

1920's french avant- garde film movement essay sample



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The avant-garde cinema defies custom of the Hollywood narrative. It is called "the art, experimental, independent film". This avant-garde films challenge to the main current in commercial films. Especially, 1920's movements of the avant-garde film emerged as a strong part of the art culture in Europe. For instance, the Dadaism and the abstract film seek extremely abstract and emotional images. Also, the impression and the surrealism express subjective conscious and psychological condition through images.

When talking about the avant-garde cinema in general it is important to understand the meaning of the word avant-garde, which originates from the military and indicates the army in the forefront. In art film, the avant-garde can be understood as those in the forefront of creative innovation. Being in the forefront of creative innovation also means to move away from the mainstream. In the case of 1920's avant-garde cinema, the influence of mainstream high art such as ballet, poetry, painting, literature was present, but more important was a love, or fascination, for so called low arts, including the circus, Hollywood silent comedies. As described in *Avant-garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions*," thus in many ways the avant-gardes saw their role being both in opposition to high art and attempting to displace it, to become a new 'high art' so to speak." (O'Pray, 2003), There was a desire to find a place for cinema as an art form,

"and to that end it explored the idea of a 'pure cinema'. (Ibid), This was done by following the neo-impressionists' claim that "a painting, before all else, is a flat surface covered with colour" (Rees, 1997), and thus seeing a film as a strip of transparent material before all else. Others worked towards

a pure cinema by looking back on the primitive narrative mainstream before " it was sullied by realism." (Ibid)

In political, economical parts of 1920's France, it was hard time to filmmakers. After the World of War I, French filmmakers had a crippling impact on their film industries by being conscripted into the army and stopping making films. However, main big companies, Pathe Freres and Leon Gaumont, had their chains of movie theaters. They needed films for screening to save their film companies, so a number of Hollywood films came into French film industry from 1915. American films began to dominate French film markets in 1917 and they had octuple as French spectators as French filmmakers in 1920. In this situation, French filmmakers tried a lot of ways to take back spectators such as, the imitation of Hollywood production and genres, experimental films. That is why they sought avant-garde movements and developed it. These French experimental films were established by Emile Cohl and Jean Durand. Particularly, their experimental accesses made to understand spectators by using easy media and source relatively. Then, French experimental films were developed and affected by new technologies and different avant-garde movements such as, the Dadaism, the Impressionism, the Surrealism.

In the Dadaism is sort of anti-mechanic civilization, irrationalism, anarchism art movements. There are representative films of French Dadaist, Man Ray (The Return to Reason, 1923), Rene Clair (Entracte, 1926), Fernand Leger (Ballet Mecanique, 1924). Most of them refused Hollywood narrative plots and continuity edits and manipulated films, and also enjoyed abstract images. Especially, there are a lot of close up shots of machines, figures and <https://assignbuster.com/1920s-french-avant-garde-film-movement-essay-sample/>

numbers, which have meanings of symbolism in Ballet Mecanique. Also, the brilliant effect of kaleidoscope made images more abstract film and repetitive images seem to show the industrial situation of the time as an anti-mechanic civilization person.

In French Impressionism, it was against Hollywood narrative formats. This movement was leaded by Abel Gance, Louis Delluc, Gremaigne Dulac, Marcel L'herbier, Jean Epstein from 1918 to 1928. They claimed that their films had an only artistic and were different with other movies, literature, theater. Specially, they emphasized the power of visual images through 'Photogenie', the theory about the photography and the idea. Their films mainly dealt with personal emotion, psychology, inner sides and focused on subjective mind of characters like a dream, delusion. In La roué (1922, Able Gance), a lot of close up shots cut into another character's close up shots when the character had dangerous situation on the cliff with his wife. This speedy montage made a tension though it was not continuity and also their expressions and acting were exaggerated. It was enough to appeal spectators and creative.

In the Surrealism, according to Lois Giannetti(1990), " The Surrealist were artful less than Dadaismists, but more than realistic. They depended on the film technology less than Dadaismists. Then, they chose the way to deviate characters". For example, in ' Un Chien Analou'(Luis Bunuel, 1924), a man cut eyes of a woman and put a dead donkey on a piano, see a lot of ants on his hand. These shots are illogical, deviant and impulsive list of images. That is unconscious and inner mind's world.

In 1930, French avant-garde film movement began to decline in prosperity since the Great Depression and arriving the sound film. Most of experimental filmmakers could not afford to product expensive sound films and also their extremely subjective, difficult styles were not accepted by spectators.

However, 1920's avant-garde films influenced on some great filmmakers, Alfred Hitchcock, Eleanora Derenkowsky, David Lynch in the future.

Bibliography:

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