

The Museum of Modern Art

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ANNOUNCES THE GRAND OPENING OF THE CELESTE BARTOS FILM PRESERVATION CENTER

*Unique \$11.2-Million Facility Will Insure the Best Care and Keeping
of the Museum's Collection of More than 13,000 Films*

June 20, 1996, in Hamlin, Pennsylvania

The Museum of Modern Art is pleased to announce the opening of The Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Center on June 20, 1996, in Hamlin, Pennsylvania. The Center, a 36,000-square-foot facility located in northeastern Pennsylvania and built at a cost of \$11.2 million, sets a new standard for film preservation and storage, as well as for the cataloguing and accessibility of the Museum's collection of more than 13,000 films. State-of-the-art environmental controls provide optimum conditions for one of the finest museum collections of international film art in the world, with ample room for acquisitions in the decades to come.

"We are very pleased to open this wonderful facility as part of the first phase of the Museum's expansion in readiness for the challenges of the twenty-first century," says Museum of Modern Art Director Glenn Lowry. "As well as preserving our past, by protecting these important works of cinema, The Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Center also looks to the future, by allowing for the long-term care and considered expansion of one of the Museum's key collections."

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The collection, which includes masterworks from every decade of cinema, enables the Museum to sustain an unparalleled study and exhibition program. It includes more than 67,000 cans of film, with titles from every filmmaking country in the world, dating from the earliest surviving American films, Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope subjects of 1894, to the present.

"As we get closer to the new millennium," says Mary Lea Bandy, Chief Curator of the Department of Film and Video, "people want more and more to look back on the twentieth century and examine its history, its social trends, its culture in the largest sense. Once you understand that MoMA is becoming a research institution for the study of the entire twentieth century, then you see that the film collection is one of the Museum's most valuable assets."

The Center, designed by Davis, Brody & Associates, comprises two buildings on a wooded 38-acre estate: a 7,900-square-foot facility for the Museum's holdings of 5,000 fragile nitrate films, dating from 1894 to 1951; and a much larger 28,000-square-foot building that houses some 8,000 titles on acetate-based "safety stock." This main building also houses the Center's conference room, offices, inspection and preservation workrooms, and the non-film components of the collection, such as posters, production notes, books, periodicals, and photographs, as well as the 1,000-work videotape collection.

The project began ten years ago, with a planning grant from The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Under Bandy's guidance, a project team carried out extensive studies of computer cataloguing, conservation, and cleaning and inspection methods. Major support from Celeste Bartos, the chairman of the Museum's Trustee Committee on Film, and a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Arts enabled the Museum to move beyond the planning stage. Groundbreaking was held in June 1993, and construction began in October of that year.

"The overriding concept of the Center is stability," says Bandy. "We have discovered that if you raise and lower the temperature or humidity, you're doing more damage than if you leave the film at a steady seventy degrees." Each building is divided into a number of individual vaults for specific types of film materials, with a separate temperature and humidity unit for each.

The Center is located close to the East Coast's major film preservation laboratory and is two hours by car from Manhattan. The computer network on which the collection is catalogued is linked to computers at the Museum, enabling unprecedented ease of access for a film archive. This makes it possible for the Museum potentially to double the audiences served by its collection.

"We have an unusually dynamic archive," says Bandy. "Not only does our own exhibition program use it constantly, but our colleagues in America and around the world depend on it also." Over the years, and to the present day, the Museum's film collection has provided an education for modern artists in all media, as well as other filmmakers, actors, students, and scholars from a variety of disciplines.

Major funding for the Center was provided by Celeste Bartos, Sony Corporation of America, the National Endowment for the Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman, the Hartley Ramsay Estate, the Lillian Gish Trust, David Rockefeller, Agnes Gund, George Gund III, Mercedes and Sid R. Bass, Carol and M. Joseph Lebowitz, Jerry I. Speyer, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Time Warner Inc., and Twentieth Century-Fox. All members of the Museum's Board of Trustees contributed to the project.

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For more information on The Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Center, please call Graham Leggat, Film and Video Press Representative, at 212/708-9752.