Symposium of the 2027 FIAF Congress

Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 April 2027

Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin, Germany

Call for Papers

“Times of Political Change: Film Heritage, Archiving and Agency”

In light of profound political upheavals around the world, the Symposium of the 2027 FIAF Congress in Berlin is dedicated to political changes in the context of film archives. What role does film heritage play in the collective memory of political upheavals? What impact does political change have on film heritage institutions? What can be learned from the past, what questions do archives face today, and how can they position themselves as resilient archives for the future? How have political changes been captured on film, and what has happened to these films once they entered the archive (and what if they did not)? This Symposium builds on the key reflections and proposals put forward in many previous FIAF Symposia, including those held in Bangkok in 2024 and in Rabat in April 2026. The goal is to provide a space for shared learning both within the FIAF community and in dialogue with all film heritage practitioners, scholars and institutions worldwide.

For the purposes of this Symposium, political change is understood broadly as significant moments of transformation, upheaval, instability or uncertainty, whether sudden or unfolding over time, whether perceived as positive or negative by those involved and affected. This may include changes in government and political institutions, legislation and cultural policies, geopolitical situations, wars, revolutions, public protests, reforms, or the political and social aspects of such phenomena as pandemics and climate change. It also encompasses broader changes in social and cultural awareness, visibility and representation, including the emergence of socio-political movements. The Symposium does not seek to define political change in terms of party politics, nor does it imply a particular ideological position. Rather, it

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asks how significant changes in the political and social environment affect the preservation, accessibility and interpretation of film heritage.

With this call for proposals, we invite contributions exploring two interconnected strands: the archival status of films that have captured, participated in or emerged from moments of political change, and the experience of film archives themselves as they operate within changing political contexts. These strands can include examples from the past, the present and looking into the future.

Films stemming from different political and social movements are often produced under precarious conditions. What happens to these films immediately after they are made and when the political circumstances change? How are they collected, preserved and made accessible, and by whom? Periods of political and social upheaval can result in the loss, destruction, manipulation, displacement and disappearance of audiovisual heritage, creating gaps and distortions in film historiography and determining whose memories and histories are preserved and whose are not. At the same time, political or social change can give new relevance to archival holdings once considered marginal, insignificant or taboo. This strand also invites reflection on the emergence of counter-archives and non-institutional, non-national or grassroots film archives based on independent and self-managed preservation practices.

On the other hand, film archives themselves are always embedded within political landscapes, national frameworks and cultural policies. These conditions differ from place to place and can change through legislation, government priorities, funding, censorship, geopolitical developments or events that challenge the routines in which archives operate. How does political change influence the mission and operational work of archives? What agency do they have in responding to it and what are the (sometimes unorthodox) solutions envisioned or implemented? Through these solutions, archives can provide spaces in which new histories, perspectives and forms of dialogue and knowledge can emerge. At the same time, archives must be mindful that their own actions might contribute to creating and stabilizing (or destabilizing) particular histories and forms of power. What role do archives play here, historically or in the current socio-political climate? This direction also invites reflection on the resilience of archives and on the role of the FIAF community as a space for communication and international cooperation. Contributions may explore strategies for safeguarding cultural heritage in times of crisis, as well as historical examples of preservation projects, agreements and other forms of archival cooperation that have enabled film heritage to survive political upheaval.

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The Symposium of the 2027 FIAF Congress will bring together contributions from across the world in Berlin, a city whose history has been profoundly shaped by political change and whose film culture and heritage continue to bear the traces of these transformations. We invite proposals addressing, but not limited to, the following subjects:

- **Film heritage and political upheaval:** loss, destruction, manipulation, displacement and disappearance, as well as preservation and recovery of audiovisual heritage in times of political and social change.
- **The archival lives of socio-political movements:** the collection and preservation of films emerging from or documenting political and social movements.
- **Marginalized histories and counter-archives:** alternative, community-based, non-institutional, non-national and grassroots approaches to preserving audiovisual memories and non-canonized materials.
- **Archives, power and knowledge:** the role of archives in producing, shaping and stabilizing or destabilizing knowledge, dialogue, histories and relations of power.
- **Decolonial archival practices and the politics of restitution:** past, existing and necessary archival practices aimed at decolonizing collections; the challenges and the outcomes of restitution.
- **Political frameworks and film archives:** the impact of legislation, cultural policies, government priorities, funding, censorship and changing political contexts on the work and missions of archives.
- **Archival resilience:** institutional resilience and strategies for safeguarding film heritage under political pressure, during war, instability and other moments of upheaval.
- **Archives and changing relevance:** the rediscovery and renewed use of films and collections following changes in political or social climates.
- **International cooperation and solidarity:** the role of FIAF and the archival community in fostering dialogue, cooperation and support during political crises, including historical case studies.
- **Film historiography and political change:** gaps, silences and transformations in film history resulting from political change and respective shifts in archival policies.
- **Past lessons, future archives:** what historical experiences of political change can teach film archives about their role and resilience in the future.

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The Scientific Committee welcomes suggestions by all interested parties – by staff of FIAF institutions and expressly also by practitioners, scholars and institutions beyond the FIAF community. We look forward to your suggestions for the following presentation and discussion formats:

- **Individual contributions**
  Individual contributions (articles, presentations, etc.) should last between 15 and 20 minutes (including extracts), with strict respect for time limits. Each contributor will share a session with a maximum of three other proposals, with room for collective discussion.
- **Pre-constituted panels** (roundtables or other formats)
  Pre-constituted panels should last 90 minutes (including discussion). Each speaker needs to fill the submission form individually but abstracts of panelists may overlap or be identical. We encourage you to consider inviting partners and colleagues from outside FIAF.
- **Poster Presentations / Lightning Talk** (short project/case presentation)
  Short individual presentations of 5 to 7 minutes to draw attention to projects in progress, aiming at facilitating future collaborations.
- Other formats not listed above are welcome.

Please submit your proposals via the **dedicated online form** by 6 December 2026. Submissions via email will not be accepted. The Symposium Scientific Committee will announce the final selection of papers by 22 January 2027.

Presentations may be delivered in any of FIAF's three official languages (English, French, Spanish). Please submit your proposal in one of these three languages and clearly indicate the language of the proposed contribution.

Note that all contributors in need of financial support will be able to apply for funding offered by the Sunrise Foundation for Education and the Arts for assistance with travel and accommodation costs. In addition, colleagues from the FIAF community delivering presentations at the Symposium will be able to apply for funding from the Christian Dimitriu Fund for assistance with travel and accommodation costs.

Members of the Scientific Committee

Peter Bagrov, George Eastman Museum (Rochester)

Ricardo Cantor Bossa, Cinemateca de Bogotá (Bogotá)

Sanchai Chotirosseranee, Thai Film Archive (Salaya)

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Dr. Michael Fürst, Filmmuseum Potsdam (Potsdam)

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Dr. Maral Mohsenin, Eye Filmmuseum (Amsterdam)

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For questions or comments, please contact the committee at fiafcongress2027@deutsche-kinemathek.de.

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