THE CONSIDERATION OF VISUAL ASPECTS OF
ART IN MOTION PICTURE AWARDS

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THE CONSIDERATION OF VISUAL ASPECTS OF ART IN MOTION PICTURE AWARDS

THESIS

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By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Although motion pictures may be as good percentage-wise as they have been since the birth of the industry, it is open to question whether they are "better than ever," as the industry would have one believe. It seems to many that advancement in art in motion pictures has not been made in direct proportion to the advancement in motion-picture techniques and the number of pictures produced.

The writer, who, as an art student, has a special interest in the visual qualities of motion picture art, has undertaken to investigate the extent to which the visual aspect of art was outstanding in motion pictures receiving awards during the years 1951 through 1954. As a result of this investigation he hopes to reach some valid conclusions concerning the chronological and geographical distribution of visually excellent pictures during the period and to consider the consequences of those trends which can be identified.

Scope of the Problem

This study is concerned with the visual art qualities of films. Visual art— from the standpoint of cinematography—
includes the photography, the settings, and that part of the directing that is concerned with composition that appeals to the eye, as opposed to the aspects of films that are concerned with sound—writing, acting, and music. The term “visual art” will be applied to motion pictures in the same graphic sense as it is applied to a painting or a still photograph; and when the term "visual art aspect" is used, it may be applicable to any of the three visual classifications or to all of them at the same time.

Among the best known judging bodies for films are the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Hollywood, the International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art in Venice, and the International Film Festival at Cannes. Because of the competitive basis on which films are accepted by these groups, as contrasted with the regulations governing entries in non-competitive festivals—such as the Edinburgh Film Festival—this paper will be limited to the study of awards made by these three organizations.

The largest field of motion-picture competition is in the feature-length entertainment film; next in importance is the group including the documentary film and the short film, with the animated cartoon following. Since the full-length entertainment film is the specific film type with which the three above-mentioned judging bodies are most concerned, it will be the category in which most of the films considered in this investigation will fall. If films in the other
categories received awards, they also will be discussed; and when other classifications were substituted for those mentioned above, the films chosen will be included in the study.

Specific films from the four-year period, 1951 through 1954, will be the subjects of the investigation. Although all of the three judging bodies have been in operation for a longer time, the years since 1951 represent the longest period during which all of them have been functioning continuously.

Outline by Chapters

Chapter I serves as an introduction to the study. In Chapter II the history of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will be presented; film awards for the period 1951-1954 will be discussed; and the prize films will be evaluated from the standpoint of visual art. Chapter III will include a history of the International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art in Venice, and a discussion of the film awards for the period 1951-1954. Again, the prize films will be evaluated from the point of view of visual art. In Chapter IV the history of the International Film Festival at Cannes will be considered, and the film awards for the period 1951-1954 will be listed and discussed. The visual art qualities will be evaluated. Chapter V will serve as the conclusion. It will include a summary of findings and a discussion of the visual art trends, with speculation on their influence on future motion-picture production.
Information Sources

Reviews and criticisms used in this study came primarily from periodicals and books in the North Texas State College Library, the Library of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Public Library of the City of New York. In addition to published information sources the writer has seen most of the films to be considered, in the Museum of Modern Art Film Library or in commercial motion-picture theatres. He visited filming locations in this country, observed photography techniques of the Daiei Studios in Japan, and interviewed various art and film critics in the United States and Japan.

Procedure

By comparing opinions of critics with the writer's evaluations of the prize-films, the writer hopes to reach some acceptable conclusions concerning the frequency with which films of high visual art quality were chosen for award.
CHAPTER II

THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES

History and Organization

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was founded in May, 1927, in Hollywood, California. Its first president was Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., who presided over its charter membership of thirty-six. This group included Cecil B. DeMille, Conrad Nagel, Mary Pickford, Jack Warner, Louis B. Mayer, and Cedric Gibbons, among others whose names are less familiar to today's motion-picture audience. In 1952 there were 1,863 Academy members in the twelve principal branches of film making: acting, cinematography, direction, music, sound engineering, production, public relations, film editing, art direction, short subjects, and administration. The Academy's own building includes a nine-hundred-seat theatre, the largest library in the world devoted exclusively to motion pictures, and four vaults housing rare films. The Academy is under the executive directorship of Margaret Herrick.

The Academy is known for its annual awards for the best film in each of the following categories: feature entertainment films, documentary films, short films, and animated cartoons. Awards are also made for the best acting, the best
directing, the best setting, the best photography, the best music, the best sound engineering, and the best production. The Academy has other functions, however. It compiles quarterly a list of players, called the Player's Directory, acts as advisor to institutions studying motion-picture arts and sciences, and presents a series of historical programs each year, at which the award winners of the past are screened.

The Academy is financed by membership fees of $36.00 per year, rental of its theatre, and sale of the Player's Directory. It has an income from a watch company using the name "Academy Award" which pays the mortgage on its building. The annual Academy Award presentation ceremony is non-profit and often costs money not budgeted for that function.

The Academy is now working on an International Film Congress—which would not be a festival—to discuss scientific, technical, and artistic advances.

In order to be eligible for nomination for award, a film must have been released to the American distributors during the same year for which awards are made. Besides American-made films, any foreign-made film released by an American film company during the period is eligible for nomination. After days of reviewing the films nominated by the Academy's nomination committee, the entire membership votes by secret ballot for those films considered award-worthy. Originally the awards were presented at a testimonial-type dinner in
Hollywood, at which a small gold statuette, called an "Oscar," was given to each winner. After the Academy expanded to include a large membership and the Industry became interested in the awards, the affair grew to gigantic proportions. It even had two ceremonies running simultaneously, one in Hollywood and one in New York, which is still the policy.\footnote{Louis Harris, "The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences," \textit{Films in Review}, III (February, 1952), 71-76.} For many years the ceremonies were broadcast by radio; and in 1953 television, used for the first time, increased the Academy Award audience. In 1955 the nomination ceremony was also televised for the first time.

The Academy's quarter century of uninterrupted activity has done much to create a real sense of competition in Hollywood.

From the eleven award categories (see page 5), the following are concerned, at least in part, with visual aspects of art: black-and-white and color photography, black-and-white and color sets, documentary films, short films, and animated cartoons. The Academy Awards for excellence in these categories plus the best film of the year for the years 1951 to 1954 are presented in Table I. They will be discussed in the following pages.

Film Awards for 1951

\textbf{The best film}.—It is not uncommon for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to make a number of awards
# TABLE I

AWARDS PERTAINING TO VISUAL ASPECTS OF FILMS, THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES, 1951-1954*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Best Film</th>
<th>Best Color Set</th>
<th>Best Black-and-White Set</th>
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<td>1951</td>
<td>An American in Paris</td>
<td>An American in Paris</td>
<td>A Streetcar Named Desire</td>
<td>An American in Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>The Greatest Show on Earth</td>
<td>Moulin Rouge</td>
<td>The Bad and the Beautiful</td>
<td>The Quiet Man</td>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>From Here to Eternity</td>
<td>The Robe</td>
<td>Julius Caesar</td>
<td>Shane</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>On the Waterfront</td>
<td>20,000 Leagues under the Sea</td>
<td>On the Waterfront</td>
<td>Three Coins in the Fountain</td>
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*Academy Awards are listed in The Motion Picture Almanac in the "Awards" section annually. Listings are made the year after awards are given; for example, 1951 awards are made in 1952 and appear in the Almanac in 1953.
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<td><strong>Best Directing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Best Documentary</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Best Short Film</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Best Animated Cartoon</strong></td>
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<td>A Place in the Sun</td>
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<td>The Bad and the Beautiful</td>
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<td>From Here to Eternity</td>
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<td>On the Waterfront</td>
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to one single picture during its annual ceremony. Often the film voted to be the best motion picture of the year will also receive awards in other categories under which awards are made. (See Table I, page 8.) That was the case in 1951, when the Best Film award was given to "An American in Paris." It also won "Oscars" for its color sets and color photography.

In the ballet—which is visually the high point of the film—the choreography, costumes, and scenery merge beautifully to build each scene in the style of a different French artist: Dufy, Utrillo, Renoir, Rousseau, and Toulouse-Lautrec. The story and plot of the film are nothing more than has come to be expected of musical extravaganzas, but because of the high quality of much of the visual aspect of the film, the story has taken what might be an unnecessarily severe critical bombardment. On the other hand, there should be a specific level of excellence for all aspects of the film, including the writing, when it is being given consideration as the best picture of the year. Rene Clair's statement, "No film is better than its script," would be equally apt if any other aspect of a motion picture were substituted for "script."

Many critics approved of this award, and the remarks published in *Time* are typical of the favorable reviews. *Time* 2

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said that "An American in Paris" is a "grand show"—a brilliant combination of Hollywood's opulence and technical wizardry with the kind of taste and creativeness that most high-budgeted musicals notoriously lack. The seventeen-minute ballet recalls "The Red Shoes" dance sequences but dwarfs them in scope, lushness, and variety. It said further that the costumes, by Irene Sharaff, score as high in imagination as in lavishness. From this standpoint the Beaux Arts Ball scenes, in which all the costumes are black and white, are memorable, and the effect, striking in itself, is the perfect aperitif for the banquet of color that follows in the ballet.  

Not all criticisms were as kind as the preceding remarks. Robert Hatch said that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's arty musical is another, though different, example of the substitution of the camera for the imagination. It is certainly true that motion pictures can produce ballet effects impossible on a stage, but that these visual gymnastics are diverting enough to make form, wit, and taste unnecessary remains to be seen. After a general "panning" of the story and musical interpretation, Newsweek expressed the belief that the film had only two redeeming features: the ballet and the debut of Leslie Caron. The adverse criticism of the mediocre script and of

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3Time, LVIII (October 6, 1951), 108.  
5Newsweek, XXXVIII (October 8, 1951), 100.
occasional, obvious displays of camera virtuosity is acceptable to the writer; however, there were those many moments of exceptional beauty in color, set, and costume which can atone for the mediocre moments if one thinks in terms of the other films produced in which there is not one frame of outstanding visual art. It is certainly one film in which the visual qualities outweigh all others in choosing it for the year's highest award.

The best color set.--"An American in Paris," discussed above, won the Best Color Set award for 1951.

The best black-and-white set.--"A Streetcar Named Desire" won the award for the Best Black-and-White Set. The film is a dramatic, theatrical character study of four people in New Orleans. It is the writer's opinion that "A Streetcar Named Desire" is one of the most consciously artistic films ever to come from Hollywood. All phases of the film are superior in quality, and they are tied together with admirable coherence. Life Magazine said that the picture is a violent, intense, morbid masterpiece; the most powerful and most uncomfortable picture of 1951. It also said that there is some excellent photography.6 In regard to the set, one critic considered the acting area too small.7 Others had only praise for it. Theatre Arts said: "The settings, in a

6Life, XXI (September 24, 1951), 91-92.
7Time, LVIII (September 17, 1951), 105-106.
squalid, lusty, colorful New Orleans slum section, are strange and evocative. The overall production is one of intelligence and taste."^8 Robert Hatch said that the set is squalid without being grotesque, and that a screen translation from the more inventive arts can be no better than this.\(^9\)

John McCarten of *The New Yorker* also felt that the playing area is too small. He said, "It seems to me that however ingenious a camera may be, it can't focus so intently on a small interior without getting monotonous results."\(^10\) McCarten failed to make his meaning clear. He might have meant that the action seemed cramped and repetitious or that the camera seemed to be tied down. It appeared to the writer that the action was certainly as free as it needed to be, and the space, considered esthetically, was quite adequate because of the "dissolving" of the walls through effective lighting, close proximity of interior to exterior action--always visible through the wide, opened street windows--the draped interior portals, and the constant infiltration of outside light and sound elements. The general attitude of critics is summed up in the remarks of the motion-picture critic of *Holiday Magazine*, who said that the sum total of acting,

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\(^8\)Parker Tyler, "Movies," *Theatre Arts*, XXV (July, 1951), 88.


writing, photography, and directing is one of the most artistically coherent pictures of the year, a rung below "A Place in the Sun" in immediacy and warmth, but crowding it in technical and visual excellence.\footnote{Holiday, X (October, 1951), 28.}

The best color photography.--"An American in Paris," already discussed in this section, won the Best Color Photography award in 1951.

The best black-and-white photography.--"A Place in the Sun" won the Academy Award for the Best Black-and-White Photography. The cinema as a representational art is seldom used in a more definitive manner than it was in "A Place in the Sun." The role of the cameraman as an artist must be admitted to be a responsible and honorable one after such excellence as was produced in this film is viewed. George Stevens' directing and photography are outstanding.

The Saturday Review of Literature called the film one of the two most impressive pictures of the year (A Streetcar Named Desire" was the other one mentioned).\footnote{Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIV (September 1, 1951), 28.} Newsweek considered it one of the most brilliant films to come out of Hollywood in years.\footnote{Newsweek, XXXVII (September 10, 1951), 96.} John McGarten observed that lights and darks are artfully manipulated to enhance mood and character along with a laudable attention to detail; that the houses of
the wealthy, for instance, look opulent and never West Coast Monumental; and that the photography has a clarity that is very easy on the eye.\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Time} said that Stevens' camera is effectively restrained, that it peeks through doorways or stands patiently in the corner like a hidden witness, and that when it moves suddenly into close-ups, the effect of intimacy is breath-taking.\textsuperscript{15}

The critics and the writer agree that "A Place in the Sun" contains visual excellence in its black-and-white photography and that the directing, done with much attention to its visual aspect, is superior.

\textbf{The best directing.--}"A Place in the Sun," discussed above, won the Best Directing award for 1951. George Stevens, as director, was responsible for the outstanding cinematographic mood achieved by his direction of light, camera position, and movement.

\textbf{The best documentary.--}The "Oscar" for the Best Documentary Film was awarded to "Benjy." Although the film is comparatively short and therefore not long enough to be a program by itself, it exceeds 3,000 feet, the limit placed upon films which can be considered in the short-film category. "Benjy" is the story of a small crippled boy who is ignored by his parents because of his deformity. As a result of an


\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Time}, LVIII (September 10, 1951), 96.
accident, he is hospitalized, and during his stay in the hospital the problems of his hostility to treatment and the guilt of his parents are worked out. The picture—after a few interesting scenes during an operation, an application of a leg cast, and an over-done display of psychology in action—ends with a plea for money for the Los Angeles Orthopaedic Foundation. The fact that the film was directed by Fred Zinneman, a quite capable Hollywood director, may account for its being "the best fund-raising film in recent years." The direction, however, in the writer's opinion, was oriented toward moving an audience sentimentally rather than esthetically. It accomplished its purpose—to move the audience to action—admirably, but it was not visually a work of art.

The best short film.—The Best Short Film in 1951 was Walt Disney's "Nature's Half Acre." This is also a documentary film, but of a different kind from "Benjy." Its intent is not to provoke action; it is purely an informational film, done with an eye toward entertaining. "Nature's Half Acre" is part of a series called "True Life Adventure." Christian Century noted that the film contains some highly perceptive camera studies of insects, birds, and flowers through the cycles of the year. Its symphonic scoring is cleverly synchronized with physical movements of the animals and plants, and it is beautifully photographed in color to enrich appreciation of

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16Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXV (October 11, 1952), 43.
the wildlife in every back yard, field, and forest.¹⁷ There is an amazing scene in accelerated motion showing a flower budding, growing, and blooming within a few seconds of screening time. One reviewer thought that this presentation was too spectacular for a realistic film and that there was too much "accent on the pretty-pretty."¹⁸ The writer is inclined to disagree with this criticism. The only thing not realistic about this sequence, and others similar to it, is the time element. This disregard for time in contrast with the natural speed of the other sequences was an important contribution to the principle of variety and added to the visual art effect of the entire film. The value of "Nature's Half Acre" as an information piece was high in the opinion of critics and the writer; however, its visual qualities, particularly in photography and color, were important factors in the formation of the writer's opinion that this film deserved the award.

The best animated cartoon.—The award for the Best Animated Cartoon for 1951 was Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's "Two Mouse-keteers," which was produced by Fred Quimbley. The writer has not seen this film, and he has been unable to find any mention of it by critics.

Film Awards for 1952

The best film.—As was the case in 1951, a big, extravagant film, "The Greatest Show on Earth," won the Best Film

¹⁷Christian Century, LXVIII (August 29, 1951), 999.
¹⁸Films in Review, II (November, 1951), 38.
award for 1952. The film deals with life behind the scenes, as well as with scenes, in the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus. The circus theme is an example of the DeMille style at its best—a top-notch film which is vulgar, obvious, and gaudy. The writer found that, although the script is not excellent and the acting is not of award quality, the visual aspects of the film are at times outstanding.

DeMille wrecks a train for the climax in a fashion that has probably never been duplicated on film. The train wreck is pure spectacle and drama at the same time. At times, the debris is organized and framed into painterly compositions—an example of cinematography used purely as a graphic art. Space and movement, added to excellent color, give visual distinction to the trapeze acts as screened.

*Time* said that if art were merely a matter of fitting form to content, this picture would be a masterpiece, for DeMille and the circus are fated for each other. It can be assumed that the *Time* critic found some flaws in the organization and dramatic aspects of the film. The only bad criticism of the visual aspect of the picture was, as noted by Hatch, that the shots of the performance itself are monotonous and much too long. He commented also that the documentation of a circus would inevitably be picturesque, and to certain temperaments, glamorous. Perhaps DeMille over-glamorized

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19*Time* LXIX (January 4, 1952), 90.
his film, for glamor is undoubtedly what John Ringling North ordered before he would permit a single seal to trumpet. Under DeMille's guidance, excellent camera work makes many un-glamorous activities pictorially significant. As pointed out in *Newsweek*, he works pictorial magic with the spectacle of a horde of roustabouts breaking open a dead weight of canvas and huffing and puffing it into the triumphant symbol of the circus and all it means. This "circus at its best" was staged by John Murray Anderson, of Broadway fame, and beautifully costumed by Miles White. The writer, and four of the six critics referred to, think that the visual art of "The Greatest Show on Earth," spectacular as it is, is its outstanding aspect.

The best black-and-white set.—The Best Black-and-White Set award for 1952 was given to "The Bad and the Beautiful," a film on Hollywood itself, but a less truthful and convincing one than other similar films have been. Since most reviewers failed to say anything about the quality of the sets or photography, they must have been either uninterested in them or too much concerned with the story to take notice. The writer thought that the sets were imaginatively conceived.

21*Newsweek*, XXXIX (January 21, 1952), 90.
and effective; however, the most impressive aspect of the film is in its value as drama. Robert Youngson remarks on what might have been the reason for the oversight of the sets on the part of many critics. He said, "If Vincente Minnelli, who directed, hadn't let his film glitter so, it might have reached the category of the great films on Hollywood." The writer assumes, as does Frank Gagnard, critic for The Dallas Morning News, that Youngson means that all the acting was overplayed and that the direction was so intense that the dramatic fireworks would not allow one to concentrate on anything but the plot and characters. It seems that the problem was one of balance—of making each phase of the cinematic process complement the other. Youngson, however, was able to see past the "glitter" to many effective visual surprises, brought about by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's special kind of photography that gives the most commonplace objects the sheen of unreality. Parker Tyler sums up the film thus: "'The Bad and the Beautiful' is not a great work of cinematic art, but is as entertaining a film as has appeared in many moons." Academy members were apparently more impressed with the set designs than critics were; critics seemed to be primarily interested in the film from the entertainment standpoint.


24Statement by Frank Gagnard, personal interview.

The best color set.—"Moulin Rouge" won the Academy Award for the Best Color Set produced in 1952. The problem was to create the Paris of Toulouse-Lautrec in 1880. If what Lautrec painted was what existed, then the setting is an undeniable success. The result of the original technique used in filming with the old Technicolor photography medium is almost always beautiful. It seems to the writer that if the film had been photographed in ordinary Technicolor, it might have been unbearable, inasmuch as many of its moments, much of its action, and many of its characters are highly colorful, literally and figuratively.

_Time_ said that at its visual best, the picture is a Lautrec painting come to life.26 _Theatre Arts_ said that "Moulin Rouge" is a distinguished art film in which the costumes and sets were well designed by Marcel Vertés, who also did the drawing which was photographed in action to appear as if Lautrec were doing it. However, as Tyler stated, the photographed act of drawing in the style of Lautrec is a weak emulation of Lautrec's draughtsmanship.27 _Newsweek_ felt that despite that inevitable weakness—for no one can draw Lautrec like Lautrec—the film has a rich catalogue of assets. Chief among them are its ravishing Technicolor portraits of Paris. Color filming almost certainly has never been done

26_Time_, LXI (January 5, 1953), 68.

with such subtlety; the whole gamut from misty pastel delicacies to sudden violences of tone suggests Lautrec's own palette. The master's authentic drawings and posters are cleverly employed throughout the film.\textsuperscript{28} Henry Hart commented that most of the scenes incorporate the themes that actually preoccupied Lautrec in his lithographs, drawings, and paintings and in some instances actual paintings are staged. It is an astonishing blend of sophistication and sentimentality, of artistic delicacy and obvious theatrics done with technological virtuosity of a high cinematic order.\textsuperscript{29} Elisofon, who was responsible for the color photography, states, "The color of the film should be used as in painting, rather than as in postcard art."\textsuperscript{30} The \textit{Nation} clarified this point of view in stating that Elisofon's dramatic use of filtered camera effects and off-key tonalities recreate on film the heated hazy quality of French Impressionist painting.\textsuperscript{31} It can be said that "Moulin Rouge" is Elisofon's highly successful cinematic painting. Critics agree with the writer that the visual art of the film is its primary asset, even though its other aspects are of high quality.

\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Newsweek}, XXXI (February 23, 1953), 96.

\textsuperscript{29}Henry Hart, "Film Reviews," \textit{Films in Review}, IV (March, 1953), 145.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Nation}, CLXXVI (February 28, 1953), 193.
The best black-and-white photography.—"The Bad and the Beautiful," already discussed (see page 19), won the Best Black-and-White Photography award.

The best color photography.—John Ford's "The Quiet Man" won the 1952 award for the Best Color Photography. The writer has not seen this film. McCarten, of The New Yorker, did not think that Ford's direction and understanding of the characters were up to the highest level of his capabilities.\(^ {32}\) Another critic felt that Ford manipulated the psychology of his characters with wit as well as insight, and that much of the comedy is Irish at its best.\(^ {33}\) Nation commented that "The Quiet Man" is an idyll, not intended to resemble anything ever seen before, that the photographic technique indicates as much. It also mentioned that some of the Technicolor photography is original: A dense gray atmosphere makes for a curious picture that takes place in daylight yet has some of the sunless, remembered look of a surrealist painting.\(^ {34}\) Films in Review sums up the general effect of the photography as follows: "There is a strange modulation of color tones deriving from the fact that many of the shots were taken through rain. The visual result is haunting, and impossible to describe." The review added that the scenery


\(^{33}\) Films in Review, IV (August-September, 1952), 352.

\(^{34}\) Nation, CLXXV (September 13, 1952), 218.
was never photographed without movement--supplied by a human being, an animal, running water, blowing leaves, or the movement of the camera itself. The high quality of the film visually is its greatest merit, according to critics.

The best directing.--John Ford won the Best Directing award for 1952. The winning film, "The Quiet Man," is discussed above. The visual excellence of the film is in a large degree the result of the directing, since Ford chose most of the location spots and made the decision to photograph in the rain.

The best documentary film.--"The Sea Around Us," directed by Irwin Allen for RKO Radio Pictures, won the "Oscar" for the Best Documentary Film produced in 1952. The writer has not seen this picture. Time, while approving of the choice, goes on to say that although the picture is all about water, it strangely does not flow. The camera concentrated on episode after episode, like an observer stepping from tank to tank in an aquarium, not like a diver roaming through the stopless ocean. The episodes, however, are sometimes magnificently caught. It said further that the film was a promising, if not too imaginative, continuation of a recent trend in Hollywood to take a few cameras off the famous faces and train them on nature itself.

35 Films in Review, IV (August-September, 1952), 353.
36 Time, LXII (July 20, 1953), 84.
One critic has probably given the correct explanation for the film's lack of continuity. The Saturday Review of Literature pointed out that much of the film had been seen before, since it was, for the most part, a compilation of scenes from films made and released prior to "The Sea Around Us." Some good photography was done especially for the film, however. Even so, it does not compare, as documentation, with Rachael Carson's book, which was the inspiration. The greatest value of this film seems to be informational, since the critics were not generally impressed with its visual art.

The best short film.--The "Oscar" for the Best Short Film was awarded to another Walt Disney documentary, "Water Birds." One of the series of "True Life Adventure" films, it presents the stages in the lives of various kinds of waterfowl. The writer has not seen this film. The Christian Century stated that it contains some amazing close-up shots in color, which reveal unique bird habits, while an imaginatively synchronized musical background adds to the effect. It was made with the assistance of the Denver Museum of History, the Audubon Society, and a number of photographers whose incredible skill and patience are evident.

37Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXVI (July 18, 1953), 30.

38Christian Century, LXIX (September 6, 1952), 1015.
Arts summarized the good and bad qualities of the film. The critic said that although wild animals are frequently amusing, Disney uses repetition, juxtaposition, commentary, and sound effects to make nature seem an endless slapstick comedy. Pelicans may not be graceful, but neither are they burlesque comedians. And at the end, when by editing he forces the birds into the artificial rhythm of a great symphonic production number, the result is as vulgarly arty as the colored lights on Niagra Falls. However, the shots themselves are superb.39

The critics lead one to conclude that the visual art, especially the photography, and the special effects are the most impressive features of the film, although one critic found the special effects common and distasteful.

The best animated cartoon.—The Best Animated Cartoon award for 1952 was made to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's "Johann Mouse." The cartoon was produced by Fred Quimbley. According to the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, no reviews are available, and the writer has not seen the cartoon.

Film Awards for 1953

The best film.—"From Here to Eternity," an expose of army life before World War II, won the award for the Best Film produced in 1953. It also won the awards for directing and

black-and-white photography. It is the writer's opinion that the awards were justified in that all aspects of the film were superior and well integrated.

Without exception, the critics hailed the film writer for his masterful adaptation of the controversial and extremely long novel. Most critics seemed to be impressed with the acting, perhaps because of its overall high quality, although only Frank Sinatra received an "Oscar,"--the Best Supporting Actor award.

Arthur Knight said that Fred Zinneman, the director, made a real, true-ringing picture, with phenomenal character insight and superb acting, and that the subtle transitions into inevitable violence are cinematic genius. Zinneman said that his actors "behaved" rather than "acted," which is the method he uses in directing all actors who work with him; consequently, he presented characters who lived, and in this case, he produced one of the most absorbing and thoroughly honest pictures to cross a normal screen in years.

The camera, according to Time, was used with familiarity and cool simplicity. The writer thinks that the nature of the story would not have allowed the photography to be shot in any way other than with honesty and straight-forwardness.

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40 Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," Saturday Re- view of Literature, XXXVI (August 8, 1953), 25.
41 Newsweek, XLII (August 10, 1953), 82.
42 Time, LXII (August 10, 1953), 94.
Affectation and trickery would have been ludicrous, but there is little time to wonder if the cinematography will be effective because one is assured of a reasonable approach to the photography problem by the opening shot of Schofield Barracks in Honolulu, where the picture was made. The scene is in the courtyard early in the morning, just as the central character of the drama is entering the court. The stark, dramatic but controlled effect sets the pace for the entire film. The contrasting moments of violence are accentuated by the simplicity of the cinematic narrative, which ties one little climax to another until they culminate in the big climax of the film.

While most critics, in their reviews, were more concerned with the theme of the film than with its visual qualities, they mention the art aspects of the film and concede that they are prize-worthy.

The best black-and-white set.—"Julius Caesar" was awarded the "Oscar" for the Best Black-and-White Set of the year. It is the writer's opinion that visually this film was one of the most gratifying of those produced in 1953. While the set is perhaps not outstanding over other aspects of the film, such as the acting, it was the best set of the year. Probably two of the most important decisions that Houseman, the producer, and Mankiewicz, the director, had to make were in regard to the use of black-and-white photography in preference to color, and the degree in which spectacle was to be used. The stark effect of black-and-white photography was
probably the deciding factor in that choice, and apparently a compromise on the spectacle issue limited the mob scenes and settings to proportions that would achieve a particular dramatic effect without any emphasis on size.

The *Newsweek* reviewer called the film an impressive and highly faithful treatment of Shakespeare. He said further that Joseph Mankiewicz achieved a spacious tragedy in starkly appropriate blacks, whites, and grays with a dramatic use of the Roman steps, levels, and the skillfully-done decorative features. Bennett Cerf received a similar impression of the film in that the absence of color, trick lenses, and "arty" shots, in his opinion, added to the brilliant interpretation of the tragedy.

The *Saturday Review of Literature* observed that some of the sets were large,—although no "Quo Vadis"-like views of ancient Rome were used—and all of them were spacious, and that they were more stylized than realistic. John McCarten makes the following interesting remark regarding the settings and photography: "There is little to indicate that the movies command visual resources that Shakespeare never dreamed of."

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43 *Newsweek*, XLI (June 8, 1953), 101.


He did not fully explain his statement, but the text in which it appears indicates that he believes that sets can take the place of much of Shakespeare’s dialogue, if the play is cut properly; in other words, the artistic unity may be maintained through substitution but not through addition.

*Newsweek* said that there was exercise of good taste in photographic technique as well as in set design. There is a judicious use of close-ups during the assassination scene, which gives a kind of formal horror and intimacy to what otherwise could have been a very usual motion-picture murder. On the instant that the first dagger-stab was made into Caesar’s body, the camera turned from the action to register the effect of the act on the witnesses, as well as to spare the sensitive audience whose sympathies were purposely directed toward Caesar.47

The writer and the critics agree with the Academy that the visual aspects of the film are outstanding and that the set is the best of the year in the black-and-white category.

The best color set.—"The Robe" was the film which won the Best Color Set award for 1953. In the opinion of the writer, this was an incredibly bad choice.

In the *Saturday Review of Literature* the unsigned review stated that "The Robe" scarcely rose above a routine level during most of its course. It went on to say that the moments

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47 *Newsweek*, XLI (June 8, 1953), 101.
when it was above the ordinary were those when the spectacular episodes—great movie murals of slave markets, imperial cities, grandiose palaces and panoramic landscapes—were being flashed on the Cinemascope screen. 48 John McCarten thought the best part of the picture was a chase-scene in which the hero, in a four-horse carriage, was being pursued by a regiment of Roman horsemen. 49

"The Robe," being the first picture to be produced in Cinemascope, would for that reason create a flurry of interest. With the new wide-screen technique numerous new problems in set design would necessarily arise. That they were solved is perhaps reason enough for giving the film some official recognition even if the cinematic results were nothing more than spectacular. Thus, the "Best Set" cannot in this case be interpreted as being a contribution to visual art, but rather to Cinemascope technique.

The best black-and-white photography.--"From Here to Eternity," which is discussed earlier in this section (see page 26), was the winner of the Best Black-and-White Photography award.

The best color photography.—The Academy awarded its Best Color Photography "Oscar" to "Shane." It is the writer's opinion that "Shane" has the best photography of any Western—

48Saturday Review of Literature, XXXVI (October 3, 1953), 44.
type picture ever produced. There were not many color films from Hollywood in 1953 from which to choose, but it might be safe to say that, if there had been, "Shane" would still have been a contender for the award. The story of the film is trite; the acting is adequate, but not outstanding; the directing is good; but the cinematography is excellent.

Aside from comments such as John McCarten's "a first rate picture,"50 which merely affirms its entertainment value, there were numerous reviews praising the direction and the fresh, yet subtle, color photography. The Time critic pointed out that George Stevens, the director, was willing to sacrifice realism for graceful movement. As an ex-cameraman, Stevens knew that a person looks better dismounting than mounting a horse. He took advantage of this knowledge, when graceful movement was important, by photographing his characters as they dismounted and then reversing the motion of the film.51 True, this is trickery, but there is no ground for complaint if the result is visually better, as in "Shane" it undoubtedly was. The use of Technicolor, according to Newsweek, is a masterpiece of illustration and mood-making, expertly handled by Loyal Griggs, the Cinematographer.52


51Time, LXI (April 13, 1953), 104.

52Newsweek, XLI (May 4, 1954), 96.
Weiss Stern observed that the color photography of mountain, sky, and storm is occasionally breath-taking.53

The writer and critics agree that the visual aspects of the film are the most worthy of consideration for award.

The best directing.--Fred Zinneman won the Best Directing award for 1953 with "From Here to Eternity." The film is discussed at the beginning of this section.

The best documentary film.--"The Alaskan Eskimo," by Walt Disney, won the Best Documentary Film award for 1953. The writer has not seen the film. The National Parent Teacher wrote in editorial that it is a comparatively short film, but it exceeds the limit of 3,000 feet set for films in the Short Film category. Comparisons were made between this film and the Robert Flaherty documentary film "Nanook of the North"; however, the only similarity is in the Eskimo subject matter. "The Alaskan Eskimo" is a more pleasant film; it is concerned with portraying the incredibly primitive life of the Eskimo in a pleasing, informative manner. In contrast with Flaherty's film, which showed the struggle for life of a small family in the frozen north, Disney's film suggests that life still holds perils, but emphasis is placed on the Eskimos as freedom-loving beings.54


54National Parent Teacher, XLVII (May, 1953), 36.
Because of the limited critical information on "The Alaskan Eskimo" it is not possible to reach a valid conclusion concerning the visual art of the film.

The best short film.--"Bear Country," one of the "True Life Adventure" series, won the Short Film "Oscar" for 1953. The writer has not seen this film. The Christian Century published the only available criticism. The reviewer said that the film presents actual scenes, in Technicolor, of animals going about their daily business of living. This one takes a (composite) mother and her cubs through the two years before the family separates. In addition to revealing interesting and not very widely known facts, the film offers intelligent commentary, frequent humorous sequences, magnificent scenic backgrounds, and a wonderfully synchronized symphonic score.55

The critic feels that the film is excellent in many aspects, but he is particularly emphatic about the information qualities of the film; however, visually it appears to measure up to the high standard one has been led to expect in the series.

The best animated cartoon.--"Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom" won the Best Animated Cartoon award for 1953. This cartoon was important for two reasons. It was the first Cinemascope cartoon, and it is also an example of the good influence

55Christian Century, LXX (February 25, 1953), 239.
of UPA (United Productions of America) cartoons on the art of the animated cartoon. It incorporated the usual warmth and charm of Disney's cartoon style with the new simplicity and beauty of UPA styles. The cartoon itself tells a story of the four main musical instrument families: brass, woodwind, string, and percussion. Time said that the drawings are witty and that the widescreen problem is neatly solved to the advantage of the audience: contrasts, which can be achieved on the regular screen only by cutting from picture to picture, can now be improved by setting the pictures side by side. Films in Review called the cartoon pictorially ingenious and pointed out the influence of the modern artists, particularly Paul Klee, on cartoons. Although the story of the cartoon was important, its outstanding quality was its visual art: the new Cinemascope medium and the freshness of the Disney-UPA combination style.

Film Awards for 1954

The best film.--The Best Film of 1954, "On the Waterfront," won more "Oscars" than any other film since "Gone with the Wind." (See Table I, pages 8-9.) The writer believes that the combined superiority of acting, photography, set, script, and music makes the film the most powerful and visually gratifying film of the year from Hollywood. The

56 *Time*, LXII (December 7, 1953), 104.

57 *Films in Review*, IV (December, 1953), 537.
black-and-white photography and the directing, both of which also won Academy Awards, show innovations in style which may be trend-setting in the United States. The same type of film, called neo-realistic in Italy, has been done consistently in a number of places throughout the world since the end of World War II—notably in Italy and Mexico, and recently in Brazil. The chairman of the Venice Festival said that "On the Waterfront" was the first "Italian" film to be made in America; so it is not an altogether new approach. It is only new in this country, but welcome nonetheless. The film is a social study, with an occasional documentary flavor, of the waterfront life of a big eastern port where violence is the rule when corrupted union officials are allowed to remain in power over the longshoremen.

The following is quoted from Newsweek:

'On the Waterfront' is melodrama that transcends itself, it's violence set off against striking depictions of love... and a big, if sometimes confusing, slice of social significance. Its dialogue has a ring of flat truth and its staging is a product of cruelly consistent realism. Yet, conversely, the pitch of Leonard Bernstein's score and the chiaroscuro of Boris Kaufman's study of the Hoboken docks and tenements have a way of making the story and its actors into dramatic universals.

The Saturday Review of Literature said that the film was a first-rate journalistic achievement superbly acted by Brando,

58Time, LXIV (August 9, 1954), 83.

59Newsweek, XLIV (August 2, 1954), 78.
and that it was explosive in its impact on the emotions and
on the motion picture as a form.\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Time} felt that the ex-
cellent acting is surpassed by Boris Kaufman's photography.
The dramatic, hard contrasts of light and dark are ever
reminding the viewer of the violent nature of the problem.
The dramatic angling of the camera is always complementary to
the action and definitive to characters. Most important, the
director, Elia Kazan, knows what is art and what is theatre
and how to get them together. The setting for the film, which
also won an "Oscar," was, with the exception of a few interior
scenes, a natural one. The film was shot on location in Hobo-
ken, New Jersey, on the waterfront.\textsuperscript{61} John McCarten observed
that in none of the scenes is there a trace of the fictitious
background that can be so unsettling in films with documentary
origins.\textsuperscript{62}

The writer and critics agree that the sites for filming
were well chosen and that those scenes requiring design were
done with expert knowledge of the film's needs and art's re-
quirements. All aspects of the film were under considera-
tion for award, as is witnessed by the number of citations
it received; the art aspects received a fair judgment and
deserved awards.

\textsuperscript{60}Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," \textit{Saturday Re-
view of Literature}, XXXVII (July 24, 1954), 25.
\textsuperscript{61}Ibid., p. 82.
\textsuperscript{62}John McCarten, "The Current Cinema," \textit{The New Yorker},
XXX (July 31, 1954), 52.
The best black-and-white set.—The Best Black-and-White
Set award was made to "On the Waterfront," as stated above.

The best color set.—The "Oscar" for the Best Color Set
was presented to "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea." The picture
is a rather commercial interpretation of the famous Jules
Verne classic in which a Captain Nemo has resigned from the
world and used his genius to build an atomically-powered sub-
marine with which he plans to conquer the world and save it
from itself. The writer thinks that the set designs were
artistically coherent with the rest of the film and completely
fascinating. The set consisted of a West Coast harbor, two
or three ships, the submarine, an office, and a volcanic
crater with connecting underwater tunnel. The submarine,
called the Nautilus, was an ingenious contrivance fashioned
after the description in the novel and influenced by our
present-day submarines. The warmth in color and design, de-
spite its being underwater, made the Nautilus appear to be a
very desirable place to live. Ralph Gerstl's described the
Nautilus as follows:

The stateroom of the mad Captain is resplend-
ent with Victorian carpets and sofas, and contains
books and paintings worthy of a collector, and an
imposing pipe organ, on which Nemo plays Bach fugues
whenever a mood is upon him.

An air of mystery is maintained throughout this
excellent film largely by virtue of the colorful and
interesting sets of John Meehan. . . . And the ex-
pert Cinemascope photography of Cameraman Till Gabain
keeps every scene visually alive. His underwater
shots on the sea floor, especially of the burial
scene, are full of natural beauty—and all too few.63

Newsweek said that the best part of the Technicolor adventure was its physical trappings, its action, and its underwater photography, which was shot off New Providence Island in the Bahamas.64

The writer and critics find the art aspects of the film to be exciting, unique in concept, and well expressed. The Academy apparently was aware of these qualities, as well as the tremendous task of interpreting the Jules Verne descriptions.

The best black-and-white photography.—The Best Black-and-White Photography award was made to "On the Waterfront." Details of the camera work appear early in this section under "The Best Film" subtitle.

The best color photography.—"Three Coins in the Fountain" won the Best Color Photography award. If the writer had given an award as a result of seeing this picture, it would have been to the city of Rome for providing the handsome setting. The photography is pleasant, but merely pleasant photography does not warrant consideration for an award when the judges are supposed to be judging art qualities.

Newsweek summed up the general attitudes of critics with the statement that the film is a light, pleasant comedy whose

64Newsweek, XLIV (December 27, 1954), 60.
only artistic merit is in the Cinemascope shots of Rome and the Italian countryside. 65 John McCarten commented that the grandeur of Rome is given a good workout, as is that of Venice and Tivoli, but he wishes the actors would go away and let the audience enjoy the scenery. 66 When the camera is not concerned with the affairs of the sextet of principal actors, it is, as Alpert says, off exploring Venice and Rome in an obvious attempt to out-Cinerama the competition. All of this emphasis on scenics, although well done, might prove just a bit disconcerting to an audience accustomed to having travelogues before the feature rather than during it. 67 The plot and the acting amount to very little. 68

The writer and critics do not agree with the Academy that the visual aspects of "Three Coins in the Fountain" are of award quality, although they are the best part of the film.

The best directing.—"On the Waterfront" had the Best Directing in 1954. Elia Kazan received the award. The directing is discussed at the beginning of this section on film awards for 1954.

65 *Newsweek*, XLIII (May 31, 1954), 85.


The best documentary film.—"The Vanishing Prairie" was awarded the "Oscar" for the Best Documentary of 1954. The writer thinks that the film was sensitively photographed in parts and that its subject was approached with a healthy honesty. The controversial scene in which a buffalo calf is born is typical of the exciting and original approach to filming life on the prairie of years ago.

*Time* said that Disney failed to show well the prairie of years ago, partly because of the smug, fatherly pats of approval he keeps giving the animal kingdom, as though he personally had founded it with Mickey Mouse. It admitted that here and there, however, the picture has a patch of beauty.69 The *Saturday Review of Literature* pointed out that the film is skillfully photographed and that it is superior in organization, illuminating in sequences, honest in score and script, and fascinating to watch.70 The visual art value of the film was perhaps no more important than its entertainment or informational value; nonetheless, the visual aspects were worthy of award.

The best short film.—"Time Out of War" received the award for the Best Short Film of 1954; however, there are no available criticisms or reviews of it, according to the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. The writer has not seen the film.

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The best animated cartoon.--The Best Animated Cartoon award was made to UPA's "When Magoo Flew." No criticisms or reviews are available, and the writer has not seen the cartoon.

Summary

It is fairly obvious, from critical comments made on the award-winning motion pictures, that all of the Academy Award films did not measure up to what critics considered should be prize-film standards. It is difficult to know exactly what the standards of the Academy are since the members vote according to individual taste, experience, and opinions, rather than by a list of adopted standards. However, the number of deserving films receiving awards is large compared with those receiving awards without apparent justification.

Two of the fourteen films studied in this chapter did not seem to fulfill the visual requirements expected of films receiving awards in categories demanding visual art quality. "The Robe," which won the Best Color Set award in 1953, lacked the originality and good design that should be inherent in films winning such an award. "Three Coins in the Fountain" won the Best Color Photography award in 1954 with what seems to be inferior photography from a cinematic point of view. "Pleasant" was the word used to describe the cinematography. Pleasantry is an inadequate best quality for a film which wins an Academy Award for photography.
Three of the remaining twelve films—"An American in Paris," "The Bad and the Beautiful," and "On the Waterfront"—won awards in both photography and setting categories. Of these three perhaps the visual art of only one did not receive as much attention from critics as it deserved; that was "The Bad and the Beautiful." The Academy, on the other hand, considered other aspects of "On the Waterfront" and "An American in Paris" as also worthy of awards; but from the awards received, it seems to have been impressed solely with the visual excellence of "The Bad and the Beautiful." The Academy awarded its Best Color Set "Oscar" to "Moulin Rouge" in 1952. The film received no other awards. During the same year the Academy named "The Greatest Show on Earth" the Best Film. Critics would likely have reversed the awards if they had been making them.

Some artists felt that "The Greatest Show on Earth" was visually the best picture of the year. "The Quiet Man" and "Shane" might be considered on the same level since their outstanding qualities were visual. They both received color photography awards. The Academy rewarded the directing in "The Quiet Man," but critics and reviewers both felt its greatest merit was in its photography, as was the case with "Shane."

The picture "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" was considered from no other point of view than its art aspects, and
its award for the Best Color Sets in 1954 was well placed. The other four films—"Julius Caesar," "From Here to Eternity," "A Streetcar Named Desire," and "A Place in the Sun"—were all highly dramatic films with exceptionally good writing, directing, and acting. The art work was on a level with all of these other aspects, but it was not considered above them, nor was it ignored, since each received awards for some phase of its visual art.

It might be said that the visual art styles of motion pictures rewarded by the Academy are fairly diverse. Sets for all types of pictures have been winners, and many different photography styles and techniques have been given "Oscars." To say the decisions during any one year are better than another might be nothing more than a matter of personal taste; however, the two most questionable awards made during the four years were made, one each, in the last two years. They were to "The Robe" in 1953 and "Three Coins in the Fountain" in 1954.

The awards for documentaries, in both the feature-length and short-film categories, seem to have been generally made to films which critics found to be outstanding in information and entertainment value, with the visual art aspect in a secondary position of importance. Exceptions are the visually outstanding films, "Water Birds" and "The Alaskan Eskimo."
It is significant that most of the winning documentaries and animated cartoons are products of the Walt Disney Studios. Disney has received awards in the past for his consistently high-quality production; and as a truly graphic artist, he is sure to recognize the importance of the visual art aspect of his films. Perhaps, in view of his numerous awards, it could be said that high visual art value is recognized as a necessary quality, regardless of story content, for all documentaries and cartoons. In the animated cartoon field UPA has been a great influence in simplifying drawing and color in almost all cartoons. By placing emphasis upon visual clarity, these cartoons have made a great contribution to cinematic art.
CHAPTER III

THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CINEMATOGRAPHIC ART IN VENICE

History and Organization

The International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art had its beginning in Venice in 1932. In its initial year it operated with great fidelity to artistic ideals, its criteria being patterned after those of the International Exhibition of Art held annually in Venice; however, it was set up entirely independent of the latter organization. Each national group of exhibitors was to bear the financial burden of its part of the exhibition and the moral and artistic responsibility for the organization and arrangements pertinent to the showing of its films. Each nation was to be represented not only officially, but with a personnel group of its own choosing. Some of this group might serve on the official jury. The administration of the Venice festival was on such an international level as to be called a copy of the League of Nations in artistic matters.¹

The screenings of the first exhibition were on a terrace at a hotel in Lido. Good weather, good films, and high ideals

of the organization made the exhibition a success. The fairness of the jury gave it an artistic superiority over most of the national competitions being held at that time. In 1937, the Exhibition moved from the Lido Hotel Gardens to its headquarters in the new, expressly-constructed Palazzo del Cinema. The Exhibition has been held here in the fall of each succeeding year, except for its inactive war years, 1939-1946.

Politics had begun to creep into the Exhibition by 1938, when the United States withdrew from the festival because Germany won the Grand Prize with an inferior film as a result of an "I'll vote for yours if you'll vote for mine" campaign. This was the episode that resulted in the organization of the International Film Festival at Cannes, France.

In 1947, the Exhibition reopened and developed to new heights of artistic principle until the state took over financial control within the year. Organizational control, however, was in the hands of the Italian Cinema Industry; so after the Exhibition reopened, the juries were all-Italian. This might help explain the prevalence of "grand prize" Italian films during the next three years. The festival lost its supernational position to become nothing more than a manifestation of the Italian Cinema Industry.

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3Zorzi, op. cit., p. 30.
This shift of power was not necessary in order to strengthen the organization, as was shown by its extremely efficient and competent operation earlier, during the pre-war years, when the Italian cinema was in a period of utter decadence. In 1949 there were signs of loss of power by the Italian Cinema Industry as the state began to regain some organizational as well as financial responsibility. The juries continued to be all-Italian, and appeared likely to stay that way, because in 1949 the United States vetoed a proposal to install an international jury. Perhaps America's previous experience with the international jury in 1938, when awards of the pre-war Fascist festival were based on out-and-out political maneuvering, had something to do with the veto.

It was an accepted fact then that a state-sponsored Italian film on a patriotic subject would be rewarded unless "politics" caused a shifting of the award to a film from some other country.  

As is the case in most competitive film festivals, there has always been much dissatisfaction with jury decisions at Venice. Festival officials at Venice say that juries are not supposed to judge films for their entertainment or box-office value, but as attempts at art. Then, a juror would have to be more than just a film maker or a critic; he would have to be an artist as well. Professional critics are not allowed

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4Ibid., p. 32.
seats on the jury because of the necessity that they break the festival's secrecy rules by reporting their opinions to their publications. Artist and art-critic jurors have at times been ostracized for being ignorant of films and film techniques. Venice has not solved the jury problem; nor has Cannes or any other festival.5

There are usually thirty-five or forty feature films shown during the three-week festival, along with documentaries and animated cartoons. The jury and 300 correspondents and critics see them all. Occasionally, official protest of a film on political or moral grounds forces a film to be withdrawn.

The annual grand prize winner at Venice is presented with a gold Lion of St. Mark. Silver Lions of St. Mark are presented to the films judged the best in acting, setting, photography, directing, music, and writing; the films representing the best national group entry; and the films winning the three international prizes. The international prize films are actually runners-up to the grand prize film.6

Films winning prizes in the categories of Best Film, Best Set, Best Photography, Best Directing, Best Documentary Film, and Best Animated Cartoon are listed in Table II. As stated

## TABLE II

AWARDS PERTAINING TO VISUAL ASPECTS OF FILMS, THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CINEMATOGRAPHIC ART IN VENICE, 1951-1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Best Film</th>
<th>Best Photography</th>
<th>Best Sets</th>
<th>Best Directing</th>
<th>Best Documentary</th>
<th>Best Animated Cartoon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Rashomon</td>
<td>Journal d'un Curé de Campagne</td>
<td>Murder in the Cathedral</td>
<td>Rashomon</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Forbidden Games</td>
<td>Forbidden Games</td>
<td>The Importance of Being Earnest</td>
<td>Forbidden Games</td>
<td>Water Birds</td>
<td>La Bergere et la Ramoneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>Corral</td>
<td>Christopher Crumpet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
previously, these categories were chosen for consideration because of their major concern with visual art in cinematography.

As Table II shows, in 1951 there were no awards for the Best Documentary Film or the Best Animated Cartoon, and in 1953 no awards were given in any of the categories listed on Table II. Frequently no film in a given category is judged of sufficient merit to receive an award. This was the reason for the omissions in 1951. In 1953 awards were made geographically instead of according to the usual classifications. The awards for that year will be discussed under the subtitle "Special Awards." In 1954 there were no awards in the Best Photography, the Best Sets, or the Best Directing categories. Other categories were substituted for these, and they, too, will be discussed under a "Special Awards" subtitle.

**Film Awards for 1951**

The best film—"Rashomon," the first Japanese film ever to win a prize in a western film festival, won the grand prize at Venice in 1951. Although "Rashomon" was well received by Western audiences, it was not liked by Japanese critics and audiences, which is an indication of the differences in oriental and occidental art tastes. According to Tameo Kajiyama, editor of *Yamatopia*, a Japanese literary magazine, the film was made especially for the Venice festival
and western audiences. 7 "Rashomon" has been erroneously translated by many American reviewers as "In the Forest."
Actually, it is the name of a city gate in Kyoto and means "Gate of Rasho." Akutagawa Ryunosuke, who wrote the original "Rashomon" story three generations ago, also wrote a story called "In the Forest." The two stories were put together to make the motion picture. The substance of the motion picture story is that of "In the Forest," in which a murder is committed in a bamboo grove; a thief is arrested for the murder; and his trial is held. During the trial, three different interpretations of the death are presented— that of the thief, that of the young wife of the victim, and that of the victim, told through a medium. 8 The commercial advantages to the Japanese Motion Picture Industry for having produced such a beautiful film and for having entered it in the Venice Exhibition are obvious. The existence of the film exhibition itself is justified when such films, which otherwise might go unnoticed, are discovered for the rest of the world to see.
In the opinion of the writer, the visual art in this film is seldom equalled in quality in occidental films. It has much of the crisp, fragile line and contrasting free force of the familiar Japanese prints, and each frame is carefully composed. As is the case with the post-war realistic Italian

7 Personal interview, Tameo Kajiyama, Editor of Yamatopia, March, 1953.
8 Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Rashomon and Other Stories (Tokyo, Japan, 1950).
films, "Rashomon" will probably influence the techniques of motion-picture production throughout the world.

Among the many favorable criticisms of the film, the following is quoted from *Newsweek*:

'Rashomon' represents the legendary esthetic powers of the Japanese art at a high pitch; it is a stunning work of art. . . . The acting has force, and the settings in the forest, the police court, and beneath Kyoto's great rainswept Rashomon gate recall the historic glories of Japanese art. There is the traditional simplification of the image, the sensitive variation of tone, the dramatic use of acute angles—as when the husband and wife, she in a ghostly hat and veil, dash by on horseback beneath a camera located in the boughs of a tree above them. Everybody's contribution is first class.9

*Time* predicted that motion-picture viewers would be impressed with its expert photography, fluent direction, and scorching insight.10 Some critics were not sufficiently impressed with the beauty of the film to overlook its slow movement, which is a very natural speed for the Japanese, but not for Westerners.

Robert Hatch commented that although the action is confined, the photography is inventive. It can be flatly realistic; it uses perspective like a surrealist; it is sometimes marvelously selective; and it blurs and stutters to convey speed, confusion, and panic.11 "Rashomon" also won the Best

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9 *Newsweek*, XXXIX (January 7, 1952), 60.
10 *Time*, LIX (January 7, 1952), 82.
Directing award in Venice in 1951. The *Nation* states that the film was smoothly directed and interpreted as a stylish study in human frailty.\(^{12}\)

The writer and critics agree that this film is outstanding primarily as a work of visual art.

The *best photography.*—"Journal d'un Curé de Campagne" won the Best Photography award in Venice in 1951. The film is a French production which has not been released in the United States; consequently, information on the picture is limited. *Films in Review* wrote short reviews of each of the feature films entered in the Exhibition in 1951. Their festival correspondent had the following to say about the film:

"Journal d'un Curé de Campagne" / Diary of a Country Priest / was slowly paced, in diary form; it was seldom heavy, never dull. Its director, Robert Bresson, succeeded with an enormously difficult subject: the outer and inner conflicts of a country priest as chronicled by Bernanos. Claude Laydu’s acting was finely, closely guided. The atmospheric camera work was excellent.\(^{13}\)

The writer has not seen this film, but accompanying the article in *Films in Review* was a still photograph of one of the scenes from the picture. The photograph was in black-and-white, as the film was. It indicates that the photography was used to heighten the drama and complement the deep psychological theme of the film. There was a very striking effect in chiaroscuro in the one scene used as illustration. The images

\(^{12}\) *Nation*, CLXXIV (January, 1952), 65.

were clear and well defined. If the rest of the film is comparable with this single shot, then perhaps the visual art of photography was outstanding enough to justify the award. The one published criticism of the film mentioned the excellence of the photography.

The best set.—The Best Set award for 1951 was awarded to a British entry, "Murder in the Cathedral." The film is an adaptation of the Thomas Stearns Eliot stage play of the same name. This film was released in the United States but has not been widely circulated. The writer has not seen it. The Venice correspondent to Films in Review wrote the following review after seeing the film at the Exhibition:

Tedious but of a distinctly high nature was T. S. Eliot's 2 hour and 20 minute talk-a-thon. Its only visible movement of a filmic nature was a hypnotic and slow use of camera-tracking. Daring, unconventional in conception, and justly a festival film, it neither added to nor subtracted from the stage version.\(^\text{14}\)

The preceding review was the most favorable one the writer encountered. Hollis Alpert expressed the sentiments of most critical reviewers when he wrote that the picture is one of the most solid bores he has ever come across. He said that it is too static and slow; the camera creeps around statuary; there is an abundance of candle snuffing and lighting; and there are shots of a pounding surf that holds some mystic symbolism that is altogether incomprehensible. The camera

\(^{14}\text{Rbid.}, \ p. \ 6.\)
stands still for a half minute at a time, focusing on an actor who is delivering Eliot's poetry; however, in Alpert's opinion, the beauty of the poetry does not save the film, because in a motion picture the picture is more important than the words.  

The New Yorker observed that the setting of the film is confined to the Twelfth Century interior of Canterbury Cathedral. Scrutiny of architectural detail warmed the coolness of the ecclesiastic surroundings. The preceding remark is the only reference to the setting that the writer encountered in his survey of eight critical reviews of "Murder in the Cathedral." The only other remarks concerning the visual aspect of the film were directed toward the unimaginative photography. The directing was not mentioned. The critics were primarily concerned with the poetry of the film. However, because of the authenticity of the setting, the writer assumes it is the film's greatest visual accomplishment.

The best directing.—"Rashomon," which is discussed above (see page 51), won the Best Directing award for 1951 at Venice.

Film Awards for 1952

The best film.—The Grand Prize was awarded to a French film called "Jeux Intredit," released in the United States as

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"Forbidden Games." The film is the story of a war orphan who is unofficially adopted by a peasant family. Much of the film is concerned with the activities of the young orphan girl and her new "brother" as they learn about death. Eventually, just when the girl is feeling some degree of happiness and security in her new surroundings, a welfare agency takes her from the peasants. The film won two other awards in Venice during that same festival—the Best Photography award and the Best Directing award.

It is the writer's opinion that the direction of the film is its outstanding virtue, if for no other reason than for the flawless integration of all of the elements of the film. It is doubtlessly the work of one man from start to finish, and any deficiency in the script or acting is his fault. The photography is highly effective in its purpose of being dramatically complementary to the theme.

Ten out of twelve top critics gave "Forbidden Games" favorable reviews. The reviewer of the New Statesman and Nation commented on the insight and character treatment of the director and called the picture "grave, lively, lovely, and honest." Nation observed that the homely settings are photographed in crude darks and lights so that the scenes of children fleeing down a country road at night give the scary, bleak, adventuresome feeling of country life to a degree that

17 New Statesman and Nation, XLV (January 10, 1953), 36.
must be recalled from childhood experience.\textsuperscript{18} The feeling of most reviewers was summed up in the \textit{Spectator Magazine} remark that for once no one could argue the rightness of an award;\textsuperscript{19} however, Tyler Parker made an unfavorable criticism of the realistic approach to the film, as follows: "Highly documentary. Even the photography has spic-and-span 'news-reel' visibility. Facts, facts: a veritable news story."\textsuperscript{20} \textit{New Republic} also unfavorably criticized the film by saying that the theme is destroyed by a reversal at the climax.\textsuperscript{21}

The writer found that all of the critics commented on the fact that "Forbidden Games" was an excellent example of the style trend in motion pictures that has come to be called "Neo-realism," which started in post-war Italian films. The stark honesty and realism of photography, the acting, and the dialogue are very documentary in flavor at times. Although the directing of the film deserved an award, its visual art was so striking and memorable that it doubtlessly contributed to the general impression of excellence which caused the juries to compliment the film so highly.

\textbf{The best directing}.--The Best Directing award for 1952 was made to "Forbidden Games" which is discussed above under the "Best Film" subtitle.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Nation}, CLXXV (December 20, 1952), 586.
\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Spectator}, CXX (January 2, 1953), 10.
\textsuperscript{20}Parker Tyler, "Movies," \textit{Theatre Arts}, XXXVII (February, 1953), 83.
\textsuperscript{21}\textit{New Republic}, CXXVII (February 9, 1953), 22.
The best photography.--The Best Photography award at Venice in 1952 was also awarded to "Forbidden Games," which is discussed at the beginning of this section.

The best set.--The British film "The Importance of Being Earnest" won the Best Set award in 1952. It is the opinion of the writer that most critics took the settings of this picture for granted because of their authenticity. They did not look like sets; consequently they were ignored as such. He believes further that the award is well deserved. Only two critics made complimentary remarks about the visual aspect of the film, but all of them were enthusiastic about the picture as an entertainment piece.

The Saturday Review of Literature said that the film contained gems of acting, dazzling costumes, and desiccated lines of Oscar Wilde, all bathed in that pleasant British technicolor.22 Time commented on the beauty of the richly technicolored sets and costumes.23 It appears that the sets were more impressive to the jurors and artists than to critics; however, that does not necessarily mean that the sets are not of high art quality. They are perfectly-chosen period settings and authoritative examples of Victorian interiors and architecture. The sets are authentic enough in


23Time, LXI (January 5, 1953), 71.
this respect to make them suitable for use in art schools for study of the Victorian period.

Film Awards for 1953

At the International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art in Venice in 1953 there was not a Grand Prize award made because of the inferior quality of the films entered that year. However, according to Francis Koval, the Films in Review correspondent, the jury considerably watered down its uncompromising attitude by awarding six second prizes, not to the films, but to their makers; this can only be interpreted as a face-saving device.24

Special awards.--The second-prize awards, which were designated by the presentation of Silver Lions of St. Mark, appear to have been made geographically. They were given to the film makers as follows: Teinosuke Kinugasa, Japan, for "Ugetsu Monogatari"; Federico Fellini, Italy, for "I Vitelloni"; Ray Ashley, United States, for "The Little Fugitive"; John Huston, England, for "Moulin Rouge"; Marcel Carné, France, for "Therese Raquin"; and Alexander Ptushko, Russia, for "Sadko." Only three of these six films have been released to the American audience and reviewed extensively: "Ugetsu Monogatari," "Moulin Rouge," and "The Little Fugitive." The other films were reviewed by the Films in Review correspondent...

in Venice. Other periodicals listed the prize winners without making any critical statements.

Japan's "Ugetsu Monogatari," which means "Tales of a Pale and Mysterious Moon After the Rain," seems to have been the most popular film among the foreign winners. *Time* said:

'Ugetsu' is contemplative in the midst of violence, wholly oriental in its lidded introspection. Its beauty and meaning are a little remote from western audiences. . . . The actors stay close to the old symbolic style because of the unreal nature of much of the film. The photography always complements the mood. . . . The moviegoer has the sense of living in a classic Japanese watercolor or walking on a world that is really a giant pearl. 25

Arthur Knight of the *Saturday Review of Literature* said that the picture was a wonderful blending of real and unreal that could be done only with the camera. 26 *Newsweek* commented further on the subtle blend of realism and legend as follows:

These, as it happens, are areas where the camera is at its best, and the genius of this film rests on the superb photography which transforms the acting, the story, and the background into a flow of insistently haunting images. 'Ugetsu' weds tradition and modernity. There are scenes of a small frail boat on a misty lake which reach back to Japanese painting for their effect. 27

John McCarten wrote the following:

As I may have pointed out before, nobody who so much as owns a Brownie can get away from one of those international film festivals without some


26 Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXXVII (September 11, 1954), 44.

27 *Newsweek*, XLIV (September 20, 1954), 98.
sort of oscar... 'Ugetsu' hasn't dissipated any of the confusion about the significance of Japanese motion picture art for, like 'Rashomon' it contains more writhing and tumbling than has been seen since the Keystone Cops turned in their badges... The workings of the Japanese mind are odd, but I should add that the workings of the Japanese cameraman who made this film are ingenious and aesthetic. Some of the shots of bleak, rush-grown country are undeniably fascinating. 28

All of the critics commented on the beauty of the photography. The writer has not seen the film, but, because of the consistently good critical reviews of the visual art aspect of the picture, it appears that its visual excellence was good reason for its being rewarded.

"I Vitelloni," meaning "The Wastrels," was an Italian entry, written and directed by Federico Fellini. The writer has not seen this film, but Fellini has the reputation of being an award-winning director. He is definitely among the Italian neo-realists and has probably followed their formula for making this film. This formula includes a generous amount of stark black-and-white photography done in a near-documentary fashion, a considerable amount of local color, much loud Italian yelling and singing, and occasional shockingly realistic down-to-earth scenes of the personal habits of the characters, which may or may not have anything to do with the story.

Films in Review said that by way of the humdrum adventure of a few typical idlers, Fellini and company give a witty and

lively portrayal of life in a provincial Italian town. Fellini uses the language of the screen so effectively that even those whose Italian is sketchy were enchanted.\textsuperscript{29} That "I Vitelloni" was Italy's best entry for the year might have been the primary reason for its inclusion in the award-winning group. The well-told story was likely a secondary consideration, while the visual aspect was inconsiderable, if the critic's comments are any indication.

"The Little Fugitive," an American entry, was produced and directed independently by Ray Ashley and Morris Engel. The writer has not seen the film. Francis Koval said that it is remarkably fresh and sincere, is excellently paced, and that it proves how much can be done on a small budget without stars or lavish sets.\textsuperscript{30} Arthur Knight pointed out that the picture was made in the summer of 1953 at Coney Island, New York, by a group of skilled semi-professionals. The naturalness of the inexperienced seven-year-old boy in the film is cited as a bit of directorial genius which required a fingertip command of child psychology. Mention is made of the adroitness of Engel's camera at catching the whole of Coney Island off guard and in suggesting that the tawdry Island can be beautiful.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29}Francis Koval, "Venice 1953," \textit{Films in Review}, IV (October, 1953), 391.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{31}Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," \textit{Saturday Review of Literature}, XXXVI (November 7, 1953), 36.
Since, as stated above, the 1953 awards were distributed geographically, it was inevitable that one of them would go to an American film. The outstanding directing of "The Little Fugitive" probably caused it to win over its competitors. The good photography might have been a secondary consideration.

"Moulin Rouge," produced in England and entered as a British film, was given one of the awards. This film was discussed in Chapter II (see pages 21-22) because of its Academy Award for the Best Color Set in 1952. That its visual art quality was high was sufficient reason for it being chosen for award from among all the British films presented.

"Therese Raquin," produced by Marcel Carné, was the winning French entry. Films in Review wrote, "In the first part there are some masterful touches and the acting is excellent. It has a dramatic climax seldom seen these days. The public was greatly impressed. More impressed, in fact, than the critics."32 From the above statement, one might assume that the film was chosen for reward because of its heavy drama, as well as for the fact that it was time for France to receive an award. There was nothing written about the visual aspects of this film; it may be concluded that its settings and photography, though effective, were not noteworthy.

"Sadko," the Russian winner, was directed by Alexander Ptushko. "Sadko" is a film adaptation of the Rimsky-Korsakov

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opera. *Films in Review* said, "It is very spectacular and colorful. The Sovcolor, in this instance, is superior to Technicolor, and the music is impressive."33 It seems to the writer that, although the color is impressive, the main reason for rewarding the film was geographical.

**Film Awards for 1954**

Again, as in 1953, the 1954 awards were made in categories different from those agreed upon previously. It is impossible to tell exactly how, if at all, the films were categorized in 1954. The jury awarded a Grand Prize to the Anglo-Italian production of "Romeo and Juliet" and four second prizes—one each to the American "On the Waterfront," the Japanese "The Seven Samurai" and "The Bailiff Sansho," and the Italian "La Strada." In addition to the films mentioned above, which will be discussed individually, "Rear Window" will be discussed because of its special significance in American motion picture trends and the fact that it was an entry at Venice.

The best film.—"Romeo and Juliet," the winner of the Grand Prize for 1954, is an Anglo-Italian production directed by Renato Castellani and produced by J. Arthur Rank. It was entered in the Exhibition as an Italian production. The writer thinks that the film is visually outstanding and that it is a beautiful piece of cinematic art. Many reviewers were

33Ibid., p. 389.
highly critical of Castellani's unfaithful treatment of Shakespeare. It is the writer's opinion that he did not intend to give a recital of Shakespeare; rather, he wanted to make a good motion picture based on Shakespeare. It is impossible to give a recital on film when the material is as complete in description and plot as Shakespeare is without altering the original writing. Castellani lost none of the overall effect of the story by his cutting; he merely amplified the visual and subdued the audible; and as has been remarked earlier in this chapter (see page 56), the picture is more important to a motion picture than the word.

The Saturday Review of Literature had the following to say about the visual art aspects of the film:

Robert Krasker, the cinematographer, has contrived to turn the screen into a veritable art gallery of old masters. His color, lighting, and compositions repeatedly recall the works of such 16th century painters as Bellini, Titian, Holbein, and Caravaggio. The exquisite photography is functional—not merely 'artistic.' . . .

Leonor Fini created a gallery of period costumes that are both handsome and dramatic and the timeless beauty of Verona and Mantua provide richness of décor that no studio could hope to rival. . . . This 'Romeo and Juliet' may have its poetic superiors, for that was not Castellani's intention, but it is not likely to be excelled in physical beauty or cinematic intelligence.34

Films in Review published similar complimentary statements. Their critic said that the film is unified in all its elements and that so skilled are the camera technique and the use of

color that it is difficult to distinguish between the real and the simulated. He called it one of the most beautiful films ever made.\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Time} made these comments:

All through the film there travels a troubling little ecstasy of recognition. The costumes and even many of the scenic compositions are copies from old masterpieces. . . . As the orchestra tunes up for the Capulets' ball, five little boys step up to sing, and suddenly are grouped, in lovely archaic rhythm, as a choir of cherubs in Raphael's style. Juliet, in the scene where she first sees Romeo, is dressed like Botticelli's Flora, and the lines of her head and neck might be a tracing from Veneziano's 'Portrait of a Young Lady.' . . . Image by image Castellani's 'Romeo and Juliet' is a fine film poem. Unfortunately it is not Shakespeare's poem. In his obsession with the beautiful single frame, Castellani has ignored not only the rhythm of Shakespeare's scenes but has even failed to set a rhythm when he cuts from frame to frame. Furthermore, his continental ear could not catch the endless modulations of voice that are necessary to make Shakespeare's language intelligible—let alone affecting—to a modern audience.\textsuperscript{36}

There is little doubt that the visual beauty of its sets, photography, and color was ample reason for awarding the Grand Prize at Venice to "Romeo and Juliet."

\textbf{Special awards.}—"On the Waterfront" won the first of the four second prizes given in 1954. This film is discussed in detail in Chapter II, pages 35-37, in connection with its Academy Awards for 1954. As previously stated, the visual aspects of the film were superior in quality and were a major consideration in naming it the Best Film produced in the

\textsuperscript{35}Lauro Venturi, "Film Reviews," \textit{Films in Review}, V (December, 1954), 539.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Time}, LXIV (December 20, 1954), 48.
United States in 1954. The same qualities were probably those that impressed the Venice jurors, who awarded it a Silver Lion of St. Mark.

"The Seven Samurai," directed by Akira Kurosawa, was a Japanese entry in the 1954 Exhibition. This film has not been released in the United States. It has been mentioned in articles on Japanese films, but never critically.

The writer saw this film without English sub-titles in Tokyo, Japan. Despite the fact that not one word was intelligible, there was never a lag in interest. The story, although it is equivalent in Japan to American cowboy-westerns, was handled with such cinematic intelligence and sensitivity that one always knew what was being felt by the characters. The film, although high in visual quality by usual occidental culture standards, does not measure up to its predecessors at Venice. "Rashomon" and "Ugetsu" are both more exciting visually. Some of the spectacular battle scenes of "The Seven Samurai" are probably the most thrilling that have ever been filmed. It is doubtful that critics would rate this film higher in visual art quality than "On the Waterfront"; however, it has the same consistent high quality throughout all its parts as "On the Waterfront" has, and that in itself justifies the award.

Only one review, sent from Venice by Films in Review during the Festival, is available. The reviewer said that the
film is a tale of long ago about poor peasants soliciting
the aid of samurais against crop-stealing robbers and having
as much reason to fear the samurais as the thieves. There
is no nobility, considerable ferocity, and some humor. But
nothing is over-accentuated, not even the love story that
flowers amid the havoc. The camera work is sensitive.37

"The Bailiff Sansho," directed by Kenji Mizoguchi, was
another Japanese film awarded a Silver Lion of St. Mark at
Venice in 1954. This film has not been released to American
distributors, and the only review is by Francis Koval, who
saw the film at Venice. He said, "Mizoguchi has packed
genuine poetry and pictorial beauty into the 2½ hours. It
is the story of two children of a noble family who are sold
into slavery. Its sincerity, and perfect rhythm, compen-
sate for the slow pace Western audiences dislike."38

The writer has not seen this film, but the short synop-
sis of the story which appears above is enough to indicate
that the Japanese audience was probably emotionally moved by
the story of the film. While in Japan, the writer observed
that the Japanese theatre-goer was very sensitive toward un-
kind treatment of nobility. In the legitimate Japanese the-
atre many traditional dramas are tragedies concerning the
royal family. Invariably, during these plays, the entire

(October, 1954), 388.

38Ibid., p. 393.
Japanese audience weeps. A Western audience is not likely to have the same reactions, but if the photography is as high in art quality in "The Bailiff Sansho" as it is in the other Japanese films which have won awards, the visual art qualities of the film should have been a primary consideration in the decision to award a prize to the film.

"La Strada," entered in the Exhibition by Italy, is another film directed by Federico Fellini. This film was shown in New York City for a very short engagement, but the writer has not seen it. Films in Review said that "La Strada," which means "The Road," is the story of a girl sold to a traveling circus performer who is too primitive to appreciate her devotion until it is too late. She witnesses a fight in which her master kills a man; she loses her senses and is abandoned to die miserably. Venice critics felt that this was just another film of significant Italian neo-realism, but this critic felt that it was just a film that dropped from a good beginning to a cheap melodrama.\textsuperscript{39} Koval usually mentions the visual qualities of the films he reviews. In this review he did not, which might indicate that visually the film was not noteworthy. He also labeled the film "a cheap melodrama." New York critics ignored the film. It would seem that the award was given to Italy out of appreciation for playing host to the Exhibition, since it does not appear to be of prize-worthy quality.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 390.
"Rear Window," directed by Alfred Hitchcock, was entered in the American group at Venice; however, it did not receive a prize. The writer thought that this was visually the best color film of 1954. Critics and festival jurors were so busy comparing the suspense elements of the film with other Hitchcock pictures that they failed to let the beauty of the photography carry its weight. This picture is an excellent example of the new trend in American cinematography toward a conscious use of the framed composition which has made Japanese films so successful in international competitions. Newsweek said of the film: "'Rear Window' is a masterpiece in any man's composition book... It has one scene—a narrow courtyard in Greenwich Village—and is as confined as a stage set, but the story could be done only with a movie camera." Time commented that there was never a dull moment and that Hitchcock has perfect control of his camera and the handsome set. Saturday Review of Literature thought that the film was exceptionally well planned but that occasionally the plot was swamped by the pyrotechnics of technique.

Although "Rear Window" did not receive an award at Venice, the writer thinks that its visual art qualities were as

40Newsweek, XXXIV (August 9, 1954), 80.
41Time, LXIV (August 2, 1954), 72.
prizeworthy as "On the Waterfront" and, from all appearances, better than "La Strada."

The best documentary film.--"Corral," a Canadian film directed by Colin Low, won the Best Documentary award at Venice in 1954. Francis Koval listed the film as a winner in his review in Films in Review but made no comment on the film. No other reviews have been published in the United States, according to the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature.43

The best animated cartoon.--"Christopher Crumpet," a UPA cartoon entered by the United States, won the Best Animated Cartoon award. No reviews are published, and the writer has not seen the film; but, regardless of its quality, it should not have received the award. Francis Koval said that a Canadian cartoon called "A Thousand Million Years" was the best cartoon in the festival. He went on to say that it would have won the Best Cartoon award if it had not been directed by Colin Low, who also directed "Corral." It is a festival policy not to reward two films done by one director, regardless of the quality.44 This, in the opinion of the writer, is clearly a political, rather than an art, consideration.


44 Ibid., p. 403.
Summary

In this chapter, "The International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art in Venice," eighteen long films are discussed. In addition, two animated cartoons and two documentary films are considered. The documentary and cartoon section is included, even though the information is too limited to form any valid conclusions, in order to give as nearly complete a record of winning films as possible.

Of the eighteen entertainment films reviewed, critics have expressed the view that eleven of them not only had superior visual art qualities but that the visual aspect was the outstanding feature of each film. These films include "Rashomon," "Journal d'un Curé de Campagne," "Murder in the Cathedral," "The Importance of Being Earnest," "Forbidden Games," "Ugetsu Monogatari," "Moulin Rouge," "Romeo and Juliet," "On the Waterfront," "The Seven Samurais," and "The Bailiff Sansho." The other seven films were considered by critics and reviewers to be outstanding in an aspect other than visual art. The jury in rewarding "I Vitelloni" seems to have been either politically or geographically motivated. "The Little Fugitive" was rewarded because of its outstanding directing. "Therese Raquin" had a highly dramatic story, and if any consideration was given to factors other than political or geographic, it must have been favorably reviewed because of the story. "Sadko" was doubtlessly rewarded after
political consideration, even though the music was outstanding. If Canada or the United States had entered the film, it would have, in all probability, been ignored. "La Strada" received an award, but it does not seem to be justified cinematically.

"Rear Window" was not considered for an award, even though it was outstanding visually. It was included in this investigation because it was highly acclaimed by the critics and because it illustrated a beginning trend in American cinema which is the result of Japanese influence on Western films—a consciousness of the framed composition and complementary photography that has not previously appeared in American films as a definable technique. The Japanese film has also had influence on European films since the discovery of "Rashomon." "Romeo and Juliet" has the same pictorial quality as Japanese films, with the exception that it lacks some of the subtlety and fragile color that Japanese pictures have.

Percentage-wise, the films that were notable because of their visual art qualities were in the majority among the award-winning films at Venice during the four-year period under consideration.
CHAPTER IV

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AT CANNES

History and Organization

The International Film Festival at Cannes, held annually in the spring, had its first program in 1946. It had originally set its opening for the spring of 1939, but the war naturally stopped international competition, and the French, who already had their own national festival, had no need for another local exhibition.

To some film makers, particularly the Italians who sponsored the International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art in Venice, the Film Festival at Cannes seemed useless under any circumstances, but it was organized despite unofficial protest from Venice. In fact, it was organized because of the Italian exhibition. The Venice organization had provoked American and French representatives on numerous occasions during festivals prior to 1938, but during that year the political influence on award presentations was so obvious that the United States withdrew from the festival with a threat to create competition for them close by, where fair judging would be the policy. The Cannes festival was the result, and it opened the first year after the war with a big press campaign against the Venice Exhibition.
In spite of the fact that there was extensive sympathetic feeling internationally for the organizers of the Cannes Festival, there were many problems that kept them from having the ideal film event they had hoped for. Cannes is in a bad location, and Venice was strong and well organized, despite its "corruption." The Festival soon fell into the commercial hands of the General Administration of Theatrical Shows, which financed it.\(^1\)

The first awards in 1946 were made by an international jury. In 1947 there was a contest—sponsored by the festival organization and run by the seven French cinema journals—in which any competent, interested person could present a critical essay to be judged in competition, the winners being granted seats on the festival jury. Seven essay winners and twelve artists and film critics made up the highly successful jury. Nonetheless, there were complaints from non-French sources that the jury was too nearly a national type to be completely objective. That year the Cannes Festival awarded prizes to films in six categories, chosen according to subject: (1) psychology of love, (2) adventure, (3) social problems, (4) musical comedies, (5) documentaries, and (6) full-length cartoons. Since classification of the entries into specific types proved to be difficult, this system was

\(^1\)Elio Zorzi, "Are Film Festivals Necessary?" International Film Review, IV (October, 1949), 30-32.
abandoned in 1948, as was the contest for selecting jurors.\(^2\)

There were no festivals in Cannes in 1949 and 1950. In 1951
the Festival re-opened with renewed strength. A large modern cinema palace was especially designed for film exhibition.

It also contained offices for officials, visiting critics, and press members. The building was financed by the French government, and the Festival itself was 60 per cent the financial responsibility of the French government. The rest of the expense was borne by the local hotels and tourist organizations that had, of course, promoted the Festival from the beginning. The Festival patrons were about equally divided between those who came to see films and those who came to the parties. Perhaps if the best "shows" had been rewarded, the prizes would have gone to various cocktail parties, on the basis of that host who could bring in the most celebrities. Fortunately, there has been a de-emphasis of the glamor aspect of the Festival in recent years.\(^3\)

The Cannes Festival shows an average of forty feature films during the two-week program. After all films have been shown, awards are made in the following categories: the Best Film, the Best Sets, the Best Photography, the Best Directing, the Best Documentary Film, and the Best Animated Cartoon. In addition to these, documentary films, animated


\(^3\)Zorzi, op. cit., p. 31.
cartoons, and special pictures are submitted to the Festival on a non-competitive basis and are ineligible for awards.\(^4\)

The films winning awards at Cannes are listed in Table III, except for those that were given awards in categories other than those which appear on the table. There were no awards for animated cartoons during the four years, and no documentary awards were given after 1951.

In 1952 there was no award given for the Best Set. In 1953 awards were made to the Best Dramatic Film, the Best Entertainment Film, the Best Exploration Film, and the Best Comedy Film, rather than in categories of sets, photography, and directing. In 1952 and 1953 no distinction was made, as far as classification is concerned, between documentary films and others.

In 1954 awards were made geographically to Austria, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Russia, and the United States, rather than in the categories of sets, photography, and directing. All of the prize-winning films are discussed individually in the following pages.

Film Awards for 1951

The best film.—In 1951 the Grand Prize was given as a split award to the Italian "Miracle in Milan" and the Swedish "Miss Julie."

### TABLE III

AWARDS PERTAINING TO VISUAL ASPECTS OF FILMS, THE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AT CANNES, 1951-1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Best Film</th>
<th>Best Sets</th>
<th>Best Photography</th>
<th>Best Directing</th>
<th>Best Documentary</th>
<th>Best Animated Cartoon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Miracle in Milan and Miss Julie</td>
<td>Moussorgsky</td>
<td>La Balanda Isabel Llego esta Tarde</td>
<td>Los Olvidados</td>
<td>Miroir de Hollande</td>
<td>No Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two Cents Worth of Hope and Othello</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>The Story of Genji</td>
<td>Fanfan la Tulipe</td>
<td>No Award</td>
<td>No Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>La Salaire de la Peur</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>The Gate of Hell</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
<td>Category Discontinued</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The writer found "Miracle in Milan," directed by Vittorio de Sica, to be an amusing film that was, however, disconcerting because of the inconsistency of style. It was difficult to follow the film idea since documentary-type scenes and pure fantasy scenes are side by side, leaving only the characters to sustain continuity. Illustrative of this mixture is the realistic scene—in which a small boy is following the hearse carrying his dead mother through the streets—juxtaposed with the fantastic scene, in which the central character is flying over Milan on a stick. Visually the film was not overly exciting, although the visual aspects are of high enough quality not to be detrimental to the film.

John McCarten complimented the direction and presentation of the humorous idea and said that the picture was very amusing and excellent film theatre.\(^5\) *Time* called the film an original work of art with a wealth of visual ideas.\(^6\) *Theatre Arts* gave the film a generally favorable criticism which emphasized the theme and story and mentioned the fact that the film contained some of the neo-realistic qualities of most of De Sica's pictures.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) *Time*, LVIII (December 17, 1951), 102.

Robert Hatch was not so favorably impressed with the film as most reviewers were. He felt that the picture lacked the consistency of style that fantasy demands and that the special effects are as creaky as the devices of old melodrama. Thus, whether the critics reviewed the film favorably or unfavorably, they were not generally impressed with its visual qualities. The author agrees with them that the film's merit is in its excellence as entertainment.

"Miss Julie," adapted from the Strindberg play, was a Swedish entry in the Festival. The writer has not seen this film, but critics were unanimous in their acclaim for the high quality of the acting and photography, as well as for the excellent story. There is no indication that any one of these three aspects of the picture is outstanding over the other two; so it may be assumed that the overall excellence of the film justified its being voted to share with "Miracle in Milan" the Grand Prize for 1951. The Saturday Review of Literature thought that the film, directed by Alf Sjoberg, was a restrained and beautifully photographed rendering of the play. New Statesman and Nation, likewise, commented upon the excellence of the story, the acting, and the photography.

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10 New Statesman and Nation, XLII (December 8, 1951), 664.
Newsweek observed that the film was tempestuously acted and superbly photographed.¹¹

The best set.--The Best Set award film, "Moussorgsky," is a Russian picture. It has not, to the writer's knowledge, been shown in the United States. Robert Hawkins, who reported the Festival from Venice for Films in Review, said that the film was strict party-line documentation of the life of the Russian composer and that the action was set in the composer's own quarters and living area of the country.¹² It would thus appear that the authenticity of the setting is, to outsiders at least, an outstanding aspect of the film; however, its quality as art cannot be surmised from this brief comment.

The best photography.--"La Balanda Isabel Lâego esta Tarde" from Venezuela won the Best Photography award in 1951; however, it was not reviewed in any periodicals which are available to the writer. Hawkins, who reviewed the rest of the winning films, but only listed this one, arrived at the Festival after this film had been shown.¹³

The best directing.--"Los Olvidados," meaning "The Lost Ones," was a Mexican entry which won the Best Directing award in the 1951 Festival. The film impressed the writer because of its photography, which showed not only a sensitive choice

¹¹Newsweek, XXXIX (April 28, 1952), 97.


¹³Ibid., p. 8.
of subject matter but also excellent technique. McCarten, of *The New Yorker*, agreed with this estimate of the film. In speaking of the directing, he said that it showed a mastery of dramatic narrative and documentary realism, and that the photography of the "terrible and remarkable film" was frightening and flawless.\(^{14}\)

Other critics indicate that they agree that the direction of "Los Olvidados" is of extremely high quality, but they seem to think of the directing in terms of thematic interpretation and character manipulation rather than in terms that are relative to the visual aspects of motion pictures. *The Saturday Review of Literature* said that for Luis Bunuel, the director, "The Lost Ones" is a personal triumph.\(^{15}\) *Films in Review*, which summarized the film's story concerning juvenile delinquency in Mexico, complimented the expert handling of an often misused theme. It said that Bunuel treated his characters humanly and explained in a near-documentary, but high dramatic fashion, the reasons for the juvenile delinquency problems; "Los Olvidados" was outstandingly a directing picture.\(^{16}\)

That some critics did not mention the outstanding photography does not necessarily mean that they were unimpressed.


\(^{15}\)Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXXIV (September 15, 1951), 24.

with it, but that they were more impressed with other aspects of a generally excellent picture.

The best documentary.--The Best Documentary award for 1951 was made to a Dutch entry called "Miroir de Hollande." According to Films in Review, the film, written, photographed, and edited by Bert Haanstra, provided one of the most pleasant surprises of the Festival. Hawkins said that the picture is a poetic expression of Dutch landscapes, houses, and people seen in their reflections in water. It is beautifully photographed and cut to a well integrated score.17 This critic leaves the impression that the visual art quality of the film, in photography particularly, was its outstanding aspect.

Film Awards for 1952

The best film.--In 1952 at Cannes, as in 1951, the Grand Prize was given as a split award to "Two Cents Worth of Hope," an Italian film, and "Othello," a Moroccan film. The writer found the former to be an enlightening documentation of life in an Italian village, but visually disappointing. Perhaps the cause for the lack of visual interest was the fact that the camera was used as if it were a human eye rather than as a camera, thereby losing the flexibility that the film needed visually.

According to Theatre Arts, "Two Cents Worth of Hope," directed by Renata Castellani, is an excellent film which ranks

17Ibid., p. 8.
at the very top of the long list of remarkable realistic Italian films. Saturday Review of Literature said that this film was realism at its best. The New Yorker commented on Castellani's enviable faculty of seeming most relaxed when he is being most artful. Films in Review said that the award was a deserved triumph, since the film's rustic love story, done in a humorous key, is one of the best Italian films in years. These comments show that the critics were very much impressed with Castellani's mastery of realism. They indicate by this that they consider the directing (by Renato Castellani) the film's outstanding aspect. No one was impressed by the film's visual art aspects.

"Othello" was entered as a Moroccan film by Orson Welles, who directed and acted in it. The writer has not seen this film. The National Parent Teacher felt that Orson Welles defined the character of Othello in a colorful, if uneven, version of the great tragedy, but went on to say that the film lost much of its stature and integrity by being shortened.

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22 National Parent Teacher, XLVII (March, 1954), 40.
Charles Stevens thought that the picture was magnificently staged and that the camera work among the Venetian and ancient Italian buildings and fortresses was breathtaking.\textsuperscript{23} Robert Hawkins reported that the picture was often brilliant, vivid, and striking, but rarely moving or novel. He thought that, although indebted to many of the best film styles of the past, its fine filmic sense made it a strong last film of the Festival.\textsuperscript{24} From these comments it appears that critics considered the overall production impressive and intelligently done, but that no single aspect of the film was outstanding over the others.

\textbf{The best photography.---}The Best Photography award for 1952 was made to the Japanese film, "The Story of Genji." This film has not been screened in the United States; consequently, the evaluation of the film must rest upon the only published review available---that of Hawkins in \textit{Films in Review}, which reviewed all entries at the Festival. Hawkins said that the picture was a stylistic treat for those able to endure its slow pace and that it was one of the most beautiful films seen in a long time, that although it was marred by a superficial and repetitious story, it was of undoubted value and interest visually.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23}Charles Stevens, "Movies," \textit{Farm Journal}, LXXVII (April, 1954), 165.


\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 260.
The best directing.—The Best Directing Award was made to the French entry, "Fanfan la Tulipe." The writer found the visual aspects of the film to be of a sufficiently high quality not to detract from the subtlety of the drama; however, it did not impress him as being visually outstanding.

*Newsweek* said that this film, directed by Christian Jaque, was a fine example of making a great deal out of utter nonsense. It is the story of a man, Fanfan, who joins the army of Louis XV after the recruiting officer's daughter, who poses as a gypsy fortuneteller, tells him, as she tells many man, that he will marry the King's daughter if he joins the army. Fanfan, of course, becomes involved with the officer's daughter. *Newsweek* went on to say that the film is a great burlesque as long as it leaves the general story line alone.26 John McCarten found the cast to be excellent and the film highly amusing, and stated that the flaws are negligible when the overall excellence of the picture is considered.27 *Time* observed that the picture was directed with sly relish of the witty satire on the typical motion picture "swashbuckler."28 Arthur Knight called the film an hilarious "spoof" of the French period of Louis XV and Hollywood western films.29

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26 *Newsweek*, XLI (May 25, 1953), 100.


28 *Time*, LXI (May 11, 1953), 110.

29 Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXXVI (May 2, 1953), 36.
Critics agree that the film is effectively directed and very entertaining; nevertheless, it must be eliminated from the list of visually excellent films.

Film Awards for 1953

The best film.—The Grand Prize at Cannes in 1953 was given to the French film, "La Salaire de la Peur," which means "The Wages of Fear." The writer has not seen this film, but critics seem to think that the picture is of high quality in all aspects and outstanding in its inherent qualities of suspense and drama.

The New Yorker called the film a great cinematic thriller and commented on the excellent acting. It summarized the story, which concerns three men who are given money for delivering explosives to a company in the mountains. During the harrowing mountain drive, one of the men is murdered by the others so that the money need be split only two ways. The remainder of the trip is filled with suspense for the two remaining characters, each of whom is wondering if the other will try to kill him in order to obtain the entire amount of money.30 Spectator said that the film was a superior, intelligent, brutally realistic work, marred only by a surfeit of the good things it offers in drama and thrills.31


31 Spectator, CXLII (February 12, 1954), 173.
Films in Review classified the film as being overwhelming in its dramatic impact, just short of the masterpiece rank because of some technical mistakes that reduce its value artistically.32

The reviews of "La Salaire de la Peur" indicate that, although the visual art aspects of the film were not its outstanding feature, they were handled satisfactorily.

**Special awards.**—The awards for 1953, other than the Grand Prize and the Best Documentary, are as follows: the Best Drama film, "Come Back Little Sheba;" the Best Entertainment film, "Lili;" the Best Exploration film, "Green Magic;" and the Best Comedy film, "Welcome, Mr. Marshall."

"Come Back Little Sheba," the Best Drama, was an American entry, directed by Daniel Mann. The writer is in accord with the critics who feel that the outstanding aspect of "Come Back Little Sheba" is in the dramatic acting.

The New Yorker presented a story analysis and criticized the acting. It stated that Shirley Booth gives such an excellent acting performance that one is inclined to overlook the rest of the actors.33 Newsweek thought that the picture was one of the outstanding films of the year. Special praise was given to the writers and to Shirley Booth.34

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34 Newsweek, XL (December 29, 1952), 64.
On the other hand, the photography and settings of the film are more than adequate. Two critics were impressed with the high quality of these visual aspects. The Saturday Review of Literature said that Mann must give much of the credit to James Wong Howe, the cameraman, for the fluidity, the intelligent camera set-ups, and lighting of the picture. It stated further that Howe did a magnificent job of camera placement against the emotional tensions of a scene and that though there are few close-ups, the camera is always close enough to follow the actions nimbly.35 Time said, "The evocatively drab photography makes the film better than one that is obviously a transferred stage play."36

"Lili," the Best Entertainment film at Cannes in 1953, was another American entry. The writer thinks that perhaps "charming" is the best description of this film. It is good entertainment with moments of surprising originality, such as the use of puppets within the story line.

The Saturday Review of Literature made the comment that the colorful sets were no larger than need be to encompass the action and that the film has taste, imagination, and "a delicate sweetness of spirit."37


36Time, IX (December 29, 1952), 66.

37Arthur Knight, "SRL Goes to the Movies," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXVI (March 7, 1953), 35.
Time says the picture has visual bounce and a blithe sense of improvisation. It made a wonderful use of colorful wood and clay puppets and dream sequences, in which Leslie Caron danced. Films in Review was impressed with the fresh approach of the film and the good taste in handling the story of naive, young love. The critics seem to agree with the writer that the picture is primarily outstanding as a wholesome entertainment film of high quality in all its parts.

"Green Magic," an Italian production, won a special award for being the Best Exploration film. Actually, the film is documentary, but apparently no distinction was made between documentaries and other films in 1953.

Critics unanimously agreed that as documentation the film was superior and that it was well photographed. The New Yorker said that the film, which describes a recent trip across the middle of South America by Jeep, was a little slow at times; that the English commentary was too florid; but that all in all the film was very good as travel films go. Newsweek observed that the material, as documentation, was well worth the six-month trip through swamps, jungles, and mountains. They called it a superior travelogue in which

38 *Time*, LXI (March 9, 1953), 100.


everything from flesh-eating piranha fish to voodoo and wedding ceremonies is documented in beautiful Ferrania color.41 Films in Review commented that the beautifully photographed film was well organized and supervised by Gaspare Napolitano.42

It is safe to say that "Green Magic" was outstanding as a work of visual art because of its superior color photography.

"Welcome, Mr. Marshall," the Best Comedy film, is a Spanish production which has not been seen by the writer. Films in Review, which published the only available review, stated that the film was a satire on the Marshall plan. It concerned a small Spanish town which was being visited by emissaries of the Marshall plan. The little town went "all out" to prepare for the visit, but the visitors completely ignored their preparations. Americans at the Festival insisted on two cuts in the film. One was an American flag in a gutter (together with other paper flags) after a fiesta had been rained out. The other was a priest's nightmare in which the priest found himself before a tribunal of the Ku-Klux-Klan. The Festival audience was delighted to find the film genuinely satirical and humorous, sparkling and quite inoffensive. The film, directed by Berlanga and Barden, deserved the prize without a doubt.43

41 Newsweek, XLV (June 6, 1955), 98.
43 Ibid., p. 259.
Apparently the outstanding quality of the picture was in its humorous satire; there was no mention of the visual aspects of the film.

Film Awards for 1954

The best film.--The Best Film at Cannes in 1954 was the Japanese "Gate of Hell." The writer agrees with critics in their view that this film is visually one of the most exciting motion pictures in color to date.

*Newsweek* made the following comment:

Kinugasa [the director] can use extraordinarily effective camera angles to heighten excitement; at the same time, he tells a story with something of the Kabuki’s formal wedding of the theatre and the dance.

Technically the film is a prize winner in any language. Sanze Wada, a painter, art professor, and expert on the scientific use of color, arranged the fabrics and sets for the Eastman color cameras.44

*Saturday Review of Literature* made this statement:

At the moment Japanese film studies seem to be doing the most interesting, most creative job of movie-making in the world. There is the urge to create a new and original school of cinematography. . . . The physical beauty of 'Gate of Hell' is so striking it sweeps away the language and customs barrier. Like a Japanese painting its tones are muted and grey. In all probability, it is its incredibly beautiful coloring that makes this film so overwhelmingly effective. . . . The Japanese studied color in Hollywood for three years then added their centuries of knowledge of the philosophy and psychology of color. . . . 'Gate of Hell' is not only the most handsome picture yet shown on any screen anywhere, but color plays an important

44*Newsweek*, XLIV (December 13, 1954), 98.
emotional role as well. It is in the fullest sense, a true work of art.\textsuperscript{45}

As \textit{Time} commented, the first Japanese attempt to shoot in color according to modern techniques is a treatise on cinema chromatics that Western motion-picture producers may be pondering for years to come.\textsuperscript{46}

The visual excellence of "Gate of Hell" justifies its award as "Best Film of 1954."

\textbf{Special awards.---}As in 1953, the awards in 1954 were not given in the usual categories based upon the different aspects of film production. The 1954 awards were made geographically as follows: to Austria for "The Last Bridge," to Italy for "Napolitan Carousel," to Poland for "Five Boys from Barska Street," to Sweden for "The Great Adventure," to Russia for "Skander Beg," and to the United States for "The Living Desert." Only the American film, "The Living Desert," has been shown in the United States; consequently, in this paper an evaluation of the foreign films must rest upon the comments of critics.

"The Last Bridge," an Austrian film, was directed by Helmut Kautner. According to \textit{Films in Review} it is an extremely good black-and-white film dealing with partisan warfare in Yugoslavia. The acting and the photography are mentioned as outstanding.\textsuperscript{47}


\textsuperscript{46}\textit{Time}, LXIV (December 13, 1954), 100.

"Napolitan Carousel," from Italy, was directed by Ettore Giannini and functionally set by Mario Chiari. It also was reviewed in Films in Review. The review stated that the film played up neither neo-realism nor antiquity, but concentrated upon pure enjoyment of songs, dances, humor, and color of the wonderful city of Naples. The critic went on to say that in its blend of song and ballet "Napolitan Carousel" was an imitation of "An American in Paris," and that, although a little slow at times, it was well received by the Festival audience. Dance Magazine commented that "Napolitan Carousel" was Italy's first color musical, that it was beautifully filmed and contained inspired choreography by Leonide Massine. These two critics indicate that the merit of the film rests on its musical and terpsichorean, rather than visual, excellence.

"Five Boys from Barska Street," from Poland, was directed by Alexander Ford. Catherine Wunschcr, who reported on the film from Venice, said that this was the first Iron Curtain picture that she has seen in which the story is the primary concern. That it was told in a cinematic way also impressed her. She said further that the actors are natural and well directed.

48 Ibid., p. 212.
Since the film is primarily concerned with a story, forcefully presented by well directed actors, visual qualities were, apparently, not considered of tantamount importance.

"The Great Adventure," from Sweden, was directed by Arne Sucks dorff. Wunscher found the film disappointing and no better than the early works of Sucks dorff.\(^{51}\) No other reviews have been printed in the United States, but Wunscher indicates that the film is not cinematically prize-worthy; so we may assume that it was rewarded because no better film from that geographical area was submitted.

"Skander Beg," from Russia, states Films in Review, is a film celebrating Albania's national hero by the same name. The picture was directed by Sergei Youtkevitch, who handled the color exceptionally well. The direction is reminiscent in technique of the masters Fudovkin and Eisenstein. The award was made with particular mention of the photography.\(^{52}\) It seems that the color photography was the outstanding aspect of the film.

"The Living Desert" was the first of the Walt Disney "True Life Adventure" films. The writer thinks that the visual aspects of the film are outstanding because of superior photography.

Newsweek said that the film is an exotic and absorbing series of faunal close-ups, strikingly Technicolored and

\(^{51}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 210.}\) \(^{52}\text{Ibid.}\)
directed by James Algar. The New Yorker described the film as a documentary study of the denizens of the Western wastelands, fascinating in marvelous photographic detail. McCarten commented that the endurance of the photographers has been rewarded with excellent results. Time said that "The Living Desert" is a triumphantly beautiful film. It said further that the greatest weakness is in the sound track; the narrative and music are often vulgar and "corny." The Saturday Review of Literature wrote that the work of the photographers is exceedingly well blended and that the Technicolor is extraordinary, considering the circumstances under which the filming was done.

In "The Living Desert" at least, Walt Disney shows that his eminence as a motion-picture producer rests upon his skill in presenting a picture as a visual work of art, even though other aspects of the film may be creditable.

Summary

The critics have indicated by their comments that the quality of art, in its visual aspects, in films awarded prizes in the International Film Festival at Cannes is far lower than

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53Newsweek, XLII (November 23, 1953), 100.
55Time, LXII (November 16, 1953), 106.
56Hollis Alpert, "SRL Goes to the Movies," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXVI (November 14, 1953), 41.
in those given awards at Venice or by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Only seven of twenty-two films rewarded at Cannes during the four-year period were examples of outstanding visual art. They were "La Balanda Isabel Llegó esta Tarde," "Miroir de Hollande," "The Story of Genji," "Green Magic," "Skander Beg," "Gate of Hell," and "The Living Desert." The rest of the films were either outstanding in some other aspect of production or were rewarded for purely political or geographical reasons.

Geographically, the awards at Cannes are widely spread. They seem to try to give awards to as many sections of the world, and to as many different political factions, as possible each year. The trends in technique most recognized as award-worthy have been the neo-realistic styles of Italy and the framed composition films of Japan. The former has a psychological-visual appeal, but the latter is a purely visual quality.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Comparative Summary

The writer had not expected that all of the films awarded prizes by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art in Venice, and the International Film Festival would be outstanding in visual art. Neither was it expected that the percentage of award films which were outstanding in visual art would necessarily be similar in each of the organizations.

Percentage-wise, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences rewarded the largest number of films which were visually outstanding. During the four-year period covered by the study, fourteen films were rewarded in categories in which, by their definition, the visual aspects of the films would necessarily receive primary consideration. These fourteen awards were to "An American in Paris," "Moulin Rouge," "The Robe," and "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" for their color sets; to "A Streetcar Named Desire," "The Bad and the Beautiful," "Julius Caesar," and "On the Waterfront" for their black-and-white sets; to "An American in Paris," "The Quiet Man," "Shane," and "Three Coins in the Fountain" for the color photography; to "A Place in the Sun," "The Bad and the
Beautiful," "From Here to Eternity," and "On the Waterfront" for their black-and-white photography. Four of the above-mentioned films—"A Place in the Sun," "The Quiet Man," "From Here to Eternity," and "On the Waterfront," also won awards for their direction.

The writer and critics agree that only two of these fourteen films were not high enough in visual art quality to deserve the awards that they received. These two inferior films were "The Robe" in 1953 and "Three Coins in the Fountain" in 1954. The Best Set award to "The Robe" is an example of an award presentation to a film in a category in which visual art qualities are expected to be superior. The technical solution to the design problems, which arose from the use of the new Cinemascope technique, is the impressive element of "The Robe." Therefore, its visual distinction is technical rather than esthetic. On the other hand, "Three Coins in the Fountain" was not exceptionally good in any aspect of its visual art.

Three of the four films awarded Academy Awards for the Best Film were visually outstanding; they were "An American in Paris," "The Greatest Show on Earth," and "On the Waterfront." "From Here to Eternity," the fourth Best Film award winner, had exceptionally good acting, writing, and directing, and the visual art was effective, but no single aspect of the film seemed to be outstanding over all others.
Eighteen of the films rewarded at Venice during the four years were discussed. These awards were given to the best photography, the best sets, the best directing, and the best film in 1951 and 1952. In 1953 all awards (six in number) were made geographically, and in 1954 all awards (five in number) except the Grand Prize were made as second prizes.

The writer and critics found that eleven of the eighteen films were visually superior and also that the visual art was the outstanding aspect of each film. These films were "Rashomon," "Journal d'un Curé de Campagne," "Murder in the Cathedral," "The Importance of Being Earnest," "Forbidden Games," "Ugetsu Monogatari," "Moulin Rouge," "Romeo and Juliet," "On the Waterfront," "The Seven Samurai," and the "Bailiff Sansho." All three of the Grand Prize films at Venice were visually outstanding; they were "Rashomon," "Forbidden Games," and "Romeo and Juliet." The other seven films were outstanding in an aspect other than visual art or were rewarded in 1953 when awards were made geographically.

The percentage of visually outstanding films rewarded at the Cannes Festival during the four years is below that of the other two organizations. Of twenty-two prize-films, only seven were visually outstanding. These films were "La Balanda Isabel Llego esta Tarde," "Miroir de Hollande," "The Story of Genji," "Green Magic," "Skander Beg," "Gate of Hell," and "The Living Desert." Only one of the six Grand Prize films at Cannes was considered to be outstanding as visual art; it
was "Gate of Hell." As was explained in Chapter IV (see Summary, page 93), political and geographical awards were probably responsible for the low percentage of visually outstanding films rewarded at Cannes.

Limited information on documentary films and animated cartoons at Venice and Cannes made a conclusion concerning the visual qualities of the films impossible. The writer and critics agree that the visual aspects of the Academy Award-winning documentaries and cartoons are gratifying, but they feel that the visual art is not always the outstanding aspect of these films. "The Alaskan Eskimo" and "Water Birds" are visually outstanding documentaries, and "Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom" is a visually outstanding cartoon.

It is the writer's opinion, and some critics agree, that in 1954 the Best Film and Grand Prize awards were given to three films that are the three most beautiful motion pictures produced up until that time—"On the Waterfront," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Gate of Hell." The writer hopes that this may be an indication of an increasing consciousness on the part of awarding juries and motion-picture producers of the possibilities of the film as an expression of graphic art.

Trends

The most significant trends in motion-picture production today are those caused by the influence of the post-war
Italian neo-realistic films and the Japanese framed-composition films. Both influences have appeared in American films within the four-year period of this investigation. Most notable are "On the Waterfront," which is extremely "Italian Neo-Realistic" in flavor, and "Rear Window" in which the framed composition was used as a recognizable cinematographic technique. The Italian influence has spread to almost all of the European film capitals and even to South America. The Japanese influence has appeared in a number of European films; perhaps the most successful result was the Anglo-Italian "Romeo and Juliet."

The UPA cartoon has been a strong influence on all animated cartoon production in the United States and possibly in Europe. The highly simplified drawing, the areas of pure unbroken color, and the sophisticated concept of the cartoons have even influenced the style of the Walt Disney productions. The writer feels that in the last two years the UPA cartoon has become too complicated in drawing to maintain its original high art standard, but its influence as a style which has set a definite trend in cartooning is undeniable.

The visual art aspects of every film receiving the Best Film or Grand Prize award in 1954 were considered to be of such superior quality—quality much higher than in any of the films rewarded before that time—that it seems safe to conjecture that the film industries will begin to produce more pictures in which the visual aspects are outstanding.
and that these qualities will be employed to their ultimate
in complementing the dramatic aspects of the films. Such an
increase in visual art consciousness might result from the
supposition that festival juries and film evaluating organi-
izations have begun to recognize the importance of the visual
aspects of films as graphic art.

While during the four-year period under consideration
most of the visually outstanding films which caused a sensa-
tion upon their discovery have been Italian or Japanese, it
seems that the near-monopoly of artistically excellent films
from these geographical areas is broken, although it is ex-
pected that both will continue to make outstanding contri-
butions. European countries, South America, and the United
States are producing some visually gratifying films, and
there is hope—and the writer thinks an indication—that the
number of these excellent films will increase and that the
motion picture will come to be recognized and judged pri-
marily as a legitimate graphic art.
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