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Academic Filmmaking in the New Humanities

Volume
Call for
27

Research Method, Communication Medium and Mode of Thought

Guest Editors

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Academic Quarter presents a call addressing the scholarly evaluation of the different forms, modes and approaches to academic filmmaking in the New Humanities and beyond.

Filmmaking is used in academic research fields as diverse as screen studies, anthropology, architecture and design studies, history of art, gender studies, performance studies and embodied research. Films and video articles increasingly find publication in dedicated journals, or exhibition at conferences, festivals or in museums, institutions which themselves draw on academic labour and expertise in the creation and curation of audiovisual works. Filmmaking can be used as a *means* to investigate a particular theme or phenomenon, as a *medium* to report or publicise research results, or it can be understood as a *mode of thought* in itself (what Spatz (2018) has dubbed 'the video way of thinking'). Academic filmmaking therefore takes place in a variety of modes: from documentary record through essay filmmaking to fictional storytelling, from participatory filmmaking to experiments in found footage curation and re-

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mix, from illustrated argument to artistic experiment. It often takes the form of practice research (or 'practice-led' research) in which, in order to generate new knowledge, filmmaking obeys protocols from the arts rather than the academy (though such work is typically accompanied by explication in more conventional prose forms). Videographic criticism — the audiovisual study of audiovisual and screen media, often in the form of video essays — has been a particularly vibrant area in recent years, and has generated a number of different genres and procedures. These include the desktop documentary, concerned with the experience of the computer desktop and online existence, and constraint-based and algorithmic approaches to scholarship that can make videographic criticism a 'boutique' form of digital humanities.

The following offers a small selection intended to evidence the range of high quality filmmaking research and practice in the academy. Perhaps the best known example of research filmmaking born in the academy is Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012), which uses a mix of straightforward documentary and imaginative reenactment to record and denounce the legacy of the 1965-66 Indonesian genocide. But filmmaking in the academy has a history that long predates the digital period, stretching back through, for example, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's influential 'theory film' *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977). (Mulvey herself has gone on to interrogate the affordances of the digital in an important book (Mulvey 2006) and short experimental videos like her remix of a scene from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (2013).) Forensic Architecture, a 'research agency' based at Goldsmiths, University of London, likewise employ film as one of their techniques to investigate human rights violations, and to present their findings. The Harvard Sensory Ethnography Lab uses film to access dimensions of the world that resist description in words, while anthropologist Christian Suhr uses a combination of prose and film in his *Descending With Angels: Islamic Exorcism and Psychiatry* (2019), described as a 'film monograph', to approach the invisible phenomena of jinn possession and psychosis. Artist filmmaker and academic Joanna Callaghan uses a mix of fictional and documentary modes in films including the 80-minute *Love in the Post* (2014), inspired by Jacques Derrida's *The Post Card*, to explore ethical questions and women's experience. Working separately and sometimes together, Kevin B. Lee and Chloé Galibert-

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Laîné have developed the desktop documentary format to critique the industries of spectacle and capture the complexities of online life in compelling films like Lee's 'Transformers: the Premake' (2014) and Galibert-Laîné's 'Watching the Pain of Others' (2018). Ian Garwood uses the desktop format reflexively to interrogate 'The place of voiceover in academic audiovisual film and television criticism' (2016) and, like Jason Mittell, another key innovator of videographic criticism, is developing an audiovisual research project to the equivalent of book length (see Garwood 2020, and see Mittell's work in progress here). Some of the range of filmmaking research and modes can be examined in venues such as *Screenworks*, the journal of screen media practice research, *Journal of Anthropological Films (JAF)*, *Journal of Embodied Research*, and *[in]Transition*, the journal of videographic film and moving image studies.

This issue of *Academic Quarter*, to be guest edited by three active and experienced scholar-practitioners in a range of academic filmmaking modes, is concerned to interrogate a shared medium and our common or diverging processes and methods. It aims to bring together a wide range of practitioners and scholars of filmmaking research, academic film and videographic criticism to debate the particular affordances of filmmaking as means and medium of investigation and communication and, in general, to offer the scholarly evaluation of the different modes and approaches to academic filmmaking. We ask:

- What are the political, epistemological, and aesthetic advantages of filmmaking in the academic context, and what are its potentials?
- What place is there for experimental approaches to filmmaking in academic practice?
- What is the relationship and relative importance of process and product in academic filmmaking practice?
- What methods are used in academic filmmaking across the different disciplines? What do these have in common and how do they differ?
- What are the institutional opportunities for and impediments to the adoption and development of filmmaking in the academy?
- What are the challenges and possibilities for the publication or exhibition of academic filmmaking?

Proposals are invited for articles or video essays, or combinations of prose and audiovisual work, that address one or more of these questions or another aspect of the issue theme. Video essays and audiovisual work may reflect on and elucidate or exemplify the methods or approaches concerned, and may themselves explore or assess the possibilities of academic filmmaking in ways that can be explicated in accompanying written reflections.

Potential contributors are welcome to contact the editors to discuss ideas before submitting a proposal.

References

Derrida, Jacques. 1995. *The Post Card: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond.* Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Garwood, Ian. 2020. "From 'video essay' to 'video monograph'? Indy Vinyl as academic book". *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies*. 9:1. https://necsus-ejms.org/from-video-essay-to-video-monograph-indy-vinyl-as-academic-book/

Mulvey, Laura. 2006. *Death 24 x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*. London: Reaktion Books, 2006.

Spatz, Ben. 2018. "The video way of thinking". *South African Theatre Journal* 31:1. 146-154.

Suhr, Christian. 2019. *Descending With Angels: Islamic Exorcism and Psychiatry*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Practical Information

Abstract: c. 150 words.
Full Article: c. 3,000 – 3,500 words
Video essay: Max 7–12 minutes. While shorter pieces are welcome, it may be appropriate to batch more than one as part of a specific submission.

Please, note that only abstracts in English will be taken into consideration.

Abstracts and articles should be sent to Annemette Helligsø (anhe@ikl.aau.dk)

Detailed author guidelines and further information can be found on the journal's website : https://journals.aau.dk/index.php/ak

Video essays

You are welcome to use the possibility of producing a video essay following these guidelines:

To ensure blind peer review of video essays, contributors should – to the greatest extent possible – ensure that their identity is unidentifiable. The video files for review should not include information on authors, directors, producers, and performers. You do not need to mask the voices or images of people.

Video essays should be max. 7-12 minutes long and accompanied by an academic guiding text between 1,000-1,500 words that clearly reflects upon the publication's scholarly/academic contribution. Video essays should be original works of publishable quality in a rigorous scholarly context, and may take argumentative, expository, explanatory, documentary, performative, essayistic, poetic, symbolic (metaphorical) or artistic forms, or a combination of these. The guiding text should clearly explain the argument in the video essay and/or the insight that the viewer may gain from watching and listening to it.

This guiding text should follow the directions in the article style sheet of Academic Quarter. Video essays should be final and handed in as a separate mp4-video-file. Video files should be sent to Annemette Helligsø by a large-file transfer service. The accompanying guiding text can be mailed directly to Annemette Helligsø. Academic Quarter hosts a video file server and archive at Aalborg University from which the finished and published video files will be streamed. Academic Quarter supports only publication and not the technical development of video essays.

Video essays and the guiding text will be reviewed together. Criteria for reviewing submissions are:

a. the lucidity (cogency) of the argument,
b. the technical and stylistic execution of the video material and
c. the clarity of the guiding text.

Submission and Review of abstract
March 15th 2023

Response to Authors of Abstracts
May 1st 2023

Submission of Articles and Videos
for Peer Review
September 1st 2023

Peer Reviews sent to Authors
November 1st 2023

Resubmission of Articles and Videos
following Peer Review
December 1st 2023

Layout Copyedit
January 15th 2024

Publication
February 15th 2024

Abstract
Around 150 words

Full article
Around 3,000 - 3,500 words

Video essay
Max 7-12 minutes

Deadlines

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