

Experimental film and the application of new technologies

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ABSTRACT

From the prehistoric times, humans have felt the need to illustrate real or imagined events through visual media, using the technologies that were available at a given moment. While the prehistoric man has been trying to capture everyday hunting scenes through simplified drawings, using dyes made from natural materials, today's average user is equipped with the most versatile modern technology - from 3D cameras to cutting-edge video production software. The integral part of this paper consists of a short experimental film recorded using a Vuze+ video system. The system consists of eight lenses, arranged so that they can simultaneously record the entire space in all directions. The medium intended for watching such a film is a virtual reality headset, a mobile device is a handy medium that can only partially convey the experience, while the experience is the worst when displayed on the computer screen. The film is amateur and exploratory in nature, made with no previous experience in recording and editing videos.

Keywords: live-action film, film genres, film crew, film technologies, experimental film, 3D camera system, virtual reality headset

Experimental film

As a form of a non-dominant film, experimental film has appeared alongside avant-garde art currents of the first two decades of the 20th century. Normally, the notion of an experimental phase in art usually appears after a long period of a classical one when all the "rules" are established and mastered, which is why we could claim that such an experimental phase in cinematography appeared rather early since, from its very beginning, most filmmakers, as well as better educated viewers, adopted some traditional notions regarding what constitutes a film and which conventions should it abide by (e.g. camera movements, editing, continuity and logic of a film narrative). The types of films that in a way separate themselves from the conventional model appear early on as a reaction to the "conventional" films. Experimental film belongs to that type. An experimental film could be defined as a film containing an innovation in the area of cinematic expression or the manner in which the subject matter is treated. Often, such a film represents an expression of a conscious resistance towards the

ingrained determinants present in the dominant cinematography. Due to its frequently exclusive character and non-commercial nature, it often originates within the frameworks of alternative cinematography, bringing forth novelties significant for the development of film in general. In that regard, we could say that it is synonymous with the term avant-garde film. Another way of perceiving experimental films is that they are specific types of film since, due to their diversity, there are different interpretations of the notion. So, for example, for S. Kracauer, an experimental film is every film characterised by the absence of narrative. Yet, other definitions encompass a rather narrow area of cinematography. Therefore, according to some, an experimental film does not use a depictive way of filming, and the film does not register reality which would be recognisable on the footage. While a part of such non-depictive current in experimental film deals with abstract animation, whereby approaching some contemporary tendencies in visual arts, another current, by filming segments of reality,

seeks to disrupt the "substantial presentation of reality" through rhythmic structuring of the film and avoiding narrativity. Such denomination is attributed to live-action films made with a specific directing procedure (only subjective frames, long takes, etc.). The so-called expanded cinema ensues, dealing with a technical overturn of film limitations (this relates to parallel projections, disrupting the cinema screen frame and its shape, the beginning and end of the filmstrip, etc.).

Characteristics of experimental film

Just as it was noticeable thus far, when describing the characteristics of experimental film, negative designations are used most frequently and everything that makes an experimental film different compared to a documentary or live-action film, or even mainstream films in general is emphasised. For example, its rhythm is emphasised which is most frequently opposite to the natural rhythm of sequencing certain phenomena.

The narrative components are, as opposed to live-action films, handled freely, they do not represent the basis for the entire film, but only one component of its structure. What is evident in experimental film is that there is no logic behind cause and effect related to breaking down and connecting events, chronology is neglected, and the time perspective is highly undefined.

That which differentiates it from a documentary film is actually the same thing that separates a live-action from a documentary film: quantitative supremacy of differentiating factors, an obvious structure. In "Innocence Unprotected" (1968), a film by Dušan Makavejev, fragments constructed through a documentary method based on conversation fit into the structure, as well as quotes from another film through which Makavejev contrasts and depicts his relationship towards two historical periods and presents the viewer with an essay on cinematography. In some aspects, this is even more emphasised than in live-action film. For example, sometimes the formation of a cinematic world of images and sounds is completely foreign to the viewer's experience of reality (abstract film). The dominance in joining parts into a whole, explicitly through the principles of logical thinking, prevalence of the author's comments and a high degree of alienating reality are the fundamental

characteristics of experimental film as a genre. It conveys a state or an emotion, functions as a reflexive work, an expression of the worldview, a momentary vision, or hallucination. The most noticeable characteristic of experimental film, conspicuous even to a layman, is definitely the obvious transformation of reality. A high degree of alienation, a true altering of reality, can be achieved in such a way that its unaltered parts are connected, not by the principles of causality, but by some key, visible only to the author. Another way of achieving this is to apply some cinematic technique which distorts, changes the physical quality of the entities shown, or through a bizarre scenographic or transformation of reality through costume design.

Issues facing experimental film

At the beginning of sound film, the period of the early 1930s, there is a certain stagnation of avant-garde orientations. Its causes are avant-garde activity in other arts, stimulative to the film, which has already reached its peak, followed by exclusivity of avant-garde activities which is sometimes contrary to the official national doctrines concerning art (Germany during the Nazi era, USSR at the time of Stalinist purges). Furthermore, the very introduction of sound gives the film medium a further degree of realism which is sometimes contrary to the tendencies towards abstraction, surrealism and stylisation which are so characteristic of such avant-garde currents.

Moreover, it seems almost needless to say how much resistance there is towards anything that is not mainstream, which is why experimental film was given the adjective artistic, alienating it from the audience, which is, of course, unnecessary.

Besides, experimental film is in opposition to the dominant and cost effective cinematography, so, as such, it is difficult to establish a position with film professionals lacking the understanding for artistically exclusive and unprofitable works. That is why such works mostly originate within alternative cinematography or amateur activity.

An issue of the very title experimental film arises. As stated by Ante Peterlić, "... the most frequently used term for this film genre is definitely the

most “awkward” since it does not even indicate the characteristics belonging to it. Its origin lies in the aspiration to emphasise the difference between some, say, unusual films and all the standard products of cinematography, so the attribute “experimental” is sometimes given to every live-action film that is more procedurally original.

An example of experimental film-making

Considering the filming technique with a 360° system consisting of eight lenses, the very filming process requires greater preparation than that which would be necessary for a film recorded using a classic camera since the viewer has the freedom to see the entire space, and, if the content is positioned to only one “frame”, the remainder of the space will seem static and unnecessary. It is practically feasible to simultaneously record several different actions spread out over the entire area, and the viewer can choose the action to watch at a given point in the film. Such a solution enables the viewer to watch the film several times and see completely different events in the area, and therefore, experience different things through repeated views. The film consists of four events recorded in four different areas. The areas were chosen in the way that, through their size, structure and lighting, they leave room for dabbling with the light and shadows with no budget whatsoever. On the other hand, considering that the camera system is amateur and does not handle spaces lacking daylight or studio lighting well, it was estimated that the quality of footage without using additional luminaires cannot be high. That is why, from the very beginning of the idea, the film was assumed to be made in black and white technique with partially emphasised contrasts.

For additional experience of the depth present in the area, the camera system was placed in a large dog crate, and, for the maximum viewer experience, the crate was positioned on a moving cart so as to achieve movement of the entire 3D surroundings. The sound present in one of the scenes served as the soundtrack, deformed to such measure that it corresponds to the atmosphere of the film.

The film is available at the following YouTube link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSJhEdzDRUQ>
It is recommended to set the video quality to maximum, and, if watched on a mobile phone, the film has to be viewed using the YouTube application.



Image 1: Depth scene



Image 2: Outdoor scene



Image 3: Soundtrack scene

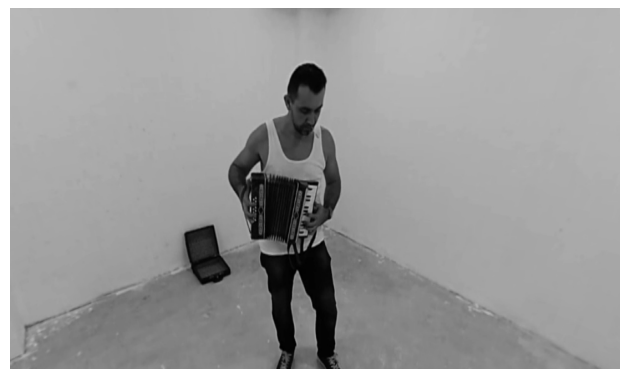


Image 4: Indoor scene

Conclusion

Film is a medium which significantly affects the society and social changes, whether by documenting real events or depicting fiction using state-of-the-art technology. The first screening devices could only be simultaneously used by a single individual, while, through the development of the cinema, television, and finally the Internet, film has become easily accessible to the masses. Nowadays, any film can be obtained through the Internet in mere minutes and watched wherever, using devices that fit into the palm of a hand. By using popular Internet platforms such as YouTube, authors can,

at any given moment, distribute their work free of charge. The latest practice, which I consider to be only in its experimental stage, is comprised of video systems which are able to record space and action simultaneously in all directions. It is expected that 360 video technology will soon be widely present in the film and marketing industries, but, I hope its potential will be used to the fullest for educational purposes.

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Eksperimentalni film i primjena novih tehnologija

SAŽETAK

Čovjek je još od prapovijesnih vremena osjećao potrebu da radnju stvarnog ili izmišljenog događaja dočara kroz vizualne medije, koristeći tehnologije koje su mu bile dostupne u datome trenutku. Dok je pračovjek koristeći boje sačinjene od prirodnih materijala slijedom pojednostavljenih crteža pokušao dočarati svakodnevne prizore iz lova, u današnje doba prosječnom korisniku dostupna je najrazličitija moderna tehnologija, od 3D kamera do vrhunskih računalnih softwera za video produkciju. Sastavni dio ovoga rada je kratak eksperimentalni film, snimljen Vuze+ video sustavom. Sustav se sastoji od osam kamera, raspoređenih na način da istovremeno mogu snimati cijeli prostor u svim smjerovima.

Medij namijenjen za gledanje takvoga filma su naočale za virtualnu stvarnost, mobilni uređaj je priručni medij koji doživljaj može samo djelomično dočarati, dok je doživljaj na zaslonu računala najslabiji. Film je amaterske i istraživačke prirode, napravljen bez prethodnog iskustva u snimanju i montaži videa.

Ključne riječi: igrani film, filmski žanrovi, filmska ekipa, filmske tehnologije, eksperimentalni film, 3D sustav kamera, naočale za virtualnu stvarnost

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