

# Liverpool Film Seminar

2019 – 2020 series

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Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Dr Elena Gorfinkel (King's College)

## Restless Nocturne: Cinemas of Insomnia

Despite its centrality to traditions of cinematic portraiture and duration (for ex. Warhol's *Sleep*), and an oneiric domain dominated by a discourse of the dream (especially in histories of avant-garde film) cinematic sleeping has long remained an opaque, marginal sphere of inquiry. Cinema and media studies' analysis of cinema's investment in corporeal movement and the moving body's activation of narrativity and propulsion onscreen has scarcely examined the "tiredness and waitings" that Gilles Deleuze identified as central to art cinematic traditions and genealogies. One such torpid subject, the sleeping body represents action's antinomy, a zero-degree horizon of dormancy. This talk suggests that sleep's challenge to cinema is one of poetics and politics, labor and energetics. Examining experimental films, shorts and moving image installations that figure sleeping bodies or bodies in insomniac or parasomniac states, it explores how recent "sleepworks" harness the liminality of sleep for articulating a poetics of global precarity, pressurised labor, hidden histories of marginalised subjects, pointing to an unrest that is as much political as embodied. In works such as Valerie Massadian's *Solitude: Insomnia* (2019), Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Blue* (2018), Jamie Maxtone Graham's *In a Green Island* (2017) and Zhou Tao's *Red and Blue* (2014) (among others), sleep space and the travails of the restless subject reveals the social and economic conditions of capitalist expropriation that exhausts bodies, an exhaustion rendered laterally, through the obliqueness of the body's undisclosing repose. Such experiments present apertures in which sleepless fatigue yields unexpected lucidities and summons collective dreams of non-sovereignty.

## Biography:

Elena Gorfinkel is senior lecturer in film studies at King's College London. She is the author of *Lewd Looks: American Sexploitation Cinema in the 1960s* (Minnesota 2017) and co-editor of *Global Cinema Networks* (Rutgers, 2018) and *Taking Place: Location*

*and the Moving Image* (Minnesota, 2011). She is the recipient of a 2018 Arts Writers Grant for her next book project, *Aesthetic Strike: Cinemas of Exhaustion*. She regularly writes criticism for *Sight & Sound*, *Cinemascope*, *Art Monthly* and other publications.