

CFP: Risible Evidence – Special Dossier on Mockumentary and Comic Documentary in a Post-Truth Media Ecology

The scholarship on mockumentary has long identified its capacity for critical reflexivity. By replicating formal strategies and codes of the documentary, mockumentaries can challenge the sobriety of the subject matter, levy critiques at the broader moral, social, and political orders, and reveal the “hidden fabrications of ‘real’ documentaries” (Juhasz and Lerner, 2006: 2). Accordingly, these texts supply a necessary intervention into the intersections of truth, power, and knowledge that coalesce and convene in documentary media and other discourses of sobriety. They playfully and purposefully challenge the authority documentary does and has claimed over the real.

But how do we understand their work in the context of a contemporary “post-truth” era— broadly understood as the waning status of facticity compared to belief and opinion? Nonfiction media have played a central role in this shift in multiple ways. Financial challenges to legacy media have led to the loss of fact-checkers and the rise of click-bait. Social media platforms offer little oversight on the claims made, providing occasions for mis- and dis-information to be circulated, whether in satire presumed to be earnest at best and pernicious conspiracy theories and incitements to violence at worst. Deep Fakes further complicate evidentiary security. And amidst what the WHO is calling an “infodemic,” autocrats worldwide are actively combatting dissent, whether by crying “fake news” or by enforcement through new laws. Under these conditions, how do we understand the mockumentary’s work in deconstructing and reflecting on the documentary (form, aims, truth claims)? And if the purpose of mockumentary is not only to undo but “redo” documentary, in what ways can it contribute to the rebuilding of documentary?

We are looking for contributions to a dossier to be published in *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* in Summer 2025. This dossier provides a timely occasion to reflect on definitions, practices and processes of mockumentary, satire, and comic documentary when documentary authority is so fraught—for better and for worse—and to ponder what the current context means for the state of visible and risible evidence.

While we are open to all possible reflections, we are looking in particular for works that expand the global discussion of mockumentary beyond North America and the United Kingdom—to draw on alternative histories, experiences with autocracies, and those challenges to ever having lived in a world of pure “truth”.

If you are interested, please submit an abstract to Ohad Landesman (lander@tauex.tau.ac.il) and Leshu Torchin (lt40@st-andrews.ac.uk) no later than 1st July 2024 with the intention of having a 7000-word essay submitted by October 2024 for editing and preparation.