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# Museological Cinema: An Ideal Approach to a Modern Art Form

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### **Abstract of Thesis**

This paper is dedicated to finding a way to better incorporate cinema into museums. The answer as to how came through a number of ways that some museums currently operate that could be adopted by others, a few new ideas, as well as an expansion in the number of museum theatres. A key theme of this is to expand the limited selection of films typically found in museums and galleries to include more popular fare, which would better attract visitors with frequency. I also endorse the idea of constructing new theatres for museums that do not already possess one, so that they can enjoy the profound benefits cinema rings. Research supporting these notions was pulled from official studies from the government and independent organizations, the press, museum websites, as well as some commercial sources. The final conclusion made here is that there are some risk factors in adopting the optimal path of building new theatres, stemming from complications of funding and the shrinking small theatre industry, but that wherever applicable, this would serve as a source of institutional and financial strength to museums large or small. Here I recommend the construction of modest theatres only in economic environments that pass a feasibility study, which should be used to play a variety of cinema regularly for the public.

State University of New York  
College at Buffalo  
Department of Museum Studies

Museological Cinema:  
An Ideal Approach to a Modern Art Form

A Thesis in  
Museum Studies  
by  
Steven A. Groff

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## Introduction

Film is a powerful force in modern society. One might even say that my generation, the Millennials, are obsessed with cinema. I am largely in agreement with this opinion, and can attest to a lifetime of watching movies. At only ten years of age, I was watching classic films from the 1980s such as *Predator* (1987), in which Arnold Schwarzenegger, along with other perennial action stars Carl Weathers and Jesse “The Body” Ventura, entered the jungle in an extravaganza of violence, culminating in the ultimate challenge against a seemingly unbeatable alien warrior. Films have formed an indelible impression on the generations since cinema’s birth, giving a common experience to draw from. Film has contributed to the social consciousness of the world for over a century now, and has impacted culture in a way no less significant than classic literature or music. One learns the values of bravery and duty from films of sacrifice, such as the enumerable classics on war; conversely their harm has been conveyed the same way in pictures like *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). Virtues of love have been learned through the romance genre in movies such as 1997’s *As Good as it Gets*, featuring an unforgettable performance by Jack Nicholson; while films like the angst inducing *Blue Valentine* (2010) provide insights on how such experiences can turn on you. We have expressed and learned from the medium of film to the extent that looking at the art is like peering directly into the zeitgeist of humanity: its ethos, history and future. These subjects are ripe to be taught in museums, and have made gains in recent years that could be incorporated more broadly. Thus, in this paper I aim to promote the adoption of what I term “Museological Cinema.” This simply denotes incorporating already existing practices, while also expanding the use of cinema in museums through the construction of new theatres and adoption of some new innovative approaches. Among the latter consideration are ways that museum theatres can be used, and a diversification of the types of

films typically found in museums to include popular cinema. If museums take advantage of this approach to cinema, troubled institution's anemic states of financial and public support will certainly improve, and their more successful counterparts would also bring in new audiences.

### **Literature Review**

Literature relating to cinema in museums is very specific in nature, thus being obscure and often difficult to locate. Among the most valuable resources available are the journals *Moving Image*, *Millennium Film Journal* and *Film History*. Each of these publications contain conversations regarding many aspects of the medium of film, including its place in the museum. Several books can also be found bearing relevance to the subject, if only in part. Several key pieces of information were found from this literary material.

“The Beginnings of Cinema as a Museum Exhibit” by Dimitrios Latsis (2016) contained a great deal of information on cinema's place in the museum since the medium's advent.<sup>1</sup> Latsis examines the very early adoption of the moving image as a feature in museums during the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was used to illustrate the technological marvels of the age. Tools of the medium were prominently exhibited for decades in institutions such as the Smithsonian's US National Museum and the London Science Museum. Questions regarding film's place in the museum are shown to have existed during these early years, ranging from how best to preserve and exhibit the moving image, as well as its merit as art. Several figures from these early dialogs

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<sup>1</sup> Dimitrios Latsis, “The Beginnings of Cinema as a Museum Exhibit: The Cases of the Smithsonian Institution and the Science Museum in London,” *Moving Image* 16 (2016): 17-34.

are highlighted by Latsis, including poet Vachel Lindsay, who held the unconventional opinion that cinema was every bit the equal of other art forms.

A further study of film's history can be found in Margaret Parsons' brief article "Still Separate... but Equal?" (2012), in which she examines the difficulty the medium had being accepted as an art form.<sup>2</sup> Important notions of how counterculture comes into vogue in art institutions are raised, showing how the marginalization of cinema in the gallery was successfully challenged by Art Films. In so doing, the author reveals a still present unease with cinema in the museum, with the countercultural themes in art films still remaining even after their enfranchisement.

"Lost Objects: The Museum of Cinema" by Sharon Willis, included in the book *The Renewal of Cultural Studies* (2011), gives a very sociological view of film archives.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, themes such as physical film's base qualities leading to their destruction are examined, arguing that this precise quality elevates such material's value in museology. This is shown by arguing imperfections of individual prints gives an individualistic quality to them, heightening a fetishizing of film stock by collectors and archivists, as well as examining the historical and cultural value being preserved by conservators. In so arguing, a seminal importance of film archives is illustrated.

The closest to a complete book on museum cinema one can find is *Film, Art, New Media: Museum Without Walls?* (2012). It is a compilation of essays edited by Angela Dalle Vacche.<sup>4</sup> A variety of different subjects are examined throughout the fifteen essays included, with Part V's

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret Parsons, "'Still separate...but equal?'" *Moving Image* 12 (2012): 89-91.

<sup>3</sup> Sharon Willis, "Lost Objects: The Museum of Cinema," in *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, ed. Paul Smith. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.), 93-102.

<sup>4</sup> Angela Dalle Vacche, *Film, Art, New Media: Museum Without Walls?* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).



final four chapters dedicated to incorporating cinema into a museum setting. Here several recurring themes of the subject are addressed, including the importance of aesthetic, setting, and the modernization of artistic standards. The essay “Museums as Laboratories of Change: The Case for the Moving Image” by François Penz is a particularly interesting view of how the artistic medium and setting changed each other through their respective qualities.<sup>5</sup> To demonstrate this, two research projects where digital culture was injected into a museum setting are cited, revealing observations, such as how touchscreen interfaces and the cultural norms surrounding the devices improved people’s level of engagement.

A lengthy account of the various ways that moving images can be accommodated by the museum is found in the book *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts* by Giuliana Bruno (2007).<sup>6</sup> This covers a variety of exhibitions on visual art, each teaching lessons on how a room’s spatial design effected the audience’s reception of the installations. Much of the material in the book is dedicated to how space can produce different experiences, and is thus not focused on film itself, but rather what surrounds the medium.

A similar account can be found in Alison Griffiths’ *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View* (2008).<sup>7</sup> Griffiths’ book deals with how new screen-based technologies (televisions, touchscreens) have impacted the museum environment. The observation that these technologies have a distortionary sensory effect on audiences is made,

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<sup>5</sup> François Penz, “Museums as Laboratories of Change: The Case for the Moving Image,” in *Film, Art, New Media: Museum Without Walls?*, ed. Angela Dalle Vacche. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012) 278-300.

<sup>6</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts*. (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Alison Griffiths, *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

immersing them into exhibitions and environments. This focuses on the moving image as a tool, rather than an art in itself.

“Shared viewing: Moving Images in the Cinema and the Museum” by Maeve Connolly examines the nature of spectatorship with cinema.<sup>8</sup> Several observations are made using other scholarly texts about how people engage with the moving image. Among these are the level of attention that can be maintained over an extended period of time, as well as critical examinations under the same circumstances. The major piece of analysis is found concerning the use of space for effective cinematic exhibitions, which turns out to be a great deal, requiring negotiation to achieve optimal results.

Volker Pantenburg’s article “Migrational Aesthetics: On Experience in the Cinema and the Museum” (2013) is concerned with how people have individual experiences based on the environment.<sup>9</sup> The author presents three exhibitions where distinctly different experiences were engendered by the settings where they took place. People receive the artistic merits of cinema differently depending on the location, whether in a commercial environment or a gallery. Much is made of the *flâneur* notion, which holds that people engage with art in a more detached manner in a museum, while they would do so more emotionally in other places. Such observations fall into a larger group of literature that attempts to discover film’s utilities based on environment.

“Cinema-in-the Round: Doug Aitken’s SONG 1 (2012), the Hirshhorn Museum and the Pleasures of Cinematic Projection”, an article by Annie Dell’Aria (2014), gives an idea of how

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<sup>8</sup> Maeve Connolly, “Shared viewing: Moving Images in the Cinema and the Museum,” *Millennium Film Journal* 58 (2013): 18-28.

<sup>9</sup> Volker Pantenburg, “Migrational aesthetics: on experience in the cinema and the museum,” *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 3 (2013): 27-37.

these notions function in practice.<sup>10</sup> Taking the example of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden's projection of a film onto an outside structure, several effects on pedestrians were noted. Among these were the perceptions passers-by had of the film, both positive and negative. Most important, however, is her thesis that cinema has a positive influence on the general public, and can be used to attract visitation.

Another article worth considering is "What's Wrong with Cinema in the Gallery?" by Nicky Hamlyn (2012).<sup>11</sup> In this work, the author examines some of the difficulties regarding how cinema is exhibited in the gallery. Looking at multi-room exhibitions of the moving image, she observes that certain limitations, principally the factors of standing audiences and movement through galleries, hamper the full inclusion of cinema in a museum setting. The argument made is that a film should be seen as a complete installation on its own, and can be absorbed by visitors as the totality of an exhibition. Doing so requires the active ability to reorient viewership through a variety of perception altering features, which she illustrates using the exhibitions by artists Philippe Parreno and Douglas Gordon as examples. However, the more valuable connotation of Hamlyn's analysis is that a single film has the capacity to satisfy an audience's mental energies.

### **Cinema's Place in the Museum**

Cinema has a surprisingly long history in museums. The turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when cinema was emerging, was a time of great technological progress. Benefits of the Second

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<sup>10</sup> Annie Dell'Aria, "Cinema-in-the-round: Doug Aitken's SONG 1 (2012), the Hirshhorn Museum and the pleasures of cinematic projection," *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 2 (2014): 208-221.

<sup>11</sup> Nicky Hamlyn, "What's wrong with cinema in the gallery?" *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 2 (2012): 265-270.

Industrial Revolution were bearing fruit, with experiments in electricity, mechanics and transportation alighting minds throughout the world. Among the many new technological achievements was the moving picture, a byproduct of film, which itself was less than a century old. The early cinematic products and instruments that brought them about were featured in routine expositions that were held to fascinate the public, as well as demonstrate the pace of civilizational progress. By 1902, George Méliès' landmark film *Le Voyage dans la Lune* was being played widely at fairs and festivals, demonstrating the medium's vast potential.<sup>12</sup> It was in this context that cinema first found its place in the museum.

During these years, film was more an object of curiosity for museums, rather than the fully realized art form that Méliès treated it as. Author Dimitrios Latsis describes the context of cinema's place in the museum as such, "Visitors to the Smithsonian's US National Museum in June 1913 would have casually strolled by dinosaur fossils, Abraham Lincoln memorabilia, and the newly donated 'Wright Flyer,' before coming to the museum's northwest court, where the collection of fine arts were exhibited."<sup>13</sup> Lost in a collection of the past and remarkable present, given its own wing of the National Museum, cinema was represented largely by the articles used to craft it: cameras, lenses, etc.<sup>14</sup> Here the medium of filmmaking was a benchmark of human achievement, measured next to others on mankind's path toward what seemed a promising future. Thus, in museums that took note of the moving image's importance, it was seen as more of a historical and technological phenomenon. Cinema had significantly less attention as an art form at the time, with many in the artistic community slower to grasp the medium's quality.

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<sup>12</sup> Chris Edwards, "A Trip to the Moon (1902)," *Silent Volume*, February 7, 2009, accessed March 27, 2017, <http://silent-volume.blogspot.com/2009/02/trip-to-moon-1902.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Dimitrios Latsis, "The Beginnings of Cinema as a Museum Exhibit: The Cases of the Smithsonian Institution and the Science Museum in London," *Moving Image* 16 (2016): 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

Latsis goes on to detail a number of people from the era far before their time in this regard, citing the poet Vachel Lindsay, whose belief that the moving image was the equal of other art forms went largely ignored during his lifetime.<sup>15</sup> Though its stature in the artistic community was questioned, museums played a part in elevating cinema's stature in the public eye as a technological marvel worth enshrining as a symbol of mankind's genius.

While film technology gained early acceptance, decades went by with little critical appraisal for cinema. The medium was forestalled from recognition in no small part because of its great success as a form of entertainment. The formation of the American film industry, which became the dominant force of filmmaking, shifted independent and international expressions to the periphery of cultural consciousness. In the 1930s, as an entertaining diversion from the Depression, populist cinema became the norm, starting with the period's monster movie craze; Universal created the bedrock of its continuing success by churning out sequels one after another for its line of horror mascots.<sup>16</sup> The next decade witnessed an obsession with World War II propaganda films, followed by the 1950's slew of cheap science fiction. With an industry established as the dominant force of filmmaking, a prevailing stigma of film as a circus for the lower classes became entrenched.

Eventually, this view was challenged by the emergence of artistically motivated filmmakers. During the 1950s, the "French New Wave" movement was formed by people breaking from traditional cinematic structure and techniques, setting the stage for others to follow.<sup>17</sup> The next

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Adam Whyte, "History of the Universal Monsters!" *What Culture*, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://whatculture.com/film/history-of-the-universal-monsters>.

<sup>17</sup> Kristen Coates, "French New Wave: The Influencing of the Influencers," *The Film Stage*, May 28, 2010. accessed March 26, 2017, <https://thefilmstage.com/features/the-classroom-french-new-wave-the-influencing-of-the-influencers/>.

decades witnessed a number of American filmmakers who challenged the domination of the Hollywood industry, producing a boom in independently produced cinema. Among the most influential personalities who brought this about was Andy Warhol, whose background as a painter aided in the acceptance of his cinematic works. A modicum of recognition for filmmaking was achieved through such artist's efforts, with a greater number of films being featured in a museological context. Many highbrow institutions, however, were not quite ready to accept cinema yet, as objections of commercialism were levied against the medium, much like with Warhol's Pop Art movement itself. Consequentially, the very term "Art Film" did not come into mainstream use until the 1980s, lacking support by large segments of the artistic community.<sup>18</sup> With a foothold in the artistic community, Art Films came into vogue as a countercultural trend, pushing back against more conservative products of the establishment.

There is no specific moment to point to as a breakthrough when cinema was fully accommodated in museums. Rather, the medium gradually gained its adherents from the sixties onward, with more and more introducing cinema into their galleries. There are those who argue that cinema, even in the Art Film genre, has never been fully accepted, and exists within something of a secondary class of arts. Reflecting on this, Margaret Parsons, head of the National Gallery of Art's film department notes,

"The traditional divide between high art and film is no secret... An interesting outcropping of this: concluding a lecture series on the topic of minimalism in contemporary painting several years ago, a prominent contemporary art curator notably received a near-ten-minute standing ovation from a crowd of over five hundred in the National Gallery of Art's theater. By contrast, a film historian lecturing on structural cinema of the 1960s could barely draw an audience."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Margaret Parsons, "'Still separate...but equal?'" *Moving Image* 12 (2012): 90.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

Angela Dalle Vacche agrees with the ongoing discomfort with cinema in the art world. Speaking for the authors in her book *Film, Art, New Media: Museum Without Walls?*, she asserts: “There seems to be a general consensus that whenever the image is moving, there is a big problem, for neither the museum nor the history of the art can fully endorse it.”<sup>20</sup> The popularity of older forms of art still eclipses film among artists, even after decades of cinema adherents.

This uneasy relationship with film extends beyond mere questions of interest and prestige, however, as others argue that a fundamental divide exists between the medium’s very nature and the artistic community. Academic Volker Pantenburg argues, “...art spaces are positioned against the cultural industry, aesthetic experience is set against entertainment, critical spectatorship against passive absorption and concentrated perception against the distracted glance.”<sup>21</sup> Essentially, the lengthy, constrained nature of exhibiting a moving image may be off-putting to an artistic community that emphasizes concentrated, critical appreciation. Maeve Connolly, an art scholar, mimics the oft raised concern of cinema’s commercial appeal, while also noting a phenomenon she calls “Virtual Time.”<sup>22</sup> Essentially, this is a critical appraisal of time-based arts, including cinema, which has the viewer forestall critical thought continually to save analysis for the next moment, thereby failing to engage in the present.<sup>23</sup> It could be that these qualities truly are a fissure that cannot be bridged with the more idealistic of the artistic community, or that the properties of cinema are of such a nature that they need to catch up in their values of appreciation.

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<sup>20</sup> Vacche, “Introduction: A Cosmology of Contingency,” 4.

<sup>21</sup> Volker Pantenburg, “Migrational aesthetics: on experience in the cinema and the museum,” *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 3 (2013): 28-29.

<sup>22</sup> Maeve Connolly, “Shared viewing: Moving Images in the Cinema and the Museum,” *Millennium Film Journal* 58 (2013): 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Whatever its status in the arts, cinema's presence in the museum has become substantial in modern day. In 2006, filmmaker and historian Stephen Bottomore compiled a comprehensive list of museums dedicated to cinema, finding them present in 37 nations.<sup>24</sup> These museums usually come in two types: institutions dedicated to cinema in general, or to a specific subject. A good example of the former is the Cinémathèque Française, located in Paris, where a large archive of film and paraphernalia representing cinema worldwide is kept.<sup>25</sup> The latter variety is considerably more common. A good example is the London Film Museum, which dedicates itself to British filmmaking.<sup>26</sup> The significantly more specific San Francisco Film Museum, focused on memorializing its city's place in cinema, also illustrates this.<sup>27</sup> Thematic institutes are a natural expression of museology, and this extends to film as well. Lone Pine, California's own Museum of Western Film History serves this trend by exhibiting the long tradition of the Western genre.<sup>28</sup> Such thematic approaches have allowed an investment of museological attention on film, looking past the base nature of entertainment by treating genre as a phenomenon worth examining.

Since being adopted more frequently into the museum, a great deal of attention has been paid to understanding the art form's properties and how to best work with these. Film's ability to convey multiple sensory experiences in tandem is unique among the arts. One can certainly augment other art forms using additional senses, such as filling a room full of a suitable scent while exhibiting a piece of music. However, this is an added quality to an already completed

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen Bottomore, "Cinema Museums – A Worldwide List," *Film History* 18 (2006): 262-273.

<sup>25</sup> La Cinémathèque Française, "The Collections," accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.cinematheque.fr/collections.html>.

<sup>26</sup> London Film Museum, "Introduction," accessed July 15, 2016, <http://education.londonfilmmuseum.com/>.

<sup>27</sup> San Francisco Film Museum, "About," accessed July 15, 2016, <http://sanfranciscofilmmuseum.org/about/>.

<sup>28</sup> The Museum of Western Film History, "About Us," accessed July 15, 2016, <http://www.lonepinefilmhistorymuseum.org/ImageRotator/the-lone-pine-museum.html>.



product. In cinema, the combination of form, movement, light, and typically, color and sound, are all combined to produce the multifarious art. This effect on people's senses can be dramatic, and much had been made of film's immersive effect. In the first chapter of her book, *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View*, Alison Griffiths examines the aesthetic qualities of religious art, arguing that their emotional effects are propagated through sensory effects that are found within cinema. Looking at the cathedral's use of stained glass windows and dramatic imagery highlights how multiple sense experiences lead to a heightened emotional involvement of visitors.<sup>29</sup> When a piece of art interacts with people's senses, it is able to relate to spectators better by making itself relevant to real world experience; with multiple senses activated, people are drawn into the art that much more.

A great deal of space is necessary to exhibit cinema in its intended scale, requiring some distance between the screen and viewers. As such, museologists have been attempting to find ways to maximize the benefit of such an investment of floor space, coming up with interesting ways of using film to create unique experiences. Much of this involves manipulating the environment surrounding film to create a plurality of effects for visitors. Design scholar Giuliana Bruno sums this up stating, "Constructing spaces of light and shadow, obscurity and visibility, the filmic text transforms the human body and the body of things into a geometry of shapes, surfaces, volumes and lines. Changing the relation of perception, cinema has changed the relation of the body – it has both embodied and disembodied the gaze."<sup>30</sup> The concept is simple enough, and can be accepted on the basic observation that film is played in the dark within movie

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<sup>29</sup> Alison Griffiths, *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 16-36.

<sup>30</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts*. (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2007), 93.

theatres to draw focus to the screen. However, maximizing museum space can be taken a great deal further than this. The Whitney Museum of American Art's exhibition *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016* is focused on cultivating its museum space to achieve different effects with film, manipulating lighting, proximity of screen, bodily positioning, among other methods while drawing off a long history of filmmaking.<sup>31</sup> The effect of these ideas has helped reconcile the medium's space requirements with the potential offerings it holds.

A unique aspect of film as an art is the view of authenticity regarding its form. Whereas in some other art forms a work's original state is emphasized, cinema is typically valued in its highest quality. A large market of high quality Blu-ray restorations exists to attest to the fact that people look at cinema's art as more figurative expression, rather than physical expression. A long history of attempting to improve upon film's original quality further demonstrates this. For instance, the colorization process was adopted in the 1970s to imbue black-and-white pictures with color; this was, however, met with resistance, as the results were questionable in quality.<sup>32</sup> Modern video technology has allowed for a superior restoration of film that results in a greater quality than original versions, referred to as high-definition. This involves improving a picture's image detail and definition, which often is done by physically cleaning individual frames of a film reel.<sup>33</sup> Criterion Pictures, which is something of a museological collection itself, prides itself on inducting the world's most notable films into its catalog for public consumption, and they

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<sup>31</sup> Whitney Museum of American Art, "Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016," accessed March 29, 2017, <http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/Dreamlands>.

<sup>32</sup> The Museum of Broadcast Communications, "Colorization," accessed April 11, 2017, <http://www.museum.tv/eotv/colorization.htm>.

<sup>33</sup> Frugal Photographer, "High Resolution and High Definition," accessed April 11, 2017, [http://www.frugalphotographer.com/info-Resolution\\_and\\_Definition.htm](http://www.frugalphotographer.com/info-Resolution_and_Definition.htm).

have gone to great lengths converting these to high-definition quality.<sup>34</sup> Because of people's general preference to view film in its highest quality, this lifts a burden from museologists' shoulders. Rather than having to feature a film in its original state for its art to be recognized, one can simply play it in high quality to exhibit it. This is a convenient aspect that somewhat offsets the space required, allowing the screening of a practically unlimited amount of cinema wherever the conditions to do so are met.

Cinema is versatile enough that the actual film need not be exhibited for an effective *homage* to its art. One of the most important aspects of filmmaking is the use of props. This presents an outstanding opportunity to represent film in museums, as authentic props are not merely objects that surround a work of art; but are rather, they are extensions of their artistic expression. The difference between an object surrounding a piece of art and what a prop represents is that one is an article belonging to an artist, whereas the other is an article belonging to the art. It is like comparing a pen Melville used to write the manuscript for *Moby Dick*, and the very harpoon with which Captain Ahab stabbed the White Whale in a film; the former manifested the work, while the latter additionally stands as a physical manifestation of the expression. Though these materials may not add up to their representative art's whole expression, they serve well enough as a point of interest, and therefore are perfect to use in exhibitions.

Props are in some ways advantageous beyond even their partial expression of a piece of art, or capacity for stimulating popular visual interest in an exhibition. It is a truism in filmmaking that props are versatile between productions, often times being reused on countless occasions. Perhaps the prime example of this is Robby the Robot, who appeared in a variety of well-known

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<sup>34</sup> Jacob Kastrenakes, "Watch how Criterion restores the world's best movies," *The Verge*, February 10, 2014, accessed April 11, 2017, <http://www.theverge.com/2014/2/15/5413974/criterion-film-restoration-process-video-hitchcock>.

features for several decades beginning with 1956's *Forbidden Planet*, setting the template for all "Old Hollywood" robots.<sup>35</sup> In Robby's case, participation in a variety of films augments his status as not just being part of one work's expression, but many; this therefore elevates the prop's cultural value. A second consideration of props is that very select examples can exceed their nominal value as a part of artistic expression, and take on a relevance of their own through an iconic status. Dirty Harry's Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum is a great example of how a prop can outgrow its source material, coming to represent something more to its culture. Perhaps the most iconic firearm in film history, Harry's Magnum represents the themes of its series: a principle of justice that cuts through overwrought, cumbersome niceties that often get in the way. People latch onto the prop as much as the film it appeared in to celebrate such notions, and would gladly pay homage to the material on its own.

The unique nature of the moving image has received attention from conservators, with some perceiving moving images as a superior form of record. While paintings and photos preserve a historic ideal or moment of time, much more is revealed by a moving image through the quality of movement. In her essay on the film deterioration, Sharon Willis observes that, even through storytelling, the medium captures moments in time and social climates that can be reexperienced through viewership. "As fiction film enters the archive, it shades into documentary, inasmuch as it registers traces of the past that exceed its own narrative drive."<sup>36</sup> One could further state that while other artifacts are but pieces of the past, the former truly captures a moment in time, acting less as a piece of the historical puzzle than a fully formed record of the past. This unique

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<sup>35</sup> Internet Movie Database, "Robby the Robot – Biography," accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1119475/bio>.

<sup>36</sup> Sharon Willis, "Lost Objects: The Museum of Cinema," in *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, ed. Paul Smith. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.), 94.

property has lent film a particularly high concern among conservators. Heightening this is the medium's inherently unstable nature, typically being made using nitrate or acetate in earlier forms. These ensure that film is constantly at risk of either a violent chemical reaction, with nitrate sending the material aflame, or having its image fade away through its acetate, especially after repeated use.<sup>37</sup>

Due to this high risk to these materials, a whole culture has emerged around restoring old films. Entire warehouses of such films have previously been destroyed, leaving only traces of their existence, including documents, still-shots, testimonials and rumors; scars of a ruined past that can only be prevented from spreading by conservators. Many examples of early films have been lost, such as *London After Midnight* (1927), a particularly sought-after film whose last copy many believe was destroyed in a fire.<sup>38</sup> One film that was once believed mostly lost was Fritz Lang's Sci-fi magnum opus *Metropolis* (1927). For decades, film scholars heard how ambitious and influential the film was for its time, recognizing the importance it had to the history of cinema, while only possessing portions of it to screen.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately, the search for lost film reels resulted in the recovery and restoration of greater part of the *Metropolis*, and several versions are now available, each with its own merits in reconstructing the art work.<sup>40</sup> In this way, many films have been restored, and the search for other lost works is ongoing. Because of the strong drive to restore the restore early vestiges of cinema history, we can today screen once lost pieces of art with quality previously unimagined.

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<sup>37</sup> Maria Fernanda Valverde, "Photographic Negatives: Nature and Evolution of Processes," Advanced Residency Program in Photographic Conservation, George Eastman House, 19-28.

<sup>38</sup> Fritz Kramer, "Lost Film Files #21: London After Midnight (1927)," *Movies Silently*, November 16, 2013, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://moviessilently.com/2013/11/16/lost-film-files-21-london-after-midnight-1927/>.

<sup>39</sup> Turner Classic Movies, "Metropolis – The Restoration," accessed April 11, 2017, <http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/345333%7C0/Metropolis-The-Restoration.html>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

A great deal of effort goes into the preservation of film today. The Library of Congress created the National Film Registry in 1988, and has selected 25 films every year to preserve in its archive.<sup>41</sup> This constitutes the greatest effort to preserve the art of film to date, having admitted 700 movies ranging from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) to *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). The National Film Registry holds up to scrutiny as an important public service. UCLA's Film and Television Archive is the second largest such organization, possessing films of great variety, along with preserved television; a collection that finds use in partnership with the university's film school to influence generations to come.<sup>42</sup> Not only do large organizations exist to preserve the art form, but this trend is being promoted to smaller institutes. Since 1998, the National Film Preservation Foundation has been dispensing government grants to historical societies large and small, throughout all fifty states to fund the safe keeping of recordings.<sup>43</sup> With the emergence of digital video formatting, the contents of film are being converted into data, but the efforts to preserve early moving pictures in their original state remains vigilant.

Modern film museums uphold the traditions of respecting cinema as a technology, while also attempting to break down previous distinctions of cinema's respectability. One impressive example of a museum operating in many of the ways I shall suggest in this paper is the Museum of the Moving Image, located in New York City. The front page of the museum website advertises exhibitions on *lucha libre* wrestling, Greek films and classic arcade games.<sup>44</sup> This is an astounding range; especially considering the attention paid to video games, a form of media

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<sup>41</sup> Library of Congress, "Program – National Film Preservation Board," accessed July 13, 2016, <https://loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/about-this-program/>.

<sup>42</sup> University of California, Los Angeles, "UCLA Film & Television Archive," accessed July 13, 2016, <https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/>.

<sup>43</sup> National Film Preservation Foundation, "NFPF Grants," accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.filmpreservation.org/nfpf-grants>.

<sup>44</sup> Museum of the Moving Image, "Main Page," accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.movingimage.us/>.

far younger and even more doubted in its merits than film. In addition to this, they have a functioning theatre that regularly plays films in variety, screening artistic classics alongside those of a more commercial variety.<sup>45</sup> Other museums are following this trend, incorporating cinema in their offerings to the public. The North Carolina Museum of Art displays a variety of films in their website's cinema section, including popular fare such as *Labyrinth* (1986) and *How to Train your Dragon* (2010).<sup>46</sup> Even smaller museums have taken to showing the occasional popular film, such as Binghamton, New York's Bundy Museum of History and Art, which featured a cult classic marathon in 2014.<sup>47</sup> Much as how Art Films gradually found a place in the museum, commercial cinema is slowly being accepted, along with other types of media.

Several observations have been made since cinema's increased presence in museums. One of the most important relates to how the general public reacts to cinematic promotions. In 2012, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden experimented by projecting a non-narrative based film on their outdoor concrete cylindrical façade for the public. Reflecting on lessons learned from the promotion, Annie Dell'Aria notes success in achieving public approval,

“Of the dozen or so spectators I spoke to, all seemed to react positively to the project and especially the song, calling it ‘a marvellous distraction’ or ‘a little gem’... Although there were those who claimed they ‘didn’t get it’, most found the project worthwhile and felt that the museum should offer more projections. Nearly all of the people canvassed heard about the project through major news outlets and did not describe themselves as regular visitors to the Hirshhorn.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Museum of the Moving Image. “Screenings.” Accessed January 27, 2017.

<http://www.movingimage.us/visit/calendar/2017/1/27/week/type/1>.

<sup>46</sup> North Carolina Art Museum, “Moving Pictures,” accessed March 28, 2017,

[http://ncartmuseum.org/programs\\_and\\_events/view/films](http://ncartmuseum.org/programs_and_events/view/films).

<sup>47</sup> Bundy Museum of History & Art, “Bundy Season Film Festival presents Cult Movie Thursdays!” accessed January 20, 2017, <http://bundymuseum.org/site3/bundy-season-film-festival-presents-cult-movie-thursdays-spring-2014-till-the-end-of-may/>.

<sup>48</sup> Annie Dell'Aria, “Cinema-in-the-round: Doug Aitken’s *SONG 1* (2012), the Hirshhorn Museum and the pleasures of cinematic projection,” *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 2 (2014): 215.

Similarly, François Penz notes in a paper examining two cinema exhibitions that they were successful in reaching new audiences, even when not exposed to outside traffic.<sup>49</sup> The public's response to cinema is largely positive, thus museums that engage with the medium could receive heightened approval and visitation. This is an extremely valuable observation, as these benefits directly affect the museum's finances.

### **The Financial Challenges of Museums**

Non-profit organizations such as museums face significant financial challenges. This became even more pronounced with a downward trend in the field's fortunes during the economic recession that began in 2008. American museums have recovered better than those of other regions, yet many challenges to keeping their doors open remain. Key sources of revenue have been reduced considerably and are under threat by economic circumstances, such as the decline of corporate funding since the 1980s and the erosion of the United States' middle class.<sup>50</sup> Between the lack of a nationalized museum industry, a limited number of wealthy donors, and financially ruined general public, some institutions are proving unable to meet their financial needs. In order to help alleviate this strain for struggling museums, new ways of grabbing the public's attention should be adopted.

According to a pamphlet published by the United States' Embassy in 2012, midway through the economic recession, roughly 25% of museum's budgets could be credited to government support, 37% to philanthropic efforts, while the remainder derived from earnings and private

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<sup>49</sup> Penz, "Museums as Laboratories of Change," 278-300.

<sup>50</sup> Kathleen Elkins, "9 charts that reveal how the American middle class has declined since 1970," *Business Insider*, January 6, 2016, accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/charts-decline-of-the-middle-class-2016-1>.



investment.<sup>51</sup> The American Alliance of Museums also indicated that during those years that the stagnant economy had the effect of reducing key sources of funding, and that two-thirds of the nation's museums were suffering financial stress due to these challenges.<sup>52</sup> It is difficult to ascertain how much the museum industry has recovered as a whole, but there are signs that some institutions are still struggling financially. In 2015, the Delaware Art Museum exceeded their four-million-dollar budget by \$1.3 million.<sup>53</sup> The Cleveland Museum of Natural History is considerably healthier at a \$240,000 deficit with a \$14 million revenue.<sup>54</sup> Reynolda House Museum of American Art in North Carolina shows a 2015 deficit of approximately \$300,000 out of a \$3.7 million in support.<sup>55</sup> However much the economy has improved, many museums still show financial stress irrespective of size or location. Therefore, it is prescient to see the industry's sources of funding to assess how to make up for these shortcomings.

An easy answer to struggling museum's issues would be to procure a significant increase in government funding. The national wealth is certainly there, with the US tax base and gross domestic product amounting to the second largest economy in the world behind the European Union.<sup>56</sup> China's slightly smaller economic assets have proven to be adequate to produce a boom

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<sup>51</sup> Ford W. Bell, "How are Museums Financially Supported in the U.S.?" *Embassy of the United States of America*, March, 2012, accessed February 24, 2016, [http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/133183/english/P\\_You\\_Asked\\_How\\_Are\\_Museums\\_Supported\\_Financially.pdf](http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/133183/english/P_You_Asked_How_Are_Museums_Supported_Financially.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> American Alliance of Museums, "America's Museums Reflect Slow Economic Recovery in 2012," accessed March 27, 2017, <https://www.aam-us.org/docs/research/acme-2013-final.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

<sup>53</sup> Delaware Art Museum, "Annual Report 2015," accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.delart.org/wordpress/media/PDF/support/index.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Cleveland Museum of Natural History, "Financial Statements with Independent Auditor's Report," accessed March 28, 2017, [https://www.cmnh.org/CMNH/media/CMNH\\_Media/Finance%20Office/2015-Fiscal-Year-Financial-Statement.pdf](https://www.cmnh.org/CMNH/media/CMNH_Media/Finance%20Office/2015-Fiscal-Year-Financial-Statement.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> Reynolda House, "Financial Statements – June 30, 2015," accessed March 28, 2017, [http://www.reynoldahouse.org/sites/default/files/annual-reports/2015\\_reynolda\\_house\\_financial\\_statements\\_audited.pdf](http://www.reynoldahouse.org/sites/default/files/annual-reports/2015_reynolda_house_financial_statements_audited.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Knoema, "World GDP Ranking 2015 | Data and Charts," accessed July 17, 2016, <https://knoema.com/nwnfkne/world-gdp-ranking-2015-data-and-charts>.

in the creation of their own museum industry, priming them to become the world's leader in the field by possessing the most museums of any nation in coming years.<sup>57</sup> The US Government spends liberally enough theoretically to provide museums with greater funds. Take for example military funding, which has been bloated out of proportion since the Cold War. The US continues to spend multiples more than its closest competitor, China, every year; in 2015, the former outspent the latter by \$394 billion.<sup>58</sup> Military contractors are set to be paid \$1 trillion over the next 30 years just to maintain the newly developed F-35 fighter jets, which have not lived up to expectations, and have never been tested in a single combat mission.<sup>59</sup> The National Endowment of the Arts is the bedrock of federal arts funding, yet its appropriations number in the millions, rather than billions or trillions.<sup>60</sup>

In reality, the likelihood of increased government intervention is little more than a pipe dream. As of the writing of this, the US Government owes \$19 trillion in debt, ensuring that the public, and therefore elected officials, will be very selective in what receives financial support for decades to come.<sup>61</sup> The general view that museums are a non-essential asset means that there is little possibility for increased government spending under these conditions. In addition, most Americans feel no impetus to cut military spending, with a 2014 *Gallup* poll revealing that 28%

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<sup>57</sup> Hannah Gardner, "China's new cultural revolution is all about museums," *The National*, September 24, 2013, accessed February 10, 2016, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/east-asia/chinas-new-cultural-revolution-is-all-about-museums>.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas C. Frohlich & Mark Lieberman, "Countries Spending the Most on War," *24/7 Wall Street*, April 21, 2016, accessed July 17, 2016, <http://247wallst.com/special-report/2015/04/21/countries-spending-the-most-on-war/>.

<sup>59</sup> Eli Wolfe, "5 Insanely Wasteful Projects the Pentagon is Spending Your Money On," *Mic Check Daily*, November 21, 2013, accessed July 17, 2016, <https://mic.com/articles/74159/5-insanely-wasteful-projects-the-pentagon-is-spending-your-money-on#.Hlhha5GAU>.

<sup>60</sup> National Endowment for the Arts, "National Endowment for the Arts Appropriations History," accessed March 23, 2017, <https://www.arts.gov/open-government/national-endowment-arts-appropriations-history>.

<sup>61</sup> United States Government, "U.S. National Debt Clock," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.usdebtclock.org/>.

believed it was too low, and 65% saying they felt it was at an appropriate level.<sup>62</sup> Not only do the logistics indicate that museums will continue to be of secondary concern for the US Government, but American tradition also dictates they rely on other sources of revenue.

A second major source of funds for museums has been corporate funding. The 1980s was something of a golden age for corporations contributing to the collective wealth of society, with a robust effort among America's wealthiest businesses to give to charitable causes in exchange for tax credits.<sup>63</sup> Among these were museums, with millions of dollars of support going to their well-being. Since the eighties, however, corporate giving has been dramatically scaled back. A minor economic recession during the 1990s was enough to reverse the trend of corporations being a major source of strength for non-profit organizations, and the subsequent market downturns have only further diminished hopes for a return to the peak of Reagan era charity.<sup>64</sup> Corporations still contribute, but at nowhere near the level they did decades ago. Much as with the other sources surveyed, corporate giving represents a single part of the collective financial assets most museums rely on, which have declined to the detriment of such institutions.

Donations are the bedrock of not-for-profit institution health, with 37% of the museum industry dependent on charitable giving.<sup>65</sup> Much of this derives from the wealthiest Americans. Historically, a great deal of the United States' civic infrastructure was constructed through the goodwill of the wealthiest Americans. Andrew Carnegie wrote in *The Gospel of Wealth* that one

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<sup>62</sup> Frank Newport, "Americans Remain Divided on Military Spending," *Gallup*, February 27, 2014, accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/167648/americans-remain-divided-military-spending.aspx>.

<sup>63</sup> Barbara L. Cicone and Jeanne G. Jacob, *Fundraising Basics: A Complete Guide 2nd Edition*, (Gaithersburg, MD:Aspen Publishers Inc., 2001), 157-9.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 159

<sup>65</sup> Bell, "How are Museums Financially Supported in the U.S.?" [http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/133183/english/P\\_You\\_Asked\\_How\\_Are\\_Museums\\_Supported\\_Financially.pdf](http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/133183/english/P_You_Asked_How_Are_Museums_Supported_Financially.pdf).

should spend the first part of one's life accumulating wealth, and spend it in one's twilight years on enriching society; a notion that defined the era among fellow industrialists.<sup>66</sup> For Carnegie's part, his unrivaled wealth was spent investing untold millions in public libraries and educational fellowships.<sup>67</sup> This followed in a long tradition of private philanthropy in the US, which had its genesis with Benjamin Franklin; a person who founded what would eventually become the University of Pennsylvania, and made countless other contributions to mankind.<sup>68</sup> Even today, civic institutions rely a great deal on the goodwill of wealthy Americans, with museums being no different. The Wealth-X and Arton Capital Major Giving Index reveals that the average person defined as possessing an "Ultra-High Net Worth" contributes \$25 million over their lifetime, amounting to a tenth of their total fortune.<sup>69</sup> There is little chance that this tradition will end any time soon, but an issue exists in that such philanthropy cannot meet the needs of the museum industry.

The wealthiest among us cannot be solely responsible for a museum's financial needs. There are more wealthy people in America than ever, expanding from 14% to 21% of the population since the 1970s.<sup>70</sup> However, this is a minority of people, and wealthy at the lower ends hardly possess the type of super-rich income needed to keep a museum open, with earners between the tenth and second percentile possessing an income of \$113,000-394,000, according to the World

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<sup>66</sup> Carnegie Corporation of New York, "The Gospel of Wealth," accessed July 17, 2016, <https://www.carnegie.org/about/our-history/gospelofwealth/>.

<sup>67</sup> Biography, "Andrew Carnegie – Philanthropist (1835–1919)," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.biography.com/people/andrew-carnegie-9238756#early-life>.

<sup>68</sup> Philanthropy Roundtable, "Benjamin Franklin," accessed July 17, 2016, [http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/hall\\_of\\_fame/benjamin\\_franklin](http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/hall_of_fame/benjamin_franklin).

<sup>69</sup> Ansuya Harjani, "How much do the ultra-rich give to charity?" *CNBC*, October 5, 2014, accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.cnbc.com/2014/10/05/how-much-do-the-ultra-rich-give-to-charity.html>.

<sup>70</sup> Elkins, "9 charts that reveal how the American middle class has declined since 1970."

Top Incomes Database.<sup>71</sup> Institutions require a large number of smaller donations from the general public to maintain the levels of support necessary for operations. After decades of American industry declining from globalizing economic patterns, the general public is less well positioned than ever. More people have sunk into the lower class since the Recession, moving people who make less than \$24,000 a year up to 29%.<sup>72</sup> This practically eliminates nearly a third of the US population from donating to non-profits. Meanwhile, the contrasting middle class is recovering less ably from the Recession than the wealthy, with earnings reverting back to levels of earlier decades when wealth was less stratified and has remained static since.<sup>73</sup> With less of a share in the national wealth, lower wages, poorer job prospects, the declining middle class is less dependable for its disposable funds than ever.

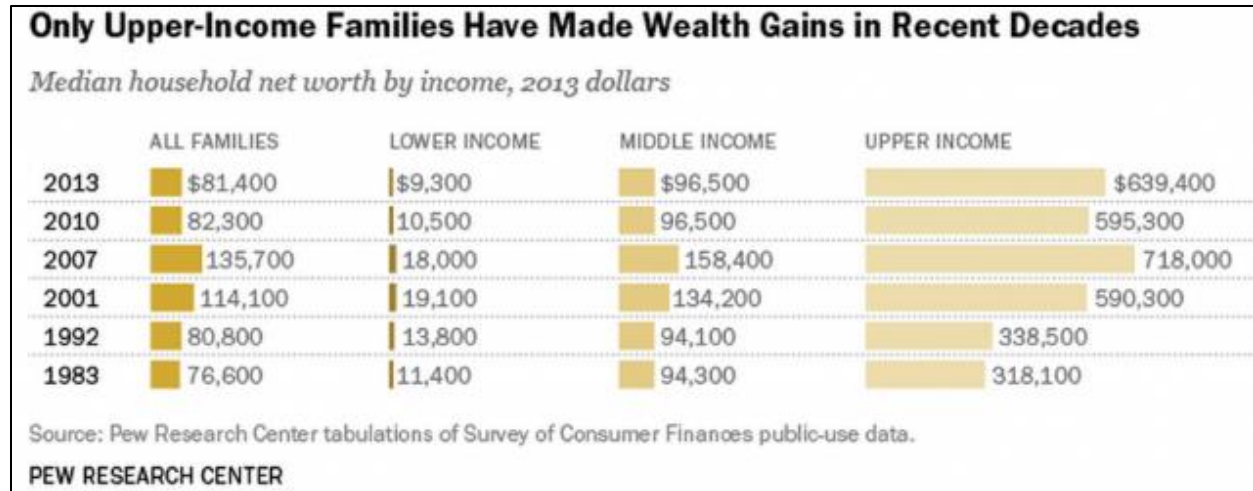
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<sup>71</sup> Jordon Weissmann, "Who Gets to Be 'Rich'?" *Slate*, August 29, 2014, accessed March 28, 2017, [http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2014/08/defining\\_rich\\_in\\_america\\_what\\_are\\_the\\_income\\_cuttoffs.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2014/08/defining_rich_in_america_what_are_the_income_cuttoffs.html).

<sup>72</sup> Elkins, "9 charts that reveal how the American middle class has declined since 1970."

<sup>73</sup> Simone Pathe, "Why the middle class is not feeling a recovery," *PBS News Hour*, December 17, 2014, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/making-sense/why-the-middle-class-is-not-feeling-a-recovery/>.

Chart 1



None of the sources of funding surveyed can be depended on to increase in the coming years, and the effects of the Recession are still felt even now. Until a new economic boom occurs – an uncertain phenomenon to predict – we cannot expect to receive further attention from museology’s traditional sources of major funding. With this state of affairs, a new source of generating revenue is required to help museums experiencing financial difficulties. The only way to gain such funds is to increase earnings. Colleen Dilenschneider, the Chief Market Engagement Officer for IMPACTS, noting a downturn in visitor traffic for museums overall, endorses finding new ways to attract audiences, stating,

“The forces of change that propel the world forward are not going away. If we don’t change our model to one that is more sustainable, then we risk going away. This is a moment when our biggest barrier to engaging emerging audiences is holding dear to our increasingly irrelevant plans and practices. We need a reset. And it’s up to all of us to put our heads together and make it happen.”<sup>74</sup>

This is a shaky proposition, given the destruction of the middle class, and severe financial strain on the poor. However, the public still demonstrates a significant willingness to spend on its recreational needs. Cinema represents an extremely lucrative enterprise that museology already interfaces with, which could be the key to alleviating some of the financial strain cited above.

### **Cinema’s Lucrative Nature**

Ever since Hollywood adopted the silver screen as its primary industry, film has been a lucrative business. For around a century, cinema has been associated with celebrity success and high society, with people riding high on the opportunities the business brings. This is no different

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<sup>74</sup> Colleen Dilenschneider, “Signs of Trouble for the Museum Industry,” *Know Your Own Bone*, December 3, 2014, accessed March 27, 2017, <http://colleendilen.com/2014/12/03/signs-of-trouble-for-the-museum-industry-data/>.

today. In fact, cinema's success is greater now than ever. While the West was the region in which cinema took off as an industry, the practice has spread worldwide in scope. Today, film industries exist in Japan, Korea, India and other nations; meanwhile, consumption of their products occurs irrespective of region. This amounts to a great deal of wealth, as one 2014 study indicated that by 2018 the industry would grow from a total value of \$564 billion to \$679 billion.<sup>75</sup>

One might call the film industry a point of obsession in modern day. A major point of focus for people's attentions, news surrounding the production of cinematic enterprises has become a mainstay of papers and magazines. The announcement on October 30, 2012 of the production of a new *Star Wars* film made worldwide headlines, with Disney buying out the franchise from creator George Lucas for \$4 billion.<sup>76</sup> This was a major source of interest for the public; not only due to the anticipation of a beloved franchise's return, but because the financial details signified just how lucrative a media product can become in the modern economy. The original *Star Wars* (1977) was expected to be a critical and financial flop at the time of release, yet it went on to be among the most successful theatrical runs in history, spawning a media empire that eventually would be traded in the billions only decades later.<sup>77</sup> This vast financial wealth was due to one factor above all else: public enthusiasm. Even after what is popularly considered to be an abysmal prequel trilogy, the most recent entry, *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*

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<sup>75</sup> Statista, "Statistics and facts about the film industry," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.statista.com/topics/964/film/>.

<sup>76</sup> IGN Entertainment, "Star Wars Episode 7 - Original Announcement Press Release," accessed July 18, 2016, [http://www.ign.com/wikis/star-wars/Star\\_Wars\\_Episode\\_7\\_-\\_Original\\_Announcement\\_Press\\_Release](http://www.ign.com/wikis/star-wars/Star_Wars_Episode_7_-_Original_Announcement_Press_Release).

<sup>77</sup> Emma Lunn, "Star Wars: How an expected flop made George Lucas billions," *Yahoo Finance*, December 8, 2014, accessed August 1, 2016, <https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/star-wars--how-an-expected-flop-made-george-lucas-billions--150701560.html>.



(2015) became one of the most successful theatrical runs of all time, just like the original.<sup>78</sup>

Public demand for cinematic entertainment went practically unabated during the recession of 2008, generating extreme amounts of revenue as it always has.

When one looks at the all-time records of box office earnings, several points can be gleaned about the film industry. First is the fact that before inflation, all but one of the top ten highest grosses are from the new millennium; the outlier being 1997's *Titanic*.<sup>79</sup> A decent retort to this can be made by observing that before inflation, the list in total revenue only features two films made in the last twenty years.<sup>80</sup> Yet, a closer look at the list will reveal some of the biggest names in cinema's history, such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Sound of Music* (1965) and *Star Wars* (1977), followed immediately by the next ten on the list being dominated by recent films.<sup>81</sup> The slight lack of assurance that film is at a height of popularity can be laid to rest with a different statistic tracking ticket sales. One such study conducted by Nash Information Services confirms that the industry was generally unaffected by the recession, as ticket sales have remained fairly steady since 1995.<sup>82</sup> The more relevant point of this, however, is that these sales have not gone down since their prices went up gradually over that same timeframe. People have remained highly enthusiastic about going to the theatre during a period of economic turmoil even as they had to pay more with less money for their entertainment needs. Additionally, increased competition with the home video and online streaming markets has not driven ticket sales or industry growth down. Data provided by the Motion Picture Association of America indicates

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<sup>78</sup> Box Office Mojo, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," accessed August 1, 2016, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=starwars7.htm>.

<sup>79</sup> Box Office Mojo, "All Time Box Office," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/>.

<sup>80</sup> Calculator Games, "Worldwide Inflation-Adjusted Highest Grossing Films of All Time," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.calculatorgames.info/mogul/>.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

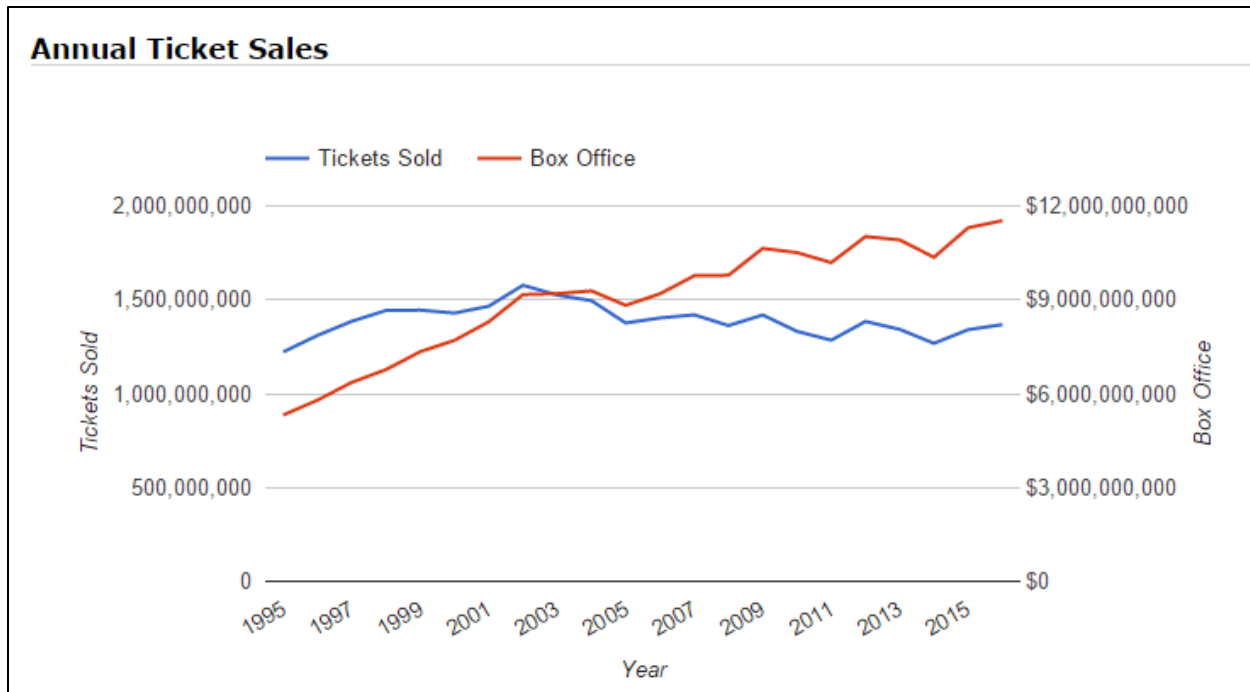
<sup>82</sup> The Numbers, "Domestic Movie Theatrical Market Summary 1995 to 2016," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.the-numbers.com/market/>.

that the total number of theatres in the United States has only gone up over the years, climbing recently from 39,662 to 40,392 since 2012.<sup>83</sup> The lucrative nature of film remains stalwart, even in the face of economic circumstances that have crippled other industries.

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<sup>83</sup> *Theatrical Market Statistics – 2016*, Motion Pictures Association of America, 2017, accessed March 22, 2017, <http://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2016-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-Report-2.pdf>.

Chart 2



This all paints a picture of a healthy industry, standing capably on its own. The popularity of film in this regard is hardly applicable to how museums could take advantage of cinema, though. These are figures representing how people consume new products coming out of the industry, and is meant only to illustrate a culture fixated on the silver screen. What is more relevant to museology is how much interest exists in older films. Museums are typically dedicated to exhibiting culture of proven worth, which has stood the test of time. Fortunately, the culture of cinema extends its obsessions backward in time as well. As of 2016, the total worth of the home video market is estimated by the Entertainment Merchant Association to be \$35 billion.<sup>84</sup> Looking specifically at Blu-Ray sales figures for the week of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, the top three sellers were averaging 172,993 units sold for each product in the United States alone, totaling \$3,614,943.<sup>85</sup> All three of these film's sales were actually down from previous weeks.<sup>86</sup> This substantial industry on its own is impressive, and illustrates that a strong interest exists for the continued memorializing of films after their initial release.

The recent 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary re-release of the *Back to the Future* trilogy can serve as a case study in how reviving old films can be a useful enterprise. In commemoration of the date when protagonist Marty McFly travels to the future in *Back to the Future Part II* (1989), October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015, Universal Studios ran a limited screening of the movie trilogy in theatres that night. The event ran on 1,815 screens in the United States alone, and raked in just under \$5 million worldwide.<sup>87</sup> This constitutes a success in both domestic and international markets, having

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<sup>84</sup> Entertainment Merchant Association, "Annual Industry Report," accessed July 18, 2016, <http://www.entmerch.org/industry/annual-industry-report/>.

<sup>85</sup> The Numbers, "United States Blu-ray Sales Chart for Week Ending May 1, 2016," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.the-numbers.com/weekly-bluray-sales-chart>.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Deadline Hollywood, "'Back to The Future' Day Racks Up \$4.8M from Trilogy Re-Release – Update," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://deadline.com/2015/10/back-to-the-future-day-racks-up-dough-from-trilogy-re-release-1201590945/>.

produced revenue with a three-decade old film. Around the same time, a documentary of the franchise was produced entitled *Back in Time*, which was crowdfunded with approximately \$150,000, detailing the cultural impact of the franchise.<sup>88</sup> This was met with acclaim in the independent film circuit, ran on video streaming services such as Netflix, and saw a home video release to produce further revenue.<sup>89</sup> Between these two examples, we can see how aging pieces of cinema can be used to both produce new sources of funding, as well as serve in examining culture in interesting ways. The latter consideration is especially crucial, as this falls firmly into the purview of museology's goals.

Thus, we can plainly see that cinema is not only highly lucrative, but there are direct inlets into the business of film for the museological community. As guardians of culture, museums can be places where people go to experience the cinematic past and particularly pristine examples of the medium. This would tap into an abundant source of funding, during a time when shortfalls are exceedingly common for museums. Additionally, the film industry's success has captured a younger generation's attentions far better than museums, boasting far greater numbers in attendance and visitation. Museums tend to be a place of occasional visits, rather than a place where people go frequently; a nature that could change by adopting film's ability to draw in audiences. Taking advantage of the public's obsession with cinema is an idea with so much potential that institutions that do so have the possibility of alleviating financial stress.

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<sup>88</sup> Kickstarter, "Back in Time - A Back to the Future Documentary," accessed July 18, 2016, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1193589543/back-in-time-a-back-to-the-future-documentary>.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Purview of Museological Cinema

Before moving on to examine how to take advantage of the opportunities presented by cinema, the matter of how film interfaces with museums must be addressed. This entails looking at the types of film currently presented in museums, and the extent that this purview can be expanded to reach a greater audience. It must be stressed that there are limitations to what films can be included in the museum industry, as well as individual institutions.

It is important to ensure that the films played in museums are compatible with their mission statements. Fortunately, this is not a significant issue, as the art form is versatile enough to compliment most institution's goals. Large museums usually have fairly broad mission statements, servicing the public in terms of general knowledge or in the exposure of culture. Take for example the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, whose mission is stated, "Through incomparable collections, rigorous research, and dynamic public outreach, we explore the infinite richness and complexity of American history. We help people understand the past in order to make sense of the present and shape a more humane future."<sup>90</sup> A film like *High Noon* (1952) is a good example of an appropriate parallel. In this film set in the Wild West, a retiring sheriff engages in a journey to bring down a man he once sent away, finding that the town he spent his life cleaning up has abandoned him in his moment of greatest need. The film would be useful for examining themes like historical archetypes of the American past, and for its nature as a parable of the Red Scare, warning against the pitfalls of enforcing social orthodoxy.<sup>91</sup> Other subjects of American history are ripe in cinema, such as the Civil War in films like *Glory*

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<sup>90</sup> The National Museum of American History, "Mission & History," accessed March 23, 2017, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/museum/mission-history>.

<sup>91</sup> Manfred Weidhorn, "High Noon: Liberal Classic? Conservative Screeed?" *Bright Lights Film Journal*, January 31, 2005, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://brightlightsfilm.com/high-noon-liberal-classic-conservative-screed/#.WN69zPnyuM8>.

(1990). Nominated for multiple Academy Awards in 1990, *Glory* is among the most lauded films representing the United States' deadliest war.<sup>92</sup> Science museums are subject to the same consideration, with the Sci-Fi genre being a particularly useful tool to approach the subject of real world science and concepts. One could look at how *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) compares with the realities of spaceflight, being that it is praised for its fidelity to real science.<sup>93</sup>

Alternatively, other films can be used to show how their representations depart from reality.

Even more obvious, cinema is directly relevant to the missions of museums dedicated to the arts.

Take for example the Museum of Modern Art, with its mission stated as,

“The Museum of Modern Art is a place that fuels creativity, ignites minds, and provides inspiration. With extraordinary exhibitions and the world's finest collection of modern and contemporary art, MoMA is dedicated to the conversation between the past and the present, the established and the experimental. Our mission is helping you understand and enjoy the art of our time.”<sup>94</sup>

Even beyond the consideration of film as a form of contemporary art, the unifying goal of most art museums is to enliven and inspire the lives of others. Like any other art form, cinema is fully able to achieve this objective.

Smaller museums might have more difficulty adapting cinema to their purposes, but the art form still holds advantages for their missions. Assuming a film is relevant to their mission, its use can facilitate a greater appreciation for what they exhibit. For instance, a museum dedicated to South America would greatly benefit from screening Werner Herzog's classic *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972). This film legendarily highlighted the Andes Mountains and Amazon River

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<sup>92</sup> The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science, “1990: The 62nd Academy Award Winners,” accessed April 20, 2017, <http://oscar.go.com/news/oscar-history/1990-62nd-academy-award-winners>.

<sup>93</sup> Margaret Rhodes, “The Amazingly Accurate Futurism of 2001: A Space Odyssey,” *Wired*, August 19, 2015, accessed April 20, 2017, <https://www.wired.com/2015/08/amazingly-accurate-futurism-2001-space-odyssey/>.

<sup>94</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, “Mission Statement,” accessed March 23, 2017, <https://www.moma.org/about/index>.

as its backdrop with unparalleled efficacy, detailing the doomed voyage of a conquistador looking for El Dorado.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, it would be a serious oversight if the upcoming Academy Museum fails to screen films from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' long history in a theatre of its own. Even without a theme, local museums would serve their communities by screening significant films just for the sake of artistic entertainment. If benefitting the community is the mission, then cinema fits that goal for all the reasons above. Film complements the missions of individual museums through its versatility, whether it be through its general nature as an art form, a certain film's relevance to a specific subject, or to enliven the community through its capacity to inspire or merely entertain.

Unfortunately, not all concepts are universal; therefore, neither is the idea of applying film to all museums. There are some institutions that will not be able to take part in Museological Cinema. Certain museums, whether large or small, have mission statements that simply fall outside the use of film. For instance, a museum or art gallery dedicated specifically to sculpture has little use for cinema. One could imagine a limited use of video screens to exhibit the act of sculpting, or films depicting the exploits of famous exemplars of the art. However, the theatre-based experience offered by this concept is really of no use to such an institution. There are also museums that may well have use for cinema, but the benefit would be too limited to justify. For example, an institution that is specifically dedicated to honoring the local art or history of a small town probably has few relevant films to show. Large cities have access to a great deal of cinematic material, such as New York City possessing a plethora of films dedicated to famous personalities and events associated with the area; in contrast, a local town with a handful of

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<sup>95</sup> Jacques de Villiers, "Myth, Environment and Ideology in the German Jungle of Aguirre, the Wrath of God," *Senses of Cinema*, July, 2012, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2012/feature-articles/myth-environment-and-ideology-in-the-german-jungle-of-aguirre-the-wrath-of-god/>.



famous figures or events has little with which to meet their mission's requirements with. In such cases, a museum must demur from the advantages of cinema for the sake of its mission.

Among institutions that have a potential use for cinema, standards for what types of film are appropriate must be accessed. Museums typically honor only ideal examples of culture into their collections, whether by outstanding quality or unique value to their mission. The same should be held true for film. This implies that a number of genres stand out as particularly useful for museums, many of which are already prominently featured in their halls.

We have witnessed pieces of cinema pass the test of time, residing in the collective consciousness of society well past their initial relevance as locusts of the film industry's financial benefit. Many classics were not crafted primarily with artistic merit in mind, yet quintessentially stand the test of time in public consciousness for a variety of reasons. One such cause could be the possession of qualities that are not immediately obvious at release; wherein a film is produced for profit motives, but thrives as the public recognizes its inherent worth. One could look at Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) as an example. Due to Lewis Carroll's work residing in the public domain, countless adaptations of the source material have been produced over the years with different adaptations and qualities. However, the animated Disney version has remained definitive to the public for over half a century because its use of expert animation and creative interpretation of the story has pleased the public the most to date. Classics can also be produced by films resonating with deeply held cultural values or dilemmas. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), is rather slow and boring by modern standards, exhibiting a plot typical of the era about extraterrestrials coming to Earth and forcing humans to deal with the resulting issues. Nonetheless, the film stood the test of time after its initially lukewarm release because of what it represented: the icy anxiety of the incumbent Cold War, symbolized by humanity's

standoff with the robot Gort.<sup>96</sup> The film effectively resonated with its contemporary audience, making it emblematic of its era, and subsequently earning it classic status.

Two other types of cinema that bear merit to museums are the previously discussed Art Film genre and similar indie cinema. Both reside outside the largely commercial art form, putting artistic merit above concerns for mass appeal. The very term “Art Film” is revelatory of the genre’s focus toward the sophisticated aspects of the craft. Complex, sometimes obscure techniques are used in these films to push the medium’s use to its limit, following in other art form’s traditions of artistic experimentation. Much as with literature, heavy use of symbolism, often to the extent of being esoteric, is regarded as adding to the allure of Art Films; in this way, they cater to the intellectual’s need for mental exercise. One might call David Lynch’s seminal 1977 picture *Eraserhead* as the highest expression of this genre. What can be interpreted as an allegory about the anxiety experienced by aging and becoming a parent, is open to an almost unlimited number of views, utilizing impressive filmmaking techniques to depict a highlight reel of eerie symbols.<sup>97</sup> Indie films use much more modest cinematic techniques, but share some commonalities with their Art Film brethren. Films of this type purposely reside outside the mainstream, being made with low budgets, usually with a primarily artistic intent. As these genres represent a pure state of artistry for film as a medium, they are uniquely advantageous for art museums, and thus deserve a place in their halls.

Another clearly applicable variety of cinema is foreign films. By looking at such films, audiences can be exposed to other cultures and learn from the experience, providing an

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<sup>96</sup> American Film Institute, “The Day the Earth Stood Still – 1951,” accessed March 31, 2017, [http://www.afi.com/wise/films/day\\_the\\_earth\\_stood\\_still/dtess.html](http://www.afi.com/wise/films/day_the_earth_stood_still/dtess.html).

<sup>97</sup> Bilge Ebiri, “David Lynch Thinks No One Will Ever Agree on What *Eraserhead* Is About,” *Vulture*, September 16, 2014, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.vulture.com/2014/09/david-lynch-interview-eraserhead-midnight-movies.html>.

educational value to museum patrons. Much like classics, foreign films exist well back in time, providing a large variety of works from which to choose. For example, the Japanese film industry has existed as a competitor to Hollywood for over a century, and filmmaking's formative years occurred largely in European lands. This long history provides a confluence between foreign and classic films, giving many movies a potential extra benefit to viewers. For instance, a foreign film such as *Nosferatu* (1922) not only allows one to examine German culture, but meets virtually every standard of scrutiny for relevance in a museum: it has stood the test of time, bares relevance to the further development to its craft, and its use of Expressionism has artistic merit. Unlike classics, however, the exposure to the mores of other cultures should make more recent foreign films easily accepted by museologists. A cursory look at the comparably young South Korean industry, for instance, reveals an interesting phenomenon regarding the peninsula's culture. A vast genre of revenge films has emerged in recent decades, such as *Oldboy* (2003), *I Saw the Devil* (2010), and many, many more, all featuring a main plot about violent reprisal. There is healthy debate concerning where this trend comes from, with writers like *Dazed*'s Christine Jun speculating in her rundown of the best films in the sub-genre.<sup>98</sup> Some could draw similarities with earlier Japanese films, suggesting an imitation of sorts; another theory could be that the trend is caused by the stressful, constantly present threat of North Korea hanging over them; still another possibility could be the chronic instability of their national politics, with past presidents being indicted for corruption, and one, Park Chung-hee, assassinated in 1979. Such a trend is well worth examining for what it represents to South Koreans, and for the public to gain an appreciation for their rapidly expanding industry.

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<sup>98</sup> Christine Jun, "Korean Revenge Films," *Dazed*, August 19, 2013, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/16796/1/korean-revenge-films>.

A final form of cinema that stands out as appropriate for museums are documentaries. It is expected of museums to act as places where the public can be uplifted, gaining new insights into the world. Documentaries facilitate this, directly approaching subjects in an academic fashion. Institutions with education in mind, such as history or science museums, could adapt such films to great effect. Ken Burns' documentaries on various subjects of American history come to mind as ideal for the aforementioned National Museum of American History. However, the subjects available in documentary form are as vast and accommodating as the medium itself. There are documentaries applicable to virtually any mission one could imagine, whether an institution is focused on a broad subject like science, or a smaller, specific theme that could be targeted directly. A museum as narrowly focused as Graceland, dedicated to Elvis Presley, has no shortage of documentaries about the King worth screening. Documentaries direct approach and versatile nature make them among the most advantageous forms of cinema for museums.

Each of these types of film has found enough of a place in museology that one can occasionally come across them playing. Science museums, for instance, commonly feature documentaries, such as the Buffalo Science Museum, which use their IMAX theatres for that purpose.<sup>99</sup> The Florida Museum of Natural History's website shows a July 2016 screening of the Japanese film *Mothra* (1961), in which a giant moth terrorizes the people of Japan in a fashion popularized by Godzilla.<sup>100</sup> This selection taps both the classic and foreign film categories. And, as previously explored, Art and Indie Films have a hard-won place in the museum as well. The Whitney Museum of American Art has featured cinema since the dawn of the art film movement,

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<sup>99</sup> Buffalo Museum of Science, "Now Playing," accessed January 21, 2017, <http://www.sciencebuff.org/site/plan-a-visit-menu/national-geographic-3d-cinema>.

<sup>100</sup> University of Florida, "'Mothra' @ FLMNH (July 8)," accessed March 31, 2017, <http://sciencefiction.group.ufl.edu/news/2016/mothra/>.

and possesses materials from the 1960s to modern day.<sup>101</sup> There is, however, a question as to whether this plethora of films is all museums should offer, or if a widening of this purview can better satisfy the public.

### **Worthwhile Films with Bad Reputations**

The critical evaluation of what films are appropriate for museums is changing with time. Under a critical lens, many films that were widely perceived as mere entertainment are later revealed as highly sophisticated pieces of cinematic expression. This typically involves an initial marginalization of certain films, until their better qualities are later recognized. American Movie Classics' film site conducted a study of the type of films least likely to be acclaimed at the Academy Awards each year, concluding that Dramas dominate, while the Sci-fi, Action and Comedy genres are often snubbed, even if their quality is widely recognized.<sup>102</sup> These genres in particular are typically dismissed as pedestrian, requiring years of maintained popularity and critical assessment before outstanding examples can be accepted as cinematic art. Take for example the Museum of Modern Art's recent showcase of Bruce Lee films, which exhibited their transformative effect on martial arts and the action genre.<sup>103</sup> When once these films were considered action schlock, they are now finding a place of honor in the museum. Modern classics such as these abound within cinema, and should be utilized in museum theatres to draw attention to their often-overlooked quality. By embracing such pieces of cinema, museums will adopt

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<sup>101</sup> Whitney Museum of American Art, "Film and Video," accessed April 10, 2017, <http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/Film>.

<sup>102</sup> American Movie Classics, "Academy Awards Best Picture Genre Biases." Accessed March 24, 2017. <http://www.filmsite.org/bestpics2.html>.

<sup>103</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, "Eternal Bruce Lee," accessed March 24, 2017, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/film/3641>.

previously overlooked pieces of art, and draw in visitors better through a superior appeal to the general public's interest.

**Chart 3**

<b>Best Picture Nominees (and Winners) by Genre From 1927/8 to 2001 (Rounded to Nearest Percent)</b>			
<b>Genre</b>	<b>358 Nominees</b>	<b>74 Winners</b>	<b>Total: 432 films</b>
Drama	49%	39%	47%
Comedy	18%	14%	17%
Historical/Epic	10%	16%	11%
Musical	8%	11%	8%
Action-Adventure	6%	5%	6%
War	5%	8%	5%
Suspense	3%	3%	3%
Western	2%	4%	2%

An example of this type of film, is the 1982 sword and sorcery epic, *Conan the Barbarian*. The reader may balk at this immediately upon reading the title, perhaps recognizing the movie as a low-brow Arnold Schwarzenegger picture. This is ideal, as doing so reveals the magnitude of social forces working against the film. *Conan* is associated with action, as well as a lead actor who is practically emblematic of that genre of cinema. Looking past these surface-level qualities, one inevitably recognizes a work of brilliance. There is a great deal under the surface of *Conan*; enough to be the subject of museological appreciation.

The film opens up with a quotation, “That which does not kill us, makes us stronger.”<sup>104</sup> Opening a movie with a quotation is a trope often employed in sophisticated films to set a theme; in this case, *Conan* is signifying its relationship with the figure associated with the quote, Friedrich Nietzsche. It is through a Nietzschean lens that the proceeding events must be analyzed to understand its deeper meaning. At its core, *Conan* is an expression of the philosophies of Nietzsche regarding the creation of the *übermensch*, or “over man.”<sup>105</sup> The eponymous character experiences struggles that ultimately refine him into a liberated being. Essentially, Conan’s is an existential journey of maturity: a coming-of-age tale.

*Conan* is filled with great quotes like the one that opens the film, exploring a variety of themes and ideologies. The plot and themes are advanced through clever, inspired writing just as much as they are by action on screen. During Conan’s journey, he glimpses a variety of worldviews through discussion, ranging from that of a fellow lowly wanderer to the ennui of a crestfallen king. Central among these is the “Riddle of Steel,” which is answered by several

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<sup>104</sup> *Conan the Barbarian*, Blu-Ray, directed by John Milius, Los Angeles: Universal Pictures, 1982.

<sup>105</sup> David C Smith, “A Critical Appreciation of John Milius’s *Conan the Barbarian*,” *The Barbarian Keep*, 1996, accessed August 2, 2016, <http://www.barbariankeep.com/ctbds.html>.



people. This is first posed by Conan's father in the opening scene, who crafts a blade as his son watches. "The secret of steel has always carried with it a mystery. You must learn its riddle, Conan. You must learn its discipline. For no one -- no one in this world can you trust. Not men, not women, not beasts," he pauses to gesture to his sword, "This you can trust."<sup>106</sup> The lesson taught is that one cannot depend on others, and that one can only trust a strong blade, which is a power that can unlock a man's destiny. Later in his journey, Conan learns a new response to the riddle from his father's killer, Thulsa Doom. Captured by him, Conan laments out loud that he stole his father's sword, a metaphor with both Freudian and philosophical connotations. "Steel isn't strong, boy. Flesh is stronger," Doom explains.<sup>107</sup> He demonstrates this by calling to one of his enthralled cultists standing on a precipice far above, who without thinking steps off and falls to her death. "That is strength, boy. That is power. The strength and power of flesh."<sup>108</sup> His answer to the riddle of steel is not to master the blade, but rather to become the master of others. Having defeated his father and himself, Conan can make no retort, leaving the question of whether Doom's answer is correct.

This theme of disillusionment is central to the Nietzschean transformation Conan undergoes. Just as Zarathustra tells others that "God is dead" in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" as a way of demonstrating the folly of false ideals, the beliefs and comforting illusions presented throughout Conan's journey are each dispelled in turn.<sup>109</sup> This comes in the form of the Riddle of Steel, other character's follies as well as Conan's own. One instance in which the character comes very close to Nietzsche's Zarathustra is his turn away from religion. Conan finds sanctuary in a long-

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<sup>106</sup> *Conan the Barbarian*, directed by John Milius.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Austin Cline, "God is Dead: Nietzsche on Killing Deity," *Thought Co.*, February 12, 2017, accessed March 24, 2017, <https://www.thoughtco.com/god-is-dead-nietzsche-on-killing-god-3889769>.

abandoned crypt, which bears a body he quickly associates with his god Crom. This event plants a seed of doubt in his mind as to whether his god is merely a mirage of a long dead man. Toward the end of his journey, Conan speaks to Crom, openly expressing doubt that he will assist in the battle, exclaiming, "...to hell with you," if he does not.<sup>110</sup> As each false belief leaves Conan, he comes ever closer to the liberated Nietzschean idea.

The completion of Conan's journey comes with his final confrontation with Thulsa Doom. In the event, Doom offers some final words, "My child, you have come to me, my son. For who now is your father if it is not me? I am the wellspring, from which you flow. When I am gone, you will have never been. What would your world be, without me? My son."<sup>111</sup> In saying this, Doom resonates with the Nietzsche quote again. He has been the primary source of Conan's struggles, and thus has created him by causing all of the hardships that molded the warrior. Killing Doom is all that is left to give Conan's life meaning, so what would there be for him to live for when he is gone? This, Conan pays no heed to, as he raises his sword and sends Doom's head cascading down the stairs below. Conan exists in something of a wasteland himself now, left without an obvious goal, and now the master of his own destiny. Unburdened by these weights, he has completed his development into the *übermensch*: a being with the weighty responsibility of living through one's will alone.

This brief synopsis barely scratches the surface of the deep meaning in *Conan*. John Milius, the director and screenwriter of the film, crafted a cinematic masterpiece that runs through many veins of world mythology. Elements of the Hero's Journey, object fetishism, contemplation of death, and many others can be examined in the picture. None of this even mentions the role of

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<sup>110</sup> *Conan the Barbarian*, directed by John Milius.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

Valeria, played by Sandahl Bergman, which was the singular aspect of the film to receive unanimous praise upon release.<sup>112</sup> *Conan* was conceived as something of a sendup to operas such as *Siegfried* (1876), by Richard Wagner, and even followed an operatic formula for some scenes in which the music would be composed first, then the photography would be conducted to suit it.<sup>113</sup> This resulted in a highly unique film in its artistry, which possesses a depth of mind well worth analysis. When considering what pieces of cinema would be suitable to be featured in a museum theatre, these qualities make *Conan* an ideal candidate.

Why then is *Conan* a film that is often dismissed as pedestrian? Even today, after decades of cult recognition and vociferous defenders such as the author, the movie only has aggregated scores of 70% approval on Rottentomatoes.com.<sup>114</sup> Additionally, it holds a fairly low score of 43/100 on Metacritic.<sup>115</sup> Upon release, *Conan* was a highly polarizing film. Some who reviewed the film recognized it for the sophisticated qualities listed above, while others panned it. Vincent Canby of The New York Times took exception to the slow, contemplative nature of the script, interpreting it as a lack of focus, stating in his review, “He doesn't seem to have thought about what sort of movie 'Conan' should be. At the center of it all is the Milius-Oliver Stone screenplay that has no discernible point of view...”<sup>116</sup> One of the more shortsighted criticisms was *Conan's* use of a Nietzschean ethos, due to a still common, overstated equivocation of Friedrich

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<sup>112</sup> Internet Movie Database, “Sandahl Bergman – Biography,” accessed August 2, 2016, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000922/bio>.

<sup>113</sup> “Conan the Barbarian – Editorial Review,” accessed August 2, 2016, [http://www.filmtracks.com/titles/conan\\_barbarian.html](http://www.filmtracks.com/titles/conan_barbarian.html).

<sup>114</sup> Rotten Tomatoes, “Conan the Barbarian,” accessed July 20, 2016, [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/conan\\_the\\_barbarian/](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/conan_the_barbarian/).

<sup>115</sup> Metacritic, “Conan the Barbarian – 1982,” accessed April 1, 2017, <http://www.metacritic.com/movie/conan-the-barbarian>.

<sup>116</sup> Vincent Canby, “Fighting, Fantasy in 'Conan the Barbarian,’” *New York Times*, May 15, 1982, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F05E5D71038F936A25756C0A964948260&partner=Rotten%2520Tomatoes>.

Nietzsche's philosophies with those of Nazi Germany.<sup>117</sup> A number of other politicized criticisms were also made, but the lasting refutations of *Conan* tend to be those regarding it as a pedestrian film. First among these is the observation of its source material: the works of Robert E. Howard. Writing during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Howard's short stories are relegated to the literary genre of "pulp fiction," a term implying its base nature compared to higher forms of writing.<sup>118</sup> His creation therefore is taken in the same fashion as spectacle without substance, even in forms that stray far from its original conception. Howard fan Todd B. Vick wrote an article about the slow acceptance of the author's work in academic circles, noting, "In too many ways, this trend has been slower than a snail traveling through peanut butter... From 1984 to 2012 when I first began searching for academic material on Howard, only a handful of material had been 'published.'"<sup>119</sup> None of these black marks against the film reduce its potential for screening in a museum. Any one of these criticisms surrounding *Conan* would be ripe to discuss in a museological forum, as they are part of it as a cultural phenomenon.

Before expounding on the most relevant objection that some would have to screening *Conan*, a brief examination of another film that would be subject to the same criticism is warranted, in order to better invalidate the objection standing against such brilliant pieces of cinema. This is the 1987 action/ sci-fi masterpiece, *RoboCop*. The suggestion inherent in the term "Robocop," that of a robotic police officer, is of such an absurd quality that one can hardly mentally conceive of it without watching the film.

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<sup>117</sup> Smith, "A Critical Appreciation of John Milius's Conan the Barbarian."

<sup>118</sup> The Vintage Library, "What is Pulp Fiction?" accessed April 1, 2017, <http://www.vintagelibrary.com/pulpfiction/introduction/What-Is-Pulp-Fiction.php>.

<sup>119</sup> Todd B Vick, "Advocating the Need for Critical Research: Robert E. Howard in Academia," *On an Underwood No. 5*, October 25, 2015, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://onanunderwood5.blogspot.com/2015/10/advocating-need-for-critical-research.html>.

At its core, *RoboCop* is not a story of self-actualization in the same way as *Conan*.

Ostensibly the film is about a man who is killed, brought back to life as a machine to serve as the enforcer of a corporate agenda, and ultimately regains his sense of self; this character arc about personal realization is merely an aspect of a larger central theme. *RoboCop* exists as a dystopian drama, thus acting as a commentary of our society in present and future tense. For the former, the film lambasts the worst elements of Reagan era America: its flagrant political and corporate corruption, aggressive consumerism, as well as how humanity has become a commodity in modern economics. One of the highlights of *RoboCop* are the vignettes peppered throughout the film; a particularly favored one being for a board game entitled “Nuk ‘Em,” in which a family competes for geopolitical world domination through nuclear force.<sup>120</sup> This type of biting humor at society’s expense is among the film’s greatest qualities, placing it in a tradition of satire that goes back to Aristophanes’ works, such as the *Lysistrata* (411 BCE). In so being, *RoboCop* unravels our society to reveal uneasy truths about American life and brings its sense of justice to them. The titular character’s journey through criminality begins in the urban hell zone of Detroit’s streets, only to conclude with a brilliant satirical twist in the heights of a corporate boardroom.

*RoboCop* is also one of the most impressive pieces of science fiction of its time. One of the major duties of science fiction is to project a vision of the future that seems advanced beyond the present, while still remaining believable to audiences. Other, perhaps more ambitious, classics expressed visions of the future that ended up being refuted with the passing of years; 1982’s *Blade Runner*, for example, projected a time which reflected the contemporary belief that the

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<sup>120</sup> *RoboCop*, Blu-Ray, directed by Paul Verhoeven, Los Angeles: Orion Pictures, 1987.

Japanese were primed to take over the business world.<sup>121</sup> By contrast, *RoboCop*'s Detroit of the future was considerably more modest in estimations, and in so being, ended up looking very much like the city does today. It is true that the Detroit of *RoboCop* is just as out of control in violence and poverty as the one in real life. Yet, it is in the prediction of how the city would be victimized by its corporate interests that really demonstrates the film's prophetic nature. In *RoboCop*, the OCP Corporation is buying up Detroit's municipalities in order to privatize and profit from civic life; this is the dehumanization and commodification of the eponymous Robocop writ large. If this sounds familiar, it is because this plot played out in reality during the decades since the film's release. Not only did rampant corporate corruption accelerate on the national stage, continuing through the banking crash of 2008, its subsequent bailouts and lack of punitive justice against the system's elites, but a literal privatization occurred with Detroit's municipalities. In the summer of 2014, Detroit's water supply was leased by the city to private interests in the midst of a major municipal crisis.<sup>122</sup> Starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, the Great Lakes Water Authority, a company whose business is facilitating water services, began operating, and will last the next forty years.<sup>123</sup> At the \$50 million annual price of the lease, the GLWA will be seeking to generate revenue in excess of \$2 billion from the region's residents in order to turn a profit.<sup>124</sup> Essentially, the power this company will have over Detroit and its surrounding counties will be just shy of OCP's in the *RoboCop* universe. This eerie similarity with the 29-year-old film demonstrates just how impressive a piece of cinema *RoboCop* truly is.

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<sup>121</sup> Charlie Jane Anders, "When Did Japan Stop Being The Future?" *Gizmodo*, June 18, 2009, accessed August 2, 2016, <http://io9.gizmodo.com/5295925/when-did-japan-stop-being-the-future>.

<sup>122</sup> "Detroit's water crisis: privatization, public health and human rights," *Public Works*, July 31, 2014, accessed July 25, 2016, <http://www.publicworks.org/detroits-water-crisis-privatization-public-health-human-rights/>.

<sup>123</sup> City of Detroit, "Water and Sewerage Department," accessed July 25, 2016, <http://detroitmi.gov/dwsd>.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

Indeed, critics and audiences have lauded *RoboCop* with great praise. In the year of its release, the film was nominated for awards in a number of industry shows, including the Oscars.<sup>125</sup> Having won one of its three nominations from this, there is a possibility of seeing *RoboCop* honored at the Academy Museum someday.<sup>126</sup> A multitude of publications have recognized the film's excellence retrospectively in lists of cinematic achievement, including the American Film Institute's *100 Series*.<sup>127</sup> Unlike *Conan*, *RoboCop* has a fairly high approval rating on Rottentomatoes.com, boasting a respectable 88%.<sup>128</sup> Additionally, its 67/100 score on Metacritic is respectable.<sup>129</sup> Also unlike the former, the poor sequels *RoboCop* received have left the original's reputation largely intact. Few people are willing to challenge *RoboCop*'s status as a genuinely great film. Much like my treatment of *Conan*, this analysis of *RoboCop* barely scratches the surface of the film's genius, failing to mention certain dimensions of its themes, legendary performances by Peter Weller and Kurtwood Smith, some of the most quotable dialogue in cinematic history, as well as the admirable score.

None of this is to say that *RoboCop* has a good reputation. Despite all of the praise the film receives and its undeniable merits, it is still branded with the same overriding stigma *Conan* possesses. Both films are routinely undercut by the observation that they are violent in nature. This is especially true of *RoboCop*, existing as a consummate example of the "Hard R" sub-genre. Some of the more notable scenes of violence in these films include Thulsa Doom having his head dramatically hacked off, and the battle robot ED-209 obliterating a man's body with a

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<sup>125</sup> The Academy of Motion Pictures, "The 60th Academy Awards | 1988," accessed August 2, 2016, <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1988>.

<sup>126</sup> "The 60th Academy Awards | 1988."

<sup>127</sup> American Film Institute, "America's Most Heart-Pounding Movies," accessed August 4, 2016, <http://www.afi.com/Docs/100Years/thrills400.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> Rotten Tomatoes, "Robocop," accessed August 2, 2016, <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1017712-robocop/>.

<sup>129</sup> Metacritic, "RoboCop – 1987," accessed April 1, 2017, <http://www.metacritic.com/movie/robocop>.

high-caliber machinegun for a full 13 seconds. Violent action in these films is a major facet of their character, mesmerizing audiences with their spectacle. The stigma of violent expression as a primitive stimulus has caused these films to be doubly marginalized, stymying people's recognition of their otherwise outstanding qualities.

There are many films whose sophistication goes on unappreciated, much like *Conan* and *RoboCop*. The reasons for this are as diverse as the films themselves, ranging from violence, to a lack of critical reception, to obscurity. Museums can be a place where otherwise overlooked or underestimated films are reevaluated on their merits. Doing so would greatly increase the range of films that could be screened, as well as the audiences that will be brought into the museum. It is best to look at embracing popular cinema as a new partnership, where two forces gain from one another. Advocating for such a stance Dr. Angela Dalle Vacche, a noted film scholar who works out of the Georgia Institute of Technology, states,

“There are also major differences between the cinema and the museum: the former is about voyeurism, while the latter depends on exhibition. Yet this contrast does not prevent a beneficial exchange between the two partners. By siding with the art museum, mainstream cinema gains status and legitimacy, and by siding with the fictional cinema, the museum becomes interesting thanks to the unique vision of a strong director.”<sup>130</sup>

Engaging with popular cinema presents the possibility both to benefit in overt, monetary ways, and to offer the possibility of adopting a cultural ethos into the artistic community that resonates with the general public.

Another type of film that is often underestimated in value are Cult Films. This is a variety that is difficult to classify, as what usually designates them is simply their obscure status. Films

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<sup>130</sup> Vacche, “Introduction: A Cosmology of Contingency,” 1-2.



of any genre can be considered cult, including action, comedies, dramas and others that are impossible to place. There are many good films that are considered to have cult status, as well as bad ones, meaning that quality is also no object in the distinction. Additionally, a once obscure Cult Film can later become popular and still be considered a part of the genre. What is important for this study is that many films considered to have cult status fit into the consideration of underestimated cinema that would be of benefit to museum theatres.

Sometimes a good film does not achieve much success in its release, but leaves a strong impression on people who see it. This was very much the case with Rob Reiner's 1984 Mockumentary *This is Spinal Tap*. The film follows the titular Heavy Metal parody band on a fictional tour, wherein farcical hijinks ensue. Despite receiving stellar reviews by critics, *This is Spinal Tap* earned only a few million dollars at the box office.<sup>131</sup> Although the film went under the radar, it nonetheless found its audience. Popular moments in the film have become iconic, such as the scene where the now popular term "Turn it to Eleven" was coined. The joke is that Nigel Tufnel, the band's lead guitarist, had an extra number installed on his sound amplifier's volume exceeding the standard maximum of ten, not realizing that the act was arbitrary, and did not actually make the machine objectively louder.<sup>132</sup> This scene resonated with people enough that the term received a page on TV Tropes, a site that catalogs popular nomenclature.<sup>133</sup> Even more unique is that the fictional band became a reality after the film's release, with the actors involved releasing albums and touring for years. Today, the film has earned tens of million dollars in the home video market, and the band's subsequent activities have resulted in far

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<sup>131</sup> Box Office Mojo, "This is Spinal Tap," accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=thisisspinaltap.htm>.

<sup>132</sup> *This is Spinal Tap*, Blu-ray, directed by Rob Reiner, Los Angeles: Embassy Pictures, 1984.

<sup>133</sup> TV Tropes, "Up to Eleven," accessed April 20, 2017, <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/UpToEleven>.

more.<sup>134</sup> This illustrates another example of an underappreciated film that museum theatres could be used to give exposure to. Countless such Cult Films are waiting to be given another chance to impress the public, as they have their diehard adherents.

If museums are intent on providing cultural experiences, Cult Films offer many ideal opportunities. There are a number of cult films that have amassed fervent followings, drawing regular crowds of people to admire their unique nature. The classic example of phenomenon is the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), in which a number of rituals have formed over decades to supplement the film. People show up to frequent screenings, mimicking the cross-dressing character's attire, reciting key lines and throwing various food items as the film plays.<sup>135</sup> A museum could easily serve as an instrument in investigating the origins of this phenomenon, as well as hosting the film and participating in the spectacle. A perhaps even more attractive alternative to this can be found in the now infamous 2003 cinematic travesty *The Room*. Widely considered to be one of the worst films ever made, *The Room* was the passion project its director, writer, producer, and lead star Tommy Wiseau, who has become something of a stupefying phenomenon himself due to his outlandish appearance, mannerisms, impossible to place accent, and mystifying origins. Like *Rocky Horror*, *The Room* became popular through late-night screenings where people came to obsess over the film's absurdity through a rapidly expanding set of rituals. Many of the same actions as Rocky Horror, such as calling out lines and throwing food items as the film plays, applies, as well as other obscure rituals that are exclusive to its screenings.<sup>136</sup> Plenty of material exists for a museological exhibition of *The Room*, with a tell-all

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<sup>134</sup> Robert Kolker, "This Lawsuit Goes to 11," *Bloomberg*, April 20, 2017, accessed April 20, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-04-20/this-is-spinal-tap-s-400-million-lawsuit>.

<sup>135</sup> Justin Wilson, "Rocky Horror Rituals," *The Calgary Journal*, March 2, 2013, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.calgaryjournal.ca/index.php/calgary-arts/1550-rocky-horror-rituals>.

<sup>136</sup> Jon Danforth-Appell, "A Viewer's Guide to The Room," *The A.V Club*, March 11, 2009, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.avclub.com/article/a-viewers-guide-to-the-room-25721>.

book named *The Disaster Artist* to work off of, memorabilia, and a constantly primed sub-culture ready to see the film. Other ideal candidates for this include *The Miami Connection* (1987), *Double Down* (2005), and many more. With the vast amount of titles in this niche category alone, this gives an idea of the limitless potential opportunities offered by broadening the scope of films to be featured in museums.

Engaging with popular culture is a tested way of reaching people. This much is demonstrated by a recent traveling exhibition of David Bowie's career, which became the most popular exhibit in the London-based Victoria and Albert Museum's history, as shown in the chart below.<sup>137</sup> Popular cinema is a convenient way to engage with popular culture, bringing in crowds of people who may not otherwise show up. Films in the vein of *RoboCop* and *This is Spinal Tap* have the potential to serve this use, boasting a lasting appeal and undeniable merits. By using such an effective new tool in their possession, museums will be much better equipped to attract the audiences they need. If museologists fail to recognize this, their theatres will be tragically less lucrative and satisfactory to the public.

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<sup>137</sup> *The Grand Totals: Exhibition and Museum Attendance Numbers Worldwide*, U. Allemandi & Co. Publishing Ltd., 2015, accessed April 10, 2017, <http://www.museum.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Visitor-Figures-2015-LO.pdf>.

Chart 4

<b>BOWIE ON TOUR</b>	
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON <i>(March-August 2013)</i> .....	<b>312,000</b> visitors
ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO, TORONTO <i>(September-November 2013)</i> .....	<b>146,000</b> visitors
MUSEU DA IMAGEM E DO SOM, SÃO PAULO <i>(January-April 2014)</i> .....	<b>80,000</b> visitors
MARTIN-GROPIUS-BAU, BERLIN <i>(May-August 2014)</i> .....	<b>160,000</b> visitors
MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, CHICAGO <i>(September 2014-January 2015)</i> .....	<b>194,000</b> visitors
PHILHARMONIE DE PARIS/CITÉ DE LA MUSIQUE, PARIS <i>(March-May 2015)</i> .....	<b>197,000</b> visitors
AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE, MELBOURNE <i>(July-November 2015)</i> .....	<b>200,000</b> visitors
GRONINGER MUSEUM, GRONINGEN <i>(December 2015-April 2016)</i> .....	<b>185,000</b> visitors (est)



## Operating Museum Theatres

Now that the subject of how museology and cinema has been thoroughly explored, we must consider how best to operate a museum theatre. The considerations at hand range from the fundamentals of operation, to ideas on how to make the most of a community asset. There are a variety of ways that museums already use cinema admirably, which will be highlighted. However, there is much more that can be done to improve this, and those which already engage with cinema could stand to use their facilities with greater frequency. Here we will see how to foster the use of film, and what a well-functioning museum theatre might look like.

The daunting task of gaining the rights to screen films can seem intimidating at first. Fortunately, this is not nearly as complex or as expensive as one may believe. The first consideration to make when approaching this issue is to obtain the right to screen films commercially. One must obtain a license from an institution's local government yearly, which comes affordably for small theatres.<sup>138</sup> This initial step opens up the possibility of obtaining rights for all sorts of films. The first variety of cinema one gains access to is the pool of films that reside in the public domain, requiring no additional steps to screen. A piece of intellectual property becomes public domain when its ownership becomes null, through a variety of circumstances. In so being, the material becomes free to use, no longer subject to licensing or restrictions of use. In the United States, copyrights are generally voided seventy years after an owner's death, meaning that many classic films are available for immediate use, and more are

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<sup>138</sup> Michael Batton Kaput, "How to Start Your Own Movie Theater," *Houston Chronicle*, December 9, 2011, accessed April 7, 2017, <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/start-own-movie-theater-12793.html>.

being freed up all the time.<sup>139</sup> This, however, only represents a small segment of films desirable for use.

If a film is not legally within the public domain, one must go the extra step of licensing it for screening. One may do so under two separate conditions: under public performance rights, if no revenue is being produced; or through the permission of a copyright owner if profits are intended.<sup>140</sup> The former can be obtained simply by obtaining a version of the film published by specific vendors, who give license through your ownership of the copy.<sup>141</sup> Permission of copyright holders can be more difficult, but become progressively easier as one operates a functioning theatre. This is due to the fact that one must obtain a license to screen films owned by specific entities, before even asking for permission with a specific film.<sup>142</sup> Learning what entities own the rights to certain films and obtaining the right to exhibit them is easy because a studio's full library usually falls under the umbrella of a licensor, and most of these entities hold the rights to the work of multiple studios.<sup>143</sup> As an institution accrues these licenses, exhibiting films becomes easy through merely requesting permission, which is expressly given barring exceptional issues. The cost of such licenses varies based on several factors, including type of venue, audience size and the licensors, but is generally affordable for a revenue generating institution.<sup>144</sup> Certain companies issue yearlong licenses for a flat fee, based on the factors above.

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<sup>139</sup> United States Copyright Office, "Duration of Copyright," accessed January 17, 2017, <https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ15a.pdf>.

<sup>140</sup> Enoch Pratt Free Library, "How Do I Find Out if a Movie Has Public Performance Rights?" accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.prattlibrary.org/locations/sightsandsounds/?id=11096>.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Motion Picture Licensing Corporation, "Frequently Asked Questions," accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.mplc.org/page/faqs>.

<sup>143</sup> "Copyrights and your Rights." (Presentation, Association of College Unions International, Bloomington, IN, November 13, 2003).

<sup>144</sup> PTO Today, "Question: Alternative to Swank Motion Pictures/Movie Licensing USA?" accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.ptotoday.com/answers/question/11588-alternative-to-swank-motion-picturesmovie-licensing-usa>.

<sup>145</sup> Others demand a cut of admission profits, usually between 35% to a full 50%.<sup>146</sup> Still others demand a flat fee paid per screening, usually between \$250 and \$600.<sup>147</sup> In addition to this, the types of license offered by such vendors can range in the rights they offer. In some instances, the rights extended are for unlimited showings within a timeframe, while others are for a single showing. Negotiating the nature of these licenses requires some attention to detail, so that a museum can play the films they want for whatever duration suits them. By following these procedures, one can as easily start their own cinema as run a museum theatre.

One aspect of Museological Cinema that should engender little argument is an adherence to the current film rating systems in place. In the United States, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has used a several tiered system of appraising who is eligible for admittance to see individual films since 1968; several similar systems exist in other nations for the same purposes.<sup>148</sup> This is used to prevent younger people from seeing films deemed too vulgar. Whether one agrees with this moral standard or not, this is a very important consideration for the reason of liability. If a sensitive child is exposed to disagreeable content, the establishment that offered this product could be held accountable for asserted damages. Enforcing these restrictions allows theatres to avoid paying such damages in a way no different than establishments selling alcohol, tobacco, or pornography.

The key to unlocking cinema's potential for museums is to take advantage of its variety. Humans are habitual creatures, and by utilizing the popularity of well-known films to attract

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<sup>145</sup> Motion Picture Licensing Corporation, "Frequently Asked Questions."

<sup>146</sup> Criterion Pictures, "Criterion's Awesome Movie License," accessed January 17, 2017, [https://www.criterionpic.com/CPL/lcl\\_movielicence.html](https://www.criterionpic.com/CPL/lcl_movielicence.html).

<sup>147</sup> Twilight Zone Cinema Services, "Movie Licensing," accessed April 10, 2017, <http://www.tzcinema.com/outdoor-movie-screen-rentals/movie-selection/film-licensing>.

<sup>148</sup> Motion Picture Association of America, "Our Story," accessed July 31, 2016, <http://www.mpa.org/our-story/>.

them repeatedly, an institution takes a significant step forward in making itself a place visited by habit. Based on the work of B.F. Skinner, we know now that new habits are formed by two main factors: repetition and positive reinforcement.<sup>149</sup> Modern movie theatres have made themselves into a place of habit by offering a wide variety of films that appeal to people's interests, which are regularly switched out for new alternatives. This works well by successfully targeting the two main areas of habit formation, in that they positively reinforce through the use of entertainment oriented films, and their variety encourages repetition. Educational psychologist Kendra Cherry gives a clue as to why film has become an especially good catalyst for habit formation stating, "The longer the time [of reinforcement], the more likely it becomes that an intervening behavior might accidentally be reinforced."<sup>150</sup> Due to the fact that audiences are experiencing mental and emotional stimulus for a prolonged period of time while viewing films, the positive reinforcement factor is especially conducive to habit formation. However, without the second factor – repetition – a habit is not successfully created. Therefore, museums must use cinema in the same fashion as movie theatres to take advantage of its potential, offering popular films in variety, while also switching them out regularly, thereby turning themselves into a destination of habit.

Though this concept is intended to benefit the whole of the museum's audience, some measure of demographic targeting should be taken. Cinema as a form of entertainment is most successful in engaging the young, with diminishing results for older demographics. According to the MPAA, whose chart is posted below, the highest rate of frequent moviegoers is between the

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<sup>149</sup> Simply Psychology, "Skinner - Operant Conditioning," accessed April 3, 2017, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html>.

<sup>150</sup> Kendra Cherry, "What is Positive Reinforcement?" *Psychology Today*, August 31, 2016, accessed January 20, 2017, <https://www.verywell.com/what-is-positive-reinforcement-2795412>.

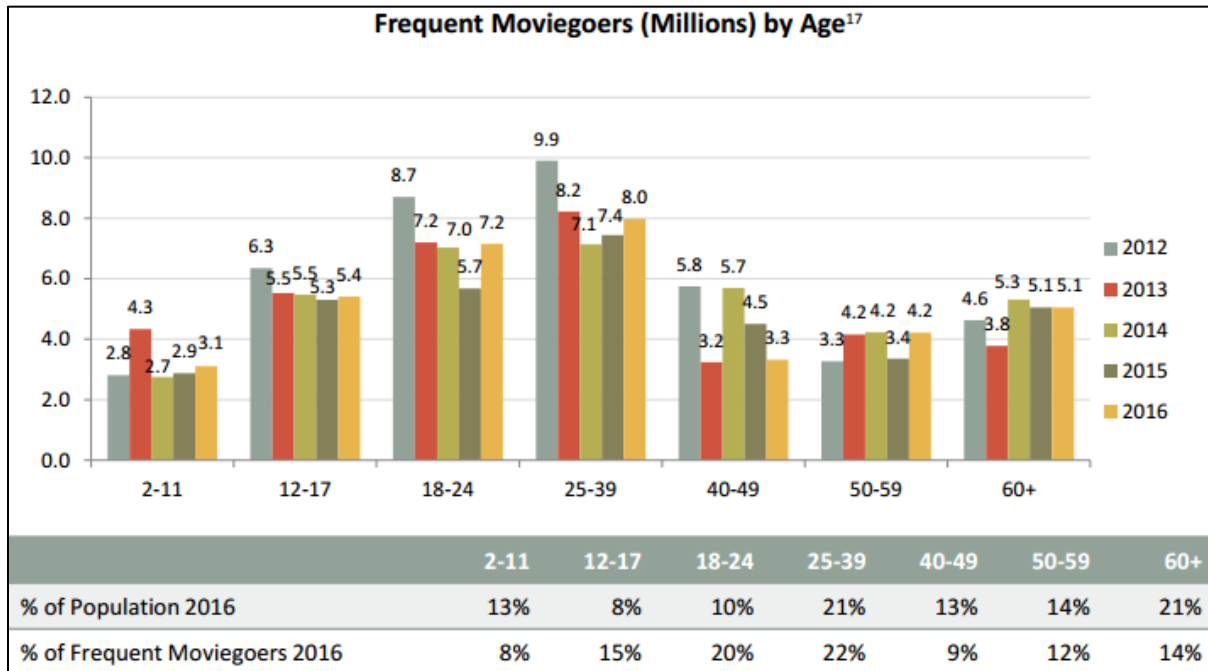


ages of 25 and 39, with the second and third highest being younger.<sup>151</sup> With this in mind, it is perhaps best to target these audiences using films that derive from their younger years. In this way, a recognizable film from the 1980s or '90s has a better chance of drawing in crowds, due to these primary age group's connections to it. In doing so, a higher frequency of visitation is more easily achieved, and thus financial goals and a greater attention to museum's other offerings are better met. As these younger audiences are targeted over time, they will ideally remain frequent visitors through habit as they get older, presenting museums with future gains as the next generations are targeted in succession.

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<sup>151</sup> *Theatrical Market Statistics – 2016*, Motion Pictures Association of America.

Chart 5



It is up to museologists to decide what films are appropriate for their museum. However, as explored above, this should take account of the public's interests. Walking the line between what is in good taste for the museum's standards and where the public's interests lay is complicated, and requires a great deal of conversation. For instance, should a fine arts museum stray far from a near-exclusivity of Art Films? I would offer the opinion that their standards should be higher than that of other museums, but past practices of relegating themselves to one narrow variety of cinema is proved to be too restrictive. There are plenty of films that have been embraced by the public, which can still be considered nearly perfect in their artistic qualities. Take for example the career of Stanley Kubrick, whose films are crafted with an almost unrivaled level of detail and dimension; or Christopher Nolan's modern classic *Memento* (2000). These should have little difficulty finding a place beside Art Films in a fine arts museum. Films that are not recognized for their outstanding artistic qualities, but are of some interest as a subject are another type of film that requires negotiation. Suppose that a museum is featuring an exhibition on the *Alien* franchise. *Alien* (1979) and its sequel *Aliens* (1986) are both cinematic masterworks that can be examined exhaustively on their own. But if a museum is exhibiting the franchise, perhaps they should also screen their inferior sequels? *Alien 3* is a bad film, yet it has a great deal of interesting information surrounding its development, as well as a later released director's cut to compare and contrast with. One could very well make a good argument for including *Alien 3*, but there is considerably less merit possessed by any of the films following it. We could well imagine some still arguing to include the entire franchise for the sake of completion, while others want to distill the subject's essence from an exhibition. There is no single answer, and museologists will have to hold ongoing negotiations to decide what is best for their museums.

A useful idea that can be employed in a number of ways is to hold public surveys to assess people's interests. A simple poll can be held on a museum website, or for a more refined result be held in-house. This can pertain to obtaining information on what a community wishes to experience in terms of film genres, specific movies, or even exhibitions. For instance, a community museum could give an option of five films for people to select, and the top three could be fit into their theatre's schedule. Another way of doing this would be to have a suggestion box in front of admissions that people could enter a requested film into. If there's a dispute that cannot be resolved among museum staff, such as the *Alien* franchise example above, a website survey could be employed as the deciding factor. In advertising, the museum could even use this further to its advantage by promoting selected titles as "By Public Request". The community would be tied closer to the museum through such polls, and people would likely turn out to see the fruits of their participation.

Along with playing films regarded as worthy, museums should make the effort of supplementing some of their screenings with exhibits. One could easily imagine a museum dedicated to Japanese culture creating a variety of exhibits to go along with the career of Akira Kurosawa. Due to his long list of films, importance to cinema in general, and overseas success, Kurosawa is very fertile ground to work with, and has a great number of materials to exhibit related to his work. One could also imagine attention being given to less appreciated films, such as Masaki Kobayashi's masterpiece *Harakiri* (1962). The range of subjects for just this one film are vast, including the golden age of Japanese cinema, the Tokugawa Era, samurai in fact and fiction, the socialist ethos in postwar Japan, as well as the far before their time cinematic techniques used in the film.<sup>152</sup> Taking the subject of samurai on its own, no museum on Japanese

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<sup>152</sup> *Harakiri*, Blu-Ray, directed by Masaki Kobayashi, Tokyo: Shôchiku Eiga, 1962.

culture is rightly complete without a few *katanas*, *wakizashis* and *tantos* in their collection, thus making the potential exhibit easily assembled. Being the primary object of museums, it should be obvious that such events already take place. Museums full of exhibitions on cinema like La Cinémathèque Française exist, dedicating themselves to cinema as an art form.<sup>153</sup> Other museums like The Milwaukee Art Museum feature temporary exhibitions, such as their exhibit on Germany's 1920s horror boom.<sup>154</sup> Exhibits such as these stand on their own as tributes to cinema, and also serve to supplement a museum's base operations.

Museum theatres need to take steps to define themselves in contrast with regular film establishments. Whereas the latter makes their money from the public's interest in seeing new films, museums should resolve to limit their showcasing of recent releases as much as possible. In general, Museological Cinema should exhibit films that have stood the test of time, and have therefore gone through a lengthy period of critical evaluation. This ensures that a film is truly notable enough to be featured in an establishment of important or artistically impressive cultural fixtures. Exceptions should be made in the case of Art Films and Independent Cinema. Both of these are crafted specifically with artistic sensibilities in mind, and thus could be more readily accepted into the theatres of art museums. Some museums already do this, such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which holds a regular schedule of recent Indie Films.<sup>155</sup> This would also meet the goal museums have of promoting the arts by giving up-and-coming artists the exposure they need, as well as their films added revenue. Another example that curators and museologists might consider are films that have been selected for the film industry's annual

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<sup>153</sup> La Cinémathèque Française, "The Collections."

<sup>154</sup> Milwaukee Art Museum, "Exhibition: 'Haunted Screens: German Cinema in the 1920s' at the Milwaukee Art Museum," accessed April 4, 2017, <https://artblart.com/2017/01/18/exhibition-haunted-screens-at-the-milwaukee-art-museum/>.

<sup>155</sup> Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Film Independent at LACMA," accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.lacma.org/series/film-independent-lacma>.

award shows. Being that these pieces of art are considered the best of their particular year, this could give them the special consideration needed to be featured in a museum. An interesting idea would be for museum theatres to screen the expected winners of the Academy Award for Best Picture in the weeks leading up to the awards show. Newhall, California's William S. Hart Museum, for example, nearly did this in 2012, exhibiting objects associated with *Hugo* and *The Artist*, which were both nominated for Best Picture that year.<sup>156</sup> Featuring newer films in these ways would be a useful way of generating additional revenue for a museum.

A way in which museums can differ from normal theatres in this regard is to show films that are normally considered unsuitable for general release. This is most notable with films rated NC-17, in which no person under seventeen can attend even with a guardian present.<sup>157</sup> Most films with such a rating are refused screening in theatres, due to the reduced potential for profit. This recently happened with the movie *Blue is the Warmest Color* in 2013, wherein the lesbian romance Art Film was left out of general circulation.<sup>158</sup> Museums should resolve to show notable films regardless of the potential revenue, and therefore ought to screen NC-17 pictures without hesitation. This resolution should also be afforded to unrated and director's cuts of films that were initially re-cut to meet MPAA standards. If we are to present films as art, we must resolve to exhibit them in their purist form. It then follows that the definitive versions of films, which are often not rated by the MPAA, will have a place in Museological Cinema. We can either advertise these as "Unrated," use their theatrical ratings with an asterisk, or conservatively estimate their rating by assigning them one tier above the theatre version. However the finer details are

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<sup>156</sup> William S. Hart Museum, "William S. Hart Museum Honors Two Best Picture Oscar Contenders: Hugo and The Artist," accessed April 10, 2017, [https://nhm.org/site/sites/default/files/pdf/press/recent/2012\\_Hart\\_exhibit.pdf](https://nhm.org/site/sites/default/files/pdf/press/recent/2012_Hart_exhibit.pdf).

<sup>157</sup> ThoughtCo, "How Does a Movie Get Its Rating?" accessed July 31, 2016, <http://movies.about.com/od/dvds/fl/How-Does-a-Movie-Get-Its-Rating.htm>.

<sup>158</sup> Gary Sussman, "Whatever Happened to NC-17 Movies?" *Rolling Stone*, November 26, 2013, accessed July 31, 2016, <http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/news/whatever-happened-to-nc-17-movies-20131126>.

arranged, adhering to these systems is a very important way of both protecting museums from liability and maintaining their relationships with the film industry.

Film marathons are another idea worth consideration. A great number of museums already do this, such as the Margaret Mead Film Festival at the American Museum of Natural History.<sup>159</sup> Even obscure places like the Hash, Marijuana & Hemp Museum in Barcelona, perform this, as evidenced by a cannabis film marathon they held in 2015.<sup>160</sup> There are many series that can be played without interruption, or in succession, that people would be interested in seeing. One of the best examples of this is *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-2003) trilogy, directed by Peter Jackson. All three of these films are long, especially in their extended cuts, but might be worth screening for people in their entirety to show them as a complete work. Other types of marathons could be comparing an original piece with a later remake; for instance, screening *The Thing from Another World* (1951) and *The Thing* (1982) in succession. These types of showings are a safe bet for generating more revenue, and could reasonably be sold to the public at a discount rate to attract more business. A considerably riskier idea, but one that would appeal to cinephiles, is to screen different versions of the same film. Certain pieces of cinema have had a variety of different cuts made due to contentious behind the scenes issues. For instance, five different versions of the cinematic masterpiece *Brazil* (1985) have been released to the public.<sup>161</sup> Examining this would be an interesting exercise, highlighting the differences in each version, as

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<sup>159</sup> American Museum of Natural History, "Margaret Mead Film Festival 2016," accessed January 21, 2017, <http://www.amnh.org/explore/margaret-mead-film-festival-2016>.

<sup>160</sup> Hash, Marijuana & Hemp Museum, "Cannabis film marathon," accessed April 4, 2017, <http://hashmuseum.com/en/news/cannabis-film-marathon>.

<sup>161</sup> Internet Movie Database, "Brazil (1985) Alternate Versions," accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088846/alternateversions>.

well as why they exist. These types of marathons would be an interesting way of keeping a museum's offerings fresh.

Special events are a great way of keeping an institution's offerings fresh. A simple way of doing this would be to honor holidays with events of their own. Every year *Rocky* marathons are run on television during Fourth of July weekend, and every year people watch because they love the series. It therefore follows that some will choose to see the same thing on the big screen in a museum theatre, if given the option, which could play the *Rocky* series annually. A museum could play all of the films in succession, or hold screenings for one entry every day on the week of Independence Day. There are six films between *Rocky* (1976) and *Rocky Balboa* (2006) that would be played Monday through Saturday, while Sunday is reserved for a full marathon, to combine both approaches. Entire months like October and December could be catalysts for playing films associated with their popular holidays. Halloween has potential for an especially lucrative event, given the public's ongoing love of the horror genre. A museum could screen foreign horror films, such as *Kwaidan* (1964), or classics. It is a little-known fact that the quintessential vampire film, 1931's *Dracula*, starring Bela Lugosi, actually has a second version. Universal filmed an entirely separate film at the same time with different actors to tap Spanish speaking markets, producing what is sometimes referred to as *Spanish Dracula* (1931).<sup>162</sup> A double screening of these two films would be an interesting showcase, with *Dracula* followed by *Spanish Dracula*, exactly how they were filmed on the same set 85 years ago.

Since museums are aiming to enrich people's knowledge and appreciation of culture, they often hold conferences where artists can engage with the public. For instance, the previously

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<sup>162</sup> Alex A. Dowd, "Same year, same sets, different Draculas," *The A.V. Club*, October 6, 2014, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://www.avclub.com/article/same-year-same-sets-different-draculas-210065>.



mentioned *Mothra* event at the Florida Museum of Natural History featured a roundtable discussion among notable attendees after the screening.<sup>163</sup> Another example is Las Vegas' Mob Museum, which featured a screening of *Rob the Mob* (2014) that held a talk with producer and screenwriter Jonathan Fernandez after the film.<sup>164</sup> Museological Cinema is especially well purposed to cultivate this practice, as an entire industry exists of people to interview. Figures such as producers, directors and writers could be tapped to contribute a commentary on their films. When a museum premieres an anticipated or important new showing, it would be a good idea to promote the exhibited film with a guest appearance. This is a good way of giving exposure to film professionals who do not receive enough appreciation, being overshadowed by people with more influential positions. Writers, for instance, are an especially frustrated caste in Hollywood, with their initial vision being radically transformed by others. Audiences could listen to how their original ideas match the finished product, gaining new insights on notable films. This falls firmly in the museologist's goal of enriching culture, by providing a new dimension to already existing pieces of art.

### **Expanding Museum Cinema**

While some museums already possess all of the resources necessary to begin screening films immediately, many do not. This means that an investment is required for such institutions to make the next step in Museological Cinema. With the establishment of a modest theatre, museums will be equipped to take advantage of all the benefits already discussed. In order to

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<sup>163</sup> University of Florida, "'Mothra' @ FLMNH (July 8)."

<sup>164</sup> Evensi, "Rob the Mob: Movie screening and talk," accessed April 10, 2017, <https://www.evensi.us/rob-the-mob-movie-screening-and-talk-the-mob-museum/196412866>.

explore the possibility of building new museum theaters, two hypothetical models are presented in this section. The calculations are based on a maximum cost model to determine the most conservative estimate. Exceptions to this are stated outright, and are only made if their inclusion is for obvious reasons. In addition to this, an alternative option to constructing new theatre space is explored, which would bypass the need for construction altogether.

The first and easiest issue to address is how museums can obtain the technological resources necessary to create a theatre of their own. AMC theatres advertises the use of Sony 4K technology on their website, representing the cutting edge of projector technology.<sup>165</sup> A quick look at 4K projectors available on Sony's website reveals that these come in prices from \$11,000 to \$150,000, in several varieties.<sup>166</sup> The \$150,000 projector, Model SRXT423, is designed for large venues, and should thus be considered by only the most ambitious museums.<sup>167</sup> What we should have in mind are projectors that can play films in an acceptable quality on a screen one-half to a third the size of one in a professional movie theatre's. Thus, we shall take the \$17,000 Model VPLGH10/1 as a base line, as it is the most expensive of the modestly priced Sony projectors.<sup>168</sup> However, for the more modest museums, there exist far cheaper models of projectors to purchase. Surveying PC Magazine's top picks among movie projectors for 2016, the average price among ten came to \$891.90.<sup>169</sup> The \$1,699.99 Epson Home Cinema 1440 1080p 3LCD represents the maximum cost of these favorable retail projectors.<sup>170</sup> Both of these

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<sup>165</sup> AMC Theatres, "The Sony 4k Experience," accessed July 29, 2016, <https://www.amctheatres.com/sony4k>.

<sup>166</sup> Sony Corporation, "4K Projectors," accessed July 29, 2016, <https://pro.sony.com/bbsc/ssr/micro-sxrdsite/cat-projectors/>.

<sup>167</sup> Sony Corporation, "SRXT423," accessed July 29, 2016, <https://pro.sony.com/bbsc/ssr/micro-sxrdsite/cat-projectors/product-SRXT423/>.

<sup>168</sup> Sony Corporation, "4K Projectors."

<sup>169</sup> PC Magazine, "The Best Home Projectors of 2016," accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2401583,00.asp>.

<sup>170</sup> PC Magazine, "Epson Home Cinema 1440 1080p 3LCD Projector," accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2496611,00.asp>.

projectors put out enough Lumens to achieve a large range of screen sizes, giving flexibility to the rooms they are used in.<sup>171</sup> The Epson, for instance, is rated at 4,400 Lumens.<sup>172</sup> Taking various factors into consideration, the highly rated Elitescreens Model M150UWH2 is a perfect projection screen candidate at 150 inches, with a 16:9 aspect ratio, and priced online at an acceptable \$315.<sup>173</sup> Finally, a complete surround sound system is necessary for an appropriate cinematic experience. Research suggests the most suitable one for a single theatre among top rated retail models to be the Monitor Audio Model R90HT1, which is priced at roughly \$2,000.<sup>174</sup> A calculation of the expenses for the basic equipment results in a \$19,315 estimate for an expensive museum theatre and a \$4,014.99 cost for a modest alternative.

In order to decide how large a room is needed for a museum theatre, the number of desired seats must be determined, ranging from an expensive model of 100 seats, with a modest alternative of 50. The average size seat for a theatre has increased over the years to a width of 22 inches, implying a width of 2,200 for the seats alone.<sup>175</sup> In order to spread this out, the arrangement might be ten rows of ten, or five of ten each, requiring 220 inches for each row. The Smithsonian Accessibility Standards require a minimum of 48 inches for walking room; so a provision of up to 52 inches for comfort would be generous.<sup>176</sup> An additional row to lead people

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<sup>171</sup> Projector People, "Lumens Guide," accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.projectorpeople.com/resources/lumen-guide.asp>.

<sup>172</sup> PC Magazine, "Epson Home Cinema 1440 1080p 3LCD Projector."

<sup>173</sup> Elite Screens, "Manual Series," accessed July 29, 2016, <http://elitescreens.com/front/front/productdetail/product/227>.

<sup>174</sup> Trusted Reviews, "Monitor Audio R90HT1 review," accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.trustedreviews.com/monitor-audio-r90ht1-review>.

<sup>175</sup> Size Matters: How a growing American audience affects the size and cost of performing arts spaces, a report prepared by Theatre Projects Consultants, Theatre Projects Consultants, [www.theatreprojects.com](http://www.theatreprojects.com), July 2010, [http://theatreprojects.com/files/pdf/Resources\\_IdeasInfo\\_sizematters.pdf](http://theatreprojects.com/files/pdf/Resources_IdeasInfo_sizematters.pdf).

<sup>176</sup> Janice Majewski, *Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design*, Washington DC: Smithsonian Accessibility Program, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://accessible.si.edu/pdf/Smithsonian%20Guidelines%20for%20accessible%20design.pdf>.

to the front should be provided, enabling guests to ascend to higher seating as well. Thus, an average of 31 feet of width is needed for the theatre. As for length, add the needed distance from the screen to the space necessary for the seats, as well as an additional space for comfort. The average theatre seat in 2010 required 38 inches for physical space and legroom, implying a needed 380 or 190 inches for the seats alone.<sup>177</sup> Add to this the 247 inches needed for the screen's width and an added 20 for comfort, for a total of 53.9 or 38 feet for room length.<sup>178</sup> Thus, the total dimensions of the room needed to house the proposed museum theatre will either be an approximate 54x31 feet for an expensive variation, or 38x31 feet for modest variants. The national average price per square foot for a commercial renovation project is estimated at a range of \$160-170.<sup>179</sup> Using the maximum of \$170 per square foot cost as at a commercial estimate, the theatre space will cost either \$284,580 or \$200,260 alone.

In addition to building the room itself, some adjustments have to be made to make it adequate as a theatre. Since a theatre requires risers after their first row for a superior seating arrangement, this will add yet further costs. This will require a contractor to build the necessary platforms to area codes, which puts into question what the exact cost of such a project would be. To approximate this, adjustments must be made based on the costs of previous known projects. In a discussion on a site dedicated to cinema aficionados sharing information with one another, the AVS Forum's Design and Construction section on the subject of risers shows that a first row of 8-inch risers typically costs \$450 from a professional contractor for three seats' worth.<sup>180</sup> This

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Theater Seat Store, "How to Measure and Maximize the Space Needed for Seats in your Home Theatre," accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.theaterseatstore.com/How-to-Measure>.

<sup>179</sup> Dean Dalvit, "Cost per Square Foot of Commercial Construction by Region," *EV Studio*, August 6, 2009, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://evstudio.com/cost-per-square-foot-of-commercial-construction-by-region/>.

<sup>180</sup> AVS Forum, "Cost to Build a Riser," accessed April 6, 2017, <http://www.avforum.com/forum/19-dedicated-theater-design-construction/658770-cost-build-riser.html>.

thereby suggests that a row of ten would require around \$1,500 to construct. For the ten- and five-rowed theatres, this amounts to \$13,500 or \$6,000 at minimum, with likely additional costs to the increasing height of subsequent rows. The \$369 cost of a modestly priced pair of theatre chairs, implies another \$18,450 or \$9,225 to seat people once the room is configured.<sup>181</sup> Stairs to surmount the ascending height of the rows need to be constructed as well. According to Improvenet, a set of straight stairs with quality workmanship, which is above consideration for this proposal, typically costs from \$1,179 to \$1,919 to construct.<sup>182</sup> Although above the probable cost of the required stairway, the maximum of \$1,919 for aisles, adding to \$3,838 for both. With the added surface area of the risers' height, there is an approximate 60x18 or 40x18 feet surface area to cover with carpeting. An affordable commercial carpet sells for 55 cents a foot, bringing this cost up to \$594 or \$396.<sup>183</sup> If the aisles are done with vinyl flooring, it would require an area of coverage approximately 60x13 or 40x13 feet. An affordable, plain vinyl can be found commercially at \$1.57 a foot, implying \$1,285 or \$816.<sup>184</sup> Lighting for the room also has to be considered. According to the Homewyse calculator for lighting costs, the average price of an average, overhead, drum style fixture is between \$126 and \$352.<sup>185</sup> In order to disburse the light evenly throughout the room, it would require the installation of four fixtures, adding the maximum of \$1,408. Theatres also require a bit of subtle lighting for when the room is dark, so that people can navigate independent of the projector's lighting. LED light strips in the rows

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<sup>181</sup> Theater Seat Store, "The Grand," accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.theaterseatstore.com/grand-seat?sc=8&category=3320206>.

<sup>182</sup> Improvenet, "Average Cost to Build Stairs," accessed April 6, 2017, <http://www.improvenet.com/r/costs-and-prices/cost-of-building-stairs>.

<sup>183</sup> The Home Depot, "Dockside - Color Bay Loop 12 ft. Carpet," accessed April 6, 2017, <http://www.homedepot.com/p/Dockside-Color-Bay-Loop-12-ft-Carpet-6865-1005-1200-AB/205046159>.

<sup>184</sup> The Home Depot, "10 ft. Wide Textured Mocha Vinyl Universal Flooring Your Choice Length," accessed April 6, 2017, <http://www.homedepot.com/p/HDX-10-ft-Wide-Textured-Mocha-Vinyl-Universal-Flooring-Your-Choice-Length-HX55LV10X1MC/205568994>.

<sup>185</sup> Homewyse, "Cost to Install a Ceiling Light Fixture," accessed April 7, 2017, [https://www.homewyse.com/services/cost\\_to\\_install\\_ceiling\\_light\\_fixture.html](https://www.homewyse.com/services/cost_to_install_ceiling_light_fixture.html).

serve this need well; and dimmable, side lighting fixtures with long lives can be bought from commercial enterprises specializing in the technology at \$75 per sixteen-foot roll.<sup>186</sup> Four of these would be required for the large theatre and three for the small, adding another \$300 or \$225. Finally, environmental factors, such as temperature control and ventilation have to be considered. The museum will likely already possess a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Unit (HVAC), which would merely require some modifications to extend its use to the new theatre. However, a brand-new unit would factor in for a conservative estimate of \$5,100, using Home Advisor's maximum priced York HVAC.<sup>187</sup> The additional cost to install the unit and new vents into the room, based on an expensive California average, comes to \$13,500.<sup>188</sup> The estimated cost of the completed theatre therefore can be approximated at \$342,555 and \$240,768 for expensive and modest projects respectively.

These seem like daunting numbers; after all, many museums are cash strapped as they are. An extremely wealthy museum that counts its revenue in the tens or hundreds of millions might easily dedicate a fraction of its budget for such an expense; but most institutions do not have such a luxury. One possibility for raising the necessary funds is by engaging in a capital campaign. This can be an extremely rewarding enterprise when people are convinced of the collective good a project can bring. An example of this is the Buffalo Museum of Science's "See it Through" campaign, aimed toward restoring their stellar observatory. This effort was able to raise \$6.5 million, and is primed to achieve an additional goal of \$1.2 million for further

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<sup>186</sup> Super Bright LEDs, "Side Emitting LED Strip Lights - LED Tape Light with 18 SMDs/ft. - 1 Chip SMD LED 335 with LC2 Connector," accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.superbrightleds.com/moreinfo/side-emitting/side-emitting-led-strip-lights-led-tape-light-with-18-smds-per-ft-1-chip-smd-led-335-with-lc2-connector/33/#tab/Specifications>.

<sup>187</sup> Home Advisor, "Heating & Cooling Cost Guides," accessed April 8, 2017, <http://www.homeadvisor.com/cost/heating-and-cooling/#install>.

<sup>188</sup> All Systems Mechanical, "HVAC Installation Cost – What's a Fair Price for a New Heating and Air Conditioning Installation?" accessed April 8, 2017, <https://asm-air.com/hvac/hvac-installation-cost/>.

renovations.<sup>189</sup> This suggests that large cities could easily meet the startup costs of one of these theatres. Smaller areas have been demonstrated to run successful capital campaigns as well, bringing in enough to fund a theatre. Consider the example of the Besser Museum in the 10,000-resident town of Alpena, Michigan, which exceeded its \$500,000 goal to construct an IMAX planetarium.<sup>190</sup> Compare these sums to the costs of the proposed model theatres, and they begin to look possible to reach.

After the initial cost of building a theatre, the routine overhead costs of operating need to be considered to see whether its operations are sustainable. Luckily, the Independent Cinema Office has made it easy to understand the associated costs involved, listing personnel, marketing, premises, and administrative costs as the most significant factors.<sup>191</sup> Building on a previously existing museum structure, a number of these factors will be mitigated; this requires a more critical approach for accuracy than simple industry figures. Personnel costs typically include managers, ushers, admissions, maintenance staff and a projectionist. Several of these are either unneeded or already exist for museums: for instance, a curator in charge of the institution's programming could be substituted for a manager, and maintenance already occurs in such buildings, regardless of the staff member who performs the duty. It is possible, therefore, to settle for a reduced staff, one-screen commensurate for the needs of a small, one screen theatre. A curator should be hired to oversee cinematic endeavors, along with a projectionist and person for admissions and other counter related activities. Between these three staff, a theatre's

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<sup>189</sup> Buffalo Museum of Science, "See it Through," accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.sciencebuff.org/site/support/seeitthroughbuffalo>.

<sup>190</sup> Diane Speer, "Museum ends very successful Capital Campaign," *Alpena News*, November 18, 2016, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.thealpenanews.com/life/2016/11/museum-ends-very-successful-capital-campaign/>.

<sup>191</sup> Independent Cinema Office, "Other costs (overheads)," accessed April 7, 2017, <http://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/resources/how-to-start-a-local-cinema/economics-of-operation/other-costs>.

offerings can be planned, seats filled, films be screened, and the site maintained. The curator should be granted \$40,000 a year, which is typical for an entry level position according to Salary.com.<sup>192</sup> The other two positions could either be filled by part time employees, or using the advantages of a museum, interns. The latter would eliminate necessary costs; but in good faith, the estimate cost should assume payment commensurate with the theatre industry. Calculating costs for a single theatre, with salaries at the lower-end, a projectionist making \$20,000 part-time,<sup>193</sup> and a counter-worker paid part-time at \$15,000 annually,<sup>194</sup> would bring staff costs to a combined \$75,000 per year.

Marketing should adopt the time-tested methodologies already used by museums, and some of those employed by the film industry. A variety of different forums can be used to advertise cinematic offerings, both with and without cost. Of the former, mediums/media such as websites where showtimes are listed, including Fandango or Yahoo, are used by the public frequently; the local paper is becoming antiquated, but still serves the same capacity. For special events, these forums might even be used for a simple advertisement to attract crowds. Money could be saved by printing film schedules in advance on pamphlets already produced for museums, as well. An initial investment in time and money would go far to promote cinematic endeavors through museum websites, renovating them to exhibit their schedule. Sites dedicated to an institution should have a page dedicated to its theatre, and a schedule on its main page. Cost-free measures could be taken using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, advertising showings to a network of people. It is difficult to determine the cost of marketing, especially since many of

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<sup>192</sup> Salary, "Museum Curator - Higher Ed. Salaries," accessed April 7, 2017, <http://www1.salary.com/Museum-Curator-Higher-Ed-Salaries.html>.

<sup>193</sup> Salary, "Motion Picture Projectionist Salaries," accessed April 7, 2017, <http://www1.salary.com/Motion-Picture-Projectionist-Salaries.html>.

<sup>194</sup> Glassdoor, "Concession Salaries," accessed April 7, 2017, [https://www.glassdoor.com/Salaries/concessions-salary-SRCH\\_KO0,11.htm](https://www.glassdoor.com/Salaries/concessions-salary-SRCH_KO0,11.htm).



the methods above are already in a museum's annual budget, but for the sake of calculations, the ICO's estimated cost roughly amounts to \$7,500 annually.<sup>195</sup>

As for the costs required to maintain the premises, several factors go into an overhead cost. The most important factors of this category are rental costs and utilities. Assuming that the museum rents, the maximum cost of rental in the US, according to the Building Owners and Managers Association, is roughly \$12 per square foot.<sup>196</sup> This adds up to a yearly cost of \$20,088 or \$14,136 for leasing the space for these theatres. The cost of electricity and gas for the theatre adds to this. According to Responsible Energy, the average yearly cost of electricity and gas for commercial buildings is \$1.73 and 31¢ per square foot, respectively.<sup>197</sup> This adds an additional cost of \$3,414 or \$2,402, depending on the theatre size. Cleaning has already been addressed, and routine tasks can be undertaken by already employed staff. Nonetheless, if the costs of a routine cleaning service are calculated based on Cost Helper's business advice, commercial cleaning costs would range between \$100 and \$200 for two thorough jobs a week.<sup>198</sup> Calculating for one room at \$100, the estimate for cleaning upkeep would be \$5,200 per year. Security is eliminated from consideration because its costs are already absorbed by the museum's existing operations. Altogether, the cost to maintain the premises is approximated at \$28,702 or \$21,738.

The final major factor in overhead expenses is in administrative costs. This relates to the cost of officially mandated certifications that have to be continually renewed. Among the most

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<sup>195</sup> Independent Cinema Office, "Other costs (overheads)."

<sup>196</sup> Building Owners and Managers Association International, "New Data Identifies Most, Least Expensive Office Markets in the U.S.," accessed April 7, 2017, <http://www.boma.org/research/newsroom/press-room/PR16/Pages/New-Data-Identifies-Most-Least-Expensive-Office-Markets-in-the-US.aspx>.

<sup>197</sup> Responsible Energy, "Managing energy costs in office buildings," accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.mge.com/images/PDF/Brochures/business/ManagingEnergyCostsInOfficeBuildings.pdf>.

<sup>198</sup> Cost Helper, "Office Cleaning Cost," accessed April 7, 2017, <http://smallbusiness.costhelper.com/office-cleaning.html>.

obvious is the cost to maintain a local theater license and copyright rights. The former must be obtained through local governments through paperwork, and comes with a yearly cost that is practically insignificant for theatres under 500 seats.<sup>199</sup> A generous estimate will be set at \$100 for the local license. Licenses for copyrights come in many different forms, and can diverge significantly based on intent and an institution's size. It is impossible to determine what the yearly cost of an umbrella license by a major licensor such as the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation would be without a personalized quote.<sup>200</sup> However, a well above average estimate provided by the ICO, intended for larger theatres is set at almost \$15,000.<sup>201</sup> Insurance rates need to be applied to commercial ventures as well. While the museum likely already has coverage, the cost of an additional General Liability policy for a small business should be calculated. Insureon, who calculated an aggregate of 18,000 businesses, reports that the vast majority of policies fall between \$400 to \$600 annually,<sup>202</sup> so the latter would reflect a maximum cost scenario. Finally, a yearly audit is required. This is already performed by museums, and does not require additional costs to produce. For these yearly expenses, an extra \$15,700 should be added to overhead costs.

In order to maintain the cost of owning these model theatres, income in excess of an estimated \$126,902 or \$119,938 per year is needed for the 100 and 50 seat models respectively. There are some factors that will make this figure go up in reality, such as personnel costs, and others that would drastically lower it, like the very high estimate of licensing fees. Thus, this calculation is a vague representation of the hypothetical theatre's overhead. With this conservative estimate, a hypothetical \$5 admission price would only require 25,380 or 23,988 admissions per

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<sup>199</sup> Kaput, "How to Start Your Own Movie Theater."

<sup>200</sup> Motion Picture Licensing Corporation, "Frequently Asked Questions."

<sup>201</sup> Independent Cinema Office, "Other costs (overheads)."

<sup>202</sup> Insureon, "General Liability Insurance Cost Analysis," accessed April 8, 2017, <http://www.insureon.com/insureonu/costs/general-liability>.

year to maintain overhead expenses. While the potential revenues for model theatres are addressed in the next section, two models already demonstrate success in achieving such necessary revenue. The ICO's figures, based on an average of 80,000 admissions a year that amount to \$510,318, estimate that in a higher-cost cinema enterprise, the revenue produced by a cinema screen is enough to turn a comfortable profit.<sup>203</sup> Additionally, Indywood's more appropriate small theatre model calculates an admirable profit of \$10,776 with its revenue.<sup>204</sup> These numbers are suitable for nonprofit goals, but the realistically lower costs associated with the proposed theatre would result in a greater profit margin, which could thereby be applied to other institutional needs.

No matter how one goes about expanding museum cinema, a significant financial investment is required. However, there exists an encouraging piece of data regarding the payoff for such an expenditure. Not only would an institution gain a new, effective way of generating public interest, but the very act of building has the same quality. As Julia Halperin notes, "Museums that expanded between 2007 and 2014 saw their attendance rise significantly faster than museums that did not, according to our analysis of nearly 500 art institutions worldwide... The annual attendance of expanded museums rose 14.1%, on average, compared with 10.2% for museums that did not expand—a statistically significant difference."<sup>205</sup> Museums that build new theatres or renovate old ones will gain a measurable boost in public attention, making their opportunities to forge a better relationship with the community all the more profound.

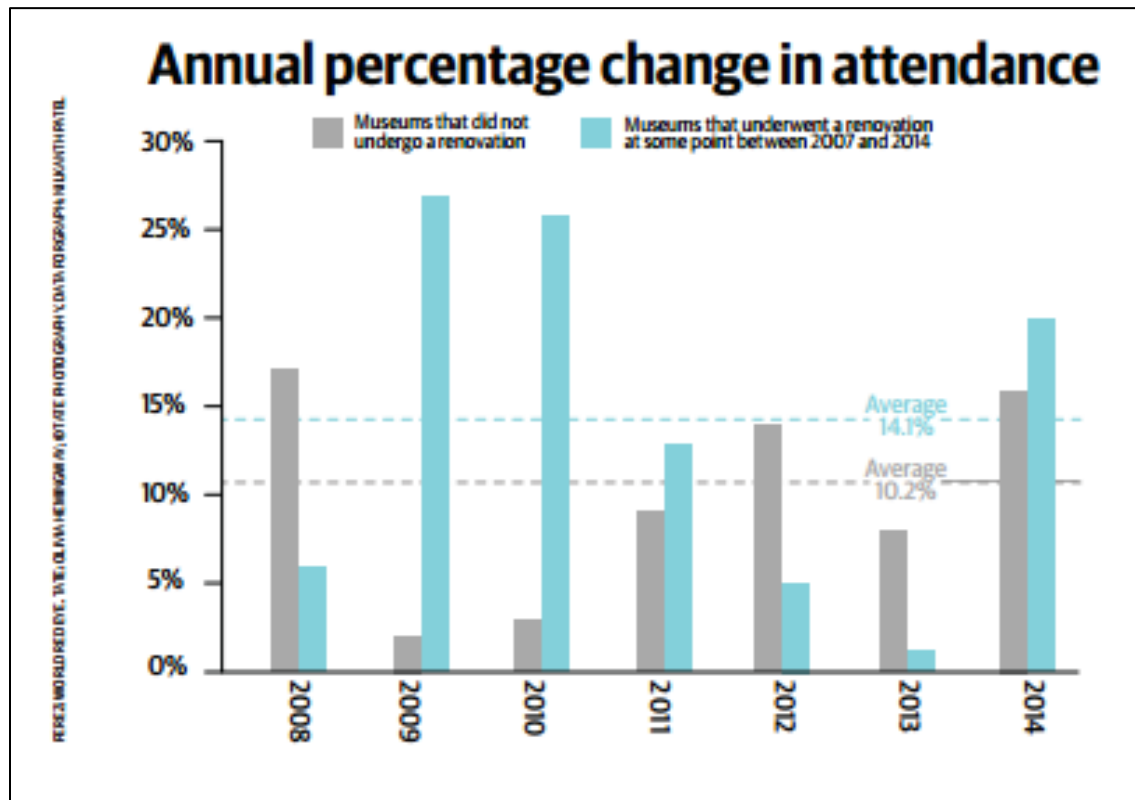
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<sup>203</sup> Independent Cinema Office, "Other costs (overheads)."

<sup>204</sup> Indywood, "How Your Movie Theater Can Make Money," accessed April 7, 2017, <http://www.indywood.org/new-blog/2015/3/16/how-your-movie-theater-can-make-money>.

<sup>205</sup> Julia Halperin, "If you build it, they will come—at least for a while," *The Art Newspaper* 278 (2016): V.

Chart 6



### Alternate Means of Expanding Museum Theatre

The suggestion above of constructing a new, fully functioning theatre is an optimal scenario, which would greatly empower any museum that pursues that course. However, this is an expensive, logistically complicated venture, meaning that many museums, especially those of a medium to small size, will be unable to engage in the practice. Fortunately, there are many other ways to go about expanding the presence of cinema in the museum. This section, explores alternate ways to create museum theatres, as well as some alternative options museums can use to exhibit cinema without possessing a theatre.

A potentially rewarding enterprise would be to restore old, broken down cinemas. All across the United States, there are derelict theatres just waiting to be restored. It is not uncommon to drive through a country town's main street, only to see the remains of a once regal local theatre, sitting unused.<sup>206</sup> Single screen institutions once served as their community's sole access to cinema, but most were put out of business by the rise of theatre chains that offered multiple screens.<sup>207</sup> These buildings continue to go unused, and could be of great value as repurposed Museological Cinemas. Not only do these buildings already possess the exact dimensions needed for Museological Cinema's purposes, generally with seating well in excess of the modest proposals above, but they are themselves artifacts relevant to both community history and that of film in general. Many of these buildings have already had campaigns to restore their use, such as Atlanta's Fox Theatre, which serves its city today in admirable fashion.<sup>208</sup> Such theatres could

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<sup>206</sup> Tom Moran, "Spectacular Abandoned Theatres and Cinemas of the Northeastern United States," *Urban Ghosts*, February 9, 2011, accessed July 20, 2016, <http://www.urbanghostmedia.com/2011/02/spectacular-abandoned-theatres-cinemas-northeastern-united-states/>.

<sup>207</sup> Atanu Dhar, "Multi Screen vs. Single Screen-- Which kind of theatre makes more economic sense?" *LinkedIn*, March 25, 2015, accessed July 20, 2016, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/multi-screen-vs-single-screen-which-kind-theatre-makes-atanu-dhar>.

<sup>208</sup> Fox Theatre, "The Fox Story," accessed July 20, 2016, <http://foxtheatre.org/the-fox-story/>.

stand as independent institutions dedicated to cinema, or be satellite locations of already established local museums.

The major issue with this approach is that while the construction costs above are ameliorated, along with their potential complications, renovating these vintage theatres is a costly venture. The Fox Theatre, for example, cost an enormous \$3 million to restore to pristine condition.<sup>209</sup> However, this should be taken as an encouraging sign, since this money was raised through community charity. Just like the “See it Through” campaign, the “Save the Fox” fundraising was an enormous success; no contribution from the community amounted to more than \$400,000.<sup>210</sup> This demonstrates that not only does the public possess a serious interest in the proposals being made here, but that the funding programs suggested above have been demonstrated to work. In addition to philanthropy, the government has encouraged the restoration of historic buildings in the past as well. The long standing Federal Historic Preservation Tax offered by the National Park Service exists specifically for this purpose, and would give a tax credit of up to 20% for rehabilitation efforts.<sup>211</sup> These types of restored theatres would serve as emblems of the museological community’s dedication to film, and are just waiting to be restored for use.

Another opportunity to create more film museums is a trend currently in place among small theatres. An increasing number of theatres with four screens or less are turning toward a nonprofit model, finding it to be a good way of keeping their doors open. Rachel Koning Beals, observing this trend for *MarketWatch*, explains, “It’s the fight for profit scraps that pushed some

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<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> *Historic Preservation Tax Incentives*, National Park Service, 2012, accessed March 23, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/taxdocs/about-tax-incentives-2012.pdf>.

of the nation's best-known independent theaters into nonprofit status, in large part to keep the mission focused on the films and related programming."<sup>212</sup> Once a theatre does this, it immediately becomes a site dedicated to exhibiting the art of film for the public, rather than profiting off of cinema as a product of entertainment. This already makes it something of a museum, attempting to perform a public service through art. The opportunity at hand would be to help convert some of these theatres transitioning into nonprofits into full-fledged museums. This would be a win-win proposition for both parties, with the museological community expanding museum theatre, and the theatre owners gaining the expertise of an industry with significant experience in nonprofit finance.

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<sup>212</sup> Rachel Koning Beals, "Independent and art-house movie theaters double down on anti-Netflix vision," *Market Watch*, February 22, 2017, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/independent-and-art-house-movie-theaters-double-down-on-anti-netflix-vision-2017-02-26>.

Chart 7

<b>U.S. Screens by Type of Venue<sup>27</sup></b>					
Source: IHS Markit					
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
1-4 screen venues	6,386	6,487	6,133	6,076	6,076
5+ screen venues	33,276	33,537	33,824	34,098	34,316
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,662</b>	<b>40,024</b>	<b>39,957</b>	<b>40,174</b>	<b>40,392</b>



There are a few steps to consider concerning the conversion of small theatres into museums. The first matter to address would be the site's mission, deciding what exactly the goals of a new cinema museum would be. As a nonprofit, obtaining grants is a major source of income, so crafting a mission that would please the public and foundations is an important consideration of an emerging nonprofit. Second is to hire a financial officer that has an idea of how to raise money from the variety of sources available. Foundations on their own require a dedicated officer to court as Barbara L. Ciconte and Jeanne G. Jacob point out, "It is extremely important for the staff involved in the solicitation of foundations to have an in-depth understanding of their organization."<sup>213</sup> A dedicated relationship and attention to detail is important for foundations, which only make up around 10% of nonprofit funding; even more detail must be paid to other sources such as giving programs and fundraising events.<sup>214</sup> Third is simply to adhere to many of the guidelines previously discussed. A discerning selection of films to screen, having exhibitions, special events and the like will turn the theatre into a real community asset, which honors the art of film in a very real manner. Of these aspects, exhibitions are especially necessary for an institution purporting to be a museum, and will require an investment to achieve. Space needs to be set aside for this purpose, requiring a site for exhibitions and storage. One could convert the lobby into an exhibition space, where people encounter a menagerie of materials and special exhibits. Another option would be to convert one of the actual theatres into new space, sacrificing it for exhibition and collection purposes. Hiring a curator will be necessary to put together effective, professional exhibits, and to look after the site's materials, requiring at least a \$40,000 annual salary.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Ciconte & Jacob, *Fundraising Basics: A Complete Guide 2nd Edition*, 198.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> Salary, "Museum Curator - Higher Ed. Salaries."

In order to fund these changes, there are always a variety of options available, ranging from simple fundraising, capital campaigns, to taking advantage of obscure programs. There is already some financial success worth reporting for these options. Kinsey Lowe of *Indie Wire* reports that Columbia, Missouri's Ragtag Cinema was successful enough in its nonprofit status that they were able to raise over \$250,000 to relocate into and renovate an old Coca-Cola plant, which now possesses two 130 seat theatres, and one smaller theatre.<sup>216</sup> Plenty of special programs exist to assist the process, some of which have already been reviewed in this paper. If the site is of particular importance to the area it is located in, the Federal Historic Income Tax is available to tide the institution over.<sup>217</sup> The National Film Preservation Foundation also comes to mind, rewarding museums nationwide for securely housing films in their collection space.<sup>218</sup> With these sources of funding, a modest cinema museum could be created in many areas that would not be able to construct a museum theatre of their own.

Moreover, this trend of turning small theatres into museums could represent the very future of the small theatre market. According to the MPAA, the number of small theatres nationwide has been dropping fairly consistently, while their big theatre counterparts only rise.<sup>219</sup> As the number of small theatres contrast, the big theatre market is quickly turning the theatre experience into an exclusive enclave of new, big budget releases. Lowe's article notes her own experience seeing small cinema dry up, "When I was a student at the University of Missouri at Columbia in the early '70s, five theaters were situated within walking distance of campus. Now there are none."<sup>220</sup> If the downward trend continues, there may be little room for organizations that screen

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<sup>216</sup> Kinsey Lowe, "The Rise of Non-Profit Micro-Cinemas," *Indie Wire*, August 24, 2010, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.indiewire.com/2010/08/the-rise-of-non-profit-micro-cinemas-186079/>.

<sup>217</sup> *Historic Preservation Tax Incentives*, National Park Service.

<sup>218</sup> National Film Preservation Foundation, "NFPF Grants."

<sup>219</sup> *Theatrical Market Statistics – 2016*, Motion Pictures Association of America.

<sup>220</sup> Lowe, "The Rise of Non-Profit Micro-Cinemas."

older pieces of cinema to survive. Even a modest cinema museum that runs films would be crucial to preserving the integrity of cinema as an art form. Giving a new nonprofit niche to theatres that screen films outside this purview will ensure that the art they offer will survive into the future, allowing cinematic masterworks to have the authentic theatre experience they were crafted for.

Facilitating an appreciation of cinematic art is possible even without optimal conditions, as evidenced by the large home video market. Therefore, another low-cost approach worth trying would be to dedicate a space in museums to cinema screenings, even without a fully formed theatre. A few rows of chairs and large flat-screen television could serve as a makeshift site for exhibiting films. Though this is hardly the lucrative venture presented by an actual theatre, the goal of increasing attention for a museum could still be accomplished in this way. Several of the previously examined methods of attracting people are still applicable here, such as exhibits, public selections, marathons and special events. Because the theatre experience is not being offered, regular screenings ought to be offered free of admission. This consideration does not include exhibits and special events, however, which constitute substantial enough efforts to warrant admission. Even under these least optimal conditions, cinema still holds some potential to museums.

One might expand the use of cinema even without converting theatres into new museum space. A partnership between a theatre and local museum could be beneficial to both parties. One could draw attention to the other through such cross promotions, where they both dedicate themselves to a project. For instance, a museum with a narrow focus, say a history museum dedicated to a local figure, can set up an exhibition relevant to a film related to that figure, which would in turn be played at the theatre. This type of arrangement bypasses all of the needs for

construction above, while still managing to exhibit pieces of cinema relevant to a museum's mission. These types of promotions already occur, as was the case with the North Park Theatre and Buffalo History Museum, which cosponsored an event featuring Japanese films for the annual Cherry Blossom Festival.<sup>221</sup> Doing so tied these institutions closer to the community they depend on, and people were exposed to the culture exhibited in the event.

Such arrangements are beneficial for multiple reasons. First is the consideration that each partner gains exposure through the other, with people attending the theatre becoming aware of the museum, and *vice versa*. This is extremely valuable, since greater visitation through film is the exact end Museological Cinema aims to achieve. If two institutions can benefit, this is all the more ideal an outcome. Secondly, there is a fair amount that can be achieved through the profits of such a venture. These could serve the overt goal of funding the two organizations, figuring into their earnings. However, seeing as museums are inclined toward altruistic motives, the money might best be used for charitable ends. Restoring civic structures is often a popular cause, as previously examined multiple times in this paper. Funding various causes such as these would be a way of further ingratiating both institutions with their communities, especially if the result is of great benefit. Finally, and most important for consideration, is that such a partnership expands the use of film for museums, giving further exposure to the art form. Although possessing and using a theatre of its own would be valuable for museums, a partnership with a local theatre is a serviceable alternative that could be engaged in with little expense.

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<sup>221</sup> Japanese Garden of Buffalo, "Sponsors," accessed April 11, 2017, <http://www.buffalocherryblossomfestival.org/sponsors.html>.

## Financial Risks and Rewards of Museum Theatres

Assuming a museum goes about obtaining a theatre of its own, many considerations have to be made regarding its use. There are significant risks involved with entering into the cinema market, especially with regards to small theatres that would mutually benefit museums. The market for the types of film to be featured in museums must be addressed, as well as the financial prospects of engaging in competition with small theatres. Only after looking at these risks can the financial rewards and opportunities presented by the new asset be contemplated.

The major issue at hand is competition, which comes in the form of both the highly lucrative home video market and small, local theatres. In theory, the experience of watching a film on the big screen, what this proposal ostensibly offers, stands independent of home video viewership. In this environment, one is surrounded by people in an environment adjusted to film viewership, which utilizes superior technology to most home theatres. Inevitably, there are those who prefer the comforts of home to this. The question is: how many? The observed continued existence of small theatres that run older films proves that enough of a market exists to sustain these. But is there enough of a market for a museum's purposes, and does the competition represent an insurmountable obstacle?

A case study of the success of older films on the big screen can be found in the example of the *Star Wars: Special Edition* (1997) re-releases of the Star Wars trilogy. A recent article in *Forbes* recounted this success, noting *A New Hope's* impressive opening weekend gross of \$35 million, and the promotion's total earnings coming in at an enormous \$892 million worldwide

when adjusted for inflation.<sup>222</sup> Scott Mendelson, the author of the article, however, notes some trepidation toward the financial efficacy of this precedent stating, "...the special edition releases were special because they occurred at a time when the very idea of seeing your beloved favorites on the big screen was in itself an event for the masses. Obviously, since then we've had the DVD wave, the surge in VOD options and online streaming."<sup>223</sup> Thus, a look at a more recent example of the same phenomenon would imply that this precedent is still applicable today. The previously examined example of the anniversary release for the *Back to the Future* films, was a great success. Although these pieces of cinema were a quarter-century old and had been previously released for home video formats, they were still able to garner \$5 million in revenue.<sup>224</sup> This is obviously a step down, suggesting that the larger home video market did cut into the novelty of watching a film on the big screen. To what degree is debatable, being that the *Star Wars* franchise is far more successful than *Back to the Future*, and therefore would not perform identically in the first place. But that matter is irrelevant to the fact that the latter still successfully brought in millions of dollars even with this increased competition. For a museum's purposes, even the lesser presented number is still highly lucrative. The market for people willing to see notable films on the big screen indeed still exists, and is substantial enough to warrant attention.

The more challenging complication is competitors in the big screen market. The Motion Picture Association of America projects a downward trend in theatres possessing four or less screens in recent years, dropping from 6,386 to 6,086 nationwide from 2012 to 2016.<sup>225</sup> This

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<sup>222</sup> Scott Mendelson, "20 Years Ago, 'Star Wars: Special Edition' Made 'Star Wars' Special Again," *Forbes*, February 1, 2017, accessed March 22, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/scottmendelson/2017/02/01/20-years-ago-star-wars-special-edition-made-star-wars-special-again/#5e6c4e062a61>.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> Deadline Hollywood, "'Back to The Future' Day Racks Up \$4.8M from Trilogy Re-Release – Update."

<sup>225</sup> *Theatrical Market Statistics – 2016*, Motion Pictures Association of America.

reveals that small theatres represent 15% of the total market, suggesting that although larger chains are dominating, small theatres still survive in a reduced capacity.<sup>226</sup> The key to succeeding as a small theatre is a matter of some debate, with many arguments about new business models abounding. An encouraging sign that museums could compete in this transforming market is that, as previously discussed, many smaller theatres are shifting to non-profit models, finding them more stable.<sup>227</sup> Being that museums are already adept at non-profit finance, this gives an immediate edge over the competition. A second consideration is the direct competition's reliance on several forms of revenue. Market Watch quotes Katharine Tallman, Executive Director of Coolidge Corners Theatre, in stating her assessment of small theatre finance as such: "...programming, 48%; food, 10%; beer and wine, 7%; membership and donations, 28%; theater rental and other income, 7%."<sup>228</sup> Of these revenue sources, the largest factors, programming, memberships and donations, are all built into the Museological Theatre model. In addition to this, museum theatres have the added benefit of their core aspect as a museum to draw off of to drive the sustainability further upward.

While museum theatres could compete successfully on their own merits as non-profits, the competition that does exist is not necessarily as much of an obstacle as imagined. One factor that instantly eliminates a fair amount of competition is that many small theatres still try to compete with large chains by screening new releases. Since museum theatres are offering older films to watch, those who show up were not searching for the same movie-going experience in the first place, and thus are not from the same target audience. Those small theatres that are in direct competition can either be bypassed or outdone by museum theatres. The former consideration

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> Lowe, "The Rise of Non-Profit Micro-Cinemas."

<sup>228</sup> Beals, "Independent and art-house movie theaters double down on anti-Netflix vision."

merely denotes not playing the same films. There are thousands of films in multiple genres to choose from, meaning that one could simply offer different films than the competition and thereby coexist. If a museum theatre is inclined to compete, however, one may do so on the grounds of experience. Patrick Corcoran of the National Association of Theater Owners has stated, “Generally speaking, a close connection to their local market and differentiation are important.”<sup>229</sup> Essentially, the keys to success in that particular market are community loyalty and a unique experience. Since museums are already fixtures of the communities they are located in, they already have an edge in loyalty. Furthermore, the ability to differentiate is also in favor of museums over small theatres. Museums are able to exhibit films in ways that small theatres cannot, through the use of exhibitions, drawing attention to deeper aspects of the subject matter, along with other ways that we have already discussed. Simply put, museum theatres have the potential to occupy a niche part of the cinema market they are already well-equipped to survive within.

There is, however, a double-edge to this proposition. While the museum is already competitive in many of the aspects keeping the small theatre market afloat, the base observation that it is shrinking overall still requires some caution. Entering into a contrasting business is a risky proposition, even if the target audience or goals are different. This is compounded by the fact that film museums themselves are not a sure bet. In his comprehensive list of film museums, Stephen Bottomore notes that like most enterprises, these institutions fluctuate, with some closing and new ones opening up with each passing year.<sup>230</sup> Thus, one should consider a few aspects before opening up a new film museum or constructing a new theatre. In order to

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<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Bottomore, “Cinema Museums – A Worldwide List,” 261.



determine this, it is best that a feasibility study be commissioned from a company that facilitates business interests. The factors that determine this are numerous, according to a sample study conducted by the R-T Associates for an aspiring entrepreneur in Lincoln, Nebraska. Included among their calculations are regional population, ticket sales, whether the location is ideal and, most importantly, competition.<sup>231</sup> If these environmental factors prove conducive, building a new theatre should be no issue.

The factor that must be considered above all others is competition. Assuming there is a notably successful small theatre to compete with, one might demur from the contest without even conducting a feasibility study. However, if the theatre in question is struggling, two options present themselves. One can either engage in competition with the theatre and outperform it with the advantages already explored; or come to an understanding with the competition. Rather than compete as an alternative, one might help convert a small theatre into a museum theatre. Since many small theatres are converting to nonprofit business models, they can be turned into film museums, focusing on playing notable cinematic works themselves. Assisting them in this transition would fulfill the goal of expanding Museological Cinema, eliminate a competitor, and require considerably less investment, since most of the needs of such an institution are built into an already operating small theatre. Whatever the case may be, approach the construction of new theatres cautiously, and proceed in environments with significant advantages.

If a museum ends up coming into possession of a theatre of its own, the matter of how best to benefit must then be decided. The first consideration to make among many is the price of admission. Part of the price of admission in a regular movie theatre is to experience something

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<sup>231</sup> R-T Associates, "Market Feasibility and Impact Study of Proposed Mega Plex Theatre in Lincoln, Nebraska," accessed April 4, 2017, <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/reports/theater.pdf>.

brand new, so in screening older films we should resolve immediately to charge less than that amount. In 2015, the average ticket price rose to a new high of \$8.34.<sup>232</sup> As previously covered, ticket sales have increased in price over the years, even as incomes have gone down.<sup>233</sup> Thus, anticipating an increase in coming years would suggest the price should be set at a little over half that of a new film. A \$5 admission price seems fair with this in mind, but could be pushed a little further. Since it has been demonstrated that people are not stingy with their entertainment, and they are guaranteed a notable film with a museum showing, a proposed price should be set at an ambitious \$6. This price is reasonable if there is an exhibition accompanying the screening, as well as the fact that the proceeds go toward the financial well-being of a community asset.

A number of typical museological and film industry methods can be employed to gain additional revenue from its admissions. One is the use of memberships, which are often used by museums to ensure repeat business from visitors. Museums could include a discount for admissions with museum memberships, perhaps lowering a standard \$6 to a special \$4 rate. A second consideration is reward cards. These are used by regular theatres and retailers to reward brand loyalty, but can also be effective in encouraging repeat business. An obvious system would be rewarding a person who goes to six museum screenings with one free admission; this would sacrifice \$6 to incentivize \$36 in revenue. Finally, many theatrical businesses offer seasonal passes to fill seats. Assume that a museum theatre is showing twelve films in its schedule during the fall. If a seasonal pass was sold for a person to see one Friday night screening a week during that time, that would be worth \$72; if a museum sold such a pass at \$50, it would sacrifice \$22

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<sup>232</sup> Mike Reyes, "Movie Theater Ticket Prices Reach a Record High," *Cinema Blend*, 2015, accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.cinemablend.com/new/Movie-Theater-Ticket-Prices-Rreach-Record-High-89337.html>.

<sup>233</sup> "Domestic Movie Theatrical Market Summary 1995 to 2016."

for seats that are not necessarily even going to be filled. In such ways, the museum makes more in revenue and the consumer is given a variety of options to encourage their business.

How individual museums choose to conduct their theatre operations would strictly be at their discretion. The number of showings at their theatre could be as much as three times a day, seven days a week, or only one showing per week. This could be decided by how convenient it is to show films; so until this is assessed, it is perhaps best to begin with a conservative model. At an individual museum charging the standard \$6, only showing once a week, if one of the 100- or 50-seat theatres was only half full for its showings, the profit would amount to either \$15,600 or \$7,800 annually. However, if that same theatre ran films once a day, that amount will multiply to \$109,200 or \$54,600. At a theatre doing so three times a day, the yearly revenue would be enough to make up the initial cost of constructing either of these model theatres. This on its own is fairly modest for large, well-endowed museums, but would be an enormous benefit to smaller institutions struggling to meet their budget.

As new museums are built, some dedicated to film in general will inevitably emerge among them. Utilizing the model suggested here, these museums should naturally screen films for the public. Moreover, these institutions would be in a unique position to make such a task their main operation, exhibiting notable films in variety, multiple times a day. Imagining a film museum with three of these expensive theatres running films nine times a day with only half-full screenings, their annual revenue from these admissions alone would come to an impressive \$982,800. Along with a regular price for browsing these museum's exhibitions, such an institution would have a fairly large amount of its operational budget met by its admissions and memberships. Considering the need for interesting exhibitions and constant access to large

audiences, this type of film museum would be best placed in major cities where both are available.

Additional benefits will accompany the revenue generated by admission prices. According to same *Slate* article above, movie theatres also obtain their revenue through two additional sources: concessions and advertisement.<sup>234</sup> The former is a somewhat contentious concern, as theatres are well known for selling unhealthy foods at absorbent rates to supplement their budgetary needs. It is easy enough to write off the need for concessions, but assuming this source of revenue will be deemed valuable enough to include, a few caveats are needed. Since the museum is a place concerned with the general welfare of its community, the usual candy, popcorn and soda offering should be avoided. On the other hand, if the museum pushes health foods too much, this effort could end up a morally hectoring annoyance to the institution's visitors. It is possible to find a happy medium with popular granola bars, such as Nature Valley or Kind Bars, which are familiar and good tasting enough for the consumer. As for drinks, bottled water and juices should be acceptable enough as an alternative to soda.

Advertisements are a major source of funding for regular theatres, with some advertisers willing to pay \$50,000 per screen annually.<sup>235</sup> This probably ends up being considerably less lucrative for museums, but a number of opportunities still exist. Just like with regular theatres, advertisement can be a powerful source of mutual gain with movie studios. While the museum should not be in the business of advertising new releases like regular theatres, it would not be improper to promote home releases for certain pieces of cinema. A preview of upcoming Blu-

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<sup>234</sup> Edward Jay Epstein, "The Popcorn Palace Economy: The thirsty moviegoer fuels the business," *Slate*, January 2, 2006, accessed July 29, 2016, [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/the\\_hollywood\\_economist/2006/01/the\\_popcorn\\_palace\\_economy.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/the_hollywood_economist/2006/01/the_popcorn_palace_economy.html).

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

Ray releases of classic films, such as those in the prestigious Criterion Collection or Studio Canal libraries, would be ideal way of both securing more buys for these companies as well as attention for notable films. A second way of using advertisement appropriate for museums would be to highlight local businesses through previews. This would be an important way of forming a partnership with the community, and would secure additional revenue.

### **Conclusion**

Many of the ideas presented here seem very ambitious. However, these ideas are necessary to entertain, as discussions relating to cinema in the museum are quickly coming to the fore. An organized effort to reason museology's approach to cinema better took place in 2011 at a Cambridge conference titled "Moving Image and Institution: Cinema and the Museum in the 21st Century." The event's purpose was to bring together people of a number of disciplines, including "academics, museum curators, museologists, architects, filmmakers and artists of national and international standing," who then discussed the relationship between cinema and the museum, as well as the future possibilities of their relationship.<sup>236</sup> Beatriz Bartolomé Herrera of Concordia University noted the conference as a success in her review, stating,

"Though still a relatively small community, the research and ideas presented throughout the conference have contributed to creating a wider perspective on the different approaches to this complicated relationship which, as Thomas Elsaesser has argued, is characterised [sic] by a series of compatibilities and antagonisms that challenge traditional assumptions and open up a fruitful field of research. Hopefully this conference will not remain a single event and the community created will have

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<sup>236</sup> Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, "Moving Image and Institution: Cinema and the Museum in the 21st Century," accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/events/1407/>.

the opportunity to continue sharing ideas in further conferences dealing with the relation between cinema and museum.”<sup>237</sup>

The contents of this paper have been similarly dedicated to facilitating a Museological Cinema useful for the museum industry, wherein a wide variety of films are played regularly at many institutions throughout the United States. The opportunities presented by all the previously argued suggestions are many-fold. Tapping into the lucrative cinema market is a way to help ailing institutions financially. Featuring cinema alongside other art forms also has the advantage of bringing people into a closer proximity with these mediums, leading to more attention for them and the museums they are housed in. This will bring an increased level of culture into people’s lives, and inspire a new generation of artists. With these opportunities considered, one realizes that Museological Cinema is an advantageous proposition that would greatly benefit society as a whole.

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<sup>237</sup> Beatriz Herrera Bartolomé, “Moving image and institution: Cinema and the museum in the 21st century, University of Cambridge (6-8 July 2011),” *European Journal of Museum Studies* 1 (2012): 186.

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