

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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## ITALIAN FILM CYCLE TO BE SHOWN AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

50 YEARS OF ITALIAN CINEMA, the first survey of the development of the film in Italy to be shown in the United States, will be presented by the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art beginning March 21, in the Museum's Auditorium, 11 West 53 Street. The retrospect, consisting of some thirty films, more than a third of which have never before been shown in the United States, is part of the Museum's 25th Anniversary year-long celebration. It marks as well the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Italian films, the first of which, THE TAKING OF ROME, was produced in 1905. Films are shown twice daily at 3 and 5:30 p.m. in the Museum Auditorium.

Commenting on the retrospect, Richard Griffith, Curator of the Film Library, says:

"Twice in the course of motion picture history, Italian films have achieved world-wide fame and influence. Before the first World War, such spectacles as QUO VADIS? and CABIRIA brought the growing film medium to a new level of artistry, helped to establish its prestige, and deeply affected production everywhere -- their great length and colossal scale, for example, inspired D. W. Griffith to produce his THE BIRTH OF A NATION and INTOLERANCE. After the second War, OPEN CITY, PAISAN, BICYCLE THIEF, and other electrifying documents of "neo-realism" startled the world with their vitality and challenged film-makers of all nations by raising all the issues inherent in film form.

"But intervening periods in Italian film history have remained largely unknown. Italian films have been continuously imported to the U.S. and shown here (since the talkies, mostly in Italian-speaking theaters); but the large public never saw or even heard of them. Indeed, many of the finest of the films of the post-war renaissance have been undeservedly overlooked.

"To remedy this situation, the Film Library's retrospect has made a wide selection of works from all periods of Italian film history, beginning with the earliest films produced and continuing down to the present to include films which have not yet been released commercially.

"An especially important consideration in making the selection was the task of documenting the beginnings of "neo-realism," research for which yielded early works by Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio de Sica, whose directorial debuts were supposed by many to have been made at the end of World War II. Indeed, the final half of the

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cycle discloses a continuity of tradition and a slow maturation of ideas and technique which destroys the widely-held belief that the Italian film renaissance is exclusively a post-war phenomenon.

"This retrospect, one of the most ambitious ever undertaken by the Film Library, was made possible through the generous help and cooperation of Italian Films Export, Inc., and of the Cineteca Italiana, as well as the many film libraries and distributors, both here and abroad, which loaned or donated films for the occasion."

The complete program of the retrospect will be released shortly. Films definitely scheduled include, from the early period: THE TAKING OF ROME (1905), the first Italian film; 1908 newsreels of the meeting of the Kaiser and the King of Italy at Venice; A DUEL UNDER DIFFICULTIES (1909), with Andre Deed; LIDIA (1910), produced by Milano-Film; and TROUBLE WITH A ROCKET (1911), produced by Itala-Film.

The period "Il Decennio del Divismo" (the decade of star-ism), represents such masculine favorites as Ferdinand Guillaume (POLIDOR'S WEDDING, 1912); Emilio Ghione, famous serial star in his character, "Za-La Mort", in an episode from the serial, THE GREY RATS (1917); and Bartolomeo Pagano, of CABIRIA fame, in MACISTE IN HELL (1926). Celebrated divas of the early period include Lyda Borelli (LOVE EVERLASTING, 1913), and Francesca Bertini (ASSUNTA SPINA, 1915). Eleonora Duse is represented by an excerpt from her only film CENERE (1916).

The great Italian spectacles of the period of the first World War will include the 1912 QUO VADIS? and the 1914 CABIRIA. The Middle Period of the Italian cinema, which saw the beginnings of neo-realism, will be represented by, among others, "1860", directed by Alessandro Blasetti in 1933; Roberto Rossellini's THE WHITE SHIP (1941); Blasetti's FOUR STEPS IN THE CLOUDS (1942); and Vittorio de Sica's THE CHILDREN ARE WATCHING US (1943).

The Post-War Renaissance begins with Rossellini's OPEN CITY (1945) and PAISAN (1946), and includes de Sica's BICYCLE THIEF (1948); Pietro Germi's MAFIA (1948); Luciano Emmer's A SUNDAY IN AUGUST (1950); Luchino Visconti's BELLISSIMA (1952); and Renato Castellani's TWO CENTS WORTH OF HOPE (1952).

During the Italian Film Festival at the Museum a new book, Fifty Years of Italian Cinema, edited by Luigi Malerba and Carmine Siniscalco with Herman G. Weinberg as editor of the American edition, will be on sale in the Museum's main lobby. Richard Griffith, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art's Film Library, has written the foreward to this book which has been prepared with the collaboration of the Unitalia Film, the National Union for the diffusion of the Italian Cinema abroad.