

# The Museum of Modern Art

## *Modern Matinees: Documentary Visions*

February 1–24, 2023

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

In the lead-up to the 2023 edition of MoMA's yearly Doc Fortnight nonfiction festival, this matinee program celebrates filmmakers who have indelibly shaped the documentary form, and whose work figures prominently in MoMA's collection and exhibition history. Spanning themes of political upheaval, ecology, labor organizing, Indigenous land rights, policing, and motherhood, these films address issues that remain at the forefront of nonfiction filmmaking today.

*Organized by Sophie Cavoulacos, Associate Curator, and Olivia Priedite, Film Program Coordinator, Department of Film.*

### SCREENING SCHEDULE:

***Finis Terrae.*** 1929. France. Directed by Jean Epstein. DCP. Silent with French intertitles; English subtitles. 81 min. Filmmaker, poet, and theorist Jean Epstein made several films merging narrative and nonfiction on the western coast of Brittany. Coming on the heels of his adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1928), *Finis Terrae* (Latin for "the end of the earth") was the first of Epstein's semi-documentaries to be filmed in the region. Working with nonprofessional actors, Epstein made a compact silent drama that follows a quarrel among a group of kelp harvesters on the island of Bannec. In the impressionistic style of the filmmaker's avant-garde period, the seaside landscape feels pre-modern, defined by its sublime vastness. Epstein wrote of *Finis Terrae*, "In this place and people is resumed the mystery of men dedicated to land that is but rock, to a sea which is but foam, to a hard and perilous trade, thus bowing to some high command."

Wed, Feb 1, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

Thu, Feb 23, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

***Law and Order.*** 1969. USA. Directed by Frederick Wiseman. 16mm. 81 min. Forever questioning the relationship between the individual and the institution, *Law and Order* is among Frederick Wiseman's most enduring works. Embedding himself with officers of the Kansas City Police Department in 1968, Wiseman turned his camera to law enforcement as the civil rights movement was nearing its end and demonstrations more and more frequently resulted in violence. *Law and Order* follows the Kansas City officers as they answer domestic disturbance calls, wantonly harass a Black sex worker, banter with each other in their patrol cars, and manage the administrative duties of the station. With an ease only Wiseman is capable of, the film exposes horrifying moments of police brutality and captures gentle instances of police serving their communities productively.

Thu, Feb 2, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

Fri, Feb 17, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

***Daguerréotypes.*** 1975. France. Directed by Agnès Varda. 35mm. In French; English subtitles. 78 min. As Agnès Varda was home nursing her newborn son, she was compelled to turn her incisive and whimsical eye to her longtime residence, Paris's Rue Daguerre. Fittingly named after pioneering photographer Louis Daguerre, her street served as ample opportunity for cinematic exploration, as she candidly interviewed and observed longtime neighbors, shopkeepers, and local wanderers. Running an electric cable from her own

apartment to power her equipment, Varda seems to effortlessly capture the intimate moments and emotional threads of our everyday lives.

Fri, Feb 3, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

Wed, Feb 15, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

***Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance***. 1993. Canada. Directed by Alanis Obomsawin. DCP. 119 min. On a hot July day in 1990, a historic confrontation propelled the villages of Kanehsatake and Oka, in Quebec, into the international spotlight, and indigenous issues into the Canadian conscience. Obomsawin endured seventy-eight nerve-wracking days and nights filming an armed standoff between the Mohawk community, the Quebec police, and the Canadian army, the result of a dispute about the development of a golf course on a sacred burial ground. The director's first feature provides stirring insight into the struggle to protect Mohawk land.

Wed, Feb 8, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

Wed, Feb 22, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

***Le Joli Mai***. 1963. France. Directed by Chris Marker, Pierre Lhomme. In French; English subtitles. 145 min. With the French-Algerian War coming to a bitter and brutal end, Marker joined now-legendary cameraman Pierre Lhomme in conducting hours of interviews on the streets of Paris. The result is a fascinating political and social document, a snapshot of French citizens reflecting on the meaning of happiness even as they confess anxiety about the future of their families and their nation.

Thu, Feb 9, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

Thu, Feb 16, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

***Growing Up Female***. 1971. USA. Directed by Julia Reichert, Jim Klein. 52 min. "I wish every high school kid in America could see this film." – Susan Sontag. *Growing Up Female* is the very first feature-length film of the modern women's movement. At turns controversial and exhilarating upon its release, the film looks at female socialization through a personal look into the lives of six women, ages four to 35, and the forces that shape them: teachers, counselors, advertising, music, and the institution of marriage. It was widely used by consciousness-raising groups to generate interest and help explain feminism to a skeptical society. It offers us a chance to see how much has changed as well as how much remains the same. Selected to the National Film Registry in 2011.

***Union Maids***. 1976. USA. Directed by Julia Reichert, Jim Klein, Miles Mogulescu. 48 min. Told through the eyes of three remarkable women, *Union Maids* opens up one of the great untold stories in our history: the fight to form industrial unions in the first half of the 20th century. The film follows Stella, Sylvia, and Kate as they leave their small farms for the bright lights of Chicago and the promise of greater job opportunities. Through humorous storytelling, the women recount their experiences of working 14 hours a day in factories where management had all the power and workers—especially women and minorities—had none. A compelling history of the era unfolds as they recall their first union meetings, the days of sit-down strikes, organizing the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the stockyards, and facing police shotguns to fight the evictions of unemployed workers. *Union Maids* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

*Digital preservation made possible by The Women's Film Preservation Fund of New York Women in Film & Television*

Fri, Feb 10, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

Fri, Feb 24, 1:00 p.m. (T2)

SPONSORSHIP:

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