



museum of arts and design

FIRST SHIRLEY AND WENDY CLARKE RETROSPECTIVE INAUGURATES 'EYE ON A DIRECTOR' CINEMA SERIES AT MAD THIS JANUARY

Q&A with Wendy Clarke, Dennis Doros and Larry Kardish
Follows 2/5 Screening of *Ornette: Made in America*

Q&A with Wendy Clarke and Michael Renov
Follows 2/12 Screening of *Love Tapes*



New York, NY, December 28, 2015 – MAD is pleased to inaugurate *Eye on a Director* with the first retrospective on Shirley and Wendy Clarke, that will run from January 8 to February 26, 2016. With a focus on experimental craft, the *Eye on a Director* series looks at underrepresented voices in film and video history and features artists that actively test the limits of the cinematic medium, challenging viewers to expand their concept of the moving image. It provides a platform for mid-to-late career artists who resisted mainstream conventions and created unique bodies of work deserving of a retrospective.

For the first installment of the series, MAD presents the works of groundbreaking experimental filmmaker and cofounder of the Film-Maker's Cooperative Shirley Clarke, alongside her daughter's, independent video artist Wendy Clarke.

"It was important for us to launch the series with the work of Shirley and Wendy Clarke. Both have been groundbreaking in their experimental approach to the craft," says Katerina Llanes, Manager of Public Programs. "Their impact is immense—in fact, the Library of Congress just selected Shirley's legendary *Portrait of Jason* to be inducted into the National Film Registry—, yet they remain little known to the general public. We hope this retrospective will change that."

Born in New York City in 1919, Shirley Clarke began her career as a dancer in the avant-garde modern dance

movement, studying under Martha Graham, Humphrey/Weidman, and Hanya Holm before transitioning into experimental film.

Her first short film, *Dance in the Sun*, was an adaptation of choreography by Daniel Nagrin and was selected by the New York Dance Film Society as the best dance film of the year. She then went on to study filmmaking with Hans Richter at the City College of New York and became part of an inner circle of independent

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filmmakers in Greenwich Village such as Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas. Together, they created the New American Cinema Group, penned the manifesto “The First Statement of the New American Cinema Group” and co-founded The Film-Makers’ Cooperative in New York City.

While a highly accomplished filmmaker extolled during her lifetime, Shirley Clarke remains little known today. This, in part, is due to the early 1960s censorship laws that banned most of her work from public screenings in New York at the time of release. *The Connection*, a film about heroin-addicted Jazz musicians, was a landmark of cinematic realism that was subsequently shutdown following complaints of indecency based on a shot that included a pornographic magazine and a word deemed obscene.

Wendy Clarke’s work can be seen as an extension of her mother’s interests in cinema and video, but from a radically different perspective. While Shirley Clarke’s films are bold, in-your-face and directed from a definitive point of view, Wendy Clarke, more introspective in nature, allows the characters in front of the camera to tell their own stories. Hers is a cinema of listening, quiet beauty and devastating emotion.

Her work will be presented alongside her mother’s for the very first time. “From my point of view, my mother could do anything. She gave me the gift of gender confidence that she had to fight for. We had a very special relationship, one that not many artists that I know experienced,” states Wendy Clarke. “She was completely supportive of my work and we had long conversations about the potential of the video, film, dance, and painting mediums. My mother wanted us to show our work together and it has taken until the MAD retrospective for this to happen.”

Eye on A Director: Shirley and Wendy Clarke is co-curated by Katerina Llanes, Manager of Public Programs, and Carson Parish, Audio-Visual Coordinator, at the Museum of Arts and Design.

All screenings take place in the Theater at MAD. Tickets are \$10 General Admission and \$5 for Members and Students. They are available by calling **800.838.3006** or visiting <http://madmuseum.org/series/shirley-and-wendy-clarke>.



THE CONNECTION

Friday, January 8, 2016, 7 pm
\$10 General, \$5 MAD Members
1961, Shirley Clarke, USA
110mins, 35mm Projection

In a stark, unfurnished apartment north of 110th street, a group of heroin-addicted city-dwellers await their next fix. The camera steers between them; the gaps between their faces filled with loose woodwork and bare swinging light bulbs. Based on Jack Gelber’s “jazz play” of the same name, *The Connection* retains most of its on-stage cast. As the performers engage the camera’s presence, they test the limits of narrative fiction in their performances. A bedrock of American avant-garde cinema, Shirley Clarke’s debut received a hushed New York City release after a lengthy legal standoff targeted its profanity and realistic portrayal of addiction. Though the film takes place in a single apartment, its influence resonated worldwide igniting a firestorm of cinematic innovation spanning the next fifty years.

A rare 1956 television interview with Shirley Clarke in Minneapolis (3mins) precedes the feature.

Restored print courtesy of Milestone Films.



THE COOL WORLD

Friday, January 15, 2016, 7 pm
\$10 General, \$5 MAD Members
1963, Shirley Clarke, USA
125mins, 16mm Projection

Shirley Clarke's second masterpiece was the first production of legendary documentarian Frederick Wiseman. Though Clarke's film is billed as narrative fiction, its source material is mirrored reality, addressing escalating gang violence amid the Royal Pythons, a youth gang in Harlem. With an exceptional jazz soundtrack by Dizzy Gillespie and stunning black and white cinematography rich with the texture of a defunct New York, *The Cool World* represents the powerful voice of an underserved community fighting to be heard.

The short film, "Bridges-Go-Round", by Shirley Clarke (5mins) precedes the feature.

The Cool World print courtesy of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and Zipporah Films.
"Bridges-Go-Round" courtesy of Milestone Films.



PORTRAIT OF JASON

Friday, January 22, 2016, 7 pm
\$10 General, \$5 MAD Members
1967, Shirley Clarke, USA
105mins, 35mm Projection

Filed by the auteur over a long December night, the camera gazes at Jason while he speaks at length about his upbringing as a queer black man, his aspirations of being a cabaret dancer, and his otherness in a relentlessly hostile world. As Jason's remarks become increasingly troublesome, Shirley and her partner, the brilliant Carl Lee, break the fourth wall and confront Jason from behind the camera. Inspiring numerous, often heated, discourses about sexuality, race, and class, the conversation between Jason and his documenters demonstrates the captivating power of monologue and the vital art of listening.

Shirley Clarke's short film, "24 Frames Per Second" (3mins) precedes the feature.

***Shirley Clarke's Portrait of Jason was selected as one of the 25 films for 2015 to be inducted into the National Film Registry at the Library of Congress.**

Restored print courtesy of Milestone Films.



SHIRLEY CLARKE SHORTS PROGRAM

Friday, January 29, 2016, 7 pm
\$10 General, \$5 MAD Members

Shirley Clarke, USA
66 mins, Digital Projection
Dance in the Sun (1953, 8mins)
Bullfight (1955, 10mins)
A Moment in Love (1957, 10mins)
Skyscraper (1959, 22mins)
A Scary Time (1960, 16mins)

In this rare screening of shorts, the breadth of Shirley Clarke's oeuvre comes to life in a matter of moments. From her landmark debut film, "Dance in the Sun", to "Skyscraper", a musical comedy about the construction of 666 Fifth Avenue, we get a glimpse into the world of performance and politics in 1950's NYC. The program closes with "A Scary Time", a haunting work commissioned by UNICEF that juxtaposes shots of children on Halloween with images of infant victims of genocide. Never used by UNICEF, the short film marks Clarke's earliest foray into narrative.

Restored digital transfers courtesy of Milestone Films.



ORNETTE: MADE IN AMERICA

Q&A with Wendy Clarke, Dennis Doros and Larry Kardish

Friday, February 5, 2016, 7 pm
\$15 General, \$10 MAD Members
1985, Shirley Clarke, USA
85mins, 35mm Projection

Diverting from a traditional biopic structure, Shirley Clarke's last complete feature film parallels iconic free jazz musician Ornette Coleman's musical style—unfettered, rhythmic, and polychromatic. *Ornette: Made in America* merges documentary footage, music video-style clips, reenactments and performances. William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Buckminster Fuller, Don Cherry, Yoko Ono, Charlie Haden, Robert Palmer, Jayne Cortez and John Rockwell all contributed to the film.

The screening will be followed by a Q&A with video artist Wendy Clarke, founder of Milestone Films, Dennis Doros and renowned film curator Larry Kardish.

Shirley Clarke's shorts, "In Paris Parks" and "Butterfly" precede the feature.

Restored print courtesy of Milestone Films.



LOVE TAPES

Q&A with Wendy Clarke and Michael Renov

February 12, 2016, 7 pm

\$15 General, \$10 MAD Members

Wendy Clarke, 1977-2001, USA

Approx. 90 minutes, Digital Projection

A revelatory work of video art, Wendy Clarke's *Love Tapes* were conceived as a participatory project, in which the artist recorded members of the public talking about their feelings towards love. Over 2,500 tapes were made across the world, illustrating the vast interpretations, variations, and memories prompted by the word "love". Through this process, video operates both as an apparatus for intimacy and facilitator for self-examination and its breathtaking scope reveals a rare glimpse of humanity communing through shared experience. Released on PBS and other public television stations in the 1980s, the work marked a milestone for the advancement of the medium.

The screening will be followed by a Q&A with Director Wendy Clarke and Michael Renov, Vice Dean of Academic Affairs, University of Southern California Cinematic Arts.

Videos courtesy of Wendy Clarke.



ONE ON ONE

Friday, February 19, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 General, \$5 MAD Members

1991-94, Wendy Clarke, USA

136mins, Digital Projection

ONE ON ONE: KEN & LOUISE (90mins)

ONE ON ONE: ARNOLD & AHNEVA (46mins)

Wendy Clarke's follow-up to her massive *Love Tapes* project was a series of videos smaller in scale yet far more complex in execution. Clarke, who was an artist-in-residence at the California Institute for Men in Chino, CA, provided tapes for inmates to send a video message to the outside world. Outsiders then selected tapes and composed video responses. The two in conversation were otherwise prohibited from communicating, leaving the tape as an enabler, allowing the development of cursory conversation into profound observations on connection, equality, and the realities of the prison industrial complex.

Videos courtesy of Wendy Clarke.



L.A. LINK + OTHER WORKS

Friday, February 26, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 General, \$5 MAD Members

1996, Wendy Clarke & Michael Renov, USA

Approx. 70mins, Digital Projection

L.A. LINK (41mins)

Keep the Memories (5mins)

Teepee Video Space Troupe: Makeup Magic

In L.A. Link, Clarke's intimate video processes are reimagined for a digital audience. Working in 1996, at the dawn of the Internet age and the impending digital revolution, Clarke and Renov's collaborative work answers several questions far ahead of its time: Can computer-mediated face-to-face encounters provide a useful or meaningful avenue for human interaction? Can people create collaboratively in such circumstances?

Collapsing the binary between distance and intimacy, "L.A. Link" proposes digital communication as deeply personal, a proposal only realized by technology in the decades to come. This program also contains "Keep the Memories" and a selection from "Makeup Magic" that serves as a cinematic link between Shirley and Wendy Clarke with some of their earliest, most candid collaborations.

"L.A. Link" and "Keep the Memories" videos courtesy of Wendy Clarke.

"Makeup Magic" courtesy of Milestone Films.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields, presenting artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill to their work. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving 21st-century innovation, fostering a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design.

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