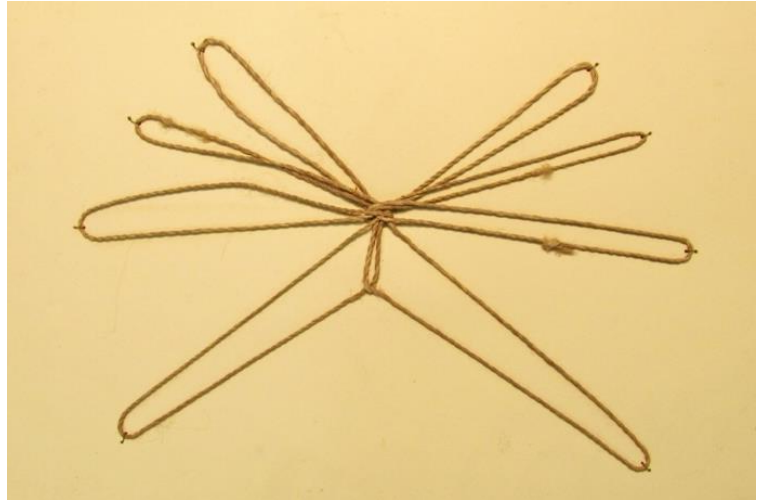


## String Figures

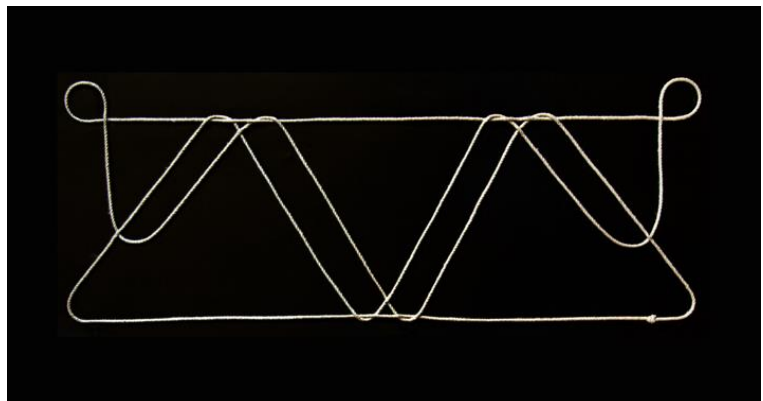
### An Interdisciplinary Workshop

String figures are among the oldest cultural techniques known to humanity. In *anthropology*, string figures were long considered a universal game. As a body practice that can be found in so many places of this world, it fed the epistemological fantasies of a universal cultural comparison throughout the 20th century. As early as 1888, Franz Boas described the string figures of the Kwakiutl. Subsequently, European-American ethnologists 'collected' string figures from almost all regions of the world. They mounted the resulting figures on cardboard or made drawings, photos and films to do justice to the performativity of the skill. They even developed their own systematics to capture the figures (including Caroline Furness Jayne, Honor Maude, and Dina Dreyfus).



Unbekannter Urheber: *Fadenspiel Raupe*, um 1910. Sammler: Theodor Koch-Grünberg in Brasilien, Rio Negro, Kaúa. Pflanzenfaser auf Karton. Ethnologisches Museum Berlin.

String figures also served as an inspiration to the Western modern *arts*. For example, experimental film pioneer Maya Deren filmed Marcel Duchamp making string figures. Andy Warhol captured the string-playing Harry Smith, an idol of the Beat Generation, on 16mm. In recent years, string figures have gained prominence in *cultural theory*. Donna Haraway promotes string figures as a method of thinking and collaboration between both disciplines and species. Rather than the technician and rigid metaphor of the network, Haraway's string figures provide a playful, process-oriented, embodied, performative (and non-Western) mode of thought in which responsibility and collaboration are foregrounded.



Harry Smith, 1960s, string, glue and poster board. Collection of Harry Smith Archives

The workshop brings these different threads together and seeks to weave connections between anthropology, history of knowledge and film, mathematics, and performance to thereby explore the possibilities of transdisciplinary collaboration.

### **Thursday, 8th of June**

19:00 Donnerstagskino with an introduction in German by Mario Schulze and Sarine Waltenspül

Drei Fadenspiel-Filme aus der Encyclopaedia Cinematographica, Institut für den wissenschaftlichen Film, Göttingen/Deutschland, von: Rudolf Haefelfinger, Basel/Schweiz, 1975, 13 min, stumm; Gerd Koch, Niutao/heute Tuvalu, 1963/65, 6 min, stumm; Christian Adler, Thule/Grönland, 1974/79, 9 min, stumm  
Caroline Monnet: "Mobilize" CA, 2015, 3 min, ohne Sprache  
Harry Smith: tba  
Fabrizio Terranova: "Donna Haraway: Story Telling for Earthly Survival" BE/F/ES, 2016, Auszüge, Englisch

### **Friday, 9th of June**

9:15 Short introduction by the organizers

9:30–12:30 Anthropology of String Figures

Éric Vandendriessche (Paris): "Ethnomathematics of String Figures"

Mareile Flitsch (Zürich): "Hesitant Hands on Similar Strings"

*Coffee Break*

Paul Basu (Bonn/London): "[Re:]Entanglements Nigerian String Figures"

Rainer Hatoum (Braunschweig): "Ajarorpoq and TseLtse'no – On the Trail of Franz Boas's Cross-cultural Fascination with Cat's Cradle"

*Lunch*

13:45–14:30 Philip Noble (Inverness): "History of International String Figures Association"

14:30–17:30 Film, Art and Knowledge

Rani Singh (New York): "From Buffalo Skin to Intertwined Snakes: The String Figures of Harry Smith"

Sarine Waltenspül (Luzern): "String Figures in the Encyclopaedia Cinematographica"

*Coffee Break*

Mario Schulze (Basel/Luzern): "String Figures Instead of Networks. Donna Haraway's SF Method"

Ines Kleesattel (Basel/Zürich): "Witch's Cradles"

*Coffee Break*

18:00–18:45 Dave Ket'acik Nicolai (Anchorage): "String Figure Performance"

19:30 *Speaker's Dinner*