DIGITAL CINEMA: FROM PLATFORMS TO STORYTELLING

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For its 2017 first issue, the International Journal of Film and Media Arts publishes a special issue dedicated to digital cinema: from platforms to storytelling. This special issue stems from the work developed under the European project "Essemble", a research and training endeavour that was developed by a consortium of four European film schools between 2012 and 2015 and by five Schools from 2015 to 2017. Initially funded under the European Union Media program (project ref: 1002TR029002PT), Essemble was implemented by a consortium of five European film and Media schools: Universidade Lusófona (ULHT), Film, Video and Multimedia Department, Lisbon, Portugal; LUCA School of Arts, Brussels, Belgium; Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME), Budapest, Hungary, and ifs internationale filmschule köln in consortium with TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences, Cologne, Germany. Cologne, Germany. Initially designed essentially has a training activity, Essemble addressed the need of European Film and Media Schools for training and mobility activities focusing on media and film related technologies that push the traditional barriers of the medium and call for new pedagogical and didactic approaches. The project involved the delivery of a set of intensive training activities dealing with the acquisition of skills and competences in new film technologies, such as stereoscopic imaging, augmented reality and visual effects, and their application in the context of the creative production of new filmic formats that cross live action, animation and virtual moving images. More recently, the project became an Erasmus + funded initiative (Agreement number – 2015-1-pt01-ka203-013112) and started to incorporate besides the training dimension, also the technical and artistic exploitation of different media's, namely VR, potential to push the barriers of cinematic creativity.

The project's main objectives included the creation of a network of competences in digital film; the development and implementation of an interdisciplinary training program focusing on film development; the development of co-production initiatives between all schools involved in the consortium depicting the creative use of the taught technologies, and theoretical and critical reflection on the crossings animation and film promote when confronted with a changing media environment. This special issue materializes this desire for further theoretical and critical reflection on these topics.

The issue is divided into two parts. In the first part, named "reflections", we collect a number of papers and essays written by different researchers involved in Essemble, revolving around the different concepts the project dwelt with. Sylke Meyer reflects on the core concept of spatial storytelling that was used as a driver for creative production in Essemble's latest stages and the consequences it has namely on what concerns the hybridization of film with other storytelling formats such as videogames. Narratives and storytelling are also the topic of Natalia's Fabics paper, that focus on the problems these new media create for more traditional forms of storytelling.

Paulo Viveiros discusses the concept of the multitask cinema as a core outcome of the transformations digital cinema is going through and the consequences this has both for creators and audiences. Ivan Marino debates the role of effects in the moulding of cinema audiences, a core topic within Essemble, since many of the crossing between animation and film are in many cases related precisely with the role of effects in film.

In the second part, named "applications" Brecht Debackere and Peter Moyes both present us with case studies of projects that using VR technologies expend the possibilities of the cinematic experience, while Tony Costa discusses the challenges digital technology implies for cinematography teaching. Finally, Simone Stewens, reflects on the consequences and implications of the emergence of digital filmmaking for film education, one of the core objectives of Essemble. All together, these different papers highlight the overarching importance of the work conducted throughout Essemble in promoting critical reflection and experimentation around digital cinema. It's our conviction that this practice based research approach is the one that best suits the complexity of problems and challenges this technologies and the social consequences they have, imply. We hope that by reading this special issue, not only the reader gets a better picture of the work that was developed throughout these years, but also of the questions and sometimes perplexities that everyday drive the educational and research endeavors of these different schools. Good readings!