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Editorial

György Ráduly
Director of the National Film Institute Hungary – Film Archive
Member of the FIAF Executive Committee

Today, all over the world, we are exposed to the kinds of global challenges that humanity has not experienced for a long time. We have not recovered from one crisis before another follows, and that results in particular pressure to preserve our everyday security as well as our cultural heritage.

FIAF-affiliated archives (and many others) have been tasked with guarding our film and cinema heritage. This tiny but important part of our universal culture, a result of an invention not much more than 120 years old, provides something special that other forms of culture cannot offer: witnessing our history, showing it in its reality. Today, the accent is (perhaps too much) on sharing and access, and our main concern is how the classic forms and values of the motion picture can prevail alongside new ones such as those intended for the small screen or made for streaming platforms. Meanwhile, it is so easy for the world to forget the fragility of the culture built by humanity over millennia, and how easily it can be destroyed. We seek attractive names to seduce and retain our audiences, but the word heritage remains and retains its importance.

When we think responsibly about film heritage, we should not only think about the highlights, the best-known, most popular titles, but also about the mass of films that are equally valuable in other respects. In most of our archives, amateur films, advertising shorts, newsreels, experimental films, and so on, outnumber feature-length films, yet they receive much less attention. In these critical times, it is particularly important to fully recognise these materials, because the wonderfully diverse world of non-feature films is not only an imprint of our own past, but, with its many genres, also a fine testament to man’s hope and willingness to experiment. This free spirit and richness is one of the most important characteristics of our film culture, and it is this complexity that we must pass on to future generations. The Symposium of the 2022 FIAF Congress should provide an important platform to address some of the burning issues relating to these collections, in particular, how we can progress digitisation of non-feature films, and find effective solutions to their safe preservation and increased visibility. What we do today inevitably affects what we leave for posterity.

Our leading article is the perfect example of this as it explains how non-fiction archive footage has been used – by an archivist-filmmaker – to explore and illustrate the effects of climate change. The article from Catalunya describes the work being done there on the pioneering (experimental for their time) films of Segundo de Chomón, while that from Brazil covers the almost-entirely lost legacy of inventor Paulo Benedetti. Most of the reviews in this issue deal with the kinds of short, amateur, and experimental films evoked earlier in this Editorial. We are beginning, at least, to give these genres the attention they deserve. Looking at non-mainstream moving images
from another perspective is an article on “non-aligned” archives which discusses how such films are often made “invisible” by the dominant industry, and offers some ideas on how they can be brought back into circulation.

Elsewhere, we publish Part II of a long interview with David Francis whose career in archiving stretches over half a century, and who has been influential in so many ways in our community. There is recognition of the women who worked on FIAF’s Periodicals indexing Project, which celebrates its own 50th anniversary this year, while the Hong Kong Film Archive describes some of the events with which they marked their 20th in 2021.

We were extremely sad to have to record the death of Laurent Bismuth, one of the stalwarts of the Cataloguing and Documentation Commission, as well as to note the passing of Peter Bogdanovich, recipient in 2007 of FIAF’s annual award to those who support our mission to maintain and disseminate the world’s moving mage cultural heritage.

Aujourd’hui, partout dans le monde, nous sommes confrontés à des défis comme l’humanité n’en avait pas connus depuis longtemps. À peine nous remettons-nous d’une crise qu’une autre lui succède, avec comme résultat un surcroît de pression pour préserver notre sécurité quotidienne ainsi que notre patrimoine culturel.

Les archives affiliées à la FIAF (et bien d’autres) ont pour mission de veiller sur notre patrimoine cinématographique. Cette partie minuscule mais importante de notre culture universelle, découlant d’une invention qui n’a guère plus de 120 ans, présente une spécificité absente des autres formes de culture : témoin de notre histoire, elle la montre dans sa réalité. Aujourd’hui, nos efforts sont centrés (peut-être trop) sur le partage et l’accès, et notre principale préoccupation est de savoir comment les formes et les valeurs classiques du cinéma peuvent coexister avec les nouvelles formes destinées au petit écran ou pensées pour les plateformes de streaming. Pendant ce temps, le monde peut facilement oublier combien la culture que l’humanité a mis des millénaires à construire est fragile et facile à détruire. Nous essayons de trouver des noms attrayants pour séduire et retenir notre public, mais le terme patrimoine conserve son importance.

Lorsque nous réfléchissons de manière responsable au patrimoine cinématographique, nous ne devons pas seulement penser aux œuvres les plus réputées ou appréciées du public, mais aussi à une masse de films tout aussi précieux à d’autres égards. Dans la plupart de nos archives, les films amateurs, les publicités, les bandes d’actualités, les films expérimentaux et autres, sont plus nombreux que les longs métrages, et pourtant ils sont l’objet d’une attention infiniment moindre. En ces temps critiques, il est particulièrement important de leur accorder la reconnaissance qu’elles méritent, car l’univers merveilleusement diversifié de ces films « hors fiction et longs métrages » est non seulement une trace tangible de notre passé, mais aussi, de par le large éventail de genres qu’il recouvre, un beau témoignage de l’espoir et de la volonté d’expérimentation de l’homme. Cet esprit libre et cette richesse comptent parmi les caractéristiques les plus importantes de notre culture cinématographique, et c’est cette complexité que nous devons transmettre aux générations futures. Le Symposium du Congrès 2022 de
la FIAF devrait offrir le lieu idéal pour aborder certaines des questions brûlantes relatives à ces collections, et en particulier comment faire progresser la numérisation des films « hors fiction et longs-métrages », et trouver des solutions efficaces pour assurer au mieux leur conservation et leur visibilité. Ce que nous faisons aujourd’hui affecte inévitablement ce que nous laisserons à la postérité.

L’article phare de ce numéro en est une parfaite illustration, puisqu’il explique comment des images d’archives non fictionnelles ont été utilisées – par un archiviste-cinéaste – pour détailler et illustrer les effets du changement climatique. L’article de Catalonie revient sur le travail effectué sur les œuvres pionnières (expérimentales pour l’époque) de Segundo de Chomon, tandis que celui du Brésil traite des travaux presque entièrement perdus de l’inventeur Paulo Benedetti. La plupart des recensions de ce numéro traitent des types de films - courts, amateurs et expérimentaux - évoqués dans le présent éditorial. Il est heureux que nous commencions à accorder à ces genres l’attention qu’ils méritent. L’article sur les archives « non alignées » aborde sous un angle inédit les images en mouvement non conventionnelles, explique comment ces films sont souvent rendus « invisibles » par l’industrie dominante, et propose quelques idées sur la manière de les remettre en circulation.

Par ailleurs, nous publions la deuxième partie d’un long entretien avec David Francis, dont la carrière dans l’archivage s’étend sur plus d’un demi-siècle et dont l’influence sur notre communauté a été considérable. Nous rendons hommage aux femmes qui ont travaillé sur le Projet d’indexation des périodiques de la FIAF, qui célèbre cette année son propre 50e anniversaire, tandis que Hong Kong Film Archive revient sur certains des événements qui ont marqué son 20e anniversaire en 2021.

C’est avec une grande tristesse que nous avons appris la disparition de Laurent Bismuth, pilier de la Commission de catalogage et de documentation, ainsi que le décès de Peter Bogdanovich, lauréat en 2007 du Prix annuel de la FIAF, qui récompense ceux qui soutiennent notre mission de maintien et de diffusion du patrimoine culturel cinématographique mondial.
en otros aspectos. En la mayoría de nuestros archivos, las películas amateurs, los cortometrajes publicitarios, los noticiarios, los films experimentales y otros superan en número a los largometrajes, y sin embargo reciben mucha menos atención. En estos tiempos difíciles, es especialmente importante reconocer el valor de estos materiales, porque el mundo maravillosamente diverso de los corto-mediometrajes de no-ficción no sólo es una huella de nuestro propio pasado, sino que, con sus múltiples géneros, también es un buen testimonio de la esperanza y la voluntad de experimentar del hombre. Este espíritu libre y esta riqueza constituyen características clave de nuestra cultura cinematográfica, y es esta complejidad la que debemos transmitir a las generaciones futuras. El Simposio del Congreso de la FIAF de 2022 debería constituir una importante plataforma para abordar algunas de las cuestiones candentes relacionadas con estas colecciones, en particular, cómo podemos avanzar en la digitalización de los corto-mediometrajes de no-ficción y encontrar soluciones eficaces para su conservación segura y su mayor visibilidad. Lo que hacemos hoy afecta inevitablemente a lo que dejamos para la posteridad.

Nuestro artículo principal es un ejemplo perfecto de ello, ya que explica cómo ha utilizado las imágenes de archivo de no ficción una archivera-cineasta para explorar e ilustrar los efectos del cambio climático. El artículo de Cataluña describe el trabajo que se realiza allí sobre las películas pioneras (experimentales para su época) de Segundo de Chomón, mientras que el artículo de Brasil recoge el legado casi perdido del inventor Paulo Benedetti. La mayoría de las reseñas de este número se refieren a los tipos de películas cortas, amateurs y experimentales evocados anteriormente en este editorial. Al menos, estamos empezando a dar a estos géneros la atención que merecen. Un artículo sobre los archivos “no alineados” aborda las imágenes en movimiento no convencionales desde otra perspectiva, y analiza cómo la industria dominante suele hacer “invisibles” estas películas y ofrece algunas ideas sobre cómo pueden volver a ponerse en circulación.

Por otra parte, publicamos la segunda parte de una larga entrevista con David Francis, cuya carrera en el mundo de los archivos abarca más de medio siglo y que ha influido de muchas maneras en nuestra comunidad. También se incluye un reconocimiento a las mujeres que trabajaron en el proyecto de indización de publicaciones periódicas de la FIAF, que este año celebra su 50º aniversario, mientras que el Archivo Cinematográfico de Hong Kong describe algunos de los actos con los que celebró su 20º aniversario en 2021.

Nos entristece enormemente tener que hacer constar el fallecimiento de Laurent Bismuth, uno de los miembros incondicionales de la Comisión de Catalogación y Documentación, así como el fallecimiento de Peter Bogdanovich, galardonado en 2007 con el premio anual que concede la FIAF a quienes apoyan nuestra misión de mantener y difundir el patrimonio cultural de imágenes en movimiento del mundo.
IN POST PRODUCTION FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS

ALL LABORATORY WORK IN 1981 AND THE 4K RESTORATION IN 2017 OF THE OSCAR-WINNING HUNGARIAN FEATURE FILM MEPHISTO AT THE HUNGARIAN FILMLAB
Digitisation of Djouhra Abouda and Alain Bonnamy’s film Algérie Couleurs at the Polygone étoilé, Marseilles, 2021.
Open Forum


Author’s Note: The climate and ecological crisis presents us with an imperative to reassess our industrial and natural heritage. In this article I discuss my experience making a documentary film about the climate crisis in the lead-up to Scotland hosting the international climate conference, COP26, in November 2021. The feature-length documentary Living Proof: A Climate Story was made with footage from more than 80 films preserved at the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive.

In 2020, archives had to reconsider how to engage audiences with cultural heritage, including film. As a curator who works primarily in public engagement and learning, the pandemic placed me at a distance from my usual audiences. School visits stopped, student teaching went online, and our film events programme largely ceased. We entered a realm of digital delivery, one which provided opportunities to connect with a broader, more geographically spread audience, as well as challenges. In some respects, my organisation was fortunate. Our archive, like our country, is relatively small, and over many years we have been improving and growing the online accessibility of our collections.

In March 2020, just before the UK went into lockdown, I started the research for the film that would become Living Proof. It was intended as a documentary for cinema that would search for the roots of the climate crisis in our history, as told through archive footage. The announcement (in September 2019) that the UN Climate Change Conference was coming to Glasgow offered a focal point for the work and a potential opportunity to connect with the media and new audiences. Now physically isolated from my colleagues and the archive, I continued to work through footage online and created a giant spreadsheet to keep track of what I was seeing – or wanted to find.

At the same time, social media were swelling with speculation around “post-pandemic” recovery, alongside reports of catastrophic weather events, conflict, and racial oppression. The Black Lives Matter protests that took place in 2020 had a large and crucial impact. There emerged a revitalised focus on the problems of casual and institutionalised racism alongside the traumas of racialised violence. The strength and visibility of the movement sharpened and made more urgent discussions
about how to “decolonise” collections: it has shaped how we in the heritage sector now discuss our work.

Black Lives Matter was symbolised in the media by images of young people toppling and removing statues of prominent historical figures. The removal of statues and monuments is often framed in the media as controversial. However, the focus on the history of the monuments as artefacts or landmarks, and their original high status within the societies that made them, can erase the motivation of the demolition act, which is societal transformation.

Historic shortcomings in how we have collected, described, and disseminated heritage must now be confronted, and quickly. Today’s anti-racist movement is being led by younger people and involves the concurrent and intersectional critique of European and Anglo-American heritage. The modern climate movement also uses critique as a means to argue for rapid transformation. It is a political and ideological campaign, as much as an ecological one, that seeks to minimise global warming and its disastrous consequences through the dismantling of its perceived root causes – patriarchal, imperialist, and capitalist structures of social and economic organisation. The climate movement favours a more equitable, caring, and environmentally sensitive socio-economic model, albeit one that is not always clearly defined. Again, it is being led by youth.\textsuperscript{1}

Climate justice is understood as a moral obligation to confront the legacy of colonialism and the reality of global inequality and racism, particularly the separation of the Global North from the Global South. The most affluent parts of the world, including their prestigious heritage or “memory” institutions, have benefitted from the exploitation of the Global South and from extractivist activities more broadly. How these countries have shaped their own mythology – as the producers of “heroic” industrialists, as “pioneers” or “discoverers”, and as enlightened educators – must now be thrown into relief.

National heritage institutions as custodians of modern collections have an important role to play in meeting with and animating these intersecting arenas. While curators may feel their primary role is to be guardians of the collections their institution preserves, they also have a duty to aid in the interpretation of those collections by the public. We are living through a time when the defining features of European modernity are under scrutiny.

Curators, too, are part of society. Some will have strong views on the multiple crises of the Anthropocene epoch and already be thinking how their collections reflect or connect with how these are experienced. While modernity may have asked us to be neutral observers (or even conduits for progress and enlightenment), current times ask us to be honest about our views, feelings, privileges, and judgements. We have no option but to admit our bias.

**THE FILM ARCHIVE AS NEXUS**

Film archives around the world hold a vast amount of material that relates to life in the modern 20th century. What can we do with these films and the ways in which we interpret them that might enable communities to process the historic causes of change that continue to impact upon their/our lives? How do we address the trauma of European colonisation and imperialism and the knowledge that much of our modern wealth, architecture, and institutions of learning have been built on extraction and exploitation? And how do we connect these historic experiences to current concerns and economic forces?

A concept that has emerged connected to the climate crisis is “climate grief”, understood as a sense of anxiety and mourning around multi-species extinctions and the idea of the Earth as a reliable, stable home that supports all life.\textsuperscript{2} Associated with this can be real-life experiences of loss. As natural disasters claim

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\textsuperscript{1} While there is some political affinity with anti-racist movements, climate activism has also been criticised for its lack of inclusivity. See Mary Annalise Heglar, “We Don’t Have to Halt Climate Action to Fight Racism” in Huffingtonpost, 16 June 2020: <We Don’t Have To Halt Climate Action To Fight Racism | HuffPost UK Impact (huffingtonpost.co.uk)>.


It is questionable at this point whether we need grand, authoritative histories. We are required not only to say something about the past but to consider how we’re framing this for a current audience. Constructing a narrative out of archive footage requires the filmmaker to bring a critical (as well as aesthetic) understanding of the past to the edit suite. We are agents in communicating where we have come from and where we want to be.

THE ARCHIVE’S “MONUMENTS”

The first place I looked when I started my research for an environmental film was our large collection of promotional documentaries which we refer to as the Films of Scotland collection. Films of Scotland was originally conceived in the 1930s, when Scotland hosted the 1938 Empire Exhibition. The word “Empire” is important. Glasgow was at the time known as the “Second City of the Empire” – a place where British colonial wealth was invested and regenerated through working class labour and international trade. Seven professional documentaries were produced to represent Scotland in the exhibition halls, partly inspired by the famous films Drifters (1929) and Night Mail (1936), and depicted all aspects of Scottish life – social, cultural, and industrial. John Grierson (director of Drifters and producer of Night Mail) was appointed as a production adviser.

The Committee folded in 1939, having done its job for the Exhibition. After the Second World War, money for film production in Scotland became scarce and under the guidance of Forsyth Hardy (who had worked in government as head of information at the Scottish Office) the Committee was re-established. The new Committee connected filmmakers with tourism, local government, and manufacturing. More than 100 films were made, from the mid-1950s to the 1980s, to document and promote Scotland’s business, industry, and post-war growth.

This group of films forms a significant part of Scotland’s collective visual memory. Technically and aesthetically varied, the productions were made by a number of different companies and individuals over time (although, it will come as no surprise, produced overwhelmingly by well-
connected men). The filmmakers were not concerned with critiquing society (if they did, it was subtle), and the period from the late 1940s into the 1960s was defined by optimism and energy. In contrast to today, this was an era of hope and expectation, reflected in those works. Many of the films celebrate social mobility and commercial growth in peacetime. Proponents of the British Free Cinema movement were critical of them, considering them as “glossy” commercials, but they were, undoubtedly, entertaining. As Geoffrey Cox has described them in his essay on music in 1960s Scottish documentary, “[a] focus on aesthetics emphasised a sensory response, engendered via visual display and musical emotiveness, and an experience that is also physical: the world wouldn’t just work better, it would look and sound and feel better too.”

Engagement with the Films of Scotland collection has tended to focus on the context of production in scholarly accounts, and on the potential for nostalgia and reminiscence in public presentations of the material. If we take these films at face value, we accept the stories they tell, and we allow ourselves some complicity with the ideologies they were designed to support. Simran Hans, writing about recent non-fiction films, says that “Documentary films have the power to make viewers understand their subjects rather than to simply identify with them.” She expresses concern over the pre-eminence of “story”, finding some films that emphasise form over story ultimately more satisfying and enriching.

Ironically, some of the most compelling films in the Films of Scotland collection do precisely this. Their seductiveness lies less in telling a story than in exploring form, colour, sound, and movement. The documentaries relied entirely on sponsorship which, effectively, made them long-form advertisements for the businesses, industries, and local-government endeavours they were being asked to describe. Naturally, in this context criticism was scant but this did not result in a lack of artistry or creativity. In some of the films, the products of industrial modernity (steel, oil pipelines) are vibrantly abstract – they are objectified and examined playfully rather than as part of the context of the narrative. This was a common trope in industrial documentaries of the period (perhaps especially those made by oil companies such as Shell and BP) in which industry is made beautiful and celebrated as part of the energetic force-field of modernity.

What is gained by bringing some of this footage together in a single narrative is perspective, not only on the stories we’ve been telling ourselves throughout the 20th century but also on how we’ve told them. There is repetition in Living Proof that comes from my deliberately drawing out common motifs, such as a fixation on economic growth and on the spectacle of mass consumerism. The narratives of modern capitalism are repetitive. It is compulsive and wearing. We get a sense of what modernity at its height is supposed to feel like – exciting, vibrant, immutable. This opens up a conversation on the formal links between wartime propaganda, the prestige corporate film, and modern advertising, which can be enlightening for people to understand. (Other links can be made, too: to Soviet filmmaking, surrealism, formalist and abstract art, as well as Hollywood narrative film – a topic yet to be explored).

A challenge for any archive documentary maker is how to strike a balance between being editorial or artistic, and maintaining the integrity of the original material. As a curator working within an institution, I needed to be respectful in my criticism. I made a decision early on to bring together two forms of presentation in the film: stand-alone archive material (what I’ve called *keystone footage*) and musical montage. The first enables the footage to be appreciated in its original context (for absorption, scrutiny, understanding) and the second allows space for counter-narrative (interpretation, articulation). Bringing these two forms together was a negotiation of my dual roles as film director and collections curator.


A frame from Dundee (1939), used in Living Proof: A Climate Story (2021).
The final soundtrack for *Living Proof* traverses space and time, with contemporary Scottish pop and rock musicians Louise Connell, Brownbear, and Post Coal Prom Queen sitting alongside the professionally orchestrated music that appears in the keystone footage. The experience of watching the film in a cinema is intended to be not only visual but aurally rich, with several musical styles competing alongside changing eras of film narration and public opinion.

The montage sequences work a little like chapter headings, bringing the viewer to where they need to be thematically for each section of footage. These musical sequences are where I take the most liberties with the material and shape it more explicitly to my own viewpoint. A significant challenge for me was finding enough material that would provide a counter-narrative to the material’s own corporate voices and state ideology. The montage sequences allowed me to bring in bits of amateur footage – especially material that documents acts of resistance or protest, and which also captures the diversity of modern Scotland, something seldom seen in sponsored documentaries.

I was very aware that I didn’t want viewers to become too comfortable with the now familiar “music video” aesthetic of some feature archive presentations. In between the short montage sequences, the longer extracts of keystone footage dominate. These have been purposefully stitched together, sometimes with their soundtracks overlapping, so that a viewer might not know, for example, where one piece ends and a new one starts. This was partly an aesthetic choice, a desire to create coherency across the whole piece, but it was also a conceptual one. The collage film has roots in the surrealist movement, creating associations between images and sounds to a dreamlike effect. I wanted viewers to be led through time in a way that was somewhat otherworldly or unfamiliar.

One of the surprises for me when it came to the edit was how much of the footage I selected was richly scored by music. Whereas I’d assumed the musical montage sequences would provide emotive release, the scores from the clips of keystone footage encroached heavily, often serving the corporate sponsors of those films by elevating the subject matter and drawing the viewer’s interest towards quite mundane industrial subjects. At times I wanted to actively undermine this, which posed an ethical dilemma. Could I intervene and add different visuals? Was it acceptable as a custodian of these films to weaken their original scripted message?

The answer in the case of one particular film, *The Highway Over the Clyde* (1970) was: yes, I certainly could! In this case, the film was a celebration of the controversial motorway that runs through the centre of Glasgow and is now the object of a campaign for its removal. I retained the original library music used in the film (a patriotic-sounding orchestral piece full of pomp and circumstance) and intercut alternative visuals from the time when the film was shot. In this way, I could offer a more rounded picture of then-contemporary Glasgow, one which considered the cost of progress alongside the encroachment elsewhere in the country of petroleum and the United States military.

In other places, some pieces of footage have been merged, their colliding soundtracks providing a bridge or an uncanny clash. Here and there I have inserted black frames to indicate a rupture or an intake of breath. In one section from *The Murchison Project* (1980), about North Sea oil, this happens within a single extract. The two-second break, broken by loud organ music, warns the viewer not to be lulled by the original narration. These slightly experimental techniques were ways to signal to the audience that *Living Proof* is a constructed piece of history, one that also demands interpretation and interrogation.

**RESPONSE DURING COP26**

The hosting of COP26 in Glasgow provided a unique opportunity for us to position *Living Proof* for cinemas, audiences, and the press. The film premiered at the opening night of Take One Action, a Scotland-based film festival for activism and social change, and attracted quite a lot of interest from journalists, with reviews appearing in *The Times*, *New Scientist*, *Little White Lies*, and many other outlets. I was...
interviewed for several publications and described the film as a sort of post-apocalyptic time machine where the past is recovered in fragments. The effect of this, I had to admit, could be unsettling.

One viewer described the experience of watching Living Proof as “mentally exhausting”; another told me during a Q&A that it was “stimulating, chewy”. Writer and film critic Katie Goh (who reviewed the film for Little White Lies) found the film different to other documentaries:

I am not a fan of most climate docs – I think most are actually super unhelpful in how they turn environmental crisis into spectacle – but I found Living Proof an engaging, emotional watch. It’s a film that made me think more deeply about the power of image & visual propaganda in relation to the climate crisis. It also left me feeling optimistic.

I attended screenings in different parts of Scotland, in person and via Zoom. Some viewers wanted to discuss the absence of non-male perspectives throughout the film. The original strident narrations spoken by men dominate, and, for a contemporary audience, that can be challenging. The first place in the film where a woman speaks is 70 minutes in. It is a powerful sequence: she is an anti-nuclear demonstrator at the Torness gathering in 1979, a key moment for non-violent direct action and civil disobedience in British history, and calls for an end to “this rotten capitalist system”. The Torness Declaration – an environmental manifesto – is also read by a woman in this extract and resonates strongly with audiences today.

The purpose of Living Proof was to reveal Scotland’s post-war history as seen through the lens of current debate, inviting audiences on a journey to revisit the promises of the past, and to consider how they relate to our future on this planet. The questions we wished audiences to consider included: Is climate change inevitable? Can we break free from a boom-and-bust mentality? Are we able to adapt to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for generations to come? The film needed to tell a story about modern capitalism and industry while simultaneously posing questions about the limits to growth, and whether the solutions to the climate crisis could be found within society.

Jason Moore has written about the need to take a longer historical view:

If we wish to explain the origins and development of capitalism as world-ecology – crucial to understanding the politics of the twenty-first century – we need a conversation over the ways that relations of power, capital and nature crystallized in the centuries after 1450. This is the analytical work of the Capitalocene – an ugly word for an ugly system. The concept asks us to unsettle the comfortable narrative of the Anthropocene, to step outside our comfortable conceptual boxes: industrial and pre-industrial; circulation and production; town and country. The Capitalocene argues for situating the rise of capitalism, historically and geographically, within the web of life. This is capitalism not as economic system but as a situated and multispecies world-ecology of capital, power and re/production.

We may only have 130 years of moving image heritage to work with, but these can be powerful starting points for larger discussions, ones which reach far beyond (in both directions) the 20th century.

8. Via Twitter @johnnys_panic / <@ehfmcultureshow> (21 December 2021).
9. The film On Site Torness (p. Alistair Scott and Mike Sharples, 1979) can be watched in full at <https://movingimage.nls.uk>.
Poster-making workshop inspired by Living Proof: A Climate Story at Eden Court, Inverness.

Take One Action festival screening of Living Proof: A Climate Story and discussion in Glasgow Film Theatre on 23 September 2021.
There can be a cozy/nostalgic/weird framing around non-theatrical archive films. The footage, when presented to the general public, may be less critically examined than presented as accurate representations of the past – a past that contained hardships as well as glories, and in which society seemed less complex, less diverse, and more cohesive. Feelings of loss around the built environment are already a familiar post-industrial trope through the ongoing expansion and contraction of workplaces and communities throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Archive film can offer comfort. The seeming “weirdness” of archive footage can offer humour, or a sense of relief that we now live in apparently more enlightened times.

We may know, deep down, that non-theatrical film has also been shaped by economics, politics, ideology, imagination, and – more explicitly in many cases – by narration. We may be aware that amateur films have been made to convey idealised moments – the dreamed realities of the makers. But we are still seduced by these films’ depictions of past realities. That the footage represents an idealised past often does not trouble us, because it is more comfortable that way.

We have work to do, and we must do it together, to some extent, with our projected audience. To paraphrase Lesley Head, if we mourn by longing for a pristine past, we hamper our capacity to deal with future/s. While we mourn the loss of modernity (our “modern selves”), we must also imagine new selves and “consider carefully what we are grieving for and whether we ever actually had it”.

Every archive has its monuments.

In the beginning, there was 2” Quadruplex, and, for a decade or so, videotape recording was pretty much the preserve of broadcast television. As with all great inventions, though, it was not long before word spread and, for the best part of two generations, a bewildering number of videotape formats proliferated. Videotape provided the everyday means for businesses, educators, and, ultimately, the general public, to capture, edit, and disseminate the most diverse aspects of recorded life. Long before the advent of personal computing, global investment in videotape had grown exponentially – and this trend was set to continue for some time.

Professional videotape recorders (VTRs) were extremely complex and cutting-edge machines and originally came with eye-watering price tags. As they were largely electromechanical in nature, running costs were high. Continual maintenance and specialist support were essential to provide the performance and standards of quality essential in markets which were fast moving and highly competitive. Ownership of a broadcast VTR could be likened to that of high-performance cars or even a luxury yacht! To complement the unavoidably “analogue” challenges of precision-engineered mechanisms and complex electronic circuitry, it might come as something of a surprise to learn that videotape recorders were also remarkably early adopters of digital technology. Consequently, for engineers working in Audio Visual (AV) around the 1970s and 1980s, with careers which went on to mature around the time of the digital revolution, a combined understanding of analogue and digital technologies was to prove an invaluable asset.

If we fast forward a mere 50 years or so from the beginnings of videotape, despite pretty much every big-named technology brand across the world having played its part in this huge success story, it is a sobering thought that, at the time of writing, not a single piece of videotape replay equipment continues to be manufactured. It is a chilling reality that this comes at a time when many of the treasures technologically “locked” within tapes that have been carefully collected, catalogued, and stored by archives and libraries across the world have yet to reach the potential they deserve through the unprecedented power of digital platforms.
A STRONG APPRECIATION OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY IS KEY TO SUCCESS FOR FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVES

While, perhaps, the speed and intensity of demise of analogue technologies came as a bit of a shock for professional film and television archivists, it is worthy of mention that we saw it coming a long time ago. Half a century before video recording was even dreamt of, photographic motion picture film was in the habit of surprising through a succession of technical challenges. While the fundamental physical dimensions of the carrier for 35mm film have essentially remained stable for over 100 years, the creative and highly competitive nature of filmmakers has resulted in continual innovation. Memorable examples of this are CinemaScope and VistaVision, which captured images in innovative ways on regular film stock to bring outstanding wide-screen experiences to cinema audiences. The introduction of colour in motion picture film of course happened even earlier than this, with hand stencilling and tinting and toning, for example, being applied retrospectively to monochrome imagery, in what now might be best described as a post-production technique. The introduction of sound in the 1920s and 3-strip Technicolor a little later kept everyone on their toes, with an explosion of complex physical materials being created in increasingly large quantities and soon making their way into archives. So, from the word go, archivists working with film have had to contend with multiple and often compounded technical variants, which, along with the not inconsiderable problems of deterioration and decomposition, present to this day continual conservation and preservation challenges.

DIGITAL – KILL OR CURE

It is no secret that the exponential rise in development, manufacture, and marketing of digital products and data communication infrastructures led to the rapid and complete collapse of the videotape ecology. After all, who would choose bulky, slow, and expensive linear magnetic tape when the market is flooded with better, cheaper, and more interoperable solid-state equivalents? Thank goodness, then, that every cloud has a silver lining. The very technologies responsible for the demise of videotape have emerged almost seamlessly as its saviour.
In fact, one might argue that there’s been no better time to future-proof our analogue memories than now. Through digitisation, which, at a remarkably simple level, uses off-the-shelf PCs, peripherals, and software, the processes for analogue to digital conversion are both straightforward and highly effective. Furthermore, with readily available data storage and media asset management systems (MAMs) providing economies of scale, reliance on lossy compression, which has always made archivists feel rather squeamish, is no longer the stumbling block it used to be. There’s icing on the cake too, for those wishing to break ties with proprietary commercial solutions. Lossless compression using the open-source codec FFV1, within a Matroska wrapper, combined with integrated LTO data-tape storage and associated management systems, make for an apparently dream partnership when it comes to affordable long-term preservation.¹

VIDEO VISIONARIES

With all the digital and data stars perfectly aligned to provide the ultimate solution for preserving our audiovisual heritage in ways harmonious with both technology du jour and, perhaps more importantly, the voracity of 21st-century audiences, all our worries and concerns about obsolescence, entropy, and proprietary formats will soon be a thing of the past. Let’s hope so, but there are just a few things we need to establish before finally waving farewell to the abundance of prized videotape collections held in archive vaults across the world.

Fundamental to the challenge of transformation remains the practical means to replay the tapes. Reflecting on the world of film for a moment, and notwithstanding the perils of decomposition, it’s hard to ignore the aesthetic value of the physical materials themselves. Being a high-density storage medium that fundamentally relies on the passage of light, film has the distinct advantage that, even without any machinery or technology, it’s possible to make sense of the images with just a light source and the human eye. Granted, that’s not the way it was intended to be seen – but beyond anything technological there is great value in keeping the physical materials. In this regard, videotape has none of film’s lustrous charm. When confronted with a reel or cassette containing videotape, all you have is an homogenous length of opaque plastic ribbon. There really is nothing to see. It could contain the most popular, successful television programme of all time – or be completely blank. Without the precise equipment essential to interpreting any given tape, there’s just no telling.

Thankfully, long before obsolescence and, ultimately, extinction were even considerations, the same overall technology-minded approach was taken for videotape as had been the case for film. A small number of experienced engineers and technicians, mostly coming from broadcast backgrounds, found themselves employed by archives (including the BFI National Archive). With the benefit of formal technical education and training by virtue of organisations such as the BBC, these individuals brought not only their in-depth knowledge and experience of the complex principles and workings of machinery essential to the maintenance of recording and replay, but also the insatiable quest such people have for the “next things” in technology. As commercial use and, ultimately, industries and service providers who supported the use of videotape waned, it became incumbent on technologists and engineers working within archives to take initiatives that would help secure the future of the vast and highly valued physical collections held by institutions across the world.

MAGNETIC CHARM

A plethora of VTRs and VCRs (videocassette recorders) was developed and sold in huge volumes throughout the second half of the 20th century, to meet the growing needs and imaginations of producers and audiences. Every videotape product sold was crammed with the most advanced electronics and precision-engineered mechanisms possible for the time. Tape stocks were every bit as crucial to the success of any given format, and required continual development and tightly controlled scientific processes to be produced in vast quantities at consistent quality. Most tape formats were

¹. See, for example, Reto Kromer, “Matroska and FFV1: One File Format for Film and Video Archiving?” Journal of Film Preservation, Issue 96, April 2017, p. 41-45.
designed to operate distinctly from those of their competitors, but, at the same time, to be completely interchangeable within the same family of machinery. To further add to all this complexity, variants were also created to accommodate each of the international regional standards: PAL, NTSC, and SECAM.

One thing all videotape formats have in common is the intimate and precise relationship which must exist between machinery and tape to convey the electronic signals which represent picture, sound, and synchronisation. Wafer-thin slivers of ferrite wound with turns of wire, which spin at high velocity on wheels or drums, lay down and retrieve the considerable bandwidth of magnetic information retained within microscopic tracks on the tape’s surface. The sheer physics of this process is astonishing to observe, with multiple factors of materials science, elegantly engineered components, and precision alignment all playing a part in a highly sophisticated electro-mechanical collaboration. With manufacturing and interchange tolerances critical to just a few microns, it comes as no surprise that, at a microscopic level, every videotape recording has to an extent its own unique signature.

Back in those heady days, with beautifully engineered equipment, manufacturer support, week-long training courses, and a full inventory of spare parts all available to those fortunate enough to have the budgets, working in the videotape business made for a prestigious and satisfying career. The nature of broadcast environments demanded the highest standards, and graduate-level engineers found themselves earning good salaries in what was a very well-resourced and frankly fun industry. VTRs were worked hard day in and day out, with groups of machines making recordings from studios and outside sources, before being used for tape-to-tape linear editing, quality checking, and then, finally, transmission to air. The extraordinary versatility of VTRs placed great reliance on format interchangeability, which meant signal and mechanical alignment checks were essential every time a tape was threaded. Behind the scenes, a high degree of mechanical servicing, often overnight, was necessary to maintain business continuity. Each machine had a multiplicity of magnetic heads, “flying” ones on wheels and drums for video and static ones for audio, and control pulses. There were fixed record heads and often separate agile ones for replay which could dither by virtue of piezo-electric platforms in order to follow less-than-perfectly straight tracks. Each time heads made contact with a tape, friction would wear a little of them away. Consequently, despite being expensive precision components, heads were consumable items and the costs of routine replacement had to be factored in to what were already steep budgets.

AN EXPENSIVE LEGACY

If we were to total up all the outlay and ongoing costs associated with recording and preserving content on any given videotape nurtured in an archive’s vault over decades, it would amount to thousands of pounds sterling. Owners and curators of archive collections have had to invest heavily, taking responsible actions for protecting the commercial, cultural, and educational values held within them. As videotape formats evolved, it was common practice to dub from one to the next in an attempt to beat obsolescence. The eventual shift of emphasis from an analogue past to a digital future has turned everything on its head. Professional archivists, not all of whom have benefitted from the extent of broadcasters’ budgets and technology prowess, have essentially had to recreate their physical collections in a digital form. Aside from the technical processes, this is by no means a trivial proposition. Intensive logistical and tracking effort is required to ensure that, once digitised, the physical assets can eventually be replaced by data assets, which, as they are in the digital domain, means they must be thoroughly searchable, instantly accessible, and of the highest quality.

With finite budgets and limited availability of service provision to cover the multitude of format variations, compounded by the scarcity of precision consumables such as video heads, it becomes apparent at the early stages of planning that any project to migrate videotape content to digital file format can only be performed once. We really have reached the
crunch point and, with extinction looming over us, the sense of responsibility archivists face can be quite daunting.

Videotape recordings come in so many guises, and while many have had the best possible care and attention throughout their operational and storage lifespans, sadly, this is not always found to be the case. Many threats exist to the enigmatic, invisible patterns of magnetism, key to unlocking the secrets of treasures which lie within videotapes. Today, the challenges faced by technology obsolescence must not be overlooked. Whereas in the heyday, reputable manufacturers and their accredited service partners were more than keen to provide end-to-end support, or at least technical manuals and training packages, very early in the 21st century these comforts summarily peeled away.

Thankfully, the marriage of polyester, the substrate on which all professional videotapes are founded, and magnetic coatings containing the recorded tracks, fares rather well over time. In the scheme of things, it could be a lot worse. It’s the critical interface between the reproduction heads and those recorded tracks of miniscule bar magnets, which must precisely align to achieve playback of any given tape that presents the greatest challenge, and this is as true for analogue recordings as it is for digital. Even when one has a perfectly performing VTR or VCR available to match any given format of recording, there are other factors which can get in the way. Spacing losses present a persistent problem and occur for a variety of reasons when the critical relationship between head and tape is compromised. Momentary losses, most often caused by tiny particles of dust or other debris, can manifest as black or white line flashes when playing analogue recordings, or – far worse for digital counterparts – catastrophic loss of data. Thankfully, the use of specially designed machines which use a series of wiping tissues can markedly improve matters in these cases. However, when contamination results from, say, mould or fungal infestation, the damage is often structural and permanent. In these cases, archivists sometimes face the worst eventuality – total loss.
SETTING THE BAR FOR QUALITY

Even if it were possible to recover perfect signals from the magnetic tracks of every legacy videotape, there are many other factors to consider when determining thresholds and standards for quality. Take, for example, the earliest UK videotape recordings, which date back to around 1960. These were made using the 2” Quadruplex format and comprised relatively low dynamic range, 405-line, monochrome images accompanied by monoaural sound. This particularly robust format went on to be the staple medium for broadcasters until the late 1970s; it accommodated major advancements in technology such as the uplift to 625-line resolution, addition of colour, and, later, a “digital” time-reference signal known as Linear Timecode (LTC). In addition to an appreciation of the fundamental bases of a given format, the quality assessor, whether human or software, needs to have some understanding of the evolutionary nature of video cameras, microphones, and the panoply of peripheral studio variables and production techniques historically used. Fortunately, knowledge and documented information do exist and there are still a small number of people working in the field who continue to pass on their wisdom.

Recordings made for the purpose of broadcast television were expected to meet agreed technical standards, through established codes of practice. An understanding of these philosophies by people now responsible for the digitisation process can be highly beneficial. In contrast, artists’ video works, by definition, often reveal experimental and creative approaches which intentionally pushed the technical boundaries of the low-budget and unforgiving recording systems often adopted. Technically they can break all the rules – but for the sake of art there must be an acceptance of such digressions. Indeed, videotape recordings made for corporate, medical, or training purposes through the decades also come with recognisable traits. It is not that any of these is wrong as such; more that they characterise each genre, largely as a reflection of the budgets available at the time of production.

Many years down the line, finding any machinery at all to replay videotapes can be a daunting task. Whether 15 or 50 years obsolete, no manufacturer support or new spare parts have been available for almost a decade. The precision mechanisms and electronic components so vital to the magic of magnetic
recordings have become increasingly susceptible to decay as well as expected wear and tear. Electrolytic capacitors are worthy of special mention in this category. Used in their hundreds within power supplies, signal coupling, decoupling, and tuned circuits, they often have an unfortunate habit of leaking. Not only does this cause havoc electronically, but there’s a nasty sting in its tail. Drips of leaking fluid, corrosive by nature, find their way into neighbouring components, and eventually eat into the fine labyrinth of conductive tracks which complete the electrical circuitry. It’s possible to de-solder and replace offending electrolytics but it is a skilled and time-consuming process, and success depends on the degree of corrosion that has taken place through the multiple layers of printed circuit board (PCB) tracks. Consequently, keeping videotape machinery operational in 2021 has become the preserve of a small and decreasing number of engineering experts and, in most cases, viability for the proper replay of videotapes for digitisation is now entirely dependent upon them.

With so many complex variables to consider, it’s clearly unrealistic to expect a one-size-fits-all approach to quality management through the life cycle of any given videotape recording.

ARRIVING AT A METHODOLOGY

Perhaps one of the best examples of diversity, both in terms of technical challenge and breadth of videotape collections, is the British Film Institute’s current Videotape Mass Digitisation Project. With National Lottery support, this is a ground-breaking initiative, which, working in partnership with all recognised regional and national UK film and television archives, aims to select and digitise the most significant 100,000 titles, uniquely held on videotape, for long-term preservation and access.

Preparation for this project was extensive and required a great deal of consultation to fully understand and wrap in the needs and ambitions of archive partners, while also being sympathetic to a framework of commercial suppliers whose challenge is to provide economically viable digitisation services on a large scale.

A crucial document, known as the “Quality & Exceptions Methodology” (QEM), was deemed essential to the project at an early stage. Led by the BFI’s videotape conservation experts but incorporating invaluable perspectives from partners and framework suppliers, the QEM sits as a central point of reference and provides guidance to all stakeholders on the practicalities and expectations feasible within a finite budget. It sets out to describe the project’s technical needs in granular detail, and is positioned to cover the broadest range of UK archival collections.

Of course, a crucial element within the QEM is a description of the deliverable – a digital preservation file, fit for the purposes of long-term preservation and access. To a large extent, the direction for this aspect was set by the BFI’s advanced, long-term Digital Preservation Infrastructure (DPI), founded as part of its previous National Lottery-funded project Unlocking Film Heritage. However, standards for a truly archival, losslessly compressed preservation codec (FFV1 within a Matroska wrapper) were also agreed and adopted for the BFI’s current Videotape Mass Digitisation Project, marking a radical departure from proprietary videotape and data solutions.

Operational guidance is given within the document, with quantitative and qualitative technical specifications for deliverables firmly laid out. After much consideration, the word “exceptions” was chosen to describe an unknown but predicted relatively small number of tapes which would not be suitable for mass digitisation within the economic constraints of the project. Based on the combined previous experiences of stakeholders, it was agreed that, as part of every attempt to digitise a given tape, service providers would follow a simple triage process with a view to diverting troublesome recordings away from their workflow. With each of the 100,000 titles chosen through curatorial selection, it was deemed essential that there be no “rejects” resulting from the somewhat industrial process of large-scale digitisation.

Instead, an alternative and more specialised workflow has been established within the BFI National Archive’s own technology work-
shop, where facilities exist or can be developed to address the many and varied problems which may present themselves. Specialised treatments for exceptions tapes include repair of broken tapes, careful cleaning of contaminated tapes, and heat treatment to drive out excessive moisture and free up lubrication compounds within magnetic coatings which tend to stagnate when tapes have been inactive for long periods. Occasionally, it is found that poor replay of tapes at the digitisation stage actually stems from faults or misalignments which occurred during the original recording process. Taking great care not to compromise archive machinery required for the longer term, reasonable endeavours are made to temporarily modify or adjust parameters of the mechanical and electronic paths to compensate for such rogues.

CONCLUSION

The positive and exciting news for archivists and, indeed, anyone who enjoys or even has yet to discover the enormous value of digitised video collections, is that the onward path to security, preservation, and access is assured. This will not only be down to the diligence and forward-looking approaches of institutions responsible for complex audiovisual collections but is as much to do with the commonalities digital technologies bring. Large-scale solutions for data storage, access, and delivery have become ubiquitous in the early part of the 21st century, with numerous paths well trodden by the world’s most pervasive and commercially dependent business sectors. Banking, medicine, education, defence, media, and social networking platforms: you name it. Every big business has big data, so, to sustain growth, continuity, and dependability across pretty much all markets, high corporate investment has led to a proliferation of technologies and tailored solutions to meet the widest possible range of needs and expectations. A further digital gift to archivists comes by virtue of a fortuitous combination of Moore’s Law and the open-source software community. With the manufacturing yield of data storage and computer peripherals at an all-time high, the cost per gigabyte is now at a point of affordability where multiple instances of master preservation data can be kept safely in geographically separate locations. The economics even make it possible to avoid lossy data compression for preservation. Open codecs such as FFV1 compress video data up to 50% without loss and are free from licensing.

There really is a sense of safety in numbers now that high-value archival assets can be stored and managed into the future as data. Once digitised, the contents of videotapes will no longer be dependent on proprietary and obsolescent physical formats, complex machinery, and the rare breed of people with the wherewithal to keep it going. With Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning techniques advancing every day, it is entirely possible that comprehensive open-source, quality-assurance toolsets will soon form the backbone of quality methodologies, automatically trawling through the multiplicity of historically concatenated artefacts to help make sense of what’s good and bad. The facility to discern, without the need for constant expert human intervention, between all the baked-in characteristics of legacy recordings and those which might have crept in as a result of less-than-ideal playback, or errors during digitisation, will hopefully transform the overall quality process and allow greater resource to be focused on saving the wealth of information still locked inside the millions of videotapes world-wide which have yet to be snatched from the jaws of obsolescence.

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2. That the number of transistors on a microchip doubles about every two years though the cost of computers is halved. Formulated by Gordon E. Moore, co-founder of Intel, in 1965.
L'article explique les défis importants auxquels sont confrontés les archivistes audiovisuels alors qu’il leur incombe de trouver des moyens efficaces de réinventer sous forme de données informatiques leurs collections de supports vidéo, afin de sauver ces derniers de l’obsolescence imminente de ces formats et supports. L’un des principaux objectifs de la préservation est de conserver l’essence et la qualité de la création originale et, dans le cas des supports vidéo, cela couvre un large éventail de technologies en constante évolution. L’assistance technique des fabricants et les pièces de rechange se sont rapidement raréfies, sonnant le glas d’une aventure industrielle de plus d’un demi-siècle. Rare sont désormais les personnes à réunir les compétences requises pour faire fonctionner la multitude de machines complexes et de précision sur lesquelles continue de reposer le processus de numérisation. Comme il est probable qu’à plus ou moins brève échéance, ces bandes vidéo soigneusement collectées et conservées ne pourront plus être visionnées, l’assurance qualité est une préoccupation majeure.

Este artículo explica los importantes retos a los que se enfrentan los archiveros audiovisuales ahora que deben reinventar eficazmente sus colecciones de grabaciones de cintas de video en forma de datos para salvarlas de la inminente obsolescencia de formatos y soportes. Un objetivo clave de la preservación es conservar la esencia y la bondad de la creación original y, en el caso de las cintas de video, esto abarca un panorama tecnológico amplio y en constante evolución. La rápida disminución del apoyo técnico de los fabricantes y de las piezas de repuesto ha marcado el fin de una industria que duró más de medio siglo. Actualmente, todo se reduce a un pequeño número de personas que poseen las raras combinaciones de habilidades necesarias para mantener en funcionamiento la multitud de máquinas complejas y de precisión de las que todavía dependemos por completo para el proceso de digitalización. Garantizar la calidad es de máxima importancia, ya que es probable que las cintas de video que han sido cuidadosamente recopiladas y conservadas se enfrenten ahora a su última oportunidad de ser reproducidas.

Fast Forward Thinking Will Save Our Digital Heritage
UN SELECTION
LES GRANDS FILMS CLASSIQUES
[section films inédits]

PRODUCTION:
LES FILMS SOLEIL Ô,
GRAY FILM.

UN FILM DE MED HONDO

NOUS SOMMES DES MILLIONS,
ILS ONT TUÉ LUMUMBA, GUEVARA, BEN BARKA, MALCOM X, CABRAL...
ILS NE NOUS TUEront PAS TOUS.

SOLEIL Ô
The following exchange derives from a discussion published in December 2021 in “The Living Journal” edited by Olivier Marboeuf and Ana Vaz for Open City Documentary Festival.¹

Léa Morin (LM): When I begin research on a film, there is frequently no viewable material and documentation may be difficult to access. My initial research often deals with absence and invisibility. Nour, the newly formed Cinematheque Beirut does not yet have a collection. You must therefore approach this project to preserve Lebanese cinematic memory through programming, research, and identification.

Nour Ouayda (NO): Yes, the Cinematheque Beirut project is the natural continuation of the Metropolis Art Cinema Association’s years of programming international and local heritage films. Our interest in film heritage preservation derives from our desire to circulate such films to diverse audiences. I do not see the purpose of restoring and preserving a film if it will never be allowed to be shown. As you say, we have no collection, and our impulse is therefore to create a living archive, one that sparks new and old encounters. Rather like you, we also start from an absence. The questions then arise: Where do you start? How? With what methodologies?

We started by creating a database of Lebanese films produced between 1929 (the year considered to herald the first of these) and today. Of course, the immediate question is: what constitutes a Lebanese film? Our definition keeps shifting and includes films shot in Lebanon, films made elsewhere by Lebanese filmmakers, and works by non-Lebanese filmmakers (Palestinian, Jordanian, and Syrian, for example) whose trajectories and histories are all intricately linked. Our defining criteria are very important as they will help determine our acquisitions and collections policies. Our aim is to slowly build, through research and staff training, an infrastructure for a resource centre and an archive that can host film and non-film materials.

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¹ See <https://opencitylondon.com/non-fiction/issue-3-space>.

Annabelle Aventurin is a programmer and the archivist in charge of the conservation and distribution of the Med Hondo collection at Ciné-Archives (Paris), the audiovisual arm of the French Communist Party and the workers’ movement. Léa Morin is an independent researcher and curator, involved in publishing projects, exhibitions, and restorations that bring together researchers, artists, and practitioners. She is a member of the Archives Bouanani: Une Histoire du cinéma au Maroc (Rabat) and of Talitha (Rennes). Nour Ouayda is a film director, programmer, and critic. She is an assistant director at the Metropolis Cinema Association in Beirut where she runs the Cinematheque Beirut project, and a programmer at the Metropolis Art Cinema Association/Cinematheque Beirut.
LM: How is your project different to earlier attempts to preserve Lebanese film heritage and make it accessible?

NO: In past decades, there were many initiatives from organisations and individuals to locate, preserve, and restore Lebanese film and non-film heritage. One important experience was Jocelyne Saab’s 1992-1993 project “Beirut, A Thousand and One Images”, to research films shot in Lebanon before the 1975-1990 wars, which led to the creation of the Cinémathèque Nationale Libanaise (CNL), the Lebanese National Cinémathèque. The project located more than 400 films. About 30 were restored with the support of the French government, ARTE, and the Lebanese Ministry of Culture, and these became the basis of the new Cinematheque’s collection. The CNL is currently the only Lebanese public institution dealing with archives: lack of funding, transparency, and cultural policies related to film heritage, means that all others are private initiatives. Our energies seem to be devoted to plugging gaps, responding to an absence. How can we move forward?

Our database was created with the aim of bringing together information on film production, film professionals, film companies, and film literature. It allows us to start mapping what has been done, what is missing, and to determine what the priorities are. Individual initiatives across the country are each preserving and restoring a collection, a specific era, or a genre. To avoid duplication of effort, it is important to communicate our activities to others. For example, Cinematheque Beirut is beginning to concentrate on building a collection of materials from the beginning of the millennium. These are endangered as many were shot and are stored in digital form (something frequently considered less worthy than analogue film). Should we be setting up infrastructure for digital preservation knowing that we will have to update it every few years? Would it make more sense to partner with an archive that already has such infrastructure and conserve our digital files there? What are the budgetary issues? Are we able to raise sufficient funding? Meanwhile, we must start training and building a team capable of forming, caring for, and researching this new collection. The advantage of concentrating on recent productions is
that many of the filmmakers are easily accessible and can be of great help in our research and restoration projects.

**LM:** Indeed, you cannot undertake a restoration project without knowing the history of the physical film, its production and distribution itinerary; often these are extremely complex and significant trajectories.

**Annabelle Aventurin (AA):** I agree – and keeping the filmmaker’s trajectory in mind is also necessary. For example, Med Hondo was born in 1936 in Atar, Mauritania; he left his native Sahara in 1955 and studied at the hotel management school in Rabat. He arrived in Marseilles in 1958 and moved on to Paris, where he began to study the dramatic arts while continuing to work in restaurants. He followed the itinerary of an immigrant to France, which is important to bear in mind because his films were made for and by Africans, with themes linked to the history of Africans and the African diaspora. While distribution copies may be found in other countries, the preservation elements (picture and sound negatives, interpositives, sound mixes) remain in France. Med Hondo’s films are also part of the French film industry as most had commercial releases in France, though not all without difficulty. *Sarrounia* (1986) received very limited commercial exploitation there, and a petition for a proper re-release was signed by, among others, Ousmane Sembene, Costa Gavras, Souleymane Cissé, and Jacques Demy. The film made a low-key appearance in 1992 but never obtained the commercial distribution it deserved.

**LM:** Ciné-Archives’s non-film holdings help us understand the films’ circulation and how Med Hondo wanted them shown. They inform us about his militancy, his struggle to get his films recognised as part of French cinema and thus not be marginalised, and about his struggle for the development of the film industry in Africa. They also help us to understand what he wanted from these different versions, multiple iterations of a single film.

**AA:** Indeed! Ciné-Archives holds the audiovisual collections of the French Communist Party (PCF) and the workers’ movement. Since 1928, the French Communist Party has produced, distributed, and collected a large number of films, thus enabling support for major social movements, communicating the Party’s ideas to audiences, and cultural work. We have acquired the pioneering work of Claude Thiébaut, who, in the mid-1970s, began to rescue films collected by the French Communist Party, in 1975 setting up an Archives section of Uni/Ci/Té (an audiovisual company, established in 1972 as part of the PCF), and then within his own company Zoobabel. At the same time, Med Hondo was shooting *Les Bicots Nègres, vos voisins*, his most Marxist film. In 1998, Ciné-Archives received a mandate from the PCF to ensure the preservation and continuing value of this material.

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2. In partnership with the Atelier de l’Observatoire (Art and Research), Casablanca.
Med Hondo’s collections reached Ciné-Archives at the end of 2015, about 300 reels having been recovered from different sources. The organisation also acquired more than a thousand documents from the filmmaker’s personal archives, which relate to his work as a director, distributor, producer, and dubbing artist, and chronicle everything that was done to make these films. A complete and detailed inventory was compiled by my predecessor Clément Lafite whose role included responsibility for Med Hondo’s film legacy. There are only three of us at Ciné-Archives. I think it is valuable to create a relationship with the institution that looks after your collection, and Med Hondo did this while he was alive. Even though he expressed a political affinity with Marxism and the PCF during his lifetime, he never joined the Party.

In your case, Léa, you’re working as distributor of Djouhra Abouda and Alain Bonamy’s film, Ali au pays des merveilles / Ali in Wonderland (1976, restored in 2021 at l’Image Retrouvée through Talitha), and also for Mostafa Derkaoui’s film. You create relationships with rights-holders in researching, preserving, and distributing their films.

LM: We work very carefully on the political and physical repair of these materials and research the specific contexts in which they were produced. Having completed in detail the whole process of identification, research, and restoration, we are the best placed to ensure their circulation. We know how and where to show them, with which allies and partners. It is quite a responsibility (and a lot of work) to invent a new circuit. Our activity does not finish with the festivals and the premières. We accompany the films in the same way as did their original makers: producers, sound engineers, and distributors of their own works. When we come with a proposal to restore a film, invisible for the past 45 years, we continue and prolong the particular (and political) care they gave to it. We are part of a similar impoverished economy and work with a comparable, militant commitment – a desire to emancipate ourselves from the rules of the industry. We also want to re-establish this intention. And to learn from it.

Restoring these films – missing from the regular cinematic narrative – and making them visible again while respecting the intentions of the author, is an attempt to restore a missing aesthetic and political history, trying to take into account the vandalism of, and gaps in the “history of cinema”. It is to reactivate the incredible and almost insane hopes these filmmakers had for cinema, and to continue to dream together ...

NO: But how can we, concretely, imagine another kind of film archive, one that is not aligned? How can we stop comparing ourselves to an “ideal” film archive, and – rather than always be thinking, “what should we do?” – ask “what can we do?” What can we do with our own means, our own specificities, and our strong relationships to the materials we want to preserve? It is not always easy to make that leap of imagination.

LM: Restoration of a single film is not much in the context of an overall archiving project, but it allows us to experiment with methods. The most important answer to your question is the existence of these small structures to which we belong, these collectives, these small islands of experimentation. It’s why we also need to get together. It is time to democratise access to the technical tools of preservation and restoration, to get involved in collaborative practices. The modest training and initiation sessions that we are conducting with Talitha (in restoration, subtitling, film development) will enable us to appropriate tools that should be available outside the dominant industries. For me, the starting point is the collective and participative aspects of all the processes.

At the Archives Bouanani in Rabat, a family apartment transformed into an association for the preservation and appreciation of Morocco’s cultural and cinematic history, we’re working (as part of the collective led by Touda Bouanani, daughter of filmmaker Ahmed Bouanani) on the reappropriation of Moroccan images and stories (collected by his family and others) and the preservation of these materials for future generations. Reactivating his archive is an attempt to restore them collectively. It’s essential to bring together the technicians, practitioners, thinkers, and communities in-
A frame from the digitised version of the 16mm print of Ballade aux sources (Med Hondo, Bernard Nantet, 1965).

A frame from the digitised version of the film De quelques événements sans signification / On Some Meaningless Events (Mostafa Derkaoui, 1974).
involved in these images, as well as disrupting bodies of knowledge and exploding frontiers as a better way to approach the restitution of the original wish(es) of all these filmmakers, whose practices were often not limited to a single discipline. The films require particular forms of knowledge and consciousness, and it is important that each person in the restoration chain shares this vision. It is even better when our partners are engaged in the same struggles as those defended by the filmmakers.

Perhaps this is what it means to try to preserve in a way that is different, that can be de-colonial, militant, or non-aligned. Med Hondo’s choice to deposit his archives in Ciné-Archives gave me food for thought. It was a committed and significant gesture. It also relates to the original lack of interest in his cinema on the part of public institutions. Today, those institutions have a new agenda and are suddenly interested in minority cinema – in films that they themselves “disappeared”.

NO: I go back to this question of public versus private. What is the nature of the archive we are dealing with? Is it public or is it private? Because public (and mostly national) archives generally respond to specific cultural policies geared towards a certain exhaustivity and, of course, follow very specific political agendas. Any change towards a more conservative or nationalistic government can put the whole archive and its accessibility in danger, since that government decides what can be considered part of the national filmography and what will be forcibly erased. However, an archive being part of a public institution gives it a certain status and legitimacy that many filmmakers look for. It’s the prestige of being part of the filmography of your country, of your work being recognised as being part of its cinematic history and memory. Many filmmakers want this kind of recognition and, in parallel, public archives need certain key films to constitute a complete national filmography. We see many archives whose mission is to preserve the entirety of their country’s filmography collecting as many films as possible, but, along the way, leaving out many that they consider unworthy of inclusion in the country’s film heritage: home movies, pornography, films by immigrants and marginalised communities, institutional films... Basically, any film that doesn’t fit the image they are trying to project of their country. At the same time, the privatisation of this whole sector is also very dangerous. To whose advantage is it to preserve or restore a
certain film? Who is making money out of this restoration? These factors determine which films will be restored and which will not and influence the way restoration is undertaken. For example, films that “sell” might be prioritised and restored in ways that answer the market’s demands but disregard any ethical questions that arise.

LM: Yes, we are obliged to invent methods, especially since these restoration projects often do not respond well to established guidelines, those of national policies of preservation, or those of the market for cinematic heritage. Sometimes the necessity, even the urgency, to render certain (non-aligned?) works visible makes itself felt. They become highly relevant in today’s context, relevant in what they open up in thought and action, in what they will perhaps permit for our futures. This could be the urgency of looking at current events head on, the urgency of re-establishing forgotten histories, of establishing genealogies, to confront, to transmit methodologies of resistance, to reclaim heritage. The archives we’re working on have this particularity. They document “disappeared” histories, marginalised by their geographic origins (from places considered of only peripheral importance at the time) or their context of production, whether they were made in militant contexts or decolonising struggles. We also know that the patterns of dominance in production and narration can be reproduced when film restoration policies are in favour.

Public archives become the image of the official history, inscribing itself on what cinema was from its beginnings: an image of the nation. It’s true for the history of cinema in Morocco (think of censorship during the political repression of the 1970s) and it explains the long invisibility of About Some Meaningless Events. Other good examples are Med Hondo or Aboua and Bonnamy’s films, not really accepted as part of the official history of French cinema. This is, perhaps, because, with respect to their production context and their struggle to exist, they didn’t correspond to anything else in the industry. Furthermore, national institutions didn’t wish to consider the importance of the political and aesthetic proposals these avant garde films espoused. In Med Hondo’s work, we are facing a transnational filmography because of the circulation of funds, films, and the filmmaker himself. Maybe this is what non-aligned archives could be, transnational, resisting the official national narrative.

NO: These itineraries are very telling about the conditions of production and distribution of films in a certain place and time. Due to the lack of public funding, co-productions are very common in Lebanon. This naturally affects the circulation of films and the localisation of the film material. For example, the only known 35mm copy of Layla Assaf-Tengroth’s film Al Sheika (aka Frihetsligan, 1994) is located at the Swedish Film Institute. Filmmakers have strong relationships with foreign countries because they migrated there. There is a continuous back and forth between Lebanon and the hosting countries as Lebanese filmmakers leave home to study and live abroad and come back to work and shoot their films in Lebanon. This creates very particular patterns and maps of circulation of films between Lebanon and other countries. It would be great to start thinking how we could set up an infrastructure capable of receiving and storing films in stable conditions with a view to repatriation.

AA: That also makes me think of the CAC, the Comité Africain de Cinéastes (African Filmmakers Committee). In 1981, Med Hondo, with Haile Gerima and Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, and others, joined this group whose mission was to promote African cinema in Africa and to combat the distribution of denigrating images from the West. In 1982, they organised the first international conference on film production in Africa and set up networks for continental distribution (including fundraising for translations into Arabic). Sarraounia was screened in Mozambique, Niger, and Angola. Bicots-Nègres, vos voisins, Soleil Ô, and West Indies (1979) were shown in Mauritania.

Med Hondo maintained this approach in the production of his films. West Indies was the result of an intra-African co-production between Algeria, Mauritania, Senegal, and Ivory Coast. Sarraounia (1986) was mostly financed by Med Hondo’s production company and...
supported by the Burkina Faso government. Despite this circulation in Africa, the films are all preserved in France.

I can digitise 16mm film with our Ciné-Archives scanner and I’ve started work on the 16mm negatives (the 2-hour 40-minute version) of Bicots-Nègres, vos voisins. The issue is subtitling. In this 1974 version, there are long sequences in Arabic, as well as other languages so far not yet identified. These are not translated in voice-over, while the shorter 1980s version is completely translated. Nor have I found any subtitle lists in the paper archives. It seems that translating these passages would run counter to the filmmaker’s intentions. The same question must be asked about Djouhra Abouda and Alain Bonnamy’s Ali aux pays des merveilles.

LM: Not subtitling entire passages reminds me of Med Hondo’s aesthetic and political positions. Each step in a restoration raises technical, aesthetic, and political questions. The film must be reconstituted along with its intentions, forms, and movements.

Far from being just technical work to recuperate damaged images, restoration involves investigation, restitution, and re-release. For this last, it is essential that no communication about the restored film is allowed to smooth out or erase its history. It must not remove (as happens with restorations that effectively remove the film grain) any complexity, or mythify the film, reduce its past merely to censorship history. Nor should it talk about the film as though it were a lost treasure, found only by chance: its previous invisibility has been caused by systematic policies of downplaying non-dominant culture, but it will be described as “rare”, “unique”, “censored”, “disappeared”, “lost”, and “rediscovered”, without additional explanation. This kind of vocabulary helps erase the complexity of a film’s history: as if the non-existence of Mostafa Derkaoui’s film in cinema histories were due only to Moroccan policies of repression and censorship, as if today’s interest in it were due only to its purely fortuitous rediscovery. In fact, its disappearance and its reappearance both exist in the context of the dominant political discourse and thus what is deemed appropriate in the histories. When
looking at such vocabulary, we must vigilantly avoid reproducing those patterns of domination. This is also part of “restitution”.

NO: I agree. However, we must also take into account the reality that labelling a film as a lost treasure can help us find the money to restore it. Presenting it as a rarity can create hype: both funders and audiences become interested in it. This is a paradox: we do not want to reproduce those dominant patterns we are trying to dismantle, but we can find ourselves pushed to integrate them, to “play the game” to find funds for preservation and recovery.

LM: One way not to “play the game” while struggling to make these works visible must be to find our own routes within the reality of our own economies and contexts?

AA: Yes, I believe so. For example, considering that these films are rarely seen, perhaps forgotten, even though they were produced in France. In the case of our work on Med Hondo’s films, the idea of “restitution”, rather than restoration, makes sense to me: recovery of a film and its contents through digitisation, making it available after decades of invisibility. I think of *Ballade aux sources* (1965), co-directed with photographer and journalist Bernard Nantet. It is part of Med Hondo’s oeuvre, but there is no trace of how it was distributed. The only film copy of this (shot on 16mm reversal stock, so no negative) is in bad condition. At present, the sound tape is in too poor a condition to be copied. There is little information in Med Hondo’s papers though its theme and quality make it worth recirculating. I digitised the film, which runs 31 minutes, in several stages, and the next step is to have the sound tape assessed.

LM: So you, with your own equipment, work on recovering Med Hondo’s films and bringing them back from obscurity into circulation, and do it all without necessarily utilising prestigious restoration laboratories?

AA: It’s sometimes possible to step aside, to be at one remove from that first inclination to restore digitally. Restoration requires time, documentary research, and expertise. There are many stages before digitisation, in 2K or 4K, depending on resources. Ideally, post-production could be undertaken in collaboration...
with the director and/or cinematographer, with, finally, transferring the production back to analogue film. All of this necessitates a substantial budget.

I digitise original 16mm negatives with the tools available to me at Ciné-Archives, which allows us, in the context of our low budget, to produce a digital master. As is the case with *Polisario, un peuple en armes* (Polisario, a People in Arms, 1978), which I’m currently working on, the objective is to produce a screenable copy that can be circulated and (re)discovered. However, there has been no restoration work done on either sound or image: this must be put into context when the film is shown because the quality and the original economy are not today’s. I took a colour-grading class in November 2021 with the idea of being more independent. Other restoration models are now being established: the Jocelyne Saab project led by Mathilde Rouxel and Jinane Mrad, working with the Jocelyne Saab’s Friends Association, is stimulating. A series of training workshops on digital restoration has been organised with the participation of Cinematheque Beirut / Metropolis Art Cinema Association and the Polygone étoilé, a centre for multidisciplinary creativity in Marseilles. Could you tell us about this, Nour? What was the process like?

NO: I think that creating a digital master of *Polisario* with the means you have is a very important step in the process of recovering a film that has been pushed to the margins. If you hadn’t done this, the film would remain unseen until you could find the funds to restore it “properly”. Restoration is a lengthy and expensive affair, so working with what resources we have is a good first step. It allows the film some exposure, creating traction that can aid fundraising. Any accessibility must be better than none; it is significant.

The copies of Jocelyne Saab’s films that have been circulating for the past ten years are unrestored telecines on Betacam and DVD. While they have not returned the films to their precise original forms, they are still important and essential contributions to the dissemination of Saab’s work during the past decade.
These “poor” copies also prepare the ground for the current restoration project. It was Mathilde Rouxel who approached Metropolis to collaborate on this restoration within the framework of our Cinematheque Beirut project. Her idea was to use the restoration of Saab’s documentaries (about 560 minutes of film and video) as a way to train post-production professionals in Lebanon in digital restoration. I think the original impulse was to have people from Lebanon work on the restitution of these images, and, since we don’t have many such specialised professionals, this seemed a good way to introduce digital restoration concepts and tools to post-production practitioners. We secured money for this workshop from the Roberto Cimetta Fund; the real challenge was to find people interested in film restoration who hadn’t already left the country and who would consider pursuing this career once training had finished.

We partnered with two post-production studios in Lebanon, the postoffice and Studio Haroun, each of which, last August, sent one person to Marseilles’s Polygone étoilé for training in DIAMANT HS-ART and DaVinci Resolve. The FIAF Technical Commission and the Cinémathèque suisse gave invaluable support. After the two technicians came back to Lebanon, they held a workshop last November for three other people. They are currently working on restoring the films from newly made scans and getting training in the process. We wanted not only to restore the films but to create a momentum that could lead to establishing a sustainable ecosystem in which knowledge and software are available for other restoration projects. The current economic and political situation means there is always the risk that someone will leave, and it is difficult for people to finance new infrastructures, but this is, of course, what we are slowly working towards.

LM: The same thing applies to conservation policies which makes me think of the efforts of Aboubakar Sanogo (a member of FEPACI, the Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes, in charge of the African Film Heritage Project), who proposes we rethink the whole apparatus of archiving, including the architecture...
of conservation centres. According to some studies, traditional architecture, long delegitimised by colonialism, would be good for film conservation. This means reinventing and decolonising the physical architecture of archives (along with its associated methodologies). Here too, the physical (in this case the building structure) is political.

We come from the sun as Med Hondo said, Soleil Ô means we come from the Sun. The idea is to really capture that energy and create our own conditions for the labs. It is a whole “dispositif” to use a Foucauldian term – the whole apparatus of archiving from the intellectual conceptual dimension to the physical infrastructure, exhibition and pedagogical.

Comment penser des gestes et des pratiques de conservation collectifs et collaboratifs adaptés aux différents modèles économiques et politiques alternatifs? Comment inventer ou proposer une méthodologie de préservation “non-alignée”?

Annabelle Aventurin, Léa Morin et Nour Ouayda tentent de répondre à ces questionnements à partir de leurs propres pratiques et les enjeux de leurs projets en cours d’archivage, de restauration et de circulation d’œuvres cinématographiques. Elles évoquent notamment la nécessaire restitution des films du cinéaste anticolonial et antiraciste Med Hondo, la formation de professionnels à Beyrouth autour de la restauration des films de la cinéaste libanaise Jocelyne Saab, ainsi que les enjeux politiques et esthétiques de la remise en circulation d’œuvres produites en situation de luttes politiques et longtemps laissées à la marge des histoires du cinéma.

Cet échange, en s’interrogeant sur la possibilité de créer un réseau d’archives cinématographiques non-alignées est un appel à partager des idées, des connaissances et des expériences pour imaginer un nouveau vocabulaire et de nouvelles pratiques de préservation de films, notamment au sein d’archives cinématographiques indépendantes, alternatives et militantes.

¿Cómo pensar en gestos y prácticas de conservación colectivos y colaborativos adaptados a diferentes modelos económicos y políticos alternativos? ¿Cómo podemos inventar o proponer una metodología de conservación “no alineada”?

Annabelle Aventurin, Léa Morin y Nour Ouayda intentan responder a estas preguntas a partir de sus propias prácticas y de las cuestiones que están en juego en sus proyectos actuales de archivo, restauración y circulación de obras cinematográficas. En particular, evocan la necesaria restauración de las películas del cineasta anticolonialista y antirracista Med Hondo, la formación de profesionales en Beirut en torno a la restauración de las películas de la cineasta libanesa Jocelyne Saab, así como los retos políticos y estéticos de la recirculación de obras producidas en una situación de lucha política y dejadas durante mucho tiempo al margen de la historia del cine.

Al cuestionar la posibilidad de crear una red de archivos fílmicos no alineados, este intercambio constituye una llamada a compartir ideas, conocimientos y experiencias para imaginar un nuevo vocabulario y nuevas prácticas de preservación fílmica, en particular dentro de los archivos fílmicos independientes, alternativos y militantes.

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Laurent Bismuth a étudié l’histoire et l’esthétique du cinéma à l’Université Paris 8 de Vincennes à Saint-Denis. Après avoir travaillé en indépendant pour plusieurs sociétés de production audiovisuelle, il intègre en 1998 l’Institut national des sciences et techniques de la documentation (INTD) du Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM). Dès l’obtention de son diplôme, il entre à l’Institut national de l’audiovisuel (INA) en tant que documentaliste à l’Inathèque de France, service en charge du dépôt légal de la télévision et de la radio françaises, où il est plus particulièrement en charge du modèle de description des programmes de France Musique. Dans ce cadre, il participe aux groupes de travail consacrés à l’élaboration et à l’évolution des règles et principes du travail documentaire. Les collègues partageant son bureau à l’époque se souviennent avec émotion de leurs échanges toujours très riches et souvent très drôles sur le cinéma, la littérature ou la musique.

Il devient tuteur pour les collègues rejoignant le service, et formateur pour les étudiants documentalistes de la formation qu’il a lui-même suivie. Au sein du petit groupe de formateurs qui s’est constitué, une réflexion pour renouveler les pratiques, créer de nouveaux exercices et proposer de nouvelles approches, s’institue dans une ambiance chaleureuse et stimulante.


Il quitte l’INA pour le CNC l’année suivante. Après son départ, il reviendra souvent à l’INA comme formateur sur les différents diplômes, toujours soucieux de transmettre des notions complexes avec clarté et pédagogie. Au sein de la Direction du patrimoine du CNC, qu’il rejoint en septembre 2008 en qualité de chef du service de la documentation des collections, Laurent accepte très vite de s’impliquer dans les travaux de normalisation européenne de la description documentaire des œuvres audiovisuelles. Ce domaine jusque-là inconnu de lui est exploré avec passion. Il fait ainsi partie du groupe qui conçoit les normes EN 15907 et
EN 15744, mettant beaucoup de diplomatie à concilier les positions affirmées de ses collègues. Mais les normes promulguées, encore faut-il les faire accepter du plus grand nombre : il en sera le promoteur enthousiaste et pédagogue, explorant les collections du CNC pour trouver les exemples les plus adaptés à cette vulgarisation. Je t’adore... mais pourquoi, de Pierre Colombier (Pathé-Natan, 1930), film aux trois variantes (espagnole, anglaise et allemande) devient ainsi son étendard à l’occasion des réunions de promotion et d’explicitation de ce nouveau modèle de description documentaire.

Il rejoint également la Commission du catalogage et de la documentation de la FIAF, d’abord comme observateur puis comme expert, et y trouve une communauté à laquelle il est très heureux d’appartenir. Chacun des rendez-vous de la commission est un événement pour lui, auquel il se prépare avec exaltation.

Laurent, en dehors de son travail, est un lecteur assidu, tout autant passionné de Marcel Proust ou d’Albert Cohen que de polars. Sa culture musicale est tout aussi éclectique, du classique au rock alternatif : il passe ainsi avec le même appétit de l’évocation d’un groupe punk des années 1980 à celle du nouvel enregistrement d’un opéra italien.

Cinéphile éclectique et curieux, il s’implique notamment dans les travaux menés par le CNC autour du cinéma fantastique en France. Il s’attache tout particulièrement au décryptage des adaptations cinématographiques des grandes œuvres littéraires fantastiques. C’est pour lui l’occasion de réunir deux de ses passions et de valoriser des univers hors norme, en marge, où il se reconnaissait des pairs. Avec gourmandise, il part à la découverte d’un grand nombre de courts métrages et livre des comptes rendus savoureux au retour de ces explorations. La programmation proposée à la Cinémathèque française par le CNC doit beaucoup à ses voyages sur les terres du fantastique.

L’aventure 58-68, retour sur une génération - Vers un nouveau cinéma français, coanimée avec Eric Le Roy, permet de restituer la diversité et le dynamisme de la création cinématographique en ces années de total renouveau, en dépassant le poncif de la Nouvelle Vague. À partir des collections conservées par le CNC, Laurent s’attache à faire émerger des films, certains disparus depuis leur conception, trop
Laurent Bismuth lors d’une réunion de la Commission de catalogage et de documentation de la FIAF à Prague, avril 2018.

souvent oubliés par les histoires du cinéma français, Dans ce cadre, il s’intéresse particu-
lièrement à l’approche moderne de l’adapta-
tion littéraire, livrant une étude analytique peu
conventionnelle du genre.

La reconstruction du film de Caramba,
*La Mirabile Visione* (1921), sera également un
chantier pris à bras-le-corps par Laurent. Il
lui permet de mettre en œuvre une coopéra-
tion fructueuse avec Maria Assunta Pimpinelli
de la Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di
Cineteca Nazionale, croisée par ailleurs au sein de la Commission de
catalogage. L’unique copie italienne est rap-
prochée de l’unique copie française de ce film,
offrant une immersion dans l’œuvre de Dante.
Une copie quasi complète après la restauration
menée par le laboratoire du CNC peut circuler
en Italie avec la complicité de Gaumont, pro-
priétaire de l’élément français, pour honorer
le 700e anniversaire du décès de Dante. Par
le soin qu’ils apportent à la reconstitution des
interitres manquants et la finesse de leur tra-
duction, Maria Assunta et Laurent s’emploient
to redonner vie à cet objet cinématographique
unique en son genre.

Disparu bien trop tôt le 3 décembre dernier,
il laissera à tous ceux qui l’ont connu et côtoyé
un souvenir vif de sa grande culture, de son élé-
gance et de son humour toujours à propos.

**en**

The first tribute to Laurent Bismuth, who died prematurely in December 2021, is by three of his former colleagues at the Institut National de l’Audiovisuel (INA) and the Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée (CNC). Laurent joined INA in 1999, where he contributed to the develop-
ment of their principles and rules for documentation, and also trained new colleagues in the work. In 2008, he trans-
ferred to the film archive of the Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée (CNC) as head of cataloguing and
documentation, and became very involved in drawing up
the EN 15907 and EN 15744 standards. An eclectic and curi-
ous cinephile, he was heavily involved in the CNC’s work
on French fantasy cinema, and coedited the book *58-68, retour sur une génération. Vers un nouveau cinéma français*
with his CNC colleague Eric Le Roy. He also co-led,
with Maria Assunta Pimpinelli of the Cineteca Nazionale
in Rome, an impressive restoration project on the film *La
Mirabile Visione* (Caramba, 1921).

**es**

El primer homenaje a Laurent Bismuth, fallecido prema-
turamente en diciembre de 2021, corre a cargo de tres de
sus antiguos colegas del Institut National de l’Audiovisuel
(INA) y del Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée
(CNC). Laurent se incorporó al INA en 1999, donde contribu-
brió al desarrollo de sus principios y normas de documen-
tación, y también formó a nuevos colegas en el trabajo. En
2008, se trasladó al archivo cinematográfico del Centre
national du cinéma et de l’image animée (CNC) como jefe
de catalogación y documentación, y se implicó extensa-
mente en la elaboración de las normas EN 15907 y EN 15744.
Cinéfilo ecléctico y curioso, participó intensamente en los
trabajos del CNC sobre el cine fantástico francés y coeditó
el libro *58-68, retour sur une génération. Vers un nouveau cinéma français* con su colega del CNC Eric Le Roy. Tam-
bién codirigió, con Maria Assunta Pimpinelli, de la Cineteca
Nazionale de Roma, un impresionante proyecto de restau-
ración de la película *La Mirabile Visione* (Caramba, 1921).
Laurent Bismuth (7th from left) and the other members of the FIAF Cataloguing and Documentation Commission during a meeting in Potsdam, March 2017.

Laurent Bismuth on stage at the 2018 FIAF Congress in Prague.

Laurent Bismuth (7th from left) and the other members of the FIAF Cataloguing and Documentation Commission during a meeting in Potsdam, March 2017.
Laurent Bismuth and FIAF

Thelma Ross and Nancy Goldman

Laurent Bismuth was a respected and valued member of the FIAF Cataloguing and Documentation Commission (CDC), with an intelligence, warmth, and humor that endeared him to many within (and outside) the CDC. Laurent’s position as head of the cataloguing and documentation department at the Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée (CNC) in Bois d’Arcy as well as his past role as audiovisual librarian for the Institut national de l’audiovisuel (INA) gave him an immense well of practical experience to draw on in his collaborations with the Commission. He offered a breadth of expertise and thoughtful analysis that were key to advancing the CDC’s work and mission.

Laurent’s involvement with the CDC began in 2010, when he started attending meetings and joining discussions as a member of the FIAF Cataloguing Rules Revision Workgroup and as a Corresponding Member. When he was unanimously approved as a Full Member by the Executive Committee in May 2017, after such demonstrated dedication and active participation, he wrote that he was “deeply touched.” He was welcomed with great enthusiasm by the Commission members and took on a larger role at a time when the CDC was grappling with several thorny issues, including re-examining its mission and focus. In his first email as a Full Member, Laurent wrote: “I am truly happy to join you bright colleagues and friends, precisely at the moment when we confront challenges that are also enthralling....”

Laurent’s feedback was vital during the development of the FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual, and he was specially thanked in the acknowledgements for his involvement. For example, in the course of several considered emails, his analysis of different publication types (e.g., theatrical, home viewing, etc.) in the context of the EN 15907 model helped in the correct placement of this concept within the Manual and examples of the values that it should capture. Laurent also offered numerous insights regarding the description and delineation of works and variants. In addition, he advocated for the translation of the Manual or, at a minimum, its terminology and concepts, into French, while recognizing the complications of developing a standardized translation amongst French-speaking communities. He was willing to be part of the process of contacting French-speaking colleagues in order to co-ordinate the harmonization efforts.
Laurent served as rapporteur of the Preservation and Restoration Task Force, which worked jointly with the Technical Commission on a project to create a “user-friendly” report that clearly outlined the areas needed for capturing preservation information. In this collaboration, he produced a draft of the first part, which received contributions and feedback from different film archives and cinémathèques and was tested by Prague’s Národní filmový archiv. He was working on incorporating additional changes, including adding video elements to the report, a new Foreword, and the shifting of some sections for smoother transitions within the text. The scope of the project included a second part that Laurent was designing, which focused on laboratories’ actual work and how to document it usefully by gathering information about processes and devices.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to work with Laurent have witnessed at first hand the impact of the knowledge which he so generously offered. What he brought to the CDC and what he achieved professionally is of tremendous value. We can trace the effects of his presence through time and mark these achievements. It was a pleasure and an honor to know Laurent Bismuth. He will be missed beyond measure.

The scope of Laurent’s contributions included participation in CDC workshops and talks, and supplemental support of CDC projects. He was responsible for providing records describing the CNC’s silent film holdings to the Treasures from the Film Archives database, in 2012 sending records describing 2,935 of them, and updating that contribution in 2015 by providing an additional 5,000 new and revised records. At the 2014 Skopje CDC meetings, Laurent and Martine Vignot gave a special demonstration of the shared database developed for the CNC and the Cinémathèque française, which included their collaborative application of the EN 15907 data model and structure to non-film related documentation (e.g., posters). In 2016, Laurent volunteered to provide an example of a restoration-as-variant for the CDC workshop in Bologna. The workshop, entitled “Cataloguing Digital Restorations,” aimed to present examples of approaches to cataloguing digitally restored titles within the context of different institutional environments. Laurent was an advocate for the usefulness of the “variant” entity and wanted to show its possibilities. He was also keen to emphasize the various factors that could impact cataloguing, including system architectures, the nature of a collection, and institutional priorities.

Le second hommage est signé par deux des proches collaborateurs de Laurent Bismuth au sein de la Commission de catalogage et de documentation (CDC) de la FIAF. Laurent avait commencé à s’impliquer dans les travaux de la CDC en 2010, d’abord comme membre du groupe de travail de révision des règles de catalogage et comme membre correspondant, puis membre à part entière à partir de 2017. Sa contribution à l’élaboration du FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual (dont la traduction en français est en cours de finalisation) aura été inestimable. Laurent fut également rapporteur du groupe de travail sur la préservation et la restauration, qui œuvrait, conjointement avec la commission technique, à l’élaboration d’un guide d’utilisation décrivant clairement les champs nécessaires à la saisie des informations relatives à la préservation. Laurent apportait également son concours à divers ateliers et conférences de la CDC, et soutenait par ailleurs divers autres projets de la Commission. Laurent Bismuth était admiré et très apprécié de tous ses anciens collègues, et son décès représente une grande perte.

El segundo homenaje está firmado por dos de los estrechos colaboradores de Laurent Bismuth en la Comisión de Catalogación y Documentación (CDC) de la FIAF. Laurent se involucró en el trabajo de la CDC en 2010, primero como miembro del Grupo de Trabajo para la Revisión de las Reglas de Catalogación y miembro corresponsal, y desde 2017 como miembro de pleno derecho. Su contribución al desarrollo del Manual de Catalogación de Imágenes en Movimiento de la FIAF (recientemente disponible en español en el sitio web de la FIAF) ha sido inestimable. Laurent también fue el relator del Grupo de Trabajo de Preservación y Restauración, que colaboró con la Comisión Técnica en la elaboración de una guía del usuario que describe claramente los campos necesarios para captar datos e información sobre la preservación. Laurent también colaboró en varios talleres y conferencias de la CDC, y apoyó otros proyectos de la Comisión. Laurent Bismuth era admirado y muy valorado por todos sus antiguos colegas, y su muerte es una gran pérdida.
Peter Bogdanovich was not active in the actual processes of film preservation, but his enthusiasm for, and his eagerness to recount the history of film made him a champion of film archives. Without film preservation cinema history becomes conjecture, and conjecture is fiction. Bogdanovich, either in person or through his narrative films, delighted in telling true stories about films and their directors. His passion for cinema was thrilling, infectious, and revelatory. Film archives provided the ongoing basis for his own filmgoing adventures which he shared willingly with all of us who love this art.

My working association with Bogdanovich began in late 1970 when I started organizing an Allan Dwan retrospective, scheduled for March 1971 at MoMA, to coincide with the publication of his book, *Allan Dwan: The Last Pioneer*. I knew, of course, of his association with MoMA through his 18-page monograph published by the Museum in tandem with its 1961 Welles retrospective, his writings on Howard Hawks the following year, also for MoMA, and his interview with Alfred Hitchcock on the occasion of MoMA’s retrospective, timed to the release of *The Birds* in 1963, and published three years before François Truffaut’s interviews with Hitchcock appeared.

Since Bogdanovich had heeded Roger Corman’s siren call to Go West and decamped for Hollywood in 1964 to work on *The Wild Angels*, I, who began my curatorial assistantship at MoMA in 1968, had not yet met him. I admired his energy and commitment to keeping film history alive while he was working in Los Angeles, not only by filling his terrific first feature *Targets* (1968) with film history references, including the employment of his star, the venerable Boris Karloff, playing a character named after Nosferatu and using a clip from Hawks’s *The Criminal Code* (1931), but also by writing a book on John Ford.

Bogdanovich was editing his second feature when he came to New York to discuss the upcoming Allan Dwan program and to decide what of the 400 films that Dwan had made between 1911 and 1961 we would or could show. Before my meeting with Bogdanovich, Praeger sent me an advance copy of his book on whose cover his name was misspelt “Bogdanovitch”. He had not yet seen the

book, and I was not eager to show him the bad “news”. But greeting me like we were old friends, Bogdanovich felt comfortable within his old stomping grounds, and his ease put me at ease as well. When I showed him the copy of his book he laughed, and said he was sure Praeger was aware of the mistake and knew it would prepare a new cover. And, of course, it did. I was impressed by his lack of ego.

We chose about 40 films to screen; except five 16mm prints, all were 35mm. Most came from studio vaults, some from MoMA’s collection, and several from other archives: the Library of Congress, George Eastman House, the British Film Institute, and the film archives of Czechoslovakia. Bogdanovich was thrilled we could borrow rare films from national and international sources. He returned to New York with an ebullient Allan Dwan, then 86, to open the retrospective, witness Dwan being celebrated, and welcome audiences of film lovers to MoMA.

Six months later, Bogdanovich’s sophomore feature The Last Picture Show had its premiere at the New York Film Festival, and the rest, as the reader knows, is history.

Although I followed the rather dramatic ups and downs of Bogdanovich’s professional and personal lives, I did not work with him again until 27 years later when he was once more living in New York and proposed we present a series based on his recently published book, Who the Devil Made It: Conversations with Legendary Film Directors. He would introduce films, speaking about their makers and his relationship to them. We began with George Cukor and Holiday (1938), and, for the second of the bi-weekly programs, Bogdanovich introduced the remarkable Joseph H. Lewis who told fascinating stories about the making of The Big Combo (1955).

The subdued Bogdanovich of 1998 was very different from the firebrand of 1971. He had become tired, wan, and alone. Always carrying his water bottle to remain hydrated, Bogdanovich was very concerned about his health, and yet the moment he began speaking about “who the devil made it” and how they “made it”, a spark ignited, and he was at once garrulous, funny, and, no surprise, still

Peter Bogdanovich and John Ford on the set of What's Up, Doc? (Peter Bogdanovich, 1972).
revelatory. His MoMA audiences always wanted more, and this recognition and applause pleased and sustained him.

In the early 2000s, Bogdanovich became more active than ever. He continued to write more books about cinema, and thanks to The Sopranos became a well-regarded television actor, best known for his performance as Dr. Elliot Kupferberg, a senior psychiatrist.

The story of film continued to animate Bogdanovich. In 2002, he directed The Cat’s Meow, a zippy melodrama written by Steven Peros and based on the story of the mysterious weekend cruise taken on William Randolph Hearst’s yacht by film pioneer and mogul Thomas H. Ince to celebrate his 44th birthday (November 1924) – and on which he may or may not have been murdered. The film’s cast of characters included, among others, Charles Chaplin, Marion Davies, and Louella Parsons, who were, indeed, on that same fateful November journey, and who may or may not have been sworn to secrecy.

Bogdanovich’s last film as director was, in his words, a “celebration” of The Great Buster (2018), an appreciation of the fabulous Buster Keaton, whose life, in its artistic triumphs followed by personal disappointments and an extended period of marginality before rediscovery, mirrored Bogdanovich’s own biography. In addition to the insights Bogdanovich brought to Keaton, and the skill with which the documentary is edited, Bogdanovich, who made a few comedies of his own, called upon his fellow filmmakers, Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, and Quentin Tarantino to comment on Keaton, giving the film a particular and entertaining authority.

I end this short tribute to Peter Bogdanovich, FIAF’s 2007 Film Preservation Award Winner, with a quote from FIAF’s first recipient of its Film Preservation Award in 2002, Martin Scorsese, who, upon hearing of his cohort’s passing, wrote,

... at a crucial moment in the history of the movie business and the art of cinema, Peter Bogdanovich was right there at the crossroads of Old Hollywood and the New. Curator, critics, historian, actor, director, popular entertainer... Peter did it all... Right up to the end he was fighting for the art of cinema and the people who created it.

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Vision and Determination: The Women Who Created FIAF’s Periodicals Indexing Project

Rutger Penne

In 1972, the International Federation of Film Archives launched a global, collaborative project of film periodical indexing. Fifty years later, the Periodicals Indexing Project (better known within the FIAF community as the P.I.P.) is thriving more than ever. Its main publication, the International Index to Film Periodicals, which currently offers almost 525,000 article references from more than 400 of the world’s foremost academic and popular film journals, is an authoritative and much-appreciated tool for film studies. To mark this milestone anniversary, FIAF commissioned a special celebration book within the framework of the FIAF History Project. The P.I.P. 50th anniversary book will be published in September 2022 and officially presented during a two-day celebratory event in Copenhagen, where it all began in 1972. It is only fitting that the readers of the Journal of Film Preservation are given an exclusive preview of the forthcoming book.

It is remarkable how many women were actively engaged in FIAF’s Periodicals Indexing Project during the early years. Apart from Michael Moulds, who, during his long P.I.P. tenure, served as Editor from January 1973 to March 1974, all the other key figures involved in the P.I.P. during the 1970s were women. This is even more striking when taking into account that in most respects FIAF was very much a male-dominated community around that time.

Below are profiles of seven exceptional women who deserve to be spotlighted for their achievements in connection with the P.I.P.

BRENDA DAVIES

Brenda Davies was Head of the Information Department and Library at the BFI’s National Film Archive (NFA) in London when she was appointed as Chairman (a title that would now be simply Chair, or Chairperson) of the newly created FIAF Commission on Cataloguing and Documentation in May 1968. Under her guidance, the Commission set up an exchange, on sheets of paper, of indexing information for film journals, which can be considered a...
P.I.P. avant la lettre. It was also Brenda Davies who suggested that the Commission should be split into two separate commissions. When this happened, in May 1969, she herself became the first Chair of the Documentation Commission, the body which would turn out to be fundamental for the development of FIAF’s Periodicals Indexing Project. But perhaps her most important decision was to invite Karen Jones of the Danish Film Museum to become a Commission member. One might say that she was thus indirectly responsible for creating the P.I.P. This is obviously an exaggeration, but it cannot be denied that Brenda Davies played a substantial role in the pre-history of the P.I.P. For instance, in a letter which she wrote to Karen Jones in July 1971, she praised one of her librarian colleagues, Michelle Snapes, highlighting her “interest in compiling a thesaurus”. Shortly afterwards, Michelle Snapes started to collaborate with Karen Jones on the P.I.P. thesaurus and guidelines. After she resigned as Chair in May 1970, Brenda Davies would remain active in the Documentation Commission until the late 1970s but would never be directly involved in the P.I.P.

Karen Jones played a key role in the history of the P.I.P. Her name appears literally everywhere in the pre-history and early years of the project (1966-1981). The Periodicals Indexing Project was really her baby, so it is appropriate to think of her as the “Mother of the P.I.P.”. Very simply, without Karen Jones, there wouldn’t have been a P.I.P.; she made sure the project survived on many occasions. Of course, Karen Jones didn’t do it all alone. She was surrounded by a team of dedicated colleagues, mostly fellow members of the Documentation Commission, who helped her to make it happen. However, she was certainly the overall driving force behind the P.I.P. On two occasions, Karen Jones stepped into the limelight: she became the first P.I.P. Editor in 1972 and returned in 1974 (to save her “baby”). Her backstage role at FIAF was even more important. Together with her eternal supporter Eileen Bowser, she moved heaven and earth when it was necessary. The many letters that Karen Jones wrote to various FIAF personalities (like Jacques Ledoux), her colleagues in the Documentation Commission, book publishers, etc., demonstrate her social skills and
Vision and Determination: The Women Who Created FIAF’s Periodicals Indexing Project

her ability to negotiate and find practical solutions. Let’s also not forget that the P.I.P. was not even her main job. She was a librarian (and later head of the library) at the Danish Film Museum, in Copenhagen, but this didn’t prevent her from spending endless hours working for FIAF (the P.I.P. was her main interest, but certainly not the only one).

EILEEN BOWSER

Eileen Bowser is, of course, no stranger to the FIAF community. She served the organisation in many capacities over four decades. She sat on the FIAF Executive Committee (EC) continuously from 1968 to 1991 and was also a member of the Documentation Commission right from its creation in 1969. This dual role made her the perfect ambassador for the P.I.P. within the EC, especially from 1972 to 1980 when she was President of the Commission. Without her complete devotion and hard work, the P.I.P. would never have survived the early years of its existence. If Karen Jones can be considered the “mother” of the P.I.P., we might rightly call Eileen Bowser its “godmother”. They were a well-oiled tandem: Karen Jones took care of the practical side of things, while Eileen Bowser defended the P.I.P. with unbribled energy to the higher echelons of FIAF. Since she was so highly esteemed within the EC, she was largely successful in shepherding the survival of the project. Every time a financial crisis erupted (and there was no shortage of those in the 1970s) Eileen Bowser managed to find ways to save it. In 1975, she personally secured a grant of $15,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts in the USA to sustain the P.I.P. She administered the grant herself on behalf of FIAF in her capacity as Film Curator at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. This is only one of many examples of Eileen Bowser’s initiatives which helped to guarantee the continuation of the P.I.P. She regularly clashed with FIAF Secretary-General Jacques Ledoux, who was rather reluctant to help the P.I.P. with extra FIAF funds. Perhaps her biggest achievement was her contribution to the creation of the P.I.P. Supporters at FIAF’s Rapallo Congress in 1981. Her efficient lobbying work in the corridors convinced many affiliates to pay an extra fee to support the project. Let’s also not for-

get that Eileen Bowser was very involved in the production and marketing of the first two annual volumes of the *International Index to Film Periodicals*. She not only talked Bowker into publishing the books, but she also took care of the proofreading, and helped to promote the books within the USA. This affirms once more the all-encompassing span of her significance for the P.I.P. during the 1970s. Like all good godmothers, she provided guidance and advice on many matters. It is a genuine pity that Eileen Bowser is no longer with us (she passed away in December 2019) to witness the 50th anniversary of a project which was so dear to her heart.

**MICHELLE AUBERT (SNAPES)**

Michelle Aubert was born in France but moved to England in 1963. After her marriage to Tony Snapes in 1965 she adopted his surname and was known as Michelle Snapes during her 20-year career at the BFI. In 1969, she joined the BFI’s Library in London, where she worked for six years in documentation, responsible for indexing. This explains her lifelong devotion to the Periodicals Indexing Project. Encouraged by her boss Brenda Davies, she joined forces with Karen Jones in the summer and autumn of 1971 to co-write three essential documents for the P.I.P.: the *List of Subject Headings*, the *Guidelines for Filing*, and the *Guidelines for Indexing*, also translating the three publications into French. As an experienced indexer (and later Chief Indexer) at the BFI, she actively contributed to the *International Index to Film Periodicals* until 1975, when she was appointed Head of the Stills Department. In that position she kept informal contacts with the P.I.P. staff, which were also based in London and regularly visited the BFI Library. In 1987, she became President of the Documentation Commission, and in that role worked closely for four years with Michael Moulds. After serving as Deputy Curator of the BFI’s National Film Archive (1986-1989), she returned to France in 1989 (under her original surname Aubert) to become Curator of the Archives françaises du film (CNC). In 1995, Michelle Aubert was elected FIAF President at a crucial time for the P.I.P. Under her leadership, the FIAF Executive Committee took important decisions, includ-

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ing the move of the P.I.P. office to Brussels in 1996 and the appointment of Rutger Penne as successor to Michael Moulds in 1998. In the history of FIAF’s Periodicals Indexing Project, Michelle Aubert/Snapes has left her mark on many levels.

**FRANCES THORPE**

After the return of Karen Jones to the Danish Film Museum, Frances Thorpe was hired as the new P.I.P. Editor in May 1975. She was not a completely unknown name within the FIAF community. When she worked for the British National Film Catalogue in the late 1960s, Frances Thorpe had joined the short-lived Commission on Cataloguing and Documentation at the 1968 FIAF Congress in London. Five years later, in October 1973, she attended a meeting of the Documentation Commission as an observer. At that time, she was working for the Slade Film History Register, run by the Slade School of Fine Art. The appointment of Frances Thorpe led to a debate on the exact relationship of the P.I.P. Editor (who was employed by FIAF) to the Documentation Commission (which was in charge of the project). In October 1975, the FIAF Executive Committee decided that, from then on, the P.I.P. Editor would automatically become a member of the Documentation Commission. Frances Thorpe remained P.I.P. Editor for five years, and, during that time, she kept it afloat under sometimes difficult circumstances. Fortunately, she could rely on the support of the BFI’s National Film Archive, which was keeping a supervisory administrative eye on the P.I.P. on behalf of FIAF. For practical matters she reported directly to David Francis, Head of the NFA, and, from 1977, also a member of the FIAF Executive Committee. One of Frances Thorpe’s biggest challenges was to find adequate staff (typists, collators, printers, and assistants). Things improved considerably when Lira Fernandes joined the P.I.P. team as a part-time Information Assistant in September 1978. This brought some stability to the project since she would remain a P.I.P. staff member until 1983.

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5. Frances Thorpe (Miller) (1942-2022). We heard the sad news of Frances Thorpe’s death while this article was in preparation.
BRIGITTE VAN DER ELST

Sometimes we cannot fully appreciate the achievements of certain people as they tend to operate discreetly under the radar. Brigitte van der Elst is a good example. Her work for the P.I.P. in the 1970s is largely unknown and definitely undervalued. FIAF Secretary-General Jacques Ledoux hired Brigitte van der Elst in 1970 as Executive Secretary in the FIAF Secretariat which was then hosted by the Cinémathèque royale de Belgique in Brussels. In no time at all she became a crucial link in communications with the FIAF community. This was clearly demonstrated in 1973, when certain P.I.P. activities (typing and card reproduction) were performed at the FIAF Secretariat. Brigitte van der Elst supervised this work (carried out by an extra FIAF staff member) while maintaining close contacts with P.I.P. Editor Michael Moulds, who was operating from London. But she did much more than that. She took care of all the subscription payments (for the annual volume) and handled an important part of the P.I.P. accounts. In 1974 she helped Karen Jones set up the new P.I.P. office in London. But even after this relocation, Brigitte van der Elst still watched over the subscription payments and the P.I.P. accounts in collaboration with the P.I.P. Editor (first Karen Jones, later Frances Thorpe). Throughout the 1970s Brigitte van der Elst acted as a vital intermediary between the P.I.P. staff and the FIAF Executive Committee (represented by Jacques Ledoux in particular). Countless letters written by or addressed to her in the P.I.P. archives bear witness to her tireless efforts and concern for the Project.

MILKA STAYKOVA

Milka Staykova worked as Head of Documentation at the Bulgarska Nacionalna Filmoteka in Sofia, and attended her first meeting of FIAF’s Documentation Commission in March 1973, as an observer. In May 1974, she became an official Commission member, and quickly proved a very active one in the recently created P.I.P. sub-commission. Witnessing the financial problems of the P.I.P. at first hand, she initiated a search for additional funding in her home country. Supported by Todor

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Andreykov, the director of her institution, she managed to convince the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture to give the P.I.P. a three-year grant, from 1978 to 1980. When she became President of the Documentation Commission in October 1981, the P.I.P. had just received a new lease on life with the creation of the P.I.P. Supporters at the FIAF Congress in Rapallo. Milka Staykova went to great efforts to expand the group of P.I.P. Supporters (in 1984, no fewer than five new archives joined the family). Being a regular indexer, she established an excellent relationship over the years with P.I.P. Editor Michael Moulds, which continued after she stepped down as President (and as a member) of the Commission in November 1986. In a report from April 1992, Michael Moulds mentions that Milka Staykova worked intensively for six months with the P.I.P. staff in London “and helped enormously in reducing the backlog of indexing of Russian, Bulgarian and East German periodicals”. This demonstrates how committed Milka Staykova was to the Periodicals Indexing Project, even when she was no longer officially involved in FIAF business.

These seven profiles demonstrate how crucial the role of women was in the early history of FIAF’s Periodicals Indexing Project. Their vision and determination shaped the project in a decisive way.

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Pour célébrer le 50e anniversaire du Projet d’indexation des périodiques (P.I.P.) de la FIAF en 2022, la FIAF publiera un livre spécial dans le cadre du Projet d’histoire de la FIAF. Le présent article, avant-goût de cet ouvrage, s’intéresse au rôle important des femmes au début du P.I.P. Il met en lumière les réussites de sept femmes exceptionnelles dans le cadre du projet. Après un portrait de Brenda Davies, qui a joué un rôle important dans la préhistoire du P.I.P., l’article souligne les contributions de deux femmes qui ont formé un tandem bien huilé : Karen Jones, première rédactrice en chef du P.I.P., et Eileen Bowser, qui était non seulement responsable de la Commission de documentation, mais aussi membre du Comité directeur de la FIAF. Dans l’histoire du P.I.P., Michelle Aubert (connue sous le nom de Michelle Snapes pendant sa carrière au BFI) aura laissé son empreinte à de nombreux niveaux. Frances Thorpe, rédactrice en chef du Projet de 1975 à 1980, à maintenu le P.I.P. à flot dans des circonstances parfois difficiles. L’article souligne également le travail méconnu de Brigitte van der Elst, intermédiaire essentiel entre le personnel du P.I.P. et le Comité directeur de la FIAF dans les années 1970. Est évoqué pour finir le profond engagement au service du P.I.P.de Milka Staykova.

es

Con motivo del 50º aniversario del Proyecto de Indización de Publicaciones Periódicas (P.I.P.) de la FIAF en 2022, la FIAF publicará un libro especial de celebración en el marco del Proyecto de Historia de la FIAF. Este artículo es un avance del libro de próxima aparición, que analiza el importante papel de las mujeres en la historia temprana del P.I.P. Destaca los logros de siete mujeres excepcionales en relación con el proyecto. Tras un perfil de Brenda Davies, que desempeñó un papel sustancial en la prehistoria del P.I.P., el artículo comenta las contribuciones de dos mujeres que formaron un tándem muy eficiente: Karen Jones, la primera editora del P.I.P., y Eileen Bowser, que no sólo fue jefa de la Comisión de Documentación, sino también miembro del Comité Ejecutivo de la FIAF. En la historia del P.I.P., Michelle Aubert (conocida como Michelle Snapes durante su carrera en el BFI) ha dejado su huella a diversos niveles. Frances Thorpe, que fue editora del P.I.P. de 1975 a 1980, mantuvo el Proyecto a flote en circunstancias a veces difíciles. El artículo también destaca el trabajo infravalorado de Brigitte van der Elst, que actuó como intermediaria fundamental entre el personal del P.I.P. y el Comité Ejecutivo de la FIAF durante los años setenta. Por último, se habla del profundo compromiso de Milka Staykova con el P.I.P.
The National Film Archive's nitrate film vaults at Gaydon in the late 1970s.
History

Advertisement for Paulo Benedetti's laboratory, 1927.

LABORATORIOS
Cinematographicos
DE
Paulo Benedetti

Os mais aperfeiçoados do Brasil, aptos para
todos os trabalhos do genero
Rua Tavares Bastos, 153 — RIO
David Francis speaking at the Library of Congress on the occasion of the publication of the National Film Preservation plan in 1994.

Rachael Stoeltje (RS): Can you tell us about your return to the National Archive in the 1970s?

David Francis (DF): When Ernest Lindgren died in 1973, Kevin Gough-Yates (who had joined the Archive as Deputy Curator in 1972) was temporarily curator, and then the post was advertised. I was the Purchasing Assistant at the BBC at the time, and I applied for this Curator position. It came at the right moment. I had originally been taken on at the BBC to provide films and television programmes for BBC2. The original concept for this second BBC television channel was that it should be an alternative channel and should represent specialist interests. It shouldn’t be going for numbers of viewers but be more concerned with providing programming for a broad range of interests. However, ideas about programming for minority interests were changing, and World Cinema was one of the few remaining specialist programmes. Because what I had come in to do was no longer needed, I felt this was the right moment time to move on. So, I applied, and I got the job as Curator at the National Film Archive.

RS: Could you say something about your 24-year nitrate duplication scheme?

DF: One of the early problems when I started as Curator was that there had been a very serious fire at Flixborough, a chemical works in the North of England (1 June 1974) which had killed 28 people and seriously injured many more. The government introduced new regulations whereby nothing inflammable could be stored close to a housing estate.

When Ernest originally acquired storage and preservation facilities at Aston Clinton, they were in the middle of an open field. As time went by, however, the local authorities built houses around them, so the Archive’s nitrate vaults were eventually in the centre of an estate. We were given one year to destroy all the nitrate materials, and, of course, I objected to this and asked if it would be acceptable for us to find alternative storage which satisfied the new conditions. The government said it would be so on a temporary basis but did not want nitrate film being stored for the
long term. I therefore had both to find a way of moving the nitrate and to plan a duplication scheme for it.

RAF Gaydon, a Royal Air Force base in Warwickshire, was one of several UK airfields where nuclear warheads had been stored in underground bunkers. While Gaydon was a long way from the Archive’s other premises, when the part of the site with the bunkers came up for sale relatively cheaply, I persuaded the BFI to buy it. As we had to move immediately, we used the existing bunkers to store the nitrate film. They weren’t ideal, but they were below ground, and had a reasonably stable level of temperature and humidity, and I then began working with nearby architects to design purpose-built nitrate vaults.

The second part of the problem was duplicating this nitrate film, of which we had quite a substantial collection. I came up with a proposal we called the “24-Year Nitrate Duplication Scheme”, the idea being that we’d guarantee the government that we’d copy all our nitrate film within 24 years. Starting in 1976, the Scheme would be completed by the end of the century if we could eventually duplicate an average of about ten million feet of film a year. Amazingly, when I put the proposal to the government, they agreed to fund it. However, not understanding what it all involved, they told me that the first ten million feet had to be copied in the first year. I said this was absolutely impossible as we would first have to appoint something like 100 extra staff and train them, plus, the existing facilities at Berkhamsted were not suitable for such an ambitious duplication system. But they said, “We divided your 24 years by the number of films, and it works out to ten million feet a year. Get going!”

Luckily, Warner Bros were just then selling their London laboratory, a lovely old-fashioned facility called Henderson’s Film Laboratories, in south London. It had been going since 1912, had retained a lot of early equipment, and was already doing the odd archive job for us. I got in touch with Warner Bros, and told them I wanted to buy the lab, and keep the staff and all the equipment.

Warners were a bit surprised, but asked, “What are you prepared to offer for it?” I didn’t have much money and offered £30,000 ($50,000). The person from Warner Bros in America said, “It’s not worth my while to fly over there to sign the contract for that amount”, to which I answered, “Well, I’m sorry, but that’s the way it is”, adding, “By the way, I noticed all the vaults are full of Warners films. What about leaving them with the lab?” Eventually, they sold us everything, including the freehold of the building and all the equipment, for £30,000. We kept on the staff – and we got the films.

We literally signed the sale document one week and started operating the outfit as our own laboratory the next. With that, we were able to achieve our ten million feet in the first year. It also gave me more time to reorganise Berkhamsted, which then had only safety vaults. I had bought the site when I was deputy curator though its vault construction occurred while I was at the BBC. I think there had been at least one, or maybe two safety vaults built, but it had never been envisaged as a self-sufficient conservation centre where one could copy ten million feet a year. We now had time to enhance it, and I started planning the Conservation Centre as a place that would eventually enable us to take all the duplication work away from south London to Berkhamsted.

It was quite a complicated operation. Henderson’s were undertaking all the preparation of the films as well as their duplication. We had to recruit and train lots of new staff at Berkhamsted to take over these procedures which meant that the staff complement rose from 30 to 130, eventually reaching 150. We kept Henderson’s for five years, running the lab at Norwood and the Conservation Centre at Berkhamsted together for a year to ensure a smooth change-over.

By now, the Centre had been generously funded by J Paul Getty Jr., and it was named after him, the J Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre, when it opened in 1987. We sold Henderson’s to the staff there for £75,000.
David Francis addressing delegates from the 1978 FIAF Congress (Brighton) at the National Film Archive’s premises at Aston Clinton.

David Francis and the National Film Archive’s London staff in the 1980s.
Jon Stenklev (Director of the Norsk Filminstitutt), Clyde Jeavons (Deputy Curator of the National Film Archive), and David Francis at the 1979 FIAF Congress in Lausanne.

David Francis and Michelle Aubert (then Deputy Curator of the National Film Archive) in the late 1980s.
($180,000), and in addition to this profit we had obtained 30,000-40,000 reels of Warner films.

RS: Given the fire concerns that you started the conversation with, were you still being told to destroy film, or could you now duplicate it and then store it?

DF: Though the government had agreed to the 24-Year Nitrate Duplication Scheme, they still said we had to destroy the nitrate originals after we had copied them. Of course, I didn’t intend to destroy them at all. We simply put them back in the new vaults. What was the point in destroying them when you could safely put them in the right environment, with the right temperature and humidity? We didn’t talk about it – we just did it. All this dominated the early part of my life at the archive – and it all took place at the same time that I’d undertaken to host the FIAF congress in Brighton in 1978!

RS: Perhaps you could talk about that?

DF: My first FIAF Congress was in 1962, in Rome, and I didn’t go again until 1975, after I’d come back to the Archive. At the 1976 Congress (Mexico), though, I offered to host the Congress in 1978, and had a long talk with Eileen Bowser about ideas for it. Every year, a few scholars would come to the Archive wanting to see films from the first 15 years of cinema – people like Charlie Musser and Tom Gunning. They used to go round all the archives, and most said that they had virtually no films from that period. I think a lot of them had titles, but they weren’t a priority compared to feature-length fiction films. Meeting these scholars and talking to them, I felt this was worrying: this whole early period of cinema was being neglected. We didn’t really know how film started. If you went to an archive, all you tended to see were a few things from the very first days, and then there was absolutely nothing until about 1915. That’s how the idea for the Brighton Congress came about.

Because of the Nitrate Duplication Scheme, I had plenty of film stock. The proposal I sent out to all the archives was that if they sent me their films made between 1900 and 1906, I would make two duplicate negatives, a fine grain, and two viewing prints. One viewing print and one dupe neg would be sent to them, with their nitrate, and we would retain the other elements. It wasn’t so expensive, from my point of view, because we had the stock, we had a working laboratory, and we were talking about relatively short pieces of films. I don’t think any other archive could have done it at the time: we just happened to be in that lucky position.

The first reason for picking 1900-1906 was that I knew that, if we started at the beginning, our whole time would be spent arguing over which country invented the cinema and I wanted to get that out of the way. The other reason was that a very cursory look at film form and language made one realise that, from a research point of view, the interesting period was roughly 1900 to 1906, the year Pathé became a fully integrated production/distribution facility, which changed the way films were produced. It is the period when cinema started to learn its own language – before it became an industry. In the end, I think we received about 800 titles. Some proved not to be in the period and some we couldn’t identify; we decided not to show films that were incomplete or we couldn’t identify, though we duplicated them all. Around 600 films were shown at the Congress.

We invited a group of scholars, I think about 20, from all over the world, (there probably weren’t more than 20 interested in this period of film history then), to come the week before the Congress. We took over a theatre in Brighton (one of the BFI’s group of regional film theatres) and screened all 600 films to these scholars; they made the selection of the films to be shown at the Congress itself.

One reason I chose Brighton was that, so far as Britain is concerned, the most famous place where early films were made was Brighton (the “Brighton School” was well known), so it was the logical place. The other reason was that I didn’t want BFI interference. Had the Congress taken place in London, the BFI Education Department would have wanted a role, and it would not have been one that I or my fellow archivists would have liked. It would have been too theoretical.
One of the people who was interested in early cinema was André Gaudreault from Laval University, in French-speaking Canada. He came to Berkhamsted before the Congress with a group of students, to start looking at and analysing early films, in terms of the way they were constructed – the number of shots, cutaways, and things like that. I thought his approach was really interesting, so we arranged that he would come to the Congress with his students, and that he would prepare a book afterwards which used his analytical approach on all the films we screened. Two volumes eventually came out of the Congress – one was the analytical part, and the other papers given by scholars at the Congress.¹

I had to go back to Eileen Bowser because there was one problem in all my plans. A large number of films from the period 1900 to 1906 were in the Library of Congress (LoC) Paper Print Collection, and we had to decide how to integrate them into the Congress screenings. The quality was not that good, and we knew that if we showed too many American films from the LoC collection, it would put people off. Eileen suggested forming a small group – in the end, six people – for the year and a half before the Congress, to look at the films, analyse them, and recommend a few for inclusion. This was important, because at that time most of the younger scholars who were interested in this period were American.

RS: The impact of the Brighton Congress on film scholarship and archiving has been huge.

DF: I think Brighton had such a massive impact because scholars could see 600 films from this period, when before the Congress they couldn’t see more than maybe 20. It provided a real basis for study. The people who were doing research up to that time were working from written documentation rather than the films themselves. Suddenly, there was this opportunity to see the films. The Congress brought together, for the first time, as many films from 1900-1906 as could be found, identified, duplicated, and screened. You had – in one place – the films, the scholars who already had some

knowledge of the material, and the archivists, who themselves had seen virtually nothing from this period; even though they might have titles in their collections, these were not often viewable. Brighton had an impact on the archive movement because it made archivists realise that this was an important period to preserve and make available if one was to understand the development of cinema. The Congress also had significance because it filled a gap, a vacant page in film history. It also was important in the study of the period after 1906, to understand how the cinema had developed its form and language, and to what extent it depended on prior visual-performance arts like the magic lantern.

Brighton consequently changed both film studies and the history of the archive movement. One fed off the other. Once the archive attitude started to change, and people took more interest, more films became available. There was more original material for scholars to look at. They were able to write in a more coherent fashion about it. It was a chain reaction and didn't just concern the period 1900-1906. Once that period was reasonably represented, archives started looking at the period immediately after it. The material they had from that period, often uncatalogued, was rediscovered. People still talk about the Brighton Congress as an important turning point in the archive movement, but clearly it was also one for film studies as well.

RS: You've spoken elsewhere of the National Film Archive as being like a family.

DF: Yes, the National Film Archive (NFA) was like a family. It really was. It was a pleasure to work there because the staff were so enthusiastic. I often felt, in subsequent times, that bureaucracy has taken away that approach to film archiving. In that early period, up until probably the mid-1980s, it was real fun to be part of the family. I can’t tell you exactly when that changed. But it did change, and, more and more, the archivist’s role became fund-raising and fighting everybody.

RS: And now we come to the Museum of the Moving Image.

DF: After Brighton, one of the big things that happened was that, from about 1986 onwards, I became heavily involved in creating the Museum of the Moving Image (MoMI) which opened on 15 September 1988. For two years before it opened, we had a really tough time because we hadn't raised all the money. We had a budget of £12m ($20.4m) and we'd only raised three-quarters of it, when Tony Smith, then BFI Director, said that he would support it. So we pressed the button. The government gave no money whatsoever towards the Museum. It had been a dream of Leslie's and mine for a long time. We had talked about it ever since I'd been at the BFI, even in the early days. From 1986 to 1988, 75% of my time was spent working on the Museum of Moving Image.

First, we had to acquire a location, and we chose a car park under Waterloo Bridge, next to the National Film Theatre. It was a difficult build – it’s not easy to build in Central London – and we needed a very strange type of building, because what we had actually bought was the airspace between Waterloo Bridge and the car park at ground level. We built a two-floor museum in that airspace. It was not simple, but it was a prime position.

The whole building had to go up, and the museum had to acquire all the items it needed, and copyrights had to be dealt with, all in two years. It was a huge operation. I think during that period, Leslie and I worked all the time, he even more than me because he was on site. I did have to keep an eye on the Archive, although Michelle Snapes [Aubert] (then Deputy Curator) effectively managed it.

RS: Why did the Museum close?

DF: I left the Archive in April of 1990 and went to America, so I only remained involved in the Museum for the first two years after it opened. The BFI closed it in 1998, and I never had a satisfactory explanation as to why. Despite all the awards and repute it won, there were objec-
tions to it from some parts of the BFI, particularly the Education Department which felt its role was not talking directly to the public but training teachers to teach. They considered the Museum too popular. They didn’t like the Doctor Who telephone box or Marilyn Monroe’s dress from The Seven Year Itch. We said that if you had nothing to attract the next generation of film enthusiasts, there wouldn’t be a BFI in the future, and eventually the NFT would close. (Already audiences were all white hair as far as the eye could see.) I don’t think a lot of the more serious people in the Education Department saw this. We felt it was completing the circle. The only thing the BFI didn’t do was show artefacts involved in the creation of cinema and pre-cinema. It didn’t have a visual showcase for attracting the next generation.

RS: We’ve covered all the way up to 1990. At this point, you made a big life change. What led you to the States and to the Library of Congress?

DF: I had a disagreement with the BFI around that time because the director changed. Tony Smith left, and the new director wanted to make much more of the BFI’s collection, which was really the Archive’s collection, readily available. I had signed agreements with the companies when we acquired films which said we would not screen or make available a film without the copyright owner’s written permission. We adhered to this absolutely, and so did the NFT. The BFI managed a chain of regional film theatres, and the new director wanted to send the archive’s viewing copies around the country without getting permission from the copyright owners. I said, “Look, I’ve signed these documents on behalf of the Institute. You cannot do this. Even if you are the person who is prosecuted, morally, I’m the person who made that commitment. I’m not prepared to stay at an organisation that won’t honour that.” I resigned, effectively. Luckily, I was eligible for retirement and I left.

RS: And then you went to the Library of Congress

DF: The Library of Congress’s Bob Saudek, then Chief of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, had come to London a little earlier, and we had taken him to Berkhamsted to see the Conservation Centre. He wanted something similar. The American National Archives had just built a centre, which the government had paid for. He thought that,
if he could come up with a similar scheme, he could get government funding for it. When it was announced that I was leaving the NFA, he got in touch, asking me to be a consultant for a year and write a plan for the conservation centre that could be used as a funding application. Which I did. In the interim, there had been a change of government and funding had dried up. The Library was told, effectively: great plan, but we’re not doing it. Bob asked me to remain as a consultant for a while and I agreed to stay another year. Two months into that year, Bob retired. His job was advertised; I applied for it, was interviewed, and was offered it,3 becoming Chief of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division.

RS: So, what happened with the Packard Campus?

DF: There was no way of proceeding with the LoC Conservation Centre right away. We started working with David Packard, who ran the Stanford Theatre (Palo Alto, California), where he insisted on showing films in their original formats and in the best possible way. In 1994, he wanted to mount a Frank Capra season and the Library had the best material, so he offered to pay for preservation if he could show the prints at the Stanford Theatre. Though this was not a normal procedure, since he was doing it through the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, a charity, we thought it acceptable and agreed. The screenings went very well, and he was very happy with the prints.

One day, I told him we desperately needed a bigger conservation centre. The existing vaults in Dayton (Ohio) were falling apart, too small, and a long way away. I had found a former Federal Reserve building at Culpeper, about 70 miles from Washington, which was for sale. After long discussions, I got the price down to $4.5m, for 42 acres with a huge, underground building. I asked David if he would give us $10m, the other $5.5m to make it suitable for our purposes, and he eventually agreed to fund it from his own foundation.

The project grew and grew during the planning stages, and David Packard eventually contributed the extraordinary sum of $155m. I retired in 2001, before the Campus was completed: I reckoned it would be another four years before it could open, and didn’t feel, at 66, that I wanted another four years of stress.

RS: You were also working on the National Film Registry and similar initiatives then.

DF: Yes, Obviously, building the Culpeper facility was a mammoth part of my life at the Library of Congress, but the other big thing that I worked on during this period was the National Film Registry. This had been set up two years before I joined the Library, the concept behind it being to select 25 films each year to become part of the National Heritage and to be preserved on film at the Library.

The legislation establishing the Registry gave an opportunity for the Library to produce a report on the current state of film preservation in the United States. We organised meetings on the East and West coasts, and in Washington, involving leaders of the film industry and people from every aspect of filmmaking to produce a report. This showed that not enough was being done to preserve and make available the motion picture heritage. We created the National Film Preservation Foundation, a private body designed to raise funding to implement preservation, as there was a mechanism in the legislation which allowed for this.

We then organised the National Film Registry Tour. This was funded by AMC (American Movie Classics), then the major channel for television transmission of classic films. The idea was that we would take a selection of the National Film Registry films and show them, where possible, in a restored original cinema in each state. We would take an important guest with us each time, to help promote the idea of the Registry. We wanted as much publicity as we could get, and as big an audience as possible, so that we could give the Registry – and the Library of Congress – a public face. In the end, we found suitable venues in all but two states.

RS: You were involved in many other initiatives during your Library of Congress years.

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3. Normal rules about such posts being open only to US citizens did not apply as the Library was part of the legislature and not the government.
Yes, there were all sorts of smaller things being done, such as the 1998 Domitor Conference, held at the Library, on sound in silent films. It was more difficult to achieve things within the Library of Congress than it had been for me at the BFI. Since the Library relies on Congress for its funding, everything is political and sensitive. You really do have to think about what the senator from Utah will say about a project, even though he is a single senator from a single state. It makes it difficult to achieve something quickly. Everything takes longer.

I retired from the Library of Congress in April 2001. I stayed in Washington, D.C., and, for the first couple of years after I retired, was a consultant for the Library on several projects, including the National Audio Preservation initiative. During that time, I continued going to FIAF regularly, the last Congress I attended being in 2011 in Pretoria.4 By 2012, I thought it was time to call it quits as I knew fewer and fewer people and was feeling more and more out of touch.

And then you came to Bloomington.

In 2004, my wonderful wife Margaret Amaral died, which brought about many changes. Maggie and I had become firm friends with Joss Marsh in the mid-1990s, when she ran a two-year workshop at Stanford University, bringing together film archivists, historians, and critics, and she became involved at a very early stage in my dream of establishing a new research centre, or museum, using my collection. After Maggie’s death, we became closer, and started performing lantern shows together. In 2006, I moved to Bloomington, Indiana, where she was then a professor, and we married in 2007. I got involved with the Indiana University (IU) preservation initiative, and things like the appointment of Jon Vickers (Director of the IU Cinema 2010-2020). Joss and I also had a generous two-year joint fellowship at IUB, which allowed us to work on a large magic lantern project, bringing together research, performance, and digitisation. Meanwhile, I continued with the National Audio Preservation initiative.

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4. David Francis attended the 2019 Lausanne Congress, after this interview was recorded.
Probably our biggest side project during this time was organising the American Magic Lantern Convention in Bloomington, which, for the first time, brought together private collectors and academic scholars, and involved eight public performances. Otherwise, I had retired, and was working mainly with my personal collection of pre-cinema material, and sometimes helping Joss’s graduate students with research projects.

Joss and I had started talking about a museum right back in 1996. By 2011, we were days away from closing a deal to buy a building in downtown Bloomington. Then I went to the Pretoria Congress, and, while I was away, Joss began wondering if she really wanted to stay in Indiana. She was unable to continue full-time as a professor for health reasons and needed a change of pace with less computer-based work. On my return, we decided she should take early retirement, and we should come back to Britain. If I hadn’t given her time to think, the museum would have been built in Bloomington!

RS: Perhaps we could talk about your FIAF activities now?

DF: The main reason I continued to go to FIAF was the Second Century Forum. By 2002, archivists were becoming very aware of the changing nature of film preservation in the new digital age. I suggested a space to start discussing this, proposing calling it the “Second Century Forum”, with a view to trying to plan ahead. This became a regular session at each Congress and set up what I believe is constructive discussion about the future of film archiving.

Originally, it was specifically designed to talk about archival preservation in the digital era, but, of course, nobody really wanted to face the issue that there would come a time where you couldn’t do traditional preservation. There was still enough film stock around. It’s very difficult to face a crisis if the crisis is not with you already. We had some interesting discussions and talks but there wasn’t the urgency of decision-making required.

The other thing I became involved with was the FIAF Code of Ethics. The reason I was so keen on that was that, ever since I’d been as-
associated with FIAF, at every Congress there had been a discussion of rules and rule changes which I thought put off many potential members. There was a feeling that FIAF was rather a closed shop, not very welcoming to outsiders, not least because you could only become a member if you were involved with an archive. I felt it was important that film museums, and all sorts of other related bodies, had some connection with FIAF, because they were part of the family, even if at its periphery. My question was what we could do to maintain important theoretical views about the nature of an archive without formalising everything as printed “rules”? The Code of Ethics made members accountable to fellow members, not to the Executive Committee. The membership would decide if somebody had broken the Code, if some sort of retribution or punishment was due, and might be more sympathetic to somebody who was not following the general principles of the archive movement.

The Code of Ethics was finally published in 1998, thanks to a lot of hard work by Roger Smither and others, but I don’t know that this reduced the concentration on rules. The Code was supposed to replace them, or at least 90%, with a very simple, single-page document. However, it just meant that, each year, you talked about the rules and about the Code of Ethics! It was a disappointment, though a good exercise because it enabled us to talk about the issues and what we felt was important about archives and their behaviour.

RS: Could you talk about FIAF as an organisation?

DF: When I first encountered FIAF, it was an incredibly secretive organisation. For instance, the only publication of holdings was of silent cinema and each archivist had to keep it under lock and key. If asked a question about whether something existed in an archive, you could look it up, but you could not allow any third party to look at the list directly! This was partly due to a situation which I’m not sure was as serious as it was made out to be. Quite a lot of European archives believed that once a company discovered that you had a film, which you might have acquired in one “creative” way or another, they would demand it back and you would not be able to resist them. This may have happened on one or two occasions, but, to me, it was an excuse for FIAF to remain an overly tight-knit community of larger archives, an elitist group. From the very beginning, it was my view that it was better to give people an honest answer. We would not give them access to unique material or let them take it out of the archive. But if they were the copyright owner and would fund the making of a duplicate negative or a fine grain or something like that, we would happily co-operate.

I always found FIAF’s secrecy a problem. There were still a number of first-generation archivists around, who had mostly started as private collectors and therefore had a private collector’s view of an archive. This was secretive both because they were afraid of copyright-owner interference and because they wanted to be the only person who had a particular item. It was like the stamp collecting of my childhood, really: one wanted to be able to say: “I’ve got this – and you can’t have it.” Second-generation archivists came in without that background; they found archives that had now been formally established, and had to make them work within the system, and be acceptable to government agencies that provided funding. You had to behave as the head of a respectable institution that could be relied on.

RS: But FIAF opened up as it expanded its membership, didn’t it?

DF: Where things started to change, though for different reasons, was under the presidency of Wolfgang Klaue (1979-1985). He was head of the East Germany archive and had the very difficult position of straddling East and West when East and West were not talking to one another. It meant that a lot of developing archives came into FIAF – small archives in countries that had never previously been considered as having archives. That was a very good thing, though there was still a “them and us” inside FIAF. There were still the large archives and there were also the younger, developing archives. Wolfgang particularly encouraged help for the younger ones, though that didn’t mean they got a key to the inner sanctum.

Originally, FIAF only wanted one archive member in each country, but, over the years, that changed: obviously, there are numerous archives which can be considered national collections within any given country. This meant that there were many more archives coming in, each part of an overall national collection. However, there were always those at the top of the pile, while specialist or smaller archives didn’t reach that inner sanctum, and it’s taken a long time to get over that.

RS: Who were you closest to in FIAF?

DF: The person I was closest to was Jacques Ledoux. We’d talk about cinema, and we’d talk about archives, and he was pretty dissatisfied. In some ways he was a party to the secrecy, but he was also dissatisfied with FIAF affiliates’ inability to preserve and make films available. We talked a lot, and I went to Brussels a lot. I also talked a lot to Peter Konlechner about what I thought archives should be, and listened to his views. Both of them were fairly purist. So, it was good for a second-generation archivist like me to talk to them, because they thought very strongly about a lot of the issues. Later, Eileen Bowser, Mary Lea Bandy, and Paolo Cherchi Usai were also very important for me.

RS: You gave a lot of help to archivists and archives around the world.

DF: I had a unique position, over the course of my career, in having been in a large European archive and a large American archive. The Library of Congress was the only archive supported by the US government. It enabled me to be generous, and to support the preservation of the orphans of cinema. I never had to rely on outside sponsorship. Both organisations had significant guaranteed funding, and both made a difference in the way I could behave, in the generosity I could show to people. We could have interns; we could give people opportunities.

I’ve always felt that, wherever possible, one should try to help and to co-operate with other people, though within limits, of course. If film archives are to come together, to solve the problems of film restoration or film preservation and access internationally, they need to cooperate, they need to help those who are not in as good a position as themselves. We were able to assist all sorts of people. We enabled archivists to come and work with us with the hope that they could take what they’d gained back to their respective archives.

Archives, as well. The Cinemateca Brasileira needed film stock, for example, because they had to pay about three times as much as American archives in import duties. Because my late wife’s father was a commercial attaché in the Brazilian embassy in London, we sent stock through the embassy, so they didn’t have to pay duty on it. That arrangement lasted four or five years. When the Argentinian archive building collapsed, they lost all their equipment. We had a couple of spare printers at the Library, so I sent them to Argentina. I even tried to give a lot of spare equipment to Cuba. I thought I was going to get away with it, but, at the very last minute, someone asked if the Library of Congress should really be doing that! At the BFI, we also gave things to smaller archives. These were ways in which a large organisation can help.

RS: Even though you said you didn’t have a big impact on FIAF, you were helping to advance our mission.

DF: I am still trying, in a very small way, to further the aims of the organisation, promoting film preservation and film access throughout the world. Once you’ve retired, one of the things you can still do to help people understand. If you’ve been around a long time and have some sort of reputation, then you might be listened to where somebody else wouldn’t be.
RS: Now tell me about the Kent Museum of the Moving Image.⁶

DF: Joss and I moved to Deal in 2011, when we bought a building and began planning a Museum of the Moving Image. After my involvement with the original MoMI, I’d always wanted to set up another museum. I always felt that not many people understood the importance of the pre-cinema period to the cinema itself. Of course, I was interested in the magic lantern, and the form and language of a lantern show were not dissimilar to those of an early film presentation. I also wanted to show the importance of what happened in the lantern performance field: an optical and projected performance that happened before cinema has relevance to cinema. Talking about “pre-cinema” is really thinking about things backwards. I didn’t see earlier visual and screen experiences as “pre-cinema” because I didn’t see cinema as the be-all and end-all. I see it as a continual development, an experience that keeps changing, in which the cinema is one part, one which is being, and will be, superseded. Cinema is no more important than any other part of that development.

After being involved with MoMI in London, I always wanted to find some way to keep the name alive, too. Meeting Joss was a wonderful thing from this point of view; she comes from a cinema family and had taught cinema for many years. She is also a scholar of the Victorian era, of the period in which pre-cinema reached its most sophisticated state. When we decided to create Kent MoMI together, we pooled our knowledge and tried to develop something to help a new generation of people understand the importance of cinema and to become interested in how it evolved from “pre-cinema”.

We opened on 27 April 2018, with a wide range of exhibits, from shadow puppets to Ealing posters. With our friend David Cleveland (former head of the East Anglian Film Archive) we’ve started a workshop on handling all formats of film on original equipment, hold children’s workshops that get them making their own pre-cinema toys, and have also mounted screenings, though

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we recognise the building is not ideal for that since we can only seat 40. Whether we’ve succeeded or not, only time will tell.

RS: What are your thoughts about cinema, film preservation, and archiving in the future?

DF: I am not sure what the current views of FIAF members are about the preservation of film in the future. It’s not just the preservation of film: it’s the preservation of an experience. It’s doing justice to content. Different projector lamps create different experiences on the screen. This is not the universal experience of, say, the days of silent cinema; it is a different experience for different people. Somehow, once you get to the digital environment, you may make a perfect-looking copy, but that experience has disappeared. The different ways in which people saw a single film – you can’t recreate those. I don’t know how you cope with this.

There’s no doubt about it, that, particularly in access terms, the digital environment has been incredibly important because it has brought classic cinema to people who normally would have never gone to see the same film projected. It is an important tool to add to your toolbox, but it isn’t an answer to the problem of trying to pass on to future generations the experiences people had when they originally viewed films in cinemas.

The solution may be very different now that the one major choice – analogue film – has disappeared. Perhaps we should think about the problem from a totally different perspective: not just physical preservation of the material, but the individual environments in which one originally saw films and how people can have this impression now.
La seconde partie de cette version editée d'une longue entrevista con David Francis abarca su etapa como conservador del National Film Archive de Londres (NFA, ahora el BFI National Archive), en la División de Cine, Radiodifusión y Sonido Grabado (MBRS por sus siglas en inglés) de la Biblioteca del Congreso, primero como consultor y luego como su jefe, así como las actividades posteriores a su jubilación en Bloomington, Indiana, y más tarde en Deal, Inglaterra.

En el NFA, Francis fue responsable de la creación de la instalación para el almacenamiento de nitrato en una antigua base de la Real Fuerza Aérea británica en Gaydon, Warwickshire, de la compra del antiguo laboratorio Henderson en el sur de Londres para facilitar un plan de duplicación de nitrato a 24 años, y de la construcción del Centro de Conservación J Paul Getty en Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. Francis fue el principal impulsor del Congreso de la FIAF de 1978 -el Congreso de Brighton-, que tanto contribuyó a ampliar el conocimiento, el estudio y la investigación del primer periodo cinematográfico, y, junto con Leslie Hardcastle, del National Film Theatre (actual BFI Southbank), el Museo del Cine de Movimiento creada.

Se le pidió a Francis que se convirtiera en consultor de la División del MBRS de la Biblioteca del Congreso, y que elaborara un informe que pudiera conducir a la creación de una instalación de conservación allí. Una vez nombrado jefe de la MBRS, consiguió convencer a David Packard para que financiara la construcción de dicha instalación, el Centro Nacional de Conservación Audiovisual, también conocido como Campus Packard, en Culpeper, Virginia. Esto condujo a la creación de la National Film Preservation Foundation y del National Film Registry Tour.

En la FIAF, Francis propuso la creación del Foro del Segundo Siglo (Second Century Forum) que, a partir de 2002, se convirtió en una oportunidad para debatir, en cada Congreso, algunos de los nuevos métodos y retas que aportaban los desarrollos de la tecnología digital. También impulsó la compilación del Código Ético que establece los principios por los que se espera que los afiliados a la FIAF lleven a cabo sus actividades de preservación y restauración. Francis habla largo y tendido sobre su opinión acerca de la FIAF, cómo ha cambiado a lo largo de los años, y sobre cómo cree que los archivos más ricos deberían ayudar a los que tienen menos recursos.

Tras su jubilación, Francis se trasladó (por motivos personales) a Bloomington, Indiana, donde coorganizó la American Magic Lantern Convention y asesoró a estudiantes de posgrado en sus proyectos de investigación. El y su segunda esposa, Joss Marsh, volvieron a Inglaterra en 2011 y crearon el Kent Museum of the Moving Image, que todavía gestiona. Su esperanza era desarrollar algo que ayudara a una nueva generación de personas a entender la importancia del cine y a interesarse por cómo evolucionó desde el “pre-cine”. El museo alberga parte de la colección de linternas y equipos antiguos de Francis, ha creado talleres sobre el manejo de películas y también tiene un programa limitado de proyecciones.
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Little is known about the technological side of filming and projecting Brazilian films in the silent era that lasted there until 1933. Whereas this field has grown in the local film historiography in the last decade, it is still relatively new. More than 90% of Brazilian silent cinema is considered lost, though more detailed documentation began to appear only in the late 1920s. In this framework, it is very difficult to reconstruct certain practices, like innovative techniques or true technological developments.

For specific areas such as sound accompaniment (especially music), laboratory processes, and use of colour systems, information remains scarce. Some related objects were kept, like the Vitaphone discs of the (now lost) first feature-length hit Coisas Nossas (Our Stuff, 1931), directed by Wallace Downey, but little more than half a century of film materials and some apparatus survives in Brazilian archives. In terms of synchronised sound attempts, most of them are attributed to the inventions of Paulo Benedetti. A few extant documents concern his Cinemetrofonia, first demonstrated in 1912 and for which still exist frames from Uma transformista original (An Original Transformer, 1915), and Benefono, a disc recording and synchronising system, for which remain only images from Vamos fallá do Norte (Let’s Go North, 1929), a musical short. Both the films were directed by Benedetti. Most of the colourised or “natural colours” (additive or subtractive) silent films preserved in Brazil exist only as contemporary, artificially reconstructed versions. Examples are the tinted and/or toned restorations of Exemplo Regenerador (Regenerator Example, 1919), directed by José Medina, and Braza Dormida (Sleeping Ember, 1928), directed by Humberto Mauro.

Until very recently, no concrete records of inventions in colour techniques were reported by film magazines or daily newspapers, or mentioned in memoirs, chronicles, or as the results of film research. There were, though, examples such as the short films made by Francisco de Almeida Fleming from 1919 on, coloured in a special tinting bath of his own devising, while Benedetti’s “natural colours” shooting and projecting process used filters similar to those of Kinemacolor. Pedro Lima (1902-1987), doyen of film criticism in Brazil, was the main promoter of Benedetti’s process – which he came to know in the late 1920s – but he never mentioned it by name. While always talking of it as being a genuine, new invention, he never published precise

technical details, his comments only highlighting the process’s “realistic” colour. Intensive research found nothing that could be cross-checked with his descriptions. Researchers and historians expressed reservations about its supposed quality, or, indeed, the very existence of the process at all.

In 2016, on the occasion of the Cinemateca do MAM’s celebrations of the centenary of filmmaker, researcher, historian, collector, journalist, and prime mover behind the short-lived National Cinema Museum Jurandyr Passos Noronha (1916-2015), his daughter Gilberta Mendes and his son-in-law Julio Heilbron donated a small 35mm can named “Benedetti” to the archive. It was a wonderful surprise to discover that the short reel of positive film inside was actually fragments of Benedetti’s original “natural colours” process. Noronha had already written about this invention, and it was initially included in his historical compilation *Panorama do Cinema Brasileiro* (Panorama of Brazilian Cinema) released in 1968, but subsequently removed. Benedetti’s experimental technique was developed between 1926 and 1929 and, in the credits associated with the images, it is called Tricolor. What survives is a set of seven shots or independent scenes, three clearly made in the garden of Benedetti’s house-studio-laboratory at Rua Tavares Bastos, 153/3, with one showing the view from the house of Rio de Janeiro’s Catete neighbourhood.

This example of Benedetti’s work – and one in generally good condition – immediately required conservation, while, at the same time, it presented us with the challenge of understanding its exact nature. This was essential if the duplication and restoration project were to be successful and not result in distortion of the colour values. Other technical and aesthetic requirements meant appreciating its intrinsic technological limitations, though in the absence of any points of reference. Usually, photochemical and/or digital restoration work of an item takes place in the context of other available materials and is based on known processes. It is rare that there is no comparable material of any kind, even that resulting from unsuccessful experiments. According to its inventor, Tricolor never reached a mature and commercially viable technological phase and was abandoned in the face of advances such as three-strip Technicolor, Kodachrome, and Agfacolor, all processes appearing in the 1930s. The archive’s restoration route required unclear and long historical research, but, side-by-side, we did a wide range of digital restoration tests after first scanning the material at 4k. The scan was made in a Blackmagic-Cintel station, and the treatment performed in the DaVinci Resolve 16/17 application, managed by the archive’s partners Mapa/Link Digital and their restorers Aarão Marins and Juliana Ludolf, under the supervision of the Cinemateca do MAM. What follows is a summary of the historical and technological research, and the ongoing quest to understand the process.

**PAULO BENEDETTI**

Compared to other Brazilian silent cinema professionals, particularly those of Italian ancestry, Paolino Michellini Benedetti’s life and career are reasonably well known although detailed information is scarce despite his many experiments and inventions. Benedetti conducted his research in great secrecy, revealing virtually nothing to the press, collaborators, or friends. Usually, he only applied for a patent and always intended to sell something when the invention would serve a practical use. Some of these, like Cinemetrofonia and Benefono, became commercially viable, and were utilised in films released on the Brazilian

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3. The process “showed on the screen all the nuances and all the variety of colours of nature”. *Diário da Noite*, 23 October 1944.
5. The nitrocellulose base of the first few frames has deteriorated a little and there is more damage at the end, but the contents of the scenes are clear.
8. The exception is an unfinished manuscript titled “A Cinemetrofonia e seu criador”, written by Rocha Galdino around 1980 and preserved in Arquivo Cinédia.
Alternate red and green Tricolor frames on nitrate stock.
movie theatre circuit. Others, like the experiments in cinematic “natural colours”, never formally ended or faced an audience. They were considered lost.

Benedetti was born in Bernalda, southern Italy, on 18 August 1863. Unlike most immigrants who came to Brazil in the second half of the 19th century, he did not travel with his parents; he was not a child, a teenager, or a young boy; he was neither illiterate nor had only a minimal education; he was neither farmer nor agriculturist; he did not settle in São Paulo state. Though coming from a doctor’s family, he refused to follow his brothers into that profession. While still in Italy, Benedetti became a musician and also learned the skills of photography, in Lucca, with Carlo del Prete’s uncle as his teacher. This education gave him some financial independence and he came to Brazil to invest in the industrial sector. The Tolomei & Benedetti partnership specialised in the manufacture of gasometers and provided interior- and street-lighting installation services, all of which were based on acetylene gas. The company won many public bids and competitions. Paolino Benedetti arrived in Rio de Janeiro, then Brazil’s capital city, in 1897. Shortly afterwards, his wife Antonietta Ciannelli, his son Fúlvio, and a sister-in-law, Rosina Ciannelli, joined him. According to a 1979 interview conducted by Rocha Galdino with Ines Piacesi, Benedetti’s godmother and neighbour in the city of Barbacena (in Minas Gerais), where the family lived from 1908 to 1916, there was an open, polyamorous relationship between Paulo (Paolino had finally changed his name) and Antonietta and Rosina.

The acetylene enterprise closed in 1905, but Benedetti kept up precision steel working to which he later added mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineering knowledge. This enabled him, in the 1920s, to open one of the best film laboratories in the country, and to introduce artificial lighting units to Brazilian film sets. His close relationship with the women of his family led him to give them various technical roles in his new cinema enterprise, which started in 1905 with a travelling moving picture show called Cinematógrafo Japonês (Japanese Cinema) which premiered in São Paulo city. Besides participating as actresses, Antonietta and Rosina also worked as projectionists, set technicians, and laboratory staff, in the Ópera Film, Capellaro Filme, and Benedetti-Film production companies, as well as Cinematógrafo Japonês (a new one, in Barbacena), and Cinematógrafo (or Cinema) Mineiro and Palácio-Vitória movie theatres. In these unusual positions for women, they had a pioneering role in Brazilian cinema history. Rosina also worked as an opératrice de prise de vues (apparently combining the jobs of cinematographer and camerawoman) on Uma transformista original. Benedetti’s nieces, Milde and Yolanda Michellini, joined the family troupe as laboratory staff in the 1920s and 1930s, when, in addition to its regular laboratory services, Benedetti-Film survived mainly by producing Portuguese intertitles and subtitles for foreign films. A prime example of their work was Mário Peixoto’s classic Limite (1931), which Benedetti-Film developed and printed.

This female presence and participation in Benedetti’s businesses seems to have been a conscious one in terms of social and cultural implications. When Benedetti-Film started the production of feature-length fiction films in 1924, the plots introduced and explored, in an unobtrusive way, female protagonists and their problems. The rise of “macho” culture and oppression was the result of the “modern way of life”, something already current in Hollywood productions but a novelty in Brazilian cinema. Because these films were commercial and critical flops, their innovative social aspect went un-

9. The first and second Cinemetrofonia systems were patented in countries like Brazil (patent number 6,961), Italy (n.130,559), France (no.454,336), Belgium (no.252,862), England (no.810), Portugal (no.8,563), Spain (no.54,629), Switzerland (no.64,500), Austria (no.66,849), and Germany (no.276,229). Benedetti made Uma transformista original in the first version. After introducing some improvements, he made Gigolette (1924) and O dever de amor (The Duty to Love, 1925). A photograph of the Benefono system, with which Benedetti made more than 30 synchronised-sound short musical films in a year, appeared in Cinearte, 5 June 1929, p.8.

10. Almost all biographical notes about Benedetti and his family come from Cinearte, 5 June 1929, p.8, A Cena Muda, 31 October 1944, pp.8-9, O Jornal, 22 October 1944, pp.1 & 4, and Rocha Galdino’s papers.

11. Cinearte indicates a previous position in Italy as a director of an amateur theatre company and suggests that the photography training started around 1895.


noticed in the extremely conservative environment of the time. Yet, the female presence is reasserted in a company card, which indicates a woman as a cinematograph creator.

TRICOLOR

Many newspaper and magazine articles defined Paulo Benedetti much more as an inventor than a producer or a cinematographer, despite all his cinema skills and prestige. Benedetti himself encouraged this image in some ways, because he approached the press to promote films and businesses as a commercially disinterested man. His relationship with Pedro Lima, which went back to the pages of Selecta (1924) and Cinearte (1926) magazines, became closer during the making of Barro Humano (Human Clay, 1929), directed by Adhemar Gonzaga, production of which lasted for two years. The film was formally a Benedetti-Film production, but, in reality, an economic and practical initiative of the Cinearte group (Gonzaga, Lima, Paulo Vanderley, and Álvaro Rocha). Lima worked on the film as production manager while Benedetti was the cinematographer.

While shooting Barro Humano, Benedetti projected an answer print, demonstrating the results so far of his ongoing research into a natural colours process, for the young filmmakers involved in its making. The person most vividly impressed with it was Lima. This first film actually made in the as-yet-unnamed experimental system was ordered in late 1927 by Lia Torá and Olympio Guilherme, winners of a “Masculine and Feminine Photogenic Beauty Contest” promoted by Fox Film and intended to discover new Latin talent. The couple’s portfolio film, made in the Benedetti-Film studio, is considered lost. After unspecified improvements, Benedetti shot new scenes in 1929 with his system, now called Tricolor, some of which was preserved by Jurandyr Noronha and donated to the archive in 2016.

Pedro Lima, who had already publicised Benedetti and his invention through the pages of Cinearte, was even more excited with the new results. The improved process impacted him to such an extent that he continued to talk about it for years, even after Benedetti’s death on 16 October 1944. He wrote notes, articles, and reviews, and made interviews that were published in newspapers from 1929 to 1959. It was mainly this material that aided our understanding of some of Tricolor’s origins, technical features, and technological limitations.

Lima’s euphoria was always opposed to Benedetti’s reported dissatisfaction with his results. The creator thought of the process as a “Columbus’s egg”, or, as he argued, an easy and obvious development of the original situation, but not a true technological upgrade. It is difficult to decipher his position. If the “natural colours” were truly present, perhaps the tech-

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14. The journalist’s memories as chronicled are sometimes confused, but the projection probably occurred in November 1926; one year earlier, Benedetti had presented his first tests to the Fox Film contest’s manager José Matienzo and cinematographer Paul Ivano, as reported in Correio da Manhã, 16 October 1927.


16. Pedro Lima mentioned “other scenes”, presumed lost, one of them intended for English buyers of the Tricolor system.

17. In addition to sources already mentioned, later and most important ones are Diário da Noite for 18, 21, and 23 October 1944, and 5 May 1946, O Cruzeiro, 27 June 1953, and O Jornal, 7 July 1959.
nical and financial side of the operation was not strong enough, or, perhaps, it was not a real advance. He never applied for a patent for his system, and it was never released commercially. The questions arise as to what was its exact nature, and what were the main problems with the equipment, the limitations of the process? What is Tricolor?

The investigation encountered many preliminary contradictions. The name suggests a trichromatic process, but the film itself shows a bicolour additive synthesis (red and green alternate filtered frames). Reference to the filters led immediately to the English Kinemacolor, examples of which were screened in Brazil in the 1910s, and to the French Chronochrome Gaumont, apparently not shown in Brazilian cinemas. In a confused text written by Pedro Lima (for an unidentified publication), titled “Côres e privilégios”, he drew a parallel between Benedetti’s colour system and “an English colour system called Kinemacolor, created by Gaumont” that was tested in Brazil the late 1910s. It is likely that a distribution company based in São Paulo offered a trial screening of some Chronochrome films in Rio de Janeiro, among them a foreign feature-length production known in Brazil as “Os vândalos”. Lima described the system’s technical features such as its narrower frame and its three filters, along with a high amperage that corresponds to French technology. (I could find no information about these Cinema Avenida screenings.) Something evidently went wrong, and the company contracted cinematographer João Stamato to correct the colour effect: he painted red and green colours directly onto the film itself. Lima stated in the article that Benedetti knew and explored this experiment, maybe his first approach to the problem. Elsewhere, Lima claimed that Benedetti was inspired by filmmaker Jayme Redondo when he visited Benedetti-Studio. Redondo speculated that colour film would be the future of cinema (Cinearte, 28 September 1927, p.5).

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18. The last registered screening was in 1930; see O Cruzeiro, 27 June 1953.

19. In a confused text written by Pedro Lima (for an unidentified publication), titled “Côres e privilégios”, he drew a parallel between Benedetti’s colour system and “an English colour system called Kinemacolor, created by Gaumont” that was tested in Brazil the late 1910s. It is likely that a distribution company based in São Paulo offered a trial screening of some Chronochrome films in Rio de Janeiro, among them a foreign feature-length production known in Brazil as “Os vândalos”. Lima described the system’s technical features such as its narrower frame and its three filters, along with a high amperage that corresponds to French technology. (I could find no information about these Cinema Avenida screenings.) Something evidently went wrong, and the company contracted cinematographer João Stamato to correct the colour effect: he painted red and green colours directly onto the film itself. Lima stated in the article that Benedetti knew and explored this experiment, maybe his first approach to the problem. Elsewhere, Lima claimed that Benedetti was inspired by filmmaker Jayme Redondo when he visited Benedetti-Studio. Redondo speculated that colour film would be the future of cinema (Cinearte, 28 September 1927, p.5).
What helps, in part, in the understanding of Tricolor has been the recent advances in the historiography of silent film colour systems and some successful restorations of two-colour Technicolor, Kinemacolor, and Chronochrome Gaumont films. The analyses of specific problems like the chromatic synthesis deficit (a dominant yellowish or blueish final hue), colour fringes and dots around moving people or objects in the on-screen image, and a visible halo in a badly projected performance, provide some parameters for a more precise evaluation of the system itself, and in the Tricolor digital restoration process.

The apparent resemblance to Kinemacolor turned out to be misleading: the most obvious Kinemacolor faults are absent from the donated Tricolor item, despite the similarities indicated by old press articles. Then, a sudden discovery revealed a better clue to identifying the true origin of Benedetti’s process. In the /lost+found television series\(^{20}\) one of the episodes (directed by Pedro Henrique Ferreira) is dedicated to restorer Johan Prijs. The documentary includes a Chronochrome Gaumont film test (1912), restored by Haghefilm in the later years of the 20th century. This film is exactly the same as the first scene of the reel preserved by Jurandyr Noronha. Benedetti evidently retained his first reference, probably from aborted experiences in the 1910s, using it as a comparative element, perhaps even pretending it was something like a quality control for the results. If the experiment could match or surpass the original chromatic effect, Tricolor would be ready to enter commercial exploitation. What went wrong? What are the differences between the two systems? Why choose Chronochrome as the starting point? What was the expected upgrade?

From today’s perspective, it seems that, compared to its competitors, Chronochrome was the better choice for a colour performance (especially when taken together with an art-nouveau sensibility such as Benedetti had). However, the French system was complex, difficult, and expensive for both filming and projection, quite apart from other key points such as its reduced frame size. While it produced a good image, it was commercially impractical from a technical and economic point of view. It is unclear how Benedetti came to know the details of the process or how he obtained a print of the French test. Nevertheless, his solutions point to attempts to overcome Chronochrome’s

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20. Produced by Dilúvio Produções and Lúdica Produções, supported by FIAF, CLAIM, and the Cinemateca do MAM, and first shown in March 2022.
economic problems without changing its basis – the best available natural colours by additive synthesis – or substantially altering cinema technology in use worldwide. His idea was simply to assimilate new elements into the existing technological framework. How could one produce an additive colour film using any camera and film stock already commercially available? How could one introduce the trichromatic basis (the filters), without the need for complex, expensive, and unusual extra equipment?

Benedetti’s solution is both ingenious and simple, along the lines of his “Columbus’s egg”, offering the perception, not of a theoretical engineer, but of a practical cinematographer, laboratory technician, and craftsman. For the camera, he created the usual additive wheel with the three filters, in his words, “a multiple and regulated ‘shutter’ suitable for any camera”.

For the exposed and developed positive black & white film stock, he ordered the manufacture of some sort of “filter printing machine” (“aparelho distribuidor” in Portuguese) of his own design to cement the emulsion with alternated red and green cellophane-like filters, cropped to fit the 35mm frame. A yellow, blue, or violet filter was inserted in front of the projector. Notwithstanding the absence of a true technological improvement, and perhaps a poor practical performance, the trichromatic additive synthesis was reconstructed at much lower cost than the old Chronochrome Gaumont system. The process also benefitted from the introduction of Kodak’s panchromatic film stock Type I, first used in Brazil in the beauty contest tests and in Barro Humano, which perhaps explains the preference for the violet filter.

Almost a century after its making, the experiment still has a unique beauty, not least because of its particular settings. The reel is exactly 2,060 35mm full frames of positive nitrate film on 1929 stock. Projected at 16 frames per second, it runs 2’08” plus 12 frames. At 24fps, it is 1’15” plus 20 frames. And at 48fps, we have 42’ plus 44 frames. The surviving images are in the following order: opening “Tricolor” credit, a simple still life (the Gaumont test), an elaborate still life, Benedetti’s front garden, a view of the city, long shot of a woman, medium shot of the same woman, and closing credit “Tricolor”.

Finally, it is important to note that the trials for a digital reconstruction of the Tricolor “natural colours” effect encountered some obstacles. What was the required converted projection speed (Chronochrome ran at 48fps)? Should we aim for the reported “red-orangeish” hue of the final image? And what about fading? Does this interfere with colour rendition? Are the current digital tools suitable for Tricolor idiosyncrasy? The results achieved until now are clearly temporary and they indicate the need for deeper research in the future. Despite these and other limitations of inquiry, knowledge, and actual technology, Tricolor emerges as the oldest-preserved, true film experiment in the field of colour cinema in Brazil, distinguished from the tinting and toning techniques of its time. An example of available resources and instruments, good adaptation, as well as a conceptually correct reworking of its predecessors, Tricolor might have failed, not because of intrinsic problems, but because it was moving towards an historical dead end. Isolated, after being considered “too old” for cinema, Benedetti discontinued this first research in the film colour field in favour of a new one: to improve on Technicolor’s three-strip process.

From 1934, he obsessively dedicated the last ten years of his life to creating an easier-to-manipulate and much cheaper colour film stock. There is no information to be found about this new research with regard to any


22. Lima observed that Benedetti first studied the day’s sunlight to decide which filter to combine with the red and green ones. This suggests great insight into colourimetry since Europe and South America have very different colour temperatures, the latter with so-called hard-to-match “tropical light”.

23. On only one occasion did Lima speculate about the real problems of Tricolor. He indicated two. First was the 48fps speed requirement and the poor lightning available in projectors, which, together, provided a “dark” final image. Second, he mentioned an “image shake” (“trepidação” in Portuguese), visible in performance, a lack of colour stability in the image produced by the first version of the process (*Cinearte*, 28 September 1927, p.5).

24. Filmmaker Luís de Barros was one of those who commented on this “beautiful colour effect” in his book *Minhas memórias de cineaste* (Rio de Janeiro: Artenova/Embrafilme, 1978, p.127). In theory, the final colour changed depending on which filter was used in camera and projector. For instance, *Correio da Manhã*, 16 October 1927, and *Cinearte*, 28 September 1927, pp.4-5, reported different combinations.
films or equipment, nor a single word about the technical features of the process. However, in the 1980s, I, personally, saw some frames in the Arquivo Cinédia, kept by Adhemar Gonzaga and his daughter Alice Gonzaga, before they were permanently lost in a flood in 1996. It was a subtractive monopack, in some ways similar to Kodachrome (or so it seemed to me at the time), and the colours were vivid. Benedetti worked so hard on this endeavour that he had a stroke. Unable to walk again, he invented a special chair in which he could literally move on and continue his research, but, though he persisted a little longer, without reaching any conclusions. His nieces kept everything they could, especially the machinery;25 however, after their deaths in the late 1960s, everything was thrown away. Pedro Lima always wanted a museum to preserve Benedetti’s inventions and films. As far back as the 1930s, he had worried that they could be lost for ever. At least we now have one tiny example.

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Trata sobre la vida y la obra de Paolo Benedetti, inventor y cineasta brasileño de origen italiano, creador de un sistema de color llamado Tricolor. Poco se sabe en detalle sobre Benedetti, y aún menos sobre el Tricolor. La mayoría de sus películas se han perdido, y aunque se describen en la prensa especializada y crítica, no se ofrecen detalles de las técnicas.

En 2016, la familia de Jurandyr Passos Noronha ofreció a la Cinemateca do MAM una pequeña bobina de película en color que resultó contener siete planos o escenas acreditadas en Tricolor. Para poder conservarlo y duplicarlo con éxito, el archivo tuvo que intentar averiguar cómo se había realizado originalmente antes de que Benedetti abandonara sus experimentos en dos colores a principios de los años 30.

El artículo continúa con información sobre la vida de Benedetti y su carrera anterior como fabricante de gasómetros y proveedor de servicios de iluminación por gas. Posteriormente, creó uno de los mejores laboratorios cinematográficos de Brasil, así como sus propias empresas productoras. En particular, empleó a varias mujeres en funciones no tradicionales, como proyeccionistas y técnicas de laboratorio.

El tricolor en sí mismo sigue siendo un misterio, aunque se sabe que se utilizó para un corto promocional de una pareja que se presentaba a un concurso de belleza de la Fox Film, y para un largometraje realizado con la colaboración del equipo de la revista Cinearte. En lugar de ser “tricolor”, como sugiere su nombre, parece haber sido un proceso de filtro de dos colores similar al Kinemacolor. Sin embargo, una restauración de Haghefilm de un fragmento en sistema Chronochrome de Gaumont resultó contener las mismas imágenes que la bobina Tricolor, y parece que este proceso fue el punto de partida de Benedetti. Todavía quedan preguntas por responder, pero el Tricolor se perfiló como el experimento fílmico más antiguo conservado del cine en color en Brasil.

Posteriormente, Benedetti se dedicó a los experimentos en tres colores, pero todo su equipo fue destruido en la década de 1960 tras la muerte de los miembros supervivientes de la familia.

25. The films probably disappeared in 1952. There was a fire at the Servicio de Información Agrícola – SIA, a Ministry of Agriculture Department where Pedro Lima worked as a filmmaker, and where he stored all the old Brazilian films that he tried to save.
Fotogramas de la copia nitrato teñida y coloreada con estarcidos de Superstición andaluza / Superstition andalouse (Segundo de Chomón, 1912).
A loose-leaf diary and other documents belonging to Mr Yuen Jim-fan, second-generation owner of Tai Ping Theatre, in the "Out of the Past – From the Tai Ping Treasure Trove" exhibition.
Mapping Chomón en la fachada de la Filmoteca de Catalunya, creado por Hamill Industries.
En 1929, el año en que falleció Segundo de Chomón en París, el cine estaba inmerso en una radical e irreversible transformación tecnológica y estética: el paso del mudo al sonoro. A lo largo de treinta años de carrera profesional, este cineasta español nacido en Teruel había desempeñado un papel prominente como especialista en trucajes y animación, y contaba en su filmografía con más de un centenar de títulos. Debió ser su capacidad técnica la que lo llevara de Barcelona, su ciudad de formación, hasta París, al ser contratado por la poderosa productora Pathé Frères, verdadero imperio cinematográfico del momento, donde Chomón vivió uno de sus periodos más brillantes como responsable de “scènes à trucs”, guionista y director.

Tras una breve estancia en Barcelona durante la cual no perdió el vínculo con la casa Pathé, se trasladó a Turín en 1912, contratado como director técnico de la productora Itala Film. Como consecuencia de su decisiva intervención en la fastuosa Cabiria, de 1914, se produjo el reconocimiento internacional de Chomón como “padre de los técnicos cinematográficos”, en palabras del director Giovanni Pastrone.

Chomón es un ejemplo claro del cine del momento, un cine de oficio, en el que el anonimato de los técnicos era casi siempre la norma. Se han conservado escasas fuentes primarias y documentos del cineasta y las pocas referencias que sus contemporáneos en España le dedicaron fueron mínimas y a menudo vagas.

Después de su muerte cayó en el olvido, y no sería hasta el final de los años cuarenta cuando historiadores como Carlos Fernández Cuenca se interesaron por su obra. Georges Sadoul en su Histoire Général du Cinema, publicada el año 1947, fue el primero que le dedicó atención fuera de España, y habría que esperar hasta 1971, en el primer centenario de su nacimiento, para que vieran la luz las primeras monografías y homenajes.

En la primavera de 1985 se programó en el Festival de Cine de Animación de Annecy una sesión con películas del desconocido pionero, que captó la atención y curiosidad de una nueva generación de espectadores y críticos. Los estudios de J.G. Tharrats, S. Nosenzo o J.M. Minguet establecieron las primeras biofil-
mografías. A ellos hay que sumar las recientes aportaciones de la Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé, en especial en el coloquio internacional celebrado en 2017, dirigido por Réjane Hamus-Vallée, Jacques Malthête y Stéphanie Salmon, así como las constantes actualizaciones del perfil del cineasta en la web del grupo de investigación Le Grimh con Jean-Claude Seguin a la cabeza. Por último, es imprescindible destacar los numerosos archivos fílmicos y museos que conservan y recuperan la obra del cineasta, contribuyendo de manera decisiva a actualizar su filmografía y legado.

Segundo de Chomón y el cine emergieron en una Barcelona en construcción, plural, contradictoria y llena de oportunidades, que el futuro cineasta supo aprovechar para convertirse en un técnico competente y requerido por las grandes productoras del momento. En este camino de formación y consolidación internacional, de manera discreta, casi invisible, Chomón participó en muchos de los proyectos para hacer de la ciudad un centro de producción, distribución y exhibición mundial. La coincidencia de que Barcelona y Chomón iniciasen a la vez sus respectivas carreras cinematográficas ha sido clave para la Filmoteca de Catalunya, que viene reivindicando su figura desde 1995. Estos esfuerzos contribuyen a un mayor conocimiento de los inicios de nuestro cine, y revelan sus singularidades, que tienen una importancia capital en los aspectos técnicos e industriales.

Nuestra Colección Chomón, que reúne 105 títulos procedentes de distintos archivos, mayoritariamente de la FIAF, ha sido determinante para el proyecto de difusión internacional de la obra del cineasta. En 2021, con ocasión del 150 aniversario de su nacimiento, el gobierno de Catalunya le otorgó rango de conmemoración oficial impulsando numerosas actividades y proyectos con el doble objetivo de actualizar sus dos etapas en Barcelona (1901-1906 y 1910-1912), y de conectar sus películas con las audiencias del siglo XXI.

I. EL AÑO CHOMÓN

Esta conmemoración se ha desarrollado en distintas iniciativas como la creación de una web, <anychomon.cat>, que ha sido el desen-
que combinaba magia, música y cine; un maravilloso mapping en la fachada de nuestra filmoteca a cargo de Hamill Industries; proyecciones en una pantalla gigante instalada en el centro de Barcelona; y por último, y aún pendiente debido a la covid-19, un concierto a cargo de la Escuela Superior de Música de Catalunya.

Una vez finalizado este intenso Año Chomón, el balance ha sido más que positivo, y nos ha permitido dar a conocer nuevos detalles de su biografía; así como localizar y presentar nuevos títulos gracias a la ayuda de diversos archivos fílmicos, que con sus generosas aportaciones han vuelto a demostrar que el espíritu FIAF continúa vigente y promueve complicidades entre sus miembros.

II. CHOMÓN-BARCELONA, UNA NUEVA MIRADA

Los resultados que ahora presentamos son fruto de recientes investigaciones y se centran en sus dos etapas barcelonesas (1901-1906 y 1910-1912), las menos conocidas hasta la fecha. Publicaciones recientes y búsquedas en archivos y prensa han permitido localizar nueva y relevante documentación.

LOS PRIMEROS AÑOS

Segundo de Chomón Ruiz nació el 17 de octubre de 1871 en la ciudad aragonesa de Teruel, pero con apenas 18 meses, la familia se trasladó a Valencia, donde falleció su padre, Isaac Chomón, enfermo del corazón. Años después, su madre se volvió a casar y alrededor de 1880, la nueva familia se trasladó a Barcelona, donde su padrastro, Antonio Argüelles, había conseguido un trabajo en la Compañía Trasatlántica.

En 1890, Segundo de Chomón fue llamado a realizar el servicio militar, que debió resolver de alguna manera para no prestarlo, ya que en 1893 estaba empleado en la Compañía Trasatlántica de Barcelona, la misma en la que trabajaba su padrastro, entonces enfermo. En noviembre del siguiente año, Chomón se casó con la joven de origen francés Jeanne Ray, y continuó trabajando en la Compañía Trasatlántica hasta mayo de 1897, cuando se presentó voluntario para intervenir en la Guerra de Independencia de Cuba. Durante su ausencia, murió su padrastro. En la documentación de su licenciatura del ejército de noviembre de 1899 aparecen sus datos personales, entre ellos, que está casado y de oficio es escribiente. Así mismo, en el padrón de Barcelona de 1900 aparece viviendo junto a Jeanne Ray.

Su llegada a Barcelona aun siendo un niño, así como la boda con Jeanne Ray, se revelan como informaciones novedosas, y ponen en cuestión algunos detalles de la biografía hasta ahora divulgada. De acuerdo con estos hechos, Barcelona debió ser su ciudad, donde residía su familia y vivió desde los nueve años, por lo que cuando finalizó su etapa de París, regresó a su casa en Barcelona. Su boda y la enfermedad de su padrastro generan no pocas incertidumbres, primero su viaje a París entre 1895 y 1896, y su primer contacto con el cine gracias a Julienne Mathieu, y segundo, su relación con ella, hasta ahora reconocida como su esposa y con quien habría tenido un hijo, Roberto. Independientemente de la relación con Jeanne Ray, queda claro que Julienne Mathieu fue, al menos desde 1906 en la productora Pathé, compañera y colaboradora del cineasta hasta su muerte en París en 1929.


CHOMÓN, EL CINE Y BARCELONA

A su vuelta de Cuba, Barcelona se estaba posicionando como un punto estratégico para la distribución de filmes en España y Sudamérica. Con más de treinta locales que proyectaban cine de manera más o menos regular, es comprensible que alrededor de este negocio en expansión aparecieran talleres de coloreado, debido a las enormes ganancias que generaban. Hasta la fecha se han identificado diez talleres, como el de Baltasar Abadal, empresario cinematográfico de éxito, que más adelante será el representante de Star Films de Méliès; Lluís Macaya, empresario clave, que representará a Pathé Frères, pero también el de Albert Marro, que llegará a tener una sucursal en París.

Esta importante figura del cine catalán, Albert Marro, viaja a París en junio de 1901 “para adquirir los últimos adelantos del cinematógrafo” y es probable que lo hiciera con el soporte económico del empresario Lluís Macaya. Un año después requiere “entre 40 o 50 señoritas. Serán preferidas las que hayan iluminado”, y ese mismo año se publicita su sucursal de manufactura y exportación de material cinematográfico en el boulevard Sebastopol, en París.

En noviembre de este decisivo 1901, Chomón también está buscando chicas para colorear películas. Poco después, en febrero del 1902, aparece un anuncio publicitario de Barbe-Bleue de Méliès, “pintada exprofeso por el conocido pintor de películas don Segundo Chomón”; y por la correspondencia con Pathé sabemos que en octubre Chomón trabaja para esta productora coloreando películas.

París y los talleres de color parecen determinantes tanto para Marro, que tiene sucursal propia, como para Chomón, que trabaja para Pathé, al menos hasta 1903. Y es precisamente este año cuando el empresario Lluís Macaya aparece referenciado en los libros de contabilidad de la casa Pathé.

En 1903 también se anuncian en la prensa Las maravillas de Lumière-Chomón, un programa especial de películas coloreadas de los exclusivos fotógrafos Napoleón, responsables de las primeras proyecciones Lumière en Barcelona en diciembre de 1896.

Ferdinand Zecca viajó a Barcelona en 1902, y recoge en sus memorias los rodajes que allí realizó, atribuidos tradicionalmente a Chomón. Aceptado este hecho, es probable que, durante su visita, Zecca contactase con Chomón, en tanto que colaborador de Pathé. Películas atribuidas erróneamente a Chomón durante estos primeros años, ahora han sido revisadas y ajustadas; de manera inversa han aparecido nuevos títulos hasta ahora completamente desconocidos, como el que de momento se considera su primer filme, Tonito y

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4. El Diluvio, 16 de noviembre de 1902.
5. El Noticiero Universal, 14 de febrero de 1902.
6. Correspondencia entre Segundo de Chomón y la empresa Pathé (Fons de J.G Tharrats. Filmoteca de Catalunya).
En esta sala se proyectaron, sobre el cual planean, De España Don Alfonso XIII realizado para la casa Pathé Tertosa Festival republicano matinal de automóviles en el Parc Güell viaje del rey a Valencia. También rodó filmes de actualidad como del film Columns Wife Through the New York Herald “Personal” entre finales de 1904 y mayo de 1906, con la productora Macaya y Marro, Chomón rodó ficciones como La memoria de Vera es tan precisa, que corro-
dir el rodaje de esta película que dirigía Chomón. Le Roi des Dollars, Le Roi des Dollars, estrenado en la Sala Mercè en febrero de 1905, y en Francia en noviembre de ese mismo año, y que abre la hipótesis de que algunas películas o trucos po-
drían haber sido rodados en Barcelona y luego vendidos a Pathé para su distribución interna-

cional, por lo que podrían atribuirse a Chomón. A RCHIVES AT W ORK a propósito del 150 aniversario de su nacimiento

Durante estos años, Segundo de Chomón tuvo acceso a más y mejor tecnología gracias a su relación con la casa Pathé. Su competen-
cia y talento debieron empezar a ser evidentes para los que le rodeaban, habiendo demostra-
do, de manera clara y sólida, sus capacidades y habilidades técnicas, para que una produc-
tora de alcance mundial le propusiera incorporarse a su equipo técnico. Este hecho plantea una pregunta muy concreta, ¿qué había hecho Chomón en Barcelona para que mereciese esa atención internacional de tanto prestigio?

A modo de hipótesis, existen una serie de títulos de Pathé, tradicionalmente atribuidos a Chomón que, en sentido estricto, hoy en día no le serían atribuibles puesto que se realizaron an-
tes de su llegada a París en agosto de 1906. Uno de ellos es Le Roi des Dollars (Pathé 1196, 1905), de Gastón Velle, que podría tratarse de Duros sevillanos o Monedas que no pasan, estrenado en la Sala Mercè en febrero de 1905, y en Francia en noviembre de ese mismo año, y que abre la hipótesis de que algunas películas o trucos po-
drían haber sido rodados en Barcelona y luego vendidos a Pathé para su distribución interna-
cional, por lo que podrían atribuirse a Chomón. Le Roi aux œufs d’or (Pathé 1311, 1905) viene a reforzar esta hipótesis, ya que no hay otra pe-
lícula de 1905 con el mismo título, y además el estreno tuvo lugar en Barcelona antes que en París. Por otra parte, existen variaciones en el metraje poco claras o confusas, y hay que aña-
dir la coincidencia del mismo truco de Le Roi des Dollars, así como el de la sobreimpresión de los brazos utilizado en Cabiria y, por último, la pa-
ticipación de Julienne Mathieu, su futura com-
pañera y colaboradora.

Pero sin duda, el caso más significativo es Le Tour du monde d’un policier (Pathé 1443, 1906) de Charles Lucien Lépine y estrenada en Barcelona en junio de 1906, meses antes que en Francia. A este hecho hay que añadir las memorias de Miguel Vera, hijastro de Martín del Olmo, exhi-
bidor catalán, que explica su participación en el rodaje de esta película que dirigía Chomón. La memoria de Vera es tan precisa, que corre-
borá la idea de que quizás algunas escenas o algunos trucos podrían haber sido realizados en Barcelona por Chomón, de manera discreta, in-
visible, para poder finalizar la película, debido a la marcha de Lépine de Pathé, en marzo de 1906.
Como hemos visto, muchas son las hipótesis y pocas las certezas, pero parece razonable pensar que Chomón debió hacer algo más que documentales y *L’Hereu de Can Pruna*, para una vez en Vincennes, convertirse de manera casi inmediata en especialista en trucajes de la casa Pathé.

Pero volvamos al inicio de 1906, cuando la productora Macaya y Marro, junto a Chomón, continuaban trabajando en distintos proyectos, y de forma repentina, muere el socio y representante de Pathé en Barcelona, Lluís Macaya. Este hecho precipita los acontecimientos, ya que cuando en marzo, Charles Pathé visita Barcelona, Chomón ejerce un importante papel durante esta etapa de transición, de acuerdo con la contabilidad de la productora, hasta la llegada de Louis Garnier. Este proceso culminará con su marcha a la casa central de París en agosto de 1906⁸. La productora francesa se encuentra en un momento de máxima expansión, le urge contratar operadores talentosos después de las marchas de Lépine y Gaston Velle. Todo ello muestra la importancia de Segundo de Chomón en la sucursal de la casa Pathé, hecho que le hace merecer viajar a París, donde podrá mostrar sus aptitudes y genialidades técnicas.

BARCELONA Y PATHÉ, DE NUEVO

En verano de 1909, Chomón no renueva su contrato con la casa Pathé Frères, para la que ha trabajado intensamente desde 1906. Con los conocimientos adquiridos, vuelve a su ciudad y sin perder el vínculo que le une con la empresa francesa, levanta dos proyectos cinematográficos en Barcelona: Chomón-Fuster e Ibérico Films.

La Barcelona cinematográfica a la que regresó Chomón estaba centrada en el negocio de la venta y el alquiler. Entre 1906 y 1910 se inició una protoindustria cinematográfica, y se crearon las primeras productoras como Hispano Films, de Albert Marro. La capital catalana era una ciudad en la que se consolidaban las salas estables, llegando a tener en 1912 un parque de 114 cines.

Investigar esta etapa ha sido uno de nuestros retos para intentar aportar un poco de luz a las circunstancias en que se gestaron las productoras Chomón-Fuster e Ibérico Films, y establecer una filmografía del cineasta en este segundo periodo barcelonés.

Desconocemos la fecha exacta del regreso de Chomón a Barcelona, pero sabemos que podría estar en la ciudad al menos desde abril de 1910, de acuerdo con las anotaciones contables de la casa Pathé. Por un lado, hay referencias a los costes del paso por aduanas de la cámara Pathé de estudio que había utilizado en Vincennes y, por otro, registros de pagos mensuales de abril y mayo en la sucursal de Barcelona⁹.

Vemos pues, que el fin de la actividad de Chomón en Pathé no significó una ruptura de relaciones con la compañía francesa, al contrario, Chomón desarrollará una carrera en Barcelona manteniendo, e incluso reforzando, el vínculo con la casa francesa.

El 1 de junio de 1910, Chomón y Louis Garnier, representante legal de Pathé Frères en España, firman un contrato donde se especifica que Chomón se ha ofrecido para trabajar para Pathé como empresario independiente, y que se compromete a rodar y montar para su distribución mundial filmes “esencialmente españoles, interpretados conforme a las costumbres del país y por actores españoles […], las vistas deben ser a partes iguales: escenas de gran espectáculo, cómicas y escenas de trucos (fantasmagorías)”. Dice también que la compañía le suministrará el material virgen necesario, que se deberán rodar dos negativos, y que se le pagarán 11 francos por metro editado y aceptado por la sucursal de Barcelona¹⁰.

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Sabemos por este documento que Chomón reside o tiene su oficina en los bajos de la Gran Vía de Les Corts, 547, ya que ésta es la dirección que consta en el contrato. Curiosamente, la primera semana del mes de junio, aparece en la prensa un anuncio en el que se solicitan actores para trabajar en “asuntos cinematográficos” y se pide a los interesados que se dirijan a los bajos del número 547 de la calle de Les Corts. Días más tarde aparece otro, esta vez se buscan “dos buenos pintores escenógrafos” y se indica esa misma dirección.\(^\text{11}\)

Se conserva un documento extraordinario en la Filmoteca de Catalunya y el Museo del Cinema de Torino: una copia de la libreta de trabajo escrita por Chomón y muy probablemente por su hijo Robert, con los argumentos de sus filmes. En la primera parte, escrita en castellano, la fecha más antigua es de junio de 1910 y la última es de octubre de 1910, y contiene 37 argumentos que coinciden con lo que especificaba el contrato con Garnier. De la segunda parte del documento, en francés, hablaremos más adelante.

Según la historiografía, Chomón habría rodado durante 1910 estos 37 filmes, pero hay muy pocas referencias y a menudo son confusas. Tenemos muchas dudas de que se llegaran a rodar todas, o incluso sólo parcialmente, ya que no consta en la libreta ningún tipo de precisión técnica de estos filmes. Tampoco ha sido posible localizar ni una sola referencia en la prensa de sus estrenos en España, ni su inclusión en los catálogos Pathé; aunque parece poco probable que, en la Barcelona de aquel momento, con un reducido número de galerías y una industria modesta con productoras que trabajaban a un ritmo de 10 títulos al año, Chomón hubiese levantado 37 en menos de un año, sin dejar ningún rastro.

El contrato con Garnier finalizó el 12 de mayo de 1911 de común acuerdo y sin que se hiciera referencia alguna al material entregado.

El 1 de mayo de 1911 se constituye la Sociedad Chomón-Fuster. Sus socios principales eran Francisco Fuster y Garí, hermano del empresario Juan Fuster, distribuidor de filmes y propietario del teatro La Maravilla del Paralelo, y Chomón. El objeto de la empresa según el

\(^{11}\) La Publicitat. 10 de junio de 1910.
documento notarial debía ser: “la impresión o producción de cintas cinematográficas y la compra-venta de toda clase de mercancías”.

El documento detalla cómo los socios distribuyen la aportación de capital. De las 12.000 pesetas del total, Fuster aporta 6.000 en metálico, mientras que Chomón “... aportará a la sociedad seis mil pesetas en maquinaria, objetos y material cinematográfico y aportará y desarrollará sus conocimientos técnicos y prácticos en lo que a la impresión y producción de películas cinematográficas se refiere”. 12

Otra pieza de este rompecabezas se conserva en el Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de Barcelona: un expediente, de junio de 1911, en el que Chomón y Fuster solicitan al Ayuntamiento permiso para construir una galería. Esta se ubicó en un solar en la Gran Vía, entre las calles Vilamarí y Entença, al lado de la plaza de toros Las Arenas y de lo que había sido el Frontón Beti-Jay. 13

Según la historiografía, Chomón y Fuster no consiguieron consolidar la empresa y se disolvió la sociedad. No se conservan documentos de este cese y en cambio sí hay referencias de pagos a Chomón y Fuster realizados por Pathé después de la supuesta disolución.

Sea como sea, parece que Chomón tampoco esta vez habría roto el vínculo con Pathé, y con la colaboración de Louis Garnier se inicia Ibérico Films, nueva marca de Pathé que se instala en su misma sede.

Pathé estaba desde 1906 en el Paseo de Gracia, 43 y tenía a Louis Garnier como director. El Paseo de Gracia era y es la principal avenida de la ciudad y escaparate de destacados edificios que la burguesía industrial catalana encargaba a los arquitectos del momento, como Antoni Gaudí, Enric Sagnier o Lluís Domènech i Montaner; un escaparate ideal para el más moderno de los negocios: el cine. Pathé se había instalado en los bajos de la casa Batlló, reformada integralmente por Antoni Gaudí entre 1904 y 1906.

Es gracias a las fuentes hemerográficas, la libreta de argumentos, los catálogos de época y las copias conservadas de las películas, que podemos establecer una primera filmografía de las producciones de Ibérico Films realizadas por Chomón: 12 filmes de ficción y trucos.

La sección de la libreta escrita en francés es una fuente inagotable de información, pues nos permite saber cuáles eran las indicaciones de montaje del negativo que Chomón enviaba a París, cuáles eran los trucos que hacía, y qué cámara utilizaba.

Trabajamos con la hipótesis que Chomón debía realizar dos negativos de cada producción: uno se montaba en Barcelona y el otro se mandaba a París con las indicaciones técnicas. Podría apoyar esta hipótesis el hecho de que todos los filmes se estrenaron en Barcelona antes que en París, a veces con varios meses de antelación. Ibérico Films produjo, además, durante el período 1911-1912 una veintena de documentales de los cuales (por fechas) podemos atribuir a Chomón al menos 8.

III. MATERIALES

Conservar para difundir es un lema que guía y anima a los archivos fílmicos de la FIAF, moviendo proyectos colaborativos. Gracias a este espíritu, durante los años noventa, la Filmoteca de Catalunya pudo iniciar la Colección Chomón. A partir del catálogo de los 500 títulos de Chomón establecido por el historiador JG Tharrats, se procedió a localizar materiales, dando como resultado 95 títulos: 64 de Chomón como director, 24 como cámara/trucajes, y 7 como colorista. De estos, 31 títulos proceden de fondos propios, y 64 son copias de diversas instituciones, entre ellas 15 archivos de la FIAF. Esta colección actualmente se compone de 304 materiales fotoquímicos, 19 nitratos y 285 acetatos; 274 en 35mm, 25 en 16mm, 3 en 9,5mm y por último 2 en S8mm. Se presentan en diferentes versiones, en blanco y negro, con aplicaciones de color, completas o sólo fragmentos; algunas con degradaciones y con calidades fotográficas muy diversas.

12. El documento de constitución de la Sociedad Chomón Fuster se conserva en el Arxiu Històric de Protocolos de Barcelona. Il·lustre col·legi de notaris.
Desde arriba en el sentido de las agujas del reloj: tira de fotogramas de la copia nitrato L’hereu de Can Pruna; tira de fotogramas de Superstición andaluza / Superstition andalouse (copia acetato de 1995); fotogramas de la copia nitrato de Superstición andaluza / Superstition andalouse.
Con motivo de esta conmemoración Chomón, decidimos actualizar la filmografía, partiendo de nuevos estudios, consultando la prensa digitalizada, así como los catálogos oficiales Pathé, en todos los formatos, también Pathé Kok, Pathé Rural y Pathé Baby. El resultado es una disminución a 270 títulos, de los cuales 61 forman parte de la Colección Chomón, frente a los 95 anteriores.

De acuerdo con esta actualización, hay que destacar que de su primera etapa en Barcelona 1901-1903, se han descartado todos aquellos títulos atribuidos a su taller de color, puesto que no se puede establecer ninguna relación sólida y científica entre estas copias y Chomón. De su segunda etapa de 1903 hasta su marcha a París en agosto de 1906, se han descartado la mayoría de los títulos de Pathé atribuidos hasta ahora a Chomón, pero se han incorporado algunos con la productora Macaya y Marro, el proyecto de la Sala Mercé y posibles colaboraciones con Pathé realizadas desde Barcelona.

Durante el periodo en Pathé de agosto de 1906 hasta que finaliza el contrato en mayo de 1909, quedan aún muchas atribuciones inciertas, puesto que el mismo sistema de trabajo industrial y en equipo hace del anonimato la norma. Además, tanto los inicios como el final con Pathé en Barcelona son muy difusos, por lo que este periodo todavía presenta muchas lagunas. Por último, del periodo en Barcelona 1911-1912, de nuevo con Pathé a través de la productora Ibérico Films, hasta ahora la más desconocida, se ha podido establecer un listado bastante preciso de atribuciones.

NUEVOS Y MEJORES

Una vez actualizada la Colección Chomón de la Filmoteca de Catalunya, hemos procedido a localizar nuevos y mejores materiales haciendo una llamada a través de la FIAF, buscando en catálogos, bases de datos, archivos y repositorios. Los resultados, sellados mediante distintos acuerdos y convenios, han sido:

Los proyectos de restauración realizados en colaboración estrecha y directa con archivos FIAF: Le Paravent de Cagliostro (Pathé 5163, 1912), a partir de un Pathé Kok 28mm del Eye Filmmuseum. Este mismo archivo ha apoyado la celebración de este año Chomón con la digitalización de Escamillo a l'avers solitaire (Pathé 5490, 1912), Les deux plus grandes villes de Portugal (Pathé 5333, 1912) y Physique diabolique (Pathé 4858, 1912).

Del mismo modo, se han establecido acuerdos de préstamo para materiales aparecidos los últimos años con aplicaciones de color formidables, como Barcelone, principal ville de la Catalogne (Pathé 5368, 1912), Kinoteka Jugoslavenska; L’Antique Toledo (Pathé 4760, 1912), Vulcanus Films (Italia) y Cineteca Nacional Méjico; Sculptr Moderne (Pathé 2076, 1908) y Les Chutes d’eau de Monasterio de Piedra (Pathé 4664, 1911), ambas del CNC, Francia; Les Lunatiques (Pathé 2050, 1908), National Library of Norway; y Le Spectre rouge (Pathé 1711, 1907), Museo del Cinema de Torino.

El Año Chomón liderado por la Filmoteca de Catalunya ha finalizado, pero el proyecto continúa. Hasta el momento se han localizado 21 nuevos materiales, de los cuales todavía no hay ninguna copia en la Colección Chomón, más otros 13 de mejor calidad o con variaciones, especialmente de color. Estos nuevos materiales serán el punto de partida (junto a la Colección Chomón) para establecer un estudio comparativo a partir de la inspección de los originales conservados en los archivos FIAF, y para proponer una filmografía sólida, con el objetivo de conseguir un corpus de la obra de Chomón conservada.
The Filmoteca de Catalunya’s relationship with the filmmaker Segundo de Chomón dates back to 1994, when it launched an international project that brought together a hundred films from more than 25 archives. The 150th anniversary of Segundo de Chomón’s birth was celebrated on 17 October 2021, its official commemoration demonstrating that the connection continues.

The article summarises some of the activities that took place in Chomón year unearthing new details of his biography, locating and presenting new titles, and trying to bring the filmmaker’s work closer to new generations. This was all done thanks to the invaluable help of other film archives, whose generous contributions have once again demonstrated that the FIAF spirit is still alive and well and promoting collaboration among its members.

One of the aims of the year was to study, in depth, the lesser-known periods of Chomón’s life in Barcelona. Between 1901 and 1906, Chomón was a connecting point between many of the activities and personalities of early cinema in Barcelona. He associated, for example, with the Napoleons, the photographers who organised the first Lumière projections in the city, with Luis Graner and his “total art” project at the Sala Mercè, and with Luis Macaya and Albert Marro in the Macaya-Marro production company. He was also connected to the local branch of Pathé Frères, which hired him between 1906 and 1909 as a specialist in trick photography and animation at their Vincennes studios in Paris. With the knowledge acquired from the French — and without breaking that link — Chomón returned to Barcelona where, between 1909 and 1912, he co-created the Chomón Fuster company and set up a film studio and another production house, Ibérico Films.

The second objective of this project has been dissemination and outreach to new generations of audiences and creators, with 35mm programmes and a selection of titles on DCP. There have been numerous Chomón events at festivals, film libraries, and other institutions. In October and November last year, the Filmoteca de Catalunya dedicated an entire season to the “Constelación Chomón”, consisting of 32 sessions that enabled his most characteristic work in the fields of colour, special effects, and stop motion, to be compared with representative films from much later periods. The result was as eclectic as it was surprising. In October, the Chomón Laboratory was held in Barcelona, which, over two days dedicated to his work, brought his biography and filmography up to date, and related his techniques to those of today. This was organised with the participation of international experts and specialists such as Jean Claude Seguin, Camille Blot-Wellens, Giovanna Fossati, Elif Rongen-Kaynakçı, Gabriele Perrone, and Stéphanie Salmon.

To celebrate a filmmaker is to make him known, to establish connections between his life and his films in order to appreciate him from today’s perspective. This has been the aim of our Chomón Year and has been made possible thanks to the work and generosity of historians, researchers, and collectors who continue to be fascinated by him and his work 150 years after his birth.

The relation entre la Filmoteca de Catalunya et le cinéaste Segundo de Chomón a débuté en 1994, année du lancement par l’institution d’un projet international rassemblant une centaine de films issus de plus de 25 archives. Le 17 octobre 2021, le 150e anniversaire de la naissance de Segundo de Chomón était célébré, une commémoration officielle qui démontre que ce lien perdure.

L’article résume certaines des activités entreprises au cours de cette Année Chomón : la découverte de détails inédits de sa biographie, la localisation et la présentation de nouvelles œuvres, et la tentative de faire connaître l’œuvre du cinéaste aux jeunes générations. Tout cela a pu être réalisé grâce à l’aide inestimable d’autres archives cinématographiques, dont les généreuses contributions ont une fois de plus démontré que l’esprit de la FIAF reste bien vivant, encourageant la collaboration entre ses membres.


Le deuxième objectif de ce projet était la diffusion et la sensibilisation des nouvelles générations de spectateurs et de créateurs à l’œuvre de Chomón, au travers d’un programme de projections, en 35 mm ou, pour certaines, en DCP. De nombreux événements autour de Chomón ont été organisés lors de festivals et dans des cinémathèques et autres institutions. En octobre et novembre 2021, la Filmothèque de Catalogne consacrait une saison entière à la “Constelación Chomón”, avec 32 séances qui ont permis de comparer ses travaux les plus caractéristiques dans les domaines de la couleur, des effets spéciaux et du stop motion avec des films représentatifs d’époques beaucoup plus tardives. Le résultat fut aussi éclectique que surprenant. En octobre était organisé à Barcelone le Laboratoire Chomón qui, pendant deux journées consacrées à son œuvre, a permis d’actualiser sa biographie et sa filmographie, et de mettre en relation ses techniques avec celles d’aujourd’hui. Cette manifestation vit la participation d’experts et de spécialistes internationaux comme Jean Claude Seguin, Camille Blot-Wellens, Giovanna Fossati, Elif Rongen-Kaynakçı, Gabriele Perrone ou Stéphanie Salmon.

Célébrer un cinéaste, c’est le faire connaître, établir des liens entre sa vie et ses films afin d’envisager son œuvre d’un point de vue contemporain. Tel était l’objectif de notre Année Chomón, rendue possible grâce au travail et à la générosité d’historiens, de chercheurs et de collectionneurs que sa personnalité et son œuvre continuent de fasciner 150 ans après sa naissance.
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L’Immagine Ritrovata is one of the main organizers of the FIAF Film Restoration Summer School, which has been taking place in Bologna since 2007 and will be held again in summer 2022. The school has been also hosted in Singapore [2013], Mumbai [2015], Buenos Aires [2017] and Mexico City [2019].
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Dedicated to preserving Hong Kong’s film heritage and bringing film art to the community, the Hong Kong Film Archive established its Planning Office in 1993 and settled into its permanent site in Sai Wan Ho in 2001. In 2021, we celebrated the Archive’s 20th anniversary and organised a series of spectacular events and activities around the theme of “Acquisition and Sharing”. Here we talk about a selection of these, with a focus on the tireless efforts of our acquisition and conservation teams who contributed their thoughts to this article.

FROM ACQUISITION TO SHARING: “TREASURE-HUNT STORIES”

Film collection is one of the most important activities of a film archive. To offer the public a chance to savour memorable titles on the silver screen and learn more about the untold stories of the treasure hunt, our programming team curated the flagship celebratory programme entitled “Treasure-Hunt Stories”, which ran from April to December 2021, and featured 36 classic films from our collection. To enrich the audience’s viewing experience of the Archive’s serendipitous discoveries, members of the acquisition team shared the stories of how they encountered and acquired the precious titles. At several screening sessions, stakeholders including film donors, conservators, and other professionals in the field were invited to share their personal memories of the treasures on view. It was not only a chance for members of the public to view these films, but also a window to promote the importance of film culture preservation. In addition, it was an opportunity for us to express our gratitude to the support of the donors, the industry, and Hong Kong film fans.

It was a great challenge to select titles from the more than 4,000 in the Archive’s collection. Fortunately, Priscilla Chan, Assistant Curator I of the Archive’s Programming Unit, who initiated and curated the “Treasure-Hunt Stories” programme, had joined the Archive’s Acquisition Unit in 1997, and was very familiar with the fascinating tales behind the Archive’s collection. In the planning stage, she tried to recall and jot down interesting or important episodes during the acquisition process. Finally, a list of 28 acquisition stories and 36 films were compiled into 32 programmes.

THE 4K RESTORATION OF THE VALIANT ONES

Zhong lie tu / The Valiant Ones (1975), a masterpiece by King Hu, was selected as the opening film of the “Treasure-Hunt Stories”. Directed, written, and produced by Hu, the film is from his early oeuvre in the 1970s, after he established King Hu Film Productions.
in Hong Kong. In 1996, Hu had entrusted the Archive with the original 35mm picture negative, soundtrack negative, and subtitles of *The Valiant Ones* in the hope that the film would be preserved for posterity. The title is therefore of great significance to the Archive. An historical tale that embodies the spirit of chivalric loyalty, *The Valiant Ones*, featuring Hsu Feng, Bai Ying, Roy Chiao, and Sammo Hung (who was also the martial arts choreographer for the film), is distinctively intricate in its plot and memorably original in its action choreography. Coupled with its bold cinematography, editing, and music, it is an indisputable classic of the *wuxia* (martial chivalry) genre. For many years, the Archive had wanted to restore the picture, which had undergone colour fading, so that it could be properly enjoyed by new generations. Thanks to the generous authorisation of the King Hu Foundation USA, we officially started the 4K digital restoration of *The Valiant Ones* in 2020, and it became the Archive’s first 4K digitally restored film.

As early as 2017, the Archive had started the project of digitising this film. After completing condition inspection, our Conservation Unit found that the original 35mm picture negative of *The Valiant Ones*, acquired from King Hu, was suitable as a starting point as the general image quality was in good condition despite some damage and slight colour fading. In order to preserve the film’s defining features, such as the incredibly fine detail and the rich colours and textures, we scanned the original negative at 4K resolution. The soundtrack negative was also scanned and converted into high resolution audio files.

The Archive was not then equipped to carry out and handle 4K digital scanning on its own, so turned to L’Immagine Ritrovata Asia. Before sending the film elements away, the colleagues of the Conservation Unit first thoroughly examined and recorded the film’s condition, indicating where necessary reinforcement and repairs were needed. For instance, as fast cutting was used for numerous combat scenes, there was an unusually high number – more than 2,000 – splices in the original picture negative. Therefore, on top of regular repairs such as fixing damaged edges and torn perforations, our conservation team had to strengthen each splice to ensure the film could withstand the tension and pressure of the scanning procedure with minimal damage.

After the completion of scanning came another detailed examination to ensure that wear and tear would remain at an acceptable level. The new digital picture files were visually inspected to check the accuracy of colour and contrast; the team also checked the audio files to see if there were any errors or distortions. Penny Wong, Laboratory Technician of the Conservation Unit, explained that there were instances where images in particular frames could have been overexposed during the scan, resulting in loss of detail. In the hope that the digital version of *The Valiant Ones* would faithfully retain all the detail, the Conservation Unit compared every frame with the original negative and made appropriate adjustments or even re-scanned where necessary.

To commence the restoration process, the Conservation Unit compared the converted digital files with the original negatives. An essential step to ensure the digital files were complete, this procedure helped identify unresolved issues in the digitised version. In the case of *The Valiant Ones*, the key issue was the colour. Ip Ka-him, Laboratory Technician of the Conservation Unit, pointed out that during post-production in the old days, it would often be necessary for a laboratory colour grader to adjust the colours. Since the digital files come directly from the original picture negative, the colours in the scan are different from the version screened in cinemas. For example, it is obvious that several scenes were shot in the daytime, and then colour-graded in the laboratory to simulate night scenes. Thus, in order to bring back the look of the original premiere screening version, other materials had to be sought out to provide reference points during colour grading.

Surprisingly, the Conservation Unit found, in the Archive’s collection, a film print with its original grading sheets. These sheets were records of the different light codes used in each shot, which determined the colour balance of the positive film as printed from the negative and would usually have been chosen on the advice of the director and cinematographer. While the transposition of traditional light
codes was difficult, the Archive was fortunate enough to have commissioned, in 1997, a local film laboratory to produce a screening copy of The Valiant Ones based on the same grading sheets. Since that 1997-produced print was in good condition, it was a great reference in our search for original colours.

Becky Lo, Assistant Curator II of the Conservation Unit, recalls that the Unit and the Italy-based partner on this project, L’Immagine Ritrovata Asia, met at the end of August 2020 for the handover of the digitised audio and visual files which had been in preparation since 2017, and kept close communication throughout the project. The Conservation Unit also provided a set of digital files made from the 1997-produced print. As Koven Lo, Assistant Curator I of the Conservation Unit, pointed out, colour grading lay at the heart of the restoration of The Valiant Ones. However, as colour is subject to individual perception and different equipment was used by the two parties, the process was more than simply dealing with scratches and spots: it required patience and open communication to achieve the best results.

Giandomenico Zeppa, colourist at Italy’s L’Immagine Ritrovata, told us that they had started the colour grading from the original camera negative, which carried all the details in terms of light, shadow, contrast, highlight, and also colour shade. According to Zeppa, their greatest challenge and intention was to give a balanced tone while recreating the typical, very warm look of the 1970s and, of course, of King Hu’s oeuvre. “The cinematography in King Hu’s films is very well done. The lighting is really creative. We tried to reconstruct and to bring the warmth of colours to life again.”

Gilles Barberis, who was responsible for the sound restoration at L’Immagine Ritrovata in Italy, says that they carried out the restoration from the original sound negative, explaining that

For the digitisation of the materials, we used a particular technology that was available in our laboratories in both Bologna and Hong Kong. While the old approach involves producing a sound positive, the new technique records the image of sound with a 2K camera and generates audio files directly from the original sound negative. The translated
Colour grading was the key to this restoration project. The restoration team worked hard to restore every image to the original look of the first release.

In addition to refining the colour tones, the restoration team repaired each and every imperfection in the picture negative, including removing scratches and spots.
material was then digitised on the Pro Tools for further application of various algorithms and manual editing; all the clicks, crackles, pops, sound interruptions, problems with equalisation imbalance, and so on were removed. Our approach to sound restoration, which is the best sound restoration approach in general, is not about making the hoarse sounds sound as good as possible; rather, it is about respecting the film’s original status and maintaining its integrity.

The Archive’s Conservation Unit was meticulous in overseeing the whole restoration process. In terms of the film tone, the restoration team made a thorough comparison between the reference materials and the restored images, paying close attention to every single discrepancy, and doing their best to replicate the atmosphere and texture of each scene and shot of the original film. Our colleagues would mark the exact location of any imperfections spotted, such as scratches, spots, flickers, and background noises, for the Italian team’s follow-up. The DCP of the digital restored version would be screened at the Archive’s cinema for examination by the Conservation Unit to ensure that the restored version was of satisfactory quality to be output as negatives and digital files for both screening and long-term preservation. The 4K digitally restored version of *The Valiant Ones* was eventually premiered at the Grand Theatre of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre on 30 April 2021, marking the beginning of our 20th anniversary celebrations with overwhelming enthusiasm from film lovers and the film industry.

Without a doubt, film restoration requires exhaustive preparatory research, as well as expertise, experience, and perseverance from the whole restoration team. This was the Archive’s first 4K digital restoration attempt, and the staff and equipment at the Conservation Unit were truly put to the test. We are very grateful for the generous support from director King Hu, the King Hu Foundation USA, and our peers in the industry, without whom we would not have been able to acquire sufficient variety of film elements of *The Valiant Ones* and its associated materials in such good condition. As digital restoration at 4K resolution sets a new benchmark in the industry, this precious experience has prepared the Conservation Unit with the knowledge and experience to handle any film restoration projects in the future. More gems in the Archive’s collection could be brought to the silver screen with their glamour restored.

**FILM DIGITISATION AND “ARCHIVAL GEMS — TIME AFTER TIME”**

Apart from film restoration, our recent efforts in film digitisation also contributed to “Archival Gems — Time After Time”, another celebratory programme for our 20th anniversary. In the government’s 2019-2020 budget, the Archive was funded to digitise 150 films in its collection within five years. The Archive was thankful to receive such an important source of funding which made possible our continuing preservation of celluloid films in digital format, keeping up with the rapid evolution of digital technologies. The Archive could thus further its mission of promoting Hong Kong cinema locally and globally, as well as paving the way for further restoration work.

According to Koven Lo, the digitisation project prioritises films with unique existing copies as well as films in deteriorating condition that have been rarely presented. After initial inspection and repairs, if the celluloid’s physical condition is up to standard, the Conservation Unit will move on to carry out digital scanning, ultimately converting the title into a digital file.

By the end of March 2022, a total of 93 film titles had been digitised and 19 of them screened in the “Archival Gems—Time After Time” series. These hand-picked titles, with the majority being iconic Mandarin and Cantonese films from the 1940s to the 1960s, presented a vibrant and multifaceted picture of Hong Kong cinema.

**BEHIND THE SCENES OF “OUT OF THE PAST — FROM THE TAI PING TREASURE TROVE”**

Alongside film restoration and digitisation, our conservators also endeavoured to preserve other film-related artefacts for another major exhibition, “Out of the Past — From the Tai Ping Treasure Trove”, which ran from May to December 2021.
Located in Sai Ying Pun, Tai Ping Theatre was built in 1904, and was one of Hong Kong’s largest theatres before it closed in 1981. Decades later, the glory of this now-demolished theatre came to life again, thanks to one important decision. In 2006, third-generation Tai Ping owner Ms Beryl Yuen gifted to Hong Kong’s four museums artefacts she had worked hard to preserve over many years. They included a collection of more than 3,000 film-related items donated to the Archive, covering film rental contracts, architectural blueprints, and regulations for theatre operations during the Japanese occupation. It became the Archive’s largest pre-war Hong Kong film industry collection. As the Archive celebrated its 20th anniversary, our colleagues in the Programming Unit curated an exhibition entitled “Out of the Past—From the Tai Ping Treasure Trove”, showcasing different objects that demonstrate the illustrious history of the theatre and Hong Kong’s film industry. It was the first time that these treasures had been on display for public viewing.

The artefacts were arranged in chronological order so that the audience could trace the footsteps of all three generations of the Yuen legacy. The story of Tai Ping Theatre began in the early 20th century when it started to present Cantonese opera performances by a wide range of virtuoso actors. Then, in the 1930s, the building underwent renovation and was reconstructed into a state-of-the-art combination of opera house and moving picture theatre. This was before sound films became popular and the Tai Ping Opera Troupe was established. A video of Ms Yuen taking a tour through the former theatre site was also on view, which walked the audience through the magnificent old days of Hong Kong’s Western district and served as testament to the family’s unswerving dedication to culture and heritage.

The exhibition required a great deal of effort from our colleagues in the Conservation Unit and Conservation Office. In late 2020, the Conservation Unit received the exhibit list, and found that the majority of items were decades-old paper artefacts. Although over 90% of the objects were in good condition, the rest of them required special treatment. In view of the availability of space, facilities, manpower, and experience in handling large paper objects, the Conservation Unit sent eight of the larger drawings to the Conservation Office for
Our special thanks to the King Hu Foundation USA, the late Mr King Hu, Ms Beryl Yuen, and Ms Janice Chow, the project researcher for “Out of the Past—From the Tai Ping Treasure Trove”.

Becky Lo recalled that it was the most challenging to handle handbills that were in poor condition. They were very fragile and parts of them had already fragmented. As if solving a puzzle, she had to put the pieces together, trim the toned repair papers into appropriate sizes and shapes, and filled the missing parts.

The Hong Kong Film Archive is committed to its mission of collecting, preserving, and promoting Hong Kong films. Film archives around the world must always strike a balance between preservation and sharing. The celebratory programmes of the Archive’s 20th Anniversary offered the public a glimpse into our efforts in preserving and sharing Hong Kong’s film culture and heritage, paving the way for our future commitments.


Une restauration en 4K de Pirates et Guerriers de King Hu a constitué une part importante du travail accompli. Commencée en 2017 et achevée en 2021, elle a été réalisée par l’unité de conservation avec L’Immagine Ritrovata Asia, en scannant le négatif original donné par King Hu lui-même, en comparant la version numérique avec d’autres copies disponibles, et enfin en effectuant une sortie du résultat sur pellicule 35 mm ainsi qu’en DCP.

“Joyas des archives – au fil des ans” (Archival Gems – Time After Time) est un programme majeur, financé par le gouvernement de Hong Kong, visant à numériser 150 films sur une période de cinq ans.

Enfin, « Surgis du passé – le trésor de Tai Ping » (Out of the Past—From the Tai Ping Treasure Trove) décrit une partie du travail nécessaire à la conservation et à la restauration d’une collection de plus de 3000 articles en papier, fruit d’un don de l’ancien propriétaire du Tai Ping Theatre, aujourd’hui démoli.

La Filmoteca de Hong Kong celebró su 20° aniversario en 2021. En este artículo se describen algunos de los proyectos emprendidos en el marco de las celebraciones. Para “Historias de búsqueda del tesoro” (Treasure-Hunt Stories), su programa de proyecciones más emblemático, el Archivo invitó a donantes, conservadores y otros profesionales del sector a compartir con el público sus recuerdos personales sobre la película que se exhibía, mientras que los miembros del equipo de adquisiciones explicaban cómo se habían adquirido las películas en primer lugar.

La restauración en 4K de The Valiant Ones, de Kin Hu, constituyó una parte importante del trabajo. Iniciada en 2017 y finalizada en 2021, fue realizada por la Unidad de Conservación con L’Immagine Ritrovata Asia, escaneando el negativo original donado por el propio Kin Hu, comparando la versión digital con otras copias disponibles y, finalmente, emitiendo el resultado tanto en 35 mm como en DCP.

“Joyas de archivo- a lo largo de los años” (Archival Gems - Time After Time) es un importante programa, financiado por el gobierno de Hong Kong, que pretende digitalizar 150 películas en un periodo de cinco años.

Por último, “Surgido del pasado: el tesoro de Tai Ping” (Out of the Past—From the Tai Ping Treasure Trove) describe algunos de los trabajos necesarios para conservar y restaurar una colección de más de 3,000 objetos de papel, donados por el propietario del teatro Tai Ping, ya desaparecido.
The “aquarium” with its inspection tables.

The CED (data processing centre) with the LTO library for backup and restore.
During 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, work began at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino’s cinémathèque on the construction of a digital “restoration” laboratory, a new section whose objective is the scanning, migration from analogue to digital, and, eventually, restoration of materials in the film collection (both deposited and donated), while seeking to involve other areas of the organisation as well. The primary challenges are:

1. to provide the Museo del Cinema with a technological structure capable of undertaking in-house those digital processes that have long been entrusted to outside organisations,

2. to bring together analogue restoration and digital processes and tools,

3. to make the museum organisation aware of the ethical and practical implications of scanning its collection.

Thanks to funding from the digitisation campaign promoted by MIBACT (the national government’s Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali – cultural assets and activities), this huge project has not only been launched, but, legally, cannot be blocked even in the event of such an unpredictable health and economic crisis as we currently face.

PROVIDING THE MUSEO DEL CINEMA WITH A TECHNOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

The laboratory is developing as a meeting point between professionals from different disciplines: those who promote its training, external professionals who train in the laboratory, people from elsewhere in the Museo del Cinema, restorers, and all those who have any kind of interest in this new creation. Points 2 and 3 above – which concern a more general restoration policy – have always been part of the discussions. The presence of a digital laboratory – the start of important improvements to the internal structure – should offer the possibility to open up a new era of research and development into its own methods, looking for new ways to create and share the film experience, historical research and study, and restoration and rediscovery.

THE DIGITAL RESTORATION LABORATORY

The post of head of the Museo Nazionale’s digital restoration laboratory was established in September 2020: the long-standing idea finally became a reality under the guidance

Gabriele Angelo Perrone is head of the film restoration laboratory at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin. He has worked with Camera Ottica, the Österreichisches Filmmuseum, the Cineteca Nacional de México, and the Cinémathèque suisse. Since 2020 he has collaborated with Rome’s Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia on training aspiring film restorers.
of Domenico De Gaetano. After finalising an initial reorganisation, the first task was to understand what was planned, to understand the needs of the Museum, and to ensure they were compatible with the ethical and practical aspects of our work.

The laboratory project has gone through different stages and undergone several changes, but, from the outset, it was developed in collaboration with Davide Pozzi, director of Bologna’s I’Immagine Ritrovata laboratory. Building a laboratory can take on different meanings, so perhaps it is appropriate to try to define it for ourselves. If one compares the different meanings of “laboratory” as found in some of the dictionaries – for instance, the online editions of Treccani, Hoepli, and Garzanti – they agree that such a space is basically an environment for the development of an innovative scientific, technological, economic, and cultural experience, but do not offer a definition of a film laboratory (whether analogue or digital). It is therefore our experience as restorers that will help us develop the meaning of “film laboratory” for digital restoration, based on what happens at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema.

The Turin museum’s urgent requirement is to build a digital film laboratory with the aim of moving towards a new era of research and development for restoration projects, and of study and research in the film and non-film collections. These are not new activities for the Museo: it has been possible, for several years past, to consult important parts of the non-film collection such as magazines from the silent era, production documents, and other evidence of the many activities carried out by companies such as Itala Film and Ambrosio, on the organisation’s website (museocinema.it). Conservation, preserving, restoring, and digitising one’s film collection, therefore, are the means to make objects from our history accessible again. But why do we do this? As the founder of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema Maria Adriana Prolo used to say, we strive to save films and everything they represent because “we enjoy cinema”.

Construction work on the laboratory began in September 2020 and was completed in March 2021. Competing ideas and critical situations were all resolved in the course of construction, and the result was that a laboratory took shape, divided into three areas: the aquarium, where inspection and identification of the film materials is combined with their digitisation, the restoration and finalisation room, where, on two workstations, it is possible to restore images, carry out colour correction, create digital outputs such as DCPs and ProRes files, and manage an LTO (Linear Tape-Open) library for back-up and restore, and, finally, the CED (Centro Elaborazione Dati – data processing centre), the nerve-centre of the laboratory, which allows the connection and management of the classic workflows of a digital restoration facility.

To understand in more detail, we should start with the aquarium. A large room housing three electric and manual viewing tables, each connected to a suction system, allows any operator to carry out the activity of analysis and identification of film material in even the worst state of conservation. The viewing tables are flanked by a scanner for digitisation and two racks that currently house the scanner workstation and provide space for future upgrades. The scanner purchased by the Museo Nazionale del Cinema is a Lasergraphics Scanstation: this choice was made in order to have the opportunity to digitise several formats with a single tool. The version of the scanner purchased allows the scanning of film materials in different states of conservation/degradation, thanks to its sprocketless film transport, in 35mm, 8mm, Super-8, 9.5mm, 16mm, and 28mm formats. During image scanning, it is also possible to capture the optical or magnetic soundtrack.

1. Domenico De Gaetano: appointed director of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema in September 2019, he has held important roles at the Film Commission Torino Piemonte, was artistic director of Volumina and image co-ordinator at the Reggia di Venaria.
3. I would like to thank Claudia Gianetto for bringing this quote to my attention. Director of the Cineteca for several years, since 2020 she has been responsible for museum activities in the Mole Antonelliana.
4. The “aquarium”, so called by Cineteca employees because of the three large windows that illuminate the room, has, in recent years, been used by external organisations as an educational space.
This version of the scanner allows images to be scanned up to 6.5K with a diffuse light system at different speeds, though only with a dry-gate option. It is worth talking about at least two of the tools that can be used during scanning: optical pin registration, for stabilising restricted and damaged materials, and the HDR (High Dynamic Range) option, for colour and black & white film stock. Scanning is a very important moment in the digital workflow; the aim of scanning, as FIAF’s latest “Digital Statement III” reminds us, is to produce a digital source as close as possible to its photochemical original. Regardless of the scanner used and the options offered, before scanning a film it is always important to test and compare the photochemical copy with the digital one.

The restoration and finalisation room consists of two workstations, one dedicated to image restoration and quality control (DR/QC), the other to grading and LTO library management (GR/LTO). Both workstations have two screens, one HDMI and the other EIZO ColorEdge. On the DR/QC workstation, digital restoration is carried out using DIAMANT software, while the creation and control of DCPs is carried out using an easyDCP plugin with a studio version of DaVinci. In addition, two loudspeakers have been installed on this workstation to allow quality control of the audio when necessary. On the other workstation,
another version of DaVinci studio allows us to focus the workflow on grading, thanks also to the use of a Mini Panel. From this same workstation, an LTO library is managed for backup and restore of what is produced internally and what is received from outside with LTFS (Linear Tape File System) formatting. The choice of this type of formatting was forced on us by circumstance and confronts us with the question of managing past restoration projects: what to do and how to manage LTO cassettes with .tar formatting present in our digital archive?

Between these two areas is the CED or data processing centre, the nerve centre of the laboratory, the point of union and connection between the aquarium and the restoration room. Two racks hold the workstations active in the restoration room, the server, the LTO library, and storage. The storage configuration system is a JBOD – Just a Bunch of Disks, a storage architecture that consists of a number of discs within a single storage enclosure. There are three different volumes here: two dedicated to the restoration workstations, while the third is a temporary storage facility. Though care has been taken to design an architecture that is intuitive and simple to use, there are risks associated with failures: damage to one of the discs can compromise the memory of the storage system. Caution! In any case, we are talking about working memory, which is temporary.

However, a laboratory is not only the tools that comprise it but also the human history that runs through it: this refers to the people, the professionalism, the objects stored and produced during its history. Reflecting on this is fundamental for the museum itself, which today, with the birth of the digital laboratory, is attempting to take an important step towards growth. Before the introduction of digital tools, the term “laboratory” was linked to a concept of a place dedicated to the identification, inspection, and repair of materials, to the classification of different formats, to educational activities aimed at outsiders, to an intelligent policy of analogue restoration and conservation, and, finally, to the circulation of the film collection in the largest possible number of formats.

This now opens up a new phase of internal training involving primarily the digital laboratory and those starting to work in it. In this start-up phase it was necessary to move on several fronts: the definition of a new digital workflow, tests on the machines, the start of a digitisation campaign, and future planning. To date, the activities of the laboratory are animated by two different professionals: on the one hand, the head of the restoration laboratory who provides his experience, on the other, a former projectionist who decided to move into film restoration. It was also fundamental to share knowledge and skills to help people understand how the way of looking at an analogue support changes: what it means to scan, and how to process a film support according to the type of project involved. The first difficulties encountered were in sharing the correct use of working tools to deal with digitisation processes, as well as the appropriate use of software dedicated to digital restoration, understood as stabilisation, de-flicker, cleaning, restoration of damaged sections, and ending with grading. Objectives in the immediate future are many: to concentrate on the finalisation and realisation phases of digital outputs, with the intention of ending laboratory training and making each operator independent and responsible for an individual project. To this end, we hope to find and involve other operators/restorers, as well as to welcome two new areas into the current structure – one dedicated to audio restoration and the other to processing video formats.

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6. To enable quality control on DCPs with EXT formatting, we have added software capable of opening this type of folder.

7. Since the 1990s, the Museum has made conservation copies of a large part of the nitrate collection and several sound restorations. In total, 225 titles have been preserved, of which 148 are silent and 77 are sound. This activity continues and complements that of the digital laboratory.

CONCLUSION. RESTORATION POLICIES AND LABORATORY DEFINITION

Digital tools do not represent, and do not guarantee a new and more widespread accessibility of a film. They contribute to change its identity and to reveal an objective difficulty in its reproducibility, conservation, and preservation. However, they are also the tools that allow us to preserve and pass on a certain idea of cinema. It is our responsibility, therefore, to remedy and reproduce the information in a detailed and honest way, highlighting difficulties, errors, and changes if necessary. In this context, what form does the laboratory take? It should be a place for film heritage and its restoration, where techniques and technologies, past and present, meet, and allow space for research, sharing, and experimentation.

The digitisation campaign promoted by MIBACT is undoubtedly a useful tool. Access to public funding is allowing institutions such as the Museo Nazionale del Cinema to improve its structure and to actively participate in the realisation of a different accessibility of a limited number of Italian productions. But does this cultural policy of digitisation and film restoration present any critical issues or aspects to be improved? Just a few considerations: the first concerns continuity, the second the digital formats finally produced. Giving continuity to this cultural policy would allow a more correct access to the film heritage and a limited guarantee of each production’s continuing existence. Museums and film archives being guarantors for the preservation of a cultural standard with reference to a particular work of genius, this would perhaps reduce the presence of wrongly presented visual or audiovisual products on the cultural market.\footnote{The confusion between remastering, restoration, and new colourisation.} The second consideration concerns new digital formats. If, on the one hand, it becomes inevitable that the nature of the film object must be changed, and that DCP and ProRes copies must be made to adapt to the new exhibition channels, should we consider adding another new element, that of audio description?

Today more than ever, restoring films is a duty (and trying to do that well especially so), while finding a balance between cultural and economic aspects is a necessity. Imagine, for a few moments, that we are Harold Lloyd in Safety Last! (1923): climbing the wall of a building or poised on a ledge, or perhaps hanging dangerously from the hands of a clock, but arriving, finally, in front of a screen and sharing the emotion of a tender embrace, caught in time.

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L’article décrit les installations numériques mises en place au Museo Nazionale del Cinema de Turin entre 2020 et 2021. L’objectif était de doter le musée d’une structure technologique permettant la mise en œuvre en interne de processus numériques jusque-là externalisés, l’association de techniques de restauration analogiques et de processus et outils numériques, et la sensibilisation des équipes du musée aux implications éthiques et pratiques de la numérisation de sa collection. Le laboratoire, développé en collaboration avec l’Immagine Ritrovata de Bologne, peut prendre en charge de nombreux formats de films. Outre le travail de numérisation et de restauration proprement dit, l’objectif est également de former de nouveaux techniciens et de concevoir des organisations de travail numérique adaptées aux activités du musée, afin d’assurer une continuité des connaissances et d’établir des critères garantissant que les restaurations seront effectuées dans le respect des plus hautes exigences techniques et éthiques.

es

El artículo describe las instalaciones digitales ubicadas en el Museo Nazionale del Cinema de Turín entre 2020 y 2021. Se espera que estas instalaciones proporcionen al Museo una estructura tecnológica capaz de llevar a cabo procesos digitales internos que antes se subcontrataban, que unan la restauración analógica y los procesos y herramientas digitales, y que logren que la organización del museo sea consciente de las implicaciones éticas y prácticas de la digitalización de su colección. El laboratorio se ha desarrollado en colaboración con l’Immagine Ritrovata de Bolonia, y puede manejar muchos formatos de película diferentes. Además del trabajo de escaneado y restauración, se pretende formar a nuevos técnicos y diseñar flujos de trabajo digitales adecuados a las actividades de la organización, garantizando así la continuidad de los conocimientos y estableciendo criterios que garanticen que las restauraciones se realicen con los más altos estándares técnicos y éticos.
Reviews
The Rise & Fall of Max Linder, the First Cinema Celebrity

Richard Abel

Richard Abel is Emeritus Professor of International Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Michigan. He has lectured and written extensively on early cinema and on American and French silent cinema.

Who was Max Linder (1880-1925), and what do we really know about his “cinema celebrity”? Those are questions Lisa Stein Haven wants to answer. What prodded her interest? The relative paucity of attention to Linder in English-language film histories and the recent overdue attention in French studies of his film work, following the death, in 2017, of Maud Linder, who had written two memoirs of her father.1 Unable to meet Maud or to access material in the newly formed Institute Max Linder in Lyon, Haven had done much original research, before the COVID pandemic, in at least 18 archives, libraries, and personal collections in France, Austria, the Czech Republic, and the United States – the source of the book’s hundred photos. She also benefited from work on Linder generously shared by Jean-Claude Seguin and Georg Renken. That research forms the basis of her fine, if incomplete (she admits) life story of Linder. Although she includes some analysis of selected films, she points to fuller interpretations found elsewhere in both French and English. That said, Haven’s text makes up just two-thirds of the entire book. Filling the last one hundred plus pages is Catherine Cormon’s invaluable Linder filmography, indebted to Renken. Extensive and detailed, it includes each film’s title (many in other languages too), length, projection speed, black & white or tinted/toned, release dates, exhibition venues, and archive sources. In short, The Rise & Fall of Max Linder really is two books in one – a double pleasure.

Making use of Maud Linder, Haven’s biography is particularly good on Linder’s early years. Born Gabriel Leuvielle in a small village in southwestern France, he went to school in Bordeaux, became skilled at fencing, and began performing on stage, adopting the pseudonym of Max Linder. In 1904, he left for Paris to take small roles in several major theatres and, one year later, in films. Drawing on Seguin’s research, Haven gives some credence to the claim that Linder acted in several films made by Théophile Pathé before his brother Charles hired him for his Pathé-Frères company, which quickly dominated France and then the world. As he became increasingly famous in films, Linder performed less on stage, often in charity events. Whether his “Max” character first appeared in Le Pendu/The Man Who Hanged Himself/Attempted Suicide (1906) or Les débuts d’un patineur/Max Learns to Skate (1907), he always was, in Eve Golden’s quoted words, a “dapper but hapless boulevardier in impeccable morning coat and silk topper.”2 Photos reveal that he was quite short, slender,

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light weight, but athletic, with unusually large eyes. By 1909, Linder had a Pathé-Frères contract commensurate with his popularity, was starring in and directing one of a series of short comic films each week (often shot in neighborhoods around the Vincennes studios and factories), and soon had his name emblazoned in many titles, as in Max est Distract/MAX IS ABSENT-MINDED (1910). As early as 1908, for Pathé’s “fête du théâtre,” he appeared in his first film-sketch act. It began with a projected film in which a phone call sent him racing through crowds thronging the Paris streets to arrive at the theater in tatters, where he ran on the stage to conclude his “tale of adventures.” When, in 1912, Linder opened a two-year tour of half a dozen European countries, one of the highlights was this signature film-sketch, reworked with footage shot in whatever city in which he was performing.

Haven clears up lots of misinformation about Linder’s military service, which was minimal and spent mostly in hospital because of pulmonary problems. Discharged in 1915, he went on another cinema-theater tour in Italy before being lured to America, in 1916, to make comic films for Essanay, replacing Chaplin, who remained a friend. On the costly, elaborate set of the S.S. Espagne, Linder heightened the antics of his first film, a story based on his own travel across the Atlantic that had him thinking a bombing was a joke played by friends. Released in the wake of many torpedoed ships, Max Comes Over (1917) seemed in bad taste; neither it nor his other two comedies lived up to Essanay’s expectations. Chastened, his celebrity in tatters, Linder returned to France, rebuilding the Ciné Max-Linder (bought in 1914), where his first feature, Le Petit Café/The Little Café (1919), premiered. Despite the film’s success, Linder tried once more to work in Hollywood’s far better facilities and to indulge in the lavish entertaining there. In 1920, with the help of friends and colleagues, he formed Max Linder Productions and released three relatively profitable feature films, the last of which, The Three Must-Get-Theres (1922), gently mocked Fairbanks’s The Three Musketeers. Yet, dissatisfied with his distribution contracts, Linder left again for France, still smarting from his love-hate relationship with Hollywood.

One of Haven’s most valuable contributions to Linder’s life story is her research on his increasingly vulnerable physical and psychological condition. He first became ill enough to halt filmmaking for weeks in 1908-1909 and underwent appendicitis operations in 1910 and 1911. His war service resulted in a weakened pulmonary condition, perhaps even tuberculosis. He again became gravely ill in 1917, before returning to France and Switzerland to convalesce. Able to make only Abel Gance’s short film Au Secours (1923) after Le Petit Café, Linder went back to Switzerland, where he was caught in an avalanche, breaking both arms and suffering internal injuries. In 1923, he married a far younger woman, Ninette Peters, and began working at Vita-Film in Vienna on his last film, Le Roi du Cirque/King of the Circus (1924). As his career declined further, his physical condition worsened and led to “morbid jealousy” and abuse of Ninette. Linder first attempted suicide with her in February 1924; then both died on October 31, 1925. Whether this tragic end came from a double suicide or a murder and suicide is still unclear.


Le nouvel ouvrage de Lisa Stein Haven, l’un des rares en langue anglaise à traiter de la vie et de l’œuvre de Max Linder, puise sa matière dans deux biographies signées par la regrettée Maud Linder et sur des informations fournies par Jean-Claude Seguin et Georg Renken, mais comprend également une part importante de recherche originale. Il est particulièrement réussi sur la jeunesse de Linder et rectifie des informations erronées sur son service militaire et sa maladie. Il comprend une filmographie complète et détaillée, établie par Catherine Cormon.

El nuevo libro de Lisa Stein Haven, basado en parte en dos biografías de la difunta Maud Linder y en información proporcionada por Jean-Claude Seguin y Georg Renken, es una de las pocas publicaciones en inglés que tratan la vida y la obra de Max Linder. Incluye trabajo de investigación original, especialmente sobre la vida temprana de Linder, y aclara la información errónea existente sobre su servicio militar y su enfermedad; así como una extensa y detallada filmografía recopilada por Catherine Cormon.
Abel Gance, Charles Pathé. Correspondance (1918-1955)

Louis-Jean Decazes

Louis-Jean Decazes est co-directeur du Concordia Film Festival et programmateur aux Rendez-Vous Québec Cinéma. Il a publié critiques, chroniques, articles de fond et textes longs dans les revues Spirale, 1895 et 24 Images, notamment sur le cinéma muet.

Paru en juin 2021 chez Gallimard, Abel Gance, Charles Pathé. Correspondance (1918-1955) a fait pour beaucoup l’effet d’une révélation : qui eût cru que ces deux personnages clés de l’histoire du cinéma avaient entretenu une correspondance durant près de quarante ans ?

Spécialiste d’Abel Gance – elle « dédie sa thèse à la dimension inachevée de [son œuvre] » –, Élodie Tamayo, rédactrice aux Cahiers du cinéma et responsable éditoriale de la plateforme VOD LaCinetek, a pris le soin de réunir ces 210 lettres inédites, de les annoter, de les précéder d’une copieuse présentation et de faire précéder l’ensemble d’un avant-propos de Kevin Brownlow, à qui l’on doit trois restaurations de Napoléon.


Quand démarre cette conversation, en 1918 donc, Abel Gance compte déjà quelques succès à son actif et, refusant d’opposer cinéma d’auteur et cinéma commercial, se tourne vers Pathé en vue d’obtenir des capitaux pour ses futures productions qu’il espère pharaoniques – dont La Fin du monde, un projet de science-fiction initié dans les années 1910 qu’il ne tournera qu’en 1931. L’émergence d’Hollywood ayant déchu la France de sa position hégémonique sur le marché mondial de la distribution, Pathé et sa multinationale traversent alors une période sombre, marquée par d’importantes difficultés économiques. En d’autres termes, l’un tente de revenir sur le devant de la scène quand l’autre est au début d’une carrière qui connaîtra bientôt son apogée.

2. p.17.
D’emblée, un constat s’impose : leurs écrits sont empreints de passion, ceux d’Abel Gance en particulier. Charles Pathé « se distingue par son capitalisme pragmatique et son esprit stratège », dixit Tamayo, mais se révèle au fil des échanges un véritable théoricien du cinéma, articulant une pensée singulière de l’art cinématographique, de son histoire, de son avenir. Au contraire, Abel Gance est un « cinéaste » (terme nouvellement inventé par Louis Delluc) au sens premier du terme, mais que l’ambition pousse à quérir des budgets rarement accordés à des productions d’avant-garde – il n’est pas étonnant, de ce fait, que l’emploi de l’argent ainsi sollicité soit au cœur de moults conversations.

L’ouvrage se déploie à travers des lettres tantôt pragmatiques – adoptant un style succinct et usant de courtes phrases –, tantôt poétiques – faisant la part belle à la réflexivité et la liberté d’esprit. Abel Gance cristallise ainsi son désir d’être plus qu’un cinéaste : un artiste total, s’exprimant par tous les moyens possibles. À ses lettres, il insuffle de la poésie dans ce qu’elles comptent de plus pragmatique, des détails techniques aux stratégies commerciales.

À travers ces échanges passionnés nous est aussi proposée une plongée dans l’envers du décor d’œuvres passées à la postérité : on découvre par exemple combien d’erreurs et d’expérimentations infructueuses ont émaillé la conception du Polyvision.

Nous procédons, par la même occasion, à un tour d’horizon des projets avortés d’Abel Gance – et il y en eut plusieurs – parmi lesquels *Ecce homo*, film précurseur de *J’accuse* (1919) tourné en grande partie à Nice (mais jamais monté), pour lequel Charles Pathé a accordé carte blanche à son protégé. Confiance qu’il réitérera, malgré la décision du cinéaste de mettre un terme au tournage, avec toutes les pertes financières qu’implique cette décision.

Abondante à la fin des années 1910, la correspondance se fait plus épisodique à l’orée des années 1930, marquées, comme chacun sait, par le passage au parlant. Avec *La Fin du...*
monde, échec critique et commercial, Abel Gance signe sans conteste son arrêt de mort professionnel. Quant à Pathé, il prend sa retraite et quitte ainsi le devant de la scène. Les lettres qu’ils échangent sont plus concises, leur tonalité plus mélancolique, gagnant en sensibilité ce qu’elles perdent en intensité.

En s’éloignant du cadre professionnel pour faire place à l’intime, à l’amitié et à l’émotion, cette correspondance trouve ainsi son cœur et son âme.


Abel Gance, Charles Pathé. Correspondance (1918-1955) is a collection of 210 unpublished letters exchanged between a filmmaker and a producer who seemed to have nothing in common: they were 26 years apart in age and had divergent artistic tendencies.

When they met in 1918, Abel Gance had a few successes to his credit and turned to Pathé to obtain capital for future productions. With the emergence of Hollywood having stripped France of its hegemonic position on the world market, Pathé and its company were going through a dark period. Their communications are full of passion, and Charles Pathé, the archetypal pragmatic capitalist, reveals himself to be a true film theorist. Pragmatic and poetic letters alternate, plunging the reader behind the scenes of works that have passed into posterity, and listing Abel Gance’s aborted projects.

The correspondence was fruitful at the end of the 1910s but became less so at the beginning of the 1930s: Gance signed his own death warrant with the failure of La Fin du monde / End of the World (1931), and Pathé retired. Their letters became more melancholy, and gave way to intimacy, friendship, and emotion.

All the letters are annotated and presented by Élodie Tamayo.

Abel Gance, Charles Pathé. Correspondance (1918-1955) es una colección de 210 cartas inéditas intercambiadas entre un cineasta y un productor que no parecían tener nada en común: les separaban 26 años de edad y tenían tendencias artísticas divergentes.

Cuando se conocieron en 1918, Abel Gance tenía algunos éxitos en su haber y se dirigió a Pathé para obtener capital para futuras producciones. Con la aparición de Hollywood, que había despojado a Francia de su posición hegemónica en el mercado mundial, Pathé y su empresa atravesaban un período oscuro. Sus comunicaciones están llenas de pasión, y Charles Pathé, el arquetipo de capitalista pragmático, se revela como un verdadero teórico del cine. Las cartas pragmáticas y poéticas se alternan, sumergiendo al lector entre las escenas de obras que han pasado a la posteridad, y enumerando los proyectos abortados de Abel Gance.

La correspondencia fue fructífera a finales de la década de 1910, pero lo fue menos a principios de la década de 1930: Gance firmó su propia sentencia de muerte con el fracaso de La Fin du monde / El fin del mundo (1931), y Pathé se retiró. Sus cartas se volvieron más melancólicas y dieron paso a la intimidad, la amistad y la emoción.

Todas las cartas están anotadas y presentadas por Élodie Tamayo.
The Story of British Animation

Chris Pallant

Chris Pallant, Reader in Screen Media at Canterbury Christ Church University, is the author of Demystifying Disney (2011), Animated Landscapes (2015), and Beyond Bagpuss: A History of Smallfilms Animation Studio (2022). He is the Founding Editor of Bloomsbury’s Animation: Key Films/Filmmakers book series (2017-present), and he currently serves as President for the Society for Animation Studies.

Reflecting on the experience of reading Jez Stewart’s wonderful new book charting the story of British animation, I kept being drawn to the fun of rock-pooling as an appropriate analogy. Working within the parameters of the new BFI “British Screen Stories” series, which his book serves to launch, Stewart is clear about the impossibility of providing the definitive account of British animation history in a book totalling 192 pages cover-to-cover. Instead, he “aims to be inclusive, joining the dots between distinct but overlapping sectors of advertising, sponsored filmmaking, children’s television, feature films and independent art, while trying to make sense of the complex history spanning well over a century” (p.9). So, returning to the opening analogy, rather than a singular, deep dive into any one of these topics, Stewart reveals the interconnectedness of these activities, with each chapter washing into the next, and with fresh insights to be gleaned in each distinct pool by virtue of Stewart’s command of the terrain. I also like this analogy, because in many ways the story of British animation is a celebration of little victories, of survival, of ingenuity, and of perpetual renewal. There is nothing to compare to the likes of Disney or Pixar in this British history, but this is not a shortcoming; rather, the diversity of British animation’s history is to be celebrated. If you want a white, sandy beach and a warm, pale blue ocean, you are in the wrong place, but if you want to get your hands grubby, and take a closer look at what hides in the shallow salty water, then you are in for a treat.

Being the curator of the BFI’s national animation archive, Stewart is able to draw upon his extensive, first-hand knowledge of primary materials to truly bring this story to life. Beautifully illustrated throughout, with more than a hundred colour and black & white images, it rarely leaves the reader without some form of visual point of reference to study alongside Stewart’s written analysis. Where primary material is absent or unreliable, Stewart proves himself again, offering confident cross-cutting examination that helps to guide the reader through even the most patchy moments in this history. For example, when discussing the challenging interwar years, a time when animators in Britain had to show flexibility by taking on commissions to stay afloat, Stewart works hard to reclaim the contributions of individuals whose names were, given the commercial context, understandably supplanted by company names such as Persil, Shell, and Kodak, or government departments, or independent bodies such as the Health and Cleanliness Council. When discussing Giro the Germ, a character introduced by the Health and Cleanliness Council, Stewart faces just this challenge. Acknowledging that the production of these films is anonymised, Stewart responds by noting how “the use of rotoscope in the earlier films suggests involvement of the ever-inventive [Sid] Griffiths and [Brian] White, while
Strangers (Charley Says series; Richard Taylor, 1973).

Giro Fast and Loose features character designs that appear to be the work of the British Utility Films crew, who were later picked up by Anson Dyer” (pp.55-56). This ability to fill in the blanks is found throughout the book and is a key reason why Stewart’s work is destined to have a lasting influence on future scholars of British animation history.

Divided into eleven chapters, with each chapter charting a distinct historical moment in the evolution of British animation, Stewart’s book is just as well suited for the tutor looking for a core text around which to build or refresh a university course as it is to the general reader, who, perhaps already familiar with the likes of Bagpuss, Wallace, Gromit, and the Snowman, is curious to learn more about British animation’s eclectic history. As well as a short section at the end of the book that suggests recommended reading, again supporting the book’s value as a core text, Stewart also leverages his role as the BFI’s animation curator to conclude this book with what he calls “A British Animation Playlist”. With many readers (although not all, of course) having access to digital devices capable of accessing the BFI Player and YouTube, having Stewart’s curated list of fifty British animations to watch, presented in chronological order, is another excellent way that the book, in an expanded sense, encourages the reader-viewer to experience the eclecticism of British animation. With that thought in mind, I would like to bring us back to the shoreline again. Much like rock-pooling, where the temptation is always to keep exploring, Stewart’s story of British animation tempts the reader to keep turning the page.

Le livre de Jez Stewart sur l’animation britannique, qui inaugure la série « British Screen Stories » du BFI, « se veut inclusif, soulignant les liens entre des secteurs distincts mais qui se recoupent, comme la publicité, le cinéma de commande, la télévision pour enfants, les longs métrages ou l’art indépendant, tout en essayant de donner un sens à une histoire complexe qui court sur plus d’un siècle ». Divisé en onze chapitres, chacun retraçant un moment historique de l’évolution de l’animation britannique, le livre de Stewart conviendra aussi bien au professeur en quête d’un ouvrage de référence autour duquel construire ou mettre à jour un cours universitaire qu’au profane.

El libro de Jez Stewart sobre la animación británica, el primero de una nueva serie de “British Screen Stories” del BFI, “pretende ser inclusivo, uniendo elementos entre sectores distintos pero superpuestos de la publicidad, el cine patrocinado, la televisión infantil, los largometrajes y el arte independiente, al tiempo que intenta dar sentido a la compleja historia que abarca más de un siglo”; y cada uno de los once capítulos traza un momento histórico distinto en la evolución de la animación británica. El libro de Stewart es adecuado tanto para el tutor que busca un texto básico en torno al cual construir o refrescar un curso universitario, como para el lector general.
An International Study of Film Museums

Stéphanie E. Louis

Stéphanie E. Louis is coordinator of research activities at the École nationale des chartes and a member of the Centre Jean-Mabillon (Paris). She is the author of La Cinémathèque-Musée, une innovation cinéphile au cœur de la patrimonialisation du cinéma en France (1944-1968), published by the AFRHC in 2020. She is currently developing CinEx, an international database of cinema exhibitions.

Rinella Cere, a reader in Media and Cultural Studies at Sheffield Hallam University, made an interesting contribution to the 2006 issue of Film History dedicated to film museums, together with Donata Pesenti Campagnoni, Laurent Mannoni, and Stephen Bottomore. Since then, although there have been several books on the history of film archives and their activities, no single comparative publication of international scope has been published that has extended this first approach to film museums (to be understood first and foremost as permanent exhibitions of non-film collections) and extra-film exhibition practices. Rinella Cere’s book therefore fills a bibliographical gap. She presents a progression in six thematic chapters flanked by an introduction and a conclusion. The journey Cere proposes is both historical and geographical – it takes us from the origins of film museums, starting in Europe, via Great Britain, France, Italy, and Spain, and ending in the United States. At each of these stages, she focusses on a particular institution.

Cere explains that, from a methodological point of view, the definition of her study corpus was partly determined by her own linguistic skills (English, French, Italian, and Catalan), which allowed her to concentrate on key institutions, such as the Cinémathèque française in Paris and the Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin. It is also worth mentioning that the book is part of a collection, “Museum and Heritage Studies”. Consequently, the originality of her approach, compared to the usual literature on film heritage institutions, is to use concepts and terms from museology. The present book does not dwell on this point, which definitely deserves more exploration in the future.

The first chapter, “The Birth of the Museum of Cinema”, discusses “the history of the idea to ‘musealise’ cinema” and distinguishes the two main thematic axes according to which film museums will subsequently develop: seeing cinema as science and technology, or as art. After mentioning the earlier examples of the Science Museum in London and the Národní technické muzeum (National Technical Museum) in Prague, she elaborates on the pioneering nature of British historian Paul Rotha’s 1930 essay “A Museum for the Cinema”, to conceptualise an ideal and modern museum for film.

This is followed by case studies which “trace history, developments and practices” of five institutions offering a range of models of national museums, some of them exhibiting a limited number of artefacts while others propose an extensive overview of the archaeology of cinema. Chapter 2 focuses on the National Science and Media Museum in Bradford (UK) but analyses it in comparison with London’s

1. Film History, Vol.18, No.3.
Museum of the Moving Image (1988-1999). Chapter 3 returns to the well-known case of the Cinémathèque française-Musée du cinéma, as Henri Langlois “was one of the first to put into practice a museological view of cinema”. Similarly, Maria Adriana Prolo’s creation of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin is dealt with in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses the less well-known and more recent case of the Museo del Cinema in Girona (Catalonia). The final chapter concerns George Eastman House (now the George Eastman Museum) in Rochester, New York, and examines, among other things, the consolidation of the place of cinema and cinematography in the museum. This set of case studies addresses the specificities of each national context and each institution, from the origins to the present day. Cere also attempts to highlight the power struggles and controversies that have underpinned the history of these institutions. Beyond local singularities, the author also highlights shared legacies. She focuses specifically on pre-cinema collections, which constitute a type of artefact that recurs from one museum to another.

Overall, the author achieves a noteworthy synthesis. In this respect, the book may have the defects of its qualities as it is impossible to fully cover such a subject, even if limited to the study of these five cases, in just over 100 pages. The treatment of the case of the Cinémathèque française does not, for example, reference relatively recent works which could have helped to reinforce the author’s hypotheses. However, this bibliographical limitation does not apply to the British and American institutions studied in the book, for which there is a rich array of English-language references available. Whatever the language, though, the observation that there is a large field of research to be filled by more works remains undeniable. In her conclusion, Cere rightly mentions the need to focus on new case studies in emerging countries, and also encourages a post-colonial approach. It is indeed to be hoped that new studies, inspired by Rinella Cere’s stimulating methodological approach, will soon complete this international panorama and provide an account of the most recent transformations in the field of film museology.

Sortie en 2020, soit deux ans avant le centenaire du format auquel elle est consacrée – le 9,5mm – l’encyclopédie compilée et éditée par Patrick Moules est née près de 50 ans plus tôt dans l’esprit de Garth Pedler et David Wyatt. Rêve de collectionneurs passionnés et de connaisseurs du sujet, ce travail, pour se réaliser, a vu se « stratifier » et se compléter de très longues listes partielles de films d’édition. Ce travail gigantesque a bénéficié du soutien d’archivistes comme Kevin Brownlow (auteur de la préface) et David Pierce.

Le format à perforation centrale s’est répandu à partir de 1922 sous l’impulsion de Charles Pathé, grâce à une équipe d’ingénieurs qui ont collaboré dans le but de concevoir un format amateur sûr et bon marché. Un petit projecteur est commercialisé, doté d’un ingénieux système mécanique commandant l’arrêt sur image pour la projection des titres, ce qui permettait ainsi d’économiser la pellicule, ainsi qu’un premier catalogue de films à visionner chez soi, en famille. Le Pathé Baby est un succès immédiat. Un an plus tard, en 1923, une petite caméra à manivelle rejoint le projecteur et, en quelques années, le format devient synonyme de « Home Cinema » dans toute l’Europe et dans le monde. Une passion qui, pour les collectionneurs cinéphiles, devient presque une religion, comme nous le raconte Kevin Brownlow : plusieurs décennies durant, plusieurs générations d’enfants et de familles découvrent la magie des projections de films, à la maison, ou en internat.

C’est une histoire de films que la maison Pathé éditait en 35 mm et qui, après avoir été exploités en salles, étaient remontés et résumés sur des cartons de titres qui condensaient les histoires en quelques mètres de film. Un système d’impression optique prodigieux est inventé pour optimiser le processus de duplication en réduisant la taille de l’image. Trois copies 9,5 mm juxtaposées sont obtenues sur un support 35 mm à partir du négatif du film. Après développement, découpe et perforation, les films sont chargés sur de petites bobines métalliques semi-fermées, prêts à être projetés. Au départ les cartons contiennent des films de 10 mètres, puis des bobines de 20 mètres sortent, et quelques années plus tard, les bobines deviennent « Super », avec une capacité de 100 mètres de longueur. Les cartons défilent alors sans arrêt sur l’image dans de nouveaux appareils de projection actualisés, plus lumineux et permettant de projeter sur des écrans plus grands. Au fur et à mesure, le catalogue gagne en richesse et en variété, les films étant pour certains issus de blockbusters internationaux, parfois ouvertement, parfois en modifiant le titre, les noms des personnages ou la structure narrative. Plus tardivement, le son fait son apparition sur les bobines 9,5 mm, mais les versions « muettes » des films demeurent plus nombreuses que celles avec piste optique. En revanche, cette nouvelle technologie n’étant pas accessible à toutes les bourses, le format reste fidèle au slogan de Pathé : « Petit, simple, bon marché ».

Patrick Moules a réussi à publier, sur le petit format à perforation centrale, un ouvrage imposant (1136 pages), avec une belle couver-
The 9.5mm Vintage Film Encyclopaedia comprend tout d’abord trois index complémentaires: un index principal de plus de 12 000 titres de films originaux, avec informations sur la production, la distribution et les principaux noms au générique; un index des réalisateurs, acteurs et équipes de tournage, totalisant 12 055 noms et plus de 200 portraits reproduits à partir de photos 9,5 mm sélectionnées par Gerald McKee; et enfin, un index par nombre de films des catalogues Pathé-Baby / Pathéscope et autres petits distributeurs, avec la durée de chaque film, ses dates de sortie et la série dans laquelle il est sorti. Ce dernier index fournit en fait un historique de distribution des films 9,5 mm.

Le livre propose également quelques textes historiques intéressants sur le 9,5 mm, notamment sur le Pathé-Baby et sur le Pathéscope, et une version de l’étude commencée dans les années 1980 par Paul Van Someren. Un bref chapitre est consacré aux index, avec les abréviations et les notes indispensables pour connaître la durée des bobines, la signification des sigles et abréviations présents dans les descriptions des listes.

Quelques schémas et notes de synthèse auraient certainement aidé le lecteur au début de chaque section principale et annexe; une chronologie historico-technologique aurait rendu l’ensemble plus exhaustif encore. Comme le précise Patrick Moules dès l’introduction, «l’encyclopédie est détaillée, mais non exhaustive». Les lacunes sur l’après-guerre sont plus évidentes, surtout hors des frontières de la Grande-Bretagne, et des erreurs de transcription s’insinuent parfois, notamment dans les titres des versions étrangères. Mais dans

This is an indispensable reference tool for all collectors of 9.5mm materials and archivists who preserve Pathé Baby films. The book has taken more than 40 years of research and includes a complete catalogue of all known 9.5mm releases. It contains an A-Z index of over 12,000 individual original film titles, with references to their 9.5mm release titles, a personality index of all known actors and film crews, series and catalogue numbers for Pathé-Baby / Pathéscope and other distributors, and a foreword by Kevin Brownlow on the importance of 9.5mm and how he was “touched” by the passion of the French format.

9.5mm film was introduced in the early 1920s by Charles Pathé and who used it to help exploit his huge film empire. Within a few years, 9.5mm became synonymous with “home cinema” throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

All texts are in English and French. The book is rich in black & white images of projectors, cameras, technical equipment, photos of actors, and so on.

Se trata de una herramienta de referencia indispensable para todos los coleccionistas de material de 9,5 mm y los archiveros que conservan películas Pathé Baby. El libro es el resultado de más de 40 años de investigación e incluye un catálogo completo de todos los estrenos conocidos en 9,5 mm. Contiene un índice de la A a la Z de más de 12.000 títulos individuales de películas originales, con referencias a los títulos de sus estrenos en 9,5 mm, un índice de todos los actores y equipos de filmación conocidos, números de serie y de catálogo de Pathé-Baby / Pathéscope y otros distribuidores, y un prólogo de Kevin Brownlow sobre la importancia de las películas en 9,5 mm y cómo le “tocó” la pasión del formato francés.

La película de 9,5 mm fue introducida a principios de los años veinte por Charles Pathé y lo utilizó para ayudar a explotar su enorme imperio cinematográfico. En pocos años, el 9,5 mm se convirtió en sinónimo de “cine en casa” en toda Europa y en el resto del mundo.

Todos los textos están en inglés y francés. El libro es rico en imágenes en blanco y negro de proyectores, cámaras, equipos técnicos, fotos de actores, etc.
Black and White Bioscope: Making Movies in Africa 1899-1925

Emma Sandon

Emma Sandon is a senior lecturer in film and television at Birkbeck College, London. Her research specialises in colonial film history in the British empire, particularly in relation to Southern Africa. She has published on documentary, educational, instructional, newsreel, and non-fiction film, is an Honorary Research Associate in the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative, University of Cape Town, and an advisor to the June Givanni Pan African Cinema Archive.

Black and White Bioscope: Making Movies in Africa 1899-1925, should be on all film archivists’ shelves and those of anyone interested in South African film history and its place in the transnational history of cinema. The book presents the production of no fewer than 59 films through contemporary synopses and reviews and over 500 illustrations of photographs and stills, drawn from newspapers and film-trade magazine publicity. Only 12 of the better-known feature films survive in various forms, in four major archives. This beautifully produced book makes up to a degree for the loss of many of these films. Its design, editing, and layout are a tribute to the creative professionalism of John Aldridge and Charlotte Rolfe at Aldridge Press, especially since Aldridge sadly passed away in January 2022. The book certainly serves as an invaluable corrective to cinema histories that have by-passed the importance of cinema in Africa from its beginnings. In a Foreword, Kevin Brownlow, the eminent film historian, filmmaker, and restorer, admits he had hardly given a thought to early film in Africa.

The book acknowledges the importance of American entrepreneur Isidore William Schlesinger’s cinema business interests in the context of his broad entertainment and economic investments in South Africa in the early 20th century. Schlesinger held a virtual monopoly over film distribution and exhibition in South Africa from 1913 until the 1950s, and he also attempted to capitalise on film production. Black and White Bioscope centres the flurry of African Film Productions (AFP’s) early films in South Africa during the colonial period within the international context of the expanding business of narrative cinema, particularly in Hollywood and Britain. The book’s 19 chapters provide a chronologically detailed overview of productions and production histories, including internationally successful feature films such as De Voortrekkers / Winning a Continent (1916), King Solomon’s Mines (1918), Blue Lagoon (1923), and Livingstone (1925). Each chapter introduces and details the subsequent careers of key figures who worked for Schlesinger’s enterprise, such as directors Lorimer Johnson, Harold Shaw, and Dirk Cruikshanks, director/producer Marmaduke Arundel Wetherell, and cinematographer Henry Howse, as well as many other collaborators, actors, and personalities, including Edna Flugrath (Shaw’s wife) and Mabel May (Schlesinger’s wife). The author Neil Parsons also includes African actors “Goba the Zulu” and Tom Zulu, as well as acknowledging the involvement of the vast numbers of African extras in AFP’s epic productions.

Readers expecting a wider perspective of early African film will find that the focus is primarily on South African-produced films. The book champions AFP for its short drama, fiction, and feature film production in the early
The writing is fluent, and the narration is eminently readable with fascinating information and cameos on particular people, situations, and places. The author’s expertise as an historian of southern Africa, as evidenced in others of his highly original publications, is in drawing extensively on newspaper archives and weaving together stories that bring out the anecdotal and everyday detail of these major productions and their screenings inbioscopes, while making connections within the broader cinema world. Though he knowingly navigates the dangers of reinforcing colonial stereotypes, attitudes, and inequalities, through inserting witty and sharp observations and comic juxtapositions of the source material, at times, some of these stories and illustrative cartoons can read uncomfortably. Nevertheless, the book provides, through its reliance on contemporary publications, a picture of how early cinema naturalised imperial and racial narratives.

In an attempt to acknowledge the importance of the African presence in the AFP films, Parsons makes the case that, compared to Hollywood, where white actors were blacked-up to play Africans, here Africans played active roles as protagonists and not stereotyped roles. He concludes that AFP films were most inherently “African” when African people were featured in African surroundings and asserts that “the success of such movies was affirmed when they were shown to, and appreciated by, African audiences in their millions”. He furthermore suggests that AFP’s “Zulutown” comedies produced between 1916 and 1917 were “black-centred”, a term he draws from Litheko Modisane’s study of black-centred films in South Africa from the 1950s to 2000.2 That the “Zulutown” films were subsequently shown in black townships and mines, and were favourite fare for audiences, is important to note, but the implication that these films allowed for critical public engagement with “blackness” and that African audiences in their millions appreciated AFP films more broadly, might have benefited from a fuller contextualised discussion of scholarship on African cinema audiences, and the racially segregated social systems in place which limited and excluded African experiences of cinema inbioscopes.

In addition to the book’s extensive bibliography and other sources, and its detailed index, archivists will benefit from the painstaking yearly listing of non-fiction films in the English language in sub-Saharan Africa between 1897 and 1925. Which films survive and what archives they are in is not indicated, but there is no doubt that this book is a marvellous resource.


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1. Published in Cape Town by Howard Timmins, 1972.

Black and White Bioscope est un ouvrage merveilleux que tout bon archiviste du film se doit d’avoir dans sa bibliothèque. Il propose un historique détaillé et superbement illustré de la genèse d’une soixantaine de films réalisés en Afrique du Sud entre 1899 et 1925, dont seuls douze ont survécu dans les archives cinématographiques. S’appuyant sur un large éventail de sources, dont des journaux, revues spécialisées, ouvrages historiques et autres textes d’experts, l’auteur reconstitue le parcours entrepreneurial d’I.W. Schlesinger dans le cinéma, avec une attention particulière pour ses premières productions pour le compte d’African Film Productions, dans le contexte plus large du cinéma sud-africain de la période coloniale.


Black and White Bioscope es un recurso maravilloso que debería estar en las estanterías de todos los archiveros de películas. Ofrece una historia detallada y un relato bellamente ilustrado de casi 60 películas realizadas en Sudáfrica entre 1899 y 1925, de las cuales sólo doce se conservan en archivos cinematográficos. Basándose en una amplia gama de fuentes, como periódicos, revistas comerciales, libros históricos y textos académicos, el libro reconstruye la historia del negocio cinematográfico de I. W. Schlesinger, centrándose en sus primeras producciones a través de African Film Productions, en el contexto más amplio de la realización cinematográfica en Sudáfrica durante el periodo colonial.
A Coleção Colonial da Cinemateca / The Cinemateca’s Colonial Collection

Rui Lopes

Rui Lopes is a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History, NOVA-FCSH, in Lisbon, and a lecturer at Birkbeck, University of London. He works on Cold War visual culture and on the international history of the Portuguese dictatorship and empire. He is a member of the editorial boards of Práticas da História: Journal on Theory, Historiography and Uses of the Past and Aniki: Portuguese Journal of the Moving Image.

A bilingual tribute to one of the key figures of the Cinemateca Portuguesa, Portugal’s film museum and archive, this book doubles as a useful guide for anyone keen to learn about Portuguese colonial filmography and how it has been preserved.

Having worked at the Cinemateca for almost 30 years, for most of this time as head of all activities related to the search and acquisition of film materials, Joana Pimentel (1953-2018) was instrumental in promoting the deposit and conservation of previously scattered – and deteriorating – Portuguese films, particularly productions from the era of the Estado Novo dictatorship (1933-1974). Her main legacy involves an extended collection of material related to Portuguese colonialism – not just state propaganda, but also industrial, tourist, scientific, educational, and amateur films (in addition to productions made by anti-colonial movements) – recognising how colonial ideology and materiality operated in various sectors and through different means.

Besides bringing together, in both Portuguese and English, four texts by Pimentel which describe the construction and content of the Cinemateca’s colonial collection, the book includes a forward by the Cinemateca’s director José Manuel Costa which contextualises the significance of Pimentel’s work, and a lengthy interview with Pimentel made in the context of a project about tourist films. Each half of the book provides a vast selection of stills, from the Estado Novo and pre-Estado Novo eras, from rare films shot in the colonies.

Pimentel’s guiding principle – that recordings of moving images are inherently valuable documents which can provide insights into the past and therefore “there are no bad films” (the title of two of the chapters) – is presented as a paradigm-shifting approach which ushered in an increasingly “comprehensive policy of archiving, surveying, conservation, restoration and access” (p.182), extending far beyond films that were conventionally deemed to be relevant or of artistic merit. The result was a broader conception of national heritage: one that led to the preservation of material that had never been screened or was never meant to be screened (such as archival records and unedited, unfinished works). Consequently, a whole new generation of researchers and filmmakers has been able to engage, in depth, with a rich variety of moving images from the Estado Novo and from Portugal’s former empire – currently two of the most vibrant fields in both Portuguese historiography and audiovisual production, whose resonance has spilled into a series of lively public debates throughout the last decade.
Not only do the Pimentel texts collected in this book chronicle how the films were acquired by the Cinemateca, but they also map out a genealogy of Portuguese colonial cinema stretching back to the first decades of the 20th century. In an impressive demonstration of the kind of approach that can be facilitated by a well-researched collection, her meticulous discussion of the background of 1929’s amateur documentary Missão Académica a Angola: Alguns Aspectos Cinematográficos da Viagem (Academic Mission to Angola: Some Cinematographic Aspects of the Trip) is especially informative, situating this expedition to Angola by a team of Portuguese university teachers and students in the context of the era’s debates around the concept of “scientific occupation” (i.e., privileging more qualified settlers and investment geared towards local development), as opposed to “undifferentiated colonization” (pp.207-8). Likewise, in the final interview, Pimentel draws on her transnational life experience as well as on her detailed knowledge of the Cinemateca’s collection to provide fascinating accounts of how cinema historically depicted the colonies (especially Angola and Mozambique), and of its presence in those territories.

The book should therefore appeal to at least three different types of readers: those interested in the ideological reasoning, institutionalisation and bureaucratic challenges of putting together an ambitious national film archive, those planning to research Portugal’s former colonial territories and seeking to track down obscure primary sources, and those studying the history of how the empire was visualised and projected at the time, in other words the history that Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have labelled the “imperial imaginary”.1


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Analoge Kinefilme und Kinefilmtechnik. Grundlage der Umsetzung der Digitalisierung von Kinefilmen nach DIN SPEC 15587

Thomas Worschech

Thomas Worschech has been a curator at Frankfurt’s DFF – Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum – since 1999 and is head of its film archive and technical collection.

For a sustainable digitisation of analogue film heritage, one must consider not only restoration ethics and aesthetic aspects: former technical standards play a crucial role. In order to achieve faithful reproduction when sourcing from original or later generation elements, while aiming to meet the benchmark of authenticity and integrity in the digital representation of a film work, a solid knowledge of the film industry standards published over the course of film history provides essential help and guidance. Most standards relevant to motion picture stocks, film production, photographic laboratory work, and film projection, were declared outdated over time and consequently withdrawn, either in favour of an updated version or without replacement. Considered obsolete by the DIN commission, most are unavailable today.

While the title of the manual reviewed here (it translates as Analogue Cine Films and Cine Film Technology. Basis for the Implementation of the Digitisation of Motion Picture Films) does not immediately reveal what the content offers, the information contained in the publisher’s advertising text provides further clarification. Following the author’s selection, Beuth Verlag has brought together the cinematographic standards from the analogue photochemical era that are essential for the digitisation of analogue motion picture films. Orientation was provided by the standard DIN SPEC 15587 Recommendations for the Digitisation of Cinematographic Film (available in English and German versions), already presented in the April 2020 Journal of Film Preservation, in which numerous DIN, DIN ISO, and ISO standards are listed as normative or bibliographic references. As a rule, these standards are those that refer to the dimensions of film formats, the dimensions and position of image and sound recordings on those formats, other technical characteristics of image and sound recordings, and those providing specifications for the equipment required for reproduction of image and sound.

According to DIN SPEC 15587)

1. DIN: Deutsches Institut für Normung (German Institute for Standardisation).
2. Beuth Verlag, Berlin: As a subsidiary of DIN, Beuth Verlag distributes national and international standards as well as other technical regulations and develops technical literature.
If a standard – in this case DIN SPEC 15587 – lists other standards as so-called normative references, these must be observed when applying that standard. It therefore makes sense to offer all of them in a single manual (which is very cheap when compared to the cost of acquiring them individually). The manual or e-book, which comprises a total of 504 pages, contains 94 DIN standards and three ISO standards, the latter, of course, in English. What makes this book interesting beyond the German-speaking community, however, is the fact that it establishes the connection between the published DIN standards and the corresponding 52 ISO standards, i.e., the respective international standards agreements, in the form of three tables:

1. Published DIN standards in numerical order with title indication, referencing the corresponding ISO signature.

2. Listed ISO standards in numerical order with title, referencing the corresponding DIN signature.

3. Published DIN or listed ISO standards structured according to criteria such as film format, image or sound, photographic or magnetic.

The third table, in particular, makes it possible to quickly locate standards that relate to specific technical criteria of film recordings or playback devices.

The manual also contains correlation tables between DIN and TGL, and TGL and DIN. The films produced in East Germany (the GDR) between 1949 and 1990 represent quite a considerable proportion of the film stock preserved and destined to be digitised in Germany. This film legacy of the GDR was produced according to the specifications of the TGL standards. Incidentally, in contrast to the DIN standards, generally only recommendations, compliance with the TGL was mandatory in the GDR. In any case, it would be desirable to have access to these standards in the future.

Of especial interest are the four papers included in this book, written by the author on those aspects of standardisation which have been subject to particularly striking changes in cinema history, and, consequently, in the history of German and international standardisation:

1. Picture-to-sound distance on combined 35mm prints with optical sound.

2. Soundtrack position and picture-to-sound distance on combined 16mm prints.
   Pre-emphasis and de-emphasis of the optical sound recording and reproduction, respectively.

3. Spectral characteristics of optical sound scanning.

For better technical understanding, it would have been good to embed graphical representations, e.g., of the curve progressions of light spectra and audio frequency responses, into the texts. As a bonus, however, the first seven of the standards for the 35mm film format issued from 1922 onwards are printed as facsimiles.

This publication authored by Egbert Koppe and published by Beuth Verlag is an important handbook for film laboratories and other digitisation and restoration service providers, equipment manufacturers, film archives, all institutions with film collections, museums, university libraries, film schools, projectionists, and film distributors.


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4. TGL: Technischen Normen, Gütevorschriften und Lieferbedingungen (Technical Standards, Quality Regulations and Delivery Conditions of the German Democratic Republic).
Pour qu’une numérisation du patrimoine cinématographique analogique s’inscribe dans la durée, il est nécessaire de respecter l’éthique de la restauration et tenir compte des aspects esthétiques, mais les normes techniques antérieures jouent également un rôle crucial. L’auteur a sélectionné 94 normes DIN allemandes et trois normes cinématographiques ISO de l’ère photochimique analogique, qui toutes sont essentielles à la numérisation de films de cinéma analogiques. Ce qui rend ce livre particulièrement intéressant pour un public plus large que la communauté germanophone, c’est qu’il établit sous forme de tableaux des liens entre les normes DIN publiées et les 52 normes ISO correspondantes, en d’autres termes les conventions internationales de normalisation.

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Para una digitalización sostenible del patrimonio cinematográfico analógico, no sólo hay que tener en cuenta la ética de la restauración y los aspectos estéticos: las normas técnicas anteriores también desempeñan un papel crucial. El autor ha seleccionado 94 normas DIN alemanas y tres normas cinematográficas ISO de la era fotoquímica analógica que son esenciales para la digitalización de películas cinematográficas analógicas. Lo que hace que este libro sea especialmente interesante para un público más amplio que el de habla alemana, es que establece la conexión entre las normas DIN publicadas y las 52 normas ISO correspondientes -es decir, los respectivos acuerdos internacionales de normalización- en forma de tablas.
André Antoine au cinéma. Une méthode expérimentale

Alain Carou

Alain Carou est ancien conservateur des collections vidéo de la Bibliothèque nationale de France et chercheur en histoire du cinéma. Sa dernière publication est De la scène à la pellicule. Théâtre, musique et cinéma autour de 1900 (en co-direction avec Remy Campos et Aurélien Poidevin), Paris, L'Oeil d'or, 2021 (contient deux DVD avec les productions du Film d'Art et leurs musiques originales).


Pourtant, malgré les articles dans les revues et les publications d’archives, notamment dans un numéro de la revue 1895, aucune étude n’était encore venue prendre la mesure de l’ambition, de l’esthétique et des résultats d’Antoine. Philippe Esnault en particulier, qui fut le découvreur et l’ardent défenseur d’Antoine cinéaste au mitan des années 1950, puis le maître d’œuvre des restaurations des années 1980, n’était pas parvenu à mener à bien le grand livre qu’il avait projeté (son Antoine cinéaste, publié à titre posthume, constitue néanmoins une solide introduction à l’homme et à l’œuvre).

L’ouvrage de Manon Billaut, tiré d’une thèse de doctorat, entreprend donc de combler une lacune importante. Sa proposition théorique forte est qu’Antoine est fidèle, au cinéma comme au théâtre, à une “méthode expérimentale”. Autrement dit, à une manière d’organiser son travail (un “protocole”) qui répond tout à la fois à une visée artistique et à une visée de connaissance du monde et des hommes.

Chaque tournage d’Antoine est préparé par un travail de repérage minutieux. L’authenticité des lieux est recherchée au point, par exemple, qu’il tourne les scènes d’intérieurs de Mademoiselle de La Seiglière (1919) dans les appartements sombres d’un château et ceux de L’Arlésienne (1922) dans une ferme arlésienne, en y faisant installer des groupes électrogènes. La documentation, les décors pris dans le monde réel et l’intégration du tournage à la vie locale visent à accomplir l’ambition naturaliste : faire de la fiction comme le “produit” du milieu social, humain, dans lequel elle s’enracine et sur lequel elle doit jouer, par contrecoup, le rôle d’un révélateur.

Il y a ainsi une très grande porosité du cinéma de fiction d’Antoine avec le documentaire. De longues séquences peu dramatisées voient un personnage parcourir Paris (Le Coupable). Les autochtones peuplent les plans du film breton tourné à Camaret (Les Travailleurs de la mer). Comme le résume
Jean Douchet, Antoine “ne cherche plus à donner de la vie au drame”, mais “donne du drame à la vie”.

Manon Billaut montre, scénarios à l’appui, combien les films d’Antoine sont écrits à l’avance, découpés, avec un jeu sur les valeurs de plans. Le metteur en scène est aussi très directif avec ses acteurs, dont il exige, comme il le faisait au théâtre, qu’ils sachent « devenir un clavier, un instrument merveilleusement accordé » au service de sa vision. Antoine n’en est pas moins capable de se laisser happer par le monde réel tel qu’il surgit au tournage. La fiction, réduite au plus tenu, tend alors à devenir un support à son exploration. Ce sera le cas au plus haut point, du moins on peut le supposer, lors du tournage de *L’Hirondelle et la Mésange*, dont le montage lui est retiré par le producteur au vu des rushes. Fin de l’aventure ? Pas tout à fait, puisque Antoine continuera longtemps à écrire sur le cinéma dans la presse, militant par exemple pour la sauvegarde et le réemploi des images documentaires d’actualités.

On regrettera peut-être qu’à force de souligner la cohérence propre à la démarche d’Antoine, le livre sous-estime un peu les points de continuité avec ses prédécesseurs en cinéma, notamment les metteurs en scène de la SCAGL comme Capellani ou Denola. Trois décennies plus tôt, avec son Théâtre Libre, Antoine avait radicalement secoué la scène théâtrale. Mais quand il est devenu cinéaste à presque soixante ans, n’a-t-il pas rejoint un milieu déjà conquis à l’esthétique naturaliste et de plein air, et où travaillent d’ailleurs des anciens collaborateurs et disciples à lui ?

Toutefois il importait avant tout de caractériser l’originalité de cette œuvre, mal comprise à son époque même, et interprétée dans sa globalité ici pour la première fois. Cent ans après la fin assez malheureuse de la carrière cinématographique d’Antoine, on ne peut que se réjouir de voir très bientôt de nouvelles restaurations de ses films, d’autant plus qu’elles ont été réalisées sous la direction de l’auteure, chargée des collections film à la Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé.
In 1984, the restoration of André Antoine’s films by the Cinémathèque française marked an important milestone in the history of French silent films. It was then discovered that this director, renowned for his theatrical research, was also the author of a unique cinematographic oeuvre: eight films made between 1915 and 1922.

However, despite articles in magazines and archival publications, notably in an issue of the magazine 1895, no study had yet appeared which measures Antoine’s ambition, aesthetic, and results. Manon Billaut’s book, based on a doctoral thesis, therefore sets out to fill an important gap. Its strong theoretical proposition is that Antoine is faithful, in cinema as in theatre, to an “experimental method”, in other words, to a way of organising his work (a “protocol”) that responds both to an artistic aim and to an aim of knowledge of the world and of men.

It is perhaps regrettable that, in emphasising the coherence of Antoine’s approach, the book somewhat underestimates the points of continuity with his predecessors in cinema, in particular directors such as Capellani or Denola. However, above all, it was important to characterise the originality of this work, poorly understood on its original appearance, and now interpreted in its entirety for the first time. One hundred years after the rather unfortunate end of Antoine’s cinematographic career, we can only be delighted to see new restorations of his films, all the more so as they have been carried out under the direction of the author, who is head of the film collections at the Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé Foundation.


En 1984, la restauración de las películas de André Antoine por parte de la Cinémathèque française marcó un hito importante en la historia del cine mudo francés. Se descubrió entonces que este director, reconocido por sus investigaciones teatrales, era también autor de una obra cinematográfica singular: ocho películas realizadas entre 1915 y 1922.

Sin embargo, a pesar de los artículos aparecidos en revistas y publicaciones de archivo, especialmente en un número de la revista 1895, ningún estudio había llegado a medir la ambición, la estética y los resultados de Antoine. El libro de Manon Billaut, basado en una tesis doctoral, trata de colmar esta importante laguna. Su propuesta teórica central es que Antoine es fiel, tanto en el cine como en el teatro, a un “método experimental”. Es decir, a una forma de organizar su trabajo (un “protocolo”) que responde tanto a un objetivo artístico como a un objetivo de conocimiento del mundo y de los hombres.

Quizá sea lamentable que, al subrayar la coherencia del enfoque de Antoine, el libro subestime un poco los puntos de continuidad con sus predecesores en el cine, en particular con directores como Capellani o Denola. Sin embargo, era importante sobre todo caracterizar la originalidad de esta obra, mal comprendida en su época, y que aquí se interpreta íntegramente por primera vez. Cien años después del desafortunado final de la carrera cinematográfica de Antoine, no podemos sino alegrarnos de ver muy pronto nuevas restauraciones de sus películas, sobre todo cuando se han realizado bajo la dirección del autor, responsable de las colecciones de la Fundación Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé.
Thierry Zéno

David Vanden Bossche

David Vanden Bossche is an art and film historian and editor-in-chief of the Belgian “Enola” film and culture website. He is currently employed by the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he is an instructor in the Department of Communication Arts and working on a doctoral dissertation on the influence of the Steadicam on film aesthetics.

A film student from Namur, Thierry Zéno (1950–2017, né Thierry Jonard) directed his first short feature – Bouche sans Fond Ouverte sur les Horizons (Bottomless Mouth Open to the Horizons) – in 1971 and stepped into immortality three years later with the highly controversial Vase de Noces / Wedding Trough. These two key features and the later documentary Des Morts / Of the Dead (1979) have now been digitised and boxed by the Royal Belgian Film Archive (Cinematek), bringing a mostly forgotten but important chapter of Belgian film history, back to life.

The trilingual booklet that accompanies the Brussels Cinematek’s Thierry Zéno box set, will tell you about Zéno’s background as a student at the Institut des Arts de Diffusion, his first ventures into short filmmaking, and his later preference for documentary features. None of that information, however, will prepare the viewer for the unique oeuvre – or at least a glimpse of it – that he or she is about to discover when sliding the discs in the player from this set that finally restores key works by this scarcely known Belgian director.

The most (in)famous film in this collection is undoubtedly 1974’s Vace de Noces, a production that was so controversial that several Belgian government institutions tried their utmost not to be associated with it. Nonetheless, it was still selected for the EXPRMNTL festival in Knokke (that also famously supported Martin Scorsese’s 1967 short The Big Shave) and even the Directors’ Fortnight at the 1975 Cannes film festival. This tale, shot in hauntingly beautiful poetic contrasts of black and white (that have now been restored to their original glory) and set to Monteverdi music, surely still raises some eyebrows with its depiction of the life led by a lonesome young man who lives in the ruins of a castle, falls in love with his pig and conceives babies with the animal, only to brutally turn against both mother and piglets, and finally ascend to heaven. While the themes and subject may challenge the viewer, there’s no denying that this idiosyncratic tale, inspired by such diverse sources as Félicien Rops’s famous gouache Pornocrates and the life of Saint Anthony, possesses an undeniable visceral cinematic power, and is a film that aligns itself with the broader art scene of its time and with the most controversial works of Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Shot on 16mm and transferred to 35mm for release, the original negative was deposited by the director at the Brussels Cinematek in 1989, only for it to be withdrawn and transported to a Brussels lab (it seems Zéno planned some additional work on the print). When, in 2019, the Cinematek searched in vain for the negative, they finally settled on using a Super-16 dupe positive and a 35mm CRI (colour reversal intermediate) still in existence. The sources – although uneven in quality – were combined for this DVD version that also restores the film to its original length (through the years, several shortened versions were produced).
The two other films in this set may be less controversial but are equally fascinating works in their own right. The first, 1971’s *Bouche Sans Fond Ouverte sur les Horizons* was Zeno’s first film; a short documentary about Georges Moinet, an amateur painter suffering from schizophrenia whose oeuvre developed entirely during his residence in a mental hospital. The director refuses any added comment or context and sets up a fascinating dialogue with Moinet’s inner world through lengthy talks that are not always coherent but interact in fascinating ways with the finished paintings. As Muriel Andrin from the Université Libre de Bruxelles points out in the accompanying booklet, this film sees Zéno tapping into a rich tradition of Belgian art documentaries, from early works by Paul Haesaerts to Henri Storck and Luc de Heusch (films that were part of the Cinematek’s 2013 box set *Art & Cinema*).

The final film – *Des Morts / Of the Dead* – from 1979 is another documentary, one that is sometimes wrongfully associated with so-called “shockumentaries”, a genre popular during the 1970s and 1980s. Contrary, however, to films like the much-maligned *Faces of Death* (1978) by John Alan Schwartz, Zéno and his collaborators are not interested in shock value in their exploration of death rituals from around the world. Ranging as far as Thailand, Nepal, and the US, Thierry Zéno, Jean-Pol Ferbus, and Dominique Garny recorded images connected to death in all its facets: burying the dead, avoiding death, waiting for death, or caring for the dead. Out of these sometimes disturbing, graphic, but honest observations, grows a poetic reflection on cultural differences and ways of dealing with the unavoidable.

Put together, these films offer the viewer a long overdue look at the work of one of Belgium’s most unique voices in filmmaking and a challenging but most rewarding journey of cinematic discovery.

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Henry Brandt. Cinéaste et photographe : un projet pluridisciplinaire qui se donne les moyens de ses ambitions

Natacha Isoz


Artiste suisse majeur des années 1950 à 1980, Henri Brandt a marqué plus de 2 millions de visiteurs avec ses courts métrages La Suisse s’interroge présentés lors de l’exposition nationale de 1964. Sa production, qui s’inscrit dans la tradition du documentaire ethnographique, porte un regard humaniste sur les enjeux sociaux de son époque dans son pays et dans le monde. Considéré en son temps comme un précurseur du « nouveau cinéma suisse », Brandt est progressivement oublié (du moins du grand public), tandis que son travail photographique reste largement méconnu. Pour célébrer le centenaire de cet autodidacte né à la Chaux-de-Fonds en 1921, le projet Henry Brandt. Cinéaste et photographe – mené par plusieurs institutions patrimoniales et l’Université de Lausanne – propose une vision complète de son œuvre à travers diverses manifestations de qualité, dont une exposition au Musée d’art et d’histoire de Neuchâtel (MahN), une rétrospective des films à la Cinémathèque suisse (CS), un coffret DVD, une publication et un site internet.

Au MahN, où le fonds photographique Brandt vient d’être déposé après une vaste campagne de restauration, une exposition de 700 m² présente pour la première fois de manière croisée des photographies et des films de l’auteur. Les photographies ont été tirées sur du beau papier dans un format uniformisé qui laisse le grain et de nombreux détails émerger et les (extraits de) films restaurés sont projetés sur de grands écrans. L’accrochage traduit l’intérêt similaire de Brandt pour les deux pratiques, l’une ne venant jamais simplement documenter l’autre. Minutieusement gérés, l’éclairage et le son permettent d’apprécier chaque œuvre dans les meilleures conditions, quand bien même les deux médiums apparaissent conjointement – un équilibre rare dans les expositions multimédias.

Les commissaires, Pierre-Emmanuel Jaques et Olivier Lugon (section d’histoire et esthétique du cinéma de l’Unil), ont conçu un parcours qui débute sur les bords du lac de Neuchâtel (prolongeant symboliquement le trajet des visiteurs puisque le musée se situe sur ses rives) et nous emmène jusqu’au Sénégal, en passant par l’Espagne, la Laponie ou encore l’Inde, autant d’espaces géographiques passés sous l’objectif de Brandt. Dix îlots thématiques permettent de découvrir ses projets significatifs, dont deux films réalisés sur le continent africain. Les Nomades du soleil, dans lequel Brandt suit pendant une année

Commandé par la Confédération helvétique pour l’Expo 64, La Suisse s’interroge se déclinaient en cinq courts métrages présentés successivement au sein d’un labyrinthe parcouru à pied. Cette installation multimédia (plusieurs typologies d’écrans, musique inters-titieille) remettait en question l’image idéalisée que l’on se faisait de la Suisse. Le troisième film, La Course au bonheur, qui porte un regard critique sur la vie d’une famille régie par l’in-satiable besoin de consommer, restera gravé dans les mémoires grâce à une seule image : celle d’un enfant dont les yeux demandent très pleinement l’expérience, ce dispositif déambulatoire immersif a été récréé presque à l’identique au cœur du MahN : une réussite.

Avec le cinquième film, Ton pays est dans le monde, la focale s’élargit avant que les visiteurs n’atteignent l’îlot suivant dans lequel l’auteur confronte diverses régions du globe pour en souligner les contradictions (fractures économiques, sanitaires ou politiques). Capturées en équipe à travers cinq continents, les images constituent la matière du long métrage Voyage chez les vivants, des treize épisodes télévisés Chronique de la Planète bleue et du livre L’Aventure des hommes (1970-3). Dans l’exposition, l’agrandissement et la présentation des diapositives sous forme d’une
Marché aux poissons, Tokyo, 1966 (Henry Brandt, diapositive 24 x 36 mm).

Cimetière automobile à Emeryville, Californie, USA, 1967 (Henry Brandt, diapositive 24 x 36 mm).
mosaïque rétroéclairée permet de saisir en un coup d’œil un certain état du monde d’une grande actualité.

Le parcours est rythmé par des encadrés (s’inspirant du motif de la pellicule) décrivant les projets et des photographies représentant Brandt en contexte. Ils sont accompagnés de documentation (livres de photographies, affiches de films ou encore articles de presse) et d’une frise biographique multimédia qui occupe l’entier d’une salle. On regrette toutefois que les textes soient uniquement en français et en allemand (excluant de fait un public anglophone) alors qu’une visite guidée est prévue en langue des signes.

Le coffret DVD édité par la CS (qui conserve l’essentiel du fonds filmique Brandt) et par le MahN prolonge l’exposition en présentant huit films (en partie les mêmes) et huit émissions (produites par la Télévision suisse romande) restaurés et numérisés ainsi qu’un livret réalisé par l’Unil. Les dix films sélectionnés parmi la trentaine du cinéaste couvrent l’entier de sa carrière et reflètent fidèlement sa production – tandis que ceux non retenus ont été diffusés lors d’une rétrospective à la CS et d’autres événements. Effectuée dans un contexte de commande à une époque où il est extrêmement difficile de financer des films en Suisse, la filmographie de Brandt atteste d’une étonnante liberté esthétique et poétique qui rend compte du morcellement de la société. Chacun des quatre DVD est dédié à une thématique : l’exploration du lointain; les réalités du troisième âge; la description du local; et un mode de vie perçu comme alternatif. Le dernier DVD inclut également des extraits d’émissions dans lesquels s’expriment des personnalités du monde cinématographique romand.

Une publication de référence comporte des textes de chercheurs et de professionnels affiliés aux institutions ayant contribué au projet et de nombreuses images. Elle apporte de précieuses informations sur Brandt et le contexte d’élaboration de ses œuvres ainsi qu’un regard critique sur sa production. Le graphisme (ouvrage, documentation et site Internet) et la scénographie de l’exposition ont été réalisés par un même studio, Onlab, ce qui donne une forte cohérence visuelle à l’ensemble. Pour un aperçu révélateur de la richesse scientifique et esthétique d’Henry Brandt. Cinéaste et photographe, rendez-vous sur <henrybrandt.ch>.
Henry Brandt. Cinéaste et photographe
https://www.mahn.ch/fr/expositions/henry-brandt-cineaste-et-photographe

A major Swiss artist from the 1950s to the 1980s, Henri Brandt left his mark on many visitors with his short films La Suisse s’interroge, which were shown at the 1964 national exhibition. His work, which is in the tradition of ethnographic documentaries, offers a humanist view of the global social issues of his time. Considered a precursor of the “new Swiss cinema”, Brandt is gradually being forgotten, while his photographic work remains largely unknown.

To celebrate the centenary of his birth, the project Henry Brandt. Cinéaste et photographe – led by several heritage institutions along with the University of Lausanne – offers a comprehensive view of his work through a number of high-quality events.

The exhibition at the Musée d’art et d’histoire de Neuchâtel, whose thematic route takes us from the city’s lakeside to the four corners of the globe, is a success on all levels: the selection of objects and documentation, the quality of the recent prints, the lighting and sound that provide the best conditions for appreciating each work, and the reconstitution of the immersive ambulatory device of La Suisse s’interroge.

Published by the museum and the Cinémathèque suisse, the DVD set contains a booklet and 16 restored and digitised films and broadcasts that cover Brandt’s entire career and faithfully reflect his output. Each DVD is dedicated to a theme (exploration of the distant, old age, description of the local and alternative lifestyle), while the films not selected were screened during a retrospective at the Cinémathèque suisse and other events.

A publication and a website (henrybrandt.ch) complete this project, which is rich both scientifically and aesthetically - the graphic design and scenography are by the same studio, Onlab, creating a strong visual coherence.

Henry Brandt. Cinéaste et photographe
Coffret de 4 DVD édité par la Cinémathèque suisse et le Musée d’art et d’histoire de Neuchâtel (MahN). Langues : français, allemand, anglais. Durée totale 290’.

Henri Brandt, uno de los principales artistas suizos de los años 50 a los 80, dejó su huella en muchos visitantes con sus cortometrajes La Suisse s’interroge, proyectados en la exposición nacional de 1964. Su obra, que se inscribe en la tradición de los documentales etnográficos, ofrece una visión humanista de los problemas sociales globales de su época. Considerado un precursor del “nuevo cine suizo”, Brandt está cayendo poco a poco en el olvido, mientras que su obra fotográfica sigue siendo muy desconocida.

Para celebrar el centenario de su nacimiento, el proyecto Henry Brandt. Cinéaste et photographe - dirigido por varias instituciones del patrimonio junto con la Universidad de Lausana- ofrece una visión completa de su obra a través de una serie de actos de gran calidad.

La exposición del Musée d’art et d’histoire de Neuchâtel, cuyo recorrido temático nos lleva desde la orilla del lago de la ciudad hasta los cuatro rincones del mundo, es un éxito a todos los niveles: la selección de los objetos y la documentación, la calidad de las impresiones recientes, la iluminación y el sonido que ofrecen las mejores condiciones para apreciar cada obra, y la reconstitución del dispositivo ambulatorio inmersivo de La Suisse s’interroge.

Publicado por el museo y la Cinémathèque suisse, la edición en DVD contiene un folleto y 16 películas y emisiones televisivas restauradas y digitalizadas que abarcan toda la carrera de Brandt y reflejan fielmente su producción. Cada DVD está dedicado a un tema (la exploración de lo lejano, la vejez, la descripción de lo local y el estilo de vida alternativo), mientras que las películas no seleccionadas se proyectarán durante una retrospectiva en la Cinémathèque suisse y en otros eventos.

Una publicación y una página web (henrybrandt.ch) completan este proyecto, rico tanto científica como estéticamente, ya que el diseño gráfico y la escenografía son del mismo estudio, Onlab, creando una fuerte coherencia visual.
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- **50 Years of Film Archives / 50 Ans d’archives du film 1938–1988**
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- **Glossary of Filmographic Terms**
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- **International Index to Television Periodicals**

- **FIAF Classification Scheme for Literature on Film and Television**
  - by Michael Moulds. 2nd Ed. revised and enlarged, ed. by Karen Jones and Michael Moulds. FIAF 1992, 50€

- **Bibliography of National Filmographies**
  - Annotated list of filmographies, journals and other publications. Compiled by D. Gebauer. Edited by H. W. Harrison. FIAF 1985, 80p., 25€

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  In 1990, FIAF published film archive technician Harold Brown’s *Physical Characteristics of Early Films as Aids to Identification*, a concentrated encyclopaedia on how the identity of a print can be discovered or verified through aspects of the film other than the actual projected image. It also included essays on key individual production companies of the silent era. 30 years later, Brown’s original text has been augmented with new original research on key film manufacturers and provides critical analysis by Camille Blot-Wellens and other leading archivists and researchers in the field. Richly illustrated (over 900 images included 125 in colour), this new 330-page edition of Harold Brown’s seminal manual will no doubt become a must-have working tool for many in the film archiving and academic fields. FIAF 2020; ISBN: 9782960029697; 35€. Available for purchase from the FIAF Secretariat and Indiana University Press.

- **Technical Manual of the FIAF Preservation Commission / Manuel technique de la Commission de Préservation de la FIAF**
  A user’s manual on practical film and video preservation procedures containing articles in English and French. / Un manuel sur les procédés pratiques de conservation du film et de la vidéo contenant des articles en français et en anglais.
  - FIAF 1993, 192p., €66 or incl.”Physical Characteristics of Early Films as Aid to Identification”, 90€ (includes a CD-ROM in Spanish and English).

- **Handling, Storage and Transport of Cellulose Nitrate Film**
  Guidelines produced with the help of the FIAF Preservation Commission.
  - FIAF 1992, 20p., 17€

- **Preservation and Restoration of Moving Image and Sound**
  A report by the FIAF Preservation Commission, covering in 19 chapters the physical properties of film and sound tape, their handling and storage, and the equipment used by film archives to ensure for permanent preservation.
  - FIAF 1986, 268p., illus., 42€

**ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS**

- **FIAF Digital Projection Guide**
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  This guide addresses the technical challenges that cinématheques, archival and repertory cinemas encounter in the paradigm change from analogue film projection to digital cinema. The guide is an extension of, and update to, The Advanced Projection Manual, a book covering the craft of projecting film classics with modern equipment. Published by FIAF, 2012, 120pp., color illustrations, paperback, 19€. Available for purchase from the FIAF Secretariat and Indiana University Press. Visit www.fiafnet.org/best-sellers.
  - ISBN 9-7829600296-28

- **The Advanced Projection Manual**
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  This book is designed to provide cinema engineers and projectionists with the necessary technical knowledge and hands-on advice. It can be ordered online at <www.nfi.no/projection>.
  - Published by the Norwegian Film Institute and FIAF, 2006, 300 p., color illustrations, hardback, 55€. Available for purchase from the FIAF Secretariat and Indiana University Press. Visit www.fiafnet.org/best-sellers.
  - ISBN 2-9600296-1-5

- **The Categories Game – Le Jeu des catégories**
  A survey by the FIAF Programming Commission offering listings of the most important films in various categories such as film history, film and the other arts, national production and works in archives. Covers some 2,250 titles, with several indexes. / Une enquête réalisée par la Commission de Programmation de la FIAF offrant des listes des films les plus importants dans différentes catégories telles que l’histoire du cinéma, cinéma et autres arts, la production nationale et le point de vue de l’archive. Comprend 2,250 titres et plusieurs index.

**OTHER PUBLISHERS**

- **Newsreels in Film Archives**
  Based on the proceedings of FIAF’s ‘Newsreels Symposium’ held in Mo-i-Rana, Norway, in 1993, this book contains more than 30 papers on newsreel history, and on the problems and experiences of contributing archives in preserving, cataloguing and providing access to new film collections. Edited by Roger Smith and Wolfgang Klaue.

- **Archiving the Audiovisual Heritage: A Joint Technical Symposium**
  Proceedings of the 1987 Technical Symposium held in West Berlin, organised by FIAF, FIAT, and IASA. 30 papers covering the most recent developments in the preservation and conservation of film, video, and sound.

- **Archiving the Audiovisual Heritage: Third Joint Technical Symposium**

- **Image and Sound Archiving and Access: The Challenge of the Third Millennium: 5th Joint Technical Symposium**
  Proceedings of the 2000 JTS held in Paris, organised by CNC and CST.
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FIAF IS PROUD TO CELEBRATE IN 2022 THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PERIODICALS INDEXING PROJECT (P.I.P.)

To mark this milestone FIAF commissioned a special celebration book, which will be officially presented during a two-day celebratory event, to be held 22-23 September 2022 in Copenhagen, where it all began in 1972.
Rethinking quality management for analog film collections

To stay relevant in a changing world, we need to use more efficient methods than in the past to protect our film heritage. “We need to know our film collections to preserve them. There is no way around. If we feel the elements are too brittle to be digitized – we need better tools. Human labor is always a limiting factor, so we need more efficient tools. There is no way around – we can’t preserve if we have not assessed the film reels – everything else is blind conservation with an uncertain outcome.”

Analog reels are notably passive in nature. Without digital access copies there is practically no access to the content, no curation, no content unlocking, no request for reuse. We have to find a way to bring our analog content to digital, quickly, reliably and with the least possible risk to the original elements. And thanks to a new invention this is possible now. But it remains a dilemma that most potential beneficiaries can’t even imagine the new possibilities this tool chain can offer.

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