

# The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 2C  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## EARLY AMERICAN FILMS FOUND IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA NOW RETURNED TO AMERICA

(New York) Two important early American films, believed no longer to exist, "The Life of Moses" of 1909, one of the first feature films ever made, and "Hail the Woman," a 1921 film dealing with women's rights, have been located in Czechoslovakia where they were carefully stored in the State Film Archive. Both films have now been donated to the Film Collection of The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and for the first time will become available to film historians, scholars, and students of film in this country. They will also be shown on occasion to the public.

On April 1st, at 8:00 p.m., the Museum will present "Hail the Woman" in its auditorium, as part of a one-month program of films recently added to its collection. "The Life of Moses" will be presented later in the month, one of 15 films, from the infancy of the medium to the present.

"The Life of Moses" becomes the earliest feature film in the Museum's archive. Until now the first feature film in the collection was "Traffic in Souls", made in 1913 around the time it was thought that feature films were introduced. However, with the discovery of "The Life of Moses" a new chapter opens in the history of film, declares Eileen Bowser, Associate Curator in charge of the Museum's Film Archive.

Commenting on "The Life of Moses," Mrs Bowser notes that the producer, the Vitagraph Company, was second only to Biograph Pictures in the quality of its films. Yet only a handful of Vitagraph pictures have survived in this country. The films, however, were widely distributed in Europe as well as in the United States, and it is believed that many still can be found abroad. With this expectation the Museum is undertaking a special project to search

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archives overseas for these "lost" films. Only in this way will the Department of Film be able to reevaluate the place of the Vitagraph Company in the annals of American film.

"The Vitagraph Company was a pioneer in the field of feature films, fighting to persuade exhibitors to show films of more than one or two reels." The company, Mrs. Bowser states, had produced "Les Miserables" in four reels prior to the five-reel version of "The Life of Moses," although the latter was issued only one reel at a time because exhibitors were not prepared to accept "the challenge" of playing all the reels at once. One exhibitor in New Orleans had the courage to present "The Life of Moses" in consecutive reels, and it was reported in the Moving Picture World of 1910 that the picture "ran for eight days to record business."

"The Life of Moses," directed by J. Stuart Blackton, has extraordinary special effects, such as the parting of the Red Sea, that Mrs. Bowser feels surpass the later inventions of Cecil B. De Mille. The producers chose to emphasize the surreal, not to create the illusion of reality. The results are also believed to have inspired D. W. Griffith.

"Hail the Woman," whose nitrate print was heavily scratched on arrival here, has been reconstructed as a joint project of the American Film Institute, the Library of Congress, and The Museum of Modern Art. A combination of materials were used, including the shooting script and the original titles found in an un-assembled negative provided by the estate of Thomas H. Ince. The film was directed by John Griffith Wray with Florence Vidor in the starring role as an early women's liberationist.

"It is an excellent film," reports Mrs. Bowser, and one of several features about the new woman and her rights which were produced immediately after the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920.

On the same program with these two formerly "lost" films, the department of Film will present other acquisitions to its collection. One of the most

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notable is "The Blue Light" (1932), directed by and starring Leni Riefenstahl, which was described by The New York Times as "a highly fascinating fantasy of the Italian Dolomites...." The film was also praised for "the beauty of the action and the remarkable camera work, especially in connection with the light effects."

Another film of special interest is "The Anthology of the Italian Cinema" Parts One and Two, containing excerpts of a great number of Italian films made between 1896 and 1943. The early contribution of the Italian cinema is not sufficiently recognized, and its fame has stemmed largely from Neo-Realism in the Post-World War II period. The anthology, however, contains clips from the early films "Quo Vadis" (1912), "Cabiria" (1914), "Assunta Spina" (1915), and "Last Days of Pompeii" (1926), as well as an excerpt from "Cenere" with Eleonora Duse (1916), and a clip from Mussolini's super-spectacle, "Scipione L'Africano" (1937).

Extensive program notes to accompany the series have been edited and collated by Steve Harvey of The Film Study Center of the Museum.

March, 1976

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The schedule follows:

- Thursday, April 1
  - 12:00 JEAN-MARC OU LA VIE CONJUGALE. (ANATOMY OF A MARRIAGE: MY NIGHTS WITH FRANCOISE). 1964. By André Cayatte. With Marie-José Nat, Jacques Charrier. French, English subtitles. 115 min.
  - 1:30 THE SILENT ENEMY. 1930. By H. P. Carver. With members of the Ojibwa Indian tribe, Canada. 83 min.
  - 2:00 HAIL THE WOMAN. 1921. By John Griffith Wray for Thomas H. Ince. With Florence Vidor, Theodore Roberts. ca 95 min.
- Friday, April 2
  - 12:00 DAS BLAUE LICHT. 1930. By Leni Riefenstahl. With Riefenstahl, Mathias Wieman. German, no English titles. 71 min.

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- Saturday, April 3  
 8:00 HAIL THE WOMAN. (see Thurs, April 1, 8:00).
- Sunday, April 5  
 8:00 THE SILENT ENEMY. (see Thurs, April 1, 5:30).
- Monday, April 6  
 8:00 THE HOUSE ON 92ND STREET. 1945. By Henry Hathaway. With Lloyd Nolan, Signe Hasso. 88 min.
- Tuesday, April 8  
 8:00 FRANCOISE OU LA VIE CONJUGALE. (ANATOMY OF A MARRIAGE: MY NIGHTS WITH JEAN-MARC). 1964. By André Cayatte. With Jacques Charrier, Marie-José Nat. French, English subtitles. 115 min.
- 8:00 CLEO DE 5 À 7. (CLEO FROM 5 TO 7). By Agnès Varda. With Corinne Marchand. French, English subtitles. 89 min.
- Wednesday, April 9  
 8:00 In Memoriam: Paul Robeson, on occasion of his birthday - PROUD VALLEY. 1940. By Pen Tennyson. With Paul Robeson. 75 min.
- Thursday, April 10  
 8:00 SALVATORE GIULIANO. 1961. By Francesco Rosi. With Frank Wolff, Salvo Randone, Pietro Cammarata. Italian, English narration & titles. 123 min.
- Friday, April 12  
 8:00 DON'T BET ON WOMEN. 1931. By William K. Howard. With Jeanette MacDonald, Edmund Lowe, Roland Young. 71 min.
- Saturday, April 13  
 8:00 SALVATORE GIULIANO. (see Sat, April 10, 3:00).
- Sunday, April 15  
 8:00 DON'T BET ON WOMEN. (see Mon, April 12, 2:00).
- Monday, April 16  
 8:00 TOMORROW. 1972. By Joseph Anthony. From a short story by William Faulkner. With Robert Duvall, Olga Bellin, Sudie Bond. 102 min.
- Tuesday, April 17  
 8:00 JEAN-MARC OU LA VIE CONJUGALE. (see Thurs, April 1, 2:00).
- 8:30 FRANCOISE OU LA VIE CONJUGALE. (see Thurs, April 8, 2:00).
- Wednesday, April 18  
 8:00 TOMORROW. (see Fri, April 16, 2:00).
- Thursday, April 19  
 8:00 DAS BLAUE LICHT. (see Fri, April 2, 2:00).
- Friday, April 20  
 8:00 CLEO DE 5 A 7. (see Thurs, April 8, 3:00).
- Saturday, April 22  
 8:30 THE WORLD MOVES ON. 1934. By John Ford. With Madeleine Carroll, Franchot Tone. 98 min.
- 8:00 CAMILLE 2000. 1969. By Radley Metzger. With Daniele Gaubert, Nino Castelnuovo. Adults only. 117 min.

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Friday, April 23

2:00 THE LIFE OF MOSES. 1909. By J. Stuart Blackton. American film with Georgian-  
vakian intertitles. ca 70 min.

Saturday, April 24

11:30 ANTOLOGIA DEL CINEMA ITALIANO. (ANTHOLOGY OF ITALIAN CINEMA). Part One covers  
the silent films. A history compiled by the Cineteca Nazionale, Rome. English  
narration. 152 min.

3:00 THE LIFE OF MOSES. (see Fri, April 23, 2:00).

5:30 WHO'S THAT KNOCKING AT MY DOOR? 1968. By Martin Scorsese. With Zina Bethune,  
Harvey Keitel. 90 min.

Monday, April 26

2:00 ANTOLOGIA DEL CINEMA ITALIANO. (ANTHOLOGY OF ITALIAN CINEMA). Part Two covers  
sound films. A history compiled by the Cineteca Nazionale, Rome. English narra-  
tion. 189 min.

Tuesday, April 27

2:00 THE WORLD MOVES ON. (see Thurs, April 22, 5:30).

Thursday, April 29

4:00 Part One, ANTOLOGIA DEL CINEMA ITALIANO. (see Sat, April 24, 11:30 am).

7:45 Part Two, ANTOLOGIA DEL CINEMA ITALIANO. (see Mon, April 25, 2:00).

Friday, April 30

2:00 WHO'S THAT KNOCKING AT MY DOOR? (see Sat, April 24, 3:00).