

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

No. 48  
FOR RELEASE:  
Friday, May 31, 1968

## MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO PRESENT HANS RICHTER FILM RETROSPECTIVE Artist, Painter, Dadaist Exhibits Forty Years of Film Fantasies

One of the earliest exponents of the experimental cinema, Hans Richter, now in his eightieth year, will be honored by The Museum of Modern Art, which will present a Richter Film Retrospective the week of June 3rd, in connection with the Museum's current exhibition on Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage. Richter, a painter himself, has two canvasses in this exhibition.

In a tribute to the artist-filmmaker, a former Dadaist, who first brought the abstract and a sense of the absurd to the motion picture, the Museum will present Richter films made over the past forty years. They include the first Surrealist feature, DREAMS THAT MONEY CAN BUY; 8 x 8, a fairy tale for adults, mixing equal parts of Lewis Carroll and Freud; DADASCOPE, Part I and Part II, described as cinema poetry and imagery; followed by an anthology of Richter films, FROM DADA TO SURREALISM: FORTY YEARS OF EXPERIMENT. The latter will be accompanied by a short, PASSIONATE PASTIME, an adventure into the game of chess and life.

The most recent film Richter completed DADASCOPE, Part II, will have its World Premiere June 6th. At the 8 P.M. performance of the Premiere / Mr. Richter will be introduced by Willard Van Dyke, Director of the Department of Film. Mr. Richter will address the audience and relate his film experiences. William S. Rubin, Curator of Painting and Sculpture, and director of the exhibition Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage, will also speak.

Mr. Richter, formerly a professor at the College of the City of New York, and Director of its Institute of Film Techniques for a period of 14 years, has trained many young filmmakers and influenced the work of Norman McLaren, Stan Brakhage and others. Long before the current vogue among contemporary cineastes he manifested anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment attitudes. He considered the film a medium of expressing the unconscious, and from his Dada origin, he displayed a concern with form and motion and elements of chance, defying reality, whenever he could, and focusing on "objects in rebellion."

(more)

In his iconoclastic approach to the film as an art form Richter was abetted by fellow Dadaists who contributed to most of his films. DADASCOPE, Part I and Part II, for example, was made with the participation of Jean Arp, Raoul Hausmann, Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Van Doesburg, Tristan Tzara, Richard Hulsenbeck, Kurt Schwitters, Marcel Janco, Georges Ribemont Dessaignes, and Walter Mehring. Dada poems composed and read by these artists suggested to Richter free associations that he made into a film collage. The poems are abstract anti-poems, and the film is an anti-film. It has no psychological implication, according to Mr. Richter. The object of the creator was "to play on the full scale of film possibilities with the freedom for which Dada always stood and stands."

The Richter Retrospective Film Showing will also include the Berlin-born filmmaker's most important work, DREAMS THAT MONEY CAN BUY. Three years in the making, it was released in 1948, and at the time one critic wrote, "The avante-garde has rarely had such a field-day, as it has had in this offering." The picture is a phantasmagoria of mannequin lovers, sexual fantasies, discs and nudes, with a dream peddler, as the central character, who has a narcissistic confrontation with himself. "We created this picture like a painting out of emotions and the subconscious," admitted Richter at the time. "We created as an artist does, for his own responsibility, and not for his audience, although we believe there is an audience for this film." Richter's statement appears prophetic twenty years later in view of the growth of animated, abstract, absurd films, designed to shock audiences in the same way that Dadaist art and Surrealism was intended to outrage the public.

Many of the artists in the current exhibition also participated in the making of DREAMS THAT MONEY CAN BUY. The "Dreams" were conceived by Man Ray, Alexander Calder, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, and Marcel Duchamp. Ernst and Julien Levy, the art dealer, appear in the picture, while John Bowles, John Cage, Darius Milhaud, David Diamond, John La Touche, Libby Holman, and Josh White are responsible for the music.

The cast of 8 x 8 reads like a Who's Who of Surrealists, headed by Jean Cocteau. This comedy in eight moves, its title derives from the squares of the chess board, was started around a maple tree in Connecticut, moved to a studio in Paris, (more)

then to a rooftop in Zurich, to a palazzo in Venice, to a villa in the South of France, to a swimming pool in Stamford, Connecticut, and back to the maple tree. The picture was made for those "who believe in the uninhibited use of the unexplored film medium," Richter was quoted as saying. "It gives free play to the imagination because its symbols, both obvious and baffling, stimulate the audience."

FROM DADA TO SURREALISM: FORTY YEARS OF EXPERIMENT is a compendium of Richter films from 1921 to 1961. Among the films included is the famous GHOSTS BEFORE BREAKFAST, in which four hats go through a series of adventures until noon, at which time they settle reasonably upon the heads of four gentlemen seated at the lunch table. Other films in this anthology are INFLATION; FILMSTUDY; RACE SYMPHONY; TWO PENCE MAGIC; EVERYTHING TURNS, EVERYTHING REVOLVES; and RHYTHM '21. The latter film when it was first shown in Berlin so angered the audience the piano player was beaten up. It was the first of the animated abstract films.

Accompanying FORTY YEARS OF EXPERIMENT will be PASSIONATE PASTIME, narrated by Vincent Price, photographed by Arnold Eagle. This short, with two experts in it, Samuel Reshevsky and Larry Evans, traces the history of chess from its origin in a Rajah's mind as a substitute for war to present day chess championships. War was not averted by ventilating aggression on a board of strategy, and instead the game was carried by soldiers from North Africa into Spain, and through Russia and Europe, Mr. Richter pointed out recently. He added that unlike his fellow Dadaist Duchamp, he has given up the game. "You have to win in chess, but I rather win in art and film." He continues his painting and film experiments.

The Richter Retrospective showing schedule follows: Monday, June 3rd, DREAMS THAT MONEY CAN BUY, winner of the Venice International Festival Prize for the best contribution to the progress of cinematography; Tuesday, June 4th, 8 x 8, a symbolic comedy of Venice, bullfights, surrealism, women and magic; Thursday, June 6th, DADASCOPE, Part I and Part II, two free play color films, photographed in Spain, France, Switzerland, Holland, and America; Friday, June 7th, PASSIONATE PAST-TIME, the evolution of chess from ancient Egypt to Washington Square, which precedes

(more)

the omnibus feature, FROM DADA TO SURREALISM: FORTY YEARS OF EXPERIMENT.

There are two showings daily at 2 and 5:30 P.M.; three showings on Thursday, at 2, 5:30 and 8 P.M.

Contemporary Films/McGraw Hill is distributing the films of Hans Richter in the United States.

\*\*\*\*\*

Stills and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.