

Titans on the Wall: Peplum films of the 1950s & 1960s

PEPLUM EXTRAVAGANZA

SEE bare-chested musclemen fighting, driving chariots, and pulling chains!

SEE calamity and exploding volcanoes!

SEE peplum film posters from the 1950s and 1960s in a new light!

Step into the world of sword-and-sandal epics through images from the David Chapman Peplum (Gladiator) Movie Poster Collection. This collection, housed in the University of Washington Libraries' Special Collections, showcases striking posters from around the world celebrating a film genre that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s.

These films—filled with mythic heroes, epic battles, and imagined ancient landscapes—also reflected the cultural conversations of their time. The posters highlight evolving artistic styles, shifting gender norms, and the social issues embedded in popular entertainment. The posters and related memorabilia in this exhibit offer a look into how these films were marketed and imagined around the world.

Movie posters are intended to be ephemeral, not long-lasting cultural documents. Due to concerns regarding light and other environmental conditions, wide size variation, and the physical condition of many posters, this exhibit presents photo reproductions instead of the actual posters residing in Special Collections.

Explore the imagery, typography, and storytelling on display. Consider what these posters reveal about the era in which they were produced and their influence on film and popular culture of today.

