

MOVING IMAGE REMAINS: ON THE REFUSAL TO DISAPPEAR

International Conference

January 29–31, 2026. Goethe-University Campus, Frankfurt

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. The international conference *Moving Image Remains: On the Refusal to Disappear* explores how material and immaterial remnants of film and media challenge dominant narratives and temporalities. Engaging with ghosted histories, unfinished projects, and marginal perspectives, the event examines the politics of remaining across archival, cinematic, and aesthetic practices. It brings together scholars, artists, curators, and activists to discuss how traces, absences, and afterlives of the moving image shape our understanding of media history and cultural memory. The conference is hosted by the DFG Research Training Group *Configurations of Film* in collaboration with partner institutions.

Registration (opened until 14 January 2026):

<https://forms.gle/hezvvtA1wpWGAhX6>

SCHEDULE

Wednesday, January 28

19:30 Pre-Conference Event. Screening at *naxos.Kino* – **Incomplete Lives, Lost Memories**

Thursday, January 29

10:30 – 11:00 Arrival and Registration, *Trude Simonsohn und Irmgard Heydorn-Saal*

11:15 – 12:00 Opening Remarks and Thanks

12:00 – 13:30 **Panel 1: Spectral Urgencies**

13:30 – 15:00 Lunch & Coffee Break

15:00 – 16:30 **Panel 2: Transient Circulations**

16:30 – 17:30 Break and Location Change

17:30 – 19:30 Special Guest Presentation at *Mal Seh'n Kino* Alison Griffiths – **The Perceptual Salience of Coal Mining Disaster Imagery: Atmosphere, Affect, and Absence**

Friday, January 30

9:30 – 10:00 Arrival and Coffee, *Trude Simonsohn und Irmgard Heydorn-Saal*

10:00 – 11:00 **Panel 3: Sites of Resistance**

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

11:30 – 13:00 **Panel 4: Reviving Archives**

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch & Coffee Break (Mensa)

14:30 – 15:30 **Panel 5: Mining Materialities**

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break

16:00 – 18:00 Break

18:00 – 20:30 Special Guest Presentation at *Orfeos Erben*: Bliss Cua Lim – **A Colonial Heroine's Decolonial Choice: Sonic Speculation in Giliw Ko**

Saturday, January 31

9:30 – 10:00 Arrival and Coffee, *Trude Simonsohn und Irmgard Heydorn-Saal*

10:00 – 12:00 Special Guest Presentation: Rosa Menkman - **Methods of Artistic Inquiry**

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch & Coffee Break

13:30 – 15:00 **Panel 6: Unresolved Histories**

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee Break

15:30 – 16:30 Wrap-up, Thanks, and Closing Remarks

PROGRAMME

Wednesday, January 28

19:30 Pre-Conference Event Screening at *naxos.Kino* – **Incomplete Lives, Lost Memories**

Introduction: Katharina Jost (Goethe University Frankfurt), Nils Meyn (Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz)

Neither images nor memories refuse to disappear. At this pre-conference event, we'll be screening two recent documentary films that instantiate the theme driving the conference in the days to follow. Both films are constructed from archival materials, engaging with deeply personal biographies while addressing complex questions of race and queerness, family and home. *Lloyd Wong, Unfinished* reflects on an incomplete project by video artist Lloyd Wong, a Chinese-Canadian gay man whose experiences of living with AIDS in the 1990s were both central to his project and, ultimately, the cause of its incompleteness. In *La photo retrouvée*, director Pierre Primetens grapples with his childhood memories spanning France and Portugal, retelling a family history marked by the erasure of the mother. With almost all family pictures vanished or destroyed, the film turns to home movies and amateur footage from others to reach the emotional core of those lost memories.

Lloyd Wong, Unfinished (Canada 2025 | Director, Producer, Writer: Lesley Loksi Chan | 29 min)

La photo retrouvée (France 2024 | Director, Writer: Pierre Primetens | 76 min)

Thursday, January 29

10:30 – 11:00 Arrival and Registration, *Trude Simonsohn und Irmgard Heydorn-Saal*

11:15 – 12:00 Opening Remarks and Thanks

12:00 – 13:30 Panel 1: Spectral Urgencies

Moderation: Marie Malina (Goethe University Frankfurt)

François Yazbeck (Aalto University) – **The Afterlife of Memory on Screen: Postmemory and Erasure**

This talk explores the afterlife of memory on screen through the occult in cultural and historical ruptures, facing catastrophes. Drawing from my ongoing film *Versets Sombres*, I reflect on how visceral cinema can conjure the spectral remains of erased histories in Lebanon, where postmemory is reanimated, rather than retrieved. This presentation explores how visceral cinema can mobilize

postmemory as a form of counter-memory to confront these historical erasures. Through tactile and somatic aesthetics, postmemory on screen operates beyond representation, by crystallizing a liminal world, to breathe from beneath the ruins, causing cracks on the surface of national myths. I reflect on how inherited fragments can be activated cinematically to resist narrative erasure. The moving image acts as a medium of necromancy, a spectral resistance, giving a new ontological form to what no longer lives.

Josefine Hetterich (Gutenberg University Mainz) – **AIDS Media's Moving Afterlives: Memory, Vulnerability, Solidarity**

This paper explores how the afterlives of AIDS activist media resonate within contemporary memory cultures and social movements, focusing particularly on Palestine solidarity activism in the wake of October 7th, 2023. Drawing on my broader conceptual framework of remembering queer futures, I examine how the moving image remains of AIDS media are remembered and reused to reanimate activist aspirations of the past. Focusing on videos such as *Voices from the Front* (1991) and contemporary protests that repurpose ACT UP slogans, images, and actions in solidarity with Gaza, I argue that these afterlives model a form of memory that is neither strictly commemorative nor nostalgic. Instead, they foster what Avery Gordon terms a "something-to-be-done," animating co-resistance through shared vulnerability and mourning, in contrast to securitized, homonationalist memory forms like Leo Herrera's *The Fathers Project* (2018–2020).

Miguel Errazu (Goldsmiths, University of London) – **Reconsidering Reactivation: Bolivian Film Archives and Spectral Hope**

In 1983, a mining camp in South Potosí, Bolivia, hosted a film workshop aimed at training young miners in direct cinema. Organized by the Trade Union Federation of Bolivian Mineworkers and the French Association Varan, the initiative produced thirteen films. However, plans to consolidate the workshop soon vanished when neoliberal reforms dismantled Bolivia's state-run mining sector in 1985. As massive lay-offs forced the relocation of mining communities, the films were scattered and neglected. This presentation is part of a research project dedicated to the study and restitution of these films, which were recently located at the offices of Ateliers Varan and the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel in Paris. By returning them to their contexts of production, the images resurface as embodied ghosts of personal, cinematic, and social traumas tied to neoliberal violence and spectral hope. This return compels reflection on the political dimensions of remaining and the multilayered meanings of "reactivation."

13:30 – 15:00 Lunch & Coffee Break

15:00 – 16:30 Panel 2: Transient Circulations

Moderation: Simon Schiller (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Joia Duskic (University of California, Los Angeles) – **NicheTube Archives: The Afterlives of Francophone Caribbean Carnival Broadcasts**

In the urban spaces of the Francophone Caribbean, carnival performances occupy a paradoxical position—both fleeting and hyper-mediated. Once experienced as embodied and time-bound, carnival is now increasingly archived through digital platforms. Public broadcasters such as Canal 10 Télévision (Guadeloupe), Kanal Martinique Télévision, and Radio Télévision Nationale d'Haïti upload hours of processional performances and crowd reactions to YouTube, transforming local events into globally accessible archives.

These seemingly raw, uncurated recordings signal a shift from institutional documentation to participatory, transnational digital circulation. As digital remains, they form layered memory objects where immediacy and historical visibility coexist. Consumed as snippets—clicked, excerpted, or algorithmically recombined—they produce collage-like reanimations of carnival. Yet, despite their abundance, most remain barely viewed or discussed. This “NicheTube” visibility positions them as counter-archives, where unstable, multilingual fields of cultural memory are continually reactivated through the platform’s dynamic, participatory interfaces.

Silpa Mukherjee (University of California, San Diego) – **Intimacies of a Contraband Corridor: The Contingent Presence of Arab Dancing Actresses in Bombay**

A contraband corridor between South Asia and the Middle East enabled a cine-crime nexus in 1980s Bombay. Many Middle Eastern dancing actresses—fleetingly mentioned in historical records—traveled this corridor alongside merchants, mules, and maids, dissolving into the documentlessness of Bombay cinema. Their movements embodied the corridor’s material traces, both through literal border crossings and fragmented onscreen gestures. Centering on one such figure, the immigrant dancing-actress Jezebel, this presentation examines her status as an “open body” subjected to techno-cultural violations: the editor’s cuts, the projectionist’s splicing, the body double’s camouflage, and the publicist’s erasure. Her flickering presence exposes how interracial capital and fantasy sustained Bombay cinema’s visual economy. The technological materiality of her body provokes an open-ended inquiry that travels between a difficult present and an unfinished past, approaching relays of illicit desires and movement between South Asia and the Middle East, aslant and materially.

Bindu Menon Mannil (Azim Premji University Bengaluru)– **Persistent Frames: The Material Afterlives of Migrant Films in Doha (1970-2025)**

This paper traces the material and epistemic afterlives of underexamined South Asian migrant film archives in Qatar since the 1970s. It explores how accessible video technology, petrochemical proximity, and a laissez-faire economy enabled South Asian immigrants to pioneer informal film production despite the region’s

limited media infrastructure. Focusing on restored films by Keralite migrant filmmakers—*Kaanamarayathu / Beyond Sight* (Orma Collective, 1987), *Pepsi Cola Bottling Unit* (A.V. M. Unni, 1984), and *Talal Mansour* (M.A. Rahman, 1989)—the study examines how restoration processes reveal tensions between presence, absence, and decay in migrant film history. Against the grain of absent official archives, in India and the Gulf region, migrants have inscribed their own histories and those of the Gulf cities through the subjective capacities of collectors, curators and media creators, redressing absences. I will explore how these dynamic infrastructures of preserving affords regenerative new geography and conceptual space for theorising migration.

16:30 – 17:30 Break and Location Change

17:30 – 19:30 Special Guest Presentation at *Mal Seh'n Kino*

Alison Griffiths (Baruch College, City University of New York) – **The Perceptual Salience of Coal Mining Disaster Imagery: Atmosphere, Affect, and Absence**

Moderation: Dennis Hippe (Goethe University Frankfurt)

My presentation explores the perceptual salience and transitive status of still and moving images of extraction made at the height of coal production in the industrialized valleys of South Wales in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Perceptual salience is a useful conceptual container for the ontological challenges presented by extraction and its relationship to media. Drawing upon Macarena Gómez-Barris's concept of the "systems of intelligibility" of the extractive zone, I am interested in the challenge extraction poses to representation and how coal mining media render fossil capitalism intelligible, epistemically and affectively. Through an examination of postcards, newsreels, and early fiction films, I explore how colliery surface imagery functions as "registering devices" for the immiseration of extraction, testifying to the trauma of a specific historical event but through such visual tropes as the crowd and vertical occlusion, grandiloquent to the broader human costs of carbon capitalism.

Friday, January 30

9:30 – 10:00 Arrival and Coffee, Trude Simonsohn und Irmgard Heydorn-Saal

10:00 – 11:00 Panel 3: Sites of Resistance

Moderation: Maren Feller (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Esra Çelikoğlu (TED University, Ankara) & Melis Acar (METU, Ankara) – **Hidden Spaces, Queer Lives: Ankara's Adult Movie Theaters as Sites of Resistance**

In the late 1970s, a cluster of cinemas, once located along İzmir Street and the Maltepe–Demirtepe axis in Ankara, shifted from mainstream neighborhood theaters to marginal, adult cinemas. The talk approaches this transformation through the lens of queer spatiality: as a reconfiguration of architectural intimacy shaped by regulation, censorship, and changing norms. Through archival research and fieldwork, it documents the traces of these cinemas—their recessed

entrances, sunken interiors, stairwells, passages, and bridge undercrofts—which together formed a geography of controlled visibility. Understanding architecture as a “viewing mechanism” (Beatriz Colomina 1992), the talk argues that these theaters operated as queer infrastructures where desire was structured by concealment and partial exposure. While obscured in Ankara’s official histories, the cinemas’ persistence reveals an alternative urban genealogy grounded in non-normative uses of space that complicate neat divides between public and private, center and periphery. These venues remain vital components of Ankara’s architectural and affective history.

Antonio López (Stanford University) – **Don’t Nobody Tell Me to Keep Quiet: Sound, Memory, and the Refusal to Disappear in Whiskey Gulch**

This paper listens to the sonic afterlives of Whiskey Gulch, a once-thriving Black and Brown commercial corridor in East Palo Alto, California. Demolished in 2000 under the banner of “redevelopment,” Whiskey Gulch became a microcosm of Silicon Valley’s racialized spatial politics. Drawing on archival film, oral histories, and community performance, the talk treats sound as social infrastructure—a means of being together and sustaining belonging amid erasure. Through the echoes of laughter, protest, and vernacular noise that survive in *Over the Ramp*, a digital film archive created by local filmmaker Michael Levin documenting East Palo Alto’s redevelopment, it explores how listening can function as both method and memorial. The paper frames sound as a critical entry point into the racial afterlives of urban renewal—a site of refusal that preserves the memory of a place redevelopment sought to silence.

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

11:30 – 13:00 Panel 4: Reviving Archives

Moderation: Victoria Elizarova (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Xin Zhou (Concordia University, Montreal) – **Corn, Peanuts, Garlic, and Film Objects: Media Rurality and the Post-Socialist Archive**

This paper investigates the material and epistemological afterlives of China’s science and education film, a genre once central to socialist media infrastructure but now largely absent from public memory. Produced by state studios from the 1950s to the 1980s, these films translated socialist modernity into vernacular forms for rural and illiterate audiences. Their faded visibility reflects broader media transformations, such as displacement by algorithmic platforms and digital infrastructures. Rather than recovering a lost archive, this research reframes the “post-socialist archive” as a site of decay and informal reanimation. Fieldwork in a Henan village reveals how rural migrants, once part of China’s informal recycling sector, circulate analog film prints through platforms like Xianyu. Barns and granaries become unlikely repositories where film reels rest beside sacks of garlic and corn. This dispersed archive, part debris, part commodity, rethinks media obsolescence and reframes the archive as a living economy of exchange and material memory.

Jane Hwang (Berlin) – **Sonic Relics: The Moving Image as a Medium for Listening to Archival Silence**

“Sonic Relics” confronts the absence of moving images through a rare Korean audio recording from the WWI era, held in Berlin’s archive. The archive primarily contains voices of prisoners of war, including Koreans serving in the Russian army captured by Germans, whose recordings remain largely inaccessible today. This project treats the sonic artifact itself as a ‘remain,’ evoking lost presence and spatiality. Combining media archeology with practice-based research, the artistic approach engages the recording’s material journey and inherent silences. Developed through collaboration with a choreographer, the moving body becomes a primary medium, translating sonic traces into gestures. This project examines how newly created moving images act as ‘remain’ themselves, generated from sonic fragments and addressing the unavoidable gaps within the archive.

Oleksandr Teliuk (Queen Mary University of London) – **Flower on the Stone: Ukrainian Soviet Film Stock and the Traces of a Repressed Past**

Drawing on Benjamin's metaphor of "traces" (1936), this paper speculates that the history of film stock can challenge the unified and often colonial cinematic narratives. The core example of the research is the case of the Ukrainian Soviet film stock, manufactured by Factory No. 6, located in Shostka (now Sumy oblast, Ukraine), which was founded in 1931. This case reveals not only cinematic and industrial historical narratives but also multiple contradictions: the substitution of indigenous Ukrainian histories by homogenizing Soviet ones; the intensive yet obscured links between cinema and military industries; and the latent "geological" potential of film as a medium (Lovejoy 2019). This case offers the moving image archival strategy, which is designed not around film titles but the unique film copies with their particular provenance and material meaning.

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch & Coffee Break (Mensa)

14:30 – 15:30 Panel 5: Mining Materialities

Moderation: Sophia Gräfe (Humboldt University Berlin)

Andrea Bordoli (University of Bern/McGill University) – **Ethnographic Haziness and the Moving Image: Analogue Traces from Subarctic Québec**

In the subarctic mining town of Schefferville and the adjacent Innu community of Matimekush–Lac John, extraction produces atmospheric and visual residues. Working with 16mm analogue film, this paper explores how these inner and outer traces inscribe themselves onto both landscape and vision. Dust – a persistent local concern – infiltrates eyes and camera, embedding itself in the image-making process. The resulting footage, often blurry, scarred, or irregularly exposed, becomes both an aesthetic surface and a raw, personal archive that registers environmental and infrastructural violence. This paper proposes thinking with perceptual uncertainty, ethnographic haziness, and material contamination to question dominant representations of extractive environments. Rather than seeking clarity, it approaches the moving image as an analogue remain, inviting

reflection on how certain kinds of images hold an openness towards fragile ecologies and unexpected, experiential understandings of this specific landscape of extraction.

Hannah Goodwin (Mount Holyoke College) – **Ghost Towns and Deep Time Hauntings in the Coal Mines of East German Cinema**

How does deep time history, preserved in the strata of the earth and churned up by mining, interact with the image afterlives of cinema? Here, I draw on recent work on deep time and geology in media studies to analyze the 1990 DEFA films *Abschiedsdisco* (dir. Rolf Losansky) and *Schmerzen der Lausitz* (dir. Peter Rocha), exploring how both films' dramatic images of the Lusatian landscape being turned into barren coal mines inflect their hauntological engagements with German history. In *Schmerzen*, the destruction of the landscape for mining echoes the demise of the region's Sorbian culture, and the landscape becomes a space of ancestral haunting. In *Abschiedsdisco*, a teenager's journey to a condemned village-turned-mining site is haunted by invocations of Nazism on the one hand and environmental destruction and resurfaced coal on the other. In both cases, film gives uneasy afterlives to the species, people, and places of entangled pasts.

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break

16:00 – 18:00 Break

18:00 – 20:30 Special Guest Presentation at *Orfeos Erben*

Bliss Cua Lim (University of Toronto) – **A Colonial Heroine's Decolonial Choice: Sonic Speculation in *Giliw Ko***

Moderation: Nils Meyn (Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz)

One of only five surviving Filipino films from the American colonial era, the 1939 musical *Giliw Ko* (My Sweetheart) was restored in 1998 in collaboration with the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA). *Giliw Ko* is a patriotic allegory unfolding between two soundworlds, American jazz music and the Tagalog love song or *kundiman*. In the film's climax, the rural heroine declares her decolonial choice: "I refuse to sing American songs; I will sing a song from my hometown." Drawing on speculative feminist historiography, I suggest that the sonic restoration undertaken by a female audio engineer at the NFSA involves a creative practice of "informed speculation" that parallels the film's focus on cliraudience – the ability to hear the inaudible. The diegetic protagonists' cliraudient ability to hear beyond the range of hearing and the woman archivist's pragmatic practice of inventing or recreating lost sounds exemplify sonic speculation in a feminist frame.

Saturday, January 31

9:30 – 10:00 Arrival and Coffee, Trude Simonsohn und Irmgard Heydorn-Saal

10:00 – 12:00 Special Guest Presentation:

Rosa Menkman - **Methods of Artistic Inquiry**

Moderation: Simone Nowicki (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Rosa Menkman is an artist and researcher who examines visual distortions and noise artifacts produced through analogue and digital media processes. Her work investigates how glitches, encoding errors and feedback patterns expose the concealed infrastructures of media standards. These artifacts illuminate how resolutions and formats are negotiated, revealing not only technical solutions but also suppressed alternatives and opaque compromises. Through her artistic and theoretical practice, Menkman demonstrates that breakdown and interruption can serve as analytical tools, opening a critical view onto the material, historical and political conditions that govern contemporary image systems.

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch & Coffee Break

13:30 – 15:00 Panel 6: Unresolved Histories

Moderation: Kerim Dogruel (Bayreuth University)

Nnenna Onuoha (Harvard University/University of Potsdam) – **Haunting the Halls: Spectral Presence and Colonial Memory in *Rosenfelde* (2020) and *The Memory Guardians* (2024)**

This paper reflects on two films from my practice that explore spectral presences of Black figures within Berlin's imperial architecture. What might it look like when those whose lives and deaths are otherwise denied visibility within the city's dominant narratives haunt its spaces on-screen? *Rosenfelde* conjures the ghosts of enslaved people whose exploitation funded Schloss Friedrichsfelde, guiding viewers through its halls to confront histories erased from official accounts. Through ritual, movement, and music, the film insists on their enduring presence within structures built on their erasure. *The Memory Guardians* stages a speculative trial of a decommissioned statue of a Black woman—sculpted by a Nazi and now hidden at the Zitadelle Spandau—before following her spectral wanderings through the site. Eschewing dialogue, both films draw on Jennifer DeClue's conjure work and Saidiya Hartman's critical fabulation, activating monuments, absences, and ghosts to confront unresolved histories of violence and erasure.

Khushboo Bhutani (University of Pittsburgh) – **Archival Authority and the Restorative Image**

Erika Balsom (King's College London) – **The Secret Mirror, or, The Disappearance of A.A.A. Offresi (1981)**

This talk will unfold the story of *A.A.A. Offresi*, a film made in 1981 by a collective of six women who used a hidden camera to record the interactions of a sex worker and her clients in a Roman apartment. Intended for broadcast on Italian national television station RAI2, *A.A.A. Offresi* had only one public screening, at the 1981 Berlinale Forum. Hours before it was meant to air on TV, it was censored through political intervention; within a week, the filmmakers were facing criminal charges for the invasion of privacy and the facilitation of prostitution. Although they were eventually acquitted, their film was confiscated and has never officially been seen again.

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee Break

15:30 – 16:30 Wrap-up, Thanks, and Closing Remarks.

Alexandra Schneider (Gutenberg University Mainz), Laliv Melamed (Goethe University Frankfurt), Yvonne Zimmermann (Philipps University Marburg)

LOCATIONS

Main venue

Trude Simonsohn und Irmgard Heydorn-Saal, Casino Building, Goethe-University Campus, Frankfurt: Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 2, 60323 Frankfurt am Main

Special Events

January 28, naxos.Kino: Waldschmidtstraße 19, 60316 Frankfurt am Main

January 29, Mal Seh'n Kino: Adlerflychtstraße 6, 60318 Frankfurt am Main

January 30, Orfeos Erben: Hamburger Allee 45, 60486 Frankfurt am Main

Conference Committee: Victoria Elizarova, Dennis Hippe, Katharina Jost, Lisa Le Anh, Nils Meyn, Simone Nowicki

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