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(In)visibility

Seeing, making visible, keeping hidden

Book of abstracts and biographies

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

RUBA SALIH (Università di Bologna, Italy)

Can the Palestinian Speak?

Bio: Ruba Salih is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Bologna. After graduating in Political Science from the same institution, she was awarded a Marie Curie grant and obtained a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Sussex. Before joining the University of Bologna in 2022, she was a Professor in the Department of Anthropology at SOAS, University of London. She also held a position as a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter (2007-2010). Her research and writing cover transnational migration and diasporas across the Middle East and Europe, colonisation and decolonisation, refugees and the Palestine question, gender, memory and colonial traumas. She was elected to the Board of the Trustees of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (2015 to 2019) and currently serves on the Executive Board of Insaniyyat, the Society of Palestinian Anthropologists. She has been a visiting scholar at Brown University, the University of Cambridge, and Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

PAOLO MAGAGNIN (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italy)

From Erasure to Inscription. How Translation Studies Conceptualize the (In)visibility of the Translator

Bio: Paolo Magagnin is Associate Professor of Chinese language and translation and a member of the Research Center for the Translation of East Asian Languages at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. His research focuses on Translation Studies applied to modern and contemporary Chinese language and culture, with particular attention to Chinese translation theories, the global circulation of Chinese cultural products from a sociological perspective, and translation in the tourism and museum sector.



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Day one – April 14, 2026

PANEL 1

HOW DOES MIGRATION INFORM PRACTICES OF FORCED OR STRATEGIC (IN)VISIBILITY?

NIHAN DURAN (Universität Bayreuth, Germany)

The Politics of Gendered (In)visibility: Intersectional Reflections on European Refugee Governance

This paper examines the gendered and epistemic politics of (in)visibility in European refugee governance. Despite extensive policy frameworks and datasets, refugee women's experiences in labour markets and social integration are often excluded, marginalised, or invisibilised. Such invisibility is not neutral but emerges from institutional, epistemic, and policy choices that determine whose knowledge counts and whose lives are made legible. Drawing on intersectionality as a critical epistemic stance, the study centers the margins, highlighting how intersecting structures of gender, race, class, and legal status shape visibility, access to resources, and agency. Migrant and refugee men and women are essential to social and economic systems, yet these intersecting structures frequently erase or distort their experiences in policy and scholarly knowledge, underscoring the urgent need for epistemic justice. Methodologically, the research combines critical policy analysis with participatory qualitative research involving refugee women and practitioners. This approach traces how policies and data practices reproduce hierarchies of legitimacy and authority, while illustrating how participatory, intersectional approaches can reclaim visibility, empower marginalised voices, and challenge dominant knowledge regimes. Using the triad of seeing, making visible, and keeping hidden, the paper demonstrates how visibility operates both as a tool of governance and a site of resistance. It argues for reflexive, inclusive, and decolonial knowledge practices that foreground lived experiences, transform invisibility into agency, and contribute to more just and equitable European refugee policies. By bridging political science, migration studies, and feminist theory, the study advances a justice-oriented rethinking of refugee governance, positioning refugee women as agents and producers of knowledge and transforming the politics of visibility into a tool for social and epistemic justice.

Bio: Nihan Duran (she/her) is a doctoral candidate of political sciences at the Doctoral College for Intersectionality Studies at Universität Bayreuth, Germany. Her research focuses on the intersecting issues of gender, (forced) migration, social policies and the labor market in the European/German context from a power-critical intersectional perspective. She received her M.A. in International Relations at Istanbul Bilgi University



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with her thesis, *Living in 'the State of Exception: Experiences of Syrian Refugees in Berlin* (2019). She visited Sciences Po, Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) as an exchange student. Her research article, "Dual Discrimination of Syrian Refugee Women in the Labour Markets in Europe and Turkey: Identifying the Challenges" wins the Jean Monnet in 2018. She is a co-editor of the book *Intersectional Knowledges: Roots, Routes and Visions* (2024).

RAISSA BARONI (Università di Torino, Italy)

The Mediterranean Border in Migration Films: a Challenge for Audiovisual Representation

The contemporary Mediterranean border, as represented on screen, reveals a major paradox in our visual culture: despite being overexposed within the geopolitical landscape and mainstream narratives, the frontier constitutes a blind spot and an elusive reality that remains socially unseen and difficult to depict beyond conventional aesthetic frames. This paradox particularly emerges in films about border crossings and migrations (Maury & Ragel 2016), especially in those produced in Italy and Germany after the 2011 "Arab Spring", which seem to challenge established regimes of visibility by using aesthetic strategies alternative to mainstream media (Fuocoammare, 2016; Io Capitano, 2023; among others). Drawing on Jacques Rancière's theory of the distribution of the sensible (2022), this proposal investigates how cinema redistributes what can be seen, said, and felt, thereby questioning the aesthetic and political mechanisms through which the border is simultaneously revealed and concealed. The interplay between invisibility and exposure in cinematic borders represents the ongoing renegotiation between people in transit and host communities, underscoring complex dynamics of recognition and their mutual interdependency. The border appears not only as a spatial limit but also as a non-place (Augé 1992) where the gaze confronts its own limits and where bodies are subject to biopolitical management. By foregrounding what is repeatedly left out, films addressing migration demonstrate how audiovisual practices can challenge the ways through which certain bodies are systematically excluded from the field of visibility. According to Rancière, cinema can act as a field of dissensus and may foster alternative forms of co-presence and relationality; otherwise, it will reproduce the same symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1997) embedded in dominant scopic regimes. At the same time, this potential is neither automatic nor guaranteed: cinema must continually develop new aesthetic models to regenerate the audience's capacity for critical interpretation.



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Bio: Raissa Baroni is a PhD student in Cultural Heritage and Audiovisual Production at the University of Turin. She is a board member of the Centre for Comparative Modernisms in Turin, leading the editorial team of the A-class journal *CoSMo / Comparative Studies in Modernism*. Her scholarly work has been published by Edizioni ETS (*Viandanze*) and Vecchiarelli Editore (*Lo sguardo del cinema italiano sulla crisi dei migranti*), among other academic publications. In 2019, she received the “Best Graduates” award for her master’s thesis. Her research “Migrant Mediascapes” explores the symbolic and imaginary dimensions of migration cinema as a medium for intercultural understanding.

MARTINA ANASTASIA CASTIGLIONE (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Netherlands)

Negotiating In-Between Histories in Italian Colonial Past: Language, Transcultural Identity and Implication in “La Riva Lontana”

During the second half of the twentieth century, the Italian colonial experience with its troubling heritage was progressively erased from the memory of the national past, making it almost invisible. Different scholars have pointed out that this *damnatio memoriae* is the result of a double process: on the one hand, the strong correlation between colonialism and the Fascist regime produces an internal desire for oblivion; on the other, the hegemonic position assumed in colonial and postcolonial scholarship of the images of British and American imperial history relegate the ‘Italian case’ to a minoritarian and marginal position. Bringing to the surface the submerged and marginalized experiences of ‘minor’ colonial histories and reinscribing them into the analysis of past and current processes through a relational framework could offer us the space to include in the postcolonial realm diverse, de-centered voices, and thus reduce the risk of creating new hegemonies. Italians, for instance, often lived the colonial settings controlled by other European nations (from Belgian Congo to French Tunisia), and this intermediate position had fundamental implications for their self- and group perception, their social status, their language identification, and so on. This paper will examine Marinette Pendola’s *La Riva Lontana* (2000), engaging with the *vexata quaestio* of identity in the novel. It aims to address it in correlation with the narrative strategies and language choices employed, within a broader context in memory and trauma studies. Using the concept of “implicated subject,” as theorized by Michael Rothberg, I analyze the complex positionality of the Sicilian migrant family in the colonial Tunisian setting by foregrounding their entanglement in the historical events that unfold in front of them and in which they indirectly or directly participate in.



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Bio: Martina Anastasia Castiglione is a Research Master's student in Arts, Media and Literary Studies at the University of Groningen. She holds a bachelor's degree in Lettere Classiche from the University of Milan, where her thesis examined the critical debate on the Arabic influence in The Sicilian Poetic School. Her interdisciplinary research interests span Italian postcolonial literature, memory and trauma studies, affect theory, and cognitive narratology. She is currently writing her thesis on estrangement in family novels, with a particular focus on decolonial perspectives and contemporary Italian postcolonial texts, including *Adua* by Igiaba Scego.

PANEL 2

HOW DOES DIASPORA INFORM PRACTICES OF FORCED OR STRATEGIC (IN)VISIBILITY?

CHENG HAO XU (Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy)

From challenging stereotypes to self-narration: the voice of a "banana" on social media

What does China look like through the eyes of a “banana”? The study outlines early findings from a critical discourse analysis of an Instagram account belonging to an Italian-speaking content creator of Chinese descent who self-identifies as a “banana”. This slang term refers to an individual being perceived as “yellow on the outside, white on the inside”, i.e. someone of Chinese appearance who is culturally assimilated into mainstream society. Within the broader public opinion arena, the voice of a so-called “banana” coexists and competes for attention with more established actors, such as traditional news outlets and institutional communication channels, both of which have to date attracted greater scholarly interest. The social media landscape, with its distinctive dynamics, offers novel means for the dissemination of these grassroots outsider voices to wider audiences. For instance, the Instagram account chosen as a case study has garnered around 120,000 followers. Through an analysis of this account's digital storytelling, the study examines which elements of China it foregrounds, how it frames them, and more specifically, how it generates, sustains, and contests discourses on China. Alongside an inquiry on the visual and narrative strategies, this study further considers the content creator positioning, addressing how they articulate their identity and how they negotiate their relationship to Chineseness. These research questions are primarily examined within the qualitative framework of Social media critical discourse studies (KhosraviNik 2017; 2023), which is attentive to the complexity of social media environments as multimodal, participatory, and shaped by digital affordances. In support of this approach, corpus



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linguistics tools, such as frequencies, collocations, and concordances, facilitate the uncovering of latent patterns, while an analysis of verbal, visual, and auditory modes accounts for the image-centered layout of Instagram.

Bio: Cheng Hao Xu is a PhD student in Civilizations of Asia and Africa (East Asia curriculum) at Sapienza University of Rome, where he also obtained his master's degree in Oriental Languages and Cultures. He holds a double bachelor's degree in Chinese Language from Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Capital Normal University (Beijing). His current research examines the discourses on China by Italian content creators on social media from a multimodal, corpus-assisted perspective. His broader academic interests include the production and the reception of images of China at large, as well as mixed-methods approaches to discourse analysis.

NINGYUAN ZHENG (Independent scholar - WUXU Group, Italy)

Who Am I in Prato? Migrant–Artist–Activist Positions and the Form of Art Today

Drawing on the ongoing *Project Prato* (2019–), this paper asks how my position as a Fujian-born Chinese migrant, artist and activist in Italy is shaped through collaborative work with Chinese and Pakistani textile workers in Prato. Rather than taking “Chinese labour” as a given object, I examine how a multiple self – migrant / artist / organiser – is constructed within specific relations to workers, unions and cultural institutions. The first part discusses *YIZHONGREN*, a workshop-based film developed with WUXU during Festival Seta and later completed as a 41-minute documentary. Through collective walks, karaoke and shared meals, participants select routes, songs and stories. The film re-appropriates Italian public space by inscribing a Chinese narration of the city in which everyday practices such as karaoke become forms of cultural production and a public statement of community presence. The second part presents *TERESA MODA* as an expanded project begun during an artist residency and continued in collaboration with the grassroots union SI Cobas. Alongside a two-channel video on the 2013 factory fire and the Texprint strike, the project includes protest textiles, workers’ letters, sound pieces and actions commemorating the dead and supporting ongoing disputes. It thus operates as a situated, collectively shaped archive of migrant labour struggles. Bringing these strands together, I argue that in this context contemporary art is less a discrete object than a set of research-led, relational practices that negotiate visibility, solidarity and authorship under conditions of racialised labour and bordering.

Bio: Zheng Ningyuan is an artist, filmmaker, and activist based in Bologna, and founder of the research collective Wuxu Group. His practice investigates global diaspora and



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geopolitical identities through archival reconstruction and social intervention. He is the winner of the 17th Premio Gianandrea Mutti (2025) and the Canada-Italy Innovation Award (2021) for the project VulCa2021. With Wuxu Group, he has presented works at the 2nd Yinchuan Biennale (2018) and DAMSLab (Tecnocene, 2022). His curatorial practice includes a research project on the cinema of the Italian '68 movement at AMNUA (Nanjing). Recent group exhibitions include *Constellations of Hope: Sharing Grounds* at Ausstellungsraum Klingental (Basel, 2025) and the exhibition *Arte e lotte operaie* (Prato, 2023) by the ToccaUnoToccaTutti collective. Previously, he was an artist-in-residence at Alchemilla (2021), supported by Fondazione Zucchelli, and participated in the Atlas of Transitions Biennale (Bologna, 2019). Additionally, he co-directed the documentary *Cinese in Italia* with Susanna Yu Bai, commissioned by the University of Turin.

JOOST BROKKE (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Germany)

Squinting as an Enactive Method for Researching the Image of the Female in Chinese Social Media

The explosive growth of short-video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou has generated a vast, dynamic, and interactive digital landscape where the image of the female is continuously constructed and contested. Traditional research methods—whether quantitative or qualitative—often fail to capture the fluid, embodied, and algorithmically shaped nature of these representations. This paper proposes squinting as an enactive methodology, inspired by Alva Noë's theory of perception as an active, embodied process. Rather than a metaphor, squinting is framed as a critical, adaptive practice that enables researchers to navigate overwhelming digital content while remaining attentive to its nuances, gaps, and distortions. As a method, squinting involves focusing on specific details—such as shifts in an influencer's portrayal of femininity—while adjusting for distortions caused by algorithms, cultural biases, and commercial interests. It requires identifying gaps in representation, like the exclusion of marginalized voices, and changing perspectives to compare interpretations across platforms or audiences. By examining audience reception through interviews or digital ethnographies, researchers can explore how images are reworked, resisted, or reclaimed. The method also includes analyzing institutional frameworks, such as platform policies that regulate female bodies or political expression, and embodying the research process through reflexive, sensory-based analyses. Rooted in feminist media studies, this approach emphasizes intersectionality, power, and embodied experience, treating social media as an ecological system where representations emerge through interactions among creators, audiences, algorithms, and cultural



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contexts. Squinting offers a way to engage critically with the complexity of platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou—not by simplifying data but by examining it with skill, care, and attention to ethical dimensions. This methodology supports research on the image of the female that is embodied, relational, and resistant to commodification, while staying attuned to the everyday aesthetic and political practices shaping digital life.

Bio: Joost Brokke is a master's student at Universität Heidelberg, where his research bridges Chinese intellectual history and media studies. His thesis examines Hegel's reception and mediation in Republican China, especially through newspapers, and he plans further work on online philosophical discourse in contemporary China. In a forthcoming chapter, he also explores the philosophical dimensions of film, focusing on nature in Hou Hsiao-hsien's works. Beyond academia, he curates exhibitions, works as a photographer, and co-leads a Public Philosophy series on lesser-known Chinese traditions.

PANEL 3

HOW DO MEDIA AND MATERIALS HELP US QUESTION THE LIMITS OF OUR PERCEPTIONS?

SERGIO GIANFRATE (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italy - Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Germany)

A Media Scandal. When the Chinese Handscroll Exposed the Printed Book and Image-Thinking Provided the Remedy

How do we expose the invisible limits of our own research habits? The scholar's tools and gestures are so naturalized they become transparent, we see through them without seeing them. This contribution draws on design and media theory to investigate this question, selecting the Chinese Handscroll as a privileged object of analysis. The researcher's habitual practice – sitting at a table to turn pages, whether physical or digital – treats the codex format as a neutral default. In contrast, the handscroll's materiality scandalizes this assumption. I will show how the sequential act of gradual explicitation through scrolling is the invisibilized other of the book format. By analyzing how the Chinese Handscroll has been epistemologically misunderstood by the dominance of the Printed Book, I argue for the insufficiency of written text as a primary research method for this medium. In response, I propose image-thinking as a remedial practice better suited to the handscroll's design. Through examples from my doctoral fieldwork—which involved collecting visual material on the bodily aspects of the handscroll's creation and appreciation—I will show how this method, by opacifying



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our own frameworks, allows us to ethically engage with knowledge-producing practices that dominant tools have kept hidden from critical reflection.

Bio: Sergio Gianfrate is currently a PhD candidate in a joint programme between the department of Asian and African Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and the Institute of East Asian Art History at Heidelberg University. His research focuses on the bodily aspects of the Chinese handscroll painting and on its remediation within the contemporary art context, with a dissertation entitled *Scrolling Inside Out. A Symptomatology of Living Practice through Chinese Handscroll Painting*.

JESSICA MATARRESE (Independent scholar)

One Authenticity, Many Invisibilities: Authenticity as a Culturally Negotiated Concept and the Concealment of Traditional Chinese Values in the Study of Chinese Porcelain

The lecture argues that contemporary scientific methods used to authenticate Chinese porcelain (such as XRF and pXRF elemental analysis, isotopic testing, and digital provenance modelling) reinforce a single dominant idea of authenticity, shared by both European and Chinese institutions, yet rooted in Western-origin epistemologies of originality and authorship. While these techniques are valuable and widely accepted, their application renders invisible the traditional Chinese understanding of authenticity, in which copying (*fang* 仿), transmission (*chuan* 傳), and stylistic reiteration could sustain, rather than negate, the value and legitimacy of an artwork. The theoretical framework draws on visibility and epistemic authority studies (Mirzoeff) and the critique of aura and originality (Benjamin), combined with scholarship on Chinese art and forgery, particularly Pierson's analysis of multiple categories of "fake" in Chinese porcelain. Recent archaeometric research on Jingdezhen and Longquan production (He et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2025) demonstrates the precision with which scientific approaches can identify production sites and periods through chemical composition but also illustrates how such data increasingly defines what counts as "authentic". By juxtaposing these scientific criteria with historical Chinese theories of artistic legitimacy (grounded in material lineage, brush lineage, and canonical models) the lecture asks: what forms of authenticity become invisible when only scientifically verified authenticity is recognized? Furthermore, when museums and markets adopt these methods as the primary gatekeepers of truth, they risk reclassifying culturally legitimate practices of replication as falsification. This intervention contends that acknowledging multiple authenticities is essential not merely for connoisseurship, but for a deeper understanding of Chinese art as a living,



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historically plural system of knowledge. Making this epistemic tension visible reveals that authenticity is not a neutral state to be discovered, but a cultural agreement continuously negotiated.

Bio: Jessica Matarrese is a sinologist and independent scholar. She completed her university education entirely at Ca' Foscari, where she graduated with honours, specialising in classical Chinese civilisation with a thesis in art history, after studying at INALCO in Paris. In 2023, she published the Italian translation of Prof. Joseph Adler's "Yijing. A Guide" for Astrolabio-Ubaldini Editore. She currently works at Fondazione Torino Musei and since 2025, she's been a member of EACS. Her research interests focus on art and market, antiques collecting, curatorship, art criticism and museology, connoisseurship, provenance, restitutions, cultural diplomacy, crimes against Chinese cultural heritage and post-colonialism.



Day two – April 15, 2026

PANEL 4

HOW DO SPATIAL LAYOUTS SPEAK OF POWER HIERARCHIES?

SELIN KOCAMAN (TED Üniversitesi, Turkey)

Ephemeral Visibility: The Afterlife of Participatory Urban Interventions in Three Major Turkish Cities

This study explores how small-scale participatory urban interventions in Turkish cities emerge as temporary acts of visibility yet often fade into institutional and spatial invisibility. Drawing on comparative case studies from İstanbul, İzmir, and Ankara, including the initiatives TAK Kadıköy, TAK Kartal, Onaranlar Kulübü, Urban Tank, and AnkaraAks, the study explores how these urban interventions rearrange public space by allowing the visibility of civic agency, collective social production, and everyday needs in a temporary fashion. A qualitative approach was adopted, drawing on written, visual, and oral sources, including archival traces, visual documentation, and interviews. The study examines the paradox of visibility in these practices; while they challenge top-down planning by foregrounding local participation, their ephemeral materiality and limited institutional recognition cause them to disappear from both urban memory and official planning narratives. These interventions reveal a fragile threshold between making visible, through participatory design, temporary installations, and public workshops, and being hidden, through exclusion from future development plans and funding, and the disappearance of their physical and social traces, as their temporality creates space for them to be gradually forgotten. The argument situates these dynamics within broader discussions on the politics of (in)visibility in critical urban studies. It proposes that the short-lived visibility of participatory interventions exposes how urban governance selectively frames which forms of spatial agency are acknowledged and which remain invisible, also reflecting the participatory efforts of grassroots collectives. By tracing the afterlife of these projects, the paper reveals how acts of seeing, recording, and remembering can themselves become tools of resistance against the institutional mechanisms of urban erasure.

Bio: Selin Kocaman is a PhD Candidate in Architecture at TED University, where she researches urban space, neighbourhoods, and everyday spatial practices. Her work adopts micro-historical and narrative-based methods to explore how lived experiences, memory, and visibility shape urban environments. She is particularly interested in bottom-up approaches, participatory urban practices, temporary interventions, and the socio-spatial dimensions of public space. Alongside her doctoral studies, she works as a teaching assistant in the Department of Industrial Design at



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TED University. Her research aims to contribute to interdisciplinary discussions on urban identity, reuse, and the politics of visibility in contemporary cities.

MARTINA GENETTI (Wien Museum, Austria)

SIMON NAGY (independent scholar - trafo.k)

Material Power and Ephemeral Dissent: Artistic Interventions and the Reimagining of Contested Monuments

In the context of global debates on contested monuments and memory politics, the Lueger Monument in Vienna's city centre stands as a striking example of how visibility, invisibility and power are negotiated in public space. Through its monumentality and materiality, it stages a propagandistic image of Karl Lueger, the former mayor of Vienna, as a popular and benevolent civic leader. What remains invisible, however, is the profound political antisemitism that defined Lueger's career and the marginalised histories of those who opposed him and his monument. Today, the more than ten-meter-high statue draws attention not only through its sheer scale but also through its current condition: it is covered with graffiti, splashed with paint, several parts are broken or defaced. These interventions testify to an ongoing attempt to expose what the monument itself conceals. A look into the monument's history reveals that such contestation is not new. Protest and critique have accompanied it since its erection, though these acts were marginalised, rendered invisible, or survive only in chance archival traces or deliberately hidden testimonies preserved for the future. These fragmentary yet revealing sources expose a fundamental challenge in dealing with contested monuments: dissent, however widespread, leaves far fewer traces than the monument itself. This imbalance highlights both the fragility of historical transmission of resistance and the structural asymmetries that determine which voices are remembered and which are forgotten. The paper explores this tension between ephemeral resistance against and the enduring visibility of monuments as a starting point for critical reflection on how contested monuments and their visible and invisible narratives can be addressed today. It further examines the potential of artistic interventions that use absence, fragmentation, and void as productive strategies to counter monumental propaganda, offering counter-narratives and reconfiguring such monuments as sites where (in-)visibility and knowledge can be critically renegotiated.

Bio:

Martina Genetti works at the contemporary art collection of Wien Museum and in the context of art and film festivals, where she engages in art-historical research and curatorial practice on memory politics, cultures of remembrance, and artistic



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interventions that confront fascist continuities in public space. Her art history thesis, *100 Years of Contestation*, examines critique and conflict in the history and presence of Vienna's Lueger Monument. Most recently, the essay "Nicht einfach kontextualisieren", co-authored with Simon Nagy, was published in the anthology *Nicht einfach Ausstellen. Kuratorische Formate und Strategien im Postnazismus* (De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2025).

Simon Nagy works in the context of various collectives for art, text and critical knowledge production in Vienna. He is a board member of trafo.K, an office for art and critical knowledge production, and member of the artist group Schandwache, which since 2020 has been intervening into the anti-semitic monument for Karl Lueger. Simon creates anti-fascist artistic memorial projects together with Rosa Andraschek and directs dialogic essay films together with Lia Sudermann. His book „Abolishing Time“ („Zeit abschaffen“) was published in German in 2024 by Unrast Verlag.

KAROLÍNA SMÝKALOVÁ (Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Czech Republic)

Architectural Restoration and Ideological (In)Visibility under Francoism

This paper examines how architectural restoration under the Francoist regime (1939–1975) functioned as a mechanism for producing, regulating, and institutionalizing (in)visibility within cultural heritage. Focusing on the work of architect and historian Fernando Chueca Goitia (1911–2004), I argue that the restoration of medieval monuments such as the church of San Caprasio, San Félix, and the Alcañiz Castle was not a neutral act of conservation, but an ideologically charged operation that determined what the Middle Ages could legitimately look like—and, crucially, what had to be erased or remain invisible. The paper shows how Chueca's concept of "medieval authenticity" was shaped by a combination of direct censorship and internalized ideological self-regulation. Restoration became a political instrument for selecting which architectural forms, stylistic narratives, and material histories were permitted to appear. By promoting a unified, Catholic, and "heroic" medieval past aligned with Francoist nationalism, these interventions rendered alternative medievalities—heterogeneous, fragmented, or socio-politically inconvenient—systematically invisible. In this sense, medieval monuments became spaces of simultaneous exposure and disappearance: they made visible a regime-endorsed historical vision while concealing the manipulations, omissions, and material absences that underpinned it. The paper also addresses the persistence of this regime-produced (in)visibility in the present. Many monuments restored under Francoism are still perceived today as coherent and "authentic" medieval ensembles, while the ideological filters that shaped their appearance often remain



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unacknowledged within institutional heritage discourse. As a result, contemporary understandings of architectural authenticity continue—frequently unconsciously—to reproduce the epistemological frameworks established under the dictatorship. By analyzing architectural restoration as a field where visibility is curated and invisibility actively produced, this contribution demonstrates how political power shapes cultural memory not only through narrative rewriting, but through the material conditioning of what history is allowed to look like.

Bio: Karolína Smykalová is a PhD candidate in the program History of Art, Heritage Conservation and Technology for Material Analysis at Palacký University Olomouc. Her research focuses on medieval architecture and its transformations under the Francoist regime (1939–1975). Her doctoral project examines the use of so-called Lombard elements in Francoist rhetoric, building on her master's thesis on architect-restorer Fernando Chueca Goitia. She has collaborated on the project *Conques in the Global World* (2021–2024) at the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute and has experience in editorial and archival work.

PANEL 5

HOW DOES ART SPEAK OF INTENTIONAL CHOICES ORIENTING WHAT SHOULD BE SEEN AND WHAT MUST REMAIN HIDDEN?

ALBA GÓMEZ DE ZAMORA SANZ (Banco de España–Museo del Prado Fellowship in Frames Conservation, Spain)

Women and the Arts: Making the Invisible Visible

The erasure of women who, throughout different historical periods, used their hands and strength in artistic trades has been a crucial tool in shaping the discourses of Art History. These discourses, grounded in categories and concepts such as genius, have relied on concealing the artistic practices and individuals that did not conform to the definitions on which the discipline was built. This process has generated a series of clichés that have come to be regarded as universal truths — among them, the idea that women artists were merely exceptions. Although women were normally involved in the production and trade of artworks — a fact well documented in many European cities such as Madrid, Rome, and Granada — the emergence of art literature gave rise to a discourse based on the belief that only certain people and certain works could be considered art. Vasari, Malvasia, and Palomino, among others, contributed to the formation of these ideas, which led to the invisibilization of those individuals and works that did not fit the constructed categories of artists and masterpieces — women



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among them. This proposal seeks to reflect on how the invisibilization of women in the arts was instrumental, from the very beginnings of art literature, in building an art historical discipline that, far from being neutral, has exalted particular works and subjects. It examines how this vision has been shaped by patriarchal ideology; how it fails to reflect the historical reality in which countless women worked in artistic workshops over time – demonstrated through case studies from various cities, with particular emphasis on the Early Modern period. Finally, it argues that overcoming such categorizations requires understanding art history as the product of complex processes of production and exchange that depended on the labor of many people. Art has always been a collective endeavor.

Bio: Alba Gómez de Zamora Sanz holds a PhD in Art History from the Complutense University (Madrid). Her research focuses on the role of women in artistic production during the Early Modern period, the development of artistic trades, artistic workspaces, and the arts as collective processes. She has published her research in high-impact journals such as *Arenal* and *Laboratorio de Arte*. She conducted her doctoral research under a doctoral contract in the Department of Art History at the Complutense, and she is currently a fellow in the conservation of the frames collection at the Museo del Prado.

LINS DEMCHUK (University of Regina, Canada)

Making Visible: Early Women Artists and Cultural Workers in Regina, Saskatchewan

Despite their work being crucial to the development of an arts ecosystem in the early settlement period (1880-1930 CE) in Regina, Saskatchewan, women artists and arts workers of the time have been eradicated from art history. This erasure has taken form through lack of attention in exhibitions, scholarly research, and even by individuals who directly benefited from women's labour. Saskatchewan's settlement period has been woefully understudied by art historians, and the existing canon that does exist is biased and inaccurate. This presentation draws upon my Art History and Curation master's thesis research, informed by feminist art historians Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker, and is a work of retrieval that relies upon archival documents and newspaper articles. In a city that did not build a publicly funded art gallery until 1953 CE, where were artworks exhibited for public viewing? Who created the artworks and what did they create? Presentation attendees will learn of the current canon in Saskatchewan, beginning with *The Myth of the Three Pioneers*: three male artists historically positioned as the only formally trained artists during Saskatchewan's settlement period. After reviewing how this myth was perpetuated over time, a counter-history will



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be presented. This revised narrative is rooted to the concept of “women’s work” in the creation of material culture and the collective efforts that led to Regina’s first artwork exhibitions.

Bio: Lins is currently completing her master’s degree in art history and Curation at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada. She attended summer school at Cattolica in Milan (2023) and at Ca’ Foscari (2024). Lins was the 2024 c-mag New Critics Award runner-up, wherein the jury described her submission as “a meta-commentary on the genre of the exhibition review itself” and praised her critique of existing interpretive contexts. In 2025, she received a major national research award called the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada’s Graduate Scholarship. Her research often involves archives and recovering untold stories.

JULIE LANG (Université de Lausanne, Switzerland)

New places for (Art) History: Teaching, Documenting, Exhibiting

My contribution proposes a genealogy of the processes of (in)visibilisation running through the writing of art history. This is examined in light of epistemological transformations that crystallised in the 1990s and which are central to the field yet remain on the margins of existing literature. Where has the authority of historical discourse been contested? How and why have various artists, critics, curators and art historians questioned the ideological implications of visibility? On which theoretical background? How has the notion of seeing and the problematisation of the canon been associated with the idea of making visible? Firstly, I will discuss the reasons and places where renegotiations were made possible through new critical approaches to formalism, of which New York has been an important epicentre. With figures including Rosalind Krauss, Lucy Lippard and Marcia Tucker, I demonstrate how their cultural and pedagogical engagements, informed by critical theory, feminism and postcolonial concerns, deliberately challenged patterns of invisibilisation by the end of the 1960s. I will talk about how they attempted to reform educational infrastructures and exhibition politics developed by iconic modernist art museums such as the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art. Through teaching, criticism, editing, and documenting contemporary practices, I highlight how their activities contributed to the emergence of contemporary art as a discipline and the diversification of its spaces of legitimation. The second part explores how this process continued or was disrupted in the 1990s, when questions of the gaze and representation became discursively central. I will focus on Laura Cottingham, a transatlantic figure whose contribution has not yet been fully considered. I will show how a variety of platforms, particularly



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exhibitions, enabled her to explore the concept of feminist heritage in relation to historical amnesia, to critically re-evaluate on how presence and absence are constructed.

Bio: Trained at the crossroads of contemporary art history, cultural and media sociology, and historical sciences of culture, Julie Lang is currently a graduate assistant in the art history department at the University of Lausanne. She was recently a visiting scholar at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Her doctoral research examines the emergence of the first art exhibition training programs. Her central hypothesis is that these educational spaces provide a privileged perspective for understanding epistemological and artistic transformations that occurred in the 1980s. She examines the development of curatorial studies – as a field of research and of practices – and how questions of gaze, representation and visibility became central to produce knowledge and history. Her recent writings have been published in the books *L'enseignement des arts à Genève du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours* (Georg Éditions) and *Screen Culture 1970s-1990s in Basel and Beyond* (Schüren Verlag). She is co-editor of the academic journal *A contrario* – where she directed an issue entitled *Résister en Démocratie. Éthique et politique de la formation des voix* (BSN Press).

PANEL 6

HOW DO TEXTS MEDIATE (IN)VISIBILITY?

GIULIA SCIALPI (Université Paris Nanterre CRIX, France)

Actio in Distans: Alice Ceresa's Rhetoric of (In)Visibility in La figlia prodiga

This paper investigates the rhetorical strategy of *actio in distans* as a specifically feminine and queer mode of resistance against the metaphysical hegemony of presence in Western thought, which constructs the feminine as a mere specular reflection of the masculine. Originating from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (Fragment 60, "Women and their long-distance effect"), the notion of *actio in distans* is reinterpreted here as a figure of feminine power acting from the margins, capable of unsettling the fallogocentric order that structures both epistemology and representation. Focusing on Alice Ceresa's *La figlia prodiga*, I argue that Ceresa's writing performs an "act of distance" that dismantles what Derrida (1967) termed "the metaphysics of presence" (*philosophie de la présence*) underlying Western metaphysical thought. Building on Teresa de Lauretis (1996) and Alberica Bazzoni (2024), who have shown how invisibility in *La figlia prodiga* becomes an internalized form of queer identity, I extend this reading by showing how Ceresa's rhetorical



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gesture, rather than reclaiming visibility within the existing symbolic order, lays bare its ideological limits and reconfigures invisibility as an active and generative force. Through a close reading of the text's repetitions, silences, and interruptions – and by theorizing *actio in distans* as a critical and creative mode of (in)visibility – I demonstrate how *La figlia prodiga* constructs a discourse “beyond presence,” an *à venir* space where the feminine and the queer can manifest as ever-unanticipated presences. In this way, Ceresa transforms invisibility into a mode of epistemic resistance that both reveals and protects, making visible precisely by keeping hidden.

Bio: Giulia Scialpi, former student of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, holds a PhD in Italian Studies from Université Paris Nanterre and works as a contract lecturer at Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès. Her research focuses on gender studies, with a particular emphasis on the representation of the female body in Italian contemporary literature, approached through the lens of sexual difference theory.

NERIDA WOODHAMS BERTOZZI (Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Italy - Université Paris Nanterre, France)

FEDERICA CECCARELLI (Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Italy - INALCO Paris, France)

Spaces of the Self: A Comparative Approach to Female Subjectivity and Homosexuality in Fleur Jaeggy and Lin Bai

This study aims to advance a comparative analysis of two novellas that thematize similar issues of female subjectivity, homosexuality and spatiality, bringing together Fleur Jaeggy's *Sweet Days of Discipline (I beati anni del castigo)*, 1989) and Lin Bai's *The Seat in the Verandah (Huilang zhi yi 回廊之椅)*, 1995). While there are, undoubtedly, conspicuous differences between the two writers, the two texts share a number of thematic concerns. Both authors address feminine subjectivity formation, familial ties, semi-autobiographical or autofictional narratives. Moreover, in both novellas, the body and its regulation through clothing and codified social norms play a central role. This study focuses on how both texts engage with the complexities and ambiguities of homosexuality in specific, confined spaces, and the tensions between these spaces and an external, global patriarchal order. Thus, this analysis draws on foundational studies of female subjectivity and homosexuality (Rich 1980, 1984) and spatial studies (Bachelard 1958, Massey 1994, 2005), by undertaking a comparative, close reading of the two texts. Both novellas display the process through which female identity is shaped by homosexual relations between women, often in the forms of emulation, repulsion and fascination. In both cases, these formative and character-building



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relations are made possible by a condition of isolation in a remote, exotic and idyllic context. This space of feminine isolation contrasts with a world of patriarchal hegemonic modernity, in which existence is constrained by compulsory heterosexuality and war. Therefore, both authors resort to similar images to formulate, occupy and reclaim spaces that create new possibilities for deviant or eccentric forms of relationality and identity. In conclusion, this comparative study attempts to stimulate a transnational approach to female subjectivity in literature, foregrounding the relevance of movement and spatial arrangements in escaping the dominating structures of patriarchy and (re)imagining a different social order.

Bio:

Nerida Woodhams Bertozzi is a PhD candidate at the Department of Interpretation and Translation (Intercultural Studies curriculum) at the University of Bologna and at the École doctorale Lettres, langues et spectacles of the Université Paris Nanterre (co-tutelle). Her research focuses on contemporary Anglophone and Italian literature, adopting a comparative approach to gender issues and (auto)biographical narratives. She is a member of the research groups “Autori, lettori, personaggi nella mediasfera dell'estremo contemporaneo” (University of Bologna) and “Espace, Déplacement, Mobilité” (Université Paris Nanterre).

Federica Ceccarelli is a PhD student in co-tutelle at the Department of Interpretation and Translation of the University of Bologna and at the Institut français de recherche sur l'Asie de l'Est of the INALCO (Paris). Her PhD project focuses on Sinophone queer fiction from the Nineties in a transnational perspective. Her research interests include Chinese and Sinophone literature, theory of literature, comparative literature, queer studies and translation studies.

RICCARDO RAMPIN (Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Italy)

Toward a Semiotics of Queer Memory: (In)Visibility in the Case of “Ossi di Seppia”

Abstract: This contribution advances a dialogue between queer studies, semiotics, and memory studies by conceptualising queer memory as a process of disaligned semiosis. Rather than a linear transmission of the past, queer memory is understood as a cultural and affective process shaped by gaps, fragments, and disalignments. These forms of meaning-making emerge from counter-systemic histories that, by their very nature, resist full absorption into dominant narrative frameworks. This disaligned semiosis generates two recurrent, often overlapping dynamics. The first concerns the re-alignment of queer memory with hegemonic culture, when it becomes publicly legible through institutionalised formats of remembrance, including national



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documentaries, monuments, and commemorative rituals, which foreground visibility while also regulating it. The second involves resistance and community-specific preservation, in which visibility is negotiated to sustain belonging, maintain friction with dominant cultural norms, and cultivate counter-narratives that protect the specificity of queer experience. Using the Italian docuseries *Ossi di Seppia* as a central case study, the contribution examines how RAI's editorial and aesthetic strategies shape the visibility of LGBTQIA+ histories within contemporary national media. Through a semiotic analysis of the text and its contextual interactions, the study shows how selective curation of rights-based narratives, trauma, and activism constructs an institutionalised and culturally assimilated configuration of LGBTQIA+ memory that expands public recognition while simultaneously softening more discordant or resistant elements. By approaching queer memory through the lens of disaligned semiosis, the contribution offers an interdisciplinary methodology for tracing how visibility and invisibility are produced, negotiated, and contested across media, spaces, and communities. It ultimately proposes that queer memory should be viewed not only as an archive of the past but also as a critical framework for understanding the ongoing contestation of historical narratives, one that continually moves between recognition, translation, and erasure.

Bio: Riccardo Rampin is a graduate student in Semiotics at the University of Bologna (Alma Mater Studiorum). His research interests lie at the intersection of queer studies, memory studies, and media analysis, grounded in a semiotic approach. Currently based in Amsterdam for his research, his MA thesis explores queer memory and its effects, drawing on the Bologna School's Semiotics of Memory.

PANEL 7

HOW DOES LANGUAGE DETERMINE WHAT IS SEEN, MADE VISIBLE, AND/OR KEPT HIDDEN?

GIORDANO STOCCHI (Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale, Italy)

(In)visible Voices: Language Ideologies in L2 Japanese in Italy

In Italian universities, Japanese is often imagined as a language that belongs to idealized native speakers. This imagination shapes how learners position themselves and how they perceive the role of their other languages in the learning process. Drawing on questionnaires and interviews with Italian learners of Japanese, this paper examines how *native-speakerist* ideologies surface in students' comments and how they intersect with attitudes towards the learning process. *Native-speakerism* is



understood as the ideology that treats an idealized native speaker as the fully legitimate owner of the language (Holliday, 2017). Within this frame, the use of Italian in the classroom among peers and with professors is common yet rarely recognized as legitimate. Here, *translanguaging* is approached as the strategic mobilization of learners' full linguistic repertoires for meaning-making and as an ideological stance that contests native-speaker normativity in the classroom (García & Li, 2014). Students describe this practice in contradictory ways, as both necessary and improper, reproducing a hierarchy in which only monolingual, native-like speech counts as authentic and important. Secondly, the paper highlights connected anxieties that crystallize around the new language, for instance in pragmatic choices, particularly the use of the interactional particle *ne*. Some male learners describe *ne* as “feminine” and worry about sounding “too soft” or “not masculine enough” if they adopt it, revealing how ideals of authenticity in Japanese are tied not only to nativeness but also to expectations about gendered voice and stance. The paper argues that what is made visible in Japanese language education in Italy is a narrow image of correct and authentic speech, while learners' translingual practices and identity remain hidden. Making these ideological structures explicit is crucial for rethinking pedagogical approaches that challenge native-speakerist hierarchies in the Japanese classroom.

Bio: Giordano Stocchi completed a PhD in Applied Linguistics (Japanese) from the University of Naples “L'Orientale”. His research focuses on Japanese L2 pragmatics and language education, with particular attention to interactional particles (*ne*, *yo*, *yone*), spoken corpora, and translanguaging-oriented pedagogy.

FRANCESCA LUPI (Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Italy)

Visual Language, (In)visible Language: Language Ideologies in the Japanese Federation of the Deaf

The Japanese Federation of the Deaf (JFD) is the largest Deaf association, and one of the most influential disability-related organizations in the country. From the 1960s, it has led numerous campaigns for Deaf rights, in addition to engaging in careful language planning and standardization of Japanese Sign Language (JSL). However, its language ideologies (Silverstein, 1979; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994) on what “Japanese Sign Language” is, and by extension what it means to be d/Deaf, have changed considerably (and strategically) in the last decades. By analyzing primary sources by the JFD and its leadership, this paper illustrates how this association employed, defined and contested the concepts of sign language, d/Deafness and Japaneseness over time, alternatively giving visibility to some members of the



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community and sign varieties, and marginalizing others. Three pivotal eras in Japanese Deaf history are examined: the first wave of activism that spanned the mid-1960s through the 1970s, when Deaf issues first became visible to the public eye through a disability lens; the “discovery of JSL” (Yamauchi, 2017) of the early 1990s, when the visibility of this language dramatically increased both inside and outside the Deaf community; and the new wave of activism started in the late 2010s, which foregrounded linguistic rights over disability and culminated in the approval of the Sign Language Act in August 2025. The analysis highlights how (in)visibility, ideologies and policies dynamically influence one another and shape the sociolinguistic landscape of a community.

Bio: Francesca Lupi is a first-year PhD student in Modern Languages Studies at the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures, University of Bologna. Her research project explores the intersection between sociolinguistics and disability studies, with a focus on the language practices of Japanese Deaf people in computer-mediated communication and instant messaging. Other research interests include language ideologies, language rights, disability media studies, and Deaf and Sign Language studies. She holds a master’s degree in Language and Civilisation of Asia and Mediterranean Africa (Japanese Studies curriculum) from Ca’ Foscari University, where she also studied Italian Sign Language and Deaf culture.

ROSANA ARIOLFO (Università degli Studi di Trieste, Italy)

AGOSTINA INVERNIZZI (Università degli Studi di Trieste, Italy)

Gender Discourses in Cultural Institutions: First Findings at Casa del Cinema di Trieste

This presentation reports the initial findings from the project “Language and Gender in Cultural Institutions: A Comparative Study of Institutional Gender Communication in Argentina and Italy,” carried out as part of a research fellowship (assegno di ricerca) in the Department of Humanities at the University of Trieste, in partnership with Trieste Film Hub – Casa del Cinema. The aim is to understand how institutional language—lexical choices, categories, and ways of naming people, roles, and activities—shapes what is brought to the foreground and what remains in the background, in dialogue with programming decisions and audience mediation. For this stage, the corpus comprises interviews, observation of festivals and activities, short audience questionnaires, and analysis of institutional social media. We understand gender discourses as the articulation of utterances, images, and practices (Bazzanella, 2009; Faloppa, 2020; Gheno, 2022), which requires attention to linguistic choices



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(lexicon, inclusive markers, tone) and to visual grammars (composition, salience, iconographies). Methodologically, the study draws on discourse analysis and social semiotics to read modes of enunciation and image grammars and incorporates audience and mediation studies to understand situated receptions and encounter devices. The contribution presents a subset of verifiable findings and outlines follow-up questions for the comparative phase with Argentine cases. In dialogue with the symposium's guidelines, this proposal aims to make visible institutional practices by identifying language and programming decisions that reinforce the public presence of gender topics and, at the same time, by recognizing and problematizing those that—by action or omission—keep them hidden, thereby articulating the axes seeing / making visible / keeping hidden and situating our position as researchers in the production of knowledge.

Bio:

Rosana Ariolfo is Full Professor of Spanish Linguistics (SPAN-01/C) at the Department of Humanities (DiSU), University of Trieste. Her research focuses on Spanish language teaching, the sociolinguistics of migration, oral discourse in migratory contexts, linguistic landscapes and, more recently, metalexigraphy, on which she has published several articles. She has been a speaker at numerous conferences and seminars and collaborates with several national and international research groups. She is an external member of the project *Paisaje Lingüístico Andaluz: Evaluación y Observación Cartográfica* (PLANE0 PY 20_00640) and scientific lead at DiSU for the project “Language and Gender in Cultural Institutions. A comparative study of institutional gender communication in Argentina and Italy”.

Agostina Invernizzi is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Humanities (DiSU), University of Trieste. She holds a PhD in Women's and Gender Studies from the Universities of Granada and Bologna. Her research focuses on film and audiovisual studies, literature and feminisms. She has taught in film and gender programmes at the University of Buenos Aires and in the Erasmus Mundus GEMMA Master's Programme at the University of Granada. She has participated in several international conferences and published in academic journals. She is the author of the book *Figuras del exceso: desvíos de las narrativas heterosexuales en los cines industriales de la década de los treinta. El caso de Manuel Romero en la Argentina* (Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2023).



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PANEL 8

HOW DO RELIGIONS, RITUALS, AND SPACES ENGAGE WITH THE SPIRITUAL, THE UNSEEN, OR THE HIDDEN?

XIANGYI LIN (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Germany)

Negotiating Visibility: Gender and Lay Buddhist Agency in Seventeenth-Century Jiangnan Region, China

Abstract: This research explores the construction of lay Buddhist religiosity in seventeenth-century Jiangnan, focusing on how visibility was negotiated through the intersection of gender, religious identity, and historiography. By analysing two biographical collections compiled by the eighteenth-century scholar Peng Shaosheng 彭紹升, *Shannüren Zhuan* 善女人傳 (*Biographies of Buddhist Laywomen*) and *Jushi Zhuan* 居士傳 (*Biographies of Buddhist Laymen*), this study argues that the (in)visibility of historical subjects was actively contested across three interlaced layers. First, at the level of gendered social norms, visibility functioned as a strategic tool. Laywomen strategically inhabited physical invisibility, reconfiguring domestic 'inner quarters' into sacred spaces that satisfied Confucian propriety and thus secured their public visibility as paragons of virtue. Conversely, literati men manipulated the 'eremitic tradition', using the invisibility of withdrawal into Buddhism as a highly visible political statement of loyalty to the fallen Ming dynasty. In contrast, non-literati men were almost entirely erased, deemed unable to embody literati ideals. Second, regarding religious identity, Buddhist devotion offered laywomen strategic agency. Whilst literati men often integrated Buddhist practice as a complement to their foundational Confucian identity, laywomen leveraged Buddhist egalitarianism to forge spiritual identities beyond family. This enabled some to challenge gender norms by rejecting marriage or prioritising spiritual deliverance over filial duties, claiming a subjectivity the patrilineal order denied them. Finally, at the biographical level, these lived negotiations were filtered through Peng Shaosheng's editorial authority. His selection reflected Confucian morality and literati bias: while erasing the lives of common men, he selectively amplified the visibility of women whose resistance could be reframed as 'exemplary' virtue. The resulting historical record is not an unmediated account but a negotiation between gendered agency and the selective erasure of Confucian biographical tradition.

Bio: Xiangyi Lin is a PhD candidate at Heidelberg University. Her academic path led from the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing to the historical and anthropological study of religions in Berlin. Her dissertation examines the tactful



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representation and discursive construction of Daoism in contemporary Chinese mediascape, while her broader research interests encompass the entangled histories of East Asia and popular religious life. Unifying these inquiries is a fascination with how language shapes thought, particularly how intellectual categories evolve across contexts and how discursive practices influence the ways people perceive, articulate, and negotiate different dimensions of experience.

JORGE BARTOLOMÉ HERRERO (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain),
Reconsidering Sakya Madhyamaka: Hegemonic Narratives and Presuppositional Bias in Tibetan Buddhist Scholarship

Contemporary philosophical scholarship on Tibetan *Madhyamaka* has overwhelmingly centred the Gelug school's interpretations as the normative framework, rendering alternative readings — particularly those of preeminent Sakya scholars such as Gorampa Sonam Sengge (1429-1489) and Taktsang Sherab Rinchen (1405-1477) — peripheral, misrepresented, or dismissed as nihilistic. This paper argues that this invisibilisation operates through two mutually reinforcing dynamics: institutional hegemony and presuppositional bias. The political and religious dominance of the *Gelug* school, both within Tibet and in exile, initially facilitated disproportionate access to *Gelug* texts and training, establishing its interpretive tradition as the default scholarly standard. Yet since the 2000s, Sakya philosophical works — including Gorampa's *Ita ba'i san byed* and *Ita ba ngan sel* — have become increasingly accessible. The persistence of *Gelug-centric* narratives thus cannot be attributed to availability alone but rather to a deeper presuppositional bias rooted in Western analytic philosophy's realist orientations. The *Gelug* system, with its affirmation of “conventional valid cognitions”, offered Western scholars a framework that appeared to rescue *Madhyamaka* from longstanding charges of nihilism. The Sakya reading, which more literally follows Candrakīrti's characterisation of phenomena as fundamentally illusory, resists such assimilation and is consequently labelled nihilistic or philosophically untenable by some mainstream scholars. Moreover, scholarly production on *Sakya Madhyamaka* has often been authored by scholars trained within *Gelug* paradigms, resulting in works that implicitly affirm *Gelug* doxographical categories as the standard. This interpretive asymmetry is exemplified in the critique that charges Gorampa with improperly importing *ālayavijñāna* into *Madhyamaka*—by presupposing the distinctively *Gelug* doxographical position that *ālayavijñāna* belongs exclusively to *Yogācāra*, thereby foreclosing the possibility that *Sakya Madhyamikas* might be legitimate in their position. Through close reading of Gorampa's own works and analysis of representative *Gelug*-oriented scholarship, this paper demonstrates



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how disciplinary presuppositions shape the visibility and intelligibility of philosophical traditions. It argues that *Sakya Madhyamaka* constitutes a coherent and sophisticated philosophical position that must be evaluated on its own terms and granted the same interpretive charity routinely extended to Gelug philosophy, rather than being assessed through the ontological and epistemological realist assumptions that pervade contemporary Madhyamaka scholarship.

Bio: Jorge Bartolomé Herrero is a PhD candidate in Religious Studies at the Complutense University of Madrid, specializing in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. A visiting doctoral researcher at Oxford University in 2023, his research examines the philosophical disagreements between the Sakya and Gelug schools on Madhyamaka interpretation, focusing on Gorampa Sonam Sengge's critiques of Tsongkhapa Lobsang Drakpa in the *Lta ba ngan sel*. His work integrates Western academic analysis with traditional Tibetan training in Buddhist philosophy.

MARIA DORILLO (Università degli Studi di Perugia, Italy)

Unveiling the Medical Paradigm in a Tiantai Meditation Manual

This contribution aims to re-examine Tiantai Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (*Great Calming and Contemplation*; T no. 1911) by foregrounding an epistemically invisible diagnostic-therapeutic paradigm that underlies both its doctrine and practice. Presented as a meditation manual based on transcriptions of the master's sermons delivered in 594, the text implicitly organizes its meditative system according to a coherent medical framework. In this sense, meditation is framed as a process of anamnesis, etiology, prognosis, and therapy. By highlighting selected passages, it will be shown how medical terminology – drawing on both Buddhist methodology and Chinese medicine – functions as an epistemic device shaping the practitioner's path. This framework not only informs the Tiantai system but also structures a wide range of practices across several Buddhist traditions, including visualizations, rituals of repentance, recitations of *mantras* and *dhāraṇī*, and breath-control techniques. In this context, making this implicit layer visible opens a conceptual space in which Buddhist soteriology and medical logic converge. By placing the *Mohe zhiguan* within the emerging field of “Buddhist medicine”, this research demonstrates how Buddhist thought contributed to the development of Chinese medical knowledge, traditionally rooted in classical sources such as the *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經. More broadly, revealing this underlying medical reasoning reflects on how conceptual invisibility itself can operate as a productive force in the making of knowledge.



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Bio: Maria Dorillo holds a BA in Foreign Languages and Cultures (Chinese and English) from the University of Perugia and MA in Chinese Studies from Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She is currently a PhD student in Human Sciences at the University of Perugia. Her research focuses on Buddhist meditation in medieval China, with particular reference to the Tiantai tradition. She is especially interested in the intersection between meditation and medicine.

PANEL 9

HOW DOES HERITAGE MIRROR, SUPPORT, AND SUBVERT DOMINANT HISTORICAL NARRATIVES?

GIULIA PILOSU (Università degli Studi di Genova, Italy)

Curating the invisible: digital infrastructure for valuing dispersed Genoese graphic heritage

The 18th and 19th-century Genoese drawing collections represent a rich cultural heritage that remains largely obscured and invisible due to historical circumstances. The systematic fragmentation and dispersal of major private holdings, such as those amassed by Count Giacomo Durazzo, Marcello Durazzo, and Santo Varni, moved these works from periods of private exhibition to archival obscurity. This historical process resulted in a dual challenge: the physical dispersal of the works and their subsequent marginalization compared to paintings and sculptures within traditional art history. To counter this, the current research adopts a Digital Humanities methodology, using the reconstruction process as an act of research creation. The core activity involves compiling, transcribing, and structuring data from newly accessed primary archival sources—including unpublished correspondence, inventory lists, and 19th-century auction catalogues. This digital infrastructure is crucial for making this heritage visible again. The resultant unified resource not only virtually reunites thousands of drawings but also enables the complex network analysis of the collecting environment. This analysis reconstructs patterns of aesthetic taste, traces the flow of works through intermediaries and agents, and reveals the influence of private collecting on the subsequent formation of public graphic repositories in Genoa. Ultimately, this methodology provides a powerful model for using digital infrastructures to address the historical concealment of cultural property, ensuring the long-term valorization of geographically and archivally fragmented art.

Bio: Giulia Pilosu is a PhD student in Digital Humanities at the University of Genova, within the Art, Performance, and Multimedia technologies curriculum. Her research



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focuses on the history of collections, specifically of Genoese drawing collections between the 18th and 19th centuries and the investigation of dispersed and dismembered collections through digital and virtual reconstruction.

MERIAM SEHIMI (Pan-African Biennial, Lead Curator - Nomadic and Indigenous Knowledge Systems)

Ancestral Place-Knowing in the Desert: Restituting an (Un)heard Spatial Archive

Colonial and technocratic regimes represent the Sahara as empty space for extraction, reproducing a *terra nullius* imaginary that erases Indigenous presence and renders Saharan nomadic environmental intelligence invisible. Grounded in my Bedouin ancestry in the central Algerian Sahara, this research reconceptualises the desert as an intangible archive where knowledge is produced through mobility, return and maintenance rather than fixed property. It addresses how environmental and heritage debates privilege colonial archives and technocratic datasets as sources, sidelining Indigenous water literacies. The project asks how nomadic water literacy operates across seeing, making visible and keeping hidden, and how these practices shape what can be known. Water literacy among Saharan nomads exceeds infrastructures like foggaras and oases and operates within Indigenous knowledge systems as a hydrological intelligence that reads landform, soil, wind and sky to locate and safeguard water. Dominant accounts of arid ecologies treat such literacies as local, actively overlooking the voices and practices of desert dwellers. Hidden water and hidden understanding form an ecology of perception that binds humans, ancestors and more-than-human beings into techniques of survival in environments where heat and light disturb distance. Endurance depends on calibrated disclosure: wells, paths and ritual sites are brought into focus or kept indistinct through decisions about timing and audience. Methodologically, the research combines reading of cadastral and hydraulic records with oral testimony, environmental ethnography and counter-cartography, assembling a counter-archive of itineraries, wells, tent grammars and maintenance rituals as spatial histories. Protocols of consent, refusal, gendered responsibility and data stewardship structure fieldwork and representation. By foregrounding these practices as forms of seeing, making visible and keeping hidden, the project uncovers actors in placemaking actively invisibilised in desert landscapes and advances an epistemic shift that restitutes Saharan nomadic worlds as sites of environmental intelligence and heritage rather than voids at the margins of history.

Bio: Meriam Sehimi is a researcher and architect with a Bedouin background, exploring the intersections of nomadic spatial practices, desert epistemologies and embodied



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Indigenous lifeworlds, with particular attention to questions of literacy. Her thesis and interdisciplinary work focus on adaptive, non-fixed practices that challenge traditional frameworks, weaving (im)material experimentation, especially textility, speculative writing and movable spatial systems with archival research. Through fieldwork and collective making, she investigates multispecies spatialities, using storytelling, performance and curatorial practice to uncover and engage with disappearing and invisibilized modes of placemaking rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, while questioning traditional concepts of authorship and the ways archives are constructed, claimed and circulated.