



Screen Studies Conference  
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*Seeing differently: women's amateur film practice in Britain's cine era*

Abstract:

Women responded swiftly to the introduction of lightweight cine equipment to Britain during the early 1920s. Some enthusiasts joined clubs, entered competitions, wrote, or supported activities run by the Institute of Amateur Cinematography (IAC) while others filmed independently in their immediate surroundings and elsewhere.

A rich visual record is emerging from freshly identified and accessible non fiction archive materials, disclosing how the intimacies of individual lives intermesh with broader issues at local, regional, national and international level. Understanding this voluntary and recreational visual practice in and beyond the domestic sphere complements studies on twentieth middle class women and leisure, work, status and identity, extends women's earlier welfare-related activities into new areas, and provides insight into gender-related issues of technology, consumerism and advertising. Importantly, these 'alternative' visual activities deserve setting alongside better known histories of women in professional film and emerging research on women and television history histories.

Mapping out this diversity and offering possible interpretative frameworks furthers our understanding of women's role in amateur visual production. I will also introduce some preliminary findings from a new collaborative study to reappraise twentieth century British women's cine practice while interviews with now elderly filmmakers or their younger relatives and friends remain possible.