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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti; smjer: nastavnički (dvopredmetni)

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Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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Zadar, 6. ožujak 2019.

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1. Introduction

Fine art has undoubtedly left a huge mark on the entire film history in many ways, but its significance in shaping that same history might have not been recognized to the extent it deserves. Either as a mere inspiration for the visual segment conceived to grasp the audience's attention, or a necessary aid in building the entire film's story, the presence of fine art has become an inevitable companion in both professional and personal development of many filmmakers. This is for sure the case with Vincente Minnelli, a film director whose name cannot and should not be missed in any serious overview of film musicals crafted during Hollywood's Golden Age.

Unfortunately, Minnelli's professional career often tends to be overshadowed by the turbulence of his private life, especially when it comes to his failed relationship and marriage with once big Hollywood star Judy Garland, and the stardom of their daughter Liza Minnelli. Hence, it is no wonder that the general audience, aside from a handful of musical aficionados and film historians, would refer to him as the father of the latter one, rather than acknowledge his contribution for making the fine art more accessible than ever before using film as the media in achieving that goal. Nevertheless, when discussing the professional segment of one artist's life, and considering his achievements there is no reason why we should not call Minnelli this way, the private segment cannot be neglected as it usually shapes the way the first one develops, at least to some extent. In case of Minnelli, the roots of his success go way back to his childhood and introduce us to the very reasons of his connection to art and its production, allowing us to understand at the same time how and why certain art quotes managed to find their way to the silver screen.

Among the entire body of his work in filmmaking, three films that somehow most vividly showcase the cinematic reflections of fine art include *An American in Paris* (1951), *Lust for Life* (1956), and *Gigi* (1958). Moreover, all three films are tied in a way they are all

intertwined with the works of art that are in one way or another associated with France and its artistic legacy that approximately fits in the time frame between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, although in certain parts they cross both that geographical and temporal barrier. Out of these three films, *An American in Paris* stands out as one of the director's most recognizable films that has caught the eye of a number of scholars who put their effort in analyzing the film's visual component, which resulted in papers that put forward the parallels with the works of particular French artists, enabling and supporting further discussions and interpretations of Minnelli's cinematic world. Following musical extravaganza of the previous film, *Lust for Life* demonstrates Minnelli's more serious and dramatic side in bringing back to life the Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, whose art is regardless of his origin inextricably tied to France, and whose struggles on the road to success Minnelli could probably relate to. Finally, Minnelli's return to Paris in *Gigi*, though with less stress on directly quoted works of art, unifies both the period and locale he was so fond of creating another celebrated film musical that finally brought him the glory he had not reached with his previous achievements.

2. A Painter Among Filmmakers – The Story About Vincente Minnelli and His Affection for Art

2.1. Humble Childhood and Beginnings in Show Business

Although Vincente Minnelli's venture into filmmaking had a relatively late start, the years prior to his Hollywood breakthrough were crucial for the gradual development of his signature style that will eventually become the staple of his career. Even the very beginnings of the life of one of the Hollywood's most prominent filmmakers and musical geniuses of the 20th century, serve as a fine indicator of the reasons for the appearance of fine art that not only lingered throughout the great deal of body of his work, but also left a vivid trace in his style of filmmaking. Minnelli's childhood occurred far away from the *milieu* commonly associated with high culture that could have catered to his sophisticated interests and future ambitions in

the art world, as he was born to the family of performers "touring the Middle East with the Minnelli Brothers Dramatic and Tent Shows" where he made his first steps as a performer "at the age of three in *East Lynne*" (De la Roche 2; Larson 122). However, the increase of the popularity of what was destined to be Minnelli's future – cinema, signified the swan song for the family business, but also then-young Minnelli's way to professional career in theatre, i.e. show business (De la Roche 2). The early exposure to this sort of performing arts must have been a strong enough aid in bridging the differences between the need to express his affections for art, and to give voice to his own views on filmmaking on one side, and inevitable necessity to conform to the taste of mass audiences that would bring the studio that employed him the expected profit on the other.

Even though details of Minnelli's early involvement with art production are relatively scarce in overviews and articles that tackle with his life and career, they still manage to inform us to a certain degree on the road from his first brushstrokes to meticulously executed and exuberant Oscar-winning achievements. Apart from his summer job that somehow introduced him to the world of painting, as he was given the chance to paint signs, Minnelli apparently did not have that many opportunities to express his own artistic visions on canvas (De la Roche 2). However, regardless of being channeled differently, his competences in artmaking were certainly not neglected. Despite the fact that his "first professional employment … [as] a designer of display windows for the Marshall Field department store in Chicago" (Naremore 1-2) only bordered with what he might have envisioned of his career as an artist, interestingly enough, that segment of his career was something that he shared with some of the greatest names in the world of art (13-14). Talking about this connection, James Naremore lists "Man Ray, Salvador Dalí, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, and Andy Warhol … [as those prominent artists who] were at one time or another designers of shop windows" (13-14). The start of Minnelli's rather successful tenure in theatre

was not long awaited. After working as ”a designer of stage settings for the Balaban and Katz chain of movie places”, Minnelli swapped Chicago for New York where he first worked for the Paramount Theatre ”as designer of both costume and scenery” (Naremore 2; De la Roche 2). But the real success was yet to come – the success that would eventually lead him towards west, towards Hollywood. According to Catherine De la Roche, upon finding his new home in Radio City Music Hall, Minnelli managed to make a fast progress, and faced with his first efforts in what would soon become one of the most recognizable aspects of his filmmaking – directing stage shows encompassing dance sequences (2).

What De la Roche also reveals is that even in this theatre segment of his career, Minnelli had never hesitated to make the way for art movements and artists he found interesting and relevant at the time, and incorporated for instance elements of ”surrealism and modern art” in ”his stage version of *Ziegfeld Follies*” (2), which according to Stephen Harvey also includes the pieces painted by the founder of the Metaphysical art movement Giorgio de Chirico (35). De Chirico’s interpretations of urban architecture and its juxtaposition with often unexpected inanimate objects, rare human figures, long shadows, and choices of colors that to a certain level evoke the color palette that Minnelli would eventually use in his films, seem like a reasonable and convenient art reference in set design as the artist’s paintings themselves remind us of elaborate stage sets. Among other art history references noticeable in sets of Minnelli’s shows, Harvey mentions Raoul Dufy whose style would later be evoked in one of the sets for the dream sequence in *An American in Paris*, French rococo painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard, or even Japanese printmaker Hokusai (30-35).

2.2. Ascent to Stardom in Hollywood, Minnelli's Relations with Art and Artists, and Their Presence in His Films

After his first attempt to make a breakthrough as a filmmaker in Hollywood under Paramount had not met his expectations, Minnelli made a decision to return to the place that would provide him with fertile ground for his ideas – New York and Broadway (Naremore 24-25). However, only three years after his disappointment in the film industry,[1] in 1940 Minnelli caught the attention of MGM's producer Arthur Freed, who would eventually become one of his most common future associates (25). Their mutual understanding might have owned to the fact that both of them were serious art aficionados as Freed himself was "an avid collector of paintings by the Fauvist artist Georges Rouault" (Koresky). Minnelli's return to the west gave MGM, which over the years had somehow become a factory in every sense of the world – a factory lacking a true artistic vision and the one that failed to deliver creativity on the silver screen, a completely new lease of life (Naremore 25).

Over the span of thirty-three years, from his first feature film *Cabin in the Sky* released in 1943, to the 1976 *A Matter of Time* featuring his daughter Liza, Minnelli made the total of thirty-seven films. Although the number of films he made in the period mentioned might seem as relatively small, many of Minnelli's films, regardless of the genre, earned their rightful spots in the history of American cinema. This is mainly because of the recognizable handwriting of their director whose artistic vision was, in collaboration with other visionaries like Gene Kelly or Arthur Freed, successfully transferred onto the silver screen. Similarly to his approach in theatre, one of the most vivid aspects of his style in filmmaking certainly includes the quotes of works of art of some of the authors he was fond of, or at least of those he could easily relate to. Moreover, it appears that such inspiring "intruders" followed

[1] According to Naremore, Minnelli's first Hollywood venture under Paramount began in 1937, but it was short-lived – after only six months spent on the West Coast during which several of his potential projects had not moved further from the initial conceptual stage, the director must have realized that his ideas were far from what the demands in Hollywood were at the time; cf. Naremore 24-25.

Minnelli throughout his entire professional career. Naremore refers to Impressionist painters whose work Minnelli got the opportunity to encounter at the Art Institute, followed by Postimpressionists, Art Nouveau, or even the out-of-this-world creations conceived by imaginative individuals like Surrealists, as the main sources of inspiration he drew from in the process of conceiving appropriate settings for the depiction of yesteryear, or at least the artistic reminiscences of it (10-17). And indeed, many of Minnelli's films are period pieces. The total of "fourteen musical films Minnelli made at MGM in the 1940s and 1950s" are set in the nineteenth century (*Somehow* 60). However, Minnelli does not offer in any sense a faithful depiction of the mentioned time period, but its Disneyfied version serving the audience a sugarcoated life that exists nowhere else but in his utopian ideals (58-60). Nevertheless, the fact they are built upon the interpretations borrowed from the artists of that period, makes up for the liberty Minnelli took in reimagining that world, probably in order to make it more appealing to the targeted audiences that might have sought escape from their otherwise somber lives.

But Minnelli had apparently never wanted to limit himself, and gave chance to more than just one particular style, movement, or artist. His open-mindedness led him towards the role of a modern patron of unconventional artists as he "helped finance some of the experimental films by artists like Man Ray and Hans Richter" (De la Roche 2). Taking the role that to a certain level could remind us of Nina Foch's character of Milo, who in *An American in Paris* put all of her effort in promoting the work of aspiring painter Jerry Mulligan, Minnelli also demonstrated his readiness to go against the mainstream in filmmaking. If we judged this step based on our general knowledge of Minnelli's overall *oeuvre*, ignoring at the same time his equal fondness of both conventional and unconventional artistic points of view and his never-ending desire to pursue career in painting, we would have certainly made a mistake by claiming it was anything but expected from this mainstream film

director. Mainly because such experimental films, like Man Ray's 1927 *Emak-Bakia*, which seems more like a collage of materials representing an unusual juxtaposition of objects and characters than something a regular moviegoer would pay to see, try to avoid the narrative, at least in terms of its treatment in the period of Hollywood's classical cinema. Of course, many of those early experimental films made by the two artists mentioned were made years before Minnelli set off to his career in film business. Nevertheless, it is interesting that details from Man Ray's biography reveal that the artist was "[a]n American expatriate … [who] arrived in Europe in 1921", similarly to the main character in Minnelli's famed film *An American in Paris* (Peggy). Hence, despite not seeing many visual traces of Man Ray's experiments in Minnelli's films, we can assume that the artist still managed to inspire him, even if it was only the basis for one of his most recognizable male characters.

Connections such as the one just mentioned only help us understand why Minnelli's "leading men … [often] played writers, painters, or performers" in his films (Naremore 3). While making the similar remark on Minnelli's characters' professions, Harvey argues that "*Lust for Life, … Some Came Running, … An American in Paris, and …Bells Are Ringing* all focus on artists or writers alienated from others by their creative urges, yet are stalled and thwarted by the work they do" (19). However, he does not relate this to Minnelli's affection for art and artists, but to everything that was going on behind the scenes, i.e. in his private life, namely the divorce from Judy Garland whom he met while filming the 1944 musical *Meet Me in St. Louis*, that has become one of the most notable films of both of their careers (19). Either way, Minnelli apparently found the projects that professionally preoccupied him and offered a sort of haven from the turmoil of his private life, but at the same time reflected his compassion with the ones who were equally struggling in the pursuit of their dreams. What is interesting is the fact that despite all the problems, this period of his career ended up being rather fruitful one resulting in some of his most renowned films.

2.3. Making Art with Camera – On Minnelli's Style

In her attempt to dissect the establishing sequence of Vincente Minnelli's 1944 *Meet Me in St. Louis*, art historian Beth Genné managed to comprehend director's views on filmmaking that on a certain level overlap with those of a painter, and provided us with her comments on those components of filmmaking that constitute his style (247-248). One of the specific things that make Minnelli essentially different from many other directors is the fact that, as Genné explains based on his own remarks, "he saw the movie screen as analogous to the painter's canvas" (247). Not only did Minnelli approach the screen painterly, but also other aspects of filmmaking seem to have received almost the same treatment in the overall execution of his films. Genné lists four aspects that support such thesis, and make his films recognizable in myriads of mainstream films, including "camera movement, frame composition, lighting, and color" (248).

Film musicals that had become a hallmark of Vincente Minnelli's career are renowned for their well-conceived and choreographed dance sequences that catch the eye of the viewers and drag them into the scene. Minnelli achieves this with the camerawork allowing the camera to become a participant in a scene, or a character in its own right, and follow the action of the film as it progresses to its climax. In *An American in Paris* it guides us through the city by gliding over its streets and squares, it introduces us with the characters and enables us to follow their every move, and accompanies Jerry and Lise as they keep dancing between sets in the dream sequence. Such things would have been unimaginable in the early years of the sound cinema when, in order to offer the audience the sound, directors were forced to limit the possibilities of camerawork and satisfy with scenes that were anything but dynamic and lively (Genné 251). One of the finest onscreen examples that illustrates such problems can be found in another film starring Gene Kelly – *Singing in the Rain* (1952), namely in the scene with filming *Dueling Cavalier* which demonstrates how the simultaneous recording of

sound and image restrained the creative process and only allowed ”frontal presentation of actors and objects” (251). Sometimes the ease of the camera as it glides over the scenes and captures all the meticulously conceived details for which Minnelli intended to be seen, parallels with the movements of a hand of a painter as one coats the canvas with continuous brushstrokes (Koresky).

Harvey comments on how Minnelli’s ”hallmark, in film as in the theater, was the selectivity of his eye” which explains why many scenes in his films look too perfect, almost as if they were choreographed like elaborate dance sequences (13). In Minnelli’s case everything from props to actors had to be under his control in order to achieve what he had envisioned as the final outcome (Genné 252). Leslie Caron, who would eventually star in the title role of 1958 musical *Gigi*, recalls Minnelli’s persistence in repeating a certain scene until reaching perfection: ”We did it once, twice, three, five, ten, fifteen times. ... I thought, 'I'm going to die. This is impossible.' And then he finally said: 'Ah! The swans were right.'” (Thank Heaven). This trait in his work places Minnelli alongside old masters like Vermeer who ”must have spent many long hours arranging and re-arranging the various objects he intended to represent even before he began the actual painting process” (Janson). Albert Johnson goes that far and comments on how ”the backgrounds in Minnelli's films always seem about to reveal a wall inscribed with 'Vermeer was here'; [because] he cannot leave life as it is” (33). And indeed, Vermeer's paintings often seem almost like shop windows with deliberately arranged set pieces even if they were supposed to look like they got in that certain spot unintentionally. This scenographic approach to executing composition was apparently one of Minnelli's strongest suits, and the one that since it initiated early in his career only kept developing.

Out of four aspects of Minnelli’s filmmaking as pointed out by Genné, the ones concerning lighting and color are somehow, more than the previous two, something that we

could associate with his experience in theatre. In fact, Minnelli ”had become known for his use of bold and expressive color and lighting effects in Broadway musicals”, that he would eventually transfer on the silver screen with success (Genné 247). As Genné explains, Minnelli’s high demands on specific light effects, that in his case were to be the result of collaboration with the cinematographer who was in charge of lighting, came from his understanding of the importance of the use of light in shaping a scene and providing the audience with a certain feeling that only light could offer (252-253).

Minnelli’s use of color, on the other hand, can be discussed from different angles. Primarily concerning its visual component, but also when deciphering the underlying meaning of some of the most recurring colors from the rich palette used in his films. As it was mentioned earlier in the chapter, Minnelli’s arrival to Hollywood, and more importantly at MGM backlot, signified creative shifts in the industry, and the use of color is certainly one of the most significant ones (Genné 253). Starting with *Meet Me in St. Louis*, which, according to Genné, represents ”his first essay in Technicolor”, bold choices of color had become an important element in many of his films not just because of their ability to catch the viewer’s attention and brighten up a scene, but also because something so simple and ubiquitous as color had the power to bear a great deal of psychological aspects of the plot (247).

There are two colors that are usually attached to Minnelli’s style choices – red and yellow. The first one, especially when it is like Dave Kehr describes it ”a bursting, tactile one, with a texture somewhere between velvet and vegetable”, cannot go unnoticed in a film scene even though it may appear only in details like a scarf, a necktie, a flower, etc. (Kehr). Sometimes it overflows the entire scenes either in the form of dancers whose vibrant attires fill the frame, or with set design that borrows from painters like Henri Matisse. Either way, it manages to express emotions ranging from love to madness that characters themselves might not want to or are not allowed to give away on the screen.

Although red is without any doubt eye-catching in Minnelli's films, the color that somehow seems to have preoccupied various scholars more than red is yellow. The latter one was apparently omnipresent in both his professional and private life. Kate Hext mentions that apart from the fact Minnelli could have been seen "wearing a yellow sports jacket with a black turtleneck jumper", he even "painted his house in yellow as an homage to James Whistler" (*Minnelli's Yellows* 2; qtd. in *Somehow* 54). In his films yellow is present in terms of "lighting, costumes and set design" that might be the sign of his fondness of "Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Decadence", but also a device used "to indicate the transition from 'reality' into an imaginative space" (*Minnelli's Yellows* 2, 3). Moreover, the two reasons might be overlapping, as Hext believes "the fin de siècle connotations of yellow to suggest that this imaginative realm may simultaneously be a space of delusional madness and homosexual deviancy" (*Minnelli's Yellows* 8). The question whether Minnelli wished to express his own struggles with such issues via color is not as relevant as the fact that it undoubtedly helped him support his characters' inner states more than it could have been achieved using only words or facial expressions and body language.

3. Dancing Paintings – The Story About *An American in Paris*

3.1. On Their Way to Paris – The Story Behind the Making of *An American in Paris*

With the dissolution of not one, but two marriages in a single decade, the period of the 1950s was most certainly far from perfect for Vincente Minnelli. At least concerning his private life. Career-wise, on the other hand, it can be seen as a rather fruitful one. It was the period that resulted in some of his most renowned and celebrated films, including *An American in Paris* (1951), *Lust for Life* (1956), and *Gigi* (1958) that will be further discussed in this and in the following two chapters. The film that since its release has almost become a synonym for Minnelli's filmmaking career, *An American in Paris* is one of the finest examples of Hollywood's approach to *gesamtkunstwerk*, i.e. "a synthesis of various art

forms", in this case most notably dance, music, design, etc. (Gesamtkunstwerk). However, as such, it could never be the product of just one person, but the group of individuals whose pursuit of creating something new, fresh, and original leads towards the integration of their talents, skills, and inspirations.

Although *An American in Paris* gathered an impressive creative team, three individuals who are responsible the most for the way it was finally assembled include "producer Arthur Freed, star and choreographer Gene Kelly, and director Vincente Minnelli" ('S Wonderful).[2] It was Freed who initiated the idea about "a film combining … the art of French impressionists and the music of the late George Gershwin" ('S Wonderful). Since he was a friend of the Gershwin brothers, the realization of such idea did not meet any initial obstacles (Harvey 95). According to music historian Gene Lees, the only condition George's brother Ira imposed on Freed, in order to name the film after composer's suite *An American in Paris*, was to make the entire film's score of the songs composed by his late brother ('S Wonderful). Freed did not mind such requirements as he imagined the film to be kind of an homage to Gershwin, whose suite was somehow autobiographical. A fiction film following a former American soldier in the pursuit of a career in art and love on the streets of Paris, seemed to work perfectly as a way of paying a tribute to the late George Gershwin, without having to film another biopic about his life. Moreover, it was Gershwin who "studied painting in Paris, and … wrote the suite 'An American in Paris' about himself", which ended up being the basis for the main character Jerry ('S Wonderful).

Along the way in production came Gene Kelly who not only brought Jerry to life with his appealing stage persona, but also contributed to the dynamic of the film with dazzling

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[2] *'S Wonderful: The Making of 'An American in Paris'*, a documentary featured on the 2009 Blu-ray edition of *An American in Paris* offers valuable information about the production of the film together with the comments provided both by the individuals involved in the production like Vincente Minnelli himself, Leslie Caron, or Nina Foch, and other film experts like Hugh Fordin or Drew Casper; cf. "'S Wonderful: The Making of 'An American in Paris'". *An American in Paris*, Warner Brothers, 2009. Blu-ray.

choreographies he conceived, as well as with some other creative suggestions. Kelly was pretty much involved with the execution of the film from its beginning to the extent that he even took part in making certain casting choices, like the one that made by-then unknown French dancer Leslie Caron a completely new rising star in Hollywood (Harvey 95-97). However, Vincente Minnelli was the one who gathered all the pieces of the puzzle together, and gave the film the flavor it is known for. As the one who, despite strong desires, never made it as an actual painter,[3] Minnelli probably could not resist taking part in the project that he could relate to without a problem. And, once we add to that his affections for the French art and fine art in general, which is something Freed must have been completely aware of, the role of the director could not have gone to anyone else.

Unfortunately, even this way Minnelli never made it to Paris, the city that was somehow always out of his reach. Despite the initial attempts to film on location, in Paris, the picturesque cobbled streets and centuries old façades of the City of Lights ended up being recreated in California (Harvey 98). The total of ”forty four elaborate sets [were built] on MGM’s backlot” for the purpose of creating the perfect illusion that would instantly transfer the audience to this famous European capital (McGovern 86). The amount of the presence of the actual city is rather scarce, as only short excerpts appeared in the final cut (Harvey 98). Although at times it is quite obvious that the actors are surrounded by the set, and not the actual location, this somehow does not diminish our impressions of Paris as Minnelli makes up for the lack of its real-life charm with attention to details and reminiscences that only support our existing notion of it. In addition, this only took the final dance sequence into direction that, according to Harvey, resulted in something that the real Paris could never offer (98).

[3] Minnelli ”harbored a desire to become a painter (in Paris, if possible)” (Naremore 10).

The sequence itself brought certain creative problems as the initial idea of the ballet accompanied by Gershwin's *Somebody Loves Me* was scrapped and replaced with the one based on seventeen and a half minutes long *An American in Paris* suite that Freed now wanted as the film's climax ('S Wonderful). It took three days for Minnelli, Kelly, and Irene Sharaff, who worked on the film as a designer, to come up with the perfect solution for the scene that would eventually become one of the most iconic moments in the history of American film musicals. The final outcome brought together "classical and American dance with sets and costumes inspired by the art of Dufy, Renoir, Utrillo, Rousseau, Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec" in what Johnson refers to as "a sort of choreographic essay" ('S Wonderful; Johnson 33). And indeed, it was an essay in which words were completely neglected in favor of cunningly conceived dance moves put in evenly brilliant sets that would all together celebrate Gershwin's suite that inspired them in the first place. The entire scene had a feeling of something that only theatre could offer, which is no wonder considering Minnelli's professional background.

Apparently, despite rather unusual way of rounding up the story, the film found its way to the audience, and managed to sell 3.75 million dollars worth of tickets only in American cinemas (Robinson). *An American in Paris* eventually earned six Academy Awards, none of which were unfortunately handed to Minnelli. However, his accolades will arrive a couple of years later, for another motion picture celebrating Paris and Parisians – *Gigi.*

3.2. A Prelude to a Dream

When it comes to the analysis of art quotes in *An American in Paris,* the grandiose dance sequence in which Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron take us towards the film's finale always takes the majority of space in texts dealing with the film's visual identity, or the film in general. Namely because of the way the sequence brings to life works of art letting them

constitute Paris as seen through the eyes of their creators. However, as much as it is impossible not to deal with this milestone of American cinema, it is at the same time quite important to look upon what preceded as it represents the ”real” world that forms the basis for the dream sequence and provides us with certain hints of what will happen in it. Somehow numerous things that Jerry soaks up in everyday Paris and stores in his subconscious during the entire film reappears at the end, but with a more artistic approach to it.

The establishing shot at the very beginning of the film takes us to the Place de la Concorde that will later make its comeback as one of the first set designs in the dream sequence. Of course, the real square as represented in short excerpts taken by ”Peter Ballbusch, a second-unit director specializing in location work”, was rebuilt upon distinguishable style of Raoul Dufy’s oils (Harvey 98).[4] Even Jerry’s humble room where we first meet him gives us certain nods on what we can expect – the walls are filled with paintings that have Maurice Utrillo written all over them revealing a painter who has not found his voice yet, and tries to rely on his role models in hope of reaching the same level of success. Moreover, in the moments prior to the dream sequence he finally reveals that he ”came to Paris to study and to paint it … because Utrillo did, and Lautrec did, and Rouault did” (An American in Paris).

Unlike Minnelli, for whom we can be sure that he did not limit his field of interests in terms of art, Angela Dalle-Vache argues that Jerry appears to be rather unwilling to accept art that is anything but conventional (78). According to the same author, this can be noticed in the scene where ”Jerry pokes fun at a canvas reminiscent of Miró by demonstrating that, with abstract art it is difficult to know which end is up” (78). He might, however, be subconsciously aware of the fact that his art will not secure him the spot in the art scene he longs for, and in a way runs from the opportunity for success given to him by a rich patron

[4] A book with the title *Dufy* can be seen on the table in Jerry's room.

Milo in return for his affections. In fact, for him accepting it would mean that he is not much of a painter since at the beginning of the film he states that ”if you can’t paint in Paris give up and marry the boss’ daughter” (An American in Paris). Jerry eventually grabs Milo’s offer and agrees to set up the exhibition in three months during which he produced a number of canvases that resembled both those hanging in his room at the beginning of the film, and the ones exposed in the Montmartre street. Most of those paintings were uninspiring cityscapes resembling Utrillo’s works, with the addition of several still lifes and portraits, including the one depicting Lise. However, one of the sequences reveals Jerry in front of Théâtre National de l’Opéra transferring it on the canvas in various shades of yellow. Although we do not get the chance to see it again in the segment in which he starts to choose frames for the

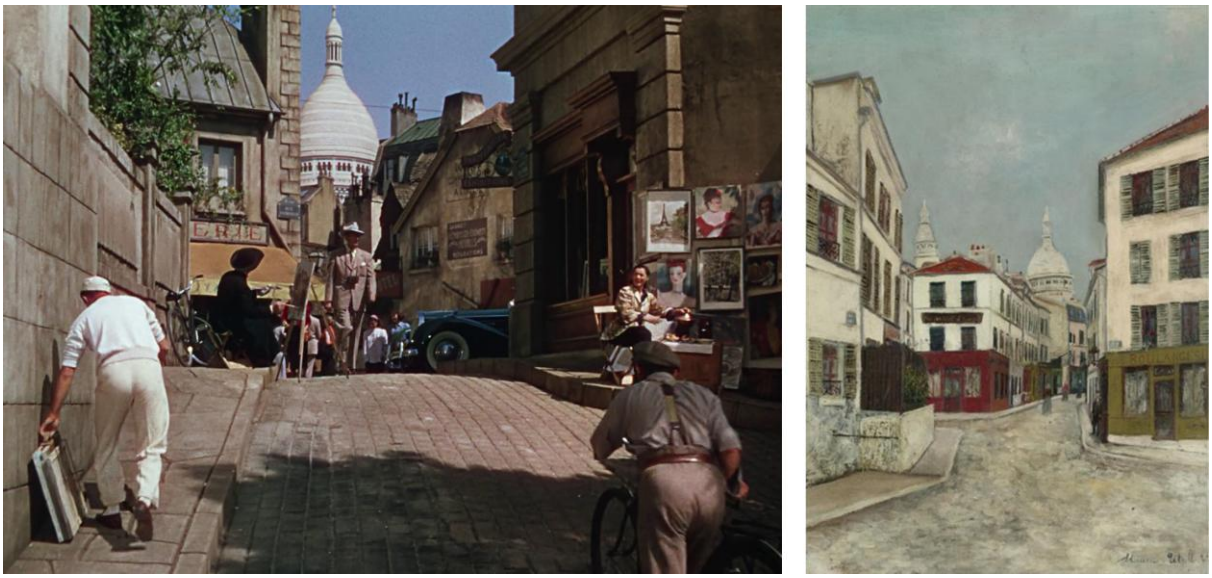

Figure 1 Still from Minnelli, *An American in Paris* (18:57); Utrillo, Maurice. *La Rue Norvins a Montmartre*. 1910. ”MutualArt,” MutualArt, MutualArt Services, Inc., 2009, www.mutualart.com/Artwork/LA-RUE-NORVINS-A-MONTMARTRE/812E29157F2D236E. Accessed 13. Jan. 2019.

exhibition, the painting of the theatre is rather important, because it indicates the theatre’s reappearance in Jerry’s dream sequence as one of the sets dedicated to Van Gogh.

Like a number of artists before him, Jerry sought his way to the top on the streets of Montmartre. The street where Jerry tries out his luck by exhibiting his paintings seems like it is only steps away from the part of the actual street Maurice Utrillo depicted in his *La Rue*

Norvins a Montmartre (1910) with both the painting and the set design revealing the recognizable dome of La Basilique du Sacré Cœur de Montmartre rising above the surrounding residential and commercial architecture of the neighborhood. While the mentioned segment of the Norvins street as seen on Utrillo's painting can be seen in almost intact shape even today, the street Jerry set his foot on every day appears to be nothing more than a collage of certain architectural elements that in the end manages to deceive the viewer into thinking that one is really being brought to the real-life Montmartre (See Fig. 1). This owes to the work of art director Preston Ames who was entrusted with the rebuilding of the parts of Paris that would have normally been shot on location if the studio had not decided to keep the production at home (Harvey 98).

During the film three individual dream sequences occur, and take the viewers into colorful realms that reflect emotions or unachieved desires of the three prominent male characters – singer Henri Baurel as he talks about his infatuation for Lise, unemployed concert pianist Adam Cook as he dreams about his frantic and euphoric concert, and finally Jerry as he chases Lise through the artistic reminiscences of Paris. Apart from the latter one, that will be further discussed later in the chapter, only Adam's dream bears some influences that we might relate to a certain artist that will later appear in Jerry's dream – Raoul Dufy. In his dream in the form of a classical concert, Adam takes the role of not just one individual musician, but the entire orchestra, the conductor, as well as the audience that admires his performance. Although Dalle-Vacche suggest that "Dufy's experiment with 'tonal painting' for his *Red Concert* (1946)" resembles "Minnelli's dramatic lighting and his extensive use of bronze and black shadows",[5] the artist painted more than one painting with the same or similar topic in the second half of the 1940s (76). Dufy's *The Red Concert* from 1946, *Concerto, Piano and Orchestra* also from 1946, *The Red Orchestra* (1946-1949), or *At the*

[5] The same author also mentions works by Edgar Degas as a possible model for Adam's concert scene; cf. Dalle-Vache 68.

Concert from 1948 convey some of that almost misty atmosphere in which musicians and the audience, represented as dark figures, stand out in the music hall filled with light in shade of red close to the one that can be found in Minnelli's films. However, color-wise, Dufy's compositions like *The Full Orchestra* (1946) and *The Great Concert* (1948) suit Adam's dream sequence better as they contain a great amount of yellow that possesses the power to take us to the non-existing realm in which Adam frantically tries to fulfill his aspirations (*Minnelli's Yellows* 2-8).

The final scene prior to Jerry's dream sequence takes place at the New Year's Eve Art Students Ball. In terms of color, the entire set and costume design were based on nothing more than black and white, which can also be seen as a kind of a coloristic pause before the upcoming outburst of color. Although they are evidently set in two different time periods, and

Figure 2 Still from Minnelli, *An American in Paris* (1:28:50); Manet, Edouard. *Masked Ball at the Opera*. 1873., National Gallery of Art, Washington. "National Gallery of Art," *National Gallery of Art*, www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.61246.html. Accessed 13 Jan. 2019.

visually mirror only in the way they both contrast dark and light elements, the Black-and-White Ball and *Masked Ball at the Opera* painted by Édouard Manet in 1873 do, however, share some common ideas regarding their contents (Dalle-Vacche 68) (See Fig. 2). What is interesting is that in the overview of the exhibition history National Gallery of Art in Washington, which owns the Manet painting, lists École des Beaux-Arts in Paris as the location of the first public exposition of the same painting in 1884 (Masked Ball). The same school of art is the one whose students organized the Black-and-White Ball, which even at the

time of the film's release was a tradition that went back to the 19th century (Shaw). As Shaw also reveals, celebrations such as the one we encounter in Minnelli's film were the perfect occasions for students to indulge in the form of entertainment that was possibly considered as deviant and socially unacceptable. Certainly, Minnelli's Ball was less obscene than the balls of that kind would normally get due to the Production Code, and probably because it was not necessary to go too explicit with the scene to capture the overall feeling of such kind of entertainment. When it comes to Manet, his painting also depicts an over-the-top celebration that shows the amorality of high society in terms of its disguised members who embarked in possibly inappropriate relations with other attendees (Masked Ball). Such emotionally stranded environment might have served perfectly to contrast it with the upcoming scene in the film that will focus on Jerry's sincere feelings for Lise in the form of dance scattered over artistically reimagined Paris.

3.3. Cardboard Paris of Jerry's Dreams, or How Art Allowed the Transfer of Paris to Hollywood

Before Lise's departure with Henri, and the start of his dream, Jerry creates a monochrome drawing in the style of Raoul Dufy that will lead us directly into that dream and serve as the first piece of set design. The drawing cannot be seen as a copy of any of Raoul Dufy's works, but only as a composition based on his signature sketchy style of drawing. According to Dalle-Vacche, Raoul Dufy's *The Gate* from 1930 and *The Park of Saint-Claude* from 1924 might have served as a model for Jerry's drawing in a way it mirrors the architectural elements of the entrance to the park, as well as the vegetation surrounding the street that narrows and leads towards what seems like Arc de Triomphe creating the illusion of depth at the same time (69-70). The set design remains monochrome until Jerry picks up a red rose from the floor, a rose that was a recurring motif throughout the entire film.

Suddenly, as the colors emerge, red and white Furies take Jerry to Place de la Concorde designed to resemble a number of paintings of the same square as painted by Raoul Dufy, as well as his younger brother Jean. The square is filled with people dressed in different shades of red, blue, and white, while the set is colored in subtle shades of blue, green, turquoise with a dash of yellow. The colors are evidently less vibrant than those that can be found in the paintings of both Dufy brothers, but they still manage to retain the impression of the city captured by the two Fauvist painters.

Upon leaving Place de la Concorde, which will appear again later in the sequence, camera takes us to the flower market located just in front of Pont Neuf that somehow resembles Pierre-Auguste Renoir's depiction of the same Parisian bridge painted in 1872, but immersed in much more gloomy atmosphere distant from the painter's airy and spring-like palette.[6] Among the stands with flowers, which give certain nods to Renoir's flower arrangements, Jerry finds a red rose that brings back Lise. But as they keep twirling in a delicately choreographed dance, Lise turns into a bouquet of flowers in Jerry's hands, while Jerry finds himself in the middle of the street similar to those painted by his idol Maurice Utrillo.

The set, colors of which follow the palette of Utrillo, brings sudden melancholy until the arrival of four American soldiers reminding us of Jerry's military past ('S Wonderful). As they go up the street, we are taken to another set dedicated to Henri Rousseau, i.e. to the "Place de la Bastille … [for] a July 4th celebration" ('S Wonderful). In this case Rousseau is present in the form of a collage of isolated elements of his paintings. Dalle-Vacche notices that those elements belong to Rousseau's *The Sleeping Gypsy* from 1897, as well as to his *The Football Players* from 1908 (70). Furthermore, the author believes that "the male tap dancers lined up with Kelly at the center are a variation on Rousseau's *The football Players*" (70).

[6] De la Roche mentions Renoir as a possible source of inspiration for the set design in the flower market scene; cf. De la Roche 23.

Dominant elements of this set design include characteristic Rousseau greenery with specific formation of leaves that dominate on a number of his paintings, including *The Hungry Lion Throws Itself on the Antelope* from 1905 or *The Garden Dream* from 1910. Ronald Alley states that Rousseau's "motifs were drawn from the unfashionable suburbs of the city, its

Figure 3 Still from Minnelli, *An American in Paris* (1:44:42); Rousseau, Henri. *Notre Dame: View of the Ile Saint-Louis from the Quai Henri IV*. 1909, The Philips Collection, Washington. "The Philips Collection," *The Philips Collection*, The Philips Collection, www.phillipscollection.org/collection/browse-the-collection?id=1694. Accessed 13 Jan. 2019.

streets and parks and the banks of its rivers", which is why the elements of architecture in the background of this set design can only derive from paintings like *View of the Outskirts of Paris* from 1896 (qtd. in Dalle-Vacche 71). Tall buildings with simple rectangular windows and dark colored roofs with many chimneys, as well as the silhouette of the *Notre Dame* from the film's set must have had its source in *Notre Dame: View of the Ile Saint Louis From the Quai Henri IV* painted in 1909 as it reveals quite similar cityscape (See Fig. 3).

Following the lively tap dance act that perfectly suits the spirit of Rousseau's naïve paintings (De la Roche 23-24), Jerry and Lise take us back to the fountain on the Place de la Concorde. As yellow, blue, and red light keep radiating through the mist around the fountain, the two characters interact in gentle and sensual dance moves, without unnecessary vulgarity. The square in front of Théâtre National de l'Opéra that appeared earlier in the film suddenly took over the role of the set design from romantic and misty fountain. In his painting of the theatre building, Jerry primarily used a couple of different shades of yellow, but the creative team behind the set design reached the number of "twenty five different shades of yellow in

the Van Gogh section" ('S Wonderful). Yellow, as well as some shades of orange that increase the warmth of the atmosphere, is not the only thing that derives from famous painter's canvases. The entire architecture seems like it was built out of energetic and short brushstrokes that are the characteristic of Van Gogh's technique. In addition, further in the background another famous element from his painting can be noticed – swirly stars from his *The Starry Night* from 1889, which in this case covered the entire sky in the rhythmic exchange of yellow and orange strokes, instead of appearing against the cobalt blue of the sky.

Figure 4 Still from Minnelli, *An American in Paris* (1:49:06); Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de. *Chocolat dansant*. 1896. "Musée Occitanie," Musée Occitanie, Association des Conservateurs et Personnels Scientifiques de Musée Occitanie, musees-occitanie.fr/musees/musee-toulouse-lautrec/collections/la-collection-toulouse-lautrec/henri-de-toulouse-lautrec/chocolat-dansant/. Accessed 13 Jan. 2019.

The short Van Gogh segment is quickly replaced with a celebration of another artist – Toulouse Lautrec. Once the man wearing a cardboard advertisement of the artist's exhibition turned around and showed his *Chocolat Dansant* from 1896, Jerry took the pose of the depicted dancer, which transferred him into the exact cardboard replica of the same composition (See Fig. 4). Jerry's dancing took him to another setting inspired by the mentioned artist – "the stage of *La Troupe de Mademoiselle Eglantine* (1896) to dance with Lautrec's muse Jane Avril, and finally into the audience, which comprises the central figures from *Aristide Bruant dans son Cabaret* (1891), *Au Moulin Rouge* (1892) and *Yvette Guilbert*

(1895)" (*Minnelli's Yellows* 10). The dancing characters in the segment, mainly Jerry and Lise, contrast nicely with the rest of living or cardboard characters that remain still in the poses they were given, while the color scheme taken from Lautrec only intensifies the gloomy feeling of the Moulin Rouge bar. The end of the dance sequence takes us back to the Place de la Concorde where, after thinking that he finally won her heart, Jerry loses Lise again just like the set loses its colors and turns back into Jerry's monochrome drawing.

4. World as He Saw it – The Story About *Lust for Life*

4.1. When Vincente Met Vincent – The Story Behind the Making of *Lust for Life*

Although Vincente Minnelli had encountered and dealt with a part of Vincent van Gogh's artistic persona in his 1951 Academy award-winning *An American in Paris*, it took five more years until the audience got the opportunity to see his take not only on this great artist's *oeuvre*, but his personal demons as well. Two things being inevitably intertwined shaped our perception of both the director and the painter. The film, which was made in the period that saw the flood of biopics in Hollywood (Jacobs 39), waited rather long to be produced, and to finally hit theaters in 1956 (Harvey 221). Ten whole years before its release, MGM purchased the rights for Irving Stone's 1934 *Lust for Life*, a novel dealing with Vincent van Gogh's life and struggling career (Jacobs 51). Between 1946, when the studio cashed out the total of $120,000 to Stone, and 1955 when the shooting began under Minnelli's direction, a number of prominent filmmakers expressed their interest in bringing the story of Vincent van Gogh to the silver screen (Harvey 221-224). However, many of them, despite their willingness to engage in filming it, struggled with the challenge of adapting Stone's material, including the son of the French Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Jean Renoir (221).

As Harvey reveals, in 1955, only a year before the studio was to lose the rights that would be given back to the novel's author, Minnelli decided to take the initiative in finally

realizing the film, taking the director's chair at the same time (221). What Harvey also adds is that ”this was the only film he himself initiated during more than two decades at MGM” (221). Together with John Houseman, whom he previously worked with on filming the 1955 melodrama *Cobweb*, Minnelli embarked on the task of breathing life into those sentences Stone based on Van Gogh’s life. This project that Harvey calls ”the grimmest of Minnelli’s self-portraits in code”, according to Naremore, meant so much to Minnelli that ”he [even] reportedly named it as his personal favorite among all his films” (Harvey 221; Naremore 137). However, apart from Minnelli, Kirk Douglas, who at one point intended to film his own Vincent van Gogh biopic independent of MGM, was equally eager to get involved with reviving the great Dutch Postimpressionist painter (Harvey 222). The role of Van Gogh was hence given to Douglas, who ”in physique and temperament … couldn’t be bettered”, and whose believable performance in, what Naremore calls it, ”histrionic style” secured him an Academy Award nomination for the best actor in a leading role (Harvey 222; Naremore 144). Once again, Minnelli found himself in the company of creative individuals, Houseman and Douglas, who were more than ready to tackle with rather complex material, which would eventually become not only a splendid visual achievement, but also a piece of film history responsible for the revalorization of the artist among the general audience. Indeed, according to Naremore, “*Lust for Life* has probably contributed more to Van Gogh’s posthumous reputation than any other movie or biographical text” (137).

Producing a film like this one proved to be a bigger challenge than any member of the film crew must have imagined. Not only because of the tight schedule, but also because of the legal issues, and technical advances that would force Minnelli to change his initial ideas on how the film should look like. Throughout the entire film, the details about Van Gogh’s life and his inner demons keep revealing in the form of letters the artist frequently exchanged with his younger brother Theo, an art dealer working in Paris, which was a narrative device

proposed to Minnelli by Norman Corwin, screen writer assigned to adapt what Stone had written in his novel (Harvey 222-223). The problem that the latter brought with it had to do with the artist's heirs and their unwillingness to let the studio use the content from the actual letters, namely Van Gogh's nephew and Theo's son Vincent, who ended up being mentioned in a short scene in the film (223).

The way Minnelli imagined for the painter's pieces of art to appear in the film was no longer possible as the studio introduced the new standard of the frame – CinemaScope (Naremore 139). What Naremore states is that although Minnelli argued "that the old-fashioned Academy ratio was closer to the dimensions of easel painting", he eventually accepted the fact that "projectionists all over the United States were likely to show the film in CinemaScope no matter how it was photographed" (139). Despite the initial refusal, Minnelli seemed to have found a solution to cope with the challenges of the new process. As it is more than evident in the film, Minnelli approached a now wider frame in his own manner – filling the *mise-en-scène* with objects, some of which could be seen as intentional hints, to the extent that some scenes almost had a feeling of medieval *horror vacui*. This mainly refers to interiors crammed up with Van Gogh's paintings, either as scattered around the author's premises, or as neatly hung on the walls of his brother's Parisian residence. Interestingly enough, after the general excitement of the major studios, the process would soon meet its downfall (Bordwell 282).

However, CinemaScope was not the only problem that was in conflict with Minnelli's standards. One of the most distinctive elements of Minnelli's films – color, and especially shades he desired, came into question as "MGM had abandoned the expensive but durable Tehnicolor in favor of Eastman color" that "was unable to register a shade of yellow appropriate to Van Gogh's palette" (Naremore 140). Although Minnelli managed to find what he thought would be a decent alternative for Tehnicolor palette in Afgacolor, Naremore

explains that it unfortunately ended up not being the case as its poor durability caused the film to lose its original coloristic zest (140).

In order to attain as much of authenticity as possible, the creative team managed to get the opportunity to shoot on actual locations, employed artists to create the illusion that Douglas really had skills of a painter, as well as John Rewald who, as a scholar with the expertise on Impressionism, made sure that fiction did not overtake historical references (Harvey 223). Of course, since nothing can encompass Van Gogh's legacy better than his paintings, there was no question whether they would be included or not. Hence, with the consent of twenty two institutions and private collectors, as stated prior to the opening credits in the film, the months-long process of photographing the actual paintings that would later appear either as inserted originals, or believable copies in hands of characters, could begin (223).

After several months spent shooting on various locations across Europe to deliver impressions of locales captured on Van Gogh's canvases, as well as on the sound stage for some indoor scenes both in Europe and Hollywood, Harvey reveals that the film was finally assembled in the early 1956 only to face another problem – inevitable changes demanded by the studio executive Dore Schary to make it more appealing to the audience (224-243). It was George Cukor, the director behind the films like *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) and *My Fair Lady* (1964), who took over the responsibility of doing reshoots required by the studio (243). Once it was released later in 1956,[7] *Lust for Life* had a certain appeal that critics could not resist, but commercially the film was far from the success the studio might have been satisfied with (223-224). Perhaps that is one of the reasons why this film remains "the only Van Gogh biopic of the classical era" (Jacobs 50). A couple of decades later, Van Gogh would again become the subject of films made by directors such as "Alain Resnais, Paul Cox, Akira

[7] According to Harvey „the world premiere took place at the Edinburgh Arts Festival in August 1956" (243).

Kurosawa, … Robert Altman", and more recently Dorota Kobiela and Hugh Welchman whose 2017 *Loving Vincent* became "the first fully painted feature film in history" offering the audience a completely new approach to understanding Van Gogh by relying completely on his technique and style (Naremore 137; Ollerearnshaw).

4.2. Cinematic Resurrection of Vincent van Gogh and His Artistic Take on the World Around Him

While there might have been later takes on Vincent van Gogh's life that visually and technologically surpassed Minnelli's version, no one can deny neither him nor the rest of the creative team the effort put into making the artist's work and developing career as a painter more approachable to the audience, while preserving a significant level of their own artistry at the same time. From one of the versions of Van Gogh's *The Sower*[8] in the opening credits to the collage of a number of his canvases arranged one next to another at the very end, the film demonstrates the original artworks, the demonstration of their genesis, as well as the recreation of the real world based on those same artworks. In fact, as Harvey reveals, it was Minnelli who wished to take a detour from the way other biopic directors treated the creation of artworks before the eyes of the audience (243). Hence, "he juxtaposed his recreated 19th-century vistas with flashes of Van Gogh's own resplendent, individual perspectives on what we've just seen, without pausing to explain or editorialize" (243). In the end, the film can somehow be seen not only as a biography with elements of fiction, but also as a rather nice overview of the artist's *oeuvre* that many viewers might have not gotten the opportunity to see in person during their lifetime, especially not at the same place.

Despite the problems with color of the film caused by the studio's decision to change the process as described earlier in the chapter, *Lust for Life* undoubtedly managed to evoke the color segment of Van Gogh's approach to artmaking. Although the intensity of his palette

[8] Vincent van Gogh "made more than 30 drawings and paintings on this theme" (The Sower).

might not have been shown the way Minnelli considered it deserved to be shown, the film at least allowed us to perceive the gradual development and blossom of that same palette simultaneously with Van Gogh's development as a painter. Bukatman divides that development into following phases: the early start of Van Gogh's relationship with art when he relies solely on muted colors of his drawings and early paintings that correspond to the atmosphere of the European north; the shy introduction of a richer palette during the period prior to leaving for Paris; his Parisian period, or the period of revelation in which he embraces much lighter and lively palette after discovering the Impressionists; years spent in the south of France that finally allowed his palette to fully blossom into recognizable coloristic moments we normally associate with his work (304-305).[9]

The beginning of Minnelli's film takes us to the cradle of Van Gogh's rather short career as an artist – to Borinage, the coal-mining region of Belgium. However, the depicted period demonstrates more of his personal struggle and disappointment with the job he was obviously not predestined to do than his first contact with the art production. Considering the depressing atmosphere of the region where he was appointed as a preacher at the age of twenty five, and the everyday scenes of working men, women and children who seem as though they have been forgotten by the one whose teaching he was supposed to spread, it is no wonder that many art references we notice in his surroundings point to the French Realist Jean-François Millet. Van Gogh's study in charcoal of Millet's canvases like *Angelus* (1857-1858) demonstrates their common understanding of piety as "Millet saw the peasant-class as most nobly fulfilling the words of the Old Testament Book of Genesis", and Van Gogh started to realize the hypocrisy of the clergy that found its deity in the riches far distant from the toil of peasants (Jean-Francois). Moreover, later in the film during one of the disputes with Gauguin we finally get to see his views on Millet as "one of the few artists that ever really

[9] Bukatman's phases match with four phases brought up by Naremore; cf. Naremore 139.

captured the human spirit … in the dignity of toil" (Lust for Life). Thus, it is no wonder that Van Gogh at this period concentrated only on such themes as the life and work of miners whom he started to sympathize with.

After only two years spent as a preacher in the Borinage region, and after his brother's visit, Van Gogh decides to return home to his family in Nuenen. Suddenly the entire color scheme of the film starts to lighten up creating a strong contrast with the one that dominated in the Borinage segment. Simultaneously, as he reveals it in a letter to his brother, he is starting to realize that drawing, something that always occupied him, might be his actual calling. However, he is still heavily focused on monochrome drawings of peasants, and reproductions similar to those described earlier. He kept that direction in art until his visit to The Hague where his cousin, painter Anton Mauve lived and worked. It was Mauve who introduced him to color giving him all the equipment necessary for his development.

Following his father's severe illness and death, and another failed relationship, this time with the prostitute named Christine (real-life Clasina Maria Hoornik) portrayed in a number of his pieces, in the depiction of Van Gogh's return to Nuenen, Minnelli finally employs the juxtaposition of artist's finished canvases and the actual scenes that were transferred on them. This way Minnelli gave us his own view on how some of Van Gogh's most famous paintings from this early, as well as the later periods of artist's production, might have been created. Suddenly, before our eyes Van Gogh's painting *The Potato Eaters* (1885) comes to life in a scene where by observing the peasants the artist creates several sketches studying their facial expressions and gestures, and tries to find the way of depicting the humility and gratitude for what they have earned with their hard labor. The color scheme that prevails is toned down, and reflects the gloom of poverty, but it is also at the same time as

Van Gogh calls it ”the good, dark color of our Dutch earth”[10] (Lust for Life). Although Minnelli manages to provide us with uncanny depiction of scenes as the artist must have seen them, they still, despite the high level of naturalism, have more of a feeling of an overly arranged shop windows than something that would spark the compassion of an observer as Van Gogh’s socially engaged canvases would (See Fig. 5).

Figure 5 Still from Minnelli, *Lust for Life* (46:45); Van Gogh, Vincent. The Potato Eaters. 1885, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. ”Van Gogh Museum,” *Van Gogh Museum*, Van Gogh Foundation, www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0005V1962. Accessed 13 Jan. 2019.

Van Gogh’s stay in Paris that was facing a new climate in art world would eventually serve as a quintessential step in the tour of painter’s development and self-discovery. It was the ”Exhibition of Impressionist Paintings”, which included Monet, Cezanne, Pissarro, Degas,

[10] In naming his four stages, Naremore describes the second one using the same quote from the film; cf. Naremore 139.

Gauguin, Renoir, Sisley and Signac,[11] that can be considered as an eye-opener for Vincent van Gogh. If we take into consideration historical facts telling us when the artist moved in with his brother Theo, who worked as an art dealer in Paris, this exhibition could not be any other Impressionist exhibition than the eighth and the last one that took place in May and June of 1886 (Gersh-Nesic). However, the exhibition shown in the film, and one particular scene showing Van Gogh's interaction with Georges Seurat, show certain historical discrepancies. One of the biggest discrepancies has to do with Seurat's painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884-1886). The painting that was first exhibited at *the Exhibition*

Figure 6 Still from Minelli, *Lust for Life* (51:14)

of Painting, which was the actual name of the ultimate Impressionist Exhibition, and marked the introduction of Neo-Impressionism (Gersh-Nesic), appears in the film unfinished in Seurat's atelier (See. Fig. 6). Instead of following historical facts, the creative team behind the film used the process of creating the painting in order to demonstrate to the audience how Van Gogh got to learn about new directions in art and consequently form his own discerning style. Picking up pieces of advice on light and color from painters like Camille Pissarro and the already mentioned Seurat allowed him to quench his thirst for understanding this, for him new way of creating art that he first encountered upon his arrival in Paris. His paintings evidently

[11] The title of the exhibition together with all the names listed can be seen on the exhibition poster with Degas' ballerinas that leads us into this Parisian segment of Van Gogh's life and career.

started to go the other direction adapting a much brighter palette and light effects suitable for the depiction of the themes that were certainly far from those concentrating on the lives of poor Dutch laborers drenched in somber colors and emerging from the dark of their humble homes. Based on the paintings shown in the film, city landscapes woven from quick and short brushstrokes of gentle, powdery shades of green, blue, yellow with a few accents of warm shades of orange and red,[12] as well as elaborate and vibrant flower arrangements, became Van Gogh's main preoccupation in this period he spent with his brother in Paris. The actual *oeuvre* still shows the traces of his former period, especially in terms of treatment of still lifes, a theme inseparable from the Dutch art and culture. In the way of their treatment, portraits and self-portraits like the one that can be seen in Theo's apartment, however, represent the total shift from his earlier work, and the direction in which his future creations would eventually go.

Upon meeting Paul Gauguin in the supply shop for painters owned by Julien Tanguy whom we can see portrayed in a color-bursting canvas in Theo's apartment, Van Gogh moves to Arles "to see nature under a clearer sky" (Lust for Life). One of the first impressions of Arles bathing in the warm sunlight of the South was the orchard in blossom that mesmerized the artist once he opened the shutters of the worn out hotel room where he spent the night upon his arrival. It is the motif that would appear in a series of canvases some of which Minnelli cunningly juxtaposed with the actual footage of the trees in blossom shot on location in Arles. In Arles, Van Gogh meets one of his most loyal friends there, and the subject of a number of his canvases, Joseph Roulin, a postman who helped him find a residence to live in, i.e. his well-known yellow house. The resemblance of the house seen in the film and the one painted by Van Gogh is uncanny, which is no wonder since after being "destroyed by Allied

[12] The actual paintings that correspond to those shown in the film like *Restaurant de la Sirène at Asnières* (1887) reveal a slightly more vibrant color palette, and warmer light treatment than the film reproductions. This is probably due to Afgacolor and its problem with preserving the original properties with time.

bombardments during the war … [it] had to be reconstructed from scratch" (Harvey 224). Although the film shows a rather washed out, almost beige version of the house, rather than a lively yellow one contrasting against the cobalt blue sky, Minnelli and the rest of the creative team undoubtedly managed to recreate all the architectural details to meet what the painter had captured with his brush. The same goes for Van Gogh's room that was recreated after one of his most recognizable pieces (See Fig. 7). However, such attention to details in recreation sometimes brings a sense of the sets being too perfect and intact as if they were taken from the pages of a magazine rather than belonging to the world of an artist reckless in terms of décor of his residence.

Figure 7 Still from Minnelli, *Lust for Life* (1:04:54); Van Gogh, Vincent. The Bedroom. 1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. "Van Gogh Museum," *Van Gogh Museum*, Van Gogh Foundation, www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0047V1962. Accessed 13 Jan. 2019.

While showing Van Gogh painting *en plein air* the film again tries to transport us back to Arles of the late 1880s by reviving the elements of some of the artist's most distinguishable landscapes such as one of the versions of *The Langlois Bridge at Arles* (1888). Arles brought Van Gogh a great deal of satisfaction, and the opportunity to paint without limitations, reflecting the rich palette of the nature on his canvases, especially different shades of yellow that could imply the upcoming emergence of his inner demons and tragic end. Sometimes we get the feeling as if the film guides us from one painting into another. This way in one scene we get to experience *The Starry Night Over the Rhone* (1888) with the artist explaining its genesis that

borders with dreams, while the next one transports us to *The Night Café in the Place Lamartine in Arles* (1888), or *Café Terrace at Night* (1888) where he takes Gauguin explaining the psychological connotations underlying the choices of color in *The Night Café.* The flashes of blood red that he mentioned would soon enhance the moment of madness ending in the ear mutilation, and eventual stay in Saint-Rémy asylum.

As the place of his (only apparent) recovery, the nature of Saint-Rémy brought the colors of green and blue, which in various shades, and in interaction with inevitable yellow resulted in iconic paintings like *The Starry Night* and *Wheat Field with Cypresses* (both painted in 1889). However, one specific painting has more importance in a way it is foreseeing his early death – *Wheat Field Behind Saint-Paul Hospital with a Reaper* (1889).[13] This reference in which Van Gogh painted the death in the form of a reaper will be later cunningly used by Minnelli to signal the end of the painter's life accompanied by repetition of his view on death. Van Gogh's time in Auvers-sur-Oise where he settled for a while after returning from the South, seemed to be fertile as the natural beauty of the place enhanced his will to paint, which resulted in paintings like *Portrait of Dr. Gachet* (1890), *The Church at Auvers* (1890), or *The Town Hall at Auvers* (1890). Moreover, as the words addressed to his brother reveal, he was eager to work as much as possible knowing that the end is approaching. Van Gogh's final moments before the attempt of suicide are shown in a frantic creation of his final painting *Wheatfield with Crows* (1890) accompanied by dramatic music that finely suited his nervous final brushstrokes. The film's climax was in fact one of the first scenes shot once the film crew arrived in France (Harvey 224), but it definitely belongs to the most intensive and believable parts of the achievement thanks to Douglas' convincing performance,

[13] Although there are several versions of the painting with the scene depicting a reaper in a wheat field, the one owned by Museum Folkwang in Essen, Germany seems to be the closest to the painting featured in the film; cf. Vincent.

and Minnelli's ability to understand the torment of an artist, and to make it seem more human and approachable to those whom he is retelling the story to – the audience.

5. Gigi, a Belle Époque Girl – The Story About *Gigi*

5.1. Gigi's Debut in Hollywood – The Story Behind the Making of *Gigi*

After *An American in Paris* in 1951, and *Lust for Life* in 1956, the late 1950s provided Vincente Minnelli with the opportunity to set off on another cinematic cruise to France. Unlike the previous two occasions, this time his camera was not there to capture the stories of struggling artists, or to bring their art to life. The reason for which Paris once again became one of the main characters in Hollywood, or better to say MGM film was almost a coming-of-age story about a young innocent girl who at the turn of the century manages to comprehend the meaning of love for a man avoiding the lessons about seduction given to her by the more experienced aunt and grandmother at the same time. The original novella with the flare of the bygone Paris was penned by a French author Colette in 1944, who built the world of *Gigi* upon a real-life story about a girl trained to win a rich man's heart by her two courtesan aunts, only to outwit both them and her beau, who eventually proposed to her (Thank Heaven).[14]

Before *Gigi* finally debuted in Hollywood in 1958, she came to life in a 1948 film of the same name produced in France, as well as on Broadway, in a show that introduced a future Hollywood star Audrey Hepburn (Thank Heaven). Hepburn's name for the show was proposed by Colette herself, but when Arthur Freed decided to bring the story on the silver screen a couple of years later, the actress was no longer interested in reappearing as a French teenage *cocotté*-to-be (Harvey 139-141). Interestingly enough, Hepburn would later take on a similar role in a film adaptation of the 1956 Broadway production of *My Fair Lady* that

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[14] *Thank Heaven! The Making of Gigi*, a documentary featured on the 2009 Blu-ray edition of *Gigi* offers valuable information about the production of the film together with the comments provided both by the individuals involved in the production like Vincente Minnelli himself, Leslie Caron, and other film experts like Hugh Fordin or Drew Casper; cf. "Thank Heaven! The Making of *Gigi*: New documentary". *Gigi*, Warner Brothers, 2009. Blu-ray.

sparked Freed's attention, and led him to Alan Jay Lerner whom he had envisioned as the screenwriter of his future film, together with Minnelli as the director (140). With Hepburn out of the picture, Freed found a new solution for the title character in the actress who debuted in his and Minnelli's *An American in Paris* – Leslie Caron, whose weakened career Freed was eager to salvage. Because of her evident physical innocence and playfulness that the audience must have remembered from her 1951 film debut, Caron was a perfect fit for the role of a teenage girl, despite being in her mid-twenties during the shooting of the film.

Even the premise of the story, intertwined with certain amoral connotations, was already beyond the moral framework set with the Production Code, but despite struggles, and with a great amount of persuasion and credibility earned with his past work, Freed managed to get censors on his side (Thank Heaven). Following the breathtaking visual component of the actual locales that gave Minnelli's *Lust for Life* a sense of authenticity, *Gigi* was destined to be treated the same way by the studio (Harvey 141). Unlike *An American in Paris* in which Gene Kelly danced and sang on artificial cobbled streets of Paris, *Gigi* was finally Minnelli's full-blooded opportunity to incorporate the City of Lights in one of his films.[15] The importance of the city's presence is such that authors like Hugh Fordin consider that "Paris is a character in the movie", although the task of depicting its *Belle Époque* period proved to be more demanding as the city had already stepped in the modern age that left a vivid mark on its surface (Thank Heaven). Even though various locations and buildings undoubtedly helped in reimagining the era, this venture happened to be far too expensive for the studio that eventually ordered the film crew to return to Hollywood where the costs would be easier to handle (Harvey 142). In the end, despite having the luck to incorporate the real Paris in his film, what Minnelli delivered was much closer to his own apprehension of the city than its

[15] Minnelli had a chance to portray Paris in his 1956 *Lust for Life*; however, the film did not extensively concentrate on that segment of Vincent van Gogh's life, and the majority of scenes were filmed in interiors built on a soundstage.

actual depiction (Koresky). Nevertheless, such interpretation fit perfectly in the musical version of the story, and gave it a certain amount of theatre charm in a manner not many directors could offer with their style of filmmaking.

When compared to *An American in Paris*, *Gigi* is equally colorful and picturesque, but retains a higher level of (false) sophistication with the avoidance of extravagant dance scenes (Robinson). Moreover, it has a feeling of a comedy film in which Frederic Loewe's songs only add to the comedic moments created by actors' performances, and unobtrusively accompany the plot from its beginning until the very end. In the period when the film musical saw its gradual fall, and the shift towards the television as the new favorite medium of entertainment was inevitable, *Gigi* managed to reach a level of success unlike any other film of its kind produced in the same period (Thank Heaven). In April of 1959, *Gigi* swept the Academy Awards, and took the total of nine golden statues, which surpassed the success from 1951 achieved with *An American in Paris*, and brought Minnelli a long-awaited recognition from the industry.

5.2. Minnelli's Revival of the Belle Époque Paris Amorality

Knowing both Freed and Minnelli's appreciation for fine art, Minnelli's soft spot for the period in which the story about Gigi takes place, and the level which *An American in Paris* and *Lust for Life* reached with art references, it was expected that even the Paris of 1900 would be built upon the works of art that recall the glorious era of this city's history. However, unlike *An American in Paris* in which art became the media through which the main character's unrealized dreams materialized in front of our eyes, and *Lust for Life* in which the artist's paintings almost had a quintessential role in retelling his life story and recreating the world he lived in, *Gigi's* relationship with art references cannot be said to be that apparent as in the previous two cases. Certainly, this does not mean that we do not get to enjoy anything of France's artistic legacy. Apart from the opening credits where Georges

Goursat's caricatures are quoted directly, other quotes and possible inspirations only linger throughout the film managing to give us the feeling of the depicted era, and yet making us wonder at the same time what is the source they originate from.

Opening credits sometimes have a more important role in the film as a whole than a regular filmgoer might suspect. And while an average modern-day consumer of classical Hollywood cinema would normally not give that much attention to a list of names that appear before their eyes in the early minutes of a film, anxiously awaiting for the real action to start, doing so with those featured in *Gigi* would certainly be a shame. The reason for that does not lie in the fact they would extract pieces of information on what they might expect in the minutes that follow by reading the text, but mostly because they would achieve that goal by paying attention to what appears in the background. In this case, when deciphered appropriately, *Gigi*'s opening credits allow the spectator to comprehend the overall tone of the

Figure 8 Stills from Minnelli, *Gigi* (00:26, 0:36)

film as Georges Goursat's litographies fulfill their role probably better than the art of any other artist of the period would (See Fig. 8). What Goursat, more familiar under his pseudonym SEM, offered with his *oeuvre* of caricatures was a humorous take on high society that often ridiculed its members (Sem George). The way Goursat cunningly mocked aged bachelors, and married men engaged in morally questionable affairs, and women often making laughingstocks of themselves by trying to gain their appreciation, was warmheartedly embraced by the authors of the film who created characters and events that modern day spectator can hardly take seriously, despite them not being that far away from reality. Apart from Goursat's comedic undertones, the visual component of his caricatures might have been

adapted by the filmmakers as well – mostly as the basis for the appearance of the socialites in the film, and locales where they dwelled, but also in terms of color scheme that is somehow close to Minnelli's use of color on big screen, which is more than evident in the scenes that follow the credits.

As the narrator, or perhaps even a commentator of the film's crucial events, Maurice Chevalier's confirmed bachelor Honore Lachaille welcomes the spectators to Paris of 1900 through his witty introduction giving them at the same time a glimpse of a certain level of society's amorality that underlies the entire film. This is the period known as the *Belle Époque*, which, according to Philippe Jullian, began with 1900 and ended up with the start of the Great War of 1914, though some go back to the second half of the 19th century to set the date of its origin, just to encompass the certain artistic movements like the Impressionism within the framework of the period (6). Such extended time frame allows us to look further back into the world of painters like Renoir, Manet or Seurat, whom the creative team might have borrowed certain details from in building the world of leisure and courtship, especially well depicted in the scenes set in the Bois de Boulogne. Although we cannot point at the names mentioned, or any other of their contemporaries, as the direct references found in the film, a certain feeling captured in some of their paintings remains present in Minnelli's take on the period in which the film takes place.

Visually, Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884-1886) could not be more remote from the look achieved in the film, but a feeling of careless leisure can somehow be found in the scene in which Honore Lachaille thanks heaven for little girls. Seurat's painting features women in day dresses with bonnets on their heads, holding parasols in a manner that could hardly protect their skin from the rays of sun. The same could be said of women whom Minnelli positioned firmly in their chairs to observe passengers as little girls playfully run around them and remind us of a more relaxed and lighthearted leisure found in

scenes framed by Renoir. Such ways of daily entertainment were not uncommon in bygone Paris, a period in which the City of Lights saw the omnipresence of prostitution that could have been found in various forms, which is something that *Gigi*, despite the need to attain a certain level of decency, is not afraid to demonstrate (Jullian 30).

One of the most prominent set designs where various events during the entire film take place irresistibly evokes yet another art reference – the residence of Gigi's family, i.e. of her grandmother and mother whom we only get the opportunity to hear singing, which can also be seen as a running gag of a kind throughout the film. What brings this apartment of a rather

Figure 9 Still from Minnelli, *Gigi* (15:19); Matisse, Henri. *The Dessert: Harmony in Red.* 1908. "Henri Matisse," *Henri Matisse*, www.henrimatisse.org/the-dessert-harmony-in-red.jsp#. Accessed 13 Jan. 2019.

unusual family closer to the art world is its décor that undoubtedly parallels with Henri Matisse's *The Dessert: Harmony in Red* from 1908 (See Fig. 9). The most striking resemblance owes to the daring use of a rich shade of red which corresponds to the one that found its place in numerous Minnelli films, either in details, throbbing flashes of light, or entire sets. Similarly as Matisse played with interweaving of his red room with decorative elements in darker shades of blue and green, or popping moments of bright yellow of food and flowers visible on the canvas, Minnelli livened up his front room with dark brown varnish of the furniture, golden details of decoration in the background or chandelier, etc. Even the appearance of Gigi's grandmother recalls the look of the lady depicted by Matisse, especially in terms of colors of their attires, and how their hair is fixed in a high bun. As we can mostly

see the grandmother only in her apartment, the use of this Matisse's piece of art, which also permanently ties the depicted lady to the recognizable red room, does not come as a surprise.

Johnson mentions both Renoir and Manet as possible references that can be found in the scenes set in Trouville (39-41), while Harvey points out to Boudin as the one who inspired the same scenes (147). However, neither of the two mentions which works of those prominent artists might have served as a source material. In Eugène-Louis Boudin's *oeuvre* several canvases (e.g. *Beach at Trouville,* 1863) depicting the landscapes of Trouville can be found,

Figure 10 Still from Minnelli, *Gigi* (57:58); Boudin, Eugène. *Beach at Trouville.* 1863. "Google Arts & Culture," *Google Arts & Culture*, artsandculture.google.com/asset/beach-at-trouville/JQGDYtZbt3L0Xg. Accessed 13 Jan. 2019.

many of which include its beaches populated with well-dressed people enjoying their free time by the sea, similar to what can be seen in the film. The almost powder-like palette of Boudin's work that wraps depicted figures in a misty atmosphere of the seaside becomes loose, but still recognizable color scheme used by Minnelli in these segments where the sparks between the two protagonists begin to change an innocent friendship into a relationship with more serious intentions (See Fig. 10). Similar artistic qualities that are mirrored in the film could be found in paintings like Manet's *On the Beach* from 1873, or Renoir's *Figures on the Beach* from 1890.

In the manner of a proper coming-of-age film, *Gigi* offers us a rather fast take on the main character's process of growing up from a playful teenager to a young woman ready to be married both to fulfill her relatives' expectations, and to find her own happiness. Gigi we meet at the beginning of the film loosely resembles one of the *Two Sisters* painted by Renoir in 1881, mostly in a way Gigi's emerald coat and oversized hat match the attire of the older

sister, but also in a way the figures interact with the greenery and the rest of the setting of the park surrounding them. Later on, as the film progresses together with Gigi's training, we are introduced to a changed character whose newborn femininity and seductiveness that are to be demonstrated in an outing at Maxim's, match those of women portrayed by John Singer Sargent. Among those portraits that show certain similarities with Gigi's new grace are *Madame X* (1883-84), whose gown matches Gigi's in shape, though not in color (See Fig. 11), and *Ena and Betty, Daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Asher Wertheimer* (1901), where the visual component of one of the sisters manages to thick even that box. But what is more important than the percentage of matching elements, is the way Minnelli handled the gentle treatment of portraiture in the manner close to Sargent's, and made out of Gigi a gracious young woman rather than a regular *cocotté* seeking nothing but attention during one of her visits at Maxim's.

Figure 11 Singer Sargent, John. *Madame X*. 1883-1884, The Metropolitan Museum of Art," The *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/200 12492. Accessed 13 Jan. 2019.

6. Conclusion

While his career in film business might not have been as long and productive as careers of some other directors whose work in the industry defined what we today refer to as the Golden Age of Hollywood, Vincente Minnelli cannot be denied his rightful spot in that same hall of fame. Looking back at his biography, which is something that many have often found more interesting than his professional engagements as at times it resembled a proper film scenario, it was evident from his early days that his competences and interests would

sooner or later lead him towards creative industries. The path of his future career unfortunately took him away from the world of high art he hoped to make a breakthrough in, but his understanding of both art and artists never vanished. Moreover, it remained as one of his strongest interests, and possibly an escape from the harsh reality that might have not been overly kind to him.

Minnelli's fondness of art movements, some of which would have hardly had any appeal to the American audience, as well as their representatives and their production, provided him with the opportunity to further explore the possibilities of both theatre and cinema. Such connection to the lives of artists and their personal struggles seems to be a topic Minnelli was especially keen on adapting for the silver screen, as topics like those were to some extent a device of expressing discontent with his own failed dreams. Discontent that he eventually turned into success. Fine art had not only influenced the way Minnelli incorporated certain art references in his theater shows and films, but also the way he started to treat many technical aspects of filmmaking almost as if he was a painter, and with some of those aspects enabled us to comprehend particular ideas and issues they channel. In the end such approach resulted in visual splendors and feasts for eyes in a number of his films.

The three films included in this discussion on Minnelli's strong bond with fine art and its appearance in his achievements, regarding the story and the time period they take place in do not seem to have that much in common at first. However, regardless of some initial differences, they are pretty much connected in a way they offer the audience a completely new experience of fine art, which in a way also constitutes Minnelli's cinematic world. The presence of fine art in his films is manifested in several different ways. *An American in Paris* introduces the audience to the daily struggles of an unsuccessful artist as he tries to climb the ladder of success in the art world of Paris by copying his role models that Minnelli cleverly inserts in the film either as his uninspiring canvases, or sets that irresistibly remind us of the

works of artists whose fame the main character will probably never reach. The most impressive manifestation of fine art in this film is by far its climax, i.e. the spectacular seventeen and a half minutes long dance sequence which reimagines the City of Lights through the sets that revive the style of several prominent painters, as well as their take on the city, offering at the same time a flare of theater in a way not many directors could achieve.

In *Lust for Life*, on the other hand, Minnelli looked in Vincent van Gogh's *oeuvre* not only to secure a better depiction of the artist's life inseparable from art production, but also to rebuild the entire world he lived in. Although at times the latter one worked well and seemed natural, in some cases the illusion of this cinematic world failed because of the director's tendency to try to reach perfection in arranging sets, which is something that lingered from the early days of his career. *Gigi* and the way it utilizes works of art, however, demonstrates Minnelli's strongest suit – taking fine art as the basis, and building the rest of the film on reminiscences achieving the authenticity of the depicted era, or at least making us believe in its authenticity.

While the majority of art references featured in these three films belongs to the time period stated in the title of the thesis, and French artistic heritage, there are several examples that violate such a description, mainly works of Raoul Dufy in *An American in Paris*, those of Vincent van Gogh's Dutch period, or proposed John Singer Sargent influences in *Gigi*. However, their presence only adds to our better understanding of Minnelli's broad views on art that are already noticeable from the remaining art quotes included in the chapters that preceded.

Although the flavor of his films might not necessarily cater to the needs of today's audience that devours films mostly on the basis of wafer-thin stories and spectacle, the work of Vincente Minnelli still retains a high level of visual qualities that can measure with accomplishments of modern cinema, even though they were crafted without admirable

technology and advanced equipment. What makes them such is the unity of different forms of art, and the director who by adopting the principles of artmaking finally managed to grasp the role he had desired his whole life – the one of an artist.

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Reflections of the French Art Between the mid-19th and the Early 20th Centuries in Vincente Minnelli's Films: Summary and key words

This thesis aims at examining and putting forward some already familiar, as well as the newly proposed reflections, i.e. influences of the French art produced between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries found in three films directed by Vincente Minnelli, including *An American in Paris* (1951), *Lust for Life* (1956), and *Gigi* (1958). Following a thorough elaboration on particular biographical details that might have been the reason for Minnelli's affection for art, and the development of his style, the thesis heads towards the overview of the production of all three films, and more importantly towards their analysis seeking art references that shaped the visual component of each one of them, while simultaneously trying to discover possible reasons for their appearance.

Key words: Vincente Minnelli, Arthur Freed, film musical, French art, An American in Paris, Lust for Life, Gigi

Odjeci francuske umjetnosti od sredine 19. do ranog 20. stoljeća u filmovima Vincentea Minnellija: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Cilj ovog diplomskog rada je razmatranje i iznošenje do sada poznatih, kao i nekih novih prijedloga odjeka, odnosno utjecaja francuske umjetnosti nastale od sredine 19. do ranog 20. stoljeća u trima filmovima redatelja Vincentea Minnellija, što uključuje *Amerikanca u Parizu* (1951.), *Žudnju za životom* (1956.) i *Gigi* (1958.). Nakon podrobne rasprave o pojedinim biografskim detaljima kao mogućim razlozima Minnellijeve privrženosti umjetnosti, kao i razvoja njegovog stila, rad se nastavlja pregledom nastanka navedenih filmova, te još važnije njihovom analizom u potrazi za umjetničkim referencama koje su oblikovale vizualnu komponentu svakog od njih, uz istovremena nastojanja pronalaska mogućih razloga njihove pojave.

Ključne riječi: Vincente Minnelli, Arthur Freed, filmski mjuzikl, francuska umjetnost, Amerikanac u Parizu, Žudnja za životom, Gigi