
Letter from the Editors

By Sophie Hopmeier and Cassice Last

In recent years, developments in digital technologies and social spaces have radically affected the ways in which documentary film functions. Challenges to, and innovations within the field have resulted in a proliferation of moves towards new manifestations of documentary such as iDocs, sensory ethnography, and trans-media expressions that subsume cinema within a greater whole. Though some of these transitions do mark a shift in the form and function of documentary, which reflect global changes in our perception of the world and reality, and the ways in which we communicate, many elements of these innovations can be identified as iterations of prior moments in the history of documentary, such as early cross platform collaborations and disavowals of the influence of the filmmaker.

This issue of Frames takes stock of these recent developments from a number of academic and practical perspectives, and provides a reflection of the influences between the past of documentary and its future, asking what the studies of prior moments in non-fiction film can tell us about its present and possible futures. In turn, it grapples with what enduring problems and practices, resurrections of lapsed forms, or marked shifts, tell us about our collective expectations and understanding of documentary- what is constant, what is a restructuring of the past, and what is truly new.

Questions of how we experience uncertainty and ‘not knowing’ in documentary are raised in Lyell Davies’ exploration of the destabilisation of binaries between dramatic fiction and objective documentary in recent films. Taking *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (Banksy, 2010) and *The Act of Killing* (Oppenheimer, 2012) as examples, Davies discusses the recent shift away from “epistophilia”, or the pleasure of knowing, to the pleasures and discomforts found in the disorientation, wavering doubt and speculation as to whether a film should be understood as documentary.

Leading on from this, Vincent Bohlinger discusses the work of Emile de Antonio, a figure who, in the 1960s, developed subjective and polemical documentary practice at odds with the apparent objectivity of the coeval direct-cinema style. Though the tracing of de Antonio’s development of a new, syndicated model for independent film financing, Bohlinger explores the pertinence and implications of this method in the internet age of the crowdfunding of political documentaries.

In her examination of the plurality of histories and the ownership of memory in Nguyen Thi's *Vietnam The Movie* (2016), Loredana Pazzini-Paracciani engages with the phenomenon of the Vietnam War as a "media myth" in the American culture industry and the reclaiming of these and other narratives through an archival appropriation and re-situation.

Coming from a practical perspective, Kim Munro reflects on her own documentary project in-process, *The Park*. Her experience working on what began as a character-driven, testimonial-based film has led her to formulate and propose a new, participatory, rhizomatic and decentralised method for creating a more affective form.

Similarly, in a POV by Liz Miller of *The Shore Line Project*, she discusses her motivations for developing an interactive web documentary, committed to consciousness raising and promoting action to an alternate future.

We would like to thank our guest editor, Noah Tsika, Assistant Professor of Media Studies at Queens College, City University of New York for his generous and deeply insightful contribution to this issue. The guidance provided by Dr Leshu Torchin, Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at The University of St Andrews, was also invaluable in the formulation of this issue, particularly with regards to her expertise in the Post-Truth era for documentary. As always, we are extremely grateful for the support of our dedicated editorial team and for their superb work on this issue.