

## CINEMATIC TECHNOLOGIES

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In the nineteenth century technological codes reached such a widespread diffusion at the level of aesthetic languages, that Thirties' theoretician Eugenio Giovannetti coined the notion of "mechanical arts". Cinema is placed at the core of the technological revolution: on the one hand it modifies the notion of art itself, on the other hand it determines a new social imaginary on the ground of technology and modernity.

From the Sixties, a new methodology of historical research on the evolution of cinematic technologies imposed itself: it led to more comprehensive technological histories of film, which focus attention, besides production, also on distribution and propose an articulated analysis of technological transformations in order to understand social changes as well as the cultural values of cinema. Although the rich contributions this methodological trend has given to film study, it hasn't still offered a complete picture of the research field. Especially in Italy, some carefully developed researches were published recently, presenting case studies of Italian technicians whose work offered an important contribution to the development of film technology. These researches though get involved just with a few historical stages and, actually, they grant a privilege to film, leaving apart the whole network of relationships and convergence that new technologies of film production and distribution determine on the social-cultural system, on the media and on the experience of spectators.

As a consequence, the research aims to map this wide field historically, revisiting the whole life span of Italian Cinema and examining in detail those innovations which changed its physiognomy and its functions; as well as the research aims to analyse the evolution of cinematic technologies in so far as they affect the whole mass communication system and the functions and effects of the medium in society.

The project, produced in 2002 as "Programma di ricerca scientifica di rilevante interesse nazionale" for Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, is going to focus on the role of technology within film history and spectatorship experiences (technologies of cinematic representation), mapping the main transformations occurred to cinematic technologies through history and checking the effects of this progress on the level of production, distribution and consumption of cinema. Besides that, the project is going to consider the role of cinema in introducing and representing technology in the social background, and we will evaluate the importance of cinema in the development of a "technological imaginary" (technologies within cinematic representation).

The analysis will be carried out both from a diachronic and synchronic point of view, and will focus on particular decades and theoretical perspectives:

- 1910-20s: overview of the birth and settling of cinematic technologies, mapping the social discourses and existing literature on cinema and technology. A methodical analy-

sis will be carried out collecting original handbooks, local newspapers, paratextes, testimonies and all sort of materials considered mediators of the incorporation of cinema in the social contest;

- 20s-30s: from Silent to Sound cinema, the research intends to check and explain how technological changes determine film genre statement and modify styles and habits of moviegoing, film exhibition and spectatorship; and also to verify how the movies represent technology and interact with cultural and artistic trends;

- 30s-40s: the focus here is on the increasing development of cinematic technologies. A complete overview of the main transformation of the studios and of the production technologies, including a history of Italian companies will be defined, and a complete analysis of the ways in which cinema leads the social acceptance of technologies and the incorporation of “modernity” in Italian society;

- 50s-60s: how technological development influenced the cinema production and distribution is at focus here, together with the relation of society, media and the cultural industry progress. A special collection of testimonies of vision experiences and spectators biographies will be connected with the transformation of the social role of cinema within Italian culture, and a map of Italian popular genres, and the definition of the boundaries of horror films, Italian Comedy and other film genres will be carried out. Also the notion of Author will be questioned with a renovated attention;

- 60s-70s: This is the period of low-budget-technologies diffusion. Their historical growth and the consequences of their circulation in production, consumption and narration is the main object here, connected to the multiplication and differentiation of theatres and spaces of consumption (films out of cinemas) until nowadays, mapping the major moviegoing and film exhibition trends;

- 80s-90s: here histories of cinema and of cinematic technologies are bound together with postmodern cultural and social debates. In this perspective textual analysis and forms of reception will be investigated together;

- The Digital turn: here the focus is on the effects of digital technologies in production, distribution, exhibition and moviegoing.

These ends will be achieved by adopting a comprehensive methodology, connecting:

- archival researches on original documents testifying the historical conditions within film and technology;

- textual analysis aimed to verify the transformations determined in the movies by technologies, especially in relation to the codification of film genres;

- paratextual studies, able to identify time and modalities of technological transformations, as well as how they are commonly perceived and their social functions;

- audience studies, in order to measure the qualities and the symbolic values of the technological turn in the experience of movie-goers.

The project is promoted by:

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