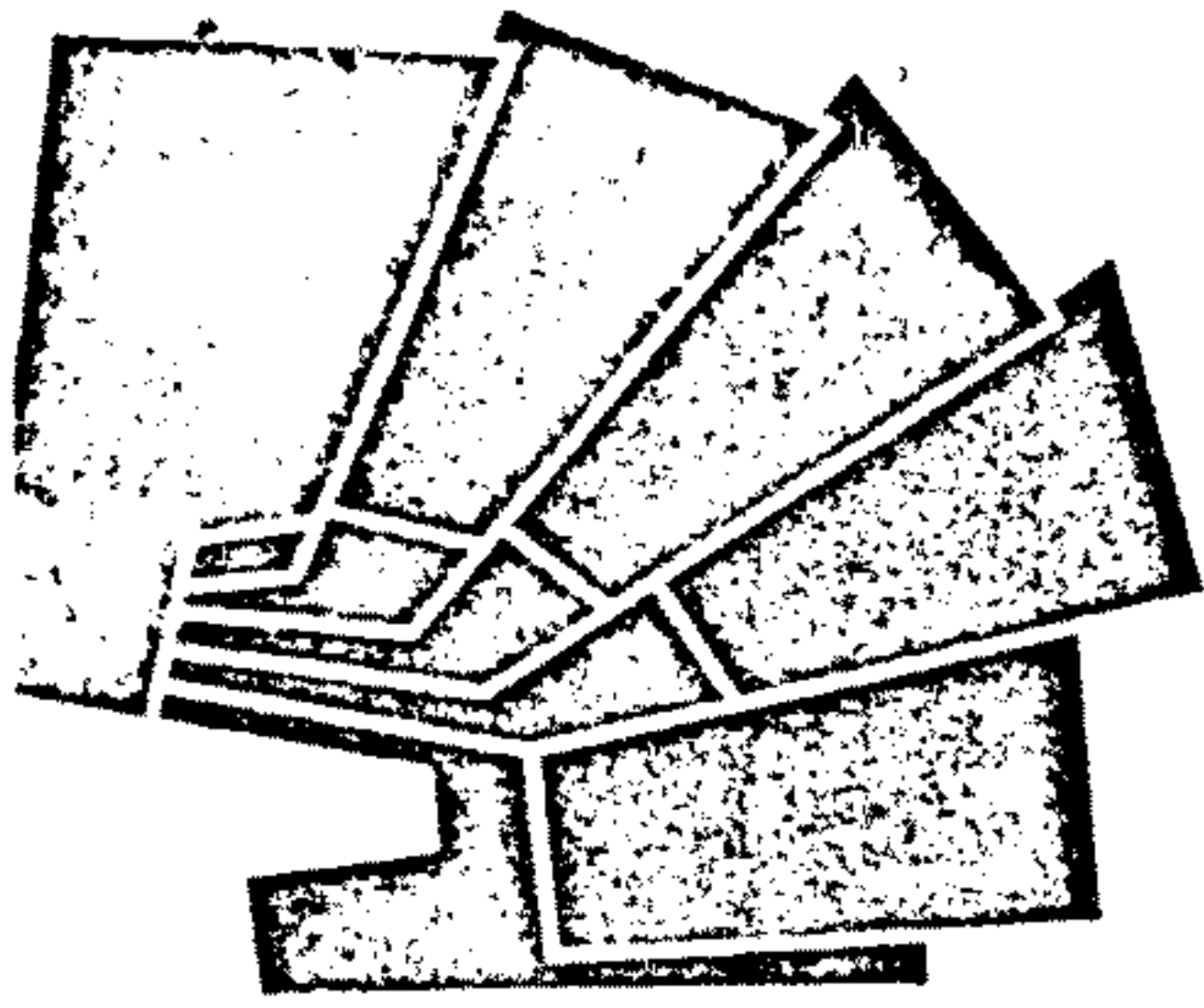


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JORIS IVENS RETROSPECTIVE

WEST COAST PREMIERE OF "HOW YUKONG MOVED THE MOUNTAINS"

This month's highlight at the University Art Museum's Pacific Film Archive is surely the presentation of the first part of a near-complete retrospective of the Films of Joris Ivens, the 79-year old Dutch documentarian who can lay claim to being the world's first truly international filmmaker, as well as one of the supreme practitioners of the art of non-fiction filmmaking. Joris Ivens himself will be present to introduce the first West Coast showing of his monumental film series on present-day China, HOW YUKONG MOVED THE MOUNTAINS, which will be screened along with Ivens' two previous films on China--THE 400 MILLION (1939) and LETTERS FROM CHINA (1958)--in six parts in both San Francisco and Berkeley. These showings, presented in association with the National Alliance of Chinese-Americans, will take place on the UC Campus in Berkeley on April 10 (155 Dwinelle Hall, 7:30), April 12 (Wheeler Auditorium, 4:00 & 7:30), April 14 (Wheeler Auditorium, 7:30), April 16 (Wheeler Auditorium, 2:30 & 7:30), April 19 (155 Dwinelle Hall, 7:00 & 9:30), April 21 (Wheeler Auditorium, 4:00 & 7:30); and in San Francisco at the World Theatre, 644 Broadway (Chinatown) on April 14 (7:30), April 15 (2:00 & 7:30), April 21 (7:30) and April 22 (2:00 & 7:30). Joris Ivens' collaborator and co-director of HOW YUKONG MOVED THE MOUNTAINS, Marceline Loridan, will also be present for the premiere screenings here of HOW YUKONG MOVED THE MOUNTAINS.

Still vigorously active--though presently completing still another film on China (on the national minorities), he travelled to Peking in December 1977 for large public screenings of HOW YUKONG MOVED THE MOUNTAINS and to New York City in February 1978 for the film's triumphant premiere at the Museum of Modern Art--Joris Ivens is surely the only working filmmaker today who can trace his career as far back as 1911, when at age 13 he directed a 7-minute "western" inspired by the writings of Karl May and James Fenimore

Cooper. However, his professional career-to-date spans 50 years, from 1928 when he produced the avant-garde classic THE BRIDGE in his native Holland, and includes more than fifty films made in numerous countries, but united by the common threads of lyric optimism and intelligent political reflection in the observation of men and women moving through the turbulent history of this century, struggling not only in the dialectic process of social transformation, but in the timeless contradiction (violent conflict/peaceful harmony) of man against nature.

Joris Ivens has made films in all the inhabited continents of this planet. He has made films with and for the peoples of China, Vietnam, Chile, Cuba, The Soviet Union, The United States, Canada, Laos, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, The German Democratic Republic, Belgium, Holland, France, Poland, Mali, and Italy. Among his collaborators are such individuals as Ernest Hemingway, Hanns Eisler, Bertolt Brecht, Paul Robeson, Chris Marker, Jacques Prevert, Alberto Moravia, Gerard Philipe, Helene Weigel, Alberto Cavalcanti, Lewis Milestone, Dmitri Shostakovich, Dudley Nichols, Virgil Thompson, Stephan Vineent Benet, Pare Lorentz, and Peter Finch. A man of disarming modesty, Ivens has encouraged a collective approach to filmmaking, and has permitted his team-productions to serve as the training ground for young filmmakers and , to some degree, for entire new national cinemas. The camera he gave Chou-En-lai in 1938 became the technical instrument which launched the progressive Chinese Cinema; he later returned to teach in China, and there are signs that the production of HOW YUKONG MOVED THE MOUNTAINS with a Chinese crew, and its current release in China, will stimulate a whole new approach to documentary filmmaking in that country of 800,000,000. His residency in Cuba in 1960/61 stimulated the rapid development of a new revolutionary cinema noted for its brilliant agit-prop and documentary films. Look at the biography of Gillo Pontecorvo, director of THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS and BURN--his first film was a sequence of DIE WINDROSE (1955/56) made under Joris Ivens' supervision! Take the two films which have been the "discoveries" of the last year according to many American critics--PADRE PADRONE and THE BATTLE OF CHILE. The former was made by the Taviani brothers in Italy, whose first major credit comes in Joris Ivens' ITALY IS NOT A POOR COUNTRY (1960), where they wrote the script and collaborated in the direction. The director of BATTLE OF CHILE, Patricio Guzman, was a young student when Joris Ivens came

to Chile and hired him to photograph A VALPARAISO (1963) and EL CIRCO MAS PEQUENO DEL MUNDO (1963).

Though written in the early 1960s, before Ivens embarked on what may come to be viewed as his most important creative period, George Sadoul's entry for Ivens in his "Dictionary of Filmmakers" gives a just assessment of Ivens' place in World Cinema: "One of the greatest documentary film artists, the peer of Robert Flaherty, a kind of "Flying Dutchman" who has worked in many countries but whose work always reflects his basic concerns: men at work, men struggling against nature or social oppression. He is a great documentarist not only because of the poetry of his images and their rhythmic construction, but also because he has been, in every sense of the term, a man of his times. He has been a constant witness of passing events, a filmmaker who has always been present at decisive turning points in human history. Totally uninterested in depressive aspects, he is excited by mankind's struggles, constructions, and creations, and, as a masterly editor, he has been able to unite people and the world around them with a deep feeling for the poetry that is intrinsic in what he shows. He made his first film in 1911 at the age of 13 and in 1926 jointly established "Filmliga," one of the first film societies. His first significant film, THE BRIDGE (1928) contains the image of water (he was born beside the Rhine) he has returned to again and again in his work: RAIN; THE BREAKERS, which protect Holland against the sea; NEW EARTH, which was wrested from the Zuiderzee; the problem of irrigation in SPANISH EARTH during the Civil War; the dockers' strike in INDONESIA CALLING; the unity of the world's workers in SONG OF THE RIVERS; and the poetical view of Paris and the Seine in LA SEINE A RENCONTRE PARIS. He is a committed partisan of a cinema-verite that expresses social reality and he has never refused to tackle quite humble films if he felt they would serve a just cause. He has continued the teachings of his master, Dziga Vertov, in the Western world and has stated that, for the camera to be truly a witness it must count less on powerful material resources than on the solidarity of the workers. This view is expressed most clearly in BORINAGE, a film made amid a bitter miners' strike and despite the Belgian police, and in INDONESIA CALLING, which centers on Australian dockers and seamen who refused to load arms intended for colonial reconquest. His whole approach to his art has made him not only

one of the great classic directors but a man who has laid the foundations for the cinema of the future."

The task of assembling the films of an artist like Joris Ivens, who has worked in so many countries, is extremely difficult--several of Ivens' earliest films are lost, burned by the Nazis after they invaded Holland. To the extent that the Pacific Film Archive is able to mount a comprehensive retrospective tribute to Joris Ivens in April and May, the cooperation and contributions of Jan de Vaal and The Netherlands Filmmuseum and Robert Daudelin and The Cinematheque Quebecoise must be credited. The Ivens Retrospective will continue and conclude in May, with as many of the following films as can be obtained (those with an asterisk are the hardest to obtain, but it is hoped that the State Film Archive of the German Democratic Republic can supply rare prints of most of these titles): PEACE WILL OVERCOME (1950)*, FRIENDSHIP WILL OVERCOME (1951)*, MEIN KIND (1955)*, ROSE OF THE WINDS (1956)*, THE SEINE MEETS PARIS (1957), ITALY IS NOT A POOR COUNTRY (1960), DEMAIN A NANGUILA (1960)*, CARNET DE VIAJE (1960), CUBA, PUEBLO ARMADO (1960), A VALPARAISO (1963), EL CIRCO MAS PEQUENO DEL MUNDO (1963), LE TRAIN DE LA VICTOIRE (1964), LE MISTRAL (1964), ROTTERDAM-EUROPOORT (1966), THE THREATENING SKY (1966), THE 17th PARALLEL (1968), LAOS--THE PEOPLE AND THEIR GUNS (1969), INTERVIEW WITH HO CHI MINH (1969).

Already seen by tens of millions of people around the globe, HOW YUKONG MOVED THE MOUNTAINS has not yet been generally released in this country. At the time of its British Premiere in 1976, the London weekly, "Time Out," wrote the following, which provides most of the essential background information to this ~~remarkable~~ 12-part, 12-hour epic:

"Ivens' connection with China is a long and historic one. When he first went there in 1938, to make THE 400 MILLION about the struggle against the Japanese invaders, he became friends with Chou-En-lai. Before leaving, Ivens found a practical way of expressing his support for the Communist cause: upon being told that they had plenty of trained personnel but no film equipment, he promptly gave them his own camera. For the next few years that film camera was the only one in north China; all the footage that exists of the Communist fight

in those crucial years was filmed with it. Today it rests in a Peking museum, and Ivens is referred to as the 'father' of Chinese cinema. Ivens has often returned to China, even teaching film to Chinese students. In 1971 he travelled there to observe the effects of the Cultural Revolution. The combination of that visit and Ivens' special relationship with the country benefit us all now in the resulting series of remarkable films.

Collectively titled HOW YUKONG MOVED THE MOUNTAINS, they are extraordinary. Ivens and Marceline Loridan were granted complete freedom to film what they wished, as they wished-- a privilege granted to no other Western filmmaker. Because of their sensitivity in trying to understand the Chinese, they allowed their original project to be totally altered by what they encountered. Passion and flexibility are not characteristics commonly attributed to a film director in his seventies, yet these are what Ivens displayed as he set out to record contemporary Chinese life.

During the '71 visit, Chou-En-lai had scolded Ivens and Loridan for not bringing their cameras. They returned with them in 1973 intending to spend four months making a three-hour film on Chinese society; they filmed for a year and a half, shot over 120 hours of film and edited it down to the 12 films we can now see. The films expanded naturally to accommodate their original subject: to show how the revolution and especially the Cultural Revolution had changed the lives of ordinary people.

The two filmmakers soon realised that the conventional three hour documentary they had envisaged was impossible. It altered the natural pace of their lives, and imposed an artificial framework through editing. One of Ivens' particular concerns has been that the subject itself should dictate the rhythm of the film. Thus a series of films was born: each dealing with an aspect of life in China: a study of workers in a factory, rehearsals for the Peking circus, the behaviour of staff and customers in a chemist's shop, and so on.

Each activity allocated its personal time, a natural length, in exactly the same way that a conversation between friends rises spontaneously, climaxes and is changed or finished. The camera ceases to be only an observer and becomes a participant in the dialogue with

to the illusion of having made a journey, rather than watched a film.

The 'illusion' is partly due to the efforts Ivens and Loridan made to ensure that those being filmed were not self-conscious about it. The couple lived with each group for one or two months before a foot of film was shot. In this way they rendered the camera 'invisible' giving them a freedom (and an honesty) which a hidden camera could not.

Given that most of us have not had, and are not likely to have, much opportunity to visit China in the near future, it would only be common sense to take advantage of such a comprehensive tour."

It might be added to the above that, although the film was shot during the heyday of the so-called "Gang of Four," the filmmakers' concentration on specific areas of grass-roots Chinese reality, as well as their "cinema direct" approach, insured that nothing in the film is tainted or dated by the official propaganda of the moment. In fact, the film's honesty in revealing shortcomings and problems in Chinese society prevented its being shown at all in China during the reign of the "Gang of Four." Fortunately, the new leadership, as part of a general loosening of cultural life, agreed to release the film in 1977, and it is now showing all over China.

For further information on the Joris Ivens Retrospective and the complete schedule of film showings, call 642-1412, or write the Pacific Film Archive, University Art Museum, 2625 Durant Avenue, Berkeley 94720.

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