



FILM

WINTER 2012 National Gallery of Art

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National Gallery of Art

Films are screened in the Gallery's East Building Auditorium, Fourth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Works are presented in original formats and seating is on a first-come, first-seated basis. Doors open thirty minutes before each show and programs are subject to change. For more information, visit www.nga.gov/programs/film, e-mail film_department@nga.gov, or call (202) 842-6799.

This winter season brings a spectrum of cinema practice, both historic and contemporary, to the film program at the National Gallery of Art. Film series *Maurice Tourneur: 1930s* and *Robert Bresson* celebrate these French masters' works with new prints. Other restorations this season include *Robin Hood* (1912), *Waiting for Godot* (shown with Samuel Beckett's *Film*), Jean Renoir's *French CanCan*, and a program of abstract shorts by Oskar Fischinger from the Center for Visual Music. The series *PhotoFilm!* offers three screening-and-discussion sessions that investigate the relationship between still and motion pictures, with short films such as Chris Marker's *La Jetée* and Agnès Varda's *Ulysse* as studies, along with many others. For the series *Texts of Light*, much-lauded American filmmaker David Gatten presents three programs of his handcrafted 16 mm films, most of which form a cycle of work centered around one of the largest and most famous libraries of colonial America, that of William Byrd II. The ongoing cycle *American Originals Now* continues this season with two programs of work by Amie Siegel, a visual artist who navigates varying exhibition venues, methods, and forms. Other special events include three screenings of Henri-Georges Clouzot's homage *Le Mystère Picasso*, shown in conjunction with the exhibition *Picasso's Drawings, 1890–1921: Reinventing Tradition*; a set of new works presented in conjunction with the Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital, including experimental films by Harun Farocki, Ben Rivers, and John Akomfrah; and *Eames: The Architect and the Painter*, a new portrait of the famous modern design duo Charles and Ray Eames.



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Art Films and Events

Jan 7 – Mar 24

OPTICAL POETRY: OSKAR FISCHINGER CLASSICS
Introduction by Cindy Keefer

Sat Jan 7 (3:00)

Oskar Fischinger (1900–1967), known as “cinema’s Kandinsky,” composed poetic and abstract animations. The first of a two-part retrospective presented in association with the Center for Visual Music, this program includes *R-1 ein Formspiel*, *Spirals*, *Walking from Munich to Berlin*, *Spiritual Constructions*, *Kreise* (two versions), *Allegretto* (two versions), *American March*, *Radio Dynamics*, *Motion Painting no. 1*, and more. (c. 1926–1947, 35 mm, approximate running time 75 minutes)

OPTICAL POETRY: OSKAR FISCHINGER RARE WORKS
Introduction by Cindy Keefer

Sat Jan 7 (4:45)

Part two of the Fischinger retrospective includes works such as *Studies 1, 3, 9*, *Pierrette I*, *Wax Experiments*, *Ornament Sound*, *Swiss Trip*, *Color Rhythm*, *Oklahoma Gas*, *1920s Tests*, *Berlin Home Movies*, and more. Prints for the retrospective were preserved by the Center for Visual Music, Academy Film Archive, EYE Film Institute, and the Fischinger Archive, with support of The Film Foundation, Sony, Deutsches Filmmuseum, and the National Film Preservation Foundation. Cindy Keefer is director, Center for Visual Music. (c. 1920–1952, 35 mm and DigiBeta, approximate running time 70 minutes)

WAITING FOR GODOT
preceded by Samuel Beckett’s FILM

Sun Jan 8 (4:30)

Waiting for Godot, a teleplay from the short-lived but celebrated early 1960s WNTA-TV series *Play of the Week*, features Zero Mostel



as Estragon and Burgess Meredith as Vladimir. “*Godot and Play of the Week* exemplify the potential heights the small screen could reach as a legitimate venue for meaningful and challenging dramatic arts” —Mark Quigley. (Alan Schneider, 1961, DigiBeta, 102 minutes)
From the UCLA Film and Television Archive

Film, Samuel Beckett’s only screenplay (the writer supervised the production as well), is a twenty-minute, almost silent short, at once an abstraction and a moving meditation. An aging and weary Buster Keaton engages in a kind of face-off with the camera lens and, by extension, with the world itself. *Film’s* noted cinematographer was Boris Kaufman. (Alan Schneider, 1965, 35 mm, 20 minutes) *Preservation funded by The Film Foundation and administered by the National Film Preservation Foundation*

**KAZAN RESTORED: MAN ON A TIGHTROPE
followed by WILD RIVER**

Sat Jan 28 (2:30)

The first of two lesser known works by Elia Kazan, *Man on a Tightrope* follows the travails of a small traveling circus in communist-era Czechoslovakia, including attempts by its manager, Cernik (Fredrich March), and his wife (Gloria Grahame) to take the troupe across the border to Germany. The rich mise-en-scène and black-and-white location footage evoke Eastern European cinema of the era; Circus Brumbach performers lend verisimilitude. Although communism is the film’s perceptible menace, Kazan shrewdly avoids political statements or imagery. (Elia Kazan, 1953, 35 mm, 105 minutes)

One of Kazan’s masterworks (and allegedly his favorite among his films), *Wild River* was motivated by personal history: “My family also lost a house... this was the first film where I said, ‘I’m going to be as lyric as I can....’” A quiet but resolute Tennessee Valley Authority overseer (Montgomery Clift) arrives to work in a town targeted for flooding and the associated displacement. Naturally, he runs headlong into the wrath and ruses of the locals, particularly one matriarch, as well as a love interest (Lee Remick). The film’s tone is interestingly reflective and subtly questions the New Deal’s notions of progress. (Elia Kazan, 1960, 35 mm, 105 minutes)

FRENCH CANCAN

Sun Jan 29 (5:00)

Gaumont’s luminous restoration of Jean Renoir’s classic tale of the origins of the Moulin Rouge screens on the occasion of the reopening of the National Gallery’s French painting galleries. With its sensuous color and soft lighting, the lively Technicolor extravaganza remains an enduring homage to Renoir’s father, Auguste, and other artists of the era, especially Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Edgar Degas. (Jean Renoir, 1954, DCP from 35 mm, 102 minutes)

CINÉ-CONCERT: NATHAN THE WISE

Dennis James, theater organ

Sat Feb 4 (2:30)

Theater organist Dennis James performs his historically themed organ score for *Nathan der Weise*, a 1920s adaptation of the famously controversial Enlightenment-era play about religious tolerance from dramatist philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Sultan Saladin (Fritz Greiner) takes Jerusalem in spite of counterefforts from his brother Assad, a Christian convert who fought with the Knights Templar. Meanwhile Jewish merchant Nathan (Werner Krauss) loses his sons when the synagogue burns, but ends up adopting young Recha, the daughter of Assad. (Manfred Noa, 1922, DigiBeta from 35 mm, 128 minutes)

A PLACE IN BERLIN

Sun Feb 5 (4:30)

The plaza known as Marx-Engels Forum in the historic Mitte district of what was once East Berlin was constructed thirty years ago to honor communist icons Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Famed painter and filmmaker Jürgen Böttcher revisited footage he shot during the forum’s creation, then returned ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, composing a filmic collage with his old and new material. This experimental documentary features Günter “Baby” Sommer and Dietmar Diesner, improvisational jazz artists from the former DDR, in a striking nonfiction essay. (Jürgen Böttcher, 2001, 35 mm, German with subtitles, 88 minutes)

LE MYSTÈRE PICASSO

Wed Feb 8 (2:30)

Thur Feb 9, Fri Feb 10 (12:30)

Three screenings of the classic 1956 film by Clouzot—an imaginative homage to his friend Picasso as the maestro paints before the camera—are presented in association with the National Gallery exhibition *Picasso's Drawings, 1890–1921: Reinventing Tradition*. (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1956, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 78 minutes)

EAMES: THE ARCHITECT AND THE PAINTER

Introduction by C. Ford Peatross

Sun Feb 12 (4:30)

Charles and Ray Eames were among our most influential designers, literally shaping the course of American architecture, furniture, industrial design, and film. *Eames: The Architect and the Painter* draws from a mass of rare and unusual archival material, as well as surprising interview footage with friends and colleagues, to depict the couple's lives while placing them in the milieu of midcentury America. (Jason Cohn, 2011, HD-Cam, 83 minutes)

LES LUTINS DU COURT-MÉTRAGE: FESTIVAL OF NEW FRENCH SHORTS

Sun Feb 19 (5:00)

This selection of new short films from France is filled with humor, compassion, suspense, and beauty. Four works, presented in original format, are shown as part of the *Lutins du Court-Métrage* festival organized in association with L'Alliance Française de Washington. Titles include *The Last Journey of Maryse Lucas*, *The Little Tailor*, *Birds Get Vertigo*, *Too*, and *Tre Ore*. (Approximately 105 minutes)

THE REACH OF RESONANCE

Thur Mar 15, Fri Mar 16 (12:30)

Four musicians and sound artists from radically different backgrounds—Miya Masaoka, a koto performer and composer inspired by insects and plants; Jon Rose, a violin virtuoso whose “found music” created with fences and other apparatus has attracted the Kronos Quartet; John Luther Adams, whose tones are motivated by the natural landscape; and Bob Ostertag, who integrates sociopolitical





concerns into his pieces — not only express their perceptions about music but use their musical talents to create ingenious social harmonies in an increasingly hostile universe. (Steve Elkins, 2010, HD-Cam, 118 minutes)

THE NINE MUSES

preceded by SACK BARROW

Sat Mar 17 (2:00)

The Nine Muses, the latest creation of the Ghana-born British film and installation artist John Akomfrah, is a layered meditation on human mass migration and its relationship to land use and culture. Combining footage of isolated places and rarely traveled roads; readings from classic texts by Homer, Dante, T.S. Eliot, and others; and the music of Arvo Pärt and India's Gundecha Brothers, Akomfrah has created an evocative journey through myth and environment, a self-described "Proustian attempt to suggest the idea of migration." (John Akomfrah, 2011, HD-Cam, 94 minutes)

Artist and experimental filmmaker Ben Rivers' *Sack Barrow* poetically portrays (in outmoded 16 mm format) the fading milieu of a pre-World War II factory near London during its final days of operation in 2010. Without voiceover or interview, he carefully records the routines of the last workers, traces of chemical corrosion and continuing decay, as well as the sense of ineffable sadness present in time's passing. (Ben Rivers, 2011, 16 mm, 20 minutes)

GRANDE HOTEL

preceded by THE SILVER AND THE CROSS

Sat Mar 24 (4:00)

Once a magnificent five-star lodge with restaurants and an Olympic pool, Mozambique's Grande Hotel — in all its gaudiness and self-importance — was the very emblem of Portuguese colonialism. Today, as architectural statement, it is in virtual ruin. What is left of the structure survives as a sort of commune for more than three thousand Mozambiquans, who live in its wide corridors and commanding terraces without even water or electricity. Stoops' documentary presents a careful portrait of a grim and complex subject. (Lotte Stoops, 2010, HD-Cam, 67 minutes)

The Silver and the Cross is Harun Farocki's pointed analysis of a 1758 naive painting depicting villages, workers, and silver mines in

Peru during Spanish colonization. In the filmmaker's words, "The Spanish brought the cross, and then took the silver," an exploitation that continues today in other ways. (Harun Farocki, 2011, 17 minutes)

**Maurice Tourneur:
1930s**

Jan 7–15

French American director Maurice Tourneur (1876–1961) — who spent his early career as an actor and worked for a time in the studios of artists Auguste Rodin and Puvis de Chavannes — became a pioneer of cinema, learning his craft initially at the French production house Éclair and later in America at Fort Lee and Paramount. By the late 1920s he had returned to Europe, where he had great success, especially within the crime genre. This program includes two new restorations of the elegant work he produced after returning to France in the 1930s. Prints are from Pathé, Paris.

JUSTIN DE MARSEILLE

Sat Jan 7 (12:30)

The murky atmosphere of the Marseille docksides provides a choice opportunity for Tourneur's pursuit of the crime drama. Justin, a professional gangster concerned with imposing his rules of conduct on the underworld, "settles scores with smalltime pimps of the Canebière who treat women badly" — Pierre Poguib. Tourneur's taste for local color stunningly opens up here in the opium den, the brothel, the parade, and the harbor itself. (1935, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 95 minutes)

ACCUSÉE, LEVEZ-VOUS!

Sun Jan 15 (4:30)

Gaby and André, a knife-throwing duo of music-hall artists in the Folies Bergères, are torn apart when Gaby is accused of murdering

Yvette Delys, the show's star attraction. With innate style and restraint, *Accusée, Levez-Vous! (Accused, Stand Up!)* offers a colorful view of the rawness of show business. "As usual Tourneur knows how to choose the most compelling details of settings, starting with the halls of the theater." — Roberto Chiesi. (1930, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 110 minutes)

**Paris to Fort Lee:
French Filmmakers and the American Industry**

Jan 14

American audiences once supported thousands of local nickelodeons, moving picture entertainments found everywhere from urban business districts to villages and seaside resorts. The one-reel farces and melodramas that fueled this explosion were often imported directly from Paris. Pathé Frères dominated the market but the Société Française des Films et Cinématographes Éclair found a way to establish a foothold of its own. If Pathé opened a film lab in New Jersey, Éclair would go one better, and in 1911 the company broke ground for the first motion picture studio in Fort Lee — the opening shot in a French invasion. Richard Koszarski, author of *Fort Lee, the Film Town* discusses the impact of these French studios and introduces two Fort Lee films, *Robin Hood* and *Alias Jimmy Valentine*.

**CINÉ-CONCERT: ROBIN HOOD CENTENNIAL SCREENING
Introduction by Richard Koszarski**

Sat Jan 14 (2:30)

Éclair's 1912 production of *Robin Hood*, a half-hour epic inspired by the once-popular Reginald de Koven operetta, has recently been restored with all its original color tints by the Fort Lee Film Commission. (Étienne Arnaud and Herbert Blaché, 1912, 35 mm, 35 minutes)

CINÉ-CONCERT: ALIAS JIMMY VALENTINE**Andrew Simpson, piano****Introduction by Richard Koszarski**

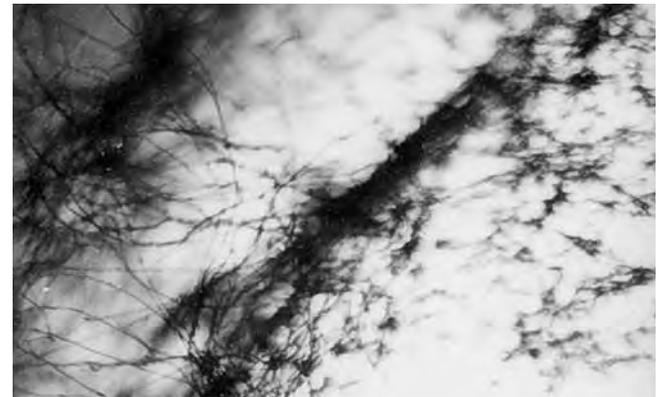
Sat Jan 14 (4:00)

Hoping to expand production to feature-length films, the Éclair company sent director Maurice Tourneur from Paris to Fort Lee in 1914. Over the next four years Tourneur and his associates would make thirty features, combining the style and sensibility of French production with the energy and local color of the Americans. One of their finest was *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, a brilliantly photographed crime thriller based on an O. Henry short story. This was the first of Jimmy Valentine's many filmed adventures but the only one so noticeably in the tradition of *Fantômas*, *Judex*, and the other great French crime serials. (Maurice Tourneur, 1915, 35 mm, 50 minutes)

David Gatten:**Texts of Light**

Jan 21–22

David Gatten's filmmaking practice is unique in American cinema. His passion for historical documents, rare books, and arcane or outmoded manuals has resulted in a body of finely crafted work that explores the intersection of the printed word and the moving image in unusual ways. Using traditional research methods (reading old books) and non-traditional film technique (boiling old books), he manages to connect categories of knowledge in unexpected ways. Known for his ongoing Byrd family chronicle, an account of the eighteenth-century Virginia family, Gatten's appearances at the National Gallery's midcareer retrospective offer a rare opportunity to discuss in person his handcrafted experimental 16 mm processes. Organized by the Wexner Center for the Arts, with special thanks to Chris Stults.



And as the snow melted from the bases of the mountains, the arctic forms would seize on the cleared and thawed ground, always ascending, as the warmth increased and the snow still further disappeared higher and higher, whilst their brethren were pursuing their northern journey

**SECRET HISTORY OF THE DIVIDING LINE, A TRUE ACCOUNT
IN NINE PARTS: Parts I–IV**

David Gatten in person

Sat Jan 21 (2:30)

This cycle of films centers around one of the largest and most famous libraries of colonial America, that of William Byrd II. (After Byrd's death, most of the volumes were purchased by Thomas Jefferson and later formed the basis for the Library of Congress' holdings.) In this first program, Gatten offers glimpses into lost worlds through text, images, and biographical writings in films such as *The Great Art of Knowing* (2004), and *The Enjoyment of Reading (Lost and Found)* (2001). (16 mm, total running time 101 minutes)

**Four Films toward Part V of SECRET HISTORY
OF THE DIVIDING LINE, A TRUE ACCOUNT IN NINE PARTS**

David Gatten in person

Sat Jan 21 (4:30)

This program includes a set of studies or intact stand-alone sections for Gatten's epic, years-in-the-making forthcoming feature film. The program includes *The Matter Propounded, of Its Possibility or Impossibility, Treated in Four Parts* (2011), *How to Conduct a Love Affair* (2007), *So Sure of Nowhere Buying Times to Come* (2010), and *Film for Invisible Ink, Case No. 323: Once Upon a Time in the West* (2010). (16 mm, total running time 50 minutes)

SILENT MOUNTAINS, SINGING OCEANS, AND SLIVERS OF TIME

David Gatten in person

Sun Jan 22 (4:30)

The final program features pairs of films from three other ongoing "non-secret history" series: *The Continuous Quantities* is structured on Leonardo's proposition to divide an hour into three thousand equal parts and offers the most kinetic exploration yet of Gatten's inquiries into the relationship between text and image. *The Invisible Ink* series, as the title implies, employs the most minimal imagery to be found in Gatten's films. The two films in the series *What the Water Said* are among the most acclaimed experimental works of recent years. (16 mm, total running time 67 minutes)

American Originals Now:

Amie Siegel

Feb 11–18

The ongoing film series *American Originals Now* offers an opportunity for discussion with young independent American filmmakers and a chance to share in their art through special screenings and presentations. The focus of this season's installment is artist Amie Siegel (born 1974), whose intelligent and idiosyncratic ruminations on history and modernism, on filmic narrative and cultural memory, have garnered international acclaim. Her work, in a range of moving image modes, is demanding yet accessible and filled with keenly inspired associations. *Empathy* and *DDR/DDR* established Siegel as an important film essayist able to unearth material from surprising sources through observation, direct address, and interview. A recipient of many international awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, Siegel teaches in the department of visual and environmental studies at Harvard University.

DDR/DDR

Sat Feb 11 (2:30)

Before-and-after traits of a once divided and then reunified Germany are seen through the filmmaker's steady and assured perspective as an outsider assuming various roles as ethnographer, actor, and collector. Vérité interviews mix with feigned dialogue to excavate East German traumas associated with both the socialist state and reunification. "A mosaic of interviews and incidents gradually connecting, allowing issues of history, state control, personal identity, and memory to emerge" — Jason Edward Kaufman. (2008, HD-Cam, 135 minutes)



HOLE PUNCHES

Amie Siegel in person

Sat Feb 18 (2:30)

This presentation of recent short films includes *Black Moon/Hole Punches* (2010), Siegel's reworking of a 1974 feature film by Louis Malle into a short film, a grouping of still photographs, and a video installation. She shows documentation of other media arts installations such as *Berlin Remake* (2007), "a double projection of exterior scenes from East German State Film Studio movies alongside their 'remade' version in the present" (AS). The artist will speak about her processes and transformation of ideas across various exhibition formats and contexts. (Total running time approximately 90 minutes)

PhotoFilm!

Feb 25 - Mar 4

"Photofilms" are moving pictures composed of still photographs. *PhotoFilm!* broadly explores the uses of still photography within the cinematic context, attempting to expand a dialogue between the two art forms that has existed since the beginnings of the motion picture. The works run the gamut from classics such as Chris Marker's *La Jetée* to new experimental films such as Shelly Silver's *What I'm Looking For*. The series is presented jointly with Goethe-Institut Washington (several additional programs take place there), supported by German Films, Ag Kurzfilm, Swedish Film-institut, and organized by the Concrete Narrative Society e.V. Berlin. Curators Gusztáv Hámos, Katja Pratschke, and Thomas Tode are present for discussion.





HOW MUCH MOVEMENT DOES THE IMAGE NEED?

Gusztáv Hámos, Katja Pratschke, Thomas Tode in person

Sat Feb 25 (2:30)

The appearance of a still photograph in a cinematographic context often arouses an element of surprise for the viewer. This program presents films that question the nature of the image as well as its relationship to other forms with works by Chris Marker (*La Jetée*, 1962), Sergei Eisenstein (*Beshin Meadow*, 1935/1967), Leonore Mau and Hubert Fichte (*The Fishmarket and the Fish*, 1968), and Katja Pratschke and Gusztáv Hámos (*Transposed Bodies*, 2002). (95 minutes)

RECALL AND MEMORY

Gusztáv Hámos, Katja Pratschke, Thomas Tode in person

Sun Feb 26 (4:30)

"That-has-been," wrote Roland Barthes; photography stands for something that has happened. Film, in contrast, always unfolds in the here and now and can be seen as a container for memory. Featuring films by Thierry Knauff (*Le Sphinx*, 1985), Agnès Varda (*Ulysse*, 1982), Jerzy Ziarnik (*Gestapoman Schmidt*, 1964), Franz Winzentsen (*The Fitting 1938*, 1985), Helke Misselwitz (*Pictures from a Family Album*, 1985), and Janet Riedel, Katja Pratschke, and Gusztáv Hámos (*Fiasko*, 2010), this program investigates these functions in the context of personal and historical memory. (93 minutes)

THE FILMIC PHOTOGRAPHIC

Sun Mar 4 (4:30)

This program focuses on the image, the process of finding and conceiving it, the act of shooting, and then describing it. Film requires the linear sequencing of photographs, which these filmmakers use to develop an analytical discourse. Including films by Hollis Frampton (*[nostalgia]*, 1971), Silke Grossmann (*The Feelings of the Eyes*, 1987), Shelly Silver (*What I'm Looking For*, 2004), Esaias Baitel (*The Zone*, 2003) and Sean Snyder (*Casio, Seiko....*, 2005). (90 minutes)

Robert Bresson

 Mar 3–Apr 1

Robert Bresson (1901–1999), one of the most refined and rigorous of filmmakers, was also one of the most philosophical—indeed his Jansenist perspective is fundamental to the coherence of his work. Pared-down narratives and moral observations are realized through an economy of means hardly matched in the cinema. From early on, the use of non-professional actors, restrained though elegant camera style, orchestrated dialogue, embedded sound effects and music, and elliptical storytelling became his hallmarks. Bresson managed, with self-imposed rules, to execute works of passion and suspense while still observing the mysterious movements of fate. This retrospective of all extant works has been organized by James Quandt and the Cinemathèque Ontario.

LES ANGES DU PÉCHÉ

Sat Mar 3 (2:00)

Anne-Marie, a novice in the Sisters of Bethany convent, has to confront her own bourgeois background and immature moral character when she takes on the rehabilitation of the delinquent Thérèse, imprisoned for crimes committed by a lover. Completed while the German army was still occupying France, *Les Anges du Péché* was written in part by the noted dramatist Jean Giraudoux. (1943, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 100 minutes)

PICKPOCKET
Introduction by Keith Cohen

Sat Mar 3 (4:15)

The all but lost art of the pickpocket—an occupation dependent on a perpetrator's economy of gesture and expressionless face (traits typical of Bresson's actors)—was the subject of one of the director's most





memorable works. With a nod to *Crime and Punishment*, *Pickpocket*'s portrait of a student consumed by a fatal fixation is so suited to the director's formalist practice that the understated action actually reveals a thorough knowledge of the subject matter—displayed in a tour-de-force sequence of takings, passings, and disposals in the Gare de Lyon. Untrained actors appear instinctively to grasp the maneuvers of this ancient form of scam. (1959, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 75 minutes)

LES DAMES DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE

preceded by LES AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Sat Mar 10 (4:30)

Hélène (Maria Casarès), doubting her lover's devotion, plots a bitter revenge. She will entice him into a relationship with a prostitute, taking pains to disguise the true occupation of her innocent decoy. Robert Bresson's screenplay and Jean Cocteau's dialogue for *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* loosely derive from an eighteenth-century story, Denis Diderot's *Jacques le Fataliste et Son Maître*. Though the film's mise-en-scène appears outwardly conventional for its period, Bresson's interior psychological rigor is abundantly evident: "one could hardly be anywhere but in Bresson's world" — Tom Milne. (1945, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 90 minutes)

Les Affaires Publiques, an early short work believed lost and then rediscovered in the late 1980s, consists of satirically comic vignettes, and remains an anomaly in Bresson's oeuvre. (1934, 35 mm, 25 minutes)

DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST

Sun Mar 11 (4:30)

By 1950 Bresson had attained his mature style—rational and reserved, with carefully calibrated sound, ellipses, a stately pace, and low-key performances. In this adaptation of Catholic fiction writer Georges Bernanos's 1936 *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, the director follows the novel's main idea and dialogue—the journal entries of a young rural clergyman—and creates a controlled yet poignant cinematic experience. The naive priest, settling into his first assignment after seminary, dedicates himself to his local parishioners who, in turn, often mock him and fail to appreciate his work. (1950, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 114 minutes)

FOUR NIGHTS OF A DREAMER

Sat Mar 17 (4:30)

Though Dostoyevsky's 1848 tale *White Nights* has had a number of cinematic interpretations over the years, none have been as visually compelling as Bresson's *Four Nights of a Dreamer* (*Quatre Nuits d'un Rêveur*), which shifts the setting from Saint Petersburg to Paris. The protagonist, an artist who dreams of finding an idyllic love, discovers a young woman who has just lost her lover. Following a fateful first meeting on the Pont Neuf, the couple shares three more rendez-vous, until finally the woman's truant suitor reappears. "I can think of nothing so ravishing as this strange romantic vision of the city, the Seine, the softly lighted boats in the night" — Roger Greenspun. (1972, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 91 minutes)

AU HASARD, BALTHAZAR

followed by **MOUCHETTE**

Sun Mar 18 (4:30)

The donkey Balthazar, separated from his young companion, Marie (Anne Wiazemsky), is the star of Bresson's taut parable. Subjected to different owners—a teacher, a baker, a schoolgirl, even the circus—Balthazar is mute witness to humanity's depravity, as each new twist brings both love and pain but always a new insult. The donkey bears his anguish with grace, and the film culminates in a kind of deification in a field filled with sheep. "Bresson's supreme masterpiece and one of the greatest movies ever made" — J. Hoberman. (1966, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 95 minutes)

Georges Bernanos's *Nouvelle Histoire de Mouchette* was the source for Bresson's next feature, a study of a mute and solitary village schoolgirl forced to care for an ailing mother and brother. Hardly an idyllic existence, yet Mouchette is cannily able to survive on her instincts. The use of random sounds is effective—not only strategically placed tones throughout the narrative, but also the poignant use of Monteverdi on the music track during the final sequence. "Like the donkey Balthazar, Mouchette has no language with which to express despair" — Judy Bloch. (1967, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 82 minutes)



THE DEVIL, PROBABLY

Sat Mar 24 (2:00)

“My sickness is that I see things clearly,” remarks Antoine Monnier, the student protagonist of *The Devil, Probably* (*Le Diable Probablement*). Anxious over the world’s problems and growing greed, he begins in protest to plan his own death. We see fragments of his life, his spiritual decline in a world “where even the churches are empty, dirty places.” A scathing look at the inhumanity of modern life, often via carefully edited documentary footage, the film is both “an affirmation of a purity no longer possible within society, and a portent of the millions of deaths, not self-willed, which must inevitably follow given the course of society’s crimes” — Verina Glaessner. (1977, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 90 minutes)

A MAN ESCAPED

Sun Mar 25 (4:30)

In a cell in the Fort Montluc military prison in occupied Lyon, Lieutenant François Letierrier starts thinking of escape. Moments of chance are vital (a friend’s unsuccessful escape attempt, the unwelcome roommate who must be enlisted or killed, intense focus on small objects) and, in a very quiet film, the orchestration of sounds — footsteps, interjections of the Kyrie from Mozart’s Mass, taps on the wall, and the squeak of a guard’s bicycle. Bresson based his first solo screenplay on a first-person account by French Resistance fighter André Devigny (who served as technical advisor), creating a work of intense mysticism and mortal suspense. (1956, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 95 minutes)

THE TRIAL OF JOAN OF ARC

Sat Mar 31 (2:30)

Court transcripts from Joan of Arc’s fifteenth-century heresy trial have been the basis for many works, from Shaw’s drama *Saint Joan*, to Dreyer’s silent film *La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc*, to Bresson’s *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (*Procès de Jeanne d’Arc*). The direct, unadorned aesthetic of the latter carries a sense of detachment — her case is presented without pretext or emotion. Voices and other sounds, such as the verbal invectives delivered by church officials and sycophants, play a critical role in setting the tone. Interestingly, there is no music. “To the

faithful — witnesses to the action in the courtroom — God is revealed through Joan’s voice (as Joan’s ‘voices’ had revealed God to her)” — Robert Droguet. (1962, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 65 minutes)

LANCELOT DU LAC

March 31 (4:00)

In *Lancelot du Lac* (*Lancelot of the Lake*) Bresson’s focus is the knights’ return to King Arthur’s court after their failed quest for the Grail. A sense that their fellowship is in decline casts a somber mood, and the knights are anxious and unsettled. A deconstruction of the legend leading to a devastating finale, the spare narrative draws attention to random sounds like the clink of armor, and to visual details — the centerpiece is a tournament viewed mainly through oblique shots of horses’ legs. With the roundtable about to come to an end, Bresson foregrounds the love of Lancelot and Guenièvre — “the one positive force amid the social decay in Camelot” — Kristin Thompson. (1974, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 95 minutes)

UNE FEMME DOUCE**followed by L’ARGENT**

Sun Apr 1 (4:00)

At the time he started to film in color, Bresson’s work also turned darker. *Une Femme Douce* is another Dostoyevsky adaptation (of the Russian writer’s 1876 elliptical short story “A Gentle Creature”). The suicide of a young wife (Dominique Sanda) leads her bewildered husband, the owner of a pawn shop, to narrate their story in an attempt to make sense of the tragedy. Was it because of something misaligned in their marriage? “The extraordinary thing about the film is that any interpretation can be read into it, still leaving, undisturbed at the bottom of the pool, an indefinable sense of despair” — Tom Milne. (1969, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 88 minutes)

In *L’Argent*, an innocent man is caught in an escalating cycle of evil when a forged five-hundred-franc note, casually passed off, leads to bribery, imprisonment, a marriage breakup, multiple murders, and finally his arrest. Adapted from Leo Tolstoy’s *The False Note*, “*L’Argent* has the manner of an official report, the tone of a spiritual autopsy...telling its ruthless tale without once raising its voice” — Russell Merritt. (1982, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 85 minutes)



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