

## Joëlle Kost

### CV

I studied Art History, Film Studies and the Theory and History of Photography at the University of Zurich. In my master thesis, I developed a filmic portrait of the swiss artist MARCK and produced a 40 minutes' documentary from an art historian's perspective. The film premiered in the cinema Xenix in 2015. Since 2016 I have been working on my dissertation about the relationship between the aesthetics and technological aspects of chromogenic color films in the period from 1955 to 1995.

My general research interests next to film are video and contemporary art. Photography fascinates me in theory, as well as in practice. Artist expeditions and film sets offer me the settings for my photographic work. My passion for drawing is reflected in sketchings and short animation films. In fall 2018 I am lecturing film analysis at the University of Applied Science in Chur and at the Berner Fachhochschule (Switzerland) in the multimedia production program.

### ***Chromogenic Color Films – Interdependencies between materiality and aesthetics***

The tension between the overall plane of an image and its internal events can be defined as an *iconic difference* (see e.g. Gottfried Boehm 1994). It is the fundamental contrast, that is inherent in every image and that is responsible for the production of meaning. The contrast is historically shaped and establishes an opposition between the 'material support' and the 'meaning' ('Sinn') in the sense of 'representation'. This relationship between technology and aesthetics is often ignored in film studies, especially when it comes to chromogenic color films from the 1950s onwards. In the academic field the technical base of these films is repeatedly reduced to short mentions of brand names such as Eastman Kodak, Agfa or Fuji. A close connection of technological aspects and their aesthetical appearances is rarely established. My PhD project aims to fill this gap and explore the advantages of a combined approach by connecting materiality *and* aesthetics. Accordingly, the project is located in the field of foundational research and will also generate knowledge in the area of film preservation and restoration.

The main research question focuses on the role of different film stocks in regard to their influence on the aesthetics of chromogenic color films. In the research period from 1955 to 1995 the evolutionary steps between the single film stock generations are small. For example Eastman Kodak alternated only one of three main characteristics from one generation to the next, maintaining thus a certain constant for the users.<sup>1</sup> Consequently the visual impact of these small changes are not always easy to comprehend. Therefore the research set-up follows a bottom-up approach: a corpus of 140 films was parsed on the basis of a computer-assisted in-depth film analysis method executed with tools from the digital humanities. This qualitative analysis displays different aesthetical phenomena, which are connected with developments in their material base. Synchronic and diachronic changes regarding film colors are considered within the thesis. Newly developed and programmed visualizations help to understand the connection between technology and aesthetics in regard to color. What is a new film stock capable of and where are its limits? What technological development enabled filming with available light in the 1970s? What aesthetical strategies were developed to cope with the advantages and disadvantages of the photographic material?

The dissertation is part of the research project ERC Advanced Grant *FilmColors*, led by Prof. Dr. Barbara Flückiger at the University of Zurich (URL: <http://www.research-projects.uzh.ch/p21207.htm>).

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<sup>1</sup> Waner, John (2000): *Hollywood's Conversion of all Production to Color using Eastman Color Professional Motion Picture Films*. Newcastle: Tobey Pub, p. 134.