Carte Blanche: Béla Tarr and Satantango
October 22–30, 2009
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

In celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of Béla Tarr’s landmark film Satantango, the Department of Film presents a special screening of the Museum’s pristine archive print, which was acquired together with other key works by the director in conjunction with MoMA’s 2001 Béla Tarr retrospective. In addition, we have invited the director to select a program of Hungarian films that have inspired him, along with a few of the films he has been involved in producing through his Budapest-based company TT Filmmuhely. Tarr’s “carte blanche” inclusions represent a rare chance to appreciate the artistic ambitions of a lesser-known segment of Hungarian cinema. These selections reflect—but in no way imitate—Tarr’s own preoccupation with expanding and refining the language of cinema. This exhibition is held in conjunction with Extremely Hungary, a yearlong festival of Hungarian art and culture. All films are from Hungary, unless otherwise noted.

Organized by Jytte Jensen, Curator, Department of Film, in collaboration with Extremely Hungary, organized by the Hungarian Cultural Center in New York and made possible in part by funding from the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture. Special thanks to Maygar Filmúnió (Kati Vajda) and Palisades Tartan (Debbi Berlin).

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

See below for screening schedule.

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

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Szenvedély (Passion). 1998. Directed by György Fehér. Screenplay by Fehér, based on The Postman Always Rings Twice, by James M. Cain. With Ildikó Bánsági, Djoko Rosic, János Derzsi. This Hungarian adaptation of Cain’s iconic noir novel delivers maximum intensity with minimalistic stylization. Pregnant silences and a slow pace enhance the erotic charge between the two decidedly non-glamorous protagonists, and brilliant cinematography makes the mise-en-scéne sparkle—even amid the almost constant rain and mud. In Hungarian; English subtitles. 136 min. Thursday, October 22, 4:30 (T1); Friday, October 30, 7:00 (T2)

Johanna. 2005. Directed by Kornél Mundruczó. Written by Mundruczó, Yvette Biro. With Orsolya Toth, Zsolt Trill. This highly stylized musical reinterpretation of the Passion of Joan of Arc, set in the dungeon-like corridors of a present-day hospital, uses opera to highlight the story’s timelessness. A young drug addict—excellently played by Toth, with vocals by Eszter Wierdl—miraculously awakens from a deep coma. Touched by grace, she heals patients by offering her body, but goodness and selflessness breed as much jealousy and resentment as gratitude. In Hungarian; English subtitles. 86 min. Thursday, October 22, 8:00 (T1); Wednesday, October 28, 4:00 (T2)

Szegénylegények (The Poor Outlaws/The Round-Up). 1966. Directed by Miklós Jancsó. With János Görbe, Zoltán Latinovits, Tibor Molnár. The minimalist visual composition of The Poor Outlaws, in which a group of failed revolutionaries in nineteenth-century Hungary are herded together under punishing circumstances amid a barren landscape, delineates the marked similarities between Jancsó’s style and that of Béla Tarr. Highly abstract, extended shots and a camera that is almost constantly moving create an atmosphere of isolation and hopelessness. Jancsó’s landmark film is presented in a newly restored print courtesy of the Hungarian Film Archive. In Hungarian; English subtitles. 90 min. Friday, October 23, 4:30 (T1); Thursday, October 29, 7:00 (T2)

Az amerikai anzix (American Torso). 1975. Directed by Gábor Bódy. Screenplay by Bódy, based on the story by Ambrose Bierce. With Sándor Csutoros, György Cserhalmi, András Fekete. Béla Tarr calls Bódy’s film “one of the highest mountains in Hungarian film history! [Bódy is] a very beautiful poet of Hungarian faith, history, and loneliness.” Collaged texts excerpted from authentic diaries, a text by Karl Marx, poems by Walt Whitman, and Bierce’s short story combine in a skeletal narrative about three Hungarian officers serving as land surveyors during the American Civil War. A poetic experiment in form, the film uses a special editing process that involves bleaching out the image between scenes and tearing, aging, and overexposing the film stock to mimic the look of a film from the late nineteenth century. In Hungarian; English subtitles. 91 min. Friday, October 23, 8:00 (T1); Thursday, October 29, 4:00 (T2)

Sátántangó (Satantango). 1994. Hungary/Germany/Switzerland. Directed by Béla Tarr. Written by Tarr, László Krasznahorkai, based on Krasznahorkai’s novel. Cinematography by Gábor Medvíg. With Mihály Vig, Putyi Horváth, László Lugossy. Satantango, which had its first U.S. screening at the 1994 New York Film Festival, remains vibrant, challenging, and fearlessly inventive. According to Tarr, the film’s form was inspired by the tango, with its six steps forward, six steps back—an idea also reflected in the film’s overlapping time scheme. The masterful use of serpentine camera movements and stunning
black-and-white cinematography heightens the impact of this exquisitely elaborate statement on the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe. In Hungarian; English subtitles. 450 min., with two intermissions.
Saturday, October 24, 11:00. T1

After three years of sustained drunkenness, an author decides he needs to write to keep drinking. He begins a romantic novel in which a young man—the writer’s alter ego—must choose between a woman and his love of alcohol and cigarettes. Time flashes back and forth, blurring moral dilemmas and life choices, past and present. In Hungarian; English subtitles. 86 min.
Wednesday, October 28, 7:00; Friday, October 30, 4:00. T2