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From Exhibitors to Exhibitions: Changes in the Consideration of Movie Posters

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ABSTRACT

At the end of the nineteenth century, posters were everywhere. Pasted on fences, walls and boards, posters advertising cigarettes, newspapers, food products, travel lines and theatrical productions were exposed to the elements and the vagaries of street life before being torn down or pasted over by other, newer posters. The use of graphics allowed posters to speak to people of all languages and social classes; they were the modern, economical way of reaching a mass audience (Duce, 1912, p. 5). Because of their appeal to the immigrant, urban audience, posters were relied upon by motion picture exhibitors to promote the films being shown in their nickelodeons (figure 1). Called the 'external literature of the theater,' they have been used to promote films since 1895, when the Lumière Brothers first projected their short

films for an audience in Paris (The Moving Picture World, 1909, p. 407). Print runs in the thousands were common, and their expendability was a given. What is unexpected is that a century later, movie posters are highly prized by collectors, exhibited in museums and galleries and collected by libraries.



Figure 1 San Jose, California c1914. From the B'hend & Kaufmann Collection.

Movie posters, especially those from the first half of the twentieth century, have clearly moved from their commercial origins to the museum environment. Drawing on collections from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Margaret Herrick Library, this paper traces the first fifty years of American movie poster production and the transition from business function to highly prized artifact worthy of collection, study and exhibition¹. In addition to exploring this evolution, this paper examines the collecting principles of collectors and institutions and looks at how they provide access and facilitate exhibition. It also considers some of the questions that arise when artifacts like movie posters are exhibited or studied in a non-commercial environment. How do curators ensure that the history of posters and their place in the film industry are not obscured by the processes of conservation and exhibition?

The Number of Good Motion Picture Posters Is Deplorably Small (Charles Matlack Price, 1913)

MOVING PICTURE POSTERS, 1895-1918

There are not many examples of movie posters from the first fifteen years of the moving picture industry. That is due to the unorganized nature of a very young industry. The advertising that exists is dominated by the novelty of the technology and clearly illustrates both the challenges of advertising motion pictures and early exhibitors' dependence on stock paper and sign-painters.

The first known example of a movie poster perfectly encapsulates the era's attitude toward the technology (figure 2). The poster, for the Cinématographe Lumière, pictures an audience watching a Lumière film of a man getting sprayed with a garden hose. Clearly, it is the novelty of motion pictures themselves, and not the subject matter of the film, that is being emphasized in the poster. Other early examples reflect the carny side of the first decade of the moving picture industry. Viewed primarily at amusement parks and carnivals, these posters either suggest the type of subject matter included in a

program or consist of artwork in the borders with a large blank space available for a program to be printed or painted.

As the technology became more widely accepted as a form of entertainment, moving picture theaters began showing up throughout America, as former stage and vaudeville theaters or other empty storefronts were converted into nickelodeons. In these early years of the motion picture industry, individual theater owners (who became known as exhibitors) were responsible for all aspects of advertising and signage used in promotion for their theaters².

Advertising moving pictures was different from most other businesses. Manufacturers of retail goods did not have a completely new product to promote almost every day of the week³. Lacking a single, unchanging good to advertise, production companies like Edison, Selig and Vitagraph used trademarks that became well known to movie-goers. Broadsheets employing these symbols, not the likeness of an actor or the name of a director, were used to catch the eye of

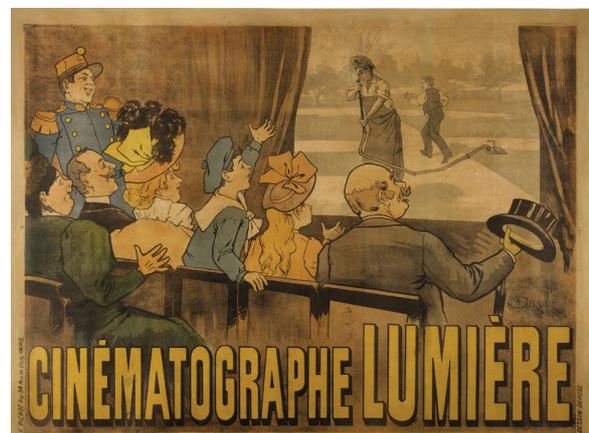


Figure 2. The first known example of a movie poster, Cinématographe Lumière, 1895.

passersby. Trademarks served several important functions in the burgeoning industry. They were printed onto the film reels as a means of copyright protection and were used on posters for advertising purposes as a way to affix a constant symbol to a rapidly changing program of films. A second source of printed materials available to exhibitors was stock

paper, available directly from printers. An undated price list for stock posters describes available half-sheet posters depicting the interior of a theater in operation with a choice of scenes projected on the screen. Among the choices are an automobile race, winter scene, kissing scene and train robbery⁴.

Stock paper posed a few problems, the biggest being the disconnect that sometimes occurred between the poster illustration and the content of the film program. Instead of using posters, some exhibitors employed sign painters to make clear the respectability of their theater and the currency of the entertainment for all audiences. In photographs, it appears that these early storefront operations primarily advertised their programs using hand-lettered signs placed close to the theater entrance. Related to the use of sign painters was the use of local artists who have become known as poster-painters. They worked in movie theaters and palaces across the United States. Movie palaces provided an entire evening of entertainment, including a stage show, a live orchestra, a short film and a feature catering to the film-going experience. They often also employed a full-time artist to create unique hand-painted posters to attract their clientele (figure 3). Artists such as Duke Wellington, Russell Roberts, Batiste Madalena and Edwin Checketts were able to make a living in cities as diverse as New York, Los Angeles, Rochester and Salt Lake City, respectively. Batiste Madalena recalled making approximately six poster-paintings per week with the instruction being to make posters people could see from the trolley cars that stopped in front of the theater (McGill, 1986, p. C-11).

Most theater owners, however, could not afford an in-house artist, so, as a way to improve the quality of advertising their product, motion picture producers took responsibility for providing exhibitors with posters and other graphic materials. It marked the true beginning of paper created specifically for the moving picture industry and suited to its special needs.

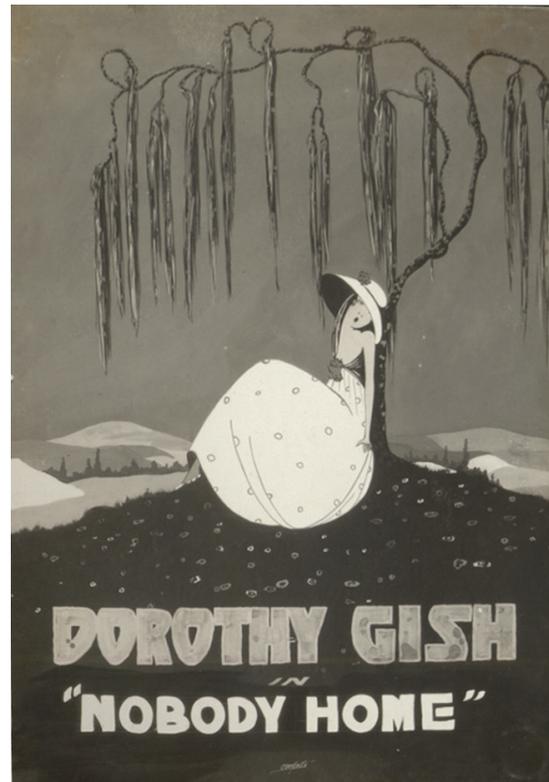


Figure 3. Edwin Checketts' poster-painting, taken from a scrapbook.

This was an influential period marked by three important factors: the development of the field of exhibition, the growth of advertising departments within the studios and the emergence of stars.

The Drawing Power of a Pretty Face (Low Warren, 1914)

In the early teens, producers recognized the need to provide exhibitors with posters and other advertising materials (*Motography*, 1915, p.147). This marked a crucial point in the development of movie posters. The practice was led by the exploitation department at Famous Players, which not only revolutionized the industry but also instituted practices that continue today (figure 4)⁵. A brochure describing the company's functions and goals notes that "[A]dvertising is a profession -- a science, and few exhibitors are advertisers. This company, therefore, takes that burden off the exhibitor's shoulders by doing his advertising for him" (Paramount Pictures, 1919, p. 55).

The studio art department worked with the publicity department to assist exhibitors with all their advertising needs.

Paramount began communicating with exhibitors through a weekly publication specifically for exhibitors. The Paramount Artcraft *Progress-Advance* detailed the company's current and upcoming releases, listed music suggestions for film accompaniment, provided theaters with print-ready artwork, supplied publicity stories for placement with local newspapers and periodicals and made



Figure4: The Poster Department at Famous Players, circa 1919.

reproductions of posters and other accessories available for purchase. It also included a weekly theater advertising critique and a column suggesting alternative uses for the posters available to exhibitors. These included oiling a poster, allowing it to dry, and then mounting it on a glass-fronted box lit from within as well as cutting out figures from three- and six-sheets, pasting them on canvas, and applying shellac so they resembled oil paintings (Paramount Artcraft, 1918, pp. 254, 458).

The posters available in the *Progress-Advance* were of a standard size established by the American Printers Congress in 1911 (Koszarski, 1990, p. 36). The most common sizes were one-sheets (41 x 27 in.), three-sheets (81 x 41 in.) and six-sheets (81 x 81 in.)⁶. The *Progress-Advance* printed a page of images that pictured the poster choices available to exhibitors. Generally there were two one- and three-sheet styles available for ten

cents and thirty cents, respectively, a six-sheet for sixty cents and a twenty-four sheet (billboard size) for one dollar (Paramount Artcraft, 1920). For a time, they offered twenty-four sheets with a space in which a six-sheet poster could be mounted.

The job of advertising moving pictures was becoming easier, due in part to the popularity of narrative film that relied on actors to inhabit roles. The public's fascination with these men and women transformed them into our first movie stars, and movie stars drew large audiences into theaters. Initially known simply as the Biograph Girl (Florence Lawrence) or the Girl with the Curls (Mary Pickford), the growing importance of actors was aided by their depiction in posters as well as other printed materials. Producers followed the trend of theatrical productions and employed the use of portraiture to create personality posters. To cost-conscious managers, these posters could be used numerous times to advertise any film in which the actor appeared. While these early movie posters were criticized for following the vogue of poster portraiture favored by stage actors, the critics were slow to realize what the exhibitors knew: movie stars sold tickets (Price, 1913 p. 142).

The aptly named Famous Players was the era's most important studio. The head of the studio, Adolph Zukor, relied on a company of actors who became movie stars, including Mary Pickford, Gloria Swanson, Pola Negri, Mae Murray, Clara Bow, Rudolph Valentino, Douglas Fairbanks and John Barrymore. Fans turned out in great numbers to see the latest moving picture starring their favorite screen idol, and the producers turned to large paper to help attract audiences. Because of their large size and visibility, movie posters attracted patrons by depicting someone that they would pay money to see (Warren, 1914, p. 37). With almost 200,000 posters being printed each month, theater fronts were soon festooned with all manner of eye-popping printed materials.

The World Today Hinges Upon Advertising
(The Story of the Famous Players-Lasky
Corporation, 1919)

1919-1945

The period between the World Wars saw several significant changes influence the design of movie posters. Contractual credits became a routine practice, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) began regulating film advertising, printing methods shifted from stone lithography to offset printing and a third-party distribution system was set up to facilitate the use of promotional accessories⁷.

Aside from the stock personality posters and posters for films that incorporated an actor's name in the title, the practice of crediting actors on posters began around 1915. A survey of 125 posters produced between 1895 and 1916 shows a steady progression toward something like the credit block familiar to modern audiences. Beginning with simply the movie's title, the text progressed to include a one-sentence tag line such as 'Tale of moonshine and romance,' or 'A drama of tense situations,' and the producer's trademark and/or name. Famous Players seems to have led the industry into this practice, and eventually the names of producers, directors and writers all found their way onto movie posters. A writer for *Moving Picture World*, commented in 1927 that old' posters had a major advantage in that

....no one 'presented,' the producers were unknown, the authors were unknown, the art and technical directors were unknown, the wise crackers had not yet come into the title writing game, no costumer asked for credit, and the supervisor had not yet been thought of (*Moving Picture World*, 1927, pp. 328, 422).

Beyond the growing number of credits included on a movie poster, an actor's rank is clearly evident. Stars are often the only actors depicted, or when other cast members happened to be in the picture, the star appeared larger and in the foreground. There is no mistaking who is the star of a movie and as the practice evolved, the credits began to support the

visual clues by emphasizing stars' names with a larger font than that of the rest of the cast. According to an employee of Continental Lithography,

Movie companies were really strict about the stars' names being in certain proportion to the title(Rebello, 1988, p. 116).

And where before the producers had free rein with the content of the artwork they commissioned for their posters, they now had to navigate the Production Code that was administered by the organization that became the MPPDA. Established in 1930, the Code was not uniformly enforced until 1934, when the Legion of Decency led a campaign against what it considered 'indecent' movies. To avoid boycotts and curtail local censorship, makers of motion pictures from the major studios became members of the MPPDA and submitted screenplays, dialogue, lyrics, costume photographs and anything else deemed necessary by the Code's administrator, Joseph Breen. The Breen office determined what changes needed to be made for the films submitted to receive a stamp of approval. Theaters were usually part of a studio-owned chain and as a member of the MPPDA, that meant showing only approved films.

As a means of regulating poster illustration, layout, copy, pressbooks and all manner of publicity material, the MPPDA established the Advertising Advisory Council. According to the head of the Council, John J. McCarthy, the department did

...not have any elaborate set of rules and regulations in passing upon copy and illustrations. We simply require that material submitted be in good taste. If it is, we approve. If it is not, we reject it (McCarthy, 1934, p.2).

Studio art departments were urged to voluntarily adopt a code of ethics that governed the depictions of officers of the law, criminal acts, liquor and sexual conduct (Alicocate, 1931, p. 663). For the studios' advertising departments, this meant an end to illustrations like those for

The Bitter Tea of General Yen (1933) or *The Sin of Nora Moran* (1933) (figure 5).

It should be noted that while the vast majority of movies made were submitted to the Breen office, it was not a mandatory practice and not all filmmakers sought Code approval. Independent film producers (including those who made films for black audiences) showed their films in independently operated theaters that exhibited movies regardless of Code approval. The artwork created for independent film posters depict actions not seen in posters from major studio releases. The 1937 Oscar Micheaux film *Underworld* shows a man shooting another man and the 1941 title *Murder on Lennox Ave* depicts a woman lying in a pool of blood, a knife sticking out of her chest. Compare these to Code-approved movies such as *Bulldog Drummond Comes Back* (1937) or *Crime Takes a Holiday* (1938), both of which insinuate bloodshed but stop well short of a graphic depiction.



Figure 5 The Sin of Nora Moran, 1933.

A third factor that changed advertising art was the introduction of offset printing. The process of offset printing had been around

for some time, but the quality of reproduction was lower than that of stone lithography. As the name suggests, stone lithography used large stone slabs to produce a print superior to that of offset printing. The power of movie posters printed using stone lithography is evident in the graphics of existing examples. The artwork originated in studio art departments and the printing was done in New York printing houses. Under the supervision of art directors, studio illustrators working from photographs taken during a film's production provided the artwork reproduced by the printers. These collaborations took six to eight weeks to complete and resulted in beautifully illustrated stone lithographs usually employing five colors (flesh, blue, red, yellow and black) (Lippincott, 1923, p. 59). Unfortunately, the stones become scarce after the first World War, and their storage and handling was problematic. By 1932, offset printing had become sophisticated enough to handle the color employed in the advertising of movies and by 1937, stone lithography had all but disappeared from the printing of movie posters.

The final significant change that took place during this period was the development of exchanges to facilitate the use of accessories. Each studio independently offered accessories to exhibitors, and independent exchanges developed to aid this process. National Screen Service (NSS) was a business that had been established in 1919 to provide theaters with coming attraction slides, an accessory that developed into trailers. With an established industry business behind it, NSS developed into the industry's primary distributor of licensed accessories, including posters and other printed materials. Starting in the early 1940s and continuing into the 1980s, the company also established a system for numbering movie posters, a practice that has become an important factor in the collectibles market. Numbering had been used previously by early printing houses, such as Tooker, Morgan and H. C. Miner, but NSS standardized numbering conventions. The NSS number convention usually

appears in the lower right corner border and consists of a two-digit number (the year of printing) followed by a slash and up to a three-digit number (the successive print job for that year). When this number is preceded by the letter "R," it indicates that the poster is not from the first year of release but from a subsequent re-release and is therefore generally less desirable.

Entering the Collectibles Market Few Things Are More Ephemeral than the Poster (Herbert Cecil Duce, 1912)

In the second half of the twentieth century, the consideration of movie posters began to reflect non-commercial motives. This was a major shift in attitude and was brought about as a result of four major factors: collectors who saw value where others saw salvage, a growing appreciation for film as an art, the exhibition of posters for non-commercial purposes and the introduction of movie posters in institutional environments.

As movies from the first half of the twentieth century came to be seen as "old," their accessories and related print materials slipped out of the industry and into the hands of collectors. Many posters were thrown out or cut up for use in lobby displays, but the ones that managed to survive a film's original release, being used as insulation, or being ground up during the paper drive of World War II were sometimes kept by theater managers and other individuals involved in the film industry. Theater managers sometimes stock piled outdated posters in an out-of-the-way place and in the process created a collection. Advertising administrators were another source of incidental collections as a type of portfolio, and film industry executives often kept movie posters as souvenirs. In addition to the existence of collections formed through this kind of benign accumulation, assembled collections became much more common.

Because of the studios' slow realization of the value of the film memorabilia that they had generated, the existence of collections and especially materials from before World

War II is largely due to individual collectors who actively sought out posters that fit their idiosyncratic methodology for collecting. These early collectors began amassing movie posters and other printed objects out of their enthusiasm for films they admired for purely personal reasons⁸. The films of an actor or filmmaker; specific genres such as horror, science fiction, film noir and animation; country of publication; poster format; time period; and the more ambiguous favorite/best-movies-ever are all commonly used collecting principles for individuals assembling collections from scratch.

Additional influences on the market for movie posters were the recognition of film as a valid field of study, the development of television programming and the emergence of repertory houses, factors that, when combined, created an atmosphere of appreciation and nostalgia for long-forgotten films and matinee idols. Added to this was a renaissance in posters as a medium, largely as a result of the popularity of psychedelic rock concert posters being produced at the time (Borgzinner, 1967, pp. 35-43). The effect of all this was the introduction of film collectibles to auctions, the first of which consisted of lots from the studios themselves⁹. The continued popularity of movie posters as a collectible led to regular auctions, exponentially increasing prices and, by the mid-1970s, the publication of two periodicals aimed specifically at the movie collectibles market: *Movie Collectors World* and *Classic Images*¹⁰.

As collections were being assembled, movie posters were discovered for use in non-commercial exhibitions. Ironically, one of the earliest documented examples was organized as part a promotional campaign tied to the release of the film *No Way Out* (1950) (figure 6). Paul Rand had been commissioned to create the graphics for the film's campaign, and his designs were considered cutting edge. The exhibition was designed to follow the evolution of advertising graphics from 1895 to the "new type of advertising" developed for the film. It was hoped that

the exhibition, which ran for a week at the Association of American Artists' galleries in New York, would generate attention, presumably for the film, from magazines and newspapers (*Newsweek*, 1950, p. 72). The source of the other exhibition objects is unclear.



Figure 6: One-sheet poster for *No Way Out*, 1950.

Other, later exhibitions toured a variety of populist venues. In the mid-1960s the collection of the Hollywood publicist Carl Post traveled to museums and colleges as well as the lobby of the Home Savings and Loan Association in Arcadia, California (Cherniss, 1966).

The first hint of legitimacy within the arena of collecting institutions is the 1968 Library of Congress (LC) campaign to collect “old movie posters for its collection of Americana.” The press release notes that LC was looking for “movie posters which might someday have aesthetic or documentary value” (*The Film Daily*, 1968, p.8). A year later, the Smithsonian Museum used the popularity of movie posters for a different purpose. *The New York Times* reported that the Smithsonian was selling 300 movie posters ranging in price from \$2.50 to \$15 (*The New York Times*, 1969, p. 43). This action speaks

volumes about the position of most art museums on the point of collecting movie posters: recognition of their collectibility but exclusion from museum collections¹¹.

The Academy’s poster collection has been the result of large and small donations and a current acquisitions program that actively solicits poster donations for contemporary films. NSS was an important link in building the Academy’s movie poster collection¹². In 1972, NSS began providing the Academy with a limited number of movie posters each month. This long-term relationship continues and has been instrumental in helping shape the collection of current releases, a group of movie posters that will in turn become relevant to exhibition. The first poster collection was received prior to 1964 and was the gift of Walter Greene, an executive at Paramount during the teens¹³. A significant collection was received in 1988 from the estate of Richard Hudson. Hudson was a native of Minnesota and film buff who in the 1950s had begun collecting posters and movie stills obtained from local theaters and the NSS exchange in Chicago. The collection is important because of its size (more than 400 posters) and the period represented, the early 1930s through the 1960s. The Academy and other collecting institutions have benefited from the foresight of individual collectors who have donated materials and in the process helped more broadly define movie posters. There are no two collections exactly alike, and their assemblage as a larger collection documents movies of all types, providing a broad representation of movie posters from the films of Gene Kelly, Ronald Reagan, black cast films and animation, to name but a few.

In addition to the Academy’s collection, movie posters are known to be collected by the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the University of California Los Angeles’ Special Collections, the New York Public Library, the Los Angeles Public Library, the Autry National Center, 20th Century-Fox and Universal. Museums like MOMA collect movie

posters for their aesthetic and/or historical significance, while the Autry collects movie posters based on its mission statement and to document the career of its namesake. Most libraries collect in a more passive manner, and the studios aim to collect as a means of documenting their history.

VIEWS ON CONSERVATION AND ACCESS

He's Mint in the Box. Never Been Opened. (Jesse, *Toy Story 2*)

As the market for movie posters from the first half of the twentieth century has continued to grow, collections are more and more finding their way into institutional collections with an educational or exhibition focus. Viewing movie posters as artifacts, collecting institutions take a very different approach to movie posters than private collectors. In addition to institutional considerations (mission statements), museums, libraries and other collecting institutions face matters of conservation, access and exhibition.

A major difference between collectors and institutions is the conservation of movie posters as artifacts. Poster collectors have become attached to the idea of "mint" and, with it, increased value. The use of condition as a measure of evaluation has become standard and the use of restoration as a means of improving an object's condition grade has become common. The practice has become acceptable, if not desirable, to most collectors. Posters printed before the mid-1980s were folded in eighths for storage and transit. As part of their display, movie posters were pinned up, taped up, folded and unfolded unknown numbers of times. They were left with pin-holes, tears and paper losses that were repaired with felt-tip marker, scotch tape, paper tape and packing tape. Collectors felt that more sophisticated methods were necessary to cover-up these early conservation efforts. They employed restorers to patch and over-paint what they found offensive. The result is that there are a tremendous number of posters that have been painted to the extreme (figure 7). Paper losses

are gone, as are fold creases. Large-format posters are often a source of over-restoration as their parts do not always line up exactly when they are assembled. With the use of over-painting, the parts appear to line up perfectly, and now the colors "pop."



Figure 7: HOTEL IMPERIAL (1927), a beautiful image that has been over-restored by a previous owner.

For the most part, collectors do not stop to ask some pertinent questions, such as what will be the long-term result of all this, how will light and time affect the paint, how will the paint and paper age differently and what is the effect on the poster as an object of intent in an exhibition? Does over-restoration in any way make a poster inauthentic? What does it mean if a poster that's supposed to have fold creases, doesn't? Does it matter? For collecting institutions, the answer has to be yes, as the concern is not whether or not the object will appear to be mint but that it will be preserved as a legacy to future generations. That is what guides the Academy's principles of conservation. Established in 1985, the Academy's poster preservation program has conserved approximately 2,000 individual posters. The program relies on the services of outside conservators, some aided by our in-house conservator, and consists of

deacidification and backing on paper. Paper losses, fold creases and stains are all tolerated as an expected part of the history of each poster.

A second institutional concern, that of access, is determined in part by the principles of the institution, whether a library or a museum. Historically, access to movie posters in library collections has been very limited due to the size and fragility of the materials, but library systems with a digital imaging component are slowly enhancing access to poster collections. LC, the Autry and the Academy all provide limited access to movie posters via online catalogs¹⁴. Aside from the Autry, museum access primarily means exhibition, and surveys of the online holdings of MOMA and the Smithsonian indicate books on the topic but do not point directly to actual objects.

Within museums, films are accepted as part of the environment. In addition to programming, more museum curators are incorporating examples of movie posters (and other ephemera) in the context of a larger exhibition or as an entire exhibition subject. The role of exhibition object worthy of contemplation is a completely different context than was the original intent of movie posters. A whole new audience, including members familiar with the poster from its original distribution as well as those seeing the graphic for the first time, is considering movie posters in a completely different way. No longer part of the commercial venue, posters are now viewed as part of an examination of popular culture and/or history.

For example, in the exhibition *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies and Broadcasting*, movie posters were used to highlight films that played a significant role in the Jewish community. The exhibition was organized by the Jewish Museum and included movie posters from *The Jazz Singer*, (Figure 8) *CrossFire*, *Gentlemen Agreement* and *The Last Tycoon*. Calling *The Jazz Singer*, 'the key Jewish narrative in twentieth-century popular American culture,' the exhibition incorporated different versions of the 1927 film's poster

as well as posters from subsequent remakes, book editions and photographs (The Jewish Museum, 2003). Another example is from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's exhibition *Made in California: Art, Image and Identity, 1900-2000*. Included in this exhibition were posters for the films *Elsa Maxwell's Hotel for Women* and *double Indemnity*, among others. The exhibition explored the relationship between the arts in California and the state's image during the last century and used a range of ephemeral materials, including fruit box labels, magazines, brochures and posters (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2000).



Figure 8 *The Jazz Singer*, 1927.

Less frequently, exhibitions of entire collections of movie posters for the beauty of their graphics or as part of a larger social topic are organized by museums. In 1997, MOMA organized the exhibition *Stenberg Brothers: Constructors of a Revolution* that explored the influence of the Russian brothers Vladimir and Georgii Stenberg on the field of graphic design (Museum of Modern Art, 1997). Since that time, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) organized *Close Up in Black: African American Film*

Posters. Composed of 95 black cast film posters from the Academy's Edward Mapp Collection, the exhibition explores the journey of African-Americans in the film industry as well as American society at large (SITES, 2003).

ISSUES IN EXHIBITION

A Desire to Preserve Many Interesting and Excellent Posters Which Are Hard to Obtain, or of Inconvenient Bulk to Preserve (Charles Matlack Price, 1913)

As curators continue to include movie posters in exhibitions, they are faced with a number of issues, including the straightforward concerns for conservation, the need to examine the change in what movie posters say over time and the obligation to consider the values placed on movie posters in the exhibition environment.

The demand for posters as part of an exhibition can be handled easily enough by implementing guidelines that consider the length of the exhibition, the level of light exposure and the item's condition. A conservative approach is necessary for over-restored items that may be on view over a prolonged exhibition period. Collecting institutions have an obligation to educate the public. Is this too much to do when combined with the action of exhibition? As museums explore exposing their processes to the public, it seems logical that efforts should be made to reveal the challenges of conservation, particularly correcting man-made problems, including over-restoration.

Furthermore, as exhibitions continue to include movie posters, they are subjected to a level of criticism at odds with their original intent. It is difficult not to view movie posters as art -- they do after all hang on the wall, and their illustration can be quite lovely. In the arena of an exhibition space, the comparison is even greater. Writing about the inclusion of landscape photography in museum exhibitions, Rosalind Krauss asks the question, what discursive space does the original landscape photograph occupy?

Her answer is that the simple act of inclusion within the confines of the exhibition, within the gallery, within the museum forces the answer to be that of aesthetic discourse. "The capacity of the gallery [has the ability] to constitute the objects it selects for inclusion as Art" (Krauss, 1989, p. 289). Can movie posters be more than representative of an idea?

Finally, movie posters come full circle when they enter the exhibition landscape. True, they are considered differently and will continue to be as today's posters become "old movie posters." At the same time, they are continuing to sell a product, albeit a Hollywood ideal that no longer exists, all of which suggests that although the movie may have disappeared from the public memory, or even literally disappeared, because of the paper, it continues to exist.

REFERENCES

¹ This paper discusses only the traditions of the United States and does not include a discussion of design, technique or development after 1950.

² Handbills were also a popular source of moving picture advertising.

³ In 1916, thirty-six percent of moving picture theaters changed their program six times per week (Koszarski, 1990, p. 34).

⁴ This information comes from an undated printer's price list found in the Academy's general subject file "posters -1959."

⁵ Famous Players became Paramount-Artcraft and then simply Paramount.

⁶ Dimensions are listed height first and width second.

⁷ The MPPDA later became the Motion Picture Association of America and is the institution responsible for the American ratings system.

⁸ Many early collectors credit the studio sales of the early 1970s for the richness of their collections, the same objects that today command hundreds and thousands of dollars at auction.

⁹ In the late 1960s, the studios were taken over by large conglomerates that proceeded to sell off film assets. This occurred at both Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and 20th Century-Fox in 1970 and 1971.

¹⁰ In the mid-1980s, a CASABLANCA six-sheet tripled in value in a two-year period (Soble, 1985, p. 12, and *Collectors' Showcase*, July/August 1987).

¹¹ It is possible that the posters sold were duplicated in the Smithsonian's collection, but that is not indicated in the written record.

¹² NSS is today owned by Technicolor and focuses its accessories distribution on one-sheet posters. The Library actively solicits posters from Technicolor and the distributors who supply their own posters.

¹³ Although an inventory of the gift does not exist, there are a significant number of Paramount posters in the Academy's collection dating roughly 1914 - 1918. Walter Greene was Paramount's vice-president and the managing director of distribution during this period.

¹⁴ Copyright law keeps libraries from providing online access to more than thumbnail images.

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