



Call for Papers
5th Spiral Film and Philosophy Conference
“Rise of the Machines”
Toronto, Canada
May 23-24, 2025

Recent breakthroughs in generative AI technology have once again drawn attention to cinema's ongoing identity crisis. In the digital epoch, under what Davide Panagia calls the algorithm dispositif or what Shane Denson refers to as post-cinema, we increasingly encounter moving images that are preformatted for our consumption by artificial metabolic processes beyond human understanding. Where once computers seemed to serve as tools of communication, information processing and entertainment, ushering in an era of liberation for humanity from needless toil, some now fear the overtaking of human intellect by autonomous artificial thought. Critics of AI contend that with the rise of “intelligent” machines that mediate our view of the world we become interpassive subjects (Robert Pfaller) that delegate our cognitive and emotional labour: AI driven algorithms shape the social and political sphere in our stead. Without the ability to experience the world for ourselves, these algorithms and machines are poised to carry the burden of our former humanity.

There are some resonances in such concerns with earlier arguments in film theory about the ways that the cinematographic apparatus (Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz) constructs and positions spectators as passive viewing subjects within the dominant ideology. On the other hand, classical film theorists like André Bazin and Stanley Cavell once praised the cinema precisely for its ability to reproduce the world automatically, showing us a proof of the reality outside our mind's biased projections – a necessary condition for any democratic society. Similarly, Walter Benjamin believed in the power of cinema's machinery to reveal the optical unconscious of modern mass societies and thereby counter the alienation and atomization produced by industrial capitalism.

A question emerges: Is AI-mediated post-cinema still for a human audience or is the target of its uncanny images the machine vision of what Daniel Chavez Heras calls computational spectatorship?

Similarly, are Silicon Valley technocrats dreaming of total digital surveillance in the metaverse the extenders of democracy, or they the harbingers of a techno-feudalism that subjugates connectively mutated neuro-workers (Franco Berardi)?

In the end, are human beings the authors, actors and agents of the post-cinematic age or are they losing their autonomy to the automatic subjectivity of capital (Karl Marx) taking a cinematic form?

For the 5th edition of the Spiral Film and Philosophy Conference, we welcome contributions from scholars, artists and practitioners for 20 minute presentations on cinema and automation, machines and artificial intelligence including (but not limited to) topics like:

• Algorithmic cinemas • Animation and AI and/or Automation • Science fiction and AI • Surveillance and cinema • The old/new crisis of cinema • Interpassivity vs. interactivity • Techno-feudalism as paradigm • The cinematic mode of production • Machine vision in cinema and media • Neuro-work and connective mutation • Post-cinema and dis-correlated images • Cybernetics and moving image media • Legacies of utopian and dystopian modernisms • Interface, screens (e.g., Galloway: Interface Effect) • Human vs. non-human agency in moving image media • Military applications of AI linked to cinema and gaming • Legacies of automatism (Surrealism, Cavell) in film and theory • The “reality-based community” and investments in observational media • Marx’s “Fragment on Machines” and its relevance to film and media theory • The “intimacy” of AI and devices in everyday life consumption of moving images • Sex Machines / Macho Machines (sexuality, gender, and machines in visual culture)

Our confirmed Keynote Speaker is Shane Denson, Professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of Art & Art History, Stanford University. Denson is the author of *Post-Cinematic Bodies* (meson press, 2023), *Dis-correlated Images* (Duke University Press, 2020), *Postnaturalism: Frankenstein, Film, and the Anthropotechnical Interface* (Transcript-Verlag/ Columbia University Press, 2014) and co-editor of *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film* (REFRAME Books, 2016), *Digital Seriality* (special issue of *Eludamos: Journal for Computer Game Culture*, 2014) and *Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives* (Bloomsbury, 2013).

The conference will be held in Toronto, Canada at OCAD University on Friday, May 23 and Saturday, May 24, 2025.

Please send a 350-word abstract, bibliography (5 max.), 5 keywords, and short biography (with institutional affiliation, if applicable) in ONE DOCUMENT as an EMAIL ATTACHMENT to spiralfilmphilosophy@gmail.com by Feb. 15, 2025. Notice of acceptance or rejection will be sent promptly via email.

Conference Registration Fee:

Conference Attendance: \$120 (Canadian)
Graduate Students and Underemployed: \$60 (Canadian)

Conference Website:

spiralfilmphilosophy.ca

Facebook:

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For inquiries contact:

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Organized by:

The Spiral Collective
in collaboration with
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