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Author(s)	Andréa Picard
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Douro, faina fluvial (Hard work on the River Douro), Oliveira, Manoel de, 1931

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

Belle toujours, Oliveira, Manoel de, 2006

Singularidades de uma rapariga loura (Eccentricities of a blond-hair girl), Oliveira, Manoel de, 2009

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

MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA'S TIME REGAINED



*"Certainly one of the richest,
most cultured directors alive."*
– Variety

"An international treasure."
– Sight & Sound

LA LETTRE

*Never in the history of cinema has a centenary been celebrated for a living, breathing, working filmmaker, until now. At one hundred years old, Portuguese master Manoel de Oliveira has just made one of his sprightliest films to date, the gem-like miniature *Eccentricities of a Blond-Hair Girl*, and is, rather unsurprisingly, in production for yet another, his thirty-first feature film. Given the director's age, it was tempting to title the series "de Oliveira 101" (which he turns on December 11) but since this select tribute skews toward works unavailable in North America, it acts not as a primer, but rather as a likely first encounter with de Oliveira's largely unknown early films, included alongside some of our favourites. With every subsequent film, he seems to chip away at the characteristics that have come to define his work. De Oliveira's ongoing contribution to the history of cinema is not only of an historic length; it is weighty, ingenious, bold, wonderfully idiosyncratic, unpredictable and incomparably elegant.*

De Oliveira has long been considered the doyen of European cinema. His films make regular and highly anticipated appearances at Cannes and Venice and receive customary, if limited, theatrical releases across the Atlantic, though rarely do they catch on in North America. In his recent monograph on the director, Randal Johnson states it plainly: "Whereas in Europe he is often acclaimed as a master on the level of Carl Theodor Dreyer, Robert Bresson, Ingmar Bergman, and Roberto Rossellini, in the United States he is sometimes seen as difficult or excessively cerebral." More than sometimes, one could argue, and add Canada to this polite understatement. With so few North American releases, and festivals content to show every two or three of his films, de Oliveira's status here is in need of redressing. It is indeed telling that Randal's 2007 monograph is the first on the centenarian published in the English language.

Born into a wealthy family in Porto, de Oliveira was an actor and champion athlete before he became a filmmaker. His prowess knew no bounds: from professional pole-vaulting, diving, to race-car driving, early signs of an unstoppable being. He turned to filmmaking at twenty-three, making *Douro, Faina Fluvial* in 1931, a silent, lyrical ciné-poem influenced by his love of Vertov, Vigo, and German Expressionism and filmed in the style of Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. But de Oliveira was not content solely to film documentary images of workers on the Douro River and choreographed a fictitious scene, signalling an interest in hybridity concomitant with his still evolving ideas about cinematic realism. He continued to make short documentaries on Portugal (as he does to this day), and during WWII and dictator Salazar's censorship-ridden "Estado Novo" he completed *Aniki-Bóbó*, a children's film set in a working-class Porto neighbourhood, and widely considered the precursor to Italian neorealism. While shooting with non-professional actors in real locations, de Oliveira admits that the film is neorealist mainly in attitude, and in its barely covert critique of authoritarianism. His brand of realism, has, right from the start, been charged with symbolism and whimsy and a strong authorial voice, reflecting his doctrine that film is always a *representation* of life, thus always a work of art.

By all accounts, de Oliveira is a radical, an iconoclastic and contradictory artist who has unfailingly eschewed mainstream strictures in order to pursue a lifelong exploration of his artistic vision, which includes an abiding dialogue with the artists of his time, most notably Portuguese writers. To him, cinema is a synthesis of many arts and his films have used music, painting, theatre and especially literature to form a unique brand of aesthetics – a sort of archaic modernism that some have wrongfully claimed is "uncinematic." In privileging dialogue (monologues mostly) and the written word over camera movement, and regularly giving equal weight to objects and people in his majestic, unraveling tapestries, de Oliveira has subverted traditional film language. Though he's adapted from a number of sources including Paul Claudel and Madame de Lafayette, three writers in particular have played a significant role in the development of his career, namely Camilo Castelo Branco (*Doomed Love*), José Régio (*Benilde or the Virgin Mother*) and Agustina Bessa-Luís (*Francisca, Valley of Abraham*), all three of whom contribute to his "Tetralogy of Frustrated Love," a landmark of European cinema.

Part of what makes these films so revolutionary is their use of frontal (and somewhat blank) address and omniscient narration, which problematizes traditional space and temporality in the cinema. Banishing the shot/countershot from his work, de Oliveira developed modes of frontal address and temporality never before seen.

From the "Tetralogy" onward, the illusionary nature of cinema is upended by the director time and time again, with witty and wicked insertions into his narratives, suggesting an artist at work whose point-of-view exists above and beyond the story unfolding. When a title card emerges at the beginning of *Francisca* announcing that "The action of this film is supposed to take place in the 1930s," the film asserts itself as a construct, belonging to two separate temporalities. And this is where de Oliveira's contribution to the history and evolution of the cinema is so great and so magnificent. By oscillating between the story's period and the time when the film is produced, and relishing in the resulting anachronisms, de Oliveira has forged some of the most original works onscreen. A certain indeterminacy hangs over many of his characters, as if they are caught between two worlds, not unlike the director himself. After all, de Oliveira was actually born during the *belle époque*, began making films in the silent era, and has thereby contributed to the history of cinema throughout much of that very history. *The New York Times*' A.O. Scott recently cited anachronism ("encountering the old and new") as proof of "late style," but de Oliveira's use of temporal *mise en abyme*, wisdom and transparency have been a hallmark of his oeuvre since the Seventies – the longest twilight phase of any director.

"The enduring career of Manoel de Oliveira is one of the seven wonders of the modern film world."

– Screen International

Through regime changes, paradigm shifts in social mores, moods, artistic movements and cinema technology, de Oliveira has consistently returned to his grand (and sometimes grandiose) themes – of spiritual crisis and crushing guilt, deathly passion, sacrifice and thwarted love, the history of Portugal and Western civilization with their attendant notions of empire and nationhood, existential doubt, the role of the artist, aging and remembrance. A repertoire of favourite and very fine actors has accompanied him throughout this incredible journey, tellurian messengers of the director's sagacious search for truth, both spiritual and intellectual. Leonor Silveira, Luís Miguel Cintra, Ricardo Trêpa (his grandson), and to some degree John Malkovich, are as key to his later career as theatre and literature were to his earlier period.

Since the Eighties (his seventies!), de Oliveira has made an astonishing one film per year, in a sort of miraculous time regained (and extended display of late style). Moving away from the fluvial lengths, theatrical soliloquies, exceptionally long takes, and the austerity of his previous work, many of de Oliveira's recent films are spry and taut, as if shrinking in old age but gaining in youth. His themes remain deeply romantic and philosophical, increasingly cynical (*Je rentre à la maison*, *A Talking Picture*, *Eccentricities of a Blond-Hair Girl*) and his approach ironic, detached, cheeky and as mischievous as ever. Both his old and new works are rewarding in a way that so few films are today, in their dialogue with the other arts, in their boundless love of pedagogy, language and history, in their transgressions and ambiguity. Their leisurely pacing, logorrhea, and grand themes set them apart, making them seem superficially out of fashion or willfully obtuse. But their state-ly tranquility and transcendent calm offer endless rebuke to our frantic modern world. Though they've always limned the canon, they may best reside on the outside, slightly insolent and impervious. Older than the Portuguese Republic, de Oliveira, it seems, will forever retain his colossal youth. – **Andréa Picard**

This series is an abridged version of the 2008 retrospective, *The Talking Pictures of Manoel de Oliveira*, organized by Florence Almozini, BAMcinématek, New York. We wish to thank the following individuals and institutions, who have made this series possible: Florence Almozini, BAMcinématek, New York; Juliet Clark, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; Sara Moreira, Cinemateca Portuguesa-Museu do Cinema, Lisbon; Paul Richer, Pyramide International, Paris; Diana Sanchez, Toronto; and Manuel de Oliveira Filmes, Porto, Portugal.

“One of the most original and profound artists working in cinema. . . . What makes Oliveira unique, is that he is not only the oldest living working director, but that his films have retained their quality.”

– Ronald Bergen, *The Guardian*



Director Manoel de Oliveira

TORONTO PREMIERE! OPORTO OF MY CHILDHOOD

(PORTO DA MINHA INFANCIA)

Director: Manoel de Oliveira

Portugal 2001 61 minutes

With: Ricardo Trêpa, Maria de Medeiros, Leonor Silveira

A delectable Proustian confection, *Oporto of My Childhood*, shown here in its belated Toronto premiere, is Manoel de Oliveira's touching tribute to his birthplace. An homage to Porto as much as to personal history, the film unfolds through the filter of memory as de Oliveira recounts his passage to adulthood via photos, reenactments, archival footage, scenes from his first ever film, *Douro, Faina Fluvial*, poems and touching appearances from friends and family, and a comedic cameo from the director himself. Not unlike the more recent city-essay-memoirs, such as Terence Davies' *Of Time and the City* and Victor Erice's *La Morte rouge*, *Oporto* interweaves memory, fantasy, longing and an unabashed love of the cinema. The film begins with a conductor setting the stage for this utterly delightful frolic down memory lane, which includes sequined flapper dresses (remember, he was born in 1908!) the ruins of his family home, Porto's famous café culture and the only time de Oliveira has acknowledged his nation's *saudade*, that indescribable melancholy that limns Portugal's soul. *Oporto*, which *Variety* called "charming and erudite," embodies a quintessential de Oliveira contradiction – that of humour and seriousness.

Preceded by

IMPORTED ARCHIVAL 35MM PRINT! DOURO, FAINA FLUVIAL

Director: Manoel de Oliveira

Portugal 1931 18 minutes silent

Long considered a masterpiece of Portuguese cinema, *Douro, Faina Fluvial* is de Oliveira's first film, made at the tail end of the silent era when he was twenty-three years old. A city symphony in the tradition of Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, *Douro* was equally inspired by the director's love of German Expressionism, Dziga Vertov, and Jean Vigo's exuberant *À propos de Nice* (screening on November 9) and laid the roots for de Oliveira's interest in the hybrid of documentary and fiction. Its exquisite chiaroscuro imagery lyrically reveals Porto's transition between its agricultural past and its industrialized future.

Friday, October 9 7:00 p.m.

Presented with live piano accompaniment by Andrei Streliaev.



ECCENTRICITIES OF A BLOND-HAIR GIRL



DE OLIVEIRA'S LATEST! ECCENTRICITIES OF A BLOND-HAIR GIRL

(SINGULARIDADES DE UNA RAPARIGA LOURA)

Director: Manoel de Oliveira

Portugal/Spain/France 2009 64 minutes

Cast: Ricardo Trêpa, Catarina Wallenstein

In fine form and displaying no signs of slowing down, the now centenarian de Oliveira brings us a deceptively simple gem. Told with a "dreamlike quality of recollection" (*Variety*), *Eccentricities of a Blond-Hair Girl* is based on a short story by Eça de Queiroz, often regarded as the Flaubert of Portugal. While on a train bound for the Algarve, a visibly beleaguered man (de Oliveira's grandson/regular, Ricardo Trêpa) recounts his troubles to his sympathetic neighbour (Leonor Silveira). He is Macário, a former Lisbon accountant who fell madly in love with Luisa, the titular blonde-haired beauty who lived across the street from his office window. Everyday he would spy on her, as she coquettishly waved her Chinese fan, performing a coy, surreptitious dance of seduction. Macário eventually decamped for Cape Verde where he could make enough money to ask Luisa's hand in marriage. But all is not what it seems, and de Oliveira's characteristic detached irony, whimsical characters and anachronistic and droll storytelling turn this miniature morality tale into another one of his lasting accounts of thwarted love. "De Oliveira celebrates his hundredth birthday with a blithe shaggy dog story that shows his storytelling at its simplest and most pleasurable" (*Screen Daily*).

Saturday, October 10 7:00 p.m.

DE OLIVEIRA'S TETRALOGY OF FRUSTRATED LOVE

Not shown in Toronto in nearly twenty years, de Oliveira's "Tetralogy of Frustrated Love" (a.k.a. "Tetralogy of Thwarted Love") is a cinematic monument, an enormous contribution to the history of cinema, all-too-unknown in North America. Together, *The Past and the Present*, *Benilde or the Virgin Mother*, *Doomed Love* and *Francisca* comprise a body of work that has come to define de Oliveira's majestic style, and is considered the apex of the filmmaker's creative voice and method.

IMPORTED ARCHIVAL 35MM PRINT!

FRANCISCA

Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal 1981 166 minutes
Cast: Teresa Menezes, Diogo Dória

Francisca is the "superb and grandiose conclusion" (*Le Monde*) of de Oliveira's Tetralogy, and one of the great works of melancholia. Based on a book by Agustina Bessa-Luís, one of de Oliveira's main writing collaborators, the film chronicles the true story of the tragic nineteenth-century love affair between Fanny Owen and José Augusto, whose all-consuming passion was ill-fated from the start. But *Francisca* takes *Doomed Love*'s Romeo and Juliet story to extremes of darkness; the entire film is composed of a shadow play, where death and the supernatural linger over the hapless lovers. The film marks de Oliveira's extensive use of literary intertitles (which he continues to use to this day) and furthers his meticulously stylized tableaux and sumptuous life friezes. *Francisca* caused a major sensation at Cannes when it premiered in the Directors' Fortnight, and *Cabiers du cinéma* declared it "a masterpiece that can't even be compared to the films in the official competition." Buoyant praise for the film seems endless: "It is as if Jean-Marie Straub had collaborated with Max Ophüls: the refined mechanism of the materialist cinema is brought to bear on the most delicate mysteries of human emotions, in what can be described as an attempt to photograph and measure a soul" (Dave Kehr, *Chicago Reader*). "The dialogues in *Francisca* are absolutely magnificent and among the most beautiful in all of cinema. . . . Whether you know his previous works or not, one certainly should not miss *Francisca*" (Charles Tesson, *Cabiers du cinéma*).

Sunday, October 11 4:00 p.m.



IMPORTED ARCHIVAL 35MM PRINT!

BENILDE OR THE VIRGIN MOTHER

(BENILDE OU A VIRGEM-MÃE)
Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal 1975 112 minutes
Cast: Maria Amélia Aranda, Jorge Rolla, Varela Silva

An adaptation of José Régio's 1947 play of the same name, *Benilde or the Virgin Mother* is an elegant and sombre chamber piece that further confirmed de Oliveira's mastery. A work of daring austerity whose triptych structure fearlessly transcends the fourth wall, *Benilde* uses frontal address, a static camera and one setting per act to tell the story of a young woman who believes she is carrying the child of God through an immaculate conception – a subject de Oliveira would return to thirty years later in *Magic Mirror*. Sequestered from the world by her overbearing father, a tentative Benilde grows up in a pious environment on a remote farm, and wanders the fields at night in a somnambulist state. When her father and governess learn of her pregnancy, various scenarios are proposed, none of which will quell Benilde's increasingly fragile peace of mind. Considered an influence on Rohmer's *The Marquise of O*, released the following year, *Benilde* is startling in its portrayal of the cruelty of doubt and "boasts the most astonishing opening shot to be found in any Oliveira film" (Jonathan Rosenbaum).

Sunday, October 18 7:00 p.m.



IMPORTED ARCHIVAL 35MM PRINT!

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

(O PASSADO E O PRESENTE)
Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal 1971 115 minutes
Cast: Maria de Saisset, Manuela de Freitas

The first film in de Oliveira's celebrated "Tetralogy of Frustrated Love," *The Past and the Present* is a mordant black comedy and excoriating exposé of the foibles of the bourgeoisie, which, according to *Sight & Sound* "could have become a world success," had it been properly distributed. The film's main protagonist is raven-haired Vanda, a venomous and sexy necrophiliac who is obsessed with her dead husband, Ricardo. Her morbid veneration of her dearly departed has taken over her ornate mansion, as well as her new husband, Firmino, who must bear the ridicule of his wife's pathology, made worse by the constant visits of Ricardo's twin brother, played by the same actor in a twist anticipating Buñuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire*. And like *Rules of the Game*, the film is a parlor game of rich couples whose duplicity, formal rituals, and perpetual *va-et-vient* transpire beneath the watchful gazes of the servants. "Oliveira directs the cast with exemplary care, and his camera style uses mirrors, doors and windows to wondrous effect. . . . This rare amalgam of literate text, controlled ensemble playing, music (and silence), plus an all-seeing camera, produces a rich and heady feast" (John Gillett, *Sight and Sound*).

Thursday, October 22 7:00 p.m.



IMPORTED ARCHIVAL 35MM PRINT!

DOOMED LOVE

(AMOR DE PERDIÇÃO)
Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal 1978 262 minutes
Cast: António Sequeira Lopes, Cristina Hauser

"By any measure, *Doomed Love* is a masterpiece, an antiromantic romantic epic with compositions that evoke Renaissance painting and a convulsive narrative that keeps you on the edge of your seat for nearly four and a half hours" (Scott Foundas, *LA Weekly*). Based on one of the most important and popular works of Portuguese literature, *Doomed Love* was recently revealed to North American audiences as one of de Oliveira's greatest works. Closely following Camilo Castelo Branco's eponymous novel from 1862, de Oliveira creates a radical and unprecedented fusion of theatre, literature and cinema, which, according to Jonathan Rosenbaum, is rivaled only by von Stroheim's *Greed*. In this doleful tale of forbidden passion, the doomed love of the title belongs to Teresa Albuquerque and Simão Botelho, whose feuding aristocratic families pave the way for a deadly *ménage-à-trois* when another woman steps in to take Teresa's place. De Oliveira credits Straub-Huillet's *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* as one of the major influences on the film, which is told through a bold series of *tableaux vivants*. Like the other works in his "Tetralogy," *Doomed Love* makes great use of omniscient narration and a host of distancing effects (static camera, lack of close-ups), "paring things down to the unspectacular, so that when something dramatic does flare up . . . the result is tremendous" (Elliott Stein). The film was originally shot on 16mm and made for Portuguese TV where it unsurprisingly floundered and was subjected to scorn. But its mythic status grew and when a 35mm blow-up was theatrically released some time later, this *film maudit* was hailed as a European masterpiece, ensuring that de Oliveira was "recognized as one of the great modern filmmakers" (Randal Johnson). No cinephile can afford to miss this date with *Doomed Love*, which is unavailable on DVD, and screening tonight in an archival print imported from Portugal.

Sunday, October 25 6:15 p.m.

Please note: there will be a 15-minute intermission approximately half-way through the screening.



“If he deserves to be regarded as a master – and I believe that he does – his mastery belongs partially in an eccentric category of his own invention, comparable to that of Thelonious Monk as an idiosyncratic jazz pianist.”

– Jonathan Rosenbaum

JE RENTRE À LA MAISON

(I'M GOING HOME)
Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal/France 2001 90 minutes
Cast: Michel Piccoli, John Malkovich

“With *I'm Going Home* – a tale as gracefully transcendent as the film itself – Oliveira has made an impossibly delicate, indirect film about the least delicate of subjects: mortality” (Dave Kehr, *Film Comment*). A hit in Cannes and at TIFF (and just about everywhere else it played), *Je rentre à la maison* is a deeply moving film, and gives Michel Piccoli one of the greatest roles in his august career. Eschewing sentimentality for a sober yet affecting humanism, the film centres on aging theatre actor Gilbert Valence, who suffers the unthinkable loss of his wife, daughter and son-in-law in a tragic car accident. “All I can do is fall,” he says prophetically during the performance of Ionesco’s *Exit the King* that begins the film. But fall he doesn’t, and instead finds ways to cope, seeking out daily rituals to guide him, defending his role as an artist and loving his grandson Serge, the sole surviving member of his family. Filmed in Paris (with a camera that is constantly subverting our expectations) at the time of the jubilee celebrations, the film has a prescient *fin-de-siècle* feel, especially when Valence confirms: “I have a past that helps me fill in the voids of the present.” When he is offered a last minute role in a film adaptation of *Ulysses* made by a renowned American director (perfectly played by de Oliveira favourite John Malkovich), the pressures of life and art weigh upon him heavily and equally – a message that de Oliveira has never ceased to convey.

Friday, October 16 7:00 p.m. Rated G.

A TALKING PICTURE

(UM FILME FALADO)
Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal/France/Italy 2003 96 minutes
Cast: Leonor Silveira, Catherine Deneuve, John Malkovich

A surprise hit, *A Talking Picture* is one of a handful of de Oliveira films to be distributed in North America, and its outlandish and brazen ending remains a matter of hot, critical debate. Is it brilliant or preposterous, or both? Combining the director’s insatiable love of language and history of Western civilization with many of his favourite actors, the film is a summation of the director’s late period and, despite its deeply cynical message (a clarion call for these post 9/11 times?) is a refreshing and all-too-rare celebration of knowledge. History professor Rosa Maria and her eight-year-old daughter Maria Joana set off on a cruise from Lisbon, en route to Bombay to be reunited with their husband and father. The trip takes them through the cradles of Western civilization where Rosa will finally see the monuments she has studied and taught. Along the way, three famous actresses – played by Catherine Deneuve, Irene Pappas, and Stefania Sandrelli – join the cruise and the captain’s table for dinner. A lengthy scene ensues in which these leading ladies discuss, in a sort of pre-Babel roundelay, de Oliveira’s preferred themes of love, art, and history with the American captain, a charismatic John Malkovich, struggling to keep up. “With this sharply cut gem of a film, the Portuguese director Manoel de Oliveira again shows himself to be a master of the medium” (Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*).

Friday, October 23 9:15 p.m.

IMPORTED ARCHIVAL 35MM PRINT!

ANIKI-BÓBÓ

Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal 1942 71 minutes
Cast: Américo Botelho, Feliciano David

Don’t miss de Oliveira’s rarely seen impressive feature debut. A landmark precursor to Italian neorealism, *Aniki-Bóbó* is a remarkable children’s film made with meager means during WWII and under the stifling Salazar dictatorship, shot with non-professional child actors in real locations in de Oliveira’s native Porto. Its incantatory nursery rhyme title reflects the nature of a “cops and robbers” type children’s game in which authoritarianism is pitted against rebellion and freedom – the film’s underlying theme. A delightful yet dark tale of two young boys’ rivalry for a girl, *Aniki-Bóbó* introduces the love triangle, which was to become so central to the director’s work, and creates a fascinating role reversal; children encounter adult dilemmas while grown ups seem irrational and extreme. Though there are moments of pure charm and Max Linder-like physical comedy, the film is a moral and social reflection of the times, with a barely covert comment on oppression: the harsh outburst of “Silence! Silence! Silence!” from the teacher in response to the spirited and cackling students seems especially revealing. It’s no surprise, then, that *Aniki-Bóbó* was denounced upon its release for its supposed immorality, and its ensuing commercial failure, paired with de Oliveira’s persecution at the hands of the government, ensured that the director would not make another feature film for twenty years. “There’s an archaic coyness about *Aniki-Bóbó*, but its mix of innocence and Vigo-esque mischief is winning” (*Sight & Sound*).

Saturday, October 24 7:00 p.m.

LA LETTRE

(A CARTA)
Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal/France/Spain 1999 107 minutes
Cast: Pedro Abrunhosa, Chiara Mastroianni

Winner of the Jury Prize in Cannes, *La Lettre* is a loose and charmingly eccentric adaptation of Madame de Lafayette’s seventeenth-century classic, *La Princesse de Clèves*, starring Chiara Mastroianni (whose parents both worked with de Oliveira) and Portuguese rock star Pedro Abrunhosa. Set in contemporary Paris amid a tony set, the film centres on the rich and beautiful, yet deeply melancholic Catherine de Clèves, whose chaste values put her at odds with the times. Like Ema from *Valley of Abraham*, she marries a man she doesn’t love, but unlike the former, cannot bring herself to act upon her adulterous desires and falls prey to increasingly perilous self-torment. In head-to-toe Cerruti, Mastroianni is the embodiment of mourning chic. The Duke de Nemours, in one of the strangest casting choices ever, is played by a brawny rocker in full regalia (sunglasses and leather trench), who seems to be portraying himself as much as the film’s protagonist. With many such cheeky and virtuoso flourishes, *La Lettre* is as ambiguous as it is ironic and is “unquestionably one of [de Oliveira’s] supreme achievements” (Piers Handling, Toronto International Film Festival). “A raw spiritual allegory of the war between the flesh and spirit” (Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*).

Friday, October 30 7:00 p.m.



"If he'd been working in the '60s (the last era in which excellence and status were directly related), or in a more influential country, he'd be venerated like Bresson or Dreyer."

— Georgia Brown, *The Village Voice*

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BELLE DE JOUR

BELLE TOUJOURS

Director: Manoel de Oliveira
Portugal/France 2007 68 minutes
Cast: Michel Piccoli, Bulle Ogier

Conceived as a tribute to Luis Buñuel and Jean-Claude Carrière, *Belle toujours* is an unlikely sequel to *Belle de jour* that threatens to reveal the latter's notorious concluding secret. Enlisting Michel Piccoli to revisit his role of Monsieur Husson, a lecherous and immoral playboy who has secretly been in love with Séverine Sérizy (the Belle of the title) all these years, de Oliveira could not convince Deneuve to reprise her role as Belle, here played by Bulle Ogier in a silken blonde wig, providing a twist somehow fitting for a nod to Buñuel. When Husson spots Séverine at a concert, he tracks her down and convinces her to have dinner with him, armed with the promise of revealing the unsolved question that has haunted her for the past thirty-eight years. Begrudgingly accepting his invitation, Séverine sits uncomfortably during much of their candlelit dinner as an increasingly drunk Husson attempts to reignite his own sense of fantasy, and not without a dose of his former cruelty. Weakened by age, solitude and alcohol, Husson nevertheless initiates this cat and mouse game with great vigour. Idiosyncratic rather than merciless like its predecessor, *Belle toujours* offers a fascinating portrait of aging and regret, while Paris — itself a timeless beauty — continues to provide the resplendent backdrop.

Sunday, November 1 6:00 p.m.

BELLE DE JOUR

Director: Luis Buñuel
France/Italy 1967 101 minutes
Cast: Catherine Deneuve, Jean Sorel, Michel Piccoli

Inciting outrage upon its release, *Belle de jour* no longer causes scandal but some of its scenes are no less shocking today. Surrealist mischief-maker Luis Buñuel, with the help of an extraordinary script by Jean-Claude Carrière (based on Joseph Kessel's 1928 novel), gives Catherine Deneuve one of the juiciest roles of her career as a frigid young newlywed with masochistic sexual fantasies. While her docile doctor husband (Jean Sorel) is at work, Séverine Sérizy (Deneuve), decked out in crisp, snug YSL, summons the nerve to investigate a high-class brothel where her fantasies can be played out before dinner time. Teeming with unforgettable scenes — Deneuve's placid, porcelain face being pummeled with manure, for one — *Belle de jour* naughtily confounds reality and fantasy, enlisting us in its kinky games. Its infamous open ending is frustrating, thrilling, and unequivocally brilliant. *Belle de jour* "is possibly the best-known erotic film of modern times, perhaps the best" (Roger Ebert). "Of all the supposedly challenging attractions playing locally in our supposedly more enlightened era, the most compellingly erotic and entertaining spectacle is still provided by *Belle de jour*" (Andrew Sarris).

Sunday, November 1 7:30 p.m.
Rated R.

VALLEY OF ABRAHAM

(VALE ABRAÃO)
Director: Manoel de Oliveira
France/Switzerland/Portugal 1993 187 minutes
Cast: Leonor Silveira, Luís Miguel Cintra

Widely considered de Oliveira's greatest film, *Valley of Abraham* placed prominently on our Best of the Nineties poll and remains at the apex of the director's eight-decade career. Based on *Madame Bovary*, but using Agustina Bessa-Luís's version of the Flaubert classic, the film tells the story of Ema (the luminous Leonor Silveira, in her most memorable role), a young woman whose beauty is so troubling that it causes men to veer off the highway. Well aware of the power she wields, Ema becomes addicted to desire and seduction, twin forces that take over her life. She settles on Carlos (masterfully played by Luís Miguel Cintra), a respected and wealthy doctor who brings her to the enchanting *Valley of Abraham*, a paradisiacal land of vineyards and natural beauty, which seems to fuel her endless passions and sense of discovery. A hymn to Portugal as much as it is a cautionary and voyeuristic tale of unfulfilled desire, *Valley of Abraham* is replete with stunning locations, displays a restrained, elegant style and is punctuated by the music of Beethoven and Debussy used to mischievously ironic effect, not unlike the observatory narration, which has a candid and amusing point-of-view of its own. "The film is a grand, singularly idiosyncratic work, as austere as Robert Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* and as thick with narrative details and chatty asides as *Little Dorrit*. It mesmerizes, sometimes maddens and tests the emotional and physical reflexes" (Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*).

Monday, November 2 7:00 p.m.