

Sticky Films

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and Clara Podlesnigg**

 **meson press**

KÖNFIGURATIONEN DES FILMS

DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft

GOETHE
UNIVERSITÄT
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Bibliographical Information of the German National Library

The German National Library lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie (German National Bibliography); detailed bibliographic information is available online at dnb.dnb.de

Published in 2026 by meson press, Lüneburg, Germany
www.meson.press

Design concept: Torsten Köchlin, Silke Krieg
Cover design: Mathias Bär
Cover image: Kerim Doğruel, Fadekemi Olawoye, Clara Podlesnigg
Copy editing: Selena Class

The print edition of this book is printed by Lightning Source,
Milton Keynes, United Kingdom.

ISBN (Print): 978-3-95796-234-8
ISBN (PDF): 978-3-95796-235-5
DOI: 10.14619/2348

The digital editions of this publication can be downloaded freely at
www.meson.press.

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Creation by Destruction: Experimental Film Practices and the Art of Splicing

Miriam De Rosa and Andrea Mariani

This text focuses on a specific phase of analogue film postproduction, namely splicing, with a particular emphasis on splicing as a gesture in experimental film practices in the interwar period. Our central concern is how splicing can serve as an epistemological tool. By looking at the films by Ubaldo Magnaghi, a member of the Milan Cine-Club and an official Agfa collaborator in the 1930s, we claim that splicing works as a reconfiguration driver acting on the film. In the case of amateur/experimental cinema, we can assume the filmmaker splices the film, and when it happens the conjunction that this implies is made technically possible by using cement (tape came later in history); however,

²¹⁶ **using cement implies emulsion or even frame loss. We then stress splicing as a “gesture of destroying” (Flusser 2014). Guided by glueing and slicing, destruction becomes not only a gesture of dismissing, dismantling, disposing, and displacing but also a productive, creative move—from within the editing practice—that allows the displaying of the film material in its full surface, thereby shedding light on a new way to think of it.**

Splicing and Modernity

As Charles Baudelaire wrote in *The Painter of Modern Life* (1859), “Modernity is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, which make up one half of art, the other being the eternal and immutable” (1992, 403). Expanding on this notion, David Harvey, in his influential account of postmodernity, interprets the transitory nature of modernity as not only a dramatic rupture with previous historical conditions, but also as an ongoing process of internal fractures and fragmentation. At the heart of this dynamic is the avant-garde, which acts as a powerful force driving discontinuity—“interrupting any sense of continuity by radical surges, recuperations, and repressions” (1989, 12). Accordingly, the Nietzschean “image of creative destruction and destructive creation” assumed the value of a *leitmotif* of the progressive project of modernity (Harvey 1989, 17). Aesthetically, montage and collage stand as the central modernist practices that most directly confronted the challenge of inscribing historical change within the chaotic, fragmented, and transitory conditions of modernity. Through print media and the moving image, they “provided one means of addressing this problem, since different effects out of different times (old newspapers) and

spaces (the use of common objects) could be superimposed to create a simultaneous effect" (Harvey 1989, 28).

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By exploring the experimental film practices of Italian filmmaker Ubaldo Magnaghi, through the lenses of Vilem Flusser's media theory, we seek to shed a different light on the modernist "image of creative destruction" (Harvey 1989, 17). In particular, we intend to stress the inner creative potential of splicing in film editing as a technique that reveals the modern impulses towards the transitory and the ephemeral, discovering the creative and reflexive features of this "tacit" (and transparent) material practice (Boguska et al. 2024). Furthermore, by excavating the practice of film splicing in the amateur sphere, we want to stress the elemental and yet pervasive qualities of this technique. A splice joins sections of film together. Splices may be required as part of the editing process. Historically, we can observe two types of splicing: tape splicing, where the whole splice is held together across its width by splicing tape and tape splices do not overlap and are merely butted together (butted splice); and cement splicing, characterized by the film overlapping across its width in a strip a couple of millimeters wide (Temmerman 2008, 327–62). The latter kind of splicing, particularly, will be discussed, by taking Magnaghi's 16mm films as case studies: the cement splicing process he employed often required partial removal (a few millimeters) of film emulsion on the overlapping area (fig. 1).

Moreover, when the cement was too sticky and splices needed to be removed for a new assemblage, the two cemented frames were cut off. Considering this, we argue that destruction is an inherent part of Magnaghi's splicing procedure. Like many other practices involving gluing, taping, or pasting, splicing is one of those cultural techniques that bridge material¹ and visual culture (Rheinberger 2023). It draws attention to the paradoxical nature of stickiness, oscillating between visibility and invisibility.

1 Physical objects, artifacts, and technological achievements created by a certain social group, reflecting its values, beliefs, and way of life.



[Fig.1] Scanned film strip from *Ten Synthesis* (*Studio n. 10* is an alternative title) by Ubaldo Magnaghi. Details of emulsion removal in preparation of slicing. Supposedly 1934, original print from Cineteca Italiana archive.

Ironically, this very “invisibility” has rendered splicing itself largely overlooked in scholarly literature. Often subsumed under the broader category of editing, splicing has been (con)fused with montage or simply taken for granted as an implicit step within

the editing process.² Splicing has remained an invisible media practice, particularly when considering the finished product of a film. It has rarely been examined in scholarly work as a fundamental process with its own epistemological significance. This text aims to bring that overlooked dimension to light.

Ubaldo Magnaghi belonged to the Cine-Club of Milan and can be considered an *enfant prodige* of 16mm filmmaking in Italy (De Rosa and Mariani 2023). He made at least five films using Agfa equipment, which was rigorously declared in the film's credits. As a matter of fact, Agfa Mailand had involved independent filmmakers to stress-test their technology and promote the technical possibilities of their stocks and film equipment since at least 1932 (Mariani and Schneider 2025). While these films may now resemble canonical avant-garde works, with their symphonic structures and easily recognizable cinematic influences, what stands out is the filmmaker's attempt to push the physical limits of the technology—particularly the film stock supplied by the Agfa company for experimental use: a 16mm Isopan Reversal film. Reversal film stocks gained popularity among amateur filmmakers in the 1930s, as they enhanced the filmmaker's autonomy in the development process. These stocks allowed filmmakers to produce a positive image directly from the original footage, eliminating the need for a separate printing phase. In fact, reversal film stock processing starts with revealing a negative image (Powers 2023, 40). This leaves the unused silver halide untouched, but it is not fixed, as it will be used later to form a positive image. After the negative image has been developed, it is totally bleached away using an acid bleach. Accordingly, the remaining silver, which is light-fogged and then re-developed, produces a positive image (Ramey 2015, 179).

2 Arguing that splicing has been taken for granted, we mean that it was conceived as a process that had to be transparent—better yet, it has not to be noticed or seen; it was designed to make smooth and invisible transitions from one frame to another.

220 On one hand, this technology enhanced filmmakers' independence by freeing them from the network of customer services typically responsible for film development and printing. On the other hand, it underscores the ephemeral and transient nature of amateur film: the original negative was lost by default, as the process involved removing the negative image to produce a positive one in its place. Here is a first degree of where the tension between creation and destruction can be retrieved. The reversible film stock technically works on an implied loss, which is the *conditio sine qua non* for creativity. As a matter of fact, as Kathryn Ramey stressed, the use of bleaches—implied in the reversal film processing by default—became a common technique of emulsion removal for creative purposes in avant-garde and structural films too (Ramey 2015, 179).

As we are discussing, splice reversal film in amateur film practices reveals multiple intertwined theoretical implications; let us briefly explore them before delving into Flusser's media theory.

Film Ephemerality and Creative Thriftiness

Reversal film for amateurs encountered large favor by emancipating the independent filmmaker both economically—less costs for positive transfers—and aesthetically: the amateurs could supervise by their own the entire film development process, adjusting film bath formulas and intervening in the revealing process. A classic account of economic constraints and creative editing in amateur filmmaking is Maya Deren's 1947 essay on "creative cutting." Unsurprisingly, Ubaldo Magnaghi also emphasized the link between the amateur's economic anxieties and their creative freedom in a 1934 article dedicated to 16mm film (Magnaghi 1934, 10) (fig. 2).

Splicing in Deren's essay assumed a tactical value that precedes montage. Thriftiness is reflected in a sharp mental predisposition of the amateur towards a rational balance between the splicing and the organization of actions and movements in the film by

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QUELLI CHE NON HANNO BISOGNO DELLE DIVE

Il cinema non è solo quello delle divi e dei capi a lungo montaggio. Anche la sua camera pura gioca e monta. Offre una vasta e inapprezzabile materia per l'occhio obiettivo (ecco qui alcuni suoi alcuni scatti) solo con il contributo "basso profilo" di un giovane Ubaldo Magnaghi, nella sua interpretazione della cura del lavoro della vita vera, sembra a colui da un occhio (l'occhio e il suo).





TRENTACINQUE $\frac{m}{m}$ E SEDICI $\frac{m}{m}$

Cinquantenni? Forse. O forse, per qualificare, la parola non è la più adatta. In primo, perché *cinematografare* costa molto, ed il giovane che si accinge a scoprire i misteri della *camera da presa* va incontro a spese di solito non solite ai giovani. Poi, la *quinta diligenza* non è appropinquata: sarebbe essere chiamati *dilettante* su pittore che fa scorpelli in luogo del quadro ad olio su commissione.

Il cinema che fa in proprio, adoperando pellicola dal formato ridotto (16 mm. e non pellicola di piccolissimo formato), non soddisfa di certo a dare un sicuro rendimento, gode di una assoluta libertà di azione. Non è soggetto, come di solito il professionista, a tutte le struttive che hanno fini commerciali. Può fare, se ha

quadro, dell'inquadratura e di seguirlo in ogni spostamento. Da al giovane la libertà assoluta, di al giovane il mezzo di poter giudicare se stesso. Se questo sbaglia vede i suoi errori. Comincia a studiare le maschere, i piani, il ritmo, a fare del montaggio. Accorda, come, sopprime ed aggiunge. Comincia a capire ciò che significano le luci, a vedere *cinematograficamente*. Comincia a sentire una sceneggiatura, a far l'occhio aperto ed a cogliere quanto è di cinematografabile in un testo scritto, in un panorama, in un movimento, in una espressione.

Attraverso l'occhio della piccola camera da presa egli vede tutto. E se il cinema ha doti di intelligenza, di sensibilità, ama l'arte nostra, dopo non molto sarà pronto per diventare un buon





Doti, arte. La sua opera, quindi, va presa in considerazione, va studiata e seguita attentamente. I suoi film sono gli unici dove l'elemento attore non importa. Ombre, i giochi delle ombre hanno modo sicuro di aver ragione.

I nostri professionisti disprezzano il passo ridotto. Il produttore, poi, quando deve assumere, quali assistenti, dei nuovi registi, si guarda ben bene dallo scegliere tra il vivaio dei giovani che con i loro piccoli apparecchi fanno del cinematografo. Va dal vecchio professionista che ha sbagliato mille volte, re del mediocre, maestro dai vecchi usi, ed i due fanno assieme un film brutto.

La critica, salvo pochi censori milanesi (vedi, *Il Corriere della Sera*), i quali al giovane hanno dato tutta la solidarietà, dei giovani

tecnico, un buon regista. Gli occorrono (fosse sì, forse no) qualche giorno (dico qualche giorno) di *apprendistato* in un grande teatro di posa; ma questo, o critici che di già avete sgranato tanto di occhi perché il punto sul quale avete attaccato, non per imparare a fare del cinematografo, come voi dite, beati per apprendere le maniere ed aiutare un poco gli occhi alla luce troppo abbagliante dei diffusori di un grande teatro.

Non per altro, mi si creda.

E poi, per rinnovare i quadri della nostra cinematografia, dove si potrà attingere se non nelle schiere di questi cosiddetti dilettanti? Che sono tutti giovani, come hanno dimostrato i Littorali della Cultura di Firenze dove alcuni dilettanti hanno dato prove di reali disposizioni? Palmetti, Damicelli, i primi che ci vengono

non si occupa. A Milano ed altrove ogni volta che in quei *clab* dove sono gli amatori del cinema, viene proiettato un film dei giovani. La critica bada ben bene dall'intervenire alla visione. Questo, confidatamente anche al valore dei nostri Gerarchi, i quali hanno voluto che si Littorali dell'Arte si fosse una sezione cinematografica, che alla Biennale Veneziana i nostri giovani fossero rappresentati in primato (della al passo ridotto).

Il passo ridotto (16 mm.), gioco ripetuto, è vera scuola per chi voglia fare del cinematografo, per chi sente il cinematografo. Da molto in primo di far conoscere il giovane i misteri della fotografia, di far imparare bene ciò che significa bianco e nero attraverso tutta la gamma delle tonalità. Lo modo al giovane di vedere nella camera da presa, di essere padrone immediatamente del

alla mente. Per i produttori, diciamo un'arrendo, ma certo diamo più da sperare gli esperimenti, se volete chiamarli così, di Mattarozzi in "Treno popolare", di "La Borsa o la vita", di Carlo Braglia, invece degli elementi notissimi che hanno già sulla copola non riconoscono dei forti meriti, viene proprio da questa incoscienza privata. Ricordo di aver visto su questo stesso giornale una foto in cui si vedeva Franceschi, un altro giovane, al lavoro con una macchina piccola come una mosca. Il colto e l'istinto avrebbero ricominciato il segno di una passione, di un ideale, senza le quali non si farà mai nulla di buono.

Ubaldo Magnaghi





[Fig.2] Original article from Ubaldo Magnaghi (Source: 1934, digitized journal from Digital Library BibliotecaLuigiChiarini, CentroSperimentalediCinematografia, Rome).

222 researching the optimal sequence duration. A clear example of this is the “transition” of action and movements “across the splice” in *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1943) (Deren 1947, 204), where the splice is not juxtaposing two frames but lets the movement continue in a long duration shot across two pieces of film stock. Magnaghi interpreted the amateur’s thriftiness and the tactical recourse to splice in a way that dates back to the practice of *compilation film* in the origins of newsreels. Nevertheless, Jay Leyda, in his theory of the compilation film, stressed that:

A technological advance in 1926 also speeded the popularization of the compilation as a commercial form: both Eastman and Agfa engineers found satisfactory methods of making duplicate negatives, achieving a “theatre quality” even with neglected negatives and worn prints. (Leyda 1964, 33)

Leyda put *duplication* at the core of a modern impulse to compile and re-assemble pre-existing material. In Magnaghi’s practice, it is not the duplication but rather the uniqueness and transience of the reversal film print that inform his personal approach to re-assemblage and compilation. This makes him a surprising and quintessentially modern(ist) filmmaker, powerfully and innovatively reverberating the two sides of Baudelaire’s formulation opening this text. Let us stress this point further. A key point to note is that by introducing reversal film stocks, manufacturers prioritized flexibility, speed in image processing, and filmmaker autonomy—often at the expense of the film’s longevity. In fact, reversal film typically existed as a single print, lacking standardized preservation conditions. This material precariousness threatened the survival of such films from the outset. Consequently, reversal film became emblematic of a practice oriented more toward experimentation—and thus cinema in the future tense—rather than memorization/preservation, which contrasts with the expectations commonly associated with home cinema’s memories. In 1937, this sense of loss is made eloquent, in quasi-poetic tones, by filmmaker Domenico Paolella, who

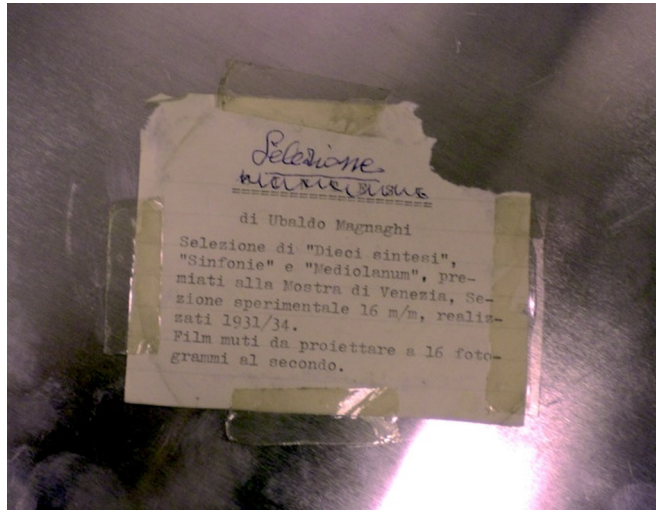
wrote these lines as introductory notes for a book about amateur 223
cinema:

Of [the filmmaker's] youthful anxiety, entrusted to the frail lightness of the film base, which soon turns yellow, which soon breaks down, there will be no trace but a secret pain. To the injustice of this destruction, may they at least oppose the illusion of a greater longevity by documenting their passion through a written paper. (Paolella 1937, 8)

The precariousness and transience of the film material become even more apparent in the case of Magnaghi's film symphonies. Between 1930 and 1934 Magnaghi filmed three films, sponsored by Agfa: *Mediolanum* (1933), *Dieci Sintesi (10 Synthesis, 1934)*, and *Sinfonie del lavoro e della vita (Symphonies of Work and Life, 1934)*. These films were discovered in a single film can, accompanied by a piece of paper including these lines:

Selection of *Dieci Sintesi*, *Sinfonie* and *Mediolanum*, as projected and awarded at the Venice Film Festival, amateur film international contest 1934. They are silent films to be screened at 16 frames per second. (fig. 3)

The film features an original montage created by interweaving fragments from three separate films (unique prints) through mixed editing. This version, presented in Venice, blends the films into a single composition. A close analysis reveals that all three include sequences shot in Milan during the same period. As a result, *Mediolanum*—a city symphony dedicated to Milan—contains scenes whose actions continue seamlessly into those found in *Dieci Sintesi* or *Sinfonie del lavoro e della vita*. This close thematic and visual proximity is further emphasized by repeated mixed assemblies of the three films, with the Venice version likely being the most recent of these recombinations. The format of the compilation film of these symphonies is certainly favoring modularity and interchangeability between frames and sequences. Beside interchangeability, in this practice of re-use we can observe the sharp mental predisposition of the amateur towards



[Fig.3] Original label signed by Ubaldo Magnaghi, stuck on the metal can (Source: supposedly 1936, original can from Cineteca Italiana archive).

a tactical use of splicing to render the film material in a renovated shape—at the expense of the original editing scheme. What we wish to emphasize is that, because the films were shot on reversal stock, every intervention—each cut or omission made on the original print or on earlier assemblies—was irreversible. In other words, the original film was deliberately sacrificed and is now permanently lost. As a result, the Magnaghi film fund takes on the form of a fragmentary cloud—a mass of film frames and sequences from each work, repeatedly broken apart and re-assembled whenever the filmmaker chose to create a new edition. That stated, how we can interpret the destructive re-assembling technique by Magnaghi as an inherently modern creative impulse?

Dismantling, Displaying, Displacing

The reflection we would like to propose moves precisely from such a technical feature of the film stock. In particular, our proposition is that splicing can serve as an epistemological tool. Looking at Magnaghi's work, we would like to contend that splicing works as a reconfiguration driver acting on the film. In the case of an amateur filmmaker like Magnaghi, we can assume he operates as editor as well, and when he splices the film the conjunction that this implies is made technically possible using cement (tape came later in history); however, to potentially re-use the film sequences and/or re-edit a fragment with another, the glued frames need to be cut and disposed of (Caneppelle 2022). In other words, using cement allows one to create new conjunctions and juxtapositions, but at the same time such a gesture of gathering implies frame loss. This means that the gesture of splicing is a "gesture of destroying" and yet it is a particular kind of destruction.

According to Vilém Flusser (2014), who notably addresses "destroying" in his study devoted to gestures, destruction is in fact to be analyzed as a two-fold concept. Taking its cues from German language, he explains that destruction can be evoked to hint at both a disruption, and a dismantling and displacement action. Whilst the first meaning goes under the term *Destruktion*, the latter is in effect *Zerstörung*. The difference between the two is determined by an intention, which in this case, in Flusser's view, can be read in two distinct ways in turn. First, if we embrace an ethical perspective, destroying brings in the issue of evil insofar as destroying may spark from the "motivation" to make something existing disappear (Flusser 2014, 56). Instead, if we adopt a pragmatic perspective, the gesture of destroying may well express a decision to alter the state of things with a new state of things as a pursued outcome; in this case not evil but rather work is brought into the equation.

226 Work is a gesture whose motive lies in the decision to make something different from what it is, because it is not as it should be. Both destruction and work decide that something is not as it should be. Unlike work, destruction decides not to make it differently but to get rid of it altogether. ... Work is revolutionary. It replaces that which should not be with something that should be. Destruction is not revolutionary: it says no, but not dialectically. The being expressed in the destructive gesture is less radical in the world than one articulated in gestures of work. (Flusser 2014, 56)

In our view, destruction and work are not mutually exclusive: looking at the filmmakers as they splice the film, this operation becomes a gesture that bridges destruction as *Zerstörung* and work: if the former always has “a minus sign” because the operation proceeds by subtraction, the latter re-channels the negative position back into positive by bringing back to existence and thus offering a plus sign. Put differently, if destruction indeed implies a loss motivated by the fact that “something is not as it should be,” at the same time it proposes a solution to fill the gap. This replacement is deployed via work, that is, via another subsequent gesture that assesses, albeit temporarily, how something should in fact be.

The way the filmmaker operates on the film material is worth looking into. We propose to identify three steps forming the filmmaker’s workflow that inform the destruction framework emphasizing its creative potential. These are dismantling, displaying, and displacing. All of them, as the *dis-* prefix clearly shows, encapsulate a sense of disposal; however, what is literally cut is not simply disposed of: it rather stands for an opening that makes room for something new to come. This echoes the potential that any gesture notably entails (Agamben 2000). In this vein, the three gestures we listed are no exception to that. We suggest that the peculiar potential deriving from disposal that we envisage is one of creation. The filmmaker takes the risk of disposing of a frame as they splice the film motivated by the

creation of a new, open form. The sense of freedom allowed by destruction becomes then the acknowledgment of the nature of the film as an open media configuration. Dismantling, displacing and displaying can indeed be seen in light of this fundamental freedom that constitutes the basic condition for any creative gesture to be unfolded. More specifically, the gesture of dismantling is a way to force the fixity of things, disturb the state of existence as it is given in the world. As Flusser comments on such an action of disturbance, “[d]isturbers ... are not necessarily destructive spirits. On the contrary they can have a constructive effect” (2014, 57). Dismantling, then, ultimately leads to a work of construction, for it poses the conditions for the latter to occur. That is how dismantling is bridged with the gesture of displaying. 227

The second step in the workflow we are trying to analyze, the process of displaying, is conducive to operating on the dismantled film material: once the film is spliced, the filmmaker needs to view the frames to be able to order and re-arrange them. To do so, the filmic time is manipulated through a process of exhibition, taking the shape of a visualization either on a retro-illuminated table or through hand-scrolling. It is quite apparent how such a passage is essential for a gesture of displacing to occur. Technically speaking, the process of displacing is located within the phase of gluing. From a conceptual point of view, instead, the process of displacing is where the highest degree of openness and freedom lie, because it is where new assemblages are envisioned. This is possible thanks to the modular and mobile nature of frames and filmic fragments, which is obvious in Magnaghi's film practices and his use of the various film fragments such as *Mediolanum*, *Dieci Sintesi*, and *Sinfonie del lavoro e della vita*: playing with them enables new conjunctions between the visual materials to appear and this, in turn, enables new relationships to be created (De Rosa and Fowler 2021). The outcome is ultimately a set of associations aimed at producing new meanings. In this regard, Magnaghi embodies the typical approach of the avant-garde insofar as his systematic re-use and re-assemblage practice

228 echoes the process at the basis of compilation film. In effect, Magnaghi's multiple re-contextualizations of the same original footage tell of his profound awareness of the film material both in terms of the content and of the affordances of the film stock. Jay Leyda discusses the same aspect in his study on compilation film:

You cannot rearrange the elements within a piece of newsreel, though you can manipulate them in relation to other pieces—but only if you have studied their whole content. It is from such study and manipulation that the art of the compilation film can grow. (Leyda 1964, 22)

The author refers to newsreels and the use of them to build up a narrative once the original context of the sequences is lost. However, we posit that the same logic—the results of which were rather innovative in the early 1930s—applies to Magnaghi's film as well: removing his own footage from a film to compose another, he meticulously excerpts the sequence, splicing it off the previous arrangement to create artistic effects and meanings. Again, with Leyda:

In the cutting of past newsreels to present historical concepts or to "agitate" an audience into thinking, it has become obvious today that to neglect the formal content of each piece weakens its informational content and leaves the audience groping for the purpose of the sequence and the idea of the whole. But in 1927 this necessity for studying the whole content of each newsreel piece and building from its formal elements a carefully engineered bridge to convey information to the audience in the strongest possible way was a totally new idea. (Leyda 1964, 23)

Think of the sequences entitled "good and evil" and "life" that close the film *Sinfonie del lavoro e della vita*: in the former we see images of joy that resemble Magnaghi's light and close-up tests. Multiple characters enter the frame without really carrying out any actions—they are in the same indoor context, well illuminated, and filling the screen while talking, posing, and

having fun together. The *mise en scene* shows that the images could be part of the test reel and they could have been taken out and inserted in the *Symphonies* film. Similarly, the merry-go-round that we see in the “life” segment might have been shot in Milan in the frame of the shooting for *Dieci Sintesi*—no full action is given to see, instead a fleeting image fills the screen. It is the image of the playground, of the sky seen from the merry-go-round when this is in action, of the carousel seats and its chains floating in the air. These glimpses have a deep poetic quality and convey an atmosphere of dynamism tinted with nostalgia. Yet, they can produce affects and meanings thanks to their use as blocks edited together, rather than showing actions in and of themselves, because they have probably been spliced off the rest of the footage shot by the filmmaker. In light of this, the gesture of displacing represents the heart of the tension between destruction and construction that we are focusing on. Further, it highlights the modularity that Magnaghi implicitly attributed to his sequences. Almost echoing the concept of *format* that will come many years after his films were produced, his sharp mental predispositions as regards the multifunctionality of his footage betrays the conviction that, to him, the spliced sequences are thought of within “programmatic relationships between individual elements and their organizational logic” (Jancovic, Volmar, and Schneider 2020, 8).

Dismantling, displaying, displacing his sequences into new films, Magnaghi uses splicing to mobilize the image and basically create a new filmic configuration. In this sense, and bearing the above-mentioned three steps—dismantling, displaying, displacing—in mind, we believe that splicing is revealed in its liberation potential: the film is mutilated but such a frame loss frees it from a fixity that makes it an open artefact. Cutting and sticking become intertwined creative gestures giving birth to new media configurations. A host of different artistic practices employing the same processes serve as an assessment and a demonstration of this statement: analogic collage, embroidery, textile art, stitching

230 and other areas of crafts such as goldsmith art all entail, in their own peculiar fashion, the same tension. Papercuts in collage and collage-based animation reply upon the destruction of the publications and illustrations where the images are taken; only by dismantling them in their original form, displacing and rearranging them, are we given the final collage or film. Bracelet or necklace links in jewellery are commonly cut off if damaged or to re-design the piece: again, only by dismantling the jewel as it was at first and intervening in the (dis-)placement of its units can it be fixed or refashioned by the goldsmith. Reversal film stock like the one used by Ubaldo Magnaghi works exactly the same way. The use he makes of it, which we have discussed, sheds light on splicing as a technique with artistic and creative value, able to unfold relevant cultural effects. His way of conceiving reversible film sequences as modules, nearly as formats, illuminates his experimentation with the medium as a key moment that shall be seen within a dynamic phase of research and development.

Splicing, in conclusion, sheds light on what can be studied in film beyond representation and, with David Joselit, *against* representation. "The artwork" he suggests:

almost always contains vestiges of what might be called the roots—or infrastructural extensions—of its entanglements in the world. These might include the means of production of the image, the human effort that brought it into being, its mode of circulation, the historical events that condition it, etc. The artwork's format solidifies and makes visible that connective tissue, reinforcing the idea that the work of art encompasses both an image and its extensions. (Joselit 2015)

Splicing invites us to consider the roots and vestiges of small-gauge filmmaking. It helps us observe what could be done with the film stock and how far practices determined by the materiality of the medium, like splicing, could be stretched and pushed.

The authors researched and designed this article together; in particular Andrea Mariani took care of sections "Splicing and Modernity" and "Film Ephemerality and Creative Thriftiness," while Miriam De Rosa took care of "Dismantling, Displaying, Displacing." We would like to thank Cineteca Italiana in Milan in the person of director Matteo Pavesi; La Camera Ottica Film and the Video Restoration Lab at the University of Udine; and Prof. Cosetta Saba and Prof. Simone Venturini. This article stems from the collaborative project PRIN2022 FilmBaseMatters: A Material Approach to the History of Small-gauge Film in Italy (project ID H53D23006770006 PI Andrea Mariani), funded by UE-PNRR of the Italian Ministry of University Research. The project is developed by the University of Udine, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and IULM University in Milan.

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