

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

NO. 128
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON 53rd STREET? CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES ON FILM AVAILABLE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET

The Donnell Library Center of The New York Public Library and The Museum of Modern Art, longtime neighbors on 53rd Street, have combined efforts to keep New Yorkers informed of social and political issues of national and international importance. Both institutions will co-sponsor and present a weekly program called "What's Happening?". Consisting of films, many made independently and by young filmmakers, the program will treat controversial themes: abortion as viewed by women who have experienced it; mental illness among Navajos and its treatment by modern psychiatrists working in collaboration with traditional medicine men; the massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee in the 19th century by the U.S. Cavalry, drawing a parallel to recent events in Vietnam; missionaries in an isolated village in the Philippines who are bringing modern technology and the Christian religion to the natives; and the confrontation of the U.S. Navy and Puerto Rican separatists who object to their island being used for target practice. Most of these films will be having their first public screenings in this country at the "What's Happening?" programs, which are scheduled to take place at noon, Tuesdays, at the library, and again the next day (Wednesdays) at 2:00 p.m. at the Museum. William Sloan of The New York Public Library is program director.

Starting mid-November there will be three films on abortion: "Women Who Have Had An Abortion," "Abortion: Public Issue or Private Matter," and "It Happens to Us." These films, two of which were directed by women, will be shown on November 14 and 15.

The following week, November 21 and 22, a new film from BBC-TV, "Navajo, The Last Red Indians," will be shown. It contains rituals conducted by medicine men that utilize colorful designs painted on the sand and eradicated after the ceremony. Many of these rituals have never before been recorded on film. The film, which shows attempts to cope with psychological stress characteristic of the Navajos, will be shown here for the first time. A new short by Sidney Theil, "Report from Wounded Knee," made from early photographs, will introduce the program.

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Also shown for the first time will be two documentaries by the young, independent American director Joe DeCola. "Volunteers" deals with militant revolutionaries who were apprehended by the New York City police as they were about to blow up a bank in Manhattan. The second film on this program, "Report from Yenan," concerns U.S. diplomats serving in China at the time of the Communist takeover, who were blamed for the fall of China by Joseph McCarthy and other red-baiters. The two films will be shown November 28 and 29.

The following week, December 5 and 6, two films dealing with protest by minorities will be shown. "Culebra: The Beginning," by Diego de la Texera, is about the efforts by the people of the island of Culebra, just off Puerto Rico, to prevent the U.S. Navy from using the island for gunnery and bombing practice. It has been said that "Culebra" marks the birth of revolutionary cinema in Puerto Rico. The other film on the program, "The Dispossessed," made by independent filmmakers and with songs by Buffy Saint Marie, concerns the re-occupation by Pit River Indians of ancestral lands now owned by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company in Northern California.

The program on December 12 and 13 will feature "Sigaboy," a beautifully photographed documentary shot in a small coastal village in the Philippines. It shows missionaries, Maryknoll Fathers, bringing new technology, concepts of government, medicines, and the rituals of the Catholic Mass to a people who are just emerging into the twentieth century.

The weekly "What's Happening?" series will continue to show films on social issues throughout the winter and into late spring. It indicates the mutual desire of both institutions to provide information that deals with socio-political matters and illuminates the human condition in many parts of the world. The program also provides a showcase for new talent. "The films in this series are about people and problems," says William Sloan, Film Librarian of The New York Public Library and program director of the series. "They are not being shown as examples of film art."

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