

# NEWS RELEASE

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Reservations required: [communications@skirball.org](mailto:communications@skirball.org) or (310) 440-4544

Skirball Cultural Center presents

## LIGHT & NOIR Exiles and Émigrés in Hollywood, 1933–1950 October 23, 2014–March 1, 2015

Co-presented with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences,  
*Light & Noir* is complemented by the related exhibitions *The Noir Effect* and *Café Vienne*,  
and LACMA's *Haunted Screens: German Cinema in the 1920s*.

LOS ANGELES—The birth of Hollywood is a Jewish and an American story alike. It is a story of immigration and innovation, beginning with the handful of visionary émigrés who founded the American film industry in the early twentieth century. Less widely known are the stories of the German-speaking actors, directors, writers, and composers—many of them Jewish—who fled Nazi persecution in Europe and went on to shape Hollywood's "Golden Age." The exhibition *Light & Noir: Exiles and Émigrés in Hollywood, 1933–1950* pays tribute to their lives and work, revealing the profound ways that the émigré experience left a mark on American movie-making. Co-presented with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, *Light & Noir* will be on view at the Skirball October 23, 2014–March 1, 2015.



*Sunset Boulevard* (dir: Billy Wilder, 1950). Photo by Glen E Richardson. © Paramount Pictures. Courtesy of Photofest.

*Light & Noir* offers an experience at once entertaining and illuminating. Among the many émigrés highlighted are luminary directors Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, and Fred Zinnemann; Oscar-winning composers Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Franz Waxman; and acclaimed writers Salka Viertel and Lion Feuchtwanger. Through a never-before-assembled selection of film footage, drawings, props, costumes, posters, photographs, and memorabilia, *Light & Noir* examines different genres in which the émigrés were especially productive: the exile film, the anti-Nazi film, film noir, and comedy. These include such classics as *Ninotchka* (1939), *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), and *Casablanca* (1942). On view are costumes worn by Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Paul Henreid, Marlene Dietrich, and Joan Crawford, as well as one of Billy Wilder's Academy Awards, Ernst Lubitsch's twenty-five year anniversary album, the Max Factor *Scroll of Fame*, and furniture from the set of Rick's Café in *Casablanca*.

*“Light & Noir* reveals the brilliant legacy bequeathed by European Jewish filmmakers to Hollywood,” says Robert Kirschner, Skirball Museum Director. “It shows how exiled outsiders became Hollywood insiders, bringing a sensibility to filmmaking at once tragic and comic.”

Concurrently, the Skirball presents two related exhibitions. *The Noir Effect* explores how the genre of film noir gave rise to major trends in popular culture, art, and media. Visitors will be invited to examine cult neo-noir films like *Chinatown* (1974) and *Brick* (2005)—as well as graphic novels, comics, children’s books and games, art, and photography—through the lens of noir. *Café Vienne*, a site-specific installation by artist Isa Rosenberger, honors the recently rediscovered work of Austrian American Jewish writer Gina Kaus (1894–1985) and the cultural role of the Viennese coffee house.

The suite of exhibitions at the Skirball is complemented by *Haunted Screens: German Cinema in the 1920s*, organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in collaboration with La Cinémathèque française, Paris. Featuring nearly 150 drawings, as well as set stills, manuscripts, and posters, *Haunted Screens* investigates the visual hallmarks of German Expressionist cinema, the distinctive style of which was a major influence on film noir. *Haunted Screens* will be on view at LACMA September 21, 2014–April 26, 2015.

During the run of *Light & Noir*, *The Noir Effect*, and *Café Vienne*, the Skirball will present several related film series, lectures, courses, and a pop-up shop of merchandise influenced by film of the period.

### ***Light & Noir. Scene by Scene***

*Light & Noir* mines a treasure trove of film history—much of it from the collections of the Academy’s Margaret Herrick Library—to present the stories of the émigré film artists who made their way to Hollywood. Throughout the exhibition, their private spheres are depicted through personal snapshots, home movies, and memorabilia, much of it on loan from their living descendants and from several Southern California archives. Posters, advertisements, and promotional materials portray their working lives. Memorable films are represented through film clips and trailers, behind-the-scenes stills, props, costumes, and musical scores, while the history of the era is traced in documentary footage, political brochures, and historical documents.

The exhibition greets visitors with more than sixty portraits of émigrés, both famous and less so, who worked in Los Angeles’s film industry from 1933 to 1950. In the opening section, visitors are introduced to three key figures who emigrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: director Ernst Lubitsch, Universal Studios head Carl Laemmle, and talent agent Paul Kohner. All were active in aiding the immigration of Jewish colleagues and others deemed politically “undesirable” by the Nazis.

With the rise of the Nazi regime and rampant anti-Semitism, Jewish filmmakers were banned from the German film industry in 1933, prompting their exodus from Europe. In the next section, entitled “Exodus and Refuge,” immigration documents, sponsorship letters, and fundraising materials demonstrate the difficult process of entering the United States. This section prominently addresses the Paul Kohner Agency (then located on Sunset Boulevard), home base for the European Film Fund, a nonprofit organization founded in 1938 to support newly arriving exiles and émigrés.

In this historical context, as Skirball Curator Doris Berger points out, a film like *Casablanca* (dir: Michael Curtiz, 1942) looks very different. With its plot directly addressing the theme of

displacement—not to mention a cast of actors who were almost all expatriates, émigrés, or exiles themselves—the Curtiz masterwork centers the discussion around exile cinema. Berger remarks, “The Bogart/Bergman classic is one of America’s most enduring and beloved movies, one that commanded a sold-out audience at L.A.’s Cinespia just this past summer! Yet when we revisit *Casablanca* as a prime example of an exile film, we shed new light on the well-known romantic drama.” On display in the section “*Casablanca* as Exile Film” are costumes worn by Bergman and Henreid in the highly emotional scene of the singing of “La Marseillaise,” the French national anthem; as well as film clips, production stills, props from Rick’s Café, a full set of lobby cards, and critical reviews published upon the film’s release.

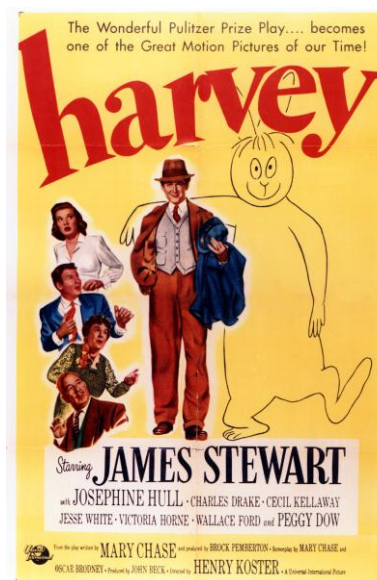
In 1939, Warner Bros. became the first studio to take a stand against the Nazis, inventing a new genre, the anti-Nazi film, when it released *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (dir: Anatole Litvak, 1939). Ironically it starred Polish German actor Martin Kosleck as Joseph Goebbels—just one example of an actor who fled Nazi persecution only to end up cast as a Nazi due to his German accent. Meanwhile, *To Be or Not to Be* (dir: Ernst Lubitsch, 1942) satirizes the absurdity of Nazi ideology to great comedic effect. To help visitors understand the context for the production of these anti-Nazi films, the section includes political material addressing anti-Semitism in the US and media responses to it during that period.

The exhibition then invites visitors to explore both film noir and comedy. “In reality no less than in cinema,” notes Berger, “the émigré experience is filled with psychological twists and turns, which are mirrored in both genres.” Jewish émigrés played an important role in developing film noir. With its dark social and psychological underpinnings, dramatic lighting, and unconventional camera angles, film noir echoed German Expressionist cinema. Among the examples featured are *Mildred Pierce* (dir: Michael Curtiz, 1945), *Scarlet Street* (dir: Fritz Lang, 1945) *The Killers* (dir: Robert Siodmak, 1946), and *Sunset Boulevard* (dir: Billy Wilder, 1950).

In parallel to film noir, *Light & Noir* looks at émigré contributions to comedy—in many ways the flip side of film noir, often with an undercurrent of deeper dimensions. Berger points out, “Dealing with diverse themes such as conflicted identity and masquerade, moments of absurdity and misunderstanding, these comedies function as a counterbalance to film noir.” Examples on view include *Harvey* (dir: Henry Koster, 1950), and *A Foreign Affair* (dir: Billy Wilder, 1948).

The last sections of the exhibition examine the political and social lives of Hollywood émigrés. In “Freedom in Question,” anti-Communist materials reveal the not-always-welcoming ways of America’s citizenry. Beginning in the 1940s, the House Un-American Activities Committee targeted many filmmakers, including émigrés, significantly limiting their personal and professional lives. Documentary footage of composer Hanns Eisler’s hearing is on view, as well as protest materials from the Hollywood community and émigré expressions of patriotism for the US.

The exhibition closes with an intimate look at “Salons and Communities” in Los Angeles, popular gathering spots for the émigré community, including the home of Salka Viertel in Santa Monica and the Feuchtwanger Villa (now Villa Aurora) in Pacific Palisades. In such private settings, the émigrés continued old friendships, formed new networks, and shared news from Europe. Using historic furniture from the Villa Aurora, the Skirball has created a salon space in the gallery, where facilitated discussions will be hosted during the run of the exhibition.



Poster art for *Harvey* (dir. Henry Koster, 1950). © Universal International. Courtesy of Photofest.

### *The Noir Effect*

*The Noir Effect* considers how the noir phenomenon has found creative and pervasive expression in American society and culture, celebrating the legacy of Jewish émigrés who helped to create this influential genre. Focusing on key noir elements such as the city, the femme fatale, the antihero, and moral codes, the exhibition features clips from films that are often considered neo-noir. These include *Chinatown* (dir: Roman Polanski, 1974) and the teen flick *Brick* (dir: Rian Johnson, 2005). Also on view are graphic novels and comics, such as *Luke Cage Noir* and *Spider-Man Noir*; children's books and games; fashion advertising; photography and contemporary art. Featured artists include Bill Armstrong, Ronald Corbin, Helen K. Garber, David Lynch, Daido Moriyama, Karina Nimmerfall, Jane O'Neal, Alex Prager, Rouse & Jones, Ed Ruscha, and Cindy Sherman.

Skirball Assistant Curator Linde Lehtinen explains, "More than just a cinematic style, noir appears across a variety of media. Noir remains a powerful approach and style because its dark, urban sensibility and its perspective on identity, morality, and the shifting nature of the modern city continue to be relevant and timely."

Finally, *The Noir Effect* incorporates gallery activities by which visitors can reinvent noir for themselves. A costume wall and portrait station invite visitors to pose for their own noir-inspired "museum selfie," while writing materials encourage on-the-spot noir narratives. The Skirball will also hold an online photo contest as a way to gather visitor snapshots of L.A. neighborhoods captured in classic noir style.

### *Café Vienne*

The site-specific installation *Café Vienne* pays tribute to the important cultural role of the Viennese coffee house. In the early twentieth century, female artists and writers in particular embraced the coffee house as a place for debate, networking, and inspiration in their quest for political and artistic recognition. Contemporary visual artist Isa Rosenberger (b. 1969) uses this historical setting to address the life and work of Austrian American Jewish writer Gina Kaus (1893–1985), once known in literary circles as "Queen of the Café." A bestselling novelist before she was driven from Europe by the Nazi regime, Kaus eventually emigrated to the US where she became a Hollywood screenwriter. Rosenberger honors Kaus's legacy in this immersive installation, inviting visitors to engage in creative discussion over coffee and Viennese pastries while viewing a newly produced video celebrating Kaus from a contemporary and artistic point of view.

### Exhibition-Related Programs

The Skirball will present many public programs related to the exhibitions. These include classic film series exploring "The War in Europe," "The War at Home," and "The Intrigante: Women of Intrigue in Film Noir"; talks on film noir fashion and make-up; a night of comedy, entitled "Noirvember," from UnCabaret's **Beth Lapidès**; screenings of family-friendly animated shorts from the era; a cooking class inspired by Austrian cuisine and café culture; and adult education courses on urban night photography and music of the 1940s. On select Sunday afternoons, in-gallery "salons" led by experts as well as family descendants will engage visitors in conversations about émigré directors, writers, and composers.

As part of its school outreach program, the Skirball will offer an exhibition tour and discussion for high school students. Participating students will explore the multifaceted experiences of exiles and émigrés in the film industry who fled to the U.S. from Nazi Germany, their impact on the films produced during Hollywood's "Golden Age," and the historical and contemporary legacy of film noir, a genre directly shaped by the émigré experience. Through writing, photography, and film, participants in an in-school residency will embark on a six-week investigation of self-identity filtered through the lens of Los Angeles, working with a professional teaching artist to create original, collaborative works. Finally, in the film and theater component of the Skirball's teacher professional development initiative "Teaching Our World Through the Arts," teachers will focus on the creative and collaborative process by which writers, directors, producers, and others developed the films highlighted in *Light & Noir*.

More information about the exhibition-related programs is available at [skirball.org](http://skirball.org).

### **Merchandise and Holiday Pop-Up Shop**

From opening day of the exhibitions through January 4, Audrey's Museum Store will present a *Light & Noir* holiday pop-up shop. In an environment designed to evoke a classic film noir set—including a femme fatale boudoir and detective's office—visitors may choose from a stylish mix of vintage and contemporary fashions and accessories, as well as clever gifts, toys, bar accoutrements, home décor, and books. Available exclusively at the pop-up shop will be a limited-edition, vintage reproduction brooch and bracelet from famed costume jewelry house Miriam Haskell, as well as a line of chic merchandise inspired by the iconic noir visual of high-contrast black and white shadows.

*LIGHT & NOIR: EXILES AND ÉMIGRÉS IN HOLLYWOOD, 1933–1950* AND ITS RELATED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT THE SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER ARE MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING DONORS:

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### **About the Skirball**

The Skirball Cultural Center is dedicated to exploring the connections between 4,000 years of Jewish heritage and the vitality of American democratic ideals. It welcomes and seeks to inspire people of every ethnic and cultural identity. Guided by our respective memories and experiences, together we aspire to build a society in which all of us can feel at home. The Skirball Cultural Center achieves its mission through educational programs that explore literary, visual, and performing arts from around the world; through the display and interpretation of its permanent collections and changing exhibitions; through an interactive family destination inspired by the Noah's Ark story; and through outreach to the community.

### **Visiting the Skirball**

The Skirball Cultural Center is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. Free on-site parking is available; street parking is strictly prohibited. The Skirball is also accessible by Metro Rapid 761. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday 12:00–5:00 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; closed Mondays and holidays. Museum admission: \$10 General; \$7 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children over 12; \$5 Children 2–12. Exhibitions are always free to Skirball Members and Children under 2. Exhibitions are free to all visitors on Thursdays. For general information, the public may call (310) 440-4500 or visit [www.skirball.org](http://www.skirball.org). The Skirball is also home to Zeidler's Café, which serves innovative California cuisine in an elegant setting, and Audrey's Museum Store, which sells books, contemporary art, music, jewelry, and more.