

## OSCAR STATUETTE



**THE MOST RECOGNIZED TROPHY IN THE WORLD, THE OSCAR STATUETTE HAS STOOD ON THE MANTELS OF THE GREATEST FILMMAKERS IN HISTORY SINCE 1929.**

Shortly after the formation of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 1927, the fledgling organization held a dinner in the Crystal Ballroom of the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles to set out its goals. Among the topics discussed that night was how best to honor outstanding moviemaking achievements and thereby encourage excellence in all facets of motion picture production.

Agreeing to institute an annual award, the group turned its attention to creating a suitably majestic trophy. MGM art director Cedric Gibbons designed a statuette of a knight standing on a reel of film gripping a crusader's sword. The Academy tapped Los Angeles sculptor George Stanley to realize the design in three dimensions – and the world-renowned statuette was born.

### A KNIGHT CALLED OSCAR

Since the initial awards banquet on May 16, 1929, in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel's Blossom Room, more than 3,000 statuettes have been presented. Each January, additional new golden statuettes are cast by Polich Tallix fine art foundry in New York's Hudson Valley.

Oscar stands 13½ inches tall and weighs in at a robust 8½ pounds. The film reel features five spokes, signifying the five original branches of the Academy: actors, directors, producers, technicians and writers. Although the statuette remains true to its original design, the size of the base varied until 1945, when the current standard was adopted.

Officially named the Academy Award of Merit, the statuette is better known by its nickname, Oscar. While the origins of the moniker aren't clear, a popular story has it that upon seeing the trophy for the first time, Academy librarian (and eventual executive director) Margaret Herrick remarked that it resembled her Uncle Oscar. The Academy didn't adopt the nickname officially until 1939, but it was widely known enough by 1934 that Hollywood columnist Sidney Skolsky used it in a piece referring to Katharine Hepburn's first Best Actress win.

## THE STUFF THAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF

The statuettes are solid bronze and plated in 24-karat gold. Due to a metal shortage during World War II, Oscars were made of painted plaster for three years. Following the war, the Academy invited recipients to redeem the plaster figures for gold-plated metal ones.

Achievements in up to 25 regular categories will be honored on February 24, 2019, at the 91th Academy Awards presentation at the Dolby Theatre at Hollywood & Highland Center. However, the Academy won't know how many statuettes it will hand out until the envelopes are opened on Oscar Night. Although the number of categories are known in advance, the possibility of ties and of multiple recipients sharing the prize in some categories makes it impossible to predict the exact number of statuettes to be awarded. As in previous years, any surplus awards will be housed in the Academy's vault until next year's event.

More than 80 years after that auspicious gathering in Hollywood, Oscar's success as a symbol of filmmaking achievement would probably amaze those who attended the dinner, as it would its designer, Cedric Gibbons.

**Read the article again if necessary and choose the statements as True or False.**

1. The designer of the statuette was MGM art director Cedric Gibbons. ☐

Los Angeles sculptor George Stanley refused the Academy to realize the design of the Oscar statuette. ☐

The five spokes of the film reel signify the five original branches of the Academy: actors, directors, producers, technicians and writers. ☐

The official name of the statuette is Oscar. ☐

The figure of the Oscar statuette is based on Margaret Herrick's uncle. ☐

During the Second World War the Oscars were made out of bronze. ☐

## Key

1. True;
2. False (He realized it in three dimensions);
3. True; 4. False (the Academy Award of Merit);
5. False (She just remarked that it resembled her Uncle Oscar);
6. False (plaster)