

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCIENCE ON SCREEN PROGRAM EXPLORES THE ORIGINS OF THE LASER LIGHT SHOW

With physicist Elsa Garmire, filmmaker Joshua White, and collector AJ Epstein in conversation, with special laser and liquid light demonstrations

Friday, May 31, 2019

Astoria, New York, May 15, 2019—Museum of the Moving Image and its [Sloan Science & Film](#) initiative will present **Circle to Sphere: The Origins of the Laser Light Show**, a rare showcase of films and other moving images that connect to the origins of the popular laser light show that became a staple of planetarium shows beginning in the 1970s. The program on Friday, May 31, 2019, at 8:00 p.m. includes screenings of works from 1921 through 2015, live demonstrations of laser and liquid light techniques, and a conversation between **Elsa Garmire**, acclaimed physicist and co-founder of the company that became Laserium®; **Joshua White**, founder of the Joshua Light Show; and Lumia collector **AJ Epstein**.

The screening portion will include visuals made with paint, kinetic sculpture, animation, and optical techniques by abstract film pioneers **Walter Ruttmann** (*Opus I*, 1921, 35mm); **Thomas Wilfred** (*Clavilux Junior, Unit #86*, 1930, filmed by AJ Epstein, digital projection); **Jordan Belson** (*Apollo*, 1982, digital projection); and **Stephen Beck in collaboration with Jordan Belson** (*Cycles*, 1974, digital projection). It will also present the work of light show pioneers **Ivan Dryer and Elsa Garmire** (*Laserimage*, 1972, restored 16mm print) and **Joshua White** (selected concert projections created for “Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution” at the Skirball Center, 2015, digital projection).

Organized by Sonia Epstein, *Sloan Science & Film* Executive Editor and MoMI Associate Curator of Science and Film, the program explores the connections between the scientific development of lasers with artistic practice and theatrical experiences that drew from the technology. “I am thrilled that we are able to highlight the overlooked contribution that physicist Elsa Garmire made to the laser light show, which became the longest running theatrical attraction in Los Angeles and played an instrumental role in bringing the public into scientific spaces—light shows made planetariums cool,” Epstein said. “In addition to seeing Garmire’s work and hearing directly from her, Circle to Sphere is a chance to experience the rarely shown work of visionary artists such as Jordan Belson and Thomas Wilfred. The group of

technologically innovative artists we are showcasing manipulated light in new ways that had wide-reaching impacts on visual art and popular film.”

Tickets for “Circle to Sphere: The Origins of the Laser Light Show” are \$15 with discounts for seniors, students, youth, and Museum members. It takes place at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Ave, Astoria, NY 11106. Advance tickets are available online at www.movingimage.us.

About the speakers:

Elsa Garmire is the Sydney E. Junkins Professor of Engineering Emerita and former Thayer School of Engineering dean at Dartmouth College. She is the former President of The Optical Society. Dr. Garmire received an A.B. at Harvard and Ph.D. at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), both in physics. After post-doctoral work at Caltech, she spent 20 years at the University of Southern California, where she was named William Hogue Professor of Electrical Engineering and Director of the Center for Laser Studies, and then went to Dartmouth in 1995. In her technical field of quantum electronics, lasers, and optics, she has authored over 250 journal papers, obtained nine patents, and been on the editorial board of five technical journals. She has supervised 30 PhD and 14 M.S. theses. Dr. Garmire has held leadership positions in the National Academy of Engineering, the Society of Women Engineers, the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, the American Physical Society, and the Optical Society of America, and served as a representative to the International Commission for Optics. Dr. Garmire received the Society of Women Engineers Achievement Award, has been a Fulbright Scholar, and is an honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Joshua White is founder of the Joshua Light Show, a group of artists improvising with projections in live concert venues. The Joshua Light Show were resident artists at Fillmore East from 1968 to '71 and performed behind major musical artists such as Frank Zappa, Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix. White has also had a prolific career in television. He directed a range of television shows including *Seinfeld*, *Club MTV*, *Inside the Actors Studio*, and *Max Headroom*. He received an Emmy nomination for an ABC special on Cat Stevens. In addition, White has continued to work with artists, directing Laurie Anderson's video to “O Superman,” and staging the first rock concert at Radio City Music Hall. Over the last 15 years he has collaborated with the artist Gary Panter with whom he also regenerated Joshua Light Show. The Light Show is still performing.

AJ Epstein is an artist and producer working in the medium of light, photography, film, and live theatrical performance. He is the Artistic Director of West of Lenin in Seattle, and has been producing plays and films in Seattle for over two decades. Epstein runs Clavilux.org, a foundation dedicated to the rescue and preservation of Thomas Wilfred's Lumia and Clavilux works. Epstein is a mechanical expert in the workings of the Clavilux, and has restored numerous works by Thomas Wilfred. He is on the board of the Northwest Film Forum.

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About Science on Screen

Science on Screen® at the [Museum of the Moving Image](#) pairs screenings of rarely seen films with conversations between scientists and filmmakers, providing new perspectives on both film and scientific subject matter. Films span from the silent era through those made for the Internet; subjects range from seahorses to robotic clones. The series has featured the work of such filmmakers as Isabella Rossellini, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Agnieszka Holland, and Alex Rivera, who have discussed topics including marine organisms, reproductive biology, and human-robot interactions with scientists including Mandë Holford, Fabien Cousteau, and Maria Gloria Dominguez-Bello. *Science on Screen* is organized by Sonia Epstein, Executive Editor and Associate Curator of Science and Film. The series is an initiative of the Coolidge Corner Theatre, with major support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

About Museum of the Moving Image

Museum of the Moving Image advances the understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. In its acclaimed facility in Astoria, New York, the Museum presents exhibitions; screenings; discussion programs featuring actors, directors, and industry leaders; and education programs which serve more than 50,000 students each year. The Museum also houses a significant collection of moving-image artifacts.

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MUSEUM INFORMATION

Hours: Wed–Thurs, 10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Fri, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Sat–Sun, 10:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

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

Free Friday Nights: free gallery admission every Friday, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. presented by the Richmond Country Savings Foundation. Additionally, this program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Film Screenings: Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and as scheduled. Unless otherwise noted, tickets: \$15 adults, \$11 students and seniors, \$9 youth (ages 3–17), free or discounted for Museum members (depending on level of membership). Advance purchase is available online. Ticket purchase includes same-day Museum admission.

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: M or R to Steinway Street. N or W to 36 Ave or Broadway.

Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: movingimage.us

Membership: <http://movingimage.us/support/membership> or 718 777 6877

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