

Segundo de Chomón. El alquimista impasible y su cine de fantasía

The exhibition will be opened at LABoral from Friday 25 February until 23 May

LABoral will inaugurate on Friday, 25th of February, *Segundo de Chomón. El alquimista impasible y su cine de fantasía* [The Impassive Alchemist and His Fantasy Cinema], an exhibition which pays a tribute to experimental and independent cinema. This exhibition is not addressing as an alternative to mainstream cinema. The idea is to redefine it from practices running against the grain, uncovering a whole world of film from approaches more akin to painting, music or essay. We all know who the Lumière Brothers were, but very few of us have heard of Segundo de Chomón (Teruel, 1871 - Paris, 1929), a Spaniard who was one of first directors of silent movies.

A pioneer of Spanish cinema, his vast imagination was focused entirely on developing the new medium. He founded Macaya y Carro, Spain's first production company, as well as a colouring and lettering workshop where he experimented with early scientific films. In Spain he was the creator of the "Zarzuela" genre in cinema. A film director, an expert in lighting and photography and also in effects and processing, a pioneer of fantasy and animation cinema, Chomón was one of the most important -and exciting- players in the first 30 years in the history of film.

El alquimista impasible y su cine de fantasía is curated by the Asturian artist, Roberto Lorenzo and will be opened until the 23rd of May 2011 in LABoral's Sala de Columnas. The show includes some of De Chomón's best films as *Le plongeur fantastique* [Diver Fantasy], *La maison ensorcelée* [The House of Ghosts], *Le spectre rouge* [The Red Spectre], *El hotel eléctrico* [The Electric Hotel], *Voyage sur Jupiter* [A Trip to Jupiter], *Une excursion incohérente* [Traveler's Nightmare], y *Le troubadour* [The Troubadour] (set to music especially produced by Juan Prieto [Akasha] and Roberto Lorenzo [Rob Loren]). Also, the report *Cinematógrafo 1900* [a tribute to Segundo Chomón] will be screened. Also, the artwork created by Roberto Lorenzo in tribute to the film director, entitled *Las palomas de Chomón* (2010-2011) [Chomón's Doves], will be shown. The work includes a video filmed in the Musée du Louvre's gardens in Paris

where De Chomón would often walk, along with sound produced by the Asturian artist.

Together with his fellow Aragonese filmmaker Luis Buñuel, Segundo de Chomón (Teruel, 1871 - Paris, 1929) is one of the foremost Spanish names in the history of cinema, working in over 500 films both in Spain and abroad. A cosmopolitan, multifaceted creator, Segundo de Chomón studied engineering, but his professional life took a complete turn between 1895 and 1897 following a trip to Paris. There he discovered cinema, the spectacular invention by the Lumière brothers. Fascinated by the new idiom he soon became one of the key figures in the origins and development of the early film industry, and was hired by the major film companies of the time -the Pathé Frères laboratories (France) or Itala Films (Italy)- where he worked as a technician in big movies such as *Vittoria o morte* (1913) and *Cabiria* (1914), by Giovanni Pastrone and *Napoleon* (1927), by Abel Gance.

Segundo de Chomón was conversant with almost all the different processes involved in the creation of a movie, like hand colouring black and white stills, signwriting for posters, a camera operator, director of photography, film editor, producer, scriptwriter, director and, very especially, as a director of special effects. It was in this last-named area that he received greatest international recognition, thanks to the enormous repertoire of effects he conceived, invented and developed, for instance the use of tracking shots in indoor sets (*Life and Passion of Jesus Christ*, F. Zecca, 1907), the use of scale models (he made his own camera and filmed a movie using this effect, his short from 1902 *Collision of Trains*), Schüfftan effects, double exposure, expressionist lighting, dissolves, transparent backdrops, pyrotechnics and the spectacular use of speed in “paso de manivela”, or stop motion, which he experimented with in *Eclipse de sol* (1905) and perfected in the wonderful piece *El Hotel eléctrico* from 1905 (filmed still by still and surely a source of inspiration for the famous *The Haunted Hotel*, 1908, by Stuart Blackton). He also contributed to the creation of a solid film industry in Spain, in which he was active at the beginning of the 20th century with the Catalan production company Hispano Films before joining up with Joan Fuster Garí to create an extensive filmography in popular genres: documentaries, fantasy, melodramas, historical dramas, zarzuelas and comedies. Equally noteworthy are his collaborations with renowned Spanish directors like Benito Perojo (*El negro que tenía el alma blanca*, 1927).

In short, Segundo de Chomón is one of the seminal names in the history of cinema thanks to his contribution to the development of cinematographic art during the silent era. He is one of the few filmmakers able to compete with the genius of the great Georges Méliès or with US superstars like D. W. Griffith.

FACT SHEET**Dates:** 25.02.2011-23.05.2011**Curator:** Roberto Lorenzo

He is a multimedia artist, teacher and audiovisual researcher living in Oviedo. He works on multimedia and video projects as a freelance artist, and as a VJ (under the name Rob Loren) in some of the most outstanding festivals in Spain. He graduated in Graphic Design from the School of Arts of Oviedo and studied CAD at the School of Engineering and Design of Llanera. Roberto Lorenzo not only works on visual works for electronic music events, but he has also helped to promote the generic space of creative possibilities interconnecting images, movement and music. He received a grant from Cajastur, and was also awarded with a touring solo exhibition in its various exhibition halls, together with an installation at the Centro de Cultura Antigo Instituto de Gijón and group shows at the Galería Vértice in Oviedo and Espacio Líquido in Gijón. The organization of the annual festival of art and new tendencies Visionica, in LABoral, is one of his most personal projects so far.

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Segundo de Chomón. *Hotel eléctrico*, 1908



Segundo de Chomón. *Una excursión incoherente*, 1909



Segundo de Chomón. *Metamorfosis*, 1912