

4th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ART CRITICS

Dublin 20 - 26th July 1953

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THEME 4

ART CRITICISM THROUGH THE FILM MEDIUM

Rapporteur : Paul Haesarts

Art Criticism through the Cinema.

The present report only sets out to make some indications about the plan to be adopted during the Congress and to raise some question concerning the creation of art films in general and of art criticism in particular.

Species of Art Films.

a. Documentaries. An artist at work. His country. His district. his visual background. His sources of inspiration. His studio. His methods of work. His appearance. His expressions. His gestures. His voice. His opinions. Visit to a gallery. Presentation of a monument. Presentation of a technique (for example the "Maillol" of Lode, The "Matisse" of Campeaux, "The Cathedral of Milan" by Blazetti).

b. Films of illustration. Narration of a story or unfolding of a series of ideas with the aid of pictures (Landscapes, characters, objects) borrowed from works of art. (for example "The Legend of St Ursula) by Lucienne Emmer, "Guernica" by Alain Resnais).

c. Films of art criticism. Study of the characteristic qualities of the work of an artist, of a group of artists or of a period. Study of a style or of an aesthetic problem. (for example "Play of Light and Shade by Denis Marion, "From Renoir to Picasso").

The animated cartoon. A totally different type from those enumerated above is the work of the artists (painters, draughtsmen) who who use the film itself as a basic technique, as a means of artistic expression. This type of film has not yet been named. Is it necessary to find one? Pictofilm, Filmographie. Amongst others the following have used this technique in different ways, Disney, Alexeieff, Masereel, MacLaren.

The Production. The films on art are distinguished by the aims of their producers, Spectacular, Didactic or Artistic.

They can be produced by

1.- The state, departments of fine arts, public education, tourist boards, museums.



2.- The Patron. Through the initiative of conisseurs or collectors.

3.- Commercial Film Producers. 20th Century Fox, Pantheon - Films. Here there is grave danger of insensitive production or of lack of due respect for works of art.

The production of art-films is undertaken without forethought, without method and without plan. Sometimes important subjects are neglected, others are ruined or incompletely presented.

The Scenario. It is agreed that the scenario should be thought out as if it were the material for a book or for a conference but in terms of the cinematograph, that is to say in the movements of images, in slowing down, in speeding up, pauses, perspectives, front views, variations in lighting etc as well as words, music and other accessories.

The Commentary. This is to be language of the cinema and not mere verbal appendages. Avoid the Film "illustrated lecture".

Types of commentary. Lyric, laudatory, serious, Economy of language and crispness of speech.

Music. This ought to aid vision and not distract attention. It ought not to be an autonomous creation, it should be independent. (The images can become subordinate to sound in certain films of which the principal subject is music)

Advantages and inconveniences of the following musical forms.

- 1.- Essentially period music
- 2.- Adapted period music.
- 3.- Music originally composed.

Realisation. Poverty of technical equipment at the present. Difficulty of working in Museums. Limits of type. Dynamic quality of Cinema. Static quality of the plastic arts.

The Character can be inspired by the spiritual or emotional quality of the artist, of the plastic form of the work, of the meaning and the critical power of the spectator. But there is a necessity to avoid the movement suggested by the movement of the subject in a picture, rhythm of a ship or of a swing, gallop of horses, flight of birds, etc., As regards the works, avoid excessive faking. Necessity of making rhythm of film conform to rhythm of the spectator. Use of travel, of panorama, or of the two movements combined. Use of lighting diversly, of breaking up into fragments, large scale plans, superimposing, divisions of the screen, of micrography, of distorted objects, animated designs, chains and connecting links. Avoid breaks of style. Conditions of use, of real views mixed with images created by the artist. Filming in black and white and filming in colour.

Distribution. Circulation. a. By the commercial circuit. Contacts with the public at large and contacts with the specialised halls.



b. By the private circuit. Contact with the public through the schools, universities, art circles, museums, academies, etc.. Projection at home. Television. The Cinema and Art Criticism. Written criticism and criticism by means of the Cinema. Historical study, elaboration of a theses, lyric presentation, definition of a plastic problem, analysis of a style or of a technique. The fact of showing images where it is necessary to keep close to the subject. Since the matter being analysed is always before one truth is immediately verifiable. The possibility of entering into the mind or psychology of an artist, of a community, of the spirit of a period, of aesthetics, of a style, of an artistic group.

Art in contact with a very diverse public. Satisfaction of being orientated of being able to pass into a different region.