

The Museum of Modern Art

Rob Tregenza: Thinking with Cinema

April 12–16, 2023

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

Transcendent formalism meets messy humanism in the work of East Coast independent Rob Tregenza. His audacious first feature, *Talking to Strangers*—nine 10-minute sequences, each shot in a single take—galvanized the 1988 Berlin International Film Festival, gathering admirers including Jean-Luc Godard, who helped Tregenza make his second feature, *Inside/Out* (1997). In his essay “Cinq Lettres a et sur Rob Tregenza,” Godard described Tregenza’s work as “remarkable and at times astonishing, that is, softly imbued with the marvelous.” This retrospective will include all four of Tregenza’s features, along with a sampling of his work as a cinematographer (for Bela Tarr, Alex Cox, Claude Miller, and others).

Organized by Dave Kehr, Curator, Department of Film.

SCREENING SCHEDULE:

Talking to Strangers. 1988. USA. Written, directed and photographed by Rob Tregenza. With Ken Gruz, Marvin Hunter, Caron Tate, Henry Strozier, Sarah Rush. 35mm. 90 min. Tregenza’s first feature, shot in Baltimore, consists of only nine shots, each an uninterrupted 10-minute take, centered on an enigmatic young man (Ken Gruz) who initiates or experiences a series of seemingly random encounters.

Wed, Apr 12, 7:00 p.m., T2 (Introduction by the filmmaker)

Sat, Apr 15, 1:30 p.m., T2

The Arc. 1991. USA. Written, directed, photographed and edited by Rob Tregenza. With Jason Adams, Kathryn Kelley, Jennifer Mendenhall. 35mm. 96 min.

Tregenza’s second feature takes the form of a highly metaphorical road movie, as the isolated protagonist (Jason Adams) drifts from gainful employment in the East (as an arc welder in Baltimore) to a spiritual apotheosis in the West.

Thu, Apr 13, 4:00 p.m., T2

Sat, Apr 15, 4:00 p.m., T2

Inside/Out. 1997. USA. Written, directed, photographed, and edited by Rob Tregenza. With Frédéric Pierrot, Bérangère Allaux, Stefania Rocca, Mikkel Gaup. DCP. 115 min.

An admirer of Tregenza’s *Talking to Strangers*, Jean-Luc Godard helped Tregenza with this 1997 film, which features the two leads from Godard’s *For Ever Mozart*, Frédéric Pierrot and Bérangère Allaux, as lovers in an icily repressive mental institution. Superbly shot by Tregenza in widescreen black-and-white, the seemingly disconnected sequences unfold around notions of belonging and exile, captivity and freedom.

Thu, Apr 13, 7:00 p.m., T2

Sat, Apr 15, 6:30 p.m., T2

Three Businessmen. 1998. Great Britain. Directed by Alex Cox. Screenplay by Tod Davies. Cinematography by Rob Tregenza. With Miguel Sandoval, Robert Wisdom, Alex Cox. 35mm print courtesy of Alex Cox and Jason Phelps, University of Colorado Boulder. 80 min.

Representing Tregenza’s extensive work as a cinematographer for hire is this underappreciated comedy from Alex Cox, a Buñuelian fable about two art dealers (played by Miguel Sandoval and Cox himself) who meet in Liverpool and embark together on a late-

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night search for a vegan meal—an impossible mission that soon turns into a global quest. Joined by a third wise man (Robert Wisdom), the trio are witnesses to a cosmic event. The complicated shoot involved locations in Rotterdam, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Almeria.

Fri, Apr 14, 4:00 p.m., T2

Sun, Apr 16, 4:00 p.m., T2

Gavagai. 2016. USA/Germany. Directed, photographed, and edited by Rob Tregenza. Screenplay by Tregenza, Kirk Kjeldsen. With Andreas Lust, Anni-Kristiina Juuso, Mikkel Gaup. 90 min.

Tregenza's most recent film, shot in Norway and written with the novelist Kirk Kjeldsen, is another of his metaphorical road trips, this time undertaken by a nameless writer (Andreas Lust) as an act of devotion to his late wife. Accompanied by a local guide (Mikkel Gaup), he travels to the hometown of the Norwegian poet Tarjei Vesaas, whose work his wife long dreamed of translating into Chinese.

Fri, Apr 14, 7:00 p.m., T2

Sun, Apr 16, 1:30 p.m., T2

SPONSORSHIP:

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Film at MoMA is made possible by [CHANEL](#).

Additional support is provided by the Annual Film Fund. Leadership support for the Annual Film Fund is provided by Debra and Leon D. Black, with major contributions from The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, the Association of Independent Commercial Producers (AICP), The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art, and Karen and Gary Winnick.