

## Call for papers

# The mobile phone: an alternative to audiovisual production?

Nice (France), June 6-7, 2023

Throughout the history of cinema and the audiovisual sector, the lightening of shooting instruments has often given rise to major aesthetic innovations, as to the experimentation of new social and economic modalities in the making of a film. Yet, in parallel with the marketing of increasingly handy cameras and cameras allowing animated shots, all this equipment gradually taking advantage of digitization (a longer recording time, a quicker access to plans without development...), a new tool is continually being improved in terms of image capturing quality: the mobile phone. Technical quality is actually one of the significant parameters of this young story.

If some of the first films shot with this small device were nourished by the particular aesthetics of the image low resolution of the first mobiles, even pixelated, the massive investments made by the telephone manufacturers have very quickly equipped the most common devices with the most advanced technologies in terms of resolution. For example, in 2017, the film by Michel Gondry, *Détour*, was commissioned by Apple to promote the quality of image capture by the iPhone 7 plus.

At the same time, manufacturers started to develop new accessories especially for mobile phones (lens kits, poles, stabilizers) that were affordable. Historically speaking, the mobile phone went along with a huge increase in amateur film practices and the advent of new forms of communication through images that Laurence Allard (2010, p. 33) designates as "digital technologies of 'communicational and relational self-expression', or which Max Schleser (2014) considers as 'Self-Reflexive Mobile Filmmaking'.

The rise of what is called by some "cellphilms" (Dockney, Tomaselli & 2010) comes out in a context where mobile telephony equipment is in a worldwide increasing momentum: in July 2021, 66.9% of the world's population owned at least one mobile phone (Global Statshot Report 2021, p. 8), noting that video is unsurprisingly one of the most widely used applications. Thus,

there is no coincidence that film and audiovisual education very quickly took hold of these generalized practices among the younger generations: in 2008, Benoît Labourdette published a manual of more than 200 pages (*Tournez un film avec votre téléphone portable, Shoot a movie with your mobile phone*), that has since been widely used in educational circles.

We should also notice the important role played by amateur film festivals in promoting this tool. A first festival totally dedicated to this category of films was born in 2005 in France, the Mobile Film Festival, since joined at a global level by many other manifestations of the same type (Wilson, 2014). Moreover the cell phone is also penetrating the professional fields of photography. Roger Odin yet noted in 2014 (p. 37) “the potential of the mobile phone to foster creativity and bring out something new in the field of cinema”.

The challenges involved in the use of this tool are multiple. First of all, of course, the reduction of the costs can create an obvious motivation. Many films testify to this quest for independence through reduced budgets in all other spheres of film production. In other cases, the impossibility of having access to a professional equipment or a complex political situation compel some directors to settle for this camera – for instance, the cases of the Iranians Jafar Panahi and Mojtaba Mirtahmasb, shooting *Ceci n'est pas un film, This is not a movie* (2011) while being in secrecy during the house arrest of the first of them, or those of the filmmakers Guevara Namer and Namer Matarin Syria (Liosi, 2018), are perfect examples of this situation. Besides, being able to create in a very personal way is also largely nourished by the new possibilities offered by the transportability of the mobile phone.

Joseph Morder (*J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un, I would like to share spring with someone*, 2008) or Rachid Djaidani (*La ligne brune - The Brown line*, 2010) were lucky to test how a filmed diary could take advantage of this little device. This way of filming, based on the capacity of the filmmaker (the "builder", man or woman, whatever, to use the terms of Jill Daniels, 2022) to root his practice in life itself allows a renewal of documentary forms, pushing a little further the historically experimented principles of the “cinema-vérité” (Uricchio 2014, p. 61), or renewing Astruc's proposals about the concept of “camera-pen” (Berkeley 2014). Finally, this way can translate an aesthetic intention, participating in the permanent search for the renewal of narrative and visual forms and modalities of the act of filming that goes along with the history of cinema and audiovisual sector, this very "Keitai Aesthetic" that studied Max Schleser in his 2010 thesis. In terms of alternative how can the emergence of this new tool be thought in the producing modalities of animated images? How did the status of the mobile phone evolve within the professional practices over the years? What kind of different uses are made in the world?

These issues are at stake during the symposium organized at Nice, in the premises of the MSH, on June 6 and 7, 2023, which intends to provide avenues to reflection, while opening up to all leads of innovative investigation in the matter.

Paper proposals, including a summary of around 2,500 characters, a bibliography and a short biography, can be sent by email before April 15, 2023 to the following address: [colloque.telephone.portable@laposte.net](mailto:colloque.telephone.portable@laposte.net)

Papers will be published in the *Cahiers de Champs Visuels* in 2024.

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