

Rediscovering Kinotron: The Kyiv School of Science Film

In late 2020, around 11,000 film reels were discovered at the National Cinemateque of Ukraine, the former Kyiv Studio of Popular Science Films. Since the studio's bankruptcy in the 1990s, these reels were stored in an attic with no proper conditions for film preservation. Part of this non-archive is a vast number of unedited rushes and footage shot for films that were left unfinished between the 1960s and 1990s. Among these is previously unknown film material created by the so-called Kyiv School of Science Film.

The school was an innovative circle of filmmakers around the director Felix Sobolev, who merged experimental film with scientific research under socialism. It was concerned with the development of various cinematic constellations of aesthetics, intelligence, and knowledge – which were approached as single elements of intertwined social processes, thus requiring new forms of spectatorship and institutional relations.

Olexii Kuchanskyi and Oleksiy Radynski, who initiated the rediscovery of the archive, will present some of the recently found visual materials as well as Felix Sobolev's writings on his unrealized project "Kinotron." "Kinotron" promised to be "a new form of film production," which would enable a "powerful acceleration" of filmmaking and mutual relations between science and cinema.

This presentation will be organized in a semi-fictional manner in order to reveal the social, political, institutional, and aesthetic conditions of Sobolev's unrealized project, as well as the abandonment of the films produced by the school. The potential of the abandoned archive is approached as a path out of the traumatic repetitions maintained by cultural and infrastructural colonial violence. Currently, this film archive is threatened not only due to improper preservation conditions, but also by the threat of Russian rocket attacks.