

# Sensing the Sea



Marine Catastrophes and  
their Counter-Surveillance

Workshop at the ifk (Internationales  
Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften)  
7. December 2024  
Reichsratsstraße 17, 1010 Wien

## PROGRAMME:

- 10:00-10:30**     **Welcome and Introduction** (Burkhardt Wolf)
- 10:30-12:00**     **Marina Gioti: *Shipwreck(ed) Ecologies: Mapping Failure and Catharsis in the Subaqueous Realm*** (Moderation: Charlotte Reihls)
- 12:00-12:15**     Coffee break
- 12:15-13:45**     **Stefanos Levidis: *Dark Waves, Sharp Rocks: Sensing state violence at the Mediterranean frontier*** (Moderation: Sophie Liepold)
- 13:45-15:30**     Lunch break
- 15:30-17:00**     **Christian von Borries: *The task of the image. Photos and videos of migration and how AI might dissolve human biases*** (Moderation: Simon Angerer)
- 17:00-17:30**     Coffee break
- 17:30-18:45**     **Screening of the movie *Purple Sea* (2020) in the presence of its director Amel Alzakout**
- 18:45-20:00**     **Roundtable Discussion** (Moderation: Jonathan Stafford)

The Mediterranean Sea plays an important role today as a transit area between Europe, Africa and Asia, facilitating the efficient shipment of goods, raw materials and people. However, the seabed beneath the surface is home to a number of hazardous substances, wrecked sea vessels - and countless people who have lost their lives at sea. It appears that the European states and authorities are primarily managing the Mediterranean as a surveillance area for extensive databases transmitted in real time, and as an operational area in which border protection is implementing a policy of European isolation and illegal pushbacks.

Nevertheless, some sea rescue activists and artists adopt a counter-surveillance approach to the Mediterranean, viewing it as an opportunity and obligation to investigate the unofficial, dark and repressed side of transit, with the aim of securing and documenting traces in this area. The workshop brings together four experts who examine the Mediterranean, its acoustic and visual dimensions, in an artistic and forensic approach, with a view to understanding it as a crime scene and archive. How might the vast and varied data surrounding current maritime disasters be transformed into texts, images and films? And how might what happens at sea on a daily basis become aesthetically, politically and ethically tangible?

**MARINA GIOTI** is a trained chemical engineer, visual artist and filmmaker based in Athens.

**STEFANOS LEVIDIS** is an architect and spatial researcher, an associate of 'Forensic Architecture' and an adjunct professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts.

**CHRISTIAN VON BORRIES** is a Berlin-based musician, filmmaker and Senior Academic Advisor of the China Academy of Art, Shanghai.

**AMEL ALZAKOUT** is a Syrian filmmaker, currently based in Leipzig, who documented her own near-fatal escape to Europe in *Purple Sea*.

**CHARLOTTE REIHS, SOPHIE LIEPOLD, SIMON ANGERER** and **CARINA HINTERDORFER** are Ph.D. students at the Doctoral School of Philological and Cultural Studies - PhilKult, Section: >>Knowledge, Literature and Media<<.

**JONATHAN STAFFORD** is an art historian with a research focus on maritime history, currently at the Leibniz Centre for Literary and Cultural Research, Berlin.

**BURKHARDT WOLF** is Professor of German Studies at the University of Vienna with a research focus on the cultural history of seafaring.

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Organized by SIMON ANGERER, CARINA HINTERDORFER, SOPHIE LIEPOLD,  
CHARLOTTE REIHS and BURKHARDT WOLF.