

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **'THE WORLD COMES TO QUEENS: FILMS FROM THE 1939 AND 1964 WORLD'S FAIRS' ON VIEW**

**Presented as part of the New York World's Fair anniversary celebrations**

**April 30–August 31, 2014**

Astoria, NY, April 30, 2014—In celebration of the anniversaries of the 1939–40 and 1964–65 New York World's Fairs—both of which took place in Queens—Museum of the Moving Image will present an exhibit of films that were made for the fairs and which reflect post-World War II-era optimism and focus on American industry as central themes. The exhibit, ***The World Comes to Queens: Films from the 1939 and 1964 World's Fairs***, featuring excerpts from six films, opens today and will be on view through August 31 in the Museum's Video Screening Amphitheater.

"These sponsored films made for the two World's Fairs capture the excitement and ingenuity behind the fairs while also revealing the goals of the companies behind them," said Chief Curator David Schwartz, who organized the exhibit. "They are also historic time-capsules of the fairgrounds: today's Flushing Meadows-Corona Park." See below for information on each excerpt.

Among the highlights of the films are scenes showing the introduction of a voice-controlled robot named Electro at the 1939 World's Fair; behind-the-scenes footage of the construction of the Unisphere (the world's largest stainless steel structure at the time of the 1964 World's Fair); John F. Kennedy speaking at an advance press event for the 1964 World's Fair, shortly before his assassination; and many more.

Nearly a hundred million people came to Queens for two World's Fairs that opened a quarter century apart, in 1939 and 1964. On the eve of World War II, the 1939 Fair looked to the future, with the optimistic slogan "the Dawn of a New Day." The 1964 Fair, with its theme "peace through understanding" was largely a celebration of mid-century American industry, symbolized by the twelve-story-high stainless steel Unisphere, which was built by U.S. Steel.

For a full listing of all World's Fair-related events and exhibits in Queens, visit <http://www.itsinqueens.com/WorldsFair/>

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*THE WORLD COMES TO QUEENS: FILMS FROM THE 1939 AND 1964 WORLD'S FAIRS*  
APRIL 30–AUGUST 31, 2014

Excerpts from six films are shown continuously in the Museum's Video Screening Amphitheater. Total running time: 34 mins. All films are presented courtesy of the Prelinger Archives.

***The Middleton Family at the New York World's Fair***

1939. Audio Productions, Inc. for Westinghouse Electric. Directed by Robert R. Snody.  
(Excerpts, 4 mins. Running time of complete film, 55 mins.)

*The Middleton Family at the New York World's Fair* is one of the few industrial films selected by the Library of Congress for the National Film Registry, a list of "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant films." Although sponsored by Westinghouse, it is strikingly different than most corporate films. Much of its hour-long running time is devoted to the complications of a love triangle with a young woman who has broken her engagement with a Westinghouse engineer to be with her anti-capitalist art teacher. The film includes discussions about the importance of machines to American workers. The film is also notable for its footage of Electro, a voice-controlled robot who had a vocabulary of more than 700 words, stored on a 78 RPM record.

***To New Horizons***

1939. Jam Handy Organization for General Motors.  
(Excerpt, 3 mins. Running time of complete film, 23 mins.)

The Jam Handy Organization was a prolific film company based in Michigan that produced thousands of industrial films, many for the auto industry. *To New Horizons* is an artifact of American utopian thinking, documenting the General Motors's pavilion "Highways and Horizons" at the 1964–65 World's Fair, which contained the popular "Futurama" exhibit. "Futurama" looked forward to what life could be like way in the future, in 1960. The focus of the film is individual car ownership and the highway system. In E.L. Doctorow's 1985 novel, *World's Fair*, a father tells his family, after exiting the ride (Futurama), "General Motors is telling us what they expect from us: we must build them the highways so they can sell us the cars."

***World's Fair Report with Lowell Thomas***

1961–63. John Campbell Films, Inc. in association with the Communications and Public Relations Department, New York World's Fair 1964–1964 Corporation. Directed by Jack Tobin.  
(Excerpts, 7 mins. Running time of complete film, 27 mins.)

Lowell Thomas was the legendary broadcaster and writer who travelled to the Middle East in 1918 and discovered T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia"). He hosts this promotional film, which was made in 1961, nearly three years before the World's Fair opened, showing the construction progress and the plans for the Fair and its surroundings, including Shea Stadium, which opened in 1964. The film, which includes footage of John F. Kennedy speaking at a press event for the Fair, was revised in 1963, shortly after Kennedy's assassination.

***Sinclair at the World's Fair***

1965. Jam Handy Organization for Sinclair Refining Company

(Excerpts, 7 mins. Running time of complete film, 14 mins.)

Many of the pavilions at the 1964–65 World's Fair were created by corporate sponsors, including car manufacturers, oil companies, airlines, and manufacturers. The most popular of these was Sinclair Oil's Dinoland, which featured nine life-sized fiberglass dinosaurs. As the Fair's guidebook suggested, "Take a break from the Space Age and journey back eons in time to the age of the dinosaurs!" A plastic green brontosaurus, based on Sinclair's logo, was among the most cherished souvenir items sold at the Fair. Sinclair also had a dinosaur exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933–34.

### ***Unisphere: The Biggest World on Earth***

1964. MPO Productions, Inc. for U.S. Steel Co.

(Excerpts, 8 mins. Running time of complete film, 14 mins.)

The Unisphere, the world's largest globe-shaped structure, was built for the 1964–65 World's Fair to represent the theme "Man's Achievements on a Shrinking Globe in an Expanding Universe." It has become the most iconic landmark in Queens, and has been seen in many films and television shows, including the movies *Men in Black* (1997), *Iron Man 2* (2010), *Black Rain* (1989), and the television series *King of Queens* (1998–2007), where it is shown in the opening credits. The Unisphere was a marvel of stainless steel engineering, and the film was produced by U.S. Steel.

### ***To the Fair***

1964. Francis Thompson for the New York World's Fair 1964–65 Corporation. Directed by Alexander Hammid and Wheaton Galentine.

(Excerpt, 5 mins. Running time of complete film, 26 mins.)

Alexander Hammid was a key figure in Czech avant-garde filmmaking, who moved to America and collaborated with Maya Deren on the seminal 1943 experimental film *Meshes of the Afternoon*. Hammid and co-director Wheaton Galentine were commissioned to produce a film that would promote attendance at the 1964–65 World's Fair. This humorous film shows visitors coming to New York by any means possible, including helicopter, hydrofoil, ten-seat bike, and amphibious car. Producer Francis Thompson made the spectacular three-screen documentary *To Be Alive!*, which was shown at the Fair.

## **MUSEUM INFORMATION**

Museum of the Moving Image ([movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)) advances the understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. In its stunning facilities—acclaimed for both its accessibility and bold design—the Museum presents exhibitions; screenings of significant works; discussion programs featuring actors, directors, craftspeople, and business leaders; and education programs which serve more than 50,000 students each year. The Museum also houses a significant collection of moving-image artifacts.

Hours: Wednesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled. Tickets for regular film screenings are included with paid Museum admission and free for members.

Museum Admission: \$12.00 for adults; \$9.00 for persons over 65 and for students with ID; \$6.00 for children ages 3-12. 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)

Membership: <http://movingimage.us/support/membership> or 718 777 6877

The Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and located on the campus of Kaufman Astoria Studios. 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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