

International Amateur Film Workshop *Researching Amateur Film Cultures – Methods and Materials*, 24-25 May 2018, Philipps-Universität Marburg

Organized by Yvonne Zimmermann and Alexander Stark

Program

Thursday, 24 May 2018

Location: Philosophische Fakultät, Wilhelm-Röpke-Str. 6A, Room 05A10 (Tower A, 5th floor)

2:00 pm: Welcome and Introduction

Yvonne Zimmermann (Marburg) and Alexander Stark (Marburg)

2:30 - 4:00 pm: Topographies of Amateur Film Culture: Research Projects

Mats Jönsson (Gothenburg) – *Gothenburg Cultures on the Town 1621–2021 (GPS400)*

Ralf Forster (Potsdam) – *Exploring Amateur Film in GDR: Resources, Methods and Results*

Mario Alves (Gießen) – *Gießen in Moving Pictures*

Chair: Yvonne Zimmermann (Marburg)

4:00 - 4:30 pm: Coffee Break

4:30 - 5:30 pm: Making Amateur Films: Resources, Technologies, and Institutions I

Sandra Ladwig (Vienna) – *Form Follows Function? Capabilities and Limitations of Amateur Film(making)*

Ryan Shand (London) – *Moving Between Filmic and Paper Records: A Case Study in Researching Campus Cine Clubs*

Chair: Alexander Stark (Marburg)

7:30 pm: Dinner

Location: Restaurant Bottega, Biegenstraße 15, 35037 Marburg

Friday, 25 May 2018

Location: Philosophische Fakultät, Wilhelm-Röpke-Str. 6A, Room 08A07 (Tower A, 8th floor)

9:30 - 10:30 am: Making Amateur Films: Resources, Technologies, and Institutions II

Annika Wickman (Stockholm) – *Amateurs in the Military: The Role of Swedish Film Officers in the 1920s*

Tim van der Heijden (Luxemburg) – *Hybrid Histories: Technologies of Memory and the Cultural Dynamics of Home Movies, 1895–2005*

Chair: Mats Jönsson (Gothenburg)

10:30 - 11:00 am: Coffee Break

11:00 am - 12:30 pm: Home Movies, Memories, and the Archive

Sebastian Thalheim (Münster) – *Making Silent Films Talk? Some Methodological Views on Film-Elicitation*

Raoul Schmidt (Vienna) – *Radical Empathy in the Film Archive – The Concept of Care for Cinematic Ego-Documents*

Laliv Melamed (Frankfurt) – *Beyond Excavation: Thinking the Home Movie Outside the Archive*

Chair: Alexandra Schneider (Mainz)

12:30 - 1:30pm: Lunch Break

1:30 - 2:00pm: Researching Amateur Film: Future Perspectives

Abstracts and Short Bios

Panel I: Topographies of Amateur Film Culture: Research Projects

Mats Jönsson (Gothenburg) – Gothenburg Cultures on the Town 1621–2021 (GPS400)

My brief presentation can be described as a basic and very general outline of ideas and strategies guiding five closely intertwined film projects within a new collaborative research and education initiative emanating from the University of Gothenburg, "Gothenburg Cultures on the Town 1621-2021 (GPS400)". The activities within GPS400 are performed together with external partners from institutions, authorities, companies, interest groups, organisations, and civic society. In the five film projects we have initiated thus far, amateur films play an integral part, and in some cases they even constitute the prime source material. By discussing and exemplifying our first tentative steps towards new collaborative and digital research and education methods within GPS400, I particularly look forward to feedback, questions, recommendations, and critique from colleagues with similar or entirely different experiences of and approaches to researching local and regional amateur film collaboratively and digitally.

Short Bio

Mats Jönsson is Professor in Film Studies at the Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He has written three monographs, co-edited seven interdisciplinary anthologies, and contributed to numerous peer-reviewed periodicals and anthologies. Also, he has initiated the international research group "The Newsreel Network". Today, Jönsson is occupied with establishing a digital collaborative platform for local and regional research and education, "Gothenburg Cultures on the Town 1621–2021 (GPS400)". He sits in the editorial boards for the archival interface www.filmarkivet.se and for the peer-reviewed book series Media History Archive <http://mediehistorisktarkiv.se>. Recent publications include "The Swedish Model Non-Fiction Film Culture ca 1920–1960: Pragmatic Governance and Consensual Solidarity in A Welfare State", in *The Blackwell Companion to Nordic Cinema*, (eds.) Mette Hjort and Ursula Lindqvist, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell (2016), and *Researching Newsreels: Local, National and Transnational Case Studies*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2018), co-edited with Ciara Chambers and Roel Vande Winkel.

Ralf Forster (Potsdam) – Exploring Amateur Film in GDR: Resources, Methods and Results

Since 2006 a small group of researchers discover the history of amateur film in the GDR. The ongoing project was supported by the DEFA-Foundation, the State Government of Brandenburg, the Filmmuseum Potsdam and the German Research Foundation. Nearly 100 digitalized films are online available (www.museum-digital.de). More results will be published this year in the book of Ralf Forster "Grab the camera, pal. Amateur film in the GDR".

Amateur film in the GDR takes place between political control, economical value and independent leisure-time activity. The films are mostly manufactured in smaller studios of state companies and organisations. The groups often used professional 16mm-equipment and tried to create artistic works. The films were made in a network of state linked institutions and festivals - to shown to a limited public. Therefore the terms "inedit film" and "home movie" are not sufficient for the subject of amateur film in the GDR.

The short presentation focuses the history of the archive and academic project. Finally three or more theses are put up for discussion.

Short Bio

Ralf Forster, PhD, is film historian and vice director of collection department at Filmmuseum Potsdam. He also curate exhibitions, lectures at universities, collects vintage movies and performs them to the public. His publications range on film commercials in Nazi-Germany (PhD thesis), home movies, GDR history, animation and film technology.

Selected publications: Traumschmelze. German drawn animation film 1930-1950. 2013; Wie der Film unsterblich wurde (How the film became immortal). History of not-academic film studies in Germany. 2015 (ed. with Rolf Aurich); BUMMI – from Toyland to the East-German reality. 2017 (with Jeanette Toussaint).

Mario Alves (Gießen) – Gießen in Moving Pictures

The City of Gießen in Hessen is not well known for its film culture, but the reorganization of the Oberhessische Museum in the City of Gießen offered the opportunity to change that. This museum is traditionally specialized on ethnological and folklore collections and is over all in a bad condition. Following the example of the well known Home Movie Day, which focuses on the awareness of the underestimated cultural heritage of analogue amateur films and film making, the project “Gießen in moving pictures” wants to offer a permanently available contact point in the newly reorganized Museum for the people of Gießen and its entire region to collect analogue amateur films in the format of N8mm, S8mm, 9,5mm, 16mm, 17,5mm that are forgotten in basements or stored in attics in long forgotten boxes. The project wants to give people the opportunity not only to watch the old film material but also to archive these films for future generations in combination with a film education program as a part of the Museum.

The project works in cooperation with the Museum of Movie Cameras in Marburg, the German Filmmuseum in Frankfurt, the office of cultural affairs of the city of Gießen and the Oberhessische Museum of Gießen and seeks further networking. In addition, the Austrian Filmmuseum in Vienna provides informal support and shares experience.

Short Bio

Mario Alves completed his master degree in Cultural- and Social Anthropology at the University of Marburg in 2016 and focused on the cultural history of the ethnic group Jenische and their special language in Gießen and works as a freelancer for various cultural projects. From 1999 until present day has been working at the Traumstern Cinema in Germany – one of the best well known art house cinemas in Germany. In 2009 he moved to Vienna and became a professional carriage driver and a professional city guide for a year but ended this profession to work between 2010 and 2012 as the main projectionist at the Austrian Filmmuseum in Vienna and can now look back at a 20 years’ practical experience with analogue film material. Furthermore he worked for the German Filmmuseum in Frankfurt based on an exhibition relating photos of old cinemas. He currently manages the festival Giennale for culture and art in Gießen and works with his own project called „Gießen in moving pictures“ for the Stadtlabor Gießen, which is a project from the office for cultural activities and the Museum of Oberhessen. He is also a member of Transit e.V., an association for museum work and exhibitions, and a member of the registered cooperative company raumstation3539 eG which supports the creative sector and cooperates with the city's cultural office of Gießen.

Panel II: Making Amateur Films: Resources, Technologies, and Institutions I

Sandra Ladwig (Vienna) – Form Follows Function? Capabilities and Limitations of Amateur Film(making)

In contrast to contemporary recording practices the activities of amateur filmmakers involved – until the launch of Super 8 in 1965 – not only a noticeable matter of expense but also the acquirement of knowledge of small gauge film technology. By means of advice literature and film examples this paper examines technical difficulties and aesthetic opportunities which determined amateur film practice especially in its infancy. The enthusiasts used and followed an exemplified ‘grammar of the film’ highly diverse to measure up to the audience’s expectations on a worth seeing outcome. The visual aesthetics of amateur films indicate a variety that refers to the social contexts in which the movies were produced and exhibited. Moreover, the differentiated aesthetic forms of film practice illustrate the personal importance nonprofessional moviemakers attached to this leisure pursuit. Analog amateur films leave visual marks that challenge archivists as well as scientists to place them in their sociohistorical contexts. In this regard the paper explores the ambivalence of amateur films as both document of historical facts and aesthetic statement.

Short Bio

Sandra Ladwig completed the Diploma Programme in theatre, film and media studies at the University of Vienna with a thesis on amateur films of the 1930s and 1940s, which are archived in the Austrian Film Museum. Sandra Ladwig has been working at the Department of Media Theory, University of Applied Arts Vienna since October 2016. She is currently writing her PhD thesis on leisure in Austrian amateur films as a phenomenon of modernity. Her research is financed by the Austrian Academy of Sciences as part of the DOC-team-project *Doing Amateur Film. Social and Aesthetic Practices in Austrian Amateur Films between the 1920s and the 1980s*. In her research Sandra Ladwig explores amateur film as a media practice that constitutes, displays and narrates leisure through highly diverse evolved film aesthetics.

Ryan Shand (London) – Moving Between Filmic and Paper Records: A Case Study in Researching Campus Cine Clubs

This presentation will explore the early history of amateur filmmaking on university campuses. It will reflect on how researchers can utilise both filmic and paper records to write new histories of amateur cine culture. Short extracts from early student films will be screened: *The Witch’s Fiddle* (UK, 1924), *Counterpoint* (UK, 1929), *Passion’s Toll* (USA, 1925), and *Steppes of Silence* (USA, 1926). These four examples will illustrate how writing the early history of amateur filmmaking is becoming increasingly feasible as a result of recent digitisation initiatives. For example, *The Witch’s Fiddle* is thought to be the first student film made in the UK, but it only became available online in 2016. *Counterpoint* was a feature film completed by students in the UK, but its print is held by a film archive in the USA. The two American titles were acquired by a local film archive within the past couple of years. The benefits of using paper records, especially journals and manuals, to actively trace the history of amateur filmmaking will be outlined. In particular, this case study will demonstrate how information from these sources can be used to locate amateur films that are not currently being held in archives.

Short Bio

Ryan Shand completed his PhD, titled ‘*Amateur Cinema: History, Theory, and Genre (1930-80)*’, in the Film and Television Studies department of the University of Glasgow. Since then he has worked on the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded projects, ‘*Mapping the City in Film: A Geohistorical*

Analysis' at the University of Liverpool, as well as *'Children and Amateur Media in Scotland'*, at the University of Glasgow. He has contributed chapters to the anthologies *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema* (2009), *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections* (2010), and *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place* (2014); article publications have appeared in *The Moving Image*, *Leisure Studies* and the *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*. Ryan is also the co-editor of *Small-Gauge Storytelling: Discovering the Amateur Fiction Film* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

Panel III: Making Amateur Films: Resources, Technologies, and Institutions II

Annika Wickmann (Stockholm) – Amateurs in the Military: The Role of Swedish Film Officers in the 1920s

For centuries military officers have not only upheld military institutions, but also been producers of images. In this presentation, I will discuss why the Swedish military introduced the title "Film Officer" in the 1920s and in what ways this new role had ties to the history of military image and media management. I will particularly focus on the officer's capacity to act both as a media producer and a gatekeeper. I argue that officers turned to new media forms out of personal interests, often exceeding their military work. Hence, they started out as amateurs. The military welcomed these amateurs and supported their interests. In return they renewed the military institution's use of images in a *medien verbund*. To deepen our understanding of the officer's role, I will draw on Deleuze's and Guattari's concept *assemblage* and practical applications of the concept recently suggested by Thomas Nail and Manuel DeLanda. The presentation takes off from my ongoing research on the media history of the Swedish military. This topic has previously lacked academic interest in Sweden. Internationally, the history of military media has attracted a greater interest, not least manifested by the anthology *Cinema's Military Industrial Complex* (Haidee Wasson and Lee Grieveson, 2018).

Short Bio

Annika Wickman is currently a PhD Candidate at Stockholm University, studying the role of educational cinema in the Swedish military during the interwar period. Wickman has a professional background from the fields of educational and institutional media. She returned to media studies and earned a master's degree from Stockholm University in 2006 and returned for a second Master of Arts degree in 2013. Her first master's thesis was on video artist Bill Viola and her second on online recruitment videos from global corporations.

Tim van der Heijden (Luxemburg) – Hybrid Histories: Technologies of Memory and the Cultural Dynamics of Home Movies, 1895–2005

In this presentation, I will present my PhD dissertation on the cultural dynamics of home movies in the twentieth century. In my research, I have investigated how various generations have recorded their memories on film, video and digital media, and, more specifically, how changes in these "technologies of memory" have shaped new forms of home movie making and screening. Covering the period from the invention of the film camera in the late nineteenth century, the introduction of 9.5mm, 16mm, 8mm small-gauges and Super 8 film technologies for amateurs, via home video to digital media technologies, this study addresses the complex interrelations between the materiality of film, video and digital media technologies, their social usages and cultural meanings from a long-term historical perspective. Focusing on specific periods of transition, it becomes clear that different media technologies, user practices and discourses not only succeed each other in time, but also

increasingly interrelate, interact or even transform each other. Maintaining both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective on media transitions, I propose an alternative form of media historiography that rethinks media histories beyond the frameworks of change and continuity by perceiving hybridity as a constant factor in media historical development.

This dissertation is one of the outcomes of the NWO-funded research project 'Changing Platforms of Ritualized Memory Practices: The Cultural Dynamics of Home Movies', a collaboration between Maastricht University, University of Groningen, Luxembourg University and several partners from the cultural heritage field. For more information about this project, see: <http://homemoviesproject.wordpress.com>.

Short Bio

Tim van der Heijden is a post-doctoral researcher at the Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH) at the University of Luxembourg, where he also coordinates a Doctoral Training Unit (DTU) on 'Digital History and Hermeneutics'. He holds a PhD in Media History from Maastricht University, a research-master's degree (MPhil equivalent) in Media Studies from the University of Amsterdam (cum laude), and a BA in Cultural Studies from Erasmus University Rotterdam. His dissertation, entitled *Hybrid Histories: Technologies of Memory and the Cultural Dynamics of Home Movies, 1895–2005*, was written in the context of the NWO-funded research project 'Changing Platforms of Ritualized Memory Practices: The Cultural Dynamics of Home Movies'. Tim van der Heijden is also a board member of the Dutch Foundation for Amateur Film.

Panel IV: Home Movies, Memories, and the Archive

Sebastian Thalheim (Münster) – Making Silent Films Talk? Some Methodological Views on Film-Elicitation.

East-German home movies from the 1950s to the 1980s reveal scenes of daily life in a socialist society. We see happy families spending the weekend on their *Datsche* (weekend cabin), travel movies at the Baltic Sea or in Hungary, congratulations to the *Jugendweihe* (secular Youth Ceremony), or even the fall of the Wall. However, these scenes remained silent, because synchronized sound was technically challenging for home moviemakers in the GDR. How to work with images, that seem on the one hand self-explanatory, when we see the unwrapping of Christmas presents, yet can be puzzling on the other hand without context information, when there is a huge gathering of people in front of the camera?

The exploration of home movies is part of my Ph.D. research: „Home movies in the GDR. Small gauge culture between socialist ideals and everyday images“. In my project I analyze visual practices beyond socialist institutions in former East Germany from the 1950s to the 1980s. Based on the images of 8 mm- and Super 8-movies I investigate the production and reception of home movies in comparison to normative concepts of leisure time in a socialist society.

In my paper, I will discuss an important method used for my empirical research: Film-Elicitation. I met former home moviemakers and inter-viewed them. Throughout these interviews, we watched a selection of home movies to stimulate the conversation and the memory of the filmmakers. In addition, I received useful information on the context of the shooting and viewing of the movies in the GDR. The paper will discuss challenges, advantages and disadvantages of this method by presenting several empirical examples (quotes and film clips). A subject of debate could be the challenge, that the reunification of Germany created new meanings of the historical images. Meanings that were obviously not part of the filming process: People nowadays watch scenes of happy moments in a past, which are described to-day by the political discourse as happy moments in dictatorship.

Short Bio

Sebastian Thalheim studied history at the Humboldt-University of Berlin and is currently working on his Ph.D. research. Since 2013 he has been member of research staff at the Department of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Münster. He is teaching courses on historical methods, ethnographic filmmaking, media studies, visual and consumer culture. As a visiting professor, he taught at the Universities of Granada, Seville, Warsaw and Bologna.

Raoul Schmidt (Vienna) – Radical Empathy in the Film Archive – The Concept of Care for Cinematic Ego-Documents

As part of the reassessment of biographical and autobiographical amateur films *as ego-document* (Caneppele & Schmidt 2015), a substantial significance within the archival work now has to be assigned to the individual amateur filmmakers. From the point of view of archival practices this theoretical reassessment integrates the hybrid character of amateur films as testimonies, documents and practices. The term ego-document postulates not only a responsibility toward the material of the film recordings themselves, but to the people who are hidden behind these recordings and are inextricably linked to them. In the sense of an ethics of mindfulness towards the sources, this means for film archivists to understand themselves as carers and guardians of an archival act – and not just of a single film. It also requires “the ability to understand and share another person’s feelings,” as the Oxford Dictionary would define *empathy*. A notion that reflects this task and its challenges is that of “radical empathy in the archive” (Caswell & Cifor 2016) as it shifts the legalistic and right based framework of archival work to a web of affective responsibilities in archival interactions. This contribution examines the applicability of radical empathy to the archival work with cinematic documents of film amateurs.

Short Bio

Raoul Schmidt is film archivist at the Austrian Film Museum and currently resident fellow at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society. He studied experimental photography at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna and is a PhD candidate at the University of Art and Design, Linz, with a research project on amateur films in European film archives.

Laliv Melamed (Frankfurt) – Beyond Excavation: Thinking the Home Movie Outside the Archive

In an essay published in *Amateur Filmmaking* (Rascaroli, Young and Monahan, eds, 2014), Liz Czach reflects on the logic under which amateur films are deemed worthy of preservation, noting that either aesthetic prodigy, or the encapsulation of historical record instigate archival recuperation. Czach summarizes two decades of a growing interest in amateur filmmaking on behalf of archivists, scholars and filmmakers. At the peak of the awakening attention, in an anthology published in 2008 (*Mining the home Movie*, Zimmermann and Ishizuka, eds.), Patricia Zimmermann celebrates amateur filmmaking as an alternative history, an archival treasure of hidden social realities. Fast forward to 2014, Czach's summary seems to lead us not to an alternative to social and filmic historiographies, but rather their reinforcement.

Drawing on these observations, and in light of past postulations on potential intervention to be made by the study of amateur practices, this paper offers a discursive critique. I argue that archival logics appropriated amateur cinema according to traditional perceptions of what constitutes cinema and its relations to hegemony, and that such valorization often hinged on notions of excavation and reservation, thus fetishizing its object of study. What to make of the immense amateur productions that were not appropriated by the archive? Are there other sites and operations that incorporate amateur filmmaking?

Short Bio

Laliv Melamed is a research fellow at Goethe University, Frankfurt. Melamed holds a PhD with distinction from the Department of Cinema Studies at New York University. She had published extensively in English and Hebrew on topics of non-fiction media forms, Israel-Palestine and the militarization of everyday media practices. Her most recent publications have appeared in *American Anthropology Review*, *New Cinemas* and the upcoming anthology *A Global History of Amateur Film Cultures*. She is the co-editor of the "Screen Memory" issue of *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* and the upcoming issue of the journal *World Records*, dedicated to organizing frameworks of documentary film practices. Melamed is currently completing a manuscript titled *Sovereign Intimacy: Israeli Homemade Video Memorials and the Politics of Loss*. In addition to her academic work she is a film curator and a programmer.

Short Bios of the Chairs

Mats Jönsson (Gothenburg)

Mats Jönsson is Professor in Film Studies at the Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He has written three monographs, co-edited seven interdisciplinary anthologies, and contributed to numerous peer-reviewed periodicals and anthologies. Also, he has initiated the international research group "The Newsreel Network". Today, Jönsson is occupied with establishing a digital collaborative platform for local and regional research and education, "Gothenburg Cultures on the Town 1621–2021 (GPS400)". He sits in the editorial boards for the archival interface www.filmarkivet.se and for the peer-reviewed book series Media History Archive <http://mediehistorisktarkiv.se>. Recent publications include "The Swedish Model Non-Fiction Film Culture ca 1920–1960: Pragmatic Governance and Consensual Solidarity in A Welfare State", in *The Blackwell Companion to Nordic Cinema*, (eds.) Mette Hjort and Ursula Lindqvist, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell (2016), and *Researching Newsreels: Local, National and Transnational Case Studies*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2018), co-edited with Ciara Chambers and Roel Vande Winkel.

Alexandra Schneider (Mainz)

Alexandra Schneider is Professor of Film and Media Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz. Her field of expertise includes Amateur Film and Media, Media Archaeology, Children & Media, Portable Media and Digital Storytelling. She is currently finishing a book on Children as Media Archaeologists together with Wanda Strauven and co-editing an Anthology on Format Studies together with Marek Jancovic and Axel Volmar.

Alexander Stark (Marburg)

Alexander Stark studied Media and History at the University of Trier and wrote his master's thesis about German amateur filmmaker Elisabeth Wilms' 1947/48 charity films and the later reuse of this material. From 2014 to 2017 he was research assistant in the project *Advertising and the Transformation of Screen Cultures* at the Department of Media Studies at Philipps-University Marburg. He gave talks at various international workshops and conferences, such as the symposium *Der klingende Amateurfilm* (Bern, 2017) the workshop *Amateurism - Professionalism - Pragmatism. Situating Film Practices* (Gothenburg, 2017) and the *11th Orphan Film Symposium* (New York, 2018). Currently, Alexander is a PhD-student at the research collective *Configurations of Film* at Goethe-University Frankfurt and is working on the interconnections of amateur film and useful cinema. His research interests also include advertising film and early cinema.

Yvonne Zimmermann (Marburg)

Yvonne Zimmermann is Professor of Media Studies at Philipps-University Marburg (Germany). She is co-editor of *MEDIENwissenschaft: Rezensionen* and a member of the DFG-Graduiertenkolleg 2279 "Configurations of Film". She is the editor and co-author of a volume on 'useful cinema' in Switzerland (*Schaufenster Schweiz: Dokumentarische Gebrauchsfilme 1896-1964*, 2011) and has published widely on industrial film, 'useful cinema' and non-theatrical film culture. Forthcoming books in 2018 and 2019 are *Films That Work Harder: The Global Circulations of Industrial Cinema* (co-edited with Vinzenz Hediger and Florian Hoof, AUP) and *Advertising and the Transformation of Screen Cultures* (co-written with Bo Florin and Patrick Vonderau, AUP). A part of her current research focuses on Asta Nielsen and the introduction of the star system in early cinema.