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FESTIVAL FILM SOCIETY
College of William & Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

THE WAR GAME

England, 1965

MAJOR PICTURE
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Produced, Directed and Written by Peter Watkins
Photography Peter Bartlett
Editor Michael Bradsell
Commentary Michael Aspel and
Dick Graham

Running time: 47 minutes

SYNOPSIS

During the Red Chinese campaign in Vietnam, nuclear warheads are dropped in Great Britain and a single megaton bomb lands twenty-seven miles from the city of Kent. All defense measures prove to be of no value as homes are destroyed, the populace is both burned and blinded, and an uncontrollable fire storm rages throughout the area. Medical and hospital facilities are inadequate; the dying are shot and there are mass burnings of corpses. The police are armed, devastated sections are sealed off, and food stores are heavily guarded. Despite this, looting is everywhere and not even firing squads can curb the lawlessness and violence . . . "The nuclear arsenals of the great powers already contain the equivalent of 20 tons of TNT for every person on the planet. And, within 15 years, another six to twelve nations are sure to have a bomb of some kind."

CRITIQUE

N.Y. TIMES. "Graphic and horrifying...*The War Game* was made by a young man, Peter Watkins, in hand-held camera style and at a pace that endows its grim, on-the-spot enactments with the seeming truth of a documentary film. While the cumulating horrors it shows, such as firestorms, the melting of children's eyes and the mercy shooting by police of rows of victims who are too badly burned to be helped, are based upon actual experiences in Hiroshima and in German cities in World War II, the monstrous piling up of these horrors in one picture seems a calculated showing of the worst. And the fact that no immediate way to avoid this is suggested to the audience by the film makes it, for most, a sheer frustrating excitement of morbidity and dread. Mr. Watkins, whom I talked to in London after seeing his film there in June, said he hopes it will agitate people to demand the elimination of nuclear bombs. But one might guess it will serve that purpose only if shown in connection with some concrete and widespread campaign. Otherwise it is no more than a powerful, isolated horror film." Bosley Crowther (N.Y. Film Festival 9/14/66).

VARIETY. "*The War Game* is grime, gruesome, horrific and realistic. It is not a pleasant picture to watch, but yet it is one that needs to be shown as widely as possible, as much in China and Russia, as in America, Britain or France. Although make-believe, it would give the general public, the army brass and even the politicians, some conception of what might happen if a nuclear war should ever be triggered off. It's frightening enough to make even the most rabid politico have second thoughts... The attack itself is predictably grim, but the most telling part is the aftermath of the bomb-the severely burned are killed off and their bodies burned, and looters face the firing squad. Peter Watkins has done an excellent and imaginative job, based on considerable research. It is an effort that deserves to be rewarded by the widest possible presentation." 'Myro' (Venice Film Festival 9/7/66).

Tomorrow night, November 12, at 8:00 P.M. the Film Society in cooperation with the 20th Century Gallery will present a program of short films on the fine arts, including The American Vision, Alberto Giacometti, Study in Wet Architecture of Japan, and The Reality of Karen Appel. The showing will be in the Botetourt Theatre, and there is no admission charge.

Members may also wish to know that on Wednesday, December 11, at 8:00 P.M. in the Campus Center Little Theatre we will also join with the Gallery in presenting an illustrated talk by Richard Griffith, former Curator of the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art, entitled "A Primer of the Film."