

MoMA PRESENTS TWO EXHIBITIONS OF MOVING IMAGE WORKS BY AVANT-GARDE ARTIST ERNIE GEHR

Gallery Exhibition Accompanied by Screenings of Gehr's Films with Several Personal Appearances by Artist to Discuss His Work

Special Magic Lantern Presentation in Theaters November 30 and December 1

Gallery installation

Panoramas of the Moving Image: Mechanical Slides and Dissolving Views from Nineteenth-Century Magic Lantern Shows

September 12, 2007–February 25, 2008

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1 and 2 Lobby Galleries

Film screenings

Ernie Gehr: Moving-Image Minimalist

September 17, 2007–February 25, 2008

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

PRESS VIEWING: Wednesday, September 12, 2007, 10:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

NEW YORK, August 31, 2007—The Museum of Modern Art presents two exhibitions of moving image work by Ernie Gehr, one of America's most acclaimed avant-garde filmmakers. Gehr (American, b. 1941), a self-taught artist who has been working in film and digital media for the past four decades, is one of the most celebrated and internationally recognized experimental filmmakers of the generation who came of age in the 1960s. Gehr's work has been shown and collected internationally by cinemathèques, museums, and other art institutions. The director will be present on September 17, the opening night of the film program, to discuss his work after the screening of a quartet of New York-based films. He will also be present on October 29, as part of the Museum's new Modern Mondays initiative (see separate release). In addition, special Magic Lantern programs of holiday works will be presented on November 30 and December 1 for adult and family audiences by early cinema experts David Francis and Joss Marsh.

Panoramas of the Moving Image: Mechanical Slides and Dissolving Views from Nineteenth-Century Magic Lantern Shows, a synchronized five-channel video work comprising images drawn from the age of pre-cinema, is presented September 12, 2007, through February 25, 2008, in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1 and 2 Lobby Galleries. The works in the installation are century-old painted and printed images on glass that were used in early moving image presentations. These images are among the earliest forms of projected "motion picture" entertainment: with a beam of light projected through them, mechanical glass slides are manipulated to simulate various kinds of change in the image, and multiple projectors allow for superimposed and dissolving views. Brightly colored, handcrafted slides, depicting human activity, fantasy figures, and landscapes, were typically presented with live narration, music, and sound

effects, in what became popular by the 1870s as Magic Lantern shows. Gehr's *Panoramas of the Moving Image* (2005) is presented as a video installation that uses 87 original slides and views, selected largely from Gehr's personal collection. The viewer's experience of the slides, which are projected side by side, is manipulated to create a mesmerizing wide-screen spectacle.

A selection of artifacts of nineteenth-century moving-image technology in the Titus 2 Gallery complement the images in the video installation. These artifacts, of the type used at the dawn of cinema, include vintage paper Zoetrope strips (illustrations that create the illusion of movement when viewed through a spinning, perforated drum—the Zoetrope) and discs from Phenakistiscopes (hand-held viewing devices that use mirrors to create a strobing effect when spun, causing the reflected image to appear to move). The exhibition is organized by Jytte Jensen, Curator, and Ronald Magliozzi, Assistant Curator, Department of Film.

"Ernie Gehr's *Panoramas of the Moving Image* reveals that there is a simple, elegant minimalism at the heart of late-nineteenth-century popular entertainment that feels contemporary in 2007," says Mr. Magliozzi. "This comes as a surprise, considering the decorative excess we typically associate with Victorian culture."

"Ernie Gehr has established himself as one of the true masters of film form," adds Ms. Jensen. "His graceful sense of style and subtle, poetic sensibility have deeply affected the cinematic avant-garde. He brings the same sense of creative exploration of space, frame, and rhythm to his more recent involvement with digital technology in theater-projected works as well as in his installation pieces."

Concurrent with this gallery installation, *Ernie Gehr: Moving-Image Minimalist*, a series of short films and digital works by Gehr, will be presented in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters from September 17, 2007 through February 25, 2008. These disparate, avant-garde films chart the artist's development. Characterized by strong lines and a certain formal severity, which in some of his works has a meditative quality, Gehr's films and recent digital works for theatrical exhibition create a sense of wonder with their unfailingly lush, sensual image quality and minute attention to contrast and framing.

Gehr began making 8mm films in the mid-1960s in New York and has completed more than 24 films in various formats. After moving to San Francisco in 1988, where he was a much-sought-out teacher at the San Francisco Art Institute, he continued to shoot, on film, subjects that have long occupied him: place, space, and setting. Apparent throughout his work is a clear affection for the devices and styles of early cinema, including the static camera that characterized much of the early years of the form. In 2004, he returned to New York where he continues to work and teach. Gehr is a recipient of numerous grants and awards from institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and the American Film Institute.

The opening night screenings—*Essex Street Market*, *Noon Time Activities*, *Workers Leaving the Factory (after Lumière)*, and *Greene Street* (all 2004)—present exquisitely framed images of Soho and the Lower East Side from another era: the early 1970s. The films, once

conceived as part of a larger work that was abandoned, were resurrected in 2004 and edited into four separate sections that together present a palpable difference between the city of the 1970s and now.

Among the other films in the exhibition is the landmark film *Serene Velocity* (1970), which is a rapidly edited study of a corridor and is on the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress. In *Glider* (2001), Gehr's camera appears to float—or glide—over distorted and refracted images of the sea, the shore, and its environs.

Continuing the early cinema theme in the theaters, two special Magic Lantern performances will be presented November 30 (for adults) and December 1 (for families). These unique, live programs, using original glass slides, will feature seasonal works by Charles Dickens (*A Christmas Carol*) and others, presented by early cinema experts David Francis and Joss Marsh.

***** PRESS VIEWING AND SCREENINGS *****

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

10:00–11:00 a.m. **Press viewing of the exhibition with the artist and curators in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1 and 2 Lobby Galleries**

11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m. **Press screening, in Titus 2 theater:**

Essex Street Market
Noon Time Activities
Workers Leaving the Factory (after Lumière)
Greene Street

Screening program 67 min.

Please R.S.V.P. to paul_power@moma.org or call (212) 708-9847

No. 75

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For downloadable images, please visit www.moma.org/press

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019

Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
Closed Tuesday

Museum Adm: \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs)
Target Free Friday Nights 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Film Adm: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. \$6 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only)
Subway: E or V train to Fifth Avenue/53rd Street
Bus: On Fifth Avenue, take the M1, M2, M3, M4, or M5 to 53rd Street. On Sixth Avenue, take the M5, M6, or M7 to 53rd Street. Or take the M57 and M50 crosstown buses on 57th and 50th Streets.

The public may call (212) 708-9400 for detailed Museum information. Visit us at www.moma.org

ERNIE GEHR: MOVING-IMAGE MINIMALIST

SCREENING SCHEDULE

Monday, September 17

8:00 *Essex Street Market*. 2004. USA. 29 min.

Noon Time Activities. 2004. USA. 21 min.

Workers Leaving the Factory (after Lumière). 2004. USA. 12 min.

Greene Street. 2004. USA. 5 min.

Filmed mostly at the old Fulton Fish Market, in diners around that downtown area, and in the subway, these exquisitely framed images of New York in the 1970s are mostly low-angle or hip-level shots of exceptional presence and texture. When *Greene Street*, the last part of this quartet of films, suddenly bursts into Kodachrome color, it is shocking—but also fitting and perfectly timed. Once conceived as part of a larger work but then abandoned, the 16mm footage was resurrected nearly 30 years later, transferred to digital video at the correct film-projection speed of 16 frames per second, and edited into four separate sections that together channel a mournful difference between then and now.

Program 67 min.

(Followed by conversation with Gehr)

Saturday, September 22

2:00 *Essex Street Market*

Noon Time Activities

Workers Leaving the Factory (after Lumière)

Greene Street. See Monday, September 17, 8:00

Monday, October 29

7:00 **An Evening with Ernie Gehr.**

As part of the Museum's new Modern Mondays initiative, Ernie Gehr discusses *Serene Velocity* (1970) and *Side/Walk/Shuttle* (1991), two structuralist masterpieces separated by 20 years that exhibit the artist's abiding fascination with panorama and urban landscapes. Gehr relates them to his interest in pre-cinema objects and the artists who

invented a "cinema of attractions," as evidenced in Gehr's works in *Panoramas of the Moving Image*.

Serene Velocity. 1970. USA.

Carefully timed edits work with our persistence of vision as two perfectly framed shots of an office hallway metamorphose into something profound and otherworldly, in a meditation of lines and squares. Preserved by MoMA in 35mm with funding from the National Film Preservation Foundation. 23 min. Silent.

Side/Walk/Shuttle. 1991. USA.

The city of San Francisco, shot from within a glass elevator, seems to perform gravity-defying acts through simple visual manipulation. 41 min.

Friday, November 23

1:30 *Glider*. 2001. USA. Silent. 37 min.

The Astronomer's Dream. 2004. USA. Sound. 15 min.

Before the Olympics. 2006. USA. Sound. 15 min.

Cinematic Fertilizer 1. 2007. USA. Silent. 5 min.

Cinematic Fertilizer 2. 2007. USA. Silent. 8 min.

Replete with visual and audiovisual humor, these works not only celebrate the pleasures of perception, as well as physical spaces and spaces of the mind, but also remain ethereal and multi-faceted in their formal and perceptual attributes. Rigorous in their construction, these films float between representation and abstraction, all the while opening up new cinematic worlds.

Program 80 min.

Saturday, November 24

4:30 *Glider*

The Astronomer's Dream

Before the Olympics

Cinematic Fertilizer 1

Cinematic Fertilizer 2. See Friday, November 23, 1:30

Wednesday, November 28

6:00 *Glider*

The Astronomer's Dream

Before the Olympics

Cinematic Fertilizer 1

Cinematic Fertilizer 2. See Friday, November 23, 1:30

Friday, November 30

7:00 Magic Images: A Lantern Slide Holiday Entertainment

Moving pictures did not burst onto the screen with the Lumières' train and the flickering cinematograph in 1895. From roughly 1659, audiences had already marveled at the "magic lantern," the direct ancestor of the movies, and the world's other premier "screen experience."

Using authentic texts, original slides, historical know-how, and on-the-spot showmanship, lanternists David Francis and Joss Marsh will recreate live, Victorian-era holiday entertainment in two programs for children (Saturday, December 1) and adults (Friday, November 30). Celebrating the influence of Charles Dickens, with the lantern slide version of *A Christmas Carol* and the lantern-inspired 1901 British film *Scrooge, Or, Marley's Ghost* by R.W. Paul, performances will also include mechanical and "dissolving" views of Gibraltar, Paris, Aladdin's adventures, and the heroic *Fireman's Wedding* (1910), and an audience sing-along to period temperance songs. Organized by Ron Magliozzi, Assistant Curator, Department of Film. Piano accompaniment by Philip C. Carli.

Program approx. 80 min.

David Francis, OBE, was for 15 years Curator of the British National Film Archive, where he co-created the Museum of the Moving Image, and was until recently Chief of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress. His many publications include the ground-breaking study Chaplin: Genesis of a Clown (Quartet, 1977; co-written by Raoul Sobel).

Joss Marsh is Associate Professor of Victorian Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. She is the author of Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture, and Literature in 19th-Century England (Chicago, 1998), and essays on Chaplin, the nineteenth-century novel and film, and film stardom. This presentation draws on work for her book-in-progress, Dickens/ Cinema.

Saturday, December 1

2:00 Magic Images: A Lantern Slide Holiday Entertainment. Program for families. See Friday, November 30, 7:00. Piano accompaniment by Philip C. Carli.

Program approx. 60 min.

Friday, January 25

6:00 *For Daniel.* 1996. USA. Directed by Ernie Gehr.

For Daniel is composed of images of Gehr's son Daniel, shot over a period of four years. Beginning right after Daniel's birth and shot very much in the tradition of early cinema as well as home movies, the film reflects the child's increasing consciousness and mobility. 72 min.

Saturday, January 26

2:00 *For Daniel.* See Friday, January 25, 6:00.