

# The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 4  
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## AFRICAN FILMMAKERS EXPECTED HERE FOR SENEGALESE FILM PROGRAM

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### PRESS SCREENINGS

Wednesday, January 18	2:00-5:00 pm
Monday, January 23	2:00-5:00 pm
Tuesday, January 24	2:30-5:00 pm
Wednesday, January 25	9:30-5:30 pm

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Four Senegalese filmmakers will arrive in New York to participate in The Museum of Modern Art's first major film program of 1978 -- SENEGAL: FIFTEEN YEARS OF AN AFRICAN CINEMA, 1962-1977. This month-long series, starting on January 26, offers the first comprehensive survey of a third-world nation's developing cinema.

Ousmane Sembène, highly honored at international film festivals, is one of four filmmakers expected here. He will bring his most recent film, the controversial "Ceddo," which has not yet been shown in Senegal, as well as the short, titled "Niaye," made in 1965 and never shown in this country. All of Sembène's theatrical films are included in the program.

Another filmmaker coming to the Museum's festival is Ababacar Samb-Makharam, whose celebrated film "Kodou" is featured in this series: it concerns the story of a young girl, who begins but does not complete the ritual tattooing. She interrupts the traditional process, runs away, and brings shame to her family while she herself is rejected.

The question of African traditions versus the European is frequently examined as in Samb-Makharam's short "Et la Neige n'était plus" in which the

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director asks himself whether his European experience has not spoiled life for him in Africa. He is an intellectual having great difficulty deciding his true identity.

Two other filmmakers in the delegation are Ben Diogaye Beye and Mahama Johnson Traoré. Traoré's film "Diankha-Bi" ("The Young Woman") is somewhat critical of the deteriorating affects of modern behavior. His later film, "Garga-M'Bosse" ("Cactus"), deals with the drama of a desert people, deprived of their normal resources, who migrate to the city. Altogether Traoré has four features and one short in the show.

The African film program, organized by Larry Kardish, Associate Curator of the Department of Film, was made possible by grants from the International Minerals and Chemical Corporation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Mr. Kardish, who recently returned from Senegal, made these observations: "The fact of Senegalese cinema is astonishing. Without sophisticated equipment, without laboratories (virtually all processing is done out of the country, mostly in Paris), without a coordinated or sustained system of official financial help, without immediate access to the country's theatres (they are owned by foreign chains), without the ease of being able to work in one language, without any of this, Senegal, with its population of five million, has somehow given birth to more than fifteen filmmakers."

While the filmmakers are not allied in an industry, points out Mr. Kardish, they are bonded by a factor common to all artists: a strong and vigorous will. "They manage to raise their own money and for the most part are independent of any supervisory organization. They are not concerned so much with aesthetics as they are with the human problems of their country. They are committed and do not merely follow international trends."

In conclusion, Mr. Kardish states, the Senegalese have a truly engage

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cinema, rooted in a complex, fluid society, and while some aspects it explores may be unique to Black Africa, they are nonetheless expressed in essentially human and therefore universal terms.

The Senegalese program will introduce five new pictures, including "Badou Boy," by Djibril Diop-Mambéty. The film, considered a fine satire, concerns a stupid policeman who chases a youth through the streets of Dakar. The director is known for his "anarchial" stance.

Featured, too, is the work of the first Senegalese woman director, Safi Faye, whose film, "Kaddu Beykat" ("News from the Village"), will also have its premiere.

Of historic interest are the films of Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, the first African filmmaker, critic, and film historian, who encouraged this Senegalese cinema movement in the late 50's when he and other Africans were in Paris. Today he is the production chief of all Sembène's films.

From the French, Mr. Kardish believes, the Senegalese learned to be cinephiles. They attended French film schools, where the continuity of film viewing and analysis provided both a stimulus and challenge to find a way of reaching their own countrymen through this medium. In addition the French Ministry of Cooperation, a division of the Department of Foreign Affairs, has given a strong support to Senegalese directors. In the interest of maintaining good relations it has encouraged independent filmmaking. One way of doing so has been to acquire the rights to a film prior to its production, and thus help the director to fund its production.

However limited their own resources, it was inevitable that Senegal should be among the first African nations to develop its cinema, indicates Mr. Kardish, as he found culture is an integral part of the daily life of the Senegalese.

NOTE:

All films will be shown in their original versions (Wolof, Diola and French), and for the most part the prints will have English or French subtitles. Detailed program notes will be available.