

## Document Citation

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Gregory J. Markopoulos (series title to be determined)  
Co-sponsored by The Speros Basil Vryonis Center for the Study of  
Hellenism

A series of seven programs presented at S.F. Cinematheque and Pacific  
Film Archive

"Gregory J. Markopolous" provides a long awaited opportunity for Bay Area audiences to see the films of the Gregory J. Markopoulos (1928-1992), a seminal figure of the American avant-garde from the late 1940s until 1967 when he moved permanently to Europe, and soon after withdrew his films from U.S. distribution. During this period he made many of his legendary works, films known by later generations only by rumor and passionate descriptions, as well as wrote extensively about his own film ideas and on the works of the New American Cinema and avant-garde. He continued both his filmmaking and writing while living in Europe, and sought to create a film center, Temenos, in Lyssaraia, Greece, an endeavor continued by his long time companion, Robert Beavers, who is overseeing the preservation of his films. Markopoulos characterized his complex, sensual films, as being either "mythic themes," "portraits" or "films of place." He developed what he called in a 1963 credo, "A New Narrative Form in Motion Pictures." "I propose a new narrative film form through the fusion of the classic montage technique with a more abstract system. This system involves the use of short film phrases that evoke thought-images." While he often stressed of the centrality of editing, he also strove for a sense of the mysterious and the unexplainable through his use of disjunctive narrative, intricate superimpositions, rhythmic interruptions of pure black or white celluloid, a nuanced palette of color, and restructured sound compositions. As Kristin M. Jones noted, "his work--which shatters and reconfigures language as much as it does conventional cinematics--eludes description." He believed in the possibility of the amateur ("that is, a lover of film") to be "a physician of images," who in contrast to commercial filmmakers, could take the spectator to "a loftier existence outside the visible, mundane world."

"The value of each image, of each sound, must be recognized for what it represents (and often as not it is chaos). It thus becomes necessary for the creative film spectator to connect, to rejoin, to interpret the various images and sound, uniting them into Meaning. In the beginning it does not matter whether the fullness of the given image or sound is immediately comprehended. If the film viewed contains a sense of communion, as opposed to deliberate communication, to any degree, the studious film specator will not fail to perceive it."-GM, 1967

We wish to thank Richard Beavers and Temenos, Inc. for organizing this series and for providing invaluable assistance; and Susan Oxtoby, Director?, Cinematheque Ontario, for coordinating the series. We would also like to acknowledge the generous assistance of Yann Beauvais (curator, "Gregory J. Markopoulos, 1928-1992," American Center); John Handhardt, Matthew Yokobosky (co-curators, "Gregory J. Markopoulos: Mythic Themes, Portraiture, and Films of Place," Whitney Museum); Jennifer Meehan for extensive research; Leanne Milla, John Mhiripiri, assistants to Robert Beavers. Prints are from Temenos, Inc. and Vienna Filmmuseum, with thanks to Peter Kubelka.

Tuesday October 7

Introduction by Robert Beavers

"What does Cinema mean to me? It means that I am able during the filming to attempt the impossible, which for me is the sincere trust which I place in emotions. The emotions of men. It is the herculean and tender task of saying what I feel is true without words like the songs of Mendelsohn."--GM, 1953

In viewing Markopolous's early films, one can mark the beginning of the formal and artistic processes that continue throughout his lifetime's work--the use of unconventional narration and formal experimentation to achieve a "new narrative film form," a more personal style of filmmaking, and the incorporation of the different themes of Greek myth and homosexual love in order to create, what he terms, "my American mythology". Tonight we present the trilogy *Du sang, de la volupté et de la mort (Of Blood, Pleasure and Death)*. In the classic first part, *Psyche*, "one sees various viewpoints on an encounter in which the heroine experiences great difficulty in giving voice to her sensuality" (Yann Beauvais). *Lysis* "ponders the nature of friendship, as perceived by a man dealing with the conflict between society and his homosexuality". And *Charmides* "is based on the Platonian dialogue in which Socrates asks who is the most beautiful boy in Athens and then proceeds to give his view on temperance." (Matthew Yokobosky) The program also includes *The Dead Ones* and *Flowers of Asphalt*.--  
Jennifer Meehan

Thursday October 9

The Illiac Passion

"For me, locations and beautiful people have always been the backbone of my work."--GM, 1967

While a student at USC, Markopoulos wrote the screenplay *Prometheus Bound*, which eventually became the basis for his epic *The Illiac Passion*. Filmed in 1964, edited in 1965, it was finally seen in 1967. Featuring Robert Beauvais as Prometheus, *The Illiac Passion* includes performances by Gregory Battock, Gerard Malanga, Taylor Mead, Paul Swain, Andy Warhol and Markopoulos, in what Markopoulos refers to as "a testament to the New York scene, to the aura of film-making at that time." Markopoulos further commented, "I allowed myself to depart, to drift, to journey among the motions of the players I found during my odyssey; until finally, in the final version of *The Illiac Passion*, the players become but the molecules of the nude protagonist, gyrating and struggling, all in love, bound and unbound, from situation to situation in the vast sea of emotion which becomes the filmmaker's proudest endeavor." The soundtrack consists of Markopoulos's creative reading, with repetitions and silences, of Thoreaus's translation of *Prometheus Bound*.

(179)

Tuesday October 21  
Bliss, Gammelion

"*Gammelion* is sixty minutes in length; to the engrossed New World Film Spectator, seconds in eternity."--GM, 1967

The short *Bliss* was filmed in Hydra, Greece soon after Markopoulos and Richard Beavers moved to Europe. Using only available sunlight, and shooting at 12 frames-per-second, Markopoulos depicted the Greek church of St. John the Baptist and its interior frescoes. Similarly shot in available light and with only two roll of film, *Gammelion*, portrays Castello Roccasinibalda, a castle in Italy with which Markopoulos had long been entranced. Each "film phrase" consisted of only a few frames which he later combined with hundreds of fade-ins and fade-outs, extending five minutes of film to sixty. The sound track includes Rilke's text, "To be Loved, is to be Consumed..." read forward and in reverse. In "Correspondences of Smells and Visuals," an article Markopoulos wrote while working on *Gammelion*, he speculated about smell in film, and using a "single, well-known musical composition to relate to the film spectator what he might not otherwise receive from the static images, so brief..."

(179)

Thursday October 23

St. Acteon, Moment, Political Portraits (fragment), The Olympian

"If a filmmaker is truly a filmmaker...he possesses that mirror which presents for him (a) what is seen, (b) what is not seen, (c) the opposite of what is seen, (d) the opposite of what is not seen."--GM, 1971

*Political Portraits*, of which a fragment will be screened, relates to the films *Ming Green*, *Galaxie* and *Sorrows*. "They're three minute portraits of the people that I met in Switzerland and other places... I call them political portraits in the Greek sense, daily living.." *The Olympian*, a portrait of Alberto Moravia, was shot on the terrace of his house in Rome, and uses extensive superimposition and black celluloid, and includes a recording of Moravia speaking. *Moment* was filmed in the Tate Galleries in London with Barbara Hepworth. In 1971, Markopoulos filmed Harold Acton in the gardens of his villa, La Pieta. The footage became one of his last films, *Saint Acteon*.

(152)