



# AGENTS OF CONCERN: IMAGES AND EMPATHY

## Conference

The conference starts on Thursday **November 16 at 18:00** with an evening programme featuring a lecture by Florian Göttke on the burning of images and a presentation by Miglė Bareikytė and Natasha Klimenko on images of Russia's war against Ukraine. The conference programme continues on Friday and Saturday **November 17 and 18** with lectures by Paul Bernard-Nouraud, Filip Berte & Cliona Harmey, Birgit Eusterschulte, Ira Goryainova, Claire Jones, Kasper Lægring, Antigoni Memou, Bart Moens & Karel Vanhaesebrouck, Paula Muhr, Nina Valerie Kolowratnik, Dámaso Randulife, Amir Saifullin, James Swensen, Stella Viljoen, and Andrew Warstat. The **keynote lecture** will be given by **Christina Varvia** of Forensic Architecture on Friday **November 17 at 18:00**.

## Exhibition I

Exhibition I at PXL-MAD Gallery features video works by Miglė Bareikytė & Natasha Klimenko, Ana Bilbao & Emilie Flower, Reel Borders, Harun Farocki, Chloé Galibert-Lainé, Jill Godmilow, Ira A. Goryainova, Florian Göttke, Jelena Jureša, Tõnis Jürgens, Nina Valerie Kolowratnik, Rabih Mroué, Goda Palekaitė, Dámaso Randulife, Frank Theys, and Joeri Verbesselt. Join us on Thursday **November 16 at 14:00** for the opening.

## Doctoral Symposium

The doctoral symposium on Friday **December 15** brings together a group of PhD researchers from Belgium who will respond to *Agents of Concern's* questions with reflections and observations from their ongoing research projects. Featuring contributions by Giovanna Caimmi, Charlotte Dorn, Joery Erna, Maria Gil Ulldemolins, Mona Hedayati, Toon Leën, Clarisse Michaux, Eline Valkeneers, Vincent Van Meenen, and Charlotte Vanhoubroeck.

***How are images used to raise concerns? Why do certain images concern us more than others? And when does the image itself become a cause for concern?***

The conference and exhibition project *Agents of Concern: Images and Empathy* brings together an international group of artists and scholars to examine the complex ways in which images affect our emotional and cognitive understanding of the experiences and mental states of others.

Comprising two exhibitions—one at PXL-MAD Gallery and the other at CCHA—and two conferences, *Agents of Concern* creates a dialogue between artistic and academic ways of speaking about, with, and to images. Exploring a wide spectrum of visual strategies for evoking empathy, the conference and exhibition contributors address diverse topics including the representation of migration, images of war and political protest, sentimentality in art, contagious images on social media, colonialism, visual investigations, human rights, and the creation of visual evidence.

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## ***Exhibition II***

Exhibition II will open on Sunday **November 26 at 15:00** at CCHA. Focused on photography and other lens-based art it will feature contributions by Jeroen Bocken, Dirk Braeckman, Tom Callemin, David Claerbout, Annelies de Mey, Geert Goiris, Tine Guns, Robin Hombrouck, Vincent Meessen, Max Pinckers, Lisa Scheikens, Dominique Somers, Lore Stessel, Guus Vandeweerd, Sybren Van Overberghe, Bram Van Stappen, Joselito Verschaeve, Aline Verstraten, Kristof Vrancken, and others.

## ***Registration***

Please register here to attend the conference or the doctoral symposium: <https://forms.office.com/e/Q8dSggaipv>

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NOVEMBER 16–18, 2023  
PXL-MAD GALLERY

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NOVEMBER 16–  
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JANUARY 28, 2024  
CCHA

*Agents of Concern* is organised by the research group FRAME at **PXL-MAD, School of Arts & Hasselt University**, in collaboration with *KRIEG?* and CCHA. The project is made possible with support from the Flemish Government, Doctoral Schools, M HKA, and VDB.

[www.agentsofconcern.com](http://www.agentsofconcern.com)

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY  
NOVEMBER 16  
14:00–20:00

PXL-MAD GALLERY  
ELFDE-LINIESTRAAT 25  
3500 HASSELT

14:00

## EXHIBITION OPENING

Join us for an opening drink at 16:00

18:00

## OPENING PROGRAMME

*Burning Images: Performing Resemblance*  
Dr Florian Göttke

*Images and Objects: Russia's War  
against Ukraine*  
Professor Miglė Bareikytė  
Natasha Klimenko

*Panel discussion*  
Dr Mykola Homanyuk  
Dr Bohdan Shumylovych  
Dr Denys Shatalov

**FRIDAY**  
**NOVEMBER 17**  
**09:00–20:00**

13:40

**POLITICS OF PROJECTION**

*Envisioned Projection and Projected Vision: The Agency of the Image in Early Soviet Art Praxis*  
Amir Saifullin

*With these Hands: An Examination of the Context and Legacy of Russell Lee's Most Famous and Most Empathetic Photograph: The Gnarled Hands of Theresia Ostermeyer*  
Professor James R. Swensen

COFFEE BREAK

*The Semiotics of the Kitchen*  
Professor Stella Viljoen

*Panel discussion*

COFFEE BREAK

*A Film Jar—On the Questions of Power and Innocence in Documentary Film Practice*  
Dr Ira Goryainova

COFFEE BREAK

18:00

**KEYNOTE LECTURE**

*Counter Shots*  
Christina Varvia, Forensic Architecture

09:00 REGISTRATION & COFFEE

**09:20 DEMONSTRATING CONCERNS**

*Sentimental Pictures Between beweeglijkheid and Einfühlung: Towards a Definition*  
Dr Kasper Lægning

*Sculpting Empathy: Representing the Destitute in Nineteenth-Century British Sculpture*  
Dr Claire Jones

COFFEE BREAK

*Imagining Empathy: Empathic Projection with the Optical Lantern (1880–1920)*  
Professor Karel Vanhaesebrouck  
Dr Bart G. Moens

*Panel discussion*

12:30 LUNCH BREAK

**SATURDAY  
NOVEMBER 18  
09:00–17:30**

13:10

**CREATING COUNTER-IMAGES**

*Talking Back to History: Violent Past  
and the Politics of Representation in the  
Work of Nnenna Onuoha and Belinda  
Kazeem-Kamiński*  
Dr Birgit Eusterschulte

*Images as Empathic Agents in the Current  
Neuroimaging Research on Hysteria/FND*  
Dr Paula Muhr

COFFEE BREAK

*Seeing Nothing—Empathy and Invisibility  
(Or “Blackness is the Site where Absolute  
Nothingness and the World of Things  
Converge”)*  
Dr Andrew Warstat

*Eyes That Do Not See*  
Dámaso Randulfe

COFFEE BREAK

*Seeing with Your Own Eyes? When the  
Inter-American Court of Human Rights  
Visits Indigenous Territories*  
Nina Valerie Kolowratnik

*Panel discussion*

09:00 REGISTRATION & COFFEE

**09:20 VISUALISING MIGRATION**

*‘Composite Images’ and Counter-Forensics*  
Dr Antigoni Memou

*Presenting or Representing: Artistic Empathy  
to the Test of Contemporary Migrations*  
Dr Paul Bernard-Nouraud

COFFEE BREAK

*BIALO\_REC*  
berte & harmey

*Panel discussion*

12:10 LUNCH BREAK

# BURNING IMAGES: PERFORMING RESEMBLANCE

Dr Florian Göttke  
University of Amsterdam & Dutch Art Institute

It has often been argued that people's empathetic (or antipathetic) response to images stems from images' visual resemblance to their 'prototype.' Drawing from my research on the use of effigies in political protest, I argue that it is not the perception of lifelikeness, but rather conventions governing these theatrical protest performances that compel people to engage in make-believe, to act as if these images were alive, and to experience and express feelings towards them.

**Florian Göttke** is a visual artist, researcher, and educator based in Amsterdam. He investigates the functioning of public images and their relationship to social memory, politics, and violence, combining visual modes of research (collecting, close reading, and image montage) with academic research. Göttke received his PhD from the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam on the peculiar practice of hanging or burning effigies—scarecrow-like puppets representing politicians—as a form of political protest. His dissertation, under the title *Burning Images: A History of Effigy Protests* (Valiz, 2021), combines two discursive narratives: a linear text and a parallel assemblage of images. Image narrative and text are like the two voices in a musical composition, each in turn taking the lead to introduce themes, structure the work, direct the reader, halt attention, or accelerate the flow.



© Florian Göttke

# IMAGES AND OBJECTS: RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

Professor Miglé Bareikytė  
European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)

Natasha Klimentko  
Freie Universität Berlin

Panel discussion (participating virtually):  
Dr Mykola Homanyuk  
Kherson State University

Dr Bohdan Shumylovych  
Center for Urban History, L'viv

Dr Denys Shatalov

The video essay *Images and Objects: Russia's War against Ukraine* explores the possibilities and boundaries of an empathic gaze, while providing a personal engagement with various forms of visual representation in the context of multi-sensory warfare. Using art and documentation by Ukrainian practitioners, *Images and Objects* explores the participants' personal or academic relationship to images, monuments, museums, and environments in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine. This video is made in collaboration with Mykola Homanyuk, Svitlana Matviyenko, Gintautas Mažeikis, Denys Shatalov, Bohdan Shumylovych and features artworks by Kateryna Lisovenko, Mykyta Lyskov, and Danylo Movchan.

Following the screening of *Images and Objects*, Natasha Klimentko and Miglé Bareikytė will be in conversation with Mykola Homanyuk, Bohdan Shumylovych, and Denys Shatalov, who will join them virtually from Ukraine.

A wrapped-up Pushkin statue in Kryvyi Rih,  
Ukraine, March 2023 © Denys Shatalov

**Miglé Bareikytė** holds the Chair for Digital Studies at European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), where she is a dual member of the Faculty of Social and Cultural Sciences and the European New School of Digital Studies (ENS). Her research focuses on digital war sensing, media geopolitics, and algorithmic accountability, with a particular focus on Central and Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine and Lithuania.

**Natasha Klimentko** is a PhD researcher at the Graduate School Global Intellectual History at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her research looks at the transregional artist networks operating in Soviet Central Asia in the first half of the twentieth century, with a focus on the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

**Mykola Homanyuk** is a sociologist, geographer, and theatre maker. He defended his PhD thesis in sociology at V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ukraine. Currently, he is an associate professor at Kherson State University, Ukraine. His research interests centre on the politics of memory, critical toponymics, ethnic studies, and documentary.

**Bohdan Shumylovych** studied art history at the L'viv National Academy of Arts, Ukraine and modern history at the Central European University in Budapest. In 2020 he received his PhD from the European University Institute in Florence. He is a researcher at the L'viv Center for Urban History, where he works on media history in East Central Europe and the Soviet Union.

**Denys Shatalov** obtained his PhD in history in 2016. Following the beginning of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war he started his research project *'That War' and 'This War': The Entanglement and Interaction of the Imagination, Commemoration and Memory of World War II and the Ongoing War in Ukraine*. He is a fellow of the Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship programme at the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, Bulgaria.





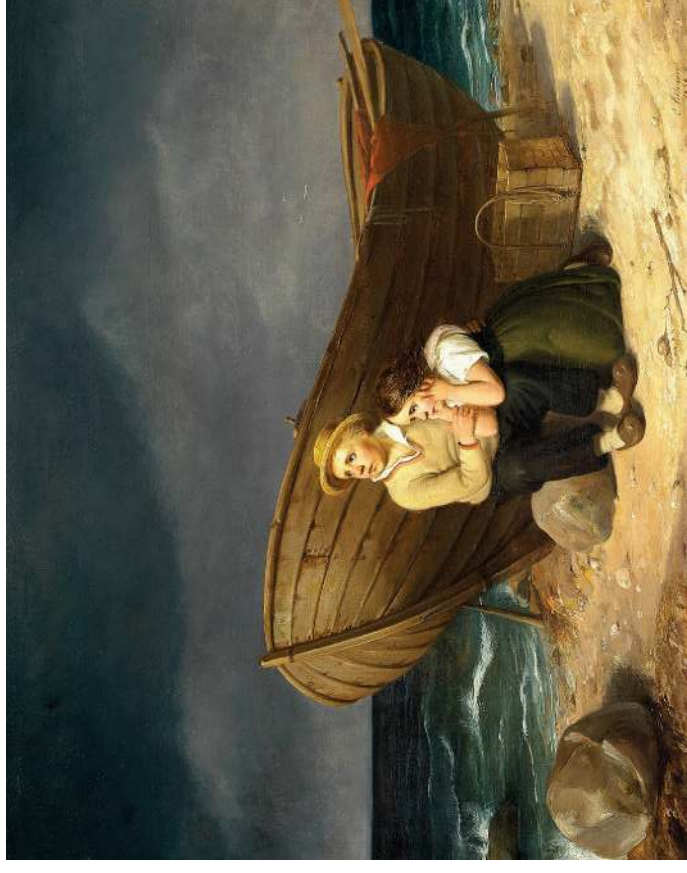
# SENTIMENTAL PICTURES BETWEEN BEWEEGLIJKHEID AND EINFÜHLUNG: TOWARDS A DEFINITION

Dr Kasper Lægning  
Aarhus University

For the modernist avant-gardes, as well as for an art history moulded in its image, it seemed self-evident that sentimentality was a bad thing, both ethically and aesthetically. Lately, however, theorists have begun to revisit the sentimental art of the nineteenth century, and to question the claims that sentimental works of art can have no share in empathy. Using two key terms related to empathy in a phenomenological sense—*beweegelijkheid* and *Einfühlung*—this paper seeks to deepen our understanding of what sentimentality in painting entails.

**Kasper Lægning** is a theorist of architecture and the arts and is currently a New Carlsberg Postdoctoral Fellow in art history at Aarhus University, Denmark. He holds degrees in architecture (PhD, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture; MSc, University of Pennsylvania) and art history (Mag. art., University of Copenhagen). His research interests broadly include emotions and empathy in painting, meaning in architecture, and modernism and postmodernism in urbanism. He has lectured, chaired conference sessions, and published widely on these topics. He is a contributor to *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries* (Brill/Rodopi, 2016–22) and *The Contested Territory of Architectural Theory* (Routledge, 2022), and his monograph *Nelson Goodman and Modern Architecture: A Belated Encounter* is forthcoming with Routledge. Together with Wayne Franits, he will be editing a themed issue of *Gouden Eeuw: New Perspectives on Dutch Seventeenth-Century Art* on emotions in Dutch seventeenth-century art.

Peter Julius Larsen, *Two Poor Children*, 1845,  
The National Gallery of Denmark



# SCULPTING EMPATHY: REPRESENTING THE DESTITUTE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH SCULPTURE

Dr Claire Jones  
University of Birmingham

This paper identifies a shift in sculpture in nineteenth-century Britain: an attempt by sculptors to represent aspects of modern life, which in turn enabled new subjects, narratives, and experiences to be articulated in sculpture. I focus on sculptures of the poor and destitute. I explore how these sculptures addressed lived contemporary experience, with the intention of prompting an empathetic connection between the viewer and the represented subject, and how they might also form a potential space for empathy today.

**Claire Jones** is associate professor in art history at the University of Birmingham, UK. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century sculpture, with a particular emphasis on the intersection of sculpture and the decorative, as well as discourses of making, display, and creative engagements with historic art. Publications include *Sculptors and Design Reform in France, 1848 to 1895: Sculpture and the Decorative Arts* (Ashgate, 2014); and *Sculpture and the Decorative in Britain and Europe: Seventeenth Century to Contemporary* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), co-edited with Imogen Hart. She is currently completing her next book, *Victorian Sculpture: In Pursuit of Modern Sentiment*, which explores how sculptors in nineteenth-century Britain attempted to engage with contemporary concerns and feelings, including representations of the everyday and creating empathetic connections between subjects and audiences.



Sir Richard Westmacott, *The Distressed Mother*, nineteenth-century, Parian ware, modelled after a statue in Westminster Abbey © Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington

# IMAGINEERING EMPATHY: EMPATHIC PROJECTION WITH THE OPTICAL LANTERN (1880–1920)

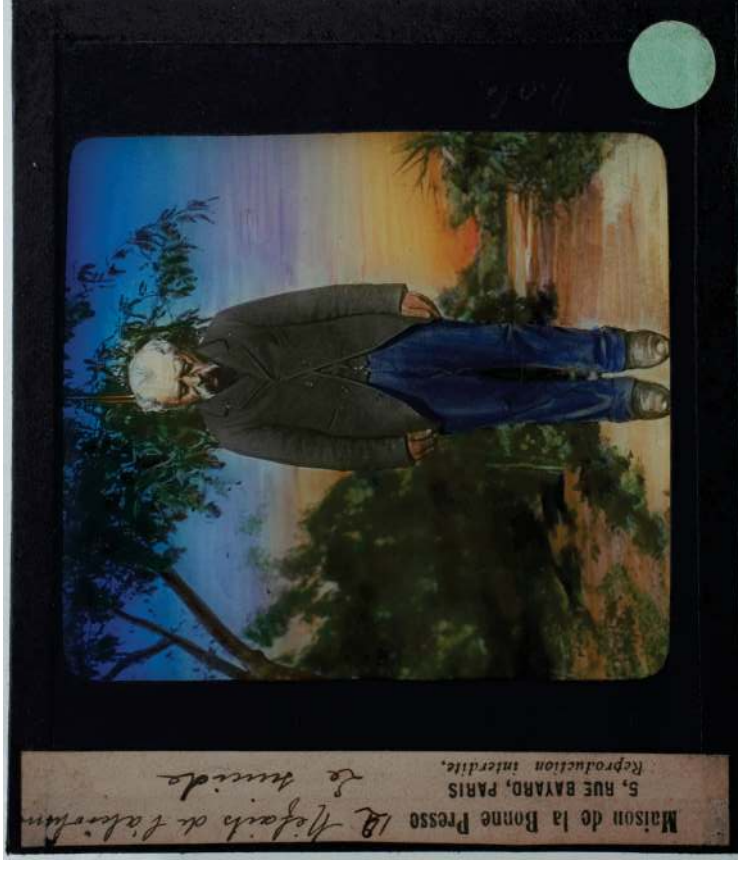
Professor Karel Vanhaesebrouck  
Université libre de Bruxelles

Dr Bart G. Moens  
Université libre de Bruxelles & University of Antwerp

Concentrating on a case of anti-alcohol propaganda by means of the optical lantern during the first decade of the twentieth century, this contribution aims to scrutinise the notion of empathic projection through the concept of Imagineering (Korsten et al. 2021). Through a live optical lantern performance, we will explore the (intended) affective and empathic involvement of these projected images on a formal level (using techniques from the arts, theatre, and photography) and on a societal level (individually and collectively).

**Karel Vanhaesebrouck** is professor of theatre and performance studies at the Université libre de Bruxelles, where he teaches courses on the MA 'Arts du spectacle'. He also works as a lecturer at the Royal Institute of Theatre, Cinema and Sound (RITCS) of the Erasmus University College, Brussels, where he teaches courses on the history of theatre and culture. He has published widely on early-modern theatre in France, England, and the Netherlands, but also on contemporary European theatre practices. He recently co-authored *Marketing Violence: The Affective Economy of Violent Imaginaries in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

**Bart G. Moens** is postdoctoral researcher at the Université libre de Bruxelles and at the University of Antwerp within the framework of the ERC-funded project 'Science at the Fair: Performing Knowledge and Technology in Western Europe, 1850–1914'. His research concerns late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century visual culture from media archaeological and art historical perspectives. In 2023, Moens completed his PhD entitled 'Emotions on Demand: Melodramatic Structures of Feeling in Optical Lantern Culture (1890s–1920s),' as part of the EOS-funded research project 'B-Magic: The Magic Lantern and its Cultural Impact as a Visual Mass Medium in Belgium,' which he is currently reworking into a book.



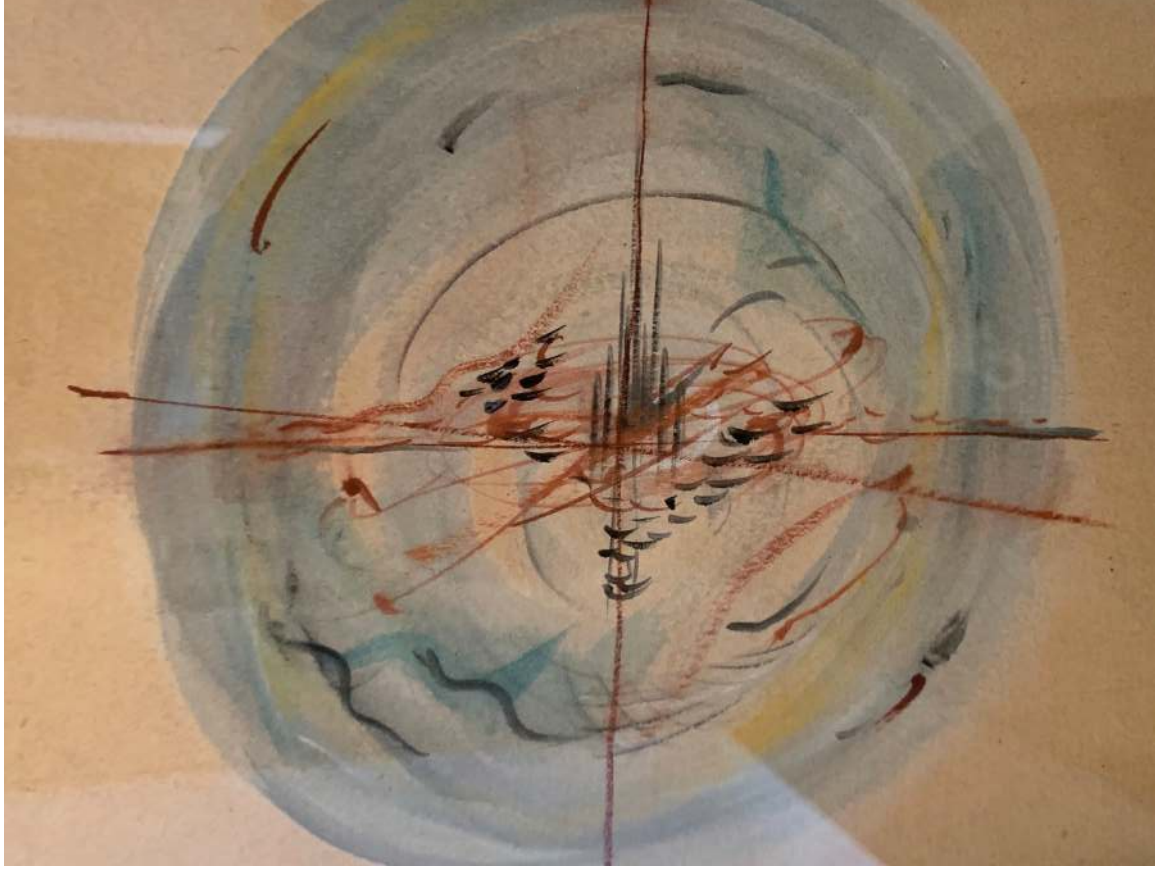
Suicide, Lantern slide 12 of 'Méfaits de l'alcoolisme,' ca. 1910, Maison de la Bonne Presse

# ENVISIONED PROJECTION AND PROJECTED VISION: THE AGENCY OF THE IMAGE IN EARLY SOVIET ART PRACTIS

Amir Saifullin  
University of Zurich

My presentation focuses on projection as an artistic mode for organising political vision, as developed by the Projectionists—an understudied Soviet avant-garde movement from the 1920s. I explore how, within their praxis, the image mediates the relationship between projected vision and envisioned projection, and emerges as a reflection of how the world is perceived, thus becoming a means to transform perception. I then critically evaluate projection as a visual strategy, examining both the political and creative possibilities discovered by the Projectionists, as well as the limitations exposed by their work.

**Amir Saifullin** is a researcher based between Rome and Berlin. Saifullin studied philosophy and art history at the Freie Universität Berlin, along with visual and Renaissance culture at the Warburg Institute in London. He works at the intersection of anthropology and the histories of art, science, and philosophy, with a particular focus on exploring how various visual forms of translation and mediation communicate and shape human cosmologies, politics, and communities. Currently, he is pursuing these interests while writing his PhD dissertation on projection as revolutionary vision in early-Soviet art at the University of Zurich.



Solomon Nikritin, *Composition with Transparent Sphere (II)*, 1920s, Museum of Modern Art, Costakis Collection, Thessaloniki  
© Photograph: Amir Saifullin

# WITH THESE HANDS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONTEXT AND LEGACY OF RUSSELL LEE'S MOST FAMOUS AND MOST EMPATHETIC PHOTOGRAPH

Professor James R. Swensen  
Brigham Young University, Utah

On his first travelling assignment for the New Deal's Resettlement Administration (later known as the Farm Security Administration), Russell Lee photographed two homesteaders, Mr and Mrs Ostermeyer, as they were being evicted from their farm on a cold December day in 1936. One of Lee's pictures was a close up of Theresia Ostermeyer's hands. This deeply empathetic image—a powerful synecdoche of a life of hard work, hardship, and pain—became an icon of the Great Depression. This paper examines the context of Lee's photograph as well as the ways in which it has continued to resonate with audiences and image-makers.

**James R. Swensen** is professor of art history and the history of photography at Brigham Young University, Utah, U.S. His research interests include documentary photography, American photography, and the visual representation of the American West. He is the author of several articles which have appeared in *History of Photography*, *TransAtlantic: Revue d'Études Américaines*, *American Indian Quarterly*, and *The European Journal of American Culture*, among others. He is also the author of two books: *Picturing Migrants: The Grapes of Wrath and New Deal Documentary Photography* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), and *In a Rugged Land: Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and the Three Mormon Towns Collaboration, 1953–1954* (University of Utah Press, 2018). He also co-authored *Returning Home: Diné Creative Works from the Intermountain Indian School* (University of Arizona Press, 2021).



Russell Lee, *The hands of Mrs. Andrew Ostermeyer, wife of a homesteader, Woodbury County, Iowa, December 1936* © Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

# THE SEMIOTICS OF THE KITCHEN

Professor Stella Viljoen  
Stellenbosch University

This paper considers three artists who utilise photography in their affective documentation of the kitchen. How does their art move the viewer towards a political understanding of taste and culture? How do these artists critique and construct narratives of kitsch(ens) and what is the relationship between 'distinction' and 'empathy'? Might sexy, consumable, and relatable images still function as semiotic provocateurs or agentic trouble-makers or is kitsch necessarily trite and impotent? The paper is a means of tracking empathy in the feminist archive.



**Stella Viljoen** is associate professor in visual studies in the department of visual arts at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. She has an MA in history of art and a PhD in media studies. She has written widely on representational cultures and how these index gender norms and political aspirations. Her current interest is in the capitalist imagination. She is a fellow of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

Fatimah Tuggar, *Lady & the Maid*,  
2000 © BintaZarah Studios

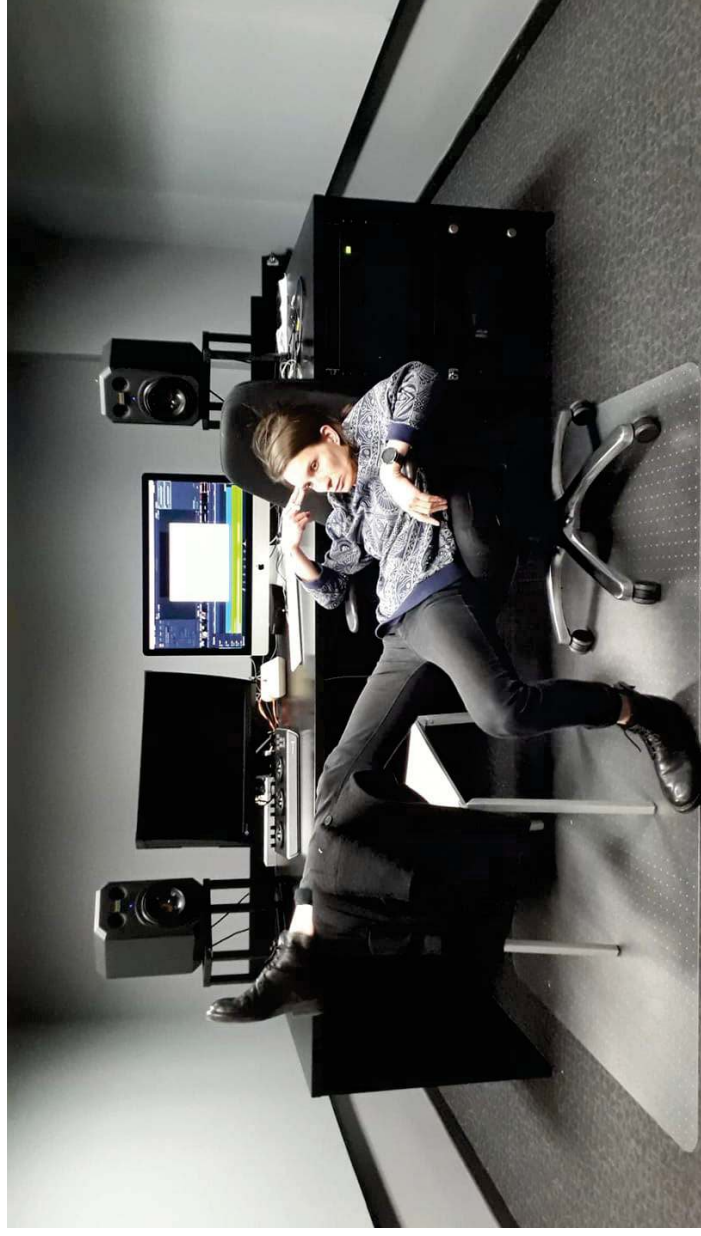
# A FILM JAR—ON THE QUESTIONS OF POWER AND INNOCENCE IN DOCUMENTARY FILM PRACTICE

Dr Ira Goryainova  
Royal Institute for Theatre, Cinema and Sound (RITCS), Brussels

Starting with the premise that any documentary portrayal has something dominating and destructive in its nature, this performance—unfolding itself in the montage space of a filmmaker—tackles the relationship between the director and her protagonist, the construction and consequences of the gaze, as well as the vacuum of a film, which takes a real-life person hostage, engulfs, and seals them in forever.

**Ira Goryainova** is a film director, audiovisual artist, and researcher based in Brussels. The relationship between body, camera, screen, and spectator is her main area of interest, which she explores in essay- and montage films, video installations, and performances. Thematically her focus is on the body under extreme conditions—such as illness, death, and suffering—and how they can be read as political metaphors while still conveying explicit bodily, non-narrative meanings. Goryainova's work has been shown at IDFA, Hot Docs, Visions du Réel, Thessaloniki Film Festival, Artdocfest, Argos, Halle für Kunst Steiermark, ISELP, RIDM, Imagine Science Film Festival, Deutsches Theater Berlin, among others. Currently she is a postdoctoral researcher, as well as a hybrid and documentary film teacher at the Royal Institute for Theatre, Cinema and Sound (RITCS), Brussels.

Ira Goryainova © Patrick Stevens



# COUNTER SHOTS

Christina Varvia  
Forensic Architecture, Goldsmiths, University of London  
& Aarhus University

In this talk, Christina Varvia will present a series of cases by Forensic Architecture, where the dominant power of images is met by counter shots from the ground. Itinerant witnesses turn their gaze back and reveal the way visual and biopolitical regimes stratify and racialise human life. The image-sections they produce carry evidentiary traces and get assembled and reassembled in different models in our news cycles and in our brains, forming the nebulas of truth.



**Christina Varvia** is currently a research fellow and formerly the deputy director of Forensic Architecture. She was trained as an architect and has taught at the Architectural Association, London. She is currently a lecturer at the Centre for Research Architecture, at Goldsmiths, University of London, and is pursuing her PhD at Aarhus University, Denmark, where she has received the Novo Nordisk Foundation Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship; she is also a Fellow at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. She is a founding member and the chair of the board of Forensis.

The Pylos Shipwreck investigation: Survivor pointing to the location where the rope used for towing was tied onto their boat © Forensis, 2023

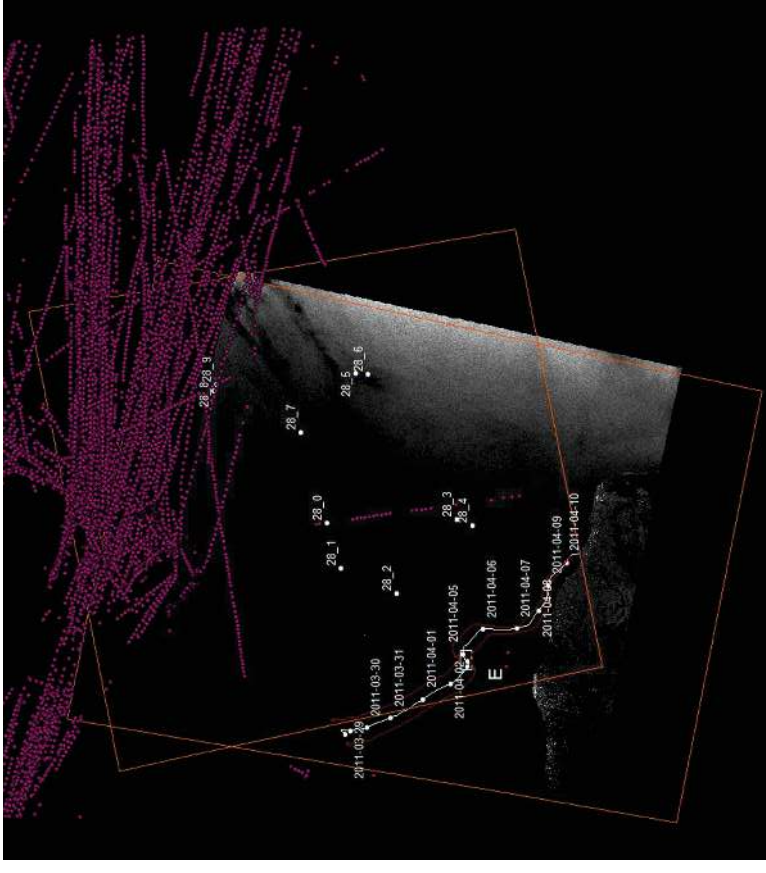


# 'COMPOSITE IMAGES' AND COUNTER-FORENSICS

Dr Antigoni Memou  
University of East London

This talk examines *Forensic Oceanography's* interdisciplinary methodology for reconstructing 'composite images,' which attest to the systemic violence against migrant people at European Union's maritime borders. The talk questions the role these images can play in holding accountable those responsible for human rights' violations and the death of migrant people. The civic practice of 'counter-forensics' will be further discussed by asking whether new forms of political resistance to border violence can be constituted by rendering systemic violence and fields of pro-migration struggles visible.

**Antigoni Memou** (PhD, Courtauld Institute of Art; MA, University of Southampton) is senior lecturer in art history and the course leader of the BA (Hons) Photography at the department of architecture and visual arts at the University of East London. She has published in the journals *Third Text*, *Philosophy of Photography*, *Photographies*, *Art and the Public Sphere*, and in edited collections. She is the author of *Photography and Social Movements: From the Globalisation of the Movement (1968) to the Movement Against Globalisation (2001)* (Manchester University Press, 2013) and co-author of *Resist! The 1960s Protests, Photography and Visual Legacy* (Lanoo, 2018). Her research interests cut across art and activism, the history and theory of photography, socially engaged artistic practices, and critical issues of contemporary display.



Satellite image from March 28, 2011, with vessel detection (white) and AIS data overlaid (purple), from Forensic Oceanography's 2012 investigation *The Left-to-Die Boat* © Forensic Oceanography

# PRESENTING OR REPRESENTING: ARTISTIC EMPATHY TO THE TEST OF CONTEMPORARY MIGRATIONS

Dr Paul Bernard-Nouraud  
Aix-Marseille University

Over the last decade, countless initiatives have been taken in the artistic field to address contemporary migration. Many commentators have criticised these projects for either lacking empathy or for displaying too much empathy. One of the main practical and theoretical issues that emerges in relation to such artistic approaches is the dilemma of presenting or representing migrations and migrants. This lecture aims to frame this debate and its theoretical concerns by focusing on several significant artistic proposals.

**Paul Bernard-Nouraud** is an art historian and art critic, based in Paris. He received his PhD from the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris. He is currently teaching at the arts department of Aix-Marseille University. Among his publications are: *Figurer l'autre: Essai sur la figure du 'musulman'* dans les camps de concentration nazis (Kimé, 2013); *Sur les œuvres silencieuses: Contribution à l'étude de l'art d'après Auschwitz* (Pétra, 2017). He is currently preparing a book on the representations of migration in contemporary art titled *Échelles de l'exil*.

Christoph Büchel, *Barca Nostra*, at the 2019 Venice Biennale  
© Photograph: Jean-Pierre Dalbéra



# BIAŁO\_REC

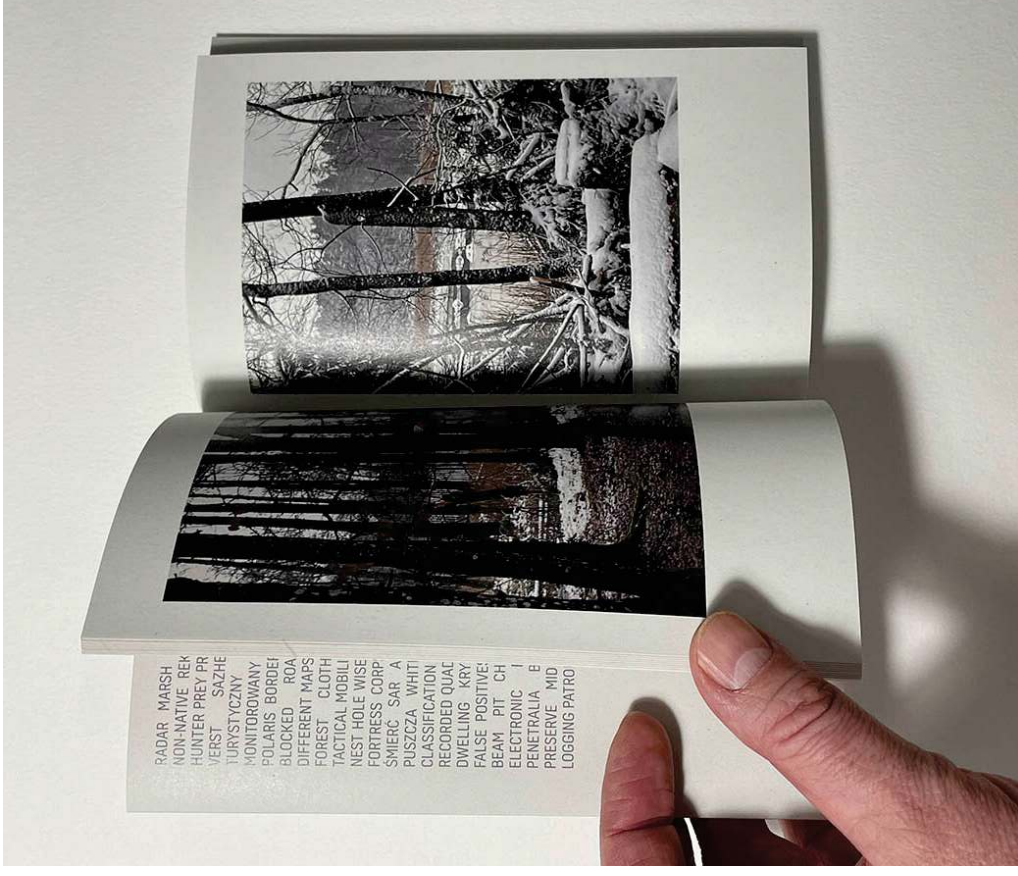
berte & harmey

berte & harmey will co-present a lecture performance using a set of images from two research trips to the Białowieża forest in Poland—a site of fragile natural habitats, which also acts as a hostile, militarised environment for people on the move. How can the particular tools of art be used to navigate, interrogate, and reflect on such a charged context? Can images help us to engage with the experiential world of people on the move—whom we do not see? How can we empathise with an invisible subject?

**berte & harmey** is an occasional artist duo formed by Cliona Harmey and Filip Berte to share research and to explore ideas around spatial politics, critical geography, historical legacies, and socio-technical systems of exclusion and inclusion. berte & harmey showed their work as part of Tuica 2022 (Galway, Ireland), at Hugh Lane Gallery (Open House Dublin 2022), NCAD Gallery (Dublin) and BLANCO (Ghent).

**Filip Berte** is an architect and visual artist who explores space from multiple perspectives looking at issues such as migration, visibility, liminality, and the concept of borders. A critical engagement is integral to his interdisciplinary and process-oriented art practice. He considers his role as an artist as the one of a mediator, tackling questions of hospitality, polarisation, observation, surveillance, and control. With his work in general, Berte is trying to offer a reflective and poetic form of resistance.

**Cliona Harmey** works primarily with technology subtly exploring the politics inherent in both contemporary and historical socio-technical systems using material exploration and hands-on artistic practice to try to understand and reveal their materiality and logic. She is interested in different ways of making immaterial and mutable data tangible and the inscription processes of its capture and production.



BIAŁO\_REC\_1 © berte & harmey

# TALKING BACK TO HISTORY: VIOLENT PASTS AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN THE WORK OF NNENNA ONUOHA AND BELINDA KAZEEM-KAMIŃSKI

Dr Birgit Eusterschulte  
Freie Universität Berlin

In the exploration of the colonial past and coloniality in contemporary art, the question of how to deal with depictions of violence is of great importance. Focusing on filmic works by Nnenna Onuoha and Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński, this lecture examines different artistic strategies of countering history and the respective ways of dealing with images of countering history and the question is how do artists talk back to the violence of images and involve the viewer in reflecting on the dilemmas and politics of representation.

**Birgit Eusterschulte** is an art historian and postdoctoral research associate at the Collaborative Research Center 1512 'Intervening Arts' at the Freie Universität Berlin. After studying art history and German literature she initially worked as a curator. In 2017, she received her PhD in art history from the Freie Universität Berlin with a thesis on materiality in conceptual art; from 2017 to 2019 she was a research associate for the Einstein Research Project *Autonomy and Functionalization of Art* at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK) with a focus on politically and socially engaged art and exhibition practice in Berlin after 1990; her current research project, *History as Material? Artistic Historicizing as Intervening Practice*, asks how different models of artistic historiography intervene in dominant narratives as a form of methodical unlearning. Recent publications include *Robert Barry: Materialität und Konzeptkunst* (Brill/Wilhelm Fink, 2021); *Funktionen der Künste* (J. B. Metzler, 2021; co-editor Judith Siegmund et al.); *Involvierte Autonomie: Künstlerische Praxis zwischen Engagement und Eigenlogik* (transcript, 2022; open access; co-editor Christian Krüger).



Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński, *Unearthing. In Conversation*, 2017, video still  
© Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński

# IMAGES AS EMPATHIC AGENTS IN THE CURRENT NEUROIMAGING RESEARCH ON HYSTERIA/FND

Dr Paula Muhr  
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Hysteria is no longer thought to exist. But since the 2000s, there has been a revival of medical research into hysteria, renamed as functional neurological disorder (FND), using state-of-the-art neuroimaging technologies. I argue that by linking FND patients' previous traumatic experiences to visualisable pathological changes in brain structure and function, brain images serve as agents of concern. By grounding the previously contested symptoms into trauma-induced neuroplastic changes, these images provide visual evidence for the reality of patients' experience of illness, which had long been dismissed as simulation.

**Paula Muhr** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for History of Art and Architecture, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and a visual artist. She studied visual arts, art history, literary theory, and physics before receiving her PhD in visual history from the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2021, published as *From Photography to fMRI: Epistemic Functions of Images in Medical Research on Hysteria* (transcript, 2022; open-access). In her doctoral dissertation, Muhr investigated active roles that diverse types of images have played in generating medical knowledge of hysteria across various historical contexts. Her interdisciplinary research is at the intersection of visual studies, image theory, media studies, science and technology studies, medical humanities, and the history and philosophy of science. She examines knowledge-producing functions of new imaging and visualisation technologies in natural sciences, ranging from neuroscience to medicine to black-hole physics.

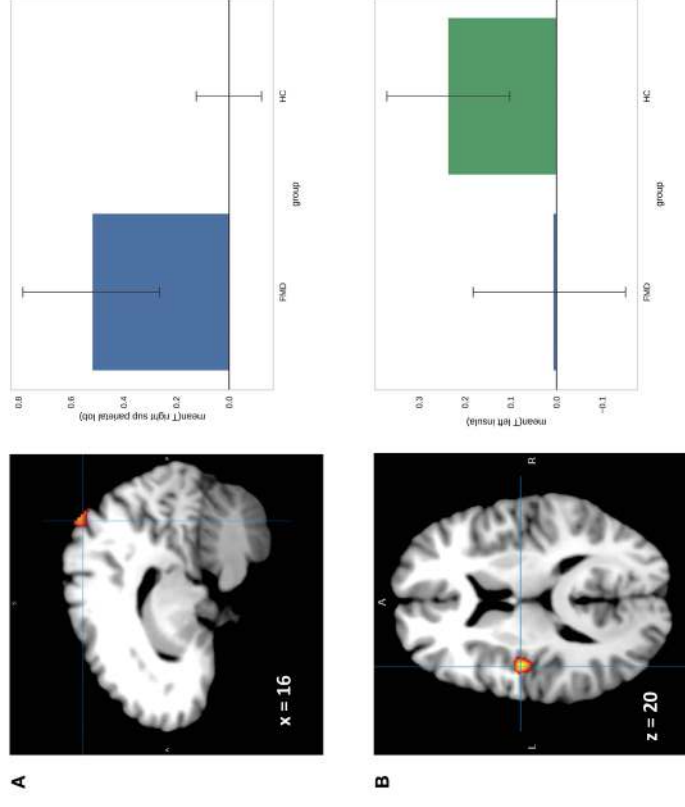


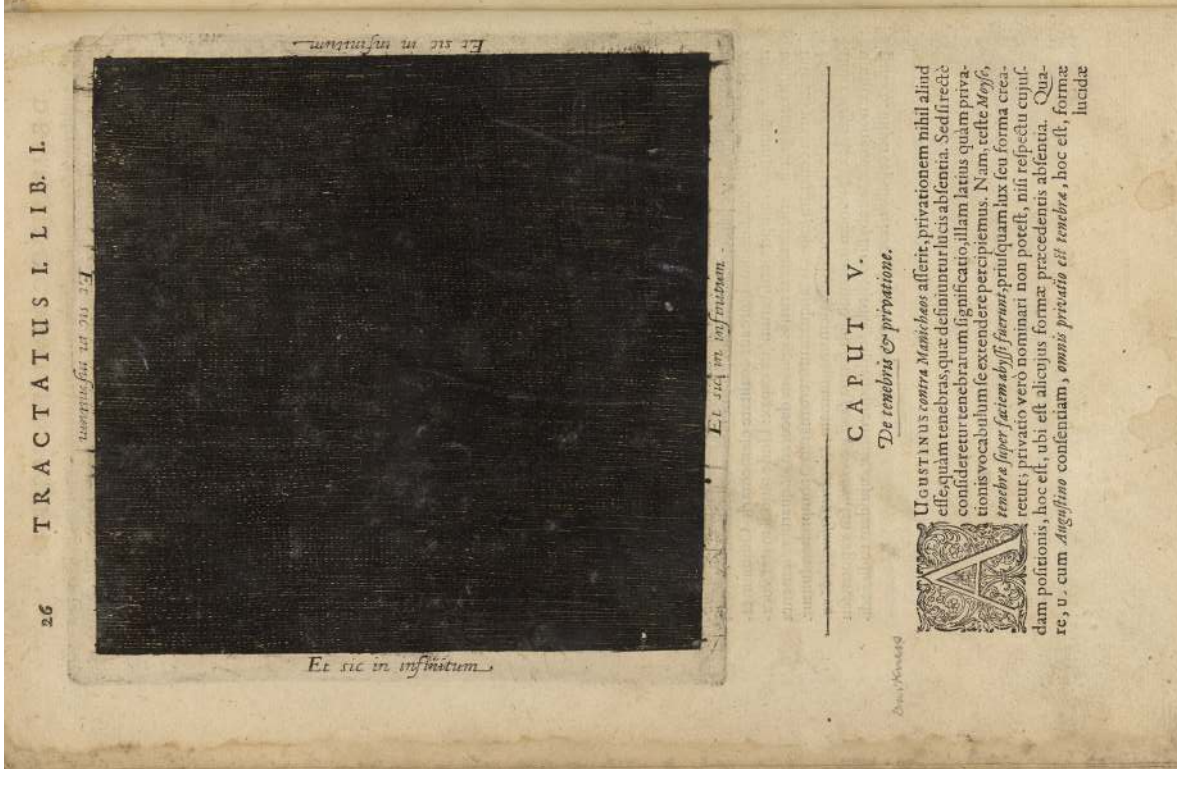
Figure from Petr Sojka et al., 'Processing of Emotions in Functional Movement Disorder: An Exploratory fMRI Study' in *Frontiers in Neurology*, Vol. 10, 2019

# SEEING NOTHING—EMPATHY AND INVISIBILITY (OR “BLACKNESS IS THE SITE WHERE ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS AND THE WORLD OF THINGS CONVERGE”)

Dr Andrew Warstat  
Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University

When an image presents us with something that we cannot see or face, we imaginatively move towards or create a *rapport sans rapport* (following Maurice Blanchot and Jean-Luc Nancy). The unstable ground of our relation to the image is a blurry zone where experience, aesthetics, ethics, and our bodies and senses merge and intermix. This lecture explores the necessary uncertainty about the disposition individual viewers should take when faced with something that is literally about the ‘un-see-ability’ of something. As a case in point, the talk will discuss the dismantling of Edward Colston’s statue in Bristol, UK as an ethical, empathetic action—an attempt to see something unseeable (the experience of slavery).

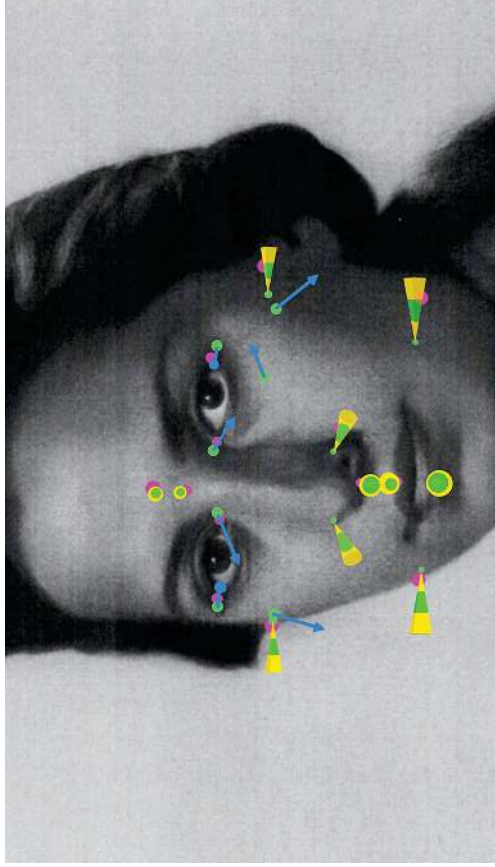
**Andrew Warstat** is a senior lecturer in art history and media theory at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University. He is a writer, photographer, and artist. Exhibitions include *After the Disaster* (Outpost, 2008) and *The Object of Photography* (The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, 2009). Recent publications include essays such as ‘Sattarder et regarder, ensemble et séparément—la photographie de Gavin Parry’ (2022) for *Maison Louis-Jardin du Mesnil-sur-Oger*, *Médiathèques Simone-Veil et Daniel-Rondeau d’Epernay*; writing on J.G. Ballard, ‘Speeding to the Doldrums: Stalled Futures and the Disappearance of Tomorrow in “The Dead Astronaut”’ in *J.G. Ballard: Landscapes of Tomorrow* (Brill/Rodopi, 2016); work on the artist John Stezaker in *parallax*, Volume 16, Issue 2, 2010; texts on the role of ignorance and ‘self-reading’ in contemporary art, ‘Un-teachable and Unlearnable: The Ignorance of Artists’ in *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think* (Blackdog Publishing, 2013); and on the filmmaker Lewis Klahr, ‘Adorno, Lewis Klahr and the Shuddering Image’ in *Drawn from Life* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018).



‘Et Sic in Infinitum’—Robert Fludd, page 26 from *Utriusque cosmologiae metaphysica, physica atque technica historia*, 1617–18  
© Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection

# EYES THAT DO NOT SEE

Dámaso Randulife  
Royal College of Art, London



Dámaso Randulife, *Eyes the Earth Will Swallow*, 2023, video still

Two exhumations frame the stratigraphy of the Spanish Empire. On one end, the sixteenth-century extraction of Sumaq Urqu's silver violently inaugurates a new geological and civilisational era. On the other end, the ongoing search for thousands of mass graves unearths the mechanisms of fascist terror in twentieth-century Spain. Exploring the entanglement of these pivotal exhumations, this lecture charts a fossil ecology inscribed between the surface of the image and the depth of the earth.

**Dámaso Randulife** is an architect and artist based in London. Their work investigates the technologies, ecologies, and mythologies shaping contemporary ways of seeing and inhabiting the earth. They are an editor of *Migrant Journal*, a publication series on the spatial politics of more-than-human migrations, and a faculty member at the School of Architecture, Royal College of Art and the School of Art, Architecture, and Design, London Metropolitan University. Their work and various collaborative projects have been presented at the Oslo Architecture Triennale, Triennale de Milano, Index Biennial of Art and Technology, Design Museum, Tate Modern, and The Showroom. They are currently an AHRC-funded PhD candidate at the School of Architecture, Royal College of Art.

# SEEING WITH YOUR OWN EYES? WHEN THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS VISITS INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES

Nina Valerie Kolowratnik  
Ghent University

In 2012, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, based in Costa Rica, decided to exchange legal robes for backpacks and visit for the first time the land of the Sarayaku people in the Ecuadorian Amazon so its judges could ‘see with their own eyes’ how the community there was affected by alleged human-rights abuses. The court has since organised five more in-situ visits to Indigenous territories. This talk discusses how the court’s first case involving Indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation, the ongoing case of the Tagaeri and Taramenane Indigenous people vs the Ecuadorian state, challenges the court’s approach to ‘seeing’ evidence—both conceptually and practically.

**Nina Valerie Kolowratnik** is an architect and a PhD candidate in law at the Human Rights Centre, Faculty of Law and Criminology at Ghent University. Her research focuses on Indigenous peoples’ knowledge in human-rights courts and the impact of the evidentiary regime on access to justice and knowledge representation. She is part of the larger ERC-funded project DISSECT: Evidence in International Human Rights Adjudication. She holds an MSc in Critical, Curatorial, and Conceptual Practices in Architecture from Columbia University and a BSc and MSc in architecture from Graz University of Technology. Following her postgraduate studies, she founded a research and advocacy practice that develops spatial visualisation systems that operate as translational tools in the context of forced migration, cultural claims to territory, and Indigenous rights. She is the author of the book *The Language of Secret Proof: Indigenous Truth and Representation* (Sternberg Press, 2019) and she is currently in Ecuador for a year to conduct fieldwork for her PhD.

Nina Valerie Kolowratnik, *Arrival by boat to Waorani Territory*





# EXHIBITION I

PXL-MAD GALLERY  
ELFDE-LINIESTRAAT 25  
3500 HASSELT

NOVEMBER 16–  
DECEMBER 15, 2023

EXHIBITION OPENING:  
THURSDAY NOVEMBER 16, 14:00  
VISITING HOURS:  
MONDAY–FRIDAY, 13:00–18:00

The exhibition at PXL-MAD Gallery forms a central component of *Agents of Concern*'s exploration of ways of speaking about, with, and to images. While the conference on November 16 to 18 and the doctoral symposium on December 15 foreground performative modes of speaking that are grounded in academic and artistic research, the exhibition features more hybrid, ambiguous, and experimental ways of reflecting on images.

Juxtaposing sixteen video works, the exhibition explores how images direct our empathic gaze and shape how we empathise with others. Much like secret agents, images 'operate' in the world with a purpose: whether in the service of political, economic, or religious concerns or with an agenda of their own, they can manipulate viewers emotionally, create false impressions, or cause misunderstandings. However, crucially they also provide evidence, raise public awareness, and enrich our understanding of others.

Looking at images as 'agents of concern,' we seek to uncover some of the methods and constructions they adopt as mediators of our empathic involvement with the world. The videos in the exhibition address such image 'operations,' both by critically employing certain visual strategies and by commenting and reflecting on them in words.

\* Please note that some of the works on display will be turned off during the conference on November 17 & 18, and during the symposium on December 15.

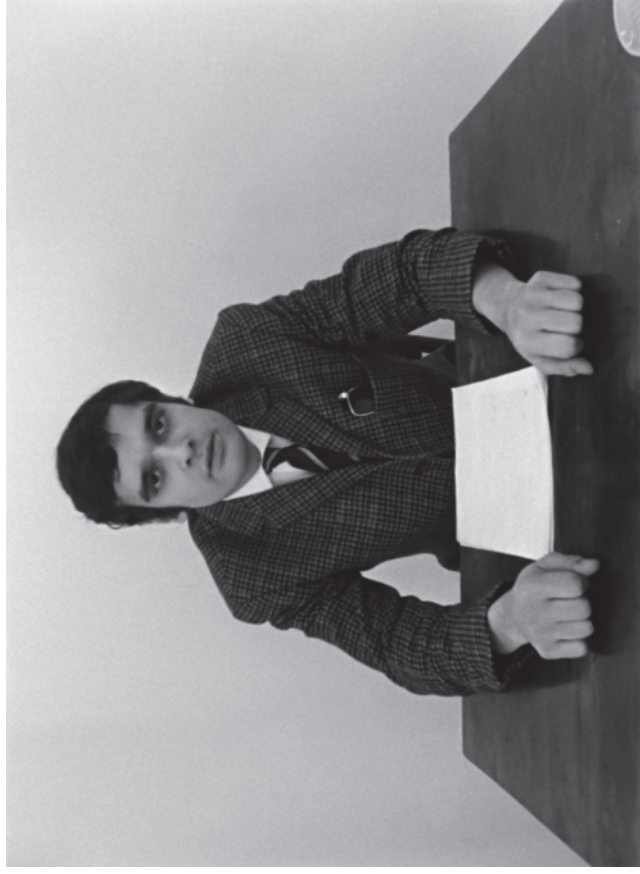
Eight video works were selected as initial reference points for *Agents of Concern*. They include iconic works like Harun Farocki's 1969 film *Nicht löschares Feuer* (Inextinguishable Fire) and Rabiï Mroué's non-academic lecture *On Three Posters*, created in 2004. In addition to this central body of works, eight video contributions were selected from the *Agents of Concern* open call. Six of these videos are new works, created or adapted especially for this project. As a performative counterpart to their videos, five of the exhibiting artists will also give a presentation at the conference on November 16 to 18.

# NICHT LÖSCHBARES FEUER, 1969

Harun Farocki



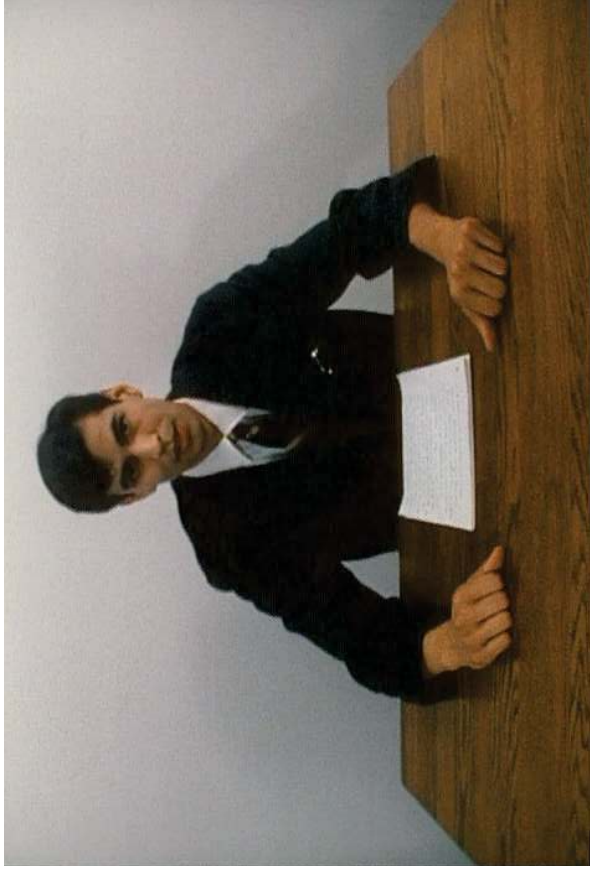
Harun Farocki, *Nicht löschesbares Feuer*, 1969, film stills © Harun Farocki GbR



**Harun Farocki** was a German filmmaker, video artist, and writer. His work critically analysed visual media, exploring how images shape our understanding of reality. Since 1966, Farocki produced, wrote, and directed more than one hundred short and feature-length films for television and cinema. He began with experimental films that challenged conventional narratives, later expanding into video installations. He also authored essays on film theory and technology's impact on visual culture. Through his thought-provoking contributions, Farocki remains a lasting influence on the interpretation of images and their societal implications. His work has been exhibited in established museums and galleries worldwide, including MoMA, New York; Jeu de Paume, Paris; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and National Museum of Modern Contemporary Art, Seoul. Farocki participated in documenta in 1997 and 2007.

# WHAT FAROCKI TAUGHT, 1998

Jill Godmilow

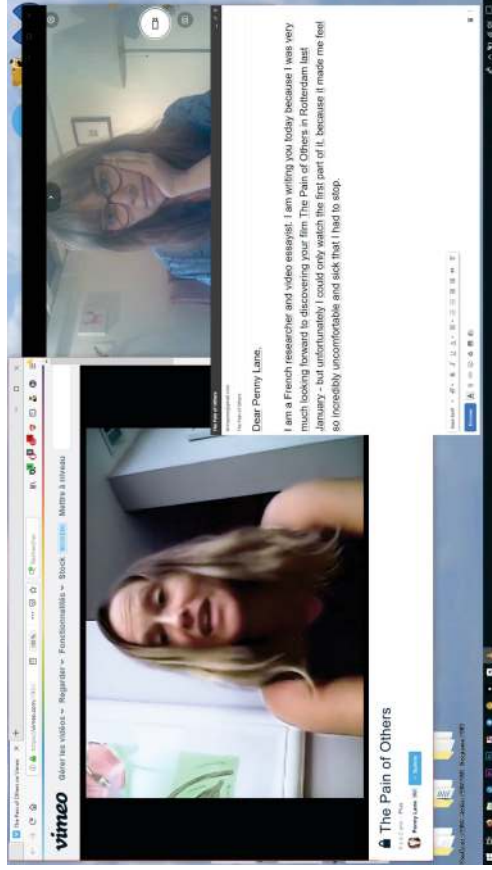


Jill Godmilow, *What Farocki Taught*, 1998, film stills  
Courtesy of the Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

**Jill Godmilow** is an independent filmmaker and professor emerita at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, US. Her films include *Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman Far from Poland* (1984), an Academy Award-nominated documentary about conductor Antonia Brico; a movement shot in the US; *Waiting for the Moon* (1987), a feature film about the literary couple Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas; and *What Farocki Taught* (1998), a meticulous remake in English of Harun Farocki's *Inextinguishable Fire*. In 2017, together with Joanna Krakowska and Magda Mosiewicz, she made a Polish remake of Carole Roussopoulos and Delphine Seyrig's 1976 film *SCUM Manifesto*, inspired by Valerie Solanas's infamous feminist text of the same title. Recent films include the short animation film *On the Domestication of Sheep* (2019), and the notable classroom film *For Teachers and Students—Notes and Images from the Vietnam War* (2022). She is the author of *Kill the Documentary* (Columbia University Press, 2022).

# WATCHING THE PAIN OF OTHERS, 2018

Chloé Galibert-Lainé



Chloé Galibert-Lainé, *Watching the Pain of Others*, 2018, video stills

**Chloé Galibert-Lainé** is a French researcher and filmmaker. They are currently working as senior researcher at the Lucerne School of Art and Design in Switzerland. They regularly teach theory classes and artistic workshops about film and media. Their work explores the intersections between cinema and online media, with a specific interest in questions related to modes of spectatorship, gestures of appropriation, processes of knowledge production, and mediated memory. Several of their films are desktop documentaries, and relate to the video-essay format and geographic research methods. Their films have been screened at festivals including IFFRotterdam, FIDMarseille, Ji.hiava DFF, Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, True/False Festival, EMAF, transmediale, Images Festival, Ars Electronica Festival and FIPADOC. Recent grants and residencies include a writing grant from the French CNC, a residency at m-cult through the European Media Art Platform (EMAP), and an Art of Nonfiction Grant from the Sundance Institute.

# TOPPLED, 2011

Florian Göttke



Florian Göttke, *Toppled*, 2011, video stills



**Florian Göttke** is a visual artist, researcher, and educator based in Amsterdam. He investigates the functioning of public images and their relationship to social memory, politics, and violence, combining visual modes of research (collecting, close reading, and image montage) with academic research. Göttke received his PhD from the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam on the peculiar practice of hanging or burning effigies—scarecrow-like puppets representing politicians—as a form of political protest. His dissertation, published under the title *Burning Images: A History of Effigy Protests* (Valiz, 2021), combines two discursive narratives: a linear text and a parallel assemblage of images. Image narrative and text are like the two voices in a musical composition, each in turn taking the lead to introduce themes, structure the work, direct the reader, halt attention, or accelerate the flow.

# ON THREE POSTERS, 2004/2021

Rabih Mrroué



Rabih Mrroué, *On Three Posters*, 2004/2021, video stills

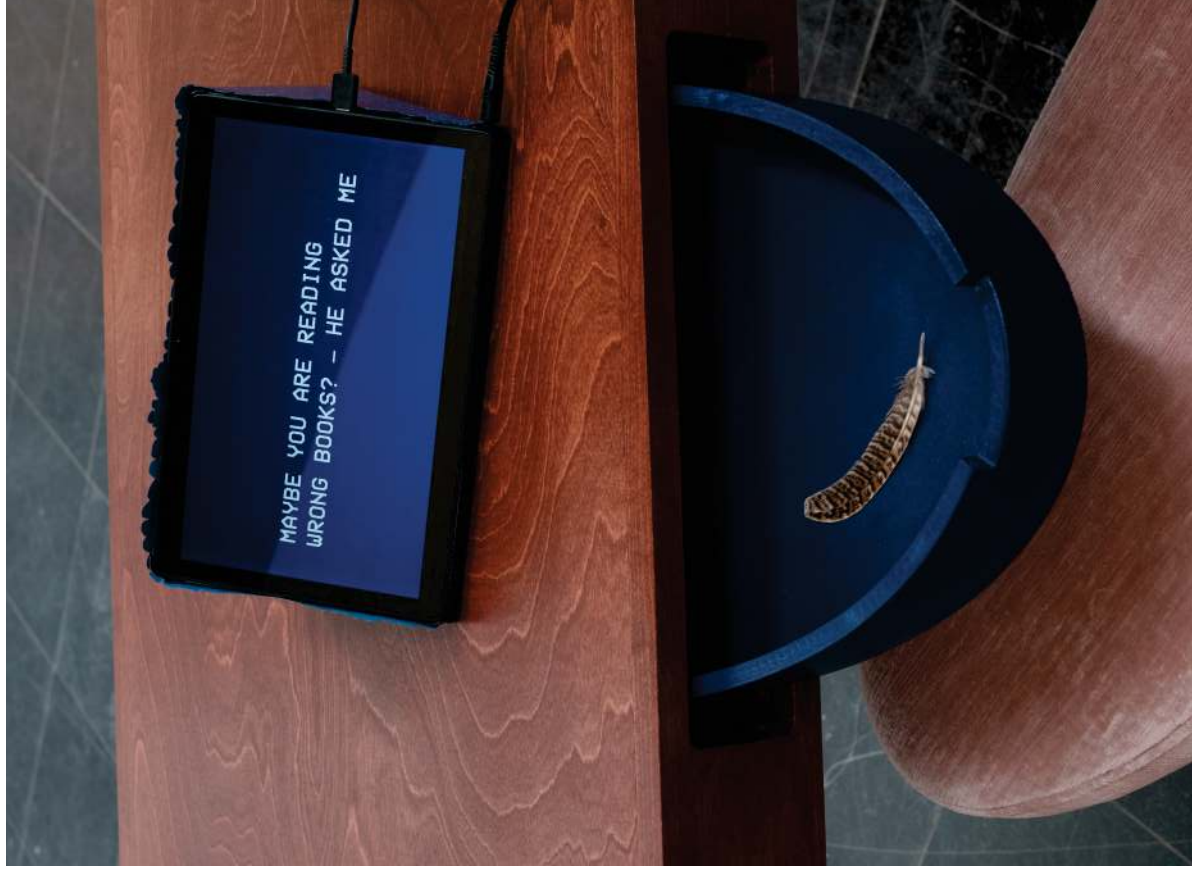


**Rabih Mrroué** is a theatre director, actor, visual artist, and playwright. His work reflects on visual culture and political iconography, in particular with regard to Lebanese and Middle Eastern politics and history. After starting his career in theatre in the late 1980s in Lebanon, Mrroué became a pioneer in the development of the lecture as an artistic format, creating a series of influential 'non-academic lectures' including *On Three Posters* (2004)—a reflection on the performance *Three Posters*, which he created together with Elias Khoury in the year 2000; *Make Me Stop Smoking* (2006); *The Inhabitants of Images* (2009); and *The Pixelated Revolution* (2012), part of a project that was also shown as an installation at documenta 13 in 2012. His work for the theatre stage is often created in collaboration with other artists, most prominently Lina Majdalanie. Mrroué's acclaimed performances include *Who's Afraid of Representation* (2005), *Photo-Romance* (2009), *Riding on a cloud* (2013), *Ode to Joy* (2015), and, most recently, *Hartaqaat (Heresies)* (2023). Mrroué's artworks have been shown in museums all over the world, from MoMA to the Centre Pompidou. His most recent solo exhibitions include *Under the Carpet*, at KW, Berlin (2022), and *Images Mon Amour*, at Extra City, Antwerp (2022). In 2020, Mrroué received the Schering Stiftung Award for Artistic Research.

# I WRITE WHILE DISAPPEARING, 2021

Goda Palekaitė

**Goda Palekaitė** is a Vilnius-born, Brussels-based artist and researcher working at the intersection of contemporary art, performance, artistic research, literature, and anthropology. Her practice evolves around projects exploring the politics of historical narratives, the agency of dreams and imagination, and the social conditions of creativity. Palekaitė holds a BFA in fine arts from Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, Lithuania, an MA in social and cultural anthropology from the University of Vienna, and an MA in artistic research from A.pass, Brussels. Currently she is a PhD candidate at Hasselt University and PXL-MAD, School of Arts, Hasselt. She has had solo shows at Beursschouwburg in Brussels; Västerås Art Museum, Sweden; Kunsthal Gent; Editorial in Vilnius; Centre Tour à Plomb in Brussels; Konstepidemin in Gothenburg, Sweden; and RawArt Gallery in Tel Aviv. Her performances and installations have been presented recently at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, BOZAR Brussels, Swamp pavilion at the 2018 Venice Biennale of Architecture, and at Tranzit Bratislava, Vilnius Contemporary Art Center, among others.



Goda Palekaitė, *I Write While Disappearing*, 2021

# APHASIA (ACT THREE) – ‘A KID FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD,’ 2019

Jelena Jureša



Jelena Jureša, *Aphasia (Act Three)* – ‘A Kid From the Neighbourhood,’ 2019, video stills



**Jelena Jureša** is a visual artist and filmmaker, born in Yugoslavia. She has extensively worked on questions of cultural identity, gender, and the politics of memory and oblivion using film, video installation, and photography. Her recent research on practices of oppression—how they operate and implicate us in systems of violence—has resulted in multidisciplinary projects that are, on various levels, as political as they are highly personal. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including solo exhibitions at Argos centre for audiovisual arts in Brussels, Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien in Graz, Austria, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, Serbia. Jureša’s most recent project *APHASIA* represented a disciplinary shift from film to concert performance, in order to foreground the topic of perpetrators and complicity through live spectatorship. The project began as a film project, produced by Argos with support from the VAF FilmLab. The film was commissioned and exhibited by Contour Biennale in 2019, and the 2022 Manifesta Biennale. The eponymous concert performance premiered at Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels in 2022. Jureša teaches at The Royal Academy of Fine Arts (KASK) in Ghent.



# MILGRAM REWOKEN, 2023

Frank Theys



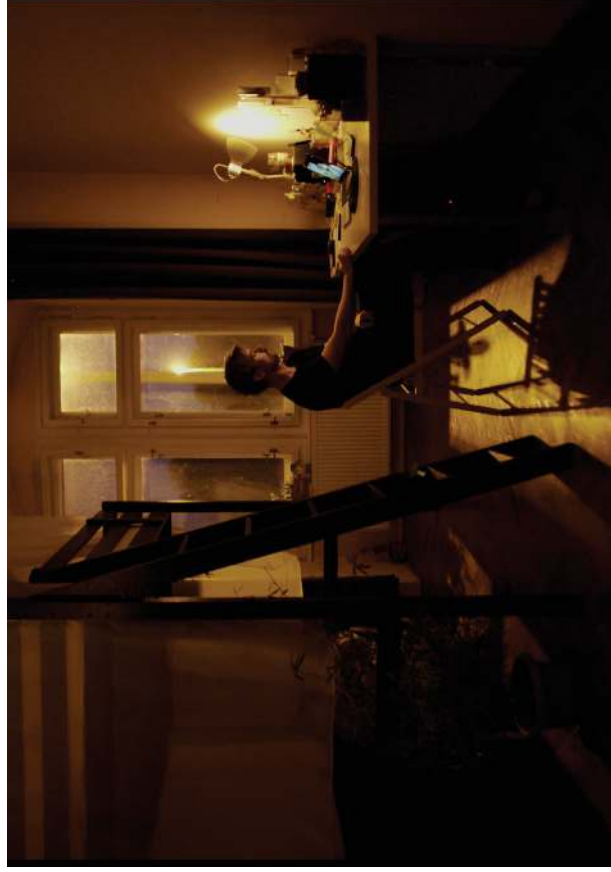
Frank Theys, *Milgram Rewoken*,  
2023, video stills



**Frank Theys** is a visual artist and filmmaker. His work often deals with new technological developments and how they influence our social structures and mindset. He explores scientific narratives and technical imaging across various disciplines such as live performance, experimental film, documentary and interactive-media installations. Recent work includes *Technocalyps*, a documentary series in which he explores truth and phantasmagoria within transhumanism; *Googly Moogly*, an action performance challenging Google's own privacy claims; and *Chronicle of an Extinction Foretold*, an interactive computer simulation in collaboration with the IPCC that visualises in one image how different aspects of climate change are expected to play out in the twenty-first century. His work has been awarded several international prizes and is in the collections of The Museum for the Moving Image, New York; the CNC French Film Archive, Paris; SMAK, Ghent; and M HKA, Antwerp, among others.

# A PRACTICE FOR SURRENDER, 2022

Tõnis Jürgens



Tõnis Jürgens, *A Practice for Surrender*,  
2022, video stills



**Tõnis Jürgens** is an artist and writer working in Tallinn, Estonia. He holds a BA in cultural theory from Tallinn University and an MA in new media from the Estonian Academy of Arts. He has also spent a year studying at the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague. Currently, he is a PhD candidate and guest lecturer at the Estonian Academy of Arts. His artistic research practice involves themes such as sleep surveillance, digital trash, and apophenia.

# VIEWS FROM THE BORDER, 2023

Reel Borders



What is the role of film in shaping border imagination, contestation, and experience? **Reel Borders** examines the interrelation of borders and film by focusing on three specific borderlands: the Irish border, the Ceuta and Melilla exclaves at the Spanish-Moroccan border, and the Turkish-Syrian border. This research project, based in the communication department at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and funded by the European Research Council, incorporates film and production analysis, expert interviews, cineforum, and participatory filmmaking, with short films created by 'borderlanders'.



Reel Borders, *Views From the Border*, 2023, video stills

**Irene Gutiérrez** is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and a PhD fellow at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and University Carlos III of Madrid. Her films and research address themes of borders, im/mobility, and migration through participatory filmmaking. As a filmmaker, she has directed *Border Diaries* (2013), *Hotel Nueva Isla* (2014), *Connected Walls* (2015), *Exile Diaries* (2019), and *Between Dog and Wolf* (2020).

**Silvia Almenara-Niebla** is a postdoctoral researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She obtained her PhD in gender and migration studies from Universidad de La Laguna, Spain in 2020. Her PhD research on transnational belonging and media practices among refugees won the doctoral prize. She is vice-chair of the Diaspora, Migration, and the Media section of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA).

**Kevin Smets** is an associate professor at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, where he teaches film history. He is co-director of the research group Echo: Media, Culture and Politics and coordinator of the project Reel Borders. He is a former member of the Young Academy of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts.

# IMAGES AND OBJECTS: RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE, 2023

Miglė Bareikytė & Natasha Klimenko



**Miglė Bareikytė** holds the Chair for Digital Studies at European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), where she is a dual member of the Faculty of Social and Cultural Sciences and the European New School of Digital Studies (ENS). Bareikytė was previously a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Siegen, in the Digital Media and Methods Team led by professor Carolin Gerlitz, where she worked on digital war sensing, media and data practices, media geopolitics, and algorithmic accountability. For many years, she has been researching digitalisation with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe.

**Natasha Klimenko** is a PhD researcher at the Graduate School Global Intellectual History at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her research looks at the transregional artist networks operating in Soviet Central Asia in the first half of the twentieth century, with a focus on the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

Collage by Natasha Klimenko, featuring photographs and paintings by Kateryna Lisovenko, Danylo Movchan, Mykola Homanyuk, and Denys Shatalov

# A FILM JAR, 2023

Ira A. Goryainova

**Ira A. Goryainova** is a film director, audiovisual artist, and researcher based in Brussels. The relationship between body, camera, screen, and spectator is her main area of interest, which she explores in essay- and montage films, video installations, and performances. Thematically her focus is on the body under extreme conditions—such as illness, death, and suffering—and how they can be read as political metaphors while still conveying explicit bodily, non-narrative meanings. Goryainova's work has been shown at IDFA, Hot Docs, Visions du Réel, Thessaloniki Film Festival, Airtocfest, Argos, Halle für Kunst Steiermark, ISELP, RIDM, Imagine Science Film Festival, Deutsches Theater Berlin, among others. Currently she is a postdoctoral researcher, as well as a hybrid and documentary film teacher at the Royal Institute for Theatre, Cinema and Sound (RITCS), Brussels.

Ira A. Goryainova, *A Film Jar*, 2023, video still



# 6 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME, 2023

Emilie Flower & Ana Bilbao



Emilie Flower & Ana Bilbao, *6 Minutes of Your Time*, 2023, video stills

**Emilie Flower** is an artist and filmmaker based at Pica studios in York. Since 2016 she has been a resident artist and coordinator of the international AHRC-funded research network exploring art, archives, and political imagination at the University of York. She is currently researching arts-based contributions to human rights and the art of political hope. Her most recent projects include *Arctivism*, *Pushing Back*, *Development Alternatives*, and *Creative Activism*. Flower also works in film design for theatre, art installations, and rights-based projects.

**Ana Bilbao** is a lecturer in modern and contemporary art in the history of art department at the University of York. Her research explores histories of exhibition-making and contemporary art, mainly from Southeast Asia and Latin America. She is currently interested in the intersection between art, human, and environmental rights from a decolonial perspective.

Bilbao and Flower are members of **Art Rights Truth (ART)**, a three-year interdisciplinary research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK and hosted by the Centre of Applied Human Rights at the University of York.

# TAGAERI AND TAROMENANE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE VERSUS THE ECUADORIAN STATE, 2023

Nina Valerie Kolowratnik



**Nina Valerie Kolowratnik** is an architect and a PhD candidate in law at the Human Rights Centre, Faculty of Law and Criminology at Ghent University. Her research focuses on Indigenous peoples' knowledge in human-rights courts and the impact of the evidentiary regime on access to justice and knowledge representation. She is part of the larger ERC-funded project DISSECT: Evidence in International Human Rights Adjudication. She holds an MSc in Critical, Curatorial, and Conceptual Practices in Architecture from Columbia University and a BSc and MSc in architecture from Graz University of Technology. Following her postgraduate studies, she founded a research and advocacy practice that develops spatial visualisation systems that operate as translational tools in the context of forced migration, cultural claims to territory, and Indigenous rights. She is the author of the book *The Language of Secret Proof: Indigenous Truth and Representation* (Sternberg Press, 2019) and she is currently in Ecuador for a year to conduct fieldwork for her PhD.

# EYES THE EARTH WILL SWALLOW, 2023

Dámaso Randulfe



Dámaso Randulfe, *Eyes the Earth Will Swallow*,  
2023, video stills

**Dámaso Randulfe** is an architect and artist based in London. Their work investigates the technologies, ecologies, and mythologies shaping contemporary ways of seeing and inhabiting the earth. They are an editor of *Migrant Journal*, a publication series on the spatial politics of more-than-human migrations, and a faculty member at the School of Architecture, Royal College of Art and the School of Art, Architecture, and Design, London Metropolitan University. Their work and various collaborative projects have been presented at the Oslo Architecture Triennale, Triennale de Milano, Index Biennial of Art and Technology, Design Museum, Tate Modern, and The Showroom. They are currently an AHRC-funded PhD candidate at the School of Architecture, Royal College of Art.



## RETREAT, 2020

Joeri Verbesselt



**Joeri Verbesselt** is an artist and researcher interested in ecological imagination and grounding the human-animal relationship. He works with many media including writing, films, and performances. Verbesselt published several essays and one short story. His short film *retreat* (2020) premiered at CPH:DOX, Copenhagen International Documentary Festival, and was shown internationally. Since 2019, his artistic research has been supported by a PhD in the arts with a bursary from the Research Foundation—Flanders (FWO). Verbesselt is a member of the Lieven Gevaert Research Centre for Photography, Art and Visual Culture (KU Leuven) and the artistic research collective 'deep histories fragile memories' (LUCA School of Arts). He is currently working between Belgium and Indigenous communities on the Pacific islands of Taiwan and Pongso no Tao.

Joeri Verbesselt, *retreat*,  
2020, video stills



# DOCTORAL SYMPOSIUM

Concluding the exhibition at PXL-MAD Gallery, the doctoral symposium brings together selected PhD candidates from Belgian universities and academies who responded to *Agents of Concern*'s open call. They will address the project's thematic concerns in relation to their ongoing research projects.

The opening lecture will be delivered by Maria Gil Uildemollins, postdoctoral researcher at Hasselt University. Following her talk, the first part of the symposium will explore the agency of images in shaping empathic encounters between viewers and human or non-human entities—be it other people, objects, gods, or insects. In the afternoon, the symposium's second part will foreground reflections on the situatedness and personal experiences of researchers, with contributors addressing their subjective relationship to the objects of their study.

# SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

FRIDAY  
DECEMBER 15  
09:00–17:00

PXL-MAD GALLERY  
ELFDE-LINIESTRAAT 25  
3500 HASSELT

09:00	REGISTRATION & COFFEE	
09:30	<i>The Finger Pointing at the Picture: Performative Iconology and the Empathy of Citational Images</i> Dr Maria Gil Uldemolins	
	<i>Empathy Beyond the Question of Deception: From Jagannath Images to Dalí's Paintings</i> Clarisse Michaux	
	<i>Irresistible Images and Sceptical Empathy</i> Toon Leën	
	COFFEE BREAK	
	<i>Teaching—An Empathic Play</i> Eline Valkeneers	
	<i>Elastic Encounter</i> Joery Erna	
12:45	LUNCH BREAK	

13:45 *Empathetically and Artistically Engaging  
with the Insect World*  
Charlotte Dorn

*Tiber: A Pulsional Portrait of Europe*  
Giovanna Caimmi

*Affective Frequencies: Human-Machine  
Sensory Performativity*  
Mona Hedayati

COFFEE BREAK

*Confessions of a Crypto-Memelord*  
Vincent Van Meenen

*Louise and Me. An Intimate Liaison  
An Exploration of the Empathic Dynamics  
between the Artist and Her Object of Study*  
Charlotte Vanhoubroeck

# THE FINGER POINTING AT THE PICTURE: PERFORMATIVE ICONOLOGY AND THE EMPATHY OF CITATIONAL IMAGES

Dr Maria Gil Ulldemolins  
Hasselt University

Inspired by Aby Warburg's seismographic approach to depictions of embodied emotion, this creative-critical lecture seeks to suggest the performative possibilities of iconology, creating a study that becomes self-aware of its own gesturality and position. An empathetic network of different agents (images, researchers, audiences, etc.) emerges. The seismographic ripples detected in different images speak of citational, and otherwise intermedial capacities for recognition and identification—of the pictures, and of the finger pointing at them, too.



Collage by Maria Gil Ulldemolins

# EMPATHY BEYOND THE QUESTION OF DECEPTION: FROM JAGANNATH IMAGES TO DALL-E'S PAINTINGS

Clarisse Michaux  
UCLouvain

The anthropologist Alfred Gell proposed treating the artwork as a person or as an element of a 'distributed person' as the most effective way to decolonise our theoretical understanding of the reception of artworks. Building on his work, I would like to discuss the connections between approaches considered 'primitive' in art and those prompted by recent cases of digitally generated artworks created by algorithmic intelligences. In images of Jagannath, as in virtual reality, the phenomenon of empathy becomes more complex. It is indeed a matter of treating the object as a person and therefore with empathy—without, however, being deceived about its origin.

**Clarisse Michaux** is a PhD candidate in the philosophy of art and aesthetics, and a member of the Center for Phenomenological Studies (CEP) at the Higher Institute of Philosophy at UCLouvain, Belgium. She is currently working on the concept of authority in art.



Shri Jagannath with Shri Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra  
© Sahu Felix, Wikimedia

# IRRESISTIBLE IMAGES AND SCEPTICAL EMPATHY

Toon Leën  
Hasselt University & PXL-MAD, School of Arts, Hasselt

This lecture performance explores how certain images lure viewers into misguided and inaccurate types of empathy. Focusing on the digital infrastructures that shape our outlook on world events, this talk compares a series of puzzling images that exemplify the entanglement of two categories: the cute and the horrible. Seeking to develop a sceptical empathy, this lecture will present unreliable yet potentially irresistible evidence to help understand the motives and ambitions of these dubious images.

**Toon Leën** studied painting at Sint Lucas Antwerp. His work moves between painting, video, and lecture performance. Recent projects include

the lecture performance *Personally, I'm Most Interested in the Shapes and Colours* and an accompanying artist book of the same name (published with MIER, Paper Kunsthal in 2015); the concert lecture *Correspondances mystérieuses*, in collaboration with pianist Lucas Blondeel (2019–21); the short video *Zwischen den Bildern* (2020) and numerous lecture performances. His work is represented by Fred&Ferry Gallery in Antwerp. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in artistic research at Hasselt University and PXL-MAD, School of Arts.

# TEACHING—AN EMPATHIC PLAY

Eline Valkeneers  
PXL-MAD, School of Arts, Hasselt

In this lecture I will explore the value of the physical presence of students and lecturers within the same room during the act of teaching. Furthermore, I will examine the notion of the school as a public space.

**Eline Valkeneers** is a part-time PhD researcher and a coordinator and teacher on the educational MA in the visual arts at PXL-MAD, School of Arts, Hasselt. After obtaining a diploma in pedagogical sciences, she started working at PXL-MAD, School of Arts, educating MA arts students to become artists-teachers. After more than ten years of teaching experience, the many interfaces and similarities between an artistic practice and a pedagogical practice prompted her to submit a doctoral proposal on the theme of 'Contemporary Views on 'the Formation' (in Dutch 'vorming') of Art Education.'

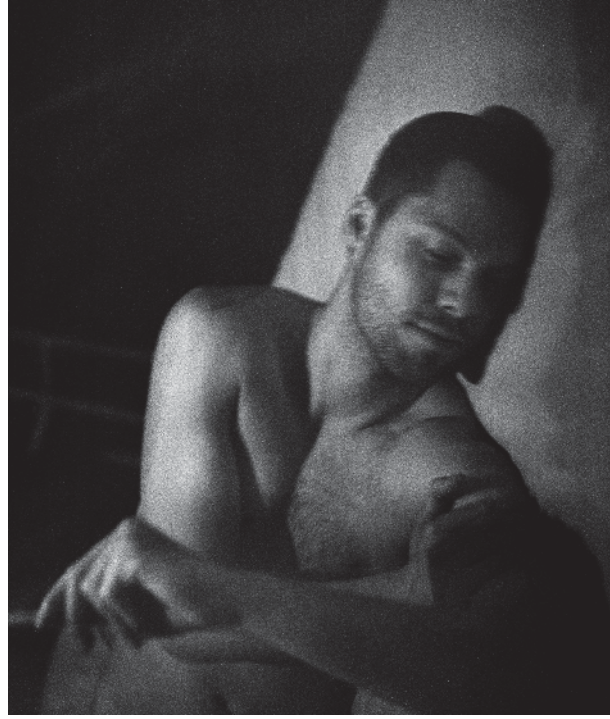


## ELASTIC ENCOUNTER

Joery Erna  
LUCA School of Arts

In this performative lecture, Joery Erna will create a dialogue between the audience and himself. Starting from the traces left by three of his works, which have all had an encounter with someone, Erna discusses the ability or inability to capture a network of feelings that occur when photographing, and questions in which way his practice can alter our relationship with others.

**Joery Erna** is a maker from Belgium focusing on photography, film, and sculpture. His work focuses on the elasticity of the photographic act. What does photography conjure for the ones involved—maker, subject, and viewer? What traces are left behind when we photograph? What is the nature of relations between the subject and the maker? His artistic practice is supported by a PhD at LUCA School of Arts. During his research, he meets makers from different fields in a series of iterative encounters to understand his own practice more completely. He is also active as chair and docent for the visual arts department at LUCA School of Arts.



Joery Erna, *Elastic*  
Encounter: *Bed Dialogues*

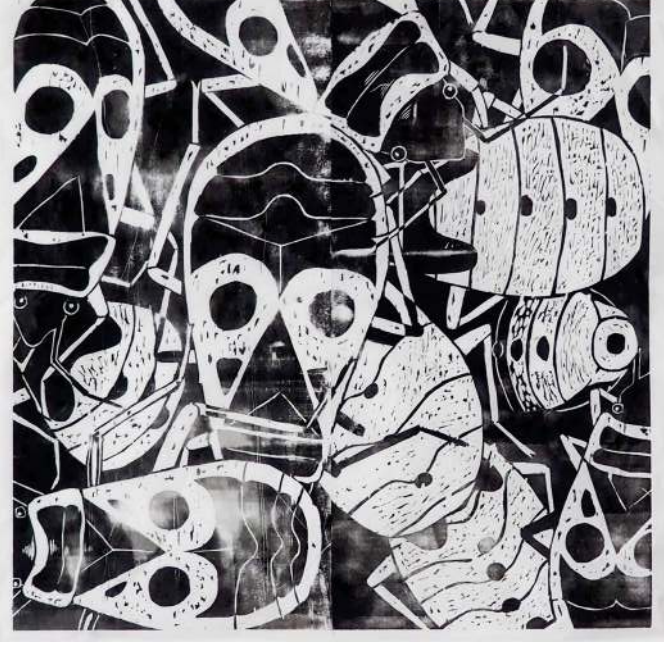
## EMPATHETICALLY AND ARTISTICALLY ENGAGING WITH THE INSECT WORLD

Charlotte Dorn  
LUCA School of Arts & KU Leuven

The video *Moments in a Firebug's Life* addresses visual strategies to increase viewers' emotional involvement with other-than-human animals through animated storytelling. The short animation will be accompanied by a reflection on artistic strategies to increase empathy for the other-than-human being. The film narrates a story around an insect's life because these beings are often viewed or encountered with disgust. Giving visibility to the microcosms that exist at the level of our feet increases the attention we give to our environment.

**Charlotte Dorn** is an artist and researcher living in Brussels. She is currently completing an artistic PhD at LUCA School of Arts and KU Leuven. Her work mainly consists of printmaking and installations. Her aim is to create works that increase the empathic engagement for and consideration of other-than-human animals. She investigates ways of making sense of other-than-human beings through art and integrates environmental awareness in the creative process. She also teaches art at the European School Brussels I.

Charlotte Dorn,  
*Moments in a Firebug's Life*



# TIBER: A PULSIONAL PORTRAIT OF EUROPE

Giovanna Caimmi  
Accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna  
& PXL-MAD, School of Arts, Hasselt

Last year a friend lent me a book about the *Deutschrömer*, German artists who came to Rome in the early-nineteenth century. Opening it, I found a photocopied article about an album of drawings by the Swiss engraver Samuel Amsler, which contained thirty-three portraits of these young artists depicting refined intelligent faces. I immediately empathised with these forgotten artists, and began making a series of polaroids and drawings to bring them into the here and now, creating a cartography of their restless travels as a pulsional portrait of Europe.

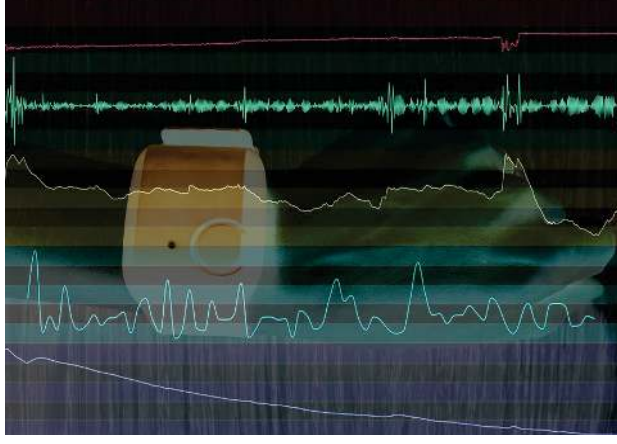


**Giovanna Caimmi** is a second-year PhD student at PXL-MAD, School of Arts, Hasselt. She graduated with honors from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna. From 2020 to 2022, she was the coordinator of painting at the department of visual arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, where she was also a professor in the department of visual arts since 1991. From 2013 to 2016, she was a member of the board of directors of the Zucchelli Foundation, where she started curating exhibitions of young artists. She has given numerous public lectures in Italy and abroad. As an independent artist, she has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in galleries and museums in Italy and abroad.

Giovanna Caimmi, *Tiber*, 2022–23

# AFFECTIVE FREQUENCIES: HUMAN-MACHINE SENSORY PERFORMATIVITY

Mona Hedayati  
Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (ARIA)  
& Concordia University, Montreal



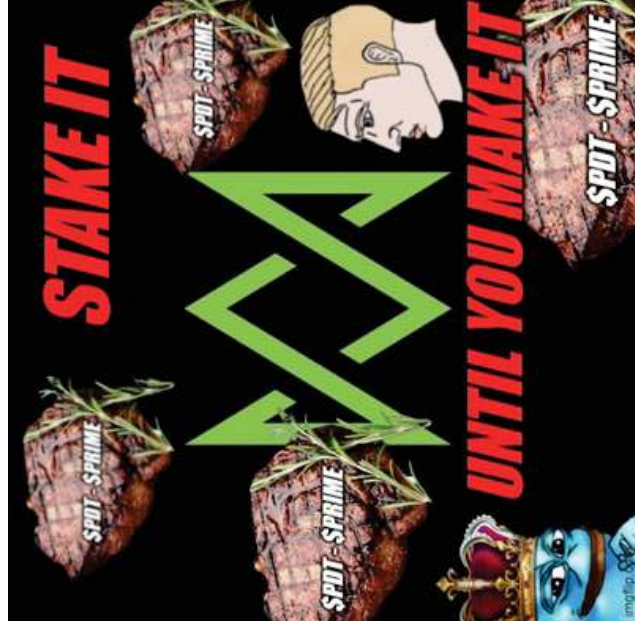
This talk will outline my doctoral trajectory centred on performative experiments as a way to communicate my lived experience of migration and exile through sensory registers rather than traditional narration. As such, sound became my sensory medium of choice as I increasingly became familiar with its affective properties as a precognitive force. From obscuring the narrative voice to repetition and modulation and tapping into embodied registers by integrating breathing patterns, I have designed these experiments with the aim of confronting the audience with the complexity of affective residues tied to my multifaceted psycho-physiological states without reducing them into cognisable frameworks.

**Mona Hedayati** is an Iranian-Canadian artist-researcher and a joint PhD candidate in interdisciplinary humanities at Concordia University, Canada and the digital arts doctorate at Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts. Her interdisciplinary research-creation draws on computation arts, sound design, and sensory studies. She has a BA in translation studies, an MFA in digital media, and an advanced MA in social-political art and design. Hedayati has been awarded the prestigious Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grants for her MA and doctoral research. She has exhibited and presented her work across Canada and internationally at institutions such as Slade School of Fine Arts, University of Manchester's Whitworth Gallery and University of St Andrews in the UK; Trinity College, Ireland; Kunsthal Extra City, Belgium; and Agnes Etherington Art Center in Canada. Most recently she has been invited to present at Bauhaus University Weimar, Germany and Ars Electronica Festival in Linz, Austria.

# CONFESSIONS OF A CRYPTO-MEMELORD

Vincent Van Meenen  
Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (ARIA)

During the beginning of the 2021 crypto bear market, I was working as a memelord for two different crypto-communities, work that I got paid for in specific tokens. In this lecture-presentation I will share my experiences, reflect on the nature of the memes that are being used in these communities, as well as the bias and worldviews they convey. Finally, I will connect crypto memes to my broader research into surrealist creation methods.



**Vincent Van Meenen** is a PhD candidate in surrealist creation methods at the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts. He is also the prize-winning author of five Dutch novels and an illustrated collection of poetry. He is the author of *EU* (Track Report, 2021), the first Dutch novel to be published as a NFT. His most recent novel *OxBilxa* (Das Mag, 2023) is centred on the Cryptoverse. He has written about contemporary artists and their methods for the Belgian art magazine *HART* and he worked as a theatre-maker in Athens and Belgium.

© Vincent Van Meenen

# LOUISE AND ME. AN INTIMATE LIAISON. AN EXPLORATION OF THE EMPATHIC DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE ARTIST AND HER OBJECT OF STUDY

Charlotte Vanhoubroeck  
Hasselt University & PXL-MAD, School of Arts, Hasselt

As part of my doctoral research in the arts I am investigating and reactivating the lost sentimental jewellery of Louise-Marie d'Orléans, the first queen of Belgium. During the course of this research, I realised that my work not only derives from art historical research, but also springs from a sense of empathy I foster for Louise. Did she become a friend, an obsession? Do I use her as a mirror, a soul-searching tool? And what am I to her? Curious about how this emotional interplay between us manifests itself, I will try to reveal and define the nature of this liaison.

**Charlotte Vanhoubroeck** is an artist, jeweller, and art historian who brings gradually fading heritage back to life via contemporary art. After graduating from Ghent University, she was trained at d'Academie Sint-Niklaas, Belgium; Bishopsland Educational Trust in the UK; and at PXL-MAD, School of Arts. She is currently conducting a PhD in the arts at Hasselt University and PXL-MAD. Vanhoubroeck's 'Stilled Sentiments' collection has made her the VOCATIO Laureate 2020, was awarded a commendation for the BVK-Preis 2021 für Junges Kunsthandwerk 2021, and has won the Preziosa Young Prize 2021, the LAO Prize 2022, and the Inhorgenta Special Prize 2022.



Charlotte Vanhoubroeck, Collage N° 37



# EXHIBITION II

CULTUURCENTRUM  
HASSELT (CCHA)  
KUNSTLAAN 5  
3500 HASSELT

NOVEMBER 26, 2023–  
JANUARY 28, 2024

EXHIBITION OPENING:  
SUNDAY NOVEMBER 26, 15:00

VISITING HOURS:  
TUESDAY–SUNDAY, 13:00–17:00  
AND DURING EVENING PERFORMANCES

This exhibition, initiated by the FRAME research unit *Image Thinking*, expands the scope of *Agents of Concern* by focusing on photography and the still image. It examines how stillness can invite an empathic gaze, and how empathy can come about through the encounter with a work of art. Featuring artworks by Jeroen Bocken, Dirk Braeckman, Tom Callemin, David Claerbout, Annelies de Mey, Geert Goiris, Tine Guns, Robin Hombrouck, Vincent Meessen, Max Pinckers, Lisa Schelkens, Dominique Somers, Lore Stessel, Guus Vandeweerd, Sybren Van Overberghe, Bram Van Stappen, Joselito Verschaeve, Aline Verstraten, Kristof Vrancken, and others.



Geert Goiris, *Whiteout #22 (Ganzfeld)*, 2008.  
Courtesy of Geert Goiris and Galerie Art:Concept, Paris

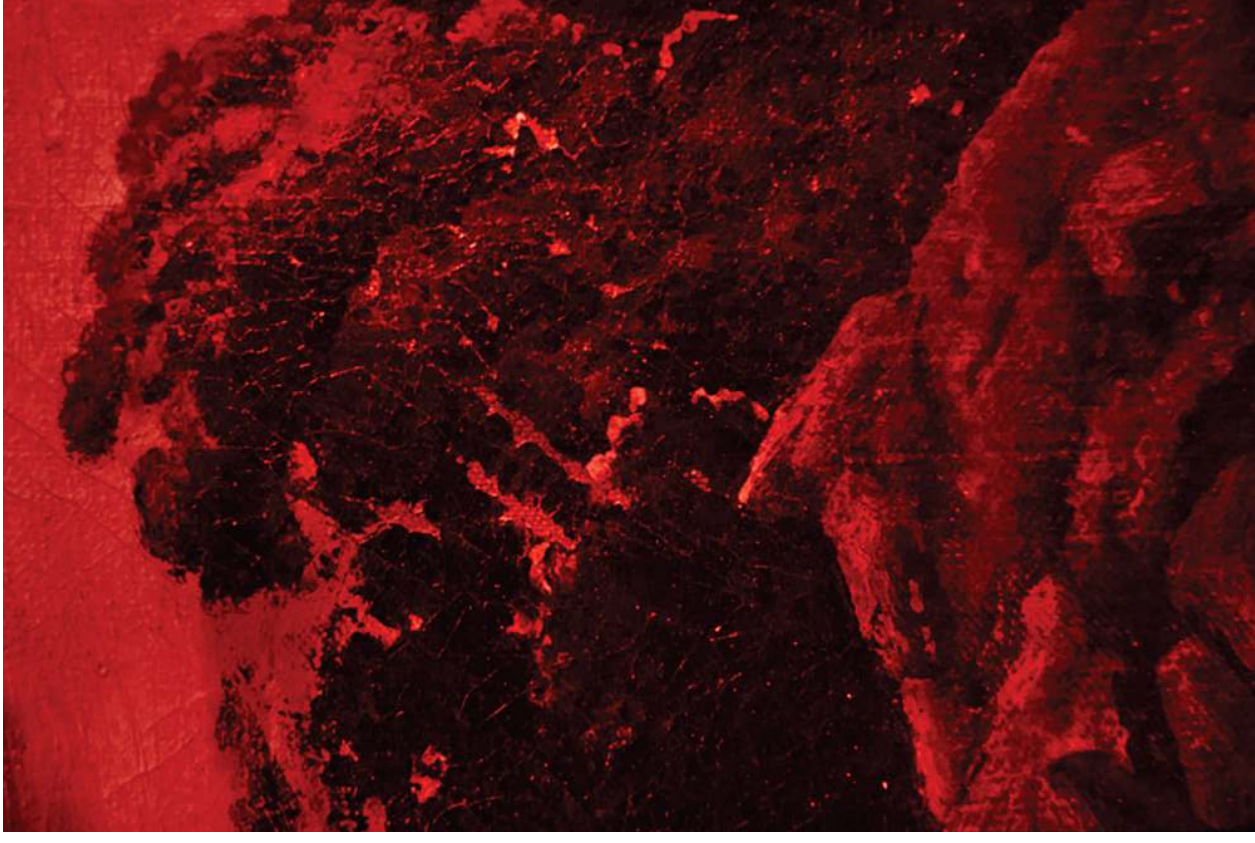


Tom Callemin, *Starling (tonic immobility)*, 2022.  
Courtesy of Tom Callemin and tegenboschvanvreden, Amsterdam



Max Pinckers, *As in a Dark Mirror*, from the series *Margins of Excess*, 2018. Courtesy of Max Pinckers and Gallery Sofie Van de Velde

Dirk Braeckman, *T.H.-R.P.-23*.  
Courtesy of Dirk Braeckman, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp,  
GRIMM Amsterdam | New York and Galerie Thomas Fischer, Berlin



## Colophon

Project initiative and conference coordinator: Toon Leën

Exhibition curators PXL-MAD: Toon Leën, Pieter Vermeulen

Exhibition curators CCHA: Patrick Ceyskens, Dominique Somers

Selection committee: Patrick Ceyskens, Tom Lambeens, Toon Leën, Barbara Roosen, Carla Swerts, Pieter Vermeulen, Aline Verstraten

Graphic design of cover image and open call: Ann Bessemans

Graphic design of posters and brochure: Niel Backx

Copy editor: Isabella Ritchie

Project assistance (internship): Zainab Zahid

Audiovisual technique for the exhibition at PXL-MAD: Christophe Leunis, Vertigo

Audiovisual recording of the conference: Ludo Motmans, PXL Digital Learning Lab

Instagram campaign: Zainab Zahid, Aline Verstraten, Niel Backx, Lotte Priemen, Boo Neven, Julie Smids, Laure Fels

Project administration: Ruth Sleurs, Karolien Bullens

This project is organised within the research unit *Image Thinking* (coordinated by Patrick Ceyskens), which is part of the research group FRAME at PXL-MAD, School of Arts and Hasselt University (coordinated by Bert Willems (PXL-MAD) and Inge Lens (Hasselt University)), in collaboration with KRIEG? and CCHA.

The project is made possible with support from the Flemish Government, Doctoral Schools, M HKA and VDB.

[www.agentsofconcern.com](http://www.agentsofconcern.com)

