

The Museum of Modern Art

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RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART'S FILM COLLECTION --

MARY PICKFORD IMPORTANT DONOR

Two Mary Pickford films, made in 1918, in the World War I period when she was the most famous actress in the world, have been acquired through the courtesy of Miss Pickford by The Museum of Modern Art, it was announced by Mrs. Eileen Bowser, Associate Curator in charge of collections, Department of Film.

The films, which the Museum will screen for the public the week of March 22, are "Amarilly of Clothesline Alley," described by the curator "as a delightful and characteristic comedy," and "Stella Marris," which provides Miss Pickford "with a double role and a chance to show her acting ability sometimes submerged in other films by force of her star personality."

Both films, directed by Marshall Neilan, will be shown in a program devoted to recent film acquisitions. The Pickford films, said Mrs. Bowser, will give American audiences the opportunity to reappraise her abilities, still not understood, as few of her films from this period have been seen since they first appeared.

Among other Museum recent acquisitions is "Flesh" a film made by John Ford (1932), known mostly for his famous Westerns and war dramas. In this film Wallace Beery, the star, is a good-natured, dim-witted boxing champ in love with the girlfriend of a clever crook. The film opens in Germany and moves to New York in the prohibition era.

"White Zombie," also of 1932 vintage, is one of the early horror films, featuring Bela Lugosi in one of his best roles.

"The Showgirl" (1927), starring Mildred Harris, was cited by Mrs. Bowser as an example of the poverty-row productions that often capitalized on the names of former stars on their way down, whose services could be obtained cheaply. Miss Harris was once famous as Charlie Chaplin's child bride, but her career as a film star did not survive their divorce.

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Besides these acquisitions, the Department of Film has also acquired a 1914 Chaplin comedy, "Caught in a Cabaret," one of the star's early Keystone productions. The Museum has prints of all Chaplin's Essanay and Mutual productions, according to Mrs. Bowser, and hopes to acquire the more numerous Keystone films that it lacks.

Recently the Museum acquired two early works by D. W. Griffith from the State Film Archives of the U.S.S.R., and the Soviets have also made available to the Collection two Russian film classics, "Revolt of the Fisherman," and "Aerograd." These will also be shown, along with other American acquisitions.

"Revolt of the Fisherman" (Vostaniye Rybakov) is a Russian classic, according to Mrs. Bowser. It was made in 1935 by Erwin Piscator, the noted German stage director, then working in the Soviet Union, and was considered experimental and controversial. In describing the film in which a strike by fishermen in a small village spreads to become part of a wider revolutionary movement, Mrs. Bowser said "the faces of nature, the sea, and the landscape, are used as dramatic elements." The use of extreme camera angles, dramatic composition and lighting, and the handling of groups of people, may have been suggested by Piscator's background in the German theatre, she stated.

"Aerograd," also made in 1935 and released here as "Frontier," was directed by Alexander Dovzhenko, known for his "Arsenal" and "Earth." Mrs. Bowser described it as the director's lyric vision of a city to be built for defense purposes on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Its chief concerns are the struggles of the Soviets with the inhabitants known as "Old Believers" and with the Japanese enemy. The film, shot partly on location in the Siberian forests, is one of the best examples of the Moscow Art Theatre's conception of character and acting style.

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