# Acropolis Cinema, the UCLA Film & Television Archive, and Film Society of Lincoln Center present



January 11-17, 2019 ~ Billy Wilder & Downtown Independent theaters

### ABOUT THE SERIES

Founded in 2014 to explore "the most expansive possible view of documentary film," Film Society of Lincoln Center's annual Art of the Real series has sustained its singular legacy as the premiere North American showcase for international non-fiction and hybrid works. Since its inaugural edition, curators Dennis Lim and Rachael Rakes have shed light onto otherwise overlooked, boundary-pushing films that blend traditional conceptions of reality with formalistic and avant-garde processes for category-defying results. Observational documentaries and their familiar form always have their place, here alongside essayistic, lyrical tone poems and phenomenological, personal history lessons. Along with UCLA Film & Television Archive, Acropolis Cinema is proud to offer a West Coast home to a curated selection of these spectacular works from the past five years of Art of the Real, all of which are premiering in Los Angeles for the very first time. Screenings will start at the Archive's home at the Billy Wilder Theater, and will continue at the Downtown Independent into the week.

## Art of the Real: Los Angeles Notes and Reactions

#### Friday, January 11—Billy Wilder Theater

Infinite Football (Corneliu Porumboiu, 2018)

"Superficially, it's hard to see the expansiveness of *Infinite Football*. For almost its entire seventy-minute span, though, *Infinite Football* is just a series of interviews that Porumboiu conducts with a middle-aged man in Vaslui, the filmmaker's home town. Porumboiu, who is better known as a director of fictional films (albeit ones that integrate history and nonfiction, as in his first feature, *12:08 East of Bucharest*, from 2006, which I discussed here recently), brings the same conceptual and compositional power, the same audacity and originality, to his documentary filmmaking. "Infinite Football" has no added music or visual effects, no voice-over commentaries, no archival footage; almost the entire movie is—not quite talking heads, but talking bodies. Yet it's one of the most original and visionary documentary films to have emerged recently, a worthy cinematic companion for such films as *Did You Wonder Who Fired the Gun?* and *Rat Film* in its extraction of vast ideas from the perspective of local, small-scale, first-hand experience of a single subject, which is, in fact, soccer." — Richard Brody, *The New Yorker* 

## Saturday, January 12—Billy Wilder Theater

Inland Sea (Kazuhiro Soda, 2018)

"Inland Sea is primarily a work of simple and unapologetic humanism, happily in love with people ("We're as we are," one remarks). In the second half, the emphasis shifts to local gossip, chatterbox and unofficial guide Kumiko, an octogenarian of child-like enthusiasms whose garrulousness evidently exerts a powerful spell over the director. The fact that she passed away in 2015 during the editing process — the shooting took place back in 2014 — perhaps helps to explain her increasing prominence as the film unfolds, with Wan-chai and Sosa taking more of a back seat, the eponymous sea only intermittently visible. While these undercurrents are unmistakeably elegiac, Inland Sea rejects gloom. A word we keep hearing — conversationally and in greetings — is the magical Japanese term genki, meaning lively, energetic spirit, much prized in a land whose citizens have the longest life expectancy on Earth. Genki is what keeps the likes of Wan-chai and Kumiko going well into their ninth decade, and it is the pulse that sustains Soda's winningly intimate study of quotidian minutiae." — Neil Young, The Hollywood Reporter

#### Sunday, January 13—Billy Wilder Theater

Untitled (Michael Glawogger and Monika Willi, 2017)

"[Untitled is] a work of decidedly global interests, taking in as much of the world and its cultures as possible. Whether or not he had lived to complete the film, or ever would have, is largely immaterial – this is, in essence, the quintessential Glawogger project. We learn late in Untitled that Glawogger often dreamed of disappearing to Harper, Liberia, considering it one of the few untouched places where one could "become invisible". This sequence, featuring beautifully rain-dappled images of the coastal town and its inhabitants, speaks most productively to the utility of the narration, redeploying Glawogger's own words and allowing them to add a final touch of earned poignancy to what is one of the more welcomingly cathartic nonfiction films in recent memory." — Jordan Cronk, Sight & Sound

#### Monday, January 14—Downtown Independent

What Means Something (Ben Rivers, 2016)

"Just as Wylie's house is a living repository of her working methods, *What Means Some-thing* lays bare Rivers's own process. Shooting on full-frame 16mm, he makes no attempt to hide the hum of the mag, the specs of dust pinned to the film gate during shooting, or the red frames and hole punches that emerge from development at the lab. Shots periodically begin with a handclap from Wylie (a DIY variation on the slate), and Rivers is regularly heard behind the camera chatting with his subject—though less often about her work than about the dappled lighting falling across her face, or about a certain gesture she gives that he admits balances his composition. As defined by a restless striving for just the right aesthetic means as Wylie's large-scale mural *Chocolate Halloween* (the creation of which, documented roughly from beginning to end in one static master shot apportioned in chunks across the film, provides Rivers his structural backbone), *What Means Something* is good proof that the filmmaker didn't need the big canvas of *The Sky Trembles*. Give him a little house in the forest and he'll find a world within it." — Carson Lund, Slant Magazine

## Tuesday, January 15—Downtown Independent

Poet on a Business Trip (Ju Anqi, 2015)

"Poet on a Business Trip looks and feels like the time capsule it in fact is: the director took Shu, a young Chinese poet, on a road trip to the barren western province of Xinjiang back in 2002, during which Shu composed poems. The footage was not edited until recently, making Poet on a Business Trip a film made now, in a way, about a film made over a decade ago. This is not its only uneasiness. It imperceptibly blends impulses towards documentary filmmaking and fiction at a time before this was a de facto standard in the world of international art-house cinema. As Shu hitchhikes and buses through Xinjiang, talking to truck drivers, awkwardly sleeping with prostitutes, looking for hostels, and walking seemingly without particular inspiration through spectacularly arid, uncommunicative landscapes, it is clear Ju is staging scenes, possibly in collaboration with the introverted poet. And yet these scenes are so simple and brisk, and the drama, if one can call it that, so uneventful. The mise en scène is utterly unpretentious and downright shabby in its grubbed black and white palette, zero production design, and society of forgotten outback. Poet on a Business Trip feels unassumingly something special and direct, like unmediated fiction." — Daniel Kasman, MUBI Notebook

#### Wednesday, January 16—Downtown Independent

White Out, Black In (Adirley Queirós, 2014)

"Undefinable and engrossing... A lo-fi sci-fi piece in which past and future overlap in the liminal zone of dystopian present-day Brasilia, Queirós's film stars a handful of handicapped middle-aged men, self-sufficient and isolated, yet united by the common past that they share—a memory of the club scene of the mid-1980s, of its music and its dancing, and of the night whose scars they will bear forever, left crippled by a police raid. The survivors' compulsion to relive their trauma isn't a matter of self-pity but a crucial act of keeping historical memory alive, providing vital, damning testimony to help a visiting emissary from a tribunal in the far-flung future collect evidence to redress the past injustice. It's a too-rare instance in which a filmmaker can be found using pop music cues not just to siphon the emotional effect of a song but to signal their function as vessels for collective cultural memory. Here, in this this film with a most fantastic premise, we find a compelling case for the historical necessity of the documentary project." — Nick Pinkerton, *Artforum* 

#### Thursday, January 17—Downtown Independent

Casanova Gene (Luise Donschen, 2018)

"As if aware that no one argument or structure is ever going to be sufficient to describe the complex interplay between attraction, lust, looking, and the body, the German director's first feature-length work merely assembles a set of wildly differing, often oblique takes on matters of the flesh and lets their overlapping visual motifs and themes seep into one another at will. Where most essays eventually converge on one particular insight or finding, perhaps the only sure conclusion drawn by *Casanova Gene* is that there's nothing as decentered as desire, an entirely apt assertion that inspires the form of the film in turn, its different images bouncing off one another like so many thoughts darting through the mind, unburdened by either words or the need for rote interpretation." — James Lattimer, *Film Comment* •







