The recent digitization of the media production industries has also been accompanied by an epistemological shift; from understanding films as narrative or aesthetic texts to characterizing them instead as a form of ‘content’ to be ‘carried’ by infrastructure such as networks. Although there exists an extensive literature that describes the role of networks in social, political and cultural production there is very little exploration of cultural infrastructure as a creative process and catalyst of social and environmental amenity. Networks in theory and practice transfer emphasis from fixed, unitary localities (whether these are topographical, organizational or symbolic) to fluid, interactional processes. They are defined by the shape, velocity and scale of their interconnections and seemingly function without borders, loyalties or purpose. Because of their expansive logic they challenge traditional patterns of knowledge, community and geography. But in their suggestion of an infinite expansion, they propose an untenably boundless economy that is independent of environment, quality or social influence. This presentation will explore the idea of cinema as an “expressive infrastructure” (Thrift 2012) through several historical case studies. Rather than proposing cinema exhibition and distribution as a passive or dispassionate foundational framing for film content, it suggests a revised understanding of cultural infrastructure which imagines how the cinema operates to produce ‘creative networks’ that reconfigure the meaning, function and relationality of individuals, institutions and locations.

Biography

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