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'Duddy as a Mayan Indian and Bobby with the Jaguar cub': Audrey Granville Soames (1900-1990) and early post-colonial participatory media

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‘Duddy as a Mayan Indian and Bobby with the Jaguar cub’:  
Audrey Granville Soames (1900-1990) and early post-colonial  
participatory media

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# Summary

- Notions of value impact what amateur film makes into an archive (and what does not)
- Misplaced assumptions about affordability influence perceptions of WHO filmmakers are, and this requires further scrutiny in the context of regional collections
- Cine could be used a tool for social mobility, particularly by women: as a way of shaping identity, but also integration
- Cine use and colour film was specifically marketed towards women in this period

AGS pictured in AV343/15 [Credit: WFSA]



# Case study of Audrey Granville Soames

- Who attributes value to amateur films?
- Predications:
  - Amateur filmmaking as a form of participatory media is often overlooked in film discourse
  - Amateurism is often marginalised and subject to value judgements based on a relational positioning to industry.
  - Stratification of practice within the field – use of the term ‘serious amateur’ (Craven, Stebbins)

Audrey Sloane Stanley at Cowes pictured in *The Tatler*, 11 Augst 1937. p13



# Context

- Data based on a cohort study of an amateur filmmaking populace
- Assumptions built into the field:
  - For the first half of the twentieth century amateur filmmaking was considered by scholars as ‘**exclusionary by dint of cost**’ (Reiger, 2005; Motrescu-Mayes & Norris Nicholson, 2018 p.4-5]
  - Recent research on cost of filmmaking equipment, troubles this assumption and should give rise to further scrutiny of collections on this basis.

*Advert for the Filmo 121 camera, aimed at women in Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News - Friday 19 July 1935, p.54*

*Here's a Movie  
camera*



**MAKES PERFECT PICTURES**

- Small and Light no bigger than a 6d. novel.
- Magazine Day-light Loading—50 ft. Spool—16mm. Film.
- Fine, general purpose F/3.5 Lens.
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In Boxes of 3 Tablets, 2/-.  
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Larola Rose Bloom (Rouge),  
the natural tint. Boxes, 1/-  
and 2/6 each.  
Larola Face Powder in Pink,  
White, Cream and Cream  
No. 2. Boxes, 2/6 each.

1/6 & 2/6  
a  
bottle

L

M. BEETHAM  
*Write for a copy of the interest*

# What the literature says

*‘Nor are the **power relations and assumptions** about superiority of those framed by the cine lens and those holding the camera straightforward whether captured in a family group, school, public, institutional, travel or colonial locations’.*  
(Motrescu-Mayes & Norris Nicholson, 2018, p.12)

*‘Each and every instance is a fragment of **interaction imbricated with values, expectations**, hidden meanings and associations which we can sometimes only begin to unravel through a combination of close visual scrutiny and interdisciplinary contextual analysis’.*  
(Motrescu-Mayes & Norris Nicholson, 2018 p.12)

*‘And claims that [...] surviving holiday material from the period often **discloses more about the person in charge** of the camera, then the people and places framed by his or her viewfinder.’*  
(Norris Nicholson, 2009, p.95)

Hawaiian women dance for British visitors in AV343/15 (1938) [Credit: WFSA]



# Audrey Granville Soames: Social Climber

- Born in 1900 into a modest household, father was a civil servant, and the family had lodgers
- Married three times – each time improving her social standing. She married incredibly well.
- Much of the footage does not meet the geographical collecting policy
- What other reasons do we have for valuing her work:
  - Social
  - Artistic
  - Technical

AGS pictured with William Dudley Ward in AV343/15 [Credit: WFSA]



# The Social Gaze

- Contemporary press and publications
- Exposed to an increasingly saturated press where cine use transformed from a rarefied curio of aspirational desire to a commodity in reach for those with means to spend.
- AGS cine used symptomatic of, and emblematic of her transition into a new social set



AV343/15 Still [Credit: WFSA]



AV343/15 Still [Credit: WFSA]

# Colour Film: Kodachrome

*'So, you're going abroad?*

*You're going to a world made for colour-movies. Are you cruising? Scene after scene shouts for 'Kodachrome', Blue seas, sunny deck life. Amusing native costume. And a cruise is always full of incident. Or are you ski-ing? Speed, thrills, action – against clear blue skies and gorgeous mountain scenery. Any Cine-'Kodak' can take colour-movies on 'Kodachrome' No filters or attachments are needed for taking or showing.'*

Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News - Friday 03 December  
1937. p.4



*Colour movies!*

OF YOUR TRAVELS, YOUR CRUISE OR  
YOUR WINTER SPORTS ARE PERFECTLY EASY  
WITH **KODACHROME** FILM AND ANY CINE-'KODAK'

# What should be filmed?



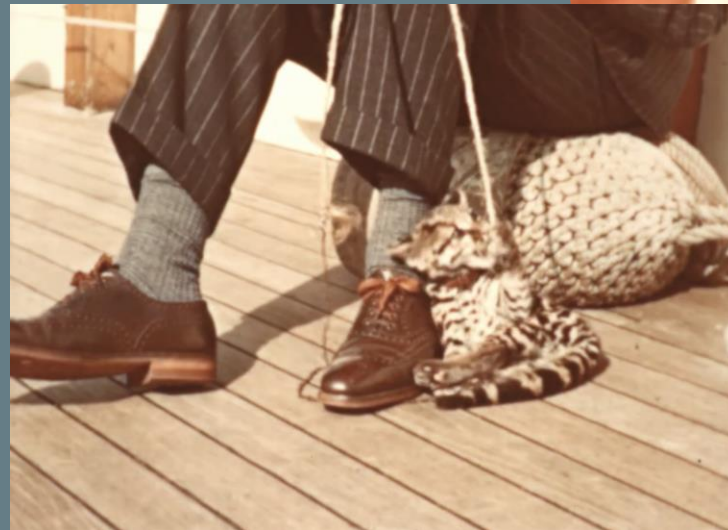
Above:  
*Pathé Review (1928) (Stills taken at 00:10:21 and 00:10:37)*  
[Credit: British Pathé]



Right: *AV343/14 (Stills from 00:16:23 and 00:18:21)* [Credit: WFSA]

# ‘Duddy as a Mayan Indian’

- What should be filmed
- women as ‘default visual ethnographers, as social vectors of British national or expatriate ethos’ (Norris Nicholson & Motrescu-Mayes, 2018) p.584
- Capturing certain images served a purpose in the moment



Jaguar cub & ‘Duddy as a Mayan Indian’  
pictured in AV343/15  
[Credit: WFSA]





AV343/15 [Credit: WFSA]



AV343/15 [Credit: WFSA]

# What gets collected

- Why did we collect these films?
- Who says they have value?
- Would we collect them today?
- What makes it into an archive?
- Geographical collecting policies
- Risk overlooking swathes of screen heritage



*Pathé baby closed canister of film. Shelving at WFSA.*



# Conclusion

- Amateur film is subject to value judgements which impact how it is viewed and discussed within and outside of archives.
- These value judgements have a detrimental effect on both the preservation of films made by amateurs and how they are interpreted within the wider film studies discipline.
- The prevailing assumptions surrounding amateur work contribute to the misrepresentation of women filmmakers and their work
- Looking past these assumptions can reveal complex production contexts and elucidate hitherto overlooked issues of social mobility

*Audrey pictured in The Tatler and Bystander; London Vol. 147, 1916,  
(Mar 16, 1938), p.46*



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