Digital technology has played a significant role in the transformation of commercial and art photography: witness the convergence of different media resulting in mobile phones doubling as still and video cameras; or the proliferation of photo sharing websites such as Flickr, Smug-Mug and pbase, where amateur photographers can post their portfolios next to those of seasoned professionals. The context for this talk is provided by this transformation of the media environment in the digital age. However, its aim is to explore deeper anxieties over the challenge to our established notions of art, culture and the media that digitisation has posed. Although I will look at the problem of digital futures through the lens of photographic arts – Gerhard Richter’s Atlas, Walid Raad’s The Atlas Group Archive, Tacita Dean’s Floh - my concerns in this paper are socio-cultural and political as much as they are aesthetic.

Dr Joanna Zylinska is a Reader in New Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is the author of Bioethics in the Age of New Media (MIT Press, 2009), The Ethics of Cultural Studies (Continuum, 2005) and On Spiders, Cyborgs and Being Scared: the Feminine and the Sublime (Manchester University Press, 2001). She is also the editor of The Cyborg Experiments: the Extensions of the Body in the Media Age (Continuum, 2002) and co-editor of Imaginary Neighbors: Mediating Polish-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust (University of Nebraska Press, 2007). Zylinska combines her philosophical writings with photographic art practice. Her exhibition, ‘We Have Always Been Digital’, was shown in the Shifted Gallery in Melbourne in 2009. Website: www.joannazylinska.net