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The Museum of Modern Art

GALLERY EXHIBITION OF RARE AND ORIGINAL FILM POSTERS AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART SPOTLIGHTS LEGENDARY GERMAN MOVIE STUDIO

Ufa Film Posters, 1918-1943
September 17, 1998-January 5, 1999
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1 Lobby

Exhibition Accompanied by Series of Eight Films from Golden Age of German Cinema

From the Archives: Some Ufa Weimar Classics
September 17-29, 1998
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1

Fifty posters for films produced or distributed by Ufa, Germany's legendary movie studio, will be on display in The Museum of Modern Art's Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1 Lobby starting September 17, 1998. Running through January 5, 1999, *Ufa Film Posters, 1918-1943* will feature rare and original works, many exhibited for the first time in the United States, created to promote films from Germany's golden age of moviemaking. In conjunction with the opening of the gallery exhibition, the Museum will also present *From the Archives: Some Ufa Weimar Classics*, an eight-film series that includes some of the studio's more celebrated productions, September 17-29, 1998.

Ufa (Universumfilm Aktien Gesellschaft), a consortium of film companies, was established in the waning days of World War I by order of the German High Command, but was privatized with the postwar establishment of the Weimar republic in 1918. Pursuing a program of aggressive expansion in Germany and throughout Europe, Ufa quickly became one of the greatest film companies in the world, with a large and spectacularly equipped studio in Babelsberg, just outside Berlin, and with foreign sales that globalized the market for German film. The studio produced films in a vast array of cinematic genres--from lavish historical epics and exotic dramas to crime thrillers and science-fiction spectacles--and, at its zenith, rivaled Hollywood in artistic prestige and commercial power. Ufa was home to a host of internationally famous actors, such as Pola Negri, Asta Nielsen, and Emil Jannings, and launched Marlene Dietrich as a star. Filmmakers like Fritz Lang, Ernst Lubitsch, and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau all made their careers at Babelsberg before coming to America.

All films released by Ufa were accompanied by elaborate advertising campaigns. Frequently, two posters were designed for a single film, and for large productions sometimes three graphic designs were commissioned. In Berlin and Vienna, the two German-speaking cinema metropolises, Ufa also printed exclusive premiere posters for each city's first showings. Today these posters are collectors' items, and it is not uncommon for only one print to have survived.

Culled from the collections of the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin and the Austrian National Library in Vienna, the rare prints displayed in *Ufa Film Posters, 1918-1943* include posters from films by major

directors. F. W. Murnau is represented by his masterpieces *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh*, 1924) and *Faust* (1926); Joe May by one of the more extravagant Ufa productions, *Asphalt* (*Temptation*, 1929); and Ernst Lubitsch by *Carmen* (*Gypsy Blood*, 1918), *Der Fall Rosentopf* (*The Rosentopf Case*, 1918), *Sumurun* (*One Arabian Night*, 1919), and *Madame Du Barry* (*Passion*, 1919). The exhibition also marks the first time that one venue will present all the posters from Ufa films by Fritz Lang: *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (*Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler/Dr. Mabuse: King of Crime*, 1922), *Die Nibelungen: Teil I: Siegfrieds Tod* (*Part I, Siegfried*, 1924), *Metropolis* (1927), *Spione* (*Spies*, 1928), and *Frau im Mond* (*By Rocket to the Moon/Girl in the Moon/Woman in the Moon*, 1929). In addition, *Ufa Film Posters, 1918-1943* features posters for early sound film classics such as Josef von Sternberg's *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, 1930) and sound film operettas such as Wilhelm Thiele's *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* (*The Three from the Gas Station*, 1931). A catalogue, featuring essays by German and Austrian archivists and scholars and full-color reproductions of some sixty-five Ufa film posters, will accompany the exhibition.

These works were designed by artists such as Robert L. Leonard, Theo Matejko, Josef Fenneker, Leopold Schmidt, Werner Graul, Heinz Schulz-Neudamm, Alfred Hermann, Boris Bilinsky, and Peter Pewas. Their posters, like the films they promoted, were heavily influenced by the contemporary styles of the 1920s: Expressionism, Art Deco, Constructivism, and New Objectivity. With the coming of sound and the onset of the worldwide depression at the end of the decade, however, a more conservative romantic realism became the dominant artistic mode, sometimes with a nationalist or racial emphasis. Again, the posters faithfully reflect these trends. With the consolidation of power by National Socialism and the establishment of the Third Reich, the studio itself was "renationalized" in the mid-1930s, and all aspects of its film productions became subject to direct governmental control.

The opening of the gallery exhibition will be accompanied by *From the Archives: Some Ufa Weimar Classics*. This two-week survey of eight Weimar-era films, all represented by posters in *Ufa Film Posters, 1918-1943*, showcases some of the studio's most ambitious and accomplished productions from its best-known filmmakers. The series opens with the German-language version of Sternberg's *Der blaue Engel*, with Marlene Dietrich's star-making performance as the seductive cabaret performer Lola Lola. *Some Ufa Weimar Classics* also features the first German film released in the United States after World War I, Lubitsch's *Madame Du Barry*, whose American success catapulted Lubitsch and actress Pola Negri to fame and made Ufa itself an international power. Other films in the series include Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* and *Faust*; May's *Heimkehr* (*Homecoming*, 1928); and three films by Lang, *Die Nibelungen: Teil I: Siegfrieds Tod*, *Metropolis*, and *Spione*. Most of the silent films will be screened with piano accompaniment by Stuart Oderman.

Ufa Film Posters, 1918-1943 and *From the Archives: Some Ufa Weimar Classics* are followed by two other exhibitions that spotlight German and Austrian cinema this fall. The Museum presents *G. W. Pabst*, a comprehensive retrospective of the surviving work of the enigmatic filmmaker, from October 5 to 31, and then hosts the twentieth anniversary of *Recent Films from Germany*, an annual survey of films from the Federal Republic of Germany, in November.

After its exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, *Ufa Film Posters, 1918-1943* will be on display at the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills, California from February 5 through April 25, 1999.

Ufa Film Posters, 1918-1943 is supported in part by the Austrian Cultural Institute, New York, and Goethe-Institut, New York. The exhibition was organized for the Museum by Mary Corliss, Assistant Curator, Department of Film and Video, in collaboration with Peter Mänz, Head of the Graphics Department, Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, and Christian Maryska, Curator, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. *From the Archives: Some Ufa Weimar Classics* was organized by Laurence Kardish, Curator, Department of Film and Video.

No. 58

[press office](#)

[menu](#)

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