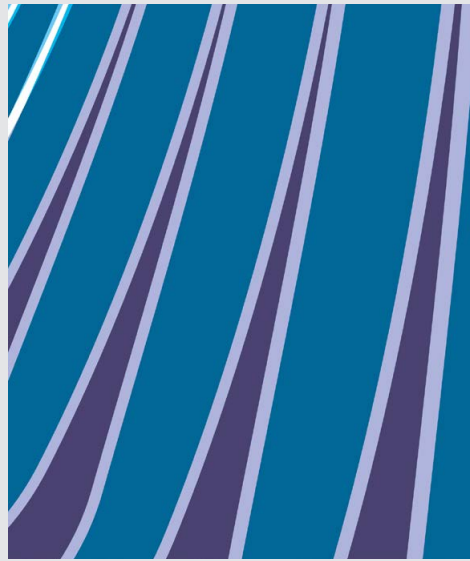


This lecture explores the operations of scale within cinematic and photographic mediations of the South African War (1899–1902), a peripheral colonial conflict between the British Empire and the Boer republics in South Africa. Examining actuality films from the war alongside officers' accounts, photographs, maps, and neglected archival collections, it proposes a way to think about scale within what Malcomess calls an emerging colonial order of information. The latter, she proposes, restructures the modern imaginary of space and time around the concept of the field, a schema with intentionally multiple inflections: a battlefield, a diagrammatic form, a field of attention, and a spatio-temporal field inscribed within diverse forms from cinematography to cartography, telegraphy, aerial photography, photogrammetry, and stereography. Employing a media-archaeological approach, Malcomess tracks operations of scale across various technologies of inscription and transmission in what Friedrich Kittler calls a turn-of-the-century discourse network to reveal a colonial desire to collapse and control distance. These case studies thus make visible a structure of feeling (Raymond Williams) that invests colonial white masculinities with a right to mobility across vast distances, contingent on their assumed possession of technological knowledge. Black colonized subjects are however either absent in these archives, or a spectral presence. Malcomess thus resituates familiar arguments around cinema's transformation of modern perception in relation to a specifically colonial constellation of information technology and media.

Bettina Malcomess is a writer and artist based in Johannesburg, where they teach interdisciplinary studio practice at Wits School of Arts. Occasionally working under the name Anne Historical, their artistic practice inhabits multivocality and density, embodied research and material investigation. Since 2016, Malcomess has produced work with analogue film, light, and sound that inhabits the entanglement of memory, technology, and history: a series of unfinished articulations in counterpoint voices, an attempt to queer the signal. Malcomess holds a PhD in film studies from Kings College London. Recent exhibitions include *Sentimental Agents* at Galerie Nagel Draxler, Berlin (2022), and Wits Art Museum (2024), an installation of digital and analogue films engaging the archives and memorials of the South African War. They are co-author of *Mapping the Sensible: Distribution, Inscription, Cinematic Thinking* (De Gruyter, 2023), and co-editor of *Not No Place: Johannesburg, Fragments of Spaces and Times* (Jacana, 2013).



Lecture Series Scale Scales are used to quantify properties such as length and temperature, or also to measure popularity and affect. But as Alice discovers in Wonderland, a change of scale can also have dramatic qualitative consequences. It disrupts customary ways of perceiving, acting, and being — to the point of feeling as 'queer' to her as a caterpillar's metamorphoses. Helped by the arguably inextricable intertwinement of different meanings and aspects of scale, Alice's experiences continue to provide apt metaphors for the disorienting importance and effects of scale and scaling at a time of hyperglobalization and the so-called anthropocene.

Scale is indeed a highly ambiguous notion, even when one only considers the meanings deriving from the Latin or Italian *scala*, ladder. It simultaneously denotes the whole ladder, one of its steps, and the relation between two steps: The scale of a cartographic map is the ratio between a distance on the map and a distance on the ground, but any particular length also defines a scale, and the range of scales from the subatomic to the planetary scale is part of the spatial scale. Paradoxically recursive, scale combines and helps mediate quantity and quality, as well as subjective perception, objective material properties, and contingent construction.

If different disciplines, discourses, and dispositives each have their privileged scales to which they tend to reduce others, what may be gained by thinking them together, acknowledging both the relative autonomy of particular scales — each with their own affordances, limitations, rules, even laws and ontologies — and their interdependence — each affecting and being affected by other scales? What is the critical purchase of developing multiscale architectures or patchworks of scale-specific, mutually inconsistent and irreducible descriptions, theories, and models? How might the tensions be made productive where they overlap or come into contact? The ICI's Lecture Series 'Scale' will address such questions by reflecting upon the critical role of scale within and across a wide range of different fields.

Bettina Malcomess

Colonial Scales

Operational Images, Depth of Field, and the Order of Information