

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## FIFTH ANNUAL 'FIRST LOOK' FESTIVAL OFFERS AN INTERNATIONAL ARRAY OF FILMS, MANY ENGAGED WITH THEMES OF CINEMA AND ART

**Festival to open with U.S. premiere of *Francofonia*, Alexander Sokurov's freewheeling poetic essay film about the Louvre and Paris**

**January 8–24, 2016**

Astoria, New York, December 4, 2015—Museum of the Moving Image has announced the lineup for the First Look Festival, its annual showcase for inventive new international cinema, which runs from January 8 through 24, 2016 and is filled with New York and U.S. premieres. Now in its fifth year, the Festival, which has been called “the season’s indispensable film event” (*Artforum*), will have a special focus this year on the love of cinema, art, and the practice of filmmaking. These themes are evident in the opening night film, **Alexander Sokurov's *Francofonia***, an inventive and freewheeling portrait of the Louvre, European culture, and the role of the museum. The focus on cinema as subject is evident in Portuguese director Manuel Mozos's exquisite portrait of João Bénard da Costa, the late director of the Portuguese Film Museum; a playful autobiographical work by the French film critic and filmmaker Louis Skorecki; and a duo of intimate behind-the-scenes films about American director Jim Jarmusch. The Festival also has a strong focus on avant-garde films engaged with the physicality of the medium, with films by Margaret Honda, Ken Jacobs, Bjoern Kammerer, and the late Andrew Noren; and formally innovative films such as Jonathan Perel's structuralist study of oppressive Argentine architecture, and Dominic Gagnon's gonzo YouTube assemblages.

“First Look is a festival designed to renew and reinvigorate the audience’s engagement with the moving image art form,” said Chief Curator David Schwartz. “The emphasis is on works that cannot be easily defined, that create new cinematic forms, and have a spirit of invention and inquiry.”

First Look 2016 starts on Friday, January 8, with a screening of *Francofonia* followed by an opening reception. The lineup includes more than 50 films and digital works of varying lengths from Argentina, Austria, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, France, Iceland, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States. All of the films have played to acclaim at international film festivals, with many New York premieres (and some U.S. and World premieres). In addition, the Festival will include a retrospective selection of films (including *Johnny Guitar* and *The Limits of Control*) that have a direct

relationship to some of the new films.

The Festival will also continue its programming partnership with FIDMarseille, the adventurous cutting-edge French documentary festival, with a day of screenings on Sunday, January 24, featuring six films that premiered at FID and with Festival Director Jean-Pierre Rehm in person.

First Look films were programmed by Chief Curator David Schwartz, Associate Film Curator Eric Hynes, and guest curator Mónica Savirón.

**Tickets will go on sale Thursday, December 17, at 12:00 p.m. at [movingimage.us/firstlook](http://movingimage.us/firstlook). A full schedule with descriptions will also be posted at that time.**

Featured films in First Look 2016:

**OPENING NIGHT FILM:**

***Francofonia*** (Dir. Alexander Sokurov, France/Germany/Netherlands, 2015, 87 mins.)

**U.S. premiere.** Taking as its starting point a portrait of the world-famous Louvre Museum, the new film by the great Russian director Alexander Sokurov (*Russian Ark*) is a freewheeling, speculative essay film with documentary and fiction elements as it considers the essential relationship between art, culture, and history. A Music Box Films release; opens in theaters April 1.

***Abandoned Goods*** (Dir. Pia Borg and Edward Lawrenson. U.K., 2014, 37 mins.) Years after a mental institution in England has shuttered, a discovery of thousands of artworks, created by patients both skilled and amateur, inspires an intricate cinematic haunting that is part documentary essay, part mournful rebuke from the beyond. Screening with ***Crystal World*** (Dir. Pia Borg. 2013, 12 mins.): Borg enacts a different kind of seance in this disquieting gloss on J.G. Ballard's novel, pairing stop-motion underwater photography with the ghosts of *The Night of the Hunter*.

***Behind Jim Jarmusch*** (Dir. Léa Rinaldi. U.S./France, 2009, 52 mins.) and ***Traveling at Night with Jim Jarmusch*** (Dir. Léa Rinaldi. U.S./France, 2014, 50 mins. **N.Y. premiere**) Léa Rinaldi proves herself to be a great observational filmmaker in this intimate duo of behind-the-scenes films, made on the sets of *The Limits of Control* and *Only Lovers Left Alive*. A blend of spontaneity and control is revealed in Jarmusch's collaboration with cinematographer Christopher Doyle in *Limits* and actors Tilda Swinton and Tom Hiddleston in *Only Lovers*.

**Films by Björn Kämmerer** (Dir. Björn Kämmerer. Austria, 2004–2015, 35mm.) Austrian filmmaker Björn Kämmerer makes sensuous yet rigorous visual studies in 35mm film, transforming photographed imagery into abstract patterns, with great attention to light and form. This 45-minute program includes *Navigator*, *Trigger*, *Gyre*,

*Turret, Torque, Escalator, Aim, Dawn, and Sicherheitsalarm.* Organized by Aliza Ma, program director at the Metrograph.

***Capital Cuba*** (Dir. Johann Lurf. Cuba/Austria, 2015, 12 mins., 35mm.) **N.Y. premiere.** A syncopated visual study of the Cuban seascape in Old Havana and the town of Casa Blanca uses striking images and an intricate editing rhythm to look at the clash between industry and nature.

***Color Correction*** (Dir. Margaret Honda. U.S., 2015, 101 mins., 35mm) **N.Y. premiere.** A meditation on the essential nature of celluloid film as a filter, Margaret Honda's debut feature was made using timing tapes for a random Hollywood feature film and presents a succession of uniform fields of color, each a surprise.

***I Am the People (Je suis le peuple)*** (Dir. Anna Roussillon. France/Egypt, 2014, 110 min.) **N.Y. premiere.** Far from Cairo's Tahrir Square, where throngs of protesters agitate for sweeping political change, poor villagers in the Egyptian south monitor the situation on TV and in daily newspapers, unaffected by the tumult in every practical sense yet also keenly aware of what it could all mean. Intimate, engaging, and humorous, *I Am the People* finds wisdom and community where most films wouldn't even think to look for it.

***Jet Lag*** (Dir. Eloy Domínguez Serén. Spain, 2014, 52 mins.) A documentary crew films a quiet night at a remote gas station, in a scene evoking an Edward Hopper painting. But a surprise visit changes things, and the lines between documentary and fiction begin to blur.

***João Bénard da Costa—Others Will Love the Things I Have Loved (João Bénard da Costa: Outros amarão as coisas que eu ameí)*** (Dir. Manuel Mozos. Portugal, 2014, 76 mins.) **U.S. premiere.** In his lyrical portrait of João Bénard da Costa (1935–2009) the beloved director of the Portuguese Film Museum, acclaimed director Manuel Mozos reveals the heart of a lifelong obsession with painting and movies. A love letter to cinema, art, and to Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar*.

***Le Juif de Lascaux*** (Dir. Louis Skorecki. France, 2015, 52 mins.) The well-known film critic and filmmaker Louis Skorecki has created a wonderfully offbeat and autobiographical enquiry into his Jewish identity. The film is a series of unexpected vignettes, and is filled with Yiddish expressions, culinary treats, variations on Adam and Eve, animal masks and more.

***Lenz Elegy*** (Dir. Christophe Bisson. France, 2015, 22 mins.) A loose adaptation from Georg Büchner's novel *Lenz*, the film traces the winter wanderings through the woods of its hero, who lives on the edge of madness.

**Maesta** (Dir. Andy Guérif. France, 2015, 62 mins.) An enormous multi-panel painting of the Passion, by Sienese master Duccio, comes to life, panel by panel, in this wondrous journey from 14th century painting to 21st century widescreen cinema.

**Meurtrière** (Dir. Philippe Grandrieux. France, 2015, 60 mins.) With “anxiety” as his stated subject, Philippe Grandrieux creates a slow-motion, mesmerizing study of a quartet of nude bodies, metamorphosing and gyrating in a fragmentary ballet, backed by an ominous bass-driven soundtrack.

**A Matter of Visibility: International Avant-Garde and Artists' Cinema** (Various artists, 1978–2015, 85 min. program., 16mm film and video) Organized by guest curator Mónica Savirón, this program presents New York premieres of strong new, experimental work in conversation with rarely seen works by avant-garde masters such as Lis Rhodes and Chantal Akerman. These artistic views have the ability to enhance our perception through symbolism, transformation, and a keen sense of creative freedom. Works include: **Reportage !** (by Rei Hayama), **Across** (Cara Morton), **Pixel Jungle** (Klara Ravat), **Cross Worlds** (Cécile Fontaine), **The Tower** (Salomé Lamas), **Trois strophes sur le nom de Sacher** (Chantal Akerman), **Maschile, Roma** (Friedl vom Gröller), **Her Silent Seaming** (Nazli Dinçel), **Defenestration** (Bea Haut), **Nocturno** (Naoko Sasaki), and **Light Reading** (Lis Rhodes).

**Of the North** (Dir. Dominic Gagnon. Canada, 2015, 74 mins.) **N.Y. premiere.** Drawn entirely from amateur videos posted on YouTube, Dominic Gagnon's intricately and aggressively constructed films orient the art of the found footage montage as gonzo ethnography. In *Of the North*, a provocative mash-up of clips uploaded from Inuit regions, he mismatches sound and picture, exults in non-sequiter cuts, and confronts viewers with the limits and extremes of self-representation. And in the simultaneously hilarious and harrowing **Pieces and Love All to Hell** (2011, 60 mins.), Gagnon collects self-made videos from an all-female cast of American right-wing conspiracy theorists who are as hard to pigeonhole as they are to believe.

**L'Oiseau de la nuit** (Dir. Marie Losier. Portugal/France, 2015, 19 mins.) **U.S. premiere.** The latest delightful portrait film by Marie Losier, this is a shimmering, colorful, and mysterious portrait of Fernando, a.k.a. Deborah Krystal, who has been performing in glorious drag every night for 30 years in a Lisbon nightclub.

**Ozoners** (Dirs. Jean-Jacques Martinod, Kyle Andrew Bell. U.S., 2014, 19 mins.) **N.Y. premiere.** The end of the line for two beloved forms, the drive-in movie theater and 35mm film projection, is beautifully and poignantly captured in this short, filmed in the American South.

**Pawel and Wawel (Pawel i Wawel)** (Dir. Krzysztof Kaczmarek. Poland/Austria, 2014,

63 mins.) **N.Y. premiere.** This gently absurdist and minimalist road movie follows the filmmaker's cross-country tour through Iceland, where he presents Polish film classics. A Viking listening to Wagner, a choir of Polish nuns, beatboxers in the high season under the trees, and a singing dog are among the odd sights in this memorable short feature.

***The Project of the Century (La obra del siglo)*** (Dir. Carlos Quintela. Cuba, 2015, 100 mins.) **N.Y. premiere.** The provincial Cuban town of Jaragua, the planned home of a Soviet-backed nuclear plant, is now a ghost town with near-empty high-rise buildings. With starkly beautiful black-and-white compositions, a darkly comic family drama unfolds, intercut with archival TV footage celebrating the promise of the Communist era.

***This Is What It Is (Esto es lo que hay)*** (Dir. Léa Rinaldi. Cuba/France, 2015, 100 mins.) **U.S. premiere.** This vibrant film about Cuba's leading hip-hop band, Los Aldeanos, captures the country's complexity and contradictions. This is a rare music documentary that goes beyond the enthralling music to take a close, candid look at the realities of daily life.

***Toponymy (Toponimia)*** (Dir. Jonathan Perel. Argentina, 2015, 82 mins.) **U.S. premiere.** In 1974, shortly after Juan Peron's return to power, the misleadingly named "Operation Independence" went into effect, resulting in the creation of rigidly designed villages arranged to thwart guerilla resistance. In his masterful structuralist study, made with no narration or dialogue, Jonathan Perel reveals the sinister politics behind the plan. "An elaborate memory puzzle whose dry, enigmatic humor would surely have tickled Perel's illustrious countryman Jose Luis Borges." (Neil Young, *The Hollywood Reporter*).

***The Visit (La visite)*** (Dir. Pippo Delbono. France/Italy, 2015, 22 mins.) The great actors Michael Lonsdale and Bobo, in their 80s, wander the halls and grounds of Versaille by themselves, reflecting on history, art, and their lives.

***Wet Streets, Orchard Street, and other work by Ken Jacobs*** (Dir. Ken Jacobs. U.S., 1955–2015, 70 min. program.) Sixty years after making it, New York avant-garde pioneer Ken Jacobs restored his first film, *Orchard Street*, to its original 27-minute length (**U.S. premiere**); it is an indelible Kodachrome study of what was then an all-Jewish street. His latest work, *Wet Streets*, was made from 3-D stills of his Tribeca neighborhood, capturing rainy dusk turning into nightfall when something unexpected happens (**World premiere**). Shown with other recent works.

Retrospective films in First Look 2016:

***Johnny Guitar*** (Dir. Nicholas Ray. U.S., 1954, 110 mins. 35mm. With Joan Crawford, Sterling Hayden, Mercedes McCambridge) This operatic western, with Joan Crawford

as a gun-toting saloon owner, was beloved by European critics and filmmakers as a great example of a classic genre being reinvented by an idiosyncratic director—Nicholas Ray (who Eric Rohmer called “the poet of love and violence”).

***The Lighted Field*** (Dir. Andrew Noren. U.S., 1987, 59 mins. 16mm) “I’m a light thief and a shadow bandit,” said the late filmmaker Andrew Noren, who died this year. “The lovers, light and shadow, and their offspring space and time are my themes, working with their particularities is my passion and delight.” A major yet neglected figure in American avant-garde filmmaking, One of his masterworks, *The Lighted Field* combines shimmering diaristic footage with flashes of archival footage.

***The Limits of Control*** (Dir. Jim Jarmusch. U.S., 2009, 116 mins., 35mm. With Isaach de Bankole). At once his most enigmatic and exquisite film, with gorgeously controlled cinematography by Christopher Doyle, Jim Jarmusch’s *The Limits of Control* follows the wanderings of a mystery man on a mystery mission through Spain.

#### Ticket Information:

With the exception of the Opening Night film and reception, tickets for *First Look* films will be \$12 each (free for members at the Film Lover level and above). Tickets for Opening Night January 8 screening of *Francofonia* will be \$15 (\$9 members at the Film Lover, Dual, and Family levels / free for Silver Screen members and above). An All Festival Pass will be available for \$40. Advance tickets will be available online at [movingimage.us/firstlook](http://movingimage.us/firstlook) (beginning Dec. 17). Complimentary industry and press passes are available.

#### About *First Look*:

Museum of the Moving Image established *First Look* in 2012 to showcase new and inventive international cinema—offering an oasis of thoughtful and provocative filmmaking amid the hype and noise of the awards season. Positioned in early January, before the Sundance, Rotterdam, and Berlin film festivals, *First Look* is a great way for New York filmgoers to start the year. David Hudson, on *Keyframe Daily*, called it “one of the most noteworthy curatorial efforts anywhere.” Among the hits and discoveries from the first two years are Chantal Akerman’s *Almayer’s Folly*, Thomas Andersen’s *Reconversão*, Philippe Garrel’s *That Summer*, Alexandre Rockwell’s *Little Feet*, Ken Jacobs’s *The Guests*, Aleksei German’s *Hard to Be a God*, and Jessica Hausner’s *Amour Fou*.

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Images, preview screening links, and individual press kits are available for many of the films. Please send inquiries for above materials and interview requests for curators and filmmaker to Tomoko.

## **MUSEUM INFORMATION**

**Museum of the Moving Image** ([movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)) advances the understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. In its stunning facilities—acclaimed for both its accessibility and bold design—the Museum presents exhibitions; screenings of significant works; discussion programs featuring actors, directors, craftspeople, and business leaders; and education programs which serve more than 50,000 students each year. The Museum also houses a significant collection of moving-image artifacts.

Hours: Wednesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. **Holiday hours:** The Museum will be open 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Mon., December 29; and Tues., December 30. The Museum will be closed on Thurs., November 27 (Thanksgiving); Wed., December 24; and Thurs., December 25.

Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled. Tickets for regular film screenings are included with paid Museum admission and are free for members at the Film Lover level and above.

Museum Admission: \$12.00 for adults; \$9.00 for persons over 65 and for students with ID; \$6.00 for children ages 3–12. Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free. Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. Tickets for special screenings and events may be purchased in advance online at [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us).

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: M (weekdays only) or R to Steinway Street. Q (weekdays only) or N to 36 Avenue.

Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)

Membership: <http://movingimage.us/support/membership> or 718 777 6877

The Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and located on the campus of Kaufman Astoria Studios. Its operations are made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation). The Museum also receives generous support from numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. For more information, please visit [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us).

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