

University of Theatre and Film Arts, Doctoral School

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Possible Educational and Therapeutic Uses of Film

Theses of the Dissertation

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The primary aim of my doctoral dissertation is to explore the potential of film-based art therapy and art education methods, to rethink the motion picture as a means of self-expression, and to present my own method of applying it in practice.

My doctoral research was originally motivated by the fact that modern clinical psychology's efforts to promote community-led principles have increasingly emphasized the use of various art therapies. In this understanding, art is not merely a time-filling activity, but also contributes, by way of anticipated cathartic effects and increased sense of competence, to the formation of the personality of those involved in the creative process. A fundamental condition in the development of film therapy methods is the democratization of film-making, i.e. in our time film-making is no longer the activity of a privileged professional circle, but is now an integral part of our everyday lives.

My doctoral dissertation was prepared by several years of research. I have worked on the theoretical and practical possibilities of the topic in various institutions. As a consequence, the dissertation includes, in addition to the scholarly exploration of the topic, a great deal of personal and therapeutic-pedagogical experience, which demanded, an analytical description of subjective impressions, always in accordance with the rules of decent scholarship. The therapeutic method is based on the fact that I was confronted with real problems of real people during my research, in the interpretation or treatment of which my own personal contribution was obviously substantial. On the basis of my immersion in the subject and practical experience, I would argue that film can be used effectively as a therapeutic or educational tool, and that within this framework it has a wealth of untapped potential.

Given the specificity of film, we can argue for the therapeutic or educational use of film on several levels, either through a cognitive study of the narrative reception of film or through a phenomenological approach to the dream-like nature of film.

The research started a long time ago and over the years I have seen countless ramifications in my thinking about it. From the very beginning, the question of competence arose for myself, as I was a filmmaker with a background in film-making, and I wanted to use film as a means of sharing difficult-to-verbalize content and of getting to know oneself better. For this reason, I felt the need to engage with theories of

art psychology and tried to find the place of film in the therapeutic process of working with art. During my research, as different tendencies emerged, I was confronted with the fact that the subject still has untapped areas and that existing findings are often only tentative in terms of drawing conclusions.

While putting the theory into practice, I met and gained experience with young people. The age group studied proved to be open to the use of this tool, and all the indications were that in many cases film was the most effective way of addressing them. In the course of working with young people, I found that I felt increasingly constrained by the limits I had set for myself, that setting and keeping in mind the therapeutic objectives often hindered the energies that could otherwise be released, that the questions and themes that were laid down often went beyond the phenomenon being addressed, and that in the process I began to formulate a new paradigm and shifted my interest from therapy to a more general educational goal. Although this attempt at a conceptual shift was determined by the opportunities and circumstances that arose during the research, it proved very useful in terms of confronting me with the potential for extension that the method has.

I have come to the conclusion that, even in the case of very diverse groups and diverse expected outcomes, there is to be ascertained an almost universal cultural milieu in which the motion picture has become so dominant and all-pervasive that it is to be reckoned with as an indispensable and inescapable reflection on the study of human nature as such. The form of overview and transmission of human knowledge has undergone such a radical transformation that has completely rearranged the toolbox of film's potential uses.

Film has become a means of cognition that is not limited to abstract knowledge, that is accessible and available to many, that offers effective forms, that meets practical requirements and that, as a result, is increasingly displacing traditional forms of narration. In this sense, I have found that whether I use the tools offered by film for therapeutic or pedagogical purposes, I am able to use them with to create different models. It was particularly important to realize, however, that whatever the form, it is obligatory to set goals, which then define the precise direction and framework of my approach, within which I must move coherently. From the outset, my outlined theory also determined the direction of my investigation: I was exploring the potential of film as a strategy to

motivate people to do things that are important and difficult for them, to strengthen self-reflective skills, i.e. how the tools of film-making can be appropriated and used to gain a better understanding of oneself. The aim of this dissertation is to explore these aspects of film, to expand its perception, and thereby to attempt to renew our ideas about film.

My thesis is divided into the outline of the theoretical background, the description of practical experiences and finally the drawing up of a usable program. Based on my starting points, I am confident that the thesis will be useful for further reflection on and development of the subject, and that the theory can shape the social perception of film and put this art form at the service of a wider social need.