

Cinema and Seriality

22nd Sercia Conference, Sept. 8-9-10, 2016
**Université Paris Diderot / Fondation des Etats-Unis / Université Paris Ouest La Défense/
Université du Havre / Guest Normandie.**

Contact :

Ariane Hudelet ariane.hudelet@gmail.com Anne Crémieux anne.cremieux@gmail.com

Scientific committee : Jean-François Baillon, Sylvaine Bataille, Anne Crémieux, Emmanuelle Delanoë-Brun, Sarah Hatchuel, Ariane Hudelet, Jacqueline Nacache, David Roche, Pierre-Olivier Toulza, Dennis Tredy, Shannon Wells-Lassagne.

SERCIA, Société d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Cinéma Anglophone (www.sercia.net), gathers French and international scholars to promote research and teaching in the field of English-speaking cinema.

Please send your proposal (biographical notice, 150 words max + abstract, 500 words max) by FEBRUARY 15, 2016, to sercia2016@gmail.com

In many ways, cinema has always been essentially linked to the notion of seriality. From the zoetrope to the devices of the Lumière brothers or Thomas Edison, cinematic movement was created by a succession of still images. When film narratives became more complex, productions like *The Perils of Pauline* (1914) or *The Exploits of Elaine* (1914) relied on the episodic form to encourage viewer loyalty. The pleasure experienced in following a story that unfolds over several hours, of parting from characters only to meet up with them after an interruption of several days or weeks, can create a feeling of familiarity and attachment, which the cinema has explored throughout its history. Today, the serial form seems increasingly dominant notably in the United States, both culturally and economically, and is associated both with television—or “post-television” if we consider Netflix, Hulu or Amazon Prime productions—and commercial cinema with its franchises, sequels, prequels and remakes.

The 22nd SERCIA conference will set out to explore the links between the filmic form and seriality in all its manifestations. Speakers are invited to reflect on possible definitions of seriality and think about the way seriality is connected with the notions of genre, corpus or cycle. The topic also calls for a consideration of cinema within a larger history of representations: what links can be established with seriality in other arts such as graphic arts (altarpieces, frescoes, engravings, comic books, graphic novels), or the serialized novel of the XIXth century for instance? How can we account for the fact that, culturally, series are often associated with “lowbrow” genres such as crime fiction, animation, comics, horror, science fiction (from the earliest examples of *serials* such as *Flash Gordon*?)

In the age of transmedia and digital technology, the relationship between cinema and seriality inevitably leads to the question “what is cinema?” and for that matter “what is television?” TV series are today perceived as a logical extension of cinema, and many filmmakers (such as Steven Soderbergh for instance) have chosen this form which, according to some, allows for more freedom. The border between cinema and series seems increasingly blurry, with intersecting modes of production and reception that directors, screenwriters and

actors freely navigate, so that cultural hierarchies are gradually shifting. The role of fan communities has also increased, and the stories are increasingly disseminated through multiple transmediatic forms—films, series, video games, alternate reality games, by-products—making the notion of series even more complex, and raising issues of unity and fragmentation.

Keynote speakers : **Samuel Chambers** (Johns Hopkins University), **Scott Higgins** (Wesleyan University).

Suggested topics:

- **The history of seriality in cinema / television**
- **Seriality and cinematic aesthetics:** interruption and continuity, conventions and innovation
- **Seriality and narration:** characterization, narrative structure, specificities of length and duration in cinema and television
- **Seriality and genre:** series and popular genres – horror, science-fiction, animation, superheroes / how series play with generic hybridity
- **Seriality as an economic and industrial issue:** from the *serials* of the silent era to the Hollywood franchises of the 21st century / the distinction between network, cable, VOD
- **Seriality and adaptation:** adapting recurring characters / cycles of popular novels, such as Philip Marlowe, James Bond etc.; adapting series into films (*Charlie's Angels*), films into series (*Twelve Monkeys*, *Fargo*), the link between comic books and series on the big or small screen (*Batman*, *Spiderman*, *Watchmen*), relationships between series and video games.
- **Cinema and television series:** influences / competition / intertextual relationships. Can we still call series produced by Netflix or Amazon Prime “television”? How should we study some franchises such as *Marvel* or *StarWars*, containing among others, cinematic and TV works?
- **Seriality and reception studies:** attachment, addiction, appropriation, modes of reception linked with new technology; how does seriality integrate fan fiction?
- **Seriality and authorship:** does seriality imply disseminated authorship or does it lead to a renewal of the *auteur* figure as we can see with famous showrunners? How does the vision of an *auteur* combine with collaborative creation in franchises or TV series? What does seriality bring to *auteurs* like Scorsese, Van Sant, Whedon, Abrams who navigate between several forms? Where is authorship located, between *mise en scène* and screenwriting?

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