

The Museum of Modern Art

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Contact: Graham Leggat
212/708-9752

SECOND ANNUAL CELEBRATION SURVEYS THE BEST RECENT FILMS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES AND THE BALTIC STATES

**Fifteen New Works, Including Thirteen New York Premieres,
Reveal an Array of Talented Directors From the Former Soviet Union
Employing Signature Styles in a Variety of Genres**

FilmFest
December 12-22, 1997
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters 1 and 2

The second annual collaboration between The Museum of Modern Art and The Foundation for the Centennial of Cinema in Moscow, *FilmFest* is a survey of recent work by filmmakers from the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States. The series, which runs from December 12 to 22 at The Museum of Modern Art, features fourteen films by veteran and emerging filmmakers. These fiction, documentary, and short films are noteworthy not only for their singularity of vision but also for having been made at all, given the difficult economic and technical conditions facing filmmakers in the former Soviet Union.

Several directors will be present during the series to introduce the screenings of their films. (Specifics are listed on the schedule that accompanies this release.) The list of guests, to be confirmed later, will likely include Georgy Khaindrava, Otar Iosseliani, Vadim Abdrashitov, and possibly Kira Muratova, as well as cinematographer Boris

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Troshev. (Most of these guests will be in New York from December 11 to 14 and are available for interviews.)

War and its aftermath are treated in powerful ways in three of the series's fiction features: *Odnebebis sasandvo* (*Cemetery of Dreams*, 1997), Georgian Georgy Khaindrava's strong debut, a harrowing account of the fate of a group of young men going to war in Abkhazia, which is made all the more disturbing by its use of actual combat footage; Georgian Otar Iosseliani's *Brigands: Chapitre VII* (*Brigands: Chapter VII*, 1996), a savagely witty saga that asserts the cyclical nature of history as, among other things, a series of armed conflicts; and veteran Russian director Vadim Abdrashitov's *Vremya tantsora* (*Time of a Dancer*, 1997), a melodrama about three friends' attempts to deal with the physical and psychological ravages of war.

A different kind of violence is explored in Alexei Balabanov's genre piece *Brat* (*Brother*, 1997), which sets its bloody tale in the crime-infested urban environment of the new Russia. Violent death is also the theme of Ukrainian Kira Muratova's *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories*, 1997), but it is filmed in Muratova's signature detached, modernist style, with, as *Variety* put it, "a tongue-in-cheek smartness a New Yorker would appreciate."

A more poignant mood is employed in Kazak director Darizhan Omirbaev's *Cardiogramma* (*Cardiogram*, 1996), one of the series's two opening night films. A hit at last year's Telluride Film Festival, *Cardiogram* sees its (literally) weak-hearted young Kazak protagonist stranded in a Russian inner-city health clinic and alienated from his family and native culture. Nonetheless, despite the day-to-day cruelty the children inflict on one another, he comes to a bittersweet understanding of life and love.

The other opening night film is also the series's sole non-fiction work. *Father, Son and the Holy Torum* (1997) is an astonishing prize-winning work by Estonian Mark Soosaar that recently played in New York City's Margaret Mead Film Festival. Structured like a dramatic narrative, though it is a documentary filmed over a period of twenty years, Soosaar's film explores the conflict between development and tradition in Siberian ancestral lands. The protagonists are a traditional shaman and his son, who works for a Russian oil company.

The stunning, mountainous Uzbek landscape is the background for Uzbekistan native Kamara Kamalova's *Atrof korga burkandi (Everything Around Is Covered with Snow, 1995)*, a simple, affecting story, folkloric in tone, of first love. The sacrifices a devoted daughter makes for her helpless father are the focus of *Ozge vakht (Borrowed Time/Strange Time, 1996)*, by Azerbaijani Gusein Mekhtiev, and Turkmenian Khalmamed Kabaev's *Toba (Remorse/Penitence, 1996)* is a somber drama that uses sometimes hallucinatory flashbacks to explore the ways in which the social roles of a young man's family change over the last half of the twentieth century.

There are also three short works, by Georgian student directors, in the program: *Si on allait à la mer? (What if We Go to the Sea?, 1995)*, a Georgia/France co-production by Solome Aleksis, about a young girl's first love; *Beobachter (The Observer, 1997)* by Lasha Otkhmezuri, which explores how interruptions work in the creative process; and *Buzi (The Fly, 1997)*, Georgy Tsintsadze's award-winning, fly's-eye look at several domestic interiors and the journey from life to death.

The program concludes with two video works by acclaimed film director Alexandr Sokurov: *Robert Scastlivaja zizn (Hubert Robert, a Fortunate Life, 1996)*, an

unusual profile of the work of painter Hubert Robert, many of whose paintings hang in the Hermitage; and *Vostochnaya elegiya (Oriental Elegy, 1996)*, a haunting dream-odyssey that played in this summer's New York Video Festival.

FilmFest was organized by Jytte Jensen, Associate Curator, Department of Film and Video, with the collaboration of The Foundation for the Centennial of Cinema, Moscow.

The exhibition is sponsored by Fusion, Washington, D. C.

Please note that in early January 1998, Otar Iosseliani's *Brigands: Chapitre VII (Brigands: Chapter VII, 1996)* will enjoy a theatrical run at Anthology Film Archives.

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Members of the press only: For more information, screening cassettes, or to interview visiting directors, please contact Graham Leggat at 212/708-9752.

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