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O pintor e a cidade (The painter and the city), Oliveira, Manoel de, 1956

Aniki Bóbó, Oliveira, Manoel de, 1942

A caça (The hunt), Oliveira, Manoel de, 1963

Douro, faina fluvial (Hard work on the River Douro), Oliveira, Manoel de, 1931

Vale Abraão (Valley of Abraham), Oliveira, Manoel de, 1993

O acto da primavera (Rite of spring), Oliveira, Manoel de, 1963

O passado e o presente (Past and present), Oliveira, Manoel de, 1972

Cristóvão Colombo - o enigma (Christopher Columbus, the enigma), Oliveira, Manoel de, 2007

MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA, OR CINEMA, THE ART OF ENIGMA

MARCH 15 – MARCH 29

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MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA

On the occasion of his one hundredth birthday, Manoel de Oliveira (b. 1908) must be recognized not only as the oldest major director active today, but also one of the most imaginative and innovative filmmakers the cinema has ever known. During his almost eighty years behind the camera, Oliveira has been an incredible creative force, confounding historical precedent by becoming only more productive in his old age and taking bold and increasingly unexpected risks with each new project, such as the wonderful *I'm Going Home* (2001) and his latest film, *Christopher Columbus, the Enigma* (2007).

Throughout his remarkable career, Oliveira has devoted himself to a singular type of art cinema that, while often referencing the work of Buñuel and the silent masters, remains unlike any other. A guiding force has been Oliveira's steadfast rejection of the quest for "pure cinema" pursued by cinematic modernism to explore instead a mode of filmmaking that draws unique inspiration and energy from theater, literature and philosophy. In masterpieces such as *Doomed Love* (1978), *My Case* (1983), and *Abraham's Valley* (1993), Oliveira offers not merely adaptations but spellbinding dialogues with the films' source novels and plays that radically reinvent the role of language and performance in film, and challenge the typically privileged position of image over sound in narrative cinema. Oliveira's keen understanding of the spoken word in film is, of course, profoundly informed by his unique qualification as the only director working today who also worked in the silent era.

Although Oliveira is revered in Europe as a living treasure, in this country his films are rarely appreciated or screened. This retrospective offers a rare opportunity to experience one of the last great masters of the cinema and to travel in time through his marvelously long and endlessly fascinating career.

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MAGIC MIRROR (ESPELHO MÁGICO)

SATURDAY MARCH 15 AT 7PM

Within the splendor of her country estate, Alfreda attempts to decipher the source of the Virgin Mary's reported wealth, debating with a Bible scholar about the limits of sainthood and the material world. Meanwhile, a team of crooks plans to fleece Alfreda through an elaborate fabricated miracle that goes strangely awry. *Magic Mirror* is one of Oliveira's several adaptations of the work of his close friend Agustina Bessa-Luís, one of Portugal's foremost modernist novelists. Here he turns her eponymous novel into a mysterious satire of religion and the idle rich in the tradition of Buñuel's late films. A sophisticated comedy and a deeply philosophical work, *Magic Mirror* boasts a cast of Oliveira regulars as well as the great Marisa Paredes.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Leonor Silveira, Ricardo Trêpa
Portugal 2005, 35mm, color, 145 min. French, Spanish, and Portuguese with English subtitles

ANIKI-BÓBÓ

SUNDAY MARCH 16 AT 3PM

Oliveira's first feature is a remarkable proto-neorealist film, notable for its use of child non-actors and actual locations in Oliveira's native Porto. *Aniki-Bóbó*, whose title derives from a child's game, fully adopts the children's perspective to tell a surprisingly adult story of friendship and betrayal between two boys and the girl who is the object of their rival affection. The perceived radicalism of *Aniki-Bóbó*, with its barely restrained critique of institutional authority, was responsible for Oliveira's persecution and brief imprisonment by the conservative Salazar dictatorship and, even worse, resulted in a devastating twenty year hiatus during which he was effectively black-listed and had almost every film project thwarted.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Américo Botelho, Feliciano David
Portugal 1942, 35mm, b/w, 70 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

PRECEDED BY

BREAD (O PAO)

Considered the best of the commissioned short films which effectively served as Oliveira's filmmaking apprenticeship, *Bread* follows the birth and life of a loaf, from the wheat fields to the bakery. Almost entirely silent, *Bread* is an important transitional work between the montage driven *Douro*, *Working River* and Oliveira's later work. It was during the search for locations for *Bread* that Oliveira discovered the local Passion play that would become the subject of his breakthrough film, *Rite of Spring*.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira.

Portugal 1959, 35mm, color, 23 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

DOURO, WORKING RIVER (DOURO, FAINA FLUVIA)

SUNDAY MARCH 16 AT 7PM

Oliveira's film debut is a visually stunning documentary poem about life and work along the principal river of the director's native Porto region. Greatly admired by critics and artists such as Luigi Pirandello, *Douro* reveals Oliveira's incredible eye and sense of rhythm. Although Hollywood had already ushered in the arrival of sound cinema in 1927, Portugal's film industry remained decidedly underdeveloped and continued to produce silent films into the early 1930s.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira.

Portugal 1931, 35mm, b/w, silent, 18 min.

FOLLOWED BY

BENILDE, OR THE VIRGIN MARY (BENILDE OU A VIRGEM MÃE)

When the young and eccentric Benilde becomes unexpectedly pregnant, her deeply religious family and inquisitive townsfolk fixate upon Immaculate Conception. A new formal complexity entered into Oliveira's cinema in

this second part of his celebrated Tetralogy, which focuses an unflattering spotlight on the absurd hypocrisies of religion and public displays of piety. One of Oliveira's breakthrough films, *Benilde* was his first to interweave theatrical and cinematic language into an overt questioning of the limits of the art film.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Maria Amélia Aranda, Jorge Rolla, Varela Silva

Portugal 1975, 35mm, color, 110 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT (O PASSADO E O PRESENTE)

SUNDAY MARCH 16 AT 9:30PM

The first in Oliveira's celebrated "Tetralogy of Thwarted Love," *The Past and the Present* offers both a dark vision of *amour fou* and an excoriating satire of the idle rich. Driven by a necrophilic passion for her dead husband, Vanda performs strange rituals of devotion and tortures her second husband for his inadequacies. The revelation of strange secrets about her first husband unfolds a dizzying game of shifting identities and loyalties. Oliveira's wickedly funny and disturbing satire of Portuguese class structure and the corruption of public mores was, ironically, his first film to receive state funding.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Maria de Saisset, Manuela de Freitas, Bárbara Vieira

Portugal 1971, 35mm, color, 115 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

FRANCISCA

FRIDAY MARCH 21 AT 7PM

The final film in Oliveira's Tetralogy is its darkest, a fascinating journey to the dangerous extremes of obsessive love. A simultaneous homage to the silent cinema and the original novel by Bessa-Luís, *Francisca's* evocative literary intertitles add a further layer of commentary and complexity to the tragic love affair that slowly destroys the bewitching Fanny Owens and her ne'er-do-well lover. Diffused with an aura of death and the



MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA DAY OF DESPAIR 1992

supernatural, *Francisca* makes striking use of masks and shadows. *Francisca* marked the start of the remarkable collaboration between Oliveira and maverick producer Paolo Branco who would produce Oliveira's next twenty films.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Teresa Menezes, Diogo Dória, Mário Barroso

Portugal 1981, 35mm, color, 166 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

DOOMED LOVE (AMOR DE PERIÇÃO)

SATURDAY MARCH 22 AT 6PM

The third installment of the Tetralogy is a brilliant and devastating portrait of young lovers tragically separated by a bitter feud between their aristocratic families. In *Doomed Love* Oliveira tested his belief in a creative merging of theatrical, literary and cinematic narrative traditions. His radical approach to adaptation captures the multi-layered language of Camilo Castelo Branco's eponymous epic novel to offer a virtual phenomenology of life and love in 18th century Portugal. After a disastrous premiere on Portuguese television, the theatrical release of Oliveira's re-edited version was quickly hailed as a landmark in the history of the European art film.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With António Sequeira Lope, Cristina Hauser, Elsa Wallencamp

Portugal 1978, 16mm, color, 265 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

VOYAGE TO THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD (VIAGEM AO PRINCÍPIO DO MUNDO)

SUNDAY MARCH 23 AT 3PM

In his final role, Marcello Mastroianni is wonderfully cast as an aging film director, modeled on Oliveira himself, traveling with three young actors through northern Portugal and past places he had known in his youth. The leisurely pace, sensuous beauty of the passing landscapes, and Mastroianni's touching performance all contribute to the film's rich evocation of place and time. A brilliant and emotionally rich road movie that deserves comparison to Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, *Voyage* marks a high point in Oliveira's late career and remains deservedly among his best-known and most beloved works.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Marcello Mastroianni, Jean-Yves Gautier, Leonor Silveira

Portugal 1997, 35mm, color, 95 min. French and Portuguese with English subtitles

DAY OF DESPAIR (O DIA DO DESESPERO)

SUNDAY MARCH 23 AT 7PM

Oliveira's dream-like semi-documentary reenacts the final hours of *Doomed Love* author Branco, believed by many to be Portugal's equivalent to Cervantes. Considered by Oliveira scholar Randal Johnson as one of the director's finest and least appreciated works, *Day of Despair* closely follows Branco's writing process and speculates about the relationship between the author's private monologue and written word. Oliveira carefully weighs each of the acts and gestures leading up to Branco's tragic and still unexplained death, searching for clues and discovering a rich poetry of ambient sounds and evocative textures.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Mário Barroso, Teresa Madruga

Portugal 1992, 35mm, color, 75 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

RITE OF SPRING (ACTO DE PRIMAVERA)

SUNDAY MARCH 23 AT 9PM

While location shooting for *Bread*, Oliveira stumbled upon the subject for *Rite of Spring*, the annual passion play enacted by a community in Northern Portugal. Intrigued by the ritualistic and incantatory qualities of their production, Oliveira returned to the village and set about directing the villagers in a re-enactment of the passion play, adding a rich performative layer to the film. A fascinating ethnographic study of local tradition and history that folds in on itself, *Rite of Spring* climaxes unexpectedly in a furious apocalyptic montage that links Christ's death to the violence and lunacy of the Vietnam era. Oliveira's tour de force return to feature filmmaking offers a blend of fiction and nonfiction that, like the contemporary work of Jean Rouch, was radically ahead of its time.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Ermelinda Pires, Maria Madalena

Portugal 1963, 35mm, color, 94 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

FOLLOWED BY

THE HUNT (A CAÇA)

Oliveira's devastating short is a menacing study of violence and frustrated masculinity that chronicles the strange accident that befalls an all-male hunting party. *The Hunt* was among Oliveira's first works to be universally praised for the strength of its vision and storytelling power.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira.

Portugal 1963, 35mm, color, 20 min.

FOLLOWED BY

THE PAINTER AND THE CITY (O PINTOR E A CIDADE)

A wonderful short film that examines a series of watercolors of the city of Porto painted by Portuguese artist António Cruz. In comparing the different modes of representing and experiencing the city, Oliveira explores the different representational qualities of film and painting.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira.

Portugal 1956, 35mm, color, 28 min.

MY CASE (MON CAS)

MONDAY MARCH 24 AT 7PM

Among Oliveira's most radical films, *My Case* is based upon a well known play by the renowned Portuguese playwright Jose Regio in which actors subvert a play by abandoning their rehearsed dialogue to speak directly to the audience, and the camera, about themselves. A dazzling evocation of the transformative power of spectacle and performance, Oliveira returns three times to this disruptive scene, each time offering a totally different film. Bulle Ogier and Luís Miguel Cintra lead the outstanding cast.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Bulle Ogier, Luís Miguel Cintra, Axel Bogousslavsky

Portugal/France 1986, 35mm, color, 90 min. French with English subtitles

I'M GOING HOME (JE RENTRE À LA MAISON)

MONDAY MARCH 24 AT 9PM

One of Oliveira's finest achievements and probably his most accessible film, *I'm Going Home* sounds a wonderful grace note in Michel Piccoli's late career. Oliveira extracts the melodramatic core of the basic plot – an aging actor (Piccoli) left to care for his grandson after his daughter, wife and son-in-law's sudden death – to focus instead upon the quiet rituals and acts of courage that define the actor's life after the tragedy. A poetic return to the subject of the interrelation between the theater and cinema which has long fascinated Oliveira, *I'm Going Home* effortlessly raises profound questions about fate and the theatricality of life. The magic of Paris in the spring conjured by Oliveira weaves moments of rapturous beauty throughout this deeply moving meditation on art and aging.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Michel Piccoli, Catherine Deneuve, John Malkovich

Portugal/France 2001, 35mm, color, 90 min. French and English with English subtitles

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, THE ENIGMA (CRISTÓVÃO COLOMBO - O ENIGMA)

THURSDAY MARCH 27 AT 7PM

Oliveira's delightful new film proposes and attempts to solve a historical mystery – was Christopher Columbus actually Portuguese? Oliveira offers a typically multi-faceted approach to this puzzle, interweaving the story of Manuel Luciano da Silva, a medical doctor and autodidact historian obsessed with Columbus, with visits to historical sites by Oliveira himself and his wife. *Christopher Columbus* offers a playful return to the subjects of empire, myth and history so dear to Oliveira.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Ricardo Trêpa, Manoel de Oliveira,

Portugal 2007, 35mm, color, 70 min. Portuguese with English subtitles

**NON, OR THE VAIN GLORY OF COMMAND
(*'Non'*, ou A Vã Glória de Mandar)**

THURSDAY MARCH 27 AT 9PM

Oliveira's brilliant meditation on war, history and empire takes as its background and point of departure Angola's colonial war of the 1970s, in which guerrilla fighters ultimately defeated Portugal's superior military forces. Mired in the Angolan jungle, a group of Portuguese soldiers begin to openly question the meaning of the war and, in turn, speculate about their country's imperial history. Luís Miguel Cintra returns as the wise commander who narrates the film's brilliant flashbacks to Portugal's most spectacular military follies and defeats. From the film's mysterious opening – a rapturous tracking shot

that glides around an ancient African tree – to the stunning battle sequences, *Non* is one of Oliveira's great late films and one of his most politically charged and outspoken works.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Luís Miguel Cintra, Diogo Dória, Miguel Guilherme

Portugal 1990, 35mm, color, 119 min. Portugese and Spanish with English subtitles

ABRAHAM'S VALLEY (VALLE ABRAAO)

SATURDAY MARCH 29 AT 3PM

Among Oliveira's uncontested masterpieces, *Abraham's Valley* is an adaptation of a novel that Oliveira himself commissioned from Bessa-Luís who, in turn, loosely took

Madame Bovary as her inspiration. Oliveira's longtime muse, the wondrous Leonora Silveira, stars as Ema, a provincial doctor's daughter whose remarkable beauty and restless spirit drive men to reckless extremes of passion and devotion. Set in Oliveira's beloved Douro valley, *Abraham's Valley* uses the landscape as the lush backdrop for a haunting drama of unrequited love and impossible desire enlivened by Oliveira's wry humor.

Directed by Manoel de Oliveira. With Leonor Silveira, Luís Miguel Cintra, Ruy de Carvalho

Portugal 1993, 35mm, color, 187 min. Portuguese with English subtitles