

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
September 1993

LILLIAN GISH: FIRST LADY OF THE SCREEN

October 14 - 21, 1993

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Lillian Gish's birth, The Museum of Modern Art presents a selection of memorable films starring this extraordinarily talented artist who performed in films, theater, and television for more than eighty-five years. **LILLIAN GISH: FIRST LADY OF THE SCREEN**, on view from October 14 through 21, 1993, includes eight feature films accompanied by early works by the great director D. W. Griffith.

The series opens with *Lillian Gish: An Actor's Life for Me* (1988, Terry Sanders, Freida Lee Mock, William T. Cartwright), a documentary on Gish's career that includes her last interview, which is full of wit and insight about how movies were developed in the teens with Griffith. The program also features Gish's screen debut, with her sister Dorothy, in *An Unseen Enemy* (1912, Edward Acker). The two later costarred as sisters in Griffith's masterwork on the French Revolution, *Orphans of the Storm* (1921), the last film Gish made with the director. Selected Biograph shorts from the early years of Gish and Griffith's collaboration accompany feature films from her subsequent career, made with such directors as Robert Altman, John Huston, Charles Laughton, and Victor Seastrom. The series also includes *The Whales of August* (1987, Lindsay Anderson), Gish's last starring role.

Lillian Gish was born in Springfield, Ohio, in 1893 and was raised in

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East St. Louis and New York City. Her father abandoned his family and subsequently died in 1911. Gish moved with her mother and Dorothy to an apartment in New York. To save money they took in boarders, one of whom was an actress who convinced Mrs. Gish to allow Lillian, at the age of five, to perform in a play touring the country. Another boarder, actress Mary Pickford, introduced Lillian and Dorothy to Griffith at Biograph. Shortly thereafter, in 1912, they made *An Unseen Enemy*. Gish directed one film in her career, *Remodeling Her Husband* (1920), in which she costarred with Dorothy. In 1970 she received an Honorary Academy Award for her contribution to the progress of motion pictures. Lillian Gish died this year in New York.

LILLIAN GISH: FIRST LADY OF THE SCREEN was organized by Mary Lea Bandy, chief curator, Department of Film.

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For further information or film stills, contact Barbara Marshall, film press representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752.