

Conference Report

‘Staging Canada at Expo67: Nationalism in the Crucible of Globalization (Film, Performance, Analysis)’

Institute of Light, Hackney; IMLR; King’s College London;
BFI, 1–4 November 2017

In the year of the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation and the 50th anniversary of the most successful World’s Fair of the twentieth century, Craig Moyes, Director of the Centre for Quebec and French Canadian Studies (IMLR, University of London), and Steven Palmer (Department of History, University of Windsor) hosted a widely acclaimed four-day interdisciplinary symposium at multiple locations across London.

The first two days (1 and 2 November) took place at Hackney’s Institute of Light, a 1960s-style cinema located under the railway arches by London Fields. Both days were well attended by delegates and members of the public. Day one was dedicated to the youth culture of 1967 and the Expo’s ‘Pavillon de la Jeunesse’. The event opened with a video introduction by legendary Québécois director Jacques Godbout, followed by a screening of his ‘film de gogo-vérité’, *Kid Sentiment*. A round-table discussion with original staff of the Youth Pavilion, Yves Laferrière and Monique Simard, was hosted by film-makers Denis Chouinard and Caroline Martel. The day concluded with the UK première of Guylaine Maroist’s ‘documentary thriller’, *Expo67: Mission Impossible*, framed by a café-concert by Martin Aubin and Jessica Pruneau performing a bilingual set of hits from 1967.

Day two focused on Québécois and indigenous (national/nationalist) cultures through a mini film festival sponsored by the Cinémathèque québécoise, including 1960s films by Michel Brault, Michel Régnier, Willie Dunn, Gilles Groulx, Mike Mitchell, Jacques Godbout, and Françoise Bujold. Governor-General’s award winner Jean-Philippe Warren (Concordia University) gave the first keynote lecture on the culture of 1967 and the day closed with a reception and a live performance of Gordon Lightfoot’s ‘Canadian Railroad Trilogy’ (originally commissioned for the 1967 Centennial) by Ontario musician Ron Leary. Day three took place at the IMLR in Senate House with a full day of plenary sessions on Expo67 and World Exhibitions, including papers by Craig

Moyes (KCL), Jocelyn Létourneau (Laval), Bill Marshall (Stirling), Heesok Chang (Vassar), Joy Knoblauch (Michigan), Peter Scriver (Adelaide), John Gold (Oxford Brookes), Mike Darroch (Windsor), Johanne Sloan (Concordia), Denis Chouinard (UQÀM), and Will Straw (McGill). The conference dinner was generously sponsored by the Délégation générale du Québec à Londres, and attended by the new Agent General, Mr John Anthony Coleman.

The final day began at King's College London with sessions dedicated first to indigenous culture at Expo67 (Ruth Phillips, Carleton; Linda Grussani, Canadian Museum of History), then to the audiovisual culture of Expo67 (Janine Marchessault, York; Monika Kin Gagnon, Concordia; Yuval Sagiv, York; Scott Birdwise, York; Guillaume Lafleur, Cinémathèque québécoise; Caroline Martel, Concordia), and finally to the avant-garde medical film-making pioneered by Robert Cordier for Expo's *Meditheatre* (Kirsten Ostherr, Rice; Steven Palmer, Windsor). The academic programme culminated in a newly commissioned performance piece by Gilda Stillbäck to accompany Cordier's film *Miracles in Modern Medicine*, attended by Mr Cordier himself.

The symposium concluded with a special programme of experimental Expo67 films at the BFI Southbank, including rarely seen competition winners from 1967 provided by the Cinémathèque québécoise, remastered copies of audiovisual experiments provided by CinémaEXPO67, and new works by Ian Helliwell (*Expo67 – An Audiovisual Collage*) and Phil Hoffman and Eva Kolcze (*By the Time We Got to Expo*). The conference organizers are grateful to the following sponsors for their generous support: Association internationale des études québécoises (AIEQ); Baizdon; British Film Institute; Canada-UK Foundation; Cassal Endowment Fund; Cinema Expo67; Cinémathèque québécoise; Institute of Modern Languages Research (School of Advanced Study, University of London); The Modern Languages Research Initiatives Fund (King's College London); La Chaire René Malo (Université du Québec à Montréal); La Délégation générale du Québec à Londres; Library and Archives Canada; Louis Latour Agencies; Results Direct; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC); The James McGill Chair in Urban Media Studies; University of Windsor.

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