

Collecting/Creating: Archive-Based Moving Image in Eastern Europe and Beyond

Thursday, October 8 – Friday, October 9, 2026

Conference abstracts

Alpagu, Faime (University of Vienna, Austria)

"I Keep Everything": Family Archives and Racialized Migrant Memory

This paper takes the phrase "I keep everything" as a conceptual point of departure to theorize family archives among migrants who are homogenized as "Turkish" and often coded as male. Drawing on biographical-narrative interviews and a hermeneutic analysis of photographs, (audio) letters, video cassettes, and other objects preserved in the family archives of those who migrated from Turkey to Austria in the 1970s, I explore how ordinary acts of keeping unsettle dominant migration narratives and institutionalized archival practices.

These vernacular archives become material and affective sites through which memory is curated across domestic, diasporic, and generational spaces. Rather than focusing solely on collection, I study the politics and labor behind what is kept, who keeps it, and how such acts resist national historiographies and reductive, racialized portrayals of migrants. "I keep everything" emerges not only as a habit of preservation, but as a quiet refusal of disappearance and a decolonial practice of presence.

Centering overlooked dimensions – especially racialized silences and the ethnic dimensions of migrant life rendered invisible as "Turkish" – the paper reframes archival theory through the lived experience of those marginalized in historical narratives. In doing so, I argue for the critical potential of family archives to inform both migration studies and institutional archival discourse.

Anger, Jiří (Queen Mary University of London, UK)

What Do All These Weird Shapes Mean? Reconfiguring Found Footage Filmmaking Through Archival Cracks

Conceptualisations of found footage filmmaking have often revolved around questions of appropriation – how an archival corpus could be decontextualised or transformed. Such questions are frequently addressed through the lens of materiality, especially its role in distorting the realities depicted in moving images and thereby reshaping their historical, political, and aesthetic meanings. But what might we gain by turning our attention to archival works in which effects similar to those found in the films of Peggy Ahwesh, Bill Morrison, Khavn de la Cruz, or Péter Lichter arise accidentally, without clear artistic intent? What if we approached archives from below, through the audiovisual objects they struggle to contain, with all their cracks and crevices that complicate our recognition of what is depicted in them?

Drawing on my monograph *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024), this talk proposes a theory of found footage anchored in singular, malleable archival objects that produce aesthetic effects through encounters with their material underpinnings – whether signs of wear and tear or properties inherent in their manufacturing processes. My point of departure is a formative encounter with a corpus of digitized (yet unrestored) early actualities by Czech cinema pioneer Jan Kříženecký, whose nitrate prints and negatives abound in blobs, scratches, tremors, and other material anomalies. What I call weird shapes – speculatively and aesthetically generative forms emerging from tensions between figuration and materiality – serve as entry points into a theory of found footage and archival film that begins by problematizing where creativity is located and whether their value should be governed so strongly by intentionality alone. Taking these weird shapes seriously also offers a way into an ethics of preservation, curation, and appropriation that champions sensitivity to filmic matter and its impact on aesthetics as well as historicity and cultural memory.

Baltag, Victoria (Queen's University Belfast, UK)

The Theoretical Archive: Resurrecting Benjamin Fondane's "Unfilmable" Avant-Garde through Precarious Fragments

The historiography of the Eastern European avant-garde is frequently defined by an "archive of absence"—a silence imposed by the geopolitical catastrophes of the mid-20th century. This paper examines the theoretical and material resurrection of the work of Benjamin Fondane (1898–1944), a Romanian-French philosopher and cineaste whose legacy was nearly bifurcated by exile and the Holocaust. While Fondane is celebrated in literary circles for his "existential philosophy," his radical film theories – specifically his *"Theory of the Unfilmable"* and his advocacy for "asynchronism" between sound and image – have remained largely theoretical due to the "lost" status of his Argentine feature, *Tararira* (1936).

This presentation navigates the "precarious archival infrastructure" of the Fondane legacy. It details a research-led intervention that moved beyond state institutions into the private, uncatalogued archives of the Aguilar family to

recover the film's optical soundtrack and visual fragments. This "archival labor" allows for a new comparative analysis: placing Fondane's theories of "pure cinema" and the ciné-poème in dialogue with the practice of contemporary archive-based artists like Péter Forgács.

By analyzing recovered fragments of *Tararira* alongside Fondane's 1928 scripts, the paper argues that Fondane used the archive of the "everyday" – the home movie aesthetic and the "stage" performance – to deconstruct narrative logic. This study contributes to the conference by exploring how the "new sensuality" of digital recovery allows us to reanimate Eastern European modernist theories that were once silenced. Ultimately, it posits that the archive is not merely a site of preservation, but a generative stimulus that transforms Fondane's "unfilmable" theories into a tangible, intermedial practice for the post-cinematic age.

Banjac, Pavla (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary)

Personal Archives and Counter-Archives: The Memory of the State in Post-Yugoslav Documentary Cinema

The paper examines how contemporary post-Yugoslav documentary filmmakers produce new, subjective archives that simultaneously engage with and confront institutional ones of Yugoslavia and its dissolution. Rather than using the archive as pre-existing material for historical evidence, I argue that these filmmakers actively and deliberately construct counter-archives, mainly through practices of recording architecture that is being institutionalized or about to be, reenacting (childhood) memories, and self-insertion into historical events. In doing so, they treat documentary filmmaking as an archival act. Their films create private histories, while remaining in tension with official ones.

The paper brings together several documentaries that reconfigure the relationship between memory, image, and historical records. In Ivan Marković's films, abandoned or disappearing Yugoslav architecture is recorded as material remnants, fighting for socialism's spatial afterlives. Emilija Gašić's reconstructed personal memory of the 1999 NATO bombing offers a VHS reenactment, creating a mediated simulation that questions the boundaries between lived and (almost) forgotten experience and fabricated archival forms. In Bojan Stojčić's work, the historical site of the Dayton Agreement is reimagined through the filmmaker's quotidian gestures, shifting attention from (geo)political narratives to embodied presentness. Marta Popivoda's archival practice uses the filmmaker's personal Yugoslav diaries, re-voiced in the present, to produce an unstable temporal loop between past and present.

Given these examples, I propose the concept of a "filmmaker-archivist" as someone who does not simply pick through and process archival materials but generates an archive through creating cinema alone. These practices blur distinctions between institutional and personal archives, authenticity and fabrication, documentation and performance. Through these differences and similarities in archival usage practices, I suggest that post-Yugoslav documentary cinema does not solely represent historical absence but actively produces new archival imaginaries through which Yugoslavia persists as a fragmented and continuously re-imagined experience.

Barkóczi, Janka (National Film Institute Hungary – Film Archive, Budapest, Hungary)

Consecrated Images: Holocaust Footage, Memory Practices, and the Politzer Saga

The presentation examines the history, circulation, and contemporary use of archival film materials related to the Holocaust in Hungary through a focused case study: Péter Forgács's *Poltitzer Saga*, exhibited in the Rumbach Street Synagogue in Budapest. By situating this work within broader archival and curatorial practices, the presentation explores how moving image documents – often fragmented, private, and recontextualized – become vehicles of cultural memory and historical inquiry.

The first part of the presentation briefly surveys the institutional landscape in which Holocaust-related film materials are preserved and catalogued. Key repositories include national archives such as the National Film Institute Hungary – Film Archive, international institutions, and specialized collections such as the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive (VHA). These archives differ not only in their collecting policies and provenance structures, but also in the ways they mediate access, digitization, and interpretive framing. The presentation asks what kinds of narratives emerge from these collections and how gaps, silences, and editorial interventions shape historical understanding.

The second part turns to modes of presentation. Forgács's work is emblematic of an artistic practice that re-edits all kinds of motion pictures into layered, essayistic installations. In *Poltitzer Saga*, personal and collective histories intersect through the reassembly of a Jewish family's visual traces, raising questions of authorship, authenticity, and ethical spectatorship. The installation foregrounds montage, animation, sound design, and textual annotation as tools of reinterpretation. Finally, the presentation addresses the specific spatial and symbolic context of the Rumbach Synagogue. As a restored, hybrid cultural venue with sacral connotations, the site adds a further interpretive layer: how does the presentation of archival Holocaust imagery function within a religious space marked

by absence and remembrance? The talk argues that such settings intensify the affective and mnemonic dimensions of archival film, producing a complex dialogue between history, space, and audience.

Bernátková, Tereza – Bernátek, Martin (FAMU, Prague – Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic)

“Speaking for the Archive”

What does it mean to speak for the archive—to add a critical voice to images that never had one? Drawing on our ongoing filmmaking practice, a film in development, and critical archival studies, this presentation examines the authority claimed when voiceover is applied to previously silent images. Focusing on the construction of voiceover in an archival film, it interrogates the illusion of transparency on which this practice relies, namely, the assumption that visual material can provide direct access to marginalized subjects.

The analysis centers on a visual archive from a care home for women run by Catholic nuns in a border region of socialist Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. In this setting, marginalization and institutional power are deeply entangled: the sisters were themselves politically and socially marginalized, yet exercised authority over women placed under institutional care. At the same time, the cinematic apparatus documenting this community produces its own regime of authority. The voiceover in this (counter-)archival film must therefore be understood as embedded within, rather than external to, these layered power relations.

The shifting position of the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe further complicates the film’s critical gesture. Once persecuted under socialist regimes, the Church today often occupies a conservative role and advances anti-feminist agendas, visible in contemporary debates such as those surrounding the Istanbul Convention. This raises a central question: subversive against whom, and in whose interests, when previously silenced voices risk being mobilized to legitimize present-day political projects?

The paper proceeds in three parts: first, situating the archive and “nun’s visual culture” within postwar regional history and Church–state relations, and within the genres of institutional film and “home movies”; second, examining the ethical and aesthetic stakes of voiceover; and third, addressing the risks of “speaking for the archive,” including the possibility of reinforcing reactionary narratives.

Blos-Jáni, Melinda (Sapientia University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)

From Analysis to Forensics. The Intermediality of the Freeze-Frame in Found Footage Cinema

Reshooting, slowing down, inducing moments of interruption are just as characteristic to the formal strategies of found footage films, as juxtaposition and montage is. The experimental cinema of Yervant Giankian and Angela Ricci Lucchi might be considered as the starting point of an artistic practice based on reshooting, reworking archival footage into something else, from an archive of the past into a cinema of the present dealing with the past. The essayistic authorial cinema, rooted in the avant-garde is usually a cinema of transformation: the archival fragment is rendered uncanny and un-cinematic and – in the same work – also re-cinematized in order to create new connections between film and reality, archival footage and its audience.

As Raymond Bellour writes, the presence of a photograph in a film or a freeze-frame proper “is all the stronger because it is in the process of evolving, and because it is valuable as an agent of passage, a point of contact between the arts” (2018, 136). The presentation will focus on the affective intermedial experience of the “arrested image” throughout found footage cinema, comparing the analogue video techniques of Giankian and Ricci Lucchi (*Pays barbare*, 2013) and Péter Forgács (*Private Hungary*-series) with the digital era documentaries like Bianca Stigter’s *Three Minutes: A Lengthening* (2021) and the projects made by the Forensic Architecture group. While Giankian and Ricci Lucchi called their artistic interventions “analytics”, recent uses of the freeze-frame might be considered as a form of “forensics” in which new technologies are employed in order to mediate the indexical testimonies of a material reality.

Cox, Melanie (Falmouth University, UK)

Invisible Histories: Counterpublic Afterlives and Archival Recovery in Channel 4’s Independent Film and Video Department (1982–1995)

A new archival research project, based in Falmouth and Bristol universities, and an emerging national and regional network has begun to address the urgent need to recover the materials of Channel 4’s Independent Film and Video Department (IFVD) from 1982–1995, to contextualize its productions and consolidate them within an accessible digital database. By examining key commissions and production practices, the research highlights how the department’s output reflected the shifting cultural climate of the 1980s and early 1990s, while also serving as an enduring historical record that speaks to contemporary struggles around representation, media democracy, and cultural memory.

This presentation evaluates the IFVD as one of the most radical interventions in British public service broadcasting, claiming that the department functioned as a complex network of subaltern counterpublics – a place where marginalized groups can exist to influence the wider public sphere and introduce new ideas, challenge power structures, and create counterdiscourses. While mainstream broadcasting favored narratives of individualism and market-driven common sense, the IFVD built parallel discursive arenas – giving visibility, voice and agency to the marginalized and unheard. Through commissions, acquisitions and co-productions, these networks frequently extended beyond Britain, connecting local struggles to transnational movements and solidarities.

Drawing on newly recovered archival materials and oral history interviews, the paper offers the first sustained evaluation of the Independent Film and Video Department. Conducted across institutional and independent collections, including commissioning records, transmission data and VHS holdings, it examines how archive-based research can reconstruct histories that have remained marginal to dominant accounts of British television. It approaches the archive as the afterlife of counterpublic media cultures, where traces of cultural production persist beyond their original moment of circulation. In the case of the IFVD, the archive does not simply save the image; it saves the social relations that made the image possible.

Cristea, Alina (independent researcher)

Precarious Encounters: Dialogues Between Public Archives and Artistic Research in Post-Communist Romania

This paper examines the dynamic and often fraught dialogue between archival institutions and research-based artistic practice in post-communist Romania. Drawing on fieldwork at the Romanian National Archives, the Bucharest City Hall Archives, the Library of the Romanian Academy and the Architecture University Library, it reflects on an artist-researcher's navigation of public photographic collections from the communist period (1945–1989) as both a methodological and a creative process.

The paper examines how state-produced photographic material – largely propagandistic in intent – coexists with not-yet-digitized, marginalized, and serendipitous documents that resist official narratives. It asks what it means for an artist-researcher, rather than a historian, to enter these precarious archival infrastructures: spaces marked by inadequate preservation, bureaucratic opacity, and the long afterlife of communist-era secrecy. Rather than seeking to extract “the truth” from archives, the paper argues for the productive value of generating alternative, anecdotal, and affectively charged narratives from archival encounters, a mode of engagement that restores what institutional history has suppressed or simply lost.

This dialogue between artistic research and the archive is traced through the development of an ongoing film work, *“Bucharest. The City-Me (Balta Albă)”*, in which state-produced propaganda photographs, as-yet-undigitised images, family blueprints, oral testimonies, and personal diary texts are brought into intermedial conversation. The research process itself, including the negotiations, refusals, silences, and unexpected gestures of generosity encountered in archival institutions, becomes part of the artistic work. Situating this practice within the broader context of Eastern European artists engaging with communist-era visual heritage, the paper asks how research-based art can critically inhabit precarious archival ecologies and what new forms of historical knowledge such inhabitation might yield.

Csizmadia, Krisztina (Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary)

A Villa at Lake Balaton, Where the Stories of Two Families Intertwine – Case Study: Where Architectural History Research Meets Archival Private Film

There are cases when the professional is also personal. As an art historian, I began private research on my family's “summer house” – an old villa in Siófok, one of the leading municipalities of Lake Balaton, Hungary's ultimate vacation venue. This idea grew into far-reaching research encompassing architectural, local, family, and oral history. It is supplemented by unique archival footage from the 1930s and 1940s preserved in the Home Movie Collection of the Private Photo and Film Foundation (Privát Fotó és Film Alapítvány), founded by Péter Forgács.

The original owners of the villa were a wealthy, middle-class family from Budapest whose everyday lives, family events, and trips were recorded on film, thanks to the rare hobby of the head of the family, Dr. Sándor Faragó. This footage provides important documentation of Hungary's interwar period, offering a glimpse not only into bourgeois everyday life, but also into historical events, sporting events, and buildings that no longer exist.

As the head of a savings bank that parceled land in Siófok, Faragó played an important role in shaping the bath resort in the 1930s. The parceling was meant to attract white-collar clerks, who formed an important segment of the Hungarian middle class during the Horthy Era (1920–1944). This led to the formation of the “Clerks' Colony” in Siófok, characterized by typical villa buildings – more and more of which are disappearing today due to changing architectural trends in the neighborhood. Eventually, my family's entry into the story took place under a new political

system: the Kádár era (1956–1989), when owning a summer house at Lake Balaton and vacationing reflected a different approach than in the pre-World War II period.

Drobnjak, Andreja (University of Belgrade, Serbia)

Archives in Motion: Reactivation, Counter-Archiving, and Curatorial Translation

This paper examines how archives are activated in contemporary artistic and curatorial practice under conditions of institutional, political, and environmental precarity. Bringing together three case studies from Serbia and the post-Yugoslav context, it focuses on three distinct operations: the reactivation of an existing audiovisual archive, the collective production of a counter-archive, and the curatorial recontextualization of an institutional art collection. The first case study focuses on Mila Turajlić's *Non-Aligned Newsreels*, developed from archival footage produced by Yugoslav Newsreels and cinematographer Stevan Labudović during anti-colonial struggles and the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Through montage, oral testimony, and performance, Turajlić reactivates an audiovisual archive whose original political and institutional framework has disappeared, transforming archival research into a performative form of heritage and political memory. The second case, *Čelično prijateljstvo* (*Steel Friendship*), approaches the counter-archive as a collectively produced "archive in motion." Emerging from artistic research, local activism, environmental testimony, and community knowledge around the Smederevo steelworks, the project documents forms of slow violence that often remain illegible within official institutional records. Here, counter-archiving becomes both a method of knowledge production and a means of challenging dominant narratives of industrial development, global capital, and spatial justice. The third case draws on my curatorial research with the October Salon collection in Belgrade. Approaching the October Salon collection as a constellation of temporal nodes through which social and political continuities can be traced, I examine how curatorial selection and recontextualization activate its archival potential in the present.

Fabos, Bettina (University of Northern Iowa, USA; Open Platform Archive Network)

Building Accessible Platforms for the Public Good

What does archival access mean when it is not necessarily accompanied by usability or findability? What does access mean if archival image search is not enjoyable, or participatory, or aesthetically riveting? And what does access mean when an archival cultural heritage platform denies meaningful public participation in the cultural artifacts made accessible?

This presentation will answer these questions by highlighting the innovative models of the Open Platform Archive Network (OPAN) and the proven success of the Fortepan Method, which offer a tangible response to the usability challenge for individuals (artists, educators, researchers, everyday people) seeking cultural heritage for exploration, interpretation, or re-use. Across Europe, cultural heritage policies are undergoing a profound transformation. The traditional mandate of "preservation" – safeguarding objects in vaults for expert consultation – is rapidly giving way to a dynamic imperative of "engagement". Yet, a critical gap remains: while institutions rush to digitize collections, true accessibility is often stalled by bureaucratic archival models designed for archivists and librarians, not citizens. OPAN represents a paradigm-shifting intervention to the way visual history is made accessible online. "Access" means that the general public (not just specialized audiences) can easily find and engage with visual cultural heritage artifacts. To this end, OPAN members are building beautiful, engaging, public-facing digital environments with multiple human-centered, free-association viewing options (timeline, gallery, map); crowdsourced tagging and geolocation capabilities; free creation tools for public interpretation, sharing, and exhibition; barrier-free public re-use; and participatory forums to contextualize and bond over photographs. In other words: OPAN platforms offer a sort of multi-purpose "super-platform" digital environment where many exploratory, interpretive, and participatory activities can happen. Fortepan (fortepan.hu) is an OPAN platform that models the human possibilities of archives better than any other. The Fortepan team has devised the "Fortepan Method" that is designed primarily to keep archives—and archiving – "for the people."

Ferencz-Flatz, Christian (National University for Theatre and Film, Bucharest, Romania)

Mobilizing an Archive of Postsocialist Advertising: *Eight Postcards from Utopia* (2024) and Beyond

For over five years, filmmaker Radu Jude and I, together with collaborators from the production company Saga, have been assembling an archive of Romanian television advertisements from the postsocialist transition period (1990–mid-2000s). Much of this material survived in precarious conditions as it was never systematically archived, while many of the institutions that produced and circulated it (early agencies, local clients, and television stations) have since disappeared. Our initial aim for doing so was to gather a corpus for a found-footage experimental film, released

in 2024 as *Eight Postcards from Utopia*. As the collection grew to over 100 hours, it subsequently became the basis for a broader, collective research project, which won funding from the Romanian Science Foundation and is currently in its second year of implementation. The project develops a transdisciplinary approach to postsocialist Romanian advertising as both a reflection and an active agent of the period's economic, political, and cultural transformations, combining perspectives from film and media studies, aesthetics, philosophy of culture, and social history to examine how advertising helped constitute the emerging postsocialist subject and reconfigure their everyday life. Most significantly, however, it also led us, in a methodological perspective, to extend within new works of artistic research techniques explored in the film into a more systematic research framework that treats audiovisual analysis as a form of knowledge production. Currently, this initiative has led to a workshop on found-footage filmmaking (planned for October 2026), with the aim of diversifying approaches to the material and potentially generating an exhibition format. This presentation reflects on how these successive engagements have informed both our understanding of the corpus and the evolving structure of the archive itself.

Füzi, Izabella (University of Szeged, Hungary)

Digital Interactions with Photographic Memories: Personal Memory and the Generative Archive

Photography has long functioned as a privileged medium of personal memory, providing seemingly stable visual evidence of past experience. The rise of digital imaging, algorithmic curation and, more recently, generative artificial intelligence has profoundly transformed this relationship. Photographs no longer merely preserve memories; they have become dynamic objects that can be enhanced, restored, manipulated, recontextualized and even generated without a corresponding lived event. As a result, the traditional distinction between documentation and fabrication is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

Drawing on José van Dijck's concept of the mutuality between personal memory and media technologies, this paper examines *Manipulated Memories 1–3*, a series of works by the Hungarian media artist Fruzsina Spitzer. Combining algorithmic image processing with generative AI, the series reconstructs autobiographical memories anchored in family photographs while simultaneously exposing the technological conditions under which such memories are produced and transformed.

The paper argues that Spitzer's work exemplifies a broader shift in contemporary memory culture: the transition from the photographic archive to what may be called the generative archive. Unlike the traditional archive, which stores, preserves and retrieves records of the past, the generative archive continuously reconstructs, recombines and reinterprets the past through probabilistic computational processes. In this emerging paradigm, photographs no longer function primarily as evidence of what has been but as generative interfaces through which personal memories are continuously negotiated, simulated and reimaged.

Georgescu, Lucian (UNATC, Bucharest, Romania)

The Digital Frankenstein: Streaming Heritage at Europe's Periphery

Romania's National Film Archive (ANF) holds thousands of films, mostly unknown today: newsreels with fascist marches in Bucharest, Stalinist actuality series, Ceaușescu-era documentaries, and communist feature fiction films – a reservoir of restorative nostalgia (Boym, 2001) waiting to be activated. Cinepub.ro – Romania's free-access heritage streaming platform, running without subscription, algorithm, or commercial logic – signed a MoC with the Romanian Center of Cinematography to bring this corpus online. The platform serves over fifty million yearly spectators, including four million diaspora users across twenty-two countries, who grew up with these films and remain eligible to vote in the national elections.

Szczepanik's (2020) concept of digital peripheries provides a structural frame: peripheral cultures operate under distinct institutional, economic, and political conditions that shape what gets preserved, circulated, and forgotten. Parvulescu's (2023) analysis of cinepub.ro's curatorial discourse around a canonical New Romanian Cinema demonstrates that these choices constitute a distinct critical practice. Drawing on Derrida's (1996) archival fever, Caswell's (2021) activist archival theory, and Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia, the paper examines whether communist-era films function as political fuel. In 2024, a nationalist candidate won Romania's first round of the presidential election before the result was annulled. The ostalgie embedded in these beloved films is the digital Frankenstein.

Hörcher, Gábor (Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Budapest, Hungary)

Imagined Surplus: Socialist Advertising Archives as Research-Based Moving Image Practice

This presentation introduces an ongoing research-based art project developed within my doctoral research at MOME Doctoral School. The project investigates how socialist advertising films can be reactivated as historical evidence

and cinematic material. It begins from a paradox in the cultural memory of late socialism in Hungary: if the Kádár era is remembered through “goulash communism” and irresponsible overconsumption, this memory also presupposes the production and management of consumer desire. Yet such desire emerged within a shortage economy, where abundance was partial, uneven, and often imaginary.

My research follows this contradiction through three layers. First, I examine Hungarian debates on shortage, consumption, “fridge socialism,” and the institutionalization of socialist advertising after the 1968 New Economic Mechanism. Second, I analyse television commercials as visual forms that did not simply inform consumers, but staged availability, modernity, humour, lifestyle, and the promise of comfort. Third, I place these materials in dialogue with archive-based works such as Harun Farocki’s *A Day in the Life of a Consumer*, Radu Jude and Christian Ferencz-Flatz’s *Eight Postcards from Utopia*, and, in the Hungarian context, Péter Forgács’s archive-based essay filmmaking, which reworks found and private images to expose tensions between official history and everyday life. The presentation will discuss the process of creating my own archive-based essay film from Hungarian socialist commercials. Rather than treating the archive as a neutral container of images, I approach it as an unstable field of ideological charge, institutional gaps, technical decay, and affective memory. Through selection, repetition, juxtaposition, and rhythmic montage, the project asks how obsolete commercials can disclose not only what was sold, but what kind of future, citizen, body, and desire socialism attempted to imagine.

Kočtář, Kryštof (Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic)

From Found Footage to Collective Event: Intermediality and Intersubjectivity in “*Pan Roman*” (2009)

Martin Ježek is a Czech filmmaker who does not preserve copies of his works and, emphasizing the ephemerality of analog material and the performative nature of projection, resists their archiving. Nevertheless, his film *Pan Roman* (premiered 2009) functions as a kind of archive – a visual archive of the life of an anonymous man whom the artist named “Roman.” The film consists of found footage from 1955–1981, in which this man was likely filmed by his father. Ježek chronologically reorganized this material and used it in its entirety.

Pan Roman cannot be understood solely as a found-footage archival film – it operates as an intermedial event. Its projection is accompanied by live music, but its form is also shaped by other elements, including everyday objects. *Pan Roman* is screened in apartments, and viewers are invited to bring their own food and drinks. The material from socialist Czechoslovakia is thus embedded in a situation that Ježek models on historical apartment screenings. Archival material is no longer tied exclusively to specific historical moments; instead, it is activated in the present and reconfigured through its embedding in a collective event.

This event can be understood through Ágnes Pethő, who describes intermediality as “an experience of in-betweenness.” Intermediality here does not refer only to relations between media, but emerges as a lived state between image and sound, and between objects and subjects. In *Pan Roman*, the intermedial is intertwined with the intersubjective: gaps between media are filled by people, while gaps between people are filled by media.

In this context, Rita Felski’s concept of “social phenomenology” is particularly relevant, as it describes how the subject is shaped by the world of others. This process is examined on two levels: in the archival images of the everyday life of the aging “Roman,” and in the projection situation as an intermedial event that forms a temporary community in which these images are reactivated.

Kukulina, Alexandra (Cornell University, Ithaca, USA)

The Censor as Co-Author: Self-Archiving Practices in Eastern European Cinema

This paper draws on my senior thesis, which examined the creative potential of physical film destruction, and extends that argument into three Eastern European films made between 1988 and 1992.

In 1977 the Polish Ministry of Culture stopped production on Andrzej Żuławski’s *On the Silver Globe* and destroyed about a fifth of the negatives. A decade later Żuławski assembled what survived, narrated the missing scenes, and filmed contemporary Warsaw streets where the lost footage should have gone. The Ministry’s action left the film’s allegory of totalitarian persecution alone. It focused on the gaps, and those gaps make the allegory readable as something that happened to the people who made the film.

Mikhail Kalik’s *And the Wind Returneth* (1991/92) works on a longer timeline. Soviet authorities shelved or blocked several of his projects across three decades, and he made this film once that system had come apart, pulling unrealized work into one structure. The historical-footage technique that shaped his earlier Soviet films becomes a way of archiving his own censorship record. What never survived, or was never shot, stays present only as the reason the film looks backward.

Mikhail Vartanov’s *Parajanov: The Last Spring* (1992) is shaped by two separate interruptions. The KGB banned Vartanov’s own *The Color of Armenian Land* in 1969 over its footage of Sergei Parajanov, and cancer ended

Parajanov's unfinished *Confession* in 1990 after one day of shooting. Neither event produced footage, but both determined what Vartanov had when he sat down to edit. Filmed during the blockade of Armenia and edited by candlelight, the finished film places the banned 1969 footage beside that single surviving day. Part of its argument about Parajanov sits in that gap.

All three films work from what Wolfgang Ernst calls the time of ruination, the dimension of culture in which the material life of a medium follows its own temporal logic, separate from the symbolic content it carries. What censorship destroyed in each case was not the film's argument but its carrier at a specific moment, and that destruction left indexical traces the filmmakers later built into the work's structure. The *syuzhet* is gone. What survives is the record of what happened to it.

Lichter, Péter (University of Pécs, Hungary)

The Thing in the Coffin: Decay, Re-filming, and Process Cinema as Media-Archaeological Practice

In this paper, I examine my film *The Thing in the Coffin* (2026) as an artistic research project grounded in the methodology of process cinema. The film is based on the deliberate decomposition of analog film material – celluloid buried, chemically altered, and exposed to organic decay – followed by its reactivation through iterative re-filming and digital manipulation within a “camera-chain” workflow. This hybrid process foregrounds transformation, contingency, and material agency, aligning with Scott MacKenzie and Janine Marchessault's conception of process cinema as a practice centered on procedure rather than predetermined imagery. In my practice, I extend this logic by combining analog material decay with digital glitch techniques. The resulting unstable and degraded images resonate with Martine Beugnet's notion of “indefinite visions,” resisting perceptual clarity and indexical stability. Drawing on Carolyn L. Kane, I approach glitch not only as digital error but as an aesthetic manifestation of underlying processes – here emerging from the interaction between analog entropy and digital translation. I argue that *The Thing in the Coffin* produces an alternative media-archaeological object: not a passive remnant of obsolete media, but an actively constructed artifact that re-enacts the history of Dracula-representations through decay, repetition, and remediation.

Lipiński, Kamil (University of Warsaw, Poland)

(A)cinematic memories of communal gatherings from the Dutch archives

This article retraces “(a)cinematic” memory practices, as defined by Jean- François Lyotard in found-footage cinema via the archival works of Hungarian filmmaker Péter Forgács, with particular emphasis on *Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle* (2000). Drawing on private home movies and institutional archives of the families, the article examines, from a comparative perspective, the relationship between personal memory, historical trauma, and the visual, documentary fragments of the Dutch Holocaust. The study proposes the Lyotardian approach to documentary archives marked by the direction to “immobility” as the pace of audiovisual collages that oscillate between the “egzo-cinema”, Todestrieb, comparative studies of intimacy and the public life, and tension between personal testimony and collective history.

Mamaeva, Anastasia (Sorbonne University, Eur'Orbem, Paris, France)

Crystal Pasts, Bureaucratic Presents: Reanimating the Television Worlds of András Rajnai

This presentation examines my ongoing transdisciplinary artistic research project based on the fantasy and science-fiction television films of Hungarian director András Rajnai (1944–2017), produced for Hungarian Television during the long 1970s. Drawing on a corpus of largely forgotten works – including adaptations of Dante, the Epic of Gilgamesh, and the stories of Baron Münchhausen and Aelita – the project investigates how archival moving images from late socialism can be transformed into new artistic forms through montage, installation, and live performance. Combining archival research, found-footage filmmaking, and sound art, the project is conceived as a hybrid of exhibition, collage film, and cine-concerts. It is being developed in collaboration with Inturist, a composer and performer whose sound collages assemble fragments of exotica, musique concrete and pop culture. His practice shares my fascination with forgotten media, Ruritanian imagery and highly eclectic late socialist-era cultural production.

Since 2025, I have been in contact with the Hungarian Television Archive in an effort to access and license high-quality copies of Rajnai's films. Yet the project has largely remained in limbo: the material exists yet remains inaccessible, constrained by financial, legal, and bureaucratic obstacles. Several Rajnai's television featurettes circulate online through unofficial recordings. Working with these lower-quality materials allowed me to create the collage short film *Krisztál Infernó: The András Rajnai Tapes* (2025). Its selection for the Hungarian experimental film festival Celluloidra Revolverrel was an encouraging sign that these neglected works can still resonate – not only but

also – within the culture that produced them. Using this project as a case study, I will reflect on archival absence, artistic reuse, and the afterlives of socialist television. More broadly, I propose Rajnai's work as a lens through which to consider how neglected media histories from state-owned film and television studios can be rediscovered, circulated, and reimaged through contemporary artistic practice.

Milic, Maja (Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, Germany)

Found footage as experimental ethnography: experimental artistic approach to home movies

This presentation introduces a theoretical and practice-based investigation into home movies as material for experimental ethnography. Through my main works – the ongoing modular film OTHER, a conceptual publication of the same title, and the expanded cinema performance INSCRIPTION, ENDURING, POTENTIAL – I explore the potential of home movies in artistic practice and the power of non-narrative, rhizomatic approaches.

Found footage adds a complex layer of meaning that does not exist in any other way. It carries a mysterious context, which I understand as potential. It is like letting something speak for you: you direct it but never have full control. Losing control adds to the unpredictability of meaning and a process of getting to know oneself together with the audience, fully open to vulnerability. In this way, spectators take control of producing meaning.

OTHER is composed from self-collected home movies from former Yugoslavia, my own cultural context, which are repeatedly reshot and reworked through different structural concepts. Rather than stabilizing these images into a closed narrative about family, nation, or memory, the work seeks to keep meaning open, "infinite," resisting the closure that occurs when a story is brought to a point.

INSCRIPTION, ENDURING, POTENTIAL centers on gesture as a holder of subtle cultural memory and history, pointing to the body as an anthropological and sociological archive. Reshot home movies are activated live through projection, repetition, and temporal dislocation, foregrounding how bodily movement inscribes social norms, affect, and history into the everyday image.

Alongside these works, I will present the conceptual publication OTHER, which functions as a "sonic" archive of conversations in public spaces, additionally developed on my website theotherarchive.com. Together, these projects articulate an experimental, non-disciplinary ethnography in which home movies do not document a pre-given reality but open a field of relations, speculations, and otherness that can never be fully closed.

Nikovic, Miljana (HafenCity University Hamburg, Germany)

Belgrade through Architectivism: Behind-the-scenes, Behind-the-archives

During my research on the urban and sociopolitical transformations of Belgrade and other cities through audiovisual materials, I have encountered a series of inconsistencies and challenges that extend beyond the archive itself. Images relating to a single place are dispersed across institutions, countries and collections, often governed by different cataloguing systems, access policies, languages and material conditions. These fragmented trajectories have shifted my attention from the archival documents themselves to the infrastructures, negotiations and human interactions that condition their circulation, as well as the assumptions surrounding national or regional ownership of memory. The correspondence generated throughout these searches – emails, requests, refusals, redirections, errors, delays, but also moments of unexpected generosity – has gradually accumulated into a parallel archive of its own.

Rather than treating such exchanges as secondary to the research process, I propose to consider them as revealing traces of the archival ecologies that condition how histories are produced and made accessible. Through a comparative reading of anonymized excerpts from communications with public institutions, private collections and independent archivists across Eastern and Western Europe, the presentation asks whether apparent differences are better understood through geopolitical categories or through uneven distributions of resources, infrastructures and labor.

Particular attention will be given to the bureaucratic procedures, logistical constraints and infrastructural limitations that slow or block the circulation of materials. This points to a paradox made audible by reading anonymized institutional open calls alongside archival correspondence: while the reactivation of archival materials has become increasingly valued – with institutions inviting artists and researchers to engage with, and effectively help sort, their collections – many archives remain structurally inaccessible, constrained by understaffing and demands that exceed their capacities. Conceived as a performative lecture based on "architectivism" (reactivation of site-specific archives), the presentation examines the asymmetrical conditions that are the background of archival research.

Noni, Enxhi (EMJMD Film Heritage, History and Cultures)

Narrating Film Heritage: On Filmmaking with Archival Material

Narrating Film Heritage is a practice-based research project that explores the relationship between archives and storytelling within archival filmmaking. It brings together critical heritage studies, literary theory, and material culture, and is anchored in Ursula K. Le Guin's *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, alongside Donna Haraway's concept of speculative fabulation.

The project consists of a written critical research paper and an artistic component, the short ethnographic film "*What Do Wild Oats Carry*". Together, they investigate how film heritage becomes a constituent of the filmmaking practice, and how narrating operates within archival engagement. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at the Home Movies Foundation in Bologna and active participation in their annual found footage film festival, Archivio Aperto, the research reflects on the embodied, affective, and situated dimensions of filmmaking when encountering archival material.

The research argues that storytelling and film heritage rarely confront each other within the same conversation, yet narration is already embedded within archival processes and emerges through filmmaking. Through the creating gestures of accumulation, association, fragmentation, and speculation, *What Do Wild Oats Carry* explores how alternative narrative forms materialize through archival engagement. Integrating theoretical analysis, artistic practice, and reflexive inquiry, the research proposes a shift in how archival materials are understood, particularly in relation to their agency in the production of new audiovisual meaning.

Palúch, Martin (Institute of Theatre and Film Research, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava)

Digital and AI Transformation of Archives in Contemporary Slovak Documentary Cinema

Under the influence of digital technologies and artificial intelligence tools, creative approaches to working with archival materials in film are undergoing a radical shift, as evidenced by contemporary documentary practices. In post-production digital processing, the original authentic status of archives is frequently transformed into new and unexpected layers of meaning. The objective of these alterations is not to challenge the objectively given, overt, and original meanings inherent to the archive, but rather to expand its foundational mnemonic layer with newly added functions that were previously absent. These functions almost universally possess a semantic character; however, they may not always be openly acknowledged. When acknowledged, they enrich the archive with additional and digitally assigned meanings – a process termed positive semantic transformation. Conversely, unacknowledged alterations result in a negative semantic transformation aimed at the deliberate creation of deepfakes. The goal of deepfake manipulation is the construction of a dystopian archive that replaces reality without being immediately apparent. Negative transformation does not expand knowledge; instead, it effectively manipulates it.

On the other hand, positive semantic transformation expands the original archival content through new semantic shifts – such as satirical, ironic, or contextual variations. While these shifts also alter the original status of the archive, they do so in favor of creating a visible, polemical meaning. Consequently, the archive does not lose its inherent value; rather, the conspicuous modification complements and develops it, ultimately beneficial to the film narrative. Jamie Baron's "archive effect" remains present – not only at the temporal and intentional levels but also on the level of transformational disparity. Such disparity does not arise between individual shots; instead, the archival shot itself undergoes a visible transformation. This study examines the positive and negative semantic transformation of archival footage across three contemporary documentary films: *Action Monaco* (dir. Dušan Trančík, 2025), *Greetings from Rhodes* (dir. Viera Čákanyová, 2026), and *If Pigeons Turned to Gold* (dir. Pepa Lubojacki, 2026).

Popa, Diana (Tallinn University, Estonia)

Archival Labour as Intermedial Practice: Estonia's Newsreel Collection and Its Documentary Re-use

Building on my work on Romanian documentary, where archival labour is displaced onto individual filmmaker-researchers rather than the state archives, I turn to the Estonian case to ask what happens when that labour is institutionalised. My object is the newsreel collection held at the Film Archive of the National Archives of Estonia (Rahvusarhiivi filmiarhiiv, hereafter RAF). Produced between 1935 and 1997 and broken by the German occupation of 1941–44, the collection has crossed sharply different regimes, each revalorising, re-describing and re-using the same footage.

I argue that archival labour is itself an "intermedial practice" (Grishakova 2024), and not merely the infrastructure on which the filmmaker's intermediality depends. Remediation – a concept shared by film studies (Bolter and Grusin 1999) and cultural memory studies (Erll and Rigney 2009; Brunow 2015) – names this crossing as an outcome but not as a laboured, institutionally conditioned process. Two operations make it visible: digitization, a medial transposition between carriers, and metadata enrichment, a media combination that binds the image to the verbal

frame, deciding its status as a “source” (Rajewsky 2005). Both are performed by the archive before any filmmaker intervenes.

These dynamics are sharpened by the sustained archival re-use of Kiur Aarma and Jaak Kilmi. Where the archive holds footage, *Disko ja tuumasõda* [*Disco and Atomic War*] (2009) re-uses it; where its record breaks, *Lahkumine Tallinnast. 1941* [*Leaving Tallinn. 1941*] (2025) reconstructs the 1941 evacuation of Tallinn, a disaster that fell into the production gap, unremembered by any postwar regime. Read against the RAF’s open-access ethos (Näripea 2026), the two films show the archive to co-author cultural memory as much through what it never recorded as through what it makes available — a labour that operates within, and may reproduce or interrogate, Estonia’s shifting models of remembrance: nationalization, Europeanisation and securitization of memory since 2014 (Davoliütè 2025).

Simor, Kamilla (University of Pécs, Hungary)

“History from Below”: Intermedial aspects of Péter Forgács’ films

In this analysis, I examine the intermedial interventions of Péter Forgács in *The Black Dog – Stories from the Spanish Civil War* (2005) and in *The Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle* (1997) and focus on freeze frames, slow-motion techniques and coloured filters. A fundamental feature of Péter Forgács’ films is the combination of home movies with material from official archives. According to Marsha Kinder, Forgács considers his manipulation of the footage to be supplementary, with the aim of bringing to the fore meanings waiting to be discovered (Kinder 2012: 55). Forgács recycles home movies found in archives in a unique way: the resulting compilation bears a strong resemblance to microhistorical family narratives, as defined by Efrén Cuevas. These are characterised by the profound interweaving of personal and family portraits within historical contexts. The “history from below” perspective demonstrates that there are forms of life that cannot be described in terms of major, history-shaping narratives. I focus on the dual temporality of the home movie genre, examining the interplay between individual, personal and historical time and I analyse Forgács’ intermedial practices and interventions in this context. I believe the director employs these techniques to revitalise past footage, making it open to present-day interpretation. In my view, these intermedial techniques can result in a particular kind of reflexive sensibility. This is significant for my analysis because Forgács’ solutions do not primarily operate on the narrative level, but from a sensory-affective perspective. Through these interventions, Forgács reshapes the interpretation of events at a sensory level, providing the audience with an opportunity to reflect on the essence and nature of the archive footage.

Strausz, László (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary)

Constructing consumer desire in a planned economy: realism and escapism in OTP car lottery advertising

This video essay will create a dialogue between the socialist-era television commercials and newspaper articles on the car lottery deposit book, a savings product launched in Hungary in 1961. Customers who purchased this special financial product entered a lottery game, in which yearly 2-300 names were drawn who won a car. In the television commercials, customers who purchase the deposit book were depicted as money-savvy, modern socialist citizens aware of the benefits of this investment. Simultaneously, local and national newspapers started to run a large number of tabloid-style reports on the ceremonial lottery drawings and interviews with the winners. These press materials emphasized how cars, in themselves scarce commodities, open up new horizons for individuals and families in designing a modern socialist life-style.

My video essay will mobilise the archival audiovisual and written texts in order to give a voice to the individuals interviewed for the press items, and at the same time show that behind and on top of the discourses of modernity, for the cash-deprived Hungarian economy the car lottery deposit book first and foremost served as a stellar source of steady income. The clash between the archival television ads and the voices of the socialist consumers unearths some of the contradictions that stand at the heart of a socialist consumer- and material culture.

Swietochowska, Grazyna (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

Animating the Still: Péter Forgács, My Grandfather’s Archive, and the Afterlife of Family Photography

I approach Péter Forgács not only as a major artist of archive-based moving image, but as someone who makes it possible to think with and through the damaged intimacy of the domestic archive. His films and installations show that private images do not merely survive history; they survive it unevenly, carrying within themselves the pressure of what was never meant to become visible. In this sense, Forgács’s work opens a way of understanding the archive not as preservation alone, but as a fragile scene of reactivation where collection turns into creation.

This paper places his practice in dialogue with my own family archive from Danzig/Gdańsk, centred on my grandfather’s generation. The materials I work with are not home movies, but wartime studio portraits, snapshots,

letters, dedications, military papers, and other vernacular remnants marked by forced mobilization, Wehrmacht service, violence, and postwar silence. They are still images, yet I read them against their apparent stillness. Each photograph seems to contain an interrupted movement: a gesture held back, a body disciplined into pose, a before and after that remain inaccessible, and an off-screen history pressing against the frame.

What interests me, therefore, is not simply the difference between moving and still images, but the possibility that the family photograph already carries a latent cinematic condition. Drawing on Forgács, I propose the notion of animating the still to describe a mode of working with such materials: reframing them as sequences, hearing inscriptions as voices, and treating absences, repetitions, and damaged surfaces as forms of montage. In precarious Eastern European archival ecologies, where domestic histories often survive only in fragments, this shift is both theoretical and artistic. The paper suggests that my grandfather's archive can be understood not only as an object of historical inquiry, but as the basis for a research-based video essay. Forgács thus becomes, here, less a point of comparison than a method for transforming family photographs into critical audiovisual thought.

Szel, Ana – Chapelan, Liri (National University for Theatre and Film, Bucharest, Romania)

An ABC of Capitalism: Learning through Postsocialist Advertising

In several of their early "political" films, such as *Die Teilung aller Tage* and *Eine Sache, die sich versteht*, Harun Farocki and Hartmut Bitomski develop a strategy of didactic presentation meant to lay out, much like a reading primer, the workings of capitalism. Our current research project, "*Commodity Aesthetics in the Making: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Postsocialist Advertising Film*", departs from the assumption that early advertisements of the 1990s in Eastern Europe perform a comparable task, while being animated with a totally different ideological intent. Alongside the promotion of particular products, these advertisements also assume the role of alphabetizing a viewership that has just emerged from an economy of shortage into the possibilities of capitalism. To be sure, they proceed in an entirely different manner, not least because postsocialist advertising is especially keen to distance itself from the pervasive pedagogical tone of socialist advertising and useful film more generally: a calm, neutral, ostensibly informative mode of address marked by paternalistic concern and a didactic impulse to guide and instruct, which also imbues Farocki's and Bitomski's above-mentioned efforts.

By contrast, postsocialist ads most overtly break with these patterns by making them the explicit object of parody. Consequently, a number of advertisements from the early transition period mock the authority of the official announcer, conflating newsperson, educator, and advertiser, often by showing the sober newsreader at their desk in the TV studio being comically derailed upon encountering a product.

At the same time, they repeatedly take the classroom, i.e. the didactic situation par excellence, as both their primary setting and a central object of ridicule. Nonetheless, the post-revolutionary moment couldn't afford to be solely negative and derisive; it also had to offer alternative models that felt organic rather than imposed. Instead of seeing bodies at work, in post-socialist advertising bodies are tools of seduction and vessels of enjoyment. Moreover, the product takes central stage, stripped of its history of production and its use value, which previously served as the main explanatory reference, and when it "speaks" (as objects were made to do in *Eine Sache, die sich versteht*), it is rather to affirm its place in the new circuit of sign values. The present video essay uses a variety of sources (pre- and post-revolutionary advertisements, production documentation and promotional ephemera of various advertising companies) in order to read postsocialist advertising as a peculiar introduction to capitalism, breaking it down into a series of discrete lessons.

Szemetová, Lucy (independent researcher)

Nation. Junked. Knowledge: Robert Vas and the Making of the 1956 Visual Archive

In 1976, twenty years after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the filmmaker and Hungarian refugee Robert Vas made *My Homeland* for the BBC. Narrated by Vas himself, the film assembles moving and still images of the revolution alongside poetry recitals and personal reflections. It reuses now-familiar images of crowds carrying flags with the communist emblem cut out, the toppling of monuments, Soviet tanks entering Budapest, and the violence that followed, which have since become "visual icons of public memory" (Wahl and Ebbrecht-Hartmann 2025). Yet *My Homeland* raises a series of largely unexplored archival questions. How did the BBC acquire this footage? Which images were available to Vas in London two decades after the revolution, and through which institutions, broadcasters, and archives had they travelled? And more importantly, what can Vas's reuse reveal about the transnational trajectory of 1956 footage?

This paper situates Vas's filmmaking within the migration and continual reworking of 1956 images, using creative reuse as a method for reconstructing their archival histories. While the 1956 revolution and its material legacies have been extensively studied (James 2005; Cox 2008; Nadkarni 2020), less attention has been paid to how its

moving images were preserved circulated, and recontextualised across national and institutional boundaries. I argue that Vas's engagement with this footage operates in two directions: it contributes to the visual archive of 1956 by keeping its images in public circulation, while simultaneously interrogating the processes of displacement, mediation, and selection through which that archive was formed. Reading *My Homeland* as both an act of reuse and an inquiry into the conditions of reuse, foregrounds the artist's role in shaping a visual archive of 1956 that is neither fixed nor nationally bounded, but continually remade through the transnational circulation of its images.

Szűcs, Réka (Labrisz Lesbian Association, Budapest, Hungary)

The Living Body of the Archive – Labrisz Lesbian Association / The Budapest Lesbian Film Collective

The Budapest Lesbian Film Collective (BLFC) (in Hungarian: Budapesti Leszbikus Filmbizottság, BLFB) has been a pioneering creative and activist group formed in Hungary in the late 1990s. It was founded to increase the visibility of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women by creating, archiving, and screening independent films. BLFC has two periods of activity: from 2000 to 2009 and from 2020 to date.

The informal collective emerged in tandem with the Labrisz Lesbian Association (a registered NGO founded in 1999); its members included some of the Labrisz members and their friends. The aim of BLFC has been to challenge the erasure of lesbian and queer artwork in mainstream media, and to contribute to emerging local queer culture. The collective has produced documentary and fiction films exploring local queer identities and history, always with humour, creativity and a critical take on politics. The films are unique examples of community filmmaking in Hungary. After a longer pause, BLFC revived in 2020, when the autocratic Orbán regime started to openly campaign against LGBTQ+ people and eliminate or restrict their existing rights. Labrisz was fighting on the frontline against these legal attacks. While producing new films in the 2020s (see: filmography), Labrisz started to work on developing its Herstory Archive in 2024, and at the archive-based exhibition for its 25th anniversary (the online version of the exhibition>>), they installed some of the films from the first period of BLFC, and created new dance performance films (Lesbian Spaces site-specific performance series, Bluebeard Paraphrase multichannel installation) based on archival materials. These moving images are not simply placed in a white cube gallery space, but are reinterpreted, reworked, and brought closer to today's audience through various curatorial concepts, creative reflections, and interventions by contemporary artists. The space-specific installation methods move these works out of the convention of traditional, frontal cinema reception, and instead offer the many possibilities of expanded cinema.

At the conference we would like to introduce snapshots of the overlapping archival and filmmaking work of Labrisz and BLFC, and reflect on the importance and opportunities of artistic/cultural production as a way of political resistance in an autocratic regime.

Teliuk, Oleksandr (Queen Mary University of London, UK)

Genealogies of Ukrainian Post-Archival Cinema

While the meaning of archive-based moving image works is situated within the loose epistemological space between pre-digital compilation non-fiction and experimental films (Leyda 1964; Baron 2013), and post-photographic desktop documentaries and audiovisual essays (Creekmur 2014), the crucial role of the archive for this artistic field is frequently overlooked and requires further exploration. This issue is particularly relevant to the media landscape in Eastern Europe, where the archival milieu was significantly shaped by ruptured historiographies, state-centred bureaucratic approaches and the Cold War atmosphere of secrecy (David-Fox 2023; Vatulescu 2024). This paper explores the nexus between archival institutionalization and archival-based filmmaking, tracing the genealogies of this 'genre' in Ukrainian cinema. While the history of Ukrainian moving image archives is marked by loss and incompleteness (Teliuk and Honcharuk 2024), the tradition of Ukrainian compilation films have addressed these lacunas through various mischievous strategies. During the Soviet era, compilation films were widespread, but they were considered as the result of a rather routine editing approach, for instance, studio film footage libraries were regularly used in newsreels and popular scientific films. In the present digital post-archival reality of the 'not-longer-post-Soviet' space (Tlostanova 2024) this tendency has acquired new distinct meanings. Artists are not only making films from archival remnants, but also becoming archivists themselves, addressing archival incompleteness and rediscovering forgotten collections. Examples of this tendency include Oleksii Radynskyi's and Tarat Spivak's films, which reused the Kyivnaukfilm attic archive; Stanislav Menzelevskyi's and Anna Onufrienko's works, which are based on the Dovzhenko Centre's collection; and Oleh Chorny and Hennadii's Khmaruk use of the Urban History Centre's archive for Derevo (2019).

Török, Ervin (University of Szeged, Hungary)

Disrupting Atmospheric Communication: Vernacular Avant-gardism in Péter Forgács's Films after 2006

In a conversation, Péter Forgács referred to his encounter with Gábor Bódy and Péter Tímár's experimental film, *Private History* (1978), as something that marked a kind of Copernican revolution – both in his own life and in the international context. *Private History* is a visual collage created from collected private footages to challenge and contrast the patterns of perception of historical time. Forgács continues this neo-avant-garde tradition to some extent in the 90's. Through his artistic treatment of private footages, Forgács develops a distinctive style that reflects his avant-garde roots (though his focus differs from that of Bódy and Tímár's film). His films are not purely narrative-driven, and employ technical solutions that create a unique atmosphere.

From 2006 onward, Forgács made a series of films in which he uses the same technical procedures as before, with one important difference. He inserts interview sequences shot in the style of everyday footages, sometimes devoid of any stylization. These definitely disrupt the atmosphere of the artistic treatment and, in many ways, have a sobering or even disillusioning effect.

Films made from the late 1980s through the early 2000s were created in a different media environment than Forgács's later experiments, which began in 2006. In a conversation, he said that in those films, people were more important to him than stylistic consistency. At the same time, this shift can be interpreted not only in terms of how the logic and purpose of the narrative change within them (as a transition from the short-form epic to the epic novel) but also as an avant-garde, artistic response to the media environment and to the way private recordings are commonly perceived through networked communication..

From a media-historical perspective, I compare Péter Forgács's avant-garde-inspired private film experiments from the 1980s and 1990s with the films *Miss Universe 1929*, *I am Von Höfler*, and *Picturesque Epochs*. Both groups of films are defined by the aforementioned Copernican shift: the private material used in them does not serve an illustrative function. At the same time, this new shift confronts the artistic demands of filter-based, automated, networked visual communication. It no longer opposes mainstream narrative film (and official memory politics) as it did before. In this way, this new shift also immunizes the media-technological solutions of Forgács's earlier artistic practice against purely aesthetic evaluation and aesthetic ideology.

Zborowska, Agata (KU Leuven, Belgium / University of Warsaw, Poland)

Assembling and Activating Diasporic Audiovisual Archive between Chicago and Poland

In this presentation, I reflect on my research/archival practice centered on the creation and activation of an archive of diasporic home movies from Polish Chicago. Although these recordings are defined by their relation to Polish immigrants and their descendants in Chicago, they cannot be understood solely within the context of the United States. An archive assembled in Chicago turns out to have much to say, and show, about Poland. Owing to the very nature of diaspora – its condition of existing between “here” and “there,” between the country of settlement and the country of origin – these home movies remain entangled in multiple relationships with Poland as a real, remembered, or imagined point of reference. These relationships can take highly material forms. They become visible in what I call homeland travelogues – home movies documenting return visits to the ancestral homeland and expressing a distinctly diasporic gaze. They also appear in video letters, recordings created specifically to circulate between Poland and the United States, sustaining transnational communication. The connection to the homeland may also assume metaphorical forms as in what I call recontextualized reenactments – recordings that document the recreation of rituals, customs, and cultural practices associated with the ancestral homeland, often reflecting imagined rather than directly inherited traditions. Together, these three genres, unique to diasporic home movies, emphasize transnational movement – whether of bodies (homeland travelogues), media (video letters), or memory and imagination (reenactments). This, in turn, reveals the possibility of activating diasporic archives through “visual repatriation,” whereby diasporic images and perspectives circulate back to the homeland, generating new ways of seeing and understanding it. More broadly, the case demonstrates how diasporic audiovisual archives challenge nationally bounded understandings of archival heritage and its uses.