

MoMA PRESENTS COMPREHENSIVE RETROSPECTIVE OF THE FILMS OF PETER HUTTON

**Filmmaker's Meditative Studies of Waterways, Cities, and Landscapes
Among 18 Titles in Exhibition**

Hutton in Conversation with Author and Critic Luc Sante on Opening Night, May 5

PETER HUTTON

May 5–26, 2008

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

Press screening: Thursday, April 24, 10:00 a.m.

NEW YORK, April 21, 2008—The Museum of Modern Art presents a comprehensive retrospective of the films of Peter Hutton, an artist noted for his luminous and meditative portraits of cities, waterways, and landscapes. The 18-film exhibition **Peter Hutton**, presented May 5 through 26, 2008 in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters, features work he has made over the past four decades. The filmmaker will be in attendance on opening night, May 5, and will present and discuss *New York Portrait, Part I* (1978–79) and *Skagafjörður* (2002–04) as part of a special *Modern Mondays* conversation with author and critic Luc Sante. The exhibition is organized by Joshua Siegel, Assistant Curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art.

Peter Hutton (American, b. 1944) studied painting, sculpture, and film at the San Francisco Art Institute under the tutelage of Robert Nelson, Bruce Nauman, and Bruce Conner. He is now the director of the Film and Electronic Arts program at Bard College, where he has been a professor of film since 1984; his students at Bard—and other institutions, including Hampshire College and Harvard University—have included Sadie Benning, Matthew Buckingham, Ken Burns, Hal Hartley, and Mira Nair. Also a former merchant seaman, Hutton has spent nearly 40 years voyaging around the world, often by cargo ship, to create meditative, luminously photographed, and intimately diaristic studies of place, from the Yangtze River to the Polish industrial city of Łódź, and from the fjord valley and coastline of northern Iceland to a ship graveyard on the Bangladeshi shore. Among the works featured in the exhibition are the two major series that Hutton began in the 1970s—one, an impressionistic sketchbook of New York (*New York Portrait, Parts I-III*), and the other a series of explorations of the Hudson River and Valley that transcribe and exalt landscape in the manner of Thomas Cole and the nineteenth-century Luminist painters.

As Mr. Siegel observes, "Peter Hutton is one of cinema's most ardent and poetic portraitists of city and landscape. Whether seeking remembrance of a city's fading past or reflecting on nature's fugitive atmospheric effects, Hutton sculpts with time. Each of his films unfolds in silent reverie, with a series of extended single shots taken from a fixed position, harking back to cinema's origins and to traditions of painting and still photography. This comprehensive

retrospective reveals an artist dedicated to reawakening a more contemplative and spontaneous way of observing and envisioning the world.”

For downloadable high-resolution images, please register at www.moma.org/press.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE FOLLOWING PRESS SCREENING IN THE ROY AND NIUTA TITUS 2 THEATER:

Monday 28 April

1:00 p.m. ***New York Portrait, Part I*** (1978–79). (25 min.)

Skagafjörður (2002–04). (35 min.)

No. 43

Press Contact: Paul Power, (212) 708-9847, or paul_power@moma.org

For downloadable images, please visit www.moma.org/press and register for user name and password.

Public Information:

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

Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
Closed Tuesday

Museum Adm: \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs)

Film Adm: Target Free Friday Nights 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
\$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)

Subway: E or V train to Fifth Avenue/53rd Street

Bus: On Fifth Avenue, take the M1, M2, M3, M4, or M5 to 53rd Street. On Sixth Avenue, take the M5, M6, or M7 to 53rd Street. Or take the M57 and M50 crosstown buses on 57th and 50th Streets.

The public may call (212) 708-9400 for detailed Museum information. Visit us at www.moma.org

PETER HUTTON

SCREENING SCHEDULE

Monday, May 5

7:00 Modern Mondays: Peter Hutton in Conversation with Luc Sante

To open his MoMA retrospective, Hutton presents *New York Portrait, Part I* (1978–79) and *Skagafjörður* (2002–04) as part of a special conversation with Luc Sante, visiting professor of writing and the history of photography at Bard College, and author of *Low Life*, *The Factory of Facts*, and *Kill All Your Darlings*.

Program 100 min.

Wednesday, May 7

6:30 *July '71 in San Francisco, Living at Beach Street, Working at Canyon Cinema, Swimming in the Valley of the Moon.* 1971.

A diary of free-spirited communal living (saunas, geodesic domes, bread baking, the defeathering of a duck), and a moment-by-moment observation of fleeting pleasures (a bicycle wheel plowing through rainwater, a woman holding yoga positions, a glider plane performing barrel rolls), filmed when Hutton was a student at the San Francisco Art Institute. 35 min.

New York, Near Sleep (for Saskia). 1972. This dream of New York, created in the spirit of filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu, is hushed and solitary in its pleasures, and sensitive to the effects of sunlight and moonlight on the city's hard-edged geometries. Made while Hutton was shooting Red Grooms's antic *Hippodrome Hardware* and living in the basement of the artist's studio. 10 min.

Florence. 1975. Hutton made this black-and-white study of texture, light, and abstraction while teaching at Hampshire College and living in an abandoned factory in Florence, New York. 7 min.

Boston Fire. 1979. Recalling the paintings and watercolors of J.M.W. Turner, Hutton evokes elemental forces of fire, wind, and water during a city blaze. 8 min.

Program 60 min.

Thursday, May 8

6:30 *Images of Asian Music.* 1973–74. A contemplative, seemingly timeless record of the years Hutton spent in Southeast Asia while working as a merchant seaman. Jon Jost writes in *American Film*, "The film is rich with truly wonderful visions: a thick, white porcelain cup perched on a ship's rail, the tea within swaying gently in sync with the ship while the sea rushes by beyond...the faces of crewmen posing awkwardly but also movingly for the camera; a cockfight on ship; scenes from a bucolic pre-Pol Pot Phnom Penh. *Images* has the haunting elegiac resonance of Eugène Atget's Paris, the echo of a time and place that was." 29 min.

Two Rivers. 2001–02. Commissioned by the arts organization Minetta Brook, *Two Rivers* was inspired by Henry Hudson's failed 1609 quest to discover a trade route between North America and China. Hutton observes the bustling industry of the Hudson from atop a ship's deck and through monocular portholes and hawsepipes before his panorama opens onto the quietude of the wooded palisades farther north. He then explores the Three Gorges area of the Yangtze River as it unfolds like a Chinese scroll painting, bearing witness to a spectral, sulfurous landscape of factory villages that have since been flooded by China's monumental hydroelectric dam project. 45 min.

Friday, May 9

6:15 *New York Portrait* (Part I, 1978–79; Part II, 1980–81; Part III, 1990). Hutton's sketchbook of mid-1970s New York, edited in three parts over twelve years, is a chronicle of indelible impressions and an act of urban archeology. The artist evokes the city's delicate rhythms, tonal contrasts, and shifts of scale—scrims of white mist and black smoke, of gauze, cloud, and fluttering pennant; the shadowy geometries of tenements and water towers; palimpsests of graffiti, skywriting, and painted signs; ecstatic sunlight glinting off the wings of homing pigeons as they traverse a pillowy sky; the slight rustle of a homeless man's shirt; the flowery patterns of rainwater draining from a flooded street; a

blimp's lazy progress between two buildings whose balconies resemble film sprockets; and a winter fog rolling over the sandy rivulets of Coney Island, making of it a lunar park, removed from time. Program 47 min.

7:30 *Budapest Portrait.* 1984–86. The first artist from a non-socialist country to make a film under the auspices of Hungary's Béla Balázs Studio, Hutton photographed Budapest's fading grandeur and present-day hardships under the wary gaze of government bureaucrats. "*Budapest Portrait* suggests the photographs alternately of Eugène Atget and Bernd and Hilla Becher, if not a lushly entropic gloss on Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*.... Human presence is often suggested merely by indexical signs—photographs, shadows, or bullet holes. This relative absence of the figure, together with the harsh chiaroscuro of the winter light, induces a poignant sense of loneliness and isolation. Voluptuously gray, worn, and lived in, the city is like a stage set for an invisible drama" (J. Hoberman, *Artforum*). 30 min.

Łódź Symphony. 1991–93. Images of a vanishing world—the nineteenth-century manufacturing city of Łódź in Poland—are rendered with devotion by Hutton. As he wanders a ghostly city trammled by history's cruel progress, Hutton finds poetry in its empty cobblestone streets, its crumbling stone facades blackened with soot and atlantes heavy with burden, its cemetery overflowing with the toppled gravestones of Jews, and its dying traditions: the proud guild of chimney sweeps, recognizable by their shiny brass buttons; and the textile looms with their beautiful mechanized movements. 20 min.

Saturday, May 10

3:00 *Landscape (for Manon)* 1986–87. An ode to a dreaming child, Hutton's daughter. Twenty-two shots, all but two separated by a momentary span of darkness, depicting Kaaterskill Clove in the Hudson Valley, the region that Thomas Cole painted and called his home. 18 min.

In Titan's Goblet. 1991. Taking its title from a surreal Hudson River landscape painting by Thomas Cole circa 1833, *In Titan's Goblet* inscribes ever-so-subtle patterns and movements of sky, sun, moon, and fire. Day becomes night, and night day, as the dawn's first light glimmers over a dark copse of trees, fleecy clouds pass like ice floes across the moon's bright orb, and a bulldozer plows its way across an infernal valley of burning tires. 10 min.

Study of a River. 1994–96. A winter's passage of ships up and down the Hudson, first viewed from the water and then from an iron-girder railroad bridge that spans the river in Poughkeepsie. 16 min.

Time and Tide. 1998–2000. Recalling John Ruskin's observation of J.M.W. Turner—"he paints in color but thinks in light and shade"—Hutton for the first time adds a wintry palette of opalescent blue-grays, greens, and ochres to his black-and-white tonalities, enlivened by splashes of eye-catching red and turquoise from the hulls of tankers, tug-barges, and cargo ships ambling their way up and down the Hudson. The film opens at a quickened pace with Billy Bitzer's 1903 time-lapse travelogue of maritime and manufacturing activity along the Hudson, then gives way to a meditation on the river's slow, sure rhythms, brooding fog and sea smoke, and counterpoints of wilderness and corrosive industry, transience and endurance. 35 min.
Program 79 min.

6:00 *Looking at the Sea.* 2000–01. A sketchbook of impossibly beautiful images drawn from the landscape and sea of Ireland's wildly desolate west coast. Flat-edged trees are rendered with the classical serenity of a Claude Lorraine drawing, while the ensanguined sun becomes a baroque medley of oranges, reds, and midnight blues on the water's glittering surface. Churning waves crash against massive rock outcroppings, and the silvery nighttime sky is abstracted in tidal pools like quick graphite strokes. 35 min.

Skagafjörður. 2002–04. With a quiet sense of drama, Hutton's magnificently photographed portrait of Skagafjörður, the fjord valley and coastline of northwest Iceland, renders it a land that time forgot, with only the barest traces of human activity and with closely observed atmospheric effects that blur distinctions between sea, earth, and sky. 35 min.

Sunday, May 11

3:00 **At Sea.** 2004–07. "The momentum of more than forty thousand tons is as absolute as the darkness" (John McPhee, *Looking for a Ship*). Hutton's most recent film—a riveting and revelatory chronicle of the birth, life, and death of a colossal container ship—is unquestionably one of his most ambitious and profound. Charting a three-year passage from twenty-first-century ship building in South Korea to primitive and dangerous ship breaking in Bangladesh—with an epic journey across the North Atlantic in between—Hutton has created a haunting meditation on human progress, both physical and metaphorical. 60 min.

5:00 **Images of Asian Music.**
Two Rivers. See Thursday, May 8, 6:30

Saturday, May 17

7:00 **July '71 in San Francisco, Living at Beach Street, Working at Canyon Cinema, Swimming in the Valley of the Moon. New York, Near Sleep (for Saskia). Florence. Boston Fire.** See Wednesday, May 7, 6:30

Wednesday, May 21,

6:15 **Landscape (for Manon). In Titan's Goblet. Study of a River. Time and Tide.** See Saturday, May 10, 3:00

Thursday, May 22

6:15 **New York Portrait.** See Friday, May 9, 6:15

Friday, May 23,

6:15 **Looking at the Sea. Skagafjörður.** See Saturday, May 10, 6:00

Monday, May 26

4:00 **Budapest Portrait. Łódź Symphony.** See Friday, May 9, 7:30

6:00 **At Sea.** See Sunday, May 11, 3:00