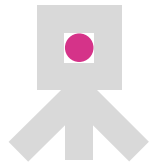


PhotoResearcher



ESHP European Society for the History of Photography

Photography & Film

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Editorial



Figure 1

Poster for *Film und Foto*, 1929.
Offset lithograph 33 x 23 1/8" (84 x 58.5 cm).
The poster was designed by German photo-journalist Willi Ruge (1892-1961) and used a 1927 photograph of his friend, photographer Arno Böttcher.

Almost 90 years ago, in the summer of 1929, the tradition-shattering Werkbund exhibition *Film und Foto* (FiFo) started its triumphal tour throughout Europe.¹ First in Stuttgart and later in Zurich, Berlin, Gdansk, Vienna, Zagreb and Munich, the camera for the first time manifested itself as the mediator of the so called »New Vision« (fig. 1). The show caused a sensation in the national press, as well as in foreign countries and – as a result – the displayed cinematic and photographic experiments soon became renowned as the epitome of avant-garde production and modernism throughout the world.

Next year, in 2019, a big *FiFo* jubilee exhibition will tour through Germany² and we also want to take the upcoming anniversary as a motive and starting-point to once again investigate the relationship between photography and film – both in their historical dimension, as well as in their past and current practice and technology.

One could argue that the radical program of the *FiFo* – based as it was on the analogue materiality of celluloid – has lost some of its initial urgency and that the principles of film-based photography and cinematography might be seen as atavistic models unfit to grasp and discuss the immersive visual media of today. But now – as in 1929 – the main shift is not the one between rivalling technologies, but towards new and unforeseen ways in which still and moving images spark our imaginations and enrich our perception. So, rather than emphasizing technical and media-specific dividing lines, we want to carry on the *FiFo*'s revolutionary spirit by focusing on the multifarious quality of the related media and exploring their visual and technical transitions.

One key factor in this regard is the accessibility and omnipresence of the camera and the way it became an integral element in our lives. The starting point of this development can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century but it turned into a mass phenomenon at precisely the same time as the avant-garde proclaimed a counter-culture of new visual expressions. In the 1920s, amateurs and artists – the “Raphaels without hands”³ as some called them – understood themselves as the antipodes to the “professionals” and postulated the democratisation of image production. Franz Roh conjures up this radical shift in media politics in the manifesto-like introduction to his book *photo-eye*⁴ as follows:

“the appliances of new photographic technique are so simple that in principle everybody can handle them. the technique of graphic art [...] was so complicated and slow, that up to the present time people were met with, who though absolutely possessing the visual power of forming, yet had neither leisure nor perseverance nor

1. Outside Europe, the exhibition was shown in Tokyo (April 1931) and Osaka (July 1931).

2. The exhibition curated by Kai Uwe Hemken will start in Düsseldorf at the beginning of 2019 and then be shown in Darmstadt before finally coming to Berlin in September of the same year.

3. Franz Roh uses this figurative expression in the preface of *Foto-Auge*, but initially it was not associated with photography. The dictum first was used in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play *Emilia Galotti* (1772) in an argument discussing the conceptual and manual aspects of painting.

4. Franz Roh, Jan Tschichold, *Foto-Auge. 76 Fotos der Zeit*, Stuttgart: Fritz Wedekind, 1929.

skill to learn the way of realization. the relation between conception and the medium of expression was too complicated. from this viewpoint it is characteristic that in this book non-professionals get a hearing. [...] only when the technical media have become so simple that everybody can learn to apply them, will they become a keyboard for the expression of many. the statement is right, that not to be able to handle a camera will soon be looked upon as equal to illiteracy.”⁵

In this way – fuelled by easy-to-use technology and affordable film – a dream came alive: a utopian vision of free and self-determined media producers, liberated from canonical traditions, exchanging without the regulations of a state or the industries.

In this context, **Noam M. Elcott’s** opening article *The Cinematic Imaginary and the Photographic Fact: Media as Models for 20th Century Art* provides an overarching introduction to this vast field and, in a schematic yet rigorous fashion, locates the centres of gravity for interwar and post-war avant-garde experiments in cinema and photography or – as Elcott calls it – the cinematic imaginary and the photographic fact. Including neighbouring disciplines like painting and literature in his argument, he succeeds in showing how diversified and multifaceted this entwinement was from the very beginning. And, by referring to the then new and ambiguous artist-figures like the photographer-filmmaker, the photo-monteur and the artist-engineer, he points at the intimate personal, theoretical and aesthetic overlaps which are so characteristic for this inter-medial field.

One of these central figures was avant-garde artist and Bauhaus teacher László Moholy-Nagy. Not only was he an influential practitioner and a theoretician of experimental art but, through his far-reaching international contacts, also an important promoter and contact point for the widespread and often rivalling avant-garde movements of his time. Moholy-Nagy was one of the curators for the *FiFo* exhibition and his selection showed an almost boundless curiosity for all past, present and future applications of photography and its interaction with other media. One of his particular interests lay in the anonymous and technical imagery including x-rays, micro/macro photography and photogrammetric images. In the preface to the 1927 edition of his book *Painting, Photography, Film*⁶ he summarizes his views as follows:

The camera has offered us amazing possibilities, which we are only just beginning to exploit. The visual image has been expanded and even the modern lens is no longer tied to the narrow limits of our eye; no manual means of

5. Roh, Tschichold 1929 (reference 4), 14. English translation from the printed book.

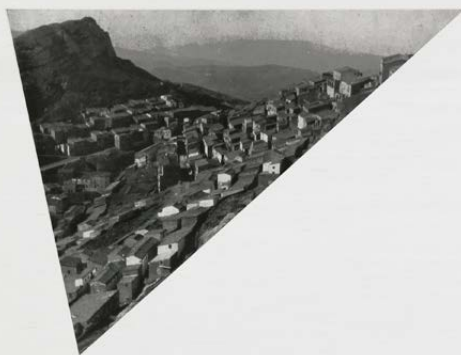


Figure 2
Page 72 from Werner Gräff's book
Es kommt der neue Fotograf
with photogrammetric pictures
by Carl Hubacher, Berlin 1929.

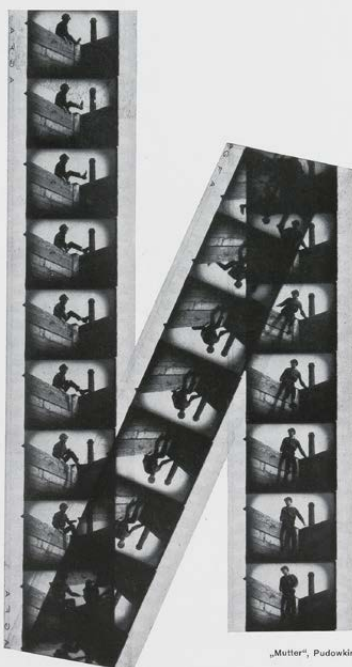


Carl Hubacher, Zürich

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Die Mittel werden geprüft

Fangen wir von vorne an:
Technische Grundlage des Films ist das bewegte, veränderliche Bild, auf einem Zelluloidstreifen fixiert.
Hier sehen Sie ein Stück Filmstreifen in natürlicher Größe. Es sind 24 Einzelbilder oder 455 mm. Die Vorführung eines solchen Stückes dauert etwa eine Sekunde. Verfolgen Sie einmal die Stellung der Arme und Beine auf den einzelnen Bildchen: Sie werden sehen, wie das Bein langsam um einen winzigen Betrag vorrückt. Die Bewegung ist bei den aufeinander folgenden Bildern ruckweise. Aber in der schnellen Vorführung erscheint sie dem Auge fließend. Die Fixierung der Bilder auf das Zelluloidband geschieht auf fotografischem Wege. Man kann mittels der Kamera natürliche Bewegungen aufnehmen (wie bei dem nebenstehenden Beispiel), doch ist das nur eine Möglichkeit.



„Mutter“, Pudowkin

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representation (pencil, brush, etc.) is capable of arresting fragments of the world seen like this; it is equally impossible for manual means of creation to fix the quintessence of a movement; nor should we regard the ability of the lens to distort — the view from below, from above, the oblique view — as in any sense merely negative, for it provides an impartial approach, such as our eyes, tied as they are to the laws of association, do not give. [...] Although photography is already over a hundred years old — it is only in recent years that the course of development has allowed us to see beyond the specific instance and recognise the creative consequences. Our vision has only lately developed sufficiently to grasp these connections.

In her article *Black Box Photography* Katja Müller-Helle explores this interest in technical images, which she extends to the photographic and filmic practices of experimental filmmaker Harun Farocki. In this way, she explores the avant-garde's scope in both directions – discussing present systems of surveillance, as well as looking back to the beginnings of automatic image acquisition and reading of images that began in the mid-19th century. Introducing the *planchette photographique* – one of the earliest examples of a photogrammetric panorama camera from the 1860s – Müller-Helle shows how this specific field of photography became part of a modernist vision that linked technological progress to the not-yet-thinkable.

In 1929, three programmatic books were published in the context of the FiFo exhibition: Franz Roh's and Jan Tschichold's already mentioned *Foto-Auge* (Photo-Eye), Werner Gräff's *Es kommt der neue Fotograf* (Here Comes the New Photographer, fig. 2) and Hans Richter's *Filmgegner von Heute – Filmfreunde von Morgen* (Today's enemies of film – tomorrow's friends of film, fig. 3). The two books were drafted and advertised as the accompanying text and the accompanying images of the exhibition and were released simultaneously and in the identical style and finish by the same publisher.⁷

While *Foto-Auge* and Gräff's book exclusively focused on new developments in photography,⁸ Richter's publication is one of the first that tries

6. The German first edition was published as No 8 in the series of the Bauhaus publications under the title of *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Bauhausbücher, 8.) by Albert Langen Munich, 1925. Translation from the printed English version of the book.

7. The two books were introduced in *Die Form* No 10 in May 1929 as part of the promotion for the FiFo exhibition. The *Werkbund* magazine was also published twice a month by the Hermann Reckendorf publishing house.

8. Franz Roh ends his preface of *Foto-Auge* with the following statement: "The most important utilization of photography, the cinema — a marvel that has become a matter of course and yet remains a lasting marvel — is not within the province of this book. we are concerned but with the statically fixed, with situations that merely pretend dynamic, while in the cinema, by addition of static situations, real dynamic rises, questions of form here enter an entirely new dimension. Roh, Tschichold 1929 (reference 4), 18.



Figure 4
Menno ter Braak, *De Absolute Film*,
No. 8 van de serie monografieën over filmkunst,
Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse 1931.
Cover design by Piet Zwart. Private Collection.

to translate cinematographic devices into graphic layout by using 35mm cine-filmstrips and individual frame enlargements. In the preface to his book, Richter even gives an elaborate explanation of how the illustrations are meant to emulate movement, filmic rhythm and cross-dissolves. Today, Richter's book is seen as a role model for the whole genre of cinematic photo books to follow. In his article *Under A Certain Influence* **Roland Fischer-Briand** discusses the history and diversity of this field and gives examples for the articulated forms of film- and cinema-related photo publications throughout the 20th century.

Richter's book is also significant for another reason since its author was the curator of the extensive film program that accompanied the *FiFo* exhibition. In the time prior to the show the works of the avant-garde ran under various terms such as *Absolute Film* (fig. 4), *Abstract Film*, *Cinéma Pur*, *Futurist Cinema* and *Surrealist Film* but, due their ambiguous formats, these films have been seen more as isolated individual experiments than associated with a specific genre or artistic movement. Being an experimental filmmaker himself, Richter compiled international feature-length and short films and bundled them in 15 events which were shown in a Stuttgart cinema and accompanied by film lectures. Today, his groundbreaking *FiFo* program is not only considered the forefather of all film festivals, but also the starting point of an identity-generating tradition of experimental film.⁹

Inspired by, and as a direct result of, Richter's program private and political film clubs were formed all over the world. This movement was driven by the cineaste's enthusiasm for the non-commercial art film and made possible by the introduction of affordable amateur-format film material by companies like Kodak and Pathé. The new film stock helped to create new and independent distribution networks and led to the development of easy-to-use still and movie cameras. This equipment was originally targeted at the amateur market, but soon also adopted by film makers like Dziga Vertov, Able Gance or Joris Ivens.

In particular, the introduction of lightweight 35mm still cameras such as the Leica, and hybrid cine-cameras like the Debie Sept (fig. 5), played

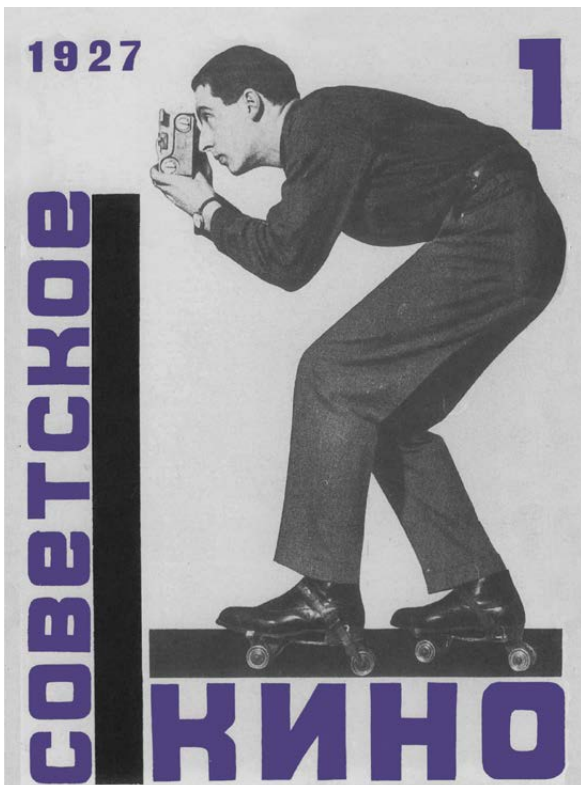


Figure 5
Cover of *Soviet Cinema No 1*, Moscou 1927.
Layout by Varvara Stepanova depicting
Russian avant-garde film maker Dziga Vertov
shooting with his Debie Sept camera
on roller skates.

9. I want to thank Thomas Tode for providing so much helpful information on the *FiFo* film program.



Figure 6
Film laboratory scene identifier,
single 35mm frame from Chad Chenouga's
2001 feature film *17, rue Bleue*.
Collection Martin Putz, Vienna.

These markers normally are invisible for the cinema audience but an essential information during the development and printing process of analogue film - used for example to synchronize the images with the optical soundtrack.

just as important a role in revolutionizing photography and avant-garde and amateur film making. In his article *Sensitive Strips* **Brian Pritchard** illuminates the origin and the history of the 35mm celluloid filmstrip and its mutual usage in photography and film. By discussing the technical differences and similarities he, at the same time, tells the parallel story of the medias' intertwined development and their social implementations.

When, within the specificities of cinematic flow, can individual film-frames become photofilmic images? And how can a single image turn into a narrative dispositive? These seemingly simple, but still highly relevant fundamental questions are investigated and reflected in two articles that are not so closely related to the historical *FiFo* exhibition, but still owe a lot to its vivid spirit. The figure of thought the authors introduce here is using the example of animation in its widest sense in order to open up a productive discourse of the intertwined media. (Fig. 6) In this way, a theoretical toolset is provided to unravel the braiding of the fictional, the attractional, the formal, the philosophical and the technological aspects of the cinematographic dispositive.

In her essay *Photofilmic Time Machines* researcher and artist, **Lydia Nsiah**, explores the field of ‘photofilm’ – a term that has been introduced to describe a specific art form that uses series of still photographs to create transitional and interfering phenomena of time (re-)production and perception. After giving a brief introduction to the history of *photofilm*, Lydia Nsiah sets out her outline of the disruptive potentials inherent in the photofilmic drawing on three contemporary art works. And, in his precise study *Stroboscopic Revelations in Blade Runner*, **Barnaby Dicker** focuses on yet another aspect of animation – namely, how stop-frame cinematography may be taken as a meeting point between photography and cinematography. He proposes a deeper reading of the famous photo-analysis scene in Ridley Scott’s science-fiction 1982 feature film *Blade Runner* – a scene that is never fully photography or cinematography, but oscillates variably between the two – by following its elliptic path into a convex looking-glass.

Martin Reinhart, Ulla Fischer-Westhauser, Uwe Schögl
Vienna, April 2018