

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
December 1994

JOSEF VON STERNBERG

December 16, 1994 - January 6, 1995

A retrospective of the extant work of filmmaker Josef von Sternberg (1894-1969), the master of cinema and Hollywood legend, opens at The Museum of Modern Art on December 16, 1994. Presented in commemoration of the centenary of Sternberg's birth, the exhibition features twenty-one silent and sound films, made between 1925 and 1953. On view through January 6, 1995, these works underscore the nuanced worlds of illusion created by a filmmaker who used the camera like a writer's pen -- to produce a personal poetry.

The retrospective spans Sternberg's thirty-year directorial career, beginning with the silent film *The Salvation Hunters* (1925). It includes the rarely seen *Thunderbolt* (1929), his first use of sound; an adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy* (1931); the uncompleted epic *I, Claudius* (1937); and Sternberg's last work, *The Saga of Anatahan* (1953).

Additional highlights include the seven films that Sternberg made featuring another cinema legend, Marlene Dietrich. Films range from the extraordinary *Der Blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, 1930), a joint German-American venture that established the actress as a star, through *Shanghai Express* (1932), *The Scarlet Empress* (1934), and *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935).

Born in 1894 in Vienna, Sternberg (the "von" was coined for the credits of a 1924 film) emigrated to New York City with his family when he was seven

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years old. He worked his way up from obscure beginnings and relatively little schooling to a series of jobs in the film industry in the New York area. As a young man, he moved to Hollywood, assisting several directors before making his 1925 directorial debut and pursuing an independent creative path.

Sternberg, who explored the creative possibilities of sound earlier and more thoroughly than any other filmmaker, was one of the most successful directors in making the transition from silent film to sound. A visual master, he used the poetic effects of light and shadow in conjunction with sound to make palpable the emotional biographies of his characters, captured in the process of self-awakening.

Sternberg's experiments met with both commercial and artistic success. Works such as *Underworld* (1927), the first famous gangster film, and *Morocco* (1930), with Marlene Dietrich and Gary Cooper, were among the most popular movies of their era. Although his method has been compared to that of Erich von Stroheim, Sternberg's films were unlike any produced at the time -- sensual and grand.

JOSEF VON STERNBERG was organized by Charles Silver, Supervisor, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Video. The exhibition was made possible with the assistance of the University of California Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles; the Department of Film of the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, Rochester; the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Turner Entertainment Company, Los Angeles; and Martin Scorsese.

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For further information or film stills, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752.

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JOSEF VON STERNBERG

December 16, 1994 - January 6, 1995

Exhibition schedule

Friday, December 16

- 2:30 p.m. *The Salvation Hunters*.** 1925. USA. Written and directed by Josef von Sternberg. With George K. Arthur, Georgia Hale, Bruce Guerin. App. 75 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *Underworld*.* 1927. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With George Bancroft, Clive Brook, Evelyn Brent. App. 85 min.
- Underworld Outtakes*. App. 20 min.
- 8:15 p.m. *The Docks of New York*.* 1928. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With George Bancroft, Betty Compson, Olga Baclanova. App. 80 min.

Saturday, December 17

- 12:30 p.m. *Underworld**/*Underworld Outtakes*.
See Friday, December 16, at 6:00.
- 3:00 p.m. *The Last Command*.* 1928. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Emil Jannings, Evelyn Brent, William Powell. App. 90 min.
- 5:00 p.m. *Der Blaue Engel (The Blue Angel)*. 1930. Germany. Josef von Sternberg. Based on Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat*. With Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings, Kurt Gerron. In German, no English subtitles; synopsis provided. 110 min.

Sunday, December 18

- 1:00 p.m. *Morocco*. 1930. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Gary Cooper, Marlene Dietrich, Adolphe Menjou. 90 min.
- 3:00 p.m. *The Docks of New York*.*
See Friday, December 16, at 8:15.
- 5:00 p.m. *The Salvation Hunters*.*
See Friday, December 16, at 2:30.

Monday, December 19

- 2:30 p.m. *Der Blaue Engel (The Blue Angel)*.
See Saturday, December 17, at 5:00.
- 6:00 p.m. *Morocco*.
See Sunday, December 18, at 1:00.

Tuesday, December 20

- 2:30 p.m. *Thunderbolt*. 1929. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With George Bancroft, Fay Wray, Richard Arlen. Courtesy UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles. App. 95 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *The Last Command*.*
See Saturday, December 17, at 3:00.

Thursday, December 22

- 2:30 p.m. *An American Tragedy*. 1931. USA. Josef von Sternberg. Based on the novel by Theodore Dreiser. With Phillips Holmes, Sylvia Sidney, Claire McDowell. Courtesy UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles. 95 min.

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- 6:00 p.m. *Thunderbolt*.
See Tuesday, December 20, at 2:30.
- 8:00 p.m. *Dishonored*. 1931. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Marlene Dietrich, Victor McLaglen, Gustav von Seyffertitz. Courtesy UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles. 91 min.

Friday, December 23

- 2:30 p.m. *Dishonored*.
See Thursday, December 22, at 8:00.
- 6:00 p.m. *An American Tragedy*.
See Thursday, December 22, at 2:30.
- 8:00 p.m. *Shanghai Express*. 1932. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Marlene Dietrich, Clive Brook, Warner Oland. Courtesy UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles. 80 min.

Saturday, December 24

- 1:00 p.m. *Blonde Venus*. 1932. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Marlene Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, Cary Grant. Courtesy UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles. 80 min.
- 3:00 p.m. *Shanghai Express*.
See Friday, December 23, at 8:00.

Monday, December 26

- 2:30 p.m. *The Scarlet Empress*. 1934. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Marlene Dietrich, Sam Jaffe, Louise Dresser, John Lodge. 105 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *Blonde Venus*.
See Saturday, December 24, at 1:00.

Tuesday, December 27

- 2:30 p.m. *Crime and Punishment*. 1935. USA. Josef von Sternberg. Based on the novel by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. With Peter Lorre, Edward Arnold, Marian Marsh. Courtesy The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 89 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *The Scarlet Empress*.
See Monday, December 26, at 2:30.

Thursday, December 29

- 2:30 p.m. *The King Steps Out*. 1936. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Grace Moore, Franchot Tone, Walter Connolly. 85 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *Crime and Punishment*.
See Tuesday, December 27, at 2:30.
- 8:00 p.m. *The Shanghai Gesture*. 1942. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Gene Tierney, Ona Munson, Victor Mature. Courtesy George Eastman House, Rochester. 98 min.

Friday, December 30

- 2:30 p.m. *Sergeant Madden*. 1939. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Wallace Beery, Tom Brown, Alan Curtis. Courtesy Turner Entertainment Co., Los Angeles. 82 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *The King Steps Out*.
See Thursday, December 29, at 2:30.
- 8:00 p.m. *The Devil Is a Woman*. 1935. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Marlene Dietrich, Lionel Atwill, Cesar Romero. Courtesy UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles. 85 min.

Saturday, December 31

- 1:00 p.m. *The Devil Is a Woman.*
See Friday, December 30, at 8:00.
- 3:00 p.m. *The Shanghai Gesture.*
See Thursday, December 29, at 8:00.

Sunday, January 1

- 2:00 p.m. *The Saga of Anatahan.* 1953. Japan/USA. Josef von Sternberg.
With Akemi Negishi, Tadashi Suganuma, Kisaburo Sawamura. Narration
by Sternberg. 92 min.
- 5:00 p.m. *Sergeant Madden.* 1939. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Wallace
Beery, Tom Brown, Alan Curtis. Courtesy Turner Entertainment Co.,
Los Angeles. 82 min.

Monday, January 2

- 3:00 p.m. *The Epic That Never Was.* 1967. Great Britain. Bill Duncalf.
BBC documentary on the making of Sternberg's unfinished 1937
screen adaptation of Robert Graves' novel *I, Claudius*. With
Charles Laughton, Merle Oberon, Emelyn Williams. Narration by
Dirk Bogarde. 75 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *The Town.* 1944. USA. Josef von Sternberg. Portrait of a small
American town, Madison, Indiana, for the United States Office of
War Information. 12 min.
- Macao.* 1952. USA. Josef von Sternberg. With Robert Mitchum,
Jane Russell, Gloria Grahame. Courtesy Turner Entertainment Co.,
Los Angeles. 81 min.

Tuesday, January 3

- 3:00 p.m. *Jet Pilot.* 1951. Josef von Sternberg. With John Wayne, Janet
Leigh. 112 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *The Epic That Never Was.*
See Monday, January 2, at 3:00.

Friday, January 6

- 3:00 p.m. *The Town/Macao.*
See Monday, January 2, at 6:00.
- 6:00 p.m. *Jet Pilot.*
See Tuesday, January 3, at 3:00.
- 8:00 p.m. *The Saga of Anatahan.*
See Sunday, January 1, at 2:00.

* Silent, with piano accompaniment by Stuart Oderman

** Silent, without piano accompaniment

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