

PAINTERS AND FILMMAKERS IN THE BELLE ÉPOQUE



PROVISIONAL DELIVERY:
JULY 2021

A FILM BY
STEFAN CORNIC

PRODUCED BY
JEAN-MARIE NIZAN

arte
DISTRIBUTION

BEALL
PRODUCTIONS

LOGLINE

On the occasion of an exhibition event on the links between painting, photography and cinema in Orsay in 2021, this documentary will take the viewer into the effervescence of the end of the 19th century, which gave birth to the modern gaze.



SYNOPSIS

The viewer's gaze is placed at the center of the documentary "L'œil, le pinceau et le cinématographe". Based on archival images, photographs, framing, paintings and films, the film questions the evolution of the gaze from the Second Industrial Revolution to the eve of the First World War. Focusing on the works produced by artists such as Claude Monet, Camille Claudel, the Lumières brothers and many others, the film reveals how the artists of the time captured the movement and transmitted it to a novice and curious audience. The 19th century, the time of the Second Industrial Revolution, is associated with inventions, department stores, and the Exposition Universelle. It is a century that, thanks to its many inventions, catches the eye of passers-by, makes them curious and shapes them. This is what the director, Stefan Cornic, calls the "spectacularization" of the world. The 19th century is also the time when the symbol of the Industrial Revolution was born: the train. On board the train, many passengers were able to witness the first optical tracking shot. It is also thanks to it and all the inventions mentioned above that the gaze was shaped.

It was indeed in the Gare Saint-Lazare that the painter Claude Monet, produced his first series of paintings entitled "La Gare Saint-Lazare" in 1877. It is no longer a simple building, it becomes a place where passers-by can observe the machines and watch the spectacle of modernity. Much later, at the end of the 19th century, it was time for cinema to make its appearance. Contrary to its ancestor photography, cinema, for its part, allows us to see banal scenes in motion while allowing us to project them in front of an audience! This new process provokes various reactions. On the one hand it fascinates, on the other hand, it frightens. The cinematograph is gradually making its mark and replacing the easels in the streets of Paris.

Cinema is going to develop little by little. It takes inspiration from the different techniques of its ancestors, such as painting and photography, to rework them and create a new language. Very soon, attempts were made to color the images by tinting the negatives. They also tried to add sound (adaptation of "Cyrano de Bergerac" by Clément Maurice in 1897, on the occasion of the Exposition Universelle of 1900). Any experimentation is good to get as close as possible to reality.

As early as 1906, collective and sharing places dedicated to cinema were opened in France and the United States. In 1911, Léon Gaumont opened the largest movie theater in the world: the Gaumont Palace. Its architecture, lighting and decor are in perfect harmony. It is in 1910 that a brand new process comes to life, bringing together literature, sculpture, photography but also theater, which later will become a source of inspiration and even an art: Cinema. A new gaze was born!

PROJECT NOTE

Trained as an art historian, author-director, Stefan Cornic mixes in his films the disciplines that fascinate him: photography, architecture and cinema. This film allows him to give an account of the rivalry between the arts, the city, the machine and cinema at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

"L'oeil, le pinceau et le Cinématographe" **wants to revive the revolution of the gaze** by taking us back to the upheavals of the end of the 19th century. It will remind us of the profusion of experiments of all kinds which, when completed, made us into the modern spectator we still are today.

The film will be based in particular on **numerous** archives. There will be many images, of different natures and mediums, of artists, scientists and amateurs who are from the outset actors of this new way of looking at and producing images. Paintings, prints, newspapers, affiches, animated optical toys, photographs, chronophotographs, early film footage and film excerpts will allow us to tell our story.

It seems important to me to embrace the nature of the images, to restore all the solicitations of the eye experienced by the spectators of the time. To show famous milestones in the history of art and cinema, as well as all the advances of the 19th century. The aim is to convey to today's viewers the idea of a "revelation" of the gaze, of the beginnings of the "screen city", of the city of spectacle.

At the heart of this film is the experience of the gaze embodied by the **voice-over**. This voice will link the different eras and unfold the story chronologically and thematically. It will be the receptacle of the sensations of the artists, intellectuals and anonymous people of the time, as much as that of the spectator that we are today.

The idea is that the viewers of the documentary can cling to certain "names": Claude Monet, the Caillebotte brothers, Etienne-Jules Marey, Camille Claudel and so many others. It is from one of their works, one of their statements that we will develop this or that part of the narrative.

This "voice of the images" will be accompanied by other **characters that we will witness being interviewed on screen**. They will intervene in a punctual and targeted way on precise aspects of the story.

Dominique Païni, Marie Robert and Paul Perrin, the curators of the Orsay exhibition, will be able to re-contextualize the production of the images, to deepen the idea that cinema has always been told as a revolution, but that the gaze has, in fact, been solicited long before 1895.

It will also be interesting to bring an embodied gaze, that of **contemporary artists and directors** who place questions of time or movement at the very heart of their work. They will be able to share their encounters with works from this period and the way in which they advance them.

Finally, **graphics** will have a key role. The archives being presented and used for what they are without being manipulated, ideas or things from which we no longer have any trace of today, will be reconstituted in a free and creative way. It will be inspired by the pictorial vocabulary of symbolism or impressionism, always making the apology of the movement and will especially allow to transmit an updated atmosphere of the story and accompany the spectator in their discovery.

It will therefore be a creation of our time, in dialogue with the archives of the period. A way of reporting on the current issues of these pioneers of the image for today's artists and audience.



arte DISTRIBUTION

Céline Payot-Lehmann
Head of International Distribution
Italy and USA
c-payot-lehmann@arteFrance.fr

Franka Schwabe
Sales Manager
Territories: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Iceland,
Netherlands, Scandinavia, Switzerland
f-schwabe@arteFrance.fr

Isabelle Monteil
Sales Manager
Territories: Asia, Oceania, Greece, Sub-Saharan Africa
Language Versions
i-monteil@arteFrance.fr

Audrey Kamga
Sales Manager
Territories: Canada, Ireland, North Africa and the Middle East,
Portugal, South America, Spain and the UK
Worldwide inflight
a-kamga@arteFrance.fr

Zoé Turpin
Sales Manager
Territories: Eastern Europe, Israel, Russia
Corporate world rights
z-turpin@arteFrance.fr

Whitney Marin
Sales Assistant
w-marin@arteFrance.fr