

# Leopoldo Savignac and Basque Photography in the first half of the 20th century: an autoethnographic investigation

Rae, Ines

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**Storytelling: Trauma, Resistance, and Remembering**  
**2nd Global Inclusive Interdisciplinary Conference**  
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Athens, Greece

In search of my grandfather: Leopoldo Savignac and Basque Photography in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Inés Rae

I am in the archive with the copy of the journal which contains the portrait of Franco which Savignac (my grandfather) took in 1939 for the National Propaganda Service. In the image 'El Caudillo' looks tired, it is the end of the civil war, and he is triumphant. Gone are Savignac's creative, pictorial, carefully composited images of the 1920s. He is now an established studio portraitist in Madrid but as an immigrant he must prove his worth. He moves from the red zone to the nationalist zone on the strength of a report from his landlady who states that he has 'observed good socio-political behaviour'. I consider the tensions of that time to understand the need he may have felt to protect his family and at what cost.

To go to the archive and study the documents there is to be complicit in the ways in which the information is organized and what it represents of the past as well as for the present. What is not there is just as interesting... the fragmented status of my grandfather's photographic practice echoing his own immigrant status.

The paper will reflect on practice as research and how to theorise pilgrimage, utilising life writing and photographic work in response to discoveries as well as what remains unknowable. This includes how photographs are taken, made, preserved, archived and written about in different ways (phenomenological, haptic, embodied). Bringing my writing and image making together will include imagined conversations between journeys, images, archive and text.

Keywords: Spanish Civil War, Photography, Memory, Life Writing, Immigration, Autoethnography, Archives