

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE PRESENTS MONTH-LONG SCREENING SERIES 'NO JOKE: ABSURD COMEDY AS POLITICAL REALITY'

*Personal appearances by The Yes Men and PFFR, new work by Tim Heidecker and Gregg Turkington, and films by Chaplin, Spike Lee, Scorsese, Bruno Dumont, and more*

October 9–November 10, 2019

Astoria, New York, September 12, 2019—MoMI presents ***No Joke: Absurd Comedy as Political Reality***, a fourteen-program series that chronicles some of the most inventive and ingenious ways artists—from Charlie Chaplin to The Yes Men—have reckoned with their political environments. The series features work by filmmakers and other entertainers who are producing comedy and satire at a time when reality seems too absurd to be true. Organized by guest curator Max Carpenter, *No Joke* opens October 7 with ***Mister America***, the new pseudo-documentary by the comedy duo Tim Heidecker and Gregg Turkington—which will be presented at multiple venues on the same night—and continues through November 10, with films including ***General Idi Amin Dada: A Self Portrait***, William Klein's ***Mr. Freedom***, Bruno Dumont's ***Li'l Quinquin*** and ***Coincoin and the Extra-Humans***, Spike Lee's ***Bamboozled***, Chaplin's ***Monsieur Verdoux***, Scorsese's ***The Wolf of Wall Street***, the Adult Swim TV series ***Xavier: Renegade Angel***, with creators PFFR in person; Dusan Makavejev's ***The Coca-Cola Kid***, ***Starship Troopers***, and ***TV Carnage***, by Ontario artist Derrick Beckles. Among other special events are Heidecker and Turkington's 2017 comic epic ***The Trial***, followed by a live video conversation with the duo, and ***An Evening with The Yes Men***, featuring the activist prankster team of Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonnano in person for a conversation with clips of their greatest stunts.

Carpenter said: "This pantheon of courageous entertainers captures a crazed world through subversive documentary, uncanny mirroring, unhinged kaleidoscopic satire, and regurgitated collagery. The throughline here is a committed engagement with reality *as it is* combined with a belief that the naked, pathetic and silly truth will always shine through whatever dressings of irony and artistry are chosen for decoration."

Tickets for each program in *No Joke* are \$15 with discounts for seniors, students, youth, and Museum members. Ticket purchase includes Museum admission. The full

program is posted online at [movingimage.us/nojoke](http://movingimage.us/nojoke) and tickets are available in advance.

**SCHEDULE FOR 'NO JOKE: ABSURD COMEDY AS POLITICAL REALITY,' OCT. 7–NOV. 10, 2019**

All screenings take place in the Sumner M. Redstone Theater or the Celeste Armand Bartos Screening Room at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Ave, Astoria, New York, 11106. Ticket purchase includes same-day admission to the Museum. Unless stated, tickets are \$15 (\$11 seniors and students / \$9 youth ages 3–17 / Free or discounted for Museum members). Advance tickets are available online at [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)

*No Joke* is organized by guest curator Max Carpenter, who wrote all the program descriptions. Special thanks to Eric Hynes, Nellie Killian, Jonathan Rosenbaum, and Daniel Witkin for their conversations and suggestions.

***Mister America***

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Eric Notarnicola. 2019, 90 mins. Digital projection. With Tim Heidecker, Terri Parks, Gregg Turkington, Curtis Webster. *Mister America* follows Tim Heidecker (*Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!*) in his attempts to enter the world of politics. After beating a murder charge for selling faulty e-cigarettes at an EDM festival, Tim seeks revenge by running a campaign to unseat the San Bernardino District Attorney. Fueled by ego and ignorance, he tries to surmount a lack of experience, funds and likability by personally connecting with unsuspecting constituents. It does not go well.

***An Evening of Xavier: Renegade Angel*  
With PFFR in person**

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 7:00 P.M.

Dirs. Vernon Chatman, John Lee, Marco Bertoldo. 2007–2008, 84 mins. Digital projection. With Jim Tozzi, Vernon Chatman, John Lee, Alyson Levy. *Xavier: Renegade Angel* is a brain-scrambling indictment of liberal white culture in all of its abject forms. Each episode of *Xavier* follows an unapologetic onslaught of philosophical diatribes and pun-filled verbiage issuing from a goat-legged humanoid who wanders like an awkward shaman in a computer-generated desert. This beast-man continually unleashes his abusive presence on unassuming nowhere towns, usually causing a town-wide or civilization-wide catastrophe. Taken in full, the series arc is structured after a Greek tragedy, but moment-to-moment the combination of PFFR's writing, the visual effects, and the hard-hitting themes serve to make *Xavier* a truly singular spectacle in the history of television.

***General Idi Amin Dada: A Self Portrait***

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 4:00 P.M.

Dir. Barbet Schroeder. 1974, 92 mins. DCP. With Idi Amin. Barbet Schroeder's insider documentary on murderous Ugandan dictator Idi Amin is an unprecedented journalistic endeavor and uniquely queasy, shockingly funny cinematic experience. *General Idi Amin Dada* follows its larger-than-life subject around as he challenges colleagues to a swimming match, plays the accordion, talks to wildlife while boating through a reserve, and philosophizes about

world politics. This is Idi Amin as he wanted to be seen—thus “A Self Portrait”—no matter how buffoonish and ineffectual he might ultimately appear. The question of how a filmmaker can and should grapple with the murderous madmen of his era has a long history, but Barbet Schroeder’s succinct answer seems to be to let them crucify themselves. Preceded by an episode of *Heil Honey, I’m Home* (Dir. Juliet May, 1990, 25 mins.) and *Muzak: A Tool of Management* (Dir. Joshua Oppenheimer, 2002, 3 mins.). **Followed by a Skype discussion with Heil Honey producer Geoff Atkinson.**

### ***Starship Troopers***

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Paul Verhoeven. 1997, 129 mins. 35mm. With Casper Van Dien, Denise Richards, Dina Meyer. *Starship Troopers* marks the second collaboration (after *RoboCop*) between maximalist director Paul Verhoeven and dystopian visionary screenwriter Ed Neumeier. Against the wishes of his bourgeois parents, 23rd-century rich boy, Johnny Rico (Casper Van Dien), decides to enlist in the military upon his graduation from high school. Rico goes on to fight an alien race nicknamed “bugs” on the desert planet of Klendathu alongside former classmates and friends from basic training, proving his strong mettle across various setbacks and heroic acts. Archly trumpeting both fascistic jingoism and over-the-top goofiness, *Starship Troopers* has a lot to say about the present day militaristic overreach of a certain world power, and none of it is good.

### **An Evening with The Yes Men**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 7:00 P.M.

Activist prankster duo The Yes Men (who go by the pseudonyms Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonnano) have spent the past two decades trolling corporate power and government corruption through an inventive blend of hoaxes and infiltration stunts. Masquerading as spokespeople for Dow Chemical and ExxonMobil, designing fake websites for George Bush’s 2000 campaign and the WTO, and distributing fake physical copies of *The New York Times*, *The New York Post*, and *The Washington Post*, the Yes Men have used mass media to force major world players to publicly confront their roles in some of the worst disasters and schemes of modern times. Andy and Mike will join us for an evening in which we will screen and discuss some of their greatest stunts as well as some of their collaborative pranks.

### ***The Coca-Cola Kid***

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Dušan Makavejev. 1985, 98 mins. 35mm. With Eric Roberts, Greta Scacchi, Bill Kerr. The late master Dušan Makavejev spent his career lampooning the follies of communism and capitalism alike and everything in between, often without a clear joke in sight. It is this sort of satirical ambiguity that Makavejev and writer Frank Moorhouse bring to the table in *The Coca-Cola Kid*’s clownish tale of corporate conquest in the outback. Viewers will be forgiven if their sympathy for the imperialistic marketing guru protagonist Becker (Eric Robert) should waver, or their dislike of idiosyncratic small-town soft-drink magnate T. George McDowell (Bill Kerr) should come into question. This is all by Makavejevan design, presenting a world in which everything is simultaneously a sitting duck and moving target.

### ***Mr. Freedom***

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 4:00 PM

Dir. William Klein. 1969, 92 mins. 35mm. With John Abbey, Delphine Seyrig, Donald Pleasence. John Abbey plays secret-agent-cum-comics-hero Mr. Freedom, a stand-in for America itself in a hilariously paranoid spoof of the sorry state of late-sixties international relations. Mr. Freedom has been sent to Paris to fight off his communist nemeses Moujik Man (Philippe Noiret) and Red China Man, who are themselves stand-ins for communist Russia and China, along the way spewing American imperialistic claptrap. William Klein's campy superhero mise-en-scène combines exuberantly with his biting critique of exceptionalism to make for a riotously strange send-up. Preceded by ***Babo '73*** (Dir. Robert Downey, 1964, 56 mins.)

### ***TV Carnage: A Rich Tradition of Magic***

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2:00 PM

Dir. Derrick Beckles. 1998, 73 mins. Digital projection. *TV Carnage* is a series of provocative feature-length media collages produced by Ontario artist Derrick Beckles that began in the mid 1990s. Stitched together from infomercials, celebrity workout videos, and made-for-TV travesties, *TV Carnage* presents a vomitous response to the everyday deluge of media to which we have all grown far too accustomed. Yet Beckles never loses his keen eye for finding the political in the mundane. The wide influence of *TV Carnage*—its quirky editing style, its VHS aesthetic, its downright bizarreness—can be seen most squarely in the recent work of comedy duo Tim & Eric and many of their Adult Swim colleagues. Shown here is the second entry in Beckles's series, *A Rich Tradition of Magic*. Preceded by ***Peggy and Fred in Hell: The Prologue*** (Dir. Leslie Thornton, 1984, 19 mins.)

### ***Li'l Quinquin***

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Bruno Dumont. 2014, 206 mins. Digital projection. With Alane Delhaye, Lucy Caron, Bernard Pruvost, Philippe Jore. Belgian provocateur Bruno Dumont's *Li'l Quinquin* is an existential murder mystery procedural, as well as a meditation on the quiet growth of nihilism and xenophobia in France. But perhaps most importantly it is also a tightly wound audiovisual slapstick comedy feast for the senses (named by Cahiers du Cinéma as the Best Film of 2014). Dumont follows no-shenanigans Commandant Van der Weyden (Bernard Pruvost) and his happily vacant sidekick Carpentier (Philippe Jore) as they stalwartly investigate an ever-growing series of bizarre murders in a seaside French village. Meanwhile, a group of local tweens led by Li'l Quinquin (Alane Delhaye) spend their days horsing around unsupervised and channeling some ugly bigotries. With *Li'l Quinquin*, Dumont revitalizes slapstick comedy by injecting it with a new political potency for an anxious age.

### ***Coincoin and the Extra-Humans***

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Bruno Dumont. 2018, 211 mins. Digital projection. With Alane Delhaye, Bernard Pruvost, Philippe Jore, Lucy Caron. Beginning where *Li'l Quinquin* left off and adding elements of science fiction and zombies to the mix, *Coincoin and the Extra-Humans* finds Bruno Dumont and company perfecting their Tati-esque universe of visual and auidial gags to a T, while keeping Quinquin's signature undercurrent of political dread very much alive. Commandant Van der Weyden (Bernard Pruvost) and Carpentier (Philippe Jore) return to investigate the sudden appearance of piles of extraterrestrial black goop around their coastal town. Meanwhile a teenage Coincoin (Alane Delhaye)—né Quinquin—continues his punkish mucking about with

friends, all of whose heretofore childish bigotry has ominously blossomed into far-right organizing.

### ***Bamboozled***

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Spike Lee. 2000, 135 mins. 35mm. With Damon Wayans, Savion Glover, Jada Pinkett Smith. Pierre Delacroix (Damon Wayans) is a nose-turned-up intellectual whose TV series pitches, all designed to portray black people in a positive light, keep getting turned down by his casually racist network boss (Michael Rappaport). Pierre finally pitches the most insensitive ramshackle program he can conjure in an effort to get fired, but the network instead loves his pitch and immediately starts production on a “New Millennium Minstrel Show.” Spike Lee’s first film of the new millennium is “howling with gallows laughter” (Ashley Clark), and downright Makavejevan in its ambiguous character sympathies.

### ***The Trial***

**Followed by a Skype Q&A with creators and stars Tim Heidecker and Gregg Turkington**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 4:00 P.M.

Dir. Eric Notarnicola. 2017, 287 mins. Digital projection. With Tim Heidecker, Gregg Turkington, Curtis Webster, Don Pecchia, Inger Tudor. In one of the monumental comedy events of the new millennium, comedian Tim Heidecker, playing an alt-right-adjacent drug-addicted pettily narcissistic version of himself, stands trial for the second-degree murder of 20 concertgoers at the Electric Sun music festival—a shoddy outdoor EDM party organized by Heidecker and his co-conspirator Dr. San. Heidecker and his legal team defend his honor and dubious innocence with a blend of crass, anti-PC bravura that explores the creeping nightmare of authoritarian bullying presently haunting our nation. Heidecker, who has been furiously lampooning the idea of a Trump presidency in his comedic acts since 2012, shows himself to be the preeminent clown for this world’s inertia. He is joined by a revelatory cast of non-professional actors and cameos from comedian Gregg Turkington and Star Trek director Nicholas Meyer.

### ***Monsieur Verdoux***

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1:30 P.M.

Dir. Charles Chaplin. 1947, 133 mins. 35mm. With Charles Chaplin, Mady Correll, Allison Roddan. Chaplin’s first film after World War II is a brooding and darkly funny reflection on society’s basest inclinations, in which Chaplin plays Henri Verdoux, an out-of-work Paris bank teller whose newfound vocation consists of marrying and murdering wealthy widows. Set directly before the war and in the throes of financial collapse, *Verdoux* was met with backlash upon its initial release for appearing to condone murderous behavior as though it were merely an extension of modern business practices, not to mention Chaplin’s unhinged take-no-prisoners approach to satire. As contemporary champion Robert Warshow noted, “ultimately the whole world, is enveloped in ambiguity and irony, and it is no longer certain whom the joke is on.”

### ***The Wolf of Wall Street***

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 6:30 P.M.

Dir. Martin Scorsese. 2013, 180 mins. DCP. With Leonardo DiCaprio, Jonah Hill, Margot Robbie. Scorsese’s carnivalesque chronicle of financial excess is a bawdy and scathing social satire,

following real-life investor and scam artist Jordan Belfort (DiCaprio) through his many drug-addled fraudulent escapades. Based on Belfort's high-pulp memoir of the same name (the optioning of which made Belfort a million dollars richer), *The Wolf of Wall Street* follows the time-tested neo-gangster plot structure of Scorsese favorites like *Goodfellas* and *Casino*, in which a character's meteoric rise is followed by a swift downfall. Yet *The Wolf of Wall Street's* subversive power comes from a story and performances that refuse to conform to any molds or expectations, in which the line between deadpan mockery and dead seriousness seems to simply melt away.

###

**Press Contact:** Tomoko Kawamoto, [tkawamoto@movingimage.us](mailto:tkawamoto@movingimage.us) / 718 777 6830

### **MUSEUM INFORMATION**

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.

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. Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Film Screenings: 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 admission to the Museum's galleries.

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](http://movingimage.us)

Membership: <http://movingimage.us/support/membership>

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](http://movingimage.us).