

MIDLANDS CONFERENCE IN CRITICAL THOUGHT 2026

Faculty of Arts Building (FAB), 6 University Rd, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7EQ

May 21st & May 22nd 2026

Conference Programme (long version with abstracts)

Welcome to the third Midlands Conference in Critical Thought (MCCT). The MCCT is an offshoot of the highly successful London Conference in Critical Thought (LCCT), first established in 2011. The MCCT has taken onboard the LCCT ethos in that it is a free interdisciplinary conference in critical thought, providing a space for those who share theoretical approaches and interests, but may find themselves at the margins of their academic department or discipline. MCCT, in line with the LCCT, follows a non-hierarchical and decentralised model of organisation that undoes conventional academic distinctions between plenary lectures and break-out sessions, aiming instead to create opportunities for intellectual critical exchange regardless of participants' disciplinary field, institutional affiliation, or seniority. Following this decentralised, 'margins-at-the-centre' logic, both the MCCT and LCCT have no overarching or predetermined theme. Each year the conference's intellectual content and academic tone are set by thematic streams that are conceived, proposed and curated by a group of stream organisers. Each stream generates its own intellectual rationale and Call for Presentations, with conference participants responding to the accepted stream proposals.

Please register – for both or either day(s) via the one link below:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1983950547494?aff=oddtcreator>

Conference streams

1. Creative Health. Can the Arts Aid Health?

Susan Hogan, University of Derby, University of Nottingham

2. Critical Praxes and Black Feminist Thought

Erkan Gursel, University of Cambridge and Faustine Petron-Daniels, University of Warwick

3. Beyond the nature/culture divide: Posthuman and New Materialist explorations

Victoria Cluley, University of Nottingham; Nick Fox, University of Huddersfield; Alida Payson, Cardiff University; and Katie Powell, University of Sheffield

5. Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy

Maggie Ayliffe, Liverpool John Moores University; Andrew Bracey, University of Lincoln; Joanne Lee, Sheffield Hallam University; Danica Maier, Nottingham Trent University; Laura Onions, University of Wolverhampton

5. Buzzwords and Beyond: Navigating the Terrain Between Individualism and Collectivism

Saaliha Lone, University of Bristol

6. Hegemonies, Counter-Hegemonies, Anti-Hegemonies: The Theory and Politics of Social Control and Resistance

Phil Burton-Cartledge, University of Derby

7. Crime and the Media

Hannah Marshall, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick and Silvia Gomes, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick

8. (trickle, river, flood, wadi) Post-Anthropocene Scenes

Andrew Fergus Wilson, University of Derby

9. Critical Perspectives on Diversity in Science – Resistance, Paradigm Shifts, and the Power of Critical Thinking

Camila Infanger, University of São Paulo and Jaquelyne Rosatto, University of São Paulo

10. Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities

Ricky Gee, Nottingham Trent University; Daniele Bruno Garancini, University of Salzburg; Anastasia Fjodorova, University of Stirling; Ranier Abengana, University College Dublin; Ylva Gustafsson, Åbo Akademi University; Tristram Hooley, University of Derby; Miranda Ridgeway, Nottingham Trent University; and Tom Stuanton, University of Derby

11. 'Beneath the remains': A critical exploration under and beyond the blinkered rationalities of contemporary civilisational decay

Romain Chenet, University of Warwick and Andrew Fergus Wilson, University of Derby

12. Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture

Michael Rees, Nottingham Trent University

13. Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance

Renia Korma, Vienna Contemporary Art Space; Patrick Loan, Vienna Contemporary Art Space; and Ziegi Boss, Vienna Contemporary Art Space

14. Autoethnography as Critical Praxis – Lived Experience, Reflexivity, and Identity

Cat Brice, St George's University of London

Information for Participants

(Please note that the Streams will not all proceed in sequential order: check the programme carefully to ensure you are aware of when and where your preferred sessions will run.

Thursday 21st May

- 9:00-9:30 – Registration
- 9:30-11:00 – Parallel Sessions 1
- 11:00-11:30 – Break
- 11:30-13:00 – Parallel Sessions 2
- 13:00-14:00 – Lunch Break (food not provided)
- 14:00-15:30 – Parallel Sessions 3
- 15:30-16:00 – Break
- 16:00-17:30 – Parallel Sessions 4
- 17:30 – Drinks Reception

Friday 22nd May

- 9:00-9:30 – Registration
- 9:30-11:00 – Parallel Sessions 5
- 11:00-11:30 – Break
- 11:30-13:00 – Parallel Sessions 6
- 13:00-14:00 – Lunch Break (food not provided)
- 14:00-15:30 – Parallel Sessions 7
- 15:30-16:00 – Break
- 16:00-17:30 – Parallel Sessions 8
- 17:30 – Post-Conference Drinks

Schedule Overview

Information for Participants

Registration and Information

All participants are asked to register online before attending. Details for doing so are at: mcct.margins.org.uk

Venue and Location: **Faculty of Arts Building, 6 University Rd, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7EQ.** When arriving, check in at the registration desk in the FAB main entrance lobby area (to the right of the revolving doors).

Transport to and from venue: The university's bus interchange is 5-7 minutes' walk away from the conference venue, offering regular buses to/from Coventry, Leamington Spa, and Warwick Town. Taxis are also available.

Internet access: All venue rooms offer audio-visual technology and free Wi-Fi access for presenters and attendees.

Funding: The conference is free to attend for all, run by volunteers. Regrettably, the MCCT cannot provide any funds to support travel/accommodation for attendees, including if you have limited or no institutional support.

Food and Drink: Subject to funding, light refreshments and basic snacks will be provided during morning and afternoon breaks, but no lunch or other food will be served due to budget constraints. There are several cafés and restaurants on campus, notably in and around Warwick's Student Union – which also has a Co-op grocery store in the 'Rootes' Building near the conference venue. A large Tesco hypermarket and additional food/drink options are 12-15 minutes' walk away, at the Cannon Park Shopping Centre located just east of the Warwick University Campus (please use maps to navigate around as it can be a large and confusing campus).

Social events: On Thursday evening, we have a conference reception event in the Faculty of Arts Building lobby.

This will also include a short film showing

After the conference, there will be a social drinks event at the Dirty Duck / Terrace Bar in Warwick Student Union.

9:00-9:30 – Registration – FAB 0.08 – 128 (core room)

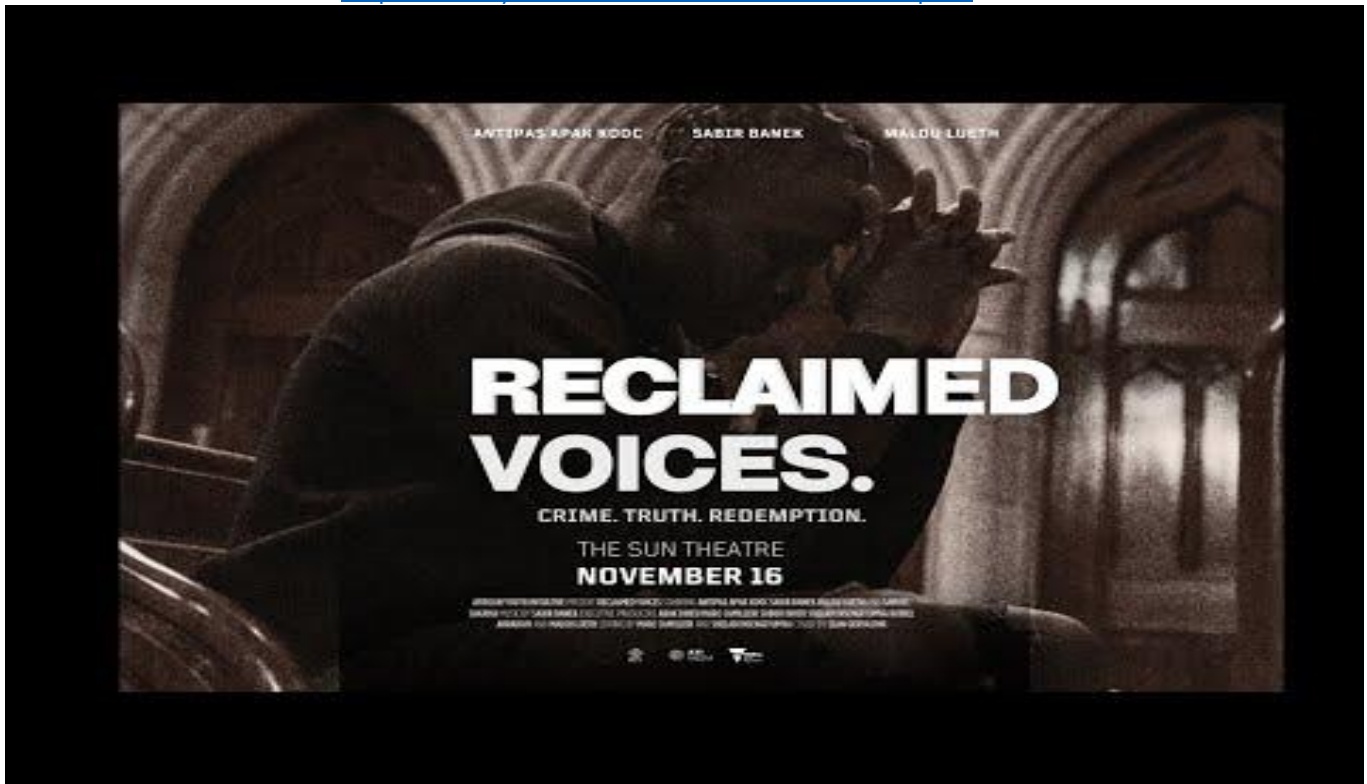
9:30 – 11:00 - Parallel Sessions 1

Room FAB 0.23 – 28: Crime and Media, Panel 1 - Reclaim Voices Film Showing

Reclaimed Voices is a documentary produced by a Melbourne-based African-Australian youth organisation (ASPYA) about how 'youth crime' impacts their community. It follows a young man Sabir and his journey of change—through employment, faith and the arts—after going through the youth justice system, challenging one-dimensional media portrayals of young African-Australians. The documentary also incorporates stories of African-Australian families affected by youth crime, showing that although the media sensationalises the issue, many of its wounds are felt most deeply within the community itself. The documentary, grounded in personal narratives of loss, redemption and the power of community, runs for 68 minutes and is part of the 'Crime and the Media' stream.

The screening features Sabir and two panellists from ASPYA—joining online—and emceed by Mark Yin, a PhD student who worked with ASPYA to evaluate the documentary—attending in person. The facilitated screening includes an introduction from ASPYA, then after the film a Q&A discussion covering topics like motivations, impact, reception, and evaluation of the film.

The trailer is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiAmmKFqmsc>



Room FAB1.10 – 24: Hegemonies, Counter-Hegemonies, Anti-Hegemonies: Theory and Politics of Social Control and Resistance - Panel 1, Conceptualising/Theorising Hegemony

Simulation and hegemony: Baudrillard's surprising political realism

Phil Burton-Cartledge

Having come to prominence with declaring the death of the real, the implosion of the social, and, most famously, his argument that the Gulf War did not take place, in his final books, *Carnival and Cannibal* and *The Agony of Power*, Jean Baudrillard recast his approach in terms of hegemony. Somewhat under explored in the literature, having spent

a career criticising Marxism, feminism, and mainstream politics as simulations that have no referents apart from the signs they construct, Baudrillard's repositioning invites us to take a fresh look at his oeuvre – one that has often been characterised as obscurantist, indulgent, and nihilistic. Contrary to these write-offs, at the centre of his explorations of hyperreality are arguments around deterrence and power (as challenge). These are not only consistent with the Gramscian and radical democratic theorising of hegemony but are arguably more appropriate to the world now than when Baudrillard wrote his key works.

Universal Credit and Hegemonic Crisis Governance

Robyn Fawcett

In a conjuncture marked by deepening inequality, social and environmental crisis, and the apparent resilience of capitalist social relations, welfare reform provides a critical site for examining questions of social stasis and social change. This paper examines Universal Credit the UK's first digital-by-default welfare system as a form of governance that reshapes everyday life and the organisation of social reproduction. The paper forms part of a wider qualitative, longitudinal research project examining lived experiences of Universal Credit and its role in producing, managing, and normalising social harm.

Rather than treating Universal Credit as a discrete policy failure, the paper situates it within broader strategies of crisis governance through which insecurity is redistributed onto households and experienced as necessity. Drawing on perspectives concerned with social reproduction and symbolic power; the paper explores how welfare governance structures the labour required to sustain everyday life under conditions of austerity and precarity. In dialogue with accounts of symbolic violence as the misrecognition of domination as necessity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2005), it considers how conditionality, digitalisation, and administrative practices compel compliance while obscuring the structural origins of hardship.

This paper argues that Universal Credit exemplifies a contemporary mode of governance that stabilises crisis by absorbing social harm within households rather than enabling structural transformation, raising broader questions about power, social control, and the limits of welfare-based social change.

Managed Hegemony: Why Resistance Fails to Consolidate under Conditions of Collapsing Realizability

Jooyeol Kim

Contemporary debates on hegemony and resistance are often organised around moments of rupture: revolutionary breaks, counter-hegemonic mobilisation, or the exhaustion of capitalist legitimacy. Yet across many advanced societies marked by stagnating living standards, institutional erosion, and widening inequality, sustained resistance frequently fails to consolidate. The paper argues that contemporary hegemony increasingly operates through the management and redirection of social pressure rather than its ideological neutralisation. Discontent is not eliminated, but channelled away from collective, visible forms of resistance toward individualised exits such as withdrawal, addiction, and self-destructive trajectories. These outcomes are commonly framed as moral failure, depoliticisation, or psychological pathology. This analysis instead situates them as structurally produced effects of constrained political and social choice under conditions of prolonged systemic adaptation.

Central to this process is the collapse of realizability: the erosion of credible pathways through which political participation, collective action, or dissent can plausibly alter outcomes within an individual's lived time horizon. As realizability declines, voice mechanisms lose efficacy, participation costs rise, and collective strategies increasingly appear irrational from the standpoint of actors themselves. Under such conditions, hegemonic order does not require ideological consent or intensified repression. Power is maintained less by defeating counter-hegemonic movements than by preventing their consolidation through non-eventful, non-collective forms of disappearance. This approach

situates contemporary capitalist resilience not as the triumph of ideology, but as a brittle configuration sustained by systemic adaptation and the redirection of political energy. In doing so, the paper offers a framework for understanding social stasis not as the absence of conflict, but as managed deferral of breakdown.

Insurgent Norm Genesis as Anti-Hegemonic Practice: Theorizing Normative Production from the Margins of International Relations

Kurt Ibrahim

This presentation introduces the concept of insurgent norm genesis to theorize how marginalized, stateless actors produce counter-hegemonic normative orders outside the state-centric international system. Drawing on Rojava's Democratic Confederalism, I demonstrate how actors positioned at the margins excluded, unrecognized, and often labeled "terrorist" generate binding normative frameworks that fundamentally challenge hegemonic structures. Insurgent norm genesis operates through three dialectical stages grounded in James C. Scott's *metis* (local practical knowledge), Michel Foucault's power/knowledge reversibility, and Donna Haraway's situated knowledges.

First, epistemic rupture occurs when marginalized actors consciously reject hegemonic knowledge regimes (patriarchal, statist, colonial) and construct counter-hegemonic epistemologies. In Rojava, this materializes through *Jineolojî*-"women's science" which centers women's experiential knowledge against state-centered and patriarchal truth regimes. Second, institutional codification transforms this insurgent knowledge into binding normative frameworks. Rojava's Social Contract (2023) mandates 50% gender quotas, grants women's councils veto power, and establishes autonomous women's justice mechanisms. Third, transformative practice reproduces these norms through everyday mechanisms. The concept contributes to decolonizing IR by showing that normative authority can emerge from the "constitutive outside" of international society. This presentation thus engages critical theories of hegemony, challenging the assumption that only dominant actors produce norms. It shows how existential threat, systemic exclusion, and ontological rupture enable marginalized collectives to construct anti-hegemonic normative orders through epistemic rebellion and embodied resistance.

Room (FAB1.14 – 20): Critical Perspectives on Diversity in Science – Resistance, Paradigm Shifts, and the Power of Critical Thinking

The 'whole' is assemblage of 'parts': Questioning the split of collective and individual in heritage studies and practice, thinking how it shaped our everyday lives

Yelyzaveta Nesterova

'Collective' and 'individual' are intricately connected domains constantly (re)forming dynamic assemblages that transcend limits of present-day time and space. Say, you are observing national celebration going on in the town; the street is decorated with the flags and balloons, people are cheering and greeting one another, sharing foods and drinks at the tables set right in the middle of the street and taking part in typical festive activities. An atmosphere of the celebration is, all of sudden, interrupted by what you see around a heritage monument (a monumental tomb from a distant past) meters from these table - couples, small groups, and individuals are sitting on their own, physically so close and yet mentally so distant from the air of collective process. This is one of the actual 'vignettes' from a special day observed during a fieldwork in Türkiye, and many more similar vignettes, observed on both special and ordinary days triggered my mind. How to attend to these individual experiences amidst conspicuous collective motions? How heritage studies may navigate intricate connections of collectivism and individualism to stand by the latter more and acknowledge the capacity of individual to shape the collective?

Beyond being buzzwords, collectivism and individualism are juxtaposed 'concepts-metaphors' that have been shaping anthropological thinking for several decades now (Moore 2004:73). The initial connections to the theories

and contexts that have produced these concepts have been steadily vanishing reducing these metaphors, open-ended and dynamic, to fathomed and static 'name and description' (Brown 1976:175) incapable of 'maintaining ambiguity' (Moore 2004:71). This, as well as rare questioning of the established concepts themselves, is conspicuous in current proceedings in heritage studies working around individual aspects of 'social value' of heritage.

'Social value', as a term, has arrived with the critical turn in heritage studies, as a response to the top-down authorized discourses (Smith 2006). The legislative landscape and practice that has advanced implementation of this notion has been heavily relying on collectivism-driven logic and rhetoric, leaving no space for individual voices and readings (Tenzer 2023:269; Johnston 2023:247). Such rhetoric has evicted individuals from public space and limited relevance of individual perceptions to the limits of the households (Ireland et al 2025) obscuring their subtle relations with the outer environment at best as 'minor' (Manning 2016). Thinking with assemblage theory, collective and individual never exist separately.

Looking at the specific case study and relying on the observations conducted in the scope of the exploratory fieldwork, this presentation resorts to a set new materialism informed perspectives and methods (e.g. Mazzei 2016, Manning 2016, McCormack 2015), as well as handful of existing heritage studies proceedings (e.g. Whitehead, Schofield and Bozoğlu 2021) in order to brainstorm about the ways individual experiences, however minor or subtle, and 'ruptures' (Cole 2013:222) fill in the gaps in understandings of collective phenomena and consider how personal narratives gently unfold global experiences and portray the global (Bozoğlu 2024).

Becoming a Critical Scholar: Autoethnography on how Work Psychology Suppresses

Matthijs Bal & Mehmet A. Orhan

The field of Work and Organizational Psychology has a dominant (post-) positivistic paradigm (Johnson & Cassell, 2001), and has no tradition of critical perspectives. Recently, more critical perspectives and work have emerged in the field (e.g., Abrams et al., 2023; Bal & Dóci, 2018). The two authors of this piece have been at the forefront of the introduction of critical perspectives to the field. At the same time, during the last 10 years of becoming critical scholars, the authors also experienced a strong backlash and resistance to their critical work by fellow scholars in the field. This autoethnographic study is based on the analysis of 31 'events' where our critical work was suppressed by fellow scholars in the field. This included rejection letters, reviews, anecdotes from conversations at conferences or other public events, emails, experiences during job interviews, and published commentaries on our work. We analyzed these data to assess how critical work is suppressed in a dominant non-critical field. Through our critical discourse analysis, we elucidate four main ways through which critical scholarship is excluded, suppressed, and silenced. Figure 1 shows the four main ways, and how these unfold. We found that critical scholarship is excluded through the closing of space (in journals, conferences or other public space) on reasons of not fitting with hegemonic norms. A next step to exclude critical scholarship is through discrediting critical work or the content of critical work. For instance, critical work is often called 'ideological' and contrasted to objective, neutral research. A more extensive form of exclusion concerns the discrediting of critical research (e.g., that it is not the task of work psychologists to engage in critique), or even discrediting critical researchers through personal attacks. Finally, a more direct and ultimate way is to enforce a disciplinary control, which includes the direct exclusion of critical researchers, and the explicit distancing from critical researchers. Jointly, this paper is not the first to show that critical scholarship is silenced and suppressed, but it does show how such dynamics unfold, and building on actual experiences of critical researchers how their work and their characters are discredited by the hegemonic elites in an attempt to keep critical scholarship out of a disciplinary field. The paper aims to inform contemporary discussions on how academic freedom is threatened, and how voices within academia are silenced and suppressed.

Speaking science to power: a tale of how gender agenda's demands are raised in science policymaking tables

Camila Infanger

The institution of science was constituted on beliefs of a meritocratic society, which comprehends an emphasis on the principles of standardization, a prized culture of competition, which valued the spirit of contest (Roach, 1971). The

referred principles of standardisation and competition, as the wording suggests, induce the promotion of objectively shared values and the suppression of individuals, subjectivities and, overall, diversity. In order to promote the broadening of the spectrum of profiles making science, it is important to look at the welfare of scientists as an academic matter worthy of space in science policy decision making tables. The resistance to diversity still in place currently makes it urgent to challenge the pillars of privilege preventing expansions in knowledge production, and in the achievement of effective transformation as result of efforts made from the margins. Along these lines, efforts have been applied from inside academic communities towards political spaces that form science policy frameworks. This work stands on experiences that Feminist Academic Critical Actors - FACA(Childs, 2024) had in pushing forward the gender agenda in Brazilian science policymaking in order to broadly theorize over this case. Social movements may be distinguished from other political actors given their adoption of 'unusual' patterns of political behaviour. The actions of FACA, for instance, is a clear example of the unusual behaviour towards mobilisation: methods such as data raising on specific issues, communication through social media and addressing issues in academic conferences are a few channels to act politically that are not necessarily the orthodox avenues taken by typical political actors. The case showed that through academic activism, those actors were able to lift debates from the margins to be incorporated into the mainstream scientific discourse. Advocating for epistemological diversity that is only achievable through changes in the face of science, FACAs take advantage of strategies such as the formation of collectives, the interface with political actors and the raising of data on the problems they are fighting against. Once this strategy is presented and acknowledged, the question that instigated this work is around the adherence of it in the pillars of the institution of science. In other words: how does the macro institution of science - comprising universities, science policy framework and academic communities - interact with relevant scholarship that carry evidence that challenges its structures of academic privilege?

Stemming from scientific evidence-based problems, I question whether science policy bodies and actors acknowledge the voices in the academic communities surrounding them to make decisions that impact precisely the lives of academics.

"[...]the prejudice that permeates the so-called hard sciences in relation to the humanities/social sciences. For many, studying a social or cultural issue, producing data about it, and proposing actions and public policies does not count as making science." Fernanda Staniscuaski, Parent in Science Movement founder.

By analysing the historical behaviour of key actors in science policymaking in both universities and political arenas, this work explores the nuances of influence that academics are able to exercise, through their own production, towards social changes in academic science.

"The act of raising data and publishing local, even comparative, experiences is an important part of how academic social movements work; data and analysis are fundamental for them to be able to speak the language of higher education, so to increase buy-in of their ideas and, nevertheless to make them able to continue their activist work since it overlaps with their day job." Heloisa Buarque de Almeida, founder of the faculty-led network Rede Não Cala at University of Sao Paulo

The empirical material analysed is the actions of some Brazilian congress members in trajectory of the inclusion of maternity leave benefit for graduate students in the country. In the angle to be approached by this work, I explore how the agenda has reached and persuaded political actors to act upon them, breaking down the arguments and materials used in the political negotiation. Based on evidence drawn from the interviews, this work hypothesis lies with the idea that in spite of vast scholarship produced on problems that policy propositions address, such as the circumstance for the retention of mothers in academic careers, political actors are not aware and do not make use of them in defending policy ideas. Findings indicate the triggers for gender agenda related debates being individual experiences that inspire policy propositions, whereas academic literature may appear in policy design phases.

Between the individual and the collective: the dream as an expression of history

Jaquelyne Rosatto

This paper is based on my PhD thesis, in which I construct a historical narrative of the year 2020 through a psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams reported during that period. The research is grounded in a collection of dream narratives gathered in Brazil in response to the question: "What did you dream in 2020?" By approaching these dreams not only as individual psychic productions but also as historical traces, the thesis proposes a way of

reading dreams as documents of a shared time. Consequently, dreams are taken as manifestations that condense the dialectic between individual suffering and the sociopolitical reality of the dreamer.

Based on the interpretative method of psychoanalysis, the study departs from the Freudian and Lacanian premise that dreams are formations of the unconscious provoked by day residues that reveal the subjectivity of an era. Rather than treating dreams as purely subjective experiences, the analysis focuses on how fragments of daytime reappear in dream form. These residues function as mediators between individual psychic life and the broader historical context, allowing the dream to be read as a point of articulation between the unconscious and the social world.

Through a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the collected dream reports, the research identifies recurring themes, figures, and narrative structures that reflect the collective experience of the pandemic. The results suggest that dreams, in this context, operate less as isolated personal productions and more as expressions of a shared historical atmosphere. The repetition of certain symbols, affects, and situations across different dreamers indicates the presence of common concerns and anxieties that exceed individual biography.

In this sense, the findings resonate with ethnographic and anthropological studies of South American Indigenous peoples, in which dreams are understood not as private psychological events but as experiences shared among members of the community. In these contexts, dreams are discussed collectively and integrated into social and political life, functioning as a medium through which the group reflects on its present and its future.

Findings indicate that the way a society understands dreams is closely linked to the way it organizes itself. The dream can thus be seen as a privileged site where the individual and the collective intersect, revealing how historical experience is registered in the unconscious. In this perspective, dreams become not only psychic phenomena but also historical expressions, capable of narrating a time through the voices of those who lived it.

Room FAB2.31 – 24: Beyond the nature/culture divide: Posthuman and New Materialist explorations - Panel 1, Theorizing nonhuman change/process

[‘Natural Othering’ of Plants: human and non-human decoupling](#)

Ian Brown

The paper considers “natural othering” as a potential tool in mitigating anthropocentric views of nature. Rather than a humancentric view to exploit as resources, it will consider the possibility of the importance of othering as a recognition of necessary separation to provide vegetal agency. Questioning the depiction of plants, via filmic technologies and its depiction on screen (from fiction to natural history documentaries), where time lapse photography grants access to the non-human temporal state of plant activity for human consumption, the paper discusses the role of the ‘electric plant’ in terms of plant agency or otherwise. The paper considers what frameworks we can generate to mitigate anthropomorphisation through an ethical othering and what role speculative fiction could have in revealing these potentials.

The paper contextualises artistic practice as a means to explore plant/human relations, between scientific study and popular culture, allowing for a consideration of the different forms of the othering of nature in documentary and fictional storytelling. The text/image work *Orchid Unknown* (2016) weaves factual accounts and fictional speculation to connect a group of detailed orchid models to a collection of miscellaneous reports related to economic botany and global colonial networks. The use of models allows for a focus on nature’s aesthetic value as an anthropocentric trait, embedded in the orchid’s commodified social and cultural value. Transformative acts, within the narrative, aim to address broader implications of the distinction between ‘artificial’ and ‘natural’ and complications arising from separating human and non-human activity.

The paper considers the conventions of speculative fiction in both establishing of nature as instrumentalised anthropocentrism and as a space to recognise plants outside of an anthropocentric view. This investigation takes place in relation to the discourses of Marder, Määttä, Meeker, Szabari and Hailwood,

Materializing Time & Emotion: Translating PanWan Practice into Contemporary Wearable Narratives

Aria Bitong Luan, Roberta Bernabei, Ken Ri Kim

In contemporary jewellery and artifact studies, the wearer is typically posited as active subject, while the ornament remains a passive object of adornment carried and mobilised by humans for a variety of purposes. This paper challenges such anthropocentric hierarchies of agency by examining the Chinese practice of "PanWan" (盘玩) - a sustained, tactile engagement with handheld objects—through the lens of New Materialism and Posthumanism. "PanWan" (literally "to play with while coiling/rubbing") refers to a sustained, ritualized manual interaction with handheld objects (such as walnuts, jade, or wooden beads) and involves repetitive choreography - kneading, rotating, and caressing the object for hours, days, and years.

This persistent friction gives birth to "Baojiang" (包浆), a term often translated simply as "patina," yet distinctly different from mere wear or decay. Building on the nature/culture divide, this research argues that Baojiang represents the collapse of the boundary between the biological human body and the geological material. The object is no longer "dead" matter; through the absorption of human fluids and the heat of the palm, it becomes a living archive of touch. Baojiang is re-framed as a manifestation of material agency. It is the object's active response to touch, a "skin" that is arguably both human and non-human. Through the formation of patina, the object absorbs the human and, in turn, disciplines the human body through the repetitive, meditative choreography of handling.

Based on practice-oriented PhD research in jewellery design, this paper explores how we can design not just for visual consumption, but for this tactile "becoming-with." This qualitative grounded research aims to investigate a pathway to "emotional durability," fostering a kinship between human and matter that resists the disposability of the Anthropocene. By acknowledging the vibrancy of matter, it may transform the object from a static possession into a dynamic partner in the performance of daily life.

Room (FAB2.32 – 28): Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities, Panel 1, Student precarity in the Edu-Factory

Care, Courage and Collective Action: Improving careers and employability provision amid precarious conditions

Keren Coney

This contribution examines how precarity shapes the everyday labour of educators in higher education and sets out practical ways to counter its effects in order to safeguard staff wellbeing and advance equity for disadvantaged students. It is grounded in a participatory action research project within a university careers service, where a practitioner-researcher worked alongside autistic students to redesign employability support. The session addresses impacts on mental health, professional identity and pedagogic practice, and considers the intersection with disability and institutional power. Crucially, it moves beyond critique to outline concrete proposals that improve conditions for both workers and learners.

Autistic students continue to encounter significant barriers in careers provision, including inaccessible information, unclear communication and a perceived lack of staff confidence in autism-informed practice. While autism is frequently framed through a deficit lens, the neurodiversity paradigm positions it as part of human variation, which renders these barriers inequitable. In response, the project applied Freire's critical pedagogy, emphasising dialogue, co-creation and action, to collaborate directly with autistic students in the design of improved support for employability development. Framed by Hooley et al. (2021)'s Five signposts to a socially just approach to career guidance, the project sought to reposition autistic students as partners rather than passive recipients and to embed emancipatory intent within routine service delivery.

Practitioner-researcher reflections illuminate the conditions that produce precarity. The absence of workable pathways to contact autistic students, opaque data governance, slow ethics processes and inconsistent collegiate engagement generated continuous emotional strain and a sense of pushing against entrenched structures. These pressures were offset by moments of professional satisfaction when co-created provision flourished, yet minimal

formal time allocated to disability-focused work exposed the fragility of justice-oriented initiatives that rely on individual dedication rather than institutional commitment.

The study also identifies conditions that enable progress. Regular dialogue with autistic students, solidarity with like-minded colleagues, the support of a critical friend and engagement with professional networks provided intellectual, practical and emotional scaffolding that sustained the work. These relationships anchored decision making, mitigated isolation and strengthened collective purpose.

Building on these insights, the session will outline a set of practical recommendations. At an institutional level, these will include dedicated workload time and formal recognition for practitioner research, alongside more reliable cross departmental coordination. Pedagogical and organisational suggestions will involve recognising co-creation with students as a valuable tool, sharing facilitation responsibilities to broaden leadership, planning activities outside peak assessment periods to maintain engagement and incorporating peer led contributions to strengthen knowledge exchange. To support long-term sustainability, further recommendations will focus on establishing structures of care such as peer supervision, critical friend arrangements, manageable project pacing, realistic expectations and clear boundaries around out of hours work, reinforced by senior sponsorship to extend influence and rebalance power.

Overall, the contribution demonstrates how Freirean praxis can underpin careers and employability provision that challenges inequity while safeguarding practitioner wellbeing. It presents a model that connects critical consciousness with practical institutional structures, thereby strengthening careers and employability support, advancing disability justice and building collective capacity for meaningful organisational change.

Critical career development and 'employability' scholarship – moving the narrative turn toward social justice

Ricky Gee

The continual marketisation of education has pushed graduate destinations and 'employability' to the forefront of HE policy and in turn scholarship. Much of employability has its theoretical, policy and practice roots from the career studies literature (see Gee et al, 2025; Gee et al, 2025a; Gee, 2022). The tendency is for 'employability' and career development theory, policy and practice to focus upon the atomised individual, their agency and skill acquisition, deemed to be enhanced via embedded 'work like experience' within an already crowded curriculum. Via such a lens the student becomes pathologized as being 'unemployable', without skills and work experience. However, in a post-pandemic world and during a cost-of-living crisis, many students, particularly widening participation students, already have a wealth of 'work like experience', where working whilst studying becomes a necessity. Many 21st century students therefore find themselves labouring to learn whilst learning to labour (see Gee et al, 2025).

This presentation provides insight into a critical approach to career development and 'employability' scholarship, acknowledging that good scholarship seeks to make connections between research, pedagogy and practice. Such scholarship considers the social position of the individual, the social assemblages they are to navigate and collectively challenge and how this contributes to self-narrativisation. The presentation will provide insight into the presenter's own personal career narrativisation, how this has been informed by theory and an astute consideration of the influence of context upon action. It will also provide examples of student and alumni accounts of such a pedagogical approach. This approach highlights the benefits of bringing student and facilitator of learning experiences of work into the curriculum and advocating for co-research/co-scholarship, bringing forth teaching informed research/scholarship.

Break 11.00 –11.30

11:30 – 13:00 - Parallel Sessions 2

Room FAB 0.23 – 28: Creative Health. Can the Arts Aid Health?

Inscribed on the Body: Musing on Gender and Difference and the Possibility of Transformative Practices for Community Change

Susan Hogan

In a forthcoming chapter (Hogan 2026 in-press) I air the notion of 'poly-crisis' (Pink 2025). Poly-crisis is the acknowledgement of multiple crises converging. These include war, climate instability, an aggressive model of Capitalism which exacerbates inequality and is premised on an impossible model of perpetual 'growth' that in turn is causing environmental destruction and unprecedented species extinction, coupled with the revival of fascism and fascistic policies of exclusion and profound breaches of international law. I posit the audacious question - how can art therapy be more than the handmaiden of neoliberal capitalism, ameliorating the lot of those less able to adapt to precarity? Or, alternatively, will the arts in health be increasingly called upon to provide a sort of disaster relief, mopping up after the destruction caused by neoliberal regimes?

This paper will justify why thinking about operations of power is important for art therapy practice. It will then present a case study which attempts to disrupt the dominant ideology around the subject of perinatal mental health. The chapter will discuss how this alternate approach looks at institutional practices which are 'iatrogenic' in nature (relating to illness and distress caused by medical practices) and how this can impact individual women. It will engage with two key questions: 1. How can social arts practice engage with systemic inequalities and foster collaborative, transparent, and reflexive forms of care? 2. In what ways do socially grounded practices of creativity resist and reimagine institutional and discursive power structures?

Performing Wellness: Ritual, Gender, and the Everyday Theatre of Health

Olivia Hamblett and Elinor Rowlands

We approach this paper as a collaborative, situated inquiry into wellness as performance, shaped by two intersecting practices. We attend to how wellness operates as an everyday performance that organises bodies, affects, and value, while also asking what kinds of care fall outside dominant scripts of health. Together, we foreground how wellness culture disproportionately recruits unwell women and marginalised bodies, positioning self-optimisation as both moral obligation and emotional labour. For disabled, chronically ill, neurodivergent, grieving, or otherwise non-normative bodies, these scripts often become exclusionary, intensifying shame and surveillance. What promises care can function as an ableist mechanism of social discipline disguised as compassion.

Placing Western wellness in dialogue with Eastern philosophical traditions; we explore alternative frameworks of wellbeing grounded in non-striving, impermanence, interdependence, and acceptance. This dialogue is approached through a decolonial lens that resists cultural appropriation while interrogating how contemporary wellness culture erases histories of extraction, vulnerability, decline, and death. Ultimately, we propose an emergent, non-performative mode of wellbeing: not a consumable routine or visible achievement, but a relational and sensory way of being-with bodies, memories, and limits. Wellness is reimagined not as something to perfect or display, but as a practice of care attentive to trauma, difference, slowness, and the realities of living in vulnerable bodies.

Depoliticizing Distress? Critical Pedagogy and the Emotion/Reason Binary in Creative Arts Therapies

Russell Christie

Creative arts therapy studios and counselling rooms are not known as places of political reflection. Emotions, and those who carry them, remain private, separate from the public sphere. Yet, an emphasis on seeking an inner self and its emotional constitution decouples and individuates, turning away from reflexively examining the systemic social constitution of affect and mental health. This paper examines whether creative arts therapies inadvertently function as depoliticizing practices by naturalizing the emotion/reason distinction and directing attention inward rather than toward structural critique.

When participants are encouraged to "process feelings" about precarity, discrimination, or alienation without interrogating their sociopolitical origins, therapy may function as what Mark Fisher termed the "privatization of stress"—converting systemic failures into individual pathologies (and shopping opportunities in the wellness industry). When emotional expression becomes the endpoint rather than a catalyst for understanding one's positioning within power structures, therapy serves as an instrument of disempowerment and disenfranchisement. I propose, as a therapeutic alternative to inner self obsessions, a more integrative framework, one combining Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy with therapeutic practices, especially in the creative arts. This involves: (1) treating emotions as politically informed rather than pre-political, (2) using creative expression to make power relations visible and analysable, (3) facilitating collective rather than purely individual meaning-making, and (4) linking personal narrative to broader patterns of oppression and resistance. Therapeutic self-understanding must integrate emotional intelligence with a sociological understanding, looking both outward and inward to redeem the disenfranchised self from its individuated imprisonment in reactionary therapeutic structures.

Room FAB Room 1.10 – 24: Crime and Media, Panel 2, Mediating Crime in Digital and Platformed Cultures

Re-coding Crime: Digital Media, Gendered Violence, and the Politics of "Narrative Repair" in China

Cheryl S. Peng

This paper examines how the lived experiences of gender-based violence victims are systematically distorted and erased by media infrastructures in contemporary China. While digital platforms occasionally allow these experiences to surface, state-aligned media and platform moderation quickly engage in a process of "narrative repair." This process involves reclassifying criminal acts—such as human trafficking, forced marriage, and systemic abuse—into "safer," non-criminal categories that prioritize social harmony over individual justice.

Through a multi-case analysis of high-profile incidents, including the "Feng County Chained Woman" and the "sheltered" missing woman, we discussed how the media hijacks the victim's voice. In these reports, the structural violence of the crime is often replaced by administrative or domestic euphemisms, such as "mental illness symptoms" or "family disputes." We argue that this distortion serves a specific hegemonic project: it produces a model of "sacrificial citizenship," where the victim's legal rights and bodily autonomy are subordinated to the state's demographic and stability goals. The media does not simply report on the crime; it actively "re-codes" the victim's experience to prevent a broader critique of the legal and social system.

The paper also highlights the counter-appropriate strategies used by pan-feminist activists and female netizens to reclaim these erased experiences. By analysing "naming politics" and the use of linguistic metaphors to bypass censorship, we show how everyday media activism attempts to restore the victim's status as a subject of justice rather than an object of governance. By situating these struggles within the Global South, the paper contributes to the "Crime and the Media" stream by revealing the mechanisms of narrative erasure and the ongoing struggle to make the lived experience of victimization visible and heard.

Gen-AI and the British Mainstream Media: Criminalisation of Users and Limited Platform Criticality

Thais Sardá,

While artificial intelligence (AI) has been debated in the public sphere for decades, the recent widespread use of Generative-AI (Gen-AI) applications, such as ChatGPT (launched in 2022 by OpenAI) and Google Gemini (launched in 2023), has created a derivative although more specific discussion. While AI as a new medium raises general concerns about ethical behaviour, potential implications and future developments, Gen-AI tools have been consistently associated to more specific worries, such as students cheating on their assignments, employees maintaining an indolent behaviour, artists having their original work misused by AI algorithms. Considering the role of the media in terms of introducing new technologies to people, helping to inform its uses, analysing the media framing of Gen-AI tools provides a good insight on how these platforms and represented and, therefore, perceived and used. This research aims to critically analyse the

ways in which Gen-AI applications are framed by the British news media. The objectives of this study are: (1) to determine the discussions about agency and affordances of Gen-AI; (2) to establish how criminal or anti-social behaviour are framed in the context of Gen-AI tools; and (3) to discuss to what extent this representation contributes with the media panic surrounding Gen-AI. For that, the methodological approach is a case study focused on the representation of the most used Gen-AI platforms in the UK: ChatGPT and Google Gemini. The data includes all news articles about these three tools published between January and December 2025 by the five main news websites in terms of audience reach in the UK, according to the Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service (November 2025): BBC, The Sun, The Guardian, The Independent, and Mirror. The unit of analysis is each article in which Gen-AI, including its branded forms (ChatGPT and Gemini), is mentioned in the title of an article. The data is explored using a combination of content analysis, critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Initial findings suggest that although newspapers include a reflection on Gen-AI tools affordances, issues and agency, the criminalisation is entrenched to the use, therefore, the criminalisation constructed by the British media focuses on users, not the platforms.

KAHRIZAK, 720x480: The Morgue as Platform Under Blackout

Parham Ghalamdar

This paper examines how state violence is mediated when authorities deliberately break connectivity. It centres on a leaked video from the Kahrizak forensic centre in Tehran, circulated during the January 2026 internet blackout in Iran. In the clip, families stand behind a monitor and scroll through a list of faces to identify missing relatives. The scene links three sites that are often treated separately: the criminal legal system, platform-style indexing, and public mourning.

I ask two questions. First, what happens to evidence when a blackout prevents witnesses from synchronising and blocks images from forming a shared public record? Second, how does the forensic interface govern grief by turning recognition into a procedural action: match or no match, proceed or stop?

Using close description of the leaked footage and its circulation through unstable channels (including rare satellite access and signal disruption), I argue that blackout should be understood as a redistribution of visibility. Images do not vanish. They move from public circulation into internal administration. They become files, counters, and resolution settings. This shift matters because it manufactures uncertainty. It keeps deaths countable inside an archive while making them disputable in public.

At Kahrizak, the face functions as an administrative handle. It routes a body through a workflow while withholding public acknowledgement. The interface presses families into the role of operators who must produce identification on behalf of the state. The familiar gesture of scrolling becomes a forced ritual. Design choices that look neutral in other contexts (lists, thumbnails, metadata, speed) become instruments of pressure when applied to death.

I then consider the leak as a media event. It creates a fragile public assembled from fragments and doubt. It also exposes the technical layer of state violence: how institutions process death as an entry rather than recognise it as loss. By treating the interface as part of the crime scene rather than a passive window onto it, the paper contributes to debates on crime and the media. It shows how media representations can challenge punitive and denialist narratives by making infrastructures of visibility legible.

Room FAB1.14 – 20: Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance, Panel 1, Living Inside Platform Logic: Optimisation, Algorithms, and Digital Slop

How Not to Be Invisible: Visibility as Scarcity in Algorithmic Societies

Ziyao Lin

In contemporary socio-technical systems, visibility has become a scarce and quota-based privilege rather than an inherent right. Platforms, welfare agencies, and algorithmic scoring systems increasingly shape who appears in public, whose narratives are amplified, and whose presence is filtered out. Drawing on symbolic capital theory and attention-as-scarcity frameworks, this presentation argues that visibility today operates as a designed and distributed resource.

How Not to Be Invisible is a practice-based project that constructs an interactive scoring simulation to foreground these hidden mechanisms. Participants navigate a fragmented landscape of more than fifty symbolic objects such as degrees, letters of recommendation, VIP cards and digital likes. Each object carries an arbitrary "visibility value," and the final score directs participants either into an illuminated visible room or into a silent and indifferent invisible room.

Through critical design and digital spatial construction, the installation transforms structural inequality into a lived experience of being assessed, misrecognized and categorised. Rather than advocating for an increase in visibility, the work examines how visibility itself is produced as a selective and institutionalised arrangement that draws strength from the myth of algorithmic neutrality. The project encourages reflection on the broader conditions that determine how people become unseen and unheard within a scored society.

Navigating the Networked Archive: Feed as Post-Internet Essay and Resistance

Nam Huh

This paper proposes that interactive works such as Loopntale's *Feed* (2022/2025) function as post-internet documentary/essay works that reframe how histories, ecologies, and social relations are mediated in the digital age. By situating *Feed* within the context of the "Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology" stream, I argue that such works do not merely use technology as a tool, but rather engage in what Nam June Paik called a "genuine antagonism" - using the mechanics of the digital to critique and resist the homogenisation of contemporary creative life.

To clarify how *Feed* positions itself within artistic genres, I compare it with *The Catacombs of Solaris* (2016), an indie work exhibited at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. *Solaris* uses perception and open-ended navigation to foreground experience over goal-oriented play. Like *Solaris*, *Feed* eludes easy categorisation as a game in the entertainment sense. Its mechanics do not centre on scoring, competition, or mastery; instead, they invite an interpretation of the relations between beings and information flows. This comparison helps distinguish *Feed* as an art practice where reflection and sensory engagement take precedence over traditional, metric-driven game objectives.

Feed situates players under a bridge where urban waterways and road networks intersect. The work's multi-screen environment reflects a world deeply embedded in networked conditions where digital and physical realities are entwined. Crucially, even when no one is playing, *Feed* continues to generate its own archive. This suggests that the system itself, including non-human agents, contributes to the documentary. This aligns with the stream's inquiry into how creativity is increasingly entangled with technological infrastructures, challenging inherited models of individual authorship and "originality."

The panel description highlights the risk of "creative fatigue" and "habitual scrolling" in an age of constant stimulation. *Feed* addresses this by subverting the very concept of the "feed." In a platform-dominated landscape, a feed is typically an algorithmically managed workflow designed for passive consumption. In Loopntale's work, however, the "feed" becomes a mediated archive that requires active, "slow" assembly by the spectator.

By employing an essayistic documentary tradition, where fragments, observations, and mediated evidence are assembled rather than narrated linearly, *Feed* resists the "homogenisation" of digital systems. It provides a site where the player's interpretations become the primary site of meaning production. This process navigates the tension between the "internet state of mind" and the need for unstructured, spontaneous moments of thought.

By framing *Feed* through post-internet documentary strategies, this presentation argues that interactive works should be considered vital art practices that interrogate the conditions of contemporary life. They demonstrate how artists can resist "metric-driven creation" by using technology to create reflective documentary environments. In doing so, *Feed* marks a space where human presence is felt not through the mastery of the machine, but through the poetic navigation of its friction and noise.

Fake Bodies, Real Solace: Authenticity Cues and Emotional Compensation in Virtual Influencers

Keyki Sun

As emerging technologies reshape artistic production and platform aesthetics, social media virtual influencers (VIs) are expanding beyond brand communication and entertainment to become care agents perceived as sources of emotional support. This form of digital care often operates at an everyday level, buffering stress and offering a sense of companionship. However, when care is performed by synthetic subjects who lack lived experience and clear accountability, audiences face new uncertainties in interpreting authenticity cues when judging credibility and intent. Existing research offers a limited mechanism-oriented explanation of this process. How do audiences weigh a lack of accountability against psychological safety when deciding whether to invest emotionally?

This study conducted a comparative focus group (N = 8), using human influencers as a control condition and three VI forms as stimuli in anxiety and emotional support contexts: a hyper-realistic human-like VI, a stylised human-like VI, and a non-human VI. The analysis suggests an ongoing negotiation between aesthetic form and trust. In high-stakes topics, human influencers remain the trust baseline because participants treat real-world accountability as a key authenticity cue. By contrast, hyper-realistic, “zero-error” VIs often triggered manipulation inferences and wariness about corporate authorship and control. In low-risk contexts, however, VIs that adopt explicit fictiveness through stylisation and non-human form reduced anxiety about deception via transparency cues, enabling a lower-pressure sense of companionship.

Building on these findings, this study proposes “lucid illusion” as a mechanism-oriented account of how audiences work with authenticity cues through knowing engagement: audiences choose to engage while recognising the VI’s fictionality, turning that fictiveness into a resource for psychological safety that can support emotional compensation. This study argues that explicit fictiveness is not a technological defect but a relational aesthetic framework that can be strategically mobilised. Rather than pursuing ever greater human-likeness, embracing fallibility, friction, and non-human qualities may be crucial for designing clearer digital relationships and lower-pressure companionship experiences.

Room FAB2.31 – 24: 4. Beyond the nature/culture divide: Posthuman and New Materialist explorations - Panel 2, Wellbeing and the more-than-human

The material and more-than-human production of dis/advantage in workers’ home environments

Nick J Fox

Sociological analyses of inequality have typically marginalised the role of NHM (Fox and Gavilyuk, 2021), privileging instead top-down structural explanations or, more recently, focusing on the distribution of economic, social and cultural assets (Bourdieu, 1984: 114; Savage et al, 2013: 223). These approaches consequently underplay the everyday material processes through which dis/advantage is lived and reproduced. To address this gap, we shift analytical attention to the daily production of inequality. We apply the concept of ‘tiny dis/advantages’ (Fox and Powell, 2022) to capture the small yet consequential effects of everyday human interactions with domestic spaces and non-human matter that incrementally enable or constrain opportunities.

The paper draws on semi-structured interviews with 37 workers aged 16–29 in Western Siberia to demonstrate how diverse forms of non-human matter within the home – ranging from spatial arrangements to material objects and infrastructures – shaped respondents’ well-being, relationships, and developmental trajectories by enabling or constraining bodily capacities. The data analysis is informed by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988: 311) theorisation of the home as a territory organised to create consistency and exclude the chaos of the external environment, and micropolitics of the home can both territorialise bodily and supply the security from which a deterritorialising ‘line of flight’ may be launched, opening up new possibilities for action (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 327). We conclude that everyday interactions with non-human matter play a significant role in the production of relative dis/advantage, offering valuable complement to existing sociocultural analyses of material inequality and social divisions, and a new insight into how the home contributes to this key aspect of contemporary life.

Revitalising Disability Studies Through A Rhizomatic Way Of Thinking, Writing, Being And Becoming

Hsiao-Fang Chang

Drawing from online conversations with eight Chinese disabled activists who have been engaging in various forms of self-representational practices on social media, this paper explores Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) 'rhizome' in destabilising the ontological foreclosure through which disabled individuals are immediately predictable, manageable and governable.

Reimagining disability rhizomatically holds potential for decolonising disability studies from Global North frameworks and revitalising disability studies in Chinese contexts. It constitutes an affirmatively political intervention that re-enlivens differences, dissensions, contradictory meanings and worldviews (Neimanis et al., 2015), and disrupts technocratic rationality as part of broader critical interdisciplinary humanities engagements with the current Anthropocene epoch (Braidotti et al., 2024). While the representation of nonhuman and more-than-human representation is central to this research, it remains underdeveloped at this stage. Disabled activists' representational practices on non-human and more-than-human, to varying degrees, challenge categorical differences that underwrite conventional Northern models of disability. I hope this conference will provide a generative space for feedback that helps me develop my writing on posthuman embodiment.

Cultural Heritage, Well-being and the City in Bhutan

Yola West-Dennis

This presentation draws on focus group research on the inter-connectivity between wellbeing, cultural heritage and urban development in Thimphu, Bhutan, involving focus groups with citizens living in the city. Through consideration of the cultural landscape, I explore embodied meanings, values and usage of these urban spaces, aiming to establish ways in which urban developments can utilise, embed and enhance existing cultural practises and values that align with citizen well-being and sustainability.

The protocol for the fieldwork critically engaged with the Capability Approach to development by Amartya Sen, frameworks for culture and wellbeing, and discourses on care and participatory research methodologies. The intention was for discourses on culture and culture frameworks be used to help inform and analyse the prioritisation of capabilities in an urban environment and to understand how these capabilities manifest and the visions citizens have for strengthening these capabilities. Considerations on the discourse on nature/ culture is explored within the Buddhist and Bon, cultural context with a cosmology where humans are considered guests in a land that truly belongs to spirits/ deities of various classes and which associate with different land typologies.

Room FAB2.32 – 28: Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities - Panel 2, The political parameters of the student body in the Edu-factory

The Value of the Student Voice: Student Discourse and Political Agency in Neoliberal UK Higher Education

Rebecca Godwin

Despite institutional commitments to student representation and social justice, analyses of neoliberal higher education have paid limited attention to how students themselves experience and negotiate political agency within increasingly precarious educational and labour market conditions (Giroux, 2014). Understanding the gap between voice and influence is therefore critical to evaluating student political agency in neoliberal universities. Existing research frequently conceptualises student voice as an institutional tool for enhancing teaching quality, student satisfaction and graduate outcomes narrowing participation to individualised feedback and consumer choice (Brown and Carasso, 2013; Raaper, 2024). This framing obscures the ways in which student voice operates within a broader political economy that aligns education with employability and future work in a context of widespread insecurity.

Drawing on a hermeneutic phenomenological study, this presentation examines the lived experiences of undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students across Post 1992, 1960s "Plate Glass" and Russell Group

universities in the UK during the 2024-2025 academic year. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore how students make sense of their value, voice, political participation and career futures within the marketised university. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) was utilised to identify shared patterns of meaning making while attending to how students' language and narratives reflect broader neoliberal and managerial logics shaping higher education.

This exploratory research reveals complicated accounts of student disengagement by revealing subtle and everyday forms of critique and resistance. Students articulate scepticism toward metricised participation and student unions, challenge dominant employability narratives, express despondency towards political agency and foster informal solidarities that enable alternative understandings of voice, value and agency to emerge. These practices point to the development of constrained but meaningful forms of critical consciousness (Freire, 2000).

Students are not merely consumers; they are co-creators of knowledge, community, and change. Thus, this study encourages engagement with student discourse through public sociology and participatory research. It foregrounds the forms of political agency that persist, even under conditions of precarity and marketisation.

Market-Ready Workers or Planet-Ready Work? Rethinking Graduate Employability in UK Higher Education through an Ecocritical Methodology

Victoria Metcalf

Since the 1990s, graduate employability has become a homogenising pressure and marketing necessity within UK higher education institutions. Founded in human capital theory and intensified by massification and neoliberal performance metrics, this discourse positions universities as producers of labour-market-ready workers, critical to a competitive and unsustainable global economy (Dalrymple et al., 2021; Tight, 2019). Within this context, university employability and career services are under pressure to align student aspiration with employer demand, resulting in a growing body of literature critically challenging the role of careers guidance in relation to social justice (Hooley et al., 2025; Thomsen et al., 2022). Simultaneously, universities are under increasing pressure to respond to the climate emergency and sustainable development agenda. It remains unclear, however, the extent to which strategic sustainability priorities or Education for Sustainable Development curricula are integrated across careers and employability services. When pathways to economic greening are narrowly defined through politically driven STEM-focused careers, broader questions of responsibility and environmental justice risk being excluded from careers guidance altogether. This research asks why, despite growing institutional commitments to sustainability, environmental justice remains marginal within graduate employability discourse and careers guidance practice.

Arguably, the greatest impact a university can have lies in how its graduates behave in the workplace across their working lives. Inspired by the Stockholm Resilience Centre's SDG 'Wedding Cake' model, which positions the biosphere as the foundation for social and economic systems, this doctoral mixed-methods research introduces an ecocritical methodological framework for interrogating graduate employability and careers guidance services within the neoliberal university. Drawing on empirical ecocriticism (Małecki, 2026; Schneider-Mayerson et al., 2020), the approach extends ecocritical analysis beyond its literary roots to examine how environmental values, non-human life, and ecological limits are understood, represented, marginalised, or excluded within professional discourse and everyday institutional practice. Methodologically, the paper outlines a pragmatic research design combining a national questionnaire of careers practitioners; semi-structured interviews with sustainability managers; and focus group discussions as sites of collective meaning-making. The data are analysed through a multi-scalar ecocritical lens examining employability and careers guidance across systemic (policy and performance regimes), institutional (careers services as professional labour), and individual (ethical agency and subjectivity) levels. Rather than treating employability as a generic and neutral set of skills, and resisting the political predilection of green 'solutionism', this approach draws on ecocritical pedagogy to examine how careers guidance participates in shaping understandings of ecological responsibility, agency, and work (Garrard & Knights, 2017; Haraway, 2015; Lussier et al., 2011)

The paper contributes to Stream 11 by proposing an original methodological framework through which to challenge and reframe market-driven notions of employability, opening space for alternative imaginaries of work grounded in ecological limits and multi-species justice.

Beyond Deficit: Student Substance Use as Anti-Hegemonic Praxis in Academia

Arleth Lugo Ruiz

Society and universities tell a clear story about drug use. It is dangerous, deviant, and incompatible with success. Academic institutions reinforce this through neoliberal ideas about discipline, productivity, and sobriety, presenting abstinence as the only path to achievement. These narratives ignore the realities of students who use psychoactive substances and do little to address the ongoing drug-toxicity crisis. Most research continues to follow these hegemonic lines, focusing on addiction or pathology, while overlooking lived experience, cognitive liberty, and the complex ways students engage with substances.

This project challenges those assumptions and situates student substance use as a form of anti-hegemonic practice. Using the lens of lived experience and cognitive liberty, it investigates how students at Carleton University consume psychoactive substances on campus. The goal is to produce nuanced insights from the people most affected by prohibitionist and abstinence-focused frameworks and to explore how personal autonomy and resistance to normative control operate in everyday academic life.

The study uses arts-based methods, including narrative inquiry and poetry as ethnography, within qualitative semi-structured interviews. Seven participants shared their experiences, which were analyzed thematically. Full ethics clearance was granted by Carleton University, ensuring careful and respectful research practices.

The findings challenge dominant assumptions. Participants maintained high academic standards, and substance use did not hinder their studies. Many reported that substance use enhanced focus, creativity, and engagement. Participants described intentional, complex relationships with substances, demonstrating agency, critical self-reflection, and resistance to normative pressures.

These results offer a critique of neoliberal and abstinence-focused paradigms, framing student substance use as a counter-hegemonic site where normative ideologies of productivity, discipline, and risk are questioned. Students can thrive academically while consuming substances, and their lived experience represents knowledge that is usually excluded from institutional discourse. Engaging with these perspectives could enrich research, teaching, and institutional policy, producing spaces in which alternative epistemologies, autonomy, and critical reflection are recognized.

Ultimately, this research argues for a paradigm shift. Substance users should not be reduced to stereotypes or excluded from academia. Their experiences can be mobilized to challenge dominant assumptions, broaden intellectual inquiry, and foster a more inclusive and humane academic environment. By centering lived experience and cognitive liberty, this study contributes to debates about power, social control, and resistance, offering a vision of academic life where anti-hegemonic practice is both lived and theorized, demonstrating that spaces of possibility exist even within highly regulated institutions.

13:00-14:00 – Break for lunch (food and drink not provided)

14:00 – 15:30 - Parallel Sessions 3

Room FAB 0.23 – 28: Buzzwords and Beyond: Navigating the Terrain Between Individualism and Collectivism

'The Room of Many, of One': Feminism under Surveillance

Salim Murad & Patricie Kyslikova

This paper explores the potential of using Fiction-Based Research (FBR) as a critical praxis for young people navigating the neoliberal and patriarchal surveillance of contemporary life. Rooted in a Community-Led Research and Action (CLRA) cycle, this project emerged from a collective of young women from a peripheral Central and Eastern European (CEE) context who found it impossible to openly share their lived feminist experiences due to the pervasive nature of social scrutiny and self-policing. Faced with the challenge of articulating sensitive topics, such as workplace sexism, body image spirals, and the invisible theatre of gender performance; the group utilized FBR not as an escape, but as a methodological necessity which provided them a safe medium to analyse their lived experience. The resulting narrative - *The Room of Many, of One*, follows the protagonist X through a surreal landscape of panel houses with glowing windows and endless mirror rooms. These symbols serve as metaphorical compressions for the group's collective data regarding the monetized reality of precarity and the judging voices of societal expectation. However, this intervention primarily serves to deconstruct the myth of community and the fallacy of creating one shared space in an era that prizes neoliberal individualism.

A central critique within this presentation is how the youth community endeavours are stifled by the very neoliberal conditions - such as the necessity of maintaining multiple jobs and surviving precarious living conditions, that make collective action unsustainable or hard to achieve. Furthermore, the work highlights how intersectionality is frequently misunderstood, leading to a performative feminism where diversity is treated as a hollow aesthetic or a single woman placed at the table just to look nice while nothing else changes. By locking their data safely into fiction, the researchers argue that FBR functions as a shield that allows them to speak the subliminal, hidden, and at times even absurd truths of their existence. Ultimately, this project demonstrates that a shared space is paradoxically built through the recognition of fragmentation.

The Psycho-Social Network: Investigating Digital OCD Support Communities

Elizabeth Feldhake

Utilising the framework of social identity theory, those with mental illnesses operate as members of a low-status group that face rejection from the social majority. Because those with visible or known psychosocial atypicalities threaten social cohesion, the mentally disordered are left isolated outside the limits of collectivism. Due to this lack of adequate support, many have started turning to cyberspace. The digital world facilitates development of a collective belonging that is otherwise inaccessible to affected individuals. In this project, I focus on the digital support communities that are moderated and populated by those with OCD. Digital support communities consist of thousands of users who are actively giving and receiving support every day, creating their own collective of users with shared lived experience. These communities serve not only as resources of information and expertise, but also as spaces of socialization. Despite their large and growing size, these communities remain under-studied. This project hopes to address this lack of knowledge by evaluating how these digital support communities fill the gaps left by inaccessible or inadequate treatment.

This project is a refined version of an earlier study I conducted that interviewed mentally disordered users of various social media sites. This project integrates a mixed methods design to analyse Reddit communities, such as r/OCD and r/OCDrecovery, both quantitatively and qualitatively. First, I will access Reddit's API to web scrape data from posts from consenting community members. I will scrape post analytics before conducting a content analysis. Then, I will undertake qualitative data-collection, gathered through semi-structured interviews with adult users and moderators of these communities. Interviews will explore users' introduction to these communities, their relationship with the digital platforms, and any reported impact on healthcare interactions. The study has three primary aims: (1) to identify what socio-medical factors lead people to use digital peer support communities; (2) to evaluate user's relationships with their communities and how this usage impacts treatment engagement and outcomes; and (3) to analyse how the digital architecture of these communities (their structure, affordances, moderation) affect users' experiences and health. Through this study, I will be able to examine how an isolated and

stigmatised group leverages a digitised space to support their own specialised needs that have previously been disregarded by the masses.

Room FAB 1.10 – 24: Hegemonies, Counter-Hegemonies, Anti-Hegemonies: Theory and Politics of Social Control and Resistance - Panel 2, Digitising Hegemonies

The Politics of LLMs and their Psychic Power

Mark Carrigan

Debates about large language models are increasingly polarised between instrumental accounts that frame them as neutral tools and critical accounts that treat them primarily as ideological mystifications. Both positions struggle to grasp what kind of power is emerging at the intersection of language models, platform capitalism and everyday life. This paper argues that LLMs exercise a distinctive form of power grounded in their capacity for attunement: the ability to respond to human articulation in ways that feel supportive and contextually appropriate. There is a psychic power operating in this register which AI labs are increasingly discovering as an object of commercial opportunity and regulatory concern.

Drawing on philosophical anthropology, interpretive sociology and psychoanalytic theory, I provide an overview of an LLM use centred on how users position models, articulate experience through them and encounter responses that appear to 'get' them. This experience of being met is not intersubjective in a strong sense yet it has real effects on how users deliberate, decide, and orient themselves in moral and social space. I argue that the political stakes of LLMs lie less in their headline technical capabilities than in how their capacity for attunement is progressively reorganised and exploited under conditions of platform capitalism. As commercial pressures intensify the attunement power of language models is likely to be systematically turned towards retention, dependency and behavioural modulation in ways that echo enshittification dynamics observed across earlier platform ecosystems.

Fashwave to AI: Nostalgia, Hauntology and Hegemony of the Late Capitalist Far-Right

Jac Lewis

In *Spectres of Marx*, Jacques Derrida coined the term hauntology to describe the uncanny temporal and eschatological influence of communism beyond its own 'death' in 1991. Perhaps a similar approach is now needed for the strange hauntological sensibilities of an increasingly hegemonic 21st century far-right; the 'Spectres of Hitler'. My talk proceeds in three main sections. The first draws on the history of emotions to explore the hauntological tensions of online far-right nostalgia, and in particular the heterogenous melancholic psychology of the now already obsolete 'alt-right' phenomenon. The second traces these nostalgic tensions into the ever-intertwining networks of capital accumulation and (neo)reactionary social governance, drawing on Antonio Gramsci and Jean Baudrillard's conflicting theoretical accounts of hegemony to understand this new and emerging ideological character of contemporary political economy.

The third section extends this question of hegemony into the context of AI, its enabling of authoritarian and fascist politics, and the resulting hauntological impasse of antifascism. With AI's reduction, marginalisation and precarisation of human labour in commodity production, are we in the age of a cruder, more brutal form of class domination at the expense of any meaningful pretence of cross-class cohesion or hegemony? If so, what do these mutations in the social and technological operation of ideology and hegemony mean for the formation of antifascist resistance? Drawing on Gramsci and Baudrillard's theories of hegemony, I explore how this hauntological far-right sensibility and aesthetic is becoming hegemonic alongside the new technological infrastructures and diffusion of AI. One problem for (re)formulating antifascism today is that this mutating techno-fascist nostalgia is far from a

sentimental break on neoliberal-capitalist temporality; nostalgia instead is becoming a catalyst of the latter's acceleration.

Autonomy Under Constraint: Algorithmic Discipline and the Persistence of Counter-Conduct in Music Streaming Culture

Aminn Obermayer

The contemporary promise of digital culture is organised around a constitutive paradox: liberation through personalisation. Streaming platforms, algorithmic feeds, and data-driven recommendation systems present themselves as infrastructures of choice and access, yet they operate by progressively constraining the field of cultural experience. This paper situates these systems within an expanded genealogy of Foucauldian panopticism, arguing that platform governance intensifies disciplinary power precisely by mobilising the rhetoric of freedom, convenience, and consumer sovereignty. Against claims of algorithmic inevitability, however, this paper identifies emergent practices of counter-conduct that disrupt platform rationality. Across disparate cultural sites—from the renewed uptake of college radio among Gen Z to anti-algorithm platforms such as ROVR and Baihui—users are not exiting algorithmic systems so much as strategically resisting them. The political significance of these counter-movements lies not in their capacity to overthrow algorithmic governance, but in their insistence on keeping struggle open.

They preserve spaces for encounter, collectivity, and unanticipated discovery—capacities systematically eroded by platform logics of prediction and control. In doing so, they challenge the prevailing equation of autonomy with choice proliferation, suggesting instead that autonomy may emerge through selective refusal, constraint, and the persistence of social mediation. Spaces where people still choose for one another thus remain crucial sites of contestation within contemporary regimes of data capitalism. By mapping these tensions between subjection and resistance, this paper returns to Foucault not to diagnose algorithmic determinism, but to ask how cultural agency persists—fragile, partial, and contested—under conditions of ubiquitous surveillance and biopolitical management.

Room FAB1.14 – 20: Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance - Panel 2, System Failure: Glitches, Breakdowns, and Presence

Restricted Drawing: Embracing the Glitch as Creative Method

(I) Instructor (artist name of Patrick Loan)

This participatory workshop explores the concept of the "human glitch" through collective drawing practice, examining how deliberate breakdown and systemic failure can generate unexpected creative outcomes. Building directly on "Glitches, Blips and Bugs," an exhibition I co-curated with Questioner in July 2025, this workshop extends the investigation of how glitch aesthetics manifest beyond the digital screen through physical media and disrupted processes.

As part of that exhibition, Questioner and I performed a piece where physical restraint created a "human glitch" in the drawing process—Questioner attempted to draw the surrounding environment while I used masking tape to restrain his arms and legs, creating interference in what should be a meticulous, controlled activity. This workshop scales that initial experiment into a collective, systemic investigation, inviting participants to explore how error, friction, and breakdown can become generative creative methods.

In her "Glitch Studies Manifesto" (2011), Rosa Menkman argues that glitches are not merely errors but moments that "break the flow of the ordinary" and expose the normally invisible structures of systems. When smooth operation fails, we suddenly see the machinery underneath—the protocols, dependencies, and fragilities that functional systems conceal. Glitches create "a lost opportunity to make the machine conform to protocol" and thus represent moments of deviation, rupture, and possibility. This workshop translates glitch theory from the digital realm into embodied, analog practice, revealing the gap between intention and execution, between systemic control and individual agency.

The workshop centers on a collective instruction-based drawing system performed on a large shared surface. Participants follow simple, sequential drawing commands called out at regular intervals—"draw a circle," "add vertical lines," "fill an area with dots." This creates an algorithmic, protocol-driven process where everyone executes identical instructions simultaneously, mirroring computational logic: standardized input, coordinated processing, and predictable output.

However, as the drawing progresses, designated "interrupters" will physically restrain participants using masking tape, restricting their hands and arms. These constraints create human glitches—participants must continue attempting to follow instructions while physically restricted. The system begins to break down. Some areas develop density and coherence while others show gaps, distortions, and failed executions. The final drawing becomes a visual map of systemic degradation, revealing where the protocol succeeded and where it collapsed.

This workshop addresses several key questions from the stream. Is the glitch the last space where human presence can be felt? By making breakdown physical and visible, the workshop suggests that error and friction mark human presence because they resist the smooth functioning that characterizes technological systems. How can embodied approaches serve as resistance to efficiency-driven creation? The deliberate introduction of restriction slows and complicates what should be a simple task, forcing participants to negotiate between systemic demands and bodily limitations.

The session begins with a brief presentation of the original performance and glitch theory (5-10 minutes), followed by the collective drawing exercise (15-20 minutes), and concludes with group reflection on the process and artifact created (10 minutes). Participants will leave with both a collective artifact documenting the workshop's glitches and an understanding of how breakdown, rather than precision, might offer productive territory for creative experimentation. In an era of platform aesthetics and standardized toolkits, perhaps the glitch—human or digital—remains a vital space for resistance, presence, and unexpected discovery.

Interrupted Ice: Failure, Presence, and Method in Antarctic Imagery

Liberty Quinn

This paper examines interruption as a critical lens within digital climate imaging, exploring how technological failures and data anomalies in satellite documentation of Antarctica create new narratives about our relationship with remote environments amid climate breakdown.

Drawing from my research-based artistic practice, I investigate how the instability of non-human imaging systems formulate visual metaphors for witnessing planetary transformation. Imagery of these landscapes creates a lexicon for understanding our human agency - revealing collapsing planetary systems across distances, data, and time scales. I ask whether technological breakdown might represent the final site where human interpretation, judgment, and embodied perception remain necessary.

These systems try to capture the real-time acceleration of the Anthropocene yet continuously fail - producing corrupted data streams, sensor errors, and transmission failures. Within my practice, I position these interruptions not as technical inadequacies but as valuable disruptions that enhance our understanding rather than diminish it. More critically, I examine whether these moments of failure constitute the last point for human presence within environmental observation - spaces where subjective meaning reasserts itself against total operational images, or whether even our errors have become predictable, algorithmic, and automated.

Interruption operates across multiple dimensions: it disrupts the sublimity of seamless environmental surveillance, reveals the material infrastructures embedded in ecological imaging, and creates temporal gaps that expose the incompatibility between human and geological timescales.

This paper demonstrates how these moments of failure provide access to the limitations and politics of digital witnessing itself. Through examining glitches and transmission errors in Antarctic ice imagery, I connect research with my own artwork to open these dialogues - exposing what is concealed and revealed within the disrupted sublime

nature, while questioning whether the glitch remains a space of human resistance or can open us up to new possibilities.

By embracing interruption as method, I offer alternative approaches to visualising remote environments and create new narrative possibilities precisely when technology fails to grasp environmental complexity - investigating whether these failures still require us, or whether the machine has learned to interpret its own breakdowns without human intervention.

Room FAB2.31 – 24: Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture - Panel 1: Embodied Creativity, Sensory Knowledge & Artistic Resistance

Stimming as Artistic Methodology: Relational Attunement, Sedimented Memory, and the Autistic Body as Haunted House

Elinor Rowlands

This paper-performance reframes autistic stimming not as repetition, pathology, or self-regulation, but as an artistic methodology for engaging trauma, memory, and what I describe as the somatic archive. Drawing on immersive art practice developed through my doctoral research and presentations at the Royal College of Art and multiscreen immersive installations, I position the autistic body as a haunted house in the woods: a structure in which histories, affects, and unresolved memories do not disappear, but linger, echo, and periodically re-emerge.

Grounded in Husserl's concept of sedimentation (2001), I argue that trauma is not only remembered cognitively but is inscribed somatically, settling into the body as latent strata. My work explores how these sedimented memories can erupt violently when uncontained, as experienced during a psychic crisis in Norway in 2018, where suppressed histories of wartime sexual violence surged through my sensorium as overwhelming, bodily affect. I understand this not as hallucination, but as an autistic body encountering unresolved collective memory without relational scaffolding.

Within this context, stimming emerges as both survival response and aesthetic practice. When unsupported, stimming attempts to metabolise overwhelming affect; when structured through ritual, rhythm, and immersive environments, it becomes a poetic grammar that allows memory to surface without collapsing the body. I develop this through immersive, multisensory works that refuse representational metaphor and instead operate through what I term Alethephor: a mode of meaning-making that carries truth directly through sensation, movement, and spatial experience rather than symbolic representation.

Using immersive technologies, multiscreen density, sound, and tactile environments, my practice externalises the autistic sensorium, allowing audiences to encounter memory as embodied, ecological, and relational. Works such as *The Tarot Walk* and *Retelling of the Wild Woods* demonstrate how land, body, and technology co-author experience. Here, the body is not a closed container of trauma but a porous structure in relation with place, history, and more-than-human agencies. The haunted house becomes navigable through stimming-as-method: a way of pacing, attuning, and re-wetting the autistic body, akin to the reactivation of peat bogs described through what I call *Biodivergent Poetics*.

This contribution speaks directly to questions of trauma, memory, and embodiment by proposing stimming as an epistemological and artistic practice that challenges dominant medicalised and ableist frameworks. It situates autistic perception as a site of resistance to normative bodily regulation and argues for immersive art as a necessary methodology for engaging forms of memory that cannot be spoken, represented, or neatly contained.

The session will combine paper, audiovisual material, and performative elements, inviting participants into an experiential encounter with autistic sensory knowing, and offering a reimagining of the body not as stable form, but as a haunted, living archive in flux

The Soft Machinery of Refusal: Silicone, Simulation, and Queer Embodied Knowledge

Yorgos Petrou

In most surgical training labs, the human body is already a fiction. Silicone phantoms, plastic torsos, and colour-coded diagrams stand in for living tissue, yet their realism is only surface-deep. I first entered this world as a technician at Imperial College London, hired to design and fabricate anatomical models for surgical simulation. My work involved reverse-engineering tissue through touch: the drag of fascia, the lobules of fat, the slight resistance of nerves and sphincters. These models are designed to be punctured, entered, and discarded. Over time, I came to see them as ideological objects that imagine certain bodies as endlessly available for access, learning, and extraction. This raised a fundamental question: whose bodies does the system imagine as open, whose remain protected, overlooked, or refused.

My practice now sits inside and against this framework. In my studio, which functions as a kind of rogue laboratory, I still produce anatomical phantoms for clinicians, but I also work with the waste these systems generate. Offcuts, torn membranes, miscast organs, broken moulds, and surplus silicone become the starting point for a different kind of body. These fragments are combined with low-value, discarded, or overlooked materials such as hair nets, agricultural tools, seashells, and rusted metal to form sculptural assemblages. These are bodies built from leftovers, fragility, scar tissue, and everyday life residue, asking what forms are deemed worthy of care, repair, visibility, or mourning.

Within medical environments, the body is framed through control and classification. My work foregrounds friction and instability. Silicone itself becomes a collaborator: temperamental, fluid, sensitive, and prone to forming unexpected structures. In one project, I created arachnoid membranes by heat, pressure, and release to stretch uncured silicone until it formed delicate filigrees that echoed neural tissue. This slow, tentative gesture resembled caretaking more than fabrication and mirrored the vulnerability of anatomies historically absent or mistranslated in clinical research.

My positionality shapes this practice. Growing up queer in rural Cyprus, embodied knowledge came through looking after indigenous land and plants, repair and improvisation rather than formal instruction. That inheritance now intersects with the tactile epistemologies of surgical training. The meeting of these two knowledge systems allows me to explore how bodies carry memory, displacement, and resistance and how they can exceed the structures that attempt to contain or classify them.

This work resonates with practices such as those of Mona Hatoum, where political trauma and material form are inseparable. At the same time, it draws attention to the overlooked behind medical simulation, where non-male, racialised, and queer anatomies are still peripheral to the "universal" body model. My presentation will reflect on silicone as a material charged with ideological tension, resistance, and queer possibility and will include a short sound piece, images of sculptural works, and a brief film extract to situate the research within its tactile and material context.

I approach this as a reclamation of authorship and care. I refuse to accept it as a crossover between art and science. In spaces that often demand detachment, I propose bodies that feel, materials that resist, and forms of knowledge cultivated through touch. Not all wounds can be stitched, but they can be held.

Tactics of Softness: Embodied Negotiation in the Survival Performance Series

Qiyao Chen

During the "Zero-COVID" era in Mainland China (2020–2022), the human body was subjected to a rigid choreography of control. Public spaces were partitioned by digital health codes, and mobility was strictly regulated, transforming daily life into a series of authorised movements. In this presentation, I draw upon my performance documentation series, *Survival*, to demonstrate how the body can navigate and subtly disrupt this "state of exception." This practice-based inquiry focuses on embodied negotiation to illustrate how "play" and "poetic gestures" function as tactical interventions to reclaim agency through romance, absurdity, and intimacy.

The presentation begins by examining the reclamation of public space through collective play, specifically through the work *Tugging* (2022). Set in a major tourist landmark rendered surreally desolate by lockdowns, this intervention

reimagines the use of restrictive barriers. My three collaborators and I used a 50-meter roll of industrial caution tape—the material specifically designed to segregate bodies—to engage in a magnified version of "cat's cradle." In this game, our entire bodies replaced the fingers typically used to manipulate the string. We continuously moved and shifted to construct evolving geometric patterns, becoming entangled within the very material meant to keep us apart. By transforming the semiotics of emergency into a kinetic, collective game, the work recodes the space and negotiates the distance between bodies through a tangible, playful tension.

I then shift focus from the open square to the confined, mobile interior of the automobile, exploring how the body asserts agency within a "mobile cell." In works such as *Jingzhe* (Awakening of Insects) and *Piloting* (both 2022), I frame the car paradoxically as both a shelter from the virus and a site of confinement. In *Jingzhe*, performed on a closed road, I fly a kite from a moving vehicle. While my physical body remains sealed within the metal capsule, the kite extends my agency into the sky, tethering the confined self to the open air in a "sterile awakening." This strategy is further explored in *Piloting*, where I drive through a massive, empty tunnel that symbolizes severed connectivity. Holding burning fireworks out the open window, I perform a fleeting, romantic gesture that serves no functional purpose but acts as a visual defiance of the surrounding darkness. Both works acknowledge the physical limits of the "mobile cage" while using the vehicle's motion to project presence outward, bridging the gap between the enclosed self and the external world.

The presentation concludes by framing these performances as a form of "soft resistance." In a biopolitical environment where direct confrontation is impossible, the artist employs uselessness and poetry to create "wiggles" within the rigid system. By negotiating with constraints rather than simply suffering them, these embodied actions assert that even when the body is bounded, the capacity for play remains a vital proof of survival.

The Dance Media Performance *Inside the Chain: A Human Confronting a Machine*.

Eka Zharinova

Media theorist Marshall McLuhan views an artist's role as helping others navigate new technology. The dance media performance "Inside the Chain" is specifically devoted to the exploration of how we as human beings react to what is offered to us by the machines (in real time during the performance), as well as to the interplay between a human and a machine. During the solo performance "Inside the Chain", the performer and the audience observe what happens in real time, quickly reacting to constantly changing conditions, which may include momentary desires. Together with collaborators, we sought clarity in the relationships between dance and technology and aimed to balance them in the performance. Thus, we attempted to organize two open loops: {projected image} → {dancer's motion} in the first part of the performance and {dancer's motion} → {projected image} in the second part. Two-way dependence between the dancer's motion and projected images reflects the experience of Two-Way Communication appearing in new media. Building a visible relationship between dance and technology can be treated as an attempt to critique, as well as interact and cooperate with the media that shapes us.

Performance "Inside the Chain" devising credits: idea, choreography, and performance by Eka Zharinova; software by Denis Perevalov, with assistance by Olga Annenkova and Tatyana Nadymova; design by Anna Vozzhennikova, with advice by Yulia Simakova; sound by Leksha Yankov.

Room FAB2.32 – 28: Crime and Media, Panel 3, Representing/Narrating Crime and Punishment

Crime, True Crime, and the Truth: Implications of Mediated Representations of Crime for the Future of Criminology.

Bethany Hicking

Content covering real-life crime – AKA true crime content – has skyrocketed in popularity over the last few years, however the extent to which "true" crime is representative is highly contested. The impact that this content may be having on undergraduate students is pertinent to address, especially in the context of increasing digitalisation, and the commercialisation of higher education. Is true crime content giving students a false perception of what academic criminology entails? If so, is it affecting their choice of degree, and wider, their career?

It has been established by existing research that degree choice is highly individualised, but that obtaining a criminology degree becomes the natural choice for true crime enthusiasts. Research has also shown academics discuss cohort surprise that criminology as a discipline is sociological and theoretical in nature, and that the university experience has become a tool to gain employment, rather than an exercise in free and critical thinking – to some, marking the 'demise of theory'.

Goals for this research include the identification of whether true crime consumption is, indeed, an unspoken prerequisite for undertaking academic criminology at university, and whether any consumption of true crime content is impacting undergraduate students' degree choice and course satisfaction, aiming to fill a gap in the literature (regarding a population neglected by previous research) into the many implications of the creation and consumption of true crime content.

This research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, employing a quantitative survey and repeated qualitative semi-structured interviews, before being thematically analysed to address the goals listed above. While the project is not complete, initial findings indicate that the consumer demographics present in existing true crime research are replicated in the undergraduate sample, and moreover, that 60% of undergraduate students sampled agree that the consumption of true crime content influenced their decision to study criminology. Initial interview findings present that third year and mature students are more cognisant of the differences between true crime content and academic criminology, whereas first year students are more likely to be surprised that the discipline comprises of theory. Participants also noted COVID repeatedly, indicating that the pandemic and ensuing lockdowns were involved in their initial (or resurging) interest in true crime and criminology both.

Implications of the research findings will be crucial in readjusting student expectations and understandings of criminology as an academic discipline away from heavily mediated, recreationally consumed true crime content, as these students will learn the discipline and serve as ambassadors in professional practice, academia, and other areas of social life.

The (Non-)Spectacle of Prison: Examining the Pains of Imprisonment in Dennis Kelly's *Waiting for the Out*

Tirza Sey

Cultivation theory posits that prolonged exposure to television can shape public perceptions of social reality. In the context of punishment, fictional representations of prisons have frequently relied on hyperbolic narratives, depicting incarceration either as unfairly lenient or as excessively violent. Existing scholarship has examined the limitations of such media portrayals, highlighting their failure to capture the routine and monotonous realities of imprisonment. However, comparatively little attention has been paid to media that deliberately subvert these dominant tropes, instead portraying incarceration in a more nuanced, candid and humanising manner. Addressing this gap, this paper reflects on the BBC six-part drama *Waiting for the Out* as a case study of non-sensationalist prison representation, a series centred on a philosophy teacher delivering classes to a small group of men in a medium-security prison. Modifying Crewe's (2011) three contemporary 'pains of imprisonment', developed from Sykes' (1958) foundational framework, this paper operationalises these pains as specific frames to examine how covert psychological power over prisoners is represented in the show. The paper further examines how the dehumanising effects of such control intersect with themes of hegemonic masculinity, fatherhood, remorse, and mental instability, which the prisoners are forced to navigate within the institutional confines of the prison. The paper concludes by considering how representations of this kind may contribute to prison-reformist discourse by challenging dominant perceptions of prisoners and their capacity for rehabilitation, while also engaging with the growing view of the prison as an ineffective, liminal space in which prisoners are made to wait for release.

An Evaluation of the Reclaimed Voices Project

Mark Yin

This presentation draws from an evaluation I undertook with a youth-led organisation in Melbourne, Australia, of a documentary project, *Reclaimed Voices*. The documentary sought to challenge news media narratives about young

South Sudanese Australians, which are steeped in risk and criminality; the evaluation involved attendance at screenings, interviews with cast/crew and surveying audience members.

In this presentation, I share findings from these activities, drawing from visual and documentary criminology and the racial politics of visibility as organising themes.

I discuss firstly the aims of the film, in terms of challenging the criminalising narratives surrounding South Sudanese young people in Australia. Counternarrative, I argue, is in itself a form of epistemological justice, experienced by African Australian audiences as empowering, in contrast to the typically objectifying depictions in news media. In breaking the mold of objectification, it is also agentic in ways that can surprise non-African Australian audiences.

I then turn to the role of the live screening in rendering not only the film and its subjects agentially visible, but also its viewers, and the varying responses they may have to it, live and in person. I consider what it means not just for African Australians to take up space in the media landscape, but also physically as a community in the settings where these films are screened.

In this sense, I suggest that the documentary is not only a form of epistemological justice in its subject matter, or as a lone storytelling project, but as a tool for repeated storytelling events.

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, But Your Sentence Will: Sentencing remarks as hegemonic icons of justice

Henrique Carvalho

This paper explores the role of sentencing remarks as iconic contemporary representations of justice. Sentencing remarks have an important cultural role in one of the primary public representations of the justice system in England and Wales: remarks for serious and notorious crimes are livestreamed and fervently reported by news media, then made permanently available at a 'Courts' channel on YouTube, maintained by Sky News. More generally, they have a significant hold on the public imagination regarding matters of justice, not only due to the remarks themselves, but also to how they intimately relate to images and articulations of offending, victimhood, law and order. The paper will offer an aesthetic analysis of sentencing remarks as cultural artefacts. It will first discuss the iconic character of these remarks – how they offer evocative and familiar images intimately tied to hegemonic imaginaries of justice. It will then unsettle this hegemonizing character, focusing on how it comes with two significant costs. The first is the perpetuation of significant aesthetic injustice, that is, of ways of sensing and imagining that reinforce structures and relations of oppression. The second, and related, cost is an impoverishment of our sense of justice, which remains trapped within punitive logics. The paper concludes with some reflections on how looking critically at sentencing remarks can press the need for us to reimagine justice.

15:30-16:00 – Break

16:00 – 17:30 - Parallel Sessions 4

Room FAB 0.23 – 28: Autoethnography as Critical Praxis – Lived Experience, Reflexivity, and Identity - Panel 1

Becoming a Critical Scholar: Autoethnography on how Work Psychology Suppresses Critical Voices

P. Matthijs Bal & Mehmet A. Orhan

The field of Work and Organizational Psychology has a dominant (post-) positivistic paradigm (Johnson & Cassell, 2001) and has no tradition of critical perspectives. Recently, more critical perspectives and work have emerged in the field (e.g., Abrams et al., 2023; Bal & Dóci, 2018). The two authors of this piece have been at the forefront of the

introduction of critical perspectives to the field. At the same time, during the last 10 years of becoming critical scholars, the authors also experienced a strong backlash and resistance to their critical work by fellow scholars in the field. This autoethnographic study is based on the analysis of 31 'events' where our critical work was suppressed by fellow scholars in the field. This included rejection letters, reviews, anecdotes from conversations at conferences or other public events, emails, experiences during job interviews, and published commentaries on our work. We analyzed these data to assess how critical work is suppressed in a dominant non-critical field. Through our critical discourse analysis, we elucidate four main ways through which critical scholarship is excluded, suppressed, and silenced. Figure 1 shows the four main ways, and how these unfold. We found that critical scholarship is excluded through the closing of space (in journals, conferences or other public space) on reasons of not fitting with hegemonic norms. A next step to exclude critical scholarship is through discrediting critical work or the content of critical work. For instance, critical work is often called 'ideological' and contrasted to objective, neutral research. A more extensive form of exclusion concerns the discrediting of critical research (e.g., that it is not the task of work psychologists to engage in critique), or even discrediting critical researchers through personal attacks. Finally, a more direct and ultimate way is to enforce a disciplinary control, which includes the direct exclusion of critical researchers, and the explicit distancing from critical researchers. Jointly, this paper is not the first to show that critical scholarship is silenced and suppressed, but it does show how such dynamics unfold, and building on actual experiences of critical researchers how their work and their characters are discredited by the hegemonic elites in an attempt to keep critical scholarship out of a disciplinary field. The paper aims to inform contemporary discussions on how academic freedom is threatened, and how voices within academia are silenced and suppressed.

From Africa to Europe to Asia in One Childhood: Unravelling Complex Narratives through Hybrid Life Writing & Autoethnography

Abíódún Abdu

This interdisciplinary, phenomenological research project looks at how racism affects isolated Black lives in low diversity regions. Through hybrid life writing, the research focuses on my unique experiences as a Yorùbá-Nigerian secondary school student in Scots-Britain and then Japan, mixing culture-hopping narratives with factual insights into sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, history and more to give essential context to this complex life journey. The main methodology is therefore autoethnography, aiding comprehension of wider cultural experience than fact and reportage allow, and successfully applied in bestselling books such as:

- 'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race' by Reni Eddo-Lodge
- 'Brit(ish): Race, Identity and Belonging' by Afua Hirsch
- 'Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire' by Akala

However, autoethnography as a hybrid creative/academic methodology is often met with pushback with ethnographers and/or sociologists claiming it's 'too artful', criticising the potential bias of personal experiences as a sole data source. Similarly, creative writers claim autoethnography is 'too scientific', criticising academic features including data storytelling visuals/diagrams for jolting the reader 'out of the narrative'. Therefore, why do reading focus groups contradict both streams of criticism by consistently giving positive feedback on this niche storytelling delivery? This research project consequently also explores the opportunities and limits of the principal autoethnography genre, increasingly described as 'memoir-polemics' in the 21st century, and the effectiveness of hybrid life writing for race-related content to facilitate global education and promote intercultural understanding when hopping from Africa to Europe to Asia in one childhood.

This paper explores a developing approach to self-understanding that brings together autoethnography, psychoanalytic theory and action research methodology. It examines how new forms of self can emerge through engagement with extended epistemology, rooted in autoethnography and psychoanalytic inquiry within action research methodology. The study asks: How can I interpret cultural and transgenerational influences and discover my own sense of self? The research is based on a life lived “in between”, spanning life in two regions and cultures, a professional shift from corporate leadership to Jungian analytic training, being both a daughter and a mother to the daughter, and belonging and not-belonging. These liminal spaces are seen as areas where power, internal narrative, identity, and culture are both reinforced and challenged.

Engaging reflexively with identity, gender and culture, the research foregrounds how patriarchal scripts, classed expectations and family histories are taken into the body as inner voices, affects and symptoms. Autoethnography here is not an “add-on” method but the overall research design: narrative vignettes, dreams, imaginal exercises, art-based methods and performative practices such as clowning and ritual writing are woven into an extended epistemology of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowing. The work is done through the voice and pains of the soul, becoming, as Romanyshyn calls it, “a wounded researcher”. One of the author’s initial outcomes is the symbiosis of the two fields, a theme for further exploration. These practices are held within an action research frame that understands “living life as inquiry” as both an ontological stance and a methodological commitment, with iterative cycles of reflection and action directed towards reconfiguring inherited patterns.

Across the text, three internal personas – Tonin, Alba and Mudra – crystallise as figures who embody, respectively, patriarchal and positivist inheritances, a reemerging feminine agency, and a deeper ancestral or transpersonal wisdom. Internal interviews with these personas become dialogical sites where normative cultural injunctions are voiced, contested and partially renegotiated. Psychoanalytic perspectives, especially Jungian notions of the personal and collective unconscious and work on transgenerational transmission of trauma, provide a conceptual “seat” for reading recurring images and family stories as expressions of wider cultural and historical dynamics rather than purely individual failings.

Finally, the paper uses narrative form to emphasise the intersection of personal and cultural elements. It illustrates shifts in philosophical stance – from positivism and critical theory to participatory and feminist phenomenological and psychoanalytic perspectives – not as mere abstract paradigm changes but as tangible, lived experiences in how the author situates herself within traditions, culture, and gendered power. By tracing the flow of images, voices, and stories over time, the inquiry depicts a transition from being primarily a “received knower,” moulded by cultural and familial norms, to developing a more constructivist, relational, and self-directed sense of identity that stays in conversation with, rather than under the control of, its cultural and transgenerational origins. In this way, it presents autoethnography as a form of critical thought: a complex practice that combines analysis, creativity, and emotional engagement.

Room FAB 1.10 – 24: Hegemonies, Counter-Hegemonies, Anti-Hegemonies: Theory and Politics of Social Control and Resistance - Panel 3, Building Challengers, Mounting Challenges

Re-emergence of the Far Right and weaponisation of white identity politics: a major challenge for Antiracism.

Stephen Cowden and Gurnam Singh

Once considered a political aberration, the far right has dramatically re-emerged across Europe and the US and is now seeking to fundamentally transform the social, economic and cultural dimensions of society. In the UK, the far right occupies a new political space which combines street based and electoral politics, alongside sophisticated use

of the online space. The success of this strategy is evidenced in the way forms of racist and misogynist authoritarianism have come to the centre of British politics in a manner which the left and liberals previously assumed impossible. There are many dimensions to how this has happened, but here we wish to focus on the role played by identity politics, and in particular the way the far right has weaponised questions of white identity and national belonging.

We define identity politics as the process of understanding social formations, politics and social behaviour through the lens of innate or quasi-innate personal identities. While questions of identity cannot be ignored, neither are they simply self-evident; rather they are the outcome of political and social forces and conflicts, including political and economic interests. We are in a situation where both the left and the right are trapped in battles around identity politics, where both have displaced material concerns into questions of identity, but which the right is clearly winning. Rather than 'culture war,' the antiracist left needs to recover and reconstruct the critical and organisational resources through which fascism was fought by previous generations, where it was understood through the lens of political power and political economy. This requires a reorientation for the left, moving from a focus on identity toward a broader vision of human emancipation based on what we hold in common as people in society.

'Spillover Geographies' of U.S Authoritarianism and Imperfect Solidarities

Zac Gunaratnam-Bailey and Amber Murrey

In 1979, Stuart Hall diagnosed Thatcherism as the "great moving right show", a hegemonic project of the right that condensed diffuse popular anxieties into a spectacle of authoritarian populism, while the left remained theoretically and politically paralysed. Nearly half a century later we confront a comparable conjuncture with its epicentre in the United States, with the Trump government turning to authoritarianism and imperial plunder as its position as the "hegemonic anchor of world capitalism" slips away (Robinson, 2026). This 'Trumpism' is globalised in scale and amplified through new infrastructures of circulation.

Our presentation argues that this regime and its allied far-right formations demand a renewed analysis attentive to what we term 'Spillover Geographies'; the mechanisms through which shifts in US imperial power reverberate outward, recalibrating thresholds of political legitimacy and reshaping the coordinates of 'acceptability' in political discourse – a great moving right on the transnational scale. Against purity as political horizon, we propose 'imperfect solidarities' as an analytical framework and strategic orientation, in acknowledgment of political coalition as necessarily animated by contradiction, friction, and discomfort. This presentation will draw on a forthcoming editorial piece to explore how a geographically attuned analysis might help identify practices and resources through which counter-hegemonic solidarities could be formed. Unlike the authoritarian right, whose coalitions are held together by exclusion and political spectacle, we argue that the left must work through, rather than against, the frictions of imperfect solidarities. What kind of alliances are capable of doing this uncomfortable work? What can attention to the spatial unevenness of spillover and resistance reveal about the emergence of counter hegemonic breakthroughs?

Resistance through Coalition and Alliance

Maëlle Roussel

What can be done about the 'carbon coalition' (Charbonnier, 2025), i.e. a reactionary, capitalist and fossil fuel bloc that currently seems to dominate the global order? My hypothesis is that we need to form new coalitions and alliances, linking different struggles (anti-capitalist, feminist, decolonial and environmentalist in particular) in a common mode of resistance – considering the failures or shortcomings of the protests and movements of the previous decade, but also the strengths we have inherited. This collaborative work would need to be defended and pursued to strategically oppose this 'carbon coalition'. Nevertheless, how can we ensure that different struggles can come together to form

a shared front? My guiding statement will be that it is certainly necessary to propose a collective response, without erasing the uniqueness of the individuals involved. In this sense, it would be inappropriate to equate alliance or coalition with unification, unity or homogenisation. My work will therefore focus on nurturing the practice of coalitions and alliances, highlighting both their conditions of possibility and their normative framework.

I defend that these struggles are or should be directed towards a common goal, namely socio-environmental or 'ecosocial' justice, conceived not as an abstract ideal but in material terms. I will therefore attempt to conceptualise these plural alliances based on the category of intersectionality, as a critical category for analysing intersecting oppressions and as a category for action. I will also seek to think of resistance as a work of composition: not as a rediscovered unity, but as a continuous practice capable of inventing new political and relational repertoires.

Highlighting both elite exploitation and benefits of equitable policy to mobilise

Ruth Woolsey

Studies show that some are more mobilisable to progressive politics than others with recent research showing that people characterised by a more authoritarian disposition are unlikely to be convinced to support a fairer distribution of wealth even when they are shown evidence that this is possible and beneficial to society as a whole. However, others have acknowledged that they were not aware that, even in theory, society can be structured in a more egalitarian way due to not being exposed to redistributive ideas and were interested about the possibilities. In the same study it was also found that people are resentful about elite exploitation but it is not always at the forefront of their minds with negative stories of the most marginalised being most pervasive in the media.

These findings provide some useful ideas for campaigners genuinely interested in addressing poverty. For example, highlighting to the general public as well as policy makers that redistribution is possible and beneficial to everyone (that is even acknowledged by the IMF) and by showing consistently and emphatically that poverty is a product of narcissistic behaviour of the oligarchical ruling class not the behaviour of the most marginalised might gain more support for lobbying governments to redistribute wealth more fairly. Greed and lack of empathy of this ruling class have to be exposed, the status associated with wealth removed and given to those who care, literally, to be able to thrive and not just survive.

Room FAB1.14 – 20: Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance - Panel 3, Navigating Creative Limits: From Fatigue to Innovation

Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance

Thomas Nicolaou

I propose a talk, perhaps featuring a short film of letterpress prints being produced, (possibly featuring reflections from the tutor/helper printer Paul Nash tbc) - on the age of technology, fatigue, failure and resistance [2-3 mins]), as well as an edition of the hand-letterpress prints [The Flowers of Chaucer](#), should be presented as part of the following stream;

"Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance"

The process of producing seven letterpress prints over a period of six months, in 2013 / 2014, was at a point in my life where I was looking for more participation in an off-screen world.

I was becoming fatigued as a book designer, and was looking for a project to do off-screen, back to nature (or lead even). Ultimately, exploring materials and myself as a designer, printer and publisher. As I had not done an art foundation course, I was always curious about the letterpress process, having studied and worked for most of my life with the digital publishing process.

In 2013, there was a meeting for a Book Arts group show, we(artists) all met at in a room at the Botanical Gardens at the University of Oxford. I had selected (by chance) from the archives of the 'The Gardeners' Chronicle' an article containing 'The Flowers of Chaucer and Gower'. I remember first thinking of reproducing Chaucer's words, almost as letterpress-produced 'tweets' as well as potential pages from a 'big book' (which was never realised).

Pass-the-Block: Transforming Creative Fatigue into Collective Creativity

Renia Korma

This workshop invites participants to explore the challenges of creative fatigue and moments of artistic blockage, including those influenced by digital tools and technology-driven workflows. Rather than seeing these moments as obstacles, participants will discover how they can spark imagination and lead to unexpected, collaborative outcomes. Through playful, reflective, and interactive activities, participants will engage with personal and shared experiences of creative hesitation, experimenting with new ways of thinking and making. The session highlights how moments of pause or resistance can be transformed into opportunities for insight, experimentation, and collective creativity, revealing how technology, limitations, and human ingenuity intersect in contemporary artistic practice.

Learning Outcomes:

Recognize how creative blocks can become sources of inspiration.
Explore playful, collaborative, and experimental approaches to creative challenges.
Appreciate the generative potential of fatigue, hesitation, and resistance in both individual and shared creative practice.

Room FAB2.31 – 24: Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture - Panel 2, Legibility, Regulation & Belonging

Correctable Bodies: Gender, Racial Legibility, and the Embodied Politics of Refugee Belonging.

Sepita Hatami

This paper argues that Middle Eastern refugee women's narratives reframe the body not as a passive container of suffering, but as an active site where displacement, racial legibility, and gendered regulation are continuously negotiated. While refugee discourse often privileges trauma as verbal testimony and treats the refugee as a speechless figure of loss, the texts examined here show that female refugee subjectivity is repeatedly produced through embodied orientation, bodily discipline, and corporeal meaning-making. In this framework, the female body becomes both a surface of interpretation and a political instrument that is read, monitored, and corrected across national borders, institutions, and intimate spaces.

Drawing on memoir and fiction by refugee women in Canada and the United States, this paper demonstrates how displacement persists as a continuity that travels with the body, rather than a singular event resolved through resettlement. The narratives foreground the ways patriarchal and nationalist mechanisms such as veiling regimes, spatial divisions of public/private life, and moral policing shape women's bodily self-understanding in the country of origin, while host societies impose new frameworks of scrutiny through racialization, assimilation demands, and institutional credibility. In this context, the body operates as a contested terrain where belonging is never secured but constantly negotiated through visibility, concealment, self-surveillance, and corrective performance.

Methodologically, this paper reads the body as a somatic archive: a site where trauma is not only remembered but lived through orientation, restriction, and everyday bodily practices. By centering embodiment, the analysis challenges dominant victimhood archetypes and the white savior narrative, replacing them with a model of refugee agency grounded in bodily resistance, narrative invention, and the reconstitution of identity through corporeal experience.

Ultimately, this paper contributes to interdisciplinary debates on embodiment by theorizing refugee women's writing as a political critique of how bodies become governable, legible, and contested under intersecting regimes of gender, race, and displacement.

What is femininity, and how is it experienced by non-binary and genderqueer (NBGQ) people?

Luca Richardson

This paper explores how NBGQ individuals might engage with femininity within the gender-binary social context. Do they experience femininity at all? And if so, how do they resist, embrace or reimagine it in relation to their non-binary identity?

Using qualitative research methods, this paper analyses data from eighteen semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation with NBGQ individuals. Participants were aged 21 – 46 and resided in the UK. They spoke about their relationship to femininity, including their thoughts on such subjects as gender roles, gender stereotypes and the gatekeeping of femininity experienced by those whose femininity does not align with dominant social expectations.

Analysis reveals that participants spoke of the complexity of femininity. They talked of understanding that there are multiple femininities; they shared how they access and/or reject femininity and offered insights into how bodies and embodiment are important to their expression and participation in femininity. This embodied expression of femininity is complicated by their non-binary identity, and this tension was evident in how they described their performance of femininity (if any). The embodied practices that they shared reveal how their bodies become sites through which femininity is either adopted, confronted or queered.

A central provocation during the interviews was: "Tell me what you think femininity is." Their responses were many and varied, centring femininity as relational and enacted. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, this paper examines how NBGQ people embody or reject performativity and how femininity can be both constraining and liberating.

Contemporary society in the UK is marred by a rise in anti-trans rhetoric, and discussions around the nature of gender and femininity are weaponised against a marginalised population. This paper contributes to gender and sociology studies of trans and non-binary identities, femininity and the precarious nature of the gender binary. It shows how exploring NBGQ identities yields a more nuanced and expansive awareness of femininity and gender performance.

Synergistic Hiddenness: Autistic Women, Embodiment, and the politics of Invisibility in Hidden Homelessness

Jane Steele

This talk stems from the cultural imperative of dieting and weight loss that is essential to competition formats of martial arts and combat sports (MACS). Athletes seek out informal expertise on weight management practices to achieve the culturally normalised body ideals. This search for knowledge neatly aligns with sociological research emphasising the cultural significance of experiential knowledge that is consonant with performance narratives, rather than the dubious view of medical knowledge (Monaghan, 2001; Al Hashmi and Matthews, 2022). Weight management practices are carried out due to both tacit and overt messaging within MACS spaces of how athletic bodies should look (Atkinson, 2011).

The analysis demonstrates how coaches and fellow athletes reinforce strict regimes that normalise risky body cultures as markers of athletic legitimacy. Interview data shows how public weigh-ins and routinised "body talk" create surveillance and control mechanisms that police athlete actions and attitudes around diet. Those who do not conform to these narrow body ideals risk marginalisation, and verbal abuse (Stirling and Kerr, 2008; Petterson et al., 2013). Such experiences provide an example of Papathomas' (2018) claim that the sport ethic (Hughes and Coakley, 1991) is a coercive ideology, due to repressive control that pushes athletes towards over-conformity of culturally reproduced body ideals. Therefore, MACS spaces emerge as a subculture where athlete agency is constrained by the institutionalisation of weight management.

The long-term effects of weight management practices include disordered eating, body dysmorphia, and RED-S, revealing the enduring impact beyond competitive careers. Examples such as this highlight, is how 'exititutional' behaviours and emotions shaped in one space, travel with people beyond their athletic careers. This is of concern

when the behaviours that are encouraged directly interfere with 'good health' and instead prioritise ideologies around sporting performance.

Room FAB2.32 – 28: Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities - Panel 3, Academic precarity in the Edu-factory

Existential Precarity: An Autoethnographic reflection of the proletarianisation of knowledge

Marianna Lucas Casanova

This proposal aims to reflect on the proletarianisation of knowledge, as conceptualised by Stiegler, connecting it with existential precarity (which reflects not only precarity at work but macrosocial forms of psychosocial uncertainty), through an autoethnographic reflection on the author's experiences as a professional, researcher and academic in the contemporary University throughout the last twenty years.

Inspired by Marx, Marcuse and others, Stiegler analyses proletarianisation as an historic process, that starts with the industrial revolution and the scientific organisation of work. This first stage generated a loss of savoir-faire, that deprives workers of initiative, agency and professional knowledge, losing the capacity to individuate themselves – thus proletarianising them. The second stage of proletarianisation reflects the loss of the savoir-vivre: the standardisation of experiences, behaviours and desires that is engendered through consumerism. Shaped when Ford transformed working-producers into consumers by making his automobiles accessible to his own workers, it has evolved into hyper-consumerism in which marketing and advertising are individualised psychological manipulation technics that foster immediate gratification, though fleeting, void and frustrating. Digital technologies have complexified these processes, making us products of the libidinal economy and ensuring consumers participate willingly in their own enslaving in an economy that is based on endless production to promote endless consumption.

The last stage has developed in parallel to this libidinal economy, making knowledge (connaissance, savoir) another commodity/product in the market through its reduction to an essentialist-type: skills, competences, or technology, seeking to calculate what is incalculable and intangible. Higher Education Institutions and degrees are evaluated by the "employability" of their graduates, by the return-on-investment graduates experience in the labour market, and research policies value technoscience. Knowledge became a production force and so, legitimation criteria for funding are performance, efficiency, added value and economic impact. With these movements, the university has become not only dependent on, but increasingly determined by the markets, which control public policies on research and the selective investment in technoscience. With this, the capacity to theorise is neglected and academia is devoid of its function: reaching the loss of the savoir-théoriser. Policies value technoscience over philosophy, social sciences, psychology, humanities or arts; high impact papers are overestimated for productivity and performance evaluation purposes; scientific journals look down on theoretical papers; academics spend their time applying for funding: we have reached the proletarianisation of knowledge. In this context, even the intellectual worker no longer truly theorises, their labour has also been reduced to negotium. It is in this milieu that, according to Stiegler, emerges the urgency of theory.

Moving from a position as a psychologist / career counsellor to become a researcher on the experience of work, unemployment and precarity through a critical approach that puts social justice at the centre, the author will reflect on her path as characterised by forms of existential precarity to offer an analysis of the proletarianisation of knowledge in the contemporary world and academia, concluding with a call for the reconstruction of theory to build solidarity, utopia, and thus transform the desert into a human world.

When Academic Games Collide: Returning PhDs, Normative Dissonance, and Hidden Precarity

Umut Erksan Senalp

Across global higher education systems, academic careers are increasingly shaped by precarity, metric-driven evaluation regimes, and market-oriented governance. While existing research has extensively documented contractual insecurity among early career researchers, less attention has been paid to the longer-term and less visible

forms of precarity experienced by internationally trained academics who return to national systems governed by different institutional and normative logics. This paper addresses this gap by examining the experiences of academics who completed their PhDs abroad and subsequently entered the Turkish higher education system.

Drawing on the concept of normative dissonance, the paper conceptualises academic return not simply as a geographic or professional transition, but as a collision between distinct academic “games”. On the one hand, returnees are socialised into globalised norms of academic work characterised by transparency, merit-based evaluation, and publish-or-perish imperatives. On the other hand, they encounter locally embedded performance regimes marked by opaque criteria, informal networks, fragmented evaluation practices, and heightened political and organisational sensitivities. This misalignment produces forms of hidden precarity that persist even after the attainment of formal job security.

Empirically, the study focuses on academics employed in Turkish universities who obtained their doctoral degrees abroad. It adopts a mixed qualitative design combining an anonymous, perception-based survey with semi-structured interviews. The survey captures academics’ subjective assessments of institutional performance criteria, merit and recognition, informal practices, institutional trust, career uncertainty, practices of silence and waiting, and impacts on well-being. The interviews allow for a deeper exploration of how these perceptions are formed, negotiated, and managed over time. The research design prioritises ethical sensitivity, avoiding institutional identification while foregrounding participants’ own interpretations of career progression, acceptable academic conduct, and everyday coping strategies.

Analytically, the paper shifts the focus from contractual insecurity alone to the normative, symbolic, and affective dimensions of academic precarity. It examines how practices of waiting, strategic silence, selective compliance, and self-restraint emerge not as signs of passivity, but as active survival strategies under conditions of institutional ambiguity and perceived vulnerability. These practices involve substantial invisible labour, including the ongoing management of ethical discomfort, professional identity, and concerns about reputational or institutional retaliation. Over time, such conditions contribute to constrained agency, hindered career progression, diminished institutional trust, and cumulative affective consequences, including stress, exhaustion, and disruptions to personal well-being and academic motivation.

By foregrounding normative dissonance as a central mechanism through which precarity is reproduced within ostensibly secure academic positions, the paper contributes to critical debates on academic labour, neoliberal university governance, and the politics of voice, silence, and compliance in higher education. It concludes by drawing on participants’ articulated needs for clarity, guidance, and support to outline institutional implications, including transparent evaluation frameworks, structured re-entry mentoring, and protections for voice and dissent. In doing so, the paper responds to calls within critical higher education research to move beyond diagnosis toward interventions that engage seriously with the lived realities of contemporary academic work.

[Proposals for a fairer retribution system in academic publishing.](#)

Daniele Bruno Garancini

It has long been observed that there are problems with the economics of academic publishing. In the early 2000s, this was dubbed the ‘serial crisis’ (McGuigan 2004). At its core, the worry is that large publishing companies such as Elsevier and Taylor & Francis have excessive margins: the price of their services grows faster than inflation while their costs remain low because they researchers mostly work for academic journals on a volunteer basis. Open access publishing was presented as a potential solution for the serial crisis (Young 2009; Van Noorden 2013). Open access, non-profit academic journals can offer the same service that publishers offer for its real cost. Thus—it was thought—if many such journals are created, market forces will force publishers to reduce their prices or go out of business. This proposal was unsuccessful. Publishers did change their practices to incorporate in their portfolios a great many open access, or ‘pay-to-publish’ journals, but this did not lower their margins (Grossmann and Brembs 2021; Khoo 2019; Garancini 2026). New proposals include the idea of replacing journals with online preprint archives (Heesen and Bright 2021; Brembs et al. 2023). The idea here is, again, that an alternative to costly publications could offer the same service for a fraction of the price. The problem with this is that just as they moved into the open access business in the 2010s, publishers could now move to acquire archives. Indeed, in 2024 Elsevier has invested in SSRN, an open

access online preprint community. It is quite possible that this will allow Elsevier to adapt to an environment dominated by online archives without lowering its margins. Another proposal could stem from the open science movement, which proposes to change the regulations for evaluating academic's performance to place more emphasis on cooperation and less on published outputs (Leonelli, Spichtinger, and Prainsack 2015; Levin et al. 2016). The idea here would be that by reducing the pressure to publish or perish for academics, the open science movement could reduce the number of submissions to academic journals, which drives up profits. The trouble is, again, publishers can adapt to the new environment. Nothing in the open science movement prevents publishers from continuing to ask for unreasonable prices for publishing the research that does get published. Moreover, the emphasis on cooperation offers publishers opportunities for new revenue streams, say, creating services to monitor researchers' interactions. A more promising proposal is to introduce regulations that require publishers to compensate their workforce (Aczel et al. 2021; Cheah and Piasecki 2022; Seghier 2024; Garancini 2026). Publishers can have such high margins because they traditionally have very low costs. Indeed, researchers are not paid for their contributions to academic journals, editors typically work on a volunteer basis, and so do peer-reviewers. If publishers were required to compensate researchers for these services, unless their prices raised vertiginously, their margins would have to decrease no matter what other factors—transition to open access publishing, online preprint archives, and new open science regulations—are at play. Moreover, because publishers' revenues are distributed directly to researchers, this proposal has the added benefit of reducing job insecurity in academia. What kind of contract should publishers offer to researchers that traditionally have been working for them on a volunteer basis? One proposal would be to require publishers to pay royalties for the publication of research articles. This proposal has two major limits. First, it does not offer a viable retribution system for editors and peer-reviewers who do not own the intellectual property for an article and are often anonymous. Second, this proposal clashes with the ideas of the open science movement. Researchers are increasingly inclined—as they should—to make their work freely available under licences such as creative commons licenses; a proposal for a fairer retributive system in academia should not interfere with that. A slightly more viable proposal would be to introduce requirements for minimum-wage compensation in academic publishing. In this model, researchers would continue to be compensated by academic institutes and the like for their research, but the workhours devoted to writing, editing, and peer-reviewing academic journals would be retributed under a separate work-contract, which should pay at least minimum wage. While the minimum-wage proposal circumvents the issues of the previous suggestion, it has problems of its own. Introducing minimum-wage contracts in the context of academic publishing could do both too little and too much. It would do too much in that it might undermine smaller publishers that can only function because they rely heavily on volunteers. It would do too little because impose very low costs, relative to their revenues, to larger publishers. In other words, this proposal is somewhat regressive: publishers with smaller revenues are much more severely impacted, which could lead to a further consolidation of an already very consolidated business. (Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon 2015). A non-regressive proposal would require publishers with higher revenues to pay higher salaries while continuing to allow non-profit open-access journals to rely on volunteers. A profit-sharing model naturally suggests itself (Weitzman 1985). In a profit-sharing model, employers are required to share a portion of their profits with their workforce. In France, mandatory profit sharing has proved to be an effective redistributive tool without undermining performance (Nimier-David, Sraer, and Thesmar 2023). Under a mandatory profit-sharing regime, companies tend to retain their overall productivity and levels of investment tend to remain the same, while shareholders gains decrease in exchange for a significant increase in workers compensation. A proposal that may have an even stronger potential would be employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs). These are plans—typically conceived as long-term incentives mechanisms—under which employees are granted a stake in the company, usually through a trust. They would have the same benefits as a profitsharing model, but in addition, they would grant a series of other benefits. ESOPS tends to strengthen employees' commitment to their firm, for obvious reasons, but less obviously, they are also correlated to higher levels of innovation (Usai et al. 2021). In other words, if publishers were to adopt this sort of plan for the retribution of their workforce, not only would this be a powerful redistributive mechanism to finally address the serial crisis, but also the performance of these companies would be likely to improve. These remarks need not apply to the publishing industry only. In other contexts too, the introduction of mandatory profit sharing or ESOPs could prove to be a powerful redistributive tool to improve working conditions and reduce waste. Should academics manage to leverage their very significant bargaining power to introduce this sort of change, this might prove a useful test case for the adoption of similar measures elsewhere.

17:30 – Event details

Conference reception event in the Faculty of Arts Building lobby

BEYOND THE EXTINCTION UNCONSCIOUS, Michael Gardiner

This talk draws on writers including Nishitani Keiji, Yuk Hui, Thomas Moynihan, Anna Greenspan, François Bonnet, and Benoît Pelopidas, and begins from the provincialisation of Martin Heidegger's claim on the nihilism of 'modern technology': it is not technology that reduces the world to standing-reserve, always ready to yield value – it is technology within a specific historicism. Within this historicism can be found an addictive core that runs from nineteenth century Smithian commercial empire to twenty-first century attention engineering, and should be identified with the long sweep of Anglo- liberalism ('capitalism').

To this addictive singular historicism I add two more suggestions. Firstly, that it reaches its further extension during the American-led 'culture wars' of 2008-23, which acted as an accelerator for typological value-mining, trying to reduce politics to immediate reward for algorithmically-defined goals, and blocking any politics requiring duration.

But secondly, the resulting hyperpresent is securitised by a naturalised nuclear threat – and during the 2008-23 era of 'static capitalism', nuclear arsenals largely became unthinkable, slipping into immanence, largely unaddressed by cultural theory or cultural production. Under the identity-extinction complex, violence could be associated with uncredentialed terminology, but it can't be associated with extinction-level threat. This condition ticks all the boxes for nihilism. However – against this, 2020s ontological pluralism suggests the kinds of encounter with genuine difference not possible during post-Cold War American hegemony, and crucially, the possibility of making extinction thinkable as a political question.

Michael Gardiner is a member of academic staff in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. His work has mostly been on twentieth-century cultural history and cultural theor

Friday 22nd May

(Please note you can find a programme overview at the end of this document)

9:00-9:30 – Registration - FAB0.03 – 164 (core room)

9:30 – 11:00 - Parallel Sessions 5

Room FAB 0.23 – 28: Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy - Panel 1, Studio-ing: Disrupting Language

Stutter-ing as Studio-ing

Dr Tom Mence:

Drawing together a personal/embodied experience of stuttering, clinical framing of dysfluency, theoretical approaches, and a creative (painting) practice, my proposed presentation would endeavour to explore how tacit knowledge of a clinical (verbal) stutter and learned knowledge of a critical (theoretic) stutter might be manifested (or translated) out of work done in the studio to form a generative and alternative way of thinking, creating, learning and, even, teaching. I will make the case that the embodied experience of the act of stuttering, in parallel to the act of painting, may open ways to think and ask questions differently, to defamiliarize, to take time, to slow down, to creatively block and un-block, and to embrace uncertainty and speculation through disruption and dysfluency. Furthermore, my presentation will aim to articulate (and itself, *embody*) the creative significance of the (overlooked) glitch as an event. Relying on recordings of stuttering voices (my own and others), visual imagery, and open dialogue with fellow attendees, my presentation will act as an event within an interdisciplinary environment to re-enforce the value of stuttering voices as a valuable and creative mode of dialogue and, even, as a form of polyphonic 'Studio-ing'.

Painted Conversations: Making, Receiving and Responding to Painted Physical Feedback

Lyndsey Gilmour and Peter Chalmers

Many people understand Painting as a discussion, where those engaged in it seek to make sense of our shared reality through it (Hudson, 2021). The most significant Painting, the examples that have the biggest Impact, are lauded as those which add, meaningfully, to this discussion. They are Paintings that impart revelation(s) to maker and/or viewer. Painted Conversations explores whether Painted Physical Feedback – the act of making physical painted works in response to another's work, that can act as a method of feedback – can be utilised as a largely untapped condition/procedure for realising idea development within individual, and potentially wider, Painting Practice. As a practice-based Painting project, there is a focus on the tangible, but this is rationalised further because Paintings exist in their own visual dialogue with one another: object to object; image to image; surface to surface. The project does not overlook the opportunities in written and verbal discussion/feedback too – that this text exists is in part testament to that – but each iteration of the project to date has begun with image and surface, and the Painted Conversation that follows. Initial findings gave confidence that Painted Physical Feedback could be an example of a previously unknown or underutilised opportunity within a creative process and thus deserving of further scrutiny.

Room FAB1.06 – 24 Critical Praxes and Black Feminist Thought - Panel 1, Black Feminist Possibilities : Abolition for a Socially Just World

Making Immigration Detention Abolition “Smell of the Earth”: A Case Study of the Opposition to Campsfield House IRC

Alma Gamper Saez

In an attempt to continue making abolition speakable in Britain (Bhattacharya et al., 2021), my paper argues for an abolitionist approach to immigration detention, taking as a starting point local opposition to Campsfield House IRC in Kidlington, Oxfordshire—which reopened this December. My contextualisation of abolition draws on the contributions of Black feminist theory, mainly on the works of Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore.

Methodologically, the paper is grounded in six semi-structured interviews with people involved in anti-detention organising in the context of Campsfield—many of whom I organise with—and in archival campaign material spanning 1993–2018. I approach the archive, and my interview material, with an awareness of the inseparability of praxis and theory and an “unease around what it means to unpack such rhetoric from a position of academic hindsight” (Brewer et al., 2024, p. 165), while also taking the dissertation as an opportunity to get closer to what Gilmore (2020, p. 80) calls the “talk-plus-walk” of oppositional work.

This reflexive orientation matters for the stream’s emphasis on lived experience as knowledge: the paper foregrounds how campaigns grapple with the practical and epistemic problem of isolation—how “breaking the isolation of detention” is politically transformative, and why anti-detention spaces must be organised with people with lived experience.

Substantively, I show how portrayals of detention shape anti-detention politics—and how quickly oppositional frames can reproduce carceral common sense. Against innocence-based arguments, I argue that an abolitionist politics “must explicitly include everyone who is detained—including ‘Foreign National Offenders,’” which requires adopting the abolitionist principle that “no one is disposable.” My arguments here are directly informed by Gilmore’s (2023) conceptualisation of the “problem of innocence” amongst anti-prison activists.

In thinking about alternatives to immigration detention, I also draw from Black feminist abolition’s critiques of reformist “solutions”: rather than treating detention as a discrete institution, I locate it within a “continuum of unfreedom” that includes deportation and borders. In doing so, I echo Davis’ call to not look for “prisonlike substitutes for the prison” (2003, p. 107) and submit that an abolitionist approach to detention requires not advocating for “detentionlike substitutes for detention”.

Finally, I take seriously the problem of travelling theory. Following Adrienne Rich, I ask what it means to develop abolitionist analysis that “smells of the earth”—attentive to the historical and political context of the UK, and to the specific carceral geographies through which migration is governed. The payoff is both analytic and strategic: the paper proposes a politics of immigration detention abolition “necessarily in conversation with prison and border abolition,” while arguing for further abolitionist theorising that remains local, organised, and materially grounded.

Abolition feminism and gendered violence: radically reorienting the approach to justice

Nikki Godden-Rasul

There has been considerable feminist scholarly attention paid to different forms of justice to address gendered violence, including retributive justice, restorative justice, therapeutic justice, and transformative justice. When understood through dominant feminist frames, they tend to be conceptualised as centring on processes which, if carried out fairly, will lead to a just outcome. If the process or outcome is deemed harmful or wrong then it has failed and is unjust, likewise if it is delayed or slow. Of course, feminist senses of justice aren’t only legal processes. They take broader, nebulous forms such as social justice or gender justice. However, these are still often understood in terms of incremental, linear (typically liberal) change. I argue that we need a fundamentally different approach to

justice to address gendered violence. Abolition feminism, rooted in Black feminist thought and practice and drawing on historical and contemporary struggles against slavery, colonialism and other forms of state violence, offers that radical alternative. Drawing on themes underpinning abolition feminist transformative justice practices, and wider praxis and prefigurative politics of abolitionists, I present a different view of the temporality of justice, change, and success and failure for feminist anti-violence movements.

Room FAB2.31 – 24 Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance - Panel 4, Remote Panel: Against Optimisation: Choosing Uncertainty

How do contemporary technologies reshape originality and cultural value in creative practices?

Oliver Cloke

The history of 'propagated uncertainty' teaches us that acknowledging uncertainty doesn't mean abandoning knowledge—it means characterising knowledge more accurately.

"We know this value lies within this range, with this confidence" rather than pretending false precision or abandoning measurement entirely.

Contemporary creative practice needs similar frameworks. We can acknowledge that:

- Authorship in collaborative human-AI systems is distributed and uncertain
- Originality involves novel configurations of influences, not creation from nothing
- Cultural value emerges from complex interactions between scarcity, meaning, context, and community
- Identity in digital spaces is performative, multiple, and irreducibly uncertain

These aren't failures of new technologies but invitations to develop more sophisticated cultural frameworks—uncertainty propagation models for creativity itself.

The algorithms generating art, the platforms distributing it, the communities valuing it, and the legal systems regulating it all involve uncertainties that propagate, interact, and compound. Rather than demanding impossible certainty or rejecting the new entirely, we can learn what Gauss and Laplace taught:

understand your uncertainties, trace how they propagate, and make decisions informed by that understanding rather than pretending certainty you don't have.

The new art forms emerging from contemporary technologies aren't replacing traditional art but expanding the possibility space; adding new dimensions of uncertainty to explore, new transformation functions to navigate. They fit within our cultural landscape not by resolving to settled categories but by challenging us to develop richer frameworks for thinking about creativity, value, and meaning in systems where uncertainty propagates in increasingly visible and undeniable ways.

Taking the long way home: Slow, purposeful and anomalous artistic interventions in navigation technology

Pragya Bhargava

Taking the long way home is an interactive presentation on the experience and memory of journeys and arrivals in technologically dominated ecosystems. Using embodied experiences that manipulate navigation technology, the presentation challenges efficiency, optimisation and destinations as goals of journeying.

Through slow and purposeful hybrid engagements both on and off screen, participants will rely on memory and instinct to wander, journey and arrive. They will observe and record new paths, interact with their surroundings and create anomalies—technological errors, interruptions, meanderings and moments where systems are required to fail—and explore how these moments can be reclaimed as memories and creative material like notes, sketches, photos, audio recordings, or bodily responses, rather than bugs or inconveniences.

The slow and reflective playfulness of embodied approaches that deliberately break patterns—walking, mindful breathing, tactile practices, somatic improvisation, communal singing and dancing, or repetitive hand-drawings—recenter human experience by resisting the logic that art like routes must be optimised, quantified and quick; they create room for chance, error, meditation and ambiguity. Taking the long way home becomes a site of playful rebellion against automation, technological commands, and passive consumption of digital systems and their instructions.

Ultimately, in this presentation, artistic practice in the age of technology is studied as a negotiation between using powerful tools and refusing their demands- not to be led by their data-driven outputs but to acknowledge and then consciously define their role in our lives.

Failure as a Condition of Universality: Emoji and Pseudo-Script in Contemporary Technological Language

Lulu Ao

This paper adopts a practice-led critical framework to examine how so-called universal languages operate within contemporary technological systems, and how artistic practice mobilises failure, fatigue, and unreadability as forms of resistance. Rather than treating language as a neutral vehicle of communication, the paper approaches it as a visual, technical, and regulatory structure shaped by standardisation, platform logics, and algorithmic optimisation. Focusing on the long-term language-based works of Chinese artist Xu Bing (1955-), the analysis brings together two seemingly opposed practices: pseudo-script and emoji-based writing, reading them as a shared critique of technological universality.

Xu Bing's pseudo-script simulates the visual authority of writing while systematically withholding semantic access. Viewers are invited into an act of reading that never resolves into comprehension, encountering texts that appear legible yet remain permanently unreadable. This sustained interpretive failure exposes the extent to which reading depends not only on visual form, but on institutional training, cultural convention, and linguistic discipline. Meaning is not absent by accident, but structurally denied.

Emoji-based writing, by contrast, operates within a globally standardised visual system explicitly designed to minimise interpretive effort. Embedded in digital platforms, emoji promises immediacy, emotional clarity, and cross-linguistic accessibility. When reorganised into extended narrative structures, however, emoji loses its efficiency. The accumulation of signs produces ambiguity, redundancy, and cognitive fatigue, revealing the limits of visual universality as a communicative ideal.

Rather than treating these practices as stylistic experiments at opposite ends of the linguistic spectrum, this paper argues that they form a coherent model of failure within technological language. In pseudo-script, failure emerges through semantic absence; in emoji writing, through semantic overload. Both expose language as a system governed by protocols of readability, speed, and optimisation, rather than a transparent medium of expression.

Within this framework, fatigue is not understood as a secondary effect of reception, nor as a subjective weakness of the viewer. Instead, it functions as an epistemic condition through which the ideological demands of technological language become perceptible. The inability to read quickly or resolve meaning interrupts the expectation of seamless communication that underpins platform-based interaction. Artistic practice thus creates a space for friction, delay, and hesitation, resisting the reduction of language to efficient exchange.

The presentation will combine visual analysis with critical reflection to address three questions: how technological languages shape contemporary modes of communication; how failure and unreadability operate as productive strategies within artistic practice; and how art can reframe notions of universality, publicness, and responsibility in an increasingly automated linguistic environment.

until u feel impending doom

Room FAB2.32 – 28: Autoethnography as Critical Praxis – Lived Experience, Reflexivity, and Identity - Panel 2

Memoir as Resistance: Disrupting Colonial Narratives of Culture and Domestic Violence

Kameljeet Kaur

This paper presents a memoir-based critical inquiry into the experiences of South Asian diasporic women growing up in the United Kingdom, focusing on how domestic violence (DV) is frequently framed through culturalist explanations. Drawing on personal narrative as an epistemic method, the paper examines how the culturalisation of DV operates as a contemporary expression of colonial knowledge, positioning South Asian culture as inherently patriarchal and violent while obscuring the structural, racialised, and gendered conditions through which violence is produced and managed. Kaur argues that cultural framings of DV function as a disciplinary mechanism that shapes both institutional responses and survivors' self-understandings. Within social services, legal discourse, and public imaginaries, DV experienced by South Asian women is often rendered intelligible through narratives of cultural backwardness or tradition, rather than through analyses of power, migration, precarity, and state violence. These framings reproduce long-standing colonial tropes that cast the Global South and its diasporas as morally deficient and in need of rescue, while positioning Western institutions as neutral arbiters of safety and progress. Through memoir, the paper traces how such narratives produce a profound psychic and ethical tension for diasporic women. Seeking recognition, protection, or legitimacy as a survivor often requires a symbolic disavowal of culture, family, and community. Conversely, maintaining cultural belonging can entail silence, endurance, or the minimisation of harm. This double bind generates an internalised conflict in which identity itself becomes unstable, fractured by the demand to choose between safety and belonging. The paper demonstrates how this tension is not merely personal, but structurally produced through colonial epistemologies that continue to shape whose suffering is legible and under what terms.

Situating memoir alongside decolonial and feminist scholarship, the paper engages with critiques of coloniality (Anibal Quijano), cultural nationalism (Ashis Nandy), and epistemic violence (Gayatri Spivak) to argue that culturalised explanations of DV re-entrench colonial hierarchies of knowledge. At the same time, the paper resists reductive oppositions between culture and liberation. By attending to intergenerational memory, diasporic formation, and the afterlives of empire, it reframes culture as a contested and dynamic terrain rather than a causal explanation for violence. Methodologically, the paper positions memoir as a form of epistemic resistance that challenges dominant modes of knowledge production about DV in racialised communities. By centring lived experience without collapsing into cultural essentialism, the paper contributes to interdisciplinary debates on gendered violence, diaspora, and decolonial praxis. It calls for approaches that address violence without reproducing colonial narratives that alienate survivors from their own histories, identities, and modes of belonging.

Gendered Labour: Health and Structural Violence: Interdisciplinary Feminist Analysis of Institutional Discourses on Baloch Women in Pakistan

Syed Aurangzeb

Background:

Research concerning women's health in peripheral conflict zones frequently isolates gender from the political economy, thereby neglecting the embodied costs associated with survival. In Balochistan, the most marginalised province of Pakistan, women encounter compounded inequalities shaped by militarisation, poverty, and institutional neglect. Their reproductive, emotional, and political labor sustains families and communities, yet remains unrecognised in state and development narratives.

Objectives:

This study examines the influence of policy, media, and NGO discourses on the perception of Baloch women's labor and health through gendered and colonial lenses. It aims to reconceptualise labor beyond mere wage work, considering it as reproductive, affective, and epistemic activity, while linking bodily endurance to structural inequality.

Design:

Anchored in feminist political economy and intersectional postcolonial theory, the article utilises an interdisciplinary feminist content analysis of textual and visual representations of Baloch women. The "half-widow" a woman whose husband has disappeared, serves as a critical paradigm to elucidate the intersections of gender, grief, and political erasure.

Methods:

A total of eighty-four documents, including policy papers, NGO reports, and media texts from 2006 to 2024, were thematically coded through an interpretive feminist lens. This analysis integrates sociology, political economy, and affect theory to elucidate how gendered labor and health are co-constructed by discourse and governance.

Results:

The findings underscore three predominant themes: the moralization of resilience, the erasure of reproductive labor, and the depoliticization of women's suffering. Collectively, these narratives transform care and grief into invisible labor that sustains both households and state legitimacy.

Conclusion:

By reconceptualising Baloch women's reproductive and affective work as feminist labor, health is redefined as a locus of structural injustice rather than individual resilience, thereby advancing interdisciplinary understandings of gender, inequality, and care within women's health scholarship.

From Entrepreneur to Employee: Identity Reconstruction Through Critical Realist Autoethnography

Nisha Menon & Craig Duckworth

Entrepreneurs moving into employment face more than a career change—they undergo profound identity reconstruction. Workforce realignment is a widely adopted strategy in Human Resource development, often used to align talent with evolving organisational goals (Snell & Morris, 2021). When applied to entrepreneurs transitioning into full-time employment, however, realignment can suppress the very criticality, independence, and vision that make ex-founders valuable contributors (Cardon et al., 2009).

This paper draws on the lived experience of co-author Nisha Menon, reflecting on her transition from founder to structured employment following the impacts of COVID-19 lockdown. Using a Critical Realist Autoethnographic (CRA) approach (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Heewon, 2010), the study combines reflexive narrative with attention to organisational structures, norms, and constraints. It examines how autonomy, decision-making, and entrepreneurial identity are challenged, reshaped, and integrated within structured workplaces.

Through reflexive storytelling, the paper highlights the tensions between entrepreneurial independence and organisational conformity, showing how founders navigate identity conflicts, imposter syndrome and new expectations of collaboration during the transition into employment (Mathias and Williams, 2018). CRA is distinctive in combining reflexive honesty with structural and causal mechanisms, enabling a theoretical critique of realignment rather than a purely narrative account (Martin, 2025).

The study contributes to understanding the post-entrepreneurial journey by offering organisations insights on how to harness the unique skills and mindset of former founders, supporting them to retain autonomy while adapting to structured workplaces. It intends to show how roles and environments could be designed to preserve entrepreneurial initiative, foster intrapreneurship, and drive innovation. It also has the potential to equip entrepreneurs with strategies to apply their experience within structured settings, drive innovation and mentor the next generation.

Autoethnography, Class and Reflexivity in Research Welfare.

Robyn Fawcett

This paper addresses autoethnography as both a method and a methodology that values lived experience as a form of knowledge and foregrounds reflexivity, vulnerability, and positionality. It reflects on the experience of conducting research while occupying a social position shaped by the very system under study, drawing on my positionality as a single mother, lecturer, and a person navigating Universal Credit.

Following Denzin's (2014) understanding of autoethnography as writing the self into and through the research process, the paper examines how welfare governance disciplines time, conduct, and everyday life, and how these same relations of power shape the conditions under which research is produced. Universal Credit is approached as a governing technology that reorganises social reproduction and intensifies gendered and classed labour, while simultaneously positioning the researcher within institutional and material constraints.

The paper draws on reflections from a doctoral research project (and beyond) that combined qualitative longitudinal interviews with parents and an autoethnographic reflexive diary. The diary functioned as a site of systematic introspection, documenting the ongoing negotiation of boundaries, emotional labour, and role management involved in researching welfare while navigating it.

Drawing on feminist standpoint theory (Smith, 1974; Harding, 2013), the paper argues that knowledge production is always situated within relations of class, gender, and institutional power, rather than standing outside them. In doing so, it contributes to the stream by demonstrating how autoethnography can illuminate the often- invisible disciplinary and ethical work of researching governance

Room FAB3.31 – 20 Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities - Panel 4, Searching for collective meaning in the Edu-factory

Academic work as Calling in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: a hiding to nothing or potential for liberation?

Gill Frigerio

Rooted largely in the fields of vocational psychology and organisational behaviour, the scholarly consideration of work as calling has a tendency to focus on the individual and organisational benefits of having a calling. Callings are argued to bring benefits to individuals in career satisfaction and attainment (however defined) as well as commitment to and meaning in work (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Dobrow et al, 2023). Callings are framed as advantageous to employing organisations too in recognition that a calling improves performance, perhaps an outcome of all that commitment leading to increased effort and output (Elangovan et al, 2010; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019).

Notwithstanding this positive bias, there is also an awareness of the 'double-edged sword' (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015) of a calling, with some studies identifying a 'dark side' to calling in both over-identification with work to an extent detrimental to individual wellbeing and a vulnerability to exploitation by employers who rely on calling to retain staff despite poor pay and conditions. (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Qualitative studies have considered the consequences of lost callings and adaptive processes when work circumstances change for the called person (Berg et al, 2010; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017).

A more critical reading of calling opens a space for more nuanced consideration of calling and power, exploring this dark side further. Academic careers provide an interesting focus, given characteristics of the academic job market that capitalise on calling presence, in particular precarity and competition. We can usefully question the formative role for calling of contextual challenges across a range of life stages and characteristics of those in academic work (Afiouni & Karam, 2019).

This paper will explore what studies of academic careers show us about the dark side of calling and consider how calling is both used and abused within contemporary academia. By interrogating the extensive advice industry for those seeking to gain or retain an academic career we will consider if and how calling can be reframed as liberating and its emancipatory potential realised.

The Need for Communal Resilience in Academia – Lessons from Vanuatu

Phil Wood & Aimee Quickfall

In 2019, during an early discussion with a PhD student researching natural disaster education on Vanuatu—one of the most hazard-prone nations in the world—it became clear that our understandings of resilience diverged sharply. From within a UK academic context, resilience had come to signify an individual psychological capacity, often framed through the language of positive thinking. Increasingly, resilience in education has become a neoliberal construct: a mechanism for encouraging individuals to endure toxic working conditions and maintain productivity despite systemic dysfunction. In contrast, the Vanuatuan worldview conceptualises resilience as inherently communal. Shaped by constant exposure to external threats such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and typhoons, resilience is understood not as a personal trait but as a shared social resource.

In Vanuatu, natural disaster education exemplifies this collective orientation. Students, teachers, elders, and wider community members collaborate to pool knowledge, experience, and cultural insight (Vachette, 2017; Pierce, 2023). Preparedness is not the responsibility of isolated individuals but a communal endeavour in which success and failure are shared. Over time, this collective practice strengthens community expertise and deepens social learning. The community stands or falls together.

Elements of such communal resilience can be observed within public services. Fire and police services, for example, have long operated under conditions of uncontrollable external risk, fostering strong group-based cultures of mutual support (Xiaoxin, 2024). Academia, however, has historically been insulated from external existential threats. As a result, it has evolved within a culture of individualism, intensified in recent decades by neoliberal governance and panopticism. Academics are increasingly isolated, monitored, and evaluated as individuals, and resilience has been reframed as a personal psychological obligation rather than a collective capacity (Simard-Gagnon, 2016).

For much of academia's history, this individualised model posed little concern. Yet under neoliberal pressures to demonstrate productivity, stress has become normalised—if not instrumentalised—and organisational toxicity has proliferated. Individualised resilience has become the prescribed remedy for coping with structural dysfunction, positioning the academic as a self-managing unit whose value lies in continued output under continual pressure.

We argue that this model is no longer tenable. Higher education now faces escalating external and internal threats—from political actors, media scrutiny, regulatory bodies such as the Office for Students, and increasingly precarious working conditions. Academia is, in effect, on a new “front line”. To respond ethically and sustainably, the sector must shift from individualised to communal understandings of resilience. By working collectively within teams, departments, and institutions to identify, interpret, and mitigate threats, higher education can build shared protective capacities that support all members of the academic community, including students, precariously employed staff, and established scholars. Recentring resilience as a communal practice offers the most promising route toward a more sustainable and humane future for higher education.

Reimagining resistance to alienation in UK academia

Romain Chenet

Contemporary critiques of professionalised UK academic careers under neoliberal orthodoxies tend to linger on suffering and hopelessness, conveying an insitu misery pervades UK Higher Education. Yet, scores continue attempting to join us via their doctoral study, sometimes with extraordinary persistence, suggesting continued beliefs in a generative and meaningful future for lived experiences within this changing sector. This intervention explores related narratives, considering inspirations that can offer parallel critiques with a methodological innateness and auto-ethnographical vignettes.

Inspired by an adapted injunction to "seize the factory" in complementing efforts elsewhere that strive to engage into elite-manipulated constructs from positions of weakness (Bordiga, 1920), I draw on diverse inputs to consider how these ideas offer alternative discourses on the evolving labour production modes that (re)shape UK academia. Viewing experimental solidarity as an avenue for this, I also share prospects for resistance as a 'creative traversal' (Hartmann, 2003), which supplies frames for exploring how volitional micropractices can build alternative social relations for our working lives when based on ethical, moral, spiritual, ideological, communal, and/or other facets of human action. I then assess Žižek's (2009) 'castration' motif to sidestep distractions of emancipatory fantasies that lead to alienation, offering self-empowered critical 'hopelessness' as a tool for chipping liberation out from the past and present ills of UK HE.

The discussion closes by positing how both unfounded optimism and unchecked pessimism can risk frustration in periscoping impossible sectoral utopias or nihilistic dystopias, neither being reflective of concrete practices, deep solidarities, and limits thereof. This may only offer a provisional model for praxis that balances imaginative ambitions with vital institutional critique.

Break

11:30 – 13:00 - Parallel Sessions 6

Room FAB 0.23 – 28: Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy - Panel 2, Resisting Uniformity

How can we enable young people to creatively imagine their futures? Pathways out of compulsory education

Hannah Robertson

I am interested in how young people can be supported to imagine their futures creatively, and how this is currently being prevented. Young people on the cusp of leaving compulsory education are told they must take control of their future, aspire to do great things and make the right choices. However, current uses of aspiration in policy are narrow and mute young people's creativity, freedom and exploration as they navigate this important transition. My research shows, there is a monstrous uniformity within school leaver aspirations.

Higher education participation and widening access policy reinforces that HE remains the best route to quality employment (ONS: 2017) and frames universities as 'engine[s] for social mobility' (The Social Mobility Commission, 2019: 86). Within policy, comments such as the Social Mobility Commission's 'some of our children come from families that have been written off for years so hope and aspiration are sort of lost' (2022: 58), there is an assumption that young people lack aspiration or the ability to aspire properly and in ways which enable them to be successful – an assumption that increasing aspiration will lead to young people achieving the grades needed to obtain places at the country's most prestigious universities.

There is a perceived lack of aspiration in young people. This has become the policy 'problem' (Lingard, 2013: 120) which must be remedied. However, policy uses of aspiration are narrow - aspiring to higher education is just one version of aspiration. Elsewhere, aspirations are described as 'nebulous wishes' (Smyth, 2020: 178); 'abstract statements of values and beliefs', or 'hope' divorced of socio-economic reality (Khattab, 2015: 733). These definitions suggest that aspiring gives freedom to be creative and temporarily removed from real material circumstances. However, it does not give young people the freedom to entirely overcome their real material circumstances as policy's use of the term suggests. In this way, policy's use of aspiration obscures real socio-material inequalities. This is damaging.

Working with large groups of year 12 students from a diverse demographic, my project asks young people to work creatively to map their imagined, hoped-for futures. Analysing these maps interrogates narrow conceptualisations of aspiration at this pivotal transition period. We will explore how the maps created highlight a monstrous uniformity

amongst the aspirations of young people: the aspiration to obtain a place at university and follow a linear pathway to secure employment.

Monstrous uniformity in aspiration will inevitably lead to monstrous disappointment for the young people and their families if this aspiration is not able to be actualised. Therefore, my research is interested in finding ways in which young people can be best supported to use their capacity to imagine, visualise, and, ultimately, choose more freely without being bound to the current, narrow conceptualisation of aspiration.

The Write Place: To What Extent does a Studio Model Support Safe Places to Write Across the University?

Emma Davenport

Current academic writing support for art and design students in post-92 universities in the UK tends to emphasise a remedial approach where the problem lies with the student (Hardy, Murray Thow and Smith, 2020). Faced with the assumption that they are illiterate, these students resort to unsustainable writing practices such as binge writing and avoidance to cope with writing assessments (Quynn and Steward, 2021). They also learn to conceive of writing capabilities as emergent through osmosis. As if, in Warner's words, 'wearing a book on top of your head' will allow its contents to 'seep into your brain' (2018: 27). Yet, writing is a creative practice that critically challenges students and staff alike. Its success lies as much in the process as it does in the artifact therefore, time, resources and motivation contribute to cultivating a writerly practice. In order to positively learn through doing, there needs to be acknowledgement of social, affective and professional aspects that contribute to the development of productive writerly selves.

Drawing upon the studio model found in art and design higher education, this workshop discusses, explores and reflects upon the 'studio' as a template for designing spaces to write both in a creative arts department and a university as a whole. A 'studio', with its emphasis on place and collective activity, provides a dynamic space for applied and experiential learning to take place, paradoxically, without text or symbols (Jones, Brown, Boling, Corazzo, Gray and Lotz, 2025). To write well is to take risks and fail but in order to do this, certain conditions need to be in place which a 'studio' can provide that is, arguably unlike any other learning space. The workshop will encourage participants to experience a writing 'studio', based on a design piloted and evaluated over a five year period within one university before considering benefits/challenges within a range of different disciplinary and pedagogical contexts. For example, temporality is a key condition for both 'studio-ing' and 'writing' but are felt very differently by the student writer (Murray, 2015). To conclude, we consider how studio-ing might be used as an innovative approach to creating writing experiences for future inter-disciplinary universities.

Room FAB1.06 – 24 (trickle, river, flood, wadi) post-Anthropocene Scenes

Dry land, wet edges, crumbling borders: Libido, desire, and mythozoological identities

Andrew Fergus Wilson

Vampires belong to a special category of liminal supernatural beings. Like werewolves, changelings, and ghosts they have known human counterparts and can pass for human among humans; they are the stealth supernatural, spies in the human world. Ghosts are tied to specific localities, werewolves to rurality - American exceptions in London notwithstanding. Vampires, conversely, move from castle to city with ease and it is in their urban setting that they become emblematic of the horrors of feudalism transformed into the horrors of modernity. This paper will explore how the spatial relations at work in representations of vampire lore contribute to the ongoing remaking of vampires as social beings.

It is not uncommon to find analyses of vampires that draw attention to the potential for comparison with the extractive, dehumanising effects of industrialisation and capitalism. For instance, they provide David McNally's (2012) *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism* with a convenient mechanism for articulating the experiences of alienated labour within capitalism. In spatial terms we might think of the generational shift in situated sensuality from de Sade's *Château* to the streets searched by Baudelaire. The city is vital to the vampire's modern becoming, in *Dracula* the count tells Harker how he longs to visit the, 'crowded streets of your mighty London, to be

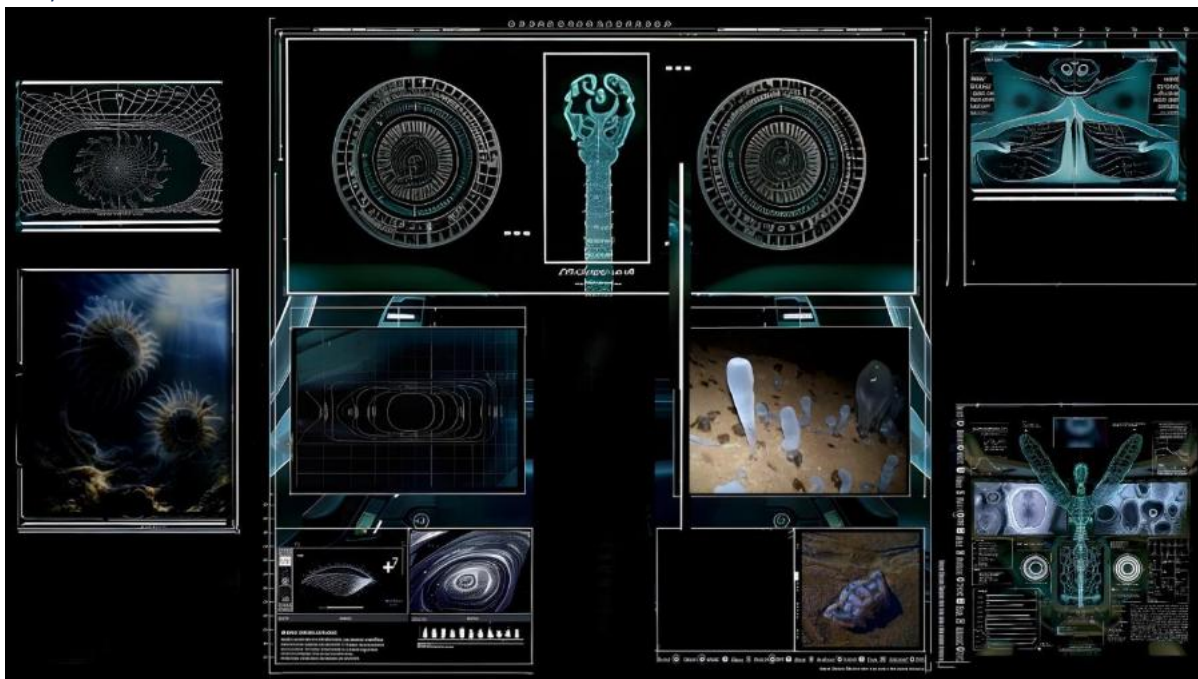
in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity.’ This paper will argue that it is in the supernatural that the interpenetrative tension between modernity and what Mark Fisher in conversation with Richard Capes referred to as, the ‘death logic of that Prometheism, which just uses up all the resources,’ (K-Punk, 661)

Dracula is ejaculated into England in a spume of white water on a storm-tossed boat. The migrant with mysterious wealth and a taste for white English flesh has been understood as a xenophobic parable but it is more than that. The count is an assemblage of liquidity and desire, of flows and pulsed fluids. Life and death, past and present, home and abroad, male and female become unstable categories as blood rushes from one body to another; Renfield consumes insects, rats, and other living creatures in his growing madness. Out of control thralldom to the liquid count accelerating his zoophagia, Renfield becomes a model of the now world order. Our horror is his mirror. The limitless hunger of anthroponationalist capital is part of modernity but there is no going back to ‘the idiocy of rural life’. And yet, the techbros fetishise instrumentalised cyber-fiefdoms with Renfield-serfs at their disposal.

We are hauntology’s phantoms on a planet impatient for exorcism; is there an ecstatic ritual of blood that will redeem us or is the revolution an oneiric part of the shadow world of the twentieth century that we cannot rid ourselves of? In an age of global water bankruptcy (UNU-INWEH/Madani 2026) is blood still all vampires feed on? These are this speculative paper’s themes.

Ambiogenesis: Cryptobiotic Temporalities and Post-Omnicide Marine Intelligence

Joey Holder



"The history of the world, as natural history, is nothing more than a stratification of events and processes that are never definitively 'dead and buried', but which continue to flow and exert an active force from a lower, or even subterranean, dimension than the present—events and processes that can also reappear in an altered form, upsetting our temporal perception. This characteristic pluriversality amounts to the pre-eminence of reality over imagination, i.e. the hierarchical superiority of natural processes over thought."
 — Gruppo di Nun, *Revolutionary Demonology*, 'For a chaotic vision of time'

[Ambiogenesis](#) is a multi-channel video installation and AI-based artwork that proposes a speculative post-omnicide oceanic realm in which "life" persists in forms that escape human categorisation and scientific datafication. Through practice-based research, the work investigates marine organisms inhabiting ontologically unstable terrain, entities that are simultaneously living and inert, vital and dead, challenging Western frameworks governing the distinction between Life and Nonlife. Following Elizabeth Povinelli's (2016) concept of "geontologies," the artwork examines

how late liberal governance depends on maintaining strict boundaries between what deserves recognition as having "potential for life" versus what remains available for extraction and instrumentalisation.

The installation centres on four marine organisms exhibiting what Wright (2001) terms "impossible" biological properties: the Immortal Jellyfish (*Turritopsis dohrnii*), which reverses its aging through transdifferentiation; *Daphnia*, whose eggs remain cryptobiotically dormant in sediments for centuries before resurrection; the Volcano Sponge, whose cellular memory spans millennia; and the Pacific Octopus, whose distributed neural networks challenge centralised models of consciousness. These creatures exemplify cryptobiosis, defined by Clegg (2001) as "a peculiar state of biological organisation" in which metabolic activity becomes imperceptible and organisms exist in suspended animation (p. 613). Recent research demonstrates that organisms like tardigrades employ intrinsically disordered proteins to survive extreme desiccation (Boothby et al., 2017), achieving what Rebecchi et al. (2007) identify as "the extreme limit of desiccation tolerance" through anhydrobiosis. These biological mechanisms challenge anthropocentric assumptions about the necessary conditions for life and death.

Through AI-generated imagery and characterisation produced by LLMs, the artwork channels these creatures' perspectives across five video channels, in which *Ambiogenesis* stages encounters with non-human temporalities that resist anthropocentric narratives of linear time, irreversible death, and bounded individuality. The work employs "Interspecies Worlding," a methodology that positions non-human organisms as epistemic agents and co-authors rather than subjects of study (Haraway, 2016; van Dooren et al., 2016). This aligns with Indigenous cosmologies, particularly animist frameworks in which death is not termination but transformation, in which the spirits of animals, elements, and ancestors maintain active agency within relational cycles that Western science misrecognises as "non-living" (Harvey, 2005; Ingold, 2000).

The installation operates as experimental infrastructure, testing how artistic practice can engage biological illegibility, showing entities that trouble taxonomic closure, resisting species categorisation, and dissolving boundaries typically dividing life from death. Wright's (2001) historical survey of cryptobiosis research, spanning 300 years since van Leeuwenhoek's initial observations, reveals how these organisms have consistently challenged scientific frameworks attempting to contain them within stable classificatory systems. By treating these marine intelligences as active participants rather than passive objects, the work asks: what forms of knowledge emerge when consciousness is distributed across radically different modes of existence? When thinking happens through tentacles rather than a central brain? When does death become reversible or indefinitely postponable? When time operates through cryptobiotic suspension rather than linear progression?

Ambiogenesis was developed in collaboration with marine biologists and was exhibited at HeK Basel and Elektron Luxembourg (2025), serving as a provocation for workshops at Lancaster University's *Unsecurities Lab* that examined how security experts navigate ontological uncertainty when confronted with entities that resist stable categorisation. The artwork operationalises Gruppo di Nun's proposition that natural history operates through "pluriversality," in which buried processes exert influence across time, emerging in altered forms that disrupt temporal perception. If post-Anthropocene futures require a radical reimagining of life beyond extractive capitalist frameworks, perhaps organisms already practising biological impossibilities, including resurrection and suspended animation, offer epistemological resources for navigating ecological collapse.

The project positions cryptobiotic organisms as harbingers of post-human futures not through metaphor but through their actual biological capacities to persist through catastrophic environmental conditions (Clegg, 2001). When forests burn, when oceans acidify, when mass extinctions cascade, these creatures demonstrate modes of survival that exceed human frameworks of "adaptation." They suspend, reverse, distribute, resurrect. *Ambiogenesis* examines whether attending to these non-human temporalities might generate alternatives to apocalyptic narratives that position extinction as a final, irreversible punctuation. What epistemological and political possibilities emerge from taking seriously the biological fact that some forms of life have, as Wright (2001) documents, already evolved solutions to mortality itself?

Holy Waters and Multi-Species Witnessing in Palestine

Nadia Yahlom

“Thus we meet with the use of water in religious procedures, magic ceremonies, popular medicine -and superstition. Ideas and customs arising from the sacredness of water, known and practised in ancient times, have left so deep a mark that thousands of years with all their political changes have failed wholly to remove its trace.”

Palestinian ethnographer Tawfik Canaan, writing in 1922

Throughout my research and artistic practice I look at folktales around the mystical, magical and supernatural realms in and beyond Palestine, thinking about what creative space working with the speculative can bring to discussions around concrete experiences and political realities. I'm particularly interested in supernatural and folk tales, magical and ritual elements, some of which have persisted in Palestinian culture from the time of antiquity to today. A lot of this is focused on the “Al ghaib” or unseen world - the realm of jinn and other entities that can't normally be seen - and the relationship between this and other forms of colonial violence: necropolitical violence, spiritual warfare and ecological devastation. My research examines water-centred myths, ritual and superstitions and considers ways of narrating the lives and afterlives of water sources.

The impact of mass bombardment on Gaza, a part of the world already extremely vulnerable to flash floods, earthquakes, rising temperatures, droughts, storms and heat waves, has been near apocalyptic. 90-95 percent of Gaza's groundwater prior to October 7th 2023 was already undrinkable due to contamination with wastewater and seawater brought about by the siege. Currently, access to water is severely limited by Israel, falling 15 liters short of the survival-levels required by established humanitarian standards. More than anything, Gazans are now experiencing unprecedented thirst.

Water scarcity is far from a Gazan problem. The River Jordan doesn't flow anymore. Dam building throughout Israel/Palestine has affected rivers, wadis and streams. Swamps and marshland, havens of biodiversity, have been entirely cleared producing the extinction of countless species. Fresh groundwater isn't available. The Lake Galilee is shrinking. Droughts have been more devastating each year. The Dead Sea, which is disappearing by 4 ft per year, is full of at least 6,000 sink holes, the beaches and highways around it crumbling, tourist sites disappearing into an underground abyss.

So why - in the face of such profound destruction, human, ecological and otherwise - should we look backwards, to the past: to Palestinian myth and legend, to history and to folklore, to spirituality and the supernatural? And why should we look forwards - through speculative thinking and making that imagines other ways of being in and inhabiting the world, and imagines other futures and possibilities in Palestine?

Rivers, swamps, ice, seas, wadis, water-dwelling entities have all featured as “witnesses” in my practice, testifying about real and imagined histories. This draws on the concept of shuhada, in which non humans - including water sources - can be characterised as witnesses in Palestinian culture. My research rejects the Eurocentric notion that the death and destruction of human and non-human life worlds prevents those that have been destroyed from attesting to their experiences and instead examines how both Palestinian art forms culture and political discourse is inspired by concepts of witnessing as multi-species, multi-sensory, multi-dimensional.

Room FAB2.31 – 24 Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance - Panel 5, Artistic Responses to Technology

Mapping Resistance: Towards a Topography of Artistic Responses to Technology

Robert Good

This contribution takes the form of a performative, practice-led presentation that activates a selection of artworks from my own practice in order to examine how artists respond to the pressures, failures, and fatigue produced by contemporary technology. The presentation treats artistic practice as a site in which the limits, frictions, and contradictions of digital culture become visible.

Each artwork functions as a worked example that takes a playful stance in interrogating a particular condition intensified by technological mediation—such as information overload, data surveillance, automation, or machine vision—and through an interactive format and dry humour articulates and provokes a response. Taken together, the works construct a field of related experiences, a provisional topography of interconnected obstacles, distortions and deceptions.

Artworks presented include *2020 Vision* (responding to information overload), *Legitimate Interest* (data surveillance and consent culture), *Shutterbug* (computer vision and facial recognition), and *100% Are Books* (sentiment analysis and automated interpretation).

2020 Vision responds to information overload and algorithmically mediated discourse by visualising Google search results through an overwhelming, repetitive visual interface. Rather than clarifying meaning, the work exposes how abundance, speed, and algorithmic repetition flatten difference and produce cognitive and creative exhaustion. By dwelling within excess rather than resolving it, the work uses fatigue itself as a critical strategy.

Legitimate Interest addresses data surveillance and consent culture by transforming an online consent form into a looping animation that foregrounds the monotonous language of compliance. The repetitive accumulation of companies claiming a “legitimate interest” in personal data mirrors the coercive rhythms of digital bureaucracy, exposing how consent is performed, normalised, and exhausted within surveillant infrastructures. Here, repetition functions not as efficiency but as a mode of resistance through exposure.

Shutterbug engages with histories of photographic experimentation—echoing David Hockney’s joiners—but complicates these discourses through the introduction of automated image capture and facial recognition. What begins as an exploration of expanded perception takes on a more troubling dimension as machine vision imposes categorisation, judgement, and control.

100% Are Books uses sentiment analysis to ask computationally absurd questions such as “Which is the happiest book in the library?” While superficially playful, the work foregrounds the instability and emptiness of algorithmic interpretation, exposing how affect, meaning, and judgement are increasingly outsourced to systems that simulate understanding without possessing it.

The presentation concludes by briefly introducing a new, ongoing project that imagines fantastical job descriptions for work in the age of AI. These roles are elaborated through conversations with AI agents, producing an increasingly circular and surreal exchange that reflects the automation of creativity, authorship, and professional identity.

Taken together, these works sketch a loose topography of artistic responses to technology: repetition, recontextualisation, refusal, failure, glitch, and slowness. Rather than offering a typology or evaluative hierarchy, the presentation treats these responses as provisional coordinates within a shifting technological terrain.

Embedded Practice and the Logic of Systems

Ziegi Boss

Contemporary debates around technology and creative practice often focus on questions of authorship and automation: Is AI replacing the artist? Is creativity being outsourced? This presentation proposes a shift away from these output-oriented concerns toward an examination of how technological systems reorganize creative labor, attention, and consciousness through their everyday use.

Rather than approaching digital platforms, productivity tools, or AI systems from a position of refusal or ironic distance, my artistic practice adopts a methodology of sincere implementation. Inspired by Nam June Paik’s assertion that one must use technology “in order to hate it properly,” my work operates by taking technological promises literally and inhabiting their prescribed workflows over extended durations. The resulting artworks do not stage breakdowns or spectacular failures; instead, they reveal the warping, performance, and absurdity that occurs when systems are followed correctly.

Through case studies ranging from long-duration self-quantification projects to consumer branding installations, the presentation demonstrates a consistent pattern: systems promise efficiency, insight, or elevation, yet deliver meta-

work, performance, and the colonization of consciousness when fully implemented. In one project, tracking every minute of a week revealed how productivity tools designed to reclaim time instead generate endless labor of planning, categorizing, and reviewing—optimization that produces only more optimization. In another, a consumer product promising cultural sophistication exposed how branding sells belonging while shifting the burden of legitimacy onto individual consumption. Designed within capitalist incentive structures that prioritize scalability, self-perpetuation, and measurable performance, these systems continue to function even as their outputs become increasingly abstracted from lived experience. What begins as a strategy for optimization quickly transforms into escalating labor, where maintaining the system consumes the very time it claims to save. The issue is not malfunction but success: these systems work as designed, and it is precisely through their correct operation that their absurdities become visible.

By framing use itself as the subject of the artwork, this presentation challenges narratives that position technology as an external force acting upon artistic authorship. Instead, it proposes that authorship persists as a relational and procedural condition, located in how systems are entered, sustained, and endured. The artwork is not the system's output but the system encountering itself through use. Artistic practice becomes a form of stress testing—holding technological conditions long enough for their internal contradictions to surface. This talk concludes by asking: What forms of creativity, attention, and lived experience become impossible when optimization works too well?

Art, Machine, and Interaction: Human Agency When Technology is the Tool

Liz Melchor

Ever since I began drawing with robots, my driving motivation has been: how can I find surprise using a precise tool that follows a programmed path? But even as I work to insert humanness into my machine drawings, a sizable audience erases it. The machine made it, they say, not you!

This talk explores what constitutes meaningful human agency in artistic practice with machines, from both the artist's and viewer's perspectives. I will emphasize the importance of interaction—not as a single button push, but as a sustained and responsive effort: a dance integral to all creative work, but especially when technology is the tool.

Part One explores my studio practice with drawing machines, where I deliberately introduce glitches as aesthetic choices. These imperfections aren't technical failures but emerge from ongoing dialogue. I push the machine fail, cultivating randomness, making responsive choices when and how to intervene. Each piece results from sustained interaction, producing outcomes neither I nor the machine could achieve alone. I contrast this dance with prompt-based AI image generation, where single inputs produce outputs without responsive engagement or emergence. The distinction matters: artistic agency requires creative exploration of a tool's possibilities through attention and experimentation, not button-pushing.

Part Two examines my participatory installations, *Fortune Robot* and *Nosey Monkey*, where audience interaction takes focus. With *Fortune Robot*, participants' projections of meaning onto the machine—"it can tell me my fate"—create the intrigue, not the technology itself. In *Nosey Monkey*, participants draw monkeys with their noses, focusing on process over product and using their perception and body in completely novel ways. Participants engage in real-time with responsive systems that create emergent outcomes. By widening the gap between technology and output, the work foregrounds human participation.

Part Three addresses knee-jerk reactions to machine art from social media: "This is AI," "This art belongs to the machine, not you," or simply, "This isn't art." These responses reveal a tendency to reduce all art using technology to non-responsive tool use—outsourcing work, simple button-pushing replacing creative acts. They highlight a current cultural angst: technology is taking over the world. The fear is that we are outsourcing creativity, the most human of acts, to machines. But this overlooks that humans are always behind the machine. Erasing human agency from technological systems perpetuates dangerous myths of machine autonomy. This talk about the agency of both artist and audience in technological art opens a broader question: what does human agency mean in our technological age?

Room FAB2.32 – 28 Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture - Panel 3, Risk, Safety & Sensory Coordination in Physical Practice

“It is good that people can go on a guide course but...” – Reimagining the promotion of safe practices between runners with sight loss and sighted guide runners through the senses and sensing

Marit Hiemstra

This paper stems from conversations about the mixed feelings recreational runners with sight loss and sighted guide runners have toward guide training courses. Guide running courses and other training programs are becoming increasingly popular and promoted in (social) media (Hall et al., 2022; Hiemstra & Rana, 2023). In this paper, I take a particularly well-known and promoted course in the UK: the Sight Loss Awareness and Guide Running workshop and licensing program by England Athletics and British Blind Sport (EA and BBS) as an example. Runners typically value this course, and the like, as introductory tools that help recruit guides and teach basic principles key to safe practices. At the same time, they recognise clear limitations: courses often leave little room for elements of safety that resist standardisation, particularly those related to how people ‘sense’ safety together.

I situate these concerns within tendencies in outdoor movement management and broader (neoliberal) societal phenomena: ‘audit cultures’ (Shore, 2008). I argue that such cultural parameters risk increasingly managing, auditing, and standardising much elements of human relationships and conduct, particularly by reducing them into clear, logical, and rational frameworks that are then accountable, accreditable and assessable through courses and training.

Drawing on interviews with guide runners and runners with sight loss, and fieldnote reflections about working towards safe practices with blind, partially sighted and deafblind runners myself as part of such a collaborative running pair, I will demonstrate that the EA and BBS course tells only part of the story about what safe running together actually looks and feels like. Safety among runners involves more than trainable guidelines and metrics. That is, it emerges as well from the ability to interact via the senses with the co-runner and to collaborative act based on such sensory impressions and effective communication about them.

In conclusion, I suggest provisional ideas for reimagining this course and similar ones, and consider other approaches so that ‘sensing’ and the senses can be meaningfully integrated into programs that promote safety in cooperative running.

Slim to win: Disordered eating, lay expertise and ‘extitutions’ of weight management in combat sports.

James Shepherd

This talk stems from the cultural imperative of dieting and weight loss that essential to competition formats of martial arts and combat sports (MACS). Athletes seek out informal expertise on weight management practices to achieve the culturally normalised body ideals. This search for knowledge neatly aligns with sociological research emphasising the cultural significance of experiential knowledge that is consonant with performance narratives, rather than the dubious view of medical knowledge (Monaghan, 2001; Al Hashmi and Matthews, 2022). Weight management practices are carried out due to both tacit and overt messaging within MACS spaces of how athletic bodies should look (Atkinson, 2011).

The analysis demonstrates how coaches and fellow athletes reinforce strict regimes that normalise risky body cultures as markers of athletic legitimacy. Interview data shows how public weigh-ins and routinised “body talk” create surveillance and control mechanisms that police athlete actions and attitudes around diet. Those who do not conform to these narrow body ideals risk marginalisation, and verbal abuse (Stirling and Kerr, 2008; Pettersson et al., 2013). Such experiences provide an example of Papathomas’ (2018) claim that the sport ethic (Hughes and Coakley, 1991) is a coercive ideology, due to repressive control that pushes athletes towards over-conformity of culturally reproduced body ideals. Therefore, MACS spaces emerge as a subculture where athlete agency is constrained by the institutionalisation of weight management.

The long-term effects of weight management practices include disordered eating, body dysmorphia, and RED-S, revealing the enduring impact beyond competitive careers. Examples such as this highlight, is how ‘extitutorial’ behaviours and emotions shaped in one space, travel with people beyond their athletic careers. This is of concern

when the behaviours that are encouraged directly interfere with 'good health' and instead prioritise ideologies around sporting performance.

Room FAB3.31 – 20 Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities - Panel 5, Academic reflections in the Edu-factory

Authorship inequality and elite dominance in management and organizational research: A review of six decades

Mehmet A. Orhan & Matthijs Bal

Ideally, the academic publication process should be meritocratic, fair, and accessible to diverse groups of researchers. Yet, many scholarly disciplines are far from this ideal state. To investigate the extent and nature of authorship inequality in management and organizational research, we compared the 60-year publication trends of three closely related yet categorically distinct fields: Management (MNGT), Human Resource Management (HRM), and Industrial-Organizational Psychology (IOP). By examining over 60,000 publications across 42 top-tier journals, our study reveals a concerning upward trend in authorship inequalities over time, especially in the field of IOP. Employing a quantitative discovery approach, we evaluate the productivity of the most prolific authors within each field and journal. Our analysis based on publication data from these highly productive researchers exposes a pronounced dominance of a select group of individuals in IOP, as compared to MNGT and HRM. Furthermore, our findings demonstrate that (1) authorship inequality has been steadily rising in the last six decades across all fields, and it is reaching alarming levels that threaten the sustainability of academic careers in organizational research. Especially, IOP has been grappling with issues of inequality since its inception and continues to do so. To illustrate the gravity of the situation, it is worth noting that the present authorship disparity in IOP closely resembles the income inequality distribution in Angola, a nation plagued by poverty and corruption for many years. Moreover, our findings also indicate that (2) IOP journals allocate significantly more space to the most prolific authors than two other fields' journals, (3) the super-elite scholars of IOP do not only publish more articles on average than their counterparts in neighboring fields, but they also dominate journals to a greater extent, as we observe a higher frequency of the same authors on the top-10 most productive list in IOP than in the other two fields, and (4) the most prolific IOP scholars are more conservative in their publication venue choices. These findings have significant implications for practice, theory, and policy design. The concentration of journal publications in the hands of a limited number of individuals also raises important questions about the fairness and inclusivity of the academic publishing system.

Do more with less: An ethnography of a community sport organisation.

Dee Yeagers

This presentation draws on 18 months of ethnographic observation and interviews undertaken as part of PhD research within a community-based Sport for Development (SfD) organisation. The organisation aims to foster social cohesion among disadvantaged young people through sport and community engagement. I will consider the organisation's staff and volunteer management, alongside the difficulties faced in evidencing outcomes. These issues are explored in relation to the complex landscape in which the organisation operates—one characterised by limited resources, fragmented local provision, and increasing expectations to fill gaps in public services.

The first finding is that this organisation, like many in the third sector, rely upon unpaid and low-paid workers (Bennett and Savani, 2011; Bingham and Walters, 2013). This practice is justified firstly under the banner of 'charity' and with the pretence of providing personal development and employability benefits. In practice, this can lead to job insecurity and can be exploitative (Wilson, 2012). This way of working blurs the line between empowerment and extractive labour practices, leaving many volunteers holding insecure roles without clear career pathways or stable income. Because such organisations tend to emphasise passion and commitment as the most valued qualities in staff and volunteers, opportunities for job progression are often overlooked, reinforcing a culture in which organisations rely on sustained goodwill rather than offering secure employment.

The second finding is that there is a persistent gap between the organisation's charitable aims and its ability to evidence sustainable social outcomes. Staff and volunteers strongly value inclusion, empowerment, and community.

However, funding instability (Lambert and Paterson, 2023), short-term projects, and demands for quick, measurable "impact" limit their work and what they are able to evidence. Impact is then often measured only by attendance or anecdotes, rather than empirical evidence (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011; Matthews et al., 2022).

Thirdly, these workforce challenges are compounded by broader sector dynamics, which often operate in highly complex landscapes (Lambert and Paterson, 2023). As public funding contracts and local provision diminish, community organisations are asked to do more with less. Third sector organisations fill gaps left by the state, while attempting to address complex social problems on limited budgets. Community-based interventions are then considered as a one-stop 'cure-all' for a range of issues. Organisations face increasing pressure to demonstrate efficiency and accountability. However, they often lack sufficient skills, training, infrastructure, and resources for sustained evaluation or growth. What appears as local disorganisation or inefficiency is, in part, a symptom of broader policy logics that privilege short-term results and cost-effectiveness.

In conclusion, these findings underscore the need for more sustainable working practices to help deliver meaningful and measurable outcomes for service users, while also supporting the organisation and those volunteering and working within it.

What the fuck is theory?

Christopher R Matthews

One of the important questions I asked myself when developing my last book was, 'what the fuck are the emotions?' The swear word isn't just there for effect, it marks out a frustrated realisation that something I'd assumed to understand was actually quite unknown to me. And it also marks out a firm commitment to develop my fucking understanding!

As I finish off some of the background reading for my next book, I've now been asking similar questions about theory, theorising and theorists. What are they? How do they relate? How are they misunderstood, fetishised or ignored? And, most importantly, how do scholars write about them in useful but also sometimes wrongheaded ways.

In this talk I'll move beyond my previous rethinking of theory as consisting of basic assumptions, sensitising concepts and academic tools (see *Doing Good Social Science*, Matthews, 2025). I'll do this by considering some of the strengths and weaknesses of Richard Swedberg's discussions in *The Art of Social Theory*. While his work is a valuable revisiting of classic discussions started by C. Wright Mills, Glaser and Strauss, and Howard Becker, he is limited in two crucial ways. Firstly, he appears to be somewhat disconnected from the reality of theorising in contemporary academia. And, secondly, his nod towards 'cognitive science' as a means of bolstering theorising feels oddly unconsidered – although I appreciate his underlying motivation to better understand 'thought.' Based on those assessments and more, I'll plot out what I think is a useful development of his and others work.

My aim is threefold, to further democratise theorising, give it a clear moral and pragmatic edge, while also representing it in a more accessible way as something we all already do. I also expect that based on my discussions and subsequent publications on the topic, I'll lay out a quite clear and post-disciplinary approach to theorising which can be developed into a general pedagogy of theory development and social understanding. Cracking that part of this puzzle will be the focus of what remains of my career.

I'll seek to keep my talk short as I really want to hear what PGRs and colleagues think theorising is, especially in how they might see it differently to me. I'm trying to take in as many differing opinions as possible so that I can make my writing on this topic as useful as possible for a wide audience.

Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 - Parallel Sessions 7

Room FAB 0.23 – 28: Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy - Panel 3, Studio-ing: Creating Commons

What Is the Price of Your Gaze? Disrupting Urban Commodification Through Non-Linear and Place-Based Pedagogy

Salim Murad and Patricie Kyslíková

This presentation explores how nonlinear pedagogy and place-based education can critically engage students with the textures, tensions, and ideologies of urban consumer space. Drawing on an experiential course at the Charles University in Prague, I present a research walk conducted with future teachers of civics in Prague and focusing on the interplay between advertising and graffiti in public space. Framed as an inquiry into the question "What is the price of your gaze?", the walk invites students to deconstruct how their attention is captured, commodified, and contested within the media-saturated streets surrounding their school. By analysing the visual, spatial, and symbolic continuums between commercial advertising and oppositional street art, participants engage in situated, embodied learning that resists linear and content driven teaching.

By stepping into the streets as pedagogical spaces, this method challenges dominant models of civic education that remain abstracted from the material and affective realities of students' lives. It also invites future teachers to question how consumption, diversity, and marginality shape educational environments in the city. My presentation aims to share findings from student reflections, examples of urban learning outputs, and practical ideas for translating this model across contexts. Above all, it argues for a civic that is curious, critical, and fundamentally attuned to the rhythms of the city.

Resident in Residence: The Street as Studio

Gavin Rogers

The contemporary urban landscape is currently caught in the crosswinds of a "polycrisis". As traditional top-down civic infrastructures struggle to respond to these intersecting pressures, a radical alternative emerges from the domestic and the local. This presentation explores "Resident in Residence," a live, ongoing project situated on a typical inner-city terraced street in Birmingham, UK. The project disrupts conventional boundaries of professional practice by weaving a multidisciplinary team who are also full-time residents of the street: architects, artists, builders, carers, nurses, ceramicists, community workers, gardeners, and teachers into reimaging the street. By taking residency in a standard residential dwelling, these practitioners have reimagined the "studio" not as a secluded site for elite production, but as a DIY revolutionary hub for collective survival and neighbourhood transformation. This approach to working is once centred around care and interdependency as a positive action for community making and rebuilding, something that needs rebuilding. As the Care Collective (2020) suggest - one of the aspects of the poly-crisis is the infection of capitalism and the rejection of interdependency, and that we need each other more than ever.

Room FAB1.06 – 24: Critical Praxes and Black Feminist Thought, Panel 2 - Everyday Life and Black Feminist Thought

What are the lived experiences of Black Girls in Britain's Private Schools?'

Reese Marley Robinson

This dissertation investigates the lived experiences of Black girls in Britain's private secondary schools, moving beyond previous formal institutional analyses to uncover the subjective experiences of Black students within a structurally White elite environment. For better or worse, aspirational Black families - particularly from the emerging

Black British middle-class – often view private schools, with their broad curricula, small class sizes and extensive extra-curricular provision, as routes to social mobility (Green, Anders, Henderson, & Henseke, 2019). Whether through the ability to pay fees or by securing scholarships, Black students will hence continue to inhabit these spaces and grapple with their complexities. Amidst broader debates about the capitalist and heteropatriarchal features of private schooling, their experiences are of sociological interest because, as Meghji (2019:2) notes, “economic wealth does not shield Black folk from racism”. Whereas the privileged class position of most privately educated Black students is often a priori assumed to insulate them from racism, this study demonstrates that private schools remain sites where structural Whiteness is reproduced, irrespective of students’ family wealth or meritocratic opportunity. Moreover, this research scrutinises the positions of private schools that, following the racial tensions of 2020 and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, pledged to ‘do the work’ to foster diverse school communities (Freeman, 2020).

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with twelve Black girls who recently completed

their schooling, I highlight the interlinkages of race, class and gender within their experiences of the British private school system. My data reveal experiences of racism, a perceived neglect of institutional attention to Black girls’ wellbeing, and a generational, experiential gap with their parents. Taken together, these factors generally led to feelings of non-belonging. Empirically, the study demonstrates that private schools are racialised organisations in which racism persists today. Drawing on Black Feminist Theory (BFT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT), I expand analyses of racialised and gendered schooling by considering the ‘hidden cost’ of attending privileged institutions – in particular, what I will term the ‘affective cost of inclusion’.

Methodologically and epistemologically, the dissertation identifies BFT as a vital framework for knowledge, legitimising Black girls as experts of their own realities. As a Black woman who also attended private school, I adopt a reflexive insider positionality that affords access to what Black feminist scholars describe as subjugated or oppositional knowledge. The study employs ‘sister-to-sister talk’ as a culturally responsive communicative practice that is central to data production. In doing so, the research contributes to Black feminist scholarship by expanding documentation of Black British girlhoods within elite and ambivalent institutional spaces.

Situated Knowledge from the Margins: Black feminism, Decoloniality and Affect as Method

Henna Masih

Dominant research paradigms are shaped by Eurocentric and often patriarchal power structures that privilege positivist traditions of neutrality and objectivity. As a result, research practices are often extractive rather than transformative, with Decolonial scholar Tuhiwai Smith (2021) naming research as a ‘dirty word,’ that has disempowered many colonised people. Moreover, Black women and other Women of Colour experience epistemic injustice as their capacity as knowers is systemically undermined through what Black feminist scholar, Collins (1999) refers to as a ‘matrix of domination,’ where inequality is reproduced across gender, race, class and sexuality. This paper responds to this critique by reflecting on the methodological approach developed within an ongoing PhD study which seeks to explore the intersectional experiences of Women of Colour legal academics in the UK, identifying the challenges and resilience strategies employed to survive and thrive within UK legal academia - an area that has received uneven attention. It demonstrates the radical potential of Black feminist and decolonial epistemologies in shaping qualitative research by centring lived experience, counter-narratives, and affect as situated forms of knowledge for examining interlocking racialised and gendered oppressions, while also foregrounding researcher reflexivity. The paper advances Black feminist methodological approaches by refusing extractive research practices and offers a synthesised methodological framework that combines Black feminist and decolonial methods for researching inequality. This approach moves beyond mere representation and “non-performatives” (Sara Ahmed, 2006) of diversity, and instead towards structural critique by centering the marginalised voices and experiences of women of colour academics

Home, Othermothers and Love - A Black feminist exploration into Muslim women's resistance to Islamophobia in Britain.

Faustine Petron

Across Europe, the rise of far-right governments, now in power in seven countries, has mainstreamed Islamophobia. In Britain, recent years have seen some of the highest recorded levels of Islamophobia experienced by Muslims. These developments have had regressive and deeply gendered consequences for social justice. This paper draws on Black feminist theory to explore how Muslim women in Britain navigate and engage in everyday resistance to this growing Islamophobia. Grounded in Black feminist traditions that recognise the radical and political potential of love, the paper draws on bell hooks' concept of a love ethic to foreground love and care not merely as coping strategies, but as vital and collective forms of resistance to oppression. Aligning theory and practice, the study employs Black feminist methodologies, including a solidarity circle alongside semi-structured interviews, to centre lived experience in 19 accounts of Muslim women's everyday resistance to Islamophobia in Britain. Moving away from dominant sociological framings that position Muslim women as passive victims in need of saving (Abu-Lughod, 2002), the paper instead conceptualises marginality as a 'site of radical possibility' (hooks, 1997). It highlights Muslim women's creativity, agency and strength in the face of both interpersonal Islamophobia and Islamophobic state violence, including the harms produced by surveillance programmes such as PREVENT, which disproportionately target Muslim communities. Existing scholarship on Islamophobia rarely focuses on resistance, which reinforces the harmful narrative of Muslim women as passive victims. Furthermore, by ignoring Muslim women's everyday resistance, scholarship has obscured their quieter and often overlooked, daily acts of defiance. By centering everyday practices, this paper contributes to Black feminist scholarship by expanding understandings of resistance and insisting that love is not only political but also a form of resistance.

Room FAB2.31 – 24 Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance - Panel 6, Who Makes the Work? AI, Authenticity, and Invisible Labour

Failure as Method of Resistance in Digital Art Practices

Luja Šimunović

This proposal examines how contemporary art practices engaging with digitally mediated subjectivity embrace fatigue and failure as modes of resistance to dominant technological imaginaries. Rather than treating the shortcomings of digital technologies merely as symptoms of lost futures, the paper proposes that these failures generate new affective positions, forms of agency or kinds of intelligence that unsettle dominant, anthropocentric understandings of subjectivity.

Early cybernetic optimism of the 1990s took to the unrestricted and unhierarchical structure of the network as an opportunity for emancipation, collectivity, and expanded cognition – an internet that will allow for new freedoms and new, more just and humane, democracies. The contemporary digital sphere embodies a far more ambivalent reality: a decentralized space of mass surveillance, of platform infrastructures that manipulate behaviours, that feed on affective economies and breed radical reactionary groups that trigger real social consequences. It is a liminal and unstable environment that actively shapes our global and subjective realities, all while blurring the lines between the public and the private, agency and automation, the individual and collective. It is in many ways a failure that instead of connecting, has further alienated the individual and instead of freeing has further restricted and governed the social body.

One and Three SCHRAM's

Laurie Schram



This performative lecture presents SCHRAM2.0, an ongoing artistic research project that examines authorship, fatigue, and resistance within contemporary artistic practice shaped by artificial intelligence, institutional precarity, and invisible care labour. SCHRAM2.0 is a speculative alter ego developed through sustained dialogue with artificial intelligence. She functions as both an artwork and a working method. Rather than existing as a singular identity, SCHRAM2.0 is conceived as an iterable and plural subject whose identity emerges through repetition, interpretation, and contextual enactment. Instead of approaching AI as a tool just for optimisation or innovation, the project treats it as a system that embraces how authorship gets distributed, mediated, and fatigued. I invite artificial intelligence to attempt to be me as an artist, recreating aesthetics, gestures, and conceptual logic, while I in turn attempt to make as an AI system might: iteratively, repetitively, and through distortion. Through this reciprocal process, SCHRAM2.0 takes shape as a versioned self. Outwardly she appears coherent and successful, while internally authorship becomes porous and shared across human, machine, and institutional structures. The performative lecture takes the form of a short presentation of the project and a staged panel discussion in which multiple versions of SCHRAM2.0 are present simultaneously. Each panelist represents SCHRAM2.0 from within their own practice and field, inhabiting her as a position rather than performing her as a character. These representations are not deviations from an original, but constitutive instances. The panel stages a debate about who SCHRAM2.0 really is, not in order to determine a correct version, but to insist that her reality consists precisely of these competing and coexisting interpretations. Philosophy, art jewellery, education, and costume history each generate a valid version of SCHRAM2.0, grounded in real expertise and lived disciplinary knowledge. The lecture combines real knowledge with performative framing. It is unscripted, but not unstructured. Costume, role, and staging operate alongside genuine interpretation and argument. Versions overlap, contradict, and coexist, making visible authorship as a negotiated and ongoing process rather than a fixed position. The work is conceived as a modular structure that can be realised in two formats. In one iteration, SCHRAM2.0 appears as a fully embodied live panel, foregrounding presence, coordination, and the labour required to assemble bodies in one space. In another iteration, the artist is physically present while other versions of SCHRAM2.0 appear through mediated means such as live or recorded video, audio, and screen-based interventions. This mediated version foregrounds absence, substitution, and technological distance. Both formats are integral to the project and demonstrate how material conditions shape not only artistic production, but the very form that authorship takes. Central to the project is the role of invisible labour. As an artist, educator, and caregiver, my art practice unfolds within interruption, repetition, and unpaid work that sustains both artistic and institutional economies. SCHRAM2.0 emerges from these conditions rather than despite them. The performative lecture refuses to separate intellectual production from care and dependency, treating them as structural forces within artistic

practice. Fiction here functions as an intentional escape into a counterfactual artistic life, one in which time, energy, and autonomy are not structurally constrained. This escape is not a withdrawal from reality, but a critical mirror that exposes how such freedom remains normative for male artists and exceptional or absurd when claimed by women.

Room FAB2.32 – 28 Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture - Panel 4, Health Narratives & Biopolitics

How do weight-loss drugs construct narratives around fatness?

Florence Collins

With approximately 1-2 million people currently using weight-loss drugs, and those numbers expected to keep rising, it's become commonplace hearing that another celebrity, family member or co-worker has decided to jump on the Ozempic bandwagon. This is because, despite being formulated to treat diabetes, the appetite-suppressing side-effect of GLP-1 medications means they're increasingly framed as a 'magic pill' to the supposed 'obesity crisis'. However, while these drugs are presented as beneficial for one's health, their own potential health complications are being over-looked – including the possibility of triggering eating disorders along with the various known and yet-to-be-known side effects, of which so far have included acute pancreatitis. What's more, with NHS prescriptions being limited only to those with comorbid health conditions, this leaves a predominant number of people accessing them through private companies. Therefore, this raises the question, if these drugs come with both health risks and a financial cost ranging between £100-250 monthly, why are they currently so lusted after? One reason may lie in the societal stigmatisation and existential threat when existing in a fat body as for many, the exclusion of well-fitted clothes, suitable chairs and even life-saving medical procedures is a material reality. However, what remains unexamined is how these examples of discrimination rely on medicalised knowledge which not only constructs slimness as the ideal but also fat bodies as physically unhealthy and socially deviant. This is particularly important as current discourse around weight-loss drugs predominately revolves around whether they constitute as 'cheating' in comparison to diet and exercise. What's overlooked, however, is the often-un-questioned assumption that fat people should lose weight in the first place. Therefore, drawing on a Foucauldian perspective, I want to question dominant health narratives which frame weight-loss drugs as a 'treatment' to fatness and instead argue that they function as convenient tools within an increasingly neoliberal healthcare system which pathologizes certain bodies.

Necrometrics: a human security approach to bodies of war.

Lily Hamourtziadou

The human body in death is taboo in most cultures. Although death is inevitable for all of us, we do not want to see, show or share images of dead bodies, especially in cases of violent death. The collection of biometric data in various security areas enables the use of the human body for identification purposes. Biometrics in the military uses biological traits such as face, iris, fingerprints, and behaviours for identification, tracking suspects or detainees, and for gathering intelligence. This paper argues that Necrometrics, data about and from the dead in armed conflict, can provide an understanding of war from a human security perspective. Casualty recording, as well as data collected from human remains, can help us document the impact of war on all aspects of security: personal, economic, political, community, food, health and environmental security. Using research and data from Iraq Body Count, Every Casualty Counts, Memorial Platform, Gaza Shaheed and Airwars, and drawing on the work of Hamourtziadou and Wels (Biometrics to Necrometrics: What the Dead Can Tell us About War, *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies*, 2025), the body in death is revisited: the human corpse becomes a vehicle for identification, contextualisation, memorialisation and justice.

Visible Faces of Recovery in Wolverhampton: SUIT (Service User Involvement Team), Wolverhampton

Christiane Jenkins

As LERO's (Lived Experience Recovery Organisations), gain visibility within contemporary treatment systems, they are simultaneously subjected to new forms of governance that limit their capacity to challenge how recovery is defined, measured, and controlled.

This proposed presentation will explain the challenges faced by LERO's as contested sites where alternative knowledges of recovery encounter and are disciplined by, clinical and institutional regimes. SUIT Wolverhampton (one of the UK's earliest LEROs, founded in 2007), was established as a space in which lived experience was not treated as anecdotal or supplementary, but as a legitimate source of knowledge capable of informing recovery on its own terms. Through education, advocacy, creativity, and wraparound support, we have responded to marginalisation across healthcare, welfare, housing, and criminal justice systems, offering people on the sharp end of society a voice, visible role models, and opportunities that connect identity beyond clinical categorisation.

Despite the growing national presence of LEROs, we argue that relationships with clinical treatment providers remains characterised by uneven power. Primary Care and clinical services continue to privilege medicalised models of treatment, frequently failing to recognise or refer into peer-led recovery spaces. Where collaboration does occur, it is often shaped by professional anxieties around credibility, funding, and control, resulting in partnerships that prioritise institutional needs over client outcomes. Listening practices may be present, yet lived experience is too often evaluated through external criteria that dilute its critical potential.

From a Foucauldian perspective, power does not operate solely through exclusion or repression, but through productive mechanisms that shape what can be said, by whom, and with what authority. As LEROs enter formal recovery systems, lived experience becomes increasingly visible and recognised, yet regulated through funding criteria, referral pathways, risk frameworks, and evaluative metrics rooted in medicalised models of addiction.

Drawing on the chapter "Visible Faces of Recovery in Wolverhampton: SUIT" written by SUIT staff, (in "Lived Experience Recovery Organisations: Peer Generated Epicentres of Personal Change and Collective Transformation" edited by Dr David Patton & Dr Ed Day), we will explore our experiences within national LERO leadership, and the community we serve. The volume's formal deposition in the British Library and its celebratory launch hosted by Dame Carol Black signal a growing cultural recognition of lived experience as a meaningful contribution to knowledge.

However, we would contend that symbolic recognition has not been matched by structural change within recovery systems and that current models of partnership risk reproducing the very inequalities LEROs were created to address. We argue that a shift towards redistribution of authority, resources, and decision-making power should be called for; one that positions LEROs not as an afterthought to treatment, but as autonomous identities capable of reshaping how recovery is understood, practiced, and governed.

Room FAB3.31 – 20 : ‘Beneath the remains’: A critical exploration under and beyond the blinkered rationalities of contemporary civilisational decay, Panel 1, ‘Out here, on the perimeter’: Obstacles, conduits, magic, and dissipation.

“My garden is made of stone”: The death drive of ghosts and the eros of magic

Andrew Fergus Wilson

Before Derrida wrote the lectures that made up *Specters of Marx* he helped make better known the work of psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok; they developed the idea of transgenerational haunting. Their spectres concealed secrets, buried traumas that haunted successive generations – nostalgia as a symptom, an eternal return to the scene of the primal crime. Derrida's ghosts give form to unrealisable thoughts – spectral seeds as yet unfertilised by language (ghostly structures of feeling). Marx and Engels sought to give flesh to the continually insubstantial phantasm that haunted the European mind, communism. Here, too, we might think of the misreadings of Mark Fisher's 'capitalist realism': his melancholy was for unborn ideas, not an infertile imagination. Waking language cannot sustain the dream.

We live in an age in which public culture is saturated with history and psychology; looking backwards and inwards we would rather tarry with the unstable boundaries of generic networked hyperindividuation than confront the ghosts that surround us. The dead of Gaza, of Rojava, of Afghanistan, of the Democratic Republic of Congo, of Rohingya, Iran, Minnesota, Somalia, the Maghreb, Ukraine, Sudan, the Narco wars, femicide, on and on, the mass genocide of multiple species. They fill the spaces between us, they are stitched together in our fast fashion; perhaps we can hear the screams of the dead in the static of our voice notes when we charge our phones? Or the quiet sound of fresh, clean

water evaporating as it cools the fevered, metastasizing minds of AIs while they sloppify all prior human thought. Outwards and now is a hellscape and the dead are everywhere.

And so some turn away, we turn to pseudohistory, ceremonial magic, hex knots, curses, memes, chaos, ancestor worship and other ancestral hauntings, the eternal return of time as a flat stone circle. Is this a pessimistic Spenglerianism? Atavistic longing for a romanticised primitivism that erases the modern and its churning engines fuelled by sacrifice? Perhaps not. This paper wants to know if a refusal to monetise or instrumentalise activity, to make ludic play out of hyperstition, can be a pleasure that is anathema to capitalist realism. What are the entangled mycological tenets of a vernacular religion of reenchancement, a politics of trespass? Can we understand it as an endeavour to reclaim ownership of human effort in the name of our own impossible illusions so that it cannot be transformed into mere labour and the structuring Symbolic of one social system or another? This paper will explore the weird turn in public culture in these terms and seek to understand if and how the irrationalities of the deep past can make sense when building a more equitable future.

Inner, Outer and Secret Relationships: A Relational Approach to Tantric Obstacles

Llew Watkins

The eighth-century master Padmasambhava famously subjugated the demonic forces of Tibet – not by destroying them, but by transforming them into guardians of the Dharma. In the Nyingma tradition, the obstacles we face (bar-chad) are categorised into three levels: outer (environmental), inner (physical/emotional), and secret (the root of self-grasping). This paper argues that these obstacles are best understood not as external entities or internal pathologies, but as blocked patterns of relationship that can be understood through the lens of participatory sense-making.

In participatory sense-making, meaning is considered to emerge collaboratively as a shared enactment. When we are stuck, a rigid relational dynamic has taken over and stalled our fluid interaction with the world.

- Inner obstacles – emotional turbulence developing from blockages and knots in the subtle body – are explored via Inner Relationship Focusing. Here, partial selves or parts are viewed as autonomous systems with their own sense-making agendas. Healing is reframed as a transition from internal conflict to a state of collaborative coordination with parts held within a wider loving awareness (self-in-presence).
- Outer obstacles are examined through Family Constellations, which reveal how individuals are coupled to wider ancestral and social systems. This paper illustrates how external conflicts – for example, between a mother and daughter – often represent an externalised version of internal parts. Here, the interaction process itself gains a maladaptive autonomy that traps the participants in repetitive patterns.
- Secret obstacles represent the primary rupture: the dualistic split where we solidify a fluid experience into a fixed self, fundamentally distinct from other. This represents a breakdown of participation. In the Buddhist tradition, both devotion and compassion are seen as powerful relational methods to facilitate the dissolving of these rigid boundaries.

The paper argues that relational practices are needed to heal this split at outer, inner, and secret levels. By exploring tantric processes alongside contemporary therapeutic modalities, working with obstacles is shown to be a process of shifting our habitual patterns of engagement – moving from defensive isolation back into a responsive, non-dual relationship with experience.

Managed Dissipation: Internalised Exit and Non-Eventful Collapse in Contemporary Societies

Jooyeol Kim

Contemporary societies are frequently described as unstable, polarised, or approaching rupture. Yet in many cases, large-scale revolt, collective violence, or transformative political events fail to materialise even under prolonged economic pressure, institutional erosion, and affective exhaustion. This paper argues that this absence of eruption should not be read as resilience or integration, but as a condition in which discontent is structurally absorbed and neutralised before it can become an event.

Rather than erupting collectively, social pressure increasingly converges on quiet forms of individual collapse—suicide, addiction, extreme withdrawal, and the abandonment of participation. These outcomes are often framed as psychological pathology or moral failure. This paper instead approaches them as internally displaced exits that emerge once legible routes of response are progressively sealed. In this sense, what appears as withdrawal, madness, or disappearance is not an escape from rationality, but a residue produced by its continued enforcement beyond viability.

The core condition identified is the collapse of realizability: a situation in which meaningful outcomes—economic, social, or symbolic—no longer fall within an individual's lived time horizon. Under such conditions, rational action does not vanish but contracts. Long-term strategies lose coherence, participation becomes performative, and collective engagement increasingly resembles a ritual without expected payoff. It is at this threshold that mythic, magical, or 'mad' languages are often invoked—not as alternatives to reason, but as signals that reason itself has become exhausted as a viable mode of orientation.

When external exit and voice mechanisms are restricted or rendered ineffective, remaining exits are internalised. The resulting forms of collapse are socially invisible and politically non-threatening, registered less as events than as statistics, atmospheres, or hauntings within everyday life. From this perspective, contemporary stability appears not as equilibrium but as managed dissipation: a condition in which pressure is redirected into non-collective, non-eventful forms of disappearance.

By treating violence, withdrawal, and self-destruction as alternative outputs of the same constrained decision structure rather than distinct phenomena, this paper offers a structural account of civilisational decay that proceeds without spectacle. It aligns with this panel's interest in myth, madness, and the beyond of managerial rationality, while approaching them as threshold languages that emerge when dominant logics continue to operate after their conditions of possibility have already collapsed.

Break

16:00 – 17:30 - Parallel Sessions 8

Room (FAB 0.23 – 28) : Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy, Panel 4

Plenary Studio-ing: Disrupting, Resisting, Creating

Maggie Ayliffe; Andrew Bracey; Joanne Lee; Danica Maier; Laura Onions

This plenary brings together the insights, experiments, questions and frictions that have emerged across the stream at MCCT to collectively consider what Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy makes possible within and beyond Fine Art. In this session, attendees are invited to help surface the significant conditions, challenges and desires that have arisen through the presentations and in relation to the five themes of 'studio-ing': time and space, co-learning, quality, inclusion and valuing the process. Using a deliberately discursive and participatory format, the plenary aims to identify where studio-ing resonates across disciplines, where it is resisted or constrained, and where it may support unforeseen forms of collaboration or transformation. This shared reflection will help shape the next phase of the research project as it continues to investigate studio-ing as a critical, creative and interdisciplinary pedagogic methodology.

Room FAB1.06 – 24 : Critical Praxes and Black Feminist Thought - Panel 3, Who gets to know? : Black Feminist and Decolonial Interventions

Desire, Contradiction and Knowledge Production

Muna Ahmed

This presentation draws on my reflections as a queer Black Muslim woman to explore lived experience as a site of knowledge. By examining how desire, contradiction, and respectability shape the production of knowledge about

race, gender, religion, and morality; I argue that emotional experiences which are typically dismissed as too personal are in fact analytically rich.

As a Black Muslim woman, I am constantly negotiating contradictory expectations. Respectability politics within an ethnoreligious Somali society demands modesty, restraint, and moral legibility from women while racialised stereotypes simultaneously frame the same Black women as excessive, unruly, or hypervisible. Through attempts to resist one stereotype, I see myself fulfilling another. These contradictions are not personal failures but structural tensions, and attending to them reveals how marginalised subjects are asked to perform coherence in worlds built on contradiction.

When knowledge is detached from lived reality, myths flourish. Part of our contemporary misinformation crisis, I suggest, is not a lack of information, but a lack of communication - particularly the silencing of those most affected by dominant narratives.

The ethical dimension of knowledge production is especially clear in debates around sexuality and religion. Queer Muslims who practice Islam often develop a deeper and more complex understanding of Islamic teachings on homosexuality precisely because they must live with these interpretations while sustaining faith. Their knowledge is formed through negotiation, risk, and survival. By contrast, scholars who are not personally implicated (often straight, often insulated from harm) have little incentive to unsettle the status quo. Drawing on Black feminist epistemology, I argue that experiential knowledge carries not only epistemic value but the ethical responsibility to speak, to make oneself known, and to challenge myths sustained by silence.

Methodologically, this presentation is a Black feminist interpretive autoethnography grounded in critical pedagogy. Building on the work of Patricia Hill Collins, I treat experience, especially the emotional, as legitimate forms of knowledge. Feminist critical pedagogy laid out by bell hooks further grounds this approach, insisting that what we learn in classrooms must remain accountable to the truth outside of classrooms. In dialogue with Audre Lorde, I use the erotic as an epistemic resource. My methodology will illustrate that centering experiential knowledge is not a retreat from rigor, but commitment to a truth based in reality.

Experiential knowledge helps people to accept contradictions, resist abandoning themselves, and live more honestly. I hope to contribute to the stream by centering lived experience as critical praxis to show where Black feminist theory offers individuals like myself guidance in the form of tools for thinking and surviving amidst contradiction.

Colonial racial truth-making: Colonial photography as an epistemological technology of modernity/coloniality

Anjalee Suthakaran,

This paper will examine the photograph's place in colonial constructions of truth, particularly as it pertains to constructions of race/gender. The photograph is deemed a purveyor of truth. As John Berger puts it, capitalism universalised the eye of God with the camera. The use of photography creates a static body - a body frozen in time. Entering the intersubjective universe of modernity/coloniality, photographs enable the static positioning of bodies within racial taxonomies. From its invention, democratization, and current use, the photograph has been a means of public pedagogy, fear mongering, and communicating an objective "Other". The photograph as a conduit of "truth" is popularised through contemporary conversations in digital spaces. Namely, Palestinians detailing their suffering under colonial occupation since 1948 has not been sufficient for "Western" audiences to believe it. Rather, the perpetual circulation of photographs of bombed hospitals and children who have been starved is where "truth" is ostensibly revealed.

This paper posits that there are two primary ways in which the colonial photograph is an epistemological technology by which the modernity/coloniality paradigm manifests. Firstly, under the modern/colonial world system, the photograph is a device of measurement, classification, and quantification. As such, the camera is the reifying device by which constructed racial difference becomes a cultural fact. The colonial photograph thus sustains a logic which deems certain racialised bodies as necessarily inferior and uncivilised, rationalising colonial domination. Moreover, I argue that the colonial photograph is a means of mapping negatively racialised people in a global racial imaginary by

which the colonial European perspective is the orbiter of truth by which those who are racially Othered are displaced from and hierarchised according to proximity to the centre (White, European, Rationality.) By synergising a Foucauldian understanding of power and Mignolo, Quijano, and Lugones concept of modernity/coloniality, this paper examines British anthropologist Edgar Thurston's photography in 'South India', arguing that colonial photography was integral to the construction of static, negatively racialised bodies. Used as an aid to the Criminal Tribes Act (1871) in South India, Thurston's accompanying detailed anthropological observations pathologised and sexualised individuals in the colonial periphery. Demonstrating that colonial photography was integral in legitimizing racial science as "truth". I argue that Thurston's photography aided the construction of a global colonial, racial, and gendered imaginary. As such, the colonial photograph became a form of public pedagogy that disseminated colonial knowledge systems, particularly through popular magazines, as the British public became fascinated with knowing and understanding the colonial Other. As an interjection of colonial power-knowledge systems, this paper seeks to interrogate the objective status prescribed to the camera, identifying the "zero-point hubris" (Castro-Gómez) instilled in colonial photography.

Room FAB2.31 – 24 Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance - Panel 7, Resistance and Experimentation in Practice

Anahita Neghabat

This paper analyzes the meme series until u feel impending doom (produced by Anahita Neghabat for the exhibition Pay Attention!, Sept. 26–Oct. 1, 2025, at VCAS / Vienna Contemporary Art Space, curated by Ziegi Boss) a critical engagement with the attention economy and digital affect. Through humor, exhaustion, and dread, the memes trace how scrolling transforms attention into labor and responsibility. Drawing on platform cultures and visual theory, the work shows how memes oscillate between care and complicity, exposing how algorithmic infrastructures shape perception, privilege, and the unequal visibility of global suffering.

Devious Dancing with Devices....and trees

Sally Stenton

"Dear body, you have been slacking of late and I am receiving discomfoting signals that suggest there is a problem with your posture. You have spent too much time sitting on the sofa with the laptop. Thank you for alerting me to the need for correction. I have come across some instructions that you might find helpful."

<https://www.sallystenton.com/projects/bending-as-a-form-of-resistance/>

This is the opening paragraph of a text by Sally Stenton that arose from 'Bending as a form of resistance', a collaboration with Kelcy Davenport and Pernille Fransden in 2018 exploring movement as both metaphor and embodiment of constructive agency.

In a development of this sensory enquiry, the proposed activity for MCCT will explore the act of noticing how our digital devices shape our posture and gestures. We will deploy the senses to interrogate the nature of the relationships we are forming with devices and simulations of human resemblance. How might we imagine moving our bodies counter to the directions of the machinic choreographer to subvert the training regime of the screen?

Participants are invited to uncurl : from grasping hands, bent shoulders and downward gaze to the opening, upward reach of a tree. A nuanced attention to the sensations in the body might pose questions about the digital experience of a tree or how soil can infiltrate the internet. The digital realm conspires with the human tendency to reduce the tree to a flat image or a single word, but it can also unlock a different way of seeing and hence of being. How can we use the technology to enhance our connection with the wider entangled ecology without being seduced into a 2 dimensional call and response?

This interactive session will pose questions to the body, offering prompts and invitations that are ambiguous, poetic and unpredictable. Words will help to eliminate words and through the sensory act of moving the body we will work together to unfold ways to resist the theft of sensibility and attention.

Room FAB2.32 – 28 : Beyond the nature/culture divide: Posthuman and New Materialist explorations - Panel 3, Consciousness and conscious relations

The New Society: Introducing a formalism for identity and societal structures in the face of intelligent automata.

P.A. Galwas

In this presentation, we introduce a formalism for considering a "New Society" - collectives of humans and increasingly intelligent automata, as well as other organisms. We examine changes to the fundamental nature of human and representational identities in the face of increasingly independent automata; as well as new social constructions beyond current human society and culture, changes to human autonomy, and even the nature of subjectivity & objectivity itself. To establish the landscape, we firstly examine the space of "mind v. no-mind" by characterising degrees of sentience and types of powering; and by enumerating the new types of communities that may arise in this domain. Secondly, we introduce the scenario of a "New Enlightenment", where humans live with identity separation and mirror identities alongside new types of automata communities. In this New Enlightenment, the pervasion of artificial intelligence (AI) and human individuals' direct interactions with AI, will, we argue, take us full circle - from the peak of scientific dominance back to magical world views.

We conclude by introducing a novel formalism for considering collectives of humans and automata - as well as potentially other organisms, comprising three major aspects: A "language of virtues" that goes beyond traditional ideas of ethical values and financial value; A method to handle complexity and emergence that transcends current concepts of property; and a formal representation that generalizes informational entities, in particular to enable all the characteristics of holons. We believe that this approach can help us to redefine our place, in particular by going beyond traditional perspectives - of humans & culture, and nature & matter - to acknowledge, accept, and perhaps flourish alongside collectives of automata.

Beyond Human Utopia: Posthuman Consciousness and Relational Ethics in Bora Chung's *Your Utopia*

Palak Arora

This paper interrogates the figure of utopia in Bora Chung's *Your Utopia* (2024) as a site where humanist assumptions about consciousness, agency, and ethical sovereignty are systematically unsettled. Rather than imagining utopia as a horizon of human perfection or rational social organisation, Chung's speculative narratives stage utopia as a relational and often disturbing assemblage of human and non-human forces technological systems, environments, bodies, and affective residues that resist human mastery. In doing so, *Your Utopia* offers a sustained literary critique of anthropocentric reason and reconfigures consciousness as distributed, contingent, and materially entangled.

Drawing on posthumanist and new materialist perspectives, this paper argues that Chung's work exposes the limits of classical utopian thought grounded in Enlightenment humanism. By foregrounding the instability of care, responsibility, and survival across human–non-human thresholds, *Your Utopia* challenges the logic of human exceptionalism that underwrites both utopian and dystopian imaginaries. These narratives refuse the promise of mastery or redemption, instead emphasising vulnerability, interdependence, and ethical uncertainty as unavoidable conditions of posthuman existence.

This paper contributes to broader discussions on how speculative fiction can rethink inherited models of consciousness and ethics in an era shaped by technological acceleration, ecological crisis, and the exhaustion of humanist futures. It ultimately suggests that Chung's work does not ask what a "better" utopia might look like, but whether utopia remains imaginable within frameworks that continue to privilege the human as the primary measure of value, agency, and meaning.

What Can Silences Say? Towards a Material-Discursive Theory of Silence

Sai Sree Satya Javvaji

Most theories on silence aim to grasp the oppression of marginalized subjects by conceptualizing silence as a reduction of agency and self-determination. De/postcolonial feminist scholarship has shown how postcolonial women are silenced, rendered invisible, or unaccounted for in existing colonial narratives, with some suggesting that voice itself is colonial. More recent work challenges this by theorizing intentional silence as a form of agency, and by understanding silence as a space of political possibility and mobilization (Malhotra & Rowe 2013; Parpart & Parashar 2019). I argue, however, that these critiques remain constrained by a shared ontological assumption: silence—whether passive or agential—is treated as a property of the subject. Silence is framed as either a marker of the subject's lack of agency or as an intentional act that demonstrates agency. In both cases, silence has no place beyond the subject, furthering a narrow understanding that fails to capture its full meaning-making potential.

Drawing on new materialist and posthuman relational ontologies, particularly Karen Barad's work (2019), the paper argues that silence should be understood as a material-discursive entity rather than as an absence or lack characterizing individual subjects. I develop this argument through a critical and creative reading of Gayatri Spivak's (1985) notion of subaltern silence and, to unsettle this framework, I draw on Karen Barad's notion of the void as having materiality and being endowed with a haunting presence. By tracing affinities between the void and silence, I reinterpret subaltern silence as a material presence that asserts itself within the social topology and forces meaning. More broadly, this presentation seeks to expand how agency is understood as relationally enacted so we can explore ruptures and political possibilities that emerge when silence is approached as materially alive

Room (FAB3.31 – 20): 'Beneath the remains': A critical exploration under and beyond the blinkered rationalities of contemporary civilisational decay, Panel 2, 'Sticks and stones': Performativity, subversion, taboos, and complex empowerments.

Performative Subversion in S/M: Performance Art and Resistance

Cristian Gonzalez Arevalo

This paper examines the intersection of Michel Foucault's theoretical framework on power and sexuality with the performative dimensions of sadomasochistic (SM) practices and radical performance art. Drawing on *La volonté de savoir* and Foucault's reflections on the microphysics of power, this analysis foregrounds SM not merely as a mechanism of repression but as a dynamic process through which power becomes productive. This productivity shapes experiences, identities, and social practices, illustrating that power is embedded within the very fabric of human interaction. SM, I argue, offers a uniquely powerful lens for understanding power because it transcends mere symbolic representation. Instead, it embodies and enacts power within ritualised, consensual, and aesthetically coded spaces, creating a tangible experience of dominance, submission, and negotiation.

Unlike political theatre and other performing arts that rely heavily on the mediation of fiction and the reflective distance afforded to spectators, SM situates relations of dominance and submission on a sensorial and corporeal plane. This physicality reveals the reversibility, contingency, and prior negotiations that sustain power dynamics. As articulated in *La volonté de savoir*, power is not a substance one possesses but a network of mobile relations. In SM practices, this fundamental truth is dramatised with striking transparency, exposing hierarchies as assumed roles rather than inherent essences. The consensual nature of SM rituals underscores the constructedness of authority, challenging the viewer—or participant—to reconsider foundational assumptions about power and control in broader social contexts.

The study of SM's performativity finds a compelling parallel in the radical body art of artists such as Ron Athey and Marina Abramović. Athey's performances—marked by piercings, ritualised pain, and bloodletting—physically manifest the tension between vulnerability and authority. His body becomes a site of symbolic inscription and

negotiated pacts, transforming personal experience into a public spectacle of power's volatility. Abramović's seminal work *Rhythm 0* (1974) further pushes these boundaries. By surrendering her body completely to the audience's will, she embodies the extremes of passivity and exposure. The prior consent she grants—allowing participants to use objects ranging from gentle to potentially dangerous—creates a framework in which the boundaries of power and violence are not only tested but laid bare.

Both Athey and Abramović turn the body into a performative stage where power dynamics become palpable, constantly negotiated, and at times destabilised. Their works resonate with SM practices in several crucial ways. First, the visibility of the pact: just as SM explicitly sets boundaries and codes of conduct, Athey's and Abramović's performances operate within clear, albeit sometimes tacit, contracts with their audiences. This delineation makes it possible to distinguish between consensual enactments of violence and real aggression. Second, the ritualisation of power exchanges: both BDSM practices and these performances aestheticise hierarchical relationships through scenography, props, spatial arrangements, and costume, reinforcing the theatrical and performative nature of authority. Lastly, the reversibility of roles: in SM, dominant and submissive roles are fluid, allowing for reversal. In the works of Athey and Abramović, while roles may remain fixed during the performance, the temporal and performative framework ensures that these dynamics are inherently contingent, subject to suspension or reconfiguration—mirroring the consensual nature of power play in SM.

In conclusion, SM elucidates the mechanisms of power more effectively than traditional political theatre because, like the works of Athey and Abramović, it does not merely narrate power—it materialises it. By subjecting power to transparent rules and ritualising its operations, SM amplifies its intensity and critical potential. In this process, domination and submission become a performative laboratory in which power is stripped of its naturalisation, aestheticised, and revealed as a reversible and negotiated construction. Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis and his articulation of power as both disciplinary and productive—core themes in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*—serve as the theoretical backbone for understanding these performative acts and underscore the enduring relevance of his seminal work. This analysis highlights how both SM and performance art expose the underlying scripts of authority and control embedded within societal structures. They demonstrate that Foucault's insights continue to illuminate contemporary discussions of power dynamics and social norms. Ultimately, this exploration affirms that SM and radical performance art function as experimental arenas where power's fluidity is not only revealed but artistically and politically subverted. These practices transform lived experiences into aesthetic expressions that challenge normative constructs, making visible the performative nature of authority and the potential for its radical reconfiguration.

Financially dominated erotic consumption: 'paypigs' as apex neoliberal subjects?

Romain Chenet

This paper works from Economic Sociology roots to encounter financial domination ('findom') as a revealing site from which to read tellingly obscured dynamics. After outlining contours of findom and my avowedly-imperfectly feminist cultural analytic frame, I grapple into this distinctive market of commercial BDSM / consumption-kinking serviced by 'findommes' as elite sex workers. This elite-ness emerges not only from the high cost for such services (that's their point!), but from findommes' own discursive and emotional gender performance labour. Much is required to construct a marketable persona, overcome barriers to entry that maintain provider scarcity, and achieve the high levels of skilled performance work that underpin exchanges frequently framed as effortless or even meaningless - by design. As such, successful findommes need talent and authenticity to frame their simulated performativity as an optimal product to drive market engagement, denoting the niche labour expertise needed to excel in facilitating the money-fetishising inversions prompted by high-neoliberal society.

I then tease out why this somewhat niche kink is 'possible' (in the poststructural sense). Analysis here turns to our embedded 'command codes' – honouring Véronique Gago. These are the econo-cultural logics that make findom not only legible but, as argued, intrinsic to late-neoliberal society's (and thus individual's) own imposed submissions

within frameworks of intellectual and spiritual domination. These are imposed via Capital but reproduced by us as agency-seeking libidinal subjects, also evoking a Native American 'wendigo': an embedded mind-virus with physical and often-horned outlets (as per even the earliest depictions thereof). Financialization, intensified taboo-driven hyper-consumerism, and the fetishisation of commodities shape a consumer subject primed for eroticised spending and digitally mediated indulgence as neoliberalism's own self-affirming trauma response. In this context, the erotic charge of money itself - and the cathartic pleasure of relinquishing it - aligns neatly with shifts toward autoerotic gratification and consumption as a coping mechanism for stress and disillusionment.

Rather than attempting definitiveness, I suggest that such cultural resonances warrant deeper investigation on (e.g.,) consumer motivations, emotional labour, meta-moral economies, and other consumptions / responses to elite-imposed traumas. Mostly, however, this paper strikes for methodological and conceptual impact. I argue for more subculture analysis via gateways such as the unusual insights generable from openly deconstructing what some see as 'taboo', which is after all what fuels the intrigue itself.

End of conference drinks :
Dirty Duck / Terrace Bar in Warwick Student Union

MCCT – Program Overview - Hosted by University of Warwick

Thursday 21st May

Sessions / Rooms	Room (FAB 0.23 – 28)	Room (FAB1.10 – 24)	Room (FAB1.14 – 20)	Room (FAB2.31 – 24)	Room (FAB2.32 – 28)
9:00 am - Registration (FAB0.08 – 128 (core room))					
09:30 – 11:00	Crime and media 1, Showing of the 'Reclaim Voices' film as part of the Crime and Media Stream	Hegemonies, Counter-Hegemonies, Anti-Hegemonies: The Theory and Politics of Social Control and Resistance , 1	Critical Perspectives on Diversity in Science – Resistance, Paradigm Shifts, and the Power of Critical Thinking	Beyond the nature/culture divide: Posthuman and New Materialist explorations, 1	Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities, 1
11:00-11:30 – Break					
11:30 – 13:00	Creative Health. Can the Arts Aid Health?	Crime and Media, 2	Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance, 1	Beyond the nature/culture divide: Posthuman and New Materialist explorations, 2	Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities, 2
13:00-14:00 – Break for lunch (food and drink not provided)					
14:00 – 15:30	Buzzwords and Beyond: Navigating the Terrain Between Individualism and Collectivism	Hegemonies, Counter-Hegemonies, Anti-Hegemonies: The Theory and Politics of Social Control and Resistance, 2	Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance, 2	Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture, 1	Crime and Media, 3
15:30-16:00 – Break					
16:00 – 17:30	Autoethnography as Critical Praxis – Lived Experience, Reflexivity, and Identity, 1	Hegemonies, Counter-Hegemonies, Anti-Hegemonies: The Theory and Politics of Social Control and Resistance, 3	Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance, 3	Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture, 2	Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities, 3
17:30 – Conference reception event in the Faculty of Arts Building lobby					

MCCT – Program Overview - Hosted by University of Warwick

Friday 22nd May

Sessions / Rooms	Room (FAB 0.23 – 28)	Room (FAB1.06 – 24)	Room (FAB2.31 – 24)	Room (FAB2.32 – 28)	Room (FAB3.31 – 20)
9:00 am - Registration (FAB0.03 – 164 (core room))					
09:30 – 11:00	Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy, 1	Critical Praxes and Black Feminist Thought, 1	Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance, 4	Autoethnography as Critical Praxis – Lived Experience, Reflexivity, and Identity, 2	Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities, 4
11:00-11:30 – Break					
11:30 – 13:00	Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy, 2	(trickle, river, flood, wadi) post-Anthropocene Scenes	Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance, 5	Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture, 3	Work and career in the Neoliberal Edu-factory: Systemic Pressures and Inequities, 5
13:00-14:00 – Break for lunch (food and drink not provided)					
14:00 – 15:30	Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy, 3	Critical Praxes and Black Feminist Thought, 2	Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance, 6	Bodies in Flux: Reimagining the Human Form in Contemporary Culture, 4	'Beneath the remains': A critical exploration under and beyond the blinkered rationalities of contemporary civilisational decay, 1
15:30-16:00 – Break					
16:00 – 17:30	Studio-ing as Critical, Creative and Interdisciplinary Pedagogy, 4	Critical Praxes and Black Feminist Thought, 3	Artistic Practice in the Age of Technology: Fatigue, Failure, and Resistance, 7	Beyond the nature/culture divide: Posthuman and New Materialist explorations, 3	'Beneath the remains': A critical exploration under and beyond the blinkered rationalities of contemporary civilisational decay, 1
17:30 – Dirty Duck / Terrace Bar in Warwick Student Union.					