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The Museum of Modern Art

A GROUNDBREAKING INTERNATIONAL SURVEY OF FORTY VAMPIRE FILMS MARKS THE CENTENARY OF BRAM STOKER'S

International Film Series Features Classic, Rare, and Offbeat Variations on Vampire Mythologies

CinemaDracula

April 17May 20, 1997

The vampire is a seminal icon around the world, present in one form or another in nearly every culture's folklore, literature, and, during the last one hundred years, film. On the occasion of the centenary of Bram Stoker's influential novel *Dracula*, whose dark Count has dominated our century, The Museum of Modern Art will present *CinemaDracula*, an international survey of forty films that draw on the novel and other vampire stories. The series, which opens April 17, features films from 14 different countries and is the most comprehensive retrospective of vampire films ever assembled. It concludes May 20.

At the heart of *CinemaDracula* are three classics of the horror genre that are also regarded as masterpieces of cinema: F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922), Carl Th. Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932), and Terence Fisher's *Horror of Dracula* (1958). The retrospective will present rare 35mm screenings of these films, including the New York premiere of the most complete extant version of *Nosferatu*, preserved with original color tints, on loan from the Munich Filmmuseum.

The series will also honor other unforgettable screen Draculas: Bela Lugosi, as the seductive continental in Tod Browning's 1931 *Dracula*; Klaus Kinski, in Werner Herzog's 1979 remake of *Nosferatu*; Frank Langella, in John Badham's 1979 adaptation of the Broadway play; and Gary Oldman, in Francis Ford Coppola's baroque 1992 interpretation.

"The Dracula retrospective will be enriched by its detours from familiar paths," adds Joshua Siegel, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Film and Video, who organized the series with Leonard Wolf, a leading authority on terror literature and film. "It will offer the wildly imaginative creations of Italian, French, British, Belgian, Danish, Spanish, Yugoslavian, Mexican, Japanese, Cuban, and Canadian filmmakers who have infused the vampire legend with their own national mythologies, cultural attitudes, and values. Like a phantom in the night, *Dracula* crosses borders by assuming indigenous forms."

This international survey confirms Wolf's observation that "vampires have appeared almost everywhere that men and women have bled." From the Philippines to India, Korea to Turkey, China to Greece, Malaysia to Belgium, the vampire is a haunting presence. Dracula films from Mexico are steeped in Mayan and Aztec lore, while those from Spain borrow motifs from Castilian folk tales. Vampires and black cats are important symbols of the feudal past in the spectacular kaidan (ghost story) films of

Japan, whereas the vampires of campy Italian giallo films play on firmly rooted cultural images of male machismo.

Like their international counterparts, independent American filmmakers have used the Dracula legend to unearth the libidinal compulsions lurking beneath mainstream society. Included in the series are William Crain's *Blacula* (1972), the first black horror movie; Bill Gunn's underappreciated *Ganja and Hess* (1973); Roger Corman alumna Katt Shea Rubin's *Dance of the Damned* (1988), about a world-weary stripper who strikes a bargain with a bloodsucker; George Romero's *Martin* (1977), about an odd teenager in a working class Pittsburgh neighborhood who engages in blood-drinking ecstasies; *Deafula* (1975), the first feature-length sign-language fiction film; and Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark* (1987) and Tony Scott's *The Hunger* (1983), cult films that merit a wider appreciation.

The Dracula legend has long been parodied in the movies. *CinemaDracula* will present the most successful of these comedies: *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948); Roman Polanski's *Dance of the Vampires* (1967) (the more complete British version, which was later re-edited and retitled *The Fearless Vampire Killers* for American distribution); *Betty Boop Meets Bela Lugosi* (1931); and animated films that include Bugs Bunny's *Transylvania 6-5000* (1963) and, from Cuba, Juan Padron's bawdy *Vampires in Havana* (1985).

The Museum thanks series coorganizer Leonard Wolf, whose most recent book is *Dracula: The Connoisseur's Guide* (Broadway Books: Doubleday Dell, 1997), and Ronald V. Borst/Hollywood Movie Posters for the image used in the series poster.

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