

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Fleischer cartoons at MoMI: starring Superman, Koko the Clown, Popeye the Sailor, and more in newly restored short films by Max and Dave Fleischer from the 1920s through 1940s**

**This summer, see two collections of Fleischer Studios cartoons in the galleries and a special screening of silent cartoons with live music on July 12**



Superman in *Mechanical Monsters* (1941), courtesy of Fabulous Fleischer Cartoons Restored

Astoria, New York, July 8, 2025 — Superman, Betty Boop, and Popeye were among the popular characters first animated for the big screen by Max and Dave Fleischer. This summer, Museum of the Moving Image will present programs of newly restored cartoons by Fleischer Studios in its galleries and in a special screening featuring live music and a panel discussion on July 12.

From the 1920s through the early 1940s, the Fleischer Studios' cartoon shorts were immensely successful, their popularity and cultural ubiquity rivaling those of Walt Disney. Originally based in New York City, brothers Max and Dave Fleischer made animated films for grown-up audiences during the Great Depression that were as bright, witty, and entertaining as they were reflective of social transformation. In some instances, the films provided critiques of contemporary issues and envisioned positive alternatives; in others, they reflected the unexamined prejudices of their time. Like other

animated shorts of their era, Fleischer Studios cartoons were made for the big screen, typically shown as part of a program that would play before a “feature” film.

In 2022, spearheaded by Max's granddaughter, Jane Fleischer Reid, a restoration effort began for the Fleischer Studios cartoons. Of the nearly 700 films made by the studio, 100 have been restored to date.

To coincide with the release of a new *Superman* movie in theaters, starting July 10, the Museum will present ***Superman! Restored Animated Classics from the 1940s***, a selection of Max Fleischer *Superman* shorts in *Tut's Fever Movie Palace*, a working theater and artwork by Red Grooms and Lysiane Luong in its core exhibition *Behind the Screen*. Five cartoons and a short documentary will screen in a loop during regular Museum hours.

On Saturday, July 12, at 4:00 p.m. the Museum will present ***Out of the Inkwell: The Silent Cartoons of Max Fleischer***, a series of cartoons first produced in 1919 that featured a mix of live action and stop motion footage. Animated sequences were produced using the rotoscope, a revolutionary device invented by Max Fleischer, first used to film Dave Fleischer as the model for Koko the Clown. The films will be presented with live piano accompaniment by Charlie Judkins and followed by a panel discussion featuring esteemed contemporary animators Aaron Augenblick, Stephen DeStefano, Mark Newgarden, and J. J. Sedelmaier about the Fleischers' enduring legacy.

Starting August 1, the Museum will present ***Fleischer Studios Cartoons – Restored!*** in the Jane Henson Amphitheater, a presentation of three short films playing in a loop, including the first cartoon appearance of Betty Boop and a classic Popeye cartoon shot in Technicolor.

Special thanks to Mauricio Alvarado, Jane Fleischer Reid, and Skyler Reid.

This project is supported through a Market New York grant awarded by Empire State Development and I LOVE NY, New York State's Division of Tourism.

**For additional information and tickets, please visit [movingimage.org](https://movingimage.org).**

SCREENING & LIVE EVENT:

**Out of the Inkwell: The Silent Cartoons of Max Fleischer**

**Featuring live musical accompaniment from Charlie Judkins and panel discussion**

Saturday, July 12, 4:00 p.m. in the Sumner M. Redstone Theater

First produced in 1919, the “Out of the Inkwell” series featured a mix of live action and stop motion footage. Animated sequences were produced using the rotoscope, a revolutionary device invented by Max Fleischer, first used to film Dave Fleischer as the

model for Koko the Clown. The block of shorts will feature shorts in new restorations spearheaded by Max's granddaughter, Jane Fleischer Reid, and with live musical accompaniment from Charlie Judkins. Films include: ***The Clowns Little Brother*** (1920), ***The Cartoon Factory*** (1924), ***Koko Beats Time*** (1929), ***The Fadeaway*** (1926), ***Koko at the Circus*** (1926), ***Koko's Magic*** (1928), ***It's the Cats*** (1926), and ***Koko's Earth Control*** (1928).

The program will be introduced by Skyler Reid, Max Fleischer's great grandson, and followed by a panel discussion with contemporary animators **Aaron Augenblick**, **Stephen DeStefano**, **Mark Newgarden**, and **J. J. Sedelmaier** about Fleischer's enduring legacy. Presented as part of the ongoing series World of Animation.

#### IN THE GALLERIES:

##### ***Superman! Restored Animated Classics from the 1940s***

July 10–October 12 in *Tut's Fever Movie Palace*

Most people first watched *Superman* cartoons on television, but these animated shorts by Fleischer Studios were originally released in movie theaters. The Museum will present a selection of these cartoons, restored to their Technicolor glory, in *Tut's Fever Movie Palace*. This working movie theater, an art installation by Red Grooms and Lysiane Luong, is located within our core exhibition, *Behind the Screen*. The program will play continuously throughout the day and includes four *Superman* cartoons from the early 1940s, along with a short documentary on the origin of the cartoon at Fleischer Studios. Titles include ***Mechanical Monsters*** (1941), ***The Bulleteers*** (1942), ***The Arctic Giant*** (1942), ***Terror on the Midway*** (1942), and ***Billion Dollar Limited*** (1942); plus the short documentary ***The Superman Story*** by Ray Pointer (2025). Access is included with Museum admission (no additional ticket necessary).

##### ***Fleischer Studios Cartoons – Restored!***

August 1–September 1 in the Jane Henson Amphitheater

This program includes ***Dizzy Dishes*** (1930), featuring the first appearance of a character who would come to be known as Betty Boop. Also on view are the wistful fantasy ***Somewhere in Dreamland*** (1936) and the classic ***Popeye the Sailor Meets Sindbad the Sailor*** (1936); both were shot in Technicolor and made use of Max Fleischer's innovative Stereoptical process, which produced three-dimensional background effects. Access is included with Museum admission (no additional ticket necessary).

##### **About Museum of the Moving Image**

Founded in 1985, MoMI celebrates the history, art, technology, and future of the moving image in all of its forms. Located in Astoria, New York, the Museum presents exhibitions; screenings; discussion programs featuring actors, directors, and creative leaders; and education programs. It houses the nation's most comprehensive collection of moving image artifacts and screens over 500 films annually. Its exhibitions—including the core exhibition *Behind the Screen* and *The Jim Henson Exhibition*—are noted for their

integration of material objects, interactive experiences, and audiovisual presentations. For more information about MoMI, visit [movingimage.org](http://movingimage.org).

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