

Private Lives Public Spaces

Home movies are made to entertain small audiences of family and friends at private screenings. Since small-gauge, portable cameras were introduced in the 1920s, many thousands of reels of home movies have been shot around the world, forming the largest body of unseen and underappreciated moving-image work on film. Democratic, personal, and unregulated, this “people’s cinema” can be seen as a precursor to social media.

Since the video revolution of the 1980s, the common fate of home movies has been one of neglect and abandonment, despite the efforts of independent advocate organizations and regional archives. The fact that these films offer varied and often frank perspectives on gender, race, ethnicity, and class is a compelling reason to recover them.

This installation of newly preserved work from the Museum’s collection demonstrates the diversity and magnitude of the home-movie phenomenon, and considers its wayward connections to narrative and avant-garde cinema.

Organized by Ron Magliozzi, Curator, and Brittany Shaw, Curatorial Assistant, with Katie Trainor, Collections Manager, Ashley Swinnerton, Collection Specialist, Peter Williamson, Film Preservation Officer, and Peter Oleksik, Associate Media Conservator, The David Booth Conservation Department