

Perforation, on the Politics and Poetics of Holding Place: Histories, Marginalisations and Residues

Miklós (Miki) Ambrózy & Risk Hazekamp

We, [Miklós \(Miki\) Ambrózy](#) and [Risk Hazekamp](#), first met at the last *Helsinki PhotoMedia Conference* in 2024 and have been collaborating ever since, resulting in (among other things) a peer-reviewed article in the journal for artistic research [LANDING](#). And last October in Vilnius, at *ūmėdė – post-media and related matter research festival*, we created a three-day open situated laboratory, where collaborative research practices could be witnessed at variable time frames and frame rates, titled [From Wonder to Disposal](#).

For the *Helsinki PhotoMedia Conference 2026* we would like to propose a **collaborative lecture performance**, in which the space (and place) of the **perforation** is explored. Perforation literally as a necessary placeholder for the photosensitive material to be transported through the device of the camera or the projector, but also perforation figuratively as a loss of space, a loss of material or matter, or a metaphor for the sociopolitical power structures of image-making. This presentation will incorporate visual, auditory and, if possible, olfactory elements to evoke a collective memory of analogue film and photography in the *Helsinki PhotoMedia* audience.

Starting from the history of perforation in the context of both the filmic and photographic discourse, perforation will guide us to thinking around structures of support and ‘holding place.’ From the perforated central part of the image in 9.5mm film at its early days, to being “banned” to the outer parts of the light-sensitive material, to the clacking optical sound effect of double-perf 16mm film, perforation tells a story about the positionality of normative practices as well as the rhythmic and sonic experience of what it means to look at different forms of Worlding today. Perforation foregrounds the limits of materiality, readying it for critique and projection, in ways that digital sensor-based media do not. On the invisible side of the perforation are millions of chads (the bits of plastic sucked out by vacuum to make a perforation), accumulating as invisible residue, useless matter, microplastic.

What happens when we no longer put our attention to the story the film is meant to carry but focus on the marginalized residue of the support structure of most small format photosensitive material? The discarded chads can be seen as a metaphor for the excess that our capitalistic system of producing refuses to acknowledge: the leftover, the remainder, the commercial waste produced by the material need for making. This residue of the film stock production is not simply debris, but a shadow archive of the Kodak Moment. Like the smell of the chemicals that allured the Kodak-employees and their families around the factory in Rochester, New York. Critical theorist and filmmaker Elizabeth A. Povinelli writes: “The odor embodies nostalgic sensations of full and secure employment, of a working middle class, of an intimate kinship among capital, production, and consumption (...).” Povinelli continues:

“The sensory history of chemicals sear into the affects, creating bonds of desire, nostalgia, and mourning for the very toxins now slowly overheating bodies and landscapes (2016).” Focusing on the specific environmental and material contexts of using film (and perforation), our approach moves it away from an aesthetic inquiry towards *Cinematic Worlding* as both a question of fictional worlds (in our images), but also physical worlding as we extract resources (Jacobson, 2025; Levin et al., 2022; Lippard, 2014). Perforation literally demonstrates how cinema produces (or reduces) worlds into various fragments. In the words of historian of modern visual culture & media and author Brian Jacobson, “putting the mining, refining, and consumption of extracted materials on display, a cinema of material ‘monstration’ made extraction a key iteration of early cinema’s industrial attraction (2025).”

The left-over matter, the residue of all the perforated photosensitive material together, takes up well over 4% of all the produced film stock. Four percent disposed and dispossessed light-sensitive matter that end up as waste product, slowly dripping into the soil in the former Kodak Park area, or being transported to some dumping side, where the small pieces are lifted up like confetti thrown by wedding guests after the extractivist-marriage-ceremony has taken place. Here the punctured-out points towards all bodies that are still not recognized as being fully human, whose lived experiences are refused to participate in the ceremony: the undocumented, the erased, the voices that never made it into the image itself. These remnants form a silenced counter-archive of all that is excluded so that the smooth functioning of the apparatus can continue: the clicking of the camera, the reel in the projector. Here we see a politics not of the moving image, but of what is discarded to make that same movement possible. It is author, curator and theorist Ariella Aïsha Azoulay who reminds us that “the right to take photographs was imposed from the start as given, **unlimited and inalienable** [emphasis added], often against the will of others (2018).”

It is exactly there that we see possibilities to re-write with perforation, coming from the verb *perforare*, from *per-* ‘through’ + *forare* ‘pierce’, to pierce through the static one-dimensional telling of history and look for a plurality of histories that are constantly in flux. Through the method of ‘Material Activism’ (Miriam Ribul, 2013) we investigate perforation as matter, embracing feminist philosopher Donna Haraway’s suggestion of ‘**speculative fabulation**’ (2016) to work with the lost material. Which stories, both human and more-than-human, were and are silenced? We now have a collective “unlimited and inalienable” amount of material to work with and to create other histories, other non-linear narratives to help build sustainable, circular, entangled and ecocentric futures.

Keywords: Analogue Perforation; Material Activism; Cinematic Worlding; Speculative Media Archaeology; Ecocentrism.