“Most narrative films take place in that part of life where work has been left behind.” Harun Farocki’s condemnation of cinema’s unwillingness to represent labour finds echoes in present-day political discussions about the struggles and persistent invisibility of labour in public space. Undocumented labour, the weakening of union organizing, and the decoupling of work from physical space in the era of the Internet are phenomena that have irreversibly altered everyday life. At the same time, a new vocabulary capturing the expansions of labour – affective labour, care work, women’s work, immaterial and precarious labour – has made it possible to deepen our understanding of what ought to be considered as labour and where this labour happens. In the same vein, a growing number of filmmakers are showing a commitment to render the spaces where work takes place today visible again.

This conference will tackle the historically shifting relationship between cinema and the representation of labour spaces and will reflect on the renewed attention to the workspace in today’s art cinema and documentary production.