

Panel im Rahmen der NECS – Konferenz: „Sensibility and the Senses. Media – Bodies – Practices“

Chair: Mats Björkin

Michaela Scharf (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society, Vienna):
Visualizations of The Self. Modes of Self-Representation in Austrian Amateur Films

Sandra Ladwig (University of Applied Arts, Vienna): Disciplined Body or Wild Gaiety?
Leisure in Austrian Amateur Films

Sarah Lauß (University of Applied Arts, Vienna): Image Practice in Austrian Amateur
Film

Respondent: Nico de Klerk (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society, Vienna)

Zeit: Sa, 01.07.2017 – 11:00 Uhr

Ort: Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, Paris, Frankreich, Raum: D33

Veranstalter: NeCS – European Network for Cinema and Media Studies

Technology, Bodies and Practices in Austrian Amateur Film

The huge number of private films published on social media platforms and on web portals has increased the interest of cultural and, more particularly, media studies in current and historical amateur films as representatives of practices of everyday life and cinematic self-concepts. The current attention to amateur films is characterized, furthermore, by new, extended archival collection practices that consider amateur films as part of the cultural heritage, as well as by the use of amateur film material in artistic productions and historical documentaries.

The panel is based on the very first results of the interdisciplinary research project “Doing Amateur Film. Social and Aesthetic Practices in Austrian Amateur Films between the 1920s and the 1980s” (funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences) which focuses on aesthetic varieties and social practices in Austrian amateur film from its beginnings in the 1920s to its marginalization in the 1980s due to the upcoming Video Home System. Particularly ambitious fictional and non-fictional amateur films are considered to fathom the academic and historical-cultural significance of amateur films.

Based on the assumption that social practices are not only intersubjective but also interobjective and therefore also include interactions between humans and objects or artefacts, the camera and other hardware elements (tripod, format, projector, screen, sound system) of the cinematographic basic apparatus will be considered in their materiality and action guiding function. The three papers explore those practices which are provoked by amateur filmmaking and are solely feasible due to the genesis of the medium. Besides understanding film production itself as a social practice, the films provide views on other social and aesthetic practices (like travel, self-representation, recreational activity, production of family identity, utilization of visual motifs) and objects, whose specific meaning and functions will also be questioned.

Michaela Scharf:

Visualizations of the self. Modes of self-representation in Austrian amateur films

The paper focuses on the potential of amateur films for research on social and cultural history regarding the correlation between modes of self-representation and media in general, and practices of subjectification, in particular. Based on the very first results of the dissertation project on “Practices of Subjectification in Austrian Amateur Films between the 1920s and the 1980s” the paper discusses different forms of the production of the self in amateur filmmaking. It follows a praxeological understanding of subjectivity, claiming that the subject is constituted during the performance of social practices. Based on Michel Foucault’s concept of “technologies of the self”, amateur film production can be understood as a self-reflexive practice. Both the filmmakers and the persons acting in front of the camera produce a specific understanding of themselves during the filming process. The filmmakers decide which moments of their lives are worth of being filmed and therefore remembered. The amateur films show both the filmmakers’ personal visions of life and the filmed persons’ practices of subjectification following a cultural repertoire of images, gestures and facial expressions. By means of selected amateur films the talk examines different modes of self-representation and emphasizes the correlations between practices of self-visualizations and the specific technological constitution of the medium.

Sandra Ladwig:

Disciplined body or wild gaiety? Leisure in Austrian amateur films

This paper examines Austrian amateur films as a social and aesthetic practice by means of the notion of leisure: not only do many amateur films depict leisure activities, but making amateur film is itself a form of leisure. Focusing on the first of these two aspects, leisure activities in amateur films are discussed as components of the spare time spectrum that Nobert Elias and Eric Dunning developed in the 1980s. Rejecting false dichotomies of labour and leisure in sociological theory, this spectrum comprises the overlapping categories of spare time routines, intermediary spare time activities, and leisure activities. Within this spectrum the degree of routinization varies and "a controlled de-controlling of restraints on emotions" enables enjoyable excitement. This assumption raises questions about what constitutes self-control and self-management in amateur films. Are there specific rules of conduct in the ways of expressing and experiencing leisure while filming?

In amateur films leisure is embodied not just by the people acting in front of the camera for the film, but also as a (social) reaction to the subject behind the lense. Inspired by Elias's development of a variety of rules of conduct relating to bodily functions as a way of (self-)management, this paper focuses on the degree of controlled behaviour in amateur films, particularly in home movies.

Sarah Lauß:

Image practice in Austrian amateur film

Assuming that amateur filming is a specific practice of producing cultural or rather visual meaning, the paper of Sarah Lauß focuses on cinematic motifs and their recurring use as image types, especially regarding the visual presentation of the human body in Austrian amateur films. This research focuses on motifs as symptoms of cultural ideas or social tendencies as well as manifestations of inherent principles. Such an approach could give an idea not only of the topics and their meanings in amateur films, but also of the traditions and conventions of visual presentation and of new ways in which these topics and motifs are presented and modified. This refers to an iconography of amateur film as well as to its visual practices. Therefore, the paper focuses on the selection and usage of motifs as a result of a specific image practice. The amateur film practice is

analysed as a practice of moving images that depends on a specific image production: the interaction between the amateur film-maker and the technical apparatuses. What knowledge of the image, the medium and the body is necessary for this practice? The present analysis of the production of an amateur film tries to answer these questions referring to approaches from art history and image science.