Film festivals: history and theory of a European phenomenon that became a global network

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Citation for published version (APA):
de Valck, M. (2006). Film festivals: history and theory of a European phenomenon that became a global network Amsterdam: ASCA
Acknowledgements

I have always liked reading academic acknowledgements. They allow a peep look in the research process, add a personal touch and bring the author down to the reassuring level of an ordinary person struggling to complete a demanding task. Most acknowledgements are in fact unabashedly generic. They meet the reader's dramatic expectations by turning the process into a mythical quest and the author into a heroic – albeit humble and humane – protagonist who has only been able to overcome adversities and fulfil his/her mission thanks to the support of a legion of family, friends and colleagues. Each one of the “helpers” in its turn is properly acknowledged with a couple of warm words. Cleary, the pleasure of reading acknowledgements is related to redundancy, to teleology and to the emotional impact of the address.

Writing acknowledgments, however, is nothing like reading them. The same formulaic structure that always gives me pleasure in reading now obstructs my writing. It seems weird to have spent more than 200 pages deconstructing among other things the primacy of human agency, only to make a quick U-turn when it comes to the acknowledgments. Did Latour not teach me not to distinguish between subjects and objects? Ought I not extend this lesson to my acknowledgements as well? One thing is sure, the actors that have made my network successful the past four years are many and include all the usual suspects as well as less conventional entities. So let me start by thanking my red dress that lifted my spirits at numerous festival parties, acknowledge the soothing effect of riding my bike through picturesque Amsterdam, and mention all those chance encounters with wonderful people who energized and amazed me. Let me begin by thanking seizing the moment.

Having said that, I’ll stop trying to be original, stop being academic about my need to overcome redundancy and teleology, and let my emotions take the better of me.

The first person I would like to thank is my promoter Thomas Elsaesser, who gave me the opportunity to do research and provided a climate of great intellectual challenges that will continue to inspire me and set my standards high. I also want to thank the Cinema Europe research group that not only gave me academic peer group support but valuable friendship and lots of laughter. I consider myself lucky to be part of the Department of Media Studies and thank all my colleagues for being the passionate professionals one wishes every department would have.

I thank ASCA, Mieke Bal, Eloè Kingma and Jantine van Gogh. They gave me a warm welcome in the research institute that feels like an extended family. Thank you, dear ASCA PhD candidates, for fusing academia and bohemia,
blurring seriousness with sociability, and introducing me to the acquired taste of an original cocktail mix.

My special appreciation goes to Dudley Andrew, José van Dijck, Patricia Pisters, Jan Simons and Renée van de Vall, who honoured me by accepting the invitation to serve on my promotion committee. I also want to thank those who helped me with comments, close reading and/or translations: Dorothee Verdaasdonk, Peter van Bueren, Frank van Vree, Ward Rennen, Tarja Laine, Malte Hagener, Floris Paalman, Sylvia Mieszkowski, Itay Sapir and Guido Vitello. I thank Saskia Lourens for doing all the copy-editing and Ineke Teeninga for the designs.

Various film festivals and organisations have been most cooperative in my research by providing me accreditation and/or access. I thank – in chronological order – the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, the European Festival on Wheels, the Arab Film Festival Rotterdam, het Joods Film Festival Amsterdam, Film by the Sea, the Berlinale, the Istanbul International Film Festival, the Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Cinematografico, the Thessaloniki International Film Festival, the Cannes Film Festival and the Maurits Binger Film Institute.

Of vital importance throughout the dissertation years were my friends and family outside academia, who helped me keep my feet on the ground while being genuinely interested in my endeavours in that odd parallel world. You gave me unconditional support, enjoyment and love. I thank you all for being the sweet persons you are! It is to my parents and sister that I dedicate this book, because words simply fail to express what you mean to me.

Marijke de Valck
Amsterdam, March 2006