

1-1-2008

The space between photography and film : an object study from the Warner Bros.-First National Keybook collection

Frances Cullen
Ryerson University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.ryerson.ca/dissertations>



Part of the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cullen, Frances, "The space between photography and film : an object study from the Warner Bros.-First National Keybook collection" (2008). *Theses and dissertations*. Paper 583.

PA
1995.9
5696
C85
2008

THE SPACE BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILM:
AN OBJECT STUDY FROM THE
WARNER BROS.-FIRST NATIONAL KEYBOOK COLLECTION

by

Frances Cullen

Honours Bachelor of Arts, Cinema Studies, University of Toronto, 2006

A thesis

presented to Ryerson University

and George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2008

© Frances Cullen 2008

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this thesis to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

*

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this thesis by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

*

*The Space Between Photography and Film:
An Object Study from the
Warner Bros.-First National Keybook Collection*

Frances Cullen
M.A. Photographic Preservation and Collections Management, 2008
Ryerson University and
George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film

ABSTRACT

Historically and conceptually, film stills occupy a precarious position between two academic disciplines: cinema studies and the history of photography. They are overshadowed in collections by more prominent and “valuable” cinematic or photographic objects competing for the same space and money; and they have received relatively little attention in scholarship, exhibitions and publications. But the film still is a unique and distinctive genre of object, possessing its own history, physicality, and aesthetic. After establishing a historical and descriptive context for understanding the film still as an object with multiple incarnations – commercial, nostalgic, historical, educational, artistic – this thesis transitions into an analysis of actual stills. By examining the physical and aesthetic characteristics of a small selection of stills from George Eastman House’s “Warner Bros.-First National Keybook Collection,” drawn from the keybooks of *Other Women’s Husbands* (1926), *Lights of New York* (1928), and *42nd Street* (1933), an argument emerges for the establishment of the film still as a genre of photographic object distinguishable by its physical and aesthetic characteristics as much as by its origin.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the film still collections professionals who so generously shared their time and knowledge with me: Robert Cushman, photograph curator and photographic services administrator for the Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy for Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; Manoah Bowman, also of the Academy; Jeffrey Paul Thompson, archivist for the Twentieth Century Fox Photo Archive; Sandra Joy Lee, curator of the Warner Bros. Archives at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts; and Anthony L'Abbate, former stills archivist and current preservation officer in the Motion Picture Department at George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film.

Thanks to my friends and proofreaders Tom Proietti, Nadia Kousari and Andrew Henderson for their time and encouragement.

Thank you also to my second reader Alex Anderson, professor of film at Ryerson University; and most especially to my first reader and advisor Nancy Kauffman, film stills archivist for the Motion Picture Department at George Eastman House, for her input, enthusiasm and guidance. I could not have had a better advisor.

Contents

Illustrations	vi
Introduction	1
Part One: Understanding Film Stills	
IN CATEGORIES	3
IN HISTORY	5
IN SCHOLARSHIP	8
IN KEYBOOKS	11
IN COLLECTIONS	15
Part Two: Looking at Film Stills	
GENERIC CONVENTIONS	29
THE WARNER BROS.-FIRST NATIONAL KEYBOOK COLLECTION	31
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	33
<i>OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS</i>	34
<i>LIGHTS OF NEW YORK</i>	34
<i>42ND STREET</i>	36
AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS	38
<i>OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS</i>	39
<i>LIGHTS OF NEW YORK</i>	41
<i>42ND STREET</i>	43
Conclusion	47
Notes	49
Annotated Bibliography	52

Illustrations

42ND STREET (1933)

vii

Figures

1.1 INTACT KEYBOOK FROM THE WARNER BROS.-FIRST NATIONAL KEYBOOK STILLS COLLECTION	12
1.2 A BOX OF 42 ND STREET STILLS FROM THE GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE COLLECTION	18
2.1 FILM STILLS VAULT IN THE MOTION PICTURE DEPARTMENT AT GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE	31
2.2 BOXES B0620-B0624, WHICH HOUSE THE 42 ND STREET STILLS	32
2.3 COVER FOR <i>THE FORWARD PASS</i> (1920)	32
2.4 PRODUCTION STILL "PUB A" FROM <i>LIGHTS OF NEW YORK</i>	35
2.5 CAPTION FROM 42 ND STREET STILL "FS-PUB-A14"	38

Galleries

<i>OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS</i>	20
<i>LIGHTS OF NEW YORK</i>	23
<i>42ND STREET</i>	26



42nd Street (1933)

Introduction

In one sense, a film still is a simple thing to define: it is any still photograph taken in association with a film production, movie star, or film studio. However, when pressed beyond this domain of basic description and identification, understandings of the film still can become multi-faceted and complex, even conceptually abstract. Although film stills are commercial in origin, they are valued as objects of nostalgic desire due to their relationship with the star or film that they depict, or with the studios and people that produced them. They have been written about, reproduced, and collected as documents of film history, as tools for analyzing films and the system that produced those films. In an attempt to elevate their status and value as art objects, some argue in favor of the artistry and craftsmanship of which they are a result. Finally, some conceptualize them in terms of such abstract ideas as spectatorship, memory, and iconography.

Film stills have the potential to don a variety of faces, but their legitimacy in these roles is obscured by the fact that they have yet truly to find their place. The film still exists in a type of limbo between the academic disciplines and institutional categories of photography and film. This is perhaps the reason that film stills have rarely been written about as objects in their own right. Instead, they appear in academic and popular publications as tools serving the purposes of other disciplines, their uses almost exclusively determined by agendas that fail to consider them as individual objects. In this thesis you will find a consideration of film stills as images and physical objects for their own sake, shaped by their origins and uses but also distinguishable by unique material and visual characteristics. This discussion will take place in two parts: "Part One: Understanding Film Stills" and "Part Two: Looking at Film Stills." The second part consists of a closer analysis of a specific group of stills from the Warner Bros.-First National Keybook Collection, which is housed in the Motion Picture

Department at the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and
Film.

Part One:

Understanding Film Stills

IN CATEGORIES

At the turn of the twentieth century, the first filmmakers quickly learned the value of photographs for publicity.* As the industry developed and the Hollywood studio system emerged, still photographs became equally pivotal for the publicity of movie stars, who attracted large numbers of people to see their films. In fulfillment of the latter need, each studio established portrait photography studios on their lots; but in fulfillment of the former, the studios hired crews of stills photographers, who took on-set photographs of every film production. The majority of these production stills, referred to here as “scene stills,” were reproductions of scenes from the film. “Behind-the-scenes shots” captured backstage activities of the cast and crew, usually staged. In addition to the studio portraits, on-set portraits were taken, but for different purposes: on-set portraits and photographs of the set were necessary to document costumes, hairstyles, sets, and props to ensure narrative and visual continuity in films. Photographs were also taken of publicity events organized as part of the campaign for certain films, such as the appearance of movie stars at premiers. Regardless of type, these production stills were then accumulated and bound by publicity departments into “keybooks” for each film, to be used both for publicity and reference.

Stills photographers were further expected to document studio events, grounds, and activities. They became involved during the pre-production stage of film projects, photographing potential locations, props and set pieces, and costumes. Should a

* Initially, film studios used both still photographs and frame enlargements from the film print to publicize films. Even though frame enlargements did not require the use of cumbersome still cameras on set, the use of photographs became the industry standard because of their superior image quality.

photograph be necessary for use within the diegesis* of a film, the stills photographer was responsible for creating this image as well.¹

New categories of stills have now emerged based on contemporary uses. The most obvious of these are the stills from lost and incomplete films.** Stills are sometimes our only remaining visual document from these films. They can be used to inform us about the film that once existed, or even to reconstruct portions of storylines in films for which only partial footage remains. The recent reconstructions of *Greed* (1924) and *London After Midnight* (1927), for example, were made possible by the employment of film stills in this way.

There are stills that depict cast members, and even entire casts, that were replaced before production was completed – for example, the Twentieth Century Fox Photo Archive holds production stills of the first cast, which was subsequently replaced, from the 1947 film *Forever Amber*.² Since still photographs were taken from the very beginning of the production process, production stills exist from films that were never completed. There are also images of alternate beginnings and endings and cut scenes and characters, sometimes featuring a performer who would later become a star. Finally, many stills are simply discontinuous with the completed film, showing scenes that happened differently or not at all in the final product.

Film stills from the studio era continue to be used as publicity tools; they are frequently reproduced on the covers and in the menus of DVD releases. They illustrate film studies publications of both historiography and theory. They are also accessed for the information that they possess about specific stars and films and Hollywood's cultural, artistic, and technical histories. Their imagery is part of popular culture, and they have occasionally been used in art projects. Sometimes, they are even accessed by individuals seeking photographs of family members.³

* In film studies, the term "diegesis" refers to the world existing inside a film's narrative.

** A "lost" film is one for which no complete print is known to remain. Of "incomplete" films, one or more partial prints remains.

IN HISTORY

In retrospect, it was clear nearly from the time of cinema's invention that still photography would play an integral role in the film production process. According to the 1987 publication *Masters of Starlight*, by David Fahey and Linda Rich, still images were taken to document sets, costumes, and scenes, and even for reproduction on posters as early as the 1890s.⁴ In his 1995 book *Hollywood Movie Stills*, Joel W. Finler officially dates the beginning of consistent production and use of film stills at 1910-11, although he concedes that Edison and Vitagraph used them as early as 1907.⁵ Until about 1915, movie stills were generally taken anonymously by members of the crew, such as the director or cameraman.⁶

As the film industry matured and developed into the efficient machine of the studio system, the importance of film stills became better established and the role of the stills photographer came to require a greater degree of specialization. Ultimately, as Fahey and Rich claim, Hollywood film studios employed more than three hundred stills photographers between the years 1910 and 1970.⁷ Individual photographers were initially responsible for both portraits and production stills, but in 1920 the studios began to establish portrait studios.⁸ From this point, studio photographers were designated as either portrait or production photographers and there was little crossover between the two.

Every year, film studios sent tens of thousands of photographs to fan magazines, newspapers, and individuals in response to fan mail.⁹ *Motion Picture* was the first fan magazine in 1911;¹⁰ *Photoplay*, launched in the same year, was the most popular. By the mid-1920s, fan magazines had become the most important venue for Hollywood's output of stills.¹¹ These periodicals were hugely popular and played a pivotal role in the publicity formulas devised by the studios. Publicity departments reigned in Hollywood because of the impact that they could have on a film's success, resulting in a five to fifteen percent increase in revenues.¹² Each film was assigned a unit publicist, who developed a publicity campaign for the film and its stars and distributed stories to the press, especially fan magazines.¹³ Photographers assigned to a particular film or star were also responsible for conceiving of a stills campaign in conjunction with the

publicity department, always with the intention of enhancing the star's public persona.¹⁴

In his introduction to *In the Picture: Production Stills from the TCM Archives*, film historian Robert Osborne describes the activities and presence of the stills photographer on the set:

'Hold for stills!': That's a phrase that used to be shouted on motion picture sets as often as 'Roll 'em!' 'Cut!' 'It's a Print!' and 'Let's try another!' . . . What those first three little words meant was that it was time for the stills photographer to have his moment. As soon as the cinematographer captured a scene on film . . . the stills photographer would emerge from the shadows to begin snapping still photographs of the same scene. He would place his camera in the very spot the movie camera had just been, and the actors would re-create the moment they had just acted – this time, however, posed and 'frozen.'¹⁵

This interjection of the stills photographer was generally resented as an interruption by most of the cast and crew.* Thus, because he was forced to complete his work without the cooperation of his colleagues, the production stills photographer was one of the most independent and solitary professions on the lot: while each photographer of course had his own working style, in general the position required that the photographer blend into the background of the bustling movie set and emerge to capture his shots quickly and accurately. Frequently he would have to be persistent, dodging pleas by the cast and crew to delay posing for stills until another day. The November 1927 issue of *American Cinematographer* quotes noted studio portrait photographer Clarence Sinclair Bull: "The 'still' man... works under more difficulties than the motion picture photographer. He has to erect his apparatus in an instant, usually is hurried by directors anxious to resume production, and granted a minimum of time, while electricians, actors, and others urge him to 'do it tomorrow.'"¹⁶

Before the union for stills photographers in Hollywood (Local 659) was established in August 1928, the job of the production stills photographer was grueling.

* Katharine Hepburn is one famous exception to this rule. She was known as a cooperative subject both in the studio and on the set who appreciated the skill and artistry of the photographer.

He was expected to work 24-hour shifts, with no vacations and no overtime.¹⁷ For this reason, and probably also because of the lack of prestige associated with the work, most Hollywood photographers of superior artistry and skill chose to work as portrait photographers – the likes of Bull, George Hurrell, and Ruth Harriet Louise. However, especially in earlier years, there were some who preferred the independent and self-sufficient working style of the production stills photographer because of the perceived creative freedom that role afforded them.

Some legendary directors made a priority of ensuring that high quality production stills were made on the sets of their films. One thinks in particular of Cecil B. DeMille, who, according to *Masters of Starlight*, hired the well-respected photographers Edward S. Curtis and William Mortensen to take the production stills on his films *The Ten Commandments* (1923) and *The King of Kings* (1927).¹⁸ Directors such as Josef von Sternberg and Erich von Stroheim were so actively involved in the process of making production stills that they composed their own images.¹⁹ Occasionally stills even influenced a director's vision, as when Sherman Clark's shots of stars Helen Hayes and Gary Cooper in a romantic embrace, taken for pre-production publicity for *A Farewell to Arms* (1932), inspired director Frank Borzage to model a scene in the film after them.²⁰

Although some gifted photographers were able to work with the cooperation of creative directors to produce inventive and artistic stills, in general the needs of the studio superceded all. A film's director had the power to provide or deny the photographer with the opportunity for a shot, thereby influencing the final selection of film stills.²¹ Studios determined the final selection of stills from among the negatives, and stars had veto power over images that they considered unflattering or at odds with their persona. The influence of the photographer himself over the final product extended little further than suggestions pertaining to the printing of stills. Even this contribution was minimal, though, because stills were always printed according to publications' needs. The creative freedom of the stills photographer was further limited by the official institution of Hollywood's internally-enforced Production Code in 1930,

which included the "Advertising Codes" requiring that each still be marked with a stamp of approval before release to the public.²²

The demise of the studio system in about 1950 brought with it an end to what could be considered the classical period of film still photography. This shift was, in general terms, a result of changing audiences, the decline of the vertically integrated industrial structure of the film industry, and the decentralization of the studio system. Studios closed their photo galleries and most stills photographers went free-lance, thus transforming the relationship between the photographer, the publicity department, and publications. The advent of *LIFE* magazine and the public's growing taste for the "photo essay" fueled the changing aesthetic of film stills.

IN SCHOLARSHIP

Existing publications on film stills very often remark on the dearth of literature on the subject. In 1995's *Hollywood Movie Stills: The Golden Age*, Joel W. Finler writes, "During recent years there has been a great revival of interest in the work of the portrait photographers . . . In contrast, the work of the unit stills photographers continues to be relatively neglected."²³ He claims that "This book represents the first ever attempt to explore the role of the movie stills photographer in all of its different guises."²⁴ In 2004, in his introduction to *In the Picture: Production Stills from the TCM Archive*, Robert Osborne similarly observes, "Numerous tomes have been published that show the marvelous work done by Hollywood portrait artists... But to my knowledge, there's never been a book devoted to the work of those many talented (and usually unidentified) stills photographers who were on a set day after day, recording Hollywood at work."²⁵ Most recently, in his forward to the 2007 book *Paper Dreams: The Lost Art of Hollywood Still Photography*, Christoph Schifferli writes that, "Film stills are actually a neglected chapter in the history of 20th Century photography," and later continues: "So far they are mainly collected and appreciated for their documentary

value; only recently private and public collectors have started to discover their original artistic qualities."²⁶

The fact that these authors have made such similar observations about the state of scholarship on production stills might bode in favor of their assertions; or it might indicate that their claim is becoming less true. As more works slowly appear, the subject of film stills grows less neglected; but although the body of work on film stills is expanding, it is by no means yet comprehensive. Where Finler and Osborne's approaches to the subject are definitely informed by the perspective of film scholars, Schifferli explicitly situates his writing within the history of photography. The film still does, in fact, hold a unique position hovering between these two areas of study; and this could be the reason for its alleged neglect in both.

The appearance of film stills in academia and art, which occurred roughly in the mid-1960s, seems to coincide with the emergence of film studies as a viable course of study in universities and among scholars. Of course, film stills have long been used as illustrations in publications. In 1970, Gary Carey authored the book *Lost Films*, which uses film stills to highlight and discuss a number of lost films. Not only does this project make use of the film still as an object, but it also refers to the exhibition of film stills previous to its publication. Carey writes, "This book grew out of the exhibition *Stills from Lost Films* I prepared for the Museum of Modern Art. I have directed several stills exhibitions."²⁷ Carey's book marks the beginning stage of a popular and academic interest in and appreciation of film stills. Carey, however, publishes no history, description, or analysis of stills in the book, instead using them only as informational documents.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, film historian and stills collector John Kobal published a series of full-length scholarly works discussing film stills. Among these is *The Art of the Great Hollywood Photographer 1925-1940*. His focus, however, was on portrait photography and the studio system more than production stills. This line of study was prominent throughout the 1980s and even into the 1990s. *Masters of Starlight: Photographers in Hollywood*, published in 1987, is an important example of the rich body of work centered on Hollywood portraits. Both of these books feature the format that

dominates film stills publications: they begin with extended essays discussing, in these cases, portrait photography and the role of photography in the studio system, followed by image galleries. Again, in these works, reproductions primarily include portraits and production stills featuring particular stars. The success of books like these was symptomatic of the tendency occurring at that time to elevate the works of Hollywood portrait studios to fine art status.

During the same period, a number of works were published examining the careers of specific photographers, thus creating a canon of established Hollywood portrait "artists." Some more current examples of these types of works are *Hurrell's Hollywood Portraits: The Chapman Collection* (1997) and *Ruth Harriet Louise and Hollywood Glamour Photography* (2002). Other photographers who have been canonized, either within larger works, such as those by Kobal, or in full-length books, include Clarence Sinclair Bull and Laszlo Willinger. Likely, one would find that the work of studio portrait photographers has been reproduced and exhibited numerous times in works and exhibitions focusing not on the photographers, but on classic films and film stars.

In the 1990s and today, there has been an increasing focus on the production still. The primary publication associated with this phase of film still scholarship is Finler's *Hollywood Movie Stills*, which was originally published in 1995 but of which a new edition is set to be released in October 2008. Most of the publications on this subject, however, are not so much scholarly works as photography/art books intended to elevate the status of these images as art objects or to appeal to a sense of nostalgia about the "Golden Age of Hollywood." Most, but not all, of these are published in association with an exhibition or collection, such as *Film Stills: Emotions Made in Hollywood* (1993), *Twentieth Century Fox: Inside the Photo Archive* (2004), and *In the Picture: Production Stills from the TCM Archives* (also 2004). Some of these, including the exhibition publication *Dream Merchants: Making and Selling Films in Hollywood's Golden Age* (1989), include extended essays featuring valuable historical, analytical, and theoretical information.

Ultimately, the claims cited at the beginning of this section pertaining to the lack of recognition of production stills in scholarship – specifically, in film studies and the history of photography – are both true and false. There has certainly been, in the last

decade or so, an increasing interest in film stills as objects of both aesthetic and informational value. The majority of this recognition, however, has taken the shape of reproductions and homages, as opposed to scholarly works. The production still needs to be examined as a particular genre with its own physical features and physical and compositional conventions. Studio keybooks in particular have rarely been mentioned in film still publications. Outside of those working with them directly, few scholars and collectors even know what they are.

IN KEYBOOKS

Because so little has been written about keybooks, most existing knowledge of them belongs exclusively to the individuals who have worked with them in collections for years, even decades, and become intimately familiar with their visual and physical characteristics in the process.* Thorough understanding of the material qualities of these objects enhances their utility as tools for historical and cultural research and helps researchers to understand the inner workings of the studio system. But they are more than simple tools for reference and illustration; and they are more, too, than objects of nostalgic value. Collectively, keybook stills constitute a concrete record of the strategies used by Hollywood to represent itself to the public, to appeal to a national (and international) consciousness. They evidence not the way that film studios were, but the ways that they wanted to be perceived. Studios staffed stills photographers for practical purposes – to document and publicize – but these industry demands resulted in a particular genre of still photographs, characterized by its own aesthetic and physical qualities.

* Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section is credited to Robert Cushman of the Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

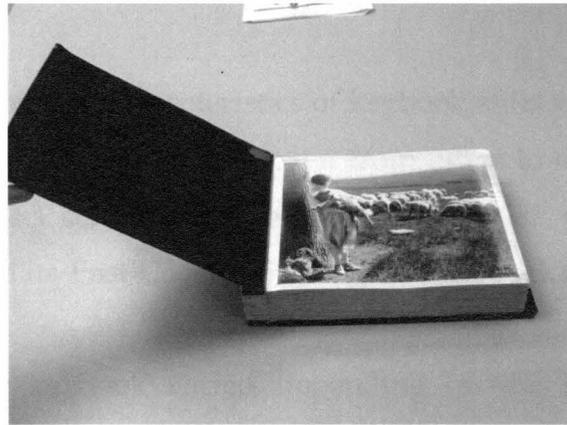
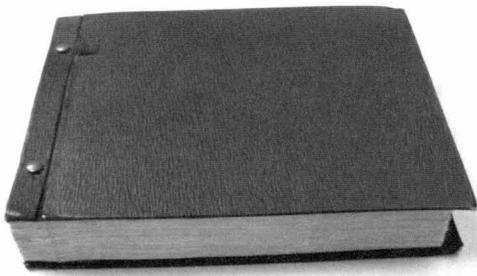


Fig 1.1: Intact keybook from the Warner Bros.-First National Keybook Stills Collection

In approximately 1912, studios began making selections from the hundreds of images produced per film and binding them into production still “keybooks.” The keybooks were then stored in studio publicity departments as a visual record of the studio’s production history and used for publicity as needed. Prints of the same and other stills were distributed to theatres and other venues, publications, and fans requesting photographs, but the stills compiled and stored by studio publicity departments possess special vintage and added meaning because of their status as official studio records. The chosen set of images not only depicts selected scenes and production details about a title, but it also reflects strategies and campaigns devised by the studio for representing that film. They are a part of the canon of the studio’s own self-written history.

At first, keybooks were comprised of photographs adhered to bound black scrapbook pages, not unlike personal photo albums of the early twentieth century. In time, each studio developed its own system of printing and binding its keybook stills. Many studios chose to linen-back their keybook stills, meaning that the 8x10 gelatin silver prints were mounted on fabric. An alternative method of printing and storing the photographs was to print them on double-weight paper, which was then bound. MGM chose neither to linen-back nor to print on double-weight paper; instead, they perforated the borders of the 8x10 photographs and stored them in three-ring binders. Twentieth Century Fox probably did not regularly linen-back its keybook stills until the 1960s. Before that, they were typically bound with a metal clasp to a cover made of

poster- or cardboard and canvas.^{28*} The physical characteristics of keybook stills varied greatly from studio to studio, from decade to decade, and even from office to office: Paramount's Hollywood office used the black scrapbook pages from 1914 to 1931, when it switched to double-weight paper, while its East Coast office began linen backing as early as 1917.

The number of stills in a single keybook varied depending on the film's production budget and publicity campaign, ranging from about forty to several hundred and sometimes reaching one thousand.²⁹ Films that were intended and expected to achieve particular success at the box office would have had more stills in their keybook. Generally, the earlier keybooks mainly included scene stills and on-set portraits. In the 1930s behind-the-scenes shots and images of publicity events related to the film's release began to appear in keybooks.³⁰ After the 1950s, keybooks grew smaller and less comprehensive, although studios continued to use keybooks until the 1970s.

Every studio developed its own internal numbering system for its production negatives. Numbering systems were individual to that studio and sometimes even to that office; such was the case with Paramount, which kept separate numbering systems in its Hollywood and New York offices. Some studios simply began numbering at "one," while others devised a more complicated system. Practices changed over time, as did the physical appearance of the keybooks. Early stills at Twentieth Century Fox, for example, were coded according to the director, film number for that director, and sequential still number: i.e. a still for the director Frank Borzage might appear as BOR-3-1, indicating that this is Borzage's third film for Fox. BOR-3 remains constant for that production, and the last number changes. A still from that keybook's portrait series might appear as BOR-3-A1, while a behind-the-scenes or other type of publicity shot might appear as BOR-3-Pub1. This appears to have been the system when it was just

* The information obtained from Jeffrey Paul Thompson, archivist for the Twentieth Century Fox Photo Archive, is based on his experience with the collection over the past two years. No systematic study has been made of the collection and a fair assessment of the collection can probably not be made until it has been fully processed. His observations are subject to change over time. For example, he has not found any pre-1960s linen-backed stills thus far, but it is possible that they exist.

Fox Film Corporation. After merging with Twentieth Century Pictures, the studio began to number films consecutively. By 1970, however, Twentieth Century Fox had simply ceased to use any numbering system at all, instead marking stills only with the initials of the film's title.³¹

Far more negatives were taken for each film than were included in the keybook. Studios selected from the large group of negatives submitted and then numbered the negatives accordingly, but not necessarily in any discernible order. Usually only negatives selected for printing were numbered. The numbering code was handwritten in india ink directly onto the negative so that it appeared in every un-cropped print from that negative, typically in the lower right-hand corner. The keybook typically included all of the numbered stills, unless a scene or character had been deleted from the film after the keybook was compiled. In that case, those stills might be removed from the keybook, leaving gaps in the numbers.

Keybook collections reflect the technological evolution of film stills production during the studio era of American filmmaking. Standard film stills were 8x10 gelatin silver prints. This format afforded the best quality images. Keybooks also included 5x7 prints on 8x10 paper, which were usually action shots. Most individuals who handle film stills on a regular basis observe that their visual quality peaked in the 1930s, and declined beginning in the 1940s. This can be attributed to changing practices and emphases as the studio system degenerated. Studios began to use lesser quality materials and poorer processing practices. They used smaller-format and duplicate negatives to print the keybook stills, which were still printed in the 8x10 format. The quality and number of film stills continued to decline in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s, studios stopped compiling keybooks, although they continued to generate 8x10 gelatin silver prints into the 1990s. Studios still use film stills, but the images are produced and managed digitally.

Sometimes a film's title and the names of its stars are printed in the bottom margin of stills, but this is not always the case. In the absence of that information, details about mounts, numbering systems, and other production practices can and do play a pivotal role in the identification of keybook stills. Those who handle film stills --

including collection managers and curators, private collectors, and dealers – and are familiar with the practices of individual studios can at the very least identify what studio produced a particular still. They might even be able to identify the film title, photographer, and stars with which the still is affiliated.

IN COLLECTIONS

Individuals began building personal film still collections as early as the 1910s and 1920s – not long after studios first began to distribute them. Public collections slowly began to appear over the following decades. Even so, it was not until about the 1970s that a widely acknowledged market for film stills emerged. Anthony Slide and Sol Chaneles, both of whom published books (in 1983 and 1977 respectively) on collecting film memorabilia, emphasize the roles of provenance and content in the worth of particular film stills. Original stills, meaning those printed from the original negative during the studio era, are more valuable because they are generally judged to be of superior quality. The age of a still, however, has less impact on its value than the star or film that it depicts. Stills picturing more popular personalities or movies, or those that are extremely rare, are the most valuable. In general, film still dealers and collectors are unfamiliar with the keybook stills that studios compiled and maintained. Therefore, a keybook still is not dramatically different in price.³²

The greatest value of a keybook does not come from its monetary worth, although vintage and provenance are intrinsic qualities of the keybook still. These objects are significant because of their relationship with studio histories and practices. The majority of a keybook still's informational value exists only in the context of its keybook collection; when a still is removed from that collection, a portion of its meaning is lost. Likewise, institutions holding keybook collections have an impact on the contextual meanings of stills because they have the power to determine the stills' arrangement and uses.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was founded in 1927. It defines itself as “a professional honorary organization composed of over 6,500 filmmakers whose achievements have placed them at the top of their craft,” and names as one of its purposes “foster[ing] educational activities between the professional community and public”.³³ Perhaps in fulfillment of this purpose, the Academy formed the Margaret Herrick Library in 1928.³⁴ The library houses posters, files, scripts, and books and manuscripts in addition to its photography collection, which is considered one of the most comprehensive film still collections in the world. It boasts over eight million photographs as part of its holdings,³⁵ including the keybook stills from MGM (1924-1972), RKO (1929-1958), First National (1919-1931), and Thomas H. Ince Productions (1912-1924).³⁶ Contrary to the practices of most other film still archives, stills are open for viewing by the public without interview. This does not apply to those housed in Special Collections, which include the keybook collections.*

The Warner Bros. Archive, which is according to its website “the largest single studio collection in the world”,³⁷ holds the Warner Bros. keybooks that were donated to the University of Southern California (USC) in 1977.³⁸ The stills are only part of a larger collection that includes musical scores, files, and scripts;³⁹ the archive itself functions within the larger framework of the university library system. The prints are organized in boxes by title, as they were at the studio, and some have been re-housed into acid-free folders.⁴⁰

The Photo Archive at Twentieth Century Fox is a corporate collection located on the studio lot, and as a rule serves only studio personnel. It holds a variety of photographic materials, including keybooks, contact sheets, negatives, and loose prints; and is physically located adjacent to other film-related studio archives, such as film, posters, and props. Twentieth Century Fox nearly disposed of its photograph collection when the studio was “cleaning house” in the 1970s, but in about 1973 sent the collection to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) on deposit instead. UCLA cared for the collection, but Twentieth Century Fox maintained ownership, and the stills were

* The special collection at the Margaret Herrick Library can be viewed by appointment and under strict supervision.

transported to the lot on an as-needed basis. The stills were re-housed in numbered archive boxes, but most have never been organized or processed. In 1997, the studio constructed the building that currently houses the photo archive, and by 2003 the collection was again on studio property. The photographs are in the process of being organized into three categories: film title, "Starhead" (glamour portraits and candid shots of stars), and lot history. Of the approximately 7,000 boxes that were sent from UCLA, at least half remain un-sorted. As a result, the total number of stills in the collection is not absolutely known.⁴¹

The film still collection at the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film was formed in the 1950s as part of the Motion Picture Department under the direction of assistant curator James Card. The department received its first large donation of 30,000 film stills in August 1953 from Marianne Huff, the mother of Theodore Huff, a film scholar and historian who had died earlier that year. This donation was likely the core beginning of the Motion Picture Department's stills archive.⁴² Warner Bros. donated the keybooks from its New York office in 1958, writing in a letter to Card, "We are glad to have these used for educational purposes and preserved by the organization best fitted to undertake these objectives."⁴³ For decades, the stills were kept in the historical George Eastman House in vertical filing cabinets. In 1989 the stills were moved to the new adjacent archive building, where they continued to be kept in vertical file cabinets in an unfinished room that essentially amounted to a warehouse.⁴⁴ Relatively recently, that room was upgraded into a film stills vault, and from 1996 to 2002 the entire collection of more than 275,000 keybook stills was rearranged and re-housed. The position of film stills archivist evolved soon after.⁴⁵

When a keybook collection is acquired by a collecting institution, the resulting shift in storage conditions, purpose, and use transforms the collection's meaning and significance. Objects that were once primarily commercial objects become, among other things, cultural records and tools for learning. The intentions of the institution that acquires, houses, and funds such a collection inevitably has a major influence over the contents, practices, and philosophies of that collection. The purpose of most of the

collections mentioned here, which represent a variety of institutional settings, sizes, reputations, and origins, is primarily to preserve and to educate: The Margaret Herrick Library, on American film history; George Eastman House, on general motion picture history; and the Warner Bros. Archive, on the history of Warner Bros. productions specifically. The Twentieth Century Fox archive, on the other hand, is still more overtly commercial. The missions of these collections determine the ways that their holdings are perceived, valued and used.

Although each of those collections is at a different stage of completion in terms of the organization and proper storage of its photographic materials, the goals and methods of arrangement and preservation are essentially universal. Keybook stills have



Fig 1.2: A box of 42nd Street stills from the George Eastman House Collection

consistently been unbound and stored in folders, either vertically or horizontally, and arranged by film title, mimicking the organizing methods of the studios. While this approach to organizing the material is entirely logical and even obvious, the standard for storing and preserving these materials is inferior to that seen in archives of photography

more traditionally perceived as art. At George Eastman House, which is also a photography museum, film stills do not receive the conservation

treatments, specialized housings, housing materials, detailed cataloguing records, or strict handling guidelines implemented in the photography archive.

Film still collections consistently exist within larger archives that house a variety of materials. The Warner Bros. Archive, for example, also holds a variety of production files, scores, and manuscripts, and functions inside a traditional library system that specializes, of course, in books and periodicals. Because the film stills are not the most important holdings in this archive, they are not likely to receive the attention and budget that is required to house them according to the highest standards. In an institution like George Eastman House, which specializes in the preservation of

photographic materials, the film stills collection is preserved and handled in a fashion relatively similar to that at USC. At George Eastman House, the film stills collection exists inside the Motion Picture Department, where the focus is on motion picture film. As mentioned above, there is a noticeable contrast between the handling and preservation practices in the film stills archive and the photo archive. It seems that regardless of context, film stills are perceived as objects inferior to other materials in aesthetic quality and perhaps even documentary value – they seem to be subconsciously seen by some institutions, in fact, as secondary.

Regardless of location, film stills are a uniquely different type of document. Amongst written materials, film stills stand out as photographic objects; next to art objects, a film still is purely commercial in origin and documentary in value. Yet, inside an archive of entirely historical and documentary photographs, the film still is different not only because it records the making of art, but because it possesses conventions of composition that required a high degree of artistry.

Other Women's Husbands (1926)



"OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS" with MONTE BLUE and MARIE PREVOST
WARNER BROS.

H52



"OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS" with MONTE BLUE and MARIE PREVOST
WARNER BROS.

H90



"OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS" — MONTE BLUE, MARIE PREVOST — WARNER BROS.

H107



"OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS" — MONTE BLUE, MARIE PREVOST — WARNER BROS.

H157



"OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS" MONTÉ BLUE MARIE PREVOST WARNER BROS.

H172



OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS WARNER BROS.

H-Pub-B

Lights of New York (1928)



1135

"LIGHTS OF NEW YORK"—ALL STAR CAST—A Warner Bros Vitaphone Picture



1161

"LIGHTS OF NEW YORK"—ALL STAR CAST—A Warner Bros Vitaphone Picture



"LIGHTS OF NEW YORK"—ALL STAR CAST—A Warner Bros Vitaphone Picture

1183



"LIGHTS OF NEW YORK"—ALL STAR CAST—A Warner Bros Vitaphone Picture

1198



"LIGHTS OF NEW YORK"—ALL STAR CAST—A Warner Bros Vitaphone Picture

1203



"LIGHTS OF NEW YORK"—ALL STAR CAST—A Warner Bros Vitaphone Picture

1207

42nd Street (1933)



FS-47



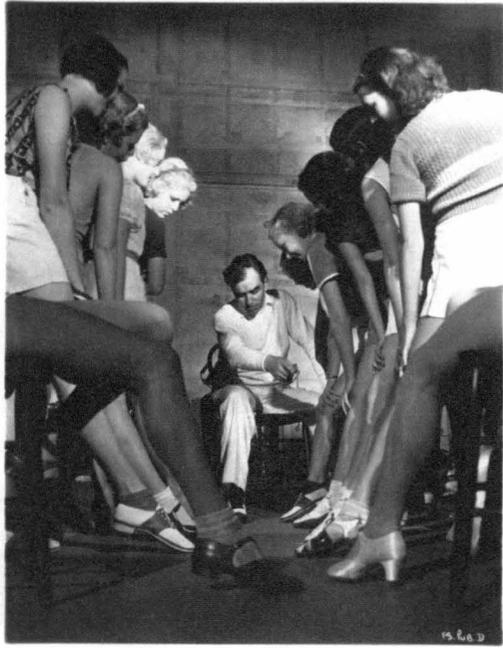
FS-204



FS-297



FS-Pub-A84



FS-Pub-D



FS-X79

Part Two:

Looking at Film Stills

GENERIC CONVENTIONS

The film still is a unique category of object, belonging to the histories of both film and photography and yet not completely belonging to either. It has its own history, its own incarnation in art and scholarship, and its own physical and aesthetical characteristics. “Part One: Understanding Film Stills” demonstrates these first two qualities; in the interest of illustrating this last point, “Part Two: Looking at Film Stills” conducts a close analysis of a selection of stills from the Warner Bros.-First National Keybook Collection at George Eastman House. This object study will describe the physical characteristics and visual content of the objects under examination, showing how the circumstances of their production shaped their appearance, functionality, and artistry. The history of film still production, collecting, reproduction, and scholarship has a trajectory that renders itself independent of the histories told about both photography and film, culminating in a genre of object boasting a variety of distinctive qualities and conventions.*

The mission of the stills photographer was to create an image communicating key information about plot, character, and genre to the movie-goer, aiding him or her in determining, based on this single image, whether a particular film was the type that would suit his or her preferences. He also had to depict stars in such a way as to support their public personas. As David Company wrote in the introduction to *Paper Dreams: The Lost Art of the Hollywood Still*, “One task of the photographer is to condense

* Please note that this section refers mainly to scene stills. Other categories of film stills, such as portraits and behind-the-scenes shots, have their own system of conventions, although they are generally every bit as staged as the scene stills.

and distill a filmic scenario into a readable image. Gestures are altered, body positions are re-organized, and facial expressions are held... caught between cinematic flow and photographic arrest, the film still has a unique pictorial character."⁴⁶ The methods used by stills photographers to meet the requirements of the publicity department resulted in a distinctive aesthetical quality consistent among all successful film stills. This quality would become a convention of the film still genre.

Film stills must simultaneously capture motion and stillness, character complexities and plot trajectories; and, when a film still features a movie star, the image must encapsulate both the character from the film and the public character of the star embodied in the single figure while repressing the character of the "real person." According to Company's understanding of the film still, film stills exist somewhere between the two extremes of art as a fragment and art as a whole.⁴⁷ The film still represents both a single moment and an entire story; it is a photograph that is a photograph, and a photograph that represents a film; it is part of a larger body of work, but must also stand alone. The film still is caught in the "space between" in all of these ways, and as a result must be acknowledged to inhabit its own space.

Images created as film stills have a way of evolving into something conceptually larger than what was originally intended for them. They have had a drastic impact in shaping our collective retrospective perception of Hollywood. Often, because we tend only to see a film once or twice, images reproduced over and over can dominate our memories of that film and come to represent it in its entirety.⁴⁸

The compositional conventions of film stills are so distinct that they have appeared in fine art photography that has little or nothing to do with actual film productions. In the most widely known of these instances, art photographer Cindy Sherman produced a series of photographs from 1977 to 1980 called *Untitled Film Stills*.⁴⁹ Although Sherman never worked on a movie set, her "film stills" mimicked the compositions and content of "film stills" in a truer sense, appropriating a visual format and style outside of the context that had originally created those conventions - namely, the encapsulation of a character and a narrative into a single moment. That Sherman was able to appropriate the format of the film still without creating an actual film

indicates that, by 1977, the film still as a genre of object and a genre of image had evolved sufficiently enough to distinguish itself from the film industry that had originally necessitated its existence.

THE WARNER BROS.-FIRST NATIONAL KEYBOOK COLLECTION



Fig 2.1
Film Stills Vault
in the Motion
Picture
Department at
George Eastman
House

Warner Bros.' East Coast office donated its keybook collection, representing its entire pre-1950 film library, to the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film in 1958.* When Warner Bros. had purchased First National in 1927, the First National keybooks had become incorporated into the Warner Bros. collection. Thus, when donated to George Eastman House, the collection was called the Warner Bros.-First National Keybook Collection. Upon acquisition of the collection, it became George Eastman House's responsibility to preserve the keybook stills and facilitate public access to them for educational purposes. Within the practical confines of space, time, and money, the stills are currently stored under favorable conditions,

* Nancy Kauffman, film stills archivist at George Eastman House and advisor for this thesis, both shared the information contained in this section and allowed the author access to the film stills vault.

although this was not always the case (see page 17 and the bottom of page 32). Within the past decade the museum has upgraded the stills' storage conditions with the construction of a film stills vault and adjacent office space. There is also study space available for the viewing of film stills by appointment. The museum employs a full-time film stills archivist to manage the paper and photographic collections, which include celebrity portraits, posters, lobby cards, and other artifacts. The keybooks have been unbound, both to allow for efficient storage of the objects and because the keybook covers, which were bound together with two metal pins through perforations in the stills'



Fig 2.2
Boxes B0620 –
B0624, which
house the 42nd
Street stills

fabric mounts, likely contain harmful materials for photographic objects. The covers are embossed in gold with the title of the film whose stills they contain; all of the covers that came with the collection have been saved and are kept with the collection (See Fig. 2.3). One keybook has been kept intact either as an example or because the film had remained unidentified until only recently (2008). (This particular keybook does not have the title embossed on its cover, nor

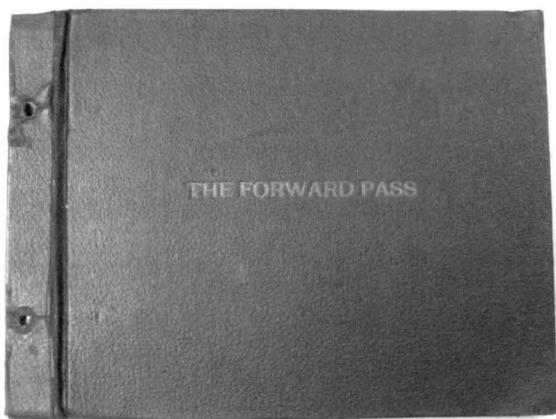


Fig 2.3
Cover for *The Forward Pass* (1920)

do the stills have the title or stars' names printed on them; see Fig. 1.1) The stills are stored horizontally, twenty-five per folder and five folders (approximately 125 stills) per box. Each box is numbered and organized alphabetically by title. Altogether, there are more than 250,000 keybook stills in the collection.

Previously the stills were stored in vertical filing cabinets, partially unbound.⁵⁰ They had allegedly been ransacked for particularly interesting and valuable stills both before their donation and over many years of informal storage at the museum.⁵¹

Consequently, it is likely that the keybooks are incomplete, particularly those from especially popular films and those featuring especially popular stars.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

In order to examine the unique physical and aesthetic characteristics of the film still, and to make a case for the film still as a distinctive category of photographic object, what follows is a close analysis of a selection of keybooks from the Warner Bros.-First National Keybooks Collection. These are the keybooks for *Other Women's Husbands* (1926), *Lights of New York* (1928) and *42nd Street* (1933), all Warner Bros. releases. The intention of this analysis is to identify the material and visual qualities of the stills that are consistent across each of the keybooks and to demonstrate how these are a result of their origin.

Other Women's Husbands is an obscure late silent film directed by Erle O. Kenton and starring Monte Blue, Marie Prevost, Phyllis Haver, Huntley Gordon, and John Patrick. Little is known about the film, and it is presumed lost. *Lights of New York* was the first feature length "all-talking" film, although it was originally intended as a short. It was directed by Bryan Foy and stars Helene Costello, Cullen Landis, Wheeler Oakman, and Eugene Pallette, among others. Despite its many narrative and stylistic shortcomings, the film's popular success played an important role in the industry-wide shift to "talking" pictures. Finally, *42nd Street* was an extensively publicized popular and financial success for Warner Bros. featuring an "all-star cast" that includes Warner Baxter, Bebe Daniels, Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell, and Ginger Rogers. It was directed by Lloyd Bacon with musical numbers by Busby Berkeley.

These titles were chosen because they represent varied degrees of investment on Warner Bros. part, and a range of popular and financial successes on their own parts. They were all released within a relatively small window of time, between 1926 and 1933. The intention behind this selection was to impose a level of control over the sample set of stills by limiting the factor of time. The year 1927, which marks the introduction of sound in feature length films and thus perhaps the most significant

turning point in film history, falls within the represented range of years -- this was also intentional.* These films were produced during a period of rapid transition in Hollywood. The widespread and large-scale adoption of sound in the motion picture industry resulted in remarkable changes to Hollywood and to the character of films themselves. Keybooks reflect these changes.

OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS

There are 132 stills for *Other Women's Husbands* in the keybook collection. The stills, all of which are linen-backed, show many signs of deterioration, although altogether their condition is fair. Some of them are yellowing, fading, and/or mirroring-out, but these symptoms appear erratically. Creases, tears, scratches, and dirt are among some of the problems suffered by the stills as a result of handling, particularly around the edges and on the perforations. The prints were clearly glossy in their original condition, but mounting them on fabric has resulted in an imprint of the fabric texture onto the print surface. There are few inscriptions on this group of stills, although the verso (back) of each has been marked with a cursive "L" and the rectos (fronts) have the title of the film and the names of two of its stars printed on the bottom margin. The vast majority of the stills are scene stills, but there are five portraits of one actress in various costumes. There are no other categories of stills in this keybook.

LIGHTS OF NEW YORK

The 99 stills from *Lights of New York* have generally the same appearance as those from *Other Women's Husbands*, although the linen-backing is more yellowed and the versos of the stills are marked with a checkmark rather than an "L." Otherwise, inscriptions are similarly infrequent and insignificant. The types and degrees of deterioration present in the *Lights of New York* stills likewise resemble those in the keybook for *Other Women's Husbands*.

* By nature this analysis is limited because it is possible that these keybooks are not representative of the general trends in keybooks at the times of their production. The discussion is valid nevertheless because it demonstrates how a variety of keybooks are essentially similar.

About 75% of the photographs are scene stills. The other 25% is comprised of twenty-two portraits of the films' cast in character, four behind-the-scenes images depicting the filming of the movie, and one photograph of an advertisement for Vitaphone.* The behind-the-scenes images – in some of which the presence of a sound booth is identifiable – are significantly more worn than the other stills due to the stress of excessive handling, with excessive tears and folds. They have extra inscriptions on their versos. One also has two typewritten captions numbered “1” and “2” adhered to its verso, both of which refer to the use of sound in the film. These stills are inscribed with the title of the film, the phrase “All Star Cast,” and the names of Warner Bros. and Vitaphone on the bottom margin of the print.

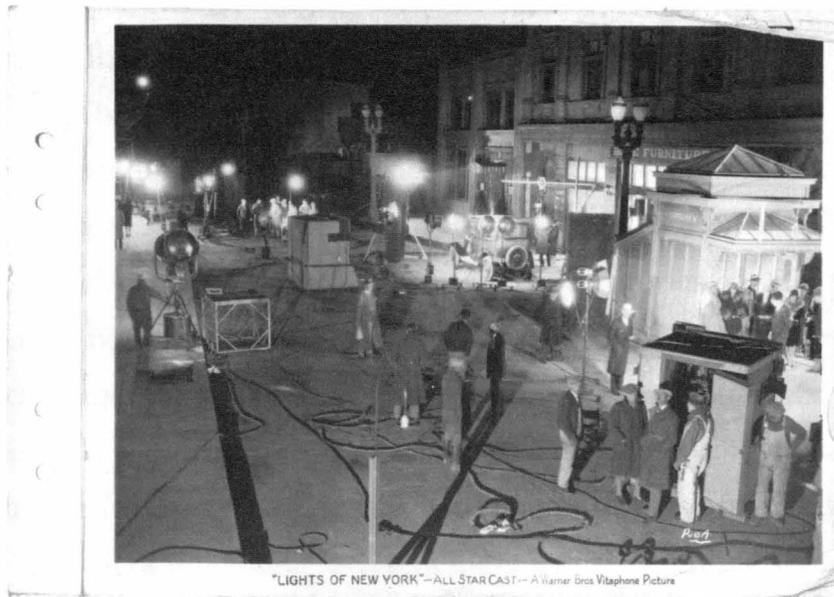


Fig 2.4: Production still “Pub A” from *Lights of New York*

* The keybook stills have been counted, but any percentages cited in these descriptions are estimations. Any quantitative analysis of the keybooks must take into account the fact of human error and that there is reason to believe they may not be complete, especially those from more popular films such as *42nd Street*. It would be difficult to ascertain whether any of these keybooks are complete, although more information might be obtained by researching production records held at the Warner Bros. Archive.

42ND STREET

The *42nd Street* keybook exhibits the same types of deterioration as the other two, but to a greater degree, indicating more frequent handling and use. Handwritten markings in various media, including graphite and grease pencil, appear more consistently on the versos. A significant portion of the stills have names or captions typewritten directly onto their versos, or captions sloppily typewritten and adhered to the versos (see fig 2.5 for an example of the appearance and content of such captions). They also have the blue checkmarks found on the *Lights of New York* stills, but they do not have the title of the film or the names of stars printed in the bottom margin of the still. Fabric tape has been applied to a few of the stills as a label tag protruding from their right edges. These labels indicate stops on the route of the “42nd Street Special” (see “42nd Street” on pages 43-46). Collectively, these qualities point to a degree of usage greater than that of the other keybook stills.

The content of the *42nd Street* keybooks is noticeably different from that of the other two films because only about 15% of the stills are scene stills. Twenty-one percent of them are behind-the-scenes shots, and 22% are on-set portraits of members of the “all-star” cast and chorus. There are two categories of stills in the *42nd Street* keybooks that do not appear in the other two key sets: 9% of the stills are smaller format prints on 8x10 paper, usually outdoor behind-the-scenes action shots; and the largest portion of the stills – 33% – are photographs taken of the promotional events surrounding the film’s release.* In these keybook stills and in those from *Lights of New York* there is a great deal of repetition, meaning that there are multiple shots of the same people in the same configurations, clothing, and locations with only slight variations. Altogether, there are 561 stills in the *42nd Street* keybook.

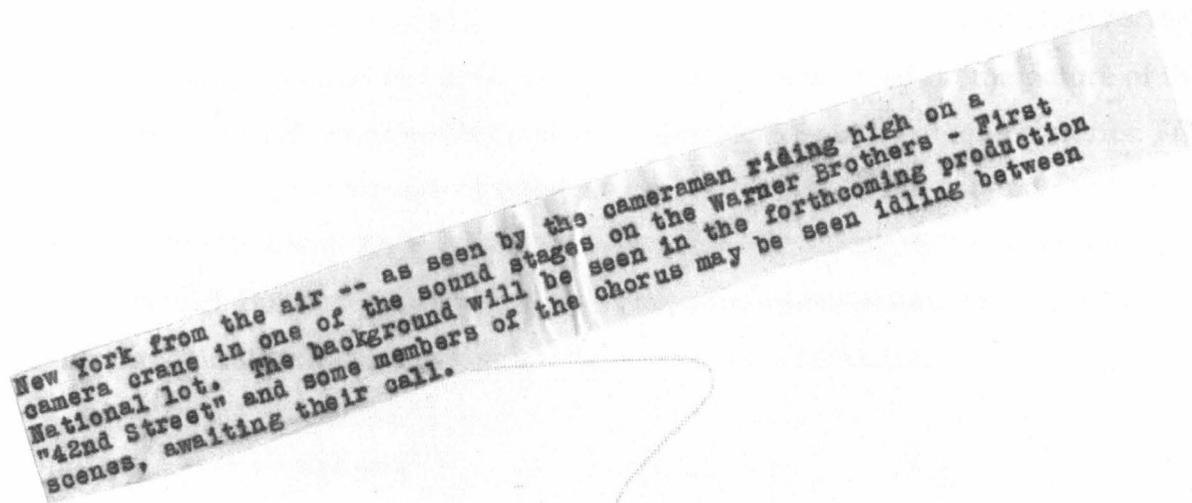
Everything about a keybook still marks it as a functional object, although today keybook stills have been unbound and housed in a museum setting, thus separating them from the context of their origin and masking or transforming this functionality. The linen-backing, perforated edges of mounts, and method of binding keybook stills

* Again, please note that these percentages are estimates.

immediately inform contemporary users that the stills were once bound and arranged to facilitate easy access and viewing. Mechanical damage suffered by the stills, including dirt, scratches, and tears, indicates frequent use and informal handling typically borne by corporate documents but not art objects. Keybook stills are reference prints made from original negatives, and the quality of the images makes it clear that an aesthetically pleasing composition was not the priority of the printer; none of the images have been cropped or otherwise altered for artistic reasons, although on some keybook stills the negative has been retouched to protect stars' public personas. Some of the prints display types of chemical deterioration such as fading, yellowing, and silver-mirroring. In some cases this can be attributed to contact of the photograph with harmful materials such as acidic papers and adhesives. In other cases a photograph exhibits symptoms of oxidation when none of the adjacent objects do. When this has occurred, poor processing is a likely culprit. The emphasis in studios, especially at Warner Bros., was on speed rather than permanence in printing because these photographs were intended more for immediate reference and reproduction than for display.

Similarities among the stills' physical characteristics define the film still as an object. On the other hand, discrepancies in the keybooks are revealing of differences in the production process for each film. The films represented were all conceived, produced, and released under varied financial circumstances, and by 1933 Hollywood was remarkably different from what it had been in 1926. The stills from *42nd Street* are noticeably greater than the others in number and in variety, and it is evident that they have been handled with far more frequency. The volume and nature of the *42nd Street* stills - the documentation of the production through behind-the-scenes shots, on-set portraits, and the photographing of publicity events is quite comprehensive - indicates that the stills department was not lacking in resources for this film. The budget was clearly more than sufficient, and based on the photographic output it seems likely that more than one photographer was assigned to the project, although the photographers for all three of these films cannot be identified from the stills. The *42nd Street* keybook is the result of a push on the part of the studio publicity department that was not there for

the other two films, neither of which was expected to be significant hits during production. (*Lights of New York* did achieve impressive monetary and popular success upon release, but this was because it became a feature-length sound film partway into the production process. It was originally intended as a short.)



New York from the air -- as seen by the cameraman riding high on a camera crane in one of the sound stages on the Warner Brothers - First National lot. The background will be seen in the forthcoming production "42nd Street" and some members of the chorus may be seen idling between scenes, awaiting their call.

Fig 2.5: Caption from *42nd Street* still "FS-Pub-A14"

"New York from the air - as seen by the cameraman riding high on a camera crane in one of the sound stages on the Warner Brothers - First National lot. The background will be seen in the forthcoming production "42nd Street" and some members of the chorus may be seen idling between scenes, awaiting their call."

AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS

The content of film stills, like their material qualities, is a result of their commercial origins. Film stills can be characterized by a distinctive visual style that is a product of the studio system that produced it. But while a keybook still's materiality is an unavoidable reminder of its functionality, the aesthetic of a particularly successful still can be attributed to an artistry that transcends its origin. Looking at keybook stills collectively reveals the aesthetic conventions that define the film still as a category of object.

Joel W. Finler has observed that film stills from the silent era have a particular aesthetic tied to the acting style and fashions characteristic of films from the period.⁵² He has also asserted that because the introduction of sound brought a wave of new talent and style to the industry, film stills from the sound era are characterized by a more sharply focused, modern aesthetic.⁵³ The difference between these periods goes deeper than the presence of new faces and fashions in the keybooks and on the screen. Silent filmmaking had evolved a narrative and visual style based on the nature of that medium. In the sound era, filmmakers had to innovate new ways of telling stories. Film stills aim to embody the essence of a film in a single image, and silent and sound films are remarkably different. As a result, the stills produced during the eras are noticeably different as well. But they are also similar, because the essential function of the film still -- to capture narrative moments in still images -- remained constant.

OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS

For the purpose of this thesis, the most important things to know about *Other Women's Husbands* are that it was likely an unspectacular late silent film made at a time when, according to most accounts, Warner Bros. was a minor film studio experiencing financial difficulties; and that it is currently presumed lost. These photographs are among the only records left of this motion picture, which by all appearances is in every way a typical film of its time. For that very reason, this group of stills is perfect for understanding the dynamic between films and stills, in spite of the fact that it is impossible to view the film. In fact, because the film is unavailable for viewing, this keybook affords an opportunity to measure the amount of information that a viewer can discern about a film simply by looking at its stills.

Presumably, like the film that they depict, these stills are a typical sample of production stills commonly made at the time. Production stills were expected to communicate the essence of an entire story in a handful of photographs - while, of course, not giving away too much plot information. It might be possible to reconstruct the plot of the film simply by viewing its production stills. How much is it possible to know about a film with only stills for reference?

Upon initial viewing the stills from *Other Women's Husbands* (see the image gallery beginning on page 20), one can identify common character types and the relationships between them: the handsome but bumbling hero, faulted but charming and likeable; the innocent and ladylike wife; the overtly sexual seductress. The motif of the woman lighting the man's cigarette in "H107" and "H90" is an explicit metaphor for sex that was frequently used in Hollywood films of the classical period. It clearly suggests to the viewer that the two characters involved are engaged in a sexual relationship. In "H90" the husband gawks at this exchange between his wife and the other male character – his obvious competition – with a clownish expression. On one level the type of slapstick humor conveyed by his facial expression links this film to the silent era; and on another it reveals his shock and jealousy at witnessing the exchange of such a suggestive gesture between his wife and another man. He, of all people, knows what the exchange implies.

Everything about these pictures is aimed at communicating the nature of the characters and their narrative roles: costumes, facial expressions, body language, props, gestures. The selection of stills reproduced here communicate that the characters are involved in sexual games (see "H172") and sexual relationships, that the romantic leads do, in fact, still love each other (see "H157"), and that the film is lighthearted and comical (see again "H172" and "H90"). But it is not enough to identify the actions that are being played out in these images. It is the compositions devised by the photographer and the performances enacted by the actors that characterize these photographs. For example, see in still "H52" how the image informs us of the suspicion present in between this married couple. Not only does she remove his jacket, she removes it from a position crouched behind him, her body small relative to his inside the frame. The directions of their bodies, the angles of their heads, and the looks on their faces suggest both motion and emotion. The characters are physically and emotionally linked, but there is a barrier of suspicion and wariness between them.

Thus it is possible to construct a rather vivid impression of *Other Women's Husbands* without viewing the film. While it is impossible to determine the true accuracy of this idea without witnessing the narrative unfold in the movie, some of the

information gleaned from the stills can be confirmed by reference to reviews of the film.

A contemporary review by Hal Erickson reads (almost in its entirety):

Dick Lambert (Monte Blue) is married to Katherine (Prevost) but has been "stepping out" with Marion Norton (Phyllis Haver), the sweetheart of attorney Phillip Harding (Huntley Gordon). Even so, Dick is outraged when it appears that Katherine has been messing around with Phillip. She hasn't, of course, but Harding encourages her to sue for divorce, with himself as her attorney -- all part of his plan to get Katherine for himself. While offering testimony in court, Dick and Marion realize that they're still in love with each other after all . . . ⁵⁴

Evidently, the assumptions made here about the film based on the stills were extremely accurate. This review is a testament to the success of the stills in conveying the nature of the film to ticket-purchasing movie-goers.

LIGHTS OF NEW YORK

1927's *The Jazz Singer* may have been the first "talking picture," but *Lights of New York* was the first *all*-talking picture. It began production in early 1928 as a two-reel "talking" melodrama and expanded into a seven-reel feature-length film, including musical numbers. Although the exact figure varies in publications, it is universally acknowledged to have been a huge hit for Warner Bros. Despite this popular success, the film is known to film critics and historians for its technical shortcomings. Film historians often speak of the time following the introduction of sound in Hollywood as one saddled with technical obstacles while filmmakers re-learned their craft. As one of the first moving pictures featuring the use of sound, *Lights of New York*, with its static camera focusing on characters speaking stilted dialogue around a camouflaged microphone, is a perfect example of these difficulties. If we ignore the fact that *Lights of New York* is an early sound film, and consider instead its visual style, narrative progression, plot, and characters, *Lights of New York* is as routine as *Other Women's Husbands*. Because *Lights of New York* was a surprise success, there are relatively few stills in its keybook. In fact, there are no stills in the keybook at all from the beginning part of the film; which, considering the way the film progressed, could indicate that these scenes were shot after the stills work had already concluded.

The one distinctive aspect of this keybook is the presence of some behind-the-scenes shots showing a sound booth. Based on the damage they have suffered, they obviously received excessive use. The film is considered historically significant because of its technical achievements, rather than its artistic or entertainment value. The Warner Bros. publicity department apparently also favored the technical aspect of the film, since it seems to have been advertised as a technical novelty rather than as an enjoyable film with a compelling storyline. What the publicity department most wished to convey to the public was not the film's generic or star appeal – although scene stills are part of the keybook – but that it is a technical innovation characterized by the presence of the sound booth on a crowded lot.

As with *Other Women's Husbands*, viewing only two or three of the stills for *Lights of New York* communicates a wealth of information about the film's genre, characters, their relationships, and plotlines. For example, see still "1198" (image gallery beginning on page 23), which highlights the relationship between the romantic leads as they embrace in the nightclub with troubled expressions on their faces. Kitty (Helene Costello) and Eddie (Cullen Landis) are lovers in an intimate moment, but their love is swallowed by their surroundings: flashy clothes, a hectic background. The difference between this keybook and that for *Other Women's Husbands*, however, is that it is possible to test assumptions by viewing stills in comparison with the film.

Scenes captured by a still do not ever really appear as they do in the film. Although the purpose of the still was to recreate the scene that had just been shot, stills photographers had the freedom to re-pose actors for dramatic affect and to compress as much plot information as possible into a single image. See, for example, still "1183." This photograph references a scene where the corrupt mob-boss club owner, "Hawk" Miller (Wheeler Oakman), makes an ominous sexual advance toward Kitty. In the film, this happens in private, and Hawk's aging girlfriend Molly (Gladys Brockwell) overhears. In the photograph, however, Hawk is backed up by a flock of curious nightclub dancers. It is possible that a similar scene was shot and later cut from the film. It is far more likely, though, that the photographer staged the scene this way in order to give a more complete picture of the plot point depicted. The presence of the chorus girls

gives the scene a locality. It shows that Hawk is the corrupt nightclub owner, and Kitty is an innocent, beautiful, and victimized young dancer. It does not really make sense for a group of dancers to stand there as they do, but this is not a problem because a film still does not necessarily look real. It does not even have to look exactly like the movie. It needs only to communicate information about the movie.

Two of the stills in the keybook – numbers “1161” and “1207” – capture moments that are easily missed when viewing the film, but that are among the most striking of the images. The spotlight and long shadow in “1207” refers to a crime that propels the plot through a good portion of the movie, but the actual imagery appears for only a fraction of a moment in a montage sequence near the beginning of the film. The highly stylized photograph is evocative of the *film noir* style that would become so prevalent in the 1940s. Still “1161” is from a part of the film where the hero Eddie and his business partner Gene (Eugene Pallette) are frantically trying to hide Hawk’s dead body. This is a memorable moment in the plot, but the shot that the photographer has chosen to recreate passes too quickly in the film to be prominently remembered. The use of the doorway to frame the figures in a dramatic moment, isolating them in their panic, is striking. The stills photographer isolates moments from the film that likely would otherwise go unnoticed. Hollywood photographer Laszlo Willinger once said, “A lot more people have seen our stills than have seen the movies.”⁵⁵ By deciding which moment to capture in photographs, stills photographers had the power to determine the public’s memory of a film.

42ND STREET

With the release of *42nd Street*, Warner Bros. is credited for bringing back the movie musical.* *42nd Street* was a substantial production publicized as having an “all-star” cast and including the musical staging of Busby Berkeley. The cast included two hundred chorus girls who are documented thoroughly in the production stills. Including stills photographers, the film had thirty-two members on its camera crew.⁵⁶

* In the first years of sound, the public had quickly grown tired of the large number of musicals inundating the market.

According to John Kobal's description of the stills department in 1933, Warner Bros. staffed about thirty retouchers, developers, printers, laboratory technicians, and, of course, photographers, who averaged about three hundred production stills a day.⁵⁷ This high capacity for productivity is reflected in the number and variety of stills in the *42nd Street* keybook. Warner Bros.' increased staff and resources also explain its publicity strategy for the film. Looking back at *42nd Street* in 1994, J.B. Kaufman wrote,

The film's success in the spring of 1933 is now a matter of record. Warner Bros. gave it a tremendous publicity boost by sending a railroad train, the '42nd Street Special,' across the country. Loaded with Warner's contract stars and other celebrities (almost none of whom had appeared in the film), the train made stops in key cities, staging parades, radio broadcasts and other activities – always leading up to the climactic event: the local premiere of *42nd Street*. But as *Newsweek* pointed out, all the hoopla was unnecessary; the film was an attention-getter in its own right.⁵⁸

The predominant categories of stills in the *42nd Street* keybook are behind-the-scenes shots, on-set portraits, images of publicity events, and scene stills. The proper labeling of certain photographs as either scene stills or behind-the-scenes shots is sometimes ambiguous, especially because of the film's status as a "back-stage musical." In the case of *42nd Street*, it is the behind-the-scenes stills that have come to represent the movie in publicity materials, publications, and collective imagination and memory. In "FS-Pub-D," rows of chorus girls point their toes for Berkeley's approval (image gallery beginning page 26). The photograph, shot from a thoroughly modern angle, epitomizes the character of the movie as a Busby Berkeley film, referencing the rigor required in preparation for the dance sequences, the back-stage component of the film narrative, and even the modern geometric style of the Busby Berkeley choreography.

Any commentary about the scene stills from this keybook would be essentially similar to the previous two. The best of the stills consolidate single moments of the film in the viewer's memory, communicating information about the scale of the production, the film's genre, the general idea of the plot, and character types and relationships. "FS-47," for example, echoes the lighting of cigarettes in the stills from *Other Women's Husbands*, also pointing to a potentially sexual relationship. In this keybook, the other categories of stills are far more interesting. The on-set portraits and behind-the-scenes

shots mimic the compositional style of scene stills as they attempt to create a fictionalized backstage world on the *42nd Street* set. Portraits such as FS-204, which shows Una Merkel (Lorraine Fleming) and George E. Stone (Andy Lee) posing on the set, blur the lines between performer and character. The subjects are in costume, posed in character and in such a way as to dramatize the dynamic of their relationship in the movie, but the backdrop behind them makes it immediately clear that this is not a scene from the film. It therefore becomes ambiguous whether we are meant to perceive the image as depicting the characters, or as the actors improvising a performance.

Because there are so many similar backstage portraits of apparently fun-loving stars “hamming it up” (see “FS-297”), it is evident that it was part of the studio’s publicity strategy to depict an atmosphere of camaraderie and creativity on the set. This message extends beyond the portraits to the behind-the-scenes images, such as “FS-Pub-A84,” most of which are every bit as constructed and contrived as the scene stills themselves. This publicity shot contains a feeling of motion and activity – in essence, captures a fleeting moment while telling an entire story. There is an effect of performance around the demeanors of Ginger Rogers and Guy Kibbee, although the only roles that they are playing are their supposed selves. It is as if the fictional world of the film narrative is sandwiched inside a second world, no less fictionalized, constructed by the film studio.

The photographs of the “42nd Street Special” and the many stops on its national tour are noticeably different from the rest. There is an impression of self-awareness about them that echoes the element of performance in the other stills, but the difference is that there is an audience present in these photographs. These actors on a publicity tour are definitely nothing but actors on a publicity tour. One role of these stills is to show the great significance of *42nd Street* on the Warner Bros.’ 1933 agenda and characterize the film as an event more than a movie.

A substantial number of the “42nd Street Special” stills are mingled with the scene stills, behind-the-scenes shots, etc. in the keybook. It is clear that they are an important part of the publicity department’s campaign for *42nd Street*. On board the “42nd Street Special” was a General Electric kitchen and an army of stars that did not

appear in the film. The excursion was planned in connection with Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration.⁵⁹ This elaborate publicity campaign used product placement and political tie-ins to enmesh the release of *42nd Street* with the lives of the movie-going audience, not unlike the way that the behind-the-scenes shots and on-set portraits in the keybook attempt to blur the lines between the constructed world of the film and the "real" world of the performers. In both of these cases, the photographs work to establish a life for the film beyond the confines of the projection screen and the theatre.

Conclusions

At this point, a case has been firmly made for film stills as a distinct genre of object, belonging categorically to the histories of both photography and film and identifiable by a discernible canon of characteristics. Variances in the featured keybooks are a result of the circumstances surrounding each production -- economic, historic, and otherwise. Yet, in spite of these differences, the keybooks are essentially similar in the ways that the images interact with films, audiences, and the movie industry.

It is the characteristics universal among stills that distinguish the objects from their utilitarian origin. A reasonably informed person handling a lone keybook still would likely be able to identify it as such based on its appearance and content; but the element of identification alone is not enough to label the film still as a unique photographic genre. That claim is made based on the assertion that stills' physical and visual properties are not simply markers of industry, uses and demands; they are generic conventions. All successful film stills conform to those conventions of composition, content, and general appearance that have come to define the film still in a way that transcends origin. The study of keybooks is a perfect way to examine these characteristics, but it is important to note that even stills that are not keybook stills are physically tied to their mode of production and belong to the same category of photographic object.

For what purpose should film stills be recognized as both individual objects and a photographic genre? The film still is an apt, under-recognized and very specific example of an application of the photographic medium that developed its own set of technical and aesthetic conventions. Existing topics of scholarship – film, industry,

images, theories of perception, art, the history of photography, etc. – can only benefit from understanding of the role of film stills in broad cultural and historical contexts.

Notes

¹ Joel W. Finler, *Hollywood Movie Stills* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1995), 7.

² Jeffrey Paul Thompson (archivist, Twentieth Century Fox Photo Archive), in discussion with the author, April 2008.

³ Sandra Joy Lee (curator, Warner Bros. Archives, USC School of Cinematic Arts), e-mail message to the author, April 15, 2008.

⁴ David Fahey and Linda Rich, *Masters of Starlight: Photographers in Hollywood* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987), 13.

⁵ Finler, *Hollywood Movie Stills*, 11.

⁶ Fahey and Rich, *Masters of Starlight*, 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹ Maxine Fleckner Ducey, "The Hollywood Stills Photographer: A Portrait," in *Selected Portraits from The Wisconsin Centre for Film and Theatre Research: Hollywood Glamour 1924-1956* (Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 1987). Published in conjunction with the exhibition "Selected Portraits from The Wisconsin Centre for Film and Theatre Research: Hollywood Glamour 1924-1956" shown at the Elvehjem Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, viii.

¹⁰ Fahey and Rich, *Masters of Starlight*, 14.

¹¹ Robert Dance and Bruce Robertson, *Ruth Harriet Louise and Hollywood Glamour Photography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press in association with The Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2002), 99.

¹² Jan-Christopher Horak, *Dream Merchants: Making and Selling Films in Hollywood's Golden Age* (International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1989). Published in conjunction with the exhibition "The Dream Merchants: Making and Selling Films in Hollywood's Golden Age" shown at the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 26.

¹³ Horak, *Dream Merchants*, 27.

¹⁴ John Kobal, *The Art of the Great Hollywood Portrait Photographers 1925-1940* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 56.

¹⁵ Robert Osborne, introduction to *In the Picture: Production Stills from the TCM Archives*, by Alexa L. Foreman, Ruth A. Peltason, and Mark A. Vieira (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 6.

¹⁶ Joseph Stillman, "The Stills Move the Movies," *American Cinematographer* (Nov 1927): 7.

¹⁷ Kobal, *Great Hollywood Photographers*, 76.

- ¹⁸ Fahey and Rich, *Masters of Starlight*, 16.
- ¹⁹ Jack Woody, *Lost Hollywood* (Altadena, California: Twin Palms Publishers, 1987).
- ²⁰ Kobal, *Great Hollywood Portrait Photographers*, 67 and 80.
- ²¹ Finler, *Hollywood Movie Stills*, 18.
- ²² Horak, *Dream Merchants*, 28; and Fahey and Rich, *Masters of Starlight*, 21.
- ²³ Finler, *Hollywood Movie Stills*, 7.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Osborne, introduction to *In the Picture*, 6.
- ²⁶ Christoph Schifferli, ed., *Paper Dreams: The Lost Art of Hollywood Still Photography* (Germany: Edition Paris, 2007), 5.
- ²⁷ Gary Carey, *Lost Films* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 4.
- ²⁸ Thompson, April 2008.
- ²⁹ Ibid., e-mail message to the author, August 1, 2008.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Robert Cushman (photograph curator and photographic services administrator, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences), e-mail message to author, May 11, 2008.
- ³³ "History of Structure of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences," Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, www.oscars.org/academy/history.html
- ³⁴ "Margaret Herrick Library," Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, www.oscars.org/mhl/index.html.
- ³⁵ "History and Structure of Academy," *Academy*.
- ³⁶ Cushman, May 11, 2008.
- ³⁷ USC School of Cinematic Arts, "Warner Bros. Archives," USC Libraries, www.usc.edu/libraries/collections/warner_bros/.
- ³⁸ Lee, April 15, 2008.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Thompson, April 2008.
- ⁴² Nancy Kauffman (film stills archivist, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film), in discussion with the author, July 2008.
- ⁴³ Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., letter to James Card, August 21, 1958.
- ⁴⁴ Anthony L'Abbate (former film stills archivist and current preservation officer, Motion Picture Department, George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film), May 21, 2008.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ David Company, introduction to Schifferli, *Paper Dreams*, 7.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 11.
- ⁴⁸ Dance and Robertson, *Ruth Harriet Louise*, 5.
- ⁴⁹ Arthur C. Danto, essay in *Cindy Sherman: Untitled Film Stills* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 14.
- ⁵⁰ L'Abbate, May 21, 2008.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Finler, *Hollywood Movie Stills*, 17.

⁵³ Finler, *Hollywood Movie Stills*, 42.

⁵⁴ Hal Erickson, "Other Women's Husbands (1926)," *All Movie Guide on The New York Times*, <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/105142/Other-Women-s-Husbands/overview>.

⁵⁵ Fahey and Rich, *Masters of Starlight*, 15.

⁵⁶ J.B. Kaufman, "Movie Musicals Turn a Corner at 42nd Street," *American Cinematographer* 75, no. 5 (May 1994), 75.

⁵⁷ Kobal, *Great Hollywood Portrait Photographers*, 67.

⁵⁸ Kaufman, "Movie Musicals Turn Corner," 78.

Annotated Bibliography

FILM STILLS IN COLLECTIONS, EXHIBITIONS, PUBLICATIONS, AND SCHOLARSHIP

20th Century-Fox. *Twentieth Century Fox: Inside the Photo Archive*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004.

Includes a preface by Tom Rothman and Jim Gianopulos, chairmen of Fox Film Entertainment, that emphasizes the role of Fox studio archives in preserving valuable pieces of history; a forward by Martin Scorsese that mythologizes Hollywood's legacy; and an extended image gallery from the Twentieth Century Fox Photo Archive collection. The images depict scenes from their respective films as well as moments behind-the-scenes.

Dance, Robert and Bruce Robertson. "Chapter 4: The Publicity Department and the Fan." *Ruth Harriet Louise and Hollywood Glamour Photography*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press in association with the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2002, 97-105.

About the career of Hollywood portrait photographer Ruth Harriet Louise at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). Contains a chapter on the role of the image in Hollywood publicity relevant to production stills.

Fahey, David and Linda Rich. *Masters of Starlight: Photographers in Hollywood*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1987.

An important contribution to historiography on still photography in Hollywood. Includes black-and-white and colour reproductions of glamour portraits, production stills, and photojournalistic works depicting movie stars from the 1910s to the 1970s, organized by photographer and thus canonizing a selection of Hollywood photographers. An essay at the beginning of the book discusses the history of photography in Hollywood, ultimately arguing for its artistry and value.

Finler, Joel W. *Hollywood Movie Stills*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1995.

According to Finler, the first work to examine production stills in depth. He devotes 165 pages to the history of production stills during the "Golden Age," but does not refer to keybook stills. The final pages of the book feature a relatively brief image gallery with detailed captions. This is probably the best current source on Hollywood production stills.

**Foreman, Alexa L., Ruth A. Petlason, and Mark A. Vieira. *In the Picture: Production Stills from the TCM Archives*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004.
Introduction by Robert Osborne.**

Reproduces a number of behind-the-scenes stills from MGM, Warner Bros., and RKO, dating from 1924 through 1968. Each image is accompanied by a caption with information about the production of the film depicted, sometimes pertaining to the taking of still photographs specifically. The book also features a brief introduction by Robert Osborne describing the importance of film stills "Then and Now."

Horak, Jan-Christopher. *Dream Merchants: Making and Selling Films in Hollywood's Golden Age*. International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1989. Published in conjunction with the exhibition "The Dream Merchants: Making and Selling Films in Hollywood's Golden Age" shown at the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House.

Horak's essay at the beginning of the catalogue discusses the workings of the studio system, including the elements of production, distribution, exhibition, and publicity. The stills, which are both in the exhibition and reproduced for the catalogue, are used as tools for understanding this system.

Kobal, John. *The Art of the Great Hollywood Portrait Photographers 1925-1940*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.

One of a number of publications by John Kobal concerning portrait photography in the history of Hollywood cinema. This book includes approximately 120 pages of text about the role of still photography in the Golden Age of Hollywood, followed by series of abbreviated portfolios for a number of the best known Hollywood portrait photographers, including Ruth Harriet Louise, George Hurrell, and Clarence Sinclair Bull.

Museum für Gestaltung Zürich. *Film Stills: Emotions Made in Hollywood.*

Annemarie Hürlimann and Alois Martin Müller, 1993. In conjunction with the exhibition.

Features a series of essays in both German and English discussing various topics related to film stills, including aesthetics and publicity. These writings are distinctly theoretical in style. There are also a number of analyses of specific images.

Salmi, Markku, editor. *Catalogue of Stills, Posters and Designs: National Film Archive.* London: British Film Institute, 1982. Forward by Kevin Brownlow. Introduction by Michelle Snapes.

An index of more than 37,000 film titles with relevant stills, posters, and designs housed in the British Film Institute collection. The index is organized alphabetically and includes date, country of origin, director, and types of materials available. Since the catalogue was published in 1982 it is certainly outdated, but might still be a valuable starting point for researchers. The foreword and introduction contain valuable information about the history and uses of stills in general and the collection specifically.

Schifferli, Christoph, editor. *Paper Dreams: The Lost art of Hollywood Still Photography.* Germany: Edition Paris, 2007. Introduction by David Company.

Features same-size reproductions of production stills from a private collection assembled through purchases at flea markets, etc. Most of the images are dated to the 1920s and 1930s, and many are unidentified. The publication also includes an introduction touching on the history of film stills collecting and conceptualizing the practice of producing and theoretically understanding the images.

***Selected Portraits from The Wisconsin Centre for Film and Theatre Research: Hollywood Glamour 1924-1956.* Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 1987. Published in conjunction with the exhibition "Selected Portraits from The Wisconsin Centre for Film and Theatre Research: Hollywood Glamour 1924-1956" shown at the Elvehjem Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum in Neenah, Wisconsin, the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts in Racine, Wisconsin, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art in Fort Wayne, Indiana and The Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame.**

Reproduces images used in an exhibition of the same title. The book contains an essay about the role and nature of glamour in Hollywood portrait photography. It also contains writing by Maxien Fleckner Ducey, Director of the Film Archive, about film stills photographers.

Vieira, Mark A. *Hurrell's Hollywood Portraits: The Chapman Collection*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1997.

Intends to be a definitive work on the career and photographs of George Edward Hurrell, legendary Hollywood portrait photographer practicing from 1930 to 1943. For the purpose of this thesis, the book's preface, which discusses the history of film still collecting, is most useful.

Woody, Jack. *Lost Hollywood*. Altadena, California: Twin Palms Publishers, 1987.

Reproductions of glamour portraits and production stills. The final page contains a short discussion of photography in film history.

HISTORY OF WARNER BROS. AND SELECTED FILMS

Carr, Jay, editor. *The A List: The National Society of Film Critics' 100 Essential Films*. De Capo Press, 2002.

Contains a brief analysis of *42nd Street*, providing historical information about the production of the film and focusing on the characteristics the film that resulted in its classic status.

Fernett, Gene. *American Film Studios: An Historical Encyclopedia*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1988.

Offers brief histories of all significant film American film studios, including, of course, Warner Bros. Studio. The Warner Bros. history highlights the role that film sound played in the success of the studio and identifies the studio's signature style and genres in the 1930s and 1940s.

Gomery, Douglas. *The Coming of Sound: A History*. New York, London: Routledge, 2005.

The chapter "The Warner Bros. Innovate Sound" challenges the "myth" that Warner Bros. was a struggling studio using the technical innovation of talking pictures as a desperate measure. Instead he analyzes economic circumstances to argue that Warners' adoption of sound was a well-constructed long-term plan. The information provides a valuable context for understanding the selected film stills.

Kaufman, J.B. "Movie Musicals Turn a Corner at 42nd Street." *American Cinematographer*, 75, no. 5 (May 1994): 73-78.

Analyzes the characteristics of *42nd Street* that resulted in its gigantic commercial and critical success while also providing historical information about its production. The article makes both mention and use of film stills.

Sperling, Cass Warner and Cork Millner with Jack Warner Jr. *Hollywood Be Thy Name: The Warner Brothers Story*. The University Press of Kentucky, 1998.

Perhaps the most recently published full-length history of the Warner Bros. studio. The book seems more commercial and possibly less scholarly than Gomery's, but provides anecdotal information about the productions and exhibition successes of both *Lights of New York* and *42nd Street* in addition to contextual information from the time of *Other Women's Husbands* release.

Wilson, Arthur, compiler and editor. *The Warner Bros. Golden Anniversary Book: The First Complete Feature Filmography*. Film and Venture Corp.: New York, 1973. Critical essay by Arthur Knight. Introduction by Willard Van Dyke.

As the title suggests, a detailed filmography of movies released by Warner Bros. and First National from 1917 to 1972. Entries are organized by year and include title, release date, credits, and when appropriate indicate that the film was released by First National. The pages are illustrated with film stills, which are not credited. Arthur Knight's critical essay documents a history of Warner Bros. until the publication date, highlighting important releases and the role of the studio in Hollywood film history.

CURRENT USES

***A Collective Endeavor: The First Fifty Years of George Eastman House*. Rochester, New York: George Eastman House, 1999.**

A retrospective institutional history of the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film.

Card, James. "The Rochester Rival: 'An Archive of Trivia.'" *Seductive Cinema: The Art of Silent Film*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, 113-127.

Chapter of the book written by George Eastman House's first film curator, James Card, describing the founding and early growth of the motion picture collection at that museum from a first-hand perspective.

Carey, Gary. *Lost Films*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970.

An early publication produced in association with the Museum of Modern Art dealing with the problem of "lost films." The book is something of an homage to these films. It features a number of lost titles, including information about credits, plot, production, and historical relevance. Each entry is illustrated with production stills. The book's introduction refers to previous film stills exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and claims that the sometime status of film stills as the "only remnant" of a particular film lends meaning and reason to the still photographs.

Koszarksi, Richard. "Reconstructing Greed: How long, and what colour?" *Film Comment*. 35, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1999), 10-15.

Provides a history of the film *Greed*, thus explaining why its current form might be considered incomplete or inaccurate, and describes how a "truer" version of the film was produced through the use of, among other tools, a vast number of film stills.

Slide, Anthony. *A Collector's Guide to Movie Memorabilia with Prices*. Des Moines, Iowa: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1983.

Includes chapters devoted to a number of categories of Hollywood collectibles. The fifth chapter discusses the history of film still collecting, provides a general description of film stills, and names some of the foremost film still vendors.

Sol Chaneles. *Collecting Movie Memorabilia*. New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1977.

Like Slide's book, contains a chapter for multiple categories of Hollywood memorabilia, but in this case, there is a chapter each for black-and-white stills and colour photography. This work contains more detailed information than that found in *A Collector's Guide* about accruing successful film stills collections.

Thompson, Kristin. "Cinema Journal Reports: Fair Usage Publication of Film Stills (1993)." *Cinema Journal*. www.cmstudies.org (accessed 5 May 2008).

Discusses legal considerations associated with the use of film stills - both publicity photographs and frame enlargements - to illustrate scholarly works. Points out the increasing prevalence of film studies in academia and thus a growing need to consider such copyright issues. Also identifies a difference of opinion concerning the level of appropriateness of using publicity stills versus using frame enlargements in such publications.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Archer, Fred. "The Still Picture's Part in Motion Pictures." *Cinematographic Annual*. Hal Hall, Ph.B., editor. 1 (1930): 245-252.

An industry insider explains all of the many ways that still photography is used by film studios, ultimately arguing in favor of the artistic talent of the staff photographers.

"The Problem of the Film Still." *Image*. (March 1956): 64-65.

Defines the ideal qualities of a film still and identifies the prevailing weaknesses of film stills for the purpose of illustrating articles about the study of films.

"Shooting Off-the-Set." *Image*. (June 1957): 135-140.

Identifies the role of candid images in museums and the study of early film history, and includes several pages of reproductions.

Stillman, Joseph. "The Stills Move the Movies." *American Cinematographer*. (November, 1927): 7-8.

Discusses the role of still photography in the film studio, emphasizing the distinct challenges to the stills photographer, the artistry involved, and the influence of the photographs on final products.