



FILMPHOT
COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL

PENSER LA PHOTOGRAPHIE DU FILM
CONCEPTUALIZING MOTION PICTURE PHOTOGRAPHY
Rennes, 18-19 November 2021

Call for Proposals

Conference directed by Bérénice Bonhomme, Simon Daniellou
and Priska Morrissey

Unité de recherche Arts : pratiques et poétiques (université Rennes 2), Institut Universitaire de
France,

Groupe de recherche “Création collective au cinéma” (Lara-Seppia, université Toulouse Jean-
Jaurès et 2I2S, Université de Lorraine)



What do we mean when we talk about a film's *cinematography*? Technique? Craft? An aesthetic? A mood? How might we uncover certain definitional and characteristic elements through historical, technical or aesthetic analyses? This conference seeks to offer a venue for interdisciplinary reflection in order to better grasp the issues surrounding motion-picture photography, to better understand what a moving image is and how it is made.

The goal is neither to designate cinematographic "schools," nor to look at photography through the lens of genre (film noir, musical, etc.), nor to write a history of the differences between black-and-white and color – subjects that all deserve their own symposia – but rather to explore the definition of the notion of "cinematography," its boundaries, confines, hidden truths and history, in order to better grasp its complexity and diversity.

We can thus consider various angles of attack, often at the intersection of several approaches:

Better grasp the notion's varied definitions by historicizing it

A first approach would seek to historicize the very notion of "cinematography" along with its automatization within the system of production – from the analysis of early motion pictures to the advent of cinema's various crafts thanks to the division of labor. In addition to the notion of "cinematography," those of "cinematographer," "director of photography," "lighting" and so forth, will be historicized, but always in relation to the first. In short, we propose a conceptualization of this terminology and its evolution over time and across geographical regions. What was the role of professional guilds in defining the meaning and scope of these terms? How has the transition to digital images modified the definition or conception of photography?

Conceptualizing the boundaries of the notion of "cinematography" also means exploring elements of pre- (film speed, lens characteristics and chromatic aberrations, etc.) as well as post-production (processing differences between labs, how a given bath affects a given print, variations in projector bulb temperature depending on year of design or wear and tear, color correction...). When we analyze a

cinematic image, shouldn't we explore its specificities? Which version? Which color correction or telecine? What kind of projection? In what conditions was the film received and perceived?

Technical and sociological approach to professions: the “combinatory logic” of the measurable and collaborative

Just like still photography, in which André Rouillé (*La Photographie : entre document et art contemporain*, 2005) identifies a “combinatory logic,” *motion-picture* photography depends on a combination of tools with quantifiable effects. Such-and-such a lens or f-stop is chosen based on the quality of light and sensitivity of the film stock. One opts for a particular style of makeup, a color scheme for the sets, or fabric for the costumes based on the possibilities and constraints of the photographic equipment and the desired result.

This combinatory logic is collaborative both between professions (institutionalized collaboration, spaces defined by professionals, training etc.) and individuals (each film constitutes a new, hitherto unseen project, often with a renewed crew). Studying a film's cinematography means considering the eco-system that governs its production – its particular industrial, economic, technical, and ideological priorities – and the varied methods of collaboration inside and outside the camera crew. This is not limited to collaborations between the DP and lighting crew (the best boy for example) and the director, but also includes exchanges with the special effects supervisor, makeup artists, set and costume designers, or even actors who may try to control their image, demand a certain freedom of movement on set, or even impose a DP. The issue of collaboration forces us to consider where each crew member's abilities and responsibilities start and end. We can thus explore where the DP's work overlaps with or departs from that of the camera-operator or still photographer. We should also consider the way the budget and production schedule impact the choice of equipment, the structure of the crew, and the division of labor.

Aesthetic issues as seen from a novel angle

This symposium also seeks to explore what this point of view can contribute to the study of individual works. How does motion-picture photography contribute to cinematic forms and narratives? What is implied in setting a photograph into motion – at the scale of the sequence or shot (perceptible changes in lighting, an actor moving into the light...) as well as on the level of the film in its entirety (its visual pacing, its photographic “scoring”). Weaknesses or apparent flaws can become stylistic markers (Godard’s backlighting, Grandrieux’s underexposure, J.J. Abrams’s lens flares...) or even vectors of meaning (a blown-out picture, desaturated colors). Sometimes, a lighting accident can become an epiphany—with serendipity playing a major role in photogenicity as Delluc understood it. The exploration of outer limits that fall below (under-exposure) or above (blinding over-exposure) the light curve strive for the same disappearance of information. Thus, cinematography is also a sphere in which the dialectic between the visible and invisible often plays out.

Translated to English by David H. Pickering

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

WEB SITE : <https://penserlaphotographiedufilm.wordpress.com/>

The symposium will take place in Rennes **18 and 19 November 2021**.

Given the context, anyone living abroad will be able to intervene remotely (technical modalities to be specified) and this possibility will be extended to the other participants if the current health crisis requires it.

Modes of submission and calendar:

Proposals, 2,500 characters max, written in French or English and accompanied by a brief bio-bibliographic note should be sent before **28 February 2021** to the following three addresses:

berenice.bonhomme@univ-tlse2.fr

simon.daniellou@univ-rennes2.fr

priska.morrissey@univ-rennes2.fr

The response to the proposals will be sent out in **April 2021**.

For more information, don’t hesitate to contact one of us.