

# UNCOVERING: VISIBILITY, DENIAL, AND AMBIGUITY IN THE CINEMATOGRAPHY OF THE HOLOCAUST

Conference of the Arbeitsgruppe *Cinematographie des Holocaust*,  
30.11.-2.12.2026 in Łódź

Filmic engagements with the Holocaust are shaped by a foundational paradox that emerged already during the genocide itself: while photographs and films were produced to document, administer, or stage aspects of persecution and mass murder, extensive efforts were undertaken simultaneously to conceal crimes, erase traces, and deny responsibility. From the beginning, Holocaust memory is thus marked by a tension between visual evidence and systematic obscuring – a tension that continues to structure cinematic representation, narration, and reception. This conference invites contributions that examine how films from and about the Holocaust negotiate practices of covering and uncovering across different historical stages. Perpetrators' claims of not having known or seen, survivors' silence and suppression of traumatic memories, and later pedagogical debates about the use of explicit images all point to the persistence of visual and narrative limits. Films may expose atrocity while simultaneously deflecting attention, contain violence through narrative framing, or offer indirect forms of address that enable both confrontation and distance. The conference situates these dynamics within broader societal and national memory cultures. In Germany and Austria, Holocaust cinema operates within societies historically implicated in perpetration, shaped by ongoing processes of guilt negotiation, responsibility, and defensive abstraction. In Eastern European countries that were occupied during the Second World War, cinematic representations engage with histories of invasion, mass violence, and shifting regimes of power, while also confronting complex and often contested questions of collaboration, complicity, bystanderhood, antisemitism, and national self-understanding. In both contexts, repressed, fragmented, or politically instrumentalized family histories contribute to what is today described as postmemory, leaving discernible traces in cinematic form and modes of address. At the same time, new technological developments – particularly the emergence of AI-generated and AI-enhanced historical images – raise pressing questions about authenticity, evidentiary status, and the ethics of visualization, further complicating the dynamics of covering and uncovering in Holocaust cinema. We welcome papers that analyze how films reflect, reproduce, or challenge these dynamics, with particular attention to documentary and archival cinema, perpetrator and survivor imagery, pedagogical uses of film, and the afterlives of Holocaust images in changing exhibition and media contexts. The conference welcomes contributions from the humanities, social sciences, and cultural studies (including film studies, media studies, history, and related disciplines). Interdisciplinary approaches are particularly encouraged.

Please submit an abstract in English of approximately 200 words  
(including a short biographical note) by 30 July 2026 to:

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