

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

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The Film Library of The Museum of Modern Art will publish a portfolio of ten black and white 8 x 10" glossy film stills on July 26 in connection with the current D. W. Griffith film retrospective. The brief descriptive text in the portfolio by Eileen Bowser of the Film Library points out that "David Wark Griffith (1875-1948), the great American director, synthesized the whole body of motion picture technique, revealing more than any other early film-maker the potential of the medium as an art form. As a child of the nineteenth century, Griffith expressed sentiments and cultural pretensions that now seem naive, but the power of his conceptions lives and the films he made are still a source of inspiration."

The stills selected for the portfolio represent some of the most memorable work of Griffith, who, by 1916, had done more than any one man to develop the unique language of the screen, to free it from stage conventions, to give flexibility to the camera and to develop imaginative and purposeful cutting of the film itself. The earliest scene in the portfolio, from THE MUSKETEERS OF PIG ALLEY (1912) with Lillian Gish, shows that Griffith had taken the action out of the studio and into the streets, a major step in freeing the early film from stage conventions. His extraordinary gift for pictorial composition is exemplified in the shot from JUDITH OF BETHULIA (1913-14), his first feature-length motion picture, with Henry Walthall and Blanche Sweet. The still showing Henry Walthall in THE BIRTH OF A NATION (1915) illustrates Griffith's ability to create excitement and to evoke feeling while dealing with the Civil War and Reconstruction Period. Griffith's impressive and imaginative sets are shown in the Feast of Belshazzar scene in the "Babylonian" sequence of INTOLERANCE (1916). The still from the "Modern" story in INTOLERANCE, in which Robert Harron is to be hanged for a murder of which he is innocent, shows Griffith's dramatic handling of the climax.

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Representing the phase of Griffith's work in which he is concerned with intensified emotion and atmosphere rather than large scale action are the stills from BROKEN BLOSSOMS (1919) and TRUE HEART SUSIE (1919). Lillian Gish portrays the country girl who sells her cow to finance the education of the man she loves in TRUE HEART SUSIE. Richard Barthelmess is shown in BROKEN BLOSSOMS in the role of a gentle and idealistic Chinese boy. Carol Dempster peering out near the end of the food line in ISN'T LIFE WONDERFUL (1924) has become a classic portrayal of food shortage, in Griffith's film dealing with the conditions in postwar Germany. Walter Huston as Lincoln and Una Merkel as Anne Rutledge are shown in Griffith's first talkie, ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1930). The last picture in the portfolio shows Griffith at work with his cameraman G. W. Bitzer and a little boy who has been identified as Ben Alexander of "Dragnet."

The portfolio is available at the Museum Bookstore for \$3.95 or by mail for an additional 25 cents for postage.

The Griffith film retrospective at the Museum continues through July 31.

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Photographs and additional information available from Linda Goldsmith, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. Circle 5-8900.