

The Museum of Modern Art

Total Cinema of Sight and Sound: Godfrey Reggio and Philip Glass

September 26, 2023 – October 4, 2023

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

In over four decades, filmmaker Godfrey Reggio and composer Philip Glass have created a series of mesmerizing visual and sonic experiences, each painstakingly crafted to reflect on the interaction between the natural world and human activities. *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), the first of their Qatsi trilogy—which also includes *Powaqqatsi* (1988) and *Naqoyqatsi* (2002)—received a rapturous response upon its release and became an instant cult classic. Their image- and sound-saturated experimental works form a continuing philosophical rumination on life on earth, and how it is altered by the forces of technological development and global economics. Poetic, meditative, apocalyptic, and intense, these non-narrative experiments embody a formal rigor in style, structure, and tone, at once cerebral and primordial. Working collaboratively, and largely in tandem, throughout the production process, the two have achieved something rare in cinema: a consummate marriage of sight and sound that weighs both aspects equally, a singular brand of total cinema that has expanded the imagination of the film medium. One cannot think of Reggio's captivating and visionary images without Glass's spellbinding and ever-shifting sound.

This retrospective, which includes all of the features the duo has collaborated on, is organized around [a weeklong run](#) of their latest work, *Once Within a Time* (2022), which is screening in its New York premiere.

Organized by La Frances Hui, Curator, Department of Film.

SCREENING SCHEDULE

Once Within a Time. 2022. USA. Written and directed by Godfrey Reggio. Co-directed by Jon Kane. Original music composed by Philip Glass. DCP. 51 min. **New York premiere.** If previous works by Godfrey Reggio and Philip Glass brought the destructive force of human activities to the fore, this new collaboration—nine years in the making since its inception, and their first since *Visitors* (2013)—provides an injection of innocence and the possibility of hope. In this imaginative work, children inhabit a surreal and whimsical world created in a studio—a departure from the duo's previous body of work, which draws primarily from real-world images. While the title brings to mind the opening of a fairy tale, there isn't a plot or a straightforward message. Dreamlike scenes guide us through a journey into the subconscious, where youngsters take center stage. Shot digitally but designed to evoke the celluloid aesthetic, the film appears as nostalgic sci-fi tying together past and future. Adults are not absent: vocalist Sussan Deyhim, who creates and performs music in addition to Glass's stirring original score, appears as a towering presence presiding over the dreamscape, and Mike Tyson makes an intriguing appearance that leaves much for interpretation.

Sept. 26, 7:00 T1 (Followed by a conversation with Godfrey Reggio, Steven Soderbergh and Jon Kane), Sept. 27, 5:00 T1, Sept. 28, 6:00 T2, Sept. 29, 4:00 T2, Sept. 30, 2:30 T2, Oct. 1, 4:00 T2, Oct. 2, 5:30 T2

Koyaanisqatsi. 1982. USA. Directed by Godfrey Reggio. Original music by Philip Glass. Cinematography by Ron Fricke. 35mm. 86 min. Godfrey Reggio and Philip Glass's first collaboration—and the initial entry in their Qatsi trilogy—*Koyaanisqatsi* is an arresting tone-

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poem on “life out of balance” (the meaning of the film’s Hopi title). Majestic time-lapse images of nature in the American Southwest gradually give way to power lines, machinery, pollution, traffic, and urban landscapes. Apocalyptic and groundbreaking at the time of its release, this non-narrative feature remains a stunning achievement for its formal experimentation, unparalleled theatrical experience, and environmental vision.

Sept. 27, 7:00 T1 (Followed by a conversation with Godfrey Reggio), Oct. 2 7:00 T2

Naqoyqatsi. 2002. USA. Written and directed by Godfrey Reggio. Original music by Philip Glass. 35mm. 89 min. Computer-enhanced images capture a delirious array of human activities and scientific explorations. In this final chapter of Godfrey Reggio and Philip Glass’s Qatsi trilogy, the interference and manipulation of technology takes over all aspects of life. The provocative music in three movements, performed by cellist Yo-Yo Ma along with Glass’s ensemble, guides us on a journey to the new frontier...or is it a battlefield, as suggested by the film’s Hopi title, which means “war as a way of life”?

Sept. 30, 4:30 T1, Oct. 4, 6:30 T2

Visitors. 2013. USA. Written and directed by Godfrey Reggio. Original music by Philip Glass. DCP. 87 min. More than a decade after the completion of the Qatsi trilogy, Godfrey Reggio and Philip Glass teamed up again for *Visitors*, a black-and-white film composed of 74 shots, many of which framed as portraits, of individuals staring at the camera. *Visitors* offers a moment of contemplation in feature length, sustained by Glass’s quietly turbulent score. If the trilogy looks at life out of balance on a grand scale, this film switches the focus onto us, human participants in the story of evolution.

Sept. 30, 6:30 T1, Oct. 1, 2:00 T2

Powaqqatsi. 1988. USA. Directed by Godfrey Reggio. Screenplay by Reggio, Ken Richards. Original music by Philip Glass. Cinematography by Leonidas Zourdoumis and Graham Berry. 35mm. 99 min. While *Koyaanisqatsi*, the first in Godfrey Reggio and Philip Glass’s Qatsi trilogy, glares at the frenzied juxtaposition of modern life and nature, its follow-up, *Powaqqatsi*, takes a more meditative and somber tone on a journey through the developing world. Shot primarily in Brazil, Peru, Egypt, Kenya, India, and Nepal, the film assembles images of human labor, farmland, and traditional practices in slow motion; the encroachment of technology and modern-day commerce remains a backdrop. Once again, the creative duo forges a striking visual and sonic reflection on the mechanisms of the global economy. The film’s title, in Hopi language, loosely refers to one life consuming another.

Sept. 29, 5:30 T2, Oct. 3, 6:30 T2

SPONSORSHIP:

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