

GENDER STUDIES

sophia

Workshops, talks, panels, screenings, exhibitions, & more....

12&13 NOV

@PIANOFABRIEK

Rue du Fortstraat 35, 1060 St-Gilles
From 09:30 till 21:30

14 NOV

@HUISVANDEMENS

Saintelette Square 17, 1000 Brussels
From 17:30 till 21:00

A STATE OF THE ART



institute voor de gelijkheid
van vrouwen en mannen



fnf's



PIANOFABRIEK



huis
van de mens



foundation
Paul Boncompagni
Agri. awarded for one excellent author

12 - 13 - 14 NOV

GENDER STUDIES

A STATE OF ART.

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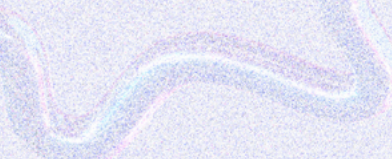
Program.

Introduction

Held every four years, Sophia's State of the Art in Gender Studies conference is a celebration of the crucial role that gender and feminist studies play in shaping and fostering inclusion, advancing gender equality and imagining collectively emancipatory futures. Far from being a niche or abstract academic topic, gender studies offer fundamental tools to understand societal structures, power relations and lived experiences to answer social, political and economic challenges through imaginative and transformative thinking.

This year's edition is the result of an open call launched in May 2025, which received over 200 submissions. Thanks to the dedication of our project committee, composed of researchers, activists, and artists, we have been able to shape a programme that reflects a thoughtful balance of languages, themes, formats, and disciplines rooted in feminist, decolonial and queer perspectives. This diversity speaks to the richness and relevance of the field of gender studies and the many ways in which feminist and gendered perspectives intersect with contemporary struggles and creative practices.

The breadth of topics addressed over the course of our conference demonstrates the centrality of gendered and feminist perspectives in contemporary research, activism and policymaking. The interdisciplinary nature of gender studies is a fundamental lens through which we can critically assess and respond to ongoing social, political and economic injustices. That is precisely because gender is embedded in labour, care, embodiment, space, land, violence, imaginaries, coloniality, past, present and future.



Besides, the capacity of gender studies for fostering imaginaries and sustaining transformations may be the reason why the legitimacy of gender studies itself is under increasing scrutiny and threat. However, the ongoing undermining of gender studies as a scientific and academic field says more about its relevance and importance than about its lack of credibility.

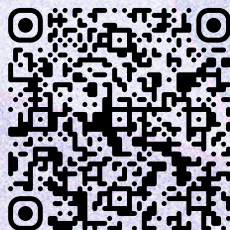
In this context of political strife, it is also now more important than ever to connect feminist struggles and Palestine, as the genocide in Gaza are shaping our global reality. At the time of writing this introduction, over two years have passed since the beginning of the assault on Gaza, which continues to endure violence, starvation, destruction and deprivation, with the complete disregard for international law and human dignity as a backdrop. In the West Bank too, cities and camps are under the siege of the Israeli army and settler violence runs rampant while Palestinians, including scholars and students, face further criminalisation and threats to their lives for their resistance to Zionist occupation. As a feminist organisation building bridges between academia, civil society, and the arts, we want to reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people and reiterate the call from feminist scholars and civil society: Palestine is a feminist issue. The struggle for decolonisation, for land and labour, for care and solidarity, and for life itself are deeply gendered, deeply interconnected, and perhaps now more important than ever.

This conference is a collective effort to support and stimulate research and initiatives across the broad field of gender studies, and at the same time a space of resistance, dialogue, coalition-building, imagination, and transformation.

How to navigate

TIMETABLE

Start with the [timetable](#) to see the programme at a glance: each session is preceded by a number that you can use to locate it in the full programme or the brochure. Information such as language, starting and ending times, and formats are also available at a glance on the timetable.



Legend: **Panel & Keynote** **Workshop** **Performance** **Screening** **Roundtable**

FULL PROGRAMME

The [Full Programme / Book of Abstracts](#), available on our website, is the complete online publication that gathers all the short descriptions, abstracts, and biographies submitted directly by the speakers and artists themselves. It is designed as a comprehensive publication where you can explore each contribution in greater depth and engage more closely with the ideas, research, and artistic practices presented during the event. Unlike the printed **brochure** you have here, which serves as a concise and accessible overview of the programme (with brief session descriptions but no biographies), the **full programme** offers the full, unedited content as received from the contributors.

The full programme is exclusively available online, in two versions:



- an **English** version
- a **multilingual** version, which preserves the original language of each session or contributor.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE...

but don't forget lunch

Pick sessions that match your interests, preferred language, and/or the vibe you're in. With more than 36 sessions spread across three days, this program is designed so you can create your own path according to your interests, language preferences, and mood.

QUIET SPACE

Care and wellbeing are at the heart of this convivial and rich gathering. A *quiet space* is available for you to take breaks if needed, in the **Catania room** (second floor of Pianofabriek).

KID'S PROGRAMME

On Wednesday afternoon (13:00 - 18:00), we have foreseen a special *kid's programme*, for children from 6 to 14 years old. Head to the **Bethlehem room** after checking-in at the **Welcome desk** (at the entrance of the building) with your kid's ticket, available via our registration form.

VOLUNTEERS & TRUST PERSONS

Besides the coordinators of Sophia and the helpful team of volunteers who will be easy to identify, there will be **two trust persons** (French- and Dutch-speaking) in case you need advanced assistance. Present yourself at the **Welcome desk** if you need access to the trust persons.

LUNCH & BREAKS

Collective lunch will take place on day 1 between 12:30 and 13:30 and on day 2 between 12:00 and 13:00 at **Zabriskie Point** (-1). Make sure to present your lunch tickets to our volunteers! Collective coffee breaks will take place in the **Expo space** (ground floor).

KIDS' PROGRAMME

Wednesday 12 November: Children's workshop - exploring identity & expression

Bethlehem (1st floor)

FR/NL

13:00 to 18:00

Led by Nazra ASBL, with two facilitators, one French-speaking, one Dutch-speaking.

In this workshop, children explore what it means to be themselves in a diverse world. Through games, movement, and creative activities, they reflect on identity, self-expression, and challenging stereotypes.

Schedule :

- Icebreakers & welcome : names, gestures, and playful introductions
- Theatre & movement games : experimenting with emotions and roles
- Creative workshop : drawing or crafting personal symbols and stories
- Collective storytelling : sharing their ideas to create a short collective story
- Closing circle : presenting creations and reflections

Who is it for?

Children aged 6 - 12, all language levels welcome.
No prior theatre or art experience required.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Illustrated notes

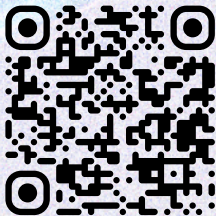
With Odile Brée

[Odile Brée](#) is a Belgian feminist illustrator. With her colour palette and dynamic lines, she juggles words, concepts and ideas. Her mission: to translate theoretical explanations into small, accessible and playful illustrations. Her images allow complex information to be recorded from a new and sometimes humorous angle. You will have the opportunity to meet her at this event, either with her logbook or during a live performance.



IG: @odilebree

RoSa's library



RoSa

Kenniscentrum voor
gender en feminisme

Often confused with one another, Sophia and RoSa's missions are closely interconnected to support knowledge-sharing. With a collection of over 21,000 non-fiction books in English, Dutch, and French, [RoSa's library](#) offers researchers a unique resource for the study of gender and feminism. Situated in the heart of Brussels, the library's curated collection reflects the diversity of gender studies across social and scientific fields. Researchers can consult the online catalogue or rely on the expertise of library staff for tailored guidance. The library is open from Monday to Thursday from 11am to 6pm.

PROGRAMME

DAY 1: Wednesday 12th NOV

Masculinities & the manosphere

1

Zabriskie Point (~1 floor)

ENG

10:00 to 11:45

With Alexander Dhoest, Zanouka Bonfilio, Tony Holman, Nicola Brajato, Bethléem Dubois & Mathieu de Wasseige (moderation)

This panel explores contemporary constructions of masculinity across different cultural and media contexts. From the ways TikTok algorithms maintain hegemonic gender norms, to incel discourse on online forums, to the psychological mechanisms behind men's performance of masculinity, the contributions investigate how masculinities are shaped, performed, and contested. Further perspectives address sartorial practices as sites of biopolitical regulation and resistance, and the visual erasure of female singlehood in contrast to male autonomy. Together, these papers shed light on how masculinities circulate in digital, social, and cultural spaces, and how they intersect with broader questions of power, identity, and representation.

The papers and research projects presented during this session are:

- From manosphere to mainstream: Representations of masculinity on TikTok
- Happily never after... a netnographic approach to incels interactions on imageboards
- Between performance and performativity: the psychology behind why and for whom men perform masculinity
- The Biopolitics of the Dressed Male Body: Corporeal Vulnerability in Non-Conforming • Men's Sartorial Practices
- Vieilles Filles / Eyes on Singles: questioning the absence of female singlehood in photographic culture

Inégalités genrées et santé

**2****Casablanca (2nd floor)****FR****10:00 to 12:30**

With Charlotte Pezeril, Ndèye Fatou Kane, Julia De Clerck, Sarah Demart, Aminata Sidibé & Océane Fraenkel

This roundtable aims to analyze together and reflect on the concrete obstacles and levers for promoting gender-sensitive approaches, in an intersectional perspective, both within health promotion organizations and more broadly among political, associative, and activist actors in civil society. The broader goal of this discussion is to foster dialogue among different actors (researchers, health professionals, activists, etc.), as well as across disciplines (social sciences, medicine, psychology, public health, philosophy, etc.).

Building on these concrete issues, it will also address the biopolitical stakes involved in the governance of bodies through public health policies, in both local and global contexts. The intersectionality of so-called vulnerable or “at risk” bodies – gendered, racialized, sexualized – needs to be seized and better understood, starting from the materiality of health and even life inequalities (those bodies that count and those that do not).

This roundtable discussion will be composed of two contributions:

- Genre et intersectionnalité en santé : comment avancer ?
- Tais toi, ça ne se voit pas : à propos de l'endométriose

Some dances last longer than Castles: Çiftetelli. Ethnic cleansing and body politics in the MENAHT dances.

Dakar (3rd floor)

ENG

10:00 to 12:30

3

With Elli Vassalou

Can a dance that brings ambiguous connotations, seen by a colonial and orientalist gaze, incorporate the potential for social, cultural and sexual resistance? Can it strengthen bonds of transnational solidarities, non-eurocentric narratives and reclaim fluid understanding of traditions and forms of community? The research driving this workshop investigates the cross-cultural and diasporic practice of Çiftetelli, a Greco-Turkish dance, as a tool for collective healing, feminist placemaking, and queer joy. Çiftetelli belongs to the traditions of "Oriental" dances practised across the SWANA region and the Balkans (MENAHT). It is not considered a folk dance, and it has been silenced as hyper-feminine, inappropriate and unfitting to the national narratives of Greece and Türkiye, who, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, sought alignment with the West.

Participants are invited to immerse themselves in the research through a collection of texts, stories from previous workshops, and pop culture references. Guided by Elli, they are invited to share personal stories, embodied memories, and reflections on the dance and body politics in their own experience. Finally, participants share rhythms that move them, teach each other favourite dance gestures, and dance freely.

This workshop is primarily for people with cultural affinity to SWANA/Balkan dance traditions, grounding this session in lived connections and heritage. Supporting allies are welcome, as long as they join with respect and center the voices of those with direct ties.

Reproductive realities: Abortion, choice & care



4

Arenberg Cinema (Ground floor) **Multi** **10:00 to 11:30**

With Constanze Wounters, Annick van Brouwershaven, Mélanie Wilmus and Anton van Dyck (moderation)

The increasing threat to sexual and reproductive health and rights across the world is sparking new debates and concerns in feminist discussions. The screening of Constanze Wouters' movie *Acts of Care*, focused on five vulnerable and powerful narratives, will be followed by a discussion to explore reproductive autonomy as a complex process embedded not only in the question of choice and self-determination but also in the question of care. The speakers will explore together social norms and expectations, emotional responses, and medical judgment around reproductive rights and autonomy for a context-sensitive understanding of this matter.

The screening of Acts of Care gathers together the following works and projects:

- Reproductive Decision-Making in the Context of Unintended Pregnancy: Navigating Social Complexities
- Cisgender women seeking permanent contraception: refusal and negative experiences

Getting it just right? The gendered social practices of health and the credibility paradox

5

Calcutta (2nd floor)

ENG

11:45 to 12:30

With Fleur Baert

Although women* and gender-diverse people are overrepresented among those experiencing health issues or chronic pain, they often receive lower-quality care. Their complaints are not always taken seriously, are investigated less thoroughly, more readily attributed to psychological causes, and treated less aggressively. Research shows that gender stereotypes about health play a significant role in this disparity.

These stereotypes intersect with a broader social dynamic that is crucial in medical encounters: credibility. A patient's perceived credibility appears to be systematically linked to aspects of their social identity. For example, women and racialized individuals are often granted less credibility when seeking medical help. As a result, many patients engage in "credibility work" – strategies aimed at presenting their complaints clearly and convincingly to secure appropriate care (e.g., writing down symptoms, bringing witnesses, etc.). This "credibility work" not only demands significant extra effort, but can paradoxically undermine their perceived credibility even further.

This workshop combines two components: a concise presentation of current research on this topic, and an interactive session where we collectively identify key challenges and explore potential pathways for policy and research.

Artist presentations on the multiplicity of female gazes

6

Expo space (ground floor)

Multi

12:00 to 12:30

With Irene Feria Prados, Léa Alapini, Erika González Ramirez, Anna Dossmann, Laura Smekens, and the DYKE*March

This exhibition centers the multiplicity of female gazes, challenging the dominance of the male gaze and rejecting rigid definitions of what is “feminine” or “female” in art. Through five interdisciplinary works, we reframe documentary materials archives, stigmatizing images, testimonies, and activist initiatives to offer new perspectives and reappropriate dominant spaces, tools, and narratives.

Through critical, intersectional, and multicultural perspectives, the project highlights the urgency of diversifying viewpoints and collectively framing female gazes in art:

- Counter-Archiving the Club: An intersectional reading of nightlife space through Brussels’ club scene by Irene Feria Prados and Léa Alapini
- ASIMETRÍA by Erika González Ramirez
- Wildlife leaflets by Anna Dossmann
- (un)known by Laura Smekens
- DYKE*MARCH Brussels in photos

De Kinderopvangzaak: Impactvolle coalitie en solidariteitsvorming

Zabriskie Point (~1 floor)

NL

13:30 to 14:30

**With Noëmi Willemen, Charlotte Horemans, Heleen Struyven
and Lies Michielsen**

The Vrouwenraad, Progress Lawyers, and the Crisiskabinet Kinderopvang present a hopeful story of solidarity through the Kinderopvangzaak (Childcare Case). The Kinderopvangzaak was a strategic legal procedure gathering 20 organisations (combining childcare initiatives, trade unions, anti-poverty and patient associations, and feminist organisations) around a common cause: access to public services amid a care crisis. It highlighted a fundamental question about the balance between private and public responsibility in raising children and the gendered “work-life balance”. At a time when more rights are under pressure and privileges are at risk, the speakers are eager to pass on that hope and share an inspiring story of building solidarity through this discussion.



7

Comment aborder en Belgique le sujet des mutilations génitales féminines dans une perspective anti-raciste et décoloniale ?

Casablanca (2nd floor)

FR

13:30 to 14:30

With Aminata Sidibé, Marianne Nguena Kana, Sarah O'Neill & Myriam Mhamedi (moderation)

Over the years, it has become clear that discussing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) with the general public can be a real balancing act. Indeed, when sharing information about the practice of FGM, it is important to be aware of the risks of stigmatising the communities concerned.

How can we talk about a specific practice without risking targeting the cultures of those affected? How can we take a step back to contextualise this practice and gain a deeper understanding of the issues at stake in the best interests of those who have undergone excision? These are the questions that will be explored through a dialogue between professionals with advanced knowledge of the subject.



8

Intra-community violence in queer relationships

9

Calcutta (2nd floor)

FR

13:30 to 14:30

With Justine Pieltrain, Cecilia Carotenuto & Annalisa Casini (moderation)

The panel discussion explores the issue of intra-community violence, and in particular within intimate relationships, among LGBTQ+ people, a topic that has received little attention from research in Belgium. Heteronormative frameworks and the internalization of patriarchal systemic violence both contribute to the invisibilization of intimate partner violence in the LGBTQ+ community, a topic that researchers Justine Pieltrain and Cecilia Carotenuto seek to shed light on. Together, their works seek to enrich our understanding of the connections between trauma, minority stress, psychological violence, and social reproduction while also attempting to formulate recommendations for greater institutional recognition of LGBTQ+ intimate partner violence and to promote more inclusive practices in the field.

The works highlighted during this session are:

- Traumatic Repetition: The Impact of Heterosexism on Sapphic Relational Dynamics
- Intimate Partner Violence among LGBTQ+ People: Issues of Recognition and Equity in the Brussels Psycho-Medico-Social Field

Siesta Resista



10

Catania (2nd floor)

ENG

13:30 to 15:00

With Norma Nardi

Why are we always so tired? Why is there never enough time? Who has the privilege of experiencing non-work as simply resting? How did it come to be that resting became instrumental to being more productive?

Inspired by the words of anti-capitalist and anti-colonial feminist thinkers such as Tricia Hersey (The Nap Ministry, Rest is Resistance) and Virginia Cafato (Manifesto Pisolini), Norma Nardi proposes a time for collective reflection on the subject of resting as a site of care and political struggle, challenging the norms that make feeling exhausted an inevitable condition for many people, and some more than others.

But Siesta Resist is, first and foremost, a space and time for... siesta! After 40 minutes dedicated to unwind, relax, perhaps sleep, and gently wake up together, we will hold space to share thoughts and impressions about both the theme and the experience, supporting participants with tools drawn from group facilitation and emancipatory pedagogy.

Asiofeminism: From erasure to sound archives

Zabriskie Point (~1 floor)

FR

15:00 to 16:30

With Mélanie Cao

“Asiofeminism: From erasure to sound archives” is a sensitive exploration in the form of a critical and guided listening session. At the intersection of a lecture and a podcast experience, Mélanie Cao offers an immersive journey through selected voices from her sound documentary, allowing a reflection on some issues shaping asiofeminism in Belgium and its intersections with other contemporary struggles. The presentation will be followed by a discussion with the participants.



11

Muslim feminisms and Modest fashion: between gendered islamophobia and aesthetic contestation

Casablanca (2nd floor)

ENG

15:00 to 16:30

With Malika Hamidi

In recent years, there has been a recurring and growing interest in a topic that is undeniably political in both the West and the Muslim world: the politicization of Muslim women's bodies in public spaces, which have become battlegrounds in times of crisis. It is in this context that we are seeing the emergence of a new profile of women who are both feminists and Muslims, who challenge normative discourses and ideologies used to infantilize Muslim women. This presentation illustrates the transition from theory to practice by Muslim women who are reappropriating conceptual tools from gender studies, such as the intersectional approach in the light of postcolonial theories, which enable them to raise the "political question" of relations of domination, inspired by Black feminist movements that emerged in the 1970s in the USA. Muslim feminists are engaged in constructing a theoretical and practical "counter-discourse" that contributes to the revolution of Muslim feminisms, while initiating an unprecedented shift toward inclusive diversity.



12

Feminist and queer research methods in law

13

Calcutta (2nd floor)

NL

15:00 to 16:30

**With Pieter Cannoot, Elise Goossens, Marie Spinoy
& Aurore Vanliefde De Keyser**

Feminist and queer approaches have significantly shaped international legal scholarship, but in the Dutch-speaking context, accessible methodological tools are still lacking. This book seeks to bridge that gap. It offers a toolbox that enables researchers to critically interrogate the dominant norms of legal scholarship and to explore new ways of producing knowledge.

The book combines insights from feminist and queer legal theory with experiences from scholars in other disciplines, as well as reflections on methodological challenges such as positionality, reflexivity, and ethics. In addition, contributions from different areas of law demonstrate how these methods can be applied in practice and how they generate new perspectives.

In doing so, the book opens up space for imagination, transformation, and resistance, inviting us to see law not merely as an instrument of power but as a field that can be collectively and critically rewritten.

Violences basées sur le genre : perspectives et limites

Arenberg Cinema (ground floor) FR 15:00 to 16:30

**With Irène Zeilinger, Chloé Janssen, Frédéric Vesentini,
Maui Druetz & Aurélie Aromatario (moderation)**

This panel examines gender-based violence (GBV) through intersecting lenses of feminist self-defense, data-informed research, and participatory media practices. It explores how GBV is produced and sustained through structural inequalities, and how responses to it often overlook the complexity of lived experiences shaped by race, class, age, disability, and migration status.

By engaging with both grassroots practices and institutional frameworks, the session highlights the tension between community-based resistance and the limited support offered by public policies. It also foregrounds the importance of inclusive, intersectional approaches that make space for underrepresented voices and alternative forms of knowledge production.

Together, the contributions reveal the need to rethink dominant narratives around GBV, shifting from top-down strategies toward approaches rooted in autonomy, care, and collective empowerment.

Genre et care : inégalités, reconnaissance et préfigurations

15

Zabriskie Point (-1 floor)

FR

17:00 to 19:00

With Lena Terrando, Ninon Ramlot, Juliette Gilman, Emma Peltier, Chloé Salembier, Ansao Totolehibe, Florence Degavre & Annalisa Casini (moderation)

This panel explores how gender and kinship norms shape economic and emotional life under the surface of formal equality. From inheritance practices to unpaid domestic labour, and from housing precarity to the emotional toll of caregiving, these contributions reveal how heteronormative and patriarchal expectations continue to structure access to resources, recognition, and support. Together, these interventions call for a broader redefinition of work and social solidarity one that challenges the invisibilization of care, interrogates the gendered assumptions built into welfare systems, and imagines alternative forms of recognition, redistribution, and community.

The discussion brings together the following perspectives:

- Inégalités invisibles : sexualité et transmission patrimoniale
- De la dénégarion à la reconnaissance institutionnelle du travail domestique gratuit : vers une redéfinition du travail au sein de l'état social
- Lire la sécurité sociale avec Nancy Fraser : reconnaissance, redistribution et travail du care
- The organization of care work within and around housing: 4 utopian/dystopian animated scenarios
- L'amour au temps du care

De l'invisible au collectif : violences, soins et luttes féministes

16

Casablanca (2nd floor)

FR

17:00 to 19:00

With Aissatou Diallo, Clée, Irène Zeilinger, Julia De Clerck, Natacha Bastiat-Jarosz, Rebecca Marsin, Sophie Evrard & Charlotte Verdin (moderation)

This participatory workshop provides a space for collective reflection on obstetric violence and, more broadly, on reproductive work and care. Designed in a “fish bowl” format, it combines experiential and scientific knowledge, personal experiences, and feminist and intersectional analyses. The discussion will take place in two stages: an initial phase reserved for speakers, followed by a second phase involving the audience. The aim is to enable all participants to share their experiences, practices, and questions around access to inclusive and respectful care, reproductive justice, and the transformation of care spaces to make them truly intersectional.

The workshop will aim to:

- raise awareness of VGO and its structural and intersectional dimensions;
- create alliances between academia, associations, and professional practices around feminist care;
- promote the tools in the manual *Je vois, j'agis* (I see, I act): intervening as a witness to obstetric violence;
- open the debate on concrete ways to improve the inclusivity and safety of healthcare spaces;
- promote lived experiences as sources of knowledge and collective empowerment.

Exploring the book "Disability Intimacy"

17

Calcutta (2nd floor)

ENG

17:00 to 19:00

With Anna Claes, Femke Beutels, Mirre Verhoeven & Nikita Van Holderbeke

Using essays from Alice Wong's book *Disability Intimacy* (2024), this workshop aims to create a safe(r) and open space for conversations on how disabled people experience intimacy. Participants will read the essays to form the basis for the collective reflections and exchange of ideas around the following questions: What does intimacy and sexuality look like for disabled people? How does that experience differ from so-called 'normative' experiences? How can we focus on alternative experiences of intimacy? And what role do other identities, such as queerness, play in this? The objective of this workshop is to critically examine dominant ideas about intimacy and sexuality to make room for alternative visions and experiences. Everyone is welcome but priority is given to disabled people.

Capitalist accelerations: gender, climate and the pull toward fascism

18

Zabriskie Point (-1 floor)

ENG

19:30 to 21:00

With Amina Adebisi Odofin, Floris de Krijger, Johannes, Raoul Rombouts & Maria Martin de Almagro (moderation)

This panel critically examines the complex and interconnected crises confronting our societies today - from ecological collapse and the escalating climate emergency to the rise of anti-gender movements and growing authoritarian tendencies - through the analytical framework of gender and racial capitalism. It explores the intensification of intersecting inequalities and environmental devastation, and the political conditions that enable the erosion of democratic institutions, as well as the slide toward authoritarianism and fascism across various national and international contexts.

Drawing on diverse critical perspectives including Black feminism, queer and trans studies, critical marketing, and international solidarity, the discussion unpacks how markets, dominant ideologies, and emotional appeals work together to normalize exclusion, systemic violence, and social fragmentation. The panel also highlights the entanglement of ecological, social, and political crises, showing how gendered and racialized power relations shape these dynamics. Beyond critique, the session emphasizes the urgent need for collective strategies of resistance and transformative imagination, seeking pathways toward more just, inclusive, and sustainable futures.

PROGRAMME

DAY 2: Thursday 13th NOV

Subjected to the streets: on the biometric exploitation of bodies in public space

Zabriskie Point (-1 floor)

ENG

10:00 to 11:45

With Paola Verhaert, Andreea Belu, UTSOPI & Fien De Meyer

For decades, feminists have debated the topic of which bodies are free to roam public space, and which bodies are subjected to surveillance. Today, the rise of technology-facilitated surveillance calls for a critical debate about who is protected by the surveillance of public space and who is not. The advent of biometric surveillance highlights the urgency of this debate, as automatic facial recognition and behavioural analysis via cameras and invisible tracking through social media monitoring are being tested in public space. In this panel discussion, we will explore the collective impact of biometric surveillance in public spaces. The discussion will be focused on the impact of this type of surveillance on groups whose behaviour and identity are already heavily monitored, regardless of the use of technology (e.g. sex workers, protesters, refugees).

19

Trans resilience & health

20

Casablanca (2nd floor)

ENG/FR

10:00 to 12:00

With Mauro Kerckhof, Laura Maria Lingenti, Antoine Henrotin, Kaatje Vandeveldde & Joke D'Heer (moderation)

This panel brings together research and clinical perspectives on gender diversity, focusing on the lived and embodied experiences of trans and gender-diverse people at different stages of life. Though pervasive structural issues of discrimination, gender-based violence, dysphoria and social exclusion remain realities for many trans and gender-diverse people, this panel sheds light on how mutual care, queer joy and gender euphoria are essential counterpoints to expand our understandings of gender, care and resilience. Presentations explore the complexity of trans and gender-diverse lives, from the role of embodied norms and vocal expression shaped through socialisation, to participatory approaches that center queer joy, cultural practices, and collective healing. Interventions with youth, therapeutic practices, and creative collaborations reflect a shared commitment to move beyond gender essentialism and binary models, both biological and social.

This session will gather together the following presentations:

- **Transilience: Increasing resilience in trans youth**
- **A Pilot Study of Wellbeing and Resilience-Affirming Initiatives for Gender-diverse Persons in Brussels Capital Region**
- **Epistemic and Practical Exchanges between Trans Voice Clinics and Gender Studies**
- **Gendereuphoria**

From taboos to truth: Bodies of resistance

21

Calcutta (2nd floor)

ENG

10:00 to 12:00

With WeDecolonizeVUB & ROOTS (UCOS)

Bodies of Resistance stems from the need to make space for the experiences of queer, trans, and non-binary people, particularly those from BIPOC backgrounds, living in Belgium. For many of them, the body is not a neutral place, but a terrain where inequality, control, and resistance converge. Their bodies are often read, regulated, or excluded on the basis of race, gender identity, migration background, or class. Within mainstream discussions around reproductive rights and bodily autonomy in Belgium, these lived realities are frequently overlooked. Yet it is precisely these marginalized bodies that struggle daily for care, safety, dignity, and the right to exist. Reproductive justice lies at the heart of Bodies of Resistance, expanding beyond the right to contraception or abortion. It includes the right to bodily autonomy, access to inclusive and affirming care, freedom from violence, and the ability to define family on one's own terms.

Queer, trans, and non-binary people from the diaspora often face multiple and intersecting barriers: medical discrimination, racialization in care systems, and exclusion from dominant family and health narratives. This event aims to expose these structural injustices and open space for collective reflection and healing. Through a panel discussion, the student projects of UCOS - WeDecolonizeVUB and ROOTS - bring together activists and experts to reflect on how your body can be a battlefield when you fall outside the norm. The activity not only creates space for conversation, but also for presence. By consciously choosing a safe, caring, and respectful setting, we want to build an environment in which participants feel heard, seen, and empowered. A space where the body does not have to be constantly defended, but is allowed to exist and heal.

Archives from the Margins and Art: How to Resist in a Fascist and Pinkwashing Context?

Zabriskie Point (-1 floor)

ENG/FR

13:00 to 14:30

With Emma Ydiers, LoupKass, Mélina Ghorafi, Aphélandra Siassia, Florence Cherrier & Constant Léon (moderation)

Information activism, a form of collective labor carried out by marginalised communities and individuals, has been fueled in recent years by the need to collect and make accessible different information about their lives and how they were represented. This work results in an abundance of archives where information is collected and stored to ensure that it remains accessible and sustainable. This panel invites researchers, artists and social workers to discuss their archiving practices, from amplifying the voices of Black, Migrant and Refugee lesbians in Belgium & the Netherlands to fighting pinkwashing in queer archives from Belgium to France. The panel explores the tensions between past and present, and how archives form essential barriers against the rise of fascism.

This panel will be divided in two parts: after the introduction, the group will be split in two smaller groups to explore the following questions:

- "What community dynamics in the archives are you questioning bring to your research?" – EN
- "How does your artistic approach / your research interact with the documents you are looking at?"

In the second part, the two groups will gather again to explore how these questions interact with the broader context of fascism and pinkwashing.

22

Intersectional representation in media and politics

Zabrikskie Point (-1 floor)

ENG

15:00 to 16:00

With Joke D'Heer, Rita Afonso & Brenda Bikoko (moderation)

This panel examines how gendered and racialized power dynamics shape political representation and media narratives in Belgium. Focusing on the lived experiences of women politicians, it explores how claims of neutrality in journalism and political institutions often mask underlying structures of masculinity, whiteness, classism, and heterosexism. Through interviews with women in politics, the panel sheds light on the persistence of gendered portrayals in news reporting, as well as the institutional norms that sustain exclusionary dynamics. These narratives are further complicated when viewed through the lens of race: Sub-Saharan women politicians, in particular, face the compounded effects of sexism and anti-Black racism – what scholar Moya Bailey coined as 'misogynoir'. Bringing together academic research and documentary storytelling, the panel highlights lived experience to question dominant models of representation.

It reveals how structural inequalities shape not only who gets to speak in public discourse, but also how their voices are framed and received through the following research projects:

- Beyond neutrality claims: women politicians' lived experiences with navigating gendered and racialized barriers in the Belgian mediated political environment
- Misogynoir: the documentary

23

Gendered spatial practices in Brussels

Casablanca (2nd floor)

ENG

13:00 to 16:00

With Ella Oelbrandt

While public space is often considered neutral and open for all, participation and access to the city is influenced by challenges such as safety, environmental sustainability, and inclusivity. Patriarchal structures historically prioritized men's use of public spaces, which is a reflection of traditional gender norms of public private spheres, which shape and constrain behaviors based on gender identity, leading to gendered spatial practices and the reproduction of gender inequalities. In a photovoice workshop on gendered spatial practices, participants will use photography to reflect on how they experience public space and how gender influences this.

The first part of the workshop will provide a brief overview of the intention of photovoice and how the workshop will proceed, including a discussion of ethical aspects of photographing in public space. Participants will then make a short, individual walk (approximately 1 hour), accompanied by questions about gender and public space. The relationship with "others" who use the same space is also addressed. The aim is to take photos of their experiences, symbolic or literal, during this walk. Afterwards, there will be a collective reflection on their experiences and the impact of embodiment based on the images taken. The aim of the workshop is to reflect on the underlying inequalities that are (physically) ingrained in the urban environment and how everyone experiences this differently.



24

Beyond white childhood: a workshop for imagining otherwise

Charleroi (2nd floor)

ENG

13:00 to 14:30

With Duha Ceylan

This workshop invites participants into an abolitionist exercise of memory, refusal, and imagination. Building on the concept of "white childhoods", the dominant model of childhood in Europe structured by whiteness, coloniality, and racial capitalism, the session explores how certain children are made legible and lovable while others are rendered unintelligible, deficient, or threatening. Rather than approaching this critique academically, the workshop creates space to reflect on how participants have lived, inherited, or internalized these norms and how we might collectively dismantle them. The workshop centres on the political urgency of imagination, not as an escape but as a method and strategy. This offering builds on the presenter's earlier academic work but refuses to reproduce extractive knowledge. Instead, it enacts abolition as pedagogy: collective, unfinished, rooted in grief and joy. It contributes to decolonial feminist approaches to education, affect, and justice. The workshop will hold complexity without collapsing it, inviting participants to sit with contradiction while building toward alternative worlds. It is meant for educators, researchers, activists, artists, and all those curious about the colonial underpinnings of care systems. No prior knowledge is required, only a willingness to reflect, unlearn, and imagine otherwise, together.



25

Our Garden: Creating a sense of belonging

Arenberg Cinema (ground floor)

NL/AR

13:30 to 14:00

With Lieve Willekens & Nadia Babazia (SAAMO Antwerpen, the Red Star Line Museum & the Permeke Library)

The film *Onze Tuin* ("Our Garden") is about a project in which women (with a migration background) take center stage. Every Thursday, they gather in the reading garden of the Permeke Library in Antwerp. By working together with soil and greenery, seeds and flowers, herbs and vegetables, they get to know one another and share each other's stories. These stories serve as the raw material for the garden. The scents and colors of plants recall a sense of home, whether far away or close by, and evoke feelings of longing. Longing for the past or for a place, longing for a loved one, a dish, a garden, or a herb. Music creates the same effect: songs and melodies take the women back into a space of memory and create a sense of home, a sense of belonging. This screening will be followed by a talk on the genesis of this project and the three layers within it: the healing garden, the storytelling garden, and the herb garden.

Onze Tuin is a space shaped by the women themselves. For now, it exists with boxes and pots, but who knows what tomorrow will bring? In this way, the women also explore how public spaces: like Permeke's reading garden, are designed, and they dream of a complete, women-friendly makeover of not only our garden, but also the streets and squares of the neighborhood, and ultimately the entire city.



26

From “Dare to Care” to collective practices: dialogues and practices of ecofeminist care

Calcutta (2nd floor)

ENG

14:00 to 16:00

With Philsan Omar Osman & Marie-Monique Franssen

This two-part session revisits the book *Dare to Care: Ecofeminism as a Source of Inspiration* (2022) through both a reflective and forward-looking lens.

Part one takes the form of a retrospective conversation between the co-authors, tracing how their thinking, politics, and practices around care have evolved since the publication of their book. They will discuss the tensions and transformations they have encountered while continuing to work from a framework that is ecofeminist, intersectional, and decolonial in nature.

Part two invites participants into an interactive space that combines elements of a book club and an evolving exhibition. Drawing from a curated selection of texts, images, and prompts related to care, including themes such as abolitionist feminism, ecological grief and queer kinship, participants are encouraged to reflect, respond, and engage. The format is intentionally flexible. Some may wish to take part in a group discussion of a chosen text, while others may prefer to simply observe the materials and hold space.

This session activates care as an ecological, creative, and collective practice that holds space for both reflection and imagination. The retrospective segment offers a situated reflection on feminist movement-building, institutional critique, and the development of care as political praxis. The interactive component centers care as a method for creating alternative spaces and forms of knowledge production. By treating care as both an analytical and embodied practice, the session aims to support ongoing conversations around affect, resistance, and community in times of social and ecological crisis.

Chosen family & queer ageing: Imagining ourselves older

Arenberg Cinema (ground floor)

FR/ENG 13:30 to 16:00

With Elisa VDK, Lylybeth Merle, Erynn, Agathe Nguyen Huynh & Bissi (moderation)

This session explores ageing within queer communities, centering the experiences, desires, and challenges that often fall outside cisgender and heteronormative frameworks.

The screening of *Famille Choisie* by Elisa VDK follows four non-binary drag artists navigating family, identity, and artistic recognition in Brussels. Their performances, shaped by both joy and struggle, reveal how chosen families and creative expression offer vital sources of support and affirmation, particularly when traditional family structures fail to provide understanding or care. Complementing the film, the panel discussion turns to younger bi/pan individuals and their visions of later life. In the absence of inclusive narratives around "ageing well," participants were invited to imagine their own futures through drawing and storytelling, opening space for new representations grounded in queer community and chosen kinship.

Together, these sessions address how queer people face ageing while navigating stigma, isolation, health disparities, and socio-economic precarity but also how they build networks of mutual care, resilience, and hope. By foregrounding lived experience and imagination, the discussions challenge normative life trajectories and invite reflections on what queer ageing can be.

Queer & racialised mobilities

29

Zabriskie Point (~1 floor)

ENG

16:30 to 18:00

With Ansao Totelehibe, Juliana Betancur Arenas, Charlotte van Vessem, Ali Ihsan Karadeniz & Duha Ceylan (moderation)

This panel explores how queer and trans individuals—particularly those racialized and/or with migrant backgrounds—navigate urban life in Brussels under intersecting systems of exclusion. The discussion centers on the lived experiences of those who encounter structural barriers in housing, mobility, care, and representation. Drawing on critical, decolonial, and queer frameworks, the panel highlights how racialized queer and trans bodies are marked by both hyper-visibility and erasure, particularly in contexts shaped by colonial legacies, securitized migration policies, and white queer norms. At the same time, the panel highlights practices of resistance and re-imagination. From informal mutual aid networks and care-based collectives to artistic mapping and self-representation, participants mobilize creative strategies to assert autonomy, redefine belonging, and build alternative spatial and affective infrastructures. The panelists also challenge dominant framings of gender and mobility—showing how queerness, transness, and racialization are lived not only through bodies, but also across streets, shelters, institutions, and imagined futures. By centering those most often pushed to the margins (migrants, trans people, queer people of colour, and underrepresented queer voices), this panel offers a grounded, relational view of urban life. It opens space for thinking about care, survival, and solidarity outside normative frameworks, and insists on the need to reshape our understanding of space, safety, and community from the perspective of those who inhabit it differently.

This session includes the following presentations:

- Migrant and transgender experiences across inhabited spaces in Brussels: tensions between socio-spatio-material care resources and racialized transphobia
- Fetishized and Feared: MENA Queer Masculinities Between Hyper-Visibility and Erasure
- Queer Mobilities in Brussels: Mapping Spatial Experiences and Imagined Futures

Make visible and legible: Post-binary typography

Casablanca (2nd floor)

FR

16:30 to 18:00

**With Enz@ Le Garrec, Camille Circlude, Sophie Vela
& Eugénie Bidaut**

Members of the Bye Bye Binary collective will share the conclusions of the research project *Post-binary typography: research on the uses, appropriations and pollination of typefaces*, carried out as part of the FRArt programme (Art Research Fund, FWB) from 2023 to 2025. This research explores the ways in which post-binary typefaces are produced, distributed and used in political, educational and cultural contexts within the framework of inclusive writing.

The presentation will focus on the notion of vivid archives. From leaflets to posters, books to cultural programmes, these contributions outline the contours of spaces for political expression. The LOVE & RAGE typeface — which questions queer aesthetics in design — and the results of a legibility study involving neuro-atypical and dyslexic volunteers using a brand new high legibility potential font will be presented for the first time.



30

In and around the erotic: Sex work, pole dance and BDSM magazines

Arenberg Cinema (ground floor) ENG/FR 16:30 to 18:00

**With Spring, Ariadna Alonso Cazorla, Caroline Merlo & Bissi
(moderation)**

This panel brings into dialogue different explorations of gender, sexuality, and power through the lens of lived experience, artistic expression, and critical research. Whether through performance, sex work, or BDSM magazines, each contribution challenges normative representations of femininity and sexuality, putting agency, complexity, and subversion at the forefront. Through film, participatory research, embodied practices, and archival study, the panel examines how bodies marked by femininity – whether trans, cis, queer, racialized, or sex working – navigate systems of control, exclusion, and surveillance, while also creating spaces of resistance and solidarity. These practices unfold within urban and often precarious contexts, but they also generate forms of connection, pleasure, and care that escape or defy institutional constraints.

The panel addresses the challenges faced by those pushed to the margins of public discourse and policymaking, from trans women and cis men who sell sex, to pole dancers creating space for artistic and personal expression, to historical representations of dominant femininities in BDSM pornography. Across these contexts, participants assert control over their narratives and bodies, challenging both moralizing discourses and the sanitization of feminist or queer politics.

Through different methods and mediums, the panel reclaims the space to speak, perform, and imagine on one's own terms:

- The Jezebel Movie
- Feminist Participatory Action-Research with trans-women and cis-men who sell sex in Antwerp
- Bitches in boots. De la représentation des féminités dans la pornographie BDSM du XXème siècle; discours et enjeux

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The Pianofabriek / Dearest Fatiha: migrant women and the (women's) history of Belgium

Cinema Arenberg (ground floor)

FR/NL

18:15 to 19:45

With Ayse Isçi, Sadies Choua, Latifah Abdou, Hajar Oulad Ben Taib & Nadia Fadil (moderation)

The role of migrant women in civil society remains largely overlooked: both in the history of the women's movement and in the history of migration, they and their organizations are barely present.

In her film *The Pianofabriek / Dearest Fatiha* (2025), Sadies Choua looks back together with three other women on the women's group that emerged in the Pianofabriek at the end of the 1990s: what did this group mean to each of them at the time? How do they reflect on that experience today?

After the screening and premiere of the film, Nadia Fadil (KU Leuven) will moderate a discussion: how do migrant women wish to preserve their heritage and pass on their 'herstories'? What changes are required in today's heritage landscape, and what inspiring examples can we draw on?

The Pianofabriek / Dearest Fatiha is spoken in Dutch and French. The panel discussion will take place in French, with summaries provided in Dutch.

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A l'ombre du figuier

// Le conte



Arenberg Cinema (ground floor) ENG/FR 19:45 to 20:00

With NAZRA

The tale of the wasp and the figtree (*La guêpe et le figuier*) is an excerpt of the play "À l'ombre du figuier". It tells the tale of a figtree, a wasp, and the breath of sacrifice. It whispers the memory of those who gave so that others might live. A metaphor of love, of transmission and of the strength hidden in the most discreet of gestures.

À l'ombre du figuier is a play that intertwines intimate storytelling, family transmission, and collective memory through poetic, political, and embodied writing. Inspired by a tale of a fig tree and a wasp symbols of intergenerational heritage and invisible courage the work moves between past and present, between 1950s colonial Morocco and a contemporary family home where three young adults question their origins, silences, and connections. Through the figure of Rahma, a mother living under occupation, her son Mamoune exiled in France, and their descendants seeking answers, the play explores coloniality, migration, and memory. Intergenerational dialogues reveal tensions between protective forgetting and the duty to remember, between respecting silences and the need for transmission.

Created by a racially diverse team rooted in postcolonial diasporas, this production amplifies marginalized stories while rejecting both victimizing and folklorizing portrayals. It interrogates the construction of diasporic identities, the weight of the unsaid, and the ways women often confined to caregiving roles, also act as agents of resistance.

This play is an ode to mothers, grandmothers, and the wasps of our stories those who, in the shadows, allow the figs to grow. It seeks to restore dignity to erased memories and to re-enchant the political through the intimate.

Speakeasy: FLINTA evening

Zabriskie Point (-1 floor) Multi

20:00 to 21:00

SpeakEasy Spoken Word BXL - a multilingual poetry collective organises (amongst others) a monthly open mic at GC Pianofabriek. This kind stage provides a space where beginning voices and seasoned poets come to express what they carry on their hearts and minds. This special edition will be a FLINTA stage in honour of the Sophia Conference. This Thursday you are invited to come listen to the many Brussels stories or to take the stage yourself. Sign up for the open mic is at 19.30. The event itself starts at 20.00. Find SpeakEasy on @spoken_word_bxl



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PROGRAMME

DAY 3: Friday 14th NOV

Claiming spaces: Feminist answers to systemic injustice at the university

Huis van de Mens

ENG/FR

18:00 to 19:00

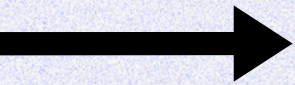
With Sigrid Wallaert, Dounia Largo, Seppe van Bladel,
Josefien Cornette & Caroline Glorie (moderation)

This panel brings together critical reflections on the politics of knowledge production, institutional authority, and feminist resistance. Each contribution sheds light on how anger, exclusion, and structural injustice shape who is heard, believed, and legitimized in both academic and public discourse. This panel insists on a radical rethinking of who gets to produce knowledge, and under what conditions. By racing the trajectory of feminist rage since the #MeToo movement, examining the systematic undermining of knowledge production from underrepresented group, and finally by launching a call for sustained political engagement against colonial and patriarchal violence at all levels of society, including academia, the panel challenges dominant structures of expertise and objectivity, reclaiming feminist critique as a vital, ongoing act of resistance – both within and beyond academic spaces.

The discussion highlights how authority and expertise are still shaped by gender, race, class, and power. It will explore the following presentations:

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- Feminist Rage after #MeToo
- Critical Approach to Anthropology: Confronting Systemic Violence to Decolonize
- Knowledge and Rethink Inclusivity
- You, an expert? Epistemological injustice and science communication: the experiences of female researchers in Flanders with testimonial injustice in science communication



HUISVANDEMENS

On the consequences of limited imaginaries: Why inequality is still an issue in Belgian universities

Huis van de Mens

ENG

19:00 to 20:00

With Nathalie Grandjean, Florence Degavre & Petra Meier

Despite the amount of data, lists of potential solutions, and attention that has been paid to the issue of inequality in Belgian universities, we witness but a slow decrease of inequality, limited reactions to sexually transgressive and other inappropriate behaviour, and increasing numbers of attacks on scholars in feminist, sexual orientation, transgender, migration and race studies, or members of the academic community who bear such socio-demographic markers. In this paper, we reflect on how it comes that the issue of inequality is still on the table. Often, there tends to be a conflation of the symptoms of inequality and the actual causes of the problem. As such, underrepresentation of women and other social groups in academia is the symptom of underlying issues. Based on this distinction, we unpack two mechanisms in Belgian universities which we consider to cause above mentioned inequalities: the lack of recognition i) that who we are influences what academic knowledge we produce, and ii) how power and authority get (re)produced, work and play out at the informal (often micro-) level. These mechanisms can be related to the traditional focus on meritocracy in academia and its more recent neo-liberalisation. Unpacking them more explicitly allows for a better understanding of a set of perverse strategies undermining efforts to promote equality in Belgian universities. Finally, we explore such strategies, including the negation, silencing, ridiculing, bending, or minimizing of existing problems, and discuss how to detect and counter them, and to reflect on alternative imaginaries of academia.

A WORD ON SOPHIA

Sophia, the Belgian Gender Studies Network, supports research and education in the fields of gender studies, feminism, intersectionality and queer studies. Through our projects, we facilitate connection and collaboration between academia, activism and civil society across linguistic communities in Belgium. Most notably, we organise yearly conferences and events that offer an international platform to everyone researching gender studies from an academic, artistic and/or activist approach.

Our vision of gender studies is expansive and rooted in an intersectional approach to existing power relations and imbalances. As gender researchers, we adopt a fundamentally critical attitude towards institutionalised knowledge. In our events, we therefore aim to valorize different knowledge forms equally. We particularly strive to make visible subaltern and experiential forms of knowledge as valuable expertise. By creating spaces for dialogue between different actors and disciplines, Sophia actively contributes to reshaping what counts as knowledge and bridging the gap between institutional and non-institutional voices.

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