

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FILM SERIES ‘L.A. REBELLION: CREATING A NEW BLACK CINEMA’ LOOKS AT A VIBRANT, LARGELY UNHERALDED GROUP OF FILMS THAT EMERGED IN THE SHADOWS OF HOLLYWOOD

Month-long series includes 36 independent feature and short films by Black filmmakers beginning in the 1970s, with personal appearances by director Haile Gerima and series curator Jacqueline Stewart

February 2–24, 2013

Astoria, New York, January 14, 2013—Museum of the Moving Image will present ***L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema***, a groundbreaking survey of 36 independent films made by African and African American filmmakers at UCLA beginning in the 1970s. The films produced by these mostly unheralded artists, including Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Larry Clark, Haile Gerima, Billy Woodberry, and many others, created a unique cinematic landscape that explored and related to the real lives of Black communities in the United States and worldwide. The films in the series, part of a national tour organized by UCLA Film & Television Archive, will screen on weekends from February 2 through 24, 2013, at the Museum—the only New York venue for the series.

Highlights include personal appearances by Haile Gerima on February 10 with his debut feature *Bush Mama*, starring Barbara O. as a Chicago welfare mother who has a political awakening, and Jacqueline Stewart, one of the curators for the *L.A. Rebellion* series, with Zeinabu irene Davis's feature *Compensation* on February 24, the closing day of the series. Ms. Stewart is the author of *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (2005) and teaches in the Radio/Television/Film and African American Studies departments at Northwestern University.

Among the feature films in the series are two by Charles Burnett, *Killer of Sheep* (1977) and *My Brother’s Wedding* (1983/2007); Julie Dash’s 1991 hit *Daughters of the Dust*, preceded by an early short *The Diary of an African Nun* (1977), adapted from an Alice Walker short story; Larry Clark’s 1977 jazz film, *Passing Through*, and his 1973 featurette *As Above, So Below*, considered a rediscovered masterpiece; Jamaa Fanaka’s *Emma Mae* (a.k.a. *Black Sister’s Revenge*) (1976), which plays off

Blaxploitation genre conventions in its portrait of a young Black woman from the South who has difficulty adjusting to life in the big city; and Billy Woodberry's 1984 film *Bless Their Little Hearts*, a neorealist portrait of one family in an L.A. community, preceded by his short, *The Pocketbook* (1980), adapted from a Langston Hughes's short story.

Just as significant and comprising the bulk of the series are the short films, many of them student works, made by Burnett, Clark, Dash, Fanaka, Gerima, Woodberry, and their colleagues who emerged out of the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television. In the late 1960s, in the aftermath of the Watts Uprising and against the backdrop of the continuing Civil Rights Movement and the escalating Vietnam War, Los Angeles had become a breeding ground for this group of African and African American students many of whom entered UCLA, as part of an "Ethno-Communications" initiative designed to be responsive to communities of color. Over the course of two decades, they created a rich, innovative, sustained, and intellectually rigorous body of work, independent of any entertainment industry influence—as students arrived, mentored one another, and passed the torch to the next group. This social phenomenon and the body of works that came out of it are referred to as "L.A. Rebellion."

"*The L.A. Rebellion* is an astonishing and significant curatorial and archival project undertaken by UCLA Film and Television Archive. We are very pleased to be the New York venue for this series, which offers so many exciting rediscoveries," said David Schwartz, the Museum's Chief Curator. "These filmmakers were working collaboratively and producing films that were more representative of the real lives and concerns of African Americans than many of the Blaxploitation films that were coming out of Hollywood at the time."

Shannon Kelley, Head of Public Programs at UCLA Film & Television Archive, and a curator of *L.A. Rebellion* said, "Explorations of class, considerations of historical legacies, stories attentive to concerns of local communities and appreciations of other Black arts are only some of the areas of inquiry. Happily, the films also display a diversity of forms, including irreverent reconfigurations of well-worn genre types and groundbreaking experiments with cinematic language."

L.A. Rebellion is presented in association with UCLA Film & Television Archive and supported in part by grants from the Getty Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. The series is curated by Allyson Nadia Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, Shannon Kelley, and Jacqueline Stewart. The *L.A. Rebellion* touring series has also shown at Pacific Film Archive (Berkeley) and International House Philadelphia, and will also travel to TIFF Cinematheque (Toronto). For more about the L.A. Rebellion film movement, please visit <http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/la-rebellion/>

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For DVD screeners, which are available for many films, please contact Tomoko above.

SCHEDULE FOR ‘L.A. REBELLION: CREATING A NEW BLACK CINEMA,’ FEBRUARY 2–24, 2013

Unless otherwise noted, film screenings take place in the main Moving Image Theater and in the Celeste and Armand Bartos Screening Room at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street), Astoria, and are included with Museum admission. All programs are free for Museum members. Advance tickets for some special screenings and events are available online at <http://movingimage.us> or by calling [718 777 6800](tel:7187776800).

Passing Through

Saturday, February 2, 3:00 p.m.

Preservation funded in part by a grant from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the Packard Humanities Institute.

Dir. Larry Clark. 1977, 111 mins. 16mm. With Nathaniel Taylor, Clarence Muse, Pamela Jones. Black jazz musician J. Eddie Warmack (Taylor) is released from a prison term for the killing of a white gangster. Not willing to play for the mobsters who control the music industry, Warmack searches for his mentor and grandfather, legendary jazz musician Poppa Harris (Jones). The film repeatedly returns to scenes of musicians improvising jazz, and flashbacks in which Poppa teaches Warmack to play saxophone; a French critic called *Passing Through* “the only jazz film in the history of cinema.” —Jan-Christopher Horak

Preceded by ***When It Rains***. Dir. Charles Burnett. 1995, 13 mins. 16mm. With Ayuko Babu, Kenny Merritt, Charles Bracy, Soul, R. Ray Barness. On New Year’s Day, a man tries to help a woman pay her rent and learns a lesson in connecting with others in a community.

***As Above, So Below* and Short Films**

Saturday, February 2, 6:00 p.m.

As Above, So Below. Dir. Larry Clark. 1973, 52 mins. 16mm. With Nathaniel Taylor, Lyvonne Walder, Billy Middleton. A rediscovered masterpiece, Clark’s *As Above, So Below* offers a powerful political and social critique in its portrayal of Black insurgency. The film opens in 1945 with a young boy playing in his Chicago neighborhood, and then follows the adult Jita-Hadi (Taylor) as a returning Marine with heightened political consciousness. Like *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, it imagines a post-Watts Rebellion state of siege and an organized Black underground plotting revolution.

Preceded by ***Medea***. Dir. Ben Caldwell. 1973, 7 mins. Digital projection. Made on an animation stand and edited entirely in the camera, *Medea* combines live action and rapidly edited still images of Africans and African Americans that function like flashes of history the unborn child will inherit. ***Ujamii Uhuru Schule Community Freedom School***. Dir. Don Amis. 1974, 9 mins. Digital projection. A day-in-the-life portrait of an Afrocentric primary learning academy located in South L.A. that focuses on the virtues of the three Rs—Respect, Righteousness, and Revolution.

Your Children Come Back to You and Short Films

Sunday, February 3, 3:00 p.m.

Your Children Come Back to You. Dir. Alile Sharon Larkin. 1979, 30 mins. 16mm. With Angela Burnett. A single mother lives welfare check to welfare check, struggling to provide for her daughter. Larkin's film masterfully presents a child's perspective on wealth and social inequality.

Preceded by **Fragrance.** Dir. Gay Abel-Bey. 1991, 38 mins. Digital projection. With Fumilayo, Leslie Rainey. When George visits his family before heading to Vietnam, he is confronted by the conflicting ideals of his veteran father, who encourages his patriotism, and his militant brother, who urges him to stay home in protest. **Rich.** Dir. S. Torriano Berry. 1982, 22 mins. Digital projection. With Steve T. Berry. On the day of his high school graduation, an African American youth battles for self-determination as his family and the neighborhood gang attempt to shuttle him toward a future of lowered expectations. This gritty and tender character study includes a scene filmed at the Watts Towers. **Shipley Street.** Dir. Jacqueline Frazier. 1981, 25 mins. Digital projection. With Leslie Smith, Don Maharry. A construction worker, frustrated by his inability to get ahead, decides with his wife to send their daughter to an all-white Catholic school, where the girl is confronted with harsh discipline and racist attitudes.

A Different Image and Short Films

Sunday, February 3, 6:00 p.m.

A Different Image. Dir. Alile Sharon Larkin. 1982, 51 mins. 16mm. With Adisa Anderson. A woman yearns to be recognized for more than her physical attributes. In cultivating the friendship of a male office mate, she aspires to a relationship with someone who can "see her as she is," rather than see only what he wants to see.

Preceded by **Cycles.** Dir. Zeinabu irene Davis. 1989, 17 mins. Digital projection. With Stephanie Ingram. As a woman anxiously awaits her overdue period, she performs African-based rituals of purification. She cleans house and body, and calls on the spirits; the film combines beautifully intimate still and moving images of the woman's body and home space with playful stop-motion sequences. **Water Ritual #1: An Urban Rite of Purification.** Dir. Barbara McCullough. 1979, 6 mins. 35mm. Made in collaboration with performer Yolanda Vidato. A pioneering work in Black feminist and experimental filmmaking, *Water Ritual #1* was made in an area of Watts that had been cleared to make way for the I-105 freeway. Structured as a ritual for McCullough's "participant-viewers," *Water Ritual #1* honors Black/Third World women's beauty and self-possession. **Grey Area.** Dir. Monona Wali. 1981, 38 mins. 16mm. From Black Panthers to young urban professionals, several members of a blighted neighborhood debate the causes and experience the stresses of cyclical poverty, as a bank commissions a film about its own supposedly good work in the community.

Killer of Sheep

Friday, February 8, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Charles Burnett. 1977, 83 mins. 35mm. With Henry G. Sanders, Kaycee Moore, Charles Bracy, Angela Burnett. *Killer of Sheep* is *L.A. Rebellion's* most widely celebrated film. The documentary-like but poetically rendered narrative follows Stan (Sanders), employed at the slaughterhouse and suffering from the emotional side effects of his bloody occupation. The film is an impressionistic portrait of a Black family man eaten up by money problems, who is fighting to save his soul and support his family in the Watts ghetto of L.A. Please note: *Killer of Sheep* is

being presented as part of the Museum's run of *L.A. Rebellion*, but is not part of the UCLA touring program.

Black Art Black Artists: Short Films

Saturday, February 9, 3:00 p.m.

Total running time: 70 mins. **Black Art, Black Artists.** Dir. Elyseo J. Taylor. 1971, 16 mins. With Van Slater. As the only Black faculty member at UCLA's film school, Taylor was an influential teacher and advocate for students of color. With voice-over dialogue with the woodcut printmaker Van Slater, Taylor's film is a visual survey of Black art since the nineteenth century, punctuated with jazz and blues selections. **Four Women.** Dir. Julie Dash. 1975, 7 mins. 16mm. With Linda Martina Young. Set to Nina Simone's stirring ballad of the same name, and with kinetic camera work and rich visual design, Dash's dance film features Young as the strong Aunt Sarah, the tragic mulatto Saffronia, the sensuous Sweet Thing, and the militant Peaches. **Define.** Dir. O. Funmilayo Makarah. 1988, 5 mins. Digital projection. Oblique, episodic meditations on the semiotics and ethics of ethnic female identity are accompanied by a blandly cynical narrator explaining how to "win an invitation to the dominant culture." **Bellydancing—A History & an Art.** Dir. Alicia Dhanifu. 1979, 22 mins. Digital projection. With Dhanifu. Dhanifu constructs a rigorous and beautifully rendered history of belly dancing—its roots and history, forms and meanings. **Festival of Mask.** Dir. Don Amis. 1982, 25 mins. Digital projection. With Carmen Stetson. Amis was one of the few Black student filmmakers at UCLA working in documentary. In this film, preparations for and performances at the Craft and Folk Art Museum's annual Festival of Mask illustrate the city's diverse racial and ethnic communities.

Daughters of the Dust

Saturday, February 9, 6:00 p.m.

Dir. Julie Dash. 1991, 112 mins. 35mm. With Cora Lee Day, Alva Rogers, Barbara-O, Cheryl Lynn Bruce, Tommy Hicks. Dash's 1991 masterpiece was her first feature, and the first feature directed by an African American woman to receive a general theatrical release. The year is 1902, in the home of several Gullah people, descendants of African captives who escaped the slave trade to live on islands off the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia. Here, members of the Peazant family are on the verge of a planned migration to the U.S. mainland, where American modernity seems to offer a good life. Dash constructs their home as a rarefied world, possibly soon a "paradise lost," through a masterful interplay of mise-en-scène, symbolic markers, and magical realist gestures.

Preceded by **The Diary of an African Nun.** *Preservation funded in part with a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation.* Dir. Julie Dash. 1977, 15 mins. Digital projection. With Barbara O. Jones, Barbara Young, Makimi Price, Ron Flagge, Renee Carraway. A nun in Uganda weighs the emptiness she finds in her supposed union with Christ. Adapted from an Alice Walker short story, the film was a move by its director toward narrative filmmaking, though it has a stylistic intensity that anticipates *Daughters of the Dust*.

Child of Resistance and Short Films

Sunday, February 10, 3:00 p.m.

Child of Resistance. Dir. Haile Gerima. 1972, 36 mins. 16mm. With Barbara O. Jones, James Dougall. Inspired by a dream Gerima had after seeing Angela Davis handcuffed on television, *Child of Resistance* follows a woman (Jones) who has been imprisoned as a result of her fight

for social justice. Gerima explores the woman's dreams of liberation and fears for her people through a series of abstractly rendered fantasies.

Preceded by ***Brick by Brick***. Dir. Shirikiana Aina. 1982, 33 mins. Digital projection. With Lester Wakefield. *Brick by Brick* documents a late-1970s Washington, D.C., ignored by the media, from which poor Black residents are being pushed out. Images of monuments contrast with prescient images of gentrification and homelessness. An alternative is provided by the Seaton Street project, in which tenants have united to purchase buildings. ***L.A. in My Mind***. Dir. O. Funmilayo Makarah. 2006, 4 mins. Digital projection. A captivating montage of notable L.A. sites, laced with free-floating names of places and people and accompanied by street noises. ***Rain***. Dir. Melvonna Ballenger. 1978, 16 mins. Digital projection. With Evelynne Braithwaite, Bernard Nicolas. *Rain* shows how awareness can lead to a more fulfilling life. A female typist goes from apathetic to empowered through the help of a man giving out political flyers on the street. Using John Coltrane's song "After the Rain," Ballenger's narration meditates on rainy days and their promise of renewal. ***The Dawn at My Back: Memoir of a Black Texas Upbringing*** (excerpt). Dirs. Carroll Parrott Blue, Kristy H. A. Kang. 2003, 10 mins. Digital projection. With Blue, Debbie Allen, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis (narrators). This evocative excerpt from the Labyrinth Project's DVD-ROM, based on a memoir by Blue, leads viewers on a rich visual and textual exploration of Blue's family history, and of the history of Houston's Black community.

Bush Mama

With director Haile Gerima in person

Sunday, February 10, 6:00 p.m.

Dir. Haile Gerima. 1975/1979, 97 mins. 16mm. With Barbara-O, Johnny Weathers. After seeing a Black woman in Chicago evicted in winter, Gerima developed *Bush Mama* as his UCLA thesis film. Gerima blends narrative fiction, documentary, surrealism, and political modernism in his unflinching story about a pregnant welfare recipient in Watts. *Bush Mama* follows Dorothy (the magnetic Barbara O. Jones) as she is subjected to the oppressive cacophony of state-sponsored terrorism against the poor in her daily dealings with the welfare office and social workers. Dorothy undergoes an ideological transformation, from apathy and passivity to empowered action. Also, part of the series *Changing the Picture*, sponsored by Time Warner. Preceded by ***Daydream Therapy***. Dir. Bernard Nicolas. 1977, 8 mins. Digital projection. With Marva Anderson, Keith Taylor, Gay Abel-Bey. *Daydream Therapy*, set to Nina Simone's haunting rendition of "Pirate Jenny" and concluding with Archie Shepp's "Things Have Got to Change," poetically envisions the fantasy life of a hotel worker whose daydreams provide an escape from workplace indignities.

Emma Mae (a.k.a. Black Sister's Revenge)

Saturday, February 23, 3:00 p.m.

Dir. Jamaa Fanaka. 1976, 100 mins. 35mm. With Jerri Hayes. *Emma Mae* is a sympathetic portrait of a young Black woman (Hayes) from the South and her difficult adjustment to life in the big city. After the death of her mother, she travels by bus from Mississippi to L.A., her rough country edges on full display. While Emma Mae's proficiency in kicking ass echoes that of the super-mama heroines who populated other character-named films of this Blaxploitation era, she is not presented as an impossibly glamorous vixen. On the contrary, her plain looks and shy demeanor seem to necessitate her physical and emotional strength.

Preceded by ***A Day in the Life of Willie Faust, or Death on the Installment Plan***. Dir. Jamaa Fanaka (as Walt Gordon). 1972, 20 mins. Digital projection. With Baby Katina. An adaption of Goethe's *Faust* with a nonsynchronous soundtrack and superimposed over a remake of *Super Fly*(1972), Fanaka's first project plays off of Blaxploitation's genre conventions.

My Brother's Wedding

Saturday, February 23, 6:00 p.m.

Dir. Charles Burnett. 1983/2007, 82 mins. Director's cut. Digital projection. With Everette Silas, Jessie Holmes, Gaye Shannon-Burnett. Pulled in opposite directions by loyalty to family and friends, Pierce Mundy (Silas) feels suspended in place. Recently laid off from his factory job, he marks time working at his family's dry cleaning store under the watchful eye of his mother (Holmes). In the face of a diminished future, the return of Pierce's best friend, Soldier, holds out the hope of a nostalgic escape to childhood. After a troubled production, *My Brother's Wedding* premiered in 1984 but wasn't released theatrically until 1991. The 2007 director's cut, thirty minutes shorter, reflects Burnett's original intentions.

Preceded by ***A Little Off Mark***. Dir. Robert Wheaton. 1986, 9 mins. Digital projection. With Peter Parros, Lee Daniels. Writer-director Wheaton's story of a shy guy trying all the wrong moves to meet the right girl rides high on its romantic sensibility.

Compensation

With L.A. Rebellion series curator Jacqueline Stewart in person

Sunday, February 24, 3:00 p.m.

Dir. Zeinabu irene Davis. 1999, 90 mins. Digital projection. With John Earl Jelks, Michelle A. Banks. *Compensation* depicts two Chicago love stories, one set at the dawn of the 20th century and the other in contemporary times, featuring a deaf woman and a hearing man. Both played by Jelks and Banks, the two couples face the specter of death when the man is diagnosed with tuberculosis in the early story, and the woman with AIDS in the contemporary one. One of the most striking aspects of *Compensation* is its unusual narrative approach. Upon casting the deaf actress Banks, Davis and screenwriter Mark Arthur Chéry modified the film to incorporate sign language and title cards, making it accessible to both deaf and hearing audiences. Also, part of the series *Changing the Picture*, sponsored by Time Warner.

Preceded by ***Dark Exodus***. Dir. Iverson White. 1985, 28 mins. 16mm. With John Jelks, Harold House. Subjected to Jim Crow laws and an overtly racist white population, an African American family in the South sends its sons away to a better life. White's period film visualizes the migration of African Americans from the rural South to the urban, industrial North.

Bless Their Little Hearts

Sunday, February 24, 6:00 p.m.

Preservation funded by the National Film Preservation Foundation and the Packard Humanities Institute.

Dir. Billy Woodberry. 1984, 84 mins. 35mm. With Nate Hardman, Kaycee Moore. *Bless Their Little Hearts* represents the pinnacle of a neorealist strand within *L.A. Rebellion* that began with Charles Burnett's *Several Friends*. Woodberry's film chronicles the devastating effects of underemployment on a family in the same L.A. community depicted in Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* (1977). Hardman and Moore deliver gut-wrenching performances as the couple whose family is torn apart by events beyond their control. If salvation remains, it's in the sensitive depiction of

everyday life, which persists throughout.

Preceded by ***The Pocketbook***. *Preservation funded in part by a grant from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts*. Dir. Billy Woodberry. 1980, 13 mins. 35mm. With Ella "Simi" Nelson, Ray Cherry. In the course of a botched purse-snatching, a boy questions the path of his life. Woodberry's second film adapts Langston Hughes's short story "Thank You, Ma'am," and features music by Leadbelly, Thelonious Monk, and Miles Davis.

Museum of the Moving Image (movingimage.us) advances the understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. In January 2011, the Museum reopened after a major expansion and renovation that nearly doubled its size. Accessible, innovative, and forward-looking, the Museum presents exhibitions, education programs, significant moving-image works, and interpretive programs, and maintains a collection of moving-image related artifacts.

Hours: Wednesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday except for select holiday openings that include Monday, January 21 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day), Monday, February 18 (Presidents' Day), and Tuesday, February 19.

Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled. Unless otherwise noted, screenings are included with Museum admission.

Museum Admission: \$12.00 for adults (18+); \$9.00 for senior citizens and for students (13+) with ID; \$6.00 for children ages 3-12. Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free. Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. Tickets for special screenings and events may be purchased in advance by phone at 718 777 6800 or online.

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: R (all times) or M (weekdays only) to Steinway Street. N(all times) or Q (weekdays only) to 36 Avenue.

Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: movingimage.us

Membership: 718 777 6877, members@movingimage.us

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