

MoMA PRESENTS EXHIBITION OF EARLY CINEMA POSTERS HIGHLIGHTING A PERIOD OF SPECTACULAR GRAPHICS, COLORFUL LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTING, AND HARD-SELL MESSAGES

Rarely Seen Display of Advertising from Film Industry's Infancy Will Be Accompanied by Screening Series

Sensation and Sentiment: Cinema Posters 1912–14

May 23–August 27, 2007

The Roy and Niuta Titus 1 and 2 Theater Galleries

Jean Desmet's Cinema of Sensation and Sentiment

July 2–August 13, 2007

The Roy and Niuta Titus 1 and 2 Theaters

NEW YORK, May 23, 2007—The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Sensation and Sentiment: Cinema Posters 1912–14***, a gallery exhibition of 44 posters and 13 photographs from a period that was a turning point in the promotion and advertising of motion pictures. The works on view include posters for Danish, French, German, Italian, British, Russian, and American films, with several spectacular billboard-sized pieces, demonstrating how film producers marshalled the forces of advertising—19th century advances in lithographic printing, eye-catching poster designs and saturation ad campaigns—to attract customers in the increasingly competitive movie-going environment of the early 20th century.

The exhibition is presented May 23–August 27, 2007, in The Roy and Niuta Titus 1 and 2 Theater Galleries. It will be accompanied, from July 2–August 13, in the Titus theaters by ***Jean Desmet's Cinema of Sensation and Sentiment***, a five-program series of films released between 1912 and 1914.

The exhibition is organized by Ronald Magliozzi, Assistant Curator, with the assistance of Jenny He, Celeste Bartos Research Assistant, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art.

In the second decade of motion picture promotion, film trade publications preached a hard-sell message to exhibitors: movie advertising should be administered to the public in “pathological doses.” Film posters should “force the eye to look,” inflaming the sentiments of passers-by on the street. The sound of the “barker” (man with a megaphone), combined with music from a player piano or phonograph, was intended to assault the senses and provoke moviegoers.

A line from *The Showman's Advertising Book* (1914) sums up the attitude that the period's film producers brought to the task of engaging their audience: “There is no sentiment on the business end of a picture show, even though the showing of sentiment on the screen is its chief source of revenue.”

Film posters were modeled on the strategies of the 19th century fairground and circus, and they were exhibitors' most dramatic form of early motion picture advertising. Design was

seldom credited, the brilliant lithographic printing alone was expected to compel attention. The French company Pathé Freres offered posters for specific films as early as 1903. Managers were encouraged to consider the whole facade of their theater buildings "a standing advertisement" for the show inside, and many did, decorating them garishly and lavishly. However, posters were an extra expense for exhibitors and so the scale and character of street advertising varied widely from one theater to the next, with many upstart exhibitors of nickelodeons using hand-lettered signs, cost-free flyers, and studio bulletins rather than the upscale posters offered by the film studios.

The visual content of the posters varied widely: scenes of spectacle shared space with images of the family and civic bravery, an indication of the production companies' understanding that film audiences were primarily women and children. Posters typically pictured a key moment of conflict from a film, with production company logos as an added selling point. Although the movie-star system had begun to take shape after 1910, performers were as yet only occasionally cited. The posters of the Kalem Company, represented in this exhibition by *The Chest of Fortune* (1914) a post-Civil War drama shot on location in New Jersey, were a notable exception to that practice.

Taglines and slogans were used sparingly in the period but go directly to the heart of each film: "sensational feature" (*The Streets of New York*, 1913), "an exceptional wild animal comedy" (*Mike's Brainstorm*, 1912), or "a tense police drama" (*The Hero Coward*, 1913) are typical. Often, a signature, text-free poster design would be created for the international market; many posters of the period omit the title of the film itself thus making a single poster useful in number of different countries. Other posters, such as the billboard triptych *Sign of the Cross* (1914), the largest poster in the exhibition, were effective due to the dynamic, orgiastic nature of their graphics and the simple statement of their well-known title.

Then as now, literary adaptations were favored and source material was aggressively exploited in promotional advertising. The exhibition includes posters for *The Streets of New York*, adapted from Dion Boucicault's immensely successful play, and *Jack* (1913), based on a popular novel of the day by Alphonse Daudet.

The other works in *Sensation and Sentiment* include photographs taken between 1906 and 1911 that document a period of neighborly interaction between exhibitors and the public: managers, ticket-sellers, projectionists, barkers, and musicians pose before their storefront theaters like the staff of any other shop. By 1912, significant changes in the nature of film exhibition had begun. Traveling exhibitors and nickelodeon storefronts were giving way to purpose-built theaters with formal facades designed specifically for the projection of motion pictures. The release of longer running, multi-reel films of 30 to 60 minutes called for oversized ad campaigns, resulting in the wider range of large-scale posters on display in *Sensation and Sentiment*.

This exhibition consists of posters recently acquired from the collection of renowned Dutch silent-film distributor and exhibitor Jean Desmet (1875–1956). His unused posters, films, and

business papers were stored in a garage near Amsterdam until they were acquired by the Nederlands Filmmuseum in 1957. His legacy testifies to the entrepreneurial spirit of exhibitors in a period when personal taste and enthusiasm shaped the experience of moving pictures.

SCREENING SERIES

The screenings in *Jean Desmet's Cinema of Sensation and Sentiment* feature five programs of studio films advertised by posters in the gallery exhibition such as *A Welcome Intruder* (1913), directed by D. W. Griffith, and Louis Feuillade's *Bout-de-Zan et le Crime au Téléphone* (1914). Studios represented include Biograph, Celio, Cines, Cricks & Martin, Éclair, Edison, Eiko, Gaumont, Imp, Kalem, Pasquali, Pilot, and Vay & Hubert. Directors include Louis Feuillade, Mack Sennett, and D. W. Griffith and range in subject matter from melodramas and adaptations of classic tales to comedies and farces. The film exhibition draws from MoMA's collection and from the Nederlands Film Archive's famed Desmet Collection. All films are silent, with piano accompaniment by Ben Model and Stuart Oderman.

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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

JEAN DESMET'S CINEMA OF SENSATION AND SENTIMENT

SCREENING SCHEDULE

Monday, July 2

6:00 PROGRAM 1

A Welcome Intruder. 1913. USA. Directed by D. W. Griffith. With Kate Toncray, Charles Hill Mailes.

A kidnapped child is saved by the kindness of strangers. Approx. 15 min.

Terra Promessa. 1913. Italy. Directed by Baldassarre Negroni. With Francesca Bertini, Emilio Ghione.

A search for African gold leads to an opera singer's seduction. Dutch intertitles. Approx. 45 min.

(Piano accompaniment by Ben Model)

Thursday, July 5

8:00 PROGRAM 2

The Doctor's Photograph. 1913. USA. Directed by Walter Edwin. With Mabel Trunnelle, Charles Ogle.

A photograph saves a burglar from a life of crime. Approx. 13 min.

Got 'Em Again! 1913. Great Britain. Directed by Charles Calvert.
British comedy cops. Dutch intertitles. Approx. 8 min.

Jack. 1913. France. Directed by André Liabel. With M. Villeneuve, Olga Demidoff.
An orphaned boy experiences the trials of a hard life at sea and a doomed love. Dutch intertitles. Approx. 60 min.

Program approx. 81 min.
(Piano accompaniment by Ben Model)

Friday, July 6

6:00 PROGRAM 3

L'Amico Intimo di Polidor. 1913. Italy. Directed by Ferdinand Guillaume. With Guillaume.

Mismatched friends come to blows. Approx. 6 min.

Ivanhoe. 1913. USA. Directed by Herbert Brenon. With King Baggot, Leah Baird.
In this classic medieval tale, the Knights Templar, Richard the Lionheart, and Robin Hood fight for the honor of their titles and the lady fair. Approx. 48 min.

(Piano accompaniment by Ben Model)

Saturday, July 7

4:30 PROGRAM 4

Bout-de-Zan et le Crime au Téléphone. 1914. France. Directed by Louis Feuillade. With René Poyen, René Carl.

The beloved French comic hero Bout-de-Zan sets out to trick his landlady. Dutch intertitles. Approx. 7 min.

The Chest of Fortune. 1914. USA. Directed by Kenean Buel. With Guy Coombs, Marguerite Courtot.
Hidden treasure reveals a lost ancestry. Shot on location in New Jersey. Dutch intertitles.
Approx. 30 min.

Das Recht aufs Dasein. 1913. Germany. Directed by Joseph Delmont. With Delmont, Fred Sauer. Lost memory and mistaken identity lead to a chase by auto, boat, and train in this crime melodrama. Dutch intertitles. Approx. 50 min.

Program approx. 87 min.
(Piano accompaniment by Ben Model)

Sunday, July 8

5:00 PROGRAM 5

Speed Demon. 1912. USA. Directed by Mack Sennett. With Fred Mace, Jack Pickford. A farce shot on location at the automobile races in Santa Monica, California. Approx. 7 min.

Kri-Kri e Lea Militari. 1913. Italy. Director unknown. With Lea Giunchi, Raymond Frau. The Italian comic hero and his girl join the army. Dutch intertitles. Approx. 6 min.

The Streets of New York. 1913. USA. Directed by Travers Vale.
Based on a celebrated nineteenth-century melodrama, this film about life in the city tells the story of an evil banker who sets out to exploit the poor for profit. Dutch intertitles.
Approx. 45 min.

Program approx. 58 min.
(Piano accompaniment by Ben Model)

Saturday, August 11

2:00 PROGRAM 1 (Piano accompaniment by Stuart Oderman).
A Welcome Intruder.
Terra Promessa. See Monday, July 2, 6:00

4:30 PROGRAM 2 (Piano accompaniment by Stuart Oderman).
The Doctor's Photograph.
Got 'Em Again!
Jack. See Thursday, July 5, 8:00

7:00 PROGRAM 3 (Piano accompaniment by Stuart Oderman).
L'Amico Intimo di Polidor.
Ivanhoe. See Friday, July 6, 6:00

Monday August 13

6:00 PROGRAM 4 (Piano accompaniment by Stuart Oderman).
Bout-de-Zan et le Crime au Téléphone.
The Chest of Fortune.
Das Recht aufs Dasein. See Saturday, July 7, 4:30.

8:00 PROGRAM 5 (Piano accompaniment by Stuart Oderman).
Speed Demon.
Kri-Kri e Lea Militari.
The Streets of New York. See Sunday, July 8, 5:00