

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART FILM LIBRARY

11 West 53 Street
New York 19, New York

REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FILM ARCHIVES,
September 30, 1958.

The 1957-58 report of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library to the International Federation of Film Archives necessarily centers around the fire suffered by the Museum on April 15, by reason of which nearly all of the Film Library's plans for the remainder of the year had to be changed or deferred. While this fire did not reach the Film Library and while damage to the Museum's collection of art was slight - only one painting, a Monet "Water Lilies", was irretrievably lost - the consequence of this fire have been far-reaching. Like all other public buildings in New York, the Museum is annually inspected for fire hazards by officials of the municipal fire department. After the fire it was discovered that, notwithstanding these annual inspections and approvals, the Museum had certain architectural features which were undesirable in a place of public assembly. Accordingly, the Trustees of the Museum resolved that, at the same time that fire damage was being repaired, the building should be renovated and in some places reconstructed in accordance with the highest standards of safety. The Museum has therefore been closed, and all its exhibition activities, including those of the Film Library, suspended since June 1. It will re-open, and the daily film programs in the auditorium be resumed, on October 8.

As stated above, the Film Library itself suffered no direct damage from the fire. Since its 35mm nitrate prints are stored either in the Library's own vaults on Long Island or in those of the George Eastman House in Rochester, the possibility of any appreciable amount of nitrate film being involved in the fire was obviated, as indeed it is at all times. At the time of the fire, the Film Library's 16mm circulating prints /all of course on acetate stock/ happened to be in the basement of the Museum, where they were in transit to the Film Library's new inspection and storage rooms in the building next door to the Museum. Since the fire did not come near the basement the films were allowed to remain there until, some hours later, it was discovered that water was seeping down from the upper floors, whereupon a hastily improvised task force of staff members and Trustees /including the Chairman of the Board, Nelson Rockefeller/ removed the 16mm prints to safety.

As a result of the complete post-fire analysis of all the Museum's facilities and activities in terms of fire hazard, new plans are being formulated for the storage and care of the Film Library collection. It is hoped that these plans can be outlined in some detail at the next annual meeting.

Regular Auditorium Film Programs

The following film exhibitions were presented in the Museum auditorium during 1957-58:

PAST AND PRESENT: SIXTY YEARS OF GERMAN FILMS, directed by John Adams, with the assistance of the motion picture industry of West Germany.

THE FIRST SIXTY YEARS: PART I /Primitive films from all countries/, directed by John Adams.

FRED ZINNEMANN, directed by Richard Griffith, with the assistance of Columbia Pictures, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and Twentieth Century-Fox.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS, directed by Richard Griffith.

A fifth exhibition, THE FILMS OF PAUL ROTH, directed by Richard Griffith, with the assistance of Ernest Lindgren and the British Film Institute, was ready for showing when the fire halted all exhibition activities. This cycle will be presented as the Film Library's first exhibition when the Museum re-opens October 8, and Mr. Roth will be present. One-man-shows of the work of Marlene Dietrich, Gene Kelly, William Wyler, and George Stevens are in various phases of preparation.

Special Film Showings

A program of Puerto Rican documentary films, including EL PUENTE and MODESTA, and introduced by Nelson Rockefeller and Governor Munoz Marin of Puerto Rico, was shown twice at the Museum during 1957-58. The Film Library commends these Puerto Rican documentaries to the attention of its colleagues as among the freshest, most functional, and most mature of their kind to be made since the war.

"Prospects for the Film", a series of three evenings devoted to discussion of experimental work in films and television, was presented during 1958. The programs and their participants were: THE SPONSORED FILM, panelists F.R. Crawley, Judith Crawley, Boris Kaufman, Joseph March, Sidney Meyers, moderated by Paul Falkenberg; THE PROPAGANDA AND THE JOURNALISTIC FILM, panelists Irving Gitlin, Isaac Kleinerman, Lothar Wolff, moderated by Richard Griffith; ARTISTS AND FILM - ANIMATION AND

EXPERIMENT, panelists Stephen Bosustow, James Davis, John Hubley, Len Ley, Norman McLaren, Robert Osborn, Phillip Stapp, moderated by Allon Schoener.

"The Saturday Morning Film Series", being a complete review of the Film Library collection for staff members and qualified film students, will continue beginning October 11.

Publications

PAST AND PRESENT: SIXTY YEARS OF GERMAN FILMS, program notes, by John Adams.

FRED ZINNEMANN, monograph, by Richard Griffith.

Film Festivals

At the request of the U.S. Commission for the Brussels World's Fair, the Film Library selected a "Cavalcade of Twenty Great American Films" for showing at the Fair.

In cooperation with the Motion Picture Association and the United States Information Service, the Film Library contributed some thirty American films to the "History of the American Cinema" with which the Cinemateca of the Museum do Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, inaugurated its first film festival. At the invitation of the Brazilian government, the Curator of the New York Film Library attended this festival, which concluded with the presentation of awards to contemporary U.S. films, and with the presentation to Jean Renoir of David O. Selznick's Golden Laurel Trophy.

Educator's Conference

On April 8-9, the Film Library was host to the second Conference on Motion Picture Education, attended by teachers of motion pictures in colleges and universities throughout the country. These conferences are designed to provide a forum for film teachers, to encourage rapport between their institutions, and to enable the Film Library to serve their work better by ascertaining the kind of teaching materials of which they stand in need. The third conference will be held in April, 1959. Speakers and visitors at the conference included Rene d'Harnoncourt, Professor Robert Gessner, John Houseman, and Mr. and Mrs. Jean Renoir. Among the films and excerpts shown were Erich von Stroheim's QUEEN KELLY, color tests of John Barrymore for an unfinished production of HAMLET, and the diving sequence from OLYMPIA.

Recent Acquisitions

PANDORA'S BOX
STRIKE
N.Y., N.Y. /by Francis Thompson/
OUR DAILY BREAD
THE CAPTAIN OF KOEPENICK /by Richard Oswald/
FANATISME /with Pola Negri/
SPIONE
TANT QU'IL AURA DES BETES /by Brassai/
THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN
ON APPROVAL
WORLD WITHOUT END
ELEPHANT BOY
THE GRAPES OF WRATH
UNFAITHFULLY YOURS
THE SNAKE PIT
MY DARLING CLEMENTINE
BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES
EL PUENTE
WORLD MELODY