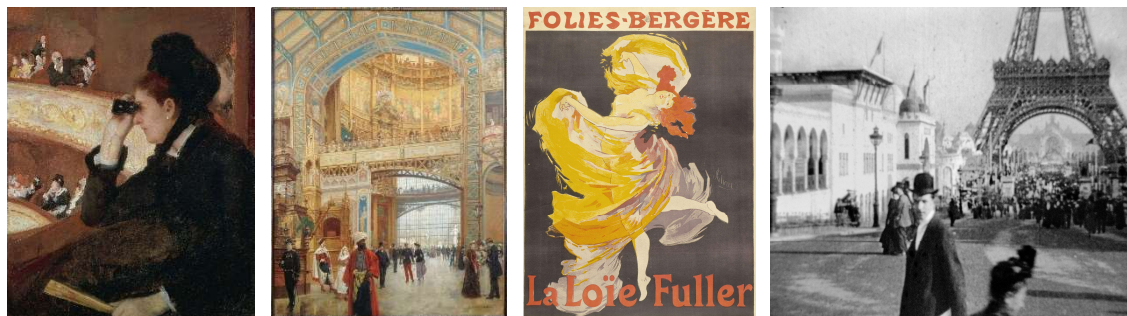


**Exhibition**     *City of Cinema: Paris 1850–1907*

**Dates:**        February 20–July 10, 2022

**Location:**     Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles, CA—December 14, 2021) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *City of Cinema: Paris 1850–1907*, an exhibition exploring the emergence of film in 19th-century Paris. Placing cinema in the context of modern Parisian visual culture, *City of Cinema* brings together paintings, sculpture, posters, prints, magic lantern slides, optical toys and devices along with photography and film, to reflect the wide range of artistic experiments that culminated in the first attempts at the moving image. Many of these works have never been on view in the United States. The exhibition is co-curated by Leah Lehmbeck, Curator and Department Head, European Painting and Sculpture and American Art, and Britt Salvesen, Curator and Department Head, Wallis Annenberg Photography Department and Prints and Drawings Department, with collaborating curator Vanessa R. Schwartz, Professor of History, Art History and Critical Studies, University of Southern California.

Co-organized with Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie, Paris, the exhibition comprises 195 objects across all media and draws significantly on Parisian repositories of visual culture including the Musée d'Orsay, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Musée Carnavalet, and the Cinémathèque française. Additionally, *City of Cinema* will present a selection of the earliest examples of films from the five major French repositories of cinema: the Centre Nationale de Cinéma, Cinémathèque française, GP Archives, Fondation Jérôme-Seydoux Pathé, and the Institut Lumière. One particularly striking display will be a working replica of the Théâtre Optique, one of the earliest moving-picture devices, used to project hand-drawn animated films—the first moving images presented to the public—in 1892.

*“City of Cinema* considers the early history of film in the larger context of cultural and art history, from the perspective of an art museum,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO

and Wallis Annenberg Director. “The exhibition is especially timely as we celebrate the opening of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures next door to LACMA, as well as being another chapter in our decade-long art and film initiative. Through key loans from international partners, as well as objects from the museum’s permanent collection, *City of Cinema* explores the interconnectedness of art and industry and the impact of new technologies and approaches on art and art history.”

“To contextualize the social, artistic, cultural and political era of Paris, LACMA’s exhibition will focus on film and its audiences, as well as the makers and the milieu of which they arose as well,” said Leah Lehmbeck.

“Through a variety of objects from across all media, many never seen before in the U.S., the exhibition tells an important history of innovation and experimentation that leads to the story of filmmaking in Los Angeles,” said Britt Salvesen.

Differing slightly in terms of themes and focus, the exhibition was on view at the Musée d’Orsay from September 27, 2021 through January 16, 2022. Accompanying the exhibition is a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by Leah Lehmbeck, Britt Salvesen, Vanessa R. Schwartz, and Brian Jacobson, and contributions by Aaron Rich. The catalogue is co-published by LACMA and DelMonico Books/D.A.P.

### **Exhibition Organization**

*City of Cinema* is organized in four sections, with seven film projections (approx. 2–3-minute film loops) placed throughout the show, culminating in a *salle de cinéma* (movie theater), which will have a longer film program (approx. 20 minutes).

The story begins on the streets of Paris, where a diverse populace of flâneurs, laborers, tourists, and many other urban citizens constituted the very beginnings of a collective audience for visual spectacle.

Moving from the street to specific sites of entertainment consumption, the second section examines the transformation of these places with the audience in mind, including the circus, cabaret, vaudeville, and the theater. Many of these spaces already existed but were updated with artificial lighting, modern narratives, and a heightened awareness that as one watched the stage, one was also being watched by fellow spectators. The Expositions Universelles (World’s Fairs) of 1889 and 1900 will be of particular focus here, to showcase how France centered itself within a global narrative. In the third section the focus shifts from the collective audience to the realm of the individual creator: from sites of consumption to sites of production, experimentation, and innovation, whether commercially or artistically motivated. The studio is thus considered as a laboratory or factory. This section also explores film’s international reach: as soon as the Lumière *cinématographe* became available in 1895, filmmakers

traveled abroad, demonstrating and selling their new apparatuses and promoting the rhetoric of “conquest.”

At the threshold of the *salle de cinéma*, the fourth and final section, the exhibition presents documentation of both early film studios and Parisian sites where the earliest films were projected. The *salle* itself will feature selections from a group of films created for precisely this setting: a darkened room with a screen, projector, and permanent seating. In subject, the films vary from *actualités* to historical recreations, fantasies, tricks, and travel. Thrilling the Parisian audiences whose tastes have been charted throughout the course of this exhibition, these films were also intended to circulate throughout the wider world. The conclusion of this exhibition thus introduces cinema as a global medium.

### **Exhibition Highlights**

Mary Cassatt's *In the Loge* (1878) masterfully captures a moment of modern-day spectacle at the Comédie Française. Here, artificial lighting and contemporary narratives not only cultivated paying, collective audiences, but also prepared them to be both viewer and viewed. The carefully mapped composition, which negotiates between near and far and deliberately includes the viewer in completing the narrative, is a critical feature that foretells audience engagement and audience awareness in the earliest experiments in film.

Louis Béroud's *The Central Dome of the Galerie des Machines, 1889 Exposition Universelle* (1890) demonstrates the magnificent grandeur of the architecture built by Joseph-Antoine Bouvard for the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Ornate polychrome decor masked the central dome's metal engineering, in contrast to the explicitly modern Eiffel Tower, the base of which is visible in the background of Béroud's image through a paned-glass wall. Béroud shows a variety of figures—including soldiers (both French and North African), fashionable European men and women, and people in regional dress—traversing the vast hall, signaling the cosmopolitanism of Paris.

The invention of chromolithography in the last third of the 19th century fueled the production of four-color posters, which became fundamentally tied to the aesthetic experience of Parisian streets. Jules Chéret's *Folies-Bergère: Loïe Fuller* (1893) announces one of the popular performances of the American modern dancer Loie Fuller, a pioneer in color chemistry and lighting whose Serpentine Dance made her hugely famous on both sides of the Atlantic. Many versions of these performances were captured in the earliest films, which were often hand colored to mimic the dramatic lighting effects projected in Fuller's live stage shows.

Spectatorship was a way of life in modern Paris, thanks in large part due to new technologies such as photography and film that revolutionized the ways people

considered their environment, history, and even identities. In many early actualités, we see Parisians gazing at cameras and their operators, perhaps anticipating the prospect of seeing themselves on screen. This film from the GP Archive highlights several major sites of the massive Exposition Universelle of 1900, including the Eiffel Tower, which had been built for the 1889 exposition and remained an icon of French technological and design superiority. Men and women perambulate the grounds, and several expectantly cast glances at the camera. More than a straightforward document of the exposition, this actualité captures a street-level view of the thousands who visited the fair, looking equally at the diverse spectacles and at one another.

#### **Credit**

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, and the Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie, Paris.

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#### **About LACMA**

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 147,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

**Image caption:** Mary Cassatt, *In the Loge*, 1878, oil on canvas, 32 × 26 in., Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Hayden Collection—Charles Henry Hayden Fund, 10.35, photo © Museum Of Fine Arts, Boston; Louis Béroud, *Central dome of the Galerie des Machines at the 1889 Exposition Universelle*, 1890, oil on canvas, 78 × 64 3/4 in. (198 × 164.5 cm), Musée Carnavalet, Histoire de Paris, image source: [www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr](http://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr); Jules Chéret, *Folies-Bergère: Loie Fuller* 1893, Kurt J. Wagner, M.D. and C. Kathleen Wagner Collection; photo © Museum Associates/LACMA ; still from the film *Exposition Universelle 1900*, Gaumont, 1900. Document GP Archives, Collection Gaumont

**Location:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)