

A HISTORY OF PEPLUM



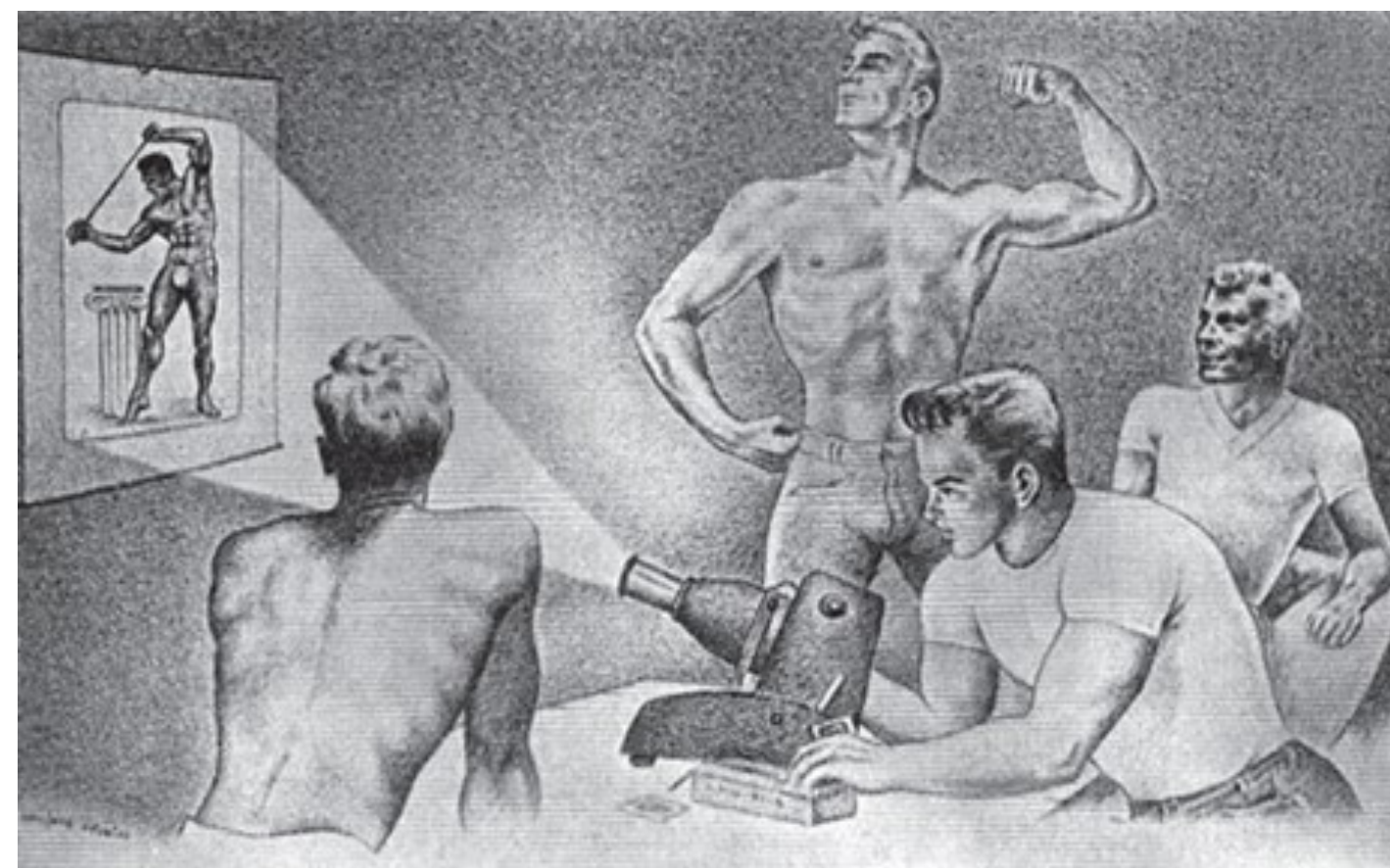
Cabiria (1914)

1910s

Deemed the beginning of the 'Silent Era,' *Cabiria* launched the peplum and sword and sandal genres. Directed by Giovanni Pastrone, *Cabiria* was a very influential film in the industry, inspiring other directors to depict the hero as a savior on an epic journey.



A scene from the film "Theodora" (1921). University of Washington, Special Collections JWS35362



"Home Show" (c. 1955) by William MacLane

1920s-40s

In the 1920-40's, after the two World Wars, film and media were consumed by increasingly diverse audiences. Now deemed the physique films, creators of other forms of media followed suit by developing cartoons and television shows focused on the bodies of men, particularly those with bodybuilder physiques. With the sheer number of films and other media being published, there were far more amateur filmmakers looking to replicate the success of physique films.



Hollywood historical and biblical epics with recognizable actors including Charlton Heston, Robert Taylor, and Victor Mature influenced Italian peplum film productions. Posters for *Quo Vadis* (1951) (above) and *Samson and Delilah* from 1949 (left).



1950s-60s

When Steve Reeves starred in Pietro Francisci's rendition of *Hercules* in 1958, it launched the director and actor into stardom. They would go on to make more than a dozen peplum films following the success of this movie. For the next decade, peplum became the focus of American cinema with many adaptations of 'Goliath' heroes in Greco-Roman settings. In the 1950's through 1960's, peplum films finally became solidified as a genre in the film industry.



The Warrior's Husband (1933). Collection of David Chapman



Fabiola (1949)



Hercules (1958), the film said to have launched the second wave of the genre