

GRAND TOUR ITALIANO: CINEMA TREASURES FROM THE ARCHIVES

(c. 1909–12, total screening time: 70 mins.)

Curated by Andrea Meneghelli, Cineteca di Bologna

This program is presented virtually on wexarts.org Feb 28–Mar 6, 2021, as part of *Cinema Revival: A Festival of Film Restoration*, organized by the Wexner Center for the Arts.

At the beginning of the 20th century, cinema offered production houses in Italy—and elsewhere—the extraordinary possibility of depicting Italy to the world and to the new citizens of the unified state, permitting everyone to go on a low cost, virtual Grand Tour. The production of “real life” Italian cinema during the early 1910s gives us the picture of a modern, industrialized country, which, at the same time, boasts the age-old traditions of its history and the incomparable artistic and natural beauty of its territory. In the ports of Genoa and Naples, while groups of foreign tourists disembark from steamboats, the docks are crowded with millions of emigrants, ready to set sail for Argentina, Canada, the United States...Italy is no longer a country for them.

Images were shot throughout Italy, from Sicily to Valle d’Aosta, from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic. The films were made by both Italian and international production houses, because the *Bel paese* (beautiful country) at once became the destination of choice for cine-camera operators sent out to capture “the Beautiful.” The operators (and their production houses) followed the lessons of the Lumière brothers, framing Italy with wisdom, using a new language written for the moving image, and with true technical know-how: manually colored images, split-screen, fixed cameras, cameras in movement... The Italy portrayed is not just that of famous places, but also of the provincial towns, of the countryside, of ancient toil and modern labor.

For 30 years, Cineteca di Bologna patiently and stubbornly collected these works from archives throughout the world and was able to put together over five hours of films that allows us to see and therefore to better understand Italy as it was 100 years ago, and, in some way, to reclaim our country.

The films arrived to us in all manner of condition; some were of excellent quality, whilst others were very badly damaged. They can be watched one after the other or following a south-north trajectory, or by selecting one of the three general themes that we have chosen (“landscapes,” “villages and cities,” “events and human activities”). Or else one may construct their own itinerary by choosing any title they desire. This is only the beginning.

These forgotten films, salvaged from film libraries throughout the world, are an authentic trip through history, destined to create a new visual library for us, freed from 20th-century stereotypes.

—Cineteca di Bologna

CHAPTER ONE: "BELLA ITALIA" OR THE INVENTION OF TOURISM

ATTRAVERSO LA SICILIA

(Piero Marelli, 191?, produced by Tiziano Film, Italy, color, 5 mins.)

A ferry unloads a train onto the Sicilian coast; steam sets it in motion, and the railway winds through barren landscapes and picturesque coastlines. In the meantime, we are shown the harvesting of seafood, the comings and goings of people at the port, and the ruins of ancient Greek settlements: Selinunte and Girgenti. The dominant colors in the film are the blue of the sea, the yellow of the sun, and a beautiful red tint that makes the grandeur of the ruins stand out against the sky.

Restored by Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin at Hagefilm laboratory from a tinted and toned positive print

EXCURSION À LA GROTTA D'AZUR

(1910, produced by Gaumont, France, color, 4 mins., German intertitles)

The steamboat the Regina Elisabetta leaves behind Naples and heads toward Sorrento and Capri. To penetrate the chromatic wonders of the Grotta Azzurra, tourists are transferred onto smaller boats. A group of street urchins keeps watch at the narrow entrance.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a positive tinted and toned print preserved at BFI National Archive and belonging to the Joye collection.

LE BELLEZZE D'ITALIA. VENEZIA

(Piero Marelli, 191?, produced by Pasquali Film, Italy, color, 5 mins.)

The third episode of the triptych *Le bellezze d'Italia* opens with a breathtaking shot: the camera moves toward the lagoon from the sea, rocking gently, immersed in a fiery red sunset; after a glimpse of Venice through its canals it returns toward the open sea to follow, together with the viewer, the night fishing boats.

Restored by Museo Nazionale del Cinema of Torino at Hagefilm laboratory from a positive tinted and toned print.

CHAPTER TWO: ITALY AT WORK

L'INDUSTRIA DELL'ARGILLA IN SICILIA

(Piero Marelli, 191?, produced by Tiziano Film, Italy, color, 5 mins.)

Near Cefalù, Sicily, during the 1910s, some clay pits were in operation. We witness different stages of the work process: from the tough extraction and transportation work to the artisan craftsmanship of the ceramists and artists who mold and decorate the items produced.

Restored by Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin at Hagefilm laboratory from a tinted and toned positive print.

EXPLOITATION DU SEL EN SICILE

(1912, produced by Milanese Film/Pathé frères, Italy/France, black and white, 5 mins., Dutch intertitles)

Watching the various stages of the extraction and treatment of salt, we see a peaceful contrast between the workers and the young lady of high society observing the educational spectacle. The finished product ends up on board a sailboat, while young and old stop to lunch on the pier.

Restored by EYE Film Institute Netherlands at Haghefilm laboratory from a positive black-and-white print belonging to Universiteitsmuseum of Groningen.

L'INDUSTRIA DEI CAPPELLI DI PAGLIA

(1911, produced by Cines, Italy, black and white, 6 mins., German intertitles)

We follow the entire manufacturing process of straw hats in Florence, from the selection of raw materials to final decoration with fancy ribbons. The beautiful finished pieces proudly display themselves, as they are neatly placed into crates, before their trip to the shop window.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a black-and-white positive print preserved at BFI National Archive and belonging to the Joye collection.

CHOKOLADEN UND BOMBONSFABRIKATION

(191?, color, 6 mins., Dutch intertitles)

The only certainty about this film is that it is of an Italian sweet factory. Which one precisely remains the subject of further investigation. Inside the building, workers knead, wrap, and decorate at a feverish pace. In front of a pile of chocolates, stuffing their mouths with great satisfaction (instead of us) are two little girls.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a tinted positive print preserved at BFI National Archive and belonging to the Joye collection.

CHAPTER THREE: FESTIVITIES AND TRAGEDIES

TREMBLEMENT DE TERRE MESSINE

(1909, produced by Pathé frères, France, black and white, 4 mins., French intertitles)

The earthquake that, on December 28, 1908, destroyed Messina and Reggio Calabria attracted droves of camera operators. We are uncertain of the identity of this film. We wander dismayed through the ruins of the Sicilian city: the port, Piazza Cairoli, the Palazzata. The townsfolk find refuge in first aid tents, search amongst the wreckage for survivors, load carts with household items, carry corpses on stretchers.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a positive black-and-white print.

LA FESTA DEI GIGLI A NOLA

(1909, produced by Cines, Italy, black and white, 1 min.)

The oldest existing moving images of the famous festival held annually in Nola, with the "gigli," enormous wooden constructions, being carried through the throbbing crowd in Piazza del Duomo.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a negative fragment belonging to the Fausto Correr collection.

IL POLENTONE A PONT CANAVESE

(produced by Cines, Italy, black and white, 7 mins., German intertitles)

In this small town in Piedmont, Carnival is celebrated with an enormous polenta feast in the square. All the townsfolk crowd around the stage and the towering pot. The zealous cooks are preparing to bring this delicate undertaking to its conclusion. The band passes by to cheer up the onlookers, perhaps already a little tipsy. The steaming polenta is finally poured out onto a long table, and in the middle of it a flag is hoisted that reads "A Gift from Rivarolo Canavese to Pont Canavese 1909." All that remains is to gorge oneself.

Restored by BFI National Archive from a tinted positive print.

CHAPTER FOUR: CITIES

NAPOLI (1911, color, 3 mins.)

This fragment is from a vintage print which brings together, in complete freedom, a variety of views of Italic beauty. The city of Naples appears very elegant when we stop in front of the National Museum in Via Foria, under Galleria Principe di Napoli, in Piazza Dante and Piazza del Plebiscito. In the popular quarters pots are fabricated in the open air and spaghetti is devoured by hand. We close on Posillipo and a profile of Vesuvius.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna and Deutsche Kinemathek at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a tinted and toned positive print preserved by Deutsche Kinemathek.

A TRAVERS LES RUINES DE LA ROME ANTIQUE

(1911, produced by Pathé Frères, France, black and white, 4 mins., Portuguese intertitles)

The remains of the Imperial Capital, from the Arch of Constantine to the Temple of Vesta, from the Appian Way to the Forum, overflowing with history but at the same time allowing itself to be traversed by the wheels of the present (carts overloaded with hay, a Royal Postal Service carriage). A wayfarer contemplates the ruins with great satisfaction.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a black and white positive print.

RICORDO DELLA SETTIMANA D'AVIAZIONE. MILANO 1910

(1910, produced by Luca Comerio, Italy, black and white, 3 mins., Italian intertitles)

The camera makes the long trip around the main square to allow the crowd, packed shoulder to shoulder and hanging off the equestrian statue of Vittorio Emanuele II, the chance to greet it. Try to spot someone not wearing a hat. Aeroplanes whizz by the cathedral spires. Or are they the result of some cinematographic trick? Aviation Week took place from September 24th to October 3rd, 1910.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a black-and-white positive print

BOLOGNA MONUMENTALE

(1912, produced by Latium Film, Italy, black and white, 5 mins., Italian intertitles)

This sightseeing tour takes in Porta Galliera, Porta Zamboni, Porta Saragozza, the porticoes (with a stop at Meloncello), the Canal delle Moline with its watermills and women washing clothes, Piazza Maggiore (back then with a statue of the king), the courtyard of Palazzo Re Enzo, Piazza Galileo, the

Arena del Sole, the Basilica of San Francesco, the Fountain of Neptune, and the Park of Montagnola. The identification of this film is probable but not verified.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna, in collaboration with Soprintendenza ai beni culturali e architettonici della Regione Emilia-Romagna, at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a positive black-and-white print.

CHAPTER FIVE: GOODBYE

SCHÖUHEITS KONKURRENZ IN DER KINDERWELT

(1909?, produced by Aquila Films, Italy, black and white and color, 5 mins., German intertitles)

This film may be *Concorso di bellezza fra bambini a Torino*, an Aquila Films production from 1909, but we are not certain. Little boys and little girls, in their best clothes (including a Red Cross nurse's uniform), do their utmost to convince the camera that they deserve the prize. But sometimes the unexpected happens, such as uncontrollable tears or a sweet that leaves a smudge on a mouth.

Restored by Cineteca di Bologna and Deutsche Kinemathek at L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory from a black-and-white and tinted positive print preserved by Deutsche Kinemathek.