

Films of Powell & Pressburger

Course Code: SMLM 046

Semester A

Seminar/workshop: Thursday, 4-6pm

Course organiser: Charles Drazin, Room: Arts 1.23

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Course description

This course is intended to offer students an in-depth appreciation of the films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. After providing a general introduction to the British cinema in which Powell and Pressburger made their names, it will explore the genesis of the partnership in the 1930s and the formation of their production company the Archers in 1942. It will then focus on the series of films that the Archers made during the 1940s and early 1950s, exploring their preoccupation with art, tradition, landscape and British identity, as well as their pioneering use of colour. Besides considering the themes and motifs of the films themselves, the course will look at their production history, as well as the social and political context in which they were made. Addressing issues of authorship, it will also explore the creative dynamic between Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, as well as other key figures in the Archers team.

Essential Reading

Ian Christie, *Arrows of Desire: The Films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger* (Faber, new edn, 2002)

Andrew Moor, *Powell & Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces* (I.B. Tauris, 2005)

Jack Cardiff, *Magic Hour: A Life in Movies* (Faber, 1997)

Michael Powell, *A Life in Movies* (Faber, new edn, 2000)

Michael Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie* (Random House, 1995)

Further Reading

Ian Christie, *Powell, Pressburger and Others* (BFI, 1978)

Ian Christie, *A Matter of Life and Death* (BFI, 2000)

Ian Christie and Andrew Moor (eds.), *Michael Powell: International Perspectives on an English Film-maker* (BFI Publishing, 2005)

Mark Connelly, *The Red Shoes* (I.B. Tauris, 2005)

Pam Cook, *I Know Where I'm Going* (BFI Publishing, 2002)

Charles Drazin, *The Finest Years: British Cinema of the 1940s* (I.B. Tauris, 2007)

Charles Drazin, *Korda: Britain's Only Movie Mogul* (Macmillan, 2002)

Gough-Yates, Kevin (ed.), *Michael Powell in Collaboration with Emeric Pressburger* (BFI, 1971)

A.L. Kennedy, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (BFI Publishing, 1997)

Kevin Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death of a Screenwriter* (Faber, 1996)

Michael Powell, *Edge of the World: The Making of a Film* (Faber, 1990)

Sarah Street, *Black Narcissus* (I.B. Tauris, 2005)

David Lazar (ed.), *Michael Powell: Interviews* (University Press of Mississippi, 2003)

Course Outline

Week 2

General introduction to the British cinema.

Genesis of the partnership and the war years (Wks 3–6)

Week 3

Edge of the World (1937), *The Spy in Black* (1939) and *The 49th Parallel* (1941)

Week 4

One of Our Aircraft is Missing (1942) and *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943)

Week 5

A Canterbury Tale (1944) and *I Know Where I'm Going* (1945)

Week 6

A Matter of Life and Death (1946)

Pioneering the 'composed film' (Wks 8–9)

Week 8

Black Narcissus (1947)

Week 9

The Red Shoes (1948)

The move from the Rank Organisation to Korda/British-Lion (Wks 10–11)

Week 10

The Small Back Room (1949) and *The Elusive Pimpernel* (1950)

Week 11

Gone to Earth (1950) and *Tales of Hoffmann* (1951)

Conclusions and Student Presentations

Week 12

Last modified: 27 July 2011