UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE

FACULTY OF LAW

INSTITUTE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY LEGAL STUDIES – LUCERNAIURIS

LAW AND THE HUMANITIES WORLD

SWISS LAW AND HUMANITIES HUB CONFERENCE

1 & 2 SEPTEMBER 2026
UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE



COORDINATION

STEVEN HOWE
INSTITUTE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY LEGAL STUDIES – LUCERNAIURIS, UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE

ANTOINETTE MAGET DOMINICÉ
ART-LAW CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA

LAURA PETERSEN
INSTITUTE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY LEGAL STUDIES – LUCERNAIURIS, UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE

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UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE
UNESCO Chair in the International Law of the Protection of Cultural Heritage

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PLENARY SESSION 1

Artful Struggles: Agonistic Storytelling in Public Art Spaces

Nilanjana Premaratna, University of Newcastle
Lars Waldorf, University of Northumbria

A distinguishing characteristic of the "humanities world" is that interpretations create spaces for dissension and alternative views (During 2025: 9). In this way, the humanities world – and especially the "extra-mural humanities" (During 2025: 6) of publics and counter-publics – might promote a more agonistic politics (Mouffe 2013) and law (Schaap 2009). This paper explores our efforts to promote agonistic storytelling (Barndt & Jaeger 2024) through an exhibition of contemporary Sri Lankan art at Harrow Arts Centre (London) in July 2023. The paper begins by setting out Mouffe's work on agonistic art and recent experiments in agonistic curating (Bull et al 2019, 2021). Next, it looks at the background context for our exhibition: the role of the arts during Sri Lanka's 2022 occupy movement, which ousted an authoritarian regime and eventually helped usher in a left populist alliance. Third, the paper examines the process of collaborative co-curating with the Sri Lankan artist behind the art gallery at the main occupy site, three Sri Lankan community organizations in the UK, and Harrow Arts Centre. Overall, the exhibition sought to show how the visual arts can help promote more agonistic understandings of political, economic, and social justice. Finally, the paper concludes by reflecting on some of the challenges in translating agonistic storytelling to a co-curated exhibition in a community art space.

Nilanjana Premaratna is a Senior Lecturer in International Politics at Newcastle University (UK) who works at the intersection of arts, culture, and peacebuilding. Her first book Theatre for Peacebuilding: The Role of Arts in Conflict Transformation in South Asia examines the peacebuilding approaches and practices of three theatre groups from Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India. Her current research explores how different art forms – specifically film, theatre, music, and literature – contend with past violence, present conceptualisations of peace, and imagined futures in Sri Lanka.

Lars Waldorf is a Professor at Northumbria Law School (UK) who has authored numerous publications on transitional justice and peacebuilding. With funding from the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Council in Sri Lanka, he led three action-research projects that combined inclusive dance and legal empowerment for disabled persons in Sri Lanka: www.performinginforming.uk. His current research looks at art, law, and resistance in post-protest Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

PLENARY SESSION 2

The Parable and Allegory – Manifesting the Humanities in Law through Theatrical Jurisprudence

Marett Leiboff, University of Wollongong

One of the challenges for law and jurisprudence, at least, of a plenary humanities, with all of its swirling possibilities, is that old quibble – what are they going to do for law, how are they going to produce any real effect on the underpinnings and practices in the field?

As someone who has stepped, uncomfortably, beyond accepted boundaries of law and jurisprudence for a long time now, this is something that I know all too well. After all, if the results of quizzes and surveys showing how different generational backstories affect the reading of judgment or foundational legal principle are not convincing of the relation between the humanities and law, my deployment of Grotowski's theatre practices and a Pina Bausch's dance theatre must be a step into the abyss.

We respond by saying that this isn't law or jurisprudence. Yet we have a long history of accepting stories – parables and allegories of a different kind – Lord Atkin's neighbour principle drawn from the parable of the Good Samaritan, or Lon Fuller's Speluncean explorers and King Rex – as a Coverian bridge between the moral world beyond law. The humanities in all their extraordinary range of possibilities, as the vast array of scholarship produced over more than the last 30 years reveals, offers the same potential, if only we could see how. I turn to the potential of theatrical jurisprudence to find a way to create bridges to connect the humanities in all their possibilities to law.

Marett Leiboff is Honorary Professorial Fellow in the School of Law, University of Wollongong Australia. She is a Law and Humanities scholar who developed the field of Theatrical Jurisprudence. A late onset lawyer, she brought her multidisciplinary background into her thinking as a lawyer and jurisprudent, drawing on theatre studies, broadcasting regulation and art history. Her PhD, which explored the problematic decision making of the courts in Australian cultural heritage law, laid the path for all her later scholarship, and her appointment as a member of Australia's National Cultural Heritage Committee. She initially researched media and broadcasting law but later moved exclusively into jurisprudential scholarship. Now retired, Marett remains an active scholar, and was appointed an inaugural Honorary Member of the Law Literature and Humanities Association of Australasia.

PLENARY SESSION 2

Lawyers on Stage: Learning to Listen Otherwise in Law and Theatre

Sara Ramshaw, University of Victoria, Canada

Perhaps surprisingly, lawyers performing on stage in theatrical productions may provide lessons for legality beyond sheer entertainment. Focusing on three productions by Lawyers on Stage Theatre Society (LOST) based in Victoria, B.C., Canada, this paper looks to the genre of the live or staged radio play, and particularly to Stage Foley (or on-stage sound effects performed in real-time before an audience) as the key to the production's artistry and affective realisation, to offer a low-risk pedagogical site for rehearsing decolonised listening in both theatrical and legal settings. For Indigenous (Stó:lō) writer, academic and sound artist Dylan Robinson, decolonising listening involves listening otherwise, that is, becoming aware of how normative listening habits and abilities are guided by our listening positionality. This positionality is shaped by perceptual habit, ability, and bias. In his book, Hungry Listening (2020), Robinson demonstrates how the dominant Western (Settler) approach to listening is extractive in nature; it desires certitude and feeds on the satisfaction that comes from being able to identify, recognise, and catalogue with some semblance of certainty to whom and/or to what we are listening. He calls this "hungry listening", which is also a "listening for": markedly devoid of any relationality. In contrast, "listening otherwise" is always a listening-with. It is a process of listening that is committed to receiving "otherness" and it intentionally engages with the unfamiliar, strange, and not already understood. Listening otherwise thereby requires a suspension of our belief in the certainty of knowing what listening actually is. This paper explores Stage Foley as Sonic Fiction, as a destabilisation of taken for granted patterns of listening and laws of audition thereby offering a safe space to practice and unlearn colonial modes of listening that are truly damaging not only to Indigenous populations the world over, but to society and legality more generally.

Sara Ramshaw is Professor of Law and Faculty Affiliate of Cultural, Social and Political Thought (CSPT) at the University of Victoria, B.C., Canada. Her research interests fall broadly in the area of arts-based approaches to law, with a specific focus on the improvisatory arts, especially music, dance, and theatre. She is currently the President of Lawyers on Stage Theatre Society (LOST), having also directed, acted in, and produced various LOST productions.

PLENARY SESSION 2

Who is Afraid of ...? Justice, Arts, and the Struggle for Rights

Liliana Gómez, University of Kassel / documenta Institut

This paper explores the critical and aesthetic practices of the performing arts in the post-civil war period in Lebanon after 1991, as it discusses them vis-a-vis the memory cultures of a fragmented society, revisiting the artistic work by Lebanese artist Rabih Mroué. Specifically, the paper looks at the theater plays Who is Afraid of Representation? (2005) and Looking for a Missing Employee (2003) while it discusses the idea of (failing) witnesses against the backdrop of the omissions of history writing of the Lebanese civil war and a theory of performance or (failing) representation, articulated at the metalevel of the plays. The paper asks, following Mroué: "In view of this threat, when the civil state finds itself weakened in the presence of the security state, and the regular workings of the courts are cancelled, what is left of theatre?" (Mroué 2009). It posits that the aesthetic and performative intervene into the historical memory and thus unfold the incongruent remembrance of the civil war. The paper thus seeks to elaborate on the possible counter-semantics –or dissensus– articulated by performance art and theater that address critical historiographies, accountability, and truth, and on the collective dimension of justice against the backdrop of the absence of a missing official historical narrative. Finally, the paper also aims to discuss how artistic practices claim civil and human rights and how they imagine a 'juridical humanity' (Gomez 2025) beyond a normative and universal modernity, articulating what we call the conscience of jurisprudence and the ethics of law.

Liliana Gómez is professor of art and society at the University of Kassel / Kunsthochschule Kassel and the documenta Institut, Germany. She is the director of CELA (Center for Latin American Studies) at the University of Kassel and a member of the board of directors of CALAS (Maria Sibylla Merian Center for Advanced Latin American Studies). She writes about cultural and media theory and history, modern and contemporary history of art, with a particular focus on Latin America and the Middle East, the arts and human rights, visual cultures, and environmental aesthetics. Recently she edited Performing Human Rights: Contested Amnesia and Aesthetic Practices in the Global South (2021) and co-edited Arts and Extractivism in the Global Present (2026), Eco-operations (2024) and Liquid Ecologies in Latin American and Caribbean Art (2020). She is the author of the book Archive Matter: A Camera in the Laboratory of the Modern (2023) and editor-in-chief of the journal Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture.

PLENARY SESSION 3

Popular Legality and Protest

Greta Olson, Center for Diversity, Media, and Law, University of Giessen

In this talk, I wish to apply the concept of popular legality (Olson 2022) to recent acts of protest. Focusing on the protests that followed the ICE shootings of Renée Good and Alex Pretti early in 2026 and demonstrations after the 2026 Berlin Pride attack, the talk argues that the power of protests resides in their simultaneous demand for and performance of an alternative normativity in times of felt crisis.

Greta Olson is Director of the Center for Diversity, Media, and Law (DiML) and Professor of American and British Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of Giessen, Germany. She is Principal Investigator of a project on images of migration and human rights in the interdisciplinary research group “Human Rights Discourse in Migration Societies” (MeDiMi). Greta was Fellow at the Käte Hamburger Center for Advanced Study in the Humanities “Law as Culture” in Bonn (2014, 2016), was general editor of the European Journal of English Studies (EJES) from 2010 through 2024, and is, with Jeanne Gaakeer, the co-founder of the European Network for Law and Literature. Greta authored From Law and Literature to Legality and Affect (Oxford UP, 2022), is co-creator of the film Beyond the Gaze: Media Awareness for Media Inclusivity (2023), and co-edited Diversity Issues in the U.S.A.: Transnational Perspectives on the 2024 Presidential Elections (transcript 2024). She works and wishes to facilitate projects on the nexus between artistic practice, political activism, and academic analysis and publishes in the areas of critical American studies, law and culture, feminism and sexuality studies, and narrative and politics.

PANEL 1

Imagining Law Otherwise: Public Humanities and the Rights of Nature in the Mar Menor (Spain)

Nicolas Serrano Cardona, Lund University and University of Lausanne

The legal recognition of the Mar Menor lagoon as a legal person and rights-bearing entity in Spain (Law 19/2022) has often been discussed as a landmark development in the global Rights of Nature movement. This paper approaches the case as a public humanities process in which a new form of legality emerged from collective experiences of ecological loss and through which legal personhood became an imaginable form of ecological justice worthy of social and political action. The ecological collapse of the Mar Menor, marked by repeated episodes of eutrophication and massive fish mortality, generated not only environmental concern but also a widespread sense of injustice. I argue that this process fostered a legality that developed beyond formal legal institutions and was rooted in lived experience, public debate, and cultural expression. Legal scholars and activists played a crucial role in introducing the Rights of Nature framework into public debate. Yet the recognition of the Mar Menor cannot be understood simply as the diffusion of an academic idea. Rather, it emerged from diverse forms of public communication, collective reflection, and shared affective responses to ecological damage (including citizen mobilisation, artistic interventions, and other forms of public engagement), in which feeling and thinking became inseparable from imagining legal personhood as a form of ecological justice. These practices helped translate an abstract legal proposal into a socially and politically meaningful claim. The case invites reflection on how public humanities practices shape legal imagination, how legalities emerge around environmental crises, and how local experiences can contribute to transnational debates on law and ecology.

Nicolas Serrano Cardona is a Swedish Research Council International Postdoctoral Fellow based at the Sociology of Law Department of Lund University and a Visiting Researcher at the Laboratory of Cultural and Social Anthropology, University of Lausanne. His research has explored the intersections of law, socioecological transitions and sociocultural change. He is currently investigating the emergence of environmental legal innovations in Europe, particularly the recognition of the Mar Menor as a legal person and a subject of rights. Nicolas is an anthropologist with an MSc in Urban Development and a PhD in Sociology of Law.

PANEL 1

Aqueous Fabrics and Vernacular Legalities: Creative Interventions for Environmental and Transitional Justice in Latin America

María Ximena González-Serrano, University Carlos III of Madrid

This paper explores the flourishing "extramural" legal humanities by analyzing how marginalized communities in Latin America employ artistic, narrative, and textile practices to redefine water governance and transitional justice from below. Specifically, it examines community-led responses in two critically impaired water bodies: Lake Atitlán (Guatemala) and the Magdalena River (Colombia).

In Lake Atitlán, Maya Ancestral Authorities contest Western technocratic megaprojects by operationalizing a "body-territory" (cuerpo-territorio) ontology. This vernacular stance is sustained through grassroots water monitoring and Indigenous storytelling, alongside performative actions that ritualize aqueous realities. In parallel, along the Magdalena River—recently recognized by transitional justice courts (JEP) as a living victim of the armed conflict—women's sewing circles utilize textile narratives to subvert histories of state abandonment and toxic "slow violence". By stitching the names of the disappeared and the river's silhouettes onto large fabrics, these counterpublics transform an aquatic platform of terror into a collective archive of living memory and ecological reconciliation.

Ultimately, these grassroots interventions serve as a platform for the rearticulation of wounded territories and the healing of fragmented ways of life, charting alternative, relational "public futures" for the legal humanities where human and non-human survival are inextricably intertwined.

María Ximena González-Serrano is a socio-legal researcher, activist, and legal scholar specialized in environmental humanities, water justice, and the rights of nature. Over 15 years, she worked with Indigenous, Black, and Peasant communities, leading collective strategies to defend territories and rivers facing extractive economies, in and out of the courts. She then turned to pursue an academic path, where she was a doctoral researcher in the ERC research project RIVERS – Water/Human Rights Beyond the Human? Indigenous Water Ontologies, Plurilegal Encounters and Interlegal Translation. Her research focuses on water disputes, environmental and climate justice, extractivism, and legal and artistic mobilization.

PANEL 1

Sacred Flows: Law as Dialogue Between People and Environment

Jennifer Kelleher, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Switzerland

Local legal systems, sometimes referred to as traditional or customary laws are vibrant, highly effective mechanisms for taking care of nature, from which there is much to learn. Even when no longer active, as in the case of the Brehon law, an oral Gaelic custom, dating in written form from the seventh century, though rooted in much older oral traditions and beliefs, offers luminous insights for reversing today's biodiversity decline.

This paper will describe how the Brehon law was conveyed through the richness of the Irish language and secured through intricate expressions of poetry, stories and ritual that cemented its effective implementation. The session will also point to several present-day customary laws that offer important avenues towards strengthening cultural, spiritual and linguistic diversity in tandem with environmental conservation.

The session will conclude with a wider argument: that the world's thousands of customary legal systems, still alive, though increasingly subsumed under dominant legal cultures and other forms of threats, act as cultural bridges, or sacred flows, to sustain the relationship between people and land. Brehon law is not a romantic notion consigned to history, but rather a living means to spark new conversations, especially in Ireland, about our reciprocal relationship with nature. Reviving, recognising and supporting these vernacular legal genres, this paper will contend, is not nostalgic but vital: a resource for biodiversity conservation that the planet urgently needs.

Jennifer Kelleher is a lawyer (LLB, LLM) and Senior Programme Manager, Diverse and Equitable Stewardship, in the Protected, Conserved and Heritage Areas Team at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). There, she works across IUCN membership to advance the recognition of the rights, governance and conservation contributions of Indigenous peoples and local communities, while also addressing human rights issues linked to area-based conservation. This work spans law and policy advocacy, technical support to governments and rights-holders, and building partnerships. Her academic research examines state-led nature conservation law as a European legal transplant, read through a postcolonial lens. She is also interested in customary law as an effective mechanism for conserving biodiversity. Her teaching interests centre on advancing Bildung at university level and seeing the university classroom as a space for an encounter with law's cultural and spiritual dimensions.

PANEL 2

Speaking Justice Otherwise: Poetry as Public Legal Humanities

Malwina A. Tkacz, Trnava University

This paper approaches poetry as a form of public legal humanities and a mode of legal critique beyond the academy. While legal discourse often relies on the language of rules, rights, institutions, and formal procedures, poetry offers alternative ways of articulating experiences of injustice, dignity, suffering, vulnerability, and responsibility. Through its imaginative, affective, and symbolic dimensions, poetry can bring into view aspects of human experience that remain difficult to capture within conventional legal categories.

Drawing on perspectives from legal humanities, philosophy, and literary studies, the paper examines poetry as a vernacular practice that shapes legal consciousness and contributes to public conversations about justice. It argues that poetry does not merely reflect legal realities but can also challenge dominant narratives of law, preserve collective memory, and cultivate alternative visions of community and responsibility. In this sense, poetry becomes a form of public engagement that bridges the gap between professional legal discourse and lived experience, making legal and ethical questions accessible to wider audiences.

The paper further considers the relationship between poetic expression and concepts central to legal thought, including human dignity, recognition, and moral responsibility. By attending to voices, experiences, and forms of knowledge that often remain marginalised within legal institutions, poetry can open new perspectives on the cultural and ethical foundations of law. Situating poetry within the broader "humanities world," the paper contributes to ongoing discussions about the public futures of the legal humanities and the role of creative expression in reimagining law's cultural, ethical, and political significance.

Malwina A. Tkacz is a PhD candidate at Trnava University and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. She holds degrees in Law and Philosophy from the University of Warsaw, as well as a diploma in Creative Writing. She has been awarded numerous international fellowships and scholarships, including those from the Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College, the University of California, Berkeley, the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and the Centre for Law and Society at Cardiff University. She serves on the Management Committee of the COST Action CA25110, Normative CONSCIOUSness in the TECH community (ConsciousTech), and is involved with the Philosophy of Education Society and the Simone Weil Society. Alongside her academic work, she is a published poet and singer-songwriter.

PANEL 2

Ode to Alu-Amon: Demons, Tricksters, Minds and the Law

Chris Dent, Murdoch University

This paper attempts a double movement with respect to humanities and law. One relates to the research content and the other to the researcher's approach. With respect to the latter, recent work characterises legal academics as "priests" of the "trickster" law. In that context, we are impelled to adopt a "right-thinking" attitude to our work. The attitude is about argument and interpretations. The attitude, in itself, does not dictate content. This then allows the second movement – the use of fiction in order to highlight gaps in the law. To be clear, for the purposes of the workshop, only a summary of a story will be offered (in sonnet form). The fiction, in this instance, relates to the law's treatment of the "mind". The narrative revolves around a road fatality caused by a tired driver – the road rules an ideal site for an interdisciplinary critique, given that there is little case law on mere infringements. Here, the academic is an enchanter, as are tricksters. We can enchant a story to disenchant, to critique, the law. The fiction problematises law's assumptions and can lay open the historical contexts that gives rise to its faults. A mindless act behind the wheel could just as easily be attributed to a demon. That one is deployed in court, and not the other, is only a twist of historical fate.

Chris Dent is a Professor in the School of Law and Criminology at Murdoch University. His expertise is variously sited in intellectual property law, legal history, regulatory theory and law and the humanities. His focus has been on the manner in which the law impacts on the actions of individuals, and how that law has come to impact on the individuals as it does now. Specific areas researched have include patents, the Road Rules, decision-making of individuals around law and our role and function as legal academics. His interest in the intersection of the law and humanities is exemplified by his undertaking of a second PhD: a Foucauldian archaeology of commercial science fiction films that explores their role in inculcating norms of behaviour in their audiences.

PANEL 2

Literary Paradoxes and the Boundaries of Legal Authority

Mate Paksy, Université Catholique de Lille

This paper explores how literary works illuminate the conceptual limits of legal authority and enrich interdisciplinary dialogue between law and the humanities. While legal authority is traditionally understood as the source of the binding force of legal norms, literary fiction constructs scenarios in which authority encounters paradoxes that challenge its very rationale. These fictional narratives function as thought experiments: although the situations they depict may rarely arise in practice, they expose tensions inherent in the concept of legal authority itself.

The paper examines a series of literary and cultural examples that illustrate existential, tragic, and obedience-related paradoxes. Drawing on Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham's divine command to sacrifice Isaac, Camus's reimagining of the myth of Sisyphus, and Joseph Heller's Catch-22, it investigates how authority can generate self-contradictory obligations and ethically absurd outcomes. Additional examples—including Kenny from South Park, Piggy from Lord of the Flies, and the enfant perdu in Sławomir Mrożek's Tango—demonstrate how authority may undermine itself when its commands negate the very purposes that justify its existence.

By analysing these paradoxes, the paper argues that literature provides a rich jurisprudential laboratory for testing the conceptual boundaries of legal authority. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to law-and-humanities scholarship by revealing the narrative, existential, and philosophical dimensions of authority that analytical legal theory alone cannot fully capture.

Mate Paksy is a legal scholar specializing in legal history, legal philosophy, and legal theory. His research has been published in English and French, and he has received numerous fellowships, including the CALE Fellowship (Nagoya), the MSCA COFUND Fellowships (Université de Liège and Université Paris Nanterre), and grants from Campus France, the École normale supérieure (Paris), and the Canadian and French governments. He has held academic and research positions at leading institutions in France, Hungary, and Belgium, including Université catholique de Lille, Université Paris Nanterre, and Université de Liège. He has coordinated and taught advanced courses in legal theory, particularly on the jurisprudence of H.L.A. Hart and Joseph Raz. His research spans the history of legal knowledge, legal surveillance, civil liability, minority rights, legal positivism, and the relationship between law, ethics, and literature. He has presented his work at international conferences across Europe and Asia on topics including legal theory, comparative law, and the philosophical foundations of law.

PANEL 3

The Place of Making in the Law and the Humanities World

Joaquín Santuber, metaverse Lab, Linz Institute for Transformative Change, Johannes Kepler University Linz

This paper situates design and artistic practices of making at the in-between of law and the humanities. As such, it devises aesthetic and curatorial strategies to explore the arrangements, orderings, and dispositions that legalities make possible. It claims that explorative devices, such as artifacts, installations, exhibitions, projects, and practices, are the means by which contemporary research through design and the arts can contribute to legal scholarship. As such, it adopts an epistemological stance toward these practices, treating them as bodily and materially grounded theorizing across disciplinary boundaries. First, it offers a brief argument that aesthetics is the common basis for law, design, and the arts, and therefore that law should be addressed not as a given aesthetic phenomenon, but as one that is constantly in the making, created and sustained. Second, it rehearses a formulation of how artistic and design practices can constitute valid forms of knowledge creation in legal theory, grounded in two artistic projects that address legal issues in international criminal justice and AI systems oversight. The aim of this research is to initiate a line of inquiry into how contemporary artistic and design practices of making shape legal concepts and discourses by opening up possible materialities, meanings, and narratives related to law and justice.

Joaquín Santuber is a lawyer and obtained his PhD in Design and IT-Systems from the Hasso-Plattner-Institute, Potsdam, Germany on the topic of designing for digital justice. As research group lead of the Metaverse Lab, Johannes Kepler University Linz, he works with art-based and design approaches to address the questions of legality in digital environments. He has been an Assistant Professor at Universidad de Los Andes, Colombia, research fellow at the Humboldt's Institute for Internet and Society, Berlin, and the Center for Social Studies, University of Coimbra. Currently, Joaquín serves as editor of the LD Journal and as a visiting professor at the School of Design, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

PANEL 3

Of Irritants and Enforcers: A Framework for Analyzing Cultural Artifacts in Assisted Dying Policymaking

Isabell Reis, University of St. Gallen

Modern law creates certainty in the face of uncertainty: Law preserves specific norms as right and just through institutionalization. Yet, societies are constituted by a variety of perspectives on what is considered rightful and just, subjecting these values to constant change. Law, therefore, must operate between the poles of institutionalization and cultural fluctuation. To gain legitimacy, the legal system depends on politics to decide what can rightfully be understood as just. This raises the question of how specific values gain the upper hand over other values, enabling them to reach political consensus and, in turn, legal legitimacy. In the case of assisted dying legislation, this becomes exacerbated: how can a legal system rightfully rule on the existential insecurities of an individual?

Drawing on cultural artifacts, this paper examines how the values underlying assisted dying policies are negotiated in society. It takes a sociological approach, presenting the strengths and limits of a systems-theory perspective to build a framework for analyzing policymaking under uncertainty. Within this framework, cultural artifacts are understood both as materializations of societal discourse and as social actors. Positioned within different societal contexts, narratives act either as irritants or as enforcers of existing values, revealing and driving differences in how justice is understood across society.

By analyzing how the values contained in these cultural artifacts are reproduced, used, and interpreted across cultural, professional, and political fields, the paper seeks to understand the negotiation of uncertainties and societal values that ultimately underpin the law.

Isabell Reis is a Ph.D. student at the Chair for Medical Humanities at the University of St. Gallen. Her doctoral research is embedded in the ASSISTED Lab, an ERC-selected, SERI-funded interdisciplinary project exploring cultural influences on assisted dying legislation. Drawing on a systems-theoretical framework, her work is positioned at the intersection of law, politics, medicine, and culture. Rather than focusing solely on the analysis of narratives and semantics, she investigates how systems and actors actively attribute meaning to cultural productions by referencing them in debates to drive policy. She holds an MA in Sociology from the University of Munich, where she previously conducted research on multiprofessional perspectives in palliative care.

PANEL 4

Scaling Legal Imagination: Crime Drama, Citizenship, and the A/V Corpus Problem

Gianluca Parolin, University of Bern

Crime formulas — with their recurring architecture of transgression, investigation, and resolution — are among the most globally replicated in television drama and among the most legally saturated. Following William MacNeil's call for a jurisprudential reading of popular culture, an approach that treats popular texts not merely as reflections of law but as active sites where legal subjectivities, entitlements, and exclusions are theorised, this paper takes crime formulas as a primary source for understanding how citizenship is imagined, performed, and contested on screen.

The defining feature of formulas is repetition: it is through their iteration across episodes, series, and national contexts that legal meaning accumulates and consolidates. This makes them compelling objects for jurisprudential analysis — and it is also what makes scaling up indispensable. The paper draws on a decade of jurisprudential work on Egyptian television drama, a vast and largely un-studied corpus whose sustained deployment of crime formulas encodes specific articulations of civic belonging, sovereign authority, and legal vulnerability. This engagement has generated a set of hypotheses about the relationship between crime formulas, legal imagination, and the construction of citizenship — hypotheses that can only be properly tested against larger and more varied datasets.

This ambition immediately surfaces a set of questions that this paper seeks to open for collective reflection rather than resolve. What does it mean to scale jurisprudential reading of audiovisual material? Building an A/V corpus is not like building a text corpus: questions of access, rights, format standardisation, and analytical tooling compound one another in ways that have received little attention in law and humanities scholarship. One possible testing ground is AI-generated drama. Because it is produced by systems trained on massive audiovisual datasets, AI-generated crime formula content may offer an accessible and methodologically manageable entry point — while simultaneously raising its own urgent questions about what legal imaginaries are encoded, amplified, or erased in the process.

Using citizenship as a case study, the paper aims to map these challenges and invite the kind of cross-disciplinary conversation that questions of this scale demand.

Gianluca Parolin works at the intersection of comparative constitutionalism, legal theory, and law and the humanities. Nearly two decades after Citizenship in the Arab World (2009), he returned to that terrain through an unconventional route: television drama. Scripting Citizenship (2026) argues that visual narratives articulate their own legal theories — developing a visual jurisprudence of citizenship that goes well beyond the scant treatment the subject receives in law books.

PANEL 4

Judicial Criticism, Popular Culture, and Democratic Dissent: Re-imagining Constitutional Expression through Cinema in India

Prabhpreet Singh, Mahindra University, India

The relationship between freedom of expression and institutional criticism has become increasingly sensitive in contemporary India, particularly when courts, judges, and constitutional institutions are portrayed through popular culture. The 2026 judgment of the Madras High Court in RS Tamilvendan v. The Secretary and Others offer an important constitutional reflection on this issue. While refusing to ban the Tamil film “Karuppu”, the Court openly acknowledged that corruption within the judiciary cannot be denied and observed that judges should not be treated as “holy cows.” At the same time, the Court strongly defended artistic freedom and held that cinema, as a form of creative expression cannot be judged by the same standards applied to factual reporting or documentary representation.

This paper examines the judgment from the perspective of law and humanities, arguing that films, digital platforms, satire, and public storytelling have become important spaces where constitutional values and institutional accountability are debated outside courtrooms and universities. The paper explores how artistic representations influence constitutional culture and how courts respond when popular narratives challenge institutional authority.

The paper further argues that democratic constitutionalism requires tolerance toward criticism, discomfort, and even exaggerated artistic portrayals, particularly when they concern public institutions. By distinguishing fictional criticism from actual contempt of court, the Madras High Court recognised that democracy cannot function if institutions remain insulated from public scrutiny. The paper situates cinema within the broader framework of public humanities and argues that constitutional democracy is examined through culture, storytelling, and popular imagination.

Prabhpreet Singh is an Assistant Professor at the School of Law, Mahindra University, India. His research explores constitutional law, comparative constitutionalism, digital governance, artificial intelligence and human rights with a particular interest in the intersection of technology and constitutional democracy. He earned his Ph.D. in Law from Manipal University Jaipur, where his doctoral research focused on the regulation of fake news on digital platforms from a comparative perspective. Passionate about international academic collaboration, Dr. Singh has delivered invited lectures and presented research at universities and conferences across Europe and Asia. He currently serves as a Committee Member of the European Society of International Law (ESIL) Interest Group on Peace and Security (2025–2029) and is a Fellow of the Central Asian Legal Research (CALR) Fellowship at Tashkent State University of Law, Uzbekistan. He has also participated in Erasmus+ academic mobility at Titu Maiorescu University, Romania in 2023.

PANEL 5

The Practitioner as Public Humanist: Human Sustainability and the Limits of Legal Scholarship

Krystal K. Thompson, Global Empowerment Direct

For 25 years, I worked inside some of the most demanding institutional environments on the planet, international criminal tribunals, post-conflict justice systems, and governance reform programs across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Central America. My experience was shaped profoundly by the leadership cultures that ran those institutions: what they demanded, what they ignored, and what they cost the people who carried them. I did not always have the tools or distance to unpack those experiences. This paper examines what happened when I did.

The 25 Years In series is a public thought leadership project on LinkedIn. Simon During's concept of the extramural humanities offers the most productive frame: the series inhabits the humanities world beyond university walls, vernacular, digital, practitioner-generated, engaging seriously with institutional memory, embodied legal knowledge, and the relationship between legal systems and the people who carry them.

Formal scholarship cannot fully hold the embodied knowledge that accumulates through sustained institutional exposure, the ongoing relationship with a subject community still living inside the experiences being described, or the temporal proximity that allows the work to reach practitioners in real time rather than in retrospect – things the monograph and journal article structurally cannot replicate.

The series has reached a counterpublic rarely addressed by academic legal humanities: senior UN officials, lawyers, and entry-level institutional workers across the international justice system. It speaks simultaneously to those in leadership, asking them to reckon with what their institutions cost the people inside them, and to those who are not: I see you, I hear you, and I was once you. That double address, at once, legal critique and witness, is what the practitioner as a public humanist makes possible.

Krystal K. Thompson is an international governance and leadership advisor with 25 years of frontline experience across international criminal tribunals and governance reform programs in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Central America. She has worked at the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, as well as on rule of law, GBV safeguarding, and institutional leadership mandates for UNDP, UNODC, and the Asian Development Bank. She founded Global Empowerment Direct, an advisory practice working at the intersection of governance, the rule of law, and human sustainability. She is the creator of the 25 Years In thought leadership series and the developer of Identity Placement Intelligence™, a framework examining how institutions assign credibility and authority to professionals, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, before they ever speak or act. She is based in Maastricht, the Netherlands.

PANEL 5

‘Alternative Methods of Dispute Resolution’: The Idea of Medieval Irish Law as a Legal Third Space

Ciaran McDonough, Independent Researcher

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a project took place in Ireland to translate the corpus of medieval Irish law, commonly referred to as Brehon Law. Originally envisaged as being only of scholarly interest, the translation project made popular the idea of a law code which was separate to and which predated English Common Law in Ireland was immediately seized upon by nationalists, who could see its potential in as a law code in a potential future independent Ireland. The idea of Brehon law soon became an alternative legal space in the public imagination, which would supposedly provide justice which was denied by official means. The restorative nature of medieval Irish law, rather than punitive measures, emphasised the suitability of it for justice, and many misinterpretations were promoted to suit this aim. Even today, popular opinion in Ireland claims that Brehon Law would provide the right justice in opposition to the current state of law. The knowledge of the existence of law tracts relating to trees, bees, and public land access means that the idea of medieval Irish law is a popular idea among the environmental movement. Newspaper articles about environmental topics often make reference to how things could be better under Brehon Law. This paper examines how a popular representation of an almost imaginary legal code is set in opposition to official law, creating a third space for interactions on the subject of environmentalism in Ireland.

Ciaran McDonough was recently a visiting fellow in th Dimensions of Europe Clister of Excellence at the Department of Digital Humanities at the University of Graz. She held a Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship at the University of Iceland and a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship at University College Dublin, which examined the nineteenth-century project to translate the corpus of medieval Irish law. She was awarded a PhD in 2017 from the University of Galway for a thesis on nineteenth-century Irish antiquarianism. She is the co-President of the Nordic Irish Studies Network and sits on the board of the Research Group on Law and Culture in the Premodern North at the University of Bergen.

PANEL 5

Integration without Recognition: Building and Inhabiting the Swiss Regime, 1991–Present

Sandra King-Savić, University of Zurich

This paper introduces the concept of integration without recognition to describe conditions in which people are durably incorporated into everyday social and economic life while institutional recognition remains partial, conditional, or risky. The argument is developed through a Swiss genealogy that connects federal-archival evidence with contemporary ethnography. Drawing on a four-volume cluster of Bundesrat protocol extracts from September 1991, covering the abolition of the Grenzsanitätsdienst, the reform of return assistance, the Stabilisierungsgesetz consultation, and the two-act package of 23 September 1991 that codified the three-circle model and assigned Yugoslavia to its outer circle over the signed dissent of the foreign ministry, the paper reconstructs how the federal state rewrote the categories through which foreigners would be made legible, screened, removable, and morally evaluated. Ethnographic material collected since 2019 among people with former-Yugoslav migration trajectories then traces how these categories are inhabited as a regime of calibrated visibility, non-claiming, and administratively suspendable recognition -- condensed in interlocutors' formulations such as "integrating means not standing out." By treating the regime as both built and inhabited, the paper argues that Swiss citizenship has come to stabilize participation while keeping equal, rights-bearing standing administratively conditional and politically reversible. The Swiss case thereby specifies what recognition theory diagnoses normatively but under-specifies analytically: the institutional production of suspended recognition as a technique of governance.

Sandra King-Savić is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Slavic and East European Studies, University of Zurich. She holds a doctorate from the University of St. Gallen and a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Migration Law from the University of Bern. Her research combines ethnographic, historical and archival methods to examine how legal status shapes migrant lives across borders, with a regional focus on the former Yugoslavia, Austria and Switzerland. She is the author of Forging Transnational Belonging through Informal Trade (Routledge, 2021), and her recent work has appeared in Qualitative Research, Comparative American Studies and Frontiers in Political Science. Her current project traces legal status as a form of transnational biographical inheritance, following the effects of residence regimes into the lives people lead after departure.

PANEL 6

The Bell is Tolling: Art, Justice and International Representation

Nataliya Tchermalykh, Geneva Graduate Institute

This paper reads the 2026 Venice Biennale as a site where the crisis of contemporary international order surfaces as a crisis of representation. Drawing on ethnographic observations, it examines the entanglement of aesthetic, political, and juridical representation. Historically, the Biennale's national pavilion system reproduced a state-centred architecture shaped by the post-Second World War international order, now increasingly disrupted by conflict. Artists, activists, curators, and jurors responded by mobilising artistic representation to articulate alternative political claims, while increasingly adopting the normative vocabulary of international law. The controversies surrounding the international jury, the Ukrainian and South African pavilions, and Palestine's recurrent presence through other institutional actors reveal how artistic institutions can become sites of dissensual international representation. The paper concludes that dissensual artistic practices seek to extend the constituency of justice-making beyond sovereign membership and formally acquired standing, while simultaneously exposing the possibilities and limits of artistic representation as a mode of international justice-making.

Nataliya Tchermalykh is a visual anthropologist and socio-legal scholar whose work examines the intersections of art, politics, and law in contexts of conflict and social transformation. She is research professor at the Geneva Graduate Institute, Faculty of Anthropology and Sociology.

PANEL 6

Developmental and Legal Critiques and Reparatives in Autotheoretical Women's Writing in Kerala

Parvathy Salil, Teesside University, UK

Borrowing from Lauren Fournier's (2021) discussion of "autotheory" as encompassing all practices that engage with theory, life, and art based on one's own lived experiences, my presentation will briefly examine the scope of an autotheoretical critique of activists' life-writing to critique the existing discourses on law and women's development under 'the Kerala Model of Development'. As a specific example, I will discuss Adimamakka (Slave children, 2023) by C.K. Janu, a politician and Adivasi (tribal) rights activist who pioneered the mobilisation and land rights movement(s) of the Adivasis in Kerala.

Popular discourse under 'the Kerala Model' celebrates high levels of social development (despite its low levels of per capita income) in line with the developmental and legal interventions introduced to enhance gender equality (among other indicators) since the 1980s. These discursive debates, mainly in the English language, continue to sustain their global reach through digital and textual corpuses alike. However, marginalised women's activism and writing (primarily registered in the regional language, Malayalam), which underscore experientially informed perspectives of the 'self' and their communities, remain rarely discussed. These counternarratives subvert the popular discourse through formal, thematic, and linguistic choices in rendering decolonial and intersectional critiques relevant to the geopolitical context in Kerala.

Foregrounding a 'close' reading of the text through selected excerpts which I have translated from my regional language (Malayalam) to English and subsequently linking Lauren Fournier's (2021) work on autotheory and Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) discussion of intersectionality, I will explore how an autotheoretical reading of activists' life-writing helps to foreground structural-, political-, and representational intersectionality endemic to the Kerala context through a reading of Adimamakka (Slave children, 2023). I will point at the political potential of an autotheoretical mode of life-writing to help Janu position herself as a "knowing subaltern" -- "one who demonstrates historical consciousness, political awareness, advocacy, and self-reflexivity" (Nayar, 2014, p. 291). This stands in contrast to the term "subaltern", which is used to refer to "the dispossessed, marginalised, and underprivileged, who lack agency or the right to make informed choices" (Nayar, 2014, p. 291).

As such, the scope of my paper extends from the scope of literary studies to mediate the bridging of the theory-praxis divide to transdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies mainly on but not confined to women's writing, law, and development.

Parvathy Salil, AFHEA, is a published poet and PhD scholarship-holder at Teesside University, UK. She holds an MA in Gender Studies (with Distinction) from SOAS, University of London. At the London Critical Theory Summer School at Birkbeck, University of London, she conceived and annually facilitates the 'Poetic Witnessing'. A former Postgraduate Teaching Assistant at the Department of Information Studies at University College London, she is a Visiting English and Digital Skills Lecturer at the London South Bank Colleges.

PANEL 6

Polyphony and Dissonance in the Law Archive

Louise de Béthune, KU Leuven

Archives are boundary objects, generating a space of entanglement with different people and objects (Bruncevic). Rather than dividing, boundary objects allow for productive collisions between disciplines and voices. As diverging interests collide, their legal governance becomes complex. In an attempt to restore the balance of rights and interests, judges decide whose interests deserve to be upheld.

Testimonies guide these decisions (Motha). However, who gets heard is limited by the anthropocentric, narrow interpretation of 'interested parties'. These epistemic frameworks are remnants of a dormant colonial past (Deliss). Agency (Matthys) holds legal contestations that defy disciplinary distinctions, and as such illuminate boundaries. Thing 1544 from Agency's archive will form one starting point, titled "Music for the Sun King." It concerns a restored musical score from the royal composer at the French Court in the 17th century. After its restoration by a contemporary composer the question arose; who holds rights over the final work?

Through the artistic method of assemblies set out by Agency, court judgements are reconsidered by bringing together diverging interests and forgotten parties. Spatial justice requires the acknowledgement of each of them. How should this ecology of relations be governed (Dusollier)? Who can decide, who can take up space? Building on the theory of agonistic pluralism (Mouffe), archives form a productive space of conflict and eventually of spatial justice. This research aims to bridge legal research with other disciplines, artistic practices in particular, to uncover often overlooked perspectives. Which infrastructures can sustain the plurivocality of the archive? New legislative initiatives and soft law mechanisms, including standardisation, will subsequently be analysed.

Musical intermezzos will accompany the question of power relations in the archives and in law.

Louise de Béthune is a Belgian PhD researcher at KULeuven's Centre for IT and Intellectual Property Law and at the Belgian State Archives. Her research focusses on how (EU) data legislation can empower heritage communities. At the State Archives she is part of the DAMAR project to create a legally sound Dependable Archive for Managing Sensitive Records. Louise holds a masters and postgraduate degree in law from KULeuven. Previously she worked as a legal advisor at the Flemish agency for Digitalisation. She is actively involved in Jubilee, platform for artistic research (ngo). She has presented at multiple conferences, including the ACM Facct doctoral colloquium (2025, Athens) and Digital Humanities Benelux (2025, Amsterdam) and organised the first edition of Archiving in Times of Data (2025, Brussels). She has completed a research stay at the Victoria University of Wellington and the National Library of Aotearoa New Zealand.

WORKSHOP 1

89mm from Europe. The Silent Risk

Marzena Grzegorczyk, Filmmaker

89 millimeters separate the Russian rail gauge from the European standard. In the 1990s, after hearing Lech Wałęsa in Chicago call on Poles to return and rebuild the homeland, Mirosław Ciełuszecki did exactly that. Near the Belarusian border, he built a company importing potassium salt from Belarus and a transfer station that lifted trains across the 89-millimeter gap, physically erasing the distance between systems. For this, he has spent over twenty-five years being prosecuted for a logically impossible crime: "defrauding himself." Not the state. Not another party. Himself. He bridged 89 millimeters of steel but fell into a gap with no measurement and no end. He is still there.

Film captures what the official record is designed to exclude: conduct, demeanor, intimidation. Contempt is not justiciable. But it is visible. Contesting the epistemic violence, film restores the event that the record replaced. The system says: nothing happens here. The camera answers: I was there. This is happening.

Through a 10-minute excerpt from A Report from the Place Where Nothing Happens (PBS, 2026) and a behind-the-scenes account of filming, the session shows how the system works: engineered delay, role reversal, vanishing evidence, regulated hope, appeals that work as a slot machine, you almost win, so you keep playing. Twenty-five years later, you are still playing. The silent risk is the evacuation of judgment from procedure.

> “Judges and I traded places. They wrote fiction; I tracked the facts [...] This isn't a victim narrative or a trauma film. It's about the scaffolding of impunity: the mentality, incentives, and language that keep lawless structures intact.” - from the filmmaker’s statement

Marzena Grzegorczyk (PhD, Stanford; MFA, USC Film School) is an American filmmaker, author, and scholar working at the intersection of law, culture, and visual epistemology. For more than fifteen years, she has documented Poland’s judicial system through courtroom observation, case analysis, and first-hand interaction. She is currently directing A Report from the Place Where Nothing Happens (PBS, 2026), a legal documentary thriller, and writing the book Where Nothing Happens: Mapping Lawlessness on the Periphery of Europe, both part of the multi-platform project. She is the author of Private Topographies (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); her article on Improper Cities was selected among the 25 most impactful in the history of the Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies. She has taught at UCLA, Stanford, Emory, and the University of Vienna; her films have screened at more than 80 international festivals, including Venice, and aired on PBS and Canal+.

WORKSHOP 2

Un/Writing Authority: Conflict, Classification, and the Afterlives of Public Controversy

Isahbella Rai, University of Warwick

This workshop explores how legal and cultural institutions assign form to conflict. Legal judgments, cultural policy, museums, archives, and media classify contested events. This shapes how such events are understood and remembered, and which accounts become visible and endure.

Positioning creative practice as a form of extramural legal-humanities work, the workshop approaches creative writing as a mode of inquiry into the production and circulation of authoritative accounts of conflict. Participants will work with a curated packet of legal, cultural, and artistic materials to produce short creative interventions through practices of redaction, rearrangement, and recomposition. In doing so, participants will examine how dominant accounts are constructed and how alternative readings are marginalised, displaced, or absorbed as events move between sites, institutions, and publics.

Isahbella Rai is a PhD researcher in Law at the University of Warwick. Her research explores how law and cultural institutions regulate artistic expression across public and private spaces. Drawing on legal humanities, critical legal theory, and cultural heritage studies, her work examines artistic intervention, contested art, public memory, and the governance of meaning. She also develops creative and interdisciplinary approaches to research and teaching through creative writing, visual practice, and arts-based pedagogy.

ROUNDTABLE

Quando lo spazio diventa luogo: arti, comunità e questioni giuridiche

Chair: Fabio Dell'Aversana, Academy of Fine Arts of Naples

La tavola rotonda propone un'analisi sociologico-giuridica del rapporto tra pratiche artistiche, spazio urbano e produzione normativa, a partire da una tesi centrale: l'arte può costituire un dispositivo di trasformazione dello spazio fisico in luogo vissuto, contrastando le logiche di controllo e stratificazione sociale che storicamente presiedono all'organizzazione del territorio.

Questa traiettoria può essere ribaltata: le pratiche artistiche informali (street art, performances urbane e arti performative) producono fatti sociali, che a loro volta istituiscono riconoscimento collettivo, attribuiscono significato condiviso allo spazio e generano conflitti di titolarità.

Si analizzano le conseguenze di questa riappropriazione dello spazio pubblico, contro le narrazioni egemoniche impresse dalla regolazione giuridica degli spazi.

Ne emergono interrogativi cui il diritto non può sottrarsi: chi abbia il potere di attribuire significato allo spazio pubblico e se questo significato possa essere attribuito dalle sole istituzioni o anche dalle collettività; se la legittimazione sociale possa o meno influenzare la legalità formale, ridefinendo categorie quali la proprietà, l'autorizzazione, l'uso legittimo dello spazio e la produzione normativa; se, nel caso di una trasformazione dello spazio già operata da una comunità, il successivo intervento del diritto abbia valore solo dichiarativo o anche costitutivo.

Si costruisce un dialogo tra sociologia urbana, antropologia, urbanistica critica e studi giuridici, assumendo l'interdisciplinarità quale condizione necessaria per comprendere fenomeni che nessuna disciplina presa singolarmente potrebbe nominare. Una discussione conclusiva coinvolge dottorande e dottorandi il cui lavoro intercetta queste questioni da prospettive disciplinari emergenti.

Participants

- Fabio Dell'Aversana - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Giuseppe Gaeta - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Fabrizia Cesarano - Scuola Superiore Meridionale
- Maria Francesca De Tullio - University of Naples "Federico II"
- Sveva Ventre - University of Naples "Federico II"
- Gennaro Caiazzo - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Enrico Cominassi - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Annaluce Licheri - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Michela Parente - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Alice Serra - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Manuel Curcio - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Francesca Forgione - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Diletta Giangiulio - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples
- Silvio Pascucci - Academy of Fine Arts of Naples