

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **ANTONIONI DOCUMENTARIES: RARE SCREENINGS OF MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI'S FOUR-HOUR FILM ON CHINA AND EARLY SHORTS**

**April 7 & 8, 2012**

Michelangelo Antonioni (1912–2007), the great Italian director of *L'Avventura*, *Red Desert*, and *Blow-Up*, began his career making documentaries. Rarely seen outside Italy, these films offer a deeper understanding of the aesthetic he would develop in later years. On the occasion of the centenary of Antonioni's birth, Museum of the Moving Image will offer a rare opportunity to see Antonioni's documentaries, including a selection of short works and screenings of *Chung Kuo China*. This legendary but seldom-shown four-hour documentary was made at the invitation of Mao Zedong but then banned by the Chinese government for years.

The Museum series, *Antonioni Documentaries*, will take place on Saturday and Sunday, April 7 and 8, 2012, with a related screening of the newly restored print of *Red Desert* on Friday, April 6. John MacKay, a film studies professor at Yale University, will introduce the short film program on Sunday, April 8, at 2:00 p.m.

*Antonioni Documentaries* is guest curated by Eugenia Paulicelli and is presented with support from the Office of the Dean of Arts and Humanities, Queens College, The City University of New York, and the Italian Cultural Institute, New York. The films are being provided by Cinecittà Luce S.p.A.

As Antonioni said of his first documentary, *Gente del Po* (*People of the Po Valley*), filmed in 1943, "Everything that I made afterwards, either good or bad, starts from there, from this film on the River Po." These documentaries show Antonioni's roots in the aesthetic of neorealism through his eye for social reality, but also suggest the beginnings of another eye, one that looks below the surface of the image for a deeper, more complicated and contradictory reality that goes beyond the social. These films also reveal Antonioni's lifelong interest in process and duration in the way his unobtrusive camera follows events as they unfold in time according to their own narrative logic and pace.

A symposium, "The Gaze Elsewhere: Michelangelo Antonioni Centenary," will take place at Queens College, CUNY, on Thursday, April 5, 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (Recital

Hall, Room 226). Speakers will include Marco Natoli (University of Massachusetts), David Ward (Wellesley College), and Ronald Gregg (Yale University). The panel is presented with support from the Department of European Languages and Literatures, Film Studies, Queens College, CUNY.

### **SCHEDULE FOR 'ANTONIONI DOCUMENTARIES', April 7 & 8, 2012**

Unless otherwise noted, films are free with Museum admission and take place at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Avenue, Astoria, NY 11106.

All films directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

Related Screening:

#### ***Red Desert (Il deserto rosso)***

Friday, April 6, 7:00 p.m.

1964, 118 mins. With Monica Vitti. In conjunction with the Antonioni documentary series, a screening of a restored new print of Antonioni's first color film, a ravishing study of alienation, will be shown as part of the ongoing series *See It Big!*

Tickets for Friday evening screenings are \$12 adults / \$9 college students and senior citizens / Free for Museum members, and include admission to the Museum's galleries which are open until 8:00 p.m.

#### **Documentary Shorts by Michelangelo Antonioni**

Saturday, April 7, 2:00 p.m. and

Sunday, April 8, 2:00 p.m.

**Program introduced by John MacKay, Yale University** (Sunday only)

***People of the Po Valley (Gente del Po)***. 1943–1947, 9 mins. Antonioni's first film depicts the life of fishermen in Porto Tolle, on the River Po. "My only presumption: to have opened the road to neorealism. It was 1943. Visconti was filming *Ossessione on the Po*, and near the same river, I was filming my documentary."

***N.U. (Nettezza urbana)***. 1948, 9 mins. *N.U.* chronicles the lives of street cleaners in Rome, with a jazz-blues soundtrack by longtime collaborator Giovanni Fusco. "I attempted to realize a montage that was completely free, poetically free, searching for some expressive values."

***Lies of Love (L'amorosa menzogna)***. 1949, 10 mins. Antonioni depicts the emergence of a new postwar popular culture, exemplified by the *fotoromanzi* (photographic comic-strip novels). He follows the stars to the studio, and outside when they wear their working clothes. This short was the inspiration for Federico Fellini's film *The White Sheik*, made a few years later.

***Superstizione***. 1949, 9 mins. A study of the rites and beliefs in the world of superstitions.

***Seven Reeds, One Suit (Sette canne, un vestito)***. 1949, 9 mins. Made when Italian fashion was establishing itself, Antonioni's film shows the different stages in the process of producing rayon: from the plant, the reed, the raw material, and the

transformations leading to the textile, to a fashion show featuring beautiful elegant gowns.

***Vertigo (Vertigine)***. 1950, 4 mins. A fragment from a tourist documentary about a famous ski resort.

***The Villa of Monsters (La villa dei mostri)***. 1950, 10 mins. Antonioni films the grotesque stone sculptures in the “enchanted garden” of Bomarzo.

***Return to Lisca Bianca (Ritorno a Lisca Bianca)***. 1983, 9 mins. Antonioni returns, 24 years later, to the sites where he filmed *L'avventura*.

***Kumbha Mela***. 1989, 18 mins. Kumbha Mela, the most important religious celebration in India, takes place every twelve years in the sacred place where the Ganges, Yamuna, and Saraswati Rivers converge. Invited by Indira Gandhi in 1977, Antonioni filmed the ceremonies with a 16mm Bell & Howell camera.

***Roma***. 1990, 9 mins. This city portrait is part of an anthology film made on the occasion of the soccer World Cup in Italy.

***Noto, Mandorli, Vulcano, Stromboli, carnevale***. 1992, 8 mins. A study of Sicily's baroque architecture.

***Sicilia***. 1997, 9 mins. Antonioni explores some of the magical places on the island of Sicilia.

### ***Chung Kuo China (Chung Kuo Cina)***

Saturday, April 7, 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 8, 5:00 p.m.

1972, 240 mins. Presented with one intermission. One of Antonioni's most important and rarely seen works. The director was at the height of his fame when he went to China in 1972 to document the revolution. He completed his cinematic portrait of workers and farmers in China's cities and villages a few months later, but he could never have guessed that it would be 32 years before the documentary would be shown freely to a Chinese audience.

### **MUSEUM INFORMATION**

Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 10:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Closed Monday except for the following **holiday opening**:

**April 9, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled. Unless otherwise noted, screenings are included with Museum admission.

Museum Admission: \$12.00 for adults; \$9.00 for persons over 65 and for students with ID; \$6.00 for children ages 3-18. Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free.

Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. Tickets for special screenings and events may be purchased in advance by phone at 718 777 6800 or online.

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: M (weekdays only) or R to Steinway Street. Q (weekdays only) or N to 36 Avenue.

Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)

The Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and its operations are made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural

Affairs, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation). The Museum also receives generous support from numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. For more information, please visit [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us).

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