

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GUS VAN SANT RETROSPECTIVE FEATURES PREVIEW SCREENING OF *RESTLESS*, PERSONAL APPEARANCE BY DIRECTOR

September 9–30, 2011 with Gus Van Sant in person on September 14th

Gus Van Sant has established himself as one of the most audacious and accomplished American filmmakers of his generation, and one of the few whose films can truly be called independent. With a poetic intimacy rare in mainstream cinema, Van Sant's films offer a sympathetic perspective of society's outsiders and an incisive critique of American culture. From September 9 through 30, 2011, Museum of the Moving Image will present an extensive retrospective, with screenings of thirteen feature films, including a preview screening of *Restless* with Van Sant in person for a Pinewood Dialogue on September 14th.

The series includes nearly all of Gus Van Sant's features from his gritty early works *Mala Noche* (1985) and *Drugstore Cowboy* (1989), his big commercial successes *Good Will Hunting* (1997) and *Milk* (2008), his studio-backed formal experiments *To Die For* (1995) and *Psycho* (1998), and his return to his low-budget experimental roots with *Gerry* (2002), *Elephant* (2003), *Last Days* (2005), and *Paranoid Park* (2007). Working with both non-professional actors and A-list stars—including Keanu Reeves, Matt Damon, River Phoenix, Matt Dillon, Nicole Kidman, and Uma Thurman—Van Sant has embraced the full range of American independent filmmaking.

"In the 25 years since his feature debut, *Mala Noche*, Gus Van Sant has built one of the most varied and vital careers in the history of American film. He is a filmmaker who possesses a rare integrity to his unique artistic vision, and who is willing to experiment boldly with conventions of narrative filmmaking," said David Schwartz, the Museum's Chief Curator who organized the series.

Restless, which is being released by Sony Pictures Classics, and opens in theaters on September 16 is a dark, tender love story, which stars Henry Hopper (son of legendary actor Dennis Hopper) as a misfit who crashes funerals and Mia Wasikowska (*Jane Eyre*) as a gamine with a fatal illness. The film premiered at this year's Cannes Film Festival.

Originally educated as a painter, Van Sant made his impressive debut as a feature film

director with *Mala Noche* (1985), a beautiful, gritty drama set in Portland, Oregon, based on Walt Curtis's autobiographical novella of the same name. Shot on 16mm for only \$25,000 and named the best independent film of the year by the *Los Angeles Times*, *Mala Noche* was a major event in the queer cinema movement that Van Sant would lead alongside directors such as Todd Haynes and Gregg Araki. Van Sant stayed in his native Pacific Northwest for his second and third films, *Drugstore Cowboy* (1989, the same year *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* and *Do the Right Thing* were released) and *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), and in both cases received major critical acclaim. River Phoenix's turn in *My Own Private Idaho* as a gay hustler in search of his mother remains the defining role of his brief career.

Following the critical and commercial disappointment of *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* (1993)—an ambitious adaptation of Tom Robbins's novel of the same name—Van Sant returned with *To Die For* (1995), his most commercial film to date, starring Nicole Kidman as a manipulative local newswoman. The film maintained Van Sant's artistic boldness, with a fractured approach that incorporates staged interviews and confessional monologues with its still-relevant critique of the distinctly American obsession with celebrity and crime.

Van Sant enjoyed his greatest commercial success with *Good Will Hunting* (1997); the story of a genius janitor made over \$200 million at the box office and won Oscars for Matt Damon and Ben Affleck (Best Screenplay) and co-star Robin Williams (Best Supporting Actor). Van Sant followed this commercial smash with a fascinating experiment, a nearly shot-for-shot remake of Alfred Hitchcock's *Pyscho*. While the film was savaged by critics and ignored by audiences, this reimagining of the horror classic is one of the most fascinating objects to come from a Hollywood studio in the 1990s.

The past decade has seen Van Sant move toward a more openly experimental approach; equally concerned with qualities of light as with story, this new style is largely defined by his ongoing partnership with master cinematographer Harris Savides. *Gerry* (2002), an exploration of landscape built around the desert wanderings of two lost men (Matt Damon and Casey Affleck), marked the beginning of Van Sant's "Death Trilogy." The second installment, *Elephant* (2003), an intricately structured examination of a high school massacre, won Van Sant the Palme d'or at Cannes and cemented his place among the top tier of American independent filmmakers. The trilogy closed with *Last Days*, a loosely factual rendering of the final days in the life of Kurt Cobain.

Paranoid Park (2007), another story of troubled, romantic youth photographed beautifully in the streets of Portland, returned Van Sant to his roots. Van Sant brought together the concerns of his entire career for *Milk* (2008), a biopic of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician elected to public office in California. An insightful and moving

portrait of San Francisco's gay community during the tumultuous years of the 1970s, the film won Oscars for Sean Penn (Best Actor) and Dustin Lance Black (Best Screenplay).

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SCHEDULE FOR 'GUS VAN SANT,' SEPTEMBER 9–30, 2011

All screenings take place at Museum of the Moving Image (36-01 35 Avenue, Astoria, NY). Unless otherwise noted, screenings are included with paid Museum admission.

This schedule is also available online at

<http://www.movingimage.us/films/2011/09/09/detail/gus-van-sant/>.

Drugstore Cowboy

Friday, September 9, 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 10, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 1989, 100 mins. With Matt Dillon, Kelly Lynch, James LeGros. Van Sant's breakthrough indie hit follows a group of drug addicts and petty thieves in 1970s Portland. Van Sant combines a realistic portrayal of addiction with a lyrical focus on the romances and friendships among the group.

Mala Noche

Saturday, September 10, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 1985, 78 mins. Shot on 16mm black-and-white film with local Portland actors, *Mala Noche* is Van Sant's ultra low-budget first feature film; introducing his familiar focus on marginal groups and male relationships. In the film, a meditation on love, lust, obsession, and class, a gay skid-row store manager falls hopelessly in love with a Mexican teenager who is an illegal immigrant.

Preview Screening of *Restless* with Gus Van Sant in person

Wednesday, September 14, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 2011, 91 mins. With Mia Wasikowska, Henry Hopper. In this dark, tender love story between a misfit who crashes funerals and a gamine who has a malignant brain tumor, Gus Van Sant explores his favorite themes of youth and death. Van Sant will be present following a screening of the film, for a discussion moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz.

Tickets: \$20 public / \$15 Museum members / Free for Silver Screen members and above.

Call 718 777 6800 or order online at <http://movingimage.us>

My Own Private Idaho

Friday, September 16, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 18, 7:30 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 1991, 102 mins. River Phoenix and Keanu Reeves are star-crossed lovers in this freewheeling adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. An affecting and poetic study of alienated youth and gay counterculture, the film is one of the milestones of the 1990s New Queer Cinema.

Good Will Hunting

Saturday, September 17, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 1997, 126 mins. With Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Robin Williams. Van Sant's biggest commercial success, *Good Will Hunting* is the Oscar-winning story of a young math savant (Damon) who works as a janitor at MIT. Once discovered, he begins seeing a therapist and attending math classes, forcing him to confront his emotional past. The film is true to Van Sant's interest in marginal working-class characters, while still working as mainstream entertainment.

Even Cowgirls Get the Blues

Saturday, September 17, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Lewis Milestone. 1960, 127 mins. Dir. Gus Van Sant. 1993, 97 mins. With Uma Thurman, Lorraine Bracco, Angie Dickinson, Keanu Reeves. Adapted from the cult novel by Tom Robbins, who narrates the film, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* stars Uma Thurman as Sissy Hankshaw, a large-thumbed free-spirit who hitchhikes across America, working as a model before landing at a ranch with a group of rambunctious outlaw cowgirls.

Paranoid Park

Sunday, September 18, 4:30 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 2007, 85 mins. With Gabe Nevins, Daniel Liu, Taylor Momsen. One of Van Sant's most experimental films to date, *Paranoid Park* is part thriller, part skateboard film, with amateur actors found on MySpace. A high-school student who belongs to the skating subculture, is involved in a terrible accident and makes a fateful decision. Wong Kar-wai's revered cinematographer Christopher Doyle brings a beautiful lyricism to this darkly emotional story.

To Die For

Friday, September 23, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 1995, 103 mins. With Nicole Kidman, Matt Dillon, Joaquin Phoenix. Buck Henry (*The Graduate*) adapted Joyce Maynard's novel into a biting satire about a television weathergirl with an ardent desire to become successful at any cost. The film exposes the workings of celebrity culture and the hunger for fame and money in the modern world.

Gerry

Saturday, September 24, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 2002, 103 mins. With Casey Affleck and Matt Damon. In Van Sant's minimalist buddy film, a tour de force for cinematographer Harris Savides, Matt Damon and Casey Affleck play two men, each named Gerry and lost in the desert. A two-person drama with spare dialogue in which the landscape becomes a third character, *Gerry* depicts the slowly developing bond between the men.

Elephant

Saturday, September 24, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 2003, 81 mins. With Elias McConnell, Alex Frost, Eric Deulen. An austere and audacious meditation on the Columbine massacre, *Elephant* uses fluid long takes and tracking shots as it inexorably explores the oppressive and alienating qualities of high school life, digging

beneath the clichés of most representations of adolescence to achieve a bracing realism. (Part of the *Gus Van Sant* series.)

Psycho

Sunday, September 25, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 1998, 105 mins. With Vince Vaughn, Anne Heche, Julianne Moore. In this shot-by-shot refilming of the 1960 original, Van Sant subverts the very concept of a remake by updating the classic Hitchcock thriller with color and Hollywood actors, without altering any of the story or camera angles. A rewarding judge-for-yourself experience, with photography by Christopher Doyle.

Last Days

Sunday, September 25, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 2005, 97 mins. With Michael Pitt, Lucas Haas, Asia Argento. A drugged-out musician wanders his mansion during his last days of life, in this artistic interpretation of Kurt Cobain's demise. With its entrancing beauty and formal rigor, the film is a study in loneliness that is also an artistic triumph.

Milk

Friday, September 30, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Gus Van Sant. 2008, 128 mins. With Sean Penn, Josh Brolin, Emile Hirsch, James Franco. Sean Penn won the Oscar for Best Actor in this epic and intimate biopic of gay activist and slain San Francisco politician Harvey Milk, who in 1977 became the first openly gay elected official in California. *Milk* is a heartfelt love story, a snapshot of 1960s San Francisco counterculture, and a tribute to a true revolutionary.

MUSEUM INFORMATION

Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 10:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (Closed on Monday except for holiday openings).

Film Screenings: See schedule above and online at <http://movingimage.us/films>.

Museum Admission: \$12.00 for adults; \$9.00 for persons over 65 and for students with ID; \$6.00 for children ages 3-18. Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free.

Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. Paid admission includes film screenings (except for special ticketed events and Friday evenings). Tickets for special programs may be purchased in advance by phone at 718.777.6800 or online.

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

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

Program Information: Telephone: 718.777.6888; Website: <http://movingimage.us>

The Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and its operations are made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation). The Museum also receives generous support from numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. For more information, please visit <http://movingimage.us>.