

Primljeno: 01.03.2021.
Prihvaćeno: 05.04.2021.

Milja Jelenić¹
Yugoslav Cinematheque, Belgrade

THE GAZE IN THE MUSEUM OF THE YUGOSLAV CINEMATHEQUE AND IN “THE OUR MUSEUM OF FILM”

UDC 791.44:061.1(497.11)
COBISS.SR-ID 41557769
[https://doi.org/
10.18485/fdu_zr.2021.39.9](https://doi.org/10.18485/fdu_zr.2021.39.9)

Abstract

In the light of redefining the term ‘museum’, the Yugoslav Cinematheque stands out as an example of complexity when it comes to musealisation of film. Whether or not we still hold to old names as just mere signs of things past, it is a must to consider heritage beyond the names of the very institutions founded to guard it. Film as media has its unique variety of spaces to be consumed in, but at the same time, each particular space affords a different gaze to the viewer. Defining those very spaces, this paper will point out three layers of presenting the film. Using the Yugoslav Cinematheque as a case study, the paper discusses the specificities of protecting film heritage, different ways of using it and the institution itself.

Key words

musealisation of film, art museum, film museum, film archive, layers of gaze

161

Milja Jelenić

*There are as many ways of putting cinema in a museum
as there are museums of cinema.
(Cere 2021: 1)*

Redefining the term “museum”

For the purpose of understanding all the layers of musealisation of the film we must first look at the current turmoil in museology, i.e. to what has seemed to be its very foundation throughout history – the term ‘museum’ and

¹ milja.jelenic@gmail.com

its definition² which has seen few modifications since the 1970s. According to ICOM Statutes, adopted by the organization's 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August, 2007: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment."³ At the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) General Conference in Milan in 2016, a working group presented reflections on the museum definition. The following year, the Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials Committee (MDPP, 2017-2019) was appointed with the task to „systematically explore, research and observe current societal trends as they impact museums, and analyse the historic background and the epistemological roots of the museum concept“ (Sandahl 2019: v). Nearly two years later, MDPP suggested a new definition of the term 'museum'. A dispute erupted at the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto in 2019, where the acceptance of the new definition was suspended due to a number of objections. Presently, it is still unknown whether the definition and the notion of museum are going to change. As Sandahl cautions, "museums cannot be defined or understood outside the realms of societies" (Sandahl 2019: v).

On "other spaces" and three layers of gaze

*As with film theatres and cinemas, film museums are 'other spaces',
with very different rules, customs and time dimensions
to those we are accustomed to in daily life.
(Lameris, 2017: 131)*

In International Study of Film Museum Rinella Cere points out her wish to answer "a recurring question about the paradox of putting cinema in a museum, after all one could watch films in many different contexts and need not enter a museum institution to do so." (Cere 2021: 1) It can be said that after a film has finished its movie theatre life, a museum is not necessarily the only space where the film can be seen next. Most certainly and unlike for other museum objects, a museum does not have to be the first next stop for a film. When discussing film's heritage and its musealisation there are many

2 The latest definition is from 2007. For further reading about all the (adopted) changes in the term 'museum' throughout history see: François Mairesse 2019, „The Definition of the Museum: History and Issues“, *Museum International*, 71:1-2, 152-159, DOI: 10.1080/13500775.2019.1638072

3 <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/> (date accessed 22.4.2021)

different types of institutions and activities, from museums to film libraries to film archives. Some institutions encompass all three roles, others only one or two of the three. Some have very few museal activities such as exhibitions of film's artefacts, while others have more extensive ones covering many centuries of the archaeology of cinema. „Cinema is many things besides films, old and new; it is archaeology, technologies, cinephilia, auditoriums, festivals, archives and libraries, art and cultural heritage. Specific national contexts and histories are also determinants for some of these differences“ (Cere 2021: 3). Reflecting on this thought and the range of objects accompanying film, the task of defining the policy of collecting and safeguarding whether in a museum, a film museum or a film archive becomes even more difficult.

One of the more interesting examples to take a closer look at here, is the props. The complexity of musealisation of the film is well captured by Groff who observes that: „authentic props are not merely objects that surround a work of art; but are rather, they are extensions of their artistic expression. The difference between an object surrounding a piece of art and what a prop represents is that one is an article belonging to an artist, whereas the other is an article belonging to the art“ (Groff 2017: 14). An example *par excellence* of this understanding is one the most iconic firearm prop in film history – Dirty Harry's Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum. This prop „is a great example of how a prop can outgrow its source material, coming to represent something more to its culture [...] it represents the themes of its series: a principle of justice that cuts through overwrought, cumbersome niceties that often get in the way“ (Groff 2017: 14). When showing a film in a museum, a museum's mission statement plays an important role. „Fortunately, this is not a significant issue, as the art form is versatile enough to compliment most institution's goals. Large museums usually have fairly broad mission statements, servicing the public in terms of general knowledge or in the exposure of culture“ (Groff 2017: 33). There is also a question of difference in the policy of collecting, depending on the type of institution we are considering. Although in some countries films that have lived in film theatres may end up being shown in a museum (again depending on a mission), they will certainly be collected and safeguarded in a film archive or cinematheque as a result of legislation (the laws concerning keeping required copies). So, why choose the museum as the first stop when discussing how film can be consumed. „There is no specific moment to point to as a breakthrough when cinema was fully accommodated in museums. Rather, the medium gradually gained its adherents from the sixties onward, with more and more introducing cinema into their galleries. There are those who argue that cinema, even in the Art Film genre, has never

been fully accepted, and exists within something of a secondary class of arts“ (Graff 2017: 9). „In 2006, filmmaker and historian Stephen Bottomore compiled a comprehensive list of museums dedicated to cinema, finding them present in 37 countries (Bottomore 2006: 262–273). These museums usually come in two types: institutions dedicated to cinema in general, or to a specific subject (Graff 2017: 11). The issue of equipment required for screening also means differences in the gaze offered to the viewer and in relation to other musealia. To understand all the differences of the gaze, for the purpose of this paper, first let us try to explain the importance of specific space in which the film is consumed, and on the other hand the specific conditions for its safeguarding. When it comes to the gaze, in „constructing spaces of light and shadow, obscurity and visibility, the filmic text transforms the human body and the body of things into a geometry of shapes, surfaces, volumes and lines. Changing the relation of perception, cinema has changed the relation of the body – it has both embodied and disembodied the gaze” (Bruno 2007: 93).

Bearing in mind the screening requirements due to its specific medium and the troubles inherent to its presentation, now let us look at all possible spaces for the film’s consumption. Firstly, it can be in the movie theatre. However, the difference between the film in the museum and the film in the museum of film and the film in the cinematheque is the key to understanding the difference in the gaze that is offered to the viewer. The film in the museum is also an interesting point to look into, precisely because the film in the non-film museum can be utilized in various ways. Again, it can be shown in a movie theatre (if the museum has the movie theatre) or as the integral part of an exhibition. And the ways for the latter range from special darkrooms to monitors and touchscreen, etc. Film museum may be dedicated to national film or just some part of the national cinema heritage and at the same time it can show technical aspects of cinema – which is often a common denominator to all film museums. As stated above, film archives and cinematheques have a different role and because of that, the type of gaze in them is different. In the *Film, Art, New Media: Museum Without Walls?* edited by Angela Dalle Vache, François Penz discusses incorporating cinema into a museum setting (Dalle Vache 2012). Using Foucault’s theory of heterotopia as ‘other’ contested place, we can state that stepping into the realm of one of those institutions (other than film theatre at the time of film’s premiere showing) our gaze towards the same material is being changed (Foucault 1984: 48). Later on in this paper, the notion of heterotopia will be discussed using the Yugoslav Cinematheque as a specific example of one such institution.

During a three day conference “Moving Image and Institution: Cinema and the Museum in the 21st Century“ in 2011, hosted by Cambridge University’s Centre for Research in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CRASSH), the participants discussed in detail and analysed the specific relationship between cinema and museum space. Some of the raised questions were: Does the gallery space change the way in which we experience and think about cinema? What are the boundaries between artistic film and video and the traditional film institution? Which theoretical or conceptual links and historical connections can we establish between cinema as a medium and museum as space? These are just some of the questions that arise from the fruitful encounter between museum and cinema. Because only a few publications have directly explored the relation between cinematic works and the space of the museum, the topic remains a new field to be researched and discussed in the future.

Musealisation of film in the Yugoslav cinematheque

To understand the layers of the gaze given in the Yugoslav Cinematheque, first, let’s shed some light on the current situation in Serbia when it comes to protecting cultural heritage. The difference in the cultural heritage protection institutions across the country is a key to understanding the process of musealisation in the Yugoslav Cinematheque. In other words, Serbian legislation recognizes five different types of cultural heritage institutions: museum, archive, library, cinematheque and institute for the protection of immovable heritage in Serbia. First, let’s look at the history of The Yugoslav Cinematheque, followed by the opening of its departments to understand fully the complexity behind it.

The history of the Yugoslav Cinematheque

The Central Yugoslav Cinematheque was founded on August 5, 1949, by the Committee for Cinematography of the then The Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. The mission and the rulebook governing the work of the Central Yugoslav Cinematheque were signed by the then President of the Committee for The Cinematography of the Government of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, Vladislav Ribnikar, and approved by the Prime Minister of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito. The Rulebook clearly defines the task of the collection (among many others): “to collect and pre-

serve all cinematographic works produced in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, in one copy, and in case of need in a larger number, ."⁴ In former Yugoslavia each republic had its own film archive for the purpose of collecting and acquiring contemporary audio-visual works but only from production companies established in that republic. The difference between these archives is that the Yugoslav Cinematheque was established as the central federal institution in Yugoslavia at the time, with the obligation of acquiring negatives and copies of every audiovisual made in the country. During the break-up of Yugoslavia, it was transformed into an autonomous and independent institution, subsidized by the state.

Departments – archive, museum, library, HQ

The Film Archive of the Yugoslav Cinematheque, as its basic organizational unit, was founded in 1949 in Kosutnjak. The activity of the Archive is to collect, process, store, display and digitize film tape and other types of media, as well as all accompanying material related to the film – photographs, posters and leaflets, technical objects and documents related to film and film material. The archives of the Cinematheque started working with only two hundred unsorted boxes of nitrate films found in the bunkers in the Tašmajdan Cave. With the help of citizens, with acquisitions, as well as taking over new copies from domestic producers and exchanging with foreign archives, the fund grew rapidly and already in 1964. The Yugoslav Cinematheque became one of the five most important film archives in the world. Today it contains over 100,000 film copies.

The Museum of the Yugoslav Cinematheque is not a museum in the traditional sense, because it is also a film theatre. Rather, it is a museum of moving images. It was opened in 1952 in the premises of the old cinema "Kosovo" at 11 Kosovska Street. The Museum of the Cinematheque in Belgrade is a specialized film theatre where domestic and foreign films from the archives of the Yugoslav Cinematheque are shown. The films are shown daily in several consecutive screenings. Special thematic programs are often made, such that they refer to certain periods of film history or outstanding film artists: directors, actors, cinematographers, domestic and foreign. The basic obligation of every cinematheque, including the Yugoslav one, is not only to preserve, but also to systematically show the most important film works and in that way save them from oblivion and transience, and thus to work on spreading film

4 The original rulebook is now a part of archival collection of Yugoslav Film Archive

art and culture. The first step towards achieving this goal was the opening of the Museum of the Yugoslav Cinematheque, where daily film screenings were organized.

In 1951, with the dissolution of the Committee for Cinematography of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, the Central Yugoslav Cinematheque inherited the library of the Committee, a with it its librarian Olga Dobrović and the premises in Knez Mihailova street. From that moment on, the library continued to develop and became a specialized library, the only one of its kind in the country.

2014-2020: (new) permanent exhibition

The new HQ building of the Yugoslav Cinematheque is located in Uzun Mirkova Street. Due to the great historical and cultural significance of the building in Uzun Mirkova Street, the Federal Government of the Republic of Yugoslavia ceded the building to the Yugoslav Cinematheque in 1992. Due to the ruined condition of the building and its long-term rehabilitation, the Cinematheque opened the building to visitors only in 2014. This original building in Uzun Mirkova Street dates from 1846 and was erected during the reign of Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević. In the middle of the 19th century, when the hotel "Srpska kruna" or "Novo zdanje" was located there, it was also the seat of important cultural-historical and social events. The most distinguished guests stayed in the hotel. In 1869, the building in Uzun Mirkova was used for the needs of Belgrade municipality for almost a century, until the municipality moved to the newly built building on the former Marx and Engels Square, today's Nikola Pašić Square. The building of the Municipality of Belgrade was located in the area that once included the Great Market, which was the epicentre of educational and administrative life of the new capital.

The work on adapting the building to the needs of the Yugoslav Cinematheque went to the architect Pavle Vasev, who did most of the work in its interior, for which he received an award in London in 2012, while the facade remained almost unchanged.⁵ Pavle Vasev treated the interior of the building in a rather minimalist way, taking into account the calmness of the tones and

5 For further readings about the building's adaptation read in "Nova „režija“ zgrade (Jugoslovenske) Kinoteke u Beogradu", interview with an architect Pavle Vasev by Nebojša Antešević d.i.a. in 2012, available at: <https://www.gradjevinarstvo.rs/tekstovi/3209/820/nova-%E2%80%9ERezi-ja%E2%80%9C-zgrade-jugoslovenske-kinoteke-u-beogradu>

the transparency of the space, as much as possible. It was officially opened in 2011, and for the audience, after equipping and moving in, in 2014. In the beautiful interior, there are three cinema halls, a permanent exhibition, temporary exhibitions, a part of the library with a reading room and the management of the Cinematheque.

Unlike other cinematheques or film museums or film archives around the world, the Yugoslav Cinematheque has never had its own exhibition space and permanent exhibition. The Museum of the Yugoslav Cinematheque at Kosovska street was and still is another name for the film theatre in which the audience enjoyed watching movies for decades. Occasionally, due to small and inadequate space, only temporary exhibitions of film posters could be organized in the lobby. The largest organized presentation of the history of film in our country was organized with the exhibition "The Century of Film" in December 1995 in the Gallery of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA) on the occasion of the centenary of the first film screening in Belgrade and in the Balkans by the Lumière brothers.⁶ The exhibition was realized by the Yugoslav Cinematheque and the SASA. After the Cinematheque moved into the new building in Uzun Mirkova street, part of the exhibits from that exhibition were included in the old permanent exhibition.

The new building, which was given to the Yugoslav Cinematheque in 1992, became a real challenge for architects, and later for curators. Due to problems with the building's static structure and attempts of the political establishment to challenge its intended use, as many as twenty years passed until, in January 2014, the Yugoslav Cinematheque opened the doors of the new building. With the opening of the new HQ building, the Yugoslav Cinematheque received reinforcements in new film theatres and in, for the first time in its long history, a space for a permanent exhibition. Thus, we can say that the Cinematheque has enriched its exhibition activity on several levels. Unlike the old permanent exhibition, the new one incorporated film in the exhibition itself. A new gaze was offered by way of more than twenty flat-screen monitors which are now a part of the permanent exhibition. Interestingly enough, the space of the new permanent exhibition was advertised as „Our film museum“ because in Serbia there is no film museum. So, now, under the rooftop of the Yugoslav Cinematheque, we can say that there is the Museum of Yugoslav Cinematheque and there is a Film museum for the first time in Serbia, giving

6 The catalog of the exhibition, ie the scientific monograph, was written by a team of historians and theorists (edited by Kosanovic D.) and it is as important as the exhibition and to this day remains the only scientific publication on film published by SASA

the observer the chance to look at film from different perspectives and not just in the film theatre, which has been the case so far.

Layers of look in the Yugoslav Cinematheque

Bearing in mind all the departments of the Yugoslav Cinematheque, ways in which it presents film, and the difference in types of gazes each presentation offers – one begins to understand the musealisation process in the Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Do we really understand that the Museum of the Yugoslav Cinematheque is actually a film theatre, and a specific exhibition space for the most important and largest collection of film funds? No film theatre in the country is a film museum and yet the Museum of Yugoslav Cinematheque is actually a film theatre. The uniqueness of the Cinematheque film theatres lies in its the daily program. Although the Museum of Yugoslav Cinematheque is not a museum of film, but a Museum of the Cinematheque, we must be precise when defining gaze within one institution. Thus, at the museological level, the monthly program of films can be read as a sort of temporary exhibition of the Yugoslav Cinematheque. The gaze offered by the Museum of the Cinematheque is not and can not be the same as the one offered in the HQ building of the Yugoslav Cinematheque whether within a permanent or a temporary exhibition. Still, let's not forget the permanent exhibition here and the gaze within. The gaze within permanent exhibition in the HQ's new building can be read in a museological way exactly as a museum of film.

After everything stated and elaborated above I wish to point out that the Yugoslav Cinematheque, complex by nature, can be seen as a unique and rare institution founded with the mission to protect film heritage. Thinking about all the layers of gaze the spectator could have towards film – the Yugoslav Cinematheque actually possesses them all. In one institution, we have a film archive, film theatres and a museum of film combined. Needless to say, each one of these departments offers research possibilities at all levels. In addition, there is a library which apart from books houses film-making books and other film-making documents. So, in the end, through permeation of the Film Archive, the Museum of Yugoslav Cinematheque (film theatre) and the new permanent exhibition (museum of the film) we have unity. The film in the Yugoslav Cinematheque then retains its integrity, when it comes to its multifaceted presentation. And that is why it is so important to read Yugoslav

Cinematheque as a whole. Not by mere names of its departments, but as a complex multilayered institution, where all its parts are just that. Parts. Prior to any intended of the many possible gazes of a film and in an effort to invoke within the viewer all possible gazes, an institution must first and foremost collect, preserve, research, present and, finally, scrutinize film.

Bibliography

- Bartolome Herrera, Beatriz (2011) *Moving image and institution: Cinema and the museum in the 21st century*, University of Cambridge.
- Bottomore, Stephen (2006) "Cinema Museums – A Worldwide List", *Film History* 18: pp. 262–273.
- Bruno, Giuliana (2007) *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts*, Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
- Cere, Rinella (2021) *An International Study of Film Museums*, London; New York: Routledge.
- Dalle Vacche, Angela (2012) *Film, Art, New Media: Museum Without Walls?*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Foucault, Michel (1984) "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", Trans. Jay Miskowec, *Architecture/ Mouvement/ Continuité* (1984): 1-9.
- Groff, Steven (2017), "Museological Cinema: An Ideal Approach to a Modern Art Form", *Museum Studies Theses*. 11.
- Lameris, Bregt (2017) *Film Museum Practice and Film Historiography*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048526741-009>
- Mairesse, François (2019) "The Definition of the Museum: History and Issues", *Museum International*, 71:1–2, pp. 152–159.
- Sandahl, Jette (2019) "Addressing Societal Responsibilities Through Core Museum Functions and Methods: The Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials", *Museum International*, 71:1–2, iv-v, DOI: 10.1080/13500775.2019.1638016
- Van Praët, Michel (2019) "The Modernity of the Museum: Sharing and Creating Knowledge Through Confrontation with the Material Evidences of the Past and the Present", *Museum International*, 71:1-2, 38-47, DOI: 10.1080/13500775.2019.1638025.
- Zelenović, R., Gavrik, V. and Lašić, V. eds. (1995) *Век филма = The Century of Film*. Belgrade: SASA and The Yugoslav Cinematheque.

POGLED U MUZEJ(U): JUGOSLOVENSKA KINOTEKA I „NAŠ MUZEJ FILMA”

Apstrakt

U svetlu redefinisanja pojma „muzej”, Jugoslovenska kinoteka ističe se kao primer složenosti muzealizacije filma. Bez obzira držimo li se starih naziva ustanova kao pukih znakova prošlosti, baštinu moramo razmotriti nezavisno od imena onih ustanova koje su osnovane da bi je čuvale. Film kao medij nudi jedinstvenu raznolikost prostora, ali u isto vreme određeni prostor pruža drugačiji pogled posmatraču. Utvrđujući upravo te prostore, rad će ukazati na tri sloja sagledavanja filma. U isto vreme, koristeći primer Jugoslovenske kinoteke, razmotriće se specifičnost ove ustanove kada je reč o zaštiti filmskog nasleđa i različitim načinima njenog korišćenja.

Ključne reči

muzealizacija filma, umetnički muzeji, muzeji filma, filmski arhivi, slojevi pogleda