

26th International Bremen Film Conference, 18–21 May 2022

Call for papers: **Green Cinema. Relations between Film and Ecology**

The 2022 International Bremen Film Conference will explore relations between nature and film. The focus will be on recent and historical perspectives that examine film and cinema through an ecological lens. A Green Cinema can be found in utopias and dystopias from a diverse range of genres. Green Cinema also engages with the ecological footprint of film production and issues of sustainability in cinema culture and the film industry. Furthermore, it has been the subject of both historical and contemporary film theories. Engaging with Green Cinema allows to experience nature and the environment, reveals past and present perspectives on nature, and enables a new, ecological orientation of film culture reconceived as *natureculture*. The conference invites international researchers, filmmakers and audiences to explore the myriad facets of Green Cinema together. We welcome abstracts for papers that address these topics (or go beyond them) and that demonstrate an interest in film theory, film practice and interdisciplinary dialogue.

If you would like to present at the *26th International Bremen Film Conference*, please submit an abstract (2,000 characters) and a short bio in German or English by 16 October 2021. Subject to the limited funding available, we will be able to offer grants to cover travel expenses. The conference will include lectures, discussions and film screenings. It will take place at CITY 46 / Kommunalkino Bremen from 18 to 21 May 2022, and is jointly organised by CITY 46, the University of Bremen and FU Berlin. The plan is to hold the conference as a physical event, but there will also be the option to attend virtually.

Natural spaces have been part of film history since the earliest days of cinema, with shots of plants, gardens, water and landscapes serving as decorative elements or as backgrounds or frames for human stories. Only rarely nature is the actual protagonist or at the centre of the action. Green cinema interrogates aesthetic configurations and audio-visual models of natural spaces. The relation between film and ecology extends through a diverse range of genres. The depiction of landscapes in Western films have shaped highly specific ideas of a life in and with nature. In Bio-Horror and Sci-Fi films, plants appear as alien Others. Educational films represent processes of growth using time-lapse photography. Auteur films often show urban landscapes. Nature documentaries and disaster movies model both the beauty and the destruction of nature.

Interconnections between film and ecology can also be studied through the lens of film production and its conditions, thereby expanding theories of film aesthetics with ecological perspectives on film and media. This raises a series of questions: what do representations of natural spaces tell us of the history of industrial culture? To what extent is Green Cinema embedded in structures of domination (such as ethnic, class or anthropological difference) or part of a (post)colonial history? In this process what is the role of issues concerning the history of knowledge, epistemology or botany? How do natural spaces in film undermine the historically deep-rooted separation of nature and culture, and open our eyes to audio-visual *naturecultures*? What implications does this have for the relation between human and natural history?

Natural spaces have also left marks on film theory. Siegfried Kracauer (1960) spoke of ‘the ripple of the leaves stirred by the wind’, highlighting the dimension of movement common to both nature and film. The avant-garde filmmaker Germaine Dulac drew attention to the temporal aspect of plant growth, and always accompanied her lectures with a short time-lapse film of beans sprouting. Against the backdrop of climate change and the Anthropocene, Jennifer Fay’s recently published *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene* (2018) marks a new direction in film theory. Other recent work, such as Adrian Ivakhiv’s *Ecologies of the Moving Image* (2013), understands audio-visual natural spaces as fundamentally entwined with aesthetics and politics. Proceeding from questions of nature and ecology, studies of film, media and history have productively engaged with research in the environmental humanities, queer/ecofeminism, critical plant studies and cultural animal studies.

Cinema’s ecological footprint is evident in the way that cinemas are configured and operated as cultural sites. The German Federal Film Board recently published a ‘Green Cinema Guidebook’ (FFA 2018). Many funding bodies now offer special support for eco-friendly film productions. Paying closer attention to relations between aesthetics, the material world and ecological cycles will allow a highly productive, forward-looking perspective on Green Cinema to be adopted in the theory and practice of film. Nadia Bozak’s *The Cinematic Footprint: Lights, Camera, Natural Resources* (2012) extends the relation between film aesthetics and politics into the domain of ecology, and shows that industrialisation is embedded in (technical) images and media. In other words, it’s no longer possible to film a forest without thinking of the ecology of forests and resource-devouring film industry cultures. In cinematographic images of forests, these relations can also be identified and analysed in terms of a history of *naturecultures*.

The *26th International Bremen Film Conference* is intended as a forum that brings together different theories and methodologies of Green Cinema. As well as encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue, it seeks to draw attention to the wide-ranging stories, accounts and productions of Green Cinema, to discuss theories of film and cinema’s relations with ecology and to present examples of sustainable cinematic practice.

Literature

Bozak, Nadia (2012) *The Cinematic Footprint: Lights, Camera, Natural Resources*, Rutgers U Press.

FFA (2018) *Das Grüne Kinohandbuch*, Berlin.

Ivakhiv, Adrian A. J. (2013) *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature*, Wilfrid Laurier U Press.

Fay, Jennifer (2018) *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene*, Oxford U Press.

Kracauer, Siegfried (1960) *Theory of Film*, Princeton U Press.