

The Museum of Modern Art

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Contact: Graham Leggat
212/708-9752

SEVEN-FILM RETROSPECTIVE PROVIDES AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RICH AND VARIED CAREER OF ISRAEL'S MOST CELEBRATED ACTRESS

Almagor Will Introduce Both Screenings on Opening Night

Gila Almagor: Israel's First Lady of the Cinema
April 10-17, 1997
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1

Israel's most highly acclaimed film and stage actress will be the subject of *Gila Almagor: Israel's First Lady of the Cinema*, a seven-film retrospective that begins April 10 at The Museum of Modern Art. Almagor's film career, which began in the mid-1950s, has paralleled the growth of Israeli cinema, and in more than fifty films spanning five decades she has given sympathetic interpretations to a broad range of characters. The series, which features some of Almagor's finest work from the 1960s through the 1990s, concludes on April 17.

"Gila's expressive, wide-ranging talent, along with her warmth, beauty, and generosity, have made her Israel's most popular and enduring actress," says Adrienne Mancina, Curator, the Department of Film and Video, who organized the series. "We hope this series will help foster a greater appreciation of this wonderful actress."

Almagor has received numerous awards in her distinguished career, including ten David's Harp awards, given by the newspaper *Yediot Aharonot*, and the Silver Rose, given by the newspaper *Ma'ariv*. In 1990 she was named Artist of the Decade by *Yediot Aharonot* and in 1996 she received a special medal of appreciation at the Jerusalem Film Festival for her

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contributions to Israeli cinema.

In addition to her film projects, Almagor appears frequently on stage. She is a leading actress in the Habimah Theater, where her husband, Ya'acov Agmon, is the director. Her considerable range is apparent from the many roles she has performed, which include Masha in Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, Jeanne d'Arc, Peter Pan, and Elizabeth Proctor in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Recent stage credits include *Medea* and *Ghosts*. Almagor is currently preparing for the lead role in Terrence McNally's *Master Class* in Tel Aviv.

Almagor is also an internationally respected author, whose two autobiographical novels, *Summer of Aviya* (1987) and *Under the Domim Tree* (1992), were adapted for the screen. Almagor has leading roles in these films, both of which will screen as part of the Museum's series.

The Summer of Aviya (1988) chronicles the relationship of the ten-year-old Aviya and her widowed mother, a survivor of the Holocaust. It was Israel's entry in the 1989 Academy Awards for best foreign film. *Under the Domim Tree* (1995), which enjoyed a critically acclaimed run in the United States, is a portrayal of the fragile lives of teenagers after the devastation of war. These films, both of which are directed by the Israeli director Eli Cohen, marked a rebirth of sorts for the actress, whose career had begun to decline in the early 1980s.

Two films in the series are from early in Almagor's career. The first is the 1969 work *Siege*, which catapulted Almagor to celebrity status on its release. In this important and moving film, Almagor plays a young teacher whose husband is killed while on military duty during the Six Day War in 1967. The other film is *The House on Chelouche Street* (1973), Israel's 1974 Academy Award entry for best foreign film, which depicts a mother-son relationship in a multicultural pre-independence Israel.

Three more recent films round out the retrospective: *Life According to Agfa* (1992), a bleak depiction of modern Israel that centers on an all-night bar in Tel Aviv frequented by loners, crooks, prostitutes, and soldiers; *Sh'chur (Magic)* (1994), a portrait of a family caught between the worlds of traditional Morocco and modern Israel; and *Passover Fever* (1995), a lively contemporary comedy that focuses on domestic issues, leaving aside history and politics.

Gila Almagor: Israel's First Lady of the Cinema is made possible with the generous support of the Consulate General of Israel in New York/Department of Cultural Affairs. The Museum appreciates the cooperation of James Quandt and Susan Oxtoby, Cinematheque Ontario, and Rafi Gamzou and Renee Schreiber, Consulate General of Israel in New York.

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For more information, to receive photos or preview tapes, or to arrange an interview with Gila Almagor, please contact Graham Leggat at 212/708-9752.

For more information on the Museum's programs, please visit our Web site at www.moma.org.

You are cordially invited to press screenings for

Gila Almagor: Israel's First Lady of the Cinema

10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m., Monday, March 31
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2
The Museum of Modern Art

10:00 a.m. *Siege*. 1969. Israel. Gilberto Tofano. With Gila Almagor, Yehoram Gaon, Dahn Ben Amotz. In Hebrew, English subtitles. Courtesy Ergo Media. 95 min. This moving character study of a young widow, set against the backdrop of the Six Day War, is also the story of a nation besieged.

11:45 a.m. *Life According to Agfa*. 1992. Israel. Written and directed by Assi Dayan. With Gila Almagor, Irit Frank, Shuli Rand. In Hebrew, English subtitles. Courtesy Moviez Entertainment. 102 min. This suspenseful tale centers around the clientele of a successful Tel Aviv bar, where corporate managers and police officers mingle with artists, pimps, and whores.

Please RSVP to press screenings by calling Graham Leggat at 212/708-9752.