



ABSTRACTION, BARE LIFE, AND COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF MOBILITY

IN THE REFUGEE FILMS OF RICHARD MOSSE
AND AI WEIWEI, *INCOMING* AND *HUMAN FLOW*

In this presentation, Professor Robert Burgoyne considers the contrasting portrayals of refugees and mass migration in the films of Richard Mosse and Ai Weiwei as an attempt to move beyond the conventional visual rhetoric for representing the stateless population. The extraordinary black, white and grey images that comprise Mosse's multi-part work, *Incoming*—recorded with a thermal camera that reads the heat emanating from the body—creates a visual record that is at once the trace of intimate biological processes and an alarming, disorienting representation of a tragedy that is both consequential to and distant from our daily lives. In contrast, Ai Weiwei's film *Human Flow* depicts the practice of hospitality as a symbolic antidote to the idea of the stateless person as threat. Emphasizing the right to be “at home” anywhere in the world, Ai's interviews with refugees attempt to facilitate what Hannah Arendt calls the “public performance of voice,” opening a space of belonging through the sharing of stories. However, the representation of stateless persons through the lens of empathy and hospitality also conveys its own forms of disempowerment and complicity. Arendt's 1951 essay, “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man,” provides a critical touchstone for this analysis.

**A LECTURE BY
PROF. ROBERT BURGOWNE
OCTOBER 11, 2-4PM
B122 WELLS HALL**

Robert Burgoyne is Professor Emeritus at the University of St Andrews. His work centers on historiography and film, with emphasis on American cinema and national identity. Recent publications include *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U. S. History* (revised edition, University of Minnesota, 2010) and *The Epic Film in World Culture* (Routledge/ AFI, 2011).

SPONSORED BY:
Department of English
Film Studies Program
Department of Art,
Art History, & Design
Global Studies in the
Arts & Humanities