

# LONDON CONFERENCE IN CRITICAL THOUGHT 2025

Birkbeck, University of London

20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> June 2025

## Deadline for Proposals: Friday 4th April 2025

The Call for Presentations is now open for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual *London Conference in Critical Thought* (LCCT), which will be hosted and supported by Birkbeck, University of London on 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> June, 2025.

The LCCT is an annual interdisciplinary conference that provides a forum for emergent critical scholarship, broadly construed. The event is always free for all to attend and follows a non-hierarchical model that seeks to foster opportunities for intellectual critical exchanges where all are treated equally regardless of affiliation or seniority. There are no plenaries, and the conference is envisaged as a space for those who share intellectual approaches and interests but who may find themselves at the margins of their academic department or discipline.

There is no pre-determined theme for each iteration of the conference. Each year the conference's intellectual content and thematic foci are determined by the streams that are accepted for inclusion in response to the Call for Stream Proposals (now closed).

### The streams for LCCT 2025 are:

- The Art of the Gimmick
- The Crisis of Experience in the in the Age of Algorithmic Attention
- Critical Thought Maintenance: How to mediate intellectual and organisational form (and get away with it!)
- The Cruellest and Most Bloody Stream Imaginable: What's Left of Warhammer 40,000?
- Cruising as Critical Methodology: Practices and Imaginaries from the Shadows
- Diagramming Digital Image Ecologies: Material Articulations of Invisual Relations
- Ephemeral Resistance
- 'In Theory': Media, Systems and (Re)Conceiving Communication
- Interweaving Embodied Practice and Critical Theory in Transnational Feminisms
- Is Empathy Dead? Understanding and Questioning The Relevance and Significance of Empathy in the Digital Age
- Labour and Liveness in a New Age of Automation
- Margins & Ambiguities: Reflections Between Material and Epistemological Metaphors and Limits
- Masturbatory Reading
- Monstrous Becomings: The politics, aesthetics and contradictions of Monstrosity
- Radical Listening: Collective Practices, Histories and Possible Futures

If you would like to participate in one of them, please send an abstract for a proposed presentation with the relevant stream title indicated in the subject line to [hello@londoncritical.co.uk](mailto:hello@londoncritical.co.uk)\*. **Abstracts should be submitted as Word documents of no more than 250 words** and must be received by **Friday 4th April 2025**.

**Please note that LCCT is an in-person conference.**

\* please note the change of email address and URL from previous conferences, which are both no longer monitored.

# Cruising as critical methodology : practices and imaginaries from the shadows

Stream organisers: Ezequiel González Camaño and Emmanuel Guillaud

Cruising — a search for fleeting encounters among the shadows — finds itself at a crucial inflection point. This subversive use of public spaces has been drastically relegating them to the margins by surveillance, neoliberal urban policies and explosions of apps, such as Grindr, Sniffies, etc. What was a libidinal transformation of the city has been commodified into safe, regulated, and commercial practices, mediated by applications and businesses. Paradoxically, cruising is now being reinvested as a fruitful site for critical analysis. Its subversive usage of space, its resistance to heteronormativity, its rejection of non-participative surveillance, its potential for triggering the unexpected, its capacity to articulate tensions — at a practical intersection of technology, ecology, visibility, power, and sexuality — have catalyzed a surge of critical discourse and artistic practices.

José Estaban Muñoz's landmark reinvention of cruising as a horizon full of potentiality for Queer Futurity has inspired a flurry of theoretical engagements and artistic interventions, while also serving as the basis for critically engaged art exhibitions and interventions. Cruising has been reconceptualised as a mode of relationality; as a choreography of gazes; as a strategy of cultivating openness towards alterity; as a research methodology and space for artistic experimentation; as poetry; and even as a literary critical method (mobilized for e.g. in the reading of Proust). Cruising as a historico-critical lens can also serve as an unexpected model for a new ecological ethic, as a practice centered on the sensuousness of the body within its synesthetic environment.

These critical strategies have been embodied through a series of politically-charged artistic practices : e.g. David Wojnarowicz's transformation of the New York Piers, an infamous cruising space, into a site of collective creation in the early 1980s; Theodoulos Polyviou's 2021 VR installation converting the museum's architecture into a potential cruising ground; the Cruising Pavilion within the 16th Venice Biennale of Architecture (2018), mobilising cruising to challenge the heteronormativity enmeshed within the logic of the Biennale itself.

Our call for presentations invites novel discussions around cruising as a lens for sociopolitical and cultural analysis, rethinking research methods, and artistic experimentations — imagining a critical engagement with cruising practices that extends far beyond the subject matter itself.

We also welcome dialogues around cruising as a methodology, in order to enlarge the potential of a conference on critical thought. Can we theoretically "cruise" the conference? What would it mean to employ cruising strategies to imagine innovative and relevant forms of intervention (movement-centered propositions, participative workshops, or performance-based talks, etc.) ?

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- Cruising as a form of (counter)visibility
- Cruising as a methodology
- Cruising non human entities, uncovering novel environmental ethics
- Historical analysis of cruising to uncover present-day strategies resisting new waves of conservatism
- The aesthetics of cruising (and its penetration into mainstream culture)
- Cruising beyond the gender binary
- Critical approaches to techno-cruising
- Cruising's mobilization of anti-surveillance strategies
- Cruising as an atmosphere with alchemical potentials for transformation