

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF PERFORMING ARTS

Film Training and Soft Skills Development – Becoming a Better You Through Film Practice

Ms Elissa Rosati
Head of Screen Production and Research Centre, School of Film and Television

Mr Alex Lai
Senior Lecturer (Film/TV Directing), School of Film and Television



Part 1 by Ms Elissa Rosati

Hello and welcome to the Life Planning Forum. My name is Elissa Rosati. I'm the Head of Screen Production and Research Centre at the School of Film and Television. I'm here to speak with you about the social impact of film production and media studies.

Well, media permeates all the parts of our working day. In fact, before you came here, you probably immersed yourself in media. When you leave, you are going to immerse you in media. And right now, this is media.

So understanding how media is constructed is essential for an individual in today's society. And moreover, understanding how to construct media is a powerful tool no matter what walk of life that you will enter.

Understanding Filmmaking and Media Studies

So what does that mean for someone who wants to study filmmaking? Well, we know that filmmaking and the study of the art of filmmaking will have enormous benefits on people's confidence and their self-esteem.

Why do we know this? Because the process of making a film will help students to develop many soft skills. These are soft skills that we can transfer to other areas of life. These are soft skills that will increase social confidence, and social confidence will lead to a much higher self-esteem in an individual.

Self-esteem, why?

"Self-esteem is regarded as vital to children's social and cognitive development and emotional well-being."
– National Library of Medicine

So we often think of self-esteem as something that gives a sense of "I feel good about myself" to the individual. But self-esteem is more important than that. Confidence building is more important than that. It also affects the cognitive development of an individual.

Confidence Building Soft Skills

So how is this happening through the study and the production of film?

Well the confidence building soft skills that you will be exposed to when you do a filmmaking programme are:

- Cooperation – You have to cooperate with team members to produce a film.
- Flexible – You have to be flexible. You have to be able to listen to your teammates and understand what it is that they want to accomplish. It's not just you in the team.
- Resilience – You have to be resilient when you are making media production and when you are making a film. Resilience is, if something goes wrong, you'll be able to overcome it and continue on. This happens all the time in film production. In fact, it's par for the course.
- Tenacity – You have to be tenacious. You have to start, and like a dog with a bone, you have to clamp down. You have to bring the project all the way through to the end.
- Trouble-shooting – You have to learn trouble-shooting and have trouble-shooting be part of your toolkit at all times.
- Controlled risk-taking – People who make films take controlled risks. This is a very important skill that we need, a soft skill in life. When I mean a controlled risk, what I mean is, you start off not knowing whether something is going to succeed and you try it anyway. So controlled risk-taking is part of the filmmaking process.
- Extended concentration – Also, filmmaking requires extended periods of concentration. So you need to concentrate on set to get a take. But you also need to concentrate for the whole gamut of the production from pre-production, through production, to post-production. And the completion of the task at the end – getting all the balls in the air and finishing the film and watching it screened – this is a very huge confidence booster in an individual. When you can complete a complex task, it gives you an enormous sense of self-worth.

So I just spoke very briefly about the process of filmmaking and media studies and why that's important. But the artifact, what you make itself, is important, because the artifact, the art itself, can be an expression of self. And in filmmaking, it's not just an artist with a canvas. It's one person, part of a group, and that whole team coming together to make a film. So it's not only self-expression. But it's the individual reacting with the group that begins to understand what they are as that group. And that artifact, that piece of work, is an expression of that group. So in this way, we know that filmmaking has a social impact. The study of filmmaking has social impact.

Our programmes in Filmmaking

At the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, at the School of Film and Television, we have several programmes. My colleague Alex Lai will introduce the Bachelor of Fine Arts to you in a moment. I'll just remind you that there is also postgraduate degree, the Master in Fine Arts. And, we're about to offer a slate of undergraduate programme for secondary schools called the "SPaRC After School Programme". So if you are interested in any of those programmes, maybe students like you have in your schools might want to join, we'll be offering visual storytelling, screenwriting and post-production courses specifically for secondary school students. The final classes of those courses will be held in our production studio, our television studio which is the state-of-the-art television studio. And the students will all learn how to run a TV studio at the end. I think these kinds of experiences in filmmaking are hugely beneficial to the youth of our city.

Thank you.

Part 2 by Mr Alex Lai

Thank you, Elissa.

When we talk about film and media arts, I think nobody will question about its great impact on us because it's not just an art form. It's mass communication. It's entertainment. It's an industry. In our everyday life, we are embraced with it, for example, when we are watching TV, web surfing or using our mobile phone on social media. It indeed has tremendous impact.

In our BFA programme, students are taught with different kinds of techniques ranging from very advanced technology like VR 360, green screen filming, motion capture and CG animation. From Year 2 onwards, they also learn different kinds of production. In Year 2, they learn documentary filmmaking and then in Year 3 and 4, they have short fiction productions.

Documentary Production

Take example in these two projects. One is about a mother who has breast cancer but still has to work very hard to earn a living and to raise her kid. The other one is about a basketball coach who becomes jobless because all the schools are closed due to COVID-19. In order to make a living, he becomes a waiter in a restaurant.

Through these productions, our students learn to use their own experience or the incidents of other people to make short documentary. They start from research, interview and observation, exploring stories that are appealing to many audiences.

Short Fiction Productions

Then in Year 3 & 4, they have short fiction projects. The graduation project is their final goal. Students will use their imagination and also their daily life experience to tell their stories. Take example of these two graduation films. One is about a little boy who is very close to the housemaid. He misses her very much when she has to leave. The other one is about three young men who have very confused future.

Besides real-life stories, the students also use their imagination to make a more experimental kind of short film like this one. Though this is a story with surreal characters, the emotions are genuine. It is very important that the films they make are related to human emotions.

After they learn various kinds of skills, they can connect with the audience in a more effective way. Their ideas and world vision will be more appealing and more audience will be drawn to their works. So I think it's very important and very good for the young people to learn film, TV and media production.

Thank you.