

Press Release // May 6, 2025

Interdisciplinary Exhibition

Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography

With contemporary artistic positions by Aziza Kadyri, Christelle Oyiri and the collective Ebb.global & Neïl Beloufa

June 6, 2025 - April 12, 2026

Press Conference: Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 11 am

Opening: Thursday, June 5, 2025, 6 pm, Admission free

How do images convey power? How do they shape history? How do they manipulate us?

The exhibition *Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography* is the first to comprehensively explore the Zeppelin as a photographic motif. It marks a new starting point in the examination of the visual history of the airship and demonstrates how the image of the Zeppelin was employed as a tool of political propaganda during the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and the Nazi dictatorship. As a symbol of conquering the skies, technological superiority, military power, and global connectivity, it became a visual vehicle of imperial ambition. By the example of this deliberate staging of visual media, *Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography* poses the highly topical question of the power of images.

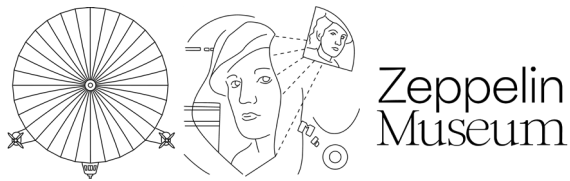
Contemporary artistic positions engage with the historical material and work with the museum's photographic archive. Artists Aziza Kadyri, Christelle Oyiri, and the collective Ebb.global & Neïl Beloufa deconstruct established narratives, question their visual language, and metaphorically turn the archive inside out. In doing so, they challenge us to critically engage with the visual history of the Zeppelin, opening up new perspectives.

In addition, the exhibition sharpens our awareness of images as carriers of information. It addresses their authenticity as well as the methods and strategies of their manipulation. The museum's educational mission is to promote media literacy among visitors and to promote a more critical, reflective approach towards visual culture.

The exhibition is supported by the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung and the ZF Kunststiftung, among others.

The exhibition showcases the unique collection of historical photographs from the Zeppelin Museum's archive. It explores how images of the Zeppelin were used throughout the 20th century to convey ideological messages and shape public perception. Between 1900 and 1940, the Zeppelin was stylised as a symbol of the conquest of the skies, military superiority, technological innovation, and global connectivity. In all three major political systems of its time—the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and the Nazi regime—the airship served as a powerful propaganda instrument. It visually supported political agendas and aimed to rally the public around the vision of an ambitious, power-oriented nation. In an era of deepfakes and disinformation, *Image and Power* exposes the parallels of systematic instrumentalization and the continuity of strategic visualisations of power.

The exhibition is complemented by new works by internationally renowned contemporary artists Aziza Kadyri, Christelle Oyiri, and the collective Ebb.global & Neïl Beloufa. Their works are developed in close dialogue with the Zeppelin Museum's unique photographic collection and open up new perspectives. **Aziza Kadyri** reinterprets the



Zeppelin as a mythical being. Through the use of artificial intelligence (AI), she breaks away from Western regimes of visual perception and resists interpreting the Zeppelin as a symbol of power, masculinity, and progress. The collective **Ebb.global & Neïl Beloufa** explore the logic of propaganda by exposing the Zeppelin as a propaganda machine. Their work employs AI as a tool to visually exaggerate and satirically question mechanisms of power. In an interactive installation, the audience is directly involved in this critical engagement. **Christelle Oyiri** focuses on the staging of images and media power, examining the sensory overload experienced by viewers when confronted with visual strategies rooted in pop culture. Referencing the Hindenburg disaster, her work addresses the dramatic impact of images that overwhelm both aesthetically and ideologically, she raises questions around media responsibility and the ethics of image production.

In dialogue with the historical exhibits, the artistic positions deconstruct visual strategies of domination, question the significance of national symbols, and open up the photographic archive to marginalised perspectives. Each of the works contributes to developing a more nuanced understanding of image production and visual regimes, encouraging critical reflection on the meaning and instrumentalization of images.

Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography not only offers an in-depth insight into the history of Zeppelin photography, but also prompts reflection on today's visual culture and the power of visual media. It reveals how images have always served as tools of power – and how they continue to shape our perception and interpretation of the world today.

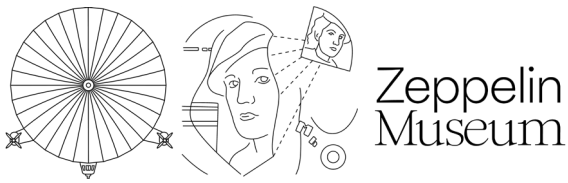
Exhibition Concept

With *Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography*, the Zeppelin Museum explores six chapters, each examining the multifaceted history of the Zeppelin and its photographic staging: *overwhelming*, *instrumentalised*, *innovative*, *seductive*, *destructive*, and *shattering*. The exhibition not only focuses on technological, political, and cultural aspects, but also highlights the emotional dimension of affective images.

Overwhelming – The first Zeppelin ascent in 1900 was celebrated as the symbolic dawn of a new era, with the airship serving as a dispositive for dreams of the future and technological utopias. In photography, the Zeppelin was portrayed not only as a technical marvel but also as a symbol of national and political power. These images—often deliberately manipulated—helped establish the Zeppelin as a visual icon of superiority and unstoppable progress. Artist **Aziza Kadyri** uses contemporary technologies to reframe these narratives and bring to light neglected female perspectives in Zeppelin history.

Instrumentalised – Beginning with the German Empire, Zeppelins were used as strategic tools of political propaganda. They functioned as symbols of national identity and were instrumentalised in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and under National Socialism to project strength and imperial ambition. Under the Nazi regime in particular, the Zeppelin became part of the propaganda machinery, promoting the image of a technologically advanced and dominant Germany, while simultaneously concealing the regime's policies of violence and repression. The ease with which visual content can be imbued with propaganda today is demonstrated by the collective **Ebb.global & Neïl Beloufa** in an AI experiment, in which visitors can generate their own persuasive images.

Innovative – Over the course of its 40-year history, the Zeppelin was continuously developed and technically refined. Photographs documented these innovations, reinforcing the Zeppelin's image as a harbinger of progress.



The press made strategic use of these images to position the airship as an essential element of the future and to boost the market value of the Zeppelin company.

Seductive – The global voyages and passenger flights of the interwar period stylized the Zeppelin as a vision of a better, more peaceful future in which technology served as a connecting force between nations. At the same time, its portrayal as a "conqueror" of distant lands and cultures reflected colonial and Eurocentric ambitions. Only recent approaches in visual studies allow for a critical reassessment of these image politics and reveal their underlying ideological frameworks.

Destructive – Even before their actual use in warfare, Zeppelins were turned into symbols of technological and military superiority through photography. These images depicted them as threatening machines meant to intimidate enemies and mobilise domestic populations. The few surviving wartime photographs do not convey the experience of war, but rather present an aesthetic of technology – detached, dehumanised, and ideologically charged.

Shattering – The crash of the Hindenburg in 1937 marked the symbolic end of the Zeppelin era. Images of the burning airship shaped global memory and turned the disaster into an emblem of technological and imperial failure. In hindsight, it also functions as a counter-narrative – an image of loss of control and the collapse of presumed superiority. **Christelle Oyiri's** work *Sky is the Limit* revisits the crash as a symbol of political failure and explores the transformation of technological symbols in collective perception.

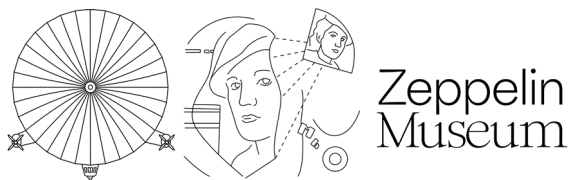
Contemporary Artistic Positions

In her sculptural installation *Lighter than the Words We Share* (2025), **Aziza Kadyri** reinterprets the story of the airship as a fable. Drawing inspiration from sources such as the ancient Persian collection *Kalila wa Dimna*, she creates a fictional narrative in which the Zeppelin appears not as a technical marvel or symbol of power, but as a mythical creature. Through interactive tablets, visitors enter imaginative visual worlds where historical photographs from the Zeppelin Museum archive are interwoven with non-Western visual and storytelling traditions through the use of artificial intelligence. At the same time, the artist, who has Uzbek roots, draws attention to the invisible labour of women. While researching in the museum's archive, Kadyri came across photographs from the First World War depicting seamstresses working for Ballonhüllen GmbH (Balloon Envelope Company). These images resonated with her memories of Uzbek textile workers: communal, resilient, and historically unseen.

Supported by the Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen Art Foundation and Zeppelin Systems GmbH.

Aziza Kadyri (b. 1994) is a multidisciplinary artist working with textiles, experimental costumes, performance, and immersive technologies. Her projects engage with themes such as migration, identity, decolonisation, feminism, and social (in)visibility. In 2024, she represented Uzbekistan at the 60th Biennale di Venezia with her project *Don't Miss the Cue*. Her works have been exhibited at Artissima (Turin), KINDL (Berlin), Pushkin House (London), eastcontemporary (Milan), as well as at the Prague Quadrennial and the Athens Digital Arts Festival.

Christelle Oyiri explores how information and spectacle have become inextricably intertwined, using various aviation disasters as a point of departure. For the artist, these events symbolise an era of emotionally charged visual worlds, where the lines between reality and media staging begin to blur. The Hindenburg disaster is



regarded as one of the first media events to receive global attention. The crash marked the beginning of an era in which images of catastrophe became a form of mass entertainment. Oyiri's film *Sky is the Limit* (2025) connects these disasters both aesthetically and philosophically, presenting them as demonstrations of technological supremacy that ultimately end in tragedy. The narrative is told from the perspective of a Black child who questions the media construction of such events. A reference to the airship in the film *Scarface*, bearing the slogan "The World Is Yours", underscores the radical shift in meaning associated with technological development: what once stood for Western progress and conquest has become a symbol of failure – a moment in which ascent and downfall converge.

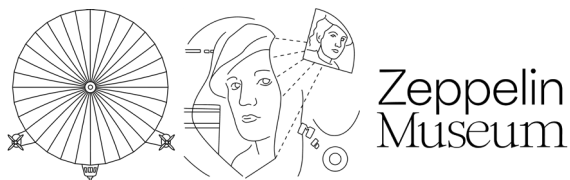
Supported by *RE-SEARCH. The ZF Fellowship for Artists*.

Christelle Oyiri (b. 1992) is a Paris-based artist whose interdisciplinary practice challenges conventional narratives. Her practice blends pop culture, post-humanities, and mythology with material-based research, drawing inspiration from music, youth cultures, and the African diaspora. Her work has been shown at venues such as Palais de Tokyo, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Bard College, and the Centre Pompidou. As a DJ and producer, she performs under the name CRYSTALLMESS.

With their work *Auto-Promo* (2025), the collective **Ebb.global & Neïl Beloufa** invites visitors to design their own propaganda or advertising postcards at a digital terminal. These can be printed on-site and sent after the exhibition visit. The images are generated by an AI model trained on historical visual material from the Zeppelin Museum. Guided by the users, it generates new image worlds of the Zeppelin – reimagined, for example, as a sustainable mode of transport, an interstellar spacecraft, or a dystopian war machine. The AI replicates visual patterns found in its training data – including propagandistic stagings, imperial gazes, and portrayals of technological superiority – without questioning their context. In an era when images are increasingly generated by machines, the project prompts reflection on how artificial intelligence influences our understanding of reality and history. With a blend of playful irony and critical insight, the collective demonstrates how technology and imagery shape narratives—and calls for a conscious, critical engagement with AI-generated content.

Neïl Beloufa (b. 1985 in Paris) lives and works in Paris. His work, situated at the intersection of film, sculpture, installation, and digital technology, interrogates structures of power, surveillance, and identity. Drawing on aesthetics from internet culture, video games, and political propaganda, he exposes the logic of algorithmic systems. Beloufa has received numerous awards, including the Prix Meurice (2013) and the Audi Talent Award (2011), and was nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp (2015) and the Nam June Paik Award (2016). His works have been shown at institutions such as MoMA (New York), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), and the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), and are held in major collections including the Centre Pompidou (Paris) and the Julia Stoschek Collection (Düsseldorf & Berlin).

Ebb.global, co-founded by Neïl Beloufa and supported by an interdisciplinary team of artists, filmmakers, curators, researchers, and developers, creates interactive, immersive, and multimedia formats. The studio actively develops new models of distribution that reflect the shifting values of contemporary society. Recent projects include *Pandemic Pandemonium* at the Secession, Vienna (2022), the *Sahab Museum* with the Hawaf Collective at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2024), *La Ruée vers l'or* with Atelier Médicis at Lafayette Anticipation, Paris (2024), *Humanities* at Kunsthalle Basel and the Renaissance Society, Chicago (2024), and *Me Time* at LUMA, Arles (2024–2025).



Educational Mission: Media Literacy

With *Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography*, the Zeppelin Museum continues its educational mission by placing media literacy at the core of its outreach. In an age where everyone constantly produces, shares, and manipulates images, the ability to critically engage with media content is more vital than ever. Media literacy not only involves reading images, but also understanding and reflecting on them within their historical, technological, and political frameworks.

Across four stations, the museum explores key aspects of visual power – from the history of photographic manipulation and the technical foundations of image production, to questions of archiving and accessibility. The exhibition seeks to foster not only knowledge, but also practical skills – for example, learning how to identify fakes and fake news, using the interactive “Fakefinder” app developed by SWR (Southwest Broadcasting).

The topic is of particular relevance through its connection to the educational curricula of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg, as well as current societal debates on artificial intelligence. With workshops held in the museum’s own darkroom, inclusive stations for visitors with visual impairments, and an expanded programme of talks and lectures, the Zeppelin Museum creates spaces for critical dialogue – making media- and digital literacy an accessible and tangible part of civic education.

Timeline: The History of Image Manipulation

A three-part timeline traces the history of photography, image manipulation, and artificial intelligence. This station demonstrates how technological developments have always influenced our perception of truth – from the early days of photography and traditional retouching techniques to today’s deepfake technologies. Inspired by Wolfgang Kemp’s theory of photography, the timeline presents the history of photography as a history of its manipulation.

Workshop: How Images Are Created – and Altered

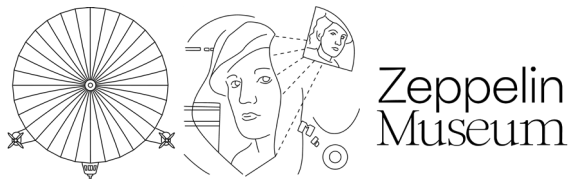
The “Workshop” offers a hands-on approach to photography and image editing. Visitors can explore the fundamentals of photographic techniques – for example, by working in an analogue darkroom, where elements such as framing and exposure significantly shape an image’s impact. Digital tools like the SWR’s interactive “Fakefinder” expand the experience with accessible learning formats. Children, teens, and adults alike learn how to detect manipulated images and to critically question their visual environments.

The Power of the Archive: Who Collects, Categorises – and Decides?

A deeper look at the archive as an instrument of power: each chapter of the exhibition is accompanied by a reflective engagement with the concept of the “archive.” These stations examine how archives function as places of knowledge storage and organisation – and how they inherently reproduce social exclusions. At the same time, the archive emerges as a potential space of resistance, where alternative orders and narratives can take shape. This critical view raises awareness of the archive’s role in the construction of history.

Inclusion and Access: Media Literacy for All

Accessibility and participation are central to this station. Visuals of each chapter are made accessible through tactile images for people with visual impairments; wheelchair-friendly, under-table stations improve physical access. The experience is complemented by audio descriptions in the accompanying podcast “*Sag mir, was du siehst!*” For the Zeppelin Museum, media literacy also means creating access – regardless of physical ability.



Program accompanying the Exhibition

As part of the **OPEN HOUSE** lecture series—taking place both online and in-person for the first time—this year's programme will focus on political education and artificial intelligence. **Bernd Stiegler** from the University of Konstanz will give a talk on the history of photomontage. **Victoria Walden** from the Landecker Digital Memory Lab and **Leo Fischer** from the Anne Frank Educational Institute (Bildungsstätte Anne Frank) will discuss AI and cultures of remembrance in an online panel and **Anna Ehrenstein** and **Neil Beloufa** will explore AI in art. Further discussions will address the power of images (in cooperation with the **Federal Agency for Civic Education** (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung)) and the role of museums and AI (with **Tina Lorenz** from Hertzlab, ZKM, and **Johannes Bernhardt** from the University of Konstanz).

In October, the **Freundeskreis des Zeppelin Museums e.V.** will present a five-part lecture series with an accompanying film matinee. The thematic focus will be on the 125th anniversary of the first flight of LZ 1 on July 2, 1900.

The Zeppelin Museum offers a series of exciting and interactive activities that make the visit a special experience. Whether it's exploring the art of image manipulation, learning classical photographic techniques, or enjoying an exciting escape room adventure – there's something for all ages and interests.

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! In this interactive tour, participants will learn all about image manipulation, from the beginnings of photography to modern techniques.

BRING LIGHT INTO THE DARKROOM! In this workshop, participants will learn the basics of analogue black-and-white photo development. Perfect for team outings or children's birthday parties.

IMAGE STORIES This tour focuses on the stories behind the images and invites participants to share their own visual narratives.

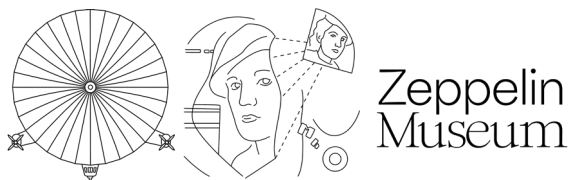
ESCAPE ROOM The thrilling escape room offers puzzle fun for groups, families, or friends. Game time: 45 minutes, group size: 1–6 people.

Scenography and Sustainability

neo.studio neumann schneider PartG mbB has designed a fascinating scenography for this exhibition, unfolding across two levels and taking visitors on a journey between history and the present. The dialogue between historical Zeppelin photographs and contemporary artistic interpretations of the exhibition themes creates a dynamic overall picture.

On the ground floor, an artfully staged area is structured by a central wall that recalls the shape of a Zeppelin. This wall serves as a projection surface for the impressive presentation of historical photographs. Sculptural space frameworks complement the scene, adding further structure. Particularly noteworthy is the work of **Aziza Kadyri**, whose engagement with the historical images uniquely extends the theme of the exhibition. Interactive stations and versatile educational offerings invite visitors to experience the exhibition in their own way. A special area is dedicated to the history of photography in the context of image manipulation and the influence of artificial intelligence, supported by a graphic timeline and a discussion area designed to inspire deeper engagement.

The first floor impresses with a narrative wall collage that frames the space. Here, the photographs appear in extraordinary, metaphorical architectures: On round, freestanding metal constructions that mirror the shape of the Zeppelins, reproductions of the photographs are displayed. The dramatic climax of the exhibition—the documentation of the Hindenburg disaster—is staged in an octagonal room, where luminous display cases



powerfully present the tragedy. An installation by **Christelle Oyiri** is integrated into this space, forming a striking centerpiece of the exhibition.

neo.studio neumann schneider PartG mbB is an interdisciplinary exhibition design studio based in Berlin. Accessibility, energy efficiency, and resource-conscious use of materials shape their approach.

Image and Power. Zooming into Zeppelin Photography

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Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen GmbH

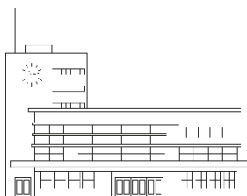
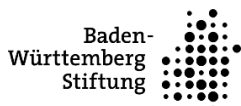
Artists: Aziza Kadyri, Christelle Oyiri, Ebb.global & Neïl Beloufa

Photographers: Lotte Eckener, Emil Otto Hoppé, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Martin Munkacsi, Wolff and Tritschler, Angelika von Braun, among others

Curators: Claudia Emmert (Director), Barbara Waibel (Head of Archive Department), Christine Buecher (Research Associate Archive Department), Mara-Johanna Kölmel (Head of Art Department) and Mark Niehoff (Research Associate Art Department)

Project Management: Stephanie Milling (Research Associate Art Department)

Supported by: Baden-Württemberg Stiftung gGmbH, Freundeskreis zur Förderung des Zeppelin Museums e.V., Kunststiftung Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen e.V., ZF Kunststiftung, SWR Kultur, Zeppelin Systems GmbH



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Zeppelin Museum: Art meets Technology, on the Shores of Lake Constance

The Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen offers a multimedia experience of innovations in technology and art, and invites visitors to engage in an interactive dialog. Interdisciplinary, discursive, participatory and inclusive, it is dedicated to historical, current and future social developments and debates.