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International Archive Report: Filmoteka Narodowa and Muzeum Kinematografii w Lodzi

This paper examines the access and collection policies of two significant archives of the moving image in Poland, the Filmoteka Narodowa, based in Warsaw, and the Muzeum Kinematografii (Museum of Cinematography), based in Lodz. Both of these organizations collect and provide access to films and related literature and supporting documents but in divergent ways based on the former's status as federated film archive and the latter collection's placement in a historical museum. While both the Filmoteka and the Museum of Cinematography are nationally-funded cultural institutions meant to preserve the history of Polish cinema, each one displays a different aspect of the country's long-running history of film production and cinematographic practice and tailors the extent of public access to the materials of film history through different means.

It is perhaps useful to first briefly examine the history of film production in Poland, as the history of the country has played significantly into the current design of both archives' operations. Film production in Poland began in 1913, when Poland as a self-governing nation did not technically exist, having been partitioned into separate provinces by Prussia, Russia and Austria towards the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was not until 1918 that the country, per the demands of President Woodrow Wilson after World War I, was finally reconstituted as a unified, self-governing country. Poland's tumultuous 20<sup>th</sup> century existence is also marked, however, by the advent of Communism after WWII, which engendered a centralized film industry marked by

widespread censorship, displacement or outright destruction of film prints. The Polish fascination with film, however, begins as early as 1896 with the introduction of the Cinematograph into Poland; the first cinema opened in Lodz a few years later in 1899. Though the Polish film industry was financially weak and production was meager, the early Polish contribution to film is one of considerable importance. Warsaw-born Boleslaw Matuszewski, who worked with the Lumieres in Poland, wrote a number of pioneering film theory texts, including 1898's "Une Nouvelle Source de l'Histoire", perhaps the earliest work to stress the importance of film history and to suggest the creation of "film archives" for the study thereof.

Poland's national film archive was established in 1955 under the moniker Centralne Archiwum Filmowe (Central Film Archive). Since then, it has undergone two significant name changes, in 1970 when it was known as the Filmoteka Polska (Polish Film Archive) and in 1987, when it was given its current name, the Filmoteka Narodowe (National Film Archive). These name changes have come to reflect the reality of the archive's existence as it pertains to both its intrinsic holdings (since the archive contains a number of foreign films as well as national productions) and to its larger social context. From its inception the Filmoteka has belonged to the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF). The archive's main tasks, broadly laid out, are to preserve the history of Polish cinematography, as well as of select foreign works; to collect all known forms of documentation relating to film production; and ongoing preservation and conservation of these film historical resources.

The Filmoteka's library is divided into the following areas: films, books, periodicals, posters, promotional materials, designs, music sheets, stills, awards and diplomas and "literary materials" (e.g. screenplays, shooting scripts, edit decision lists) connected to a film's production. All of these resources, save for the films, can be readily accessed by anyone in the archive's

reading room, located at the Filmoteka. Some documents, including literary resources and posters, are stored off-site; they can be ordered by a researcher and will be made available on the following Wednesday after the request is submitted. The library currently contains over 23,000 books on cinema, all of which are retrievable through a search engine on the archive's website. (For non-Polish-speaking researchers, it is possible to search for title, author, year, publisher, keyword and language in English.) All access to library materials in the reading room is free, with the exception of newspaper cuttings and certain archival materials for which a minimal fee is charged. Students and academics "of higher education" can peruse books via inter-library loan, and occasionally books are lent to other institutions for the purposes of exhibition. Film prints, on the other hand, can only be loaned out to other institutions for non-profit screenings at venues with proper qualifications, i.e. 35mm projection with a certified trained projectionist. All rentals must be made at least two weeks in advance of the proposed screening date, and borrowing entities pay for rental and shipping costs according to the Filmoteka's price list. A part of these costs go back into conservation and storage of the film collection at the Filmoteka.

The film collection at the Filmoteka Narodowa is concentrated largely on feature films from the entirety of Polish film history, as well as foreign films which are considered cinematographically important. Other archives in Poland collect films that fall outside of this scope; for instance, the Museum of Cinematography at Lodz collects largely animated features and short films. Because of the numerous traumas Poland suffered through its 20<sup>th</sup> century existence, the reclamation of Polish film from before WWII has become a somewhat difficult and painstaking process to undertake. Many long-lost or rare films from Poland's silent era, for instance, have turned up in other countries' film archives, necessitating the repatriation of Polish cinematographic practice as one of the main goals of the film library. Currently, there are only

about 150 titles in the Filmoteka that were produced before World War II. However, since 1996, Poland has enacted a legal deposit law for all films made in the country into the Filmoteka, resulting in a much more thorough collection of films made after the war. The foreign films number about 13,000, are from countries as various as the United States, Russia, France and Senegal, and feature “historically important” work by directors such as Hitchcock, Bergman, Resnais and Antonioni, among many others. A small department of archivists is responsible for the processing, acquisition, and cataloging the film holdings of the Filmoteka, while a separate section processes the remaining library holdings. Conservation work is performed by a staff of trained archivists both on-site and at a second lab elsewhere in Warsaw; in addition, there is a conservation center in Lodz, Poland that the Filmoteka employs for preservation treatment work of films made between 1945 and 1989, the period between the end of WWII and the demise of Communist rule in Poland.

The Filmoteka calls attention to its holdings through various promotional strategies. The promotional sector of the archive is devoted to fostering partnerships with other institutions for educational and screening purposes. The Filmoteka works with universities and other organizations of higher education to help promote the teaching of film history, often through lending materials and film prints to such institutions. In addition, the archive works with film societies and clubs in Poland to help organize private screenings. The archive is furthermore involved in film production aspects as well, lending institutional and financial support to TV stations and film studios towards the production of documentary features. The Filmoteka is also devoted to the screening and exhibition of its materials, and have realized this mission through the establishment of the Iluzjon Cinema, founded in the late 1950’s. The theatre, which seats 374, holds a variety of screenings, largely of prints from their own collection, with at least one film

(and very often, two or three films) screened every day. A number of film festivals are held at the cinema throughout the year, such as the “Celebration of Silent Cinema”, and on Sunday mornings the Iluzjon Cinema hosts a screening series for young children in the early afternoon.

Further south, in central Poland, lies the Museum of Cinematography at Lodz (sometimes known in brief as the Kinomuzeum). The museum was established in 1976 in the former palace of Karol Scheibler, a 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial magnate and philanthropist from Lodz. The year before, it had been used prominently as the background to Andrzej Wajda’s film *The Promised Land*. Although the Warsaw-based Filmoteka Narodowa is the largest film archive in Poland, Lodz is still renowned as the “film capital of Poland.” It is the location of the major film academy of Poland, the National Film School, from where nearly all of the well known Polish directors in the West are alumni: Andrzej Munk, Andrzej Wajda, Roman Polanski, Krzysztof Kieslowski, and Jerzy Skolimowski, to name a few examples, in addition to some of Poland’s most renowned cinematographers. There is even a star walk similar to the one in Hollywood in front of the school, which has led people to refer to the Academy as „Holly-Lodz”. As such, the museum is primarily devoted to the exhibition of the history of cinematography – that is to say, the technologies that have shaped film production.

The collection is broken down into four main components: film history, film technology, posters and animation. The Museum also holds a film and video archive that contains about a thousand items. There is a focus on “niche” films in the collection: early Polish films, documentaries, and animation are particularly well-represented. The film history department collects the archives of many esteemed Polish directors, among them Andrzej Munk, Wojciech Has, Jan Rybkowski, and Aleksandr Ford. The collections contain correspondence, personal records, photographs, and documents relating to the directors’ life and work. It also contains the

largest archive in Poland relating to Pola Negri, Poland's most famous international silent cinema superstar. The film technology department largely comprises pre-cinema technology, being home to a considerable magic lantern collection. Among the holdings is a „fotoplastikon” from 1900 that is still fully functional and on display. Represented in the collection are a number of worldwide film equipment companies: Eastman-Kodak, Agfa, Pathe, Zeiss-Ikon, Arriflex. Additionally, there are items from Poland's own major company, Prexer, whose factory was based in Lodz. These items are not presented on a constant exposure; many of them are in very fragile condition and receive temporary exhibition space both in Poland and abroad.

The collection also includes over 12,000 posters which illustrate the history of Poland and the history of world cinema as well. Poland's reputation as one of the world's most significant contributors to poster art is adequately documented in this large collection, which includes an extensive collection of Kieslowski's film posters. This area also collects in costume design and set design for Polish feature films. Again, Kieslowski, a graduate of the school is well-represented here: the museum contains, among other items, the clothing designed by Elizabeth Radke for his films. The animation portion of the museum contains designs and drawings from Polish animated films, which includes puppets and props that demonstrate the long tradition of puppetry in Polish culture and animation. Among the treasures are the archives of Wladyslaw Starewicz, considered the pioneer of Polish animated film, including drawings and sketches for his films. The collections are represented to the public through both permanent and temporary exhibitions. The permanent exhibition largely consists of film equipment, where the temporary exhibitions often feature materials drawn from the museum's extensive archive such as drafts, scripts, scores, etc. In conjunction with these temporary exhibitions, the museum often publishes exhibition catalogs which are available for purchase at the museum.

The museum has recently begun to recognize the role of the Internet and its capacity for publicizing its holdings. A virtual museum of some of the interior spaces of the museum, as well as some of the museum's artifacts, has been established. The offerings so far are scant, and at present there is little information attached to each object, except for the name of the object and its approximate date of construction. One can click on the object to view it from any number of angles left-to-right. The Filmoteka began to move some of its content on the Internet due to a number of reasons: lack of space in the museum itself due to construction and restoration work; highlighting particularly interesting objects in the museum's collection; and as a tribute to the particular charms of the interiors of the museum and the skilled work of the craftsmen who built the chapel. The entire ground floor of the museum appears to be devoted more to the elegant and extravagant wood carvings and frescoes that adorn the palace than to any of the film equipment. The museum clarifies that the virtual tour is not meant to replace a visit to the actual establishment; it is merely meant to offer a sample of the unique architecture and the broad variety of items in its collection. There is no catalog or database of the Kinomuzeum's holdings made available to the public other than these few examples.

In addition to this online publicity, the Kinomuzeum also hosts a number of film festivals, including the Festival of Film Music, devoted to recognizing achievements in musical composition in film, and the "Czlowiek w Zagrozeniu" (People at Risk) Festival, which focuses on contemporary Polish documentaries. Like the Filmoteka, the Kinomuzeum also organizes screenings at a theater located on-site with regularly scheduled screenings that are organized by subject matter or theme. The theater, which seats 70, is actually located in the former coach house of Karol Scheibler, whose external appearance has been modified only slightly. Often, screenings are preceded by a lecture or accompanied by written information, such as brochures,

designed to give context to the particular film being screened in the larger history of national film production. The Kinomuzeum also offers special Sunday screenings to children between the ages of 3 to 10, usually animated prints from the museum's collection featuring classic Polish cartoons.

The two contrasting examples of the Filmoteka Narodowa and the Muzeum Kinematografii w Lodzi offer different strategies for how film materials are collected in Polish cultural institutions. The fragmented history of the country makes collecting a somewhat difficult process but the establishment of rigid collection policies in particular areas helps to establish each institution with a unique identity, each highlighting different facets of the rich history of Polish film production.