

# The Museum of Modern Art

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## THE MUSEUM PLANS THREE-PART RETROSPECTIVE OF SOVIET SILENT FILMS INITIAL PROGRAM IN SERIES STARTS MARCH 7 BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOVIET FILM ARCHIVE AND PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

The Museum of Modern Art will present the first part of a three-part retrospective of the Soviet silent cinema, offered by the Department of Film by special arrangement with Gosfilmofond, the Soviet State Film Archive, and the Pacific Film Archive of the University Art Museum at Berkeley, California. The three-part cycle will contain the most thorough retrospective of Soviet cinema in its classic and revolutionary silent era that has ever been mounted outside of the U.S.S.R.

The first part of the series, beginning March 7 and continuing through April 15, covers the period of 1918 to 1925, although a rare film of 1916 will be included. It is "The Queen of Spades" from the Pushkin novel.

The selection of 29 films has been made by Professor Jay Leyda in collaboration with the Director of Gosfilmofond, Victor Privato, and the Program Director of the Pacific Film Archive, Tom Luddy. Professor Leyda is the author of the definitive text in English on the history of Russian films, "Kino," and has taught this subject at New York University and Yale University.

Program notes and a synopsis will accompany each film as many of them will be shown with the original Russian titles, untranslated into English. In an introduction to the program Tom Luddy states Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Dovshenko are the three giants whose works have become classic, influencing generations of filmmakers in all countries. He points out that recently Dziga Vertov has become known outside the Soviet Union through his writings and his films though only fragments of his Kino-Pravda series and a single long film, "The Man with a Movie Camera," have been available in this country. Vertov is championed here both by cinema verité filmmakers influenced by

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his "kino-eye" theories and militant film groups inspired by his defiance of reactionary aesthetics and work methods.

An important function of this series, however, will be to dispel the prevalent impression that Soviet silents are heavily serious or coldly abstract treatments of sober revolutionary events. Consequently there are many comedies on the program, including one by Lev Kuleshov called "The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks," made with a sense of humor so that it remains today as fresh as it was in 1925, when it was very popular with Russian audiences.

Different schools of film theory were so common in the Soviet silent cinema that the polemics that developed around them were believed to be one of the healthiest aspects of the revolution's policy of encouraging creativity and experimentation. Luddy refers to the various positions: the conservative notion that theatrical films with revolutionary content were best suited to the needs of the people; the more extreme views of Vertov who denigrated the old cinema, the romanticized theatrical films. Thus Eisenstein's "October" was severely criticized by Vertov's partisans, at the same time that Eisenstein was given to calling Vertov a "camera Hooligan." Vertov was only 20 years old when he entered the cinema; Eisenstein was 26 when he made his first feature. "Youth was very definitely a factor in the explosively quick development of the Soviet silent films."

The films in Part I like "Strike" express the life and ideas of a new society at its most crucial and formative time. They also indicate the growth of the Soviet cinema into a mature, varied and incredibly rich brand of revolutionary culture. As Jay Leyda indicates "Strike" warns us to listen more attentively to Eisenstein's declarations of cinema as a synthesis of art:

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and sciences. Leyda finds in Eisenstein the influence of science (particularly physics and psychology) rather than the influence of graphic or theatrical principles. Nonetheless "Strike," considered a forerunner to "Potemkin," is full of cinematic metaphors, images of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. The picture also marks the long, harmonious, inseparable collaboration between photographer Edward Tisse, the artist-logician, and filmmaker Eisenstein, the artist-craftsman. Tisse was a newsreel cameraman in World War I, and during the Russian Civil War, and in Eisenstein he is said to have met a director as swift and fearless as himself.

Part I of the three-part cycle also serves to introduce the work of Lev Kuleshov, a lesser-known pioneer, who established the first film workshop with only a single reel of raw film (D. W. Griffith) to teach the principles of filmmaking to his pupils, among them Eisenstein and Pudovkin. The artistic legacy that Kuleshov passed on to them was his firm conviction that inherent in a single piece of unedited film there were two strengths: its own and the strength of its relation to other pieces of film. Introducing the American methods of editing, Kuleshov even tried to imitate the popular American adventure films and French serials which he put into a Russian setting. One of the latter is "Death Ray," written by Pudovkin, designed by the director, and brilliantly acted by him. "Death Ray" was technically proficient, although emotionally empty. It was the work of a collective group, under Kuleshov, assisted by Pudovkin. Its model was the French serial "Fantomas."

Just as Kuleshov altered the loose, narrative structure, so Dziga Vertov changed the newsreels. "Kino-Pravda" was photographed by his brother Michael Kaufman using a concealed hand-held camera. Vertov "dared to treat the

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present, and through the present, the future, with an approach as revolutionary as the material he filmed." He organized his cameramen so that they functioned as news correspondents and later, because of his years of cutting experience, he "shaped film scraps into atoms of Soviet life sharply observed from the many angles of the 'Kino-Eye.'"

Other films to be shown in the initial program are "Little Red Imps," 1923, made with three circus performers. It is a Russian revolutionary version of "Huckleberry Finn," says The New York Times in its first review of a Soviet film, whose style is called "Tarzan in manner and tempo."

"Station Master" is based on Pushkin's simple story of a loving father, a pretty daughter and an unscrupulous Hussar officer. It is also a valuable record of the method then used by the Moscow Art Theatre, cast as it is with people trained in the methods of Stanislavsky.

The first Soviet animated cartoon is called "Soviet Toys," 1923. It will be shown along with a parody, made up of cartoons and dolls, entitled "Interplanetary Revolution." Finally, a film not to be dismissed is "Chess Fever," the first effort of Pudovkin, starring his wife Anna Zemtsova. It is a film of simple satire and movie wit that expresses the hero's extreme preoccupation with the game and the heroine's growing exasperation. It was Pudovkin's first film, co-directed by Nikolai Krpikovsky, and it represents a salute to Pudovkin's master, Lev Kuleshov, whose famous etudes it followed in style.

Many of the films representing the accomplishment of Soviet filmmakers of the 20s have never before been seen here, and they are now circulating to universities and museums throughout the United States and Canada.

The program follows:

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- Thur, Mar 7, 5:30 Congestion. 1918. A. Panteleyev, D. Pashkovsky, A. Dolinov. ca 55 min. -- The Young Lady and the Hooligan. 1918. Y. Slavinsky. Written by and with V. Mayakovsky. 40 min.
- Thur, Mar 7, 8:00 The Queen of Spades. 1916. Y. Protazanov. From the Pushkin story. With I. Mozhukin. No English titles. ca 60 min.
- Fri, Mar 8, 2:00 The Queen of Spades. (see Thursday, Mar 7, at 8:00)
- Sat, Mar 9, 3:00 Same program as Thursday, Mar 7, at 5:30.
- Sat, Mar 9, 5:30 Hammer and Sickle. 1921. V. Gardin. Camera by E. Tisse. Assisted by and with V. I. Pudovkin. (First reel missing.) 48 min. -- The Miracle Maker. 1922. A. Panteleyev. 45 min. No English titles.
- Sun, Mar 10, 5:30 Father Sergius. 1918. Y. Protazanov. From the story by Tolstoy. With I. Mozhukin. English titles. 112 min.
- Mon, Mar 11, 2:00 The Murder of General Gryaznov. 1921. I. Perestiani, A. Nikidze. 48 min. -- The Metalworker and the Chancellor. 1923. V. Gardin. Written by Gardin and V. I. Pudovkin. (Two reels missing.) 57 min. No English titles.
- Mon, Mar 11, 5:30 Red Imps. 1923. I. Perestiani. No English titles. 100 min.
- Thur, Mar 14, 5:30 Arsen, the Bandit. 1923. V. Barsky. No English titles. 90 min.
- Thur, Mar 14, 8:00 Same program as Monday, Mar 11, at 2:00.
- Fri, Mar 15, 2:00 Father Frost. 1924. Y. Zheliabuzhsky. No English titles. 40 min. -- Chess Fever. 1925. V. I. Pudovkin. 25 min.
- Sat, Mar 16, 3:00 Kino-Eye. 1924. D. Vertov. Camera by M. Kaufman. No English titles. 77 min.
- Sat, Mar 16, 5:30 Same program as Friday, Mar 15, at 2:00.
- Sun, Mar 17, 5:30 His Call (Broken Chains). 1925. Y. Protazanov. No English titles. 78 min.
- Mon, Mar 18, 2:00 Interplanetary Revolution. 1924. E. Komissarenko, Y. Merkylov, N. Khodatyev. 11 min. -- Aelita. 1924. Y. Protazanov. Adapted from Tolstoy by F. Ostep and A. Faiko. No English titles. 90 min.
- Mon, Mar 18, 5:30 Kino-Eye. (see Saturday, Mar 16, at 3:00)
- Thurs, Mar 21, 5:30 Same program as Monday, Mar 18, at 2:00.
- Thurs, Mar 21, 8:00 Kino-Pravda no. 21. 1925. D. Vertov. Camera by M. Kaufman. 25 min. -- How Petunka Travelled to Illyich. 1924. M. Doronin. 34 min. No English titles.
- Fri, Mar 22, 2:00 Same program as Thursday, Mar 21, at 8:00.
- Sat, Mar 23, 3:00 The Tailor from Torzhuk. 1925. Y. Protazanov. No English titles. 84 min.
- Sat, Mar 23, 5:30 Stepan Khalturin. 1925. A. Ivanovsky. No English titles. 108 min.
- Sun, Mar 24, 5:30 The Tailor from Torzhuk. (see Saturday Mar 23, at 3:00)
- Mon, Mar 25, 2:00 Three Lives. 1924. I. Perestiani. No English titles. 158 min.
- Mon, Mar 25, 5:30 The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom. 1924. Y. Zheliabuzhsky. No English titles. 105 min.
- Tues, Mar 26, 5:30 Three Lives (see Monday, Mar 25, at 2:00)
- Thurs, Mar 28, 5:30 The Station Master. 1925. Y. Zheliabuzhsky, I. Moskvina. Adapted by V. Turkin from the Pushkin short story. No English titles. 94 min.
- Thurs, Mar 28, 8:00 Soviet Toys. 1924. D. Vertov. 13 min. -- Red Partisans. 1924. V. Viskovsky. (First reel missing.) No English titles. 90 min.
- Sat, Mar 30, 3:00 The Ninth of January. 1925. V. Viskovsky. No English titles. 70 min.

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- Mon, Apr 1, 2:00 The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks. 1924. L. Kuleshov. No English titles. ca 80 min.
- Thurs, Apr 4, 5:30 The Death Ray. 1925. L. Kuleshov. Written by, assisted by and with V. I. Pudovkin. No English titles. ca 90 min.
- Thurs, Apr 4, 8:00 The Ninth of January. 1925. V. Viskovsky. No English titles. 70 min.
- Fri, Apr 5, 2:00 Father Sergius. 1918. Y. Protazanov. From Tolstoy. With I. Mozhukin. English titles. ca 100 min.
- Sat, Apr 6, 3:00 The Death Ray. (see Thursday, Apr 4, at 5:30)
- Mon, Apr 8, 2:00 Hammer and Sickie. 1921. V. Gardin. Camera by E. Tisse. Assisted by and with V. I. Pudovkin. (First reel missing.) 48 min. --
- The Miracle Maker. 1922. A. Panteleyev. 45 min. No English titles.
- Thurs, April 11, 5:30 Red Imps. 1923. I. Perestiani. No English titles. 105 min.
- Thurs, April 11, 8:00 Arsen, the Bandit. 1923. V. Barsky. No English titles. 90 min.
- Fri, Apr 12, 2:00 His Call (Broken Chains). 1925. Y. Protazanov. No English titles. 78 min.
- Fri, Apr 12, 5:30 Same program as Monday, Apr 1, at 2:00.
- Sat, Apr 13, 3:00 Stepan Khalturin. 1925. A. Ivanovsky. No English titles. 108 min.
- Sat, Apr 13, 5:30 The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom. 1924. Y. Zheliabuzhsk. No English titles. 57 min.
- Sun, Apr 14, 5:30 The Station Master. 1925. Y. Zheliabuzhsky, I. Moskv. Adapted from the Pushkin short story by V. Turin. No English titles. 94 min.
- Mon, Apr 15, 2:00 Soviet Toys. 1924. D. Vertov. 13 min. -- Red Partisans. 1924. V. Viskovsky. (First reel missing.) ca 90 min. No English titles.
- Mon, Apr 15, 5:30 Fragment of lost Eisenstein film, Glumov's Diary. 1925. ca 5 min. -- Strike. 1925. S. Eisenstein. English titles. 75 min.
- Thurs, April 18, 5:30 Same program as Monday, April 15, at 5:30.

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