

Arsenal Summer School

Experiment ↔ Institution

Dialogues on How to Build an Independent Film Culture in Cairo and Berlin

(events held in English)

The fifth Arsenal Summer School will take place from August 21 to 23. “Experiment ↔ Institution: Dialogues on How to Build an Independent Film Culture in Cairo and Berlin” will consist of eight events – discussions, film talks, and screenings – at which different contributors from theory and practice will reflect on the tasks and challenges of working with film. While the Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the Cimatheque – Alternative Film Centre in Cairo has only just been founded. Two institutions with many interfaces and similar visions discuss and pose questions: What do we understand by the concept “subversive/alternative” cinema – both historically and today? Have there been shifts in meaning? What are the tasks and missions of curatorial practice within an institutional framework? What contemporary ideas are available for this? What is the significance of film archives with respect to the contemporary practice with film?

Dialogues between the two institutions, represented by:

Mohamed Beshir, Hana Al Bayaty, Tamer El Said (Cimatheque – Alternative Film Centre in Cairo)
Milena Gregor, Birgit Kohler, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art)

With participation by:

Michel Balagué, filmmaker, producer (Mengamuk Films, Berlin/Vienna), co-founder of Labor Berlin
Marcin Malaszczyk, filmmaker, co-founder of Mengamuk Films, Berlin/Vienna
Michael Zryd, York University Toronto

Screenings:

SIENIAWKA, Marcin Malaszczyk, Germany, Poland 2013, 126 min
AL-KHOROUGH LEI-NAHAR (Coming Forth by Day) Hala Lotfy, Egypt, United Arab Emirates 2012, 96 min
Plus shorts subjects and film clips

Wednesday, 21 August

3:00 p.m.

Experiment ↔ Institution: Dialogues on How to Build an Independent Film Culture in Cairo and Berlin

Welcome of participants and introduction

Milena Gregor, Birgit Kohler und Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art), Mohamed Beshir, Hana Al Bayaty, Tamer El Said (Cimatheque – Alternative Film Centre in Cairo)

location: Cinema 2

3:30–5.30 p.m.

Cinema as a Contemporary Practice

While the Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the Cinematheque – Alternative Film Centre in Cairo has just been founded. Two institutions with many interfaces discuss and pose questions. What are the tasks and challenges of working with film in a living and timely manner in various social and political contexts? What do the terms public and counter-public mean today? What strategies of mediating film are being sought out? There is a self-reflexive question at the center of all this: What are the distinguishing characteristics of a living cinematheque, a film institution, a film cooperative, a living film archive?

location: Cinema 2

6:00–7:00 p.m.

Capacity Building – Where Does the Institutionalization of the Experimental Begin?

Michael Zryd, York University Toronto

Forming institutions in the area of alternative, experimental, or independent film seems just as inevitable as critiquing them. Often, however, what institutions offer artists, but also ‘consumers’ or cultural producers, is above all the opportunity for self-organization, without which they could not exist. To what degree does institutionalization contradict the anti-conformism of experimental filmmaking, or to what degree does the formation of institutional structures promote the cinema as a site for subversive art, and film as the expression of it?

Michael Zryd, York University Toronto

location: Cinema 2

8:00 p.m. dinner

Thursday, 22 August

10:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

SIENIAWKA – A Classic Forum Film?

Filmmaker Marcin Malaszczyk and producer Michel Balagué discuss film visions and the possibilities of financial and creative autonomy in the production process.

Screening with discussion following: SIENIAWKA, Marcin Malaszczyk, Germany, Poland 2013, 126 min

Future, past, and present meet in SIENIAWKA, a film of few words. The men in the “outside world” live in the “freedom” of a zone that bears the geographical, political, and film historical marks of an apocalyptic present. Other men have fled to the “inside world” of an institution, resigning themselves to rigid everyday routine. How real can life be in place forgotten by history? “SIENIAWKA is an intelligent film about a place not far from our border to Poland. It is surrounded... by an apocalyptic landscape scarred by open-cast coal mining. Over two long, but never too long hours of this classic Forum film, we even come to understand this image. The madmen are still us.” (Philipp Bühler)

location: Cinema 2

1:30–3:30 p.m.

Alternative/Independent/Subversive Cinema

What do we understand by these terms – both historically and today? Have there been shifts in their meaning? What socio-cultural and political frames of reference are bound up with this kind of terminology? What meaning do they take on within an institutional framework?

location: Cinema 2

4:00–6:00 p.m.

Archive Work as a Contemporary Artistic and Curatorial Practice

What does it mean to do curatorial work with films? What does the curator's responsibility look like within an institutional structure, as well as within a political system? What is the mediating task at hand, and how should we understand the relationship to censorship and social critique? To what degree is curatorial practice an expression of collection consciousness and/or the curator's individuality?

location: Cinema 2

Friday, 23 August

10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

What is a Revolutionary Film?

Screening with discussion following: AL-KHOROUGH LEI-NAHAR (Coming Forth by Day)

Hala Lotfy, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, 2012, 96 min

One day in the life of Soad, who lives with her mother and bed-ridden father at the edge of Cairo, resigned to caring for her father. The camera patiently follows her routine activities, capturing both her frustration and also moments of great tenderness. Hala Lotfy's impressive debut focuses the gaze on the relationship of light and shadow, of inside and outside, of life and death. Soad's longing is palpably directed outward. But when one evening she leaves the apartment and drifts alone through the Cairene night, it becomes clear how far away she is from her own needs.

location: Cinema 2

1:30–3:30 p.m.

Archive Work as Looking Back to the Future

Over the course of the last 50 years, a comprehensive archive of around 8,000 films has been collected at the Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art, without any systematic collecting mission ever having existed. In Cairo, there is currently no film archive at all. Artistic works and films that might serve as witness to the past revolutionary upheavals in the country, and which might be able to focus interest on the cultural identity and history of the country, are scattered about – in private homes, at censorship boards, abroad ... Despite the differing starting points, both institutions are faced with the question of how doing archive work as a contemporary and artistic practice can be understood and implemented within these two institutions.

location: Cinema 2

4:00–6:00 p.m.

Closing discussion with reception following

location: Cinema 2

Event venue:

Arsenal Kino 1 and 2

In the basement of the Filmhaus at Potsdamer Platz,

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