

ABSENCE

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE



Digitization, AI, and Politics

FR, 11.10., 15:00 - 18:00

Alexi Kukuljevic
Moderation

Alexandra Schauer
(Frankfurt, DE)

Future Lost. On the Crisis of
Historical Consciousness in
Flexible Capitalism

Alessandra Lemma

(London, via Zoom) - Mourning,
Melancholia, and Machines: An
Applied Psychoanalytic
Investigation of Mourning in the
Age of Griefbots

Isabel Millar (London, UK)

Three Body Problem: Can the
San-Ti Speak?

Excursion with Tour

Minna Antova (Vienna, AT)

DENK-MAL Marpe Lanefesch
(Altes AKH)

Psychoanalysis

SA, 12.10., 10:00 - 12:30

Jeanne Wolff Bernstein
Moderation

Rachael Peltz (Berkeley, US)

The Dialectic of Presence and
Absence – Today!

Cecilia Taiana (Ottawa, CA)

Mourning the Dead, Mourning
the Disappeared

Joachim Küchenhoff

(Basel, CH)

Ambivalences of Absence.
Coping, Avoiding, Accepting,
Using, Mourning

Museology, Literature, and Philosophy

SA, 12.10., 14:00 - 17:45

Daniela Finzi
Moderation

Monika Pessler (Vienna, AT)

Absence or What Remains

Leonard Schwartz

(New York, US)

H.D., Freud, and the Mental Image

Victor Mazin

(St. Petersburg, RU)

The Holes and the Real:
Lacan and Langoliers

Lorenzo Chiesa

(Newcastle, UK)

Anxiety: Absence as a Presence,
Elsewhere

Sigm. Freud
MUSEUM

What is “Absence”? The German word “Ab/wesenheit” and its English equivalent, “ab/sence” reflect a complex dynamic between a loss of being [*Sein/Wesen*] and a loss of sense. Both can be lost when absence extends over an all too long period. In psychoanalytical thought, absence represents a critical component although the term as such does not appear very often in Sigmund Freud’s writings, nor in the vocabulary of psychoanalysis. In fact, psychoanalysis pays just as much attention to the gap as to the words and memories that conceal it. The analytic process is marked by an irrevocable entanglement of presence and absence, of relationship and dissociation. This paradox of the continuing process of disappearance and return finds a striking description in Freud’s observation of his grandson’s *Fort/Da* game in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1921). Only the phantasies of return make the pain of absence and separation bearable. At the same time, the constant repetition of the *Fort/Da* game allows for an unconscious pleasure as the separation, in this case from the mother, is ultimately symbolized by words, and the child can thus take possession of its loss.

In the sense of lack or blank space, the problem of absence has remained key for psychoanalysis and its different schools, for instance in Melanie Klein’s concept of the good or bad breast, in Wilfred Bion’s theory on the development of thought, or in Jacques Lacan’s approach that the subject can only constitute itself in the absence of the other. D.W. Winnicott is one of the few psychoanalysts to have addressed the subject of absence in a *specific* manner. According to him, the experience of being alone and the tolerance of bearing the absence of the other are closely connected to the early presence of the other. Absence can only be borne, and sometimes even longed for, when a sufficiently strong early (maternal) presence has been ensured. When the lack of maternal presence cannot be symbolized as loss, there is a danger of an endlessly continued tragedy. Since the Shoah, a further kind of absence has moved to the foreground as the survivors of the Shoah not only speak of an absence of an object but of a handed-down loss, a blank space at the centre of the psyche for which a language is yet to be invented.

In addition, lack, loss, blank space, but also other notions from the semantic field of absence like reverie or absentmindedness, increasingly become the object of discussion in art and literature. Already Lessing in his introduction to *Laocoön*, dating from 1766, refers to the fact that it is painting and poetry that imagine absent things as present. Besides their ability and their different methods of evoking the absent, absence has played a key role as a *subject* in literature, and in particular in modernity. Absence also is a term that bridges the gap to other disciplines like sociology, cultural and media studies, and allows us to view some phenomena of social transformation and the current media society in a new light. What does the absence of the body in digital communication, where it is only available as an image, do to the subject, and society? What phantasies of absence, or permanent availability, are at work in AI? And, given the climate crisis and the ecological collapse we are heading for, how can we imagine the future other than as its absence?

The international symposium at the Sigmund Freud Museum traces these manifold facets of absence from diverse perspectives and disciplines, possibly in order to recall them into the present later. The event location itself here becomes an object of study or illustration: when the »Origin of Psychoanalysis« was renovated and redesigned, working with the emptiness that marks this place due to the forced emigration of the Freud family became a constitutive element. By exposing architectural »remnants of memory«, we are now actually able to un-cover a past world that – reconstructed in phantasy – claims our attention and heedfulness as pure representation. Quoting Hans Loewald, it was thus possible to “turn the ghosts of the past into ancestors” and to create a space in which the situation of a “present absence” can be experienced at first hand.

Panel “Digitization, AI and Politics”

Alexandra Schauer (Frankfurt, DE)

Future Lost. On the Crisis of Historical Consciousness in Flexible Capitalism

In response to World War I, the primal catastrophe of the 20th century, Walter Benjamin diagnosed a loss of communicable experience. The gap between the pre-war reality of travelling by “horse-drawn carriage” and the industrialized “war of position” seemed so glaring that it could no longer be bridged even by narrative. People had returned from the battlefield not richer, but poorer in terms of communicable experience. Sigmund Freud's contemporary discovery of the traumatic repetition compulsion can also be understood as a diagnosis of a loss of experience, yet of a different kind. The compulsive clinging to a painful experience prevents any meaningful reference to the future, so that here too time seems to be both broken and suspended. In the flexible capitalism of the present, the absence of the future, which once appeared as the result of a historical catastrophe, has become an everyday phenomenon. Instead of an unlimited horizon of possibilities, the future is experienced as an uncontrollable danger zone. Of particular interest for psychoanalysis is the fact that this imagination of an apocalyptic future often corresponds with a fatalistic serenity: Both the fear that would be appropriate to this future and the agency for politically changing and shaping society are suppressed. A repetition compulsion of its own kind takes their place establishing a broad present in which social and ecological devastation persist. The lecture explores the connection between the loss of the future and the destructive modes of dealing with the crises.

Dr. **Alexandra Schauer**, is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt/Main. She studied sociology and philosophy in Jena and Paris. In 2021/22 she was Visiting Professor for Critical Social Theory at the Justus-Liebig-University Giessen. She has also taught and conducted research in Basel, Munich and New York. For her book *Man without World. A Sociology of Late Modern Socialization*, published 2023 by Suhrkamp, she was awarded the dissertation prize of the German Sociological Association and the Wilhelm Liebknecht Prize of the City of Giessen. Her research interests lie at the interface of social philosophy, social theory and psychoanalysis.

Alessandra Lemma (London, UK)

Mourning, Melancholia and Machines: An Applied Psychoanalytic Investigation of Mourning in the Age of Griefbots

Death and mourning are being shaped by posthumous opportunities for the dead to affect current life in ways not possible in pre-digital generations. The psychological and sociological impact of the dead 'online' and of 'grief tech' is only beginning to be understood. It has not yet been explored psychoanalytically until this paper that examines one type of grief tech, namely the griefbot. This development is critically explored through a psychoanalytic reading of an episode of the British television series *Black Mirror*.

I suggest that a psychoanalytic model of mourning provides an invaluable perspective to help us to think about this technology's potential as well as the psychological and ethical risks it poses. I argue that the immortalization of the dead through digital permanence works against facing the painful reality of loss and the recognition of otherness, which is fundamental to psychic growth and to the integrity of our relationships with others. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's conceptualization of "originary mourning", I suggest that mourning is an interminable process that challenges us to preserve within the self the otherness of the lost object. The tools we use for mourning need to be assessed first and foremost against this psychological and fundamentally ethical process.

Alessandra Lemma, Fellow of the British Psychoanalytic Society and Chartered Clinical and Counselling Psychologist, is a Visiting Professor in the Psychoanalysis Unit, University College London and Consultant, Anna Freud Centre and Visiting Professor, Centro Winnicott, Rome. For 16 years she worked at the Tavistock Clinic where she was, at different stages, Head of Psychology and Professor of Psychological Therapies in conjunction with Essex University. She was a recipient of the 2022 Sigourney Award in recognition of her theoretical and clinical contributions to understanding body modification practices, the impacts of technology on psychic functioning and transgender identities as well as for her efforts in developing and disseminating worldwide a brief psychoanalytic intervention for mood disorders. She is the former General Editor of the New Library of Psychoanalysis book series and is the current Chair of the International Journal of Psychoanalysis' Management Board. She has published extensively on psychoanalysis, trauma, the body and transgender. Her latest books are: *First Principles: Applied Ethics for Psychoanalytic Practice* (OUP, 2023) and *Dynamic Interpersonal Therapy: A Clinician's Guide* (Second Edition, OUP, 2024). Her forthcoming book in 2025 is: *Introduction to the Practice of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (Third Edition)*.

Isabel Millar (London, UK)

Three Body Problem: Can the San-Ti Speak?

The acronym TESCREAL circumscribes and critiques various interrelated approaches to the future of Artificial Intelligence and space travel expounded by the usual parade of overconfident white men of a certain age with a penchant for eugenicist ideas with a “happy ending”. It stands for Transhumanism, Extropianism, Singularitarianism, Cosmism, Rationalism, Effective-Altruism and Long-termism. It also captures and delineates what we could describe as the phallic enjoyment of technocapitalism, or as Lacan put it, the jouissance of the idiot. What they all have in common is something which psychoanalysis recognizes all too well: the (always-already thwarted) desire for the augmented human – the organism completely fulfilled, bursting with vitality, pleasure and potentiality at all times. In short, a total body. What this obscures are the necessary failures of the body and the absence of meaning which lies at the heart of subjectivity. This fantasy of wholeness is propped up and perpetuated by countless fictional depictions of the future, fantasies which often forgo many fascinating psychological and conceptual aspects of these imagined worlds. Netflix’s adaptation of Liu Cixin’s *Three Body Problem* being one recent example of how phallic fantasies of AI and non-human forms of intelligence (like that of the San-Ti from the planet Trisolaris), omit the psychoanalytic and philosophical complexity of how the human subject (or speaking-being) copes with the potential not just of other intelligences but also how this implies our whole relationship to time and space.

Isabel Millar is a philosopher and psychoanalytic theorist from London. She is the author of *The Psychoanalysis of Artificial Intelligence* published in the “Palgrave Lacan Series” in 2021 and *Patipolitics*, forthcoming with Bloomsbury. As well as extensive international academic speaking and publishing, her work can be found across a variety of media, including TV, podcasts, magazines and art institutes. She is currently Associate Researcher at Newcastle University, Department of Philosophy and faculty at The Global Centre for Advanced Studies, Institute of Psychoanalysis.

Minna Antova

Guided Tour DENK-MAL Synagoge Marpe Lanefesch (Altes AKH)

Absence in public space, invisibility and repurposing. How can memory be evoked? In a dialog with psychoanalyst Jeanne Wolff Bernstein, artist Minna Antova leads a tour of DENK-MAL Synagogue/Marpe Lanefesch on the grounds of the Altes Allgemeine Krankenhaus (Vienna General Hospital) – now the university campus. Built in 1903 by Max Fleischer for the sick of the Jewish faith, the synagogue was desecrated by the Nazis in 1938. After 1945, it disappears from urban development plans. At the beginning of the 1950s, the synagogue was converted into a transformer room, which supplied the “Narrenturm” (first psychiatric clinic, 1784) with electricity until 2000.

In 1998, Antova was developed in self-commissioning the concept of DENK-MAL Synagogue, in which the building is defined as a multi-dimensional place of meaning: a former Jewish place of worship; the last sacred building testimony of a culturally and historically significant Viennese architect; a place of the destruction of Jewish lifeworlds and a testimony to the handling of places of Jewish history and their destruction after 1945.

2005, it was opened as a “university space with special significance” under the name DENK-MAL Marpe Lanefesch (Hebrew for “healing for the soul”).

Minna Antova was born in Sofia, Bulgaria and educated in Sofia, Stockholm and Vienna, where she studied at the Masterschools for painting and sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in, as well as philosophy and art history at the University of Vienna. A world-space archaeologist, her work draws on her examination of public works and myths, the sacred and the profane, present-day phenomena and visions of the future. Her main fields of work are the construction and deconstruction of cultural memory in public space, acculturation and the complexity of gender. Her exhibitions have been held in London, Madrid, Guatemala City, China, Poland and Bulgaria, among others. As national treasure her work is owned by the Federal Ministry for Arts and Culture, the City of Vienna, the Provincial Government of Lower Austria and Salzburg.

Panel “Psychoanalysis”

Rachael Peltz (Berkeley, US)

The Dialectic of Presence and Absence – Today!

Our work as psychoanalysts is inherently based on the capacity to sustain the tension between presence and absence. Indeed, patients often come to us because of suffering that is rooted in the inability to sustain that tension. Every analysis involves oscillations in the ability to generate new meaning depending on the nature of the anxieties present and containable by the patient, the analyst or both. Breakdowns in the creative process can result in treatment impasses when primitive anxieties are uncontained and projective identifications abound.

In this presentation I will situate impasses as psychic and philosophical breakdowns in which presence and absence are polarized and the capacity to constitute presence out of absence is lost. I will also underscore the paradigm shift in psychoanalysis today in which we are called upon to actively establish our presence in a multitude of verbal/symbolic, and non-verbal/pre-symbolic and procedural ways as a pre-condition for the possibility of new meaning to emerge, especially in the context of these trauma-filled times.

Rachael Peltz, Ph.D. is a Training Analyst, Faculty member, and Co-director of the Community Psychoanalysis Track at the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California. She is an Associate Editor of *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, publishing papers on psychoanalytic listening, depth, the dialectic of presence and absence, impasses in analytic couples' work, Bionian field theory, the manic society, refugee children suffering from resignation syndrome as a parable of our times, and the creation of the first training track in community psychoanalysis in a Psychoanalytic Institute. She works with adults, adolescents, couples, families and groups in Berkeley, California

Cecilia Taiana (Ottawa, CA)

Mourning the Dead, Mourning the Disappeared

Freud's interest in the impact of death on the living goes back further than *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917); in *Totem and Taboo* (1912 – 13) Freud noted the ambivalence of emotions we experience in connection to the dead. In this presentation, I focus on Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* as a landmark in the understanding of both the normal and psychopathological aspects of mourning and depressive processes in human beings. Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* bridges between his first and second topographic theories of the psychic apparatus and constitutes for many authors the foundation of his theory of internal object relations.

With this psychoanalytic understanding of mourning as a framework, I discuss “special mourning processes” such as the ones confronted by psychoanalysts in Argentina when treating the relatives of thousands of disappeared persons; “special” in the sense that the “external reality [which] constitutes the starting point of the psychic mourning process,” as described by Freud, was absent. I argue that the “absent-presence” of the body as an enigmatic message initiates a special mourning process that bears certain characteristics of and is isomorphic to Jean Laplanche's seduction theory.

Cecilia Taiana, Ph.D., born in Argentina, is a psychoanalyst in Ottawa, Canada. Her most recent articles, part of a trilogy, are on “What does poetry offer psychoanalysis? Robert Frost's Sound Sense”, CJP, Spring 2022, and “T S. Eliot's Concept of Tradition”, CJP, Fall 2022. The third article is on Wallace Stevens, Connoisseur of Chaos, and His Notion of Motion, CJP, forthcoming 2024. The journal *fort-da* has published two of Cecilia's poems, *A Tale of Sounds*, Fall 2022 and *Émilie du Châtelet*, Spring 2023. A third poem, *Our Abiding Companion*, was submitted to the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society for publication in their Website Poet's Corner.

Joachim Küchenhoff (Basel, CH)

Ambivalences of Absence. Coping, Avoiding, Accepting, Using, Mourning

The aim of this article is to outline the many facets of absence from psychoanalytical perspective and to consider the ambivalence or open-ended polarity. Absence can be pronounced in different ways and prove to be merely a challenge or a trauma. It can, regardless of its severity, be due to chance or be unavoidably linked to human existence. Normally, it is experienced as an experience that emanates from the other, e.g. but it can also be reinforced or even sought by the person themselves.

By definition, absence is a withdrawal, a negativity, the consequences of which can be both productive and destructive. The loss of an object, which can be associated with absence, can be met with sadness or melancholy. They are comparable in that both struggle for the lasting presence of the absent object, but in a different way and with different consequences for the person affected by the absence of the object.

Joachim Küchenhoff, Prof. Dr. med., practices as a psychoanalyst (DPV, SGPsa, IPA), specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy and in psychosomatic medicine and psychotherapy in Basel. He is professor emeritus at the University of Basel, chairman of the supervisory board and visiting professor at the International Psychoanalytic University Berlin, scientific advisor to the Sigmund Freud Institute Frankfurt and Lindauer Psychotherapiewochen, among others. He is the author and editor of numerous publications (www.praxis-kuechenhoff.ch).

Panel “Museology, Literature and Art”

Monika Pessler (Wien, AT)

Absence or What Remains

The concept of absence, a significant factor in the historical developments at the origin of psychoanalysis, was a starting point for the redesign of the museum in 2020. Even before then, internal and external experts had been asked to consider the following question: How can Freud’s cultural work be presented at his former place of work, when what stands out is primarily what is no longer there? Just think of his couch, which Freud took with him into exile in London when he fled from the Nazi regime.

From an artistic and architectural perspective, the question itself provides the answer: The presence of the absent remains the focus of our museological interventions to this day. The building itself proves key here. The museum visitors’ interest seems to stem from a general desire to explore the origins of psychoanalysis on site and thus also to participate in (their own) history. Over the course of the visitors’ reception, this act of self-localization is subject to a continuous comparison of what was once there with what remains or can still be seen. The external perceptual stimuli that reveal themselves today at psychoanalysis’s home of origin are predominantly reduced to architectural fragments and to what has seemingly been lost, to what is absent. The images created by architectural photographer Hertha Hurnaus and other “remnants of memory” provide an opportunity to explore the originality of the location and its attributions of meaning—the genius loci of Berggasse 19.

Monika Pessler is the director of the Sigmund Freud Museum in Vienna since 2014. She studied art history and curation for museum and exhibition contexts at the Danube University Krems Department for Arts and Cultural Studies. In 2014, Pessler received her master’s degree in organizational development from the IFF, Alpen Adria Universität in Carinthia. She has also worked as a curator at what is now known as the Museum of Modern Art, Klagenfurt as well as at the “steirischer herbst” contemporary art festival, and served director of the Austrian Friedrich and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation from 2003 to 2013. Her additional engagements extend to wide-ranging exhibition activities, lectures, and publications on contemporary art production, architecture, museum organization and development. She has curated many exhibitions at the Sigmund Freud Museum including *SURREAL! Imagining New Realities* (2022) and *THE UNCANNY. Sigmund Freud and Art* (2024).

Leonard Schwartz (New York, US)

H.D., Freud, and the Mental Image

The poet H.D. (1886 – 1961) is a seminal figure in the formation of American avant-garde poetry. She worked with Freud in 1933 – 1934, visiting Bergasse 19 as both patient and friend, and writing both “Advent” and “Writing on The Wall” about their interactions, work later brought together in her book *Tribute to Freud*. For H.D., Freud, surrounded by surprising and evocative objects, was Janus, the Roman God of doorways and thresholds. The poet and the psychoanalyst together considered H.D.’s mystical experience of language projected by the absent gods onto a wall in Corfu in 1920, and the crises this encounter led to for H.D.

Whether in her early Imagist phase or in her later palimpsestic and mythopoetic work, the mental image – the absence of the thing itself but the desire to make it appear present – is at the heart of H.D.’s project in poetry. Is to stand on a threshold or in a doorway to be absent in both rooms or awake to the possibility of being present in both? How does a poem maintain its reader on the threshold? As the Sigmund Freud Museum itself makes clear, doorways are both definite and mysterious.

Leonard Schwartz is the author of numerous books of poetry, including, most recently, *Actualities I: Transparent, to the Stone, Actualities II: Two Burned Hotels, and Actualities III: Comic Earth* (2021, 2022, 2023 Goats & Compasses), as well as *Heavy Sublimation* (Talisman House) and *Horse on Paper* (Chax Press), with painter Simon Carr. His work in poetics *The New Babel: Toward a Poetics of the Mid-East Crises* (University of Arkansas Press), is inclusive of poetry, essays, and interviews. Other titles include *If* (Talisman House), *A Message Back and Other Furors* (Chax Press), and *The Library of Seven Readings* (Ugly Duckling Presse). He also edited and co-translated Benjamin Fondane’s *Cinemoems and Other*, with New York Review Books. Schwartz is a dual US/Austrian citizen.

Viktor Mazin (St. Petersburg, RU)

The Holes and the Real: Lacan and Langoliers

In my research in the field of absence I follow the Freudian tradition of self-analysis and start from my particular experience of holes in space left by disappeared people. This experience was a moment which felt like an absence. It was for real. In a train of thoughts this experience led me to Stephen King's image of creatures called langoliers. The presence of langoliers is in absentia, they are recognizable as hallucinatory sounds returning back from the real. These sounds belong to the oral delirium, which produces the image of the oral holes, of the enormous langoliers mouths devouring the space. The space is corroded with holes.

Hole [trou] is an important notion in Lacanian teaching. Being differentiated from lack [manque] and gap [béance], it is still a heterogeneous notion. The only common trait of different holes is that they always refer to the real. Passing by some different versions of the hole – hole in truth, hole in psychosis, hole in the dream fabric, hole in the real – we come back, to the holes left by the vanished people, to melancholy as a hole in psyche, das Loch im Psychischen (Sigmund Freud).

Victor Mazin, Ph.D., is a practicing psychoanalyst. He is the founder of Freud's Dream Museum in St. Petersburg (1999) and an honorary member of The Museum of Jurassic Technology (Los Angeles). He is the head of the department of theoretical psychoanalysis at the East-European Institute of Psychoanalysis (St. Petersburg), and associate professor at The Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences of St. Petersburg State University, honorary professor of the Institute of Depth Psychology (Kiev). He is also a translator from English and French into Russian, and was editor-in-chief of the *Kabinet* journal and member of the editorial boards of the journals *Psychoanalysis* (Kiev), *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* (Rome), *Transmission* (Sheffield), *Journal for Lacanian Studies* (London). He has published numerous articles and books on psychoanalysis, deconstruction, cinema and visual arts.

Lorenzo Chiesa (Newcastle, UK)

Anxiety: Absence as a Presence, Elsewhere

Jacques Lacan has a detailed theory of anxiety, which spans at least three *Seminars* and culminates in *Seminar X. Anxiety*. He deals with phenomenological, structural, and ontological, if not ethical and political, aspects of anxiety. In this paper, I will mostly focus on the phenomenological aspect. What do we experience when we are anxious? This mundane question obviously has direct implications on the clinic of psychoanalysis, in terms of both how the analyst understands phenomena such as depersonalisation and how anxiety is constructively leveraged upon in the psychoanalytic treatment. Lacan claims that “anxiety emerges when something appears at the place of *absence*”. This is the place that constitutes, in self-consciousness, the subject of demand, and the object demanded as always lacking. Commentators tend to read this in a twofold manner. First, if in anxiety something appears in the place of absence, then anxiety amounts to the absence of absence as *something*. Second, anxiety would therefore stand for a “catastrophic reaction” that fixes absence and leads to de-subjectivation. I will argue that my stance on this is quite the opposite. First, in anxiety, “absence reveals itself *for what it is*” *qua absence*, and therefore cannot be reduced to *something* resulting from an absence of absence. Rather, what absence is “reveals itself [as a] *presence* elsewhere”, namely, the presence, *elsewhere*, of what Lacan calls object *a*. In anxiety, the subject sees itself *elsewhere* as an object seeing the *subject* back. This is for Lacan what Freud called *Unheimlich*, which is epitomised by the Wolf-Man dream. Second, anxiety is thus not a fixation of absence. It amounts on the contrary, in a still Freudian fashion, to a “DANGER! signal” and thus a fundamental subjective *defence*. Absence is instead catastrophically fixed in the so-called passage-to-the-act, as epitomised by Freud’s case of the young homosexual woman, and her attempted suicide.

Lorenzo Chiesa is a philosopher who has published and taught extensively on psychoanalysis. His books on psychoanalysis include *Subjectivity and Otherness* (MIT Press, 2007); *Lacan and Philosophy* (Re.press, 2014); *The Not-Two: Logic and God in Lacan* (MIT Press, 2016); and *The Virtual Point of Freedom* (Northwestern University Press, 2016). He recently completed a new book (co-authored with Adrian Johnston), titled *God Is Undead. Psychoanalysis for Unbelievers*. He is currently writing a monograph on Lacan and Badiou, their formalised ontologies and psychoanalysis as a truth-procedure, tentatively titled *Letter and Event. Lacan, Badiou, and the Future of Psychoanalysis*. Presently, he is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Newcastle University, where he is also serving as co-convenor of the Faculty Research Group in Critical Theory and Practice. He was previously Professor of Modern European Thought at the University of Kent, where he founded and directed the Centre for Critical Thought. He held visiting positions at institutions in the UK, continental Europe, the US, and Asia, including The Freud Museum in London and The Freud’s Dream Museum in Saint Petersburg.

Moderations

Panel “Digitization, AI and Politics”

Alexi Kukuljevic is a philosopher and an artist. He is faculty in the Department for Art Theory at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and the author of *Liquidation World: On the Art of Living Absently* published with MIT Press (2017). He is currently finishing a book entitled *Like Hell It Is: Horror and Hilarity*. The book addresses black humour in figures ranging from the Marquis de Sade and Samuel Beckett to the comedian Richard Pryor. His artwork has been exhibited widely at institutions such as the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, the ICA in Philadelphia, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Ljubljana. His research primarily addresses art and literary theory, Post-Kantian critiques of metaphysics, psychoanalysis, and contemporary French philosophy.

Panel “Psychoanalysis”

Jeanne Wolff Bernstein is a psychoanalyst, living and working in Vienna. She is a member, training analyst, and vice-president of the Board at the Wiener Arbeitskreis für Psychoanalyse (WAP). She is the head of the Advisory Board of the Sigmund Freud Foundation where she had also been the Fulbright-Freud Visiting Lecturer of Psychoanalysis in 2008. Prior to moving to Vienna, Jeanne Wolff Bernstein was the past president and supervising and personal analyst at PINC (Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California). She is still on the faculty at PINC and at the NYU Postdoctoral Program and teaches at WAP. She has published numerous articles on the interfaces between psychoanalysis, the visual arts and film. Her most recent publications include the chapter on Jacques Lacan in *The Textbook of Psychoanalysis* (2012/2024), “Living between two languages: A Bi-focal Perspective”, in *Immigration in Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2016), and “Unexpected Antecedents to the Concept of the Death Drive: A Return to the Beginnings”, in *Contemporary Perspectives on the Freudian Death Drive, in Theory, Clinical Practice and Culture* (Routledge, 2019). Her book *The Lure of the Gaze and the Past* (Alexander Verlag) is forthcoming. She is also the co-editor with Daniela Finzi of *Thoughts for the Time on Groups and Masses, A Sigmund Freud Museum Symposium* (Leuven University Press, 2024).

Panel “Museology, Literature and Art”

Daniela Finzi is a literary and cultural scholar. She is the research director and board member of the Sigmund Freud Foundation since 2016. She has worked as a research assistant at the Sigmund Freud Museum since 2009. Finzi is a member of the editorial board of the Vienna University Press series “Sigmund Freud's Works. Viennese Interdisciplinary Commentaries”. Her most recent publications include the catalogue *FREUD. Berggasse 19 – Origin of Psychoanalysis* (2020), together with Elana Shapira, the anthology *Freud and the Émigré* (2020), and, together with Jeanne Wolff Bernstein, the anthology *Thoughts for the Times on Groups and Masses* (2025). She has (co-)curated many exhibitions at the Sigmund Freud Museum including *Organized Escape – Survival in Exile. Viennese Psychoanalysis 1938 and Beyond* (201) and *Narrating Violence. A Comic-Exhibition* (2023).