

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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THURSDAY EVENING FILM SERIES AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Ancestors of the New American Cinema, a Thursday evening film series at the Museum of Modern Art, will begin November 9 at 8:30 p.m. with Hallelujah (1929), directed by King Vidor. Louisiana Story (1948), by Robert Flaherty, will be shown December 28; followed January 18 with Housing Problems (1935), by Edgar Anstey and Arthur Elton, and Western Approaches (1945), by Pat Jackson; and February 1, La Bataille du Rail (1945), by Rene Clement, and In the Street (1952), by Helen Levitt, Janice Loeb and James Agee.

Tickets for the four programs, sold in series only, are available at the Museum, 11 West 53 Street, or by mail. The series, \$4.50 for Museum members and \$6.00 for non-members, includes admission to Museum galleries, open Thursdays until 10 p.m. Dinner and refreshments are available.

According to Richard Griffith, Curator of the Museum Film Library, "'The New American Cinema' is the term that has come to be applied to a group of films made outside the commercial industry, and on both coasts, by men and women of little professional experience, working principally for love. Financed by miscellaneous 'angels'; much in the manner of a stage production, and by studios, laboratories, and equipment renting agencies which defer their charges until the pictures are released and earning money, these films are however not intended for avant-garde or 'special' audiences. It is the hope of their makers to compete with the big commercial productions in the theatrical marketplace. They believe that film-making should be an individual, not a collective, act, and they hope to show that its high costs can be made to pay. The most discussed of these films to date are Jack Kerouac's, Alfred Leslie's, and Robert Frank's Pull My Daisy, John Cassavetes' Shadows, Jonas Mekas' Guns of the Trees, Frank's The Sin of Jesus, and Shirley Clarke's The Connection. The Savage Eye, though made by veterans, is related to the group, as are The Cry of Jazz and Jazz on a Summer's Day.

"What all these films have in common, aside from their low cost, is their concern for the living human scene, now. Stylistically they share an intense interest in spontaneous behaviour and especially spontaneous speech. In fact, the watchwords of these artists are 'spontaneity' and 'improvisation,' a preoccupation they share with several of the off-Broadway stage theatres. Spontaneity and improvisation are not easy qualities to achieve in an artistic process in which it often takes many hours to place the cameras and lights for a single shot. But in spite of all

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difficulties, these men and women feel impelled by the nature of the film medium to set down their cameras in the stream of life itself.

"In this they are the latest heirs of a great tradition. It is improbable that the films listed below directly influenced today's film-makers, most of whom are too young to have seen them at the time of their original release. But at all periods of movie history, and in all countries, dedicated film-makers have felt the recurrent impulse to turn the camera away from the profitable field of staged action and back toward its original function as an instrument of observation, of exploration, of spying on nature and human activity in the belief that it will thus find patterns which the eye passes over. In presenting, as it hopes to do this season, several of the 'New American Cinema' pictures not yet publicly shown, the Film Library also offers this brief survey of the realist tradition in films as it had developed before the last decade."

Nov. 9 - HALLELUJAH (1929), directed by King Vidor for M-G-M, script by Wanda Tuchock, photographed by Gordon Avil. Vidor's dream of making a film of Negro life using an all-Negro cast acted mainly by non-professionals was realized when the advent of sound opened the whole realm of Negro music to the screen. Critics of the day hailed its spontaneity which was achieved by feeding his players their lines of dialogue one by one and asking them to give them back in their own words.

Dec. 28 - LOUISIANA STORY (1948), produced and directed by Robert Flaherty with the assistance of Frances Flaherty, photographed by Richard Leacock, music by Virgil Thompson. Robert Flaherty was the first and greatest of those film directors who have tried to bring the life of whole peoples, whole cultures, intact to the motion picture camera. In this last of the Flaherty idylls, using exactly King Vidor's method, he drew the dialogue out of the non-actors of his cast in their own words, both in English and in Cajun French.

Jan. 18 - HOUSING PROBLEMS (1935), written and directed by Edgar Anstey and Arthur Elton for the British Commercial Gas Association, photographed by John Taylor. A series of direct sound interviews with London slum families, who tell in their own idiom what they think of the way they have to live.

WESTERN APPROACHES (1944), produced by Ian Dalrymple for the Crown Film Unit, directed by Pat Jackson, script by Pat Jackson, Gerry Bryant, photographed by Jack Cardiff. This grim and beautiful true story of British convoys during the battle of the Atlantic was acted entirely by British Navy officers and seamen who had many times experienced the events they re-enacted.

Feb. 1 - IN THE STREET (1952), directed and photographed by Helen Levitt, Janice Loeb, and James Agee, music composed and played by Arthur Kleiner. Using angle viewers to conceal from their subjects that they were being photographed, the makers of this short film sought what the camer could reveal of random behaviour in the neighborhood of 105th Street, East Side, New York.

LA BATAILLE DU RAIL (1945), written and directed by Rene Clement for the Cooperative General du Cinema Francaise, dialogue by Colette Audry, photographed by Henri Alekan, music by Yves Baudrier. Detailing efforts of French Resistance railwaymen to sabotage the Nazi military railway system, this film was made immediately after the events it portrayed and many of the participants are re-enacting their own lives.

Photographs and additional information available from Herbert Bronstein, Associate
Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 Street, New York 19 CI 5-8900.