

Nathan Gelgud's New York Film Review

Nathan Gelgud writes about moviegoing

June 02, 2008

Interview with Marie Losier, Curator & Filmmaker

In April, the French Institute screened Maurice Pialat's *Naked Childhood* back-to-back with Jean Eustache's *My Little Loves*. They are rare films by masterful directors, not to mention two of the best movies I've ever seen next to each other. Starting tomorrow, they will be screening films featuring Yves Montand in a series made up of canonized stuff like tomorrow night's *Wages of Fear* as well as plenty of films that are not available on DVD. Marie Losier, the Institute's film curator, conversed with me (via email) about Montand, the pitfalls and philosophies of programming, as well as her own work as a filmmaker. You can learn more about Mlle Losier and her films at marielosier.net. I've edited our conversation for length and clarity.



Marie, I wish the idea to interview you had come to me last month when you did the series that you called Jean Eustache's Circle. Can you talk a little about the concept behind that series?

The Jean Eustache series was a series I wanted to do for a long time and thanks to [co-curator] Sam Di Iorio this dream came true. I first had just wanted to present Eustache films but Sam made it even more interesting by widening the series to Eustache's circle of friends, inspirations, films he performed in, worked on...so the series became a sort of wider image of Eustache's time and work. I feel Eustache is not well known outside of the usual one—*The Mother and The Whore*—which is an amazing film, but no one really knows the short films and their incredible richness, humor and visceral beauty. I was happy to be part of a Eustache trip because all the prints went from NY to Washington to many other cities to be

shown all over the US, so more Eustache is in our eyes!

How much of the curatorial process for you is about filling in the gaps?

Partly, [it's about] filling the gap in the sense that you love deeply a filmmaker and his work and you want others to discover it where it is not known and enjoy and share your passion. So that is what I call filling the gap, but it is not always the case for the programming. You also [are restricted to] French films only for my programming, and they have to have 35mm prints subtitled in English....so it makes it sometimes very difficult in the programming process, narrow, and yet full of discoveries.

Are there any films that you've been dying to show but haven't been able to?

Oh yes plenty! All the time! For example I would love to show all of Jacques Rozier films, all of Jean-Gabriel Albicocco films, but for him all the copies are turning red vinegar, have no subtitles, and have to be restored in order for people to see them. I would dream to show all of George Franju and Vadim's films which is very hard and the one we can see is *God Created Woman* but nothing more and my ultimate dream is to show all films with and by Serge Gainsbourg!! And that has to stay a dream, impossible to get prints and find them!

Do you feel that you and your fellow programmers have any influence over what films become available?

Yes I think programming does have an effect on restoration of prints and touring of programs. For example, the Eustache [series] was one of the programs that toured and made many prints available, subtitled, taken care of. I think it is the same with the Jacques Demy films that the Ministere is restoring with Agnes Varda so that the films

can be shown all together at MoMA. Some are impossible, like the Franju films, because one person owns a couple prints and does not want to lend them unless we pay a million dollars to show them which makes it impossible for any cinemas, cultural centers...

Is there anything in the Yves Montand series that you would like to have shown?

I would have loved to find a print of [Claude Sautet's] Vincent, François, Paul... et les autres (1974), [Sautet's] César et Rosalie (1972), and [Costa-Gavras'] Compartment tueurs (1965).

Have you ever taken a group of films that you want to screen and then concocted an excuse to show them, or do you always begin with a concept and then select the films?

I think the programming goes both ways, you see films you want to show and they have nothing to do with each other but you find a thread and make it a series, or you think of a theme or concept and then you find and choose the films. It really varies for me.

As a filmmaker, you are playful. You cast yourself in Elliott Gould's role in your shortened version of Bergman's *The Touch*. In *Manuelle Labor*, you build a movie about childbirth around a pun.

I love playfulness and that is how I enjoy life....making those films!

Your work also has an infatuation for the aesthetic of silent films. What attracts you to the look and feel of silent movies?

Silent films are magic! They are totally free, free to be as humorous, playful, surreal and visually stunning and tricky as no other forms of cinema for me. Silent films are visually beautiful and for me nostalgic, close to painting. I used to be a painter so the tactile feel to these films always have attracted me. Also often they are so over theatrical which I adore, and have no dialogue which allows me to create any story without writing a dialogue and working with actors. I can just work with people—friends always, actually—that have incredible physical personality and physicality, way of walking, faces, gestures... That is what interests me most ... I grew up on [silent films] in Paris and also I was crazy about screwball comedies of Lubitsch, Cuckor, Keaton, and also more serious like Murnau ... that is where my head floats always.

You've had work at the New York Underground Film Festival. You also used to show your work at the Invisible Film Series at Millennium Film Workshop, along with Reverend Jen, George and Mike Kuchar, and many others. NYUFF just had their last festival, and I think Invisible is extinct as well, right? Are non-commercial New York filmmakers in trouble?

Many places that showed experimental films are disappearing. Like I used to curate at Ocularis for years and Robert Beck Memorial cinema and both are gone. But in some way new ones come up, like Light Industry in Brooklyn and also right now at the Stone where Andrew Lampert curated a whole month of those type of films and performances. Also I feel that I am more involved in making films and my first feature film now so I have less time to curate these films and go to shows ...so it feels less of an issue for me and in some way. Also I've shown at Berlin Film Festival and Rotterdam, where there is a huge experimental crowd and makers and events.

Would you like to tell us about the feature you're working on?

Sure! It has been a long adventure for now 2 years ... a feature film on Genesis P-Orridge and her/his partner Lady Jaye and their band Psychic TV. It will take much longer because I have no budget and this is a big project so I go slowly, reel by reel! Genesis and Lady Jaye's Pandrogyné project is their attempt to deconstruct their individual identities in order to create a third being, "Breyer-P-Orridge", a deconstruction of the fictional SELF which would be free from the rules of society.

This "deconstruction of individual identities to create a third being," this is being done via surgery, correct?

Yes! Crazy but also [via] music, writing, performance....



Above: From Losier's short film "Flying Saucy!" To see Losier's films, click [here](#).

Getting back to Montand ... What made you want to do this series?

Yves Montand is a part of a lot of Frenchies' childhood, mine absolutely first as a singer when I was little, I adored and still do love his songs and his voice...which is so unique. And as an actor just amazing face, presence, voice, and husband of Simone Signoret, a legendary couple ... there is not more French than Yves Montand.

If someone only sees one of the Yves Montand movies at FIAF, which one should it be?

Chris Marker's Loneliness of the Long Distance Singer. Also Elliot Stein, the journalist and film historian who was Montand's English professor in Paris, will introduce Manon of the Spring July 15th.

Is there a series that you are most proud of having curated?

Well, a couple: the one of Raoul Coutard was for me life changing because Raoul came over and we became friends which really changed a lot in my life, he was a sort of hero to me and I discovered a wonderfully hilarious man filled with stories, easy, gentle and full of character who just spoke about anecdotes about each film he shot with and without Godard in the most exciting and unknown way, he really made the series magical. That series was programmed with Jake Perlin. Another one was Michel Brault and his documentaries, his coming and meeting Albert Maysles...I discovered so much about his films and he is a delicate man with so much grace and secrecy. Series programmed again with Sam [Di Iorio]! Other series without the artist that I adored was the one on Cinema of the 70's that I programmed with Sam, and the one on Eustache.

Posted at 05:50 PM | [Permalink](#)

TrackBack

TrackBack URL for this entry:

<http://www.typepad.com/services/trackback/6a00d8341e759f53ef00e552b1d7648834>

Listed below are links to weblogs that reference [Interview with Marie Losier, Curator & Filmmaker](#):

Comments

Verify your Comment

Previewing your Comment

Posted by: I

This is only a preview. Your comment has not yet been posted.



Your comment could not be posted. Error type:

Your comment has been saved. Comments are moderated and will not appear until approved by the author. [Post another comment](#)

The letters and numbers you entered did not match the image. Please try again.

As a final step before posting your comment, enter the letters and numbers you see in the image below. This prevents automated programs from posting comments.

Having trouble reading this image? [View an alternate.](#)

