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SPRING 2026 EVENTS

Graduate Student Focus



Anne Friedberg Memorial Lecture: World Records, World's Stage: Photography, Television and the 1936 Olympics

JESSICA HANSON

Ph.D. Candidate, USC Department of Art History

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22
12:30-2pm PT
SOS 250

The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games remain one of the most infamous sporting events of the twentieth century. Held three years into Hitler's regime, they are often portrayed in scholarship and popular culture as a confrontation of ideologies as much as a clash of athletes—a test of the purported peacefulness and internationalism of the modern Olympic project in the shadow of the violence and discrimination of the Nazi worldview. Although many scholars have explored the 1936 Olympics as a mass propaganda event, few have considered the publicity surrounding developing visualization technologies as key to the capture, dissemination and reception of the Games as a “historic” media event. Where cameras are considered in scholarship, analysis largely centers on the filming of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938) films, which were released two years after the Olympics had ended. In focusing on the public discussions and depictions of media technologies covering the 1936 Games, such as photo finish cameras, long focus lenses and early television, this talk will elucidate how such camera developments were integral to the German people's reception of the athletic events as history-in-the-making. Centering the camera's role in constructing the 1936 Olympics as a seminal event in sports—and world—history will nuance understandings of how image dissemination and reproduction technologies engendered mass sporting spectacle as we know it today.

Jessica Hanson is a PhD candidate in Art History at the University of Southern California, where she specializes in the history of photography. Her dissertation, “Sports, Illustrated: The Making of the Global Image in Sports Photography, 1900-1974,” examines sports photography and film in the twentieth century as extensions of the art historical tradition of capturing the body in motion. Jessica's research has been supported by the USC Visual Studies Research Institute, the Central European History Society, the French Embassy to the United States and the Josephine de Karman Fellowship Trust. She is a proud recipient of the Visual Studies Graduate Certificate.

Image credit: *Jesse Owens at the Men's 200m Final*, Reemtsma Cigaretten-Bilderdienst, 1936.

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