Photography & Film
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Almost 90 years ago, in the summer of 1929, the tradition-shattering Werkbund exhibition Film und Foto (FiFo) started its triumphal tour throughout Europe.  

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 Germany 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” 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 as follows:

“the appliances of new photographic technique are so simple that 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

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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.
skill to learn the way of realization. the relation between conception and the me-
dium 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."

In this way – fuelled by easy-to-use technology and affordable film – a utopian vison 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 multi-
faceted 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 inter-
action 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* he summarizes his views as follows:

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

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.

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 photographe – 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, Richter’s publication is one of the first that tries...
I want to thank Thomas Tode for providing so much helpful information on the FiFo film program. 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 forerunner of all film festivals, but also the starting point of an identity-generating tradition of experimental film.

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 Debrie Sept (fig. 5), played 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.

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.

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

9. I want to thank Thomas Tode for providing so much helpful information on the FiFo film program.
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 dispositif? 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 attractive, the formal, the philosophical and the technological aspects of the cinematographic dispositif.

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.

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