How Do Media Create Soothing Experiences?

A Conversation on the Aesthetics of Calm in Culture, Film and Design

How do media create experiences of soothing? What kinds of aesthetic choices, material settings and cultural practices make certain forms of media feel calming, reassuring or emotionally supportive? This online event brings together two perspectives on the aesthetics of comfort and calm in contemporary culture.

When: Thursday, 10 December 2026, 17:00 CET
Where: online (MS Teams)
https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/352056032023962 3?p=U6DBnsryJS2POWTmgR

Joanna Łapińska (Institute of Audiovisual Arts, Jagiellonian University)
Soothe Yourself! The Cases of ASMR and Goop

Anna Wiśnicka (Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences)
Designing Comfort in Scandinavian Film

The event is open to the public. Two presentations will be followed by a Q&A session.

JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN KRAKÓW

INSTYTUT SZTUKI POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK

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Joanna Łapińska will discuss ASMR, an online audiovisual phenomenon built around soft sounds, whispering and personal-attention videos, and Goop, a wellness and lifestyle brand, as two very different cultural forms that promise relaxation and emotional regulation. Focusing on the ways in which soothing is presented, performed and encouraged across these two contexts, she will consider how media and wellness cultures invite individuals to actively participate in creating their own experiences of calm. The presentation draws on research conducted as part of her project "Soothing the Self: Affective Infrastructures of Calm in Feminine Wellness Media from Gloria Swanson to ASMR," funded by the National Science Centre, Poland (NCN).

Anna Wiśnicka will turn to Scandinavian screen culture to examine how comfort is constructed through the design of interiors and everyday objects. Using selected film and television examples, she explores how material environments help generate particular moods and emotional experiences. Drawing on design semiotics, she analyzes the narrative agency of domestic space, showing how architectural forms, textures and furnishings serve as conduits for memory and suppressed vulnerability. Her discussion centers primarily on Joachim Trier's *Sentimental Value*, alongside comparative cases such as Mia Hansen-Løve's *Bergman Island* and the Swedish series *Anxious People*.

Dr Joanna Łapińska is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Audiovisual Arts, Jagiellonian University. Her research spans film and media studies, gender studies and affect theory, with a particular focus on ASMR and self-care cultures. She is the author of "Hear the Tap, Feel the Scratch: The Transgressive Intimacy of ASMR" (2026) and the principal investigator of the NCN-funded project "Soothing the Self: Affective Infrastructures of Calm in Feminine Wellness Media from Gloria Swanson to ASMR."

Dr Anna Wiśnicka is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IS PAN) in Warsaw, specializing in design history, film studies and object anthropology. Alongside her research, she is a university lecturer, teaching classes on design history and visual culture. She is the author of "Simo Heikkilä: Designer's Life and Work" (2020) and numerous papers on contemporary design and object semiotics.