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SCREENING SERIES
THAT AIMS TO HELP
FOSTER A HEALTHY,
FERVENT FILM CULTURE
IN THE BUFFALO AREA.



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CULTIVATING CINEMA: ONE YEAR LATER

BY JORDAN M. SMITH

Sometimes it's difficult being a cinephile. Despite living in an age where thousands of films from around the globe spanning decades of film history are available at the swipe of a fingertip, many of us crave the big screen experience — the ornate cathedrals of projection, the intoxicating aroma of butter drenched popcorn, the distraction free viewing environment and the contagious communal affair that makes comedies funnier and lends tragedies more emotional gravity thanks to the mere emotional presence of fellow engaged cinema goers. Buffalo has had a long-running history

that celebrates this euphoric theatrical experience, but in the last few years the support systems that have enabled them to grow had begun to decay.

A little over a year ago, Jared Mobarak and I decided to attempt to help reconcile this situation. Both of us have spent most of our lives cinema obsessed and have invested much of the last decade into catching local shows and traveling to film festivals like Sundance, Toronto International, True/False, Hot Docs and beyond, taking in as much as our eyes and ears would allow while writing about the



BRIGITTE BARDOT AND MICHEL PICCOLI IN JEAN-LUC GODARD'S 1963 *CONTEMPT* (RIALTO PICTURES).



TOP: RICHARD GERE IN TERRENCE MALICK'S 1978 *DAYS OF HEAVEN*. BOTTOM: CORINNE MARCHAND IN AGNES VARDA'S 1962 *CLEO FROM 5 TO 7*.



experiences for various media outlets both online and in print. We met after having run into each other countless times at local press screenings and quickly found our tastes in cinema and our skill sets to be pleasantly complementary. Bearing witness to just how much spectacular cinema is being produced around the world, it pained us to know how many of the countless films we had fallen in love with tragically flew under the radar of Buffalo's cinemas.

We decided to help right that wrong by forming what has become Cultivate Cinema Circle, an ongoing film series that aims to help foster film culture here in Buffalo. By showing films that would otherwise go unseen in our beloved city, bringing filmmakers from around the world like Fredrik Gertten, Stephen Broomer and Jessica Oreck to present their work in

person, and by getting the community involved by partnering with as many local businesses and venues as possible (see our overflowing sponsor page for the full list of wonderful businesses we've had the pleasure of working with this past year), we hope to help bring people back to cinemas and other community spaces while also inciting conversation about the movies that entertain and enlighten us as well as the new and exciting perspectives made possible only through the lens of talented filmmakers teaching us more about our world.

Looking back on our inaugural year of existence, we couldn't be prouder of the programming we put together, not to mention the sheer volume of films we were able to show around town. As it stands, we managed to host 37 screenings at 7 fantastic venues around Buffalo, including a handful of New York State premieres, a whole host of Buffalo premieres, and a lineup of repertoire auteurist cinema that had us a bit weak in the knees. What cinephile in their right mind wouldn't be excited about this list of names: Varda, Godard, Dreyer, Cameron, Ray, Welles, Sirk, Malick, Wenders, Herzog, Vertov, Demy and more!

As we look toward the future, Cultivate Cinema Circle will be expanding its reach, partnering with more local businesses and community spaces in an effort to help cinema culture in Buffalo thrive once again by bringing the best of cinema new and old while also encouraging local cinephiles to join us in conversation in person and online! We want to know how you came to love movies as much as we do, what films melt your heart, what in the world of cinema makes you lose your shit laughing, what scares the shit out of you and how cinema has brought about positive change in your life and the world around you. Your involvement is what will ultimately make this project a success. So, with the greatest of gratitude, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for coming out and watching movies with us this past year and we couldn't be more excited to see you for the many screenings that lie ahead in the years to come!



Jordan M. Smith (Director)
A Buffalo-based film critic who writes for *IONCINEMA*, *Influence Film Club*, *Stranger Than Fiction*, and is a social media coordinator for DOC NYC and STF. He is also a member of the Online

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Jared Mobarak (Artistic Director)
A Buffalo-based film critic and graphic designer who writes for *The Film Stage* and *Buffalo Vibe*. He is also a member of the Online Film Critics Society and

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YEAR ONE

2015-2016

SUMMER 2015 SEASON

The Case Against 8

Ben Cotner & Ryan White - 2014
June 4th, 2015 at North Park Theatre

Pather Panchali

Satyajit Ray - 1955
June 18th, 2015 at North Park Theatre
Introduction by Girish Shambu

Hard to Be a God

Aleksei German - 2014
June 25th, 2015 at Buffalo Central Library

The Terminator

James Cameron - 1984
July 6th, 2015 at Buffalo Central Library

Mommy

Xavier Dolan - 2014
July 23rd, 2015 at Buffalo Central Library

Bikes vs Cars

Fredrik Gertten - 2015
August 4th, 2015 at Buffalo Central Library
Director in attendance for introduction and Q&A

Cobain: Montage of Heck

Brett Morgen - 2015
August 20th, 2015 at North Park Theatre
Introduction by Donny Kutzbach

An Evening with Stephen Broomer

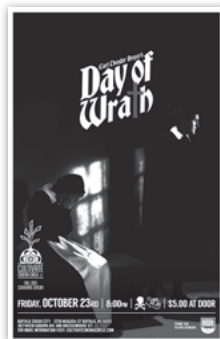
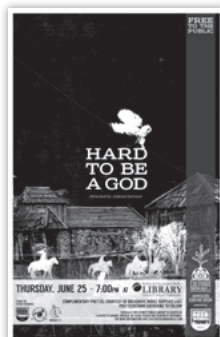
18 short films screened on 16mm - 2010-2014
August 25th, 2015 at Buffalo Central Library
Director in attendance for introduction

Contempt

Jean-Luc Godard - 1963
August 27th, 2015 at North Park Theatre

Cléo from 5 to 7

Agnès Varda - 1962
September 23rd, 2015 at Canisius College Science Hall Atrium





1. JORDAN M. SMITH, STEPHEN BROOMER & JARED MOBARAK
2. FREDRIK GERTTEN & CYCLISTS, COURTESY OF THE FILMMAKER
3. JESSICA ORECK & JORDAN M. SMITH AT SQUEAKY WHEEL

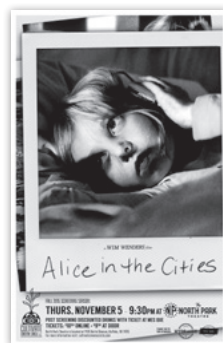


Aparajito

Satyajit Ray - 1956

September 24th, 2015 at North Park Theatre

Introduction by Girish Shambu



FALL 2015 SEASON

Mur murs

Agnès Varda - 1981

October 7th, 2015 at Canisius College Science Hall Atrium

Vagabond

Agnès Varda - 1985

October 21st, 2015 at Canisius College Science Hall Atrium

Apur Sansar

Satyajit Ray - 1959

October 22nd, 2015 at North Park Theatre

Introduction by Girish Shambu

Day of Wrath

Carl Theodor Dreyer - 1943

October 23rd, 2015 at Sugar City Buffalo

The Beaches of Agnès

Agnès Varda - 2008

November 4th, 2015 at Canisius College Science Hall Atrium

Alice in the Cities

Wim Wenders - 1974

November 5th, 2015 at North Park Theatre

The Gleaners and I

Agnès Varda - 2000

November 18th, 2015 at Canisius College Science Hall Atrium

The Look of Silence

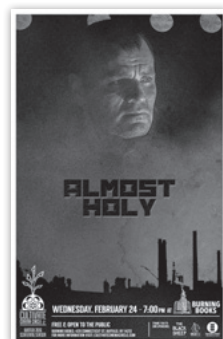
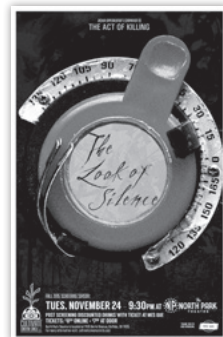
Joshua Oppenheimer - 2015

November 24th, 2015 at North Park Theatre

The Lady from Shanghai / Touch of Evil

Orson Welles - 1948 / 1958

December 5th, 2015 at Buffalo Central Library



WINTER 2016 SEASON

All That Heaven Allows / Far From Heaven

Douglas Sirk - 1955 / Todd Haynes - 2002

January 9th, 2016 at Buffalo Central Library

Days of Heaven

Terrence Malick - 1978

January 25th, 2016 at North Park Theatre

How to Change the World

Jerry Rothwell - 2015

January 27th, 2016 at Burning Books



1. ALL CULTIVATE CINEMA CIRCLE POSTERS FROM YEAR ONE DESIGNED BY JARED MOBARAK.
2. JORDAN M. SMITH TALKING WITH A CAPACITY CROWD AT BURNING BOOKS AFTER *A GOOD AMERICAN*.



The Better Angels

A.J. Edwards - 2014

February 13th, 2016 at North Park Theatre

Abe Lincoln in Illinois

John Cromwell - 1940

February 14th, 2016 at North Park Theatre

Almost Holy

Steve Hoover - 2016

February 24th, 2016 at Burning Books

Olmo and the Seagull

Petra Costa & Lea Glob - 2015

March 1st, 2016 at Canisius College Science Hall Atrium

A Good American

Friedrich Moser - 2016

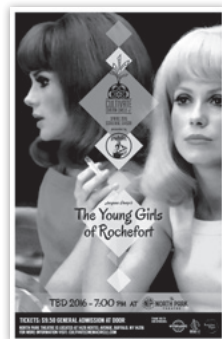
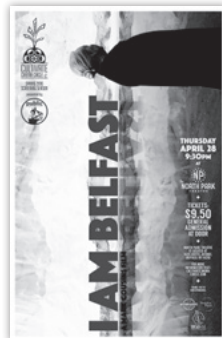
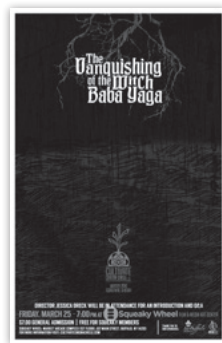
March 16th, 2016 at Burning Books

The Vanquishing of the Witch Baba Yaga

Jessica Oreck - 2014

March 25th, 2016 at Squeaky Wheel

Director in attendance for introduction and Q&A



SPRING 2016 SEASON

A Film About Coffee

Brandon Loper - 2014

April 16th, 2016 at Buffalo Central Library

I Am Belfast

Mark Cousins - 2016

April 28th, 2016 at North Park Theatre

Man with a Movie Camera

Dziga Vertov - 1929

May 21st, 2016 at Buffalo Central Library

The Royal Road

Jenni Olson - 2015

May 26th, 2016 at Dreamland Studio & Gallery

Atomic: Living in Dread and Promise

Mark Cousins - 2015

June 8th, 2016 at Burning Books

Lo and Behold, Reveries of the Connected World

Werner Herzog - 2016

June 13th, 2016 at North Park Theatre

A Coffee in Berlin

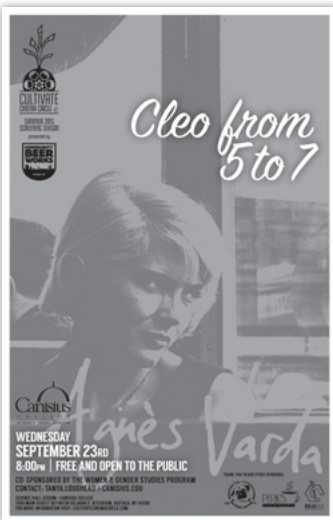
Jan Ole Gerster - 2012

June 25th, 2016 at Buffalo Central Library

The Young Girls of Rochefort

Jacques Demy - 1967

TBD, 2016 at North Park Theatre



1. **CLEO FROM 5 TO 7** PLAYS ON THE SCREEN AT CANISIUS COLLEGE'S SCIENCE HALL ATRIUM.
2. SOLD OUT AUDIENCE AT SOUEAKY WHEEL FOR **THE VANQUISHING OF THE WITCH BABA YAGA**.
3. OUR CCC BANNERSTAND REPRESENTING AT SUGAR CITY FOR **DAY OF WRATH**.
4. THE BUFFALO LIBRARY AUDIENCE LISTENING TO FREDRIK GERTTEN'S **BIKES VS CARS** INTRO.





RETURNINGS TO LIFE: THE APU TRILOGY IN BUFFALO

BY GIRISH SHAMBU

Originally published on *Criterion.com*'s "Current" 

One refrain often heard in discussions of twenty-first-century film culture is a lament for the loss of social film viewing. While we celebrate the fact that digital technologies have given us convenient access to unprecedented numbers of movies, old and new, we often presume that this luxury comes at a price: the widespread decline—except in perhaps a few large cities—of the theatrical experience.

But anyone seriously interested in film culture today will find that this sweeping generalization doesn't really match up to the reality on the ground. In fact, we are witnessing a burgeoning interest in public cinema. Small signs of this resurgence can be seen across the country: for instance, recently in Buffalo, New York (where I live), a successful event series marked a convergence of three restorations—or, if you will, three "returnings to life" . . .

From June through October of 2015, Buffalo's North Park Theatre screened the newly restored versions of Satyajit Ray's landmark *The Apu Trilogy*: *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Aparajito* (1956) and *Apur Sansar* (1959). The series was presented by Cultivate Cinema Circle, a new and ambitious film-screening organization that is aiming to revitalize film culture in the city.

The historic and majestic North Park opened its doors in 1920, during the silent film era. Its founding, almost a century ago, was heralded as an architectural event; the theater boasted a neoclassical foyer and auditorium with six art nouveau murals by the famed painter Raphael Beck. Five of these murals were designed for and layered into the ceiling's ornate dome, while the sixth crested the proscenium. An elegant Art Deco marquee was added a couple of decades later.

In recent years, however, the theater, a victim to indifference and short-sightedness, fell steadily into neglect and disrepair. The elaborate ceiling in the lobby was lowered to save on heating bills. The striking stained-glass window above the marquee was boarded up. But last year, following a painstaking year of work, the theater reopened under new owners, restored to its former architectural glory. Crowds are now flocking to the theater in numbers that had not been seen in decades.

Cultivate Cinema Circle (CCC), the organizer of *The Apu Trilogy* screenings, is an energetic local initiative committed to the idea of *dispersed* public cinema showings—held at a variety of sites and in diverse contexts around Buffalo. Founded and run by two young critics—Jordan Smith and Jared





NORTH PARK THEATRE PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE THEATER.

Mobarak, who write for a range of online cinema outlets—it is a refreshingly eclectic and omnivorous group. In addition to Satyajit Ray's work, the circle's programming over the past few months has included challenging Russian art cinema (Alexei Gherman's 2013 film *Hard to Be a God*), experimental cinema (the films of Stephen Broomer), activist documentaries (Fredrik Gertten's *Bikes vs. Cars*, released this year), classic French New Wave (Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 *Le mépris*), and a five-film series devoted to Agnès Varda, copresented with the Women and Gender Studies program at Canisius College. CCC has also forged relationships with a diverse range of organizations and had success in persuading several local small-business owners to sign on as cosponsors for screenings—an example that might be of broad use in cities across the country.

I was invited to introduce *The Apu Trilogy* screenings, and the experience brought back some deep-seated memories. I have always felt a profound connection with *The Apu Trilogy*, and especially with *Pather Panchali*: these are works that have accompanied my life. I first saw them as a teenager growing up in Kolkata, and I have met up with them time and again in various cities and countries over the years. These meetings have been under differing circumstances and in dramatically different settings: from a palatial auditorium (at my university in India) to a small, thrift-store TV set in

my living room (when I was a recently arrived grad student in the U.S.). But the newly restored version shown in Buffalo brushed aside my familiarity and took me by surprise: the crystalline clarity of the images feels almost surreal. (The story behind the restoration is itself fascinating.)

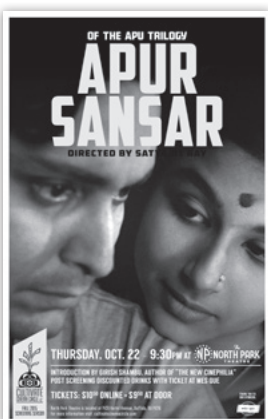
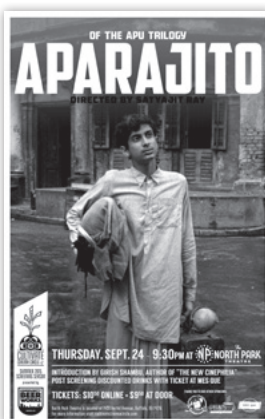
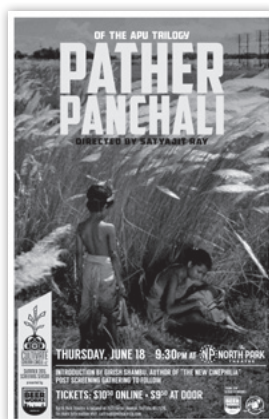
I believe that, unconsciously or not, it is common cinephile practice, when revisiting a film, to search for something new—to be open to registering something unexpected that was always there but remained hidden from us. This time around with *Pather Panchali*, I noticed something so unmistakable that I was almost embarrassed I had never been struck by it before.

The film tells the story of a poor family in rural Bengal in the 1920s: the long-suffering mother who struggles to run the household; the financially oblivious father who is an itinerant and frequently absent priest; and their children, Durga and Apu. An elderly relative (Auntie Indir), who has no permanent home, occasionally stays with the family. What I realized on this most recent reviewing is that the *first moment* a character makes her or his appearance in *Pather Panchali*, we immediately glimpse something deep and essential about that character. In the film's first shot we see the family's wealthy neighbor praying on her roof—and then jerking her head around, her face curdling in suspicion that Durga is stealing a guava from her garden. (Mere seconds into the film, we learn so much about the hypocrisy and small-mind-

THE APU TRILOGY

DIRECTED BY SATYAJIT RAY

PATHER PANCHALI APARAJITO APUR SANSAR





PATHER PANCHALI / STILL COURTESY OF JANUS FILMS.

edness of the landowner class in Bengal.) We are then introduced to Durga, skipping away from the garden and crouching down to hide behind a plant: an ornate leaf creates a visual rhyme with the shape of her face. Her mischievous smile and her association with nature capture her earthy spirit; the fact that she indeed has a stolen guava in her hand signals that she is carefree and fearless.

In contrast, Apu's first appearance (not counting the couple of shots of him as a newborn baby) marks him as less forceful than his older sister, and more passive. Seconds before we see him, we are shown the bustling household going about its morning activities. Apu, instead, is allowed to sleep in: he's a bit of a spoiled boy. When Durga wakes him, Ray, in a slightly coy but cute touch, withholds our glimpse of his face—then suddenly shows it to us in full close-up, making sure none of us will miss his utter adorability. Soon, Durga is brushing his hair, getting him cleaned up and ready for the day. The fact that Apu is so doted upon also has a dark side: this is a family (and patriarchal culture) in which the male child is held to be special. (The film will go on to show us a pattern of differential treatment between Apu and Durga.)

The first time we see the family patriarch, Harihar, it is in a lightning-brief shot as he paces outside while

his pregnant wife is in labor inside the house. The shot's brevity and Harihar's exclusion from the site of Apu's birth are both indications of his powerlessness and the weakness of his contribution to sustaining the family. The fate of Apu's mother is worst of all: great responsibility with little authority. When we first encounter her, she is drawing water from a well while being publicly humiliated by her affluent neighbor. She doesn't fight back or protest, but instead quietly turns away. For the rest of the film, she struggles, heroically but with little appreciation or acknowledgment, to preserve her besieged family. Watching the film this time around, her plight felt more piercingly unjust to me than ever before. A fruitful possibility for analysis suggested itself for *the next time* I return to the trilogy: how do the lives of women—materially, and over time—play out differently from those of the men in this saga . . .

Girish Shambu teaches at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, and runs a community-oriented film blog at girishshambu.blogspot.com. He is the author of The New Cinephilia and is coeditor (with Adrian Martin) of the online cinema journal LOLA.

Original link:

<https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/3848-returnings-to-life-the-apu-trilogy-in-buffalo>



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SUMMER 2015



SPRING 2016



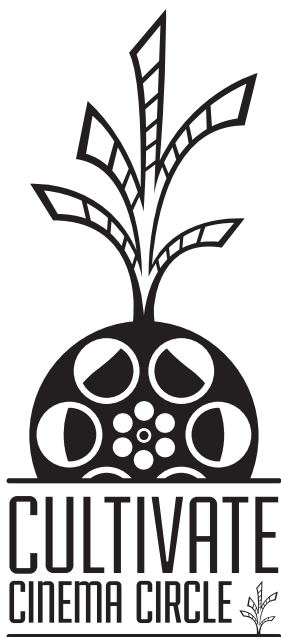
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VENUES



MONTAGE OF HECK SPECIAL GUEST DONNY KUTZBACH BEFORE OUR NORTH PARK SCREENING.



YEAR ONE
2015-2016

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