



*Self Portrait with Hand (1925-29), © the Estate of László Moholy-Nagy / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn
ABC IN SOUND (1933)/BFI National Archive*

MISSING FOR OVER 80 YEARS LONG ‘LOST’ EXPERIMENTAL FILM BY BAUHAUS ARTIST MOHOLY-NAGY REDISCOVERED AND RESTORED BY BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE

** Premiere of new 4K restoration at BFI Southbank 18 June **

** Available on BFI Player and BFI YouTube from 19 June search <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/BFIfilms> **

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For Immediate Release Tuesday 11 June 2019, London

The BFI are delighted to announce the rediscovery of Bauhaus teacher and artist László Moholy-Nagy’s long ‘lost’ optical sound film, **Tönendes ABC / ABC in Sound** (1933), missing for over 80 years. The experimental film, from one of the most influential figures of the avant-garde, was found at the BFI National Archive and correctly identified by BFI Curators.

László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) was a tenacious, restless creative who associated with various early twentieth century vanguard art movements. Teaching at the legendary Bauhaus school, which this year sees its centenary, his early optical sound films experimented with the formal properties of film and blurred the lines between sound and image and the act of hearing and seeing sound. Newly scanned at 4K the restoration of **Tönendes ABC /ABC in Sound** (1933) will receive its world premiere at **BFI Southbank** on 18 June before being made available to view online for **free on BFI Player** in the UK and **BFI YouTube** for international viewers from 19 June.

News of the rediscovery coincides with a new **exhibition of works by László Moholy-Nagy presented by Hauser & Wirth** in London (22 May – 7 September), curated by the artist’s grandson **Daniel Hug, Director of the Moholy-Nagy Foundation**. The show in London provides a deeper understanding of this innovator, artist, educator and writer. The works in the exhibition span a period from the early 1920s to the 1940s

revealing a diverse practice that defies categorisation, moving fluidly between disciplines that encompassed photography, painting, sculpture, film and design.

In 2018, BFI National Archive curators Bryony Dixon and William Fowler were researching a programme around early experiments in optical sound. On inspection of the Oskar Fischinger film, **Early Experiments in Hand Drawn Sound** (1931) they realised the reel also contained another title, which they identified as the long ‘lost’ László Moholy-Nagy title **Tönendes ABC or ABC in Sound** (1933).

Audiences will have the first chance to see this ‘lost’ work onscreen as part of BFI Southbank’s monthly ‘Experimenta’ film strand at a Bauhaus-themed programme and panel event on 18 June (18:20), also part of the BFI Southbank 2 month Weimar Cinema season. Moholy-Nagy’s film will be presented alongside the Oskar Fischinger short which it has shared the last 80 plus years with, preserved together in the BFI National Archive.

Daniel Hug Director of the Moholy-Nagy Foundation and Grandson of the artist says, “*The Moholy-Nagy Foundation is grateful to the BFI in finding this long lost film, a thrilling re-discovery of one of Moholy-Nagy's most radical film works, this reinforces his important contribution to film and sound art.*”

William Fowler, BFI Curator Artist Moving Image said, “*Artist filmmaking has a long, vibrant history within cinema. Tönendes ABC, or ABC in Sound demonstrates the level of invention that took place in the transition between the silent and sound eras. Its non-realist, formal play, mixing and blurring the distinctions between sound and image reflects Moholy-Nagy's powerful, multi-disciplinary approach to creativity. We were delighted to discover the film in the Archive and look forward to new audiences connecting with Moholy-Nagy's sensory experiment over 80 years after it was last screened in London*”

The ‘lost and found’ story behind this rediscovery is extraordinary. The original nitrate reel of was spliced to a copy of Oskar Fischinger’s **Early Experiments in Hand Drawn Sound** for a screening programme at the London Film Society in 1936. The highly influential London Film Society (1925-1939), run by a group of active young cineastes with backgrounds in journalism, film business and the intelligentsia, was the first significant organisation to screen films outside of an immediately commercial context. Luminaries like H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw were named as supporters and the society programmed a mix of shorts and feature films spanning the globe as well as different genres.

The society promised to encourage the production of artistic films such as these experimental works by Moholy-Nagy and Fischinger, pushing the boundaries of sound and vision, blurring the lines between film and art. In the 1920s when it became possible to record sound as an image there was a flurry of bold, beautiful and sometimes bizarre experiments with ‘drawn’ soundtracks on film – images that made sound, and vice versa. The nitrate reel, referred to only as **Early Experiments in Hand Drawn Sound** with **Tönendes ABC/ABC in Sound** unknowingly still attached was then acquired by the BFI on 18th May 1951 and duped onto safety film on 29th October 1958. The original nitrate was not retained.

László Moholy-Nagy presented by Hauser & Wirth in London (22 May – 7 September), hauserwirth.com

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ABOUT THE BFI

The BFI is the UK’s lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers

- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

ABOUT THE BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage.

That heritage includes all time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts a significant collection of filmmakers' papers as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.

ABOUT BFI PLAYER

BFI Player is a ground-breaking video on demand service which offers a uniquely diverse range of films, from the latest releases to the rarest silent cinema classics, giving UK audiences a rich and rewarding digital film experience. The Victorian Film collection is accessible through the BFI Player.

ABOUT BFI SOUTHBANK

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £13.75, concs £11.25 including Gift Aid donation. Members pay £2.20 less on any ticket - www.bfi.org.uk/southbank.

Young people aged 25 and under can buy last minute tickets for just £3, 45 minutes before the start of screenings and events, subject to availability - <http://www.bfi.org.uk/25-and-under>.

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment