

## Pratt Film Society Program Spring 2008

### **2/5 OFFSIDE**

directed by Jafar Panahi, (2007, Iran, 93 mins.)

Winner of the Silver Bear at the 2006 Berlin International Film Festival, OFFSIDE, the latest film from Jafar Panahi (THE CIRCLE), is both hilarious and poignant. OFFSIDE is a most unusual sports film, a feminist comedy that is also a plea for women's rights in Iranian society. Here, various young women (it has been illegal for women to attend sporting events in Iran since the 1979 revolution) meet up at a World-Cup-qualifying soccer match in Tehran's Azadi stadium where they disguise themselves as men to gain entrance. Panahi made the film during an actual soccer match, misleading the government on what the film was about in order to receive a permit. Using a handheld digital camera and a tiny crew to avoid the police, OFFSIDE employs a neo-realist style with nonprofessional actors.

### **2/12 MURIEL**

directed by Alain Resnais (1963, France, 112 mins.)

Using jump cuts and frenetic montage sequences to create disunities in time and space, Alain Resnais creates a visual and thematic conundrum on the effects of the Algerian War on the lives of three emotionally scarred survivors. Helene is literally surrounded by the past, as she uses her apartment to showcase and sell antique furniture. Alphonse, who has struggled to rebuild his life after the war, is unable to reconcile with their failed relationship. Bernard, haunted by the memory of a nameless war casualty, sits in a dilapidated studio endlessly replaying military footage, struggling with his own personal demons. MURIEL is a cryptic, and labyrinthine puzzle on memory and altered perception--a challenging portrait of isolating guilt and the tragedy of survival.

- STRICTLY FILM SCHOOL

### **2/19 KILLER OF SHEEP**

directed by Charles Burnett, (1977, USA, 80 mins.)

A masterpiece of African American filmmaking and one of the finest debuts in cinema history, KILLER OF SHEEP was chosen for the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress and named one of the 100

Essential Films by the National Society of Film Critics. In the Los Angeles community of Watts, Stan, a sensitive dreamer, is growing detached and numb from the toll of working at a slaughterhouse. Frustrated by money problems, he finds solace in moments of simple beauty. Combining lyrical moments with neorealist style, Burnett unfolds his story with compassion and humor. KILLER OF SHEEP's luminous images and extraordinary soundtrack are a revelation in this new high-definition transfer from the UCLA Film & Television Archive's brilliant 35mm restoration.

## **2/26 THE CASE OF THE GRINNING CAT**

directed by Chris Marker, (2004, France, 58 mins.)

In November 2001, French documentarian and cinema-essayist Chris Marker, became intrigued by the sudden appearance in Paris of alluring portraits of grinning yellow cats on buildings, Metro walls and other public surfaces. Marker's cinematic efforts to document the mysterious materializations of this charming feline are a recurring theme of THE CASE OF THE GRINNING CAT. This engaging record of Marker's cinematic peregrinations throughout the city, visually energized by his free-association montage style, chronicles strikes, demonstrations, memorials, election campaigns, celebrity scandals, international political incidents, and a seemingly endless variety of political protests. The personalized commentary running throughout offers the simultaneously learned and witty reflections of the filmmaker, now in his early eighties, on both the contemporary and historical implications of these varied events and personalities.

## **3/4 FROWNLAND**

directed by Ronnie Bronstein, (2007, USA, 106 mins.)

A self-described "troll from under the bridge," the painfully awkward Keith Sontag spends his days selling coupons door-to-door and his evenings trapped in a squalid apartment situated in some particularly hellish outer ring of New York. With the most basic elements of human communication a struggle, Sontag lurches through an uncaring city, attempting to aid a suicidal friend, evict an unctuous roommate, and simply attain some measure of self-respect. With FROWNLAND, Bronstein has made a bold and bracing film that is both a hilarious black comedy and a ragged love letter to an earlier era of independent film. Both the film and its singular hero are raw, confrontational, and, finally, unforgettable.

### **3/11 STILL LIFE**

directed by Jia Zhangke, (2006, China, 108 mins.)

China's colossal Three Gorges Dam is the setting for Jia Zhangke's latest foray into the socio-economic surreal: a perverse dreamscape of industrial wasteland, scenic splendor, and frightening architectural feats. Negating the still waters of the rising Yangtze River are two lost souls: Han Sanming, a mainlander seeking his ex-wife who may or may not have been relocated from her soon-to-be-submerged village; and Shen Hong, a city dweller determined to confront her absentee husband, now working under the auspices of the ceaseless Dam project. As they meander across a topography resembling a war zone, Martian panorama, and futuristic colony all at once, the classic Zhangke landmarks are mapped out with acute familiarity: the polarity of old and new, the scars of unremitting change, and the human debris of those left in its wake.

- Tim Wong, THE LUMIERE READER

### **3/25 IN BETWEEN DAYS**

directed by So Yong Kim, (2006, USA, 83 mins.)

IN BETWEEN DAYS intimately portrays the joys and risks of first love and burgeoning adulthood with bracing and undeniable honesty. Aimie is a teenager recently transplanted from her native South Korea to a snowbound North American city. Disconnected from her single mother and bored at school, she struggles to find her way in a strange land of new faces, only to encounter a strange age of new feelings. Aimie's sole meaningful connection is to her best and only friend Tran, a Korean boy a few steps ahead of her on the path to assimilation. In her thrillingly self-assured feature debut, So Yong Kim uses intricately framed handheld DV photography and a naturalistic soundscape to lucidly render her non-actor cast's performances with remarkably unforced believability.

- KINO INTERNATIONAL

### **4/1 BROOKLYN ARTS COUNCIL 2008 Film Festival Preview**

The Brooklyn Arts Council's International Film and Video Festival has served independent film and video artists for 42 years, the longest running event of its kind in Brooklyn. The Festival provides opportunities for film and video artists to show their work to other artists, critics, the media, and an enthusiastic New York audience. The festival also serves Brooklyn and the wider New York community by providing quality film

and video programs from all over the world, free of charge. Films screened in the festival include work by independent filmmakers, college students, and youth (K-12) in both feature and short lengths. Categories are narrative, experimental, documentary, animation, and films by Brooklyn filmmakers and women of African descent. This evening's program, which is open to the public, is a press preview of the 2008 award winning films.

#### **4/8 ANTONIO GAUDI**

directed by Hiroshi Teshigahara, (1984, Japan, 72 mins.)

Catalan architect Antonio Gaudí (1852-1926) designed some of the world's most astonishing buildings, interiors, and parks; Japanese director Hiroshi Teshigahara constructed some of the most aesthetically audacious films of the second half of the twentieth century. Here, their artistry melds in a unique, enthralling cinematic experience. Less a documentary than a visual poem, Teshigahara's ANTONIO GAUDI takes viewers on a tour of Gaudí's truly spectacular architecture, including his massive still-unfinished masterpiece, the Sagrada Familia cathedral, in Barcelona. With camerawork as bold and sensual as the curves on his subject's organic surfaces, Teshigahara immortalizes Gaudí on film.

#### **4/15 ZABRISKIE POINT**

directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, (1970, USA, 111 mins.)

In honor of the recent passing of this legendary director, the Pratt Film Society presents the only film he made in the USA. This epic and prescient work is defined by Antonioni's absorption in the landscape, both natural and man-made. "I would say my films are political, but not about politics ... they are made from a definite point of view ... In August, 1968, just before we were going to begin shooting, I went to Chicago for the Democratic convention. What I saw there - the behavior of the police, the spirit of the young people - impressed me as deeply as anything else I've seen in America. To some degree, ZABRISKIE POINT is influenced by what happened in the streets of Chicago ..."

- Michelangelo Antonioni, from an interview with Roger Ebert in 1969.