

Application for a Doctoral Studentship in Fine Art

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1. PROJECT PRESENTATION

TITLE

Conventions in Moving Images – Experience and Experiments

SHORT DESCRIPTION

By working with short video productions I want to investigate what conventions and expectations related to moving images are manifestly effective in different areas of production. I want to find out what happens if you go against them in different ways in different contexts. The aim of the study is to establish, through an artistic practice, knowledge of the complex relations created and brought to the fore in a seemingly ordinary representation in moving images. The result will be presented in video and writing.

2. APPLICANT

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WHY A DOCTORATE IN ART

Since I started to become an artist, around 1995-1996, I have had the idea that art is always partly an intellectual performance, both in the making and the receiving. Before I began my studies I took it for granted that art was a field of knowledge that was intellectually defended and debated. After some time I realised this was not always the case. I encountered the idea that art was something you just could not be intellectual about, it was something almost esoteric. This provoked me since I believe that expressions of all kind, whether they are made for communication or the sake of expression itself, are always made and received by an intellect, may it be collaborations, accidents or the work of a so called genius. I see no limit in what ways one may work to intensify and deepen this knowledge or intellectual abilities that one possesses as an artist. A doctoral studentship is interesting because it provides a framework for this intensification with a structure that promotes development and independence. The result is a presentation that is comparable and communicable in a way that established forms of art writing or debating, like art history, art criticism and artist talks, is not. It is important that art as a practice and profession includes this form of expression, in order to uphold a credible position in a public debate and not just be the jester, and I want to be a part of that development.

3. OUTLINE OF PROPOSED RESEARCH

SUBJECT AREA, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

How much movie make up can the Prime Minister wear when appearing on the TV-news before it becomes a show and we no longer take him seriously? Or how does an uncommented black and white live broadcast of a football game work? Will we think of it as a historical event even though the top right corner says "Live", or do we believe there might be something wrong with our receiver?

In a feature film it is natural that those acting in front of the camera wear special make up and costume, and that these things tell us something about the performed character. In documentaries one may rather hide the fact that these matters have been considered. In a news report the aim is a kind of hyperrealism, where the viewer can experience the reality being "revealed" to her, and so maybe one totally avoid using make up and costume as means of expression. What would happen if you swapped some of the components and followed a convention from a different context or genre?

By working with short video productions I want to investigate what conventions and expectations related to moving images are manifestly effective in different areas of production.

I want to start my research with a kind of mapping through exercises and experiments where I try and document "nuances in" or "degrees of" different conventions, in order to find out where there are limits or borders that would be interesting to cross, and thus which conventions it might be most effective breaking. I am also interested in examining how these conventions are being used, how they were established, why they are maintained and who is taking part in making them.

Some of my preliminary questions will be: With what means is a person or a situation described in moving images? What devices and techniques are established as convention

within different genres or contexts? What difference does it make if they are used intentionally or unintentionally in relation to common expectations? How is identification with a person or a character created? How obvious is it in different situations that the production of moving images include a moment of interpretation? How does different types of moving images relate to the popular idea of the possibility to express "the true image" of something? How, when and where does moving images function as document and means of authority?

The aim of the research is to establish, through an artistic practice, knowledge of the complex relations created and brought to the fore in a seemingly ordinary representation in moving images.

My study will utilise the combination of a craft in filmmaking and video art and the use of semiotic analysis. I will work intercontextual using a set of terms taken from the production industry, the academic world as well as from the art world and my own experience. The study of conventions I believe is a new approach to the subject of representation in moving images. I have found, and I will build on that, theoretical works dealing with stereotyping (Richard Dyer for example) but I have not found any practical or theoretical works dealing across contexts with conventions as is my intention. Thus I believe I can claim that my study will be original.

PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Camera angle and framing have different meaning in different contexts. A handheld camera on the TV announcer would be so out of the ordinary so that it might be frightening, signalling an earthquake or a coup d'état. The same applies to sound. How would we take it if the voice over of the person reporting from a place of war or a natural catastrophe sounded like coming from the vacuum of a studio recording and didn't have the background noise of a location sound recording. Perhaps we would doubt that the reporter had even left the home TV-station.

Just as there are these unspoken agreements between TV-producer and audience, I believe they also exist in video art and art cinema. In my research I want to make art works and reflections that show how, as with language, much of what we perceive is influenced by these agreements.

Photo- and filmtheory have long since dealt with the indexical relationship between image and object, and debated whether a photograph or a film really can function as a document of something actual. Despite this, we still everyday encounter material presented as just documents, "true" images of reality. But there are conventions concerning what these documents look like and how they are presented. Those are conventions that has formed our expectations. In turn our expectations are used to produce effects, that is to highlight or deepen the experience of a material, by going either with or against what we expect is going to happen. After a while the effect become expected and eventually turns into convention. Then new effects are made in relation our new expectations. And so it continues.

Through cinema studies (1995-1997 and 2008) I have my theoretical foundation in postmodern film theory and analysis. The basic perspective for my work is post structuralistic, influenced by Jaques Derrida and his notion of deconstruction as means for creative interpretation. My relationship to film as a medium is generally semiotic, i.e. film is a

kind of language, inspired by film theorist Teresa de Lauretis. I also base my work on theories of the power of the gaze as formulated by Michel Foucault and treated by feminist film theorists since the mid 1970s. This theoretical context will be the startingpoint of my research. I will further investigate psychosemiotic queer- and feminist theory along with contemporary aesthetic theory relating to moving images like those based on Gilles Deleuze's writings on cinema and the media theory of Lev Manovich.

METHODOLOGY

My study will be both practical and analytical. It will be a theory informed by practice integrated in a practice informed by theory.

One part of the research will be to map out hypothetically what conventions are strong in their contexts or genres to see where the effect of breaking or shifting them will be the greatest. That I will do by studying the work of established producers in each field. I will though stick to the western production of moving images, and leave out traditions from the rest of the world. This because the western form is dominant and it is familiar to me. And I have a better chance at finding nuances and degrees in the works that I am familiar with.

For the mapping I will use a method that is a kind of practical deconstruction. I have in my work with the research- and development project (KU) *The Woman Without Qualities – Functions of the Stereotype in Narrative Film* made at Konstfack in 2008 used this method for example to gather and preserve feature film narratives. Then I made short versions of feature length films, where I cut ninety minutes down to eight minutes, in which the complete story is still told. The method is simply described as follows; I take a completed production, analyse the structure of the work, take it apart and put it back together in a new form where the former structure is made more visible.

This mapping will be done parallell to the first stges in the production of different types of video material trying the same conventions in practice. The practical work will be divided into some smaller projects which by experiments and presentations will investigate the conventions I will find most rewarding to try. When producing this material I will be working in line with the common practice of each field. So when making a piece of fiction for example I will use actors, director, photographer, scenographer, costume designer and a make up artist. Though along the way I will shift or modify the functions of this structure, leave things out or add devices that normally aren't used. I will also use the team of professionals to investigate which conventions apply in each field. As a memory and a method for reflection I will keep a continous writing practice.

WORK PLAN

The mapping phase I beleive will take about one semester. Then I roughly plan to produce one or two pieces of video per year while simultaneously reflecting in writing on the result of the experiments. The genres or contexts are not set because it depends on what I find in the mapping, but I think that one feature piece, one documentary piece and one news piece will be relevant plus one or two more which is yet to be decided.

FORM OF THE FINAL PRESENTATION

For the final presentation I will put together a video installation composed of the produced video material. I will also edit the material to fit on a DVD and the writing will be presented in a piece of printed matter together with it. Either it will be a DVD with text or a book with a DVD. I will also make a presentation for the www.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

In 2008 the institution of Cinema Studies at Stockholm University published the anthology "Film och andra rörliga bilder - en introduktion" (Raster förlag) edited by Anu Koivunen, in which the film medium is described in relation to the contemporary question of how "Film, TV and digital media entertain and educate, organise and shape our relationship to the world around us" (quote from the book cover, my translation). The publication is a general view but it contains wider and contemporary references for my study, written by merited researchers and experts in a great variety of perspectives on moving images. I will use this work as a source of inspiration for initial questions and perspectives on my research subject.

A pioneering work in Sweden on the subject of video art related to cinema is Annika Wik's PhD essay "Förebild film. Panoreringar över den samtida konstscenen" from 2001, also from the institution of Cinema Studies at Stockholm University. Wik focuses on the relationship between cinema and video art and points out the similarities and differences in conventions belonging to each field. This work supports my initial assumption that there is a difference in the attitude towards the medium in different contexts producing moving images.

In Göteborg the project "Passionen för det reala. Ett tvärkonstnärligt projekt om det dokumentära" has a part lead by Göran du Rées that is dealing with moving images and their relation to "the documentary". The project will be presented publicly this spring but from the presentations made so far I believe it will be relevant to my research in defining what "the documentary" is. In the project presentation published on the web site the aim is to "thematise basic questions about moving images and its ongoing change into a digital medium" and that the project is "about the event and the memory, about perception and reconstruction, about history, identity and power" (my translation). Since I also pose some of these questions I am sure it will benefit my work to study the result of this project when it is made public.

Internationally there are several research projects concerning the subject in moving images that could be interesting to my work. For instance at the Royal College of Art, the University of Westminster and the Slade school of Art in London and the Bildkonstakademin in Helsingfors. I am especially interested in studying the work of Mark Nash and his students at the RCA, since he as a writer at the momentous british film journal *Screen* was a part of shaping film theory as we now know it. In my Bachelor's essay in cinema studies I wrote about the theories on authorship of the 1950s and 1960s that was partly defined by the writers and editors at *Screen* journal. I believe that these theories were again brought to the fore in discussions about art a couple of years ago. And I think perhaps it would be interesting to use this discourse as a reference to the question of whether there is an authorship behind what is common and conventional in moving images today.

As a forerunner in the field of artistic research that include film and video I believe Eija-Liisa Ahtila stands out. She places herself between art and cinema with video works that is the result of both cinematic craftsmanship and the attitude of a conceptual artist. She has worked methodically and germinal with all different kinds of spatial installations of video art (examples of this were shown in her solo show "Real Characters. Invented Worlds." at Tate Modern in 2002). Her work is a prerequisite for my study.

PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

Glen Creeber, *Tele-Visions: An Introduction to Studying Television* (London: British Film Institute, 2006)

Jaques Derrida, *Rösten och fenomenet* (Stockholm: Thales, 1991)
Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1987; reprinted London: Routledge, 2003)
Michel Foucault, *Sexualitetens historia. Band 1. Viljan att veta* (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2002)
Anu Koivunen, red., *Film och andra rörliga bilder – en introduktion* (Stockholm: Raster, 2008)
Tanya Leighton, red., *Art and the Moving Image : a Critical Reader* (London: Tate 2008)
Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second. Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006)
Mark Nash, *Screen Theory Culture. Language, Discourse, Society* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)
Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Methods* (London: Sage, 2007)
Sue Thornham, red., *Feminist Film Theory. A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999; reprinted 2005)
Brian Winston, *Lies, Damn Lies and Documentaries* (London: British Film Institute, 2000)

As reference I will also use known fiction and documentary films, television programs and video art works. I will make a selection using the same method as I did in my research and development project *The Woman Without Qualities* and look at canon and major production contexts such as Hollywood, major TV-networks and large art institutions and galleries. This is to find ground for my idea that there are established conventions in different production fields of moving images and prove that the devices I call conventions are frequently occurring.

MY ARTISTIC PRACTICE

I have selected three works that represent my artistic practice and that are relevant for my research project. Documentation of these and other works is available at www.kiracarpelan.se

My latest large work, *The Woman Without Qualities*, is a research and development project (KU) made in 2008-2009 at Konstfack. The work is about stereotype portraits of women in fiction film. With a selection of about fifty films from the western film canon as a reference, I made around fifteen scenes that contains a presentation of a female character somehow typical, known or common in feature film. The scenes were put together into a short film of seventeen minutes. The situations presented are taken out of their narrative context and are in my video loosely held together, missing both "before" and "after". Yet they are arranged in an order which is faking a dramatic curve with a beginning, a middle and an end, turning points and rhythmic editing effects. The result is a form of pastiche in which one experience the feeling of looking a little on the side of something, on that which is not meant to be in focus, even though this woman is always in the center of attention. The purpose is to show how little this typical female character actually does and that she in spite of this fact very often is present in the plot because of her indispensable function as accompaniment to the main character in the story. The result of the project is a video piece and an essay.

In my work as an artist I have in different ways related to what I call identity shaping images. They are fictions that encourage identification and have the ability to stick with you, become a reference and a part of the material for building ones self-identity. In 2004 I made a work about how personal memories like myths are built on repetition and settlements, and how they at an attempt to map them break up into fragments. The piece is a web site lacking obvious function and the conventional tools for navigation. It forces the user into a different tempo than the medium normally encourages. It is presented at www.nonce.se

In connection to my masters course at Konstfack i took part in a project initiated by Miriam Bäckström. The projects aim was to create "the artist" as a character to see what is expected today of a contemporary artist, or someone who is to become one. I performed the role of payed apprentice in Miriam Bäckströms art practice. I made a video (*Untitled*, 2007, HDV, 24 minutes) and an exhibition in her name, using my name as the title. The video *Untitled* shows two women talking to and past each other while beeing wathced by a third character who's presence we know only through the nervous movements of the hand held camera. At the same time Miriam made a video (*Kira Carpelan*, 2007, HDV, 80 minutes) showing her view of the working process. Through multiple layers of meta fiction and unexpressed expectations, the project claim was to create a "new" image of an artist. My character tries to perform this image at the same time as she is questioning the whole idea of making a "new" image; is it possible or even interesting to try? The result is an unsecure fiction composed of mirrorings and colliding intentions, presented in two video works, two exhibitions and a number of statements in seminars, catalogue texts and published interviews. Taking part in the project besides myself and Miriam Bäckström was Anders Kreuger, Jan Åman and Rebecka Hemse.

MY WORK CONTEXT

In 2008 I started a collaboration with PhD Per Zetterfalk in a project called *Portraits in moving Images – Representations and Interpretations of "The Third Subject"*. This project is a practice based research project about subjectivity and representation in moving images. The basic assumption we make is that a portrait of a person is a creation of two subjects resulting in a third. The first subject is the portrayed and the second subject is the portrayer, and the result, the portrait, forms a third subject. This third subject is composed of the first two but it is also something in its own. It could be compared to Julia Kristeva's "abject" only with the difference that "the third subject" would be something attractive to both the first and the second subject, in that it would probably be a merge of two rather idealised images of a person. With this project we applied for funds from Vetenskapsrådet in april 2009 and the response we got from Astrid Söderberg Widding who was the external assessor was generally very positive. This has motivated us to work through the the part of the project plan where she had some relevant questions and apply again in 2011. (We didn't do it this year because I have been on maternety leave this winter/spring.)

In my art practice there is a group of people that I through conversation and cooperation include in my creative process in different ways. They come from three fields mainly; film, art and aesthetic theory. They are among others: artists Patrick Kretschek, Lina Selander, Björn Kjelltoft, Katarina Elvén, Malin Pettersson Öberg, Maria Andersson, Markus Öhrn, Maja Hammarén and Erik Rosshagen; filmmakers Leontine Arvidsson, Marius Dybwad-Brandrud, Anna Hansson and Camilla Söderberg; designers Maja Gunn, Ninna Berger, Jenny Bergström and Eva Wilson; theorists Fredrik Ehlin, Oscar Mangione and Per Zetterfalk; and curators Stella D'Ailly, Kim Einarsson, Camilla Larsson and Sinziana Ravini. I have also kept contact with former teachers and employers such as Roy Andersson, Trond Lundemo, Marysia Lewandowska, Katji Lindberg, Magnus Bärtås, Gunilla Bandolin, Rolf Gullström-Hughes and Ronald Jones among others. I know that I in all these people have access to a great area of creative competence that is very valuable for my work as an artist, and as a doctoral candidate.

4. REFERENCES

Marysia Lewandowska, Artist and Professor in Fine Art, Konstfack - University College of Arts, Crafts and Design My tutor in the Master's Course in Fine Art 2006 2007

Phone:

Mail:

Trond Lundemo, PhD and Senior University Lecturer in Cinema Studies, Stockholm University

My tutor on the Bachelor's Course Essay in Cinema Studies 1997

Phone:

Mail:

5. LIST OF SUBMITTED WORKS

TEXT

Kira_rapport.pdf

Kvinnan utan egenskaper – stereotypens funktion i filmberättande Research and Development Project Report, Konstfack 2008 (swedish)

Dilemma_slutred.pdf

Dilemma of Becoming article in Geist no 11, 12, 13 – Method, 2008 (english)

blicken_uppsats.pdf

Blickens politik – genus, sexualitet och rörliga bilder Master Course Essay in Cinema Studies, Stockholm University, 2008 (swedish)

kira_MA_essay.pdf

Stånd-punkt! Masters Degree Essay, Konstfack 2007 (english/german/swedish)

VIDEO

kue_web2.mov

Excerpt from *The Woman Without Qualities* (2009, 17 min, Full HD/Stereo)

untitled_4min_comp.mov

Excerpt from *Untitled* (2007, 22 min, HDV/Stereo)

mir.mov

Excerpt from Miriam Bäckström's *Kira Carpelan* (2007, 80 min, HDV/Stereo)

STILL IMAGES

rosa_6.jpg, lillith_3.jpg

Stills from video *Untitled*, 2007

inst_untitled.jpg

Installation view of *Untitled* at Konstfack Vårutställningen, 2007

papiljotter.jpg, glass.jpg, resturang.jpg

Stills from video *The Woman Without Qualities*, 2009

nonce_release_small.jpg

Release letter for project *Hemstad, del 2* at www.nonce.se