

Assessment of the diploma work „Black and white cinematography in the digital era“ written by Guilherme Burgos Barbosa da Silva

The work with subtitle „Aspects of monochrome cinema in the contemporaneity“ is divided in three basic parts : Historical Foundation, Crafts and Technology and Cinematography within the Creative Process and Production.

The first part represents a brief analysis of possible ways how to work with color documented on different approaches how the color image was created in motion picture. With the introduction of Technicolor system was discussed also the question „why we should use colors?“ In the article „Technology and Aesthetics“ Scott Higgins describes how slow the new possibility was going to be accepted by the industry as a reliable technology and desired aesthetics, as for color film it would have yet to put itself in conformity with already established cinematographic aesthetics norms of production and conventions relating style to the tasks of narration. The discussion continues with voices that inclusion of colors stifles the greatest of audience reactions, it does not stimulates imagination, or is the picture as good in color as it would have been in black and white? A moment of big transformation in society might be represented by the advent of the color television, transition to post modern age justifying culturally how people were more likely to watch color films then black and white.

The chapter „Crafts and Technology“ is oriented to the production of black and white moving images in the digital era and contains also the results of the practical tests made by author to compare shooting in color followed by desaturation or shooting with monochrome sensors. He decided to explore basic question : Is there any difference in the reproduction of color tones in the shades of gray if the image is captured by a color camera and post produced to black and white or if the image is already captured in black and white by monochrome sensor? Which of the two technologies would be able to give a better looking image or if the images would be different at all.

With this aim in mind he selected two cameras Arri Alexa and Arri Alexa B+W having native EI 800 respectively EI 2000. The picture was composed of well known objects, apples, oranges, leafs, dark and light skin model, color charts and grey charts. The large set of tests is then discussed with respect to how the images differ in contrast of colors reproduced in a grey scale, tests were made also to define influence of color filters and infrared photography. At the end of this chapter are discussed advantages and disadvantages of both approaches – do we have to use color or monochrome sensor. Many variables have to be considered before choosing a camera to shoot a movie. Recent developments of the monochrome sensors is something that opens up the range of possibilities how to accomplish different ideas.

The last chapter is oriented on the interviews with the cinematographers explaining their films how were made, what awards received, why they decided to shoot in B+W.

Vast collected analysis, information, examples make this work an important study material that can be recommended to everybody who is interested in this topic. I suggest the grading A.