Yearbook of Moving Image Studies 2026: Autonomous Images

Deadline: Mar 21, 2026

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Call for Abstracts / Articles:
Yearbook of Moving Image Studies (YoMIS) 2026.
»Autonomous Images. Posthuman Perception, Agency and Ecology in Intelligent Visual Media«.
Edited by Lars C. Grabbe, Patrick Rupert-Kruse and Norbert M. Schmitz.

Deadline for Abstracts: March 21, 2026
Deadline for Articles: August 21, 2026

Abstract
In contemporary visual cultures, moving images no longer appear solely as representations or objects of human perception, but operate increasingly as autonomous agents within complex socio-technical environments. Enabled by advancements in machine perception, neural rendering, and robotic sensing, images now analyze, decide, and intervene – often without human attention or control. These emergent forms of computational visuality challenge long-standing assumptions about spectatorship, agency, and mediation in the field of moving image studies.

»Autonomous Images« designate visual entities that integrate sensing, data processing, and action in continuous feedback loops, thereby transforming perception into a posthuman ecology distributed across humans, machines, infrastructures, and environments. From operative vision in military, industrial, and governmental contexts to autonomous cinematography in drones and mobile robotics, the camera itself becomes a decision-making apparatus embedded in logistical, navigational, and surveillance systems. In gaming and simulation, procedural image generation serves as predictive modelling, producing worlds in which machinic spectatorship coincides with algorithmic governance. Artistic and design practices meanwhile probe the limits of nonhuman sensibility by experimenting with autonomous vision systems and expanding the aesthetic understanding of what it means for images to see and to act.

Within this shifting media landscape, the role of the human viewer is increasingly decentered. Visual knowledge production becomes a shared cognitive milieu in which images operate for and with other agents – technical, institutional, ecological, and multi-species. The classical relation between image and observer is thus redefined through infrastructures of control, calculation, and intervention, raising urgent ethical and political questions concerning accountability, opacity, and power in machinic perception.

This volume examines the governance, aesthetics, and ecologies of autonomous images by bring-

ing together perspectives from media theory, philosophy, visual culture studies, game studies, artistic research, film theory, design, and critical AI ethics. Contributions investigate how autonomous image systems reshape cinematic practices through computational camerawork; how gaming environments establish operational image cultures; and how artistic and design strategies render visible the hidden agencies of machine perception. Furthermore, the book explores how autonomous visual infrastructures modulate planetary processes – from environmental sensing and multispectral observation to wildlife monitoring – thus situating image autonomy within the broader context of posthuman environmental entanglements.

By establishing a theoretical and critical framework for understanding autonomous moving images, this volume seeks to illuminate the profound cultural, epistemic, and material transformations emerging as images increasingly act without humans – and sometimes against humans. In mapping these transformations, the book contributes to an expanded posthuman paradigm of image studies that accounts for images as active participants in the world rather than mere objects of representation.

Contributions may address, but are not limited to:
1) Governance & Operative Images
- Algorithmic surveillance & decision-making
- Military targeting, border regimes & policing visions
- Visual infrastructures in Smart Cities
2) Autonomous Cinematography
- Drone vision & computational camerawork
- Autonomous vehicles as visual apparatuses
- Robotic cinematography & tracking systems
3) Gaming & Predictive Worlds
- Procedural and simulative image cultures
- Machinic spectatorship & player displacement
- Game engines as operational environments
4) Artistic Research & Design Practices
- Speculative and critical experiments with machine vision
- Posthuman spectatorship in installation, XR and live systems
- Design interventions in AI imaging
5) Environmental & Multi-Species Vision
- Planetary sensing & ecological image agency
- Wildlife vision technologies & conservation
- Datafication of natural and multispecies environments
6) Theoretical Reconfigurations
- Posthuman media ecologies
- Aesthetics of agency & machinic perception
- Philosophical foundations of autonomous images

Submission Guidelines: We welcome articles from diverse disciplines, including Media theory & visual culture studies, Game studies, Film & cinematic studies, Design & artistic research, Philosophy, semiotics & posthumanism, (art-)history, AI ethics, economy and political theory, and Environmental humanities. Long Abstracts with 600–900 words and a short biography with contact

details should be sent until March 21, 2026 to: l.grabbe@fh-muenster.de.