

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
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THE FILMS OF MARGUERITE DURAS

April 14 - May 14, 1995

An exhibition of films by French director, writer, and actress Marguerite Duras (b. 1914) opens at The Museum of Modern Art on April 14, 1995. Best known in the United States as an author, Duras has generated an extremely impressive, and often controversial, body of film work that offers an essential counterpoint to her writings. The fifteen films included in **THE FILMS OF MARGUERITE DURAS**, in which verbal lyrical texts are as significant as the images, offer a profound and poetic challenge to conventional dramatic narrative. The exhibition continues through May 14.

Characters in a Duras film are often lovers in search of some unelaborated fulfillment, inhabiting worlds marked by immense loneliness, resignation, narcissism, love, and cruelty. They often cling to the trappings of romantic cliché: the wineglass, the piano sonata, the rose, the tryst in the hotel bar, the crime of passion. In Duras' hands, these subjects become vivid emblems of her preoccupations with memory and dreaming, with colonialism and gender game-play, and with the power of language, music, and film to corrupt, to liberate, to wound, and to heal.

Highlights of the exhibition include Duras' first screenwriting effort, *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), directed by Alain Resnais; *Nathalie Granger* (1972), starring Jeanne Moreau and Gérard Depardieu; *Moderato cantabile* (1960), with Moreau and Jean-Paul Belmondo; and, perhaps her most popular film, *India Song* (1974). Also included is an episode from a British

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television show in which Duras is profiled, as well as two programs in which Duras is interviewed by French journalist Benoît Jacquot.

In her films, Duras moves freely between the stuff of dime-store detective novels and tabloid journalism and that of highbrow French abstraction. Particular sounds and images become recurring motifs that are transformed as they pass from written text to play to film and back again. Actors like Depardieu (*Le Camion*, 1977), Moreau (*Moderato cantabile*), Delphine Seyrig (*India Song*), and Duras also appear and reappear from one film to the next, either as themselves or as characters. Many of her films echo her early experiences in Indochina, where she was born and remained until she moved to Paris at the age of eighteen.

In Paris, Duras studied science and law and was active in the French Resistance during World War II. After the war, she achieved her first success as a novelist associated with the French literary movement of the 1950s known as the *nouveau roman* (usually translated as "new novel" or "anti-novel"). In 1966 she began directing because of dissatisfaction with other filmmakers' interpretations of her novels; since then, she has pursued careers in both literature and film.

THE FILMS OF MARGUERITE DURAS was organized by Joshua Siegel, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Film and Video, in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bureau of Cinema, Paris.

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For further information or film stills, contact Samantha Graham, Film Press Representative, Department of Public Information, 212-708-9752.