

Press Release

Cedric Gibbons – the most successful art director in the history of cinema

The Audi Dublin International Film Festival is putting a spotlight on the life and work of the most successful art director in the history of cinema, Dublin-born Cedric Gibbons (1890-1960). Working for MGM from the 1920s, he shaped the sets, props and costumes for more than a thousand films, and contributed greatly to the studio's reputation as Hollywood's number one 'dream factory.'

He conceived the colossal sets of *Ben Hur* (1925); the technicolour realm of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939); Van Gogh's world in *Lust for Life* (1956); and the futuristic setting of *Forbidden Planet* (1956). And Gibbons' enthusiasm for abstract art and art deco interiors in the 1930s probably did more to promote modern design than the Bauhaus.

Gibbons won eleven Oscars for his art direction, receiving the famous statuette that he himself had designed. Four films showcasing Gibbons' art direction will be shown as part of the Audi Dublin International Film Festival at the IFI – *The Big Parade* (1925) on Mon 26th Feb, 13.30; *Dinner at Eight* (1933) on Tues 27th Feb, 13.30; *Grand Hotel* (1932) on Wed 28th Feb, 13.30; and *An American in Paris* (1951) on Fri 2nd March, 13.30. Tickets are available from www.diff.ie

Reflecting on his own design for *Grand Hotel*, Gibbons said 'motion picture settings usually serve the purpose of providing a background for the action of the picture. Here, however, the sets take the role of an actor, becoming one of the central figures in the story'. Gibbons' influence extended beyond the film set - he designed a white inner office and a Santa Monica beach house for Louis B. Mayer. His own California home is a masterpiece of Art Deco design and the subject of many myths. The young Errol Flynn is reported to have been discovered during an archery session on the grounds of Gibbons' dream villa. Married to two of the most glamorous movie stars of the era, Dolores del Rio and Hazel Brooks, Gibbons was also a Hollywood celebrity.

And yet, he remains an enigmatic character. Proud of his Irish heritage, he claimed Dublin as his birthplace, though others claim he was born in Brooklyn. And how his massive studio – employing dozens of set designers, and costume and prop makers – operated remains a mystery. To explore his life and career, and to unpick these riddles, the Audi Dublin International Film Festival has combined with the MA in Design History and Material Culture at National College of Art and Design (NCAD) in organising a Cedric Gibbons exhibition and conference in NCAD's gallery in Thomas Street.

The exhibition in the gallery's foyer features photographs from the American Academy of Motion Picture Art and Sciences' archive (weekdays 2-12 March 2018).

The conference at NCAD on 2nd March 2018 includes talks on the past, present and future of design in film. Speakers include cultural historian Luke Gibbons, Finn Halligan, chief film critic of Screen International, and professional film designers working today including Eimer Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh – the programme appears at www.ncad.ie

Tickets for the Cedric Gibbons Season in the Audi Dublin International Film Festival are available from www.diff.ie. Tickets for the Cedric Gibbons Conference at NCAD on the 2nd March are available at www.ncad.ie/

For more information contact Patrick Stewart, ADIFF Publicity Manager on press@diff.ie or 01 662 4260 / or Grace Lennon at NCAD 085 816 7427

About Audi Dublin International Film Festival (21st Feb-4th March 2018)

The Dublin International Film Festival is sponsored by Audi, its principal funder is the Arts Council and it is also in receipt of funding from official industry partner, the Irish Film Board. Key partners and funders include hotel partner The Merrion Hotel, print transport partner Wells Cargo, post-production partner Windmill Lane, social listening partners Olytico, digital out-of-home provider Orbscreen, official food ordering app Just Eat and champagne partner Moët & Chandon, with media partners Entertainment.ie, 98FM, The Times & The Sunday Times and micromedia.ie. Kerry Foods' Cheestrings are sponsors of the ADIFF's Fantastic Flix family programme. Venue Partners include Cineworld.

Founded in 2003, the Dublin International Film Festival sets the agenda of the year with its programme of outstanding Irish and international film. Offering unique access to a plethora of filmmaking talent, the festival transforms Dublin into a hub of glamour, creativity and film appreciation.

Over the past fifteen years, the festival has hosted over 600 major guests, including winners of the festival's prestigious Volta Award such as Al Pacino, Julie Andrews, Danny DeVito, Daniel Day-Lewis, Joss Whedon, Brendan Gleeson, Angela Lansbury, Stanley Tucci, Stellan Skarsgård, Kristin Scott Thomas and Ennio Morricone.

The festival has screened world cinema from 52 different countries, a total of almost 1,500 films, of which 300 were Irish features including Irish premieres of *Sing Street*, *Once*, *Ondine*, *In Bruges*, *Calvary*, *The Stag* and *The Secret of Kells*. The festival's young people's programme Fantastic Flix is expanding each year, engaging schools and families and building a new generation of film fans.

ABOUT AUDI

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sophistication, and is at the core of Audi's car-building philosophy. Audi leads the way in technological and engineering excellence, pioneering new innovations, such as quattro®, for a truly unique driving experience.

The Dublin International Film Festival is sponsored by Audi, and funded by The Arts Council and The Irish Film Board.

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