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Programs curated by Haden Guest and text written by Haden Guest and Brittany Gravely, unless otherwise noted.

On the cover: A still from (nostalgia) by Hollis Frampton whose films and writings featured in the pages of the journal Afterimage are celebrated in a new book and film series this season. p. 11

CINEMA BEFORE 1300 BY JEROME HILER

DECEMBER 14 - MARCH 15



In 2017 I invited Jerome Hiler to the Harvard Film Archive to present *Cinema Before 1300*, an illustrated lecture he had delivered on several occasions whose title and subject intrigued me. A talk on medieval stained glass, accompanied by Hiler's own still images taken over the years, principally in those cathedrals in France and the UK that today remain among the last repositories of this now lost luminary art and craft. The event that unfolded was mesmerizing and moving, a meditation on stained glass as a popular and devotional art, and as a precursor to cinema. Inspired, I invited Jerome to consider transforming his talk into a work of digital cinema that could be presented online, and thus experienced by a wider audience. We returned to this idea during the pandemic and Jerome generously agreed to expand his talk, rewriting and recording his own lecture. Leaving more room for additional images and for the personal observations and insightful musings that make this film so rewarding, this expanded version of *Cinema Before 1300* is available to be experienced through the Harvard Film Archive website starting on December 14 and lasting until March 15. After this date, the film will remain available for online viewing upon request to HFA Collections staff. Although made for the smaller screen, *Cinema Before 1300* is magnificent when seen in a theater. The HFA has also created a DCP version that is available for theatrical screenings, upon request. — *Haden Guest*

More than eight hundred years ago, a confluence of technological, philosophical and financial upswellings converged to create the most advanced form of mass media the world had known: stained glass. Built en masse across France, Spain, England and Germany, great cathedrals were designed to display giant windows that told stories through light, color and form. Every day, thousands of viewers arrived to marvel at the glorious colors and hear stories recounted beneath their realization in light. Modern visitors to a cathedral would probably not suspect how many activities took place in these buildings during medieval times. They were truly community centers, and community members had the right to be there because they all took a great part in the construction of the buildings. This program looks at the first one hundred years (or so) of stained glass's magnificent birth and culmination. It was during this fortuitous time frame that the most care, effort and expense were applied to the new art. By a sad irony, technological innovations making glass more uniform and the tasks of the craft easier destroyed visual interest and soon degenerated the art altogether. — *Jerome Hiler*

Visit the HFA website or scan the QR code to stream online for free through March 15.



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OUSMANE SEMBÈNE, CINEMATIC REVOLUTIONARY

JANUARY 19 – FEBRUARY 25

“I’m not a militant of any party, I’m a militant through my art.” — Ousmane Sembène

For many years, the Senegalese novelist and filmmaker Ousmane Sembène (1923-2007) refused to release his films on video and DVD. Thus, opportunities to see films by the “father of African cinema” have been few and far between, compounded by the racism that relegates pioneering Black and African directors to history’s margins. Sembène was a firm believer in the big screen. He came of age in Senegal’s segregated cinemas, which he attended almost every day. It was in one such theater that he encountered the paradoxical beauty of Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia* (1938), one of few films he would later name as an influence.

What Sembène valued most about seeing his own films in the cinema was sitting with an audience, “to smell different perfumes, to see people smiling, to know that people will go to dinner afterwards and talk about what they have seen.” Intent on reaching the masses, he often traveled to rural areas with his own equipment to project and discuss the films himself. The Harvard Film Archive’s retrospective invites audiences to see these under-appreciated films as the artist intended: in the cinema, together. The series features nearly all of Sembène’s films, including Janus Films’ recent 4K restorations of *Mandabi* (1968), *Emitai* (1971), *Xala* (1975), *Ceddo* (1977) and *Guelwaar* (1992).

Like Sergei Eisenstein, the director he considered most important, Sembène rejected socialist realism in favor of a cinematic language both didactic in function and supple in style. He aimed directly at his targets—capitalism, neocolonialism, patriarchy, religion—with nimble montage, sumptuous mise-en-scène, freeze-frames and zooms, flashbacks and visions, blistering caricatures and frank depictions of sex and mortality.

Sembène’s decision to become a filmmaker was the result of an epiphany he had on the Congo River, after independence swept through Africa in the early sixties. He had already defied expectations by becoming a novelist: previously he had been a mason, mechanic and construction worker in Dakar; a soldier for the Free French Army during World War II; and a docker and trade unionist in Marseilles. But Sembène knew that literature could only do so much in the face of widespread illiteracy in Africa. A dedicated Marxist-Leninist who believed art to be an essential part of revolutionary struggle, he determined that “cinema is the people’s night school.”

At thirty-nine-years-old, Sembène left Senegal for the Soviet Union’s Gorky Studio. He avoided all theory courses and learned only the most essential technical skills, then returned after one year. It had been only three years since the overturning of the Laval Decree, a Vichy-era law that effectively disallowed African people from filming themselves. Though there were several pre-independence films by African filmmakers, most were neither commercially released nor filmed in Africa. This made Sembène one of the first sub-Saharan African filmmakers to make films in Africa for an African audience.

Under his production company Filmi Domirev, Sembène made the short film *Borom Sarret* (1963) with an old Soviet camera. The winner of the First Film Prize at the Touris Film Festival, *Borom Sarret* opens with a cheeky introduction: the name “Sembène Ousmane,” described by scholar Jean Jonassaint as a pen name that subverts the colonial naming system of the school and the army. This name, which Sembène went on to use in all of his films, is a reminder of France’s many failed attempts to colonize the mind. The reference to colonial schooling is an especially pointed one for Sembène, who was expelled at fourteen for striking back at a racist and violent French teacher.

That Sembène’s next three films—*Niaye* (1964), *Black Girl / Le Noire de...* (1966), and *Mandabi* (1968)—were adaptations of his own short stories that proved his urgency and command of both mediums. Though he carried over the themes of his literary works, Sembène flexibly applied perspectival and chronological changes to his texts, enlivening them with dynamic compositions and voiceover. Throughout the sixties, Sembène broke ground for accomplishing numerous firsts. A charge against the neocolonial exploitation of African workers, *Black Girl* was the first African film to win the Prix Jean Vigo. The following year, he served as the first African member of the jury at the Cannes Film Festival.

In 1968, Sembène’s Wolof-language satire *Mandabi* became the first feature film shot entirely in an African language. *Mandabi* marked a departure from Sembène’s previous films, which required him to subvert the coproduction requirement of French dubbing by using French voiceover as a symbol of colonial violence.

Despite these triumphs, securing funding remained a difficult and unpredictable process for Sembène. After the screenplay for *Black Girl* was rejected by the Ministry of Cooperation’s Film Bureau (which provided funding to francophone African productions), Sembène shaved the film down to one hour to satisfy the requirements of the Centre national du cinéma (CNC). In the case of *Mandabi*, the film’s French producer—whose participation was required by the CNC—demanded nudity, causing a difficult legal battle when Sembène refused.

Though he understood the contradictions of accepting American or European funding, Sembène often stated that he was ready to “sleep with the devil or she-devil to make my films.” He coined the term *mégotage* (or “cigarette-butt cinema”) to describe the absolute necessity of resourcefulness in African filmmaking. In the spirit of *mégotage*, Sembène experimented with coproduction models that would provide sufficient resources without threatening his autonomy. The short film *Tauw* (1970), for instance, was commissioned by an American church—an irony for the atheist Sembène, who used the money to fund the historical epic *Emitai* (1971).



Ousmane Sembène *BLACK GIRL*



Ousmane Sembène *GUELWAAR*

Dedicated to "all the militants of the African cause," *Emitai* signaled a shift towards increasingly provocative political critique and a narrative structure derived from collective protagonists. Set in the forties, the film follows the raid of a Diola village by French officers and Senegalese tirailleurs. Whereas Sembène's preceding films focused on individual protagonists, *Emitai* cuts from individual to individual and group to group, from death and back to life. The result is a film that is at times still and languid then brisk and forceful, exemplifying Sembène's distinct rhythm in prototypical form.

After *Emitai* was banned across Africa, Sembène took even greater risks with *Xala* (1975) and *Ceddo* (1977), two films condemning the hypocritical African leaders who seek to benefit from neocolonialism. After the Senegalese government cut multiple scenes from *Xala*—a sex comedy that skewers a group of wealthy subcontractors, among them a blatant stand-in for President Léopold Senghor—Sembène responded by handing out fliers to audiences describing which scenes had been removed.

The Senegalese government again attempted to penalize Sembène for *Ceddo*, which was officially banned due to the spelling of the title—a Pulaar word referring to a group of outsiders who resisted slavery and colonization. Sembène mortgaged his own house to fund *Ceddo*, which shows in vivid detail African participation in the slave trade. Slavery serves as the economic backdrop of the film's frightening narrative: a guileless African leader fails to protect his people from a slave trader, a Catholic priest, and an imam—the latter of whom gains an exceeding amount of control over the king's decisions.

Sembène attracted heavy criticism for depicting the introduction of Islam in West Africa as a threat to traditional beliefs and cultures. In the years of difficulty that followed, he prepared his passion project: a big-budget epic about the Mandingo chief Samory Touré. Unfazed by censures, he contended that his movies have "more followers than the political parties and the Catholic and Muslim religions combined. [...] The people will come whether they share my ideas or not."

Sembène had planned to retire after completing *Samory*. But when the project became mired in delays, he changed his retirement plans and returned with the Senegalese-Algerian-Tunisian co-production *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988). Co-directed by Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow, *Camp de Thiaroye* draws from Sembène's experience as a soldier during World War II in its depiction of the 1944 Thiaroye Massacre. The film follows a platoon of West African veterans placed in a squalid military camp that uncannily resembles a German internment camp. Though it won the Grand Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival, the film was banned in both Senegal and France.

Even when circumstances prevented Sembène from fully accomplishing his goal of a pan-African production and distribution model, his final films underscored the importance of self-determination. These are also his most meditative films, connecting conversations and encounters across web-like structures. Significant for the very private Sembène, a subtly personal dimension emerges within the work as well: the eponymous political dissident in *Guelwaar* (1992) who speaks out against foreign aid recalls Thomas Sankara, but there are traces of Sembène's own character as one who never held his tongue. And although the protagonist of *Faat Kiné* (2001) is a single mother, her ebullient pursuit of sexual and financial independence is not unlike Sembène's own lifestyle as a twice-divorced artist who valued his freedom.



Ousmane Sembène *CEDDO*



Ousmane Sembène *FAAT KINÉ*

The ever-productive Sembène planned for *Faat Kiné* to be the first in a trilogy dedicated to the heroism of everyday life. For the second installment, the Bambara-language film *Moolaadé* (2004), he pushed himself even further by filming in Burkina Faso with a pan-African cast and crew. Upholding his belief that "the future liberation of Africa will never happen without the liberation of women," *Moolaadé* denounces the practice of female genital excision. Though Sembène's health had rapidly deteriorated during the shoot, he remained persistent and optimistic about the future: At the time of his death in 2007, he was preparing to make *Brotherhood of Rats*, the last film in the trilogy.

Sembène frequently likened the artist's role in society to that of the griot, a lower-caste oral storyteller whose knowledge of history gave him or her the power to publicly speak the truth and to point the finger at corrupt leaders. For Sembène, to follow in the footsteps of the griot was a commitment to question authority, instigate debate, and empower other African people to do the same. As a founding member

of the Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI), and a co-founder of the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), he helped pave the way for independent and radical African cinema to stand its ground against Western cultural imperialism.

In his lifetime, Sembène introduced to the screen a striking array of actors, including Mbissine Thérèse Diop, Mamadou Gueye, Younoussè Sèye, Ibrahima Sane and Thierno Ndiaye Doss. Sembène also made several appearances in his films, in far more demanding roles than the fleeting cameos of Alfred Hitchcock. He was visited by leaders, thinkers, and artists like James Baldwin, Angela Davis and W.E.B. DuBois. And to younger filmmakers like John Singleton, Med Hondo, Souleymane Cissé and Charles Burnett, he was a guiding light in the fight for Black and African self-representation.

The astonishing consistency of Sembène's filmography across four decades is a testament to his fortitude as a militant artist. That he has yet to be universally acknowledged as a central figure of the cinematic canon is one of many proofs that colonialism is alive and well today. But to encounter his films is to be continually heartened by the truth that another form of imagination not only exists but also towers over colonial ways of thinking, to plainly see that obstacles like budgetary restrictions or government censorship are superficial limits to the unique language of cinema. — Kelley Dong

Film descriptions by Kelley Dong.

Special thanks: Brian Belovarac—Janus Films.

friday january 19 at 7pm
sunday january 21 at 3pm

XALA

An adaptation of his 1973 novel, Ousmane Sembène's uproarious *Xala* condemns the corruption and complicity of African leaders through the symbol of sexual impotence. On his wedding night, businessman El Hadji Abdoukader Beye (Thierno Leye) discovers that a curse of impotence (or "xala") has been placed upon him. His attempts to remove the curse reach outrageous extremes, exceeding the effort he puts into being a man of integrity. Though *Xala* harkens back to the dark humor of *Mandabi*, it demonstrates the evolution of Sembène's style by deriving its rhythm from a collective protagonist. Dislodged from El Hadji, the film cuts from mistreated wives to greedy subcontractors, then to galvanized peasants—and, as is characteristic of Sembène, from wide and medium to extreme close-ups. Enveloped in shades of blue and brown, *Xala* also stands out for its moments of playful self-reflexivity: Makhourédia Guèye from *Mandabi* plays the president of the chamber of commerce, who resembles President Léopold Senghor. The rooms of El Hadji's children—decorated with a poster for *La Noire de...* and photographs of pan-African revolutionaries—resemble Sembène's own office. After the Senegalese government cut twelve scenes from *Xala*, Sembène responded by distributing flyers indicating which scenes were removed.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Thierno Leye, Myriam Niang, Seune Samb
Senegal 1975, DCP, color, 123 min. French and Wolof with English subtitles

Preceded by

BOROM SARRET

After one year of film school in Moscow, Ousmane Sembène returned to Senegal and made *Borom Sarret*, which he considered to be his "first true short film." One of the first sub-Saharan African films made in Africa by an African director for an African audience, *Borom Sarret* follows a day in the life of a downtrodden cart driver in Dakar. The driver's thankless toil is met with apathy and cruelty, which he endures by clinging to reminders of the past—the praises sung by a griot, a military medal. Sembène was inspired to bring together elements of Soviet cinema and Italian neorealism—specifically Dziga Vertov's newsreel series *Kino-Pravda* (1922-1925) and Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948). But the film's narrative structure (a brisk chronology enriched by interstitial digressions), and its stark juxtapositions between foreground and background,



Ousmane Sembène *TAUW*



Ousmane Sembène *XALA*

are pure Sembène. Most remarkable about *Borom Sarret* is the fact that it already contains many of his signature motifs and archetypes: bureaucratic red tape, burial rites, wealthy African Europhiles, griots and the deliberate use of asynchronous French voiceover. The latter, a key feature of Sembène's sixties output, underscores the colonial implications behind the demands of French co-productions.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Ly Abdoulay, Albourah
Senegal/France 1963, DCP, b/w, 18 min. French with English subtitles

saturday january 20 at 7pm

CAMP DE THIAROYE

Co-directed and co-written by Ousmane Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow, *Camp de Thiaroye* excavates a harrowing postwar tragedy from 1944: the Thiaroye Massacre, in which France murdered hundreds of West African veterans for demanding unpaid wages and protesting unfair treatment. Members of a West African platoon, many of them former prisoners of war, are placed in the Thiaroye military camp where they await their repatriation. Intuitively, the soldiers sense the overlap between colonialism and fascism: no matter how hard they try to ignore their surroundings—their observations accompanied by elegant tracking shots and precise set design—the camp looks and feels like a German internment camp. Winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the Venice International Film Festival, *Camp de Thiaroye* was a painful and personal production for Sembène, who was fighting in Niger as a soldier for the Free French Army when the massacre occurred. The film also broke ground as a Senegalese-Algerian-Tunisian co-production, made without European money. Unrestricted in its indictment of France's postwar hypocrisy, *Camp de Thiaroye* is one of the greatest war films of all time. It was banned for three years in Senegal and for a decade in France, where it was only released on DVD in 2005.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow. With Sidiki Bakaba, Hamed Camara, Ismaila Cissé
Senegal/Algeria/Tunisia 1988, 35mm, color, 153 min. German, French, Wolof and English with English subtitles

sunday january 21 at 7pm

MANDABI

Winner of the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival, Ousmane Sembène's *Mandabi* is an adaptation of his novella *The Money Order*. Ibrahima Dieng (Makhourédia Guèye) receives a money order from a hard-working nephew in Paris, who requests

that he withdraw the funds on his behalf. This seemingly simple task unravels into a mess of bureaucratic red tape worsened by Ibrahima's illiteracy, lack of identification papers and tendency to lend more than he owns. As Ibrahima is chased by creditors, debtors, scammers and bureaucrats (including one played by Sembène), his strong-willed wives (Ynousse N'Diaye and Isseu Niang) hold down the fort. As a French-Senegalese co-production, *Mandabi* was required to have two cuts: one in French and one in Wolof, making it the first feature-length film in an African language. Unlike Sembène's earlier films, which use French dubbing as an extratextual layer of colonial violence, *Mandabi*'s characters conspicuously switch from Wolof to French when cheating one another. Despite his reticence to film *Mandabi* in color, Sembène's palette is stunning and selective, concentrated in striking visual motifs: a white doll, a red bra, a crumpled piece of paper.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Makhourédia Gueye, Ynousse N'Diaye, Isseu Niang
Senegal/France 1968, DCP, color, 91 min. Wolof and French with English subtitles

Preceded by

TAUW

Regarding the unusual financing behind the short film *Tauw*, a commission by the National Council of the Church of Christ, Sembène simply stated: "I am taking the money from where I can get it." A short film about youth unemployment in Senegal, it is in no way a compromised work. As Sembène would continue to do in films like *Faat Kiné*, *Tauw* questions the meaning of national independence in the context of individual independence. Like the child whose bottom is spanked in the film's opening, the film's eponymous protagonist Tauw is infantilized by the employment office (where one of the workers is played by Sembène) and by his parents. But it is the latter who push for Tauw to take hold of his future, a responsibility the government refuses to claim. Sembène's depiction of youth unemployment as a series of starts and stops between panic and leisure (expressed with sharp cuts and tracking shots) recalls his own young adulthood in Dakar, where he witnessed widespread postwar unemployment as a member of the construction workers' union.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Ibrahima Boye, Fatim Diagne, Amadi Dieng
Senegal/US 1970, 16mm, color, 24 min. French and Wolof with English subtitles

monday january 22 at 7pm

sunday february 18 at 7pm

BLACK GIRL LA NOIRE DE...

The first African film to win the Prix Jean Vigo, Ousmane Sembène's *Black Girl* is considered the first sub-Saharan African feature film to garner international recognition. An adaptation of his short story "The Promised Land," the film denounces the neocolonial exploitation that Sembène deemed the "new black slave trade." Allured by the gifts of a white French couple (Anne-Marie Jelinek and Robert Fontaine) and dreams of seeing France, Diouana (Mbissine Thérèse Diop) leaves Dakar to be their housemaid in Antibes. Immediately upon her arrival, she is subjected to grueling work and humiliating objectification. In decentering the film's white characters, Sembène foregrounds the African worker who cooks, cleans and raises their children. He presents Diouana's alienation with abrupt cuts—from wide to close-ups—and cutting irony: the France outside her window is actually Senegal, where the film was shot. She never opens her mouth and is only heard in French voiceover, dubbed in the language she cannot read. It is worth noting that upon its release, *Black Girl*—today a seminal masterpiece of postcolonial cinema—received attention but not acclaim; in his review, Roger Ebert described the film as suffering from a "primitive naturalism."

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Mbissine Thérèse Diop, Anne-Marie Jelinek, Robert Fontaine
Senegal/France 1966, DCP, b/w, 59 min. French with English subtitles

Preceded by

NIAYE

For his second short film, Ousmane Sembène turned to his novella *White Genesis*. The tale is told by an observant griot, whose words function as a record of the immorality he has witnessed. When the chief of a village is revealed to have impregnated his thirteen-year-old daughter, the villagers' concern is not the safety of the girl but that this incestuous act might become known to the French colonial authorities. The burden of shame falls on the chief's wife and his son, a former soldier plagued with hallucinations of war. *Niaye* is an early example of Sembène's indictment of African leaders, in this case a wicked chief backed by obsequious elders whose morals have been clouded by a desire to curry favor. Despite its short length, *Niaye*'s density—concentrated within and around a single village, stripped of expositional excess yet intricately structured—precedes Sembène's later historical epics like *Emitaï* and *Ceddo*.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Serigne Sow, Astou N'Diaye, Mame Dia
Senegal/France 1964, 35mm, b/w, 35 min. French and Wolof with English subtitles

sunday january 28 at 7pm

sunday february 18 at 3pm

CEDDO

In order to finance *Ceddo*, his most ambitious film in scale and most incendiary in subject matter, Sembène mortgaged his home and borrowed money from friends and family. A recent convert to Islam, the feeble king Demba War Thioub (Makhourédia Guèye) has accepted into his inner circle a power-hungry imam (Gouré). Refusing to convert to Islam, the Ceddo—a group of outsiders distinguished by their animist beliefs—kidnap the king's daughter, the princess Dior Yacine (Tabata Ndiaye). The ensu-



Ousmane Sembène *BLACK GIRL*

ing religious war between the imam and the Ceddo is intensified by the people's economic dependence on slavery and the simultaneous encroachment of Catholicism. The inner workings of these intersecting threats are laid bare in masterfully staged public assemblies, complete with exquisite costumes and halting monologues, and a shocking day-for-night sequence of violence. In interviews, Sembène refused to specify the century or country in which the film takes place and instead challenged viewers to see the similarities between the precolonial past and the neocolonial present. The negative critical reception of *Ceddo*—which was officially banned in Senegal for a petty objection to the title's spelling—brought Sembène's career to a twelve-year halt, after which he fearlessly returned with *Camp de Thiaroye* in 1988.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Tabata Ndiaye, Alioune Fall, Moustapha Yade
Senegal/France 1977, DCP, color, 117 min. Wolof, Arabic, English and Dyula with English subtitles

friday february 2 at 7pm

MOOLAADÉ

Filmed in Burkina Faso with a pan-African cast and crew, the Prix Un Certain Regard winner *Moolaadé* was considered by Sembène to be his most African film. A rural counterpart to *Faat Kiné*, it is the second film in Sembène's trilogy about everyday heroism. In a Bambara village, a group of girls escape female genital mutilation and take refuge under the magical protection—or the *moolaadé*—of Collé (Ma-

lian journalist and activist Fatoumata Coulibaly), a woman who has long opposed the practice. Collé's courage inspires an awakening among the women, causing the men to retaliate with violence. Despite the heft of the issue at hand, the film is both graceful and brisk, coalescing many of the techniques and motifs Sembène perfected throughout his oeuvre: flashbacks and visions, public debates and acts of resistance, striking frames filmed in both day-for-night and natural sunlight, and the collective protagonist as a narrative compass. Though his deteriorating health caused him much pain throughout the making of *Moolaadé*, Sembène insisted that he "will have plenty of time to rest when I die," and poured everything he had into this towering vision of African women's liberation.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Fatoumata Coulibaly, Maimouna Hélène Diarra, Salimata Traoré
Senegal/Burkina Faso/Morocco/Tunisia/Cameroon/France 2004, 35mm, color, 124 min. Bambara and French with English subtitles

sunday february 11 at 7pm

saturday february 17 at 9pm

EMITAI

Dedicated to "all the militants of the African cause," *Emitaï* is the first in a series of controversial and revolutionary films about collective, anti-colonial resistance. Set in Sembène's home territory of Casamance and filmed over two years, *Emitaï* depicts a real-life rebellion that took place in the forties. A Diola village is raided by French colonial officers and Senegalese tirailleurs who seek to seize the villagers' rice. (One of these soldiers is played by Sembène, a self-critical gesture given his background as a former soldier of the Free French Army.) While the women (a group of non-professional actors led by Mbissine Thérèse Diop from *Black Girl*) fearlessly hide the rice, the hesitant men consult the gods. Sembène's use of a loose tripod, combined with continual shifts from individual to individual and group to group, fill *Emitaï* with jolting electricity. Its breathtaking compositions—which incorporate trees, faces, and limbs as frames—culminate in a potent vision of death that invokes Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible: Part II* (1958). Though *Emitaï* was banned across Africa upon its release, it endures today as a moving portrait of resistance in which women take charge when even the gods fall silent.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Andongo Diabon, Robert Fontaine, Michel Renaudeau
Senegal/France 1971, DCP, color, 103 min. Wolof and French with English subtitles



Ousmane Sembène *EMITAI*

friday february 16 at 7pm

FAAT KINÉ

An endlessly charming meditation on African women's independence, *Faat Kiné* is the first in a trilogy of films Sembène dedicated to the heroism of everyday life. A successful gas station owner and single mother, Faat Kiné (Younousse Sèye, Senegal's first woman painter and a frequent Sembène collaborator) is preparing for her two children's graduation. Though Kiné relishes her solitude, the children insist that she remarry. However, the only men around seem to be vacuous suitors or terrible exes—whose misdeeds Sembène reveals via flashbacks—and Kiné refuses to settle for less. Though the film's exposition is Ozu-esque, Sembène is far less gentle in his depiction of men: he fiercely pierces through middle-class comforts and niceties to expose the patriarchal pressure for women to marry as an enduring form of oppression in post-independence Senegal. Notably, *Faat Kiné* features perhaps the most returning actors of Sembène's oeuvre: Mame Ndoubé Diop of *Guelwaar* plays Kiné's mother; Ibrahima Sane from *Camp de Thiaroye* plays Jean, one of Kiné's suitors; Tabata Ndiaye of *Ceddo* plays Kiné's friend Amy; and the seventy-seven-year-old Sembène makes a hilarious final appearance as an elderly man transfixed by the sight of the glowing Kiné and her friends.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Younousse Sèye, Mame Ndoubé, Awa Sene Sarr
Senegal 2001, 35mm, color, 120 min. French and Wolof with English subtitles



Ousmane Sembène *GUELWAAR*

saturday february 17 at 7pm

sunday february 25 at 3pm

GUELWAAR

Straightforward in premise yet elusive in structure, *Guelwaar* exemplifies the style of the auteur's late period: elongated encounters, interjected by lyrical flashbacks and loosened by a languid pace, carried by superbly controlled tonal fluctuations. The

body of Pierre Henri Thioune (Thierno Ndiaye Doss), a murdered Catholic dissident known as Guelwaar, has been mistakenly placed in a Muslim cemetery. The botched burial—an absurd incident that recalls *Borom Sarret*—causes a religious conflict between Catholics and Muslims, whose grief makes them vulnerable to predatory politicians looking to advance their own agenda. Within a web of sticky confrontations, Sembène interweaves flashbacks of Guelwaar's life to cross-examine the value placed by others on his burial. Of these family members, friends, and followers, who will remember and continue Guelwaar's legacy? The ideology of Guelwaar—an opponent to foreign aid as an imperialist tool to diminish economic sovereignty—invokes that of the pan-African revolutionary Thomas Sankara, who had been assassinated only five years prior. But the intimate details that Sembène imagines in Guelwaar's personality, especially his nature as a distant father and husband, subtly suggest a likeness between the militant thinker and the outspoken director.

Directed by Ousmane Sembène. With Abou Camara, Marie Augustine Diatta, Yama Diedhiou
Senegal/France/Germany/US 1992, 35mm, color, 115 min. French and Wolof with English subtitles

VICTOR ERICE, FULL CIRCLE

JANUARY 26 – FEBRUARY 4



Victor Erice *THE SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE*

Meanwhile, the mother writes a letter and immediately goes to the train station to send it to a mysterious recipient. As she puts the letter on the train, a soldier looks at her from the window of a car and she looks back at him: an indecipherable but sufficiently intense exchange takes place, no less ambiguous than the letter. All this happens over thirty minutes, leading to a scene in which all the characters—for the first time, little by little—come together. There is something in the mise-en-scène that indicates disintegration and fatigue, a mystery covered with a barely expressed discomfort. It is not known, not named, but is perceived. There are two monsters in the film: *Frankenstein*, in the vision of James Whale, projected in a cinema in a lost town in Spain in the 1940s; and a second abject creature, a monster that is not projected, but is present as the spirit of the times: Francoism.

In *El espíritu de la colmena* a family seems to live in exile in a small town deep in the Spanish countryside, a place where politics barely register. A photo glimpsed in an album reveals that the father had a close relationship with Miguel de Unamuno. Why would an intellectual dedicate himself to beekeeping? The fact that Maurice Maeterlinck wrote *La vie des abeilles* (*The Life of the Bee*, 1901) is not sufficient reason to interpret the destiny of that man, perhaps interested in the same thing, but

In the fourth stanza of the Rhine Hymn, Hölderlin states: "For as you began, so shall you remain." The tradition invoked with that verse has practically nothing in common with the world of Víctor Erice (b.1940), except for one essential thing: the nature of poetry. Writing verses is always a silent way of escaping from exhaustive explanation and remaining for a brief time in the uncertain. How long does it take for *El espíritu de la colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*) to combine the sequences of the first act into an intelligible whole?

It is true that everything begins with "Once upon a time," but this story threads slowly, retaining the indeterminacy of the meaning of the world that the film reveals and those who inhabit it. The two little protagonists go to the cinema, return alone, and before falling asleep the younger one asks her sister about the movie. She wants to know why the monster killed the girl. Their father is seen working with his honeycomb panels and at night writing a philosophical essay about the world of insects responsible for honey.

forced into it by other circumstances. The allusion to Francoism and monsters is fully reflected when the youngest girl, Ana (interpreted by Ana Torrent), driven by curiosity, tries to solve what is monstrous and randomly encounters a person persecuted by the regime. In this context, Ana starts on the path—always incomplete—of understanding finitude. The girl in the movie has died. The man Ana found in an abandoned room in the vastness of the countryside and took care of for a while has also died. Whale's ellipsis protects Ana from contemplating infanticide; nor does she witness a nighttime shooting, though the blood scattered on the ground confirms her suspicion.

Erice's first film is beautiful, a little sad, and always enigmatic: in the last scene, the girl says and repeats, "I am Ana." In *Cerrar los ojos* (Close Your Eyes), the filmmaker's latest film, no less masterful than the first, Torrent once again becomes (another) Ana and repeats her name twice. This time she is in front of her father, who has lost his memory. The scene has the same intensity as the indelible closing scene of Erice's debut film and functions here as the preamble to the last scene of *Cerrar los ojos*, whose title becomes image and sound and, once seen, is impossible to forget. What happens is nothing other than a certainty of what cinema was (without a doubt) and can still be (perhaps) in relation to memory and identity: a spiritual supplement of the self, interwoven with feelings made of images and sounds.

In *Cerrar los ojos*, a filmmaker was unable to finish his second film; In the middle of filming, his lifelong friend and the main actor of the film disappeared. He is presumed dead, but his body has never been found. That happened in 1990. The story itself takes place in 2012, and the link between that almost forgotten misfortune and the present of Miguel Garay—now a translator, far from Madrid and the cinema, near the sea and to the south, in Granada—is brought back by a television program that returns to the unsolved case of Julio Arenas, the missing actor.

What happens next is a knot of secretly extraordinary situations, filled with singular characters. The story moves in only one direction, the possible reunion of the two friends. They are accompanied on this journey, at different moments by: an old film buff who guards the cans of the two reels of *La mirada del adiós* (which is seen at the beginning and at the end of *Cerrar los ojos* and which has obvious affinities with *La promesa de Shanghai* (The Promise of Shanghai), the film that Erice himself never managed to make); two nuns who provide unexpected comedy; an Argentine pianist and singer, who was also the lover of both Miguel and Julio; three of Miguel's neighbors who take care of his dog and his garden when he is away, and who can invoke the happiness of being together by all singing a song from *Rio Bravo*. They are all beautiful, even the host of the television show who is seriously concerned about Julio's whereabouts, and the benevolent nurse who also wants the best for a man whom everyone now calls Gardel, but who could really be that actor who abandoned the world.

It has been said that *Cerrar los ojos* is more narrative than Erice's previous films. To a certain extent, yes, but the pictorial dimension of many of his shots is hardly lacking. The last thirty minutes are imposed not only by dramatic suspense, but also by the behavior of the light in the shots and the laborious planning of the frames. Erice is faithful to Bresson's idea of the cinema as discovery. With light and sound, it is possible to transfigure the given world and replace something unmatched and in principle nonmimetic that can only be established through a camera. In fact, there are scenes that transcend their narrative function: observing the composition of the shot showing Gardel's bed that has been made, in the small room the nuns have provided for him in the home for the elderly where he works, is enough for us to witness what a filmmaker can achieve with a single image. There are several such shots: the one of the friends watching the sea behind a fence, and the one of the nun going to the room where Miguel is staying, the one of the father and daughter sitting on a bench at night, in silence, and the one of the moment when the lights of the elderly home go out and the night returns us to the loneliness of those who live there.

In both films, the very Argentine tango "Caminito" with lyrics by Gabino Coria Peñaloza is sung. The lyrics sketch the experience of finitude in a popular key, the same one that Ana once sensed as a child and again now as an adult. A verse: "Little path that time has wiped away / Upon which once we were seen walking / I have come for the last time / I have come to tell you of my sorrow / Little path that once you were / Fringed with clovers and rushes in bloom / A shadow soon you will be / A shadow just like me."

El espíritu de la colmena begins with a screening in a cinema and that *Cerrar los ojos* ends with another. It is Erice's great circle. In the first film, in the cinema, everyone opens their eyes wide; in the second, a paradoxical discovery is revealed: sometimes you can see what you need to see when you close your eyes. Those who study the hermeneutics will be able to say something about the cinema itself, about Erice's entire work, about the character of Julio Arenas. In a recent interview on his last film, Erice cited a poem by Borges, "Una brújula" ("A Compass"): "Behind the name there is something that is not named." That mystery has always belonged to Víctor Erice. We are lucky to be his contemporaries. — Roger Koza



Victor Erice CLOSE YOUR EYES



Victor Erice CLOSE YOUR EYES

friday january 26 at 7pm

sunday january 28 at 3pm

THE SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE EL ESPÍRITU DE LA COLMENA

Directed by Victor Erice. With Fernando Fernán Gómez, Teresa Gimpera, Ana Torrent
Spain 1973, 35mm, color, 99 min. Spanish with English subtitles

saturday january 27 at 6pm

sunday february 4 at 3pm

CLOSE YOUR EYES CERRAR LOS OJOS

Directed by Victor Erice. With Manolo Solo, Jose Coronado, Ana Torrent
Spain/Argentina 2023, DCP, color, 165 min. Spanish, Catalan, English, French and Chinese with English subtitles

AFTERIMAGE... FOR A NEW, RADICAL CINEMA

JANUARY 29 – MARCH 3



This series of screenings celebrates the publication of *The Afterimage Reader* (The Visible Press, 2023), a selection of essays, interviews, editorials and filmmakers' statements from the British film journal. Dedicated to new and radical cinema, *Afterimage* was published irregularly between 1970 and 1987. The journal has been described, generously, by the critic Nicole Benez as "one of those precious magazines through which the great wind of history blows, one of those rare magazines that made history." She suggests that "nothing that was politically and aesthetically revolutionary was foreign to *Afterimage*." The diverse avant-garde strategies manifested in the films that were discussed in the journal, and are represented in these programmes, bear testament to a vital and turbulent period in the development of independent filmmaking across the world. *Afterimage* was founded on the principle—as declared in the two divergent editorials in No. 2 (reprinted in *The Reader*)—of an ongoing commitment to avant-garde cinema, to radical cinema, to "new" cinema understood both aesthetically and politically.

It is important to bear in mind that *Afterimage* (not to be confused with the US photography journal founded two years later) was born in a completely different context to our current digital age: a time of 16mm prints and projectors; the emergence of magazines devoted to radical and political cinema; the birth of political film collectives and cooperatives for "underground" cinema distribution. It also developed out of the legacy of late sixties political turmoil, student protests in UK and US universities and, of course, the upheavals of May '68 in Paris.

Afterimage consistently emphasised the importance of the writings of filmmakers themselves. Over thirteen issues, alongside critical essays by important critics such as Noël Burch and Peter Wollen, the journal published interviews, manifestoes, scripts, theoretical texts and polemical essays from filmmakers, including Jean-Luc Godard, Glauber Rocha, Julio García Espinosa, Hollis Frampton, Paul Sharits, Laura Mulvey, Malcolm Le Grice, Yvonne Rainer, Raúl Ruiz, Derek Jarman and Jan Švankmajer, as well as by important pioneers such as Dziga Vertov and Jean Epstein. Special issues were devoted to Michael Snow and to Jarman, to the relationship between the avant-garde and early cinema, and to visionary animation. Each of the thirteen (one a double issue) was organised around a theme or particular filmmaker.

Presenting this series in the US offers the opportunity to acknowledge how indebted *Afterimage* was to *Film Culture*, the journal founded by Jonas and Adolfas Mekas, to which P. Adams Sitney was a contributing editor. *Film Culture* was a model for us of a partisan publication that was deeply committed to the New American Cinema and its rich avant-garde manifestations of the 60s and 70s.

Afterimage also prided itself on its look, so just as important was the influence of the handsome issues of *Film Culture* designed by George Maciunas. Inspiration came from the Brakhage issue with its brown paper and corrugated cover and the Warhol issue with coloured paper and elegant full-page images. As a consequence, every issue of *Afterimage* had a distinctive design that incorporated many film stills and visual ideas. In assembling *The Afterimage Reader*, Mark Webber (its editor and publisher) integrated some of these design elements into the book.

If the first six issues edited by Simon Field and Peter Sainsbury explored the "two avant-gardes" and contemporary debates in film theory, the new energy brought to the journal by the arrival of Ian Christie as co-editor extended the commitment to radical forms but also looked afresh at early cinema and took us to consider "neglected" figures such as Jean Epstein and Raúl Ruiz, whose films expressed "a notion of cinema as a philosophical machine, a form of discourse in and about the world."

Michael O'Pray's contributions as a co-editor of the later issues steered us in the direction of "troublesome cases": first Derek Jarman, then in the final issue, on the Quays, Jan Švankmajer and other visionary animators.

This series of screenings aims to transmit some sense of the different and changing forms of the international radical cinemas that were celebrated in the pages of the *Afterimage* journal. Copies of *The Afterimage Reader* will be available for purchase from the HFA box office throughout the season and can also be purchased from thevisiblepress.com. — Simon Field and Mark Webber

A founder and editor of *Afterimage* from 1970 to 1987, Simon Field was director of the ICA Cinema, London from 1988 to 1996. He became the director of the International Film Festival Rotterdam in 1996. Then in 2005, he joined the UK's Illuminations Films as a producer and has mainly worked with the Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

Mark Webber is a musician and independent curator based in London. Together with María Palacios Cruz, he co-founded The Visible Press in 2014. In addition to *The Afterimage Reader*, they have published writings by Gregory J. Markopoulos, Peter Gidal, Thom Andersen and Lis Rhodes.

Film descriptions by Simon Field, unless otherwise noted.

Hollis Frampton stills courtesy of Anthology Film Archives and the estate of Hollis Frampton.

Special thanks: Jackie Raynal.



Still from CRITICAL MASS marked up for use in the production of *Afterimage* No. 4



Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Gérard Martin *WIND FROM THE EAST*

monday january 29 at 7pm

sunday march 3 at 3pm

WIND FROM THE EAST *LE VENT D'EST*

The very first issue of *Afterimage*, published in 1970, with its cover and illustrations from Godard's *Ciné-tract* newsreels shot during the upheavals of May '68, included Godard's own notes on *British Sounds* (1969) and *Pravda* (1970), films made under the sign of the Dziga Vertov Group, alongside an original manifesto "Que Faire?/What is to be Done?" In that manifesto, coloured by Maoist/Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and the spirit of "self-criticism," Godard writes of the need to not just make political films but "make films politically." *Le vent d'est* was perhaps one of the most elaborate attempts to do that and in the words of one critic describing the films of the Dziga Vertov period becomes "a guerilla handbook of explosive radical film and politics."

Starting from the format of the Western—or even spaghetti Western, given the star presence of Gian Maria Volonté, not to mention Allen Midgette of Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys*, alongside Godard's muse of the period Anne Wiazemsky—it is a film being debated and critiqued as it proceeds. With a constant critical interaction between images and sounds, its spirit is radically Brechtian, allowing the viewer no falling back into the comfort of bourgeois forms of cinema. As he outlined the film's strategies of fragmenting narrative, distancing, open forms and radical mixing of fiction and documentary in his essay on *Le vent d'est* as "counter cinema" in *Afterimage* 4, Peter Wollen, writing in 1972, concluded: "*Le vent d'est* is a pioneering film, an avant-garde film, an extremely important film. It is a starting point for a revolutionary cinema. But it is not that revolutionary cinema itself." It is a fascinating and challenging film to look back at, bearing in mind Godard's return to more auteurist art cinema but also the constant self-reflection on cinema of the late, great essay films like *Livre d'image*.

Directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Gérard Martin. With Gian Maria Volonté, Anne Wiazemsky, Christina Tullio-Altan France/Italy/West Germany 1970, DCP, color & b/w, 95 min. French, Italian, English and Portuguese with English subtitles

saturday february 3 at 7pm

DEUX FOIS

Although Godard was an emblematic figure for *Afterimage* in its early issues, the journal also took note of other avant-garde directions in France. When Godard was active within the collective of the Dziga Vertov Group, a very different collective of individualistic filmmakers were creating very different films under the banner of the Zanzibar Group and the generous patronage of Sylva Boissonnas, who left them free to create without scripts and with the luxury to shoot "experimental" films on 35mm. Jackie Raynal has said, "We were influenced more by Andy Warhol and we were closer in spirit to the Factory than the French New Wave. We thought of ourselves as the New New Wave. We were questioning the rules: of having great actors play in films, of plot, of the relationship between image and words."

Raynal had been an editor on Godard's *Ciné-tracts* (1968) and was later to become the programme director of the Bleecker Street Cinema in New York.

Deux fois was her first feature and is an extreme tabula rasa of cinema, pared back for a new beginning. As she herself says in the film, it aspires to "the end of meaning." The French critic Louis Skorecki described it as "thirty shots with barely a spoken word. But this wouldn't be worth mentioning if *Deux fois* were not one of the strongest yet...most enigmatic works ever seen." Noel Burch, an important critic for *Afterimage*, saw the film as "an intentionally elementary meditation on certain primary functions of cinema...at the roots of film editing such as expectations, exploring the picture, perceptual memory, relationship between on-screen and off-screen space..."

Directed by Jackie Raynal. With Jackie Raynal, Francisco Viader, Oscar France 1968, DCP, b/w, 66 min. French and Spanish with English subtitles

saturday february 3 at 8:30pm

THE INNER SCAR *LA CICATRICE INTÉRIEURE*

No greater contrast to *Deux fois* within the Zanzibar Group films and their minimalist, non-narrative aesthetic can be offered than *La cicatrice intérieure*, a luxuriously visual, acid-inspired film made by Philippe Garrel in his radical early years—the same Garrel who went on to be one of the recognised auteurs of French cinema. Signposting the connection to Warhol is the presence of Nico, then Garrel's partner and collaborator on the film, which carries five of her songs. Shot in the staggering landscapes of the Sinai Desert, Death Valley and Iceland, the film features Nico, Garrel himself and the "underground" star actor and filmmaker Pierre Clémenti. Garrel proposed that: "you can't ask questions of the film...you just have to enjoy watching it, in the same way you'd enjoy a walk in the desert. It's a record of what was going through my head at the time..."

Directed by Philippe Garrel. With Nico, Philippe Garrel, Christian Pääfgen France 1972, 35mm, color, 60 min. English, German and French with English subtitles

saturday february 10 at 6pm

THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES

LA HORA DE LOS HORNOS

In its second issue, published to coincide with a major gathering of filmmakers and films for the Underground Film Festival in 1970, *Afterimage* devoted its content to experimental, avant-garde cinema. For No. 3, the journal returned to one of the determining



Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas *THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES*



Jackie Raynal *DEUX FOIS*

factors in the journal's foundation: the emergence of a New Latin American independent cinema in the late 60s and early 70s, which was accompanied by a number of fiercely political manifestoes arguing for a new, radical cinema. In translation *Afterimage* printed Glauber Rocha's "Aesthetics of Violence" in No. 1 and devoted No. 3 to Third World Cinema, publishing Julio Garcia Espinosa's "For An Imperfect Cinema" as well as Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas' "Towards A Third Cinema," a manifesto for a new militant revolutionary Latin American cinema with low-budget aesthetics and guerrilla distribution that paralleled the aesthetic directions and new distribution circuits of political filmmaking in the west.

Shot on 16mm without sync sound and exploring the possibilities of sound against image, *La hora de los hornos* is a monument of that Third Cinema: polemical, partisan and agitational. An immense "essay film" in three parts, it furiously encompasses documentary footage (often pirated), intertitles, quotations and voiceover to tell a political history of Argentina, its oligarchs, its violence, its neocolonialism.

Directed by Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas
Argentina 1968, 16mm, b/w, 260 min. Spanish, English and Portuguese with English subtitles



Yvonne Rainer *FILM ABOUT A WOMAN WHO...*

monday february 12 at 7pm

HEARING : SEEING

A programme of two contrasting films... Like Frampton, Michael Snow was a landmark figure of the New American Cinema for *Afterimage*. A whole issue was dedicated to his work on the occasion of a retrospective in London. *Breakfast (Table Top Dolly)* is a typically wry, modestly scaled and humorous complement to his masterpieces—from *Wavelength* to *La Région Centrale*—that explore the potential of camera movements. In a special 1978 issue under the rubric of "Hearing : Seeing," *Afterimage* published extracts from Snow's encyclopaedic exploration of sound and image, *Rameau's Nephew* (1974). In that same issue the complete script of Yvonne Rainer's *Kristina Talking Pictures* (1976) was published, demonstrating Rainer's complex weaving of different fragmented narratives, elements of fiction in contrast to documentary, voiceover and dialogue against moments of dance-like performance, her characters in a form of almost italicised dialogue.

The cinema of both Snow and Rainer appealed to *Afterimage* as offering radically new potentials of cinema, partly encouraged by their involvement in the ambitiously modern arts. Before making several remarkable feature films, Yvonne Rainer was a key figure in modern dance, exemplified by her groundbreaking minimalist performances at the Judson Memorial Church in the 60s. If her modern dance works eschewing narrative paralleled the work of filmmakers like Snow and Frampton in the 60s, her first feature-length film, *Lives of Performers* (1972) and then *Film About a Woman Who...* were revelatory and exciting for their strategies of a radical collage structure that brought elements of autobiography and narrative back into avant-garde cinema. They also became key films for debates about a radical feminist cinema as the Women's Movement evolved. In a typically slightly laconic tone, which matches those of her voiceover in the film, Rainer describes *Film About a Woman Who...* as "a meditation on ambivalence that plays with cliché and the conventions of soap opera while telling the story of a woman whose sexual dissatisfaction masks an enormous anger."

FILM ABOUT A WOMAN WHO...

Directed by Yvonne Rainer. With Dempster Leech, Shirley Soffer, John Erdman
US 1974, 16mm, b/w, 90 min

Preceded by

BREAKFAST (TABLE TOP DOLLY)

Directed by Michael Snow
US 1976, 16mm, color, 15 min



Hollis Frampton *ORDINARY MATTER*

saturday february 24 at 6pm

HAPAX LEGOMENA

"For A New Cinema" was the impassioned title of *Afterimage* No. 4 and that issue brought together both sides of the "two avant-gardes" that were proposed in an influential essay by Peter Wollen. On the one hand here in the issue was the more demonstratively political "counter cinema" of Godard and on the other the more formal avant-garde represented by the important theoretical text of Paul Sharits' "Words Per Page" and a long and important interview with Hollis Frampton (published in *The Reader*). For *Afterimage* this was an avant-garde which aligned itself with the most ambitious modern painting, writing and music. With his masterpiece of 1970, *Zorns Lemma*, Frampton was an exemplary figure for the journal's editors and not just for his films but for his richly elaborate writings on cinema and photography. They later published his lovely speculation "A Stipulation of Terms for Maternal Hopi" in *Afterimage* 8/9.

Hapax Legomena is an ambitious cycle of seven separate and very different films, each of which can be considered independently. Together they offer an exploration of the possibilities of cinema from the autobiographical and the narrative to using sys-

tem structures exploring the basic parameters of film itself. *All* of the films involve the spectators in the creation of what they are watching.

A photographer's perverse autobiography through which we are taken by the voiceover of Michael Snow, (*nostalgia*) plays on Frampton's own immersion in the New York art scene. *Poetic Justice* is a script which calls upon viewers to create their own imaginary film, and *Critical Mass* is a starkly visual, sonic quarrel that builds upon repetitive structures. This takes us on into films in which Frampton leads to the very basis of cinema; film in *Special Effects* is reduced to film frame, print, colour, sound, time.

(NOSTALGIA)

Directed by Hollis Frampton
US 1971, 16mm, b/w, 36 min

CRITICAL MASS

Directed by Hollis Frampton. With Frank Albetta, Barbara DiBenedetto
US 1971, 16mm, b/w, 26 min

POETIC JUSTICE

Directed by Hollis Frampton
US 1972, 16mm, b/w, silent, 32 min

TRAVELLING MATTE

Directed by Hollis Frampton
US 1971, 16mm, b/w, silent, 34 min

ORDINARY MATTER

Directed by Hollis Frampton
US 1972, 16mm, b/w, silent, 29 min

REMOTE CONTROL

Directed by Hollis Frampton
US 1972, 16mm, b/w, silent, 29 min

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Directed by Hollis Frampton
US 1972, 16mm, b/w, 11 min

INTRODUCTION BY MARK WEBBER

friday march 1 at 7pm

THE FALL

Few films could offer a better introduction to the context of the late 60s out of which *Afterimage* emerged than *The Fall*, the major and ambitious work of the very individual British filmmaker Peter



Peter Whitehead *THE FALL*

Whitehead. Embedded in the counterculture of the 60s he made some of the most legendary documentaries of the period: *Wholly Communion* (1965), documenting a major poetry event in London's Albert Hall with Allen Ginsberg and other members of the Beat Generation; *Charlie is My Darling* (1966), featuring the first Stones tour of Ireland; and *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London* (1967), a celebration of "Swinging London."

In *The Fall*, shot largely in New York between October 1967 and May 1968, Whitehead—his own cameraman, editor and producer—also stars as a filmmaker in search of himself. The film is laced with rock music and fast edits, covering New York culture

and political upheaval at the time of Vietnam War and radical Black protests. Finally he finds himself involved directly in the conflicts between police and students at Columbia University.

At the time of the rediscovery of Whitehead's films in France in 2007, critic Nicole Brenez's enthusiastic description of Whitehead's work especially applies to *The Fall*: "From plastic abstraction to documentary reportage, from psychic investigation to political pamphleteering, from the autobiographical essay to a demonstration of the powers of montage, from graphic and textural work to militant revindication—Whitehead's work accomplishes an exceptional synthesis, open to every different dimension of avant-garde cinema, tending towards perpetual explosion and euphoric fusion with phenomena."

Afterimage 1 featured a long essay on *The Fall*. We must confess a vested interest: Whitehead, who published a number of filmscripts by Godard and others under his own Lorrimor imprint, was also a founding father to *Afterimage* and bankrolled the first two issues.

Directed by Peter Whitehead
UK 1969, DCP, color & b/w, 116 min

Preceded by

RESIST – WITH NOAM CHOMSKY

AKA CHOMSKY-RESIST

Directed by Newsreel
US 1968, DCP, b/w, 12 min

INTRODUCTION AND CONVERSATION WITH SIMON FIELD AND MARK WEBBER

saturday march 2 at 7pm

THE TROUBLESOME CASES

This is a collection of "troublesome cases" or mavericks who in different ways worked against the grain of dominant radical film thinking and filmmaking of their time. Brought together across several different issues of *Afterimage*, they create a fascinating selection with an intriguing continuity across different sensibilities for both a continuation of the spirit of surrealism and the possibilities of animation. Jeff Keen—or Dr Gaz, the flame-torch-bearing persona he developed for his expanded cinema performances—was a one-off eccentric in the British experimental film scene. Blasting forth a deluge of found pop images, he was once memorably described by Raymond Durgnat as a filmmaker who makes films on a shoestring and blows them up to Super 8.

Raúl Ruiz's work was celebrated in a large part of Issue 10 centered around his films and writing alongside that of Jean Epstein. This was in 1981 before he became widely recognised as an extraordinarily inventive filmmaker and theoretician of cinema. *Colloque de chiens* makes inspired use of the French tradition of the *photo-roman* and the relative modesty of an animation budget to describe a murder mystery of a domestic life that paradoxically and disturbingly spirals back upon itself.

Jarman exemplified a new direction in British independent filmmaking: a queer cinema, sensual, theatrical. *Afterimage 12* was devoted to his work. *Imagining October*, in his textured, slow-motion Super 8 style with its frozen, elegiac frames, is—at the same time—a visual meditation on a trip to Moscow (and Eisenstein's apartment) with other filmmakers, and a passionate denunciation of Thatcher's Britain.



Jan Švankmajer *DIMENSIONS OF DIALOGUE*

The final issue of *Afterimage* turned to a very different tradition of cinema, one that combined surrealism with the fantastic to fully utilise the potential of animation to create the marvelous or the uncanny. Rich in black humour, Jan Švankmajer's Surrealist films astonish with their invention and originality. *Dimensions of Dialogue* is a classic example.

MEATDAZE

Directed by Jeff Keen
UK 1968, 35mm, color, 8min

DOG'S DIALOGUE COLLOQUE DE CHIENS

Directed by Raúl Ruiz
France 1977, 35mm, color, 22 min. French with English subtitles

IMAGINING OCTOBER

Directed by Derek Jarman
UK 1984, 16mm, color, 27 min

DIMENSIONS OF DIALOGUE MOZNOSTI DIALOGU

Directed by Jan Svankmajer
Czechoslovakia 1983, 35mm, color, 12 min. Czech with English subtitles

INTRODUCTION BY SIMON FIELD

saturday march 2 at 9:30pm

THE HYPOTHESIS OF THE STOLEN PAINTING
L'HYPOTHÈSE DU TABLEAU VOLÉ

A prodigious reader, the author of a rich collection of speculative writings around the poetics of cinema, Raúl Ruiz was the maker of over a hundred films in a myriad of formats and genres. *Afterimage*'s 1981 dossier was an early celebration of a filmmaker who, throughout his career, explored in both writings and films the exciting possibilities of a different cinema, a filmmaker who described the cinema as "an instrument of speculation and reflection, or a machine for travel through space and time."

L'hypothèse du tableau volé is one of the most deliriously inventive—and beautiful—of a series of generous French TV commissions that were characteristic of the earlier years of Ruiz's exile from Chile. It displays the cinematic magic and the spirit of exploration that were also about to be seen in



Raúl Ruiz *THE HYPOTHESIS OF THE STOLEN PAINTING*

his marvellous features *Les trois couronnes du matelot* / *Three Crowns of the Sailor* (1983) and *La ville des pirates* / *City of Pirates* (1983). Proposed as a documentary portrait of the French philosopher and novelist Pierre Klossowski, Ruiz instead took some of Klossowski's themes and fabricated this fictional portrait of an art collector. A droll, ironic parody of French cultural programming of the period, the film also offers a characteristic Ruizian meditation on cinema, on representation, on the relation between language and image.

The great cinematographer Sacha Vierny (who would become Peter Greenaway's primary director of photography) creates glistening, smoky, black and white images and sensual camera movements

to weave around the earnest collector and his off-screen interviewer. With the speculative seriousness of a Klossowski, the collector tours his rambling mansion while explaining the themes of his mysterious series of paintings by the 19th Century French painter Frédéric Tonnerre (a painter invented by Ruiz) and their connection via different "tableaux vivants" to a mysterious and cruel "ceremony." Ever playful, Ruiz diverts us at one point from these frozen tableaux to take us into a vertiginous speculative narrative of different characters and situations, figures immobilised in what might be a murder mystery.

Directed by Raúl Ruiz. With Jean Rougeul, Chantal Paley, Jean Raynaud
France 1978, DCP, b/w, 64 min. French with English subtitles

EXCAVATING SUBTERRANEA.
THE FILM POEMS OF ANA VAZ

FEBRUARY 4 – FEBRUARY 5



Ana Vaz *APIYEMIYEKÎ?*

Born in Brasília in 1986, Ana Vaz has studied, lived and ventured around the world—including France and Australia—and since returned to this critical location, the setting of many of her films. Through a kind of interrogation and recombination, the experimental filmmaker helps us to remember what the modernist phenomenon of Brasília attempted to erase, a decimation that has also taken place and takes place in different forms, in different places, as if the original wilderness and its inhabitants had never existed. Brasília's creation involved a unique kind of erasure, its vision of utopia a contradictory negation of life. In her own words, Vaz is "excavating the layers underneath this architecture, trying to reconnect with a subterranean dimension of this place." Working with the organic alchemy of 16mm for her initial image capture, Vaz mentions the possibilities of the camera "dehumanizing our vision a little bit," not in the alienating sense, but in the sense of expanding and changing the perspective to experience things without as much learned interference, a kind of sensory decolonization. She asks us to "remember that cinema is not consumption: it is perception, transformation of perception, it is time and space." Her films often exist in such a multidimensional state, aided by either making visible the invisible, or by pointing to the masks and illusions created to silence myriad voices that know better.

Her approach is an equitable one, similar to Egydio Schwade of *Apiyemiyekî?* in his revolutionary and sobering work with indigenous people who, thanks to Schwade's non-didactic teaching methods, were able to finally speak about genocide through their art. Following the pedagogy of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire that critical thought is "anchored in a belief that students and teachers learn together, outside the oppressive master-student logic," Vaz, too, acknowledges those she films with an open-minded trust and respect, letting them help instruct her in the work's formation. She is as close an observer as she is a listener, and her films are born of this heightened awareness and attunement. Sonically and visually, she shatters expectation and form, arranging with the audience a hallucinatory ecosystem that seems to evolve with each viewing. Perhaps most palpably evident in her recent feature film, *It Is Night in America*, it is nearly impossible to passively partake of the film, which confronts us with a simultaneous sense of horror and reverential contemplation. Bubbling up from the exhausted grains of film, Vaz's science fiction is here and now.

Vaz is also a founding member of the collective COYOTE, "an interdisciplinary group that works in the fields of ecology and political science through experimental forms (conversations, drifts, publications, events and performances)." She lives and breathes her work, deeply engaged with her ideas and questions beyond simply the production of art.

The design of Brasília was inspired by the ideas of Le Corbusier, the architect of the Carpenter Center, so it is appropriate that Ana Vaz and her films will momentarily inhabit this concrete modernist construction, activating its walls and those within them with her prescient, potent apparitions. The Harvard Film Archive and the Film Study Center welcome Vaz as this year's Robert Fulton III Fellow in Nonfiction Filmmaking. — *Brittany Gravely*

Film descriptions by *Brittany Gravely*.

Special thanks: Marcela Ramos—David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies; Film Study Center, Harvard.



Ana Vaz *HÁ TERRA! / THERE IS LAND!*

\$15 SPECIAL EVENT TICKETS **ANA VAZ IN PERSON**

sunday february 4 at 7pm
APIYEMIYEKÎ?

Ana Vaz renders in graphic black and white Bruno Giorgi's modernist sculpture *Os Candangos* in the concrete expanse of central Brasília. In this film, the iconic figures now appear as symbols of the colonial takeover that occurred with the development of Brasília, a utopian vision that negated the existence of the lives and land already there. Vaz's film gradually reveals dense layers of water, flora, fauna intertwined with the visions of the indigenous Waimiri-Atroari people, many of whom were killed with the construction of the BR-174 highway that also threads its way through her film. Through a collaboration with teacher, ecologist and indigenous rights activist Egydio Schwade, Vaz unearths part of an extensive archive of drawings that emerged from his literacy project with the Waimiri-Atroari many years after their near erasure. The superimposed drawings viscerally cut through and merge with the landscape, as if exposing the trauma imprinted on the land. Brought back into the cinematic consciousness, the silenced voices speak volumes in Vaz's re-animation, ultimately asking one simple, anguished question.

Directed by Ana Vaz
Brazil/France/Portugal/Netherlands 2019, DCP, color & b/w, 27 min

AMAZING FANTASY

While working on a larger project in the islands of Ogasawara, Japan, Vaz captured a boy's mesmerizing performance. Part of the film's bewitching spell comes from the simple enjoyment of physical magic, but as she explains, it is also "about desire for mastery and the impossibility of floating..."

Directed by Ana Vaz
France/Japan 2018, DCP, color, 2.5 min

HÁ TERRA! / THERE IS LAND!

As the title's loaded refrain from Manoel de Oliveira's *Francisca* (1981) echoes throughout Vaz's free-form exploration, her feral camera moves furtively in the tall grasses of the Brazilian savanna with the young Ivonete. Vaz's vision and Ivonete's stories spiral around the indigenous relationship to the land versus the colonial approach: exploitation, displacement and genocide. Vaz drops into the cauldron contemporary footage of Brasília's zoo and the 19th century ethnographic paintings of Goiás by German artist Johann Moritz Rugendas, among other images, and the furious cycle begins to feel like a rite, a ritual, a reclamation.

Directed by Ana Vaz
Brazil/France 2016, DCP, color, 12.5 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

ATOMIC GARDEN

Within the gorgeous, hypnotic paroxysms of this flicker film resides evidence of the toxic and traumatic

residue from the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The flowers are those of Aoki Sadako who was displaced from her home after the accident; she travels back to the contaminated zone to care for her garden. In between the toxic blooms are fireworks from the Bon Odori festival for the dead, though in Japan they also recall the only atomic bombs dropped on people. "What bothers me is that the film can be read superficially, as a beautiful film, because of the flowers," acknowledges Vaz, "but my flowers are monstrous... For me *Atomic Garden* is a monster film, it is closer to *Godzilla* than *Marie Menken*."

Directed by Ana Vaz
Brazil/Portugal 2018, DCP, color, 8 min



Ana Vaz *AMAZING FANTASY*

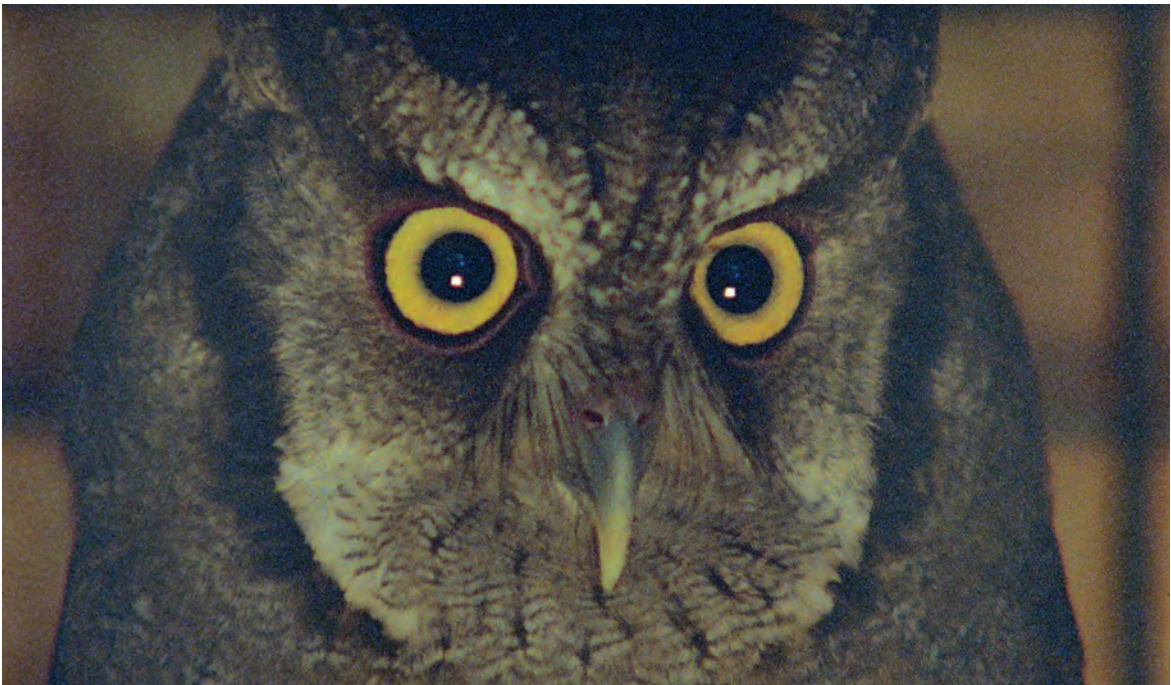
THE TREE A ÁRVORE

“A árvore is a ritual-film about my father—the artist, musician, and mystic of the forest—Guilherme Vaz, a man who lived and reflected on the frontier, on the fatal advance of modernity over the peoples of the earth, a man who wrote music instinctively, who thought of cinema as his ‘spiritual father’ and, above all, whose lived life was his greatest work.” As her father intones in the film, “We who live in the time of images, our lives are peopled with ghosts.” He himself appears in spectral form in this meditative homage, yet her father—who also contributed much of the music in her films—remains intimately, vitally intertwined with her life and her art. Their conversation in this film traverses artmaking and travel, including the time he spent with indigenous people in the State of Rondônia, Brazil, a place now victim to massive deforestation. The stoic entity of the title remains standing throughout all seasons, events and cycles of life, a witness and here, perhaps, the luminous representative of the dynamic, profound life force that pulses through creation.

Directed by Ana Vaz
Brazil/Spain 2022, DCP, color, 20.5 min. Portuguese with English subtitles



Ana Vaz ATOMIC GARDEN



Ana Vaz IT IS NIGHT IN AMERICA

\$15 SPECIAL EVENT TICKETS
ANA VAZ IN PERSON

monday february 5 at 7pm

IT IS NIGHT IN AMERICA É NOITE NA AMÉRICA

In the opening shot of Ana Vaz’s feature debut, an intense blue descends upon the sprawling, modernist metropolis of Brasília, which starts spinning out of control as a symphony of wild animal sounds crescendos. It is night in America. A recognition, an alarm, an investigation, a lament...Vaz’s film sounds every one of these notes and then some, within rather subtle boundaries, such as the limited exposure and contrast range of an expired 16mm film stock, along with “day for night” shooting techniques that fabricate a permanent twilight. Through patient and attentive observation, Vaz documents the reduced territory of Brasília’s native animals, losing their habitats to an ever-encroaching human popu-

lation. Between the sounds of machines, the animal and insect chorus and Guilherme Vaz’s portending composition are the voices of police, veterinarians and animal rescuers answering calls from people who no longer know the wildlife now entering their backyards or running across highways in a city designed for cars. Monkeys, anteaters, foxes, snakes, capybaras, giant otters, owls and other creatures present a growing refugee population, captive and vulnerable. Periodically punctuated by the long, direct gaze of the owl, this film—which also exists as a three-channel gallery installation—invites viewers to not only witness this ominous, delicate dance between wilderness and civilization, but experience it with decolonized eyes.

Directed by Ana Vaz
France 2022, DCP, color, 66 min. French and Portuguese with English subtitles

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JANUARY 2024


S	M	T	W	T	F	S
07	08	09	10	11	12	13
					MEMBER SCREENINGS	MEMBER SCREENINGS
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
					7PM BOROM SARRET XALA P. 5	7PM CAMP DE THIAROYE P. 5
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
3PM BOROM SARRETT XALA P. 5 7PM TAUW MANDABI P. 5	7PM NIAYE BLACK GIRL P. 6				7PM THE SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE P. 7	6PM CLOSE YOUR EYES P. 8
28	29	30	31			
3PM THE SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE P. 7 7PM CEDDO P. 6	7PM WIND FROM THE EAST P. 10					



Edward Yang A BRIGHTER SUMMER DAY P. 27



Margaret Tait HAPPY BEES P. 29



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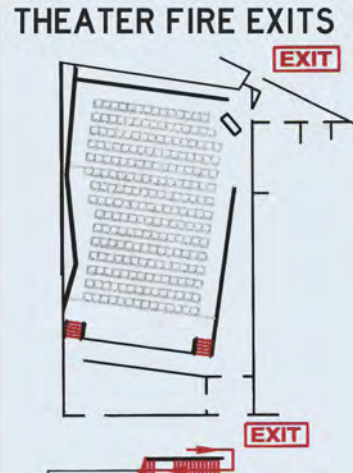
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There is limited metered parking in Harvard Square, which is free after 8pm and all day on Sundays. Parking is also available at several public lots in Harvard Square.

THEATER FIRE EXITS



FEBRUARY 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				01	02 7PM MOOLAADÉ P. 6	03 7PM DEUX FOIS P. 10 8:30PM THE INNER SCAR P. 10
04 3PM CLOSE YOUR EYES P. 8 7PM APIYEMIYEKÎ? AMAZING FANTASY HÁ TERRA! ATOMIC GARDEN P. 14 THE TREE P. 15 ana vaz in person	05 7PM IT IS NIGHT IN AMERICA P. 15 ana vaz in person	06	07	08	09 7PM IN WATER P. 20 8:30PM IN OUR DAY P. 20	10 6PM THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES P. 10
11 3PM IN OUR DAY P. 20 7PM EMITAÏ P. 6	12 7PM BREAKFAST (TABLE TOP DOLLY) FILM ABOUT A WOMAN WHO... P. 11	13	14	15	16 7PM FAAT KINÉ P. 7	17 7PM GUELWAAR P. 7 9PM EMITAÏ P. 6
18 3PM CEDDO P. 6 7PM NIAYE BLACK GIRL P. 6	19	20	21	22	23 7PM IN OUR DAY P. 20	24 6PM HAPAX LEGOMENA P. 11
25 3PM GUELWAAR P. 7 7PM IN WATER P. 20	26 7PM COTTON COMES TO HARLEM P. 21 introduction by matthew wittmann	27	28	29		

Edward Yang *IN OUR TIME* P. 28

Margaret Tait *A PORTRAIT OF GA* P. 29

MARCH 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					01 7PM RESIST – WITH NOAM CHOMSKY THE FALL P. 12 introduction by mark webber	02 7PM THE TROUBLESOME CASES P. 12 conversation with simon field & mark webber 9:30PM THE HYPOTHESIS OF THE STOLEN PAINTING P. 13 introduction by simon field
03 3PM WIND FROM THE EAST P. 10 7PM IN WATER P. 20	04 7PM THE BLOODETTES P. 22	05	06	07	08	09
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 7PM QUARTIER MOZART P. 23	19	20	21	22 7PM ARISTOTLE'S PLOT P. 23 jean-pierre bekolo in person	23 7PM MIRACULOUS WEAPONS P. 23 jean-pierre bekolo in person
24 7PM LE PRÉSIDENT P. 23 introduction by jean-pierre bekolo	25 7PM SHAKTI P. 25 RAPADO P. 24	26	27	28	29 7PM YI YI P. 26 introduction by kalli peng	30 6PM A BRIGHTER SUMMER DAY P. 27 introduction by kalli peng
31 3PM ARISTOTLE'S PLOT P. 23 7PM A CONFUCIAN CONFUSION P. 27						

Martín Rejtman SILVIA PRIETO P. 25

Martín Rejtman SHAKTI P. 25

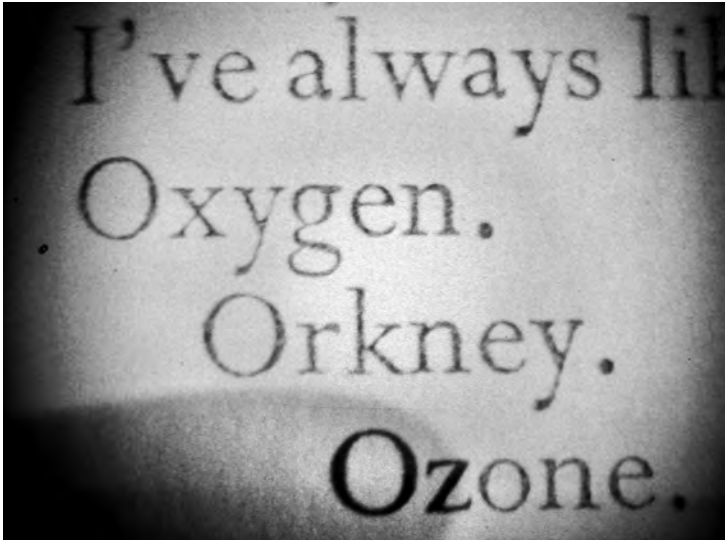
APRIL / MAY 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	01 7PM THE CONVERSATION P. 32 introduction by steven biel	02	03	04	05 7PM THE PRACTICE P. 25 martin rejman in person	06 7PM SILVIA PRIETO P. 25 martín rejman & carlos Gutiérrez in person
07 3PM MAHJONG P. 27 7PM NAKED REALITY P. 23	08 7PM THE TERRORIZERS P. 27	09	10	11	12 7PM SHORT FILMS BY AND ABOUT MARGARET TAIT P. 29 ute aurand in person	13 7PM THREE PORTRAIT SKETCHES START OF A RACE, END OF A SHOW, ETC. BEING IN A PLACE... MY ROOM. VIA ANCONA 21 P. 30 luke fowler in person
14 3PM SILVIA PRIETO P. 25 7PM MUDIMBE'S ORDER OF THINGS, PART I P. 24	15 7PM THAT DAY, ON THE BEACH P. 27	16	17	18	19 7PM MAHJONG P. 27	20 7PM TAIPEI STORY P. 28 9PM THE TERRORIZERS P. 27
21 3PM TAIPEI STORY P. 28 7PM MUDIMBE'S ORDER OF THINGS, PART II P. 24	22 7PM IN OUR TIME P. 28	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	MAY 01	02	03 7PM YI YI P. 26	04 6PM A BRIGHTER SUMMER DAY P. 27

05
3PM
IN OUR TIME P. 28



Ana Vaz THE TREE P. 15



Margaret Tait ON MY WAY TO ORKNEY P. 29

THIS IS US. TWO FILMS BY HONG SANGSOO

FEBRUARY 9 – MARCH 3

With his twenty-ninth and thirtieth features, South Korean maverick Hong Sangsoo (b.1960) continues to pare down his threadbare aesthetic without sacrificing the subtly experimental edge that has kept his output fresh for over a quarter of a century. At a glance fairly familiar tales of creative stagnation and existential angst, both *in water* and *In Our Day* find the director quietly upending expectations in unique ways.

Set on a small island in the Korean Strait, *in water* follows a first-time filmmaker whose process resembles Hong's: each morning, after brainstorming the day's scenes, he searches for locations with his cameraman and actress, shooting only when and if inspiration strikes. Otherwise, the trio's time is spent puttering around the picaresque port town in a spell of collective ennui, snacking, smoking, and, yes, occasionally drinking as they discuss their divergent artistic philosophies. In a playfully radical touch—one apparently inspired by Hong's worsening eyesight—he shoots a majority of the film's scenes out of focus, simultaneously situating the viewer in an appropriately clouded headspace and creating an impressionistic visual palette not unlike that of the director's frequently cited favorite, Paul Cézanne. In lieu of his typical narrative gamesmanship, this shrewd stylistic coup marks *in water* as arguably Hong's most delicate and transporting work to date.

Equally melancholy but more rigorous, *In Our Day* nods at a very Hongian structural conceit—a pair of seemingly unrelated plot lines with slippery character convergences—but, rather than neatly tie up its various threads and ambiguities, instead calls on the viewer to reconcile its thematic parallels and narrative echoes. Told in alternating fashion, the film's two storylines center on, respectively, a disillusioned former actress spending time at an old friend's apartment, and an alcoholic poet who is visited by a pair of young admirers. In each, casual conversation over bowls of ramen begets intimate reflections on creativity and inspiration (or lack thereof), linking the two central characters in spirit, if not on a deeper level. As with *in water*, a simple formal gambit yields rich dividends in *In Our Day*, just as an unassuming dramatic device—a song shared between ex-lovers in the former; a lost cat poignantly named Us in the latter—can convey profound meaning. — Jordan Cronk

Film descriptions by Jordan Cronk.

Co-sponsored by the Kim Koo Forum at the Korea Institute, Harvard University. Special thanks: Nicholas Harkness and Susan Laurence—Korea Institute.

friday february 9 at 7pm
sunday february 25 at 7pm
sunday march 3 at 7pm
IN WATER MUL-AN-E-SEO

One of Hong Sangsoo's most quietly radical films, *in water* sees the veteran director subtly reimagining his aesthetic even as he continues to simplify his process. Set on Jeju Island, the movie centers on a small film crew, one not unlike Hong's, led by a young actor (Shin Seokho) who has decided to give up acting and make a short film with two friends, a cameraman (Ha Seongguk) and an actress (Kim Seungyun). Each day, the trio scouts for locations in hopes that the director will find inspiration in the dreamy seaside setting, but instead they mostly end up wandering about or stopping to eat, drink, and chat about their differing artistic impulses. ("It's for the honor," the director says about his desire to suddenly take up moviemaking.) Meanwhile, a possible tryst between the actress and cinematographer has the filmmaker frustrated and in his feelings about his own lost love, which he is only able to reconcile when a chance encounter with a stranger and a love song



Hong Sangsoo *IN WATER*

from his past combine into an imaginative spark that will set the course for his project. Similarly drawing on collaborative energy and personal experience, Hong, whose eyesight is said to have worsened in recent years, adopts a softly blurred image to tell this tale of creative inertia and youthful inexpressiveness, pushing a recognizable template to freshly impressionistic ends. Playful and poetic, *in water* exemplifies Hong's wily streak and undiminished flair for subverting his own formulas.

Directed by Hong Sangsoo. With Shin Seokho, Ha Seongguk, Kim Seungyun
South Korea 2023, DCP, color, 61 min. Korean with English subtitles

SNEAK PREVIEW SCREENING

friday february 9 at 8:30pm
sunday february 11 at 3pm
friday february 23 at 7pm

IN OUR DAY URIUI HARU

In Hong Sangsoo's thirtieth feature, the director's proclivity for repetition and sly narrative contrivance is streamlined into parallel storylines with self-reflexive overtones. Nimble moving between its two threads and separated by humorously scene-setting intertitles, the film unfolds like a novella as it tells the seemingly unrelated stories of, respectively, a disenchanting former actress (Kim Minhee) who's returned to Seoul to decompress at a friend's (Song

Sunmi) apartment, and an alcoholic poet (Ki Joo-bong) visited in his home by a student filmmaker (Kim Seungyun) working on a short documentary about the middle-aged artist. In each, a third party—a cousin (Park Miso) of the actress in the first scenario; a young admirer (Ha Seongguk) of the poet in the second—soon arrives to disrupt the dynamic, prompting existential and artistic musings between the characters that echo across the plot divide. As in many Hong films, similar themes arise in both strands, as do specific details, such as pet cats, estranged loved ones, and bowls of ramen noodles spiced with pepper paste. Here, though, the motifs relate loosely, rather than with strict cohesion. In this way, the film is more suggestively structured than many of Hong's more openly conceptual works, relying on association and symbolic resonance rather than the kind of iterative logic or regenerative synergies that typically resolve (or at least work to explain) the director's idiosyncratically shaped narratives. With *In Our Day*, Hong continues to forge a roundabout path through his career-long obsessions, finding fertile new ground through the smallest of gestures and the slightest of variations.

Directed by Hong Sangsoo. With Gi Jubong, Kim Minhee
South Korea 2023, DCP, color, 84 min. English and Korean with English subtitles



Hong Sangsoo *IN WATER*

COTTON COMES TO HARLEM, THE GODFREY CAMBRIDGE COLLECTION AT HOUGHTON

FEBRUARY 26

This screening celebrates the recent acquisition of actor/comedian Godfrey Cambridge's papers by Harvard University. The archive, which includes manuscripts, correspondence, photographs, and audiovisual materials documenting his career on stage and screen, is open for research at Houghton Library. Matthew Wittmann, Curator of the Harvard Theatre Collection, will enlighten the audience with details about Cambridge and his creative and politically active life.

INTRODUCTION BY MATTHEW WITTMANN

monday february 26 at 7pm

COTTON COMES TO HARLEM

Often credited as the first blaxploitation movie, *Cotton Comes to Harlem* is also the first film directed by actor Ossie Davis and features the film debuts of Calvin Lockhart, Judy Pace, Cleavon Little and Redd Foxx. The popular comedian Godfrey Cambridge and Raymond St. Jacques star as detectives "Gravedigger" Jones and "Coffin Ed" Johnson, characters created by Chester Himes in a series of Harlem crime novels. A surprise box office hit, the film is a rainbow whirl of action and comedy with some trenchant asides about race and class as the two black detectives attempt to expose the revered reverend swindling Harlem residents through his supposed "back-to-Africa" movement. Davis packs as much as he possibly can from Himes' wild, pulpy thriller into a nonstop parade of off-beat characters mixed up in theft, sex, murder, double-crosses, kidnapping, jailbreaks, hidden chambers and of course, that elusive bale of cotton. As Gravedigger, Cambridge effortlessly subdues criminals and banters with Coffin Ed while maintaining his signature dry humor and cool exterior. With some wily individuals giving them a run for their money, the detectives outwit both their superiors at the station and all the assorted lawbreakers in solving this convoluted crime. — BG

Directed by Ossie Davis. With Godfrey Cambridge, Raymond St. Jacques, Calvin Lockhart
US 1970, 35mm, color, 97 min



Ossie Davis COTTON COMES TO HARLEM

JEAN-PIERRE BEKOLO, 2024 MCMILLAN-STEWART FELLOW

MARCH 4 – APRIL 21



Jean-Pierre Bekolo

In 1992, both Jean-Pierre Bekolo (b.1966) with *Quartier Mozart* and Quentin Tarantino with *Reservoir Dogs* (along with Julio Medem) were nominated for the London Film Festival's prestigious Sutherland Trophy as two of the most promising cinematic voices in the years to come. Flash-forward three decades later: Hollywood filmmaker Tarantino is now a household name around the globe, while equally talented and maverick Cameroonian/African filmmaker Jean-Pierre Bekolo has, in spite of a truly brilliant and cerebro-visceral output, unfortunately and, arguably, unjustly not received the same amount of attention. This structurally uneven and unequal political economy of world cinema, which shapes and defines the destinies of filmmakers around the world, underlines the need to celebrate and honor Jean-Pierre Bekolo's insufficiently recognized, yet thoroughly original, deeply reflexive, and always profoundly forward-looking cinema of questioning.

Jean-Pierre Bekolo came to cinema in the mid-1980s as a student of physics and chemistry at the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon. Taking advantage of the newly opened national television station, he received training as an editor for two years, in the process directing many music videos including one for popular Cameroonian musician Charlotte Mbango. From 1988 to 1990 Bekolo attended the famous Institut National de l'Audiovisuel in Paris and took courses with world-renowned film semiotician Christian Metz. After the release of three short films, his first feature film, *Quartier Mozart* (1992), announced the advent of a groundbreaking, innovative voice in African

and world cinema, one who was at once part of the MTV generation of Africans and was also deeply influenced by the films of Spike Lee and by American popular cinema more broadly. Immediately, the film was selected and celebrated at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival.

Bekolo continued to develop a rich, multilayered and complex filmography including such classics as *Aristotle's Plot* (1996), *Les Saignantes* (2005), and *Le président* (2013); exploring newer terrains with *Naked Reality* (2016), *Miraculous Weapons* (2017) and *Nous Les Noirs* (2021); and more recently producing a filmic adaptation of Djaili Amadou Amal's novel *Walaandé, the Art of Sharing a Husband* (2023), directed by Thierry Ntamack. In addition to filmmaking, Bekolo's artistic practice navigates the worlds of the gallery and the museum, of knowledge production and dissemination as well as collective action and organizing.

It was clearly apparent, at least since *Aristotle's Plot*, a film commissioned by the British Film Institute as part of its celebration of the centenary of the cinema, that Bekolo was, at his core, an essayist in the noblest sense of the term, who sought to work out his interrogations, ideas, thoughts and affects in his own subjectively ex-

perimental, tentative and nondogmatic ways. Indeed, since the end of the first decade of the 2000s, Bekolo has been publishing essays, blogs and various forms of reflection both on the significance and relevance of the cinema as well as on the challenges and the destiny of the African continent, including *Africa for the Future*, *Sortir un nouveau monde du cinéma* (2009) and more recently *Cinéma as a Transformative Tool for the Therapeutic Intellectual* (2023). Together, these writings reveal a mind at once restless, perpetually inquisitive and questioning, always innovative while remaining profoundly dissatisfied with a lenifying status quo both in cinema as a means of representation and with the object of representation itself, i.e. the real, African and otherwise. There is in Bekolo a double impulse to transform the real itself as well as the means to represent it, making his work profoundly philosophically inflected.

In addition to committing his own reflections and musings to paper, Bekolo has also in the last decade sought to disseminate the thoughts of others through the moving image. Arguably inspired by Michel Gondry's documentary *Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy? An Animated Conversation with Noam Chomsky* (2013), Bekolo would devote a three-hour documentary, *Mudimbe's Order of Things* (2015), to one of the foremost African philosophers, Valentin Mudimbe, author of such classics of postcolonial theory as *The Invention of Africa* (1988). Perhaps Bekolo's single most comprehensive effort in this area involved filming the now famous "Workshops of Thought" (*Les ateliers de la pensée*) initiated by prominent African public intellectuals Achille Mbembe and Felwine Sarr. In doing so, Bekolo positions himself as a traveling companion to major African scholars and intellectuals, situating the cinematic field as another battlefield for both discursive and actual social transformation.

Jean-Pierre Bekolo's work exceeds the focus on his own cine-artistic output. A decade after the beginning of his film practice and upon his return to France following his North American years, roughly 1998-2000, he decided to join and actively take part in one of the most important film movements in the history of African cinema, the Guild of African Filmmakers and Producers. Created in the mid-1990s as a self-conscious group which sought to initially establish its distances from the much larger Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI), it saw itself as the gathering of filmmakers who had a love for Africa in common, who shared a location as displaced African subjects/cultural producers in major European/formerly colonial metropolises (primarily Paris/France), and who benefitted from the singularity of their bidirectional insider/outsider gaze at the continent. This globalization generation of African filmmakers was also the first generation to embrace the promise of the digital as a way of reinventing African cinema and the cinema more generally. This group included some of the most prominent contemporary voices of African cinema, from Jean-Marie Teno, Nadia El Fani, Jihan El Tahri, Abderrahmane Sissako and Fanta Nacro to Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, Dani Kouyaté, Issa Serge Coelo, Jacques Trabi, Fatma Zohra Zamoum, Balufu Bakupa Kanyinda and Mama Keïta.

Most famously, Bekolo's participation within the Guild included a major intervention at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival. As part of its celebration of its sixtieth anniversary in 2006, Cannes had commissioned filmmakers from around the world to each direct a part of an omnibus film but had not invited African filmmakers to participate, with the exception of Youssef Chahine. For several years, the festival had also failed to select a single African film in its official competition. Bekolo spearheaded a press campaign to denounce this, pondering whether this was a case of racial profiling related to "the color of our images," arguably anticipating by over a decade the #OscarsSoWhite movement.

Jean-Pierre Bekolo is also an accomplished educator who has lectured at various universities in Europe and the United States. In recent years, he has initiated the Scripto Sensa Workshops focusing on book-to-film adaptations and invented what he refers to as an "Alphabet of Film" in which he breaks down "cinematic elements into symbols and cards." — *Aboubakar Sanogo, Carleton University*

Bekolo's extended visit to Harvard as the 2024 McMillan-Stewart Fellow in Distinguished Filmmaking will feature nearly all of his theatrical releases. The Harvard Film Archive is thrilled to welcome Bekolo to discuss his inventive, otherworldly cinema and presumably much, much more.

Film descriptions by Farah Clémentine Dramani-Issifou, a film programmer, curator and researcher who is currently a Film Study Center Fellow 2023-24.

Special thanks: Joana Pimenta, Julie Mallozzi, Cozette Russell—Film Study Center, Harvard; and the McMillan-Stewart Advisory Committee.



Jean-Pierre Bekolo *MIRACULOUS WEAPONS*



Jean-Pierre Bekolo *THE BLOODETTES*

monday march 4 at 7pm

THE BLOODETTES *LES SAIGNANTES*

A science-fiction film and erotic thriller, *Les Saignantes* follows two sex workers as they attempt to dispose of the corpse of one of their clients, a political leader. As usual, Jean-Pierre Bekolo mixes genres in this hybrid film, which is part female revenge film, part antisexist denunciation and part open criticism of the systemic corruption of Cameroonian politics. The director also looks to the future, placing Africa and women at the heart of a narrative in which they are usually absent, and drawing inspiration from the precolonial cultures of Cameroon's powerful Beti women's secret society to imagine Black heroines capable of fighting and healing the postcolonial state.

Journalist and critic Olivier Barlet (*Africultures*) describes the film as "astonishing, provocative, insolent, fun and perfectly paranoid." With *Les Saignantes*, Jean-Pierre Bekolo offers a future tale of a dystopian Cameroon, with burlesque outbursts and lurid lighting, mixing sex and death, as if to underline an impossibility: indeed, "How can you make a film of anticipation in a country that has no future? How can you make a detective film in a country where you can't investigate?" asks Bekolo.

Directed by Jean-Pierre Bekolo. With Adèle Ado, Dorylia Calmel, Emil Abossolo M'bo
Cameroon 2005, 35mm, color, 92 min. French with English subtitles

monday march 18 at 7pm

QUARTIER MOZART

Jean-Pierre Bekolo's first film is the story of the misadventures of a young girl called "Chef de Quartier" (*District Manager*), a little too curious for her age. The witch Mama Tecla teaches Chef de Quartier a revealing lesson by turning her into a young man. Now she becomes "Mon Type" (*My Guy*), and as if to mock their machismo, she joins the gang of youngsters in the Mozart district, who spend their time flirting. They encourage her to seduce "Samédi" (*Saturday*), the daughter of "Chien Méchant" (*Naughty Dog*), the grotesque local policeman, who never stops playing with his walkie-talkie.

Screened at major film festivals from Cannes to Locarno, Ouagadougou and Montreal, *Quartier Mozart* is a comedy with a burlesque and fickle accent, in which the game of cross-dressing only makes sense within the social satire staged in this working-class district of Yaoundé. By mixing stories of love, belief and witchcraft with influences from American cinema—the opening sequence is reminiscent of Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*—Bekolo was already, at the age of twenty-five, inventing his own cinematic grammar within what would become a classic of African cinema.

Directed by Jean-Pierre Bekolo. With Serge Amougou, Saïdou Abatcha, Timoléon Luc Boyogueno
Cameroon/France 1992, 35mm, color, 80 min. French with English subtitles

\$15 SPECIAL EVENT TICKETS

JEAN-PIERRE BEKOLO IN PERSON

friday march 22 at 7pm

sunday march 31 at 3pm – without filmmaker

ARISTOTLE'S PLOT *LE COMLOT D'ARISTOTE*

What is historical African cinema? And what kind of cinema is in Africa, for African audiences? During the period of colonial domination, the Pierre Laval Decree of 1934 forbade filming in the colonies without the express authorization of that territory's lieutenant governor and deprived Africans from filming themselves for nearly thirty years. Instead, African audiences watched newsreels, propaganda films and Hollywood productions, which have continued to be widely distributed on the African continent. In countries where cinema has been controlled, censored and even denied to local populations, and where self-representations at the cinema have been made by others, Jean-Pierre Bekolo asks us about the political sense of making and broadcasting films in Africa today. He explores these questions through an aesthetic *mise en abîme*: a group of hooligans who are fans of Hollywood films reenact the gestures and words of Van Damme and Bruce Lee, clashing with a filmmaker we imagine to be the director's alter ego, who has just returned to his homeland with a mission to defend African cinema at all costs.

Directed by Jean-Pierre Bekolo. With Ken Gampu, Albee Lesotho, Anthony Levendale
France/UK/Zimbabwe/Cameroon 1996, 35mm, color, 72 min. In English

\$15 SPECIAL EVENT TICKETS

JEAN-PIERRE BEKOLO IN PERSON

saturday march 23 at 7pm

MIRACULOUS WEAPONS

Set in the mid-sixties during apartheid, in a state called the Free State, *Miraculous Weapons* tells the story of a South African death row inmate, played by Cameroonian Emil Aboussolo M'bo, and three women in his life: his wife, a prison teacher and a



Jean-Pierre Bekolo *ARISTOTLE'S PLOT*

European pen pal. By not revealing the reason for Djamel's fifteen-year imprisonment and death sentence, the director condemns the death penalty absolutely and points to Black liberation struggles in a transatlantic perspective (for Bekolo is certainly referring to American citizen Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther who has been imprisoned for the past forty-two years). Indeed, borrowing its title from the eponymous collection of poems by Aimé Césaire (1946), the Martinique poet and champion of negritude and the liberation of Black peoples, the film is described by the director not only as a manifesto in favor of abolishing the death penalty, but as a hymn to life.

Directed by Jean-Pierre Bekolo. With Emil Aboussolo M'bo, Maryne Bertieaux, Andrea Larsdotter
Cameroon 2017, DCP, color, 98 min

INTRODUCTION BY JEAN-PIERRE BEKOLO

sunday march 24 at 7pm

LE PRÉSIDENT

How do you know when it's time to leave? This is one of the questions raised by Jean-Pierre Bekolo's forth feature film, shot in Cameroon, a country ruled for

over forty years by Paul Biya. In this film Bekolo also analyzes the congruent relationship between the media and political power in order to question, in the form of a satirical film, the meaning of democratic political representation in the context of contemporary Cameroon. (For instance, pay attention to the TV show footage included in wider shots.) With his signature mixing of codes and genres, Bekolo portrays here a fictitious president with dark glasses, imbued with power. Unsurprisingly, the film was censored by the Cameroonian authorities when it was released in 2013. Yet being president is not a divine gift, and "being the son of a president not enough to become one," as the rapper, political activist and exile Valsero, who appears in the film, reminds us.

Directed by Jean-Pierre Bekolo. With Massam A. Biroko, Gérard Essomba, Max Essouma
Cameroon/Germany 2013, DCP, color, 63 min. French with English subtitles

sunday april 7 at 7pm

NAKED REALITY

"*Naked Reality* is not just a futuristic film from Africa with an incredible cast, powerful images and music. *Naked Reality* is the cinema of the future." – Jean-Pierre Bekolo

Wanita leaves her home one morning, unaware that her morning prayer to the ancestors has initiated her journey to Dimsi, the land that cannot be seen. In search of a new identity, Wanita is propelled 150 years into the future, into a world dominated by immortals, where African cities have become gigantic megalopolises. An Afrofuturistic dystopian fable shot in black and white, *Naked Reality* is a *mise en abîme* of Jean-Pierre Bekolo's philosophical and aesthetic exploration of his cinematic universe. Moving between fiction and reality, he once again deconstructs the codes of narrative and discourse, using minimalist elements and unconventional settings to further blur the lines. Plunged with the viewers into a future in the grip of an unprecedented energy and health crisis, a young woman navigates a permeable city where she has lost all bearings, an "unfinished" open city in unnerving proximity to our virtual present.

Directed by Jean-Pierre Bekolo. With Weza Da Silva, Luthuli Dlamini, Akin Omotoso
Cameroon 2016, DCP, b/w, 62 min



Jean-Pierre Bekolo *NAKED REALITY*

sunday april 14 at 7pm – PART I

sunday april 21 at 7pm – PART II

MUDIMBE'S ORDER OF THINGS LES CHOSES ET LES MOTS DE MUDIMBE

Les choses et les mots de Mudimbe is an interview with Valentin Yves Mudimbe, a philosopher and philologist by training, born in 1941 in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. One of the most important African intellectuals of the 20th century, Mudimbe has contributed to the deconstruction of Western (post)modernism and the decolonization of knowledge, following Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966) and Edward Saïd's *Orientalism* (1978). Bekolo provides an insight into the man and his way of life, as well as his commitments, through a 243-minute face-to-face, penetrating interview during which the camera is rarely at rest, also studying Mudimbe's books, objects and surroundings. The Cameroonian philosopher's reflections focus on the lessons we can learn from philosophers and thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Patrice Lumumba, from Mudimbe's unusual perspective. In his first documentary, Bekolo plunges intensely into the powerful cosmogony of Mudimbe, continuing to question the meaning of the existence of beings and things, philosopher-to-philosopher.

Directed by Jean-Pierre Bekolo

Cameroon 2015, DCP, color, 243 min. French and English with English subtitles



Jean-Pierre Bekolo *MUDIMBE'S ORDER OF THINGS*

THE PRACTICE (AND OTHER WORKS) BY MARTÍN REJTMAN

MARCH 25 – APRIL 14

The Practice, the new film by Martín Rejtman (b.1961), reaffirms his singular place in Argentine and world cinema as one of the rare auteurs working, with innovative brio and sophistication, within the realm of comedy. Beginning with his now classic debut *Rapado*, Rejtman's narrative features have each added formal complexity and philosophical depth to that often-dismissed broad genre category through wryly detached, yet richly humorous, stories centered around heroes and heroines trying to retrieve something they have unexpectedly lost—be it an object, a relationship, youth or even identity itself. *The Practice* thus uses its narrative of a yoga instructor reevaluating his life and work as he deals with a divorce and a torn meniscus, among other complications, to offer a gently comic portrait of late midlife crisis shaped by Rejtman's signature and carefully choreographed minimalist, deadpan style. With its emphasis, often refracted by humor, on the meaning of sustained physical and mental routine, *The Practice* may also be taken as a meditation on the rigor and restraint guiding Rejtman's practice as a director who, like Bresson, Ozu and Tati before him, uses extended rehearsals to define the ideal cadence, rhythm and movement of dialogue, gestures and bodies. Also like the work of these filmmakers, Rejtman's films diffuse their narrative meaning across their meticulous mise-en-scène, rendering dialogue and characters only one element within a larger and subtly polyvalent world in which seemingly minor objects and gestures exert a major presence, and in which exits and entrances seem to have as much meaning as the characters who pass through them.

To celebrate Rejtman's new film and the longer arc of his remarkable career, this program includes two now classic early works recognized as highlights of the New Argentine Cinema—*Rapado* and *Silvia Prieto*—together with his wonderful recent short film, *Shakti*. After the screening of the digitally restored *Silvia Prieto*, he will be joined by Carlos Gutiérrez, co-founder and Executive Director of Cinema Tropical, the pioneering US distributor of Latin American film and early champion of Rejtman's films. Gutiérrez's visit is also an occasion to celebrate the HFA's recent acquisition of the Cinema Tropical Collection comprised of 35mm English-subtitled release prints from the distribution catalogue. — Haden Guest

Film descriptions by Haden Guest.

Special thanks: Marcela Ramos—David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard and Mariano Siskind—Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard.



DAVID ROCKEFELLER CENTER
FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Martín Rejtman *RAPADO*

monday march 25 at 3pm

RAPADO CROPPED HEAD

Rejtman's legendary feature debut became an instant cult sensation, immediately recognized as an authentic, iconic harbinger of a new sensibility in Argentine and Latin American filmmaking. *Rapado* boldly announced Rejtman's signature laconic style with its restrained camera work, zero-degree performance style, crisply distilled dialogue and careful structure of repetitions that both abstract and intensify the largely nocturnal world tightly contained within it. A close adaptation of the title entry from Rejtman's eponymous collection of short stories, *Rapado* follows two, or perhaps three, days and late nights in the life of a young man still stuck at home with his parents and enervated by the pregnant decisions that seem to weigh down his every action. A droll and melancholy comedy of delayed reaction that captures the loneliness of the corner store and video arcade, and the even-then precarious state of the Argentine economy, *Rapado*'s poignant rendering of directionless youth merits comparison to the late, desolate masterworks of Aki Kaurismäki.

The Harvard Film Archive will screen a beautiful 35mm print of Rapado from its collection, struck directly from the original camera negative in 2010.

Directed by Martín Rejtman. With Ezequiel Cavia, Damián Dreizik, Mirta Busnelli
Argentina/Netherlands 1992, 35mm, color, 75 min. Spanish with English subtitles

Preceded by

SHAKTI

The precise yet unexpected symmetries that guide Rejtman's narratives (in cinema as in his short stories) are showcased in his sharply comic short film, *Shakti*, a brisk chronicle of the days in the life of a young man after he determines to break up with his girlfriend on the same day of his grandmother's death. As in *Silvia Prieto*, Rejtman makes brilliant use of hesitant voiceover and crisp dialogue to embody the young man's uncertain place in a world he has yet to make his own. Featuring the first Jewish character in Rejtman's cinema and based partially on characters modeled after colleagues and friends—including celebrated Argentine filmmaker Albertina Carri, who inspired the eponymous heroine—*Shakti* points clearly towards the openly autobiographical turn taken by his latest feature *La práctica*.

Directed by Martín Rejtman. With Ignacio Solmonese, Laura Visconti, Valentina Posleman
Argentina/Chile 2019, DCP, color, 19 min. Spanish with English subtitles

\$15 SPECIAL EVENT TICKETS MARTÍN REJTMAN IN PERSON

friday april 5 at 7pm

THE PRACTICE LA PRÁCTICA

With an understated spiritual questioning, *The Practice* returns to the searching narrative shared by all of Rejtman's fiction films, now with a portrait of an Argentine yoga teacher, Gustavo (Esteban Bigliardi), living and working in Chile while navigating his divorce and what seems to be a new accident- and injury-prone stage of his life. The series of poignantly comic displacements stoically suffered by Gustavo thus resonate as emblems of a deeper quest as he is faced not only with his floating status as a newly single foreigner but also a serious muscle injury and, equally grave, the anxious attention of his overbearing mother. Gustavo's suddenly unbalanced posture is, however, gently mirrored in the pratfalls and mishaps of the other yoga-practicing characters who together comprise a community of searchers and stumblers. The more personal, intimate inflection of Rejtman's latest work is signaled by its partially autobiographical inspiration in the filmmaker's own decades-long practice of Ashtanga

yoga (including in a Chilean retreat) and his uncanny physical resemblance to the film's lead, veteran Argentine stage and screen actor Bigliardi.

Directed by Martín Rejtman. With Catalina Saavedra, Esteban Bigliardi, Mirta Busnelli
US/Argentina/Chile/Portugal 2023, DCP, color, 93 min. Spanish with English subtitles

\$15 SPECIAL EVENT TICKETS MARTÍN REJTMAN & CARLOS GUTIÉRREZ IN PERSON

saturday april 6 at 7pm – DCP

sunday april 14 at 3pm – 35mm

SILVIA PRIETO

Rejtman's effervescent masterpiece is a glittering screwball-inspired comedy of shifting identities that centers around the ardent efforts of its strong eponymous heroine to suddenly lead her life in a radically new direction. Everything goes differently when she discovers there is more than one Silvia Prieto. Buoyed by its fanciful, rapid-fire dialogue and

at times hilariously absurd story, *Silvia Prieto* is saturated by a Pop sensibility that belies a gently ironic fascination with bright logos, television slogans and the rich contradictions of consumer culture. Rejtman's deep appreciation of nonprofessional actors led him to prominent, popular Argentine singer-musicians in key roles, including Vicentico and Rosario Bléfari, who brings a spontaneous grace to her portrayal of Silvia Prieto as a young woman spinning at a crossroads of her own design. Guided by Bléfari's mellifluous voice in a wonderfully disjointed voiceover, *Silvia Prieto* offers an affectionate portrait of romantic folly that, at its end, reveals an unexpected bridge to Rejtman's lesser-known documentary work.

The Harvard Film Archive will screen a beautiful English-subtitled 35mm print that now forms part of the HFA's Cinema Tropical Collection.

Directed by Martín Rejtman. With Rosario Bléfari, Valeria Bertuccelli, Vicentico
Argentina 1999, DCP/35mm, color, 92 min. Spanish with English subtitles



Martín Rejtman *THE PRACTICE*

CHRONICLES OF CHANGING TIMES. THE CINEMA OF EDWARD YANG

MARCH 29 – MAY 5

According to a well-known anecdote, Haruki Murakami only began writing fiction when he was twenty-nine. When watching a baseball game, he suddenly had an epiphany that he *could* write a novel. After that he went home and started writing, giving birth to his first book nine months later. Like Murakami, Edward Yang (1947-2007) had a similar flash of insight at a similar age when he came across Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972). This film became a powerful inspiration, reminding him that magnificent films could be made without an extravagant budget. So the story goes.

When growing up, Yang thought he would "please his parents" and traveled a path that would lead to conventional successes. After receiving his graduate degree in electrical engineering from the University of Florida in the mid-1970s, Yang stayed in the US and worked as an engineer for seven years or so. When he turned thirty, he found himself to be less certain than ever about the kind of life he was heading into, and soon decided that he ought to at least pursue one of the fields that he had been deeply passionate about: architecture or filmmaking. Upon receiving admission offers from several prestigious architecture schools (including Harvard and MIT), he met with a close friend who posed the question: "Would you still want to make films even after being an architect for a while?" He finally realized what he *really* wanted. (Unsurprisingly, knowing or not knowing what one really wants became a consistent theme in several of his films.) Having made up his mind, in early 1980s he came back to Taiwan and launched a twenty-year career that was only too short for his immense talent and brilliance. As a leading figure of the Taiwan New Cinema—inaugurated by the omnibus film *In Our Time* (1982)—Yang conducted a series of marvelously unyielding inquiries into the trials and tribulations of contemporary life in Taipei through seven and a quarter feature-length films.

Importantly, his many years of scientific training were not simply left behind after the “turn” toward filmmaking. Analytical precision forms an essential part of his subtle yet distinct style—a kind of intense rigor that does not content itself with the so-called mind games that one often finds in cheap mysteries or psychological thrillers. Underlying his artistic vision, perhaps, is a search for a more pervasive and original form of rationality that has sensibility already as a part of its constituent core. His visual compositions illuminate a hyperawareness that geometrical figures are closely linked to intuitive knowledge; his play with sound often gives rise to moments of surprise, jolting us out of habitual association or perception, the naturalness of which we have long taken for granted. In this way, his demand for formal and narrative exactitude yielded a style that is often described as sober, distant, cold and challenging.

The narrative worlds that Yang’s oeuvre constructed crystallized into a cinematographic form of history of the development of Taiwan in the second half of the 20th century. The diegetic space of *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991) is the earliest: the story is based on a true incident, a murder that took place in 1961. The film was made shortly after the loosening of governmental censorship, when Taiwan’s history became a permissible subject for more open discussion and reflection, but the original uncut version was not screened publicly in Taiwan until 2007. The lost and confused adolescents in this film, who struggle to find a sense of belonging and identity, will have grown into the same age as the adults or parents in the world of Yang’s last feature, *Yi Yi* (2000), set in contemporary Taipei at the turn of the millennium. Time has passed and much has changed, yet the difficulty in grappling with the full meaning of life persists.

The only other period piece is his first short film, a segment titled *Expectations* in *In Our Time*, which marks its own diegetic time with a subtle reference to Beatles’ Japan Tour of 1966. Even though few of his works are set in the past, Yang’s contemporary films carry a poignant presentness which is deeply rooted in the history and changes of Taiwan. His first feature film, *That Day, on the Beach* (1983), through complex flashbacks and flash forwards, depicts a narrative that spans from the late 60s to early 80s. Along with *Taipei Story* (1985), these three early films foreground female interiority in a Taiwan undergoing drastic socioeconomic changes.

One of the questions persistently posed by Yang’s films is: in changing times when one’s values are constantly undergoing reconstruction, elimination and assimilation, how can people keep their own character and ideals intact while remaining adaptable and fit to live in harmony with the new moment? His continual experimentation with different film and literary genres such as melodrama, comedy, epic and tragedy as well as with different artistic media, including theatre, music, drawing and animation, shows his own efforts in reflecting on this question. His last three films—the “New Taipei Trilogy”—*A Confucian Confusion* (1994), *Mahjong* (1996), and *Yi Yi*, orchestrate intricate narrative mosaics with playful stylistic explorations. The first two of this group are among his less-known films, which not only depict explicitly and fiercely the impact of capitalism on personal relationships in Taipei and the challenging role of tradition in an increasingly multicultural metropolis, but also poignantly expose a pervasive spiritual emptiness and intellectual timidity which generate unfortunate or terrifying consequences.

In an age when “grand narratives” are called into question, Edward Yang did not hurry off to celebrate any facile sense of freedom or independence. His relatively small, yet tremendously important, cinematic corpus (sharing the same number as Andrei Tarkovsky’s) warns us of the encroaching void and compels us to continue reflecting on the fragile relations between a private self and public conventions. Yang loved Taipei deeply, but like any true friend, he would never be its mere flatterer. In exposing the problems associated with urban alienation, the dominance of capitalist and materialist thinking, and the increasing opacity of human intimacy, he let the city of Taipei, with its unique history and complicated identity, become a marvelous site for the world to contemplate perennial questions such as the meaning of life, the pursuit of happiness, the knowledge of the self, and the challenges of the individual’s navigation with broader social forces.

Within the span of just a month in 2007, Edward Yang, Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antonioni passed away. Even though Yang had been far less recognized than the other two, a worldwide effort to acknowledge the significance of his cinema had been under way in recent years. In related but different ways, all three cinematic masters were concerned with civilization and its discontents. Epitomizing a sharp sensitivity to both the magic of film form and the power of narrative possibilities, their works speak to different strands or moments of modernism. They make visible the unending transformations and turmoil of the human psyche in the midst of change: difficult, terrifying, at times exciting, but always inevitable.

But the brave souls will keep soaring in the sky. As Edward Yang’s epitaph reads, “Dreams of love and hope shall never die.” — Ruochen Bo

The Harvard Film Archive is pleased to welcome Kaili Peng, the wife of Edward Yang, to introduce the first two screenings of our retrospective. A world-renowned pianist and composer, Peng collaborated with Yang on his late films and has worked tirelessly to preserve his work and the vast archive of materials spanning his entire career.



Edward Yang *A BRIGHTER SUMMER DAY*



Edward Yang *YI YI*

Film descriptions by Ruochen Bo.

Special thanks: Jessica Yu, Cultural Officer—
Taipei Cultural Center of TECO in New York.



INTRODUCTION BY KALLI PENG

friday march 29 at 7pm

friday may 3 at 7pm – without intro

YI YI (A ONE AND A TWO...)

Edward Yang’s cinematic swan song, released at the turn of the millennium, is a moving tapestry that weaves together the dissolution and reconstitution of the fragile subjectivities in an increasingly global, capitalist and mediated urban society. *Yi Yi* opens with a wedding and ends with a funeral. What unfolds between love and death is everything that saturates our modern existence: awakening, nostalgia, contingency, anxiety, alienation,

the ennui of everyday banality and the oscillations between longings for interpersonal dependence and fears of intimacy. This three-hour-long audiovisual epic unfolds the confusions and struggles of the multigenerational Jian family. As the grandmother falls into a coma, the family members take turns sitting at her bedside relaying their life to her, only to hear their own doubts and uncertainties reverberate in the resounding silence. At his tenderest moment, Yang, through *Yi Yi*, delicately, wisely and elegantly portrays the poignant reminiscences of the stirrings of first love and unveils the beauty that all too often shies away in the face of a perceived emptiness of life.

Directed by Edward Yang. With Wu Nien-Jen, Elaine Jin, Issey Ogata
Taiwan/Japan 2000, 35mm, color, 173 min. Mandarin, Min Nan, Hokkien,
English, Japanese and French with English subtitles

INTRODUCTION BY KALLI PENG

saturday march 30 at 6pm

saturday may 4 at 6pm – without intro

A BRIGHTER SUMMER DAY

GULING JIE SHAONIAN SHAREN SHIJIAN

Similar to Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *A City of Sadness* (1989), *A Brighter Summer Day* also traces the experiences of a large family during a critical historical epoch in Taiwan. Set in the early 1960s, against the backdrop of a society witnessing the consequences of major demographic shifts and political oppression, this film depicts the difficult trials awaiting the simple and harmonious life of the Zhang family. With Yang's exacting demands on the historical accuracy of the props, such as the family house and the furniture in the classrooms, *A Brighter Summer Day* splendidly restores the material historical world to us while inquiring into its zeitgeist. Caught between the world of rock 'n' roll, gang rivalry, love triangles and the White Terror paranoia, a group of teenagers are compelled to learn to negotiate the tensions and discrepancy between ideals and reality. The adolescent struggles in grasping that which is worth holding on to, be it people or principle, turn out to be an inescapable fate for adults alike.

Widely considered as Yang's magnum opus, this film, based on a real-life murder, launched Chang Chen's acting career at the age of fourteen. The brilliant juxtapositions of light and darkness, movement and stasis, sound and silence, all work together to yield a tragic lonesomeness that even the warmth of a bright summer day cannot cure.

Directed by Edward Yang. With Chang Chen, Lisa Yang, Chang Kuo-Chu
Taiwan 1991, DCP, color, 237 min. Mandarin, Min Nan, Shanghaiese and
English with English subtitles

sunday march 31 at 7pm

A CONFUCIAN CONFUSION DU LI SHI DAI

A satirical comedy with biting wit and a romance that is equally suspicious of and hopeful about love, this film ambitiously negotiates the coexistence of Confucianism with capitalism and democracy. In what feels like a second take of his *Taipei Story*, Yang stages a frantic tango that is danced not with two but twelve. A circle of closely knit friends and relatives forms an entangled web of relationships where lost and insecure young professionals (civil servants, accountants, businessmen, publishers, writers, and artists) navigate different emotional scenes in a vibrant Taipei. Following a series of misunderstandings, a pervasive sense of loneliness permeates these densely populated frames, resulting in a

deliberate messiness. Intentionally not a guide for the perplexed, Yang's dazzling world melts pretense, fakeness, authenticity and sincerity into a confounding pool of restlessness.

One of the two least heralded (or screened) films by Edward Yang (the other being *Mahjong*), *A Confucian Confusion*'s stylistic and narrative experimentation is in fact fiercer than ever, reflecting his ongoing formal exploration in a diverse oeuvre. Made after directing plays such as *Likely Consequence* (1992) and *Growth Period* (1993), *A Confucian Confusion* conducts, with a bold theatricality, a brilliant investigation into the challenging sedimentations of traditional ideals of social conformity and hierarchy in a modern age of independence.

Directed by Edward Yang. With Chen Li-Mei, Chen Shiang-chyi,
Chen Yi-Wen
Taiwan 1994, DCP, color, 125 min. Mandarin and Min Nan with
English subtitles

sunday april 7 at 3pm

friday april 19 at 7pm

MAHJONG MA JIANG

Mahjong is a game for four players, and the one who first collects winning sets of tiles wins. But the real game lies not in these rectangular pieces per se, but in deliberating what one already has and could afford to discard or how to acquire from others what one desires but does not yet possess. The funniest and angriest of Yang's films, *Mahjong* questions the sustainability of the dominance of a calculating profit-mindedness and transactional mentality, incubated in a capitalist madness blown to the point of barbarity. Red Fish, the son of a missing millionaire, leads a group of four young men as they swim in the ocean of ambivalent values among European expats, entrepreneurs, liars and criminals. A series of surprising events expose a social world where tenderness only makes one vulnerable to be exploited or deceived, and people—avoiding responsibilities—lack courage to think or make decisions for themselves. Following *A Confucian Confusion*, this dark comedy continues to experiment with theatrical forms. Yang's use of lighting in a scene of an astonishing and dramatically powerful murder recalls Béla Tarr's intense chamber drama *Autumn Almanac* (1984). The repeated appearance of T.G.I. Friday's and the Hard Rock Café, along with other



Edward Yang *THE TERRORIZERS*

globalist trinkets, casts an alluring, mysterious and uncanny shadow over Taipei's colorful nightlife.

Directed by Edward Yang. With Tang Tsung Sheng, Chang Chen,
Lawrence Ko
Taiwan 1996, DCP, color, 121 min. Mandarin, Min Nan and English with
English subtitles

monday april 8 at 7pm

saturday april 20 at 9pm

THE TERRORIZERS KONG BU FEN ZI

Characterized as "Yang's most difficult, intellectually provocative, and structurally challenging film" (John Anderson), Edward Yang's third feature-length film is a puzzle with immense reverberatory power. *The Terrorizers* depicts the intertwining of love and death among three different couples: a young photographer and his literary girlfriend; a middle-class and middle-aged married couple whose mutual estrangement grows to the point of no return; and a delinquent duo whose income comes from committing petty pickpocketing and blackmailing. Prank phone calls, amateur photography, writer's block and coveted promotions serendipitously bring these separate lives together. As close relationships come to



Edward Yang *A CONFUCIAN CONFUSION*



Edward Yang *TAIPEI STORY*

a dissolution, the distinctions between life and art, fiction and reality also edge toward implosion.

Directed by Edward Yang. With Cora Miao, Lee Li-Chun, King Shih-Chieh
Taiwan 1986, DCP, color, 110 min. Mandarin and Min Nan with English subtitles

monday april 15 at 7pm

THAT DAY, ON THE BEACH HAI TAN DE YI TIAN

A renowned young pianist, Tan Ching-Ching (Terry Hu) comes back to Taipei for the first time in thirteen years to give a performance. An old friend, Lin Jia-li (Sylvia Chang), gets in touch with her to reconvene over an afternoon coffee. *That Day, on the Beach* takes place over a conversation between the two female friends, during which Ching learns about how the romantic and domestic life of Jia-li and her elder brother evolved over the past decade. Through complex flashbacks, the microcosmic personal life is revealed to be closely interwoven with the drastic economic and social changes that Taiwan witnessed over the entire 70s. Full of subtle narrative and cinematic surprises, the film explores the difficulties that accompany freedom, love and trust; in staging the fragility of any sense of facile contentment and hope, it makes visible the pleasure and pain entailed in one's pursuits of happiness. The film also marks the debut of Christopher Doyle as

a cinematographer, best known for his collaborations with Wong Kar-Wai. Released in Taiwan four decades ago, Edward Yang's first feature's length, storytelling, and formal ingenuity all speak to his unwavering will to uphold his artistic vision despite all obstacles.

Directed by Edward Yang. With Sylvia Chang, Hsu Ming, Lee Lieh
Taiwan 1983, DCP, color, 166 min. Mandarin and German with English subtitles

saturday april 20 at 7pm

sunday april 21 at 3pm

TAIPEI STORY QING MEI ZHU MA

Lung (Hou Hsiao-Hsien), an ex-Little League baseball player, runs a fabric store in Dihua Street, a traditional commercial center in the west of Taipei. His long-term girlfriend, Ah-Chin (Tsai Chin), in contrast, works an assistant to the manager at an architecture firm in the newly developed East District. The film centers on the increasing estrangement between the couple as well as the widening gap between a commercialized corporate world and a nostalgic world of traditional values. The striking visuals of Taipei's city space parallel the quietly stormy vicissitudes emanated from the spiraling disillusionment, distrust, disappointments and discords in the psychical space of the city's inhabitants.

The shape of this film's production epitomizes the camaraderie between the artists leading the Taiwan New Cinema, as Hou Hsiao-Hsien not only acted a major part in the film, but also mortgaged his own house to get funding for the production costs. Edward Yang deliberately chose nonprofessional actors for the major roles. The remarkable performances from both Hou and Tsai bring to light, in somber melancholy, the uneasy, if not tragic, strain in the inescapable disharmony between obligation, desire and reality

Directed by Edward Yang. With Tsai Chin, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Ko I-Chen
Taiwan 1985, DCP, color, 110 min. Min Nan, Mandarin and Hokkien with English subtitles

monday april 22 at 7pm

sunday may 5 at 3pm

IN OUR TIME GUANG YIN DE GU SHI

The omnibus film *In Our Time* initiated radical innovations in terms of aesthetic styles, industry practices and commonly depicted themes, thereby revolutionizing the filmmaking industry in Taiwan and inaugurating the movement of Taiwan New Cinema. The four segments are shot by four young emerging directors and each film—set in different decades from the 1950s to the 1980s—represents roughly one of the four younger stages of life: childhood, adolescence, young adulthood (in college) and married life (as working professionals).

Titled *Expectations*, sometimes translated as *Desires*, Edward Yang's segment features a series of sensitive and expressive vignettes that depict the growing pains of adolescents in mid-60s Taiwan. Yang sees the placement of the second short film as structurally akin to the second movement in a symphony, typically characterized by its lyrical and slow nature. The teenaged Hsiao-Fen (Shi An-Ni) serves as a kind of prototype for other young heroines in Yang's cinematic corpus. The diversity of the cinematic techniques used in his debut short film accentuates the complexity of the protagonist's emotional and perceptual experience.

Directed by Edward Yang, Chang Yi, Ko I-Chen and Tao Te-Chen. With Sylvia Chang, Emily Y. Chang, Lee Li-Chun
Taiwan 1982, DCP, color, 110 min. Mandarin and Min Nan with English subtitles



Edward Yang *THAT DAY, ON THE BEACH*

BEING IN A PLACE. REDISCOVERING MARGARET TAIT

APRIL 12 – APRIL 13

Margaret Tait's is an unlikely story, but then poets' always are. Born in Kirkwall in 1918, she left at eight to go to school in Edinburgh. She studied to be a doctor in the late 1930s and in 1943 joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, serving in India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Of her eventual turn from medicine to art, Tait said, "I think I gradually came over to feeling that it was necessary to do something more than simply bringing people back to bodily health." Like many northern poets before her, she sought her inspiration in Italy. Tait would later recall how she went to Rome to research a script based on the life of St. Francis. Scooped by Rossellini's *The Flowers of St. Francis* (1950), she enrolled in a filmmaking course at the Centro Sperimentale di Fotografia, where she studied for two years.

She may not have made her life of St. Francis, but neither did she stray far from the Franciscan ideal. Robert Bresson once remarked that there is a prejudice against simplicity in cinema, and that surely goes double for a woman in midcentury Scotland. Without any available infrastructure to produce the kind of poetic films she had in mind, Tait launched Ancona Films out of her Edinburgh studio in 1953. Within ten years, she had a clutch of short films and five volumes of poems and stories to her credit.

Tait's films are resolutely small-scale, human sized. The main action of *Land Makar* (1981) consists of the rebuilding of a haystack after a gale, while a family of swans goes about their business at loch's edge. The ordinary sights of a dead bird (1974's *Aerial*), an old woman unwrapping a sweet (1952's *A Portrait of Ga*), or a gate's being latched (1955's *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo*, a heavenly illustration of the Gerard Manley Hopkins poem) come touched by epiphany. "I used to lie in wait to see the clover open / Or close," one of her poems reads, "But never saw it. / I was too impatient, / Or the movement is too subtle, / Imperceptible / And more than momentary." She found an ideal instrument for such patient probing in a handheld Bolex camera ("A tool that is fully used," Tait writes elsewhere, "gets a bloom on it"), with shots quickened by cuts that work as line breaks. Her progressively more adventurous, contrapuntal use of sound further dynamized her montage, such that the images of her films glint while the sounds burrow.

The modesty of Tait's work should not obscure the fact that she experimented with a strikingly contemporary variety of forms: from landscape film to hand-painted abstraction, portraiture to fable, pure color to documentary voice. She did not hold to any particular way of working, at times producing films for public television and local government, and later in life working at feature length (1992's *Blue Black Permanent*). One senses that her distaste for labels—she didn't particularly like "avant-garde" or "diary film" and had her doubts about documentary value altogether—stemmed from a broader resistance, abundantly evident in her art, to anything getting in the way of direct contact.

What holds all this work together is an abiding preoccupation with place—truly a sense in Tait's films. Her Orkney is a place of work, family, the street and history, as surely as it is one of animals, plants, wind and sunlight. It is a place where land meets sea and days eternity. In Ronald Blythe's *Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village*, a very Tait-like book fashioned from oral histories, there is a short chapter given over to a poet who has left behind a jobbing life for rustic simplicity. "I am now at home here," he says of the village, "Words have meaning for me here. I am lucky, I came here to get better but I have in fact been reborn. I have escaped into reality." Tait's films bear the imprint of this same quiet revelation, forever pointing the way home. — Max Goldberg

Curated by Ute Aurand, Luke Fowler and Haden Guest.



Peter Hollander and Tait filming in Perugia, 1951. ©The Margaret Tait estate and Orkney Library and Archive



Ute Aurand GLIMPSES FROM A VISIT TO ORKNEY IN SUMMER 1995

UTE AURAND IN PERSON friday april 12 at 7pm

It was in summer 1993 when I first saw films by Margaret Tait. Not in a cinema, but at a 16mm editing table in the Filmmakers Co-op office in London. The room was not dark enough, the image small, but I was inspired and deeply touched by something that is difficult to put into words. Till today I ask myself, *what is it, that I admire so much in Margaret Tait's films?* They are timeless and speak directly to our inner self, plain and clear and complex at the same time. Her images are simple, nothing special, her camera movements motivated by an inner impulse, often surprising, like her editing. If we see her films, something remains secret, inexplicable but not hidden. Tait said: "The cinema I care about is at the level of poetry." Perhaps this best explains what defies explanation.

In 1994 I organized the first retrospective of her films in Berlin and several cinemas in Germany. Because I wanted to see all her films I visited Tait in Orkney in summer 1995. We sat down in her living room, and she projected her 16mm films in an empty picture frame. After studying film in Rome in 1951, Tait actually wanted to make features—not shorts—but it was not until the age of seventy-three that she was able to realize her

only feature-length film *Blue Black Permanent*. Luckily, she was not given the means earlier, otherwise her idiosyncratic shorter films—which today give her an important place in the canon of poetic film—would not exist.

I have selected seven short films for the program to show a range, starting with one of her earliest films, *A Portrait of Ga*, from 1952 and ending with her last film, *Garden Pieces*, from 1998. The Tait program is framed by two of my own short films, which I filmed during my visit to Orkney in 1995. — Ute Aurand

ON MY WAY TO ORKNEY

Directed by Ute Aurand
UK/Germany 1998, 16mm, color, 3.5 min

A PORTRAIT OF GA

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1952, 16mm, color, 5 min

AERIAL

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1974, 16mm, color, 4 min

THE LEADEN ECHO AND THE GOLDEN ECHO

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1955, 16mm, color, 7 min

COLOUR POEMS

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1974, 16mm, color, 12 min



Margaret Tait CALYPSO

CALYPSO

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1955, DCP, color, 4 min

HAPPY BEES

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1954, 16mm, color, 17 min

GARDEN PIECES

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1998, 16mm, color, 12 min

GLIMPSES FROM A VISIT TO ORKNEY IN SUMMER 1995

Directed by Ute Aurand
Germany/UK 2020, 16mm, color, silent, 4.5 min

LUKE FOWLER IN PERSON

saturday april 13 at 7pm

“Well, what was it, ‘Speak the things you know,’ you know? Make films about what you really feel, what you really know...”

“How to bring the qualities of the big film into independently made shorts—taking available actuality as material then by known cinematic methods to create something with its own entity and duration, its own substance—is the inspiration and discipline in this work.”

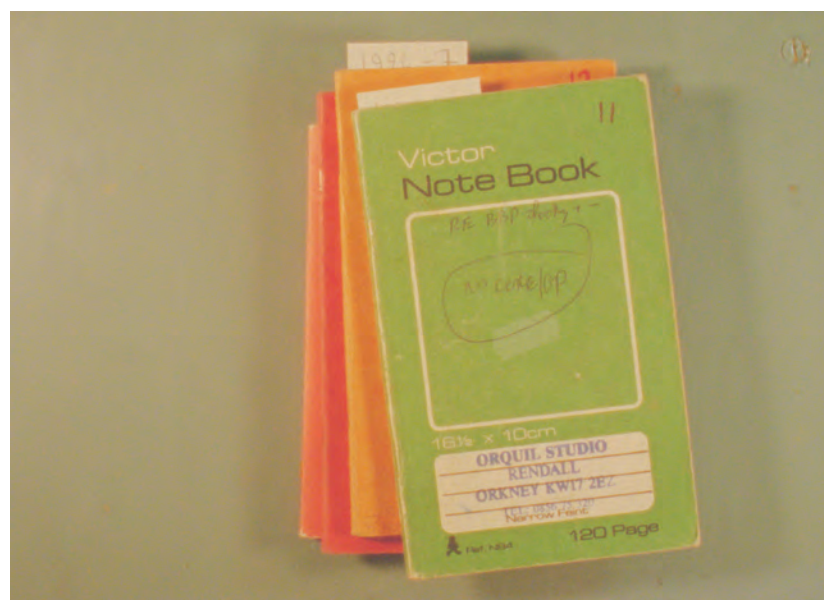
— Margaret Tait

Around 2019 I began work on a film about Margaret Tait, the initial impetus being the discovery of a box of Tait’s 16mm rushes and offcuts* that were rejected by the Moving Image Archive, where the majority of her filmic elements reside. The material—all collated and spliced together by Tait on reels (including sound takes)—was rejected on the criteria of not being considered “finished films” and therefore presumably of insignificant artistic value to the archive. I found this judgement strange and inconsistent as the archive already holds unfinished films of Tait’s and presents them on their website making no distinction between what is completed or otherwise. In recent years there has been an academic interest in the “unfinished film” reconsidering the rich generative potential of this phenomena rather than deeming it a site of failure.

Being in a Place is based on Tait’s unrealised script proposed for Channel 4 in 1983 titled *Heartlandscape Orkney: Visions of Ephemerality and Permanence*. It was written at a time of great excitement about the new channel and the possibilities it could afford independent filmmakers. Part of Channel 4’s original mandate was to provide an alternative to the existing channels by providing an inclusive and diverse platform for disenfranchised groups. Margaret, an older, female filmmaker based in the archipelago of the Orkney islands, therefore would seem like a natural choice to have been involved in such an initiative. Unfortunately, this was not to be.**



Margaret Tait THREE PORTRAIT SKETCHES



Luke Fowler *BEING IN A PLACE: A PORTRAIT OF MARGARET TAIT*

In the first half of my film the archival material dwells on lists—shots, sounds, memos, titles and reflections on screenings undertaken (including Tait’s thoughts on the current avant-garde “structuralist” filmmakers—several of whom adopted her as an influence and considered her the most apt “predecessor” to their own experimental project). As the film draws on, we are introduced to a series of correspondences between Tait and several television producers or funders, to whom she appeals for opportunities and engagements. In all of their replies Tait’s proposals are rebuffed.***

The proposal for *Heartlandscape* was based around a journey from her home, East Aith, to her studio, in an old “kirk” in Rendall. Tait’s proposal was rewritten several times, considering different titles and chapters. At one point, it is called *Heartlandscape Of Orkney*; in another it’s referred to as *Being In A Place – visions of permanence and ephemerality*. The typewritten budget outlines a 75-minute, 16mm film shot on Eastman Kodak colour film, working with a film crew for four weeks and also shooting parts herself (which she writes would be more effective than working with a film crew). She considers £2000 for her fee (less than the price of an answer print) and then reconsiders that figure, adding, by hand, an extra 1 to make a more reasonable £12,000. One version of the

chapters includes: *Brief Portraits*; *Outlook (through windows, clear and coloured)*; *Garden Pieces*; *Heartlandscape (at the heart of the island and the last of the wilderness)*; *All To Rust*; *The Town in the Isles* and *Human Portraits*. Other versions of the proposal incorporate a preexisting black and white film: *Start of a Race, End of a Show, etc.* (1976) and what would be her final film, *Garden Pieces* (1998). In her proposal she makes several allusions to how she prefers to work: “in the way I work the shape and pace of the film come out of the filming itself.” Tait often made reference to her use of “available actuality”; these methodologies would no doubt be an anathema to a more traditional, television production.

One of the aspects of Tait’s original proposal I found most nourishing was to consider her metaphors for structuring and editing the work; in these she draws from her deep knowledge and love for Pibroch (a type of Scottish bagpipe music consisting of a series of variations on a theme). In these notes, she makes references to certain shots forming the “ground” whilst others embroider on these, as if composed “entirely from grace notes.” In the same way that she drew on poetry as a structuring device for filmmaking—we can see how in her *Heartlandscape* film—she draws on musical forms (the *crunluath a mach*) considering a radical interweaving of shots and chapters which would invoke “repetition, elaboration and glimpses of almost subliminal yet related images.”

My own film ends with a rather scathing comment from Tait on the current situation of Scottish film culture: that there is no such thing, i.e. that most “Scottish films” are not made from within Scotland but merely use Scotland as a landscape. Tait’s engagement with people, place and film form embodies a true alternative to this. Her films were vividly subjective—“full of poetry.” She was quietly experimental yet remained committed to the community and place where she grew up and returned, the Parish of Kirkwall, on the mainland of Orkney. — Luke Fowler

Lezione di Recitazione

Beware of approximations,
Tamberlani said to the student actors,
and I was listening.
Again and again he made that point.
Go to the heart of what it is,
Examine each character, each situation for itself
Each time
And never take the time before’s presentation,
Another person’s reading
Or anything else that doesn’t come out of this, now,
here.
Read the real individual reason.
Don’t approximate
By copying readymade externalisations.

— Margaret Tait

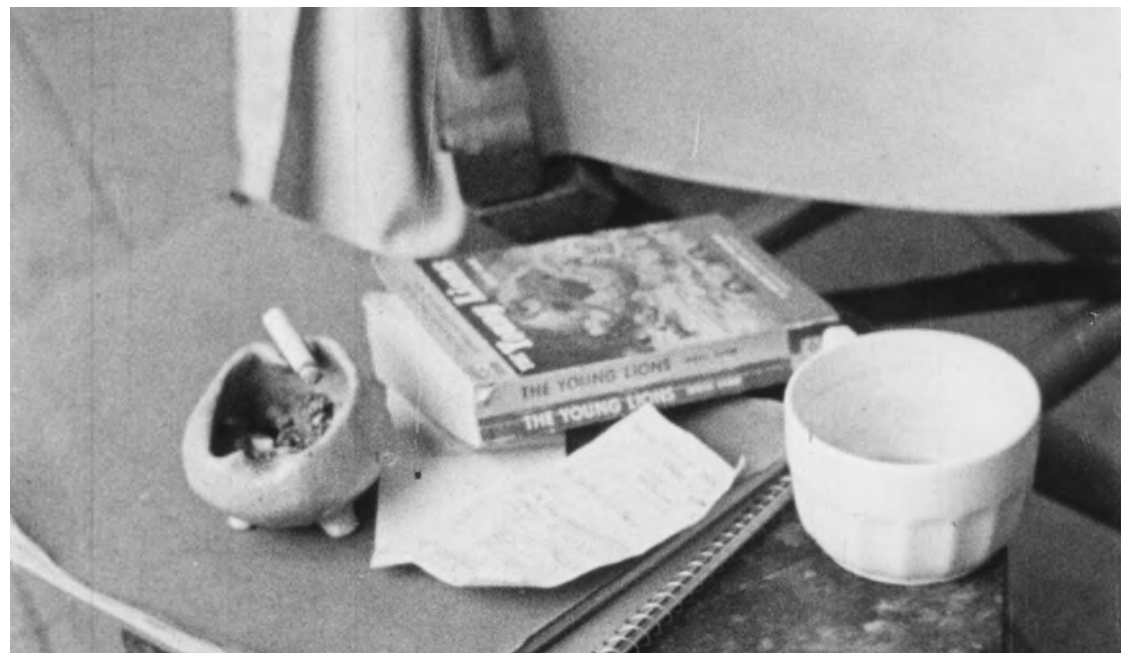


Margaret Tait GARDEN PIECES

* These came to me via professor Sarah Neely, who dubbed them “the fugitive archive.”

** Channel 4 instead commissioned a documentary on Tait by Margaret Williams based upon a scripted interview with Tamara Krikorian. It was not until the early 90s that Tait would receive funding to make her first feature, arguably a more traditional narrative feature, *Blue Black Permanent*.

*** In one of the few positive responses, a visiting BBC film crew to Orkney—making a film on the novelist Neil Gunn—thank Tait and her husband Alex Pirie for providing fresh coffee and cake. She had originally proposed to the producer to make a “film within a film.”



Luke Fowler BEING IN A PLACE: A PORTRAIT OF MARGARET TAIT

THREE PORTRAIT SKETCHES

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1951, 16mm, b/w, silent, 10 min

START OF A RACE, END OF A SHOW, ETC.

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1976, DCP, b/w, silent, 4 min

BEING IN A PLACE: A PORTRAIT OF MARGARET TAIT

Directed by Luke Fowler
UK 2023, DCP, color & b/w, 60 min

MY ROOM. VIA ANCONA 21

Directed by Margaret Tait
UK 1951, DCP, b/w, silent, 2.5 min



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FROM THE HFA COLLECTION...

APRIL 1

This season, our ongoing series of rare and unique prints from the HFA's vast collection continues. Thanks to an initiative with the Yale Film Archive, a new 35mm print of *The Conversation* was created in November 2023 from a preservation duplicate negative provided by American Zoetrope.

Special thanks: Brian Meacham, Yale Film Archive.

INTRODUCTION BY STEVEN BIEL

monday april 1 at 7pm

THE CONVERSATION

"I would be perfectly happy to have all my personal things burn up in a fire. Because I don't have anything personal."

The postrevolutionary paranoia of the early 1970s suffuses *The Conversation*. Even so, Coppola depoliticizes this thriller, removing action, character and history by going over the same tape again and again, in an aural, Watergate-era version of *Blowup*. Gene Hackman, as a professional wiretapper, plays a self-consciously anonymous man at the top of a clandestine profession in which no moment between human beings cannot be recorded. He becomes unglued once he takes an interest in the story beyond its audio quality.

Made between *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather, Part II* (1974), Coppola's Palme d'Or-winning *Conversation* applies the eeriness and quiet of San Francisco to the murk of the corporate thriller. The doomed quality of the talented cast of character actors deepens the atmosphere of mistrust and conspiracy that's on display in this hesitant masterpiece of Murchian sound design. — A.S. Hamrah, from the HFA program *Furious and Furiouser*, Autumn 2015

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. With Gene Hackman, John Cazale, Allen Garfield
US 1974, 35mm, color, 113 min



Francis Ford Coppola *THE CONVERSATION*

in person

ANA VAZ feb 4 & 5

MARK WEBBER mar 1 & 2

SIMON FIELD mar 2

JEAN-PIERRE BEKOLO mar 22 - 24

KALLI PENG mar 29 & 30

MARTÍN REJTMAN apr 5 & 6

UTE AURAND apr 12

LUKE FOWLER apr 13

coming soon

MELVILLE ET CIE

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