



format : dispositif

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abstract & bios

Dalida María Benfield

The Montage of Complex Unity: Dissonant Dialectics from the Ashes of Modernity

The *dispositif* of montage, as semiotic (r)evolutionary dialectic, collides with other galaxies of sense blowing through (con)temporalities of cinemas. Sharding and re-joining units of meaning that escape or transform modernity/coloniality, montage becomes *complex unity*. As we observe collisions of cinematic beliefs and practices, and the shreds of being-ness thus created, we wonder at the fact of dissonant dialectical stories: Other formats. The iterations of being, non-being, and in-betweenness emerging in these juxtapositions, formed in the ruins of the presumed dominance of a single cosmology, propose dissonant dialectics from the ashes of modernity.

Dalida María Benfield, Ph.D. (Panamá/US/Finland) is an artist-researcher, filmmaker, and theorist. Her practice is focused on decolonial feminist re-arrangements of the geo-politics of knowledge. She is the Research and Program Director of the Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research (Boston, US), an international platform supporting socially engaged research projects. Her work, often collectively produced, includes video installation, film, digital media, activist pedagogical interventions, and experimental writing, published in English and Spanish, and, in translation, French, Portuguese, and Russian.

Philipp Blum

Jenseits des Medialen (?): Filmische Naturbeschreibungen zwischen Wahrnehmungsdispositiv und toxonomischem Format

Miriam De Rosa

For a poetics of conjunction: Artistic moving images in the age of media configurations

The talk moves from the notion of media configuration as a response to the crisis of the concept of medium (specificity). It focusses on artistic moving images to develop a framework that brings to the forefront spatiality and discusses the environmentalisation of moving images. At the same time, it also attends to the ongoing and dynamic nature of the installations and artistic projects I study, and proposes *conjunction* as the key logics able to come to terms with the inherent complexity characterising them.

Miriam De Rosa researches and teaches film and media theories as well as visual cultures at Ca' Foscari, University of Venice, where she is Associate Professor in film and screen media. She joined Ca' Foscari last year, after working at Coventry University and at the Catholic University in Milan. Her most recent publications include: *Media |Processes. Moving Images Across Interface Aesthetics and Gestural Policies*

(2022), *Making conjunctions: thinking topologically with contemporary artists' moving images* (2021), *Dwelling with moving images* (2020), *Film & Domestic Space* (2020), *Gesture* (2019).

Miriam also serves as the general coordinator of the International Master in Cinema Studies (IMACS), sits on the NECS Steering Committee, chairs the NECS Cinema & Contemporary Visual Arts workgroup, and is active as independent film curator. Her latest curated film programmes projects were *Desktop Cinema* and *Incursions in the Politics of the Image: Films by Belit Sag* (both April 2022, Venice).

Congle Fu

Performative Encounter: Reflections on Projection in Art Exhibition

Projection is the beginning of cinematic time and movement, however, it has gained minor attention among academic scholars on film exhibition. In recent scholarship on formats, projection has become the focus of rethinking and rewriting the histories of film beyond cinema. In responding to such a manner, I will explore modes of projection that are beyond its theatrical usage by examining artist Wu Tsang's film practices of juxtaposition and partial intersection of two tracks of images on a single screen. In the act of projection through blending and overlapping, an entangled visual space is thereby created, further sensitizing the viewer to the performative and situated practice of moving image projection. In contextualization of Tsang's technique, I intend to further examine how projected images engage with the institutional spaces and cultural standards of the art world; in which ways projection has been employed and expanded to create new or different modes of encounter, mutuality and togetherness.

Congle Fu is a PhD student at the Department of Film Studies, University of Zurich. As part of the SNSF research project "Exhibiting Film: Challenges of Format", she works on the intersection of art and cinema with approaches from format theory, art history, and film studies. She holds a MA in Art History from Freie Universität Berlin.

Carla Gabrí

Crisscrossing Off-Centers: Die Wäscheleine als peripheres Ausstellungsdispositiv in Roberta Cantows 16mm-Film *Clotheslines* (1981)

Frank Kessler

Prospects for a History of Media Dispositifs

How can we make the concept of "dispositif" productive for media historiographies? What perspectives does such an approach open up, compared to traditional media histories? How do we need to conceive of media dispositifs to be able to study their multiple histories? These are some of the questions that this paper aims to address.

The term dispositif being notoriously polysemic, it is at the same time open enough to be operational as a heuristic analytical tool. As an "in-between" concept, it allows to consider the manifold interrelationships between the technical-material, the textual and the spectatorial factors in a mediated communication process. As these factors, in turn, are subject to historical change, considering media as dispositifs makes it possible to explore their historicity from various viewpoints.

Frank Kessler is professor of Media History at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. He is a former president of DOMITOR, the international association for research on early cinema and one of the founders of *KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films*. His research interests are focused on the emergence of cinema

as a mass medium and cultural form. In his current research projects he works on the role of the optical lantern as a medium for knowledge transmission in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Birte Kleine-Benne, Marcus Held
Was theoretische Begriffe in Gang setzen!

Im Prozess der theoretischen Auseinandersetzung mit den titelgebenden Theoriebegriffen Format und Dispositiv (1) und deren Anwendung für die Erforschung von Techniken der Gouvernamentalität des Betriebssystem Kunst (2) stoßen wir auf weitere Begriffe wie Form, Praxis, Praktik und Poiesis (3) und thematisieren abschließend die Öffnung theoretischer Begriffe (4).

Marcus Held ist derzeit Lehrvikar in Mannheim, sowie assoziierter Postdoc am International Graduate Center for the Study of Culture und dem Institut für Evangelische Theologie in Gießen. Seine aktuellen Forschungsinteressen liegen in der psychoanalytischen Sozialpsychologie, Soziologie der Lebensformen und Gouvernamentalität, Religionsphänomenologie und Tierethik.

Birte Kleine-Benne studierte Kunstgeschichte, Philosophie und Neuere Deutsche Literatur an der Universität Hamburg, später Politikwissenschaften an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Sie wurde 2006 mit einer Dissertation über Kunst als Handlungsfeld promoviert. Es folgten Lehraufträge, Gast- und Vertretungsprofessuren an der Universität der Künste Berlin, der Universität Hamburg, der Burg Giebichenstein/Kunsthochschule Halle und der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. Derzeit hat sie die Interimsprofessur Geschichte und Theorie der Kunst an der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar inne. Ihre inhaltlichen Schwerpunkte sind theoretische und angewandte Forschungen zu zeitgenössischen bzw. sog. nächsten Formen von Kunst- und Theorieproduktionen. Weiteres: <https://bkb.eyes2k.net>

Isabel Krek
The Lamphouse as a Dispositive: Arrays of Lighting Technologies in Film Projectors from the 1920s

One of the key elements in the technology of film projection, which was subject to constant innovation, revision and improvement from early on, was the light source. In the first decades of film, numerous companies emerged in Germany to develop and manufacture film projectors. During this period, despite the predominance of carbon arc lamps, a variety of light sources such as incandescent lamps, lime light, acetylene light, etc. coexisted and were used in different (or the same) devices.

The arrangement of the various elements within the lamphouse, such as the mirror, light source, carbon feed, etc., greatly influenced the practices of the projectionist and consequently the projection display as a whole. This paper examines the relationships between these individual technical aspects through a media archaeological and epistemological lens in order to understand their influence on historical film projection practices.

Isabel Krek is a PhD candidate and teaching assistant at the Section d'histoire et esthétique du cinéma at the University of Lausanne. She has taught at Unil and HTW Berlin and is an editorial board member and author for the publication *Décadrages. Cinéma, à travers champs*. With her dual background as a film historian and archivist, her dissertation examines the technologies of cinema projection between 1907 and the end of the 1920s and their representation in the media.

Volker Pantenburg

From INCA to Mediateca Onshore: (Re-)Inventing formats and dispositifs for Guinea Bissau's media history

After its independence from Portugal in 1974, Guinea Bissau started to establish the National Institute for Cinema and Audiovisual (INCA) for the study of film history and the training of young filmmakers. Chris Marker, who was participating in this endeavor, integrated some of the Guinean footage shot by Sana na N'Hada in his film *Sans Soleil* (1982).

Due to political turmoil, the project of the INCA was soon abandoned. Its archive, made up largely of 16mm film and videotapes, was neglected and left in an advanced state of decay when Filipa César, filmmaker and artist based in Berlin, started to preserve and activate its fragments and remains together with the Guinean filmmakers. Since 2010, the project has seen many iterations. In a continuous re-invention of para-academic media-archaeological practices, the traces of a militant film practice with a particular global cine-geography have been uncovered. The project included collective screening events (in Europe and Guinea Bissau), itinerant projections, conferences, installation works, and the film *Spell Reel* (2017). Since then, the project has transformed into the "Mediateca Onshore," operating nomadically first, and now located in Malafó.

In my presentation, I will visit some of the stages of this long-term project, focusing in particular on the format changes (from analog to digital, from fragmentary film clip to archival inventory in book form and beyond) and the temporary dispositifs that have been mobilized by Sana Na N'Hada, Flora Gomes, and others together with Filipa César.

Volker Pantenburg is professor for Film Studies at the University of Zürich. He has published on essayistic film and video practices, experimental cinema, and contemporary moving image installations. Book publications in English include *Farocki/Godard. Film as Theory* (2015), *Cinematographic Objects. Things and Operations* (2015, Editor) and *Screen Dynamics. Mapping the Borders of Cinema* (Co-Editor). In 2015, he co-founded the Harun Farocki Institut, a platform for researching Farocki's visual and discursive practice and supporting new projects that engage with the past, present and the future of image cultures.

Fabienne Liptay

Is format theory global?

The theoretical inquiry into formats has only occasionally acknowledged its indebtedness to David Summers's *Real Spaces* (2003). In this book, Summers uses the concept of format to address the inadequacies of art history in including what it calls "world art" into the methodological and theoretical framework grounded in Western modernism. In a critical reading published under the title *Is art history global?*, James Elkins responds to Summers's book, noting that the book holds a "dark mirror" to the discipline and its aspiration to become global. Elkins develops his criticism from a reading of the concepts and methods on which Summers's argument is built, arguing that they are derived precisely from the tradition of Western thought that the book seeks to overcome. In my talk, I would like to take this dispute as a starting point for a provocation of some of the premises on which this symposium as also much of current research on format is based. I am not attempting to discredit "format" as a Western concept that is systematically misused when addressing the unequally accessible and distributed resources in artistic and cultural production. Or, worse, as a theoretical grip on local practices that is not even aware of its epistemic violence (in the sense that Elkins accuses Summers's book of imposing a terminology of the colonial order on indigenous artifacts). However, I would like to consider the unresolved tension of any attempt to consider format, as we put it in the invitation to this symposium, a theoretical concept that makes it possible to address films as heterogenous ensembles in terms of knowledge hierarchies and power structures.

Fabienne Liptay is Professor of film studies at the University of Zurich. Currently, she is also a Fellow at the Käte Hamburger Center "global dis:connect" in Munich. Her research primarily focuses on the theory and

aesthetics of film imagery and narrative as well as on the interrelations between film and other arts and media. In her recent SNF project “Exhibiting Film: Challenges of Format” (2017–2021; 2022–2026), which has been awarded an excellence grant, she and her research team are investigating institutional and artistic practices of film exhibition, as well as their reflection and display in the films themselves, conceptualising also the epistemological potential and cultural impact of film’s exhibition practices within the larger social and political sphere. Her publications include: *Artur Żmijewski. Kunst als Alibi* (Zurich/Berlin: diaphanes, 2017, ed. with Sandra Frimmel, Dorota Sajewska, and Sylvia Sasse); *Telling Images. Studien zur Bildlichkeit des Films* (Zurich/Berlin: diaphanes, 2016); *Immersion in the Visual Arts and Media* (Leiden/Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2015, ed. with Burcu Dogramaci).

Tobias Schönrock

Frühe deutsche Tonfilme und ihr “Originalformat” in der Filmrestaurierung

Der Vortrag widmet sich der legitimierenden und ausschliessenden Funktion des Formatbegriffs für Entscheidungsprozesse der Filmrestaurierung. Veranschaulicht wird dies anhand aktueller Beispiele aus der Restaurierungspraxis deutscher Tonfilme des Produktionszeitraums 1929 bis 1934, mit Schwerpunkt auf das Bildformat. Während die Restaurierung in der Regel auf die Herstellung einer als «authentisch» erachteten Fassung des Filmwerks zielt, bezeugen die im Arbeitsprozess recherchierten und erschlossenen Quellenmaterialien ein multiples Bild des Formatgebrauchs innerhalb seiner Produktions- und Zirkulationsgeschichte. In der Recherche nach dem “Originalformat” gelangen jedoch nicht nur historische Praktiken der Reformatierung in den Blick von Restaurator:innen, sondern im Fall der frühen 1930er Jahre in Deutschland auch eine historische Situation, in denen Filme in unterschiedlichen Formaten simultan vertrieben wurden. Erschwerend für Restaurator:innen stellen sich hierbei eine mitunter lückenhafte Dokumentation archivarischer Filmmaterialien sowie Forschungsdesiderate über den spezifischen Formatgebrauch in lokal und zeitlich verorteten Infrastrukturen der Filmverwertungskette dar.

Tobias Schönrock ist seit April 2022 Doktorand am Seminar Filmwissenschaft im Projekt «Exhibiting Film: Challenges of Format», finanziert vom Schweizerischen Nationalfonds SNF, mit einem Dissertationsvorhaben über «Marginalisierte Formate im Zuge der Standardisierung und Konsolidierung des Lichttonfilms im deutschsprachigen Kino der 1930er Jahre». Bachelor-Studium der Filmwissenschaft und Germanistik an der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz. Masterstudium im Programm «Filmkultur: Archivierung, Programmierung, Präsentation» an der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. Während des Studiums Praktika in Filmarchiven und 2019 bis 2022 wissenschaftliche Aushilfe in der Filmrestaurierung und -digitalisierung am DFF – Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum in Frankfurt am Main.

Jonathan Sterne

When A Format (Almost) Becomes an Instrument: Provincializing Eurorack

Please note: while Jonathan will deliver the talk, the research presented is from a paper coauthored by Jonathan and Andy Stuhl.

Eurorack is a format for modular synthesis, a long-running type of electronic sound production that has seen a new wave of interest since the late 2000s. This article examines what Eurorack means to the manufacturers who design synth modules to its specifications, to the buyers who assemble them into instruments, and to observers wondering how these physical interfaces fit into a new media landscape where screen-based examples are the norm. As a distinctly *seamful* media phenomenon embedded in musical and logistical contexts, Eurorack helps us model an approach to understanding how technical protocols interact with creative ecosystems. Since this is also a talk for a formats conference, I will also include some

reflections on how my understanding of formats has shifted (or not?) since I wrote about them in *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*.

Maria Tortajada

Inside a Frame: How *dispositive* is dealing with *format*

How can we work together? That is the main question I will be asking here. “Format” and “dispositive” are two words that imply many ways of unfolding the problem of how media work and what they do. Recent studies on format have expanded the material and technical notion of medium to a specific way of questioning media by asking about design, manufacture or technical constraint in relation to media circulation as well as their integration in a geographical, social, political, and economical environment. Format as well as dispositive do not only refer to specific objects or objects’ devices but to a methodology. *Dispositive* is based on an epistemology inherited from what has been called “l’*épistémologie française des sciences*”, mainly from Bachelard, Foucault and Simondon, — even if *dispositive* is not a *dispositif of power*. Dispositive and format are not exactly the same, but they may collaborate. This is my bet. I plan to test the connection between the two from some case studies I’m currently thinking about for my book project: “Concepts de l’animation. De la stroboscopie aux pratiques numériques”. The “political” questioning will not be cultural, economic nor geographical, but institutional and ontological according to techniques and practices. The way media and technology are defined implies the way they are framing thinking procedures, the way of drawing conceptual and technological territories that can be thought of as limits of knowledge or “epistemological obstacles”, to use Bachelard’s concept. As far as digital cinematic procedures are concerned, animation is a key issue that still needs to be questioned. The talk will focus on a case study.

Maria Tortajada is Full Professor in the Film History and Aesthetics Department at the University of Lausanne. She conducts and leads research on media and dispositives epistemology, on animation film history and concepts, on theory of representation, on the notion of national cinema and identities’ construction. Her latest SNF funded project focuses on the Swiss sand animators Nag and Gisèle Ansgere, in which two doctoral theses have just been brilliantly defended. Among her most significative works on dispositives’ questions published in English: *Cinema Beyond Film. Media Epistemology in the Modern Era* (ed. with F. Albera, 2010) and *Cine-Dispositives. Essays in Epistemology Across Media* (ed. with F. Albera), Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015.

Stéphane Tralongo

Disturbing Juxtapositions: The Introduction of the Tape Recorder as a Fieldwork Tool in Swiss Expeditions

In the early 1950s, the use of the tape recorder during Swiss expeditions came with numerous anecdotes of startled reactions to recorded sounds. Indeed, such anecdotes did not vanish after the “novelty period” of the phonograph and the gramophone. On the contrary, they continued to spread through travel narratives, functioning as a persistent metaphor for the relationship of colonized people to foreign technologies. This paper therefore suggests to consider the implications of a change of media and sound format in the interactions between Swiss filmmakers and indigenous populations. Beyond anecdotes of the first listening of recorded sounds, it discusses the recurring uses of the tape recorder’s “playback mode” in the larger context of an “aural dispositive”.

Stéphane Tralongo is Lecturer in Film Studies at the Department of Film History and Aesthetics of the University of Lausanne, SNSF Senior researcher for the project “Nagra: Sound, Film History, and Media Archaeology in Switzerland” led by professor Benoît Turquety at UNIL in partnership with the Swiss Film Archive, and member of AFRHC (French Association of Research in Film History). He holds a PhD in Film

Studies from the University Lyon 2 and the University of Montreal. His work focuses on the history of French early cinema, particularly on the career of film pioneer Georges Méliès, and on the archaeology of visual and sound media in Switzerland.

Benoît Turquety

Formats as Spatial Planning: Gilbert Simondon and the Decentralization of Media

Gilbert Simondon had a plan. To him, a renewal of civilization was needed, which required a radical transformation of spatial hierarchies. In that plan, media played a central role, but they had to be specifically designed: they needed to be decentralized. This is where the notion of format becomes nodal in his work, as it allows to think media in terms of their spatial distribution, and according to the modes of interaction between infrastructures and their “techno-geographical milieu”. Formats thus describe not only a certain image resolution or carrier size, but levels of cost, territorial coverage and energy consumption which entail different political and ecological relations with the human and nonhuman environment. This talk will examine a few moments in Simondon’s work which show his constant attention to the concrete ways in which media are formatted, and to the complex network of their implications.

Benoît Turquety is Associate Professor in the Film History and Aesthetics Department of the University of Lausanne. After an SNF project on Bolex cameras and amateur cinema, he is now leading a new one on Nagra sound recorders. He recently published *Inventing Cinema: Machines, Gestures and Media History* and *Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub: “Objectivists” in Cinema* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019 and 2020); *Medium, Format, Configuration: The Displacements of Film* (Meson Press, 2019), and in French, *Le “Direct” et le numérique. Techniques et politiques des médias légers*, co-edited with Caroline Zéau (Mimésis, 2022). His *Politiques de la technicité. Corps, monde et médias avec Gilbert Simondon* will be released next Fall by Mimésis.

Axel Volmar

Dispositif and Format as Means of Distributed Cooperation

Wherever we find media, we also find formats. Indeed, the concept is just as heterogeneous as its manifestations, whether in the context of publishing, broadcasting, computing and digital media, or other media and medial texts. I will use the proposition of this conference to specify the notion of “format” by relating and contrasting it to the equally ambiguous concept of the “dispositive.” Since both terms affect, and to some extent govern, human actions and practices, I will particularly focus on comparing dispositives and formats with respect to their purposes and practical effects as instruments of remote governance. Building on the similarities and distinctions between the two concepts, I aim to outline a theoretical understanding of “format” that emphasizes format making and formatting practices as means to organize as well as sustain cooperative relations, processes, and practices.

Axel Volmar is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Collaborative Research Center “Media of Cooperation” at the University of Siegen. From 2014 to 2016, he was a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. His research interests include the history, theory, and praxeology of digital media, infrastructure studies, format theory, sound studies, and the study of (digital) time. He is co-editor of several books, most recently [Format Matters. Standards, Practices, and Politics in Media Cultures](#) (Lüneburg: meson press, 2020) and [Media Infrastructures and the Politics of Digital Time. Essays on Hardwired Temporalities](#) (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021).

Michael Wagnières

La rectangularisation passagère du format de l'image dans le jeu vidéo comme stratégie « transcinématographique »

Dans un premier temps, nous reviendrons sur les quelques applications des concepts théoriques de *dispositif* et de *format* dans le champ du jeu vidéo. Nous nous arrêterons ensuite sur le cas des changements temporaires du format de l'image – via l'apparition de bandes noires – dans plusieurs jeux sortis entre les années 1990 et 2000. Nous présenterons les raisons potentielles de telles alternances, par l'observation de leurs impacts sur le discours ludo-narratif du jeu et par la comparaison à des jeux antérieurs et postérieurs issus des mêmes séries vidéoludiques. Nous connecterons cette réflexion à la dimension matérielle des dispositifs domestiques audiovisuels (comme le téléviseur) et au recours au cinéma à des formats de type panoramique. En somme, nous postulons que ces variations du format traduisent une volonté du jeu vidéo de citer et/ou de se rapprocher formellement de productions cinématographiques.

Michael Wagnières est doctorant à la Section d'histoire et esthétique du cinéma de l'Université de Lausanne, dans laquelle il entame une thèse de doctorat sur l'histoire des manuels et des didacticiels vidéoludiques. Il est membre du groupe de recherche #Cultures numériques du Centre Nucleus (UNIL). Parallèlement, il travaille en tant que chargé de recherche pour l'Institut de hautes études en administration publique (UNIL) et comme assistant au Collège des humanités (EPFL). Il s'intéresse principalement au jeu vidéo sous un angle historique, narratologique et énonciatif, ainsi qu'aux liens qu'entretient ce médium avec le cinéma.

Haidee Wasson

The Sounds of Small Cinema: Mapping the Audio-Visual Dynamics of Little Film Formats

What are often called “small” film formats (9mm, 16mm and 8mm) require a notably different family of concepts to unpack their unique, dispersed and intermedial historical dynamics. Their dispositifs are entirely distinct from those that characterize theatrical, large format, cinema. As audio-visual formats go, portable films and their devices have been particularly resistant to settling into a singular technical, institutional, or cultural iteration but long persisted as shifting and multivalent throughout their over 100-year history. Both as formats of media making and then of circulation and use, portable film gauges have maintained an especially complex relationship to sound. This presentation will sketch the range of scripted, improvisational, amplified, and recorded sounds in histories of small moving image formats, with a focus on moving image performance, presentation and playback. We will consider what the sounds of small cinema can tell us about portable film formats.

Haidee Wasson is Professor of Film and Media, Concordia University, Montreal. Her most recent book, *Everyday Movies: Portable Projectors and the Transformation of American Culture* (2021), was awarded the Katherine Singer Kovacs “Best Book” Award from the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. Previous books include *Museum Movies*, *Inventing Film Studies*, and *Useful Cinema*. She is currently working on the history of small and medium sized film formats.

Siegfried Zielinski
becoming disposable. towards an open & operational concept of media

My lecture has four parts:

In the first part I will discuss some principle theoretical questions regarding the dialectics of dispositif and format.

In the second part, I address the question of the relationship between dispositif and subject constitution.

The accentuated third part is dedicated to artistic positions that deal with the interactions of dispositif, format and subject constitution (Jean-Luc Godard, Rosa Barba).

In the fourth part, I present fragments from my most recent project on “Ladders to Heaven & Stairs to Hell”. Dispositive arrangements and their artistic /de-constructions/refractions play an outstanding role here.