



9th Seminar on the Origins and History of Cinema

Objectivity and the effects of truth.

Early cinema and the realist tradition.

DATE:	Thursday 14th and Friday 15th of November, 2013
PLACE:	Girona
ORGANISATION:	<i>Museu del Cinema</i> , The Department of Geography, History & History of Art at the University of Girona (UdG), and the Spanish Ministry Economy and Competitiveness " <i>La construcción del imaginario bélico en las actualidades de la Primera Guerra Mundial</i> "

On Thursday the 14th and Friday the 15th of November, 2013, the 9th edition of the **Seminar on the Origins and History of Cinema**, entitled *Objectivity and the effects of truth. Early cinema and the realist tradition*, will be held.

The advent of cinema took place while the discourse about realism was at the heart of the cultural debate of the time. Science in the nineteenth century had established the notion of objectivity as an epistemic construct focused on searching for certain truths. Positivism, which was introduced by Auguste Comte, spread by the introduction of the idea that all aspects of human experience could be objectivized using exact empirical science, based on the truth of that which is observable. Literature used realism for the creation of reality effects and the construction of a narrative model that created the illusion of a world that would have a huge impact on popular culture. The advent of photography and film restored the notion of the printing block as a sign of a physical phenomenon that had taken place in front of the camera and had been captured beforehand. Photochemical reproduction put pressure on traditional forms of representation modelled on Aristotelian mimesis, based on the idea of copying or imitating the world. The development of the mass media only reinforced the notions of truth and objectivity by making journalistic articles create a series of statements around what had happened and what could be quantified.

It is true that in the midst of this positivist wave, film also opened up to the esoteric, magic, special effects and the mysterious. It is also true that, despite the dominance of realistic discourses, throughout the twentieth century the idea gathered force that neither literature nor film nor photography are like mirrors that walk along the paths, as Stendhal defined the construction of the novel. The rejection of the referential dimension of art, which considered every exercise in transparency to be nothing more than a trick or an illusion, and saw realism as merely a construction based on a number of truthful effects, prevailed in modern thought and artistic practice.

However, we believe that the question of realism based on the tension generated between the construction of objectivity and the development of a series of real effects that strive for transparency of discourse is a key issue for understanding the origin of cinema, its development and its subsequent institutionalization based on the myth of film language.

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 **9th 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 mean 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 9th Seminary:*

This seminar aims to study the impact that the realist tradition had on early cinema through a series of topics that will be developed from a truly multifaceted interdisciplinary perspective. Some topics to be developed include:

- Representation and reproduction. The tension between classical representation and the appearance of film prints.
- Nineteenth-century realism in literature and its impact on the formation of structures that would lead cinema to search for narrative formulas.
- Realism in nineteenth-century painting and its impact on figuration in early cinema.
- Scientific objectivity and its relationship with images. X-rays and the birth of cinema. The first scientific films. The search for truth through the image.
- Scientific and technological images as the discovery of new worlds. The relationship and tensions between scientific truth and everyday reality.
- New scientific discourses on subjectivity (psychology, physiology, etc.) and their influence on cinematic form or its discourses.
- What is shown and what cannot be shown. Political discourse that hides certain realities and discourses on the image that reveal worlds that are a far cry from the public sphere and institutional visibility systems.
- The development of information based on newsreels and their aim of creating informative objectivity based on the concept of current affairs.
- Realist constructions in film by creating effects of truth that bring together elements of fiction and history.
- The idea of pretense – or feigning – as a way to see that an image is real when it is nothing more than the result of a process of illusion. Falsehood aimed at creating truth.
- The way in which early cinema advertising creates forms of seduction based on the use of forms and resources taken from realist illusion.
- Realist theatre, melodrama and its impact on forms of representation.
- Realist and naturalist drama schools and their influence on early cinema.
- Initial thoughts and theories on film as archive material, testimony, documentation, etc.

b) *General subject matter:*

Presentation of on going 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: **15th February, 2013**
- 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 (U. Rey Juan Carlos), and Jordi Pons (Museu del Cinema) - will evaluate the proposed communications and will communicate the admission or exclusion to each individual author before the **15th of March, 2013**

2. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCEPTED PAPERS:

- **MAXIMUM LENGTH**: 10 pages (18,000 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.
- **DELIVERY DEADLINE**: **14th of October, 2013**
- **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 ninth edition of the seminar will be published on paper, along with the presentations by our invited experts, during 2014, provided that they have been defended by the author during the seminar. 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:

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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, 4th of October, 2013