

PRESS RELEASE

FIRST COMPLETE RETROSPECTIVE OF JEAN-MARIE STRAUB AND DANIÈLE HUILLET IN THE UK

In cooperation with numerous prestigious partners, the Goethe-Institut London is pleased to present the first complete UK retrospective of the films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, who crafted one of the most influential and controversial oeuvre in modern cinema together.

11 February 2019

**The Films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet
Complete Film Retrospective
1 March – 1 June 2019
Opening 1 March, 6.30PM, ICA**

Running from 1 March until 1 June 2019 across several prominent London venues including the Goethe-Institut London, the retrospective will include Straub and Huillet's long and short films directed between 1962 and 2006. The retrospective will also present Jean-Marie Straub's works after Danièle Huillet's death in 2006. Additional events and workshops will provide an opportunity for in-depth encounters with the unique aesthetics and political engagement of the filmmakers, whose unwavering artistic resolve and clear stance against political and economic oppression are more relevant than ever. Viewers will be able to experience the exquisite craftsmanship and sheer beauty of their work, as all films are presented in digitally restored copies and on 35mm prints with English subtitles.

Screenings and events will take place at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), BFI Southbank, King's College London, Goethe-Institut London, Ciné Lumière, Close-Up, Birkbeck Cinema and Whitechapel Gallery.

The films of Jean-Marie Straub (born 1933, France) and Danièle Huillet (1936–2006, France) have been a crucial presence in European cinema since the 1960s. They have provoked controversial debates, including in the UK, elicited the admiration of filmmakers such as Harun Farocki, Pedro Costa and John Gianvito, and have been the subject of recent retrospectives for instance at the Centre Pompidou, MoMA, Akademie der Künste Berlin and other venues.

The filmmaking couple first met in Paris in 1954, then moved to Germany in the early 1960s, where they established their critical reputation with the two features *Not Reconciled...* (1965) and *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (1967). From the beginning, their films were radical in form, uncompromising, and often polemical. Their work confronted the politics of post-war Europe, and took up stories of political battles, class struggle and resistance from a Marxist perspective. With a highly original approach to adaptation, Straub and Huillet found new ways to interpret works by prominent European intellectuals and artists such as Franz Kafka, Bertolt Brecht, Friedrich Hölderlin, Cesare Pavese, Elio Vittorini, Pierre Corneille, Arnold Schoenberg, Marguerite Duras and Paul Cézanne.

Straub and Huillet filmed in Germany, France and Italy, where they also lived, making the performance of the various languages a key element of their work. Created with intense rigour, their films demand the viewers' undivided attention and reveal Straub and Huillet's immense generosity, their utmost respect for people and nature as well as their love for cinema.



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The retrospective is organised by the Goethe-Institut London in collaboration with BELVA Film and in partnership with BFI Southbank, ICA, Institut Français, Close-Up Film Centre, King's College London, German Screen Studies Network, Birkbeck Institute for the Moving Image (BIMI) and Whitechapel Gallery.

With kind support from the Embassy of Switzerland in the UK, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Londra, Instituto Camões, BIRMAC (Birkbeck Interdisciplinary Research in Media and Culture) and the Department of German at King's College London.



Programme Overview:

Please visit our [website](#) for more detailed information.

FRI 1 MARCH OPENING

ICA

The retrospective opens with the UK premiere of Straub and Huillet's 1996 adaptation of Arnold Schoenberg's comic opera *From Today Until Tomorrow*, and Straub's latest film, *People by the Lake* (2018) at the ICA on 1 March. Additionally, Barbara Ulrich, philosopher and a collaborator of Jean-Marie Straub and a vital force in the restoration of Straub and Huillet's work, will introduce a screening of *Communists* (2014). The latter is a compilation of sequences from Straub and Huillet's previous films, and focuses on resistance and forms of violence or oppression: from the Communist prisoners defying their Fascist interrogators, Italian partisans fighting against Nazi occupation to the anti-colonial opposition and class struggle in Egypt.

SAT 2 - WED 20 MARCH

BFI Southbank

BFI Southbank presents films from the first two decades of Straub and Huillet's career, including the seminal *Not Reconciled...* (1965) and *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (1967). Other screenings include their first films directed in Italy such as *Othon* (1969), *History Lessons* (1972), *Fortini/Cani* (1976), and *From the Cloud to the Resistance* (1978). In addition, *Moses and Aron* (1974), an adaptation of Arnold Schoenberg's music, and *Class Relations* (1983), a political reading of Franz Kafka's incomplete novel *Amerika*, will be shown.



TUE 19 MARCH - SUN 5 MAY
ICA

The ICA picks up the retrospective with a short run of *Too Early/Too Late* (1980/81), Straub and Huillet's investigation into land and colonialism that influenced the work of contemporary artists and filmmakers such as Harun Farocki.

Later on, the ICA will host over ten short and longer films, including two important series of films based on the writings of Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini such as the much loved *Sicilia!* (1998). The editing of Straub and Huillet's *Sicilia!* is documented in *Where Lies Your Hidden Smile?* (2001) by Portuguese director Pedro Costa. One of Straub and Huillet's most important films *Workers, Peasants* (2000) about a utopian community of workers and peasants, will be shown in a newly restored 35mm print.

WED 8 - MON 13 MAY
Ciné Lumière

In May Ciné Lumière will join the retrospective with a double bill of *Cézanne. Conversation with Joachim Gasquet* (1989) and *A Visit to the Louvre* (1989), two exceptional films exploring the paintings and ideas of Paul Cézanne. Other screenings include a programme of films about the French occupation and resistance, plus *The Antigone of Sophocles after Hölderlin's Translation Adapted for the Stage by Brecht 1948* (1991).

WED 1 - WED 29 MAY
Close-Up

A special International Worker's Day screening of *Class Relation* (1983) will kick-off screenings at Close-Up. The arthouse cinema will also host repeats of some of the most significant films of the retrospective, along with a selection of Jean-Marie Straub's latest video works as well as a special back-to-back screening of the two versions of *A Visit to the Louvre* (1989).

Events and Workshops:

SAT 9 MARCH
King's College London

Incendiary Fictions: Straub-Huillet and Screen Adaptation

This workshop will take a look at Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's short films which used prose and poetry as source materials. Academics Martin Brady, Helen Hughes, Roland-François Lack and Nikolaj Lübecker will introduce and discuss the films to explore why literary texts, in the words of Huillet, "are still necessary to start the fire".

MON 4 MARCH
BFI Southbank

The intensive materialism of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub



In an introductory lecture at the BFI Southbank, artist and theorist Kodwo Eshun argues that the aesthetic politics of the collaborators' cinema emerges from their ongoing commitment to the project and practice of materialist intensification. In an age in which Hollywood chases after fragmented audiences, Straub and Huillet's films constitute an aesthetic re-education of the senses and demand undivided attention from the viewers.

SAT 16 MARCH
BFI Southbank

History Lessons

The work of Bertolt Brecht has played a key role in the development of radical cinema, including the oeuvre of Straub and Huillet. The BFI Southbank welcomes academics Martin Brady, Ian Christie, Nicolas Helm-Grovas and Laura Mulvey for a roundtable discussion hosted by Erica Carter. "History Lessons" explores how Brecht's texts and concepts influenced both Straub & Huillet's films and British cinema as well as the impact of Straub and Huillet's work on the British film culture in the 1970s up until today.

FRI 22 – SAT 23 MARCH
Goethe-Institut London

"Mama, What Are Modern People?" Straub-Huillet's adaptation of Schoenberg's comic opera *Von heute auf morgen*

Straub and Huillet's film *From Today Until Tomorrow* (1996), an adaptation of Schoenberg's comic opera *Von heute auf morgen*, will be the subject of another workshop with Straub-Huillet experts Martin Brady and Larson Powell at the Goethe-Institut London. On the previous night, the Goethe-Institut London is screening Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer's domestic silent comedy *Master of the House* (1927), a particular favourite of Straub and Huillet.

Sat 30 MARCH
Birkbeck Cinema

Günter Peter Straschek - Early Films

This programme combines two key shorts by Straub and Huillet, *The Bridegroom, the Comedienne, and the Pimp* (1968) and *Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's "Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene"* (1972), with films by the Austrian radical filmmaker and historian Günter Peter Straschek. Presented as part of the Essay Film Festival.

SAT 13 APRIL
Goethe-Institut London

Stages of Violence. *Antigone* by Straub/ Huillet, between Theatre and Film

The lecture by theatre expert Patrick Primavesi addresses violence in Sophocles's tragedy *Antigone*, Hölderlin's translation of the play, Bertolt Brecht's version of it and Straub and Huillet's 1992 drama *Antigone*. This will include an analysis of the relation of theatre and theatricality to stage rehearsals, performances and film.



SUN 28 APRIL
Goethe-Institut London

Straub and Huillet in Buti - Acting and Working Collaboratively

The interaction with actors is an essential component in the aesthetics and politics of the cinema of Straub and Huillet. The way in which they were involved is explored during an afternoon of presentations and screenings, led by lecturer Manuel Ramos-Martinez. Actor and director Romano Guelfi, who participated in many of Straub and Huillet's Italian films, will discuss Straub and Huillet's engagement with the local theatre in Buti near Pisa, where the filmmakers spend an extended period of time to build a community of collaborators and friends.

WED 15 MAY
Goethe-Institut London

Not today but yesterday and tomorrow

During this evening filled with screenings and conversation, scholar and translator Alberto Toscano and writer Gabriele Pedullà will reflect on Straub and Huillet's sustained interest in the works of the prominent Italian writers and intellectuals Cesare Pavese, Elio Vittorini and Franco Fortini.

THU 16 MAY
Whitechapel Gallery

Border Struggles (of the Common Birds)

Paris-based filmmakers and artists Silvia Maglioni and Graeme Thomson present an evening of readings, screenings and conversation, drawing on excerpts from their new film in progress *Common Birds*. The evening reflects on how the work of Straub and Huillet has informed the invention of cinematic forms and methods which test the boundaries of voice and language.

SAT 25 MAY
Birkbeck Cinema

Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub at Work

A series of films and documents showing the filmmakers at work will give insight into how the duo worked together and cooperated with their various crews and actors.

SAT 1 JUNE
Goethe-Institut London

The Aesthetics of Equal Distribution

In a workshop focusing on Straub and Huillet's 1974 adaption of Arnold Schoenberg's opera *Moses and Aron*, media theorist Ute Holl will discuss how the filmmaker's aesthetic strategies relate to the principles of Schoenberg's twelve tone composition. Based on this analysis, she will also address certain themes in the film such as migration and exile, law and media, resistance and "missing people".