

TIRANA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, 2014

Panel on the Albanian Cinema

Saturday, November 8, 13.00-14.30

Nëna Terezë Room

Pallati i Kulturës, Tiranë

Panel Moderator: Lars Kristensen: PhD

This Panel represents a two pronged effort. First, it will contribute to the efforts of its participants to widen and deepen academic research on the Albanian cinema. This joint effort of scholars from several countries represents the acute need to explore and discover the hidden treasures of the Albanian cinema. Difficulties stemming from a half century communist self-isolation and little knowledge of the Albanian language by foreign scholars have left a huge void in efforts to probe, analyze and explain various features of the Albanian cinema. Several efforts by Albanian scholars have helped shed light on this aspect; yet much of that literature remains unknown to the international audience. This project aims at filling these gaps by bringing together an international crew of researchers from several disciplines and sub-disciplines. The final goal would be to publish a special issue of Kinokultura on the Albanian cinema as well as an edited volume published by a major international press.

The second goal of the Panel is to establish an academic tradition within TIFF. Unfortunately, an initial successful effort by Lars Kristensen and Ilir Butka in 2009 did not manage to open way to sequent panels. We hope that the renewed efforts of Lars and Agron Domi, the new director of TIFF, would serve to reignite that tradition.

PRESENTATIONS

Early Cinema in the Balkans: An Archaeological Approach
ANA GRGIC, University of St Andrews

The particular geopolitical and cultural space of the Balkans requires a methodology which is informed both by an archaeological approach to media studies and a transnational framework, in order to reconstruct the multi-layered cultural milieu in which the artefact/film was produced, and to trace the linkages between scattered surviving materials in archives beyond national confines. This talk will focus on specific characteristics that define the research methodology for early cinema history in the Balkans through the case study of Albert Kahn's film footage Albanie, which does not limit itself to the film-text, but encompasses various non-film materials both archival and digital.

Towards a History of Albanian Cinema
LARS KRISTENSEN, University of Skövde, Sweden

This paper will provide a brief historical overview of Albanian cinema. It will be linked with the history of film and the history of communist cinema and its postcommunist manifestations. It will argue that we cannot bypass how the development of cinema itself has influenced Albanians and their depictions and how the political history of Albania has influenced forms, styles and content of the countries cinema industry. Any form of historical writing is fraud with pitfalls and dangers of determinism, which would tie events and relations to actual historical actors and established factual accounts. However, in lack of such a history in the case of Albanian cinema, the aim of the paper is exactly to move towards such an account, charting ideas and ideologies that crisscross the Albanian land territory.

It's a Wonderful Job! Women at Work in Xhanfise Keko's Kur po xhirohej një film/While Shooting a Film

BRUCE WILLIAMS, William Paterson University, USA

In light of the official state policies of egalitarianism, the films of communist Albania frequently foregrounded the woman worker. Although the Albanian Film Archives have categorized only 20 films made between 1958 and the fall of communism under the rubric of “people working,” the theme of work was considerably more widespread. Made just a decade before the fall of the communist regime, Xhanfise Keko's *While Shooting a Film/Kur po xhirohej një film* (1981) is not only one of the final works of Kinostudio's only woman director, but moreover, it reveals how the theme of women at work increasingly converged with that of the nuclear family. The depiction of a working woman integrating marriage, motherhood, and career within the confines of the home ultimately serves as a metaphor for the self-containment of Albania itself.

The Making of the Socialist Martyr: Pjetër Llesh Doda and Rrugë të Bardha

KONSTANTINOS GIAKOUMIS, University of New York Tirana

TRUDY-ANN ANDERSON

CHRISTOPHER LOCKWOOD

This paper will explore the Christian redemptive sacrificial imagery utilized in the film “Rrugë të Bardha”, in rapport with propaganda and power positioning in filmic representation. In doing so, after outlining the life of Pjetër Llesh Doda, the film's hero, we shall compare the cinematographic version of his life with parallel examples from the Judeo-Christian tradition. We hope to document a case-study that communism, consciously or unconsciously, utilized the

emotional and spiritual power of Judeo-Christian sacrificial redemptive examples in order to reinforce its ideological ends, thereby projecting the socialist regime as a religious isomorphism.

Construing and Dismantling the New Man Utopia: The Contribution of the Albanian Cinema to the Communist and Postcommunist Albanian Ontology
RIDVAN PESHKOPIA, University for Business and Technology
ARBEN IMAMI, Institute for Political Studies

By the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s the state propaganda began to disseminate regime's vague notion of the Socialist New Man. The concept was never theoretically elaborated and flew more as a bunch of propagandistic clichés. The Albanian communist regime employed cinema as a means to draw the physical and moral image of the New Man, initially starting with schematic heroes mainly imported by new film directors from other communist countries but later engaging in the elaboration of some more sophisticated characters. This paper focuses on the role of the Albanian communist cinema in shaping the image of the New Man. Departing from some raw cues of Hoxha, the Albanian filmmakers moved slowly from Soviet stereotypes to homegrown characters combining the Albanian-style communist concept of man with folkloric characters. Ultimately, by the end of 1980s, the regime had to settle for some more down-to-earth, real-life characters than the upbeat New Man-like characters of the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. By the same token, the Albanian cinema began to lose those antiheroic characters that counterbalanced the schematic New Man.