

The Museum of Modern Art

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MARGUERITE DURAS, FRENCH NOVELIST GUEST OF HONOR AT SEASON'S FIRST CINEPROBE

Marguerite Duras, the famous French novelist, now a film director and scenarist, will initiate The Museum of Modern Art's Cineprobe series Tuesday, October 9, at 5:30 pm, in the Museum auditorium. Mme. Duras will present her most recent film, titled "La Femme du Gange" ("Woman of the Ganges"), selected by the Department of Film to launch the Cineprobe season.

Cineprobe is a bi-monthly program introduced by the Museum in 1968 for the purpose of present works by independent filmmakers, who are present on the occasion to talk about their work and answer questions from the audience. Programs range from works by avant-garde experimentalists to more conventional narrative films not in commercial distribution. This year Cineprobe is partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts.

While Mme. Duras has made four previous films, this is her first picture in color. Starring Catherine Sellers, Dionys Mascolo, Nicole Hiss and Gerard Depardieu, it was filmed in a seaside resort in Normandy at the end of the summer when the town is almost deserted. According to Richard Roud, who will introduce Mme. Duras, the story is one that constantly evokes the past. Various elements -- deserted hotel corridors, a young couple observing and commenting on the action, two autonomous voices heard at moments throughout the film like a kind of "obligato" counterpoint -- "have been forged together by Mme. Duras into a whole, into a film," Mr. Roud states. "Someone once said 'A poem should not mean, but be'; here is a film which does not mean but is."

Born in Saigon, Marguerite Duras emigrated to Paris at 17, attended the Sorbonne, and received her degree in law and political science before becoming secretary at the Ministry of Colonies from 1935 to 1941.

(more)

Her first major novel, "A Quiet Life," was written in 1944. It was not until six years later that she was acclaimed one of France's great modern novelists with the publication of "Barrage against the Pacific," described by Germaine Bree as "a Hemingway-type-story," and said to contain one of Duras' basic themes: "barrage against the immense solitude of human beings; barrage against the pain of all involvements; barrage against despair."

Following her novel "The Sailor from Gibraltar," Time Magazine commented "She writes about people and their moods with incomparable ease and sensuality." "The Little Horses of Tarquinia" was followed by a cycle of short novels, including "The Square" and "Moderato Cantabile." The latter, a prize-winning novel, was adapted for the screen and made into a film by the author. Mme. Duras had by this time written the scenario for the acclaimed film "Hiroshima, Mon Amour." She also wrote and directed "Destroy, She Said," "La Musica," "Nathalie Granger" and "Jaune le Soleil."

In an interview Mme. Duras has said she does not consider herself a "woman writer" although she considers writing her most important work. Her women are "young no longer, neglected or betrayed," while her men "appear to be fugitives or dissidents, who tend to be maneuvered by women." What applies to her novels can perhaps be said of her films.

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