

Michael Cowan

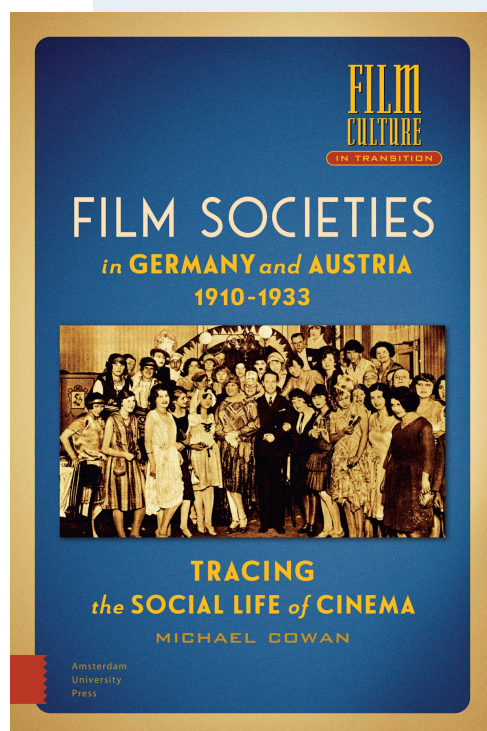
## Film Societies in Germany and Austria 1910-1933

*Tracing the Social Life of Cinema*

This study traces the evolution of early film societies in Germany and Austria, from the emergence of mass movie theaters in the 1910s to the turbulent years of the late Weimar Republic. Examining a diverse array of groups, it approaches film societies as formations designed to assimilate and influence a new medium: a project emerging from the world of amateur science before taking new directions into industry, art and politics. Through an interdisciplinary approach—in dialogue with social history, print history and media archaeology—it also transforms our theoretical understanding of what a film society was and how it operated. Far from representing a mere collection of pre-formed cinephiles, film societies were, according to the book's central argument, *productive* social formations, which taught people how to nurture their passion for the movies, how to engage with cinema, and how to interact with each other. Ultimately, the study argues that examining film societies can help to reveal the diffuse agency by which generative ideas of cinema take shape.

### BIOGRAPHY

Michael Cowan is Professor of film and media history in the Department of Cinematic Arts at the University of Iowa. His research, focused on German and European cinema, examines the broader cultural and technological contexts in which film practices emerged and evolved in the early 20th century. His publications have won numerous awards from the Society of Film and Media Studies and the British Association of Film and Television Studies Scholars, as well as the Willy Haas Award (Germany) and the Limina Award (Italy).



Film Culture in Transition

March 2023

282 pages, 57 Illustrations, black & white

Hardback

156.0 x 234.0 mm

€117.00 / £100.00 / \$134.00

ISBN 978 94 6372 547 7

e-ISBN 978 90 485 5572 7

BISAC HIS014000 / PER004030 / SOC052000

BIC APF

### KEYWORDS

Film societies, German cinema, Austrian cinema, film culture, film journals, media archaeology, scientific film, film industries, cinephilia, film activism

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