

The Museum of Modern Art

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

NO. 9
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SERIES OF FRENCH FILMS AT MODERN MUSEUM

Starting January 31, The Museum of Modern Art will devote three weeks to a program of 42 French films, both features and shorts, largely made during the 60s and all representative of aesthetic theories and innovative cinematic ideas. Typical are the films of Alain Resnais, Jean Rouch, Chris Marker, Alexandre Astruc, Jean-Luc Godard and Robert Bresson. These filmmakers, with the exception of Resnais and Godard, were unheralded in this country; their films were overshadowed by the more commercial New Wave pictures. In retrospect, however, they appear to be seminal films that have introduced new techniques, resurrected discarded techniques of the past, manipulated the dimension of time, and explored hitherto neglected subjects such as socio-anthropological themes.

All the pictures in this series are the output of Argos Films, an independent producing firm, headed by Anatole Dauman, who gave opportunities to unknown, untried young directors. As a result, in recognition of this company's contribution to French films over the past two decades, the Museum's Department of Film has chosen to present this program of Argos-produced films. The program was organized by Adrienne Mancina, Associate Curator of Film.

Featured are three early Resnais films: "Night and Fog," "Hiroshima, Mon Amour," and "Muriel." Of "Muriel" the director has said, "It will be up to the spectators to finish this story ... of error, indecision and lies." "Muriel," made on location in Boulogne, is considered the most rigorous undertaking of Resnais by many of his admirers. It is as formally ordered as a fugue, according to Richard Roud, who says on a second or third viewing one begins to appreciate more fully the beauty of the way it is put together.

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It utilizes all the director's camera know-how: fast cuts, overlapping of image and dialogue, and extra-fast and extra-slow, sometimes seemingly unrelated, images, lingered over for their sheer beauty.

The work of Chris Marker, who was assistant director to Resnais on "Night and Fog," will also be shown. His "Sunday in Peking" reveals this ancient and new city through the filmmaker's own observations of its historical and cultural paradoxes. Marker is known as a film essayist who inevitably expresses his personal vision, as he does in "La Jetée," a short feature in which a man recalls a childhood experience. In this film, Marker, like Resnais, travels backward and forward in time, uses still photographs, frozen movement, and a detached literary narration.

Jean Rouch is well known in France. One of his early films is "Chronicle of a Summer - Paris, 1960," featuring the brilliant cinematography of Raoul Coutard, with a non-professional cast whose members reveal something of their personal feelings in a scriptless and atypical documentary of the summer of 1960. Because Rouch is an anthropologist-filmmaker, and his colleague on this film, Edgar Morin, is a sociologist-film critic, the film succeeds in capturing ordinary people in their most natural, unaffected moments. "We have tried, Morin and I, to find a new form of humanism," the director has said, and his picture, according to Penelope Gilliatt, "probes like a needle into the real fear centers: the fear of poverty and of being alone, fear of other races and of sexual failure and most of all fear of self-fraudulence."

The films of Robert Bresson to be shown are "Au Hasard Balthazar" and "Mouchette," the latter from the novel by Georges Bernanos. Of all Bresson films it is considered the easiest to understand. Yet the director does not modify his "chaste, elliptical style," nor does he become sentimental in this neo-classical tragedy, despite the Dickensian problem of an oppressed

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child in a hostile world. For Mouchette is a 14-year-old peasant girl bereft of love and humiliated.

A recent film produced by Argos is "Immoral Tales," which the Department of Film recommends for adults only. It is an anthology film made by Walerian Borowczyk. Shown at the 17th London Film Festival in 1973, Borowczyk's film will eventually have five episodes, prefaced by an introduction. The theme is the true nature of man's repressed sexuality; the objective is to show that eroticism is far older than we are and worth studying. One episode takes place in the 18th century; another occurs in modern times.

The most recognized director of the 60s, Jean-Luc Godard, is represented on this program by two films: "Two or Three Things I Know About Her" and "Masculin-Féminin," highly lauded at the time. Lesser known works by far, many of them of short length, include: Georges Franju's "The First Night"; Jan Lenica's "Monsieur Tête," based on an Ionesco script and done in animation; "A Valparaiso" by Joris Ivens and "The 17th Parallel" by the same director; "Symphonie mécanique" by Jean Mitry; "La Piège" by Jacques Baratier; and "Regard sur la folie" by Mario Ruspoli, about which Jean-Paul Sartre has written, "it is not a documentary film. It invites you with wonderful images to have for the first time the experience of madness."

There is also "The Crimson Curtain" by Alexandre Astruc, based on a 19th-century mystery. This film without dialogue, told years after the event it depicts, has been described by the director as "mid-way between the memory and the dream, between the confession and the plot." It deals with an adolescent memory of a whole night's struggle with a corpse.

Contemporary/McGraw-Hill Films is circulating many of these films in the U.S.A. A few may be obtained from New Yorker Films. However, others are not available and have not been shown here at all. They include the

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work of Oumarou Ganda of Niger, who is responsible for "Le Wazzou Polygame," a story of an elderly African's life of prayer and work in the rice paddies of his world. The Nigerian film director also has contributed "Cabascabo," with the director himself in the title role of an army recruit, dismissed and disillusioned upon his return to civilian life. "L'Amour c'est gai l'amour c'est triste" (1968) is a feature film with Bernadette Lafont, which has until now had no American release.

The schedule follows:

- Thur, Jan 31, 2:00 Two or Three Things I Know About Her. 1966. Jean-Luc Godard. With Marina Vlady. English subtitles. 85 min.
- Fri, Feb 1, 2:00 La Jetée. 1963. Chris Marker. English commentary. 30 min. -- Night and Fog. 1955. Alain Resnais. English subtitles. 30 min.
- Sat, Feb 2, 3:00 Hiroshima Mon Amour. 1959. Alain Resnais. English subtitles. 88 min.
- Sat, Feb 2, 5:30 Same program as Friday, Feb 1, 2:00
- Sun, Feb 3, 5:30 Chronicle of a Summer - Paris 1960. 1960. Jean Rouch, Edgar Morin. English subtitles. 90 min.
- Mon, Feb 4, 2:00 Monsieur Albert, prophète. 1962. Jean Rouch. French version. 22 min. -- Le Vieil Alkassa. 1969. Serge Henri Moati. French version. 32 min. -- Le Wazzou Polygame. 1970. Oumarou Ganda. French version. 35 min.
- Mon, Feb 4, 5:30 Muriel. 1963. Alain Resnais. English subtitles. 120 min.
- Tues, Feb 5, 5:30 Same program as Monday, February 4, 2:00
- Wed, Feb 6, noon Paris la belle. 1960. Pierre Prévert, Jacques Prévert, Marcel Duhamel. In French. 24 min. -- The Searching Heart. 1952. Jean Aurel. English narration. 15 min. -- Goya: The Disasters of War. 1951. Pierre Kast. English narration. 20 min.
- Thur, Feb. 7, 2:00 Same program as Wednesday, February 6, noon
- Thur, Feb. 7, 5:30 Au Hasard Balthazar. 1966. Robert Bresson. English subtitles. 95 min.
- Thur, Feb. 7, 8:00 Mina de Vanghel. 1953. Maurice Clavel, Maurice Barry. In French. 45 min. -- The Crimson Curtain. 1952. By Alexandre Astruc. English version. 45 min.
- Fri, Feb 8, 2:00 Same program as Thursday, February 7, 8:00
- Sat, Feb 9, 3:00 Masculin-Féminin. 1966. Jean-Luc Godard. English subtitles. 103 min.
- Sat, Feb 9, 5:30 Mouchette. 1966. Robert Bresson. English subtitles. 90 min.
- Sun, Feb 10, 5:30 The First Night. 1957. Georges Franju. 20 min. -- The Whalers. 1958. Mario Ruspoli. English commentary. 28 min. -- Du Côte de la côte. 1958. Agnes Varda. English version. 28 min.
- Mon, Feb 11, 2:00 Same program as Sunday, February 10, 5:30
- Mon, Feb 11, 5:30 Concerto pour un exil. 1967. Désiré Ecaré. English titles. 30 min. -- Cabascabo. 1968. Oumarou Ganda. French version. 45 min.

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- Wed, Feb 13, noon Sunday in Peking. 1956. Chris Marker. English commentary. 31 min. -- A Valparaiso. 1963. Joris Ivens. Script by Chris Marker. 31 min.
- Thur, Feb 14, 2:00 Same program as Wednesday, February 13, noon
- Thur, Feb 14, 5:30 17^e Parallèle. 1968. Joris Ivens. English titles. 110 min.
- Thur, Feb 14, 8:00 Lettre de Sibérie. 1957. Chris Marker. English commentary. 60 min.
- Fri, Feb 15, 2:00 Same program as Monday, February 11, 5:30
- Sat, Feb 16, 3:00 L'Amour c'est gai l'amour c'est triste. 1968. Jean-Daniel Pollet. In French. 90 min.
- Sat, Feb 16, 5:30 La Piège. 1968. Jacques Baratier. English subtitles. 60 min. (repeated Monday, February 18, 5:30)
- Sun, Feb 17, 5:30 Same program as Saturday, February 16, 3:00
- Mon, Feb 18, 2:00 Le Mystère Mao. 1965. Claude Oztenberger. In French. 24 min. -- Regard sur la folie. 1961. Mario Ruspoli. In French. 53 min.
- Tues, Feb 19, 5:30 Chaval. 1970. Mario Ruspoli. In French. 15 min. -- Conte Mediocre. 1972. Edited by Mario Ruspoli from drawings by Chaval. In French. 8 min. -- Une Collection particulière. 1972. Walerian Borowczyk. No commentary. 14 min. -- La Véritable Histoire de la bête de Gévaudan. 1972. Walerian Borowczyk. No commentary. 23 min. Adults only.
- Wed, Feb 20, noon Les Astronautes. 1959. Walerian Borowczyk in collaboration with Chris Marker. 15 min. -- La Femme Fleur. 1964. Jan Lenica. English narration. 11 min. -- "A". 1964. Jan Lenica. 10 min. -- Monsieur Tête. 1959. Jan Lenica, Henri Gruel. 12 min. -- Le Pays beau. 1972. Michel Boschet, Georges Wolinski. In French. 12 min.
- Thur, Feb 21, 2:00 Same program as Wednesday, February 20, noon
- Thur, Feb 21, 5:30 Same program as Monday, February 18, 2:00

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 Additional information available from Lillian Gerard, Special Projects
 Coordinator, and Mark Segal, Assistant, Department of Public Information,
 The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019.
 Phone: (212) 956-7296.
