

Lecture and Screening by Robert Desjarlais

Walter Benjamin's Berlin Childhood around 2024: Digital Filmmaking and Multimodal Phenomenality



How might we go about understanding the complicated and ever-shifting nuances of bodily experience, sensory perception, consciousness, and memory, time, and history in our lives and the lives of others? I give thought to this question by reflecting – through the prisms of digital filmmaking – on Walter Benjamin's autobiographical writings on his childhood in Berlin, as found especially in the posthumously published text, *Berliner Kindheit um 1900* (Berlin Childhood around 1900).

My current project engages with Benjamin's writings through the medium of digital filmmaking, in which I seek to portray the many intersecting aspects of Benjamin's childhood, with all of this set within a broader, palimpsestic expanse of place, time, memory, history, and political-cultural formations. In effect, I propose that an ethnographic-historiographic approach to "multimodal phenomenality" – phenomenal moments appearing in multiple, interrelated modalities through complex currents of time – holds the potential to convey well the trans-temporal and inter-media forms of historical consciousness and personal perception and experience.

Lecture

April 16 6:15 – 7:45 pm

Screening

April 17 11:15 am – 12:45 pm

Robert Desjarlais (Sarah Lawrence College, NY; Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Berlin)

Robert Desjarlais is Professor of Anthropology at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, and presently the recipient of a Humboldt Research Award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. He has conducted ethnographic research in several distinct settings, ranging from a homeless shelter in Boston, Massachusetts, to the city of Paris, France. He has also conducted extensive ethnographic research in the Nepal Himalayas with Hyolmo people, an ethnically Tibetan Buddhist people. He is the author of several books, the most recent titled, *Traces of Violence: Writings on the Disaster in Paris, France*, co-authored with Khalil Habrih (University of California Press, 2022).

(the screening and discussion about his experimental digital filmmaking)



Room 000.235, Seminar Room, Hartmannstr. 14, Building DI, Erlangen

link for attendance: <https://fau.zoom.us/j/63672581746>.

