

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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#42

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW FROM THE CIRCULATING FILM LIBRARY: BEFORE HINDSIGHT,
DOCUMENTARY ON BRITISH NEWSREELS AND THE RISE OF NAZISM

Public Screening Scheduled for June 27 in the What's Happening? Series

When the Nazis raised a huge iron swastika in the Alps, British newsreels portrayed the event as a cheerful folk festival. When Goebbels consented to an interview, the commentator dispensed with asking questions and merely stated the Nazis' viewpoint; all the Propaganda Minister had to do was nod. News of the arrival in London of Jewish refugee children turned into a story about the generosity of the British people to all mankind. News of the annexation of Czechoslovakia ended with an assurance to the audience that the peace of the world was not threatened.

These images of the rise of Nazism--represented by British newsreel makers at the time as objective, balanced accounts--are the subject of Before Hindsight, a feature-length documentary produced in Britain in 1977 and now being released in the United States by The Museum of Modern Art Circulating Film Library. The film will be available through the Museum in 16mm format for rental and sale. Public screenings are scheduled for the concluding program in the weekly WHAT'S HAPPENING? series at 3:00 and 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 27, in the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2.

Directed and edited by Jonathan Lewis, with on-camera commentary by James Cameron, Before Hindsight uses extensive footage from the Movietone, Pathe, March of Time, and Paramount newsreels of the 1930s, including material shot but never released by the companies for fear of commercial damage. As some of the newsreel makers now explain in interviews, entertainment value and the film companies' perceptions of public opinion weighed more heavily than the need to report the news. And, although there was no official censorship, filmmakers who were active at the time testify that government influence was both strong and pervasive. As a result, British audiences throughout the 1930s watched newsreels that showed Mussolini as a spokesman for peace, promoted Chamberlain's program of appeasement in quasi-religious terms, and treated the English blackshirts as a "point of interest" on a par with the latest fashion show.

Before Hindsight concludes with a discussion of today's television reports, which are the heirs of the newsreel. Current reporting is a vast improvement on that of the 1930s, according to the filmmakers; yet the ideology of journalistic balance,

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of the reporter as middle-of-the-road truthseeker, may disguise propaganda today as effectively as it did during the rise of fascism.

Inquiries for the rental or sale of Before Hindsight may be addressed to the Circulating Film Library, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019 (212) 708-9530. For information on the public screenings of Before Hindsight in the WHAT'S HAPPENING? series, the public may call (212) 708-9500. Tickets to the screenings are free with Museum admission: \$4.50 for adults, \$3.00 for students, \$2.00 for senior citizens; after 5:00 p.m., admission is on a pay-what-you-wish basis.

Two Programs by Iris Barry

May 1985

As part of the 50th anniversary celebration, the Department of Film has reassembled the first two programs organized for public screenings by Iris Barry, the Department's founding curator. The two programs of silent films are titled The Development of Narrative and The Rise of the American Film. (Times Theater 2)

1935-1985: 50 YEARS OF FILM AT MOMA 25 Years of Independent Narratives: 1960-1973

Drawn from the Museum's archive, this tribute to the narrative tradition in American independent cinema includes pioneering works by Morris Engel and Ruth Griffin, Lionel Lincoln, Shirley Clarke, Robert Frank, Richard Leacock, J.A. Pomeroy, John Cassavetes, and Belle de Jour. Also included are first films by Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, and Paul Bartel. (Times Theater 1 and 2)

July 19 -
September 29

July 20 - 26

FILMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: WESTON WOODS ANIMATED FILMS

The Department will pay tribute to Weston Woods Studios on their 30th anniversary with screenings of their animated films based on outstanding children's books. The program will include this year's Academy Award winner for best animated short film, Watership Down, adapted by Michael Sporn from a book by William Steig. (Times Theater 2)

July 22

70mm SPECIAL: DRIFT (BLACK OFFICE)

The Museum will present the New York premiere of the "con-

For further PRESS information, please contact Stuart Klawans, Film Publicist, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019 (212) 708-9752. Inter-

Advance Schedule