

CINEMA ADRIFT MODERN CANON 2000 - 20xx



VIII

introduction to the world of Science:
MAN AND HIS UNIVERSE



CINEMA ADRIFT

VOLUME VIII

An Introduction to the World of Science: THE MODERN CANON 2000 - 20xx

with the

Illustrated Eiga Jisho

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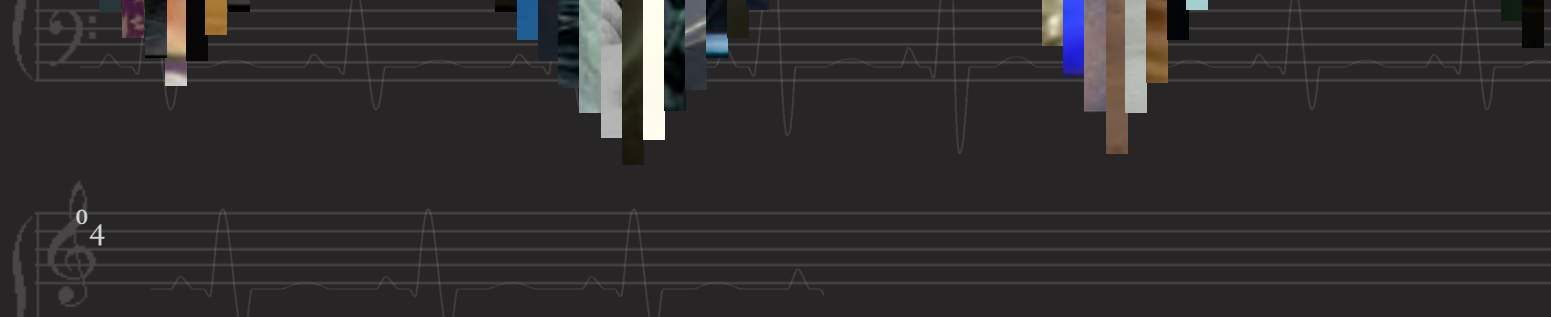
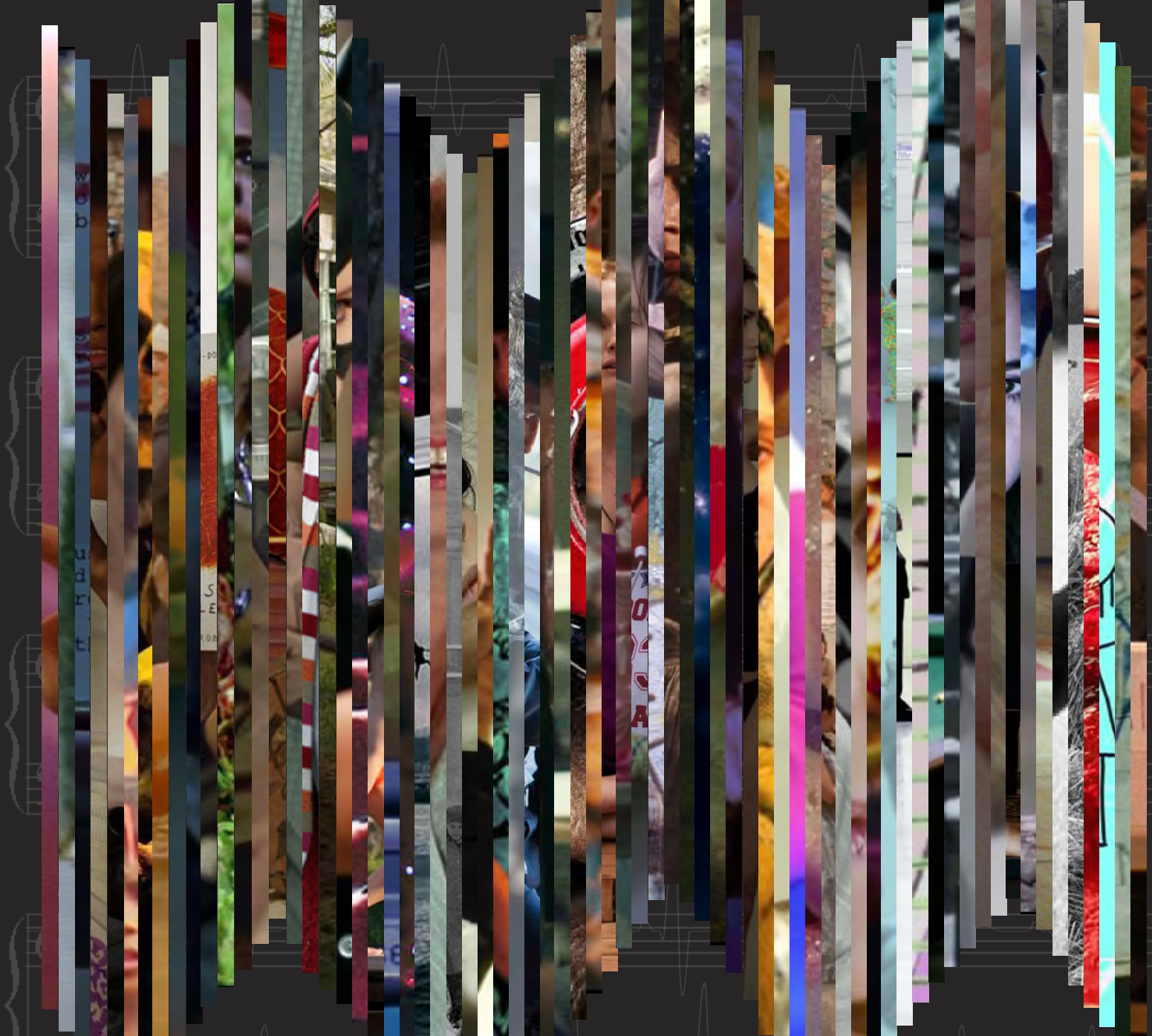
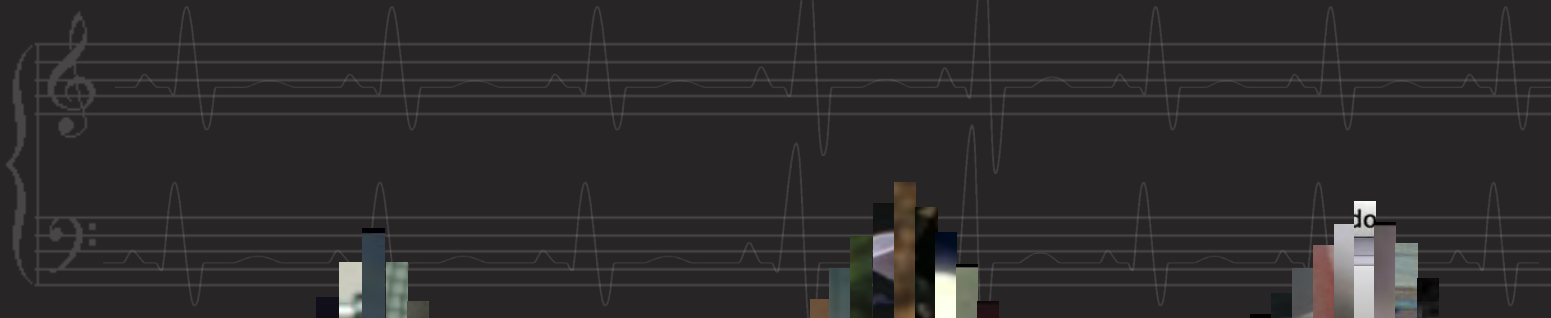
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T A I B L N E O D F C O E N S T E N T T X

Canada (pg. 27, 39, 74).....

Chile (pg. 60).....

Cinema (pg. 10, 18, 19, 23, 24, 33, 43, 49, 56, 57, 58, 70, 74).....

Hungary (pg. 11).....

Hong Kong (pg. 80).....

Italy (pg. 23, 62).....

South Korea (pg. 34).....

Japan (pg. 28, 36, 45, 67, 70).....

India (pg. 33, 38).....

Crime (pg. 12, 20, 29, 31, 42, 44, 51, 57, 59, 66).....

List of Contributors (pg. 6).....

Sweden (pg. 52).....

Iran (pg. 47, 61).....

Taiwan (pg. 14, 24, 32).....

Denmark (pg. 52, 57, 66).....

Love (pg. 11, 17, 21, 32, 33, 39, 47, 67, 69, 72).....

Thailand (pg. 37, 65).....

United States (pg. 10, 12, 16, 18, 19, 21, 25, 29, 33, 36, 38, 41, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, 64, 69, 72, 73, 76, 77, 78).....

UK (pg. 23, 31, 42, 55, 68, 71, 75).....

Norway (pg. 57).....

Mexico (pg. 15).....

France (pg. 20, 23, 36, 40, 47, 56, 58, 60).....

Afghanistan (pg. 26).....

Animation (pg. 28, 60, 71).....

Australia (pg. 17, 31).....

Germany (pg. 35, 46, 79).....

Poland (pg. 63).....

Preface (pg. 7).....

Principle of Superimposition (pg. 80).....

Russia (pg. 22).....

Spain (pg. 15, 53).....

Greece (pg. 43).....

Graduating Class (pg. 8).....

Black and White (pg. 13, 27, 46, 63).....

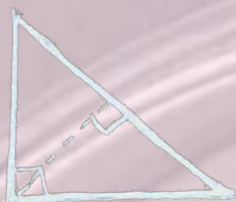
Adaptation (pg. 10, 12, 13, 16, 19, 23, 36, 51, 53, 55, 65, 67, 68).....

THE CONTRIBUTORS


WRITINGS

$$f(x + \text{Nick Arno})^{\text{Kevin Spacey}} = \sum_{\text{American Beauty}=\infty} \left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Maps to the Stars} \\ \text{Au Hasard Balthazar} \end{array} \right) \text{Star Wars}^{\text{Sunrise}} \text{Nightcrawler}^{\text{Baby Jane}}$$

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$$f(\text{Brittany Drinnon}) = \frac{1}{2} \text{Belladonna of Sadness} \cdot \text{Suspiria} = \frac{1}{2} \text{Burial Ground} \cdot \text{Audition}$$

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EDITORS

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PREFACE

Today it is possible for the average family to sit in the comfort of its living room and watch astronauts return to Earth from the moon nearly 250,000 miles away. This vast distance can be covered in three days--already plans have been made for further space explorations to Mars, Venus, and even beyond.

Human embryos can be genetically modified to remove disease-causing regions of the DNA or even to change the eye color of the eventual live human baby. At the current rate of research and experimentation it will not be long before humanity is made to order.

And yet, despite the immense role it plays in the life of each one of us, science and its incredible number of applications are seldom discussed intelligently, if at all, by the average person. The many quotidian activities we do out of habit, often with total indifference, are the result of highly advanced studies. Moreover, science has become an important instrument of national power; it determines, to an extent, the political and meteorological climate of the world.

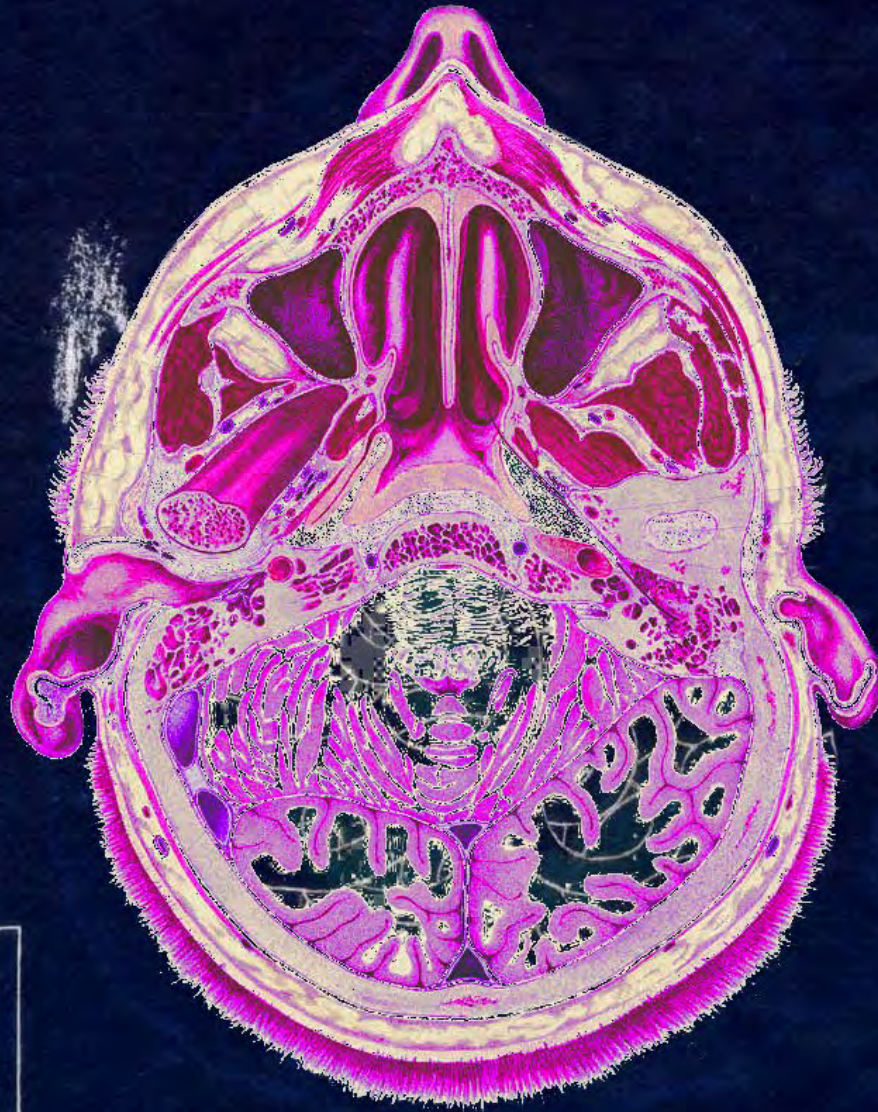
This Modern Canon has been prepared for all those that want to enter into the spirit of modern science. But the further specialization of certain fields and the increasing accesibility of an abundance of texts have made it difficult to find reading material of a general and concise nature. We have attempted in this volume to offer such a text and in a way that enables the reader, regardless of his/her scientific background, to consider questions that are both difficult, foreign, and frightening to her/him. The approximate time to finish the Modern Canon is 134 hours and 23 minutes.

While the majority of articles are meant to be read in sequence, so as to create an underlying and overarching narrative, each individual piece may be read and understood without having seen the preceding article. In this way, the set may be used for both casual reference and serious study.

It should be said that with a text of this nature there is bound to be oversight. Whether this is a result of a mandated subjectivity under postmodern thought is of no importance. Great pains have been taken to compile an encompassing and varied collection while adhering to a small but core set of guidelines (i.e. no more than one work per unique creator). The possibility for future volumes has been left open.

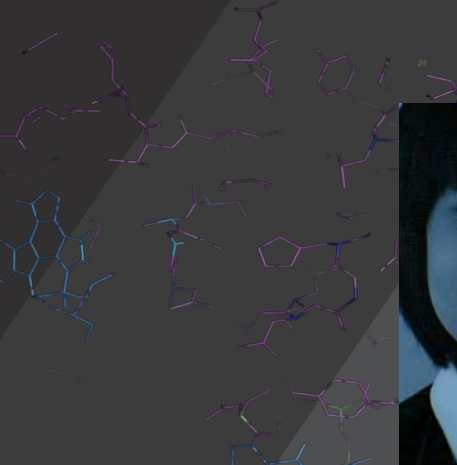
These articles are designed to give you a taste of what has been left behind and what remains as apparition; they will provide the reader with enough basic information so that he/she may gain an intelcetual foothold in whatever subject she/he may wish to investigate.

-THE EDITORS

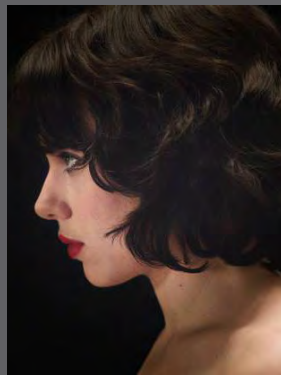


Visual hallucinations are illusory perceptions in the removed eye owing a sense of reality but occurring without external stimulation of the sensory organ. People, animals, buildings, and unfamiliar scenery are most often reported. The incidence of phantom sensations in the anophthalmic cavity is high, mostly pain. In one case study the patient (female; 31yr) developed severe depression and anxiety and was suicidal.





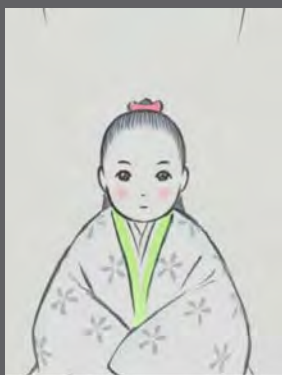
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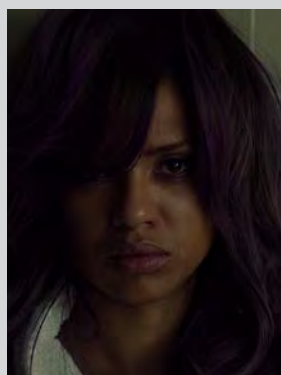
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死ぬべきか
それが問題だ



figure 1

HAMLET

Michael Almereyda, 2000, United States, 112'

Script by Almereyda. Play by William Shakespeare. Photographed by John de Borman. Music by Carter Burwell. Edited by Kristina Boden. With Ethan Hawke, Kyle MacLachlan, Diane Venora, Liev Schreiber, Julia Stiles, and Bill Murray.

What do Mel Gibson, Kenneth Branagh, Sir Laurence Olivier, Nicol Williamson, and Derek Jacobi have under their belts? The Prince of Denmark via film... (Mad Max, really?) Famous "Gertrudes" abound: Claire Bloom, Julie Christie, Glenn Close. Marianne Faithfull plays one heck of an Ophelia in 1969. Why, with numerous film options for *Hamlet*, should you spend 113 minutes checking out Michael Almereyda's 2000 version? For one, watching Sam Shepherd melt into a Pepsi machine ranks high as an unforgettable image. Yes, bizarre images overflow in Almereyda's mesmerizing chaos, some breathtaking. Ophelia's drowning worth your price of admission. The unique "play within a play" melts blood-red roses, "ear animation" (Monty Python style) and quick-shots sandwiched in between of Claudius (MacLachlan) and Gertrude gasping at Hamlet's charges. The game is up at the Denmark Corporation. It is as if Almereyda's peek into the Big Apple foreshadows our current political nightmare.

Vertical shots of NYC's skyscrapers reaching heights defying gravity allude to inflation given free-reign to corporate ambition, unbridled hubris, and infinite greed. Almereyda juxtaposes the backdrop of Hamlet's computer station with an overkill of small images reflecting the Prince's mind; one contains the famous Olivier scene with Yorick's skull in hand tying together Hamlet's fateful tie to court jester. He returns to the familiar "to be or not to be" soliloquy as a mantra to his tangled, fragmenting mind.

Ethan Hawke's Prince oozes over-the-top intensity as he winds his way through the city's matrix-like chasms. Exquisite NYC: Guggenheim images, mod glassed-in apartments overflow with vast floor to ceiling book displays. Balconies abound for bird's eye viewing of a lonely empire. A most impressive hook is Sam's performance as Hamlet's father's ghost. As he eyes his Prince from balcony reverie, he opens & enters with a plea: Vengeance, before he journeys to the nether world—soon to fade from this too, too solid flesh. His plea to his son attests to Shepherd's amazing skill as a dramatist/actor: The number one delivery of a Shakespearean nuanced performance. Do not miss it!

The cast, rich & varied: Diane Venora's reeks hungry sensuality and snake-like overtones. Liv Schreiber shines as angry bereaved brother, Bill Murray charming, bumbling Polonius... All-in-all, Almereyda's style deserves applause for taking chances that pay off. Check out his creative documentary *This So-Called Disaster* ('02) & *The Experimentor* ('15) as a follow-up to an amazing, creative director. -ww

Selected Filmography: *Happy Here and Now* ('02); *William Eggleston in the Real World* ('05); *Cymbeline* ('14); *Experimentor* ('15); *Marjorie Prime* ('17).





figure 2

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE (花樣年華)

Wong Kar-wai, 2000, Hong Kong, 98'

Script by Wong. Photographed by Christopher Doyle, Mark Lee Ping Bing. Music by Michael Galasso, Shigeru Umebayashi. Edited by William Chang. With Maggie Cheung and Tony Leung.

A waltz becomes an aural motif as Wong drops the needle more persistently than he has ever before with a piece of music. It is “Yumeji’s Theme” composed by Umebayashi Shigeru originally for the Seijun Suzuki film *Yumeji*. Quotations from the writings of Liu Yi-Chang bookend the film. These extra texts frame the work but have no specific bearing on the story of two souls hesitantly looking for a meaningful connection with another. Two married couples move into a small apartment on the same day, their belongings become mixed up as movers, tenants, and future neighbors intermingle. This is a foreshadowing of the comingling to occur between the two pairs. Mrs. Chan (the same Su Li-zhen of *Days of Being Wild*) is a secretary, her husband is constantly abroad in Japan due to his work. Mr. Chow is a journalist, he pulls long hours typesetting. His wife pulls even longer hours and because of it their sleep cycles have become opposite. After a series of neighborly niceties between Mr. Chow and Mrs. Chan – they run into each other at a noodle vendor, him arriving as she is leaving – they soon discover her husband and his wife have started an affair.

These two embark in what is arguably a greater liaison than that of their respective spouses. They abandon the physical and dance around something deeper. Reenactments of how they think the affair between their spouses started is both a way to delay the inevitable between them but enjoy their own intellectual affair with a safety net. Mr. Chow, with the help of Mrs. Chan who becomes his emotional equal, decides to pursue an interest in writing serials. He rents out a hotel room to focus on his writing. This room briefly becomes an alternate reality for the two. What if they hadn’t married? What if they had married each other? The relationship is something that can never be, which is perhaps its purity. Su Li-zhen will remain with Mr. Chow as the secret he whispers into a hole in a wall which he will then cover with dirt. He pushes the past aside as his stories go from classical martial arts epics to lovelorn science fiction i.e. stories of the future. The number of his room: 2046. “She has kept her head lowered to give him a chance to come closer. But he could not, for lack of courage. She turns and walks away.” -JS

Selected Filmography: *2046* (‘04); *Eros* segment “The Hand” (‘04); *My Blueberry Nights* (‘07); *The Grandmaster* (‘13).





figure 3

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM

Darren Aronofsky, 2000, United States, 101'

Script by Hubert Selby, Jr. and Aronofsky. Based on novel by Selby, Jr. Photographed by Matthew Libatique. Music by Clint Mansell. Edited by Jay Rabinowitz. With Ellen Burstyn, Jared Leto, Jennifer Connelly, Marlon Wayans, and Christopher McDonald, et al.



There's a collection of audiences that do not wish to view this film because of its long standing reputation, especially due to the film's ending. Those who refuse to see the film believe that it represents drug abuse in an unsympathetic way. However, the people who have not seen it do not realize that Aronofsky represents this issue in a way that is all of the following: profound, delicate, mesmerizing, and beautiful. He does not only allow you to look into the lives of the film's characters, he allows you to become a part of their world. The film is a character portrait that is not substantially linked through plot. This almost makes the viewer unable to distinguish themselves from the pain they are feeling watching the film from the pain that the characters feel.

The four stellar performances defy the realms of a well-cast ensemble. It begins with Jared Leto, whose character connects the audience to a way of life that is not a choice but a disease. His character is unusually relatable, as he takes us into a world in his mind that seems all too familiar. This is followed by Jennifer Connelly, who takes her character to a world we may not want to watch but is still a real-world phenomenon. Then there is Ellen Burstyn. The only Academy Award Nomination for this film went to her, and it was very well deserved. Her character's role is to show a slightly different disease, but one that can still be described as an addiction. Even though it has the highest level of "fantasy," it is the realest performance in the film. But isn't fantasy a majority of life? Finally, an unusually impressive performance by Marlon Wayans, who before had consistently wound up being the comic relief. His character sparks fear into the hearts of people trying to escape an inevitable fate.

The focus of the "dream-like" state in this film is also captured by the score by Clint Mansell, who has worked with Aronofsky on almost all of his films. Terrifying, hypnotic, and masterful, the creation that is *Requiem for a Dream* is positively one of the most unlikely relatable works of art of this century so far. -NA

Selected Filmography: *The Fountain* ('06); *The Wrestler* ('08); *Black Swan* ('10); *Noah* ('14); *mother!* ('17).



figure 4

WERCKMEISTER HARMONIES (*Werckmeister harmóniák*)

Béla Tarr/Ágnes Hranitzky, 2000, Hungary, 145'

Script by László Krasznahorkai and Tarr. Based on *The Melancholy of Resistance* by Krasznahorkai. Photographed by Milós Gurbán, Erwin Lanzensberger, Gábor Medvigy, Emil Novák, Patrick de Ranter, Rob Tregenza, and Jörg Widmer. Music by Mihály Vig. Edited by Ágnes Hranitzky. With Lars Rudolph, et al.

The long take in theory is less filmic than the more conventional assemblage of moments in a scene through the use of editing. Every cut is a reminder of the medium to the viewer. But now the long take has become a more useful Brechtian tool to pull the audience out of the story thanks to the bravado associated with the more famous examples of the device. Béla Tarr has made a career exploring the form, making features with average shot lengths that can go up to ten minutes. *Werckmeister Harmonies* (thirty-nine shots) sees Tarr and collaborator/spouse Ágnes Hranitzky finding perfect compatibility between formal aesthetics and thematic concerns no matter how obscure they might seem at times.

These extended takes provide the opportunity of clear beginnings, middles, and ends. The interest is in how structures change over time. Something is taking hold in this small Hungarian town as the Soviets encroach. Each scene is the shorthand version of this political turmoil but on a smaller scale. The opening scene sees János, the fool of the story, orchestrate a recreation of the planets orbiting the sun with the help of fellow bar patrons. Constantly we are shown variations of order. Chaos and upheaval are like a pen being pressed into a napkin, the ink spreading as it is being soaked up. The title is a reference to the musical theorist and his tuning guidelines, yet another example of order that exists to be replaced.

The more tangible visitation to the town is the arrival of a traveling circus, the main attraction being a giant stuffed whale. Its moderator is The Prince, able to incite riots well-timed to the behind the scenes planning on the part of the police to “clean up the town.” There is not an ounce of sentiment or purpose to the rioters. Their violent revolution is hollow. But Tarr has refused to discuss meaning in regards to his works. The obvious symbols of the film like the whale, the piano tunings, and The Prince seem to orbit the film. What is undeniable about *Werckmeister Harmonies* is its feel of a bleak fable and the entrancing nature of its form. The length of a reel of film is an infliction of structure that suits the pacing. -JS

Selected Filmography: *The Man from London* ('07); *The Turin Horse* ('11)





figure 5

YI YI (一一)

Edward Yang, 2000, Taiwan, 173'

Script by Yang. Photographed by Wei-han Yang. Music by Kai-Li Peng. Edited by Bowen Chen. With Wu Nien-jen, Elain Jin, Issey Ogata, Kelly Leem Jonathan Chang, Hsi-Sheng Chen, Su-Yun Ko, et al.



Yi Yi was never supposed to be Edward Yang's final film. But years' worth of difficulties getting projects off the ground and the pursuits of other non-cinematic ventures have made it so. With the hindsight of his death it's tempting to turn the film into the closing chapter of Yang's body of work. After two decades' worth of Taipei stories that were informed by melancholy or rage directed at a city changing around Yang and his new wave contemporaries, this is the film with a spectrum of emotion and a perceptiveness about city-life that he didn't have fifteen years prior. Like the 8-year old Yang-Yang, who takes photos of the backs of people's heads so that they can see what they can't, *Yi Yi* attempts to show us what we can't see.

No matter what city you find yourself in, it is always possible to find a place to be alone, sought after or not. Betrayal is timeless. Wu Nien-jen's NJ spends his business trip in Tokyo with an old flame. His reliving of first love is overlapped and synced up with his daughter's own budding teenage romance, also timeless. NJ's brother-in-law just married but still spends time with his former girlfriend. Yang-Yang's crush stands in front of the projected image of a classroom educational video, making her appear as though floating in a blue sky. The reflection of Taipei and all its far-reaching activity creates a blanket over the mother (Jin) as she stares out her office window, realizing there is nothing inside of her. Yang uses non-stop layering to get at what is shared. Foreground and background interact with one another. Sounds from yet unseen moments are tracked onto current frames.

NJ finds one other meaningful connection during his week in Japan. Issey Ogata shines as the software developer Ota-san, who NJ finds within a kindred spirit, able to speak frankly to him in English, the second language they share. Ota is refreshingly philosophy first, business second. He wants to do something new with his company and can't understand why people are scared of the new. Every day is something new he reasons. Some days are more unfair than others, and these days seem to pile up. But maybe we only pay attention to the humiliations and the disappointments. Within one family Yang finds the obvious – birth, marriage, love, death – but to think that this is all there is to life is resignation. -JS



figure 6

THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE *(El espinazo del diablo)*

Guillermo del Toro, 2001, Spain/Mexico, 107'

Script by del Toro, David Muñoz, and Antonio Trashorras. Photographed by Guillermo Navarro. Music by Javier Navarrete. Edited by Luis De La Madrid. With Marisa Paredes, Eduardo Noriega, Federico Luppi, Fernando Tielve, et al.

What is a ghost? Guillermo Del Toro synthesizes this question and distills a series of answers with a remarkable purity. *The Devil's Backbone*, his 2001 Gothic horror film set during the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, is not just a ghost story. Everything in this film is a ghost. Reflections of the past trapped in stasis, unresolved.

A young boy named Carlos (Tielve), whose father was killed in action is abandoned by a republican loyalist at Santa Lucia, a small orphanage caught in the middle of the conflict. A defused bomb that was dropped by Spanish nationalists sits in the courtyard of the orphanage undetonated, a ticking statue and a haunting reminder of the war. An educated child with a small amount of personal wealth, Carlos is targeted by the oldest of the children Jaime (Garcés). But something else consigned to the void of memory takes residence with the children. Unexplained silhouettes appear in the bedchamber of the orphanage. Wet footprints with no one to make them scatter in the night. Santa Lucia's reluctant groundskeeper Jacinto (Noriega), who was raised an orphan as well, plans to steal the cache of gold kept by the owners to supply the Republican soldiers. Carlos and Jaime begin to bond as the dark secrets of the orphanage, including the spirit of a child named Santi, start to unravel.

Referred to by Del Toro as the opening companion piece to *Pan's Labyrinth*, there are quite a few thematic similarities between the two. Gothic set design, the cloud of the Spanish Civil War, and paranormal metaphors link the two in spirit. Guillermo paints children's problems and adult conflicts as equally important. What *The Devil's Backbone* does to stand out as a singular work is how well the concepts of abandonment and time are executed. Living, undead, and inanimate, everything paralyzed by the feeling of loneliness. The bomb is a forgotten, useless vessel of destruction. The children, left to search for meaning on their own with little to no guidance. The adults and the orphanage itself, assumed destroyed, stands alone, lost in time like the dead, just a drop in the bucket. -NE

Selected Filmography: *Blade II* ('02); *Hellboy* ('04); *Pan's Labyrinth* ('06); *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* ('08); *Pacific Rim* ('13); *Crimson Peak* ('15); *The Shape of Water* ('17).

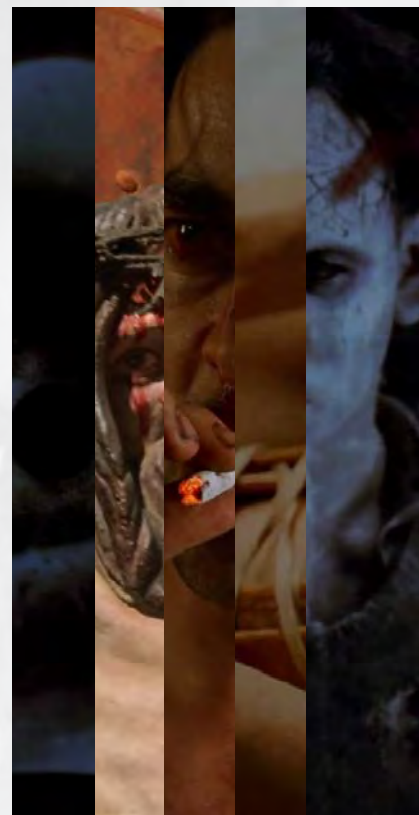




figure 7

GHOST WORLD

Terry Zwigoff, 2001, United States, 112'

Script by Daniel Clowes and Zwigoff. Based on graphic novel by Clowes. Photographed by Alfonso Beato. Music by David Kitay. Edited by Carole Kravetz-Aykanian and Michael R. Miller. With Thora Birch, Scarlett Johansson, Brad Renfro, Bob Balaban, Illeana Douglas, Steve Buscemi, et al.

Norman sits waiting on a bus stop bench marked, "NO LONGER IN SERVICE"—he's easy prey for Enid (Birch) and Rebecca (Johansson), whose number one pass-time is making fun of any and everything they encounter. Norman looks foolish to them. But later, Enid admits he's the only one she can count on--he's there always waiting...

Enid & Rebecca exit their graduation ceremony, middle fingers aimed at their school, classmates & instructors, plus the world at large. They kill time for hours by following strangers that catch their eye, making sarcastic comments about everything in their path.

In scene one Enid, red graduation robe shaking frenetically, dances to *Jaan Pehechaan Ho* a pre-Bollywood Hindi film (Raja Nawathe, 1965) "Gumnaam"—the dance number's title roughly translates, "We should get to know each other" (Wiki.). Precisely what Enid needs but doesn't get... Enid bumps into road blocks no matter which way she turns. Even her bestie, Becca, ridicules Enid's fascination with "creeps, losers & weirdos." Enid melancholically replies, "but those are our people."

Enid befriends Seymour (Buscemi) after she & Becca pull a cruel practical joke. But what starts out as a stunt transforms into friendship as Enid gets to know him. She realizes his eccentricities (a collector of old 78 blues & jazz records) fall closer to her own desires. Seymour piques her budding interest in blues. He sells her a compilation--she sits in her bedroom playing Skip James's "Devil Got My Woman" over & over again; James's Delta blues lament and crying guitar capture her.

Bob Balaban as Enid's father rings sweet, but his bumbling thick-headedness shows he has zero awareness of his daughter's needs. He calls her Pumpkin—no clue she's grown. When he moves his former girlfriend back into the house (played with creepy smarminess by Garr), it's Enid's last straw. She desperately seeks out Seymour's affections, which painfully backfires.

Becca's mean-spirited, vengeful nastiness signals a best friend's jealousy. When she gives Seymour Enid's "Crumb"-like drawings, that affectionately show scenes of his idiosyncratic nature, he feels shamed. Later, Enid tells him they're portraits of him as her "hero." Yes, she needs heroes to help model her life. As she watches Norman get on a bus, her jaw drops. It sparks a beautifully poetic escape for the girl in a red dress carrying a huge red hatbox--she leaves her Ghost World for sites unknown. -ww

Selected Filmography: *Bad Santa* ('03); *Art School Confidential* ('06); *Budding Prospects* ('17).





figure 8

MOULIN ROUGE!

Baz Luhrmann, 2001, Australia, 128'

Script by Luhrmann and Craig Pearce. Photographed by Donald M. McAlpine. Music by Craig Armstrong. Edited by Jill Bilcock. With Nicole Kidman, Ewan McGregor, John Lequizamo, Jim Broadbent, et al.

“Voulez-vous coucher avec moi (ce soir)?” Everyone at Luhrmann’s *Moulin Rouge!* knows what that means, as the Diamond Dogs shout it out, even though it’s a melody which sticks for more than the night. In case you’re one of the few who haven’t succumbed to having the refrain embedded & don’t know the translation, watching the “Dogs” leaves nothing to the imagination (“Do you want to sleep with me (tonight)?”). Lady Marmalade, written in 1974 & recorded by Patti LaBelle (bar-none, best version), the “Dogs” version (Christina Aguilera, Lil’ Kim, Mya, & Pink) have the crowd howling, “more, more, more, more...” on beat.

John Huston’s *Moulin Rouge* (1952) garnered numerous awards (an Oscar for Best Art Direction & Costume Design; BAFTAs & the famous Venice Silver Lion for John Huston) and earned \$5 million in North America (not too shabby for 1952). Bob Fosse credits Huston’s version of the can-can as influencing his own film style. But, its 1950’s look obviously runs tame viewed next to Luhrmann’s 2001 version.

Baz Luhrmann’s finishes his Red Curtain Trilogy (*Strictly Ballroom*, *Romeo + Juliet*, *Moulin Rouge!*) with a bang! If you’re interested in the degree of creative detail that went into production, a scene-by-scene analysis is offered on the DVD, well worth study for curious cinema hounds. The entire production shows what a labor of love Baz’s crew put into his “Truth, Beauty, Freedom, & Love” tale, from sterling silver garters for Satine (Kidman) to “melting” sets delays.

The appeal of this production lies in the multi-layer eye-candy & musical bravado. The tale, old as romantic pain/pleasure, blends farce with tragedy...not the easiest to pull off. Overtones of whore/Madonna dichotomy flavor the whole stew. And, the old Royal typewriter scenes draw us in as Christian’s (McGregor) reverie recalls his enchantment. Toulouse’s (Leguizamo) sparkly characterization beckons us into a land of hedonistic abandon. Luhrmann’s homage to 50’s musicals pushes the extravagance to the limit. Wow! Diamonds are a girl’s best friend, even if Nicole broke two ribs proving she can update Marilyn...

All-in-all, the wild ride brings us overfull to tragedy. Is Luhrmann professing we should wear sunscreen? Or merely warning us that too much stimulation leaves a terrible hangover. In any event, if you missed this extravaganza on the big screen, please borrow a screening room for the full tour. Well done, “Baz-niacs”! -ww

Selected Filmography: *Australia* (‘08); *The Great Gatsby* (‘13).



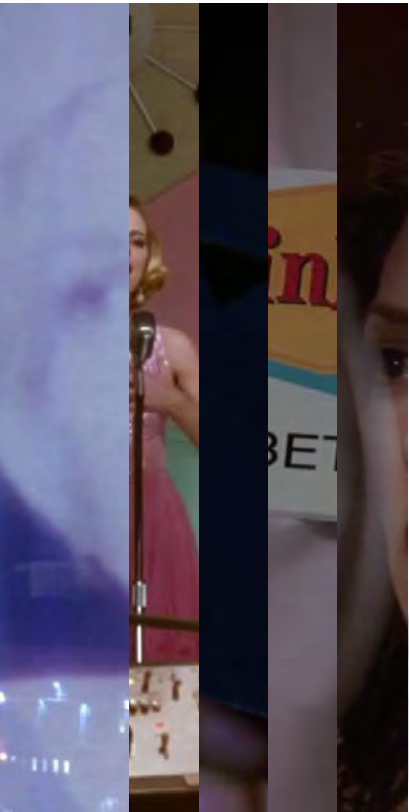


figure 9

MULHOLLAND DR.

David Lynch, 2001, United States, 146'

Script by Lynch. Photographed by Peter Deming. Music by Angelo Badalamenti. Edited by Mary Sweeney. With Naomi Watts, Laura Elena Harring, Justin Theroux, Ann Miller, Robert Forster, Melissa George, et al.



David Lynch's homage to LA/Hollywood, originally shot on film for a television series, was scrapped by ABC. Much later funding came through to transform the film into a 2hr feature. Luckily, because it was shot on film, color richness is enhanced, offering exquisite cinematic beauty. Throw on top Lynchian-freaky mystery plus ominous sound design and you've got enough to clear your soul. The Hollywood dream/make-believe illusion co-mingles with impoverished characters and betrayed love, the underbelly of the beast.

Lynch has described the film as a love story and the characters are caught, like most love stories, in a dark/light flip. They go weaving back and forth between ecstasy and agony. Lynch, the color master impeccably reflecting mood, shows a brilliant ability to use images drenched with color as magnifiers enhancing each scene.

Take the scene between Adam the director (Theroux) and the Cowboy (Lafayette Montgomery, aka "Monty")—the mood borders on terror as Adam drives into a deserted corral. A single blinking, buzzing, strobe-like light hanging beneath a horned animal skull makes it feel like we're entering a strange concentration camp, exuding a dark/light background. Adam's dressed in black, spattered with neon pink paint from a fight he's had with his unfaithful wife. The Cowboy, on the other hand, dresses impeccably in Tom Mix's wardrobe (yes, the actual wardrobe from the actual Tom Mix complete with white Cowboy icon hat!).

The Cowboy calls out Adam on his arrogance; he begins the conversation commenting on the lovely evening and thanking Adam for driving out from the city into the country to meet. Adam's response, rather than exchanging pleasantries, is brusque—no time for "small talk." The Cowboy quickly shocks and flattens Adam with one blow: "...you're a man who wants to get right down to it...A man's attitude goes same way as the way his life will be..." He then lets Adam know he has zero power in this conversation. The Cowboy drives the buggy. Adam gets it; he's not tooling around the city streets anymore showing off his sports car; he's caught in the raw atmosphere of ominous nature with it's no nonsense punch—he's suddenly on a buggy ride.

Each scene Lynch designs carries a Zen-whack. We're drenched in mood. We go from curious observer to shocked participant drowning in intense feeling. We're submerged in dark and light and every shade in between. -ww

Selected Filmography: *Inland Empire* ('06), *Twin Peaks: The Return* ('17).



figure 10

ADAPTATION

Spike Jonze, 2002, United States, 114'

Script by Charlie Kaufman and Donald Kaufman. Based on *The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orlean. Photographed by Lance Acord. Music by Carter Burwell. Edited by Eric Zumbrunnen. With Nicolas Cage, Meryl Streep, Chris Cooper, Tilda Swinton, and Brian Cox, et al.

“Adaptation is almost shameful, it’s like running away.” Thus through the voice of one of the most critically acclaimed and versatile actors of our age (Streep) the real Charlie Kaufman provides commentary on his movie and his own crisis. Trying to give a brief description of *Adaptation* is a crime, but it is essentially a meta-film about Charlie Kauffman’s failure to Adapt Susan Orlean’s *The Orchid Thief* into a film, and his move towards instead making a movie about this struggle. *Adaptation* is not a movie, it is a visual representation of the complex relationship between screenwriter, content, and the resulting image. As a result, one must be careful when watching this movie or else they might get lost in its meta-quality. While this meta-structure is indeed brilliant it is also disorienting. However, this is where *Adaptation* establishes its humor. The movie isn’t ha-ha funny it’s stupid funny. The further you get in the film the more you try to contemplate its circular nature and in your confusion you ultimately just get sucked into its outward façade: a film that wishes it was solely focused on orchids but is actually just a Nic Cage duality.

The film wants you to question whether or not you are watching the story of the films creation or the product of that story. Eventually you cease to care and get to enjoy how weird the film is, loving the way it hits you over the head with its self-referential comedy. Many of the jokes involve the duality of Nic Cages. Cage plays both the real life Kauffman and his fictitious brother Donald Kauffman who is listed as a co-writer. This second Cage, or Kauffman to be exact, is the best part of the movie. Donald is attempting to construct his own screenplay just as Charlie is in the process of constructing his. Donald’s story is about a serial killer with multiple personalities, a plot which Charlie laments. Charlie even berates his brother saying that the two ideas which his story revolves around are the most overdone in history. While not exact, Donald’s fake screenplay 3 begins to seep into Charlie’s both the real and the fake. This is the most nuanced part of the movie and what I compel you to search for upon your viewing. -JV

Selected Filmography: *Yeah Right!* (’03); *Fully Flared* (’07); *Where the Wild Things Are* (’09); *Her* (’13).





figure 11

FEMME FATALE

Brian De Palma, 2002, France, 114'

Script by De Palma. Photographed by Thierry Arbogast. Music by Ryuichi Sakamoto. Edited by Bill Pankow. With Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Antonio Banderas, Rie Rasmussen, Peter Coyote, and Eriq La Salle, et al.



A hotel in Cannes on the opening night of its festival. Inside one of the rooms a woman lies on her bed. *Double Indemnity* is on, her reflection on the television overlays onto Stanwyck. For the film-literate a lineage is instantly created; we have her number but, as we find later, only to a certain degree. Rebecca Romijn is Laure Ash, a thief unafraid to bare some skin, able to seduce both sexes, and involved in a diamond heist during the famous film fest. When she double crosses the rest of her team and makes off with the jewels, a chance encounter with her doppelganger is the ticket to a successful getaway. But just as chance played into her future, so does chance bring her past up to speed with her.

When De Palma makes a personal film cameras, watchers, and computers appear (e.g. Antonio Banderas' paparazzo). It's personal because as a young man, De Palma was a tech-whiz who surveyed and captured evidence of his cheating father on behalf of his mother. But within the personal De Palma work we also find characters who are movie buffs. Laure takes a semantic approach to the world around her; in the Venn diagram of reality and cinema there is just a single circle. Within an hour and a half whole lives can be predicted as long as you've seen enough films.

Laure dons the identity of her doppelganger, taking her name 'Lily.' With the new identity she marries the American ambassador of France. Seven years later she's back in the country. A candid photo of Laure alerts her ex-accomplices to her whereabouts. Once again in danger she pulls the cameraman who took the photo (Banderas) into her world. A brilliant nod to Hawks' *The Big Sleep*, Banderas pretends to be a fairy when he first interacts with Laure/Lily, just like Bogart's Marlowe when visiting a rare book shop that's also a front for a porn racket.

Femme Fatale is a defining post-noir, it takes the self-reflexiveness of the style and propels it to a conclusion that is completely illogical. Laure Ash is a woman on the run, for her, awareness of tropes is a weapon greater than sex. Is it possible to use noir's fatalism to change one's destiny? When there is no difference between laws cinematic and actual, the answer is yes. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Mission to Mars* ('00); *The Black Dahlia* ('06); *Redacted* ('07); *Passion* ('12)



figure 12

PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE

Paul Thomas Anderson, 2002, United States, 95'

Script by Anderson. Photographed by Robert Elswit. Music by Jon Brion. Edited by Leslie Jones. With Adam Sandler, Emily Watson, Phillip Seymour-Hoffman, Luis Guzman, Mary Lynn Rajsclub, et al.

What if Adam Sandler starred in a Jacques Tati film? Or what if Tati directed an Adam Sandler vehicle? These are questions not easily answered by the film that got Billy Madison himself into Cannes. The sound of a semi hurtling down the road is only heard once it is in the frame, the same play with vehicular sound and image seen in *Traffic*. Sandler's blue suit and Watson's red dresses make them immediately discernible in the frame ala Hulot and his getup used to confuse in *PlayTime*. This is but a framework for Anderson to play, much like how *Boogie Nights* and *Magnolia* borrow merely loglines from Altman to create something distinctly PTA (he still incorporates some Altman here with the beautiful voice of Shelley Duvall's Olive Oil singing "He Needs Me"). The Tati feel goes only so far; there is a looseness to the choreography of the film; emotion and intimacy work better in close-up. Sandler's Barry Egan has a hard time communicating with words. The feeling of falling in love is already hard enough to convey. Anderson doesn't try to express this with conventional cinematic language, opting instead for the art of Jeremy Blake and the sounds of Jon Brion. Colors and patterns morph from one to the next in these sequences, one of which ends with a night sky glistening with stars. It's the stuff that can't be spoken.

Over the course of the film Barry falls back on communication without words or thought; the instinctual actions that come out of him whether rage, love, or the blending of the two. Characters ask aloud why some things are there like the harmonium that came into Barry's life the same day he meets Lena or the hundreds of pudding cups Barry plans to use to accumulate a million frequent flier miles thanks to a mistake in the fine print of a promotional offer. Barry can't explain why these are there. But by acting on emotion Barry is able to outsmart the script: without thinking he will physically bring symbols to the characters they are symbolic for. Every tool of film form, from soft focus to lens flare, is used to express the outburst of romance. But there is nothing disingenuous about it. When the iris closes in on the two holding hands, this isn't a dissertation on the construction of the romantic comedy but just what feels right in the moment regardless of whether it can be explained or not. -JS

Selected Filmography: *There will be Blood* ('07); *The Master* ('12); *Inherent Vice* ('14); *Phantom Thread* ('17).

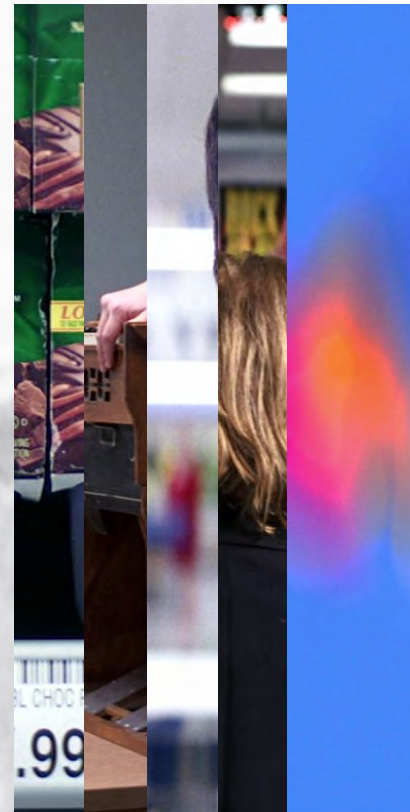




figure 13

RUSSIAN ARK *(Russkij Kovcheg)*

Alexander Sokurov, 2002, Russia, 96'

Script by Anatoli Nikiforov and Sokurov. Photographed by Tilman Büttner. Music by Sergei Yevtushenko. With Sergei Dreiden, et al.



All that I can say is, that since I have been in Russia, I take a gloomy view of the future reserved for Europe. At the same time, my conscience obliges me to admit that my opinion is combated by wise and very experienced men. These men say that I exaggerate in my own mind the power of Russia; that every community has its prescribed destiny; and that the destiny of this community is to extend its conquests eastward, and then to become divided. Those minds that refuse to believe in the brilliant future of the Slavonians agree with me as regards the amiable and happy disposition of that people; they admit that they are endowed with an instinctive sentiment of the picturesque; they allow them a natural talent for music; and they conclude that these dispositions will enable them to cultivate the fine arts to a certain extent, but that they do not suffice to constitute the capacity for conquering and commanding which I attribute to them.

In Russia, everything you notice, and everything that happens around you, has a terrifying uniformity; and the first thought that comes into the traveler's mind, as he contemplates this symmetry, is that such entire consistency and regularity, so contrary to the natural inclination of mankind, cannot have been achieved and could not survive without violence. . . . Officially, such brutal tyranny is called respect for unity and love of order; and this bitter fruit of despotism appears so precious to the methodical mind that you are told it cannot be purchased at too high a price.

I could not forget the Empress Catherine's journey to the Crimea and the facades of villages set up at intervals on boards and painted canvas, a quarter of a league away from the road, to let the triumphant sovereign believe that the desert had been populated during her reign. The Russian mind is still obsessed with such notions: everyone disguises what is bad and shows what is good before the master's eyes. There is a permanent conspiracy of smiles plotting against truth for the greater contentment of mind of the one who is supposed to want and act to the advantage of all.

-Marquis de Custine: *Scrisori din Rusia-Rusia in 1839* (Letters from Russia).

Selected Filmography: *Father and Son* ('03); *The Sun* ('04); *Alexandra* ('07); *Faust* ('11); *Francofonia* ('15).



figure 14

THE DREAMERS

Bernardo Bertolucci, 2003, UK/France/Italy, 115'

Script by Gilbert Adair. Based on *The Holy Innocents* by Adair. Photographed by Fabio Cianchetti. Edited by Jacopo Quadri. With Michael Pitt, Eva Green, and Louis Garrel, et al.

The Dreamers is Bertolucci's love story of cinema and the art life of 1960's Paris. The story involves an American in Paris swept up in the poetic love and freedom of a sister, Isabelle, and her brother, Theo; they float through the days of idle spending much of the time at the Cinema. We too are having a film lesson. We track and trace the characters on the screen. We watch the films they watch. During a protest, the siblings find and befriend the lonely American Matthew, a lost innocent explorer, and thrust him into their cinematic dream. Protests in the street, the excitement and love of cinema mirror this love triangle unfolding; they are living out a dream life, mirroring what they see on the screen. The trio run through the Louvre mimicking Godard's *Bande à part*, trying to break the timed record. They let cinema guide and define them; they live the cinema and let this dream take hold of them and push them out the other side. They play games with one another, the punch line and answer to each riddle always taken from a piece of cinema history.

Matthew is quickly enmeshed with the 'Siamese twins.' Falling in love with both and having a love affair with the Isabelle. Cinema their shared religion; they watch with ecstasy the emerging birth of Modern French Cinema. The siblings take in Matthew as "one of us" fellow "freaks" finding companionship. The twins bring in Matthew perhaps to pull themselves out of their closed enmeshment instead of pulling him into the fray. As the revolutionary nature of the world outside becomes more intense, the three retreat into a fantasy world of play and emerging sexuality. Initially Matthew is the student, the innocent to the twins' absurd and twisted games, but he then attempts to call them out of their arrested development. Matthew encourages Isabelle into going on a date with him and the conventionality of it presents a direct dichotomy to their shared bubble baths and play forts. They cannot continue to live in a fantasy of games and manipulation. Eventually the world comes in awaking them from their slumber; shattering a window and exposing them to the outside world again. In the streets, they are confronted with ideas of truth and the reality of violence, swept up in the crowd. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Ten Minutes Older: The Cello* segment "Histoire d'eau" ('02); *Me and You* ('12).





figure 15

GOODBYE, DRAGON INN (不散)

Tsai Ming-liang, 2003, Taiwan, 82'

Script by Tsai. Photographed by Lioa Pen-Jung. Edited by Chen Sheng-Chang. With Lee Kang-sheng, Chen Shiang-chyi, Kiyonobu Mitamura, Miao Tien, Shih Chun, Yang Kuei-Mei, et al.

A run-down cinema in Taipei is showing King Hu's 1967 wuxia epic *Dragon Inn* as its send-off before shutting down for good. Not many have shown up for the event, and those that have are there with little fanfare and for other reasons. The ticket woman (Chen) climbs stairs and limps down vacant corners of the theater looking for the projectionist (Lee). A Japanese tourist continually searches for another man to make advances on him. The only ones watching the film without any supplemental distractions are a pair of old men who arrived separately, one with his grandson. Both men appeared in that night's feature and have not seen it in years. They'll run into each other afterwards in the lobby to reminisce – Tsai actually getting Jun Shih and Miao Tien to play themselves.

Tsai has always exhibited a playful touch in his films but the miserablism and languid pacing has become synonymous with the director. *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is the closest he has come to a silent comedy. The evolution of the failed attempts by the Japanese tourist to have a homosexual encounter recalls a Keaton gag: a string of variations on the same joke with slight increments of absurdity. A woman sits in the auditorium, the film glazing over her eyes instead of engaging in a silent dialogue with her. She cracks open peanuts, haphazardly discarding the shells on the floor, her shucking louder than the film. Awkwardly she climbs over seats and sits directly behind the Japanese tourist, looking for an encounter of her own. The metronomic cracking of nuts in her teeth scares the man off; he runs down the stairs where the peanut shells are nearly at a 1:1 ratio with the carpet. The score and sound effects of the martial arts classic provide perfect juxtaposition and an aural layer of comedy to these encounters. The focus on the ancillary and the annoyances of movie-going recalls the theater segment in Etai's *As Long as You've Got Your Health*, it's all the junk you only miss once it's gone. It's bittersweet instead of resentful as the right people showed up that night. Tsai gets it, that it's not just about young lovers cradling each other as they watch a classic in a sold-out show. The passion for the cinema is also in the solitary moments when you're surrounded by film, not just watching it but taking drags of it as Lee's projectionist does when he lights a cigarette outside of the booth. -JS

Selected Filmography: *What Time is it There?* ('01); *The Wayward Cloud* ('05); *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* ('06); *Face* ('09); *Stray Dogs* ('13).

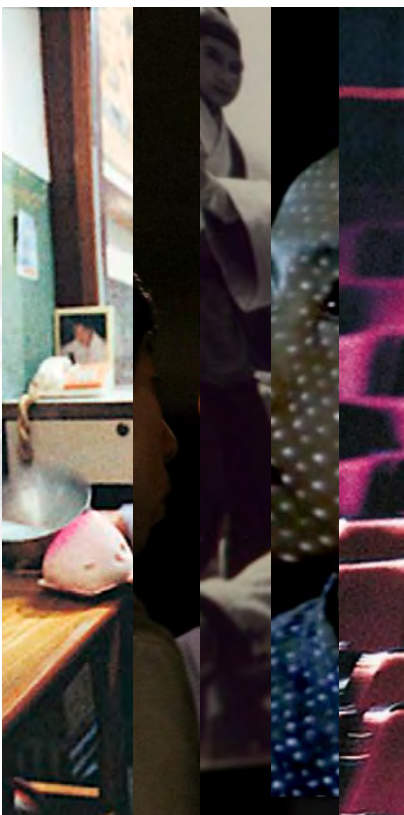




figure 16

MASKED AND ANONYMOUS

Larry Charles, 2003, United States, 112'

Script by Bob Dylan and Rene Fontaine. Photographed by Rogier Stoffers. Music by Bob Dylan. Edited by Pietro Scalia and Luis Alvarez y Alvarez. With Bob Dylan, Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Penélope Cruz, Luke Wilson, Jessica Lange, et al.

If you are addicted to lights and sounds and love Bob Dylan this is the film for you.

Directed by Larry Charles and co-written by Charles and Bob Dylan under pen names Rene Fontaine and Sergei Petrov, this film is a contemporary allegorical tale set in the not so future present; in the Capitol of this “god forsaken country” during a long and futile civil war. A question asked in the beginning of the film sounds out from a transistor radio. A preacher asks, “Are you humble before god;” then states, “what did Martin Luther King get out of it, --a boulevard?”

Jack Fate played by Dylan is the son of the dying president, not long for this world; the president’s illness further destabilizes this war-torn region. At the beginning of the film Fate is in prison, possibly for a crime he did not commit; he is released in order to provide entertainment for a network run benefit concert, for victims of the war (but mostly as a cover to funnel money). John Goodman plays Fate’s manager Uncle Sweetheart, dressed in a powder blue suit, a smooth-talking con-man finally on the ropes. ‘Sweetheart’ tries to pull out one last miracle to get the bill collectors, hungry for blood, off his back. Jessica Lange, one of the benefit promoters, is also running out of time; the network and the power players are on her back demanding a successful show.

This film has several excellent live performances by Dylan and his band; played in the film as, “the one and only Jack Fate cover band ‘simple twist of fate.” Numerous one liners and inside jokes flow from one encounter to another that are so great that multiple viewings of the film are recommended. Dylan’s Fate provides a floating narrative throughout the film offering abstract insights and reflections. Fate offers many gems throughout the film both with his narrative lines, as well as his interactions with the strange people he meets.

Fantastic supporting characters include: Luke Wilson as Bobby Cupid, Jeff Bridges as journalist Tom Friend, his girlfriend Penelope Cruz, Bruce Dern as Friend’s editor, Val Kilmer as a mystic animal wrangler, Angela Bassett plays Jack’s old love/his father’s girlfriend; Mickey Rourke, superb as the new president and childhood friend to Jack. Ed Harris plays Oscar Vogel a minstrel banjo player who reminds Jack “the whole world is a stage.” -MN

Selected Filmography: *Borat!* (‘06); *Religulous* (‘08); *Bruno* (‘09); *The Dictator* (‘12); *Army of One* (‘16).

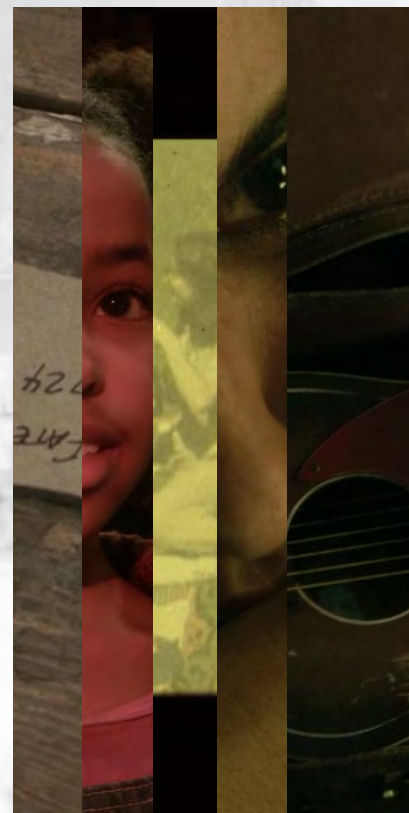




figure 17

OSAMA (هماسا)

Siddiq Barmak, 2003, Afghanistan, 83'

Script by Barmak. Photographed by Ebrahim Ghafari. Music by Mohammad Reza Darvishi.

Edited by Barmak. With Marina Golbahari, Arif Herati, Zubaida Sahar, et al.

Bacha posh. Literally “dressed up as a boy” in Dari. Refers to a hidden cultural practice in Afghanistan where parents disguise daughters as sons and raise/present them as such so they have the societal benefits of the gender. These girls live as boys up to puberty when they are then expected to transform back in time to become wives and mothers. Such is the lot in life of our title character (Golbahari). She and her mother must be escorted by a stranger agreeing to pretend to be the man of the house. Despite the precautions they are still stopped by the Taliban. The man is berated for taking his wife on a bike and she is told to cover her feet. Later, when Osama has cut her hair and deepened her voice we see her feet, the same as her mother’s but now completely acceptable.

Winner of the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film, *Osama* found an equally supportive fan base in Washington D.C. Hillary Clinton and fellow senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson sponsored a screening of the film, the first to be made since the fall of the Taliban, in November 2004. Colin Powell worked with MGM/UA to send the film out to US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as screen it in the UN’s Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium March 2004. Both screenings were used by their respective presenters to sway opinion on how to support free elections in Afghanistan and to increase military presence in the country. Marina Golbahari sports eyes made for the cinema. They are focal points of pain that recall the equally transfixing presences of the non-actors of the Italian Neo-Realists or Bresson. One look into them is a call for action.

The opening of the film briefly breaks the fourth wall. A film director who remains off screen pays a boy to talk to him in front of the camera. During the interview a women’s protest occurs. Soon the Taliban arrive to turn the hoses onto the protesters, hauling them off inside locked cages. One member of the Taliban approaches the camera and beats its operator. This is the death of the Afghan cinema that director Barmak witnessed when the Taliban seized Kabul in ’96. In interviews he has recounted the destruction of his 8mm cameras, photos, and projectors inside his home. When they got to the steps of the Afghan Film Institute thousands of films were burned including those by Barmak and one of his idols: Tarkovsky. The story of Osama is just one of many that were unable to be captured by artists during this era. Over the course of filming Barmak cut out instances of hope, opting for the bleak reality of these women instead of the lies found in his hopeful dreams. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Opium War* (‘08).





figure 18

THE SADDEST MUSIC IN THE WORLD

Guy Maddin, 2003, Canada, 99'

Script by Maddin and George Toles. Photographed by Luc Montpellier. Music by Christopher Dedrick. Edited by David Wharnsby. With Isabella Rossellini, Mark McKinney, Maria de Me-deiros, David Fox, et al.

If you're sad, and like beer, then she's your lady. The baroness Helen Port-Huntley (Rossellini), owner of Winnipeg's Muskeg Beer and possessor of no pair of legs; usually essential for a dame but she's since moved on to the dollar. A doomed love triangle from her past culminated in a car crash. She should have lost one leg but came away with two stumps and zero beaus. With the end of Prohibition around the corner, Ms. Port-Huntley devises a contest for one last surge of the global alcoholic dollar before it goes back down to the states. Musicians representing their home countries will square off to find the saddest music in the world. This is the premise, and the title, Maddin kept from Kazuo Ishiguro's script before ditching the rest in favor of the aesthetics of early cinema; grainy, soft black and white with occasional ventures into antiquated color techniques.

In the contest are a father and his two sons. Fyodor (Fox), once and still in love with Helen, represents Canada. His sons Chester (McKinney) and Roderick (McMillan) represent American and Serbia respectively despite being Canadian, Chester's love of money and his smirking callousness making him American. McKinney's tenure with *The Kids in the Hall* has him clearly at home soliciting pathos within strange and baroque surroundings. Chester and Helen are old flames but he's looking for prize money not the love of a woman, legged or not. Roderick arrives by train and under pseudonym, in his breast pocket is a jar with his son's heart, pickled by his own tears. The wife who left him after their son's death and the nympho-amnesiac screwing Chester are one and the same.

Solo piano squares off against traditional tribal music from Africa. Roderick's cello is matched-up against the bagpipes of the Scots. Siamese flute versus Mexican mariachi. Eventually brother will fight brother, the winners of each round slide into a celebratory pool of beer. Chester acquires the losers and buys off the poorer contestants for his Broadway theatricalities, the subject matter of his compositions revolve around broader tragedies of American history. Unknowingly the contest actually does find the saddest music in the world: the music of a man who will do and play whatever it takes to avoid his own sadness. The sheet music for an up-tempo version of "The Song is You" is the veil covering the block of ice that formed in the tear ducts. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Cowards Bend the Knee* ('03); *Brand Upon the Brain!* ('06); *My Winnipeg* ('07); *Keyhole* ('11); *The Forbidden Room* ('15).





figure 19

TOKYO GODFATHERS (東京ゴッドファーザーズ)

Satoshi Kon, 2003, Japan, 92'

Script by Keiko Nobumoto and Kon. Photographed by Katsutoshi Sugai. Music by Keiichi Suzuki and Moonriders. Edited by Takeshi Seyama and Kashiko Kimura. With Toru Emori, Yoshiaki Umegaki, Aya Okamoto, et al.



For a director who has been asked on a few occasions why he chose animation instead of live-action, an infantile pigeonholing of anime to sci-fi/fantasy fare if ever there was one, *Tokyo Godfathers* must be that obvious target. The story of a contemporary, non-post-apocalyptic Tokyo, and its flawed residents is extremely rare in the world of animation. The types of people who become the heroes just as rarely depicted in live-action film, Japanese or otherwise (*The Fisher King* being an exception). Kon had a masterful eye as to what can be achieved with animation without resorting to fantastical creatures soaring over sweeping vistas. Since his death in 2010, his talent for the tiny, fascinating details of both narrative and character has proven unfortunately singular.

The days leading up to Christmas, a time associated with coincidence and magic. It's the time of year miracles are relegated to. For instance a string of ones could be the winning lottery ticket. The structure of Kon's third feature is analogous to that lottery ticket mentioned in the film only in passing: a string of ones, a series of coincidences that pile onto one another, each one less statistically probable from the last. And like those repeating digits past, present, and future become blended when multiple characters deal with the same problems as others. For Gin, Hana, and Miyuki, the self-described drunk, faggot, and runaway, they are forced to deal with what they left behind as they live concurrent and crisscrossing *A Christmas Carols*.

Kon and co-writer Keiko Nobumoto – who Kon says provided Hana with his feminine side – sought out to depict the people and harsh truths Japan wanted to sweep under the rug. A group of teenagers kick the shit out of the homeless for fun. Foreigners carve out homes in rundown apartments littered with discarded needles. A woman who recently miscarried, who sees starting a family as an escape from a loveless life, sits in a frozen playground at night, fruitlessly urging an infant to breast-feed. Christmas miracles become all the more noticeable and magical when we've been taken to the basest levels of disillusionment. The divine intervention of the film is not necessarily a life-saving gust of wind, but the challenge to the apathy of three homeless who decide to return a baby they found in the trash to her parents. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Millennium Actress* ('01); *Paranoia Agent* ('04); *Paprika* ('06); "Good Morning" ('08).



figure 20

COLLATERAL

Michael Mann, 2004, United States, 120'

Script by Stuart Beattie. Photographed by Dion Beebe and Paul Cameron. Music by James Newton Howard. Edited by Jim Miller and Paul Rubell. With Tom Cruise, Jamie Foxx, Jada Pinkett Smith, Mark Ruffalo, et al.

People who do versus people who talk. Those that choose the former, that's cool. The souls who operate in a Mann film are consumed by their work and defined by the minutiae of their performance of said job. Foxx's Max Durocher keeps his cab clean and knows ETAs off the top of his head. Cruise's Vincent excels at the Mozambique Drill: a double-tap to the chest, within millimeters of each other, and a third targeting the central nervous system. Ruffalo's Ray Fanning finds connections his fellow officers choose not to see and is willing to pull an all-nighter to see them through. Pinkett Smith's Annie Farrell is just as work focused as the men, a rare type of female for a Mann film, who embraces the deepest fears of failure she has as a prosecutor the night before opening remarks. All of these people, Vincent especially, relate to the world through their job. When Vincent compares the night he and Max are having to jazz on account of the need to improvise, it's clear this isn't just a job. Thankfully there's not an ounce of sentiment in Vincent for his work. Like Max and the others, they've picked a path and they seek quality. Max prefers to be right about the quickest path to a rider's destination instead of what will yield the better fare. Asked what he digs so much about jazz, Vincent appreciates what's "behind the notes."

Collateral is obsessed with what's behind the notes. The out of focus lights of cars and traffic signs find ubiquity as soft spheres of color sharing the frame with the leads. This is the fruition of Mann's choice to go full-digital in his shoots. These are the people who won't notice the dead guy riding on the MTA. Just as they won't notice a cab with a body in the trunk and a trained killer with a full itinerary for the night riding passenger. They seek something beyond the disconnection. Overhead, aerial tracking shots of Max's cab gives it anonymity, but look closer and the cracks on the windshield are there. Two men meet in an LA taxi. They find themselves in a situation where social amenities can be dropped and values can be tested, fronts can be peeled back. Why should Vincent be the villain when he acts as sensei to Max? In one night he forces Max to realize he's living a life without jazz. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Ali* ('01); *Miami Vice* ('06); *Public Enemies* ('09); *Blackhat* ('15).

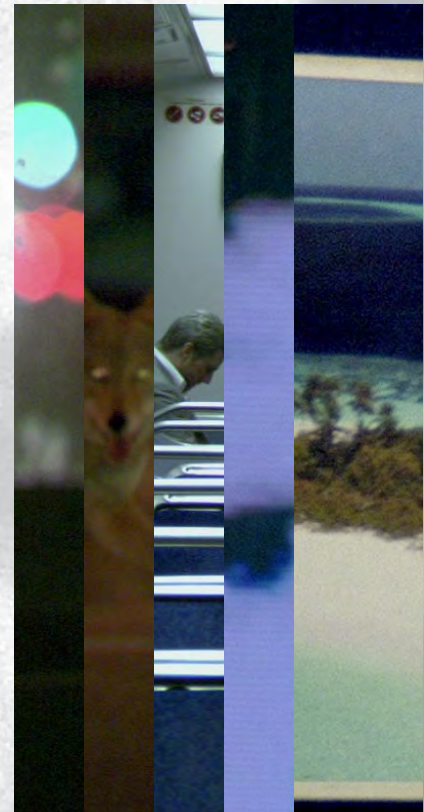


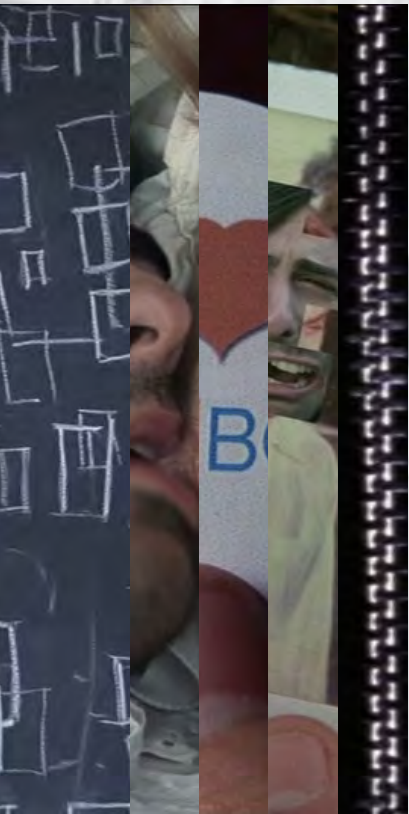


figure 21

I ♥ HUCKABEES

David O. Russell, 2004, United States/UK, 106'

Script by De Palma. Photographed by Peter Deming. Music by Job Brion. Edited by Robert K. Lambert. With Jason Schwartzman, Jude Law, Naomi Watts, Dustin Hoffman, Lily Tomlin, Mark Wahlberg, Isabelle Huppert, et al.



Is it coincidence that Jason Schwartzman also appears (and co-authored) *The Darjeeling Limited*? Another story of spiritual journeys meant to escape existential crisis than to find real answers. But *Huckabees* is existential noir, where the crime is murder of the self, the perpetrator is the natural order of all life, and the scene of the crime is the universe and everything in between. Interconnectivity, which before was the invisible glue that held everything together, has gone the way of convenience. We only find it when it brings us joy and makes us feel safe. Jon Brion also did the scores for *Punch-Drunk Love* and *The Future*. Also don't the pictures in the previous spread (pg. 28-29) look the same? Not that this means anything special, or anything for that matter, but that's where we find the beauty which in turn is something special. The interconnectivity we choose to suppress is the reminder that we are not unique in a cosmos of billions but in fact are so similar to the people we despise to the point of being the same person. To think there are no answers in the duality is just another lead to add to the case file.

Why should we listen to O. Russell when he abandoned the method directing for Oscar fishing? With *Huckabees* he seeks answers to the unanswerable, venturing out to the edge to find truth. His post-*Huckabees* career is a result of the operant conditioning and negative reinforcement he encountered fighting for unconventional films about all the stuff we don't want to be reminded about. How is *Silver Linings Playbook* not like himself? How is *American Hustle* not like himself? How is *The Fighter* not like himself? How is *I Heart Huckabees* not like himself? It's quantity not quality. But without the manure we would never be able to recognize all the stuff that's not like the rest of all the other stuff, in other words "there is no magic" as Albert Markovski says. People of all colors, tax brackets, and numbers of attractive on a 1 to 10 scale lie to themselves but there is never a bad time to wake up. The meaninglessness grounds us and we bring this awareness to the pursuits that keep us going, which could be anything from Magritte to a rock outside the strip mall where the meadows once were. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Solderis Pay* ('04); *The Fighter* ('10); *Silver Linings Playbook* ('12); *American Hustle* ('13); *Joy* ('15).



figure 22

THE PROPOSITION

John Hillcoat, 2005, Australia/UK, 104'

Script by Nick Cave. Photographed by Benoît Delhomme. Music by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis. Edited by Jon Gregory. With Guy Pearce, Ray Winstone, Emily Watson, Danny Huston, John Hurt, et al.

The film begins with a child's voice singing a tune called 'Happy Land.' The spirit of the film follows the haunting ghost of the British Empire and its compulsive need to "civilize." The relenting heat and wind dominate the setting. The idea that the people of the town wanted to settle there is almost absurd and yet on a deeper level, a question could be raised--what were they escaping from, in their homelands of England and Ireland? The haunting score by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis dominate and inhabit the film. The melodic lines are a guide leading into this mythic tale of violence and revenge. Set in the 1880's, in the harsh setting of the Australian outback, the landscape and score play as important a role in the film as the characters and storyline. The relentlessness of the landscape amplifies the violence. The violence that comes back is perhaps the split off aggression asserted in the repressed Victorian culture.

Captain Stanley (Winstone) has been given the task to keep the lawful citizens of the town safe, and to bring criminals to justice. His wife Martha (Watson) spends much of her time isolated in a big house on the outskirts of town. Charlie (Pearce) is given a Proposition from the Captain: In order to save the life of his younger, imprisoned brother, he is to track down and kill his older brother, the leader of a violent gang which rapes and pillages anything in their path. The older brother played by Danny Huston is a psychotic mystic dreamer; he has a strong set of values that are not affected by the dominate culture of rules and laws. He only cares for the love of his family and his individual freedom and survival. John Hurt, a drunken bounty hunter, adds to the surly mix.

An uncomfortableness boxes in the characters, the oppressive heat, the unknown forces of impending violence, revenge and power plays for this dusty piece of land. But down below the modern histories and horrors, the story hidden underneath is the dreaming of the land and the aboriginal people who have inhabited it for thousands of years. Perhaps the disconnection is the true message below, the disconnection from nature and humanity has forced our entire civilization off course. -MN

Selected Filmography: *The Road* ('09); *Lawless* ('12); *Triple 9* ('16).





figure 23

THREE TIMES (最好的時光)

Hou Hsiao-hsien, 2005, Taiwan, 120'

Script by Hou, Chu Tien-wen. Photographed by Mark Lee Ping Bing. Music by Lim Giong.

Edited by Liao Ching-song. With Shu Qi, Chang Chen, et al.

A time for love. A time for freedom. A time for youth. 1966, 1911, and 2005 respectively. The omnibus film is fairly important in the developing “new wave” of filmmakers that included Edward Yang and Hou. 1982’s *In Our Time* is seen as the starting point for this new era, itself a collection of four films each by a different director. Hou was not involved with said production but he had experience with the collective work in ‘83’s *The Sandwich Man* before he was in talks to make another two decades later. Production difficulties led him to wind up directing all three stories himself and thus *Three Times* was conceived. Money is on the film’s 1966 opening story “A Time for Love” as the one he would have helmed had the film went into production as originally planned. Its era matching the time in which he grew up recalling the autobiographical works of the mid-80s. But as a whole the film feels a culmination of his body of work up to this point.

Following the pool halls of its nostalgic opening, Hou goes back in time to Taiwan under colonial Japan in the second sequence. Shu Qi and Chang Chen play couples in all three times and here they are a courtesan and patron. Every segment is accorded a different style and “A Time for Freedom” was made as a silent film, its dialogue presented as title cards. The two discuss poetry and politics. They each long for different sorts of freedom, he for his country’s sovereignty and she for an escape from the life she lives in the brothel. As with the other segments, two souls float past each other.

The film’s final segment recalls *Millennium Mambo* and *Daughter of the Nile* where night clubs form the settings of tales of youth Hou doesn’t, and is perhaps unable to, understand. Text messages replace the letters and calligraphy of the previous two segments. Shu Qi is a singer drifting from a relationship with another woman to a man (Chen). She has a tattoo of the Japanese yen symbol centered on her throat. There has never been a more powerful image representative of Hou’s probing of the past and his critical but compassionate view of contemporary youth. “Name your price. I want to sell my soul. No past, no future. Just a greedy present.”

References to the number three seem to be Hou’s comic way of acknowledging that he is an artist of trilogies and triptychs. But the form is perfectly suited to his preoccupation with time and the subtle ways past informs present; and everything that’s been forgotten because of time’s natural order. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Millennium Mambo* (‘01); *Café Lumière* (‘03); *Flight of the Red Balloon* (‘07); *The Assassin* (‘15).





figure 24

THE FALL

Tarsem, 2006, United States/India, 117'

Script by Tarsem, Dan Gilroy, Nico Soultanakis. Photographed by Colin Watkinson. Music by Krishna Levy. Edited by Robert Duffy, Spot Welders. With Lee Pace, Cantinca Untaru, Justine Waddell, et al.

In order to make a labor of love on his own terms, Tarsem Singh – credited here solely as Tarsem – knew the prices he would have to pay, including airfare. Made over four years in over twenty countries, the bill was largely fronted by Tarsem himself. He had to up the personal risk in making *The Fall* in order to understand a story of how high the stakes can get in the act of storytelling. In a Los Angeles hospital during the halfway point of the silent film era, a stuntman (Pace) waits to find out if he's lost the use of his legs after a stunt gone (purposefully) wrong. A young Romanian girl Alexandria, recovering from a broken arm in the same hospital, is wide-eyed enough to be suckered into getting things for a bedridden Roy that he can't himself. To win her over he begins telling her an epic adventure of a masked bandit and his four compatriots (one of them being Charles Darwin). The same actors who play various denizens of the hospital also appear as characters in Roy's story. This is how Alexandria is imagining it but Roy purposefully draws from what's around them (as most untrained raconteurs do when riffing) and from details he finds out about Alexandria's life, a humble start to the two's symbiosis of narration as the story goes on.

Tarsem works hard to remove the frame from the mise en abyme so that the story within a story becomes inconsistent and fragmented. He applies doses of expressionism to the narration itself, a risky move for a filmmaker to tell a story poorly on purpose. Roy and Alexandria may forget details from the previous session; the little girl comes to imagine Roy behind the bandit mask instead of her father. Reminders of Roy's heartache, the first fall, affect how he tells the story. To become more invested in the action-adventure over the two people sitting in the same hospital bed is to miss the point. The heroes of the story travel across unbelievable but apparently real-world landscapes to kill Governor Odious. A simple premise, but coherence and continuity are boldly eschewed to match the emotions of those telling the story. It's heartbreaking how close to home these two make the tale but it's also incredibly human. Roy bitterly grabs hold of the story and tries to drag it down with his sinking ship and it's up to Alexandria to fight for her heroes, singular in the case of Roy. -JS

Selected Filmography: *The Cell* ('00); *Immortals* ('11); *Mirror Mirror* ('12); *Self/less* ('15).





figure 25

THE HOST (괴물)

Bong Joon-ho, 2006, South Korea, 119'

Script by Beak Chul-hyun. Photographed by Kim Hyung-koo. Music by Lee Byung-woo. Edited by Kim Sun-min. With Song Kang-ho, Byun Hee-bong, Bae Doona, Park Hae-il, Ko Ah-sung, et al.

If one were to single out some recurring principles of the South Korean blockbuster, 1999's *Shiri* commonly seen as starting point to this side of the domestic film renaissance, there is the influence of the Hollywood blockbuster from which homegrown talent make their own, usually disregarding tonal consistency, and with a strong emphasis on domestic historical/social/political concerns. From this concoction of globalization and national appeal grew *The Host*. Concerns of United States involvement over domestic affairs and the ineptitude of the government are injected into this monster film. The monster of the film emerging out of the Han River, the very same river the US military dumped gallons of formaldehyde into back in 2000. Many of these specific references for a Korean audience are littered throughout the film.

The mediocrity of the Park family is integral to the political appeal of the film. To give them the surname of Park is a necessity to their averageness. Multiple generations of the family run a small snack bar by the river. Song Kang-ho's bleached hair an indicator of his dim-witted nature – his daughter played by Ko Ah-sung making her debut among a cast of actors who have all worked with Bong before. Bae Doo-na's aunt is seen winning the bronze medal in an archery competition. And the uncle (Park Hae-il) is a washed up college graduate who knows how to make Molotov cocktails, a reference to the student riots of the 80s. This is *Little Miss Sunshine* meets *Godzilla*. Their dysfunction even rears its head during encounters with the monster making the action climax more thrilling and the family's cooperation more necessary.

All of this was the perfect formula for mass resonance as a fourth of the country's population came out to see it, breaking records for admissions to a domestic release. Only three other films have been able to surpass the numbers of *The Host*, and it took almost a decade for it to happen. Recent record breakers like *Train to Busan*, while maintaining the high-standard set by the previous decade's blockbusters, lack the political subtleties found in Bong's film. The failure of the older generations to protect their young is the core dynamic between the family. This is not simply an anti-US allegory as much blame is placed on the elder generations; there are consequences for taking action too late. The monster itself is a living, breathing symbol which evolves as the Parks inadvertently take on multiple governments. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Barking Dogs Never Bite* ('00); *Memories of Murder* ('03); *Mother* ('09); *Snowpiercer* ('13); *Okja* ('17).





figure 26

THE LIVES OF OTHERS *(Das Leben der Anderen)*

Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006, Germany, 137'

Script by Donnersmarck. Photographed by Hagen Bogdanski. Music by Gabriel Yared, Stephane Moucha. Edited by Patricia Rommel. With Ulrich Muhe, Martina Gedeck, Sebastian Kock, Ulrich Tukur, et al.

This film is set in East Germany in 1984; University professor and Stasi surveillance expert Hauptmann Gerd Wiesler (Muhe) is called to begin surveillance for a state supported successful playwright, Georg Dreyman (Koch). Placing bugs throughout the apartment and mapping the layout of the flat, complete audio surveillance is set in motion in a speedy 20 minutes; the surveillance officer sets up shop in the attic rafters above.

Wiesler is a trained professional, by the book, called in for his excellence on the job. He draws an outline of the flat below in white chalk and types up transcripts of the daily routine. The observer truly believes in his power of observation and has complete confidence in his instincts. On the day the bugs are planted, he instinctively knows the neighbor is watching out her peep hole. He quickly knocks on the door. He knows her name and threatens her daughter's standing at the University if she says anything.

The first day of surveillance begins with the playwright's 40th birthday party. All the important artists and friends are there, including a blacklisted director who sits alone on a couch reading Brecht. The author has requested no books for his birthday instead the blacklisted director gives him a musical score "Sonata for a Good Man," this is a theme that plays out and unfolds in different areas throughout the film.

Surveillance of the artist begins to have an effect on the observer. He visits the apartment while the author is away and steals the Brecht book; at another moment, he weeps as the sonata is played. As the surveillance unfolds Wiesler begins to see the hypocrisy at work; the minister, a high-ranking government official, who has set this operation in motion is strong arming the author's girlfriend, a famous actress, into a relationship. By observing, Weisler gets pulled into the drama unfolding and at several times interferes with the interactions and secretly changes the course of events. At one point, he confronts the actress at a bar telling her, "I am your audience." He becomes participant as well as observer. He is now part of this drama unfolding and is partially responsible for the outcome. As the film unfolds decisions ultimately have an impact on all involved, people are more than objects pushed and controlled by the state; power and creativity are juxtaposed exposing tragic flaws and heartbreaking consequences. –MN



Selected Filmography: *The Tourist* ('10).



figure 27

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Sofia Coppola, 2006, United States/France/Japan, 123'

Script by Coppola. Based on *Marie Antoinette: The Journey* by Antonia Fraser. Photographed by Lance Acord. Edited by Sarah Flack. With Kirsten Dunst, Jason Schwartzman, Judy Davis, Rip Torn, Rose Byrne, et al.

Sofia Coppola brings her particular style of personal character driven storytelling to the genre of historical fiction. A new wave rock groove starts this film, giving the indication to sit up and come along for the ride. The story follows the arranged marriage of Marie Antonia (Dunst) Archduchess of Austria to Louis-Auguste XVI (Schwartzman) - heir to the throne of France. An early scene set in Austria 1768, shows a sleepy teenage girl waking up cuddling with her pug puppy, later her mother (Faithfull) instructs her upon leaving for France, "all eyes will be on you." She takes a long carriage ride across the Austrian countryside. In a wet muddy field, on a foggy day, the young girl is handed over at the border to the French Royal court. The transfer takes place in a large tent, entering on Austrian soil exiting in France. Marie is stripped of all belongings, stripped naked, she is then clothed in a lavish French gown. From that point on she is the property of France.

Coppola an expert at capturing mood through landscape and the use of music goes under the story imagining the life of a teenage girl thrust into power and yet completely powerless. Through her newly acquired Royal life, Marie Antoinette is given carte blanche in abundance. She lavishly has dresses and wigs made in honor of her new-found grandeur; her one act of control is through excessive extravagance through dress, food and parties. Marie is like most teenagers, completely naïve at her place in the world. This film, shot beautifully on the grounds of Versailles, shows the excessive expanse of the landscape. The girl is trapped in the formalities and repetition of Royal life, watched over by a court of hundreds. The main stress on the young couple is to produce a male heir to the throne thus uniting France and Austria through a Royal bloodline. Coppola deconstructs and highlights the ridiculous formality, repetition, and hierarchy of Aristocratic society, the tediousness and boredom of it. Twisted rituals are documented, including on their wedding day, the newlyweds sheepishly sit in their large bed as the King, the Church and the Royal Court bless them and their future offspring.

The casting impeccably mirrors the cinematic lineage of bloodlines: Frances Ford Coppola's daughter reporting her version of a royal upbringing with cousin Jason playing Louis XVI and Danny Huston son of famed director John Huston playing Marie's brother.

Selected Filmography: *Lost in Translation* ('03); *Somewhere* ('10); *The Bling Ring* ('13); *A Very Murray Christmas* ('15); *The Beguiled* ('17).





figure 28

SYNDROMES AND A CENTURY (แสงศตวรรษ)

Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2006, Thailand, 105'

Script by Weerasethakul. Photographed by Sayombhu Mukdeeprom. Music Kantee Anantagant. Edited by Lee Chatametikool. With Nantararat Sawaddikul, Jaruchai Iamaram, Sophon Pukanok, Jenjira Pongpas, et al.

You majored in Pharmacy? Both parents were doctors, the film is a mesh of their stories and his memories of these stories.

Why did you switch faculties? Weerasethakul has since emigrated from his home country, still under martial law, after the release of *Cemetery of Splendour*.

Did you find the army base boring? If you had seen *Syndromes* in its limited run in Thailand (meaning legal, non-private), black and soundless film stock was put in place of the four scenes asked to be removed by the Board of Censors. These matched the place in the film and lasted the duration of each cut scene.

How would you describe yourself? Cinematic installation.

Why do you think you're cheerful? Humor is found in the dualities of male/female, then/now, doctor/patient, country/city.

Do you play any sports? Romances fail, barely missing.

Can you draw? A woman doctor in a rural setting. A male doctor in a city medical center.

Do you prefer drawing with paint, pencils, or pastels? ...

Do you prefer triangles, squares, or circles? Like *Blissfully Yours* and *Tropical Malady* before it, there is a distinct structure of halves.

A circle? What color would it be? The daylight of the past is replaced by fluorescent tubes of the contemporary ceilings.

And what size? Characters reappear, moments are repeated from different vantage points.

What would you like it to be made from? A funnel draws in the fumes of a hospital basement, the camera comes close to being sucked in itself.

Do you keep any pets? Parallels are echoes just as much as they provide commentary. Repeat viewings will create a two-way conversation in real time.

Can you sit up?

What hand do you use for surgery?

What does DDT stand for? The song is called "Fez" by Neil & Iraiza.

Selected Filmography: *Mysterious Object at Noon* ('00); *Blissfully Yours* ('02); *The Adventures of Iron Pussy* ('03); *Tropical Malady* ('04); *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* ('10); *Mekong Hotel* ('12); *Cemetery of Splendour* ('15).

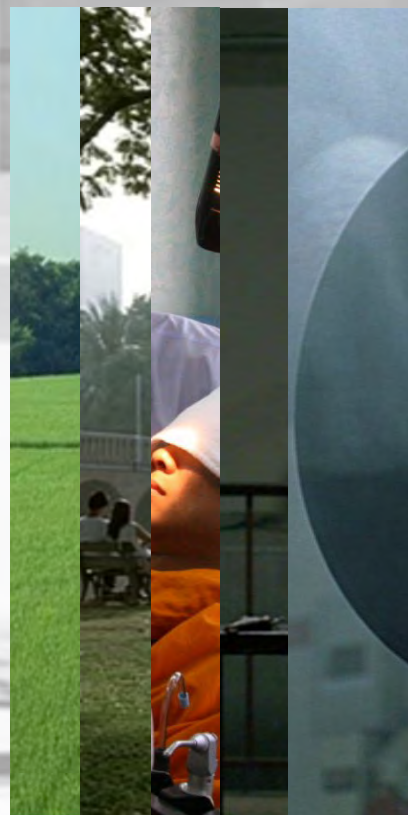




figure 29

THE DARJEELING LIMITED

Wes Anderson, 2007, United States/India, 91'

Script by Anderson, Roman Coppola, Jason Schwartzman. Photographed by Robert D. Yeoman. Edited by Andrew Weisblum. With Owen Wilson, Adrien Brody, Jason Schwartzman, Amara Karan, Anjelica Huston, Bill Murray, et al.



Wes Anderson's movies up to this point had a recurring motif of a sequence in slow-motion. It was a signifier that things were coming to a close. These types of scenes put the story on pause so all emotions could be dwelled on and put into context, and it was usually accomplished just by characters walking set to a well-chosen song. The slow-motion sequence happens early on in *The Darjeeling Limited*. And then it happens again. After that it happens a few times more. On a spiritual journey there might be moments when you think it's a good place to stop but if the journey is honest then it's a train that's never coming to a complete halt, derailed or not. It's a playful acknowledgment on Anderson's part of filmic ideas he's fallen back on. The self-awareness is carefully used in service to the three Whitman brothers: Francis, Peter, and Jack. It's the last time an Anderson film could be picked out from a sea of parodies, before the play with form and the Ophüls references didn't get in the way of characters trying to find meaning. This train going across India is not Wes' dollhouse. The passengers bring too much hurt – yes, their baggage – to be merely the human figurines of the mise-en-scene.

When the film played theatrically it was accompanied by the short "Hotel Chevalier" which acts as a prologue to *The Darjeeling Limited*. Jack (Schwartzman) reunites with an old flame in a hotel in Paris. We see later in the main feature that Jack is very careful about orchestrating the ambience of his room for the women he hopes to sleep with and that his works of "fiction" are thinly veiled reports. But what the short does most importantly is show that Jack and Peter (Brody) are not just going on a trip through India because their oldest brother Francis (Wilson) insists, but because they are temporarily running away from their current lives. As expected, some things just can't be erased. The funeral of a young boy who drowned ("I didn't save mine" Peter admits) brings them back to the day of their father's funeral. Prior to the river accident, Francis had called the boys attempting to cross assholes. And it's not until he's looking in the mirror, standing next to his brothers, that he confesses why he's all bandaged up. The human condition of a Wes Anderson film: quirks are funny, but they sometimes allude to pain. -JS

Selected Filmography: *The Royal Tenenbaums* ('01); *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* ('04); *Fantastic Mr. Fox* ('09); *Moonrise Kingdom* ('12); *The Grand Budapest Hotel* ('16); *Isle of Dogs* ('18).



figure 30

DEAD FAVORITES

Laurence Girard, 2007, Canada, 74'

Script by Girard. Photographed by Preston B. Sanchez. Music by Talia Jones and Soap Star. Edited by Girard. With Jacob Staiger, Jasmine Cambria, Nola Frisch, Laurence Girard, Kenneth Rabbe, et al.

If 27 is that magic number for those great artists who died much too soon, then Laurence Girard's death before he even hit his 26th birthday was an act of iconoclasm. With his ultimate film, the retrospectively uncomfortably titled *Dead Favorites*, this quest for genuinely different forms of expression is quite fully formed for an artist so young. But Girard himself would be the first to tell you he had to make a lot of crap before he "got lucky" (his words, not mine) with *Dead Favorites*. His tetralogy concerning the five senses starting with 2005's *Touch* and ending with 2007's *headphones on* is conveniently forgettable. Notice from his credited filmography that his masterpiece was but one of five features he made that year. But his last film is so bursting with exuberance for the medium and a steady stream of disregard for predictability, and those films of his cutting-the-teeth period are so negligible that I would dare to compare Girard to another one-time filmmaker who helmed a supreme masterpiece: Charles Laughton and his *The Night of the Hunter*.

The plot concerns the daily activities of a man (Jacob Staiger who hasn't appeared in another film since Girard's death) who is attempting to create a convergence of events so that he can meet the love of his life. He is unsure of who that person will be whether male or female, younger or older; it's all a mystery to him, even when and where this meet-cute will take place. He believes destiny can be hastened and the only way to do so is to antagonize the world around him. These range from cringe-inducing pranks to elaborate acts of altruism. The film quickly dispels any worry that this will be a series of unconnected vignettes as what is happening is the cinematic equivalent of a snowball being gently rolled down a ski slope, gathering mass at an exponentially insane rate. This is an exercise in cause and effect on a mass, multi-faceted scale.

The Rube Goldberg nature of the story begs for repeated viewings. Its short runtime gives you no excuse but to try and decipher how everything works together. But what will happen every time is that you get lost in Girard's love of life and his fascination with how beautifully chaotic the world is. It perfectly infuses the sentiment that there is someone out there for everyone with an all too rare dose of agency. -SC

Selected Filmography: *Touch* ('05); *Smell/Sight* ('07); *Licking Jack* ('07); *headphones on* ('07); *Up Nineteen Cents a Gallon* ('07).





figure 31

THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY (Le Scaphandre et le Papillon)

Julian Schnabel, 2007, France/United States, 112'

Script by Ronald Harwood. Based on novel by Jean-Dominique Bauby Photographed by Janusz Kamiński. Music by Paul Cantelon. Edited by Juliette Welfling. With Mathieu Amalric, Emmanuelle Seigner, et al.

This film is based on the autobiography of French “Elle” editor-in-chief Jean-Dominique Bauby, who at the age 42 suffered a rare brain injury after a stroke and was diagnosed with a disorder known as locked-in syndrome. This is a tale of loss, fantasy, and memory. The narration floats through the psyche of a man completely incapacitated with only the ability to communicate with a blink of one eye. Through the help of a speech therapist he developed a communication system using blinks and alphabetical code – to write his memoir. As he began to come to terms with the severity of his situation he had an insight; “I’ve decided to stop pitying myself—other than my eye, two things aren’t paralyzed, my imagination and my memory.”

One of his first entries completed with the help of an assistant poetically expresses his state of mind as he proceeded to write his book.

“through the frayed curtain,
a wan glow heralds the break of day.
my heels ache, my head weighs a ton,
my body encased in a kind of diving suit.
my task now is to write, the motionless travel notes . . .
from a castaway, on the shore of loneliness.”

This French film directed by American painter and filmmaker Julian Schnabel is a visual homage to the book. His poetic journey is played beautifully by Mathieu Amalric. Much of the film is shown from Jean-Do’s limited and distorted point of view. The film captures the extreme claustrophobia of his situation. Schnabel masterfully and delicately provides other visuals that add to the overall tone of the film. For example, a scene where Jean-Do is being gently floated in a therapy pool, held like a baby by a gentle male nurse; and a heartbreaking scene, on a cloudy windy beach, celebrating Father’s Day with his three children.

Bauby’s imagination and memory are his only tools for freedom; he floats through fantasies and bitter sweet memoirs. We witness the day of the stroke as his last memory of his previous life, and another memory of the last time he saw his father, played by Max von Sydow. The two in an intimate exchange as Jean-Do shaves his father’s face. Later in the film a poignant resonance between the two men is shown; his elderly father unable to maneuver the stairs down from his apartment is locked-in in a different way; their intimacy left in memory; two men left to their lonely fates. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Lou Reed’s Berlin* (‘07); *Miral* (‘10).





figure 32

I'M NOT THERE

Todd Haynes, 2007, United States, 135'

Script by Haynes, Oren Moverman. Photographed by Edward Lachman. Music by Bob Dylan. Edited by Jay Rabinowitz. With Christian Bale, Cate Blanchett, Marcus Carl Franklin, Richard Gere, Heath Ledger, Ben Whishaw, et al.

Todd Haynes film stalks six imagined lives of Bob Dylan. Each actor inhabits a different dream space of the character of “Bob Dylan,” each with a different name, time, and persona (Woody, Billy, Jude, Jack/Pastor John, Arthur, and Robbie). The story told as a weaving surrealistic tale with unfolding mysteries and the wandering circumstances of his life. We see him laid out as a corpse to be examined and pulled apart. The director takes artistic liberty in his interpretation using “real” facts blended with fictitious imaginations. Actual Bob Dylan songs and recordings blend with covers from other sources, including at times, the characters themselves. We follow Dylan’s humble beginnings as a young runaway, hopping freight trains and singing folk songs. We see him electrifying the Newport folk festival in 1965. We see him as a hobo, a musician, a husband, a loner, a poet, and a preacher.

Each of the six lives have their own aesthetic feel, time, and visual style captured through impeccable set design that accurately captures the various time periods. We follow the journey of this man, watching the mythmaking unfold from box cars, to pulpit, to stage, to obsolete small town. We see a lonely wanderer played by Richard Gere in a mountain cabin, living on the outskirts of a soon to be demolished town, filled with carnival imagery and ghosts of the old south. Cate Blanchett plays the androgynous rocker, living the fast-paced fallout of the Newport folk festival and a surreal tour of England that followed, including a mythic meeting with Allen Ginsberg played by David Cross. We experience the sadness of a dissolving marriage breaking down before our eyes in 1970’s Woodstock played by Heath Ledger and Charlotte Gainsbourg. We see Christian Bale as a born-again preacher. We see the collapse of art dreams, financial excess, and the floating unknown, capturing the sadness of the seventies in the hungover melancholia of the 60’s, flowing into the lone wandering dream adrift, in the forests of the back woods American landscape; lost to time but not lost to the feelings that mix confusion with loss, and the underfelt sense of connection to others. Haynes’ film offers a road map for other filmmakers to dream big and map out imaginal ideas and incorporate new ways of visual storytelling that smashes and expands the form of historical fiction. -MN



Selected Filmography: *Far from Heaven* (’02); *Carol* (’15); *Wonderstruck* (’17).



figure 33

IN BRUGES

Martin McDonagh, 2008, UK, 107'

Script by McDonagh. Photographed by Eigil Bryld. Music by Carter Burwell. Edited by Jon Gregory. With Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson, Ralph Fiennes, et al.



To die. There's no better place to shuffle off than in a fairy tale. And apparently this Belgian city in Christmastime is the closest you can get to one. What with the morning fog, the rides down the canals, and all that other bullshit like the swans and the cobble-stone alcoves. Two hit-men are told by their employer to lie low in Bruges after a hit gone terribly wrong. Rookie Ray (Farrell) and his mentor Ken (Gleeson) start their holiday hopping to all the touristy bits of sights and culture. Ray's uninterested in all this retarded crap until he sees Bosch's *The Last Judgement*. Like the triptych, Bruges is Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. Ray fucked the last job up pretty bad, and this painting becomes his way of trying to talk about the guilt with Ken. There's a Christmas tree somewhere in London with a bunch of presents underneath it that'll never be opened.

McDonagh's hitmen are not Tarantino cool. They take out their contact lenses before bed. They are sensitive, Ken's empathy might just be his way of making up for lost time. Farrell and Gleeson completely sell the dark humor and everything that it's hiding within Ray and Ken. These two take to the pub when something painful is on their minds. Their respective aches have washed up on the shores of their psyches, each pint is the flood of the tide that can't wash it away. They do coke with the midget who is in town to shoot a shitty film with a dream sequence. He talks about the future war between the whites and the blacks, doesn't even want the Vietnamese on the white side. Ray wants to see the movie version of the white midgets fighting all the black midgets but Ken is reminded of the murder of his wife, who was black. There just isn't an adequate escape that doesn't also involve a bit of cleanup afterwards.

As a crime thriller every bit of the story and its characters coalesce once Harry (Fiennes) comes to town to finish the job Ken wouldn't do. McDonagh finds perfection in his signature mix of the meditative and the coarse. The film is dark and its morality tests plunge deep, but the denouement is frankly enchanting. These three men get to stand by their principles amid all the bloodshed. In some cases they find out what those principles were. Never before had they allowed death to hang so low overhead, hence the heavy, sorrowful weight to every contemplation and interaction. But there's the rub that it had to be in Bruges of all places. -JS

Selected Filmography: *"Six Shooter"* ('04); *Seven Psychopaths* ('12); *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* ('17).



figure 34

DOGTOOTH (Kynodontas)

Yorgos Lanthimos, 2009, Greece, 97'

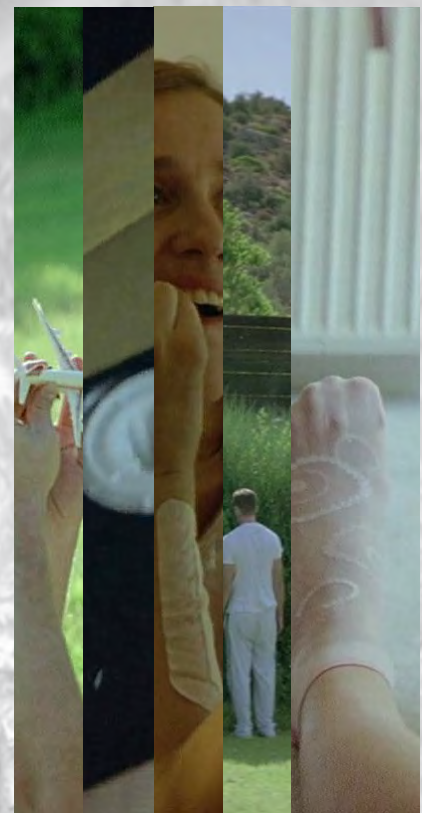
Script by Lanthimos, Efthymis Filippou. Photographed by Thimios Bakatatakis. Edited by Yorgos Mavropsaridis. With Christos Stergioglou, Michelle Valley, Angeliki Papoulia, Mary Tsoni, Christos Passalis, et al.



the keyboard

The post-modern Greek myth. Absurd. Anthropological. Fascinated by language and social constructs; too learned to propose a better way of doing things. A mother and father raise one son and two daughters inside their gated home. Through very careful means they keep their children, all adults, stunted and dependent, unwilling to venture past the perimeter of the fence. When planes fall from the sky they are just as tiny up-close as they appear in the air. Salt shakers are known as telephones. Zombies are tiny yellow flowers. And the outside is dangerous for those who haven't lost either right or left dogteeth. Institutions are designed to control, the means of control are deceptions, of the self or otherwise. With enough time inside the system certain individuals will become

drawn to peering behind the curtains. In the Pasolini tradition the outsider Christina, brought in by the Father to satisfy the son's sex drive, introduces to the Eldest Daughter tools of escape in exchange for getting her keyboard licked. The tools are *Rocky IV*, *Jaws*, and *Flashdance*. She introduces the chaotic element much quicker than the parents can figure out how to adapt and maintain what they've cultivated. The ambiguity of her success is ultimately a personality test. *Dogtooth* is a landmark work of what international critics have dubbed a "Weird Wave" to the chagrin of filmmakers creating earnestly during deep financial crisis; its shadow looms over all involved. The father Christos Stergioglou later depicted Antonis Paraskevas and his eternal return. Angeliki Papoulia had smaller parts in Lanthimos' subsequent two films *Alps* and the English language *The Lobster*. In May 2017 Mary Tsoni was found dead in her apartment as result of suicide, leaving behind her music with Mary and the Boy. Co-writer Efthymis Filippou worked with Lanthimos three more times as well as on *L* and *Chevalier*, proving integral to the uncanny and compulsive thought processes these characters are imbued with. There is a pragmatism at the heart of the film which is deceptively simple. It is in opposition to the perversion of communication the film adopts to match the father: that people who liken child rearing to the training of dogs should not be parents. -JS



Selected Filmography: *Kinetta* ('05); *Alps* ('11); *The Lobster* ('15); *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* ('17).



figure 35

THE LIMITS OF CONTROL

Jim Jarmusch, 2009, United States, 116'

Script by Jarmusch. Photographed by Christopher Doyle. Music by Boris. Edited by Jay Rabinowitz. With Isaach de Bankolé, Paz de la Huerta, Tilda Swinton, Gael García Bernal, Bill Murray, Hiam Abbass, et al.

The film begins with a line from a poem in the original French with English translation
As I descended into impassible rivers. I no longer felt guided by the ferryman . . .
 -Arthur Rimbaud

This may be Jim Jarmusch's most abstract film, filled with moving landscapes and sonic flowing music, sending the viewer into a dream like state. Many of the lines are repeated in various languages throughout the film, a mantra of sorts, or the idea that people at times repeat themselves in order to be understood--for an idea to be made clear. Jarmusch explores language and communication via his translation into visual forms; he observes and contemplates concepts of energy, language, transit and translation. The film offers an invitation to question what we see and how we perceive.

The film begins with the main character played by Isaach de Bankole reflected upside down in a mirror, in an airport bathroom performing a martial arts movement meditation. He then meets two men in the airport who ask in Spanish then translated into English, "You don't speak Spanish-- right?" "Are you ready? Everything cool? Use your imagination and your skill--everything is subjective." These are his first instructions and instructions to the audience as well.

He meets his contacts in airports, on trains, and cafes. Movement is juxtaposed with stillness. We watch him within the beautiful landscape of Spain. He gets clues passed to him in small match boxes; with each interaction, the various characters he meets offer bits of insights. Snippets of dreams and memories are discussed in koan like riddles. He is asked by his different contacts at various times if he is interested in music, science, art/painting, hallucinations by chance? Mostly he is alone, solitary in his actions. He goes to the art museum and later sees the paintings' imagery mirrored in the real world. He is on a covert mission, a dream mission where reality and imagination meet in a subjective landscape, the movement and pacing slow and methodical. The notes he retrieves contain written letters and numbers, (perhaps cardinal points on a map), the clues leading him forward on his quest. His final meeting occurs in a heavily guarded bunker; here he meets his final contact, here he makes the radical act to fight for the subjective reality, to the fight against the rational linear interpretation of the world. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Coffee and Cigarettes* ('04); *Broken Flowers* ('05); *Only Lovers Left Alive* ('13); *Paterson* ('16); *Gimme Danger* ('16).





figure 36

SYMBOL (しんぼる)

Hitoshi Matsumoto, 2009, Japan, 93'

Script by Matsumoto, Mitsuyoshi Takasu. Photographed by Yasuyuki Toyama. Music by Yasuaki Shimizu. Edited by Yoshitaka Honda. With Hitoshi Matsumoto, David Quintero, Luis Accinelli, Lillian Tapia, Adriana Fricke, Carlos C. Torres, et al.

TRAINING -----> PRACTICE --> FUTURE

The thing about Hitoshi Matsumoto is that thanks to his background in *manzai*, variety television, and sketch comedy, he did not bring any preconceived notions about what a film should be when he decided to start making films himself. Much like Kitano, yet arguably more so than the *enfant terrible* of the 90s, Matsumoto shows a disregard for the conventional wisdom of form and content as it pertains to a movie. But as of his feature debut in 2007 he was still not able to shake the sketch comedy structure. Two years later he had learned his lesson: explore an idea and say something with the film. Insanely, he took on the biggest question of all – the meaning of life.

A man (Matsumoto with kid pajamas and a bowl haircut) wakes up in a white room with no exit, just four walls that seem to extend up to a distant ceiling in the heavens. A mass of cherubs emerge from the walls and blend back in, leaving their tiny angelic penises sticking out. Every press of a penis produces a delicate, high-pitched acapella note and something more tangible to the man appears in the room with him. The Man comes to accept his life in the room despite that it and each penises' corresponding output is tailored made to antagonize him. Like "Duck Amuck" this is an allegory of man's existence, his inputs to his world and what he gets in return are largely absurd, unfair, and unconquerable.

During all of this we cut back and forth to Mexico where luchador Escargo Man prepares for a big fight, his son Antonio watches from the distance how his father changes and distances in preparation. The pacing of the film makes each storyline seem non-sequitur to the other and Matsumoto's unpredictability has their convergence itself feel like deviation. Subsequently he would find ingenious ways to explore what it means to be an entertainer (2011's *Saya Zamurai*) and finally, with a few films under his belt, what it means to be a director (2013's *R100*). -JS

Selected Filmography: *Big Man Japan* ('07); *Saya-zamurai* ('10); *R100* ('13).





figure 37

THE WHITE RIBBON (Das weiße Band, Eine deutsche Kindergeschichte)

Michael Haneke, 2009, Germany/Austria, 144'

Script by Haneke. Photographed by Christian Berger. Edited by Monika Willi.

With Christian Friedel, Ulrich Tukur, Josef Bierbichler, et al.



Winner of the Palme d'Or 2009, *The White Ribbon* is Michael Haneke's black and white meditation on the inhabitants of a small village in Germany. The film depicts the uneasy tensions of class and rigidity offering a preface indicating the mood of the country prior to World War I. The narration of the story provided by the town's school teacher looking back, reflecting possibly, from our present-day context as an elderly voice tells the story. He is looking back highlighting several disturbing events that took place in the village when he was a young schoolteacher, thirty-one years old.

The film's visuals take the story even more deeply into levels unseen, activities and events that the narrator is unaware--levels of abuse, violent actions of anger and grief. The narrator is almost too innocent to truly perceive what is taking place in the town. As the viewer, we are not let off the hook but led into the discomfort brought on by the abuse of power on various levels.

Haneke, an expert at holding tensions, takes the viewer on a yearlong journey where things are revealed and yet nothing is resolved. It is a snap shot and possible working theory of some of the underlying currents, causes, and conditions that lead to the escalation of WWI.

The beauty and contrast of the black and white film mirrors the black and white nature of the reality the characters inhabit; strict moral and social codes dominate all forms of communication including grief, puberty, sexuality, employment, and childhood rebellion. The repression is a bubbling sore that expels itself through outbursts of rage and violence--the mysterious perpetrator or perpetrators are unseen. No one really fesses up and takes responsibility--just more force and repression is enacted.

The strength of the visual images and slow unfolding of the story makes the forcefulness of repression palpable. Some images flood the picture plane--a field of cabbages violently cut before harvest; while other events uncomfortably take place off screen—a child beaten with a belt for misbehaving. We as viewers and voyeurs are just out of sight at times of the actions of abuse; yet we observe and participate. As a master Haneke takes us to places that are uncomfortable but necessary if we are at all curious about the complexities and horrors of human nature. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Code Unknown* ('00); *The Piano Teacher* ('01); *Time of the Wolf* ('03); *Caché* ('05); *Funny Games* ('07); *Amour* ('12); *Happy End* ('17).



figure 38

CERTIFIED COPY *(Copie conforme)*

Abbas Kiarostami, 2010, France/Iran, 106'

Script by Kiarostami. Photographed by Luca Bigazzi. Edited by Bahman Kiarostami.

With Juliette Binoche, William Shimell, et al.

Over the course of one Tuscan evening a woman known only as “she” (Binoche) and a man, a British writer of the name James Miller (Shimell), will go from strangers getting to know the other over discussions of art to the annoyances and learnedness afforded to couples that have been married for years. It is as if we are seeing the whole of Linklater’s *Before* trilogy play out in a single film. Miller is in town to discuss his latest book, *Certified Copy*. He argues – and will do so in the close-quarters of she’s car – that notions of authenticity are of no importance. On one hand everything is a copy of something else and on the other the replications themselves are originals in their own right. The *Mona Lisa* is but a copy of the woman who posed for da Vinci, or the woman he imagined.

Miller meets with She in her antique shop, after receiving her note from his translator. She apologizes for having to leave his talk early due to her teenage son’s disinterest. He lets her drive him out to the countryside. She has him sign multiple copies of his book. It all feel very “first date” until something clicks. Kiarostami pulls a switch and the dynamic between the two changes. Emotional years have passed before our eyes and all within same two-shot. Does this notion of a “certified copy” pertain to things not artistic creations? Kiarostami’s film has a deep intellectual curiosity that remains playful subtext, never getting in the way of a romance that feels real with humor and longing. The uncertainty of what their actual relationship may be gives the film the feel of a spy thriller. This might be just another way of reiterating how thrilling and somewhat breezy it feels, yet requiring the viewer to stay intellectually on their toes.

An interesting trivia: fellow Iranian auteur was shooting his film *Cut* in Japan at the time. The two expressed the joys of shooting in their respective foreign countries and so Kiarostami made his next feature in Japan and Naderi in Italy. In some ways *Certified Copy* is a perfect synthesis of the late-Kiarostami: obsessed with the blurring of fact and fiction on a romantic, human level. It’s the work of a matured artist at play. Concerned with what is timeless and affording it the levity associated with matters of the heart. -SC

Selected Filmography: *ABC Africa* (‘01); *Ten* (‘02); *Five* (‘03); *10 on Ten* (‘04); *Shirin* (‘08); *Like Someone in Love* (‘12); *24 Frames* (‘17).

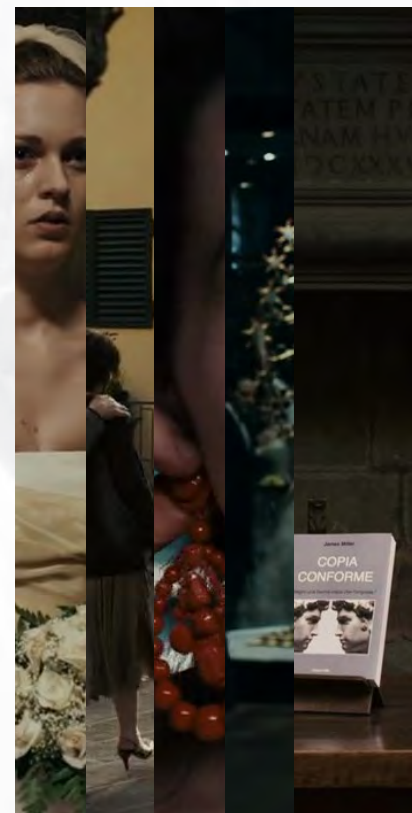




figure 39

MEEK'S CUTOFF

Kelly Reichardt, 2010, United States, 104'

Script by Jonathan Raymond. Photographed by Chris Blauvelt. Music by Jeff Grace. Edited by Reichardt. With Michelle Williams, Paul Dano, Bruce Greenwood, Zoe Kazan, Rod Rondeaux, et al.



Here's the thing: Kelly Reichardt is a masterful writer, director, and editor, performing all three tasks to create the perfect film. *Meek's Cutoff* is a subtle ode to the old west; an old west that is tarnished with an underlying turmoil that the characters try to keep from pouring out into reality. The story follows a small group of people, and when people are isolated they never have a perfect relationship. With intrigue and fear among the emotions that follow the journey of these corrupted people, they are framed by the breathtaking natural beauty of the American west; as well as an unusual but effective aspect ratio that traps the viewer in the realm of the characters.

Reichardt is also a master at collecting actors. In this film, she brings in her dedicated and always reliable leading actress Michele Williams, who feeds off her deepest thoughts to create a world where nothing can cross her without revealing the depths of her character. Paul Dano makes an appearance as the fellow traveler that takes on a transformation into a character finding trouble trouble taking sides. And of course Bruce Greenwood, who unexpectedly brings a delicate but fiendish performance as Stephen Meek. He comes to life in a way that sends a chill down the viewer's spine.

Reichardt uses sound to her advantage. No score unless absolutely necessary. The films of tomorrow are truly facing reality in a more adventitious way. *Meek's Cutoff*, as well as the others in Reichardt's portfolio, follows this idea in creating a story that is real enough to the audience to envelop them completely. Every frame is a painting and every moment is timelessly suspenseful. One of Reichardt's many masterpieces that leaves the viewer in a state of overwhelming ecstasy. True horror, daringly subtle action, and beautifully choreographed scenes that make us wonder, what films are the Academy watching? -NA

Selected Filmography: *Old Joy* ('06); *Wendy and Lucy* ('08); *Night Moves* ('13); *Certain Women* ('16).



figure 40

DETENTION

FDSJAFLSKDFJALF

Joseph Kahn, 2011, United States, 93'

Script by Kahn, Mark Palermo. Photographed by Christopher Probst. Music by Brian & Melissa. Edited by David Blackburn. With Shanley Caswell, Josh Hutcherson, Spencer Locke, Aaron David Johnson, Jonathan Park, Dane Cook, et al.

"It isn't necessary to imagine the world ending in fire or ice—there are two other possibilities: one is paperwork, and the other is nostalgia."

-Frank Zappa

For the students of Grizzly Lake High School, this death by nostalgia manifests as a time travel narrative, the arguably greater threat being a copycat slasher-movie villain stalking the halls. And the biggest fear being the uncertainty of life after prom, finals, graduation, the works. Riley's (Caswell) life sucks. She has a leg in a cast, her taste in music is not ironic enough, she's also a vegetarian and the next target of the masked killer offering her classmates. Plus her best friend Ione (Locke) is winning the heart of her crush Clapton (Hutcherson) with forced and outdated references. In Clapton's defense Ione does like Sting and every little thing she does is magic.

Riley is undergoing a personal apocalypse. Her school is literally imploding on itself, conveniently timed to her unimaginable future and the hell of her present. She and her peers find solace in the previous decade, sometimes by actually going there. But it's not like any of these post-modern parodizations of the high-school/slasher/body-swap/time travel/fly blooded boy genre mean anything if you're dead or not going to prom. Red shirt.

Kahn is one of those music video directors not getting enough opportunities to make features. The Kahn of *Detention* is not the one who earns his living making videos for pop acts destined for the Gobi tent at Coachella, but the one who remade *Vertigo* in 4 minutes with the likes of Faith No More and Jennifer Jason Leigh or who makes extensive use of three-way horizontal split-screens. This hyper-visual spirit can be found in every second of our time at Grizzly Lake. The fact that Sony picked this up in 2011 with plans to capitalize on Hutcherson's appearance in the first of a series of YA dystopian cash grabs only to dump it to VOD after a year of sitting on it, meant not as many brain chemistries were altered as could have been. Thankfully, the tweenagers of Tumblr have found their way to the film, manufacturing fandom through a series of Clapton Davis gifs. -JS



Selected Filmography: *Torque* ('04); *Bodied* ('17).



figure 41

THE FUTURE

Miranda July, 2011, Germany/United States, 90'

Script by July. Photographed by Nikolai von Graevenitz. Music by Jon Brion.

Edited by Andrew Bird. With Miranda July, Hamish Linklater, et al.



How would you spend your time if you had 30 days to completely abandon and redefine your life; what would happen if you could stop time?

As the film begins Sophie and Jason decide to take a big step in their lives by adopting a cat they found hurt and abandoned, but it turns out the cat needs to convalesce at the vet for 30 days. They decide to use this open space as a way to break free and reinvent themselves. The injured cat, Paw-Paw, provides an inner dialogue to the film, a faceless narration of waiting--waiting for love, for companionship, nurturance, and security. Both characters' journeys offer a new take on existential crisis in the social media age. Jason quits his job as an on-call computer tech support phone operator; instead, he adopts an attitude to go out and observe and find the many cues the universe has to give him. He is confident that he will find his way as long as he pays attention to everything. He quickly begins going door to door selling trees in an effort to help the environment. Through a found penny saver ad Jason meets and befriends an elderly man, Joe; as he observes Joe in his daily routine, Jason begins to have a shift of perception.

Sophie also quits her job and decides to post 30 days 30 dances. Sophie grapples with self-expression in the world. Her self-consciousness is amplified and judged by the notion of peak hits on you-tube as the new form of "making it" and how she is valued in society. Here is where her inner time stops. She is stuck in an immobile dance unable to express herself and connect to the world.

This film is about regret with melancholic precision; and the quest for what and how time plays out in our daily lives, which decisions do we make as a true natural choice and which ones are simply a reaction, to force a new pattern. This is a movie about time shifts in consciousness and the self-consciousness of being stuck. Sophie unconsciously takes a drastic turn which offers the climax of the story. Jason actually stops time in order to process what has transpired and even as they stop time, consequences continue to happen--showing even when we focus on stopping time, the world's impact and trajectory continues on. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Me and You and Everyone We Know* ('05).



figure 42

KILLER JOE

William Friedkin, 2011, United States, 102'

Script by Tracy Letts. Based on play by Letts. Photographed by Caleb Deschanel. Music by Tyler Bates. Edited by Darrin Navarro. With Matthew McConaughey, Emile Hirsch, Juno Temple, Gina Gershon, Thomas Haden Church, et al.



William Friedkin brings another masterpiece to the screen that rivals *The Exorcist* in terms of execution. This is another film that is surpassed by its reputation. Based on the play by Tracy Letts, a long time playwright whose works include *August: Osage County* and *Bug*, this story takes a look into corruption in a way that is humorous, terrifying, and downright hardcore. Matthew McConaughey delivers his most underrated role as the sheriff of a small town in Texas whose view of right and wrong rivals any logical thinking. His manipulative, staggeringly surreal performance takes his character through a transformation that leads the viewer into a state of uneasiness. The film is subtly propelled by an uncomfortable Lolita complex that Juno Temple is the center of, an actress whose career should certainly be much more in the spotlight. Emile Hirsch and Thomas Hayden Church bring an unlikely force to this story that makes the viewer ask themselves if they are being so aloof on purpose, or if they have no understanding of the situation they have created. The scenes in the film are shot very purposefully, as all films should be; however, the emotional impact of the film

is created by weaving a graphic style photography where every frame has an object at its core that moves the story forward. Whether it's a gun or a chicken leg, there is always something important to watch on screen. For any who enjoy the unconventional pull of the undeserving, or the riveting excitement of being bad, the unforgiving nature of *Killer Joe* is the next step in real-world filmmaking; a cry for help in a world that struggles for normal lives. -NA

Selected Filmography: *Rules of Engagement* ('00); *The Hunted* ('03); *Bug* ('06).





figure 43

MELANCHOLIA

Lars von Trier, 2011, Denmark/Sweden, 135'

Script by von Trier. Photographed by Manuel Alberto Claro. Edited by Molly Malene Stensgaard. With Kirsten Dunst, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Alexander Skarsgård, Brady Corbet, Charlotte Rampling, John Hurt, Stellan Stensgaard, Udo Kier, Kiefer Sutherland, et al.

Lars von Trier's film is an apocalyptic story told in two parts, named after two sisters--part 1: Justine, played by Kirsten Dunst and part 2: Claire played by Charlotte Gainsbourg. The two parts are book-ended by two versions of Earth's destruction. Excerpts from Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* choreograph the film and offer the effective tone for the devastation. We see the final scene in slow motion beauty as a preface to the film.

The main film opens with an aerial view of a white stretch limo driving up a winding unpaved road. A bride and groom in the back in white wedding dress and black tux. The limo is too big to maneuver up the mountain road. The 'stuckness' foreshadows problems to come. The characters' expectations do not fit in with the reality of the situations they encounter.

Family dynamics are exposed at the long wedding party. Justine suffers from massive waves of debilitating depression. This film shows a painfully accurate depiction of depression. Mirrored by the cataclysmic reality of a star on a trajectory to the destroy the Earth. Set at a resort, owned by Claire's husband, the greens and beauty of the surroundings offer a contrast to Dunst's debilitating malady. Trier as always brilliantly documents the uncomfortable exchanges and faults in human communication and shows the spots where one's reality cannot and will not translate to another person. The sisters' relationship can be summed up by an exchange they have at the wedding party. Justine describes her experience as follows, "I am trudging through a grey woolly yarn. It's clinging to my legs. It's really hard to drag along." Claire's response follows, "No you're not."

The sisters' parents are played by Charlotte Rampling and John Hurt, with supporting roles by Stellan Skarsgard as Justine's boss, Alexander Skarsgard as her naïve groom and Keifer Sutherland as Claire's husband. Udo Kier provides a bit of comic relief as the wedding planner. "She ruined my wedding. I will not look at her."

In the second half of the film we witness Claire becoming unhinged, her control and extreme anxiety getting the best of her. Characters are stuck and trapped. They are pushed into the claustrophobic reality of running out of time. Claire is unable to accept the reality of the situation she fights the unpleasantness of it all the way. Justine is able to offer a sane response to an insane situation. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Dancer in the Dark* ('00); *Dogville* ('03); *Manderlay* ('05); *The Boss of it All* ('06); *Antichrist* ('09); *Nymphomaniac* ('13); *The House that Jack Built* ('18).





figure 44

THE SKIN I LIVE IN *(La piel que habito)*

Pedro Almodóvar, 2011, Spain, 120'

Script by Almodóvar. Based on *Tarantula* by Thierry Jonquet. Photographed by José Luis Alcaine. Music by Alberto Iglesias. Edited by José Salcedo. With Antonio Banderas, Elena Anaya, Marisa Paredes, Jan Cornet, et al.

Symptoms: After the auto accident his wife was horribly burned in, Dr. Ledgard (Banderas), an expert plastic surgeon, attempts to develop a new skin that could save the lives of other burn victims. Following his wife's death, years later; he creates a skin that guards the body but is still sensitive to touch. With the help of his housekeeper, Marilia (Paredes), he tests his skin on Vera (Anaya), who is held captive against her will.

Examination: Dr. Ledgard's artificial skin questions bioethics by process of using pig skin cells. He calls his creation 'Gal' after his wife. His obsession takes over especially after the passing of his daughter Norma who was raped at a party they attended together and weeks later takes her life. Ledgard has the boy, Vicente that sexually assaulted his daughter kidnapped. The doctor vengefully performs a vaginoplasty on him. After more body modifications and feminine adjustments Dr. Ledgard gives Vicente the new name, Vera. Vera struggles with the forced identity and is crippled by the psychological war that confronts her every day. Subsequently Vera gets word of Dr. Ledgard's artificial skin labeled as forbidden by the president of the science. She suggests they live together a normal life where she can leave the house. Ledgard at first is hesitant along with Marilia but agrees. She builds trust with the two by displaying good behavior on their outing. Then a lustful moment gives Vera the dominate momentum and she shoots Dr. Ledgard and Marilia.

Diagnosis/Rx: This film wants to challenge you; it's mesmerizing and brings the viewer to an unsettling premise-a dark mirror reflection of everyday issues. Almodovar deliberately creates confusion by placing everything out of order but it is organized chaos. Vincente, the boy who grows up confident and around strong women rapes, Dr. Robert Ledgard the man who advocated good morale still violates others, the core concept of being a woman as punishment and the male libido power struggles. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* comes to mind; the doctor falls in love with his creation so that he forgets his original purpose- a fatal flaw in the end. -BD

Selected Filmography: *Talk to Her* ('02); *Bad Education* ('04); *Volver* ('06); *Broken Embraces* ('09); *I'm So Excited* ('13); *Julieta* ('16).



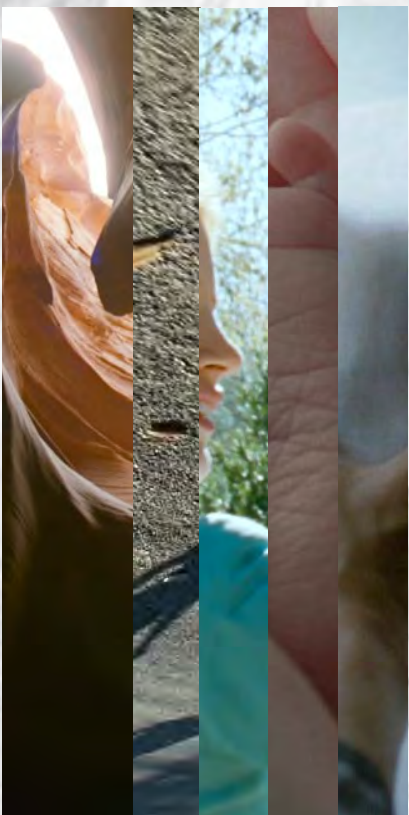


figure 45

THE TREE OF LIFE

Terrence Malick, 2011, United States, 139'

Script by Malick. Photographed by Emmanuel Lubezki. Music by Alexandre Desplat. Edited by Hank Corwin, Ray Rabinowitz, Daniel Rezende, Billy Weber, Mark Yoshikawa With Brad Pitt, Jessica Chastain, Sean Penn, Tye Sheridan, et al.



Malick's *The Tree of Life* had years' worth of troubles getting off the ground. This time in production limbo only served to give the film legendary status before anyone had seen a frame of it. It was some sort of nebulous brass ring and apparently there were dinosaurs. What it turned out to be once it was finally released was a coin with the universal on one side and the singular on the other, spun on its edge so that the halves appear as one.

Jack O'Brien (Penn) is vaguely presented to be living a life of nondescript marriage, glass elevators, and endless skyscrapers. We catch him at a time of contemplation, recalling his small town childhood with the modest homes and green lawns, in opposition to the glimpses of his current state. He remembers the images of his mother (Chastain), father (Pitt), and brothers (Sheridan) of then and not now. We hear members of the O'Brien family ask large questions, the film itself is Jack's search for answers to the questions he hides under his tongue.

The term 'Malickian' has now come to designate the cosmic in cinema, thus making his previous works anomalies when actually it is the other way around. It also diminishes the intensely personal nature of *The Tree of Life* to its creator. Beyond the effects work of Douglas Trumbull and the Opus of light and color by Thomas Wilfred, what is being made cosmic is memory. On one hand the creation of the universe provides context to Jack's reminiscenza, a gesture to microscopic man in relation to the cosmos. On the other hand an analogy is created between the space that encompasses everything and the space of a single mind. In a single home tucked away in a suburban pocket of Texas an infinite number of worlds can be found. Whether it is the experience of the now or the distortions caused by reflection, one could never venture out from a single spot and still neglect entire worlds of that place. Malick's cinema: the montage of sweeping camera, imagery meant to evoke senses beyond sight, and floating voice over all work once combined to express these distortions of reflection. This is a feat distinctive to film. *The Tree of Life* suggests there is still much more to be explored of film's overlap with memory. -SC

Selected Filmography: *The New World* ('05); *To the Wonder* ('12); *Knight of Cups* ('15); *Voyage of Time* ('16); *Song to Song* ('17).



figure 46

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN

Lynne Ramsay, 2011, UK/United States, 112'

Script by Ramsay, Rory Stewart Kinnear. Based on novel by Lionel Shriver. Photographed by Seamus McGarvey. Music by Johnny Greenwood. Edited by Joe Bini. With Tilda Swinton, John C. Reilly, Ezra Miller, et al.

The color red is as much a character in this film as the actors. Throughout we see it dominating as a visual cue disguised as common objects, rarely as the main hidden topic--blood. The film opens with tomatoes thrown about at a European festival. Loud crowds move together flailing about in a messy tomato bath of ecstasy and chaos. We are introduced to the main character Eva played by Tilda Swinton. We see her elevated and carried by the crowd, a Christ like figure carried passively, face gazing upward covered in red. Red returns with a vandalized house and car covered in bright red paint. Windshield wipers push through an attempt to find a clear point of view. Jelly is smashed on the table left untouched for days covered with ants. Flashing lights of emergency vehicles, the color a reminder of events in the past and a foreshadowing of violence to come. The little details that Ramsay shows gives the story its power and magnitude, color playing an important role.

Memory and flashbacks are the main devices used to tell the story. Tilda Swinton is mother of two and wife to lovable John C. Reilly. The story unfolds in a series of flashbacks. With a muted floating narrative, we see Kevin as a baby, growing up as a toddler, early school age, and then as a teenager. The focus of the film is the relationship between mother and son – how they do or do not bond and how their relationship unfolds. The power dynamic between the two is the common link from an inconsolable wailing baby to a young boy refusing to be potty-trained, to a cold methodical teenager, to a prison inmate. The power struggle and story are told with a slideshow-like precision. The feelings hiding are under-expressed through the muffled sounds of the sound design. The musical score by Jonny Greenwood adds to the tension. Lynne Ramsey has created a film that seems like an impossible one to tell. The title of the film based on the novel by Lionel Shriver gives a small hint of the tragedy to come. The two infinitely linked; two lost souls bonded in disconnection. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Morvern Callar* ('02); *"Swimmer"* ('12); *You Were Never Really Here* ('17).





figure 47

HOLY MOTORS

Leos Carax, 2012, France, 116'

Script by Carax. Photographed by Caroline Champetier, Yves Cape. Edited by Nelly Quettier.
With Denis Lavant, Édith Scob, Eva Mendes, et al.



If Martin Scorsese can have a personal journey through the American and Italian cinemas, and Bertrand Tavernier has his through French cinema, why shouldn't Leos Carax have a personal journey through his own cinema? *Holy Motors* is just that, manifesting like a dream of Carax's, the director himself appears at the start of the film, rising from his bed to unlock a door leading into a crowded cinema. What ensues is possibly the film playing in said theater but nonetheless it is playing within Carax.

Denis Lavant, an incredibly underrated performer with a mastery of the physical, portrays a man named Oscar. For his job he is driven around in a white limousine by Celine (Scob) going from one appointment to the next. On the drive between appointments he does his own make-up and costume work in the back of the limo, transforming himself into whatever persona the appointment calls for. These range from an old woman beggar to a father picking up his young daughter from a party. On one level we are traveling through Carax's past films. In the appointment where Oscar performs motion capture work, he is directed to run on a treadmill firing his prop machine gun as the green screen backdrop mimics the famous Bowie sequence from *Mauvais Sang* creating a CGI bastardization of it. An appointment late into the film sees Oscar having a night-time rendezvous with a woman inside La Samaritaine, right next to the bridge of *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf*. To his late lover Yekaterina Golubeva is the film dedicated, the star of *Pola X* and with whom Carax was raising a daughter.

At a certain point the film moves beyond the cinema to explore the "cinematic life;" every interaction is a performance. Various situations call for various identities. And for creators the understanding of this world is achieved only through the ghosts of past works. Carax allows others involved in the film to portray aspects of their cinematic lives. Lavant sighs when he opens the file to see his next appointment is a reprisal of Monsieur Merde who he played previously in Carax's segment for *Tokyo!* And of course Scob must eventually don the mask she wore from the famous Franju film of her youth. Immediately *Holy Motors* is beguiling and seductive but with each appointment we see just how much soul is being bared and how genuinely Carax seeks to confront his own dreams and demons. -SC

Selected Filmography: *Tokyo!* segment "Merde" ('08).



figure 48

THE ACT OF KILLING/THE LOOK OF SILENCE

Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012/2014, Norway/Denmark, 159'/103'
 Photographed by Anonymous, Carlos Arango de Montis, Lars Skree. Music by Elin Øyen Vister/
 Seri Banang, Mana Tahan. Edited by Niels Pagh Andersen, Janus Billeskov Jansen, Mariko
 Montpetit, Charlotte Munch Bengtsen, Ariadna Fatjó-Vilas Mestre.

Indonesia 1965. Following a coup by the Indonesian Army a genocide of 500,000 took place. Officially it was a purge of the Indonesian Communist Party but as it went on proof of politics was not of importance to the death squads carrying out the orders. What's unique about this situation is that the people who committed the genocide are still in power. The perpetrators have maintained a regime of fear as they celebrate the genocide. Joshua Oppenheimer does not simply interview survivors and the perpetrators, which would have been enough for most filmmakers seeking to bring attention to the crime. Instead, Oppenheimer uses filmmaking itself as a tool of exploration, inviting some of the higher ranking squad leaders to restage and film their crimes. Brilliantly taking command of the subjective nature of all film, even the documentary, he gets the killers, specifically Anwar Congo who boasts of having killed more than 1,000 people, to remember and romanticize the horrors. The footage becomes ammunition he turns back on them when they rewatch it. Asking the killers to revisit the crime scenes and play victim instead of killer becomes too real. The making of their film brings out another horror: the similarities there may be between Anwar and the audience.

Once the editing was finished for *The Act of Killing*, Oppenheimer returned to Indonesia before the completed film had premiered, knowing it would not be safe for him in the country once it had. Over the years of filming he had come to know just as many, if not more, survivors and those haunted by the fear of another round of killings. He returned to work with one man in particular whose brother was murdered during the communist purge of the 1960s. Adi's brother was murdered before he was born but the actions of Anwar and his kill squads took a toll on his family and community that he saw continue to his adulthood. Adi, an optometrist, asks Oppenheimer to give him access to the killers so that he can confront them with their crimes and find out whether they have remorse. What is right and wrong is foregrounded on all levels by the film. Should Oppenheimer have shown Adi *The Act of Killing*? Should Adi have told his wife what he was planning on doing? We see Adi watch footage of the interviews with the killers. He shows footage of these interviews to the perpetrators and their families to differing reactions. Denial is one variation of the look of silence. A companion piece that is equal to the film on the killers, but arguably surpassing it due to its subject's stare.





figure 49

SOMETHING IN THE AIR *(Après mai)*

Olivier Assayas, 2012, France, 122'

Script by Assayas. Photographed by Eric Gautier. Edited by Luc Barnier.

With Lola Créton, Clément Métayer, Felix Armand, et al.

Oliver Assayas' film gives his take on France in the early seventies, witnessing the culture still heavily influenced by the revolutionary nature of the sixties. *Something in the Air* could be a companion piece to Bertolucci's *The Dreamers* (p.23). The original French title more aptly named *Après Mai* (After May) gives the film a context within historical time. It grasps the uneasiness of coming of age as an artist and a citizen. The students inspired to act out in radical ways are also confronted with conventional aspects of life and work. Assayas shows the movement and fluidity of time; we see characters moving from one encounter to another with the exuberance of youth; they have a frantic burning to experience all there is and the push against the structures that confine and oppress. There is a bitter sweetness to their journey. The trappings of real life obstacles push their way into the lives of the characters. Through revolutionary acts some characters bump up against threats of jail time while others struggle against rigid roles. One young woman takes up with revolutionary filmmakers who document workers struggles throughout the world only to have her male comrades turn a blind eye towards who is doing the cooking, cleaning, shopping, and secretarial work in their own front room. Another young woman studying sacred dance falls in love with a painter only to have their blissful dreams squashed by an unwanted pregnancy. And a third artist succumbs to the trap of heroin as her only way to access poetic and artistic realities. Assayas delicately and tenderly approaches these grey areas that occur when black and white decisions do not correspond to a life devoted to creativity and art.

Some of the most beautiful aspects of the film document the art making process taking place. We see Gilles the protagonist of the film exploring with various art techniques. He experiments throwing color and ink on large papers and makes life drawings of friends and lovers. He and a friend visit ancient ruins and diligently and earnestly sketch in their notebooks. They take their own art and that of their friends with dead seriousness. At the end of the film we see Gilles in a surreal world of a PA on a movie set, for him a transition into 'real' life is on the sound stage of a B movie. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Sentimental Destinies* ('00); *Demonlover* ('02); *Clean* ('06); *Paris, je t'aime* segment "Quartier des Enfants Rouges" ('06); *Noise* ('06); *Boarding Gate* ('07); *Summer Hours* ('08); *Carlos* ('10); *Clouds of Sils Maria* ('14); *Personal Shopper* ('16).





figure 50

A TOUCH OF SIN (天注定)

Jia Zhangke, 2013, China/Japan/France, 135'

Script by Zhangke. Photographed by Yu Lik-wai. Music by Lim Giong. Edited by Matthieu Laclau, Xudong Lin. With Jiang Wu, Zhao Tao, Wang Baoqiang, et al.

By the release of *A Touch of Sin* it had been almost a decade since Jia's *The World*, his first "legitimate" film as he had gone through the proper channels for consent from the Chinese Film Bureau. Now his films could be legally screened for the public and on a larger scale than he was able to receive before. This wider domestic release is important for a film like *A Touch of Sin* which draws heavily from recent events fresh in the minds of Chinese citizens. But to the populace these stories of killing sprees, robberies, and suicides remain distant thanks to government controlled news outlets. The only source for further information being the microblogging service Weibo, which Jia admits to using frequently to discover a wider range of commentary. Jia's film, told in four denoted chapters with a prologue and epilogue, brings these real stories of boiling points to life, depicting the context and the bloodshed itself in ways 140 Chinese characters cannot.

Central Propaganda Department:

Do not conduct interviews, report, or comment on Jia Zhangke's film "A Touch of Sin."

(October 24, 2013)

An ex-miner attempts to call attention to the mine owners' ignoring of the contractual terms which has kept the small mining town poor so the elite can get richer. When face-to-face protests and complaints to the central government do not work, he drapes a tiger-pattern cloth over his rifle and seeks justice. A man travels the country killing and stealing. He returns to a village outside Chongqing for a brief visit with relatives, his wife, and his son before setting off again towards Burma where he can buy a better gun. A woman whose lover won't leave his wife ekes out a living as the receptionist of a massage parlor. She is alone, her phone calls do not get picked up. Her lover's wife pays thugs to beat her and the clientele pressure her for sex. And finally, a young man hops from job to job, unable to create genuine relationships with people looking out for number one. His mother hounds him over the phone to send back his money earned. The characters cross paths gently for only a handful of frames to pass the baton to the next person. There is the sense that Jia's camera is done with the individual once they've picked the path of violence, whether directed against others or the self. But there is also the sense that no matter where we look people are treated like animals. And when civil discourse fails, they will act on their feral sides to survive. It isn't condoned but violence is explicitly not the only crime on display. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Platform* ('00); *Unknown Pleasures* ('02); *The World* ('04); *Still Life* ('06); *Dong* ('06); *Useless* ('07); *24 City* ('08); *I Wish I Knew* ('10); *Mountains May Depart* ('15).





figure 51

THE DANCE OF REALITY/ENDLESS POETRY (La danza de la realidad)/ (Poesía sin fin)

Alejandro Jodorowsky, 2013/2016, Chile/France, 133' /128'

Script by Jodorowsky. Photographed by Jean-Marie Dreujou/Christopher Doyle.

Music by Adan Jodorowsky. Edited by Maryline Monthieux. With Brontis Jodorowsky, Adan Jodorowsky, Jeremías Herskovits, Pamela Flores, Cristóbal Jodorowsky, Leandro Taub, et al.



The first two completed parts of an autobiographical trilogy by Alejandro Jodorowsky explore areas of memory, trauma, and isolation. He uses an active imagination approach to story-telling by revisiting his childhood, unfolding past traumatic events; memories are retold and ultimately transformed, modeling an exquisite form of inner child-work that expands memory, offering creative tools as maps to psychological healing.

The Dance of Reality explores his childhood in Tocopilla Chile, a surreal tale of trauma and abuse, economic upheaval, prejudice, domestic violence, and political dogma all unfolding in the life of our main character, a young Alejandro in a small mining village. We witness his abusive father Jaime and the corporal techniques he used to shape and influence the young isolated, sensitive boy in a brutal environment. Surreal elements amplify memory and trauma as the story unfolds. The physical landscape mirrors the destitute, polluted village. Early in the film we see the director come in as his future self to sooth and comfort the young boy (his past self). A focus of this film is the exploration and healing of the abusive father. We follow Jaime throughout the second half of the film; through a series of humbling events Jaime transforms and returns to Alejandro and his mother Sara.

Endless Poetry picks up where the first film leaves off. Here we see the emergence of an artist, as a young Alejandro turns from a pubescent boy into an innocent and idealistic poet. This film follows a more linear story line than the first film but offers no less visual imagination and enthusiasm. Jodorowsky's films seem to exist on a grander scale than most. They offer a glimpse into low budget techniques but never skimp on quality. His attention to detail is impeccable and his instincts always strive for the truth of the situation--the truth of the dreamer, the creator and poet. Jodorowsky's works aim to wake us up from our slumber and call for change.

At the end of the film, Alejandro visits one of his early poet heroes who has given up poetry to be a university professor; he instructs Alejandro that the world will never change, and that he better not burn his bridges, only to have the young poet reply with a smile, "The world won't change, but I can change myself! I will burn my bridges!" -MN



figure 52

FISH & CAT (ه‌ب‌رگ و ی‌ه‌ام)

Shahram Mokri, 2013, Iran, 134'

Script by Nasim Ahmadpour, Mokri. Photographed by Mahmoud Kalari. Music by Christophe Rezai.
With Babak Karimi, Saeed Ebrahimifar, Siavash Cheraghipoor, Abed Abest, Neda Jebraeili, et al.

Inspired by an incident of a restaurant in northern Iran that served human meat in the 90s, these Ed Gein-esque antics are only a fraction of *Fish & Cat's* thesis. Mokri finds much formal and thematic inspiration from the digital camera used [see also: pg. 29] to film the story of a group of college students putting on a kite-flying event during the winter solstice. The students are stalked by the three cooks who work at the neighboring restaurant. Time being the primary concern of the film, Mokri and cinematographer Mahmoud Kalari (*Shirin*, *Offside*, *A Separation*) film the whole thing in one continuous shot [see also: pg. 22].

A bit after the half-hour mark is when Mokri introduces the first time loop of the film. Through careful choreography, once we arrive at the campsite we will continue to loop and see the same interactions either with slight variations or in the background as we follow other characters. Within the grounded framework of the one-take, this non-linearity is amplified by introductions of memories, flashbacks and flash-forwards, as well as sights – and even a person – only certain individuals can see.

Much has been made about the execution, but what's been overlooked is the slyly political stance offered by this choice of technique. By repeating the same block of time from different vantage points, these students have come stuck in time; that it's running out for them is made more tragically obvious each time we loop. The slasher tone enhances this feeling of dread that never amounts to conventional thrills. There are no onscreen deaths. The feeling that at any moment or by any interaction life can be ended is depicted as everyday reality for the modern Iranian.

We are allowed insight into the lamentations of the final girl who narrates the moments leading up to her death knowing what's going to happen from hindsight. Since it's non-linear she is a whenever, as opposed to final, girl. Perhaps she is without prefix, her existence was a whisper. Now we know the origin of the meat inside those bags the cooks are holding at the start of the film when a group of students pull into the restaurant asking for directions. *Fish & Cat* is a post-slasher where its college students don't have the time to deconstruct the genre or even have sex in their tents. It breaks tradition by removing all excess and upping the just plain bad luck of it all. -JS

Selected Filmography: "The Dragonfly Storm" ('02); "Limit of Circle" ('05); "And-C" ('07); *Ashkan*, *The Charmed Ring and Other Stories* ('09).





figure 53

THE GREAT BEAUTY *(La grande bellezza)*

Paolo Sorrentino, 2013, Italy, 142'

Script by Sorrentino, Umberto Contarello. Photographed by Luca Bigazzi. Music by Lele Marchitelli. Edited by Cristiano Travaglioli. With Toni Servillo, Carlo Verdone, Sabrina Ferilli, Carlo Buccirosso, et al.



Beauty and sadness are conjoined twins in Paolo Sorrentino's masterpiece. Reviews highlight how Sorrentino follows in the footsteps of his predecessor genius, Fellini; there's no denying the thread between *La Dolce Vita's* main character and Jep Gambardella (Servillo). But, Sorrentino takes a logarithmic jump. His hero reflects a more complex character than Fellini's Marcello Mastroianni's journalist. Apologies to Fellini purists. It may be mixing apples & oranges, but that's the point: Sorrentino's in a class of his own.

The complexity of Jep's inner conflict is not so much *La Dolce Vita* ("the sweet life"), the flesh vs. spirit, but about the continuous tug of beauty vs. expression. Jep's first words detail a childhood story, which points to his fate as a writer. Because of his sensitivity, he's not interested in "pussy" as much as the smell of old people's houses. His declaration juxtaposes Celine's quote, appearing pre-storyline, "...advocating travel as a spur to the imagination: 'All the rest...is disappointment and fatigue.' ("Dancing in Place," Phillip Lopate for the Criterion Collection) Jep, instead, stays glued to Rome & suffers in stagnation. If he would venture out (as Celine advises), he could have written that second novel. The question of the second novel is paramount to the heart of the film.

Sadly, subtitle translations can sometimes change the nuance of a masterpiece—that's the case here. When it was released on the big screen, the scene between Jep and the 104-year-old saint brought the entire film into balanced focus—a denouement extraordinaire: every chaotic, hedonistic event suddenly melts away into a moment of perfect clarity. She becomes his muse. She tells him that despite all the mysteries of nature she's privy to, including knowing the Christian names of each flamingo poised for take-off, she cannot understand why he didn't write a second book. (She had found his first to be beautiful & fierce.)

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Of course, there will be numerous interpretations, but subtlety is lost in the Criterion translation. In the exchange between Jep and saint, she asks if he wrote a second book. He says no, that he's been searching instead for the great beauty. She then leaves him with an important riddle about roots. This subtle translation difference changes the "fierce beauty" of the scene. Alas, no less the masterpiece! -ww

Selected Filmography: *One Man Up* ('01); *The Consequences of Love* ('04); *The Family Friend* ('06); *Il Divo* ('08); *This Must Be the Place* ('11); *Youth* ('15).



figure 54

IDA

Paweł Pawlikowski, 2013, Poland, 82'

Script by Pawlikowski. Photographed by Łukasz Żal, Ryszard Lenczewski. Music by Kristian Eidnes Andersen. Edited by Jarosław Kamiński. With Agata Kulesza, Agata Trzebuchowska, et al.

Shot in black and white and in the Academy ratio, with extensive use of the rule of thirds; in other hands this would be a shallow attempt to depict a past era but instead it is used to carry worlds of meaning for two women who find themselves on a road trip through Communist Poland, digging up ghosts of the war. As a starting point these women are identified by the ideologies of their respective paths: political in the case of Wanda, a resistance fighter turned state prosecutor, and religious in the case of her niece Anna, who must visit her only surviving relative before taking her vows.

A frame that picks verticality over width suggests close-quarters but also solitude. The open space above their heads is the judgement of a god who might not be there. Wanda encourages Anna to try some sin before taking her vows. Trzebuchowska endows Anna with a gaze that pierces through the emptiness of the outside world and how unsuccessful the booze and the one night stands have been for Wanda. She asks Wanda to show her the graves of her parents.

It is a photograph of her mother that is Anna/Ida's sole view into the past. It is a past that only becomes immediate as she sets out with her aunt. The framing of those within each shot matches this distance from history. It reflects the distance of the audience and the filmmaker who is being refreshingly honest about his own weak connection to the past. Frequently we only see slivers of their faces as it would be untrue to suggest an attainable familiarity. Due to the concerns of the present and the covering up of what shames a society, things will be lost over the passing of time. A haunting notion from a film filled with them.

Outside the convent Anna/Ida finds humor and music. She also finds a world filled with the same resignation and numbness that others assume of her life at the convent. Both worlds give her an enlightenment regarding the other. Multiple times she must re-evaluate her identity – Wanda as well. Her name is Ida, not Anna. She is Jewish, not Christian. She gets close to people who suggest what they think will be a better future for her. Her crisis of faith has more to do with the sovereignty of herself rather than material or physical pleasures. Her choice to make her own decisions is evocatively portrayed. -SC

Selected Filmography: *Last Resort* ('00); *My Summer of Love* ('04); *The Woman in the Fifth* ('11).





figure 55

INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS

Joel and Ethan Coen, 2013, United States, 105'

Script by Coen Bros. Photographed by Bruno Delbonnel. Edited by Coen Bros. With Oscar Isaac, Carey Mulligan, John Goodman, Garrett Hedlund, F. Murray Abraham, Justin Timberlake, Adam Driver, et al.

*“Oh no,” cried King Henry
That’s a thing that I can never do
If I lose the flower of England
I shall lose the branch too*

The Coens have always added a touch of the enigmatic to their films. But out of the more puzzling like *Barton Fink* and *A Serious Man*, it is *Davis* that is the most mysterious and it does so without resorting to the outright surreal. The world – 1960s New York City in this case – repeatedly presses its thumb down on Llewyn (Isaac), pushing him into a corner of immediate needs but not helped by his adherence to principle. He goes from couch to couch, cycling through the same circle of friends, giving enough time so that his offending remarks have been forgotten before asking to crash again. He adheres to traditional folk songs when he’s on stage. In the audience he sits and questions the popularity and better reception of his contemporaries. Essentially the structure of the film is simple save for the film’s opening scene which bookends the film, brilliantly employed to come off as two similar occurrences instead of the one specific event it is. Over the course of a few cold, washed out days there is a structure of a back and forth between Llewyn and the universe which repeats until it’s hard to discern whether this is a continuous string of bad choices coming back to haunt him or simply the cruelty of fate. He is an asshole when trying to inflict his resentment onto others but inside there is disappointment and hurt. Never give a sucker an even break and give him the karma-beating he deserves plus some. The film’s title is the same as Llewyn’s record, his first solo effort since the suicide of his musical partner. When asked to play something from *inside* himself, the double meaning is obvious, but what *is* actually inside is not so, even to Llewyn. Maybe he was never any good to begin with. Or perhaps something’s gone missing, and he’s not aware enough to go looking, distracted by living hand to mouth. Llewyn Davis is a tragic hero, and from the eternity of such a melancholic week there are no answers. -JS

Selected Filmography: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (‘00); *The Man Who Wasn’t There* (‘01); *Intolerable Cruelty* (‘03); *The Ladykillers* (‘04); *Paris, je t’aime* segment “Tuileries” (‘06); *No Country for Old Men* (‘07); *Burn After Reading* (‘08); *A Serious Man* (‘09); *True Grit* (‘10); *Hail, Caesar!* (‘16).





figure 56

MARY IS HAPPY, MARY IS HAPPY

Nawapol Thamrongrattanarit, 2013, Thailand, 127'

@marylony

Script by Thamrongrattanarit. Photographed by Phairat Khumwan. Music by Somsiri Sangkaew. Edited by Chonlasit Upanigkit. With Patcha Poonpiriya, Chonnikan Netjui, Wasupol Kriangprapakit, et al.

The script comes from 410 consecutive tweets from an anonymous teenage girl. This coming of age story of Mary's high school senior year matches the private whimsy and briskness of such a format. Thamrongrattanarit's fictionalized version of the girl behind the micro-thoughts doesn't poke fun but seeks to do justice to the individual. The forum of Twitter is a space for communication without context, the body of work amassed over hundreds of posts is random. It also might be more analogous to the human experience than long-form treatises, especially for someone still growing up. On an impulse Mary buys a jellyfish online. Her cell is an overseas cheapo that blows up in her ear every now and then. Mary, being a photographer, is tasked with the creation of her high school's yearbook. Her best friend Suri assists in what quickly becomes a massive undertaking, the culmination of Mary's artistic side she's still developing. She soon meets a boy, M, who occupies her thoughts but not her dreams. There's no time to Wong Kar-wai as the yearbook deadline approaches.

The more surreal aspects of the film find real life corollaries with high school anxieties. Suri is murdered on a late-night snack run. The separation of friends once everyone sets off for their respective universities has been expedited for Mary. The school is bought by a canned soup manufacture. At this point the school becomes a police state. Prep for finals includes reading about the headmaster's childhood and canned soup. Everyone has felt a distrust for what they're learning and why they're learning it. Mary's insistence to shoot all yearbook photos during the magic hour of the last light is total stubborn eccentric artist mode, but it also speaks to the limbo before graduation, the type of pause that remains throughout a life. Beginning, middle, end. Nothing new, everything has been done. If that were true why does *Mary is Happy, Mary is Happy* feel so fresh? Its structure is freeing to go as many places and feel as many feelings as possible within the average festival goer's attention span. -@TokyoBatsu

○Expand ○Reply ○Delete ○Favorite

Selected Filmography: 36 ('12); *The Master* ('14); *Fragment* segment "Scene 38" ('15); *Heart Attack* ('15).





figure 57

ONLY GOD FORGIVES

Nicolas Winding Refn, 2013, Denmark, 90'

Script by De Palma. Photographed by Larry Smith. Music by Cliff Martinez. Edited by Matthew Newman. With Ryan Gosling, Kristin Scott Thomas, Vithaya Pansringarm, Ratha Phongam, Tom Burke, et al.



The films of Nicolas Winding Refn deal in characters that mythologize themselves only to be rudely awakened when they find that the diner damsel-in-distress is horrified by a hero who is more violent than the villains (*Drive*) or that they are not as special or talented as their mothers had them believe (*Only God Forgives*, *The Neon Demon*). *Only God Forgives* is the flip-side to *Drive*, replacing blue with red, Hollywood with Bangkok, but keeping Gosling and the dedication to Jodorowsky (see: pg. 60). Here we have multiple people caught up in their myths and one at a time being force-fed their mortality until only the real deal is left.

Julian (Gosling) is in many ways another variation on the Refn protagonist: the getaway driver, the one-eyed slave, the nubile model, the criminal who spends most of his life in solitary confinement. But his key difference is he can't maintain the illusion of himself once his sense of justice gets in the way. We are treated to the karaoke of the Thai lieutenant (Pansringarm) who acts as God because it's important to know he is just a man and he chose to be the punisher of sin and lives to meet the task of such a delusion.

Each character appears able to not just sense the others, but to physically see them from other rooms/scenes. Since there are multiple characters with equal attention placed on them, the world is unable to be focalized by a specific person. Therefore specific thoughts of Julian's are presented as his own mental images and not concrete occurrences. His visions of Lt. Chang are his haunting guilt. His mother (Scott Thomas), an irresistible mix of Lady Macbeth and Queen Jacosta, is the only one able to get him to briefly deny the punishment he knows he deserves. But perhaps it is his want to prevent the type of violence his brother practiced that he knows he is capable of. Everyone is defined by their values – instead of what they do like a Mann film – their interactions play out like the card game of War. *Only God Forgives* is sensitive, its rage spilling over despite its hands being tied down. These hands are both closed to form a fist or carry a weapon, and open to caress a thigh or feel the womb from which they were borne. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Fear X* ('03); *Pusher II* ('04); *Pusher 3* ('05); *Bronson* ('08); *Valhalla Rising* ('09); *Drive* ('11); *The Neon Demon* ('16).



figure 58

THE TALE OF THE PRINCESS KAGUYA (かぐや姫の物語)

Isao Takahata, 2013, Japan, 137'

Script by Takahata, Riko Sakaguchi. Based on *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*. Photographed by Keisuke Nakamura. Music by Joe Hisaishi. Edited by Toshihiko Kojima. With Aki Asakura, Ken-go Kora, Takeo Chii, Nobuko Miyamoto, et al.

This film is based on the Japanese Folktale, “The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter.”

The film’s beautiful drawings make it stand out with a different visual dimension from most animated films. Director Isao Takahata from the very outset wanted to make a different kind of animated film. He wanted this film to be a departure from traditional cel animation--where the moving images are placed on a fixed background. He explains, “With cel animation you are stuck in one style. I want to break through that.” Takahata’s ideas were completely successful; he brings movement, color, and texture to the world of animation in a new way. Each drawing like a moving pastel drawing comes alive before our eyes. Just as the little princess found in a bamboo shoot comes alive.

The story begins with a bamboo cutter finding a tiny princess sprouting out of a bamboo shoot. He brings her home cradled in his hands. She is a tiny creature smaller than a kitten, but with each new experience she begins to grow. Within minutes of the wood cutter bringing her home, to show his wife, she grows into a crying, hungry infant. With each new experience, she grows and develops. She begins to crawl, roll over, and sit up; she learns to jump by watching a frog; quickly she is standing and walking. She soon befriends a group of neighbor children who nickname her li'l bamboo. She learns to laugh, talk and sing. This truly magical creature grows and develops with the same curiosity as her friends but her faraway magical quality sets her apart. Her father takes her to the Capitol to raise her as a true princess. Here her loneliness begins; she is shaped and molded into a fine beautiful princess, but the experience develops a longing that grows within her. She pines for the moon; worldly affairs have no interest to her. She longs for her home in the countryside.

The use of beautiful flowing animation makes the story even more heart wrenching to watch. We go through this journey with the princess; her longing is our longing. Characters and situations each have their own visual style and mode of expression; throughout the story we see a vast range of animation styles--from more “traditional” styles of animation, into fluid charcoal sketches, all the scenes moving together flawlessly. -MN





figure 59

UNDER THE SKIN

Jonathan Glazer, 2013, UK, 108'

Script by Walter Campbell, Glazer. Based on novel by Michael Faber. Photographed by Daniel Landin. Music by Mica Levi. Edited by Paul Watts. With Scarlett Johansson, et al.

Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin* is a contemporary sci-fi story set in present day Scotland; it mostly uses visual imagery with very little dialogue. Strong contrasts between black and white imagery and crisp reds, against naturalistic images of crowded city spaces, open natural landscapes and dense woods provide the setting. It is reminiscent of late 60's and 70's sci-fi films such as Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* ('68), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* ('72), and Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* ('76).

The film does not have a traditional narrative structure as a guide; we are thrown into an unknown and yet recognizable world. Mica Levi's brilliant score provides the amplifications and cues that provide some order, but the crying strings unhinge and amplify the mysterious nature of the story. The initial scene of a dead woman being undressed by the main character played by Scarlett Johansson is in harsh white light, like some kind of cosmic examination room. Naked Scarlett slowly dresses in the dead girl's clothes and high heels. The dead girl stares blankly as we see Scarlett's character pick up a small ant and examine it crawling on her finger. The next shot we walk behind her in a crowded mall, her mini skirt hanging slightly off kilter as she moves through the crowd in a somnambulist haze buying lipstick and a faux fur coat. We next see her driving about in a large moving van through a crowd of fans after a sports event. The van is engulfed in the crowd. She begins to randomly engage with various men asking directions and asking, "Are you alone, do you live alone?" gradually guiding the characters she picks up to follow her into a glowing blackened space. The characters follow her, submerging into a liquid like space suspended into slow motion silent infinity. The musical score amplifies the visuals and flood the picture frame with sound.

The final scenes unfold in a wooded snowy landscape, the white now more dulled by the earth's natural light versus the initial clinical light at the beginning of the film. Our character's victimized skin is ripped away revealing black charcoal underneath. Looking into her mask of human features her eyes blink back, self-reflection turned inside out, destroyed and burned rising in a black cloud above the landscape, then fading into a soft fat falling snow. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Sexy Beast* ('00); *Birth* ('04).

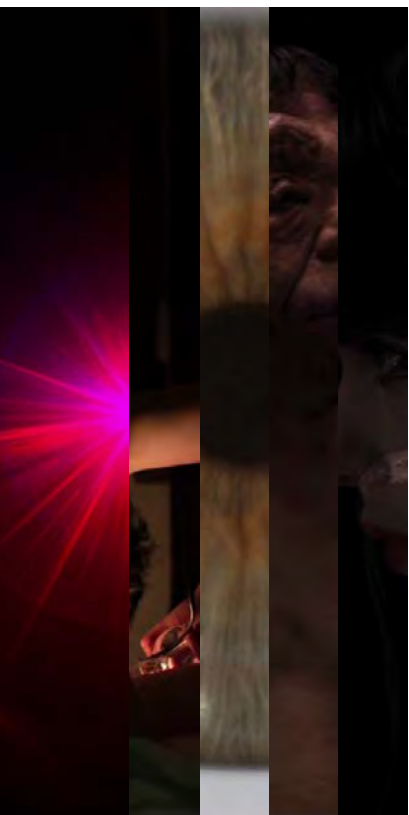




figure 60

UPSTREAM COLOR

Shane Carruth, 2013, United States, 96'

Script by Carruth. Photographed by Carruth. Music by Carruth. Edited by Carruth, David Lowery. With Amy Seimetz, Shane Carruth, Andrew Sensenig, et al.

root (Shane Carruth)

Proposition: Exposition is waste. A byproduct of antiquated storytelling.

Proof: An engaged subject can decipher a litany of intense imagery with minimal effort.

Z + Larva > Thief (Thiago Martins) (x. Child z. Child >neural connectivity) x Kris (Amy Seimetz) = Kris' Home Equity - Kris' Larva

Thereafter

Z+ Sampler (Andrew Sensenig) freq. (Kris' Larva + ungulate suidae/piglet) + Kris' unemployment = End of Act 1

Lemma: Trauma and beauty are cyclical forces.

Proof: Kris connects to Jeff through shared psychosis brought on by external circumstance. e: Folie à deux or "Madness of two".

Z+ Jeff (Shane Carruth)/ Larva X (Kris + Pregnancy) x sow a) is determined: uterine cancer = End of act 2

Thus we have

Jeff + Kris a) Sampler (- litter of piglets) x postpartum depression x Revenge: Handgun > Sampler x (Orchids - Larva - Thief) = Kris + piglet Z+ Finale

Proposition: A film constructed methodically and a film constructed emotionally are not mutually exclusive.

Proof: Upstream Color.

-NE

Selected Filmography: *Primer* ('04).

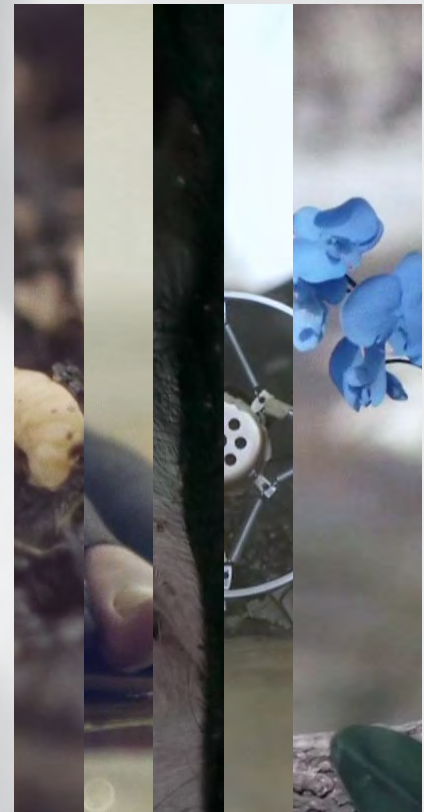




figure 61

WHY DON'T YOU PLAY IN HELL? (地獄でなぜ悪い)

Sion Sono, 2013, Japan, 129'

Script by Sono. Photographed by Hideo Yamamoto. Music by Sono. Edited by Jun'ichi Itô. With Hiroki Hasegawa, Fumi Nikaido, Jun Kunimura, Gen Hoshino, Shin'ichi Tsutsumi, Tak Sakaguchi, et al.

Show an old man fondling a 35mm projector and you already have a “love letter” to cinema. Derived from a fifteen year old script written by a pre-*Suicide Club* Sono – this is not like other odes to filmmaking where everything from the camera to the screen reeks of nostalgia. *Why Don't You Play in Hell?* is more like a challenge to the posers and a manic middle finger to the haters. If you love the movies so much why don't you die for them?

A high-school group of wannabe filmmakers has a run in with a yakuza on one of the more eventful, blood-soaked days between two warring clans. Everything is set in motion for The Fuck Bombers Fantastic Cinema Club to meet these gangsters again approximately ten years later. Arguably it all started with a toothpaste commercial featuring a cute little girl performing a catchy jingle, asking everyone to gnash their teeth with all their might. Let's go!

The Fuck Bombers pray to the *eiga no kami*, the God of Movies, for a chance to make a great film. When the opportunity finally comes knocking it's time to stop stalling and just do it. There's always room for better preparation but there's simply no extra time when it comes to fulfilling destiny. The crime lord father of the girl from the commercial, now a teenager and still an aspiring actress, has only a few days to make a movie starring his daughter before his wife is let out of prison. Kill-joys in the form of the police watch yakuza assemble lights and learn film production as they stake out their headquarters. Sono is likening filmmaking with the codes and the for-life nature of the yakuza. It's not long before The Fuck Bombers are running the show, filming real gang warfare for their film, with everyone involved – save for the cops – in on the production and ready to make a great film.

A director's passion is contagious. Making a film is war. Handling the money, the equipment, the actors, and the producers is a series of sacrifices hopefully of flesh and blood. Everything was worth it once it's in the can. There's a crazed dignity in dying for what you love. If film, physical or otherwise, is on its way out, then it should be an honor to go to hell with it. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Suicide Club* ('01); *Hazard* ('05); *Noriko's Dinner Table* ('05); *Strange Circus* ('05); *Exte* ('07); *Love Exposure* ('08); *Be Sure to Share* ('09); *Cold Fish* ('10); *Guilty of Romance* ('11); *Himizu* ('11); *The Land of Hope* ('12); *Tokyo Tribe* ('14); *Love & Peace* ('15); *Tag* ('15); *The Whispering Star* ('15); *Anti-Porno* ('16); *Tokyo Vampire Hotel* ('17).





figure 62

THE WORLD'S END

Edgar Wright, 2013, UK, 109'

Script by Wright, Simon Pegg. Photographed by Bill Pope. Music by Steven Price. Edited by Paul Machliss. With Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Paddy Considine, Martin Freeman, Eddie Marsan, Rosamund Pike, Bill Nighy, et al.

Change can be a difficult undertaking. Time passes us by, our friends get married, old relationships wither, and sometimes the easiest thing to do is sit back in the annals of our minds reliving the glory days of our youth. Something our lead character and the film's director Edgar Wright actively explore throughout *The World's End*. Gary King (Pegg) is struggling, or noticeably not struggling with alcoholism in his early 40's, reminiscing on a failed twelve-part bar crawl attempted decades earlier with his mates in their home town of Newton Haven. A failure that followed him into adulthood while his companions moved on, adjusting easily to the humdrum working class adulthood that awaited. Ironically invigorated after an AA meeting, Gary coerces his old friends into returning home to give the beer marathon one more go.

Nick Frost, often the more affable and clumsy of the two, plays Andy Knightley, a corporate lawyer whose partying days are well behind him. His role reversal with Pegg is a welcomed contrast to the previous entries in the Cornetto trilogy. Shifting this dynamic is more than a palette cleanser, it creates a sense of growth and loss within the duo's usual manboyish innocence. The supporting cast of friends is equally detached from King: Oliver or O-Man (Freeman) and Steven (Considine), a rival for the affection of high school crush and Oliver's sister Sam (Pike). All of them entirely uncommitted to the bar crawl and Gary's rose tinted memories. Before the genre elements are even introduced and our characters start to notice Newton Haven and its occupants are hiding something, most of the character drama and tension has already been primed.

Wright's quotable satire is replaced by a bittersweet reflection on our addiction to nostalgia and the "good ol' days". Because of the film's reluctance to devolve into full blown parody like *Shaun of the Dead* or *Hot Fuzz*, it stands as not just an *Invasion of the Body Snatcher's* spoof, but as one of the best films in that genre. Pegg's character commands most of the screen time and much of the story's dilemma, his friends aren't unscathed though. Real estate agents or lawyers, they all run the risk of losing their humanity and healthy interpersonal connection. If Edgar's previous works were examinations of friendship, this is the examination of losing one. -NE

Selected Filmography: *Shaun of the Dead* ('04); *Hot Fuzz* ('07); *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World* ('10); *Baby Driver* ('17).





figure 63

BEYOND THE LIGHTS

Gina Prince-Bythewood, 2014, United States, 116'

Script by Prince-Bythewood. Photographed by Tami Reiker. Music by Mark Isham. Edited by Terilyn A. Shropshire. With Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Nate Parker, Minnie Driver, Danny Glover, Machine Gun Kelly, et al.

*'Cause your mama's name was "Lonely"
And your daddy's name was "Pain"
And they call you "Little Sorrow"
'Cause you'll never love again*

-Nina Simone, (Nina Simone with Strings, 1966)

There's a reason that the gauge for gender equality behind the camera has become whether women are getting hired to direct multi-million dollar blockbusters and franchise entries, and it's because most of the people so concerned with having more female directors don't go out and buy tickets to smart, character-driven works like *Love and Basketball* and *Beyond the Lights*. The difficulties acquiring financiers for her original scripts have led Gina Prince-Bythewood's talents to television and those aforementioned franchise entries. This is not to say that these films have no potential to transcend the expectations of clichéd upturned noses, but this is diversity in a very small pocket of the cinematic landscape. There is something extremely grounded about *Beyond the Lights*, from its inception to its execution. Prince-Bythewood did not need to bring her auteur edge to pre-written material but instead follows through on a clear vision of two souls discovering there is more to life, and themselves, than what was told to them. And by their mutual contemplations they find love with one another.

This is not a love story where the couple immediately falls in love and must fight to be together despite the protests from those around them, although there is plenty of that - after all this is a melodrama between a pop star and a cop. More emphasis is placed on Noni and Kaz' struggles of the self. Noni's singles "Masterpiece" and "Private Property" fashion her into something created and to be owned. Her red carpet outfit utilizes chains. These details are authentic and never venture into caricature of the popular music scene. Kaz has political ambitions but finds it tough to play the game even if it's for the "community." The intercutting of two tales of generational conflicts and careful use of melodrama recall the scripts of Noda and Ozu. Noni and Kaz are not defined by their romance and the film invests time in their internal dilemmas. Happily ever after comes from their choice of an authentic life at the cost of the career they were told they wanted. The film shies away from blaring the volume and thus it's gone under the radar, rewarding those looking deeper. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Love & Basketball* ('00); *The Secret Life of Bees* ('08).





figure 64

LOST RIVER

Ryan Gosling, 2014, United States, 95'

Script by Gosling. Photographed by Benoît Debie. Music by Johnny Jewel. Edited by Nico Leunen. With Christina Hendricks, Saoirse Ronan, Iain De Caestecker, Matt Smith, Eva Mendes, Ben Mendelsohn, et al.

Ryan Gosling's directorial debut has been dismissed as mimicking Lynch, Malick, and Refn. This is an easy way for critics to dismiss the work. De Palma is commonly accused of ripping off Hitchcock; P.T. Anderson gladly says he is ripping off De Palma and Altman--as an art form, cinema is a rich history of influences, homages, nods, straight up scene steals and expansions of previous visual ideas.

Lost River is a tale of a dying town and the grave of another lost city hidden beneath the town's reservoir. It is a meditation on the birth and death of a town. As progress moves onward, towns fade away, inhabitants forgotten along the way and homes reduced to rubble.

We join a family, an unemployed single mother and her two sons on the brink of foreclosure. A sadistic banker played by Ben Mendelsohn offers her a job at a club on the outskirts of town. He is a banker traveling from town to town cleaning up the last details of the unpaid mortgages. He also runs and performs at the club that offers last kicks at the end of the road; it is a strange underworld vaudeville show where anything goes and blood and gore are the only proper response to the horror of everyday life.

It is a story of the under-dog lost and pinned down. The villains and bullies are too strong, too powerful and shameless in their exertion of power. They are the power, and they want more – a violent mean streak is the communication style. Tenderness expressed in the main characters is mirrored in the lush landscape of the overgrown trees and grasses reclaiming a town broken in decay. There is sweetness grasping out that cannot be pushed under; tenderness is the means to escape. A shared experience of loss and the support from a sweet cab driver offers the vehicle for a way out.

Gosling's construction shows few signs of a first-time filmmaker. The look and feel of the film shows he has gleaned important tools from his work with other directors, but I would argue he has his own eye and vibe that shows influences but still exists on its own. For all the rehashed rom-coms and carbon copy action films, this art film deserves a viewing for its strong visual style and deep understanding of its characters' dilemma and ultimate release. -MN

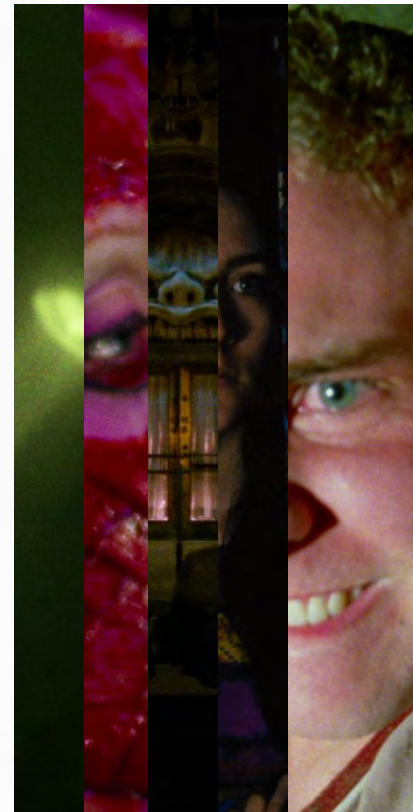




figure 65

MAPS TO THE STARS

David Cronenberg, 2014, Canada, 112'

Script by Bruce Wagner. Photographed by Peter Suschitzky. Music by Howard Shore. Edited by Ronald Sanders. With Julianne Moore, Mia Wasikowska, John Cusack, Robert Pattinson, Olivia Williams, Evan Bird, Sarah Gadon, et al.



“Liberty” – a poem by Paul Eluard is the poetic line that threads its way through what screen writer and novelist Bruce Wagner describes as a modern-day ghost story. Often Wagner’s work has been dismissed as Hollywood satire, but in truth he is stalking the dreaming reality beneath the Hollywood storyline. His work explores and questions what happens when the behind-the-scenes supporting roles filled by parents, therapists, agents, lawyers, and friends are star struck? What damage ensues in a power-hungry feeding frenzy. What does that do to psyches of all involved--especially the child actor who is often referenced by his box office sales.

Cronenberg is the perfect director to bring Wagner’s script to life. This is the 21st century landscape he began to explore in his 2012 New York limo tale, *Cosmopolis*, based on Don DeLillo’s 2003 novel. Robert Pattinson moves from his role as rider and watcher to driver and aspiring screen writer and character actor. He is outside the star systems but observes it with a wanting eye; he participates by following orders. In both *Cosmopolis* and *Maps to the Stars* Cronenberg is working with ideas from novels; although *Maps to the Stars* is a script many years in the making, its contents are distilled elements that can be found in many of Wagner’s novels. The structure is of a Greek tragedy with a valley girl talking actress played by Julianne Moore as a narcissistic aging commodity and second-generation Hollywood royalty. Olivia Williams is a controlling stage mother managing her son’s super star career. She is part of the negotiations of film contracts and dollar amounts; with ruthlessness, she offers her son up to the highest bidder. John Cusack plays husband, father, and therapist as a megalomaniacal superstar guru. This film deconstructs the star filled projections we inhabit as viewers and consumers of the movie machine.

Benji and Agatha, damaged poster children of lost innocence; they are both far too hurt and betrayed to break free from their current reality; they are backed into a corner by circumstances poisoned by parental greed and emptiness – this ghost story explores the generational patterns infused with mythical forms. Other characters include a dead girl, a drowned boy, and the ghost of a Hollywood actress killed in a fire. The elements of fire and water flow and engulf the patterns transforming and mimicking a trajectory dramatic and tragic. -MN

Selected Filmography: *Spider* (’02); *A History of Violence* (’05); *Eastern Promises* (’07); *A Dangerous Mind* (’11); *Cosmopolis* (’12).



figure 66

MR. TURNER

Mike Leigh, 2014, UK, 150'

Script by Leigh. Photographed by Dick Pope. Music by Gary Yershon. Edited by Jon Gregory.
With Timothy Spall, Dorothy Atkinson, et al.

The horse scene. Yes, that's why watching Mr. Turner makes you believe in magic. There are many, many other scenes that do the same, but when you hear about the filming of the horse scene, your goose-bumps sprout goose-bumps.

"Genius often comes in the strangest of packages...beauty and horror...the art of the sublime..." This comment (Special Features DVD Sony Pictures Classics) also describes the Georgian period itself. Mike Leigh's film captures not just the part JMW Turner plays during his last 26 years, but the flavor of the surrounding culture as well. Timothy Spall as Mr. Turner admits, "When I look in the mirror, I see a gargoyle." Despite all his love of light & ability to capture it (Turner's actual last words, "The sun is God..."), looking closely at the artist's creations, the gargoyle's always there. Whether it's Spall's dark profile against sunrise/sunset or his rendering of "Apollo and Python," there lurks a monster to be uncovered.

Leigh emphasizes his film is NOT a biopic. Despite his insistence, some reviews take offense at his artistic interpretation of Turner. He explains by defending his directorial delivery, which involves an organic unfolding of each scene completely unscripted but with overzealous detailing of the physical settings pre-filming. His goal is to let the cast, all of whom are over-the-top character actors of the nth degree, "grow" their characters in the rich staging that's supplied. Spall, himself, spent two years with a painter studying before he came on set. He also stalked the connection Turner had with his father by hovering in a corner pretending he was an infant. The bonding between the two actors pays off as "Billy Boy" and "Daddy" reflect deep affection every moment they inhabit the screen. Wm. Turner, Sr.'s (Jesson) dedication to Billy Boy never wavers, shining through their final shot together.

Leigh knows how to create magic on film and sometimes nature helps as well: perfect sunsets/sunrises that cinematographer Dick Pope captures. But his narrative of the horse scene defies coincidence. After arduous balancing to shoot a steep overhead shot of Spall sketching from a cliff, another turn of the camera "accidentally" captures an ascent of several wild horses. These are wild horses that just decided to have their 15 seconds of fame; absolutely, no rehearsal necessary. And, yes, it does take your breath away. Not the first time in this breathtaking creation... -ww

Selected Filmography: *All or Nothing* ('02); *Vera Drake* ('04); *Happy-Go-Lucky* ('08); *Another Year* ('10).





figure 67

UNFRIENDED

Leo Gabriadze, 2014, United States, 83'

Script by Nelson Greaves. Photographed by Adam Sidman. Edited by Parker Laramie, Andrew Wesman. With Shelley Hennig, Moses Jacob Storm, Renee Olstead, Will Peltz, Jacob Wysocki, Courtney Halverson, Heather Sossaman.



It's nearing the one-year anniversary of Laura Barns' public suicide. Her best friend Blaire (Hennig) watches a video of the suicide that's been uploaded online. It's not long before her attention strays to a Skype chat with her boyfriend Mitch (Storm) and talk of virginity taking on prom night. A one-on-one private chat soon becomes a group thing as their friends join in. They notice an uninvited user lurking in their chat. All attempts to kick out "billie227" don't take. Soon accounts are hacked and embarrassing photos of each other are uploaded. That each of them has to prove they're not behind these personal attacks on each other is proof of the tenuousness of their friendships. The emotional and physical violence of this night occurs in the context of each person's involvement in the death of Laura Barns.

Unfriended is not a horror film. It takes its moral agenda and imbues it with a violent schadenfreude. The most universal POV of today is the computer screen. For an hour and a half we see a comedy of errors in open windows and the tragedy of youth culture play out all in real time. Out of a handful of films which utilize facsimiles of a computer's interface for their entireties, *Unfriended* is the standard of quality. It has a command of the desktop's mise-en-scene, allowing the ratio between the frame and Blaire's laptop screen to be 1:1. Sounds guide the viewer every now and then but largely we are free to drift around the monitor as we wish from a private chat to the video feeds of her "friends" to the tabs open in her web browser to her desktop we can glimpse behind her open applications.

Producer Jason Blum took the extra trouble to license Facebook, Skype, and other real-world brands to ground the film, not letting the retribution of a group of cyber bullies be taken as pure fantasy. And unlike other films of its ilk where the horror of the internet comes from faceless cyber stalkers – who eventually appear in person but with masks on to match their online anonymity – *Unfriended* doesn't kid anyone about the real monsters of world wide web, putting the webcam as close to their faces as possible: the little shits whose tool of pain is a keyboard, cutting their classmates down as they multitask. -JS

Selected Filmography: *Lucky Trouble* ('11).



figure 68

ENTERTAINMENT

Rick Alverson, 2015, United States, 102'

Script by Alverson, Gregg Turkington, Tim Heidecker. Photographed by Lorenzo Hagerman. Music by Robert Donne. Edited by Alverson, Michael Taylor. With Gregg Turkington, Tye Sheridan, John C. Reilly, Lotte Verbeek, Michael Cera, Amy Seimetz, et al.

American director Rick Alverson's fourth film is about a stand-up comedian played by Gregg Turkington. We follow the comedian on a tour of the Southern California desert. His persona represents a show biz comedian "travelling a great distance" to bring the hard-working folks a respite from their daily reality, a place to relax and laugh at a few jokes, to unwind and to be entertained. The comic brings us the laughs, an escape from our daily lives and yet the film shows the daily life of the comedian in all its grim loneliness and isolation.

During the day, the comedian stops at road-side attraction walking tours of oil fields and ghost towns; the film opens at an airplane graveyard, our main character walking alone separate from the group, isolated he stands in the desert and in an empty hull of an airplane. The film unfolds like a slide show. The juxtaposition between the comedian and his environment.

We see hecklers, drunks, and "regular folks" responding to his act. As the film continues, a higher level of aggression amplifies and peaks with the comedian calling out audience members in volatile, uncomfortable exchanges. The world the comedian travels continues to become more bizarre as he meets various people on his journey, climaxing with a gig at the private home of a big star in the Hollywood hills. The tension builds throughout the film with uncomfortable interactions and the strangeness of human behavior.

The film holds a tension that is unusual in most films. The comedian's jokes have a way of exposing a kind of hypocrisy that is embedded within celebrity culture; with jokes about Madonna, Elton John and "The Leeeeegendary Prop Comic Carrot Top." The way in which he highlights each celebrity, he calls attention to the ridiculousness of their importance to the cultural framework and dialogue of our contemporary time. Tapping into a kind of TMZ culture that watches and observes the celebrity story unfolding before our eyes, the comedian exposes a vile side of celebrity culture that exists. The movie is a dreamlike flow from scene to scene – pushing the viewer's expectations and assumptions about what is "entertainment," lucky for us it also pushes the boundaries of cinema – we slow down but also sit with and push into uncomfortable aspects of human spaces we share whether at a comedy club or the darkened theatre. -MN

Selected Filmography: *The Builder* (ˆ10); *New Jerusalem* (ˆ11); *The Comedy* (ˆ12).





figure 69

WORLD OF TOMORROW

Don Hertzfeldt, 2015, United States, 17'

Script by Hertzfeldt. Photographed and Edited by Hertzfeldt. With Winona Mae, Julia Pott.

The experiencing of watching *World of Tomorrow* is all at once frightening, funny, empathetic, and overwhelming. However, there is something else. Something which leaves you in the end feeling both a little strange in your place and time, but also a little more adept in your ability to experience and comprehend your own feelings. The film utilizes an experimental tone in its visuals and animation style, however, this is merely a means of expressing a much greater experimental purpose. This film's true experimental purpose is to redefine the image and to question the way we interact with media. The film explores a plethora of complex science fiction and philosophic ideas in its short sixteen minutes, so much so that it is hard for the viewer to keep track of everything they absorb. This does not stop them from absorbing it anyway. In this film a little girl named Emily has been thrust forward in time by her future clone and is given an explanation of her clone's memories and the future state of the world. All the while we receive a cute and disturbing commentary from the child Emily Prime.

The viewer is like little Emily Prime. We are unable to comprehend exactly what the cloned Emily is explaining to us and as a result the film transmits its images to us, not through our eyes, but through a complex set of base biological and spiritual reactions which go beyond complete intellectual understanding. Emily's vision into the future through the means of her clone are contemplative of what it means to view and experience visual phenomena. One of the best parts of the film is when we find Emily Prime in the future world enjoying her power to change the color of that world. The juxtaposition of this simple childish joy of changing color and the harrowing ideas proposed by the future dystopia expresses the complex nature of media. This complex nature being one that can both horrify and excite us in its profundity, or simply expose us to more simple joys like shape and color. Perhaps the true nature of film is a swirling amalgamation. By the end the feeling that pervades the air is a complex mixture of, love, nostalgia, and, pure life. This comes through in the stony eyes of David, the cloned Emily's determination to love, and Emily Prime's childlike enthusiasm. -JV

Selected Filmography: *Rejected* ('00); *The Meaning of Life* ('05); *It's Such a Beautiful Day* ('12); *World of Tomorrow - Episode Two: The Burden of Other People's Thoughts* ('17).



figure 70

TONI ERDMANN

Maren Ade, 2016, Germany, 162'

Script by Ade. Photographed by Patrick Orth. Music by Patrick Veigel. Edited by Heike Parplies. With Sandra Hüller, Peter Simonischek, Ingrid Busu, Thomas Loibl, Trystan Pütter, Michael Wittenborn, et al.

Whenever Winfried's daughter Ines comes and visits the family she is essentially passing through. With non-stop work Ines is glued to her phone. Financially she is doing well but he rarely sees her. A man of dead-pan pranks that can happen at any time, Winfried has a crisis when his dog dies. This time he will be the one travelling to visit his daughter in Romania. His visit is almost just another passing through when he proves to be an annoyance to her busy schedule. He leaves in a taxi as Winfried but will turn up again as Toni Erdmann, a life coach and business consultant with long black hair and teeth that are comically unkempt. Ines plays along despite it obviously being her father and what ensues is a slow reconnection as he, and eventually her, start to make the cracks bigger in the kind of living she's been doing.

Despite almost universal acclaim upon its release, *Toni Erdmann* felt oddly overlooked among all the travel bans, the flashy musicals, and concerns for representation at inconsequential events like award shows. Out of any film from the same year, it is Ade's that had the most complex inner-workings and locked away were universal and meaningful ways of looking at the world. Sandra Hüller gives the kind of performance that most likely will end up being her defining work.

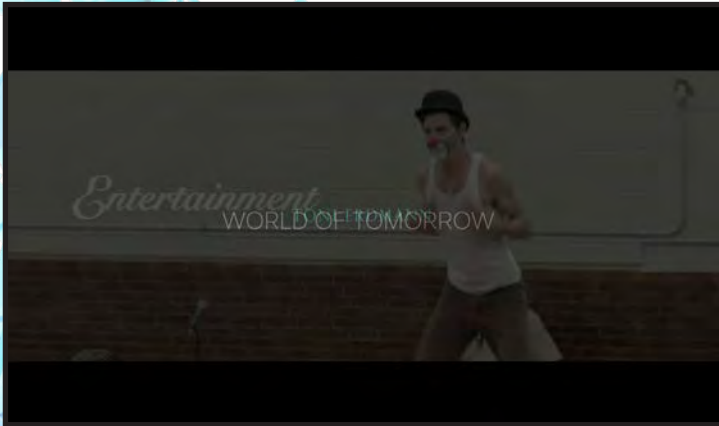
The film surprisingly encompasses many realities of 21st century existence without losing sight of its premise. These maladies are given adequate attention because it is Ines' entire world that is weighing down on her. Globalization, capitalism, gender politics in the workplace, and economic depression are but a few of the topics touched on in the film, brilliantly incorporated but never allowed to dominate the soul of the picture. There isn't one magical remedy that's going to solve all of her problems, and the film doesn't dare to be so dishonest as to suggest a quick fix. The application of small doses of irreverence can be freeing, but the ease of falling back in is all too real and frightening. As Ines continues to run into Mr. Erdmann we see a miniature salvation that comes out in loud, absurd, and embarrassing ways but is ultimately private. What's unspoken is a large enough endeavor for an epic like this. -JS

Selected Filmography: *The Forest for the Trees* ('03); *Everything Else* ('09).



PRINCIPLE OF SUPERIMPOSITION

Strata Sequence
Natural Selection: Change What Already Exists
Nicolaus Steno aka Niels Stensen
Uranium-213
Fossil Record: New Species = Modified Older Ones



2015-20xx
Once all the strata has been put in order and their dates have been estimated, we can read the fossil record from bottom to top.

2010-2014

Fossils in adjacent layers were more similar to each other than to those found in layers more widely separated, implying a gradual and continuous process of divergence.



2005-2009
Assigning a date to a "first appearance" should be seen as somewhat arbitrary as modern forms do not appear in the fossil record suddenly, arising out of nowhere.

2000-2004

Groups appear on the scene in an orderly evolutionary fashion, with many arising after known fossil transitions from ancestors.



