

The actor and film acting

Summary

This book is an attempt to describe the phenomenon of acting and the actor in terms of systemic reflection, which is in essence interdisciplinary and is located where semiotics, communication theory, film studies, cultural anthropology, social psychology, cognitive science and media studies intersect. The semiotics of culture provides the methodological background for the discussion presented in this publication. This constitutes the foundation on which the author builds his own original and multifaceted reflection on acting and the actor in film, which is rooted in the semiotic and communication theory perspective. Through his interdisciplinary approach to the subject of his research, the author is able to consider a variety of perspectives and methodologies.

The study combines the theory of acting and the actor with social practice related to this phenomenon. The author does not limit it to the field of art. On the contrary, in a consistent and convincing manner he points to the necessity of broadening the scope of analysis of the actor and acting, not only in relation to film, theatre, performance and entertainment, but also with reference to practices that lie outside artistic activity (e.g. politics, popular culture, celebrity culture, the issue of taboo and social condemnation etc.). The approach provided here facilitates the study of various forms of acting in the contemporary world, including its virtual reality aspect, and in this way takes the discussion presented in this publication closer to the concept of “actor network” proposed by Bruno Latour.

The book, *Actor and film acting*, engages in a discussion with classic concepts of an actor and acting: starting from antiquity (the chapter on the etymology of the notion of the actor), through the 18th century (Denis Diderot) and 19th century (including the Meinin-

gen Ensemble), up to the instructive overview of the 20th-century models of acting (The Great Theatre Reform, Actors Studio etc.). This publication is composed of over 30 essays, each of which looks at acting from a different perspective. The vast scope of the approach is reflected best in the list of titles of the particular chapters:

1. Diderot in cinema, 2. Discussing Irzykowski, 3. Anthropology of acting, 4. Bolesławski at the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT/ MChAT), in New York and Hollywood, 5. Discussing Kracauer, 6. Checking the Actors Studio, 7. Reading Brook, 8. Discussing Goffman, 9. On the etymology of the word actor, 10. Acting according to Mamet, 11. The character actor, 12. Natural actor, 13. On comedy acting, 14. The social actor, 15. The amateur actor, 16. On comedy acting, 17. Acting and archetypes, 18. Acting duos, 19. Together as a company or acting ensemble, 20. Acting and film memory, 21. Beginnings of film star cult, 22. The magic of the silver screen, 23. The system of film stars, 24. Film stars, 25. Anti-film star, 26. How to evaluate film actors, 27. Why do actors bare all in films? 28. Sex appeal, 29. Acting and music, 30. Soc, or the schematic actor, 31. The case of Zbigniew Cybulski, 32. Semiotics of an actor, 33. Phenomenology of watching, 34. The actor as a digital puppet, or Edward Gordon Craig in the cinema of the future.

The significant feature of this publication is its consistent search for the systemic rules and universal communication properties of acting analysed within the categories of social practice. In the process of developing this concept, the author does not juxtapose the 'natural' manifestations of acting with its 'cultural' aspects. On the contrary, he confronts both determinants by combining them and in this way treating them as complementary elements.

The primary value of this book is its extensive multilingual bibliography related to the issues of acting and the actor, not only in its film manifestation.

Key words: communication, sign, play, interaction, film, film as art, actor, acting, individuality, reality, image, interpretation, improvisation, role, star, star system, projection-identification syndrome, idol, hero, character, direction, creation, audience, performance, persona

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