

Writing in first-person

This project provides a reflexion on the role of representation in the ways we tell stories and produce knowledge and the relevance of practical thinking at the edge of creative and experiential boundaries. I have not only proposed a change in the way we look at transgression in cinema but literally engaged with a practice-based inquiry, finding in it the parameters for thought. This study's methodology might thus be of inspiration and reference for those who are interested in cinema as an art as well as artistic practice as a mode of inquiry inside and outside academia.

About Júlia Machado

Júlia Machado is a journalist and filmmaker. She has directed short films and worked as a film editor in many media and film productions since 2006. Her research focus is on cinema as an art and a mode of inquiry and reflection. She produced her PhD dissertation at the Department of Media Studies, Aarhus University, where she has been part of the ICT, Media, Communication, and Journalism research programme.

Website: <http://juliamachado.com>

Contact

Júlia Machado
machadoc.julia@gmail.com
+45 5273 9319

Institut for Kultur og Samfund
Aarhus Universitet
Jens Chr. Skous Vej 3
8000 Aarhus C.





ART FILM AND THE POETICS OF TRANSGRESSION: A PRACTICE-BASED INVESTIGATION

PhD dissertation by Júlia Machado



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

ART FILM AND THE POETICS OF TRANSGRESSION: A PRACTICE-BASED INVESTIGATION

Summary of the main points of PhD dissertation Art Film and the Poetics of Transgression: A Practice-Based Investigation by Júlia Machado, Department of Media Studies, Aarhus University. This thesis examines the value of transgression for art films and cinema as an art, taking into consideration the issue of a certain standardization of transgressive poetics at the turn of and during the first decades of the twenty-first century.

Excess is a misleading parameter for understanding transgression in art cinema

Transgression and excess figure more often than not in a seemingly inextricable relationship for both the ones who defend and dismiss its poetic value. Whereas some scholars point out to an inherently subversive quality in the excesses of this poetics, some critics and theorists highlight its conventional and conservative nature. Even though one cannot simply divorce the terms, in this research, I attempt to show that excess is not an appropriate critical parameter for thinking of the creative and reflexive values of transgressions in art cinema, particularly today.

Rethinking transgression from the perspective of practice

As transgression transverses genres constituting its own poetic territory in cinema, it has demonstrated a tendency to standardize its repertoire of content, styles, and affections. Although some scholars in the field affirm a difference between standard and artistic forms, little focus is put on explaining what allows art cinema to be outstanding in its procedures and strategies however. I have thus chosen to change perspective and conduct a practical

mode of inquiry in order to find in the artistic practice the parameters to think this poetic territory in cinema.

The reflexive dimension of filmmaking practice

Through filmmaking practice and with a particular focus on the subject of sexuality, I approach transgression as a poetic territory but also as a poetic force. The productions comprise four short films: one short film-essay (Transgressions) and three short narrative films (Bliss, Femme, Paradise). There, I observe the erotic dimension and value of this force for film storytelling and experience, the process to activate it and the intimate reflexive dimensions that might be involved – which is described in the text and documented with behind-the-scenes videos and interviews with participants.

The process of choice-making and matters of risk and trust

If the daring character of the proposal has involved matters of uncertainty and fear, it has also benefited the films to a large extent, as it allowed me to generate unexpected encounters that fed the creative process. Although unexpected, encounters can be catalyzed by an artistic aspiration and an artistic ethos, as the practice shows. Starting with a standard repertoire of taboo contents, an artistic aspiration was what guided the filmmaking process towards a more existential dimension of characters and stories. Whereas an artistic ethos allowed me to generate trust and engagement among participants.

The tense liminal encounters between excesses and limits

Art film transgressions, I argue, are defined less by the often-observed bodily excesses and more by the tensions of a liminal dramaturgy. An artistic gesture through this poetic territory may generate new forms of storytelling but also intimate reflection through unexpected encounters at the frontiers of cinema as cultural production, medium, and art. The productions confirm there is an erotic force inherent to this poetic territory that may be activated in the filmmaking process with or without the display of explicit content and through different modes of production and styles.

Contribution

This research adds to the growing body of studies on transgression in art cinema. My approach contributes to an understanding of it as both a poetic territory and an erotic force and provides empirical findings of its dramaturgical possibilities also. This study brings insights into the creative and reflexive dimensions of art film dramaturgy and might thus be of relevance for researchers as well as filmmakers, artists, educators, critics, and moviegoers.