

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***FASHION IN FILM FESTIVAL: BIRDS OF PARADISE* FEATURES UNDERGROUND FILMS, EARLY CINEMA, AND HOLLYWOOD EXOTICA**

**Films by Jack Smith, Kenneth Anger, Cecil B. DeMille, Steven Arnold, Erich von Stroheim, and more to be shown, with talks and live music
April 15–24, 2011 at Museum of the Moving Image**

Museum of the Moving Image will present *Birds of Paradise*, a special edition of the London-based Fashion in Film Festival that will focus on costume as a form of cinematic spectacle. The two-weekend film series, from April 15 through 24, 2011, ranges widely through early cinema, Hollywood exotica, and the American underground, and features screenings, guest speakers, and silent films with live music.

From the exquisitely opulent films of the silent era to the lavishly stylized underground films of the 1940s through 1970s, costume has played a significant role in cinema as a vital medium for showcasing movement, change, light, and color. “The Fashion in Film Festival has established itself as a lively and wonderfully programmed event that spans a wide range of genres and periods, finding a common link on the medium’s emphasis on visual spectacle and dazzling excess,” said the Museum’s Chief Curator, David Schwartz.

Fashion in Film: Birds of Paradise features nearly two dozen films including rare screenings of Nino Oxilia’s *Rapsodia Satanica* (1915/1917), Jack Smith’s *Normal Love* (1964), Jose Rodriguez-Soltero’s *Lupe* (1966), and Alexandre Volkoff’s *Secrets of the Orient* (1928). There will also be a program devoted to artist, photographer, and filmmaker Steven Arnold—a muse and model of Salvador Dalí’s—whose Los Angeles circle resembled Warhol’s Factory. Additionally, avant-garde works by Ron Rice, Kenneth Anger, and James Bidgood’s *Pink Narcissus* (1971) will be shown.

Other screenings include classic films such as Cecil B. DeMille’s *Male and Female* (1919), Erich von Stroheim’s *The Merry Widow* (1925), Robert Siodmak’s *Cobra Woman* (1944), and Josef von Sternberg’s *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935). All silent film will be accompanied by live music, by Stephen Horne, Donald Sosin, or Makia Matsumara.

“These programs explore episodes in film history that foreground costume, adornment, and styling as vehicles of sensuous pleasures and enchantment,” said Marketa Uhlirova, Festival Curator. “The program forges a link between the visual intensity of underground cinema and the dreamlike world of silent cinema. In their magical, sometimes, phantasmagorical tableaux, costume and artifice are not merely on display. Instead, they dazzle, seduce, surprise, or dramatically metamorphose, becoming a type of special effect.”

Founded in 2005, Fashion in Film (fashioninfilm.com) is an exhibition, research, and education project based at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. *Birds of Paradise*, Fashion in Film’s second collaboration with Museum of the Moving Image, was organized in partnership with Yale University, the Center for the Humanities, and the Graduate Center at the City of New York.

This season of Fashion in Film runs in conjunction with a program of seminars at the Graduate Center at the City University of New York (April 19 and May 2), and will be followed by a symposium on Orientalism in cinema at Yale University in November of this year. For more information, visit www.fashioninfilm.com

The program was curated by Marketa Uhlirova, with assistance from Ronald Gregg, Stuart Comer, Eugenia Paulicelli, and Inga Fraser, and organized for Moving Image by Chief Curator David Schwartz.

Festival advisors: Serge Bromberg, Alistair O’Neill, Eric de Kuyper, Ronny Temme, Christel Tsilibaris, Marc Siegel. Supported by the British Council; the Italian Cultural Institute of New York; Film London, Arts Council England, and London College of Fashion. The season is part of the PMI2 Project funded by the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) for the benefit of the United States and UK Higher Education Sectors.



SCHEDULE FOR 'FASHION IN FILM FESTIVAL: BIRDS OF PARADISE (APRIL 15–24, 2011)

Films are included with Museum admission unless otherwise noted and take place at the Museum.

JACK SMITH'S *NORMAL LOVE AND UNDERGROUND OPULENCE*

FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 7:00 P.M.

Introduced by Marketa Uhlirova and David Schwartz

Live music by Makia Matsumara

Bursting with color, this program reconnects the avant-garde queer sensibility of the

underground with some genres in early film that—with their ornamental costumes and décor—anticipate some of the richness of the underground's camp aestheticism. Total running time: 140 mins.

Tit for Tat (La Peine du talion)

Dir. Gaston Velle. 1906. France. Digital projection. Gloriously winged insects seek revenge for the practice of lepidoptery. Velle's richly colored film is one of the finest examples of its kind.

Metempsychosis (Métempsychose)

Dir. Segundo de Chomón. 1907. France. Digital projection. The special effects pioneer Segundo de Chomón reinterprets a famous stage illusion in which a statue turns into a butterfly fairy and performs a number of ravishing costume transformations.

Puce Moment

Dir. Kenneth Anger, with Yvonne Marquis. 1949. 16mm. Puce Moment pays tribute to the mythological Hollywood of the Jazz Age and the perversely luxurious tastes and lifestyles of such female sirens as Mae Murray, Marion Davies, and Gloria Swanson.

The Pearl Fisher (Le pêcheur de perles)

Dir. Ferdinand Zecca. Pathé Frères. 1907. France. Digital projection. A deep-sea diver encounters marvelous creatures in an underwater kingdom.

Normal Love

Dir. Jack Smith. 1963. With Diana Baccus, Mario Montez. 16mm print courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York. After completing *Flaming Creatures*, Smith shot the more ambitious *Normal Love* in dazzling color, with elaborate sets (including a Busby Berkeleysque multitiered cake made by Claes Oldenburg) and costumes inspired by horror films and Maria Montez epics.

SECRETS OF THE ORIENT (GEHEIMNISSE DES ORIENTS/SHÉHÉRAZADE)

SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2:00 P.M.

Live music by Stephen Horne

Dir. Alexandre Volkoff. 1928. 126 mins. Imported 35mm print from the National Film Center, Tokyo. With Marcella Albani, D. Dmitriev, Brigitte Helm. Germany/France. This exquisite fantasy of an escape into the "Orient" features over-the-top ornamental sets by Ivan Lochakoff and sensuous costumes by Boris Bilinsky, a magnificent blend of Eastern and Western motifs. With its paradisaical atmosphere and a sumptuously stencil-colored sequence, the film is a fairytale world of fancy filled with adventure, magic, mystery, and harem dancers.

MALE AND FEMALE

SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 5:00 P.M.

Introduced by Inga Fraser

Live music by Stephen Horne

Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. 1919. 97 mins. 35mm print from George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film. With Gloria Swanson, Thomas Meighan. In this film's notorious dream sequence, Gloria Swanson dramatically enters a lions' den decked out in a lavish all-white robe and a headdress made of pearls, beads, and peacock feathers. The

showstopping outfit, designed by Mitchell Leisen, was so heavy that Swanson required two crew members to help her move. Inga Fraser is associate curator of Fashion in Film at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London.

A DOUBLE BILL ON COSTUME AND EXCESS (DEDICATED TO KENNETH ANGER)

SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 7:00 P.M.

“America is the Pleasure Dome of the world . . . There’ll always be a penalty to pay for these artificial paradises.” —Kenneth Anger

The Devil Is a Woman

Dir. Josef von Sternberg. 1935. 76 mins. 35mm. With Marlene Dietrich, Cesar Romero. Fashion in Film Festival invited Kenneth Anger to pair Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome with another film, and he suggested “something by [costume designer] Travis Banton for von Sternberg or DeMille.” *The Devil Is a Woman*, like Anger’s film, makes masquerade its leitmotif. Dietrich’s uber-sensuous Concha Perez enjoys a game of seduction while flaunting Banton’s veils, outlandish headpieces, fans, and fringes.

Preceded by: ***Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*** Dir. Kenneth Anger. 1954/1966. 38 mins. 16mm. With Samson De Brier, Marjorie Cameron, Joan Whitney, Anaïs Nin. A hedonistic costume extravaganza through and through. The idea for the film was in fact born from a masquerade party Anger attended in 1953. Anger transformed this experience into a hallucinatory cinematic vision, a ritual that is both enigmatic and idiosyncratic.

DREAMS OF DARKNESS AND COLOR

SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2:00 P.M.

Introduced by Eugenia Paulicelli

Live music by Stephen Horne

This program explores the role of costume in several silent cinema journeys into darkness, all of which are executed in color. Presented with support from the Italian Cultural Institute of New York. Total running time: 80 mins.

The Red Spectre (Le Spectre rouge)

Dir. Segundo de Chomón. 1907. France. Digital projection. In a dark cavern, a devil-like magician performs a series of tricks, putting to great use his magnificent cloak.

The Pillar of Fire (La Danse du feu)

Dir. Georges Méliès. 1899. France. Digital projection. With Jeanne d’Alcy. A demon conjures a woman wearing a voluminous white dress who performs a dance à la Loie Fuller.

The Butterflies (Le Farfalle)

Dir. Unknown. 1904. Italy. Digital projection. Geishas dance and play with a butterfly woman whom they have imprisoned within a cage. Her lover comes to rescue her, only to be killed by the group. A butterfly revenge ensues.

Rapsodia Satanica

Dir. Nino Oxilia. 1917. Italy. 35mm. With Lyda Borelli. A prime example of the diva genre, *Rapsodia Satanica* is a masterpiece of silent Italian cinema. It features Lyda Borelli as Alba

d'Oltrevita in a Faustian tale of a woman's search for eternal youth and worldly pleasures.

PINK NARCISSUS

SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 4:30 P.M.

Dir. James Bidgood. 1971. 71 mins. 35mm. With Bobby Kendall, Don Brooks. With a background in still photography and stage costume design but no training in film, Bidgood shot his cult classic *Pink Narcissus* on the cheap, using 8mm and 16mm stock. A series of homoerotic fantasies, the film has a singular aesthetic that is at once highly camp and deliberately trashy. Its charming naiveté evokes such early film pioneers as Méliès and de Chomón.

GOLDEN BUTTERFLY (DER GOLDENE SCHMETTERLING)

SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 7:00 P.M.

Live music by Donald Sosin

Dir. Michael Curtiz, 1926. 77 mins. Austria. Imported 35mm print from the British Film Institute. With Lili Damita. French model and revue dancer Lili Damita, then the wife of director Michael Curtiz, stars as a performer, portrayed as a moth drawn to the glitter of the stage only to be burned. This spectacular European coproduction showcases the high glamour of metropolitan nightlife and dramatizes the familiar Jazz Age conflict between female independence and morality.

STEVEN ARNOLD SPECIAL

FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 7:00 P.M.

Introduced by Stuart Comer, film curator, Tate Modern (London)

Artist, photographer, and filmmaker Steven Arnold was a muse and model of Salvador Dalí's, and the center of a Los Angeles circle reminiscent of Warhol's Factory. His films provide a bridge between the early cross-gender experiments of Claude Cahun and Pierre Molinier and what Gene Youngblood termed the "polymorphous subterranean world of unisexual transvestism," which he saw as a hallmark of the emerging "synesthetic cinema" of the 1960s. The screening also pays homage to an innovative—yet often overlooked—poet of the Beat Generation, Ruth Weiss, who stars in all the films.

All films are directed by Steven Arnold.

Various Incarnations of a Tibetan Seamstress

1967. 10 mins. Digital projection. "Originally, it was to be a serious look at Westerners influenced by Eastern trends. As it developed, however, it became much more humorous, with characters in yoga positions with high heels and smoking cigarettes at the same time."—Stephanie Farago

Messages, Messages

1972. 23 mins. Digital projection. "A journey of the psyche into the world of the unconscious. Made when Arnold and I were students at the San Francisco Art Institute, the film is influenced by Dali, Buñuel, and the German expressionists."—Michael Wiese

The Liberation of Mannique Mekanique

1967. 15 mins. Digital projection.

Loosely based on William A. Seiter's 1948 film *One Touch of Venus*, Steven Arnold's first film is a macabre, decadent work presenting mannequins and models that travel through strange universes.

COBRA WOMAN

SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Robert Siodmak. 1944. 117 mins. 35mm. With Maria Montez, John Hall, Sabu. A star of Universal's Technicolor adventure films in the 1940s, the Dominican-born siren Maria Montez became the centerpiece of Jack Smith's Hollywood idolatry two decades later. In *Cobra Woman*, she is cast in a dual role as Tollea of the South Seas and her evil sister, Naja, priestess of the Cobra People on a forbidden island. The film showcases her charms in Vera West's sensuously soft pastel gowns as well as gaudier outfits.

FLAMING CREATURES AND SENSUOUS PLEASURES

SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 4:30 P.M.

Flaming Creatures

Dir. Jack Smith. 1963. 43 mins. 16mm. With Francis Francine, Sheila Bick, Mario Montez, Joel Markman. Deemed obscene by the State of New York, Smith's revolutionary and elusive masterpiece *Flaming Creatures* was shot on outdated black-and-white film stock, reproducing some of Hollywood's golden days on a Lower East Side rooftop. Smith gives his cross-dressed actors the freedom to preen, dance, and playfully inhabit the rapturous and exotic fantasies of Hollywood cinema.

Preceded by: ***The Most Wonderful Fans of the World (De Mooiste Waaiers ter Wereld)***

Dir. Unknown. 1927. 12 mins. Netherlands/France. 35mm. With Pépa Bonafé. This sumptuously stenciled short was filmed on the stage of a Paris music hall and includes such Orientalist numbers as "In the Temple of the Fakirs" and "The Chinese Fan."

DRAG GLAMOUR

SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 7:00 P.M.

Followed by a panel discussion with Ronald Gregg, Stuart Comer, Eli Troyano, and Agosto Machado

This program pairs two of the most accomplished uses of superimposition in underground film, transporting drag glamour into a psychedelic, cubist-like dimension. The screenings will be followed by a lively debate about the legacy of the queer aesthetic in which the spectacle of fashion plays a dominant role, from the shimmering dresses in Kenneth Anger's *Puce Moment* to Jack Smith's reimagining of 1940s Hollywood Orientalism to the stunning, surreal imagery of Steven Arnold. Ronald Gregg is senior lecturer in American Studies and Film Studies at Yale University. Stuart Comer is curator of film at Tate Modern, London. Ela Troyano is the award-winning Cuban director of *Carmelita Tropicana: Your Kunst is Your Waffen*. Agosto Machado is a legendary figure in New York experimental theater.

Lupe

Dir. Jose Rodriguez-Soltero. 1966. 50 mins. 16mm. With Mario Montez, Charles Ludlam. A visually stunning celebration of the life and death of Mexican Hollywood star Lupe Velez, Rodriguez-Soltero's film is an ecstatic explosion of color, costume, music, camp performance, and multiple superimpositions. Unconstrained by any given style, Rodriguez-Soltero drew

inspiration from experimental film; Latin American, pop, and classical music; trash culture; experimental theater; and Kenneth Anger's *Hollywood Babylon*. *Lupe* is also a love poem to underground star Mario Montez, who designed his own sensational costumes.

Chumlum

Dir. Ron Rice. 1964. 45 mins. 16mm. With Jack Smith, Beverly Grant, Mario Montez. Before his untimely death in Mexico in 1964, Ron Rice was among the most charismatic figures of the New York underground. *Chumlum* is filled with intricate superimpositions that mix indoor and outdoor milieus and a colorful gaggle including Jack Smith and Mario Montez as they loll about in a riot of costume and color.

THE MERRY WIDOW

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2:00 P.M.

Live music by Donald Sosin

Dirs. Erich von Stroheim, Monta Bell. 1925. 137 mins. 16mm print from George Eastman House. With Mae Murray, John Gilbert. Stroheim uses an adaptation of Franz Lehar's famous operetta to comment on the decadence of European aristocracy, foregrounding themes of sexual lust, voyeuristic pleasure, and fetishism. Former Ziegfeld Girl and silent film star Mae Murray's dazzling costumes include a satin-velvet dress held with a birds-of-paradise headpiece designed by the young Adrian.

SALOMÉ

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 5:00 P.M.

Introduced by Pat Kirkham

Live music by Donald Sosin

Dir. Charles Bryant. 1923. 74 mins. 35mm. With Alla Nazimova, Mitchell Lewis. This film's cult status owes much to the outlandish, highly stylized sets and costumes à la Aubrey Beardsley. Despite being a box-office failure, the film remains a landmark in cinema history, bridging the mainstream and the avant-garde. Its radical modernist aesthetic and deliberately exaggerated acting are a departure from the turn-of-the-century portrayals of Salomé as an overtly eroticized seductress. Pat Kirkham teaches design and decorative arts at the Bard Graduate Center.

FASHIONS OF 1934

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. William Dieterle. 1934. 35mm. With William Powell, Bette Davis. Musical numbers by Busby Berkeley. *Fashions of 1934* is one of a long line of films from the 1930s and 1940s that exploited the success of New York's super-revues, such as the Ziegfeld Follies and George White's Scandals. Berkeley's musical number "Spin a Little Web of Dreams" combines the sensuousness of the Follies' costuming and décor with his trademark kaleidoscopic choreography. As its title suggests, the film is set in the fashion industry and tackles such issues as creativity versus commerce, originality versus copying, exclusivity versus mass availability, and the rivalry between Paris and New York.

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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. **Holiday Openings: Monday, April 18, and Monday, April 25 (Spring Recess for NYC public schools), 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** (Closed on Monday except for holiday openings).

Film Screenings: See schedule above for schedule.

Museum Admission: \$10.00 for adults; \$7.50 for persons over 65 and for students with ID; \$5.00 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. Paid admission includes film screenings (except for special ticketed events and Friday evenings) Tickets for special screenings and events may be purchased in advance online at movingimage.us or by phone at 718.777.6800.

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

Subway: R or M trains (R on weekends) to Steinway Street. N or Q trains to 36 Avenue.

Program Information: Telephone: 718.777.6888; Website: <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 <http://movingimage.us>