

Thanks to the initiative of the Bureau International de Recherche Historique Cinématographique of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film, which has its headoffice in Paris, in several countries already national research-committees have been inaugurated, mostly under the auspices or as a department of the national filmmuseum (or archive). In those countries the very difficult but most thankful task of historical filmresearch has started.

Not long ago this has happened in England and also in Holland, where a committee of filmhistorians, filmcritics and technicians is studying the first problems and starting a gigantic labour.

As for Holland, this committee was inaugurated as a department of, and with the help from the Netherlands Filmmuseum, which brought together a small group of people who are willing by their great interest to start the work in this field, which is completely unknown for Holland.

After several working-meetings and working out fixed tasks, this kernel-group will make use of the documentation material which the Netherlands Filmmuseum has collected in the course of the years, and which during the last years has been considerably enlarged, such as old filmweeklies, photo's, posters and last but not least old films.

Up till now it especially appeared how difficult it is to find a starting-point for this country. Although there is enough material to start somewhere, it will be clear that working according to a system is more desirable and, in the long run, more effective.

So the Netherlands research committee has adopted the following working outlines: In the way the different tasks are divided at the moment, the following subjects will come up for discussion:

1900 - 1925

- 1) the Netherlands filmproduction  
the Netherlands newsreel
- 2) the filmreviewing and the critic
- 3) the filmdistribution
- 4) the different short films shown before the feature films  
in the cinema programs
- 5) shooting- and projection techniques
- 6) educational and scientific films, travelogues and the documentary  
film in general
- 7) the filmbusiness (trade)  
the Nederlandse Bioscoop-Bond (Cinema Union)  
censorship  
filmlegislation

8) situation and furnishing of the cinemads  
number of cinema's  
number of visitors

9) propaganda and publicity (methods)

Every member of the committee has one of two tasks in this field. On the basis of the material supplied by the Netherlands Filmmuseum, the members of the committee can start the research-work and meanwhile the Filmmuseum regularly gets new collections of material and goes on searching for new (old) sources of supply.

In the autumn there will be a meeting of the members again and the first reports will appear. It is expected that many will express new wishes, mostly concerning the investigation of sources, discovered by the research. These sources, which possibly still exist somewhere in the Netherlands, will only be mentioned in writing and it will indeed be the task of the Filmmuseum, to fulfill the wishes of the committee and investigate those sources.

Also there will be working-gatherings, whereby old filmpioneers will be invited to tell everything they remember from the old days. This will be put on tape and worked out later. In this way after some time - let us say about a year - somuch will be discovered, reconstructed and put together, that a first publication, preferably illustrated with the authentic "discovered" photographs and reproduced letters and writings, will be possible.

The committee is convinced that these publications will be not only a great help to the national and international historical filmresearch, but that they will open up an interesting and almost forgotten world for a great many people in the historical, the sociological or juridical field.

Therefore it is very gratifying to know that the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Art and Sciences already shows great interest in this very modest beginning.

During the 12½ years of its existence the Netherlands Filmmuseum has already discovered many sources and collected very much material. This material has first to be put into order and registered. Only then the ~~xxxxxx~~ research-workers can make use of it. Therefore it is of eminent importance that the NFM not only pays great attention to the collecting of old films and preserving them, but also tries it utmost to build up a large documentation-centre.

This documentation service, working with most different materials as old and very old wæeklies, photographs, posters, folders, press-cuttings, articles, memoirs, letters, publicity material etc., will need in the coming years a staff of co-operators, who must be able to order and register thousands of items and data in such a way that they form a living archive, out of which everything can be obtained.

The documentation service now has the following divisions:

- I Personalia
- II Films
- III Manifestations
- IV Techniques
- V Miscellaneous

When the research work wants to make use of this material, many old periodicals will have to be bound and old curiosa will have to be prepared in such a way that the possibilities of damaging them will be reduced to a minimum.

It is to be hoped that in the near future the national research committees will be able to help each other by exchanging advices to complete each ~~ix~~ other's tasks.

The following may illustrate the possibilities in this field:

In 1922 in Haarlem, which had in those years a very flourishing film industry and is situated about 20 kilometers from Amsterdam, a film was made, named "The Black Tulip". From this film the NFM has found a complete copy, which has been conserved and from which the following data are known:

Length: 1760 meter - silent - black and white  
Producers: Hollandia-film, Haarlem in co-production with an English firm (the directors: Maurits Binger and Tony Richardson Granger-Binger production)  
camera: Feiko Boersma  
cast: Eduard Verkade, Coen Hissink, Lau Ezerman, Harry Waghalter, Frank Deene and Zoe Palmer

This appears to be a Netherlands-English co-production (and not the only one from that time!)

As far as we have discovered now it came out that during the first world war a number of English soldiers which were interned in the Netherlands, formed a stage-group, named "The Timbertown Follies". Their leader was Fred Penley. This dance- and stagegroup played in travesti in the films of Maurits Binger, the filmpioneer and producer in Haarlem.

His productions were made in the Hollandia Filmstudio, which was situated in Haarlem. In 1919 he established a co-production with an English firm and in this way a couple of Dutch-English films were made. Artists from both countries cooperated. Studio-shots were taken in the Hollandia Filmstudio and people shot on location in little villages in the neighbourhood of Haarlem, such as Heemstede and Aerdenhout, but also in the country-manor "Duin en Kruidberg" and the ruins of Brederode Castle near Santpoort. One of these co-productions was "The Black Tulip" (1922). Directors were Maurits Binger and, as we suppose, the father of Sir Ralph Richardson, well known and very popular in England. Shots were made in Haarlem and The Hague.

This Dutch-English cooperation was very successful and the press in England, in 1920, wrote about those productions: "The scenery, the beautiful landscape and

and the enormous arsenal of artists that the Dutch have, is prove that during the years 1914-1918, they didn't sit with their hands in their lap. In the field of filmproduction they have become dangerous competitors with great routine and unequalled improvisation. The Dutch Binger moreover sees fit to charter our best experts for his productions. It is time that an English Binger puts the affairs of the English filmworld in order."

On 17th July 1924 a heavy fire destroyed the filmstudio at the Spaarne, a river in the city of Haarlem. This was the end of Hollandia Film, and as for the national filmproduction also the end of "the good old times".

It would be most interesting if not only the research committee of the Netherlands investigated more about this period, but also if England could supply more information about it.

J.de Vaal  
director Nederlands Filmmuseum

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. de Vaal', written in a cursive style. The signature is located in the lower right quadrant of the page.