

Black Hole | Black Box (online/Rome, 19–20 Mar 26)

Online / Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History, Rome, Mar
19–20, 2026

Nina Caviezel

Black Hole | Black Box: Limits, Opacity, and the Unknown Across Art, Science, and Media.

This conference examines limits, opacity, and the unknown by bringing together two notions from very different domains: the black hole of astrophysics, where empirical and theoretical boundaries are reached, and the black box of computation and technology, whose inner workings are inaccessible even as they produce observable effects. Rather than treating them simply as objects of absence, the conference approaches black holes and black boxes as conceptual, aesthetic, and methodological frameworks for exploring what is partly unseeable, partly generative, and always challenging the thresholds of knowledge and perception. By juxtaposing perspectives from art, media, and science, we want to investigate how these frameworks allow us to study, imagine, and engage with phenomena that elude us.

Please follow the event also online through the platform ZOOM :

19.02.2026

<https://eu02web.zoom-x.de/j/67093757575?pwd=3V5a6hwb6NYAArZzYQ6Fq50ZyZHVkt.1>

20.03.2026

<https://eu02web.zoom-x.de/j/67042030958?pwd=jRXF7TnOfuQPesQnPX3UeoOCeR07iQ.1>

PROGRAMME:

THURSDAY, 19 March 2025

13:30 – 13:45 Welcome

13:45 – 14:30 Eszter Polonyi (University of Ljubljana / Kunstuniversität Linz), Introduction

Panel 1

Chair: Leo Impett

14:30 – 15:00 Violaine Boutet de Monvel (Bibliotheca Hertziana), Recursive Aesthetics at the Edge of Chaos and Collapse: Toward a Cosmic Analogy

15:00 – 15:30 Nina Pillet (Aix-Marseille University, online), The grid as a recording medium for invisible gravitational presence

15:30 – 16:00 Joint Discussion Violaine Boutet de Monvel & Nina Pillet

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

Panel 2

Chair: Alexandra Gilliams

16:30 – 17:00 Julie Kolovou (Aix-Marseille University), The Aesthetic and Existential Dimensions of the Interstellar Void as a Space for Shaping Stellar Landscapes

17:00 – 17:30 Tommaso Morawski (Sapienza University of Rome), Cosmic View, Powers of Ten, and the New Sense of Scale

17:30 – 18:00 Joint Discussion Julie Kolovou & Tommaso Morawski

End of the day at 18:00

FRIDAY, 20 March 2025

10:30 – 10:45 Welcome

Panel 3

Chair: Sebastian Rozenberg

10:45 – 11:15 Orit Halpern (Dresden University of Technology, online), The Planetary Experiment

11:15 – 11:45 Fabian Offert (University of California, Santa Barbara), Machine Learning as Humanities Epistemology

11:45 – 12:15 Katja Müller-Helle (Humboldt University of Berlin / Hermann von Helmholtz Centre for Cultural Techniques), Blackboxing. On the history of images as data

12:15 – 13:00 Joint Discussion Orit Halpern, Fabian Offert & Katja Müller-Helle

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

Panel 4

Chair: Lachlan Kermode

14:00 – 14:30 Ellen Charlesworth (University of Luxembourg), Productive Metaphors: Developing Methods for Detecting Absences in the Archive

14:30 – 15:00 Jennifer Marine (University of Virginia / Menil Drawing Institute, online), Tracing Shadow: Imaging and Photography in the Absence of Light

15:00 – 15:30 Joint Discussion Ellen Charlesworth & Jennifer Marine

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

Panel 5

Chair: Sietske Fransen

16:00 – 16:30 Paula Muhr (Brand University of Applied Sciences Hamburg / Technische Universität Berlin, online), The “Pivotal” Images of Black Holes, Their Epistemic Power, and Retrospective Auratisation

16:30 – 17:00 Nina Caviezel (Bibliotheca Hertziana / University of Basel), Black Box | Clean Room: Imaging Infrastructures of the James Webb Space Telescope

17:00 – 17:30 Joint Discussion Paula Muhr & Nina Caviezel

End of the day at 17:30

Scientific organization: Violaine Boutet de Monvel, Nina Caviezel, Ellen Charlesworth, Sebastian Rozenberg. Collaboration between the Machine Visual Culture research group and the Visualizing Science in Media Revolutions research group.

Reference:

CONF: Black Hole | Black Box (online/Rome, 19-20 Mar 26). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 13, 2026 (accessed Apr 29, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51969>>.