

Arthouse: Bemis Artists Talk Cassavetes

Art conversation to focus on the films and influence of independent film legend John Cassavetes

Omaha, Nebraska (March 16, 2009)— Today he's known as the "father of American independent film," but even that underrates director John Cassavetes (1929-1989). For decades now, filmmakers have grasped at the authenticity that came so natural to his work by following Cassavetes' DIY approach—hand-held cameras, available lighting, friends and family as cast, and above all, financing by second-mortgage and sky-high credit. The blessedly mixed results—alternately amateurish and transcendent—all point back to an influence so fresh and ahead of his time that we still haven't caught up to him.

On **Thursday, March 26, at 7 p.m.**, Film Streams and the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts will present a discussion about Cassavetes' films and influence, featuring the perspectives of Bemis Center artists-in-residence and moderated by curator Hesse McGraw. The talk will take place at Ruth Sokolof Theater, located at the corner of 14th and Webster within the Saddle Creek Records development in downtown Omaha, and will conclude Film Streams' 7-week Cassavetes retrospective.

The series-wrapping talk will also include clips from Cassavetes' films, providing a valuable recap for those knowledgeable of his work and an informative introduction for those unfamiliar with his career. Tickets for the talk are \$8 general admission, \$6 for seniors, students and teachers, and \$4 for Film Streams and Bemis Center Members. **Free admission will be granted to anyone who presents two or more ticket stubs from the Great Directors: Cassavetes series currently playing at the Ruth Sokolof Theater.**

Born in New York City in 1929, John Cassavetes made his filmmaking debut at age 30 with SHADOWS, about a biracial romance in New York during the Beat generation. Over the next 30 years, he would carve out a reputation as one of cinema's most daring, influential and debated auteurs, making films that inspired both impassionate praise and harsh rebukes. Regardless of their initial reception, nearly every one of his films is considered a landmark of American independent cinema, including FACES (1968), HUSBANDS (1970), MINNIE AND MOSKOWITZ (1971), A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE (1974), THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE (1976), OPENING NIGHT (1977) and LOVE STREAMS (1984). A true "actor's director," Cassavetes regularly spotlighted the same players, most notably his wife Gena Rowlands and close friends Peter Falk, Ben Gazzara and Seymour Cassel (who appeared at Film Streams' Ruth Sokolof Theater in February).

On various occasions, Cassavetes appeared in films directed by other filmmakers—including roles in such movies as THE KILLERS (1964), THE DIRTY DOZEN (1967), ROSEMARY'S BABY (1968) and MIKEY AND NICKY (1976)—but more often than not these acting jobs were performed to fund his true passion: writing, directing and performing his own work.

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Arthouse: Bemis Artists Talk Film is a collaboration between Film Streams and the Bemis Center, two contemporary arts organizations committed to creating a vibrant ongoing dialogue at the intersection of art, film and life. The series emphasizes the importance of film as an art form; provides opportunities for the public to discuss the art of film and filmmaking; and allows visiting artists to engage the larger community. Past Arthouse events have resulted in surprisingly rollicking conversations—despite the artists and audience often seeing the film for the first time, the dialogues have been humorous, exploratory and perhaps even profound, with a high degree of conversation between artists and audience.

Previous Arthouse conversations have focused on Robert Bresson's 1966 film *AU HASARD BALTHAZAR* (June 2008), Werner Herzog's Academy Award-nominated documentary *ENCOUNTERS AT THE END OF THE WORLD* (August 2008), and François Truffaut's *THE WILD CHILD* (January 2009).

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