

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

BY JENS HOFFMANN

TRUST ME ... the world is full of people who believe in alien abductions, extra-terrestrial conspiracies and Martians invading our planet, and quite often these are the same people who believe that immigrants are privileged in our society, and that minorities have too much power. What is articulated through such convictions is the fear and paranoia of the unknown and the unfamiliar that culminates in a collective psychosis about a secret plot to take over the world, whether by aliens, immigrants or other outcasts and strangers. Interestingly enough, the notion of the alien and immigrant has often been connected and even more often confused. In the world of science, an alien is a life form that exists and originates outside our planet, which is so far the only planet that allows for life from a biological perspective. The concept of aliens is therefore completely imaginary: no one has ever seen an extra-terrestrial. In legal terms, an alien is a person who is not a native or naturalised citizen of the land in which she or he lives: an immigrant.

In the history of film, aliens are usually seen as those invading the earth in search of natural resources, or in order to abduct humans, to enslave them or to replace human life. H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*,¹ serialised in 1897, was the first work of fiction to describe an alien invasion and the archetype for all science fiction literature that followed. Published in the late 19th century, it is easy to see how it could be read as a harsh critique of European colonialism of that time. The technological superiority of the aliens clearly mimics that of the European powers who were, just as ruthlessly as the Martians in Wells' novel, exploring and exploiting Africa, Asia and the Americas. Wells made countless predictions in respect to the weapons the Martians would use in their attack of Earth. Gas and nuclear weapons were introduced to millions of readers through *The War of The Worlds*, destructive technologies that would only a few years later be used to kill millions of people. It is no coincidence that the *Alien Nation* exhibition brings us back to some of the locations mentioned in Wells' book. Much of the destruction by the aliens took

Orson Welles broadcasting at CBS Radio after the 30 October 1938 radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*, November 1938

