

Film Courses in Art Schools

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We know that there are film schools in Munich and Berlin, even if we don't know what happens there or what is concretely done there. We know practically nothing about the film courses in Braunschweig, Kassel, Hamburg, and Düsseldorf. I have given seminars in some of these courses over the past few years; I was in Stuttgart for one year, as a lecturer from early '70 to early '71 in the basic film course. Based on these experiences, I'd like to give some information about film courses in art schools. In Stuttgart, we were always working toward the day when systematic teaching would become possible. (But this day never came; now there is no longer even a planned film course in Stuttgart.) We didn't have a single editing table, no money for film stock, and we usually gave the seminar in a hallway. The students received no stipend since film had not yet been approved as a subject. And because there was no money for specialized lecturers, I had to ambitiously scratch the surface of all kinds of topics. Under such conditions, it is impossible to give anything other than cultural-political information. It appears pointless to me to deal with my failure regarding the students' wishes and just as pointless to criticize the students' wishes. I must therefore forego describing the process of the emergence of judgment or recognition.

The film school in Berlin is endowed with approximately 50,000 DM a year per student; the budget of the school in Munich is similar. With this money, many lecturers can be hired, an equipment room as well as a library can be maintained, and it enables every student to shoot films alone or in groups. The thesis film can be produced for a per-minute budget similar to that of a TV feature on the third channel. These kinds of working conditions are far from ideal, but they at least make it objectively possible to make the most of the level of the scholarly and technical understanding of film. From the standpoint of the authorities, 50,000 DM is absolutely great. An art school only needs a third of this amount for its students. A functional film department in an art school would therefore be a disproportionately overstocked department. A foreign body in the books and in the consciousness of the schools and ministers. It is hard even to reckon with such overabundance. Feature film producers and TV stations have had a crucial role in initiating the schools in Munich and Berlin; the TV stations are also involved in supporting

the academies. It cannot be expected that both of these groups will work for the same or a similar concept in a third location. With the same concept, but fewer means than in Berlin or Munich, it is only possible to scratch the surface. A concept must therefore be found with specialized educational and research goals that makes sense to the cultural ministers and that at least partially motivates support from TV and film companies; a concept that at the same time does not hinder the remaining activities of an art school.

The first concept that comes to mind is that of nonindustrial film work, of “another” film. A prototype workshop is actually cheaper than an assembly line system, and one can achieve more in a well-furnished prototype workshop than in a poorly equipped production facility. But the comparison to the car industry and film industry is a bit thorny. A progressive critique does not blame an industry for using machines rather than handwork (production forces). It needs to critique the form of relation between the producers in production and the form of relation between products and users (production relations). This is shared by both industries, and so a progressive film critic does not accuse Hollywood of not making auteur films. But then again, the FRG is not Hollywood. Progressiveness in the production forces and collective ownership in TV stations does not really catch the eye. Maybe because we don’t have the right eye for it: in any case the “other” film tends to turn away from the industry instead of influencing it. Hence, a prototype workshop is needed that primes innovations so that they can be produced in series. An art school is the right place for this because prototypes are also being worked on in other disciplines and different kinds of training come together in them.

A further concept for film work in art schools is training in media education. I don’t need to elaborate in *Filmkritik* that film and TV companies are currently ruining rather than fostering the visual literacy of viewers (including the one that the proletariat acquired through visual stories). Teachers are increasingly being required to turn their art courses into “communications courses,” but there is no place to acquire this skill. Art schools train art educators who also paint pictures and are therefore allowed to deal with art. To make sure that students of future media instructors will be able to deal with films, film courses should allow instructors to handle films and not only to listen to theories about film.

Media education is a discipline that could persuade ministers of education, that would at the same time turn the budget restrictions into an advantage, and that would match the functions of art schools.

In Stuttgart, we were also thinking about a particular specialization: work on educational films. Most educational films are still made by people who resemble

the ones who wrote our schoolbooks. Most educational films look like a fricassee; many individuals make an educational film only if they desperately need the money and then they do so only in secret and quickly. Just as school classes can spoil literature for someone, most educational films spoil our receptiveness for films that are not pure cinema.

Basically, an educational film program should be a research institute. Since making educational films means to be able to cooperate with fields other than film, an educational film program must be made up of instructors, filmmakers, linguists, and information theorists. The concept of an educational film program, therefore, exceeds that of an art school and requires coordination with teacher training colleges or universities.

P.S. I would be happy if participants in film courses were to respond to these suggestions and propose their own concepts. There are so few possibilities for film work that we must use all of the ones available in the most optimal fashion. Love for film should not remain futile; we must find ways to consummate it that have consequences not just for the lover.

Note

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