

Visiting Los Angeles ----- The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures

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The Oscars

If you are a movie buff like this writer , the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles would be a fantastic place to visit . Remember those days every year in February/March when people would wait in eager anticipation for the announcement of the results of the Oscars Awards of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) in the United States to see who would be the best actor and best actress and which movie would get best picture?



By the way, I bet most reader do not know that the Oscar statuette that the Oscar winners get, is in fact made of solid bronze (plated in 24-karat gold) which is 13.5 inches high and weighing 8.5 pounds (yes , it is quite heavy to hold it one hand and try to wave it about when you receive the award). And why is it called the Oscar ? Well , although the first Academy awards were first given out in 1929 , the Academy did not officially adopt the nickname of the statuette as Oscar until 1939. The most widely repeated story is that the name was coined at the time by the Academy librarian, Margaret Herrick, who said it resembled her Uncle Oscar. Today , inside the museum , for a fee of US\$15 , special effects will transport you to the night of the Oscars , where you can hold one of the statuettes in your hand and deliver an acceptance speech in front of a virtual audience of industry celebrities. Well, you will have to give back the golden statuette to them after the experience (I mean , it's only a US\$15 experience) , but you will get a video recording of your performance. Of course , you really should prepare a speech beforehand to make the whole exercise worthwhile and meaningful . On the other hand , if you are shy (even in front of a virtual audience), you can just have your picture taken while walking along the red carpet where all the celebrities need to walk along when they enter the theatre to the Oscar event.



The Building

The main building of the museum was originally a department store building from 1939 . The renovation design was by the celebrated architect Renzo Piano who also built a monumental giant glass-and-steel dome next door housing the museum's 2 theatres . The roof top terrace of the dome was connected by a walkway (named the Barbra Streisand Bridge) from the main building . This terrace offers a panoramic view of the whole area of Hollywood . Yes , you can definitely see the Hollywood sign on the hillside in a distance. And don't forget to visit the restaurant (Fanny's) on site. The name of the dishes there (Gone with the Chicken Caesar , Crouching Tiger Hidden salad , Finding Salmon, The Good , the Burrata and the Ugly , and Meatballs named Desire, etc) are really entertaining , with quality to match.

The Exhibits of Memorabilia

With a collection of over 50 million objects from notable films , the exhibits of iconic objects and memorabilia would take viewers down (a lot of) memory lanes . There are the old ones like Dorothy's ruby slippers from The Wizard of Oz (1939), Bela Lugosi's cape from Dracula (1931), and Shirley Temple's tap shoes from The Little Colonel (1935),



More modern ones include the Aries 1B spaceship model and spacesuit from 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), Shark mold from Jaws (1975) and E.T. prop from E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial (1982), Emma Stone's yellow dress from La La Land (2016) and the amphibian man costume from The Shape of Water (2017). There is also a Godfather photo experience where the office of Don Vito Corleone was re-created giving visitors a chance to sit in the Godfather's chair and imagine Amerigo Bonsasera pleading for justice in the opening scene of the movie.

One of the most interesting galleries must be the one that exhibits clips from iconic acceptance speeches from previous Oscars nights. If you have been watching Oscars nights over the years , you will definitely be entertained . There is this one clip from 1973 when Marlon Brando was awarded the Best actor for his role in the Godfather film. He did not attend ,but sent an American Indian activist (Sacheen Littlefeather) to go on stage on his behalf . It is really amusing to see her go up to the stage, brush the MC aside , and then go on to give a “non-acceptance” speech to admonish the discriminatory practices against American Indians by the Hollywood film industry. While she was talking , one can hear a mixed reaction of boos and applause from the audience. Yes , I do remember that scene back in 1973 .

Exhibits of Hollywood Film

A lot of your favourite popular movies are here----- Toy Stories , Beauty and the Beast , Barbie , and Jaws, just to name a few. Do you know that the iconic movie Jaws was made in 1975 and it has now been over 50 years? And who can forget the main "shark" theme -----a simple alternating pattern of two musical notes " E and F and " F and F sharp" that had since become a classic piece of suspense music, signifying approaching danger . In the exhibition , there is a key board for visitors to recreate the ominous music .



Non-Hollywood Films.

And it is not just Hollywood films on show . There is a gallery devoted to Pony(崖上的波兒) by Hayao Miyazaki (宫崎 駿) , an extremely popular animated film with an English version back in 2008 loosely based on the The Little Mermaid story . Back in 2008 , this animated film was done entirely by hand . Another gallery was devoted to the Korean director Bong Joon Ho(奉俊昊) . In 2020 , his movie “Parasite” (上流寄生族), a black comedy/thriller, became the first foreign-language film ever to win Best Picture at the Academy Awards. In addition , it also won three more Oscars ----- for Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, and Best International Feature Film.