Press Release

Bard College Announces Launch of the Center for Moving Image Arts

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, N.Y. – Bard College announces the launch of the Center for Moving Image Arts. The Center will be unique in facilitating the study of cinema’s history and future in an interdisciplinary environment focused primarily on undergraduate education and in bringing various aspects of film culture—public screenings, publications, educational initiatives, and archival development—under the same umbrella.

According to the Center’s founder and director Richard I. Suchenski (Assistant Professor, Film and Electronic Arts Program), “There are many exciting aspects of new technologies, but the rush to the digital has resulted in a contemporary media culture that is historically amnesiac, making it difficult for people—especially students—to understand films as complex artworks and to see particular cinematic practices in relation to the larger history of the arts. The ‘moving image arts’ rubric extends broadly from the nineteenth century to the contemporary moment, and the primary mission of the Center will be to secure, exhibit, and contextualize major works of cinematic art from all periods and regions, some of which will become part of a permanent collection. Film prints are becoming increasingly scarce, and the creation of a carefully curated and properly administered film collection will guarantee long-term accessibility and allow a direct connection to pedagogy. Students and community members always remark on the value of seeing films like this in their original format.” Peggy Ahwesh (Professor and Chair of the Film and Electronic Arts Program) adds, “I look forward to a strong working relationship with the Center for Moving Image Arts in this new and unique opportunity for Bard undergraduates to engage with the history of cinema.”

Equipped with a temperature-controlled vault and maintained by a full-time manager/archivist, the Center for Moving Image Arts archive will build off previous print donations by organizations like the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office. Bard alumnus Jake Perlin ’98 (founder of The Film Desk) has made an inaugural donation of 35mm prints with the promise of future expansion. Collection development has four primary target areas: Classical Hollywood, international auteur cinema, silent/early sound cinema, and East Asian cinema. In addition, the Center will establish a partnership with Cinema Conservancy, a program of Artists Public Domain, a New York–based nonprofit production and distribution company that is committed to sustaining the integrity of American independent film. This initiative will entail the creation of the Cinema Conservancy Collection, celebrating the achievements of American independent filmmaking (including films produced by Artists Public Domain), an annual internship program, and a screening series showcasing titles in the collection.

The Center for Moving Image Arts will pair major traveling retrospectives with a new series of edited anthologies that will include scholarly essays, critical perspectives, interviews, and production materials. The first volume, devoted to Taiwanese film director Hou Hsiao-hsien,
will be published in partnership with the Austrian Film Museum and Columbia University Press and released in conjunction with a comprehensive retrospective initiated and organized by Center director Richard I. Suchenski. The retrospective will travel to prominent venues throughout North America, Europe, and Asia in 2014. Confirmed venues include the Austrian Film Museum (Vienna), the Toronto International Film Festival Cinematheque, the Museum of the Moving Image (Astoria), the Harvard Film Archive (Cambridge, Massachusetts), the Freer and Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C.), the Pacific Film Archive (Berkeley), the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the National Museum of Singapore.

"Book and retrospective projects like this will contribute to the larger objectives of the Center by integrating the often disparate fields of scholarship, teaching, and exhibition," says Suchenski. Related workshops with filmmakers, critics, and industry leaders will help the Center interface with other Bard programs, while internships and professional initiatives will open up educational and career opportunities for students. Regular, curated film programs will strive to provide exposure to seminal works of film history and to encourage the comparative exploration of influences, dialogues, and stylistic shifts within the work of major filmmakers and film movements. "Thanks to its position at Bard, the Center for Moving Image Arts will be able to synchronize the materials and histories of cinema in an organic and original way, encouraging a multifaceted engagement with this profoundly synthetic medium," says Suchenski.

The advisory board for the Center for Moving Image Arts consists of founding members James H. Ottaway Jr. (Former Senior Vice President, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.) and Jake Perlin ’98 (Director, Cinema Conservancy); Norton Batkin (Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies, Bard College), Haden Guest (Director, Harvard Film Archive), Alexander Horwath (Director, Austrian Film Museum), Kent Jones (Director of Programming, New York Film Festival and Artistic Director, World Cinema Foundation), Mark McElhatten (Sikelia Productions and Founding Curator, Views from the Avant-Garde), John Mhiripiri (Director, Anthology Film Archives), Anne Morra (Associate Curator, The Museum of Modern Art), and James Quandt (Senior Programmer, Toronto International Film Festival Cinematheque and Critic, Arthureum).

Inaugural contributors include Mary Ottaway and James H. Ottaway Jr.; Jake Perlin; Vincent Paul-Boncour; Cameron Brodie; Hunter Gray, Tyler Brodie, and Kate West (Artists Public Domain); Gary Palmucci (Kino Lorber); Neal Block and Eamonn Bowles (Magnolia Pictures); Ed Arentz and Andrew Carlin (Music Box Films); David Laub, Dan Berger, and Dechen Yauch (Oscilloscope Pictures); Nancy Gerstman, Emily Russo, and Benjamin Crossley-Marra (Zeitgeist Films); Ashish Avikunthak; and Ashim Ahluwalia ’95.

Launch events are planned early in 2014.