

MOVIMCAT: CINEPHILIA & CURATING THE AVAILABLE

Stefano Miraglia

Cinephilia entered my life in a very strange way. It was not in a screening room – although I did watch films in cinemas. It was in my bedroom, watching the TV program *Fuori Orario* (which is the Italian translation for *After Hours*) late at night on RAI 3, the national television's third channel. The program can be roughly described as follows: images coming from one or several films or other audiovisual documents suddenly appear on the screen, most of the time without any information on what is being shown. Then comes the (often lo-fi) recording of a man's voice (not) commenting the images and presenting the films he is going to show. Very often, the audience is also presented with images of the man speaking (Enrico Ghezzi), but sound and images are out-of-sync. After the presentation, the program credits start: images from Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* with *Because The Night* by Patti Smith Group as soundtrack. After the credits: the programmed films. Sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes more, until five or six in the morning.

Watching *Fuori Orario* is one the activities that shaped - on an emotional and aesthetic level - my personal way of experiencing films on a small screen: the choice of films, the extremely non-standard way of presenting them, the mystery of those images that were shown during the presentation - without any information on the authors, the freedom in the editing. All these aspects were crucial to me, but it took me some time to understand that this form of cinephilia was one of the things that led me to create *Movimcat*.

I founded the online project *MOVIMCAT - The Moving Image Catalog* in December 2016. I wanted a web page that could point me to films that were being released on Vimeo by artists and experimental filmmakers. I couldn't find such page, so I created it. I was sure that the audience was already there: artists, students, fans, festival programmers, teachers and, among them, the people that, for one reason or another, can't travel to reach a public screening. I would scout for films only on Vimeo and suggest them on Facebook at first. Later came also the website and the Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Movimcat is just another tiny piece of the artists' moving image and experimental film global context, whose circulation of works we are still in the process of understanding [1].

As *Movimcat*'s online presence became stable, the most natural thing happened: proposals for offline activities arrived. In the summer of 2018, I was invited to Le Dôme Festival in Montbazou, France. The festival's artistic directors Baptiste and Constantin Jopeck asked me to present *Movimcat* through an exhibition, a round-table and a text. Working on the text presentation [2] made me realise about *Fuori Orario* and the mystery and emotion of watching films alone, at night, on a small screen: there they were the perfect premises for watching hours of films online to feature on *Movimcat*.

Movimcat's main curatorial activities are: selecting moving image works that

are officially and freely available to watch online, sharing the selection to social media followers, building an index, creating special programmes and inviting guest curators. The main concept and effort is to curate a selection of what is already available online, a practice that, personally, is the equivalent of some sort of DIY ethos.

My first attempts at curating were luxurious to say the least: I was still a student, in Lyon, and had the opportunity to co-curate an exhibition by choosing artworks from the region's contemporary art public collection (called FRAC). The artist line-up was dreamy and, as students, we had access to almost everything we needed. That same year, while assisting my film studies teacher in creating a public screening on contemporary visual anthropology and art, I had the chance to curate a small portion of the program by renting and screening a selection of 16mm films by João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva. I couldn't be more happy.

Obviously, the dream ended with the end of my academic studies in Lyon: no more fully-funded, high-end curatorial opportunities. The need to start a new curatorial project needed a personal reassessment: what to curate without any institution backing you up?

For me, the answer became curating the available, what was already there, online, in my field of practice: artists' moving image and experimental cinema. The artists' practice of taking the Vimeo password-protection off 'old works' [3] was something that I was observing with interest, it was a debate topic between friends working in experimental and animated cinema. The practice looked like a sort of new convention, not just a way of reaching a larger number of potential viewers. Since I started working on *Movimcat*, I took this topic to Le Dôme and to Nomadica in Bologna, in the form of meetings and round-tables.

The decision of curating the available led to the blossoming of so many questions: how do I choose? Do I choose according just to my own taste? What's my taste by the way? Should I propose works made by students too? How important should be a theme and/or a practice when combining films in a programme or an index entry? These questions and the answers I try to give – like a sort of (still ongoing) conversation with myself and with the others – are at the core of *Movimcat*.

[1] *More than two years after its first publication, Erika Balsom's book After Uniqueness is still the best compass for navigating the current situation in this field.*

[2] *(*preview only), Le Dôme Festival, July 2018.*

[3] *The common rule is that the work submitted, in order to be considered for selection at a film festival, needs to be recent (with the limit usually being set as two years since its completion).*