

Importing Asta Nielsen Cinema-Going and the Making of the Star System in the Early 1910s

International Conference: Frankfurt, German Film Museum, 27 to 29 September 2011

Organised by Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt, and Media Studies, University of Trier, in connection with KINtop. Curated by Martin Loiperdinger.



Asta Nielsen has been the first renowned female star of world cinema. Her name is inextricably connected with the advent of the long feature film and the introduction of the star system. Her films played a crucial role in the transition from short films to the long feature film as the main attraction of the programme which took place in various countries, in the years before the First World War.

Asta Nielsen's international film career started in Germany with the 'invention' of the Monopolfilm, the monopoly rental system, in late 1910. Her films were distributed within this exclusive system and received tremendous box-office records. The screen personality of the Danish actress appealed to audiences of all sorts. Branded as 'the Eleonora Duse of Film Art' she uncontestedly was the most popular film actress with German film audiences in 1913.

But was this also the case with the many countries which imported Asta Nielsen films before the First World War? How was the distribution of her films organized in those countries?

Did the Danish actress indeed attract audiences in those countries as she was able to do in Germany? And did her films also play a crucial role in establishing the long feature film format as they did in Germany?

What about the reception of her films in so many countries with different cultures and customs? How did censorship react to the provoking characters which Asta Nielsen played on screen? How did trade periodicals and daily newspapers respond to her screen personality?

And, last but not least, in which ways was Asta Nielsen on screen appropriated and received by the varied audiences of so many countries, varying not only in gender and class, but also in education, religion, and life style? Is it possible to map different patterns of audience response to Asta Nielsen films in different countries?



The conference will discuss various modes of distribution, exhibition, appropriation, and reception of Asta Nielsen within countries of all continents.

Conference fee will be 30 Euro for three days, 15 Euros for one day.

Conference fee for students will be 15 Euro and 7,50 Euro respectively.

Conference Programme

27 September

09:00 – 10:00 Registration

10:00 – 10:15 Opening of the Conference

10:15 – 12:30

Panel 1: Asta Nielsen and the Emergence of the Star System in Germany

Chair: Uli Jung (Trier)

Martin Loiperdinger (Trier):

The German Model – *Afgrunden* and the first Asta Nielsen Monopolfilm Series

Andrea Haller (Frankfurt):

Asta Nielsen, the Introduction of the Long Feature Film and Female Audiences – the Case of Mannheim

Pierre Stotzky (Metz):

The Exhibition of Asta Nielsen Films in Metz

12:30 – 14:00

Lunch

14:00 – 15:30

Panel 2: Asta Nielsen in Austria-Hungary and Poland

Chair: Nic Leonhardt (Munich)

Patric Blaser (Vienna):

Asta Nielsen in Austria-Hungary

Jakub Klíma (Brno):

Asta Nielsen in Brno

Andrzej Debski (Wrocław):

Afgrunden in Warsaw

15:30 – 16:00

Coffee Break

16:00 – 17:30

Panel 3: Asta Nielsen in Small Countries – Northern Europe

Chair: Laura Horak (Stockholm)

Anne Bachmann (Stockholm):

Public Response to Asta Nielsen's Clash with the Censorship Board in Sweden

Outi Hupaniittu (Turku):

"Three times at the censorial office and nothing to remark, for you with a special price" – *Afgrunden's* lucky escape and the new ways of promotion in Finland

18:00

Dinner

20:30 – 22:30

Cinema Lecture

Karola Gramann, Heide Schlüpmann, (Frankfurt):

Asta Nielsen – A Cinematic Phenomenon (followed by film screenings)

28 September

09:00 – 10:30

Panel 4. The First Filmstar – Asta Nielsen in Italy and Russia

Chair: Martin Loiperdinger (Trier)

Giovanni Lasi (Bologna):

Italy's First Film Star - Asta Nielsen, 'Polaris'

Lauri Piispa (Turku):

Asta Nielsen and Russian Film trade

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 – 13:00

Panel 5: Asta Nielsen in Great Britain and the US

Chair: Anke Zechner (Frankfurt)

Jon Burrows (Coventry):

"The Great Asta Nielsen", "The Shady Exclusive" and the birth of film censorship in Britain, 1911-1914'

Richard Abel (Ann Arbor):

Asta Nielsen's Flickering Stardom in the USA, 1912-1914

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00

Panel 6: The Emergence of the Long Feature Film in Denmark

Chair: John Sedgwick (London)

Caspar Tybjerg (Copenhagen):

Hjamlar Davidson, His Kosmorama Cinema, and *Afgrunden*

Isak Thorsen (Copenhagen):

The Breitung Mülleneisen Case: Nordisk Films Kompagni and Asta Nielsen

Julie Allen (Wisconsin):

Reluctant Admiration: Asta Nielsen's Conflicted Reception in Denmark

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee Break

16:30 – 17:00

Panel 7: Film Stars and Marketing Policies in the Early 1910s

Chair: Annemone Ligensa (Cologne)

Caroline Henkes (Trier):

Asta Nielsen and her Poor Female Characters of 1911

Ian Christie (London):

From Screen Personalities to Divas – Early Film Stars in Europe

19:00 Dinner

29 September

09:00 – 11:00

Panel 8: Strange Encounters – Asta Nielsen in Arabia and the Far East

Chair: Uli Jung (Trier)

Ouissal Mejri (Bologne):

Asta Nielsen and the Star System: the Foreign Influence in Egypt

Sawako Ogawa / Hiroshi Komatsu (Tokyo):

Encounters with Asta Nielsen in Japan

Stephen Bottomore (Chiang Mai):

Asta Nielsen on Eastern and Australasian Screens

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

11:30 – 13:30

Panel 9: Asta Nielsen in Small Countries – Western and Central Europe

Chair: Caroline Henkes (Trier)

Ansje van Beusekom (Utrecht):

Distributing, Programming and Recycling Asta Nielsen films in the Netherlands

Paul Lesch (Luxembourg):

"Earning the audience's unbridled applause" - Asta Nielsen in Luxembourg

Mattia Lento (Milan):

Asta Nielsen as Star in the German part of Switzerland and in Ticino

Pierre-Emmanuel Jaques (Lausanne):

Asta Nielsen in Lausanne

13:30 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00

Panel 10: Digital Tools for Comparative Research in the Emergence of the Star System

Chair: Ludwig Vogl-Bienek (Trier)

Karel Dibbets (Amsterdam):

Asta Nielsen Meets Digital Humanities

Annemone Ligensa (Cologne):

The Siegen Database

16:00 – 16:30

Coffee Break

16:30 – 17.30

Comments and Closing Discussion
