

Notes on the Small Gauge Task Force

AMIA Conference November 13-18, 2000

Los Angeles, CA

Posted by Dwight Swanson to the SG list-serve

(<http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/smallgauge/>)

Several others on this list and I recently returned from a slightly delirious week at the Association of Moving Image Archivists' annual conference in Los Angeles. Small gauge film was definitely very high on the agenda...so much so that the size of the crowds for the small gauge sessions had to be moved to larger rooms to accommodate them.

There were three sessions devoted to the Small Gauge task force—primarily to summarize the actions taken so far this year (the meeting in Los Angeles held in June and the subsequent NEH grant proposal). Secondly, the purpose was to create working groups for the 2001 AMIA conference in Portland. Portland will have a major small gauge component to it, with sessions threaded throughout the entire week.

The first small gauge meeting of the week was held early on at the Japanese American National Museum. The purpose was twofold: first, it was to view an impressive eight-screen video installation currently up in one of the exhibits. Produced by Karen Ishizuka, it makes extensive use of home movies in extremely innovative ways. I cannot recommend it highly enough. Secondly, we gathered to discuss cataloging issues, specifically those which are unique to small gauge films.

During the technical screening program, two 8mm to 35mm blowups were shown, including "Underwater Blues," a hand-painted and scratched art film, plus "Topaz," the WWII Japanese internment camp amateur film on the National Film Registry.

On Saturday, Melinda Stone and Karen Shopsowitz gave a great presentation on amateur film clubs, including a clip from Karen's documentary "My Father's Camera," which was screened later in its entirety. It really is an amazing film and an extremely important addition to the field of amateur film. Melinda, who is doing her Ph.D. dissertation on the California film clubs, also showed several clips, including an 8mm collaborative club film about the joys of pickpocketing.

I don't think that anyone would disagree that it was an important week in the field of amateur film preservation, but what was really inspiring was the level of interest and the enthusiasm of all of the participants—who knew how many people were into this stuff? The coming year should be even better.

~Dwight

AMIA Conference November 13-18, 2000
Los Angeles, CA
Small Gauge-relevant meetings and sessions

Friday, November 17

10:00 - 11:00

Executive Boardroom

Meeting: Small Gauge Film Preservation Task Force

Chair: Toni Treadway, Brodsky & Treadway International Center for 8mm Film
AMIA members interested in the work of the Small Gauge Film Preservation Task Force are invited to attend.

11:00 - 12:30

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Issues of Small Gauge Film

Chair: Toni Treadway, Brodsky & Treadway International Center for 8mm Film
Speaker: Pam Wintle, Smithsonian Institution Human Studies Film Archives
In June 2000, a Roundtable on Small Gauge Film was held in Los Angeles. 19 people discussed the special issues that small gauge film presents to archives and planned for a Symposium in November 2001. This session will share the current thinking about selection criteria, categories, evaluation and the technical challenges of copying small gauge film. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss the findings of the Small Gauge Roundtable and to develop the long-range plan.

Saturday, November 18

11:00 - 12:30

Writer / Director Room

Arts & Crafts: Cine-Clubs Past & Present

Chair: Dwight Swanson, Alaskan Moving Image Preservation Association

Speakers: Karen Shopsowitz, National Film Board of Canada

Melinda Stone, University of California, San Diego

Sue Howard, Yorkshire Film Archive

Amateur cinema clubs provide the opportunity for archivists, scholars, and producers to interact with amateur -filmmaking culture and to promote film preservation across the range of avant-garde documentary, travel, personal experimental - and quite unclassifiable - filmmaking. What are the ethics of working with amateur clubs? What strategies have our speakers used to work with clubs on screenings, preservation initiatives, and other projects? The sphere of amateur cine clubs is global, from the earliest days of cinema, taking off in the 1920s with the establishment of the Amateur Cinema League. This session will examine amateur cinema clubs--which, by their existence, re verse the notion that all amateur film was unedited and shown only at home. Clubs provided technical expertise and screening venues. They nurtured collaborative filmmaking and innovation: some club members designed and crafted home-made

gadgets to create special mattes and animation effects. Speakers will examine the need to collect and preserve amateur equipment and supporting paper materials relevant to the life of clubs. Discussion will include archives' and producers' experiences in working with collections from current and disbanded clubs, and an innovative archival project to solicit and preserve contemporary works from clubs.

12:30 - 1:30

Director Room

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