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| Lewis Jacobs (1906-1997) |
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| Lewis Jacobs (1906-1997) was an American film critic, historian and filmmaker. Jacobs initially studied painting and design, and his first foray into cinema was through the Philadelphia Cinema Crafters, an amateur film club founded in the late-1920s. (The first record of its existence in the Amateur Cinema League dates from 1928). In 1930, he cofounded the short-lived periodical *Experimental Cinema* with poet and fellow cine-enthusiast David Platt. Much of the content of *Experimental Cinema* dealt with Soviet montage film, but it also contained essays on filmmaking aesthetics, international directors, and workers’ film societies both in the U.S. and abroad. The final issue in 1935 was largely devoted to Sergei Eisenstein’s *Que Viva Mexico!*, and published Eisenstein’s full scenario for the film. During the 1930s, Jacobs was involved with leftist film organizations in New York and made several documentaries and experimental films, including *Footnote to Fact* (1934). Also in the 1930s, Jacobs began publishing film criticism in *The New York Times*, his articles frequently centering on directors like D.W. Griffith. In 1939, he published *The Rise of the American Film: A Critical History*. It is a technical, industrial, and aesthetic history; like Jacobs’s newspaper criticism, it pays special attention to key American directors. Jacobs continued making films into the 1960s, wrote and edited books on the aesthetics of cinema and on documentary, was an early contributor to *Hollywood Quarterly* (subsequently renamed *Film Quarterly*), and taught film at the City College of New York, New York University, and the Philadelphia College of Art.  References and Further Reading  Amberg, G. (1969) “Introduction,” *Experimental Cinema, vol. 1, no. 1-no. 5*, New York: Arno Press. iii-iv. (*Experimental Cinema* included 5 issues published between 1930-1935. Jacobs and Platt published the first two issues in Philadelphia in 1930 and published the subsequent three issues in New York after moving there in 1931. George Amberg’s brief introduction to this bound volume of all five issues provides socio-historical context for the publication.)  Campbell. (1982) *Cinema Strikes Back: Radical Filmmaking in the United States, 1930-1942*, Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press. (A history of Leftist filmmaking in the United States in the 1930s. Contains information about the Workers’ Film and Photo League (WFPL) and similar film organizations.)  Horak, J. (ed.) (1995) *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press. (A collection of scholarly essays on early U.S. avant-grade cinema. Most of the essays are historical and accessible to a non-specialist audience, though some contain theory that might prove challenging. Contains an extensive filmography and bibliography. The filmography below was drawn from the index of this book.) |
| Further reading:  Selected Print Works written or edited by Lewis Jacobs[[1]](#footnote-1)  Jacobs, L. (1935) “Since D.W. Griffith: A Critical Survey of Hollywood’s Leading Directors and Their Work,” *New York Times* 20 Oct 1935: X4.  Jacobs, L. (1947) “Experimental Cinema in America,” *Hollywood Quarterly* 3 (2): 111-124. (Reprinted in the 1968 edition of *The Rise of the American Film*.)  Jacobs, L. (1960) *Introduction to the Art of the Movies*, New York: Wiley.  Jacobs, L. (1967) “World War II and the American Film,” *Cinema Journal* 7: 1-21.  Jacobs, L. (1968) *The Rise of the American Film: A Critical History; With an Essay, Experimental Cinema in America 1921-1947*, New York: Teachers College Press.  Jacobs, L. (1969) *The Emergence of Film Art: The Evolution and Development of the Motion Picture as an Art, from 1900 to the Present*, New York: Hopkinson and Blake.  Jacobs, L. (ed.) (1971) *The Documentary Tradition: From Nanook to Woodstock*, New York: Hopkinson and Blake.  Jacobs, L. (ed.) (1970) *The Movies as Medium*, New York: The Noonday Press.  Filmography as Director[[2]](#footnote-2)  *Another Time: Another Place* (1964)  *Gothic Art* (1960)  *The Rise of Greek Art* (1960)  *Face of the World* (1960)  *Ages of Time* (1960)  *Fibers and Civilization* (1959)  *The Stylists* (1957)  *Old Art, New Magic* (1957)  *The World that Nature Forgot* (1956)  *Case History* (1956, released 1964 as *Another Time…*)  *The Book of Job* (1945)  *Ode to a Grecian Urn* (1954)  *The Raven* (1954)  *Matthew Brady: Photographer of an Era* (1953)  *Buma: African Sculpture Speaks* (1952)  *A Sculpture Speaks* (1952)  *Lincoln Speaks at Gettysburg* (1950)  *Birth of a Building* (1950)  *Sunday Beach* (1947-48)  *From Tree Trunk to Head* (1939)  *Hopi* (1935)  *Underground Printer* (1934, with Thomas Bouchard)  *Synchromy* (unfinished, with Mary Ellen Bute and Joseph Schillinger)  *Footnote to Fact* (1934)  *The Scottsboro Boys* (1933, with Leo Hurwitz and Leo Seltzer)  *Commercial Medley* (1933)  *Scottsboro Trial* (1932, with Tom Brandon)  *Western Pennsylvania and Kentucky Miners’ Strike* (1931, with Joseph Hudyma and Tom Brandon)  *Mobile Composition No. 1* (1928, with Jo Gerson and Louis Hirshman)  *Transition* (1927, unfinished, with Jo Gerson and Louis Hirshman) |

1. Jacobs published extensively in newspapers, film magazines and journals, and books. This list contains his books and some of his key essays. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Drawn from the appendix of Jan-Christopher Horak, ed., *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945*. Jacobs also wrote screenplays in the 1940s and 1950s. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)