

# INTERDISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP

## ART AND CONFLICT IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

17–18 JULY 2025, BERLIN

FORUM TRANSREGIONALE STUDIEN



ORGANIZERS: EMILY MCGIFFIN (UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK), FENG SCHÖNEWEISS (4A\_LAB, KUNSTHISTORISCHES INSTITUT IN FLORENZ – MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUT), T PRITCHARD (THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH), ANTONIO MONTAÑES JIMENEZ (UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD), AND 4A\_LAB

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# CONCEPT NOTE

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Climate change has happened more than once in the histories of planet Earth and those of human beings. Notably more recent, and historically documented, occurrences include the so-called Medieval Climate Anomaly (ca. 950–1250 CE), the Little Ice Age (ca. 1300–1850) and indeed the contemporary Anthropogenic climate crisis in times of the Anthropocene. From the Russian famine at the beginning of the 17th century following severe winters triggered by volcanic eruptions in Peru, to severe flooding in Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi displacing almost a million people, such climatic shifts have affected and are affecting enormous numbers of people around the planet. Unsurprisingly, endemic to the periods of climate changes are conflicts. These conflicts drastically affect human lives, thus we find both conflicts and the climatic shifts that precipitated them reflected in and entangled with cultural productions. One example is the paintings created by Dutch masters of people ice-skating and revelling on frozen rivers while enjoying the curious prosperity brought by conflict with Spain. Another is from Song-dynasty China: Facing deforestation and military conflicts with northern Jurchen powers, metropolitan regions of the Song increasingly shifted from firewood to coal as energy source, which correlated with producing some of the finest porcelain glazes in Chinese history. These historical instances resonate strongly with the contemporary music of Syrian activists, who are grappling with the effects of drought and Civil war. In multifaceted ways, the making of arts, broadly defined as the cultural expression of human lived experience, has been entangled with both the violent forces of climatic change, conflicts, and crises.

To examine the complex connections and correlations between art and conflict in times of climate change, this workshop focuses on (1) how cultures have been shaped by the concurrent forces of war and changing environments, and (2) how these lived experiences are expressed through art and literature. Researchers will contribute works-in-progress across disciplinary boundaries, including anthropology, art and cultural history, environmental and digital humanities, postcolonial literature, besides film and media studies. Taking a necessarily planetary perspective, the workshop will interrogate and explore artistic creation and armed conflicts in historical and contemporary climate changes, and will explore pertinent and indeed timely topics across historical and geographical boundaries. Our core questions include: How was/is artistic creation, and cultural expression in general, conditioned and/or oriented by non-human beings and beyond-human factors, such as deforestation, ocean currents, monsoon, El Niño, orbital facing, and volcanic activities? How have these factors been represented, and what are the complexities of representing and recording such profound cultural memories? How were/are violence and environmental disruption intertwined within cultural memories, and constituted in material, oral, visual and textual cultures? What methodologies could contemporary researchers use and develop to address the aforementioned questions from interdisciplinary perspectives? How could formats of interdisciplinary collaboration, enhance academic research on common questions, further knowledge transfer across sectors, and enable actions for positive changes?

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## COVER IMAGE:

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525–1569), Massacre of the Innocents, ca. 1565–1567, oil paint on wood panel, H. 109.2 cm, W. 158.1 cm. Royal Collection Trust, UK. RCIN 405787. King's Closet, Windsor Castle. Artwork in public domain.

# PROGRAM

Venue: Forum Transregionale Studien, Wallotstraße 14, 14193 Berlin

Day 1: Thursday, 17 July 2025

**9:30**

Welcome Address by **Georges Khalil** (Forum Transregionale Studien) and **Hannah Baader** (4A\_Lab / Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut)

**9:50**

Welcome of Critical Friends by **Feng Schöneweiß**, 4A\_Lab

**10:00**

Concept Note by **T Pritchard**, The University of Edinburgh

**10:20**

Keynote by **Katrin Kleemann**, German Maritime Museum – Leibniz Institute for Maritime History

*Climate History Perspectives: Echoes of Conflict and Culture*

**10:40**

Discussion

**11:00–11:30**

Coffee Break

**11:30–12:30**

**Panel 1: Extraction, Transition, and Repair**

**Rebecca Macklin**, University of Aberdeen

*Visualising Relations in the Tar Sands: Extraction, Aesthetics, and Repair*

**Emily McGiffin**, The University of Warwick

*“God has riches, I have cows”: Field Notes on Cultural Heritage in the Bauxite Zone*

Chair: **T Pritchard**, The University of Edinburgh

**12:30–13:30**

Lunch

**13:30–14:30**

**Panel 2: Anthropologies of Collaboration and Conflicts**

**Antonio Montañes Jimenez**, University of Oxford

*Scarcity, Family Memories, and Conflict: Methodological Notes and Collaborative Insights*

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**Freya Hope**, University of Oxford

*Anarchy, Art and Alternative Worldmaking: New Travellers' Historicity of Resistance*

Chair: **Christopher Williams-Wynn**, Freie Universität Berlin

**14:30–15:00**

Coffee Break

**15:00–16:30**

**Film Screening** (work in progress) and **Discussion** (hybrid)

*Film and Conflict: Minerals in Times of Climate Change*

Film and presentation: **Matthias De Groot**, University of Antwerp / University of Amsterdam

Discussants: Antonio Montañes Jimenez, Rebecca Macklin, Emily McGiffin (chair), Feng Schöneweiß

**16:30–17:00**

Coffee Break

**17:00–18:30**

**Lecture** (hybrid)

**Sugata Ray**, UC Berkeley

*Das Paradies: The Anthropocene Extinction in the Early Modern World*

Chair: **Hannah Baader**, 4A\_Lab / KHI

Day 2: Friday, 18 July 2025

**9:30–11:00**

**Panel 3: Climate and the Arts of Change**

**Tenaya Jorgensen**, Trinity College Dublin

*Climatic Stress and Political Fragmentation: Environmental 'Pull Factors' in Viking Raiding Strategies in Ninth-Century Francia*

**Feng Schöneweiß**, 4A\_Lab

*Celadon Aesthetics, Gunpowder, and Energy Transition in Song-dynasty China*

**T Pritchard**, The University of Edinburgh

*"As if the world should straight be turn'd to ashes": Comprehending Climate Change and Conflict in the Early 17th Century*

Chair: **Parul Singh**, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

**11:00–11:30**

Coffee Break

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**11:30–12:30**

**Panel 4: Resilience and Memories** (hybrid)

**Ammar Azzouz**, University of Oxford

*A Revolution of Art*

**Rebecca Hanna John**, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte

*Preservation and Extinction: On the Entanglement of Ecological and Decolonial Perspectives in Jumana Manna's Artistic Practice*

Chair: **Mahroo Moosavi**, 4A\_Lab

**12:30–13:30**

Lunch

**13:30–15:00**

Roundtable Discussion

Chair: **Hannah Baader**

Concluding Remarks by **Emily McGiffin** and **Feng Schöneweiß**

Contact

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