

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE PRESENTS 19-FILM SERIES  
DEVOTED TO CINEMATOGRAPHER JAMES WONG HOWE, THE  
ILLUSTRIOS TECHNICIAN OF GOLDEN AGE HOLLYWOOD AND  
BEYOND**

May 13–June 26, 2022



Astoria, New York, April 21, 2022 — Museum of the Moving Image presents **How It's Done: The Cinema of James Wong Howe**, a 19-film screening series devoted to the cinematographer whose skill and innovative ideas shaped the look of classic Hollywood films and beyond in a career that spanned more than 50 years. The series opens May 13 with one of the two films for which Wong Howe won an Academy Award: *Hud* (1963), directed by Martin Ritt and starring Paul Newman. It continues through June 26 with films from each of the decades in which he worked, ranging from the silent era—*Peter Pan* (1924) and *Mantrap* (1926)—through his years at Warner Bros., his work as a freelancer, and to his final film, *Funny Lady* (1975), starring Barbra Streisand. The series also includes a rare screening of the independent film he directed, *Go Man Go* (1954), a New York-shot origin story about the Harlem Globetrotters, which featured Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, and real-life members of the Globetrotters. When possible, the selections will be presented on 35mm film, including archival prints.

*How It's Done: The Cinema of James Wong Howe* coincides with Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May. Full schedule and tickets are available online at [movingimage.us/james-wong-howe](http://movingimage.us/james-wong-howe).

Born in China at the dawn of the 20th century and arriving in the United States as a young child, James Wong Howe would come of age within and alongside Hollywood, serving as one of the industry's major stylistic and technical innovators from the early 1920s through the mid-1970s. One of the few Chinese immigrants in the nascent industry, Wong Howe hustled, labored, and apprenticed his way to becoming a studio contract cameraman and cinematographer in the early part of his career, taking on assignments for luminaries such as Allan Dwan, Victor Fleming, and Howard Hawks, and developing particular affinities with William K. Howard and John Cromwell. Wong Howe eventually became a highly sought-after freelancer, working on a string of late-career hits such as *Picnic* (1955), *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957), *The Rose Tattoo* (1955), and *Hud* (taking home Oscars for the latter two).

Though films such as *Seconds* (1966) and *Bell, Book and Candle* (1958) allowed him unforgettable stylistic flourishes, Wong Howe's approach was always one of practical, screenplay-dictated solutions to dramatic problems. He was among the first to utilize deep focus, tracking shots, crane shots, and dolly shots, but his innovations never called attention to themselves, lest the images distract from the story rather than help it come to life.

"Discovering or revisiting the work of James Wong Howe is to encounter one exquisite choice after another—he always seemed to know just how to light a set, where to place the camera, and when to move it," said Curator of Film Eric Hynes. "Movies are an amalgam of choices, and Wong Howe always, despite a changing industry and society and a rotating group of collaborators, made the right ones."

#### 'HOW IT'S DONE: THE CINEMA OF JAMES WONG HOWE,' MAY 13–JUNE 26, 2022

All screenings take place in the Sumner M. Redstone Theater or the Bartos Screening Room at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Ave, Astoria, NY, 11106. Advance tickets are available online at [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us).

#### ***Hud***

Friday, May 13, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 15, 6:00 p.m.

Dir. Martin Ritt. 1963, 112 mins. 35mm. With Paul Newman, Patricia Neal, Melvyn Douglas. Working with Martin Ritt, one of his favorite directors (*Paris Blues; The Long, Hot Summer*), Newman plays a hell-raising cowboy with a pink Cadillac who doesn't get along with his moralistic rancher father (Douglas). Patricia Neal, as the housekeeper whose beauty tempts Hud even as she refuses his ungentlemanly advances, Douglas, and cinematographer James Wong Howe all won Oscars for their work on the film, which remains perhaps Newman's greatest and most psychologically complex movie of the 1960s.

#### ***Mantrap***

Saturday, May 14, 1:00 p.m.

Friday, May 27, 2:30 p.m.

**With live accompaniment by Makia Matsumura on Saturday, May 14, 1:00 p.m.**

Dir. Victor Fleming. 1926, 86 mins. Archival 35mm print courtesy of the Library of Congress. With Clara Bow, Percy Marmont, Ernest Torrence, Ford Sterling, Eugene Pallette. Fleming's jazzy, vivacious western parody follows a Minneapolis manicurist (21-year-old Bow in her breakout performance) as she negotiates the competing affections of her burly trader husband (Torrence) and an effete New York divorce lawyer (Marmont) amid the picturesque wilderness of central Canada. Shot on location by James Wong Howe with a double eye for large-scale scenic beauty and discreet comic detail, the film would become one of Bow's most beloved pictures and her own personal favorite.

### ***The Thin Man***

Saturday, May 14, 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 15, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. W.S. Van Dyke. 1934, 91 mins. 35mm. With William Powell, Myrna Loy, Maureen O'Sullivan, Nat Pendleton, Minna Gombell. Dashiell Hammett's hit novel—about retired private detective Nick, reluctantly pulled back into service, with the help of his keenly perceptive wife, Nora—was adapted into *the* comic mystery of 1930s Hollywood, kicking off a successful movie franchise to boot. Wittily adapted to the screen by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, this first and best of the series—a Best Picture Oscar nominee in 1934—introduced the world to the martini-dry chemistry of Powell and Loy, whose evocation of Hammett's sleuthing couple (rumored to have been based on Dash's relationship with Lillian Hellman) is one of the joys of golden-age American cinema. In one of his biggest early sound films, James Wong Howe gives everything an illustrious sheen of sophistication and visual sparkle.

### ***The Prisoner of Zenda***

Friday, May 20, 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 21, 3:00 p.m.

Dir. John Cromwell. 1937, 101 mins. 35mm. With Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. This David O. Selznick production of a popular late 19th-century novel is a buoyant, ingenious, thoroughly entertaining affair, and one of James Wong Howe's proudest achievements. Colman plays English gentleman Major Rassendyll, who takes a fishing trip to an unnamed central European country where he encounters a soon-to-be king with whom he bears a striking resemblance, Rudolf V (also Colman). A dastardly rival to the throne necessitates that Rassendyll impersonate Rudolf, which only leads to more drama when the former falls for the latter's fiancée, while a dashing saboteur (megawatt star Fairbanks Jr.) tries to play everyone against one another. Working alongside legendary art director William Cameron Menzies, Wong Howe devised ambitious tracking shots, ceiling-suspended shots, fluid transitions from interior to exterior, and in-camera split-screen magic to allow the perfectly game Colman to interact with himself.

### ***After Tomorrow***

Saturday, May 21, 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 22, 1:00 p.m.

Dir. Frank Borzage. 1932, 79 mins. 35mm print courtesy of the UCLA Film & TV Archive. With Charles Farrell, Marian Nixon, Mina Gombell, Josephine Hull, William Collier, Sr. One of six collaborations between director Borzage and ace screenwriter Sonya Levien, *After Tomorrow* united them with James Wong Howe, whose photography brings a sense of moody, stylized drama to this pre-Code, depression-addled love story. Farrell and Nixon play giddily engaged lovebirds grounded by money woes and meddlesome mothers. Just as their relationship endures thanks to faith in a

better future, Wong Howe's work is constantly looking ahead to the next several decades of moviemaking: every shot and scene of the film seems motivated by innovation—where to place the camera, when to move it, how to evoke big city life and psychological interiority.

### ***Hangmen Also Die!***

Saturday, May 28, 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 29, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. Fritz Lang. 1943, 134 mins. Restored DCP. With Hans Heinrich von Twardowski, Brian Donlevy, Walter Brennan, Alexander Granach, Anna Lee, Gene Lockhart, Dennis O'Keefe. A riveting and twisty thriller set in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, Lang's *Hangmen Also Die!* is loosely based on the real-life assassination of Reinhard Heydrich—"The Hangman of Prague"—and adapted from a story by Bertolt Brecht. After the killing, the assassin, a doctor in the resistance played by Donlevy, finds help from a young woman (Anna Lee), whose act of kindness comes to envelop her whole family. Meanwhile, the Gestapo tighten their grip on a terrorized city. Through expressive use of shadows, James Wong Howe's cinematography captures the city's claustrophobia, with some astonishingly suggestive references to off-screen torture. While the film considers the moral dilemma of sacrificing innocents during wartime, Lang's film is a powerful paean to the resistance.

### ***The Hard Way***

Friday, May 27, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 29, 1:00 p.m.

Dir. Vincent Sherman. 1943, 109 mins. Archival 35mm courtesy of the UCLA Film & TV Archive. With Ida Lupino, Dennis Morgan, Joan Leslie. Sherman's gritty musical melodrama stars Ida Lupino as Helen, a woman hell-bent on escaping poverty by pushing her sister (Leslie) into marriage with a showman (Morgan) and stage stardom. Though they find success and wealth, things unravel as Helen's ambitions take their toll. Lupino was awarded Best Actress by the New York Film Critics Circle for her hardboiled performance, which James Wong Howe supports with moodier images than are normally found in backstage dramas.

### ***Go Man Go***

Saturday, May 28, 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 5, 12:30 p.m.

Dir. James Wong Howe. 1954, 82 mins. Archival 16mm print courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. With Dane Clark, Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Patricia Breslin, and the Harlem Globetrotters. Wong Howe's sole directorial feature is a rousing, scrappy production that dramatizes the formation of the beloved basketball entertainment troupe the Harlem Globetrotters. Shot in New York, with actual Globetrotters game-play captured at Madison Square Garden, the film features a young Ruby Dee and, in one of his earliest roles, Sidney Poitier as charismatic center Inman Jackson.

### ***Pursued***

Friday, June 3, 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 4, 3:15 p.m.

Dir. Raoul Walsh. 1947, 101 mins. Archival 35mm print courtesy of the UCLA Film & TV Archive. With Teresa Wright, Robert Mitchum, Judith Anderson, Dean Jagger, Alan Hale Sr., Harry Carey Jr. In this masterful psychological western, Robert Mitchum stars as the doomed Jeb Rand, a soldier-turned-gambler haunted by a repressed trauma and flashing visions of shiny spurs. As a

child, Jeb was adopted by Mrs. Callum (the great Judith Anderson) and told not to ask about his past; he loves his stepsister (Teresa Wright), and is vexed by the disdain of his stepbrother. Director Raoul Walsh and cinematographer James Wong Howe fill the open landscape of the Southwest with an oppressive dread, while the shadowy interiors hint at the domestic disarray at the heart of the drama. Wong Howe's low-key lighting and deep-focus interiors transplant the look and feel of film noir to the western.

### ***Kings Row***

Saturday, June 4, 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 5, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. Sam Wood. 1942, 127 mins. 35mm. With Ann Sheridan, Robert Cummings, Ronald Reagan. Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture, this haunting, elegiac melodrama set in a fictitious Midwestern town was the film that made Ronald Reagan a movie star. He gives a fine performance as Drake McHugh, a rich heir-turned-amputee who loses his fortune to embezzlement. "Where's the rest of me?" became Reagan's signature line and the title of his first autobiography. Seen as overly brooding and melancholy at the time of its release, *Kings Row* is one of Wood's best films, with atmospheric, Oscar-nominated cinematography by James Wong Howe.

### ***They Made Me a Criminal***

Saturday, June 4, 5:00 p.m.

Dir. Busby Berkeley. 1939, 92 mins. Archival 35mm. With John Garfield, Claude Rains, Ann Sheridan, Gloria Dickson, Ward Bond, and the Dead End Kids. A remake of Archie Mayo's 1933 pre-Code *The Life of Jimmy Dolan*, this Warner Bros. crime film features Garfield, in his first top billed role, as a New York boxer who goes on the lam to rural Arizona after being wrongly accused of murder. There he hides out on a work farm with a young woman (Dickson) overseeing the reformation of a rowdy group of juvenile cases (the Dead End Kids fresh off *Angels with Dirty Faces*). The unlikely pair of Wong Howe and Berkeley manage the kaleidoscopic blend of genre elements with aplomb, as proto-noir shades into depression-era social picture, before blossoming into bucolic romantic comedy.

### ***Transatlantic***

Saturday, June 11, 1:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 18, 3:15 p.m.

Dir. William K. Howard. 1931, 78 mins. Archival 35mm. With Edmund Lowe, Greta Nissen, Myrna Loy, John Halliday, Jean Hersholt. James Wong Howe paired for the first time with frequent collaborator Howard for this ensemble dramatic thriller set entirely on a transatlantic ocean-liner where the high seas aren't nearly as dangerous as the passengers, conspiring and interfighting over fortunes made and lost. *Transatlantic* features jaw-dropping wide angles and deep focus lensing a full decade before *Citizen Kane*. "The art director was Gordon Wiles and we argued constantly," Wong Howe told historian Alain Silver. "I wanted to shoot with a wide-angle lens and see the ceilings and to carry the focus back as far as I could. Mr. Howard sided with me and Wiles had to change a lot and went over his budget. But he was happy in the end because he won an Oscar for art direction." Restored by The Museum of Modern Art and The Film Foundation with funding provided by The George Lucas Family Foundation.

### ***The Power and the Glory***

Saturday, June 11, 3:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 18, 4:45 p.m.

Dir. William K. Howard. 1933, 76 mins. Archival 35mm print courtesy of the UCLA Film & TV Archive. With Spencer Tracy, Colleen Moore, Ralph Morgan. This early sound gem provided a young Spencer Tracy with a meaty, larger-than-life showcase as Tom Garner, a cigar-chomping, up-by-his-bootstraps industrialist whose supposed villainy is steadfastly contradicted by his right-hand man (Morgan). Widely conjectured as an influence on *Citizen Kane*, Preston Sturges's screenplay employs a flashback structure to set the record straight about its protagonist, from an influential early childhood incident to Machiavellian conquests to furtive affairs and heartbreak. Partnering with frequent collaborator William K. Howard, James Wong Howe creates stunning imagery throughout, alternating between understated dramatization and purposefully stylized, shadow-dominant compositions in service of a story defined by hubris and foreboding.

### ***Picnic***

Sunday, June 12, 1:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 19, 2:00 p.m.

Dir. Joshua Logan. 1955, 115 mins. DCP. With William Holden, Kim Novak, Rosalind Russell, Susan Strasberg, Cliff Robertson. William Inge's smash 1953 Broadway production, which dared to uncover the smoldering desires of small-town American life, was transformed into a hit movie by studio stalwart Logan, who also directed the original stage version. For the screen, Logan and cinematographer James Wong Howe bring Inge's then-scandalous play to sensuous, Technicolor life, using extensive location shooting in Kansas to lend authenticity to the story of a handsome drifter (Holden) who arouses the romantic and erotic interests of his buddy's girlfriend (Novak), her little sister (Strasberg), and a middle-aged schoolteacher (Russell, perfect as always).

### ***Bell, Book and Candle***

Sunday, June 12, 4:15 p.m.

Saturday, June 25, 3:15 p.m.

Dir. Richard Quine. 1958, 106 mins. DCP. With Kim Novak, James Stewart, Jack Lemmon, Ernie Kovacs, Janice Rule, Elsa Lanchester, Hermione Gingold. A sui generis Hollywood entertainment about a hipster Greenwich Village witch (Novak) who casts a romantic spell on her upstairs neighbor (Stewart), *Bell, Book and Candle* was released the same year as Stewart-Novak's other famous pairing, *Vertigo*. James Wong Howe's work on the film is atypically stylized, featuring wall-to-wall strong colors, ornate lighting, spectral conjurings, and cat's-eye perspectives. "I had fun photographing that picture, trying out ways of lighting with various colored lights and filters," he told historian Alain Silver. "So [at times] you do have to get all the bags of tricks out and sort through them and find the right ones. And that only comes from experience."

### ***Sweet Smell of Success***

Friday, June 17, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 19, 4:30 p.m.

Dir. Alexander Mackendrick. 1957, 96 mins. 35mm. With Burt Lancaster, Tony Curtis. One of the great New York movies of the 1950s, *Sweet Smell of Success* pits Lancaster's ruthless columnist J. J. Hunsecker against Curtis's desperate publicist Sidney Falco in a noirish, pitch-dark morality play. The whip-smart script by Clifford Odets is rightly famous, but just as essential is the black-and-white photography by James Wong Howe, a nightmarish riot of light and darkness, much of it filmed on location in New York.

### **Seconds**

Friday, June 24, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 26, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. John Frankenheimer. 1966, 107 mins. DCP. With Rock Hudson, John Randolph, Frances Reid, Murray Hamilton, Salome Jens. A middle-aged, married banker in New York is offered a chance at a second life. Arthur Hamilton (played by John Randolph, then on the Hollywood blacklist) undergoes complete reconstructive surgery to become Tony Wilson (Rock Hudson), a younger, single artist living in Malibu. James Wong Howe, nominated for an Oscar for his work, shot in black-and-white and used misshapen lenses to create a surreal atmosphere as Arthur Hamilton's dream of a new life turns into a waking nightmare.

### **Funny Lady**

Saturday, June 18, 12:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 24, 3:00 p.m.

Dir. Herbert Ross. 1975, 136 mins. DCP. With Barbra Streisand, James Caan, Omar Sharif, Roddy McDowall, Ben Vereen. Though it was nominated for five Academy Awards, including for James Wong Howe's cinematography, this sequel to Barbra Streisand's breakout film, *Funny Girl*, was mostly roasted by critics. In hindsight, Herbert Ross's continuance of the Fanny Brice story was bolder than its trappings would indicate, and despite its 1930s setting, serves as a startlingly jaundiced look at its own time. It's also gorgeously shot by Wong Howe in what would be his last movie. Caan plays ambitious songwriter Billy Rose, who jumpstarts Fanny's stalled career and helps her get over her dashing ex-husband Nicky (Sharif).

### **Peter Pan**

Saturday, June 25, 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 26, 1:30 p.m.

**With live accompaniment by Makia Matsumura on Saturday, June 25, 1:00 p.m.**

Dir. Herbert Brenon. United States. 1924, 102 mins. 35mm. With Betty Bronson, Ernest Torrence, Cyril Chadwick, Virginia Brown Faire, Anna May Wong, Esther Ralston, George Ali, Mary Brian, Philippe De Lacey, Jack Murphy. Brenon's magical adaptation of J. M. Barrie's 1904 stage play *Peter Pan; or, the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* disproves the film historical canard that the "filmed theater" of the silent era was somehow less cinematic than the montage film by leaning into its theatrical origins. Peter is played by a girl (then-unknown Bronson); the Darling family dog is an actor in full-body suit; and, as in a live performance, the audience is asked to clap to revive Tinker Bell (Browne Faire). In his fourth of eight collaborations with Brenon, Wong Howe's delicately balanced chiaroscuro would jumpstart his reputation as "Mr. Low-Key."

# # #

Top image: James Wong Howe on set on *The Glory Guys* (1965) / United Artists, courtesy of Photofest

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**PRESS IMAGES AND OTHER MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE HERE (PASSWORD: MoMIPress)**

## MUSEUM INFORMATION

Museum of the Moving Image (MoMI) is the only institution in the United States that deals comprehensively with the art, technology, enjoyment, and social impact of film, television, and digital media. In its acclaimed facility in Astoria, New York, the Museum presents exhibitions; screenings; discussion programs featuring actors, directors, and creative leaders; and education programs. It houses the nation's largest collection of moving image artifacts and screens over 500 films annually. Its exhibitions—including the core exhibition *Behind the Screen* and *The Jim Henson Exhibition*—are noted for their integration of material objects, interactive experiences, and audiovisual presentations. For more information about the MoMI, visit [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us).

Hours: Thursday, 2:00–6:00 p.m. Friday, 2:00–8:00 p.m. Saturday–Sunday, 12:00–6:00 p.m.

Museum Admission: \$15 adults; \$11 senior citizens (ages 65+) and students (ages 18+) with ID; \$9 youth (ages 3–17). Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free.

Address : 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street), Astoria (Queens), NY, 11106

Subway : M (weekdays only) or R to Steinway Street. W (weekdays only) or N to 36 Ave.

Program Information : Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)

Membership: <https://movingimage.us/join-and-support/become-a-member/> or 718 777 6877

Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled. Unless noted, tickets are \$15 adults / \$11 students and seniors / \$9 youth (ages 3–17) / free or discounted for Museum members. Advance online purchase is recommended.

[Please note safety protocols for visiting the Museum.](#)

Museum of the Moving Image is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and has received significant support from the following public agencies: New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; New York City Council; New York City Economic Development Corporation; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Governor and the New York State Legislature; Institute of Museum and Library Services; National Endowment for the Humanities; National Endowment for the Arts; and Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation).