

Fellows



Edward Dimendberg
IFK_Senior Fellow

Duration of fellowship
01. April 2006 bis 30. June 2006

Edward Dimendberg

PROJECT TITLE

Allegories of Production: Post-1945 Cinema and Sensory Modernization

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

My research project centers upon the role of cinema in the processes of cultural modernization after 1945. Accompanying the unprecedented expansion of mass production and consumer society across the globe, film in the postwar decades provides an ideal prism through which to view the transformation of the objects and subjects of everyday life. For as new products, textures, spaces, and surfaces became embedded in the home, workplace, and urban fabric, both the sensory field and the perceptual process itself rapidly adapted new forms. Post-1945 cinema, especially, but not uniquely, in its American guises, functions as an allegory of this production process, even when labor and industrialization seemingly are absent. Central to my investigation is the overlap and frequently blurry line between narrative fiction films and industrial documentaries intended to promote new economic and technological realities. These parallels attain exemplary clarity in the four rubrics of my research. Single family houses in the American suburbs redefine relations of interiority and exteriority and provide the spatial matrix for a domestic revolution organized around the perception of new colors, shapes, and textures. Plastics became regarded as the quintessential material of the 1950s whose qualities and possibilities fascinated architects, product manufacturers, and filmmakers such as Alain Resnais. Charles and Ray Eames united architecture, industrial design, and cinema and highlighted the aporia of postwar American space. Los Angeles, subject of documentaries and fiction film throughout the 1970s, most notably, "Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles" (1972) served as a laboratory for the new experiences of space and time central to the new logics of production and consumption. Through an analysis of films in these four domains, I hope to demonstrate how space, materiality, design logic, and speed adumbrate the cultural and perceptual dynamics of modernization in the period between the earlier modernity of the 1920s and the emergence of postmodern culture in the late twentieth century. Engaging spectators through the senses of sight and sound, cinema participates in the modernization of other senses in a manner that suggests the necessity of reconceptualizing its definition as an audio-visual medium.

CV

Associate Professor at the Department of Film and Media Studies, University of California

Publications

U.a. with Anton Kaes and Martin Jay (Ed.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1994; *Excluded Middle: Toward a Reflective Architecture and Urbanism*, Houston/San Francisco 2002; *Film Noir and the spaces of Modernity*, Harvard University Press 2004.

