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Introduction

Based at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Amsterdam since 1994, the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) is an internationally renowned research institute and doctoral school dedicated to the critical and innovative study of culture from a broadly interdisciplinary perspective grounded in the humanities but increasingly extending to non-humanities fields. ASCA is not bound to one particular discipline, one particular theoretical approach or one type of cultural object. Home to more than 100 scholars and over 150 PhD candidates, it brings together cutting-edge scholarship in philosophy, musicology, literary studies, cultural studies, European studies, art history, theater and performance studies, and (new) media studies.

What unites the research conducted within ASCA are the five principles of Cultural Analysis, originally formulated by Mieke Bal:

- First, within ASCA disciplinary knowledge is highly valued and respected but is mobilized in conversation with other disciplines to allow new insights to emerge at the intersection of fields of knowledge. This **commitment to interdisciplinarity** is at the core of its mission.
- The second principle of Cultural Analysis that ASCA adheres to is that its research is **theoretically grounded**. Theory is not considered as a master discourse, but as opening up important critical perspectives in its dynamic engagement with particular cultural objects (which can be cultural products but also social phenomena). This engagement also tests and transforms the theories brought to bear on the objects.
- The third principle important for all ASCA research is that it is **socially relevant**: it aims to diagnose, dissect and answer urgent questions about the world we live in by working with theories and objects that themselves are not seen as coming out of the blue or as having fixed uses and meanings, but as emerging from and functioning within historically and socially specific contexts.
- The fourth principle that binds cultural analysis research is the centrality of **detailed analyses of cultural objects** (through close reading or other methods, including digital and ethnographic ones).
- The fifth and final principle of cultural analysis is that it offers an engagement with culture and society from a **contemporary perspective**. The past is

important, but always from the perspective of our present engagement with it. ASCA researchers ask: why and how does a cultural product, social phenomenon or theory still matter to us now?

With respect to the content of its research programs, ASCA has always adopted and promoted an open, bottom-up approach to foster a wide variety of curiosity-driven innovative and topical research. ASCA researchers are invited to create their own research groups to share and advance research findings; to organize academic events; to apply for grants; and to produce articles, books and dissertations. This open structure inspires innovative research; supports individual excellence; allows for cross-disciplinary collaboration; promotes work in emerging research areas; and has resulted in a dynamic, non-hierarchical research environment responsive to changes in both the academic context and society at large.

ASCA currently has 90 research groups, divided into three categories: funded research projects (28); reading groups & seminars (28); and network groups (34). Each group belongs to one or more of the five constellations that identify the broader thematic research areas ASCA focuses on. These five constellations, designated with the acronym MAGIC, are:

- **M**ediality
- **A**rts & Aesthetics
- **G**lobalization & Migration
- **I**dentities
- **C**ultural & Social Critique

The themes identified by the constellations are at the forefront of academic and public debates, allowing ASCA researchers to collaborate not only with each other, but also with external academic and non-academic partners. ASCA's vibrant PhD community is at the center of our activities and operates in a spirit of openness, collaboration and experimentation.

In 2025, 34 new PhD candidates and 2 new staff members joined ASCA; ASCA offered 35 ongoing seminars and/or reading groups, and (co-)organized 147 conferences, lectures, workshops and other meetings; ASCA members acquired over 2,5 million Euros of external funding for their research; and 20 ASCA PhD candidates earned their doctor's title.

ASCA in 2025

Compared with 2024, 2025 saw less visible unrest at the university. Yet the underlying sources of concern remained pressing. Ongoing war and violence in Ukraine, Gaza, and many other regions of the world continued to shape the conditions in which we work and live, with particularly direct consequences for ASCA researchers who are personally affected by these conflicts.

The year nevertheless began on a positive and celebratory note, with a strong ASCA presence at the University of Amsterdam's Dies Natalis on 16 January. ASCA researcher Margriet Schavemaker delivered the Dies speech, "About the Anniversary City, the University, and the Power of the Ode." The occasion also saw the awarding of honorary doctorates to historian, journalist, and author Bianca Stigter, and filmmaker, screenwriter, and visual artist Steve McQueen. ASCA researcher Patricia Pisters served as honorary promotor. Both doctorates had been nominated by the Faculty, following a proposal by Patricia Pisters and Jaap Kooijman.

Another positive note was the publication of final report of the research evaluation of AIHR and the Faculty's research schools, which had been conducted in 2024. The committee was very positive about ASCA, concluding that "ASCA has maintained and strengthened its position as a leading interdisciplinary research school, successfully combining theoretical innovation with methodological rigor and societal engagement." The report also included several productive recommendations to improve the collaboration with AIHR, to provide more support for individual researchers in times of political polarization, and to strengthen the research community, particularly for our PhD candidates.

At the same time, concerns about academic freedom became increasingly acute. Academic freedom is under attack in many parts of the world, most visibly in the United States but by no means only there. These developments have tangible effects on the academic community. Some ASCA members, for example, decided not to attend conferences in the United States because of concerns about how their gender identity might be treated at the border. These issues formed the subject of a discussion between the Faculty's Dean, the ASCA Director, and others in the Dean's podcast of 20 May.

In the Netherlands, too, the growing distrust of academic institutions and academic knowledge was a matter of serious concern. In response to an

interview with Marcel Levi, chair of the NWO, published in [NRC](#) on 22 June, in which he suggested that Dutch universities had become too inward-looking, the ASCA Director issued an appeal to administrators and politicians responsible for research and education. Rather than publicly criticizing scholars and academic institutions, they should help foster a climate in which scholars can communicate, safely and enthusiastically, why academic knowledge matters. After *NRC* declined to publish the piece, it appeared in [Folia](#) on 1 July.

The importance of academic knowledge also provided the central theme for this year's ASCA Theory Seminar: "What's at Stake? The Importance of Research." In a departure from previous years, every session featured an ASCA staff member, who selected the assigned literature (including one text of their own research) and participated in the discussions with the PhD candidates.

Another major concern in 2025 was the prospect of drastic budget cuts in higher education. Led by the Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research (AIHR), ASCA joined the other research schools in developing a future vision that identified possible reductions in costs. ASCA welcomed the Faculty's expressed commitment to retaining the 40% research time for all staff members in the U-line.

The 2025 ASCA Workshop, held from 26 to 28 May, was organized by Laila Bouziane and Serra Hughes around the theme "Re-Imagining Universality in the Pluriverse." This year, ASCA did not organize its annual Summit. Recognizing that the format required renewal, we decided to move the annual meeting of the research community to the beginning of the calendar year. The event has therefore been postponed to April 2026 and will return under a new name: the ASCA Spring Event.

While 2025 remained a difficult year in many respects, ASCA continued to draw motivation from the solidarity and resilience of our research community. As a research school, we cannot take away the grave concerns our members have about the state of the world, but we can continue to offer support and encourage our members to keep thinking critically, to remain open to other perspectives and to take care of others and themselves.

Highlights of 2025

In 2025, ASCA organized and facilitated more than 140 events, ranging from public lectures, workshops, and masterclasses to conferences and symposia,

screenings, and book launches. Across the year, recurring threads included decolonial, postcolonial, and Global South perspectives; racial, gendered, queer, trans, and disability justice; and urgent reflections on war, state violence, censorship, migration, and the conditions of democratic life. A sustained concern with climate crisis, care, and multispecies justice connected philosophical inquiry with artistic and activist practices. Media, visual culture, performance, and sound formed another major focus, ranging from film heritage and television history to digital culture, AI, algorithmic power, creative labor, and experimental artistic research. Many events foregrounded archives, memory, historical afterlives, and alternative futures. The following highlights are given to showcase the diversity and wide range of our events:

Roundtable “*Giovanni’s Room: Spaces, Places, and Identities*” | 23 January | Radical Space in the Book Shop ITA

Organizers: Jaap Kooijman and ITA (International Theater Amsterdam)
Prompted by the current ITA stage adaptation of James Baldwin’s classic novel *Giovanni’s Room* (1956), directed by Eline Arbo, the roundtable addressed questions of identity that are raised by the novel, either explicitly or implicitly. ASCA researcher Nawal Mustafa and Monica Pearl (University of Manchester) both presented statements, followed by a conversation moderated by Jaap Kooijman. Mustafa and Pearl discussed how gender, race, and sexuality intersect by focusing on how the novel mobilizes whiteness to explore male homosexuality and how Paris functions as an imaginary space of escape from the gendered and racial boundaries of US American society. Also discussed was how the novel resonates in contemporary times, in which these questions of identities are more explicitly enunciated yet often are dismissed by charges of identity politics. Based on the roundtable, Monica Pearl published the article “Closets Foreign and Familiar: *Giovanni’s Room* at the International Theater of Amsterdam” in the academic journal *James Baldwin Review* (2025).

Book launch: *The Problem with Doing Media Research* | 24 March | VOX-POP

Organizers: Misha Kavka and Michael Stevenson
Beginning with a short introduction of the textbook *Doing Media Research* (Sage 2025), authored by Michael Stevenson and Misha Kavka, the event created an interactive conversation with invited speakers and the audience about the challenges of media studies in contemporary times. There is no shortage of problems facing media researchers today, from fake news and the impact of AI to economic constraints on creative production; but what about the problems we face in **doing** media research? At a time when the need for critical media research is so great, this event is an attempt to turn our critical

eye inward: what are the problems we need to solve in order to better carry out our core mission? A shape-shifting media landscape, questions of ethics and data access, unresolved frictions in interdisciplinary research, work pressure and imposter syndrome: this, too, is just a sampling of problems that media researchers face. Crucially, these same problems face researchers of all levels, from undergraduates learning the ropes to seasoned veterans and leaders in the field. Invited speakers included the ASCA researchers Asli Özgen-Havekotte, Balázs Borros, and Mark Deuze, as well as ASCA alumna Anne Helmond (University Utrecht).

ASCA International Workshop 2025 “Re-imagining Universality in the Pluriverse” | 26-28 May | Doelenzaal

Organizers: Laila Bouziane and Serra Hughes

Keynote speakers: Markus Messling, Barnita Bagchi, Paulo Lemos Horta, and Ruth Clemens

Can diverse epistemologies be recognized and honored while also potentially revealing glimpses of universality that can contribute to a sense of shared space and time necessary to address the needs of the globalized present? Is it possible to address the concerns of the planet without finding a constructive way to talk about human commonalities that do not equate to universalism as oppression? Is it possible to distinguish universality from imperial and hegemonic notions of universalism and, if so, how? The ASCA 2025 workshop brought together cultural analysts, theorists, artists, and researchers to investigate if universality can be approached through pluriversality. The aim was to do the urgent work of looking at universality, as opposed to imperial universalism, from new perspectives and find constructive ways to conceptualize a shared but diverse world.

Symposium “Fanon at 100, or the Pragmatics of Freedom: Aesthetics, Care, Psychoanalysis, and Revolution” | 24 June | PC Hoofthuis

Organizers: Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken and Sanjukta Sunderason

Keynote speakers: Norman Ajari, Layal Ftouni, David Theo Goldberg, Monique Roelofs, and Rehnuma Sazzad, moderated by Wayne Modest.

How to put the more psychoanalytical legacies of Fanonian thought into conversation with concrete activist work? How might we articulate the urgencies of Fanonian thought in scholarship, pedagogy, and activism? What are the stakes of teaching Fanon today? Beyond the facile and albeit seductive romanticization of Fanon’s writing and life especially in the “cultural industry,” why is it that Fanonian thought remains overwhelmingly central to the work of so many scholars from quite varying, even schismic, affective relationships to

the de/post/colonial? How might we account for these quite divergent intellectual legacies? As such, these curated panels, are interested in creating plenary conversations between and among the legacies of his work, among scholars in the political, the literary, the philosophical, and the psychoanalytical.

Screening and roundtable “IDFA & Decolonial Futures: Cinema Under Siege #3” | 8 October | Het Documentaire Paviljoen

Organizers: Nadica Denić in collaboration with IDFA

Under the title Cinema Under Siege, this series explores the risks filmmakers face under political regimes that monitor, censor, and suppress dissent – often at great personal cost, from legal persecution to exile. How do filmmakers navigate these threats while continuing to tell urgent stories. Previous events in the Cinema under Siege series explored the boundary between censorship and self-censorship among filmmakers in Turkey, and the destruction and preservation of audio-visual heritage in Palestine. This third event expanded the conversation on contemporary cinema under constraint by focusing on Hong Kong, where a new generation of filmmakers is reimagining their relationship to the city and reshaping their craft in the wake of recent political upheavals. How do activism, social unrest, and the risk of legal repercussions shape the contemporary cinema of Hong Kong? The program featured recent short films from Hong Kong, introduced by Nadica Denić, and followed by a conversation with the directors. The films and their creators have chosen to remain unnamed.

Workshop “Cultural Analysis in the World” | 24 October | Oudemanhuispoort

Organizers: Murat Aydemir and Aylin Kuryel, in collaboration with the Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies

It’s a truism that cultural studies is different wherever it is practiced. In this workshop, two institutions came together to compare notes on the field in relation to present circumstances and challenges: the Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies (SCCS) and the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA). The workshop is informed by the SCCS seminars on the “state of cultural analysis,” exploring the most contemporary approaches to culture, cultural studies, and cultural analysis, and the recent volume *The Future of Cultural Analysis: A Critical Inquiry* (edited by Murat Aydemir, Aylin Kuryel, and Noa Roei) on the pasts, presents, and futures of cultural analysis.

2025 World Picture Conference: Direction | 6-8 November | University Library, University Theater, Oudemanhuispoort

Organizers: Abraham Geil, Rhys Jones, and Jacob Engelberg in collaboration with the University of Toronto and NICA

Keynote speakers: Daniel Loick (ASCA), Eliza Steinbock (Maastricht University)

The theme of this year's World Picture conference, "direction," invites a collection of international scholars to consider what it means to orient ourselves in this moment of global political crisis where borders are being either reinforced or redescribed, when our normal pathways—social, legal, and otherwise—are being disrupted. We are also trying to respond to the imposition of political directives that proliferate crisis and disruption in the name of normality. When one wonders how to act in a moment of political urgency what one seeks is a sense of direction, an effective order. The risk of giving direction is that one takes responsibility for what cannot be guaranteed. Direction can be understood temporally as the structuring of experience through logics of progress, regression and rupture. Direction is also a way of describing a new beginning, as when we decide "to go in a different direction" in some, if not all, aspects of our lives. How do we experience the place we live when we can no longer easily go in one direction or another? How does direction call us to think of migrancy? In a world where there is both too much and too little direction, can we think differently about the value of indirection?

Management and Research Groups

The current ASCA's management team consists of the academic director (Jaap Kooijman, Associate Professor Media Studies), the vice-director (Carolyn Birdsall, Associate Professor of Media Studies) and the managing director (Eloe Kingma), with administrative support provided by Jantine van Gogh.

The management team is jointly responsible for the day-to-day running of the research school. The academic director sits on the AIHR Research Council, which meets every six weeks or so to discuss general policies, strategic roadmaps and finances that are part of the policies and governance of the Faculty of Humanities and liaises with the Heads of Department and Program Directors in the so-called "triangle," most importantly about new positions opening up. The vice-director is responsible for all matters concerning the PhD community, including welcome meetings, pilot study assessments and evaluation meetings.

The ASCA Board consists of a mix of senior and junior staff members, and two PhD representatives. Current members are: Fairuzah Atchulo (PhD candidate), Barnita Bagchi (Professor of English Literature and Culture), Jana Cattien (Assistant Professor of Philosophy), Boris Noordenbos (Associate Professor of Cultural Analysis), Marringje Paijmans (Assistant Professor Dutch Studies), Esther Peeren (Professor of Cultural Analysis), Oliver Seibt (Assistant Professor of Musicology), Sanjukta Sunderason (Associate Professor of Cultural Studies), Tommy Tse (Associate Professor of Media Studies), Esther Weltevrede (Associate Professor of Media Studies).

The main task of the ASCA management team and Board is to facilitate the research activities of its members. We have chosen to do this by creating a community that is open, inclusive and supportive of bottom-up initiatives. ASCA hosts research groups that differ in size, aim, lifespan and in how active they are. A coherent profile is nonetheless ensured by all research groups subscribing to ASCA's interdisciplinary, theory-driven humanities approach and engaging with at least one of the thematic constellations. In their variety and flexibility, the research groups ensure that new pressing issues, emerging fields (such as animal politics or disability studies) and innovative approaches (such as new digital methods) can be taken up quickly in relation to the constellation themes. The groups also showcase the vast range of themes, approaches, initiatives and collaborations ASCA members are involved in.

The assessment of research within ASCA occurs primarily at the level of the individual researcher, who may be a member of multiple research groups. Each individual is assessed annually by the ASCA director on the basis of their own report about their research activities. The assessment – which takes the form of a letter – is discussed with the researcher's Head of Department and on the basis of the assessment and upon request of the Department positive and sometimes negative recommendations are made concerning promotions, grant applications and sabbatical leaves. In cases of underperformance, individual research and publications plans are made with specific deadlines; if these are not met, ASCA, in consultation with the Department and the AIHR director, can take away research time.

At the level of the research groups, the ASCA director inquires annually with the coordinator(s) about the group's activities and output (publications, seminars and other events, valorization, etc.), including whether the group is still active (if not, it is disbanded), whether the website description needs updating and which constellation(s) the group engages with.

ASCA distinguishes three different types of research groups: funded research projects, readings groups & seminars, and network groups (see Table).

- **Network groups** bring together researchers with shared interests that meet on an ad hoc basis. Although these groups do not necessarily work towards defined outputs, they frequently lead to conferences/workshops or other events, publications and funding applications.

- **Funded research projects** are projects comprising one or more researchers that are externally funded at the national or European level (ERC, VENI, VIDI, VICI, Horizon2020); their performance goals are fixed, as is their lifespan.

- **Reading groups & seminars** are groups that meet regularly (generally once a month) to discuss articles, books or work in progress, or around a specific theme, sometimes with guest speakers. Reading groups & seminars often result in conferences or other events, joint publications and funding applications.

Network Groups	Coordinators	M	A	G	I	C
AI and Cultural Production	Claudio Celis Bueno					
Amsterdance	Oliver Seibt					
Art - Activism - Conflict	Sruti Bala					
Art Education as Critical Tactics	Fabiola Camuti					
ASCA Cities Project	Carolyn Birdsall					
ASCA Comics Studies	Rik Spanjers, Kristina Gedgaudaitė					
Cosmologies	Halbe Kuipers, Erica Biolchini					
Crisis, Critique and Futurity	Maria Boletsi					
Critical Health	Gaston Franssen					
Cross Media	Markus Stauff					
Decolonial Meridians	Sunderason, Szakács, Mazadiego					
Digital Methods Initiative	Richard Rogers					
Emergencies of Authoritarianism	Daniel Loick					
Fashion/Representations in Global Context	Christine Delhay					
Film and Philosophy	Patricia Pisters, Monique Roelofs					
Game Lab	Toni Pape					
Geomediations	Patricia Pisters, Leonie Schmidt					
Global Digital Cultures	Thomas Poell					
Literature of the 21st Century	Ellen Rutten					
Moving Images	Floris Paalman					
Music and Culture	Barbara Titus					
Networked Images	Annet Dekker					
Peripheries Project	Esther Peeren, Hanneke Stuit					
Philosophy and Public Affairs	Thomas Nys					
Postcolonial Film Histories and Heritages	Emiel Martens, Asli Tuncer					
Reading Pain	Assel Kadyrkhanova					
Queer Analysis	Diego Semerene, Misha Kavka					
Sex Negativity	Marija Cetenic					
The Significance of Phenomenology	Christian Skirke					
Thinking Artistic and Design Practices	Marie Aude Baronian					
Videographic Criticism Group	Jaap Kooijman					
Walking as Research Practice	Tania Cardoso					
Word and image	Mia Lerm-Hayes					
World Literature and the Environment	Jeff Diamanti					

Funded Projects	Principal Investigators	M	A	G	I	C
A Planetary Aesthetics for the Future Democratic Society	Stefan Niklas					
Abolition Democracies	Daniel Loick					
Algorithmic Life	Stefania Milan					
Artificial Intelligence: Power Asymmetries and Data Justice	Claudio Celis Bueno, Lonneke vd Velden					
AV-Collection Histories to Enrich Data and Public Value	Carolyn Birdsall					
Children's Media and Diversity project	Rik Spanjers, Balasz Boross					
China Fashion Power	Tommy Tse					
Coalitions of Distrust: Conspiricization via Hashtag Hijacking	Marc Tuters					
Conspiratorial Memory	Boris Noordenbos					
Content Moderation: A Cross-Platform Analysis	Richard Rogers					
Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives	Barbara Titus					
Ecolslam	Leonie Schmidt					
Entangled Freedoms	Sanjukta Sunderason					
Ephemeral Art Forms	Helen Grogan, Annet Dekker					
Friendship as Political Practice	Divya Nadkarni					
Future Modernities and Non-modern Futures	Baldi, Villaescusa Illan					
Governance by data in the post-pandemic democracy	Stefania Milan					
Imagining Institutions Otherwise	Chiara de Cesari					
Just Not Fair	Marjolein Lanzing					
Making the hidden visible	Stefania Milan					
Moral Truth	Thomas Nys					
Narratives from the long tail	Giovanna Fossati					
Oceanic Imaginaries, Oceanic Solidarities	Mikki Stelder					
Opinion Dynamics and Cultural Conflict	Richard Rogers					
Pressing Matter	Chiara de Cesari					
Re-Imagining Water in the Neerlandophone Space	Marrigje Paijmans					
Restituting, Reconnecting, Reimagining Sound Heritage	meLè Yamomo					
Rethinking AI Governance	Fieke Jansen, Niels Ten Oever					
SoBigData++	Richard Rogers					
Speculative Fictions	Elio Baldi, Irene Villaescusa Illán					
Sustainable AI Features	Fieke Jansen					
The Platformization of the Global Sex Industry	Thomas Poell					
The Politics of (not) Eating Animals	Eva Meijer					
(Trans-)Sexualities and Psychoanalysis	Semerene, Cetinic					
Untimely World Pictures	Simon Ferdinand					
Who Controls AI	Fernando v.d. Vlist					
Worlding Public Cultures	Chiara de Cesari					

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Researchers and Publications

The tables below show that the ASCA research staff remains stable, with a slight decrease in the number of full professors and associate professors, and a slight increase in the number of associate professors.

The anticipated increase in successfully defended PhD dissertations finally materialized, rising from 14 in 2023 and 12 in 2024 to 20 in 2025. We expect this upward trend to continue in 2026. Most of these defenses (18 out of 20) were completed by PNID PhD candidates: non-contracted candidates who are not employed by the University. This is unsurprising, as most ASCA PhD candidates are not employed by the university, although many PNID candidates receive some form of funding. We strive to ensure that candidates pursuing a PhD without full funding have a realistic understanding of what this entails, and we continue to monitor the job-market outcomes of all our PhD candidates. A more significant concern is that the proportion of PID PhD candidates (those employed by the university) who successfully defend their dissertations within five years remains too low. This issue has our full attention.

Quite unexpectedly, the total number of publications decreased from 386 in 2024 to 329 in 2025. This decline cannot be accounted for by the slight reduction in staff numbers, from 121 in 2024 to 117 in 2025. Publications in the categories most highly valued by ASCA (refereed journal articles, books, and book chapters) also declined: refereed journal articles fell from 168 in 2024 to 124 in 2025; books from 30 to 10; and book chapters from 100 to 70. While this development is unexpected, it is not yet a cause for concern. Academic publishing often takes a long time, and the numbers may partly reflect unfortunate timing. Moreover, most staff members continue to publish above the minimum requirement of two peer-reviewed articles per year, or one monograph every five years in combination with one peer-reviewed article per year. The average number of publications per staff member decreased only modestly, from 3.0 in 2023 and 3.2 in 2024 to 2.8 in 2025.

Main Categories of Research Output at Institutional Level

	2023 %		2024 %		2025 %	
Refereed journal articles	162	41%	168	44%	124	38%
Non-Refereed journal articles	34	9%	34	9%	36	11%
Books	22	6%	30	8%	10	3%
Book chapters	92	23%	100	26%	70	21%
PhD Theses	13	3%	12	3%	20	6%
Conference Papers						
Professional publications	40	10%	27	7%	37	11%
Publications aimed at public	35	9%	15	4%	32	10%
Other Research Output*						
Total publications	398	100%	386	100%	329	100%
Dissertations	13		12		20	
staff members	132		121		117	
Average publications p.p.	3,0		3,2		2,8	

Research staff in fte at institutional level

	2023 #		%	2024 #		%	2025 #		%
Staff									
Full Professor	5,3	18	8%	10,8	19	18%	7,26	16	13%
Associate Professor	5,3	20	8%	9,8	17	16%	11,26	25	19%
Assistant Professor	36,4	75	57%	27,1	70	44%	31,43	67	54%
Postdocs	17,1	19	27%	13,7	15	22%	8,1	9	14%
Total Staff	64,1	132	100%	61,4	121	100%	58,05	117	100%
PhD Candidates	fte	#		fte	#		fte	#	
Contracted PhDs	26,8	27		23	23		32	33	

PhD Program

ASCA offers an internationally recognized PhD degree, awarded by the University of Amsterdam. The ASCA curriculum, which brings together academic staff, PhD candidates, and selected Research MA students in collaborative and supportive contexts, is designed to provide high-quality, comprehensive scholarly and professional training for future scholars working within the interdisciplinary humanities.

Sustaining ASCA's vibrant PhD community is a top priority. While emphasizing the importance of expanding funding for independent PhD projects (now only possible through NWO's PhDs in the Humanities scheme, as the Faculty of Humanities' funding for such positions has been replaced by PhDs funded through the starting grants) in order to keep rejuvenating the research community and open up new research fields, ASCA has been increasingly successful in securing national and European funding for large projects that include PhD candidates (and postdocs). Having a critical mass of funded PhD candidates employed by the Faculty of Humanities, who have more time for their research and are therefore able to be more involved in ASCA events and their organization, helps to keep the PhD community vibrant.

ASCA trains young researchers to develop an informed understanding of cultural phenomena, stimulating them to combine theorization with detailed analysis of specific case studies. The seminars, courses, and workshops offered within the training program are open to all ASCA PhD candidates, as well as to other scholars, including those working in other research schools or faculties, and those outside the university (artists, curators, activists, etc.).

The PhD project is considered as a collaborative endeavor in which the PhD candidate is the central figure, supported by the supervisors and ASCA's vice-director. At the start of the PhD project, all PhD candidates and their supervisors have a welcome meeting with ASCA's vice-director. At this meeting, an individually tailored training program is drawn up. PhD candidates work under the close supervision of (at least) two senior researchers and are evaluated on an annual basis (contracted PhD candidates in meetings; non-contracted PhD candidates by email or, if issues are flagged, in a meeting). During the annual evaluations, specific attention is paid to the progress of the dissertation and the quality of the supervision, as well as to career perspectives and the building of a strong CV for the academic or non-academic job market. PhD candidates are encouraged to gain teaching experience (up to

0.2 fte of teaching in the 2nd and 3rd year is expected for candidates with fulltime contracts), to have at least one peer-reviewed article or book chapter published before the defense and, if they are so inclined, to spend some time at a university abroad. In the evaluations, it is emphasized that activities undertaken during the PhD trajectory should feed into the dissertation as much as possible, to avoid delayed completion.

Supplementing the PhD training program offered by the Faculty of Humanities, ASCA organizes annual skills workshops on publishing and the academic job market. The advice given – by ASCA’s director and vice-director, and recent ASCA alumni – is geared specifically to PhD candidates with an interdisciplinary profile.

ASCA provides opportunities for PhD candidates to present their work and to take part in the organization of international events, from the annual ASCA workshop, organized by a team of PhD candidates, and the ASCA Theory Seminar, to smaller events related to the research groups.

The effectiveness of ASCA’s PhD training is evidenced by the fact that after graduating, 80% of ASCA’s contracted PhD candidates that finished between 2012 and 2025 hold academic jobs (temporary or permanent), within and outside the Netherlands. Of the self- and externally funded PhD candidates that finished between 2014 and 2025, 66% hold an academic job (temporary or permanent). Finished ASCA PhD candidates who pursue non-academic careers end up (or, in the case of many self-funded PhD candidates, continue) working mainly in the cultural sector, in policymaking and in secondary education.

Social Impact

The most prevalent form of societal impact of ASCA research is its contribution to scholarly and societal debates. Most ASCA research critically engages with contemporary issues in arts, politics, media and culture with the aim of making productive contributions to the public debate. Its audience consists of professionals from the field of cultural production, policymakers, activists and members of the general public with an interest in the critical analysis of culture. ASCA researchers are eager to share their research. At ASCA, we do recognize that the public debate has become highly politicized, particularly on many of the subjects that ASCA researchers work on, such as question of identity, race, and gender, the environment, online culture, etc. Public engagement on these issues may expose researchers, especially women and researchers of color, to online harassment and threats.

Contributions to **national media (radio and television)** include Mark Deuze on influencers in *dr Kelder en Co* (8 February), social media and war in *RTL Nieuws* (18 June); Jaap Kooijman on 25 years of TMF in *Editie NL* on SBS6 Television (1 May); Michiel Leezenberg on Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* in *OVT* on NPO Radio 1 (17 August); Misha Kavka on dating apps in *RTL Nieuws* (28 September); Sal Hagen on Google and AI in *NOS* (25 October); and Elio Baldi on the increase of Italian tourism in Amsterdam in *NH Nieuws* (11 November).

Contributions to *national newspapers and online news media* include Mark Deuze on creative leadership in *Algemeen Dagblad* (14 January), the creative sector in *de Volkskrant* (26 January), twenty years of YouTube in *Trouw* (14 February), Big Tech in *Trouw* (18 June), YouTube in *Trouw* (4 September), AI and authenticity in *Trouw* (17 October), and political attacks on Dutch public broadcasting in *Algemeen Dagblad* (6 December); Misha Kavka on dating apps in *NRC* (16 January); Yolande Jansen on student activism in *NRC* (16 January), the taskforce against antisemitism in *Trouw* (22 April), and ties between Dutch and Israeli universities in *NRC* (24 September); Jaap Kooijman on Trump's America in *NRC* (14 February); Safae el Khannoussi on her novel *Oroppa* in *Trouw* (11 March); Geert Lovink on WhatsApp in *De Telegraaf* (19 March); Michiel Leezenberg on India and modernism in *NRC* (21 March) and philosopher Michel Foucault in *NRC* (3 December); Fieke Jansen on digital media and sustainability in *NRC* (13 April); Richard Rogers on Elon Musk in *NRC* (15 May); Patricia Pisters on psychedelia and robots in *Trouw* (16 June); Sal Hagen on AI and right-wing extremism in *NRC* (22 August); and Sruti Bala on boycotting Israeli institutions in *NRC* (18 September).

Contributions to **national magazines** include Mark Deuze on journalism studies in *Villamedia* (16 January); Richard Rogers on social media in *Psychologie Magazine* (10 February); Daniel Loick on police violence and democracy in *De Nederlandse Boekengids* (17 February); Geert Lovink on Signal and WhatsApp in *Folia* (11 March); Kati Röttger on Theatre Studies in *Theaterkrant* (19 March); Yolande Jansen on cutting ties with Israeli universities in *Folia* (28 March); Natalia Sánchez Querubín on social media and health in *Libelle* (8 April); and Boris Noorderbos on online propaganda in *Folia* (15 May).

Contributions to **international media** include Marc Tuters on American blogger and software designer Curtis Yarvin (21 January), the Epstein Files (15 July), and Charlie Kirk (15 September) on *France 24*; Daniel Loick on President Donald Trump (24 March), new eugenics in the USA (17 April), global right-wing politics (1 May), political resistance (12 June), and antifascism (29 June) in *Neues Deutschland*; Jaap Kooijman on the twenty-fifth anniversary of *American Psycho* on CNN (15 April); Ansgar Mohnkern on German football in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (25 April); Geert Lovink on Gen Z and analogue media in *The Independent* (1 October); and Fieke Jansen on the ecological costs of AI in the Belgian magazine *Samenleving & Politiek* (November).

Financial Overview

ASCA Financial Report 2025	
Working Budget	50.000,00
Expenses:	
ASCA events	36.214,90
ASCA artistic research	3.205,89
ASCA Workshop	7.950,87
Total	47.371,66

ASCA receives an annual budget from the Faculty of Humanities to support its PhD training program, research events, administration and other operational costs. The amount of this budget is determined by the Faculty's financial position and by the total research time allocated to ASCA members. Personnel costs for academic and administrative staff, as well as other overhead costs, are funded separately and do not form part of ASCA's annual budget. Like in 2024, the ASCA's 2025 budget was €50,000. ASCA remains committed to distributing these resources as widely as possible, enabling as many members as possible to organize research events and other scholarly activities. In 2025, we organized and/or facilitated more than 140 events, without going over budget. We strongly encourage our members to find additional funding, for example by teaming up with the national research schools, such as NICA.

All ASCA members and research groups can apply for money from the annual budget to fund research activities such as the organization of workshops, conferences and other academic meetings with guest speakers. If the event involves and is targeted at ASCA members, and a description and full budget (including contributions by other sponsors) is provided, ASCA will grant the application for an amount up to 1,000 Euro. On principle, ASCA does not pay honorariums to academics in full, non-precarious employment, but honorariums may be paid to precarious academics, artists and activists. The majority of the annual budget is reserved for activities organized by members and research groups. Another part (about 9,000 Euro) is reserved for the ASCA International Workshop.

ASCA Events 2025

- January-October **What if....**
three public events of Performance Philosophy focused on the human/non-human relationship and social justice organized by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.
- 8 January 2025 **Philosophy and Public Affairs**
PhD Workshop organized by Jetske Brouwer | Jetske Brouwer (UvA) will discuss the chapter 'Thinking (Categorical) Porosity: Gestationality as More-than-Human Care', and Giovanni Russo (Bologna/visiting UvA) will discuss 'How to Criticize a Form of Life? On the Ethical Problem of Rahel Jaeggi's Immanent Approach'.
- 21 January **Including the Voices of Humans who Cannot Advocate for Themselves in the Discourse about Long Covid, ME/CFS and Comparable Conditions**
Organized by Eva Meijer in collaboration with Anil van der Zee, Anne Vroegindeweij, prof. dr. Vivienne Matthies-Boon and others.
- 22 January **Algorithms of Suspicion: Authentication and Distrust on Digital Labor Platforms**
Invited lecture by Lilly Irani in the online Critical AI seminar series organized by Anna Schjøtt Hansen and Dieuwertje Luitse.
- 23 January **Giovanni's Room: Spaces, Places, and Identities**
Roundtable at Radical Space in The Bookshop, International Theater Amsterdam. Organized by Jaap Kooijman
- 4 February **'You just have to learn to live with it' – Living with Chronic Illness in Relation to Linear and Non-progressive Temporalities**
Long Covid Conversations organized by Eva Meijer | Speaker: Femke van Hout – PhD-researcher, Tilburg University.
- 6 February **An Introduction To Hermaphrodite Logic**
Lecture by Dr Juliana Gleeson in the Sex Negativity Seminar organized by Marija Cetinic.

- 6 February **Social Epistemology / Jennifer Lackey**
Reading Group organized by Annemijn Kwikkers and Yorgos Karagiannopoulos.
- 7 February **Mapping Erasure**
Masterclass with Hashem Abushama and Annelys de Vet organized by Eleri Connick.
- 12 February **Book Launch Multispecies Dialogues**
Online Book launch of Eva Meijer's new book, *Multispecies Dialogues* with Issy Clarke.
- 13 February **Haint Blue: African American Gothic, Afropessimism, and the Possibilities of Black Narrative**
Lecture by Dr. Marco Petrelli (Assistant Professor of American Literature at the University of Pisa) organized by Michael Miller.
- 14 February **Jazz progressions: voicing theoretical and historical perspectives**
International symposium in collaboration with the Music Research Division of the Amsterdam Conservatorium.
- 14 February **Key Aspects of Cinematographic and Photographic Film Digitization**
Presentation of the results of the DREAM-Film Project by the ASCA Research Group 'Moving Images: Preservation, Curation, Exhibition' organized by Floris Paalman and Giovanna Fossati.
- 14 February **Building Futures, Shaping Resistance: Nairobi in Focus**
Organized by the Global Africa Group organized by Fairuzah Atchulo and Johanna von Pezold. Speakers are Dr. Elisa Tamburo and Fairuzah Atchulo. The session was moderated by Dr. Jupiter Wang.
- 21 February **Glissant's Opacity: Bodies, Relations, Translations**
Lecture by Lieks Hettinga, Assistant Professor, Utrecht University, Gender Studies | Organized by Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken.
- 3 March **Abolition and Democratic Confederalism**
Joint seminar of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis and the University of Rojava (Kurdistan). This seminar is

organized by Leila Faghfour Azar, Safae El Khannoussi El Boudrin, Daniel Loick, Shahin Nasiri, Abdulkarim Pusat, and Oscar Talbot, in collaboration with our partners from the University of Rojava.

- 5-8 March **Postcolonial Hauntologies: Art in the Presence – Absence of the Past**
International Symposium organized by Assel Kadyrkhanova, Mehmet Berkay Sulek, and Alexandra Tsay.
- 5 March **Performing land and the non-human: Necrosonic Landscapes and The Return of the Wolf**
First session of the Climate Imaginaries seminar organized by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca | Guest speakers: Berkveldt Collective (Noëlle Ingeveldt and Juriaan van Berkel) | ASCA respondent: Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca with Agat Sharma.
- 5 March **Community TV in the Caribbean 📺 Inside Errol Fabien's Gayelle the Caribbean in Trinidad & Tobago**
Seminar on the role of community television in the Caribbean, with a special focus on Gayelle the Caribbean, a groundbreaking community television station in the postcolonial twin-island nation state of Trinidad & Tobago | Organized by Rebecca Robinson and the Postcolonial Film Histories and Heritages Group.
- 6 March **A Critical History of Psychoanalysis in the Netherlands**
Dialogue with psychoanalyst Carolina Moreirã, organized by the Queer Analysis Group.
- 7 March **The Unreal Made Ideal: Gender, Role-Playing, and Intimate Bonds in Li Yu's (1611-1680) "A Male Mencius's Mother Raises Her Son Properly by Moving House Three Times"**
Lecture by Shengyu Wang, Visiting Research Fellow at Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study | Organized by Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken.
- 7 March **Trans Femme Futures Book Launch with Nat Raha and Mijke van der Drift**
Book launch with Nat Raha and Mijke van der Drift engaging in conversation with writers Simon(e) van Saarloos (author of *Against Ageism: A Manifesto*) and Alejandra Ortiz (co-founder Papaya Kuir, author of *De Waarheid zal Mij*

Bevrijden) on topics such as radical transformation, mutual aid, transfeminism, and abolition.

- 11 March **Archives, Practices, Rhythms**
Seminar with Alana Osbourne, Rita Ouédraogo, and Carine Zaayman | Organized by Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken.
- 12 March **Social (In)Visibility / Mediated Time**
Workshop organized by the ASCA Cross-Media Research seminar | Guests: Olivia Poppe (University of Vienna, ASCA affiliated PhD researcher), Esther Peeren (UvA/ASCA), and Andrea Seier (University of Vienna).
- 12 March **Synthetic Vision/Algorithmic Violence**
Invited lecture by Rocco Bellanova & Francesco Ragazzi in the online seminar series on Critical AI organized by Anna Schjøtt Hansen and Dieuwertje Luitse.
- 14 March **Worlding our Everyday**
Lecture and In-Conversation with Prof. Dr. Francio Guadeloupe | Organized by Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken.
- 14 March **Desire for Trans**
Symposium organized by Diego Semerene | With Silvia Lippi, Callaz, Luce deLire, and Marco Borkent.
- 19 March **And Suddenly There Was City Pop.... The Global Dimensions of the Retrograde Formation of a Japanese Popular Music Genre**
International Research Workshop organized by Oliver Seibt and Ken Katō (Osaka University, JP).
- 20-21 March **Violence and Tenderness; Voices in our Hearts - two events with Abdellah Taïa**
Symposium with Moroccan writer and filmmaker Abdellah Taïa organized by Diego Semerene.
- 24 March **The Problem with Doing Media Research**
Book Launch featuring Anne Helmond, Asli Özgen-Havekotte, Balázs Borros, Mark Deuze, Misha Kavka and Michael Stevenson.

- 24 March **Epistemicide, Genocide, Apartheid: Our Ethical and Legal Obligations Towards Palestinians.**
Teach-in organized by ASCA Teach-in group, UvA Staff for Palestine and Dutch Scholars for Palestine marking Israeli Apartheid Week | Moderator: Sruti Bala.
- 25 March **Long Covid in Children: A Human Rights Perspective**
Long Covid Conversations organized by Eva Meijer | Vivek Bhatt (NYU).
- 25 March **Cybernetic Capitalism**
Book Launch of Jan Overwijk's *Cybernetic Capitalism. A Critical Theory of the Incommunicable*.
- 26 March **The Ecology of the Future: Democracy for the Day After Tomorrow**
Workshop organized by the Critical Cultural Theory group in collaboration with The Planetary Aesthetics Project. | With Ludger Schwarte (Art Academy in Düsseldorf), Stefan Niklas, Nick Psomas, and Emma Ricketts.
- 27-28 March **Raw Earth Agriculture**
Raw Earth Agriculture (REA) is a two-day workshop hosted by Jeff Diamanti, Rebeca Ibáñez Martín, and Florence Evans at Framer Framed.
- 28 March **Pattern as a Figure of Knowledge**
International Workshop at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) organized by Stephan Besser (IAS/University of Amsterdam) and Flora Lysen (Maastricht University).
- 28 March **Extending the Document: Contemporary Transmedial Poetics**
The inaugural Max Nännny Lecture by Catherine Gander preceded by a panel with the Board Members of the International Association of Word and Image Studies (IAWIS).
- 2 April **The Loss of the Presumed World: Phenomenology of Smell Loss in Long COVID**
Long Covid Conversations organized by Eva Meijer | Speaker: Dr. Pedro Prikladnitzky.

- 3 April **“Starting back toward life”: Post-countercultural Anarchism in Toni Cade Bambara’s *The Salt Eaters***
English Department Lecture by Dr Jo Freer organized by Michael Miller.
- 8 April **Generative AI and the automation of creative labour**
Speakers: Isadora Campregher Paiva and Dimitris Tzionas | Organizers: Claudio Celis Bueno and Nanne van Noord.
- 9 April **Partisan Genealogies: Schmitt's paramilitary and politics beyond the law**
Philosophy and Public Affairs Colloquium with Aleksandar Novakovich and comments by Matylida Jellonek.
- 10 April **ASCA Supervision Workshop**
Workshop for current and prospective PhD supervisors on PhD supervision.
- 15 April **The Sexed Being is Only Authorized by Themselves and a Few Others: on the inseparability of psychoanalysis and politics**
A lecture by Pedro Ambra (psychoanalyst) organized by Diego Semerene.
- 16 April **History, Subject and Territo-Reality: Brazilian perspectives on psychoanalysis**
A seminar with Pedro Ambra and Clarice Pimentel Paulon organized by Diego Semerene.
- 16 April **Word and Image Research Group: Mia You, Meme Aesthetics**
In this session of the Word and Image group, Mia You (English Language and Culture, Utrecht University; Critical Studies, Sandberg Institute) will present the special issue on “Meme Aesthetics” she recently co-edited with Stephen Best and Damon Ross Young for *Representations*. The Word-Image Group is organized by Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, Emilie Sitzia and Louis Hartnoll.
- 16 April **Armed by Design**
Book Launch at Framer Framed | Speakers: Lani Hanna, Sanjukta Sunderason, Canan Marasligil | Moderated by: Mikki Stelder.

- 24 April **ASCA PhD Skills: The Academic Job Market and Publishing**
Organized by Jaap Kooijman.
- 25 April **Play through the Grey Prism: Addressing Chromatic Leisure in Cities**
ASCA Cities Project with a lecture by Paul O'Connor (University of Exeter) | Co-organized by Carolyn Birdsall, Linda Kopitz and Alex Gekker.
- 30 April **Climate Imaginaries: Practicing Ubuntu**
Climate Imaginaries Seminar Series organized by Laura Cull | Guest speaker: Wakanyi Hoffman | ASCA Respondent: John Taukave.
- 6 May **Foundation Models: Technical, Ethical, and Economic Implications**
Part of the seminar series "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on AI & Culture" In this session Mohammad Mahdi and Bernhard Rieder lead the discussion. Organizers: Claudio Celis Bueno and Nanne van Noord.
- 7-9 May **The Circuits of Television. Histories, technologies, imaginaries**
International Conference University of Lausanne, Switzerland, organized by Marie Sandoz, Anne-Katrin Weber (University of Lausanne), and Markus Stauff (ASCA).
- 7 May **Long Covid+ Round Table: Ways Forward for the Academic Community and Beyond**
Long Covid+ Conversations organized by Eva Meijer | Online | Speakers: Suzanne, Judith de Hont and micah marissa from Feminists Against Ableism, and others.
- 7 May **Seen Unseen: An Anthology of (Auto)Censorship**
Cinema under Siege, a new collaboration, Decolonial Futures and Het Documentaire Paviljoen (IDFA) explore the multifaceted relationship between cinema and (de)coloniality.
- 8 May **A Cutting Room Floor: Practices & Methods of Disclosing Militant Cinema**
This workshop is part of the Amsterdam School for Heritage and Memory Studies (AHM) and Amsterdam School for

Cultural Analysis (ASCA) research initiative on Critical Audiovisual Heritage, co-hosted by Framer Framed and supported by UvA and NWO.

- 9 May **The Ludification of Vision**
Mini-symposium organized by Mathieu Li-Goyette and Toni Pape.
- 9 May **Inhabiting Error: From "Last Christmas" to "Senior's Last Hour"**
New Tendencies in Critical Theory presents Sianne Ngai, Inhabiting Error: From "Last Christmas" to "Senior's Last Hour" | Organized by Jeff Diamanti and Marija Cetinic.
- 11+15 May **100 Years Malcolm X: His Legacy for Black (and) Muslim Communities**
On the centenary of Malcolm X's birth, this two-part event in Amsterdam brought together scholars, archivists, and community members to reflect on his powerful and enduring legacy | Organized by Nawal Mustafa.
- 14 May **To Forgive the Ocean: Re-imagining the Caribbean through Relation and Poetry**
Climate Imaginaries: Artistic Research for Regenerative Futures with Land and Water organized by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca | Guest speaker: Imani Heijmans | ASCA Respondent: Mikki Stelder.
- 14 May **AI and the (Re)Shaping of Intelligence**
Invited lecture by Wendy Chun, Stephanie Dick & Matt Canute in the online Critical AI seminar series organized by Anna Schjøtt Hansen and Dieuwertje Luitse.
- 15 May **Psychoanalysis and... Architecture! A Workshop and Talk with Jane Rendell**
The Psychoanalysis and... Series | Organizers: Ben Moore and Alvaro Lopez.
- 16 May **Re-Thinking Media Conglomerates**
Lecture and NICA-Masterclass with Kit Hughes organized by the ASCA Cross-Media Research seminar.

- 16 May **Playful Resistance: Sensor-Counter Practices in Urban Environments**
ASCA Cities 'Playable Cities' seminar | Lecture by Christoph Borbach and Max Kanderske (University of Siegen).
Organized by Carolyn Birdsall, Linda Kopitz and Alex Gekker.
- 16 May **Artistic Research: Sharing Methods and Practices**
A public event with talks by two visiting artist researchers, Maria Konschake and Uta Eisenreich, describing their methods and practices.
- 21 May 2026 **Estrangement on a Strange Planet**
English Department Lecture by **Mathias Thaler** is Professor of Political Theory in the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh | Organized by Michael Miller.
- 21 May **The command of responsibility to a burning world**
Philosophy and Public Affairs with Danielle Celermajer (University of Sydney); respondent Eva Meijer.
- 22-23 May **The Politics of not Eating Animals**
Conference organized by Eva Meijer.
- 22 May **Research, Values, and Intervention: Navigating AI and Technomoral Futures**
An Empirical Ethics Workshop with Shannon Vallor and Sabina Leonelli organized by Selin Gerlek and Paula Helm.
- 22 May **Basandja Filmic experiences from the frontlines of the rainforest, mining communities, and conflict zones in the DRC.**
Event organized by Matthias De Groof.
- 23 May **Un/savory Sub/stances: a colloquium on the erotics of bodily waste**
Colloquium organized by the Queer Analysis group.
- 23 May **Dissolve Into: Creative Methodologies in Post-trauma**
An ASCA interdisciplinary workshop that explores creative methodologies in post-trauma, with a particular focus on eco-psychoanalysis and screenwriting organized by Dr. Elan Gamaker (Kingston University London) and Dr. Catherine Lord (University of Amsterdam).

- 23 May **International Japanese Studies workshop**
Launch of the research network 'Consortium for Global Japanese Studies', organized by Carolyn Birdsall and Nanako Ota.
- 25-28 May **The Colour Fantastic Revisited: Across Global Histories, Theories, Aesthetics, and Archives**
10th Eye International Conference in collaboration with ASCA and the University of Utrecht.
- 26-28 May **Re-imagining Universality in the Pluriverse**
ASCA international workshop | Organizers: Laila Bouziane and Serra Hughes | Keynote speakers: Markus Messling, Barnita Bagchi, Paulo Lemos Horta, and Ruth Clemens .
- 27 May **This Is Not Chinatown: Film Screening & Panel Discussion**
Preview screening of the documentary *This Is Not Chinatown: The Experience of Chinese Students in the International Student City of Amsterdam* in VOX-POP. With an introduction before, and panel discussion after, the film featuring UvA researchers Maggi Leung, Linde Luijnenburg, Rui Wuang and Emiel Martens.
- 29-30 May **Interferences: Live (Performance)**
Part of the 2025 Fiber Festival, including a discussion with Anette Hoffman, performance by meLê Yamomo, NWO Re:Sound co-project leader Sri Margana (Universitas Gadjah Mada), and moderated by composer Alison Isadora.
- 3-5 June **(Trans—) Sexualities + Psychoanalysis Summer School**
Summer School featuring two public lectures open to the public. The first, on June 3rd, is by Patricia Gherovici on Transpoetics: From Kafka to Woolf via Preciado; the second, on June 5th, by Antonios Poullos, titled: A body in transition: rethinking gender, theory, clinic and ethics. Organized by Diego Semerene and Marija Cetinic.
- 4 June **De/Postcolonial Climate Imaginaries**
Seminar 4 of the Climate Imaginaries Seminar Series organized by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca | Guest speakers: Dorothy Blokland + Agat Sharma | ASCA Respondent: Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.

- 11 June **On the Uses of Absence**
Launch of *Soapbox: Journal for Cultural Analysis* with Marta Lopes Santos, ilja schamlé, Parel Joy, and Eugenie Brinkema.
- 16 June **Toward a Transindividual Self, by Ana Vujanović and Bojana Cvejić**
Book presentation of *Toward a Transindividual Self*, by Ana Vujanović and Bojana Cvejić | With guests Sruti Bala, Marija Cetinić and Antonella Fittipaldi.
- 19 June **Y2K: A conversation with Colette Shade**
A conversation to discuss Shade's work, the relevance of history and memory in contemporary culture and politics, and the significance of digital culture. Organized by Gavin Mueller.
- 20 June **Global Africa Book Salon**
The ASCA Global Africa Reading group's final seminar event with Andrea Pollio and Maria Repnikova. Organized by Fairuzah Atchulo and Johanna von Pezold.
- 24 June **Fanon at 100, or the Pragmatics of Freedom: Aesthetics, Care, Psychoanalysis, and Revolution**
Event to commemorate the centennial of Frantz Fanon's birth organized by Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken and Sanjukta Sunderason.
- 26-27 June **Feminist Philosophy, Now and Then**
Workshop organized by the Philosophy & Public Affairs Capacity group with support from the Philosophy Department of the University of Amsterdam, the Duitsland-Institut, the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, and the Nederlandse Onderzoeksschool Wijsbegeerte (OZSW).
- 30 June **Yet another War: Unpacking Israel's Attack on Iran**
Teach-in on the recent Israel's war on Iran, organized by the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis together with the Amsterdam Centre for Middle Eastern Studies (ACMES).
Speakers: Leila Faghfour Azar, Ladan Rahbari, Shahin Nasiri.
Moderator: Ali Hamdan.
- 3 July **Defending Critical Education in Authoritarian Times**
Organized by the Philosophy and Public Affairs Capacity

Group and the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) | Speakers: Marjolein Lanzing, Shahin Nasiri, Yolande Jansen, Stefan Niklas, Yonathan Listik, Daniel Loick, Thomas Nys, Yorgos Karagiannopoulos, Michael Thomas, and Jana Cattien.

- 7 July **Global Perspectives on GenAI & Creativity**
Workshop at the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), UvA, in collaboration with the University of Toronto & ASCA organized by Thomas Poell.
- 9 July **Revolutionary People's Artist, Poet, Anti-caste Activist from India**
Lecture-performance with Sambhaji Bhagat.
- 29 August **Ambient Propaganda**
Exhibition Curated by Marc Tuters, Lesia Kulchynska & Boris Noordenbos
- 9 September **Moments of Meaning-Making On Anachronism, Becoming, and Conceptualizing**
Launch of Mieke Bal's 50th book with: Marlene Dumas, Tingting Hui, Maaïke Meijer, Abram de Swaan, Roos Theuws, and Mieke Bal.
- 11 September **How to Turn Your PhD Dissertation into a Book**
Seminar by Alf Grunvald Nilsen (University of Pretoria) organized by Fairuzah Atchulo.
- 12 September **On the Southern Interregnum: Hegemonic Projects in a Turbulent Conjuncture**
Global Africa seminar organized by Fairuzah Atchulo hosts Alf Grunvald Nilsen (University of Pretoria). Moderated by Tommy Tse.
- 15 September **Reality Shifting: Valentina Tanni - Exit Reality: Vaporwave, Backrooms, Weirdcore, and Other Landscapes Beyond the Threshold**
Esoteric Media Reading Group organized by Sara Gelao and Amir Vudka.
- 16 September **A Critical Theory of Venture Capital**
Speaker event with dr. Olivier Jutel (University of Otago) organized by Gavin Mueller.

- 22 September **Videographic Criticism and Reflexive Footage**
Workshop by Jason Mittell, organized by Jaap Kooijman.
- 22 September **Aristotelian Naturalism about the Good**
Talk by Dhananjay Jagannathan, Associate Professor, Hunter College, City University of New York, organized by Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken.
- 25 September **The Portrait of a Lady: Sketching a “True Likeness” in Tang Xianzu’s “Peony Pavilion”**
Contesting Critical Histories Series | Speaker: Shengyu WANG. Organized by Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken.
- 25 September **Models of Black Thought**
Philosophy Department Annual Opening of the Semester Lecture 2025, by Michael Thomas. Chair: Monique Roelofs.
- 1 October **Toward a Theory of Myth Critique**
Carmen Lea Dege is guest speaker in the Philosophy and Public Affairs seminar coordinated by Jana Cattien.
- 1 October **Capitalism 2.0: Political Economy in Contemporary Critical Theory**
Reading Group organized by Marc Farrant, Ben Moore and Steyn Bergs.
- 2 October **ASCA Postdoc Meeting**
- 2 October **ASCA PhD Meeting**
- 6 October **Filmscreening 'Class Outside' with paneltalks**
Organized by Aylin Kuryel.
- 6-8 October **Afrovibes Festival | Discourse/Context**
Afrovibes Festival 2025, in partnership with the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA).
- 8 October **Potentialities: Between Thinking and Feeling**
RMeS/ASCA seminar comprising 6 sessions between October 2025 and June 2026, organized by Sudeep Dasgupta.
- 8 October **IDFA & Decolonial Futures: Cinema Under Siege #3**
In a new collaboration, Decolonial Futures and Het Documentaire Paviljoen explore the multifaceted

relationship between cinema and (de)coloniality. Co-organized by Nadica Denic.

- 13-14 October **More-Than-Human Deliberation: Moving towards Justice with Animals, Plants and Other Earth Beings**
Online Workshop organized by Matthias Kramm, Eva Meijer, Lucia C. Neco.
- 15 October **On Self-Preservation and Speaking Out: A Young Hegelian, Feminist Response to University Censorship.**
Philosophy and Public Affairs hosted the SW*IP-NL (Society for Women* in Philosophy Nederland & Vlaanderen)
Academic Lecture with Rae Aumiller.
- 16 October **The Anthropometric Record: On Legal Branding And the Production of Social Death in the Postcolony**
Abolitions Democracies Seminar presentation Safae El Khannoussi.
- 23 October **The ‘mere’ alternative: culture, aesthetics, sensuality... and the remains of the utopian**
Lecture and Master Class by Malcolm James, Co-Director of Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies, New Tendencies in Critical Theory series organized by Murat Aydemir, Aylin Kuryel, and Noa Roei.
- 23 October **Legal Bodies: Women, Economies, and the Law in the Eighteenth-Century Novel**
English Department Lecture by Dr. Jolene Zigarovich, organized by Michael Miller.
- 24 October **Bridging Wor(l)ds: Future-proofing the Languages and Cultures Sector in Dutch Higher Education**
National Conference of the sector plan Languages and Cultures, University of Amsterdam, co-organized by Alice Fleerackers.
- 24 October **Cultural Analysis in the World**
SCCS-ASCA Workshop. Organized by Charlotte Frazer, Malcolm James, Naaz Rashid, Ben Highmore, Aylin Kuryel, and Murat Aydemir.
- 28 October **The Materialities of Television**
Inspired by Ramón Lobato’s forthcoming book, this seminar

session on Materialities of Television asks: What happens when we apply a materialist lens to television research?
Organized by Frédérique Khazoom and Markus Stauff

- 30 October **Utopia and Social Conflict**
Public lecture and workshop with William Paris (Philosophy, UToronto) organized by Michael Thomas.
- 4 November **The Civic Infrastructure of Torture: Medical Ethics in Israel, From Hunger Strikes to Sde Teiman**
Lecture by Professor Hagar Kotef, organized by Jana Cattien.
- 6 November **Attributing Agency: Herzog's Encounters at the End of the World**
Talk by Martin Blumenthal organized by Ansgar Mohnkern.
- 6 November **Cultural Imagination and the Legacy of Colonialism**
Framer Framed hosts an evening organized by historian Karwan Fatah-Black and literary scholar Marrigje Paijmans.
- 6-8 November **2025 World Picture Conference: Direction**
International conference organized by Abraham Geil, Rhys Jones, and Jacob Engelberg in collaboration with the University of Toronto and NICA.
- 7 November **Breath and Soul in Transit: The Art of Rukai Artist Eleng Luluan**
Workshop organized by Xinyi Zheng and Halbe Kuipers with Prof. Dr. Ching-yeh Hsu, University of Taipei.
- 7 November **Rerooting in the Polder**
Artistic Research Research Group Excursion to Casco Art Institute in Utrecht to visit and discuss the exhibition Rerooting in the Polder.
- 10 November **Bourgeois Coldness**
We Never Have Had Sex seminar with Henrike Kohpeiß.
Organized by Marija Cetinic.
- 12 November **Synthetic data: the real subsumption of data production**
Masterclass with Dr. James Steinhoff (University College Dublin), organized by the Alsymmetries research project, coordinated by Claudio Celis Bueno.

- 12 November **Critical AI: On reading machine learning**
The Critical AI Seminar series, organized by Anna Schjøtt Hansen, Tobias Blanke, and Dieuwertje Luitse started with an invited talk by Louise Amoore and Alexander Campolo.
- 14 November **The Afterlives of Non-Alignment: Memory, Legacy, and Contemporary Resonances**
Event organized by Sruti Bala, Nika Cimperšek Bukinac | Speakers: Christian Guerematchi, Sergej Kreso, Paul Stubbs, Mila Turajlić (joining virtually).
- 14 November **Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theorists**
ASCA and CAFP book launch event for the second edition of *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theorists*, edited by Agnès Rocamora and Anneke Smelik.
- 16 November **Echoing Travelogues: The Beyond and Us**
Concert project led by Amsterdam-based ASCA PhD, composer, and performer Emine Bostancı.
- 19 November **Book Launch: Exposing the Film Apparatus: Global Laboratory Perspectives**
Edited by Giovanna Fossati and Annie van den Oever – published by Amsterdam University Press in the Framing Film Series.
- 20 November **Herlambang Bayu Aji - Macan-macan Lewung**
ARRG Seminar: Artist Herlambang Bayu Aji presented his video installation Macan-macan Lewung.
- 20 November **Beijing Queer Film Festival and the Art of Failure, including a QA with filmmaker and curator Jenny Wu Man.**
Screening of "Our Story: 10-year Guerrilla Warfare of Beijing Queer Film Festival" (2012, dir Yang Yang, 42mins), QA with guest Jenny Wu Man (BJQFF). Moderated by Andy Zhu.
- 20 November **Television at the Swiss Stock Market. Data Flow and Money Flow in the Electronic Age**
Marie Sandoz is guest in the Useful Television Standing Seminar, organized by Anne-Katrin Weber, University of Lausanne, and Markus Stauff.
- 21 November **Histories and Materialities of Second-Hand Clothes**
Session of the Global Africa Reading Group organized by

- Fairuzah Atchulo. Speakers are Mwangi Mwaura (University of Oxford) and Jiaying Tu (University of Amsterdam).
- 21 November **Japanese Studies research seminar**
Organised by Carolyn Birdsall and Bruno Luberti.
- 21 November **The Countryside Imagined / Het platteland in verbeelding**
Book Launch Rural Imaginations for a Globalized World (Brill 2025), editors Esther Peeren and Tjalling Valdés-Olmos.
- 24 November **Gail and Bharat**
Screening of the documentary film *Gail and Bharat* directed by Somnath Waghmare, followed by Q&A.
- 27 November **1st Forum for Film Education**
Organized by Blandine Joret and Thijs Witty
- 27 November **Worlding Beyond Wording #1**
ARRG In collaboration with Julia Stoll and Vox Pop two-part series on neurodiverse artistic research with artists Vera Lelie and Renske Tiermesma.
- 2 December **The Queerness of Babies: A Queer Theory of Drives?**
panel + workshop organized by the Queer Analysis research group with psychoanalyst Marie Couvert.
- 4 December **Jane Austen in the World at 250**
Celebration of the 250th birth anniversary of Jane Austen with this online symposium bringing together speakers from India, the Netherlands, the UK, and the USA to consider what it means to read and respond to Austen's works in the twenty-first century and as part of the past, present, and future of world literatures in English.
- 4 December **Stories from Tomorrow: Sinophone Imaginations of Resilient Futures**
Workshop organized by Jori Snels, Jeroen de Kloet, Emily Shin-Jie Lee, Jiyoung Kim, in collaboration with Framer Framed.
- 5 December **RPA Decolonial Futures Workshop & Roundtable | Leanne Betasamosake Simpson**
Leanne Betasamosake Simpson engaged in conversation on her recent book *Theory of Water* () with UvA scholars John

Taukave, Nawal Mustafa, and Said Ortega Rosales followed by a discussion with the workshop participants.

- 8 December **Maroon Cosmopolitics**
Workshop organized by Halbe Kuipers with Prof. Dr. Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha, Museu Nacional, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and filmmakers Tolin Alexander, Lonnie van Brummelen, and Siebren de Haan.
- 9 December **Digital simulation of work: from training technology to the imagined future of actual workplaces via television**
Guilherme Machado is guest in the Useful Television Standing Seminar, organized by Anne-Katrin Weber, University of Lausanne, and Markus Stauff.
- 10 December **Visualizing Film History: Film Archives and Digital Scholarship**
Book launch organized by the Research Group 'Moving Images: Preservation, Curation, Exhibition' led by Floris Paalman and Giovanna Fossati.
- 10 December **Hands-on Zotero Tutorial**
Tutorial offered by Niels ten Oever and Stefania Milan.
- 11 December **Screening: Muman Minggil**
Organized by the Documenting Audibilities x Auralities Seminar.
- 11 December **“What of the Future?”: Affect, Media, and the Desire for Foreknowledge**
Master Class and English Department Lecture by Aleks Prigozhin organized by Michael Miller and Nicholas Carr.
- 12 December **A conversation on Hannah Arendt and the erosion of statehood, human rights, and belonging in the 21st century**
Organized by Shahin Nasiri and Nawal Mustafa in collaboration with Goethe-Institut.

New Groups

ASCA PhD Writing Café

You are all welcome to the ASCA PhD Writing Café every week from September onwards.

An informal and supportive space dedicated to advancing your dissertation progress. Work alongside fellow PhD researchers, share insights, and pursue your writing goals in a focused and friendly environment away. | Organized by Shekoufeh Behbehani, Luc Marraffa, and Joe van der Eerden.

Whether you are drafting chapters, revising sections, or simply looking for accountability, this space offers encouragement, motivation, and a sense of community. Each session held weekly on Wednesdays from 9:00 to 17:00, begins with a brief check-in and ends with time to discuss writing challenges and share strategies. Let's make dissertation writing less solitary and more productive together.

Capitalism 2.0: Political Economy in Contemporary Critical Theory

Reading Group organized by Marc Farrant, Ben Moore and Steyn Bergs

Since the 2008 financial crash there has been a veritable explosion of publishing in the area of political economy, with writers from various disciplinary backgrounds contributing to an ongoing discourse that seeks to reframe our present beyond the capitalist realism of a neoliberal age; an age defined by a “disenchantment of the political by the economic”. With the second Trump victory in 2024, the post-crash zombified murmuring of progressive neoliberalism has finally ceased. In this new multi-polar, populist and authoritarian world, what comes after neoliberal capitalism? It has perhaps never been more central to the work of critique to question rentier and extractivist forms of economic exploitation, not least since economist thinking threatens the university itself as an institution, but also that such thinking has never been more central to the ethnonationalist projects that are a hallmark of the postliberal era of the 2020s. This group will explore contemporary theoretical takes on this question, investigating the various labels posed as alternatives for refiguring the present, some of which include: Technofeudalism, Neofeudalism, Cybernetic Capitalism, Postcapitalism, Vulture Capitalism, Too Late Capitalism, Technocapitalism, New Capitalism, Platform Capitalism. This group will also explore classical texts to open up the background to these recent regroupings and reformulations, for example Marx, but also the work of neoclassical economists and self-styled neoliberals (Hayek, Friedman).

To obtain the readings and join the mailing list, please write to b.p.moore@uva.nl and m.w.farrant@uva.nl.

New Tendencies in Critical Theory

New Tendencies in Critical Theory is an annual speaker series inviting researchers and students in cultural analysis to evaluate emerging, returning, or fading tendencies in critical theory. Organized by Jeff Diamanti and Marija Cetinic in collaboration with the Supply Chain Criticism seminar hosted by ASCA Political Ecologies.

Facilitated by coordinators of BA, MA, and rMA programs in cultural analysis, the series aims to galvanising shared vocabularies and habits of critique across the larger teaching and research communities. Previous speakers include Beverley Best and Sianne Ngai.

Potentialities: Between Thinking and Feeling

RMeS/ASCA Seminar organized by Sudeep Dasgupta / The seminar comprises 6 sessions between October 2025 and June 2026.

The seminar focuses on the tension between thinking and feeling as a crucial resource for understanding the mediation of politics and culture. This tension has often been lost in the “turn to affect”. The seminar reorients the politics of feeling by setting it into relation with thought, concepts and reasoning. Rather than finesse varied forms of “affect theory”, the seminar constructs a *mise-en-scène* within which thinking and feeling, reasoning and sensing, are explicitly staged as fractious interlocutors. The tension between thinking and feeling will be understood for their potential to generate forms of knowledge rather than as a block to action. Three broad perspectives frame the seminar: firstly, to engage with a much longer history of affect, feeling and sensorial experience from the specific vantage point of critical theory; secondly, to relate the question of feeling and the body in relation to post-structuralism and affect theory; lastly, close readings of texts in philosophy, aesthetics and media studies from queer, postcolonial, and feminist perspectives to rethink the relation between thinking and feeling. This theoretical focus will be concretized by looking at cultural objects and practices where the tension between thinking and feeling is staged. Media in many forms, from literature to film, photography to art in general, will be engaged with, as they relate to specific political struggles.

The Ludification of Vision

Seminar Series organized by Mathieu Li-Goyette and Toni Pape.

We explore the ways in which early comics artists pioneered new visual techniques to engage, educate, and challenge audiences. In the late 19th and early 20th century, artists like Frank Beard, J. H. Howard, and Winsor McCay approached the page as a complex interface that could educate and entertain audiences at the same time. Indeed, an important goal of this period was to train the audience's media literacy through playful means, often combining the written word with visual realism and an oral commentary in the case of live performances.

ASCA Critical Animal Studies Research Group

Organized by Divya Nadkarni and Rochelle Villani

The discipline of *critical animal studies* functions as an analytic to understand the politics of oppression and marginalization in the broader sense, extending beyond the sociopolitical world of the human-animal. This Critical Animal Studies (CAS) research group i) aims to develop a critical understanding of the systematic oppression nonhuman animals face in a world dominated by corporate interests; ii) it invites us to think through the interconnectedness of patriarchy, imperialism, speciesism, capitalism, sexism and racism; iii) it asks what alternative and emancipatory forms of social and political life nonhuman lifeworlds might teach us in this contemporary moment of exacerbated political, economic and ecological violence.

CAS's activities in 2025-2026 focus on the ways in which we cohabit with nonhuman life in urban spaces, and what kind of emancipatory politics we can imagine with nonhuman perspectives. We ask: How are non-human animals represented in media and culture and through what language? Where do concepts like 'crazy cat lady' and 'domesticated animal' come from? How did colonial and capitalist logics transform our landscapes into productive territory, and whose lives have been erased? In what ways can we explore more-than-human-agency and decolonial food systems? What does it mean to *touch* the body of a non-human animal? How can we rethink urban ecologies as sites of cohabitation and kinship, not extraction or mere utility? Ecofeminist and decolonial thought are intrinsic to CAS. Through the group's rejection of anthropocentrism and institutionalized oppression, it takes an activist stance against any type of violence, like factory farming and animal testing. Instead, members are invited to reimagine multispecies futures shaped by curiosity, care and kinship.

CAS's ecofeminist and decolonial approach fits perfectly within cultural analysis, and offers a unique approach to examining today's social, political and

ecological crises. In the Netherlands, CAS is still niche, though the discipline has been growing a lot internationally in recent years. It would be fruitful to start this research group at NICA to bring together scholars in the Netherlands who are already working with CAS, and to build a solid foundation for new research in the field.

Esoteric Media

Reading Group organized by Sara Gelao and Amir Vudka

Observing the contemporary epistemic shift in the relationship between spirituality and technics, should we interpret this shift as signaling a spiritual crisis (as suggested by Bernard Stiegler) or a comeback of spiritual sensibilities? Or, as William James would argue, the sacred impulse simply reorients rather than vanishes in new epochs? What if these terms were never mutually exclusive, but always interwoven in an ongoing dialogue that has been reshaped with modern technology and media?

Esoteric Media emerges from the urge(ncy) of tackling such kinds of questions by challenging the prevailing narrative that dis-enchantment and de-sacralization are what largely defines current modes of thought, knowledge and experience. As George Bataille stated, "the more a culture denies myth, the more insistent the myth becomes in hidden, subterranean forms. Myth is never absent from life; it simply reappears in new forms, more deeply rooted in unconscious structures" (Bataille 1988 [1943], p. 132).

Today, the assumption that the triumph of technological rationality has condemned the spiritual imagination to the trash heap of history is increasingly being challenged. As Erik Davis argues in his book *TechGnosis*, myth, magic, and mysticism permeate the history of technology and have merged into the fabric of contemporary technoculture.

Esoteric Media refers to forms of media and modes of mediation that engage with occult dimensions of experience. This concept challenges the mainstream assumption that modern media are purely secular, materialist and rational, suggesting instead that contemporary media can serve as conduits for esoteric knowledge and spiritual exploration. By examining the ways in which digital, cinematic, and other media channels mediate not only information but also affective and spiritual states, Esoteric Media highlights how these platforms facilitate access to symbolic, mythic, and quasi-mystical realms of thought. In this sense, Esoteric Media emerges from the need to understand the spiritual or sacred elements that persist within modern media systems, operating beneath or alongside their visible functions.

Working as a thinking hub, this reading group aims to inquire into modern processes of world-making ['worlding'] (Heidegger, Deleuze, Haraway,

Stengers) as related to different ‘esoteric’ practices of thought-action, in the attempt to challenge western worldviews conceiving (technical) reality and its spiritual rhythms as disjointed parts. In other words, the manifestation of technicity (Simondon) and that of sacrality (Mircea Eliade) are to be resituated as processes and networks (re-)founding the world, jointly and similarly. Such a quest goes beyond the mere exploration of mythical figures (the mystic, the shaman, or the prophet) and religious or mystical traditions (alchemy, astrology, or Hermeticism), since we are not only interested in understanding esoteric media as a fixed category, but also, by flipping it around, in navigating the esoteric affordances that media withhold at large – be them images, films, generative AI, or other techno-aesthetic mediations.

Form and (Dis)Order

ASCA Reading Group co-organized by Michael F. Miller and Stephan Besser

From perspective to narrative, database and beyond, symbolic forms organize experience and shape epistemic horizons. If Lev Manovich’s key insight was to recognize the entanglement of symbolic and technical form, we may now ask how (post)digital culture and seemingly limitless data flows generate a new desire for form in critical theory and cultural production. Situated at the intersection of literary theory, media theory, and the poetics of knowledge, this reading group will explore a wide range of symbolic and literary forms and their epistemic and ideological affordances. We will ask how various new formalisms understand terms such as structure, organization/disorganization, and order/disorder, and how these concepts travel across discourses and scales.

Speculative Fictions and (Non) Modern Futures

Reading group organised by Elio Baldi, Verónica Copello-Duque and Irene Villaescusa Illán.

We assume that all fiction is, indeed, a form of speculation therefore, in this reading group, we are particularly interested in the politics of such speculation and the forms that it can take. The umbrella term speculative fiction includes science fiction, utopian/dystopian fiction, feminist fiction and numerous other genres and writing modes. We think of speculative fiction as a mode of creating which not only focuses on science, technology and futurism but one that is also experimental, unfamiliar, posthuman.

We propose to engage with the concept of modernity and of the future through speculation. Human beings try to adapt to (anthropogenic) “slow violence” by adopting all kinds of future scenarios driven by dominant ideas on modernity, informed, mostly, by advances in science and technology

which generally display AI generated/controlled worlds, climate apocalypses and geoengineering in an increasingly technocratic Global North. But forms do speculative fictions about the future that are liberatory, decolonial and sustainable take? What about past and peripheral imaginations of the future? What imaginations of the future envision less 'futuristic' futures for both (human) animals and the planet?

Since 'modernity', 'human beings' and 'environment' are dynamic and plural notions, they need to be investigated critically, especially in a context in which neoliberal capitalism and techno-utopianism combine to create mostly conservative futuristic solutions that reproduce Western, patriarchal and anthropocentric worldviews.

These worldviews (re)produce an essentially monolithic idea of the future through linear notions of time and progress and extractivist and expansionist conceptions of space (conceptions that are more and more projected in another space to be conquered and claimed for nation states and megacorporations, such as the outer space and the deep seas). We want to study how speculative fictions from literature, film and other art forms employ a strategy of indirection to think through visions of the future that interrogate constructed identities and the gendered, racialized, and speciesist elements of our contemporary world.

In these seminar sessions we are also interested in diversifying our library by reading fiction works across languages and critical theory. In these seminars we would also like to explore the boundaries and porosities of (non) European texts and Western epistemologies in relation to transnational languages and transcultural texts.

The Queer Formalism Research Group

Organizers: Imogen Grigorovich, Jakob Henselmans, Samuel Ludmila Feline Constantin

Two provocations: *The history of queer theory is one of a disarticulated investment in form and formalism, and formalisms (can) produce queer readings of texts.* What is at stake, in short, is an unlikely encounter between methodology and politics, between a set of academic dispositions and a conceptual culture. That is the prompt for this reading group and the organizing principle behind the selection of texts we want to read together, which re(t)read queer theory and its central interventions in critical thinking through the spectre of its aesthetic investments, its wavering attachment to form, and its shy formalisms.

Two movements:

1) *Queerness to form(alisms)*. Queer theory's relationship to form and formedness, and to formalist reading practices, is at once disarticulated and smuggled into queer theory under various disguises. It is true that neither the Russian formalists of the 1920's nor the American New Critics of the 1950's spring to mind as particularly queer readers of literature. And yet our suggestion is that there is in queer theory an undertheorized element of such highly interested (and interesting!) readings of form. It is none other than Eve Sedgwick, after all, who tells of a childhood marked by "a kind of formalism, a visceral near-identification with the writing I cared for, at the level of sentence structure, metrical pattern, rhyme" ("Queer and Now," 1993). Entirely against a traditional understanding of who or what 'the formalist' is, she redescribes formalism as the trait of a "perverse reader." Lee Edelman likewise argues without condemnation that "formalism expresses the excessive element in any world that exposes that world as not-all" (*Bad Education*, 2022). And Leo Bersani succeeds his work on sex, homosexuality and AIDS ("Is the Rectum a Grave?," 1987) with a book dedicated entirely to formalist readings of Beckett, Rothko and Resnais (*Arts of Impoverishment*, 1993), as if to imply that there somehow exists an obvious and complete continuum between theorizing sexuality and formalist readings of art.

What, then, is this relationship between sex, sexuality and form; between queer theory and formalism? But if there is indeed one, how to think about the seeming opposition between queer theory's common celebrations of ambivalence (Berlant) and even formlessness (Halberstam), and the rigorous, methodological fascinations with form that formalism champions, with all its emphasis on the innocuous in objects: lines, rhymes, rhythms, shapes? How and where does (or should?) queerness encounter form(s), and queer theory formalism(s)? And what is finally at stake in neglecting such an encounter?

2) *Form(alisms) to queerness*. Recent strands of formalist scholarship, such as the work on methodology by Eugenie Brinkema, sound increasingly and remarkably queer. Brinkema's plea for a "radical formalism" attends to the "disaffordances" of form — its "capacity to trouble, disrupt, even void grounds of meaning, to render readings that are bad investments." Her work presents an unmistakable echo of queer theory's infatuation with bad educations, non-reproductions, failures, non-essentiality. At the same time, however, this queer-like formalist tendency stands in stark contrast with the work of other contemporary formalists, such as Anna Kornbluh and Caroline Levine. Both, in different voices, have recently turned to the promises of meaning and structure that form can afford. In urgent responses to crises of the university and politics (if not the world!), they call for a greater attendance to (theories

of) form for the purposes of critical and social betterment, to counter what Kornbluh has called critique's fatal retreat into the "beautiful fantasy of formless life." Indeed, what to think of queer theory's own contributions to that fantasy, with all its utopian emphases on breakdown, anarchitecture, disruption? And, more broadly: how can form be at once what escapes any definitive politics *and* what sounds so politically relevant?

"Form" has meant surface shape and inseparable essence, superficial part and inalienable whole. "Formalism" has been used to justify a retreat from history and politics and to argue for their return to critique. Our starting point is not any one definition but the minimal proposition that form makes up the world we inhabit, and that queer and trans theories at best offer tangential tools for accounting for that proposition. Expect, then, readings of both canonical and lesser known queer theory scholars matched with readings on political form, textual form, social structure, and methodological formalisms, ranging from literary studies (like Eric Savoy's "Primer on Queer Formalism") to Brinkema's work all the way back to, yes!, the New Critics and Russian formalists. These meetings open up, we hope, a different path through the central debates of contemporary theory, from issues of (anti)normativity to the antisocial and negativity, from destitution to infrastructure, in the spirit of an encounter with otherness that, in a phrase by Berlant and Edelman, "exceeds and undoes the subject's fantasmatic sovereignty."

Readings may include work by Lauren Berlant, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, José Esteban Muñoz, Helen Palmer, Sarah Ahmed, Robyn Wiegman, Judith Butler, Eva Hayward, Eliza Steinbock, Sybil Lamb, Rizvana Bradley, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, Luce Irigaray, Catherine Malabou, John Paul Ricco, David J. Getsy, William J. Simmons, Anna Kornbluh, Carolina Levine, and early and historical formalists.

2026 ASCA Awards

The 2026 ASCA Awards Committee, consisting of Fairuzah Atchulo, Selin Gerlek, and Ben Moore, has given awards to the following researchers: Yvette Lok Yee Wong, Laura Vermeeren, and Joost de Bloois.

ASCA Dissertation Award: Yvette (Lok Yee) Wong, *Wenyi and Its Discontents: A Study of Creative Practices and Politics in Hong Kong*



“Time will pass while our voice will last”

This is the opening quote from the abstract of this year’s Best ASCA Dissertation award. As someone still on my own painstaking journey of completing my dissertation, I was awed and equally motivated to not only read this year’s winning dissertation, but also the numerous dissertations produced by our illustrious PhD candidates – slash recent awarded Doctors. The competition was very tough and this award is certainly not given lightly. In that regard, I would personally like to thank and congratulate all of the candidates who defended their dissertations with integrity, grit and dedication and the various research they poured their whole hearts into complete. The dissertations from this year covered various theories, philosophies and empirics. Including old age and growing older; the ways writers create texts; the cultural policy and frameworks of producer-distributor relationships; theorising tonal jazz; dramaturgies and the Anthropocene; an examination of composers persecuted by the Nazis; clowning as an embodied performance, how openness, criticism and transparency can strengthen our public spheres; the role of prophecy and its influence on politics, culture, and national identity; how the culture of silence recreated in the aftermath of a disaster can stunt the revitalization of commemorative practices; how cybersecurity knowledge is produced and the ways this knowledge shapes political and social realities; the vibrancy of imagined futures of the Sinophone spheres; the interplay of environmental, technological, and socio-political factors that threaten the long-term survival of film collections; the distinct potentials of archiving a heterotopic space; challenging hegemonic negations of nature and culture; the ways journalists can strengthen their autonomy by

reflecting on their work; the derailment of BRI within the cinematic sector; and last but not least, reconceptualizing art as a mode of social critique. These dissertations are socially, politically, economically and academically poignant and rewarding on their own. But this year's winning dissertation confronts us as academics, researchers, journalists, practitioners and policy analysts to see ourselves as this – as creatives tasked with the ability and the burden to create, transform and trans-mutate the overlooked, the mundane, the interesting, the tedious, and even the obvious into works that speak with agency, urgency, the conviction to change, and the will to last. This winning dissertation does so by providing a distinguished lens through which to view the entanglements between creative practices, politics, culture and creative practitioners. And while we here in this room in the minutiae of our work may not always consider ourselves as creative practitioners, this winning dissertation challenges us all to think of ourselves as creative practitioners faced with confronting our futures, convictions, struggles, failures and even our discontents.

In this political, social, cultural and economic climate that we currently find ourselves, these confrontations are as especially timely. For they remind us that indeed, while time will surely pass, our voices and most certainly the work we dedicate ourselves to will last. Thus, it is with tremendous joy that I present this year's Best Dissertation Award to Yvette Wong Lok Yee for the dissertation of "Wenyi and Its Discontents: A study of Creative Practices and Politics in Hong Kong."

ASCA Article Award: Joost de Bloois, 'Forest passages': Narratives of withdrawal and ecological thought. *Social Science Information*.



We live under the sign of climate crisis: rising temperatures, mass extinction, burning forests, flooded cities. Land, sea and air are threatened on all scales. And at the center of this crisis are we, humans – destructive, extractive, and increasingly exhausted.

With this comes a relentless imperative: to “act now,” to save what can still be saved. But what if we ask a more unsettling question: what if this very call for action is itself part of the problem?

We also live in a time of overload and fatigue: climate reports, rolling crises, endless streams of information, alongside a growing sense that our modern political scripts have somehow “run out of steam” (Latour). This resonates with Latour’s claim that “we have never been modern”, and perhaps also with Bartleby’s quietly subversive response “I would prefer not to”.

This year’s winning article takes this ambivalence seriously. Rather than searching for yet another politics of acceleration or solutionism, it explores what it calls a “politics of withdrawal”: gestures of retreat, refusal, shelter, and recalibration that unfold around figures such as the hut or the forest.

Withdrawal here is not escapism or quietism, but a risky attempt to loosen our attachment to the technocratic and extractivist logics that produced the crisis itself. In this sense, the article asks whether ecological thought may require not simply new solutions, but different ways of inhabiting the world beyond the exhausted political scripts of modernity — while remaining attentive to the dangers of nostalgia and reactionary regression.

Precisely because this article captures these tensions with such conceptual richness and offers such a provocative language for our ambiguous present, we are delighted to present this year’s Best Article Award of our research school to Joost de Bloois, for the article “Forest passages: Narratives of withdrawal and ecological thought.”

ASCA Book Award: Laura Vermeeren, *Ink Studies: practices of everyday calligraphy in contemporary China*. NUS Press, 2025



This year’s winner of the ASCA Book Award brings together ancient tradition and modern media in an innovative and deeply engaged way. It asks us to think about how writing and art interact through a practice with deep roots, which is being transformed and reinvented in the context of a changing society and the growth of digital culture. It is a study with broad societal implications but also, in the best traditions of ASCA, is deeply personal, tracing an experiential journey of its author as much as a line of conceptual development.

I am delighted to present this year's award to Laura Vermeeren for the book *Ink Studies: Everyday Practices of Calligraphy in Contemporary China*, published by the National University of Singapore Press. During on her own experiences of learning calligraphy, Vermeeren takes us through five different ways of 'doing calligraphy' in modern China. What was once an elite and exclusive practice of a relatively small group of men, she shows us is now opening up to new people and new artistic and creative modes, but nonetheless remains shaped by its long history.

Ink Studies takes us from the process of learning calligraphy, with its links to discipline and imitation of respected traditional styles, to the everyday and playful art of 'water calligraphy', practised in parks across China each morning. She shows us ways that calligraphy seems to be loosening its connection to the characters on which it is based, and how it is being remediated via apps and the ubiquitous digital infrastructure of modern China. She also asks shows some of the ways in which calligraphy crosses over between art and advertising, shaping the modern urban environments of China today. The committee were deeply impressed with the depth, diligence and inventiveness of Vermeeren's work, which is itself a work of mediation between past and present, art and writing, social structures and individual experiences. We are very pleased to present the award to *Ink Studies*.

Dissertation Defenses

Suzanne Biewinga

Growing Older as an Experience. A Dialogical Inquiry into Truth and Meaning of Growing Older in the 21st Century 15 January 2025 | Supervisors: René Boomkens, Els van Wijngaarden (Radboud UMC)



Demographic developments and changing social and technological circumstances make growing older a different experience than in all previous centuries. A different experience than current cultural narratives would have us believe. Growing older is not staying 'young'. Nor is it just loss. What is the truth of growing older? And how can you assign meaning to it?

Philosopher Suzanne Biewinga investigates the possibility of a new formulation of the truth and meaning of growing older, in line with the experiences, insights, concerns and desires of older people themselves. In her philosophy workshop, she enters into dialogue with groups of older people about the truth and meaning of growing older. In interaction with these conversations, she studies the work of contemporary thinkers and scientists on the human experience as desiring, embodied, social and finite beings. Research into the philosophies of the Stoics and Epicureans from the Greco-Roman era offers a point of reference for innovative thinking in the present day. This creates a new semantic space: not an alternative standard story about growing older, but a linguistic, thinking and meeting space in which classical values and virtues are given contemporary and additional formulations. A plea for a social space for action, in which growing old appears as a life that older people can and want to live.

Suzanne Biewinga (1954), trained in guiding emancipation processes, worked professionally as a support worker for national patient organizations and as a coordinator of a hospice. After her working life, she studied philosophy at Radboud University in Nijmegen, specializing in ethical questions about growing older.

In the following years, she developed a methodology in her philosophy workshop to conduct a philosophical dialogue with older people, aimed at finding a suitable way of thinking and speaking about growing older. This resulted in a PhD research project at the University of Amsterdam. Her dissertation is written in Dutch. A public edition (also in Dutch) will be published by Boom Publishers by February 2025.

Floor Buschenhenke

Entering stories. Decoding born-digital fiction writing through keystroke logging

17 January 2025 | Supervisors: Karina van Dalen-Oskam, Luuk van Waes, Dirk van Hulle



On January 17th, 2025, ASCA-member Floor Buschenhenke will defend her thesis *Entering stories: decoding born-digital writing through keystroke logging*. This thesis delves into the intricate dynamics of digital writing processes to explore how eleven Dutch and Flemish fiction writers create their texts. The theoretical foundation stems from genetic criticism and writing studies. After an introduction of keystroke logging as a tool for recording digital writing, four archetypical writing strategies are used to characterise these writers' approaches. Then, a newly developed measure of non-linearity is applied to the processes, followed by an in-depth look at the role that revision plays. The core questions for this thesis are: How do cognitive and literary theories inform textual changes? How do writers structure their activities over time? What are the shared practices and unique methods of different writers?

Daphne Idiz

Streaming Giants and European Screen Production. Cultural Diversity, Creativity, and Dependence

29 January 2025 | Supervisors: Julia Noordegraaf, Thomas Poell



In light of the growing role of streaming giants like Netflix as global content commissioners, the central question of this thesis is: *how do global streaming TV services reshape cultural production in the European screen industries?* Employing a holistic conceptual model, this research investigates the complex interactions between cultural policy and regulatory frameworks; content, catalogues, and reception; production practices; and evolving producer-distributor relationships across European markets. Crucially, it moves beyond algorithmic and data-focused analyses by shifting the focus to cultural producers, who operate within and intricately negotiate this field of tension. To answer this question, the thesis builds on theory from media industry studies, production studies, information law, and platform studies. The methodological approach combines multiple research methods, including 17 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from five European countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, and Spain), textual analysis, quantitative research, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with media authorities, a Netflix representative, public broadcasters, producer and film associations, showrunners, producers, directors, and screenwriters, offering valuable insights into the changing media landscape.

This thesis contributes a conceptual framework for researching cultural production, a methodological approach for assessing content locality, and

critical examination of how streaming services impact local production cultures. Key findings include the challenges surrounding existing regulatory frameworks, the complexities of local content production for global streamers, and the power asymmetries between producers and streamers. This research highlights significant concerns around intellectual property rights, fair remuneration, and data transparency that directly impact cultural production and the dependence of cultural producers.

Barbara Bleij

An Annotated Theory of Tonal Jazz Harmony

12 February 2025 | Supervisor: Walter van der Leur



Photo: Nine IJff.

The dissertation presents a theory of tonal jazz harmony in which melodic, harmonic, and stylistic aspects of tonal jazz harmony are integrated and grounded in a solid theoretical foundation. The thesis includes an introduction to the work and its contexts, followed by a commentary on the harmony theory through extensive annotations.

The work's point of departure is that tonal jazz harmony is a specific variant of Western harmony and does not require a fundamentally new theoretical framework but, rather, crucial modifications of Western harmonic theory to accommodate and explain the musical phenomena adequately. Therefore, it adopts the *Harmonielehre*-format, a hybrid of speculative theory and pedagogical instruction. The work also touches upon key issues in jazz culture and jazz research, such as the long-standing questions of "ownership" and "entitlement" in jazz, gender, and the recent debates in the US around racism in and through music theory.

Alice Breemen

Dramaturgie van het antropoceen. Theatraliteit in transitie(s) (Dramaturgy of the Anthropocene. Theatricality in Transition(s))

4 March 2025 | Supervisors: Kati Röttger; Odile Heynders.



In this PhD project I research how dramaturgies of contemporary Dutch theatrical performances engage with issues related to the (concept of the) Anthropocene. Through practicing creative concepting (Van der Tuin and Verhoeff 2022), I develop an ontoepistemological understanding of the concept theatricality as tool of analysis. In each case study, this notion of ontoepistemological theatricality is at the core of the analysis of the dramaturgy of each performance in connection respectively with the following concepts representative of the Anthropocene: astronaut | pandemic | islands. Synthesized, the case studies' performance analyses form a collection of speculative future scenarios for living and dying in and after the Anthropocene, connected to central problems associated with climate change: dying forests, sea level rise, colonizing space, and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic. My PhD project aims to research these alternative climate change narratives for the Anthropocene, focusing on how theatre makers are applying theatrical strategies and developing new dramaturgies to make sense of this geological epoch in which the influence of humankind on the planet became visible.

Ira Solomatina

Politics and the political in women's fashion magazines: Perspectives from India, Russia and the USA

27 March 2025 | Supervisors: René Boomkens and Christine Delhaye



In the first quarter of the 21st century, fashion media's coverage of political and social issues, although still largely perceived as novel and unusual, has become ubiquitous. This thesis focuses on the increased visibility of political coverage in fashion media, exploring how politics and the political are expressed in fashion publications, and what change the newly sharpened focus on politics signifies in the genre of the fashion magazine. To address these questions, the research examines how fashion publications' political coverage relates to locally and globally shifting views on citizenship, activism, and civic duty. The study explores the conflation of spectacle, activism, consumption, and politics that characterises the current moment, alongside the exigencies, limitations, and historically gendered nature of fashion media. The study focuses on the time span between late 2019 and early 2023, and analyses political discourses in fashion media situating them within wider political and cultural contexts. It is based on data from three countries – India, Russia and the USA, and draws on examples from nine mainstream fashion and lifestyle publications for women.

Noortje de Leij

The Terms of Critique, On Art as Critique in October Journal

25 April 2025 | Supervisors: Mia Lerm-Hayes, Sven Lütticken



In 1976, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson founded *October*, a New York-based journal for art theory and criticism, allusively named after Serge Eisenstein's film *October: Ten Days that Shook the World*—about the October revolution. Aiming to reconcile late modernism's self-critical focus with socio-political concerns, the journal became a pivotal platform for reconceptualizing art as a mode of social critique. Yet despite its influence, *October's* foundational assumptions remain underexamined. Titled *The Terms of Critique*, this study interrogates the philosophical premises underlying *October's* conception of critique, focusing on two key paradigms: Krauss's poststructuralist deconstruction and Buchloh's Marxist-inspired immanent critique. By unpacking these interventions, the thesis also reveals their internal contradictions and proposes a new framework for thinking art as critique.

Pengan Hu

Derailing the Belt and Road: Film, Social Media Screen Culture, and Globalization from China.

19 mei 2025 / Supervisors: Jeroen de Kloet en Patricia Pisters



This PhD project examines the cultural dimensions of China's flagship geopolitical initiative—the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Rather than offering a comprehensive account of a meticulously planned project, the focus lies in how the BRI is continually derailed, particularly through its negotiation and contestation within the cinematic sector.

To trace these derailments, the project first situates the BRI within China's broader globalization strategy from a cultural perspective. By exploring why the initiative is named after the ancient Silk Road, it reveals how the BRI embodies China's new imagination of globalization. Building on this premise, the project also answers why such a new vision of globalization is so strongly desired — highlighting a shift in the country's cultural confidence.

Although China's imagined globalization may appear coherent in official discourse, my research also shows how it becomes fragmented in practice. For instance, at events such as the Silk Road International Film Festival, state narratives are met with competing actors pursuing their own agendas. I argue that such derailments are not only common but inevitable. In today's globalized world, China must frequently negotiate and compromise. It is precisely these moments of negotiation, contestation, and creative resistance that form the heart of this study.

Yvette (Lok Yee) Wong

Wenyi and Its Discontents: A Study of Creative Practices and Politics in Hong Kong

22 May 2025 | Supervisors: Jeroen de Kloet, Leonie Schmidt



“Time will pass while our voice will last,” I titled the conclusion of this project with this line of lyrics, which I wrote in 2022. This line points to a key question of this project: How and when is *wenyi* politically engaged in the protests in Hong Kong? With the accelerating integration into China, and a definite return to Beijing looming in the year 2047 (Sino-British Declaration 1984), the future is increasingly unspeakable. Whilst it is often claimed that the future belongs to the young, a group of young literary practitioners, *wenyi*, have been involved in and struggling with, if not failing, their engagement with the anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill movement in Hong Kong. This project asks when and how the creative practices of this group of *wenyi* practitioners—ranging from flash mobs to art, and from music to poetry – and politics intersect during the Anti-ELAB protests.

Timon Ramaker

Journalistiek onder druk. Versterken van autonomie door reflectie

3 June 2025 | Supervisors: Mark Deuze and Jan van der Stoep



Journalism is under pressure. This dissertation argues that journalists can strengthen their autonomy by reflecting on their work. The main research question is: How can reflective practices, both formal and informal, in the journalistic production process strengthen journalists' professional autonomy? To answer this question, this study employs action research. Journalism is often described in the literature as an a-reflective profession. This study complicates that idea by showing that there are many different forms of reflection across the journalism field, ranging from individual to collective and from informal to formal. However, many insights gained through reflection are not applied to the work process. Additionally, there is the organizational paradox that each form of reflection requires design, yet too much organization conflicts with autonomy. Based on interviews, focus groups, and an intervention study, this dissertation presents three principles for developing an open learning culture: psychological safety, facilitative leadership, and an experimental approach.

Monique Peperkamp

Techno-critical Dimensions of Art: Challenging Hegemonic Negations of Nature

16 June 2025 | Supervisors: Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, Jeff Diamanti, Peter Sonderen.



In this thesis I inquire into the ways in which art and theory have reflected and challenged the changing relationship between nature and culture from a position of concern for ecological breakdown. More in specific, I develop a critique of the hybridist naturalisation of technologisation and its aesthetics of an ecology without nature. To critical, social-ecological thinkers and environmentalists the concept of nature has been a tool to convey the need to limit (post-)modern techno-culture that not only produces solutions but simultaneously continues to ignore and increase ecological hazards, injustice

and harm, while narrowing the scope, space and time of possible responses. Part of this culture, works of art and social ecological (art) practices nonetheless convey a wider, both sensitive and rational understanding eluding the merely efficient. They (re)present a multitude of situated and connective, regenerative and creative possibilities, and counter the alledged incapacity to take responsibility individually and collectively.

Lennart Ritz

Klangspuren aus dem Pazifik: Klangepistemologien im Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv

10 September 2025 | Defended at the Georg-August-Universität in Göttingen

Supervisors: B. Abels (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), Julia Kursell,

Barbara Titus



I analyse the Phonogramm-Archiv at the beginning of the 20th century as a heterotopic space and explore its current potentials. In the archive, the recordings from many different parts of the world were collected, organized and made audible. In this way, the macrocosm of the world's musics was mapped in the microcosm of the archive. By musicological analysis of the recordings, hierarchical relations between different regions of the world were established. However, the Phonogramm-Archive as a heterotopic space also has potential to undermine and reshape these knowledge systems. As a place of filled with sonic monuments, the archive today can be understood as a place of remembrance of disciplinary and colonial history as well as a hub of global intertwining history.

Martino Cipriani

Audiovisual Archiving in Mainland Southeast Asia. Analog and Digital Preservation Challenges of Thai and Vietnamese Film Heritage

24 September 2025 | Supervisors: Giovanna Fossati and Floris Paalman



The thesis examines the preservation of audiovisual heritage in Mainland Southeast Asia, with a focus on the Thai Film Archive and the Vietnam Film Institute. It examines the interplay of environmental, technological, and socio-political factors that threaten the long-term survival of film collections and shape preservation strategies across the region. The research focuses on the transition from analog to digital technologies in archival practices, highlighting that archival efforts are deeply embedded in local cultural values and involve ongoing negotiations among regional and global stakeholders. While digitization improves accessibility, it also raises concerns about technological obsolescence, the lack of specialized expertise, and precarious digital carriers and infrastructures. To address these challenges, the thesis advocates for sustainable, context-specific approaches, including safeguarding analog film processing knowledge, regional cooperation, shared infrastructures, and community engagement, to secure the legacy of Southeast Asian film heritage.

Jori Snels

Sinofuturism as Worlding: Imagining Futures Sinophone Digital Art | 1

October 2025 | Supervisors: Jeroen de Kloet, Esther Peeren



“Sinofuturism as Worlding: Imagining Futures in Sinophone Digital Art” responds to the prevalence with which futures of the Sinophone sphere are imagined in either techno-utopian or techno-orientalist terms and as determined by either China or “the West.” The study asks: How does Sinophone digital art imagine technology-infused futures in response to techno-utopian and techno-orientalist imaginations of those futures? To answer this question, it adopts a theoretical framework that consists of three concepts: Sinophone, worlding, and Sinofuturism. They are mobilized to analyze how future-oriented Sinophone digital art brings into being technology-infused futures of Sinophone words. The chapters focus on four themes that are prevalent in imaginations of such futures: connectedness, embodiment, self-care, and artificial intelligence. By adopting a method of cultural analysis grounded in art historical and ethnographic methods, a more comprehensive understanding is produced of the multifaceted futures that are being imagined and brought into being across the Sinophone sphere.

Claudia Aanonsen

The technopolitics of cybersecurity. Sociotechnical configurations, epistemic devices, and the production of knowledge

17 October 2025 | Supervisors: Stefania Milan, Rocco Bellanova



Claudia Emilie Aanonsen's thesis critically examines how cybersecurity knowledge is produced and how it shapes political and social realities. It challenges dominant, technocratic approaches that frame cybersecurity as a purely technical matter, arguing that such views obscure the everyday practices and power relations embedded in security technologies. By drawing on Critical Security Studies (CSS) and Science and Technology Studies (STS), her thesis reveals how cybersecurity reproduces hierarchies, legitimises surveillance, and transforms ordinary practices into tools of political control. Ultimately, the thesis calls for a rethinking of cybersecurity that remains open to democratic debate and acknowledges the sociotechnical processes through which insecurity is constructed.

Yuko Marubayashi

Silence After Catastrophe: Disaster Survivor Witnessing in Contemporary Japan

20 October 2025 | Supervisors: Gaston Franssen, Ernst van Alphen



This dissertation focuses on the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake survivor/izoku (family members of the deceased) testimonies, representations, art works, and collaborative acts of witnessing to examine how cultural silence

during the aftermath of disaster is created under the public discourse of revitalization and commemoration practices. The author examines transformative modes of survivor/izoku witnessing to uncover discrepancies between survivor/izoku's memories and other public memory, and to contemplate this crisis of interpersonal and intergenerational memory transmission. The author argues that these alternative acts of survivor/izoku witnessing become processes that contribute to breaking through the crisis of disaster memory transmission and the lack of forgiveness and healing in contemporary Japanese Shin Buddhist culture.

Vasilis Alexiadis

Prophecy and Power: The Politics of Popular Eschatology in Contemporary Greece |

29 October 2025 | Supervisors: Maria Boletsi, Boris Noordenbos



This dissertation examines the role of prophecy in contemporary Greek Orthodox Christianity and its influence on politics, culture, and national identity. Prophecies, framed as imminent visions of the End, circulate through charismatic monks, media, and popular culture, shaping responses to crises, conflict, and war. Drawing on discourse analysis, structural analysis, and ethnography, the study shows how prophetic narratives both critique the realities of neoliberal austerity and mobilize nationalist sentiment, legitimizing systems of oppression, exclusionary politics, and ethnoreligious authority. Far from marginal, they function as powerful meaning-making practices that connect past, present, and future through conspiratorial and apocalyptic lenses, shaping social and political life in Greece and beyond.

Carine Alders

Caught in a web of silence. Composers in Dutch music history 1920-1955 and the impact of World War II

29 October 2025 | Supervisors: Julia Kursell, Rob van Laarse, Philomeen Lelieveldt



This thesis examines the lives, works and networks of composers in the Netherlands who were persecuted by the Nazis. The first section deals with the interwar period and factors that blocked access to music historiography. The second section deals with the impact of Nazi rulings on performing opportunities, source production, networks and narratives. The third section addresses how performance opportunities were influenced by a national narrative on victory and resistance, causing victims of the Holocaust to be largely excluded from commemoration. With the help of biographical research and a network approach, this dissertation uncovers aspects of the history of composing in the Netherlands that have received little attention so far. Guided by Michel-Rolph Trouillot's theory on silencing in historiography it looks at performing opportunities, source production and narratives, and adds network analysis. Following theories on canonisation by Kerman, Caswell and Citron, this thesis also focuses on documentary recuperation to broaden the canon of composing in the Netherlands.

Ariane Gros

Performative Figures and Political Affordances: Towards a Critical History of the Clown in Western Media and Performances

2 December 2025 | Supervisors: Sruti Bala, Peter Marx (University of Cologne), Stephan Packard (University of Cologne) co-tutela PhD with defense at UoC on, awarded 'summa cum laude' at UoC and 'cum laude' at UvA



The dissertation offers critical perspectives on the history of clowning by exploring its colonial legacies and oppressive performativity. To reflect on clowning as one of several exhibitory practices that reinforced systems of social domination by shaping collective imaginaries, the study theorises the clown as a performative figure, as both a figure in cultural representations as well as an embodied performance. It explores the tension between the performance of the body, constructed as failing and laughable, and the narration of an 'authentic' interiority in clown education theories and fiction. By reflecting on the clown's affordances and their political malleability, the research opens up on how a performative figure can reflect social or political changes, and how their affordances are obscured or activated over time, at odds with an evolutionary conception of cultural history.

Dissertation Defense: Daan Roovers

Critical Publicity and its Epistemic Challenges; A Philosophical Approach to Public Opinion Formation in a Post-Digital Public Sphere

3 December 2025 | Supervisors: Yolande Jansen, Markus Stauff



In her dissertation, Roovers explores the epistemic challenges to public opinion formation in an era where social media and digital platforms dominate public debate. Are the classic normative requirements of the *critical public sphere* - as conceived by thinkers like Habermas in the 1960s - still applicable in today's fragmented online world, or do they need to be rethought?

Roovers introduces the concept of *throughput legitimacy*: what matters is not only who participates (*input*) or the outcomes of public debate (*output*), but above all *how* public discussions unfold: the machinery of publicity. How is the confrontation between different viewpoints organised? How are information and expertise processed in the debate? And how is the problem definition shaped?

Through three examples - the role of influencers during the COVID-19 pandemic, activist movements around climate change, and investigative journalism networks such as Bellingcat - Roovers shows how new forms of publicity, when open, critical, and transparent, can strengthen a resilient, inclusive, and reflective public sphere.

Grants & Awards

ASCA members were awarded over 2,5 million Euros for their research initiatives.

Marjolein Lanzing	NWO Veni	
Divya Nadkarni	NWO Veni	320,000
Fernando van der Vlist	NWO Veni	320,000
	UKRI – BRAID	320,000
Fieke Jansen	Demonstrator	
Paula Helm	EU Horizon	112,514
Sruti Bala & Divya Nadkarni	Open Science Meeting	2,950
Tommy Tse	Robert Ho Family Foundation Global Grant	50,000
Stefania Milan	Leverhulme Research Centre	663,945
Fieke Jansen & Niels ten Oever	Omidyar Network 2	396,296
Alireza Kenari	NWO PhD in Humanities	229,340
Richard Rogers	Dutch Government	49,996
Hemen Heidari	CIIC Innovation agenda	3,327.50
Helen Grogan	Samstag Scholarship	39,788.40
Total		2.564.539,90

Stefania Milan KNAW Member



(photo: Kirsten van Santen)

Stefania Milan has been selected as new member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). KNAW members - leading scientists from all disciplines - are chosen on the basis of their scientific achievements.

Stefania Milan is Professor of Critical Data Studies at the Faculty of Humanities, Media Studies. Her research highlights the darker sides of a data and algorithm-

driven society. Milan explores how technological developments, such as artificial intelligence, can undermine democratic processes.

She approaches these topics by integrating perspectives from the humanities, social sciences and computer science. With her interdisciplinary method, Milan sheds light on the consequences of AI for vulnerable groups, both in the West and the Global South. Her work is not only conceptual, Milan actively collaborates with stakeholders to contribute to just and sustainable solutions.

Veni Marjolein Lanzing

Just not Fair: Towards a normative framework for AI and algorithmic surveillance technologies (ASTs) from the perspective of structural injustice



Facial recognition and risk prediction algorithms (ASTs) are increasingly used across social domains. Unfortunately, they can lead to 'algorithmic discrimination'. 'Algorithmic fairness' is an inadequate concept for addressing it. Unlike structural injustice theories, it neglects the social structures in which algorithms are embedded, like institutions. This blinds us to important roots of discrimination such as unequal power relations. Therefore, building on three case studies, this project develops a new, normative framework for assessing ASTs from the perspective of structural injustice.

Veni Divya Nadkarni

Friendship as Political Practice: Reorienting Solidarity in a Globalised World



This project explores how literary imaginations of friendship can help us rethink our relationships, strengthen our communities, and support democracies in troubled times. Using insight from novels and short fiction from Non-Western contexts, I show how these imaginaries of friendship can challenge old ideas and spark new ways of coming together. Through this fresh view, this project aims to inspire a stronger, more resilient form of democratic solidarity that meets the challenges of growing polarisation, authoritarian threats, and the instability of our world.

Veni Fernando van der Vlist

Who controls AI? Power, platforms, and Europe's digital future



Big Tech companies play a dominant role in shaping artificial intelligence (AI) globally by controlling the infrastructure and financial systems that underpin it. This research investigates how these companies integrate AI technologies into different industries, influencing society and economies. It also explores how Europe can address challenges like reliance on foreign tech giants and market dominance. The project provides practical insights for making AI systems fairer, more resilient, and better aligned with Europe's goal of digital independence.

Fieke Jansen, Sustainable AI Features

(Co-applicant with Jo Walton, Sussex University and Dan McQuillan, Goldsmith) UKRI – BRAID Demonstrator

How do we govern AI's environmental impact responsibly? Sustainable AI Futures is an AHRC Bridging Responsible AI Divides (BRAID) project addressing this challenge. Specifically, we investigate the social life of environmental governance tools: including how they work, how they are made, how to improve them, their potential for unintended consequences, and their wider political, social, and ethical implications.

Paula Helm, ELLIOT Multimodal Generalist Foundation Models

(With Tobias Blanke and Cees Snoek, Computer Science, PI), ELLIOT Horizon Europe

ELLIOT is a Horizon Europe-funded project aiming to develop next-generation Multimodal Generalist Foundation Models, AI systems capable of learning general knowledge and patterns from massive amounts of data of various types — from videos, images, and text to sensor signals, industrial time series, and satellite feeds — and efficiently transferring the generic knowledge learned in generalist manner to a wide variety of downstream tasks. ELLIOT's models will empower new applications in the domains of media, earth modelling, robotic perception, autonomous driving, computer engineering and workflow automation.

Sruti Bala and Divya Nadkarni, Academic freedom and public education in India: international consultative consortium meeting of scholar-activists

Open Science Meeting

Current conceptions of AF tend to focus on indicators such as the freedom to research and teach, institutional autonomy or campus integrity. These have serious limitations: 1) they tend to view AF primarily in terms of individual freedoms; 2) they isolate AF from the sociopolitical and ecological conditions that shape and delimit knowledge production; i.e. the very issues of justice to which academics facing censorships are committed; 3) they are limited to national frameworks, thus overlooking international connections and possibilities of solidarity beyond national borders.

The consultative meeting brings together nine scholar-activists from six countries, including both researchers in higher education as well as civic actors affiliated to the network International Solidarity for Academic Freedom in India (InSAF India). Although each participant has a different area of disciplinary expertise, AF has emerged as a pertinent subject of collective intellectual inquiry. Given the limited access to higher education in India, the growing restrictions to critical scholarship, and the incarceration of dissenting voices, there is an urgent need to unpack the relation between AF, ethno-nationalism and the corporate-military-state nexus, and, in doing so, strengthen the role of collective and open knowledge.

Hangfeng Chen and Tommy Tse, Voyages of Identity

(1 year artistic research project at ASCA in collaboration with Tommy's ERC project) Robert Ho Family Foundation Global Grant

Voyages of Identity, a multidisciplinary research-based art project—led by Hangfeng Chen, a visual artist and filmmaker based in Shanghai and Amsterdam—exploring the intersections of Chinese heritage, African identity, global trade, and cultural exchange.

Stefania Milan, Algorithmic Life

Leverhulme Research Centre

Stefania Milan is part of a consortium that has been awarded £10 million to establish the Leverhulme Centre for Algorithmic Life. This centre, which will be based at Durham University, and led by Prof. Louise Amoore, aims to change the way we understand and study the interaction between people, machine learning and artificial intelligence algorithms.

The University of Amsterdam will be one of the centre's four collaborating institutions, alongside universities in York, Edinburgh, and North Carolina. The researchers will focus on two key questions: what new ways of thinking, seeing and acting arise with modern algorithmic technologies, and how do our ideas about what it means to be human change and adapt when we work with these algorithms?

Fieke Jansen & Niels ten Oever, Rethinking AI Governance: Doing better things instead of doing things 'better'

Omidyar Network 2

This research project will explore how AI infrastructures can exist in and produce a better relation to the Land. To answer this question, the critical infrastructure lab builds on Agathe Balayn and Seda Gürses (2024) argument that we should not look at the product of computing, AI, but at the computing environment from which these products emerge. The material infrastructures of AI, and its data centres offer an entry point to understand its environmental harms, how this impact is assessed and acted upon by industry and European policy-makers, and what is missing from these approaches. The project builds on the ongoing research in which the lab is co-designing a Dutch data centre policy rooted in scarcity. This two-year research project will centre around two research questions: (1) How is AI reshaping Europe's sustainability agenda? (2) how can AI infrastructures exist and produce a better relation to the Land?

Alireza Kenari, From Alleyways to Mediascapes: Micro-Resistance to Iranian Militarism (2010s-present)

NWO PhD in Humanities (Supervisors: Stephen Turner, Markus Stauff)

This project explores the resilience of Iranian civil society in contesting the Islamic regime's militarized and ideological narratives, with emphasis on grassroots resistance during and after the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. It examines how public spaces, digital platforms, and diasporic networks become sites of defiance, producing intersecting physical and digital realms that challenge authoritarian control. Through the analysis of independent documentaries, digital activism, and embodied resistance, the research reveals

mechanisms by which civil movements reshape spaces, narratives, and identities. This timely study offers actionable insights for combating authoritarianism in Iran and similar contexts, aiding policymakers, educators, and human-rights advocates.

Richard Rogers, Content Moderation

Research Commissioned by the Dutch Government

Election integrity is one of the most followed issues in content moderation, given the weight it is given by policymakers and social media platforms alike. There is copious scholarship surrounding election-related misinformation on social media platforms, including in the Dutch context. Much of the scholarship concerns the identification of problematic information on social media during the run-up to elections, together with its performance. The research is often conducted either on the level of sources or of specific posts. How do problematic sources (mentioning election-related themes) perform according to user engagement with their posts? How prominent are specific posts containing misinformation, providing for example false voting instructions? These type of studies may be snapshots or longitudinal in nature, following misinformation sources or posts over the course of the campaigning period or comparing them across election cycles.

While joining this lineage of scholarship, this research project steers a somewhat different course, contributing to a relatively understudied aspect of content moderation around elections: moderation performance. It asks, how does content moderation concerning election integrity work in practice? It takes a hands-on approach through identifying and reporting misinformation to the platforms and subsequently monitoring platform actions. It does so by first identifying sets of problematic sources and/or information, in line with the lineage sketched above. But it thereafter logs platform actions such as removal, demotion, noting or standing pat. That is, if problematic sources of individual pieces of misinformation are identified and reported to the platforms via their reporting systems, how much of it is removed or remains on the platform.

Hemen Heidari, Heritage for the Future: Expanding the IX ecosystem for embodied cultural experiences

CIIC: Artistic & Design Research for Immersive Experiences – ronde 1A

HEFT strengthens the Dutch IX ecosystem through artistic research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustainable development. Its studio model connects creators, producers, institutions, and researchers to explore new storytelling paradigms, participatory methods, and models for scalable

distribution and long-term preservation. HEFT's research unfolds across three thematic strands— Embodied Engagement & Social Impact, Collectivity & Scalability, and (Re)Production & Sustainability—and progresses through iterative co-creation, user testing, and impact planning. Outcomes include applied IX design methodologies, audience research insights, ethical and sustainable good practices, and integration into MBO and HBO curricula. HEFT delivers both artistic innovation and structural transformation of the sector, directly supporting the CIIC Innovation Agenda and enhancing the cultural, societal, and educational value of immersive media.

Helen Grogan, Frictions, Vulnerabilities, and Affordances in Ephemeral Art Forms

Samstag Scholarship – Guest researcher Annet Dekker

In her research, Annet Dekker analyses the consequences of institutional documentation and compares these to artists' methods of documentation. Whereas she has been researching primarily at the level of digital art and culture, and distributed archives, Helen Grogan's research adds an additional layer of how choreographic and process-driven artistic practices are addressed and documented by institutional archival regimes. So, the research allows Dekker to move beyond net art and digital preservation into a broader ecology of ephemeral art forms, as well as to bridge between digital-archival thinking and embodied, durational practices of, and in, documentation practices. At the same time, the focus on frictions, vulnerabilities, and affordances across the ecosystems in Grogan's research network will generate information that aligns directly with Dekker's interest in how preservation emerges through relationships rather than through institutional authority alone. This closely connects to my concept of "networks of care", and Grogan's research will allow her to study how the conceptional notion may be organized and function (long-term) in practice. Throughout the period of one year and a half, Grogan's research will provide a detailed and context-rich opportunity to analyse how networks of care configure across formal and informal institutions, and how networks of care can be enacted as embedded practices in which the possibilities for sustainable, ethical and networked preservation of complex, living, and politically charged artistic practices can be extended.

New PhD Candidates (34)

Arsen Abrahamyan, *Conflicting Urban Layers: the Colonisation of Yerevan's City Landscape during the Soviet Period*

Supervisors: Marie Baronian, Patricia Pisters

This research explores the alteration of the urban landscape of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, focusing on the Soviet period (1920s-1980s). Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines cultural analysis, environmental anthropology, memory studies, and urban analysis, the study examines how the city's physical and social spaces were reshaped under Soviet rule, viewing these changes through a post-colonial perspective.

This research aims to fill the Armenian cultural and urban studies gap by critically examining Yerevan's development through the lens of urban conflict and environmental colonialism, offering new perspectives on the city's past and its ongoing struggles with modernisation and gentrification.

Matteo Bard, *Governing Security through Interoperability: Biometric Data and Citizen Sovereignty*

Supervisor: Stefania Milan

This PhD investigates how biometric data infrastructures reshape governance and citizen sovereignty in the European Union. The EU's interoperability agenda seeks to link databases such as SIS, VIS, and Eurodac, framed as enhancing efficiency and security. Yet these systems rely on "digital people," datafied representations that are partial and biased. Using interviews, follow-the-data ethnography, and focus groups, the project explores two dynamics: how interoperability consolidates security governance around digital identities, and how it diminishes citizens' ability to control their representation. The study contributes to critical debates on surveillance, digital infrastructures, and democratic accountability in European security governance.

Flora Cantacuzino Levy, *Re-centering the Queer Child: Representation, Consumption and Temporal Dis/orientations in Contemporary Media*

Supervisors: Rik Spanjer, Balasz Boross, Misha Kavka

This project examines how childhood performances of conviction and self-knowledge challenge the normative developmental expectations that continue to structure contemporary representations of the queer child. I analyse various forms of mediated (self) representations of queered childhoods that deviate from those narrative norms that position the child as innocent, vulnerable and in an emergent state of becoming. Alongside an analysis of the discursive practices that seek to infantilise these performances, I argue that, by insisting

upon the present-tense of the child, these performances of self-knowledge reject the implied futurity of childhood and resist epistemological interrogation. The project combines textual and empirical methods of ethnographic research, interviews and focus groups.

Nour Chantout, *The New Dress as a Counter-Cartography of Resistance*

Supervisors: Sruti Bala, Jeff Diamanti

This project looks at Palestinian embroidery in the Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon. It explores how embroidery is influenced by the migration of Syrian-Palestinian and Syrian women who took refuge there after the 2011 Syrian revolution. Moreover, it focuses on the ‘imperfect commodification’ and the NGO-isation of embroidery as a post-war practice and a practice that turns ‘from a labour of love to labour’ in times of crisis, building upon the research of Rachel Dedman (2016, 2018) as well as Marxist analyses of the formal subsumption of this labour into the world market.

Eleri Connick, *The Materiality of Exile in Jordan: The Palestinian House*

Supervisors: Yolande Jansen, Asli Ozgen

“The Materiality of Exile in Jordan: The Palestinian House”, sits at the intersection of critical heritage, memory studies and conflict studies. Where my interest has been in exploring how objects within the domestic space convey notions of exile that transcend the home and present time, and can enable the creation (and securing) of an extended archive of Palestine and resistance to cultural destruction. These objects are understood as “Material Witnesses of Exile” and are first encountered through “playful workshopping” that takes place in Amman. Within the workshops, these objects become more than just mementoes; they are survivors, witnesses, and carriers of stories. The Material Witnesses give an access point into exploring encounters with insurgent Palestinian memories in Amman’s private and public memory-spaces and their role in rupturing the Jordanian regime’s narrative. The project is firmly rooted in an ethnographic commitment to the city of Amman.

Verónica Copello Duque, *Writing with Matter: Geological Approaches to 21st century Latin American Writing*

Supervisors: Irene Villaescusa Illan, Elio Baldi, Esther Peeren

This dissertation engages with 21st-century Latin American writings that bring to the surface relations between life forms (including plants and human and non-human animals) and geological matter. The main research questions addressed are: Which aesthetic practices and narrative strategies do these texts employ? How do they contribute to the conceptualization of alternative

futures and understandings of colonial pasts? In addressing these questions, the dissertation engages with the scaling of place and time as part of a geological aesthetics deployed in the works studied, the use of digital textual strategies, and the possibilities of feminist creative practices in (re)imagining futures.

Lamia Putri Damayanti, *Eco-Islam Narratives and Discourse: Analyzing Green Islam Campaigns Across Social Media Platforms*

Supervisors: Leonie Schmidt, Patricia Pisters

This research examines how Islam in Indonesia, both through media and movements, forms environmental awareness and advocacy through social media. Although Green Islam is gaining popularity, public awareness is still limited. Media narratives influence how environmental ethics are framed in a religious context, shaping environmentally conscious citizenship. Using digital methods, this research explores affective politics and governmentality in Islamic eco-media texts, discourses, networks and visualizations. The research expands the scope beyond Green Islam to include other Islamic movements engaged in ecological issues. By analyzing advocacy campaigns, digital narratives, and proselytizing (da'wah) spread across social media, this research provides insights into the intersection of religion, media, and environmental activism in Indonesia.

Dominik Vrabič Dežman, *Stuck on Smooth: Generative AI, Interfaces, Visibility, Labour*

Supervisors: Bernhard Rieder, Alex Gekker

Stuck on Smooth: Generative AI, Interfaces, Visibility, Labour investigates the digital interface as a contested site where embodiment, aesthetics, and political economy meet. I examine how generative AI reconfigures the times and spaces of creative labour by transforming interfaces from mediating tools into anticipatory environments. Engaging a range of case studies at the vanguard of GenAI integration into digital design practices, the project investigates how this new frontier of increasing frictionlessness and abstraction obscures infrastructures of control and redraws the boundaries between public and private, in terms of spaces, knowledge, access, and division of labour. Methodologically, the research commences by combines auto-ethnography with genealogical analysis, tracing the arc from the graphical user interface to contemporary “vibe designing.” The project draws on post-phenomenology, interface critique, critical theory, aesthetics, politics, philosophy of technology, design studies, and feminist STS, to explore how embodied agency is affected by the new regime of GenAI-inflected interaction, fundamentally altering the

lived experience of cultural production. The central question asks: *How is the interface – understood as a site of mediation where embodied perception, aesthetics, labour, and political economy meet – being reconfigured by generative AI?*

Nicholas Ekkel, *The Political Uncanny: How anti-democratic movements mobilise the return of the repressed*

Supervisors: Misha Kavka, Jana Cattien

This project argues that the dissonance and decay of modern democratic life can be more deeply understood through the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny – what Freud described as the unsettling return of repressed material in distorted form. By bringing psychoanalysis and political theory to develop the political logic of the uncanny, this project offers a new way to understand how the strange and unsettling are not only felt, but actively produced and mobilized. The project asks: how does the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny help theorize the dynamics of repression and return in western liberal democracies, and the conditions they create for anti-democratic mobilization?

Alireza Kenari, *Politics of Absence: State Propaganda in Iran's Urban Spaces and Media, and Its Contestation through Independent Cultural Practices*

Supervisors: Markus Stauff, Stephen Turner

This project examines how Iranian civil society resists the regime's militarized and ideological narratives through everyday practices of micro-resistance. Anchored in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement and the Persian-specific culture of *Koocheh-Bazari*, rooted in working-class alleyways and bazaars, it investigates how mundane activities, from gatherings in cafés to digital activism, become acts of defiance. By combining audiovisual analysis and spatial ethnography, the study traces how physical and digital realms intersect to produce volumetric forms of subversion. Engaging with independent documentaries, grassroots activism, and diasporic networks, this research illuminates how cultural practices contest authoritarian control and reimagine civic resilience.

Lars Klute, *Cutting: A Feminine Discourse*

Supervisors: Misha Kavka, Diego Semerene

Cutting is constitutive. From the umbilical cord and circumcision to trans surgeries, body modification and auto-mutilation, cutting (re-)shapes how we understand the body and its multiple identities. While cutting normatively connotes division or destruction, Eva Hayward redirects this negative interpretation by considering cutting as a “generative enactment”. The PhD

project departs from this insight to reframe cuts, wounds, and scars as not merely negative marks but as sites of renewal and trans-formation. Through this lens I examine how media functions through the logic of the cut, reconfiguring what it means “to do media” and how to analyze it.

Leo Koivistoinen, *Digital Dissonance: Grotesque Aesthetics and Posthuman Identity in Contemporary Digital Art*

Supervisors: Jakko Kemper, Ansgar Mohnkern, Jaap Kooijman

The project examines how grotesque aesthetics operate in contemporary digital art through the work of Mario Klingemann, Hito Steyerl, and Lu Yang. Their practices destabilise representations of body, identity, and subjectivity. Using psychoanalytic and posthumanist frameworks, the study treats the grotesque not as style but as a critical strategy that resists algorithmic certainty, disrupts systems of control, and reintroduces tension, ambiguity, and estrangement into visual culture.

Maithri, *Decolonizing the Future: South Asian Futurisms, Identity, and the Politics of the Possible*

Supervisors: Esther Peeren, Divya Nadkarni

This project explores South Asian Futurisms as a critical and decolonial mode of imagining futures beyond colonial epistemologies, ethno-nationalist logics, and Eurocentric temporalities. Focusing on 21st-century short-form speculative fiction from across the Indian subcontinent—written in or translated to English—the study examines how science fiction narratives engage with pressing regional concerns such as climate crisis, systemic marginalisation (across caste, religion, and gender), and migration. Grounded in decolonial theory, the research analyses how South Asian SF reconfigures identity, time, and knowledge production. By employing close textual and thematic analysis, the research positions South Asian Futurisms as an epistemic and aesthetic bridge between postcolonial critique and decolonial thought, contributing to wider conversations within global speculative fiction, including Afrofuturism and ecofeminism.

Karen van Minnen, *The Coventry Paradox: Zoë and the Curing Silence of the Oubliette*

Supervisors: Gaston Franssen, Joost de Bloois

This dissertation engages the figure of *The Dying Body* to explore how precarious human and more-than-human lives persist amid political, social, legal, and ecological exclusion. It investigates two concurrent case studies: Proeftuin, where individuals assert self-determination to broaden legalised

assisted dying, and SCAT!, where researchers trace wolf GW3273m through territorial markers and mediated history as it moves from protection to elimination and ultimately to taxidermic display in a museum. The project demonstrates how life, politically suspended within the silence of the Oubliette, enacts agency through traces, absences, and affective residues.

Yuval Moline Obedman, *Military Metaphysics. Toward a Materialist Philosophy of War and Technics.*

Supervisors: Yolande Jansen, Huub Dijstelbloem

Modern conflict's inherence in 'technoscience' is often considered a given in present scholarship, but its conceptual significance in current innovation is rarely explored in STS or philosophy. This thesis seeks to reevaluate military science's spillover into civilian innovation by engaging in a dialogue with mid-to-late-20th-century European continental philosophy, particularly the work of Günther Anders, Gilbert Simondon, and Gilles Deleuze. The main contributions will be: a) A parallel reading of these authors through the lens of war, which, to varying degrees, compelled them to address the question of technoscientific development as the primary philosophical concern of their time; b) A reappraisal of their work in the context of recent (civilian) technoscientific trends, with special interest in agricultural innovation.

Emmeline de Mooij, *Making Something from Nothing: Spinning Life Force as Aesthetic Reparative Practice*

Supervisors: Hanneke Grootenboer, Paula Albuquerque

In this practice-based research project I will investigate thread's history of origin in a multi-fold way. Utilizing a transhistorical approach, I will explore the importance of thread for human survival on the basis of the spinning-goddesses-cults that were central to European pre-Christian and pagan religions — as they are associated with the invention of the earliest technologies — and use this as a lens to look at today's garment industry, in particular the different ways in which technological innovation has reinforced the exploitation of predominantly female garment workers.

Angeliki Mousiou, *Cavafy's "lives": Biographical constructions of C. P. Cavafy and the making of his literary persona(s)*

Supervisors: Maria Boletsi, Takis Kayalis

This Ph.D. project focuses on the biographical constructions of the poet C. P. Cavafy in life-writing, literature and other media. I will draw from recent theoretical and historical approaches to biography (often quoted under the umbrella term 'biographical turn'), exploring the complex relationship between

life-writing, literary criticism and the reception of Cavafy's work. By juxtaposing the evolving and often conflicting critical approaches to Cavafy's poetry with his multiple "lives", this project aims to illuminate the intertwining of criticism and biography in the distinct case of C. P. Cavafy while also contributing to wider discussions on literary biography and the construction of the artist's public image.

Carina Nasser, *Identification Infrastructures in Brazil*

Supervisors: Stefania Milan, Steven J. Jackson (Cornell University)

I wish to study how Brazil's push towards federal, centralized, and digitized state identification impacts two groups of actors involved in identification change: a) state and municipal authorities (until recently, the main purveyors of individual identification); b) individual and collective residents seeking to change their identification data and options. More specifically, how do different groups and individuals build, embrace, or deny responsibility for identification change when fewer, higher-up, and private actors are in control of the digital infrastructures on which state identification relies?

Merel Raats, *Mad Enby Theory: Notes on Maddening for the Abolition of Pathologies*

Supervisors: Daniel Loick, Lieke Hettinga

This research examines how institutional and relational conditions shape and sustain affective experiences of maddening among non-binary people, foregrounding how these experiences are lived and negotiated. It highlights various modes of relating within psychiatric institutions from the perspective of (formerly) incarcerated people, as well as the forms in which these relationalities seep through social interactions and intimate relations. Through an autotheoretical account of the latter, the entangled relation of violence and care within state institutions is addressed. This, in turn, calls for the abolition of pathologies to contemplate various strategies within abolition.

Harrie Reynolds, *From Disorder to Diversity: Incorporating Autistic Experience into Research*

Supervisors: Titia Benders, Josje Verhagen, Leni van Goidsenhoven

This interdisciplinary research addresses the disconnect between traditional academic discourse on autism on the one hand, and autistic experiences on the other. The project assesses the current trends in autism research, analyses the underlying assumptions upon which this research is built and ultimately asks, how can listening to autistic experience improve the quality of research in the

field? Within this, a particular focus is placed on autistic language and communication.

Su Sakarya, *Translating Boys Love Manga: Turkish Scanlation Communities*

Supervisors: Rik Spanjers, Misha Kavka

The project explores how Turkish fan communities create spaces for socialization, identity formation, and expression under restrictive socio-political conditions, through the translation and circulation of Boys' Love (BL) media material online. Through digital and ethnographic research, it examines the participatory practices, norms, and power relations that shape these communities. The study also analyzes translated media alongside the broader Turkish media context — particularly state censorship, moral regulation, and youth's subcultural and resistant uses of networked media — to contextualize these dynamics. Ultimately, it aims to advance understanding of how queer fan practices in non-Western contexts mobilize digital media to foster solidarity and agency.

Kiva Sakona, *Touching Images, Imaging Touch: The Entanglement of Our Audio-Visual Reality, the Erotic Sphere, and Advanced Capitalism*

Supervisors: Patricia Pisters, Paula Albuquerque

The aesthetic experience of everyday life in our audio-visual environments is intertwined with the ways advanced capitalism captures desire (or libidinal energy). My aim is to investigate the visual and temporal conditions fostered within the present-day attention economy and how these are closely entangled with our capacity to cultivate both the erotic sphere and the imagination – the realm where desire flows. Simultaneously, I seek to delve into the potential of art, including my own artistic practice, to create conditions where deep attention, awareness of embodied experience and imagination can flourish.

This research will be grounded in an interdisciplinary approach, engaging with philosophy, media studies, neuroscience, gender and sexuality studies, cultural analysis, visual anthropology and artistic research.

Rifat Saleheen, *Entangled Freedoms. Modern Art and Freedom from the Global South (East Pakistan/Bangladesh)*

Supervisors: Sanjukta Sunderason, Barnita Bagchi

The independence of Bangladesh stems from a long history of struggle characterized by a series of mass mobilizations. This fight for freedom was led by a diverse group of people driven by differing political and social agendas. Despite sharing a common goal, a wide range of imaginations and

interpretations of what freedom entails emerged, expressed in different forms, particularly visualization. This thesis will explore the visualization of movements advocating for self-determination, anti-imperialism, anti-authoritarianism, and liberation, which ultimately led to the liberation war of Bangladesh and the establishment of a new nation-state. This work will try to understand how they envisioned freedom and mobilized people in East Pakistan, and later in post-independence Bangladesh (1947-1975).

Nienke Scholts, *Pausing Together / regenerative dramaturgies of collaborative work*

Laura Cull, Lisa Skwirblies

This artistic research PhD takes the fatigued bodies of artists and cultural workers within the international performing arts scene in the Netherlands as carriers of knowledge towards a reevaluation of exhaustive ways of working within a market-oriented art field. Placed within dramaturgy this research proposes pausing as a critical and overlooked practice within dramaturgies of work and non-work. Studying cases of cultural production houses, I investigate how artists and cultural workers work institutionally and independently within precarious conditions. Plural lived temporalities and a forwarding of interdependency and relationality provide a theoretical framework. Beyond understanding the exhaustive and neuro-normative logic of separability within modernity/coloniality, these lenses will offer approaches towards co-developing regenerative dramaturgies of work based in a relational logic of being.

Benjamin Schoonenberg, *Post-disciplinary Witnessing: The Contemporary University and its Impasse*

Supervisors: Rolando Vazquez, Joost de Bloois, Pepita Hesselberth

Departing from an autotheoretical encounter with the barricades that were constructed during the student protests in the late spring of 2024 at the Universiteit van Amsterdam – taking the barricade as a material metaphor for the historical *impasse* that the university currently finds itself facing – this PhD project aims to conceptualize the possibility, as well as potential models, for the university to take up both its responsibility, and its role, as “witness”. In order to become more attuned to its responsibilities towards the questions of our present, I will research how, and in which ways, the university can become a post-institution: by performing different social functions and engaging with its potential as a witness. This is analyzed on three levels, (1) on the level of the institution, (2) on the level of the (anti-)disciplinarity of social movements, and (3) on the level of individual practice; as well as through a variety of case

studies, ranging from the experimental art school Blackmountain college, to the multimodal practice of Forensic architecture.

Mehrnoush Shahbakhti, *The Reception History of Jazz Music in Iranian Culture (from the Cold War to the Present)*

Supervisors: Walter van de Leur, meLê Yamomo

This project examines the reception of jazz in Iran from the 1950s to today, analyzing its cultural, political, and musical dimensions. It highlights how policymakers, institutions, musicians, and audiences shaped its trajectory. Jazz entered Iran in the 1950s through U.S. cultural diplomacy and modernization policies but faced opposition from leftist critiques of Westoxication. After the 1979 Revolution, anti-Western and Islamic policies suppressed it, conflicting with Iran's tradition of cultural diversity. In the Reformist era, most popular music was legalized except jazz. Despite restrictions, it revived underground, and today musicians sustain it through private initiatives, international events, and online platforms.

Berhan Taye, *Resisting and Sabotaging Automated Decision-Making Systems*

Supervisors: Claudio Celis, Lonneke van der Velden, Stefania Milan

The PhD research investigates how digital ride-hailing companies in Kenya and Ethiopia deploy automated control mechanisms, the extent to which these systems create disparities in driver compensation, and the collective and individual resistance strategies and tactics developed in response to the automated control and compensation disparities. The research will use labor process theory to understand these dynamics.

Jiaying Tu, *Rethinking the Global Second-hand Clothes Trade and Consumption from Africa - Unravelling the Ghanaian and Rwandan experiences with the growing visibility of "China"*

Tommy Tse, Jeroen de Kloet

The research project studies the cultural economy of second-hand clothing (SHC) consumption in two African countries (Ghana & Rwanda) and how their SHC markets are implicated in the global production networks led by China. Specifically, the project seeks to examine how SHC consumption unfold and evolve in the Ghanaian and Rwandan contexts and their respective developments intervened by "Made in/with China", initiating discussions on the global circular economies and the sustainable development of Africa's local industries.

Sruthi Vanguri, *Governing Digital Identity: Power, Participation, and the Politics of Infrastructural Design in India and the European Union*

Supervisor: Stefania Milan

This project studies how digital identity infrastructures in India, particularly Aadhaar and associated sectoral systems, reshape democratic participation and public service delivery. It critically examines how power asymmetries are embedded in the infrastructural design and governance, and how public-private partnerships influence the citizen-state relationship. Grounded in social informatics, critical data studies and feminist technoscience, the research employs mixed methods and participatory tools to explore governance by data infrastructures and its policy framings. A comparative analysis with digital identity systems in the European Union will highlight how different infrastructural designs and governance models yield varying outcomes for equality and state power, and how they can be reimagined to foster trust, inclusion, and digital justice.

Nuoyi Wang, *Reconceptualising AI agents: Reconfiguring power dynamics in global AI platform ecosystems between the US and China*

Supervisors: Thomas Poell, Fernando van der Vlist

The doctoral project aims to critically investigate the evolving role of AI agents within the broader AI platform ecosystems. This process of the “platformisation of AI” responds to the growing convergence of platform studies and the political economy of AI, especially in light of the recent surge in Generative AI and the industrialisation of foundation models. While existing research has predominantly focused on the infrastructural dominance and economic logic of US-based Big Tech firms, this project highlights the need to account for geopolitical variability, particularly the rising influence of Chinese technology giants.

Chang Wan-Hsuan, *Make-do Order: Performing (Un)Lectures in Transwar Asia, 1920s-1960s*

Supervisors: Rolando Vazquez, Sanjukta Sunderason

This project examines lectures as performative speech acts across colonial and postcolonial transitions in Taiwan, Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines during the transwar era (1920s–1960s). It analyzes how art practices were mobilized as forms of lecturing—including political speeches, education programs, and propaganda campaigns—to mediate knowledge and negotiate authority under shifting imperial regimes. Adopting the lecture/unlecture/relecture framework and introducing the concept of make-do order, the study compares imperial framing strategies and colonial counter-lectures, and explores how

contemporary artists activate decolonial aesthesis by revisiting these tensions. It contributes a transimperial, practice-based methodology to reframe the role of artistic and pedagogical practice in shaping historical consciousness.

Qi Yang, *Crush as World-Making: Affective Politics and the Reimagining of Romantic Desire in Neoliberal Cinema*

Supervisors Murat Aydemir, Aylin Kuryel

This project explores the affect of the crush through a post-critical lens to rethink romantic cinema under neoliberalism. Defined by ambivalence and ephemerality, the crush disrupts teleological structures of desire disciplined by neoliberal normativity, which Berlant theorises as *cruel optimism*. Through close readings of heteronormative and queer melodramas—including *The Notebook*, *La La Land*, *Before Sunrise*, *Call Me by Your Name*, and *All of Us Strangers*—the study examines how the crush’s melancholic-nostalgic undertows resist heteronormative futurism. Reframing Barthes’s “not-wanting-to-seize” alongside Berlant’s “crisis ordinariness,” it reimagines the crush as a minor world-making force attuned to ongoing precarity beyond neoliberal promise.

Muchamad Zaenal Arifin, *Eco-Islam in Indonesia: Media, Institutions, Publics*

Supervisors: Leonie Schmidt, Jeroen de Kloet

As digital platforms increasingly shape religious and environmental discourse, Islamic eco-media has emerged alongside the growing eco-Islam movement. This research aims to provide perspectives on the intersection of religion, media, and climate change in Indonesia by explaining how Islamic eco-media contributes to the construction of public eco-awareness regarding climate change issues. Using an ethnographic research method, four case studies are examined: eco-*pesantrens*, eco-Islam organizations, Islamic women's groups, and grassroots Muslim movements. Theoretically, by employing mediatization theory, reception theory, and translation theory, this study critically assesses the public's reception of Islamic eco-media and its translation into Islamic cultural practices.

Sabahat Zehra, *Entangled Freedoms. Modern Art and Freedom from the Global South (Pakistan, 1940s-80s)*

Supervisors: Sanjukta Sunderason, Monique Roelofs

This thesis aims to explore “freedom” and “modernity” in their varying versions from the 1950s to the 1990s in Pakistan. The main goal is to analyze the differing ways in which these colonial categories of analyses are adopted, recontextualized, and represented in visual culture and discourse across the

country's history. The thesis aims to draw connections between the power structures present in the country and tie them to colonial roots of epistemological violence. The project does this by engaging with cultural discourse and visuality/ies of nationalism, protest and dissent, globalization, universalism, and artistic practices as they tie with or converge from the ideologies of the "Islamic" "Republic" of Pakistan.

New Staff Members (2)

New ASCA Member: Alice Fleerackers



Photo: Alfred Hermida (UBC)

Alice Fleerackers (she/her) is Assistant Professor of Journalism and Civic Engagement in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Her research examines the intersections of journalism, health and science communication, and scholarly communication. She is also an (occasional) freelance writer, the Vice President of the Public Communication of Science and Technology Network (PCST), and co-founder and co-chair of PCST's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee. Find her at alicefleerackers.com.

Joke Hermes Erik de Vries Chair



As of June 1st, Joke Hermes will be Erik de Vries professor in the history of radio and television on behalf of the Netherlands Institute for Sound and

Vision. She will focus on how especially television allows for convivial exchange across social divisions and extend her audience research experience to show how shared recollection of media historical moments and texts greatly matter. Although both radio and television seem far removed from their earlier broadcast forms, old and new shows, series and programs continue to find and bind audiences. From both her lectoraat (professorship) at Inholland UAS and the De Vries chair, she will use encounters with audience members to query how 21st century incarnations of cultural institutions such as broadcasting but also the public library or the museum can carry forward their connective agendas and authority in a post-paternalist form.

Publications

Aydemir

Peer-reviewed

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Kuryel A, Roei N, Aydemir M. Afterword. In Aydemir M, Kuryel A, Roei N, editors, *The Future of Cultural Analysis: A Critical Inquiry*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. 2025. p. 243-252 Epub 2025 Jan 3.

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Barnita Bagchi

Peer-reviewed

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Lucia Bainotti

Peer-reviewed

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Sruti Bala

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