

The Museum of Modern Art

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For Immediate Release
September 1996

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DUSAN HANAK: A RETROSPECTIVE

*All Seven Feature Films
Including the U.S. Premiere of Paper Heads (1995)
Introduced in Person by the Filmmaker*

**October 19–November 5, 1996
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2**

The remarkable Slovakian filmmaker Dusan Hanak will be the focus of a seven-film retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art from October 19 to November 5. A complete presentation of Hanak's feature films, **DUSAN HANAK: A RETROSPECTIVE** opens with the U.S. premiere of *Paper Heads* (1995). Nine years in the making, this incisive look at postwar oppression in Czechoslovakia will be introduced by the filmmaker in person at the opening-night screening.

Hanak's best-known film in the United States is *Pictures of the Old World* (1972), an extraordinary tapestry of life among villagers in the Czech Republic's remote Tatra Mountains. This work was inspired by the photography of Martin Martinec and by the films of animator Jan Svankmajer. It was Hanak's second film, made directly after *Diagnosis 322* (1969), his formally adventurous and assured debut that shared the Grand Prize at the 1969 Mannheim Film Festival with Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool*.

Paper Heads is Hanak's second documentary film, though documentary impulses are evident throughout his work: in the sequences capturing gypsy culture and music in the romantic comedy *Rosy Dreams* (1976); the delineation of the daily humiliations and struggles of a love-

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starved married woman in *Quiet Joy* (1985); and the trivia of socialist quotidian life in *Diagnosis 322*. Using eyewitness accounts and stunning archival footage, *Paper Heads* depicts and analyzes the practices of Communist ideology from the end of the Second World War until the Velvet Revolution, in 1989. The title refers to the giant expressionless puppets, papier-mâché likenesses of former apparatchiks, that appear throughout the film.

Born in 1938 as part of a talented generation of filmmakers that includes Jiri Menzel and Milosz Forman, Hanak has sometimes been spoken of as the black sheep of the Czech film industry. His first feature, *Diagnosis 322*, was banned, as was *I Love, You Love* (1980). *Pictures of the Old World* was kept out of circulation by the Czech authorities for 16 years, because of its portrayal of "a flawed society." When it was finally screened, in 1989, it won numerous international awards, including the Los Angeles Critics' prize for best documentary.

The suppression of Hanak's films is interesting since, with the exception of *Paper Heads*, they are not overtly political; rather, they are close observations of the habits, circumstances, and everyday lives of their subjects. But it is precisely this candor and detail that so clearly reveal the perversities and criminality of the regimes under which the characters labor.

DUSAN HANAK: A RETROSPECTIVE is organized by Jytte Jensen, Assistant Curator, Department of Film and Video, with the cooperation of Pavel Cerny, President, the Eastern European Film Office, Los Angeles, and Les Films de l'Observatoire, Paris.

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