

## Alberto Diana

Q1Q: How would you describe home movies to a person who has no familiarity with the term?

Q1A: I understand home movies as being part of the family environment, of a specific historical period. Because the home movie corresponds indeed with the birth of the small gauge formats which are formats that have enabled the use of the camera also inside the homes, especially in richer layers of society in the first times, because lets say that the first reels were the K formats, a difficultly accessible format because of its economic value, that afterwards has started to become more democratised with the arrival of super8 for example. Therefore it could be considered also a genre in a certain sense, right, because it respects certain standards, there is somehow a general unconscious act inside home movies, that leads to the repetition of a specific style, also as an alignment with guides. Very often film guides, such as the case of 9,5mm of Pathe, had almost a normative value. Therefore there are already certain styles that tend to repeat, and we can talk about a phenomenon regarding behaviour, culture and so on, of the 1900, but maybe also about a cinema sub-genre.

RL: Ok, so you connect the home movie to the technology-genre binome right?

AD: Yes, for sure.

RL: Regarding your definition of home movies, do you make a clear distinction between the home moviemaker and the club amateur or do you see a convergence here?

AD: Both things. I mean it depends also on historical moments right? Because from a certain moment on, the home moviemaker becomes also the cine club amateur. It is enough to think about certain cases, such as the Felici in Italy, I mean those cine clubs where the moviemakers met and and small works developed between those walls were a sort of small pieces of cinema. Some also organised festivals with prizes. A thing that most probably was not existent in the first moments, maybe during the 20s and the 30s, when there was a certain artistic tendency among the home movie-makers who most probably were coming from photography and had a certain experience with the image; not the moving image but the still frame, that afterwards they developed in a certain way, almost with a certain experimental curiosity, like there was the cinema also in the first moments: something new, that appeared from nowhere, breaking into in people's lives and transforming social relations.

Q2Q: DO you think that the type of public, which finds an interest in this footage, has changed over the past years? If so, how?

Q2A: Well the public of the home movie is by definition the family, right? In the sense of the family of the moviemaker in general, but in most cases it is the 'pater familias'. The public was made of his wife, his children, then in the case of an enlarged family made also of uncles, aunts, grandparents and friends. The obviously the public has changed nowadays because these families don't exist in the majority of cases and it is us that look now at home movies.

Q2Q: We are a little bit like the unknown heirs of these families, right?

Q2A: Yes, exactly, because what happened is that it is a thing that is directly connected to conservation. The home movies passed from a sort of forgetting and abandonment connected to the technological decadence of projectors and so on, they have not been seen for 10 or 20 years, have been then found and digitalised and with today's technologies it is us who watch these movies, for purposes of study, because we want to make something creative out of them. Therefore the public

changes. It consists not of family members in some cases but of creative, archivists, historians and other professionals.

Q2Q: A public that is not so much connected to the family nucleus, but an even more enlarged public.

Q2A: yes, exactly. Then there is the case of some home moviemakers who have never been family members, who are the descendants, like Alina Marazzi, who will be present tomorrow. She has been a family member but not a member of the public in the time when these home movies were created. Therefore these changes have taken place for sure.

Q2Q: A specific situation like yours: first filming your own family in 'La concorrente'.

Q2A: yes, exactly.

Q3Q: Which do you think are the most successful formats deployed for reusing home movies?

Q3A: Do you refer to specific works or to artists?

Q3Q: I refer to categories of outputs. Similar to your identified specific categories of public, which are the genres that such material best embodies?

Q3A: Well there are different possibilities of reuse, of which one is the installation connected to the historical reconstruction, or even connected to a more free context where you rework on the typical visual code of the home movie, on its style, maybe you create something new from it. The possibilities are there, maybe I do not possess the theoretical knowledge to identify them clearly.

Q3Q: I am more interested in your own perspective, the possibilities you find.

Q3A: In my perspective, the work with home movies is for sure a type of work that cannot be disconnected from its historical context, from the social context of the home movie-maker and his life. Because in home movies we can't see only the baptism, the wedding, the holidays at the seaside, but also vision of a society. I mean the home moviemaker, as bad and unable as he can be, he still transmits a vision of something right? I mean something beyond that lies outside or in the periphery of the shot. This is something that I am interested to explore through my work, because there is a not-spoken about (un non detto), a not-seen (un non visto) in every family environment, especially in a Catholic culture like ours, where the not-spoken about has a much greater value than what you actually say. Like this in the family shots, the not-seen values much more than what you are able to see. Or maybe what can be seen based on how it is being shown, shows something different than the home movie-maker wants to depict, similar to what happens in the home movie that we will see tomorrow, La famiglia, la patria, right? An innocent stroll in Tripoli, that shows the wife of the home movie-maker in a marketplace doesn't really show the wife taking a walk or in a seaside resort, but in my opinion it shows a series of things that we haven't seen and read in history books on colonialist Italy. This has been something that has raised my curiosity from the beginning to want to discover more. I guess that my interest is about uncovering what lies behind this vision, trying to discover the latent truth that lies at the periphery of the shot/frame.

Q4Q: You made the passage from films of your family to films that reuse home movies. What generated this shift?

Q4A: What drove me to do this work is what I was saying before, to go beyond the beauty of the home movie. The way in which home movies are being presented you cannot see the suffering, the domestic violence, and the abuse. But in a certain way they are, they can be. Indeed the dark side of our history of our country, of our countries, because it is not only the case of Italy, lies in this not-spoken about, the not-seen, but that becomes visible in the moment in which we know how to

position ourselves to look at the home movie-maker who looks, to look at the home movie-maker while he watches the world. Therefore, this is the issue. There is therefore a parallel story of our country, that lies in those images and that we discover and it is every time different. For example in my own work with home movies, I perceive this curiosity, to uncover this latent life that lies in the 'not spoken about', of the 'not seen', of the 'outside the frame'. Before confronting myself with it, I was feeling emptiness, I have perceived it also in the documentary I realised and that you have seen. There is an empty space between the family story and the moving image story. I want to position myself on this emptiness and discover that it beholds.

Q5Q: Which do you think are the easy parts and which the difficult part of working with home movies?

Q5A: Maybe here it is easier for you if I explain to you my artistic and exploration path. When I started the residency, the work in the archive, we agreed with the tutor/the archivist who said: I will bring you various collections you can work on. Me I said from the start that I will select only one collection, belonging to one film-maker, because being my first work, my first approach with this archive, I was not feeling ready to do a complex work involving more collections. I was feeling the need to go in-depth, not to remain on the surface of the collection, but to get to know each story of each moviemaker. Therefore, from there on, after selecting the collections of interest, we started doing interviews with the donors and their families, in order to uncover as much information as possible about the home movies in the collections: who were those people starring in the images, what had happened in the context of that specific summer and so on. Therefore during one week we didn't close ourselves in the archive to look at home movies, but we encountered each and every possible person who was connected to the history of that collection or in some cases the home movie-makers themselves. This has been the first step. Ok, so, sorry, what was the starting question?

Q5Q: The question was about the hard and easy parts in working with home movies.

Q5A: So the easy part is what I just told you about and it was the most stimulating, motivating for me, because I do not like to stay fixed in front of a computer to look only at images. There is who works in this way and finds in this process of looking at images the point of starting a creative discourse; for me it does not work. The image is a point/position of encounter. And because the image is a point/position of encounter, the question is: where do we stand? If in the images of the moviemaker there is a voice, I need to find as a filmmaker the correct position to be able to express this voice of the home moviemaker in a correct manner. Therefore I need to find my voice and his voice and create this sort of dialogue. This is the most difficult part that involves also the capacity of storytelling, with which persona to establish a dialogue, how to approach the material, then there is a position to take that needs to include respect, because as visible in *Patria*, *Famiglia*, there is material that can be regarded with a critical eye, given the historical period when it was shot. But at the same time there needs to be a profound respect for the home movie-maker who has shot, conserved and donated these images, that need to be seen again. For me, in a certain sense there is this feeling of gratitude in front of who took those images, that doesn't need to be forgotten in the moment that you are laying your hands on it in order to find something. Therefore finding the voice and the relation to the images that is the most difficult part maybe.

Q6Q: Do you think it is possible that during the reuse process of home movies, the footage acquires a completely new meaning or not?

Q6A: I don't know if these images are completely forms to fill in, because they have their own meaning. They have been produced with very specific motivations. The home moviemakers who I discovered in the archive were all very precise people: in filming, in conserving the images, in giving titles to the images. The question is: how do you relate to this meaning? For me it is not about making a documentary about the history of a moviemaker, but on the history of his/her images. Therefore, it is about exploring his sense. This relationship here is the result of the documentary, an encounter between two perspectives, right? Two positions: one that is already there and the other that uncovers maybe that which is hidden, visible only through distance. Therefore the home moviemakers are much more aware than one can possibly think they are.

Q7Q: Are there home movies, which you came across and remained dear to you?

Q7A: Yes, and they are images I am particularly fond and which the same time provoke me discomfort, because they talk about, I mean there is a beauty in these images, but there is also a something that can generate a sort of repulsion because they recall an Italian unconsciousness that, in this particular case the colonialism, the fascism, is something that has not been completely removed and cleared. And it is obvious that there is this issue here, that nevertheless ... for example I have chosen as a header image of the documentary the Arabic wife, right? It is in reality the daughter of the moviemaker, who finds herself in Libia, in one of the family trips to Tripoli and is wearing a typical Arabic wedding dress. It is a beautiful image, it has a certain technical appeal, the way it was filmed, with her on the camel, seen from beneath, and then she turns. In a certain sense it is an elegant composition, she seems almost a diva in an ad. But it produces a certain level of discomfort and you say: this is the only close-up that exists in the film about the daughter. Then you see the before and after, the distance that there is to the local population, that is filmed with a certain curiosity, almost an ethnographic approach, but maybe also with a sense of contempt.

Q8Q: Can you think about home movies scenes that were extremely ambiguous, not being part somehow of the home movie imaginary which depicts the happy family?

Q8A: The most ambiguous images have been for me those depicting parades. The parades of Balilla and of the Youth of Littorio, because they are filmed in a newsreel style, a style that we know very well in Italy because they know them from the Luce Institute images; we have all seen them, even if we didn't live in fascism. But there is an issue, which is present in the film and the subtitles try to question it: the images of Luce were to a great extent recreated images. I mean, yes the parades, the groups were there, but in most cases these images were fictional ones. Here instead they are being reproduced almost like a cinema of conservation. And it is there that I ask myself: these images, what use do they really have? Are there for remembering? I mean the family needs to remember this? Who were those images for? For whom did he produce them, for the family, friends, for summer colonies? There is a series of things that I ask myself. Then in these images there is the daughter. There is the daughter, the Arabic wife who is depicted like a character in Laurence of Arabia, and then we see her pass as nothing had happened. Indeed, in order to underline this I had to slow down the image and make a close-up on it to say: here is the daughter, in the middle of everyone else. This has caused me questions. There is this ambiguity. For this reason I named the documentary: the family, the homeland. There is the coincidence between the two terms. I had a

conversation some days before about the fact that the two words sound the same in one language, I don't remember which exactly. There is the same noun to identify the concept of father and homeland. Maybe in Czech language is this coincidence. There is in a certain way, in the vision of the moviemaker and that of the totalitarian vision of fascism, this conjunction between the patriarchal family and the homeland. Also in Italian 'patriarcato' there is this coincidence.

Q9Q: Could you talk to me more about your choice to begin and end your documentary with the presentation of an unidentified character? How much of this decision was condition by your mediated relation with the images and how much by your profound investigation of the life of the moviemaker?

Q9A: It was for sure conditioned to a great extent. Then there is also a question connected to the format. Like you have seen in the format are visible the perforations of the 9.5mm. I have chosen to use, in contrast to the other two works developed for re-framing, the original scanning that shows on the screen also the perforations; one ne thing that is possible due to modern scanning technology. Telecinema did not give this possibility. What do we discover, which is our advantage. We can see now a portion of the image that was not visible through the cinema and neither to the filmmaker when he was doing his recording. Most probably he was not aware that on the right upper hand of the image there was this lady.

Q9Q: the intruder...

Q9A: Exactly. This is a recurring thing of the film. Maybe also the issue of the little girl at the end, the filmmaker was not aware of her. It is a provocation, in a certain sense, because in the filmmakers gaze there is a sort of order, of regularity of movements, which in specific cases is not being respected. The choice of the beginning and the end is therefore not governed by chance. At the beginning it intends to act as a warning for the public, (hey be careful that during the movie you will find these issues) who is being invited to look at the limit of the frame. And it is an issue that does not signal only a theoretical aspect, but is also connected to the social status of the filmmaker; that lady is most probably a domestic worker, a gardener, someone not foreseen to be part of the environment. In the case of the ending it represents some of the few cases of freedom, in the entire story of the film. And I must say that I find myself in that little girl, because as a child I was the same in sports education, doing something completely different than the others. It seemed to me right to find also a moment of respite.

Q10Q: I have put together a small compilation of home movie scenes, which I would like you to see and comment if possible.

Q10A: For example here, how many different ways can there be to represent an archaeological place? This could be for example Agrigento in a summer afternoon, during sunset. I have thought about the sequence of 'La famiglia, la patria', with the image of the roman theatre. There too there is a sort of fascination for the monument. Here there is an aesthetic fascination for the sunset, the light that is dimming etc. There it is totally an imperial adhesion. Also when I say what type of difference there is in the vision. I don't know the filmmaker but I get with my mind to make these comparisons.

Q10Q: one thing that I would like to ask you bluntly: which of these scenes has captured your attention?

Q10A: So many of them. The old lady in the beginning reminded me of my grandmother. Then there was the little boy who was fishing and the two old persons on the motorbike. There is especially a

high amount of old people. The thing that makes me curious is that in most home movies children are the focus of attention. This is something that makes me very curious, the motivation behind, and the desire to capture on image something. For example even if most filmmakers have this desire to film childhood here it is on the contrary. But attention, there is a difference between home movies and found footage. That which is in the archive is home movies. The pure found material such as Peter Tscherkassky uses in his shot film Happy End, which is found footage. In the archive there is no found footage, because there is a donor who signs also a contract. The important thing of the archive is actually the archive; because the institutional archive is also an institution of power. It is nice because there is a different approach to found footage. I would love to work on this material because you can make space for everything else. Yes, I would love to work with this material, to do the opposite exercise, to know nothing about it.