

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon May 2 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Screening Series

\$11 [members \$8]

Fantasia of Color in Early Cinema

Film restorations by EYE Film Museum, Amsterdam

Attention, lovers of the celluloid image: here is an opportunity to travel back in time by way of a ravishing treasure trove of hand-colored cinematic visions and wonders from more than a century ago. Beautiful restorations of these rare films are showcased in the new book *Fantasia of Color in Early Cinema*, the revelatory, lavishly illustrated exploration of the first-ever uses of applied color in movies. Accompanied by live music, superb digital transfers of restored work from the archives of EYE Film Institute Netherlands can now take viewers to when colored moving images truly opened a portal into otherworldly magic and the uncanny—and yet could also heighten realism. Two of the book's authors, film scholar Tom Gunning, of the University of Chicago, and painter, illustrator and animator Jonathon Rosen, of the School of Visual Arts, introduce this delightful cinematic phantasmagoria.

In person: Tom Gunning, Jonathon Rosen

Reveries of the most hallucinatory imaginations." – *Hyperallergic*
(Read the entire review and enjoy some preview footage by clicking on: <http://hyperallergic.com/215472/the-early-color-films-left-out-of-the-history-of-cinema/>)

"Mysterious and wondrous effects! And such a fascinating history!
– Guy Maddin

On the companion book, *Fantasia of Color in Early Cinema* (Amsterdam: EYE/Amsterdam University Press, 2015), by Tom Gunning, Joshua Yumibe, Giovanna Fossati and Jonathon Rosen: "This revelatory book shows—ever so extravagantly—that early film was not just black and white and industrial, but also color and artisanal. As far back as 1895, more than eighty percent of films were all or somewhat (hand-)colored with dyes, stencils, color baths, and

tints. Reproducing frames from original film dating prior to World War I, the authors have assembled a sometimes surreal grouping of 300 images (many full page) which display a surprising range of tone and color. In doing so, they have created what Guy Maddin calls "The most gorgeous collection of photos I've ever seen." In his forward, Martin Scorsese wrote "I could gaze at the images in this book for hours. They are as fascinating as illuminated manuscripts or magic lantern slides." – *Fandor*

Films:

Fantasia Book Teaser

(2 min 40 sec)

L'Album merveilleux

France, Pathé Frères, 1905, Gaston Velle. Stencilled.

(2 min 10 sec)

Le Royaume des fleurs

France, Gaumont, 1914, unknown. Stencilled, tinted, toned.

(1 min 38 sec)

Le Voyage sur Jupiter

France, Pathé Frères, 1909, Segundo de Chomón. Hand-colored, stenciled. (8 min 4 sec)

Santa Lucia

Italy, Ambrosio, 1910, unknown. Tinted, toned.

(4 min 58 sec)

Le Charmeur

France, Pathé Frères, 1906, Segundo de Chomón. Stencilled.

(4 min 21 sec)

La Légende des ondines

France, Pathé Frères, 1911, George Denola. Stencilled.

(6 min 29 sec)

Les Grandes eaux de Versailles

France, Pathé Frères, 1904, unknown. Hand-colored.

(1 min 54 sec)

Dutch Types

France, Gaumont, [1915], unknown. Stencilled.

(3 min 43 sec) (fragment)

De Wortelrups

(5 min 2 sec)

Bout-de-Zan et le crocodile

France, Gaumont, 1913, Louis Feuillade. Stencilled.

(4 min 42 sec)

Conway Castle - Panoramic View of Conway on the L. & N.W. Railway

United Kingdom, British Mutoscope and Biograph Syndicate, 1898, William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson. Hand-colored.

(1 min 45 sec)

Visions d'art : 3. La Fée aux étoiles

France, Pathé Frères, 1902, unknown. Tinted.

(8 min 50 sec)

De Molens die juichen en weenen

Netherlands, Hollandsche Film, 1912, Alfred Machin. Stencilled, tinted, toned. (6 min 55 sec)

L'Orgie romaine

France, Gaumont, 1911, Louis Feuillade. Stencilled, tinted.

(9 min 27 sec)

Aurora Goes to Holland

Reduction mashup of the installation video 'Phantasia Stereo Megamix' presented at the EYE Film Institute Netherlands and shown during the conference 'The Colour Fantastic: Chromatic Worlds of Silent Cinema' with live music by The West Side Trio.

(7 min 10 sec)

Buona sera, fiori!

Italy, Ambrosio, 1909, Giovanni Vitrotti. Tinted.

(1 min)

Curators Statement

In the beginning the primary purpose of the cinema was to dazzle the eyes and minds of spectators with visual attractions: unseen wonders of the world, magical transformations, elaborates spectacles of costumes – all of these in bright, glowing colors. Colors? Didn't the cinema have to wait for Technicolor to capture the spectrum of the

natural world? Before photographic color was achieved, filmmakers endowed their images with applied colors, dyes and tints that had nothing to do with photography and often little to do with naturalism. This early artisanal process of applying color to each individual print, liberated color from realism and allowed it to paint the black and white images with all the hues of fantasy. These unique color prints have been hard to preserve and even harder to reproduce and only recent digital process have allowed us to see the full range of these early applied color film. Drawn from the unique collection of early colored film in the EyeMuseum in the Netherlands, we present here a voyage through the fantasia of early film color, with screenings and discussions inspired by our recent book, *Fantasia of Color in Early Cinema* (Amsterdam: EYE/Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

Tom Gunning is the Edwin A. and Betty L. Bergman Distinguished Service Professor in the Department on Cinema and Media at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (University of Illinois Press, 1991) and *The Films of Fritz Lang; Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (British Film Institute, 2000), well as over hundred and fifty articles on early cinema, film history and theory, avant-garde film, film genre, and cinema and modernism. With André Gaudreault he originated the influential theory of the "Cinema of Attractions." In 2009 he was awarded a Andrew A. Mellon Distinguished Achievement Award, the first film scholar to receive one and in 2010 was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is currently working on a book on the invention of the moving image.

Jonathon Rosen is a painter, illustrator, animator, and faculty member of the MFA Visual Narrative and Illustration/Cartooning departments at The School of Visual Arts in New York. The merging of humans and machines permeates his work and aesthetics. His artist Books, *Intestinal Fortitude* (Poote Press, 1990) and *The Birth of Machine Consciousness* (Le Dernier Cri, 2003) are in the permanent collection of the New York Metropolitan Museum. He was responsible for the Ichabod Crane drawings in Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* (1999). Solo and group exhibitions include La Luz de Jesus (Los Angeles, CA), MoMA PS 1 (Long Island City, Queens), and Kunst-Werke (Berlin). His animation/video-mix performing debut took place at REDCAT for the MOCA, LA. exhibition Visual Music (2005) with composer Tom Recchion.