

family, meets a young rodeo rider named Colby (Colby Trichell), the abashed looks and polite words they exchange suggest something stirring between them. Dating is no more a part of Sara's life than commercial popular culture, and Colby is both too respectful and too easily distracted to pursue her with much zeal.

But this is hardly a tale of forbidden love. It is, instead, an investigation of Sara's inner life — of the state of her soul — wrapped in an exploration of her social environment. It may be hard for an audience at Lincoln Center (where "Stop the Pounding Heart" opens on Friday) to avoid looking at the film from across a cultural and ideological divide. Sara and Colby, for all their differences, both live in a world where literal interpretation of the Bible and commitment to the Second Amendment are pillars of behavior and belief. In Sara's case, submission to male authority is a principle of family life, explained by her mother in lessons to Sara and her sisters.

"Stop the Pounding Heart" transcends both the red state-blue state split and limited, didactic ideas of cinematic realism. Its scenes, quiet and undramatic, are nonetheless suffused with an almost lyrical intensity, and its sympathy is as limitless as its curiosity. Mr. Minervini practices a kind of ecstatic humanism masquerading as ethnography. The people in his film, as we come to know them, seem very familiar, and if they also seem mysterious, it is partly because the rest of us are, too.



Coming soon to Acropolis

- *Coming to Terms + Blue Strait* (Dir. Jon Jost, 2013/2015)—Double feature, June 22 at 2220 Arts + Archives, with Jon Jost and James Benning in person
- *What You Gonna Do When the World's On Fire?* (Dir. Roberto Minervini, 2018)—Closing night of "A More Perfect Union: The Films of Roberto Minervini," June 23 at Brain Dead Studios
- *Measures for a Funeral* (Dir. Sofia Bohdanowicz, 2024)—Los Angeles premiere, June 29 at 2220 Arts + Archives, with Sofia Bohdanowicz in person
- *Collective Monologue* (Dir. Jessica Sarah Rinland, 2024)—Los Angeles premiere, July 8 at 2220 Arts + Archives, with Jessica Sarah Rinland in person

Acropolis Cinema presents:



June 21, 2025 – Brain Dead Studios



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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Low Tide (Dir. Roberto Minervini, 2011):

Bearing traces of Huck Finn and Antoine Doinel, *Low Tide*'s nameless adolescent hero (Daniel Blanchard) runs errands and cares for his substance-abusing mother (Melissa McKinney). Roberto Minervini's second feature casts nonprofessionals to magnificently truthful effect, and the writer/director demonstrates his characteristic sensitivity for small Texas towns and their resilient denizens. Blanchard is seldom off-screen, as Minervini follows him on his "rounds" from the nursing home where his mother works to a slaughterhouse, but also to the river to catch frogs and fish. Minervini does not mute the hardships of his protagonist's life, nor does he deny him the right to be 12 years old.

Stop the Pounding Heart (Dir. Roberto Minervini, 2013):

Sara (Sara Carlson, playing herself) is part of a devout Christian goat-farming family with 12 children, all home-schooled and raised with strict moral guidance from the Scriptures. Set in a rural community that has remained isolated from technological advances and lifestyle influence—no phones, TVs, computers, or drunken-teen brawls—the subtly narrative film follows Sara and Colby, two 14-year-olds with vastly different backgrounds who are quietly drawn to each other. In Minervini's intimate documentary-style portrait—the third in the Italian-born filmmaker's Texas trilogy—Sara's commitment to her faith is never questioned. It's the power of the director's nonintrusive handheld-camera style that reveals his protagonist's spiritual and emotional inner turmoil about her place in a faith that requires women to be subservient to their fathers before becoming their husbands' helpers. By also presenting an authentic, impartial portrayal of the Texas Bible Belt, Minervini allows humanity and complexity behind the stereotypes to show through.

Part of "A More Perfect Union: The Films of Roberto Minervini," a complete retrospective of the Italian-born director's features running from June 13-23 at 2220 Arts + Archives and Brain Dead Studios. Copies of *Textur #7: Roberto Minervini*, a monograph published for the 2024 Viennale, will be available to purchase at each screening. Co-presented by MUBI.

TRT: 192 min

Low Tide by Jessica Sarah Rinland

The following article was originally published in Textur #7, a publication of the 2024 Viennale

He wheels his bike through the arid, scorching hot Texan landscape, pausing at the sight of a brown snake gliding over the cracks in the dry soil. He puts the bike down and walks cautiously towards the snake as she attempts to slide down into one of the cracks. Kneeling, he carefully tugs at the snake's tail with the fingertips of both hands, once, twice, until her head reappears from the hole. He gently holds the snake in his palms, stroking her head with his index finger. He arranges his body into a more comfortable cross-legged position, placing the snake over his bruised legs. His fingertip sits under her chin. He then puts her down next to him, moving out of her path and watching while she slithers away, attempting to escape into a crack she doesn't fit into before eventually finding one she does, disappearing underground.

An hour later, he's lying in bed at night, hovering between sleep and games. He's interrupted by the loud crash of his mother falling through the front door headfirst, coughing, passed out. He runs towards her, attempting to turn the weight of her unconscious body, shaking her arm before placing it over his small shoulder and dragging her towards the unmade mattress which, thankfully, isn't in its bed frame. He slides her across the floorboards as he continues trying to wake her up, "Mom, Mom!" He takes hold of her arms, pulling them above her head, dragging her dead weight a little further. Her head falls limp onto the side of the mattress as he stops to gather his strength. He once again places her arm over his shoulder and finally pulls her as far up on the bed as possible. Her feet balance over the edge as he softly slides her socks off. Exhausted, out of breath, he lays down next to her, stroking her hair, moving it out of her face with his index finger.

In the hour between his contact with the snake and the encounter with his unconscious mother, he fills his time by communicating with various fauna, showing no distinction between violence and tenderness: he taps his fingers on the murky window of a camper van, interacting through the glass with the two confined cats that long for touch; he seems unfazed when watching a cow being shot to death at a butcher's, only covering his ears to protect them from the bang of the rifle; he stops on his way home to play with two small frogs, allowing them to crawl over his body as he strokes their backs, removing the tiny twig stuck between one of their legs; he returns home and fills up the paddling pool before the blank TV screen. Once filled, he empties a plastic bag containing three goldfish into it, then cautiously joins them in the water, allowing them to glide in and around his hands, observing, curious.

His final interspecies encounter comes after various attempts at fishing. He eventually catches one, places her on a rock and stabs her twice, staring at her as she slowly disappears, her gills fluttering. It is a precursor of what he will later do to himself. The only way left to get the attention he needs and desires from his mother is to do the worst imaginable.

This is all part of an ongoing process of reflection, on the lengths that we all go to in order to find connection with other beings, and to our mothers in particular: covering their naked bodies with a blanket as they sleep, embracing their tattooed wings in the shallow water, using recording devices as intermediaries so as to listen and converse without intense arguments, re-enacting moments shared. If they disappear before us, we are left going through their belongings, however few or many, trying to decipher our bond. ♦

Stop the Pounding Heart by A.O. Scott

The following article was originally published by the New York Times, September 18, 2014

In Roberto Minervini's "Stop the Pounding Heart," nonprofessional actors play versions of their real-life selves. This practice, which can blur the distinction between drama and documentary and allow a glimpse at truths otherwise invisible to the camera, flourished in the Italian neorealism of the 1940s and the work of Iranian filmmakers like Abbas Kiarostami and Mohsen Makhmalbaf in the 1990s. Mr. Minervini, an Italian director who has now made three features in rural Texas, extends this tradition with impressive sensitivity and skill.

"Stop the Pounding Heart" could be described as a story of teenage romance, though its plot is a mere whisper. When Sara (Sara Carlson), one of 12 children in a Christian, home-schooling farm