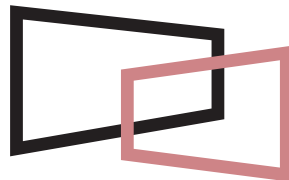


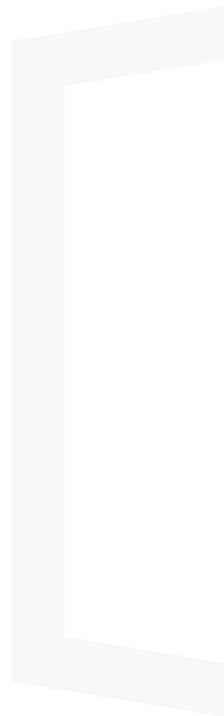
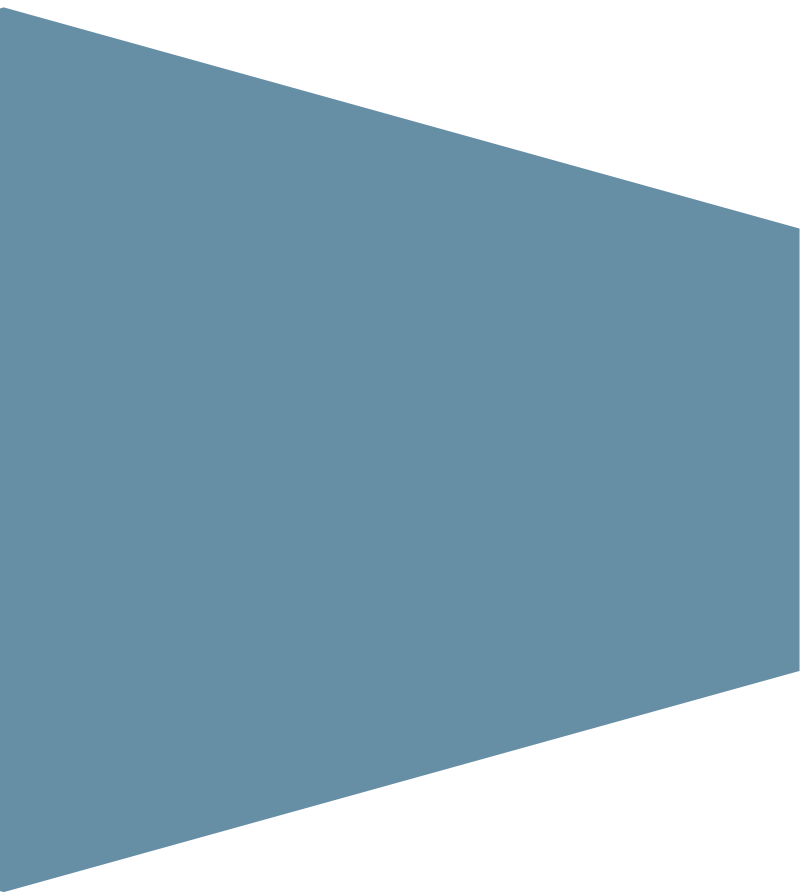
Research Program  
**Cinepoetics** – Center for  
Advanced Film Studies

Hermann Kappelhoff  
Michael Wedel



**Cinepoetics**

Poetologien  
audiovisueller  
Bilder



## Cinepoetics

The Center for Advanced Film Studies *Cinepoetics* examines how film images interact with other film images, how they emerge from other images and constantly produce new film images. That is to say, it researches the theoretical conditions and historical peculiarities of audiovisual discursivity.

Films do not illustrate the reality that surrounds us—and not the world as it ‘really’ is, and not the way in which it is given once and for all to the individual person. Rather, they are media that make it possible for an **undefinable plurality of all possible people** to manufacture a common world, a shared sensation for the communal world. Film images are therefore media of manufacturing a sensed, physical experience of the world, which is shared by a wide variety of people with widely divergent ranges of experience, desires, and intentions, and which is apportioned and conveyed among them in order for the feeling of a common world to emerge.



## *The Film Image*

According to our thesis, the discourse of audiovisual images cannot be referring to the issues represented, nor to the stories represented, not even to the fictional or real actions that are performed there. It concerns much more the media conditions of human perception, understanding, assessing, and imaging; and in these conditions it is a model of our relationship to our commonly shared world.

Film images do this in a special way; in fact they do not in any way exist per se as technical artifacts, but always and exclusively in the appropriation of audiovisual images by the media user, they are media of creating a feeling for a communal world.

This is the sense in which we speak of **viewing films** as a specific way of appropriating audiovisual images. This allows film images to emerge from the interweaving of two acts of perception: a seeing and a hearing that is performed as audio-vision in a wide variety of displays—and an appropriation process by the media consumer that relates to this seeing and hearing as an object of its perception. The film image only arises in the first place from the interaction of the technologically moved image and its reception.



## *Poiesis of Viewing Films*

Film images are therefore media that are produced in order to be able in turn to produce a feeling of being-in-the-world shared by many people, a Sense of Commonality in their actions and thoughts. They emerge from a doubled production process—the appropriation of audiovisual images that are turned into the medium, with which they in turn cause the production of a shared sensation of the world, a **sense of commonality**.

In view of this doubled production process we speak of the **poiesis of viewing films**. We understand poiesis (in contrast to practice) as an act of bringing forth, as creating something new.

In doing so we wish to take all the varieties of audiovisual discourses into account and to interrogate them in their doubled production, the poiesis of viewing films: the production of a medium (the film image) with which a shared sensation of the world can be created, and the production of a shared sensation of the world by means of this medium.

In their physical activities, consumers of audiovisual images become media of the emergence of film images just as much as the film image itself becomes an agent of the history of audiovisual discourse. In reverse, in the act of viewing films



whatever audiovisual images might provide to the media consumer in terms of conventional patterns of meaning, calculations of the aesthetics of effect, and (standard) poetic stereotypes becomes the object of a obstinate production of spaces of perception, affect scripts, and cognitive schemata, which relate each of these aspects to a concrete socio-cultural constellation of experience.

These reflections give rise to wide-reaching implications, not only for writing film and media history, but also for how the discourse of audiovisual images relates to history, to society, and to the political. The goal of our research is to define the history of the audiovisual discourse by unfolding the poiesis of viewing films.

In a certain sense the poiesis of viewing films, the production of a new film image each time, itself remains invisible. It only comes out in its effects. In the analytical approach the 'nexus' of this poiesis—the appropriation of the audiovisual image by media users—can be worked out in two directions: one the one hand into the analysis of poetic concepts of film as witnesses of a process of appropriating film images, and on the other into the analysis of particular varieties of consuming audiovisual images as a obstinate production of spaces of perception, affect scripts, and cognitive schemata.



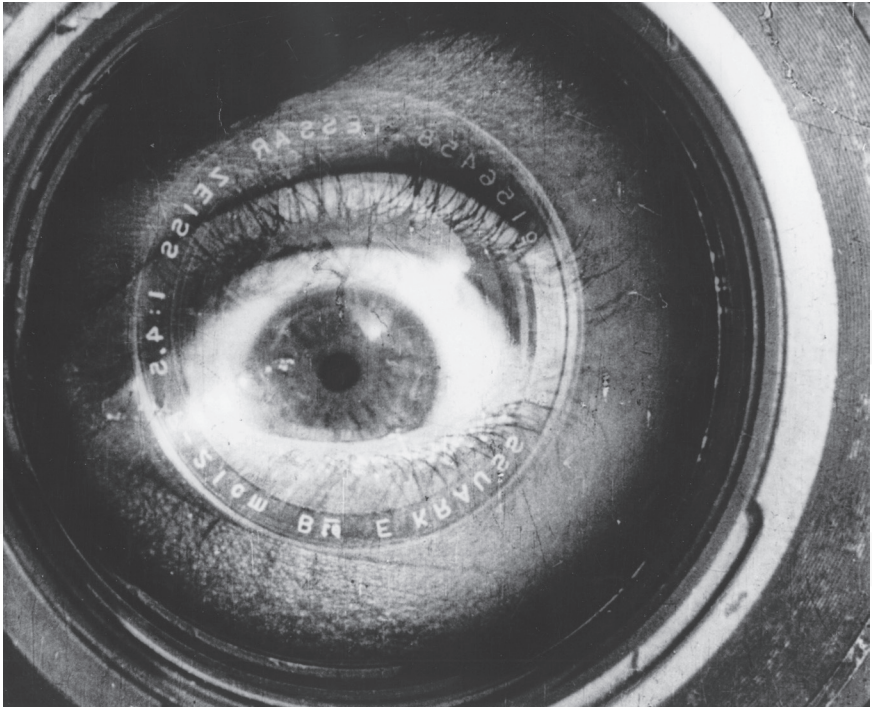
The first direction—**making films** as a form of consumption—can be illustrated particularly well in reference to the European ‘new waves’ of the 1960s and 1970s. These ‘new waves,’ exactly like the New Hollywood, emerged directly from *cinéphilie* as a poiesis of viewing films. Their extensive quoting of classical Hollywood cinema is only one telling example of how much a poiesis of viewing films is articulated in making films, which then gets continued in the discourses of criticism and theory. In its political dimension this interrelation is always evident whenever it explicitly seeks to emphasize a minoritarian position against cultural hegemony: for instance in how German-Turkish cinema deals with Hollywood and German television or in the remake of a Hollywood blockbuster as an African amateur production. One of the main tasks of the Center for Advanced Studies will be to analyze film images in their representational logics and interrelations as a tactical appropriation and modification of previous representational concepts.

The second direction—the spectrum of different ways to consume—can be identified when it yields obvious social and cultural effects in the form of “tactical appropriations,” as “arts of making” (De Certeau) when using media: in the constitution of dissident **communities of taste**, based on reevaluating and reversing meaning, on affirming trash, the esoteric, and the unsavory; od in the camp, queer, or girlie communities, who turn repressive clichés from normalizing entertainment culture into the objects of aesthetic pleasure. Something similar can be said for those communities marked by a specific use of media—the video store nerds of the 1980s, the series junkies of today, or those YouTube users who consume films in short snippets. The poiesis of viewing films is seen here as a “tactic of consumption,” which will be examined in the work of the Center for its political dimension.

In our conception, this poiesis, with its two inextricably intertwined directions, not only fulfills the role of illustrating reality, but also every form of production logic, or authorial intention. In this sense, we never understand reception as reducible to the mere completion of poetic logics, the comprehension of narration, or the application of genre knowledge. Neither the side of production nor that of reception, taken in themselves, capture what we wish to examine as film thinking. This thinking is much more the product of the poiesis of viewing films.

## *The Thinking of Images*

The formulation “thinking of images” refers to the a priori conditions that make it possible to experience in the first place. It conceives this as a variable relation between space and time, as construed by film images: as the dynamically variable conditions of understanding and recognizing a world. Relations between subject and object—as the fundamental requirement for the activity of the senses, of cognitive operations, of affectedness—are then understood as changeable positions, constituted in the act of viewing films. It thus becomes quite clear that film images cannot be reduced to a mimetic relationship to reality or to any kind of statement about this reality. They cannot be directly derived from a priori circumstances (regardless of whether these are variable, cultural dimensions such as conventions, norms, or stereotypes or presumably fixed physiological dimensions such as the limitations of the human capacity for cognition and perception), but always emerge anew from the interplay of production and consumption in the poiesis of viewing films.





A term like “thinking of images” also implies that the way that images relate to other images is not predetermined. Rather, every film works in its own way at constituting a specific **space of historical experience**, which is reshaped with every new film—that is, with every new appropriation of film images. (Film) history is thus never fixed, but is always in motion. Here it is important not to forget that we no longer—and for some time already—only come across film images in the cinema. Precisely in the interchange of media (in the appropriation of film images by television or the internet, or vice versa) the poesis of viewing films can be seen as providing the justification for an audiovisual thinking, which comes into relation with the changing constellations of making films and viewing films (for instance, watching films in the cinema vs. surfing the internet).



## Communal Feeling

Viewed from the perspective of such a poiesis, the history of the film image can be understood as a permanent description and reinscription of the temporal and spatial coordinates of the world of our everyday perception. With this thesis we are borrowing from Rorty's concept of "poetic making." At the core of this is a constantly evolving description of the boundaries of the political community, a constant reconfiguration of the "sense of commonality." Thinking with Rorty, the poiesis of viewing films can be seen as a genuinely political mode of acting, which fits into a "history of the poetic making" of political communities. From this perspective, film images constantly describe a world that determined specific ways of being together, different, or separate, producing in each case particular relations of inclusion and exclusion, that is, it is communally shared in a particular way in each case. By consuming, the consumer then puts him or herself into relation to such a **description of the world**.

The question of the political dimension of media strategies of affecting thus becomes available to analysis—namely in each special pattern of the aesthetic modulation of an affective communal relation; this is only realized in the act of consuming an image, as a "spectator feeling" (Kappelhoff/Bakels). Poetic making of new perceptual spaces is therefore, in our view, in no way restricted to the factual production of images. It can instead, again thinking with De Certeau, equally be taken into account for the consumption of such media representations. The "tactical appropriation" of the given affect-poetic pattern and its reworking shifts into forms of expressing new and potentially divergent forms of community.



## Summary

In the interplay of viewing films, making films, and all the variations of consuming audiovisual media, their criticism and their theory sketched out above, the history of film images can be conceptualized as a space of continual **poetic making of communally shared worlds of perception**. This would be the space of the history of permanently reconfiguring particular aesthetic formations of community. It could be reconstructed in the ramifications of a wide variety of genres of film images, in their historical references to and interdependencies with the media and genres of other forms of art and entertainment. It can be represented differently with every socially and culturally situated appropriation and can be configured anew in every appropriation as a space of experience. The history of this ever newly applied reconfiguration of the space of the poesis of viewing films is the discourse of film thinking. This discourse—and this is the overriding goal of the Center for Advanced Studies—should be conceptualized as a **poetology**, that is, as a logic of bringing forth ever new space/time schemata of communally shared, but particular worlds of perception, and be reconstructed in individual studies. ‘Poetology’ therefore does not—as in classical rule-governed poetics and genre theories—refer to taxonomies and conventions, but to the historical and cultural ramifications of the poesis of viewing films, and thus to the history of audiovisual descriptions and redescriptions of a common world in highly disparate and heterogeneous communities of media consumption and of taste.



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