

## **CONFERENCE**

**« Cultural History of Cinema: Experiences and Horizons »**

**Call for Papers**

## **COLLOQUE**

**« Histoire culturelle du cinéma : expériences et horizons »**

**Appel à communications**

For the past twenty years, a seminar entitled "Cultural History of Cinema" has taken place monthly in Paris. The seminar encourages exchanges between film specialists of different backgrounds as well as researchers from other fields who work on related subjects (press, theatre, exhibitions, other media...) in various branches of social science across multiple geographical areas. It has never been the organizers' intention to found a school or a discipline, but rather to encourage a renewal of historical approaches to cinema in the French academic space via a bi-annual conferences. In this context, questions fundamental to the history of cinematographic phenomena have been raised, in order to characterize the place of cinema in its social, political and cultural contexts. We have privileged in particular the study of filmic objects within a historiographical project that pushes beyond their construction process.

If cultural history can be defined as "a social history of representations" in Pascal Ory's words, then the cultural history of cinema can be understood as a social history of representations created by cinema. But the notion of representation goes beyond that of the image *stricto sensu* and encompasses the discourses and practices through which these representations can also be expressed. From that perspective, the field of cinema goes beyond that of film, so that it encompasses the activities and social imagery related to it, whether it is to examine the contours of a cultural industry, spectator practices and their ideological determining factors, cinephilic and critical discourses, or the mythologies conveyed by a mass art.

Our twentieth anniversary is an opportunity to host a symposium aimed at questioning the epistemological issues between history and cinema and re-interrogating their scientific practices.

Several lines of reflection will be considered during the conference.

### **1. Borders and territories of the cultural history of cinema**

First, we will enquire into the epistemological boundaries and territories of the cultural history of cinema.

Questions have arisen about its contours, objectives and foundations: what are its ultimate interests? Does its specificity lie in its objects, its methodologies or in the way it looks at the “cinematographic fact”? To what extent does it contribute to redefining the latter? How does it dialogue with other forms of history and other approaches to culture, in particular those resulting from different types of studies (from cultural to media studies, including gender or star studies)? In short, how does it fit into the international historiographic landscape? Particular attention will be paid to possible crossroads or convergences with other approaches, including New Cinema History.

## **2. Transnational approaches**

Another set of questions concerns the relationship of cinema to national and transnational issues, thus joining the abundant historiography on these observation scales. If cinema is caught up in the fabric of local practices and national issues, it is also the object of global transfers and circulation from the end of the 19th century. In the age of a transnational turn of film studies as historical studies, how can we adapt the historical approach to this methodological challenge? How can/should we circumscribe the territory of a cultural approach and consider its intertwining, from local to regional and then global? Does cinema provide cultural history with a textbook case on this issue?

## **3. Social history, history of cinematic apparatus**

Cultural history is a form of social history and, as such, particular attention will be paid to studies on the women and men who, from film workers to ordinary spectators and more famous personalities, make cinema. For example, we could look upstream at film professions, professional organizations, speeches and their social representations. Special emphasis will also be paid to the case of the screening context (attraction cinema, ordinary commercial cinema screenings, film clubs, heritage screenings, festivals, etc.). More broadly, the question arises as to what it means to attend a collective screening. How is the film performance experience organized materially and socially? Shouldn't a cultural history of cinema take on the task of examining the multiple variations of the spectators' experience? But with which tools (quantitative, qualitative), which methods?

#### **4. Is a cultural history of forms possible?**

We would also like to reexamine a criticism sometimes levelled at the cultural history of cinema. If it is a history that goes beyond that of films, is there not a risk that it will not make room, or not enough room, for cinematic forms? Unlike classical art history, which considered the analysis of the work almost as a compulsory exercise, the cultural history of cinema sometimes seems to approach the cinematographic fact without studying its form. This choice actually depends on the subjects being studied. The question of the place devoted to film as an object of cultural history nevertheless arises: can there be a cultural history of film forms?

The conference will take place in Paris, at the Condorcet Campus, the Institut national d'histoire de l'art and the École nationale des Chartes, on 28-29 May 2020.

**Proposals** - in French or English, maximum 2000 characters with a bio-bibliographic presentation of 400 characters - must be sent before 15 December 2019.

**Write to:** [hcc2020@chartes.psl.eu](mailto:hcc2020@chartes.psl.eu)

Notifications will be sent at the beginning of 2020.

**Scientific and Organizing Committee :** Christophe Gauthier (École Nationale des Chartes), Myriam Juan (Université de Caen Normandie), Anne Kerlan (CNRS, UMR Chine Corée Japon), Mélisande Leventopoulos (Université Paris 8), Stéphanie Louis (École Nationale des Chartes; IHTP), Dimitri Vezyroglou (Université Paris 1)