



Release Date: September 27, 2019

National Gallery of Art 2019 Fall Film Program Features Eastern European Absurdist Films, International Art Film Festivals, Films by Shirley Clark and Basilio Martín Patino, Ciné-Concerts, and Discussions with Filmmakers

—Screenings in New Locations for 2019–2020 Season—



Still image from *Breaking the Frame* by Marielle Nitoslawska (2012, 100 minutes), screening at the National Gallery of Art, West Building Lecture Hall, on Saturday, November 16, 2019, at 2:00 p.m., with Marielle Nitoslawska in person. Image courtesy Picture Palace Pictures.

Washington, DC—The 2019 fall film season (October–December) at the National Gallery of Art offers a selection of new 35mm print restorations of films noirs; ciné-concerts; Washington premieres; special events with filmmakers, and several series of archival and contemporary films from around the world.

The season opens with works by Spanish master Basilio Martín Patino, a luminary of the Nuevo Cine Español of the 1960s, presented on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Spanish Republican exile and the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939. Avant-garde American artist Shirley Clarke is celebrated in the series *Woman with a Movie Camera: Shirley Clarke at 100* that includes a number of early shorts and two of her celebrated documentary portraits. *Welcome to Absurdistan: Eastern European Cinema 1950 to 1989* recalls the theatrical and literary traditions of the absurd—a major influence in the ultimate downfall of Soviet-dominated regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989. *We Tell:*

Fifty Years of Community Media explores in a five-part program the importance of participatory community media in the United States. Tributes to two major international festivals devoted to the art documentary—ArteCinema in Naples, Italy, and ArtFIFA in Montreal, Quebec—present recent interpretations of contemporary art on screen.

Special film screenings include *Animation Beyond Cinema*, with work by emerging artists from The Animator Festival in Poznań, Poland, and three films that are part of a city-wide festival, *Films Across Borders: Stories of Water*. Video documentation, architectural models, and new media are introduced as investigative techniques by Eyal Weizman, who will present the annual Rajiv Vaidya Memorial Lecture, *Forensic Architecture—Counter Investigations*, at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden on December 8.

The fall films are screened in the West Building Lecture Hall, Embassy of France, Embassy of Italy, American Film Institute (AFI) Silver Theatre and Cultural Center, and Freer Gallery of Art due to ongoing Master Facilities Plan renovations in the East Building. All events are free of charge. Online reservations are required for screenings at the Embassy of France and Embassy of Italy. Information regarding reservations is available on their websites.

Films are screened in original formats whenever possible. Seating for all events is on a first-come, first-seated basis. Doors open approximately 30 minutes before each show. Programs are subject to change. For more information, visit nga.gov/film.

Special Events

Renzo Piano—The Architect of Light

October 12, 2:30 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Celebrated Spanish director Carlos Saura captures the genius of one of the most famous Italian architects in the world, Renzo Piano, during the design and construction of the Botín Center in Santander, Spain. The story becomes a reflection on Piano's creative process, and on the synergetic relationship between architecture and cinema. (Carlos Saura, 2018, subtitles, 80 minutes)

Ruskin

Introduced by Rebekah Rutkoff

October 19, 2:30 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

"*Ruskin* is a wonderful, complex work that explores the city of Venice guided by John Ruskin's melancholy text, *The Stones of Venice*. In Beavers's film Venice awakens as a city haunted by the layers of history found within its most intimate architectural details and evoked in the isolated sounds brilliantly woven throughout the film—water lapping, approaching footsteps, a single extended chord

on an organ. The frequent presence of the filmmaker's hands—a recurrent motif throughout Beavers' work—evokes the hand-crafted, almost sculptural quality of his unique cinema"—Harvard Film Archive. (Robert Beavers, 1974/1997, 16mm, 45 minutes) Rebekah Rutkoff is editor of *Robert Beavers* (2017) and lectures frequently on his work.

Woman in the Dunes

October 20, 1:00 p.m.

Freer Gallery of Art

A Tokyo entomologist exploring a small seaside settlement for new species accidentally misses his bus back to the city and ends up staying the night in the fragile shack of a young widow at the bottom of a sand dune. In return for room and board, the man must shovel sand to keep the house from collapsing—an action, as it turns out, that helps the entire town. Hiroshi Teshigahara's classic film is based on the novel by Kōbō Abe. (Hiroshi Teshigahara, 1964, 123 minutes) This film is shown in association with *Films Across Borders: Stories of Water*.

The Woman and the Glacier

October 20, 4:00 p.m.

Freer Gallery of Art

For decades, Lithuanian scientist Aušra Revuitaite has been living 11,000 feet above sea level on the Tuyuksu Glacier of Central Asia bordering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and the autonomous Chinese region of Xinjiang. All alone with a dog and cat, she turned a Soviet-era research station into a home and a lab for recording local gradations of global warming in this otherworldly landscape of melting ice, underground streams, caves, and stony mountains. (Audrius Stonys, 2017, 56 minutes) This film is shown in association with *Films Across Borders: Stories of Water*.

Walking on Water

October 27, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Ten years after the death of his partner, Jeanne-Claude, Christo executed *The Floating Piers*, 24 acres of shimmering yellow fabric in a modular floating dock on Italy's Lake Iseo. Rippling just above the water's surface for 16 days during the summer of 2016, the artwork gave a million visitors the experience of walking on the lake from Sulzano to Monte Isola and the island of San Paolo. The film crew had open access to the artist and his team for an unprecedented look at the project's complexities. (Andrey Paounov, 2019, subtitles, 100 minutes) This film is shown in association with *Films Across Borders: Stories of Water*.

Animation Beyond Cinema

Anna Głowińska and Peter Burr in person

November 2, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

The Animator Festival, held annually in Poznań, Poland, is an international platform for new and historic animation. Curator Anna Głowińska introduces the work of several emerging artists from the festival program *Animation Beyond Cinema* that focuses on media artists who traverse the cinema and the gallery to broaden and explore the potentialities of these exhibition spaces. Works by Polish artists Piotr Bosacki, Agnieszka Polska, Mateusz Sadowski, Magdalena Łazarczyk, and Wojtek Bąkowski are included, as well as animations by British artists Alice Dunseath and Stuart Middleton, and animators Peter Burr and Jodie Mack from the United States. (Total running time approximately 70 minutes) The Gallery would like to thank the Adam Mickiewicz Institute for its support.

La Pointe Courte

Introduced by Nicholas Elliott

November 11, 3:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Agnes Varda's first feature, *La Pointe Courte* was filmed with a small crew in a coastal fishing village and, typical for Varda's work, proved to be ahead of its time, ultimately inspiring the cinematic new wave in France. Local fishermen play themselves, while a pair of actors, playing a young couple with marital woes, arrive on holiday, a counterpoint to local life against a backdrop of Varda's neorealist visuals. (Agnes Varda, 1954, subtitles, 86 minutes) Nicholas Elliott is US correspondent for *Cahiers du cinéma*.

Breaking the Frame

Marielle Nitoslawska in person

November 16, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

With *Breaking the Frame*, filmmaker Marielle Nitoslawska crafts a daring profile of the radical New York artist Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019), a pioneer of performance art and avant-garde cinema. For more than five decades, she challenged taboos leveled against the female body and the woman as artist. (Marielle Nitoslawska, 2012, DCP, 100 minutes). The screening and discussion are followed by a set of short films by Schneemann, including *Plumb Line* (1968–1971) and *Precarious* (2009).

Ciné-concert: Gallery of Monsters

Alloy Orchestra in performance

November 17, 1:00 p.m.

AFI Silver Theatre

The first of two circus films from the 1920s, Jaque Catelain's rarely seen *La galerie des monstres* has recently been restored by Lobster Films in Paris. Catelain also stars in the film, produced by his friend Marcel L'Herbier. Riquet, a poor Gypsy boy, and his love Ralda, a patrician Spanish girl, run away to the circus and join the sideshow, but soon discover that the real freaks and monsters of the spectacle are far from the sideshow performers themselves. (Jaque Catelain, 1924, 75 minutes)

Ciné-concert: Variété

Alloy Orchestra in performance

November 17, 3:30 p.m.

AFI Silver Theatre

E. A. DuPont's circus trapeze-artist melodrama stars Emile Jannings as the wronged lover who opts for revenge. Cameraman Karl Freund's showy cinematography—he even installed cameras on the trapezes to reflect states of mind and dizzying crowd shots—made for suspenseful viewing in 1925. The film was widely seen then, not only for its visual thrills, but also for a rousing modern psychological depiction of erotic desire among the threesome of Jannings, Lya De Putti, and Warwick Ward. (E. A. DuPont, 1925, 90 minutes) The film score was commissioned by Indiana University Cinema and the Indiana University Office of the Bicentennial.

Ciné-concert: A Fool There Was

Philip Carli and Flower City Society Orchestra in performance

November 22, 7:30 p.m.

AFI Silver Theatre

John Schuyler (Edward José)—diplomat, husband, and father—is caught in the clutches of the cunning seductress Theda Bara, legendary for her allure and for devouring all men in her path. On a cruise to the UK, Schuyler is targeted and soon becomes a willing victim. One of the few extant features with the exotic Bara (most of her films are now lost), *A Fool There Was* is reputed to have put the expression "vamp" into circulation. Philip Carli and Flower City Society Orchestra perform their original score. (Frank Powell, 1915, 78 minutes)

Ciné-concert: Wheels of Chance

Philip Carli and Flower City Society Orchestra in performance

November 23, 2:00 p.m.

AFI Silver Theatre

A gentle cycling comedy filmed in Hampshire and Sussex, *The Wheels of Chance* is based on an H. G. Wells early comic novel from the late 19th century—a time when bicycles were becoming trendy for all British classes and the automobile had yet to rule the roads. George K. Arthur plays Mr. Hoopdriver, a lowly draper's assistant who sets out on a cycling holiday to ease his workaday blues but experiences mystifying adventures along the way. (Harold M. Shaw, 1922, 75 minutes)

Our Family Album

Washington premiere

Introduced by Charles Musser

December 1, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Our Family Album is a reflection on the construction, nature, and meaning of family photography. In this era of globalization, filmmakers Maria Threese Serana and Charles Musser move back and forth

between the Philippines and the United States, two countries whose early relationship was forged by war and a half-century of colonization. How these two filmmakers (a married couple) and their son John Carlos negotiate their lives between contrasting cultures is accomplished, in part, through the medium of the photographic album. An intimate portrait, *Our Family Album* also engages a variety of scholars, archivists, and other filmmakers who have differing perspectives and even conflicting views on the nature of family photography and its uses in their personal and professional lives. (Charles Musser and Maria Threese Serana, 2019, 100 minutes) Charles Musser is professor of film and media studies, theater studies, and American studies at Yale University.

Rajiv Vaidya Memorial Lecture

Forensic Architecture—Counter Investigations

Eyal Weizman, speaker

December 8, 2:00 p.m.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Forensic Architecture, an interdisciplinary research agency established in 2010 at Goldsmiths, University of London, utilizes video documentation, architectural models, new media, and other investigative techniques to examine and cross-reference human rights violations, state and corporate crimes, and environmental destruction internationally. Collaboratively working with advocacy groups, nonprofits, journalists, artists, and filmmakers, Forensic Architecture's presentations extend beyond art and cultural practice into courtrooms and legal or political forums, including the United Nations. Their contributions have given rise to a new form of investigative practice at the threshold of art and policy. Eyal Weizman is professor of spatial and visual cultures at Goldsmiths, and the founder and director of Forensic Architecture. (Approximately 70 minutes)

Ciné-concert: Gaumont Restores—L'X Noir preceded by *Animal Shorts*

Andrew Simpson in performance

December 11, 7:00 p.m.

Embassy of France

The creator of France's first film studio (and today the oldest continuously running production house in the world), Léon Gaumont delighted pre-World War I audiences with serials and comic shorts at Paris's Gaumont Palace, which included actualités, short dramas, comedies, and phonoscènes synchronized with sound recordings. This program of new restorations includes four early shorts starring a variety of animals, plus an episode from a 1916 serial *L'X Noir* (or *Black X*), in which an international gangster with multiple identities poses as an American diamond dealer. *L'X Noir*'s code name is derived from his all-white costume with a huge black cross—a parody of Fantômas, who always wore black. Léonce Perret filmed *L'X Noir* in Nice during World War I (while Fantômas's director Louis Feuillade was away at war) and deployed his full range of aesthetic aspirations from sophisticated lighting to creative framing. (Léonce Perret, 1916, subtitled, 42 minutes)

Preceding the feature are four early shorts co-starring a collection of amusing *animaux*: *Dressage d'oiseaux* (1910, 4 minutes); *La Course à la saucisse* (Alice Guy Blaché, 1907, 5 minutes); *Onésime aime les bêtes* (Jean Durand, 1913, 6 minutes); and *Le petit Chantecler* (Émile Cohl, 1910, 8 minutes). Registration is required for events at the Embassy of France; register at <http://frenchculture.org/>.

Ciné-Concert: Broken Blossoms

Appalasia in performance

December 15, 2:00 p.m.

Freer Gallery of Art

D. W. Griffith adapted a story from Thomas Burke's popular 1916 collection *Limehouse Nights*. Set in London's East End, *Broken Blossom's* moody, fog-bound tale is a tender love story, a tragic melodrama, and a prescient study in immigrant relations. Cheng Huan (Richard Barthelmess) arrives in England to bring "the message of Buddha to the Anglo-Saxon lands" but ekes out a living as a shopkeeper. The delicate Lucy (Lillian Gish) and her pugilist dad Battling Burrows (Donald Crisp) are the locals who inhabit the uncouth life of the quarter in meager digs. Original live score for erhu, dulcimer, and banjo performed live by Appalasia's Mimi Jong, Jeff Berman, and Sue Powers. (D. W. Griffith, 1919, 90 minutes)

John Richardson: The Art of Picasso 1927–1973

December 22, 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

John Richardson (1924–2019) devoted his life to writing the definitive chronicle of Pablo Picasso, a friend since the 1950s. This recent release from Checkerboard Foundation captures the celebrated art historian as he researches the fourth and final volume of his Picasso biography; revisits three ground-breaking exhibitions; and travels from Paris to Barcelona, and to Antibes and the bullfighting ring at Arles. There are many other voices, including Picasso's muse Françoise Gilot and her son Claude Picasso, all offering personal insights on the artist's work of his final 40 years. (Edgar Howard, Tom Piper, and Muffie Dunn, 2017, 77 minutes)

Film Series

Basilio Martín Patino

October 5–6

Basilio Martín Patino (1930–2017) was a leading figure in the rise of the New Spanish Cinema (Nuevo Cine Español) of the 1960s. Keenly interested in the formal experimentation occurring in contemporary cinemas around the world, his early work met with severe censorship in Spain. His films were highly influential and won top awards in competition due to their distinctive documentary-like tone, location shooting, and found footage. As early as the late 1950s Patino organized the landmark *Conversaciones de Salamanca*, a critical analytical forum for Spanish cinema, while in his filmmaking practice he became a pioneer of the satirical mockumentary form. This program of three

works shown in 35 mm prints by Patino is presented in association with the Cultural Office of the Embassy of Spain in honor of the 80th anniversary of the Spanish Republican exile and the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939.

Nine Letters to Bertha

October 5, 2:00 p.m.

East Building Auditorium

Through elegant letters written by a student in 1960s fascist Spain to a woman called Bertha, the daughter of a Spanish exile living in England, *Nine Letters to Bertha* (*Nueve cartas a Berta*) explores the attitudes of a younger generation in Franco's Spain trying to move forward but trapped in the past. The documentary-like aura and beauty of the location cinematography (the film was shot in Salamanca) betray a weariness but also a hope that Spain is moving toward modernity. Patino's first feature became a symbol for Spanish youth and "the most emblematic film of the Nuevo Cine Español"—Casimiro Torreiro. (1966, subtitles, 35mm, 92 minutes)

Songs for after a War

October 5, 4:00 p.m.

East Building Auditorium

Songs for after a War (*Canciones para despues de una guerra*) is Patino's masterful compilation film assembled from period newsreels, propaganda, photographs, and other documents—paired with popular songs, for a satirical edge—forming a mosaic of postwar Spain's entrenched political realities from 1939 to the early 1950s. Censored and then banned, it was not screened in public cinemas until September 1976, a year after Franco's death, when it enjoyed huge popular success. (1971, subtitles, 35mm, 100 minutes)

The Lost Paradise

October 6, 4:00 p.m.

East Building Auditorium

The daughter of a republican intellectual who died while in exile returns to her ancestral home in a village in Castile to take charge of her father's legacy. Capturing the disenchantment of Spanish exiles who left their homes to protest Franco's fascist regime, but who then returned to find that democracy had not made much difference, Patino based his narrative on his own life experiences. In a literary subplot, the daughter (who has been living in Germany) is also in the process of translating the German lyric poet Friedrich Hölderlin's *Hyperion* into Spanish. (1985, subtitles, 35mm, 94 minutes)

Woman with a Movie Camera: Shirley Clarke at 100

October 13–26

Born in New York in October 1919, filmmaker Shirley Brimberg Clarke (1919–1997) crafted many of the most enduring images of the New American Cinema movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Her early training with pioneering choreographers Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Anna Sokolow, and Doris

Humphrey launched a career in modern dance, but after receiving a Bolex as a gift, Clarke decided to "improve the standards for movies on dance." Clarke's inherent sensitivity to the dynamic motions of the filming and editing process, in addition to her sense of spontaneity, were compatible with another goal—she enjoyed pushing artistic boundaries and probing the social conventions of her time. This series includes several shorts and two celebrated documentary portraits. With thanks to the Wisconsin Center for Film & Television, and to the independent distributor Milestone Films for preserving the films of Shirley Clarke.

Shirley Clarke: Early Shorts

October 13, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Shirley Dancing, A Photo Gallery (1930s–1940s); *Dance in the Sun* (1953, 7 minutes); *Skyscraper*, "a musical comedy of skyscraper construction in Manhattan," said Clarke, in an era of urban renewal (with Willard Van Dyke, D. A. Pennebaker, Irving Jacoby, John White, and Teo Macero, 1959, 21 minutes); *Bridges-Go-Round*, the quintessential montage of New York's bridges, first with a jazz score and then with electro-acoustic music (1958, 8 minutes); *In Paris Parks*, a city symphony demonstrating Clarke's skill with lensing and composing while focusing on children enjoying postwar Paris (1954, 13 minutes); *Rose and the Players* inspired by Picasso's *Family of Saltimbanques* (1957, 7 minutes); *A Moment in Love*, elegantly choreographed by Anna Sokolow (1957, 9 minutes); *World Kitchen*, a montage of old restaurant billboards, posters, and neon signs about food and its delights (with D. A. Pennebaker, 1957, 3 minutes); *A Scary Time*, an "experimental horror film for UNICEF" contrasting children's struggles in other countries with Halloween dress-up in America (1960, 16 minutes); and excerpts from Clarke's family home movies (1950s, 15 minutes). (Total running time 98 minutes)

Robert Frost: A Lover's Quarrel with the World

Introduced by Donna Cameron

October 26, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Clarke's portrait of Robert Frost, produced for public television and filmed a few months before the poet's death in 1963, won an Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary. Using ample footage of Frost with students, with President Kennedy, on tour throughout the country, and just pattering around his rural Vermont home, Clarke playfully allows the poet to criticize the entire filmmaking process a self-referential touch that feels ahead of its time. (1963, 50 minutes)

Ornette: Made in America

October 26, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Clarke's final film was a portrait of jazz legend Ornette Coleman who, like Clarke, was a formal innovator. Rather than a well-ordered biography, the film mimics Coleman's unstructured style, shifting timelines and mixing performance footage with interviews and reenactments. Friends, family, and

associates including Brion Gysin, Don Cherry, Yoko Ono, Charlie Haden, Robert Palmer, William S. Burroughs, Buckminster Fuller, Ed Blackwell, and Denardo Coleman make appearances. (1985, 77 minutes)

Film Noir: New 35mm Restorations

October 13–20

The Gallery is pleased to screen two new 35mm print restorations courtesy of the Film Noir Foundation and UCLA Film & Television Archive. Both events take place at the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. For more information, visit <http://afi.com/Silver/>.

Trapped

Introduced by Foster Hirsch

October 13, 3:30 p.m.

AFI Silver Theatre

An early B-noir from director Richard Fleischer, *Trapped* opens with a voice-over homage to the Department of the Treasury but transitions to the tale of convicted counterfeiter Lloyd Bridges, offered early release in return for acting as an undercover operative. Location shooting in Los Angeles streets provides counterpoint to the film's mostly confined settings, including a final sequence in an underground trolley-car barn. (Richard Fleischer, 1949, 35mm, 78 minutes) The restored 35mm print of this film is courtesy of the Film Noir Foundation and UCLA Film & Television Archive.

Woman on the Run

Introduced by Eddie Muller

October 20, 5:00 p.m.

AFI Silver Theatre

Based on a 1948 story by Sylvia Tate, *Woman on the Run* finds San Franciscan Frank Johnson (Ross Elliott) hiding out after witnessing a gangland murder. Though the police presume that Frank's wife (Ann Sheridan) will lead the way, there's no possibility of that—she never wants to see Frank again, or so it seems, in this sardonic thriller luminously shot on location in multiple midcentury San Francisco spots. (Norman Foster, 1950, 35mm, 77 minutes) The restored 35mm print of this film is courtesy of the Film Noir Foundation and UCLA Film & Television Archive.

ArteCinema

October 17

Held annually during October in Naples, Italy, Arte-Cinema: International Festival of Films on Contemporary Art was established in 1996 to focus solely on the art of the present day. Filmmakers, artists, scholars, curators, and the general public assemble from all parts of the world to view, converse, and debate the works. This two-part program, organized in association with the Italian Cultural Institute, comprises two films, one on an Italian artist and the other American. Filmmaker

Andrea Bettinetti is present to discuss the filming process following the screenings. With special thanks to the Italian Cultural Institute, Washington, the program is presented at the Embassy of Italy in conjunction with International Day of Italian Contemporary Art. Registration is required for events at the Embassy of Italy; register at https://iicwashington.esteri.it/iic_washington/en/.

Louise Bourgeois followed by *Piero Manzoni, Artista*

Andrea Bettinetti in person

October 17, 6:00 p.m.

Embassy of Italy

French-American artist Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010) often referenced her own psychology, the human body, and sexuality in her work. Bourgeois, known for her creative drive, remained active even in her nineties, always projecting a special aura. Nina and Klaus Sohl, who film contemporary art for public broadcasting in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, recorded the artist in her Manhattan home near the end of her life. (Nina and Klaus Sohl, 2007, subtitles, 40 minutes)

The work of Piero Manzoni (1933–1963) ushered in the Arte Povera movement in 1960s Italy. Patrician, self-taught, inventive, and provocative, Manzoni favored unconventional materials that bluntly and cynically mocked consumerism and mass production. *Piero Manzoni, Artista* incorporates new findings—including an important cache of vintage home movies, many of which were recorded by the artist while he was working on some of his most famous creations. (Andrea Bettinetti, 2013, subtitles, 54 minutes)

Welcome to Absurdistan: Eastern European Cinema, 1950 to 1989

November 2–24

Welcome to Absurdistan—or more accurately Absurdistán, the Czech phrase that conjures up a distant nonsense land. The word signifies the absurdities homegrown in Czechoslovakia and other former socialist republics of Eastern Europe from the end of World War II until, for most of them, the revolutions of 1989. This program marks the 30th anniversary of the liberation of the former "people's republics" from their previously socialist and Soviet-dominated regimes, a shared sensibility of the absurd uniting these diverse nations as well as their films. The title of the series recalls the theatrical and literary tradition of the absurd—specifically the famous postwar plays and their style of theatrical presentation—but with a significant difference: the Eastern European sense of the absurd brewed over the centuries when the peoples of the region could not determine their fates. The absurd then overflowed in the gaps between the ideals and realities of their socialist states: between the happiness they were supposed to enjoy and material hardships they faced. Unlike the aesthetic of the absurd in Western Europe, the absurd in the East was a personal, everyday experience. Glossy or stark, scathing and playful, the films express the ludicrousness of authoritarian rule through creative varieties of absurdity. The Gallery is pleased to present Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, and Slovak films, many in North American premieres of restored prints from their

national film institutions. The series is organized in association with Gabriel M. Paletz of the Prague Film School.

The Selection followed by *The Witness*

November 2, 1:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Two films from Hungary illuminate the workings—and farcical failings—of socialist bureaucracy through a documentary and a picaresque tale. In *The Selection*, the chiefs of a communist youth organization at a fuel company audition rock groups to play for their young employees, but their wish to provide popular entertainment clashes with their fears of youthful rebellion. Through their rigid requirements they try to tame rock 'n roll. (Gyula Gazdag, 1970, subtitles, 39 minutes)

The bumbling protagonist of *The Witness* stumbles through a series of minor appointments at which he unerringly and hilariously fails, most famously in cultivating the "Hungarian orange." At his final trial, this tart film issues defiance against a regime defined by favoritism and betrayal. In celebration of the film's 50th anniversary, the newly restored print that was a highlight of this year's Cannes Film Festival will be screened. (Péter Bacsó, 1969, subtitles, 103 minutes)

March, March! Tra-ta-ta!

November 3, 4:30 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Released in 1965 by the Lithuanian Film Studio, *March, March! Tra-ta-ta!*—the first Lithuanian film in color—was a bitter political satire that the audience of the day probably did not recognize as such. Grigory Kanovich and Ilja Rud-Gercovskis co-wrote the screenplay about a delicate personal situation that provokes an absurd accident with a border guard, which, in turn, becomes the pretext for another war between the two bogus neighboring enemy countries, Centia and Groshia. (Raimondas Vabalas, 1965, subtitles, 78 minutes)

The Barnabas Kos Case

Introduced by Rastislav Steranka

November 9, 1:30 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

What happens to a humble triangle player when suddenly appointed official party director of his orchestra? *The Barnabas Kos Case* shapes this fanciful scenario into a droll and piercing plot. Although Slovak director Peter Solan and his collaborators belonged to the generation of the Czechoslovak New Wave, their film also bears the artistry and drive of a classical Hollywood narrative with a character arc that depicts how a minor musician turns cultural tyrant when touched by power. (Peter Solan, 1964, subtitles, 92 minutes) Rastislav Steranka is the director of the Slovak Film Institute, Bratislava.

The Reenactment

Introduced by Gabriel M. Paletz

November 9, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Director Lucian Pintilie (1933–2018) and his collaborators had the audacity to undercut the theater in the regimes of the Soviet satellites. These governments followed the USSR in the public performances of show trials and the staging of mass demonstrations that compelled citizens to express their enthusiasm for an ideology in which no one believed. In this film, Pintilie restaged a reconstruction in which two juveniles who injured someone in a fight are forced to recreate their crime for a film. Grim and sardonic, *The Reenactment* is a disturbing work of realism that explains why Pintilie is known as the godfather of the Romanian New Wave. (Lucian Pintilie, 1968, subtitles, 100 minutes) Gabriel M. Paletz teaches at the Prague Film School.

I Don't Like Mondays

Introduced by Gabriel M. Paletz

November 10, 4:00 pm.

West Building Lecture Hall

A Western businessman gets ensnared in a series of absurd mishaps in this lighthearted, critical, and lyrical film about an ordinary day in socialist Poland. The film's peculiar magic turns a dysfunctional Warsaw into a slapstick playground, with a physical humor and episodic structure recalling Jacques Tati's *Playtime*, while exposing the far from ideal conditions—heroic workers who booze and snooze through the day, interminable construction, shortages, and the uncivil public services that populated socialist perfection. (Tadeusz Chmielewski, 1971, subtitles, 99 minutes)

Case for a New Hangman preceded by *The Uninvited Guest*

Introduced by Gabriel M. Paletz

November 17, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

The first of two allegories of life in socialist Czechoslovakia, both are imaginative, critical films "banned forever" by the regime. Produced at the Czech national film school FAMU, just months after the Warsaw Pact invasion crushed the Prague Spring, the dark-humored *The Uninvited Guest* portrays a couple in an apartment block who face a gruff intruder. (Vlastimil Venclík, 1969, 22 minutes)

Case for a New Hangman is unique among the works of the Czech New Wave. Pavel Juráček adapted part three of Gulliver's Travels into a sci-fi journey through socialist Czechoslovakia. The confining borders, polluted landscapes, perverted justice, and public surveillance of a socialist land transform into an unsettling new world, for discovery (in the film's alternate title) by A New Gulliver. (Pavel Juráček, 1969, subtitles, 102 minutes)

A Figure to Support followed by *Two Men and a Wardrobe* and *The Garden*

November 23, 12:30 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

The first of three absurd shorts, *A Figure to Support* is an essential and overlooked film of the Czech New Wave. A man is happily surprised to rent a pet cat—only to discover later that the rental shop from which he got the creature has disappeared from the streets of Prague. (Pavel Juráček and Jan Schmidt, 1963, subtitles, 38 minutes)

In *Two Men and a Wardrobe*, a great early short by Roman Polański, two men carry a wardrobe out of the sea, only to find unrelentingly hostile conditions on land. (Roman Polański, 1958, subtitles, 14 minutes)

The Garden is a rediscovered landmark in Jan Švankmajer's oeuvre and the short that originally admitted him to the Czech surrealist group. One man invites another to his country home, which is protected by a very unusual hedge. (Jan Švankmajer, 1968, subtitles, 16 minutes)

The Asthenic Syndrome

November 24, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Hailed by critics as "an apocalyptic fresco," Kira Muratova's *The Asthenic Syndrome* was brilliantly conceived and executed in two parts. The first, in black and white, is a film-within-a-film about a widow who rails against the world. The second (in color) is ostensibly the story of a failed writer stifled by the dull routines of his mindless milieu. Yet the film is much more—and Muratova supplies many absurdist sequences with crushing irony. Interestingly, it was the only Soviet film banned during the liberal glasnost era. (Kira Muratova, 1989, subtitles, 153 minutes)

We Tell: Fifty Years of Community Media

November 23–December 21

With the development of video and public access television in the late 1960s, community media—the broad term for local grassroots alternatives to mainstream journalism—moved from a democratic ideal to a salient means of production and broadcast for various communities and filmmakers across America. This five-part series celebrates a diversity of voices, time periods, and geographic locations over the 50-year history of participatory community media in the United States. With thanks to Louis Massiah, Scribe Video Center; Patricia Zimmerman, Ithaca College; Carmel Curtis, IU Libraries Moving Image Archive; and XFR Collective.

Body Publics

November 23, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Works in this program focus on celebrations and concerns of LGBTQIA+ communities, as well as the

ways in which access to various forms of healthcare, or lack thereof, affects people from many walks of life. Shorts such as *HSA Strike* (Kartemquin Films, 1975), *Diabetes: Notes from Indian Country* (Beverly Singer, 2000), and *Nature's Way* (Elizabeth Barret, 1973) illustrate a continued advocacy for self-regulation of the human body. (Total running time approximately 87 minutes)

Collaborative Knowledges

December 7, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

Unearthing lost knowledge and histories, highlighting shared experiences, and centering on the traditions and practices of storytelling, this program includes shorts from community media centers such as Appalshop, Kentucky; Paper Tiger TV, New York City; and Scribe Video Center, Philadelphia. Titles included are by makers who view participatory community media as a tool for self-expression, education, and social change, such as *Cruisin' J-Town* (Duane Kubo/Visual Communications, 1974) and *Herb Schiller Reads the New York Times 712 Pages of Waste* (Paper Tiger TV, 1980), among others. (Total running time approximately 98 minutes)

Environments of Race and Place

December 7, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

The third program in the series concentrates on issues surrounding immigration, migration, and racial identity unique to a specific environment. These works embrace and enhance the micro rather than the macro, moving away from the national to the local and from the long-form theatrical feature to the short-form documentary. Discussions of police brutality in Third World Newsreel's *Black Panther: Off the Pig* (1967) or animations about toxic pollution made by the Indigenous youth media collective Outta Your Backpack expand conceptualizations of independent nonfiction work. (Total running time approximately 84 minutes)

Wages of Work

December 15, 4:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

There are endless ways in which people approach issues surrounding job opportunities, occupations, wages, unemployment, and underemployment. *Wages of Work* puts a spotlight on the various lives under the restraints or freedoms of these topics, and includes shorts such as Visual Communication's *Wataridori: Birds of Passage* (1974), which explores the legacy of first-generation Japanese Americans, and *Los Trabajadores* (2002), by Scribe and CATA (El Comité de Apoyo a Los Trabajadores Agrícolas), which tells the day-to-day experiences of mushroom-farm laborers in Pennsylvania. (Total running time approximately 93 minutes)

States of Violence

December 21, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

States of Violence adopts a personal approach from those directly affected by incarceration, police brutality, crime, and war from the 1970s to the present day. This program demonstrates how participatory community media has enabled artists and creators to produce their own moving images in the name of creating a discourse for better sociocultural understandings and tangible progressions toward change. Included are *Inside Women Inside* (Christine Choy and Cynthia Maurizio/Newsreel, 1978) and *Black Lives Matter* (Movement for Black Lives, 2014–2018), among other titles. (Total running time approximately 103 minutes)

ArtFIFA: International Festival of Films on Art

December 13–14

An annual event in Montreal for almost 40 years, Festival International du Film sur l'Art (known as ArtFIFA), the longest running film festival devoted exclusively to art, showcases film and media productions relating to all forms of endeavor—from painting and sculpture to architecture, design, music, dance, fashion, restoration, photography, literature, and cinema—and all eras. The Gallery's two-day program is a sampling of work from the 37th edition held in Montreal in March 2019, a 13-day event that featured some 200 films from 40 different countries. Special thanks to Maria Térésia Mari and Philippe U. del Drago, Festival International du Film sur l'Art.

ArtFIFA: Part 1

December 13, noon

West Building Lecture Hall

Harry Gruyaert—Photographer (Gerrit Messiaen, 2018, subtitles, 66 minutes); *Elizabeth King: Double Take* (Olympia Stone, 2017, 63 minutes); *Munch in Hell* (Stig Andersen, 2018, subtitles, 75 minutes); *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story* (Stephane Kaas, 2017, subtitles, 67 minutes); *Le photosophe—des instants avec Frank Horvat* (Sandra Wis, 2018, subtitles, 72 minutes). (Total running time 343 minutes with intermission)

ArtFIFA: Part 2

Filmmakers Marsha Gordon and Louis Cherry in person

December 14, noon

West Building Lecture Hall

Creations from the Obscure (Tomoya Ise, 2018, subtitles, 59 minutes); *Rendered Small* (Marsha Gordon and Louis Cherry, 2017, 15 minutes); *Bauhaus Spirit* (Niels Bolbrinker and Thomas Tielsch, 2019, 90 minutes); *Black Indians* (Jo Béranger, Hugues Poulain, Edith Patrouilleau, subtitles, 2018, 91 minutes); *Marmo* (Nancy Allison and Laura Boato, 2016, 7 minutes); *Lucinda Childs—Great Fugue of Beethoven* (Marie-Hélène Rebois, subtitles, 2017, 77 minutes). (Total running time 340 minutes with intermission)

Press Contact:

Laurie Tylec, (202) 842-6355 or l-tylec@nga.gov

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Department of Communications

National Gallery of Art

2000B South Club Drive

Landover, MD 20785

phone: (202) 842-6353

e-mail: pressinfo@nga.gov

Anabeth Guthrie

Chief of Communications

(202) 842-6804

a-guthrie@nga.gov

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Laurie Tylec

(202) 842-6355

l-tylec@nga.gov

Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or pressinfo@nga.gov

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