

Liverpool Film Seminar

2019 – 2020 series

Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Professor Duncan Petrie (University of York)

A changing visual landscape: British cinematography in the 1960s

The 1960s was a transformative period for the British cinema; a decade which saw substantial levels of American financial support for production, increased budgets and higher production values, and an unprecedented level of international visibility and success. If one surveys the range of films made in Britain between 1960 and 1969, one of the most striking features is a gradual transformation in visual style: from a predominance of black and white to the ubiquity of colour; from hard edged, high contrast lighting to a softer, more diffused use of illumination; from carefully composed images and minimal camera movement to a much freer, mobile and spontaneous visual register; from the aesthetics of classicism to a much more self-conscious use of form appropriate for a decade associated with a new emphasis on spectacle and sensation. British cinematographers also achieved new levels of international recognition during this period, with the award of five Oscars for Best Cinematography between 1960 and 1969, equalling the total from the previous twenty years.

In this presentation (which has been published in the *Journal of British Cinema and Television*) I will examine this transformation, considering some of the most significant practitioners and films and the key factors (cultural, institutional, technological) that influenced the shifts in visual aesthetics and production processes. But I will also move beyond the scope of the original article to consider how this kind of analysis might be applied to more recent developments in cinematography in British moving image production. The development and wholesale application of digital technology has ushered in a different kind of transformation in aesthetics, production practices and accessibility.

Biography:

Professor Duncan Petrie is Head of the Department of Theatre, Film, Television and Interactive Media at the University of York. Duncan has published widely on aspects of British, Scottish and New Zealand Cinema, cinematography and Moving Image Education. His books include

Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry (Macmillan, 1991), *The British Cinematographer* (BFI, 1996), *Screening Scotland* (BFI, 2000), *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel* (EUP, 2004), *Shot in New Zealand: The Art and Craft of the Kiwi Cinematographer* (Random House, 2007), *Educating Film-Makers* (Intellect, 2014), with Rod Stoneman, and *Transformation and Tradition in 1960s British Cinema* (EUP, 2019), with Richard Farmer, Laura Mayne and Melanie Williams.