

THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH FILM STUDIES PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR BY LUCY FISCHER

This Fall has been a very active one. First, we have a new Film Studies faculty member in the Department of English—Daniel Morgan, who comes to us, most recently, from the University of Chicago where he received his doctorate. This term Daniel is teaching a class in Film and Politics, and next semester he will offer an entirely new class on New Media.

Our film series this Fall (organized by Irina Livezeanu in History and Vladimir Padunov in Slavic) has focused on Romanian cinema. It involved six film screenings and a guest lecture by Romanian film critic Alex Leo Serban (who spoke on the question: "A Romanian New Wave in Cinema?").

We have run three Pittsburgh Film Colloquia: one on Japanese cinema (Dr. Keiko McDonald), another on film pedagogy (Dr. Lucy Fischer) and a final one on American masculinity in the 1950s (Dr. Mark Best).

We have also hosted two outside speakers. William Paul (Washington University) gave a talk entitled "Against the Classical Norm: How Exhibition Helped Shape American Film Style or, Why Did Communists Go to the Music Hall?" and Paul Arthur (Montclair State University) gave a lecture entitled "An Incongruent Truth: The Rise of the American Documentary."

We look forward to an equally vital and engaging Spring term.



Dr. Lucy Fischer

FACULTY PROFILE: LUCY FISCHER DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, DIRECTOR OF FILM STUDIES

BY KATHERINE FIELD

Having recently achieved a promotion to Distinguished Professor, Dr. Lucy Fischer continues to play an instrumental role in developing the Film Studies Program at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Fischer was among the first generation of students to obtain a PhD in cinema studies, attending NYU and pursuing a full doctoral degree, which focused on critical studies, rather than production.

Dr. Fischer's presence in Pittsburgh's film community began at the Carnegie Museum of Art where she served as Assistant Film Curator for a year. However, having the desire to teach and impressed by the film community at Pitt, she became a junior faculty member in the English Department and Film Studies Program in 1979.

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NEW MEDIA ACQUISITIONS COORDINATOR: ANDY HORBAL

Andy Horbal couldn't tell you his ultimate career goal. He couldn't tell you the topic for his next blog entry or the next film he will see. Though incredibly dedicated to his current endeavors, Andy prefers to live in the present, rather than intricately script his entire life in advance.

As a 2004 graduate of Pitt, Andy channeled his interests in a few departments: Film Studies, Art and Architecture and Children's Literature. As an undergrad, university library work was plentiful, and Andy worked in several facets. After graduation, Andy continued in library work and became a full time employee at the circulation desk. Currently, he is enrolled as a half time graduate student in the Mas-

ters program of Library and Information Science. He also serves as the Media Acquisitions Coordinator for the Media Resource Center (MRC/Hillman G-20) where his primary responsibility is to place orders for people in the university who have departmental funds available to them. He shares his duties with other members of the MRC staff, who deal with circulation, booking, and helping students use equipment.

Andy says that it's easy to order media related items and that the MRC has access to incredible resources on a regular basis. To place an order, one must fill out the relevant form on the website: www.library.pitt.edu/faculty.



Andy Horbal

Orders are filled in the Fall and Spring when the Media Advisory Committee meets. If the order is more urgent and a professor has departmental funds to use, faculty members simply email Andy and he is able to obtain the items.

This Summer, the MRC acquired almost every film made by Luis (Continued on page 7)

FACULTY PROFILE (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

Pitt was interested in expanding the film curriculum, and Dr. Fischer instantaneously became director of the program, though it was basically non-existent at the time. Dr. Fischer explains that the Film Studies Program began as a series of courses, such as Film History and Film Theory, plus a few given by Pittsburgh Filmmakers in Oakland, but there was no major or minor. She and her colleagues worked to develop a film studies "certificate" first (like a minor) and eventually the major, literally creating the program.

While continuing to be influential in expanding the Film Studies Program, Dr. Fischer climbed the ranks of her professorship hitting all the marks: tenured associate professor and full professor. However, Dr. Fischer's Distinguished Professor title is attributed to her extensive publication record, as reviewed by outside scholars, and to recognition of her stature within the field.

Research drives Dr. Fischer's career, especially in terms of her teaching. Many of her courses over the years have reflected her research on women and film and aspects of feminist film criticism. Among numerous publications are the monographs *Shot Countershot: Film Tradition and Women's Cinema*, *Cinematernity: Film, Motherhood, Genre*, *Designing Women: Cinema, Art Deco and the Female Form*, and several books she edited (*Stars: The Film Reader* [with Marcia Landy], *Imitation of Life and Sunrise*). Also, last year Dr. Fischer organized a film series at Pitt on women and film, which focused on women filmmakers in the 21st century. While these contributions to film are very much focused on specific women's issues, Dr. Fischer says much of what she does goes way beyond issues of gender and film. In fact, the majority of her courses have been broad theoretically. Currently, she is teaching a

graduate course titled *The Hollywood Studio System*.

Dr. Fischer is also in the process of editing two books. One, for which she will write two chapters, focuses on American Film of the 1920s (to be published by Rutgers University Press). Colleagues Marcia Landy and Mark Anderson will contribute to the volume as well. Dr. Fischer is also editing a book for the Modern Language Association called *Teaching Film* to which Pitt professors Neepa Majumdar and Adam Lowenstein will contribute.

Aside from consistent publishing and teaching, Dr. Fischer directs the Film Studies Program, serves on the Faculty Senate Sub-Committee on women in leadership, the University Tenure Council, and the English Department Personnel Committee and is also chair of the Media Advisory Committee to Hillman Library. On a national level, she has served (Continued on page 8)

THE GRADUATE INTERVIEW: MATTHEW TINKCOM

Matthew Tinkcom received his PhD in Cultural and Critical Studies from the Department of English in 1995 where he specialized in Film Studies. He is now an Associate Professor of Communication, Culture and Technology at Georgetown University.

Katherine Field is a first-year graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh pursuing a MFA in Creative Non-Fiction.

Katherine Field: I learned from your Georgetown bio that you are currently working on a project about the digitalization of cinema and another project on television reality programming, particularly makeover shows. Could you describe these projects and their progress?

Matthew Tinkcom: The project on the digitalization of cinema has required me to retrain myself in the areas of technology studies, philosophies of technology and new media, and there are two features of the project. One is about the preservation and redistribution of older motion pictures and the other is about the new kinds of narrative that are emerging around digitalization.

In regard to the latter, I'm working on a chapter which is about what I call recursive narrative, which is narrative that loops and doubles back on itself temporally. One of the things I'm discussing is DVD formatting and how it allows domestic viewers to move around inside text with relative ease, and how there are new kinds of cinematic narrative that are kind of responding to that capacity. Films like *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Memento* and *Primer* take advantage of the fact that the viewer doesn't have to view them sequentially in old-fashioned screening time, so that

their stories imply, against Aristotle, that they might have no beginning, middle, or end.

On the other hand, the makeover-television project hasn't moved as far along as I'd really hoped for it—



Dr. Matthew Tinkcom

right now it's on a hiatus while I try to figure out where the genre is going on television.

KF: You are currently teaching graduate courses in the Communication, Culture & Technology Department at Georgetown. How is your involvement in this program linked to your PhD in Film Studies at Pitt? Do you find significant differences between your PhD studies at Pitt and how that subject is studied and taught at Georgetown?

MT: I was one of the first two people hired to teach in the program when Georgetown established it ten years ago, and I was fortunate to be able to design parts of the program around my interests and my training, which is a real luxury. When I first came to Georgetown from Pitt, I was coming from a place that encouraged one to think at the intersections of different intellectual enterprises, such as cultural studies, critical theory, film and media stud-

ies, new media. That's been really important to how I do my research now and that has been a centerpiece to how I work with my students here.

KF: It seems that your research interests include film history and theory, popular media, critical theory, cultural studies and queer theory. How did you become interested in these areas of film?

MT: A lot of it had to do with the faculty at Pitt because graduate students are allowed to be so self-directed. My dissertation came out of work that I did on post-modernism, queer theory and film history and theory, all framed in terms of the relation between political economy and cultural production. One of the things I was always working on at Pitt is how to frame work on media in relation to questions of politics and aesthetics. Those things all came out of different parts of my curriculum there at Pitt and shaped my dissertation, which became my first book.

KF: You are now located in Washington, D.C., a significant car ride back here to Pittsburgh. Is there anything you miss about the city in particular?

MT: Pittsburgh is one of my favorite places because it has such a powerful sense of place. There's a texture to life in Pittsburgh that makes it different. It's unique. The truth of the matter is a lot of cities, and I'd include Washington, increasingly have a certain kind of sameness to them. And one of the things that I really value about Pittsburgh—and I think it was a form of education when I lived there—is to think about what shapes a place and the people from there. This helped me think about Andy Warhol—and his films—in a different way than I had before.

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UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Several undergraduate students share their recent internship experiences related to their involvement in the Film Studies Program.

Marc Shatzman interned for New Line Cinema's publicity department in New York City this Summer. During his time at New Line Cinema, Marc says, "My days were anything but typical." His tasks varied depending on which film he was scheduled to work on: *Hairspray*, *Rush Hour 3*, or *Shoot 'em Up*. Marc was responsible for traditional office tasks, such as photocopying, running errands and answering phones, and even working to create promotional ideas for the films. Occasionally, Marc had the opportunity to contribute to special events, including press screenings, premieres and junkets. He formed strong relationships with the vice presidents for whom he worked. Marc says, "By working for a smaller company such as New Line, I was given the unique opportunity to see more parts of how the company functions."

Marc obtained his internship with New Line Cinema by researching different opportunities for film publicity work online. After sending his resume to various companies, Marc underwent a rigorous interview process before landing summer employment with New Line Cinema.

"It seems like every day at New Line had a highlight to it; whether it was going to a film screening or experiencing the energy of the red carpet at a premiere," Marc says as he recalls his experience.

After **Julie Sokolow** received notice of a semester-long internship opportunity with the Silk Screen Asian American Film Festival, she contacted founder Harish Saluja and was granted an internship position from January to May of 2007.

Initially, Julie carried out her responsibilities outside of the office, but as the festival grew closer, she worked primarily at the North Side headquarters. Julie researched films that were pursued for the festival, posted information on the festival blog and generated a list of Korean people living in and around Pittsburgh used for festival promotion and recruitment purposes. As the semester progressed, Julie developed a comprehensive list of potential sponsors for the festival and gala event and contacted them personally.

Among the many relationships formed, it was the one with the festival's founder, Harish Saluja, which offered Julie the most insight into the film industry. Julie reflects on her overall experience: "During the preparatory months, it was hard to imagine everything coming together perfectly. Then, the festival kicked off with its extravagant, widely attended gala, and everything after seemed to fall into place."

With the large task of completing a documentary on Judaism, **Dave Goldstein** got a true taste of a filmmaker's reality during his internship with Hillel Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. Dave served as the documentary's director, along with Johnny Mitchell, and worked alongside three other Pitt students. While Dave conducted all of the interviews for filming, the tasks of planning and questioning the subjects

were a group effort. During the documentary process, Dave and the group narrowed the focus of the film to Anti-Semitism, including the culture, origin and practice of it.

Dave values the relationships formed with the other Pitt students in working on the documentary. As most of them plan to continue in the film industry, he is sure their paths will cross again. Furthermore, Dave explains what made this experience so meaningful: "Sitting down with five people (the four of us and our advisor) who are passionate about a project, and being able to discuss and debate the form a documentary should take, was an awesome experience." He also notes the necessity of compromise in the film industry, something that he and his colleagues learned.

Dave was alerted to this internship experience by responding to an email by Ellen Bishop, who then put Dave in touch with Hillel. In addition to making the film, Dave and his group interviewed and filmed a Klesmir (traditional Yiddish theatre music) group from Germany.

From mid-March to mid-April of this year, **Joshua Green** interned with Smithfield Street Productions during its production of *The Bridge to Nowhere*. Joshua served as an office intern taking responsibility for several tasks: faxing, filing actor and crew paperwork, answering the phones and adding revised pages to the script. He occasionally had the opportunity to spend the entire day on the set and had the chance to watch the director and crew work with the actors.

"It was a chance to watch everything come together," Joshua says.

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OUR HIGHER FACULTIES

These faculty members have shared some of their most recent accomplishments.

Adam Lowenstein's recent publications include: "The Surrealism of the Photographic Image: Bazin, Barthes, and the Digital *Sweet Hereafter*," *Cinema Journal* 46.3 (Spring 2007): 54-82; "New Jersey: The Movie," in *Living on the Edge of the World: New Jersey Writers Take On the Garden State*, ed. Irina Reyn (New York: Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 2007), 81-96; a review of *The Devil's Backbone* (Guillermo del Toro, 2001), in *100 European Horror Films*, ed. Steven Jay Schneider (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 69-70; "Borat and Hostel: Hilarity and Hostility in America Via Fantasies of Eastern Europe," *KinoKultura: New Russian Cinema* 15: www.kinokultura.com/index.php/forums/viewthread/7/; and a review of "From the Tsars to the Stars: A Journey Through Russian Fantastik Cinema," a film series presented by the Film Society of Lincoln Center (New York), *KinoKultura: New Russian Cinema* 14 (October 2006): www.kinokultura.com/2006/14-lowenstein.shtml.

In June 2007, he participated in "Considering Horror," a panel discussion for the film series "It's Only a Movie: Horror Films from the 1970s and Today," at the Museum of the Moving Image, Astoria, New York. His co-panelists were Nathan Lee (*The Village Voice*), Maitland McDonagh (*TVGuide.com*), and Joshua Rothkopf (*Time Out New York*). (To access an archive of the panel discussion, please visit www.movingimage.us/pinewood/index.php?globalnav=dialogues§ion.) In conjunction with this film series, Professor Lowenstein was interviewed in Rob Nelson, "The Zeitgeist Made 'Em Do It," *The Village Voice* (13-19 June 2007): 68 and in Rob Nelson, "It's Only a Movie? Cutting to the Heart of Horror with Professor Adam Lowenstein," *Minneapolis/St. Paul City Pages* (12 June 2007): http://blogs.citypages.com/ctg/2007/06/its_only_a_movie.php.

In March 2007, Professor Lowenstein presented his paper "Cinema, Gaming, Interactivity: Between *eXistenZ* and *Un Chien andalou*" at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Chicago and again at Pitt's After the Avant-

Garde: European Experiments With the Moving Image Conference (organized by Randall Halle).

Mark Lynn Anderson wrote an essay called "Tempting Fate: Clara Smith Hamon, or The Secretary as Producer," which deals with the stardom of Smith Hamon, whose brief film career began in 1921 after extensive news coverage of her criminal trial for fatally shooting her millionaire employer/lover. This piece appears in *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method*, edited by Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007: 117-150.

Professor Anderson also attended the 26th annual Silent Film Festival in Pordenone, Italy, in early October.

The 80th Annual Academy Awards
will be held on
Sunday, February 24, 2008.
Tuesday, January 22, 2008:
Nominations announced 5:30am,
Samuel Goldwyn Theatre



GRADUATE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Tanine Allison attended the East Asian Cinema in Transnational Contexts Workshop and Seminar in Bloomington, Indiana, in May. In October, she presented her paper "Dario Argento's Bloody Investigations: Memory, Nation, and Cinematic Vision in *Deep Red*" at the Literature/Film Association conference in Kansas City.

Tara Lockhart's article, "Jennifer Lopez: The New Wave of Border Crossing," appeared this Fall in a collection published by the University of Texas Press: *From Bananas*

to Buttocks: The Latina Body in Popular Film and Culture. Her piece traces Lopez's ethnic "crossing-overs" across her work in both film and music and in relation to fan perceptions concerning Lopez's ethnic, racial and linguistic performances, in order to argue that Lopez manifests a fluid pan-ethnicity within shifting racial categories.

Amy Borden was awarded a Lawler Fellowship last Spring in recognition of outstanding research and teaching. During last

March's 2007 Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference, Amy presented a paper entitled, "The Photogram in the Novelty Era (1894-1897): Depictions in Popular Periodicals." In her essay, Amy argues that reproductions of film frames in popular coverage of the industrial process of film production asks middle-class readers to mimic the projector via a reading experience that straddles movement and stillness.

RECENT GRADUATE: MIKE BRANT

Mike Brant was no rookie to internships. Having worked on several projects, including professor Carl Kurlander's films, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Pittsburgh Polio Story*, as well as at KDKA-TV and WOED, Mike knew how to maximize his internship at CBS.

Mike (who graduated this Summer with a B.A.) completed three majors at Pitt in Film Studies, English Literature and Philosophy and learned that staying involved in activities enhances one's experience in and out of college. He was given the opportunity to intern at CBS over the Summer by receiving the Anthony and Concetta Ambrosio Internship Award, which provided the job as well as \$5,000 for living expenses in New York City. During this stint on *The Early Show*, which airs each morning from 7-9AM, Mike never worked the same shift. This gave him a variety of experiences ranging from basic clerical duties, researching stories for pro-

ducers, going through tapes, accompanying anchors on shoots or actually working the show itself. For the most part, Mike worked for several producers. However, he also experienced several interesting shoots, including the finale of the HBO series, *The Sopranos*, and a piece about a woman golfer who recently shot 14 holes-in-one. While many would consider those experiences the ultimate highlights of his internship, Mike would disagree. "The satisfaction and confidence in knowing how to do the very basics—how one would work in a newsroom or a production company—was more rewarding than simply meeting a celebrity or being behind the scenes on a shoot," he says.

During his ten weeks at CBS, Mike and other interns were split into "teams" and challenged to take a story from first conception to broadcast. Mike's group aired a two-minute segment that reflected

a story Mike wrote about attitudes toward HIV in the younger generation (ages 14-24). It was noted as "the most intelligent of all stories" and tied for second place.

Mike continues to keep in close contact with the producers at CBS. He often sees them on the streets of New York, his new home. Currently, he is working on the seventh season of *The Apprentice* as Office Production Assistant. Mike is able to use his vast experience in film from Pitt to influence his current work. During his time in a class taught by Carl Kurlander, Mike helped write, produce and edit a 20-minute trailer used to help fund the film *The Pittsburgh Polio Story*, which aims to give credit to those involved in developing the Polio vaccine. Mike is not completely positive which realm of film he will eventually pursue. However, he is confident that Pitt gave him a well-rounded education covering everything from production to critical studies and invaluable internship opportunities.

HEINZ 57 CONTEST SEMI-FINALIST: KEITH PARISH

Recent graduate **Keith Parish** has already drawn major attention to his film talent on a national level. After his mother informed him of the Heinz 57 Commercial Contest, Keith considered a few ideas, tested them on close friends and received the desired reaction: laughter and amusement. Keith and friend Tyler Rudolph ran with the idea and composed the script, using the Temple Family Diner in Reading, PA, as their shooting location. After about thirty takes of a thirty-second scene and many laughs from customers, Keith and Tyler had a successful commercial. The commercial was submitted and made it into the top fifteen, a notable accomplishment, as it was

up against professionally made films that required thousands of dollars to create. Keith's commercial budget was a mere \$20—the price of his food at the restaurant.

While not winning the grand prize, the commercial made a significant impression on the judges and was allowed a two-week run online where viewers could watch the top commercials and vote for their favorite. Heinz received over 4,100 entries, making Keith's accomplishment even more significant. "Even though we didn't win, it was really great to be included in the top fifteen along with professionally made films," Keith says of the experience.

Keith graduated in April of 2007 with a degree in Marketing and a certificate in Film Studies. He currently lives in south Oakland and has a small video production business called Parish Digital Video Production. The address of his business website is www.parishdigital.com and contains links to previous media pieces about his Heinz commercial, along with other information. He also works part-time at WOED as an underwriting producer.



You can view the top fifteen Heinz commercials, including Keith's, on the website, www.topthis.tv.com. Choose "Take One Winner & Semi-Finalists" and click on Keith's commercial thumbnail.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ACTIVITIES (CONT. FROM PAGE 4)

During this experience, Joshua met a lot of people active in aspects of the Pittsburgh film industry. "They taught me a great deal about production and the things they told me are invaluable," he says.

Joshua also formed relationships with other film students who were from programs other than Pitt and learned about what was taking place at Point Park University's film program.

Rachel Shepherd's internship with the Silk Screen Asian American Film Festival developed into a part-time job, which she currently balances with her studies at Pitt. While working as an intern from February through May 2007, Rachel's biggest responsibility was maintaining the database. She researched companies and non-profit organizations in Pittsburgh to add to the database and distributed numerous mailings

to promote the festival. After the festival, Rachel used surveys to analyze the demographics of attendees, which aided the grant application process. She was also given the opportunity to present a film at the Melwood Screening Room (part of the Pittsburgh Filmmakers site in Oakland). Rachel recalls the hard work and anxiety leading up to the festival gala event, which turned into the most rewarding part of her internship as she received numerous compliments from very pleased guests.

This internship allowed her to develop rewarding relationships with festival founder Harish Saluja and Festival Administrator Katie Jones, which has led to advice for post-college plans. Rachel reflects on her internship and current job feeling more confident about the direction of her future career.

ANDY HORBAL (CONT. FROM PAGE 2)

Buñuel and David Lynch. Also, Andy is in the process of ordering every Criterion DVD as it is released.

Other than his current job, Andy uses the Internet to stay connected to and participate in the film world.

His newly created blog, *Mirror/Stage*, serves as a useful resource for people interested in film events. Unlike Andy's previous blog, *No More Marriages!*, this revised blog focuses less on film criticism and takes a more traditional "blog" approach, capturing current thoughts and experiences, while providing its audience with abundant information on what's new around Pittsburgh and beyond in the realm of film.

Andy comments, "I still have a lot to read, a lot to see, a lot to learn. And I'd kind of like to focus on that as

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THE GRADUATE (CONT. FROM PAGE 3)

KF: What advice do you give your current graduate students when they find themselves ready to look for a university teaching job?

MT: The job market is always tough. One thing I would tell people approaching the job market for the first time is how flexible they have to be about what they can teach. I interview a lot of people who seem only want to teach something related to their areas of research in very narrow ways, and I think anyone going on the job market has to stretch themselves in terms of what you're willing to teach. I'm convinced that I became a faculty member at Georgetown because I came from Pittsburgh with an immense

amount of teaching experience, and I had learned how to talk about it.

The other thing is that anyone going on the job market for the first time obviously has to be able to talk about their research, but it's important to be able to ground that in relation to larger questions that animate the field. It's important to frame yourself as a potential colleague who can talk about something other than the particular topic you're working on at the moment.

KF: What is your favorite course to teach, or which class, designed by you, are you most excited about?

MT: I teach a foundational course called *Critical Theory and Contemporary Media*. In some ways it's a very canonical critical theory class, but it's designed so that students can invent their own research projects in relation to whatever contemporary media form they want to work on. They work on psychoanalysis, feminism, queer theory, Marxism and dialectics and then turn their attention to cybertechnology, blogs, Internet culture, and YouTube. I love the class because I'm always amazed at what students do with their first encounter with critical theory—where they go with that in their own mediascapes.



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FACULTY PROFILE (CONT. FROM PAGE 2)

as President of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, the major academic film organization in the world.

Dr. Fischer works in many facets of the university to continue to better the Program that she, among others, helped build. She speaks of it with pride, explaining, "We really compare very favorably to other programs, particularly on the side of film historians, critics and theorists. I think we're one of the top places to study." She goes on to note that if one combines all the people seriously involved in film studies, Pitt's program is as large as departments like NYU Cinema Studies, and Pitt's reputation is strengthened even more due to the numerous faculty members who have national and international reputations.



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ANDY HORBAL

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opposed to sharing what limited insights I have." While well versed in the area of film and media, Andy chooses to share in his development rather than promote his knowledge. "It's a conversation space. It's not a publication. It's just where you chat," Andy says about *Mirror/Stage*.

As for the future, Andy predicts that he will live in New York eventually. He is also considering a PhD in film studies at some point. But, as for now, you can find him in the Media Resource Center, possibly eating a large cookie from the coffee shop and helping the university's film resource base grow while preparing for his classes. Visit his blog site at <http://truespies.org/mirror-stage/> to stay informed on film happenings around Pittsburgh and to engage with Andy's experiences regarding film.