SELF-REFERENTIAL FILM SERIES FEATURES
FILMS ABOUT FILM

SELF-REFERENTIAL CINEMA, an unusual series of films which explore the means and processes of filmmaking itself, will begin May 14 at The Museum of Modern Art. Among the films selected by Donald Richie, Curator of Film, from many different genres and periods, are Bergman's "Persona," Dziga Vertov's "The Man with a Movie Camera," Ken Jacobs' "Tom, Tom, The Piper's Son," Vilgot Sjöman's "I Am Curious (Yellow & Blue)," H.C. Potter's "Hellzapoppin," Fellini's "8 1/2" and Godard's "Contempt."

In a note on the nature of self-referential films, Mr. Richie writes:

A self-referential film is one which is about itself. Unlike the traditional narrative film, which seeks to maintain the illusion that what we are seeing is reality, the self-referential film wants to show that it itself is an illusion. Consequently, one often sees the camera, the mike, the movieola, the cutting board, even, occasionally, the audience--us. In showing that it is an illusion, however, the self-referential film also suggests another reality—that, for example, of the makers of the self-referential film we are seeing. This reality is presented as a more real reality than that which the ordinary illusion-film offers. All self-referential cinema becomes, then, a search for reality, or for truth.

A film asserts its self-referential nature in various ways, notes Mr. Richie. Some take the form of diaries or journals; in others, the camera sits in a stationary position and records whatever passes in front of it; and sometimes film leader and bad footage are deliberately included.

The concern of the medium with its own means is not peculiar to film. In recent years, painters and sculptors have chosen to let their materials be what they are, rather than something to be transformed. Structure and process are no longer factors to be hidden in a finished product; they are the product if, indeed, there is a
finished product at all.

Mr. Richie notes the contemporary inpatience with façade as one of the reasons behind self-referential films. This façade can be the illusion of reality conveyed by a story and/or by various technical means. Therefore, stories are often done away with or undercut by making explicit the fact that they are stories, and the apparatus and processes of the medium are exposed rather than hidden.

Film, unlike the other visual arts, according to Mr. Richie, must always present the audience with another illusion—in film one cannot get away from the illusion of the image. As he says, "The philosophical perspective in these pictures...is that of a hall of mirrors, or more, perhaps, a vortex leading to a vacuum which is the nature of reality itself. The inability of film to escape from this portrayal of an ostensible reality is, however, also among its capabilities: it can lead us to question reality and hence, as these films indicate, force us to define that reality which will be our own."

The schedule of SELF-REFERENTIAL CINEMA follows:

Friday, May 14 (2:00, 5:30)

Saturday, May 15 (3:00, 5:30)

Sunday, May 16 (2:00, 5:30)

Monday, May 17 (12:30)

Wednesday, May 19 (2:00, 5:30)

(OVER)
Thursday, May 20

Friday, May 21 (2:00, 5:30)

Saturday, May 22 (3:00, 5:30)

Sunday, May 23 (2:00, 5:30)

Monday, May 24 (12:30)

Tuesday, May 25 (5:30)

Wednesday, May 26 (2:00, 5:30)

Thursday, May 27 (2:00, 5:30, 8:00)
To be announced.

Friday, May 28 (2:00, 5:30)
OCTOBER IN MADRID (1964-5). Written and directed by Marcel Hanoun. No English titles. Courtesy Anthology Film Archives. ca. 90 min.

Saturday, May 29 (3:00, 5:30)

Sunday, May 30 (2:00, 5:30)

Monday, May 31 (12:30) and Tuesday, June 1 (5:30)

Wednesday, June 2 (2:00, 5:30)

Additional information available from Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, and Mark Segal, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7296.