

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE TO PRESENT ALEXANDER PAYNE WEEKEND RETROSPECTIVE

January 5–10, 2024 with Payne in person with *The Holdovers* on Jan 10

Find schedule at movingimage.org/series/alexanderpayne

Astoria, New York, November 30, 2023—Museum of the Moving Image will present an Alexander Payne retrospective opening January 5, 2024, featuring all eight of the writer-director's feature films, culminating with a screening of his moving, exquisitely made latest, *The Holdovers*, with Payne in person, on Wednesday, January 10.

Since arriving on the American independent film scene with his breakthrough *Citizen Ruth* (1996), an unexpected dark comedy starring Laura Dern as a pregnant woman being used a pawn in both sides of the ideological divide over abortion, Alexander Payne has always put this country's cultural, political, and emotional realities under a microscope—while never forgetting to also make viewers laugh. This rare talent, coupled with an enormous skill directing actors, many of whom give career performances under his watchful eye, has carried him through all his films, psychologically acute and often poignant inquiries into the lives of taciturn American misfits and losers perched on the edge of satire.

The full schedule for the series is included below. All screenings take place in the Sumner M. Redstone Theater or the Bartos Screening Room at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Ave, Astoria, Queens, New York. Tickets are \$15 with discounts for MoMI members, seniors, students, and youth.

Tickets for *The Holdovers* and conversation with Alexander Payne on January 10 will be free with RSVP (with priority given to MoMI members).

SCHEDULE FOR ALEXANDER PAYNE RETROSPECTIVE, JAN. 5–10, 2024

Citizen Ruth

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Alexander Payne. 1996, 106 mins. With Laura Dern, Swoosie Kurtz, Mary Kay Place, Kurtwood Smith, Kelly Preston, Burt Reynolds, Tippi Hedren. When it debuted at Sundance in early 1996, Payne's debut instantly announced a striking new dark-comic voice to American cinema. Dern plays, with a lack of condescension, a poor, drug-addicted mother of four unable to care for her children who finds herself pregnant yet

again—and under arrest for huffing paint in public. After being processed through a criminal justice system that doesn't know what to do with her, she finds herself co-opted by forces on the right and left who want to make her pregnancy a political flashpoint. As the film continues, it becomes clear that neither side is particularly interested in her as a human being. As provocative as ever, Payne's film pokes at our nation's lingering sore spots and moral certitudes.

Election

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1:00 P.M.

Dir. Alexander Payne. 1999, 103 mins. With Reese Witherspoon, Matthew Broderick, Chris Klein, Jessica Campbell. A suburban Omaha high school presidency election reveals the petty self-interest and essential juvenilia of everyone involved, from teens to their adult supervisors, and becomes a pretty persuasive metaphor for the hopeless political system in Payne's instant classic comedy, adapted from the novel by Tom Perrotta. Witherspoon unforgettably embodies fiercely driven "go-getter" Tracey Flick, whose single-minded ambition drives her political science teacher Mr. McAllister (Broderick, magnificently pathetic) to derangement. *Election* remains one of Payne's purest and funniest commentaries on human fallibility.

About Schmidt

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 3:15 P.M.

Dir. Alexander Payne. 2002, 125 mins. With Jack Nicholson, Kathy Bates, Hope Davis, Dermot Mulroney. *About Schmidt* is a poignant and incisive character study of an ordinary Midwestern businessman on a journey of self-discovery. Nicholson gives one of his most purely touching performances as a weary retired actuary mired in purposelessness. After his wife's death, he suddenly finds himself driven to do something when his daughter announces her engagement to a loser car salesman he feels just "isn't up to snuff." Embarking on a road trip to his future son-in-law's house with the hope of stopping the wedding, Schmidt instead confronts his own shortcomings and failures. Bates shines in an Oscar-nominated supporting role as his crass yet good-hearted bohemian maybe-in-law.

Sideways

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 5:45 P.M.

Dir. Alexander Payne. 2004, 126 mins. With Paul Giamatti, Thomas Haden Church, Virginia Madsen, Sandra Oh. Best friends Miles and Jack, two middle-aged guys with little in common but their propensity for failure, set off to California wine country for one last stab at fun and romance. *Sideways* was nominated for five Academy Awards, winning Best Original Screenplay for Payne and his co-writer Jim Taylor. Giamatti's portrayal of a wannabe novelist entering middle-age stands as one of the loveliest centerpieces of any Payne film, and he's given able support by a trio of superb character actors, including Haden Church as his cocky, former soap-star best buddy; Madsen as an angelic sommelier with grander career ambitions; and Oh as her tough-as-nails friend.

The Descendants

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 12:45 P.M.

Dir. Alexander Payne. 2011, 115 mins. With George Clooney, Shailene Woodley, Judy Greer, Matthew Lillard, Robert Forster. In his most affecting, down-to-earth performance, the Oscar-nominated George Clooney is Matt King, heir of a prominent Hawaiian land-owning family, whose life is overturned when his wife is critically injured in a boating accident. King suddenly finds himself raising his two daughters, while at the same time processing news of his wife's adultery and dealing with questions of inheritance. Payne's note-perfect balance of pathos and wild comedy is on full display. Woodley broke through to stardom with her emotional performance as Matt's fed-up teenage daughter.

Nebraska

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 3:15 P.M.

Dir. Alexander Payne. 2013, 115 mins. With Bruce Dern, June Squibb, Will Forte. Payne's black-and-white, jewel-like family drama bears traces of the writer-director's more acerbic earlier films, but pushes his filmography into more introspective, humble territory. Bruce Dern received a much-deserved Oscar nomination for his splendid performance as Woodrow T. Grant, who's beginning to show signs of dementia and who takes a road trip with his resentful son, Dave (Forte), from Montana to Nebraska. *Nebraska* is perhaps Payne's tenderest film.

Downsizing

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 5:45 P.M.

Dir. Alexander Payne. 2017, 136 mins. DCP courtesy Paramount Pictures. With Matt Damon, Kristen Wiig, Rolf Lassgård, Laura Dern, Hong Chau, Jason Sudeikis, Christoph Waltz. Payne's speculative science-fiction comedy *Downsizing* is premised on a fascinating and plausible scientific theory: if we were all five inches tall, the world's resources would go a long way. Paul (Matt Damon) and his wife Audrey (Kristen Wiig) decide to downsize in order to afford the kind of life they want. From this premise of extreme human engineering, Payne keeps deepening his story and characters, ultimately elaborating a political message about human exploitation of labor and resources, featuring a marvelous Chau in her breakthrough role. One of recent Hollywood cinema's most ambitious films, *Downsizing* was underappreciated upon release but has been reclaimed by some as one of Payne's very best.

The Holdovers

With Alexander Payne in person

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Alexander Payne. 2023, 133 mins. DCP. With Paul Giamatti, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Dominic Sessa. Giamatti makes a welcome return to Payne-land in a finely etched performance as a curmudgeonly instructor at a New England prep school who is forced to supervise a handful of boys with nowhere to go over the Christmas holiday

break. Through a series of unforeseen adventures, he winds up bonding with one kid in particular, a brainy troublemaker (Sessa), and with the school's head cook (Randolph), who is in mourning over a recent, devastating loss. With its effortless mix of comedy and pathos, Payne's acclaimed 1970s-set latest is destined to be a seasonal classic, a film of relatable melancholy and profoundly felt humanity, held together by a trio of superb actors. **Free with RSVP (opening late December).**

Museum of the Moving Image (MoMI) is the only institution in the United States that deals comprehensively with the art, technology, enjoyment, and social impact of film, television, and digital media. In its facility in Astoria, Queens, New York, the Museum presents exhibitions; screenings; discussion programs featuring actors, directors, and creative leaders; and education programs. It houses the nation's largest 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 the MoMI, visit movingimage.us.

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[Press gallery](#)

MUSEUM INFORMATION

Hours: Thurs, 2:00–6:00 p.m. Fri, 2:00–8:00 p.m. Sat–Sun, 12:00–6:00 p.m.

Museum Admission: \$20 adults, \$12 senior citizens (ages 65+) and students (ages 18+) with ID, \$10 youth (ages 3–17). Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free. General admission is free every Thursday, 2:00–6:00 p.m.

Film Screenings: Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and as scheduled. Unless otherwise noted, tickets: \$15 adults, \$11 students and seniors, \$9 youth (ages 3–17), free or discounted for Museum members (depending on level of membership). Advance purchase is available online.

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: M or R to Steinway Street. N or W to 36 Ave or Broadway.

Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: movingimage.us

Membership: movingimage.us/join-and-support/become-a-member or 718 777 6877

Museum of the Moving Image is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and has received significant support from the following public agencies: New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; New York City Council; New York City Economic Development Corporation; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; Institute of Museum and Library Services; National Endowment for the Humanities; National Endowment for the Arts; and Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation). For more information, please visit movingimage.us.