



December 10-11, 2025

WOMEN IN FILM:
LEADERSHIP,
CREATIVITY, AND
INTERDISCIPLINARY
PERSPECTIVES



#3 a c a d e m i a

Hybrid International
Academic Conference

UNATC Bucharest (Tudor Arghezi 3b) and Online

HER STORY

The Peer-Review Committee for Presentations

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HER



Intro

Women in Film: Leadership, Creativity, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives brings together powerful voices from film industry, academia, and the arts to explore how women shape and transform the moving image.

It represents a renewed and imaginative format for the third edition of the *Her Story, Her Future* mentorship programme for women in the film industry, presented this year under the name *Academia*. Designed as a vibrant blend of scientific presentations, masterclasses, and uplifting talks from amazing and generous women professionals, researchers, and artists, the conference creates a special space for knowledge sharing and interdisciplinary reflection.

Focusing on leadership, authorship, creativity, and intersectional perspectives, the event features presentations from different countries, highlighting how women rethink aesthetic and narrative structures, challenge systemic disparities, and engage in ethical and sustainable creative practice. Its international dimension enriches the conversation, bringing new angles and fostering dialogue on representation, identity, mentorship, and collaboration, while amplifying women's visibility and influence in film and media.

Participants are highly encouraged to submit articles for inclusion in *Doctoral Horizons*, the academic journal of the UNATC Doctoral School. All the contributions will undergo a peer-review process, ensuring depth, rigour, and clarity (submission deadline: February 10, 2026). For more details, please consult: <https://cinetic.arts.ro/evente/conference-women-in-film-leadership-creativity-and-interdisciplinary-perspectives/>.

Through dialogue and reflection, *Women in Film: Leadership, Creativity, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* aims to cultivate a supportive and sisterly community in which women support and inspire each other.

Mirona RADU, PhDc, Research Assistant, UNATC;
Founder of Her Story, Her Future - mentorship programme for women in the film industry



HEROS

Programme

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

11:00-11:10

Welcome Address

Liviu LUCACI, PhD, Rector of the National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest (UNATC)

Mirona RADU, PhDc, Research Assistant, UNATC; Founder of Her Story, Her Future - mentorship programme for women in the film industry

11:10-11:30

Inspirational Talk

Ada SOLOMON, acclaimed Romanian Film Producer and Founder of HiFilm Productions (Romania)

11:30-12:10

Keynote

From Exploitation to Care: How Women's Perspectives Redefine Ethics and Sustainability in Creative Practice

Anna ADAMUS-MATUSZYŃSKA, PhD, Sociologist and Public Relations Specialist, Professor at the University of Economics in Katowice (Poland)

12:10-12:30

On Women of the Danube Delta as Strong and Skillful Managers of the Fishing Households. Only in Real Life, not on the Silver Screen

Oana IVAN, PhD, Assistant Professor, Babeş-Bolyai University (Romania)

12:30-12:50

Collaborative Filmmaking: Actress as a Document Representing the Aftermath of a War

Goda JANUSKEVICIUTE, Yelyzaveta HRYTSENKO, Filmmakers (Lithuania & Ukraine)

12:50-13:10

My Place in Cinema - Film Education Project for Empowering Young Women

Evi KARAGEORGU, PhDc, Artistic Director of Meetings of Young European Cinema (Bulgaria)

Programme

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

- 13:10-13:30 *The Film Camera as a Tool for Unlocking Adolescents' Creativity. Case Study: Maria*
Alma LASCU, PhD, Actor, Theatre Pedagogue, UNATC (Romania)
- 13:30-13:50 *On Making "Between the Edges of the Day" - a Short Film About Domestic Violence, Based on the Co-writer's Personal Story*
Andreea LĂCĂTUȘ, PhD, Filmmaker and Director of One World Romania IDHRFF (Romania)
- 13:50-14:10 *Constructing the Female Subject: The Case of Poor Things (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2023)*
Maria ANDRONIKOU, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher, School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens; Lecturer, Stavrakos Film School (Greece)
- 14:10-14:30 *The Woman on Screen Through the Lens of Men - Between Reality and Imagination*
Laura LĂZĂRESCU-THOIS, PhD, Associate Professor, UNATC (Romania)
- 14:30-15:30 Break
- 15:30-15:50 *Feminist Creative Leadership Through the Body: A Diffractive Reading of Adina Pintilie and Ana Lungu*
Ruxandra Maria GHIȚESCU, PhD, Filmmaker, Associate Lecturer, Ovidius University (Romania)
- 15:50-16:10 *Reclaiming the Gaze: Feminist Spectatorship and Creative Resistance in Maryam Tafakory's Irani Bag*
Adela CHIRU, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Bucharest (Romania)

Programme

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

- 16:10-16:30 *The Power of Gentleness in the Films of Claire Denis*
Lucia CHICOŞ, PhD, Filmmaker, Teaching Assistant, UNATC (Romania)
- 16:30-16:50 *Cute but Psycho. Multimodal Metaphor, Humour and Femininity in Female-Led Horror Contemporary Cinema*
Teodora VASILESCU, PhDc, University of Bucharest (Romania)
- 16:50-17:10 Dissolving the "Female/Male Gaze": Individual Subjectivity as the Core of Auteur Vision
Teodora-Kosara POPOVA, PhDc, Filmmaker, Assistant Professor, National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts (NATFA) (Bulgaria)
- 17:10-17:30 Inspirational Talk
When Women Hold the Camera: What Happens When We Stop Waiting for Permission
Joy HARRIS BIRD, Filmmaker, Founder and Creative Director, JoyPark Studios (USA)
- 17:30-19:30 Break
- 19:30-20:00 Inspirational Talk
Alexandra SOFONEA, PhD, NET therapist, Researcher UNATC (Romania)
- 20:00-22:00 Screening & Discussion - invited event by Her Story, Her Future
Trauma and Storytelling - Explore Healing Through Art and Science
Presentation of the Swedish theatre play *Barrikad* (performed in Swedish with English subtitles). Before the performance, Dr. Katy Robjant, Dr. Sabine Schmitt, and Dr. Susanne Axelsson will offer a brief introduction to the NETfacts intervention approach. After the play, a discussion with the participants will be hosted by the director of the production, Emil Nilsson Mäki.

Programme

Thursday, December 11, 2025

- 11:00-11:40 Keynote
Women Leadership and Creativity
Alexia MUIÑOS RUIZ, Filmmaker, Executive Director, European Women's Audiovisual Network (Spain)
- 11:40-12:00 *Mentorship as Creative Leadership: Transforming Women's Voices in Screenwriting Workshops. A Case Study of SYAA*
Raluca MĂNESCU, PhDc, Screenwriter (Romania)
- 12:00-12:20 *Authentic Motherhood in Contemporary Auteur Cinema: Between Lived Experience and Representation*
Evi KARAGEORGU, PhDc, Cultural Researcher (Bulgaria)
- 12:20-12:40 *Black Soup: Alimentary Identity and the Politics of Memory and Resistance in Tania Licheuskaya's film "Čornaja poliŭka"*
Valeria BARBAS, PhD, Mixed Media Artist, Senior Researcher, Institute of Cultural Heritage (Republic of Moldova)
- 12:40-13:00 *The Final Brushstroke - Color Grading as a Modern Visual Art Practice*
Maria MURGU, PhD, Research Assistant, Lecturer, UNATC (Romania)
- 13:00-13:20 Inspirational Talk
Women, Leadership, and AI in Audiovisual Production
Anna KASIMATI, Head of the Creative Europe MEDIA Programme at the Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center (Greece)
- 13:20-13:50 *The Algorithmic Gaze: Who Has Control Over Meaning?*
Georgia MIHALCEA, PhDc, Filmmaker, Narrative Systems Architect (Romania)

Programme

Thursday, December 11, 2025

13:50-14:10

Women and Product Design on Screen: A Cinethnographic Approach on the Sector's Gendered Realities

Guim ESPELT ESTOPÀ, PhD, Designer, Researcher, Curator, Teacher, Elisava, Barcelona School of Design and Engineering (Spain)

14:10-14:30

Towards a Socio-educational Design: Interdisciplinary Process of Creating a Documentary Comic for Tunisian Children

Nada DAGDOUG, PhD, Visual Artist, Caricaturist, Educator (Tunisia)

14:30-16:30

Break

16:30-18:00

Masterclass on Assertive Communication with Andreea Mereuță - exclusively on site - for Romanian participants

Andreea MEREUȚĂ is a cognitive-behavioural psychotherapist and neurotrainer.

In a world where we often speak more than we listen, how we express ourselves can transform the dynamics of professional relationships. This masterclass invites participants to explore how to communicate their needs, feelings, and ideas with clarity, respect, and confidence.

Through examining automatic reactions, common blocks, and practical steps, participants will learn to foster balanced conversations—ones that connect rather than divide—and leave with tools for authentic, tension-free dialogue.

HEROES OF

11:10-11:30

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Ada SOLOMON

— Inspirational Talk —



photo credits: Adi Bulboacă

Ada SOLOMON has built a long and impressive track record over the past decades. Memorable for her contribution to the Romanian and international film sector, her name appears in the credits of nearly 100 films over her 25-year career, winning two Golden Bears, first for Călin Netzer's *Child's Pose* (2013) and for Radu Jude's *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* (2021). Other renowned films include *Sorella di Clausura* (Ivana Mladenovic, 2025), *The New Year That Never Came* (Bogdan Mureșanu, Best Film at the Venice Orizzonti section & European Film Academy Discovery nominee, 2024), *Do Not Expect Too Much of The End of the World* (Radu Jude, Special Jury Prize Locarno, 2023).

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Ada SOLOMON

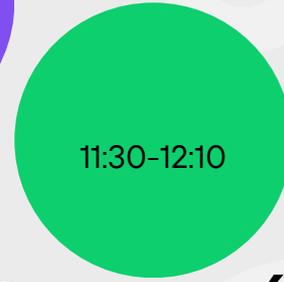
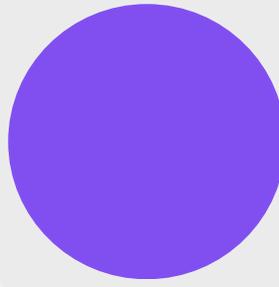
Inspirational Talk

11:10-11:30

She co-produced projects with companies from 15 countries, and her films have been distributed in over 50 territories worldwide. Her career is inextricably tied to Radu Jude's international parcours, as they worked together for 20 years on 21 films. Furthermore, she worked with prestigious directors such as Ivana Mladenovic, Alexandru Solomon, Răzvan Rădulescu, Tomasz Wasilewski, Hana Jusic, Drago Sholev, and was executive producer for the winner of the European Film Academy Awards and Oscar-nominated Toni Erdmann (*Maren Ade*, 2016).

Apart from her being the Chairperson of the European Film Academy, Ada Solomon is member of the board of the European Producers Club, a founding member of the Romanian Film Producers Alliance, financial consultant for ACE Producers, initiator of Pop-Up Residencies, external expert for the Creative Europe MEDIA programme, and former Executive President of European Women in Audiovisual – EWA Network.

Ada Solomon received the European Film Academy Award for contributions to the development of European co-productions – Prix Eurimages (Berlin, 2013), the Central European Initiative Award (Trieste, 2018), the Underground Spirit of Europe Award (Palić, 2021), and the Award of Excellence from the Czech Producers Association APA (Jihlava, 2022).



11:30-12:10

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Anna Adamus-Matuszyńska

Keynote



Anna ADAMUS-MATUSZYŃSKA, PhD, sociologist and public relations specialist, professor at the University of Economics in Katowice. At present, her research interests are primarily situated within the field of public relations (PR) understood as an academic discipline, with particular emphasis on decision-making processes in PR practice. Lecturer in sociology with specialization in conflict management, organizational sociology, public relations, and communication studies. Instructor in communication skills, negotiation and mediation, human resource management, conflict management, public relations, and change management.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

11:30-12:10

From Exploitation to Care: How Women's Perspectives Redefine Ethics and Sustainability in Creative Practice

Anna ADAMUS MATUSZYŃSKA

— Abstract —

The creative industries constitute significant agents of cultural transformation and are critical drivers of the transition toward sustainability. Through the content they produce, these sectors shape social values and behavioural patterns. In addition, they play a key role in translating complex scientific knowledge into affective narrative forms that are accessible, emotionally resonant, and memorable.

Embedding Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into creative industries has moved from theory to action, driving sustainability across workflows, projects, and institutions. However, despite this momentum, only a small number of studies have seriously explored how sustainability and ethical concepts are woven into actual creative processes within the industry.

Ethics in this field has been radically reshaped, especially in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal and the MeToo movement. These watershed moments have forced a hard reset of the norms that govern how people relate to each other at each stage of creative production. That's why weaving clear, explicit, and rigorously tested ethical principles into every layer of the creative process is not optional; it is essential.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

From Exploitation to Care: How Women's Perspectives Redefine Ethics and Sustainability in Creative Practice

Anna ADAMUS MATUSZYŃSKA

Women play a crucial but complex role in the creative industries. They are often seen as key drivers of ethical and sustainability agendas yet continue to face deep structural inequalities. They play a key role in embedding ethical principles into the governance of creative companies to reduce power imbalances, gender discrimination, and wage gaps at the senior levels.

The core thesis of the article is that women's perspectives are a key force in transforming creative practices from exploitation to care and regeneration. It rests on the historically documented marginalisation of women in all artistic fields and on empirical evidence that, on average, women show greater sensitivity to social and environmental issues.

This sensitivity is seen to be partly shaped by the persistence of traditional gender roles assigned to women.

What transformations are urgently required? Women-led creative industries should systematically implement transparency mechanisms, proactively disseminate and institutionalise sustainability principles and practices, and prioritise sustainable development and ethical standards as central organising frameworks for their activities and decision-making processes in the creative industries.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

On Women of the Danube Delta as Strong and Skillful Managers of the Fishing Households. Only in Real Life, not on the Silver Screen

Oana IVAN, PhD

—— Author ——

Oana IVAN, PhD is an anthropologist specializing in visual anthropology and environmental anthropology (following a PhD obtained under joint supervision at the University of Kent, UK and Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania). She is also a director and producer of anthropological documentary films focused mainly on the interaction between human communities and the natural environment. Her research area includes natural protected areas, as well as social inclusion through filmmaking of marginalized communities. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the Documentary Film Department of the Faculty of Theatre and Film - Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

On Women of the Danube Delta as Strong and Skillful Managers of the Fishing Households. Only in Real Life, not on the Silver Screen

Oana IVAN, PhD

— Abstract —

Danube Delta UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, one of the biggest deltas in Europe, is being promoted today, around the globe, as an “untouched natural paradise and an unspoiled heaven”. Seventy years ago, during the socialist era, the Danube Delta had a completely different narrative. Under the communist ideology, nature had “to be conquered”, natural resources systematically and intensively exploited, and the fishermen, like brave soldiers, were at the center of the visual representations.

Starting with 1991, the Danube Delta became a strictly protected area, and the ecological discourse completely replaced the former narrative, with a new one, focused entirely on conservationist approach, grossly disregarding the millennia-long human presence and its constant interaction with the natural environment. At their best, the visual representations generally mention local communities, especially fishermen, reduced to the stereotypical images of “old, bearded man in a lonely boat”.

Based on anthropological research and film studies, this interdisciplinary inquiry discusses how, regardless of the century and ideology, these narratives lack almost completely women’s figure and representation. Relying on participant observation, oral history, and archive, as main research methods, the study argues that women have had a crucial role in the economic life of the Danube Delta fishing communities for the past hundred years. One of the main research questions of this study is: how are women portrayed, if present at all, in documentaries? The analysis of two documentaries produced by Sahia studio in the 1960s, and of other visual products, shows us that women are hardly ever mentioned, and if they are, their representation lacks individuality, power and agency.

The historical look over the pre-, communist and post-communist eras points out the pivotal role of women in the local economies of the Danube Delta, which irrespective of the political and economic regime, is being disregarded in most visual representations.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

12:30-12:50

Collaborative Filmmaking: Actress as a Document Representing The Aftermath of a War

**Goda JANUSKEVICIUTE,
Yelyzaveta HRYTSENKO**

— Authors —

Goda JANUSKEVICIUTE – Film Directing Master of Arts Degree student at the National Film School (KIMO) of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LMTA). The artistic enquiry is improvisation in film: how to reach mastery in cinematography? During the master of film art studies, Goda delves into blending documentary and fiction in an improvisational manner, looking for cinematographic mastery by analyzing the works of auteur French-Belgian directors Varda, Akerman, and Dardennes. Debut Goda's debut fictional improvisational short "Present Continuous" (Dabartiste, 2026) awaits the scheduled national film festival premiere. The documentary short film "Home" (Namo, exp. 2026) had been invited to a keynote at the Association of Performing Arts Critics conference in Lithuania in 2025 on documentary and cross-disciplinary storytelling. Goda is a member of the Vilnius Actors Studio. She has extensive training in Sanford Meisner and Lee Strasberg acting techniques. For more than 15 years, she had practised contemporary dance, currently taking part in the Lithuanian Contemporary Dance Association activities. Currently, Januskeviciute also works as the Head of the Integrated Communications and Public Relations Program at the Lithuanian Journalism Centre (LZC) and is a Board Member at the Association of Lithuanian Cinema Culture (KKA). Previously, Goda worked in theatre, opera, journalism, and film festivals in Lithuania, Spain, France, and Germany, both on the creative side as well as communications. During her work for the "Moving Images – Open Borders" film festival network (MIOB), she was responsible for sustainability initiatives, inspired to deliver a more climate and community-friendly creative process.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Collaborative Filmmaking: Actress as a Document Representing The Aftermath of a War

**Goda JANUSKEVICIUTE,
Yelyzaveta HRYTSENKO**

— Authors —

Yelyzaveta HRYTSENKO – Theater and film actress, former member of the Vinnytsia M. Sadovsky State Academic Drama and Musical Theater ensemble. During 5 years at the theatre, Yelyzaveta created around 30 roles in dramatic performances and ballet dance productions, most prominent being Alice at the “Alice in Wonderland” by Louis Carroll, Marusya at the “Marusya Churay” by Lina Kostetnko, She at “Illusions” by Ivan Vyrupaev, Dorothy at the “Adventures in OZ”, Galya at the “Nazar Stodolya” by Taras Shevchenko, among others. She also worked as an Actress at Hooligan Theater, “Theatrical environment” Theatre, MON/PLAI creative company at Vinnytsia, Ukraine. Hrytsenko graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree as a Drama Artist from the Vinnytsia College of Culture and Arts named after M. Leontovych. She also graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Event Directing at the Luhansk State Academy of Culture and Arts in Kyiv. Yelyzaveta also worked as a Former Acting Teacher at the Children’s Theater in Vinnytsia “The Theater” and a cultural leader at children’s recreational organisation “Dubky”. In 2023-2024, she performed at the Vilnius Old Theater’ staged “The Amazing Spring”, written by Oleg Mikhailov, directed by Andrius Darella. Hrytsenko is a Co-Founder and Acting and Contemporary Culture Teacher at the creativity and arts studio “Meno respublika” in Vilnius, Lithuania. For more than 6 years, she has also been working as a photographer. One of the recent works is emigrated Ukrainian children photo stories. In 2023-2024 worked as a coordinator of the Ukrainian refugee support project. Currently resides in Vilnius, Lithuania.

HEROES

12:30-12:50

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Collaborative Filmmaking: Actress as a Document Representing The Aftermath of a War

**Goda JANUSKEVICIUTE,
Yelyzaveta HRYTSENKO**

— Abstract —

How to represent a war aftermath showcasing its atrocities without moving the whole film crew to dangerous areas? How to reflect the lives of the casualties in fiction, avoiding false directorial interpretations, over-dramatisation, and clichés?

Goda Januskeviciute, Master of Arts in Film Directing Student at the National Film School (KIMO) of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LMTA) had been working on three short films, fictional, documentary, and hybrid, collaborating with a Ukrainian actress, Yelyzaveta Hrytsenko, in an improvisational manner to reflect her personal story of having no place to come back at, and also including other Ukrainian artists – from DOP to other actors – to represent a polyphonic voices of those who experienced the Russia's full-scale invasion of the Ukraine. Co-creating with the Ukrainian actors during the improvisational scriptwriting, the director works under the influence of Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy of the "Other", Susan Sontag's "Regarding the Pain of Others", and the aesthetics as well as ethics of care.

Politically belonging to post-Soviet Lithuania, the director seeks solidarity with the trauma-experienced Ukrainian artists, including her own experience, reflecting long-buried trauma. Fictional short film "Present Continuous" (2026) was shot in Vilnius, Lithuania, showing how a Ukrainian artist tries to adapt running from a full-scale invasion, documentary short film "Home" (2026) happens meanwhile her coming back to Ukraine, and hybrid short film "Togetherness" (2027) was filmed on the road from Vilnius, Lithuania, to Ukraine, revealing the emotional state of the displaced.

Delving into acting improvisations, collaborative scriptwriting, idea generation, and decision-making is aimed at finding a form to inhabit the traumatic topic. Research methods include the elements of autoethnography, analysis of a discourse, devising and reflecting after the creative experiments, forming more free, co-authored, blending fiction and documentary directorial strategy.

Hopefully, building a polyphonic artistic "home" in a collaborative manner.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

12:50-13:10

My Place in Cinema – Film Education Project for Empowering Young Women

Evi KARAGEORGU, PhDc

— Author —

Evi KARAGEORGU is a cultural researcher, curator and artistic director of Meetings of Young European Cinema, the largest film festival in Bulgaria dedicated to children and young audiences. With more than a decade of experience in film education, programming and youth engagement, she has developed numerous initiatives that foreground cinema as a tool for critical thinking, creative expression and social inclusion.

She holds a Master's degree in European Studies with a focus on human rights and cinema, and her work increasingly centres on feminist perspectives, representation and the politics of visual storytelling. Since returning to Bulgaria in 2020, she has deepened her research on gendered stereotypes and the social constructs surrounding motherhood, exploring how women's autonomy and maternal identity are framed differently from men's parental roles in European cinema. Her forthcoming PhD project examines the double standards that normalise paternal absence while disciplining maternal agency, drawing inspiration from works such as *The Lost Daughter*, *Pieces of a Woman* and contemporary feminist documentary practices.

Evi is the creator of the two-year educational project *My Place in Cinema*, which brought films by women directors into schools across Bulgaria, opening space for honest conversations with teenage girls about gender inequality, stereotypes and lived experiences of injustice. The project blended film pedagogy, creative workshops and participatory arts practices to empower young women to author their own narratives and question dominant representations of femininity.

Her broader work integrates cultural policy, youth empowerment and interdisciplinary approaches to cinema, reflecting her commitment to strengthening film literacy, amplifying women's voices and building more equitable creative ecosystems.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

12:50-13:10

My Place in Cinema – Film Education Project for Empowering Young Women

Evi KARAGEORGU, PhDc

— Abstract —

“My Place in Cinema / Моето място в киното” is an educational-cinema initiative aimed at girls aged 12–19 in Bulgaria, which explores how female authorship in cinema can serve as a catalyst for self-reflection, empowerment and cultural transformation. Drawing on a curated selection of films by women directors (including works by Agnès Varda, Cecilia Mangini, and other contemporary European voices), the project invites young participants to unpack gendered narratives, challenge stereotypes and imagine new possibilities for female presence both on-screen and behind the camera. In line with the conference themes of leadership, creativity and interdisciplinary perspectives in women’s cinema, this project positions adolescents not only as passive viewers but as co-creators: through guided sessions of film-analysis, peer-based reflection, and practical media creation exercises, participants craft their own narratives, deconstruct mainstream images of womanhood and author their own “place in cinema”. Guided workshops include scripting short scenes, constructing visual collages from contemporary media, and creating analogue auto-portraits – methods that bridge film studies, gender theory and arts education while nurturing media literacy and creative agency. By working in collaborative teams and presenting their own micro-projects, girls develop leadership qualities: they become peer-mentors, shape discourse and gain visibility in an environment where female authorship remains under-represented. The project also fosters interdisciplinary connections—cinema intersects with pedagogy, sociology of gender, visual arts and youth work—offering a model of film education that advances feminist perspectives and cultivates future creative professionals. “My Place in Cinema” thus contributes to the ongoing dialogue on structural inequities in the film world, the gendered gaze and the power of film to transform individual and collective subjectivities. It offers empirical insight into how early engagement with women’s cinema and participatory arts education can nurture leadership, challenge gendered hierarchies and build resilient creative communities for the next generation.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

13:10-13:30

The Film Camera as a Tool for Unlocking Adolescents' Creativity. Case Study: Maria

Alma LASCU, PhDc

— Author —

Alma LASCU is an actor, theatre pedagogue, and doctoral researcher at the National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale" (UNATC), with over fifteen years of experience in non-formal education through theatre and film. Her doctoral research, titled "Theatre as Nonformal Education for Adolescents: Theories, Concepts, and Methods," investigates how creative practices can support adolescents' identity development, emotional expression, and access to personal agency. Her work focuses particularly on the formation of acting trainers capable of guiding young people toward discovering their creative and identity-related potential.

Throughout her professional activity, Alma has coordinated numerous workshops and extracurricular programmes dedicated to children and adolescents, developing a pedagogical approach centred on creativity, personal expression, and experiential learning. Her methodology integrates classical acting techniques—such as improvisation, embodied expression, and presence training—with interdisciplinary insights drawn from modern pedagogy, developmental psychology, and applied neuroscience. In her work with adolescents, Alma aims to create a safe, inclusive, and dynamic learning environment in which young people can explore identity, regulate emotion, and cultivate creative confidence, regardless of their future professional choices. Her practice places strong emphasis on autonomy, reflective thinking, and the encouragement of curiosity and authenticity. Her recent research includes an examination of the pedagogical use of the film camera in adolescent creative training, with attention to how filmed exercises support meta-reflection, self-observation, and the integration of cognitive and emotional processes. Through both her artistic and academic work, Alma seeks to contribute to a contemporary pedagogy of theatre and film that combines art, science, and empathy to support the identity and emotional development of adolescents.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

13:10-13:30

The Film Camera as a Tool for Unlocking Adolescents' Creativity. Case Study: Maria

Alma LASCU, PhDc

— Abstract —

This presentation explores the pedagogical potential of the film camera in creative work with adolescents, arguing that filming theatrical processes (training through games and acting techniques) can function as both an accelerator of neuroplasticity and a catalyst for identity exploration during adolescence. Neuroscience studies (Hohnen, Gilmour and Murphy, 2021) show that the adolescent brain undergoes one of its most intense phases of neural reorganization, characterized by prefrontal cortex remodeling and heightened limbic activity. This temporary imbalance—between the late maturation of executive functions and strong emotional reactivity—creates a unique window for creative, experiential, and expressive interventions. The film camera provides what neurocognitive theories describe as meta-reflective feedback: adolescents observe their own bodies, voices, emotional responses, and narrative choices, activating right-hemisphere processes (imagery, intuition, narrative thinking) alongside left-hemisphere functions (planning, linguistic analysis, self-regulation). Filming theatrical exercises in iterative cycles supports inter-hemispheric integration, a concept grounded in Siegel's work (2020), which links integrated neural processing to emotional stability and creative flexibility. The study includes a case analysis of Maria, an adolescent who, through theatre-film workshops, gradually discovered her creative potential—not in acting, but in modelling, visual expression, and later in creative leadership. As part of the "Storytelling Night" team, she collaborates with professionals from various fields to share career journeys with students, illustrating also how artistic intervention can spark identity and vocational transformation. Aligned with the conference theme, the presentation also examines the role of trainers, highlighting the contribution of female leadership in creative educational spaces. Social psychology research indicates that female mentors more strongly activate neural networks associated with empathy and co-regulation (Carter, 2019), creating emotionally safe environments essential for artistic and personal exploration. Thus, the film camera becomes an interdisciplinary tool—artistic, cognitive, and formative—capable of revealing, shaping, and amplifying adolescents' creative potential.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

13:30-13:50

On Making “Between the Edges of the Day” – a Short Film About Domestic Violence, Based on the Co-writer’s Personal Story

Andreea LĂCĂTUȘ, PhDc

— Author —

Andreea LĂCĂTUȘ, PhDc, is a filmmaker and cultural producer, currently director of One World Romania IDHRFF.

Her work spans film, research, and community-based cultural practices, with a focus on collective creative processes and horizontal modes of collaboration.

She experiments with different media and is interested in how shared authorship shapes both artistic outcomes and ethical approaches to storytelling.

Since 2018, she has developed various access-to-culture, educational, and community programs addressing social justice, representation, and audience engagement.

As a CEC ArtsLink Fellow, she collaborated with the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), examining the long-term impact of cultural initiatives in vulnerable communities.

She is currently pursuing a PhD in filmmaking, focusing on the ethics of film production and the representation of vulnerable communities in fiction, and teaches screenwriting.

Her research and artistic work explore the intersections between personal narrative, vulnerability, and care-informed film production.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

13:30-13:50

On Making “Between the Edges of the Day” – a Short Film About Domestic Violence, Based on the Co-writer’s Personal Story

Andreea LĂCĂTUȘ, PhDc

— Abstract —

This proposal presents a case study on the ethical challenges encountered during the development and production of a short film („Between the edges of the day”) addressing domestic violence, based on the childhood experiences of the film’s producer and co-writer. The project engages with questions of representation, vulnerability, and responsibility when transforming lived trauma into cinematic narrative. The study examines how women’s collaborative authorship shaped both the film’s creative process and its ethical framework, foregrounding the complex dynamics that arise when personal history becomes artistic material. The presentation analyses two interconnected dimensions. The first concerns issues of representation: the risks of retraumatization for the co-author, the potential for reproducing stereotypes surrounding domestic violence, and the dilemmas related to gendered depiction and narrative framing. These questions are approached through feminist film theory and ethical storytelling practices, highlighting how women filmmakers negotiate authority, agency, and care when working with sensitive autobiographical material. The second dimension focuses on the production process and the ethical considerations involved in working with a child actor in a context of simulated vulnerability. This includes the criteria for casting, strategies for safeguarding the child’s emotional well-being, and the development of a controlled environment that preserves authenticity without exposing the young performer to harmful content. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives, from psychology, pedagogy, and film production, the case study reflects on the responsibilities of filmmakers when staging scenes that recreate traumatic realities. By mapping these challenges and the methods used to address them, the paper contributes to broader discussions on mentorship, collaborative authorship, and socially responsible filmmaking led by women. It argues that ethical awareness is not a limitation to creativity but a generative force that shapes narrative, aesthetics, and production practices, offering models for sustainable and empathetic creative work within the film industry.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Constructing the Female Subject: The Case of Poor Things (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2023)

Maria ANDRONIKOU, PhD

—— Author ——

Maria ANDRONIKOU, PhD, originally studied History of Art (BA Hons, University of London). She followed interdisciplinary routes during postgraduate studies: MA Visual Culture (Middlesex) & MResearch Humanities & Cultural Studies (London Consortium, University of London).

Her PhD (School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens) proposes a formalist analysis of production design via a close examination of the role of architecture. It has become a book and its English translation is shortly forthcoming from Macmillan Palgrave. She is currently pursuing postdoctoral research on architecture in the cinema at NTUA, and also teaches History of Art and Architecture at Stavrakos Film School in Athens.

She is co-editor of the forthcoming CILECT volume Teaching Production Design in the 21st Century.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Constructing the Female Subject: The Case of Poor Things (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2023)

Maria ANDRONIKOU, PhD

— Abstract —

By paying particular attention to issues of production and costume design, as well as the formation of the cinematic, the paper intends to focus on the gradual transformation of the-fantastical and distinctly out of the ordinary-character of Bella Baxter, in order to analyse the way it was created.

Via concentrating on the film's visual components, it will also attempt to foreground that architectural issues are of vital importance throughout. With the aim of showing that the variety of buildings featured, or the evolution of the cinematic space in general, correspond to the character's own, it will, thus, closely concentrate on the way sets -or elements of them- can be correlated with real architectural styles.

Bella's development will also be examined vis-à-vis issues relating to psychoanalysis, (as the character's growth and maturity seems distinctly at odds with Freud's theory of the psychosexual development of the subject), postmodern philosophy and earlier or more recent versions of feminist theory.

HEROES



14:10-14:30

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

The Woman on Screen Through the Lens of Men – Between Reality and Imagination

Laura LĂZĂRESCU-THOIS, PhD

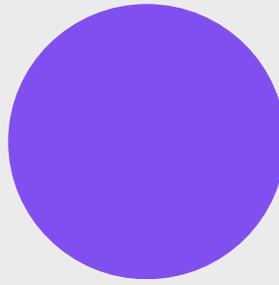
— Author —

Laura LĂZĂRESCU-THOIS graduated in 2008 from the Multimedia, Sound and Film Editing Department of the Film Faculty of the “I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film of Bucharest. In 2012 she obtained her PhD. degree in the field of Cinematography and Media, with a research topic relating to sound in the American animation film.

In 2018 she finished a second study, BA in marketing at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. She works in both film and video production (as an editor, sound designer or director), and in the marketing field, being responsible for the strategy, the content or the online marketing for different festivals, agencies, or clients. Laura also published three books and various articles and market research articles, which she presented at different international conferences.

Currently she is an Associate Professor, PhD., teaching at the Sound Department of the Film Faculty of UNATC.

HEROES



14:10-14:30

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

The Woman on Screen Through the Lens of Men – Between Reality and Imagination

Laura LĂZĂRESCU-THOIS, PhD

— Abstract —

My presentation will focus on the portrayal of women corresponding to the category of Doppelgänger/double in several representative films.

The chosen type of Doppelgängerinnen is the one triggered by men's psyche, by their desires or traumas.

Among the questions that I will try to put to the debate are the following:

How are the women represented on screen?

Are there any specific clichés or stereotypes in the portrayal of women, according to the imagination of men?

In which way do men change their perception of the double compared to the real version?

Some of the films I will mention are: Lost Highway (David Lynch), Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock), Black Swan (Darren Aronofsky), Possession (Andrzej Zulawski), La double vie de Veronique (Krzysztof Kieslowski), Pâfekuto burû (Satoshi Kon), Trzecia część nocy (Andrzej Zulawski), Cam (Daniel Goldhaber), etc.

The presentation will focus on the narrative structure of the selected films, the characterization of the main characters, the specific elements of cinematic language, while analyzing the interdependence between masculine and feminine characters.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

15:30-15:50

Feminist Creative Leadership Through the Body: A Diffractive Reading of Adina Pintilie and Ana Lungu

Ruxandra Maria GHIȚESCU, PhDc

— Author —

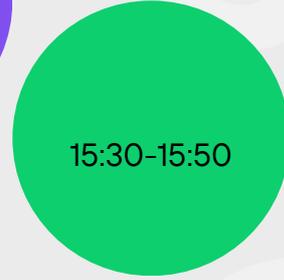
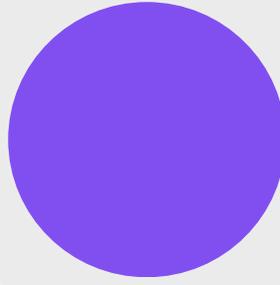
Ruxandra Maria GHIȚESCU is a Romanian filmmaker and screenwriter. She is a graduate student of the Media Art School, in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Currently she is a PHD student at the University of Bucharest, "Space, Image, Text, Territory" Doctoral School, Center of Excellence in Image Studies and works as an associate lecturer at the Ovidius University, Constanța. "Otto the Barbarian", her debut feature, premiered in 2020 and received several awards. was awarded the prize for Best Romanian Film at TIFF 2021, Cluj, Alexandru Tatos AWARD, UCIN 2022 and Best Romanian Film at the RRC Award Gala, 2022.

"Clara" directed by Sabin Dorohoi is her third feature screenplay.

The film premiered in 2023 at Cottbus International Film Festival where it received the Audience Award , in May 2024 it screened at South East European Film Festival Los Angeles where it won the BRIDGING THE BORDERS award for best feature film.

HER



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Feminist Creative Leadership Through the Body: A Diffractive Reading of Adina Pintilie and Ana Lungu

Ruxandra GHIȚESCU, PhDc

— Abstract —

This paper proposes a diffractive reading (Barad, van der Tuin) of Adina Pintilie's *Touch Me Not* (2018) and Ana Lungu's *Self-portrait of a Dutiful Daughter* (2015), mobilizing the affective dimensions of Sedgwick's reparative reading, Alaimo's trans-corporeality, and Butler's performativity. Instead of aligning the films along a comparative or oppositional axis, the analysis follows the patterns of interference they produce when read through one another - tracing how each work renders visible different modalities of corporeal agency and creative authorship.

Pintilie's film places spectators and performers within a shared tactile field, foregrounding bodily permeability and the vulnerability of contact. These interactions materialize Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality: bodies, environments, cinematic apparatuses interact, shaping one another. From a Sedgwickian perspective, these encounters create reparative spaces. Lungu, by contrast, works with micro-gestures - hesitations, pauses or quiet refusals and a minimalist aesthetic that exposes the making of gender norms as theorized by Butler. Her film turns everyday domestic spaces into arenas where femininity is rehearsed and reconfigured, making them a fertile ground for reading them through Sedgwick's formulation of "weak theory".

Read diffractively, the films generate a shared epistemic field in which corporeality functions not as a theme but as a method of inquiry: a way of producing knowledge.

Their encounter reveals forms of feminist creative leadership that do not rely on directorial authority or expressive mastery, but on redistributing agency across bodies, collaborators, and cinematic apparatuses.

Together, the films articulate alternative modes of creative affirmation in contemporary Romanian cinema - modes grounded in care, dialogue, and embodied risk. They propose feminist authorship as a relational practice of world-making, where meaning arises not from control but from the capacity to remain with uncertainty, to work through affect, and to allow vulnerability to become a generative artistic force.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

15:50-16:10

Reclaiming the Gaze: Feminist Spectatorship and Creative Resistance in Maryam Tafakory's Irani Bag

Adela CHIRU, PhD

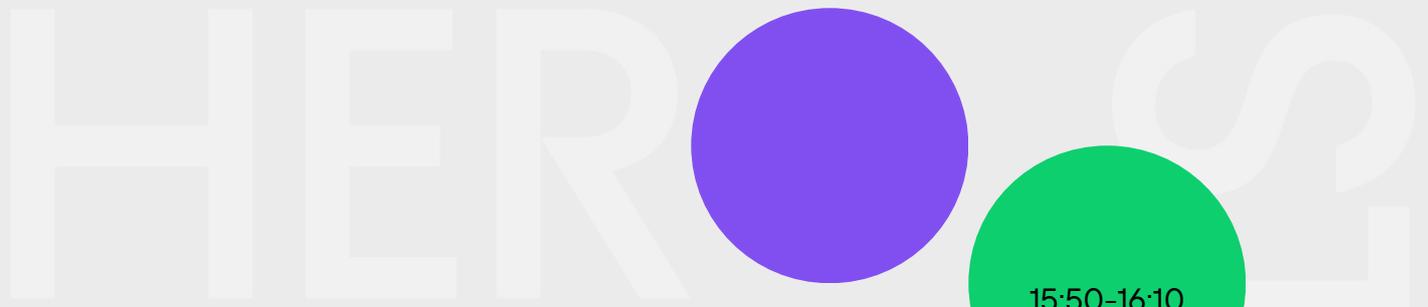
— Author —

Adela CHIRU is an Assistant Professor at the University of Bucharest's Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures. She holds a PhD from the University of Tehran, making her the only Romanian scholar to earn a doctoral degree in Iran (a background that offers cultural and linguistic insight into contemporary Iranian society and its visual and literary production). Her research focuses on modern Persian literature, Iranian cinema, translation studies, and the socio-political dynamics shaping cultural expression in Iran.

Chiru's interdisciplinary work emphasizes gender representation and women's narratives across literature and film. Her studies examine narrative strategies used to depict marginalized or silenced women, a perspective she now applies to Iranian cinema through research on linguistic expression and censorship. She has also published on social and linguistic dimensions in Asghar Farhadi's films.

Beyond her academic work, Chiru serves on the advisory board of the Encyclopaedia Iranica and is an active member of the Association for Iranian Studies and the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies.

She contributed to several Iranian literary journal editorial boards and organized the First International Conference on Iranian Studies in Romania, Bridging Past, Present, and Future.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Reclaiming the Gaze: Feminist Spectatorship and Creative Resistance in Maryam Tafakory's Irani Bag

Adela CHIRU, PhD

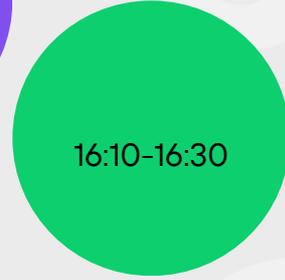
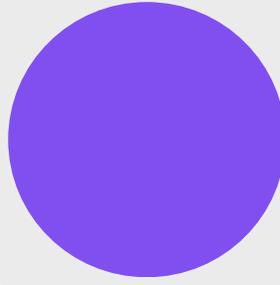
— Abstract —

How can cinema embody forbidden touch and interrupted gazes under state censorship? This presentation explores Marayam Tafakory's "Irani Bag" (2020) through feminist film theory and essay film aesthetics, examining the politics of gaze and touch in Iranian cinema. Drawing on Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze (1973), it analyzes how "Irani Bag" repositions the handbag as a coded prosthetic for denied bodily contact, using split-screen montage, textual overlays, and key scenes from post-revolution Iranian cinema (1990-2018) to challenge dominant representations of female subjectivity.

The film's tactile poetics are further illuminated through Laura Marks's concept of haptic visuality (2000), which helps decode how close-ups of bag surfaces, gestures, and hands evoke sensory memory and modes of "touch without touching". The layering of the sound design also amplifies this embodied spectatorship, generating a perpetual space in which visibility and erasure, body and object, self and screen remain in constant negotiation.

By situating "Irani Bag" at the intersection of feminist film politics and interdisciplinary cultural production, this presentation highlights Tafakory's work as an innovative intervention in Iranian women's cinema, fostering critical dialogue on identity, censorship, and resistance, and it offers insights into how visual arts, media studies, and film can collaboratively advance feminist discourses on representation and subjectivity in restrictive sociopolitical contexts.

HER



16:10-16:30

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

The Power of Gentleness in the Films of Claire Denis

Lucia CHICOŞ, PhD

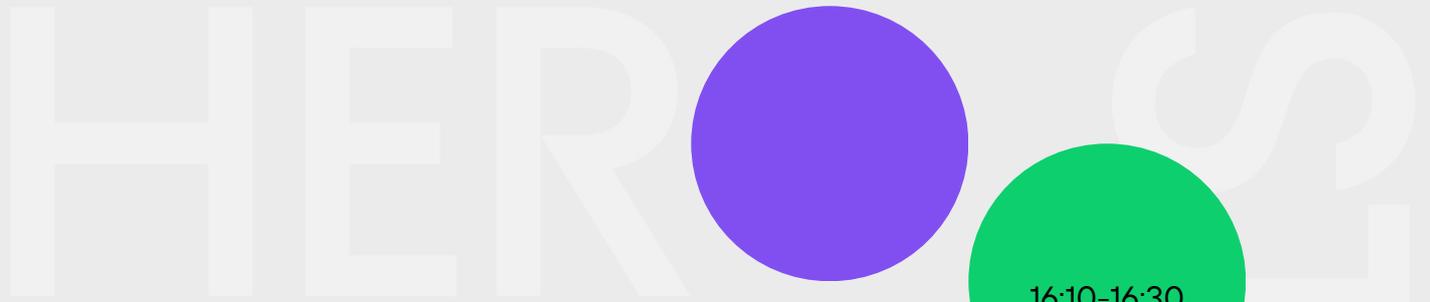
— Author —

Lucia CHICOŞ (b. 1998) is an emerging Romanian film director and a teaching assistant at UNATC – National University of Theatre and Film I.L. Caragiale Bucharest. She is currently developing her debut feature film, “Horseshoe”, based on an original screenplay by novelist Lavinia Branişte and produced by ICON Production. Chicoş is a UNATC graduate, with a BA and MA in Film Directing, and in 2024 she successfully defended her PhD thesis entitled “Cinema as Art of Presence. An emotionally intelligent approach to teaching film directing”.

Her previous work as a film director spans both fiction and documentary, short and feature-length films. Her short fiction film “Contraindications” received 3rd Prize in Cinéfondation at the 2020 Cannes Film Festival, a Young Hope nomination at the 2020 Gopo Awards, and Best Romanian Film at CineMAiubit ISFF. She later directed the fiction shorts “There Will Come Soft Rains” and “Berliner Kindl”, the latter earning a Special Jury Mention at TIFF in 2023. Her documentary work includes the short “Our Daily Work” (Ji.hlava IDFF 2020, Best Short Documentary nomination Gopo Awards 2020) and the feature-length “Where I Am Now”, co-directed with Alexandra Diaconu and selected at IDFA – International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam in 2022.

Chicoş is also interested in programmes and initiatives that shape teaching cinema as socio-emotional education for children and adolescents, and in feminist-inspired approaches to both industry and formal education practices. She often takes part as a trainer in various film workshops and projects dedicated to children and teenagers.

LLC



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

The Power of Gentleness in the Films of Claire Denis

Lucia CHICOŞ, PhD

— Abstract —

Power that is also soft, nobility that is also humble, sweetness that is also intelligent, subtlety that is nevertheless striking, fragility that has the potential to subvert the status quo. In her 2013 essay, "Power of Gentleness. Meditations on the Risk of Living", French philosopher and psychoanalyst Anne Dufourmantelle reclaims the concept of "gentleness", understood as a form of strength without aggression, and frames it as a remarkable force of resistance within ethics and politics. The power of gentleness consists of its transformative ability over things and beings, a power that determines the ripening of what is until then idle within the thing itself. But nowadays gentleness is being sold to us in the diluted form of "mawkishness" or incorporated into the discourse of "self-improvement" industries that often denies the darker, more confused instances of human experience, arresting its real potential. Dufourmantelle explores the concept of gentleness not only through traditional philosophical means of inquiry, but also through sensory experiences that define it, highlighting its existence at the crepuscule of materiality and immateriality, of touch and thought, of intelligence and feeling. This presentation imagines the cinema of Claire Denis as an inspiring embodiment of such an exploration. The opposite of gentleness, Dufourmantelle argues, is not brutality or violence, but the counterfeit of gentleness, which perverts it by imitating it. By resisting sentimentality, and through its treatment of carnality, cruelty, the relationship between bodies and spaces, and the pacing of storytelling and shots, Denis's work unfolds as rich in sensory experiences of gentleness. While themes such as postcolonialism and the superimposition of the personal with the historical already make Denis's films readily lend themselves to political interpretations, Dufourmantelle's poetical approach enables us to further explore the filmmaker's cinematic choices as more subtle, unconventional ways of creating empowering representations of otherness.



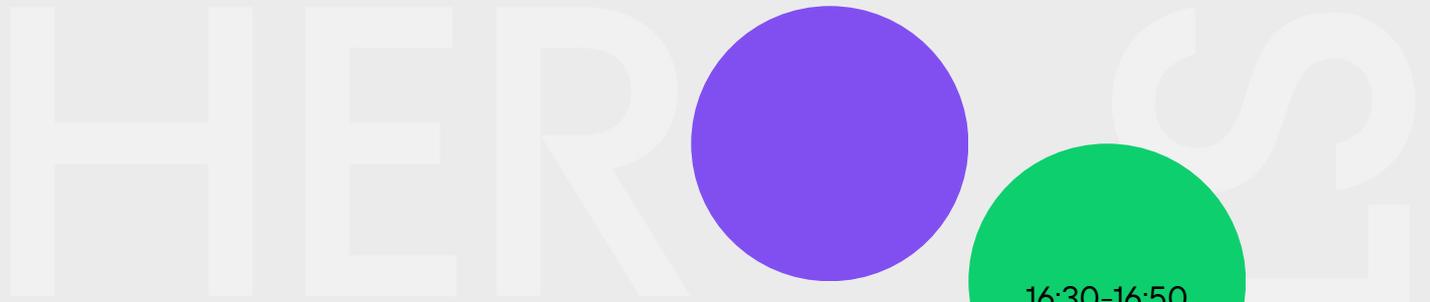
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Cute but Psycho. Multimodal Metaphor, Humour and Femininity in Female-Led Horror Contemporary Cinema

Teodora VASILESCU, PhDc

—— Author ——

My name is **Teodora Vasilescu**, and I am a second-year PhD student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, where I research how literature and film use conceptual metaphors to construct identity, and how these metaphors transform when literary works are adapted for the screen. My research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating cognitive linguistics, literary studies, film theory, and philosophy to analyse how metaphors influence identity. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Literature and a Master of Arts in English Applied Linguistics, both from the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Bucharest. Additionally, I have completed a Master's degree in Cognitive Science – Mind the Brain! at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Cute but Psycho. Multimodal Metaphor, Humour and Femininity in Female-Led Horror Contemporary Cinema

Teodora VASILESCU, PhDc

— Abstract —

In this paper, I adopt a comparative case study framework to analyse how multimodal metaphors interact with humour in contemporary female-led horror cinema. I focus on four films: Karyn Kusama's *Jennifer's Body* (2009), a feminist teen zombie satire, Anna Biller's *The Love Witch* (2016), a retro-camp occult romance, Coralie Fargeat's *The Substance* (2024), a cyclical body horror dystopia; and Lynne Ramsay's *Die My love* (2025), a woman's descent into postpartum psychosis. Each film uses humour and metaphor to (re)create different narratives of the unhinged woman trope in media. Through modes such as framing, decor, colour palettes, embodied gesture, sound design, and *mise-en-scène*, cinematic multimodal metaphors trigger both emotional and culturally coded cognitive expectations (Forceville 2006). Inspired by Judith Butler's theory on gender performativity and integrating current feminist perspectives on female rage and agency, I will look at how the female characters in these films express femininity (Butler 1988). Seen through stereotypical filters, these metaphorical mappings are not only the cognitive containers for femininity (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) but also mechanisms that produce (dark) humour, irony, and satire. In these contexts, humour is produced due to script opposition (Raskin, 1985), when there is a conflict between concepts to create emotional effects: physical beauty and monstrosity/supernatural transformation; love and manipulation. The brain reframes and reinterprets the incongruity between what it expects and what is presented (Suls, 1972, 1983), and the aftermath can be both discomfort and laughter. As Krikmann (2003) states, "both metaphor and humour are embodied in texts with two planes of meaning." The blend of humour and horror transforms the female body into a social critique. By tracing these cognitive mappings across the cinematic corpus, the paper asks: how does contemporary horror cinema, through multimodal metaphor, reframe the concepts of madness, desire, and ageing concerning femininity and the unhinged woman aesthetic? How is the fear of female excess presented when subverted by humour?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

16:50-17:10

Dissolving the “Female/Male Gaze”: Individual Subjectivity as the Core of Auteur Vision

Teodora-Kosara POPOVA, PhDc

— Author —

Teodora-Kosara POPOVA is a film director, researcher, and assistant professor in Film and Television Directing at the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts (NATFA). Her doctoral research focuses on “The Evolution of Directorial Means of Expression in 21st Century Auteur Cinema,” examining how contemporary filmmakers develop innovative visual and narrative strategies and engage with authorial subjectivity. Her work integrates aesthetic, psychological, and theoretical perspectives, aiming to propose a framework for understanding the evolution of cinematic language in global auteur practices.

Alongside her academic work, Popova has directed documentary and narrative films, as well as social campaigns, commercials, music videos, and digital content. Her 2020 documentary *Tanda* was nominated for a Student Academy Award in the Foreign Documentary category, and her other short films have been selected and awarded at festivals worldwide.

Actively engaged in the international film community, Popova has served as a youth jury member at the Otranto Film Fund Festival (Italy) and Sofia Film Fest. Her work bridges theory and practice, exploring how contemporary auteur cinema evolves its expressive means while maintaining a nuanced understanding of psychological, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of the authorial gaze.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

16:50-17:10

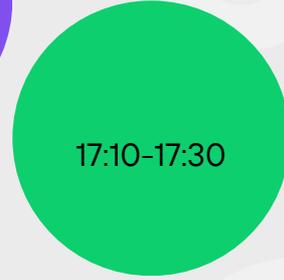
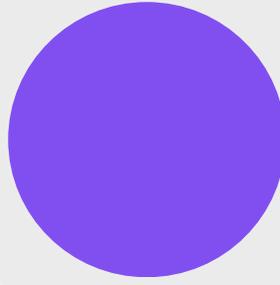
Dissolving the “Female/Male Gaze”: Individual Subjectivity as the Core of Auteur Vision

Teodora-Kosara POPOVA, PhDc

— Abstract —

This paper forms part of my doctoral research on the evolution of directorial expressive means in 21st-century auteur cinema. Within this broader framework, the present study focuses on Italian cinema as a case through which to reassess the relevance and limitations of gendered paradigms such as the “male” and “female” gaze. While feminist film theory—especially Laura Mulvey’s foundational articulation of the male gaze—remains indispensable for understanding classical Hollywood representational regimes, its uncritical extension into contemporary auteur practice risks obscuring the complexity of modern cinematic subjectivity. Through a close examination of key Italian auteurs, including Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, and Pier Paolo Pasolini, the paper demonstrates that qualities traditionally labelled as “feminine”—interiority, emotional nuance, fragmentary storytelling, symbolic layering—are not inherently tied to gender, but to the broader artistic logic of auteur cinema. These filmmakers construct deeply subjective female perspectives despite being male authors, revealing that gender alone cannot account for the subtleties of creative vision. At the same time, contemporary Italian voices such as Alice Rohrwacher complicate the discussion by exposing the paradox of the “minority privilege” attached to the category of the woman director, suggesting that gender classifications, while politically significant, can become aesthetically reductive. By integrating aesthetic, psychological, and theoretical approaches, the paper argues that authorial subjectivity in 21st-century cinema is shaped less by gender than by individual perceptual structures and evolving expressive tools. Although the analysis centres on Italian art cinema, the theoretical model proposed here is adaptable to other national contexts and underscores a broader tendency in contemporary auteur filmmaking: the dissolution of stable boundaries between “male” and “female” modes of seeing. Ultimately, the paper proposes a shift away from binary frameworks toward a more fluid, individualised understanding of the creative gaze.

HER



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

When Women Hold the Camera: What Happens When We Stop Waiting for Permission

Joy HARRIS BIRD

— Inspirational Talk —

Joy Harris Bird is an award winning filmmaker, author, and founder of JoyPark Studios, a creative production company in Houston, Texas, dedicated to telling culturally rich stories that inspire healing, hope, and representation. Her work spans animation, narrative film, documentary, and children's media, with a focus on centering the lived experiences of Black families and communities. Joy is the creator and director of the animated children's series *Kalifornia Dream*, currently streaming on Amazon Prime and Black Education Station. She is also the author of several children's books, including *Feeling Some Type of Way*, *Dream Big Dreams*, and *My Friend Gru*. Her short film *Bloom* was recently named a finalist in the International Indie Film and Screenplay Festival, noted for its emotional resonance and visual storytelling.

In addition to her work in film and literature, Joy is the founder of Dream Academy, an arts based educational platform that blends creativity, animation, and academic enrichment for young learners. Through this initiative, she develops interactive lessons, animated content, and culturally responsive storytelling designed to support confidence, identity formation, and imagination in children.

Joy's creative practice is deeply informed by interdisciplinary influences, drawing on education, psychology, faith, and community engagement. She is committed to creating content that uplifts underrepresented voices and expands how children and families see themselves on screen. Her upcoming narrative project, *Deliver Us*, continues her exploration of themes related to identity, trauma, and restoration. Joy believes that storytelling is a form of leadership and that when women take ownership of their creative voices, they help reshape culture, strengthen community, and open pathways for future generations of storytellers.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

17:10-17:30

When Women Hold the Camera: What Happens When We Stop Waiting for Permission

Joy HARRIS BIRD

— Abstract —

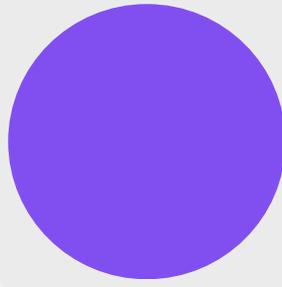
This talk examines the cultural and creative impact of women filmmakers through a practice based lens, exploring how women use storytelling, leadership, and interdisciplinary collaboration to reshape the film ecosystem. Drawing from my work as an independent filmmaker, author, and founder of JoyPark Studios, I present a reflective case study on how women enter filmmaking spaces without traditional access, yet create work that influences community identity, education, and cultural representation. The presentation is structured around three areas of inquiry. First, I explore authorship and representation by analyzing how women directors, particularly women of color, reframe narratives about family, identity, and belonging. Using examples from my animated children's series *Kalifornia Dream*, as well as my short film *Bloom*, I demonstrate how creative choices in storytelling shape emotional and cultural meaning for young audiences.

Second, I examine leadership and mentorship within creative industries. Through my development of *Dream Academy*, an animation based educational platform, I highlight how women build collaborative ecosystems that function as both artistic labs and community centered learning spaces. This section considers mentorship as both an artistic practice and a form of cultural sustainability.

Finally, I discuss the role of interdisciplinary work in expanding the presence and influence of women filmmakers. I reflect on how practices drawn from education, psychology, spirituality, and community engagement inform my creative process and contribute to broader conversations on equity and representation.

This talk argues that when women hold the camera, we create more than art. We generate cultural visibility, emotional restoration, and collective possibility. By moving beyond permission based frameworks, women storytellers expand the future of film and open pathways for generations to come.

HEROES OF



19:30-20:00

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Alexandra SOFONEA

— Inspirational Talk —



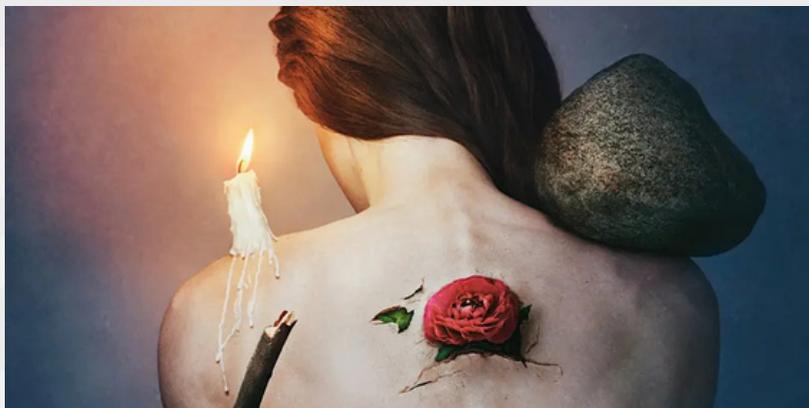
Alexandra SOFONEA, PhD is a research scientist at UNATC, working at the intersection of theatre, psychology, and neuroscience. Her expertise includes interdisciplinary art-based research, drama therapy-informed interventions, and social-emotional learning programs for youth. She has coordinated and contributed to projects such as T-NET, which integrate improvisation, storytelling, and psychoeducation to support emotional regulation and prevent bullying. Her academic work also extends to EEG-based investigations of emotional and embodied processes. She develops and teaches curricula on applied theatre, creative methodologies, and emotional development, emphasizing the role of artistic practice in wellbeing, reflection, and behavioral change. Her recent publications and conference presentations explore theatre games as experiential learning tools, narrative identity in youth, and the contribution of interdisciplinary collaborations between the performing arts and the sciences to understanding human emotion and learning.

HEROES

20:00-22:00

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Trauma and Storytelling – Explore Healing Through Art and Science —— Screening & Discussion ——



Presentation of the Swedish theatre play **Barrikad** (performed in Swedish with English subtitles). Before the performance, **Dr. Katy Robjant, Dr. Sabine Schmitt, and Dr. Susanne Axelsson** will offer a brief introduction to the NETfacts intervention approach. After the play, a discussion with the participants will be hosted by the director of the production, **Emil Nilsson Mäki**.

How do we heal from trauma in a world which often stigmatises survivors of violence? Introducing *barrikad*, a theater play co-created by survivors, told in their own words. We explain our therapeutic approach (NETfacts) to healing individuals and communities, and ending the conspiracy of silence that so often surrounds trauma.

Gain insights from trauma experts, engage in meaningful discussions, and experience the power of narrative in healing while watching the theater play *barrikad* in Swedish with English subtitles - join us for this transformative evening that combines science, art and conversation!

More information about the theater play in Umeå, Sweden, can be found here: <https://www.skuggteatern.com/programme/barrikad>

Invited event by Her Story, Her Future, and organized by Vårsta Diakoni in cooperation with vivo international e.V.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

Alexia MUIÑOS RUIZ

Keynote



Alexia MUIÑOS RUIZ is a filmmaker born in La Coruña, Spain. She received her MS in Chemistry and studied Violoncello at the Conservatory of Music before leaving for Barcelona where extended her education by graduating in Film Studies and completed her training with a scholarship in New York City. Expert with over 18 years of experience in the audiovisual industry, both on the creative side, as a scriptwriter, producer and director, and on the backstage of the industry, as a lecturer in seminars, a member of juries, a programmer or a speaker in numerous panels. She has directed and produced several award-winning short films (En RE DO, Domingo por la Mañana) and her award-winning debut feature Noche Transfigurada (Cartagena de Indias Film Festival, among others). Her recent film work includes the short Asuntos Domésticos (2015), which received over 70 international selections and multiple awards. Now, she's working on her first feature documentary Trapped in Ice, focusing on Women's rights, which has been selected for La Bonne's 9 Months Laboratory in Barcelona. She is also developing the historical drama series La Conjura de los Soñadores. She is a great connoisseur of the European gender scene and a strong advocate for Gender Equity. She's a founding member of Dones Visuals. She joined European Women's Audiovisual Network in 2013 and since 2024, as its Executive Director. She has devised ad hoc programming for film professionals combining her interest in science and sustainability with gender equity. Deeply committed to the women's cause. She has attended masterclasses with Agnès Varda, Abbas Kiarostami, Jane Campion, Céline Sciamma and Mark Cousins. She has also worked for several magazines as a writer and film critic. Alexia has recently founded her company Marineda Films.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

11:40-12:00

Mentorship as Creative Leadership: Transforming Women's Voices in Screenwriting Workshops. A Case Study of SYAA

Raluca MĂNESCU, PhDc

— Author —

Raluca MĂNESCU is a screenwriter and doctoral researcher at UNATC, focusing on collaborative authorship, women's creative practices, and the relationship between personal experience and screenwriting craft. She is a mentor in the SYAA program, part of the ANIMEST International Animation Film Festival, where she works with young female writers on developing their voices through dialogue, experimentation, and group-based feedback. Her practice combines screenwriting for film and series with an interest in how creative communities shape confidence, ethical decision-making, and authorship. Her current research and projects explore themes such as trauma, mentorship, agency, and the ways women navigate leadership and emotional labor in contemporary storytelling spaces.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

11:40-12:00

Mentorship as Creative Leadership: Transforming Women's Voices in Screenwriting Workshops. A Case Study of SYAA

Raluca MĂNESCU, PhDc

— Abstract —

What actually happens inside a screenwriting workshop when women mentor other women?

Drawing on my experience in SYAA, the screenwriting program of the ANIMEST International Animation Film Festival, this presentation looks at the ways group dialogue, peer feedback, and personal narrative material shape a writer's voice long before a screenplay takes form. I explore how trust is built, how women learn to speak openly about personal experiences and how vulnerability can slowly turn into a creative tool rather than something to hide.

In this presentation, I share examples of how group dialogue, emotional work, and peer support turn uncertainty into authorship and hesitation into agency.

Instead of seeing mentorship as "support work", I view it as a form of creative leadership. I argue that women-led mentorship spaces are not simply supportive environments, but actual engines of leadership, confidence, and ethical decision-making.

The talk highlights why such spaces matter and how they contribute to a more diverse and responsible storytelling culture.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

12:00-12:20

Authentic Motherhood in Contemporary Auteur Cinema: Between Lived Experience and Representation

Evi KARAGEORGU, PhDc

— Author —

Evi KARAGEORGU, PhDc, is a film curator, cultural researcher, and artistic director of Meetings of Young European Cinema, the largest Bulgarian festival dedicated to children and young people. With a background in cultural studies and a master's degree in European Studies, her work focuses on the intersection of cinema, gender, and human rights. Since returning to Bulgaria in 2020, she has developed a strong research interest in women's rights and the social constructions surrounding motherhood, particularly the moral double standards that continue to shape women's lives and their representations on screen.

Over the past 10 years, Evi has led numerous film education initiatives, workshops, cineconcerts, and youth programs, creating accessible cultural experiences for young audiences. Her two-year educational project My Place in Cinema brought films by women directors to schools across Bulgaria, opening space for honest conversations about gender inequality, identity, and societal expectations.

As a researcher, she is particularly inspired by contemporary European auteurs and feminist documentary pioneers such as Agnès Varda and Cecilia Mangini. Her current work explores how cinema shapes understandings of motherhood and fatherhood, how young women internalize these images, and how auteur film can challenge dominant narratives by offering more authentic, complex representations of maternal experience.

Evi's perspective bridges practice and theory, blending cultural leadership with a commitment to feminist scholarship and socially engaged filmmaking.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

12:00-12:20

Authentic Motherhood in Contemporary Auteur Cinema: Between Lived Experience and Representation

Evi KARAGEORGU, PhDc

Abstract

This paper examines how contemporary auteur cinema negotiates the tension between the lived realities of motherhood and its persistent ideological constructions on screen. Despite significant social progress toward gender equality, cinematic motherhood often remains bound to moral expectations of self-sacrifice, emotional stability, and unconditional devotion—codes inherited from decades of patriarchal representation. Drawing on qualitative interviews with young mothers, this research investigates how their expectations around pregnancy, birth, and early postnatal life were shaped by films and series, and which contemporary screen narratives they perceive as authentically reflecting maternal experience. Their testimonies form the basis for a critical analysis of recent auteur works, including *The Lost Daughter* (Gyllenhaal, 2021), *Pieces of a Woman* (Mundruczó, 2020), *Aftersun* (Wells, 2022), *Nightbitch* (Heller, 2024), *Die My Love* (Ramsay, 2025) and the feminist documentary traditions of Agnès Varda and Cecilia Mangini.

The theoretical framework builds on Adrienne Rich's distinction between motherhood as institution and as experience, Julia Kristeva's reflections on maternal ambivalence, Sara Ruddick's conception of care as ethical practice, and Laura Mulvey's critique of the ideological construction of femininity in patriarchal cinema. Dina Iordanova's insights on European film culture further situate this discussion within a tradition of social realism and personal authorship.

By juxtaposing women's lived accounts with the narrative and stylistic strategies of auteur films, the paper argues that authenticity emerges not through verisimilitude alone but through a cinematic language that embraces vulnerability, ambivalence, temporal disruption, and the multiplicity of maternal identity. Ultimately, the study suggests that contemporary European cinema—building on a feminist lineage—offers vital spaces for reclaiming motherhood from myth and reimagining it as a complex, subjective, and deeply human experience.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

12:20-12:40

Black Soup: Alimentary Identity and the Politics of Memory and Resistance in Tania Licheuskaya's film „Čornaja poliŭka”

Valeria BARBAS, PhD

— Author —

Valeria BARBAS (b. 1984) is a mixed media artist, curator, born in Chişinău, the Republic of Moldova. She holds a B.A. (2001-06) and M.A. (2006-08) in Music Composition from the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts in Chişinău (AMTAP). She has taken electronic music courses with Mikhail Afanasiev (2005-06), has received a B.A. in Academic Singing from AMTAP (2002-07), and another B.A. in Painting from "I. Creangă" State Pedagogical University during her educational journey.

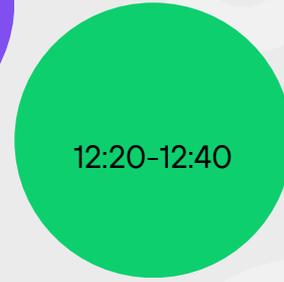
Served as a lecturer at AMTAP (2014-15) and currently holds the position of Senior Researcher at Moldova's Institute of Cultural Heritage (2010-24).

She holds a PhD in the study of art and culturology (2017), and has authored 73 scientific articles along with books that delves into the exploration of Moldova's contemporary art and new music phenomenon.

She is a member of the Moldovan Union of Composers and Musicologists, the Union of Painters, the Moldovan Association of Women in Cinematography (ANTHILL), as well as ALTERNATIVE Cinema and the Coalition of Independent Cultural Sector from the R. of Moldova.

From 2014 to 2016, she served as director/author of Ars Nova Radio Programs at Radio Moldova and director/author of the Zona Ars TV show (currently Nova Ars) at public television MOLDOVA 1 (2019-25).

HER



12:20-12:40

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

Black Soup: Alimentary Identity and the Politics of Memory and Resistance in Tania Licheuskaya's film „Čornaja poliŭka“

Valeria BARBAS, PhD

— Abstract —

The current article examines Čornaja poliŭka (2024), the experimental film by Belarusian filmmaker Tania Licheuskaya, focusing on the symbolic and semantic explorations of a soup – into a cultural and political instrument. In Eastern Europe, hospitality is traditionally expressed through ritualized culinary gestures, and within this ritual system, soup functions as a primary medium of welcome, identity and community memory. Using this cultural grammar with different ingredients, the film reconfigures the act of cooking as a gesture of refusal and resistance in the context of the war in Ukraine, so as facing Soviet ideological legacy “at the table”.

The experimental film Čornaja poliŭka by Tania Licheuskaya was selected for its world premiere at the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival (2024), presented at the Milan Machinima Festival in Los Angeles (2025), and screened at the Rencontres Internationales Traverse in Toulouse, France (2025), where it was praised for its innovative approach combining experimental form with activism in the East European context. At the center of the film lies čornaja poliŭka – a specific black soup made with animal blood, historically served in Belarus as a polite means of rejecting a marriage proposal. Licheuskaya transforms this culturally specific gesture into a metaphor for rejecting imperial intrusion. The domestic act of simmering, chopping, and stirring becomes a counter-language to military violence. Through this parallel narrative, the film asserts a form of culinary activism, where cooking becomes a tactic of reclaiming and redefining borders within the intimate space of the kitchen. A voice-over addressed to the “unwanted guest” is framing the invader as a figure of insatiable hunger, extending appetite into territorial conquest. The film continues a broader tradition of experimental cinema that mobilizes everyday gestures as tools of critique. In this framework, food becomes more than a cultural artifact: it becomes a performative marker of identity and a symbolic weapon that opposes violence through slowness, ritual and embodied memory.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

12:40-13:00

The Final Brushstroke – Color Grading as a Modern Visual Art Practice

Maria MURGU, PhD

— Author —

Maria MURGU, PhD, graduated Bucharest National University of Arts, Painting department. She is research assistant at CINETic UNATC since 2015. In 2017 she completed her Phd in Cinematography and Media and she activates as university lecturer in the Department of Film and TV Image of the Faculty of Film at UNATC.

The image concerns her from multiple perspectives. Between 2015 and 2019, Maria Murgu followed the art therapy training program within the Romanian Association of Expressive Therapies (ARTE) and Wiener Schule for Kunsttherapie (WSK – Austria). She facilitates processes of self-knowledge and development through creativity in diverse groups, training groups and individual sessions.

She has been active in cinematographic post-production, in the gradeing and digital intermediary studio since 2004. In addition to advertising productions for the Romanian and international market, his career as a colorist includes Romanian and international cinematographic creations that have obtained international distinctions (4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days, Death of the mister Lăzărescu, award-winning international productions in Hamburg, Sarajevo, Chicago, Israel).

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

12:40-13:00

The Final Brushstroke – Color Grading as a Modern Visual Art Practice

Maria MURGU, PhD

— Abstract —

This paper investigates color grading as a decisive expressive operation within contemporary cinematographic practice, situating it at the intersection of technological mediation and visual authorship. While the act of imagining precedes any visual creation, the materialization of the imagined image is always shaped by the filters—both conceptual and technical—through which it is produced. Drawing on an experimental inquiry into the transformation of raw footage through digital grading, the study demonstrates how adjustments in chromatic palette, luminance, contrast, and saturation reconfigure not only the representational qualities of the filmed objects but also the viewer's perceptual experience of temporality, spatiality, texture, and narrative emphasis. Within the broader context of the conference theme – Women in Film: Leadership, Creativity, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives – this research also reflects on the gendered dimensions of a field traditionally dominated by men, despite its inherently artistic and interpretative nature. By foregrounding the creative potential embedded in color grading, the paper highlights the importance of diversifying authorship in technically specialized areas of filmmaking, where women's perspectives and sensibilities remain underrepresented yet profoundly valuable. By placing cinematic color grading in dialogue with the long-standing traditions of pictorial arts, the paper argues that grading constitutes a generative, not merely corrective, intervention: the final articulation of a visual concept, akin to the painter's final brushstroke that completes the tableau. In the era of hybrid scenographies—where physical sets coexist with digitally constructed environments—grading emerges as a key locus of artistic intention, enabling filmmakers to refine, reinterpret, or reassert visual meaning within increasingly malleable digital workflows. The research ultimately positions cinematography as a contemporary continuation of the visual arts lineage, with color grading serving as the epistemic and aesthetic threshold where imagination, technology, and artistic vision converge.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

13:00-13:20

Women, Leadership, and AI in Audiovisual Production

Anna KASIMATI

Author ————— Inspirational Talk

Anna KASIMATI is the Head of the Creative Europe MEDIA Programme at the Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center (HFAC). She coordinates initiatives that support the development, production, and international promotion of Greek and European audiovisual works, aiming to strengthen creativity, visibility, and professional capacity within the Greek audiovisual sector.

She holds a BA and MA in Communication and Cultural Management, specializing in cultural policy and the strategic development of creative organizations. Her professional background includes the management of EU co-financed NSRF programmes and collaboration with European institutions and networks on audiovisual policy, creative industries, and digital transformation. Her work focuses on linking cinema with emerging technologies and fostering cooperation among European professionals and organizations.

She is a member of EFAD (European Film Agency Directors Association) and EFARN (European Film Agency Research Network), and serves as Executive Secretary of the SEE Cinema Network, contributing to regional collaboration and the international visibility of Southeast European cinema.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

Women, Leadership, and AI in Audiovisual Production

Anna KASIMATI

— Abstract — Inspirational Talk —

This talk examines the emergence of gender-specific leadership and creative decision-making models within contemporary European audiovisual production, focusing on how women articulate alternative modes of authority, collaboration, and authorship. While the industry has traditionally operated within hierarchical and male-dominated structures, recent developments reveal a shift toward more horizontal, care-informed, and community-driven approaches introduced by women directors, screenwriters, and producers. Over the past decades, women filmmakers have cultivated collaborative production cultures, generating notable transformations; however, progress remains uneven, fragile, and far from achieving systemic equality.

This partial progress coincides with a profound technological turning point. AI-driven tools—ranging from script generation and casting analytics to virtual production and automated editing—are reshaping creative labour and decision-making. The key question arises: will this technological transition accelerate women's access to leadership roles or reinforce existing inequities?

On one hand, AI can democratize production workflows by reducing resource barriers, enabling independent and women-led teams to innovate with limited budgets. Automated tasks may redistribute labour in ways that favour creative authorship and strategic leadership—areas where women have established strong footholds. On the other hand, research indicates risks: algorithmic bias, reinforcement of male-centric storytelling, and amplification of gatekeeping through non-diverse tech infrastructures. AI could centralize power, marginalizing voices already underrepresented in leadership. By situating gendered leadership models within this shift, we propose a dual framework for understanding AI as both opportunity and structural threat. The future of women's leadership in European audiovisual production will depend not only on creative practice but also on active engagement with the ethics, governance, and authorship implications of AI-driven filmmaking.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

13:20-13:50

The Algorithmic Gaze: Who Has Control Over Meaning?

Georgia MIHALCEA, PhDc

— Author —

Georgia MIHALCEA is a filmmaker and architect of narrative systems finalizing her PhD in Cinema and Media at UNATC Bucharest. Her transdisciplinary research bridges cinema and information architecture to develop Semantic Filmmaking - a framework for creating "AI-ready" narratives wired for the evolving Web. Recognized for "Pedagogical Innovation" at the 18th annual International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation (ICERI 2024, Seville) for her work on the formation of structured vocabularies of emotions in the transition from creative and digital numbness to resonance, Georgia focuses on shaping the digital architectures required to secure the longevity, integrity, and interoperability of artistic work in the hypermedia landscape.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

13:20-13:50

The Algorithmic Gaze: Who Has Control Over Meaning?

Georgia MIHALCEA, PhDc

— Abstract —

The contemporary film industry faces a dual systemic crisis: an “architectural inequality” rendering films invisible to algorithms due to pre-internet workflows that result in films as “black boxes” or “unusable data” severely limiting their visibility and integrity, and a “production barrier” gated by prohibitive costs, financing models, and distribution patterns. This reinforces a capital-driven narrative, leaving independent creators vulnerable to the “Algorithmic Gaze”- an external system that misinterprets, curates, and stereotypes their work, effectively trapping films in a digital “Silent Era.” For women filmmakers, this creates a double marginalization - cultural and algorithmic. This presentation proposes a paradigm shift to Meaning-First Cinema. Responding to the industry’s post-factum “patchwork” solutions (data tagging, content enrichment, SEO, paid advertising), I introduce a framework that approaches film as a self-communicating narrative system, enabling the creator to evolve into an “Architect of Sense” by utilizing the work’s ontology and their artistic vision as a “Semantic Operating System” to ensure intelligibility for human, AI, and algorithmic audiences alike. For demonstration, I will showcase a short film created algorithmically via the “Informational Montage” process. Functioning simultaneously as a research result, a visual expression of the research itself, and an applied workflow, this case study proves that shifting focus from pixel manipulation to semantic precision bridges the gap between human intent and machine response.

Crucially, it reveals that the creator’s semantics act as superior “sources of truth” compared to traditional pathways or sophisticated prompt engineering. I argue that by encoding the creator’s vision into a machine-readable system architecture (translatable into data), women filmmakers achieve two victories: production advantage and organic discoverability (wiring the film directly into the digital infrastructure). It also highlights a new angle for leadership: directing not just a crew, but the digital infrastructure itself, transforming the film from a “black box” into a transparent amplifier of the unique female voice.



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

Women and Product Design on Screen: A Cinethnographic Approach on the Sector's Gendered Realities

Guim ESPELT ESTOPÀ, PhD

—— Author ——

Designer, researcher, curator, teacher, learner. His background is in product design, and he has a special interest in the relations between design and fiction, design methodologies and socio-cultural aspects of design. He holds a PhD with a thesis about the representation of product design practice and discourse in cinema.

He has worked in the areas of research and curatorship, creative projects, teaching and knowledge transfer, and organisation and management. Since 2017 he works at Elisava, Barcelona School of Design and Engineering, where he acts as a teacher in methodological and theoretical subjects, as a researcher for various European and corporate projects, and as a Managing Editor for Temes de Disseny, the academic journal published by the university.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

13:50-14:10

Women and Product Design on Screen: A Cinethnographic Approach on the Sector's Gendered Realities

Guim ESPELT ESTOPÀ, PhD

— Abstract —

This presentation analyses the representation of women in relation to the product design process, utilising selected findings from an extensive interdisciplinary research project on product design practice and discourse in commercial fiction cinema. Its filmography has been identified from a systematic search of product design-related terms on several movie databases, and a subsequent filtering to match the research preset boundaries: to only focus on the product design sector –not graphic, fashion or spatial design– depicted in feature films –not documentaries, shorts or series– with a mundane approach –not science fiction or experimental–.

The cinematic depiction overwhelmingly presents the product design sector as highly masculinised. The research identified over eighty relevant male designer characters, compared to a mere dozen female designers. This profound gender imbalance on screen mirrors the documented invisibility of women in the professional design field—a subject of growing scholarly inquiry.

The presentation will focus on the different roles women have in the cinematic narrative of the product design process. These roles include, but are not limited to, active professionals, students, critics, target audience members, victims of sexism, and businesswomen. These significantly shape the sector's public image and its perception in popular culture. The presentation will critically reflect on the design sector through a gender perspective, leveraging commercial fiction cinema as an ethnographic tool to challenge the transmitted image and the underlying realities it conveys.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

14:10-14:30

Towards a Socio-educational Design: Interdisciplinary Process of Creating a Documentary Comic for Tunisian Children

Nada DAGDOUG, PhD

— Author —

Born in Tunis in 1981, Nada Dagdoug is a graduate of the Higher Institute of Fine Arts in Tunis. In 2018, she obtained her doctorate in Arts Sciences and Practices on the theme of image education and education through images in the Tunisian extracurricular environment.

A caricaturist and comedian at heart, she enjoys bringing her characters to life and making them speak, which allows her to address social injustices and absurdities in a way that is both critical and amusing.

Among her most famous characters is "Tfail," the parasite created in 2005 and published in 2016 by the Tunisian comic book collective Lab 619, "Gleg," created in 2013 with the antiheroes Mercure and Basilic (a satirical animated capsule about boredom), and "Lovely Rabbits," the little rabbits created in 2023 in response to the outbreak of genocide in Gaza. In 2025, she began publishing the first volume of the educational docu-fiction series named after her modest heroine "YEZA."

In 2019, she launched the Grif Graf workshops for children, an initiative that allows her to combine her talents as an illustrator, educator, and animated film director.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

14:10-14:30

Towards a Socio-educational Design: Interdisciplinary Process of Creating a Documentary Comic for Tunisian Children

Nada DAGDOUG, PhD

— Abstract —

We are experiencing a certain societal effervescence encouraging, more than ever, the enhancement of our tangible and intangible heritage. These initiatives inevitably raise complex questions relating to identity, to adults as well as to young Tunisian targets. (Ben Abbes.H, Toumi.M; 2019)

Starting from my career as an image designer, teacher researcher and artistic mediator with children, my research has never ceased to develop the disciplinary links or the articulations necessary for the convergence of my theoretical and practical knowledge. It turns out that this interdisciplinary link resides in this word: creative pedagogy, but even more pedagogical design which leads through previously chosen methods towards a pragmatism of the creative operation of the project (Basque; 2010). These ideas developed by theorists join the pragmatism of the so-called design research (Findeli; 2004). Thus, certain practices of educational designers are classified according to paradigms. The latter take the artistic path based on experience and personal tastes.

As such, this article aims to present the collaborative conduct of a series in documentary comics, represented by a heroine named "Yeza" (Amazigh first name meaning "the beautiful one"). The main character of the comic strip travels through Tunisia to discover the local human and cultural heritage. This educational and documentary visual product, targeting children aged between 8 and 12, is in its first exploratory phase known as development. It encompasses an educational (Freinet; 1964) and artistic trial and error centered on the scriptwriting and graphic participation of the target itself and the collection of feedback.

This operation of concordance with the expectations of the target responds to the questions raised by the conduct of projects in both design and art, those relating to how and the ones relating to the process of the creative fact.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

Andreea MEREUȚĂ

Masterclass

16:30-18:00



Masterclass on Assertive Communication with Andreea MEREUȚĂ exclusively on site – for Romanian participants

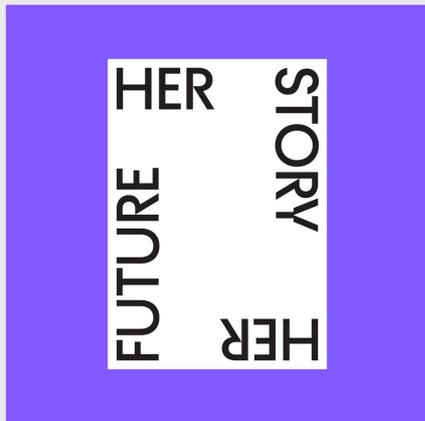
Andreea MEREUȚĂ is a cognitive-behavioural psychotherapist and neurotrainer. In a world where we often speak more than we listen, how we express ourselves can transform the dynamics of professional relationships. This masterclass invites participants to explore how to communicate their needs, feelings, and ideas with clarity, respect, and confidence.

Through examining automatic reactions, common blocks, and practical steps, participants will learn to foster balanced conversations—ones that connect rather than divide—and leave with tools for authentic, tension-free dialogue.

WOMEN IN FILM: LEADERSHIP, CREATIVITY, AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

Leadership in cinema is not only a position, but a practice.

Creativity is not only an outcome, but a process of care, resistance, and connection.



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