



## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

60th Anniversary Screening: **Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb** + Q&A with Armando Iannucci, Sean Foley and Steve Coogan

Thu 26 Sep 18:10

Funday Workshop: **Wallace & Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit**

Sun 29 Sep 10:30

Funday: **Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit** + intro by Nick Park and Merlin

Crossingham

Sun 29 Sep 12:00

Nick Park and Merlin Crossingham in

Conversation

Sun 29 Sep 14:15

TV Preview: **The Life and Deaths of Christopher Lee** + Q&A with Peter Serafinowicz, director Jon Spira, producer Hank Starrs and Christopher Lee's biographer Jonathan Rigby

Tue 1 Oct 18:00

## REGULAR PROGRAMME

Experimenta: **Film Repatriation and New Relational Possibilities: An Illustrated Talk by Xavier Pillai**

Wed 25 Sep 18:15

African Odysseys: **Claude McKay, from Harlem to Marseille** + intro and panel discussion (guests tbc) hosted by actor-director **Burt Caesar**

Sat 28 Sep 14:00

Relaxed Screening: **This Is Going to Be Big** + discussion

Mon 30 Sep 18:10

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## EXPERIMENTA

# Film Repatriation and New Relational Possibilities: An Illustrated Talk by Xavier Pillai

Film heritage is now considered part of broader calls for the restitution of heritage objects. Unlike other cultural artifacts, however, film is an industrial art, which during the colonial era was disseminated via colonial film units, binding audiovisual culture and heritage to the colonial project. The continued dependency of post-colonial cinemas on European labs and post-production facilities perpetuated the colonial relationship. As labs and related facilities collapsed, materials were offered to Western archives and heritage institutions, which thus became enduringly entangled with the film histories of formerly colonised polities.

One case in point is the collection of the Government Film Unit of Trinidad and Tobago. This collection reached the British Film Institute while the institution was midway through a mass cataloguing project. A quick decision was made to split the collection between pre- and post-independence work, with post-independence material made by the Trinidadian film unit being returned to Trinidad over ten years. The Associated Press archives acquired the OFTV collections from other nations.

This chapter reconstructs and critically examines the circumstances that led to the only documented incidence of film repatriation from the BFI to an archive of the Global South. By compiling reflections from workers at both archives, the author posits the importance of institutional memory in facilitating and conducting repatriation work. These historical experiences then guide a proposal for a collaborative model for shared heritage through cross-cultural collaboration.

In Felwine Sarr and Benedicte Savoy's *Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics*, the authors elucidate the potential of returning heritage materials to restructure the world, thus creating new social relations between the historically colonised and their colonisers. This report does not distinguish between audiovisual culture and intangible or tangible forms of heritage (such as artefacts). The return of audiovisual material can lead to many of the same relational outcomes that are the primary focus of Sarr and Savoy's paper. The origins of audiovisual heritage and culture are bound to the colonial project from inception; as a legacy of this, audiovisual material is constituted in a category we would deem 'shared Heritage.' Unlike other heritage objects, film was disseminated by colonial power, for instance, via colonial film units initiated by Britain. These 'instructive' newsreels centred around development in the mid-20th century pre-independence era. Colonised nations were incorporated into filmmaking for the first time to decentralise the colonial film output, and many colonial film units were eventually taken over by post-independence nations. These films were developed in Western labs and, as a result, film archives in the West are transnationally linked to the film histories of other nations: as labs and related post-production facilities collapsed, materials were offered – due to proximity or pre-existing relationships – to Western archives and heritage institutions.

This practice report will reflect on the history of the Overseas Film and Television Centre (OFTVC) and the eventual repatriation of material to the ownership of the state of Trinidad and Tobago by the British Film Institute (BFI).

## SIGHT AND SOUND

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Index:

Acronyms:

BFI - British Film Institute

AP - Associated Press

HLF - Heritage Lottery Fund

NATT - National Archives Trinidad & Tobago

NFTVA - National Film and Television Archive

OFTVC - Overseas Film and Television Centre

T&T - Trinidad and Tobago

WALCO - Wilfred A. Lee Company

Locations of interest:

Iron Mountain - A storage and facilities company in London

Note: Throughout the lecture, the terms National Film Library (from 1935), National Film Archive (from 1955), National Film and Television Archive (from 1992) and BFI National Archive (from 2006) are used chronologically to refer to the same institution, reflecting the era and name of the BFI National Archive.

The paper that accompanies this presentation will be published as part of the edited volume *Restitution and the Moving Image: On the Politics and Ethics of Global Audiovisual Archiving*, eds. Nikolaus Perneckzy and Cecilia Valenti (Amsterdam University Press).

### Speakers:

**Xavier Alexandre Pillai** is a curator and programmer at the BFI, a writer and a trustee at LUX Moving Image, based in London. He has curated on large public access projects like BFI Replay and is co-curator of a project on the Black and South Asian workshops. His research focuses on the issues of restitution and repatriation in film, manifested in a paper presented at the FIAF Global Symposium in 2024 and a curated film programme, 'Restitution in Motion: The Call for the Return of Cultural Property', in 2023 for the Independent Cinema Office. He has programmed for the London Film Festival, the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival and has written for publications as diverse as *Sight and Sound* and *UltraDogme*. He can be found online at @Xavi\_\_\_\_a.

**Onyeka Igwe** is a London born, and based, moving image artist and researcher. Her work is aimed at the question: how do we live together? Not to provide a rigid answer as such, but to pull apart the nuances of mutuality, co-existence and multiplicity. Onyeka's practice figures sensorial, spatial and counter-hegemonic ways of knowing as central to that task. For her, the body, archives and narratives both oral and textual act as a mode of enquiry that makes possible the exposition of overlooked histories. Her works have been shown in the UK and internationally at film festivals, in galleries, museums and at biennals.

**Arike Oke** joined the BFI in the new role of Executive Director of Knowledge and Collections in January 2022. Prior to the BFI Arike was the Managing Director for Black Cultural Archives, the home of Black British history. She's worked in heritage across the UK from the seminal Connecting Histories project in Birmingham, collections development for Wellcome, and co-convening Hull's first official Black History Month. Formerly Co-Chair of the Association of Performing Arts Collections, she has advised the National Archives, BAFTA and the UK government. She is a fellow of the Arts Council's Museums and Resilient Leadership programme, a trustee of iniva, and is published by Hachette, Tate, and in various journals and magazines.