

Obituaries

Jan de Vaal

Jan de Vaal, founder of the Netherlands Film Museum, died on 8 April 2001, at the age of 78. Beginning in 1946, de Vaal ran the new Netherlands Historical Film Archive. This was immediately recognised by the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF), to whom de Vaal was ever grateful and whose network he always cherished. From 1949 on, de Vaal also ran the archive of the Uitkijk art house, the heritage of the avant-garde movement of the Filmliga. De Vaal's two archives merged in 1952 into the Nederlands Filmmuseum, which was later housed in the Amsterdam modern art museum, the Stedelijk Museum. De Vaal promoted screenings at the Stedelijk as the place to see classical avant-garde, documentary, fictional art films and animation film and regularly invited filmmakers to introduce their own films, thereby continuing a policy from the Filmliga days.

His own interest, though, was primarily in collecting. He enriched the Filmmuseum with such extraordinary collections as the Desmet Collection, the

Ivens Collection, the Uitkijk Collection, and a huge amount of colonial cinema shot in the former Dutch Indies. From 1958 on, the nitrate films were deposited in a vault built during the Second World War, but a new climatized vault was built between 1970 and 1976. Lack of space, money, and specialised staff were huge problems at the Filmmuseum. After years of struggling, de Vaal finally managed to move the offices and screening room in 1973 to the elegant Vondelpark Pavilion.

While preservation was low key under de Vaal's management, he will be remembered as *the* collector. Collecting for him was the creation of a time capsule, defined by the objects one collects. Therefore, this *collectionneur* was not only interested in films, but everything connected to them – which explains why the Netherlands Film Museum now has one of the richest, as well as one of the most unconventional, film collections in the world.

Ivo Blom

Erik Barnouw

Erik Barnouw, historian of broadcasting and film, scholar, teacher, and mentor, died on 17 July 2001 at the age of 93. He was born in the Netherlands, and had come to the United States with his family in 1919.

In the spring of 1970 at Columbia I took Erik Barnouw's course 'The Film Medium', although I remember only a few specific things from the experience now: an in-depth discussion of the studio/theater ownership decision from the Supreme Court, and several films – George Stoney's *All My Babies*, Drew and Leacock's *Primary*, and *Happy Mother's Day*, only aired on ABC in an edited version called *The Fischer Quintuplets*. Barnouw's lectures were hypnotic, dense, full of detailed information,

and required intense concentration – unlike his writing, which though equally full of facts, is very accessible, elegant and refined.

The last seminar that Barnouw taught, before retiring from his long career in the division he founded at Columbia, was on Flaherty and Vertov. Now a PhD candidate, I joined a dozen others comparing the work of these two pioneers. We spent a weekend at the Flaherty farm in Vermont, and hours in Special Collections at Butler Library, where the Flaherty papers are stored, and we saw Vertov films from the collection of his brother Mikhail Kaufman.

Erik Barnouw was deeply interested in film, though perhaps best known for his award-winning three-volume *History of Broadcasting in the United*