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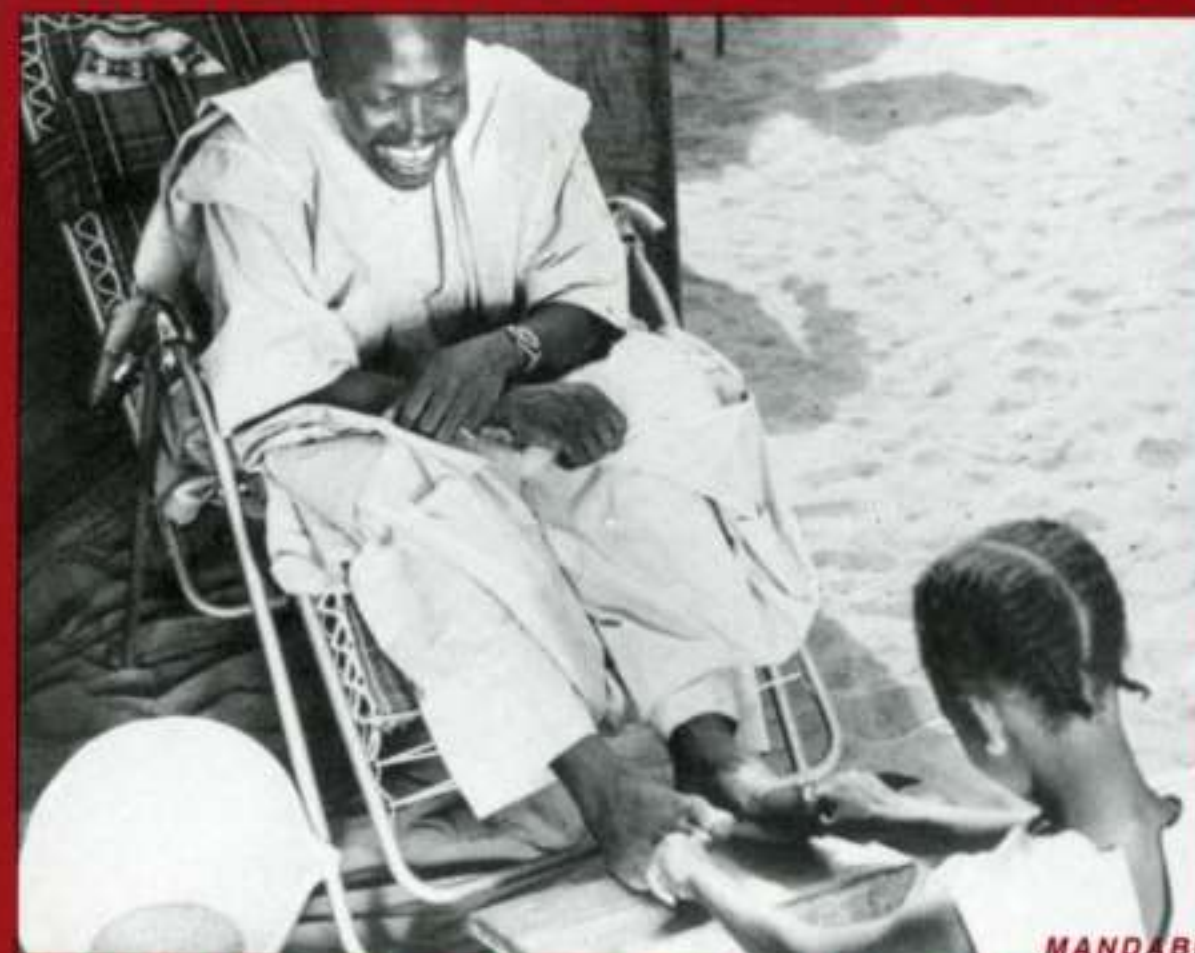
# OUSMANE SEMBÈNE

FILM RETROSPECTIVE • MAY 22 - 29

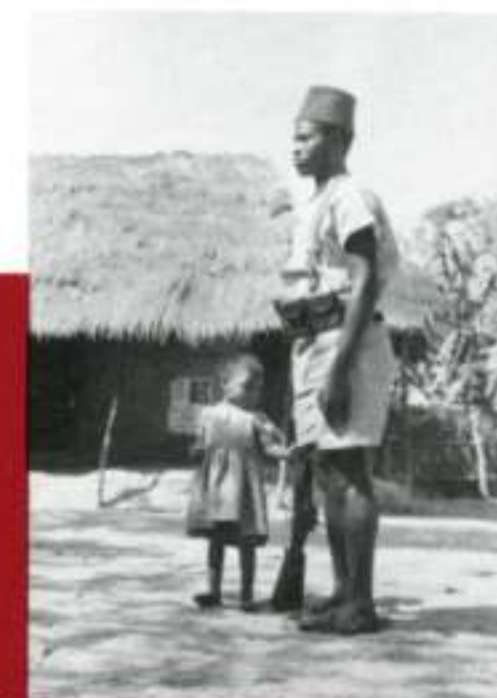
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## OUSMANE SEMBÈNE

FILM RETROSPECTIVE • 1964-1993



THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS



*Ousmane Sembène* is the most important figure in the establishment of an independent African cinema and is the best-known African filmmaker in the world. Born in 1923 in southern Senegal, Sembène was a longshoreman and union organizer, then a novelist of considerable repute before embarking on a filmmaking career. Sembène's appearance in Detroit—together with a full retrospective of his feature films—is a significant moment in the history of The Detroit Film Theatre and The Detroit Institute of Arts.

The Ousmane Sembène Film Retrospective is made possible by:  
*Cadillac Motor Car Division*  
*Metropolitan Detroit Cadillac Dealers*  
*General Motors Foundation*

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*The American Express Company*

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*Friends of African and African-American Art*  
*The Detroit Film Theatre of The Detroit Institute of Arts*  
*Cinematic Arts Council*



# OUSMANE SEMBÈNE

## FILM RETROSPECTIVE • 1964–1993

*Ousmane Sembène's* background has had a significant influence on his novels and films, which reflect a sophisticated directness and an avoidance of simplistic conclusions regarding post-colonial Africa. His work often centers on identity problems encountered by Africans caught between Africa and Europe, tradition and modernization. The concentrated realism of his early classics evolved into a rich, wide-ranging mixture of comedy, political and religious allegory, satire, traditional African forms, and biting social criticism. Sembène's career in filmmaking includes seven feature films and a small number of short films.

### Mandabi (1968)

**Sunday, May 22, 2 p.m.**

Unlocking—perhaps for the first time on screen—the complex daily world of modern Africa, Sembène's second feature was a bright burst of lightning on the world cinema scene. A deceptively simple story of a man who receives a money order and encounters a barrage of bureaucracy when he attempts to cash it, this is a moving, witty, altogether masterful portrait of an ancient civilization in the throes of change. A quarter-century after release, *Mandabi* remains fresh, exciting, warm, subtle and heartbreaking. **Following the showing of *Mandabi*, director Ousmane Sembène will be present to discuss his work.** \*Please note the special admission prices for this event.

(90 minutes • DIA Lecture Hall)

### Ceddo (1977)

**Tuesday, May 24, 7 p.m.**

*Ceddo* (translated loosely as "the feudal class") may well be the single most important film yet produced in Africa—an engrossing and magnificent national epic that defines its culture at a particular moment in history. While on the surface *Ceddo* is a riveting and entertaining political thriller about the kidnapping of a beautiful princess, the deeper subjects of Sembène's masterpiece include philosophy, fantasy, militant politics and at least two electrifying leaps across the centuries. If there is a modern motion picture that comes close to evoking the whole of the African experience, it is *Ceddo*. **Tonight's screening will be personally introduced by Ousmane Sembène.**

(120 minutes • DIA Auditorium)

### Black Girl (1965)

**Wednesday, May 25, 7 p.m.**

Sembène's debut feature made a profound impression at international film festivals in 1966 and, in fact, many historians date the evolution of African cinema from this point. Shot in an elegant, freewheeling style, *Black Girl* is the tale of a Senegalese maid taken to the Riviera by her employers, where she begins to realize that she is nothing more than property to her employers, literally "the black girl who belongs to..." Direct, bitter, angry yet restrained, *Black Girl* never loses sight of its central theme: the myth of decolonialization. Also on this program are two brilliant short films by Sembène: *Tauw* (1969), the eloquent tale of an unemployed dock worker, and *Borom Sarret* (1964), a stunning portrait of a day in the life of a cart driver in Dakar. **(110 minutes total • DIA Auditorium)**

### Emitai (1971)

**Thursday, May 26, 7 p.m.**

With assured, stunning images and brilliant stylistic authority, Sembène's timeless and elegant *Emitai* depicts the clash between French colonialists and the Diolas, a mystical African tribe, in the closing days of World War II. The tribe's women provide the first clear voice of resistance, and Sembène conveys their instinctual knowledge of survival as well as an astonishing and haunting visualization of the myths, rituals and history of this Senegalese tribe. This a perfect, utterly seamless work of art.

(101 minutes • DIA Auditorium)

### Camp de Thiaroye (1987)

**Friday, May 27, 7 p.m.**

Sembène's *Camp de Thiaroye*—co-directed with Thierno Faty Sow—is a powerful, explosive, fact-based drama which, like *Emitai*, deals with the dilemma of African troops in the French Army at the end of World War II (a turning point in African history when the colonial myth of white superiority began to collapse and an African consciousness strongly emerged). This fascinating epic is the saga of repatriated Senegalese infantrymen—many of whom, after heroic service, had been confined in Nazi concentration camps—who are placed in yet another camp upon their return in order to reestablish the structures of white oppression disrupted by the war.

(152 minutes • DIA Auditorium)

### Xala (1974)

**Saturday, May 28, 7 p.m.**

Zeroing in on the hypocritical posturing by African leaders on the subject of white colonial policies, this brilliantly witty satire deals with a self-satisfied, partially Westernized businessman who is suddenly struck down by the xala: a curse which renders its victim impotent. While he desperately chases after witch doctors and soothsayers in search of a cure, his impotence becomes a reflection of the impotence of emerging African nations over-dependent on European technology and bureaucratic structures. *Xala* is one of Sembène's most entertaining, important and powerful films.

(123 minutes • DIA Auditorium)

### Guelwaar (1993)

**Sunday, May 29, 4 p.m.**

Sembène's latest masterwork is a stinging comedy that revolves around the mysterious death—and even more mysterious disappearance after death—of a local political activist, philandering patriarch, and pillar of the local community. The tense standoff that ensues over the body's disappearance is just the beginning of an extraordinary tale that this master storyteller relates in a marvelous blend of comedy, political allegory, social satire, family drama and indictment of both homegrown corruption and neocolonialism. No filmmaker is a sharper critic of the internal problems of modern Africa, yet no film is a more powerful assertion of African pride and autonomy than *Guelwaar*.

(115 minutes • DIA Auditorium)

## Ticket Information (313) 833-2323

**General Admission: \$5 Students & Seniors: \$4**  
DFT discount coupons are available in books of five for \$17.50 and will be accepted for all performances.

**\*General Admission for *Mandabi* on Sunday, May 22: \$10**  
Students, Seniors and DIA Founders Society members: \$5  
DFT discount coupons will not be accepted for this date only.