

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ART CRITICS' CONGRESS

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Theme 4

"ART CRITICISM THROUGH THE CINEMA"

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I declared in a recent study that the cinema did not constitute a new critical method. This does not mean that criticism cannot be exercised by means of the cinema.

The cinema is nowadays a means of expression; it is even, as Ragghianti claims a figurative means of expression. I mean by that the cinema, in the domain of artistic realisation, is the equivalent of colour, (the artistic medium of painting), or notes (the artistic medium of music). Until now all speculative activity has been communicated by means of words. Hence the doubts which crop up as soon as a typically artistic language is proposed as a vehicle for critical argument, and it would seem that the spoken commentary is indispensable to all art films.

Another question; - are the cinematographic and theatrical points of view so similar as to be considered identical, as Ragghianti claims ? Are they not quite distinct and opposite in their demands, possessing those different characteristics that give the one its specifically cinematographical nature and the other its specifically theatrical one ?

In order to draw certain concrete conclusions, I am going to compose, here and now, a film devoted to a given painter. For this purpose, I shall sketch a biographical chronicle of the artistic evolution, and so try to create a synthesis of the cultural atmosphere in which he has matured. In the same way, I shall deal chronologically with the different milieux and works of art with which he has been in contact. I shall not be so much concerned with making a film as with using the film to illustrate an artistic fact, in the same way as when I write an essay I do not worry about creating a literary work of art, but only try to throw light on my subject by means of literary images. A critical text should be translated, so to speak, into cinematographical images, accompanied by a spoken commentary which is both unobtrusive and extremely precise.

The Art film can never be anything but a filmed essay. And if the cinema is not to be limited to a simple presentation of artistic fact, but is to become the vehicle of a more deeply penetrating purpose, the skill of the producer must be supplemented by the mind of the art critic.