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Uncovering the Domesticated Spectator: Film Exhibition and Spectatorship in the Home, 1920-1950

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UNCOVERING THE DOMESTICATED SPECTATOR:
FILM EXHIBITION AND SPECTATORSHIP IN THE HOME, 1920-1950

by
Patrick Brame

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in English

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ABSTRACT

UNCOVERING THE DOMESTICATED SPECTATOR: FILM EXHIBITION AND SPECTATORSHIP IN THE HOME, 1920-1950

by

Patrick Brame

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2022
Under the Supervision of Professor Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece

This dissertation builds on recent historical scholarship that adds complexity to apparatus theory from the 1970s by examining the experience of film exhibition and spectatorship in the American home from 1920 to 1950. While the screen, projector, and content of home exhibition influenced the spectator's experience, so too did the domestic environment: blurring private and public spaces loaded with sociocultural tensions of gender, sexuality, race, and class. Through my investigation of amateur filmmaking magazines, primarily *Movie Makers*, *Home Movies*, industry journals such as *The Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, and more widely read magazines like *Popular Mechanics*, *Popular Science*, and *Architectural Record*, I offer an analysis of the nuanced relationship between gender roles, class distinctions, domestic media objects, and film spectatorship. I examine how the newfound middle-class identity – entangled with the modern woman, genteel public culture, film exhibition practices, domestic interior design, and the home movie – complicates distinctions between the amateur and professional and what each term signifies. Ultimately, I argue that the material and discursive practices of these heterogenous elements form a *dispositif* that lends insight to contemporary spaces and modes of film spectatorship.

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To
My Mom and Dad
and
Nicole

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INTRODUCTION

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic forced movie theaters across the globe to shutter their doors indefinitely. Hollywood and independent studios were stuck with a catalog of new films without traditional exhibition spaces available to recoup the production and marketing costs. With people unable to participate in public entertainment, studios moved their new releases to streaming video on demand (SVOD), delivering films directly to consumers in their home as part of an established streaming service package or a premium video on demand for a rental fee. While the shift to SVOD has been increasing in the last decade, the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the changes to the ways in which consumers viewed films.

Since the emergence of VHS in the 1980s, Hollywood and theater owners agreed to a “theatrical window” of ninety days. This meant that a film was exclusively exhibited in theaters for three months before it was released on home video. This practice continued well into the transition to DVDs, video on demand, and now SVOD. But what has emerged from the pandemic ashes in Hollywood is a shortened theatrical window of 45 days or less. For instance, Universal Pictures recently signed a deal that would see their films available on SVOD services as early as 17 days after release.¹ In perhaps the most well-known example, Warner Brothers, in an attempt to recover costs through streaming subscriptions, decided to simultaneously release their entire 2021 theatrical schedule on their new streaming service HBOMax and in theaters.

This decision was met with the ire of filmmakers and commentators across the industry interrogating ideas of public film spectatorship, the role of art within media conglomerates, and what is lost by viewing films in the home. Among other infuriated filmmakers, *Dune* director

¹ Rebecca Rubin, “RIP to the 90-Day Theatrical Window,” *Variety*, <https://variety.com/2021/film/box-office/theatrical-window-dead-1234973333/>.

Denis Villeneuve wrote an impassioned letter in *Variety* condemning Warner Brothers' release model. Villeneuve claimed to have made the film as "a unique big screen experience" with each "image and sound... meticulously designed to be seen in theaters."² Amid Villeneuve's desire for the financial benefits of a theatrical release, is an argument for the need of cinema to be on the big screen because it is "an art form that brings people together," an "in-person collective experience we share as human beings."³ In the months leading up to *Dune*'s release, Villeneuve seemed resigned to the release schedule, but still strongly, and rather cheekily, advocated for people to safely see the film in a theater: "Frankly, to watch *Dune* on a television, the best way I can compare it is to drive a speedboat in your bathtub."⁴ While Villeneuve's comments were not surprising – what director wouldn't want their film seen on the biggest screen possible – it nonetheless describes a specific, and perhaps idealistic, spectatorial experience that relies heavily on the technical and communal qualities of a theater. The design and technical aspect of the theater helps in the creation of an ideal spectator in silent awe of the grandeur of the images on the screen and in a communal hypnosis of contemplation. For many film enthusiasts, Villeneuve's words may ring true, yet the home as a space for film exhibition has held a prominent position for the film industry since cinema's origins.

In *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and The Home*, Barbara Klinger argues that since the development of private use exhibition technologies, the home holds a "persistent historical role as an ancillary forum for studio pictures and for its substantial

² Denis Villeneuve, "'Dune' Director Denis Villeneuve Blasts HBO Max Deal (Exclusive)," *Variety*, <https://variety.com/2020/film/news/dune-denis-villeneuve-blasts-warner-bros-1234851270/>.

³ Villeneuve, "Blasts HBO Max Deal."

⁴ Denis Villeneuve, interview by Jordan Farley, *Total Film*, Gamesradar+, August 17, 2021, <https://www.gamesradar.com/dune-2-is-not-a-sure-thing-but-director-denis-villeneuve-is-optimistic/>.

contemporary economic significance.”⁵ The increase in “new entertainment technologies designed to deliver films to household audiences” and Hollywood’s ever-increasing reliance on home exhibition to recuperate costs has helped shape the home as a crucial site of exhibition.⁶ In fact, “most films fail to earn back their negative costs at the box office” and instead use a film’s theatrical run to provide “the advertising and media buzz they need to generate income through DVD and Blu-ray sales and rental, cable and Internet VOD downloading, premium cable channel licensing, and network syndication.”⁷ Since the publication of Klinger’s work in 2006, the home has become even more integral as a site of film consumption, as exemplified in the surge of SVOD.

While the contemporary shift in exhibition practices and modes of spectatorship are radically changing how people interact, consume, and view film, the home as a site of film exhibition and consumption is nothing new. Film projectors, specifically 16mm, were available for purchase and use beginning in the early 1920s, albeit only for those who could afford such relatively expensive leisure toys.⁸ Beyond the 1920s, film projectors and screens could readily be found in middle to upper class family homes, where they were used to exhibit home movies, amateur films, and rented or purchased content produced by professional production companies. A historical investigation into the experience of domestic film exhibition and spectatorship – from its introduction into the home in the 1920s through its maturation as a common and permanent fixture – illuminates the complexity of contemporary film viewing in the home.

⁵ Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and The Home* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2006), 4.

⁶ Klinger, *Multiplex*, 4.

⁷ Caetlin Benson-Allott, *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 13-14.

⁸ Haidee Wasson, “Electric Homes! Automatic Movies! Efficient Entertainment!: 16mm and Cinema’s Domestication in the 1920s” in *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Summer 2009), Austin: University of Texas Press, 1-4.

This dissertation will elucidate the experience of home spectatorship from the early 1920s, when home exhibition practices and distribution matured, to 1950 as television increasingly entered more homes across the country and altered the ways in which spectators understood and interacted with audio/visual entertainment in the home. I follow recent historical scholarship that provides nuance to apparatus theory from the 1970s, which can, in large part, be traced to the theories of Jean-Louis Baudry. According to Baudry, it is the “cinematic apparatus,” which encompasses the technical aspects of the film – camera, projector, and screen – and the viewer’s psyche, that forces the spectator into an artificial regressive state allowing dominant ideological messages within the film to be consumed. No doubt that Baudry’s theorizations were invaluable for the development of film studies, however, his theories are largely based on the assumption that the film’s ideological messages are accepted because the audience is homogenous, made up of white, heterosexual men.⁹

Following the work of Miriam Hansen, my dissertation disrupts Baudry’s arguments through a similar historical examination of contextual factors and identity-informed spectatorship in the home in the first half of the twentieth century. Hansen traces how a mobilized public exhibition space and locally constructed audiences influenced spectatorial experience during the early silent film era. Her work represents a major shift in spectatorship discourse: both challenging the homogenous spectator and signaling a shift away from theoretical underpinnings to a more historically centered methodology focused on contextualized audiences and reception. Historical scholarship that articulates experiences of cinematic spectatorship primarily focuses on theatrical spaces and the demographic, economic, and racial make-up of the moviegoing

⁹ See Laura Mulvey’s *Visual and Other Pleasures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), Mary Ann Doane’s “Film and Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator” (in *Screen* Vol. 23(3-4) Sept/Oct 1982), and Theresa de Lauretis’s *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

public. While these accounts of spectatorship and theater exhibition spaces paint a vibrant picture that informs our contemporary modes of viewing, they too often leave out the experience and history of domestic film spectatorship. This dissertation fills in these blanks by adding to the body of work on film spectatorship in America in the first half of the twentieth century.

To clearly understand the spectatorial experience of domestic film exhibition before 1950, I consider Baudry's emphasis on the relationship between the technological aspects of the cinema – the “cinematic apparatus” – and the historical spectator's viewing experience. Both the cinematic apparatus and the sociocultural underpinnings of domestic life are foundational to addressing questions concerning home exhibition and spectatorship. I contend in my dissertation that the home was an engineered site that was meticulously decorated and designed to present a specific message to residents and outsiders. Within the engineered domestic sphere, the production of symbols and their meanings evolved frequently. Where the screen, projector and content of home exhibition influenced the spectator's experience, so too did the domestic environment's blurring of private and public spaces that were loaded with sociocultural tensions of gender, sexuality, race, and class. The integration of home film exhibition technologies within the home fostered a more nuanced understanding of gender roles, class distinctions, domestic media objects, and film spectatorship. The home was and continues to still be a site that signifies and fosters social relationships with the family, community, and the nation. As the primary site of film exhibition transitions to more private and domesticated spaces, I offer an alternative history of film exhibition and its sociocultural underpinnings that inform modes of multifaceted spectatorship.

The heterogeneous elements of the sociocultural foundations of domestic space and the cinematic apparatus formed a *dispositif*, defined as an “ensemble of material and discursive

practices whose configuration is historically specific,” which influenced the cultural and practical understanding of film spectatorship and spectatorial experience.¹⁰ My dissertation follows Will Straw’s contention that Baudry’s “cinematic apparatus” does not account for the *dispositif* or the “set of protocols which govern the interconnected operation of [the apparatus] elements for a pre-determined end.”¹¹ In regard to domestic film exhibition and spectatorship, the *dispositif* is made up of not only the distinct elements of Baudry’s ‘apparatus’ but also “their arrangement relative to each other, and the conditions and relationships they establish” through interconnected discourses of domestic spaces, amateur filmmaking magazines, both public and private exhibition practices, and modes and theorizations of film spectatorship.¹² In contrast to Baudry’s definition of spectatorship tied to the theater, the home offers alternative relationships between spectator and exhibition, forming a new *dispositif*. In line with Ariel Rogers, I contend that the domestic film exhibition *dispositif* outlined in this dissertation illuminates the assemblage of cinema’s heterogeneous components in relation to “other mediatic and cultural configurations.”¹³

My dissertation stems from an investigation of amateur filmmaking magazines, primarily *Movie Makers* and *Home Movies*, and industry journals like *The Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, as well as more widely read magazines like *Popular Mechanics*, *Popular Science*, and *Architectural Record*. Across these primary sources, I examine advertisements, advice columns, and technical guides and blueprints for domestic film activities. These primary sources were a major site for amateur filmmakers, projectionists, and hobbyists to debate

¹⁰ Thomas Elsaesser, “What is Left of the Cinematic Apparatus, or Why We Should Retain (and Return to) It,” *Cinema & Technologie* Vol. 31, no.1-2-3 (2011): 38.

¹¹ Will Straw, “Pulling Apart the Apparatus,” *Cinema & Technologie* Vol. 31, no.1-2-3 (2011): 65.

¹² Straw, “Apparatus,” 65.

¹³ Ariel Rogers, *On The Screen: Displaying the Moving Image, 1926-1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 28.

filmmaking and exhibition practices and the role of the domestic film spectator. By uncovering this discourse, I reveal the cultural anxieties of the American middle-class and how domestic film exhibition influenced various power relations and disciplinary measures around the production of social relations, in both public and private spaces. While these sources do not directly reflect the actions and beliefs of the general amateur film consumer or spectator, it nonetheless represents a network of *how* domestic film exhibition and spectatorship was presented to the public and the specific anxieties surrounding it. For instance, as Chapter Two will illustrate, disruptive audiences of domestic exhibitions were a primary concern that was reflected by advice columns on silencing techniques. *Movie Makers* and *Home Movies* magazines often incorporated columns from amateur filmmakers and exhibitors highlighting a piece of equipment or a strategy they found successful. In this way, these advice columns, ads, and conversations about architecture and leisure reveal a dialogue that makes up what Lynn Spigel calls an “intertextual network” that shaped how people understood domestic film exhibition and spectatorship.¹⁴

This dissertation describes the experience of domestic film exhibition and spectatorship in the first half of the twentieth century in the United States. The four chapters of this dissertation highlight the heterogeneous elements that make up the *dispositif* of domestic film exhibition and spectatorship. Chapter One, “The Domestic Flâneuse: Female Filmmakers and Mobile Spectators,” argues that early iterations of domestic film exhibition were aimed at highly feminized consumers and located within fluid spaces that encouraged mobility. By historically tracing the transformation of the housewife into a “professional” of the home – a “general purchasing agent” – and a target of amateur filmmaking discourses, I illustrate the confusing

¹⁴ Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Postwar Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 15.

boundaries between definitions of amateur and professional. The “professional” housewife, tasked with providing clothing, food, and leisure activities for the home, roamed and explored the city’s shopping districts as a “flâneuse.” This female “flâneur” was defined by her mobility and her optical encounter with shopping windows and other urban attractions. For historian Anne Friedberg, the mobility of the “flâneuse” and her practice of window shopping informed the development of film spectatorship. This mobility is equally seen in the architectural designs of American suburban homes in the early twentieth century. The American Bungalow emphasized multipurpose rooms and a circular pattern of motion through its first floor, in addition to lightweight and mobile furniture. Like Friedberg, I contend that the architectural and social history of the modern American home deeply influenced the spectatorial experience of domestic film viewing.

With a mobile mode of spectatorship fostered by furniture and the home’s architectural design, what was the actual spectatorial experience of viewing a film in the home in the 1920s and 1930s? Complicating public exhibition’s ideal spectator, the home’s open floor plan and multipurpose living room were seen as a transitory space of socialization. Chapter Two, “Manners Make the Spectator: Gentility and The Home Show,” details how domestic film spectators were often talkative and disruptive during screenings and the disciplinary measures amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses recommended to quell the behavior. This chapter argues that the middle-class consumer and spectator of amateur films in the home used domestic film spectatorship to defy the public disciplinary mechanisms that molded silent, attentive, and passive spectators. In this way, domestic film exhibition and spectatorship intersects with the emergence of the American middle-class, industrialization, and genteel culture. New means of production meant cheaper goods that still resembled luxury goods. Members of the working class

could now present a more refined identity through clothing, manners, consumption, and leisure. Alongside the emergence and gradual molding of a middle-class identity, amateur filmmaking and exhibition was a common sign of refinement used by the middling orders. The middle class could participate in a refined leisure activity, while in private, free from the scrutiny and surveillance of the public genteel culture, they continued to personify working-class manners. This chapter specifically highlights the participatory nature of working-class audiences and how their interactive engagement transferred to the home. Thus, this chapter offers nuance to the historical understandings of participatory cinema audiences and the American middle class.

Chapter Three, “The Personal Touch: The Domestic Archive and Middle-Class Identity,” continues the previous chapter’s focus on the middle class by arguing that the content and variety of genres of domestic screenings functioned as a middle-class archive. This archive, made up of professionally produced newsreels, amateur productions, and home movies (or semi-professionally produced memories), strengthened both the filmmakers’ newfound middle-class identity and the spectator’s. I highlight the archive’s prominent role in the home by describing the archival qualities of the Victorian Era parlor and library. It was through the display of consumerism – objects, media, collections, photographs, books, etc. – that a refined and genteel identity was created and presented to residents and visitors. With the transition to multipurpose living rooms, however, the material archival clutter was replaced, I argue, with the amateur film archive. Instead of a genteel identity, the middle-class aimed to present a specific “personality.” I interrogate the implications of a white, heterosexual middle-class archive that produced identity through the staging, editing, and narratives of family memories and professionally produced newsreels.

My last chapter, “The Phantom Theater: Domestic Cinephilia and The War Effort,” concentrates on the architectural and spatial designs of living room theaters – where a filmic apparatus is built into the foundation of the home and concealed when not in use – and the home theater – a domestic space, typically a basement or attic, specifically designed for film exhibition. In an attempt to replicate the spatial design of a public theater, both versions symbolize the ultimate form of “professionalism” and refined taste by way of a “brand of cinephilia” defined by the homeowner’s technical knowledge. Much of the technical knowledge denoted by living room and home theaters was coopted by the US government to boost morale around the war effort. The chapter concludes by arguing that moving into the 1950s, the filmic apparatus of the living room theater and home theater become part of an assemblage of media technologies, social and cultural configurations, and communication networks that point toward an increasingly mediatized home.

For Villeneuve, “cinema” and “proper” spectatorship can only truly happen in the technological and communal traditions of the public theater. Yet this idealistic experience is disrupted by sociocultural factors, outside institutions, and leisure activities carried by the spectator into the public theater, including domestic film exhibition and spectatorship. Like the spectatorship theorists of the 1970s, Villeneuve describes a fantastical space that ignores the historical *dispositif* that make up contemporary film spectatorship. While domestic film exhibition and spectatorship was different in many ways from what took place in a theater, both were exhibition spaces that encouraged multiple modes of encounter with the moving image. Like Villeneuve’s description of the public theater, the following four chapters reveal a complementary space of film exhibition that was simultaneously “unique,” with images and sounds “meticulously designed” for domestic space, and an “art form” that fostered an “in-

person collective.”¹⁵ While Villeneuve argues for his “speedboat” to be free in the ocean of the big screen, I posit that the contemporary transition to a “bathtub” cinema of the home is neither a devolution nor an innovation but a foundational attribute of film history.

¹⁵ Villeneuve, “Blasts HBO Max Deal.”

CHAPTER ONE | THE DOMESTIC FLÂNEUSE: FEMALE FILMMAKERS AND MOBILE SPECTATORS



Figure 1 Sears Catalog Crescent Home

Tired of the strain of traveling to the chaotic city? How else are you supposed to shop? Eat out? See a film? Your friends insist the city is where to experience “life.” To truly experience a film, you must be in the cinema! Well, my homebody friend, it’s time to challenge your friends’ and neighbors’ insistence that films can only exist in the cinema. You’ll find that you



Figure 2 Crescent Living Room

yourself can match the presentation and spectatorial experience of any professional film exhibitor. On the evening you invite your audience over to your Sears catalog Crescent home (Fig 1), you can easily transform your living room



Figure 3 Crescent Dining Room

(Fig 2) and dining room (Fig 3) into a suitable theater. You already have enough seating for the neighborhood, all you need to do is arrange it! Leave the couch where it is, as this already offers a prime view of the pull-down screen over the front window that you've secretly hidden in plain sight for months now. Turn the window bench 180 degrees to face the screen. Perhaps for a young couple to enjoy! Next, turn and pull the front reading chair back a bit. Do make sure you don't block the view of the couch spectators. Be warned! With its position and comfort, this will likely be the most coveted seat in the room. Then, move the ample number of chairs in the dining room and stagger them throughout the right side of the living room space. It may be difficult but suggest to your guests these are the best seats so as to leave the couch open for any late guests. Ensure to not block the entrance and hall though, as this allows guests to freely exit and enter without disturbing the screening. Finally, position your projector in the dining room pointed into the living room. Purchase one of the fine projector stands on offer or simply roll a small table or cabinet on its casters in to the dining room. Close the curtains just so the projector's throw is able to escape and land on the screen. This will help mask the projector noise and allows you, the

projectionist, to work without disturbing your audiences. If you'd like, it may even be a worthwhile idea to pull one of the lamps near the dining room entrance into the now converted projection room to provide some light for reel changes.

The fictional amateur film exhibition column above highlights a common problem for the middle to upper class suburbanites of the early twentieth century: how does one experience the pleasures of the city, without sacrificing themselves to its shocks, surprises, and unpredictability? In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the home became a refuge from an urban environment in the midst of a cultural and socioeconomic transformation. Historians often attribute this transformation to modernity. Although there is still debate as how to define “modernity,” there is a strong consensus that modernity was a western phenomenon limited to the United States and Western Europe. Historian Stephen Kern views modernity as a time period that took place between 1880 to the culmination of World War I and fostered the Industrial Revolution, new forms of transportation and communication, and revolutionary forms of thinking.¹⁶ Film historian Tom Gunning, on the other hand, defines modernity as a vague time period represented by a “change in experience” produced by new forms of production and manufacturing, urban migration that saw an increase in urban traffic, and “new technologies of transportation and communication.”¹⁷ Ben Singer emphasizes how each factor of modernity – rational, discontinuous, mobile, hyperstimulant, and individualistic – was heavily influenced by the industrious “rise of mature capitalism.”¹⁸ This mature, global capitalism, coupled with

¹⁶ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 19.

¹⁷ Tom Gunning, “Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, eds. Leo Charney & Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 15.

¹⁸ Singer, *Melodrama*, 21.

philosophical skepticism, the empirical scientific method that led to perpetual modifications, and persistent technological change, produced a constant sense of “perceptual uncertainty, discontinuity, and instability.”¹⁹ Film scholar Anne Friedberg, while recognizing a specific time period, describes modernity as a “social formation” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This time period saw the rise of industrialization and urbanization of “capitalist, cosmopolitan cities (Paris, Berlin, London, New York, Chicago, Moscow),” a new visual culture refashioning “the nature of memory and experience,” and new technologies of transportation that altered perceptions of distance.²⁰

Despite their differences, all of these historians agree that such profound cultural changes resulted in Americans experiencing defamiliarization, disjunction, dislocation, and the displacement of a traditional sense of being. An economy extended and enmeshed across the globe, a deteriorating sense of communal and religious support, and a new emphasis on “specialized” individuality led many Americans feeling “adrift,” floating endlessly away from any semblance of “a secure ‘sense of selfhood.’”²¹ New technological advancements in transportation and telecommunication radically shifted traditional boundaries and definitions that ultimately led to “changes in experience” and new “social formations.” Where once there were firm and contrasting definitions of inside/outside and public/private, modernity introduced more nuanced definitions. Each concept, idea, and technological advancement of modernity, according to Beatriz Colomina, “disrupts the older boundaries between inside and outside, public and private, night and day, depth and surface, here and there, street and interior, and so on.”²²

¹⁹ Singer, *Melodrama*, 24.

²⁰ Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and The Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 14-15

²¹ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 13.

²² Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 12.

The modern suburban American home, while a refuge from the chaos of urbanization, could not escape the technological advancements, and, consequently, confusion that defined modernity. The American Victorian home in the mid-1800s and its relationship to the natural world is a revealing example. With the emergence and growth of urban areas, much of the beautiful and natural vegetation of these areas was ignored or destroyed all together. In response, the suburban Victorian home was sheltered by “a protected landscape, complete with large lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, and birds.”²³ The front lawn in particular, a sign of prosperity for middle-class families, acted as a transitory space, a bridge between the private and public spheres and between modernity and nature.²⁴ Within the home itself, plan-book writers and reformers suggested large, bay-windows to build a conservatory of plants to create the illusion of the home and its occupants as part of the natural world.²⁵ This illusion was further constructed by architects and contractors incorporating materials, such as “rough limestone” or “cedar shingles,” as well as favoring forestry colors, like the “reds and golds of autumn leaves, the greens of ferns and lichens, the soft browns and grays of weathered woods,” so as “to simulate the hues of nature.”²⁶ For the housewives’ part, in order to showcase her artistic side, it was common to find the interior decorated with “leaves pinned up to make a cornice or suspended with threads as if they were falling.”²⁷ Seeing the lengths reformers, planners, and housewives went to in order to transform the home into a sanctuary from the urbanized, modern world, the domestic sphere could still not escape the overwhelming power of modernity’s blurring and nuanced definitions.

²³ Clifford Edward Clark Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 100.

²⁴ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 35.

²⁵ Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983), 107.

²⁶ Wright, *Dream*, 106.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 107.

If the primary space of modernity was the city – defined by its crowds, speeds, and shocks – the entity that embodied the lived experience of it was the flâneur.²⁸ Traditionally defined as a male spectator with the freedom to roam the streets of the city and to move from private and public spaces without hinderance, the flâneur embodied the scattered and diffuse characteristics of global capitalism – a “fluid and chaotic mixture of social objects and subjects.”²⁹ For Friedberg, the flâneur was a primary example of a “social formation” expressed by the flâneur’s fluid ability to move unhindered throughout the city. Their freedom of movement allowed unimpeded spatial transitions that simultaneously granted admission and autonomy to the public sphere as well as the private space of the home.³⁰ The flâneur intentionally immersed himself in the visual and aural chaos of the urban landscape “in search of anything novel, arousing, [and] engaging.”³¹ What drew the flâneur’s attention was, according to Tom Gunning, the attraction: “something that appears, attracts attention, and then disappears without either developing a narrative trajectory or a coherent diegetic world.”³² Not only did the attraction represent the discontinuous and hyperstimulating experience of the city, it coincided with a new, visual consumer culture that made the flâneur “stop and stare” against the backdrop of a fluctuating urban crowd filled with distractions.³³

These attractions, while initially geared towards men, steadily catered to a new conception of womanhood produced by “lower fertility rates, and the proliferation of labor-

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, “The Flâneur” in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* translated by Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1973).

²⁹ Singer, *Melodrama*, 26.

³⁰ Friedberg, *Window*, 29.

³¹ Singer, *Melodrama*, 35.

³² Tom Gunning, “The Whole Town’s Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity,” in *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 193.

³³ Gunning, *Gawking*, 194.

saving machines and commodities.”³⁴ These “New Women,” as they would be named, were self-reliant, energetic, often employed and, most importantly, in direct contact with the public sphere.³⁵ As women became the primary consumers of family households, they entered the public domain in search of domestic products, leisure activities, and even items for themselves. It is here that Friedberg notes a new subject of modernity: the female flâneur, or “flâneuse,” who safely roamed department stores and shopping districts and became the primary target for visual consumerism and entertainment. Hence, the flâneuse, empowered with mobile freedoms and purchasing influence, became a significant spectator and consumer of the urban environment. The flâneuse’s new empowerment overlapped with a new industry focused on mass production, which produced “lower prices, fixed prices, entre libre, and sales promotions” that fashioned new shopping behaviors and consumer desires, such as household goods, furniture, and appliances.³⁶ Friedberg argues that film spectatorship, an inverted experience to window shopping, emerges from the architectural and social history of the urban shopping district. Thus, the flâneuse, the female shopper, played an integral role in cinema’s construction.

The flâneuse, like the flâneur, was partly defined by her location: the urban shopping district. In addition to cinema’s emergence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the recognition of flânerie, a “uniquely American icon” was materializing: the mail order catalog.³⁷ While the home attempted to emphasize a strong relationship with the natural world, film historian Alexandra Keller argues that mail order catalogs became a ruptured site where the

³⁴ Singer, *Melodrama*, 240.

³⁵ Singer, *Melodrama*, 242.

³⁶ Friedberg, *Window*, 58.

³⁷ Alexandra Keller, “Disseminations of Modernity: Representation and Consumer Desire in Early Mail-Order Catalogs,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, eds. Leo Charney & Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 156.

suburban and rural home allowed the urban public sphere inside. Similar to roaming department stores and gazing in store windows, mail order catalogs accumulated thousands of items conveniently classified by uses and needs for easy purchase.³⁸ The public activity of shopping surrounded by jam packed shelves and racks of goods, eager vendors, consumers, and gawkers was ultimately brought into the private space of the home.³⁹ What mail order catalogs accomplished that store windows and attractions could not was physically reaching across the urban/rural divide and arouse consumerist desires.⁴⁰ Like Friedberg's flâneuse, mail order catalogs first defined their rural readers as a spectator, then created the impression of desire, and, lastly, transformed them into consumers. The reader/spectator then becomes, as Keller argues, a "rural flânerie," encompassing a similar experience of cinematic spectatorship: "the subject remains still while the object of inquiry is kinetic."⁴¹

Friedberg and Keller both locate their modern subjects within a specific time, and, significantly, in a particular place. While Keller more directly relates the "rural flânerie" to static film spectatorship, Friedberg emphasizes the mobile nature of her "flâneuse" moving through a shopping district and gazing upon shopping windows and attractions. This mobility is equally seen in the architectural designs of American suburban homes in the early twentieth century. The American Bungalow emphasized multipurpose rooms and a circular pattern of motion through its first floor, in addition to lightweight and mobile furniture. These elements catered to and promoted socializing and leisure activities, such as, I argue, domestic film exhibition and spectatorship. Like Friedberg, I contend the architectural and social history of the modern American home, a heavily gendered space, deeply influenced the spectatorial experience of

³⁸ Keller, *Catalogs*, 157.

³⁹ Ibid, 157.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 164.

⁴¹ Ibid, 157.

domestic film viewing. This chapter focuses on the transformation of the housewife into a “professional” of the home, a “general purchasing agent,” and the public role that entails.

Like many practices, technologies, and materials within the home, domestic film spectatorship and exhibition similarly became informative sites of modernity’s efforts to blur formerly distinct boundaries. By extending Keller’s and Friedberg’s definitions of *flânerie*, I argue that it is within the home that film spectatorship becomes a clear and tangible illustration of the radical symptoms of modernity. There, the *flâneuse* moves within designated, feminine spaces and gazes upon people, display windows, and images. Based on primary documents of advertisements and advice columns from amateur filmmaking magazines *Movie Makers* and *Home Movies*, as well as the male-oriented *Popular Mechanics* magazine, and through an analysis of amateur filmmaking and exhibition consumers, this chapter argues that early iterations of domestic film exhibition and its consumers were highly feminized and fostered a mode of spectatorship located within fluid spaces that emphasized mobility.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first begins with a history of the influential role women had in amateur filmmaking and domestic exhibition. Film historians Haidee Wasson and Moya Luckett claim domestic filmmaking equipment was relegated to discourses on women’s work and household appliances. However, I contend that while this largely may be the case, women were also targeted in amateur filmmaking magazines and advertisements that depicted women as more than just housewives, but artists and creatives. By historically examining women’s relationship to the arts and individual expression within the home, I will highlight how the female filmmaker embodied modern sensibilities by confusing the boundary

between amateur and professional, and between work and art.⁴² The second section provides a short history of the American bungalow home. The bungalow's architectural design coupled with popular furniture fostered family togetherness and leisure activities through a fluid sense of mobility between spaces and activities. This trend toward mobility is also apparent in domestic film equipment and furniture. Whether a transportable film projector or stationary film cabinet, film spectatorship within the home provided an alternative mode of viewing than what was desired in the theater.⁴³ Instead of being stationary in their seats, domestic film spectators were presented as mobile, resembling more of a flâneur than the passive spectator favored by theater managers.

Beyond Domestic Work: The Female Filmmaker

Haidee Wasson and Moya Luckett have argued that the main target for amateur cameras and home film projectors were indeed women. Wasson in particular contends that the marketing strategies embraced by makers of amateur filmmaking equipment shared similar approaches to domestic electrical appliances and technologies. For Wasson, home exhibition technologies fell within the “discourses of efficiency, gendered labor, and moral housekeeping,” that shaped “home entertainment...as women's work” and outside the periphery of amateur filmmaking and leisure.⁴⁴ Wasson's gendering of home exhibition technologies strikes me as accurate, yet, given my focus on amateur filmmaking discourses, I want to complicate Wasson's positioning of

⁴² The housewife was also a discourse of the modern that brought male-centered discourses into the private space of the home. See Sigfried Giedion's *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948) and his historical examination of scientific management and mechanization influence on, and, consequently, the blurring of, women's and men's “work.”

⁴³ As film historians like Miriam Hansen have noted, while theater managers preferred passive spectators and instituted measures to enforce stillness and quiet, it was much more likely for theater spectators to be active – loud, unruly, participative, and mobile.

⁴⁴ Haidee Wasson, “The Reel of the Month Club: 16mm Projectors, Home Theaters, and Film Libraries in the 1920s,” *Going to The Movies: Hollywood and The Social Experience of Cinema*, eds. Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes, and Robert C. Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 232.

amateur filmmaking practices within “women’s work.” By extending Wasson’s analysis of home film exhibition technologies, I add nuance to the historical relationship between housewives and amateur filmmaking equipment.

The public/private distinction in regard to gender roles – male/public and female/private – was established and cemented during the introduction of the factory system, large-scale business enterprises, and the growth of public education.⁴⁵ These advancements, in addition to developments in transportation and telecommunication technologies, altered the modes of production that moved “work” even further from the home.⁴⁶ According to Ruth Schwartz Cowan, this separation, which further gendered roles and spaces, originated from the domestication of the gas stove and industrialized flour in the 1860s. When gas stoves began to replace the traditional hearth, males were no longer needed to chop and collect wood. Instead, these new stoves required gas or coal, resources that could only be obtained through monetary exchange. This meant that men were now required to leave the home and enter the public sphere of the workforce to purchase the fuel needed, while women were relegated to the home and family care.⁴⁷ This in turn gendered the domestic and private space of the home as female, and the public sphere as male.

In the decades that followed, the home was further defined as a place of leisure and consumption. The home was simultaneously a haven from the chaotic and competitive public sphere and the main site of societal improvement. The home, managed by the housewife, created the perfect environment for an individual to blossom into a refined, moral, and civic-minded

⁴⁵ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 16.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, “How We Get Our Daily Bread, or the History of Domestic Technology Revealed,” in *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 12, no. 2, Science and Technology (Winter, 1998), 10.

person for the betterment of society. From the late 1860s to the early stages of the Progressive era (1890s – 1920s), reformers advocated for the family and their home as “the most important institution in the life of the individual.”⁴⁸ By way of domestic architecture and family advice experts on “appropriate family behaviors,” reformers “hoped to improve the nature of society itself” and transform America into a global titan of manufacturing and knowledge.⁴⁹ As women were relegated to the home, reformers believed that, through their teachings, work, and influence, society could be saved and ultimately transformed.⁵⁰

This version of the belief that a better society begins in the home originated with Catherine Beecher and her “ideology of domesticity” published in 1841. Beecher believed the immobility of 1840s America was due to economic, racial, ethnic, and sectional strife. Her solution was to focus on a form of “domesticity” that cut across these conflicts by differentiating definitive gender roles that would “unify a nation.”⁵¹ Even after the violent conflict of the Civil War, ultimately proving Beecher’s thesis wrong, she nonetheless continued her campaign by insisting that the only way to adjust to the new modern world was through the home.⁵² Beecher’s ideology insisted that the family, the “central institution in American life,” was at the country’s heart, and mothers who oversaw this space, this American institution, became “respected authority figures and arbitrators of power.”⁵³ The home, then, became “a power base” for women to “transform the moral character of the nation” through the family.⁵⁴ Women’s role in society, while relegated to the private sphere of the home, was seen as vital to the betterment of America.

⁴⁸ Clack Jr., *Family Home*, 4.

⁴⁹ Clack Jr., *Family Home*, 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 32.

⁵¹ Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 17.

⁵² Marsh, *Suburban*, 17.

⁵³ Marsh, *Suburban*, 8; Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 34.

⁵⁴ Marsh, *Suburban*, 41.

Here, the housewife could sway policies, beliefs, and ideas of the public sphere. She accomplished this not through power, but by influence, ultimately transforming the home into a “political platform.”⁵⁵

While reformers in the late 1800s advocated the home as a site of transformation for the betterment of society, conservative thinkers and middle-class men, threatened by urbanization’s erosion of conservative values, argued for a male-centric ideal that limited women’s role to family care and housework.⁵⁶ At the center of this ideal was a physical space, the home, “a respite from urban cares as well as a device to preserve republican virtue” that kept the family insulated “from the temptations of the city.”⁵⁷ In this new conservative ideal, the home was not a site for the betterment of society, but a sanctuary to “nurture, restore and support” its male occupants.⁵⁸ The public sphere, intertwined with a new, mature, global form of capitalism, encompassed overwhelming sentiments of ambition and competition that led to the merciless manipulation of people and objects.⁵⁹ The physical space of the home, specifically through its interior design, became a vital respite from these sentiments and behaviors of the capitalist public sphere. In a time of “severe competition,” “unsentimental manipulation,” shocks, distractions, and an ever-increasing tempo to everyday activities, it was the housewife’s responsibility to transform their home and its interior into “adequate counter-attractions.”⁶⁰ Women thus transformed the home, their sphere, into a sanitized refuge for their husbands that focused on “the ‘softer’ and more ‘cultured’ qualities of sentiment, beauty, and repose.”⁶¹

⁵⁵ Ibid, 8.

⁵⁶ Marsh, *Suburban*, 8.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁸ Clark Jr., *Family Homes*, 35.

⁵⁹ Marchand, *Advertising*, 167.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 186.

⁶¹ Ibid, 167.

To create this isolated haven, the housewife became a “diligent consumer,” creating a safe, comfortable space of leisure and relaxation away from the chaotic and hyperstimulating public sphere.⁶² In contention with this more male-centered domestic ideal were feminists and middle-class housewives who advocated for an alternative relationship with domesticity, that prioritized efficiency so more time could be spent on interests outside the home.⁶³ In the early period of the Progressive Era (1890), the middle-class family underwent a transition from the rigidity and importance of manners and decorum to an emphasis on “informality and spontaneity,” including a more active role for housewives and mothers outside the home that exemplified more energy and physicality: “eager to ride bikes, play tennis, attend college, and receive professional training.”⁶⁴ In the following decades, these new active roles overlapped with the emergence of a new female identity: “the New Woman.” Traditional values of motherhood and domesticity were superimposed with the charms of “pleasure, glamour, and eroticism.”⁶⁵ Appalled by these new interests, reformers and conservatives proposed an alternative identity – one that took on a more active role in society but was still relegated to the private sphere of the home and coupled with the preservation of the family. Instead of an informal, spontaneous woman, the housewife was transformed into an “exacting, highly skilled ‘household administrator.”⁶⁶ In their new role as “household administrator,” defined by a capacity “for planning, efficiency, and expert decision-making,” housewives also became the “family G.P.A. or general purchasing agent.”⁶⁷ With the establishment of a new culture of consumption where the female shopper in 1915 made up eighty to eighty-five percent of purchasing in the United

⁶² Wright, *Dream*, 111.

⁶³ Wright, *Dream*, 159.

⁶⁴ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 132.

⁶⁵ Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 117.

⁶⁶ Wright, *Dream*, 159.

⁶⁷ Marchand, *Advertising*, 168.

States, the distinctions between public and private spheres began to blur. Not only were middle-class housewives liberated from the private sphere of the home and allowed entrance into the public, but, because of their new purchasing power, were given immense influence within mass consumption.⁶⁸

One noteworthy example of women's new purchasing power and impact on mass consumption is illustrated in their relationship to nickelodeons and theaters in the early twentieth century. Not only were shopping districts, department stores, magazines, and advertisements beginning to frequently cater to women and their sensibilities, but so was public entertainment. As women gained greater influence over the family finances and escaped the confines of the family home for public commercialized environments, closely located vaudeville theaters and nickelodeons implemented female centric offerings and advertisements with the purpose of attracting middle-class women spectators.⁶⁹ For exhibitors, middle-class women embodied the characteristics of the perfect film consumer – “social propriety, refined manners, and impeccable taste” – which strongly influenced the attendance of other patrons.⁷⁰ Advertising campaigns centered around the cinema would target women by combining their new role in the public sphere as “general purchasing agent” with “their customary maternal domain”⁷¹ In other words, ads would strategically align cinemagoing with the housewife's new role in public life by illustrating the extension of their roles as society's caretaker. Exhibitors displayed the new role

⁶⁸ Hansen, *Babel*, 116.

⁶⁹ Kathy Peiss, “Commercial Leisure and the ‘Woman Question’” in *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*, ed. by Richard Butsch (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 112; Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 13.

⁷⁰ Stamp, *Movie-Struck*, 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 13.

of the housewife by actively listening and honoring suggestions on theater design, layout and family focused entertainment.⁷²

During the 1910s and 1920s, early theater owners attempted to lure female audiences by transforming their theater spaces into a safe social space they could drop in from after shopping, entertain children for a few hours, or for an evening out with the whole family.⁷³ To emphasize this transformation, exhibitors would showcase “acceptable family entertainment” including “half-price afternoon ‘specials’” and announcements in between screenings explicitly stating “‘We are aiming to please the ladies,’ and ‘Bring the children.’”⁷⁴ In addition to new promotions and programming, women also influenced the interior design of theaters, with some exhibitors going as far as modeling their theaters after the layout of department stores as well as incorporating ladies’ lounges for women to seek help with their children. Theaters would have brighter lights, fresh ventilation, mirrors throughout the common areas, “perfumed deodorizers, and uniformed attendants.”⁷⁵ The uniformed attendant gave the consumer a sense of “comfort and safety” within the chaos of the public sphere.⁷⁶ Aesthetically, the space would also include “gilt fixtures, plush seats, artwork, and lounges” that “catered to women’s sense of gentility and refinement.”⁷⁷ The purpose of these design choices was to not only attract female spectators but, to attract a specific kind of audience member and encourage a more decorous behavior.⁷⁸ Other improvements to the interior included brass railings that created orderly lines around ticket

⁷² Ibid, 13.

⁷³ Peiss, “Leisure,” 112.

⁷⁴ Douglas Gomery, “The Movie Palace Comes to America’s Cities,” in *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*, ed. by Richard Butsch (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 138; Peiss, “Leisure,” 112.

⁷⁵ Stamp, *Movie-Struck*, 20.

⁷⁶ Peiss, “Leisure,” 112.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Stamp, *Movie-Struck*, 20.

booths near the entrance. It was hoped that this addition would provide the appearance of order and discipline by pacifying any unruly crowds that modern, bourgeois women would find worrisome.⁷⁹ Exhibitors' investment in attracting "new women" audiences also corresponded with the desire for a new, quiet and passive spectator. The industry hoped that the classy, refined, cultured women audiences would help create and influence a passive audience. To the disappointment of theater owners, women viewed the theater as a break from their normal household duties and a safe place to socialize with friends and neighbors. For these reasons, female spectators were often seen as clashing with the exhibitor's imagined spectator who was male, silent, and passive. Thus, much like the boisterous, active spectator, the female spectator was similarly pushed out of the theater to a different space of exhibition and spectatorship: the home.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

BELL & HOWELL ANNOUNCE - Filmo 75 *a beautiful "watch-thin" movie camera* at an attractive new price

FIVE years ago Bell & Howell produced Filmo 70, the first successful *automatic* movie camera simplified for amateur use, and now standard among amateurs the world over.

Now, after three years of intensive development comes the new Filmo 75, affording the finest personal movies and costing *one-third less* than the Filmo 70!

With the new Filmo 75 the veriest novice can make home movies of theatre brilliance, depth and beauty on the first try.

It is "watch-thin" compared with other movie cameras. Beautifully embossed, wear-proof metallic finish. Weighs only three pounds—fits into the coat pocket. Winds like a watch, the permanently-attached key folding flat against side of camera. Retains the familiar spy-glass viewfinder concealed within the frame.

Held and operated easily in one hand. Regularly equipped with Taylor Hobson-Cooke F 3.5 ana-

stigmat lens, quickly interchangeable with Telephotos and speed lenses for special use. Spy-glass viewfinder has automatic field area adjustment for use with all optional lenses.

Filmo 75 is built to the same high standards of quality as the Bell & Howell professional cameras costing up to \$5,000, with which practically all of the world's finest theatre motion pictures are made. Among amateur cameras it is excelled only by the well-known Filmo 70.

See the new Filmo 75 in beautiful colors at your dealer's. Price includes genuine Scotch-grained leather, plush-lined carrying case. Mail coupon now for full descriptive information.

BELL & HOWELL CO.
1828 LARCHMONT AVE., CHICAGO, ILL.

Please mail full descriptive information on your new Filmo 75 and send name of nearest store where I may examine and try it.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____

BELL & HOWELL
Filmo



FILMO 70

The most flexible and highly perfected movie camera made at any price for amateur use. Adaptable to all conditions of light, speed and distance. Optional mechanism for making 9-16-in. movies, described in free booklet, "Home Movies of the Better Kind." Write

"What you see, you get"

BELL & HOWELL CO., 1828 LARCHMONT AVE., CHICAGO, ILL. : NEW YORK : HOLLYWOOD : LONDON (B. & H. Co., Ltd.) : ESTABLISHED 1907

Figure 4 Bell & Howell Filmo 75

Moving from the theater to amateur film magazines and advertisements, a similar influence can be seen in a new sense of style that was encouraged by marketers and advertising agents that would appeal to the "new woman." Manufacturers took mundane and utilitarian products and transformed them into "fashion goods" by introducing a variety of colors and color

schemes.⁸⁰ According to Roland Marchand, one of “the most inventive manufacturers to catch hold of the color-ensemble bandwagon [was] the Eastman Kodak Company.”⁸¹ With the popularity of portable cameras on the rise, particularly with women, Kodak hoped that by offering multiple color options for their cameras it would easily blend in with the rest of the woman’s ensemble. This idea came to fruition with the 1928 release of “the Vanity Kodak, a ‘highly ornamental and intensely personal’ camera ‘designed to echo the color scheme of the particular costume.’”⁸² In the same year, Bell & Howell released their Filmo 75 that was “a beautiful ‘watch-thin’ movie camera” with a “beautifully embossed, wearproof metallic finish” and weighing “only three pounds” and “fits into the coat pocket” (Fig 4). Of note is the image associated with the camera. Not only does the ad offer the camera “in beautiful colors,” but it showcases a woman cinematographer modeling its use with a larger image highlighting the intricate, almost floral like design, and a carrying case with a similar finish. The Vanity Kodak and Bell & Howell’s Filmo 75 both illustrate manufacturers and advertisers attracting women consumers, not only to their products, but to the domestic film industry as a whole.

By appealing to average, middle-class female consumers, filmmaking manufacturers entered into the domain of leisure and amateur discourses. As practices, technologies, and gender roles responded to modernity by becoming more intertwined and nuanced, so too did people’s understandings of professionals and amateurs, specifically in regard to domestic film exhibition. The housewife’s role within the home, first as nurturer and ward of the domestic haven then as the household administrator, a title offering the illusion of professionalism, becomes complicated further with the introduction of domestic film discourses into the home. Here, the professional

⁸⁰ Marchand, *Advertising*, 121.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 134.

⁸² *Ibid.*.

and amateur filmmaker and exhibitor are similarly intertwined. As filmmaking grew in popularity within middle-class Americans' homes, definitions of leisure, work, professional, and amateur became confused. If the housewife was considered the professional of the home, the business administrator and caretaker, were traditional leisure practices, like home movie making, considered work or leisure? As I've already outlined, Wasson argues that amateur filmmaking, because it falls within the space of the home, becomes work as it applies to the housewife's domestic duties. If domestic filmmaking and exhibition is defined as work when in the hands of the housewife, does it become a professional activity, as work is traditionally related to professionalism? Or, is it still amateur? If they are not a professional, can we consider them an advanced version of an amateur? Or is the housewife acting out a formal domestic duty disguised as a hobby?

The first piece of evidence in determining who is a professional and who is an amateur in pre-World War II America is, according to Patricia Zimmerman, the equipment used for the film's production and exhibition. A professional used expensive cameras that allowed the operator to manipulate the image, highlighting their technical complexity and control.⁸³ If, however, you used reduced film gauges, cheap cameras enhanced with simple instructions and easy operations, you were firmly within the bounds of amateur filmmaking. Beyond the definitions here, the amateur is further split into two modes: the "advanced" amateur and the hobbyist. While the advanced amateur and the hobbyist both utilized nonprofessional film formats (i.e. 8mm or 16mm), advanced amateurs employed "professional" techniques like continuity editing that showcased a continuous narrative or thematic through line.⁸⁴ The

⁸³ Patricia Zimmerman, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 118.

⁸⁴ Charles Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Moviemaking, 1923-1960* (Oakland: University of California Press), 6.

hobbyist, on the other hand, is best represented by the home movie, a text that more closely represents, as Roger Odin claims, a family photo album than a narrative film. First, in relation to aesthetics and content, the home movie presents its subject in the same style as a photograph, i.e. “the pause, the front-on shot, the looks at the camera, the group photo, etc.” Second, the home movie does not have a coherent and linear narrative. Instead, it “presents a succession of life moments separated by gaps in time of varying sizes (from a few minutes to several days, even several months).”⁸⁵

In addition, the advanced, or “serious” amateur is consciously aware of their potential viewers while filming. The “serious” amateur kept their future audience and exhibition space in mind while simultaneously reflecting, appropriating, and manipulating dominant Hollywood film styles of the time period.⁸⁶ All of this produced a film that promoted a passive, contemplative spectator. Conversely, according to Richard Chalfen, the hobbyist-produced home movie is a form of “home mode communication.” Home mode communication does not directly speak to the way home movies communicate their messages, but rather is mainly concerned with exhibition space and an audience of family and close friends.⁸⁷ In short, home mode communication refers to the personal relationship between subjects on screen and the viewing audience. The hobbyist filmmaker will likely know the subjects of their films and the audience will similarly know the filmmaker or can at least identify the subjects on screen.⁸⁸ Indeed, while watching home movies of strangers can be a fascinating experience, any emotional resonance or

⁸⁵ Odin, Roger. “The Home Movie and Space of Communication.” In *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, eds. Laura Rascaroli and Gwenda Young (New York: Bloomsbury Academy, 2014), 18.

⁸⁶ Tepperman, *Amateur*, 6; Ibid, 8.

⁸⁷ Ryan Shand, “Theorizing Amateur Cinema: Limitations and Possibilities,” *Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists*, Fall, Vol.8 (2008), 39.

⁸⁸ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), 8.

narrative clarity is either nonexistent or hard to come by. The audience of a home movie is rarely passive or contemplative, but rather, due to home movies use of “home mode communication,” the audience is active, noisy, and distracted.⁸⁹

The discourse that qualifies the distinctions between the advanced amateur and the hobbyist shares affinities with Robert Stebbins’ sociological analysis of modern recreation, which asserts that there are two forms of leisure: serious leisure and causal leisure. Causal leisure is found more readily within the domesticity of the family, where home movies and “home mode communication” are much more common. Like the hobbyist, casual leisure is “the domain of the ‘player, dabbler, or novice” and remains typically ‘fleeting, mundane and commonplace.’”⁹⁰ Serious leisure, on the other hand, shares many of the “attributes of paid employment undertaken on professional terms,” but without any monetary gain or value.⁹¹ What becomes visible here is that the boundary between the amateur and the professional that public discourses tried so hard to construct is not as clear cut as it was once thought to be. The advanced amateur participating in “serious leisure” begins to closely style themselves as an expert, often even looking to be misidentified as a professional.⁹²

As I’ve illustrated up to this point, with the distinctions between professional and amateur filmmaking further complicated by their inclusion in domestic leisure activities, it becomes difficult to confidently contend that female domestic filmmaking simply fell within the purview of the housewife’s domestic duties. As Wasson argues, the advertising campaigns for portable

⁸⁹ Chapter Three will detail the spectatorial experience and subsequent implications of identifying and actually seeing people a spectator knew, including themselves, on screen.

⁹⁰ Ian Craven, “A Very Fishy Tale: The Curious Case of Amateur Subjectivity,” *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema*, ed. Ian Craven (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), □8.

⁹¹ Craven, “Fishy,” 8.

⁹² Ibid, 12.

film projectors fell in line with the “domestic ideal” and the image of the “consuming housewife” who created an efficient home by overseeing and operating the domestic appliances.⁹³ Looking at home exhibition in the 1920s and 1930s, Wasson observes the rise in popularity of home movie equipment advertisements in mass-distributed magazines and newspapers that were specifically geared towards the female consumer. For instance, Wasson observes that Kodak marketed their equipment “as part of the contemporary explosion of electrical appliances and domestic euphoria.”⁹⁴ If we attribute amateur filmmaking equipment to the home, as manufacturers like Kodak did, amateur filmmaking and exhibition inadvertently became positioned as a feminine activity. This framing is further illustrated by ads that would often frame the home movie camera and projector as a “new invention” that freed female homemakers from their everyday, mundane routines all while staying within the confines of the home.⁹⁵ I will illustrate below, however, that the popular discourses specifically addressing the amateur and home movie maker complicate Wasson’s assertions by placing amateur filmmaking discourses not merely as a job within domestic responsibilities, but as a creative, artistic practice where the lines of work, leisure, and art become blurred.

The Journal of the Society of Motion Pictures Engineers (SMPE) is a stark departure from popular discourses of domesticity and, instead, provides a professional perspective frequently centered on filmmaking equipment. Founded by scientist and inventor C. Francis Jenkins, the purpose of the *Journal of the SMPE* was to advance “the theory and practice of motion picture engineering and the allied arts and sciences, the standardization of the mechanism

⁹³ Haidee Wasson, “Electric Homes! Automatic Movies! Efficient Entertainment!: 16mm and Cinema’s Domestication in the 1920s” in *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 48, no. 4, (Summer 2009), 3.

⁹⁴ Wasson, “Reel,” 228.

⁹⁵ Moya Luckett, “Filming the Family: Home Movie Systems and the Domestication of Spectatorship,” *The Velvet Light Trap* no.36 (1995): 25.

and practices employed therein and the dissemination of scientific knowledge by publication.”⁹⁶

The *SMPE*, therefore, was strictly from the point of view of manufacturers, technicians, and projectionists and focused on the scientific and technical side of filmmaking equipment. From this perspective, several articles in the late 1910s on personal projectors insisted they be “light in weight, compact, and easy to set up” with controls, functionality, and any necessary adjustments to be “as fool proof as possible.”⁹⁷ Projectors should also contain safety features so that film strips cannot be torn, burnt, or stretched.⁹⁸ Other *SMPE* writers contend that most, if not all, film projector owners are in fact filmmakers themselves and attributes any discrepancies to this assertion to projectors being used for educational and industrial related films.⁹⁹ While this does support Wasson’s observation that the efficiency and operational ease of amateur film projectors was an attraction to female consumers fulfilling a domestic duty, evidence shows that while projectors fell within these discourses of domesticity, the perspectives and suggestions from the *Journal of SMPE* define amateur film projectors as technical objects that were used by filmmakers and artists. Furthermore, it is my contention that housewives who operated home film cameras and projectors were not merely exercising their domestic role, but produced, curated, and screened female directed films within domesticated feminine spaces. Considered in tandem with Wasson’s argument, the housewife complicates the boundaries between work and art and how discourses around professionalism and amateurism are understood and reflected within amateur filmmaking and domestic exhibition.

⁹⁶ “The Society of Motion Picture Engineers: Its Aims and Accomplishments,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, July (New York, 1916), iii.

⁹⁷ A. Shapiro, “A New Sixteen Millimeter Projector,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, Jul.-Dec. (New York: The Society, 1930), 598.

⁹⁸ Shapiro, “Projector,” 600.

⁹⁹ J.B. Carrigan & Russell C. Holslag, “An Estimate of the Present Status and Future Development of the Home Talkies,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, Jan.-Jul. (New York: The Society, 1931), 68.

In addition to its position as a laboratory for political ideologies, the home has historically been a site for artistic freedom and creative expression. Beginning in the American Victorian Era home (1840s-1890s), when she wasn't constructing the ideal transformative sanctuary for her family, the housewife's domestic role equally consisted of individual activities of "creativity and self-expression," whether "through reading, music, painting, or other uplifting arts."¹⁰⁰ The dullness and roughness of a new industrial society led many domestic activists to encourage housewives to undergo individual forms of artistic expression. Not only did these activities sprinkle some excitement onto the monotony of the everyday, but, more importantly, they sanded down the rough edges of a new industrial society.¹⁰¹ With the urban environment's disregard for such artistic modes of expression, the suburbs, according to historian Clifford Edward Clark Jr. became "the proper supportive and nurturing area for personal growth and artistic achievement."¹⁰² Outwardly, the home and its artistic innards became a dramatic illustration of a family's identity, and, significantly, their material and cultural progress.¹⁰³ One of the housewife's unspoken duties, then, was to maintain the appearance of a specific economic status the husband had built. The home, then, became "a personal statement – a symbolic representation of what the owner stood for and valued."¹⁰⁴ To express your identity and individuality through your home was by celebrating your own creativity, and no one was expected to be more creative than the housewife.

While men also participated in creative and individual expression, middle-class women of the Reconstruction Era (1863-1877) learned at an early age to paint or draw, musical talents

¹⁰⁰ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 121.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, 100.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 114.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

like playing the piano, and crocheting intricate “female elegancies” that were displayed around the home.¹⁰⁵ Like much of women’s work within the home, the housewife’s artistic forms of expression, while showcasing her creativity, should also be useful to her family and home.¹⁰⁶ For instance, once they mastered crocheting, middle-class women were expected to sew doilies and lace collars to be draped over wooden furniture to help “preserve the finish” and “lessen the wear and tear.”¹⁰⁷ This illustrates a direct relationship between the housewife’s “leisure creativity” then, and preserving a superficial economic status that began to blur the lines between work, leisure, and art. This blurring is further illustrated by many housewives who publicly promoted their “artist” identity as a way to enter the public sphere, all while remaining within the private confines of the home.¹⁰⁸ The parlor, designed to entertain guests and socialize, became a gallery of sorts for the family’s most impressive works of art and possessions.¹⁰⁹ These works and possessions visually illustrated the economic and cultural position of the family, but, more importantly, highlighted the housewife’s own artistic individuality by showcasing her own “keen insight, independence, and appropriate training.”¹¹⁰

Spatially, the Victorian Era home often consisted of individual family members having their very own “special room” for leisure activities, which encouraged artistic forms of expression, in addition to keeping children and husbands away from “outside influences.”¹¹¹ The unusual configuration of Victorian homes – seemingly useless protrusions, numerous bay windows, and an oversized porch – was particularly set up to foster creativity with its emphasis

¹⁰⁵ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 106.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 107.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Wright, *Dream*, 109.

¹¹⁰ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 107.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 35.

on individualized spaces. Each odd addition and arrangement nurtured specific activities whether it was “playing the piano, sewing, reading, or tending a hot stove.”¹¹² Even in “unpretentious houses,” it was quite common to find a small music room or library, and closets and storage rooms filled with numerous possessions.¹¹³

Only two simple operations necessary to take movies with Filmo:
1. Locate scene in spy-glass viewfinder
2. Press the button.

The World's Highest Quality
Amateu**M**ovie**C**amera

BELL & HOWELL
Filmo
Automatic

So simple a child can operate it

IN designing Filmo, the original automatic motion picture camera for the amateur, Bell & Howell Company were guided by the requirements of making fine motion pictures rather than the alternative of building a camera to a price. The price of Filmo is highest, appealing to those who require the maximum of sharpness, depth and variety in their amateur movies.

In Filmo you find exclusive features developed by over 20 years experience in making the cameras and equipment used by the leading motion picture producers all over the world. Every Filmo feature yields professional results with strictly amateur ease. The lens is a Taylor Hobson-Cooke, 25 mm., F 3.5 aperture. All parts are built to precision, not exceeded even in the highest grade watches. Built to last a lifetime—an instrument in keeping with the finest things you possess.

Exclusive Filmo Features

1. The spy-glass viewfinder. Eliminates necessity for using more than one viewfinder. Excludes all light except from object to be photographed.
2. Iris diaphragm dial figures visible in viewfinder.
3. Twelve different lenses for special purposes may be interchanged with regular lens.
4. A superior quality F.A.S. lens furnished as regular equipment.
5. Special mechanism for taking automatic 16-mm. motion pictures optional.
6. Extreme simplicity.
7. Distinctive, Ornamental.
8. Requires no tripod. Filmo is the original automatic amateur movie camera.

Write for fully descriptive Filmo booklet, "What You See, You Get"

BELL & HOWELL CO.
1828 Larchmont Avenue, Chicago, Illinois
New York, Hollywood, London (B. & H. Co., Ltd.) ESTABLISHED 1907

The BELL & HOWELL
Filmo
Automatic
PROJECTOR

The projector used by many leading industrial firms to show their own "sales" or "good will" movies. Shows your movies without flicker and with theatre clarity and brilliance. Runs forward, backward (for novelty effect) or stops on any single picture. Seven lenses interchangeable for varying pictures to various requirements. Described in Filmo booklet, "What You See You Get." Write for it.

Figure 5 Bell & Howell Filmo Ad

¹¹² Wright, *Dream*, 112.

¹¹³ Ibid.

The confused definitions around women's status in society continued well into the Progressive Era and beyond. While Victorian Era homes featured spaces that fostered artistic expression and activities, as discussed above, the following decades saw conservative reformers reinventing women's role in society as the "professional," both household administrator and general purchasing agent. Yet, as ads from the 1920s and 1930s suggest, in addition to their household duties, women were also participating in the production, exhibition, and spectatorship of domestic films. Arguably one of the most common attributes for amateur film equipment manufacturers was to market their equipment towards capturing and sharing activities and events centered around the family (Fig. 5). On the surface, this marketing strategy further supports Wasson's notion that amateur filmmaking equipment fell within the familial responsibilities prescribed to the domestic housewife. However, a closer analysis of this same Bell & Howell advertisement from 1927 suggests a more complex answer. The ad champions "The Filmo" as a product with "exclusive features developed by over 20 years experience in making the cameras and equipment used by the leading motion picture producers all over the world." While boasting their relationship to the professional filmmaking industry, Bell & Howell's ad emphasizes how each feature "yields professional results with *strictly amateur ease*." This is further evidenced through the ad's visuals. The image at the top of the ad shows a little girl, presumably the daughter, using Bell & Howell's "World's Highest Quality Amateur Movie Camera," The Filmo. Not only does this highlight its ease of operation (the ad says "So simple a child can operate it"), but it also visually embodies the domestic insistence that, at an early age, women should learn an artistic skill that highlights the family's cultural status. The emphasis on the camera's professional features and high quality, combined with its ease of operation, highlights modernity's blurring distinction between the tools and qualities of an amateur and professional.

Beyond marketing filmmaking and exhibition equipment around the family, one company, De Vry, took a different approach. The first De Vry ad, a two-page spread from 1927 promoting their new camera prominently displays a female operator on one full page, and a detailed explanation of the camera features on the next (Fig 6). The feature I want to specifically underline in this ad is the camera's ability to hold "100 feet of Standard Theatre Size film – the same sort of film which is used in professional cameras." The ad further highlights the camera's use of 35mm film by suggesting the amateur filmmaker would be able to screen their films "in any Theatre or at any public gathering" and even boasting that "many" owners have sold their films "to the news reel weeklies, and many more have experienced the delightful sensation of having their films shown at their neighborhood movie houses." Not only does this camera cloud

Just Why the DeVry takes BETTER Amateur Movies

1. The DeVry holds 100 feet of Standard Theatre Size film – the same sort of film which is used in professional cameras and which must be used by the amateur if he wishes to get the best results . . .
2. The DeVry can be loaded in daylight . . .
3. The DeVry will take 35 feet of film without rewinding . . .
4. The DeVry can be focused direct on the film . . .
5. The DeVry can be put into action from any position and has three view finders instead of one . . .
6. The DeVry requires no cranking . . .
7. The DeVry needs no tripod . . .
8. The DeVry starts and stops smoothly.

Simply point the DeVry, press a button and you are taking movies guaranteed to be as perfect as those taken by a professional camera. The DeVry is absolutely vibrationless and amazingly easy to operate. Also, because the DeVry uses Standard film, the movies taken with it can be shown in any Theatre or at any public gathering.

Standard film has six times the picture area of "miniature" 16 mm. film. If you use it you can have your films developed in any large city in the world in a few hours. Also you always have a negative which assures you clear brilliant movies year after year and from generation to generation. Standard Film enables you to take movies of finest feature film brilliance.

Many DeVry owners have sold films taken by themselves to the news reel weeklies, and many more have experienced the delightful sensation of having their films shown at their neighborhood movie houses. The DeVry weighs nine pounds, is enclosed in a handsome steel case and sells for \$150.00.

Send for Free Book

We have prepared a new FREE beautiful illustrated booklet on the subject of "Just Why the DeVry Takes Better Movies." It explains in detail the many and varied advantages of the DeVry.

Write or mail the coupon today for your copy of this book.

C O U P O N

THE DEVRY CORPORATION
1111 Centre Street, Dept. 405, Chicago, Illinois
Please send me your new free book "Just Why the DeVry Takes Better Movies."

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____

F I L M

T O U C H S T O N E

Figure 6 1927 DeVry Ad

one of the main distinctions between an amateur and professional filmmaker – 16mm vs. 35mm – but the ad further complicates these definitions by prominently featuring a female filmmaker

and suggesting her film could be shown in a professional setting. Furthermore, while we don't see what the woman is capturing with her camera, a close look at the point where the ad visually compares the size and quality of 16mm and 35mm film stock reveals images of a group of four women. The ad, then, is specifically selling the idea to the female consumer, who is thought to be strictly relegated to household duties, that they too could become filmmakers and potentially share their own stories and experiences to the public in a professional theater.

De Vry also featured both male and female Hollywood actors, such as Joan Crawford gleefully operating one of their latest cameras (Fig 8). De Vry's use of male and female celebrities here points to the increasing trend of the female film fan, similarly witnessed in early film magazines. According to Kathryn H. Fuller, early twentieth century film magazines mainly fell within similar,



Figure 7 Victor Animatograph Female Ad

male hobbyist discourses that focused on the technical aspects of the cinema.

However, as film “evolved into a professionalized, commercialized entertainment form” the male tech

hobbyist was replaced with a new movie fan, “the fan as a consumer.”¹¹⁴ Just as De Vry and Bell & Howell repositioned their

marketing strategies, movie magazines, such as *Motion Picture Story Magazine* and *Photoplay* shifted their content and readership “away



Figure 8 Joan Crawford DeVry Ad

¹¹⁴ Kathryn H. Fuller, *At The Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 144.

from special-interest, fan-interactive publishing and toward the fast-growing, lucrative category of women's magazines."¹¹⁵

Two additional ads from Bell & Howell (Fig 9 & Fig 10) and one from Victor Animatograph (Fig 7) from 1927, feature a fashionable upper middle-class woman outside the domestic environment, eye pressed to the viewfinder, filming her latest travels, favorite football team, and exotic outdoors. Notably, all three ads do not display the female cinematographer capturing family moments or activities, but rather individual, personal moments and creations. Both Bell & Howell ads include a smaller image of what seems to be the same woman, projecting her films to the family. Here she appears to have taken up her domestic role, standing next to the projector presumably as the operator or preparing herself to act quickly on her feet if the need arises. Thus, while one portion of the ads feature a female filmmaker out in the wild capturing exotic, exciting, and natural images, this is contrasted with the domestic caretaker. Yet this domestic caretaker is also operating the projector, a mechanical machine, that, while built and modified for ease of operation, still required practiced maintenance and an artistic eye to make accommodations depending on the screen material and distance, and to ensure focus and catch blur during operation, among other factors. Theater owners and projectionists certainly thought projection was an artform, as F.H. Richardson made clear in 1927 in the *Journal of the SMPE's* "Why Expert Knowledge and High Grade Intelligence is Essential in The Theater Projection Room."¹¹⁶ These ads provide nuance to the arguments from Wasson and continues, as I argue, to identify the Progressive housewife as an artist as well as a domestic professional.

¹¹⁵ Fuller, *Picture Show*, 145.

¹¹⁶ F.H. Richardson, "Why Expert Knowledge and High Grade Intelligence is Essential in The Theater Projection Room," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, 1931, 500.

Travel Movies

In most instances, can never be taken, but is imperative that you take perfect pictures on the first try. There is but one personal movie camera representing the same used on professional cameras to take clear, sharp pictures under all conditions of weather, light and distance. This camera is Filmo, illustrated below. Take it with you when you travel.

Why it pays to pay more for this camera

FIRST, consider the lens in the camera you buy. It is of first importance in taking perfect pictures. Filmo is regularly equipped with a highest quality anastigmat, Taylor-Hobson Cooke, 25 m/f 3.5 aperture lens. No lower-priced movie camera affords such a lens. You can use other lenses on Filmo, too—12 of them—from the exceptionally fast F 1.8 to a 6-inch telephoto which takes closeups of action at great distances. No other camera using 16 m film has this feature.

Filmo has the original special type of viewfinder used in taking professional movies. It is the spy-glass viewfinder, which excludes all light except from the object being photographed. It is speedy and accurate. What you see, you get.

Only in the Filmo design of camera can you get a special mechanism for taking a low motion picture. An invaluable aid to galleries and others who have occasion to analyze motion.

With the Filmo fast lens and the adjustable, accurate speed control you are sure to get clear pictures, even on dark, cloudy days. This factor alone may save time for you more than the entire Filmo cost.

When you are ready to make your own sub-titles, splice and edit films, produce "fade-ins" and "fade-outs," make animal cartoons and in other ways get effects familiar to you on the theatre screen, remember that Bell & Howell is the only manufacturer of personal movie cameras making complete equipment for producing these effects. For 20 years Bell & Howell Company has made the professional cameras and equipment used almost exclusively by leading motion picture producers throughout the world. This vast experience is now at your disposal, through Filmo Camera, Projector and equipment. There is also the Eterna Camera, using standard 35 m film, for those who prefer it.

Either Filmo or Eterna is a lifetime investment. Both have same exclusive features. Don't let a slight additional first cost stand in the way of future years of satisfaction. Mail the coupon for complete Filmo or Eterna information.

BELL & HOWELL CO.
1828 Larchmont Ave., CHICAGO
New York, Hollywood, London
Established 1907

Filmo
REGISTERED

BELL & HOWELL CO.
1828 Larchmont Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Please send me complete information (I am interested in Filmo equipment using 16 m film.) (on Eterna equipment) using standard 35 m film, with name of nearest dealer. (check proper square)

Name _____
Address _____
City _____

Figure 9 Female Bell & Howell Filmo Ad

"Touchdown!"

"What you see—
you get"

**To get every play
you require a**
BELL & HOWELL
Filmo
Motion Picture Camera

THERE is but one amateur motion picture camera having all the adaptability required to take football movies under all conditions of light, speed and distance. That is the Bell & Howell Filmo, made by "the movie people."

With a Filmo to your eye you can shoot over the heads of the crowd and catch every play. The spy-glass viewfinder and its telephoto auxiliary for closer magnification locates the action instantly and follows your hero down the field as easily as you would follow him with the naked eye.

The regularly furnished Taylor-Hobson Cooke F 3.5 lens is lightning fast. It gets the picture for you, even on cloudy days. Or you can quickly replace it with a 3 1/4 inch telephoto lens that will take close-ups of action at the other end of the field, without requiring a tripod.

Take a Filmo with you if you want to get the whole game. To take s-l-o-w motion choose the Double-speed, Three-speed or Super-speed Filmo. The adaptability found only in Filmo, among amateur movie cameras, comes from Bell & Howell's twenty years of experience in making the cameras used almost exclusively in the professional movie studios of the world.

Your Filmo dealer checks the telephoto lens interchangeable with regular Filmo lens to get movie of desired action. See him, or write us for complete information on any Filmo movie question.

BELL & HOWELL CO.
1828 Larchmont Ave., Chicago, Ill.
New York, Hollywood, London, B & H Co., Ltd.
Established 1907

Figure 10 Female Bell & Howell Filmo Ad

To further illustrate the complicated amateur/professional relationship between housewives and filmmaking, women were additionally depicted in ads for other filmmaking equipment, such as light exposure meters, titling, and editing tools. In the 1931 Bell & Howell ad (Fig 11) the same woman is featured not only filming, but also titling, editing, and finally projecting the film to a group of friends. On the surface, these images might appear surprising, but really these depictions are not out of the ordinary. For example, one might consider filling every role of the filmmaking process amateurish. Instead, it was not unheard of, common in fact within independent studios, to have one person oversee directing, writing, producing, acting, and editing for one film.¹¹⁷ Second, a woman filling these roles, positions traditionally thought of as

¹¹⁷ David Meuel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2016), 28.

masculine, similarly mirrors the professional film industry. Hollywood, in fact, has a long history of women working in their technical departments, specifically as film editors. As Hollywood shifted towards producing feature length films, there was a need for someone to undergo the mundane job of sorting, organizing, and then assembling the mounds of footage. Women were often sought out for these roles “because the work was low paying and considered menial and monotonous (work akin to knitting or sewing)”¹¹⁸

Make sure of a good picture

*... then improve it with
Titling, Editing and a
B & H Extra Bright Screen*



B & H CHARACTER TITLE WRITER

- Maybe you're artist enough to get away with a movie without titles. But we'll gamble that you could improve your films a lot with the kind of titles you can make on a B & H Character Title Writer. (\$36 complete, with title cards, pen and white ink, 165 watt Mazda bulbs, and focusing device). Other titling outfits, \$7.50 to \$18.00.



B & H FILM EDITOR

- Editing film is like putting punctuation in a sentence ... it's as important as the subject of the film itself. A Picture Viewer, Rewinder, and Splicer all in one compact device make the B & H Film Editor the most *usable* piece of 16 mm. equipment you could own. \$40, complete. Combination Rewinder and Splicer, \$14. Splicer \$7.50.
- You get back from the screen just what you have on the film—provided you've a good projector, and provided you've a good screen. The B & H Extra Bright Screen is a marvel of reflective power ... perfect for both Kodachrome and black and white movies. Reversible feature protects surface for storing. Has folding feet, too. 20" x 12" size is \$21, 30" x 40" size, \$19.



B & H EXTRA BRIGHT SCREEN

Write for new Filmo Catalog No. 30-C, describing these and many other aids to better movies

BELL & HOWELL CO., 1843 Larchmont Ave., Chicago, Ill.
New York, Hollywood, London (B & H Co., Ltd.) Estab. 1907

Figure 11 1931 Female Bell & Howell Ad

¹¹⁸ Meuel, *Women*, 21.

A focus specifically on the editing image and this amateur female editor's position compared to professional editors like Anna Bauchens (Fig 12) underlines the amateur resembling more and more the professional.¹¹⁹ Both women are professionally dressed, seated at an editing bay, focused on cutting or splicing the filmstrip in front of them. Moreover, both the amateur and the image of Bauchens include spare film canisters and empty reels. The only major difference, besides the amateur clearly editing 16mm filmstock, is the location. The amateur is shrouded in darkness with the viewer unable to determine where she is located, however, using the following screening image, we can deduce that she is presumably somewhere in the home. The image of Bauchens, however, is clearly taken at the studio in the editing workshops. By comparing these images, it seems the only stark distinction between the amateur and professional editor is *where* the editing is taking place, further blurring our understanding of these definitions.



Figure 12 Professional Editor Anna Bauchens

¹¹⁹ The image of Bauchens is from Su Friedrich's online archive and survey of 206 editors "who invented, developed, fine-tuned and revolutionized the art of film editing." <http://womenfilmeditors.princeton.edu/bauchens-anne/>

While scholars have long debated the cause of women's departure from the film industry, most point to the structural systemic changes made in the mid to late 1920s.¹²⁰ These structural changes followed the assembly line model made famous in the automotive industry that transformed Hollywood and its independent studios into "multi-layered corporate models of senior executives, production heads, and staff producers, directors, writers, cinematographers, editors, and other personnel."¹²¹ Prior to the adoption of a corporate, assembly line model, women in the 1910s and early 1920s, according to Jane Gaines, held more positions of power in Hollywood "than at any time in the U.S. motion picture industry history."¹²² For instance, successful women filmmakers and actors, such as Alice Guy Blaché, Lois Weber, and Helen Holmes, among others, all held prominent positions of power within their own independent studios, with some, like Weber, even gaining immense power within the studio system.¹²³ Unfortunately, the systemic remodeling of Hollywood emphasized a masculine sensibility that led many jobs, such as editing, to become specialized and, ultimately, gendered.¹²⁴ The systemic remodeling of Hollywood studio operations, combined with D.W. Griffiths revolutionary editing techniques introduced in the late 1910s, transformed Hollywood into a "serious business" where only "strong, no-nonsense men were best suited for key management, production, and technical roles."¹²⁵ Interestingly, this forced exodus of female Hollywood workers coincided with women disappearing from the pages of amateur filmmaking magazines and being predominately replaced by male hobbyists and filmmakers.

¹²⁰ For an in-depth historical examination of this time period and event see Jane M. Gaines's *Pink-Slipped: What Happened to Women in the Silent Film Industries?*

¹²¹ Meuel, *Women*, 28.

¹²² Jane M. Gaines, *Pink-Slipped: What Happened to Women in the Silent Film Industries?* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 16.

¹²³ Meuel, *Women*, 18.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 29.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

The long history of women's role in Hollywood combined with a new agenda of their domestic duties, highlights the way domestic film exhibition and spectatorship was inherently imbued with feminine values and characteristics. Like the female flâneuse roaming the shopping districts and department stores of urban areas influenced cinema spectatorship in the early twentieth century, amateur female filmmakers swayed how films would be produced, exhibited, and consumed within the home. Not only was film spectatorship and exhibition within the home feminine, but it represented modernity's blurring of once distinct boundaries by confusing the definitions determined through professional/amateur discourses.

The Bungalow Spectator

American women's new role of household administrator and general purchasing agent required the entrance into and ability to move freely within certain sectors of the public sphere. While the housewife was allowed access to specific public areas, this was often relegated to shopping districts, department stores, and various forms of entertainment. A symbol of modernity, the woman shopper, or flâneuse, moved fluidly between private and public spaces of consumerism. A key characteristic of modernity itself is its speed and increased sense of mobility by way of the locomotive, automobile, trolleys, and assorted forms of public entertainment.

Modernity's fixation with mobility nurtured cinema as one of the more popular forms of entertainment as it was utilized to create the illusion of movement that helped define the modern world. Hale's Tours, for instance, was a public amusement featuring filmic technologies among various illusive strategies to replicate the sensation of riding in a train car while the customer

remained immobile and seated.¹²⁶ This form of amusement carried well into the nickelodeon era and beyond in the form of travel kinesthetic films that produced a similar sensation of movement while audiences remained calmly seated in a theater. This sense of fluidity was further represented in the physical roaming of the city, specifically through shopping districts. For instance, Friedberg's flâneuse was constantly inundated with attention-grabbing images that reflected the spectatorial experience of the cinema. These images competed for the consumer's attention and money, while encouraging a consistent flow of people moving in and out to make room for new customers and more profits.

This sense of mobility, in addition to modernity's emphasis on simplicity and efficiency, was also illustrated in the architectural design and experience of the new American home: the Progressive era bungalow. The bungalow had two basic principles. First, architects favored honesty in the materials and structures of the bungalow: "Wood was to look like wood, stone like stone."¹²⁷ Instead of applying paint or including excessive decorations and woodwork, designers emphasized the natural appearance of construction materials. The second principle was an aesthetic one that fell in line with modernity's emphasis on efficiency advocated by architect Le Corbusier. In opposition to the Victorian Era home, the bungalow favored "simple, clean lines...flat surfaces, straight lines, and sharp angles" that stressed "cleanness and prevision."¹²⁸ These simpler and cleaner lines followed Corbusier's insistence that homes were a "machine for living in" and nothing more.¹²⁹ Homes and furniture are not works of art, and they don't have a "soul"; they are machines for living and sitting.¹³⁰ For reformers and designers, reducing bric-a-

¹²⁶ Hale's Tours will be discussed with greater detail in Chapter Four.

¹²⁷ Clark Jr, *Family Home*, 146.

¹²⁸ Ibid..

¹²⁹ Le Corbusier, *Towards a new Architecture*, trans. by Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publication, 1986), 4.

¹³⁰ Corbusier, *Architecture*, 122.

brac and the small nooks and crannies of domestic space would reduce the home to its “essentials” with the hope that this would simplify household duties, specifically the cleaning, cooking, and organizing, and other chores for which the housewife was responsible.¹³¹ While this new design was advocated by scientists and doctors of the time to reduce breeding grounds for germs, the more prominent argument was for more efficiency that ultimately led to more family time.¹³² Less time spent cleaning meant there was more time for the family to participate in leisure activities that might improve familial relationships.¹³³

The new, efficient design of the bungalow fostered a “new ideal for the family” that advocated for a sense of informality and togetherness. Reformers and architects molded this new family ideal by tearing down the walls of the individual rooms of the Victorian Era home, and instead, constructed a first-floor layout that was more open. There would be three rooms – a living room, a dining room, and a kitchen – each having multiple functions and purposes. While some historians argue that the main reason for this new design was to reduce the home’s square footage and ultimately “compensate for the increased expenses of plumbing, heating, and other technological improvements,” what becomes more apparent is that the open floor design of the bungalow “compelled family togetherness” through fluid movement.¹³⁴ The literal breaking down of walls allowed family members to move freely between once gendered spaces and participate together in traditionally gendered activities.

The main site for this new, informal family ideal took shape primarily in the living room and dining room, which were often merged to spatially appear as one large room. Where the Victorian Era home had individual rooms dedicated to entertaining guests, creative expression,

¹³¹ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 146.

¹³² Wright, *Dream*, 162.

¹³³ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 163.

¹³⁴ Wright, *Dream*, 171; Marsh, *Suburban*, 83.

intellectual growth, and raising children, the bungalow's living room was multidimensional. The primary intention of the living room, often referred to as the multi-purpose room, was to act as a "a staging ground for family activities," yet due to a general lack of furniture that, when present, was built-into the perimeter, the space could easily be transformed into one for entertaining guests and holding social events.¹³⁵ In fact, it was highly encouraged that families incorporate furniture that was lighter in weight, which could then be easily moved to allow a quick rearrangement depending on the purpose.

The efficiency and multidimensionality of the bungalow living room was also evident in furniture of the period. The trend of living rooms having several purposes arguably began in the mid nineteenth century with furniture designers incorporating casters, or small wheels, on the front two or all four legs that allowed the piece to be easily moved.¹³⁶ For instance, Eastlake style furniture, in a response to the excess of various Victorian Era styles with "overblown designs" and "ornate decoration," produced a style more in tune with modernity: "careful craftsmanship, honest use of materials, and reconsiderations of the basic relationship between form and function."¹³⁷ In fact, historian of decorative arts Marvin D. Schwartz contends that Eastlake furniture presents one of our earliest "glimpses of modernism" within the home.¹³⁸ Eastlake commonly included casters, as well as a "strongly rectilinear" form and "incised linear decoration" that signaled its industrial manufacturing, but also adhering to modernity's sense of efficiency.¹³⁹ One of the earlier styles to take advantage of folding chairs, Eastlake folding

¹³⁵ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 163.

¹³⁶ Marvin D. Schwartz, *The Knopf Collectors' Guides to American Antiques: Chairs, Tables, Sofas & Beds* (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1982), 24.

¹³⁷ Schwartz, *Antiques*, 28.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

armchairs (Fig 13) were enthusiastically embraced and were often used as spare chairs in smaller living rooms that could be brought out for guests.¹⁴⁰



Figure 13 Eastlake Folding Chair

The Progressive Era bungalow, with its multipurpose rooms and mobile, light weight furniture, would seem to provide the perfect landscape for home film exhibition and spectatorship. Initially, it did exactly that. In the early years of home exhibition, the film projector was “a piece of portable equipment to be packed up and stowed away in the closet when not in use.”¹⁴¹ The majority of domestic users did not intend for their film projectors to be on display when idle. On the other hand, for the more serious amateur film enthusiast some

¹⁴⁰ Schwartz, *Antiques*, 183.

¹⁴¹ Carrigan, “Home Talkies,” 75.


manufacturers, such as RWK, Bell & Howell, and Eastman Kodak, produced “home movie furniture”: huge cabinets with “beautiful designs” and finished in “solid walnut” that held a projector, bulbs, reels, oils, screens, cameras, sound and editing equipment, etc. (Fig 14) While some manufacturers, like Bell & Howell, included casters on their cabinets (Fig 15), others marketed their projector-cabinets as permanent fixtures within the home, evidenced by their emphasis on blending in with the consumer’s home and other furnishings.



Figure 14 RWK All Movie Cabinet Ad

Bell & Howell Co.

really fine



Desk Model "G"

Holds Filmo Projector, two Filmo Cameras—28 and 7.5, and all the accessories in general use. Has two solid lined drawers for lenses and small accessories. Total film storage capacity in drawers is 40,000 ft. and 100 ft. reels—22,000 feet of 16 mm. film.

FILMO DESK AND

AGAIN Bell & Howell pioneers in the interest of amateur movie makers. This time in the development and production of beautiful *motion picture* Console Cabinets, combining projection, desk and storage features.

Well designed, sturdily constructed, finely finished—these solid walnut veneer cabinets are beautiful pieces of furniture, ready to be placed among the finest furnishings of any well appointed home.

Upon opening the Console your Filmo Projector is found practically in position to show your movies. There is storage space conveniently arranged in drawers and compartments for cameras, accessories and large quantities of film, on reels or in storage cans.

introduces the first

Home Movie Furniture

CONSOLE CABINETS

Model "G," shown at left, is the larger Cabinet. It provides an editing desk and storage space for 22" x 30" projection screen. Is electrically equipped with two plugs for Projector and Film Editor or Character Title Writer. The price is \$135 ready to equip.

Model "E" (at right) is a beautifully designed Cabinet for the apartment or smaller home. Holds Projector in tilt-top compartment. Has two lower shelves for storing Camera, Character Title Writer and other accessories; velvet lined drawer for lenses; seven drawers for 400 and 100 ft. film reels—total capacity 16,800 feet of 16 mm. film. The price is \$105 ready to equip.

See your Filmo dealer for all particulars on these beautiful Console Cabinets. Or mark coupon and mail to us *now* for fully descriptive literature.



Console Model "E"

Uncomplicated as a first forerunner in home use of Filmo Projector, makes a comparatively smaller size unit. Holds Projector when screened opposite that screened for screen when any projection with screen.

Now Walking Stick
THE DREMOPHOT

Figure 15 Bell & Howell Movie Cabinet

The “Library Kodascope,” the film cabinet manufactured by Eastman Kodak, highlighted the cabinet’s permanence in the consumer’s home while also offering a completely new and different spectatorial experience. Originally, the “Library Kodascope” was marketed as a “self-contained projecting unit” within a “handsomely finished walnut cabinet in the shape of an elongated octagon” (Fig 16). Inside the walnut case was a Model B Kodascope projector, electric cord, extra room for a 400-foot reel, extra lamps and lens and, significantly, an “innovative” folding, translucent screen that could quickly be set up to allow for rear projection. Potentially, this allowed consumers to view films even during the daytime without the fuss of blocking out every inch of light. The images Eastman Kodak used to present the “Library Kodascope” to the world showcased its mobility. Not only is the “Library Kodascope” presented as a single case, placed on a separate table, but the emphasis on its ability to hold all the essentials for a screening strongly suggests that was Kodak’s intention.

After the initial introduction of the “Library Kodascope,” Eastman Kodak seemingly abandoned its portable feature and focused future ads on the projector/screen case as one unit attached to an immobile cabinet equipped with a rotating tabletop (Fig 17). In fact, Eastman Kodak celebrated the “Library Kodascope’s” immobility as the consumer would now be able to avoid the hassle of setting up a make-shift screening room. In comparison to the cabinets from RWK and Bell & Howell above, the “Library Kodascope” highlighted its efficiency: “The projector will no longer be taken from a closet, reels sought, a screen erected, a table pulled to a convenient place.” Combined with its “handsome” aesthetic and convenience, the “Library Kodascope” was “a creation of both beauty and utility” that could easily “take its place quietly but effectively in any home.” The new Kodascope, with its immobile cabinet, yet efficient qualities, becomes a fascinating site of conflicting traditional and modern sensibilities.

Even with more efficient exhibition and the prospect of adding a “handsome” piece of furniture to your home, most consumers opted for smaller, more portable equipment. It was believed that with the high cost of such furniture, and with living rooms already feeling crowded with large radio cabinets, the addition of another cabinet would present more problems for the housewife than a simple two- or three-unit set up.¹⁴² Most cabinets also required a “short throw projection system,” which meant the size of the projected image was limited. Lastly, if families were privileged enough to be able to afford a cabinet with sound producing equipment, the sound from the film came from the same place as the noise from the projector.¹⁴³ For these reasons, the “Library Kodascope” and other permanent film cabinets were generally avoided by amateur filmmakers and exhibitors.

While “home movie cabinets” like the Library Kodascope may have been popular with “true” amateur film enthusiasts, most consumers opted for portable projectors, projector stands, and screens. Stationary film cabinets contradicted the multidimensionality of the American bungalow’s architectural design. As I noted above, the design of American bungalows limited the number of rooms on the first floor, forcing them to have multiple purposes and smooth inter-travel. The new open floor plan encouraged “a circular pattern of movement” where inhabitants could move freely between the living room, dining room, and kitchen.¹⁴⁴ Beyond fostering family togetherness and social entertainment, this pattern of movement and spatial layout allowed the housewife to communicate directly from the kitchen to the front door and to easily serve food or beverages from the kitchen to the dining room or living room. Children could also

¹⁴² Carrigan, “Home Talkies,” 75.

¹⁴³ E.W. Kellogg, “The Development of 16-mm. Sound Motion Pictures,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, Jan.-Jun 1935, 76.

¹⁴⁴ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 167.

run freely throughout the first floor, using alternative routes in case dad didn't want to be disturbed while reading or listening to the radio.¹⁴⁵ Yet, even with "home movie furniture" that locked the projector and screen in place, spectators could freely move throughout the first floor while a screening was taking place, embodying a version of domestic *flânerie*. In fact, amateur filmmaking magazines even suggested exhibiting films so that people *could* easily move in and out of spectatorship. Not only did this create a mode of spectatorship distinct from the theater, and one more in tune with window shopping, but it left other spectators undisturbed from their viewing experience. The spatial layout of the bungalow that promoted togetherness, socialization, and movement cultivated a distinct spectatorial experience. Beyond influencing the

Introducing the
LIBRARY KODASCOPE
Beautiful . . . Aristocratic . . . Practical

HERE is a projector that merits a place of honor in the most exclusive household.

The Case
The case is of handsomely finished walnut, attractively designed and fitted with hinged metal handles at each end. In shape, it is an elongated octagon and the top is richly inlaid with a darker wood. An inlaid border of darker wood also extends around the bottom.

Inside this strikingly beautiful case, the justly famed Kodascope, Model B, nestles snugly. Kodascope, Model B, has many new mechanical improvements. It is fitted with the Kodascope Threadlite, which makes for easy threading and rewinding without the aid of auxiliary lighting in the room. It is finished in lustrous, and the lens barrel, loop guides and other metal parts are plated with long-lasting, non-tarnishing chromium.

The Self-contained Screen
And now the innovation! A translucent screen is an integral part of the Library Kodascope. When the machine is folded, this translucent screen folds snugly about the projector. When in use, the screen is unfolded and extends about two feet in front of the lens. Included as a part of the equipment of the new Library Kodascope is a one-inch lens for use with the translucent screen, in addition to the standard two-inch lens for the longer throw.

For Large Pictures
When direct projection on a larger Kodascope screen is desired, the small translucent screen may be swung to one side and the two-inch lens substituted for the one-inch lens. This operation adds greatly to the scope of the projector. The projector itself is mounted on a swivel so that it may be swung from right to left and the projected image accurately centered on either the translucent screen or the regular Kodascope or Kodascope Screen.

When the Show Is Over
When the show is over, the reel arms fold to the body of the projector, and the translucent screen, in turn, folds back, permitting the walnut case to be placed and snapped in position over both. There is room inside the case for the connecting cord, a 400-foot reel, extra lamp and lens; even an oil can fits snugly in a clip. The Library Kodascope brings new pleasures to home movies.

Beautifully finished walnut case for the Library Kodascope

PRICE, COMPLETE, \$300

Ask a Cine-Kodak dealer for a demonstration

EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

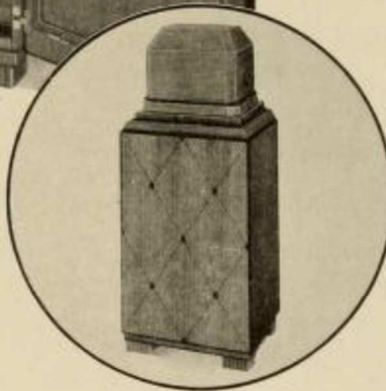
Figure 16 Eastman Kodak Library Kodascope Ad

¹⁴⁵ Clark Jr., *Family Home*, 167.

A NEW ERA IN HOME MOVIES



Amateur movie making has passed through its experimental days, and has come into a new era—an era in which beauty and utility of home movie equipment will be rightly demanded. The projector will no longer be taken from a closet, reels sought, a screen erected, a table pulled to a convenient place. The up-to-date home movie enthusiast will combine all of his projecting equipment in one unit—a creation of both beauty and utility. Such is the new cabinet for the Library Kodascope.



THE BEAUTY of the new cabinet is evident in every line, in the lustrous finish of the fine grained, hand rubbed walnut, in the skilful marquetry and trimming of polished ebony. In design the cabinet is conservatively modern. It is distinctive in appearance, but unobtrusive. It will take its place quietly but effectively in any home.

Its utility is equally pronounced—for the new cabinet, with the Library Kodascope, forms a complete, compact, instantly available outfit for showing home movies.

In material and finish, the cabinet matches the case of the Library Kodascope. Inside, there are compartments for twenty-six 400-foot reels, and a roomy drawer for accessories. Hinged on the inside of the cabinet door is a shelf which, when swung into a hori-

zontal position, gives generous room for reel containers when the reels are in use and for editing and splicing. There is ample space for permanently attaching a splicing block. Secured to the door under this shelf is a detachable, walnut-mounted Kodacolor Screen, a collapsible standard for which is in the cabinet drawer.

The top of the cabinet revolves, permitting the self-contained screen of the Library Kodascope to be extended in any direction, or a larger screen to be used without moving the cabinet.

The new cabinet, alone, is \$150; the Library Kodascope is \$300. They may be purchased separately or as a unit.

Ask a Ciné-Kodak dealer for a demonstration

EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, Rochester, N. Y.

Figure 17 Eastman Kodak Library Kodascope Cabinet Ad

spectatorial experience, the fluid movement throughout the first floor was similarly reflected in actual home exhibition equipment and design. The openness of the bungalow allowed the housewife to freely enter in and out of the exhibition space to attend to the projection or other hosting duties. Her lack of immersed spectatorship, however, aligns her closer to the professional filmmaker and artist that is more concerned with the exhibition itself, than actually viewing

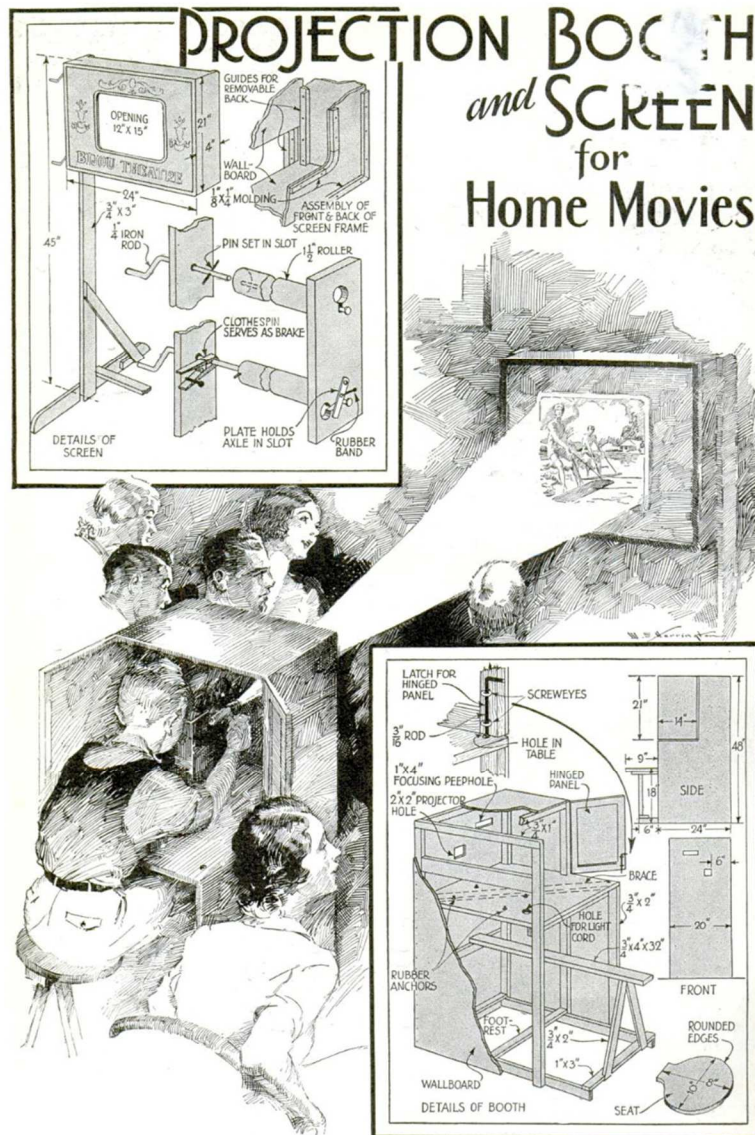


Figure 18 Portable Projection Booth

the film. In the male targeted hobbyist magazine *Popular Mechanics*, readers are shown how to design and construct their own homemade projection booth and screen (Fig 18). The plans are complemented by an illustrative example of the booth and screen in operation. This provided a cheaper alternative than the manufactured film cabinets for home film enthusiasts but also emphasized the booth's and screen's easy transportability. The article boasts that "the completed

booth is so light it can be carried by one person and its dimensions enable it to be passed through any door.”¹⁴⁶

Most homes, however, did not have the tools, or family members with skills, to construct their own projector booths, let alone having enough money to purchase a movie cabinet. The only alternative left for many consumers was to simply convert furniture they already possessed into homemade movie furniture. Eastlake furniture, for instance, featured several parlor tables (Fig 19) with casters that could double as a table or be easily transformed into a projector stand. One of the more popular styles during the early twentieth century, Art Nouveau (Fig 20), also incorporated casters on their side tables for easy rearrangements and multiple purposes.¹⁴⁷ In fact, it was almost rarer for these tables *not to* have casters than to have them. Tables specific to the parlor and hobby rooms, even before the early twentieth century, would have multiple purposes, often related to self-expression, hobbies, and socializing. For instance, dating back to the early and mid-nineteenth century, it was common to find tables specifically designed for card playing with family members and friends. Moving into the late nineteenth century, card tables, in addition to arts and crafts stands, sculpture pedestals, plant stands, and sewing tables became permanent features in middle-class households. The influx of these specific pieces indicated furniture designer’s willingness to blend traditional uses of furniture with more popular leisure and artistic activities. It is not a far stretch to assume many of these pieces could potentially be used for additional purposes, including projector stands or editing bays. It was through modernity’s blurring of boundaries and new leisure activities afforded by a new economy that domestic furniture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century became more fluid.

¹⁴⁶ “Projection Booth and Screen for Home Movies” in *Popular Mechanics*, May (Chicago: H.H. Windsor, 1932), 833.

¹⁴⁷ Schwartz, *Antiques*, 336.

Furniture thereby moved between decoration, Corbusier functionality, and embodiments of a social function, similarly to domestic film exhibition and spectatorship.



Figure 19 Eastlake Parlor Tables with Casters

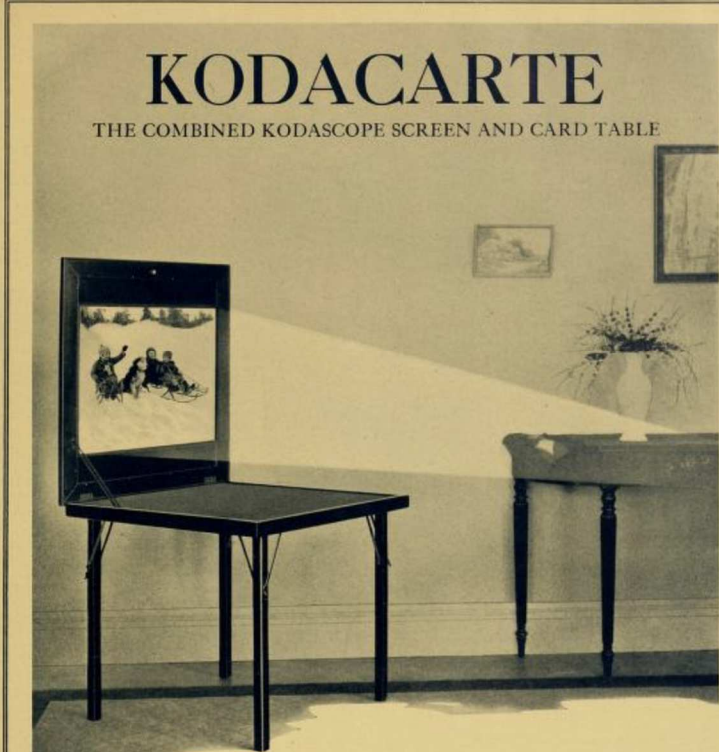


Figure 20 Art Nouveau Side Table with Casters

It should come as no surprise that amateur filmmaking manufacturers also participated in blending social leisure activities and fluid movement with Corbusier functionality. For instance, in 1928 Eastman Kodak developed a card playing table *and* projector screen: the “Kodacarte” (Fig 21). The “Kodacarte” was a portable table for social gatherings of cards, specifically bridge, that, when opened up, revealed a screen for home exhibition. The ad emphasizes, in line with the American home’s multidimensionality, “Kodacarte’s” multiple purposes: it was “far more than a bridge table” that “will be regarded as a permanent addition to the living room.” With its multidimensionality and efficiency, the “Kodacarte” fit snugly into the new American home by blurring the boundaries of home film exhibition, leisure, and socializing. As the ad exclaims, the “Kodacarte” “meets the social requirements of a card table and the technical requirements of a home movie screen.” Thus, the “Kodacarte” allowed cinema to easily shift between separate discourses and definitions. Moving home film exhibition into the realm of leisure and games, specifically card playing, the “Kodacarte” further aligns home film exhibition as a fluid activity and experience. Moreover, the spectatorial experience offered by the “Kodacarte” is in stark opposition to the classical spectator described by 1970s film spectatorship theorists. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a lively game of cards, drinks, and socializing was followed by a silent viewing of a home film. The separate ad even boasts, “in between hands, the guests sit back and enjoy the movies without delay or disturbance.”

The architectural design of Progressive era homes coupled with furniture that blended efficiency, sociality, and leisure promoted an alternative mode of film spectatorship than what the theater owners and exhibitors desired. Amateur filmmaking equipment manufacturers catered to both the novice and the “advanced” amateur with easy-to-use transportable projectors as well as home film cabinets, where the faux-professional could either display her equipment proudly,

or have it blend in with their interior design. Together with the bungalow's open floor plans that nurtured socializing and movement, amateur film exhibition equipment helped create a film spectatorial experience grounded in movement and fluidity that closely resembled the comings and goings of the flâneuse. Domestic film spectatorship and exhibition in the early twentieth century was constructed as an alternative to the theater and one that closely resembled many of the conditions generated through modernity's technological advancements and new approaches of thought.



KODACARTE
THE COMBINED KODASCOPE SCREEN AND CARD TABLE

KODACARTE meets the social requirements of a card table and the technical requirements of a home movie screen.
Closed, it is an unusually attractive card table, covered with artificial leather embossed in gold and treated to protect it against stains and scratches.
Open, it is an aluminum finished screen, 18½" x 25", that will bring out the best there is in your pictures.

Price \$30.00

ASK YOUR CINÉ-KODAK DEALER FOR A DEMONSTRATION

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York

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Figure 21 Eastman Kodak Kodacarte Ad

Conclusion

The living room theater imagined for the modern bungalow with its furniture, exhibition equipment, and open floor plan was a transitory space of leisure and socialization. With this in mind, the correct way to view films in this space became a hotly contested subject for amateur filmmakers and experts alike. What does “proper” spectatorship of amateur films in the living room look like? Often, domestic film screenings were interrupted by private conversations, questions directed toward the filmmaker, and even playing with the projected beam. This was not the mode of spectatorship encouraged through the disciplinary measures put forth by theater managers and reformers at the time in the public sphere. The next chapter will analyze the domestic film audience and their relationship to the disciplinary mechanisms of “correct” public behavior imagined by amateur filmmaking discourses: silent, attentive, passive.

This relationship intersects with the emergence of the American middle-class defined primarily through visual and aural cues such as clothing, manners, consumption habits and leisure activities. New capitalism provided the means and goods for some members of the working class to present themselves as a member of a higher economic status. The members of this new class were stuck between their old working-class identities and a refined new one. An identity characterized by its ambiguity and uncertainty, no longer working class, but not quite part of the upper class. To bolster this new identity, the middle-class looked towards new leisure pursuits like amateur filmmaking and exhibition. It was here, specifically in domestic exhibition and spectatorship practices that the middle-class could both present a genteel culture while continuing to “act” like their former, working-class selves. In public, where the working-class audience was boisterous and rowdy, the middle-class presented a more refined exterior that mirrored the upper classes. As Chapter Two will explain, in private, free from the scrutiny and

disciplinary measures of the public sphere, newly appointed middle-class film spectators invoked their former working-class personality and became a figure that provides nuance to the histories of cinema audiences, domestic leisure, and middle-class identity.

CHAPTER TWO | MANNERS MAKE THE SPECTATOR: GENTILITY AND THE HOME SHOW

New York City's Bowery Theater (Fig 22) in the 1840s was well known, not for its performances or shows, but for the audience: the Bowery b'hoys. Made up of working-class bachelors, the b'hoys became notorious for their boisterous and unruly actions during live performances.¹⁴⁸ They luxuriated in their authority over the performance. Accepting a preplanned and orchestrated performance wasn't in the cards for the b'hoys. Instead, the b'hoys determined individual acts and the overall show by audibly demanding specific songs, encores, and going so far as ordering the theater's performers and manager on stage to defend their choices before the audience.¹⁴⁹ The rise of industrialism eliminated the traditional opportunities and prospects of becoming a self-employed master craftsman.¹⁵⁰ The B'hoys, jobless and homeless, were far from eligible bachelors. The bulk of their time, beyond their penchant for the theater, was spent on other leisure activities – clothes, drinking, and socializing (Fig 23).¹⁵¹



Figure 22 New York City Bowery Theater

¹⁴⁸ Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 47.

¹⁴⁹ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 50.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 47.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*.

The b'hoys identity – loud, combative, and rude – was in stark opposition to the up-and-coming middle-class identity of the mid to late 1800s. On the one hand, the audience behavior illustrated by the b'hoys was seen as a clear rejection of the refinement and respectability embodied by the middle class who attempted to differentiate themselves from the lower classes.¹⁵² On the other, the middle- and upper-classes utilized the b'hoys to define their own identities – “quiet, polite, and passive” – while simultaneously pointing them out as “why Americans needed civilizing.”¹⁵³ Thus, each class feared to be seen embodying the characteristics of the other and being misidentified. This fear, particularly from the middle class, continued well through the early stages of film exhibition.¹⁵⁴ The behavior of spectators in the late 1800s and early 1900s became a visible and aural sign of one's class status – a signifier still true today, albeit with racial in addition to class prejudices. If middle class audiences were unable or unwilling to actively participate in full view of the



Figure 23 The B'hoys

¹⁵² Butsch, *American Audiences*, 47.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 6; Ibid, 49.

¹⁵⁴ See Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

public, they would have to find a new, more private space: the home.

The division between working class spectators and the middle-class in the early twentieth century extended well beyond just the theater, but also into the public sphere. Class status during the turn of the century was enforced through the disciplinary measures of gentility and refinement. Gentility refers to displaying a genteel nature or quality that shows social superiority through one's behavior, appearances, and manners.¹⁵⁵ Class status was therefore defined through visual and aural cues – clothing, manners, consumption habits, and leisure activities, among other factors. Gentility could, therefore, be learned by the working and middle classes so that they could *appear* to be of a higher social standing. The desire to lift one's social status through refined attributes was combined with various disciplinary tactics that would, according to reformers, improve society as a whole. Genteel disciplinary mechanisms were enforced, not by a higher authority, but by fellow members of the public, even of one's own class. Social climbers were fearful of being criticized and ridiculed in public, while simultaneously afraid of appearing below one's class status or one's actual status. Trapped between these fears, the middle class was inherently uncertain about their place and role in the public sphere, and, consequently, became even more confident and disciplinarian in their new identity.¹⁵⁶

Reformers and the upper classes feared working class and immigrant audiences in public theaters because, it was believed, their boisterousness and control over a show signaled their ability to form a powerful and active collective. Through gentility, refinement, and film industry standards (feature film, sound, and the picture palace), reformers persuaded modern audiences to represent a "better" class of people through a more passive form of spectatorship. This ideal

¹⁵⁵ OED Online, n. "gentility."

¹⁵⁶ Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 404-405.

spectator no longer had the power or control to influence a show that signified a revolt against societal mores. The rise of new capitalism created jobs that transformed former working-class citizens into a new liminal identity: no longer working class, but not quite a member of the upper class. The middle class, with the funds to enjoy upper class entertainment and leisure activities still inherently embodied a working-class personality. Thus, even if they attended and participated in upper-class entertainment, they had to learn how to “properly” behave, going against their natural instincts. Unable to rebel and appear “rude” in public, the middle-class resorted to acting boisterous in the privacy of their homes. The middle-class domestic film spectator was responding to the disciplinary measures engulfing public spaces and highlighting their uncertain sense of self. This chapter will complicate the histories of cinema audiences, domestic leisure activities, and the modern middle-class identity.

One way to identify as a specific class was through suitable leisure activities. From the early years of domestic film exhibition and production, white middle- and upper-class members were the primary intended customers. Amateur filmmaking and exhibition were always a middle- and upper-class hobby due to the required finances needed to purchase the necessary equipment. Surprisingly, even after the catastrophe of the Great Depression in 1929, amateur filmmaking and exhibition grew in popularity throughout the 1930s.¹⁵⁷ For instance, the cost of a camera and its related equipment, projector, screen, and optional sound equipment in the 1930s cost between \$400 and \$600, which is equivalent to \$6500 and \$8500 today. This alone shows that amateur filmmakers and exhibitors were made up of a class shielded from economic

¹⁵⁷ Charles Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Moviemaking, 1923-1960* (Oakland: University of California Press. 2015), 144-145.

distress.¹⁵⁸ Domestic film exhibitors also required the necessary space to properly project a film for an audience. Film exhibition in the home was either done through a quick and easy set up in the living room, or, if the homeowner was privileged enough, in their very own custom designed home theatre. I've already detailed some of the furniture related to domestic film exhibition in Chapter One, and more features of these spaces will be outlined further in Chapter Four. For now, however, it is important to know that most projectors required a "throw" to project a bright and clear image in addition to the space and furniture needed for an audience to view the film with an unobstructed sightline. The ability and freedom to participate in leisure activities in general was seen as an upper-class entitlement – one that cost \$500. Furthermore, a popular leisure activity for the middle- and upper-class was travel, particularly international travel. So, if the filmmaker and projectionist screened a homemade vacation or travel film, they could keep the titles and explanations to a minimum because, according to amateur filmmaking experts, "almost everyone in an audience that you are likely to ask to your home will be familiar with the country you have filmed."¹⁵⁹

Advertisements for projectors and advice columns further make clear that domestic film exhibition audiences were of a higher class. The accompanying image (Fig 24) to the 1931 article "The Test of the Pudding" in *Movie Makers* magazine features a group of adults sitting attentively in front of a screen, watching an amateur film production. Note, however, the clothing of the audience, as well as the surrounding décor. The men are dressed in tuxedos and the women in evening gowns and jewelry. In the background of the image, peering over the entire

¹⁵⁸ Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 75

¹⁵⁹ Arthur C. Gale, "Tips on Titling," *Movie Makers*, December 1929, 804.

room, is a portrait of a lone man atop the mantel of a Georgian fireplace.¹⁶⁰ A similar message is communicated in two Eastman Kodak Projector Ads from 1934. The men are donning tuxedos and the women's gowns sparkle in the projector light (Fig 25). An ad for Eastman Kodak's Library Kodascope (Fig 26) is plainly described as "The Aristocrat of home movie projectors." Both ads frame domestic film exhibition as an upper-class leisure activity defined by their genteel qualities – characteristics the middle class obsessively sought in the early twentieth century. All three ads represented middle-class directed consumerism in the early 1900s where class status could be purchased through the "right" products and activities.

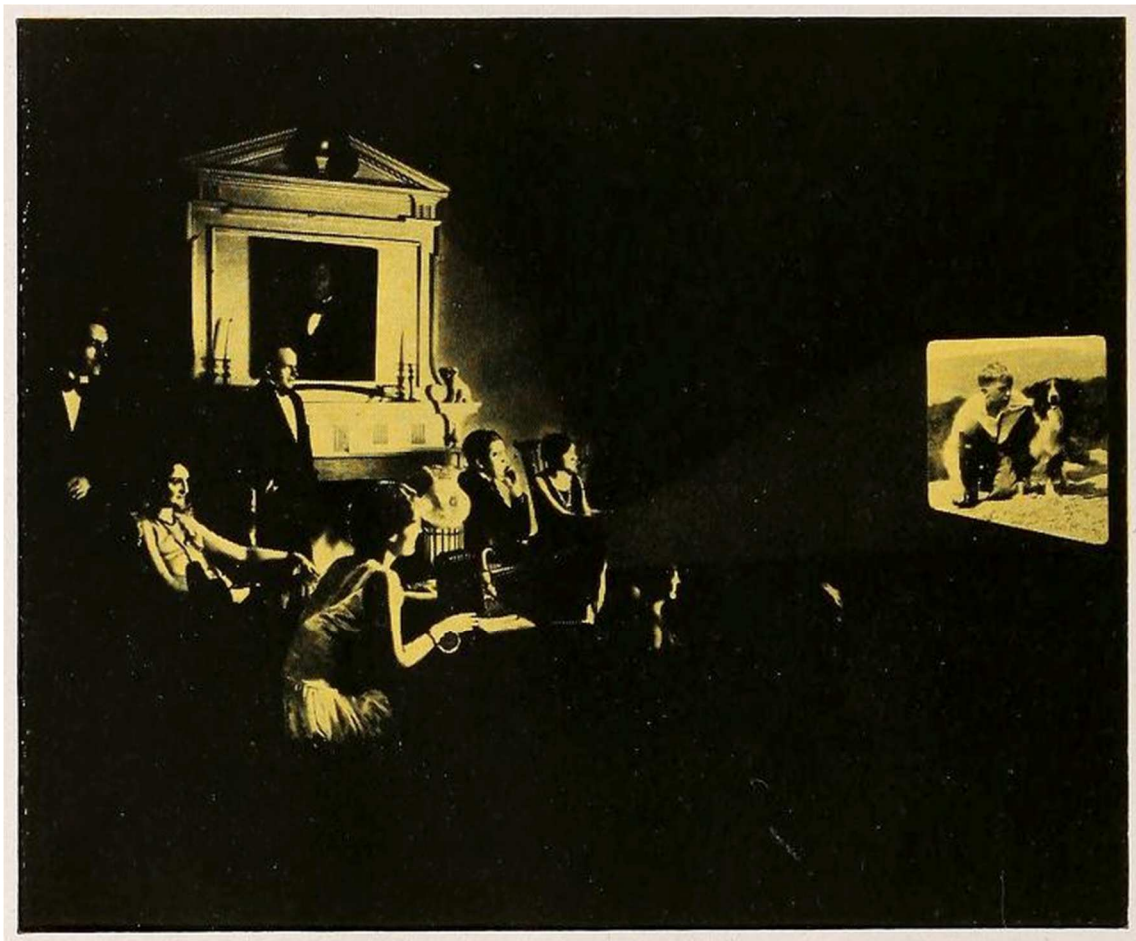


Figure 24 "Test of The Pudding"

¹⁶⁰ Patricia Poore, "Considering the Mantel," last modified June 23, 2021, <https://www.oldhouseonline.com/interiors-and-decor/old-house-mantels/>.



The Same Films *but a* **BRIGHTER SHOW**

*Project your movies at their best with
a new powerful 16 mm. KODASCOPE*

IT takes a powerful light source to bring out all the obscure details and hidden beauty in your films . . . to add new vitality and interest to the valuable movie records they contain.

You get this greater illumination in either Kodascope K or D.

750, 500, or 400 Watts

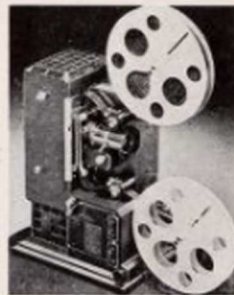
KODASCOPE K-50 supplies the maximum illumination necessary for average home projection . . . 500 watts. Kodascope K-75 is fitted with a special 750-watt lamp that provides an even more brilliant light for showing movies before large groups.

Kodascope D's 400-watt lamp is an unusually brilliant light source for a projector with a low price of \$71.50.

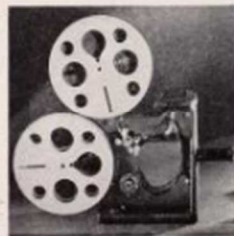
But that's not all. In any of these projectors you get more dependable, more simplified operation as well.

Bring your favorite reel to your Ciné-Kodak dealer. Let him project it for you in Kodascope K or D. See for yourself how these new Kodascopes help the same movies give a better show.

Exceptionally Brilliant . . . Improved Operation in these Kodascopes "K"



Kodascopes K-50 and K-75, new 500-watt and 750-watt projectors, offer single switch control of room light and the Kodascope lamp; centralized control panel; fast motor rewind and tension brake that safely rewind 400 feet of film in less than 30 seconds; smart, sturdy, compact construction. The K-50, \$199.50; the K-75, \$230.



400 Watts . . . Only \$71.50 . . .
for Kodascope "D"

Kodascope D has 400-watt illumination; motor rewind; improved motor-driven cooling fan; framing lever; still picture attachment; elevating device; is light and compact, and is finished in bronze with nickel plated fittings. \$71.50.

EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, Rochester, N. Y.



Figure 25 Eastman Kodak Upper Class Ad

The
ARISTOCRAT
of
home movie
projectors—
the
LIBRARY
KODASCOPE



IT is no longer necessary to get your projector from some out-of-sight place, clear a table for it, and put up a screen when you want to show movies. The Library Kodescope does away with all this.

In its attractive walnut case, the Library Kodescope is a striking piece of furniture, designed to repose permanently on the library or living room table. Its case bears no outward indication that it conceals Kodescope, Model B, "the projector that's almost human," always ready for instant use. Remove the



*Attractive walnut case
of Library Kodescope*

cover, extend the metal arms attached to the base on which the Kodescope rests and which support a small translucent screen, insert the end of the film into the automatic threading device, turn

the switch—and you have movies!

The translucent screen is most convenient and shows a brilliant picture even in a lighted room. It is recommended for showing movies to a small group only. When a larger picture is desired, the translucent screen is simply swung to one side and the regular Kodescope or Kodacolor screen used. A one-inch and a two-inch lens are supplied as part of the equipment so that the projector may be used for either the short or long throw.

Beauty, convenience and practicability—these are the outstanding features of the new Library Kodescope. It introduces a new era of home movie projection.

Price complete—\$300

ASK YOUR CINÉ-KODAK DEALER FOR A DEMONSTRATION
EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Figure 26 Eastman Kodak "Aristocrat" Library Kodescope Ad

It would be fair to assume the middle-class audience carried over their public persona and behavior into domestic film exhibitions. On the contrary, early twenty-first century domestic film spectators were so talkative that fellow filmmakers dreamed of a newly invented “audience muffler” to silence their disruptions. One perplexed expert noted that “there is something about an amateur movie show that opens the floodgates of irrelevant conversation. The minute the title is thrown on the screen, jointly and severally, the watchers become imbued with an irrepressible desire to talk.”¹⁶¹ In opposition to the refinement of modern public spaces, home film exhibition didn’t have rules. As another expert describes, this was “either of necessity or of courtesy, which guides the amateur film audience. News of the day, backyard gossip, reminder of the other scenes, anything and everything may come out as freely as if the meeting were an open forum.”¹⁶²

One reason this may have been more prevalent in the home was due to the transitory nature of the exhibition space. Many amateurs couldn’t afford or even have the space to construct a home theatre, instead, as outlined in Chapter One, transforming the living room into a screening room. It was natural in these circumstances for the audience to become confused about “proper” spectatorship and behavior. Indeed, a living room screening would entail various distractions, such as “interruptions of private conversations, numerous questions regarding scenes and dates, the incessant urge to create hand shadowgraphs on the screen, [and] constant bobbing of heads up and down intercepting the beam from projector to screen.”¹⁶³ In this way, drawing from Juergen Habermas, the parlor room turned private theater became a “reception

¹⁶¹ J.O.M. Van Tassel, “Quiet, please!,” *Movie Makers*, October 1937, 493.

¹⁶² Van Tassel, “Quiet,” 493.

¹⁶³ Dr. A.K. Baumgardner, “Showmanship in Screening Movies ‘Ups’ Audience Interest,” *Home Movies*, February 1941, 73.

room in which private people gather to form a public” and further confused the boundaries that separated public and private life.¹⁶⁴ Domestic film spectators were free from the critical and watchful eyes of the public sphere and could shed, however partially, their outer genteel exterior.

This chapter will contend the middle-class film spectator, unable to be an active viewer out of fear of appearing lower class, found refuge in the privacy of the home where they were able to “act” like a working-class spectator. Unlike immigrants and the working class, the boisterousness of the middle class was apolitical, simply well-off individuals mimicking the lower classes for entertainment. In conjunction with the disciplinary mechanisms enforcing “correct” public behavior, amateur filmmaking discourses emphasized a domestic spectator that was disciplined to be quiet, passive, and attentive. Amateur filmmaking magazines strongly advised employing professional tactics proven successful in public theaters: preparation, sound, and titles. The home, then, similarly becomes a disciplinary mechanism, à la Foucault, creating docile bodies and passive consumers out of the middle-class.

This chapter begins with a history of public entertainment audiences from the mid nineteenth century to the 1920s and 1930s. This history traces the role of class in entertainment consumption, political power, and early disciplinary measures employed by theater owners and show managers. These disciplinary measures coincided with the culture of refinement and gentility and the establishment of the middle class. I argue, however, that the middle-class was not ready to fully abandon their working-class identity and used domestic film exhibition as a safe space to become an active spectator. This uncertainty of middle-class identity was exemplified through various Victorian Era parlor games. The role of parlor games, like the 1930s

¹⁶⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 45-46.

domestic film spectator, allowed the middle class to work through and understand their new role in the public sphere. In line with genteel disciplinary measures advocated by middle class reformers in the early 1900s, I will outline how amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses extended the desire for refined personalities to a stronger form of professionalism that fostered a passive, individual domestic spectator.

A History of Public Audiences - Gentility, Discipline, and Consumerism

Historical accounts of the distinctions and conflicts between active and passive audience members in theaters of the public sphere are closely tied to individual class status, and, to some degree, their gender. Whether for concert halls, Elizabethan era playhouses, or vaudeville and opera houses, audience members would often participate in the event, becoming part of the entertainment. Lawrence Levine suggests that to accurately envision these audiences one needs to consider contemporary sports spectators “who can enter into the action on the field, who feel a sense of immediacy and at times even of control, who articulate their opinions and feelings vocally and unmistakably.”¹⁶⁵ Whether they were pleased or unhappy with the performance, audiences were “whispering, talking, laughing, coughing, shouting, shuffling, arriving late, arriving early, noisily turning the pages of programs, stamping of the feet, applauding promiscuously, insistently demanding encores, sneaking snacks, spitting tobacco,” among other “sins.”¹⁶⁶ These “sins” came to symbolize more than just annoyances, but an exercise in expressing their rights as citizens. In fact, in 1853, a New Orleans judge ruled that paying audience members were legally permitted to “hiss and stamp” during a show.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 26.

¹⁶⁶ Levine, *Highbrow*, 182.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 179.

The active audience, though rude and often rowdy, held more political influence than a passive one. Richard Butsch defines passive audience members as “individuals” with a “singular focus on the entertainment.”¹⁶⁸ He differentiates active audience members as a “collective body” more focused on each other, than with the entertainment. Spectatorship was then “embedded in some larger enterprise like family or community interaction.”¹⁶⁹ Active audiences, thus, have a stronger “interaction or relationship...among audience members rather than between audience and entertainment.”¹⁷⁰ Butsch furthers this definition by specifying that “when the boundary of that interaction is communal rather than family or household, the activity is constituted as a public sphere and a foundation for collective action.”¹⁷¹ In this sense, theaters held “political possibility” for the lower classes and acted as potential “spaces of discourse.”¹⁷² Audience members familiar with each other, the theater, its performers, and performances, claimed a sense of community and ownership over the show. Because these audiences were familiar with one another, they were more likely “to speak their minds, to be invested in this community, and were therefore prepared to speak up to defend or merely to participate” in lively debates. They were “inclined to claim collective rights of audience sovereignty and to act collectively to enforce their rights.”¹⁷³ While the majority of these discussions were targeted towards the performers on stage and theater managers, they were, nonetheless, material “forms of public discussion” among a “collective identity” that shaped possible “collective action.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 11.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 12.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid, 13.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 14.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

The transformation to a more “respectable” audience began within vaudeville industries by elevating the variety show to a more refined class in the 1860s-1870s.¹⁷⁵ The primary technique that transformed the audience was to purify the show and subsequently attract an audience mainly comprised of the middle class, specifically women.¹⁷⁶ While vaudeville was still popular among the general public, many of the moves and strategies employed by theatre managers – “admission prices, décor, and cultural pretensions” – targeted a new group of rising working-class individuals: “social climbers who might have been the first or second generation in their family to aspire to a middle-class life-style and status.”¹⁷⁷

The rise of industrialization and new capitalism took rooted social and class hierarchies and firmly established them. Stuart Blumin notes that the transition from a “pre-class” to a “class” society in the nineteenth century can be characterized as the bodily and personal distancing between social hierarchies. Where the eighteenth century consisted of individualized hierarchies based on face-to-face interactions, the nineteenth century saw these relationships depersonalized. The rise of new capitalism and industrialization fostered social networks that brought people together yet kept them apart. This created an environment where groups were attracted and repelled at the same time.¹⁷⁸ Soaring urbanization in the mid nineteenth century also meant a mass migration from smaller towns and villages that led to a breakdown of already established communities and hierarchies. Without a personal connection to public spaces, social networks, and a sense of community, new urbanites were cast adrift without a sense of their own

¹⁷⁵ Robert C. Allen, “Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction” (dissertation, University of Iowa, 1977), 26.

¹⁷⁶ Allen, “Vaudeville,” 24.

¹⁷⁷ Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) 59.

¹⁷⁸ Blumin, *Emergence*, 231.

hierarchical status or of the strangers' around them.¹⁷⁹ The only way to determine one's identity and social status was through one's appearance and public behavior. It was through "gentility" – displaying refined manners and fashion – that facilitated the urban drifters "to claim a place, forge an identity, and... a recognizable hierarchy."¹⁸⁰

The Progressive Era in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century advocated for gentility and refinement in the public sphere through a "cult of etiquette." Prior to this, reformers in the early and mid-nineteenth century focused on change through direct, face-to-face approaches through various social networks and groups. Paul Boyer contends that this "personalistic approach" made the elites' desire to control the masses abundantly clear.¹⁸¹ Conversely, progressive environmentalists hid their intentions for control through a focus on the betterment of city spaces through professional expertise, technical skill, and scientific arguments. It was through these means that reformers, backed by organizations and structures of the elite class, wished to save the city from the lower orders who advocated for "degeneracy," "disorder," "wickedness," and worst of all, a revolution.¹⁸² With a flood of new immigrants and rural migrants into urban areas, Progressive reformers and business elites felt they were losing control of the populace and public sphere. Reformers responded by advocating for a combination of positive environmentalism and "proper" consuming habits that would ultimately lead to a more refined and genteel life.

¹⁷⁹ Bushman, *Refinement*, 404.

¹⁸⁰ Bushman, *Refinement*, 404.

¹⁸¹ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 278.

¹⁸² Boyer, *Urban Masses*, 279.

Traditionally, gentility and social refinement were “the culture of the elite.”¹⁸³ In the eighteenth century, there was simply a stark distinction between the genteel class and everyone else sharing a “common culture.”¹⁸⁴ During the nineteenth century, however, coinciding with the rise of new capitalism, the middle class formed a diluted sense of gentility. The working class, made up mostly of immigrants, were now relegated to an even lower social status, pushed and isolated to the cultural margins.¹⁸⁵ Beyond establishing a more concrete identity for the middle class, gentility also presented them, for the first time, concrete social power. By presenting themselves as refined, the middle class was able to inspire the trust of powerful people, and, ultimately, impress and influence them.¹⁸⁶ The middle class could now *appear* as part of the elite class, thus giving them “the exhilarating sensation of ascent and a heightened respectability.”¹⁸⁷ A more refined life, inspired by gentility, promised the middle class an entryway into an “exalted society of superior beings.”¹⁸⁸ The path of least resistance to this heightened social status by way of a refined life was through consumption.

The middle-class identity in the early twentieth century was caught between two polarities of social life: the active, boisterous lifestyle of the working class and a more genteel and refined way of life. Thus, the middle-class were unsure about their identity and social status and needed help to navigate new urban spaces and social networks made up of refined manners and genteel appearances. Guidebooks, written by “experts” became crucial in navigating these new spaces, interactions, and relationships. These guidebooks emphasized the importance of appearance and refined manners, all of which could be purchased. If the promise of a higher-

¹⁸³ Bushman, *Refinement*, 279.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Bushman, *Refinement*, 279.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, xix.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, xv.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, xix.

class status could be procured through consumerism, new capitalism, industrialization, and mass production were more than willing to provide. The increase in demand for fabric, furniture, parlors, and clothing, all offered at inexpensive prices, was quickly met by advantageous entrepreneurs.¹⁸⁹ Commercial elites and the business class quickly adopted and advocated for the progressive environmentalists' ideals.¹⁹⁰ Coupled with a desire for a genteel identity and refined appearance, the business class prospered in the early twentieth century. It was only through their goods and services that one could achieve a rise in social status. Thus, "gentility and capitalism collaborated in the formation of consumer culture," where all the participants – elites, manufacturers, and consumers – "had a vested interest, understood or not, in the promotion of gentility."¹⁹¹ Without the forces of new capitalism, industrialization, and mass production, the middle-class would not have been able to afford the trappings of a refined life.¹⁹²

As cities became increasingly filled by fleeing strangers with a reduced sense of community and little self-awareness of a societal identity, visible and aural signs – mainly appearance and manners – became increasingly important as a means of communication. It became common to seek advice from "vivid texts" that "produced a textual world of color, light, and spectacle emanating from goods."¹⁹³ The construction of an identity through products and advice books relied on superficial sentiments that simultaneously built a sense of community and nationhood, feeding the self-absorbed impulses of the consumer, and flattened once diverse identities and social structures.¹⁹⁴ In this new consumer culture based on gentility, products replaced good deeds and intimate relationships. Advertisements promised Americans that

¹⁸⁹ Bushman, *Refinement*, 406.

¹⁹⁰ Boyer, *Urban Masses*, 281.

¹⁹¹ Bushman, *Refinement*, 407.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 406.

¹⁹³ Simon J. Bronner, "Reading Consumer Culture," in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989) 51.

¹⁹⁴ Bronner, "Consuming," 52.

through products their lives could be altered for the better. Their products mediated emotions and built human relationships – “flowers as gifts, the leaving of cards, and the stuffing of Christmas stockings with presents” – through their offering. The ability to translate signals, texts, and appearances, therefore, became crucial to navigating this new consumer landscape of facades.¹⁹⁵

Caught between the continued emergence of the middle-class through genteel consumption and Progressive Environmentalists in the early twentieth century, were public, commercial leisure activities – vaudeville, nickelodeons, and picture palaces. Progressive environmentalists treated the theater as a primary site for the betterment of society. Reformers believed that through “pure” entertainment, whether art, music, literature, or drama, a “moral order” could be persuasively conveyed to the public and end the supposed chaos engulfing the country.¹⁹⁶ Progressive activists viewed the entertainment industry, specifically the nickelodeon, as a “rhetoric of uplift” to educate the masses, with a specific eye on immigrants and the lower classes.¹⁹⁷ Reformers framed many of their cultural regulations as a way to improve society. More accurately, these structures were enacted to appease the cultural elites fears of an underclass uprising.¹⁹⁸ For instance, much of the reformer’s energy was spent on protecting impressionable, immigrant children, who they believed lacked sufficient education and nurturing from the “dangerous” space of the theater and the images projected on screen.¹⁹⁹ This belief was a larger indictment of the middle- and upper-classes’ fear of immigrants and lower classes “absorbing dangerous ideas from movies.”²⁰⁰ These reformers and social theorists sought to

¹⁹⁵ Bronner, “Consuming,” 52.

¹⁹⁶ Levine, *Highbrow*, 200.

¹⁹⁷ Hansen, *Babel*, 66.

¹⁹⁸ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 14.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 152.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 156.

utilize movies as a way “to teach the foreign-born to adopt the values of the established social system of native-born white Protestant culture.”²⁰¹ Beyond establishing order and discipline in the theater, this meant “hard work, responsibility for others, and strict sexual control” as well as “preserving the family.”²⁰² Even when immigrants and the lower classes were willing to adhere to these standards and showcased a desire to “better” themselves, they were discriminated against through restrictive legislation, Klan violence and continuously told that “their character and traits, cuisines, mores and habits were barriers to full admission into American life.”²⁰³

With vaudeville managers expanding their audiences to encompass the middle and upper classes, immigrants and working-class audiences were forced to discover new venues of entertainment. The nickelodeon was a small film exhibition space located in neighborhood storefronts costing only one nickel for admission. Kathryn Fuller describes the nickelodeon audience as actively involved in the spectatorial experience: “gossiping and eating bag lunches or suckling babies, viewers translating subtitles out loud for illiterate audience members, children cheering on their cowboy heroes, and peanut-sellers hawking their wares on the aisles.”²⁰⁴ Fuller’s description closely resembles the early characteristics of active audiences, particularly, the Bowery b’hoys. With a rise in prices for vaudeville theaters that targeted a higher class of consumers, the nickelodeon helped fill the gap with their lower price of admission. Located nearer to high traffic areas, such as shopping districts, nickelodeons scheduled short programs

²⁰¹ Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1990), 8.

²⁰² Bowser, *Transformation*, 8.

²⁰³ Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 259.

²⁰⁴ Kathryn Helgesen Fuller, “Boundaries of Participation: The Problem of Spectatorship and American Film Audiences, 1905-1930” *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 20, no. 4 (December 1990): 75.

that ran continuously throughout the day, which made it easier for workers and shoppers to catch a show.²⁰⁵

The environment of the nickelodeon fostered a spectatorial experience familiar to working class and immigrant audiences. Many nickelodeons were located in the audience's neighborhood where they would be familiar with the manager, ticket taker, usher, fellow audience members and possibly even the owner.²⁰⁶ This atmosphere fostered a laxer attitude toward proper and "respectable" spectatorship that was, arguably, found more readily in the private space of the home. Everything from "the egalitarian seating, continuous admission, variety format, nonfilmic activities like illustrated songs, live acts, and occasional amateur nights" encouraged modes of spectatorship and interactivity that strongly deviated from middle- and upper-class manners and decorum.²⁰⁷ While there were other spaces for upper- and middle-class individuals to view films – high-class vaudeville shows, museums, and amusements – some, according to Eileen Bowser, would indeed venture to nickelodeons but would cautiously make sure no one they knew saw them before entering.²⁰⁸ In fact, middle-class audiences would visit nickelodeons to experience "a glimpse of cultural otherness," where "working-class audiences were perceived as part of the spectacle" offered on screen.²⁰⁹

Several strategies were employed by vaudeville theater managers and nickelodeon exhibitors to create an atmosphere that would attract a more refined and passive spectator. For instance, women were courted by vaudeville theater managers as early as the 1860s by offering

²⁰⁵ Hansen, *Babel*, 61.

²⁰⁶ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 163-164.

²⁰⁷ Hansen, *Babel*, 61-62.

²⁰⁸ Bowser, *Transformation*, 1.

²⁰⁹ Hansen, *Babel*, 65.

several afternoons a week a “refined” matinee where drinking and smoking were prohibited.²¹⁰ By cleaning up the exhibition space and performances, vaudeville theaters attempted to create a space that was safe for “respectable” women, children, and entire families.²¹¹ During the nickelodeon era, theater owners set up “tea hour” screenings to attract women during their shopping breaks or picking up their children after school. Middle-class women, particularly, viewed the theater as a respite from their household and parental responsibilities.²¹² Managers also requested that film producers cater to a more female-centric audience by producing “respectable” films from respected authors: “Emile Zola, Edgar Allen Poe, Victor Hugo, Mark Twain, and even William Shakespeare.”²¹³ Moreover, these films attracted audiences that aspired to climb above their current social status.

The nickelodeon came to be viewed as a safer and less threatening “substitute for the saloon,” ultimately transforming the exhibition space into a “social center” where women could meet friends and neighbors during the workday and entertain their children.²¹⁴ These theaters were advertised and sold to female audiences as a safe public space to meet friends and socialize during the show. This clearly clashed with the middle- and upper-class insistence that audiences should limit any social interactions and instead be made up of silent and passive spectators.²¹⁵ For these reasons, by 1915, commentators, reformers, and theater owners reconsidered soliciting (female) patrons from shopping districts believing that the mobile inattentiveness of shopping

²¹⁰ Allen, “Vaudeville,” 25.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Hansen, *Babel*, 117.

²¹³ Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 31.

²¹⁴ Kathy Peiss, “Commercial Leisure and the ‘Woman Question,’” in *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*, ed. Richard Butsch (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 110.

²¹⁵ Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27.

diverged too far from their conception of absorbed spectatorship.²¹⁶ Thus, the constraints placed on active audience members, such as the social female spectator, ultimately transforming them into passive consumers and spectators, forced the active spectator to move to lower-class theaters and the home.

According to Richard Butsch, this feminization of middle- and upper-class entertainment “required men to suppress the roughness that had been the mark of American masculinity and continued to be so for the working class.”²¹⁷ This “de-masculinization” of entertainment had two major effects: it fostered the establishment of more male-centered forms of entertainment and attracted middle-class men to a more masculine working-class culture centered on physicality, drinking, fighting, burlesque, and working-class theaters.²¹⁸ As outlined in Chapter One, much of amateur filmmaking and exhibition equipment and practices fell more into female leisure and activity. Not only was amateur filmmaking relegated to the female domain – the home – but the feminization of public amusements, like cinema, helped frame film as a feminine activity. The marketing of middle-class entertainment, like vaudeville and nickelodeon theaters, to female audiences fostered a self-fulfilling need to seek out more women to fill theaters as male audiences were gravitating towards other forms of entertainment and spectatorial experiences.²¹⁹

Beyond the typical sins of active audiences, middle- and upper-class reformers began to fear the nickelodeon as “centers of communication and cultural diffusion.”²²⁰ Their fear was based on the idea that immigrant and working-class audiences found a staunchly unAmerican source of information and perspective with films often being produced by ethnic filmmakers

²¹⁶ Stamp, *Girls*, 29.

²¹⁷ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 72.

²¹⁸ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 73-74.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 78.

²²⁰ Sklar, *America*, 66.

themselves. This information was consumed “unsupervised and unapproved” by the moral gatekeepers of societies: churches, schools, critics, and professors who served as the curators of American culture.²²¹ Rowdy working class and immigrant spectators dominated the nickelodeon during its introduction to the public. Beginning in 1905, however, under pressure from Progressive reformers and the prospect of financial opportunity, theater owners left these audiences behind in favor of the financial freedom and flexibility of the middle-class.²²²

The fear of the lower classes in theaters was born out of the beliefs foundational to the Progressive movement in the early twentieth century. The strength of the Progressive movement came from white Protestants from the middle- and upper-classes discovering the chaotic and rebellious behavior of the lower classes.²²³ The Progressive movement was specifically responding to middle- and upper-class fears of uncontrolled immigration, labor disputes, and, most importantly, the loss of their political and economic influence. There were three lines of thought regarding the space of the nickelodeon and vaudeville theaters. One, reformers, believing immigrants and the working class were simple-minded, believed the lower orders could be hypnotized by the “dangerous” images projected in a dark and anonymous auditorium.²²⁴ Two, the actual space of the theater, shrouded in darkness, fostered unique threats, like prostitution and working-class drinking.²²⁵ Three, critics feared the theater provided the lower classes with a space to collectively gather, obtain information, and politically act.

The main critique leveled by Progressives against popular entertainment at the time was the “vulgarity” of vaudeville and variety shows.²²⁶ Reformers believed, according to Miriam

²²¹ Ibid, 66.

²²² Gomery, “Pleasures,” 29.

²²³ Sklar, *America*, 66.

²²⁴ Fuller, “Boundaries,” 76.

²²⁵ Hansen, *Babel*, 63.

²²⁶ Bowser, *Transformation*, 18-19.

Hansen, that the “nonsynchronous mixture” of live acts and performances reverted vaudeville and the nickelodeon “to its plebian lineage” where the “structural conditions around which older forms of working-class and ethnic culture could crystallize and responses to social pressures, individual displacement, and alienation could be articulated in a communal setting.”²²⁷ In other words, the variety format often found in the nickelodeon fostered and encouraged alternative modes of spectatorship that diverged from middle-class standards – “participatory, a sound-intensive form of response, an active sociability, [and] a connection with the other viewer.”²²⁸ Moreover, movies in general, but particularly in the context of the nickelodeon, directly challenged American values and institutions of “respectability.” Many producers, filmmakers, and exhibitors were foreign-born artists and businessmen who were thought to actively incite crime and other salacious behaviors through their films.²²⁹

The taming of vaudeville and nickelodeon audiences was part of a larger cultural transformation where divisions between the private and public spheres grew even further through the advancement of gentility and refinement.²³⁰ The Progressive movement advocated a “cult of etiquette” where, as Lawrence Levine describes, “individuals were taught to keep all private matters strictly to themselves and to remain publicly as inconspicuous as possible.”²³¹ Everything from “eating, coughing, spitting, nose blowing, scratching, farting, urinating” were relegated to the private spheres. The strategies employed by theater managers to enforce middle-class decorum helped in governing audience reactions and emotions.²³² The control and discipline displayed by audiences through their individual, not collective, silence originated and

²²⁷ Hansen, *Babel*, 94.

²²⁸ Hansen, *Babel*, 95.

²²⁹ Sklar, *America*, 260.

²³⁰ Levine, *Highbrow*, 198.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid, 199.

strengthened in the middle- and upper-class theaters of opera, concert halls, and high-class vaudeville houses. The middle- and upper-class utilized these new social attitudes to sneer at audiences that expressed emotions while distinguishing themselves from immigrants and the working class.²³³ Moreover, as Richard Sennett notes, silence visibly and aurally signified your sophistication and invulnerability to outside forces.²³⁴ The silent individual was able to shield themselves from the outside world by signifying their “right to be left alone” and “be absolutely lost in his own thoughts, his daydreams; paralyzed from a sociable point of view, his consciousness could float free.”²³⁵ But this contemplation wasn’t done in the private space of the individual’s home, but in the public sphere: “one escaped from the family parlor to the club or café for this privacy.”²³⁶

The Progressive belief that the arts could “uplift” society, as long as the “cult of etiquette” was followed, shared strong similarities with Catherine Beecher’s concept of the “ideology of domesticity.” As explained in Chapter One, Beecher’s main argument was the home, managed by the housewife, was the ideal environment for an individual to be shaped into a refined, moral, and civic-minded citizen. For Beecher, the home was the “central institution in American life” and was overseen by the authority of the housewife. This authority ultimately instilled the housewife with a sense of control over the betterment of society. Women played a similar role in transforming “rowdy” audiences into respectable ones. Middle-class housewives and mothers were the primary carriers of the specific attitude reformers were advocating: “great emphasis on restraint, self-control, and impression management.”²³⁷ As theaters transformed into

²³³ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 206-207.

²³⁴ Sennett, *Fall*, 210.

²³⁵ Sennett, *Fall*, 217.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 66.

sites of consumption by aligning themselves with department stores and food parlors, they sought out women audiences by advertising their theaters as a sanctuary from the dangerous public sphere. Owners and managers did this both to seek out a new market of consumers, ones that were heavily targeted already by the consumer industry, and as a means to combat working-class and male rowdiness.²³⁸

The domestic ideal was closely tied to the emergence of the middle-class. The domestic ideal saw the home, headed by the housewife, as an integral institution to the betterment of society. The emergence of a distinct middle-class identity was shepherded by, as Stuart Blumin asserts, a “cultural preference for domestic retirement and conjugal family intimacy over both the ‘vain’ and fashionable sociability of the rich and the promiscuous sociability of the poor.”²³⁹ It could therefore be argued that the middle-class, dependent on the authority, consumerism, and managerial skills of the domestic housewife, was, like the domestic ideal, “woman’s work.”²⁴⁰ The development of the middle-class “went beyond the realignment of work, workplace relations, incomes, and opportunities,” and was molded around “domestic womanhood” to create an identity around domestic activities and family practices.²⁴¹ Domestic space, too, was not able to escape the influential reach and prowess of gentility and refinement. Domestic activities, social gatherings, and leisure pursuits were equally refined and made more respectable. Gentility, in turn, was equally influenced by the domestic life created by the housewife and mother and given a “homely cast.”

²³⁸ Ibid, 69.

²³⁹ Blumin, *Emergence*, 187.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 191.

²⁴¹ Ibid; Ibid, 187.

Public spaces, like the nickelodeon and vaudeville theater, became increasingly privatized and caused the eventual withdraw of the public to the private space of the home, that, consequently, created a “greater barrier to community identity and participation.”²⁴² This was done in two phases. First, in line with Hansen’s assertion, audiences were ultimately tamed by transforming the public space of the theater from a forum of conversation and action to a marketplace of consumption, where the spectatorial experience shifted from a “collective/communal” one to a “familial/individual” one. Public spaces, thus, became privatized and impersonal as people socially remained within their own community groups.²⁴³ This doesn’t mean that social and political discourses ceased. Rather, they moved to increasingly private spaces, the home being chief among them, along with much of the entertainment, like radio and motion pictures. Thus, the family, as well as friends and neighbors, shared once public experiences now in private, ceasing the desire to build a collective public community.²⁴⁴

The insecurity of a middle-class identity, caught between a working-class culture and middle-class consumption, was visibly exhibited in the privacy of the home. This uncertainty manifested in leisure and social activities, such as parlor games and amateur film exhibitions. In both instances, while activities that allowed the rejection of genteel standards – active audience participation - simultaneously encouraged and strengthened the refined manners and consumption habits of the upper classes.

Taming The Domestic Film Spectator - Parlor Games, Attention, The Show

²⁴² Butsch, *American Audiences*, 13.

²⁴³ Ibid, 13.

²⁴⁴ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 13.

The middle-class's confusion over their newly acquired class status could be readily seen in the spectatorial experience of middle-class domestic film audiences – interruptions, gossiping, constant questioning, and active participation. In the years that followed the rise of new capitalism, industrialization, and genteel consumption, members of the lower class quickly rose to the middle class. For the first time, manual laborers' rising incomes coincided with cheaper products and comforts that helped in defining the nonmanual middle class.²⁴⁵ Thus, not only was the boundary between the middle and upper class ambiguous, but the variations among the middle class also became equally difficult to identify. Here, the working class, now able to afford the comforts of the middle-class, still identified, according to Blumin, as “working class with reference to the relation of the workplace, but also came to see themselves as middle class with reference to consumption and their lives away from work.”²⁴⁶ As noted by Richard Bushman, these new members were insecure and questioned their newfound status: “Had they truly cast off their simple and rude pasts? Did they accurately understand the principles of refinement? Did they betray their own uncertain claims to gentility by mistakes in speech and decorum?”²⁴⁷ The solution to their insecure identity was an even stronger adherence to the rules of etiquette and gentility coupled with the scorn of newcomers' genteel aspirations.²⁴⁸ Domestic film exhibition and spectatorship, I argue represents this uncertainty. In public they had to adhere to a specific etiquette, but in the privacy of their homes, they were free to break the established rules of refined film spectatorship.

Domestic film exhibition and spectatorship was one among many forms of leisure that illustrated the liminality and uncertainty of the middle class. Early twentieth century parlor

²⁴⁵ Blumin, *Emergence*, 296.

²⁴⁶ Blumin, *Emergence*, 296.

²⁴⁷ Bushman, *Refinement*, 404.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 405.

games were similarly a private, though social, leisure activity that demonstrated middle-class anxieties. Melanie Dawson's extensive study on domestic entertainments of the middle-class contends that many parlor games of the mid nineteenth to early twentieth century "defined themselves against the excesses of genteel living."²⁴⁹ These games revealed the "the façade of polite interaction" and hidden labor in the performativity of gentility required by the middle class – "privileging competition, inventiveness, and visible work."²⁵⁰ Parlor games allowed the middle-class individual to reflect on the cultural transformation of gentility and new group affiliations through "playful, provocative ways, testing out behavioral boundaries, social codes, and the possibilities of rethinking them."²⁵¹ Yet, the guidebooks that detailed these games were located within the gentility eco system that strengthened the middle-class identity.

Simultaneously offering advice on middle-class refinements and "implicitly promising that reacting against gentility's boundaries constituted a pleasurable response to the laborious process of becoming affluent."²⁵² Moreover, while these games did foster environments to reflect on and satirize refined norms, they championed the individual over the group through competition and rewards, representing the same capitalistic system that fostered such class hierarchies.

Regardless, the purpose and joy from playing parlor games came from countering supposed superiority and mocking, and ultimately breaking, genteel behaviors.²⁵³ Dawson highlights two types of activities presented by entertainment books of the progressive era: worker games and mocking theatricals: "Worker games, which mimic scenarios of labor,

²⁴⁹ Melanie Dawson, *Laboring to Play: Home Entertainment and the Spectacle of Middle-Class Cultural Life, 1850-1920* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), 20.

²⁵⁰ Dawson, *Laboring*, 20.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 11.

²⁵² Dawson, *Laboring*, 22.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 20.

showcased and celebrated what were primarily manual forms of work; theatricals that mock gentility, a second type of play, directly confronted mannered pretension and sought to expose its contradictions, arguing its unfittedness to middling family life.”²⁵⁴ Worker games in particular highlighted middle-class discomfort over their newfound identity and social hierarchy. These games were, according to Dawson, “deeply symbolic” in their representations of manual work within the environment of the middle-class parlor adorned in genteel design and objects. Yet, many of the participants of worker games were likely manual laborers themselves or had vivid memories of preprofessional work.²⁵⁵ The games themselves and the participants showcased a desire to distance themselves from the working class, even if they were in denial about their current societal status.

A few of the parlor games described by Dawson share a similar spectatorial experience to domestic film exhibitions, including the disciplinary mechanisms acting upon the participants. One game, “The Picture Gallery,” required a group of people to present themselves in “tableaux, vivants, or ‘living pictures’ on various subjects.” The object, then, was to make the “tableaux” break character and laugh.²⁵⁶ One can imagine, like amateur filmmaking and projection magazines, the rules and disciplinary mechanisms advised by parlor game guidebooks were continually manipulated, ignored, and circumvented by the participants. In so doing, the participants created their own game, or an altered version of the one outlined by the guidebook. Both “The Picture Gallery” and domestic film spectatorship required a form of spectatorship predicated on specific guidelines. Only, in this case, the roles were reversed. “The Picture Gallery” required participants or actors to be quiet, still, and passive, while the spectators, in

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 30.

²⁵⁶ Dawson, *Laboring*, 2.

order to win, must yell, make jokes and insults, and funny faces to make the tableaux break character. Domestic film spectatorship, on the other hand, asked spectators to remain passive, quiet, and still to effectively consume the film. With the participatory nature of early domestic parlor games, I contend that domestic film spectatorship was an extension of this spectatorial experience and was equally disruptive, talkative, and interactive. Moreover, domestic film spectators were, in a way, creating a new form of spectatorship that relied heavily on a collective and communicative form of consumption more readily known to exist in the public vaudeville theatres or nickelodeons. Only, whereas the public audience's political possibilities created through their participation and boisterousness, domestic film audiences were likely apolitical, more interested in mocking the film, discussing neighborhood gossip, consuming snacks and alcoholic beverages, asking questions, or demanding particular films. Like parlor games and public film audiences, domestic film spectatorship and exhibition was similarly under the thumb of various disciplinary mechanisms that tried to create passive, pliant, and individual consumers and viewers.

The disciplinary measures recommended by amateur filmmaking experts were, I assert, an extension of the corrective mechanisms enforced by Progressive reformers and genteel culture. The public sphere, engulfed in gentility and refinement, relied on various disciplinary means, most prominent of which was the self-aware performance where one was conscious of "how one looked in the eyes of others."²⁵⁷ This performance was determined by genteel instructions regarding fashion, mannerisms, and proper social etiquette with the ultimate goal to be more likable.²⁵⁸ In essence, gentility transformed the public sphere into a stage where one

²⁵⁷ Bushman, *Refinement*, xiv.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, xiv.

performed a refined enactment of respectability that simultaneously reinforced class hierarchy through a clear distinction between “ordinary citizens” and “gentlemen.”²⁵⁹ But, as Bushman notes, people were not merely imitating, but “emulating” or “partaking” to share the “power and... the glory, strength, and beauty that were believed to inhere in those who stood at the peak of society and government.”²⁶⁰

The disciplinary mechanisms of gentility shares affinities with Michel Foucault’s theories of discipline and panopticism. Genteel discipline was implemented across all areas of public society, including vaudeville theatres and cinemas. Gentility represents an iteration of what Foucault defines as a disciplinary mechanism that creates docile bodies subjugated to power. These same mechanisms were molded to influence the behavior of rowdy vaudeville and film spectators. In fact, much of the disciplinary mechanisms in theaters relied on the “performance” of the spectator that symbolized a specific class status. These strategies were, I argue, molded once more to work on private, domestic spaces filled with talkative and inquisitive film spectators.

Progressive reformers and genteel culture’s expectations worked in a Foucauldian sense as a disciplinary mode of power that reinforced the authority and cultural influence of the upper classes on the lower orders.²⁶¹ The power of gentility was exercised through criticism and exclusion from the refined and elite. Ultimately, this deepened societal and cultural discrepancies by excluding “the rude” in order for “the refined” to attain the prominence.²⁶² If gentility clearly and visibly signaled a higher status for its users, it just as distinctly marked the lowly through

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 404.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 406.

²⁶¹ Foucault, *Discipline*, 215-216.

²⁶² Bushman, *Refinement*, xv.

their unkempt looks, abrasive behavior, and feeble homes.²⁶³ Genteel discipline was a set of expectations that manipulated and acted upon the gesticulations of the body and the person's behavior.²⁶⁴ Reformers and genteel experts, in line with Foucault, detailed a "mechanics of power" that produced docile consumers that obeyed the promise of a better life through the accumulation of genteel commodities.²⁶⁵

Genteel culture fostered an urge to "perform" refined behavior and fashion in the public eye. Like professional performances, the genteel were similarly under a "spotlight to be either praised or scorned," to "please the company or suffer its disdain."²⁶⁶ Genteel culture, thus, reflected the influence working class audiences had on vaudeville performances. Only now, genteel culture encompassed more than just a bodily performance: "one's house, its yard, one's carriage, dress, and posture were perpetually on display."²⁶⁷ Foucault highlights modern disciplinary mechanisms, which, genteel culture is one iteration, through Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. For Foucault, the panoptic schema is the ideal disciplinary mechanism of "subtle coercion."²⁶⁸ It works on "a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed" that ultimately creates "homogeneous effects of power."²⁶⁹ Like a panoptic schema, the fear and power from gentility came from the "anonymous and temporary observers" being able to surprise the refined and instill a greater sense of "anxious awareness."²⁷⁰ In line with the many observations made by Foucault, genteel culture was part of a "network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without

²⁶³ Ibid, 420.

²⁶⁴ Foucault, *Discipline*, 138.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Bushman, *Refinement*, xiv.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Foucault, *Discipline*, 209.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 205; Ibid 202.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 202.

interruption in space or in time.”²⁷¹ Bushman even evokes Foucault and the panopticon in a scenario illustrating the disciplinary criticism inherent in genteel culture: “To be *caught* in the kitchen, not fully dressed, unready for examination, greatly embarrassed a lady” (My emphasis).²⁷²

Genteel discipline relied on the critical surveillance of the upper classes on the lower orders to ensure its proper implementation. Only, the upper classes were not the only guards on duty. The lower orders, in accordance with gentility, were also critical of their own community and class members. They were constantly and unrelentingly performing for each other with their harshest critiques coming from within their own ranks.²⁷³ In this sense, the lower orders were both the victims of an all-encompassing disciplinary schema and the very ones enforcing its mechanisms.²⁷⁴

Domestic spaces were not immune from the discipline of gentility. As stated previously, consumerism was essential for the emergence of the middle-class through refined purchasing, leisure activities, fashion, and outward behaviors. The modern home, under the authority of the domestic housewife, was made up of blurred spaces of public and private interactions between people and objects. Outlined in Chapter One, consumerism was an integral factor of the modern female experience and, consequently, family and home life construction. Amateur filmmaking and exhibition, therefore, was a leisure activity that signaled a particular class of people due to its cost and cultural implications. Even the lower middle-class, if they could splurge on amateur filmmaking equipment, could “perform” as an upper-class member. Amateur filmmaking and exhibition’s role within gentility’s refinement of the lower orders also meant that filmmakers and

²⁷¹ Ibid, 209.

²⁷² Bushman, *Refinement*, xiv.

²⁷³ Ibid, xiv.

²⁷⁴ Foucault, *Discipline*, 201.

spectators were encouraged to adhere to genteel discipline. Amateur filmmaking and exhibition, thus, fell under the purview of the disciplinary schema of gentility and was equally susceptible to powerful and influential criticism.

For instance, it was common for amateur filmmaking advertisements to utilize “scare copy” or “negative appeal,” which, according to Roland Marchand, “sought to jolt the potential consumer into a new consciousness by enacting dramatic episodes of social failures and accusing judgements.”²⁷⁵ Here, the product, or in the case of home film exhibition, the steps and practices to “correctly” exhibit one’s films, emerged “to offer friendly help.”²⁷⁶ Like much of the marketing strategies that emerged during the early 1900s, amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses painted an audience that was “unsympathetic” and extremely “judgmental,” and then provided the filmmaker and/or projectionist with solutions to these unnerving new complexities, modern sensibilities, and new technologies.²⁷⁷

To avoid the embarrassment and judgement from genteel audiences, amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses advocated for amateur film exhibitions to apply professional film practices and techniques to their own shows. In this way, professionalism was an outward expressive form of gentility and refinement. For instance, to eliminate audience interruptions and participation, experts recommended replicating the professional show by creating a “totality of effect.” Miriam Hansen observes that early nickelodeon and vaudeville film exhibitors tamed “rowdy” immigrant and working-class audiences by producing a “totality of effect.”²⁷⁸ Hansen defines “totality of effect” as “a type of fascination that would subdue social and cultural

²⁷⁵ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 14.

²⁷⁶ Marchand, *Advertising*, 14.

²⁷⁷ Marchand, *Advertising*, 14.

²⁷⁸ Hansen, *Babel*, 66.

distinctions among viewers and turn them into a homogeneous group of *spectators*.²⁷⁹ Here, a “totality of effect” would create such a strict mode of attention and spectatorship that it would not only subdue “rowdy” behavior but would homogenize the audience into a “a tense, well knit, immobile mass of human faces, with eyes fixed alertly on the screen.”²⁸⁰ A “totality of effect” could be implemented by several strategies that, like gentility, molded a specific behavior in the spectator. In the home, the goal of the “totality of effect” was to limit interruptions and disturbances – gossiping, questions, commentary, etc. A “totality of effect” was best created for amateur filmmakers and domestic film exhibitions through an “illusion of actuality.” The “illusion” was the spectator believing they were witnessing an actual event and were consequently so engrossed in the screen their surroundings ceased to exist.²⁸¹ This was aided by a smooth and continuous show. Several amateur experts on domestic film exhibition note how rare it is to see an interruption or break during a “professional performance” and that it should be the goal of every exhibitor to “try to duplicate such performance in your own home.”²⁸² If, for instance, “the image on the screen is suddenly blurred, if the projector is stopped,” the film breaks, or there is too much chatter, “the illusion of actuality will be destroyed.”²⁸³ Not only does this break the spectator’s relationship to the film but frames your film in an unprofessional light and “the appreciation... will be lessened.”²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Nicholas Pronay, “The Newsreels: The Illusion of Actuality” in *The Historian and Film* ed. Paul Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 96.

²⁸² See C.W. Gibbs, “The Home Show,” *Movie Makers*, January 1934 20; Dr. A.K. Baumgardner, “Showmanship in Screening Movies ‘Ups’ Audience Interest,” *Home Movies*, February 1941, 73; Karl A. Barleben, “Pointers on Projection,” *Movie Makers*, November 1929, 718; Karl A. Barleben, “Pointers on Projection,” *Movie Makers*, November 1929, 718.

²⁸³ Lawrence O. Grantley, “Better Projection,” *Movie Makers*, April 1940, 166.

²⁸⁴ Grantly, “Projection,” 166.

The desire to keep an audience's attention, both in public theaters and domestic spaces, was an extension of the newly demanded attentiveness required by new capitalism, industrialized means of production, new forms of consumption, and the urban lived experience. It was these very structures, however, that, according to Jonathan Crary, produced inattention. As Crary asserts, a natural process and experience of new capitalism "demands that we accept as natural the rapid switching of our attention from one thing to another."²⁸⁵ Thus, modernity and new capitalism both required attentiveness but produced and depended on distraction. Spectatorship during this period may best be described, then, as "intermittent attention." Individual audience members had their attention divided. On the one hand, they may be "engaged in the story and even have an aesthetic knowledge of the genre and place aesthetic demands upon practitioners." On the other, their attention may be periodically focused on audience conversations and other activities.²⁸⁶ Vaudeville theaters in the late nineteenth century employed various strategies to try to focus the audience's attention on the stage or screen. One such strategy was intermission, which relieved the audience from the illusion so as to then be more easily subsumed by the later show. Another was the dimming of the lights in the theater, where the brightest lights attracting the eyes of the spectator was from the stage or screen.²⁸⁷ The disciplinary measures and strategies employed by theater managers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was simply one piece within a larger network of discourses and techniques that defined the modern spectator as both attentive to the performance and distracted by the show and their environment.

Within the entertainment industry, attentiveness became a signifier that came to reference multiple meanings. Inattention has always been attributed to audience independence and a denial

²⁸⁵ Crary, "Vision," 48.

²⁸⁶ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 10.

²⁸⁷ Levine, *Highbrow*, 190.

of passiveness.²⁸⁸ In the nickelodeon era, the greater lack of attention displayed by the audience typically led to rowdy and disruptive behavior that signified a lower class. Historically, though, inattention during live theater performances and the opera was a hallmark of the upper-class audience and their status. This displayed their familiarity with the medium and specific performance, which allowed them to center their attention, then, on each other. As Butsch describes, the theater was “a place to be seen and see others of their class.”²⁸⁹ Class roles in the public theater were ostensibly reversed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Working-class audiences, made up mostly of immigrants, brought with them “old-world habits of socializing” during public performances – conversing with each other, eating, or attending to children – that the righteous and respectable middle- and upper-classes defined as “rowdyism.”²⁹⁰

Similar to Crary’s discursive analysis of the role of attention in modernity, amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses similarly defined “attention” using capitalistic and monetary analogies. Not only were amateurs to consider their domestic audience as “the public,” but they should be sympathetic to their wants, desires, and above all else, time: filmmakers and projectionists “should not force his friends to suffer through dull or disordered showings... We are paying to be entertained, just as the crowd at the Dreamland. The only difference is that we pay with *attention* and applause instead of with dimes” (My emphasis).²⁹¹ Modernity’s conception of “attention” as a commodity is further illustrated in the critical domestic film spectator. Within this framework, then, amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses shaped the “attention” of their readers to focus on their audience’s levels of interest.

²⁸⁸ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 9-10.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 10.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Epes W. Sargent, “Cine Peeves,” *Movie Makers*, July 1936, 309.

Many of the strategies advocated for by experts centered on keeping the interest of the audience focused on the moving images presented on screen. For instance, one columnist insists that “one of the most important functions of a title” in nondramatic silent films was “stimulation” – “attracting the attention of the audience and arousing its curiosity about a forthcoming scene or sequence.”²⁹² The strongest indication of an audience’s attention was if the film aroused an “emotional response.” This was often done through narrative, editing, variety, and contrast. The use of close-ups in particular was framed as a successful way to keep the audience’s attention on the screen. Best applied with long and medium shots, the close-up signified to the audience that the subject presented is “the only important thing in the world at that moment.”²⁹³ Other techniques suggested contrasting the size of objects, colors, and textures, as well as playing with the speed of action. If a “normally slow action” is sped up, it will “always get a laugh,” and “higher than normal camera speeds, used to produce slow motion effects on the screen, always bring forth the ‘Oh’s!’ and the ‘Ah’s!’”²⁹⁴

A strategy early local actuality filmmakers employed was also suggested for use by amateur filmmakers and exhibitors. To appease their audience and keep them interested, filmmakers were encouraged to include them on the screen, thereby transforming the screen into a mirror. One expert suggested “a title to dedicate the program to the guests by having their names appear on the screen.” This simple element would surprise and please the audience and simultaneously “command attention and respect,” which, ideally, created a “successful screening of the program.”²⁹⁵ Including audience members in the film molded a “totality of effect” simply by appeasing the spectator’s own narcissistic desires. One amateur filmmaker’s production of a

²⁹² Arthur L. Gale, “Recipes for titlers,” *Movie Makers*, January 1931, 15.

²⁹³ Sherman Price, “Is it Exciting?” *Movie Makers*, August 1940, 375 & 389)

²⁹⁴ Price, “Exciting,” 390.

²⁹⁵ Baumgardner, “Showmanship,” 99.

humorous newsreel specifically used his friends and neighbors as actors. When he screened the film for them – “with more than usual interest” – he was showered with “roars of glee and back slapping” from the audience.²⁹⁶

Domestic film exhibition and spectatorship extended genteel qualities, and, consequently, disciplinary mechanisms, from the public sphere to the private space of the home. Amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses strongly encouraged amateur filmmakers and projectionists to produce, edit, and exhibit their films like a professional. This focus on professionalism in the 1930s, I argue, closely resembled a genteel ideology of class distinctions and uplift through refined performances. Instead of proudly displaying distinct fashion styles or consumer goods, amateur filmmakers and projectionists mimicked the professional screening in the private space of the home. Amateur filmmaking discourses advocated for a strong sense of “showmanship” that created a “totality of effect” and attentiveness. This transformed a domestic, middle-class audience into “docile” bodies that remained silent and attentive during the show. “Showmanship” entailed various elements, but the defining factor was a continuous show. The presentation of an amateur’s show should never be interrupted, whether from the projector malfunctioning, the film strip breaking, audience dissatisfaction, or continuity errors. It was interruptions such as these that, according to amateur filmmaking discourses, defined a home show as professional or amateur, refined or crude. The more professional the show, the more the spectatorial experience would exhibit genteel qualities of silent absorption.

Amateur filmmakers and projectionists sought out advice for professional film exhibitions in amateur filmmaking magazines, such as *Movie Makers* and *Home Movies*. Similar to Progressive reformers and genteel advocates using “scientific arguments and sociological

²⁹⁶ Ken Wagner, “It Wow’ed ‘Em,” *Movie Makers*, October 1939, 508.

data” from city administrators, managers, and planners, the amateur filmmaker and projectionist relied on the expertise of professionals and their technical skills.²⁹⁷ The first step in elevating an amateur performance to a “professional” show was to pay careful attention to projector maintenance. The ideal professional performance consisted of a projector that was “unobtrusive” to the audience’s attention of the film.²⁹⁸ Like professional theaters that concealed their projectors, the home show projector should never be noticed by the audience.²⁹⁹ Any noticeable noise or breakdowns were evidence of “improper care and threading or... careless maintenance.”³⁰⁰ Before guests began to arrive, it was strongly advised that projectionists carefully inspected their projector’s mechanisms and oil them adequately using nothing “but the very finest of oil.”³⁰¹ The aperture plate and lens also had to be cleaned thoroughly as well as conducting an inspection of the projector’s light bulbs.³⁰²

Before the audience arrived, assuming the host did not have a permanent home theater, the room and its layout would have already been completed. The projector and screen erected, and chairs and sofas positioned in front of the screen. This also included threading the projector with an “edited, titled, and spliced” film and, if they planned on showing multiple reels, additional reels were organized nearby and ready to go. Using the threaded film, the exhibitor should take the time to focus the lens of the projector.³⁰³ These steps enabled the projectionist to quickly begin the show without delay as soon as the audience arrived and were seated. If the audience had to watch the host arrange the furniture, set up the projector and screen, and oil and

²⁹⁷ Boyer, *Urban Masses*, 278.

²⁹⁸ Russell C. Holslag, “More Projection Pointers,” *Movie Makers*, December 1929, 794.

²⁹⁹ Projector and screen location, audience positioning, and home theater architecture equally help “hide” the projector and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

³⁰⁰ Holslag, “Projection,” 794.

³⁰¹ Douglas H. Trafton, “Perfecting Projecting,” *Movie Makers*, November 1931, 598.

³⁰² Trafton, “Projecting,” 598.

³⁰³ Karl A. Barleben, “Pointers on Projection,” *Movie Makers*, November 1929, 718.

thread the projector, if they hadn't already fallen asleep or drank all the liquor, they were surely less enthused about the proceeding show.

Once the projector was ready for use, it was strongly encouraged to warm it up before the presentation. It was likely that after the projector was prepared, it sat "off" until guests arrived. This allowed the oil to "become slightly stiff" and would thus "start more slowly."³⁰⁴ It was advisable, then, to turn on the projector a few minutes before the performance began. A "douser," a small opaque shutter, should also be constructed to easily cover and uncover the projector's beam of light.³⁰⁵ When the projectionist began the film, the screen displayed a bright white light produced by the projector. To not strain the eyes of the audience, the "douser" was placed over the projector light. Ideally, the more professional option was to include "a black leader at the beginning of a reel" and, if the film had synchronized sound-on-disc, it should have been marked with "*Start*" or in some other way to signal when to slowly fade in the introductory music.³⁰⁶ It was recommended that the music "always start just before the introductory title appears."³⁰⁷ At the conclusion of the film, the projectionist was quick to cover the projector lens with the "douser" using one hand, while the other was "on the volume control to fade the sound away." The "douser" was one among many strategies that conflated the projectionist with an active form of spectatorship. To not blind the audience once the film commenced, "the accomplished projectionist will be on the lookout for the end of the reel and at least will be ready to place his hand over the projection lens at the end of reel."³⁰⁸ If, by mistake or carelessness, the film ended and a bright white light blanketed the audience and strained their eyes, the "illusion

³⁰⁴ Trafton, "Projecting," 598.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ George J. Saliba, "Home Talkies – Film Versus Disk," *Movie Makers*, May 1932, 205.

³⁰⁷ Frederick G. Beach, "The Clinic: Sound Aid," *Movie Makers*, April 1935, 161.

³⁰⁸ R. Fawn Mitchell, "Perfecting Projection," *Movie Makers*, October 1934, 435.

of actuality” that was so carefully constructed up until that point was broken.³⁰⁹ These minor techniques were thought to make “an especially good impression on the audience” and mimicking the technical mastery of a professional show.³¹⁰

Not only did preparing the space and equipment enhance the audience’s interest and attention, but it also gave the impression of professionalism by replicating the experience of a nickelodeon or vaudeville theater. The preparation described above signified a disciplined and technical mastery that further aligned the filmmaker, projectionist, and host as a member of the genteel class. The attention to detail and patience required to organize a screening would, it was hoped, persuade the audience to also be patient, attentive, and gently critical – all characteristics of a refined spectator. Yet, the common domestic spectator was, in reality, rarely on their best behavior, often interrupting, questioning, and criticizing the show, or ignoring the film all together. By including sound, however, many amateur filmmakers and projectionists hoped to quell and pacify the domestic film spectator.

A 1930s domestic film exhibition that included sound required more preparation and set up than a silent one. This was combined with domestic film spectators being more critical than usual regarding sound as their experience with sound films in the 1930s was predominately a commercial, and therefore, professional show.³¹¹ For this reason, there was even more preparation and detailed attention for domestic screenings with sound. After the film and sound equipment were positioned in the screening room, it was strongly encouraged for the projectionist to play the film, with sound, all the way through to note how accurate the

³⁰⁹ Lawrence O. Grantley, “Better Projection,” *Movie Makers*, April 1940, 190.

³¹⁰ R. Fawn Mitchell, “Showmanship with Sound,” *Movie Makers*, December 1934, 548.

³¹¹ Mitchell, “Showmanship,” 529.

synchronized markings were and when the volume or tone control needed to be adjusted.³¹² To know the latter, the “serious enthusiast” first played a “frequency tone record” of a “slowly played, simple toned piano” to use as a “reference for standard projector performance.”³¹³ Ideally, the projectionist would learn and note the poor sections of their records and, “by judiciously controlling the volume” during the show, keep the volume low to mask any “obtrusiveness of harmonic distortion.”³¹⁴ This practice was common in public theaters as exemplified by the shows exhibited by Samuel “Roxy” Rothapfel. With each act and film having a specific score that was controlled by the projectionist, and thus resembling a live performance, Roxy demanded that each show be rehearsed before being presented in front of the public.³¹⁵ The domestic projectionist, then, had to concentrate not only on the audience’s attention, but also on the film and sound quality. This further alludes to the integral role “attention” played in domestic film spectatorship and exhibition, as well as highlighting its close relationship to a live, professional show.

The process of choosing music for a film began with the projectionist viewing the film alone – or with assistance from “a well-informed dealer in the local music and record shop” or a friend with “musical knowledge” because “surely, one of them plays the piano, the violin or has interested himself in concerts or recitals” – “slowly and with frequent pauses for notations at each change of scene or mood.”³¹⁶ In this way, the chosen music and sound presented the filmmaker’s cultural status as both knowledgeable and a member of the proper social circles. The

³¹² Ibid, 428.

³¹³ L.T. Sachtleben, “The Sound Projector,” *Movie Makers*, October 1936, 428.

³¹⁴ Sachtleben, “Sound,” 386.

³¹⁵ William Paul, *When Movies were Theater: Architecture, Exhibition, and the Evolution of American Film* (New York: Columbia University, 2016), 64.

³¹⁶ James W. Moore, “Choosing Sound for Films,” *Movie Makers*, April 1937, 172; Leon Falk, “Music for Silent Films,” *Movie Makers*, February 1931, 76.

first step was to “measure or time each portion of the film and note where a change of scene will require a different selection of music.”³¹⁷ Depending on the length of the film, it was typical for a fifteen-minute amateur film to require “about ten records,” which gave the projectionist around “twenty selections and plenty of variety.”³¹⁸

Selecting which music to use was often described as “the most difficult task” for an amateur filmmaker and projectionist. To aid filmmakers, amateur filmmaking experts recommended they consider the “types of music played with the old silent theatrical pictures.”³¹⁹ The music for the introduction and conclusion of the film was carefully orchestrated with special attention paid to the beginning of the film – “just before the first title appears on the screen...with a short fanfare, in order to bring the audience attention” – and the conclusion – as the final shot fade outs, “bring up the volume until it is quite loud as the words ‘The End’ appear on the screen” followed by “a brisk march or popular tune.”³²⁰ Both mimicked the spectatorial experience of the “legitimate theatre orchestras.”³²¹

Of course, the music strongly depended on the type of scene presented – dramatic, action, melancholy, triumphant, etc. If a film focused on a baby or small children, amateurs were advised to use “lullabies, ‘toyland’ marches, doll dance music, and so forth.” For action scenes, “fast music, such as gallops,” should be used or tragedies should be accompanied by “music in a minor key, or slow, sorrowful tunes.” For a personal or family travel and vacation film a “string ensemble and the salon types are most acceptable.”³²² To ensure the audience’s attention through

³¹⁷ Ray E. Merville, “A Sound Idea for Adding Music to Films,” *Home Movies*, October 1939, 418.

³¹⁸ Merville, “Sound,” 419.

³¹⁹ Frederick G. Beach, “Added Sound,” *Movie Makers*, February 1937, 84.

³²⁰ Beach, “Sound,” 85; George W. Cushman, “Recorded Music Answer to Cine Sound Demand,” *Home Movies*, October 1939, 418.

³²¹ Beach, “Sound,” 85.

³²² Cushman, “Recorded,” 416.

the entirety of the film, the climb towards the climax was accompanied by a sudden increase in tempo that added “a tremendous ‘punch’ to the finish.”³²³ As was common in criticisms of sound in professionally produced and exhibited films, the music was to stay “truly in the background” and always “be subordinate to the film... never dominate it.”³²⁴

All the preparation, time, and technical knowledge required for sound exhibitions was, in the end, well worth it. Sound not only added a professional flair to an amateur screening and boosted the filmmaker’s societal standing, but also enhanced the attention span of the domestic spectator. Sound, specifically a musical background, allowed the filmmaker to avoid the attention-grabbing tricks of silent films – quick editing, exaggerated facial expressions, and an abundance of titles. Instead, unbeknownst to the audience, the “ideal musical background” took “on a new interest if augmented by a carefully chosen musical score” and gave the amateur filmmaker more freedom with longer, uncut, scenes.³²⁵ In other words, music appeared to “speed up the tempo” of the film and gave the appearance of flowing “smoothly and at a much more normal pace” than the slower, silent films.³²⁶

Adhering to a specific professionalism common in public theaters aligned the amateur filmmaker and projectionist with vaudeville and nickelodeon programs. Replicating the “liveness” of vaudeville and nickelodeon performances, the projectionist was also advised to keep a watchful eye on the audience for “signs of boredom.” A bored audience would have conceivably meant they were also highly critical of the performance. The domestic spectator, thus, was both acting for and acted upon genteel discipline by way of a watchful critical eye. If

³²³ Frederick G. Beach, “Scoring Technique,” *Movie Makers*, November 1938, 553.

³²⁴ Cushman, “Recorded,” 417.

³²⁵ Beach, “Sound,” 84.

³²⁶ Cushman, “Recorded,” 417.

the projectionist noticed signs of boredom, they “cut the program by one reel without being discourteous or inconsiderate of others who may be enjoying themselves.”³²⁷ Or, if there was a particularly special scene they were proud of and wished to showcase it, they would alter “the overall tone” by simply holding a “small piece of appropriately colored cellophane, or other transparent filter, before the projection lens.”³²⁸ The color would hopefully beckon the spectator’s attention toward the screen and caused them to become further absorbed into the film. Techniques to catch the spectator’s attention could, however, potentially harm your show as well. As one expert described, if the projectionist and filmmaker was fond of a scene that was a little too short they could “lie in wait for these shots to occur and when they appear, you swoop to the controls and slow the machine as far as possible without actually stopping it. Immediately, the action lags, and the flicker becomes pronounced. The *illusion of actuality* is lost.”³²⁹ (My Emphasis). This further highlights the blurred boundary between the projectionist’s roles as a spectator – actively watching the audience response, projection quality, and aural distractions – and maintaining the mechanics of the projector – oil, light bulbs, reel changes, etc.

Imitating the professionalism of film exhibitionists like Samuel “Roxy” Rothapfel, blurred the boundaries between public and private spaces, professionalism and amateurism, and class distinctions. The spectatorial experience of a domestic film exhibition was, like the public, professional show, immediate, finite, and alive. For instance, the ability to improvise a show depending on the audience’s reactions further aligned the domestic amateur film exhibition with a live performance. While some amateur filmmakers were fortunate enough to have a home movie theater, many simply transformed the living room into a makeshift one with the projector

³²⁷ Ormal I. Sprungman, “Home Presentations,” *Movie Makers*, October 1935, 447.

³²⁸ Lawrence O. Grantley, “Better Projection,” *Movie Makers*, April 1940, 191.

³²⁹ Grantley, “Projection,” 190.

and projectionist being part of the spectator's space. Without hiding the projector and projectionist, as was typically recommended, the projected image knowingly came from an apparatus with a hands-on manipulator. Similarly, early introduction of sound in the 1930s was not part of the filmstrip, but played *along with* the film from a synchronized disc.

The finite spectatorial experience of a domestic film screening shared close affinities with the “move show” of the 1910s and 1920s. These shows were not confined to the boundaries of what was printed, produced, and circulated on a film strip. Miriam Hansen contends there were two types of activities beginning in the early years of cinema – from the early nickelodeon days to the picture palace – that transformed cinema into a live performance: performances that occurred simultaneously with the film and acts that happened in between films. The former consisted of “lectures, sound effects, and music” with the latter, “in keeping with a variety format,” involved “illustrated songs, vaudeville turns, and occasionally, as late as 1909, magic lantern and stereopticon shows.”³³⁰ By assembling a program of films and live acts, with some interacting with the screen, each exhibition became a live and distinct event that depended on place, time, audience composition (ethnic background, race, gender, and class), and musical accompaniment.³³¹ Due to the vast number of opportunities for “improvisation, interpretation, and unpredictability,” combined with live acts and films, each program felt immediate, a singularity, a one-time experience.³³²

Beyond the distinctness of a show, the interaction of live and filmic elements created an alternative mode of viewing that blurred the boundaries between passive and active spectatorship. This new mode of spectatorship extended the show, and all that entails, directly to

³³⁰ Hansen, *Babel*, 43.

³³¹ Miriam Hansen, “Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere,” in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 138.

³³² Hansen, “Cinema,” 147.

the spectator. Traditionally, the theater space and the spectator were theorized as separate from the screen “with its regime of absence and presence and its discipline of silence, spellbound passivity, and perceptual isolation.”³³³ Even if there was an overall theme or a narrative feature film that immersed the spectator, the live acts of the show broke this immersion. In other words, the live acts constantly reminded the audience that they were within a theatrical space of consumption.

During the silent era, live music was an integral aspect of the exhibition and spectatorial experience. Beyond building a thematic through line and quieting the audience, live music provided a sense of “collective presence,” where the merging of live sound and screen highlighted the “presentness” of the show and its spectators.³³⁴ Live music allowed the greatest opportunity for audience interaction and improvisation. In fact, piano players, who were mostly women at the time, “took pride in their improvisational skills” and would often respond to the audience, particularly when in smaller, neighborhood theaters where the audience was familiar with one another. It was not uncommon, particularly in smaller towns, for theater managers to draw on the “home-style talent” of singers, pianists, and other musicians who, as addressed in the previous chapter, were accustomed to training and performing in the home as part of their domestic roles. This interaction, “home-style talents” and public audiences, further underlines the confusing definitions between the amateur and the professional within film discourses and spectatorship that closely resembles domestic film exhibitions.

Due to their familiarity with the audience and as a holdover from the variety and vaudeville days, it was encouraged for audience members to join in on the chorus and sing with

³³³ Ibid, 138.

³³⁴ Hansen, *Babel*, 43.

the performer on stage.³³⁵ The liveness of the show was further displayed by the performer and audience holding considerable control over the music. Many musicians, in fact, rejected the studio provided musical cue sheets and opted instead to play to their own interests and their audience's.³³⁶ With this in mind, the musician and audience had the ability to completely change the tone and significance of a scene.³³⁷ Musicians could ultimately transform the genre of a film, for instance, by playing "inappropriate ragtime that accompanied the tender love scene or the melancholy death scene."³³⁸

If the theater was able to afford an extra musician in addition to the pianist, a drummer was included to provide an array of sound effects to accompany the film. The use of sound effects during silent films was a common practice with many of the high-class shows in large vaudeville theaters employing well-rehearsed foley musicians behind the screen.³³⁹ In smaller, nickelodeon theaters, the drummer would be the main sound effect producer, however historians have noted that nickelodeon drummers could easily provide color and amusement for themselves and the audience by delivering intentionally "inappropriate sound effects and drum rolls," that shifted the tone of a specific genre, i.e., a heavy melodrama into a riotous comedy.³⁴⁰

The ability to reproduce sound for domestic film screenings was, according to Charles Tepperman, available to exhibitors as early as 1928 from DeVry in the form of a turntable and sound-on-disc set up – the "Cine-Tone" (Fig 27).³⁴¹ In the years that followed, many other amateur filmmaking equipment producers began marketing their own "Home Talkies" sound equipment: Victor Animatograph's "The Animatophone" (Fig 28), Bell & Howell's

³³⁵ Bowser, *Transformation*, 15.

³³⁶ Butsch, *American Audiences*, 149.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid, 13.

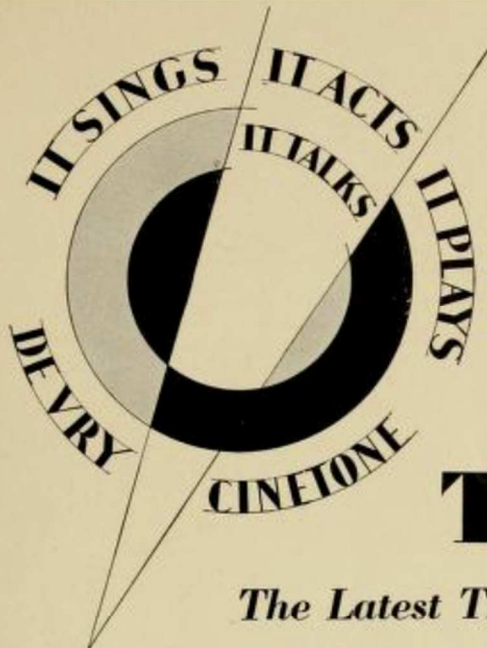
³³⁹ Bowser, *Transformation*, 13.

³⁴⁰ Bowser, *Transformation*, 13.

³⁴¹ Tepperman, *Amateur*, 98.

“Filmophone” (Fig 29), and Ampro’s “Sound System” (Fig 30). Comparing the Cine-Tone and Animatophone, featuring a built-in apparatus and frame for the amateur’s projector and easy connection, to the Filmophone and Ampro Sound System, highlights the variety available to amateurs depending on their needs and wants – portability, speakers, amplifier, and microphone. Compared to the sound heard in public film theaters – echoey, booming, unsynchronized – the “average comfortable furnished living room” was, according to amateur filmmaking experts, the ideal space for reproducing synchronized sound because of its size and acoustics.³⁴²

³⁴² Sachtleben, “Sound,” 438.



HOME TALKIES

The Latest Thrill in Amateur Movies

YOU KNEW they would come, of course... *some day*.

They are here... **NOW**. Home talkies, the latest thrill in the professional movie world, made available for amateur use in the home.

Cine-Tone, by DeVry, provides perfectly synchronized pictures and sound. Cine-Tone sings... plays... talks... acts... with results equal to fine theater productions.

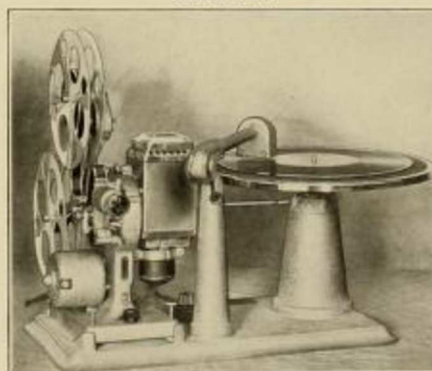
Everything is in a single, compact, dependable unit, as easy to operate as a 16 mm. ordinary projector. Cine-Tone may be used separately for ordinary films, or the outfit may be used as a phonograph with any electrically produced records. Sound reproduction is by the "electric pick-up" process.

Weekly releases of synchronized films and records assure variety and interest of program. Complete, with electrical connections to radio loud speaker, Cine-Tone costs but \$250, including case.

By all means see and hear Cine-Tone. Your DeVry dealer will gladly demonstrate it. If you do not know his name, write us for the complete information.

DEVRY CORPORATION

1111 Center St., Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.
DEPT. 2MM



DeVry



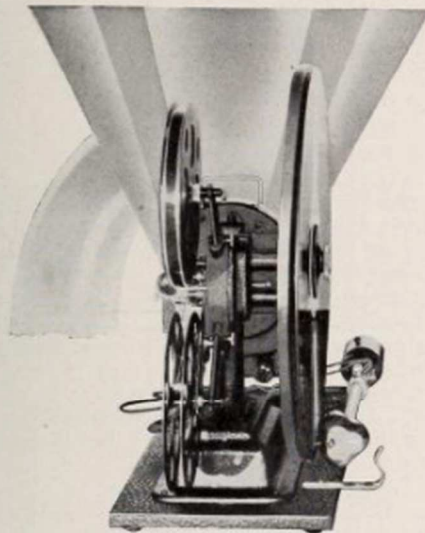
WORLD'S LARGEST MANUFACTURERS OF STANDARD MOTION PICTURE CAMERAS AND PORTABLE PROJECTORS

111

Figure 27 DeVry Cine-Tone Ad

Announcing a REVOLUTIONIZING COMBINATION

of Projection and "Talkie" Features in a Single Master Instrument



THE most exacting critics will acclaim the new Animatophone . . . a portable "Talkie" equipment which rivals the optical and phonetic excellence of the finer theatres.

The vertical positioning of the disc is typical of the clever design and high perfection of this instrument. This makes the turntable shaft an integral part of the projector mechanism . . . an arrangement that sets a new standard for simplicity, compactness, and light weight . . . plus unrivaled performance.



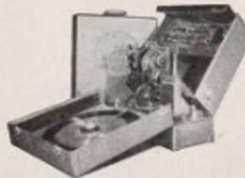
Already . . . without formal announcement . . . the MODEL FIVE MASTER PROJECTOR with ANIMATOPHONE has become one of the most talked of and highly regarded equipments in the non-professional movie field. Ask to SEE and HEAR this marvelous new "Talkie" equipment for business, church, school and home use.

VICTOR ANIMATOGRAPH CORPORATION
DAVENPORT, IOWA

Branch Sales Office: 242 West Fifty-Fifth St., New York City
Canadian Distributor: Film & Slide Company of Canada
156 King Street West, Toronto

The ANIMATOPHONE

FOR *Non-Theatrical* TALKIES



MODEL FIVE MASTER Cine-Projector, designed especially for sound synchronization either 78 or 33 1/3 R.P.M. records. May also be used "silent".

ANIMATOPHONE, the sound-reproducing parts used with the MODEL FIVE Cine-Projector. Equipped for tone and volume control.

Figure 28 Victor Animatograph Animatophone Ad

Announcing—The Filmophone

... a Portable Sound Movie Outfit

● Bell & Howell has done it first . . . and best! The Filmophone, expertly built around the famous Filmo 57 Projector, is a *complete* sound movie outfit from Projector to Loud Speaker, and is contained in two medium-sized easily carried "suitcases." The special Projector motor drives the turntable by a flexible shaft acting on a precision-cut worm and fiber gear. Absolutely no lost motion to affect synchronization. A unique two-stage power amplifier and a high quality dynamic loud speaker deliver a tone quality of startling fidelity and clarity. The pickup is of finest quality. And best of all is the hand-microphone with which you can explain a silent movie, or interpose your own voice during a "talkie" while the picture continues. Your own Filmo Projector can quickly be adapted for use with the Filmophone. Write for special literature on the Filmophone. Ask for Folder No. 30-F.



Close-up of the Filmophone in operation with operator using the microphone interposing his own voice in explanation of the personal movie which is being shown on the screen.

... and here are the talking films!

● Felix goes "talkie"! And if you don't think an animated cartoon can talk, just put one of these Felix sound films on your Filmophone and have the best laugh you've had in years. Each subject, complete on one 400 foot reel with a 16-inch sound disc, \$35.

Felix in **ONE GOOD TURN**. Felix, as usual, finds himself in a peck of trouble, and is saved by friendly Brother Fox. When Br. Fox gets into trouble, Felix comes to the rescue.

Felix in **FALSE VASES**. Felix breaks his wife's Chinese vase, and speedily heads for China to get one to replace it. He gets the vase, all right . . . but . . . well, you'll have to see it and hear it.

Felix in **OCEANTICS**. Felix wins his way to the sailors' hearts with his singing and dancing. But the ship's goat gets jealous. What these two do to one another is almost too much. Plenty of sound!

Felix in **TEE TIME**. Felix hires a substitute to keep up the piano practice at home. Then he goes out to play golf. Such a game! Gets mixed up with a fire engine, cannibals, and what not. All with full and complete sound effects.



Scene from Felix talking picture, "One Good Turn."

Famous UFA Features in Sound

● The Filmo Library includes fifty of the internationally famous UFA sound films. The sound, in the form of voice accompaniment by leading educators, is supplied on one 16-inch disc, with a duplicate disc included. Each subject on one 400 foot reel, complete, \$60. Other types of sound movies in Filmo Library.

MERCURY, VENUS, MARS. This is part of the fascinating UFA astronomical series on the planets. Its interest is heightened by a novel trip to the planets in an ingenious machine.

AFRICA. Here is a travel and geographical film centered about native life in the South African gold mines.

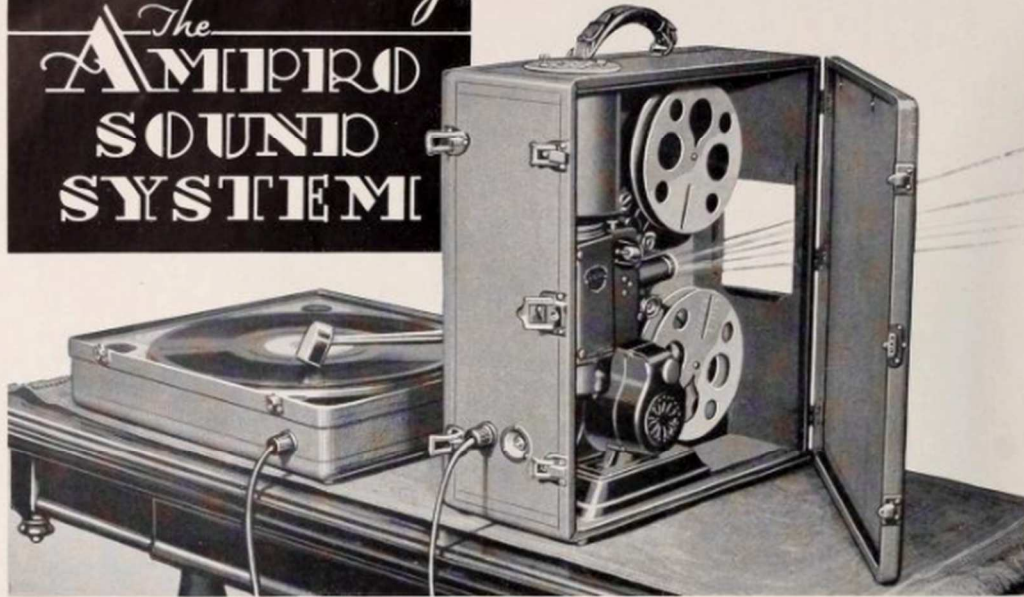
TINY HOUSEKEEPERS. This is the life story of the hamster, a mole-like rodent which lives underground. The habits and modes of life of this interesting creature are strikingly portrayed.

KINGS OF THE AIR. This is the fascinating story of the Serpent Eagle and the Imperial Eagle. Close-ups of the nests, the young, and the majestic birds in flight.

BELL & HOWELL CO., 1843 Larchmont Ave., Chicago, Ill.
New York, Hollywood, London (B & H Co., Ltd.) Established 1907

Figure 29 Bell & Howell Filmophone Ad

Announcing The AMPRO SOUND SYSTEM



PERFECT 16MM. SOUND for Industrial, Educational and Home Use

The Ampro Sound System is contained in two cases, both nearly alike in size and weight. One contains the projector and turntable unit. The other, the amplifier and speaker with accommodation for six reels, six records, and the necessary connecting cords. The following features distinguish the Ampro Sound System.

FLEXIBILITY—The Ampro Sound System may be used in a variety of ways:

- 24 frames per second film speed with 33-1/3 R.P.M. turntable speed;
- 16 frames per second film speed with 33-1/3 R.P.M. turntable speed;
- 16 frames per second film speed with 80 R.P.M. turntable speed;
- 16 frames per second film speed without sound accompaniment;
- Electrical sound reproduction at 33-1/3 R.P.M. turntable speed;
- Electrical sound reproduction at 80 R.P.M. turntable speed.

PROFESSIONAL RESULTS—Pictures up to 9x12 feet can be shown with the Ampro Sound System at distances up to 100 feet. The amplifier will easily take care of a hall holding 1000 persons.

CONSTANT SPEED—There is no fussing with speed regulators on the Ampro Sound System. The motor has been especially designed for constant speed over a range between 100-120 volts. This uniformity of speed is largely responsible for the exceptional tone quality obtained.

RUGGEDNESS—The Ampro Sound System is not a silent projector, adapted for sound. Rather, it has been designed from the ground up for the higher speeds of sound pictures and for the more intense usage to which a sound unit is put in industrial and educational work.

EASE OF OPERATION—One button controls volume. A switch stops and starts the projector. Two automatic pilot lights—one over the turntable and one on the projector—eliminate the necessity for turning on lights for rethreading after each reel.

QUICK SET-UP—Approximately two minutes are sufficient to set up the apparatus and have the show on the screen. No ground wires to connect. Three cords to plug in and the show is on.

MUSIC WHILE THREADING—The turntable load is entirely segregated from the projector, so that the latter's mechanism is not subjected to additional wear. This also makes it possible to have the turntable operating and to give the audience musical entertainment while the projector is being threaded.

STARTING—The film is threaded in the usual way and a knob is provided which is rotated until the starting frame is projected on the small screen within the projector case. The audience is not annoyed by the operator having to find the starting frame on the screen.

PORTABILITY—The combined weight of both units is approximately 85 lbs.

BEAUTY—The Ampro Sound System, in its two cases, presents a most attractive appearance. The brown leatherette cases with their nickle trim and the artistic design of the speaker grill make the Ampro Sound System harmonize with any environment. Complete with rain-proof, slip-cover covers and microphone jack, \$575.

The Ampro Corporation

2839 N. WESTERN AVENUE.....CHICAGO
545 FIFTH AVENUE.....NEW YORK
6058 SUNSET BOULEVARD.....HOLLYWOOD
192 SUNNYSIDE AVENUE.....TORONTO, ONT.



Note the easy accessibility of films, cords and records. Also observe that tubes may be instantly replaced without removing the amplifier.



Only two cases to carry, and everything needed contained therein. The Ampro Sound System is simplicity itself!

AMPRO

PRECISION PROJECTORS

Figure 30 Ampro Sound System Ad

Sound was a crucial component in transforming domestic film exhibitions into a professionally produced live show. This is evidenced by several sound technology advertisements that compared the spectatorial experience of domesticated synchronized sound with the live and public vaudeville show. As one 1929 ad for the “The Recordion” from the National Film Publicity Corporation asks the reader, “don’t you wish then that you could call in a good orchestra or a pair of clever blackface dialogists to entertain you as you loll back in your comfortable easy chair?... With RECORDIAN synchronized, non-breakable records and films you can have all the enjoyment of high-class vodvil (sic) with all the comforts of home” (Fig 31). Similar ads for “The Recordion” continued to be marketed this way by featuring vaudeville imagery (Fig 32 & Fig 33). The early introduction of domestic, sound film exhibitions illustrated the desire to mimic the vaudeville experience in the privacy of the home. Furthermore, ads for amateur sound equipment often highlighted the relationship between sound and professional shows. DeVry’s 16mm Sound-on-Film Projector (Fig 34) featured a “standard Sprocket Intermittent... used in all Professional Theatre Projectors” and claimed it would raise amateur exhibitions to a “Professional Level!” because “it is the *first* and *only* 16mm. projector with this exclusive theatre mechanism – the *Sprocket Intermittent*.” These ads implicitly sold the idea to amateur domestic projectionists that if they mirrored the production of a professional show with “professional” sound equipment, their show would carry all the disciplinary mechanisms, refined audience manners, a particular spectatorial experience, and class status professionalism implied.

The technical knowledge and professionalism required to implement sound during a domestic film exhibition not only created a finite spectatorial experience but signified refined and genteel values. The equipment required to reproduce and synchronize sound in the home

alone implied a particular class status as the price tag for film and discs were “considerable.”³⁴³ The process, then, to set up and correctly synchronize sound to a film was often described as a “technical challenge” that attracted “advanced amateur moviemakers” so as to illustrate their technical mastery and professionalism to their audience and peers.³⁴⁴ This technical professionalism further complicated the relationship between middle-class filmmakers and projectionists and genteel culture. The uncertainty of the middle-class identity began to solidify around a “professional class” of technical knowledge that bridged the divide between the manual working class and refined elites.³⁴⁵ To display this professionalism and “showmanship” during domestic film screenings suggested to the spectator a specific mode of viewing as well. For instance, it was encouraged to include “plenty of pauses” throughout the film’s narrative to “permit your audience to get the full force of the pictures” and “add force to the moments when you are speaking.”³⁴⁶ The interplay of silence and sound intensified the spectator’s focused attention on the screen and reinforced the “totality of effect.”

Sound-on-disc, opposed to sound-on-film, was the dominate sound equipment featured in the home during sound’s early introduction in 1931. Prior to 1931, the availability of equipment and content was so minimal that few had the capabilities to produce sound, let alone acquire content. The amateur filmmaking magazine *Movie Makers* dubbed 1931 as “the first real year of development in home talkies.”³⁴⁷ In the following years, manufacturers quickly responded “with amazing rapidity” by producing and offering equipment and sound films for amateur exhibitions.

³⁴³ J.B. Carrigan and Russell C. Holslag, “An Estimate of the Present Status and Future Development of The Home Talkies,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, January 1931, 68-69.

³⁴⁴ Tepperman, *Amateur*, 195.

³⁴⁵ Chapter Four details the construction of home theaters and the role of the “gadgeteer” and technical professional.

³⁴⁶ James W. Moore, “Choosing Sound for Films,” *Movie Makers*, April 1937, 189.

³⁴⁷ John Beardslee Carrigan and Russell C. Holslag, “Sound Ahoy!,” *Movie Makers*, February 1931, 73.

The increase in equipment, films, discs, and advice columns led to the editors of *Movie Makers* magazine claiming that “1934 will go down in the history of amateur movies as the year of sound.”³⁴⁸

MOVIE MAKERS

SYNCHRONIZED PERFECTLY

ACTION MADE AUDIBLE!

with the new
RECORDION
TALKIE AND SOUND REPRODUCER
FOR YOUR HOME

T IRED from the day's grind, whether it be housecleaning or putting over that big deal, don't you wish then that you could call in a good orchestra or a pair of clever blackface dialogists to entertain you as you loll back in your comfortable easy chair? Just to hear them is not enough. You would like to see their actions and mannerisms. Impossible? Not at all when you own a RECORDION Talking Picture Reproducer. With RECORDION synchronized, non-breakable records and films you can have all the enjoyment of high-class vodvil with all the comforts of home.

RECORDION talking picture entertainments are made in our own laboratories exclusively for RECORDION owners and are made to the same standard as those seen on the screens of the motion picture theatres. *The sound is geared to the film!*

You will get your first big thrill since your childhood Christmas Days if you have an authorized RECORDION Dealer demonstrate the RECORDION in your own home.

If there is no RECORDION Dealer in your city, write direct to us, giving your local dealer's name and address.

NOW! ←
WEEKLY RELEASES
→ FOR YOU

ORCHESTRAS, bands, dialogue, comedy teams, golf lessons, bridge instruction, sound effects, music, thrills, laughter—all coming to you through the RECORDION Weekly Release plan. Get your name registered for a regular bulletin of the latest releases for your RECORDION Reproducer.

NATIONAL FILM PUBLICITY CORPORATION
MANUFACTURERS AND LICENSORS
311-321 SOUTH SARAH STREET
SAINT LOUIS, U.S.A.

Close here
to a sales agent
Gentlemen: Please send me further particulars
on the RECORDION

Name _____
Address _____

Copyright 1934 by National Film Publicity Corp., Dept. M
St. Louis, Mo.

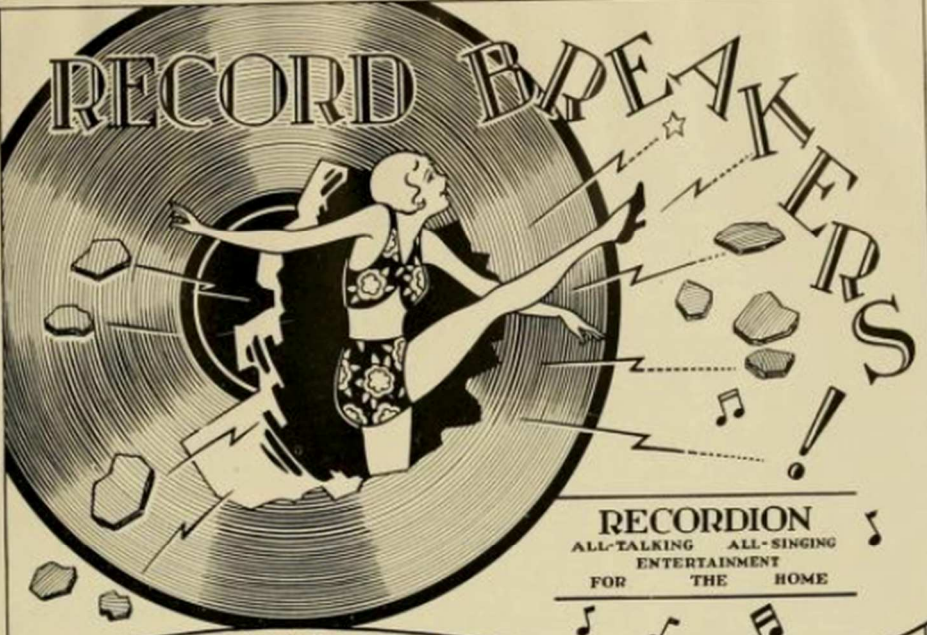
RECORDION

495

Figure 31 The Recordian Ad


³⁴⁸ “The Sound Year,” *Movie Makers*, August 1934, 317.

RECORD BREAKERS




RECORDION
ALL-TALKING ALL-SINGING
ENTERTAINMENT
FOR THE HOME

RECORDION TALKIE RELEASES



R. P. 0701



R. P. 0704

Now—

RECORDION engineers have perfected a 100% Talking and Sound picture reproducer for you: Just connect to any make of 16mm. projector. Your picture and record starts in synchronization and remains so—be it 100 or 1000 ft. of film—show after show—

and priced at only **\$85** (Less amplifier and tubes)
PLAY THROUGH YOUR RADIO SET

The POPULAR RECORDION
MODEL R-1
consisting of projector, turntable and volume control may now be had—
at only **\$175** (Less amplifier and tubes)



R. P. 0706



R. P. 0708

RELEASES

R. P. 0701—400 ft., \$28 with Record
"THE RECORDION ORCHESTRA"
Medley of Popular Hits

R. P. 0704—300 ft., \$21 with Record
"TOYLAND FANTASY"
Cliff Fredrickson, The Boy Accordionist

NATIONAL FILM PUBLICITY CORPORATION

Manufacturers 311 S. Sarah Street  & Licensees Saint Louis, Missouri

RELEASES

R. P. 0706—200 ft., \$15 with Record
"COTTON PICKERS MELODY BOYS"
Singing Southland Boys

R. P. 0708—200 ft., \$15 with Record
"RECORDION REVUE"
Youth and Beauty on Parade

Figure 32 The Recordian Vaudeville Ad



**IF YOU ARE
OF "SOUND" MIND =**

You will want the RECORDION
The Perfect Synchronized Talking Picture Unit—

This remarkable unit is made up to professional standards for 16mm Home Movies using the 16 inch disc system upon a 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ standard—the same as the talkies in your favorite theatre.

RECORDION dealers are being established to serve Home-Movie owners with a weekly release of RECORDION films and RECORDION NON-BREAKABLE records—another exclusive RECORDION feature.

NATIONAL FILM PUBLICITY CORPORATION

Manufacturers
311 S. SARAH ST

@ Licensors
ST LOUIS, MO.



DEALERS: Are you cashing in on the popularity of the "Talkie"? Write or wire us TODAY for complete information on our RECORDION dealer's plan.

DON'T DELAY!

CLIP HERE
National Film Publicity Corp. Dept. M
311 S. SARAH STREET
ST. LOUIS, MO.
Gentlemen: Please send me further particulars
Name _____
Address _____



Figure 33 Recordian Vaudeville Ad 2

THE 16mm SPROCKET INTERMITTENT LIFTS 16mm PRO- JECTION TO THE PROFESSIONAL LEVEL!

*The most far reaching
improvement in 16mm.
equipment since its origin*

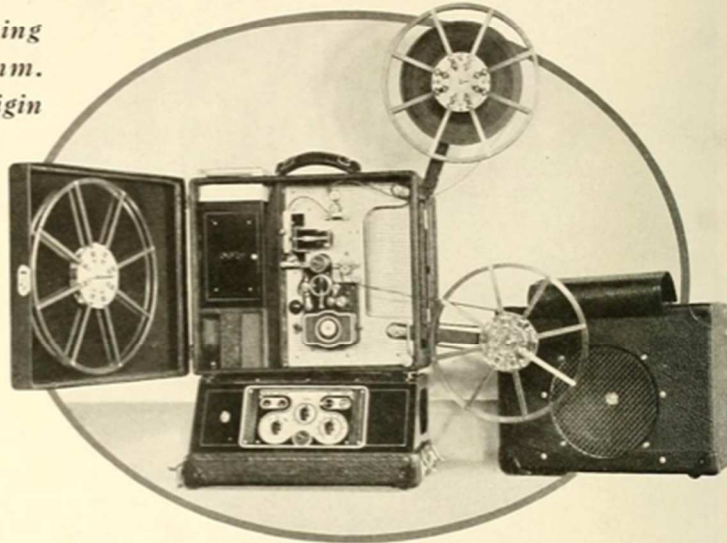
DEVRY LEADS AGAIN!

The New DeVry 16mm Sound-on- Film Projector

moves the film with a standard theatre Sprocket Intermittent—(Geneva Movement) the goal of all manufacturers for a decade.

The substitute claw movement with all of its consequences is now unnecessary. The regular Geneva Movement used in all Professional Theatre Projectors is so far superior to the claw, that no sincere argument can prove the contrary.

Made for Theatres, Schools and Other Serious Showings Where Professional Quality is essential.



The "Theatre" 16mm Sound Projector Has Arrived

"Theatre"—because it is the *first* and *only* 16mm. projector with this exclusive theatre mechanism—the *Sprocket Intermittent*. Moreover, it is the *only* 16mm. projector with *Silent Chain Drive*—exactly the same as is used exclusively in The DeVry Theatre Sound Projector.

—Also—greatly increased illumination.

**Don't Buy 16mm. Sound Until You Have
Seen This Revolutionary New DeVry**

*See it demonstrated at the DeVry Summer School of Visual Education
Chicago, June 24-28*

Main Office
and Factory

HERMAN A. DEVRY, INC.

Eastern
Office

1111 CENTER ST., CHICAGO

DEPT. J.

347 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK

Figure 34 DeVry Sound-On-Film Projector Ad

Sound was produced for amateur exhibitions using either sound-on-disc or sound-on-film technologies. Sound-on-film had several advantages over sound-on-disc: guarantee of seamless synchronization, simpler projecting, and even after continued use, the sound quality remained the same.³⁴⁹ All of which led to a pleased and satisfied audience. In 1934, manufacturers did offer sound-on-film projectors for 16mm films, however, because sound on film cameras were not readily available – unless they were specially built – combined with the many challenges sound recording presented, they were only used by amateurs exhibiting professionally produced sound films.³⁵⁰

Instead, sound-on-disc synchronizers were the preferred option for amateur filmmakers and exhibitors. The equipment for a sound-on-disc setup was described as “similar in operation to that of the familiar phonograph” and family radio set. Moreover, threading the film was the same technique used for a silent picture, with the only challenge being to drop the needle at the correct time and place.³⁵¹ Another advantage to sound-on-disc was the freedom it afforded – both technologically and economically – the filmmaker and projectionist to experiment with synchronizing their films.³⁵² Yet, sound-on-disc had a major disadvantage if the film needed repaired or edited. Because synchronized sound was physically removed from the filmstrip, any alteration to the film would alter the sound synchronization. As one columnist explained, “If the film happens to break, it cannot be repaired like the silent film... there must be a certain number of frames to the foot to keep synchronism and every time a frame is removed it must be replaced with a blank frame.”³⁵³

³⁴⁹ Tepperman, *Amateur*, 195.

³⁵⁰ Frederick G. Beach, “A Sound on Film Primer,” *Movie Makers*, August 1934, 342.

³⁵¹ J.B. Carrigan and Russell C. Holslag, “An Estimate of the Present Status and Future Development of The Home Talkies,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, January 1931, 74.

³⁵² Herbert C. McKay, “Synchronizing Your Own,” *Movie Makers*, February 1934, 64.

³⁵³ George J. Saliba, “Home Talkies – Film Versus Disk,” *Movie Makers*, May 1932, 205.

Sound during domestic film exhibitions produced a spectatorial experience that closely resembled the live vaudeville or nickelodeon shows in a public theater. The liveness of film screenings in the home was attributed to two piece of sound technology: the dual-turntable and microphone. The dual-turntable was a piece of equipment as well as a strategy and skill encouraged by amateur filmmaking experts as a way to replicate the professional show. In the early 1930s, two separate turntables were recommended as “the most effective method of presentation where a succession of discs is to be employed.”³⁵⁴ Aided by a “radio friend,” the projectionist would have a sound fade device and switch constructed that would fade out one record while fading in another and, consequently, make the “change from one record to another...very smooth and pleasing to the hearer.”³⁵⁵

A detailed description of a do-it-yourself dual-turntable system appeared in a 1934 issue of *Movie Makers* magazine that featured an amateur filmmaking enthusiast, Hamilton H. Jones (Fig 35). Jones begins his column describing a show that used only one “portable phonograph equipped with an electric pickup that was connected directly to the radio.”³⁵⁶ With only one phonograph “each change of record” led to a “few seconds of interruption in the musical background which could not pass by entirely unnoticed.”³⁵⁷ If an amateur was restricted to only one phonograph, it was recommended that record changes occur during titles, “as it is less noticeable, and usually sufficient time is available for the change.” This relied on the assumption that titles most often occurred during “an emotional shift in the picture” and should therefore “not be difficult to find points at which to change records.”³⁵⁸ Jones’ spectatorial experience led

³⁵⁴ Leon Falk, 76, “Music for Silent Films,” *Movie Makers*, February 1931, 76.

³⁵⁵ Falk, “Music,” 76.

³⁵⁶ Hamilton H. Jones, “Sound it Yourself,” *Movie Makers*, July 1934, 275.

³⁵⁷ Jones, “Sound,” 275.

³⁵⁸ Edwin Schwarz, “A System for Scoring Films,” *Movie Makers*, September 1937, 454.

him to design and construct a dual-turntable “with the electric pickups connected as to enter the radio as one line,” which would eliminate “the awkward and noticeable change over from one record to the next.”³⁵⁹



Figure 35 Jones' Dual Turntable System

Beyond making a record change seamless, Jones also asserted that dual-turntables made synchronization easy, creating a spectatorial experience that resembled a professional show. While one turntable played a “musical background,” the other one had a sound effect record at the ready that could be brought in “over the music by turning up the volume on the pickup,” resulting in a spectatorial experience “nothing short of startling.”³⁶⁰ Jones details his own example as an illustration:

“For instance, during a sequence of a railroad train, a musical record would be playing on one turntable and, just before a scene of a whistle blowing, the other

³⁵⁹ Jones, “Sound,” 275.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

pickup would be placed on a record carrying a continuous whistle sound. With this continuous whistle sound playing, although not heard, you can turn the volume control just as the whistle in the picture on the screen begins to blow, and, as a result, you will have what is apparently absolute synchronization”³⁶¹

By synchronizing sound to the amateur’s film, the domestic audience’s attention was never interrupted by any “sudden clicks or breaks,” thus mimicking “a professional type showing, and one that is really entertaining.”³⁶²

Synchronization created a spectatorial experience that closely resembled the experience of commercially and professionally produced shows. Spectators were simultaneously in awe of a synchronized film in a domestic setting and, as evidenced by Jones’ description above, the projectionist’s “technical gadgetry” on display.³⁶³ The liveness created through the dual-turntable and the technical knowledge needed to accomplish such a feat positioned the middle-class filmmaker and projectionist not quite an aristocrat, nor a laborer, but as a “technical professional.” Even when sound-on-film became more readily available in the late 1930s, dual turntables were, while more difficult, “a peck more fun.”³⁶⁴ Many amateur film experts went as far as touting that “double turntables can produce music far superior to the celluloid product” because you don’t have to worry “about the disastrous consequences of a sound film break.”³⁶⁵

The spectatorial experience of an amateur film exhibition that featured a dual-turntable constructed an environment that felt alive. Because the sound was not physically attached to the film strip, the projectionist was free to improvise during each show, creating, like the live

³⁶¹ Jones, “Sound,” 275.

³⁶² Meyer Frieberg, “Let’s Add Sound to Our Movies It’s Easy,” *Home Movies*, February 1939, 51.

³⁶³ Tepperman, *Amateur*, 197.

³⁶⁴ Ormal I. Sprungman, “Home Movies Need Sound,” *American Cinematographer*, October 1939, 451.

³⁶⁵ Sprungman, “Home Movies,” 451.

professional shows of vaudeville and the nickelodeon, a one-of-a-kind spectatorial experience. As Jones explains, “the pictures are actually scored each time they are screened. This is a little more work, to be sure, but the fact that no special disc or sound film has been prepared gives one the great advantage of keeping the film up to date, or reediting whenever desired.”³⁶⁶ The dual-turntable alone enhanced a domestic film screening to a live show, but adding a microphone that allowed the projectionist, or even individual audience members, to interject and participate in the moment, shaped the film’s exhibition and spectatorship as a living experience. The additional equipment required for synchronized sound and live commentary combined with a “skillful presentation... elevated the amateur exhibition from informal (and relatively unskillful) home exhibition to an impressive performance fit for public consumption.”³⁶⁷ Thus, the careful presentation required for synchronized sound and live commentary allowed more “advanced amateurs” to distinguish themselves from “home movie snapshooters...while also developing an artistic practice that was distinct from (canned, standardized) commercial film exhibition.”³⁶⁸

Live commentary during a vaudeville film act or in the nickelodeon was conducted by a lecturer whose purpose was to act as a bridge between the film and the audience. The lecturer was more common in ethnically diverse neighborhoods and theaters where non-English speaking audiences went to the movies to learn the language. But the lecturer also became popular with audiences who were confused by narrative driven films that contained multiple shots across space and time. In this sense, the lecturer controlled the audience and their experience viewing the film. The lecturer’s sense of control in influencing the audience’s behavior and understanding of a film shares close affinities with the introduction of the orchestra conductor in the nineteenth

³⁶⁶ Jones, “Sound,” 298.

³⁶⁷ Tepperman, *Amateur*, 200.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

century. As musical orchestras grew it became difficult to play in sync and coordinate amongst themselves. Richard Sennett observes the first “great” nineteenth century conductor was the Parisian Charles Lamoureux who “established the principle of the conductor as a musical authority.”³⁶⁹ Modeled after Lamoureux, conductors demanded a level of respect and authority, not only from their orchestra’s, but more importantly, from their audiences. It was believed that in order to control such an assorted collection of musicians through various disciplinary means the conductor themselves “must possess self-control,” and resemble “a tyrant.”³⁷⁰ This control trickled to the audience as well, where accounts of conductors stopping shows to discipline the audience if they were too disruptive became common place.³⁷¹ Thus, the role of the conductor, in addition to coordinating across the orchestra, was to “render the audiences docile” by instilling, according to Lawrence Levine, the notion that they needed to “accept what the experts deemed appropriate rather than play a role themselves in determining either the repertory or the manner of presentation.”³⁷²

The musical conductor was the ultimate signifier and disciplinarian of refined manners and genteel behavior. Not only were they admired for their high-class art, but their professional status as head of the orchestra, as well as the upper-class audience, positioned them as an embodiment of gentility. Film lecturers, referred to as a “presenter” after the 1920s, were not

³⁶⁹ Sennett, *Fall*, 211.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Lawrence Levine describes a concert at Central Park where “a young man in the front row, who had been talking incessantly to the lady with him, began to snap one ‘explosive’ match after another in a futile attempt to ignite his cigar, Thomas, according to an observer, ‘gave the signal to his orchestra to stop, laid down his baton, turned to the young man, and said with one of his sweetest and most cynical smiles, in a voice audible to all around him, ‘Go on, sir! Don’t mind us! We can all wait until you light your cigar...Thomas suddenly gave the signal for a long drum roll during which he started at a couple who had been chatting and then resumed the Mendelssohn. Thomas often reacted to the incessant noise by standing with his hands in the air until silence prevailed or by stopping his orchestra and apologizing to the audience for interrupting their conversation” (187).

³⁷² Levine, *Highbrow*, 189

translators, but rather entertainers in their own right who dramatically read and interpreted the titles in English. Lecturers would also act as a way to subordinate the spectator into the film by directing the audience's expressive energy and translate it to the diegesis of the film. Thus, no matter how rowdy, loud, or expressive, the gifted lecturer would continuously absorb the audience's energy and transform it into the filmic space, tying the spectatorial experience directly to the film.³⁷³ The lecturer, acting as a form of crowd control, was simultaneously seen by the middle- and upper-class reformers as a source to educate working-class immigrants on respectability.³⁷⁴ From the lecturer in the public theater to the projectionist in the home, both symbolized similar attributes of refinement and discipline.

Amateur film equipment manufacturers in the 1930s acknowledged the desire of microphones from amateur projectionists by providing microphones and separate sound recorders. For instance, Bell & Howell's "Filmophone" (Fig 29) was marketed as a "*complete* sound movie outfit from Projector to Loud Speaker" that featured, "best of all," a "hand-microphone with which you can explain a silent movie, or interpose your own voice during a 'talkie' while the picture continues." Likewise, in the late 1930s, Presto Recording Corporation introduced a portable sound recorder (Fig 36) and dual-turntable system (Fig 37) that allowed the amateur to "record voices and music while the picture is being filmed" and "playback the records while the picture is shown" to create synchronization or add live commentary similar to a newsreel.³⁷⁵

Microphones added a distinct flair to an amateur domestic film show that mimicked the lecturer from commercially and professionally produced shows. Like the public show, the

³⁷³ Hansen, *Babel*, 97

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 96.

³⁷⁵ "Presto Sound Recorder Explanation," *Home Movies*, April 1939, 150.

lecturer shaped the spectatorial experience as a live performance. One filmmaker and projectionist acknowledged that the films he produced and screened were “projected with a verbal explanation dished off on the side” from a prewritten and rehearsed script that ultimately mimicked “a professional film commentator’s technique” on a newsreel.³⁷⁶ This heightened the spectatorial experience to a professional level while simultaneously keeping their ears’ and eyes’ attention on what was presented on the screen.³⁷⁷ It wasn’t just the projectionist and filmmaker, however, that provided live commentary. Perhaps a bit contradictory to a disciplined audience, sound also enabled the audience to become part of the show. One 1933 columnist for *Popular Science* magazine describes screening a homemade animation film where, with a microphone connected to a speaker or the family radio set, “the children speak the lines of the various

³⁷⁶ Curtis Randall, “Sound for Films – 8mm or 16mm For a Few Dollars,” *Home Movies*, September 1939, 364.

³⁷⁷ Randall, “Sound,” 371.

characters.”³⁷⁸ Here, the audience participates and ultimately helps finish the film during a live presentation, thus making the spectatorial experience one of a kind.

A domestic film exhibition in the mold of a live vaudeville show had the potential to energize an audience and foster an environment that led to more participation, instead of less. Yet, the “liveness” of a domestic show had the opposite effect by creating a show that beckoned an audience’s attention. Even when an audience’s participation was required or requested, it was still within the framework of the projectionist’s show and therefore under their governing mechanisms and disciplinary gaze. If perhaps the sense of liveness encouraged the audience to become chatty and begin asking questions, experts advised refraining from overexplaining the scene or filmmaking process. Instead, “make any necessary explanations brief and to the point.” This helped stifle any potential urge to give a “rambling monologue,” but still be a courteous



Bring your home movies to life...

ADD SOUND

YOU'LL have fun taking pictures on vacation—but it'll be twice the fun if you can bring 'em back *alive*—with actual voices, sound effects and music captured on permanent discs. Presto recordings equal the best 16 mm. sound on film—yet they cost far less—one 75¢ Presto disc takes a sound accompaniment for two 100' reels of 16 mm. film. The recorder can be taken along and operated easily by anyone. Ask your dealer to write us and arrange for a free demonstration.

Complete Presto Recorder \$100.00 and up

PRESTO MODEL M RECORDER

Let us think your sound effects and music to be reproduced with your silent pictures. The 12" turntable, operating at either 78 or 33 1/3 rpm, enables you to record and play records continuously without interruption. Recorder may also be used with any radio set to record radio programs off the air. Send for free literature.

PRESTO RECORDING CORPORATION
242 West 55th Street, New York, N. Y.

New York: EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, 300 Madison Avenue
Chicago: NORMAN WILKES SOUND PRODUCTIONS, 30 North Wacker Drive
Hollywood: NORMAN S. NEELY, 8334 Hollywood Boulevard

PAGE 245

Figure 36 Presto Sound Recording System Ad



How often have you said "IF I COULD ONLY AFFORD SOUND!"

YOU CAN

With this new Presto Recorder you can add sound to pictures at remarkably low cost.

PRESTO MODEL M RECORDER

Let us think your voice, sound effects and music to be reproduced with your silent pictures. The 12" turntable, operating at either 78 or 33 1/3 rpm, enables you to record and play records continuously without interruption. Recorder may also be used to record radio programs, or as a 5-watt public address system. Complete data on request.

Put life into silent films with music, sound effects, the voices of family and friends. Presto recording equals the best 16 mm. sound on film—yet it costs far less and the machine can be operated easily by anyone. Ask your dealer to write us and arrange for a free demonstration.

PRESTO RECORDING CORPORATION
273 West 55th Street, New York, N. Y.

PAGE 159

Figure 37 Presto Dual Turntable System Ad

³⁷⁸ Morton Bartlett, “Comic-Strip ‘Talkies’: Give Children Endless Fun at Home,” *Popular Science*, December 1933, 61.

showman by answering their queries.³⁷⁹ Afterall, assuming the filmmaker was a “professional,” their film should be adequately titled and edited for clear communication. One expert goes as far to advise against addressing questions when a “title is on screen” or have a lecturer or recording accompaniment. If the “scenes were shot silent,” then they should be kept so.³⁸⁰

In lieu of a lecturer – most often represented by the filmmaker and projectionist explaining the film – domestic film audiences were presented with detailed titles negating the need for any verbal explanations. Prior to the emergence of sound in public theaters and in the private space of the home in the 1930s, titles were at the forefront of much of amateur filmmaking discourses. While opinions on titles varied among amateur filmmaking experts in the 1930s, many held the belief that if the filmmaker did their job correctly all the information the audience needed for their comprehension should be told through images. Titles were merely an interruption from the flow and movement of the film. For these reasons, if a filmmaker did in fact need to interrupt their film with informational titles they did so at a minimum.³⁸¹ Others, however, viewed the use of titles as the final touches to a finished film, much like, in the written word, “paragraphs, commas, and periods are seldom realized interruptions,” but “serve to point up printed text.”³⁸² In helping the spectator better understand the film, titles acted as a disciplinary mechanism to tame the spectator and dissuade them from verbally interjecting or asking questions during a screening. The first guideline in titling was to view the film from the audience’s perspective. In fact, one writer recommended asking friends, or, even better, a complete stranger, to view the film and to verbally ask any questions they may have while the

³⁷⁹ C.W. Gibbs, “The Home Show,” *Movie Makers*, January 1934, 20.

³⁸⁰ Ormal I. Sprungman, “Home Presentations,” *Movie Makers*, October 1935, 446.

³⁸¹ C. W. Gibbs, “Advanced title making,” *Movie Makers*, January 1931, 18.

³⁸² Epes W. Sargent, “Title Writing,” *Movie Makers*, December 1931, 661.

filmmaker notes the answers, later translating them to titles.³⁸³ In other words, to avoid the criticism inspired from gentility, the filmmaker would seek out members of the public and receive feedback to ensure their film was free of any embarrassing unprofessionalism.

To create the illusion of a professional movie show, filmmakers were advised to use a printing press, as opposed to handwritten titles, and to keep a consistent title theme (typeface) throughout so as not to distract from the film by making the titles more memorable.³⁸⁴ Titles should be short and simple, kept to one major idea, as this resembled a professionally produced film.³⁸⁵ Yet, amateurs were also advised to produce “fluent” and “musical” titles by, for example, quoting from the hymn, *Fast Falls the Eventide* to describe a sunset.³⁸⁶ Filmmakers were assumed, then, to have a working knowledge of lyrical and musical prose, various typefaces, all while keeping the titles short, but not too short. The assumption here was that amateur filmmakers were well versed in genteel cultural and refined art.

Titles were also used to attract and keep the attention of the domestic film spectator. For instance, while an eye-catching typeface might initially have kept the spectator’s attention, the addition of a distinct background or bordering held the audience’s attentiveness more. However, the use of elaborate backgrounds for titles were strictly for opening and closing titles only, otherwise, they might distract from the overall film but also the actual information being presented.³⁸⁷ All of the strategies outlined above were employed to enhance the spectator’s absorption, and subsequent passivity, during a screening. By keeping the titles brief, it avoided “traveling titles” – titles that require more than one title frame – which were a well-known

³⁸³ George W. Cushman, “Title Composition Simple as A-B-C,” *Home Movies*, August 1940, 387.

³⁸⁴ Gibbs, “Advanced title making,” 19.

³⁸⁵ Contest Judges, “Edit – And Give Us More Titles! – Say Contest Judges,” *Home Movies*, August 1939, 341.

³⁸⁶ Epes W. Sargent, “Title Writing,” *Movie Makers*, 1931 December, 661.

³⁸⁷ Contest Judges, “Edit,” 341.

obstacle to holding the audience's attention. Some even looked upon "traveling titles" as an "obvious method of holding attention," comparable to irritating conversationalists "who hold the floor while thinking of what they are going to say next."³⁸⁸ Titles were designed and implemented to enhance and keep the domestic spectator's attention on the screen by providing information to an audience who might otherwise interrupt with questions or comments.³⁸⁹ If the spectator was provided enough information, they would ideally become even more absorbed into the filmic world. The rationale being, it was better to interrupt your film with a title, than with a voice from the audience. Titling became so important that *Home Movie* magazine, in addition to running various title maker advertisements (Fig 38) and provided title backgrounds for their reader's own films (Fig 39), ran the monthly column "Title Troubles," where filmmakers were encouraged to write in with questions, often technical in nature, that would be addressed by an expert.

³⁸⁸ Arthur L. Gale, "Test for titles," *Movie Makers*, February 1931 February, 79.

³⁸⁹ Contest Judges, "Edit," 322.



Figure 38 Title Maker Ad

Titles were also used to heighten the interest of the audience by forming an emotional connection to the screen through “narrative,” “spoken,” and genre specific titles. If the film was a competitive event – sports, a parlor game, or race – filmmakers were advised to “emphasize the dramatic element of struggle” so the audience would be able to “take sides, work toward the climatic conclusion of the contest.”³⁹⁰ If the film was a topical, such as a newsreel, the titles should focus on relaying “important facts” by providing “answers to the primary news questions: who what, when, and where.”³⁹¹ For a fictional comedic or dramatic film, and even in certain cases with topicals, “spoken” titles would be utilized. However, “spoken” titles do not convey information like “narrative” ones, but rather “create *feeling*, to build up emotional intensity.”³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Arthur C. Gale, “Tips for Titling,” *Movie Makers*, December 1929, 829.

³⁹¹ Gale, “Titling,” 829.

³⁹² Paul D. Hogan, “Title Rhetoric,” *Movie Makers*, January 1940, 34.

“Spoken” titles had to be brief, with little explanation, because their purpose was to intensify and dramatize the images on screen. They were inserted at the exact moment a word was leaving a subject’s mouth and preferably presented in a close-up with moving lips.³⁹³ All three genres, however, utilized “narrative” titles. These titles “may serve to inform the spectator of facts about the film itself...or to state necessary facts about the characters in a more complete manner than the visual part does.”³⁹⁴

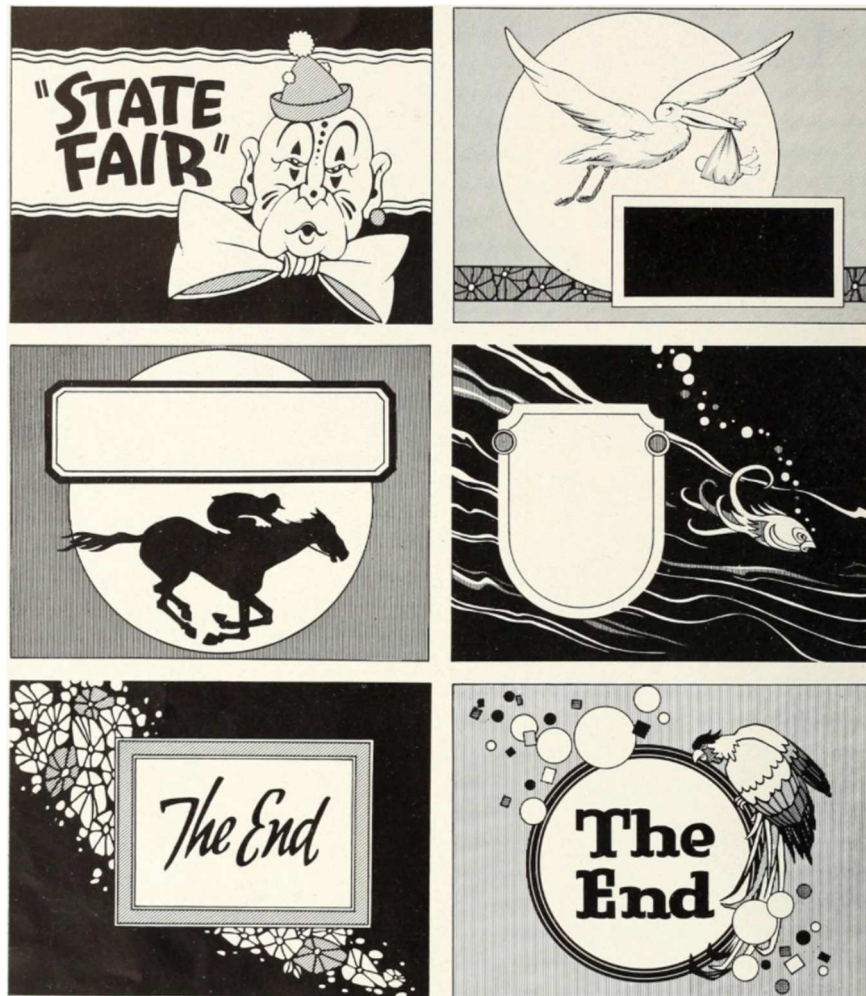


Figure 39 Title Backgrounds

³⁹³ Hogan, “Title Rhetoric,” 34.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, 13.

To further strengthen the domestic spectator's attention, it was recommended that titles in between action should only act as a link between scenes or sequences and "never tip off the forthcoming action."³⁹⁵ If the title tipped off what was to come, it threw cold water on any suspense that had been built up to that point and allowed the audience to find interest elsewhere.³⁹⁶ Instead, titles should be inserted before a sequence "where they will arouse the curiosity of the audience and stimulate its interest."³⁹⁷ The "dramatic value" is thus heightened by both the placement of the title and its concise, lyrical prose. For "spoken" titles this strategy was also utilized. If a scene involving dialogue was "of quick tempo," to "heighten interest" in the audience, instead of cutting after the title back to the subject speaking, "cut direct to a closeup of the subject spoken to in order to show quickly the second character's reaction."³⁹⁸

What is clear among amateur filmmaking experts was that the titles' primary function was to aid in the film's narrative and continuity. Like "instruments in an orchestra or the voices in a quartet," titles should "harmonize" with the images on screen, but they should do so "without appearing to do so."³⁹⁹ Like the illusion of continuity editing, the "most successful title is one that is read without consciousness of the medium, the idea being implanted in the brain of the spectator and carried until the next scene is flashed on the screen to complete its meaning."⁴⁰⁰

Domestic film exhibition and amateur filmmaking relied heavily on narrative to both tame the audience and keep their attention fixed on the screen in front of them. One way this was advocated for in amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses was by including "expository

³⁹⁵ Hogan, "Title Rhetoric," 13.

³⁹⁶ Paul D. Hugon, "The Fine Art of Titling," *Movie Makers*, December 1932, 552.

³⁹⁷ Arthur L. Gale, "Recipes for Titlers," *Movie Makers*, January 1931, 15.

³⁹⁸ A.E. Milford, "Title Editing Same as in Silent Picture Days," *Home Movies*, February 1941, 94.

³⁹⁹ Paul D. Hugon, "The Fine Art of Titling," 552.

⁴⁰⁰ Arthur L. Gale, "Test for Titles," *Movie Makers*, February 1931, 93.

material.” Like any communicative text, the message should be clear to the audience it is directed towards. As one expert mockingly retorted, “if the sole result of originality in treatment or photography is to have the spectators ask, ‘What is it all about?’ the effect is like that of a joke that has to be explained.”⁴⁰¹ The amateur’s film should thus “make clear who are the people concerned, their relationship to one another and to their environment, as well as the situation which is to develop into a plot.”⁴⁰² Expository material, however, should be given time to breathe, which provides the audience time to “digest” each new character and piece of information. Expository material provided a narrative for the multiple characters and subjects within the film’s plot, which allowed the audience to keep their attention on the various elements presented on the screen.⁴⁰³

Conclusion

The role of sound, the lecturer, and titles replicated the professionalism of a public vaudeville show or nickelodeon screening in the hopes to pacify the rowdy domestic film spectator. The reality of domestic spectatorship was an experience that more closely resembled the working-class or immigrant audiences of the nickelodeon or vaudeville show – interruptions, questioning, yelling, cheering, and drunken debauchery. To create docile spectators in domestic film exhibitions amateur filmmaking discourses encouraged filmmakers and projectionists to employ professional techniques that were first presented in the public theatre and, consequently, where audiences were trained to respond with passivity and appropriate manners. The domestic film show demonstrating professional practices – sound, lecturer, and titles – simultaneously

⁴⁰¹ Paul D. Hugon, “Let Us Be Clear,” *Movie Makers*, January 1932, 12.

⁴⁰² Hugon, “Let Us Be Clear,” 12.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

encouraged a refined mode of spectatorship and presented the middle-class projectionist and filmmaker as a master of various technical skills. In turn, the middle-class filmmaker and projectionist presented an alternative class that closed the gap between the manual laborer and the genteel elite: the technical professionalism class. These techniques, when transferred to a domestic film exhibition, both attracted the attention of the spectator and signaled them to react “immediately, according to a more or less artificial, prearranged code” of genteel and refined behavior.⁴⁰⁴ Domestic film spectators were, by way of Foucault, placed “in a little world of signals to each of which is attached a single, obligatory response: it is a technique of training, of dressage.”⁴⁰⁵

The disciplinary techniques outlined in this chapter encouraged a docile film spectator, but to what end? Why was it important for the spectator of domestic film exhibitions to replicate the spectatorial experience of the professional and public theater? Chapter Three will argue that, while the reasons are multifaceted and complex, a passive spectator was more inclined to consume and accept the ideological content of domestic film exhibitions. The content of domestic screenings – home movies (memories), amateur productions, and professionally produced cartoons and newsreels – functioned as an archive that presented, formed, and strengthened the American middle-class identity. Before the dominance of amateur film exhibitions in the home, the parlor and library acted as an archive that presented a family’s identity through consumerism - objects and media owned or collected, such as images and books. As the rigidity of the Victorian era faded and modern relationships transformed, the parlor and library transformed into a decluttered living room. In the 1930s American home, absent material objects and collections, the amateur domestic film exhibition became an evolving filmic archive

⁴⁰⁴ Foucault, *Discipline*, 166.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

of the American family's middle-class identity. Chapter three will interrogate the creation of a specific white, heterosexual middle-class and national identity through the staging, editing, and narrativizing of family "memories" as well as the collection of professionally produced newsreels and animation.

CHAPTER THREE | THE PERSONAL TOUCH: THE DOMESTIC ARCHIVE AND MIDDLE-CLASS IDENTITY

The rigidity and moral character of the nineteenth-century family ideal gave way to a more relaxed and easygoing domestic lifestyle. This new family ideal was best represented in the transition of the Victorian-era parlor room to the modern living room. The modern living room was a space where the whole family, not just specific members, and guests, could escape the chaos and uncertainty of the modern world. Among the factors that articulated this shift – new social and gender roles, consumerism, and novel architectural and interior designs – leisure activities began to illustrate the anxieties of the encroaching twentieth century modern world.⁴⁰⁶ It was through leisure activities that the “new modern self” was exposed to outsiders’ private realms and scenes of replenishing relaxation.⁴⁰⁷ This transition was best illustrated through a popular Victorian-era optical toy: the stereoscope. The stereoscope was for both children and adults and had two magnifying lenses that when looked through would reveal a three-dimensional image that emphasized depth (Fig 40) The image, or stereo card, could be swapped out for others, giving the owner a variety of subjects to view. The stereoscope and basket of stereo cards were often positioned to be easily accessible to guests as it displayed the family’s commitment to instructive self-improvement.⁴⁰⁸ Shirley Wajda notes that as the shift to a personality centered culture from one based on character ensued, popular series of stereoscope images began re-creating moments that were traditionally regarded as private and explored the tensions inherent in a new modern world.⁴⁰⁹ The Victorian Era stereoscope illustrates how

⁴⁰⁶ Shirley Wajda, “A Room with a Viewer: The Parlor Stereoscope, Comic Stereographs, and the Psychic Role of Play in Victorian America,” in *Hard at Play: Leisure in America, 1840-1940*, ed. Kathryn Grover (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 113.

⁴⁰⁷ Wajda, “Stereoscope,” 134.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 113.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 134.

mediated representations provided insight into the middle-class and how they understood and viewed themselves in the twentieth century.



Figure 40 A Victorian Era Stereoscope

Material culture scholar Katherine C. Grier poses the question that if the Victorian-era parlor room transformed into a modern living room, losing many of its qualities as a social façade, where and how were the “energies and values that created the memory palace parlor” redirected?⁴¹⁰ This chapter will argue that the “memory palace” or middle-class archive was, as exemplified by the stereoscope, transferred to the production, curation, and projection of amateur and professionally produced films exhibited within domestic spaces. The domestic show, made up of professional and amateur productions, functioned, I argue, as an archive that presented, formed, and strengthened the American middle-class identity. Before the dominance of amateur film exhibitions in the home, commodities arranged and presented in the parlor and library acted

⁴¹⁰ Katherine C. Grier, “The Decline of the Memory Palace: The Parlor After 1890,” in *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, eds. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 67.

as an archive that defined the resident's identity, specifically their "personality." As the rigidity of the Victorian era faded and modern relationships transformed, the parlor and library transformed into a decluttered living room focused more on presenting the resident's "personality." With less adherence to material objects and collections, the 1930s American family utilized domestic film exhibition as an evolving filmic archive displaying a national and middle-class identity. This chapter will interrogate the creation of a specific white, heterosexual middle-class and national identity through the staging, editing, and narrativizing of family "memories," a collection of professionally produced newsreels, and the role of the domestic film spectator.

With a few exceptions, amateur films of the 1930s mainly consisted of "topical" films. Topical films can be broken into three distinct sub-genres: local actualities, travelogues, and newsreels. Local actualities focused on real-life events and settings familiar to the filmmaker and audience. Travel films, or travelogues, often involved a voyeuristic gaze of foreign environments and cultures. Lastly, the newsreel combined various shots and sequences of local and global newsworthy events. A combination of all three categories, home movies were films of either random or narrativized family events, memories, and social gatherings that at any point could resemble an actuality, travelogue, or newsreel. As is common with categorizing genres, each sub-genre outlined was easily collapsed into another. Indeed, the differences between a local actuality and newsreel could be imperceptible. However, amateur filmmaking magazines in the 1930s focused many of their editorials on replicating the professional newsreel, regardless if the subject was travel or a family memory. As Jay Leyda of *Movie Makers* magazine asserts, "one of the most positive signs of health in the amateur cine movement is the great interest in making

topical or newsreel films.”⁴¹¹ The consensus among amateur filmmaking experts was that newsreels, in particular, were “capital training for any other kind of filming.”⁴¹² Newsreels insisted on the “wisdom” of filmmakers because, it was argued, fictional films only used “people, places, and things” as “properties” instead of highlighting their complexity.⁴¹³

During the 1930s, newsreels were a generally popular attraction – so popular that cities across the country saw the opening of theaters dedicated strictly to newsreels. In 1929, Fox Film opened the Embassy Theatre that “promised eleven shows per day” with “standing-room-only crowds.”⁴¹⁴ The latter feature highlights the highly transient nature of newsreel theater spectators who were often described as “nomadic,” “drifting,” and “floating.”⁴¹⁵ Similar to the exhibition spaces of suburban homes, the newsreel theaters were constructed for an audience that could easily drop in and out.⁴¹⁶ In March 1931, the Trans-Lux Newsreel Theater opened targeting upper-middle-class customers and featured seats that were “larger than normal, with more legroom and wider aisles than the average theatre of the day.”⁴¹⁷ The added legroom and space was solely to allow distraction-free movement so spectators could “come and go without bothering each other.”⁴¹⁸

The “nomadic” nature of the newsreel spectator was primarily the cause of newsreel theater’s continuous, seemingly never-ending show. The similarities between a typical newsreel show and the home show bare calling attention to as the same spectatorial experience, content,

⁴¹¹ Jay Leyda, “Tips on Topicals,” *Movie Makers*, January 1931, 13.

⁴¹² Epes W. Sargent, “When Newsreels are Real,” *Movie Makers*, June 1934, 233.

⁴¹³ Leyda, “Tips on Topicals,” 13.

⁴¹⁴ Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 144.

⁴¹⁵ Louise Anderson, “Else-Where and Else-When: The Formation of Newsreel Memory as a Distinctive Type of Popular Cultural Memory” (dissertation, Newcastle University, 2010), 79.

⁴¹⁶ See Chapter 1 and the construction of the Bungalow open floor plan.

⁴¹⁷ Gomery, *Shared*, 146.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

and identity-formation that occurred in newsreel theaters also occurred, I argue, in domestic film exhibitions. A newsreel show consisted of “newsreels, cinemagazines, travelogues, documentary, and interest films” emphasizing the audience’s interest in “spectacles of actuality” and the “exchange of knowledge and information.”⁴¹⁹ This program ran continuously through the day and well into the night which meant the theater itself was frequently blanketed in darkness.⁴²⁰ For this reason, the news theater became a tangled site of transient modern identities within a seemingly private space for “the old or unemployed” to rest and idle away the day. More scandalously, the continual darkness of the newsreel theater arguably encouraged “illicit sexual encounters,” that were typically reserved for the private sphere.⁴²¹ The activity of the newsreel spectator and continuous show subsequently “reframe[ed] (as people moved seats) and reform[ed] (as new patrons appeared)” the spectatorial experience.⁴²² The space of newsreel spectatorship, in addition to their value in the amateur filmmaking community and archival ability, calls for a closer interrogation of its role in domestic film exhibition and the American middle-class identity.

This chapter begins by defining “archive” and its relationship to the space of the home and the power imbued to the “custodian” of the archival materials. Following the definition of the archive, I highlight the role amateur filmmakers played in building an American middle-class archive of amateur topical films. Prior to the inclusion of amateur filmmaking as a leisure activity, American middle-class identity was materially presented and stored in the Victorian era parlor or drawing-room. I will outline the history of the middle-class reliance on the consumption and display of commodities to present and strengthen their newfound class status

⁴¹⁹ Anderson, “Else-Where,” 65.

⁴²⁰ Ibid, 83.

⁴²¹ Ibid, 85.

⁴²² Ibid, 79.

and “moral” character. As the new century approached and family and social relationships shifted, the parlor room transformed into the modern living room. The modern living room was defined by its decluttered and simplistic style, fostering casual relationships among family members and guests. Following this transition, I argue that the middle-class identity was presented less through material commodities and, instead, mediated through domestic film exhibitions. I end the chapter then with a historical survey of the American newsreel and its prominent place in domestic film exhibitions. I contend that the content, projection, and spectatorship of amateur newsreels helped shape and reshape the identity of the American middle-class. Where Progressive Era environmentalists treated the public movie theater as a primary site for the betterment of society, I uncover a similar discourse that positions domestic film exhibition and the amateur newsreel as a “rhetoric of uplift.”⁴²³

The Archive – The Home, Material Identity, and Home Movies

The home was a primary site aiding in the creation of an American middle-class identity. Gentility’s reliance on the consumerism of objects and proper environments transformed the American home into an archive that shaped a specific middle-class and national identity. The archive, from its origins, has had a strong relationship to the home. Coming from the Greek “*arkheion*,” which means “a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of superior magistrates, the *archons*.”⁴²⁴ The “*archons*,” who publicly held much of the political power, stored, organized, and interpreted important documents that represented the law.⁴²⁵ Thus, the “*archons*”

⁴²³ Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) 66.

⁴²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.

⁴²⁵ Derrida, *Archive*, 2.

were given immense power over their community as they not only interpreted the law but systemized recorded events, which through their manufactured relationships, created meaning for future generations. In this way, I contend that the amateur American filmmaker, predominantly a white, heterosexual male, became the inadvertent “custodian of collective memories” and chose what aspects of America got “theorized, analyzed, interrogated, deconstructed, [and] activated.”⁴²⁶

Professionally produced newsreels, such as *News Parade* from Castle Films and personal home movies aided in shaping and reaffirming an uncertain middle-class and national identity. Just as an archive is made up of “heterogeneous, undifferentiated stuff” that is then organized “by the principles of unification and classification,” the amateur home movie was often a collection of miscellaneous moments edited together to form a narrative. It was even advised to “keep a supplementary reel” of the more personal scenes that “though interesting to you and those appearing, would not interest an ‘outside’ person” because any footage captured was “worth keeping” even if they were unusable.⁴²⁷ As one amateur filmmaking expert, E.J. Balthazar noted, it was common to find “an assortment of unconnected scenes in any movie maker’s collection of family film” that consisted of “pot shots” of various family members.⁴²⁸ Without any manipulation, the scenario described by Balthazar already resembles, as Carolyn Steedman describes, an archive of “mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and just ended up there.”⁴²⁹ Balthazar continued by suggesting the amateur take their “pot shot”

⁴²⁶ Patricia R. Zimmermann, “The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings,” in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 19.

⁴²⁷ W. Sterling Stutfin, “Creating a Film Library,” *Movie Makers*, March 1927, 9.

⁴²⁸ E.J. Balthazar, “The Family Album,” *Movie Makers*, January 1931, 16.

⁴²⁹ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 68.

collection and create a “movie album” with a narrative framing device: begin with mother sitting on a “nicely lighted porch” with a photo album.

Take a scene of her turning over the leaves, next a shorter one close enough to reveal the title of the book she is reading and then come to a shot over her shoulder as she turns through the book. She comes to a page and stops. Take a closeup of the page that interests her. It may be the enlargement of Dad reading his paper, cigar in hand, the smoke curling upward in arrested curves. Now follow the two feet of this scene which we have just made, to which is added the original movie scene. When the sequence is projected, you have Mother looking at the none too good still of Dad in the album and then it smoothly breaks into lifelike activity.⁴³⁰

While Balthazar frames his suggestions to keep the audience interested – for instance, he encourages filmmakers to insert brief shots of Mother peering at the album but “at different angles to avoid monotony” – it nonetheless displays how a collection of unrelated and heterogenous shots can be rearranged – just as in experimental films, documentaries, and continuity editing – to form new meanings.

Balthazar ends his scenario with a last shot of Mother “closing the book, smiling and looking into the distance with wistful amusement in her eyes.”⁴³¹ The film ends, then, much like a biographical letter or diary highlighting the way home movies can act as a “means of remembrance” and interrogating the question “who am I?”⁴³² In effect, the above film becomes a

⁴³⁰ Balthazar, “The Family Album,” 40.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Peter Forgacs, “Wittgenstein Tractatus: Personal Reflections on Home Movies” in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmerman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 49.

self-reflexive narrative about the emotional power of an archive. One that shows, according to Michel Foucault, people “not what they actually were but what they need to remember themselves as having been.”⁴³³ Similar to the “movie album,” Balthazar encourages filmmakers to “supplant pot shots with planned series of scenes in which the subject is doing something of interest.”⁴³⁴ Here, the “memory” is constructed and becomes an artificial “melodrama of personal life and the idealized projections of family.”⁴³⁵ Balthazar recommends:

instead of a single shot of brother Bob walking toward the camera, we could first take a medium shot of him making snowballs in the backyard, follow with a near view as he takes a shot at the garage door, then return to a medium scene as he leans down to his ammunitions pile for a new projectile. Next to a closeup as he winds up to pitch it with particular care. Then comes a closeup of a lemon pie on a windowsill. The snow ball cuts across the scene and lands with disastrous results in the pie. The sequence would end with an indignant face peering out of the window and a short shot of the place where Bob was, but is no more.”⁴³⁶

While the scenario Balthazar plans out would assumedly be more entertaining to the domestic film spectator than a random shot of Bob, it becomes an implied memory experienced by Bob and Mother in the kitchen. Thus, not only could the “memory” become part of Bob’s and Mother’s identity, but also one of the domestic film spectator’s as well. More importantly, depending on their media literacy, future generations of viewers could assume this was part of

⁴³³ Michel Foucault, Patrice Maniglier, Dork Zabunyan, *Foucault at the Movies*, trans. and ed. Clare O’Farrell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 106.

⁴³⁴ Balthazar, “The Family Album,” 16.

⁴³⁵ Patricia R. Zimmermann, “Morphing History into Histories: From Amateur Film to the Archive of the Future,” in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 19.

⁴³⁶ Balthazar, “The Family Album,” 16.

their family history. The amateur filmmaker, therefore, becomes the curator of middle-class family and individual memories, placing them, per Foucault, “in charge of their vitality...their experience and their knowledge of previous struggles.”⁴³⁷

The middle-class reordering and reimagining of oneself through collective memories stems from similar domesticated leisure and entertainment pursuits. As detailed in the previous chapter, Melanie Dawson outlines how the middle-class interrogated their newfound identity through parlor games and other home entertainment activities. Domestic spaces and parlor games became “reflective spaces” for the middle-class to “test out visions of a culture in the process of (trans)formation” and “perform their new postures, attitudes, and behaviors.”⁴³⁸ It was during parlor games, Dawson asserts, that middle-class participants represented themselves not as “middling” but “as risk takers, as possessed of rich lives through which to distill competitive abilities, and as self-aware performers who turned a critical eye to their own participation in developing markers of class affiliation.”⁴³⁹ In addition to performing their reimagined identity, Dawson highlights the turn of the century popular parlor game “recitations,” which illustrate the history of the American middle-class curating their experiences and memories to create new meanings.

Recitations were first-person narratives performed in front of a domestic audience. They focused on personal anecdotes that were transformed into a “collective, archetypal past.”⁴⁴⁰ These narratives blended the performers’ personal memory with a more extensive middle-class

⁴³⁷ Foucault, *Movies*, 106.

⁴³⁸ Melanie Dawson, *Laboring to Play: Home Entertainment and the Spectacle of Middle-Class Cultural Life, 1850-1920* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), 19.

⁴³⁹ Dawson, *Laboring*, 12.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 201.

history of “triumphantly formative, socioeconomic success.”⁴⁴¹ They often mythologized the past by nostalgically presenting it as “simple” or “plain” in contrast to the more technologized present of modernity. For instance, they often focused on the “formative period” of the middle class with “narratives that included mercantile and material successes as unifying elements.”⁴⁴² In making the past “simple,” however, it erased the “dynamism” and struggles of the past and painted family ancestors as inherently and “predictably triumphant.”⁴⁴³ These recitations, thus, became collective familial and middle-class experiences of the early twentieth century and helped shape much of the modern American middle-class identity. These ideal narratives created a unified and national past by circumventing “the more divisive issues characterizing the early twentieth century: conflicts over labor relations, stratified class tiers, and the challenges of acknowledging identities based on race, religion, ethnicity, and gender.”⁴⁴⁴ The “collective experience” promoted by the recitations’ white, rural, and middling key figures ignored much of the diverse values and struggles of the nineteenth century in lieu of an “all-inclusive, revisionist history where personal advancement and community building mutually reinforced one another.”⁴⁴⁵ The resulting presentation was not only nostalgic but willfully ignored class and racial struggles and the middle-class’s own role in oppressive practices. Much like the pre-shoot planning and editing process of filmmaking, recitations informed their audience of a specifically tailored past that shaped and reinforced the spectator’s (perceived) identity.

In addition to domestic leisure activities, middle-class identity, as outlined in Chapter Two, relied heavily on displaying genteel manners and refined objects prior to the twentieth

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Dawson, *Laboring*, 177.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid, 196.

century. It was the latter, however, that strongly influenced the interior design and layout of domestic spaces. In the nineteenth century, the influence and power that came with wealth were suddenly tangible and, therefore, could be obtained by the lower orders. As Simon J. Bronner notes, “the accumulation and display of goods expressed the power to manage people by directing production through consumption” and exhibited the consumer’s gentility through their “taste.”⁴⁴⁶ The consumption of genteel goods and a refined taste would, as argued by reformers, save society from the “ungodly states of barbarism and savagery” by transforming it into “a sprawling, glorious American civilization.”⁴⁴⁷ The mass market was thus flooded with the lower orders wanting to purchase individual items that represented wealth: “carpets, mahogany furniture, tableware, fine fabrics, brooms, candlesticks, buckles and buttons, hats, books, and on and on.”⁴⁴⁸ While Richard Bushman notes that capitalism did not generate gentility it certainly helped in spreading it through a legion of manufacturers, artists, suppliers, and retailers, who depended on the expanding market for genteel goods.⁴⁴⁹ The uncertainty over the lower order’s newfound middle-class identity could now be clarified, for themselves as well as outsiders, by the consumption and, notably, the display of material objects and “things” in the family’s parlor or drawing-room.⁴⁵⁰ The arrangement and display of such objects and “things” ultimately transformed domestic spaces into an individualized American middle-class archive.

Coinciding with the rise in genteel consumerism was the need and creation of “proper environments” that elevated “life to a higher level of beauty and grace.”⁴⁵¹ Prior to the twentieth

⁴⁴⁶ Simon J. Bronner, “Reading Consumer Culture” in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 13.

⁴⁴⁷ Bronner, “Reading,” 13.

⁴⁴⁸ Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), xviii.

⁴⁴⁹ Bushman, *Refinement*, xix.

⁴⁵⁰ Bronner, “Reading,” 15.

⁴⁵¹ Bushman, *Refinement*, xviii.

century, the parlor or drawing-room became this “proper environment” that displayed genteel goods and objects. Consumers filled these rooms with as many portable and separate goods they could in the hopes to signify a “commodity aesthetic” that showcased the collapsed boundaries between the self and the commodity.⁴⁵² In other words, the parlor, filled with a methodical and informed collection of goods, represented the social standing and moral character of the owner. Everything from random knick-knacks to furniture to the layout and interior design of the parlor made “rhetorical statements” that persuaded outsiders, as well as the owners, that they were truly what their possessions alleged them to be.⁴⁵³ For these reasons, the parlor was designated for the entertainment of guests or special occasions and not everyday family gatherings or activities.

Ideally, the housewife imbued the parlor with a feminine eye that simultaneously expressed the family’s genteel and refined acuity and economic status. As outlined in Chapter One, the housewife was central to accumulating and displaying refined material goods. While not quite the “general purchasing agent” of the twentieth-century family, the Victorian-era housewife oversaw transforming the home into the ideal sanctuary for the family away from the newly industrialized and dangerous world. One way this was accomplished was by participating in and teaching activities of creativity and self-expression, such as crafts, reading, painting, and playing musical instruments. Even if the husband purchased, and ultimately chose, the material goods, it was presumably the housewife’s duty to properly display them throughout the parlor along with the family’s creative abilities.

⁴⁵² Jean-Christophe Agnew, “A House of Fiction: Domestic Interiors and the Commodity Aesthetic” in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 135.

⁴⁵³ Grier, “Memory Palace,” 54.

The close attention to details of furniture arrangements and the “fancy appearance of each individual item” expressed what Katherine C. Grier calls “the aesthetic of refinement.”⁴⁵⁴ If a higher social status was best communicated through the accumulation of refined material goods, social climbers responded by amassing as much “accomplishment and artifice” as they could purchase. This appeased both the owner’s desired message as well as delighted genteel guests with a “refined eye” to consume as much information as they could.⁴⁵⁵ Even so, these rooms were commonly described as overcluttered with objects.⁴⁵⁶

The parlor prior to the twentieth century not only conveyed the family’s desired social status but also, as Grier argues, functioned as a “memory palace.” The Victorian era parlor was made up of “shrines” dedicated to the family’s education, beliefs, sentiments and homelife.⁴⁵⁷ While many of the objects displayed in the parlor were “refined,” one would imagine they also carried some personal attachment. At the very least, there would have been a story behind the purchase and the reason for its display, i.e., its relationship to the room and other objects. The combination of products and self-made art, organized and arranged in a particular fashion, transformed the parlor into a middle-class familial archive where a select few were given access.

The early twentieth century brought a range of factors that influenced the transformation of the overcluttered parlor to a more comfortable decluttered living room. That’s not to argue that the transition from the Victorian Era parlor to the living room was quick, however. Indeed, the tastes and interior designs of the nineteenth-century parlor lasted well into the 1920s.⁴⁵⁸ With women’s societal roles becoming more public – shopping and leisure activities, such as movies

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 61.

⁴⁵⁵ Grier, “Memory Palace,” 62.

⁴⁵⁶ Agnew, “House of Fiction,” 141.

⁴⁵⁷ Grier, “Memory Palace,” 59.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, 63.

and social clubs – domestic interior design became less of a priority.⁴⁵⁹ As new domestic technologies became more affordable – heating, plumbing, hot water, electricity, and gas stoves – families refashioned their budget for refined material objects in order to invest in a more comfortable living environment.⁴⁶⁰ Living spaces also began to shrink as evidenced by the popular modern bungalow home design. The bungalow’s open floor plan in particular made it difficult to segregate guests from family life.⁴⁶¹ The open floor plan also signaled a significant shift in modern family relationships, now defined by “family togetherness.” Where the Victorian-era home contained rooms dedicated to an individual family member, the bungalow’s living room fostered more family time that could easily transform into a space for guests. The middle-class living room, thus, became both the primary family room and space to entertain the public.⁴⁶²

Even though the modern living room was defined by its simplicity and comfort, it still relied on the consumption of specific material goods. Unlike the nineteenth century’s artifice of a genteel character through refined “things,” the modern living room reflected the owner’s individual personality.⁴⁶³ Yet, it was still encouraged that the modern living room reflect a specific personality, one that is desirable through sympathy and charm.⁴⁶⁴ Grier describes the 1930s’ consumer as in a constant state of “tension between purchasing and saving, restraint and desire,” and “domestic consumption and self-presentation,” where the desire to own things “was even more widespread” than in 1875.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 67.

⁴⁶⁰ Katherine C. Grier, *Culture & Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 1988), 215.

⁴⁶¹ Grier, *Culture*, 216.

⁴⁶² Ibid, 215.

⁴⁶³ Ibid, 218.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 224.

The 1930s living room was simultaneously the “heart” of the home – “cheerful, cozy, sunny, restful” – and an expression of the family’s personality.⁴⁶⁶ Where the parlor room was a “show-room,” the living room was meant to be comfortable and lived in.⁴⁶⁷ As outlined in Chapter One, much of the nineteenth-century parlor was dedicated to improving the resident’s character and moral self to society’s betterment. The modern living room, on the other hand, became the canvas where “personal decorating” emerged as a “language” at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁶⁸ These personal decorations illustrated a specific modern personality characterized by “emotional temperament,” “individual idiosyncrasies, personal needs and interests,” “magnetic attraction, fascination, aura, and charm,” all with the purpose of wanting “to be liked.”⁴⁶⁹ With much of the middle-class beginning to reject the random accumulation of genteel goods, in addition to a shortage in space, consumerism encouraged a more rigorous selection that kept abreast of each new trend and style. Living spaces, thus, became living “window displays of department stores” with “an every-revolving still life of household furnishings.”⁴⁷⁰ What items were lucky enough to be chosen for display signified their importance and “personal” worth.⁴⁷¹ The distinction between the individual and the displayed items of the living room collapsed even further than it did in the nineteenth century. The living room, with its carefully selected commodities, reflected the resident’s “idiosyncratic selves” and ensured their personalities’ “vitality and charm.”⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁶ Karen Halttunen, “From Parlor to Living Room: Domestic Space, Interior Decoration, and the Culture of Personality” in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 171.

⁴⁶⁷ Halttunen, “Parlor,” 171.

⁴⁶⁸ Halttunen, “Parlor,” 180.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, 187.

⁴⁷⁰ Agnew, “House of Fiction,” 141.

⁴⁷¹ Halttunen, “Parlor,” 188.

⁴⁷² Ibid, 189.

This transformation was readily visible in the residential library as well. It was common in the Victorian era home to have rooms dedicated to activities that would better the individual. While the residential library seems like something only the upper- and ruling-classes would have, with the introduction of “machine-made paper” the price of books was reduced low enough by 1830 that the middle-class could now purchase a diverse collection of reading material and participate in home education.⁴⁷³ Children were predominantly educated in the residential library that also included, in addition to a collection of books, specimens, art, and souvenirs.⁴⁷⁴ In addition to education, the library signified to outsiders that the residents prized intellectual curiosity.⁴⁷⁵ As the twentieth century approached, living spaces grew smaller and children increasingly sought education in the public school systems, so the library transformed into a sanctuary away from household noises and the modern world outside.⁴⁷⁶ Within the familial roles though, only the man of the house was afforded time to “retreat” to the library, thus, shifting the design of the library to display the masculine personality of the husband and father – “personal photographs, trophies, awards, and items related to leisure pursuits and sports.”⁴⁷⁷ It was more common, however, especially in the 1920s and 1930s for a family home, like the bungalow, to lack the space for a separate library. Instead, to allow the flexibility and transitory nature of the bungalow’s open-floor plan, the living room typically included an alcove with built-in bookcases for family and guests to enjoy.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷³ Candace M. Volz, “The Modern Look of the Early-Twentieth-Century House: A Mirror of Changing Lifestyles” in *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, eds. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 35.

⁴⁷⁴ Volz, “Modern Look,” 35.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 36.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, 35.

The meticulous choices in designing the modern living room, I argue, influenced the spectatorial experience of domestic film exhibitions. Just as amateur filmmaking expert Paul D. Hugon argued in 1932, the “atmosphere” created by paying close attention to costumes and set design “can be made highly expressive of the social standing, the financial circumstances, the family relationship, even the individual temperaments of the people concerned.”⁴⁷⁹ Describing a home setting that feels “like a home!,” Hugon encouraged the filmmaker to pay close attention to “the placing of a few cushions, the arrangement of seats in relation to sources of light, showing that people do use them to sit in and read in, the casual appearance of a morning newspaper carelessly folded in the wrong place, next to a pair of spectacles.”⁴⁸⁰ All of which can impress upon the spectator a clear sense of who this family is – “old fashioned, conservative, middle class, refined, luxurious and exotic” among other characteristics.⁴⁸¹ The living room transformed into film exhibition space tells a similar story to the domestic spectator, one that would undoubtedly have influenced how they interpreted and understood the images on screen.

As the living room and a more modern aesthetic rose in popularity, so did the art of the “personal touch.” Instead of commodities expressing the complexity and many facets of the residents’ personalities, the “personal touch” advocated for “a few smaller articles such as pictures, photographs” or items that “signaled personal hobbies or tastes.”⁴⁸² The equipment for amateur filmmaking and exhibition as well as the actual screenings themselves acted as signifiers communicating a personality interested in new technologies and artistic vision. Amateur filmmaking experts recommended filmmakers and projectionists store their films on their

⁴⁷⁹ Paul D. Hugon, “Let Us Be Clear,” *Movie Makers*, January 1932, 38.

⁴⁸⁰ Hugon, “Let Us Be Clear,” 38.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Halttunen, “Parlor,” 185.

bookshelves with their books – the “proper place” to keep them.⁴⁸³ Bookshelves in the living room had the ability to communicate an abundance of information all within a confined space. As Lydia Pyne notes, how objects, mainly books, are catalogued, shelved, and displayed on a bookshelf “shows a certain worldview and a particular system of thinking.”⁴⁸⁴ Thus, the bookshelf becomes an index of identity.⁴⁸⁵ The bookshelf can define a room’s tone and character thereby informing a guest how to act.⁴⁸⁶ To blend film storage with book collections, film manufacturers and amateurs alike provided storage that resembled a row of books on a shelf (Fig 41). One amateur even provided detailed plans for a film cabinet costing less than a dollar for easy inclusion (Fig 42).⁴⁸⁷ The personal touch of displaying one’s films on their living room bookshelf not only allowed guests to browse their collection easily but signified a nuanced personality.



Figure 41 Film Cabinet

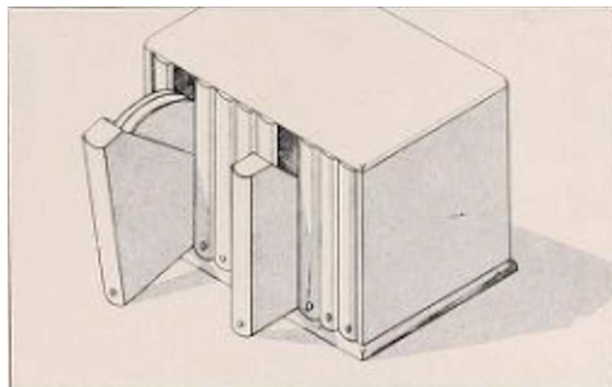


Figure 42 Amateur Film Cabinet

⁴⁸³ Sutfin, “Creating a Film Library,” 9.

⁴⁸⁴ Lydia Pyne, *bookshelf* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 33.

⁴⁸⁵ Pyne, *bookshelf*, 41.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid, 68-69.

⁴⁸⁷ William H. Fetz, “Building ‘Bookcases’ for Your Films,” *Movie Makers*, April 1939, 173.

Bookshelves, beyond conveying a specific personality, also served the similar function of an unspoken access to knowledge that bestowed exclusive power and privilege to the owner.⁴⁸⁸ The bookshelf, like the Victorian era parlor, connoted archival qualities of gatekeeping, knowledge, and power. For centuries, the ability to read and own books signified intelligence and, therefore, power. Access to literary knowledge was one aspect of this power. The other came from books' ability to store knowledge and to record and keep memories for future generations. Like the amateur film and home movie, there was power in creating and thus, storing this knowledge for generations to come. However, unlike the pages of books, the filmic information relied on the filmstrip's quality, which, if left exposed would degrade and become unwatchable. The fear of losing personal memories and family events, deprived of access to the knowledge and power of history, found its use in film manufacturing and consumerism.

In 1931, Bell & Howell introduced the Filmador film storage container. The Filmador consisted of "two heavy aluminum containers, one within the other, with a half inch dead air space in between" with the inner container "humidified." The Filmador boasted its ability to prevent "the quick changes of temperature and humidity which are so ruinous to film" and will keep "films always fresh and pliable, *always ready to project*." (Fig 43) The ad further exclaims in sizable bold lettering that the Filmador was capable of storing film for twenty years, thus implying what can be shared and to whom. One 1932 ad, similarly claiming a thirty-year storage capability, compares the inferior preservation of the family photo album to the Filmador and film in general (Fig 44): "But in spite of the utmost precaution, these interesting memories of the

⁴⁸⁸ Pyne, *bookshelf*, 75.

family dimmed and faded and, in time, Uncle Hiram's beard became a mere reflection of its former glory." The early ads for the Filmador primarily focused on preserving memories of children and other family members or events that would normally be "lost in the mist of memory" and "prove elusive." Instead, the Filmador, seemingly unsure of how long it could store film, could save these memories "permanently" (Fig 45).



20 YEARS LATER

"Recognize yourself, Agnes? Yes, that's how you looked when you were one year old."

"But, Dad, how can film twenty years old show such simply stunning pictures? I should think it would have dried out and fallen apart long ago."

"It might have, dear, except that the pictures meant so much to mother and me that we gave them the best of care. We've always kept them in these Filmadors."

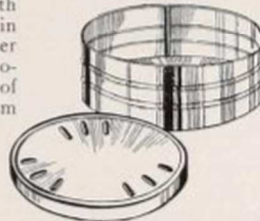
Store your precious films in Filmadors and you'll thrill at them again twenty years from now. For the Filmador provides ideal film storage conditions. It absolutely prevents the quick changes of temperature and humidity which are so ruinous to film. With a minimum of attention, it keeps films always fresh and pliable, *always ready to project.*

The Filmador consists of two heavy aluminum containers, one within the other, with a half inch dead air space in between. The inner container is humidified and accommodates three 400 foot reels of 16mm. film. Here is a film protector worthy of being entrusted with your most prized reels, yet offered at a price that recommends it for all your films.

The Filmador, \$5.00.



Outer Container



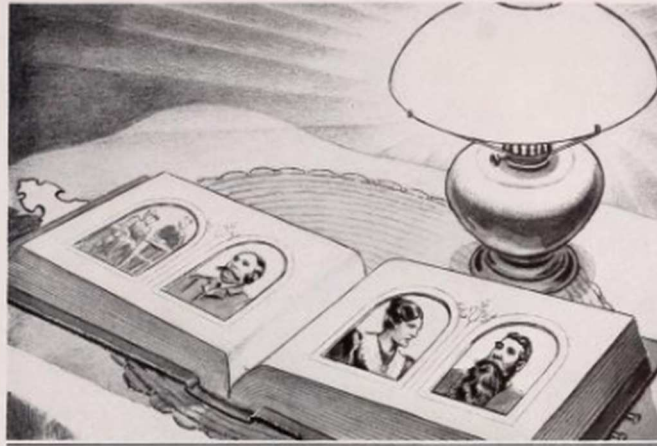
Inner Container

FILMADOR

The thermo-humidor film safe

BELL & HOWELL CO.
1843 LARCHMONT AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILL.

Figure 43 Bell & Howell Filmador Ad



30 years ago



the stiffly posed portraits of Uncle Hiram, his face surrounded by a mass of hirsute vegetation, Aunt Hepzibah in her well padded armor and little Jane in pinafore and braids were placed for preservation in the secure, staunch and padlocked family album. But in spite of the utmost precaution, these interesting memories of the family dimmed and faded and, in time, Uncle Hiram's beard became a mere reflection of its former glory. . . . Life's golden moments, as depicted on 16mm. film, are capable and worthy of a preservation which the old family album never afforded. . . . Subjected to quick changes of temperature or insufficient humidity, film will dry out—will lose its pliability and freshness—will become brittle and crack.

. . . Preserve these sparkling memories of your children's happy play, of jolly hours at sports and games in **FILMADOR** which conserves the moisture content of your film, preserves its pliability and protects it against sudden changes of temperature. Filmador is a scientifically constructed film humidifier, consisting of two heavy aluminum containers, one within the other, with a half-inch dead air space in between. The inner container is humidified and accommodates three 400-foot reels of 16mm. film.

Price \$5.00



FILMADOR

THE THERMO-HUMIDOR FILM SAFE

Distributed by

BELL & HOWELL CO.

1843 Larchmont Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Figure 44 Bell & Howell Filmador Ad 2

CHILDREN CHANGE FROM YEAR TO YEAR



FILMADOR

Preserves Each Interesting Phase

PERMANENTLY

Nancy on all fours . . . toddling along in her first efforts to walk . . . admonishing her new dolly . . . astride her pony . . . all entrancing phases of her childhood.

In years to come, think as we may, the recollection of Nancy's fascination and charm, at any particular period, is lost in the mist of memory.

No longer need these memories prove elusive. Stored in Filmador, films depicting the bright, sparkling memories of childhood's happy play — of jolly hours at sports and games — will *live*, a constant reminder of each endearing phase. . .

. . . for Filmador provides ideal film storage conditions, absolutely

preventing the quick changes of temperature and the drying out which are so ruinous to film. With a minimum of attention, it keeps films always fresh and pliable, always ready to project.

The Filmador consists of two heavy aluminum containers, one within the other, with a half inch dead air space in between. The inner container is humidified and accommodates three 400 foot reels of 16 mm. film.

Filmador makes an appropriate Xmas gift, for, as the vault containing the family film history, it will remain for many years a cherished reminder of the donor.

Price \$5.00



BELL & HOWELL CO.
1843 Larchmont Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Figure 45 Bell & Howell Filmador Ad 3

In the years that followed, as amateurs were able to accumulate professionally produced films as well as their own, storage became more essential. In the late 1930s, Neumade Products Corporation, a leader in 35mm film storage, introduced 8mm and 16mm film storage cabinets that were “efficient,” “convenient,” and, importantly, “indestructible.” (Fig 46). Neumade offered the “Permaneu” cabinets in a variety of models and prices depending on the desires of the consumer (Fig 47). Neumade’s cabinets were constructed “entirely of heavy gauge steel” that ensured the film’s protection from “becoming brittle, dried out, full of dust and dirt and from the always present danger – fire!” The cabinets could also be equipped with an “approved humidor” that would humidify the entire cabinet (Fig 48). Each cabinet was equipped with rows of dividers that allowed the filmmaker and collector to organize and arrange their films, like a bookshelf or living space, that would be efficient and best project their personality. Film storage options for domestic filmmakers and projectionists highlighted the ways amateur filmmaking and home movies, like the Victorian-era parlor and modern living room’s bookshelves, acted as a middle-class archive that stored memories, events, and knowledge. The ads for domestic film storage illustrated this relationship by emphasizing the “permanent” nature of their storage capabilities and the importance of the film by essentially enclosing them in an “indestructible” steel safe.

**YOUR FILMS ARE SAFE
IN NEUMADE 16MM CABINETS**

**EFFICIENT—CONVENIENT
INDESTRUCTIBLE!**

NEUMADE film storage Cabinets offer to schools, film libraries, and to the amateur, the ultimate in protection of valuable 16mm films. Spot welded from sheet steel, Neumade cabinets allow easy access to each film. Cabinets are made in compartment units; each compartment holding one, two or three reels of film, as specified. Index card slots show contents at a glance. Made in several sizes and models—the ideal way to protect and store your films.

Specifications

ST-4-S—Cabinet with air chamber wall between each compartment. Each compartment holds 1-400' reel in can. Doors have gravity hinge, convenient handle and label holder. Weight of reel holds door firmly closed. Per compartment **\$3.50**

ST-4-D—Same as above, except that each compartment holds 2-400' reels. Per compartment **\$4.50**

ST-16-S—Same as above, with single reel, 1600 ft. compartments. Per compartment **\$5.00**

ST-16-D—Same as above, with compartments for 2 or 3 1600 ft. reels. Per compartment **\$6.00**

1600 ft. compartment holds 3 reels

Cabinets in 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12 Compartment Sizes

Neumade Products Corp.

Figure 46 Neumade Products Film Storage Ad

PROTECT YOUR FILMS OF TODAY for the WORLD OF TOMORROW! Neumade "PERMANEU" Film Storage Cabinets



FLOOR MODELS

To provide the maximum storage facilities in the minimum of space. Fitted with separators to hold reels erect and convenient for selection. Complete index and humidifying facilities.

DC-415 (Illustrated)
92-400 ft. Reels
MM 102...100 Reels
MM 103...140 Reels
MM 51...75 Reels
MM 50...50 Reels
MM 40...40 Reels

PERMANENT — EFFICIENT DISTINCTIVE

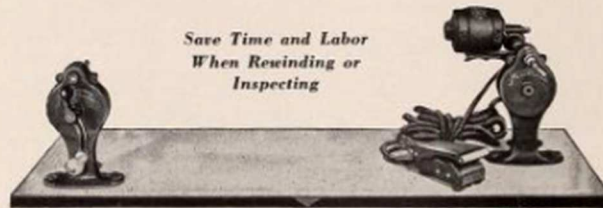
Valuable films require and deserve proper storage and protection. They represent not only an investment, but hours that can never be relived—a veritable treasure of unforgettable moments. The NEUMAIDE system provides an efficient, practical method of storing and preserving these expensive films. Every cabinet is not only dust-proof, but also fireproof, being tightly constructed entirely of steel. Standard finish—olive green enamel, baked on, with polished chrome fittings. Doors have 3-point locking device and key locks.

Ideal for use in the home, school, library, office or laboratory. Whether you have ten reels or one thousand, NEUMAIDE can provide the cabinet.



DE LUXE STORAGE

Every refinement possible. Each reel stored in individual, fireproof compartment with separate handle and index cardholder. Tilt feature gives easy access. Upper section holds 400 ft. reels in cans. Lower section holds 1600 ft. reels. Rubber covered ball bearing swivel casters in base permit moving from place to place, as desired.

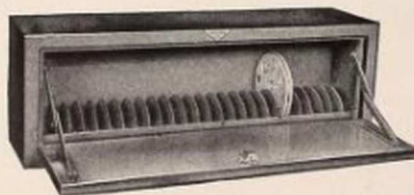


Save Time and Labor
When Rewinding or
Inspecting

POWER REWIND ASSEMBLY

Operates at various speeds easily controlled by sensitive foot pedal. Motor driven rewind end equipped with special clutch for reversing by hand operated geared end. Both units mounted on large, weighted, white porcelain board.

Also 8MM CABINETS



MODEL MM-8 . . . \$20.00

Holds 25-200 ft. reels of 8mm. with or without cans. Each held erect by rigid, curved wire rod separators. Drop door with snap catch provides convenient shelf. Overall dimensions 23" long, 8" high, 6½" deep.



SECTIONAL CABINETS

"ST" Series—Individual compartments for either one or two reels with a double wall air chamber between each compartment. Separate handle, index card and holder makes labeling easy. Stocked in 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12 compartment sections for all size reels. Made for 8, 16 and 35mm.

INNOVATION MODELS



MM 20 (20-400 ft. reels) \$27.50
MM 16 (17-1600 ft. reels) \$42.50

Ideal for the growing library—can be built up like sectional bookcases. Each unit a complete cabinet in itself, with separator rack, humidifier tray and index holders. Combination units easily assembled.

ALSO PROJECTION TILT TABLES, INSPECTION TABLES, SHIPPING CASES
REWINDERS, SPLICERS, MEASURING MACHINES, ETC. A COMPLETE LINE

See your dealer or write direct for new catalogue

WORLD'S FAIR VISITORS — OUR SHOWROOMS ARE OPEN FOR YOUR INSPECTION

Neumade Products Corp.
MANUFACTURERS

427 WEST 42D ST.

NEW YORK, N. Y.

Figure 47 Neumade Permaneu Film Cabinets Ad

HUMIDIFIED

Fireproof Dustproof

CABINETS

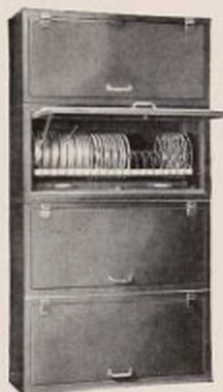
PERMANENT—DISTINCTIVE

How long do you expect your films to last? Why not preserve and protect them from becoming brittle, dried out, full of dust and dirt and from that always present danger — fire! File and keep them the efficient practical way in a specially designed film storage cabinet. Neumade cabinets are tightly constructed entirely of heavy gauge steel, making them dustproof and fireproof. An approved humidifier humidifies the entire cabinet.

Every film user needs and should have proper storage facilities in the home, school, library, plant or laboratory. Whether you have ten reels or a thousand — Neumade can provide the cabinet.



"ST" Series — Individual compartments for either one or two reels with a double wall air chamber between each compartment. Separate handle, index card and holder makes labeling easy. Stocked in 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12 compartment sections for all size reels.



INNOVATION MODELS

Built up like sectional bookcases as your library grows. Each unit illustrated holds 50 reels. Easy to label with Neumade system. Entire cabinet covered with approved humidifier. Holds 50 reels without separators. Ideal for the school, individual or business with a growing library.

MM-16 1600' Reels
MM-12 1200' Reels
MM-20 400' Reels
MM-8 (8mm.) 200' Reels

MODEL DC-200

Storage and work facilities combined. Linoleum covered drop shelf perfectly rigid when lowered; provides ideal work surface. Two utility drawers. Approved humidifier for each compartment. Stores 120-400' reels with index card and holder for each.

DC-175 — Same as DC-200 but without two top sections, 80 reel capacity.



MM-202 (illustrated) — 100 Reels. Floor models to provide the maximum storage facilities. Efficient humidifier serves the entire cabinet. Lower units have generous storage compartment in base for movie equipment. See locks for all doors.

MM-103 840 Reels
MM-51 75 Reels
MM-50 50 Reels
MM-40 40 Reels



Rewinders — Splicers — Projection Tables — Measuring Machines — Shipping Cases
8 mm 16 mm 35 mm.

See your dealer or write direct for illustrated catalog.

TRADE MARK
Neumade
PRODUCTS CORP.

427 WEST 42ND STREET,

NEW YORK, N.Y.

Figure 48 Neumade Humidified Film Cabinet Ad

The power and privilege displayed by the bookshelf arguably depended on the quality and variety of books and other items. Just as interior decorators advocated for a mixture of furnishing styles to represent specific personality traits, the bookshelf should include a variety of subjects, authors, and items to reflect the occupant's knowledge and complex personality.⁴⁸⁹ The recommendation for variety similarly extended to domestic film exhibitions with amateur filmmaking experts arguing for a "balanced program." To achieve a balanced program, the domestic projectionist was encouraged to include a variety of short subjects, such as travel films, cartoons, comedy or dramatic narratives, newsreels, and possibly even a feature film of two reels. The "balance" of a program wasn't only determined by subject variety but also its production value. Coupling a program with both professionally produced films and the projectionist's own helped align their films with a more distinguished touch. Similar to mixing self-made art with professional commodities in the living room, the home movie and amateur production, framed by a more professional film, will "claim more applause" from the audience.⁴⁹⁰ The projectionist, however, needed to closely consider the arrangement of the program to convey their knowledge of artistic curation while keeping their audience entertained. For instance, it was advised to "avoid putting a reel of personal snaps on immediately after a library release" because "your own stuff most likely will suffer by comparison." Alternatively, if you screen a cartoon but also have a comedy film, "don't run them one after the other." Instead, "put an entirely different sort of film, a travel reel for instance, in between them."⁴⁹¹ It was encouraged to position the projectionist's own film as the climax of the show – typically

⁴⁸⁹ Halttunen, "Parlor," 183.

⁴⁹⁰ F. Irving Jewell, "Theatrical Presentation," *Movie Makers*, November 1938, 564.

⁴⁹¹ Peter A. LeNeve Foster, "Planning Home Movie Programs," *Movie Makers*, January 1936, 25.

reserved for the feature film or main event – in the hopes that the audience would be more inclined to give it “a more favorable reaction.”⁴⁹²

Much of the advice offered by amateur exhibition experts was framed as following “the precepts of the professional theater” when planning the show.⁴⁹³ The variety of a balanced program originated in the early years of film exhibition during the vaudeville era. Like film programs, the vaudeville program was not haphazardly put together, but a “rigid framework” created through an agonizing process.⁴⁹⁴ The order and substance of the program, developed by the booking officer and manager of the theater, was “used to manipulate and feed the expectations and desires of vaudeville audiences.”⁴⁹⁵ According to George A. Gottlieb, booking agent for the Palace Theatre in New York, the typical vaudeville program consisted of nine acts. The opener, “a dumb act,” relied on “visual rather than auditory attention” – “acrobats, animal acts, magicians, dancers” – so as to still be enjoyed during the “noise of late-arriving patrons.”⁴⁹⁶ The first true performance is a more “typical vaudeville act,” like a “male-female singing team,” to prepare the audience for the show and attune their attention to the stage.⁴⁹⁷ The third act is a brief dramatic play that delivers the first “big punch” of the evening, followed by a “personality act: a comedy team or well-liked vocalists.”⁴⁹⁸ The final act before intermission, was reserved for the programs “second most prestigious and important” act that had piqued the interest of even the most inattentive audience member. Intermission was usually followed by a “strong specialty act or a comic dumb act” that walked a tight rope of holding audience interest without

⁴⁹² Jewell, “Theatrical Presentation,” 565.

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 564.

⁴⁹⁴ Robert C. Allen, “Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction” (dissertation, The University of Iowa), 48.

⁴⁹⁵ Allen, “Vaudeville,” 48.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, 48-49.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, 49.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

overshadowing any of the proceeding acts. The seventh act is another dramatic, possibly a comedic melodramatic, play. The acts that proceeded intermission were all built towards the crescendo of the show, “the culmination of the program,” – a hit comedy show performed by a “performer of celebrity status.”⁴⁹⁹ Once the headliner was finished, the final act, like the first, is a “dumb act” that singled the end of the show but could still be enjoyed while audience members noisily left the theater.⁵⁰⁰

The importance of the “show” continued into the Nickelodeon era and well into the eras of the picture palace and feature film. A typical program during the silent era consisted of a variety of film genres: one- or two-reel comedies and dramas, newsweeklies, serials, animated cartoons, and scenic or travel films.⁵⁰¹ Even in the 1920s, when the feature film gained popularity among exhibitors and audiences, the concept of “the show” was still highly valued. Within “the show,” the four-reel feature film was merely one attraction among many: orchestras, \$30,000 organs, architectural theater design, ushers, “live acts, musical performances (such as orchestral overtures or illustrated songs), newsweeklies, comedy shorts, or animated cartoons.”⁵⁰² Film historian Richard Koszarski views the “belief in a balanced program” held by theater managers during the silent era almost as a religious doctrine.⁵⁰³ And this belief in the balanced program held true with audiences: “Surveys throughout most of the 1920s suggest that only a small fraction (10 percent in one survey) of movie goers had come to see the feature; the overwhelming majority (68 percent) had come for the ‘event.’”⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁹ Allen, “Vaudeville,” 50.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture 1915-1928* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1990), 48.

⁵⁰² Hansen, *Babel*, 99.

⁵⁰³ Koszarski, *Evening’s Entertainment*, 53.

⁵⁰⁴ Hansen, *Babel*, 99.

While movie programs varied among exhibitors, most theaters emphasized the importance of a “well-balanced” program. A “well-balanced” program meant a combination of various genres, including films and live acts. According to Douglas Gomery, a “typical movie show began with a ten-minute overture,” followed by a live act segment, a “comedy short, newsreels, and a feature film” in that order.⁵⁰⁵ This model program was arguably instigated by Samuel “Roxy” Rothapfel, the manager of The Regent and The Strand. While other theaters spent their energy and concentration on refining their projection techniques to create the finest picture, Roxy was much more interested in arranging the films, music, and live acts in an “ideal program.”⁵⁰⁶ Roxy’s “ideal program” consisted of three reels of film:

First an ‘industrial,’ a leisurely introduction to the entertainment; some escalation in vitality with a song (not specified, but likely accompanied by stereopticon slides following contemporary practice); ‘a splendid dramatic reel,’ increasing the intensity of the program; and, finally, a comedy, so that the ‘audience will leave their seats all smiles and satisfaction.’⁵⁰⁷

He was adamant that music be played throughout the entire show to create a sense of unity among the various acts and films: “not one minute during the entire performance should your music cease.”⁵⁰⁸ Each act and film would have a specific score, a lively waltz for example, which would be controlled by the projectionist. Such a show closely resembled a living, breathing performance conducted by the exhibitor. So much so that, by Roxy’s insistence, it should be rehearsed before stepping in front of the public.⁵⁰⁹ The advice offered to amateurs for their own

⁵⁰⁵ Douglas Gomery, “Toward A History of Film Exhibition: The Case of The Picture Palace” in *Film: Historical-Theoretical Speculations*, 1977, 19.

⁵⁰⁶ William Paul, *When Movies Were Theater: Architecture, Exhibition, and the Evolution of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 64.

⁵⁰⁷ Paul, *Movies*, 64.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

domestic shows was couched in this same sense of professionalism expressed in Roxy's program and other vaudeville and nickelodeon shows.

As the Victorian era parlor, overfilling with "character" representations, transformed to the modern, simplified living room, the middle-class was still eager to present their identity, now defined by a more nuanced "personality." I contend that amateur filmmaking and domestic film exhibition became a primary means for expressing the residents' and, therefore, middle-class identity. This was accomplished by the utilization of the new, modernized technology of film and further represented through the content produced, collected, projected, and consumed. Within the modern society of the 1930s, amateur filmmaking and exhibition acted as a medium to express middle-class social roles and as a means of "social 'up-classing.'"⁵¹⁰ Not only did amateur filmmakers and projectionists display an artistic mindset (taste) and ability to adapt to new technologies but displayed "considerable financial resources" by owning and operating the required film equipment.⁵¹¹ Domestic film exhibition followed Grier's observation that modern domesticity "suggested that the world be brought into the house and mediated, miniaturizing it and giving it its stamp of approval for family consumption."⁵¹² More specifically, the middle-class identity of the 1930s was mediated through the domestic newsreel – professionally and amateur produced – and the narrativized home movie.

Domestic Newsreels & Middle-Class Memories

⁵¹⁰ Charles Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Moviemaking, 1923-1960* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 15.

⁵¹¹ Tepperman, *Amateur*, 73.

⁵¹² Grier, "Memory Palace," 62.

The earliest vaudeville audiences of the motion picture demanded “scenes of life in the world” – “movies of horse-drawn ambulances, or bathers splashing in a pool, or a hundred other sights of daily industry and amusement.”⁵¹³ These films were defined as “topicals” and could be broken down into three categories: local actualities, travel films, and newsreels. Films that focused on real-life events and subjects were regarded as a “local actuality.”⁵¹⁴ The appeal, of the “topical film,” specifically the “local actuality,” was the fascination of being able to see your own community and neighbors on the big screen.⁵¹⁵ The audience became the “stars” of the film, able to witness their lives presented directly back at them. The “local actuality” became so popular among audiences that, according to Kathryn Fuller, nickelodeon managers began producing and developing “local pictures in almost reckless fashion.”⁵¹⁶

The second topical film, travel films, is still popular today with nature and wildlife series. Anne Friedberg closely associates the travel film with the trajectory of the “panorama, diorama, and cinema, where, as the gaze became more ‘virtually’ mobile, the spectator became more physically immobile.”⁵¹⁷ The travel film followed the typical narrative of an actual tourist adventure: prearranged “sights” (a narrative sequence) aided by a guidebook (informational titles).⁵¹⁸ Robert Allen differentiates between two types of travel films: the “armchair traveller” film and the “kinesthetic” film. The “armchair traveller” film resembled what contemporary audiences might be familiar with today when viewing a travel and wildlife series. The

⁵¹³ Sklar, *Movie-Made*, 74.

⁵¹⁴ Allen, “Vaudeville,” 104.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵¹⁶ Kathryn H. Fuller, “Boundaries of Participation: The Problem of Spectatorship and American Film Audiences, 1905-1930” in *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 4 December 1990, 79.

⁵¹⁷ Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 61.

⁵¹⁸ Friedberg, *Window*, 59.

“kinesthetic film,” though, used “travel in a much more literal sense; it was designed to produce an almost physiological thrill in audiences by giving the illusion either of being in the path of a moving object or of actually moving through space.”⁵¹⁹ Travel films were particularly popular among nickelodeon audiences made up of immigrants and the working class who couldn’t afford or were unable to travel themselves.

In the 1910s and 1920s, as public theaters catered to the middle- and upper-classes by offering more narrative and feature films, topical films that were popular among the working class found new life in amateur filmmaking and domestic exhibition spaces. For the middle-class, travel films became a strong indicator of one’s personality and cultural knowledge. More importantly, amateur travel films ideally included a place’s “general atmosphere,” and “natural” close-ups of family members’ faces and locals in order to capture and record the filmmaker’s, and by extension their family’s or friends’, memories. For the film to appear “natural” it was encouraged to frame the travels by a narrative that was planned in advance.⁵²⁰ For instance, to emphasize the general atmosphere of a foreign country, the filmmaker highlighted the “contrast of the old and the new” by shooting a traffic light in Jerusalem that featured both camels and automobiles.⁵²¹ Likewise, to capture a “natural” close-up of a local it was more “interesting” to see “a face concentrated on some definite task,” like one of the local industries, such as fishing or cattle, or a unique custom.⁵²² When these foreign-travel home movies were eventually screened in the home for the family or outside guests, the people and foreign culture captured by the cameraperson became, as Patricia Zimmerman asserts, “a spectacle,” and one that is

⁵¹⁹ Allen, “Vaudeville,” 130.

⁵²⁰ Charles W. Herbert, “This is How a Professional Shoots Travel..,” *Home Movies*, May 1939, 189.

⁵²¹ Herbert, “Travel,” 204.

⁵²² *Ibid*, 205.

“commodified and quantified... for consumption in the United States.”⁵²³ The mediation process of foreign travel films transformed the film, and its subjects, like the modern living room, into commodified objects representing the personality of the projectionist, family, and middle-class in general.

The final and most important “topical film” that was popular with audiences was the newsreel. The newsreel merged filmmaking techniques and subject matter from both the local actuality and travel films. Nicholas Pronay suggests that the first newsreel was shot by the Lumiere brothers in 1895 of delegates arriving at the Congress of the French Photographic Societies and subsequently screened for the same delegates the following day.⁵²⁴ The Lumiere brothers, seemingly unknowingly, converted two “cardinal techniques of local or specialist journalism:” ensuring the news item interested a specific audience and focused on subjects that viewers could “identify with or already know, their neighbours, their colleagues or their vicarious familiars, such as public ‘personalities.’”⁵²⁵ In the ensuing years, the newsreel became an established “medium of communication and persuasion” with the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1896, followed closely by the Boer War.⁵²⁶ These war-focused newsreels appeased the “public fascination with war and the machinery of war” with any depiction of a disaster being immensely popular.⁵²⁷ The footage from the Spanish-American War revealed exotic locales that not only appealed to the audience’s fascination with travelogues but also provided images of the faraway theater of war.⁵²⁸

⁵²³ Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 81.

⁵²⁴ Nicholas Pronay, “The Newsreels: The Illusion of Actuality” in *The Historian and Film* edited by Paul Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 97.

⁵²⁵ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 97.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵²⁷ Allen, “Vaudeville,” 144.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

These war-time newsreels revealed to producers and exhibitors that news told using moving pictures fostered much more emotional involvement from readers than stills and the printed word.⁵²⁹ The conviction and emotional manipulation of newsreels replaced the critical individual with a mass audience by acting on the spectators “like a demagogue.”⁵³⁰ For this reason newsreels became an effective tool for the American government’s entry into the First World War. Although WWI newsreels did indeed inform the public, they more closely resembled propaganda art. Woodrow Wilson’s administration produced, edited, and finalized each film, leaving “unflattering footage” on the shelf, for American theater exhibition to “sell the American public on the war.”⁵³¹ While war-time newsreels were immensely popular with audiences, they revealed the immense difficulties of filming actual battles. Not only did the filmmaker gamble on the correct location of an “event” but they had to depend on the unpredictability of equipment and unreliable weather for good light.⁵³² These difficulties influenced future newsreel productions in two crucial ways: a focus on predictable subject matter and the rise of fake or staged footage.

Newsreels that were able to capture shocking and unpredictable events were immensely popular with modern audiences. Yet, the actual filming of such events proved extremely difficult as the cameraperson didn’t know where or when to point the camera. What emerged as popular subject matter for newsreel producers, then, were events that the filmmaker could plan and rehearse for: “parades, ceremonies, training exercises, and the like.”⁵³³ Many newsreels focused on “state-sponsored pageantry and official ceremony” as the filming could be easily preplanned

⁵²⁹ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 98.

⁵³⁰ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 99.

⁵³¹ Gomery, *Shared*, 143.

⁵³² Pronay, “Newsreels,” 99.

⁵³³ *Ibid*, 99.

and often featured familiar celebrity faces.⁵³⁴ Amateur filmmakers were similarly encouraged to focus on events, like parades, where the local newspapers gave the route beforehand that allowed the filmmaker to preplan and know where to aim their camera.⁵³⁵ The amateur, though, had an advantage over professional newsreel filmmakers. Limited to their local and familiar surroundings, the amateur, according to one amateur filmmaking expert, was able to capture their town's "hidden beauty, possibly its pathos and certainly its humor" that may be concealed from the average resident or visitor.⁵³⁶ Through disciplined planning, a keen eye for selecting subject matter, and, most important, editing, the filmmaker could transform the mundane into something exciting and emotionally resonant.⁵³⁷ By capturing an event, subject, even a commonplace object "from an unusual viewpoint – one from which we are not accustomed to view it in everyday life" – it had the ability to offer "an entirely fresh and exciting appearance."⁵³⁸ Where the professional may focus their attention on the surface of an event, the amateur newsreel has the capability of uncannily displaying the spectator to their own hometown. In the context of a domestic film exhibition, the amateur newsreel presented spectators with the filmmaker's – often white, straight, and middle-class – perspective and, consequently, their interests and personality.

Sporting events were also popular among amateur newsreel filmmakers. The field or stadium location allowed filmmakers to effortlessly and economically plan their shots beforehand. Sports were also inherently action-packed and competitive, which created a natural dramatic narrative for spectators.⁵³⁹ Sporting events, specifically football, were also easily

⁵³⁴ Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 54.

⁵³⁵ Sargent, "When Newsreels are Real," 233.

⁵³⁶ Leyda, "Tips on Topicals," 13.

⁵³⁷ Ibid, 13.

⁵³⁸ Sherman Price, "Is it Exciting?," *Movie Makers*, August 1940, 390.

⁵³⁹ Fielding, *American Newsreel*, 58.

transferrable to the realm of domestic film exhibition. Before the game began, it was crucial that the amateur filmmaker position themselves and their camera so that as the game progressed and the sun set, it would be positioned behind the camera.⁵⁴⁰ The filming of the game itself, in addition to specific, but various, plays, needed to capture the “atmosphere” of the game by incorporating a variety of elements: the parading band, close-ups of the scoreboard, cheering crowds, and “the drunk who always starts a fight in the next section.”⁵⁴¹ While disconnected from the game narrative, the drunk painted a more lively atmosphere through their boozy spectacle that made for a much more interesting film. The combination of plays and atmosphere were then edited together to form a narrative of sequences. For instance, one amateur filmmaking expert suggested “a scene of an important play followed by one of the enthusiastic cheering from the stands and then, if the score had been changed by the play, a telephoto closeup of the score board could be spliced in.”⁵⁴² It is worth noting that much of the advice for filming sporting events explained the game to the reader: “A pass usually takes place when one player of the advancing team falls back some distance from the rest. If this position is taken on the fourth, or last, down, however, the possibility is that it will be a kick.” This revealed the filmmakers as unfamiliar with the subject, but more interested, it would seem, in the personality portrayed by screening a film of a football game.⁵⁴³

The advice offered regarding sporting events for amateur newsreels highlights the importance of presenting sensationalized news images instead of “accurate information” through editing and narrativizing.⁵⁴⁴ Silent newsreels, in particular, due to their inability to verbally

⁵⁴⁰ Kenneth F. Space and Donald Brady, “Cine Touchdowns,” *Movie Makers*, November 1931, 595

⁵⁴¹ Ernest W. Page, “Short but Perfect,” *Movie Makers* November 1932, 477.

⁵⁴² Sidney C. Hayward, “A Fable for Football Filmers,” *Movie Makers*, October 1931, 563.

⁵⁴³ Space, “Cine Touchdowns,” 595.

⁵⁴⁴ Fielding, *American Newsreel*, 45.

communicate, relied on more spectacle-driven news stories that were more entertaining than informative.⁵⁴⁵ In fact, in lieu of political events and other informative subjects, many silent newsreels featured stunts performed by their very own cameraperson. One of the more significant outcomes of this was the realization that audiences responded more favorably if the newsreel was a “story” made up of “sequential juxtapositions.”⁵⁴⁶ Editing became a crucial skill in developing sequences. So crucial, in fact, that the editor – commonly described as a “scenarist” in amateur filmmaking magazines – arguably became more central than the cameraperson.⁵⁴⁷ Newsreel editors could, potentially, take genuine shots from a real event and location and construct a fantasy or charade.⁵⁴⁸ In addition to manipulating the representation of an incident through editing, it was common for producers to manufacture or re-enact aspects of a particular event. These manipulations, however, were not viewed as misleading but were seen as “reveal[ing] the true nature of the subject matter” through the sequential and juxtaposed narrative told.⁵⁴⁹ Truth, in this sense, did not reside “in the photographic credentials of any one shot,” but in the combined elements of the film.⁵⁵⁰

American newsreel historian Raymond Fielding outlines four categories of newsreel manipulation. The first strategy, and the less manipulative, involved “theatrically staged recreations of famous events” that were “based roughly upon the original but not intended or likely to fool audiences.”⁵⁵¹ The second strategy involved the re-creation of a newsworthy event

⁵⁴⁵ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 108.

⁵⁴⁶ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 100.

⁵⁴⁷ L. O. Ulrich & R. C. Bennett define a scenarist as an editor in reverse in “This is How Hollywood Edits Movies,” *Home Movies*, March 1939, 98.

⁵⁴⁸ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 101.

⁵⁴⁹ Fielding, *American Newsreel*, 148.

⁵⁵⁰ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 100.

⁵⁵¹ Fielding, *American Newsreel*, 37.

featuring the same “location, participants, and circumstances of the original.”⁵⁵² This allowed producers to rehearse, craft sharper compositions than if they had to film the real event, and juxtapose genuine footage with the re-creation.⁵⁵³ The third strategy presented “rough re-creations of famous events, made without attempting to duplicate known participants of the events.”⁵⁵⁴ The last strategy was the outright faking of a famous event that featured celebrities and public figures. As more and more newsreel productions entered the market, however, this last strategy was quickly abandoned as it was likely another production company could verify the legitimacy of the event.⁵⁵⁵ With each manipulative strategy, however, newsreels gained an “increased smoothness of presentation and a more theatrical style” that resulted in “a proportionate decrease in authenticity, believability, immediacy, and journalistic integrity.”⁵⁵⁶

The introduction of sound to newsreels in the late 1920s helped transform it from an informative, if sometimes fraudulent medium, into a “fully-fledged journalistic” one with “a potent form of political persuasion.”⁵⁵⁷ While live-recorded sound effects increased the newsreels authenticity – even though fake sound effects recorded in a studio increasingly replaced original recordings – it wasn’t until the introduction of the journalist voice-over that newsreels became significantly persuasive.⁵⁵⁸ The images of the film were quickly subsumed by a rush of words from a persuasive and vociferous voice that told audiences what they were seeing, and relied less on clear, tangible footage. This subsequently led to the increased use of re-creations, old silent newsreel footage, and vague, random shots.⁵⁵⁹ The authoritative nature of

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid, 150.

⁵⁵⁴ Fielding, *American Newsreel*, 37.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 151.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 168.

⁵⁵⁷ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 97.

⁵⁵⁸ Fielding, *American Newsreel*, 168.

⁵⁵⁹ Pronay, “Newsreels,” 111.

sound in newsreels translated to the advice columns and advertisements of sound equipment for amateur filmmakers and domestic film exhibitions. The middle-class identity was shared and shaped through sound in two fundamental ways. First, a “varied collection of suitable records” that was balanced presented with the home show illustrated an “intelligent, artistic amateur” to the audience.⁵⁶⁰ Second, sound played a crucial role in establishing memories and records for future generations. For the filmmakers and projectionists who didn’t utilize sound, one expert asks why they would “default on your obligation to the future generation? Will you deprive your grandchildren of the pleasure of listening to your voice?”⁵⁶¹ He recommended, instead, to write and shoot a film where the filmmaker would “act, sing, and be the life of the party” so that their grandchildren would have “something to remember you by.”⁵⁶² One 1935 ad for RCA sound equipment, featuring images of an infant, similarly marketed their product as transforming “the movies you take today into living, breathing, talking, singing, laughing records of the precious life about you” (Fig 49).

⁵⁶⁰ Leon Falk, “Music for Silent Films,” *Movie Makers*, February 1931, 76

⁵⁶¹ Ray W. Merville, “Records Provide Sound, Plot, For Home Movies...,” *Home Movies*, November 1939, 451.

⁵⁶² Merville, “Records,” 451.



Figure 49 1935 RCA Sound Ad

If an amateur film projectionist was more of a collector than filmmaker and desired newsreels to become part of their show, the offerings were slim. It wasn't until 1937 when *The New York Times* credited former newspaper journalist and, professional cameraman, Eugene Castle, as the pioneer of professionally produced newsreels for the home.⁵⁶³ Castle served as an apprentice in several newsreel production companies before helping in the formation of Fox Movietone News. At 21 years old Castle started his own newsreel business "with a capital of \$500 and a commission from a Pacific Coast railroad magnate to make a series of pictures depicting the scenic wonders along the railroad right-of-way and the natural beauty of the national

Fig 3.10

⁵⁶³ Though, Pathegram's Newsreel division marketed 10mm versions of the Coronation prior to June 1937.

parks that could be reached by train.”⁵⁶⁴ In June 1937, Castle introduced *News Parade*, professionally produced 8mm and 16mm newsreels specifically for domestic film exhibitions (Fig 50). *News Parade* featured newsworthy subjects from theater exhibited newsreels that were reduced to 8mm and 16mm for the domestic movie show.⁵⁶⁵ *News Parade* was marketed as “an unprejudiced motion picture report” that avoided “sensationalism”⁵⁶⁶ and served “as a living reminder” and “segment of history” that held “permanent value in the home” for “historians of the future.”⁵⁶⁷ *News Parade*’s first planned release was the coronation of George VI but was quickly replaced with footage of the Hindenburg disaster.⁵⁶⁸ George VI of England’s coronation shortly followed in a separate release, with a third focused on the life story of the Duke of Windsor.⁵⁶⁹ All three newsreels were immediate successes: the Hindenburg film “sold more than 9,000,000 feet of film, with demands for additional footage still coming in” and the coronation film eventually “leading the Hindenburg in footage sales, having passed the 12,000,000 mark” and The Duke of Windsor film “sold approximately 2,500,000 feet” of film.⁵⁷⁰ The film based on the life of The Duke of Windsor, “The Life of Edward” (Fig 51) followed by his funeral, initially seems out of place in an American middle-class film collection. Yet, in addition to showcasing various celebrities and royal members, these films highlighted the middle-class allure to gentility and their desire to present refined qualities. As Bushman notes, the “spread of gentility speaks for the enduring allure of royal palaces and great country estates, for the enticing mystery of

⁵⁶⁴ Thomas M Pryor, “Newsreels for The Home,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), July 4, 1937.

⁵⁶⁵ Fielding, *American Newsreel*, 188.

⁵⁶⁶ Robert Woodman, “How Castle Edits News,” *Movie Makers*, July 1938, 349.

⁵⁶⁷ “Castle Provides History,” *Movie Makers*, December 1938, 615.

⁵⁶⁸ Pryor, “Newsreels for The Home.”

⁵⁶⁹ Fielding, *American Newsreel*, 188.

⁵⁷⁰ Pryor, “Newsreels for The Home.”

nobility and gentry, for the enchantment of those seemingly charmed and exalted lives, for enthrallment with their grace of movement, speech, and costume.”⁵⁷¹

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Figure 50 The News Parade Announcement

⁵⁷¹ Bushman, *Refinement*, xix.

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If he cannot supply you, write to

CASTLE FILMS, Inc.

30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA New York City Circle 7-7388	1312 CLAUS-SPRECKELS BUILDING 703 Market Street, San Francisco, Calif. Sutter 1284	WRIGLEY BUILDING Chicago, Illinois Superior 4648
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Figure 51 Castle Films "Life of Edward" Ad

The persuasive power of newsreels is further illustrated by Castle's partnership with the United States Government. Known as the "newsboy for the government," during World War II Castle both produced and distributed a number of government films, including ones "of a confidential nature for the Navy" that made up 20 percent of overall production.⁵⁷² Castle Films also regularly distributed films issued by the Department of Agriculture, by the Office of War Information, the Canadian Film Board and the United States Office of Education.⁵⁷³ The military even utilized Castle's "war material" films for training and entertaining troops and went as far as stocking "every naval vessel...with a complete set of Mr. Castle's wares."⁵⁷⁴ Castle's more

⁵⁷² Theodore Strauss, "Of One Man's Castle: In Which Eugene Castle Proves That Big Profits Can Grow on Small Ideas," *New York Times* (New York, NY), April 4, 1943.

⁵⁷³ Strauss, "One Man's Castle."

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

entertaining films, financed by the Chesterfield cigarette manufacturers, were shown to “Army Camps, USO centers, or even on maneuvers” that featured “a plug for Chesterfield.”⁵⁷⁵ For training purposes, Castle distributed “pre-flight pre-induction training films for use in schools” that taught “youngsters the rudiments of flying under the regular Army and Navy educational program.”⁵⁷⁶

The structure of newsreels did not differ much between amateur and professional ones. The amateur newsreel began with a “spot news” idea that was used to grab the audience’s attention. This attention grabber was followed by topics that contained variety in subject matter, shot type, and length. The final clip was typically humorous, or an exciting and emotional subject that had the most news value.⁵⁷⁷ The various newsreel clips were identified by two classifications: actual news and “manufactured” news.⁵⁷⁸ The first classification may include historical moments of your family, constructing a new home, municipal events, the town 4th of July parade, or images of distant relatives or friends arriving and departing after a visit.⁵⁷⁹ Following early professional newsreel producers, the second classification had “plenty of latitude” as it was all manufactured.⁵⁸⁰ For instance, one columnist advised staging a fight between friends on a quiet street corner of town as two rival newsboys who seek the same customer:

They scrap. The victor sells the prospect a newspaper. Loser nurses a black eye...

The customer is a friend of yours and the two boys are neighborhood youngsters

⁵⁷⁵ Strauss, “One Man’s Castle.”

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Epes W. Sargent, “New Wrinkles on Newsreels,” *Movie Makers*, January 1936, 17.

⁵⁷⁸ Richard C. Lockwood, “Making a Family Newsreel,” *Movie Makers*, December 1941, 542.

⁵⁷⁹ Lockwood, “Making a Family Newsreel,” 542 & 569.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid, 569.

who will stage the fight for a quarter apiece – or maybe for pleasure. Just tell them what you want and stage the fight on a quiet street corner where you will not attract attention. Your friend carries makeup for that black eye, which is put on between shifts of camera position.⁵⁸¹

Better yet, following the professional strategy of manipulative editing, amateurs were advised to cut and insert a professional newsreel, like from Castle Films, and juxtapose it with one of your clips “to give it the real newsreel flavor.”⁵⁸²

The manipulative qualities of newsreels, both professional and amateur ones, share affinities with early film exhibition and the practices employed by a theater’s general manager and exhibitor. It was common for the general manager of theaters in the 1910s and 1920s to be conflated with in-house editors and projectionists. A prominent figure of this collapsed role was Eric T. Clarke, the director of The Eastman Theatre in Rochester. Clarke, above all else, strongly emphasized “the show” over individual films. The standard program at The Eastman Theatre in 1921 “included an eight-minute overture, a ten-minute news weekly (edited by the management from four rival ‘news services’), a ten-minute live act, and a ten-minute comedy or novelty film.”⁵⁸³ Each act would vary in length, however the feature film was a strict “eighty-minutes or less” to adhere to Clarke’s “two-hour program policy.”⁵⁸⁴ If the feature film was longer than eighty-minutes, Clarke, refusing to cut any one act or lengthen the overall two-hour program (which, he believed, would confuse the standards his audience had grown accustomed), resorted to cutting the film himself, or, more accurately, with his inhouse editors, and/or speed up the film

⁵⁸¹ Lockwood, “Making a Family Newsreel,” 569.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Koszarski, *Evening’s Entertainment*, 53.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

so it was eighty-minutes or less.⁵⁸⁵ Ironically, the audience at the Eastman, up to 50 percent according to Clarke, would often arrive partway into the feature and would thus have to stay throughout the show and into the next to see what they missed.⁵⁸⁶ His solution to this “catastrophe” was, when selecting films for exhibition, to skip the first one or two reels to see if the narrative could still be understood.⁵⁸⁷

An alternative solution from Clarke was for his in-house editors and staff to take the “overlong” feature film and make edits. Whether these were removing scenes or sequences all together, speeding them up, or revising the overall structure of the film, Clarke was determined to never present a “weak film within an ostentatious frame.”⁵⁸⁸ In response, two motion picture publications, *Photoplay* and *The Moving Picture World* between 1909 and 1912 strongly advocated for a standard projection speed to curb the “evil” act of “picture racing.”⁵⁸⁹ The tradition of exhibitors manipulating already produced films has a long presence in the history of cinema. One of the earliest multi-shot films, for example, Edwin S. Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery*, was distributed in individual reels that allowed exhibitors control over the film’s assembly.⁵⁹⁰ This was famously done with Porter’s film as exhibitors, not the filmmakers, chose when the famous shot of a cowboy aiming and shooting his gun at the camera played at the beginning or end of the film.⁵⁹¹ In early film exhibition, and continuing well into the 1920s, projectionists and exhibitors seemingly had editorial control over the narrative of a film and were assumed to have a significant influence on the final product and spectatorial experience.⁵⁹² This

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Koszarski, *Evening’s Entertainment*, 53.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, 54.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, 56.

⁵⁹⁰ Hansen, *Babel*, 42.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

control ultimately meant that exhibitors and projectionists tied the film's meaning directly to the specific context in which it was viewed. This practice continued until, according to Miriam Hansen, the "reduction of a primitive diversity of genres, the gentrification of exhibition, and the introduction of the feature film," that allowed the creation of "centrally organized production companies" through the Motion Picture Patent's Company and could exert control over the film's meaning as a "product and commodity."⁵⁹³ In the same way that professional exhibitors and projectionists took editorial control of a film, domestic filmmakers and projectionists similarly altered a film's meanings in conjunction with the complete show and exhibition space. These professional practices increasingly influenced amateur film discourses that were subsequently domesticated in the home and continued to blur understandings of amateur and professional attributes.

The preplanning and editing of amateur newsreels had significant implications for American middle-class identity. While amateur newsreels did focus on newsworthy events and mimicked the professional newsreel style, too often they consisted of "family news" and more closely resembled the contemporary home movie. Amateur filmmakers in the 1930s didn't have the resources to compete or replicate professional newsreels. Instead, they thought of the newsreel as a way to preserve newsworthy events of their life: "the baby cuts his tooth, you buy a new car, your son wins a local 'soap box auto derby,' you take a trip to some picturesque spot."⁵⁹⁴ As I already described, some of these films contained events that were so commonplace that, to an outsider, they were insignificant. What guest would be interested in "family tennis matches and golf foursomes," scenes of an "amateur sailor and swimmer,"⁵⁹⁵ or family habits

⁵⁹³ Hansen, *Babel*, 98.

⁵⁹⁴ Lockwood, "Making a Family Newsreel," 542.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid, 569.

like typing a letter on a typewriter, playing the piano, and watching the family birdcage?⁵⁹⁶ The subjects presented here are undoubtedly of a distinct class, one that values family relationships, bourgeois athletics, and artistic and educational practices. The amateur newsreel, thus, acted as the American middle-class archive and parlor room – signifying, through mediation, a specific personality, and class status.

Paul D. Hugon of *Movie Makers* magazine outlined a detailed scenario for amateur filmmakers that, similar to “salesmanship,” will “provide the stimulus that will produce that particular response and no other.”⁵⁹⁷ The following outline from Hugon is indeed long; however, it is important in establishing not only his audience but the values and commodities that were believed to make up the American middle-class. As Hugon himself admits, the goal of his scenario is to separately establish each character’s identity, “bring them together to establish their relationship,” and then introduce the “environment separately to establish the circumstance that will lead to the conflict.”⁵⁹⁸

1. Closeup, sister at phone: her beau is talking to her as shown by her pleased expression. She says a few words here and there; five feet. 2. Closeup. Mother preparing a salad, hooking a rug, feeding the canary, watering her ferns, cutting the flowers, arranging the silver plate in its case or decorating the table; five feet so far. She hears something; i.e., she turns her head slightly to one side, raises her chin slightly, holds that pose for an instant and then breaks into a smile of recognition, hastens to finish what she is doing and moves away from the camera; five or seven feet more. 3. Dad in the car appears down the street and comes to a

⁵⁹⁶ Paul D. Hugon, “Posing the Family,” *Movie Makers*, March 1931, 141.

⁵⁹⁷ Hugon, “Posing the Family,” 141.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 158.

halt at the curb; five or seven feet. 4. Exterior of the house. Mother appears in the doorway, walks a step forward and waves to Dad; eight feet. 5. Cut back to the phone scene. Sister also hears Dad arriving; says, 'Wait a minute!', cranes her neck in the direction of the window, looks at her wrist watch, says something like, 'I'll be right over,' hands up and begins an exit; seven feet. 6. Cutback to the car at the curb. Dad opens the car door, alights, stands at the curb, waves (supposedly to Mother), then catches sight of something on the opposite side; seven feet. 7. Separate shot of tiny Junior at the side of the house gathering his floral offering for Dad. he catches sight of him, jumps up and exits; seven feet. 8. Junior almost runs into Dad who thanks him grandly for the bouquet without moving more than a step or two from the curb; five feet. (Keep them all from speeding across which would prematurely end the scene.) 9. Different angle, Dad and Junior walk toward the house hand in hand. Mother comes down to meet them halfway. Greetings (actual words must be exchanged); ten feet. 10. Door of the house, Sister comes out with her hat on. She shuts the door behind her; six feet. 11. Longer shot of previous group. Sister comes toward them, greets Dad and says, 'You don't mind if I take the car, do you?' with a gesture toward the curb. Dad laughs and says to Mother, 'She doesn't believe in letting the engine get cold, does she? All right, Sister, go ahead but don't be too late getting back.' Sister throws him a kiss and exits toward the car; fifteen feet. 12. Again at the curb, Sister gets in and drives off; six feet. 13. Return to group. Junior hops on his tricycle and rides out of scene. Dad and Mother walk toward the house; seven feet."⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁹ Hugon, "Posing the Family," 141, 156, 158.

This manufactured newsreel inevitably became a record of the family that could be shared with future generations. More importantly, it blurred the lines between reality and what Louise Anderson coins as “newsreel memory.”

Anderson defines “newsreel memory” as a type of “cultural memory” defined by Marita Sturken. Sturken uses the term “cultural memory” to explain “memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning.”⁶⁰⁰ “Cultural memory” is produced through “technologies of memory” that create representations through images, like cinema.⁶⁰¹ In this way, memories can be shared and given new meanings based on the context within which they are experienced. For Sturken, “personal memory, cultural memory, and history do not exist within neatly defined boundaries,” but all three can shift and be subsumed by the other.⁶⁰² “Newsreel memory,” according to Anderson, is located in the “liminal space,” then, “between the historical and the autobiographical.” It collapses the memories of actual events and the spectatorial experience of their repeated cultural representation through newsreels.⁶⁰³ The viewing of newsreels and their subsequent imagery highlights the slippery slope between “cultural memory and history itself.”⁶⁰⁴ In other words, “newsreel memory” is the entangled remembering of the event itself and the newsreel representation of the same event.

Anderson, by way of Sturken, asserts that newsreels were one among many forms of media (radio and newspaper in particular) that engaged the nation as a whole with “visual

⁶⁰⁰ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3.

⁶⁰¹ Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 8.

⁶⁰² Ibid, 5.

⁶⁰³ Anderson, “Else-Where,” 2.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid, 4.

evidence of history, and, thus, a prompt or pre-text for subsequent recollections” regarding the country’s own history and creating “common imaginings of a shared past.”⁶⁰⁵ The American national identity, then, was partially constructed through a communal “negotiation between lived experience and the imagined and mythologized.”⁶⁰⁶ Just as “newsreel memory” establishes, questions, and refigures the idea of nationhood and “Americanness,” amateur newsreels, specifically ones focused on the family, aided in the construction of the American middle-class identity.⁶⁰⁷

Newsreels’ persuasive power and ability to produce memories stemmed from their “convincingly accurate record” and “compelling evidence of events,” even if some, or most, of the images were manufactured. Even so, spectators who were knowledgeable and wise to these manipulative techniques still held “to the conviction that the filmed image irrefutably provides evidence of the real.”⁶⁰⁸ This argument follows the conviction of French film theorist Andre Bazin who argued that the camera’s ability to objectively capture an object “by a mechanical reproduction in the making of which man plays no part” elevates it beyond other art forms and imbues the filmic image with immediacy and authority.⁶⁰⁹ The artist or photographer “enters into the proceedings only in his selection of the object to be photographed” opposed to the sculptor or painter who creates through the motion of their physical body.⁶¹⁰ Therefore, “in spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re-presented*, set before us, that is to say, in time and space.”⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, 8.

⁶⁰⁶ Anderson, “Else-Where,” 7.

⁶⁰⁷ Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 13.

⁶⁰⁸ Anderson, “Else-Where,” 196.

⁶⁰⁹ Andre Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Summer, 1960), 7.

⁶¹⁰ Bazin, “Ontology,” 7.

⁶¹¹ Ibid, 8.

Consider the scenario above written by Paul D. Hugon. The scenario, while manufactured, attempts to capture, and present what is believed to be the “true nature” of an American middle-class family. The recognition of family members, a familiar setting – their home and yard – and a plausible scenario imbues the film with newsreels’ qualities of immediacy and authority. The filming and screening of Hugon’s scenario ultimately becomes conflated with real, actual memories of family interactions and relationships. These memories, whether real or imaginary, shape the identity of the family, especially as it becomes a sentimental record for future generations, who may be none the wiser to the “actuality” of the subject matter. The family, and ultimately American middle-class identity, is continuously shaped and reshaped by the archival nature of the film. This becomes even more complicated if the filmmaker inserts sequences of professionally produced newsreels, like from Castle Films, into their own. Not only will this present the professionally produced scenes as your own but will “provide a valuable record for the future – you will have the history of your family life against the background of world events.”⁶¹² As the film is viewed over and over, it creates “an indexical link” between the events represented and the imagined memories in the spectator. The spectator does not recall “the pre-discursive events...but the diegetic world of verisimilitude” created by the footage.⁶¹³ As Anderson’s research shows, “the memory of a specific event is often perceived to be located within a specific newsreel, and beyond this, for many people newsreel footage *becomes* the historic event to such a degree that it is often impossible to imagine the event itself in the *absence* of the newsreel footage.”⁶¹⁴ The family newsreel, real or manufactured, with

⁶¹² Lockwood, “Making a Family Newsreel,” 569.

⁶¹³ Anderson, “Else-Where,” 197.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid, 206.

every repeated viewing becomes inseparable from memory and history and influences the middle-class spectator's own personality and identity.⁶¹⁵

Conclusion

The audience views images captured by the camera as a “trace” or “imprint” of reality. The family newsreel combines the factual reality of the indexical image with the representation and illusory reality the filmmaker constructs through editing, sound, narrative, and shot composition. The film's illusory reality is intertwined with the filmmaker and spectator's memory, identity, and history. The spectator, whether present in the film or not, experiences the family newsreel as a projection of their memories and cultural knowledge of the middle-class identity.⁶¹⁶ Thus, like the family newsreel itself, the middle-class spectator's identity is ultimately stitched together using threads of home movie images and its illusory techniques.

The American middle-class identity was additionally presented through the construction of home theaters. The following chapter focuses on the architectural and spatial designs of living room theaters: where a filmic apparatus is built into the foundation of the home and concealed when not in use, and the home theater: a domestic space, typically a basement or attic, specifically designed for film exhibition. In replicating and domesticating the public theater, the middle-class conveyed the ultimate form of professionalism and added nuance to their

⁶¹⁵ Ibid, 206.

⁶¹⁶ See Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus” in *Movies and Methods Vol. 2*, edited by Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

dependency on the “commodity aesthetic” through the “gadgeteer” and a “brand of cinephilia” defined less by cinema knowledge and more by technical mastery and expertise.

CHAPTER FOUR | THE PHANTOM THEATER: DOMESTIC CINEPHILIA AND THE WAR EFFORT

In the 1920s and 1930s many amateur filmmaking products blurred Victorian and Progressive era aesthetics with modern technologies and sensibilities. In 1929, the Coutard Projection Screen Panel (Fig 52) boasted its unique ability to be “*two gifts in one!*.” Not only was it a “*wall panel* of rich dignity and charm” but, hidden above the tapestry was “a *permanent projection screen*.” The projectionist simply lowered “the screen like a window shade and raise[ed] it *out of sight* at the end of the performance!”⁶¹⁷ To fit the interior design and personality of the homeowner, the “beautiful panel” came in a range of motifs, “from the simplest to the most elaborate – and a wide assortment of colors and fabrics.”⁶¹⁸

In the years that followed, amateur filmmaking equipment manufacturers emphasized portable products that could easily be transported between various locations, whether within the domestic space or outside it. With a few exceptions, it wasn’t until the 1940s that amateur filmmaking and home exhibition discourses emphasized more permanent projection spaces. Updating Coutard’s Projection Screen Panel was the modern Pict-O-Screen introduced in 1946 (Fig 53). The Pict-O-Screen featured a screen “concealed behind an exquisite reproduction” of your choice of “six different” oil paintings, “including landscapes, floral and marine subject – each reproduced in full color by a special process with raised brush stroke effect.” The Pict-O-Screen, “suitable for any home, office, school, or institution,” offered further options to match the consumer’s taste in choice of frame: Antique Gold or Pickled Pine.⁶¹⁹

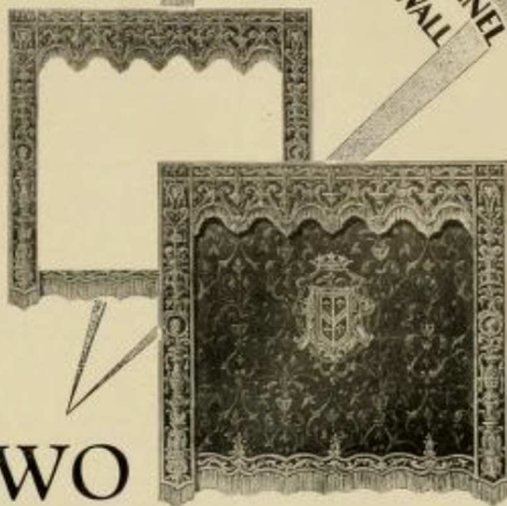
⁶¹⁷ “Coutard Projection Screen Panel Ad,” *Movie Makers* December 1929, 825.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Pict-O-Screen Ad, “A Two-in-one: Projection Screen,” *Movie Makers* December 1946, 452.

A PROJECTION SCREEN
FOR THE FILMS

A BEAUTIFUL PANEL
FOR THE WALL



TWO Remarkable Gifts in ONE!

HERE is an utterly unique Christmas Gift—that will delight anyone who is showing movies in the home! It is actually two gifts in one! First, it is a wall panel of rich dignity and charm that makes a beautiful embellishment in any room. In addition, it provides a permanent projection screen—completely concealed when not in use! You simply lower the screen like a window shade—and raise it out of sight at the end of the performance!

Let the Coutard Projection Screen Panel solve several of your gift problems this Christmas. And why not present one to yourself! There are motifs ranging from the simplest to the most elaborate—and a wide assortment of colors and fabrics. Write today for complete information.

B. SAUBIAC & SON, 305 E. 46TH STREET, NEW YORK
Manufacturers and Distributors

COUTARD

Projection Screen Panel

Figure 52 Coutard Projection Screen Panel Ad

A Two-in-one PROJECTION SCREEN

- ① A Beautiful Oil Painting
- ② A Brilliant Projection Screen

PICT-O-SCREEN

U.S. PATENT APPLIED FOR



AN INVISIBLE PROJECTION SCREEN

This modern projection screen is concealed behind a beautiful oil painting—always ready for instant use. Pull a concealed cord and presto—a second later, you have a modern projection screen ready for slides or movies.

Use Pict-O-Screen Everywhere



• RECREATION ROOM



• DEN



• EXECUTIVES



• DOCTORS



• CLASS ROOMS



• CLUB ROOMS



• SHOW ROOMS



• SALES ROOMS



Costs But Little More Than The Picture Itself...

A remarkable new innovation... a beautiful practical gift for any home. A modern projection screen concealed behind an exquisite reproduction of an oil painting. Your choice of six different pictures including landscapes, floral and marine subjects—each reproduced in full color by a special process with raised brush stroke effect. Each picture has been chosen for its lasting beauty and appeal... each has been painted by an outstanding artist. You have a choice of hand finished frames... in Antique Gold or Pickled Pine finishes—suitable for any home, office, school or institution. Complete framed pictures measure 33" x 40".

The projection screen, cleverly concealed, is always ready for projection of your slides or movies. A slight pull on the concealed cord and the screen is lowered into position... easily... gently... with a feather touch.

The New Pict-O-Screen has the famous Radiant Hy-Fleet Glass Beaded screen surface that makes all pictures look better! You will enjoy brilliant, crisp black-and-white pictures... thrill to full, rich, natural Kodachrome slides and movies.

And the best news of all—the price complete... including choice of painting, selection of hand finished frame, concealed Radiant Hy-Fleet Glass Beaded screen and lowering and raising mechanism... ready for use—is but little more than the regular price of the picture itself.

Mail Coupon Today!

Radiant Manufacturing Corp.
1207 S. Talman Avenue, Chicago 8, Ill.

Gentlemen: Please send me complete information and specifications on the new Radiant Pict-O-Screen.

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

City _____

Zone _____

State _____

My Dealer's Name _____

Address _____

Mail
this
coupon
today
for
full
details

Figure 53 Pict-O-Screen Ad

The Coutard Projection Screen Panel and Pict-O-Screen illustrate the continued desire of the middle-class to present refined sensibilities well into postwar America. As argued in Chapter Three, the “professionalism” of domestic film exhibition was meant to highlight the resident’s adherence to genteel attitudes and culture. As wealth became more tangible and was represented through the purchase of specific goods, the emerging middle-class could display their newfound identity through a “commodity aesthetic.” The parlor and subsequent living room of the modern era came to represent an archival space that informed outsiders of the homeowner’s personality and simultaneously reinforced the resident’s perceived identity. Amateur filmmaking equipment, the preparation before a screening –filming, editing, titling, projector maintenance, sound synchronization, screen and seating arrangements – and the films screened all presented to the audience qualities of professionalism: technical knowledge, showmanship, and filmmaking expertise.

Domestic film exhibitions of the 1920s and 1930s were mostly an ephemeral event. Filmmakers and projectionists typically removed their equipment from a closet or storage area and prepared the exhibition space for each individual screening. This included setting up the screen, unpacking the projector and sound synchronization equipment and ensuring everything operated without error. The home theater of the late 1930s and 1940s represented the epitome of professionalism and proved an elegant and efficient solution to the labor of domestic film exhibitions.⁶²⁰ The home theater became such an accepted solution that architects were advised in 1940 by *Architectural Record* magazine that the “projecting, viewing, and screening” of films needed to be “seriously considered...when designing the modern house.”⁶²¹ One amateur

⁶²⁰ While there were early examples of home theaters before the 1940s, amateur filmmaking discourses emphasized the rise of home theaters beginning in the late 1930s and 1940s.

⁶²¹ “Home Movie Projection Creates New Design Problem,” *Architectural Record* December 1940.

filmmaker, O.S. Granducci of Washington, D.C., was so passionate about his hobby that when planning his home in 1945 he gave the architect plans for “his theatre and workroom first” insisting that the home had to “conform” around the theater.⁶²²

Home theaters in the 1940s became so prominent, in fact, that architectural discourses highlighted the specifics of amateur filmmaking equipment. For instance, architects were advised on the importance of viewing angles, screen type, screen mounting options, and how screen size was determined by the distance between the projector and screen.⁶²³ This development makes sense considering the steep rise in amateur filmmaking practices in the 1930s with those same filmmakers now becoming homeowners in the 1940s. Instead of domestic film exhibition equipment being continually set up and removed, there was a gradual swing to permanence. While still often relegated to the living room, architects and homeowners resorted to building amateur film exhibition equipment into the design and foundation of the house. Unlike the immobile film exhibition equipment outlined in Chapter One, the screen, projector, and sound system were permanently fixed in place as part of the house itself.

Warren Garin of *Home Movies* magazine outlined how one architect’s plans for a living room home theater became a permanent and influential component of domestic living. The screen was mounted on “an ordinary window-shade roller” and hidden inside the fireplace mantel by a hinged lid. Right below the screen, “recessed into the fireplace masonry, is the loudspeaker of the sound system which is permanently connected with the amplifier.”⁶²⁴ The projector and dual turntables for synchronized sound were securely bolted to “a sort of folding ‘ironing board’ unit” that was “built into a wall in the living room and lowered easily into place

⁶²² “Cine Work and Play,” *Movie Makers* February 1945, 51.

⁶²³ “New Design Problem”

⁶²⁴ Warren Garin, “Make Way for Home Movies,” *Home Movies* July 1940, 332.

for screening of movies with sound.” The electric and audio wiring were furthermore “permanently connected” to the projector and turntables. The projectionist simply lowered the table from the wall, like an ironing-board, mounted their film reels, and the show could begin! To conceal the film-board when not in use, a “special decorative treatment” was applied to the wall, which hid any indication of film equipment and the projection-board.⁶²⁵ While living room theaters were indeed popular, especially among apartment dwellers, as *Architectural Record* indicated, the preferred option for domestic film exhibition was “setting aside one room in the house as the movie theatre and making structural provision for equipment.”⁶²⁶

This chapter will focus on the two particular iterations of the filmic apparatus found within the American home in the 1930s and 1940s: the living room theater and home theater. For this chapter, the living room theater refers to a filmic apparatus that was built *into* the very foundation of the home and concealed from residents when not in use. This concealment transformed the projector and screen into an apparatus like the theories advanced by spectatorship scholars of the 1970s. Here the apparatus is invisible to the spectator, acting on the subconscious unless it is made visible and known. The “home theater” will specifically refer to domestic spaces – basements, attics, and garages – that are solely dedicated to film exhibition: permanent screens, projection room, stage, proscenium arch, curtains, neutral walls, and comfortable, immobile chairs. By replicating the design and architecture of the public theater, the home theater becomes a phantom, an experiential simulation of the real thing. In this way, the home theater acted as a Baudrillardian simulacrum that mimicked the public theater but obfuscated its original connotations and structures. The home theater of the Depression Era and wartime America became a material simulacrum that laid the foundation for theorizations of the

⁶²⁵ Garin, “Make Way for Home Movies,” 332-333.

⁶²⁶ “New Design Problem”

contemporary spectatorship that is inundated with interconnected networks of screens, information, and simulations. This chapter further argues that the purpose of the home theater was to symbolize a “brand of cinephilia” defined less by a passionate love for cinema and more by the filmmaker’s technical knowledge while simultaneously fostering a disciplined mode of spectatorship. Both denotations were then coopted by the US government to build support and morale for World War II. In both the living room theater and home theater, the filmic apparatus was an assemblage of media technologies, class status, nationhood, gender roles, and communication networks that foreshadowed the implications for an increasingly mediatized home.

With the home theater on the rise in United States, James W. Moore of *Movie Makers* magazine in 1933 pondered why the home theater rose in popularity so quickly: “Are these creations... the temples of pride in a fascinating hobby? Or are they... the havens from worldly care of countless Timid Souls? Showshops or sanctuaries, that is the question.”⁶²⁷ This chapter will argue that the home theater was all of these things and more: a shrine to cinema, a trophy room, a male workshop and refuge, and, as Barbara Klinger claims, a fortress “where individuals can withdraw to engage in private shows and reveries via the playback of cinematic and other images.”⁶²⁸ While Klinger focuses on contemporary film exhibition technologies – televisions, high-resolution surround sound, digital technologies, and physical media collecting – her concept of the “fortress” shares affinities with the Depression Era and wartime home movie theater. As I outlined in Chapter One, the home has a long history functioning as both a place of betterment and safe haven from the fears of modernity’s uncertainties and public disarray. In the years that

⁶²⁷ James W. Moore. “The Cinema at Home,” *Movie Makers* December 1933, 508.

⁶²⁸ Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and The Home* (Berkley: The University of California Press, 2006), 9.

led up to and during World War II the home became an even stronger symbol and sanctuary for the middle-class American family.

The Wartime Home Theater

Beatriz Colomina asserts that domesticity in the first half of the twentieth century became a “powerful weapon” that boosted morale at home and broadcasted to the world and armed forces overseas a positive way of life. Colomina interrogates the discourse around the domestic lawn and highlights the ways the lawn was a stand-in for the “face of the nation” and played a “key role in simultaneously defining domestic architecture and national ideology.”⁶²⁹ With the lawn being the literal home front, it was all too easy for articles and advertisements to persuade homeowners that to care for the lawn was equal to fighting on the battlefield.⁶³⁰ Moreover, to limit the use of critical wartime resources – “gasoline, automobile tires, and public transportation” – the government, by way of popular media, recommended citizens not leave home, and instead, care for the lawn. This went as far as encouraging homeowners to build a “victory garden” for personal fruits and vegetables to relieve shipping and packing resources and farmers as their wartime responsibilities expanded.⁶³¹

The wartime discourse of the home as home front was also apparent in the pages of amateur filmmaking magazines. As the war raged on amateur filmmaking equipment from film gauges to screens and projectors were in short supply or ceased manufacturing all together.⁶³² With manufacturers no longer producing film projectors for non-theatrical use, amateur filmmaking discourses insisted it was imperative that amateurs properly cared for their current

⁶²⁹ Beatriz Colomina, *Domesticity at War* (Cambridge: The MIT Press. 2007), 114.

⁶³⁰ Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 115.

⁶³¹ Ibid, 116.

⁶³² Joseph Lenser. “Build Me This Post-War Projector,” *Home Movies* December 1943, 398-412

projector in order to prolong its life. Articles emphasized the importance of oiling, cleaning and adjusting belts, polishing the lens for brighter illumination, ensuring the mechanics were operational, and the exterior was free of dust and well-polished.⁶³³ In this way, projector maintenance was framed as a national duty in aiding the war effort. Amateur projectionists were advised to “get in touch with his local Defense Council” and screen “defense training films to many small groups,”⁶³⁴ as well as “civilian defense and O.W.I films.”⁶³⁵

A determining factor in the rise of home theaters during WWII was the amateur’s inability to purchase new equipment or film to produce their own movies. What they could do, however, was improve and experiment with new exhibition spaces.⁶³⁶ The example described below regarding an outdoor screening, shares strong affinities with early film spectatorial experiences of the vaudeville and nickelodeon era. Norville L. Schield opted to screen his films in the family home’s backyard “beside the open air fireplace, under the stars”⁶³⁷ (Fig 54). Prior to the screening, he advised others who might be interested to acquaint the guests beforehand by playing “a few outdoor games... where all can participate.” After the film presentation, the fire was then lit so everyone could “roast marshmallows and sing songs with the aid of an old guitar” and “the words of the songs...projected on the screen from 35mm black and white slides.”⁶³⁸ This particular outdoor screening and sing-along calls to mind the experience of film exhibition during its early years in vaudeville and the nickelodeon. For instance, the sing-along was a common audience activity during the silent era where the orchestra would provide the music

⁶³³ William I. Gatti, “Your Projector How to Lengthen it’s Lifeline,” *Home Movies* June 1943, 174-175, 186.

⁶³⁴ Arthur A. Hebert, “Projection for Defense,” *Movie Makers* May 1942, 196.

⁶³⁵ Gatti, “Lengthen it’s Lifeline,” 174.

⁶³⁶ Kenneth F. Space, “The Clinic: Projection Room,” *Movie Makers* December 1943, 470

⁶³⁷ Norville L. Schield, “Showing Films Out of Doors,” *Movie Makers* August 1945, 299.

⁶³⁸ Schield, “Showing Films Out of Doors,” 299.

with the words to a song projected on screen. Furthermore, though a short-lived experience until the emergence of the drive-thru theatre, “airdome” theaters, “a cousin to the store front nickelodeon,” were an “open lot with a high fence around it, seats set directly on the ground, little sawed-off ‘coops’ containing one projector, and a cheap as possible screen.”⁶³⁹ Airdomes were a popular alternative to the hot and sweaty nickelodeons during the summer months where the audience could enjoy the fresh air of the outdoors and a film show. Interestingly, both airdomes and Schield’s domestic lawn show shared a similar concern with uninvited guests or freeloaders catching a glimpse of the show: “the screen should be placed where it will not attract passing pedestrians; because, if people on the street can see the action on the screen, your party will cease to be private, and your guests may feel uneasy at having so many ‘kibitzers,’ at a screening that was intimately planned.”⁶⁴⁰ Clearly, the communal aspect of wartime living only extended so far.

⁶³⁹ Q. David Bowers, *Nickelodeon Theatres and Their Music* (Vestal: The Vestal Press, 1986), 51.

⁶⁴⁰ Schield. “Showing Films Out of Doors,” 312.

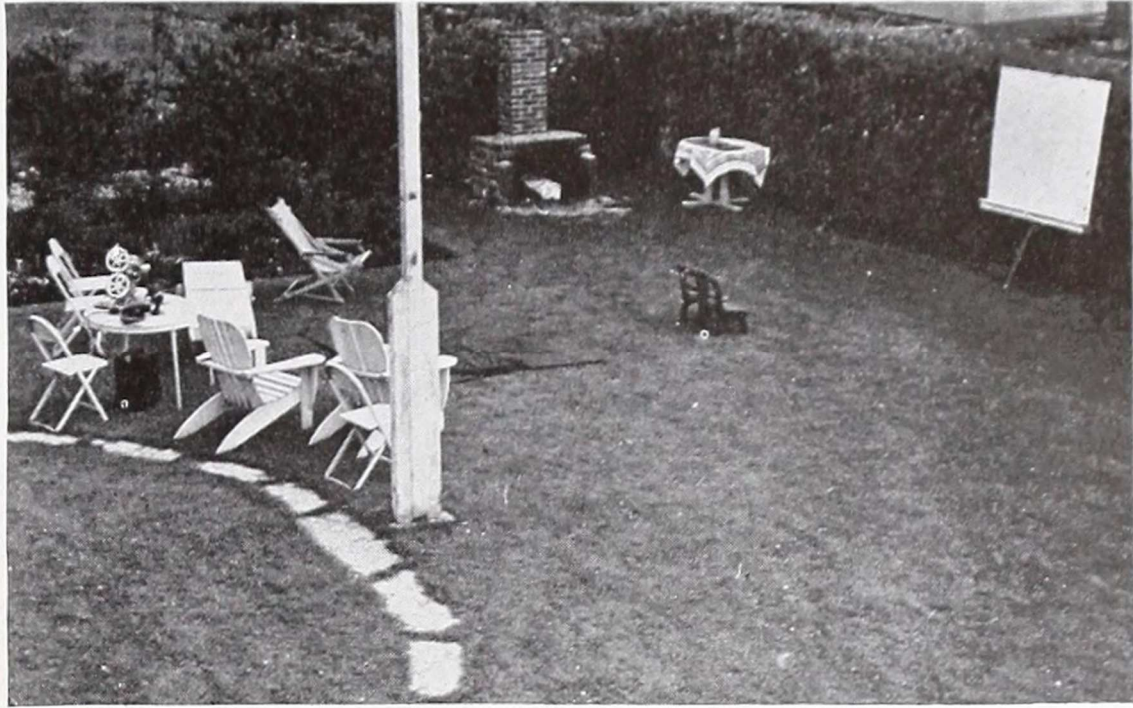


Figure 54 Schield's Lawn Movie Show

The image of the professional within amateur filmmaking discourses was similarly swept up in pro-war rhetoric. As Arthur A. Herbert advises in his 1942 article “Projection for Defense,” when the amateur “goes out to project a film,” often for civilian defense or OWI, to help “distribute the burden,” “he should handle the job in a thoroughly professional manner.” Herbert proceeds to describe in great detail proper projection care and setup that the “professional operator” undergoes before each showing.⁶⁴¹ The professionalism described by Herbert is additionally couched in “safety” rhetoric, a common theme of war-time media: “Remember that your duty as an operator is to consider public safety *first* and to do a good job of projection *second*. You are taking part in a program of training the public in safety measures ‘in the event

⁶⁴¹ Arthur A. Hebert, “Projection for Defense,” *Movie Makers* May 1942, 196.

of... ‘; so don’t subject people to hazards at the same time.’⁶⁴² In this sense, film exhibition professionalism – projector care and exhibition knowledge – could literally save lives.

“Check out my film apparatus!” – Domestic Cinephilia and the Restful Atmosphere

Cinephilia describes a passionate interest in film and its criticism that is best exemplified by docile spectators in a contemplative immersion of the moving images projected on the screen before them. The combination of theater architecture – advocated by Benjamin Schlanger – and the rise of film criticism and filmmakers – inspired by *politiques des auteurs* and *Cahiers du cinema* – produced a new mode of film spectatorship.⁶⁴³ As Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece asserts, Schlanger’s theater architecture was a “model of cinephilia’s patterns of watching” that closely adhered to a “pedagogy” and Foucauldian discipline of film spectatorship.⁶⁴⁴ Schlanger imagined an immobile audience hypnotically immersed in the enveloping images projected on screen that was accomplished through a theater design of neutralization. A neutralized theater emphasized spectators forward facing, tilted slightly up toward the screen, and “undistracted by extravagant décor.”⁶⁴⁵ Ultimately, the cinephilic spectator was enthralled not only with the film itself, but with the power and influence of the filmic apparatus. Klinger, by way of Christian Metz, describes the cinephile as taking “ardent, fetishistic pleasure in the viewing conditions themselves.”⁶⁴⁶ In other words, the cinephile is in awe of the illusionary and immersive conditions created by the filmic machine of the theater.

⁶⁴² Hebert, “Projection for Defense,” 220.

⁶⁴³ Dale Hudson and Patricia R. Zimmermann, “Cinephilia, Technophilia and Collaborative Remix Zones” in *Screen* Vol. 50 no. 1 (Spring 2019) (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 136.

⁶⁴⁴ Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Optical Vacuum: Spectatorship and Modernized American Theater Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5.

⁶⁴⁵ Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Optical Vacuum*, 40.

⁶⁴⁶ Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 54.

For Klinger, the cinephile found in the contemporary domestic setting gorges on the “fetishistic pleasure” for film technologies and leaves the contemplative immersion behind. The domestic cinephile is far less passionate about the film and its immersive qualities and more zealously preoccupied “with picture and sound reproduction” accomplished through “the purchase of the most refined electronic systems.”⁶⁴⁷ The desire for this “hardware aesthetic” aligns the domestic cinephile closer to the technophilic tinkerer or gadgeteer.⁶⁴⁸ For Klinger, the epitome of this “brand of cinephilia” is the film collector.⁶⁴⁹ Klinger’s conception of the film collector as it relates to cinephilia is not someone who prioritizes the collection of filmic experiences but rather the various technological aspects of the media itself. Thus, this collector owns multiple formats – VHS, laserdisc, DVD, etc. – as well as special collector editions that champion the finest audio and visual quality possible by contemporary technology. The collector, like much of the amateur filmmaking discourse outlined in previous chapters, is “approached through class-based appeals” that signify specific equipment and exhibition technologies with a particular economic status as well as a more “serious film viewer.”⁶⁵⁰ Even though Klinger’s project focuses on domestic film technologies of the 1980s to the 2000s, her concept of cinephilia as technophilia shares striking similarities to the amateur filmmaker and projectionist in Depression Era and wartime America. While the content of domestic film exhibitions had a significant role as outlined in Chapter Three, the allure of domestic film exhibition was the apparatus, the machine itself.

The gadgeteer of the 1930s and 1940s was a prominent figure in amateur filmmaking and domestic exhibition discourses. Much of their contribution to the discourse focused on

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid, 63.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, 85.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid, 63.

⁶⁵⁰ Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 63.

conveniently transitioning a living room into a space for film exhibition. Living room theaters were particularly popular for people living in apartments and smaller homes without access to a basement, attic, or garage. In *Popular Science* magazine, one apartment dwelling film enthusiast shared his living room theater by highlighting its various mechanized aspects: a remote control that enables the motorized raising of the screen, the lowering of a framed picture to reveal projector port holes, and control over the lights and radio (Fig 55).⁶⁵¹ The use of framed pictures hinged to a wall and attached to a draw string was a common strategy used to conceal projector port holes. This design, as well as others like it, prominently featured a layout that was often already in theater mode. The thinking, according to one amateur, was if “drop-in visitors suggest a look at his films, they may remain seated and view the pictures projected upon a screen elevated into position above the fireplace from its unobtrusive place of concealment.”⁶⁵² The assumption here is that all the projectionist needed to do is prop up the screen (Fig 56), lower the framed pictures revealing the projector port holes (Fig 57) and start the show.

⁶⁵¹ “Home Movie Theater,” *Popular Science* June 1937, 56.

⁶⁵² Curtis Randall. “Living Room Theatre Deluxe,” *Home Movies* June 1944, 234.



When Clifford Potts wants to show movies to his friends, a screen rises into place as shown at the left. Below, Potts is manipulating controls in a table drawer, while a picture slides down on the wall to uncover the concealed projection window

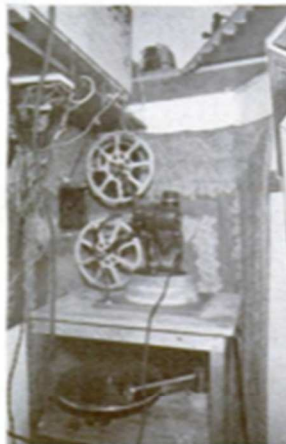


Home Movie Theater

OPERATED BY REMOTE CONTROL

OPENING the drawer of a small table in the living room of his New York apartment, Clifford Potts, a home-movie enthusiast, presses a series of buttons mounted on a built-in panel. Slowly all lights begin to dim. A small screen silently glides up an end wall, while a picture slowly slips out of place on the opposite wall to reveal a glass-covered projection window. Just as the last glimmer of light fades, a moving picture appears on the screen, and the show continues for as long as an hour, to the accompaniment of music from a radio or from phonograph records mechanically synchronized with the film. At the conclusion, other buttons are pressed, the lights build up slowly to full brilliance, the screen disappears, and the wall picture slides back into place. Without any bustle of preparations, or the annoyance that usually is involved in putting apparatus and equipment away, a complete movie show has been presented entirely by remote control.

All the mechanisms for the movie presentation are actuated by switches and buttons within the table drawer. Fitted with oversize reels, the projector is mounted in a large clothes closet soundproofed with discarded bedding. A phonograph turntable and pick-up are located beneath the projector, while above it a shelf houses the sound amplifier and the rheostats that control the living-room lights. One electric motor operates the sliding picture that hides the projection window cut into the closet wall, and another drives the rolling mechanism that hoists the screen, which normally is hidden by window drapes and a living-room table.



The projector on a special mounting that makes rethreading easy. Note the synchronized phonograph beneath the table

Projection mechanisms and sound effects are controlled from this drawer. The hand is on the tuning dial of the radio



How the remote-controlled theater is arranged. The projection booth is a closet soundproofed with old bedding



The motor that raises and lowers the screen is hidden by window drapes and by the living-room table, as seen in this photograph

Figure 55 Remote Control Apartment Theater

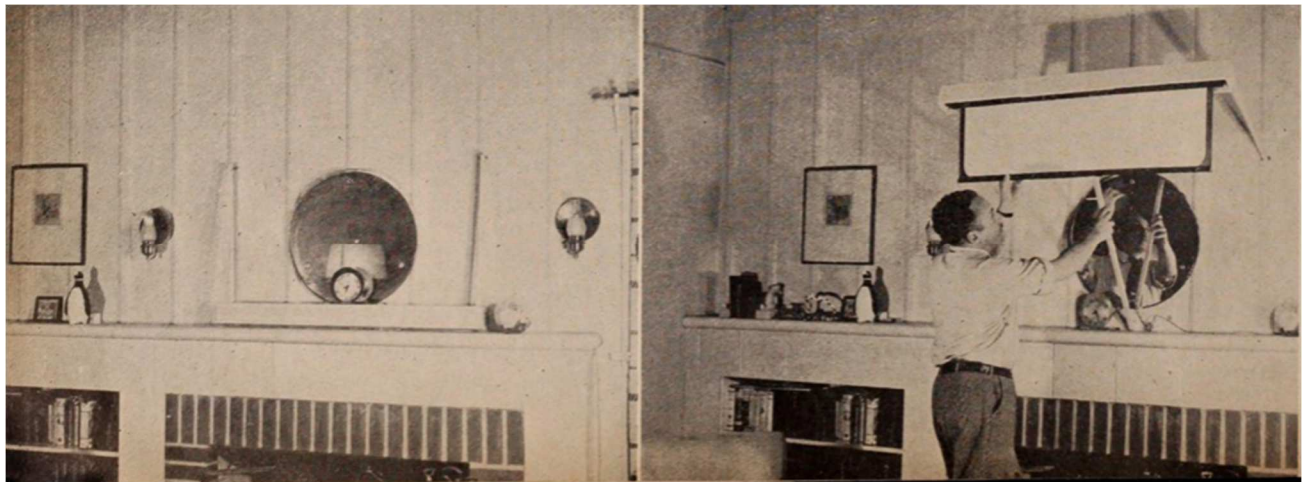


Figure 56 Living Room Screen

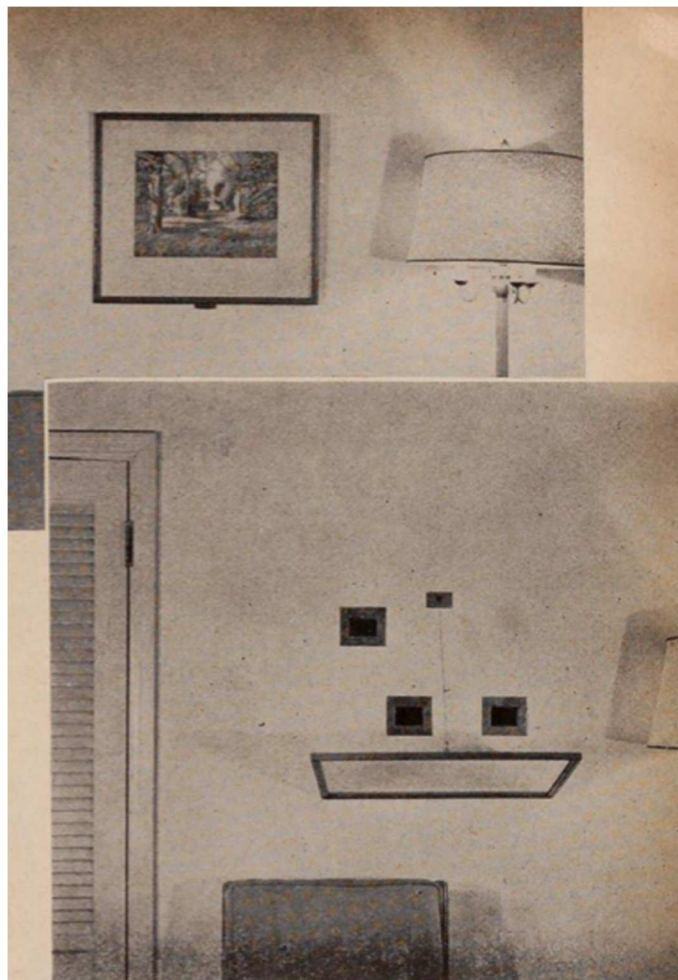


Figure 57 Living Room Projector Port Holes

This “brand of cinephilia” that adhered to a/v equipment and experimental exhibition spaces distinctly shifted amateur filmmaking away from female fans and cemented it as a male hobby that demonstrated “a persistent equation of men and machines.”⁶⁵³ This gender shift was illustrated in “exclusionary discursive practices” and further manifested itself spatially in the home.⁶⁵⁴ The basement or attic home theater was often framed as a trophy room, playroom, bar, workshop, and, most importantly, a “personal shrine to the cinema”⁶⁵⁵ (Fig 58).⁶⁵⁶ Moreover, when planning and constructing a home theater it was advised that the “projection and work room should be separated from the auditorium” so it could be “locked,”⁶⁵⁷ signifying that it was “‘out-of-bounds’ to other members of the family.”⁶⁵⁸ Many domestic theaters were also equipped with space for other leisure activities, such as “a demountable ping-pong table” or “a few tables of bridge or other amusements.”⁶⁵⁹ These spaces not only offered privacy for the man of the house but gave returning WWII vets a space to focus their energy. The spatial representation of this gender shift recalls the purpose of the residential library in the early twentieth century outlined in Chapter Three. As children went off to public schools and no longer needed a domestic space for their education, the library transformed into a sanctuary space for the man of the home to retreat. Thus, the library, once filled with books, specimens, and art, was then filled with the father’s own photographs, trophies, leisure pursuits, and other memorabilia. The combination of a cinephilic gadgeteer, segregated spaces, and other leisure activities alludes to the home theater, then, as an early sign of the contemporary “man-cave.”

⁶⁵³ Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 56.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ Edward P. Ellis, “The Home Theatre,” *Movie Makers* October 1936, 430.

⁶⁵⁶ “The Clinic: Glamour Basement,” *Movie Makers* February 1944, 64.

⁶⁵⁷ Don Graf, “Build a Cellar Cinema!,” *Home Movies* April 1945, 147.

⁶⁵⁸ George Strickling, “Basement Theatre and Cine Workshop,” *Home Movies* April 1946, 197.

⁶⁵⁹ Strickling, “Basement Theatre,” 197; R. C. Surridge. “An Amateur Movie Heaven,” *Movie Makers* June 1933, 246.



Figure 58 “Personal Shrine to Cinema”

Whether in the living room or “man-cave,” the home theater was positioned as one piece of a “commodity aesthetic” among many. In this sense, the filmic apparatus becomes just another “thing” to be “admired and manipulated rather than as spaces to be entered.”⁶⁶⁰ In other words, the domestic theater’s aligning with identity-commodities – objects meant to be distinct and seen – obstructs the spectator’s ability to completely immerse themselves into the film. To emphasize this distinction, I contend that, while initially implemented for other reasons, amateur filmmaking relied on the masking of screens to help differentiate the film and filmic apparatus from the surrounding domestic space. Screen masking refers to a black, nonreflective border around the edges of the film screen. Domestic projectionists, as well as professional ones in public theaters, were advised to position the projector and screen so the image would “bleed”

⁶⁶⁰ Ariel Rogers, *On The Screen: Displaying the Moving Image, 1926-1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 224-225.

from the white field into the black border. In the public theater as well as in the home, masking served multiple purposes. First, it ensured no part of the screen was blank that could potentially “detract from the picture.” Second, contrasted with the black border, the image appeared brighter than it actually was and helped hide “lint and other particles that would ordinarily be seen all around the frame.”⁶⁶¹ Lastly, masked screens helped to steady a shaky image from a substandard projector by hiding “the dancing edges of a jittery frame.”⁶⁶² This was less of an issue in professional theaters after 1930, but continued to be a common issue in domestic film exhibitions through the 1930s and 1940s.⁶⁶³

In the public film theater, professional film engineers, projectionists, and theater architects became concerned that masking created too great of a contrast between the projected image on screen and the exhibition space. One alarming issue was the contrast between a bright screen and a dark auditorium that led to “physical discomfort” from “‘eye fatigue’ or ‘even injury.’”⁶⁶⁴ The more prominent concern over masking though, was the separation it created between the picture on the screen and space of the auditorium. The spectator of a masked screen viewed the moving images like a framed picture on a wall – observing instead of experiencing immersion. Architects and engineers, prominently led by Schlanger, advocated for the removal of masking to allow the spectator’s immersion in a borderless and all-encompassing filmic image – “a window onto a changing, moving, proximal world” – where “eye and object shared the same world.”⁶⁶⁵ Eliminating the black border visually extended the screen out into the spectator’s space and blended it into the theater walls. This new spectatorial experience helped construct the

⁶⁶¹ F. Irving Jewell, “The Technique of Careful Projection,” *Movie Makers* September 1937, 429; J.R. Samel, “How to Emulate a Real Theatre,” *Movie Makers* February 1947, 60.

⁶⁶² Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Optical Vacuum*, 87-88.

⁶⁶³ Ibid, 70-71.

⁶⁶⁴ Rogers, *On The Screen*, 145.

⁶⁶⁵ Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Optical Vacuum*, 86-87.

cinophilic spectator – docile, contemplative spectators immersed in another world. For domestic cinephilia, however, masking was *the* point. Masking the screen established clear boundaries between the film, exhibition space, and spectators. It drew awareness to the filmic apparatus as commodity that further signified a middle-class identity of professionalism and technical knowledge.

The combination of the show's content – amateur home movies, newsreels, and various professionally produced shorts –and screen masking hindered the domestic film spectator from fully losing their sense of self and place. They were continuously made aware of the filmic apparatus and, as discussed in Chapter Two, became easily distracted, interruptive, and disorderly. With spectators unable to fully immerse themselves into the film, and thus become disciplined, domestic exhibition spaces needed to utilize other methods. Similar to the beliefs of public theater engineers, architects, and showmen of the 1930s, the domestic film apparatus and show “should encourage viewers’ relaxation and comfort, eliminate distractions and the need for bodily movement, and ensure that each seat afforded an equally uninhibited rapport with the screen.”⁶⁶⁶ Across amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses there was a strong consensus that in order to create a disciplined audience the exhibition space needed to pay close attention to three elements: seating arrangements, chairs, and lights.

It was argued among amateur filmmaking experts that the proper seating arrangement, chairs, and lights of domestic exhibition space would lead to a “restful atmosphere.”⁶⁶⁷ This atmosphere, considered a replication of the public theater, took the physical comfort of the spectator with the utmost importance. Not only did this atmosphere calm the audience, but it also lulled them in a more pliable state of mind to absorb the images dancing before them. With their

⁶⁶⁶ Rogers, *On The Screen*, 134-135.

⁶⁶⁷ C. W. Gibbs. “The Home Show,” *Movie Makers*. January 1934, 20.

mind and body at ease, the spectator was more accepting of the disciplinary methods acting on their spectatorial experience. Before the audience arrived, filmmakers and projectionists were advised to arrange the seats “conveniently so that the occupants can see the screen with the utmost comfort.”⁶⁶⁸ To avoid a member of the audience “sitting in an awkward position or straining to see the screen,” seats “may require staggering”⁶⁶⁹ and be situated in relation to the screen and projector so that “tardy guests need not interrupt the passage of light to the screen in order to reach their seats.”⁶⁷⁰ Lastly, the seats were grouped together “in *front* of the screen and not at the sides of the room.”⁶⁷¹ The closer the spectator’s viewing angle matched the projector’s, the brighter, and thus clearer, the image.

In the public theater, the individual theater chair was one aspect among the “machine” of the cinematic apparatus. It formed a “cinephilic” mode of viewing a film: stillness, facing forward, equal placement, and a uniform screen angle.⁶⁷² Theater chair design in the 1930s emphasized the “ergonomics” and “posture”⁶⁷³ of the spectator to the point of having a “narcotic effect” on the spectator’s immobile body.⁶⁷⁴ The spectator, soothed into a hypnotic dream-state, is merged with the chair, losing their physical sense of self, and becoming a part of the film.⁶⁷⁵ Where the theater chair constructed a cinephilic spectator, the home theater chair was a means of comfort and theater replication. The amateur projectionist was encouraged to provide the audience “with comfortable chairs from which to enjoy the performance.”⁶⁷⁶ They were

⁶⁶⁸ R. Fawn Mitchell. “Perfecting Projection,” *Movie Makers*. October 1934, 420.

⁶⁶⁹ Mitchell. “Perfecting Projection,” 420.

⁶⁷⁰ F. Irving Jewell. “The Technique of Careful Projection,” *Movie Makers* September 1937, 429.

⁶⁷¹ Russell C. Holslag. “Perfecting Projection,” *Movie Makers* December 1941, 570.

⁶⁷² Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece, “Revisiting the Apparatus: The Theatre Chair and Cinematic Spectatorship” in *Screen* Vol. 57, No. 3, Autumn 2016. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 254.

⁶⁷³ Szczepaniak-Gillece, “Revisiting the Apparatus,” 265.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 259.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 272.

⁶⁷⁶ Jewell, “The Technique of Careful Projection,” 450.

repeatedly warned against hard chairs that would make the spectator physically uncomfortable and less receptive to the program, for “no audience can enjoy even the best program if members are seated on hard, straight chairs.”⁶⁷⁷ If it was possible, armchairs were encouraged because they delivered the most comfort for a spectator.⁶⁷⁸ Yet the domestic film spectator was not lulled into a hypnotic state, but was shifting their attention between the filmic apparatus, moving images, and the “commodity aesthetic.”

Lighting was arguably the most important aspect in creating a “restful atmosphere” for disciplined spectatorship. To ensure this atmosphere, the amateur was tasked with being attentive to the lighting prior to, during, and after the show. Close attention to lighting also signified professionalism by reproducing the same lighting system and procedures as a public theater. To this end, exhibition and projection experts advised constructing a “means of controlling the lighting” from the projection booth or projector stand.⁶⁷⁹ One such expert suggested “a portable panel” that would switch the “floor lamp lights... on and off without moving from the projectionist’s position” (Fig 59). This design allowed the projectionist to “control house lighting in whatever friend’s house he may be showing films.”⁶⁸⁰ The professional lighting procedure began prior to the show with the lights of the exhibition dimmed to help the “guests become accustomed to the impending darkness.” A dimmed room also served to signal to the audience that the show was about to begin. This control over lights alluded to the projectionist’s ability to command the audience’s attention. For instance, as the lights were further dimmed, this signaled the show would soon begin, communicating to the spectator to exude an appropriate demeanor

⁶⁷⁷ Holton Howell, “Projection is Fun,” *Movie Makers* August 1943, 312.

⁶⁷⁸ Howell, “Projection is Fun,” 312.

⁶⁷⁹ Kenneth F. Space, “The Clinic: Professional Projection,” *Movie Makers* September 1941, 410.

⁶⁸⁰ “The Clinic: Room Light Control,” *Movie Makers* October 1945, 386.

for viewing.⁶⁸¹ This dimming of the lights, referred to as “effect lighting” by Schlanger, “created the right atmosphere for viewers to ‘*transition* into the motion picture performance” by “putting them in the proper frame of mind for the filmic encounter, making them passive yet engaged viewers reduced to their opened eyes.”⁶⁸² Where a pitch black auditorium in the public theater was avoided to reduce screen contrast and assuage fears of violence and illicit behavior, home theater experts suggested never completely extinguishing the lights because, it was argued, that “a totally dark room naturally makes every one want to talk to keep from getting lonesome,” “patrons coming in or going out must be able to see their way,” and lastly, “a great many people have a subconscious fear of darkness and are nervous in a completely darkened room.”⁶⁸³ A “small amount of light during projection” was, thus, recommended as it would “add a noticeable sensation of warmth and comfort,” or, as Szczepaniak-Gillece describes, the “proper balance” of “light and dark focused and retained its spectators’ attention, encouraging their intellectual progress from the womb-like uncertainty of the darkened room to the slow dawning of wisdom through the projector’s heady beam.”⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸¹ Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Optical Vacuum*, 50.

⁶⁸² Ibid, 48-49.

⁶⁸³ Rogers, *On The Screen*, 146; Gibbs, “The Home Show,” 20; F. Irving Jewell, “Theatrical Presentation,” *Movie Makers* November 1938, 539; Jewell, “The Technique of Careful Projection,” 450.

⁶⁸⁴ Jewell, “Theatrical Presentation,” 564; Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Optical Vacuum*, 50.

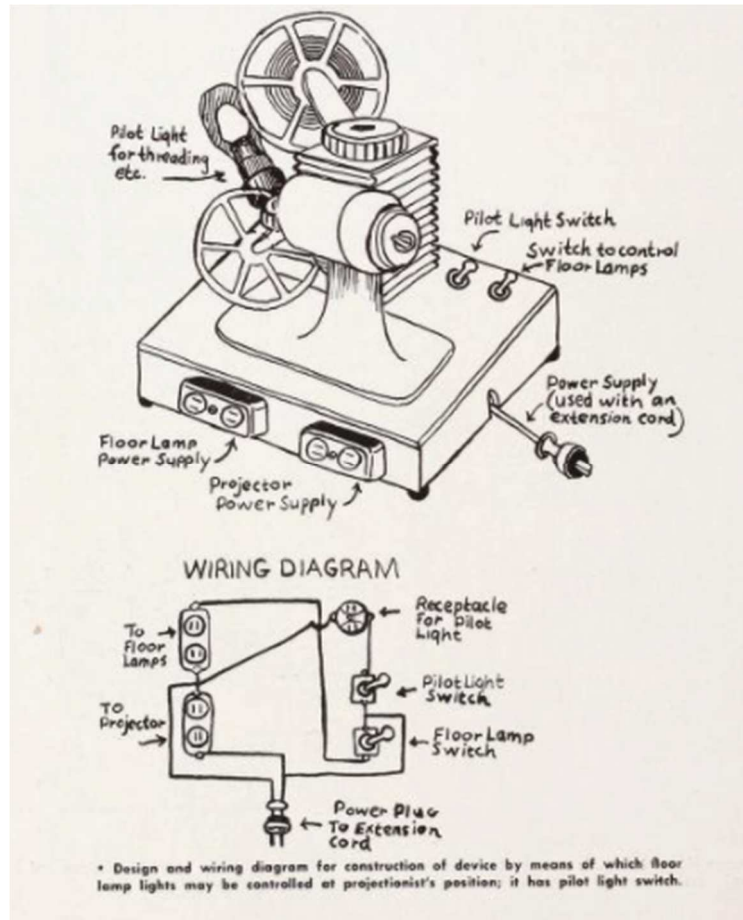


Figure 59 Remote Control Lights

“When does the show begin?” - The Phantom Theater and Experiential Spectatorship

Close attention to seating arrangements, chairs, and lighting encouraged audience members to follow a disciplined mode of film spectatorship, one that more closely aligned with the cinephile. The “restful atmosphere” made it more likely, then, for the spectator to pay close attention to and mimic the middle-class and national identity represented through home movies and Castle newsreels. In addition to the strategies outlined above, the home theater’s architectural and interior design further strengthened this messaging. According to C.L. Edson, the first “personal movie theatre,” nicknamed the “Ashcan Theatre,” was constructed in the

basement of Rowden King in Glen Ridge, N.J.⁶⁸⁵ While the specific motivations of King's home theater are unknown, it can be surmised that two of the more motivating factors was convenience and professionalism. A common thread through amateur filmmaking and exhibition discourses regarding the home theater was its convenience: "No more falling over projector cords, stumbling on loud speakers, carting dining room chairs around and making much ado over a simple home movie picture presentation."⁶⁸⁶ The home theater contributed a strong sense of professionalism even for the most amateur films. Even if the show suffered from poor editing or sloppy projection, it could still "take on an aura of perfection when shown in [the] appropriate setting."⁶⁸⁷ The professionalism exhibited by the home theater space encouraged a respectful, docile, and disciplined mode of spectatorship.

Amateur filmmaker Dr. A.K. Baumgardner found that even though he didn't have the space to create the proper atmosphere of a home theater, he could still present his audience with an "indirect suggestion toward a proper atmosphere."⁶⁸⁸ Relegated to the informal living room, Baumgardner found his audience increasingly disorderly: "interruptions of private conversations, numerous questions regarding scenes and dates, the incessant urge to create hand shadowgraphs on the screen, constant bobbing of heads up and down intercepting the beam from projector to screen, all distract the attention of those who really appreciate your creative art."⁶⁸⁹ Baumgardner began each show with an introductory film encompassing a "reproduction of a small stage with curtains closed richly colored to resemble an elaborate proscenium" (Fig 60). Together with the stage, "suitable overture music is started to duplicate the effect of a professional theatrical

⁶⁸⁵ C. L. Edson, "Homes for Home Movies," *Movie Makers* May 1931, 264.

⁶⁸⁶ R. C. Surridge, "An Amateur Movie Heaven," *Movie Makers* June 1933, 246.

⁶⁸⁷ Arthur M. Sharp, "Parlor Showmanship," *Home Movies* September 1946, 544.

⁶⁸⁸ Dr. A.K. Baumgardner, "Showmanship in Screening Movies 'Ups' Audience Interest," *Home Movies* February 1941, 73.

⁶⁸⁹ Baumgardner, "Showmanship in Screening Movies," 73.

opening and after a delay of about 30 seconds, the curtains part slowly and smoothly to reveal the first title, set far enough back on the stage to allow colored lights in flasher sockets to make several changes.” Tellingly, Baumgardner intentionally concealed the colored light bulbs from view to better “simulate theatrical effects.”⁶⁹⁰ If Baumgardner’s mere visual representation of a “professional theatrical opening” quieted and pacified a domestic audience, it’s not too much of a stretch to infer the same kind of influence with a home theater. In fact, the physical immersion within a spatial representation of a theater that acted on the spectator’s body had, I contend, an even stronger effect.

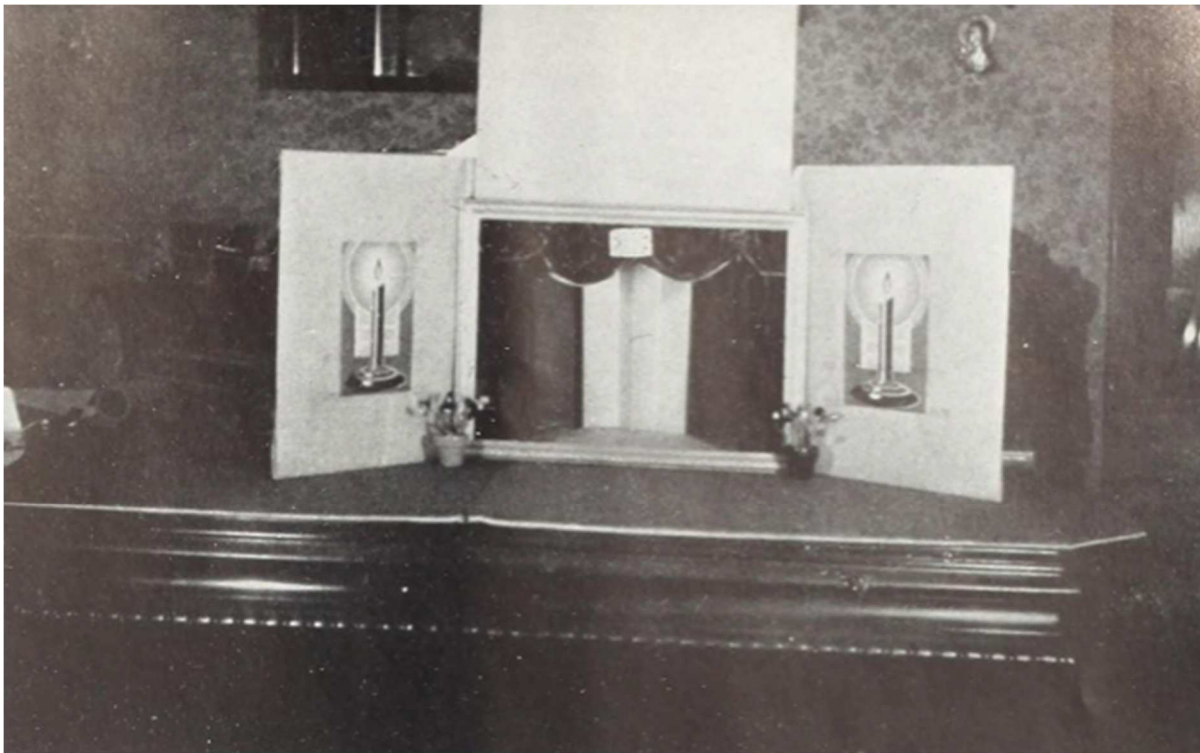


Figure 60 Baumgardner’s Small Stage Reproduction

The immersion of the physical body in a simulation of a public theater coupled with a “restful atmosphere” supported a disciplined mode of spectatorship. Crossing the boundary from domestic space into the home theater signified, it was hoped, a sense of formality and

⁶⁹⁰ Baumgardner, “Showmanship in Screening Movies,” 73.

refinement, attributes displayed in the public theater. In this way, the home theater shares similarities with the experiential qualities of Hale's Tours and the nickelodeon. Between 1905 and 1910, Hale's Tours was an immensely popular "multi-sensory" attraction that simulated a twenty to twenty-five minute train ride using early film technologies for only ten cents a ride.⁶⁹¹ Customers purchased and handed over their tickets to a uniformed train conductor outside a makeshift railroad depot office.⁶⁹² As customers entered the train car and sat down, a "phantom ride" – a film traversing railroad tracks – was projected on a screen facing the audience. To enhance the simulation, "the carriage would sway and tremble as though in motion and gusts of wind were blown through" with "bells and whistles" mimicking "the noises of a real train experience."⁶⁹³ Obviously, the home theater did not physically move the bodies of spectators, but the combination of professional showmanship – lighting, sound, seating arrangement, and a curated show – and the architectural design of the space – screen, projection booth, and chairs – created an illusion, a phantom, of the public theater. Like the rides of Hale's Tours, the home theater became a phantom space influencing bodily and perceptual experience.

Using similar architectural strategies of Hale's Tours, the nickelodeon employed designs that superficially separated the customer from the outside world and provided the impression of entering a new one. Among the limited construction required for a nickelodeon, one crucial element was the separation of the entrance from the sidewalk. The front of the theater – ticket booth, entrance and exit doors, and projection booth – was to be "six feet back from the

⁶⁹¹ Christian Hayes, "Phantom Carriages: Reconstructing Hale's Tours and the virtual travel experience" in *Early Popular Visual Culture* Vol. 7, No. 2, (July 2009) New York: Routledge, 190; Raymond Fielding, "Hale's Tours: Ultrarealism in the Pre-1910 Motion Picture" in *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Autumn, 1970) Austin: University of Texas Press, 41.

⁶⁹² Fielding, "Hale's Tours," 41.

⁶⁹³ Hayes, "Phantom Carriages," 190.

sidewalk” to give “advertising space,” and, more importantly, to give the customer a sense of withdrawal upon entering the theater.⁶⁹⁴ In other words, as soon as the customer crossed the boundary between the nickelodeon and sidewalk, they should feel a sense of escape from the city even before the show began. As Amir H. Ameri describes, the boundary and separation between the nickelodeon and sidewalk denotes cinema as occurring always in an “Other” space, where a journey might end.⁶⁹⁵ Thus, the façade of the nickelodeon marked an escape from the customer’s “real” world and welcomed them to an “imaginary” escape of a show.

In the years following the rise of the nickelodeon the picture palace theater offered an even greater escape from the chaos of the modern city. It was believed that for the customer to fully escape their reality they needed to be immersed in a space that was distinct from everyday life and “a great deal more elaborate.”⁶⁹⁶ In this sense, the picture palace hoped to transform the audience “into tourists visiting a displaced and displacing land... that was not only out of the ordinary but ornate and complex in appearance.”⁶⁹⁷ Similar thinking was illustrated in early iterations of home theaters that simulated an exotic land that simultaneously indicated the cultural knowledge of the owners.

One of the earliest home theaters on record was that of George Eastman of Eastman Kodak (Fig 61). Eastman’s personal theater was “gothic in design with a vaulted roof and a great stone fireplace.”⁶⁹⁸ The walls of the theater were covered with trophies of Eastman’s hunting adventures – the heads of “three lions, a white ‘rhino’ and innumerable African gazelles, deer and antelope.”⁶⁹⁹ The juxtaposition of decapitated animal heads peering down at an audience

⁶⁹⁴ Bowers, *Nickelodeon Theatres and Their Music* (Vestal: The Vestal Press, 1986), 45.

⁶⁹⁵ Amir H. Ameri, “The Architecture of the Illusive Distance” in *Screen* 54, No. 4 (Winter 2013), Oxford University Press, 444.

⁶⁹⁶ Ameri, “The Architecture of the Illusive Distance,” 447.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid, 448.

⁶⁹⁸ Edson, “Homes for Home Movies,” 265.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

enraptured “by a miracle of modern civilization” where the animals “are again brought to life,” presents George Eastman as a walking amalgamation of new technology and the natural world.⁷⁰⁰ Here, Eastman was a man consumed with literally and figuratively collecting and possessing the natural world.

Likewise, the home theater of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Wright showcases an even stronger affinity for the picture palace with their African inspired theater (Fig 62) that highlights their own travels throughout the continent: “The proscenium is an exact reproduction of Moorish architecture... The lighting is effected by bulbs masked in African devil masks and witch doctors’ headdresses. Also there is the headdress of a Zulu boy who pulled their rickshaw at Durban and the fancy hat of the Belgian Congo colored aristocracy.”⁷⁰¹ Not too far removed from Eastman’s theater, the Wright’s theater is a collection, a stark materialization and domestication of western colonialism by simulating, and thus possessing, an African culture that ignores the original referents and is repurposed to express the interests and cultural status of the Wright family.

⁷⁰⁰ Edson, “Homes for Home Movies,” 265.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid, 282.



Figure 61 George Eastman's Home Theater

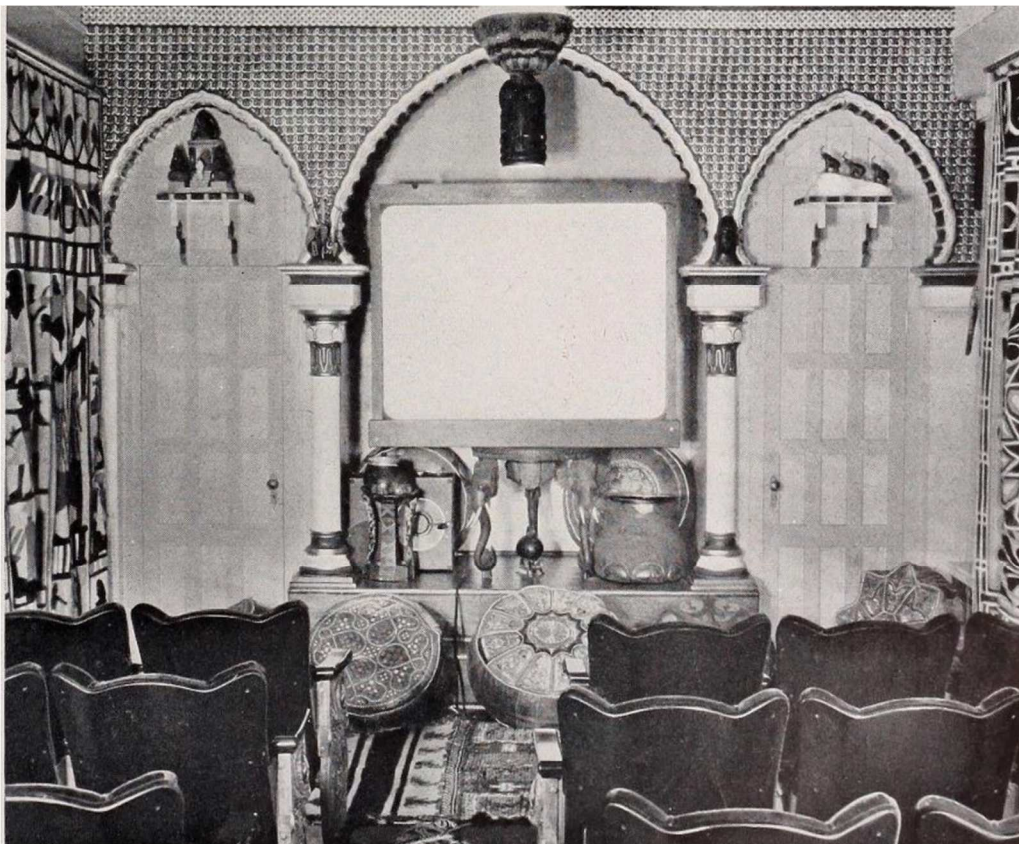


Figure 62 Wright's African Inspired Home Theater

Over the proceeding years, amateurs continued to design their theaters as not just theaters, but exotic lands or fairy tales. For instance, some home theaters replicated the

atmospheric theater by painting the ceiling and walls with a “blue tint” and included “clouds and stars... on the ceiling with luminous paint to suggest an open air effect” as the theater lights were dimmed.⁷⁰² The public atmospheric theater created an illusive space of being “elsewhere,” but when incorporated into the domestic space, the atmospheric home theater becomes an illusion on top of another illusion. In this case, not only is the spectator in a simulated public theater in domestic space but they are in domestic space, overlayed with a public theater that also simulates being outdoors. This is evidenced further by A.L.O Rasch and his basement theater that incorporated a roller screen behind a “dummy window” in one wall to create the illusion of a second living room (Fig 63). Rasch’s theater featured two windows, made with frosted glass, that obfuscated the view to the unfinished portion of the basement. To enhance the illusion even more, the window was “lighted from the rear, to give the impression of an outside window in the daytime.”⁷⁰³ Thus, the basement was molded into a home theater that could effortlessly transform into a living room and social space that was lit by an artificial sun.

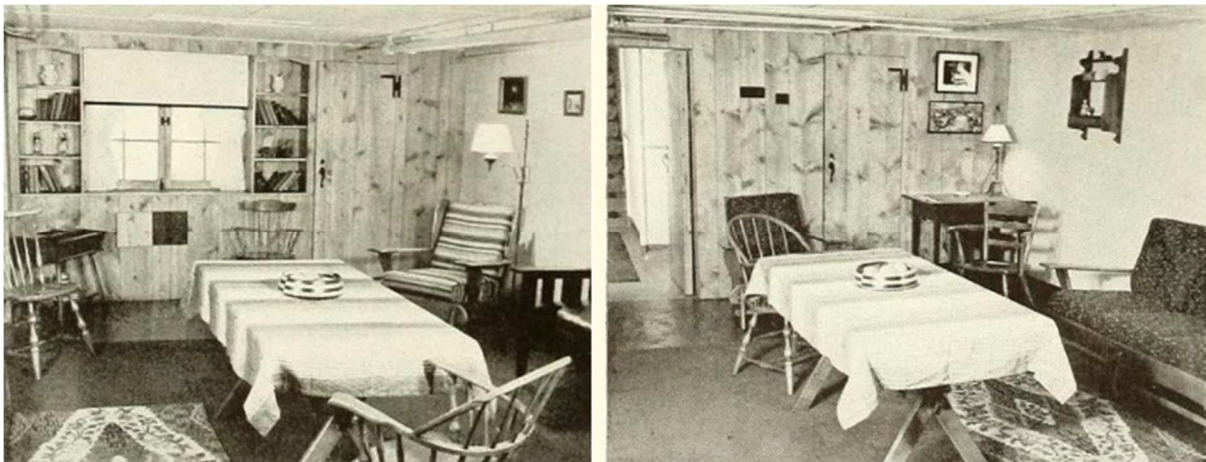


Figure 63 Home Theater with Dummy Window

⁷⁰² Walter A. Murtz, “Attic Theatre for Home Movie Shows,” *Home Movies* July 1946, 403.

⁷⁰³ A.L.O Rasch, “Cine Theatre in the Home,” *Movie Makers* June 1941, 268.

A definitive phantom home theater of the 1940s was Don Graf's cellar cinema design. Graff included detailed blueprints (Fig 64) for the construction of the projection booth, auditorium, and approach. The projection booth hindered any projector noise and allowed the projectionist a light to work from without disturbing their audience. This way, the apparatus is hidden from the spectator creating a spectatorial experience not unlike one in a public theater. Graff's projection booth also incorporated a workbench for film editing and title work and a row of cabinets for equipment storage and filmmaking books, as well as a space for professionally produced and the amateur's own films.⁷⁰⁴ Lastly, the projection booth included light controls for both the auditorium and projection. The auditorium consisted of six chairs with ash tray stands and a screen above a "tiny stage with curtains" that are connected to a "set of light clothes lines and pulleys." This enabled the projectionist to start the show from the booth by remotely dimming the lights, "part the curtains and start the show with a considerable flourish of professionalism."⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁴ Graf, "Build a Cellar Cinema!," 147.

⁷⁰⁵ Graf, "Build a Cellar Cinema!," 160.

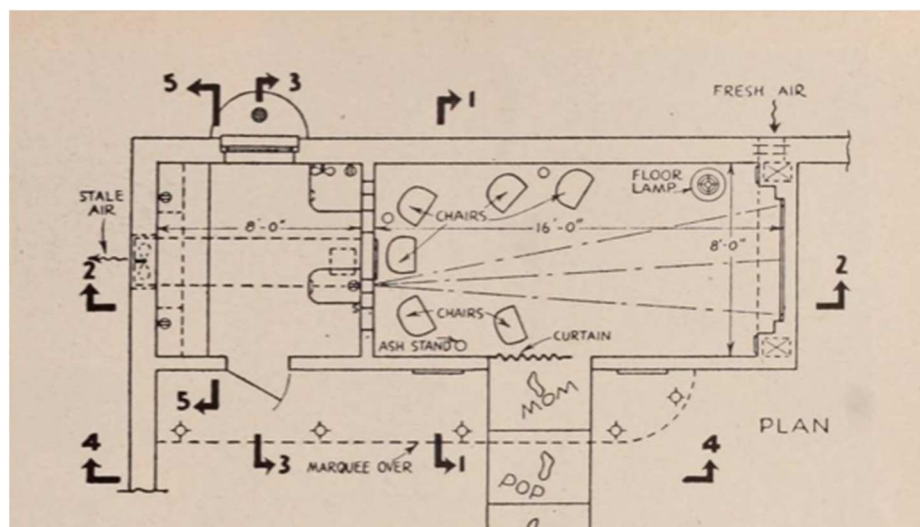
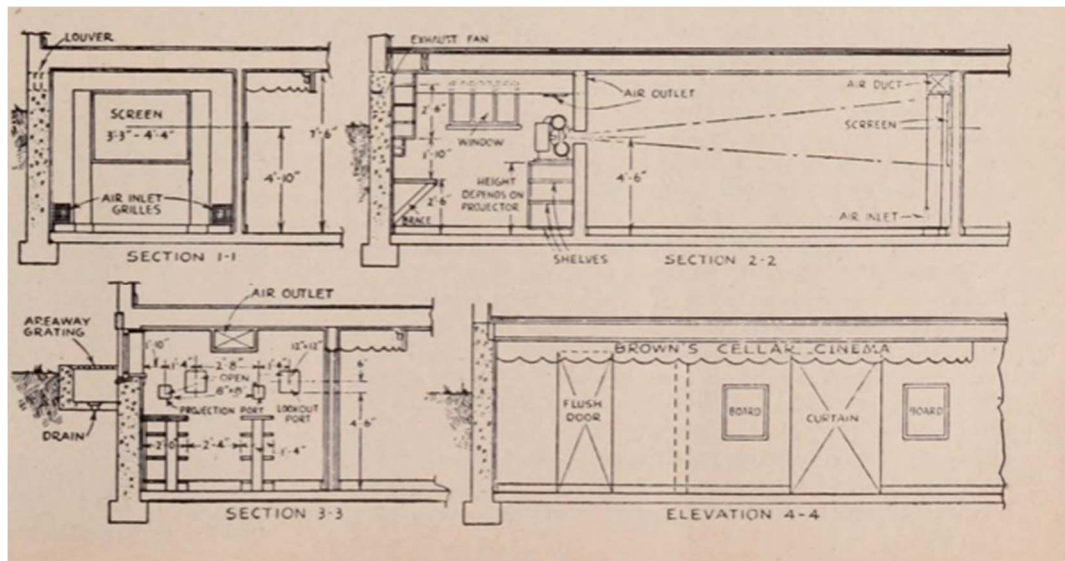


Figure 64 Graf's Cellar Cinema Blueprint

But what really distinguished Graf's theater from other's was his adherence to the illusion of the phantom theater. Like Hale's Tours and the nickelodeon, Graf included designs for the "outside" of the theater, or approach, and couched them in mimicking "Hollywood premieres": "they roll out a rug from the theater to the curb, so let's have a rug too! It can be painted on the cellar floor, a real hall runner rug can be used, or a strip of bright linoleum."⁷⁰⁶ Graf went even further and encouraged the amateur to "get busy with a cold chisel, or an electric

⁷⁰⁶ Graf, "Build a Cellar Cinema!," 160.

drill... and cut out five or six squares to depth of half an inch. Fill these panels with fresh cement and get the members of your home movie 'cast' to make their imprints when the cement has reached its initial set but is still plastic." Graff himself makes the archival quality of home movies well-defined by suggesting that when a reel is screened of "daughter Mary" they should "make a party out of the occasion and have Mary do her footprints in fresh cement, with proper ceremonies."⁷⁰⁷ Graf concluded his passion project with plans for a marquee: "Some 1" x 2" furring strips against the ceiling will be sufficient to hold a valence cut out of plywood or from light weight discarded packing crate wood" and "a row of electric lights can be installed just back of the valence, giving your home movie theatre a final professional touch."⁷⁰⁸ Even before entering the exhibition space, the audience, looking all around would encounter elements of a public theater building the illusion that they had left the space of the domestic and entered somewhere else.

Graf's theater, while an idiosyncratic example, is nonetheless symptomatic of the purpose behind home theater construction and its relationship to the middle-class American family. Not only were home theaters like Graf's notably advanced and detailed, but in addition to providing returning WWII vets a place to focus their energy, it required help from the whole family to construct. As C.L. Edson of *Home Movies* argued, the home theater was prevalent because it was a product of the machine age, specifically the motion picture machine, and combined with "family institutions so old they have forgotten their reasons for existence."⁷⁰⁹ The "new woman" and rise of informal domestic spaces leading up to World War II threatened traditional family values and institutions. Edson contended that the "little theatre of the cinema in the home"

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ Edson, "Homes for Home Movies," 264.

became the new hearth where “all the traditional pleasures of the fireside” were “preserved and united.”⁷¹⁰ For Graf’s theater, then, the family footprints that led up to the theater entrance became material archival objects that must be passed over to enter the home theater where the middle-class family and national identity were constructed through home movies, feature films, and newsreels.

Conclusion

Together with the transformation of the parlor to the modern living room, the home theater of the 1930s and 1940s was swept up into “decluttering” discourses of simple, organized, and efficient design. In the years following World War II, domestic spaces resembled past Victorian parlors and drawing rooms. Middle class homes were inundated with “things” as the boom in consumption related to leisure pursuits and new technologies took hold across the States. For this reason, storage became a central concern for architects and homeowners. This can readily be seen in several elements of amateur filmmaking and exhibition: film reel storage cabinets, editing and titling workshops, projection rooms, built-in speakers, and permanent screens. With new media technologies and smaller homes, the middle-class family was told one solution lay in more efficient and invisible organization.

Eventually, the home theater apparatus became subsumed by the efficiency discourse of post-World War II America. In May of 1946, the 21st annual Indianapolis Home Show featured a new home design focused primarily on new media technologies of leisure and entertainment. The featured home, “designed and built for a veteran of World War II” by the young architect Leslie F. Ayers, included a “built-in cabinet with a home movie projector” among a “built-in desk with

⁷¹⁰ Ibid, 265.

a built-in radio in the wall, plus a telephone, typewriter, miscellaneous cabinets, book shelves, nooks for ornaments and a 'tack board' near the telephone for keeping phone numbers and messages" (Fig 65 & 66).⁷¹¹ The future homeowner had the option of a portable screen stored in a "remote locker" or a "roller beaded screen in a cornice across end of the room with a motor drive that would enable it to be lowered or raised by the turn of a switch at the projector base."⁷¹² Ayers claimed to have incorporated motion picture equipment in his designs in "response to demands from countless movie hobbyists for home plans offering more convenient means for showing films and slides."⁷¹³

Perhaps anecdotal, this "House of Ideas" nonetheless received "hundreds of inquiries" nationwide "regarding various new features and innovations of the house."⁷¹⁴ Even if Ayer's designs were not replicated exactly, his design signified the desire for the home theater apparatus to be incorporated into the home, becoming more than a single piece of media technology, but an apparatus among a network of assorted technological assemblages. In this way, Ayer's film projector cabinet reflects the design concept of George Nelson's "Storagewall" that was popular in the early 1940s. The Storagewall's purpose was to assist in the transformation of the modern living room by eliminating the "Victorian décor," then known as "clutter," that was still "associated with women's taste."⁷¹⁵ By "disciplining the environment" and framing leisure and media as "key centers of everyday life," the Storagewall anchored amateur film technologies within a network of other media apparatuses and decorative objects. The contents of the

⁷¹¹ Allen A. White, "Accent on Movies," *Home Movies* October 1946, 641; White, "Accent on Movies," 604

⁷¹² Ibid, 605

⁷¹³ Ibid, 604.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid, 605

⁷¹⁵ Lynn Spigel, "Object lessons for the Media Home: From Storagewall to Invisible Design," in *Public Culture* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 543.

Storagewall helped express the family's taste and cultural status. More accurately, the Storagewall represented the person who purchased and organized the objects: the housewife.⁷¹⁶ Similar to the curation of the home show and individual home movies, the Storagewall became an outlet for the housewife to express their interests, style, and knowledge to an audience.



Figure 65 Leslie F. Ayers Home featuring a Storagewall

⁷¹⁶ Spigel, "Object lessons for the Media Home," 546-547.

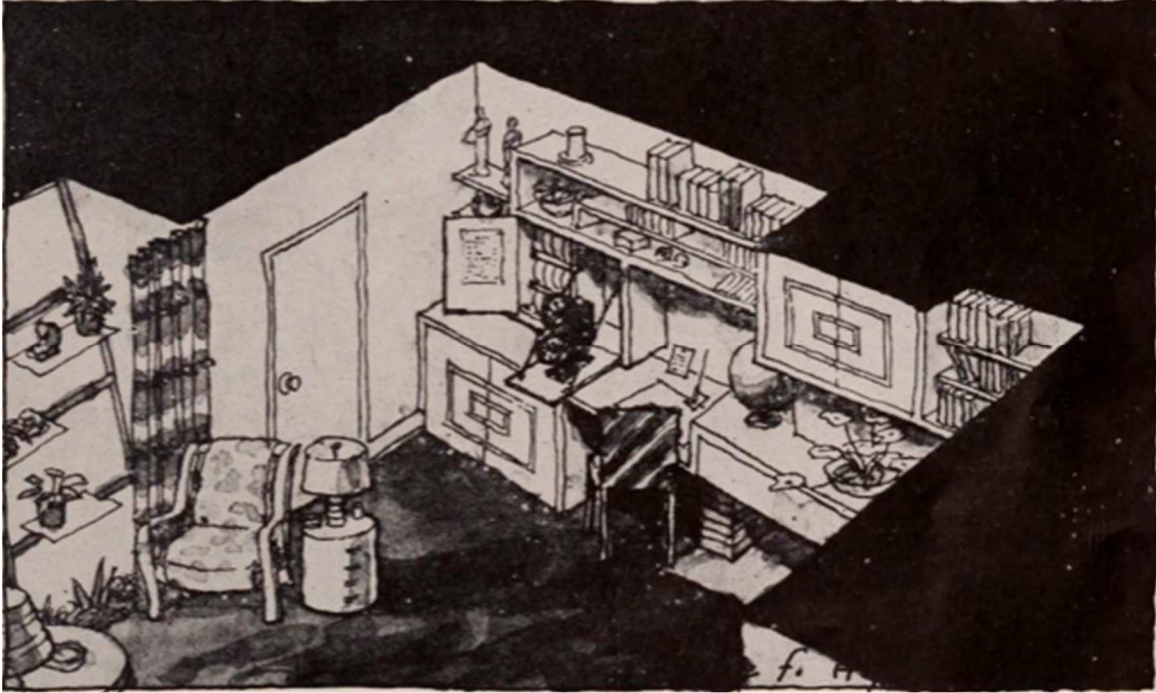


Figure 66 Leslie F. Ayers Built-In Film Projector and Screen

Lynn Spigel positions the Storaewall among a network of domestic ideologies “that expressed one’s acquisition of cultural capital and the democratic freedom to choose one’s taste.”⁷¹⁷ Where the housewife partook in the artistic creation and capturing of family memories through amateur filmmaking and exhibition, the Storaewall’s means of communication was told through organizational housework. Just as the modern housewife was “promoted” as the “general purchasing agent” of the family, their role as “organizational manager” positions them above the duties of a house maid or cleaning girl; but only just.⁷¹⁸ The Storaewall and its incorporation of domestic film technologies brought amateur filmmaking and exhibition back into the realm of the feminine. Where the home theater and film workshop align with the gendered space of the “man-cave,” the incorporation of film technologies back into the living room, stored in a media

⁷¹⁷ Spigel, “Object lessons for the Media Home,” 555-556.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid, 565.

wall, complicates the gendered identity of amateur filmmaking and exhibition and its positioning as professional or amateur.

One of the goals of the home theater was to hide the filmic apparatus from the audience to paint the illusion of professionalism and immersion in a public theater, both of which inspire a disciplined mode of spectatorship. With the projector and screen located in the Storagewall, the apparatus is hidden when not in use, visible when used. Thus, the film apparatus is rendered visible and more distinctly becomes a commodity communicating a particular personality and sense of taste. According to Jean-Louis Baudry, the visible film apparatus becomes a “denunciation of ideology” and a “critique of idealism,” thus losing its ability to inscribe ideology.⁷¹⁹ However, the film apparatus itself is subsumed by larger structures of commodity fetishism. The ensuing levels of abstraction result in the apparatus’ sign value overtaking its use value. In the home, the meaning of the film apparatus is further enmeshed in capitalist ideology given its physical positioning with the other commodities that make up the Storagewall. In this way, like other objects of the Storagewall, the filmic apparatus becomes a means of holding and displaying information, conveniently and quickly, ingraining itself into the everyday lives of the middle-class family. Thus, the middle-class archive described in Chapter Three becomes a commodity itself, equivalent to other “active storage (cleaning supplies, clothes, media machines, etc.)” that is “filed and retrieved on demand.”⁷²⁰ Memories become storage, data, “things” that can be forgotten but saved and retrieved quickly and conveniently. The daydreams, memory reveries, and the “commodity aesthetic,” have been replaced with technologized media of “projectors and recording machines.”⁷²¹ Spigel contends that the “frame” of the Storagewall

⁷¹⁹Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus” in *Movies and Methods Vol. 2*, edited by Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 534.

⁷²⁰ Spigel, “Object lessons for the Media Home,” 570-571.

⁷²¹ Spigel, “Object lessons for the Media Home,” 570-571.

was a manifestation of “social action in postwar media homes” and “shows how the logics of communication networks and postwar information society were embedded” in the structures of domestic spaces.⁷²² Thus, the home theater apparatus and its markers of the middle-class family institution and personal tastes were an early manifestation of this framing of people and objects.

The commodification of home theaters, their technologies, and the social relations discussed in this and previous chapters culminates in the model room displayed in New York City by Bloomingdale’s in 1949 (Fig 67). This particular “Home Theatre” incorporates furniture that was designed with “the most forceful influences” from “the development and growth of home movies.” The furniture here resembles the portable/transformational furniture of the early modern era: “Furniture designers have borne the brunt of the problem by designing adaptable, easily movable furniture. This has brought a return of casters on seating pieces and tables. Chairs and sectional pieces can be wheeled into comfortable viewing position. Tables are easily brought into reach when needed, or folded out of the way... There is even a swivel chair designed to allow a viewer to face in any direction depending on whether he is viewing home movies, television, a good book or a dinner table – all from the same chair.”⁷²³ With the design pictured here, the “theatre-like chairs... can be pushed back against the wall and disguised as living room sofas.”⁷²⁴ In this case, the filmic apparatus has become an everyday element of domestic space. Comfort and efficiency is the goal, with permanent screens, like the “pict-o-screen” frame, or placed on a wall hidden by a curtain and draw string when not in use.⁷²⁵ Amateur film exhibition and spectatorship has embedded itself in the design of domestic spaces and carried its social and economic signifiers with it.

⁷²² Ibid, 575.

⁷²³ Hal Coolidge, “How to Plan a ‘Little Theater’ at Home” in *Home Movies* December 1949, 630.

⁷²⁴ Coolidge, “How to Plan a ‘Little Theater,’” 630.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.



Figure 67 Bloomingdale's Home Theater

CONCLUSION | DIGITAL SPECTATORSHIP

Advancements in digital production and exhibition technologies have radically shifted how spectators consume and understand the moving image. In a world of increasing screens and instant communication, spectatorship in the public theater and the home has evolved in significant ways. The contemporary mediatized home is now inundated with interconnected networks of mobile and stationary screens, increasingly intimate and secluded spaces (whether virtual or material), and vast archival spaces of images, movies, texts, and other records. As film exhibition moves away from the public theater and to the privacy of the mediatized home, the work of uncovering the historical and ontological intersections of media spaces, domesticity, and film exhibition technologies is increasingly urgent.

The heterogenous elements of the *dispositif* described in this dissertation lay the foundation for better understanding the *dispositif* of contemporary film spectatorship. Each chapter has complicated the belief that the features of contemporary film exhibition and spectatorship can be solely attributed to the rise of digital technologies by illustrating how such practices emerged out of the machine age and the cinema in the first half of the twentieth century. The roots of an impulse to use social media as a tailored archive of a projected identity is revealed through home movie culture of the 1930s and 1940s and its discourses of storage, editing, and titling. Contemporary spectators that interact with a film in real time through smart devices and instant digital communications share affinities with the autonomy and participation exercised by public and domestic film audiences in the 1920s and 1930s. The means by which contemporary viewers are able to interact with a film instantaneously, whether with other spectators or the world at large, emerges from within a virtual space of networks of

communication and information not too far removed from the simulated home theatre of the Depression Era and wartime America.

This dissertation outlined the various ways public film exhibition practices and behaviors were domesticated and given new meanings. Looking ahead, further historical investigations into the intersection of private and public spaces of film exhibition will inform the ways current multimedia environments interact with traditional notions of cinematic spectatorship. What might similar research reveal about the mediatized home of digital technologies and networks of communications? Historical research, for instance, on screen materiality and non-theatrical film distribution may begin to explain the spectatorial impact of contemporary digital screen materiality, formed within institutional corporatized networks, and digital software's ability to shape, resize, and control the image through the digital materialization of "buttons."⁷²⁶

The experience of film spectatorship within the contemporary mediatized home could be best described as "connected viewing." Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson define "connected viewing" as "a multiplatform entertainment experience" that, by way of larger media conglomerates, "integrate[s] digital technology and socially networked communication with traditional screen media practices."⁷²⁷ In Holt and Sanson's formation of "connected viewing," the spectatorial experience relies on multiple screens that merge the social experience of film spectatorship with the film's distribution methods, whether the film was "bought, sold, 'pirated,' packaged, policed, redistributed, and redefined."⁷²⁸ The growing presence of contemporary domestic leisure technologies frames "connected viewing" as a phenomenon deriving from the

⁷²⁶ Haidee Wasson, "The Networked Screen: Moving Images, Materiality, and the Aesthetics of Size," in *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*. Eds. Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 76.

⁷²⁷ *Connected Viewing: Selling, Streaming, & Sharing Media in the Digital Age*. Eds. Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

⁷²⁸ *Connected Viewing*, 2.

home. Yet the rising use of portable screens and smart devices in public spaces, especially in the public movie theater, points to the ways historical research in these practices could illuminate how private behaviors and spaces are now mobilized and experienced in public with others.

Contemporary film spectatorship is fragmented among multiple screens fighting for the viewer's attention and engagement. But the multi-screen experience further circumscribes the spectator within corporatized networks of capital and information. The more screens the individual spectator views and interacts with, the more individual data is created, obtained, stored, and commodified. The spectator in turn is transformed into a product that can be bought and sold. Barbara Klinger's conception of the "minifortress" provides a helpful representation of the contemporary film spectator as a digital node of capital. The rise of mobile screens, portable devices, headphones, and virtual reality headgear create "minifortresses" across the home and allows the individual to create their own private spaces, albeit ones that are secluded from the material spheres of private and public spaces, burrowing even further away from the material and physical.⁷²⁹ Inundated by smart phones, tablets, gaming systems, social networking communications and streaming services, the contemporary spectator's "minifortress" has become increasingly virtual. Fewer people collect films or video games, and more store their digital copies on servers and the "cloud." Texting, email, and social media have replaced traditional modes of physical, face-to-face communications, even telephone voice-to-voice communication. To play video games, one no longer invites friends over and physically moves from their home to someone else's, instead communicating and playing together online.

Contemporary domestic film exhibition, then, has become essentially virtual. Even if the spectator remains off social media and is attentive to the primary screen, the medium in which it

⁷²⁹ Barbara Klinger. *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and The Home* (Berkley: The University of California Press, 2006), 10.

is viewed is entangled within virtual networks of capital and control that ultimately influence one's understanding of the text. Here, the place of the spectator in a virtual public sphere intersects with an endless assortment of information from military intelligence, commercial transactions, news media reporting, job training, and, as has become the norm the last few years, work itself, among other data. What happens to the spectator who is further absorbed into virtual simulations and increasingly spends their time there? Does contemporary spectatorship resemble less of the modern subject and more of Donna Haraway's "cyborg" where the physical self and digital technologies begin to blur?⁷³⁰

Contemporary home exhibition lives within confused and often contradictory spaces of inside/outside, private/public, and spectator/object. However, as my dissertation has illustrated, this is nothing new. In fact, what often shapes and informs our understanding of new media technologies, as well as their production, distribution, and use-value, are these very same negotiations around definitions of private and public spaces and the ways in which a spectator engages with the object being consumed. The increasing spectatorial move to the digital and virtual spaces poses many questions that cannot yet be properly answered without thorough investigations into the role of material spaces on the film spectator. Without them, scholars can merely only theorize what the digital will bring. In order to understand how the contemporary spectator is influenced, acted upon, and shaped by digital environments, we must closely examine how alternative spaces of exhibition, such as the home – the preferred space for the contemporary spectator – creates and produces meaning.

⁷³⁰ See Donna Haraway's 1985 influential text "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late 20th Century."

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Education

Awards and Honors

Publications

Presentations

“A Critical Analysis of Michael Haneke’s Funny Games.” Guest Lecturer, Cinema 102, San Francisco State University, Ashley Nunes, April 2013.

“Dexter Morgan: The Traumatized American in a Post 9/11 World.” The Free Exchange Conference: *Heroes and Villains* at The University of Calgary, March 2011

Teaching Experience

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE (Milwaukee, WI)

- *Instructor*, Introduction to College Writing (Online) Aug. 2020 – Dec. 2020
- *Lecturer*, Film History II Jan. 2020 – May 2020
- *Instructor*, College Research and Writing Jan. 2020 – May 2020
- *Instructor*, Entertainment Arts: Film, Television, Internet (Online) Aug. 2019 – Dec. 2019
- *Graduate Teaching Assistant*, Zachary Finch Aug. 2019 – Dec. 2019
- *Lecturer*, Film History II Jan. 2019 – May 2019
- *Instructor*, College Research and Writing Jan. 2017 – May 2019
- *Graduate Teaching Assistant*, Tami Williams Aug. 2018 – Dec. 2018
- *Instructor*, Entertainment Arts: Film, Television, Internet (Online) Jan. 2018 – Dec. 2018
- *Graduate Teaching Assistant*, Benjamin Schneider Jan. 2017 – May 2017
- *Instructor*, Introduction to College Writing Aug. 2015 – Dec. 2016

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY (San Francisco, CA)

- *Graduate Teaching Assistant*, Tarek Elhaik Aug. 2014 – Dec. 2014
- *Graduate Assistant*, R.L. Rutsky Jan. 2013 – May 2013
- *Graduate Assistant*, Steve Kovacs Aug. 2012 – Dec. 2012
- *Teacher Assistant*, R.L. Rutsky Jan. 2012 – May 2012
- *Teaching Assistant*, Steve Kovacs Aug. 2011 – Dec. 2011

Employment

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE (Milwaukee, WI)

- *Tutor*, UWM Writing Center Aug. 2019 – May 2022

Academic Service

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE (Milwaukee, WI)

- *Volunteer*, Midwestern Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference: *Artifice* Feb. 2019
- *Volunteer*, Midwestern Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference: *Asymmetry* Feb. 2018
- *Event Coordinator*, Midwestern Interdisciplinary Graduate Conf.: *Mosaic* Apr. 2016 – Mar. 2017

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY (San Francisco, CA)

- *MA Representative*, Faculty Meetings Jan. 2013 – May 2013
- *Co-Chair*, CSGSA Film Conference: *Cinema in Crisis* Jan. 2012 – Oct. 2012