

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Lumière Films

Ref. No. 2004-25

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. SUMMARY

The collection nominated for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register comprises all the original films (negatives and positives) known as the Lumière films (i.e. having round perforations) and listed in the catalogue of 1,423 titles produced at the factory of the brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière. Since 18 films have been lost, the collection comprises the original films of the 1,405 Lumière titles that have been identified and restored (cf. Annex 1).

2. DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2.1 Name (person or organization)

Archives françaises du film (French film archives – AFF) of the *Centre national de la cinématographie* (National Film Centre – CNC)

2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

Custodian, restorer and preserver

2.3 Contact person(s)

Boris Todorovitch – Director of film heritage, CNC

Michelle Aubert – Deputy Director
Conservator of French film archives, CNC

Jean-Louis Cot – Head of the department responsible for cataloguing, analysis and logistics related to the AFF collections of the CNC

Robert Poupard – Head of documentary studies related to the AFF collections of the CNC

2.4 Contact details (address, phone, fax, email)

Centre national de la cinématographie

Archives françaises du film

7bis, rue Alexandre Turpault

78390 Bois d'Arcy Cedex

Tel.: 01.30.14.80.86

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Email: boris.todorovitch@cnc.fr; michelle.aubert@cnc.fr; robert.poupard@cnc.fr

3. IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

The “Lumière films” include all the films produced by cameramen working on behalf of the brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière and included in the sale lists of the Lumière factory. Study of the sale lists has made it possible to prepare a catalogue containing numbers and titles for 1,418 films. Four numbers which were missing from the French lists have been allocated from numbers found on the original Lumière boxes. The complete list therefore contains 1,422 titles, numbered from 1 to 1,400 and from 2,001 to 2,023. Since film no. 2,011 includes a no. 2,011 bis, there is therefore a total of 1,423 titles.

With the exception of 18 films (cf. Annex 2), efforts to identify the films have uncovered all the films that were produced.

The Lumière titles are linked to a serial number allocated by the AFF database. This number is used to identify all the various elements related to the particular title.

3.2 Description

The Lumière films are, on average, between 15 and 17 metres long, each containing approximately 800 photograms. A particular characteristic of these films is the round perforation in the bottom third of the image. Most of them are static shots from a single angle. Around 200 of them contain some form of cinematographic effects (still shot, zoom or special effects).

The Lumière films mainly show military events (manœuvres and parades), everyday scenes (busy streets, markets), official events (ceremonies and official journeys made by leaders), fiction (comical or historical), circus or music-hall entertainment and the Lumière family. A few films depict the world of work (industry or agriculture).

Detailed information as well as bibliographical references and the names of experts are included in the appended book and CD-ROM entitled *La production cinématographique des Frères Lumière*, published by the CNC, the Université Lumière-Lyon 2 and the National Film Library, with the expert assistance of Michelle Aubert and Jean-Claude Seguin.

4. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1 Authenticity

The fact that the films have round perforations proves that they were made using a Lumière camera. Only Lumière cameras used this type of perforation. Consequently, the authenticity of the Lumière films is indisputable because of this technical feature.

4.2 World significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability

The Lumière films have world significance for various reasons:

- The Lumière films were the first example of a phenomenon which has now spread across the globe: the public showing of film. This phenomenon, which is still popular all over the world, was launched by the Lumière cameramen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

- Although most of the Lumière films are static shots, the cameramen's inventiveness was such that they produced the first examples of cinematographic effects (zoom, editing by stopping the camera and panoramic shots).

4.3 Criteria of (a) time, (b) place, (c) people, (d) subject and theme, (e) form and style

(a) Time

More than two-thirds of the Lumière films were made between 1896 and 1900. During that time, the cameramen filmed all over the world (Europe, Asia, Africa and North America). They were therefore the first to capture the lifestyles, customs and traditions of faraway peoples (e.g. the Ainus of Japan).

(b) Place

In most countries visited by the cameramen, the Lumière films were the first films ever made and shown.

The Lumière films were made one by one, initially in and around Lyon and La Ciotat, then in Paris and the French provinces, then Italy, Switzerland, Germany, England and Spain. The cameramen subsequently visited Scandinavia (Sweden), Russia and the Mediterranean (Turkey, the Middle East, Egypt and North Africa). Finally, they went to film in the French provinces in Indo-China and Japan. They also went to North America (United States, Mexico and Canada) and Australia.

(c) People

The Lumière films provide the earliest cinematographic footage of some leading personalities (Presidents and sovereigns), some of whom died at the start of the twentieth century (Queen Victoria, King Humbert I of Italy and President Félix Faure).

(d) Subject and theme

The decision to film everyday life means that this is the oldest footage of people in the countries to which the cameramen travelled.

In Western countries, the Lumière films show people's way of life shortly before the mass advent of the car in major urban centres.

(e) Form and style

Through their research, the Lumière cameramen laid the foundations of cinematographic effects. They escaped the shackles of the static shot by creating the first travelling platforms, panoramic shots, editing by stopping the camera and special effects.

They also initiated the important film genres of the documentary and fiction.

4.4 Rarity, integrity, threat and management

(a) Rarity

All films with round perforations form part of the Lumière collection. Films with round perforations were no longer produced after the Lumière factories ceased production in 1905.

(b) Integrity

More than 96% of the Lumière films have been identified and restored. This is exceptional for films of this era, since almost 80% of silent films have been lost.

(c) Threat

Films made before the 1950s are threatened by the decomposition of the nitrate with which they were made. At present, this affects only two Lumière films. Virtually the whole collection remains perfectly intact because all the owners have always been aware of the value of these films and have stored them in optimal preservation conditions. Nevertheless, it is certain that one day the Lumière films will also begin to deteriorate.

(d) Management

In 1992, the *Archives Françaises du Film* of the *Centre national de la Cinématographie* began to identify, list and restore all the Lumière films. Once the inventory work was complete, each Lumière film was restored on polyester, with intermediary printing elements also created in order that copies could be made on film without damaging the originals. The Lumière films were also transferred on to a professional videotape for broadcast on television.

5. LEGAL INFORMATION

5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

The films are owned by the Lumière family, the exploitation of whose rights has been entrusted to the Association Frères Lumière through an exclusive order (the association is based at the *Archives françaises du film*). The *Centre national de la cinématographie* initiated and financed the restoration of the collection and accordingly received funds to cover the restoration costs. It has also been given the right to exploit the films in the cultural sector.

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)

Archives Françaises du Film
7bis, rue Alexandre Turpault
78395 Bois d'Arcy Cedex

5.3 Legal status:

(a) Category of ownership

The Lumière films are protected by artistic copyright law.

Pecuniary rights are owned until 2039 by the *Association Frères Lumière*. The CNC agreed to restore the films at a cost of €2.5 million. In return, the *Association Frères Lumière*, which manages exploitation rights on behalf of the brothers' descendants, pays to the CNC a percentage of the exploitation rights.

(b) Accessibility

The Lumière films fulfil the three accessibility criteria. Accessibility for reproduction and distribution is managed by the *Association Frères Lumière*.

(c) Copyright status

Pecuniary rights are owned until 2039 by the *Association Frères Lumière*. Non-pecuniary rights are held by the Lumière estate.

(d) Responsible administration

Centre national de la cinématographie
Direction du patrimoine cinématographique
7bis, rue Alexandre Turpault
78395 Bois d'Arcy Cedex

6. **MANAGEMENT PLAN**

6.1 Since 1992, the *Archives françaises du film* have been implementing a management plan for the Lumière films in order to fulfil its three tasks of preservation, restoration and distribution.

- Preservation: The Lumière films are stored in cells that are protected from fire by a special firebreak system. They are preserved at a constant temperature of 12 degrees and constant hygrometry of 80%. Each film is kept in a plastic box with ventilation holes. These conditions provide optimal protection of nitrate base film.
- Restoration: Since 1996, all the Lumière films have been restored on the most reliable type of film currently available, polyester.
- Distribution: The *Association Frères Lumière* manages the distribution of the Lumière films to cinemas and television.

7. **CONSULTATION**

7.1 The national committee was informed of the nomination on 5 March 2004 and the right-holder (Thierry Frémaux, President of the *Association Frères Lumière*) gave his formal agreement on 29 March 2004.

PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8. **ASSESSMENT OF RISK**

8.1 The Lumière films are exposed to the same risks as all nitrate-based films, i.e. irreversible degradation of the film. However, this has not yet affected these films because they have been preserved in favourable conditions.

Since the films are highly inflammable, they are also vulnerable to accidental fire. As the films are stored in separate fire-resistant cells, this risk is kept to a minimum.

9. **ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION**

9.1 The Lumière films are stored in cells that are protected from fire by a special firebreak system. They are preserved at a constant temperature of 12 degrees and constant hygrometry of 80%. Each film is kept in a plastic box with ventilation holes. These conditions provide optimal protection of nitrate-based film.

PART C – LODGEMENT

This nomination is lodged by:

(Name) Boris Todorovitch

(Signature)

(Date) 27 April 2004