

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## The Museum of Modern Art

FOUR-MONTH SERIES AT MOMA EXPLORES THE HISTORY AND INFLUENCE OF HOME MOVIES

Program of Amateur and Professional Films and Videos, Including Animated Works, Documentaries, and Features, Examines the Depiction of Family Life and the Domestic Sphere on the Screen

### *Home Movies*

Gallery Installation, April 30-September 26, 2000

Third Floor

Screening Program, May 5-September 9, 2000

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2

From the earliest days of motion pictures, the movie camera has recorded scenes of everyday family life. Beginning with Louis Lumière's *Repas de bébé* (*Feeding the Baby*, 1895), amateur and professional filmmakers have used the medium to capture images from the private domain and display them in a more public context. Over the course of the last hundred-plus years, these movies document the ways in which the "roles" of father, mother, and child have changed, along with the changing status of the moving image itself. The Museum of Modern Art explores the development of this underappreciated genre and its many permutations in the series *Home Movies*, running Fridays and Saturdays from May 5 through September 9 in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2. The program consists of films and videos from MoMA's own collection, both typical, anonymous home movies, as well as animated, documentary, and feature films that focus on the domestic sphere.

*Home Movies* is presented in conjunction with *Modern Living 2*, a gallery exhibition devoted to domestic design in the post-World War II era. Integrated into this exhibition of furniture and design is a Swiss-manufactured 8mm Bolex projector (c. 1958) that will project onto a standing screen a film loop commissioned from a variety of artists who work with found footage. The loops will change every month; the first to be presented is Ken Jacobs's *Baby Advances*, based on a fragment of a film that depicts the quintessential home movie image of a child taking its first steps.

"Whether in the hands of amateurs or professionals, whether designed for private or public consumption, the defining components of a home movie seem to be covered by notions linked to the intimate sphere: immediacy, familiarity, authenticity, accessibility, and artlessness," note Jytte Jensen, Associate Curator, and Anne Morra, Assistant Curator, Department of Film and Video, who organized the exhibition. "The series will demonstrate the various ways these qualities have developed throughout the century, while also examining how these same qualities are being questioned, deconstructing an often static image of domestic tranquility and happiness."

Although home movies by professional filmmakers existed from the birth of the medium, it was the introduction of 16mm film stock and camera in 1923

that provided the amateur filmmaker with the technology to document various domestic events. Nevertheless, economic forces prohibited the wide consumption of this gauge of film, and its use was generally confined to the affluent. Typically these home movies are not the filmic records of the average family, but rather they illustrate the "private" lives of very public people or the celebrated friends of the moviemaker. From the early 1920s, home movie documents of the socialite and celebrity proliferated throughout the world. MoMA's own collection, in addition to films by Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford and by Mrs. Gilbert W. Chapman, for example, also includes a small collection of 16mm prints documenting the leisure activities and travels of pioneer filmmaker D. W. Griffith and his wife Evelyn.

In 1932, 8mm film and cameras were introduced into the nonprofessional filmmaking market. Affordable, lightweight cameras, reliable film stock and workhorse projectors all permitted the amateur filmmaker of modest economic means to realize his/her auteurist potential. With the advent of the newly formulated small-gauge film now in the hands of pure amateurs, the obvious subject of the lens would be turned inward to focus on a more closed and private environment.

The spread of movie technology beyond those already professionally familiar with the medium had marked stylistic ramifications. Generally speaking, the home movie came to be recognized by the amateurish quality of the camerawork. It was often unedited, spontaneous, and unrehearsed, technically devoid of deliberate lighting and naively self-conscious. Especially following World War II, the home movie functioned as an equalizing force, cutting across economic, social, and cultural boundaries as family units declared their uniqueness and celebrated their achievements, while the action of filming reinforced a common goal of personal documentation.

Among the highlights of *Home Movies* are *Feeding the Baby* and the Biograph company's *Mr. Kenneth Marvin's Wedding* (1914), two of the earliest examples of the genre; the home movies of married movie stars Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford (c. 1929); the amateur films of Mrs. Chapman, who recorded her friends in the European art world - among them Colette, Gertrude Stein, Constantin Brancusi, and Marcel Duchamp - from 1934 to 1943; *Something Strong Within* (Robert A. Nakamura, 1994), a compilation of home movies shot by Japanese Americans interned in camps on the West Coast during World War II; Andy Warhol's *Afternoon* (1966), which documents a summer afternoon at Edie Sedgwick's apartment, and a selection of *Screen Tests* (1963-67) of Factory regulars and visitors; Martin Scorsese's *ItalianAmerican* (1974), a wry documentary profiling the director's parents and the neighborhood in Little Italy where he grew up; Ernie Gehr's *For Daniel* (1996), which documents the birth and growth of Gehr's son up to the age of four; Julia Loktev's *Moment of Impact* (1997), an unblinking look at her father's physical deterioration following a car accident; Joseph Lovett's *The Accident* (1998), which examines the conflicting memories of a group of siblings about their deceased parents; and *My Neighbors the Yamadas* (Isao Takahata, 1999), an animated Japanese feature about a not-so-typical family next door.

#### **SPONSORSHIP**

This exhibition is made possible by Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro. *Making Choices* is part of MoMA2000, which is made possible by The Starr Foundation. Generous support is provided by Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro in memory of Louise Reinhardt Smith. The Museum gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with gifts from Lily Auchincloss, Agnes Gund and

Daniel Shapiro, and Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder. Additional funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley, Mrs. Melville Wakeman Hall, and The Contemporary Arts Council and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art. Education programs accompanying MoMA2000 are made possible by Paribas. The publication *Making Choices: 1929, 1939, 1948, 1955* is made possible by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. The interactive environment of *Making Choices* is supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Web/kiosk content management software is provided by SohoNet.

No. 32

[press office](#)

[menu](#)

©1998 The Museum of Modern Art, New York