



**THE THOUSAND AND ONE FACES OF
SEGUNDO DE CHÓMON:
TRICK FILM ARTIST, COLORIST, CAMERAMAN...
AND PIONEER OF THE CINEMA**

**Call for papers
Conference 27-28 November 2017**



Segundo de Chomón (1871-1929) is one of the undisputed masters of early trick cinematography. His contribution to animated images is also intimately associated with their coloring. However, this Spanish pioneer is much more; the importance of his work would probably have been better recognized and more closely evaluated had it not been for the shadow cast by Georges Méliès. If Chomón was inspired by the famous French pioneer in some of his trick films, he stands apart in his masterly use of single frame techniques, silhouettes and reverse action. In addition, he was one of the few *cinématographistes* to have successfully made the big leap from the monstrative trick films of the 1900s to the institutionalized cinema of the 1910s, the beginnings of this conversion may be already perceptible during his Paris career at Pathé.

The effects of his first trick and transformation films would mature into special effects in narrative films which he would execute with perfect mastery, from *La Poule aux oeufs d'or* (1905) to Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* in Italy in 1914, to Abel Gance's *Napoleon* in 1927.

While the principal writings on Chomón are due to Spanish historians such as Carlos Fernandez Cuenca, Juan Gabriel Tharrats, Agustin Sanchez Vidal, and Joan M. Minguet Batllori, a major part of his work was done in France for Pathé, and provide numerous avenues of research which have not yet produced studies in French, Spanish and English. This conference proposes to look back at his work in the light of rarely examined and recently discovered sources. Thus, the accounting and iconographic archives of the Foundation, still little studied on this particular subject, should allow us to define components of the French career. It will be the occasion to discover or re-view the films of Chomón during the retrospective scheduled between November and December 2017 at the Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé, in collaboration with the French and foreign film archives.

Several aspects of Chomón's life and work will be considered during this conference:

- **Chomón and color** : Extant color films by Chomón display an expertise and concern for color, which can be seen, for example, in a print of *Samson et Dalila* (Pathé frères, 1902). What were the techniques employed by Chomón to obtain such enduring quality? What role did color play in his different fictions? Conference papers could also deal with his last films in color for the Keller-Dorian company.
- **His trick techniques, in particular single-frame animation (“one turn, one image”) and stop-frame animation**: Chomón quickly diversified early trick techniques, making special use of stop-frame animation, either as an attraction as in *Le Sculpteur moderne* (1908), or as a narrative device as in *Hôtel électrique* (1908) and *Le Voleur mystérieux* (1908), a very free adaptation of Wells's *The Invisible Man*. *Le Spectre rouge/Satan s’amuse* (1907) is full of particularly innovative techniques, from masks to reverse time scenes, which demonstrate the virtuosity and scope of Chomón's palette. What then is Chomón's place among the pioneers of trick photography? What form of animation did he use? What techniques did he develop in his work with Pathé?
- **His filmography, his signature themes, his “style”**: after several films made at the turn of the century in Barcelona, he moved to Paris before returning to Spain in the early 1910s. His career oscillated between Spain, France and Italy and it would be pertinent to look at his favorite themes, his sets and costumes (like those in *La Légende du fantôme*, 1908) or the role of dance in his work as in *La Poule aux œufs d’or* (1905) and *Excursion dans la Lune* (1908). This latter film is particularly interesting for analyzing Méliès's influence on Chomón, who produced thinly disguised remakes of major films by the Wizard of Montreuil: *Le Voyage dans la Lune of 1902* becomes *Excursion by Chomón* (1908) ; Méliès's *Le Mélomane* of 1903 becomes Chomón's *En avant la musique* (1907). How then can we define the “style” of Chomón? What narrative and esthetic forms can we emphasize in his different directorial periods?
- **His different collaborations**: Chomón worked with numerous pioneers, from Gaston Velle to Giovanni Pastrone to Abel Gance. This conference will also provide the occasion to explore these collaborations as well as the multiple roles played by Chomón throughout his career: from director to special effects supervisor, Chomón was involved in the birth of different cinema disciplines. Throughout his career, he collaborated with his wife, Julienne Mathieu, herself a colorist and actress, and their work as a couple could be the object of an analysis. What functions occupied Chomón? How did he work with his different partners, directors, technicians, producers? What do we re-trace his career as he moves among different cities/countries where he exercised his talents?

Animator, trick film artist, *cinéaste*, supervisor of special effects, artistic collaborator, colorist, dance aficionado... This conference proposes to cast a light on this “little-known pioneer of European cinema” to paraphrase Tharrats, by documenting Chomón's work and the archives, including those of the Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé which is hosting this event.



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Indicative bibliographie

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Informations

This conference is organized by the Université Evry-Val d'Essonne (Centre Pierre Naville) and the Fondation Jérôme Seydoux - Pathé, under the direction of Réjane Hamus-Vallée and Jacques Malthête, in collaboration with "Les arts trompeurs. Machines, Magie, Médias" (2015-2018), a research program which deals with the intermedial relationship between magic and technology.

The conference will be held at the Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé
73 avenue des Gobelins, 75013 Paris
27 & 28 November 2017.

Proposals for papers, in French or English, not exceeding 2 000 characters, and accompanied by a biobibliography, are to be sent no later than 30 April 2017 to the following email address:

colloque@fondationpathe.com

Papers will be in French or English

Communicators will be informed about the acceptance of their papers by 30 May 2017.



Illustrations : *Les Verres enchantés* (Pathé frères, 1907), copie du BFI
L'abeille et la rose (Pathé frères, 1909), film restauré par le CNC