

Le Cinéma Français et la "Question du Nouveau"

23 - 27 Dec. 2020

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مارگریت دوراس
آلن رنه
اریک رومر
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Stéphane Brizé
Marguerite Duras
Nicolas Philibert
Alain Resnais
Jacques Rivette
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Hesam Amiri
Adel Mashayekhi
Saleh Najafi

سینما و امر نو

بانگاهی به سینمای فرانسه

۳ تا ۷ دی ماه ۹۹

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Cinema and the "New"

A Glimpse on French Cinema

This program was first planned long before Covid-19 pandemic in hope of developing Emkan Film sessions and widening the space for new communities to take shape, since, unlike some arts such as painting and photography, which enjoy their exclusive limited range of audience, cinema can be regarded as a sort of broader context favorable for considering collective concerns.

Nevertheless, the problems brought up by Covid-19 led us to exercise online exhibiting. We had no doubt that at its outset the project's gaze has to be turned to the cinema in France, the birth-place of this medium and where a significant proportion of those brilliant moments in its life has been fulfilled. To our content, the arduous job of selecting six films from this specific geography was softened through a list of copyrighted films that was handed to us, however, some notable films and directors were excluded which we hope to fit into future plans. A brief summary for the selected films can be found in the next section.

In this program it has been tried to, in form of lectures, have cinema examined from three relatively different point of views and each lecturer was asked to take one of the films into account.

■ Cinema, Made in France

In this part, through a comparison between cinema in America and France (the two pivotal points in the generation of cinema), Hesam Amiri seeks to describe two distinguished cinematic worlds: in America cinema has no “outside”. America means cinema, and cinema means America, while in France “outside of cinema” and “non-cinema”, either in the shape of venerable traditions of other forms of art or the general continental worldview, play important roles. In this talk the noteworthy reverberations of such distinction are fully described in order to set a definition for these two cinemas.

■ Rivette’s Exit Plan: Chance, Secrecy, Conspiracy

In his second talk Hesam Amiri talks about Rivette’s *Le Pont du Nord* and his labyrinthine world. The main points discussed in this part include: How in following years after May 68, when Rivette felt that horror ruled over France and previous emancipatory ideas faced defeat, his concerns revolved around freedom and the possibility for creating the new in cinema? What possibilities are vivified through Rivette’s Paris? And finally, what was Rivette’s solution to set himself free from strict normative ideas without being trapped by formalism?



■ Cinematic Communes

Pointing to various examples, Saleh Najafi mainly focuses on *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* by Peter Watkins, 1999 in this talk. Through a fascinating description of political milieu and cinematic movements in France at the time when this film was made, he touches upon a critical issue: what Watkins' decision was in order to picture a momentous event such as Paris Commune. This discussion illustrates how this film, from the very moment of casting to the final release and distribution, was inspired by the ideas firstly unfolded in Paris Commune itself.

■ From Françoise to Françoise: Dichotomy of Postwar French Historical Memory

Eric Rohmer's *My Night at Maud's* is the film Saleh Najafi studies in this part. The film is mainly the story of the lead character's dilemma in confrontation with two female personas, namely Françoise and Maud. The Françoise in the film is a blonde western-looking woman while Maud has black hair and Algerian countenance whose role is acted by the Algerian-French actress under the stage name of Françoise. Pointing out to the duality of Françoise in the story and the actress Françoise, Saleh Najafi borrows Henry Rousso's concept of "The Vichy Syndrome" in post-WWII France to recount a dichotomy in French memory. He goes on to offer a description for morality that is implied by Eric Rohmer's choice of French moralists, and based on which Pascal can be considered a libertine with Maud as his female double.



■ Deleuze, Cinema, Proletariat

In an elaborated discussion Adel Mashayekhi explains what philosophical problem forced Gilles Deleuze, the contemporary French philosopher, to take cinema as his subject of study in his two books of cinema, where he deals with concepts such as movement and time. It is suggested that the problem could be considered as the relation between thought and cinema, how thinking “with” cinema becomes possible and what contribution cinema, as non-philosophy, can make to philosophy. If, as Deleuze says, cinema’s power lies in its ability to recreate the broken link between world and modern man, how this can be achieved? Other formulations are also brought up for this problem during the talk: what relation between theory and act can move beyond the chain of habits and sensory-motor schema and generate a space of unprecedented possibilities? How can we think immanently about being without being confined to representation? What relation can dwell between a part and an open whole?

While discussing these concepts, another important issue is brought up in this talk too. If class is a sort of molar concept for Deleuze, what definition for proletariat is upheld in his philosophy? Relying on the pivotal concept of “pure optical and sound situation” in Deleuze’s *Cinema II*, that alludes to a strait where action (as habitual behaviors corresponding to sensory-motor schema) becomes impossible and an unprecedented space of possibilities for act (as moving toward change, and creation of the new) unfolds, a different description for proletariat is brought up that is no more a concrete set with a specific condition of belonging, but only makes sense in relation to a proletarian situation. Stephan Brize’s *Measure of a Man*, beside some other films from the history of cinema, are pointed to throughout the argument.



Le Pont du Nord

129 min | Colour | 1981

Jacques Rivette

While film summaries are generally aimed to describe the film's world and provide a clue to its theme, introducing a plot summary can be the worst decision in this film's case. Looking for a typical line of story in this film is no less than assessing the works of Paul Klee or Jean Dubuffet according to the paintings of da Vinci or Raphael, or reading Alice's Adventures in Wonderland with the same attitude that is taken for War and Peace. Probably the children, whose world is not yet permeated with the logic ruling over the lives of grown-ups, enjoy this film more.

But for us, the grown-up, who may need a flicker to get involved in a film's world, it may be useful to remind that Gilles Deleuze, the French philosopher, in *Cinema II* calls the world of Rivette a world of "fantasies, memories, or pseudo-memories", and similar to "fables and children's games" (2005:10). In an article on Rivette's cinema for *Cahiers du Cinéma* he further explains, "if the political, judicial, and police conspiracies weighing on us are enough to show that the real world has become a bad movie, then it is cinema's job to give us a piece of reality, a piece of the world."¹

Rivette, who also edited in *Cahiers du Cinéma* from 1963 to 1965, later refuses to allow his criticism be reprinted – mainly, he said, because he no longer agreed with much of it. As Jonathan Rosenbaum points, he probably preferred to apply his criticisms to his own films, which he strongly detested to formulate as "a film by" since, like any other film, were always by at least fifteen people.²

For more information on the crew visit the following link:

[imdb.to/3r7mCAf](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0724314/)

1- bit.ly/38ecfC5

2- bit.ly/38f1PDB



The Measure of a Man,

93 min | Colour | 2015

Stéphane Brizé

Thierry, at the age of fifty-one and after twenty-five years of service in a factory, is among those workers who get laid off. After twenty months on unemployment, he leaves the circle of his ex-coworkers to step into a new path. The film narrates his efforts to find a job and moral dilemmas he faces. How long will he withstand the existing circumstances on his own?

Stéphane Brizé, the film's French writer and director, says in an interview, "My films have always dealt with the intimate, without highlighting human beings in their social environment. The next step was to observe the brutality of the mechanisms and exchanges ruling our world by juxtaposing one man's humanity – a vulnerable man with no job security – with the violence of our society. I wrote the script with Olivier Gorce... His analysis and perspective on social and political themes are very lucid. He was the ideal travel partner for this project."

Vincent Lindon's performance in this film won him the best lead actor award in 2015 Cannes Film Festival.

For more information on the crew visit the following link:

imdb.to/2WxDnXi



The Measure of a Man,

93 min | Colour | 2015

Stéphane Brizé

After spending several years abroad, Jean-Louis (Jean-Louis Trintignant), an engineer, has recently returned to France and, longing for some peace and quiet, he settles in Clermont-Ferrand. At the church he attends every Sunday, he notices a young blonde woman he fancies and, without knowing her well, decides that she will become his wife. Meanwhile, at a local restaurant, he accidentally meets Vidal, an old school friend, now a philosophy professor at Clermont-Ferrand University. Vidal invites him to spend the Christmas Eve at Maud's, his lady friend who is also a doctor and divorcee. Following their heated discussion on love, religion and philosophy Jean-Louis is conflicted about what he desires and the dark-haired Maud's charm pushes him into an emotional turmoil.

My Night at Maud's is one of the films in Rohmer's "Six Moral Tales" collection. In a television program on this film - due to Rohmer's total refusal to appear in public - Rohmer's old friend and film critic, Jean Douchet, is invited to speak about the film. He explains that in each of these six films the main character follows a specific moral code by which he tries to conduct the way of his life. Each character meets a female character who embraces life with all its surprises and chances, and so a twisted and winding road appears before the male character. In *My Night at Maud's* this moral code is Catholicism. In this interview, Douchet points to Rohmer's extreme realism and the documentary aspects of the film. Rohmer insisted to film in a provincial environment where people, especially a specific social class, have more time and a long discussion over philosophy and religion is realistic, whereas it wouldn't be realistic in Paris. Moreover, Rohmer emphasized that when a mass is shown it should be real mass or people in the factory should be real people instead of stunts, he had the obsession to depict the exact geography of the place where the story happens.

For more information on the crew visit the following link:

1- bit.ly/3p0Oww1

imdb.to/3r7rqWA



Life of Riley

108 min | Colour | 2004

Alain Resnais

During rehearsals for a play, Colin and Kathryn receive the news that their friend George Riley is fatally ill. The drama goes about how the lives of three couples can be affected by such an incident and its following consequences.

In his latest work, once again, Alain Resnais turns to one of the writings of his favorite English playwright, Alan Ayckbourn, to have a new contemplation on his long-held concern: Relations; human relations and, of course, the relations between various artistic forms, since from Resnais' perspective where there is no form, there is no emotion. What happens when an unfamiliar element penetrates into the routine-bound lives of three couples? What happens when cinema comes into contact with comic strip, theatre, music, painting, etc.?

Even if this didn't always work Resnais never gave up experimenting and had a strong belief in chance and the possibility to create the new.

And, surely, it also can be asked what happens when a filmmaker, whose film deals with imminent death, dies three months after its first release? Does this leave any mark on the very world of the film? This film is performed by Sabine Azéma (Resnais' wife and a regular actress in his films) and other regular actors of Resnais' films, who are also among the circle of his close friends.

For more information on the crew visit the following link:

imdb.to/38aodwN



Le Navire "Night"

90 min | Colour | 1979

Marguerite Duras

A passionate love story that only takes place by telephone.

In 1978 Duras published a short text under the same title. Ten months later she had made a theatre performance and a film based on it and they, respectively, went on stage and screen at the same time. The film tells the story of a woman and a man that accidentally phone each other on anonymous calls and, without any kind of physical presence, their talks gradually get longer and more intimate. This lack of presence is represented in the film by means of physical absence of the characters. Duras's voice, as well as Benoît Jacquot's (the French director), are dubbed over scenes of Seine river, the Bois de Boulogne, and Père Lachaise Cemetery and every now and then the actors, Mathieu Carrière, Bulle Ogier, and Dominique Sanda, are seen while being made up for shooting, the film of which is never shown. Duras, loyal to her long-held concern regarding language and words, examines these elements' dissimilar ways of manifestation via different media. Voice is no more predominated by image and they maintain their independence. A passionate desire is being formed and communicated through the voice and yet the image, by its asynchronicity, unveils a varied world before our vision. This may be climaxed where we watch a Vietnamese red attire while the voice talks of a carnal passion.

"Finally, the eyes see and touch." Remarks Michel Cournot, the French writer and director, on this film.¹

For more information on the crew visit the following link:

[imdb.to/3nzyhGc](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0078448/)

¹- In Michelle Royer, *The Cinema of Marguerite Duras: Multisensoriality and Female Subjectivity*, Edinburgh University Press, 2019, p 65.

LE NAVIRE NIGHT



ÉCRIT ET RÉALISÉ PAR

MARGUERITE DURAS

AVEC

DOMINIQUE SANDA

BULLE OGIER

MATHIEU CARRIÈRE

To Be and To Have

104 min | Colour | 2004 | Documentary

Nicolas Philibert

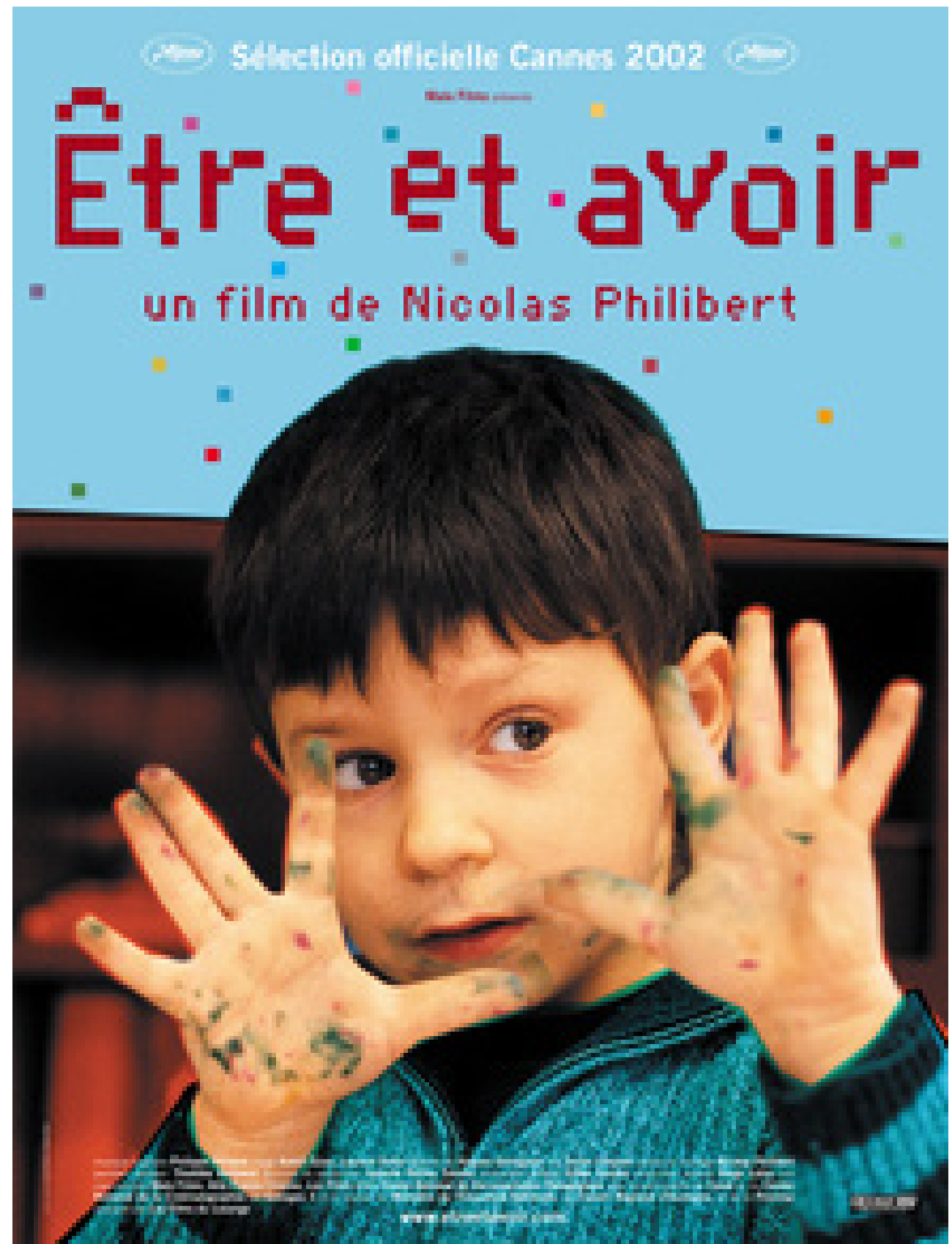
All over France, there are still examples of what are known as “single-class schools”: classes that bring all the children of a village, from kindergarten to the last year of primary school, together under one single teacher’s supervision. For better or for worse, these eclectic little groups, seesawing between isolation and opening up to the world, share everyday life. This film is shot in one of these schools, some place at the heart of the Auvergne Mountains, where the teacher, George Lopez, is soon to be retired.

The name “To Be and To Have” is taken from the two most common auxiliary verbs in French that are taught within first years of education. Although Philibert has a background in philosophy, he detests doing research prior to documentation, “this way you increasingly get encouraged to study more and more, and you are a prisoner, you are a hostage of your knowledge and you start to be a teacher.” And this is not the stand he seeks in filmmaking, “I make films to learn something, not to teach others.”

For more information on the crew visit the following link:

imdb.to/3p4hwD0

1- bit.ly/3gV7lOm





- Films have the copyright permission for one-time screening and will be available in our website according to the program.
- Talks can be watched via our Instagram page and website.
- Instagram: [emkanofficial](#)
- website: [www.1emkan.com](#)

Image used in the poster is taken from LA REPRISE DU TRAVAIL AUX USINES WONDER, by Jacques Willemont, 1968

Just few days after May 1968, a team of young students arrived at the entrance of the Wonder factory to film its occupation. But the workers had just voted to resume work. All, but a young woman, the one presented in the photo, who shouted: "I won't go back, no I won't go back; I don't want to put my feet back in this disgusting jail".

Find more information here: bit.ly/3gY5EQp

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