



14th International Seminar on the Origins and History of Cinema

Visions of the sick body

Physical and Mental Pathologies' Representations in Photography and Early Cinema

DAY:	Wednesday 8 th , Thursday 9 th and Friday 10 th , November 2023
FORMAT:	On-site ¹
ORGANIZERS:	Museum of Cinema - Tomàs Mallol Collection, Department of History and History of Art of the Universitat de Girona, Research Unit on Early Cinema (GROC) and the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation R&D Project "Visiones del cuerpo enfermo en el cine y la fotografía: patologías físicas y psíquicas (1885-1920)" (Ref.: PID2021-125555NB-I00)

Call for papers

From its origins, both cinema and photography recorded the daily life bodies: workers leaving the factory, women dancing the serpentine dance, babies having breakfast, urban strollers or the bourgeois families' portraits. The wonderful and strange capacity to offer a presence amplified the new forms of Modernity's corporeal culture, and corporeality became one of the great issues for cinema and photography. Among the many bodies that began to appear in the images between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, we are interested in observing the sick bodies, both victims of physical and mental illnesses.

In order to better understand nowadays images, we consider it is necessary to situate ourselves at the crossroads represented by an in-between period, from 1885 to 1920, in which different revolutions took place. These revolutions would have an impact on visual culture and, more specifically, on the conception and vision of the body. In this scenario, sick bodies were used in melodrama fictions as unhappy ones, thrown into a tragic destiny, or as neurasthenics, compelled by different psychological and mental states, unable to assume the new stimuli of modern times. In the epoque that we intend to study, medicine experienced an important evolution, including the apparition of X-rays and microscopic photography, and the interiority of the body began to be shown.

In his book *Historia cultural del dolor*, Javier Moscoso considers this era fundamental, since pain had "a leading role in the social, political and scientific space as it had never had before" (2011, pp. 117-18, our translation). Domènec Font, in *Cuerpo a cuerpo*, states that "cinema appears as the body's pathologies' symptom. And in the tensions that it establishes and in the emotions that it intensifies, it [the sick body] claims a certain

¹ The organization reserves the right to accept on-line communications from participants who request it (see the *On-site Seminar* section).



hypersensory stage and a certain conception of the affective body. (2012, p. 20, our translation). To study the sick body in early cinema and photography, we have to know, on the one hand, the devices that created it and the places where it was filmed and, on the other hand, we need to study the theories that arose at that moment. An époque when the use of words such as kinesthesia were halfway between physiology and medicine. At the same time, it is essential to know how the sick body became visible both in the news of the period and in the multiple fictions that were developed at the time and that came from popular genres. The body appears in burlesque cinema as one that has not adapted to the mechanics of its world, while the body in melodramas is represented as a sickly one, victim of the contemporary diseases that go through the great fictional and theatrical tales: tuberculosis, cholera, fevers, syphilis, etc.

The purpose of the 14th International Seminar on the Origins and History of Cinema is to analyze the physical and mental pathologies' representations in cinema and photography from the period between the ending of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Our intention is to x-ray in which way, both from a historiographical and an aesthetic approach, a series of transformations take place within the advent of Modernity. These transformations in the artistic field, both national and international, will have implications too in the scientific development, providing not only a new catalog for the representation of the disease, but also the way in which it is perceived by its contemporary audience.

As in the past editions, the Seminar will be divided in two parts that will be alternating. The first part will be committed to theoretical reflection on the main topic with several lectures by prominent experts. In the second half, the goal is that different researchers expose and debate with the attendants the results of the studies they are developing in the field of pre-cinema and / or early cinema. From the 14th International Seminar on the Origins and History of Cinema's organization we encourage you to participate, and we offer you the possibility of disseminating your research works through the tribune of this Seminar.

On-site Seminar

After the 13th Seminar edition was held in a hybrid (both on-line and on-site) due to the sanitary measures derived from the COVID-19, we return to the on-site version.

However, in order to maintain a larger international repercussion, some communications may be presented on-line, if displacement is impossible and has justified reasons. The author must request it and justify it at the time his/her proposal acceptance is communicated to him/her.



Communications proposal

1. DELIVERY OF A SUMMARY FOR THE COMMUNICATIONS SELECTION

■ THEMATIC:

Topic A: Visions of the sick body: Physical and Mental Pathologies' Representations in Photography and Early Cinema

- *Media Archaeology.* The analysis of the technologies used to record and photograph sick bodies can allow us to establish bridges with devices such as Étienne Jules Marey's chronophotography, Duchenne de Boulogne's electrophysiological experiences on the face, or the search for graphics and technologies that allowed the study of movements and the interior of the human body.
- *The viewer's experience in the presence of the disease on-screen and the shows' conception as forms of projection.* In order to understand the devices' importance, it is essential to know what the viewer's experience in front of the images was.
- *Visions of the disease in early films and photographs from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.* Another research line can be based on the existing films from that period in order to verify how sick bodies were depicted and / or represented. Considering Early Cinema and the photographs from that time as spaces for the representation of diseases can lead us to consider their cultural significance.
- *Representation of mental pathologies.* Beyond the representation of physical pathologies, studying the representation of mental illnesses and subjective visions can also help us in order to understand the emergence of new forms and experiences related to the visible.
- *Bridges between the past and the present.* It is possible to establish a reflection that leads us to a review of the forms of the past from a double logic based on both the analysis of the representation of physical and mental pathologies between 1885 and 1920, and the aesthetic reflection around the models of representation of current pathologies.

Topic B: pre-cinema and early cinema

- Presentation of works in progress on pre-cinema or cinema until 1915.

- EXTENSION: Abstract of the communication in 60 lines maximum. It must include the state of the art that is presented, basic bibliographical references, primary, secondary or unpublished research documentary references, and the novelty of the contribution.
- DEADLINE: **April 30th, 2023**



- **AUTHOR'S ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Name, address, telephone number, e-mail.
- **DELIVER TO:** e-mail to:

institutestudis@museudelcinema.cat
- **SEMINAR'S SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**
Àngel Quintana (UdG), J.E. Monterde (UB), Sandro Machetti (UdL), Bernardo Riego (UniCan), Iolanda Ribas (Filmoteca de Catalunya), María Tortajada (UNIL), Pietsie Feenstra (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier, UPVM), M. Magdalena Brotons (UIB), Ramon Girona (UdG), Carolina Martínez (UdG), Alan Salvadó (UdG) y Jordi Pons (Museu del Cinema) - will evaluate the proposals and will announce individually each admission or exclusion, before **May 31st, 2023.**

2. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS OF ACCEPTED COMMUNICATIONS

- **MAXIMUM LENGTH:** 10 pages (18.000 characters, including spaces).
- **LANGUAGES:** Catalan, Spanish or English.
- **ILLUSTRATIONS:** on digital support, a maximum of 6 images.
- **DEADLINE:** **October 9th, 2023.**
- **DELIVER TO:** conveniently supervised, by e-mail to:

institutestudis@museudelcinema.cat
- **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**
 - name, address, telephone number, e-mail
 - a brief CV of the author (5 lines) and a brief abstract with the content of the text (5 lines).
- **PUBLICATION:** The communications presented during the 14th edition of the Seminar will be published in both paper and digital on the website www.museudelcinema.cat , alongside the presentations, during the year 2024, if they have been defended by their authors during the Seminar. The scientific committee reserves the right to exclude from publication those communications that do not reach enough level of quality.

For any enquiry related to the Seminar, you may address to:

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