

# Noisy Systems: Aesthetics, Epistemology, and Computation

Organized by the *Machine Visual Culture* research group.

**Where:** Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History, Villino Stroganoff, Via Gregoriana 22, 00187 Rome, and online (Zoom)

**When:** 4th and 5th June 2026

**Scientific organization:** Violaine Boutet de Monvel, Eryk Salvaggio, Amira Moeding

In machine learning and information theory, noise is typically defined as an unwanted intrusion into a signal—an error to be minimized, filtered, or regularized. Yet recent advances in large language and diffusion models place noise at the center of their operation: from randomized probabilities in token prediction to noise seeds in image, sound, and video generation. Philosophical and aesthetic perspectives have meanwhile long recognized noise as a force of disruption and invention—one that opens systems to unpredictability, difference, and transformation. Noise, in other words, is not only what obscures meaning, but also what enables new meanings to emerge.

This tension raises fundamental questions. Who determines what counts as “signal” and what is discarded as “noise”? What happens when noise is no longer conceptualized as merely impeding communication in the Shannon–Weaver sense, but becomes a constitutive part of both the channel and the model’s behavior? Such conditions call for sharper critique and theorization of what this workshop reframes as “noisy systems”. *Noisy Systems: Aesthetics, Epistemology, and Computation* thus proposes to examine noise as a position of reference across technical, social, and cultural domains, bringing together insights from machine learning, critical AI studies, media theory and archaeology, art history, philosophy, and practice-based research.

**Please follow the event also online through the platform ZOOM:**

04.06.2026

<https://eu02web.zoom-x.de/j/64785086392?pwd=sb6rKbRBFeax3HZ3xXnauYyhZfANXI.1>

05.06.2026

<https://eu02web.zoom-x.de/j/65170089677?pwd=tF0M6lgM5l9x4h0yJzIUncjAiksxs.1>

## PROGRAMME

*Each panel is structured as two 20-minute presentations, and a subsequent joint conversation.*

Thursday, 4 June 2026

**10:00 – 10:10** Welcome

**10:10 – 10:30** **Introduction: Amira Moeding** (University of Cambridge) – *TBD*

**10:30 – 10:40** Discussion

### **Panel 1: Noisy LLMs**

Chair: Valentine Bernasconi

**10:40 – 11:00**      **Ryan Heuser** (University of Cambridge) – *The Statistical Unconscious: Noise, Desire, and the Law of AI Alignment*

**11:00 – 11:20**      **Ivar Frisch** (ACS Research) – *Noise Between Worlds: Computational Contingency and Representational Collision in Multi-Agent LLM Systems*

**11:20 – 11:40**      Discussion

**11:40 – 12:00**      Coffee break

### **Panel 2: Governed Noise**

Chair: Giulia Flenghi

**12:00 – 12:20**      **Michael Castelle** (University of Warwick) – *Song Implements Thom: Determinism and Noise in the Statues of Contemporary AI*

**12:20 – 12:40**      **Mariya Dzhimova** (University of Music and Performing Arts Munich) & **Benediket Zönnchen** (Munich University of Applied Sciences) – *Translating Noise: The Social Construction of Indeterminacy in Art, Engineering, and Machine Learning*

**12:40 – 13:00**      Discussion

**13:00 – 14:00**      Lunch

### **Panel 3: Threshold Images**

Chair: Ludovica Schaerf

**14:00 – 14:20**      **Christoph Engemann** (Ruhr University Bochum) – *Graphs: Navigating Noise*

**14:20 – 14:40**      **Paula Muhr** (Brand University of Applied Sciences) – *Foregrounding Noise: Subthreshold Analyses and ‘Transparent’ Visualisation in Contemporary Neuroimaging*

**14:40 – 15:00**      Discussion

### **Panel 4: Signal Regimes**

Chair: Eryk Savaggio

**15:00 – 15:20**      **Shuyi Yin** (Columbia University, **online**) – *Adjudicating Noise: Heritage Documentation and the Governance of Signal*

**15:20 – 15:40**      **Bronac Ferran** (independent researcher) – *Edge-Detectors: How Semiotic Noises First Permeated Postwar Concrete Texts and Early Computer Art*

**15:40 – 16:00**      Discussion

**16:00 – 16:20**      Coffee break

**16:20 – 17:00**      **Keynote: Cécile Malaspina** (The School of Materialist Research) – *TBD*

**17:00 – 17:20**      Discussion

Friday, 5 June 2026

**10:00 – 10:10**      Welcome back

**10:10 – 10:30**      **Introduction: Violaine Boutet de Monvel** (Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History) – *TBD*

**10:30 – 10:40**      Discussion

**Panel 5: Programmed Aesthetics**

Chair: Leonardo Impett

**10:40 – 11:00**      **Ben Pulver** (University of Toronto) – *Slop in the Machine: Art, Computers, and Kitsch*

**11:00 – 11:20**      **Paola Lagonigro** (Sapienza University of Rome) – *Traces of Information Aesthetics in Pietro Grossi's HomeArt*

**11:20 – 11:40**      Discussion

**11:40 – 12:00**      Coffee break

**Panel 6: Soft Images**

Chair: Ryan Heuser

**12:00 – 12:20**      **Bernd Behr** (University of the Arts London / Royal College of Art) – *La Belle Noiseuse: Adversarial Noise between Ichnography and Semantic Topology*

**12:20 – 12:40**      **Tuomo Rainio** (Aalto University) – *Technical Images with Soft Edges: Noise and the Epistemic Model of Digital Images in Artistic Practice*

**12:40 – 13:00**      Discussion

**13:00 – 14:00**      Lunch

**Panel 7: Counter-Visualities**

Chair: Amira Moeding

**14:00 – 14:20**      **Edoardo Pelligra** (University of California, Los Angeles) – *An Aesthetics of the Indefinite: Surveillance Art and Queer Embodiment*

**14:20 – 14:40**      **Anoushirvan Masoudi** (Offenbach University of Design and Art) – *A Counter-Visuality: Grain, Noise, and Distortion in Iranian Amateur Video Culture*

**14:40 – 15:00**      Discussion

## **Panel 8: Entropic Practices**

Chair: Violaine Boutet de Monvel

- 15:00 – 15:20** **Connor Cook** (Design Academy Eindhoven / Amsterdam Academy of Architecture) – *Bodies In-Formation: Noisy Skill Acquisition in Competitive Cheerleading*
- 15:20 – 15:40** **Arnaud Mery** (Université de Montréal, **online**) – *How to cook a doubtful haze: a recipe for anti-normative entropy modulation with Stable Diffusion*
- 15:40 – 16:00** Discussion
- 16:00 – 16:20** Coffee break
- 16:20 – 17:00** **Screening: Eryk Savaggio** (University of Cambridge) – *Human Movie: Six Meditations of a Compression Algorithm*
- 17:00 – 17:20** Closing remarks