JIA ZHANGKE RETROSPECTIVE AT MoMA PRESENTS CONTEMPORARY FILMS
THAT REFLECT THE ENORMOUS CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN CHINESE SOCIETY

Internationally Celebrated Filmmaker Takes on Complex Subject Matter Using a
Combination of Gritty Realism, Elegant Camerawork, and Unique Artistic Vision

Jia Zhangke: A Retrospective
March 5–20, 2010
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

NEW YORK, February 5, 2010—Jia Zhangke: A Retrospective is the first complete U.S.
retrospective of this internationally celebrated contemporary filmmaker who, in little more than a
decade, has become one of cinema’s most critically acclaimed artists and the leading figure of the
sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers. The exhibition screens in The Roy and Niuta Titus
Theaters from March 5 through 20, 2010, and includes Jia Zhangke’s (Chinese, b. 1970) entire
oeuvre: eight features and six shorts, dating from 1995 to 2008. The retrospective is organized
by Jytte Jensen, Curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art.

The director will be at MoMA with Zhao Tao—his leading actress since her debut in Zhantai
(Platform) (2000)—to introduce most of his films at screenings between the opening night film on
Friday, March 5, at 7:00 p.m. of Shijie (The World) (2004), through the screening on Monday,
March 8 at 4:00 p.m. of Black Breakfast (2008) and Sanxia haoren (Still Life) (2006). Jia will also
participate in a special Modern Mondays event at MoMA on the evening of March 8 at 7:00 p.m.,
where he will discuss his recent films and present two shorts and a sneak preview of a segment of
his upcoming feature, Shanghai Chuan Qi (I Wish I Knew, 2010), followed by a discussion.

Merging a gritty realist style with elegant camera movements and postmodern flourishes,
Jia tackles contemporary subject matter in both documentary and fiction projects, often fusing the
two approaches to great effect. He has created a body of work that reflects on the enormous
physical and interpersonal changes in Chinese society over the past 50 years. Jia Zhangke’s films
resonate with both domestic and international audiences due to his original combination of a
sophisticated aesthetic with plainspoken integrity.

The films illuminate the transformations taking place in China’s environment, architecture,
and society, by placing everyday people in the midst of a landscape in turmoil. Aiming to restore
the concrete memory of place and to evoke individual history in a rapidly modernizing society, the
filmmaker recovers the immediate past in order to imagine the future. His films reflect reality
truthfully, while simultaneously using fantasy and a distinct artistic vision to pose existential
questions about life and status in a society in flux. Through rigorous specificity, his art attains
universal scope and appeal.

An inspiration to fellow filmmakers, Jia has devised an original, ever-evolving,
contemporary filmmaking style with a porous, symbiotic relationship between the real and the
imagined. His works are cast with amateurs as well as professional actors, and he uses fluid camera movements to deconstruct space, adapt its movements, and position its subject matter. These are prominent aspects of all the director’s films, and are essential to his storytelling technique and to the remarkable texture of his films.

Jia Zhangke’s beautifully calibrated 2008 dramatic short *Heshang aiquing (Cry Me a River)*, pays homage to an earlier film from the Golden Era of Chinese filmmaking, the 1948 Chinese classic *Xiao Cheng Zhi Chun (Spring in a Small Town)*, directed by Fei Mu, which also screens at MoMA as part of this retrospective.

The retrospective is made possible with the support of Xstream Pictures (Eva Lam, Project Manager); The Sarajevo Film Festival (Howard Feinstein, Programmer); and Tzu-Wen Cheng. Prints Courtesy of Zeitgeist Films; New Yorker Films; Cinema Guild; Memento/Artscope; Art for the World; Xstream; Celluloid Dreams; and Sidus Pictures.

**RELATED EXHIBITIONS:**

*Projects 92: Yin Xiuzhen*
February 24—May 24, 2010
The Contemporary Galleries, second floor

Yin Xiuzhen (Chinese, b. 1963) works primarily in site-specific installation and sculpture, formats she has been engaged with since the early 1990s. Her work addresses issues on both an environmental scale and a personal one, often employing quotidian materials including found textiles. *Projects 92* presents her large-scale sculpture, *Collective Subconscious* (2007), which is composed of a bisected minivan connected by a long tube covered in a quilt made of found garments. The public is invited inside this transformed conveyance, where they will find a welcoming environment with low stools and soft pop music, forming a kind of cozy refuge within the white walls of the gallery, making it a place for conversation and discussion. This exhibition is organized by Sarah Suzuki, The Sue and Eugene Mercy, Jr., Assistant Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books, The Museum of Modern Art.

*The Elaine Dannheisser Projects Series is made possible in part by The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art and the JA Endowment Committee.*

**ContemporAsian: Ghost Town**
March 15–21, 2010
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

As part of the monthly exhibition *ContemporAsian*, MoMA showcases films that get little exposure outside of their home countries or on the international festival circuit, but which engage the various styles, histories, and changes in Asian cinema. Presented in special weeklong engagements, the films in the series include recent independent gems and little-seen classics. *ContemporAsian* is organized by Jytte Jensen, Curator, Department of Film, with William Phuan, independent curator, and the assistance of Laura Rugaber, Department Assistant, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art.

*Ghost Town* (2008), by Chinese director Zhao Dayong, is a tremendously rewarding film that illuminates the alienation and marginalization of the denizens of one of China’s countless remote
villages. Divided into three parts, this epic documentary brings a compassionate intimacy to its varied cast of characters, bringing audiences face to face with people who were unceremoniously left behind by China’s new economy. Zhao displays tremendous compassion and respect for the squatters and other inhabitants of the village, and he patiently teases out the special places and attachments to which they cling. Cleverly structured and beautifully shot, the film is a gratifying, if ultimately heartbreaking, testimonial to the talent and commitment of China’s vanguard independent documentary movement. Print courtesy of dGenerate Films. 169 min.

Screenings: Monday, March 15, 7:30; Wednesday, March 17, 4:00; Thursday, March 18, 7:00; Friday, March 19, 3:30; Saturday, March 20, 4:00; Sunday, March 21, 4:15.

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For downloadable images, please visit www.moma.org/press.

No. 10

Public Information: The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019

Hours: Films are screened Wednesday-Monday. For screening schedules, please visit www.moma.org.

Film Admission: $10 adults; $8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. $6 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only.) The price of a film ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket when a film ticket stub is presented at the Lobby Information Desk within 30 days of the date on the stub (does not apply during Target Free Friday Nights, 4:00–8:00 p.m.). Admission is free for Museum members and for Museum ticketholders.


SCREENING SCHEDULE

Jia Zhangke: A Retrospective
March 5–20, 2010

Friday, March 5

7:00 Shijie (The World). 2004. China/Japan/France. With Zhao Tao, Chen Taisheng, Jing Jue. Fake landscapes contain real problems in this epic postmodern parable about China’s cultural renovation. A Las Vegas–style theme park on the outskirts of Beijing is the setting for a sort of backstage musical in which the personal dramas of a group of youthful employees play out against a background of small-scale replicas of the Eiffel Tower, the World Trade Center, and other famous landmarks. Jia’s beautifully choreographed widescreen shots capture kitschy shows held in “national pavilions” that demonstrate the park’s motto: “See the world without ever leaving Beijing.” This ravishing portrait of a delusional China illustrates the difficulty of maintaining interpersonal relationships in a cultural wasteland. In Mandarin, Shanxi, Russian; English subtitles. 143 min. Introduced by Jia Zhangke, and actress Zhao Tao.
Saturday, March 6

5:00  Ren xiao yao (Unknown Pleasures). 2002. China/South Korea/Japan/France. With Zhao Weiwei, Wu Qiong, Zhao Tao.
Two teenage slackers drift towards tragedy in Datong, a once-vibrant industrial city. Pop culture and electronic gadgets provide their only feelings of connection to the outside world—and to their own aimless lives. Working with a small high-definition camera for the first time, the director memorably tracks through the vast empty spaces of the former textile mills, in stark contrast to the city's crowded housing projects and teeming streets. In Mandarin, English; English subtitles. 113 min. Introduced by Jia Zhangke, and actress Zhao Tao.

Puppies are stuffed into a burlap sack for sale at a market. 6 min.

In "24 City," an enormous factory building that is being converted into luxury apartments, three generations of workers give testimony about communal life in what was once a state-owned munitions factory. In this hybrid "fictional documentary," which witnesses’ stories and memories are relayed by a potent blend of amateurs and well-known actors, adding compelling layers of artifice to the “real” process of remembering. In Mandarin; English subtitles. 112 min. Introduced by Jia Zhangke, and actress Zhao Tao.

Sunday, March 7

Jia’s camera follows the lives of a touring performance troupe through one of China’s most radical periods of economic and social change (1979–89). Focusing more on character and place than on any one plot, the director follows individual stories of the youthful cast, whose personal dreams and aspirations change as radically as the name of their troupe: from The Peasant Culture Group of Fenyang to All-Star Rock ‘n’ Breakdance Electronic Band. Liberally dotted with dance numbers and featuring a rich soundtrack of pop songs, political broadcasts, and incidental goings-on, the film offers an insightful exploration of how policy shifts affect individuals. In Mandarin, Shanxi; English subtitles. 155 min Followed by a Q&A with Jia Zhangke.

A milestone in new Chinese independent cinema, Pickpocket is a devastating portrait of a young, under-motivated former petty thief, his fascination with a karaoke hostess, and the cop who pursues him. Jia made the film for less than $50,000 in his home town, capturing the city’s chaotic streets with his energetic handheld-camera style and an expertly mixed soundtrack. In Mandarin; English subtitles. 105 min. Introduced by Jia Zhangke.

Monday, March 8

4:00  Black Breakfast. 2008. With Zhao Tao.
A segment from the omnibus film Stories on Human Rights, a collective film project by ART for The World. No dialogue. 5 min.
and
Sanxia haoren (Still Life). 2006. China/Hong Kong. With Zhao Tao, Han Sanming.
Two tenuously connected narratives of a man and a woman in search of their migrant worker spouses are played out against the changing landscape of the enormous Three Gorges Dam project. The urgency of imminent flooding, the physicality of the workers preparing the buildings, and an all-pervasive background of fundamental change is
contrasted with these two small figures tenaciously traversing the enormous landscape on their personal quests. Exceedingly surreal visual phenomena highlight the film's general feeling of absurdity. In Mandarin; English subtitles. 111 min. **Introduced by Jia Zhangke, and actress Zhao Tao.**

**7:00 Modern Mondays: An Evening with Jia Zhangke.** In conjunction with MoMA’s Jia Zhangke retrospective, the director hosts a screening of his *Wo men de shi nian* (**Ten Years**, 2007) and *Black Breakfast* (**Black Breakfast** (2008), a segment from the international omnibus film *Stories on Human Rights*, as well as a sneak preview of an excerpt from his latest film, *Shanghai Legend* aka *I Wish I Knew*. Followed by a conversation between Jia Zhangke and Howard Feinstein, Independent Curator and Critic; and Kevin B. Lee, Critic, Filmmaker, and Programming Executive, dGenerate Films.

**Wednesday, March 10**

**4:30 Wu Yong (Useless).** 2007. China/Hong Kong.
Designer Ma Ke’s line of painstakingly handmade “anti-fashion” clothing, “Useless,” starkly contrasts China’s soulless assembly-line clothing industry. *Useless* captures the quiet elegance of artisanal clothing production and independent tailoring businesses, which are increasingly threatened by the rapid proliferation of fabric sweatshops. In Shanxi, Cantonese, Mandarin, English, French; English subtitles. 80 min.

and

**Dong (East).** 2006 China/Hong Kong.
This documentary is divided into two loosely connected parts. Jia follows Chinese artist Liu Xiaodong to Fengjie, a town doomed by the Three Gorges Dam project, where Liu paints the workers on wide canvases. Afterward they travel to Bangkok, where Liu paints young “bar girls.” In Mandarin, Thai; English subtitles. 66 min.

People stand alone or briefly interact in public spaces, including a train station, a pool hall, and a bus stop. No dialogue. 30 min.

and

Jia’s amazing thesis film, made with friends from the Young Experimental Filmmakers Club, caught the eye of producers when it was shown at the Hong Kong Short Film Festival. The plight of China’s migrant workers is a recurring theme in the director’s subsequent work, and here he explores the story of a cook trying to find fellow travelers for a journey from Beijing to his hometown for New Year’s. The film is a master class in texture—the characters speak a regional dialect, the handheld camera work takes on the manic rhythm of the streets, and various texts anchoring the narrative in daily minutia are intermittently superimposed over the onscreen images. In Mandarin; English subtitles. 58 min.

**Thursday, March 11**

**4:00 Xiao Wu (Pickpocket).** (See Sunday, March 7, 5:30.)

**7:00 Xiao cheng zhi chun (Spring in a Small Town).** 1948. China. Directed by Fei Mu. With Wei Wei, Shi Yu, Li Wei, Cui Chaoming.
This classic Chinese film is greatly admired by Jia, and was a major influence on his *Cry Me a River*. Fei’s exquisite melodrama is set in a provincial town, where a young woman caring for her sickly husband is tempted by an old love—her husband’s friend and doctor. The film perfectly captures the brief period between the end of World War II and the Chinese Revolution. In Mandarin; English subtitles. 93 min.
**Heshang aiqing (Cry Me a River).** 2008. China/Spain/France. With Zhao Tao, Hao Lei, Guo Xiaodong, Wang Hongwei. This perfect gem of a film was shot in the city of Suzhou, with its canals and graceful old buildings reminiscent of Venice. When four former classmates (two ex-couples) meet to celebrate an old professor’s birthday, youthful dreams and attractions are met by the reality of adult responsibilities and tradition, leading to sadness and regret as penetrating as the cold dampness of the city’s canals. In Mandarin; English subtitles. 19 min.

**Friday, March 12**

4:00 **Gou De Zhuang Kuang (The Condition of Dogs).**  
and **Er Shi Si Cheng Ji (24 City).** 2008. (See Saturday, March 6, 8:00.)

7:00 **Wu Yong (Useless).**  
and **Dong.** (See Wednesday, March 10, 4:30.)

**Saturday, March 13**

2:00 **Gong Gong Chang Suo (In Public).**  
and **Xiao Shan Hui Jia (Xiao Shan Going home).** (See Wednesday, March 10, 8:00.)

4:00 **Zhantai (Platform).** 2000. (See Sunday, March 7, 2:00.)

**Sunday, March 14**

2:00 **Shijie (The World).** (See Friday, March 5, 7:00.)

5:00 **Black Breakfast.**  
and **Sanxia Haoren (Still Life).** (See Monday, March 8, 4:00.)

**Wednesday, March 17**

7:30 **Ren Xiao Yao (Unknown Pleasures).** (See Saturday, March 6, 5:00.)

**Saturday, March 20**

2:00 **Xiao Cheng Zhi Chun (Spring in a Small Town).**  
and **Heshang Aiqing (Cry Me a River).** (See Thursday, March 11, 7:00.)