

Cultural Identities in Newsreel Cinema after 1945 (Lausanne, 22–24 Nov 12)

Lausanne, Switzerland, Nov 22–24, 2012

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Constructions of Cultural Identities in Newsreel Cinema after 1945

Not least due its function as a tool of propaganda during the two World Wars, the production of newsreels after 1945 commanded a large arsenal of stylistic and technological means as well as skilled people. Although the period immediately after WWII proved to initiate the last phase within which the newsreel was being produced, the genre kept its importance as a decisive audiovisual mass medium by being an important tool in the development and shaping of politico-cultural public spheres up to the 1960s.

The main focus of the planned conference will lie on the analysis of the role of the newsreel as a medium for the formation of cultural identities in a variety of national contexts after 1945. Special attention is paid to newsreels that thematize cultural and artistic topics, respectively, which demonstrate strategies for the construction of a shared identity. In applying theoretical approaches within cultural and media studies, it will be examined what narratives were seen to be guaranteeing the (re-)consolidation – on a national level – of a community based on traditions informed by cultural, political, and religious practices. In presuming that the newsreel constitutes the important audiovisual narrative of a “biopic of the nation,” a discussion is initiated that moves well beyond traditional understandings of film genres and therefore allows for a wide array of approaches from various fields within cultural studies.

Apart from a focus on Swiss weekly newsreels, attention will be put on newsreels of nation states that were only “founded” after WWII – Germany (East and West), Israel and India – for it is in these states that the need for an ostentatious consolidation of cultural identity can be most virulently observed and which was provided by a (partially) federal control. Conversely, the conference invites the examination of the two opposite quarters during the Cold War by looking at newsreels from the United States and the USSR. However, because the conference would like to provide a comprehensive overview on the phenomenon of the newsreel, all presentations about the various practices regarding this particular genre are welcomed – regardless of which national contexts they discuss.

Conception and organization: Prof. Kornelia Imesch Oechslin, Mario Lüscher lic. phil., Section d’histoire de l’art, University of Lausanne / Prof. Sigrid Schade, Nadja Lutz lic. phil., Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts, Zurich University of the Arts.

The conference will be held in English, German, and French. Proposals of up to 400 words written

in one of these languages can be sent to mario.luscher@unil.ch by November 1st, 2011.

Reference:

CFP: Cultural Identities in Newsreel Cinema after 1945 (Lausanne, 22-24 Nov 12). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 3, 2011 (accessed Jun 11, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/1762>>.