

PONENCIAS
53 CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE
ARCHIVOS FILMICOS
FIAF - 1997

The 'Oscar' winners of the amateur movement - towards an acquisition policy

Paper presented to FIAF by Janet McBain

Cartagena 1997

There is, undeservedly in my opinion, a widely held perception of amateur film as something seen within a narrow, close circle, of family films shown in a domestic environment to friends and relatives.

However there are many other aspects of amateur film which are more visibly 'public', that suggest an ambition, a style of film making and a context that is closer to professional or commercial cinema, factors that take amateur film out of the home and onto a more public stage.

Film historians at the end of the cinema's first century, are looking more and more closely at the history of the amateur film, rediscovering a hitherto hidden or neglected part of the world's film culture. They will be looking to the film archives to provide evidence of that culture. Amateur film crosses many generic boundaries (drama, science fiction, documentary, avant garde, animation, educational, propaganda and personal). For film archives in process of developing an acquisition policy what kinds of selection criteria should they employ.

Any set of criteria will necessarily be varied to represent the variety that is amateur film. With this presentation I would like to explore some of these potential criteria by looking specifically at amateur films offered to audiences outside the family home, that body of work that I suggest could be classed as part of a national film culture

Obviously I am most familiar with the position in my own country . To illustrate the nature of this public face of amateur film I will take a case study from Scotland that of the Scottish Amateur Film Festival, illustrating with clips on video some of the key films I would include in any acquisition strategy.

The Scottish Amateur Film Festival grew out of the first 'Open Competition' organised in Glasgow by the Meteor ("Shooting Star") Film Producing Society. Newly formed in 1933 they decided to hold a film competition to stimulate interest and membership in the society. The members formed a number of small groups and set about shooting three films for the forthcoming contest. The cinema correspondent of the local newspaper encouraged the organisers to enlarge the scope of the competition beyond the Society's membership and invite entries from the whole of Scotland. This attracted a further four films. The Athenaeum Theatre in the centre of Glasgow was booked for the event. Before this stage was reached however the competition needed a judge. Victor Saville, film director, was due to visit Glasgow to promote his latest feature film *I Was a Spy* with its star Madeleine Carroll. Saville was approached and consented to judge the competition. The resultant show in October 1933, playing to a packed house, was a roaring success. Joint first prize was awarded to a drama, *Hair*, based on a story by Grand Guignol. and a documentary film about a city office worker on a day out, *All on a Summer's Day*. The range of entries (drama, a western, documentaries, a travelogue and episodes from the life of the historical figure Rob Roy) and the enthusiastic response of the public encouraged the organisers to carry on, creating what was to become an annual event and one they were proud to claim in later years was the first competition of its kind to be organised in Great Britain and, indeed, in the world.

Video extract opening scenes from **All On A Summer's Day 1933**

That first event in 1933 set the precedent for what was to become the unique aspect of 'the Scottish' - as the Festival became affectionately known - amongst the network of amateur festivals. That uniqueness was the involvement of a professional from the film industry as sole adjudicator and the fact that the winning films were presented in a commercial cinema immediately after the adjudicator had made his decisions.

In 1934 and now enjoying the title Scottish Amateur Film Festival there were fifteen entries. The competition had been advertised nationwide, the organisers producing a 35 mm trailer promoting the up coming festival. This year, 1934, saw the first of the entries from Glasgow School of Art Kinecraft Society two of whose members Norman McLaren and Stewart McAllister were to later benefit from the exposure of their work to professional scrutiny. Their film *Seven Till Five* took the prize for best non-fiction film. Prizes were awarded in the category 'Interest Film', open to individuals resident in Scotland and to all cine clubs in Great Britain. The listing of these entries from clubs signals some of the earliest cine society activity in the country. The adjudicator that year was film company director and author Andrew Buchanan.

The logistics of running a national competition from a small voluntary society may have been one reason for the lack of a festival in 1935. Whatever the reason by 1936 the running of the event had been taken over by the Scottish Film Council the national body in Scotland with a remit to support film culture. Established in 1934 the SFC had been formed to deliver government support for film in Scotland. At the time SFC's remit focused on promoting the educational and industrial training value of film and for a time published lists of 'suitable' cinema films for general consumption. Based in Glasgow, by then the city with some of the highest cinema attendances in the country, the Council's support for amateur film production and its public exhibition fitted in perfectly with its remit to encourage the wider appreciation of film beyond that of a commercial entertainment. The Scottish Film Council was to continue to support the Festival for the next forty years. It was perhaps this institutional link that secured the services of the documentary pioneer John Grierson as Festival adjudicator

that year. What is perhaps most interesting about this festival is the intervention of the adjudicator in the fortunes of the participants. Norman McLaren, still a student at the Art School entered two films, one *Hell Unlimited* was a group effort, the other a solo project *Colour Cocktail* in which he presented his first experiments in the use of colour. Film critic Forsyth Hardy recalled in 1990 the effect the film had on Grierson, renown for his championing of new talent. - I quote - "Grierson was sitting beside me. When *Colour Cocktail* came up on the screen, he grasped my arm - I've still got the marks on it - and said "Who is that?" - barking it out - and I told him. "Take me to him," he said" . From that meeting came the offer to McLaren and his fellow student Stewart McAllister to join the GPO Film Unit for professional training. From there on both were to carve for themselves a respected career in film, McLaren at the National Film Board of Canada and McAllister at British Transport Films. McLaren in later life was to reflect appreciatively on the chance that the Festival gave him in taking up film-making as his life's work.

Video extract the closing sequence from **Hell Unltd, 1936** a powerful anti war propoaganda film using a mixture of live action and animation

The Festival gathered momentum. In 1937 there were forty five-entries, the adjudicator Anthony Asquith so moved by the non-fiction prize winning film *The Day Thou Gavest* that he prefaced his comments with "The best film in the competition and of the best films of its kind, amateur or professional I have ever seen." A new award of Novice Class was introduced this year and was won by Frank Marshall, who was to figure regularly in the prize winners in subsequent years. The prize for best Sound was dropped in favour of an award for Colour demonstrating that the Festival was recognising technological change within the realm of film-making and rewarding ingenuity in relation to technology as it evolved.

In 1938, the year of the 5th Festival, Glasgow hosted the Empire Exhibition an international 'expo' from all the countries of the then British Empire. The exhibition attracted twelve million visitors that summer. The SAFF took up the theme and the contest that year was

opened up to the Commonwealth, with a special prize for a film *From British Subjects Abroad*. This attracted entries from Australia, India, Portugal, Bangkok, and Singapore amongst the seventy-nine entries judged by Alberto Cavalcanti, respected for his work on the film *Night Mail* (1936). The Colour prize was won by a Londoner for his film *Burmese Highway*.

The advent of war in 1939 with its shortage of film stock and with many of the film makers overseas serving in the forces put a stop to the annual competition. The Festival re-emerged after the war with Michael Powell the celebrated film maker in the Adjudicator's chair selecting from 67 entries.

Throughout the 50's the festival sustained a high level of interest from amateur producers, receiving on average one hundred entries annually. The highest proportion of these came from the British Isles with submissions from countries such as the USA, South Africa and Cuba. The practice of awarding prizes in several categories continued but from 1949 onwards one film was singled out for the ultimate accolade the Victor Saville Trophy for the Outstanding Film of Festival, a sort of 'best film Oscar' in memory of the first adjudicator and which could be selected from any of the categories of entry.

The 50's also saw a period where the amateur movement within Scotland enjoyed its most fruitful time. The Scottish Association of Amateur Cinematographers (SAAC) was formed in 1949, bringing together all the cine clubs in Scotland under one umbrella organisation. They participated in UNICA, the international association of amateur cinematographers. Indeed the UNICA Congress was held in Glasgow in 1951. Scottish entries enjoyed success in other international competitions, Frank Marshall having set a precedent for his fellow film-makers with *Mower Madness* the winning film at UNICA in Stockholm, 1947.

In 1963 the SIAFF celebrated its 21st birthday with a publication recalling the history and the achievements of the Festival. By then 'the Scottish' as the Festival was known, was one of the premiere festivals on the international amateur circuit and was enjoying an enviable reputation. It had opened up to entries world-wide and had evolved a complex but effective system of adjudication which it claimed to be one of the fairest in existence. The final choice of prize winners was entirely that of the adjudicator. In presenting his choice publicly at the prize winners' screening, in a public cinema and to an audience comprising entrants and members of the public the adjudicator would read out his reasons for his choice and give constructive criticism of the faults. In this way, as Norman McLaren was to recall years later, - quote - 'we gained insight and stimulation from seeing our work screened in public with other work and from having it carefully scrutinised by an expert'. The selection of a professional as adjudicator was based on the belief that - again I quote - 'he will bring to his task a wide range of experience in production, independence of judgement, complete freedom from personal interest in the films or their makers and above all by his criticisms and commendations assist the amateur to raise the standard of his or her work.'

The unofficial spin off from the close contact with a professional was the opportunity for that vital toe in the door of the commercial industry. Norman McLaren as we have seen benefited from the adjudicator's patronage in 1936. Others were to follow. The Scottish Film Industry is littered with professionals who got their first break through success at the SAFF. Those who have an international reputation also feature in the entries. For example Robert Zemeckis, SAFF winner in 1974 now better known as a Hollywood director (*Back to the Future* and *Forrest Gump*). There may be more names buried in the lists of entrants and prize winners who subsequently achieved critical success in their home countries and this an aspect of research that fellow film archivists may be able to help with.

The chance to present films to a professional could have other benefits. This next film so enchanted the adjudicator that he recommended it to the Director of the Edinburgh Film Festival where it featured the following year. *The Singing Street*, made by three school

teachers in Edinburgh simply and unaffectedly captured the rich oral tradition of the streets in the rhyming games played by generations of children.

Video Extract (sound) **Singing Street.**

The Festival continued successfully throughout the 60's and up until the mid 70's attracting an impressive list of adjudicators and high quality entries. By the time of the 40th Festival in 1978 there were some concerns that public interest was on the wane. The prize winners' shows had traditionally been held in the 800 seater Cosmo Cinema in Glasgow and had been so well supported that there had on occasion been a special train run from other parts of the country to cater for filmgoers from afar. Whilst the amateur clubs and the entrants still attended, the public audience for the films in the 80's was slipping, as was cinema attendance generally. Budgetary constraints forced the Festival into abeyance in 1979 and in 1980. When next held in 1981 it attracted a record 120 entries. However by 1984 a decision was made to discontinue the Festival due to lack of support from the public and funding problems.

Although audiences were losing interest there was still considerable energy and enthusiasm for making films in the amateur sector. To lay the rest the myth that amateur films were always on small gauges or technically sub standard here is an extract from **Loser's Blues**, one of the last of the Festival entries, shot on 35mm colour negative with a camera cajoled from a friendly professional producer and film stock begged from the local television company who were in production of a television feature. Using 'short ends' - the unused short lengths of longer camera rolls - with help from local unemployed actors and some dramatic industrial landscape the film addresses the pressures of unemployment on a relationship.

video extract (sound) **Loser Blues**

You may have recognised the young actor John Hannah who is now much better known through his role in the recent successful British feature film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*

There is no doubt that the Scottish Amateur Film Festival has played a significant part within film culture in Scotland. For some it was the stepping stone, the unique opportunity to get into the movies. For most, however it was an opportunity to show films they had made to their peers and to learn from the constructive criticisms offered by a professional. Many took great pride in graduating from Novice to seasoned entrant. Some worked as individuals, embracing new technology as it became available on the home market. Others preferred the experience of working in a group to collaborate in producing a cinematic work all of their own making and lovingly created. Education in Scotland benefited from the skills learned by amateurs in their leisure time who would put these to use as teachers making films for the classroom. And the country as a whole has and will continue to benefit from the legacy left by these film-makers with their film records of our life and times.

And what of the adjudicators? Many were Scots who had found success in the wider world of film production and who were pleased to 'give something back' to their home country. They were generous with their time and with their knowledge and experience, some openly envious of the freedom of the amateur film-maker who was not encumbered by 'union regulations' or studio control. The success of the Scottish Amateur Film Festival was in no small part due to those who adjudicated as well as to those whose works were put forward for their consideration.

So to conclude: - what I hope I have achieved with this presentation is offer some workable examples of criteria upon which film archives can base an acquisition policy for amateur productions.

These selection criteria could be summed up as follows:

productions that reflect the early work of a particular film maker film, in other words that is part of his or her 'oeuvre'

films adjudged by professionals and peers as of intrinsic merit as films, as works of art

as a genre, or a body of work, films reflecting a filmmaking culture that exists outside formal studio systems,

and films that offer a cultural perspective from below, rather than from that of the establishment and authority.

There already exist many archives world wide who actively seek and preserve amateur films. I would hope that we can find a way, perhaps through the channels of communication that exist in FIAF, to collaborate on the finding and preservation of amateur films, to consider repatriation of films to the creator's home country, to have access to information on films held elsewhere that reflect on our own countries.

We still need to establish what has been made over the years in order to aid our search and to inform our selection procedures and to that perhaps we might look for help to the film historian in their telling and uncovering of the whole story of amateur film.

Finally and looking forward to FIAF 98, edited highlights from a 1937 film of a **Journey to Prague**

VIDEO EXTRACT

NORTH WEST FILM ARCHIVE PRESENTATION AT FIAF CONGRESS 1997

Amateur Film : The Cataloguing Challenge

In June this year the North West Film Archive will celebrate its twentieth birthday. Since 1977 we have been working to rescue the filmed heritage of our region. This work covers all the aspects that you will be familiar with - finding material, undertaking technical inspection and repair, assessing footage for selection and acquisition, preservation, storage, cataloguing and providing public access. However - and this is how our operation will probably differ from most of yours - we are exclusively concerned with moving images that record and illustrate the life of our region. While the North West of England supported thriving film and cinema industries in the first half of this century, much of this legacy had been lost by the mid 1970s. The central purpose of the NFTA has been to attempt to save the films that have survived and ensure their long term future. The region that we serve from our Manchester home covers a wide geographical area of approximately eight thousand square kilometres and includes the counties of Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire and Merseyside. The area now has a population of approximately six and a half million people. It has a strong industrial tradition and is, in fact, regarded as the heartland of the industrial revolution where manufacturing (especially textile production) created considerable wealth for Britain during its Age of Empire.

Over the past one hundred years, social, cultural and economic patterns of life have inevitably changed drastically. This is strongly evidenced in our film collection. The Archive holds professional material - documentaries, cinema newsreels, travelogues, promotional, corporate, educational and advertising footage - which are highly valued for their historical significance. However, we have always strongly believed that the work of the amateur film maker - the person or persons who did not use the camera to earn their living - was also worthy of attention. Amateur material plays a crucial role in building up as comprehensive, definitive and balanced a picture of the region as possible. For this reason, the Archive's main film holdings (excluding its television programmes) are split 36% professional to 64% amateur.

Just as we hold many types of professional material, our amateur footage is also varied. There are broadly four main categories of amateur film types that we can identify in our collection. Firstly, we have family films - those reels shot by a particular family as a personal record. Common subjects include their special times (for example weddings and holidays) or show children growing up - in many ways these are the animated version of treasured family photograph albums. They were made to share with a fairly small circle of family and friends and were not intended to reach a wider audience. As such they have a

particular intimacy – but pose problems of understanding and appreciation to those outside the circle, unless a willing guide can be found. While the apparatus and costs of film-making were within the reach of better-off families from the 1920s, sadly many reels of film have been thrown away by later generations. Unlike family photograph albums, images on film reels cannot be instantly recognised – often separated from the means of projection they cannot even be viewed. Collections have been consigned to the rubbish bin or abandoned when moving house. What survives is precious – not just to the remaining relatives but to the community as a whole.

The second category of amateur footage is defined as the work of members of societies or clubs. Here collaboration takes place that results in the production of a film on an agreed topic – generally the subject matter has a broader range than family films. Often such films were intended to be shown to a group audience – perhaps a works association, ciné society or community group.

The third category is represented by individuals who have chosen to explore their own special interest in a subject by recording it onto ciné film. An example of this type from our collection is the work of Mr Phillip Taylor who travelled the region with his camera during the 1970s filming his great passion – folk traditions. The final, and less distinct, category reflects elements of the previous three – family members using film to go beyond personal recording by featuring subjects of wider reference – such films were often intended to be screened outside the home and have a very different character from the home movies of popular perception.

I have sketched out these four categories of amateur work to illustrate that the intention, circumstance and focus of the amateur can vary significantly. There are, however, two factors that apply to them all. Firstly, we are nearly always dealing with unique material, where no duplicates existed and so the film that we handle is the sole surviving copy.

The second common feature is the imperative to explore beyond the framed image in order to answer the questions:

- Why was the film taken and by whom?
- When and where was it shot?
- What does it show?
- Who appears in the film?
- How was it shown?
- What did it signify to the people involved?

Unless we try to find these answers, the amateur films that we acquire, preserve and show will not reveal their full meaning. While this intelligence gathering presents serious challenges, it also offers rich rewards. The need for such detective work is most pronounced when dealing with silent and untitled material (93% of our amateur footage). I shall return to this point in a few minutes. The reference tools and sources that support research on professional films (either feature or non-fiction) are of very limited use when dealing with material that did not attract commercial audiences or critical media coverage. We clearly need to look elsewhere.

In order to illustrate how we can try to discover more information about amateur films, I have chosen one collection from the Archive's holdings. In 1980, I presented a film show to the members of the Stockport Ciné Society. As usual, I ended my screening with an appeal for material. I was approached by a gentleman, Mr Denis Preston, who told me that he owned a collection over one hundred reels of 16mm film - they had been shot by his father, Harold, and by Harold's twin brother Sidney, during the 1920s and 1930s. So began a series of negotiations that took place over five years - we eventually succeeded in acquiring the entire collection of one hundred and fifteen reels. This family's footage proved to be a real find. Yet, without working closely with the surviving generations of the Preston family, we would have had little idea of how historically valuable their films were.

While donors cannot always unlock the meaning of their material, they are always our first line of investigation. By transferring the films to videotape, we can provide copies for the family to view in their home, at their own convenience, when they can gather together to identify the people, places and events that are recorded, dating sequences whenever possible. This evidence can then be matched to our own analysis of stockmarks in order to help date sequences. The majority of amateur footage that we are offered is silent and less than 10% is titled or explicitly labelled. Without the assistance of a soundtrack commentary, while we can recognise obvious landmarks or hazard a sensible guess at costume styles or transport types, we cannot be very confident in describing accurately what we see. Without the assistance of a co-operative member of the donor family, the sequences shot can be uncommunicative and puzzling. Very fortunately, the Preston family were proud of their forebears and delighted by our interest in their collection. They were able to tell us, not only that both twin brothers were responsible for taking the films, but also that they were intended to record two particular interests. The first of these was the work of their father, Joshua Preston as he performed his duties as the Mayor of Stockport during 1927, 1928 and 1929. We have tried to discover more about Mayor Preston through

Stockport Local History Library which holds the town's newspapers for the period. Sadly, while copied to microfilm, the work of indexing this vast record has not yet been undertaken and so we will have to wait to pursue this avenue. The other subject matter for the twins was their own great enthusiasm for all forms of transport – on land, sea and air.

With the help of the donor and his wife, we were able to construct a family tree – a useful first step when assessing such material. We also learned that the family fortune was established in the textile trade – this was most interesting as we already hold a wide range of textile footage – the cotton industry was the major employer in our region in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Joshua Preston started work as a tailor and built up a large clothing business, manufacturing gentlemen's suits. His business, called Joshua Preston and Sons Wholesale Clothiers, employed several hundred staff. We have copied the Preston's photographs to hold as contextual records. They show the family, their business premises and their impressive house, Clengarry, in the leafy suburbs of Bramhall, Cheshire. Joshua was accompanied in his mayoral duties by one of his seven children, his daughter, Certie – who is easily recognised in the films. His twin sons, Sidney and Harold, shot the films using a Bell & Howell Filmo 70 and a Ciné Kodak Model BF3.5 camera – equipment with high quality optics and mechanics. Their camerawork was of a very high standard, with good use of panoramic and close-ups shots and their editing efficient and coherent. The films are camera originals, shot on black and white reversal stock, with one rare sequence of Dufay colour.

The collection had become shrunken and warped over the years with severe emulsion cracking in parts. Fortunately, there was little projection damage beyond scratching and the splices were good. We have attracted funding from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to copy a representative thirty-five titles to 16mm negative for high quality preservation. It is exceptional to find a large collection of amateur films that are of such consistently high technical standards and that exhibit interests sustained over a period of many years. Nevertheless, the principles that I am describing with regard to unlocking content information, do apply to all the amateur collections that we have acquired.

SCREENING NUMBER ONE

Compilation of extracts showing the Preston family and Joshua Preston as Mayor.

Comments from speaker over screening.

Once we have gathered as much information as we consider necessary to understand the amateur films within our custodial responsibility, the work of the Archive's Cataloguers can begin in earnest. They refer to this information when compiling the ~~summaries~~ and indexes that you will all be familiar with. It is at this point that the worthwhileness of our detective work is most appreciated. Were the cataloguing team to rely exclusively on the images in front of them, their task would be extremely difficult and the results superficial or generalised. All supporting information gathered is kept together in a single collection log wallet which contains all acquisition, accession and technical information alongside any supporting material - this forms an adjunct to the computerised database records.

Once the films are fully documented, the wider benefits of our work are experienced - when researchers are assisted in tracking down the sequences that they require through the detailed indexing - by title, subject, place, personality, producer and date - that has been undertaken by the cataloguing team.

I must be honest and admit that, while we aspire to search out as much information as possible on our amateur acquisitions, we are not always successful - the trail sometimes goes cold. Occasionally donors cannot help or it is difficult to secure the time that this sort of co operation demands. Pressures on our own time, including the more urgent demands of another collection, sometimes make it impossible to commit further resources to problematic acquisitions. Ironically, it does happen that, having reluctantly moved onto other work, we later come across people - perhaps someone who has seen our material on local television or attended one of our public film shows - who can throw new light on unsolved mysteries!

The interest and enjoyment that have been expressed when we show examples of our amateur holdings is a strong justification of the continuing importance of safeguarding this material for the future - we are certainly committed to amateur films as a vital aspect of our public collection. I am pleased to end my presentation by reporting that, earlier this month, we managed to trace a further twenty reels of film made by Harold and Sidney Preston - my colleagues are working on them back in Manchester now!

Maryann Gomes, Curator
North West Film Archive
Manchester, England.

11 April 1997

History and Theory of Amateur Film
 by
 Patricia R. Zimmermann, Ph.D.
 Professor
 Department of Cinema and Photography
 Ithaca College

Amateur films and their various, pluralized histories betray a convoluted imbroglia. Their histories and representations exceed a simple record of family life. Amateur films need to be reclaimed as local, regional, national and transnational mappings of both histories and memories, politics and psychic imaginaries.

Always a technology entombed within corporatized institutions, it holds a dialectical possibility for empowerment, hope and change. If we scrape away the Sony camcorder advertising, the patriarchal familialist ideologies, the seeming incoherencies of their semiotic systems, we find a revolutionary possibility for democracy latent in all low-end, amateur media technologies, from Super 8 film, to camcorders, to home satellite systems. The issue is then not simply the technology, but its social and political relations.

Massive privatization of public culture worldwide, the most horrendous closing down of the public sphere in world history, rampant civil wars all over the world, death, destruction and unprecedented diaspora, and global economic reorganization by the media transnationals which know no borders presents a situation, in whatever nation we call home, where intervention into the global flows of commercial imagery seem futile.¹ This global reorganization of all media and politics in the post-1989 era constitutes one of the most significant destructions of public culture in the last 100 years. Transnational media corporations like Viacom, Sony-Columbia, Disney, and Time/Warner create only one subject position for spectators: consumer.² Democracy--which engages a hope that the world can be reimagined and remade by multiple subjects who self-define their own agendas--is, symbolically and politically, destroyed.

Democracy, as we have learned in the case of the post-1989 Eastern Europe and post Soviet situations, has increasingly been redefined as Westernized, American consumer capitalism.³ If we stay within the domain of the transnationals and of nation states which continue to deregulate all media industries to make them more attractive to privatization, the current state of affairs seems hopeless and bleak for democracy.

However, within, around and under this globalization remains the local. The term local suggests an entire range of identities, subjectivities, collectivities, histories, fantasies, imaginaries located within specific landscapes and specific places which are crisscrossed, still, by the transnational global flows.⁴ I do argue for a binary opposition between global and local; instead, I want to shift the location of analysis away from dominant, unifying economic structures toward more dispersed sites.

While the transnationals depend on altering the relations between time and space, deterritorializing everything from capital to production to consumption, the local can be recontextualized within this newly emerging globalized space as a place with multiple, diverse and competing registers. It is in these local spaces, whether they be ethnic identity groups, diasporas, regions, families, collectivities, that some form of media democracy can exist within the cracks of the global flows. Within the shifting, fluid, multiply

defined construct of the amateur, the globalization process of transforming all communities into consumers is reversed: the productive capacities are reclaimed to remake the world.

Bill Gates' Microsoft Word acquisition in 1995 of the entire Bettman photographic archive bespeaks how democracy has been colonized by the newly emerging information economies. Gates claims he is democratizing the images by privatizing them on CD ROM and the Internet. Unregulated transnational capital with no social responsibility or public accountability have redefined democracy as unabashed privatization which will create enormous divides between the information rich and the information poor, and between the technology rich and the technology poor. Issues of universal access will increase saliency.

However, amateur video technologies have contributed to the psychic and political reordering of the post-national world along more democratic lines exactly at the time that racialized struggles have divided the globe. The Nation Erupts, produced by the African-American and Latino Not Channel Zero Collective, edits together footage of various demonstrations, debates, and alternative music videos shot by multicultural activists around the United States in a variety of regional communities in response to the Los Angeles rebellion after the Rodney King verdict. The tape refutes the idea that the Los Angeles rebellion was a black riot, and relocates the struggles of people of color within a long history of police brutality and racially motivated regulations.

Sarajevo Ground Zero, a compilation of video tapes shot by a multicultural team of Croats, Serbs, and Muslims, chronicles the devastation of Sarajevo from the ground up, away from the corporate gaze of CNN. With the television stations and film studios of Bosnia bombed by the Serbian nationalists, filmmakers and producers were left with nothing but low end, amateur video to document the atrocities, horrifying living conditions, and effects of Serb nationalist aggression on the populace so that the devastation would be remembered.

Amateur film marks the trace of the local and the regional. It will perhaps become one of the few sites that will be left uncolonized in the media landscape if the pace of transnationalization, GATTization, and NAFTAization continues unrestricted by public debate. The local here can be small archives in Maine, local historical societies, specialized collections like Prelinger Associates or the Human Studies Film Archive, and collections in countries with no tradition of commercial national cinema, like Wales or Scotland.

In analyzing the social and political importance of amateur film and video, our discourse shifts from a unified, essentialized notion of history into a more diverse, pluralized, contradictory and fluid construct of histories. In this inversion, memory--incomplete, inaccurate, inchoate, warped--counters official history, which is often lies, distortions, and blackouts on truth to protect the borders of the nation. Heterogeneity, a central component of democracy in the post-national era as Homi Bhabha and others have argued, counters the homogeneity of Hollywood film practices, national cinemas, commercial televisions.⁵

Amateur film is not simply a fetish object of psychoanalytic trauma, although its images can be peeled back to reveal this and more. It is not a cultural artifact, but a cultural process, identified by its fluidity, its contradictions, its sedimentary layers of meaning and histories. Therefore, I would term it a form of volatile history, constantly reshaping and revising

its democratic agendas and visions. Within its volatility lies its hope. The very gnarly philosophical and ontological problems provoked by its fluidity are the very reasons it should be considered a central component of access to communications in the new world order. As the MacBride Roundtable has argued, the right to communication is a basic human right that should be protected and enhanced around the globe. Without accessible, inexpensive technologies, like amateur film and video, democracy will forever be held captive by westernized consumer capitalism.⁶

Amateur film is often seen as factual evidence for the way people lived, how streets looked in a given decade and how people did certain rituals like marriage and family birthdays. That thinking, of course, is true, but it constitutes only half the story. Amateur film gives us something much more twisted, much more an incidence of images being inside out and outside in. They are facts which reveal fantasies, and they are fantasies which reveal facts. They pose as psychic imaginaries of real things, and present real things as psychic imaginaries. This disturbs the realist orders of the nation.

Nothing is what it seems, and the only way to understand it is to do two moves at the same time: pile up the sedimentary layers of history, and pull away what is not there, what is repressed and denied. Without the major cinematic archaeological efforts of african american filmmakers, japanese american, gay archivists, feminist filmmakers, the amateur film which chronicles these lives outside the borders of the white male nation which is the fantasy of american would be lost. For these histories can be found in the marginal cinemas of the amateur.

One of the central political struggles of the twentieth century is the chasm between professionalism and amateurism, between the public sphere and the private sphere, between the national and international and the local, between the dominant and the emergent, between people and corporations. Of course, these oppositions are not so neatly organized. In their actual practice, they are layered into one another. Most amateur films simultaneously deconstruct these oppositions as they travel between each end. However, the power relations between these oppositions can be obscured if analysis insists solely on a kind of postmodern ambiguity.

Michel Foucault's entire historical project was focused on ferreting out the power relations and knowledges constituted in the marginal. Foucault's ideas about how history is always incomplete, filled with gaps and fissures and ruptures, are central to any discussion of the democratic agendas offered in amateur film. His theorizations suggest a way to see amateur film not as a text, but as a series of power relations and negotiations between dominant film practices and marginal ones, between privileged knowledges and delinquent ones, between grand schematics of film history done by studios to more local specific, delinquent knowledges. It is a historiography that rejects a pure linear progression. It offers a way to look at how shifts and redistributions between a number of discourses could mark off a whole domain of inquiry, creating and recreating its object as it went along.⁷

So politically, any study of amateur film, whether it be anthropological, historical, or archival, is a radical political act of defiance. It is to side with the incomplete over the spectacle, the fragmentary over the cohesive narrative, the historical over the textual, the cheap and accessible over the expensive and impossible, the fantasies and memories of everyday people over the delusions of Hollywood, the documentary over the narrative, the local over the general, the sloppy over the slick.

Amateur film and video's status as cultural exile from slicker and more dominant visual regimes demonstrates its potentially destabilizing threat to the dominant visual order and the dominant economic organization of visual culture. It is, to deploy current theoretical language, heteroglossic, multiple. Its deportation to the margins of traditional film history exposes how it is part of a significant cultural struggle over who has power to create media, to invent images, to fashion narratives out of life, and to enter into the world of representation. It is impossible to consider democracy in the global age without considering amateur media's productive capacities.⁶

Amateur film has been the only form of media production to map the uncharted waters of the private sphere from the point of view of the participants. In many ways, all amateur films collapse distinctions between subject and object, between text and spectatorship, between public and private. Amateur films trace the melodrama of personal life and the idealized projections of family. They graph the contradictions between the realities of family life bounded by class, race, and gender expectations and the fantasies of nuclear family representation. They map the national imaginary as it wraps around the localized sites.

Indeed, the concept "amateur" is distinctly rooted in 19th century capitalism. As entrepreneurial capitalism evolved into corporate capitalism in the late 19th century in the United States and the Europe, the notion of "professional" developed to describe desirable attributes of intellectual workers and managers within the increasingly corporate economy. The "professional" was controlled, committed to a profession rather than the self, possessing reproducible skills that accrued monopoly control, a team player without passion.

The concept of the "amateur" on the other hand evolved almost as an antidote to the enervation of the professional, corporatized cog. The word amateur derives from the latin word amare, which meant to love. In the 19th century, amateurism of all forms--from bicycling, to painting, to drama--was associated with all those instabilities that corporate capitalism had expelled from the workplace: passion, autonomy, creativity, imagination, the private sphere, family life. The term professional was linked with rationalized work, the public sphere, and exchange relations, while amateurism was located within leisure, the private sphere, and hobbies. As professionalism molded middle class workers into interchangeable parts, amateurism served as a safehaven for the ragged remains of bourgeois individualism.

In film history, amateurism has functioned similarly. Since the beginning of film in the late 19th century, amateur technologies have been available. In fact, these various technologies have often revealed a parallel history to commercial film. From 1885 until 1923, many different formats and technologies--many of them promoted by European inventors--vied for the consumer market, with limited success. Amateur films produced during this era fell into two categories: 35mm films shots by professionals which chronicled the familial life of elites such as presidents, kings, czars, and corporate executives; and family films and actualities shot on a variety of formats ranging from 9.5 mm, to circular film, to glass plates.

In this early period, amateur film was defined almost purely in technological terms. It was an experimental arena for entrepreneurs--a dying breed in an era of corporate capitalism and the middle management engineer--outside of the monopoly control of the Motion Picture Patents Company that controlled all access to 35mm production. The only significant distinction

between professional and amateur film during this early period was public exhibition and interchangeability, both of which were possible only in 35mm.

In 1923, Bell and Howell and Eastman Kodak colluded to standardize the amateur film gauge as 16mm, thereby guaranteeing them a virtual monopoly over consumer technologies. With the standardization of 16mm, amateur film transformed from an entrepreneurial battleground for competing patents into a consumer commodity aimed at families which copied Hollywood narrative forms.

From the 1920s until World War II, the aesthetic domain almost exclusively defined amateur film: amateur film was what Hollywood was not. A plethora of magazines geared to amateur filmmakers appeared, hawking Hollywood style as the pinnacle of cinematic perfection to be emulated and adored. Amateur film was a training ground to create a new aesthetic consciousness about the perfection of classical Hollywood style. Women's magazines, family magazines, and arts magazines heralded amateur film as a new art form.

For the most part, amateur filmmaking was ideologically controlled by Hollywood: articles emphasized the harmony and beauty of Hollywood style pictorial composition and the control of narrative continuity. Hollywood narrative style was imported via professional editors and cinematographers who wrote for these magazines to amateurs, with some writers even supplying narrative scenarios of family life that could be copied. They imported a sense of reactionary stability into the visual register via 19th century photographic pictorialism, which was, by the 1920s, all ready an old fashioned artistic form.

These articles harbored a fear of constructivism, which would move image making out of the home and into public life and out of harmony into discordant and jarring angles. Some radicals like Harry Alan Potamkin, wrote many articles debunking Hollywood narrative style. He advocated instead that amateurs utilize the principles of constructivism, which was more within their resources, by shooting factories, cities, and other aspects of public life. Some writers even hailed Soviet direct Sergei Eisenstein as the greatest amateur of all time because he used real people and shot on location. Simultaneously, and in direct contradiction to Hollywood narrative indoctrination, some writers, particularly in Amateur Movie Maker, adopted amateurism as a way to enliven film as an art form, to save it from the mindlessness of commercial film, thought to have become enervated and destroyed by the coming of sound in 1927.

By World War II, amateur cameras went to war with B52's and guns. The United States military drafted all 16mm equipment into the war effort. Amateur cameras were used for surveillance, for chronicling battles, and for training. For the first time, Hollywood cinematographers launched training sessions of cameramen for the military. Signal Corps cameramen were told to shoot with cameras and guns, thereby equating the camera eye with the barrel of a gun, both shooting at the enemy. World War II did more to legitimate amateur film than almost any other event or article in its history: it standardized 16mm as a semi-professional medium, increased the number of professionally trained operators, standardized equipment by augmenting its interchangeability, and initiated a new standard of participatory, hand held bumpy, camera work derived from shooting in the trenches as an indicator of a more phenomenological realism.

By the 1950s, amateur film was almost completely isolated within the confines of the bourgeois nuclear family. Amateur film collapsed into home movies. It was redefined as a social relation between families, rather than as

an art form, a political intervention, a public act, a democratic formation. New formats like 8mm that could not be publicly exhibited proliferated, creating a class hierarchy in amateurism based on how much technical control an operator could have over the imagery.

Endless articles appeared in women's magazines which direct amateurs towards shooting their families. The nuclear family's greatest form of recreation was itself, and its endless reproduction in imagery. Home movie equipment sales boomed, with camera gear seen as important as barbecue grills for family togetherness. In the United States, the Do-It-Yourself movement, dedicated toward occupying families with fixing up their homes themselves with a variety of hobbies, engulfed amateur filmmaking. Filmmaking became the visual equivalent of gardening: both were family oriented activities that kept one at home and out of the streets.

As the nuclear family became increasingly isolated in suburbia, cut off from the differences erupting in urban life, cameras emerged as the tools which etched out the privileging of the family and patriarchal power. Fathers took more pictures than mothers, and children were photographed more than almost anything else, according a marketing study conducted by Bell and Howell in the mid 1950s. However, during this period of increasing isolation and enervation of amateurism within the bourgeois home, several strains of resistance did emerge, among them, the development of an experimental film movement in the US based on 16 mm, and the use of cameras within community groups to document the civil rights struggles in the south.

The historical development of amateur film technology has followed a trajectory of smaller and smaller equipment, simpler and simpler usage, and more and more emphasis on family as a subject. Historically, we can discern the ways that the potential amateur film offered for democratic participation in the public sphere were gradually stripped away in a series of redefinitions, first technological, then aesthetic, then social and political, each discourse limiting the domain of the amateur. Cheaper and more accessible than studio cameras, amateur film technologies present an emergent possibility to democratize media production. However, for the most part, the democratic potential of amateur film to expand the number of producers and kinds of work was circumvented. Aesthetic standards imported from Hollywood style colonized amateurism. Social relations that inserted amateur film into the bourgeois nuclear family stunted its ability to enter the public sphere.

The various aesthetic "lacks" and "insufficiencies" of amateur film practices, are exactly what makes amateur film such a complicated social and historical document. These ruptures and fissures suggest that the text alone is insufficient. This alterity of amateur film instead forces us to analyze these films not as artistic inventions (although that strategy certainly erupts from time to time), but as a series of active relationships between the maker and subject, between the film and history, between representation and history, between the international and the local, between reality and fantasy, between the real and the imaginary. Amateur films then are records of marginal practices, but they are also registers of complicated social and historical discourses. In other words, when we analyze amateur films, we are not simply tracing the visual as something detached and separated from the world of lived relations, but we are deconstructing the very idea of the visual as empirical.

But these amateur films have extremely radical potential to reimagine democracy as well. For example, in the United States, documentary filmmakers

investigating and refabricating identity politics have used amateur film as archival material to retrace the borders between history and memory. Amateur films operate as a form of psychic restoration, interrogation, and reclamation, the site where the familial and the political have condensed. Rea Tajiri's History and Memory, an American independently produced documentary, traces the refusal of her mother to discuss her time in Japanese internment camps during World War II. The larger history of the war is deconstructed by the family images, which show that any history is a complex system of domination and resistance. The film for instance includes some amateur footage shot by Tajiri's uncle with a 8mm camera smuggled into the camps against the orders of the U.S. Government.

By opening up the borders of what constitutes film history, we can move away from the monasticism of high art analysis into the activism of looking at culture as a continual process of contention and debate over who speaks, from what position, and within what kind of power relationship, the central questions for any democratic media politics. As transnational communication systems flood the world, reducing national and localized identities into a homogenized kind of American consumerism, we need to rethink the importance of the local as an incidence of, and space for, resistance. And amateur films, although encoded within a powerful domain of domination that has stripped them of most of their cultural power, still offer us an example of localized knowledges that irresolutely and unabashedly promote their differences.

Amateur film's very incompleteness as a cultural product, its constant evolution and realignments within culture and history, its insignificance and marginality within the visual order, constitute perhaps the strongest arguments for its democratizing possibilities to extend image production beyond corporations. Amateur films disclose the ways everyday people narrate and create their own culture; as such, they form a visual record of the complicated, differing ways identities are nationalized, genderized, socialized, fantasized, commoditized. To preserve, restore, analyse, and produce amateur film is to safeguard the small intimacies of culture from eradication. It is to side with democracy rather than corporations. To claim that these trivial, out of focus foragings into the everyday are as important as footage of Kings and Queens and armies and movie stars is to preserve that which truly makes history, and that which truly matters most.

1. See for example, Richard Barnett and John Cavanaugh, Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994); Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck, ed. Altered States: A Reader in the New World Order (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1993); and Benjamin R. Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld (New York: Random House, 1995).

2. Herbert I. Schiller, Information Inequality: The Deepening Social Crisis in America (New York: Routledge, 1996).

3. For a series of wide-ranging discussions on democracy in the post-1989 world, see David Trend, ed. Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State (New York: Routledge, 1996). For a penetrating discussion of how democracy is racialized and gendered within transnational flows and nationalist civil wars,

see Zillah R. Eisenstein, Hatreds: Racialized and Sexualized Conflicts of the 21st Century (New York: Routledge, 1996).

4. For diverse arguments on the politics and aesthetics of the global and local from writers from across the globe, see Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds. Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996).

5. For a psychoanalytic and political discussion of the psychic structures of difference, see Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994).

6. E-mail correspondence with Sean O Siochru, Summer 1996.

7. Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings by Michel Foucault, 1971-1977, Colin Gordon, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980)

8. For a more extensive historical analysis and theoretical argumentation on the development of amateur film, see my Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Lamento muchísimo no poder acompañaros en la presente ocasión, en la que me había propuesto exponer mi modesto criterio sobre el "cine amateur de creación" y ofrecer una somera pincelada histórica en lo concerniente a los inicios, en Cataluña y España, del movimiento que propició la importante implantación del cine amateur. No pudiendo, pues, dirigiros la palabra personalmente, he preferido que sean las imágenes las que hablen por mí. En todo caso, no unas imágenes cualesquiera, sino las correspondientes a una película que, en su momento y durante bastantes años más, fué considerada la mejor, no sólo en el ámbito local-nacional sino, también, en el plano internacional. Un film que quiero presentaros como un exponente de la creatividad cinematográfica no profesional, consecuencia del movimiento intelectual que propició, a partir de 1932, la implantación del cine amateur en nuestro país. Desde Cataluña, un grupo de entusiastas pioneros apostaron por la novedosa forma de dar a conocer sus ideas bajo la nueva estética del cine, o sea, de la creación plástica y discursiva a base de imágenes móviles.

Uno de estos pioneros, DOMÈNEC GIMÉNEZ I BOTEY, fué el realizador, en 1935, de la película EL HOMBRE IMPORTANTE que expongo a vuestra consideración como un símbolo, para mí, de lo que fueron los interesantes inicios de nuestro cine amateur. Espero y deseo que sea de vuestro agrado y aceptéis esta simbólica presencia mía en Cartagena de Indias. Desde Barcelona, no lo dudéis, mi pensamiento estará con vosotros.

ANTON GIMÉNEZ I RIBA
conservador de la
FILMOTECA DE LA GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA-Barcelona

A FALTA DE INDUSTRIA, BUENO ES AMATEUR : UN CASO REGIONAL

Unos aventureros italianos, los hermanos Francesco y Vincenzo Di Doménico, llegaron a comienzos de siglo con cámaras y proyectores a Barranquilla. No era un día cualquiera: la ciudad se encontraba en pleno Sábado de Carnaval y los Di Doménico vieron asombrados una fiesta que les recordaba las celebraciones a Baco de su propia tierra. Se hubieran preguntado si un extraño azar no los había devuelto a su punto de origen si los techos de palmas, la deslumbrante luminosidad del Caribe colombiano, los disfraces de animales y personajes distintos a los suyos y una música de tambores de cumbia con sabores indígenas, españoles y africanos no los hubiera convencido de inmediato de que sí habían alcanzado su destino.

Barranquilla estaba entregada como siempre por completo a su gran fiesta y nadie parecía interesado en ese invento extraño de seres que se movían en la pantalla como si fueran de carne y hueso. Los Di Doménico tuvieron que esperar a que se acabara el Carnaval para despertar el interés de la ciudad y propiciar con su llegada el nacimiento de la industria cinematográfica en Colombia.

La fiebre por el cine prendió bien en estas tierras, que siempre han parecido hechas para los ojos de las cámaras: en todo el país se fueron creando salas de exhibición, se proyectaban obras de distintos cinematografistas, y como en otras latitudes el público se quedaba atónito, reía o lloraba e incluso salía corriendo de la sala ante los primeros efectos visuales.

El entusiasmo fue tan grande que muchas personas pasaron de la butaca de espectadores a las cámaras para realizar sus propias películas. Cuando la Fundación Cinemateca del Caribe inició su labor de rescate del patrimonio audiovisual se encontró con una cantidad impresionante de documentos fílmicos que prueban hasta que punto prendió la semilla del cine en la costa Caribe colombiana.

Si hubiera todavía alguna discusión sobre la importancia de ese material realizado por aficionados, el solo ejemplo de nuestra región bastaría sin duda para terminarla: ese cine amateur nos está dando una información valiosa sobre la evolución en muchos frentes de una región que hoy tiene más de ocho millones de habitantes y que de otra forma no tendría conocimiento de parte importante de su pasado, porque en ese material hay, escondido a veces tras la sonrisa de un niño que juega frente a la cámara de su padre, de un baile captado por uno de los invitados o del recuerdo fílmico de un paseo al campo de ciudadanos o a la ciudad de gentes del campo, una información tan

compleja que apenas hoy, con el desarrollo de la sociología, la antropología y la interesante reflexión sobre la vida cotidiana que caracteriza a la llamada "nueva historia", estamos empezando a valorar en todas sus dimensiones.

Los espectadores de las salas comerciales de cine de Barranquilla se extasiaban no hace muchos meses con las imágenes de un accidente de tránsito simulado de los años cincuenta, en imágenes de archivo de la Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano utilizadas para recordar los cien años del cine en Colombia. Era conmovedor ver como los espectadores iban identificando casas ya desaparecidas de Barranquilla y calles que el progreso a ultranza fue transformando, señalando incluso en voz alta la cantidad de árboles que existían en aquella época y la belleza de algunas construcciones del pasado. Una de las exhibiciones con mayor participación del público que ha tenido la Cinemateca del Caribe en su sala en Barranquilla fue la de un Carnaval filmado por un aficionado en 1954. A nadie escapó la exuberancia de las carrozas de antaño y la desaparición de algunas de las esquinas célebres de la ciudad.

Si hablamos de Barranquilla con insistencia no es sólo porque esa es nuestra sede sino porque fue por ese puerto marítimo y fluvial por donde entraron muchos avances tecnológicos al país desde comienzos de siglo, incluyendo el cine.

Barranquilla es hoy la cuarta ciudad de Colombia por su desarrollo económico e industrial, pero está enclavada en una región que se ha caracterizado por su atraso respecto de otras zonas del país. Esta diferencia se ha mantenido a través de los años y se ha reflejado también en el desarrollo de sus expresiones artísticas. En toda la historia de la Costa Atlántica sólo se ha producido, por ejemplo, un largometraje. Fue sólo en los años ochenta que eso fue posible, a diferencia de otras ciudades, incluso de menor importancia en las que se han encontrado películas hasta del período silente. Vamos a filmar el año entrante apenas el segundo largometraje, gracias a la terquedad insobornable de un grupo de cineastas de nuestra región. ***

Con el apoyo inconstante de algunas entidades estatales y privadas se ha podido emprender la búsqueda del patrimonio audiovisual de la región. Es una responsabilidad muy grande ya que antes de cualquier cosa hay que convencer a mucha gente de su existencia e importancia ya que generalmente se cree que no existen imágenes animadas sobre la región. No existía un archivo formal en el que se pueda identificar esa población, ni en el que se

pueda indagar sobre su cultura y la evolución de sus aspectos sociales fundamentales, políticos, antropológicos, artísticos, etc.

La Fundación Cinemateca del Caribe, una organización no gubernamental creada por noventa amantes del cine en 1986, es la única entidad dedicada a la conservación y restauración del patrimonio audiovisual en la región. Esta actividad es aún más difícil cuando el Estado, y a veces los mismos poseedores del material tienen escaso interés y pocos recursos para salvaguardar un patrimonio tan valioso.

Gracias a estos hallazgos se puede reconstruir un pasado del que no hay casi testimonios vivos, ni siquiera fotográficos y escasamente escritos.

Hay sin embargo esperanzas. Nuestra fundación lleva ya por buen camino un proyecto para construir en Barranquilla un archivo de imágenes en movimiento con técnicas modernas diseñado para ese fin. No sólo sería el primero de la Costa Atlántica sino del país. En él se guardarían no sólo imágenes en movimiento de cine y televisión sino incluso algunas grabaciones del riquísimo folclor de nuestra región que de otra manera quedarían condenadas a la desaparición. Ya hemos tenido la asesoría de Joao Sócrates de Oliveira, arquitecto brasileño, experto en técnicas constructivas, quien vino especialmente a Barranquilla para asesorarnos en el diseño del proyecto, mientras a nivel nacional y local ya hemos tenido respuestas positivas tanto del sector gubernamental como del sector privado, que nos permiten pensar que el proyecto es posible. Todavía nos falta, sin embargo, un trecho muy largo por recorrer para lograr la financiación. Prestaría servicios no solamente al país sino a nuestros vecinos de la cuenca del Caribe.

No sería justo con este proyecto el que yo desaprovechara la oportunidad de decirle a los archivos colegas que toda su ayuda es desde ya bienvenida.

Las imágenes que veremos a continuación son testimonios visuales inéditos de acontecimientos algunas veces trascendentales, nacionales o regionales que aportan una gran cantidad de información sobre la vida y costumbres colombianas y en especial sobre Barranquilla, ciudad joven que prácticamente se piensa sin pasado. Jamás sospecharon sus realizadores que esas imágenes improvisadas se convertirían en el único documento audiovisual de esos años sobre la región.

Cuando empezamos a buscar películas hechas por aficionados que valientemente adelantaban sus trabajos a pesar de la inexistencia de una industria cinematográfica, descubrimos verdaderas joyas.

Empezamos la tarea en 1991, comenzamos la investigación para la localización y búsqueda del patrimonio fílmico de la región, y, básicamente, de los seiscientos veinte rollos que hemos encontrado, casi todos, excepto unos cuantos que no pasan de veinte, son hechos por realizadores aficionados.

En ese afán de búsqueda de nuestra propia historia en imágenes, encontramos unas escenas familiares de los mencionados pioneros italianos Di Doménico. Veamos la película recientemente restaurada gracias a la donación del señor Joao Sócrates de Oliveira, técnico de la National Film and Television Archive de Inglaterra
(Rodar casete)

Así, durante estos años hemos podido verificar que el hecho más importante alguna vez registrado por nuestros aficionados ha sido el Carnaval de Barranquilla, fiesta regional de gran valor folklórico que en nuestro archivo ocupa más del 30 % de las imágenes rescatadas.

Veamos los ejemplos de otro italiano, Floro Manco, realizados en los años veinte.
(Rodar casete)

Un pintor francés, Pierre Daguet, seducido por el sol del Caribe, echó raíces aquí en Cartagena, y no sólo hizo parte del movimiento artístico que impulsó a pintores y escultores locales, sino que dejó un legado invaluable que se pudo rescatar en 109 rollos en 8 mm, de los cuales les traemos los más representativos tanto de su obra como de su entorno.
(Rodar Casete)

La falta de una industria cinematográfica hacía pensar que todo el material que se encontraría serían documentales o homemovies.

Para nuestra sorpresa, también en Cartagena encontramos dos ejercicios de ficción, el primero de Gastón Lemaitre y Luis Mogollón. Cartageneros de tradición, hicieron parte de un grupo de inquietos intelectuales y cineastas aficionados en los años cincuenta. Veremos su película "Faustino".
(Rodar Casete)

Ahora exhibiremos un ejercicio cinematográfico de Francisco Pignaud, otro cineasta espontáneo que sigue dedicado al oficio audiovisual, aunque es economista.
(Rodar Casete)

RAFAEL CAMPANELLA, también hijo de inmigrantes italianos, fue primero trabajador de campos petroleros y alcalde de su propio pueblo y finalmente cineasta aficionado. Sus películas en Super 8 mm. documentan la vocación religiosa de esta región.

(Rodar Casete)

NANCY TARUD DE ABDALA. Esta diseñadora de modas coincidió en un viaje a Bogotá con la tragedia del incendio del edificio de la oficina de correos más importante del país.

(Rodar Casete)

LUIS ERNESTO AROCHA (Corralejas)

En el espacio amateur del cine de la Costa Atlántica colombiana también existen algunos cineastas que profundizaron en el oficio y lograron expresiones que ya están a medio camino hacia el cine profesional. Es el caso del pintor cartagenero Enrique Grau, el arquitecto barranquillero Luis Ernesto Arocha y el escritor y periodista Alvaro Cepeda Samudio. De ellos veremos el corto *Corralejas*, de Arocha, y *La Langosta Azul*, de Cepeda Samudio. Ambos pertenecieron a grupos de intelectuales en los cuales se gestaron escritores, como Gabriel García Márquez.

El caso de Arocha es particularmente interesante, no solamente porque sigue haciendo cine hoy en día sino porque participó en movimientos cinematográficos en Estados Unidos al lado de figuras conocidas del arte contemporáneo como Andy Warhol. Experiencia que marca algunos de sus documentales sobre artistas colombianos.

(Rodar Casete)

ALVARO CEPEDA SAMUDIO (La Langosta Azul)

En cuanto a Cepeda Samudio, compartió su tiempo de director de un diario con la realización de un noticiario cinematográfico, de los pocos que han existido en el país y documentales sobre diversos temas. Su película *La Langosta Azul*, hecha en los años cincuenta fue realizada junto con el catalán Luis Vicens y el fotógrafo Nereo y marcó un momento importante en la historia de la cinematografía nacional por su clara intención de hacer un cine distinto. La inexistente industria cinematográfica los obligó a presentar un trabajo sin sonido. La película tiene una clara influencia del movimiento surrealista.

(Rodar Casete)

Gracias por su atención.

EXPERIENCIAS DE UNA COLECCIÓN DE FILMS DOMÉSTICOS

(Intervención de Ricardo Muñoz Suay)
Director de la Filmoteca de la
Generalitat Valenciana - Valencia

Según una definición de la Asociación Europea de Inédits, films inéditos son aquellas imágenes en movimiento que evocan todos los aspectos de la vida de nuestras sociedades, de ayer y de hoy, realizadas en todos los formatos y soportes y que, en su origen, no estaban destinadas a la difusión en los circuitos profesionales del audiovisual.

Uno de los primeros problemas con los que se encuentra un archivo filmico que acoge a todos estos materiales (ya que dentro de los archivos filmicos hay quienes quieren conservarlo todo y quienes sólo lo esencial), es la clasificación de los mismos. Siguiendo las criterios generales que se establecen en las normas de catalogación de la F.I.A.F. comenzamos desglosando lo que genéricamente se denomina como inéditos en tres categorías:

- INÉDITOS. Producciones de tipo familiar en los que predomina el caracter documental o el reportaje familiar pero sin que conste la familia objeto del reportaje o la persona que filmó las imágenes. También incluye materiales no familiares cuyo proceso de producción no se concluyó.

- Películas caseras (HOME MOVIES) - Personal

- Familiar

Pero luego nos encontramos con una serie de películas adscribibles al denominado cine independiente, pero no sólo el

valenciano: aparecen así las primeras realizaciones de un director español Paulino Viota o las del músico Carles Santos. Además tenemos que separar en otro listado películas de ficción realizadas por aficionados o amateurs con equipos y formatos propios de las películas caseras pero cuyos contenidos desbordan esta clasificación. Asimismo hay una serie de depósitos con producciones valencianas de carácter documental que, pese a estar filmados en 16mm y sin respaldo industrial, existe la duda de considerarlos amateurs por ser profesionales sus realizadores en el momento que los realizaron o con anterioridad. Y tampoco pueden considerarse como inéditos al estar montados y en muchos casos existir negativo y copia de exhibición. Son más bien cortometrajes convencionales que no alcanzaron la difusión comercial que buscaban sus propios realizadores y productores. Son problemas para su clasificación.

Por otro lado, una de las grandes ventajas de los films de aficionados es que registran una cronología. Al contrario del profesional que intenta encontrar el pasado reconstruyendo un momento preciso, cada film amateur es una crónica. Las historias locales reflejan la historia nacional. Una sociedad que goza de buena salud es una sociedad que dialoga con su experiencia pasada para comprender el presente y prepararse para avanzar en el futuro. Los films inéditos pueden contribuir y ejercer un papel importante en la comprensión del comportamiento de Europa a lo largo del siglo XX.

Pero para este proyecto doble es preciso primero catalogar los films y luego analizarlos en su contexto, lo que debería de contar, probablemente, con la ayuda de la Universidad. Toda una

suma de detalles pueden ser interpretados en cada uno de estos films en un plano histórico, social o religioso, a pesar de la apariencia banal de las tomas del cineasta. Y no sólo el sector académico debería estar involucrado, también el sector de la producción, y especialmente el de la producción televisiva, estos últimos nuestros clientes más habituales en la petición de imágenes.

Estos tres elementos: los archivos filmicos, la Universidad y la Producción, deberíamos de estructurar una colaboración para beneficio de todos.

Hasta ahora el archivo de la Filmoteca de la Generalitat Valenciana acumula (....) estos documentos filmicos, es a nosotros a quienes se nos confían. Pero no debemos ignorar que estas imágenes tienen espectadores potenciales a quienes les interesan. Para una producción, la única selección es la que puede hacerse con relación a la temática, es el papel del realizador. El cine puede también ofrecer nuevas perspectivas abiertas para el uso de estas imágenes.

Y los archivos tienen problemas financieros. Las imágenes amateur interesan a mucha gente pero las filmotecas no podremos durante mucho tiempo ceder las imágenes a las universidades o a las productoras de forma gratuita. Habrá que buscar la fórmula que nos permita sacar algún beneficio para nuestros archivos.

Referente a este tema nosotros ya hemos tenido una experiencia en una coproducción con la Televisión Valenciana. Como consecuencia de un convenio de colaboración entre la Filmoteca de la Generalitat Valenciana y Televisión Valenciana, surgió la idea de localizar y catalogar imágenes de la Comunidad Valenciana rodadas mayoritariamente por amateurs, material

inédito que podía resultar de interés para conocer los fondos que permanecían guardados y olvidados en nuestros almacenes. Fue toda una sorpresa para los documentalistas de TV, ya que no podían imaginar la riqueza de imágenes que encontraron: desde la visita de un general franquista al lago de la Albufera de Valencia en los años 1940, la familia que veraneaba en Benicassim y que captó el rodaje de la película "Novio a la vista" de Berlanga o los comienzos de la publicidad a principios de los años 30. Fue una serie que se tituló "Imágenes de la Memoria".

En una sociedad como la actual acostumbrados a las imágenes y a la multiplicación de los canales de TV, fue un acierto mostrarles como vestían sus abuelos, como era una boda en los años 20 o como celebraban el nacimiento de una criatura. Pero no solamente este tipo de acontecimientos familiares sino que también pudimos descubrirles como eran físicamente personajes reconocidos de la cultura valenciana o el último recorrido del tren Gandia-Alcoi, una línea de ferrocarril hoy desaparecida.

Fue una experiencia interesante, ya que aparte de la novedad de esta iniciativa supuso para nosotros una puesta al día de estos materiales. Debido a nuestro escaso personal, parte de este material inédito estaba aparcado a la espera de su posterior catalogación: partiendo de los rollos de las películas depositados se hizo un trabajo de registro, catalogación e indización del material audio-visual. Para ello se creó una base de datos con el sistema de gestión documental BRS/Search. Por otra parte en diversos medios de comunicación se insertó publicidad de este proyecto y conseguimos recuperar bastante más material inédito para enriquecer nuestros fondos. Gracias a este convenio, no tuvimos beneficios económicos, pero por lo menos,

se hizo posible que nosotros pudieramos disponer facilmente de nuestro material inédito y aumentarlo y que la Televisión Valenciana emitiera una serie de producción propia.

No es un trabajo acabado. Pero lo principal es que continúan llegando materiales inéditos y que la gente ha descubierto que el Archivo de la Filmoteca es el mejor sitio donde pueden conservar las imágenes de sus familiares.

Actualmente tenemos más de dos mil documentos, unas 200 horas de imágenes retrospectivas de pueblos, vida cotidiana, celebraciones, visitas oficiales, bodas, entierros, misas católicas, manifestaciones antifranquistas, fiestas populares, etc..., desde principios de siglo hasta finales de los 70, aproximadamente, lo que supone una riqueza documental para posteriores usos en programas de televisión o en producciones cinematográficas.

Debo agradecer al equipo de la Filmoteca de la Generalitat Valenciana, los compañeros del Archivo (Lahoz, Trull y Bosch) y a la responsable del área de restauración Elena Vilardell, no sólo sus trabajos sino el inicio de una actividad.....

R. MONOZ SUAY

