

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MOVIES MADE IN NEW YORK 100 YEARS AGO RECEIVE THE SPOTLIGHT IN MUSEUM PROGRAM**

**November 10 & 11, 2012: Weekend series features films by D.W. Griffith, Alice Guy Blaché, Lois Weber, Winsor McKay, and other early cinema pioneers shot in and around New York in 1912**

**Titles include *A Vitagraph Romance, Winter Visit to Central Park, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The New York Hat, Making of an American Citizen* and many more**

New York film production has a proud and rich history spanning more than a century, making it possible to see the locale and its cinema players in action 100 years ago. Museum of the Moving Image presents four programs, celebrating films made in and around New York in 1912, and curated by film historian Richard Koszarski, during the weekend of November 10 and 11, 2012. The selection includes pivotal works such as Edison's *Winter Visit to Central Park*, *How a Mosquito Operates* by the father of American animation Winsor McCay, the Keystone comedy *A Grocery Clerk's Romance*, Thanhouser adaptations of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Robin Hood*, D.W. Griffith's *The New York Hat*, the first female director/producer Alice Guy Blaché's *Making of an American Citizen*, among many others.

In this second annual review of the local filmmaking scene as it existed exactly a century ago, guest curator Koszarski, author of *Hollywood on the Hudson*, demonstrates how New York filmmakers never limited themselves to New York stories. Still, the influence of local history (and regional or ethnic performance traditions) is unavoidable in these examples. Archival film prints from some of the leading archives such as the Library of Congress, The Museum of Modern Art, George Eastman House, Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum, and others have been gathered for this series.

Tickets for each film are included with Museum admission, which is free for Museum members. For information about membership and to join, visit <http://movingimage.us/support/membership> or call [718 777 6877](tel:7187776877). (Tickets for Friday evening screenings are \$12 adults and \$9 seniors and students (13+) and include admission to the galleries which are open until 8:00 p.m.)

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## **SCHEDULE FOR 'MAKING MOVIES IN NEW YORK: 1912,' NOVEMBER 10–11, 2012**

Unless otherwise noted, film screenings take place in the Main Theater and in the Celeste and Armand Bartos Screening Room at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street), Astoria, and are included with Museum admission.

### **A Night at the Nickelodeon**

**Introduced by Richard Koszarski and with live piano by Donald Sosin**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 4:00 P.M.

(70 mins.) Despite the release of a handful of feature-length films, most movies in 1912 still lasted only ten or fifteen minutes. Thousands of motion picture theaters across the country did their best to offer a balanced program of fiction and non-fiction, comedy and melodrama, with most of them changing the bill every single day. This 70 minute program of shorts, all from 1912, includes: ***A Vitagraph Romance***. Dir. James Young. 16mm, Museum of Modern Art. Clara Kimball Young is among the stars in this early behind-the-scenes showcase, which was designed to give movie fans a taste of what life in the big Brooklyn studio was like. ***How a Mosquito Operates***. Dir. Winsor McCay. 35mm, Library of Congress. Originally intended to accompany McCay's live vaudeville act, this bit of nightmarish surrealism from the master of screen animation is astonishing, hilarious, and surprisingly bloody. ***Flo's Discipline***. Dir. Harry Solter. 35mm, Library of Congress. Universal-Victor. Florence Lawrence—promoted as America's first film star—has trouble with her boarding school charges in this Coytesville, New Jersey, romantic comedy. ***Winter Visit to Central Park***. 35mm, Library of Congress. Edison. This comprehensive bit of reportage seems to show nearly everything in and around the park, from the Met to the Dakota, as well as the zoo, the Arsenal, and Cleopatra's Needle—with time out for roller hockey and some ice-skating on "the frozen lake." ***The Land Beyond the Sunset***.

Dir. Harold Shaw. 35mm, George Eastman House. Edison. When the Fresh Air Fund takes newsboy Joe out of the slums for a day in the country, the results are hardly what anyone might expect. A remarkably ambivalent take on social activism for a film apparently sponsored by one of New York's great social welfare agencies. ***An Unexpected Reception***. 16mm, Library of Congress. Pathé. Probably shot somewhere near Pathé's Jersey City studio, this rude French-style farce makes good use of two incredibly tenacious pit bulls. Mack Sennett would model American slapstick comedy on films like this. ***A Grocery Clerk's Romance***. Dir. Mack Sennett. Digital projection. Keystone. The first few Keystones were shot in New York and New Jersey, just days before Mack and Mabel got on the train for Hollywood. This (literally) anarchic Ford Sterling comedy was made in and around Rambo's Tavern in Fort Lee, where Sennett had been working with D. W. Griffith's Biograph company for the past two years. (Part of the series Making Movies in New York:1912)

### **Classical Cinema**

**Live piano by Donald Sosin**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 6:30 P.M.

With theater owners doing their best to attract a more upscale clientele, producers responded by plundering history and literature. High-class French and Italian imports provided the model,

and by 1912 most studios were looking to the classics to add a veneer of respectability to their programs of one-reel comedies and melodramas. This 70 minute program of shorts, all from 1912, includes: ***A Japanese Idyll***. Dir. Lois Weber. 35mm, Library of Congress. Universal-Rex. *Madame Butterfly* was still under copyright, so Universal's most ambitious writer-director-actor came up with her own one-reel version of the bittersweet encounter between a Japanese maid (Cherry Blossom, played by Weber herself) and a visiting American. Of course, with an adaptation this free, no one will mind if you fix the ending. ***Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde***. Dir. Lucius Henderson. 35mm, Library of Congress. Thanouser. Robert Louis Stevenson's diabolical tale of split personality had been a great success onstage, and would prove a natural for screen adaptation as well. Director Lucius Henderson was highly praised for his performance of both main roles—although recent scholarship suggests that it may not always be Cruze under all that makeup. ***The Cry of the Children***. Dir. George Nichols. 16mm, Thanouser Company. Thanouser. A horrifying progressive-era attack on child labor, with interiors shot in a satanic mill near Thanouser's New Rochelle studio. Quotations from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 1843 poem seem designed to make everything less appalling, but even poetry can't do much to soften this film's hopeless conclusion. ***Robin Hood***. Dir. Étienne Arnaud. 35mm, Fort Lee Film Commission. Éclair. Shot at Éclair's new studio in Fort Lee, this earliest surviving Robin Hood film was inspired less by Howard Pyle's illustrations than by Reginald De Koven's once-popular operetta. The half-hour epic was intended to combine European style and sensibility with American stars (Robert Frazer as Robin, Barbara Tennant as Maid Marian) and locations (whatever the Palisades might offer). (Part of the series Making Movies in New York:1912)

## **Griffith in Fort Lee**

**Introduced by Richard Koszarski and with live piano by Donald Sosin**

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 3:00 P.M.

Although he was already spending half the year in California by 1912, D. W. Griffith still spent every summer and fall in New York. Avoiding the cramped Biograph studio on East Fourteenth Street whenever possible, Griffith and his company preferred to take the ferry to Fort Lee where exteriors for all the films in this program were shot (even those that seem to have been shot on the Lower East Side). There he could work on uncrowded streets and tap into a supportive infrastructure of local hotels, businesses, and movie-struck extras, treating the town as his personal back lot. This 85 minute program of shorts, all from 1912 and directed by Griffith, includes: ***The Narrow Road***. 35mm, Library of Congress. With Mary Pickford. An ex-convict tries to go straight for the sake of his family, but the law—and some of his old associates—won't make it easy. Also starring the remarkable Elmer Booth, who not only looks like James Cagney but seems to have all the same mannerisms. ***An Unseen Enemy***. 35mm, preserved by The Museum of Modern Art with support from the Lillian Gish Trust for Film Preservation. With Lillian Gish, Dorothy Gish. The first screen appearance of the Gish sisters, trapped in an isolated country house and menaced by a dissolute housemaid. But the real interest here is the race to the rescue, which runs back and forth all over Bergen County, even defying the treacherous bridge over the Hackensack River. ***The Painted Lady***. 35mm, Museum of Modern Art. With Blanche Sweet. No chases or last-minute rescues here. Or even much of a happy ending. Instead, Griffith offers social context and performance style. Critics of the day,

accustomed to “mad scenes” that could blow the roof off, sat astonished as the sixteen-year-old Sweet showed that with movie acting, less really could be more. ***The Musketeers of Pig Alley***. 16mm, Museum of Modern Art. With Lillian Gish, Elmer Booth. Inspired by New York newspaper accounts of street gangs and police corruption, this landmark film packs an entire world of crime and redemption into the confines of a one-reel melodrama. And as usual with Griffith, when authority proves feckless, community is all we have to depend on. ***The New York Hat***. 35mm, the Museum of Modern Art. With Mary Pickford, Lionel Barrymore. Why is the minister sending extravagant gifts to Little Mary? The town’s self-appointed moral guardians (Griffith’s favorite villains) think they have the answer. A little masterpiece of comedy, romance, melodrama, and social criticism, graced with a pair of elegantly understated performances from Pickford and Barrymore. ***The Burglar’s Dilemma***. 16mm, Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum. With Henry B. Walthall, Lionel Barrymore. While the police, as usual, are about to beat a confession out of the wrong man, spineless weakling Walthall wrestles with a dilemma that arises after he kills his own brother. Justice is not a legal issue, Griffith tells us, but something much more personal.

### **Alice Guy-Blache: Queen of Solax**

**Introduced by Richard Koszarski and with live piano by Donald Sosin**

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 6:00 P.M.

The first woman to produce and direct her own films, and the only one ever to own her own studio, Alice Guy Blaché had been directing films in Paris since before the turn of the century. Sent to America with her husband, Herbert, to promote Gaumont’s talking film system in 1907, she saw the opportunity to launch her own production company and three years later opened the Solax studio in Flushing. As business took off, she built an impressive new Solax on Lemoine Avenue in Fort Lee, which the company moved into during the summer of 1912. But even when Solax was releasing two or three films every week, this busy studio head still found time to direct most of them herself. This 85 minute program of shorts, all dating from 1912, includes: ***A Fool and His Money***. Dir. Alice Guy Blaché. 35mm, Library of Congress. With James Russell. The earliest known film with an all-black cast, this farcical romance suggests one of the routines popular on segregated vaudeville circuits at the time. But the focus on class over race reveals an essentially European perspective quite different from later American “race movies.” ***Falling Leaves***. Dir. Alice Guy Blaché. 35mm, Library of Congress. With Marian Swayne, Magda Foy. Two little girls try for a miracle, with some help from a passing doctor and a nod to O. Henry’s tale “The Last Leaf.” ***Algie, the Miner***. Dirs. Edward Warren, Harry Schenck. 35mm, Library of Congress. With Billy Quirk. A “sissy boy” (as the Solax ad put it) is sent out west to become a man. A regeneration drama that gradually reveals itself as a curious and complicated love story. ***The Detective’s Dog***. Dir. Alice Guy Blaché. 35mm, Library of Congress. With Darwin Karr, Magda Foy. Years before Rin-Tin-Tin, Solax (and cute little Magda Foy) send their trusty Saint Bernard to the rescue when our inquisitive hero finds himself tied to a log in a sawmill. ***The Girl in the Armchair***. Dir. Alice Guy Blaché. 35mm, Library of Congress. With Blanche Cornwall, Darwin Karr. It’s hard to say which is more important here: the noble young heroine or the carefully arranged armchair that hides her from the other players (but not the audience). ***Canned Harmony***. Dir. Alice Guy Blaché. 35mm, Library of Congress. With Billy Quirk, Blanche

Cornwall. Fooling Dad with the aid of the phonograph. A decade earlier, Alice Guy Blaché had been directing talking films for Gaumont, shot to playback. Now much of this same technology was available to mischievous middle-class consumers. ***Making of an American Citizen***. Dir. Alice Guy Blaché. 35mm, Lobster Films. With Lee Beggs, Blanche Cornwall. An “Americanization” film directed by a woman who had arrived in the States only five years earlier and was not herself a citizen. Obsolete traditions brought over from the old country—notably wife beating—must be recast in the great American melting pot.

**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 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.

Hours: Tuesday-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. Closed Monday except for holiday openings

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 senior citizens and 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](tel:7187776800) 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](tel:7187776888); Website: [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)

Membership: [718 777 6877](tel:7187776877), [members@movingimage.us](mailto:members@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).