



8th Seminar on the Origins and History of Cinema

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEWS IN EARLY CINEMA

DATE:	Thursday 7th and Friday 8th of April, 2011
PLACE:	<i>Auditori Narcís de Carreras, La Caixa. Sta. Clara, 9-11 4t pis</i>
ORGANISATION:	<i>Museu del Cinema, The Department of Geography, History & History of Art at the University of Girona (UdG), and the Spanish Ministry of Science & Innovation Project "La construcción de la realidad en el cine de los orígenes (1896-1914)"</i>

On Thursday the 7th and Friday the 8th of April, 2011, the **8th edition of the Seminar on the Origins and History of Cinema**, entitled **The Construction of News in Early Cinema**, will be held.

The film industry emerged at a key moment in the development of the written and graphic press and it would not be too long before it was playing a role in creating the imaginary of current affairs through images. Although these news images did not begin to be gathered together into a specific programme until the year 1908 thanks to Pathé Frères, in the very beginnings of cinema there were already images of current events, royal visits, official openings, sports events or exceptional situations that were to bind the image to its present context and bring it into the territory of what could be deemed as newsworthy. When we began to discuss the proposal, we were interested in images that captured reality, such as the reconstructions of events that were to become news. The proposed seminar will focus on trying to define the relationship between cinema and news, to see how it began to build the news imaginary that presaged many of the questions of the future news images both in the subsequent newsreels and in those that came along with the birth of television. We are also interested in observing film as an area of intermediality, bringing together a variety of forms from other areas such as photography, painting and popular theatrical shows, in which the idea of news began to be presaged. The time period of the study is to be from 1895 up to 1914, since we believe that the newsreels underwent a different development with the outbreak of World War I. The proposal of the seminar is to establish a methodology of research and reflection in the context of news and, eventually, to find out how and if we can talk about a kind of birth of the documentary image.

As in previous editions, the Seminar will be divided into two alternating parts. The first will involve theoretical reflection on the central theme with various presentations from leading experts. In the second part, the aim is to enable various researchers to present and discuss with the participants their research into pre-cinema and early cinema.

On behalf of the organisers of this, the **8th Seminar on the Origins and History of Cinema**, we encourage you to take part in this event in which we offer the possibility of disseminating your research by means of the platform provided by this seminar.

The procedure for proposing papers is as follows:

1. PRESENTATION OF SUMMARIES FOR THE PROCESS OF SELECTING PAPERS

■ RESEARCH TOPICS:

a) *Specific subject matter of the 8th Seminary:* The Construction of News in Early Cinema

-Terminological approaches. What do we talk about when we talk about news event films, or newsreels in the field of early cinema? How can we define the images that recorded contemporary events that became part of the framework of newsworthiness established by the press? At what point in time can we start talking about newsreels?

-Precedents in the concept of news. Cinema began as a place of intermediality that brought together work from various forms of expressive media. From this point of view, we want to see how the concept of current events was present in such spectacles as the magic lantern shows, panoramas, illustrated journals and illustrated vignettes or how it took on a key role in the construction of the collective imaginary in Wax Museums. Also significant at the time was the idea of *Teatro por horas* (popular hour-long performances) that included representations of contemporary issues. Another precedent in current affairs worth studying was photojournalism and its relationship with cinematographic news.

-Limits of the notion of current affairs. The inclusion of filmic images into what was real entails research not only into news, but also into the construction of the touristic imaginary and the documentation of the industrial world. Given these premises, we are interested in defining what the limits of current affairs really are. What is considered an *event*? When and how long did an event remain current at the beginning of the century?

-Cinematographic news models: films of real events, images of war, royal visits, official openings, fashion events, festivals and sporting events. We have to consider that the field of filming sports events is of fundamental importance in developing the image of events in general and the subsequent setup of live television. Early cinema included frequent showings of boxing matches.

-Re-enactments news. We want to see how certain news items were re-enacted, how the *staging* of the scene is achieved, which elements document the truth and which are fictional.

-The role of the lecturers accompanying the news presentations. Did the figure of the lecturer appear when news was projected? Which was his role?

-The relationship between the written and the graphic press. Establishing a bridge between what the pictures show and what the press of the time explained. Analysis of the development of cinema as information from the perspective of the history of the press.

-The position of the camera with regard to the event: the point of view of the camera and the staging with regard to royal visits and displays of authority. When does the camera arrive after an event has occurred? How was more than one camera used to film certain sporting events? Who

were the historical personalities who believed in the power of the camera and wanted to be filmed in order to increase their fame and the other personalities who did not?

-The contexts of the audiences: how were the cinematographic news shows of the time received? Was there a relationship between what the viewer believed and the hypothetical "truth" of images? What was the timing involved in showing news events? Were there incidents or events that could be seen the next day since they were processed and shown quickly? How can we relate the timing of early cinema with the search for live events that were subsequently carried out on television?

-What was lacking in cinematographic news? The images built up a highly specific reality through a series of ideological factors: race, power, colonialism, sexism, etc. What historical events were not shown? What was outside the field of news? What was the relationship between political censorship and news?

-The regular newscasts. The newsreels of Pathé Frères began to be screened regularly in 1908. A study of the Pathé model and how it was received in the context of the period.

-Reusing contemporary news events in film making. Films such as "The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty" (Esfir Shub, 1927) and "Paris, 1900" (Nicole Vedrès, 1948) are films that were put together using news items from before 1914. What significance did the images have in the compilation of documentaries made during the time period?

b) General subject matter:

Presentation of ongoing studies into pre-cinema or cinema before 1915.

■ REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSION OF SUMMARIES

- LENGTH: The summary of the paper shall not exceed 60 lines and shall include the current state of the issue in question, the bibliographic reference sources, the main, secondary and unpublished documentary sources for the research and the novelty of the contribution
- SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 31st October, 2010
- AUTHOR INFORMATION: Name, address, phone, e-mail
- MEANS OF DELIVERY: via e-mail to: institutestudis@museudelcinema.cat

The Scientific Advisory Committee for the seminar - comprising Àngel Quintana (UdG), Romà Gubern (UAB), Palmira González (UB), J.E. Monterde (UB), J.M. Minguet (UAB), Sandro Machetti (UdL), Luis Alonso (U. Rey Juan Carlos), Bernardo Riego (U de Cantabria), Mariona Bruzzo (*Filmoteca de Catalunya*), F. Javier Frutos (U. de Salamanca), Daniel Sánchez Salas (*Proyecto del Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación "La construcción de la realidad en el cine de los orígenes 1896-1914"*) and Jordi Pons (Museu del Cinema) - will evaluate the proposed communications and will communicate the admission or exclusion to each individual author before the 20th of November, 2010

2. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCEPTED PAPERS:

- **MAXIMUM LENGTH:**
 - a) Special subject of the 8th Seminar: 10 pages (18,000 characters including spaces)
 - b) General subject: 5 pages (9,000 characters including spaces)

- LANGUAGES: Catalan, Spanish or English
(There will be simultaneous translation during the seminar sessions)
- ILLUSTRATIONS: On digital media, a maximum of 6 images for (a) special subject and 3 images for (b) general subject.
- DELIVERY DEADLINE: **28th of February, 2011**
- MEANS OF DELIVERY: with all due corrections, by e-mail to:
institutestudis@museudelcinema.cat
- ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED:
 - Name, address, phone, e-mail
 - A brief *curriculum vitae* of the author (5 lines) and a brief summary of the text (5 lines)
 - A list of material necessary for public presentation of the paper

The papers presented at the eighth edition of the seminar will be published on paper, along with the presentations by our invited experts, during 2012, provided that they have been defended by the author during the seminar. However, the Scientific Advisory Committee reserves the right to publish within the volume containing the proceedings of the seminar either the whole text or a synopsis written by the author of the submitted papers, and in the latter case, the committee reserves the right to publish the full text on the website of the *Institut d'Estudis* of The *Museu del Cinema*, for consultation and possible subsequent publication.

For further information regarding the seminar, please contact:

Montserrat Puigdevall
 Institut d'Estudis del Museu del Cinema
 c/ Sèquia, 1 17001 Girona
 Tel: 972 412 777 - Fax: 972 413 047
 E-mail: institutestudis@museudelcinema.cat

With kind regards,

Jordi Pons
 Director of the *Museu del Cinema*

Àngel Quintana
 Professor of the Theory & History of Cinema at the University of Girona

Girona, 31/05/2010