

## Cinema and communication in the Montecatini Community

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### Abstract

*Though too often lately we've found ourselves watching films at home, instead of going to theatres, cinema in itself is a medium of fellowship, reminiscence and communication.*

*Starting from these premises we, as a festival, wanted to create a different way to get to experience cinema and its values, without actually involving the cinematic experience. While immersed in a global experience (the pandemic) we started to look back again to the unique differences that make us part of all the smaller communities we are involved with and how this engagement is, and can be, told by films. Those thoughts got us looking for the stories of those that, brick after brick, have built the community and its beliefs, only to remember that a community is a living thing and it evolves with its members. This path led us to think of a project called "Italian Identities – Series and memories of the communities" and he had some Tuscan high schools to join it.*

*The project consists in getting the students to know better the cinematic media and how to use it in order to tell their story as part of their community. Some professional critics, scriptwriters and directors helped in the process of filming and editing and the final result was projected at the latest edition of the Montecatini International Short Film Festival, and will also have an international distribution. Cinema was again a medium of communication, fellowship and reminiscence, but it's now seen from the other side of the camera.*

**Keywords:** Community, Cinema, Montecatini Terme, Educating village.

### Introduction

During the past few years, events have occurred that have turned the world, the way stories are told and experienced upside down. The centrality of the movie theater has given way to online platforms that over time have specialized and produced content of increasing quality; social media are among the main competitors of "classic" forms of entertainment changing the approach of users to content and making them in turn creators also of success.

If already the Montecatini International Short Film Festival was interested in new languages this situation represented for us a new challenge that we enthusiastically accepted, choosing to turn to young people to find together how, even in these new guises, cinema can be a space for sharing and dialogue.

The Montecatini Terme Film Festival has built its Identity over time, working, unceasingly, with young people. Cinema, by its nature, is capable of creating new and complex forms of language and at the same time helping young people to understand and master with a critical spirit the competitive, futuristic, digital world through which they will have to face the future. For these reasons we wanted to create equally innovative training activities.

Part of these activities are carried out in the territory, in collaboration and in agreement with the Schools, others, thanks to European projects, are carried out in Europe, and still others are carried out On Line.

A brief presentation of the Festival's activities will help the reader to better frame this project:

### The concept of the Festival

It is no coincidence that the Festival takes place in Montecatini Terme, in fact, the history of Cinema in the city has ancient origins, dating back to the first decades of the 1900s (1926), with the presence at the opening of the first Cinema Hall (Excelsior) of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, who came to Italy to promote the cinematographic works they produced in America and distributed through the United Artist, recently founded together with Charlie Chaplin and D.W. Griffith. The Festival is conceived as a laboratory and center of expressive and artistic experimentation, a place ideally devoted to the evolution of languages, comparison of genres, styles and formats that have come and gone in international film culture and production.

The Festival, which has been held in Montecatini Terme, an authoritative "City of Cinema" since 1926, has selected and screened more than 100 works made by authors from all over the world who have met in Montecatini; thanks to its reach as an international cultural event, guests, producers and filmmakers know that they will find a diverse environment in which to network, conceive new projects together and find valuable collaborators to realize their ideas. Given the excellent results of the Association's commitment to the promotion of the territory in the city of Montecatini Terme, it was decided over time to expand this commitment to other regions and cities, organizing initiatives aimed at enhancing art and the specific territory, always finding a strong rootedness of the initiatives in the social fabric on site, without neglecting the international relevance of the initiatives. Thus, in fact, projects such as film training in schools in Tuscany and Friuli Venezia Giulia, initiatives and in Florence, and film, cinema and dance, and cinema and theater campuses around Italy were born.

## Programming and Special Sections

The competition categories are culturally relevant; in fact, to the most popular film genres in Festivals (Animation, Documentary, Fiction), which being cinema are already culture in themselves, we have added other categories that allow us to embrace, within film culture, other cultural forms as well:

- *Experimental Cinema/Video Art*, usually relegated to the art world as video installations is instead a highly innovative and noteworthy type of cinema,
- *Monographs/Biographies*, are the transformation into Art of the lives of the protagonists in the Bio&Arts project whose purpose is the celebration through cinematic narration of the main, significant protagonists who have made it famous in the world and who represent it abroad spanning all areas of creativity.
- *Cinetourism and Territorial Promotion*, this last section celebrates Italy and its territories as custodians of our culture, in fact looking at landscapes and cities every detail testifies to the history that made that place what it is now, a narrative made of invasions, conquests, innovations and creativity left for posterity.

Within the Festival there are also *Special Sections* of considerable cultural depth and cross-cultural interest:

- The section dedicated to *Enterprise Cinema*, in collaboration with the National Archive of Enterprise Cinema in Ivrea. Part of the Montecatini Cinema Association's commitment to the enhancement of the territory is to highlight the value that companies produce on it, through cinematic representation. In achieving this goal, AMC draws on the support of interdisciplinary professional networks for a direct relationship with business. The Ivrea Business Cinema Historical Archive, strongly desired by the state and our natural partner, is a testimony that since its beginnings, cinema has told and celebrated the industrial realities that, as today, are part of the daily lives of citizens and have contributed to making Italy famous in the world. No medium is able to do justice to the vicissitudes and triumphs that a company faces in its history like the cinematic tale, only cinema is able to make the values of companies clearly transpire, make the ideal tangible.
- Italian Marriage in Cinema. The "*History of Italian Marriage in Cinema Project*" will be presented at MISFF 2022, among the aims of the initiative are, both the structuralist analysis in a modern key of the concept of marriage as an event, social act, collective and therefore evolutionary, and the establishment of an Archive for the preservation and valorization of the audiovisual documentation present to date on the subject in Italy. The National Archive of Social Film, produced and promoted by the Montecatini Cinema APS Association, will be the first Italian structure dedicated to the recovery, preservation and enhancement of Audiovisual and

film media dedicated to this type of social and religious event. The historical period taken into consideration goes from the immediate post-war period to the present day and, at the moment, Associazione Montecatini Cinema APS is the only organization in Italy that carries out the activity of film collection throughout the national territory and guarantees the preservation of the original audiovisual documents in adequate premises (the same national archives made with public and private funds). The collection activities, which are already underway, involve the direct involvement of authors, film culture associations, institutions and the many business organizations present throughout the country. A careful work of selection and cataloguing of audiovisual documentations from Italian regions and territories will then be carried out. Finally, a Special Award will be granted to the most deserving Film Work that combines Quality in every aspect. The awarding of the prize, will take place during the days dedicated to the sector, during the course of the Festival scheduled for the last decade of October.

- *Wine and Cinema*, in collaboration with the Association the Wine Women,
- *Italian Costume in Cinema and Art & Crafts in Cinema*, from Liberty to typical productions.

Also planned this year is an in-depth study of the figure of Giorgio Vasari, through the creation of an audiovisual and multimedia itinerary dedicated to the artist in the city of Florence, which he lived in and loved.

Finally, to add to the usual sections of the Festival, this year there will be a Focus dedicated to "Cinema & War," or that cinema that originates in areas where there are latent or overt conflicts of war. We will host focuses dedicated to Iranian Cinema, and Ukrainian Cinema, involving leading experts, to give space to the most interesting emerging directors and producers from countries torn by various forms of conflict

## Activities with schools

In addition to these activities, MISFF provides constant film culture training initiatives dedicated to high school children, through master classes and workshops throughout the year with the MISFF Academy section, which has so far involved about 300 children from various regions, in which the development of new filmmakers and their training is encouraged, putting them in contact with professionals and including them in the Festival organization. Last year's edition involved and enthused 125 young people through school projects carried out in high schools in Montecatini Terme and Udine, this year the experience will be expanded, involving schools and associations also from other regions such as: Lazio, Marche, Sicily, Abruzzo and Molise, as well as Tuscany and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, already involved in past editions. For the 2022 edition of the initiative, 300 children are expected to be involved.

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### **Italian Identities Project - Stories and Memories of Communities.**

Identity, learning and community are considered key words through the examination of which it is possible to understand the innovative scope that new online communication environments are bringing to the social, cultural and private lives of those living complex scenarios.

The project Italian Identities: History and Memory of Communities introduces children to film techniques and culture, to foster their critical reading skills and the enhancement of skills in audiovisual languages. The workshop activity involves them in the creation of a short film in all its stages, from conception, the writing of the subject and set design, the choice of locations, in-group casting, the organization of filming and set duties, to the editing and final editing of their audiovisual product. Young people learn how to shoot a film with the technological means already available to them (cell phones and cameras) and how to use them to best express themselves.

Motivated by the intention to continue to make Cinema live even away from the theaters, we have involved about 300 young people from various regions, involving them in a training course in which the development of new filmmakers and their training is encouraged, putting them in contact with professionals in the field and including them in the organization of the Festival. The past edition of the project saw 125 young people participate and become enthusiastic through school projects held in high schools in Montecatini Terme and Udine.

The youngsters participated in lectures by professionals in the field on film criticism, directing, organizing film events, subtitling films and, under the supervision of expert tutors, were encouraged to investigate the history of their places of origin, to develop techniques for recording the present through new technological and expressive means, after being involved in curricular training on film language and film workshops.

The young people were then asked to write, shoot and edit a short film on such themes as the beauty around them, the places they consider most significant in their own cities, and to tell the stories of their families, their grandparents, the ordinary stories, never told, that helped make those places so special. Digital tools are used in the training activities to support learning, with tutoring in presence, and, in accompaniment in digital environments, to develop the full creative

and innovative potential of young people. In order to provide as complete a preparation as possible, we also make use of a film training platform on which young people take a specific course free of charge on making films with their smartphones, an activity that they will put into practice to record the final video work.

In addition to the dissemination of film culture, it is also important for the Festival, the promotion of the territory, the enhancement of its history and that the boys become an active part of the socio-cultural fabric in which they live and study. To this end, the topics covered by the participants in the project concern the history of their families, the stories of the individuals who made Montecatini the city we know so well, what in their eyes is good to tell about their environment and their society, to encourage them not to take everyday beauty for granted and to new readings of the historical and human heritage that surrounds them.

The shorts were edited into a documentary that was premiered during the Montecatini International Short Film Festival evenings and then subtitled, screened and distributed abroad.

From its beginnings until today, the Montecatini International Short Film Festival constantly seeks new languages, new forms of artistic expression. This year we will develop the theme and relationship between Cinema and Theater. Cinema has placed itself in relation with theater, establishing a relationship, sometimes problematic, from both technical and narrative points of view, but still fruitful. This all-encompassing reflection, led us to develop a section of the Festival with which we want to stimulate, both the audience and the young participants in the Campuses, involving participants and novice filmmakers in the reflection about the artistic marriage between these two different forms of storytelling.

Young Campus participants will have to construct a play and film it creatively, assuming a summation of different arts, assigning each one the task of searching for an intrinsic harmony of the parts. Through this recognize the power of beauty, that aesthetic and ethical force at the same time, which transforms, transfigures and brings to fruition the fate of matter.

The young students participating in the residential campuses, will be involved in "On Line" Themed meetings will be preceded by various activities: participation in On Line courses and workshops and direct contact with Zoom or preparatory Meet Conferences.

This experience was very enriching for us and for the children and gave rise to other paths that would make evident the harmonious communication between cinema and other arts. These other paths are Campuses that will be structured as a permanent Editorial Office (full-immersion mode). Among the stated goals is the creation of a stable relationship between people, giving great recognition to teamwork. The presence of an "Editorial Line" connected to the main themes of the Festival. Each student participant, will have to put themselves on the line and face challenges proportionate to their maturity. Already experienced journalists, film critics, influencers, social

media communication managers, mentors, professors, will support the students selected for the Campuses.

Each student actively participates in the Campuses using, not only the training activities coming from the expert tutors, but also their smartphones, as a valuable tool for enhancing the territory, through their artistic expression. All works created by the Campus participants will be visible on the Festival's social channels, in movie theaters and presented on special digital platform.

## Cinema and theater

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Cultural relevance can best be argued and enhanced by innovating in the research and formation of a new art form, with the aim of proposing a continuous line that unites, even temporally, culture, art, music, Theater and Cinema.

Once again, the history of the City inspires new projects and concrete practices, which create obvious connections between past and present. Montecatini Terme has been the cradle of opera music, here have been composed, unforgettable Operas, here have produced priceless artistic values: Gioacchino Rossini, Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, Leoncavallo, Enrico Caruso, Pietro Mascagni, reconnecting us to their work here is a new original artistic production of international importance.

New proposals arise from the concrete experience of Theater Director, Maria Paola Viano, who wrote and directed the short film *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, drawing inspiration from the musical theater prototype given to us by the representative madrigal of the same name by Claudio Monteverdi (Cremona 1567-Venice 1643). This cinematic experiment is the beginning of a broader experimentation that is increasingly taking place in Italian Baroque musical theater, considering these important factors:

1. The recognition of the not only archetypal but rather desecratory and avant-garde character that, the musical theater of Claudio Monteverdi, had in the early 1600s, the time of its invention;
2. The realization that a revisitation in a cinematic sense of these masterpieces is necessary to re-propose a similar impact even today;
3. The vision of Italian-ness in a cultural sense, seen not so much as museum preservation, but as openness to the future and as a proposal for novelty.

The Festival, after a preview in the past edition, promotes research aimed at the experimentation of musical and dramaturgical languages, as well as from the transformation of the theatrical act into a cinematic act, since it is not, in our case, a mere documentation of a theatrical production. Creatively constructing a theatrical performance and filming it presupposes a summation of different arts, assigning to each the task of seeking an intrinsic harmony of the parts. Through this it is possible to recognize the power of beauty, that aesthetic and ethical force at the same time, which transforms, transfigures and brings to fruition the fate of matter.

## Cinema and dance for the enhancement of the territory

This project has the overall objective of promoting an active role in young people for the valorization of Italian heritage, combining the languages of culture, dance and cinema.

The young people involved in the project will have the necessary tools, knowledge and skills to help offer a contemporary narrative of Italy's historical and artistic heritage, through the proposal of a training course in presence (campus) and online (digital platform). Against the knowledge and skills developed, the 100 young people involved in 4 Italian cities (Montecatini, Ladispoli, Trapani and Mondovi) will produce films with cell phones, organize texts for the realization of story-telling actions able to combine and record forms and iconography of the past with the contemporary using cinema, dance and historical and artistic heritage as founding elements.

The project idea stems from the need to promote and bring young Italian youth closer to the assets of their country; the well-being of a society, in fact, is also influenced by the way of inhabiting the territory and taking care of its cultural heritage, so much so that our Constitution, mentions in its fundamental principles the protection of the landscape and the artistic and historical heritage, citing in Article 9 that "The Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific and technical research." In addition to being priceless assets, landscape and artistic-historical heritage become indicators of citizens' quality of life. In order for Article 9 to be fulfilled, it is not only necessary to bring citizens closer together, but it is essential to provide current tools, to develop skills useful for governing the present and outlining future prospects, aimed at fostering active cultural participation and strengthening a national identity.

In the current year, the European Year of Youth has been called; the initiative, launched by the European Commission, has made it possible to shine a spotlight on the importance of European youth in building a better future. Young people, thus turn out to be a great resource for the national and European territory, and in Italy there are numerous strategic national plans that invite and highlight the importance and need to bring young people and students closer to cultural activities, fostering their cultural-artistic-historical growth and

development, but also making them means and instruments of promotion and transmission of local and national cultural heritage.

### **MISFF IRS (International Road Show)**

The MISFF IRS (International Road Show) is an initiative promoted annually to promote young Italian talents in short and long films. The selected works express a strong sense of belonging and identity, the "New Style of Italian Cinema" and are characterized by the quality, creativity and originality demonstrated. The works and authors who become part of MISFF IRS are promoted nationally and internationally thanks to the collaboration with several Festivals, with Schools and Universities, Institutes of Italian Language and Culture Abroad. It is a unique opportunity to enhance and spread the new Italian cinema in the world.

### **Cinema and Identity: new virtual communities, moving towards Metaverse.**

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Part of these activities are carried out in Italy, in collaboration and in agreement with the Schools, others, thanks to European projects, are carried out in Europe, and still others are carried out On Line.

The aim is to create Virtual Cosmopolitan Communities, to facilitate Tutor-assisted knowledge and enjoyment of the different cultural environments that, thanks precisely to the Festival, may have no real boundaries. A continuous becoming between real and virtual.

The new Festival Community will be created using a part of the current Community that was formed with the Festival. Other forms of participation will be integrated, inviting Lecturers and Students from prestigious International Universities and Schools with Locations in other Nations, other Festivals and Filmmakers, researchers and experts, influencers.

We intend to develop processes of online interaction, digital identities, virtual communities, implement environments and technological tools of different types, starting from the simplest such as forums, blogs, webinars, Digital Content Platforms, to the most complex such as augmented reality or environments prepared for the metaverse.

Digital tools will be used in training activities to support learning with in-person tutoring, and, in accompaniment in digital environments, online to develop the full creative and innovative potential of young people.

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to understand the innovative scope that the new online communication environments are bringing to the social, cultural and private lives of those who live complex online scenarios.

The new Community will be a useful tool for students and teachers as well as for filmmakers and devotees of film and Visual Arts and more generally for all those interested in learning more about the dynamics of identity construction, communication and use in educational contexts of virtual environments.

To form, to become, to be new citizens, in a world without borders and apparent boundaries implies new responsibilities and new knowledge. The Festival intends to create and develop a Community organized as a Village with different roles and skills. About 1,000 new members, new virtual inhabitants, anchored in the contemporary real, will be involved in the experimental phase.

Given the excellent results of the Association's commitment to the promotion of the territory in the city of Montecatini Terme, it was decided over time to expand this commitment to other regions and cities, organizing initiatives aimed at enhancing the art and the specific territory, always finding a strong rooting of the initiatives in the social fabric on site, without neglecting the international relevance of the initiatives. Thus, in fact, projects such as film training in Tuscan and Friuli Venezia Giulia schools, initiatives and in Florence, and film, cinema and dance, and cinema and theater campuses around Italy were born.

The Montecatini Film Festival has contributed significantly to establishing Montecatini Terme as the country's film hub, along with recognizing its importance on an artistic level due to the characteristic presence of the Art Nouveau style, and on a tourist level due to the presence of the thermal springs.

### **Conclusions**

Despite constant changes over time and different modes of enjoyment, cinema has amply demonstrated that it still has much to say, especially when in communication with the other arts that came into being even before it and that have permeated it deeply since its beginnings. Our commitment in these years and in the years to come is to show young people, the audience that in Italy frequents theaters less and is less attracted to more traditional cinema, the magic that the film medium still possesses after all these years and to let them touch it with their own hands.