

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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Press Preview:

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11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

A retrospective exhibition of Movie Posters will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, December 14 - February 5. Selected for historical interest and graphic excellence, the 45 examples range from an 1898 advertisement for Edison's Kinetoscope to a current poster for the 1960 On the Beach. Nine countries are represented - Czechoslovakia, England, France, Germany, Poland, Puerto Rico, Russia, Switzerland and the United States. The exhibition was selected, primarily from the Museum's poster collection, by Mildred Constantine, Associate Curator of Graphic Design.

As demonstrated in the current exhibition, both movies and posters have been influenced by contemporary art movements. Posters make use of drawing, photography, photo-montage and painting. When made expressly for the movies, posters sometimes show the influence of cinematic techniques as well. The spirit in Germany responsible for Expressionist painting and such strong graphic artists as Barlach, Kollwitz and Grosz, produced Der Golem (1920), The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919) and Metropolis (1926), as well as the posters for these films. Designed for German audiences, Jan Tschichold's poster for The General and C. W. Muller's for Seventh Heaven (both American, 1927) use circles and emphatic diagonal lines in abstract compositions characteristic of the Suprematist movement of the late Twenties.

In the Russian poster, Imprisoned, the movie closeup is adapted graphically by use of a film strip over which a magnifying glass is applied to one frame. In recent Polish posters for foreign films, many techniques simulate closeups: The Wages of Fear (French, 1959), Symphonie Pastorale (French, 1947), and Surgery Necessary (Russian, 1956), use realistic or symbolic eyes as the focal point of disassociated faces to project the emotional content of the story. Polish posters generally, with simplified and abstract drawing, symbolism, and bold composition, reflect Poland's current movement away from the tradition of literal representation in all the arts.

According to Miss Constantine, "Although the impact of the post-war years in the United States has been expressed with great force in American architecture, painting, literature, and also in the movies, the United States movie poster has lagged far behind, lost among the cliches of advertising. Our posters have come through various phases in which individual scenes from a movie were used without particular concern for their effectiveness as posters. Black and white photographs were tinted with pastel colors, lessening their visual impact. All kinds of magazine illustration :

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techniques were also adapted. A notable exception are the posters especially commissioned for Salome (1922), showing the influence of the Art Nouveau illustrator Aubrey Beardsley. Natasha Rambova designed the sets, costumes, and the preliminary poster drawings."

The convention of sex interest imposed on film advertising has hampered poster design, Miss Constantine says. A fresh approach is seen in the work of Saul Bass. His posters for Man with the Golden Arm (1955) and Anatomy of a Murder (1959) have turned to strong color, abstraction and lively typography.

More than half of the films represented by posters in the exhibition are in the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art.

Movie Posters will travel during 1961-62 to several American cities under the auspices of the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions. The tour is made possible with the aid of a grant from the CBS Foundation, the organization through which the Columbia Broadcasting System makes educational and cultural contributions.

Photographs and further information are available from Herbert Bronstein, Associate Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, N. Y. C. CI 5-8900.