

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MOVING IMAGE PRESENTS RECENT WORKS BY AVANT-GARDE FILM PIONEER KEN JACOBS**

**March 30–April 1, 2012**

**Jacobs will be present for all screenings**

Avant-garde film pioneer Ken Jacobs, whose early movies were deeply rooted in the physical and mechanical nature of 20th-century cameras, projectors, and celluloid, has been reinvigorated by the seemingly limitless possibilities of digital technology. Over a career that has spanned 50 years, Jacobs has continued to inventively explore the very nature of the moving image.

From March 30 through April 1, 2012, the Museum will present nearly a dozen recent works by Jacobs including his magnum opus *Star Spangled to Death*, *Return to the Scene of the Crime*, a digital reworking of his seminal 1969 film *Tom Tom the Piper's Son*, and his spectacular new work *Seeking the Monkey King*. Jacobs will also present a live performance of his own invention, the Nervous Magic Lantern, which uses pre-cinema means to create stunning big-screen experiences. Jacobs will be present for all screenings in the series.

In 1989, Museum of the Moving Image presented the nation's first comprehensive retrospective devoted to Ken Jacobs, featuring screenings of nearly all of his works to date. Most recently in spring of 2011, Moving Image exhibited two works by Jacobs, *The Day Was a Scorcher* (2006) and *The Georgetown Loop* (1996), in a continuous loop in its Video Screening Amphitheater. "Ken has been remarkably prolific in recent years, using the manipulative, elastic power of computer-based editing and processing to create works that reinvent the medium of cinema while expanding our perception," said Chief Curator David Schwartz, who organized the series.

This series, *Ken Jacobs: Recent Works*, is made possible with support from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Ken Jacobs is an essential figure in the history of American avant-garde film. A leader in cinematic and now digital experimentation since the late 1950s, he explores the mechanics of the moving image and the very act of viewing. Jacobs was born in New York in 1933. In the 1950s he studied painting with Hans Hofmann and began to make films. His early works, such as *Star Spangled to Death*, *Blonde Cobra*, and *Little Stabs*

*at Happiness*, were seminal works of the American avant-garde movement of the 1960s. In 1965, Jacobs and his wife Flo founded The Millenium Film Workshop, a production and screening center for independent filmmakers. His filmmaking went through a variety of transformations throughout the 1960s. From diaristic 8mm films and epic allegories such as *The Sky Socialist*, he turned in 1969 to the refilming of a 1905 Biograph film to make the widely acclaimed and influential *Tom Tom the Piper's Son*. Through his Nervous Magic Lantern pieces, Jacobs creates seemingly impossible 3-D worlds in which time and space are controlled by the artist's hand. In all of Jacob's work, there is a tension between the desire to use art to create new worlds and the understanding that it is impossible to escape history. Jacobs lives and works in New York City.

Museum of the Moving Image advances the understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. In January 2011, the Museum reopened after a major expansion and renovation that nearly doubled its size. Accessible, innovative, and forward-looking, the Museum presents exhibitions, education programs, significant moving-image works, and interpretive programs, and maintains a collection of moving-image related artifacts. More information at [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us).

**Press Contact:** Tomoko Kawamoto / [tkawamoto@movingimage.us](mailto:tkawamoto@movingimage.us) / 718 777 6830  
**Ken Jacobs is available for interviews. A selection of preview screeners is available.**

### **SCHEDULE FOR 'KEN JACOBS: RECENT WORKS', March 30–April 1, 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 Ken Jacobs, who will be appear in person with all screenings in the series.

#### ***Return to the Scene of the Crime***

and

#### ***Seeking the Monkey King***

FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 7:00 P.M.

***Return to the Scene of the Crime*** 2008, 93 mins. To make his seminal 1969 film *Tom Tom the Piper's Son*, Ken Jacobs used an analytic 16mm projector to rephotograph and transform a 1905 Biograph film. Four decades later, Jacobs returns with a computer, which "allows for an unbounded freedom of study and playfulness."

***Seeking the Monkey King*** 2011, 40 mins. An immersive and dazzling work whose vivid gold-blue abstractions are seemingly made from photographed tinfoil, Jacobs's masterful new work is also a scorching political diatribe about America today.

Tickets for Friday evening screenings: \$12 (\$9 for senior citizens and students) and

includes admission to the Museum's galleries, which are open until 8:00 p.m.

**Nervous Magic Lantern Performance: *Time Squared***

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2:00 P.M.

As Ken Jacobs describes his marvelous invention, “A lightweight propeller steadily turns, interrupting a beam of light passing through a lens. I place things in the path of light, and now and again in the course of a performance I manipulate or replace them.” The result? “An uncanny illusion of things moving in depth in every possible direction without moving at all—potentially forever . . .”

**Short Works by Ken Jacobs**

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 4:30 P.M.

***Disorient Express***

1996, 30 mins. A 1906 film of a train ride is dramatically altered through repetition, mirroring, inversion, and directional reversal.

***Flo Rounds a Corner***

1999, 6 mins. Jacobs’s first work using original video footage.

***Surging Sea of Humanity***

2006, 11 mins. A stereograph from the 1893 U.S. Centennial Exposition is transformed into “an enormous rugged and craggy 3D landscape.”

***The Day Was a Scorcher***

2009, 8 mins. Jacobs uses his own home movie footage from a family trip to Rome. “It’s a perfect day when nothing happens.”

***Capitalism: Child Labor***

2006, 14 mins. Jacobs digitally animates a Victorian stereoscopic photograph of a nineteenth-century factory floor, crowded with machinery and child workers.

***Seeking the Monkey King***

2011, 40 mins. (See description above.)

***Razzle Dazzle: The Lost World***

and

***A Loft***

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 7:30 P.M.

***Razzle Dazzle*** 2006, 92 mins. This feature-length work uses relatively low-tech special effects to examine, stretch, slow, expand, and otherwise play with a 1903 Thomas Edison short film of people gazing into space (and time) as they spin on an amusement park ride.

***A Loft*** 2010, 17 mins. Jacobs applies exacting digital techniques to footage of his New York City working and living space. The loft, crowded with books and film equipment, is rendered in vivid digital colors, inverted, and broken into planes that flatten the space, while Jacobs’s signature stroboscopic effects give the illusion of three-dimensionality.

***Star Spangled to Death***

SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 1:30 P.M.

1956–60, 2003–04, 440 mins. Presented with an hour-long break and a thirty-minute break. In Jacobs's magnum opus, a history of 20th-century politics and culture is communicated through a crazy quilt of found film, combined with the filmmaker's own filming. It pictures a stolen and dangerously sold-out America, allowing examples of popular culture to self-indict. Racial and religious insanity, monopolization of wealth, the purposeful dumbing down of citizens, and addiction to war are opposed by joyous scenes of Beat playfulness.

### **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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