

Refugee Futurity: From Perpetual Crisis to Critical Dystopia in Contemporary Film and Video Art

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How can art conjure radically different futures for those who have been left outside the dominant narrative of Western progress? How do artists and filmmakers imagine alternative futures for communities and regions marked by prolonged displacement, violence, and conflict? And how might creative visions of the future illuminate a present that continues to be shaped by histories of colonialism, slavery, and neocolonial practices? This talk will explore recent film and video works that concern questions of forced displacement, dispossession, and futurity in geopolitical contexts marked by a perpetual sense of crisis and conflict. In such conditions, crisis rhetoric has become a common mechanism for authorizing exceptional measures, states of emergency, and practices of criminalization, punishment, and containment. This talk will focus on the ways in which film and art practices conceptualize and figure refugee imaginaries and engage with refugee timescapes in relation to spatially distributed bordering practices and temporalities of crisis, which center on the ever-present specter of a seemingly inevitable “invasion,” “threat,” or “catastrophe” in the near future. With a specific focus on “refugee crisis” across the Euro-Mediterranean borderlands, I will examine the ways in which artistic practices can counter and disrupt the crisis framework by envisioning alternative, decolonial futures.

Biography

Nilgun Bayraktar is Assistant Professor of Film at the History of Art and Visual Culture Program and Film Program California College of the Arts. Her work, focusing on migrant and diasporic cinema, contemporary art, and critical border studies, has been published in journals including *Journal of European Studies*, *Screen City Biennial Journal* and *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*. Her recent book, *Mobility and Migration in Film and Moving Image Art: Cinema Beyond Europe* (Routledge 2016), examines cinematic and artistic representations of migration and mobility in Europe since the 1990s. Bayraktar's most recent book project, *Refugee Futurity: Countermemory and Speculative Imagination in the Cinema of Displacement*, explores contemporary film and video works dealing with questions of forced displacement, countermemory, and futurity in geopolitical contexts marked by a perpetual sense of crisis and conflict. She recently curated the exhibition *No Place Else: Dystopian Sci-Fi Imagination* (CCA San Francisco), which explored concepts including the dystopian city, the post-human, AI, ecological crises, and retro-futurism.