

13th Annual Northeast Historic Film Summer Symposium

Wunderkino II

On the Varieties of Cinematic Experience

July 26-28, 2012



(“National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC” courtesy of Mark Neumann)

Wunderkino (“wonder-cinema”) are moving images that ignite our curiosity by engaging, and helping us to rethink questions about creativity, complexity, rarity, and the multiple uses and understandings we may find in amateur and non-commercial films. The 2012 Northeast Historic Film (NHF) Summer Symposium revisits the idea of *Wunderkino* to inform and expand our understanding of amateur and non-theatrical film. In 2011, the NHF Summer Symposium focused on assembling a “cabinet of cinematic curiosities.” This year we draw from the wide range of approaches that scholars, artists, filmmakers, and archivists are bringing to the study and use of amateur and non-theatrical film.

SCHEDULE OF PRESENTATIONS

Thursday July 26

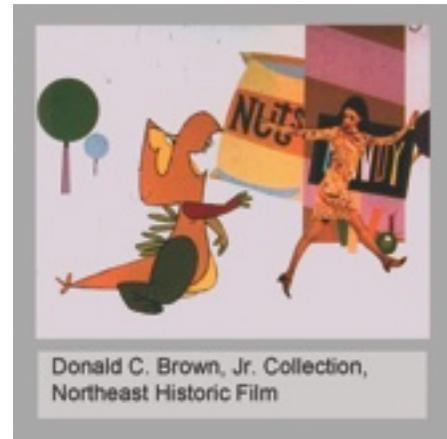
6:30 PM **Opening Reception**

Screenings From NHF

Getting Your Snacks Straight: Intermission Reels from NHF's Donald C. Brown Jr. Collection

Walter Forsberg—Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, New York City, NY

More than mere ‘Coming Attractions’-style teaser trailers for upcoming feature films, the snipe film category encompasses such assorted skeletal trailer reel elements, as: ‘tags’ and ‘daters’; concessions advertisements; theatre policy notices; holiday well-wishing messages from local businesses; Soundie-style musical interludes; and, countdown clocks—essentially everything other than the promos for feature films that one generally associates with the term, ‘trailer.’ Snipes, these “other” kinds of trailers, are an oft-overlooked genre of independent and industrial film. Produced by such regional independents as Chicago’s Filmack and Boston’s Pike Productions, snipe film production was known to be a refuge for emerging or out-of work animators; Walt Disney, Dave Fleischer, Walter Lantz, and Jay Ward are all known to have authored snipes during the hungriest points of their careers. Furthermore, as they were very often custom-tailored to the needs of specific theatres and localities, snipe films can reveal much about the cultural heritage and movie-going practices of individual communities. Walter Forsberg is the 2011 recipient of Northeast Historic Film’s *William O’Farrell Fellowship*, which provides support for research at NHF. He will present his ongoing research on intermission reels at this symposium.



Friday July 27

8:30 AM Coffee/Registration/Conversation

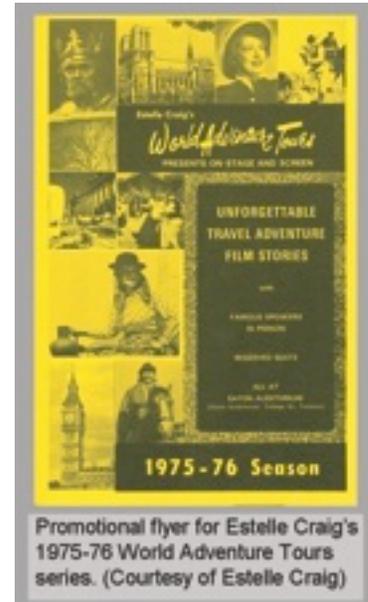
9:00 AM Opening Remarks

9:30 AM

Travel Lecture Filmmaking in the Post-War Era

Liz Czach—Department of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

The availability and affordability of 16mm in the post-war period revitalized the practice of film lecturing, and large and enthusiastic audiences gathered in auditoria and lecture halls across North America to watch films and hear filmmakers narrate travel, outdoor adventure, or nature wildlife film presentations. Even by the mid-1970s, with television providing formidable competition, there were still an estimated 1000 ongoing travel lecture series across North America and over 500 professional travel lecturers. The practice still continues to the present day. In this presentation Liz Czach will focus on recovering some of the lost history of travel lecture filmmaking in the post-WW2 period. Using the rich material of the Melvin and Ethel Ross archival collection at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, she will outline the scope of the post-war travel lecture world.



Promotional flyer for Estelle Craig's 1975-76 World Adventure Tours series. (Courtesy of Estelle Craig)

10:15 AM

Destination Japan: Re-envisioning Japan in Silent Travel and Educational Films

Joanne Bernardi—Modern Languages and Cultures Department/Film and Media Studies Program, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY

Joanne Bernardi's presentation focuses on two amateur travelogues of Japan made between 1928-1931, the eve of the prewar boom in American trans-Pacific tourism to Japan: *Japan in Cherry Blossom Time* (Charles Wyeth, c. 1928-1932) and *Japan as Seen From a Rickshaw* (unknown member of the Amateur Cinema League, 1931). Both prints are in the George Eastman House Motion Picture Collection. These films are records of Japan at a specific historical moment, but as by-products of the human act of travel, they are also remnants of a more personal history, a subjective understanding of everyday life in the world in which they were made. As material culture—tangible objects carrying evidence of their own production and the history of their use—they provide useful case studies for a broader inquiry into the ways in which Japan has defined itself and been defined by others, and the complex relationship between images, objects, and the people who use them.



Movie theater in Asakusa, Tokyo from amateur travel film "Japan as Seen from a Rickshaw," George Eastman House.

11:00 Break

11:15 AM

Cine-Kids: Exploring the Past and Present of Youth Media Production

David Cooper Moore—Department of Broadcasting, Telecommunication and Mass Media, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

Renee Hobbs—Harrington School of Communication and Media, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI

The youth media movement reflects an evolution of practices pioneered in the 1950s and 1960s, as amateur filmmaking increasingly became a reality in American families and schools. In this presentation, Moore and Hobbs seek to identify the links

between past and present in the continued popularization of youth media practices in schools, after-school learning environments, and camps as an issue of significant importance for archivists and historians.

Though its amateurishness can often be strange, even off-putting, to wider audiences, youth media and documentation of its creation also offer insights on the relationship between authors and audiences. While it's difficult to assess the true nature of youth filmmaking as a learning experience, youth media films are valuable in deepening our understanding of histories of amateur filmmaking in other modes, especially as we track the way that the aesthetics, content, and quality of amateur productions may change before and after youth media and media literacy learning experiences.



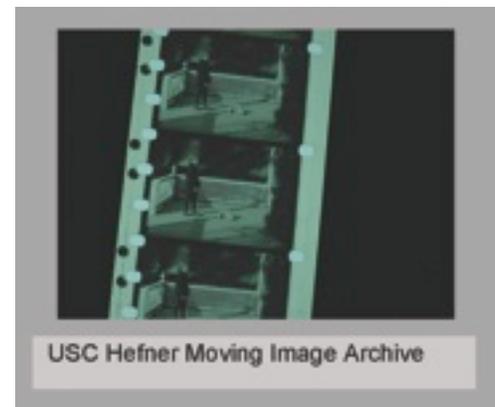
12:00 Lunch and Archives Tour

1:30 PM

28mm: One Hundred Years Later and Still Too Big for the Living Room, Too Small for the Theatre

Dino Everett—Hugh M. Hefner Moving Image Archive, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

This year marks the centennial of safety film for the home spearheaded by the 28mm format released by Pathé in France. The format was important for Pathé as it marked their ability to break free from the reliance of Kodak film stock. It was also important for production companies since it meant that film could safely be placed in the classroom, as well as the home. A boom in the production of educational films was one response to the format, and some of these films were never available in anything but 28mm. In addition, 28mm was also available for the casual filmmaker to take and project safe home movies of the family. With all of the uniqueness surrounding the format there has never been a plan or even desire by film archives to produce new 28mm preservations of this material. Digitization or blow-ups to 35mm are the only available options, calling into question the notion of film preservation. This presentation seeks to challenge current archival practices by suggesting that 28mm film needs to remain 28mm. If no preservation model exists for proper duplication, then original films must be exhibited. To emphasize this, a physically 100 year-old film print will be projected on an archival original 28mm projector. Others are encouraged to bring 28mm films they wish to see projected.



2:15 PM

Polavision: A Failed Amateur Technology

Graeme Spurr—School of Culture and Creative Arts,
University of Glasgow, Scotland

Polavision was an unsuccessful instantaneous film camera, viewer and tape system, created for the amateur cinematography market in 1977 by Polaroid Corporation. While many anticipated its release, managerial issues plagued the technology in its pre-manufacture and conception stages. In addition, Polavision suffered a variety of technical issues in post-production. Alongside competition from early video

systems, Polavision was inevitably ‘shelved’ at the beginning of the 80s. Spurr’s presentation argues that the Polavision system marks a significant turning point in the production of amateur filmmaking equipment and that it is a primary, contributing factor in the demise of European cine equipment manufacturer Eumig. The end of this company is, from the perspective of the UK amateur cine movement, a catalyst for feelings of anxiety and resistance that characterizes much of the initial response to early video equipment in the mid 80s. The narrative of Polavision not only determines the closure of a traditional cine manufacturer in the bankruptcy of Eumig, but it also represents the more widespread closure of an “era” within the amateur cinematography and amateur cine-club movement, signaling the end of the ‘cine’ period and the beginnings of a, post-film, ‘video’ age. This presentation includes a selection of promotional advertisements and online footage of Polavision.



3:00 PM Break

3:15 PM

Dissecting Ditty: The Making of Operation Ditty

Taylor Whitney—Preserving the Past, Rochester, NY

Susan Patrick—Archives and Special Collections, Ryerson
University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

The Adventures of the Girls from Ditty is a film about schoolgirl detectives/spies, who are dedicated to maintaining world peace and security. The Girls thwart an international incident and potential revolution when they rescue a princess who has been kidnapped by the forces of evil and destruction, namely the Mysterious Cult of the Black Mushroom. This project combines Super 8 film, video, animation, special effects, photographs, music, and narration (originally recorded on reel-to-reel in stereo) to preserve the lives of one teenage filmmaker, her family, friends and the Montreal neighborhood of Westmount in 1967. While maintaining the director’s original intent and the integrity of the era, color-correction and restoration was performed, and animation, special effects, and titles were added using Final Cut Pro, Motion & Adobe’s After Effects. The final product was output using Compressor and authored on DVD using DVD Studio Pro.



Saturday, July 28

8:15 Coffee and conversation

8:45 Opening Remarks

9:00 AM

Lost in Transmission: Distribution, Access, and Online Collecting of Amateur Media

Dan Mauro—Department of Radio-Television-Film, University of Texas, Austin, TX

While amateur films and videos capture details and moments often unseen in commercial media, very few of these images reach large numbers of viewers. Production is plentiful, yet distribution and consumption pose challenges to any viewing potential they may have. Such potential is often discussed in popular and scholarly discourses as having democratizing qualities, but these qualities are too often assumed to be a part of the recording technology itself. This conception of democratic media neglects the roles of distribution and access in yielding any actual political potential.

This presentation suggests that the accessibility of amateur film and video in digital spaces is key to overcoming constraints and limitations in the realization of their potential in broader cultural historiography. To illustrate and explore the accessibility of amateur film and video, this presentation will include three diverse case studies: an amateur videographer's self-produced collection of new material, digital cabinets of curiosities showcasing old media in digital spaces, and new paradigms in institutional approaches to presenting online collections from select archives.

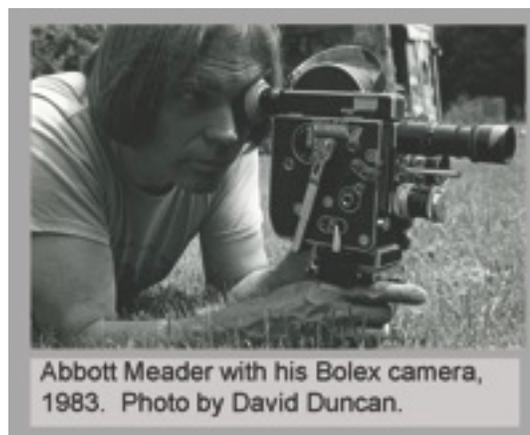


9:45 AM

The Regional Avant-Garde: Yet Another Archival Agenda

Steve J. Wurtzler—Cinema Studies, Colby College, Waterville, ME

This presentation argues that a too often overlooked component of the film archival agenda involves the works made by faculty and students at regional colleges during the 1960s and 1970s. While the circulating catalogues of, for example, Canyon Cinema (itself in grave financial danger) and the Filmmakers Co-op guarantee that the films of now canonical and some self-selected entrepreneurial filmmakers are preserved and still circulate, other filmmakers' works remain dispersed, seldom seen and potentially uncared for. My presentation will introduce, screen and include some remarks about one of the unarchived films of painter and teacher Abbott Meader, Emeritus Professor of Art at Colby College. The vast majority of Meader's works on film exist as single copies on 16mm stored in his home. A series of strikingly beautiful experimental films have thus avoided historical and critical scrutiny. Meader is just one example of a number of filmmakers and their students who worked with cinema during an extremely rich period of artisanal and collaborative film production. The presentation will introduce the audience to Meader's films and hopefully begin a broader discussion about strategies we might use to begin tracking down and rescuing these largely forgotten films.



10:30 AM Break

10:45 AM

Science Non-Fiction: Space Footage Appropriation in Avant-Garde Cinema

Leo Goldsmith—Department of Cinema Studies, New York University, New York City, NY

Documentary footage of human space exploration has historically served a variety of evidentiary functions, providing both observable phenomena for research scientists and visual support for claims of dominance for the competitors in the Space Race of the 20th century. While the novelty of this footage, with its double claim of both scientific and state authority, has occasioned some skepticism from conspiracy theorists, other film and video makers have challenged this footage's authority and function in other ways through various forms of appropriation and reuse. This presentation considers some of the ways in which filmmakers have repurposed footage of space exploration, addressing issues of public domain and public history, and redirecting this footage's intimations of state power and its claims of scientific authority toward more expansive aesthetic and philosophical ends.



11:30 AM

Zoe Beloff: Performing the Archive

Artemis Willis—Department of Cinema and Media Studies, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

In 2008, the Coney Island Museum invited media artist Zoe Beloff to create an exhibition commemorating the centennial of Freud's 1909 visit to Coney Island. Rather than present an illustration of Freud's day by the seashore, Beloff adopted an archival tactic for the Coney Island project. Positioning herself in the role of an archivist, she repurposed a range of artifacts from the museum's collection, which she combined with newly created objects to evoke the impact of Freud's theories on the Coney Island community. Her 2009 exhibition,

"DREAMLAND: The Coney Island Amateur Psychoanalytic Society and Its Circles, 1926-1972" thus weaved a narrative of a purportedly forgotten organization called The Coney Island Amateur Psychoanalytic Society, their "dream films" and their visionary founder, Albert Grass, who devoted his life's work to the unrealized project of rebuilding Dreamland as a Freudian amusement park. In placing the museum's collection, orphan films and original artwork into a new set of relations, Beloff's installation was not only an experimental archival inquiry, but also a dynamic reanimation and reification of known and unknown facts, or latent and manifest content. Given the widespread performative turn in archival art, and its proliferation within the ubiquity of new media practices, this presentation seeks to explore the artist's role in constructing a performative archive. It examines Beloff's key position as alternative archivist, and considers her selection and installation of objects and films, as well as her means of orchestrating their articulations, to be a performative mode of intervention.



12:15 Lunch and Archives Tour

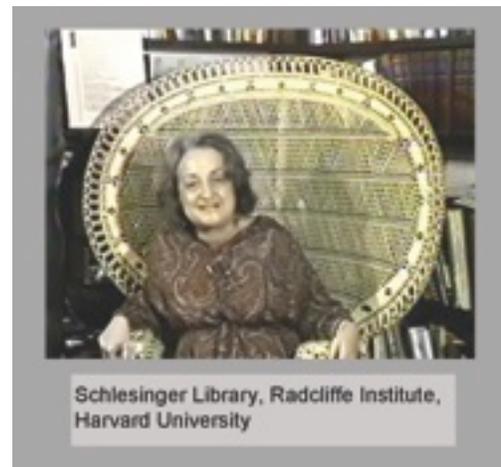
1:30 PM

Betty Friedan at Home

Melissa Dollman—Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

The influential feminist author and activist Betty Friedan (1921-2006) has a well- documented legacy (particularly *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963) and political impact (co-founder and first head of the National Organization for Women, 1966-70). Although she was also a famous media figure, she was not a television personality; thus, the rediscovery of an unaired television pilot and outtakes for a talk show she hosted, *Betty at Home* (ca. 1977), gives a

new perspective on Friedan's evolution as a public intellectual. A never-aired TV pilot, outtakes, and the motley environs of 1970s cable access illustrate the unusual nature of the episode which was recorded in Friedan's New York apartment. Friedan's discussions of the challenges for middle-class American women entering the work force, as well the importance of domesticity and sexual identity reveal the delightful incongruities of one of America's most significant feminists and public intellectuals.



2:15 PM

Revisiting Grace Moore: A Discovery of Home Movies

Crystal Sanchez—Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, New York City, NY

Grace Moore was an internationally renowned touring opera singer who gained worldwide fame after the success of the 1934 film, *One Night of Love*. Her career began in musical theater, working with Irving Berlin, Gershwin, and Jerome Kern. She is remembered as embodying a demanding, rebellious, and temperamental professional demeanor. At the age of 48, Moore died suddenly in a plane crash. Her home movies, shot mostly at her rural home in Connecticut in the early 1940s, showcase her interacting in the domestic sphere. Although their content is mundane and their quality is precarious, they show Moore stripped bare of her star persona, and they serve as a testament of importance to home movies as significant texts in reconstructing a legacy.



3:00 PM Break

3:15 Wrap-up Discussion

6:00 PM Pre Dinner Reception at NHF

7:00 PM Lobster/ Vegetarian Dinner at NHF