

And The Ship Sails On

by Serge Toubiana

at the occasion of the end of his term
as Director-General of the *Cinémathèque française*.

Within just a few days, I shall come to the end of my term as Director-General of the *Cinémathèque française*. As of February 1st, 2016, Frédéric Bonnaud will take up the reins and assume full responsibility for this great institution. We shall have spent a great deal of time in each other's company over the past month, with a view to inducting Frédéric into the way the place works. He has been able to learn the range of our activities, meet the teams and discover all our on-going projects. This friendly transition from one director-general to the next is designed to allow Frédéric to function at full-steam from day one.

The handover will have been, both in reality and in the perception, a peaceful moment in the life of the Cinémathèque, perhaps the first easy handover in its long and sometimes turbulent history. That's the way we want it - we being Costa-Gavras, chairman of our board, and the regulatory authority, represented by Fleur Pellerin, Minister of Culture and Communication, and Frédérique Bredin, Chairperson of the CNC, France's National Centre for Cinema and Animation. The peaceful nature of this handover offers further proof that the Cinémathèque has entered into a period of maturity and is now sufficiently grounded and self-confident to start out on the next chapter without trepidation.

But let me step back in time.

Since moving into the Frank Gehry building at 51 rue de Bercy, at the behest of the Ministry of Culture, the *Cinémathèque française* has undergone a profound transformation. It has moved with the times to establish healthy, transparent management practices and a smooth, confident relationship with its regulatory supervisors. Endowed with a budget three times larger than in our Chaillot days, we have been able to extend our film heritage and conservation activities enormously. Over the last ten years, our archival collections have been enriched by spectacular acquisitions. Our programming and educational activities have grown considerably too. And we have acquired expertise at enhancing the value of our collections by organizing 24 exhibitions in 10 years. Our Film Museum has thrived. The Film Library has become much more open, enabling thousands of students and researchers to make use of texts, journals, archives and other precious materials relating to the history of cinema. We have established a bookshop and a restaurant called "Les 400 Coups" (the Four Hundred Blows).

In order to achieve all this, the Cinémathèque has expanded. It has changed in size and scope, developing new departments, such as Finance and Administration, Legal, HR, General Facilities, Cultural Development, IT, World Wide Web, Public Access, Public Relations and Building Supervision to manage our highly complex building. These newly acquired forms of expertise are what make our ambitions feasible.

Taken together, our activities, their overall logic and synergy, constitute a varied and constantly evolving cultural supply. Our ability to evolve is our great strength as an institution, entirely

dedicated to the history of cinema from the earliest days (Etienne-Jules Marey, Auguste and Louis Lumière, Georges Méliès) to now.

Because of the incredible quality of its collections, the dedication and competence of its staff, the means at its disposal (three up-to-the-minute screening theatres, museum and exhibition spaces, Library, bookstore) not forgetting its sponsors and the wide range of its partnership organizations, the Cinémathèque welcomes a wide variety of increasingly youthful audiences, keen to improve upon or acquire a knowledge of the history of world cinema or just intent on satisfying their curiosity.

Every year, several tens of thousands of school-age children and teenagers enjoy study-tours with their teachers. They discover films on the big screen, visit the museum or temporary exhibitions, and join visual-education or practical workshops organized by an enthusiastic and open-minded educational team.

The offer is plural and made in a spirit of discovery. There are meetings with filmmakers and other creative figures, active or retired, from all over the world. There are conferences, master classes, educational and training workshops, guided tours, a Conservatoire of Film Techniques that offers its own lectures, as well as, of course, a crucial web-based *Cinémathèque française*. All of this activity is designed to be scholarly yet accessible to all. It has made the Cinémathèque a resounding success over the last ten years.

Restoring films as well as processing and cataloguing our non-film collections and gradually making these available online are Heritage department priorities, because digital technology is breathing new life into cinema by making it more visible at a higher quality.

The Cinémathèque is famous outside France as well as within it, with a reputation well-established from Europe to Asia and throughout the Americas. Our hundreds of retrospectives have redrawn the map of world cinema in an exciting and lively way. We are proud to have played host to some of the greatest filmmakers working today, including Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, Michael Mann, William Friedkin, John McTiernan, Bernardo Bertolucci, Nanni Moretti, Frederick Wiseman, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, Tsai Ming-liang, Amos Gitai, Joel and Ethan Coen, Raymond Depardon, Alain Tanner, Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Tim Burton, David Cronenberg, Hong Sang-Soo, John Landis, Spike Lee, Michael Haneke, André Téchiné, Pierre Etaix, Benoit Jacquot, Alexander Sokourov, Jacques Doillon, Andrzej Wajda, Alain Cavalier, Pedro Almodóvar, and many others.

There have been tributes to actors (Danielle Darrieux, Catherine Deneuve, Shirley McLaine, Isabelle Huppert, Juliette Binoche, Jeanne Moreau, Bulle Ogier, Jim Carrey, Michel Piccoli, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Delphine Seyrig, Juliet Berto, Jacques Perrin, Ingrid Bergman, Bette Davis, Mathieu Amalric, Gérard Depardieu, etc.), directors of photography (Giuseppe Rotunno, Raoul Coutard, Renato Berta, Pierre Lhomme, Caroline Champetier, Michael Ballhaus, Willy Kurant, Philippe Rousselot, etc.), producers (Alain Sarde, Raoul Lévy, Daniel Toscan du Plantier, Humbert Balsan, the Brothers Hakim, among others), soundtrack composers (Antoine Duhamel, Michel Legrand, Bruno Coulais, Gabriel Yared, etc.), Retrospectives such as these open many windows and offer a wide range of insights into cinema in the making.

Many of our retrospectives involve showing the complete works of great auteurs, from Akira Kurosawa to Federico Fellini, from Robert Aldrich to Julien Duvivier, and Jean Renoir to Ernst Lubitsch, from Jean-Pierre Melville to Alfred Hitchcock, Maurice Pialat to Jacques Demy, not forgetting Jacques Tati, Jean Epstein, Roberto Rossellini, Howard Hawks, Ritwik Ghatak, John

Ford, Orson Welles, Claude Sautet, Fritz Lang, Sacha Guitry, Blake Edwards, François Truffaut, Marcel Carné, and many others. They have enabled a younger generation of film-buffs to discover essential works on the big screen.

Over these last ten years, 24 exhibitions have been organized, each supplied with a fine catalogue. Some were imported from elsewhere, like MOMA's *Tim Burton* in 2012, a huge box-office success), the Frankfurt Filmmuseum's *Stanley Kubrick*, in 2011 or the Berlin Deutsche Kinematek's *Martin Scorsese*, which is on now.

We have developed our own shows too, though, based on our own and other private collections, such as *Jacques Tati* (in 2009), *Jacques Demy* (in 2013, with the enthusiastic support of Ciné-Tamaris : Agnès Varda, Rosalie Varda-Demy et Mathieu Demy), *Maurice Pialat* (2013), *Georges Méliès* (2008), *Les Enfants du Paradis* (designed in 2012 with support from Pathé), *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (2013, in co-production with three European cities: Barcelona, Rome and Berlin), *Henri Langlois* (in 2014, the centenary of the birth of the man who founded the Cinémathèque in 1936), *François Truffaut* (in 2014), *Michelangelo Antonioni* (in 2015), *German Expressionism*, *Magic Lanterns* (in 2009), *Blondes Brunettes* (in 2010), and others.

Some of our shows were enabled by a privileged relationship with filmmakers like *Pedro Almodovar* (in 2006), *Dennis Hopper* (in 2008, two years before his death in May 2010), *Amos Gitai* (2014) and – coming soon – *Gus Van Sant*.

Often, these shows have provoked a wave of media interest and often too they have served to bring new and younger audiences into the building.

Of course the most magnificent of all our shows has been *Renoir / Renoir*, developed at the brilliant suggestion of Claude Berri, then Chairman of the *Cinémathèque française*. This involved hanging some 40 paintings by Auguste Renoir (most of them lent by Paris' Orsay Museum) beside screened extracts from films by his son Jean Renoir, thus juxtaposing of the two major artistic enterprises of our time.

This was the show that launched the Cinémathèque in its new home when we moved into the rue de Bercy. Martin Scorsese was one of many well-known guests who attended the opening. He told us, "I can only say how happy I am to be here, for the inauguration of this magnificent new Cinémathèque in the rue de Bercy. Filmmakers from all over the world know this place, even if they have never set foot here. It is our spiritual home.

Since then, ten years have passed. Real fast.

We have been driven on by the energy and enthusiasm of the Cinémathèque's own in-house teams, and by a shared belief that cinema is alive and kicking and longing to be shared. As far as I am concerned, the *Cinémathèque française* has a soul. It lives and breathes film.

For eight years, I have been privileged to work alongside Costa-Gavras, Chairman of the Cinémathèque. This has enabled me to get to know and admire the man, as well as the filmmaker. I have felt that he was a protector, protecting me and protecting the institution as a whole. His commitment, his friendly support and international reputation have made many projects happen. Without Costa, how would we ever have been able to make contact with Steven Spielberg, Michael Mann, Francesco Rosi, John Landis, Bernardo Bertolucci or Martin Scorsese as easily as we did? I owe him a great deal. In truth, the Cinémathèque owes him everything.

But this is no time for looking back, it is time to carry on the good work. I am convinced that Frédéric Bonnaud, whom I know to be a passionate film-lover and a man of open mind, will fire this great, unique institution with characteristic spirit and ardour.

I wish him all the happiness that I have known here.

It only remains for me to thank, from the bottom of my heart, all of those people who have made this such a very special job over the last twelve years and nine months, since that day, May 4th, 2003, when I first took up the reins.

I can think of no better job to have.

Best wishes.

Serge Toubiana.