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Elia Suleiman
INTRODUCES

Pickpocket

Robert Bresson

FRANCE, 1959

75 minutes ■ Black and White/35mm
Production Company: **Agnès Delahaie**
Producer: **Agnès Delahaie**
Screenplay: **Robert Bresson**
Cinematographer: **Léonce-Henry Burel**
Editor: **Raymond Lamy**
Production Designer: **Pierre Charbonnier**
Sound: **Antoine Archimbaud**
Music: **Jean-Baptiste Lully**
Principal Cast: **Martin Lassalle, Marika Green, Jean Pélégri, Dolly Scal, Pierre Leymarie**

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Toronto IFF
2002

"Since my father never gave me an 8mm camera for my eighth birthday, I never made short films when I was nine and did not accomplish my first feature film when I was 18. To my regret, I am not a film buff. I came to cinema very late in my life. And it is, I am aware now, a way of life. My life.

"Unlike some filmmakers, I have no one film that inspired or influenced my cinematic identity. There are at least a hundred filmmakers that did so, if not many more. What I retain from so many great films is a souvenir of certain scenes of these films. Flashes, or flashbacks. Recurrent flashes of *Pickpocket*, for instance, are the pickpocketing scenes. Their association to my memory is double.

"First, the folding and unfolding of money and wallets, in and out of wallets, in and out of pockets in a harmonious flow, in a space seemingly without gravity, yet at once confined and constrained within a firm frame, accumulating tension that threatens to break free or explode. Hence a cinematographic choreography so truthful to the choreography of the art of stealing.

"Second, a souvenir that goes back some two decades before I watched the film for the first time. When I was very poor and living in foreign lands, I encountered a man also from Nazareth who decided to help me earn some money. So he commenced to bless me with his teachings on the art of stealing from the cashiers when working behind bars. This spectacle had to be performed in front of

the customers – who had to be banned from being spectators, for obvious reasons. The challenge of this taboo art was that it was only possible when giving back change, so that some coins, after meticulous calculation, slid into my pocket. I received strict training. Needless to say, I have not maintained my mastery of the art of stealing for long!

"Ironically, after so many years have passed, I find myself engaged in an art where the rules of the game are built on the premise of showing, and the condition of the spectator seeing. I might be in the business of stealing moments instead of change. But the moments keep fleeting and still no arrest."

– Elia Suleiman



Elia Suleiman was born in Nazareth. In 1981 he went to New York City where he made his early short films, *Introduction to the End of an Argument* (91) and *Homage by Assassination* (92). In 1994, he returned to Jerusalem to found a film department at Bir Zeit University. His first feature, *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (96), was named the best debut feature at the Venice film festival in 1996. He now lives in Paris. *Divine Inspiration* (02) is his second feature.