

Avatars of the image

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The tension between photography and cinema has been inherent to the latter since its birth. On the 22nd of March 1985, six days prior to the presentation of the cinematograph, Louis Lumière gave a conference to the Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale, illustrated by the projection of a number of photographic plates and the well-known animated scene depicting workers leaving a factory for their lunch break. Still pictures came to life for the first time to the sound of the whirring projector. The sudden animation of pictures for that impressionable audience highlighted the differences between photography and cinema even back then, establishing the frame as the basic unit of the celluloid strip, as well as contrasting its stillness with the cinematic illusion of movement. Beyond the material relationship between the two mediums, filmmaking has generated an endless number of combinations of photography and cinema that have given life to many more dialectics and opened up possibilities for digression around the temporal and spatial flow of still and moving images based on the techniques and discourses that propelled it: films made with photographs, frames taken from still pictures that have historically functioned as icons (the transition known as picture migration), the use of freeze frames, archival photographs, time-lapse photography, etc., right up to today's digital re-mediation. All this is dealt with by the authors –coming from different countries and different aesthetic and historiographic positions that do not always coincide– who contribute to this issue's Notebook, *From Camera to Camera: Still Photography and the Moving Image*, as well as in the Dialogue with Agnès Varda, a filmmaker whose particular approach to photography is not limited to her films alone, as her career also represents the contrary movement followed by film-makers and artists of various generations, like Ulrike Ottinger, Chris Marker, Chantal Akerman, Peter Greenaway, Atom Egoyan, Victor Erice and Abbas Kiarostami, whose works have generated exhibitions examining the intersections between cinema and the new media, between moving image and screening practices. Installations, multimedia art and work based on the study of and reflection on space-time (through the use of video and photography both in analogue and digital formats) blur the boundaries between theatre screenings and galleries or museums, a topic that will be dealt with in depth in the next *Disagreements* section in issue 13 (January-June 2012), *Cinema in the museum*. In this issue, this section explores a completely different topic with which, without shying away from discrepancies or contradictions, we seek to echo the current state of film criticism in Spain by giving voice to the professionals who work in the field. Criticism, as the umbilical cord between the cinema and its audience, bears witness to the need to keep communication alive between these two spheres without harming either one, always seeking to consider the low in light of the high, with the aim of conveying the sense of elevation intrinsic to the critic's work. It is easy to overlook its mission on the pretext that Spanish cinema is not a favourite of audiences, or that audiences are only interested in films that appeal to their lowest instincts. The verdict traditionally proclaimed by the critic (as an artist or demiurge) is a symbol of the responsibility critics hold.

Finally, as usual, in *Vanishing Points* a group of authors analyse different topics from different areas. This miscellany, which ranges from Polanski's metaphors to the visual architecture of action films, has the genuinely truthful vitality of "wild thinking". The articles that form this last section could be labelled with the warning that the practically unassailable objection to criticism is the terror that it will be overwhelmed by the object of its appraisals. ■