

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## FACT SHEET

**EXHIBITION** **NAPOLETANA: IMAGES OF A CITY**

**DATES** November 12, 1993 - January 27, 1994

**ORGANIZATION** Adrienne Mancia, Curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art; and Adriano Aprà, Aldo Bernardini, Vittorio Martinelli, and Patrizia Pistagnesi, Incontri Internazionali D'Arte, Rome. The exhibition is a project of the Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art, and the Incontri Internazionali D'Arte with the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome.

**SPONSORSHIP** The exhibition is sponsored, in part, by Giorgio Armani, Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo -- Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, and Assessorato Turismo e Spettacolo della Regione Campania.

**CONTENT** This survey of Neapolitan cinema is the first ever presented in the United States and includes more than eighty films, dating from 1909 to 1992, focusing on Naples and the surrounding region. The films in the series reflect a deep-rooted and complex culture historically found in song, theater, and literature. From the turn of the century until the end of the 1920s, Naples was alive with a cottage industry of filmmakers who turned out *sceneggiate*, or narratives of popular songs. In its use of location shooting, non-professional actors, and stories of the so-called "common" people, Neapolitan cinema could also be seen as a prelude to neorealism.

**NAPOLETANA: IMAGES OF A CITY** includes comedies, many featuring the great Totò; musicals; melodramas; adaptations of *sceneggiate*; and films starring famous Neapolitan theater actors. Also included are works by foreign directors inspired by Naples, such as Frank Borzage's *Street Angel* (1928, with Janet Gaynor) and Billy Wilder's *Avanti!* (1972, starring Jack Lemmon).

The exhibition features a number of films starring Sophia Loren, a native of Naples, and films by such well-known directors as Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Lina Wertmüller, as well as recent films by young Neapolitan filmmakers. Many films are shown for the first time in the United States.

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Another highlight of the series is the rediscovery of Elvira Notari (1875-1946), the first and most prolific woman writer and director in Italy. She and her husband, Nicola Notari, founded Dora Film and shot many films in the underbelly of Naples, taking advantage of the city's natural resources. Notari's films, successful both in Italy and among Italian immigrants in the United States, are particularly sensitive to women's conditions. Unfortunately, only a handful of Notari's films have been preserved: *The Little Girl's Wrong* (1921) and *The Holy Night* (1922), are included in the series.

Two musicians, Guido Sodo and François Laurent, accompany the silent films screened in the first week of the exhibition. They play mandolin and classical guitar and sing Neapolitan songs.

#### PUBLICATION

***Napoletana: Images of a City.*** Essays by Adriano Aprà, Aldo Bernardini, Giuliana Bruno, Gianni Borgna, Goffredo Fofi, Mario Franco, Vittorio Martinelli, Mirco Melanco, and Patrizia Pistagnesi, among others. The translation is by Jennifer Franchina.

#### TRAVEL

After its New York showing, a large part of the exhibition travels to the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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