

# REAL ABSTRACTIONS

Workshop

## Processes of Simulation: Production and Reproduction

The term *simulation* is subject to a wide range of definitions, many of which are contradictory. In everyday life, scientific experimentation, professional practice, gaming cultures, and artistic production, simulation serves as a crucial operative mode. This workshop gathers speakers from different fields to analyse and explore some of these approaches.

Simulation is frequently framed as “*acting as if*”, a mimetic engagement with an external referent. By contrast, certain strands in aesthetics and media theory describe simulation as an auto-poietic process that generates realities without reference to an external world. Such a position prompts the question, how is a nonreferential simulation even possible, and to what extent do practitioners in art, science, and design actually reject or reinforce connections to the “real” world? This begs the question as to whether these conceptualizations address the same phenomenon at all — and, if so, how they might be reconciled.

Building on recent debates in art history, media archaeology, and digital aesthetics, our workshop examines whether the process of simulation, beyond its role in test scenarios, constitutes a critically and aesthetically productive mode in its own right, and how it differs from related processes such as fiction or reproduction. Finally, the workshop seeks to address a fundamental question: where, conceptually and practically, does simulation begin and end?

September 11–12, 2025

HSLU Design Film Kunst

This workshop is part of the SNSF-funded research project *Real Abstractions. Reconsidering Realism’s Role for the Present*, led by Julia Gelshorn and Wolfgang Brückle at University of Fribourg and Lucerne School of Art and Design.

Organisation: Irène Unholz, Wolfgang Brückle, Julia Gelshorn, Tobias Ertl, Salvatore Vitale.

### Venue

HSLU Design Film Kunst

Nylsuisseplatz 1

6020 Luzern-Emmenbrücke

Building 745, ground floor, room 079

### Participation Information

Participation is free of charge. Registration (by e-mail to [irene.unholz@unifr.ch](mailto:irene.unholz@unifr.ch)) is appreciated.

**Note:** Preparatory reading material will be provided.

We encourage you to take a look beforehand to enrich our discussion.

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## Programme

**Thursday, September 11, 2025**

14:45 Arrival

15:00 **Introduction**

*by Julia Gelshorn, Wolfgang Brückle, Irène Unholz*

15:30 **Selena Savić, University of Amsterdam**

*Abstraction Media. How Models Encode the World*

16:00 Discussion

17:00 Coffee break

17:30 **Orit Halpern, TU Dresden**

*The Planetary Experiment: Notes to a History of  
Science at Scale*

18:00 Discussion

19:30 Dinner

**Friday, September 12, 2025**

09:15 Arrival

09:30 **Inge Hinterwaldner, KIT Karlsruhe Institute for Technology**

*The Calculated Versus the Perceived.  
A Matter of Negotiations*

10:00 Discussion

11:00 Coffee break and individual VR preview

11:30 **Christina Zimmermann, HSLU**

*“Crossing Over Into the Image and Establishing the  
Boundary” — Shades of Simulation in a Biographical  
VR Experience*

12:00 Discussion and closing remarks

13:00 Lunch