Report of Online symposium

Interrogating the Modes of Videographic Criticism

 24-25 February 2022

Website: https://cc.au.dk/poetics-of-videographic-criticism/interrogating-the-modes-of-videographic-criticism

Introduction

The symposium 'Interrogating the Modes of Videographic Criticism' was held online for nearly forty participants (speakers, chairs and respondents) and an audience of about 200 attendees, on 24 and 25 February 2022. Organized by Maria Hofmann (film scholar and video essayist), Kathleen Loock (Leibniz University Hannover), and Alan O'Leary (Aarhus University), the symposium featured emerging as well as established voices in order to build networks and to expand the community of videographic practitioners and researchers.

Day 1 was devoted to interrogating the affordances and knowledge claims of three distinctive modes of videographic practice: Desktop Documentary, Parametric/Deformative/Experimental and Personal Explorations. Day 2 was devoted to five workshops run in parallel (on videographic 'entanglement', sound, animation, accessibility and the 'accented' videoessay) followed by a closing roundtable which presented a range of perspectives on videographic criticism and the symposium debates.

Day 1 Panels

Panel 1: Desktop Documentary

Convened by Maria Hofmann and chaired by Maria Pramaggiore (NUI Maynooth)

The first speaker on the symposium's first panel was Juan Llamas-Rodriguez (University of Texas at Dallas). In his presentation 'Searching for the World on your Desktop', he highlighted the use of desktop documentaries as a teaching tool. He spoke about the connection between global media and desktop documentaries and pointed out that videos and clips have the ability to act like digital postcards sent around the world. Furthermore, he pointed out how personal and individual desktop documentaries can be, considering for example personal folders and documents visible on the videoessayist's desktop. He finished with a discussion of desktop documentaries in terms of 'research as narrative experience', where the viewer is invited to accompany the essayist on the documentary investigation.

In 'Get Ready With Me: Sharing struggles, stories, and screens in the video essay on YouTube', Grace Lee (video essayist at What's So Great About That) considered YouTube as a video sharing platform and as a cultural space in itself. Lee framed her discussion with reference to a trend circulating on the platform: various videos entitled 'Get Ready With Me', where creators sit in front of the camera putting on make-up or otherwise preparing for their day, often speaking about topics unannounced in the clip title. Lee found analogies with her own approach to videoessay making in this form, including the sharing of process and the willingness to digress on arbitrary themes. Lee also showed screen shots and clips from her current work in progress, foregrounding what she described as her own lo-fi 'aesthetic of authenticity'.

In 'Disappearing into the Mise-en-Abîme: Implying but Not Making Arguments in the Video Essay', David Sorfa (University of Edinburgh) spoke from an avowedly film-philosophical perspective to wonder what we are doing when we make videoessays about film. He proposed a comprehensive taxonomy of possible reasons given for *writing* about film (that a film is entertaining, morally edifying, aesthetically or politically significant and so on). But what about desktop documentary? Such work seems, he said, to dwell somewhere beyond interpretation. Philosophy on some accounts is not about *things* but about *how we speak about things*; so, if a film can be philosophy, able in some respects to do what prose philosophy is less equipped to do, than a video-essay about film is speaking about how we speak about things…

Stephanie Brown (Washington College) began her discussion in 'Desktop Documentary and the Practice of Everyday Life' with how she uses popular culture as a shared language, and of how popular culture embeds itself into our everyday lives through our social interactions. She considers the desktop documentary a uniquely productive format in which the computer screen acts as both lens and canvas, making it possible to create content while simultaneously interacting with others – a process of looking while also being looked at. She referred to the interface of TikTok, where users have the possibility of both recording and looking into the camera with a 'duet' feature that makes it possible to put on a 'musical presentation' by people watching and performing at the same time. Brown described the desktop documentary as a response to how everyday life is increasingly digitized and suggested that it surpasses the traditional academic paper in being able to grasp this.

Kevin B. Lee (Università della Svizzera Italiana) acted as respondent to the panel. He was appreciative of the 'guerilla aesthetics' he noted in the work of Grace Lee and Stephanie Brown, but pointed out that while the desktop documentary allowed accessibility, this accessibility was still a question of *images*, and therefore positioned us as (mere) spectators. Reality, in such an address, remained at issue. In playful fashion, Lee finished with an invitation to join in 'Desktop Documentary Bingo', sharing a table of keywords he had transcribed from the four presentations, reproduced below.

DESKTOP KEYWORD BINGO

(If you can create a sentence connecting four boxes across, you are the Top of Desktop!)

Juan	Grace	David	Stephanie
Desktop as space for engaging other spaces	Desktop for expressing personality	Implicative arguments	Desktop as everyday life
Desktop as pedagogical practice	Intimacy / Parasociality	Processuality / desktop cognition / sense-making	Method of critical study of pop culture in life
Embracing contestable positions as a strategy towards undoing	Processuality / behind the scenes	Academic research as Desktop labor	Interactionist approach
Cognitive mapping vs. Geography	Internet rhetorics (meme)	Hypothesis in academic film arguments	Multiscreen multimodal multitasking
Image becomes space, spaces become images	Internet aesthetics (lofi)	Going beyond explicit interpretation and argument	Desktop performativity
Navigating and contesting borders	Authenticity vs artifice (seamlessness)	Desktop as a more implied way of speaking	TikTok as Desktop Documentary
Videographic Postcards	Simultaneity "as it happens"	(Desktop) film can do philosophy in a way writing cannot	Possibility for critical positionally / resistance

Panel 2: Parametric/Deformative/Experimental

Convened by Alan O'Leary and chaired by Susan Harewood (University of Washington)

In his video presentation, 'The Collaborative Potential of Algorithmic Procedures (and the Algorithmic Potential of Collaboration)', Ariel Avissar (Tel Aviv University) distinguished between algorithms, understood as sets of parameters, that were 'prescriptive' and 'descriptive'. By prescriptive algorithms, he had in mind exercises like those influentially set at the Scholarship in Sound and Image workshops at

Middlebury College, and widely adopted elsewhere. By descriptive algorithms, he meant sets of parameters retroactively extracted from existing videos, adapted and used to generate a further piece (which may be a response to the first). For Avissar, both prescriptive and descriptive algorithms had the potential to generate community and collaboration amongst peers and in the classroom.

Kevin Ferguson (CUNY) showed a videoessay in progress entitled 'Tennis for Yes, House for No: Medical Imaging as Videographic Criticism?'. The video was intentionally disorientating for the first half before its underlying principle was revealed, cryptically (initially) but powerfully demonstrating the potential for medical imaging software to contribute to audiovisual analysis. Found footage from a range of sources, from feature films to publicity interviews with scientists, was organized in Ferguson's video by a series of suggestive questions posed in intertitles: Is medical imaging videographic criticism? What exemplifies the videographic? What is criticism in the context of viewers' bodies? What does it mean to think by proxy? Ferguson's powerful video was as challenging as it was rhetorically sophisticated.

In 'Poetic parameters: Leading with form and the limits of parametric scholarship', Jenny Oyallon Koloski (University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign) spoke about the musical grids she has created, and reflected on how to view or categorize her works – as scholarship and/or as aesthetic objects. Her presentation was a meditation on her own motivations and methods directed to other filmmakers working with videographic criticism, especially those working in similarly algorithmic ways. It offered a behind-the-scenes of the rationale and process of creating her musical grids, and her thoughts on the impact of the work, both academically and personally.

Matthew Payne's (University of Notre Dame) presentation consisted of a five-minute introduction followed by a playful videoessay 'Break it, 'til you make it', that celebrated the skill and charisma of the actor Madelaine Kahn. Payne noted that the work was a response to criticism he had received from a fellow member in a videographic research network, who asked him of some previous work on gender and genre, 'Where are the women?'. As such, the presentation dealt with how parametric procedures can foreground questions of gender (and by implication other political themes) even as they are constructed with ludic procedures. (Not incidentally, the clips of Madelaine Kahn came from a film, *Clue* (Lynn, 1985), based on a board game.)

In 'Cryptic mediators, un/spoken prohibitions', Maryam Tafakory (artist filmmaker) discussed the injunction in post-revolutionary Iranian cinema against (among other things) touch between men and women. Tafakory showed extracts from her videoessay work constructed from clips from Iranian films where inanimate items like handbags were used as an intermediary for touch between the male and female characters. This video work grasped with the problem of how to present cultural and bodily viewing practices concerned not with plots or endings but with small and mundane scenes. Tafakory argued that a poetic and collage mode of video could best access the sense of competent but anxious spectatorship invited by Iranian films made and constrained according to evolving regimes of taboo and prohibition.

Jason Mittell (Middlebury College) organized his response to the panel presentations around questions of absurdity and the audience. Much parametric work, he pointed out, generates an affect of absurdity, or points to absurdity in the source material. The sense of bafflement often generated by the parametric work provokes questioning in the viewer: What is going on? How has this been assembled? By what rules? And what can I do with it? This last question itself raises the question of audience: who is the parametric work *for*? The maker themselves? Other makers? Yet the suggestion that deformative and parametric work may be esoteric is contradicted by the presence of parametric procedures in meme culture, and Mittell gave the example of one of his own well-known series of deformations of *Singin' in the Rain*, which has been watched nearly 20,000 times on YouTube.

Panel 3: Personal Explorations

Convened by Kathleen Loock and chaired by Elizabeth Alsop (CUNY)

In 'Cinematic Hauntings and Videographic Explorations', Evelyn Kreutzer (Konrad Wolf Film Universität Babelsberg) described how she uses videoessays to explore traumatic memories but noted that it can be difficult to achieve academic legitimacy when working with the personal, as one risks losing the argumentative complexity that written academic work possesses. However, she noted that the personal infiltrates all videographic and scholarly work. Good scholarly work is intrinsically personal, as it often takes a vantage point in something rooted in oneself. She concluded citing Catherine Grant's argument that videographic criticism is fundamentally scholarly if it is made by scholars.

Cormac Donnelly (University of Glasgow), in 'Personal Exploration: Thoughts from a safe place?', explored the strengths and weaknesses of working from a personal and vulnerable perspective. He emphasized this mode's ability to let the viewer form their own personal reflections. This makes the form both alluring and rewarding for maker and viewer, although it can be time-consuming and painful for makers as they are dealing with an imperfect personal archive of memories. Personal explorations, he suggested, run the risk of becoming too personal for a wider audience; but he argued that the maker should let the work find its own voice and, in so doing, it will eventually find its audience.

To discuss what is at play in the current debate on personal explorations, Hoang Tan Nguyen (UC San Diego), in his presentation 'Seeing You, Feeling Me', drew from feminist debates of the 1980s and 1990s within academia. He highlighted the struggle around the gendered private/public dichotomy, noting that scholarly work is often required to come from a 'public' place. He noted that the personal, or the 'I', can be an important element of an argument, especially inasmuch as it gives a voice to minoritized makers and communities. However, he pointed out that it is important that minorities should not be limited to or forced only into talking about minority stories.

In 'Scrubbing through the Timeline: Editing What I Feel to Myself', Katie Bird (University of Texas El Paso), like Hoang Tan Nguyen, shared her experience of how the personal is perceived as feminine and non-scholarly, but went on argue against such a perception. She highlighted that personal reflection when producing a videographic work is an important theoretical process. The end result, she concluded, is made meaningful through the process, and sometimes you may learn more from what is *not* shared in the end.

Kathleen Loock (Leibniz University Hannover), in 'Time Machines: Video Essays at the Intersection of Individual and Cultural Memory', questioned the ideal of intellectual detachment that defines film scholarship and the field of memory studies. Drawing on Annette Kuhn's notion of memory work, she presented her work-in-progress on the haunting power of the horror film *IT* (1990) that she watched as a child. Her videographic memory work connected personal recollections (triggered by a recent remake of the film) with the generational experience of German reunification (the so-called *Wendekinder*), thus establishing a link between the personal, historical, and social, and between individual and cultural memory.

In his response to the panel, Chris Keathley (Middlebury College), began with a comment by Stanley Cavell, who in a published interview talked of moments in films that strike the viewer and draw one in as the 'memory that keeps returning'. For Keathley, this personal experience is the starting point from which to begin scholarly work. Such a departure point may often be repressed in written criticism but seems to be invited by videographic criticism. Paraphrasing Thomas Elsaesser, Keathley talked of movies as events that have happened to us, and that continue to happen to us when we work with them on the

editing timeline. He finished by saying that he appreciated most those videoessays built playfully and associatively using the personal archive as well as the object of analysis.

Day 2

Parallel Workshops

Each of these workshops, run simultaneously, was led by two or more scholars or practitioners of videographic criticism or other forms of filmmaking research, who collaborated to define a topic for investigation and to draft a set of questions that spoke to their own interests and to the concerns of the videographic community as a whole.

Workshop 1: 'Techniques of Videographic Entanglement'

Johannes Binotto (Lucerne School of Art and Design/University of Zurich) and Ben Spatz (University of Huddersfield) launched their workshop with motivating words about video media and its uses in academic settings. Binotto said that we, as academics, are used to long and perfectionist processes when writing or making videos for academic purposes. But he believes that roughness and error are beneficial for the process, and should be cultivated as they enable entanglement with the subject. Spatz talked about videos seen not just as a form of documentation in performance settings (his own area of expertise), or as a means to relate information to its viewer, but as its own part in creative investigation and research as a way to explore new subjects. The bulk of the workshop was then devoted to a practical exercise for all participants, split into three steps:

1. *Take a screenshot of some sort of media on your computer and upload it to an online folder provided.*

This screenshot could be of anything you did not mind others editing and using for the workshop exercise.

2. *Choose one of the screenshots (not your own) and make a short film clip of about 10-15 sec. in which you in some way physically interact with the chosen image.*

Participants moved on to the third exercise after a brief review of the resulting clips.

3. *Choose one of the resulting clips and edit it into something new.*

The resulting films were remarkably varied in form and tone, but the workshop was a hands-on and intense experience for all participants, with material created and reworked in the moment, without time for forethought.

The convenors finished the workshop with a discussion about the experience and implications of the entangled process that participants had just engaged in.

Workshop 2: 'Sound and Music in Videographic Criticism'

The workshop 'Sound and Music in Videographic Criticism', convened by Mathias Bonde Korsgaard (Aarhus University) and Jaap Kooijman (University of Amsterdam), addressed the issues and challenges of working with sound and music in audiovisual essays. In advance, participants were asked to view audiovisual essays by Liz Greene, Andreas Halskov, Jaap Kooijman, and Cormac Donnelly, each taking a different approach to the use of sound. The workshop revolved around two questions: 1) Why can it be

challenging to work with sound and music in videographic criticism? 2) How do we best overcome the challenge and realize the potential of such work?

One of the convenors' crucial points was that audiovisual essays tend to focus on the visual part, while the sound aspect is often considered secondary. The interaction of audio and visuals is a phenomenon that should be part of a general discussion and should not be turned into a subfield. Bonde Korsgaard showed an audiovisual essay in progress, 'Music / Video / Space', in which he is trying to integrate music and sound into the argument of the audiovisual essay. He made the point that we should be speaking of 'audiovisual essays' rather than 'video essays' because the latter could suggest that the visual part is more important than the audio. The convenors emphasized instead a trial-and-error approach not necessarily based on knowledge of music. After all, much creative decision-making is based on what 'feels right' in the interaction between picture and the sound. Therefore, scholars were encouraged to experiment with music in their work.

Participants mentioned how the characteristics of audio and visual elements demand different work methods and how copyright issues can complicate work with music. They discussed the differences between the temporalities of audio and video, and the diverse ways in which sound can be layered. It was observed that many tend to choose 'safe' and common sounds; the general consensus was to encourage experiment with more unusual soundscapes.

Concluding the discussion, participants were encouraged to 'turn up the volume' about sound and music in videographic criticism and to foreground sound further. Instead of applying music to a video essay to serve as a calming 'sound wallpaper', participants were enjoined to use music at the center of their arguments. It was agreed that a further special journal issue on sound in videographic criticism (to follow up previous publications in the *The Cine Files* and *NECSUS*) would be desirable – a gathering that focuses on the question: What happens when sound comes first?

Workshop 3: 'Animation and/as Videographic Criticism'

The workshop 'Animation and/as Videographic Criticism', led by Andrea Comiskey (University of Pittsburgh) and Maike Sarah Reinerth (Konrad Wolf Film Universität Babelsberg), dealt with several perspectives on the subject, though a core question concerned the extent to which animation elements of videographic criticism influence research practice by their very nature.

Diverse perspectives and input from academic and practical fields including film, games, and photography came together in the workshop discussion. Participants considered which affordances and techniques, modes of use, potentials, and specifics of the animation aspect in videographic criticism exist, as well as which technical and logistical challenges it presents. Furthermore, they investigated which types of animation exist outside of videographic criticism, but still *within* academic practice (for example, documentary and essay films). Last but not least, the discussion focused on the differences of videographic approach between videographic criticism and films or computer games.

Another theme in the discussion was the question of the degree to which animation in videographic criticism can be seen as artistic or practice-based. In what ways does it intervene with the objects it examines? Where are the boundaries of the two areas and where do they merge?

A further focus was on teaching methods and techniques within scholarship. Here, the main consideration was how lecturers can best teach editing to their students. This also implied the question of how this can be practically implemented at universities, since institutions are often able to provide only limited accesses to proprietary software. Furthermore, participants looked at how student

videographic-animated work could be assessed and how students could be taught to reflect on their own work. Finally, relevant resources, software (for screen record etc.), websites, and journals (eg., *animationstudies 2.0*) were introduced and evaluated.

Workshop 4: 'Accessibility & the Audiovisual Essay: The Good, The Bad, and The Upturn'

To start off the workshop, the convenors Will DiGravio (video essayist, critic, podcaster) and Cydnii Wilde Harris (film scholar, writer, video essayist) posed the question of how to make the field of videographic criticism more accessible. Ideas proposed to make the field more inclusive for a larger audience included the employment of captions, voiceovers, transcripts, and other tools. Yet this also raised the issue of how these tools should be used, in what forms, and on what platforms—and the strengths and weaknesses of YouTube, TikTok, and Vimeo were discussed. While participants acknowledged the international reach of these platforms, it was also noted that they of course require internet access (and, in some contexts, an absence of censorship), something that is not universal.

It was pointed out the use of online platforms implies dealing with issues like the power of algorithms and the role of digital longevity. Sometimes digital media is suddenly deleted or blocked; for example, admired work has disappeared on Vimeo due to copyright notices related to the use of music. in addition, as one participant pointed out, 'the algorithm only recommends well-known creators, so unless people know your name and search for it, your product will not be found'.

Another point of discussion was the question of the individual's point of entry in the field as several video essayists may come from non-academic backgrounds or may be self-taught. This question led to further discussion about which standards of quality and evaluation should be used, and set by whom, and about prejudices concerning the topic field from different types of audiences.

Some participants agreed that visual narratives create more emotional incentive for people to participate, compared to the textual counterpart. Others argued that the visual narrative can be perceived as a more inclusive way for participants to interact with one another. However, genuine inclusivity takes place in the real world in accordance with the 'credibility' of the contributors. Therefore, the issue of discrimination between non-academics and academics might not be a product of a particular platform, but rather of the users themselves.

Workshop 5: 'The Accented Video Essay'

When hearing a voiceover, you will typically encounter a male voice speaking English flawlessly. Over time, the English language has become the language of the academic world, and it seems that all academic studies should be carried out within it. In their workshop, 'The Accented Videoessay', the three workshop convenors, Barbara Zecchi (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Anupama Prabhala (Loyola Marymount University), and Danielle Hipkins (University of Exeter), questioned the desirability of this Anglo-centric approach, and asked what role other languages and accents should play in the academic field of video essays.

Speaking in a native tongue that is not English or speaking with a non-native accent can be seen as indicating less academic authority. Flawless English has somehow become the epitome of authority and competence in academics, and all three facilitators express having had insecurities about using their own voices for voiceovers. Zecchi described how she used to ask others to do her voiceovers because of her Italian accent; once one of her students did a voiceover in her own voice, Zecchi saw the value in using one's own voice and accent, and recognized what it can bring to a video essay. As Prabhala pointed out,

the accented voice is something that should be celebrated rather than avoided since it adds layers and depth to a video essay.

The convenors encouraged participants to resist the need to make everything as accessible as possible. According to the facilitators, there is a difference between making the content of your video essay legible and making it too easy. Making your content legible does not necessarily mean using an English voiceover or even subtitles. Rather, it should be considered routine in academia to create content in a non-English language, and to demand more of the viewer in relation to acccessing the content.

The central position of English in academia might hinder this development. Several participants pointed out that they would like more views of their video essays, and that an English voiceover would more likely provide them with these views than speaking in Italian, German, or Chinese. However, the convenors insisted on a resistance to privileging the monolingual English-speaking viewer, and to empower the accented voice, thereby adding a sense of vulnerability and intimacy to the video essay that increases its value. Speaking in a language other than English or speaking with a distinctive accent is not to be seen as non-academic but is instead an asset to be used more confidently in videographic criticism.

Roundtable

Participants in the closing roundtable were asked to offer their assessments of the discussion at the event as a whole and to address any themes they considered important for future debates and for the development of the practices of videographic criticism and research filmmaking.

Alison de Fren (Occidental College) discussed the meaning of the essay form and issued a call for greater access to the form. In the writings of Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), the term 'essay' implied an experiment on form. For de Fren, the essay is a meeting point of the abstract and concrete, and the video essay communicates with images and sounds as well as words in order to shape affective experience for its viewer. Drawing on Philip Lopate, de Fren suggested that an essay can best be understood as a continual asking of questions, and its purpose is not necessarily to find solutions, but to enact the struggle for truth in a larger perspective.

Ian Garwood (University of Glasgow) agreed with the imperative to open to the community by broadening the formats and formulas of, and access to, videographic criticism. He reprised the theme of sound discussed in one of the day's workshops, suggesting that the use of sound may be more difficult than the use of images and that we should continue to pay special attention to it in our work and discussions. He also took up the issue of academic legitimacy that had been a motif in the discussions, suggesting that whereas experimental scientific method defines its value in terms of 'reproducibility', 'remixability', instead, might be a better aspiration for videographic work. According to Garwood, the question we should ask ourselves as makers is: Does our work have reuse value for other makers?

Catherine Grant (filmmaker and Honorary Research Fellow, Birkbeck University) also focused on the importance of community. She pointed out that symposiums like the present one create community by informing and bringing practitioners together. She noted that videographic criticism had, to some extent, become institutionalized. There are both negative and positive sides to this process of institutionalization, she said, but the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Chiara Grizzaffi (IULM University) picked up themes of authenticity, vulnerability and accessibility in videographic practice. Although based on the (apparent) limpidity of the desktop as a window on the maker's own private life, the desktop documentary mode challenges, through its self-reflexive form, the idea of transparency by drawing attention to the computer as a medium. Videographic criticism from the

desktop screen can then be a destabilizing practice, one that questions the very notion of authenticity, 'of a supposedly "real", "unmediated" self', and in that way makes the essayist vulnerable. For Grizzaffi, videographic criticism should be a field where makers are allowed to be vulnerable, and it should be accessible not only for established video scholars.

Maria Hofmann (film scholar and video essayist and co-organizer) drew on a 1997 essay by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is About You', to discuss videographic criticism as reparative or alternative reading. The fear, she argued, of seeming insufficiently scholarly or rigorous in one's videographic practice may have its origin of equating academic rigor with defensive or suspicious, that is, paranoid reading, possibly precluding positive, alternative readings. The problem may not be the process, but the vocabulary scholars use as videographic essayists. Instead of adapting paranoid reading strategies into audiovisual form, videographic criticism offers an opportunity to explore the 'additive and accretive' desire of reparative readings.

Alan O'Leary (Aarhus and co-organizer) circled back to David Sorfa's question in panel 1 about what we think we are doing in our practice of videographic criticism. He shared a poll, reproduced below, which listed practices mentioned during the symposium as points of reference for videographic criticism. He went on to suggest that the activity of videographic criticism is a form of 'philosophizing', meaning that the video essayist is engaged in a 'pre-scientific' activity of discerning the key issues that the practice should pose. For O'Leary, videographic criticism has the potential to discern new sets of concerns in 'the nebula of audiovisual phenomena'. However, he hoped that we would not discern them too soon but would focus in the meantime on play and method.

For me, points of reference for videographic criticism should include: *

☐ Psychoanalysis

☐ Environmental imperatives (and/or environmental humanities)

☐ Experimental video

☐ Critical and speculative design

☐ Themes and questions in mainstream screen studies

☐ The 'traditional' standards and protocols of prose scholarship

☐ Practice(-led) research and artistic research

☐ Modernist literature and art (eg., Pataphysics, Surrealism, Oulipo)

☐ Anthropology and ethnographic film

☐ Movements for social justice

☐ Documentary

☐ Cinephilia and 'retrospectatorship'

☐ Other:

Concluding reflections

Too many themes were discussed during the symposium to summarise here in closing, but questions of community and accessibility stand out. In this light, it was striking that, despite being run online, the symposium seemed to generate a sense of community that transcended academic rank or renown. The question of accessibility had two aspects: firstly, access *to* the making of videographic criticism, and so to the associated hardware and software and to venues and platforms for publication; secondly, the accessibility *of* videographic work, meaning its ease of legibility even for the uninitiated. While the former

seems a straightforwardly admirable (if not easily attainable) goal, several presentations challenged (implicitly or explicitly) the necessity or desirability of the latter.

It was notable that discussion centred less on the scholarly value of videographic criticism as such — something that has been the focus of important recent publications — and more on the ongoing need to persuade of its legitimacy in institutional contexts. Much of the videographic work presented or discussed evidenced a wish to experiment and play, consistent with a form perceived to be still new, and evinced also an imperative to integrate the personal with the analytical. The character of this 'personal' tended to oscillate in the discussion between the poles of authenticity and performativity, but speakers seemed united in emphasizing the videographic maker's sense of exposure and vulnerability. Most practitioners still approach videographic criticism as novices, lacking the higher-level training and long practice that characterizes their prose scholarship, but speakers and participants agreed that a sense of vulnerability can be deployed to the benefit of videographic work and discussions about it.

It is fair to say that the large attendance at the symposium and the air of enthusiasm surrounding the discussions indicated a vibrant and growing area of practice, and an excitement to produce, view and debate videographic criticism.

Credits

This report was prepared by students on the Audiovisual Media Production course taught by Alan O'Leary at Aarhus University. It was edited by Alan O'Leary, Alissa Lienhard (Leibniz University Hannover) and Lida Shams-Mostofi (Leibniz University Hannover), with input from Maria Hofmann and Kathleen Loock.

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