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EDITORIAL

CONTEXTUALISING THE **TRANSVERSAL** **ENTANGLEMENT** CONFERENCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS ISSUE

This special issue is the result of two processes that approach artistic research from the domains of artistic practice in film and its implications for research in film education institutions. The first part of the editorial describes the impetus for the conference *Transversal Entanglement - Artistic Research in Film* organized and hosted by the Institute for Artistic Research IKF¹ at Film University Babelsberg, with considerable support from GEECT², which took place from 3-5 June 2021 - on site and online. The second was through an open call for papers on the topic of artistic research in film and audiovisual media which aimed to augment and expand the scope of the submissions generated from the conference.

In the first part of the editorial, we undertake a detailed contextualization of the Transversal Entanglement conference because it goes some way to framing the interrogation and implications of artistic research in film schools and film programmes across European institutions and then more broadly from global examples. Moreover, the spectrum of the conference curation provided diverse, open, new, queer and critical approaches, methods and procedures as well as perspectives on topics negotiated by researchers through their

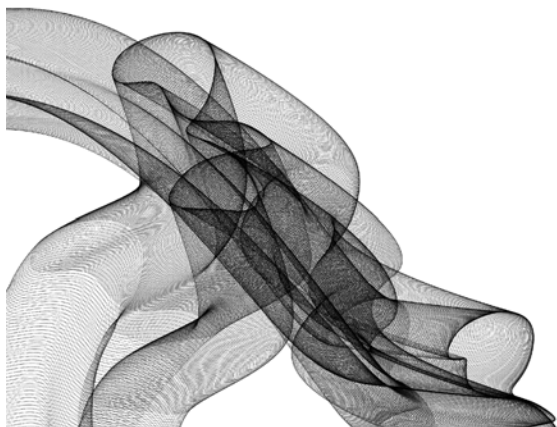
1 Institute for Artistic Research IKF; founded in 2008 aims to anchor artistic research at Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF in Potsdam. The possibility of a doctorate programme to combine methods of scientific and artistic research was introduced in 2016. The IKF continues to advance and promote networking with international partners.

2 GEECT Groupement Européen des Ecoles de Cinéma et de Télévision, the association of European film schools belongs to the international umbrella organization of higher educational film institutions CILECT Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinéma et de Télévision.

artistic practices. The conference was initiated by professors Gesa Marten and Stefan Winter, and it was significantly enriched artistically and discursively by professors Marlis Roth and Christine Reeh-Peters and Master's student Angelina Urbanczyk, whom we acknowledge and thank once again.

We have retained the term Transversal Entanglement for this issue because it is a continuation of the threads on artistic research in film initiated from the conference and continued in this journal issue.

Transversality
Entanglement
Relationality



This visual was created specifically for the 2021 Transversal Entanglement Conference by Jennifer Beitel.

Christine Reeh-Peters elaborates:

"The title Transversal Entanglement is composed of two concepts that I consider particularly meaningful for artistic research in general as well as for artistic research in film in particular, while also referring to the manifold nature of this conference.

First, there is the concept of transversality which derives from Félix Guattari's idea of transversality to substitute dominant power relations, designating an associative principle of an a-central multi-relationality which interconnects different topics and levels not in the expected way, beyond the hierarchic standards and norms. Relying on transversal principles further implies to frame different practices of experimentation and favors multi-perspectivity in a dynamic and process-based way: Transversality is a concept which implies movement and transformation. By choosing this title the conference favors a kind of artistic research in film which is on opening-up new approaches, affinities and entangled relationships between different artistic and audiovisual practices and discourses.

Second, entanglement refers to the interweaving, intertwining, interlacing, integrating and interconnecting ways this transversality is happening and evokes the entanglement designated in quantum physics when particles of differently defined states become dynamic composites when regarded as one system."

Polyphony
Polyvocality
Multi-perspectival

The conference foregrounded case studies where international artists presented their research questions and processes through their work. The case studies were drawn from different global perspectives and culturally specific experiences with practices in film. Furthermore, through moderated discussions the experimental and systematic procedures described by the contributors provided the space for further engagement with cinematic processes which advanced the analysis of film language in the specific cases based on geo-political locations. The contributions captured a breath of perspectives and a wealth of experiences that ranged from

seasoned film director Claire Denis (Paris), alongside Masters students Verena Buttman (from HfbK Hamburg) and Patrick Wallochny (from Film University Babelsberg), visual artist Rachel Rose (New York) and writer and director Lola Arias (Argentinian artist living in Berlin).³

The on-site Conference Stand

In response to the restrictions of the covid-19 pandemic, the conference team developed a hybrid way of bringing participants together. International guests were unable to travel to Potsdam and even though they contributed through digital platforms, it was important to have a physical center to assemble the 25-or-so-member team - albeit with masks - and to create a focal point. The Conference Stand was initiated by Marlis Roth and developed by her "Site-Specific Film" research group with students from Film University Babelsberg.



© Marlis Roth, 2021

Marlis Roth describes the project:

"The idea was to create a space for relaxed focus/de-focus on the notion of artistic research in film and to serve Transversal Entanglement as the main stage and break room. The group's central idea is to take situations and architectures as an occasion for spontaneous filmic reactions. The Conference Stand also shows 17 works that were created specifically for this setting."

These works could also be viewed online by participants during the conference⁴. The conference team enthusiastically inhabited the space created specifically for the gathering and had a strong visual impact on the on-line experience.



Online-Presentation by Filipa César and Olivier Marboeuf during the GEECT Conference Transversal Entanglement 2021.

© Gesa Marten

3 The full program can be found on the conference website. <https://artistic-research-in-film-conference2021.filmuniversitaet.de/en/>

4 For copyright reasons, the video works cannot be shown beyond the Conference, either on the Conference website or linked here in the Journal.

Graphic recordings as seeing listening

Throughout the conference, Christiane Büchner, an author and director of documentary films, provided graphical summations of the presentations and discussions which were available on the website throughout the conference.

Christiane Büchner explains:

"This form of recording creates links between information and visual language, the content and the dynamics of a discussion, speakers and participants. A process that took place in time takes on form and overview in the space of the drawing. The image structures the memory and opens spaces for discoveries."

With graphic recordings participants and viewers experience three things at once: (i) direct engagement with key words, (ii) summary of key points and (iii) visual interpretation as documentation. The illustrator creates an archive of the presentations and discussions of the conference. In this issue, we have provided the animated and completed summative drawings from the conference presentations⁵ that are part of the published papers.



Drawing by Christiane Büchner. It was made during a conversation with Rachel Rose at the GEECT Conference Transversal Entanglement 2021.

Defocus and deliberation

The challenge of an on-site and online (hybrid) conference is the *missed opportunities of informal conversations and reflections that spill over into the coffee breaks after plenary sessions and presentations. To accommodate the absence of these possibilities, two effective strategies were designed in this conference. The first used the on-site Conference Stand for sessions called "Focus/Defocus"* and second used the digital platform function of breakout rooms.

The "Focus/Defocus" sessions had an informal feel that took place at various intervals in the conference programme. Different conference convenors were responsible for these sessions and they offered personal reflections, observations that related to their own practice or expertise, or propositions that connected to previous sessions. It served less as a summative space and more to highlight personal impressions. This offered a valuable shift in tone to the conference and enhanced the uses of the Conference Stand.



Focus/ Defocus Session during the GEECT Conference Transversal Entanglement 2021 in the Set of the Conference Stand.

© Robert Sagi

⁵ The gallery in the conference website hosts downloadable graphic recordings of all conference sessions. <https://artistic-research-in-film-conference2021.filmuniversitaet.de/en/graphic-recording/>

The digital breakout rooms were an alternative to “Focus/Defocus”. Participants were invited to join breakout rooms for said topics and some breakout rooms were opened simply for people to meet and reconnect without thematic allocations – making it feel more in keeping with the informalities of an in-person conference. With the two spaces of (i) “Focus/Defocus” and (ii) breakout rooms came a growing inventory of topics that were carried over in a moderated final conference session and some of these ideas are shared in the contributions in *Perspectives and positions on Artistic Research* in this issue.

One of the conceptual complexities that emerged from the conference was how visual artists and filmmakers describe their research processes which must be clearly differentiated from research driven by an enquiry or a conceptual undertaking. What is clear is that while an “artist talk” may describe a process of research in a film practice, it does not necessarily foreground the sentiments nor the scope of artistic research particularly with the imperatives designed in a university or film education context. Another observation that had strong resonances in some “Focus/Defocus” sessions was the epistemological import and expansion of film language(s) and its relation to form and the politics of representation. The issue of ethics and aesthetic forms in film are also directly connected to how artistic research facilitates more discursive modes of production. Furthermore, there is a vivid connection of artistic research to its political potential. This is not only captured in how feminist and queer politics have been developed through research projects in film but how the ideas of exploring the Anthropocene and social justice issues have created interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary connections through film practices. For other participants the political potential of artistic research lies in its connection to decolonial strategies towards onto-epistemological representations that expand film grammars. In this sense the summative comments and discussion cued future potential topics while affirming that artistic research in film is no longer a matter of justification but rather a viable and productive vehicle towards artistic and epistemological disciplinary entanglements.

Contributions in this issue

The papers developed from the *Transversal Entanglement* conference foreground practice to make visible the conceptual propositions that inform how film practice leads and advances enquiry. The practitioners and researchers work with multiple forms to expand the conventions of film genres by exploring and expanding forms that are strategically driven by the processes and circumstances of their modes of research and production. Whether it is the circumstances of urban environments; conditions of labour and activism or a search for how to locate a language of embodiment and corporeality – the breath of the papers captures multiple strategies of research through an enquiry in and through the medium of film. Practice leads the conceptual enquiry and knowledge of the subject is innovatively positioned through the medium of film. Each of the contributions is attentive to how the ethics of the practice comes to be encoded in the film grammar of the artistic projects and in effect broadens the language of film.

In *A Pile of Ghosts: A Cinematic Heterotopia of Spectral Urbanization*, **Ella Raidel** brings a strong film practice to the fore by mapping urban spaces to the experiences of characters and their circumstances. Her undertaking is an examination of the historical development of urbanization in parts of China. In her research, she endeavours to show how staged and fictional elements support documented events of urban regeneration projects. By combining the specificities of Chinese cinematic representative forms and her research of urban development, the paper outlines the processes of her film practice and is a reflective consideration of observing a culture from the inside but capturing the liminality of ghostly presences as an outsider.

In contrast **Arturo Delgado Pereira** uses strategies of re-enactment to ground the presence of informants and volunteer-protagonists in *Reenactment as Social Action: The Making of Encierro*. The proposition in this research is towards

expanding the genre of documentary strategies and film practice to bring the lived experiences and testimonies of miners from 1984 who were locked in a shaft, in direct engagement with the community in Almadén (Ciudad Real, southern Spain) some 35 years later. The radicality of the proposition is the re-enactment of the event as a way to address the political and economic circumstances that shaped the historical event with its contemporary reflections and representations. The sense of embodied experiences and speculative propositions are the core impulses for this practice and attention is also directed to collaborative endeavours in the process.

Focusing on collaborative strategies and corporeality is foundational to their research and practice; **Annika Boholm** and **Kersti Grunditz Brennan** recount their process in *THE BLOOD METHOD: Case study of an Artistic Research Project in Film*. Their propositions are derived from a manifesto, in keeping with the political ethos of feminist practices but one in which they disclose how their collaborative framework is negotiated and re-negotiated through a series of iterative procedures. The paper too in its style and form reveals these (re-)negotiated iterations between the collaborative conditions of artistic practices and what is at stake in individual positioning both as researchers and practitioners who bring different institutional relations to the project.

Two contributions that foreground the significance of early cinema as a way to reassess the histories of cinema and spectatorship with film technologies are respectively: **Samantha da Silva Diefenthaeler** - *Reflections around Comic Gaze. From the female gaze in the early years of cinema to the performance *Servitudes*, by Jesper Just* and *The Cinema of Extractions: Film as Infrastructure for (Artistic?) Research* by **Kristoffer Gansing**.

In the case of the former, da Silva Diefenthaeler works with gaze regimes: the male gaze and oppositional gaze to

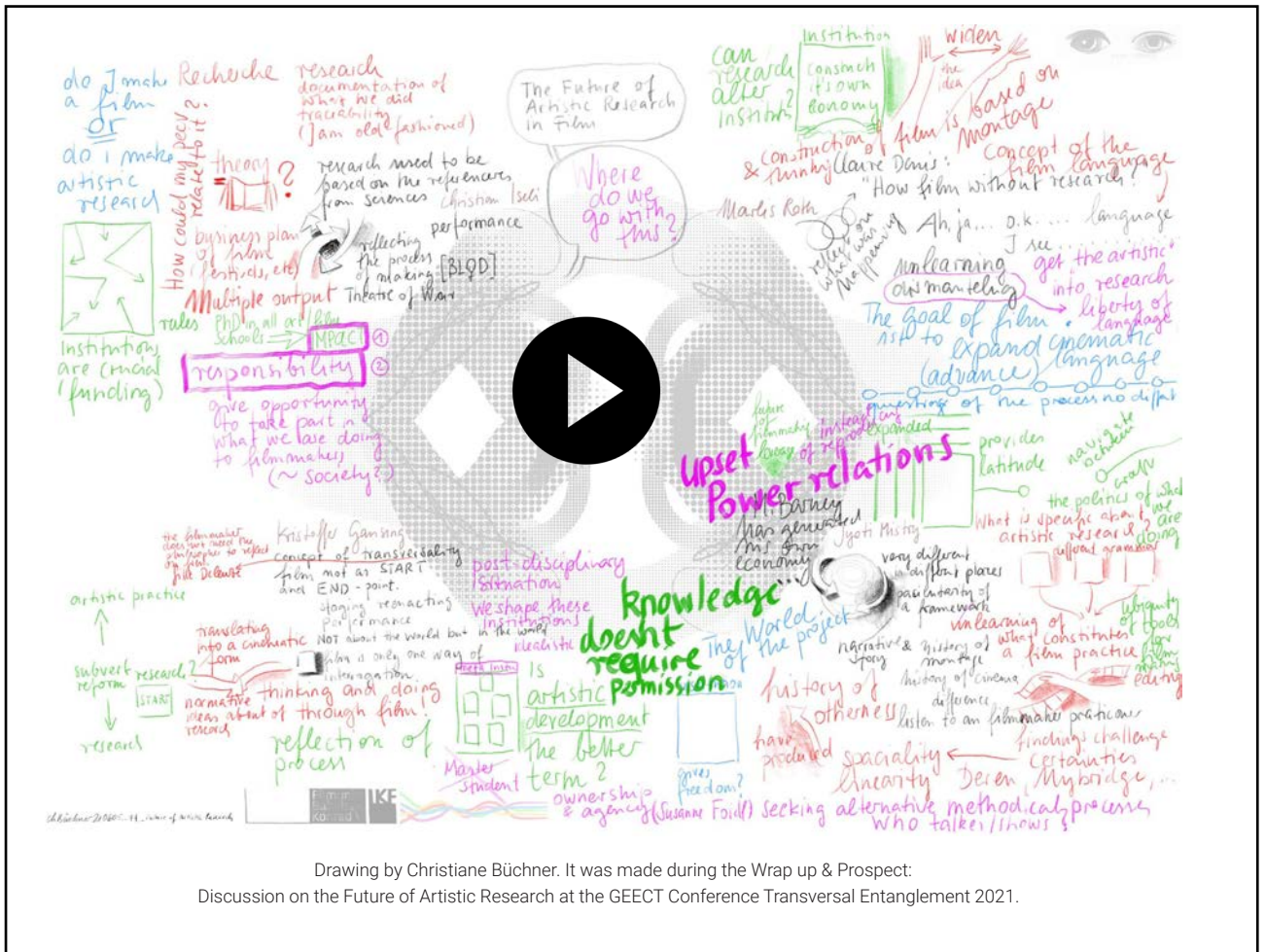
describe a defiant gaze of women through three examples from early cinema spanning 1903 to 1920. Working towards the proposition of the irreverent gaze the paper assesses the import of these concepts and its performance in the work of contemporary artist Jesper Just's work *Servitudes*. In the latter, Gansing, offers a revised proposition of film history through an intervention on several levels: (i) by re-viewing the cinema of attractions, (ii) offering a survey of how technical interventions in film may be arguably part of an artistic research trajectory and (iii) how finally these historical reorientations may be viewed as a cinema of extractions defined through a contemporary shift in film technologies through datafied infrastructure. Gansing's contribution is further enlarged through his desktop essay that animates these ideas vividly by enacting the research through this form.⁶

In the spirit of open-endedness, reflection, enquiry and speculation, we have assembled *Positions and Perspectives on Artistic Research* from colleagues across different institutions and with varied experiences. The invitation to contributors was to share a snapshot from their vantage point of the affordances of artistic research either to their own artistic practices, their roles in facilitating artistic research or in how their institutions support the development of artistic research. The form of the assemblage aims to offer a layered approach and while the ordering of necessity is linear, there are various overlaps and synergies and useful dissonances between the various perspectives. This contribution as an *assemblage* is augmented with images from contributor's to their practices, some share their institutional reservations, while other colleagues interrogate the future of artistic research as it becomes increasingly "disciplined" within institutional structures. We have created a peppering of terms and phrases that mark pauses; interruptions with concepts that have informed artistic research practices rather than used these as headings to sections. This weaving of positions and perspectives serve to activate further and future entanglements in artistic research in film.

⁶ A link to the desktop video is available in Gansing's text in his contribution in the Journal.

The final contribution in this issue is a review of Sarah Tremlett's recent book *The Poetics of Poetry Film* by **Suzie Hanna**. Its relevance to this issue is predicated on the re-evaluation of the genre of poetry film in terms of form and from a gendered perspective that advances not just the discourse on film form but the very practice of film.

Gesa Marten, Jyoti Mistry



Drawing by Christiane Büchner. It was made during the Wrap up & Prospect: Discussion on the Future of Artistic Research at the GEECT Conference Transversal Entanglement 2021.