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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

Zoë Viney Burgess zoe.burgess@uwl.ac.uk



Summary

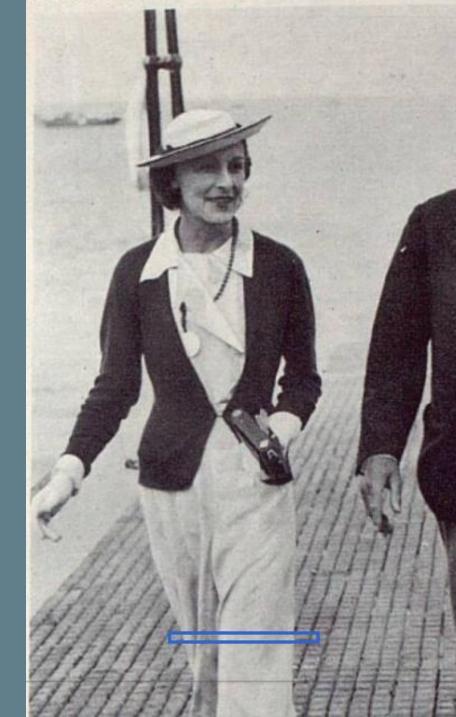
- Notions of value impact what amateur film makes into an archive (and what does not)
- Misplaced assumptions about affordability influence perceptions of WHO filmmakers are, and this requires further scrutiny in the context of regional collections
- Cine could be used a tool for social mobility, particularly 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)



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



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)

(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



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





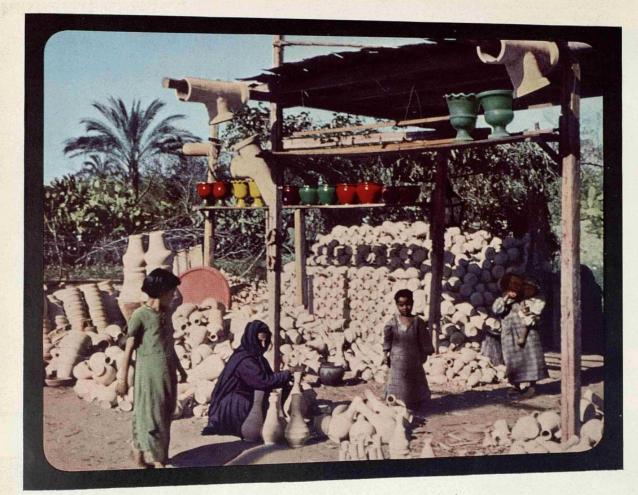
AV343/15 Still {Credit: WFSA]

AV343/15 Still {Credit: WFSA]

Colour Film: Kodachrome

'So, you're going abroad?
You're going to a world made for colourmovies. 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?







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]















What gets collected

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



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



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