From 2014 to 2016, photographer Richard Mosse follows two refugee routes into Europe – from the Middle East via the Aegean islands and Greece; from the Maghreb across the Mediterranean to the 'Jungle' of Calais – documenting border crossings and camps with a high-performance thermal camera that detects body heat from over 30 km. The workshop will discuss Mosse’s strangely gleaming video footage in the context of 'Byzantine' visuality. While photography and cinema are traditionally correlated with Renaissance monocularity, spatial depth, and linearity, Byzantium suggests itself as a figure of thought to comprehend post-cinematic media images. This not only relates to aesthetic properties such as flatness, luminosity, or mosaic structures, but also to more abstract notions of presence, absence and representation. What is more, Mosse’s 'Byzantine' screens might even hold a political potential, namely to set the icon’s "tabular space" (G. Didi-Huberman) against the intrusive gaze of border surveillance...

Ulrich Meurer teaches film and media studies at the University of Vienna. After receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Konstanz in 2005, he has been Assistant Professor at the Department of Comparative Literature at Leipzig as well as Visiting and Associate Professor at the Department of Theater, Film, and Media Studies at Vienna, the Ruhr-University Bochum and the Visual Studies Platform at Central European University, Budapest. His main fields of research are media philosophy, (pre-)cinematic media and political theory, and contemporary Greek and US-American film cultures. His most recent article publications include "Short Voyages to the Land of Gregarious Animals: On Political Aesthesia in Sto Lýko and Sweetgrass" (2017) and "Laboratory Athens: On Austerity Politics and Small Gauge Film" (2018).