

10th Arsenal Summer School August 23–25, 2018 at silent green and Kino Arsenal

YOU NAME IT!

Indexing and other guideposts through film archives

Each year the Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art offers a Summer School. For three days participants engage with a topic located at the interface of theory and practice.

Keywording, tagging, algorithms, indexing – all these terms revolve around the possibilities of approaching archives and the challenges involved with a data bank. How do you find what you're looking for? How much are conceptual terms attributed to an artistic work defined by contemporary reception or in turn define it? How do film archives differ from other archives and how can we safeguard something as ephemeral as "oral history," incorporating it into a meaningful systematics of search functions?

The presentations and workshops at this year's Summer School are about the practice of indexing in archives, looking both back and into the future: What requirements should be fulfilled by contemporary databanks? Can search functions be developed that will last into the future, beyond the Zeitgeist? What criteria do we need to consider?

Contributions by Johannes Braun, Toby Cornish, Madhusree Dutta, Milena Gregor, Dr. Florian Hoof, Birgit Kohler, Sebastian Lütgert, Jasmina Metwaly, Volker Pantenburg and Stefanie Schulte Strathaus.

The presentations are partly in German language only.

All those interested can register at summerschool@arsenal-berlin.de.

The number of participants is limited.

Program

Thursday, August 23

9:30, silent green Kulturquartier

Arrival and Welcome

10:30–11:30, silent green Kulturquartier

Keywords in the History of the Arsenal – Looking Back

by Milena Gregor, Birgit Kohler and Stefanie Schulte Strathaus

When the Arsenal published its last analogue distribution catalogue in 1987, it carried descriptions of the films as well as a series of indexes that were meant to make the films accessible through various ordering schemes. Besides lists of films sorted by directors, countries and a register of the German titles, the catalogue also included a list of keywords. Maybe due to the translation from an analogue list to a data bank or due to doubts of the terms used in the list: the distribution catalogue of 1987 was the last document that offered a search through keywords as an access to the films of Arsenal's collection. The current data bank is based on author names, film titles, countries, years of release and technical formats.

The abandonment of keywords as a tool to sort and access films equalled the doubt of the used terms. To apply the given formats and conventions would mean to consciously simplify the films' approaches and shrink their scopes. This remark might be a reminder that our use of language in annotating our practices is far more complex than the day to day dealing with the archive. But would we have to give up on working with keywords entirely?

11:30–13:30, silent green Kulturquartier

KEYwording. Notes on Enculturation of Words and Word Practice within the Image Archive – Ein Living Archive Projekt

by Madushree Dutta

During the archival project "Living Archive – Archive Work as a Contemporary Artistic and Curatorial Project" Madhusree Dutta and Ines Schaber examined "Keywords" in an international context. The project was based on contemporary debates about the articulation of cultural practices in language. Their goal was to create a cross-cultural dialogue on the usage and currency of terms in the context of cultural production. The project was carried out by Ines Schaber and Madhusree Dutta, two cultural workers, artists, and critics from Berlin and Bombay. The particularities of life experiences in these two cities, coupled with a common approach to contemporary social order, formed the basis for their reflections.

Starting from keyword projects taken from the last 50 years, they created yet another list of keywords, which they argue address the immediate thinking in cultural practices and discourses and, in addition, represent to a certain extent the non-synchronization of experiences in different cultural contexts.

13:30, silent green Kulturquartier

Lunch in Mars restaurant

15:00–16:30, silent green Kulturquartier

**Search images revisited. How to find images with images?
by Volker Pantenburg**

“Every archive of moving images on film, whether as a resident archive or as a sorting operation that seeks to structure itself according to pictorial similarities, constantly comes up against the problem of a logic of images.” – write Wolfgang Ernst, Stefan Heidenreich and Ute Holl at the beginning of the volume *Suchbilder. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmen und Archiven* [*Search Images: Visual Culture between Algorithms and Archives*]. The book, which appeared in 2003 and stems from the tensions between media and cultural studies, computer science, and artistic practice (especially Harun Farocki’s film contributions to an “Archive of Film Expressions”) looks for alternatives to the dominance of a purely language-based access to the archive. How does access to the archive change if the search criteria are not words, but images? If key-images form the entry point and the connections rather than keywords?

Since then 15 years have passed, in which questions of automatized image recognition and algorithmic search have come more and more into the focus of debate, and the balance between human and mechanical vision has shifted in favor of mechanical vision. Using my concrete work with the holdings at the archive of the Harun Farocki Institute, my presentation is meant to take a new look at some of the questions from 2003. How can the logic of keywords, lists, linguistic descriptions be linked up with possibilities of addressing that are internal to the image, possibilities that exist today to a much wider degree? And what is our relation now to what Tom Holert in his time called the “post-political, post-ideological, post-semantic, post-social etc. operations of transferring critique into programming”?

17:00–19:00, silent green Kulturquartier

**"The Zen of [Pad.ma](#)" – Contemporary Data Banks
Sebastian Lütgert in conversation with Jasmina Metwaly**

After more than ten years of running video archives like [0xDB.org](#) and [Pad.ma](#), and in the light of more recent projects like [bak.ma](#) and [858.ma](#), I would like to talk less about what we do, and more about how we do it. Because what we do is online, open, for-free, transparent, and reproducible, while how we do it often remains a mystery, sometimes even to ourselves. The “artist-run archive” is still an outlier in a world of institutionalized cultural heritage management, our practice of “friendship-driven software development” still mostly unheard of in a tech scene that moves from meetings to milestones, and back again. And while one of our most important findings, namely that “waiting is forbidden,” has attracted a number of fans, followers and even friends (some of whom speak Arabic, which is how we learned that our beautiful slogan just means: “no parking”), we still think that our time this summer is best spent by shedding more light on what it means, for each of the abovementioned projects, to first of all, by all means: “do it” – and then ask questions later, lay the groundwork later, deal with disasters later, and sit in archive conferences, seminars, and workshops later. (Sebastian Lütgert)

858 is an initiative to make public all the footage shot and collected in Egypt between the years 2011 and 2013. It is an initiative open to the public with footage that hasn’t been seen before, some of it was on YouTube, but mostly in an edited form. On launching, the archive has 858 hours of raw indexed and time-stamped video material in its original length presenting thousands of histories of revolt, along with photographs and documents collected in that period.

858 is an ongoing project open to interventions, interactions, countering. (Jasmina Metwaly)

19:00, silent green Kulturquartier

Dinner together at the Mars Restaurant (included in the fees)

Friday, August 24

10:00–12:00, silent green Kulturquartier

Cornish and Braun: “Roughness on the Edges”
Film strategies for photography archives
by Toby Cornish and Johannes Braun

The filmmakers will talk about their video installation “Roughness on the edges”, their working process and the parallels between the systematics of archives in four photographic archives documented and their own archival method of film-montage.

1000 shots were filmed in 4 photographic archives in Berlin and Florence, showing the surfaces, labels, notations, edges and surrounding habitat of the archival objects as well as the actions and gestures of the hands of the archivists. The filmmakers not only wanted to show the materiality and behavior of the archives visually, but also to reflect the methodology of the archives in their montage by using a physical file-card system, keywords, and categories to label and edit their own material. Made for the exhibition “Unboxing Photographs - Work in Photo-Archives” at Kunstbibliothek, Berlin, 2018.

12:00, silent green Kulturquartier

Lunch in Mars restaurant

13:30–15:30, silent green Kulturquartier

Praxis Workshop “What would you decide?”

Four selected films will be viewed in groups. Afterward the participants will work on keywords with which they reflect and specify the experiential spaces and thematic fields of the individual works.

16:00–18:00, silent green Kulturquartier

Joint viewing of films: Presentation and discussion of the results in the plenum

followed by a move to the Arsenal

19:30, Arsenal Cinema 2

Film History Indexed?
Film program with an introduction by Milena Gregor

Since October 2009 the Arsenal’s film history series – the Magical History Tour – has followed the principle of alternating its monthly thematic focal point. With sometimes classical headings, sometimes looser ones like “Color in Film,” “Montage,” “Spatial representations” but also “Lost Films Found,” “Collectives,” or even “Flaneurs in Film, Flaneuring Cinema,” 10 to 15 diverse films (from all eras, continents, styles, genres) are positioned each month in relation to one another. Is this an “indexed” writing of film history, and if so, what opportunities does it present, or what restrictions have to be worked around?

20:00, Arsenal Cinema 2

Magnolia (Paul Thomas Anderson, USA 1999, 35 mm, OV, 188 min)

or

21:15, Arsenal Cinema 1

Gloria (John Cassavetes, USA 1980, 35 mm, OV with German subtitles, 123 min)

Saturday, August 25

10:00–12:00, silent green Kulturquartier

Digital Access Assistance Systems: Uncertainty and Making Decisions in Digital Film Culture

by Dr. Florian Hoof

Digital streaming and archival platforms like Netflix, archive.org, or European Film Gateway consist of a large amount of data. Aside from the actual “content,” the moving images, this encompasses the levels of metadata, which are meant to provide the user with an overview and a way to navigate through the available content. Alongside “classical” forms of describing objects in archives such as indexing, this also includes so-called recommendation systems, which automatically recommend new contents to the user. Netflix or Google refer to these digital assistance systems as automatized algorithmic operations or as AI, artificial intelligence. How does this change “decisions of the archive”? What media historical genealogies converge here with established archival practice? What areas of conflict arise? What new opportunities for access result from this? And how can we introduce these operations into the dissemination of film and media culture?

12:00, silent green Kulturquartier

Lunch in Mars restaurant

13:30–15:00, silent green Kulturquartier

Workshop: Arsenal Data Bank of the Future

What do we want and need from a data bank of the future? An open discussion

15:30–17:30, silent green Kulturquartier

Closing discussion

17:30, silent green Kulturquartier

Drinks

Attendance/Registration

The number of participants is limited (30 persons). Attendance fee: 135 Euro / 115 Euro (members, students, Berlin-Pass) / 95 Euro (members of arsenal-Freundeskreis)

Registration deadline is August 5, 2018

Venues:

silent green Kulturquartier
Gerichtstr. 35, 13347 Berlin
& Kino Arsenal
in the Filmhaus at Potsdamer Platz
Potsdamer Str. 2, 10785 Berlin

Contact

Angelika Ramlow | Organization
summerschool@arsenal-berlin.de