

17. Arsenal Summer School

19.–21. August 2026, at Arsenal Filminstitut

Introduction to Humanities From the Film Archive of Living Environments

Film archives are full of ideas and designs, some of them invented, others taken from lived realities that have been prevented from writing history. Criticism that wasn't heard, analyses that had to give way to prevailing narratives, living environments that had boundaries set for them. Cultural spaces are becoming smaller, and with them the range of forgotten, repressed or now historical designs for life that once used to have a place at the cinema at least. In the face of the crises and wars of the present, we need them now more than ever: as possible orientation and as a corrective at a time marked by polarization and one-sided narratives. Film archives are collections of perspectives and voices of expressive power. This year's summer school focuses on them as spaces for life and action.

This year's contributors include fellows of the Living Archive Residency, which the Arsenal and the Goethe-Institut are jointly hosting in August and September: Didi Cheeka (Lagos Film Society, Nigeria), Drika de Oliveira (Brazil), Petna Ndaliko Katondolo (Republic of the Congo), and Beatrice Zerbatto (Italy). Further contributions will be made by filmmakers and artists Shelly Silver from New York, as well as Filipa Cesar, Minze Tummescheit and Arne Hector from Berlin.

The events will be held in English.

PROGRAMM

Wednesday, August 19

10–10:30 a.m., Arsenal Remise

Arrival and welcome

10–11 a.m., Arsenal Remise

Welcome and introduction of the participants

Screening: INTRODUCTION TO HUMANITIES (Alice Anne Parker, a.k.a. Anne Severson), USA 1972, 3 Mins. "My first year Humanities class at the San Francisco Art Institute steps before the camera and introduces itself one by one". (Alice Anne Parker, a.k.a. Anne Severson)

Followed by formation of groups that collect their thoughts on the topic and the contributions during the three days of the Summer School and work together in the practical part.

11:30 a.m.–12 p.m., Arsenal Remise

Stefanie Schulte Strathaus: Introduction to the Hidden Places in the Archive

INTRODUCTION TO HUMANITIES is one of the many films in the Arsenal Film Archive that hardly anyone knows about. Seminar participants step in front of the camera to introduce themselves. Some consciously stage their appearance, while others seem uncertain or reserved. Behind every gesture lies a life story that seems to hold promise. A film archive is also an archive of untold stories. Some stories were told but not heard. Others were told and heard, but subsequently forgotten or kept secret. Is it worth searching the hidden corners of archives for answers to the questions of the present? Using examples from the Arsenal Film Archive, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus introduces the theme of the Summer School.

12:30–1:30 p.m., Arsenal Remise

FORMER EAST / FORMER WEST Shelly Silver, USA 1994, 64 Mins.

Followed by a discussion with Shelly Silver

Two years after German reunification, American filmmaker Shelly Silver interviewed hundreds of passersby while in Berlin for an artist residency. Her film FORMER EAST/FORMER WEST is composed of these interviews: a lively, surprisingly candid, and at times unsettling documentary that questions the notion of a common language by addressing shifting conceptions of democracy, freedom, capitalism, socialism, nationality, and history. More than a quarter-century later, Silver is living in Berlin again for a few months and, in conversation with the Summer School participants, recalls statements made by her protagonists.

1:30 p.m., silent green

Lunch at Mars restaurant

3–4:30 p.m., Arsenal Remise

Workshop I: Analysis of a Short Film

In Search of Untold Histories

5–7:30 p.m., Arsenal Remise

Screening of the films and presentation of the workshop results

7:30 p.m., silent green

Dinner at Mars restaurant (included in admission price)

Thursday, August 20

10: a.m.–noon., Arsenal Remise

MANGROVE SCHOOL by Filipa César (2022, 35 min)

Followed by a discussion with Filipa César

During Guinea-Bissau's struggle for independence between 1963 and 1974, led by the agricultural engineer, political organizer, and poet Amílcar Cabral, an ambitious educational program was launched to combat Portuguese colonial rule. The revolutionaries built more than 150 schools in the liberated territories, at least one of which was hidden in the tidal mangrove forest and constructed from natural materials. Inspired by this story, Mangrove School is a collective fabulation developed by Sónia Vaz Borges and Filipa César in collaboration with the Malafo community in Guinea's Oio region. The tabular scenes and

voice-overs are based on lived experiences as well as a three-week workshop. The film explores an anti-colonial pedagogy that is materially and philosophically shaped by the ecological environment.

12 p.m., silent green

Lunch at Mars restaurant

1:30–3:30 p.m., Arsenal Remise

IN ARBEIT cinéma copains, 2012–2018

Presentation and discussion of a long-term film project

Minze Tummescheit and Arne Hector (cinéma copains) view their long-term film project **IN ARBEIT** as an exploration of the conditions, possibilities, and limits of collective action. The communicative process of this exploration becomes the film's subject matter. A chain of interviews connects collective projects across Europe that focus on collaboration. This creates a picture of cooperative practice in a wide variety of areas of society. "IN ARBEIT is based on the simple act of introducing oneself to others in a social setting: To explore the possibilities of collective action, Minze Tummescheit and Arne Hector have initiated a chain interview. The first interviewee leads the film crew to the second, and so on. What connects them all is their work within cooperative structures. (...) The most important question they address is that of their legitimacy: Is it meaningful—and even possible—to position oneself outside of industrial progress, the political public sphere, or the global market? We learn a great deal about film laboratories and the materiality of film, about the relationship between craftsmanship and industry, about French labor market policies for film and theater professionals and the resistance they provoke, and about mafia-like Sicilian structures. Each collective creates its own images, sounds, and rhythms, and so individual images come together to form a series and ultimately a shared political discourse—not least about cinema itself." Stefanie Schulte Strathaus

6.30–8 p.m.

dinner / break

8 p.m., Arsenal Cinema

TECHQUA IKACHI – LAND, MY LIFE (James Danaqyumtewa, Anka Schmid, Agnes Barmettler, West Germany, Switzerland 1989)

Introduction: Markus Ruff

This ethnographic documentary, a collage of film, photography, and painting, tells the story of the Hopi people of Arizona from their own perspective. Against the backdrop of traditional laws and ancient prophecies, the elders from the village of Hotevilla recount the nonviolent resistance with which they confronted the land expropriation and paternalism imposed on their people by the U.S. government in the early 20th century. For over 20 years, James Danaqyumtewa documented oral traditions and ceremonies. His Super 8 footage forms the basis of the film, which was created with the help of director Anka Schmid and artist Agnes Barmettler. The digitally restored version is available in two cuts; the longer one (111 min.) is the "Hopi version," which delves even more deeply into the history of resistance in Hotevilla.

Markus Ruff discusses the unique challenges of the film restoration, which had to take into account the multiple layers of memory and forgetting.

Followed by a discussion moderated by Summer School participants

Friday, August 21

10 a.m.–12 p.m., Arsenal Remise
Living Archive Fellows in Conversation II

12 p.m., silent green
Lunch at Mars restaurant

1:30–3 p.m., Arsenal Remise
Workshop II: Designing a film program that looks at history to seek new answers to contemporary issues

3:30–4:30 p.m., Arsenal Remise
Presentation of the workshop results

4:45–6:15 p.m., Arsenal Remise
Discussion in the plenum, final round

6.15–7:30 p.m.
dinner / break

7:30 p.m., Arsenal Cinema
RIVER DREAMS (Kristina Mikhailova, Kazakhstan, Switzerland, United Kingdom 2026, 98 min)
Kristina Mikhailova asks women and girls to imagine themselves as a river. Village girls, young female city dwellers, LGBT and gender positivity activists, a headmistress singing the praises of gender-conformist education, women in prison, students with dreams of emigrating, as well as recurring conversations of toxic masculinity. But on the banks of the unassuming river Aksay the “river girls” also talk of their desires, dreams and utopias. With radical tenderness and almost sociological rigour, feminist demos and the art of active listening give rise to political scenes marked by sisterhood and solidarity. (Gaby Babić, Barbara Wurm)
Followed by a discussion (moderated by Summer School participants)

9:45 p.m., Arsenal Backyard
Drinks

Registration

The number of participants is limited. Slots will be allotted according to when the application is received. Participation fee: 185 Euro / 165 Euro (members, students, Berlin-Pass) / 145 Euro (members of the Arsenal Freundeskreis)

Registration deadline: August 1, 2026

Venues

Arsenal Filminstitut, Remise
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Contact

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