

Geist and the Machine (Philadelphia, 15 Mar 13)

Philadelphia, PA, USA, Mar 15, 2013

Deadline: Jan 15, 2013

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Graduate Student Conference 2013

Geist and the Machine: A Graduate Student Conference on German Cinema and Film Theory

Keynote: Gertrud Koch, Freie Universität Berlin

Submission due date: January 15th, 2013

Conference date: March 15th, 2013

The German term Geist bears no simple translation into English. From spirit to mind to ghost to intellect, it exists both as a singular philosophical concept and an elusive shapeshifter. In *The Spirit of Film*, Béla Balázs writes that “the camera can photograph the unconscious,” citing cinema’s ability to use technology in order to reveal immaterial thoughts and desires, while placing it in a penetrating relationship to the idealist and invisible nature of Geist. Throughout film’s relatively short history, discussion and theorizing of the impact of the intrusive nature of the medium on individuals and society at large has remained ever-presently suspect. Yet writers such as Walter Benjamin offer an alternative approach to this seemingly symptomatic problem by proposing that the film actor is not exploited by technology, but rather “preserve[s] one’s humanity in the face of the apparatus,” and furthermore, offers the spectator a chance to regain one’s own humanity by proxy. This conference seeks to animate the debate surrounding film’s value for society by exploring the relationship between technology and imagination as illuminated by cinema.

While the focus of the conference is on German cinema and film theory, we encourage submissions from other disciplines, not limited to: art history, cinema studies, media studies, philosophy, history, communications, sociology, comparative literature, and theology. We welcome topics on the translation of German film theory and its influence, non-German films and theoretical writing inspired by the German film canon and its deviations, and methodologies that question cinema as an institution and its relationship to marginalized spectators. We also welcome submissions from practicing film-makers, animators, and video artists whose work is influenced by the German philosophical tradition of Geist and the technological experimentation of German directors.

Please feel free (but not obliged) to use the following broad themes as a springboard:

- early German film and theoretical writing (visualizing the speed and movement of industrialism, anxiety over relationship between the human and the machine between the World Wars, landscape/cityscape in early film)
- filming the unconscious (the uncanny, film's potential to depict alternative desires and modes of subjectivity, Benjamin's optical unconscious)
- film technology and film-making (the production process, the filmic actor, the impact of advances of camera technology, relationship between sound and image)
- representation of the immaterial in the material world (the relationship between the spiritual and technology, the camera as a demiurgical eye)

Please send your 250-300 word abstracts in both the body of the e-mail and as an attachment to Jehnna Lewis and Roksana Filipowska at jejhna@gmail.com by midnight on January 15, 2013. Submissions should include the paper title, author's name, affiliation, and e-mail address. Those whose submissions are accepted will be notified within the week.

Reference:

CFP: Geist and the Machine (Philadelphia, 15 Mar 13). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 1, 2012 (accessed Jul 2, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/4322>>.