



*Philip French at home in his study (2007) photo credit: Richard Saker, The Observer*

## **PHILIP FRENCH COLLECTION DONATED TO THE BFI REUBEN LIBRARY**

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The **BFI** are delighted to announce that the family of **Philip French**, the highly esteemed Observer film critic, have donated Philip's collection of film books to the **BFI Reuben Library** at **BFI Southbank**. This significant collection of **over 3000 books** offers a precious insight into the film interests of one of British Cinema's most revered and influential film critics, reflecting Philip's learned passion for film culture and an encyclopaedic knowledge of cinema. Philip, who died in 2015, was keen that his library would continue to be used to help educate and inspire future generations of film writers and this **generous donation to the BFI Reuben Library** ensures that a wide range of students, researchers, filmmakers, critics and the general public will have free access to the collection.

Taking up just under **90 metres** worth of shelves, or **13 bays** in library speak, the donation, which will be known as **The Philip French Collection** was moved from French's house, in North London and moved to the Mixed Media Vault in the J Paul Getty Jnr Conservation Centre at the **BFI National Archive** where it is currently being catalogued and stored. It took a specialist removal company two days to pack up the collection which consisted of **120 packing crates**. Most of the collection dates from the early 60s onwards, up to 2015. Some of the books include hand written notes on paper tucked into front covers, reflecting Philip's thoughts on the book if it were for a review or just notes jotted down for a criticism he was working on.

The donation to the Archive also includes scrapbooks of Philip's original reviews, pasted by French himself, including his time as the Observer's film critic between 1973 and 2013.

**Kersti French, Philip's widow, said, "Philip loved to educate and inform, to share his excitement and interests. Now through the extraordinary energy and visionary zeal of the BFI, the books will be used to**

*inspire new filmmakers, students and writers and thus protect and nurture Philip's legacy, and we, his family, feel truly honoured on his behalf."*

**Heather Stewart, Creative Director- Cultural Programme, BFI said,** *"I cannot say a big enough thank you to Philip's family for this generous donation. Philip was a Fellow of the BFI, the highest honour we can award for outstanding contribution to film culture. For forty years many hundreds of thousands of readers will have learned from and been inspired to see films from reading Philip's reviews. His deep knowledge and love of cinema – and maybe the puns – have been nourished by his reading, and this great collection is a reflection of that. I'm thrilled that his collection will be freely available for everyone to enjoy and learn from."*

**Emma Smart, BFI Reuben Library Manager adds,** *"The dominant genre is as you'd expect, the western, Philip's area of expertise. What's been interesting for us and will enhance our collection immensely is that he collected a wide range of books around the subject, on the topography and geography, cultures and history of the West, all of which were used to inform his own writings and understanding about the cultural phenomenon of the western film genre. We wouldn't normally collect books of this kind, we have to prioritise material that is moving image focused, but to have a selection of writings around a topic as important as the western is really amazing for us."*

Work is progressing in cataloguing the collection to make the books available to visitors to the BFI Reuben Library. We're currently about a third of the way through the work so far, and hope to have it completed in early 2019. **The Philip French Collection will be searchable through our catalogue Collections Search which is available online and to view in venue at the BFI Reuben Library at BFI Southbank.**

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**ABOUT THE BFI**

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

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 THE BFI REUBEN LIBRARY**

BFI Southbank is home to the BFI Reuben Library which holds the world's largest collection of books, journals and digitised material about film, television and the moving image and welcomes 75,000 visitors a year. The library is free to access and hosts a year-round programme of talks and events.

'Not just for movie nerds - this huge collection of film and TV books, periodicals, scripts, stills and posters is full of inspiration for anyone involved in the creative arts' – Evening Standard Magazine

The BFI Reuben Library is open 10:30-19:00, Tuesday-Saturday.

### **About the Reuben Foundation**

The Reuben Foundation is a UK registered charity focused on making essential contributions to healthcare and education in the UK and worldwide. The Reuben Foundation launched the Reuben Scholarship Programme in association with the University of Oxford, University College London and ARK Schools, to assist bright students from disadvantaged backgrounds both to continue their education and see that attending university is an option very much open to them. The Reuben Foundation also created the 'Team London' volunteering scheme in partnership with the Mayor of London, which raised over 100,000 new volunteers for existing voluntary organisations in the capital, allowing them to work more effectively to improve quality of life, offer more opportunities to youth and help lower crime. Please visit [www.reubenfoundation.com](http://www.reubenfoundation.com) for more information.