

SATYAJIT RAY'S

brilliant social drama

The Music Room

**Past
Exhibition**



Art for Art House

The Posters of Peter Strausfeld

November 13, 2025–April 12, 2026

In operation from 1931 to 1986 (with a brief hiatus between 1940 and 1944 due to damage sustained during World War II), the Academy Cinema was London's premier art house movie theater. Managed by Elsie Cohen, it specialized in international films that eschewed classic cause-and-effect narratives and instead highlighted a given director's vision. This approach to moviemaking led many art house films of the period to be known primarily by the names of their directors rather than by those of their stars; Federico Fellini, Akira Kurosawa, François Truffaut, Ingmar Bergman, Andrzej Wajda, and Satyajit Ray still hold cult status for cinema aficionados. The output of such directors was often prolific since they did not have to navigate standard Hollywood bureaucracy and could therefore focus entirely on their craft. Of course, once these films achieved international fame, the larger movie industry began copying many of their visual techniques and storytelling methods; however, during the early to mid-20th century, art house remained a novel and daring form of cinema showcased by only a few theaters.

Elsie Cohen believed strongly in the purpose of her theater and in 1937 she hired George Hoellering, an Austrian-Jewish refugee, film producer, and director, as the Academy's deputy general manager. When Great Britain entered World War II in September 1939, however, any residents born in countries with which England was now at war were classified as "enemy aliens," and many were sent to internment camps around the country. Hoellering was imprisoned in Onchan Camp on the Isle of Man, one of the larger facilities that became a residence to many foreign-born artists and academics. While there, he formed a deep friendship with Peter Strausfeld, a German refugee and artist whom he ultimately hired to create the Academy's unique advertising posters from 1945 until Strausfeld's death in 1980.

Both Strausfeld and Hoellering had lived in Berlin during the 1930s and would have been familiar with the lithographic posters created by Josef Fenneker for the Marmorhaus cinema. Never before had a theater commissioned its own unique posters for films, and Fenneker's designs stood out dramatically for their unique approach to advertising. In this same manner, Strausfeld created more than three hundred bold, predominantly single-color linocut compositions with a deceptively simple hand-printed feel. Where mainstream movie posters typically relied on colorful, montage-style interpretations of scenes from a film combined with striking typography, Strausfeld's posters were the opposite. Originally printed on bookbinders' linen because of the wartime paper shortage, they were first posted at bomb sites around the city. Once paper was more readily available, editions of 100 to 350 copies began appearing in London's subway system, expanding through design the audience for what was a relatively niche product. These posters remain some of the most unique examples of localized cinema advertising in movie history.

Unless otherwise noted, all posters are from the collection of Michael Lellouche.

Whenever feasible, Poster House reuses materials from previous shows to drive sustainable practice.

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France

The advent of French New Wave Cinema in the late 1950s marked a turning point: art house films rose to prominence among a small but growing demographic around the world. Films were no longer just a means of pure entertainment but were also an avenue for larger artistic expression. Auteur-style directors like François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Éric Rohmer, and Agnès Varda broke with traditional narrative forms and used hand-held cameras to establish a sense of realism, introducing rogue, nonlinear editing; plot ambiguity; and an overall existential philosophy to films in which angst-ridden characters sought personal meaning in an absurd universe (an outlook that many people, especially the younger generation, found relatable in the aftermath of the war). These directors were not just filmmakers but also passionate students of cinematic history, with many of them employed as critics by the esteemed journal *Les Cahiers du Cinema*.

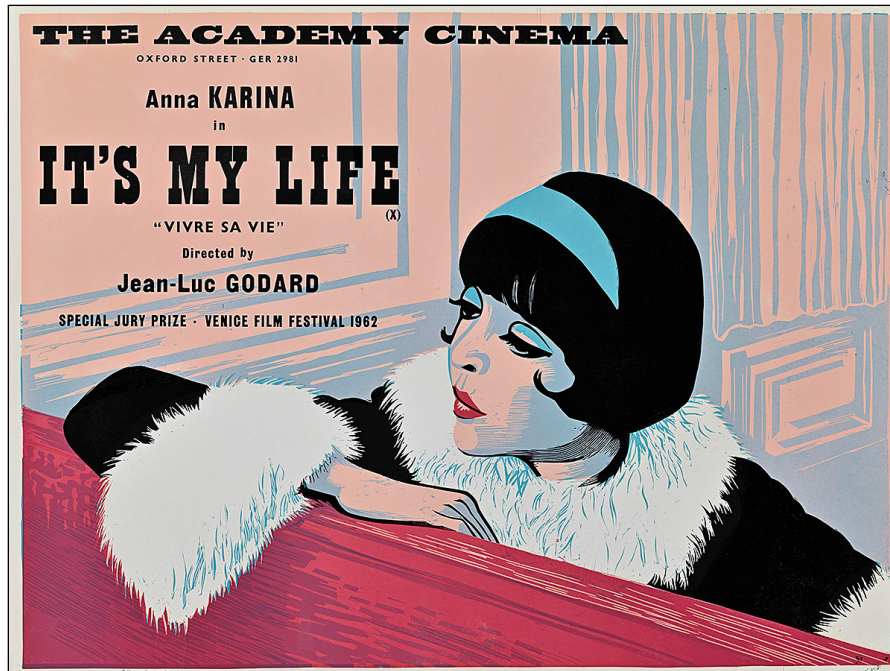


Drôle de Drame, 1951

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Poster House Permanent Collection

- While many of the New Wave directors dismissed those of the old guard, a select few were honored for their innovations within the medium. These included visionaries like Jean Renoir, Jacques Becker, Henri-Georges Clouzot, and Marcel Carné, the director of this film.
- Originally released in France in 1937, *Drôle de Drame* (known in English as *Bizarre, Bizarre*, but more literally translating to “Funny Drama”) is a farce based on an English novel set in Victorian London. While rather complicated, the narrative is a comedy of errors in which a husband and wife are presumed missing while, in disguise, they are simultaneously attempting to solve their own disappearance. Meanwhile, the wife is seduced by an actual serial killer who then colludes with the husband to fake their deaths so they can start new lives as crime writers.
- In 1938, Peter Strausfeld married Margaret “Peggy” Pendrey, a British citizen. While there is no precise documentation indicating why he chose to use her surname when signing his early work, it is most likely because the very German-sounding Strausfeld would have been viewed with suspicion in England so soon after the war. This poster is one of the few in which he uses his wife’s maiden name.

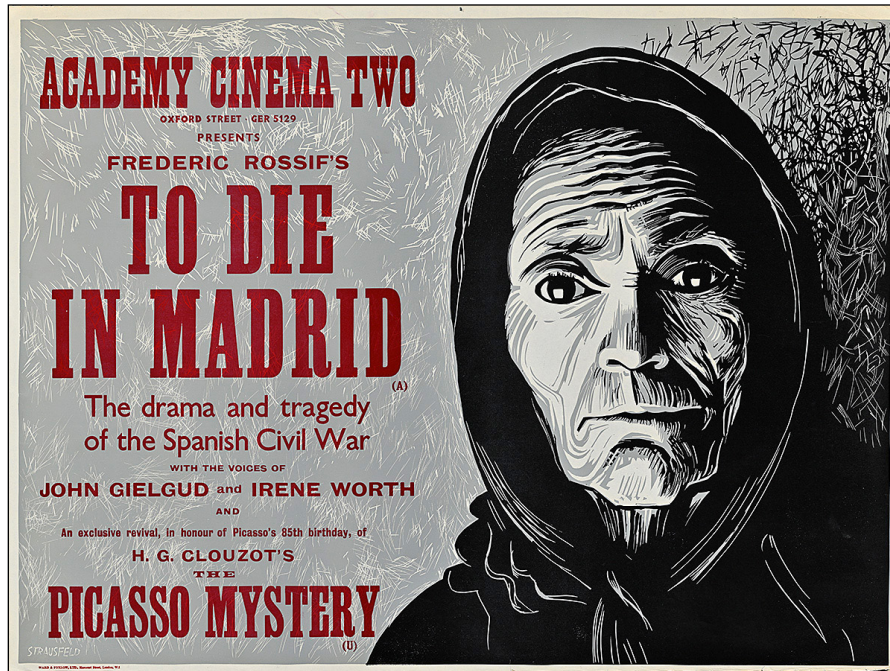


It's My Life, 1962

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Written and directed by the legendary Jean-Luc Godard, *Vivre sa vie* (released as *It's My Life* in the United Kingdom and *My Life to Live* in the United States) follows a woman who leaves her husband and child to pursue an acting career but ends up becoming a prostitute. As with many New Wave films, there is neither a typical “Hollywood ending” in which the characters find happiness nor a satisfactory resolution to the plot.
- The film stars Anna Karina, one of the darlings of French New Wave cinema as well as Godard's wife and frequent collaborator. Her melancholy pose in this poster is directly drawn from a scene in the movie; however, Strausfeld has inverted it so that she is facing left.
- A version of this poster without the advertising copy appears as set decoration in Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967), suggesting that he was a fan of Strausfeld's design even after he and Karina divorced.



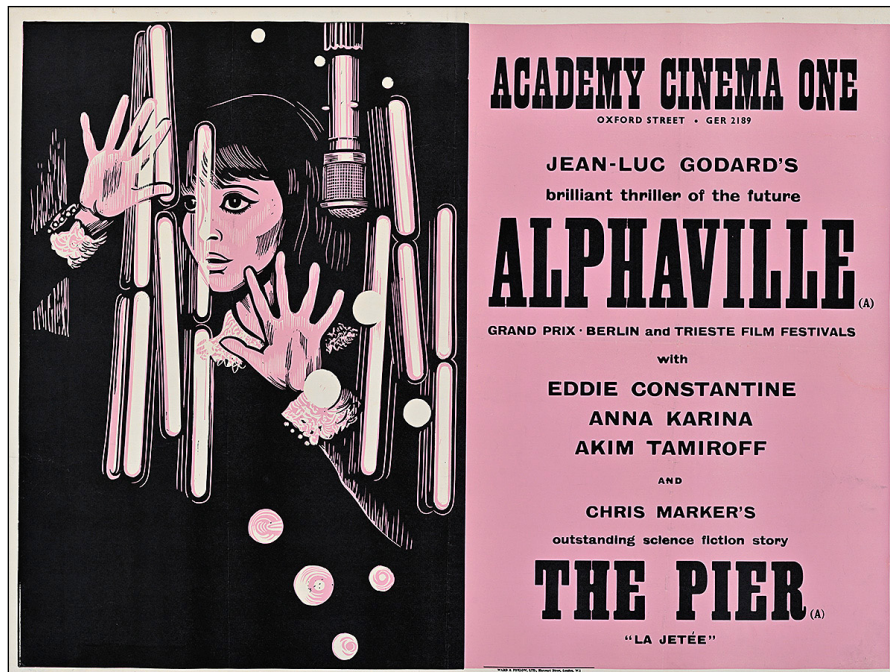
To Die in Madrid, 1968

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Directed by Frédéric Rossif, *Mourir à Madrid* (*To Die in Madrid*) is a French documentary on the Spanish Civil War that focuses on the grinding inequality prevalent in Spain during the late 1930s (when half the population was illiterate and 0.1 percent of the population owned half the land). Drawing on tremendous archival research, it points to the fact that Franco would not have won without significant assistance from Hitler and Mussolini.
- Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary feature, the film was released while the Franco regime was still in power in Spain. There was backlash from both the far left and the far right within France due to the tone and content of the film; the French government delayed its release by one month and requested that a few scenes be cut so as not to upset Franco.
- The official poster for the French release of the film was based on the famous Robert Capa photograph *The Falling Soldier* (1936), taken during the Spanish Civil War. Rather than base his composition on this dramatic image, however, Strausfeld focuses on the quieter human suffering of Spain's civilian population during this period.



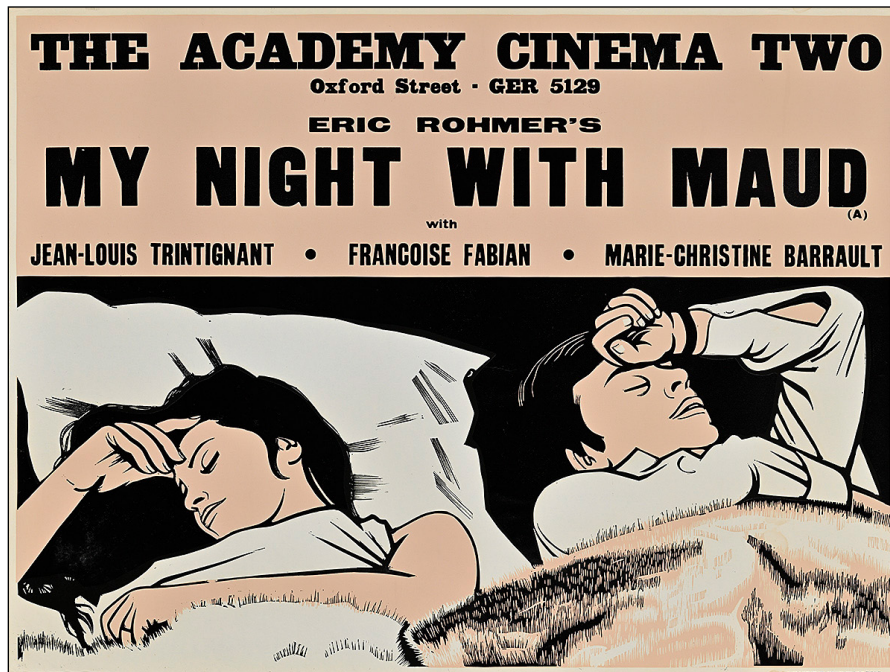


Alphaville/The Pier, 1966

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Private Collection, NYC

- Strausfeld's poster for Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* is one of his most sought after by contemporary collectors. This film is a dystopian work of science fiction in which hard-boiled detective Lemmy Caution attempts to find a missing agent on a distant planet where humans are unable to experience emotion or to act illogically.
- Godard shot *Alphaville* in Paris, creating a futuristic world without the help of elaborate sets or props—modernist architecture and the latest examples of computer technology were unusual enough that they could easily establish the sense of an alternate universe for most viewers. This approach would become the model for science-fiction films like *Blade Runner* (1982).
- The design focuses on the protagonist's romantic interest played by Godard's wife, Anna Karina (also seen in the poster for *It's My Life*), in one of the final scenes of the film.
- The poster also promotes a screening of Chris Marker's 1962 short film, *La Jetée* (The Pier), a postapocalyptic story composed out of still photographs in which a time traveler attempts to visit the past and the future in order to save the present. Considered by critics to be one of the best shorts ever made, it would serve as inspiration for Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* in 1995.

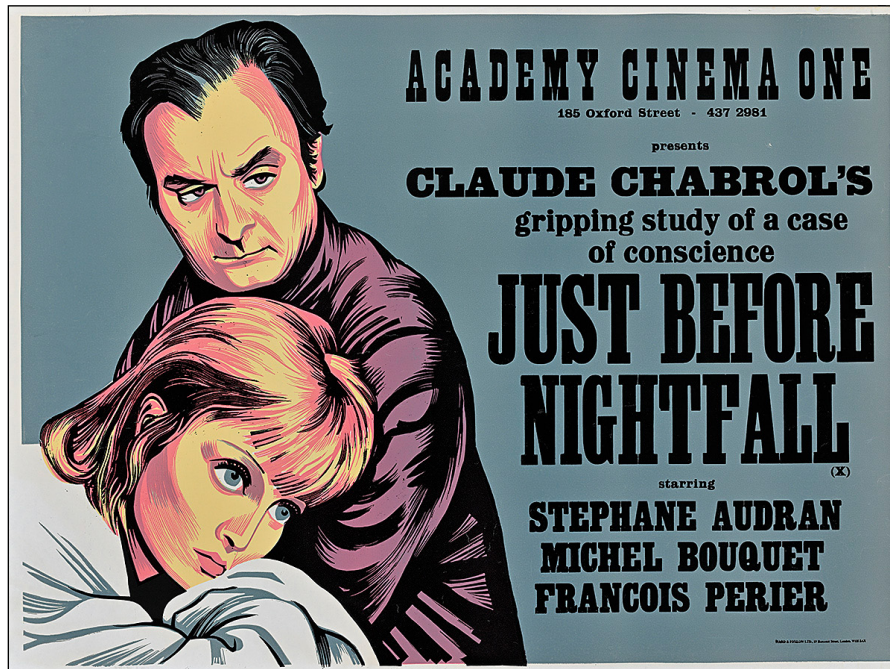


My Night with Maud, c. 1969

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- *Ma Nuit chez Maud* (*My Night with Maud*) is the third (but released fourth) in the series of Six Moral Tales by the New Wave director Éric Rohmer. It was his first international success, garnering him both commercial and critical praise as well as two Academy Award nominations.
- True to form for a New Wave film, the narrative focuses on a love quadrangle and the various philosophical and ethical stances of each of the characters, in this case in relation to religion, mathematics, and love.
- Rather than portray the inner torment of any of these people, Strausfeld references the title of the film, showing the male protagonist fully clothed in Maud's bed as they wearily engage in philosophical debate. As the director noted, "What matters is what they think about their behavior, rather than their behavior itself."

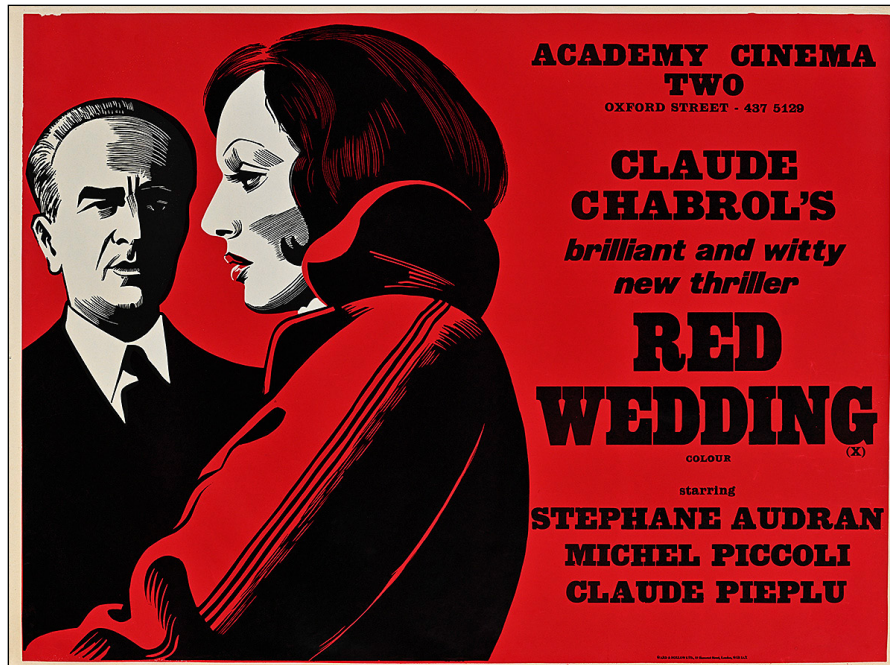


Just Before Nightfall, 1973

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Considered to be the most commercial of the French New Wave directors, Claude Chabrol was particularly well known for thrillers starring his wife, Stéphane Audran.
- *Juste avant la nuit* (*Just Before Nightfall*) is based on the British novel *The Thin Line*, and deals with the guilt felt by a man after he inadvertently kills his mistress during sex. In an effort to clear his conscience, he confesses to his wife and his best friend (the husband of his mistress), who both tell him not to turn himself in to the police as it would just cause more suffering. Unable to handle the idea that perhaps he actually intended to murder his mistress, he announces that he will face the consequences without their blessing. His wife, not wanting to ruin her life and those of her children, kills him with sleeping pills and his death is deemed a suicide.
- During the 1960s, the Academy Cinema expanded to feature two and then three screens. Strausfeld's posters also began to indicate the theater in which a particular film was playing—in this instance, Academy Cinema One is the original, main screen.

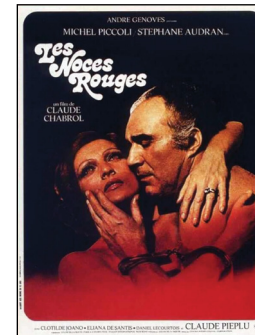


Red Wedding, 1973

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Also directed by Claude Chabrol and starring his wife, Stéphane Audran, *Les Noces Rouges* (released as *Red Wedding* in the United Kingdom and as *Blood Wedding* in the United States) is based on the true-crime story of a husband who killed both his wife and his lover's husband. While the plot strays from the actual story, the movie's release was nonetheless delayed as the real husband, Bernard Cousty, was facing the death penalty and the government did not want the film to inadvertently influence the jury. Cousty was ultimately condemned to death but his sentence was later commuted to life in prison.
- Although the poster advertises the film as "brilliant and witty," it is still very much within the genre of film noir, as Strausfeld's moody design emphasizes. The composition stands in stark contrast to the original French poster for the movie that shows a nude, middle-aged couple in a passionate embrace, handcuffed together at the wrists. Strausfeld's poster is subtle and intriguing, while the original can almost be viewed as camp.



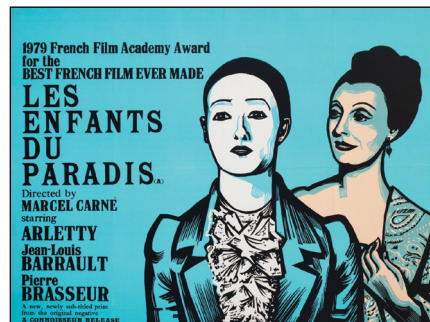


Les Enfants du Paradis, 1979

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- The Academy did not just show new art house films but also regularly highlighted notable movies from the past that fit stylistically within the genre. This is the printer's proof version of the poster for the 1979 rerelease of *Les Enfants du Paradis* (*Children of Paradise*), demonstrating how Strausfeld created a composition before the addition of text. The film was shown so frequently over many years at the Academy that the linocut block eventually wore out.
- Shot sporadically in Occupied France during World War II, the film was originally released in 1945 and was both a critical and commercial success. It was also a precursor to many New Wave films, influencing many of its most prominent directors.
- The plot focuses on a courtesan and the four very different men who compete for her love in the theater world of the 1830s (one of whom, the mime Baptiste Deburau, is shown in this poster). None of them ultimately give her happiness, suggesting that the only lasting love is that between the actor and the audience.
- The word "paradis" in the film's title relates to the slang term used to describe the top mezzanine level within a theater, known for its inexpensive seats and passionately vocal audience. Many actors of the period directed their performances at these viewers, playing to their preferences and affording them a level of power within the theater world.



The United Kingdom

While the United Kingdom had a long-established commercial movie industry dominated by numerous studios, most famously Ealing and Pinewood, it was also home to its own New Wave. This subgenre within art house cinema sprang from England's great theatrical tradition and often reflected anger at the class system as well as larger cultural shifts during the postwar period. While seminal directors like Tony Richardson and John Schlesinger emerged in the late 1950s, the era of British art house was relatively short lived. Many of its finest directors were quickly absorbed into the internationally dominant Hollywood studios, while the homegrown industry was soon overshadowed by such blockbusters as the James Bond series.

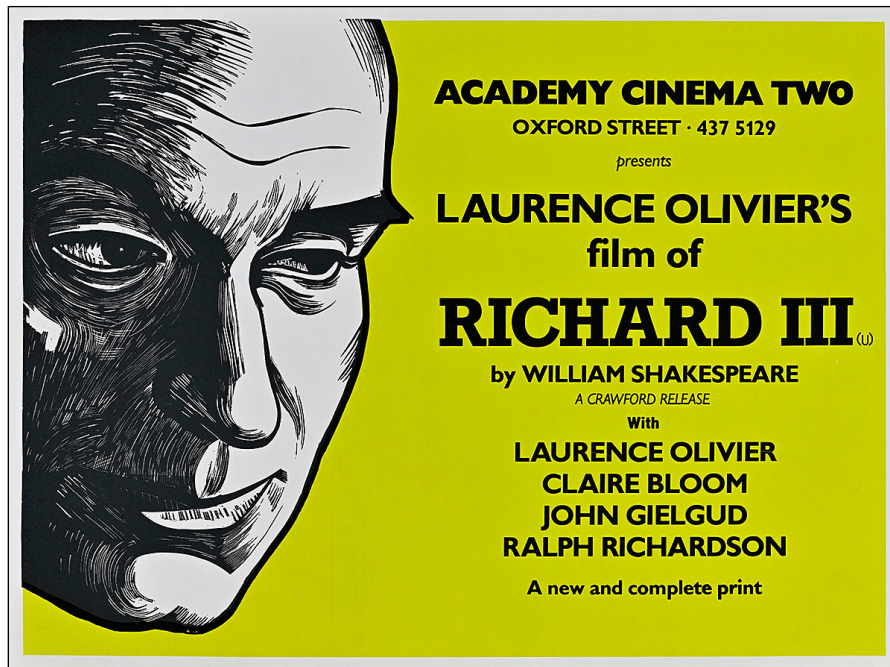


Murder in the Cathedral, 1952

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- While it represents a departure from Strausfeld's typical style, this poster highlights the intimate professional relationships within the Academy. Based on T. S. Eliot's 1935 verse play of the same name, *Murder in the Cathedral* was directed by George Hoellering—the theater's general manager who had originally hired Strausfeld.
- In addition to creating this poster, Strausfeld served as the art director for the film itself under his postwar pen name Peter Pendrey (taken from his wife's surname). The book about the film's production, released the same year, also featured many of Strausfeld's sketches. He won the 1951 prize for best art direction at the Venice International Film Festival before its theatrical release the following year.
- Shot in black and white with amateur actors, the film follows the life and murder of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1170. As most of the drama takes place within Canterbury Cathedral, Strausfeld chose a multicolored palette to emulate the structure's stained-glass windows.



Richard III, 1966

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Directed by and starring the famous Shakespearean actor Laurence Olivier, *Richard III* was originally released in the United Kingdom in 1955. It was released in the United States nearly a year later, both in theaters and on broadcast television simultaneously.
- The decision to air the film on television negatively impacted its international box-office income, resulting in the cancellation of Olivier's planned adaptation of *Macbeth*. *Richard III*'s original status as a "flop" has since been reassessed, and many critics now believe it is Olivier's finest adaptation of Shakespeare to film. As between 25 and 40 million people watched the original television broadcast in the United States, it is also considered the most impactful production of any Shakespearian play.
- Strausfeld's poster focuses on an illustration of Olivier's face in the title role and was created for the 1966 rerelease of the film, presented here in "a new and complete print." As the version released in the United Kingdom had not been cut in the first place, however, this language was probably used solely for marketing purposes rather than reflecting a significant change in the print of the film.



Dutchman/Tonite Let's All Make Love in London, 1967

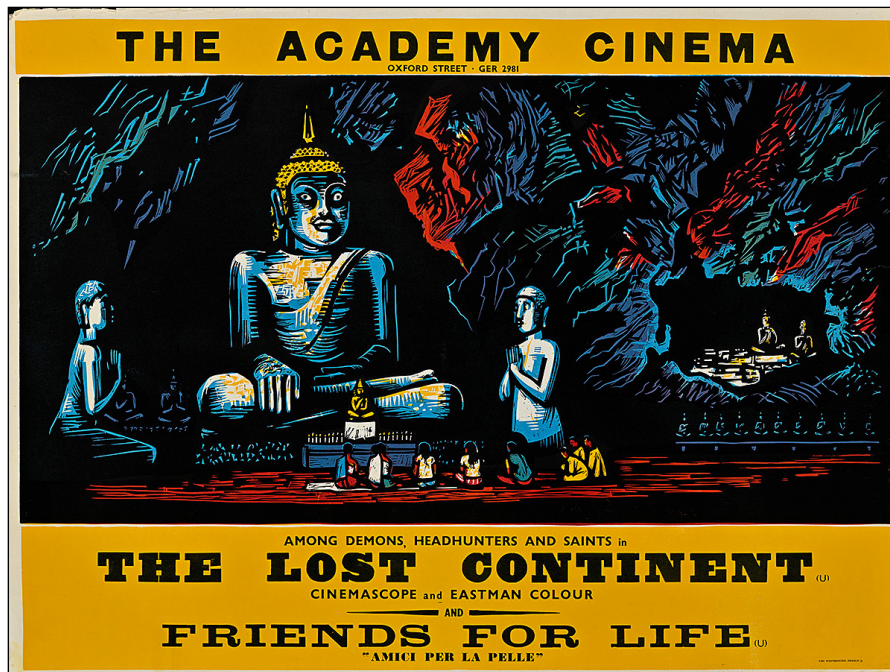
Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Shot in documentary style, *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London* chronicles the counterculture of “Swinging London” in the 1960s and features vignettes with young celebrities (many of whom are listed at the bottom of the poster), actors, pop-culture icons, Beat-generation writers, and rock bands, including Pink Floyd and the Rolling Stones. Many have viewed the film not only as the definitive document of a generation but also as a commentary on the loss of the British Empire.
- The central figure is based on a photograph of the quintessential Biba Girl, representing the Biba clothing shop in London that defined the Mod era of fashion in the '60s. Shot on set, the image was part of the original press kit.
- Also listed on this poster is *Dutchman*, a critically praised drama based on the 1964 play of the same name in which a white woman aggressively pursues and antagonizes a Black man on the New York subway.

Western Europe

Although French movies represented a large percentage of the foreign-language films shown in the United Kingdom, other European directors, most notably Italy's Federico Fellini and Sweden's Ingmar Bergman, also achieved cult status there. Italy was perhaps the earliest country to produce art house cinema. Unable to identify with the saccharine and optimistic films emerging from Hollywood in the postwar period, directors in war-shattered Italy gravitated toward untrained actors, gritty plots about everyday life, and decadent fantasy as a counterpoint to a more harsh reality. Meanwhile, Bergman's deeply psychological films introduced narratives that explored the absence of God and dysfunctional human relationships.



The Lost Continent/Friends For Life, 1955

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- One of Strausfeld's most intricate designs, this poster promotes a double bill of the Italian films *Continente Perduto* (*Lost Continent*) and *Amici per la pelle* (*Friends for Life*), both released in 1955.
- The image is drawn from documentary footage featured in *Lost Continent*, a movie that won that year's Special Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Despite these accolades, the film was not universally praised; the famed critic and philosopher Roland Barthes noted that despite its documentary status, it still presented South East Asia through a European lens of exoticism—a sense only reinforced by the poster's subtitle "Among Demons, Headhunters and Saints."
- Also nominated for a variety of awards, including Best Film in the British Academy Film Awards, *Friends for Life* is a coming-of-age tale in which two rival teenage boys become best friends until one betrays the other.



So Close to Life, 1958

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Known as *Brink of Life* to American audiences, *Nära livet* is one of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's lesser-known films. The story takes place in a maternity ward and follows three women whose pregnancies lead to a miscarriage, a stillbirth, and a failed abortion.
- The content of the movie was deemed offensive or unsuitable for young viewers in various countries, including Italy. Despite this, Bergman won the Best Director award at that year's Cannes Film Festival while the actors playing the three mothers and the head nurse shared the award for Best Actress. This was the second time in the history of the festival that this award was given jointly; it has since happened three more times, including in 2024 for *Emilia Pérez*.
- While the original Swedish poster depicts the heads of all three mothers, Strausfeld illustrates only the actor Ingrid Thulin, the woman who suffers a miscarriage, in a moment of anguish.



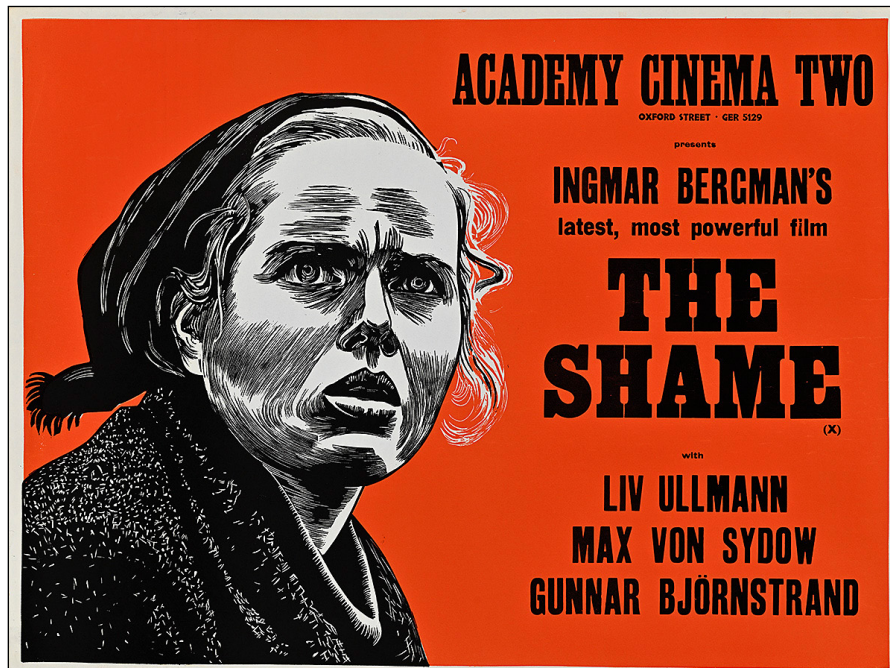


Juliet of the Spirits, 1966

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Director Federico Fellini's first color film, *Giulietta degli spiriti* (*Juliet of the Spirits*) is a phantasmagoric extravaganza in which the eponymous Juliet experiences surreal and wondrous visions as she discovers her husband's extramarital affair. As the apparitions intensify, she finds the inner strength to leave him and discover a world of her own.
- Strausfeld's design highlights a few of the bizarre characters Juliet encounters in the course of the dreamlike narrative; some imagined, some, like her glamorous neighbor, real but deeply eccentric. He counterbalances this pink-and-blue toned fantasy world by depicting Juliet—played by Fellini's actual wife, Giulietta Masina—in shades of black and white.
- Riding on the extreme international success of Fellini's earlier films *La Dolce Vita* and *8 1/2*, the Academy chose to show this movie in two theaters simultaneously. The word "Felliniesque" even entered the English language around this time; historian Bernard A. Cook has defined it as embodying "a certain Italian sophistication yet earthiness, a fascination with the bizarre yet a love of simplicity all wrapped in a flamboyant Mediterranean approach to life and art."



The Shame, 1968

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Filmed on Fårö, the island where Ingmar Bergman lived, *Skammen* (*Shame*) is one of the director's most devastating movies. The plot follows a young couple who find themselves caught up in a civil war. They each respond to the circumstances and brutalities of the situation differently, forcing a breakdown of their relationship.
- Strausfeld's depiction of actress Liv Ullmann in this poster is far less flattering than the film still upon which it was based, weathering her appearance rather than highlighting her beauty. Such brutal naturalism is reminiscent of the work of German Expressionist artist Käthe Kollwitz, with whom Strausfeld, as a professor of graphic design, would have been familiar.
- Despite being released during the Vietnam War, Bergman was adamant that his movie was not a commentary on contemporary politics but rather a reflection of the way war in general tears apart humanity.





Tristana, 1970

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

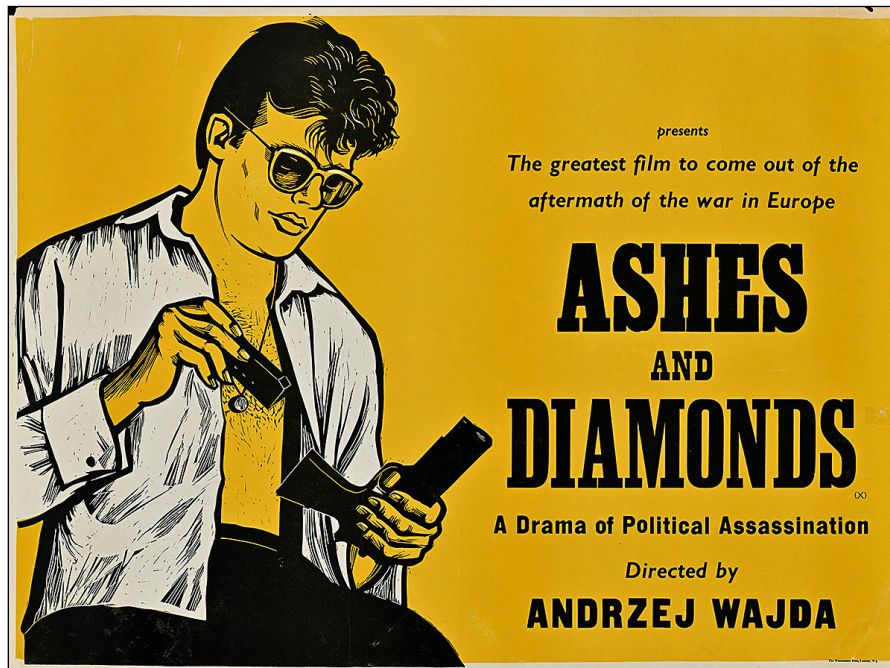
- Spanish director Luis Buñuel first rose to prominence in artistic circles in 1929 with the surrealist 16-minute short *Un Chien Andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*) that he wrote with Salvador Dalí. Forty years later, his *Tristana* was a more commercial endeavor, starring notable European actors Catherine Deneuve, Franco Nero, and Fernando Rey.
- While Buñuel had tried to adapt Benito Pérez Galdós's novel of the same name since the early 1960s, the right-wing, Catholic government of Spain repeatedly rejected his proposed script, citing censorship laws. Buñuel's position as a socialist and as an outspoken atheist did not help matters, and he ultimately relocated to Mexico for many years before returning to Spain in 1969.
- This was not the director's first encounter with censorship. One of his previous films, *Viridiana*, had won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1961 as Spain's official entry, only to be criticised by the Vatican and then banned in Spain for 18 years.
- After approximately four major rewrites, *Tristana* was finally filmed. The plot involves a wealthy nobleman who preys romantically upon his female ward, Tristana. She becomes more rebellious with age and runs away with a young man; however, she returns to her guardian when she falls ill. Knowing he will die soon, Tristana agrees to marry him for financial reasons. Some academics have pointed out that the film's political and socialist-feminist content in its final format may have gone over the heads of the censors.

Central and Eastern Europe

The death of Stalin in 1953 and the subsequent denunciation of his system by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev three years later ushered in an era of reduced artistic censorship. Directors within neighboring Comecon countries (socialist-leaning countries aligned with the Soviet Union) began experimenting with increased creative freedom, producing films that tackled the social discontent of young people and narratives that could be interpreted as critical of the state. This movie industry, however, was still largely controlled by the state; government restrictions ebbed and flowed over the years and many directors used satire or surrealism in order to avoid being silenced.

When asked ‘What is behind the Berlin Wall?’ the Polish directors of the 1950s gave the truest answers of anyone in the Eastern Bloc.

—Andrzej Wajda, director



Ashes and Diamonds, c. 1959

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- A leader in the Polish Film School movement, Andrzej Wajda is one of the country's most prominent art house film directors; no fewer than four of his movies have been nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards. *Popiół i diament* (*Ashes and Diamonds*) is one of his best-known works, the final film in his war trilogy.
- Based on the 1948 novel of the same name, *Ashes and Diamonds* is set in the aftermath of World War II and follows a former resistance fighter's tragic attempts to assassinate the local secretary of the Polish Workers' Party.
- George Hoellering was loyal to a handful of directors whose work he deeply admired, including Wajda and the Hungarian director Miklós Jancsó, frequently screening all of their films. This practice was known in cinephile circles as "la politique des auteurs" (the policy of authors) in which the director is valued above all else.



A Blonde in Love, 1965

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Part of the Czechoslovak New Wave, Miloš Forman was one of the country's most lauded directors until he was forced to emigrate to the United States in 1968 after the Soviet-inspired Warsaw Pact invasion. Up until that point, his films had mocked aspects of Communist regimes.
- *Lásky jedné plavovlásky* (*A Blonde in Love* or *Loves of a Blonde*) is a comedic drama produced by Forman while he was still based in Czechoslovakia. The film was inspired by his real-life experience of seeing a young woman struggle with a suitcase while crossing a bridge.
- Forman intentionally cast amateur actors in most of the roles and much of the dialogue was improvised. The lead character of Andula, depicted tenderly in this poster by Strausfeld, was played by Hana Brejchová, the director's former sister-in-law.
- While *A Blonde in Love* is considered Forman's best Czech-language film, he is far better known for the two Academy Award-winning movies he directed after emigrating to the United States: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* starring Jack Nicholson and *Amadeus*.

The United States

While Hollywood dominated the type of movie both produced in and exported from the United States in the 1950s and '60s, a few American directors offered an alternative to its typically conventional style of storytelling. Inspired by art house directors from around the world, these young filmmakers attempted to make their own low-budget productions that told small stories or documented everyday lives. Nevertheless, American cinema would always be governed by more traditionally commercial narratives, the box office dictating what was considered viable on the market.

A few great directors have the ability to draw us into their dream world, into their personalities and obsessions and fascinate us with them.

—Roger Ebert, film critic

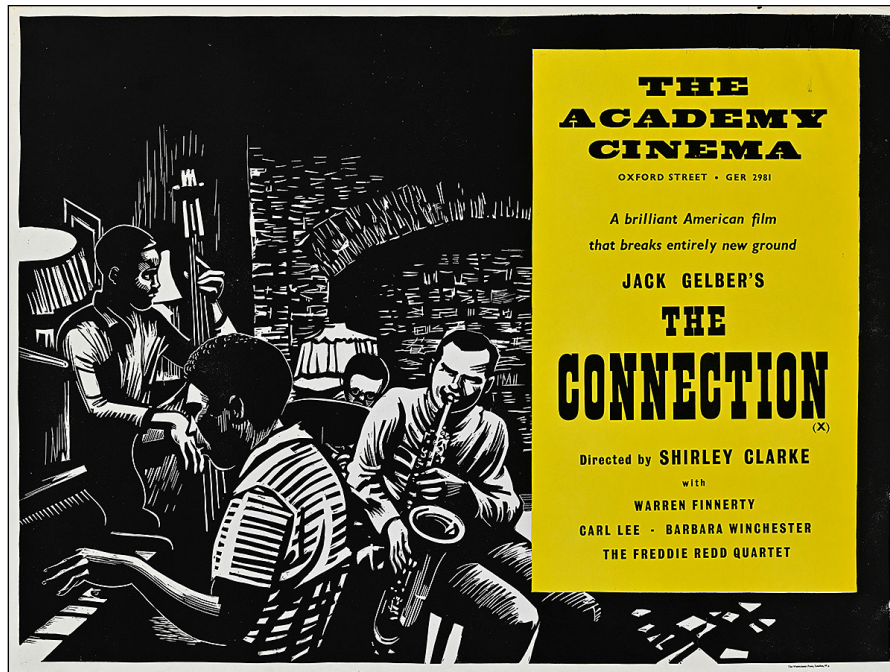


Buster Keaton Summer Season, c. 1970

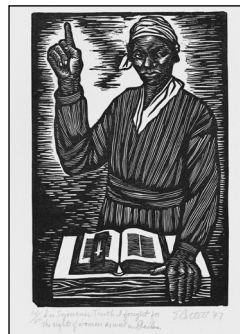
Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- In two different years (though likely more than two as this particular design is referenced in Strausfeld's obituary as appearing "annually"), the Academy Cinema hosted a Buster Keaton Summer Season that highlighted 10 films within the silent-film star's oeuvre over the course of five or six weeks. Two variations of the design are known; the main image is the same in each but the text is slightly changed to reflect new dates and the presence of a live piano accompanist. This indicates that Strausfeld kept some of his linocut carvings in order to reuse them.
- Buster Keaton has long been a favorite of film buffs; he starred in 19 silent short films and 10 features, including *The General* (a movie with mixed critical reception that has since become canonized). Known for his deadpan facial expression and knack for physical comedy, he was most active in the 1920s before his career fell into decline.
- While interest in silent-era films was standard within art house circles, Keaton also appeared in cameo roles on television during the 1950s and '60s, which might also account for the renewed interest in his earlier work.



*In Sojourner Truth I fought
for the rights of women
as well as Negroes, 1947,
Elizabeth Catlett*

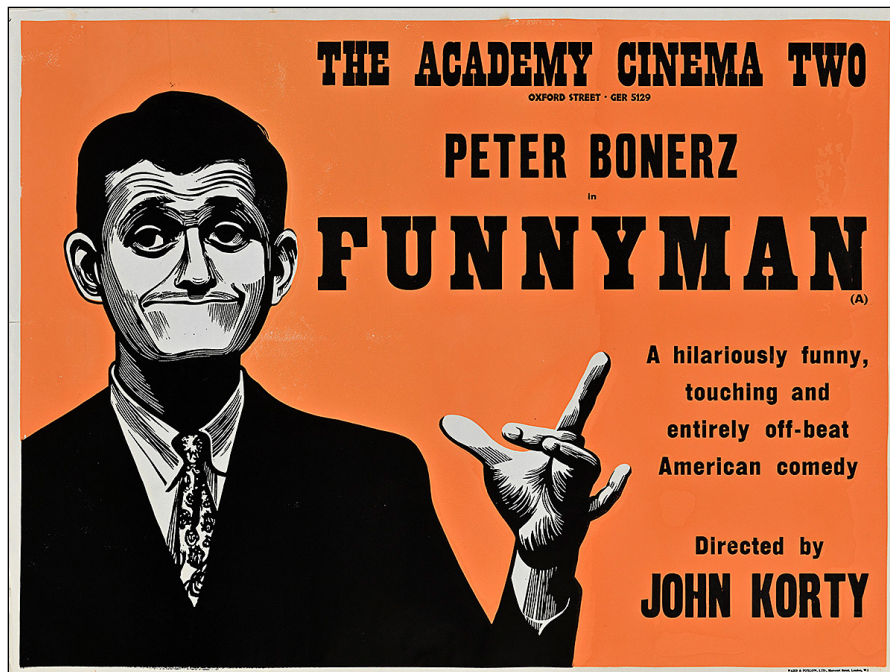


The Connection, 1962

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- In addition to being the Academy's official poster designer, Strausfeld taught graphic design at Brighton College of Art (today the University of Brighton) from 1959 until his death in 1980. He also worked as a book artist, cartoonist, and art director—all of which allowed him to present his deep knowledge of global art history. This evocative composition of jazz musicians recalls WPA-issued woodcut prints of the 1930s and '40s by artists like Hale Woodruff and Elizabeth Catlett.
- Adapted by Jack Gelber from his play of the same name, *The Connection* is the first known film to announce that it is the product of "found footage," implying a high level of authenticity. In reality, it was not a documentary—the original play followed a similar format, claiming to use real addicts as cast members in this story about jazz musicians and heroin use (the "connection" they are all waiting for is their drug dealer).
- Although the movie premiered at the Cannes Film Festival without incident, the American release faced censorship issues because of the repeated use of the word "shit." The director and producer ultimately brought the case to the New York State Court of Appeals where it was determined that the word was used to refer to heroin and not as a curse word; it was therefore not in violation of obscenity rules—a verdict that had lasting implications for movie censorship in the United States.

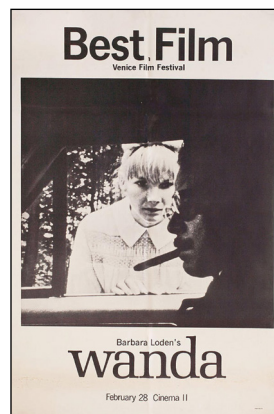
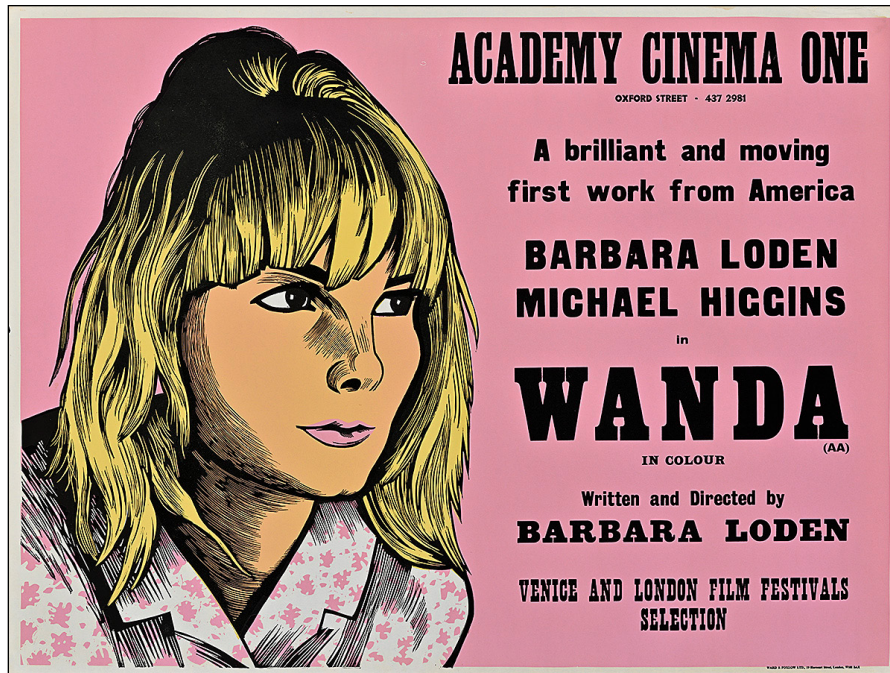


Funnyman, 1968

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Filmed before lead actor Peter Bonerz found mainstream success on *The Bob Newhart Show*, *Funnyman* presents him as a member of the notable San Francisco comedy troupe The Committee. Largely improvised, the movie deals with the lead's existential angst about his floundering career and romantic relationships.
- Strausfeld based his portrait of Bonerz on a promotional film still from the movie featuring the actor performing his routine. As in other examples, his use of linocut ages the figure but retains the essence of his pose and demeanor.
- Almost all of the posters in this exhibition include a parenthetical letter next to the title of the film indicating its official rating (today's American equivalents are G, PG, PG-13, and R). These guidelines have evolved significantly since their introduction in the United Kingdom in 1912. Between 1951 and 1970 (when the majority of these posters were printed), the British Board of Film Classification had only three rating levels: U for all audiences, A for adults, and X indicating that those under 16 years old would not be admitted. Art house films were in the vanguard of sexual frankness and the British censor took artistic merit into consideration when granting certificates.



Wanda, 1970

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

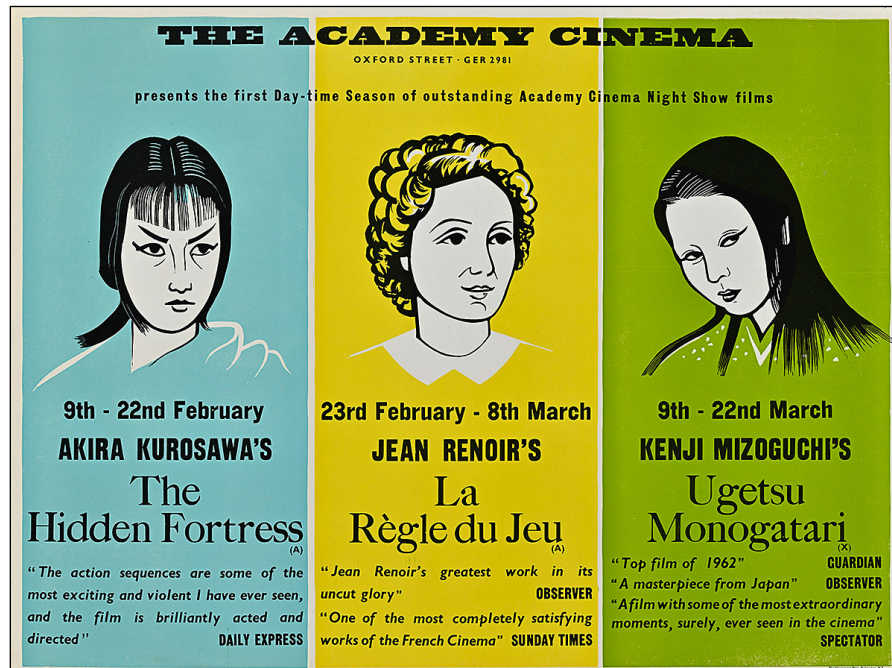
- Written and directed by—as well as starring—Barbara Loden (wife of the famous director Elia Kazan), with a cast and crew of only seven people, *Wanda* is the antithesis of a Hollywood movie. The plot follows an aimless woman from a coal-mining community in Eastern Pennsylvania who attaches herself to an abusive criminal before bungling a bank robbery.
- With a budget of \$115,000 (approximately \$962,000 today), the feature went on to win Best Foreign Film at the Venice Film Festival. Nevertheless, it failed to find success in the United States. It remains Loden's only directorial work.
- Strausfeld's design for the poster is more assertive than that of the official one, and is dominated by a bubblegum pink that highlights Wanda's childlike femininity and her desire to be loved.
- This is the only poster on display to feature a AA rating—a new level introduced in England in 1970 to indicate a film unsuitable for anyone under 14. At this time, the X rating was also pushed up from 16 to 18.

Japan

After the Japanese surrender in 1945 at the end of World War II, all films produced within the country had to go through a censorship committee overseen by the United States military. Everything from samurai movies to plots deemed antidemocratic were banned, and many historic Japanese films were burned. These censorship rules ended when Cold War tensions persuaded the United States to change its tactics within Japan. Suddenly, the market was flooded with *jidaigeki* (period dramas) and other independent films that became popular around the world, ushering in a golden age of Japanese cinema.

A story should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.

—Jean-Luc Godard, director

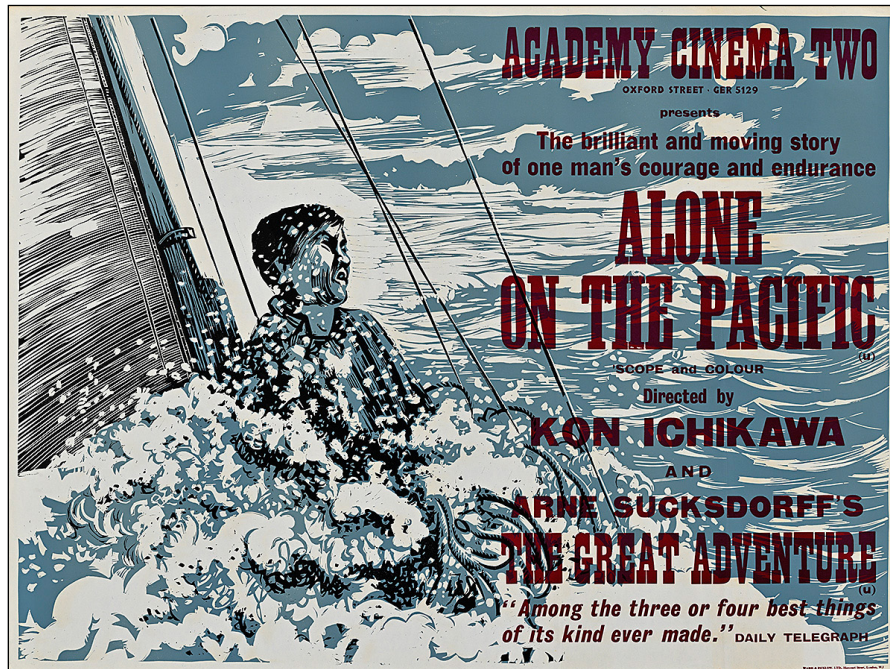


The Hidden Fortress/La Règle du Jeu/Ugetsu Monogatari, c. 1962

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- This triptych-style design highlights three foreign films—two from Japan and one from France—that introduced the Academy's new daytime screenings. Each movie is represented by a portrait of its heroine, the name of the director, and praise from various critics in England.
- *The Hidden Fortress* was director Akira Kurosawa's most successful film in Japan when it was first released in 1958. It tells the story of a disguised princess and a general who must be escorted through enemy territory by unsuspecting peasants. The movie had a significant influence on American filmmaker George Lucas, who used the plot as well as many of the film's details to construct *Star Wars*.
- When it was first released in 1939, *La Règle du Jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*) was the most expensive French film ever made. Despite director Jean Renoir's distinguished reputation at the time, it was panned by critics, and a significantly cut version was circulated in an attempt to redeem it. The film was then banned by the Vichy government in wartime France for its content. Here, the Academy promotes the original, uncut version that was rediscovered in 1956 and has since become known as one of the greatest French films ever made.
- Both a *jidaigeki* and a ghost story, *Ugetsu Monogatari* is a 1953 Japanese film directed by Kenji Mizoguchi based on short stories from an 18th-century book of the same name. It is one of the earliest Japanese films to find critical success in the West and it helped pave the way for a broader interest in the country's cinema.



Alone on the Pacific/ The Great Adventure, 1967

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Directed by Kon Ichikawa, *Alone on the Pacific* is a dramatization of Kenichi Horie's 1964 book *Koduku: Sailing Alone Across the Pacific*, documenting this solo, 92-day voyage—the first known occurrence of such a feat. As the ending of the journey takes place in San Francisco, it was the first Japanese film ever shot on location in the United States. Ironically, when Horie originally came ashore, he was immediately arrested for not having a passport. Today, his ship, the *Mermaid*, is on display in the lobby of the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.
- As a professor of graphic design, Strausfeld may have been inspired here by Hokusai's famous print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1831).
- The poster also advertises the Swedish film *Det stora äventyret* (*The Great Adventure*) that chronicles two boys domesticating an otter on their farm before it escapes and returns to the wild.





An Actor's Revenge, 1967

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- One of many cinematic adaptations of this classic tale set in the Edo period (1600–1868), *An Actor's Revenge* follows an orphaned boy who is raised by a Kabuki theater troupe in Osaka. Trained to perform as an *onnagata* (a male actor who performed female roles), he lives his life as a woman. Years later, he encounters the three people who caused the death of his parents and kills them before disappearing.
- Unlike the official Japanese poster for the film that features a montage of all the performers, Strausfeld's design focuses on the intimate relationship between the lead character and the daughter of one of the men who killed his family.
- The text highlights two notable people affiliated with the movie: Kon Ichikawa, who had received international acclaim for his 1965 *Tokyo Olympiad*, generally considered to be the greatest sports documentary ever made, and Kazuo Hasegawa, one of the most prolific screen actors in Japanese history, who had appeared in more than three hundred films by the time this one was released. Hasegawa was not only the lead in this version of *An Actor's Revenge* but also starred in the 1935 version thirty years earlier.

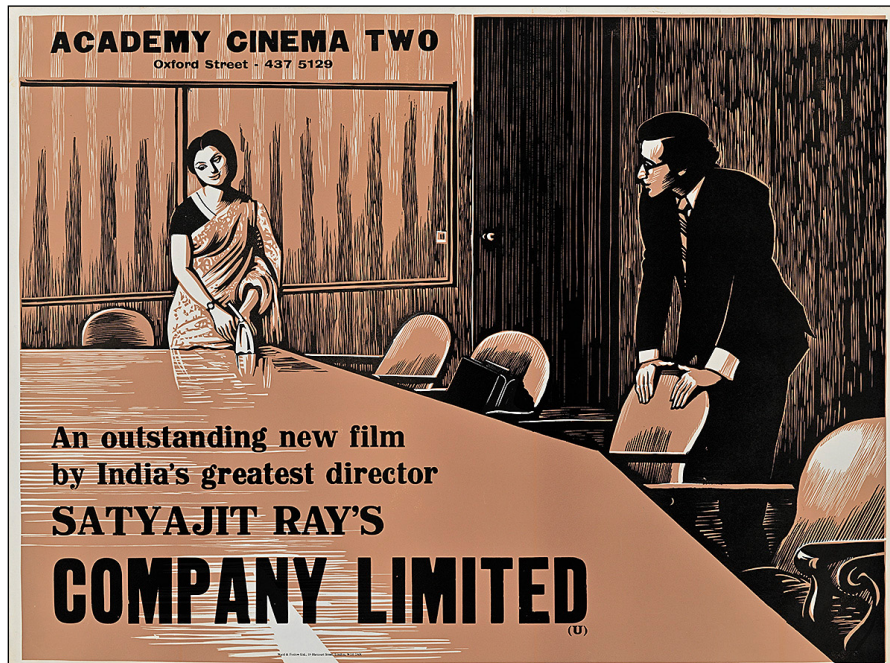


India

Known as Parallel Cinema (or occasionally New Indian Cinema), India's art house films originated in West Bengal in the 1950s, and were greatly inspired by Italian Neorealism. These movies also laid the foundation for the Indian New Wave cinema of the 1960s that further explored concepts of cinema verité and social commentary. While a handful of directors spanned both genres, Satyajit Ray is the most renowned among them. Regarded as one of the greatest directors of all time, his work inspired generations of filmmakers around the world while enhancing the wider visibility of India, its people, and its history.

Not to have seen the cinema of Ray means existing in a world without seeing the sun or the moon.

—Akira Kurosawa, director

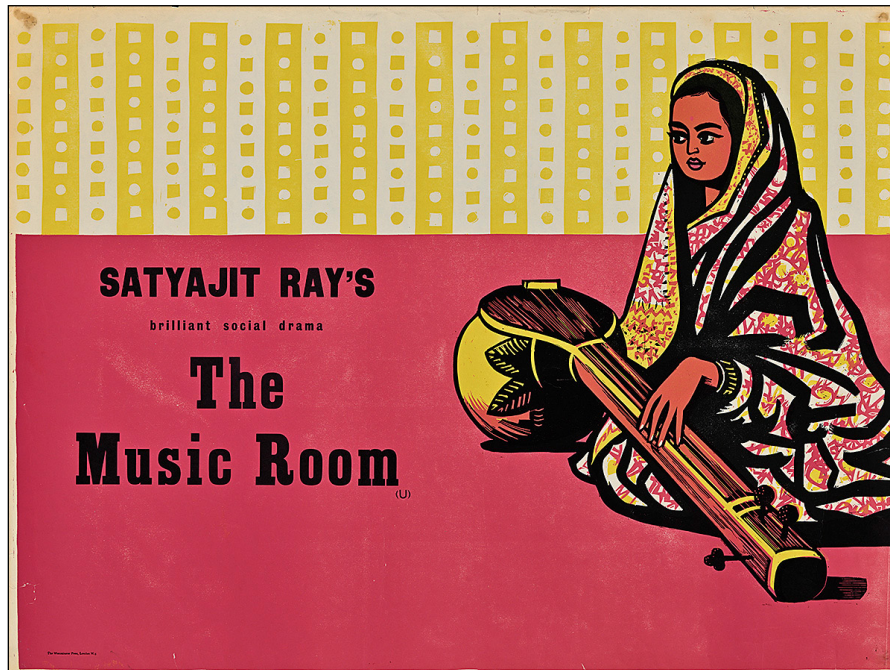


Company Limited, 1974

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Based on the novel of the same name, *Seemabaddha* (*Company Limited*) is the second film in Satyajit Ray's Calcutta Trilogy highlighting the social and moral problems that arose during Calcutta's rapid modernization.
- The majority of Ray's films are in Bengali, the official language of both West Bengal (a state in eastern India) and Bangladesh (a country that had gained independence from Pakistan just six months before the movie's release). At the time, Calcutta (now Kolkata) experienced a mass influx of Bengali-speaking refugees trying to avoid the Bangladesh genocide by the Pakistani military junta that initiated the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- Strausfeld's poster depicts the boardroom from which the lead male character orchestrates his rise up the corporate ladder at the expense of his workers. His sleek, Western attire stands in contrast to the traditional dress of his sister-in-law, who is horrified by the sacrifices he will make for success.
- While Ray's films were generally not popular in India, English audiences, especially those of Indian heritage, responded enthusiastically to his work. George Hoellering was instrumental in launching Ray's international career when, over Christmas in 1957, the Academy screened *Pather Panchali* (the first film in Ray's lauded Apu Trilogy).

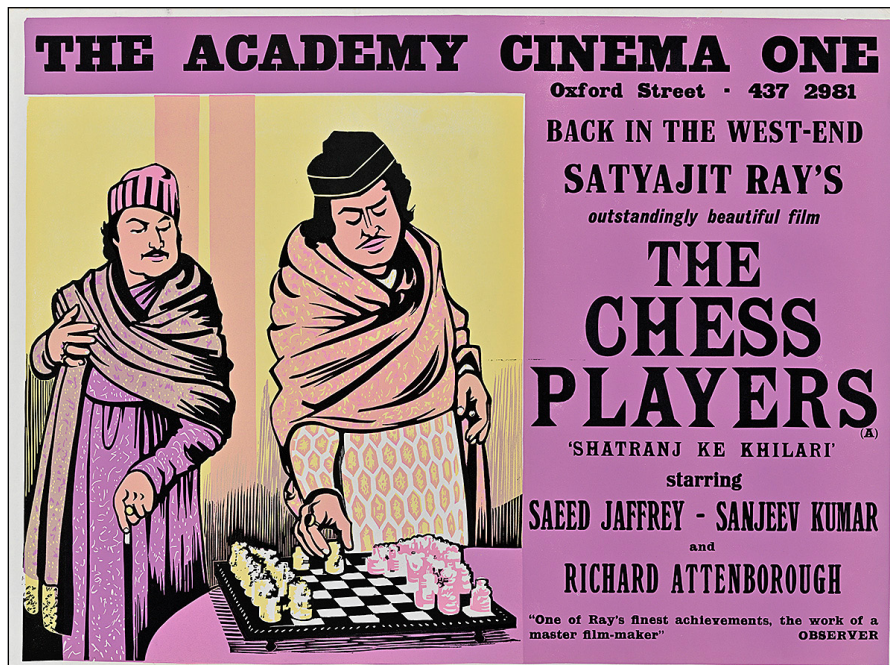


The Music Room, 1961

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- Shot in 1958, *Jalsaghar* (*The Music Room*) is Satyajit Ray's fourth feature film. As with many of his movies, it was not originally well-received within India but went on to become an international classic.
- Based on the 1938 short story of the same name by Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, the plot focuses on an Indian nobleman whose fortunes are fading; rather than maintain his sizable lands, he spends his money throwing lavish parties in his music room to prove his status. Not wanting to be outdone by his nouveau-riche neighbor, he makes reckless decisions and loses all that he has—ultimately ending in his downfall.
- At least two versions of this poster were printed. The first, shown here, promotes *The Music Room* (but lacks the Academy's name at the top), while the second also features the 1960 Soviet film *The Lady with a Little Dog*, based on the Anton Chekhov novel of the same name. Such textual variants indicate the utilitarian nature of these posters, intended to accommodate additional film titles as the Academy's schedule changed.



The Chess Players, 1977

Peter Strausfeld (1910–80)

Collection of Michael Lellouche

- *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (*The Chess Players*) is Satyajit Ray's only full-length, Hindi-language film. It also had the largest budget of any of Ray's productions and featured many prominent Bombay stars alongside the British actor Richard Attenborough.
- Set in 1857 in the North Indian state of Oudh (now Uttar Pradesh), the film tells the story of two nawabs (similar to princes) who are so obsessed with the game of chess that they ignore their responsibilities as rulers. Meanwhile, the British have annexed the state and are scheming to have the government handed over to the East India Company.
- The film is an allegory of Ray's view of India's nobility: ineffective, self-interested, and afraid. Meanwhile, Strausfeld's poster beautifully captures the languidly lavish lifestyle of the two protagonists before they realize their unwitting complicity in their own downfall.



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