

Fellows



Antonia Lant

IFK_Visiting Fellow

Duration of fellowship

01. March 2005 bis 30. June 2005

Antonia Lant

PROJECT TITLE

The New Hieroglyphics: Time and Articulation in the Silent Cinema

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Two, contrasting popular conceptions of hieroglyphics were in circulation as the new medium of cinema emerged. Commentators drew on both to explain cinema's special power. The first emphasized cinema's expertise at converting events into a universally perceptible language of pictures. The cinema suited "the incapacity of the eye-minded public for abstraction," providing it with a directly accessible account based in cinema's verisimilitude. This way of thinking tallied with the widespread championing of cinema as the world's ambassador. The second notion drew on the strenuous hunt to decode hieroglyphics, as well as on Egypt's general association with the occult. Here cinema's moving sequences of images and words suggested clues to be deciphered. Kracauer describes the cinema as hieroglyphic in this sense - he excavates the surface hieroglyphs of Weimarfilms to reveal the psychological tendencies of the latter's audiences.

Antonia Lant's research investigates the varied and Contradictory life of the hieroglyph within silent cinema. She studies egyptomania on screen, and analyses film writings, and texts by Freud, Riegl, Neurath, Mach, and the Austrian Esperanto circle, to suggest how and why the hieroglyphic analogy came to the aid of so many thinkers. A fascination with Egypt shaped multiple dimensions of modern urban life, from commercial product design to arguments about ornament. The network of cultural uses of the hieroglyph points to a crucial and extended artistic and intellectual effort to specify how artworks (and other complex processes, like dreaming) are structured, as well as how they can be investigated and understood. The hieroglyph was a powerful turn-of-the-century theory of representation, a means to aesthetic conceptualization.

CV

Associate Professor at the Department of Cinema Studies, New York University

Publications

U.a. *Blackout: Reinventing Women for Wartime British Cinema*, Princeton 1991; *The Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writings on the Cinema, The First Fifty Years*, London/New York 2005 (forthcoming).