

A MOMENT WITH IRÈNE JACOB

President of the Institut Lumière

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What makes a film timeless?

Irène Jacob: "What's quite astonishing is that there are films which are deeply personal. When films are made with genuine sincerity and from a deeply personal perspective, they transcend eras and borders to become timeless. They can be seen anywhere in the world and resonate with audiences in a deeply personal way."

There is also something tied to a film's inventiveness, because that, too, is personal: being inventive, creating images, finding a way to tell a story, speaking about ourselves or about the world. When a film is inventive, it has a youthfulness to it; it creates something new. And creating something new is what stands the test of time.

I think when you watch a film like "*Metropolis*", or films by Godard, Méliès, or Alice Guy, you are captivated by their inventiveness, their freshness, their desire to tell stories, and you recognise yourself in them, just as we do today!"

Why is it important to pass on the history of cinema to future generations?

I.J.: "In our homes, we always have photos of our grandparents, great-grandparents. The story of where we come from has always mattered in family albums. When we walk into a library, we are delighted to find a book by Balzac or Montaigne. And when you wander around a city, you feel reassured to see how different eras are layered on upon the other there too."

In cinema, and of course especially at the Institut Lumière, our mission is to bring the past into the present, and to pass on this heritage to future generations, and to make sure that the adventure continues and remains a promise kept!"

What is the strength of the Institut and Festival Lumière?

I.J.: "The secret behind this transmission, at least at the Institut Lumière, is truly a combination of great expertise, a deep love of cinema, and a commitment to public service. Thierry Frémaux and his entire team have rolled it out in an incredibly inventive way, making transmission something very festive. Films are always introduced by new directors, the audience feels invited. And the Lumière archive films suddenly become the latest new release..."

It's a way of bringing the archives out of the cellar. Because all the screenings at the Institute, and all the films are introduced by someone. That's part of the Institute's particular DNA, and it means that it's always an exchange, an encounter with the present as well as an encounter with the past."

Which of today's films will become tomorrow's classics?

I.J.: "This year, for example, *"All of a sudden"*; last year *"It was just an accident"*, *"Anatomy of a fall"* ... It's true that these were award-winning films. *"Souleymane's story"*, *"The Animal Kingdom"* ... I'm sure I'm forgetting some, but these are films that have spoken about something in a different way, and that I actually found deeply moving.."

Which films would you pass on to audiences in 2126?

I.J.: "Just one film would be really hard... I would be tempted to say two films, simply because they are so very different. *"La Strada"* by Fellini: a film that somehow endures. A cinematic DNA, the human strength that can emerge from it, the meeting of acting, the poetry of despair, a sense of wonder... And then *"The Great Dictator"* by Chaplin.

These are films with a very wide range. With Chaplin, there is the visionary, the courage to make this film about a dictator at that time, in the midst of the war. But also the poetry, the humour, the clown, the music... He's an inventor, a magician of cinema. It's all so subjective, it could obviously change, but I must say that for me, these are films that I find truly seminal."

