

See also www.konfigurationen-des-films.de/en for updates concerning the conference.

Call for Papers – International Conference

Moving Image Remains: On the Refusal to Disappear

January 29 – 31, 2026

Goethe University Frankfurt (Campus Westend)

Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Organized by the DFG Research Training Group 2279 "Configurations of Film"

Absence dictates what we know, presence what we forget. In the realm of film and media the rediscovery of neglected fragments, traces of unfinished projects and suppressed narratives offer a powerful means for unsettling dominant accounts. For instance, early cinema materials long suggested an absence of Black intimacies on screen. In 2017, however, a nitrate print was discovered at the University of Southern California's film archive. The 1898 short film features what is now supposed to be the first on-screen kiss between African American performers. As film historian Allyson Nadia Field's work on this discovery demonstrates, such reappearances can initiate an evidence-based speculative retelling of film history and shed a new light on archival absences (Allyson Nadia Field 2021 & 2022). Interventions like this reveal how what remains can resist disappearance, haunting and disrupting dominant narratives while demanding accountability. It invites us to think of absence as something in flux rather than absolute—a site of action and insistence, setting the stage for broader conversations about the im\material politics of remaining.

We aim to explore the refusal to disappear in the light of recent studies and interventions that engage with fragmented or untold stories, particularly in the current context of democracies, science, and minorities under threat—and with them, historiography itself. Our discussion seeks to uncover new perspectives to look at incomplete and undone film projects to revalue them for their possibilities (Alix Beeston & Stefan Solomon 2023; Philip Widmann 2024). Remains prove to be disruptive, contributing to efforts to de-canonize histories and unsettle linear temporalities—spanning various transmedial, neo-materialist, and environmental approaches in film and media studies.

Flickering between legibility and distortion, what remains generates interference—where absence becomes a mode of communication, where silence speaks volumes. The figure of remains enables an im\material connection with unresolved pasts. Absences and omissions haunt us as marginal histories risk being lost. Thus, remains demand a "something-to-be-done" (Avery Gordon 1997), as resistance, counter-archiving, and artistic practice. We understand remaining as a political act, through which the agency of both the living and the supposedly dead unfolds.

Answering the call to do something, *Moving Image Remains: On the Refusal to Disappear* invites contributions to engage with the interplay between persistence and disappearance across film and media, as well as archival, activist, artistic, curatorial practices and other fields. We welcome proposals that address (but are not limited to) the following topics:

Resistance to Remain: How do certain materials resist preservation or inherently decay, as if refusing to remain? What does this resistance reveal about their nature, agency, or the environmental and cultural forces acting upon them?

Absence and Memory: What remains when something is physically absent? Which agents—oral histories, traumas, or memories—mediate and transmit these absences?

Haunted Archives: How can gaps and silences in archives—understood as a physical space or commemorative practice—be understood through haunting? What persists in the ephemeral and the fragmented?

Afterimages: What comes after the image is gone? How do afterimages, as residues of what has been, circulate and challenge us?

Material Disruptions: How do glitches, cinema formats, and other material traces disrupt the audio-visual experience? What do these imprints reveal about mediation and perception?

Media Witnessing: From decay (e.g., vinegar syndrome) to environmental and institutional imprints, how does the materiality of film itself haunt as a witness to time and interaction?

Political Dimensions of Remaining: How do archival practices and artistic restorations create a dialogue between historical fragments and contemporary activism?

Spectral Urgency: How do archival practices, restorations, or remixes enact a call and response between historical fragments and contemporary interventions? How do ghosts, phantoms, and spectres embody the temporal complexity of remaining and signal that action is needed?

With *Configurations of Film's* final conference we want to draw attention to what is often dismissed and marginalized, we especially welcome scholars, artists or activists from queer, feminist, postcolonial, BIPOC and non-theatrical perspectives engaging with fragmented, peripheral and neglected materials.

Please send abstracts (max. 300 words) and a brief biographical note (max. 150 words) to **remains.conf[at]gmail.com** by **July 27, 2025**. Applicants will be notified of acceptance by September.

To make this conference as inclusive as possible we have set aside funds for travel grants for graduate students and precariously employed (part time on limited contract) or currently unemployed scholars. Please contact us if you have any further needs we can address, i.e. accessibility questions. More information about the application process for travel grants will be sent out with the acceptance notifications. See also www.konfigurationen-des-films.de/en for updates concerning the conference.

Conference Committee:

Viktoria Elizarova, Dennis Hippe, Katharina Jost, Lisa Le Anh, Nils Meyn, Simone Nowicki



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Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation