DAY 1

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

9:30–10:00	Doors open — coffee, chat, arrival
10:00–10:15 OPENING	**Welcome address** Frédéric Jaeger (programme manager)
10:15–10:45 IMPULSE SPEECH	**Do you feel provoked? Some thoughts on the subversive power of film** A personal reflection on how cinema can question social expectations and norms by creating new narratives, images and stories. What happens when a film pushes or crosses boundaries, what effect does it have on its audiences, what purpose can it serve, and by what means? Déa Kulumbegashvili (writer, director)
10:45–11:00	Coffee break
11:00–12:30 DISCUSSION	**What's controversial about my film? Discourse, outrage and artistic freedom in cinema** What happens between a film and its audience when norms, taboos and moral expectations are broken? How subversive can a filmmaker get without losing the viewers, and what does the longing for transgressive cinema say about society and film's place within it? Two filmmakers discuss the reactions and repercussions of their films and weigh in on the necessities of challenging cinema. Nadav Lapid (writer, director), Déa Kulumbegashvili (writer, director) · Moderation: Dana Linssen
12:30–14:00	Lunch break
14:00–15:30 PANEL TALK	**Villain, superhero, supporting role? The many functions of AI in shaping stories and the connection to the audience** While entire industry trade unions protest and go on strike against AI, many filmmakers find inspiration in using it for their film. From fear of unemployment to the boom of new data strategies, AI is rapidly changing work in media. How exactly is AI impacting story development, with what intent and which purpose? How can humans remain in power and what ethical and legal boundaries are at stake? How can organizations and individuals profit without being made obsolete? A group of experts give insights into their work and answer some of the most pressing questions for creatives. Prof. Taç Romey (HFF Munich, Director AI Master Programme), Nico Hofmann (producer, director, professor, former CEO UFA), Silke Botsch (editor, director *Grace*) · Moderation: Oliver Schütte
15:30–16:00	Coffee break
16:00–17:00 INTERVIEW	**Through a different lens: Challenging the images from indie cinema to "Hollywood"** For many, the camera is the most powerful tool in film production. But how are visions negotiated between a filmmaker and the director of photography? How do questions of diversity, the politics of the visible and the audience gaze factor into that work? DOP Ava Berkofsky has worked on indie films, commercials and hit shows like *Insecure* and gives us an insight into their process and work. Ava Berkofsky (cinematographer, director) — via Zoom · Moderation: Ana David
17:00–17:45 RESPONSE & RESONANCE	**Open Stage** Everyone interested

DAY 2

Thursday, October 15, 2026

9:30–10:00	Doors open — coffee, chat, arrival
10:00–10:30 IMPULSE SPEECH	**What if film is bigger than the film?** A film's potential lives not only on the screen, but in the people it reaches, the conversations it sparks, the communities it activates, and the change it makes possible. Impact producer Simone Pero explores a more expansive way of thinking about audience design, one that connects audience to impact, partnerships, funding, distribution, and cultural change. Simone Pero (For Impact Productions)
10:30–12:00 PANEL TALK	**Sleepers, mavericks and surprise hits: Unexpected audiences for auteur cinema and international recognition** Can we influence the echo of an arthouse film and the audiences it reaches? Somewhere in between festival circuits, reviews, marketing strategies and the box office lie hopes, dreams and expectations. But which factors shape international visibility and recognition? How important are a filmmaker's signature and their reputation — and what chances are there to get through to a new audience and expect the unexpected? A discussion about the many possible careers for auteur-driven cinema. Sata Cissokho (World Cinema Fund), Julien Razafindranaly (Films Boutique), Simone Pero (For Impact Productions), Tobias Walker (Walker Worm, tbc) · Moderation: Dorothee Werner
12:00–12:30	Coffee break
12:30–13:30 KEYNOTE	**Understanding the true power of story** Stories have a frightening power. They can change the way we vote, manipulate what we buy and transform our most innate beliefs. How and why? In this session we'll take a look at the key elements that allow stories to have such a profound effect on our lives. And how those lessons can be applied to the writing and making of fiction and drama. Touching on a number of different techniques — from dramatic irony to narrative reversal, this is a sweeping overview of everything that goes to make narrative such a profound influence on our lives. John Yorke (author, lecturer)
13:30–15:00	Lunch break
15:00–16:15 DISCUSSION	**Art films that matter** Auteurs don't compromise. Independent filmmakers Athina Rachel Tsangari and João Pedro Rodrigues have developed cinematic languages in their poetic films that dazzle and challenge our expectations on story, narrative, image and politics. Is there ever an audience in mind during the creative process? How much freedom can be guaranteed by alternative modes of production? And which idea of recognition does a cinema have that defies convention? A talk on perseverance, survival, artistic expression and film reception. Athina Rachel Tsangari (writer, director, producer), João Pedro Rodrigues (writer, director) · Moderation: Dana Linssen
16:15–16:30	Coffee break
16:30–17:15 RESPONSE & RESONANCE	**Open Stage** Everyone interested

DAY 3

Friday, October 16, 2026

9:30–10:00	Doors open — coffee, chat, arrival
10:00–10:30 IMPULSE SPEECH	**Beyond the female gaze?** Does the term “female gaze” still hold up? And if so, where does it take us? Drawing on her documentary *No Mercy*, which explores women* directors’ engagement with a straight male-dominated cinematic language, Isa Willinger examines the term’s relevance today. Through a cinematic dialogue with filmmakers such as Céline Sciamma, Nina Menkes, Alice Diop, Joey Soloway, and Catherine Breillat, Willinger weighs the arguments in favor of and against the concept of a specific gaze. Isa Willinger (director)
10:30–11:45 DISCUSSION	**The limits of reality: Approaching documentary filmmaking** When talking heads meet ten commandments: The approaches to documentary film are as diverse as the genre itself. While Kazuhiro Sōda declares his method and style in a list of self-imposed rules, including no scripts, music or external financing, Isa Willinger operates on the other side of the non-fiction spectrum. How do they wish to shape the reality they depict and how does this relate to ideas of an audience’s and a filmmaker’s gaze? Between observational and interrogative methods, this talk discusses the power of strong stances in documentary film. Kazuhiro Sōda (director), Isa Willinger (director) · Moderation: Therese Koppe
11:45–12:15 RESPONSE & RESONANCE	**Open Stage** Everyone interested
12:15–13:45	Lunch break
13:45–15:15 PANEL TALK	**Transnational battles: Exiles, diasporas, international solidarity and cinema** Does exile have a nation, and what political implications shape the making of a film abroad? How important are global and national solidarities, and what kind of relations are there to the cinema in the countries of departure and arrival? The battles fought are often a pivotal point in the writing and making of the films, so is exile cinema always a small victory? A discussion on networks, support and independence in an interconnected world. Abdallah Al-Khatib (writer, director), Alina Matochkina (writer, director, editor), Mahnaz Mohammadi (writer, director) · Moderation: Wolf Plesmann
15:15–15:30	Coffee break
15:30–16:00 IMPULSE SPEECH	**Altered states: a matter of life or undeath** In which I find my cinema zombie in a state of indefinite suspension betwixt praxis and entropy — nostos and nostrum — irrelevance and revelation — tactility and distraction — transcendence and slop. Athina Rachel Tsangari (writer, director, producer)
16:00–17:30 PANEL TALK	**A group effort? Dogmas and collective work in film** From vows of chastity to rules that ban the use of the internet for film production or demand handwritten scripts, dogmas are seeing a revival, as is working in collectives. How do groups of creatives come together, set frameworks for themselves, and what do they hope to achieve by doing so? How collective can and should filmmaking be? What are the merits of working under restrictions, and how do you share labor and artistic vision if there are many of you? Filmmakers from Dogme 95, NoCut Film Collective and DOGMA 25 share their experience. Lone Scherfig (writer, director, producer), Jorgo Narjes (producer), Isabella Rinaldi (writer, director, producer) · Moderation: Frédéric Jaeger
17:30–19:00 RECEPTION	**Closing remarks & drinks**