

The Museum of Modern Art

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

No. 66
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWENTY-SIX NATIONS ATTENDING FILM CONGRESS AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

PRESS INVITED TO COVER AND ATTEND RECEPTION TO BE HELD
6:15 - 8:00 P.M., WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, IN MUSEUM GARDEN.
TELEPHONE ACCEPTANCE. LIST OF DELEGATES AVAILABLE.

Delegates from twenty-six nations will attend the Twenty-Fifth Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives at The Museum of Modern Art, whose Film Library was one of the founding members. The all-day session of the full Congress convenes at 10:00 a.m., May 21, for the first meeting of the Federation in this country since 1938. The Congress will continue for four days; some of the delegates will then visit the Library of Congress in Washington. They held two days of executive meetings prior to the opening Congress.

Willard Van Dyke, Director of the Museum's Department of Film, will act as host to 43 delegates and observers from the Soviet Union, Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Uruguay, India, East and West Germany, and many other countries. Mr. Van Dyke, Victor Privato of the U.S.S.R., and Ernest Lindgren of England are Vice-Presidents, and Jerzy Toeplitz of Poland is President of the 32-year old Federation.

Film preservation will be the major subject of the Congress, at which annual reports will be made by the representative nations on their individual accomplishments and activities. The archivists, who are principally concerned with augmenting their own collections, also form a network of exchange of both films and information.

"The Federation is truly a bridge between eastern and western countries," states Willard Van Dyke, pointing out the common goals of every archive: the search for film, the conservation of existing film, the standardization of film cataloguing, and the publication of film monographs and other serious film works.

Among the nations that belong to the Federation are Israel, Belgium, Italy, East and West Germany, Hungary, Great Britain, Australia, Norway, Canada, Korea, Cuba, Holland, Finland, Albania, Greece, Sweden, Spain, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, The Soviet

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Union and several Latin American countries.

At the Congress, to be conducted in English and French, with Jacques Ledoux of Brussels as Secretary General, the problems of young archives will be discussed including the situation of the Latin American Archives. The Library of Congress will attend as an observer.

Filmography, a relatively new scholarly discipline, will also be investigated so that international standards of cataloguing films can be formulated to make the tracing of a film of a particular epoch or a particular film-maker more feasible on an international scale.

The member organizations are dedicated to the preservation of film as a heritage to pass on to future generations. Preservation demands that films in every collection be guarded under special environmental conditions. The collections may range from a few hundred prints to many thousands.

In the archives of each nation are films that date back to the beginning of the century as well as films that represent the most avant-garde efforts of today's film-makers. The archivists now are actively encouraging the birth of new film ideas, although they originally banded together to conserve films of the past for posterity.

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.

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SOME FACTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FILM ARCHIVES

The International Federation of Film Archives was formed in 1938 at The Museum of Modern Art with four charter members: The Film Library of the Museum, the Cinémathèque Française, The British Film Institute and The Reichsfilmarchiv of Berlin. From these four members it has grown to forty members whose aims are to conserve and collect films for aesthetic and historic reasons, to facilitate the international exchange of film, and to provide research facilities and documentation relating to cinematographic history.

A Polish photographer and cameraman, Boleslaw Matuszewski, was the first one to demand the creation of a film archive in 1898. The earliest collections, before World War I, were comprised mostly of newsreels; in the twenties, films of historic, religious or instructive nature were added. But the real impetus to establish film archives came with the invention of the sound film when it appeared that the early masterpieces of silent motion pictures would disappear, and with them those pioneering films that had contributed to the growth of the cinema.

By 1935, in Paris, London, Moscow, Berlin, and New York, a movement to establish national film archives grew into a reality. The British Film Institute, the Cinémathèque Française, The Reichsfilmarchiv and the Film Library of The Museum of Modern Art were all started about the same time, with a recognition of the need to exchange films and information. The international origin of the cinema made it advantageous to form a liaison which would enlarge individual collections to include Russia's Eisenstein, the Scandinavian director Stiller, Germany's Murnau, Méliès of France and Italy's Pastrone.

In order to obtain such films from many sources these four existing archives founded the International Federation of Film Archives, following which, in 1938, the film collection of The Museum of Modern Art in New York was exhibited at the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris. Film art for the first time was welcomed in a famous European museum and placed on the same level as other arts.

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The salvaging of film treasures of the past was a concept that had to be advanced and encouraged because it was entirely new. It required the indefatigable efforts and the imagination of the pioneers of preservation. Outstanding among them was the Honorary President of the Federation, Mrs. Iris Barry, who was the first film curator of The Museum of Modern Art. Another contributor of considerable importance was Henri Langlois of the Cinémathèque Française.

In the past years the Federation has held its Congress in many different countries. Five years ago in Moscow it commemorated the Centennial of Louis Lumière who first projected a motion picture in the basement of Paris' Grand Cafe; three years ago it was held in Sofia; two years ago in East Berlin; last year in London, where Princess Margaret opened the session and then gave a reception in the Royal Banqueting Hall.

Each Congress has served to uncover some forgotten or missing films, to divulge new protective measures against the deterioration of old films, to renew the efforts of members to acquire films, though it is acknowledged that it becomes "more perilous to judge the lasting artistic value of motion pictures as the output of film increases."

While the film archives serve the growing number of film scholars by making it possible to study the entire works of individual film-makers, the archives are not remote research centers. On the contrary, film archives are now centers of culture such as public libraries, concert halls, and museums. Each archive offers viewing of special films, old and new, to accommodate the growing cinema cognoscenti of every nation.

A spokesman for the Federation has stated, "We collect the most living, the most faithful and the most eloquent documentation of reality. Our archives are the living chronicle of the twentieth century. If one wished to see with one's own eyes how in the course of the past years life, culture and finally human beings have changed, one could do no better than to study the movies of the past."

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