



NORDIC SUMMER UNIVERSITY
Circle 1, Studies in Remoteness.
Sensoria of Absence, Distance and Neglect



Time Work.

Debt, inheritance, and intergenerational practice.

Studies in Remoteness 2026 Summer Session, July 24th - 31st
Saulkrasti, Latvia
24 July – 31 July 2026

*Image: Paul Klee, "Angelus Novus" (1920);
monoprint technique with oil transfer method invented by the artist*

	Friday July 24	Saturday July 25: <i>Introductions to Time Work</i>	Sunday July 26: <i>The Presence of Ruins & Tides: Sites & senses</i>	Monday July 27: <i>Displacement & Remoteness</i>	Tuesday July 28: <i>Going Elsewhere</i>	Wednesday July 29: <i>Performing with Others: Baltic Time Work & Peoples' Histories</i>	Thursday July 30: <i>Debts & Inheritances</i>	Friday July 31	
7.30-8.00		Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Breakfast and Departure	
8.00-9.00	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast		
9.00-10.30	Joint Meeting Board and Coordinators (JMBC)	Session 1. <i>Forming Words: Sounding an introduction to the symposium</i> Lindsey Drury, Helena Hildur W., Agnese Cebere	Session 4. <i>Mapping Praxes</i> Ilona Blumgrund & Helena Hildur W. Session 5. <i>Workshops</i> Lu Lin, Paul Landon, deepani seth	General Assembly I	Excursions	Session 11. <i>Performing the Past</i> Guy Dolev, Hanna Sjöberg, Lindsey Drury	Session 14. <i>Long Distance Multiple Belonging</i> Maria Backman Koch & Hanna Sjöberg <i>Parallaxing-(i)</i> workshop with setareh fatehi		
10.30-11.00	Coffee	Coffee				Coffee	Coffee		Coffee
11.00-12.30	Joint Meeting Board and Coordinators (JMBC)	Session 2. <i>Tears, Seas, Rain: Histories that drip</i> Adrian Trujillo Centeno, Tinka Harvard, Monica Tusinean	Session 5. <i>Workshops continued</i> Lu Lin, Paul Landon, deepani seth			Session 7. <i>Possession in the Site of Dispossession</i> Shilu Jamir with Bendanglemla Longkumer	Session 12. <i>Entangled Pasts: Archives, Absence, and the Making of Ethnographic Knowledge</i> Andrea Zittlau, Vida Savoniakaitė		Session 15. <i>Suitcases, photos: Family, Distance & Inheritance</i> Nikola Markovic, Agnese Cëbere
12.30-14.00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch			Lunch	Lunch		Lunch
14.00-15.30	Joint Meeting Board and Coordinators (JMBC)	Arrival of Participants	Keynote Abdalrahman Kittana (online)	Session 6. <i>Multiple Belongings: Migrancy & co-presence</i> Milena Blahuta setareh fatehi		Session 8. <i>Keynote</i> , Ilze Boldāne-Zeljenka (SSEP)	General Assembly II		Session 16. <i>Ruin as place, Art Work as Reflection</i> Paul Landon with Lu Lin, deepani seth, and Monica Tusinean Closing discussion
15.30-16.00	Coffee	Coffee	Coffee	Coffee		Coffee	Coffee		Coffee
16.00-17.00	Joint Meeting Board and Coordinators (JMBC)	Arrival of Participants	Workshop about General Assembly and NSU as an Organisation	Circle 8: orientation workshop regarding trans-inclusivity		Session 9. <i>Fugitive Communities</i> Johanna Gilje and Timo Kaemmerer	General Assembly II		Joint Meeting Board and Coordinators (JMBC)
17.00-17.30	Arrival of Participants		Break	Break		Break	Break		Break
17.30-18.30			Community Review	Regional Meetings		NSU Working groups	Session 13. <i>Shared Stages: Dance Cultural Histories from the Baltic Region</i> Anne-Liis Maripuu & Valda Vidzemniece		Football
18.30-20.00	Welcome Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Circle Dinner (BBQ)		Dinner	Dinner		Gala Dinner
From 20.00 onwards	Welcoming Evening	Documentary Screening: Latvian Myth and Folklore	More than Human Library	Multilingual Reading on the Baltic Sea // Book Launch Cybioses		Session 10. <i>Lecture Performance</i> Guy Dolev - COW PARK	Art Fair		Disco!
	The Children's Circle runs from July 25 to July 30 (apart from excursion day) from 8.55-12.30 and from 13.55-17.00								

Time Work.

Debt, inheritance, and intergenerational practice.

Introduction

Let's call it "time work"; those practices that negotiate the relations between the living and the dead. Time work is not merely conducted by archivists and historians, but by grave diggers and undertakers, documentary filmmakers and memoirists, knowledge bearers, politicians, war journalists, practitioners of living traditions, speakers of dead languages, as well as by any and all who keep something – a story, a trinket, an heirloom, a song – holding onto it to remember. Time work is not easily done without feeling; It is driven by the weight of mattering, it is attention called by the fact that now – this, "our" now – is in-part composed by the shadows of what and who came before. Time work is haunting work, it whispers of recurrences ("*this happened before*"), and implicitly describes the present as a thing pushed to the surface of existence by the collective force of innumerable spent lives, over centuries, over millennia.

In the 2026 Summer session of *Studies in Remoteness*, we explore the ways that time work might destabilize the remoteness of history – its absence, distance, and neglect. How might we describe the work that transforms time into a weighted force that accumulates, persists, and can be carried forward, often across generations? Through what actions is one accountable to the past? What does it mean to hold or carry an inheritance? In what ways are people indebted to those who came before, and how might the living "pay the debts" that have accumulated over generations? What kinds of temporalities do different approaches to time work produce, and what social relations are then enabled or foreclosed? Through these questions, the symposium reflects on the entanglement of debt and history, exploring debt as an enduring paradigm that variously informs intergenerational relations, systems of oppression, and historical justice.

*Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;
That is not it, at all."*

T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915)

Time Work Programme Overview

Saturday 25th July: Introductions to Time Work

9:00-10:30. Session 1. Forming Words. Sounding an introduction to the symposium

Lindsey Drury, Agnese Cēbere & Helena Hildur W.

11:00-12:30 Session 2. Tears, Seas, Rain: Histories that drip

Adrian Trujillo Centeno, *Sterile Promontories: Grief and Failed Stereopsis*

Tinka Harvard, *The Melt Archive: Water, Memory, and the Work of Attention*

Monica Tuşinean, *Hill House, not sane*

Sunday 26th July: The Presence of Ruins and Tide. Sites & Senses

9:00-9:30 Session 4. Mapping Praxes (case study) – joint session with the Feminist Circle

Ilona Blumgrund & Helena Hildur W, *Mapping Practices: AutoFiction, Renderings, Dialogue*

9:30-12:30 Session 5. Mapping Praxes (workshops)

Lu Lin, *Co-Mapping Time and Place: Exploring Saulkrasti's Situated and Fluid Relations*

Paul Landon, *Reflecting on the Ruins of Modernism*

deepani seth, *A proposition for drawing close, gathering time*

14:00-15:30 Session 6. Multiple Belongings: Migrancy & Co-Presence

Milena Błahuta, *"Everything here is a bit behind" – on catching up with the "West" and migrants as comparative experts*

setareh fatehi, *Parallaxing-(i): Remote hosting across separated localities* (intro)

Monday 27th July: (Dis)Placed Remotenesses. Epistemic and Embodied Migrations

11:00-12:30 Session 7. Possession in the Site of Dispossession

Shiluinla Jamir, with respondent Bendanglemla Longkumer, *Rethinking Contemporary Animism from the space of Remoteness*

(discussion)

14:00-15:30 - Session 8. Displaying Otherness in the Baltics – NSU Keynote

Ilze Boldāne-Zeļenka (SSEP), *Whose history is it? Ethnic and Freak Shows in the Territory of Latvia at the Turn of the 20th Century*

16:00-17:00 Session 9. Fugitive Communities

Johanna Gilje, *The Negative Shape of Community*

Timo Kaemmerer, *A Vagabond History of Idleness in the Weimar Republic*

Time Work Programme Overview

Tuesday 28th July: Going Elsewhere – Excursion Day

20:00 Session 10. Lecture Performance – NSU Cultural Evening Programme

Guy Dolev, *COW PARK*

Wednesday 29th July: Performing with Others. Baltic Time Work & People's Histories

9:00-10:30 Session 11. Performing the Past

Guy Dolev, *COW PARK: reversing throughout the Armenian parking lot in Jerusalem between collective struggle, genocidal history, and not-only-human genealogy*

Hanna Sjöberg, *At the Water's Edge*

Lindsey Drury (SSEP), *Bear Tracks. Following creatures and captives through a northerly "natural history" of dance*

11:00-12:30 Session 12. Entangled Pasts: Archives, Absence, and the Making of Ethnographic Knowledge

Andrea Zittlau (SSEP), *Marking the Absence of Pietro Bruce*

Vida Savoniakaitė (SSEP), *Entangled Pasts in the Baltic–German Region and Eduards Volters' Ethnographies, 1882–1941*

17:00-18:30 Session 13. Shared Stages: Dance Cultural Histories from the Baltic Region

Anne-Liis Maripuu & Valda Vidzemniece (SSEP), *Modern dance practices in Estonia and Latvia during the interwar period: a comparative look*

Thursday 30th July: Debts & Inheritances

9:00-10:30 Session 14. Long Distance Multiple Belonging

Maria Backman & Hanna Sjöberg, *I förvar / In Custody*
setareh fatehi, *Parallaxing-(i): a walk on a shaky bandwidth* (workshop)

11:00-12:30 Session 15. Suitcases, photos: Family, Distance & Inheritance

Nikola Markovic, *Spectral Garments and Reworking of Time in the Balkan Family Archive*
Agnese Cēbere, *Strange Belonging*

14:00-15:00 Session 16. Ruin as Place, Art Work as Reflection

(workshop presentations followed by a roundtable)

Paul Landon with Lu Lin, deepani seth & Monica Tuşinean

15:00-15.30 Closing discussion moderated by Helena Hildur W. & Lindsey Drury



The NORDIC SUMMER UNIVERSITY

The Nordic Summer University (NSU) has been an independent, academic institution since 1950, organizing symposia that draws international participants across disciplines mainly in the Nordic and Baltic regions. Among academic institutions, its structure is a rare example of democratic organizing and horizontal principles. It is a non-profit organization, based in Sweden but run collaboratively across national contexts and on a voluntary basis. It provides grounds for the development of new interdisciplinary research fields, and has contributed to the rise of feminist studies and artistic research in the Nordic and Baltic contexts. The main organ of decision-making is the General Assembly, which includes all members as voting participants and takes place yearly during the Summer Session.

The Nordic Summer University consists of a maximum of ten study circles, each focusing on a chosen topic, primarily within the humanities and the social sciences, but also integrating technological and artistic perspectives. The circles hold separate Winter Sessions, while the week-long Summer Session marks the yearly culmination, bringing all circles together to hold their symposia at a shared location. This session usually takes place at the end of July, alternating between places in the Nordic and Baltic countryside. The study circles work during the day, and in the evening enjoy social and cultural events - self-organized as well as by invited guests.

Nordic Summer University operations and activities are mainly financed by the people of the Nordic and Baltic States, through in-kind contributions of their voluntary time, and by participation fees. Up until 2020, part of the activities were funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. After 2020, the activities have been funded by Nordplus Horizontal, the Swedish Academy, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities. Thematic funding of separate circles includes Experimental Humanities Collaborative Network, OSUN Science Shop at European Humanities University, Polin Institute, and now also the Baltisch-Deutsches Hochschulkontor.

Each circle organizes their winter symposium with a local partner, such as a university, a research institute or another independent organization. These are documented in the annual reports. Among collaborating partners are the European Humanities University, Vilnius University, Icelandic Academy of the Arts, University of Latvia, University of Copenhagen, Roskilde University, Aarhus University, University of Iceland, University of Akureyri, University of Gothenburg, Tampere University, University of Oslo, and Freie Universität.

In 2024, with support of the General Assembly in Denmark, the Nordic Summer University established an economic fundraising foundation – read the text of the public declaration of the foundation here:

<https://www.nsuweb.org/establishment-of-an-economic-fundraising-foundation/>



Circle 1, Studies in Remoteness.

Sensoria of Absence, Distance and Neglect

Studies in Remoteness does foundational theoretical, artistic, and historical work toward initiating a new field of interdisciplinary research in critical remoteness studies. To unpack the geopolitical, environmental, and cultural dimensions of "remoteness" – particularly, in the circumpolar North – we will center Indigenous scholarship and critiques of extractive colonialism, as well as artistic and embodied approaches, in a series of six symposia across the Baltic rim from 2026 to 2028.

The project turns its attention to the notion of "a place far away" – be it the regional peripheries or cartographic borderlands between nation states; the residential areas of Indigenous/minoritized communities; historical testimonies and lacunae; sub-cultural meeting spots, or your neighbour's kitchen. Theorizing modernity by turning to its so-called outskirts, the project inquires sensoria of absence, distance, and neglect that have blossomed along the frontiers of colonial empires and sedimented among the margins of modern infrastructures of "global connectivity". With lingering attention, *Studies in Remoteness* intends to unsettle conditions of obscuring or exoticising – resolutely acknowledging histories, topographies and epistemologies with an eye to how these might come into "intense proximity", as coined by Okwui Enwezor.

As a three-year collaborative research project, *Studies in Remoteness* brings together a network of scholars, artists, and activists to engage in community-based research practices. By establishing a co-creative space – open for the sharing of facts, questions, concerns and practices – we believe that our work will prove enduringly relevant.

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***Studies in Remoteness* condensed study plan 2027–2028**

- 2027 Winter Session, April 8-10 (University of Stockholm, Sweden)
Topic: *Beyond Plunder. Remoteness and regimes of expendability and waste*
- 2027 NSU Summer Session and Summer School, late July (venue tba)
Topic: *Infrastructures of Remoteness*
- 2028 Winter Session, early April (venue tba)
Topic: *Sacredness and protection.*
- 2028 NSU Summer Session and Summer School, late July (Baltics, venue tba)
Topic: *Being Lost*

Time Work Presenters

Maria Backman Koch, *I förvar* / In Custody – in collaboration with Hanna Sjöberg



Maria Backman was born in Ludvika, Dalarna region (Sweden). She is educated at Konstfack Department of Painting, and the Royal Academy of Art (Stockholm), and at Umeå Academy of Fine Arts. She also holds a BA in Art History at Stockholm University. She now lives and works in Stockholm and Dalarna; as a visual artist, she engages both with thematic projects with documentary background, and in totally subjective painting in different techniques and materials. Editor of the net-based magazine [Korgen](#).

Website: <https://konstproduktion.se/>

For the bio of Hanna Sjöberg, please see her section (below).

Where is the line drawn between art becoming explanatory and used as a tool, and art as a more independent form of expression? Or, is it that all of this applies but what separates good works from better ones is the ability to synthesize? How far must the artist adapt to what is assumed to be understood by the viewer? Even within contemporary art there are – perhaps unspoken, but nevertheless – norms and rules for how to tell a story. A changed way of working that is based, amongst other things, on the academicization of art education.

These are issues we have encountered in our work with the art project *I förvar/In Custody*. The project looks into the reception of refugees in Sweden during the Second World War, with a particular focus on local perspective. The project moves between understanding history and politics, memory and identity. Between 2017 and 2021, we staged six different exhibitions with *I Förvar*. The theme of each exhibition related to the place where it was shown, focusing on a specific event or particular historical and human aspects of refugee reception taking place on that very location.

Project website:

<https://xn--hemligstplat-iffb.nu/>

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Milena Błahuta, "Everything here is a bit behind" – on catching up with the "West"



I am a sociologist and a graduate of the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Warsaw. In April 2026, I defended my PhD thesis, where I analyzed intra-regional migrations and current transformations of the migratory landscape in "Eastern" Europe, engaging in broader discussions on the conceptualization of the categories of "East" and "West" in migration research. I now live in Vienna and work here as a scientific coordinator at the Scientific Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences. I have attended three NSU summer schools so far; in 2024, I also worked as a coordinator of a one-year study circle "Feminist intersectional pedagogies".

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Time Work Presenters

Milena Błahuta, continued

This contribution will be based on four years of fieldwork conducted for my doctoral research on young Polish migrants who have chosen to live and work in selected countries of "post-socialist" "Eastern" Europe. I focus on a form of intra-European mobility that remains relatively under-explored in migration studies, which continue to prioritize East-West/South-North mobility patterns. Yet, as I suggest, such unobvious mobilities provide an important perspective for rethinking dominant narratives of European integration and modernisation, as well as for revisiting key transitological concepts developed after 1989.

In my time slot, I would like to invite participants into a collective reflection on how space can be experienced in multiple ways - sensory, emotional, mnemonic... Together, we will read and discuss selected anonymized excerpts from the interviews conducted during my research, focusing on how experiences of time, space, and mobility are narrated and constructed.

In the second part of my contribution, I will present my ongoing analysis, which explores how social imaginaries of the past may shape present-day experiences of mobility, particularly when alternative interpretive frameworks are absent. However, rather than presenting a finished argument, I wish for this session to become a space for shared reflection on how individual experiences are narrated within broader and (often) implicit interpretive frameworks.

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Ilona Blumgrund, *Mapping Practises: AutoFiction, Renderings, Dialogue* – in collaboration with Helena Hildur W.



I am a doctoral student in systematic theology at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. My research combines systematic theology and forced migration studies, focusing on asylum seekers from Muslim-majority countries who convert to Christianity during the asylum process in Finland. Such conversions may affect asylum processes, as converts may face persecution in their countries of origin. I examine how the Finnish Immigration Service assesses the credibility of conversion and explore converts' experiences through asylum documents and interviews with converted refugees. Using qualitative methods, I analyze theological and ethical themes related to conversion, asylum seeking, and freedom of religion.

photo credit: Satu Karmavalo

"Mapping Practices: AutoFiction, Renderings, Dialogue" is a joint session with Circle 4, Feminist Philosophy. For the bio of Helena Hildur W, please see her section (below).

This presentation by Ilona Blumgrund and Helena Hildur W. is in part a case study; it begins from an interaction that eventually manifested as *Ilona's Itinerary* – one of the objects that constitute Helena's art project *Mapping Praxis*. Together, we explore the complex process of mapping a person's life course, when done as a collaborative work between an interviewee and an artist. *Ilona's Itinerary* exemplifies the blurred borders between facts, fiction and interpretation, and brings to the fore questions about agency and ethics: Who owns the story? Who makes decisions about the end product/artwork? How to handle individually and politically difficult questions, and issues such as (for instance) cultural appropriation?

Participants will be invited to engage in a modest "auto-mapping" exercise, before further processing the inherent complexities in mapmaking (and potentially other methods for documentation).

Agnese Cēbere, *Strange Belonging: A Workshop and Presentation*



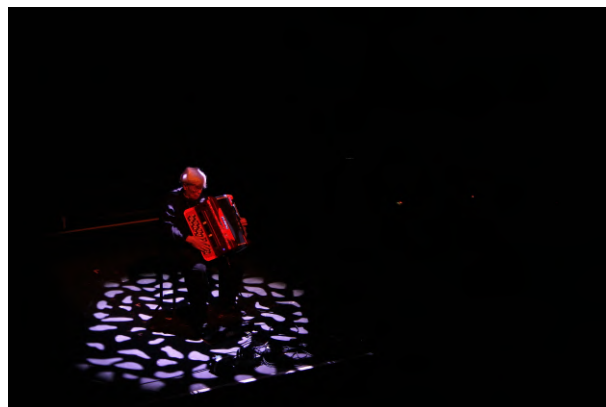
Agnese Cēbere is an interdisciplinary artist working across video, photography, performance, and installation. Her work concerns perception and cognition in relation to embodiment and technology, and stems from improvisation and explorations of site. Originally from Latvia, Cēbere grew up in Sweden and earned her BA in Intermedia Art at Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland. She graduated with an MA in Media Studies from The New School in New York in 2018, and an MFA in Art from the University of Oregon in 2022. She is currently an instructor of art and art history and works as a videographer.

My participation in the summer symposium Time Work is two-part: a workshop based on the sounds of the Latvian alphabet, and a presentation of my artistic work. My contributions are based on my own cultural background and experience with remoteness. Originally from Latvia, I grew up in Sweden and now live on the west coast of the United States. In some ways, my relationship to Latvia (and Sweden) has grown more distant in recent years due to remoteness, producing both longing and guilt in me as I consider the generational debt I owe to my homeland and my family. In other ways, I am experiencing a renewed commitment to and intimacy with Latvian culture since becoming a mother in 2023.

In my art practice, I use my voice in creating soundscapes and librettos for performances and installations, with a view to fragmentation and breaking down of the sense and order of language to reveal slippages of meaning and to create a resonant space. I think of language as a way of speaking-into-being, considering the force of articulation and fragmentation both; the movement between flow and friction, immersion and estrangement.

The workshop is responding to my experience teaching my son Latvian and thinking about the sounds of the Latvian alphabet, the mouthfeel and the tonality of it. Inspired by Pauline Oliveros's Deep Listening, I will guide us through sounding out the Latvian alphabet together and improvising with the sounds of the language.

In my presentation I will talk about my research on the relationship between the visual and the haptic, site-specific work on temporality and projection, and older work to do with my Latvian identity. My contributions are part of a larger ongoing research project on the material mediations of estrangement and empathy. It is also an attempt at bridging a gap between my work on embodiment and perception on the one hand and my personal history and cultural belonging on the other.



*Pauline Oliveros in performance,
photo credit [Rosa Menkman via Wikimedia Commons](#)*

Time Work Presenters

Adrian Trujillo Centeno, *Sterile Promontories: Grief and Failed Stereopsis*



Adrian Trujillo Centeno (he/him) is an Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies at California State University, Long Beach, and co-editor of the upcoming publication *Stages of Belonging: Plays from the Latinx New Play Festival* (Bloomsbury). He's developed and supported new works at South Coast Repertory, La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program, Ojai Playwrights Conference, and New York Stage & Film, among others. Adrian earned his master's degree from UC Santa Cruz, where he was recently honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award. He is also the Artistic Director of Seven Devils New Play Foundry.

Website: www.luchaturgy.com

"I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises, and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory..."
- Hamlet (Act 2, Scene 2)

Drawing on Hamlet's description of a world that remains recognizable but no longer feels livable, this presentation argues that grief produces a form of perceptual doubling in which knowledge and experience fall out of alignment. Borrowing from the logic of the stereoscope – a device that creates depth by fusing two nearly identical images—I describe Hamlet's perception as a case of what I term "failed stereopsis". The world can still be named as ordered and even "majestical", but that knowledge no longer coheres with how one views it or how it feels. Rather than producing a richness of depth, these now-incompatible images generate strain in the viewer, flattening perception into an unstable surface.

From this starting point, the presentation examines grief as a form of temporal work that holds past and present within the same perceptual field. Grief overlays the observable world with the felt persistence of what has been lost, unsettling linear models of time. Against contemporary economies that privilege measurable, productive duration, grief and mourning emerge as a temporal practice that resists resolution, preserving an ongoing relation to loss through a form of time that appears unproductive or "wasted".

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Guy Dolev, *COW PARK*



I am an artist, researcher, and teacher working across performance, video, and text. Based in West Jerusalem, I employ choreographic tools and digital mechanisms to critically inquire into the city's layered histories and political structures, navigating the violent logics of Israel/Palestine to imagine cracks for escape from within: this is transcendence through immersion. Beside my creative processes, I teach Interdisciplinary Art classes and run an arts education program in Masafer Yatta, West Bank.

continued →

Time Work Presenters

Guy Dolev, continued

COW PARK is a video-based performative lecture, created in collaboration with *Save the ArQ*, the activist group of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. In Cow Park I attempt to study a marginal story in Israel/Palestine in a way that exposes this place's core unequal socio-political order. The work is driven by a commitment to solidarity in times of genocide and by an inquiry into how histories persist, are displaced, and are made to disappear.

In recent years, the Jerusalemite Armenian community struggles to protect their historical territory of the Cow Garden: once an open field where cows grazed and pilgrims and genocide refugees pitched tents, it serves today as a parking lot; a real-estate deal aiming to build a hotel on site threatens the Armenian hold of this place. When I heard about this struggle, I contacted *Save the ArQ*, the activist group of the Armenian Quarter, and asked to document their work. Moved by their juridical, diplomatic, and community-based resistance, I wished to approach this plot of land as a field of accumulated and layered historical debt: a place where past displacements, refuge, and violence persist as unresolved obligations in the present.

Understanding that under the current layer of the parking lot lies a nucleus of this community's history, I started filming the site with my red car's rear camera while driving in reverse. This method of documentation became a form of timework: a practice of moving backwards from the current parking lot, drawing near the past of the Cow Garden, circulating the story again and again, but without colliding.

The reverse camera captures the site's geography, objects, and people in distortion: the image it produces is fish-eyed, in low resolution, roughly coloured, and from a low vantage point. Throughout the video-accompanied performance, this image making apparatus, designed to eliminate blind spots, becomes a speculative device for historical vision.

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Lindsey Drury (co-convenor of Studies in Remoteness),

Bear Tracks. Following creatures and captives through a "natural history" of dance – for bio and abstract, please see the section "Shared Stages, Entangled Pasts"

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setareh fatehi, Parallaxing-(i): Remote hosting across separated localities



I am setareh fatehi (pronoun: او) an artist-researcher Not based in Tehran and London. I have been looking at the formation of trans-border collective bodies, hosting remote dancing beyond the geo-political borders that have been separating and debilitating many. During the past years I have been a lecturer at the MA Choreography in Amsterdam School of the Arts, co-director of Jacuzzi dance space in Amsterdam and a member of Foj collective in Tehran. My current research is an artistic practice developed between Tehran, Istanbul, Amsterdam, Karaj, London, Fuman, Berlin, Zurich and Malindi where I have been attending conferences, mediating workshops and performing in festivals forming a collective-body addressing Colonial FOMO and Unpayable Debt. This research is currently developing as a collaborative doctoral award offered by the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and performingborders– a platform for artistic research since 2023, funded by London arts and humanities partnership (LAHP).

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Time Work Presenters

setareh fatehi, continued

This research is led by the practice of Parallaxing-(i), a speculative performance practice that hosts remote presence across separating borders while exploring the apparatus of remote hosting. The term 'separated' here exclusively addresses the gap that is caused by borders as symptoms of imperial and state power and more specifically between the context of Iran and North-West European countries (i.e. the UK, Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland) where the practice was located. In this performance practice temporary collective bodies are formed with border-crossing artists/friends to attend any event that "I" have been invited to, juxtaposing the individual physical presence of "I" with a collective cross-border hybrid one. Parallaxing-(i) is a practice that creates space to feel and connect with borders and the ways we create and cross them, using the remoteness that is caused by those borders. Applying artistic research methodology the apparatus of remote gathering addressing the choreopolitics of remote gathering including representational signifiers as well as material requirement for a collective body to be present.

Within the *Studies in Remoteness* circle, I will address the forms of presence that capture the fluidity of our connections and movements across borders by telling 'a' story of the practice of Parallaxing-(i) as well as playing with the apparatus in a one hour workshop. The walk is an invitation to connect a neighborhood in Tehran and our surroundings in Saulkrasti while listening to our story. The workshop is where we practice the methodology of 'staying with the parallax' when the collective body of the practice, its components, requirements and limitations is introduced through a simple exercise that involves our bodies and phones. Speculating on the meaning of connect-ability and move-ability while moving with our temporal hybrid collective body we contemplate Parallaxing-(i) as a possible way of hosting our absence and remoteness as a form of presence.

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Johanna Gilje, *The Negative Shape of Community*



Johanna Gilje is an artist, writer, and researcher with an MA in *Spatial Strategies* from Weißensee Kunsthochschule Berlin and a BA in Critical Cultural Studies from The Evergreen State College. Her master's thesis, *The Imaginary Shape of Community: A Reflection on the Edges of the Real World* explores the role of imagination in the formation of alternative political communities. She is a founding member of *Kollektiv Quotidien* and co-editor of *Lefebvre for Activists* (2020) and *Activist Ecologies* (forthcoming, 2027) with adocs publishing house. Her first book, the desire to contain and the inevitability of rupture, was published in 2016 by The Evergreen State College Press.

Website: johannaigilje.org

This presentation examines the countercultural impulse to "tune out" of society, live "off the grid", go "back-to-nature", and "live off the land" that was particularly prevalent in the American hippie era during the Cold War period – often driven by utopian dreams of building a "better world". In contrast to communities and landscapes that are pushed to the edges – marginalized, dismissed, and extracted by colonial narratives and power structures, these "alternative" communities make themselves "remote" on purpose – often in settler colonial style – in pursuit of a "new" or "better" life.

continued →

Time Work Presenters

Johanna Gilje, continued

This work builds on my MA thesis titled *The Imaginary Shape of Community* which analyzes media – technologies, memes, and slogans – through which countercultural communities imagine and enforce their edges as set apart from the "mainstream". Through a personal reflection on intergenerational debt and inheritance in my family history, I begin by situating my childhood in remote communities historically, showing proximities between the "back-to-the-land" movement, techno-optimist culture, far-right, and prepper movements that all emerged out of the same countercultural milieu and are echoed in overlapping "new age" and "far right" movements today.

In tracing these entanglements, I interrogate the impulse to live remotely – both through physical and ideological distancing – showing the dangerous side of world-building and the slippery meaning of being "alternative". Borrowing Naomi Klein's notion of the "shadow self" to describe her *doppelgänger* and "shadow lands" to describe worlds we are intimately tied to but refuse to see, I ask: What is the negative shape of community?

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Tinka Harvard, *The Melt Archive: Water, Memory, and the Work of Attention*



Tinka Harvard is a writer, historian, and theologian. She is a doctoral researcher and PhD student in Church History at Åbo Akademi University in Finland, where she also earned a Master of Arts degree. Harvard holds a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University in New York City. Her writing for general audiences is available in Lush Life, a collection of short stories, StepAway Magazine, Adelaide Literary Magazine, Adelaide Voices Anthology 2018, and Polychrome Ink.

Website: <https://www.tinkaharvard.com/>

Scholarly Profile: <https://research.abo.fi/en/persons/tinka-harvard>

This presentation proposes *The Melt Archive* as a framework for rethinking time-work, inheritance, debt, and historical remoteness through the material and imaginative life of water. Building upon earlier research that examined ice as a relational archive, I ask what happens when archives begin to melt. If ice preserves through holding, compression, and delay, water remembers differently: through movement, circulation, sedimentation, and return.

Drawing together hydrofeminist thought, memory studies, archival theory, visual art, and poetry, the presentation explores how histories persist within unstable material forms. Through encounters with the visual artwork of Kara Walker and Firelei Báez, alongside reflections on the Baltic shoreline at Saulkrasti, Latvia, I examine how memory exceeds institutional archives and becomes distributed across bodies, landscapes, waters, and images. Water emerges not merely as a metaphor for memory but as a material medium through which inheritances travel and unsettled histories continue to surface.

Engaging the symposium themes of time-work, debt, and intergenerational responsibility, my work considers slavery, colonialism, migration, environmental change, and Baltic histories as forms of unfinished

continued →

Time Work Presenters

Tinka Harvard, *continued*

inheritance that remain active within the present. Rather than asking what has been preserved, *The Melt Archive* asks what continues to move, accumulate, and return. In doing so, it challenges notions of historical remoteness by showing how the past persists through material, ecological, and cultural relations.

Ultimately, I argue that attention may be the deepest form of time-work. The challenge is not only to remember inherited histories but to cultivate forms of attentiveness capable of encountering what remains unfinished and responding ethically to the worlds we pass forward.

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Shiluinla Jamir, *Rethinking Contemporary Animism from the space of Remoteness*



Dr. Shiluinla Jamir is an Indigenous feminist theologian from Nagaland, North East of India. Her work draws from liberative ethics and its emphasis on moral "oughts" as "derivatives of survivals", as well as on non-archival community knowledge and oral memory; thus giving voice to a relationality by which Indigenous people engage with the world and with each other. By centering moral knowledge based on Indigenous peoples' world-making paradigm, she contributes to the global discussion on what it means to live well.

The proposed session critically looks at Contemporary Animism's advancement of relationality as an alternative world view to modernity and as a solution to environmental challenges. Through the perspectives provided in *The Undercommons*, I ask whether a concept of relationality framed without dismantling the power structures that perpetuate hierarchies of difference be a viable ethical norm of living in this world. I look at this question from my own positionality as an Indigenous Christian feminist ethicist. I argue that New Animism needs to reconsider relationality within the larger power dynamics that defines our thinking.

*

Paul Timo Kaemmerer, *A Vagabond History of Idleness in the Weimar Republic*



Paul Timo Kaemmerer is a cultural worker and researcher. They have worked in several cultural institutions, as well as in free projects, hosted regular community radio shows and are a DJ. Currently, they are curating and organizing exhibitions and events at Stiftung Humboldt Forum, Berlin. They have studied at Bauhaus University Weimar; Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona; University of Edinburgh, College of Arts; and Humboldt University Berlin, with a BA in Media Studies and a MA in Cultural History and Theory.

continued →

Time Work Presenters

Paul Timo Kaemmerer, continued

Tens of thousands of homeless were roaming the country roads of the mid and late Weimar Republic. A group of anarchist vagabonds attempted to mobilize these masses and ignite a political movement based on the principles that they found and proclaimed to be central to the vagabond life. They called themselves *Bruderschaft der Vagabunden* (fraternity of the vagabonds), but despite the name, they were neither a closed, clearly defined group nor exclusively male, but a rather loose network of artists, artisans, society dropouts and intellectuals – some of them forced into vagabondage, but many living that life by choice. The *Bruderschaft* organised gatherings, conferences and one or two exhibitions, but the main tool of their agitational work was their journal *Der Kunde: Zeit- und Streitschrift der Vagabunden* (1927-1931). Here, they collected and published their political manifestos, as well as survival tips, announcements for gatherings, songs, travel diaries, poetry, etchings, drawings, and more.

In my research I activate this written material, whose arguments are often very incoherent and escape fixed determinations. Against the historical backdrop of alternating practices of exclusion and inclusion, of welfare, criminalisation, pathologisation, institutionalisation, erasure, and othering of vagabondage, and making use of the vagabond terminology that the authors merge with their political ideas, I set out on a wandering investigation and theorization of those thoughts. In my reading, a refusal of the hegemony of work is being turned into an absolute: a lifestyle of withdrawal and radical idleness, that institutes (or rather destitutes) an autonomous, situationist temporality, detached from linear time – a vagabond time, as I sketch out.

*

Paul Landon, *Reflecting on the Ruins of Modernism*



Paul Landon (professor at the École des arts visuels et médiatiques of UQAM) is an artist who explores urban space using experimental processes of mediatization, both analogue and digital. Landon's work is structured through the uncompromising physicality of architecture and the modern landscape; his art practice and his research reflect upon the social and experiential effects of the multi-dimensional built environment. In 2016 Landon completed a doctoral project which considered urban architectures of moving image presentation through a travelogue form of writing. His installation and video works have been exhibited internationally for over thirty years and are in public collections in Canada and Europe.

My project is a creative reflection of the ruins of the 1960s modernist restaurant Vārava and, by extension, an exploration of the palpable and obscured history of the coastal site of Saulkrasti. I will investigate how the ruined building could act as a catalyst for recalling elements of the past accessible through individual, collective and intergenerational memories. A ruin has basic structural elements intact, with others worn away. Like the architectural elements destroyed and worn away, details of our past are forgotten and blurred.

My engagement with modernist ruins from what I see as their resonant qualities; these ruins demand our attention, but we do not know why. This resonance is expressed by the site's own vulnerability as a tragic

continued →

Time Work Presenters

Paul Landon, continued

ruin or an abandoned manifestation of a community. Modernist ruins also resonate in the visitor who is vulnerable to their potential qualities rendered obsolete. The uncanny familiarity of the architecture leaves the visitor questioning what they consider meaningful in their experience of the site.

The project takes the form of a week-long workshop. Participants will be asked to develop creative projects based on architectural and other sites in Saulkrasti that could be found to trigger the unexpected: lost memories and sensations of uncanny familiarity. The project takes the form of a week-long workshop. Participants will be asked to develop creative projects based on architectural and other sites in Saulkrasti that could be found to trigger the unexpected: lost memories and sensations of uncanny familiarity.

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Lu Lin, *Co-Mapping Time and Place: Exploring Saulkrasti's Situated and Fluid Relations*



Lu Lin (Alicia) is an architect, designer, and PhD student at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in the Asian and African Department, and a member of LAST Lab (Lab on Area Studies for Sustainability Transformations). Her research explores relationality, regenerative design, situated knowledge, and ecological relationships. She studied architecture at the University of Auckland, Technical University of Munich, and Bergen School of Architecture. She has conducted academic research, teaching, and international architectural practice across Asia, Europe, and Oceania. Since 2020, she has led an independent practice in Dali, Yunnan, exploring adaptive reuse, materiality, and community-engaged ecological design. Her current research examines human-water relations and collective design practices between Venice and Dali.

This workshop proposes a co-mapping exercise in Saulkrasti, Latvia, exploring the situated qualities of the landscape through its ecological, material, and historical traces, with particular attention to fluidity, boundaries, and intergenerational memory. Building on *Mapping the In-Between* from the *Studies in Remoteness* Winter Session in Berlin, the workshop uses co-mapping as a method to engage participants in sensing, interpreting, and collectively reimagining place.

The workshop is structured around two interconnected stages: Silent Walking and Talking whilst Mapping. The silent walk invites participants to encounter the landscape through personal embodied attention, moving beyond observation to sense the rhythms, textures, and layered histories of the site. Through walking, participants notice relationships between human, ecological, and material traces, allowing the landscape to reveal its temporal and spatial narratives.

Following the walk, participants engage in talking whilst mapping, where memories, observations, and reflections are translated into collaborative visual representations. Mapping is approached not as a technical documentation process, but as a creative and relational practice that reveals how space becomes place through lived experience, perception, and collective imagination.

Through this process, the workshop aims to co-produce knowledge of Saulkrasti as a landscape shaped by time, remoteness, and transformation. The resulting maps bring together sensory encounters, personal perspectives, and shared reflections, making visible both tangible and intangible layers of the site while opening possibilities for imagining future relationships with the landscape.

Time Work Presenters

Bendanglemla Longkumer, *online respondent in Session 6, "Possession in the Site of Dispossession"*



Dr. Bendanglemla Longkumer is an Associate Professor in Theology and Ethics at Pasifika Communities University, Fiji. She comes from the Ao-Naga community in India. Alongside teaching, she is involved in supervision and research writing, especially from Indigenous context, which are published in journals and books. Her recent works include a co-edited book, Theological Legacy: Festschrifts in Honour of Limatula Longkumer, edited by Zulunungsang Lemtur & Bendanglemla Longkumer (Mokokchung: Clark Theological College & TDCC Publications, 2025).

At the "Time Work" symposium, Bendanglemla Longkumer will act as online respondent to Shiluinla Jamir's presentation *Rethinking Contemporary Animism from the space of Remoteness*.

*

Nikola Markovic, *Dressing the Remains: Spectral Garments and Reworking of Time in the Balkan Family Archive*



Nikola Marković (they/them) is an artist, fashion researcher, and practice-based doctoral candidate at Northumbria University (UK), where they have worked as a research assistant in fashion product and heritage. Their work develops experimental, interdisciplinary methodologies for engaging with vernacular archives through expanded practices of garment-making and hybrid filmmaking. Their research focuses on the intersection of material memory, garments as affective and spectral archives, and domestic sartorial practices in the central Balkans.

I begin with two suitcases that never met.

The first, lost in transit in 2015, contained clothes made, held, and worn by 4 generations of my family of tailors. The second holds my grandmother's clothes for the afterlife (odeća za onaj svet), situated within understudied Balkan burial-dress traditions (Zečević, Jovanović), in which individuals prepare an ensemble for their own death, years or decades in advance. Although differently unavailable in the present, both continue to organize familial memory. Working through these two suitcases, my research develops the concept of the 'spectral garment' as its central object of inquiry: garments that exist across unstable spatiotemporal thresholds between past and future, between the living and the dead.

continued →

Time Work Presenters

Nikola Markovic, continued

This presentation proposes that spectral garments perform time work by mediating inter-, intra-, and trans-generational relations within the family. I build on spectral studies (Gordon, Hudson, Rahimi) and on material and phenomenological approaches to absent bodies/objects (Leder, Corbin, Holmes) to explore how spectral garments affectively reconfigure time. Garment production is repetitive, structured labour, historically tied to Taylorism, piecework and industrial regimes. Yet, garment-making in domestic contexts reveals slowness and inefficiency. Spectral garments in particular render time as expenditure without resolution and operate outside – or against – economic time.

The presentation reflects on two years of collaborative garment-making and filmmaking with living family members, through which spectral garments were conjured, dys-embodied, and animated as part of an expanded creative methodology. Film excerpts accompany the presentation to consider how creative practice engages with spectral garments as active participants in the reworking of familial time within Balkan vernacular knowledge systems.

*

deepani seth, A proposition for drawing close, gathering time



deepani seth is pursuing a PhD in Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Tasmania. Previously, she has worked as a design researcher in public health and early education. Her illustrations and text-and-image narratives have appeared in print, in publications by Yoda-Sage, Zubaan and CSDS-Sarai. Her drawings have been featured in exhibitions organised by SAHMAT (Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust), New Delhi and the Drawing Research Network, Loughborough University.

My ongoing research is an attempt at negotiating belonging in the places I have migrated from and those I have migrated to: from cities and small towns in India, to the site of western academia, to a small town in lutruwita/Tasmania. Driven by homesickness and a desire for home, I make drawings and stories about houses inhabited prior to migration, and the house I reside in now as an immigrant. I negotiate the disjuncture caused by migration– the rupture between past and present, here and there. Of the processes that make up my drawing practice, is one that tries to trace the movement of time in an unfamiliar place, to learn the place in the most mundane and intimate of ways, to learn one's own entanglement with a place. As I draw *here*, I find other, distant places that are tangled up with my being. As part of the summer symposium, I propose a participatory drawing workshop that extends this premise to the spaces of Saulkrasti– the proposition that through tracing the movement of time in a place, one may draw close to places familiar and unfamiliar, distant and proximate.

*

**Hanna Sjöberg, *At the Water's Edge* and
I förvar/In Custody – in collaboration with Maria Backman Koch**



Hanna Sjöberg was born in Stockholm in 1956, and lives in Berlin. She holds a Master of Fine Arts in Textile Design, Konstfackskolan, Stockholm, 1984, and studied at University of the Arts, Berlin, 1993-96.

*"My work usually focuses on art based on documentary research; in other words, in my projects or artworks I must engage with the documentary aspect, with facts, and perhaps with eyewitnesses. This applies to both the project *I Förvar/In Custody* and my *Baltic Sea* project *At the Water's Edge*. The initial driving force behind the projects is that I have seen or experienced something that has affected me. Something I need to delve into."*

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For more on the "I förvar/In Custody project", please see Maria Backman Koch's section (above).

The Baltic Sea cross-regional art project *At the Water's Edge* was a memory project from the shores of the Baltic. About remembering living there in times when the sea was divided by the Iron Curtain. When the Baltic Sea gradually opened up after the fall of the Wall, many of us around the sea were curious to get to know what it was like on the other side. We began to make tentative journeys eastwards and westwards.

Initially, the project took shape through conversations with family and friends, through travel and new friendships. My own perspective largely came from Gotland, the island in the middle of the sea, with childhood memories and grandfather photographs. The idea, or perhaps the wish, behind *At the Water's Edge* was to create spaces for sharing memories of the Cold War period. My partners and I collected memoirs from all the Baltic Sea countries, and the exhibition was shown in almost all of them, the last one 2018 in Gdynia, Poland. The project was initiated early in the post-Cold War era and carried out in a time that gradually changed.

How can we nowadays share these memories? What relevance do they have for us today?

*

Monica Tuşinean, *Hill House, not sane*



Dr. Monica Tuşinean (b. 1986, Romania) is an architect and researcher based in Germany. She completed her doctorate magna cum laude in 2024 through the Practice-Based PhD program (PEP) at TU Berlin, investigating non-invasive adaptive reuse strategies for industrial heritage and speculative design methodologies. She currently leads a research project on transformation strategies at the Institute for Spatial Concepts and Design Fundamentals, University of Stuttgart, and has taught at KIT and Universität Stuttgart. Monica's publications include contributions to Neuwerk Magazine for Design Sciences and i2ADS Porto. Her research has been presented at institutions including Kent State University, FU Berlin, Universidade de Porto, and the University of Greenwich.

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Time Work Presenters

Monica Tuşinean, *continued*

Hill House, designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, is rotting from the inside and has been doing so for well over a century. Mackintosh encased it in cement render, which he considered a marvel of modern technology, rather than the lime-based plaster tradespeople had used for millennia. Unlike lime, cement doesn't breathe: it cracks, lets water in, and traps it there. The building is slowly decaying, suffocating within its own skin, accruing damage across generations of neglect that no single moment of intervention can undo. Because the cement render is now inseparable from the building's history, it cannot be removed without falsifying the record. The error is preserved as heritage.

This paper takes Hill House as a case study for examining inherited debt – material, professional, and political – within architectural practice. Central to this inquiry is a question of knowledge and whose work is valued. Somewhere in the building's history, tradespeople likely knew better and were overruled. Their craft knowledge, rooted in centuries of accumulated practice, was not recorded as knowledge worth keeping. Mackintosh's name endures. Their expertise does not.

Tradespeople are, in a structural sense, the living carriers of heritage: their hands, judgment, and embodied practice are the medium through which material knowledge travels across generations. Capitalist labour practices refuse this understanding, treating workers as interchangeable units of productivity rather than as bearers of culture. When a plasterer is replaced, a lineage is lost – one that, unlike a building, cannot be caged and preserved.

This presentation asks what it means to be indebted to knowledge that was not permitted to survive, and what forms of artistic and design inquiry might recover, or at least honestly mourn, what was lost when the architect's authority was mistaken for expertise. Drawing on speculative design methodologies and practice-based research, it proposes that artistic exploration may offer what architectural discourse alone cannot: a means of sitting with inherited hubris without resolving it prematurely.

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Helena Hildur W. (co-convenor of Studies in Remoteness),
Mapping Practises: AutoFiction, Renderings, Dialogue
– in collaboration with Ilona Blumgrund



I am a visual artist. Grounded in drawing and painting, my work extends into multiple materialities and relationalities; I have occasionally facilitated inter-religious dialogue by embroidery, conducted multilingual performances and offered the public fresh fruit out of a warm compost tended in darkness.

Since 2023, when I joined the NSU study circle Praxis of Social Imaginaries, my ongoing project [Mapping Praxis](#) has brought me the joy of interacting through art with a number of persons in many ways very different from myself, and made me aware of imaginative powers and deep-rooted issues in the craft of mapmaking.

Pronouns: she/her

"Mapping Practices: AutoFiction, Renderings, Dialogue" is a joint session with Circle 4, Feminist Philosophy. For more on the presentation, please see Ilona Blumgrund's section (above).

"Shared Stages, Entangled Pasts": Performance Research Across the Baltic–German Region

Shared Stages, Entangled Pasts is a research project that brings together scholars to examine how artistic performance, scientific display, and popular spectacle have historically shaped the comparative construction of ethnic and national identities across Baltic and German contexts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It approaches the Baltic-German region as a historically entangled political and cultural context shaped by the circulation of shared methods for staging and interpreting human difference.

Shared Stages, Entangled Pasts focuses on how performing bodies – functioning as artistic media, scientific evidence, and public spectacle – have reflected, constructed, and challenged notions of ethnic and national identity. Contributing scholars will present case studies on living ethnological exhibitions, touring human zoos, traveling performance troupes, and exchanges of modernist dancers between Germany and the Baltic States, illuminating reciprocal relationships between artistic practice and scientific discourse through these histories. The presentations will investigate how interregional academic and cultural exchange shaped concepts such as Indigeneity, Jewishness, Africanness, and Baltic Germanness, while informing methodological and theoretical approaches to embodiment and ethnic/national identity.

The program will take place during the Nordic Summer University's annual Summer Session, which convenes more than 100 researchers across ten international study circles. Within this interdisciplinary environment, the project will provide one of the keynote speakers for the Nordic Summer University session, Dr. Ilze Boldāne-Zeļenka. Other presentations are framed within the *Studies in Remoteness* symposium *Time Work: Debt, Inheritance, and Inter-generational Practice*, exchanging methodologies for investigating historical debt, colonial legacies, and complex pasts across Nordic, Baltic, and circumpolar regions.

This project of the Baltic-German University Liaison Office is supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with funds from the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany.

"Shared Stages, Entangled Pasts" Presenters

Ilze Boldāne-Zeļenka, *Whose history is it? Ethnic and Freak Shows in the Territory of Latvia at the Turn of the 20th Century* – NSU keynote



Ilze Boldāne-Zeļenka is a leading researcher at the Institute of Latvian History, University of Latvia, whose work examines Soviet ethnography, colonialism, race, and the history of anthropology in the Baltic region. Her recent publications include From Centre to Periphery... and Back? The Contribution of the Latvian Soviet Ethnographers to the Journal Sovetskaya Etnografiya (2025), Displaying Exotic Otherness: Does the Space Matter? (Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics, 2022), and Others among Others: Latvians' View of Members of Ethnographic Shows (East Central Europe, 2020). She currently leads the international project "Shared Stages, Entangled Pasts", investigating performance, colonial heritage, and identity formation in the Baltic-German cultural region, and has previously explored the role of ethnographers in constructing Soviet socialist traditions in Latvia.

Throughout the long nineteenth century, ethnic shows, also freak shows, were a popular form of entertainment in Europe and the United States. These events offered audiences opportunities for surprise, curiosity, and the acquisition of new knowledge. While ostensibly focused on displaying cultural and physical diversity, such exhibitions also served as instruments for promoting colonial policy. By presenting individuals as "savages", "heathens", or "monsters" – with more sensational epithets often increasing attendance – these shows helped colonialism garner public support for its purported mission to "civilize" the peoples on display.

In the present day, many countries that emerged from former empires tend to avoid addressing the impact of ethnographic exhibitions, often asserting that they are unrelated to colonialism because of their histories of subjugation. Nevertheless, such performances occurred within these territories, including in major cities of the western provinces of the Russian Empire, such as Riga. These events were advertised and reported in the local press, and were sometimes imitated by local residents in market squares. This was one of the ways they formed perceptions of otherness and of themselves.

The ongoing lack of scholarly attention to this topic, along with the absence of related artifacts in museums, raises an important question: why has this subject remained unexplored? In this lecture, we will examine possible reasons for this in the context of Latvia.

*

Lindsey Drury, *Bear Tracks. Following creatures and captives through a "natural history" of dance*



Lindsey Drury is a dance and performance studies scholar whose research inquires historical relations between colonial sciences and dance modernities. She holds a PhD in early modern studies and teaches within the Critical Dance Studies programme at Freie Universität Berlin. With Helena Hildur W, she also co-coordinates the three-year project Studies in Remoteness, which aims to contribute foundational artistic, theoretical, and historical work toward initiating the field of critical remoteness studies.

This presentation takes up a portal object: a *Bärenfell* (bearhide) dance regalia collected from the Mamalilikulla people of what is now British Columbia by the Norwegian seafarer, human exhibition recruiter, and colonial entrepreneur Johan Adrian Jacobsen. Long stored in the Berlin Ethnological Museum's Dahlem depot, the *Bärenfell* was described as "worn for festive dances" in an 1883 publication by Adolf Bastian and appeared in an illustration advertising a "Bella Coola" dance performance in Berlin. Following encounters with the Nuxalkmc troupe, the anthropologist Franz Boas published *The Mythology of the Bella Coola Indians* (1898), including an account of Nuxalkmc kinship with bears and interspecies transformation through the wearing of a bear skin. Drawing on Boas and Bastian, Irving Hallowell's influential 1926 work *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere* continues to shape anthropological understandings of bear ceremonialism as a global practice, evident in projects such as the National Science Foundation-funded *Walking the Bear: Understanding Circumpolar Bear Ceremonialism*, which identifies a circumpolar pattern from which Europe is notably absent.

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial ethnological exhibitions and natural history displays transformed dance and ceremony into performances of cultural identity. When it entered Europe, the *Bärenfell* became entangled not only in colonial scientific regimes of capture and captivation, but also in a European nationalist and folk-revivalist symbolic ecology of bears, bear kinship, and bear-becoming. Bringing examples of this from Germany, the Baltics, and the edgelands of the former Russian Empire/Soviet Union into exchange with the Nuxalkmc *Bärenfell*, I inquire the meaning of the bear as animal, captive, dancer, performer, relative, sacrificial victim, totemic being, and heraldic symbol, when its signification straddles the entangled contexts of Indigeneity, imperialism, coloniality, and re-envisioned nationalisms. I argue that colonial anthropology did not simply distinguish the natural from the cultural; it produced them as mutually constitutive categories through which both Indigenous ceremonial practices and European national traditions became intelligible.



*"Krolls Etablissement. Bella-Coola-Indianer", advertising poster for a show featuring Nuxalk Indigenous performers from Bella Coola (Vancouver Island); lithographic print by Adolph Friedländer (1885)
Hagenbeck-Archiv, Hamburg*

Anne-Liis Maripuu & Valda Vidzemniece, *Modern dance practices in Estonia and Latvia during the interwar period: a comparative look*



Anne-Liis Maripuu is an independent Estonian dance researcher. Her research focuses on modern dance in Estonia and Germany before the Second world war. She defended her doctoral dissertation at the University of Tartu (Estonia) in autumn 2025, which resulted in the publication of the book "The Role of Modern Dance in Shaping Artistic and Gender Discourses in Estonia in the 1920s". She has published several articles on Estonian dance history and has organized conferences and curated photo exhibitions to promote and popularize the field.



Valda Vidzemniece is a choreographer, educator and dance historian. Since 2008, she teaches Dance Composition and Dance History at Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Department of Choreography. She holds a Master's degree in Choreography from JVLMA, and completed her doctoral studies at the Latvian Academy of Culture in the field of Arts. She has published research articles and participated in local and international scientific conferences, and is the author of monograph "Modern Dance in Latvia in the First Part of the 20th Century" (2024). Her research interests include modern dance history and theory, ballet history, ethnochoreology, and interdisciplinary studies.

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This lecture explores the connections between Germany and Estonia and Latvia through the development of modern dance. Here, "modern dance" is understood as a form of concert dance that emerged in opposition to classical ballet, German body culture and modern dance – specifically *Ausdrucks-tanz* (dance of expression) – and radically redefined human movement in the twentieth century. As one of the principal centers of the "new dance", Germany attracted artists from across Europe.

The lecture traces the emergence of modern dance in Estonia and Latvia during the 1920s through the exchange of dance practices, ideas, and artists between Germany and the two Baltic countries. It highlights not only the influence of German modern dance in Estonia and Latvia but also the contributions of Baltic dance artists to the development of modern dance in Germany. Finally, the lecture examines how the changing political climate of the 1930s reshaped these artistic exchanges and explores how modern dance became intertwined with the construction and expression of national identities in Estonia and Latvia.

Our research draws on a wide range of historical sources, including newspaper reviews, interviews, articles, advertisements, photographs, and performance programmes. Methodologically, it combines historical research with discourse analysis. This is our first attempt to examine the histories of modern theatre dance in Estonia and Latvia in parallel. Rather than presenting a single unified narrative, the lecture embraces the distinct perspectives, research interests, and interpretations of its two presenters, inviting a dialogue between different approaches to the shared history of dance in the Baltic region.

Vida Savoniakaitė, *Entangled Pasts in the Baltic–German Region and Eduards Volters’ Ethnographies, 1882–1941*



Vida Savoniakaitė is Head of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, a Chief Researcher, and Editor-in-Chief of the journal Lietuvos etnologija/Lithuanian Ethnology at the Lithuanian Institute of History. Her scientific interests include the history and theory of anthropology; ethnicity and nationalism; economic anthropology; cultural history and heritage, the anthropology of art. In 2026, she published the book Empire and Eduards Volters: The Ethnography of Lithuanians and Latvians, 1882–1941, with Berghahn Books, and also a chapter entitled Rethinking Conflicts: The Cold-War Museum in the Žemaitija National Park in Decolonizing Europe: Ethnographies of National and Transnational Projects: 169–191, edited by Patrícia Ferraz de Matos and Livio Sansone.

The lecture will address how the academic environment in the Baltic-German region was entangled with past theories of ethnography, anthropology, and philosophy. The discussion will highlight how 19th-century performance anthropology explained to Europeans how to rule the world more effectively. Anthropological and ethnographic methods were not widely known of in many Central and Eastern European locations. Meanwhile, democracy, the humanities, books and newspapers did have an enormous influence on learning about other peoples.

A broader problematizing approach to early Lithuanian studies has not yet been applied in the context of European anthropology, ethnology and the ethnography of the Russian Empire. This lecture aims to generate new interest in what imperial and national ethnography can teach the contemporary person. The analysis will reveal which European institutions, Baltic-German personalities, and theoretical perspectives had the strongest influence on the first Lithuanian and Latvian ethnographic research in decolonization. It introduces the newly discovered historical concept of the local ethnography in the Russian Empire.

It will deeply explore how the early Latvian ethnographer Eduards Volters (1856–1941), who was a researcher at the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, reconciled his imperial research with the political goals of the Lithuanian and Latvian peoples. The presentation considers the influence of the philosophy and anthropology of Jonathan von Herder on nationalism in Lithuania and Latvia, which were then part of the Russian Empire.



Refugees from Pskov and the Leningrad region, employed by the Germans to dig trenches on the defense line near Ķīšupe, August 1944. From the private collection of Jānis Seregins.

Andrea Zittlau, *Marking the Absence of Pietro Bruce*



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Nayo Bruce from Togo was a professional showman who built his own ethnic show troupe and toured successfully in Europe until his death in 1919. While on tour with his group, wives, and several children, he left his son Pietro, who was four years old at the time, with a wealthy family – the von Fircks – in Rostock (Warnemünde). The von Fircks moved between Rostock and Riga and apparently took care of more than one child originally from the African continent. Very little is known about Pietro and the other children. In this presentation, I will think about absence and its significance in our research. As I visited places of Pietro Bruce's past, I am thinking about theories and methods that can mark absences, such as Erin Manning's anarchive, experimental archaeology as explored by Sam Kean and literary imagination used by Saidiya Hartman.

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Image: Baltic Sea Sunset, photo credit: Juliette Santerre