

MARC SIEGEL

Lensable Belief or Friends of Maria in the 1960s Queer Underground Film Scene

In this talk, I argue that the relationships among key members of the 1960s American underground film and theater scene were mediated through a shared interest in Hollywood stars, foremost among them the Dominican-born star of 1940s fantasy films Maria Montez. The writings, films and performances of such figures as Jack Smith, Ronald Tavel, Mario Montez, Andy Warhol, and Taylor Mead abound not only with references to stars from Hollywood's Golden Age, but also with examples of the creative potential of star worship. My work on star worship in the 1960s underground is part of a chapter of my current book manuscript on the role of gossip as an indiscreet means of circulating Hollywood star images within queer counterpublics. I argue that gossip is not simply a means of oral communication but a speculative logic of thought apposite to cinema and central to the construction of identity and intimacy in queer counterpublics. This chapter, "Lensable Belief," focuses on the concept of belief as a key both to understanding the function of star worship in the Underground and to characterizing the epistemological arrangement of gossip.

Dr. Marc Siegel is an Assistant Professor of Film Studies in the Department of Theater, Film and Media Studies at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. His research focuses on avant-garde film and queer studies. His publications include the essays, "Charming Ridiculous Werner" in Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, eds. *Temporal Drag* (Hatje Cantz, 2011) and "Reproducing W+B Hein's Material Films" in *W+B Hein: Material Films* (DVD, Filmmuseum München, forthcoming). He also works as an independent curator and has recently presented an exhibition of works by George Kuchar at the Berlin Biennial 2010 and „LIVE FILM! JACK SMITH! Five Flaming Days in a Rented World“ (with Susanne Sachsse and Stefanie Schulte Strathaus) in 2009 at the Arsenal Institute for Film and Video Art and HAU/Hebbel am Ufer.