THINGS TO COME
THE CITY IMAGINED ON FILM

CO-PRESENTED WITH THE NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM
FEB 11 – APR 5

AFI Silver Theatre
TICKETS & INFO: AFI.com/Silver

JUST IMAGINE
Feb 11, 2:30

TRANSATLANTIC TUNNEL
Feb 19, 6:00

THINGS TO COME
Feb 20, 4:00

METROPOLIS with live musical accompaniment
Feb 24, 7:30

BRAZIL
Feb 25, 9:45; Feb 28, 9:00; Mar 1, 9:15

PLAY TIME
Mar 3, 1:20; Mar 4, 7:00

THE TRIAL
Mar 10, 1:00

GATTACA
Mar 17, 9:45; Mar 18, 9:45

THX 1138
Mar 18, 1:00; Mar 19, 9:30

LOGAN’S RUN
Mar 21, 1:30; Apr 1, 9:45; Apr 4, 9:15; Apr 5, 9:20

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Things to Come: The City Imagined on Film
February-April 2012
AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center

Join us as we celebrate the exhibition Unbuilt Washington with our second film series partnership with the American Film Institute (AFI) Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. Between February 11 and March 31, ten films screened at the AFI Silver Theatre will provide striking futuristic views of city life and urban design.

Unbuilt Washington surveys architectural paths not taken; some seem unthinkable beside the iconic forms actually built. Skyscraper designs appear particularly strange—revealing how a limit on building heights not only altered Washington’s skyline, but also expectations for how the Capital should appear. In contrast, the cinematic city of the imagination is a place where limits are usually left in the dust.

Skyscrapers, elevated highways, electronic devices—the 1930s city of the future is not far from today. Yet, futuristic films of the Depression era reflect keenly on challenging times, shading the possibilities of technology with a strong dose of ideological zeal. The film that established the design vocabulary for these, and other futuristic films to follow, is Fritz Lang’s 1927 masterpiece, Metropolis—unsurpassed in its artistic vision of a dystopian urban society.

The 1960s ushered in another era in which the city was re-imagined on film. Instead of being a place of technological wonderment, however, the city is more often a trap from which to escape. Not surprising given growing fears about population growth, crumbling urban infrastructure, and threats to the environment.

Films of this time express the unease of industrialized society. The modern environments in Welles’ surrealist adaptation of Kafka’s The Trial (1962) and Tati’s satirical comedy Playtime (1962) are both mazelike and maddening, though with very different effects. Similarly, the technological utopias seen in George Lucas’ first film THX-1138 (1971) and the cult classic Logan’s Run (1976) are both efficient, to a fault, hiding dark secrets that force individuals to abandon the conformist “prison” of the city for the wilderness beyond.

A tension between wonder and fear appears almost any time the city has been imagined on screen. When the question of the future—of what may be built, lost, or is yet to come—is added to the equation, the tension grows. Beautiful cities are created, only to be exposed as hostile environments; scientists and engineers are celebrated, only to have their handiwork rebel or backfire. Science fiction is clearly much more about the present than the future – helping reveal the concerns of evolving urban realities.

- JUST IMAGINE (David Butler, 1930, 109 min.)
- TRANSATLANTIC TUNNEL (Maurice Elvey, 1935, 94 min.)
- THINGS TO COME (William Cameron Menzies, 1936, 100 min.)
- METROPOLIS 2010 Restoration with Alloy Orchestra Live (Fritz Lang, 1927, silent, 145 min.)
- BRAZIL (Terry Gilliam, 1985, 132 minutes)
- PLAYTIME (Jacques Tati, 1967, subtitles, 124 min.)
- THE TRIAL (Orson Welles, 1962, 118 min.)
- GATTACA (Andrew Niccol, 1997, 106 min.)
- THX 1138 (George Lucas, 1971, 86 min.)
- LOGAN’S RUN (Michael Anderson, 1976, 119 min.)

AFI Information