



**Keynote:
“The Horrorcene”**

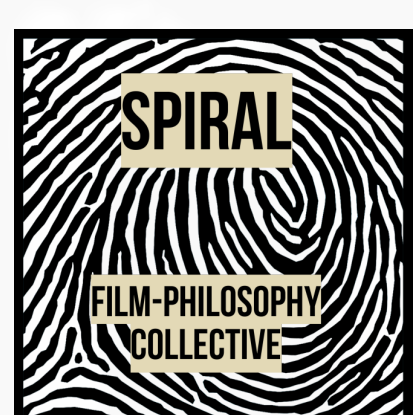
Mila Zuo (University of British Columbia)

As the etymology of “radical” comes from radix (roots), I contend that emancipating movements need to reckon with the root rot of fascist enjoyment. This presentation discusses contemporary horror of white western empire as some of the most unwittingly honest films made about the psychic debts of neoliberal-colonialism. Building from Robin Wood’s claims about American horror, I argue that today’s populist horror concerns repressed guilt and the mechanisms of disavowal in an age of 24/7 reality-bending. We know very well about the neo/colonial crimes committed under “defending civilization,” but all the same, our Enjoyment! depends upon disavowal—the horror genre’s apocryphal confession that these are extraordinary, even supernatural events. Extending Salar Mameni’s conceptual “Terracene,” which accounts for the global war on terror as formative to the Anthropocene, I theorize the “Horrorcene”—the horrific scene as prescriptive after Trump, the “first livestreamed genocide,” and the Epstein files. Horror, though, indicates that enjoyment comes at an ironic cost, like the MAGA farmers who vote for racist jouissance at their own material expense. W.E.B. Du Bois’ “psychological wage” reveals that the “good life” is bound to racist enjoyment. The wages of horror enable a perpetrator society to imagine itself as the victimized, the persecuted, and the exceptional. As a key to enjoyment, such willful errors lead to psychosis and what I define as an epistemic “tautologocide.” To this end, I examine popular settler horror cinema of the 21st century, including American films *Final Destination: Bloodlines* (2025) and *Smile 2* (2024), as well as the Israeli film *Big Bad Wolves* (2013). Drawing a dissonant net over film-philosophy, psychoanalytic theory, studies of fascism, feminist theory, critical race theory, Indigenous studies, and anti/postcolonial theory, this talk suggests that radical movements should not only pursue “pleasure activism” and joy as resistance (à la adrienne maree brown). Leftist liberation in the Horrorcene also requires becoming “psychic militants” (Lara Sheehi) and antifascist killjoys.

Mila Zuo is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theatre and Film at UBC. She is the author of *Vulgar Beauty: Acting Chinese in the Global Sensorium* (Duke University Press, 2022), which focuses on the affective racialization of Chinese women film stars, demonstrating the ways in which vulgar, flavourful beauty disrupts Western and colonial notions of beauty. *Vulgar Beauty* won the 2024 Outstanding Achievement best book award in media, performance, and visual studies from the Association for Asian American Studies. Zuo is also the director of award-winning films, including *Carnal Orient* (2016) and *Kin* (2021). She is currently working on her first feature, *Mongoloids*.

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Spiral Film and Philosophy Conference
May 15–16, 2026
Toronto, Canada

SPIRAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

DAY ONE: FRIDAY, MAY 15

8:30am

Conference Check-In

8:45am

Conference Welcome

9:00am–10:30am

Panel 1: Radical Returns

1. Filip Andjelkovic (University of Toronto), “Cinema Symptom: The Horror of Sight”
2. Claire Cao (University of British Columbia), “Forms of Surrender: Reading Negative Life in *The Master* (2012) and *Caught by the Tides* (2024)”
3. Emelia Steenekamp (Concordia University), “Video, Home, System: Surplus in *Caché* and *The Sleeping Child*”

10:45am–12:15pm

Panel 2: Radical Cinema Today

1. Phil Kaffen (University of North Carolina at Charlotte), “The Difficulty of Being Radical in the Era of Post-Cinema”
2. Patrick Marshall (University of Toronto-Mississauga), “Sabotage and the Cinema of Property Destruction”
3. Glen Norton (Wilfrid Laurier University), “The Ethics of Radical Counter-Cinema: Radu Jude’s *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* (2021)”

12:15pm–1:30pm

Lunch

1:30pm–3:20pm

Panel 3: Radical Forms

1. Jordan Chrietberg (Georgia State University), “As in Radix – Radical Formalism Antagonism”
2. Sulgi Lie (Bauhaus-University Weimar), “Radical Gentleness. On Tangential Gestures in Adorno”
3. Calac Nogueira (University of Washington, Seattle), “Andy Warhol or the Filmmaker as a Speculator”
4. Joshua Harold Wiebe (Lafayette College), “Form-Giving Fires: Cinema and the Critical Description of Labour”

3:35pm–5:05pm

Panel 4: Tactics

1. Frieda Gerhardt (University of Plymouth), “Emancipating Film from Product: Subverting the Cinematic Apparatus through the Physical ‘Act of Filming’”
2. Becky Ip (York University), “Monotropic, Rhizomatic: Making Films, Doing ADHD”
3. Sam J. Reimer (University of Toronto), “On the Homoeroticism of Skateboarding and the Comedy of the Bail”

5:30pm

Join us for Food! Dim Sum King Seafood Restaurant, 421 Dundas St W 3rd floor

SPIRAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

DAY TWO: SATURDAY, MAY 16

9:30am–11:00am

Panel 5: Radical Times

1. Scott Birdwise (OCAD University), “Why the Tears? Radical Despair in *The Ballad of Crowfoot* (1968)”
2. William Brown (University of British Columbia), “Radical Anachrony and Aftermathematics in Contemporary ‘Canadian’ Fourth Cinema”
3. Ryan Watson (Misericordia University), “What is Radical Civic Media? Media Activism in Western Sahara and Beyond”

11:15am–12:45pm

Panel 6: Dialectics and Disruptions

1. Conall Cash (St Francis Xavier University), “Counter-Institutionality in Maurice Pialat, or, The Possibility of a Non-Radical Cinematic Force”
2. Matthew Croombs (University of Calgary), “*Algérie année zéro* (1962) and the Dialectic of Hope and Disenchantment”
3. Goran Kusić (University of Amsterdam), “Radical Yugonostalgia – Haunting, Activating, and Re-Aestheticizing Memory for the Future”

12:45pm–2:00pm

Lunch

2:00pm–3:30pm

Panel 7: Radical Atmospheres

1. Michał Bilski (University of Amsterdam), “The Violence of Convex Shapes: A Radical (Queer) Formalist Reading of Kenneth Anger’s *Fireworks* (1947)”
2. Louise Bouvet-Zieleskiewicz (Aix-Marseille University and Sorbonne), “Radical Projection: Atmospheres of the Guerrilla Screening”
3. Erin Obodiac (SUNY Albany), “Archeinema and the Constitution of Time Through Colour”

3:45pm–4:45pm

Panel 8: Worlds in Transition

1. Tamar Hanstke (University of Toronto), “‘We All Go a Little Mad Sometimes’: Mad Spectatorship, Radical Anti-Productivity, and *Legion*”
2. Bogna Bochińska (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis), “The Radicality of a Mermaid Subject”

5:00pm–6:30pm

Keynote:

“The Horrorcene”

Mila Zuo

(University of British Columbia)

7:00pm

Join us for Food and Drinks! Free Times Cafe, 320 College St.