

REPORT

FROM

THE DANISH FILM MUSEUM

1957

Change of premises.

In March 1957 The Danish Film Museum moved to the centre of Copenhagen from the rather isolately situated Evidovre. We have now been established in excellent premises in 27 Vestergade right near the town hall square and only a few minutes from our cinema.

Almost simultaneously the two film institutions under the Government, Dansk Kulturfilm and Statens Filmcentral, moved into the same building in Vestergade.

The removal to Vestergade has resulted in an increase to about the double of visitors to the library and archives, and in the basement of the building we have established our enquiry office with sale of membership cards etc. The entrance is right from the street and in the windows are very effectively displayed various sorts of propaganda for the showings and other functions of the museum. In a showcase outside is thus placed our poster for the running series of showings. We issue a poster in 300 copies for each series with a picture from one of the most outstanding films in the programme and these posters are also placed in various buildings and institutions all over Copenhagen. In the building is a 16 mm projection room for the use of all 3 institutions.

The showings are still taking place in our own cinema in 25 Frederiksbjerggade a few minutes from Vestergade. The cinema holds about 30 people and each film is shown one whole week at three performances a day.

We still keep some of our vaults in Evaldsø - about 30 miles from Copenhagen, for a great deal of our old apparatus and effects and the majority of our 35 mm films are still preserved here.

Our library is open daily from noon till 3 o'clock, except Saturday, and further twice a week in the evening from 7 till 9 p.m.

The Government and the film in Denmark.

As mentioned, the three institutions - The Danish Film Museum, Statens Filmcentral (The central film library of the Danish Government) and Dansk Kulturfilm (The production centre of the Danish Government) are now housed in Vestergade. The two last-named are Government institutions - whereas the Film Museum, though supervised by the Ministry of Justice like the others, is assigned an annual grant subsidy from the means of the Film Fund, but is not a Government institution.

Through several years it has been the intention of the Government to co-ordinate the work of the three institutions. So far a joint book-keeping has been set up. The Government will most probably make the co-ordination more comprehensive, especially as some recent events have made it appropriate.

First, the director through many years of Dansk Kulturfilm, Ib Koch-Olsen, resigned to take over another post. Dansk Kulturfilm is at present run with an acting director and no successor to Mr. Koch-Olsen has yet been appointed. Only with the American distributors is co-operation still somewhat difficult, because these have neither the legal possibilities nor the desire to help us.

Secondly, the death occurred in August of Ebbe Neergaard, the director of long standing of Statens Filmcentral and also a distinguished film historian and critic. Neither for his post has a successor yet been appointed.

These two events in connection with the efforts of the co-ordination commission to centralise the film activities under the Government make it probable that the Government will in future have a still growing influence on the work of the three institutions and it is even expected that the authorities will appoint a joint administrator.

Film acquisitions

The conditions for acquisition of films to our museum have greatly improved.

First and foremost we have come to an agreement with Nordisk Film Company, in the archives of which have been preserved a comparatively small but still important part of negatives of the films from the great period in the Danish cinema. By the aid of an extra grant from the State - about 220,000 - and after long negotiations with Nordisk Film, it has been made possible for us to have positives and new negatives made of all the preserved negatives from the great period. So far we have had prints made of several remarkable films, for instance some by the two most interesting directors of the time: August Blom and Holger-Madsen. We are allowed to show such films both in our own cinema and in the film societies round the country, and as these films have not been available at all for many years, it is very inspiring for the film historians to get the opportunity of seeing them.

The fact that we were granted this extra subsidy seems to us to be a definite recognition on the part of the Government of the film as an art of public cultural importance, and we also take it as a sign that the film museum will in the future be favourably treated by the authorities.

It is only natural that the Government in the first place considers the preservation of the national films of greatest importance, although the period in which the Danish cinema constantly held an international standard was a brief one - from about 1908 till about 1914. Still, we believe that this recognition can be considered a basis for further developments. An added advantage is an improved relationship between the distributors and the film museum after an agreement has been obtained concerning purchase of films. We are now able to buy a great proportion of the important films after the license has expired. To some extent ...

the distributors also make available stills and publicity material to the museum.

Among the acquisitions of the past year the most rare and interesting film is probably Phil Jutzi's "Berlin - Alexander Platz" though in an incomplete version.

Among our other recent acquisitions have been some 16 mm films from USA, for instance Joris Ivens' "Power and the Land" and a documentary by Capra, "The Negro Soldier". Positive prints have been made of "Bed and Sofa" and "Way down East" among others. Furthermore, we have recently received Fred Zinnemann's "The Wave" from USA and we are just expecting a negative of "Children of the Earth" (Dharti ke lal).

Acquisitions of books and stills.

We are at the moment negotiating with Ebbe Neergaard's widow about purchase of his very fine collection of film books. Before Hitler came into power, Neergaard was a lecturer in Berlin and as he was already then a keen student of the films his collection holds many books and periodicals from Germany in the twenties. If this purchase is arranged we will also acquire a great deal of duplicates for exchange with other archives.

Ebbe Neergaard left an attractive collection of stills to the museum. Among these are many rarities, for instance some from Dreyer's lost films.

The museum is planning to catalogue the books of the library. By the end of this year we reckon that the entire collection will hold about 7.000 volumes.

Lists have been made of the duplicates of periodicals in our library to enable an exchange with other archives. Interested members of FIAF can ask for a copy of these lists.

Tape recordings at the museum.

We have continued our tape recordings of interviews with important Danish and foreign film pioneers and personalities. Among those interviewed are the Danish director, George Schneevogt, the German-American director Hans Richter and Alma Hinding, Danish star from the great period.

Television at the museum.

The television is beginning to play a part in the functions of our museum, although we do not lend films for their programmes. We have a TV-set in our offices and the transmissions are reviewed in our periodical "Kosmorama". The book library keeps up to date with the literature on TV.

The film societies.

There have been 22 active film societies in Denmark in 1956-57 and 5 passive ones-which means that they have held meetings for members without showings, owing to their financial inability to hire a cinema. The film societies are almost entirely supplied with films from The Danish Film Museum. According to the earlier mentioned agreement with the distributors and cinema proprietors, the film societies are now accepted and have the permission to show the films supplied from us within the frame of the agreement.

During the past year our supply of films to the film societies amounted to 610 35 mm films and 276 16 mm films.

The showings of the film museum.

The showings at our cinema in Copenhagen have as usual consisted of a number of "classics". The following films are among those presented by the film museum for the first time in Denmark.

Frank Borzage:	MOONRISE
Kaneto Shindo:	CHILDREN OF HIROSHIMA
K.A. Abbas:	MUNNA
Lorenza Mazzetti:	TOGETHER
Guarini, Francioli, Rossellini, Zampa and Visconti:	SIAMO DONNE
Alf Sjöberg:	KARIN MÅNSDOTTER
Berlanga:	BIENVENIDO MR. MARSHALL!
Wolfgang Staudte:	ROTATION
Bernard Miles:	CHANCE OF A LIFETIME
Matti Kassila:	SKURDEMÅNAD
Shish Kuei:	THE MARRIAGE OF THE FAIRY PRINCESS
Claude Autant-Lara:	DOUCE

Some of the Nordisk films we have had restored from the old negatives have also been shown.

Contact with other countries.

In June 1956 the University of Kiel arranged "Skandinavische Film-tage" in Kiel. The Film Museum lent several old Danish films for the showings and sent two lecturers to Kiel: Arne Krogh and Erik Ulrichsen who lectured on the activities of the Danish film societies, on the

social element in the early Danish cinema and on the history of the Norwegian cinema.

Other lecturers were Ebbe Neergaard and Idestam-Almquist and Rune Waldekranz from Sweden. Plans are made for publishing the lectures in a small book.

Erik Ulrichsen visited in April the Polish film archive in Warsaw on occasion of a festival of Dreyer-films, for which the Danish Film Museum lent a number of films. Ulrichsen made the introduction for "Prästänkan".

Miss Grete Olsen, who has now returned to the film museum, spent a year working at the museum in George Eastman House, Rochester, New York. She acquired a thorough knowledge of the work of this archive and during her stay in the United States she also got the opportunity to study the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In August 1957 the film society in Lübeck arranged a festival - "Nordische Filmtage" - for which we sent some of Dreyer's films. As representative of the museum Mr. Ib Monty participated and lectured on Dreyer and on the contemporary Danish cinema. Other Scandinavian participants were Idestam-Almquist of Sweden, Aito Mäkinen of Finland and the Norwegian director of puppet films, Ivo Caprino.

Miss Vibeke Brodersen has just returned to her work at the museum after having spent two years in London, where she, among other things, did some work for the British Film Institute.

At the Venice festival 1956 a retrospective series of Dreyer's films was arranged by our museum.

Then, of course, there is the constant contact of film exchange with the members of FIAPF. During the past year we have lent 197 films to foreign archives and borrowed 52.

Our periodical "Kosmorama" has brought a number of articles by foreign writers.

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To this report of our work I should like to add some general comments on our mutual work, from my personal point of view. It should be easy enough to find the natural basis for the creation of an institution aimed at preserving the art of the film and placing this art form either among the other art forms or as a link in the sociological picture of our society - it is easy enough in the countries where the film production started right at the beginning of the film age and has held an important position ever since. It is all the more difficult for the smaller countries where the basis is only a short period of glory or even less than that. Such countries - like my own - thus have hardly a historical place in which to stand and must seek to obtain a position which makes the public as well as the authorities realize the usefulness and importance of supporting the national efforts.

About ten years ago when I started the far from amusing part of the work to make the right kind of people interested in my vague and uncertain plans, my strongest argument always was that the Danish film production held a position within the film production of the world. At that time the truth of that argument was a matter of faith to me. Nobody could judge whether I was right until we had the opportunity to see what was left in the vaults or in the dust bins at the film factories in Copenhagen.

Stubbornly referring to the film as being an art in spite of its resemblance to an industry and thus often subject to financial speculations prior to artistic considerations, and admitting that the industry according to the laws entirely belonged to private concerns, I stressed again and again that great artistic values and social reflections of modern times were preserved on film strips and that all that was available ought to be considered a cultural communal property. All this is evident to our circle but nevertheless did not seem sufficiently convincing to those who had the financial possibility of carrying out my plans for a film archive. Only last year did we in Denmark succeed in making our biggest and oldest production company accept this point of view. Their recognition would, however, have been without much importance, had the authorities not accepted our point of view at exactly the same time. But fortunately they realized the importance of taking advantage of the offer from Nordisk Film to let us preserve the remains of the national film production, whether it be art or industry, whether it be complete or in fractions.

I presume that very few of us have the ideal working conditions. We have not got the same conditions as the established forms of museums - like those of paintings and sculptures or the specialist ones created for practical purposes - we have not got homogeneous collections already available. Our work will still for some years to come consist mostly of collecting.

At a FIAF congress some years ago the idea of specialization was taken up and plans were made for creating specialist museums within FIAF.

I found this a sound and promising idea but nothing was really done about it. The idea would, however, be of immense value to the individual museums and to the unity of FIAF if it were carried out effectively and of course with full support from all members. It is obvious that many of the smaller museums have to work on a too broad scale in order to please the financial sources in the countries concerned, but much work is wasted - from an international point of view - because the same work is being done simultaneously in several countries and therefore it would be highly useful if we developed the idea of the specialist museums. For example, I wouldn't dream of making a great effort to create an enormous archive of stills in Copenhagen because I know that my colleague, Einar Lauritzen in Stockholm is very close to possessing the ideal still collection - partly thanks to an excellent co-operation with the biggest Swedish production companies and distributors right from the start. It would therefore not be sensible if I didn't renounce myself in this field and try to support him. All the archives ought to do the same, while they, of course, at the same time must create a still archive for everyday use according to their needs.

At the time when the different specialities were given to the members of FIAF I am afraid I did not get the opportunity to maintain the natural line of The Danish Film Museum to be that of collecting books, periodicals and pamphlets on films. For we have for a number of years been able to buy practically all that was offered to us within this field. Our budget for books and periodicals including bindings has for the last years been about £ 500 - £ 700 a year, and I suppose I ought to have stressed this financial advantage. This is just an example and must not be interpreted as a criticism of the arrangements made at that time nor as any doubt concerning the way Switzerland has handled its international task, for I am sure this country has made a fine effort, provided it has obtained the necessary support from the other members of FIAF.

For some museums, conditions are such that their existence is allowed only if their functions are more or less confined to the showings in other words if their work is laid down on an educational line. This may lead to the museum being converted into an institute with lecturing and educational activities as its main task. This is far from the ideal way of running a film museum, but the audience is too small in the small countries and one will gradually be forced to popularize the programmes and thus be more and more limited to the field of a film society and eventually be a competitor to the commercial cinemas.

It is not possible to keep a distinguished and genuine film museum standard like the one you find on the repertory of the cinema of Cinémathèque Française in Paris. Paris is a large city and one devoted to the arts by tradition, but the specialised programmes which la Cinémathèque has the possibility of showing, with even the least intelligible kind of films on the programmes, ought to be considered as a joint task for all members of FIAF. We should all feel engaged in solving this task and should

boast of our efforts to our financiers in our home cities. I am convinced that wherever in the world one of our colleagues makes successful progress it can be used in our work to stimulate the interest for film museums in general and one's own in particular.

Further, I would like to give an example where co-operation would be valuable. In Copenhagen like in many other cities all over the world a girl is writing index cards with film titles and various credits. I wouldn't know how many she writes a year - I reckon about a few thousand. Why not multiply these cards - the result of her work - for the benefit of all interested members of FIAF?

The work London did some years ago on the publication of a joint catalogue ought to be continued and kept up to date week by week if not day by day. I can tell you that The Danish Film Museum has saved a couple of thousand kroner thanks to that catalogue. When we have worn out films in our hands and are uncertain whether we can use it or whether we ought to have a negative made, we consult the catalogue to see whether a negative exists of the films. We then ask for a confirmation in the country quoted and if a good negative is kept there we will of course not use our money for the making of a duplicate. In my opinion this catalogue should be a permanent living organism and every time a film is acquired for use or for preservation whether positive or negative, information should be given so that the catalogue can be kept up to date and so that the persons in charge are able to reply to questions from FIAF members as to the necessity of using money on preservation of a particular film. There is certainly no reason for, say, three countries in Europe to preserve negatives of the same films.

It may all sound very simple but is perhaps not so simple to practice. However, I wish to ask the congress - not for a discussion of these problems but to consider the appointment of a committee whose job should be to set up at least some system of co-operation and effectiveness in our daily work.