

About the Conference Teaching Cinematography 2019

Description of the Conference:

The overall topic is the interaction of research and **teaching cinematography**. We do not see that as two separate entities but as interacting methods to look into the storytelling capacities of moving images. Essentially, it intends to reveal the relevance of the study of cinematography to the field of film studies. We make a bridge between academic research and the practice of teaching cinematography. This also includes the understanding and researching of the experiential knowledge of cinematographers. Cinematography research has significance beyond the academic field and is committed to generate knowledge that matters. In our mediated social world, the hunger about how to create emotion-evoking images, and how they are perceived, is becoming more and more relevant. Although movies do not offer a realistic window on the world, they do shape our experiences and offer us tools for defining our societies (Verstraten, 2013, p. 50). To better understand cinematography is a worthwhile goal, "a medium like film is a tool that modern society uses to organize itself, and that to function efficiently and productively, people should know how to accurately interpret media" (Young, 2012, p. 179).

The first aim is to add to the scholarly field of film studies, to put a focus on the methodology for researching cinematography by connecting educators and academic researchers in that relatively new field of study: cinematography. Beginning with the first investigations of cinema in the early twentieth century, the intellectual milieus in which knowledge of cinema has been generated stood far away from the production film set (Grievesson & Wasson, 2008, p. xvii). Cinematography has hardly been researched. We want to lay out and talk about an alternative area of investigation in the field of film studies: the contribution of cinematography to narrative film.

A key objective is to present papers and research from academic researchers, to build a bridge between film practice and film studies. The argument for tapping into the knowledge of cinematographers lies in the simple fact that since the existence of cinema, cinematographers, or cameramen as they were first known, were always there. "Cinematographers have been there since the inception of the motion picture. Without them, there could be no film" (Sterling, 1987, p. vii). Moreover, the study of cinematography needs to become an established part of film studies; it needs its own space, so that critical focus can be put on the cinematographic expression. That will then invite investigations into the different aspects of cinematography, especially its role in narrative film. The challenges and the limitations when researching cinematography are numerous, not only does the technology evolves super fast, the art and craft of cinematography is little understood in the academic world. However, in this fast-paced age, the hunger of how to create emotions evoking images and how it is perceived is big.

A second key dimension of the conference is to discuss the current trends in cinematography and how this should be applied to future teaching in film school and other educational facilities. It does not limit itself to technique but includes the "development of the eye", film history, the study of art history and traditional teaching of established techniques alongside the teaching of digital workflow and other more recent developments in the digital domain. The round tables we will organise will generate conversations with the international cinematographers' societies with the teachers of cinematography on related topics. The round tables will be led by selected experts in the field.

Methodology

The focus is on academic research and teaching (in an academic setting, a.k.a. schools) and the connection between the methodologies of researching cinematography and teaching

cinematography. We have identified four main angles namely:

1. The role of disruptive new technologies
2. Sharing pedagogical experiences
3. Relation between practice and academic research of cinematography
4. Cinematography as an art form

The overall topic; the discourse of the visual, is linked to the three stages of film modes: production, projection and film participation.

We will pay attention to the overall framework and the contributions to the field of film studies that the conference will bring. It looks into new knowledge acquisition and its methodologies. These approaches are historically not embedded in film studies but currently many cinematographers are turning into scholars. For example while during the round table we can discuss how to teach digital colour grading, we can during the seminar session learn about academic research on the perception of colour.

1. TEACHING CINEMATOGRAPHY – ROUND TABLES

Each participant will be able to attend two of the below round tables where a key question will be asked at the start of each session.

1. In practical terms, what exactly should a student of cinematography be able to do once he/she finishes school?
2. What new educational methods have you already put into practice in regards to the specific theme of your workshop? This can obviously include hardware, software as well as the theoretical aspects taught in class.

Following this preliminary exchange of views, the participants of each workshop will then explore some more specific topics.

• Round Table & paper presentations Topics

1. The role of disruptive new technologies

This includes topics such as different displays, recording formats and projections technologies and its impact on narration and complications of teaching these subjects in a film-school environment.

2. Sharing pedagogical experiences

An emphasis will be put upon the tools and methods to exchange teaching and practice experience and the documentation of it for educational goals. Which methods are effective to teach the foundation of lighting, framing, camera-placement, virtual cinematography, 360 degrees etc.. and what tools, books, exercise do exist?

3. Relation between practice and academic research of cinematography

We want to bridge and connect academic researchers in the field of visual studies and cinematographers that research and teach in film schools.

The exchange of articles, books and experiments is interesting for researchers in related fields such as optics, art-history, electronics, digital data etc.. and vice versa.

4. Cinematography as an expressive form of visual narration

The debate on the role of cinematography and its impact on the visual narration can range from the perspective of film history, style, aesthetics, film language, color and perception. Putting a focus on Cinematography in the field of film studies for academic research is a promising area to explore.

2. RESEARCHING CINEMATOGRAPHY

• Paper presentations:

A call for papers will be launched and selected researchers will be invited to present their research on Cinematography during the conference.

DISCUSSION CONVERSATION

- **Conclusions:**

- Podium discussion on artistic research
- The heads of the round table give a summary of conclusions and findings

Conference Partners:

IMAGO the European federation of Cinematographers

IMAGO has been reaching out the last decade to partners in society and education. In 2014 an education committee was formed and the members have since organised debates, conferences and other educational activities. This conference will also be co-organised by its members. Besides the creation of the images, cinematographers feel responsibility towards connecting the makers and the audience, the professors and the students, the cinematographers and the directors on an international scale. The power of an image is not to be understated and can show us the wonders- the truth if you want- about humanity and the world but can also manipulate, deceive and spread hate. The last couple of years a big effort has been done to organize conferences on the question 'how to teach'. The members are aware of their responsibility in this debate and will participate in this conference, sharing teaching methods and academic research methodologies. Tony Costa is the chair of the education committee of IMAGO and teaches at Lusofona University, which is a partner in the organisation of this conference.

SBC the Belgian Society of Cinematographers

The two co-chairs from this conference, van den Hove and Dr. Van Kets are members of the education committee of IMAGO and are co-chairs of the education committee of SBC. Ella teaches at INSAS and Marijke teaches at RITCS. Marijke is also engaged by the RITCS as a researcher and intends to establish a research group with a focus on cinematography in the field of film studies.

Target group:

We will have four groups namely participants, experts, presenters and observers. Clearly one can also be a participant and a presenter, the divide between the groups might not always be crystal clear.

But roughly we can state the following:

- The participants, our prime target group, are mainly film faculty teaching and/or researching cinematography and related topics in film schools (GEECT).
- The second group of presenters will include academics who might not be cinematographers but who are conducting research into related fields such as the perception of visual media, the narration of moving images and so on.
- The third group consists of experts who will be heading the round tables for moderations and are experts in the specialisation discussed, for example on the topic of: VFX a specialisation? an expert in Visual effects cinematography and post-production (who can also be teaching this subject) will lead that round table.
- The fourth group of observers will be cinematographers (not teaching staff), other film faculty, head of departments, technical staff and film students attend the sessions and presentations but are not expected to participate in the discussions.

Attending the 3rd 'Cinematography in progress' conference



by Leslie Charreau

Photo credits: Annika Wallis

I must admit when I was asked if I could write an article about the **Third International Conference on teaching and researching Cinematography**, I wasn't thrilled. I thought it was going to be a bit boring hearing teachers talk about how they can improve their educational tools to form better cinematographers or how they can acquire the methods for researching cinematography. I couldn't be more wrong. Not only did these two subjects turned out to be fascinating but moreover they were presented by passionate people. Furthermore, this conference opened my mind to a number of ideas for consideration. On top of that it was really nice to be among peers from all over the world and to hear and participate in their discussions regarding the same concerns, but in very diverse angles depending on the country and the type of school they come from. What more can I say? At the end of the three days, I was hooked...



In my opinion, the success of the conference was not only due to the relevance of the subjects, but also to the ways these matters have been debated. On the first morning, five papers were presented in a rather academic-style in front of the ninety participants (reading, PowerPoint, excerpt and then Q&R), but in the afternoon participants had to choose between four different poster sharing sessions repeated two times. Divided in smaller group, they could hear and then interact with two, sometimes three researchers on each theme. On the second day, the participating cinematographers had even more opportunities to

express themselves as they could choose between six roundtables topics repeated in three different sessions. Each roundtable of one hour had one head and several experts to lead and supply peer-exchanges on the matter at hand. After a ludic walk through Brussels, on the afternoon, five other

papers were presented in front of the whole audience. Then on the third day, after a last paper presentation, the conclusions of each roundtable were submitted to all the participants by the head researchers. This enabled the cinematographers to be alternately listeners and lecturers, to share their experience, to debate, but under the constant time management of the organisers, giving substance to these topics.

This was the **PROGRAM**.

“What topics could last three-day-long regarding the teaching and researching of cinematography?” one could ask. Well, it's really hard to report on the diversity of the reflections raised, you just had to be there. First, just let me say I won't talk about the topics raised in the six roundtables, because a report on the emerging cinematography practices, the use of celluloid as a method to teach cinematography, the methodology to research cinematography, the new pedagogical tools at hand, how to use the prior digital skills of students and the teaching of the cinematographer's responsibilities is available [HERE](#). But I will try to present what really interested me in the rest. In advance, I must apologise to the participants because obviously I won't be able to synthesise all of what was said. I'm only human, I don't have the gift of Ubiquity...

The first topic presented in the seminar that really puzzled me was raised by Tony Costa aip, chair of the IMAGO Education Committee, and came back a few times in the poster' or



Tony Costa opened the conference with his proposed research called «One film, three visions»

roundtable's discussions: Can the cinematographer be considered as an author? The author of the image, obviously, but as such also co-author of the film like the scriptwriter or the composer. In fact, it is really hard to isolate the work of the cinematographer, even if we know he is in charge of the framing, the movement, the lighting, the ratio, the choice of camera and lenses etc. How can we distinguish his work from the director's decisions and choices? To answer that question Tony Costa proposed a research called «One film, three visions». He projected the same film shot three times with the same director, the same script, the same intentions, the same actors, the same crew, the same editor, the same music etc, but with a different cinematographer each time. At the end of the projection he asked the audience: Does cinematography change the perception of the viewer? And the results were quite interesting, because in fact they were three very different films producing very diverse emotions and telling different stories to each viewer depending on their tastes and their personal histories... At the end, some of the audience thought cinematographers should be considered as authors whereas others thought they can only be considered as artistic technicians like makeup artists or set designers. The debate will surely continue.



Cathy Greenhalgh's presented her paper called Skin tone and faces

Later on, the diversity in cinematography was brought to our attention by Cathy Greenhalgh's paper called Skin tone and faces: cinematography pedagogy which foregrounds inclusivity and diversity in teaching lighting. The matter was also discussed in at least two poster sessions with Diarra Sourang's research on Filming black complexions: why bother? A research on new filming techniques and Yao Joseph Homadji Ladzekpo's presentation called "An introspection of an African cinematography educator in the 21st century." How to teach diverse cinematographic techniques regarding the skin-tones, but also the gender, the sexual orientation or age of the subjects? And how to include the students and teacher's culture in the pedagogy?

In an audience originating from over thirty countries, in which male teaching cinematographers from Europe and North America are outnumbered, these questions seemed quite relevant. The Western patriarchal and traditional way of lighting and framing is still dominant in the didactic rulebook of most of the schools worldwide. For instance, materials have been optimised for light skin tones (colour balancing charts, zebra etc). Another illustration: the soft lights applied to women is a heritage from centuries of male domination passed from painting masters to cinematographers. Besides, the vocabulary we use is quite relevant: for example, there is no such things as black skins, all humans have the same pigments, the main difference between skin-tones is density and in it there is a lot of colours. That is why it is necessary to include not only more culture in the education system but also belief, spirituality, environment, politics, philosophy and psychology in order to make cinematography richer. So, students can learn not only that when light skin-tone faces will be shaped by shadows, dark ones will be better shaped by reflexions, but also why that matters. How do we want to represent the diversity of our society?



Kommer Kleijn talking about the advantages of the use of high frame rate

On a seemingly more technical issue, Kommer Kleijn's paper and Aaron Kuder and Stefan Grandinetti's poster session on HFR (High Frame Rate) really got my attention. The way HFR can truly improve the quality of the image by increasing substantially its sharpness and eliminating strobos was vision-based proven in Aaron and Stefan classrooms by comparing 24 fps' images to 96 fps' ones. But more importantly as Kommer Kleijn's



Aspect of one of the poster sessions. This one Stefan Grandinetti's poster session on HFR (High Frame Rate)

presentation demonstrated the technical improvement matters not unlike the possibilities that lies beneath: a new way of telling stories. In fact, if teachers would propose HFR exercises and practices to film students they might create new forms of cinematic language and maybe working directors, cinematographers and producers could stop argue against it and realise the huge prospects it offers. Because in Kommer, Aaron or Stefan's opinion, HFR is the new technical revolution ahead.



Marijke Van Kets SBC from RITCS key organizer of the conference and always diligent with the time.

Another point that kept coming back in a lot of papers, poster sessions and roundtables was the insecurity of the cinematography students. In a quite violent and competitive society it's only logical that students are competitive between themselves. And even more if you consider that at the end, when they get out of school, many are called, few chosen. But even if the context explains it, should not the schools and moreover artistic schools, allow young people to express themselves and find their own path? How can teachers, who are only human after-all, find the time to encourage them personally, to allow failure, to dissolve or try to avoid the violent competition among them in an already full and fragmented schedule?



Ella van den Hove SBC from INSAS one of the key organizers of the event

At the very end of the conference, in the final discussions between participants a new theme was mentioned: should cinematography teachers include sustainability in their courses? As Katrin Richthofer and Peter Slansky pointed out there's quite a few solutions to make cinema more ecological. Not only does it have a role to play in the public advocacy and the community mobilisation, but there are concrete actions necessary, productions can take from pre-production, shooting to post-production to truly reduce its impact. More specifically the cinematographer has the power to reduce the energy consumption by his choices of camera, hard drive, type of lighting (LED), energy supplier, generator, post-production studio etc...

Of course, some things about the conference could be improved; For instance, the absence of cinematography students was a real pity,



There were several Round Table discussions

even though understandable - when I was a student, I had no idea what problems my teachers faced. In the end, I think the conference was a big hit, because it highlights pioneer subjects, not in regards of the educational aspect of it but also pointing out the research subjects and avenue's. Indeed, it is really important for cinematographers to evolve and digest all the fascinating topics presented above and all the others we didn't talk about, to create a platform where they can share their research and knowledge. And it matters because, as the youngest researcher at the conference, Diarra Sourang, said: "The society may shape the image we make, but our images can shape the society back."



The group picture

IMPORTANT LINKS

[PHOTO GALLERY OF THE CONFERENCE](#) Photos by Annika_Wallis

[ROUND TABLE REPORT](#)

VIDEOS INTERVIEWS

[Cinematography in Progress 2019, the aims](#)
[Research into the artistic role of cinematographers](#)
[Alternative methods for teaching cinematography](#)