

Prospectus for Curated Series

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Introduction

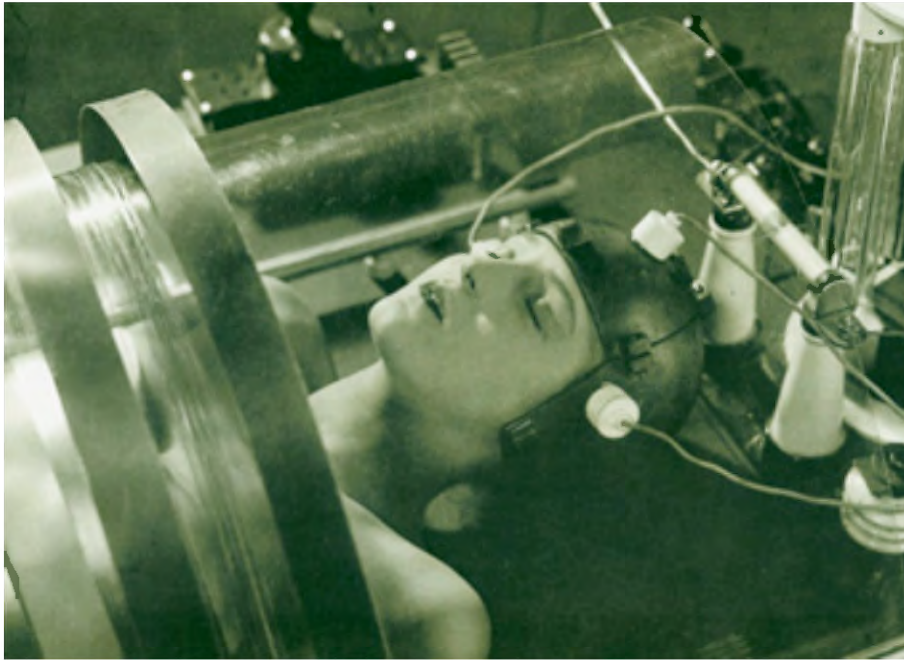
In cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City, I propose a multimedia cinematic exhibition that would consist of five sessions of approximately two hours each. Designed for the general public, the curated program would be entitled “Cinema Ex Machina: Movies and Machines Between the Two World Wars.” The movies to be shown were all released between 1927 and 1936, and they deal with varying relationships between machines and humanity as well as the different cinematic representations of those relationships. The sessions, in order, are titled “Machine Sexuality?,” “Machine Art,” “Machines of the Future,” “The Individual Vs. the Machine,” and “The World Vs. the Machine.”

The films to be screened are, in succession: Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927); Dziga Vertov’s *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929) with Lloyd Bacon’s *42nd Street* (1934); David Butler’s *Just Imagine* (1930); Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times* (1936); and Cameron Menzies’s *Things To Come* (1936).

MOMA will provide all of the films, with the exception of *42nd Street*. Ron Magliozzi, a curator in MOMA's Department of Film, reports that 35mm screening copies of all of the other films are available.

To enhance the viewing experience, I have identified experts to speak about each of the session’s topics at the end of each screening.

Session I: Machine Sexuality?



Film still from *Metropolis* (Google Images)

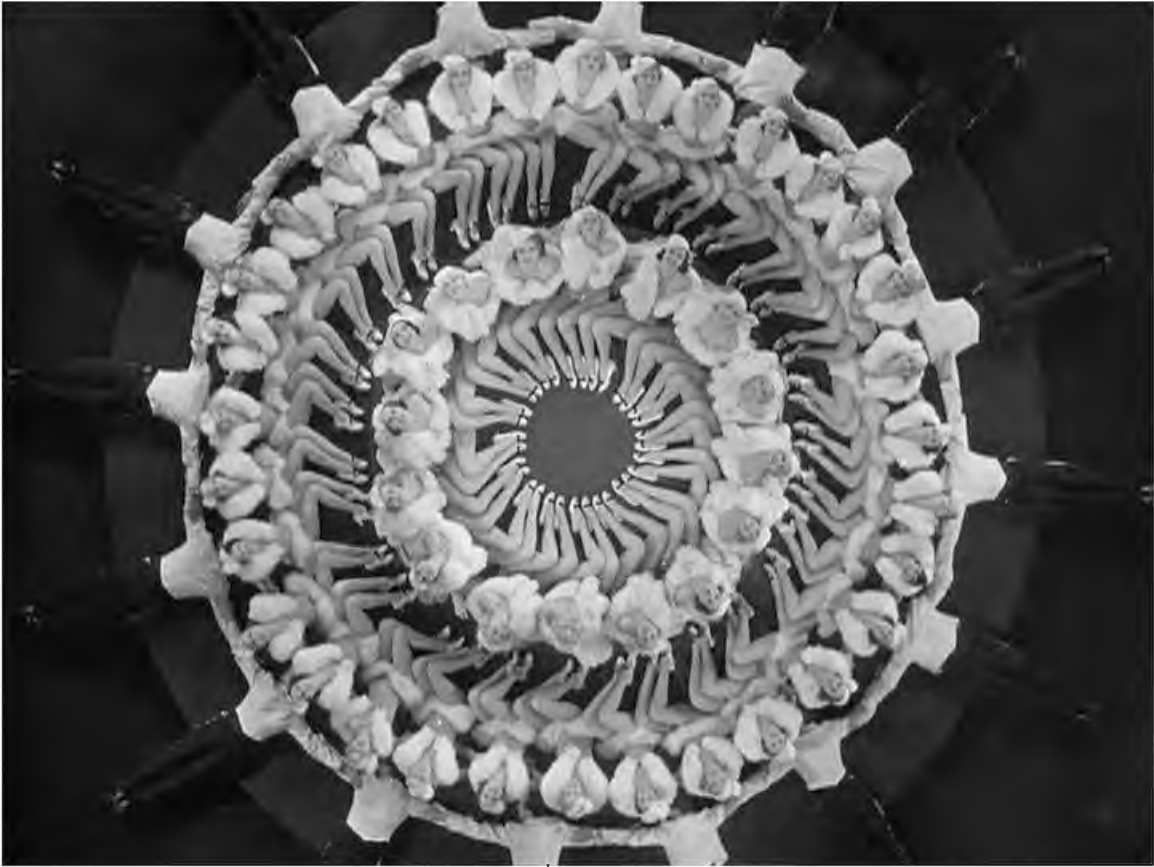
Metropolis, the first film in the exhibition, is noted for its dramatic set designs, which Lang is known to have based on the architecture of New York City. But what may not be as well known is that *Metropolis* received only lukewarm reviews when it was first released. A March 1927 issue of the film trade magazine *Variety* described *Metropolis* as a “weird story...without any degree of unusual imagination and oft times monotonous.”

The session will conclude with talks by Andreas Huyssen, the Villard Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Columbia, and R.L. Rutsky, an Assistant Professor in the Cinema Department at San Francisco State University. Both speakers will discuss the staying power of *Metropolis* 80 years later, as well as reference their own work on the subject of machine sexuality in the film.

Dr. Huyssen, whose article “The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*” appeared in the Autumn 1981/Winter 1982 issue of *New German Critique*, suggests that “the doubling of Maria, the use of religious symbolism, the embodiment of technology in a woman-robot and Freder’s complex relationship to women and machines, sexuality and technology...give us a key to the film’s social and ideological imaginary.”

Rutsky’s paper, “The Meditation of Technology and Gender: *Metropolis*, *Nazism*, *Modernism*,” references the Huyssen work. Published in the Autumn 1993 issue of *New German Critique*, Rutsky suggests that “the robot is represented as sexuality or physicality that has been ‘cut off’ from the organic body...[and] presented as fetishistic, masturbatory and destructive.”

Session II: Machine Art

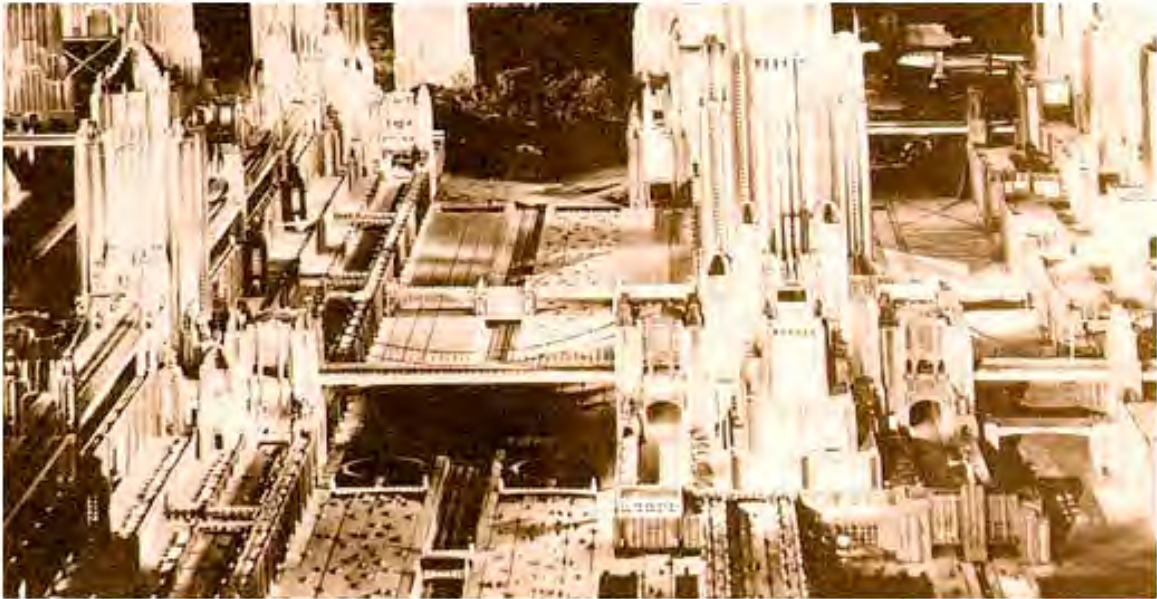


Film still from *42nd Street* (Google Images)

The second-session films, *42nd Street* and *Man With A Movie Camera*, are a diverse pair. *42nd Street*, along with *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933), made so much money for Warner Brothers that the studio raced to continue the series with *Footlight Parade* (1933). By contrast, the original sound version of *Man With A Movie Camera* was lost until the mid-1990's, when Yuri Tsivian, Professor in Art History and Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago, published Vertov's notes on the film's musical accompaniment. The film was originally designed to be shown with brief pauses between each reel.

Film Comment contributor Nicole Armour, guest speaker for the second session, will present her paper, “The Machine Art of Dziga Vertov and Busby Berkeley,” which appeared in *Images*, the online film journal. Armour draws intriguing connections between Vertov and Berkeley. *Man With a Movie Camera*, she says, “continuously refers to its own machinations and includes depictions of the transit lines and assembly lines” while Berkeley “deferred to the majesty of the machine through song and dance.”

Session III: The Machine Age



Film still from *Just Imagine* - Google Images

Many of the sets for *Just Imagine*, the third-session film, would be recycled for the popular Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers serials of the late 1930's and early 1940s. Unfortunately, *Just Imagine* has never been released on DVD. The speaker, Professor J.P. Telotte of the School of Literature at the Georgia Institute of Technology, taught a course on "Film and Technology: The Machine Age" and wrote a book on the subject that he will be referencing in his talk. In his book, *A Distant Technology: Science Fiction Film and the Machine Age* (Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1999), Dr. Telotte says *Just Imagine* invited the American audience of 1930—who tended to be apprehensive about the Machine Age (which he designates as having taken place, roughly, during the two decades between the World Wars)—to envision this highly technological future as “not being so far removed from the present or the past.”

Session IV: The Individual Vs. The Machine



Film still from *Modern Times* (Google Images)

The fourth-session film, *Modern Times*, marked the last screen appearance of Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp. Originally, Chaplin had planned a more sentimental ending for the film that did not result in a lasting reunion with the Gamine. And although this ending was filmed, it was eventually abandoned in favor of the more hopeful one, with the couple heading into the sunset together.

Joan Mellen is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Temple University in Philadelphia and the author of a new book (2006) on the film *Modern Times* for the

British Film Institute's Film Classics Series. The book chronicles Charlie Chaplin's creation of his signature character, The Little Tramp, as well as Chaplin's own journey toward—and during—the filming of *Modern Times*. Mellen describes *Modern Times* as “unique for its naturalistic and concrete images of an America under economic siege” and draws connections between *Modern Times* and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Mellen would, with her talk, close the fourth session of the exhibition.

Session V: The World Vs. The Machine



Film still from *Things To Come* (Google Images)

The fifth-session film, *Things To Come*, is based on H.G. Wells book *The Shape of Things To Come*, and was, for the most part, favorably reviewed in *Variety*. The review said *Things To Come* “surpasses in scope anything which has come from Hollywood” and “is to be commended as an experiment successful in every respect except emotionally.”

Sir Christopher Frayling, Chairman of the Arts Council of England, is perhaps the most prestigious of all of the speakers. In 1995, he published the book *Things To Come* for the British Film Institute’s Film Classics Series. In this book, he highlights Wells’ desire for *Things To Come* to represent the future as a utopia as opposed to the dystopia of Lang’s *Metropolis*. Sir Frayling also discusses the symbolic characters in the film, the emphases placed on the “Space Gun debate,” the “debate about gender roles in the future and Wells’ own treatment of the film which “waxed lyrical about the technology of things to come and the ‘general impression’ it was intended to create.”

Ephemera



Original poster from the MOMA Archive:
Architecture and Design Collection

The exhibition would begin outside the MOMA screening room with a revolving series of projected images of a variety of poster advertisements for all of the films screened in the exhibition. Additional information about the posters will be mounted on the adjacent wall. The use of projected digital images in lieu of the actual posters is both cost effective and easy to manage. After consulting with Magliozzi, the curator, he confirmed that the museum had many digital images of posters and lobby cards that could be projected for the exhibition.

Budget

The exhibitions would take place on Fridays evening at 7 pm for five weeks between August 31 and September 28, 2007. In compiling the figures for this budget, I took into consideration the varying locations the speakers would be coming from and the number of days each person would have to spend in New York. This helped determine travel and lodging expenses while the relative status of the individuals determined their honoraria and per diem amounts.

Professor Andreas Huyssen lives in New York, so we only need to provide an appropriate honorarium.

Professor Mellen, of Temple University, lives in Philadelphia and will travel via the Amtrak Acela train to New York on the same day (September 21) as the event and will stay over one night.

Armour, Telotte, and Rutsky are all coming from destinations that will require them to stay two nights in New York, and Frayling will require a three-night stay. Because of Frayling's status, he will also receive the highest honorarium and per diem.

For lodging I chose a conveniently located bed and breakfast, the Broadway Inn at 264 West 46th, between Seventh and Eighth avenues, an easy walking distance from MOMA. Single rooms ranges from \$139 to \$159 per night.

Travel expenses for Telotte, Armour, and Rutsky are based on rates offered by American Airlines purchased in advance for the specific dates (Rutsky on August 31, Armour on September 7, and Telotte on September 14) of their sessions. Frayling's travel figure is based on the rate offered by the all-business-class British airline Silverjet,

for the date (September 28) of his session. The budget for the six speakers comes to approximately \$8,570, without hotel taxes computed.

Travel

Nicole Armour: on American Airlines	Christopher Frayling: on Silverjet	Andreas Huysen	Joan Mellen: on Amtrak	R.L. Rutsky: on American Airlines	J.P. Telotte: on American Airlines
\$434.32	\$ 918.819	N/A	\$101.00	\$328.00	\$188.00

Lodging at Broadway Inn (per night, taxes not included)

Nicole Armour	Christopher Frayling	Andreas Huysen	Joan Mellen	R.L. Rutsky	J.P. Telotte
\$139.00	\$159.00	N/A	\$139.00	\$139.00	\$139.00

Honoraria

Nicole Armour	Christopher Frayling	Andreas Huysen	Joan Mellen	R.L. Rutsky	J.P. Telotte
\$350	\$1,000	\$700	\$500	\$250	\$350

Per Diem (for food, local travel each day)

Nicole Armour	Christopher Frayling	Andreas Huysen	Joan Mellen	R.L. Rutsky	J.P. Telotte
\$100.00	\$200.00	N/A	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00

In terms of items for the exhibition, *42nd Street* would be the only film that would have to be located elsewhere but would cost nothing. Warner Brothers, Mr. Magliozzi confirmed, does not charge the MOMA to borrow film prints. Because the digitized images would also be provided by MOMA, they too would not have to be factored into the budget.

Filmography

42nd Street (1933, sound, 89 mins., b&w, 16mm)

Prod. Co: Warner Bros.

Director : Lloyd Bacon

Producer: Darryl F. Zanuck

Writer: Rian James, James Seymour, Bradford Ropes (novel)

Cinematography: Sol Polito

Choreographer: Busby Berkeley

Editor: Thomas Pratt, Frank Ware

35mm print from the Warner Bros. Film Archive

Julian Marsh, a successful, yet ailing Broadway director who was wiped out in the stock market crash returns for one final show. But, at the last minute, he is forced to cast a novice in the lead role when his leading lady is injured.

Just Imagine (1930, sound, 109 mins., b&w, 35mm)

Prod. Co: Fox Film Corp.

Director : David Butler

Story: B.G. Desylva, Lew Brown , Ray Henderson

Director of Photography: Ernest Palmer

Music Director: Arthur Kay

Dance Director: Seymour Felix

Editor: Irene Morra

35mm print from MOMA Film Archive

A science fiction musical set in the 1980s in New York where numbers have replaced names. Scientists revive a man who had been struck by lightning in 1930 and rename him "Single O." He is befriended by J-21, who is unable to marry the girl he loves because he is not considered important—that is, until he is chosen for a four-month expedition to Mars.

Man With A Movie Camera (1929, sound, 68 mins., b&w, 16mm)

Prod. Co: VUFKU.

Director : Dziga Vertov

Writer: Dziga Vertov

Camera: Dziga Vertov

35mm print from MOMA Film Archive

This film is actually two documentaries in one. Through revolutionary rapid editing, Dziga Vertov documents both a day in the life of the people of the Soviet Union, as well as the making of the actual film itself.

Metropolis (1927, sound, 95 mins., b&w, 16mm)

Prod. Co: Universum Film (UFA).

Director : Fritz Lang

Writers: Thea von Harbou, Fritz Lang

Producer: Erich Pommer

Cinematography: Karl Freund, Gunther Rittau, Walter Ruttmann

35mm print from MOMA Film Archive

Set in the year 2026, Metropolis is a city divided up into the planners, who live in luxury above ground, and the workers, who live in squalor below the city. But when a woman takes up the cause of the workers, the planners set about to destroy her.

Modern Times (1936, sound, 83 mins., b&w, 16mm)

Prod. Co: Charles Chaplin Film Corp.

Director : Charles Chaplin

Writer: Charles Chaplin

Director of Photography: Rollie Totheroh, Ira Morgan

Editor: Charles Chaplin

35mm print from MOMA Film Archive

Man against machine, Chaplin's Little Tramp is first seen trying to keep up with a production line when he is selected for an experiment with an automatic feeding machine. The experiment results in Tramp's breakdown and he is sent to a mental hospital. After his release, mistaken identity lands him in jail. After foiling a jailbreak, the Tramp is—against his will—released yet again. Many misadventures ensue before our Tramp can walk into the sunset one last time.

Things To Come (1936, sound, 109 mins., b&w, 16mm)

Prod. Co: London Film Productions, Ltd.

Director : William Cameron Menzies

Producer: Alexander Korda

Photography: George Perinal

Editor: Frances Lyon

35mm print from MOMA Film Archive

Years of endless war and plague have wiped out most of the world's population when a strange aircraft lands and its pilot encourages the rebuilding of the civilization. Finally, in 2035, on the eve of the first flight to the moon, there's an uprising against technological progress—because it is seen as the cause of all of humankind's past sufferings.