

# Universal exhibitions and the cinema: history and culture<sup>1</sup>

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## RESUMO

O artigo tem por objetivo examinar a presença do cinema nas exposições universais entre 1893 (*World's Columbian Exposition*, Chicago) e 1939 (*New York World's Fair*). Integrante de uma cultura visual construída por esses espaços dedicados a celebrar o capitalismo, o cinema tem sua trajetória identificada a das diferentes feiras mundiais pela sua capacidade de entreter e, ao mesmo tempo, educar. Consolidando-se como meio de comunicações de massas em meio à Primeira Guerra, participará de maneira mais intensa das disputas simbólicas de um mundo prestes a entrar em seu segundo conflito mundial. Atingirá um público mais amplo, constituindo-se na principal 'vitrine' em que a nação projeta as virtudes a serem comemoradas. O novo grande espetáculo visual assumirá, dentro desse quadro, maior destaque por meio de filmes idealizados como verdadeiros monumentos cinematográficos. Palavras-chave: cinema e história; exposições internacionais; história do cinema.

## ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to examine the presence of cinema in World Fairs between the 1893 *World's Columbian Exposition* in Chicago and 1939 (the *New York World's Fair*). As an integral part of a visual culture constructed by these spaces to celebrate capitalism, the trajectory of cinema is identified with these world fairs due to its ability to entertain and, at the same time, to educate. Cinema was established as a means of mass communication during the First World War and afterwards would participate more actively in the symbolic disputes of a world about to enter the second global conflict. It would reach a broader public, becoming the main 'showcase' in which nations projected virtues to be celebrated. The new striking visual spectacle assumed, within this context, greater emphasis through films idealized as true cinematographic monuments. Keywords: film and history; world fairs; film history.

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According to Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, within the culture of modernity that emerged in the nineteenth century “cinema formed a crucible for ideas, techniques and representational strategies already present in other places.”<sup>2</sup> In this context the universal exhibitions, which began in London in 1851, by celebrating capitalism through scientific advances and new machinery, reserved a significant space for various initiatives in the fields of entertainment in order to mark that economic dominion had found correspondence in a trajectory linked to cultural development.

As is well known, these were moments to celebrate the processes of industry, to exalt the world of goods which had become wider and more diversified, to measure the progress of nations and their struggle for international hegemony. As such they were signs of a ‘carnage of spirit’ that under the aegis of nationalism would become a real bloodbath in 1914.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, in this idealized spectacle to be visually consumed by citizens in large cities, pavilions dedicated to literature or fine arts were accompanied by large spaces dedicated to leisure, even if these were marginal in relation to the principal event. These sectors in the *World’s Columbian Exposition* (1893) in Chicago, for example “became one of the most successful and famous amusement areas of any of the world’s fairs, and it established a pattern for mass entertainment that soon found application in such independent parks as Coney Island.”<sup>4</sup>

A new form of vision was created with the universal exhibitions through the introduction of technologies that were then new and which allowed the incorporation of procedures that mobilized sight and the body which the cinema would inherit, adapt and reconstruct years later.<sup>5</sup>

The *World’s Columbian Exposition* demonstrated in turn “the context in which the cinema appeared, the celebration of modernity and technology through an emerging visual culture, both official and popular.”<sup>6</sup>

Tom Gunning, in his study on the *Louisiana Purchase International Exposition* (St. Louis, 1904), highlighted that the new and popular forms of mechanical illusions contributed to the success of the cinema as it was positioned in the cultural market of the time. For him,

cinema moves within this culture [visual and technological] less as its culmination than as a parasite, drawing upon both its forms and its themes but initially remaining relatively neglected, seeming like a pale shadow of richer, more vivid, form. (ibid., p.423)

From this perspective the showing of films or the wide range of apparatus in different world fairs until the First World War has to be looked in from within this culture in which it emerged and which strengthened it.<sup>7</sup> After 1918 its place would be different in these events, since as we will see, the status of cinema was modified. It was consolidated as a means of mass communication in a non-pacified world, fulfilling other functions, including propaganda.

VISUAL CULTURE, ENTERTAINMENT, KNOWLEDGE:  
THE CINEMA IN UNIVERSAL EXHIBITIONS BETWEEN 1893 AND 1915

According to Charles Musser,<sup>8</sup> Thomas Edison intended to commercially exploit his new invention, the kinetoscope, in the 1893 exhibition. Edison made this declaration shortly after the announcement of his discovery in October 1892. In order to anticipate the demand for products he built a studio, which entered into history as the Black Maria, completed in May 1893. However, the apparatus was not yet ready to be produced on a large scale. The first twenty-five machines would only be ready in March 1894 (p.75). A month later commercial production began, with the filming of *Sandow* (1894). Despite the controversies about its presence or absence, Musser believes that no kinetoscope was shown in the *World's Columbian Exposition* (p.504).

Cinema as a recent novelty in the field of entertainment was officially recognized in the 1900 universal exhibition held in Paris. Synthesizing the industrial advances of the century that was ending and projecting the paths of progress to be followed, this exhibition celebrated electricity, the newest member of the concerto destined to affirm modernity.<sup>9</sup>

Despite this recognition cinematographic production did not play a leading role. Its legitimacy was derived from photography, as demonstrated by the classification given to the new media. According to Emmanuelle Toulet, belonging to class 12, 'Photography', indicated treatment that was "restrictive, solely as a derivative of photography ... and as a reproduction technique, close to typography" (p.180).<sup>10</sup>

The respected physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey, also involved with the research that contributed to the emergence of cinematography, was president of the class 12 installation committee, with Louis Lumière being the vice-president (p.180). The international jury of this class, however, was solely composed of members linked to photography, with the exception of Marey.

This class was divided into two sections: Material and Procedures and

photographic proofs. There were no installations for fixed or animated projection. The apparatus and the films, with various sizes and perforations, were exhibited on the stands. Interest was solely technical and scientific. The content and artistic quality of films was not an object of attention.

953 exhibitors participated in class 12. Of the 289 French exhibitors, ten companies, albeit some just partially, were concerned with cinematography. One of these, evidently, was the Société Anonyme des Plaques et Papiers Photographiques Antoine Lumière et ses fils.<sup>11</sup> The others “are all industrialists or merchants who added this new business to a previous activity which, even if it tended to decline in the face of the expansion of the cinematographic sector was still prudently maintained” (p.183).<sup>12</sup>

What was valorized in the Exhibition was ‘innovation and technical development,’ rather than the quality of films or company’s commercial success (p.183). Nor was cinema seen as an instrument in favor of education and teaching and much less as a work of art.

Some countries resorted to the cinema to present aspects of their economic and cultural activities, anticipating the use that the communication vehicle would play from the second decade of the twentieth century onwards as a disseminator of national values. The US, for example, organized cinematographic sessions about American life (p.185). France sought to reaffirm its pioneering role in the discovery of cinematography by organizing public exhibitions in Paris.<sup>13</sup> A gigantic cinematograph was built by Lumière, with the institutional support of the organizing committee. On a circular screen that was 18 meters high and 21 meters wide, around 150 small films were shown in more than three hundred sessions to a public estimated at one million four hundred thousand spectators (p.185 and ss).<sup>14</sup>

Apart from this highlight the event was also registered by foreign filmmakers. James White, from the Edison Company, visited the Universal Exhibition and made at least 16 films.<sup>15</sup>

The 1900 Exhibition and the following one, the 1901 *Pan-American Exposition*, held in Buffalo in New York State, were the first to become an object of the so-called *actualités*.<sup>16</sup> In the case of the latter, this vocation was reinforced due to an event that shook US society at that time.

On 6 September, White and other workers from the production sector of the Edison Company were accompanying the visit of President William McKinley to the exhibition, on the so-called Presidents’ Day. The next day they were waiting for him outside the Temple of Music, where he happened to be. However, McKinley was shot there by the anarchist Leon Czolgosz, “and the

camera crew filmed the stunned and angry crowd. These scenes were an Edison exclusive.”<sup>17</sup>

Apart from filling “cinema’s promise as a visual newspaper” (Musser, 1990, p.319), the films made about the exhibition sought to give continuity to the visual experience enjoyed by ‘fair goers’ who visited the different spaces in the fair. One of the highlights in this way was *A trip around the Pan-American Exposition* (Edison Company, 1901), a work that was approximately ten minutes long in which the camera was positioned in front of a moving gondola, allowing viewers to make a tour of the canals that were spread around the exhibition.<sup>18</sup> This involved placing the spectator in the position of a tourist, an aspect always highlighted in all the exhibitions, since they were thought of as a ‘world picture’. Cutting through time and space, “a trip around the fair grounds was seen as the substitute for a trip around the world, a compressed and timesaving educational experience,” as Tom Gunning tells us (1994, p.426).

In addition, there is also *Pan-American Exposition by Night* (1901), filmed by Edwin Porter for the Edison Company, within a “popular stereopticon convention – day-to-night dissolving views” (Musser, 1990, p.319). Finally, according to Robert Rydell, the Education section of the US pavilion in 1901 exhibited Biograph films about military maneuvers in what the author sees as “the government’s first public use of this new medium.”<sup>19</sup>

After 1901 the films came to be shown more frequently in exhibition spaces.<sup>20</sup> In 1904, however, the place of cinema in the *Louisiana Purchase International Exposition* was more marginal if compared to what would occur in Paris four years later. According to Tom Gunning,

Cinema had no official recognition or high profile presence at the St. Louis Fair. Its main role was that of a backstage technology for other attractions which offered mechanical illusions more vivid and sensational than the rather feeble experience offered by motion pictures alone. (1994, p.423)

According to Musser, Biograph sent one of its staffs to Washington with the aim of filming “United States Post Office Department employees sorting letters, loading cars, and delivering mail.” A series of various short films were made for the Navy “showing recruitment, training, the administration of first aid, and the auctioning of personal property left behind by deserters.” The Department of the Interior ordered films about the schools designed for Indians “and daily life on the reservation (NAVAJO SQUAW WEAVING

BLANKETS, n° 2659), as well as views of the Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Park.” For the Missouri Commission films were made about “students from various schools across the state” (*op. cit.*, p.359).

Biograph also produced works about large industries, such as those photographed by Billy Bitzer for the Westinghouse Electric Company, a large competitor of Edison in that sector. Considered by Gunning to be one of the inaugurators in the genre (p.439), these were shown in the company’s section in the pavilion known as the House of Machinery. Three films were shown per day, with great public interest, filling the 350 seats in the auditorium.

In the following exhibitions until 1915,<sup>21</sup> the place of cinema does not seem to have modified much, with its status remaining practically unaltered. In 1905, for example, in the *Exposition Universelle et Internationale* (Liège), “the highlight of the French exhibit was the chromophone, combining cinema and phonograph to reproduce synchronized sound and movement.”<sup>22</sup> In 1907 in Dublin a ‘cinematographic hall’ was joined with other attractions in the *Irish International Exhibition*, such as “live theatre; Indian jugglers, conjurers, and fakirs; a water chute; shooting ranges; a concert hall; organ recitals; fire brigade displays ... and a Somali village complete with native huts and native children in a schoolhouse.”<sup>23</sup> The perspective of a tourist’s guided visit continued to be present in the films made about the exhibitions, as indicated by the title of *Farmer Jenkin’s Visit to the White City* (1910), cited by Christopher Jeens<sup>24</sup> in relation to *The Franco-British Exhibition* (London, 1908).

However, in 1915 cinema gained another dimension among exhibition spaces. Indicative of this change was the creation of a production company, Exposition Players Corporation, by the organizers of the *Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco) to guarantee the continuous flow of films in the different exhibition spaces and to publicize the event. Promotional works circulated in more than 3500 cinemas throughout the United States and Canada.<sup>25</sup> It is estimated that more than three hundred thousand meters of film were shown for free in the sixty cinemas scattered around the enclosure<sup>26</sup> in sessions that began in the morning and ended at night.<sup>27</sup> As affirmed in one of the official documents of the event: “one of the striking features of the Exposition was the extent to which motion pictures were utilized.”<sup>28</sup>

Many national, state, private company or public agency pavilions made a cinema theater available to the public in order to show through the intermediation of the moving image the advances of their culture and economy.<sup>29</sup>

According to the official exhibition guide cinema played “an important

part throughout the Exposition, and their possibilities for usefulness in the cause of education is fully shown in the education displays.”<sup>30</sup> The educational potential of cinema was principally witnessed in the Palace of Education and of Social Economy, which housed “a moving picture theatre of impressive dimensions and architecture, capable of seating several hundred persons.”<sup>31</sup> In other exhibition spaces, such as the state of Wisconsin, the first to incorporate the cinema in the classroom, it was shown “how films are used in teaching civil engineering.”<sup>32</sup>

Even with these highlights, the orientation followed the perspective coined by the representative of the Smithsonian Institute in the organizing commission of many international fairs held in the United States between 1876 and 1893. For George Brown Goode, “to see is to know.”<sup>33</sup>

#### MONUMENT, SHOP WINDOW, PROPAGANDA: CINEMA IN UNIVERSAL EXHIBITIONS BETWEEN 1915 AND 1937

As is well known 1915 was a landmark in the history of cinema due to the launch of *Birth of Nation* by David Griffith. This film represented the consolidation of a certain type of language, called classical narrative cinema. It is necessary to highlight this aspect, since it involved one of the existing aesthetic possibilities. The *Les Vampires* serial (1915-1916) by Louis Feuillade and *Cabiria* (1914) by Giovanni Pastrone pointed to distinct paths. Pastrone, for example, constructed another form of visual configuration and narrative structure, centered on slow panoramas that describe the film space, full of the monumental scenery that evoked ancient Rome and Carthage.

The histories of cinema and the exhibitions intercross in these years. *Cabiria*, along with other monumental Italian epics, was imported in 1914 to the US market by the distributor George Kleine, and shown “at advance prices in opera houses, legitimate theaters, and the biggest, most deluxe downtown cinemas in major cities and then were sent to the ordinary circuits.”<sup>34</sup>

The Italian film was much compared by critics with *Birth of a Nation* at the time it was released.<sup>35</sup> Notwithstanding the comparisons, the impact *Cabiria* had on Griffith was enormous, as we shall see.

During the same period, another decisive influence marked the director’s artistic trajectory. In search of location for the project to follow *Birth*, namely *The Mother and the Law*, a story based in the contemporary United States, with a more intimate nature and a lower budget in comparison with the previous

film, Griffith visited the *Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco, 1915).

As we have seen, this extravaganza,<sup>36</sup> together with the *Panama-California Exposition*, held in São Diego between 1915 and 1916, marked for Rydell ‘the blossoming of film as powerful medium for shaping cultural values under the aegis of entertainment’ (1984, p.231). In addition to the data mention above, there is also Rydell’s reference, based on documentation from the time, to a Universal Films’ production entitled *The World to Come*, a story in which we watch the attempts of a count to transform the world into something better. The concrete result of its action was materialized in what corresponded to the exhibition space of San Diego – ‘his paradise in earth.’<sup>37</sup>

Griffith, in an interview given at the time, say he was impressed with the Exhibition – ‘the grandest thing the world has known.’ For him, ‘it would be a crime to let the exposition come and go without perpetuating it in ... a film drama that will mark another forward leap as great as that of *The Birth of a Nation*.’<sup>38</sup>

According to Mirian Hansen, the exhibition also encouraged the director to “to take advantage of the vogue of Orientalism” and “spurred Griffith’s ambitions for the Babylonian set – in terms of sheer size, grandiosity, and feasibility – far beyond the scope of any film, including *Cabiria*.”<sup>39</sup>

The impact of the work of Pastrone and the São Francisco exhibition led Griffith to, thus, reexamine the project that would come after *Birth of a Nation* (1915). He decided to expand the scope of his work, inserting it into a film with a monumental work, a project that gained the appearance of a super-production, a historic reconstruction whose apparent fidelity was manifested in the grandiose scenarios and luxurious scenarios, with a multitude of extras and in an epic dimension in the events represented. On the other hand, this ambition was also materialized from the point of view of language. In relation to the production, Griffith resorted in an unprecedented manner to parallelism to deal with the question of incomprehension in the film that came to be known as *Intolerance* (1916).<sup>40</sup>

Although Griffith did not make the film about the exhibition as promised in the interview given to the newspapers that covered the event, this was certainly because the director intended to aesthetically and sensorially overcome the experiences given to fair goers while moving between exhibition spaces. In another key, specific to the means of communication that he helped to consolidate, Griffith, more than a ‘drama film’ about the event, constructed a cinematographic epic that was intended to be more encompassing, entrancing



and sensational than those of the large international fairs: *Intolerance* is not just a film translation made by the director of this experience, but his principal *estravaganza*, a characteristic that would be the mark of the large productions of the cinema industry from then on.

What is significant is the convergence between the celebration space and the cinema-spectacle. By being consolidated as a means of mass communication cinema came to be used ever more as a 'shop window' in which each nation projected, before itself and before others, the national virtues in a scenario marked by imperialism. It was the obvious will of countries with a structured cinematographic industry that certain films be seen as an expression of national pride, due to the condensation of economic strength, technical advances, artistic talents and administrative competence in works such as those by Griffith, Pastrone and others. In the initial decades of the twentieth century, even more so than nowadays, technical and discursive competence (in terms of mastery of specific cinematographic narrative techniques) signified national progress and superiority in a competition that transferred to the new art the role eminently performed by the universal exhibitions during the nineteenth century. Like the national pavilions and advanced machinery, the new large visual spectacle supported by advanced technology was projected onto screens to assume the dimension of a monument, a type of national allegory even of the content of human experience focused on for its representations.

During the First World War, the cinema, due to its institutionalization process, came to be an object of concern of states interested in symbolically winning over an increasing number of people to their cause. An important indication of this is the British government's invitation in 1917 of Griffith to direct a work that would persuade the US government to enter the conflict.<sup>41</sup> The project never materialized because the US declared war at the moment when Griffith arrived in England to start filming. This and other factors allowed him to make what became known as *Hearts of the World* (1918), which was very popular at that time.

For Russell Merritt, apart from the political recognition which was then unprecedented for a film maker, what the English state intended revealed "an entirely new technique in international diplomacy, reflecting the increasingly propagated belief in the importance of public opinion for government action" (p.209). In relation to the use of the cinema as a propaganda instrument, the 1914-1918 period brought about this change.<sup>42</sup>

The International Exhibition of the Centenary of the Independence of Brazil, held between 1922 and 1923 in Rio de Janeiro occurred within this

scenario, and had a very close relationship with the global tendency mentioned above. Its importance within the global context was that it was the first universal exhibition after the First World War.<sup>43</sup>

The classification of cinema proposed by the organizers of the exhibition says a lot about the concept that the cultural elite at that time had, especially of the cinema made in Brazil until then: neither art nor an information vehicle.<sup>44</sup> The classification of it along with what was considered as ‘postal and telegraphic communications services’ and ‘sciences’ gave cinema hope in relation to its role in relation to the field of the industrial innovation that it only partially filled.

On the other hand, various films were shown, whether or not they had been specifically produced for the event, in the cinemas available in the pavilion for São Paulo State, Argentina and the US, not to mention the entertainment park.<sup>45</sup> The US exhibition room was constructed in the open air and had the largest screen seen until then in Brazil.<sup>46</sup> Important authorities turned up for its opening, at which were shown three documentaries and *The Three Musketeers* (1921), directed by Fred Niblo and starring Douglas Fairbanks.

This fiction film did not have any educational purpose, only to show the eternal struggle of good against evil, as the cinematographic producers preached to sectors of society already concerned about the effect that cinema had on the moral formation of individuals.<sup>47</sup> It was also distanced from the documentaries that accompanied the various stands in the pavilions dedicated to industry and work. From what seems to be the case, their presence reflects the vocation these films had in assuming the role of a representative of modernity intended by the society that produced them.

In relation to the universal exhibitions that occurred later, including those held in Paris in 1925, 1931 and 1937, there is little information about the question our research is concerned with, especially due to the absence of sources and bibliography in Brazil.<sup>48</sup>

In the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* cinema was still associated with photography, ‘technically inseparable,’ and belonging to Group V, namely teaching. Although theater was in Group IV (Theater, street and garden arts), the two were seen as closely related artistic expressions, as can be seen in the *Rapport général* (1929, p.9).

Constructing the history of the cinema from the French perspective – ‘cinematography is a French discovery’ –, the authors of the report, in harmony with the theoretical perspective of the text, called another pioneering

achievement: 'it is worth noting that for the first time cinema was mentioned in the Exhibition report.' In addition, 'for the first time, Cinematography figured in France in an international exhibition' (*Rapport général*, p.61 and 73). Leaving aside the exaggeration, in the report there is a detailed discussion about the specificity of the cinema, in accordance with the theories on which the so-called artistic vanguards of that time were based, which did not appear in the other reports. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the projections and other activities linked to the field were mentioned in the official documents to which we have had access.

Apart from the preoccupation with explaining the so-called 'visual alphabet' of the cinema, the report marks the incorporation of modern cinema as it had been made until then as an expression of the vitality and diversity of French culture, seen as one of its original aspects: 'no country has as many divergences, so many opposing schools.' Germaine Dulac, Marcel L'Herbier, Abel Gance, Jean Epstein, Louis Delluc, amongst other modern filmmakers, made the 'masterpieces out of which arose, with frequently opposing tendencies, the best French films until the present. Equal emphasis was given to educational and documentary cinema (*Rapport général*, p.68-75).

What were certainly original were the conference cycles that discussed 'the history, evolution and tendencies of silent art.' Among the speakers Georges-Michel Coissac gave a brief history of cinema from 1895-1924, L'Herbier 'spoke of the means necessary to express the cinematographic idea and technique,' Dulac, 'adopted the question of the photogenia of exterior aspects, the angle, the light,' Epstein, 'the photogenia of interior aspects, the photogenic drama,' Moussinac, the 'tendencies of French cinema.' The educational role of the cinema was also the question of various talks, such as that of Jean Benoît-Lévy, who was concerned with the 'technique of educational cinema.' Finally, Léon Gaumont, was concerned with the 'discovery of spoken films.' The series of conferences was opened by Maurice Quentin, 'president of the Municipal Council of Paris' who gave a talk significantly entitled: 'The cinema, a historical document' (*Rapport général*, p.82).

Sweden, Italy Great Britain, Denmark, Germany and the United States, countries with either consolidated cinematographic industries or a filmography of reference at that time, did not send their apparatus or their films to the exhibition. Apart from France, only the USSR participated in the 'cinematographic exhibition.' Russian cinematography was "represented by stills taken from photograms of different films, notably 'Palais & Citadelle,' 'D'une Étincelle naît la Flamme,' directed by Bassalygo, 'Le Minaret de la

Mort,' 'La Grève,' by Eigenstein (sic), and 'Aéhlita,' by Protazanov'" (*Rapport général*, p.85).

Jean Renoir was hired for the *Exposition Coloniale Internationale* (1931) to make the 'centenary film,' a long feature film that became known as *Le Bled* (1929), meant to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the French invasion of Algeria.<sup>49</sup> It thus integrated and reinforced a tradition that was then configured in French cinema dedicated to aggrandizing colonial actions. Work less known or analyzed that Renoir, the production of Société des Films Historiques "glorifies this conquest, making it into myth, transforming the first conquerors of Carlos X into valorous protagonists of the qualities of the country through the representations of lands cultivated by hordes of tractors!"<sup>50</sup> Certainly this is a rich film to discuss the frontiers between art and politics, since the work would contradict what the director would make a few years later, especially in *La Marseillaise* (1936), financed by the French Communist Party.<sup>51</sup>

The *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la vie moderne* was held two years before the outbreak of the Second World War. According to Marc Mancini, it was in this exhibition "that both the scope and the gravity achieved by the exhibition film became evident,"<sup>52</sup> as expressed in the construction of Palais de Lumière and Pavillon du Cinéma. This exhibition became known however for the 'dramatic architectonic confrontation' between two pavilions which were placed facing each other: on the one hand that of the Soviet Union; and on the other the Nazi one designed by Albert Speer.<sup>53</sup> The Third Reich one had, amongst other attractions, 'on the lower floor the information office, the cinema and a groups of television cabins.' While the Soviet one had on the external part of its pavilion 'a complete cinema'.<sup>54</sup>

The outline traced here is completed by the contribution of the American cinema industry to *New York World's Fair* (1939). *Land of Liberty* (1939) was made at the request of the organizers of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA), the association of the large producers. Its president, Will Hays, best known for having implemented in 1934 the moral of conduct to be observed in films by member companies, was its coordinator. In turn, he gave the task to one of the best known directors of that period, Cecil B. DeMille, responsible for the monumental epics *The Ten Commandments* (1923), *The Sign of the Cross* (1932), *Cleopatra* (1934) and *The Crusades* (1935), amongst his most important works.<sup>55</sup>

At the beginning the team included a professor of the history of international relations in Columbia University, James Shotwell, a man very

close to the government and who had been part of the American committee at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, as well as having actively participated in the creation of the International Labor Organization, a year after the end of the First World War. Shotwell was at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la vie moderne* (Paris, 1937) at the invitation of IBM to organize cinema sessions with documentaries that showed aspects of American life and industry. According to his autobiography, cited by Allen Palmer, the projections attracted a large audience, 'while the rest of the American display was given only casual inspection' (Apud Palmer, 1993, p.40). This experience consolidated in him the perception that the cinema was the ideal media to reach a wide audience to divulge historic questions and their concerns about the challenges facing the US.

The project that Griffith had conceived in 1915 appeared to have arrived. DeMille's project, however, was not one of fiction as such, but rather of something hybrid, since, based on 'a collage of filmed scenes from previously produced Hollywood movies,' the intention was to tell the story of the US from independence to 1939 (Palmer, 1993, p.36). To the contrary of 'compilation films' made with fragments taken from cinema newsreels and documentaries, *Land of Liberty* predominantly consisted of material taken from fiction. For example, Theodore Roosevelt could be seen in various contemporary newsreels and afterwards be seen as interpreted by actors in historic films (p.45). The junction of the two types of register diluted the frontiers between what at the beginning had belonged to distinct universes,<sup>56</sup> a strategy for authenticating film discourse that is still unprecedented today.

DeMille was responsible for the script and for the final editing of all the extracts. Among the fiction films selected were a wide variety of historic melodramas, westerns and biographical pictures, better known as *biopics*, such as: *Abraham Lincoln* (1930) by David Griffith, *Billy the Kid* (1930) by King Vidor, *Cimarron* (1931) by Nick Grinde, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935) by Jack Conway, and *Victoria, the Great* (1937) by Helbert Wilcox. There was a concern to select titles in which the *star system* was present. For this reason there are fragments of historic reconstructions in which Clark Gable, Henry Fonda and Betty Davis appeared, mentioning only the names most known at present.<sup>57</sup>

The result did not please the historian, who asked that his name be removed from the final credits. Shotwell's interventions in the preparation of the script sought to correct the information and the visions of the event, from a perspective centered on the understanding that historical truth exists and

that cinema should only illustrate this. As he stated in 1939: “if the purports to be history, it must be history, and that is serious subject” (Apud Palmer, 1993, p.42). DeMille, however, was concerned with humanizing and personalizing the past, transforming it into romance, taking into account the popular appeal that the film was intended to have. Despite the controversies, restricted to the production, Shotwell’s name was used a lot in the publicizing of the film, since it was perceived that the inclusion of a very well known historian would give the work credibility.

*Land of Liberty* was a tremendous success, being shown for the first time in the federal government pavilion in the 1939 exhibition. Always attracting a large public, it was also shown in the *Golden Gate International Exposition* (San Francisco 1939-1940), the ‘last of the old-style world’s fairs.’<sup>58</sup> Its commercial release took place in the US capital, Washington, in January 1941. Between its opening session in New York World’s Fair and 1942, it is estimated that it reached an audience of 20 million viewers (Palmer, 1993, p.37). It, thus, went beyond the limits of the cinema rooms of the two international fairs, which reveals its force and its capacity to communicate in a more effective form with large segments of the population.

A film which involved historical representation, a documentary and fiction at the same time, a great spectacle, and a visual encyclopedia of US production in the 1930s, *Land of Liberty* represents a real cinematographic monument erected to Hollywood industry and to its media culture.

Symbolically, the presence of the cinema in international exhibitions until the end of the 1930s fulfilled the propaganda function it already had in cinema rooms, schools and other public spaces, as intended by governments of various ideological types. The efforts put into making films that could contribute to the dissemination of national values demonstrates in those years the force and dimension achieved by that means of communication, which became effectively a mass media, extending its action to what had previously been restricted to the exhibition spaces. During those years the United States, Germany and the Soviet Union anticipated in the field of images the conflict that would occur shortly after. As DeMille said in his memories, the release of the film ordered by the organizers of the international fair of New York onto the commercial circuit a few months before the attack on Pearl Harbor fulfilled its ideological function: ‘perhaps some of those who saw it had a better idea of what they were called upon to defend when bombs fell on American soil on 7 December 1941’ (Apud PALMER, 1993, p.46).

Understanding the role of cinema in this dispute and in the universal

exhibitions will certainly contribute to define better what its role was before the cataclysm of Shoah and the dropping of the atomic bomb on civilians.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Research financed by CNPq. It is part of the USP/Cofecub project coordinated by Prof. Marcos Napolitano (DH/FFLCH/USP).

<sup>2</sup> CHARNEY, L.; SCHWARTZ, V. Introduction. In: \_\_\_\_\_. (Eds.). *Cinema e the invention of modern life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> The bibliography about the exhibitions is extensive. For a general picture, see AUGUST, T. *The Selling of the Empire: British and French Imperialist Propaganda, 1890-1940*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985; BENEDICT, B. *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915*. London: Scolar Press, 1983; BOUIN, P. and CHANUT, C-P. *Histoire française des foires et des expositions universelles*. Paris: Éditions de Nesle, 1980; GREENHALGH, P. *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Expositions, and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988; HODEIR, C. and PIERRE, M. *L'exposition coloniale*. Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1991; RYDELL, R. *All the world's a fair: visions of empire at American international expositions, 1876-1916*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984; \_\_\_\_\_. *World of fairs: the century-of-progress expositions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c.1993. Amongst the Brazilian authors who have dealt with the question are Sandra Jatayh Pesavento, *Exposições Universais. Espetáculos da modernidade do século XIX*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1997, and Heloisa Barbuy, *A Exposição Universal de 1889 em Paris: visão e representação na sociedade industrial*. São Paulo: Loyola/História Social USP, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. BADGER, R. Chicago 1893. World's Columbian Exposition. In: FINDLING, J. and PELLE, K. (Eds.). *Historical Dictionary of World's Fair and Expositions, 1851-1988*. NY: Greenwood Press, 1990, p.127. The relationship between entertainment parks and cinema at its beginnings has been studied by, amongst others, RABINOVITZ, L. Through the people. Cinema at the amusement park. *For the Love of pleasure. Women, movies, and culture in turn-of-the-century Chicago*. NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998, p.137-167.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. RABINOVITZ, L. The fair view: female spectators and the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. In: ANDREW, D. (Ed.). *The Image in Dispute*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997, p.99, 111.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. GUNNING, T. The world as object lesson: cinema audiences, visual culture, and the St. Louis world's fair. *Film History*, v.6, n.4, p.423, winter 1994.

<sup>7</sup> All the works about this point are related to a greater or lesser extent to early cinema, or to the examination of the devices that preceded it. In addition to the previously cited works, see CHAPERON, D. *Le Cinématographie astronomique. Camille Flammarion: un parcours de 1864 à 1898*. 1895. *Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma*, n.18, p.53-69, été 1995; DE CAUTER, L. The Panoramic Ecstasy: On World Exhibitions and the

Disintegration of Experience. *Theory, Culture and Society*. v.10, n. 4, p.1 – 23, Nov. 1993; MURPHY, P.J. Edison and the Panama Exposition. *Confrontation*, n. 74-75, p.196 – 201, spring/summer 2001; OGATA, A. Viewing Souvenirs: Peepshows and the International Expositions. *Journal of Design History*, v. 15, n. 2, p.69-82, 2002; PAUL, A. I. Nebraska's Home Movies: The Nebraska Exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair. *Nebraska History*, v.76, n.1, p.22-27, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> MUSSER, Charles. *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*. NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990, p.72.

<sup>9</sup> Cinema in the 1900 exhibition is dealt with in MORETTIN, E. O cinema e a Exposição Internacional do Centenário da Independência do Brasil. *Artcultura*, v. 8, n. 13, p.191, 2006, based on the study by TOULET, E. Le Cinéma à l'exposition universelle de 1900. *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, n.33, p.179-209, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> As well as the already mentioned work by Emmanuelle Toulet, histories of French cinema also mention the participation of cinema in the event. See for example, JEANNE, R. and FORD, C. *Histoire encyclopédique du cinéma. Vol. 1. Le cinéma français. 1895-1929*. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1947, p.71-74.

<sup>11</sup> In addition to Lumière, Pathé and Gaumont were also present. There were exhibitors "specialized in certain types of accessories," such as the Victor Planchon company, a manufacturer of film; Elie Reuille, Louis Encausse and Elisabeth Thuillier, representing three different companies linked to the coloration of photographic and cinematographic films. Only three were exclusively dedicated to cinema: Reulos, Goudeau e Cia, Manufacture française d'appareils de precision from Encausse, and Siegmund Lubin's company, the owner of the American company Lubin Manufacturing Company. (TOULET, 1986, p.181-183).

<sup>12</sup> The only one which was not concerned with photography initially was Pathé, which initially worked with phonographs (*ibid.*, p.183).

<sup>13</sup> The films made by Lumière, however, are not mentioned in class 12 by official documents (*ibid.*, p.181).

<sup>14</sup> The section of the French pavilion dedicated to teaching in Paris also resorted to the cinema. Under the responsibility of Louis Gaumont and Georges Démeny, "visitors passed through a dark corridor in front of small screens in which they could watch scenes lasting forty-five seconds showing the activities of municipal schools in Paris," (*ibid.*, p.185).

<sup>15</sup> MUSSER, 1990, p.278. Toulet also lists Siegmund Lubin, as we have seen, as being one of the foreign exhibitors (1986, p.182).

<sup>16</sup> RABINOVITZ, L. World's Fairs. In: ABEL, R. (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*. London: Routledge, 2005, p.705.

<sup>17</sup> MUSSER, 1990, p.319. The president's funerals were the theme of numerous films, made both by the Edison Company and the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company. *Execution of Czolgosz with Panorama of Auburn Prison* (1901), by the Edison Company, was one of these productions.



<sup>18</sup> RABINOVITZ, 2005, p.705.

<sup>19</sup> *All the world's a fair, op. cit.*, p.142.

<sup>20</sup> RABINOVITZ, 2005, p.705.

<sup>21</sup> As well as the exhibitions already mentioned, in this period the following were also held: *The Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair* (Portland, 1905); *L'Esposizione Internazionale del Sempione* (Milan, 1906); *The New Zealand International Exhibition of Arts and Industries* (Christchurch, 1906 – 1907); *Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition* (Jamestown, 1907); *The Franco-British Exhibition* (London, 1908); *The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition* (Seattle, 1909); *Exposition Universelle et Internationale* (Brussels, 1910); *Nan-Yang Ch'Uan-Yen Hui* (Nanking South Seas Exhibition) (Nanking, 1910); *Festival of Empire* (London, 1911) and finally *Exposition Universelle et Industrielle* (Ghent, 1913).

<sup>22</sup> GENDRON, M. Liège 1905. *Exposition Universelle et Internationale*. In: FINDLING and PELLE (Eds.), 1990, p.187.

<sup>23</sup> DALY, M. E. Dublin 1907. *Irish International Exhibition*. In: FINDLING and PELLE (Eds.), 1990, p.197.

<sup>24</sup> JEENS, C. *London 1908*. *The Franco-British Exhibition*. In: FINDLING and PELLE (Eds.), 1990, p.205.

<sup>25</sup> RYDELL, 1984, p.231.

<sup>26</sup> BENEDICT, B., San Francisco 1915. *Panama Pacific International Exposition*. In: FINDLING and PELLE (Eds.), 1990, p.224. Rydell speaks of 67 cinemas (1984, p.231).

<sup>27</sup> *Official Guide of the Panama-Pacific Exposition, 1915, San Francisco, California, USA*. San Francisco: The Wahlgreen Company, s/d., re-released in 2011, p.107.

<sup>28</sup> *The State of New York at Panama-Pacific International Exposition. San Francisco. California*. Albany, J. B. Lion Company Printers, 1916, p.266.

<sup>29</sup> According to the official exhibition report we know of the existence of exhibition rooms in the pavilions of Argentina, Norway, the United States (Palace of Liberal Arts, Palace of Machinery, Palace of Mines, and the states of Massachusetts, Mississippi, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Washington, and California), and the Southern Pacific Building (*Official Guide, op. cit.*, p.80, 86, 91, 93, 97, 98, 100, respectively).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>31</sup> *The State of New York, op. cit.*, p.76.

<sup>32</sup> *Official Guide, op. cit.*, p.74.

<sup>33</sup> Apud GUNNING, 1994, p.425. The report on the participation of New York state in this exhibition has a lot of information related to this (*The State of New York, op. cit.*, p.318 and 324, for example).

<sup>34</sup> BOWSER, E. *The Birth of a Nation*. Production. In: USAI, P. C. (Ed.). *The Griffith Project. Volume 8*. London: BFI Publishing/Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2004, p.57.

<sup>35</sup> STOKES, M. D. W. *Griffith's 'The Birth of a Nation.'* NY: Oxford University Press, 2007, p.122.

<sup>36</sup> Term borrowed from RYDELL, 1984, p.2, who uses it to refer to exhibitions in general.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.231. There is no film database available in the internet for this work.

<sup>38</sup> Apud RYDELL, 1984, p.231.

<sup>39</sup> HANSEN, M. *Babel & Babylon. Spectatorship in American Silent Film.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, p.237.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. XAVIER, I. De monumentos e alegorias políticas: a Babilônia de Griffith e a dos Taviani. *Estudos de Cinema*, n.2, p.125-152, 1999. In relation to *Intolerance*, see also EISENSTEIN, S. Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today, ed. and tr. Jay Leyda In: *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977, p.195-255.

<sup>41</sup> MERRITT, R. Le film épique au service de la propagande de guerre: D. W. Griffith et la création de 'Cœurs du Monde.' In: MOTTET, J. (Dir.). *D. W. Griffith.* Paris: Ed. L'Harmattan, 1984, p.209.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. VÉRAY, L. Le cinéma de propagande durant la Grande Guerre: endoctrinement ou consentement de l'Opinion. In: BERTIN-MAGHIT, J-P. *Une histoire mondiale des cinémas de propagande.* Paris: Ed. Nouveau Monde, 2008, p.27-62.

<sup>43</sup> This question was dealt with by the author in MORETTIN, 2006, op. cit., e Cinema e Estado no Brasil. A Exposição Internacional do Centenário da Independência em 1922 e 1923. *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* (89): 137-148, mar. 2011. In relation to the 1922-1923 exhibition, see Thaís Sant'Ana. *A Exposição Internacional do Centenário da Independência: Modernidade e Política no Rio de Janeiro do início dos anos 1920.* Campinas, SP, Masters Thesis, IFCH/Unicamp, 2008.

<sup>44</sup> In relation to the cultural marginality of Brazilian cinema during this period, see GALVÃO, M. R., *Crônica do cinema paulistano.* São Paulo: Ática, 1975, and GOMES, P. E. S. *Cinema: trajetória no subdesenvolvimento.* Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra/Embrafilme, 1980

<sup>45</sup> "Guia álbum" da cidade do Rio de Janeiro: propaganda da exposição comemorativa do centenario da Independencia do Brasil. [Rio de Janeiro]: s.n., 1922, p.12.

<sup>46</sup> MONROE, L. O pavilhão dos Estados Unidos. *A exposição de 22.* n.10-11, dez. 1922.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. MORETTIN, E. Cinema educativo: uma abordagem histórica. *Comunicação & Educação.* n.4, p.13-19, set./dez. 1995.

<sup>48</sup> There is little documentation available in the Brazilian archives. What is available includes, FRANCE. Ministère du Commerce, de l'Industrie, des Postes et des Télégraphes. *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes, Paris, 1925. Rapport général. Section artistique et technique. Volume X. Théâtre, Photographie et Cinématographie.* Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1929, and BEAUPLAN, R. Théâtre, cinéma et radio. In: *Exposition internationale de Paris 1937: arts et techniques.* Paris: L'Illustration, 1937, p.?, which includes articles from the magazine *L'Illustration*, published between May and November

of that year. In the latter case the text dedicated to the cinema announced what would be done, since it was published before the event was held.

<sup>49</sup> HODEIR and PIERRE, 1991, p.30. This film has not been commercially released in VHS or DVD in Brazil. We are also unaware of its release in DVD in France. In a search on the site [www.amazon.fr](http://www.amazon.fr), on 27 March 2011, there was no mention of the film in the 177 references to the term 'Jean Renoir.'

<sup>50</sup> BARLET, O. and BLANCHARD, P. *Rêver: l'impossible tentation du cinéma colonial*. In: *Culture coloniale 1871-1931*. Paris: Autrement, 2003, p.119.

<sup>51</sup> QUINTANA, Angel. *Jean Renoir*. Madrid, Editorial Cátedra, 1998, p.62.

<sup>52</sup> MANCINI, M. Pictures at an Exposition. *Film Comment*. v.19, n.1, p.44, Jan.-Feb. 1983. Marking the inaugural point, as can be perceived, is a recurrent trait in a literature which, with some exceptions, does not know what was written before.

<sup>53</sup> CHANDLER, A. *Paris 1937. Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la vie moderne* In: FINDLING and PELLE (Eds.), 1990, p.286, 288.

<sup>54</sup> BEAUPLAN, 1937, p.?

<sup>55</sup> All the information about this project was taken from PALMER, Allen. Cecil B. DeMille writes America's history for the 1939 World's Fair. *Film History*, v.5, p.36-48, 1993. Like *Le Bled*, this is a rare film, not on sale as a DVD in the United States. Nor do any Brazilian film and video archives have any registration of it.

<sup>56</sup> In relation to films made with archive material, see LEYDA, Jay. *Films beget films. Compilation Films from propaganda to drama*. NY, Hill and Wang, 1971.

<sup>57</sup> Data available at [www.imdb.com/title/tt0033809/fullcredits#cast](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0033809/fullcredits#cast), accessed on 2 March 2011.

<sup>58</sup> LARSON, Donald. San Francisco 1939-1940. Golden Gate International Exposition. In: FINDLING and PELLE (Eds.), 1990, p.301.

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