

MoMA PRESENTS A TRIBUTE TO SEMINAL FILM JOURNALIST LILLIAN ROSS

The Red Badge of Courage* Screening to Be Followed by a Conversation with Ross on February 23, Commencing Series that Includes *Anatomy of a Murder*, *Ran*, *The Boston Strangler*, and *One from the Heart

PICTURES IN PRINT: LILLIAN ROSS & THE MOVIES

**February 23–28, 2007
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters**

NEW YORK, January 22, 2007—The Museum of Modern Art presents a tribute to Lillian Ross, longtime journalist for *The New Yorker*, with an exhibition of five films illuminated by her writing. ***Pictures In Print: Lillian Ross & The Movies***, presented February 23–28, 2007, in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters, features films that were prominently discussed and analyzed in her magazine profiles. Ross will be present on February 23, where she will hold an onstage conversation with Susan Morrison, Articles Editor for *The New Yorker*, following a screening of *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951). A book signing will take place in the Titus 1 lobby at 8:00 that evening. The exhibition is organized by Ron Magliozzi, Assistant Curator, Research and Collections, and Leigh Goldstein, Executive Assistant, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art.

Ross (American, b. 1927), is one of the most celebrated names in film journalism. Reporting on the film industry over the last six decades, she has captured many of the outsized personalities and landmark moments in the history of cinema. Shortly after her start at *The New Yorker* in 1945, Ross wrote a series of articles on John Huston and the making of *The Red Badge of Courage*, covering all aspects of its production, as well as the critical and financial reception that greeted the finished feature film. Ross's work caught the studio system at a true turning point when independent producers and directors were beginning to assert themselves; these articles are widely regarded as the most informative and engaging record of the era in which film studios had primacy in dictating scripting, casting, profit-sharing, and release patterns.

Ross began as a staff writer at *The New Yorker* at a time when the magazine was still under the direction of Harold Ross, its founding editor, and in which Joseph Mitchell, James Thurber, E.B. White, and A. J. Liebling were regular contributors. Beginning with a 1950 profile of Ernest Hemingway that detailed the novelist's short trip to Manhattan, including a shopping excursion and a caviar-and-champagne visit with Marlene Dietrich, Ross became celebrated for the immediacy of her writing style. The *New Yorker* editor William Shawn, with whom Ross enjoyed a personal and professional partnership for several decades, summarized Ross's talents as the "dual gift for invisibility and observation, so that not only does she see, and see profoundly, but people tend to act out their dramas in her presence."

In the wake of her Hemingway profile, Ross received several offers to come to Hollywood as a screenwriter, all of which she refused. In the summer of 1950, Ross accepted an invitation

from John Huston to chronicle the making of his latest film, *The Red Badge of Courage*. Originally published as a series of articles entitled "Production Number 1512," her book-length profile of Huston and *The Red Badge of Courage* was collected and republished as *Picture* (1952). Often described as a founding example of "literary journalism," *Picture* presents the producers, assistants, actors, crew, and families that orbited the realm of the film as vibrant characters in a story about the Hollywood studio system, with the leading role occupied by Huston.

Ross also reported on Otto Preminger's suit against Columbia Pictures for allowing *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) to be broadcast on television with commercial breaks. A portrait of the filmmaker's combative but charming nature, the piece captures his pride in the film, as well as a cultural moment in which a feature film's legacy could be determined by the manner in which it was presented on television.

In addition to her extensive profiles of directors such as John Huston, Otto Preminger, Akira Kurosawa, Francis Coppola, Federico Fellini, and Clint Eastwood, and actors, including Tony Curtis, Robin Williams, Al Pacino, William Holden, Vanessa Redgrave, Natasha Richardson, Warren Beatty, Walter Matthau, and Tommy Lee Jones, Ross has profiled politicians (Adlai Stevenson), playwrights (Edward Albee, Harold Pinter) and novelists (Hemingway). "The Yellow Bus," her piece about Indiana's Bean Blossom High School seniors on a class visit to New York, has become a classic, taught in schools and colleges for years throughout the country. She has also written shorter pieces on such film industry figures as François Truffaut, Sidney Poitier, Anjelica Huston, Sean Connery, Bill Murray, and Wes Anderson, among others. With a prose style that relies on succinct but striking detail, and through quotations that register all the imperfections of unrehearsed speech, Ross offers compelling and fully realized narratives on her subjects, or what she terms "little story-films."

Ross is the author of 11 books, including *Reporting* (1961) and *Reporting Back: Notes on Journalism* (2002), both collections of her *New Yorker* articles; *Moments with Chaplin*, an impressionistic sketch of Charlie Chaplin that draws on their years of friendship; *The Player: A Profile of an Art* (1962, co-written with her sister Helen Ross), a series of short character studies of actors, all written in the first person; and *Vertical and Horizontal* (1963), a satirical novel. She is currently working on a new book about actors, *One of a Kind*, to be published by Doubleday.

While *Picture* has been in print for 56 years, and Ross's profile of Coppola has been republished in a collection of interviews, the articles on Preminger, Kurosawa, Eastwood, and Tony Curtis have not been reprinted in full since their original publication in *The New Yorker*. To coincide with this exhibition, the profiles of Coppola, Preminger, Kurosawa, Eastwood, Curtis, and an excerpt from *Picture* will be made available at www.newyorker.com.

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SCREENING SCHEDULE

PICTURES IN PRINT: LILLIAN ROSS & THE MOVIES

Friday, February 23

8:30 An Evening with Lillian Ross

Lillian Ross will read selections from *Picture* before the screening. A conversation with Ross follows the film. A book signing will take place at 8:00 p.m. in the Titus 1 lobby.

The Red Badge of Courage. 1951. USA. Directed by John Huston. Screenplay by Albert Band, based on the novel by Stephen Crane. With Audie Murphy, Royal Dano. Huston fought with studio chief Louis B. Mayer to present Crane's Civil War classic as a commentary on the nature of courage. The film features thrilling battle sequences shot in stark black and white. Courtesy Warner Bros. 69 min.

Saturday, February 24

7:30 *One from the Heart.* 1982. USA. Directed by Francis Coppola. Screenplay by Coppola, Arman Bernstein. With Frederic Forrest, Teri Garr. A fantastical love story with songs by Tom Waits, Coppola's follow-up to *Apocalypse Now* is set in Las Vegas but was shot entirely within Zoetrope Studios. Described by Coppola as "a fable about love and show business," the film concerns two long-time lovers who decide to explore other romantic and sexual options. Courtesy American Zoetrope. 101 min.

Sunday, February 25

2:00 *Ran.* 1985. Japan. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. Screenplay by Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni, based on William Shakespeare's *King Lear*. With Tatsuya Makadai, Daosuke Ryu. Set in 16th century Japan, Kurosawa's epic reinvents King Lear as an ailing warlord ready to divide his considerable wealth between three sons. *Ran* features spectacular battle sequences and elaborate medieval costumes that Kurosawa conceived through hundreds of preparatory paintings and sketches. 160 min.

Monday, February 26

8:15 *Anatomy of a Murder.* 1959. USA. Produced and directed by Otto Preminger. Screenplay by Wendell Mayes. With James Stewart, George C. Scott. Stewart gives one of his greatest performances as a small town Michigan lawyer defending a murderer (Ben Gazzara) in this engaging courtroom drama steeped in moral ambiguity. Seven years after *Anatomy* was released, Preminger took his distributor to court in an

effort to prevent the film from being shown on television with commercial interruptions.
Courtesy Sony Pictures Entertainment. 161 min.

Wednesday, February 28

7:00 ***The Boston Strangler.*** 1968. USA. Directed by Richard Fleischer. Screenplay by Edward Anhalt, based on the book by Gerold Frank. With Tony Curtis, Henry Fonda.
Based on a true story, Fleischer's film offers Fonda as a state-appointed investigator intent on finding the perpetrator of a series of rapes and murders. Profiled by Ross in 2002, Curtis relayed that *The Boston Strangler* was his favorite of his films, and that the titular role was the ultimate test of his acting abilities. "Playing that murderer, Albert Desalvo, was the greatest challenge, and so satisfying" (Curtis). **New print** courtesy Twentieth Century Fox. 116 min.

