

The Archaeology Channel

Conference on Cultural Heritage Film

May 8 – 10, 2013

10 am – 5 pm

University of Oregon Baker Downtown Center, Alaska Room



Presented by Archaeological Legacy Institute

Co-sponsored by the University of Oregon Department of Anthropology

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Conference Schedule

Wednesday, May 8:

- 10:00 am **Seminar: How to Watch a Movie Like a Film Critic**
Doug Hennessy, The Movie List Blogster, Eugene, Oregon
- 12:00 pm **Lunch Break**
- 1:00 **Modes of Re-presentation in the Now: Turn of the Century Ethnographic Films and the Future of the Indigenous Image**
Chandra Maldonado, Florida Atlantic University, Miami, Florida
- 2:00 **Film: Hard Bargaining** (France; 52 min.)
- 3:00 **Film: Looting the Holy Land** (Jordan; 47 min.)
- 4:00-5:00 **Film: Tropical Amsterdam** (Germany; 52 min.)

Thursday, May 9:

- 10:00 am **The Past Is the Present**
Meredith Dreiss and David Brown, ArchaeoProductions, Inc., Austin, Texas
- 11:00 **Showing Up: Capturing Historical Ephemera on Film**
Chad Carlson, Georgia Department of Transportation, Atlanta, Georgia
- 12:00 pm **Lunch Break**
- 1:00 **Tad Nichols' Navajo Rug Weaving: The Importance of Preserving Amateur Films and Uncovering Their Histories**
Janna Jones, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona
- 1:45 **Amateur Film and Archival Explorations**
Mark Neumann, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona

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- 2:30 ***The Making of “6 Generations”***
John Johnson, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara, California
- 3:15 ***Distribution Opportunities for Cultural Heritage Film in the New Media World***
Richard Pettigrew, Archaeological Legacy Institute, Eugene, Oregon
- 4:00 ***What Archaeology Means to Me: To Recognize Yourself As an Individual***
Anzhela Frangyan and Marianna Abrahamyan, M.E.K.H. Production, Yerevan, Armenia

Friday, May 10:

- 10:00 am ***Bucinci – Iron Age Necropolis***
Milica Koceva and Bojan Trpchevski, NGO Archaeologica, Skopje, Macedonia
- 11:00 ***Film Briefing on “Unburying the Past”***
Mrs. Subaidah Md. Top, Mr. Muhamad Rizal Mat Yasin, Mrs. Lara Ariffa, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 12:00 pm **Lunch Break**
- 2:00 ***Truth in Film Making: “Ancient Aliens” Isn’t the Story!***
Gray Warriner, Camera One, Seattle, Washington
- 3:00 ***Making Connections Across Cultures: The Power of Arts in Film***
Carolyn Kallenborn, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin
- 4:00 ***In Search of Meluhha: The Story of Mohenjodaro***
Saqib Mausoo, Blackcrow Productions, Pakistan

Presentation Abstracts

(Alphabetical Order by Speaker’s Last Name)

Showing Up: Capturing Historical Ephemera on Film

Chad Carlson, Georgia Department of Transportation, Atlanta, Georgia

How are we capturing our cultural history on film? Things that might appear insignificant or ephemeral have importance beyond our present day perspective. The most important thing one can do to preserve our cultural past is not to have an idea, a script, or a production; those might come later, after the historic moment has passed. Simply showing up with a camera, turning it on, and leaving it on, is a heroic act; you might be the only one to ever capture something that will never appear again.

The Past Is the Present

Meredith Dreiss and David Brown. ArchaeoProductions, Inc., Austin, Texas

The first ArcheoProductions film, *Chocolate: Pathway to the Gods*, released in 2005, attempted to connect an archaeological theme, the story of chocolate in Mesoamerica, with a broad modern audience, interspersing modern use of chocolate in Mesoamerica and its history in Europe with the ancient development. In this tradition of bringing archaeological topics to a wider audience, we are producing a second film, whose working title is *Agave is Life*, which takes a similar approach, discussing 10,000 years of agave-human relations in Mesoamerica and the Southwestern US. We unveil the topic through the lens of current practices, ethnographic material, interviews, archival images and archaeological investigations. Along the way, the past is brought into focus with today's concerns about loss of biodiversity, climate change, and both human and plant exploitation. In the presentation, we discuss some of the technical and creative challenges faced in making these films and some of our solutions.

What Archaeology Means to Me: To Recognize Yourself As an Individual

Anzhela Frangyan and Marianna Abrahamyan, M.E.K.H. Production, Yerevan, Armenia

The most sorrowful expression on the criticism of the video films with archeological themes prepared by us is the following: "You are only speaking of the ancient times. Is it of any interest?" And that's why that "ancient" is sometimes concealed by the veil of indifference. However these stories, containing 7000 years of history, are a unique vehicle in time and space which give an opportunity to recognize yourself as an individual. All the human progressive achievements are directed to it and the recalled knowledge has the value of newly acquired knowledge. Being just amateurs and not specialists, we fix and discover interesting facts and events, and in the future present those facts to the specialists, having the expectation to get answers to many questions.

Seminar: How to Watch a Movie Like a Film Critic

Doug Hennessy, The Movie List Blogster, Eugene, Oregon

Film critic Doug Hennessy explores how film reviewers watch movies, how a critic's eye works, and what critics are thinking about during the screening of a movie. Hennessy will use numerous examples from a variety of films and engage participants in a discussion of the specifics of what critics look for, why, and examine scenes from an array of film titles.

The Making of "6 Generations"

John Johnson, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara, California

6 Generations tells the history of the Ygnacio family (Barbareño Chumash) through the perspective of its female members, beginning with the Spanish colonial era and continuing down to the present day. The original script was the result of collaboration between Chumash elder Ernestine Ygnacio-De Soto and anthropologist John Johnson and was based upon family oral tradition, Twentieth Century ethnographic interviews conducted by anthropologist John Harrington, and information from Santa Barbara Mission records. The purpose of this effort, presented for several years as a public program for various audiences, was to educate people regarding the California Indian experience through the trials and tribulations of one well documented family. With the assistance of filmmaker Paul Goldsmith, the original presentation became the basis for the *6 Generations* production.

Tad Nichols' Navajo Rug Weaving: The Importance of Preserving Amateur Films and Uncovering Their Histories

Janna Jones, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona

My presentation's focus will be on the 1939 amateur film *Navajo Rug Weaving*. With his 16 mm movie camera, Tad Nichols documented the process of Navajo rug weaving—from the shearing of the sheep to taking the rug off of the loom. The 17-minute film, now preserved with a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation, portrays Navajo domesticity, the grand starkness of the Wupatki landscape, the weaving process, and Nichols' intimate relationship with the Navajo family. I will show clips from the film; speak to the importance of preserving early amateur films that depict Native Americans, and discuss why it is important for researchers to try to uncover contextual information about such films.

Making Connections Across Cultures: The Power of Arts in Film

Carolyn Kallenborn, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin

I am trained as a textile artist. I am a maker and a visual storyteller. Through art and shared making, I have developed deep connections with indigenous weavers in Oaxaca, Mexico. It has become a rich exchange of ideas and culture where we inspire and learn from each other. I have come to appreciate the power of the arts to make connections across age, language and cultural boundaries. In this presentation, I will discuss my artistic connections with the artisans and how film has become a powerful medium to share the cultural heritage of the Zapotecs.

Bucinci – Iron Age Necropolis

Milica Koceva and Bojan Trpchevski, NGO Archaeologica, Skopje, Macedonia

This presentation represents the activities of NGO Archaeologica on the summer field school on the Iron Age necropolis, Bucinci. The team of NGO Archaeologica during the excavation in 2011 filmed an amateur documentary about the history of the site. This is only a small step in the preservation of our cultural heritage, as we are still beginners in the film industry and we would like to make progress and to gain knowledge in this sphere. Through making this documentary, we want to affirm, present, and protect our cultural heritage. In the future we would like to film more short documentaries about the archaeological sites in Macedonia. This is the easiest way to preserve one archaeological site and to document it, because its protection and presentation are very important both for Macedonian and world archaeology.

Modes of Re-presentation in the Now: Turn of the Century Ethnographic Films and the Future of the Indigenous Image

Chandra Maldonado, Florida Atlantic University, Miami, Florida

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, a line of ethnographic documentary films was released from Paramount Pictures, which documented the struggle of non-Western cultures. This project will study the history of the ethnographic film form, the expectations of the realism it portrays, and how Western romanticism was prevalent in the construction of indigenous identity during the turn of early Twentieth Century visual culture. Indeed, I argue, it is necessary for both future and present scholars to explore the documentary image not as truth seeking texts but as mechanisms for the construction of indigenous identity. This is not to dismiss the discernible attachments of indexicality the genre claims to the historical world—it is to suggest we view its presentation as “non-fictional” as problematic. Filmmakers, scholars, and spectators ought to consider the ethics behind indigenous re-presentation as well as the social implications and political inclinations the film form establishes between entertainment and documentary authenticity of the image.

In Search of Meluhha: The Story of Mohenjodaro

Saqib Mausooof, Blackcrow Productions, Pakistan

5000 years ago, Mohenjo Daro was the world's first planned city. At its peak, the Indus Valley Civilization had a population of 5 million and was spread across 280,000 square miles. It was known for its artisans, engineers and the birthplace of spiritual dance forms now identified as yoga. Yet two centuries later, the carefully planned metropolis was abandoned and the ruins were lost until discovered in 1911. The reasons for its demise remain shrouded in mystery, but a credible hypothesis includes climate change. Even the name Mohenjo Daro, which translates as "the mound of death," is a modern interpretation and the only link to its past is what is mentioned in the Akkadian texts, a city state to the east, a place called Meluhha. As a documentary film, *In Search of Meluhha* is one such project that presents an opportunity to experience the remnants of a unique civilization and to leverage our combined human experience to build a peaceful and prosperous South Asia.

Amateur Film and Archival Explorations

Mark Neumann, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona

This presentation examines amateur films and home movies as a basis of cultural heritage. From approximately 1915 through the early 1970s, the availability of consumer cameras (in 16 mm and later 8 mm and Super 8 gauges) created a vast record of moving images that offer a range of perspectives on everyday life, work, and culture. Such films were often dismissed for their amateur status. However, they offer incredibly interesting records of cultural life from the perspective of people who documented their private worlds and social lives. I have been doing research on the collections of amateur film housed in the Northeast Historic Film (NHF) Archives in Bucksport, Maine, since 2000. This presentation will focus on the use of amateur films drawn from the NHF regional archive. I will show short clips from various films as a basis for discussing how such films are a significant resource of examining cultural life. Amateur films offer a perspective on cultural heritage that captures a view of life that is often absent in our understanding of documentary. This presentation aims to recuperate an interest in such films for understanding culture.

Distribution Opportunities for Cultural Heritage Film in the New Media World

Richard Pettigrew, Archaeological Legacy Institute, Eugene, Oregon

The world of media, as predicted way back in the 90s, has gone digital, opening up countless new possibilities for distribution and audience viewing. Despite this, most cultural heritage films today still are viewed in a very limited range of venues. The distribution world is chaotic. Few film makers break into the limited spectrum offered by PBS, National Geographic, History, and Discovery. However, ALI has been working aggressively to develop a variety of both online and cable TV venues for our own programming and that of our partners. This presentation continues the discussion carried out over the past two years at the TAC Conference on Cultural Heritage Film with an update on ALI's progress in developing distribution outlets.

Truth in Film Making: "Ancient Aliens" Isn't the Story!

Gray Warriner, Camera One, Seattle, Washington

2000 years ago the Hopewell were among the most skilled geometers and mathematicians on Earth, moving millions of tons of earth to turn their vision into reality: a reality that some archaeologists contend rivals even the works of ancient Egypt. Only now are we at the verge of cracking the Hopewell Code. Yet, simultaneously, professional archaeologists find their work as fodder for pseudo-science entertainment companies merely posing as creators of science-based documentaries. The truth isn't a rubber band to be stretched until it breaks and big budgets don't make great films. As a filmmaker, learn how to draw the line between fact and fiction, between hubris and asking the right questions, and discover when to back off and change course. Archaeology may be construed to be a "soft science," but new tools are stiffening it every decade. Learn to make a film that spans the ages.

Film Descriptions

(Alphabetical Order)

Hard Bargaining (52 min.)

Distributor: Nathalie Giboire Labid, GAD Distribution

Producer: Jean-Pierre Devorsine, France

French museums are continuously being confronted with pressing demands for the return of works that have decorated their museum walls for ages. With demands coming from all over the world the museums now must answer these countries. Despite the conflict of returning these works to their native lands, they also face a larger national question: Was it a violation of the principle of inalienability of France's national collections or was it a just reparation for the victims of colonization? This film follows the conflict as the museums defend the idea of a "universal museum" whose works belong to the whole of humanity and the countries of origin struggle to bring their heritage back home.

Looting the Holy Land (47 min.)

Distributor: Maysara Films

Producer: Maysara Films, Jordan

Surrounding the long-lasting Arab-Israeli dispute, this film addresses the influence that archaeology has exerted. For Israel, archaeology has been a key tool in buttressing its territorial claims to historic Palestine. Archaeological findings are used to assert ownership and to rename the territories they occupy. However, Palestinians see the cultural heritage of the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza as a central part of their ancestral birthright. Ownership is key to building an economy based on pilgrimage and tourism. Is the removal of historic treasures from the occupied territories a case of cultural preservation or stealing a heritage?

Tropical Amsterdam (52 min.)

Distributor: Journeyman Pictures

Producer: Alexa Schulz, USA

Tropical Amsterdam tells the story of a Dutch tribe left behind by colonialism in Sri Lanka and now at the verge of extinction. Framed and guided by Christmas celebrations that have been kept up by the Christian Dutch Burgher community in Buddhist Sri Lanka for over 350 years, this film delves into the lives of several older Burghers who grew up there during colonial times. Later as adults they were forced to come to terms with a very different reality. The film is a window into colonial life and how it played out after the white colonizers lost their power.