

Brooklyn Public Library Launches Six-Day International Literary Film Festival

Inaugural Lineup of Films Showcases Celebrated Playwrights, Poets, Authors, Translators, and Characters from Around the World and Features Director Talkbacks, Staged Readings, and Panel Discussions

BROOKLYN, February 8, 2018—Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), one of the largest and most diverse libraries in the country, today announced the debut of *LitFilm*, a six-day festival celebrating films from around the world that focus their lenses on the great playwrights, poets, writers, and literary characters from the late-19th century through the present day. BPL's *LitFilm* festival will examine some of the most influential figures of modern literature, looking beyond the narratives that dominated their lives in the public eye to reveal new perspectives on their work. Taking place at BPL's historic Central Branch, the free festival will kick off on Tuesday, February 20 with a keynote address by **Rebecca Miller**, Arthur Miller's daughter and director of the documentary *Arthur Miller: Writer*, soon to air on HBO. The festival will continue with 17 diverse events, culminating on Sunday, February 25 with a discussion of *Joan Didion: The Center Will Not Hold*, led by Didion's nephew, the actor and director **Griffin Dunne**.

"At the intersection of literature and film, *LitFilm* will illuminate the creative trials and triumphs of some of the most beloved voices of the 20th century," said **BPL President and CEO Linda E. Johnson**. "Over six days, we hope patrons will encounter new writers, and discover new perspectives on writers they've read and reread, from Baldwin to Sontag."

The inaugural edition of *LitFilm* will feature films that explore the human side of legendary writers and playwrights **James Baldwin, Joan Didion, Arthur Miller, Susan Sontag, Alice Walker, Diane Di Prima, Václav Havel, Svetlana Geier**, and reflect on the complex lives of literary figures who embodied their nations in the eyes of the world, from **Gabriel García Márquez** and **William S. Burroughs** to **Yukio Mishima** and **Mahmoud Darwish**.

LitFilm will also feature director Q&As, panel discussions, and staged readings with filmmakers, critics, and actors. Among the events, directors of *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* Karen Thorsen and Douglas K. Dempsey will host an audience-led discussion on the place of Baldwin's work in the contemporary movement for civil rights, and actor Najla Said will lead a reading of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry following *Write Down, I Am an Arab*, a film considering the late poet's role in shaping modern Palestinian literature.

"With *LitFilm*, Brooklyn Public Library is casting a new light on some of the most compelling and enduring forces in modern literature," said **BPL's Vice President of Arts & Culture László Jakab Orsos**. "Bringing together rare and revealing films and filmmakers, *LitFilm* will open up a dialogue on the humanity and legacy of these iconic literary figures."

The debut edition of *LitFilm* is part of Brooklyn Public Library's thought-provoking spring season of cultural programming, bringing together the world's most illustrious writers, critics, and artists with the Brooklyn and Greater New York communities to discover new perspectives, draw creative inspiration, and participate in today's most urgent conversations.

LitFilm is made possible through generous support from The Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/LitFilm>

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

7:00 PM Keynote by Rebecca Miller, director of *Arthur Miller: Writer*

Director Rebecca Miller delivers the keynote for the first *LitFilm: A BPL Film Festival About Writers* and introduces her personal portrait of her father, legendary playwright Arthur Miller. The talk is followed by a Q&A and a reception in the Dweck Lobby.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

7:30PM *Arthur Miller: Writer*

Documentary, dir. by Rebecca Miller
US, 2017, 98 min.

Director Rebecca Miller creates a personal portrait of her father—master playwright Arthur Miller—built around impromptu interviews shot over many years in the family home. Far from a conventional biographical documentary, it is a close consideration of a life shadowed by the tragedies of the Red Scare and the death of Marilyn Monroe, a bracing look at success and failure in the public eye, and an honest accounting of human fragility.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

4:00PM: *The Woman with the Five Elephants (Die Frau mit den 5 Elefanten)*

Documentary, dir. by Vadim Jendreyko
Germany, 2009, 93 min.
German and Russian with English subtitles

Winner of the Sterling Award for Best World Feature Documentary at Silverdocs, *The Woman with the Five Elephants* unravels the mystery behind the life and work of the world's greatest translator of Russian literature, Svetlana Geier. For the first time in 56 years, Geier returns to Kiev together with her granddaughter, resulting in a revelatory investigation into language, meaning, and the tides of history.

7:00PM: *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket*

Documentary, dir. by Karen Thorsen and Douglas K. Dempsey
US, 1989 (Original), 81 min.
2K Restoration

An emotional portrait, a social critique, and a passionate plea for human equality. Without using narration, the film allows Baldwin to tell his own story—what it means to be born black, impoverished, gay, and gifted in a world that has yet to understand that “all men are brothers.” This award-winning documentary, now considered a classic, combines rarely seen archival footage from nine countries,

public speeches, and interviews with close friends and colleagues, among them Maya Angelou, Amiri Baraka, and William Styron.

Screening followed by a Q&A with directors Karen Thorsen and Douglas K. Dempsey.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

6:00PM: *Alice Walker: Beauty in Truth*

Documentary, dir. by Pratibha Parmar
US, 2013, 90 min.

Writer, self-confessed renegade, and human rights activist, Alice Walker made history as the first black woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction with her groundbreaking novel *The Color Purple*, later turned into a Hollywood movie and a Broadway musical. *Beauty in Truth* traces the inspiring journey of an extraordinary woman, from her birth in a paper-thin shack in the cotton fields of Putnam County, Georgia, to her recognition as a key writer of the 20th century.

8:00PM: *Gabo: The Creation of Gabriel García Márquez (Gabo: La creación de Gabriel García Márquez)*

Documentary, dir. by Justin Webster
US, 2015, 89 min., Spanish with English subtitles

How did a boy growing up in the poverty and violence of northern Colombia become a writer who won the hearts of millions? How did he change our perception of reality with critically acclaimed books such as *Love in the Time of Cholera* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*? The answers lie in the incredible story of Nobel Prize-winner Gabriel García Márquez, known as Gabo to all of Latin America. The award-winning film explores the way in which creative imagination can transform the raw material of life and history into illuminating works of art.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

3:00PM: *Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines*

Dir. Kristy Guevara-Flanagan and Kelcey Edwards
US, 2012, 62 min.

The film explores the fascinating birth, evolution, and legacy of Wonder Woman. It introduces audiences to a dynamic group of fictional and real-life superheroines fighting for positive role models for girls, both onscreen and off.

5:00PM: *Write Down, I am an Arab*

Documentary, dir. by Ibtisam Mara'ana
Israel/Palestine, 2014, 73 min., Arabic with English subtitles

A fascinating look at the life and work of Palestinian national poet and one of the most influential writers of the Arab world, Mahmoud Darwish. Through his poetry, secret love letters, and exclusive archival materials, the film unearths the story behind the man who shaped Palestinian identity and helped galvanize generations of Palestinians to their cause.

After the film, Najla Said and other actors and writers read Darwish's poetry.

7:00PM: *Burroughs: The Movie*

Documentary, dir. by Howard Brookner
US, 1983, 90 min.

Made up of footage filmed over the course of five years, the documentary charts the development of William S. Burroughs' unique literary style and wildly unconventional life, including his travels from the American Midwest to North Africa and several personal tragedies. The result is a one-of-a-kind nonfiction portrait of the controversial *Naked Lunch* author, brought to life with the help of a remarkable crew of friends, including Jim Jarmusch and Tom DiCillo, and featuring onscreen appearances by Allen Ginsberg, Patti Smith, and others.

9:00PM: *Citizen Havel (Občan Havel)*

Documentary, dir. by Pavel Koutecký and Miroslav Janek
Czech Republic, 2017, 120 min., Czech with English subtitles

An absorbing cinéma-vérité portrait of dissident playwright-turned-statesman Václav Havel through his private moments and backroom dealings. Spanning from 1992, prior to Havel's election as president of the newly formed Czech Republic, through his defeat in 2003 and beyond, the film is a revealing look at a tumultuous period and the development of ideas and decision-making that defines Havel. After the tragic death of director Pavel Koutecký, the film was completed by fellow documentarian Miroslav Janek.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

1:00PM: *Bartleby*

Short/Animation, dir. by Kristen Kee and Laura Naylor
US, 2017, 11 min.

A stop-motion reimagining of Herman Melville's classic novella of the same name, in which a Wall Street lawyer finds himself beset by a stubborn office employee who "prefers not to."

1:15PM: *The Poetry Deal: A Film with Diane di Prima*

Short, dir. by Melanie La Rosa
US, 2011, 27 min.

An artful short about legendary poet Diane di Prima, spanning through 50 years of poetry, activism, and cultural changes, and providing a unique perspective on the Beat Generation.

2:00PM: *Regarding Susan Sontag*

Documentary, dir. by Nancy D. Kates
US, 2014, 100 min.

The award-winning documentary explores the life of the passionate and gracefully outspoken writer, Susan Sontag, through experimental images, archival materials, accounts from friends, family, colleagues, and lovers, as well as her own words read by actress Patricia Clarkson. From her early infatuation with books and her first experience in a gay bar, from her marriage in adolescence to her last

lover, *Regarding Susan Sontag* offers a fascinating look at a towering cultural critic and writer whose works on photography, war, illness, and terrorism still resonate today.

4:00PM: *Patriotism (Yukoku)*

Short, dir. by Yukio Mishima
Japan, 1966, 28 min., Japanese with English subtitles

Novelist, playwright, poet, and founder of the Japanese nationalist Tatenokai movement, Yukio Mishima foreshadowed his own suicide with this ravishing short, his only foray into filmmaking. All prints of the movie, which depicts the seppuku of an army officer, were destroyed after Mishima's death in 1970, though the negative was saved, and the film resurfaced 35 years later.

4:30PM *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*

Film, dir. by Paul Schrader
US, 1985, 120 min.

A stunning collage-like fictional account of the final chapter of Yukio Mishima's life. Taking place on Mishima's last day, when he famously committed public seppuku, the film is punctuated by extended flashbacks to the writer's life and stylized evocations of his novels, accompanied by an unforgettable score by Philip Glass.

7:00PM *Joan Didion: The Center Will Not Hold*

Documentary, dir. by Griffin Dunne
US, 2017, 94 min.

Literary icon Joan Didion reflects on her remarkable career and personal struggles in this intimate documentary directed by her nephew. Griffin Dunne unearths a treasure trove of archival footage and talks at length to his "Aunt Joan" about the sleek literati scene of New York in the 1950s and early '60s, her return to her home state of California for two turbulent decades, the writing of her seminal books and film scripts, her view of 1980s and '90s political personalities, and the meeting of minds that was her long marriage to writer John Gregory Dunne.

Followed by Q&A with director Griffin Dunne.

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