

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA CONSIDERS CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD MOVIE POSTERS WITH *WHAT PRICE HOLLYWOOD* GALLERY EXHIBITION AND ACCOMPANYING FILM SERIES

A Survey of Gender Representation, Sexual Identity, and Feminism in Movie Marketing Posters from 1925 to 1977

What Price Hollywood

March 30–June 15, 2018

The Roy and Niuta Titus and Morita Galleries

NEW YORK, March 4, 2019—The Museum of Modern Art announces *What Price Hollywood*, an exhibition exploring the gender roles and relationships displayed in studio-era movie posters, on view from April 8 through June 16, 2019. Taking inspiration from George Cukor’s 1932 film of the same name, the exhibition and an accompanying film series demonstrate how masculine and feminine stereotypes were employed in the marketing of classical-era films. Featuring some 138 posters and lobby cards from collector Ira Resnick and the Museum’s own collection, dating from the silent cinema era through the 1970s, the exhibition highlights ways in which graphic and photographic representation on film posters shaped the moviegoing public’s understanding of romance and sex. *What Price Hollywood* is organized by Ron Magliozzi, Curator, and Brittany Shaw, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Film.

Beyond the nostalgia for cinema history that traditionally frames today’s consideration of classical Hollywood films, the exhibition also explores what critic Parker Tyler once described as its “monstrous and pernicious” influence on society and culture. Looking at the different ways gender roles and behavior are depicted in this body of work has rarely seemed more relevant. Ron Magliozzi explains, “The exhibition is motivated by a desire to look differently at a familiar form of motion picture ephemera in a way that ignites fresh interest in it and the performers whose work it represents, focusing attention of how this old-school entertainment medium still serves to shape cultural attitudes and social behavior today.”

The exhibition examines how the studios use body language to place male and female performers in characteristically defined couplings; how the differing gaze of some critical observers served to challenge intended meanings; and how certain genres allowed for subversive suggestions of female agency and queer perspectives to be imbedded in poster art. One section provides an analysis of the posters through the lenses of queer case studies, allowing alternative viewings of heterosexual pairings in classic Hollywood films.

The stars of silent cinema are also examined, with images of Mary Pickford and Rudolph Valentino exemplifying how suggestions of gender defiance served in the marketing of films as early as the silent period. Pickford’s on-screen persona as an indomitable heroine and off-

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screen reputation as a pioneering Hollywood businesswoman are convincingly reflected for her fans in the militant feminist pose seen in a poster for *Johanna Enlists*, while Valentino's fashionably narcissistic appearance and sexually active image on screen in films such as *Monsieur Beaucaire* led to his becoming one of the country's earliest and most public victims of queerbaiting.

What Price Hollywood also takes a closer look at the fetishized nature of American film genres like the Western and biker movies, with their catalogs of costumes, props, and activities that simultaneously bolster notions of manhood and exploit alternative erotic subtexts. Stars of these genres, like Gary Cooper, Barbara Stanwyck, Marlon Brando, and James Dean, aided by enlightened directors like Nicholas Ray, explored the complexities of their gendered personas on screen and in promotional materials for films such as *Along Came Jones*, *Cattle Queen of Montana*, *The Wild One*, and *Rebel Without a Cause*.

The lack of black representation on classic Hollywood film posters—a reflection of the significant absence of black performers in leading roles under the studio system—is also explored in the exhibition. Historically, African American entertainers began touring overseas in the late 1890s, in an effort to escape racism in the United States and expand their employment opportunities. *What Price Hollywood* includes film posters for *Papitou (Siren of the Tropics)*, starring Josephine Baker in her first film, and Bill Gunn's *Ganja & Hess*, among the most remarkable works to come from a black filmmaker working outside the Hollywood system in the 1970s.

What Price Hollywood is the 35th film poster exhibition to be held in the Museum's theater galleries since 1960. Past installations have featured works representing studios, designers and directors, international cinema, historical periods, and race.

In conjunction with the gallery exhibition, the accompanying film series takes a focused look back at the nature of sexual politics on screen. During the studio system's "golden age," empowered star turns by Barbara Stanwyck, Louise Brooks, Bette Davis, and Gloria Grahame often simultaneously upheld gender norms and hinted at alternative models of sexual identity. While later players, like Peggy Cummins in *Gun Crazy*, Marlene Clark and Duane Jones in *Ganja & Hess*, or Divine in *Female Trouble*, were given license to subvert gender limitations altogether.

SPONSORSHIP:

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Special thanks to Ira M. Resnick for lending works from his collection for this exhibition.

FILM SERIES:

What Price Hollywood

April 8–20

This series presents 20 films that highlight themes from the *What Price Hollywood* gallery exhibition, taking a closer look at sexual identity and erotic imagery on screen. Selections range from the 1920s—with G. W. Pabst’s *Diary of a Lost Girl* (1929), Clarence Brown’s *A Free Soul* (1931), and George Cukor’s *What Price Hollywood?* (1932)—on through the 1970s, with Bill Gunn’s *Ganja & Hess* (1973) and John Waters’s *Female Trouble* (1974).

For more details, please see the accompanying screening schedule or visit moma.org/film.

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Downloadable high-resolution press images are available at moma.org/press.

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, moma.org. Hours: Sunday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 10:30 a.m.–9:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00–9:00 p.m. moma.org: No service charge for tickets ordered on moma.org. Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current ID. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA membership within 30 days.