

The Museum of Modern Art

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West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

CINEMA OF THE ABSURD FROM POLAND

The Cinema of the Absurd will be shown Wednesday at noon, June 17, at The Museum of Modern Art, with a selection of films from Poland, including two early shorts by Roman Polanski, director of such features as "Knife in the Water," "Repulsion," and "Rosemary's Baby." The weekly Wednesday-at-Noon showings are programmed by Margareta Akermark, Associate Director of the Department of Film.

Along with Polanski's "Two Men and a Wardrobe" (1957), the program includes his short "Mammals" (1962), as well as other Polish shorts: "Dom" (1958), directed by Jan Lenica, "Rondo" (1958), directed and written by Jan Majewski, and "Hobby" (1968), designed, written and directed by Daniel Szczechura.

The ideas expressed in these films were first widely disseminated by playwrights such as Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter. These pioneers of the Theater of the Absurd shared the belief that the world is illogical and that rational explanations and solutions to man's problems are fruitless. The expression of man's confrontation with what Camus called "the benign indifference of the universe" has since taken the form of black comedy in both theater and film, with man an impotent, comic figure whose efforts at self-assertion are absurd.

Polanski's "Two Men and a Wardrobe," for example, is a parable of two men who emerge from the sea with an old wardrobe and try to make their way into a town. They are not allowed to board a train, they are removed from a cafe, denied a hotel room, and, finally, attacked by hoodlums. In the end they return to the sea with no more than what they emerged with, except perhaps the awareness of the futility of their efforts.

Like "Two Men and a Wardrobe," all five films share a surreal, fable-like quality and a focus on the absence of meaning in the universe. The entire program is presented through the courtesy of Contemporary Films/McGraw Hill.

Additional information available from Mark Segal, Assistant, and Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York 10019. Telephone: (212) 956-7296.