

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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## NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART PRESENTS FILMS BY PAUL STRAND

Washington, D.C., January 7, 1991 -- Six films produced by major twentieth-century photographer Paul Strand are being shown in conjunction with a retrospective exhibition of the artist's work that opened December 2, 1990 at the National Gallery of Art. The films may be viewed from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. daily in the East Building small auditorium on the concourse level through February 3, 1991. The exhibition and film program are made possible by Southwestern Bell Foundation.

The films include Manhatta, The Wave, The Plow That Broke the Plains, The Heart of Spain, Native Land, and It's Up to You. They reveal Strand's desire to capture in his art the relationship of people to their social, religious, and natural environments, and above all, the human need for community.

Strand made his first film, Manhatta, with the American painter and photographer Charles Sheeler. According to Strand, their intention was to encapsulate "those elements which are expressive of New York, of its power and beauty and movement."

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In 1933, at the request of the Mexican government, Strand produced and photographed a large portion of The Wave, a film about the uprising of people in a poor Mexican fishing village who are demanding higher wages. Strand employed Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's concept of montage -- abrupt cuts from one object or viewpoint to another -- to imply a relationship between disparate objects and establish a sense of conflict.

The Plow That Broke the Plains, the first film financed by President Roosevelt's Resettlement Administration, documented the transformation of the once-fertile Great Plains into a "Dust-Bowl." Strand worked as a cameraman on this project along with Leo Hurwitz and Ralph Steiner. The film contrasted scenes of plenty with scenes of want, creating a structure that would keep its audience entertained while delivering a strong message.

The Heart of Spain was one of the many films produced during the five-year existence of Frontier Films, a company formed in 1937 by Strand, Hurwitz, Steiner, filmmaker Lionel Berman, and others. With The Heart of Spain, they attempted to symbolize the communal efforts and shared goals of those opposed to fascism. By combining actual newsreel footage with unrehearsed shots of Madrid and reenacted scenes, Strand and Hurwitz began to explore a new style -- appropriating footage from many sources in order to convey an idea emphatically.

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Native Land, the last and most important Frontier Film to be made, was based on the findings of the La Follette Senate Committee on the denial of civil liberties to labor activists in the 1930s. Strand and co-director Hurwitz combined a series of stories and accounts of real incidents that juxtaposed the idea of freedom with the struggle to preserve it. Footage of actual events, newsreel footage, and still photographs were combined with reenacted story sequences, and images with music and narration, in order to intensify their arguments as well as heighten viewers' reactions.

With the onset of World War II, Frontier Films lost its impetus and was dissolved. Strand, however, made a few more films such as It's Up to You. Directed by Henwar Rodakiewicz, the film explains why food rationing was so important to the war effort.

In addition to the six films, a new feature-length documentary, Strand--Under the Dark Cloth, by Canadian filmmaker John Walker, will have its first public screenings in Washington in the National Gallery's East Building large auditorium on January 10, 11, and 12, at 12:30 p.m. and on January 13 at 1:00 p.m.

The National Gallery, at Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, is open free to the public, Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., every day except Christmas and New Year's.

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Attachment: Strand Film Schedule

Paul Strand Film Schedule

National Gallery of Art, East Building

Small Auditorium, Concourse Level

December 2, 1990 through February 3, 1991

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

- 12:00      The Wave (1937, 60 minutes)
- 1:10      Manhatta (1921, 9 minutes) and  
The Heart of Spain (1939, 31 minutes)
- 2:00      It's Up to You (1943, 10 minutes) and  
The Plow That Broke the Plains (1936, 30 minutes)
- 3:00      Native Land (1942, 90 minutes, with brief intermission)

Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday

- 12:00      Native Land
- 2:00      The Wave
- 3:10      Manhatta and The Heart of Spain
- 4:00      It's Up to You and The Plow That Broke the Plains

Sunday

- 12:00      It's Up to You and The Plow That Broke the Plains
- 1:00      The Wave
- 2:00      Native Land
- 4:00      Manhatta and The Heart of Spain