

STATEMENTS ABOUT HOLIDAY MOVIES

5 MANIFESTOES

written by the members of the Holiday Movies Initiative

Nancy de Holl, Los Angeles, 2004

The experience of making a Holiday film is a three-part process:

1. Generating a loose idea involving a certain aesthetic, location, event, activity, genre, prop, etc. that is a springboard for a story.
2. Going out into the world, spontaneously applying some of these ideas to our encounters therein, and appropriating the circumstances (captured on film) as material for a story, which may or may not resemble the original idea.
3. Organizing the footage and recording sound (and/or music) in a collage-like manner to fill-in, enhance, edit, and complete the story, which again, may deviate from prior ideas.

There are certain limitations and liberties that Holiday filmmaking maintains as essential to the form. One of the most defining characteristics of the films is the practical, casual attitude with which they are technically executed. We choose to place our ambitions in areas other than technological scope, polish, believability, and effects. Our tools for filmmaking are our budget equipment on hand, our spirits, and our imagination.

Quintessential to the Holiday sensibility is the activity of play. Our filmic excursions are part adventure, part performance. There is almost always traveling involved, the films being made in the context of a kind of vacation, where anything can happen. Besides the enjoyment of taking a break from the sobriety of our daily lives, we recognize the pleasure of creating characters out of our selves and aspire for the viewer to partake in this pleasure as well.

Holiday films recognize the importance of entertainment, while also seeking to challenge the familiar logic of narrative conventions. We embrace literary contradictions, borrow freely from filmic genres, and are not so concerned with language, context, or problems of representation as may be the subject in the tradition of documentary film. The goal is to avoid conflict by letting go of determined interpretations through absurdity, beauty, amusement, and alienation.

Alice Könitz, Los Angeles, 2004

1. Vacation

Holiday movies are filmed entirely on vacation. The timeframe of these vacations may vary, but the movies have to be spontaneous, the shooting time has to be short enough to keep the experience pleasurable and inspiring. On vacation time our minds enter an altered state. We make use of this phenomenon.

2. Story Development

The perfect story develops out of the situation. It becomes perfect in postproduction because the content is so malleable that it shapes completely according to the images that are obtained during vacation time. There is no way of reshooting anything. We choose two things that determine the story before we start: the costumes and the location. We start thinking about the story on the way to the location. It develops from there.

3. Form and content of holiday movies depend on another

Content develops according to form, form develops according to content

4. Involvement of locals

Sometimes we ask locals before we integrate them into our films, sometimes afterwards.

5. Illusion and acknowledgement of materials

Our films create worlds (scenarios) of their own, with their own rules and their own reality. Sometimes image sound and narrative line up so seamlessly that they create a complete illusion, in which your attention is completely taken by the action of the film. If this works really well, you may be sitting in a screening room while your perceptive organs have left your body to hover right in front of the movie.

At other times we prefer to create quite transparent and hand made foley sounds that may interrupt your engagement with the action and draw it to the movies' other qualities.

6. Use of myths and genres

We take from myths and genres, if they come up within a certain situation. We don't stick to them and we're also not interested in deconstructing them. We just take. Our interest is the invention of a new story.

7. Invention

Each film should at least have one new quality, or definition of characters. It's about the invention of something new that employs parts of different realities.

8. Non hierarchical

Our small group is non hierarchical and subject to personal fluctuation. We try to put in equal amounts of work, ideas and money and discuss every decision. Everyone of HMI should have their own voice, which is why everyone writes their own manifesto. We try to stay anonymous.

9. Holiday movies

We all have jobs and other things to do, otherwise there wouldn't be any vacation. We're all artists working on other projects. I don't know, if we all have to be artists in our daily lives.

Antonia Baehr, Berlin, 2004

What's a holiday film to me/us?

It's a violation of borders between holiday and work, expertise and amateurship, private and public spaces and fantasies. The first principle when we film, make up the story, or synchronize the sound is to have pleasure. So theoretically (I say theoretically because there are some workaholic, loud and overwhelming women involved in the enterprise) so theoretically, if some in the group prefer to go swimming, that has to go first – or the swimming has to be included in the film story somehow.

It's made with simple no-budget means, Super8, four track machines, home editing devices.

It's made collectively, story, filming and sound, as far as possible, because being an international group, we don't live on the same continent.

“The amateur engages in painting, music, sport, science, without the spirit of mastery or competition (...) he establishes himself *graciously* (for nothing) in the signifier: in the immediately definitive substance of music, of painting (...) he is – he will be perhaps – the counter-bourgeois artist.”

Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 52

I don't know how “counter-bourgeois” we really are, how much we really try to escape commodification, but we don't do it for monetary gain and we do have pleasure with it, feeling that if we do have pleasure, maybe an audience might too.

Isabell Spengler, Los Angeles, 2004

1. Holiday movies are made during a vacation, so they have to be fun in order to get made. - Not just fun to watch, but maybe more importantly fun to make!
2. Holiday movies tell a story.
3. There are no mistakes. The story has to be able to incorporate and adapt to whatever happens.
4. All filmmaking collaborators and the objects, animals and people encountered in the process have equal rights in influencing and manipulating the film-process and product. (The filmmaking collaborators, who pay for the materials, reserve the right to withhold this information.)
5. All production costs are shared evenly between the filmmaking collaborators. The production is to be made as cheap as possible in order for it not to interfere with point 1) of this manifesto.
6. Holiday movies are made fast. - Production-time, from shooting to finished product, is usually one week.
7. All technical equipment, production conventions and filmmaking strategies known and unknown to the filmmakers can be employed in the process.
8. Holiday movies are usually shot on (silent) Super-8 film.
9. Every shot only gets taken once. A shooting ratio of 1:1 is aimed for.
10. The group has to get together again after the vacation to agree on a cut version and to make the sound (including dialogue, foley and music) for the film.
11. All functions and activities related to the production, such as directing, acting, camera-operating, editing etc. can be assumed by and rotated between all and any filmmaking collaborators as suited and desired.
12. This manifesto is not meant to be exclusive off any other Holiday Movie manifestos or binding in any way. This manifesto is not responsible for contradictions between it and other Holiday Movie manifestos.

Jennifer Sindon, Los Angeles, 2004

I. Democracy

“Toward that intolerable country
 The banner floats along.
And the rattle of the drum is stifled
 By our backcountry shouting...’

‘In the metropolis we will feed
 The most cynical whoring.
We will destroy all logical revolt.’

‘On to the languid scented lands!
 Let us implement industrial
And military exploitations.’

‘Goodbye to all this, and never mind where.
 Conscripts of good intention,
We will give policies unnamable and animal.
 Knowing nothing of science, depraved in
 our pleasures.
To hell with the world around us rolling...

‘This is the real advance!
 Forward...
 March!’

-Rimbaud

II. Films should not require too little work...

“ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST”
-Ruiz

Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret...

III.+inertia, goals, and rewards...

For example, most people go to work every day just thinking of payday, and the money they will get from the work they are doing. They can hardly wait for Friday or Saturday, whatever day they receive their money and can take time off. They are working for the reward, and as a result they resist work. They try to avoid the action and it becomes more difficult, and they don't do their best. If one takes action for the sake of doing it, without expecting a reward, you will find that you enjoy every action you do. Rewards will come, but you are not attached to the reward. You can even get more than you

would have imagined for yourself without expecting a reward. If we like what we do, if we always do our best, then we are really enjoying life. We are having fun, we don't get bored, and we don't have frustrations. -Ruiz

IV. Animals

There should be at least two animals represented; meat, humans dressed as animals, and statues of animals all count.. "Human beings are animals in a material world contingent to the core. Reflection must take as its primary datum human action aimed at eating and fleeing. The philosophy of animal faith consists of disentangling the beliefs tacit in such actions and yields a realism concerning both the objects of immediate consciousness and the objects of belief. Knowledge is true belief rendered in symbolic terms. As symbolism, it constitutes the hauntingly beautiful worlds of the senses, poetry, and religion; as knowledge, it guides and is *tested* by successful action (see II)."
-Santayana

V. HOLIDAY!

The movie ought to truly be a holiday. Away from a place where group members live, work, eat, sleep, on a regular basis (see III).

VI "To survive war, you must become war."

-Rambo

Group name should reflect the dynamics of the group.

VII. Nature

VIII. Beauty

"Without historical remembrance there would be no beauty. The past, and with it the cultural landscape, would be accorded guiltlessly to a liberated humanity, free especially of nationalism. What appears untamed in nature and remote from history, belongs-polemically speaking- to a historical suffocation. Times in which nature confronts man overpoweringly allow no room for natural beauty; as is well known, agricultural occupations, in which nature as it appears is an immediate object of action, allow little appreciation for landscape. Natural beauty, purportedly ahistorical, is at its core historical; this legitimates at the same time that it relativizes the concept. Wherever nature was not actually mastered, the image of its untamed condition terrified. This explains the strange predilection of earlier centuries for symmetrical arrangements of nature. In sympathy with the spirit of nominalism, the sentimental experience of nature delighted in the irregular and unschematic. The progress of civilization, however, easily deceives human beings as to how vulnerable they remain even now. Delight in nature was bound up with the conception of the subject as being-for-itself and virtually infinite in itself; as such the subject projected itself onto nature and in its isolation felt

close to it; the subjects powerlessness in a society petrified into a second nature becomes the motor of the flight into a purportedly first nature. In Kant, as a result of the subject's consciousness of freedom, the fear of nature's force began to become anachronistic; this consciousness of freedom, however, gave way to the subject's anxiety in the face of perennial unfreedom. In the experience of natural beauty, consciousness of freedom and anxiety fuse. The less secure the experience of natural beauty, the more it is predicated on art. Verlaine's "*la mer est plus belle que les cathedrales*" is intoned from the vantage point of a light on the world human beings have made-a salutary fear." -Adorno

This is a fear to be indulged. For instance the affore mentioned cathedrales could "act like" the sea if we filled them with suspended lengths of blue chiffon etc. So on and so forth...

X. FAUNS HEAD

Among the leaves, green curtain stained with gold,
Among the tremulous leaves, the flowery
Tangled bower, like a sudden kiss revealed,
Bright rent in this exquisite tapestry,

Glitter the eyes of a frightened faun,
Who bites the red flowers with his small white teeth.
Brown and bloody as the dregs of wine,
His lips part in laughter beneath a leaf.

Then, like a squirrel, he turns and disappears,
But his laughter lingers still along the leaves,
And, shaken as a startled chaffinch soars,
The Golden Kiss of the Woods is left in peace.

-Rimbaud