# THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES



DEPARTMENT OF CINEMATIC ARTS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #1 SUMMER 2016

IT'S IN THE CAN!

N THIS ISSUE

# Welcome to the Cinematic Arts Newsletter!

By: Paula Amad, Associate Professor and Chair (phone: 319-335-2827 e-mail: paula-amad@uiowa.edu)

We're excited to share with you our first newsletter from the Department of Cinematic Arts at the University of Iowa.

Having just had the honor of participating as the Faculty Marshall for the Convocation Ceremony, I couldn't think of a better time to share the wonderful achievements of all the people who contribute to the Department of Cinematic Arts -- undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff.

The CAN will give you a glimpse into the wide array of talents and accomplishments of our students as well as the rich variety of filmrelated events we sponsor to help broaden and inspire the creative and intellectual spirit of our department. These accomplishments include MFA graduate student Carl Elsaesser's Award from the prestigious Ann Arbor Film Festival and undergraduate student Matthew Smithers' accepted presentation of a research paper at the annual Society for Cinema and Media Studies Undergraduate Conference. On the events schedule, highlights from the past year included packed screenings and talks by experimental film artists like Deborah Stratton as well as conversations with

directors like Terry Zwigoff and, via Skype, Fredrick Wiseman. You'll also read about how the Department of Cinematic Arts, in partnership with a wonderful group of our own alumni, and the UI Pomerantz Career Center, put on our first Exploring Careers in Cinema Event. A report by our Student Ambassador appears on page 2 of this newsletter. You can also view a video of the event made by one of our talented undergraduates Kylie Clark (with the help of Assistant Professor Mike Gibisser) at this link <a href="https://vimeo.com/166268454">https://vimeo.com/166268454</a>.

As you'll soon see, it's been a busy and rewarding year! We hope you will enjoy browsing the CAN and learning more about the vibrant film culture that underpins the commitment to academic and artistic excellence in education and research in the Department of Cinematic Arts at UI. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.





Exploring Careers in Cinema Alumni Event, Spring 2016

UI cinema, media alums return for a panel with students.

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Frank Brinton of Brinton Entertaining Company

Undergraduate
Presents Research
at Prestigious
Academic Conference

On April 14, 2016 Cinematic Arts undergraduate Matthew Smithers presented at the Society of Cinema and Media Studies Undergraduate Conference.

### **EXPLORING CAREERS IN CINEMA**

March 1, 2016 in the AJB rotunda

# UI CINEMA, MEDIA ALUMS RETURN FOR PANEL WITH STUDENTS

By: EJ Philby, Cinematic Arts Undergraduate Student Ambassador

Six University of Iowa alumni from the Department of Cinematic Arts walk into the journalism building. No, it's not a punchline for a joke, but their reason for returning to lowa City was equally entertaining. On March 1st, 2016, the cinema department hosted their first-annual "Exploring Careers in Cinema" event. These six alumni held a late-afternoon session in which they explained to current students how to get a job in a cinema-related career after graduation. The turnout was great, and the lecture room in the Adler Journalism building was standing-room only. Undergraduate students, graduate students, professors, and a few community members— some from as far as Des Moines—all came to the event.

As the cinema department's Student Ambassador, my job is to explain to prospective students and their parents how the University of lowa's cinema program works. The question that I receive most often from parents concerns finding a steady job after graduation. In fact, this question is also the most asked by current cinema majors. During the "Exploring Careers in Cinema" event, the six alumni did their best to answer this and any other questions the audience had. The session was



split into two halves: the first concerned more traditional filmmaking careers and the second was centered around advertising and commercials. The first half's speakers included Sarah Price, a Producer and Director; Chelsea Walton, an Assistant Editor at Pixar Animation Studios; and Kent Lambert, an independent artist-filmmaker-programmer. The second half included Matt Sabljak, President of Sabljak Raether Hogerton in Milwaukee; Kelly Duff from Leo Burnett Advertising in Chicago; and Meng Xiong, a graduate student in the Film MFA Program in Creative Producing at Columbia University in New York City.

The alumni offered advice in both practical and personal ways. Do what makes you happy, be a nice person, and be passionate about your work; these are some main ideas that their words often returned to. On the practical side of finding a career in cinema, they recommended looking in small to medium-sized cities when first starting out. The film markets in these cities are often less

competitive but still have a large enough market to offer jobs for the newly graduated. Cities like Milwaukee, Austin, Minneapolis, Boston, and Des Moines are among those that were mentioned. Getting a minor or at least taking classes in business was also highly recommended—whether working commercially or independently, running a business is a key component of the filmmaking industry that is often overlooked.

By the time the event ended, students lingered around for a while to continue talking to the visiting alumni. A few asked me if there would be another "Exploring Careers in Cinema" day next spring. It would certainly be beneficial for students if it were continued. After such a successful turnout, it seems likely that there would be even more interest in the event during its second year. I look forward to seeing both new and familiar faces again next March.





# TERRY ZWIGOFF, DIRECTOR OF GHOST WORLD VISITS CINEMATIC ARTS

On April 7, 2016, filmmaker Terry Zwigoff visited Cinematic Arts students as part of his trip to lowa City under the auspices of the Mission Creek Festival. Zwigoff, director of *Crumb*, a documentary portrait of American cartoonist Robert Crumb, and *Ghost World*, an adaptation of Daniel Clowes' graphic novel, shared stories and fielded questions in a crowded classroom.

In response to a probing inquiry from Cinematic Arts Chair Paula Amad about memorable early film viewing experiences, Zwigoff recalled his very first trip to a movie theater as a young boy. His father gave him the okay to go to the rest room on his own while watching a B-movie about alien invaders. Too young and too short to carefully read signage, Zwigoff accidentally pushed open the emergency exit, setting off alarms and halting the show. As he put it, "After that, I only wanted to watch films on television at home."

Zwigoff is well-known as a filmmaker who embraces oddballs, outsiders and marginals. Whether it's Crumb himself, the idiosyncratic and beloved cartoonist who best embodies the spirit of the Bay Area underground comic scene, or Ghost World's dork anti-hero Enid, characters who buck a vapid trendiness populate Zwigoff's colorful cinematic universe.



But make no mistake, he's no ne'er do well slacker when it comes to craft. In response to a request from a bright Cinematic Arts undergraduate for advice, Zwigoff told a story about the importance of studying acting in his transition to directing fiction features. Judith Weston, author of *Directing Actors*, granted him permission to observe her acting classes in San Francisco. He found himself sitting next to Francis Ford Coppola. Shocked to see such a luminary in an acting class, Zwigoff asked, "What are you doing here?" Coppola replied, "Terry, I'm trying to stay on top of my craft. It takes a lifetime to understand acting."

These are but a few of the wonderful anecdotes from the memorable afternoon conversation with Terry Zwigoff. Cinematic Arts would like to thank Andre Perry from Mission Creek and Joe Tiefenthaler from Film Scene, lowa City's independent movie theater, for making the event possible.

# CINEMATIC ARTS UNDERGRADUATE PRESENTS RESEARCH AT PRESTIGIOUS ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

By Matthew Smithers (Cinematic Arts Senior and Honors Student 2016)

I enjoyed my experience at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Undergraduate Conference which this year took place at the University of Colorado Boulder, April 14-16. At the conference, I presented research on Frank Brinton and the Brinton Entertaining Company based on the recent acquisition of the Brinton Collection by the Special Collections Department of the University of lowa and on newspaper records. For the conference, I briefly outlined some of the biographical information I have learned about Brinton and began to contextualize his career within the existing literature on early cinema. An itinerant lecturer and showman of motion pictures and other entertainment, Brinton toured towns in the Midwest and the South of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and exhibited in opera houses, theatres,

community halls, churches, tents and the open air. Brinton was also a world traveler and an inventor and airship designer.

The Conference included two days of panels, where students read their papers and questions responded to comments. There was also plenty of opportunities to talk to other students and professors outside of the panels. It was very helpful to receive feedback on my research and paper, to listen to the academic and research interests of other students, as well as to share information about our respective colleges and universities. There was also plenty of food provided, and the Boulder campus is lovely. Participating in the conference was a rewarding experience. I am thankful for the Honors Program for helping fund the trip.

I am also thankful for Professor Paula Amad for suggesting that I apply to the Conference. lt learning was experience. Conferences are an important of cinema and studies. Professors and professional in the field of film studies frequent such events. They are the equivalent of film festivals for filmmakers. It is an opportunity to share ideas. There were some excellent papers presented in the panels. Most of them were text-oriented, whereas my paper was different in that it focused on motion picture exhibition. I also learned that the Cinematic Arts Department at the University of Iowa has an excellent reputation at other universities, as professors and students at the Conference remarked to me.

# FILMS TO MAKE YOU THINK, FEEL, AND ACT



HEADROOM IS DEDICATED TO PRESENTING EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA AND NEW MEDIA IN IOWA CITY

Film is dynamic and alive in lowa City, and the proof is in the events! The innovative Headroom Screening Series had another stellar year of programming with sold-out crowds packing into on- and off-campus community venues where fresh faces and long time cinephiles alike came out to get a sense of what is happening in contemporary experimental film, video, and new media.

The mission of the series, as described by lead programmer, Assistant Professor in Cinematic Arts, Michael Gibisser, is to "introduce the cultural community in lowa City to a mode of filmmaking that is more challenging, poetic, politically urgent, and/or enigmatic than that which is generally available in traditional mainstream cinema." Screenings are always followed by a Q+A sessions and discussion, generally with a visiting artist or curator.

Over the course of the year, this format led to both engaging aesthetic inquiry and important community discussions. In February, Cinematic Arts MFA, Anna Swanson, teamed up with the Office of Outreach and Engagement to bring filmmaker, Julie Perini, to town to screen her recent documentary, ARRESTING POWER: RESISTING POLICE VIOLENCE IN PORTLAND. Following the screening, Perini took part in a panel discussion with Dr. Jessica Welburn, a Ulowa Assistant Professor of Sociology and African American Studies, and LaTasha DeLoach, a board member of the Iowa City Community School District, as well as a member of the Coalition for Racial Justice and the Iowa City Black Voices Project. Swanson moderated the discussion, which delved into systemic issues of racial discrimination, intolerance, and violence at both the local and national levels.

Headroom was founded in 2013 by former Cinematic Arts faculty member, Jesse McLean, as an itinerant screening series that would move around the city, utilizing spaces best suited for the specific work being showcased. To this end, this past year's events included a multiprojector, multi-media performance by Dallas artist Michael A. Morris at Public Space One, an all-celluloid 16mm program of films from Ann Arbor Film Festival that took advantage of the Franklin Miller Screening Room's spectacular projection, and immersive digital short film programs at FilmScene with visiting artists Vanessa Renwick and Mary Helena Clark, from Portland and Hamilton, NY, respectively.

The season culminated in another FilmScene screening of Deborah Stratman's 2016 film, THE ILLINOIS PARABLES, which premiered at the Sundance and Berlin Film Festivals only a few months before coming to lowa City through Headroom. It was standing room only for some members of the audience who packed the space for the experimental

documentary described as "a beautiful ghost of a film," by Michael Phillips at the Chicago Tribune. In Stratman's words, the film lurches through the past fourteen centuries in the area that became Illinois to reveal "the state as a convenient structural ruse, allowing its histories to become allegories that explore how we're shaped by conviction and ideology."

The screening capped a series of events with Stratman, a Fulbright scholar and Guggenheim fellow, whose visit was made possible with a grant from the Perry A. and Helen J. Bond Fund for Interdisciplinary Interaction. As part of the visit Stratman gave and artist talk and screened her 2009 essay film, O'ER THE LAND, a sister project to THE ILLINOIS PARABLES, which also interrogates the ideological infrastructures of freedom, threat, and national identity.

"Deborah's work is emblematic of the type we love to showcase at Headroom. As the name implies, we're deeply invested in films and projects that engage viewers in both the brain and body, and that resonate on both intellectual and affective registers" says Gibisser.

Headroom will return next year with a full roster of events, and will be programmed by Cinematic Arts faculty members Gibisser and Jason Livingston in collaboration with Vertical Cinema, a new curatorial student group founded by Cinematic Arts graduate students, Emily Drummer and Carl Elsaesser.



# DEPT OF CINEMATIC ARTS MAKES AN IMPACT AT THE 2016 SOCIETY FOR CINEMA AND MEDIA STUDIES CONFERENCE

The annual conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS), held in Atlanta between March 30th and April 3rd, 2016 featured a ceremony culminating in our colleague, Professor Emeritus Rick Altman, receiving the Distinguished Career Achievement Award, the society's highest honor. In his remarks upon receiving the award, Rick summarized his career teaching film studies at the University of Iowa, and cited the work of many of his former students as a frequent inspiration for his own groundbreaking research. The University of Iowa was, as usual, well represented at the SCMS conference, the main annual professional event in the field of Film Studies. Participants at the meeting included current faculty (Corey Creekmur, Steven Ungar) and Film Studies graduate students (Patrick Brown, Joshua Kierstead, Amos Stailey-Young, Katherine Steinbach), as well as many former colleagues (Dudley Andrew, Rosalind Galt, Nathan Holmes, Angelo Restivo, Marc Vernet) and alumni, including Jaimie Baron, Kelley Conway, Nilo Couret, Don Crafton, Jon Crylen, Angela Dalle Vacche, Ofer Eliaz, Peter Feng, Jennifer Fleeger, Caryl Flinn, Hannah Frank, Barbara Klinger, Dimitrios Latsis, Ana Lopez, Kevin McDonald, Michael Meneghetti, Rebecca Meyers, Charlie Michael, Linda Mokdad, Paul Morton, Bjorn Nordfjord Phil Rosen, Patrice Petro, David Rodowick, Phil Rosen, Michael Slowik, Luke Stadel, Erica Stein, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, Raymond Watkins, Ryan Watson, Jennifer Wild, and James Prakash Younger.

During the conference Corey Creekmur interviewed Rick Altman as part of the SCMS-sponsored Fieldnotes project, which collects oral histories of pioneers in the field: a video recording of the interview will be posted on the SCMS website soon.

We hope to organize a more formal gathering of department students, alumni, and colleagues at the March 2017 SCMS convention, to be held in Chicago.



# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING CINEMATIC ARTS GRADUATE STUDENTS!

## **AWARDS:**

**Patrick Brown** has been awarded a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Grant and a Graduate Summer Fellowship.

**Carl Elsaesser** received the Barbara Aronofsky Latham Award for Emerging Experimental Video Artist for his work *Vague Images at the Beginning and End of the Day* at the 2016 Ann Arbor Film Festival.

**Joshua Kierstead** has been awarded a Ballard-Seashore Dissertation fellowship.

**Timothy Orme** has been awarded an Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award from the Council on Teaching.

**Katherine Steinbach** has been awarded a Graduate College Summer Fellowship and a Post-Comprehensive Research Award.

**Leah Vonderheide** has been awarded a Ballard-Seashore Dissertation Fellowship.

**Chang-Min Yu** has been awarded a Stanley Graduate Award for International Research.

# **ACHIEVEMENTS:**

**Hannah Bonner** presented at the NYU Cinema Studies 2016 Graduate Student Conference on Displacement.

**Patrick Brown, Joshua Kierstead,** and **Anna Swanson** each presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Jakobson Memorial Graduate Conference on Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers.

Patrick Brown, Joshua Kierstead, Amos Stailey-Young, and Katherine Steinbach each presented at this year's Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference in Atlanta.

**Emily Drummer** screened a film at the Experiments in Film Festival.

**Matthew Hipps** and **Juana New** each presented at the 2016 Crossing Borders Symposium on Rethinking Memory and Trauma: New Directions in Cultural and Visual Studies.

Laura lancu, Timothy Orme, and Anna Swanson each successfully defended their MFA theses, which included public screenings of their thesis films at FilmScene. Tim also screened a film at the European Media Arts Festival in April, Anna screened a film at the Oneota Film Festival in February, and Laura will screen films at the Lima Bean Film Festival in St. Louis, and at the Proxy Act International Film Festival in London.

**Se-Young (Seth) Kim** and **Leslie DeLassus** each successfully defended their doctoral dissertations, and Seth has accepted a three-year position as Mellon Assistant Professor in Asian Film and Media Studies at Vanderbilt University.

**Metrah Pashaee's** film "Movement Study: Discipline" was screened at Anthology Film Archives in New York.

**Amos Stailey-Young** successfully passed his PhD Comprehensive Exams.

**Chang-Min Yu** presented at the 2016 Harvard Film and Visual Studies Conference.

## SPOTLIGHT ON GRADUATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

# Film Studies PhD Student Pat Brown Receives DAAD Research Grant

Starting at the end of this summer, Film Studies PhD Candidate Pat Brown began living in Berlin to continue work on his dissertation with the support of a prestigious 10-month DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Research Grant.

Pat was among 106 out of a pool of 655 applicants -- and the only student from the University of Iowa -- to receive this highly competitive grant this year. This support will allow him to conduct invaluable archival research on his dissertation, "Spiel/Film: On Play in Weimar Cinema and Culture," which looks into various facets of the film culture of the Weimar Republic in Germany (1918-1933) that augur the emergence of today's play-centric global culture, and indeed suggest that modern media technologies have long encouraged certain types of "play." Thus far Pat's work has focused on positioning Weimar cinema historically and theoretically within a milieu of new media forms that include the innovations of the art movement Berlin Dada and early forms of popular war gaming.

While in Berlin, Pat will be enrolled at the Freie Universität-Berlin and working under the supervision of internationally renowned film scholar Gertrud Koch, conducting research at local archives and libraries

including the Deutsche Kinemathek, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, the Bundesarchiv Berlin, and the Landesarchiv Berlin. This grant allows him to complete research begun last year and this previous summer with Semester and Summer research grants provided by the University of Iowa Graduate School.

The DAAD grant will also allow him to enjoy the latter part of a Berlin summer.





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# Department of CINEMATIC ARTS Newsletter

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