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FREDERICK WISEMAN: A SENSE OF PLACE

ACCLAIMED DOCUMENTARIAN'S CAREER IS CELEBRATED WITH REGIS DIALOGUE AND RETROSPECTIVE

"No contemporary maker of films, whether for theatrical release or for television, engages my emotions so fully or consistently as Frederick Wiseman."—*Life Magazine*

Frederick Wiseman, one of this country's most celebrated filmmakers and a pioneer of cinéma vérité, will be honored by the Walker Art Center with a Film Retrospective and Regis Dialogue from November 2-21. **Frederick Wiseman: A Sense of Place** will include films from throughout the director's illustrious career. The series opens on Sunday, November 2, at 1 pm, with *Belfast, Maine*, and concludes on Friday, November 21, at 8 pm, when Wiseman will be joined onstage for a Regis Dialogue with film director/producer Jim McKay (*Girls Town, Our Song, The Sleepy Time Gal*, and Cheryl Dunye's *Stranger Inside*). The retrospective includes the premiere of Wiseman's newest work, the theatrical drama *The Last Letter* (Wednesday, November 19, at 8 pm), as well as a collaboration with Get Real: *City Pages* Documentary Film Festival with a screening of *Domestic Violence 2* at 7 pm on Monday, November 10, at Oak Street Cinema.

Wiseman's aim is "to make as many films as possible about different aspects of American life." As he reaches this goal, it is clear that no other filmmaker will come close to his breadth of vision. Best known as a documentary filmmaker with a patient eye and a careful ear, Wiseman has brought his camera into the institutions that shape our lives: the classroom, the courtroom, the hospital, the monastery, welfare offices, military facilities, the store, the zoo, housing projects, the theater, and the fashion runway. His films are about people—workers, soldiers, everyday citizens—who are caught up in abstract ideals and day-to-day bureaucracy. While each stands on

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its own, these films come together remarkably well as a series. This grouping of 12 works, selected from his oeuvre of 38, focuses on Wiseman's sense of place, which is defined not only by geography, but by stories that chronicle the idiosyncracies, flaws, strengths, and humor of our Americanness.

Frederick Wiseman: A Sense of Place is made possible by generous support from the Regis Foundation.

Unless otherwise noted, screenings are \$7 (\$5 Walker members) and take place in the Auditorium. All films are directed by Frederick Wiseman. For information, call 612.375.7622.

**FREDERICK WISEMAN: A SENSE OF PLACE
FILM RETROSPECTIVE AND REGIS DIALOGUE
NOVEMBER 2-21**

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1 PM

Belfast, Maine

A film about extraordinary experience in a beautiful old New England port city, *Belfast, Maine* offers a portrait of daily life that emphasizes the work and cultural life of the community. The labors of lobstermen, tugboat operators, factory workers, shop owners, city counselors, doctors, judges, policemen, teachers, social workers, nurses, and ministers become fascinating under the careful eye of a great documentarian. Wiseman works like a pointillist painter, creating a mural from small bits, that tells the story of a town, a society, a whole species. 1999, U.S., color, 16mm, 248 minutes.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 8 PM

Titicut Follies

Wiseman's debut documentary *Titicut Follies* is a stark, unrelenting glimpse into the State Prison for the Criminally Insane located in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Portraying the conditions that existed when it was made in 1967, the film was banned worldwide until 1992 due to a court ruling regarding invasion of privacy, but has since become an esteemed classic. The title refers to a musical revue staged by inmates and guards. Telling you more than you could possibly want to know—but no more than you should know—about life behind the walls of one of those institutions where we file and forget the criminally insane. 1967, U.S., BW, 16mm, 84 minutes.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1 PM FREE

High School

"The most frightening thing about *High School* is that it captures the battlefield so clearly; the film is too true" (*Newsweek*). This documentary shows us that a school system exists not only to pass on facts but, ideally, to transmit social values from one generation to another. In 1968, roaming through a large school in Philadelphia, Wiseman captures on film a series of formal and informal clashes between teachers, students, parents, and administrators through which the ideology and

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values of the school emerge. Spoofed in Wes Anderson's 1998 feature *Rushmore*, Wiseman's film is a wicked, brilliant documentary. 1968, U.S., BW, 16mm, 75 minutes.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 8 PM FREE

Basic Training

Wiseman uncovers human conditions in inhuman situations. By showing us the marching, the hand-to-hand combat, the loss of identity, he conveys the humor and sadness of the situation. *Basic Training* follows a company of draftees and enlisted men through the drills and weapons training that converts civilians into soldiers. 1971, U.S. BW, 16mm, 89 minutes.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1 PM

Essene

Lecture Room

Described as one of the best religious films ever made, *Essene* observes the daily life in a Benedictine monastery and the resolution of conflict when personal needs are weighed against the institutional and organizational priorities of the community. Showing the relationship of individual work and worship to the community as a whole, the monks must cope with the same issues that arise in any community: rules, work, values, love, and play. 1972, U.S., BW, 16mm, 86 minutes.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 7 PM

Domestic Violence 2

Tickets: \$7

Oak Street Cinema, 309 Oak Street SE, Minneapolis

Wiseman returns to Hillsborough County, Florida, the setting of his film *Domestic Violence* (which screened at the Walker in 2002), though, as *Variety* notes, "[f]amiliarity with the first film is in no way a requisite for appreciation of what Wiseman does here." Beginning with the response of Tampa police to a 911 call, Wiseman follows a series of domestic abuse cases into arraignment and court, where lawyers and judges ask questions that elicit riveting stories of couples' conflicts and the ensuing violence that led them to the judicial system. Screened as part of Get Real: *City Pages* Documentary Film Festival. 2002, U.S. color, 16mm, 159 minutes.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 7 PM

Racetrack

Racetrack focuses in on Belmont, one of the world's leading tracks, and highlights the training, maintaining, and racing of thoroughbred horses. As is his style, Wiseman wanders around Belmont finding ripe, illustrative material about a small industry comparatively, but it serves as a rich microcosm of the emotional wages of materialism. 1985, U.S., BW, 16mm, 114 minutes.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 8 PM

The Store

Delving deeply into seemingly superficial subject matter, this film about the main Neiman-Marcus store in Dallas shows the daily practice of selection, presentation, marketing, pricing, advertising, and selling a vast array of consumer products—all the while showing us the internal management of a large corporation. Presented as an informative—and incidentally entertaining—tract that will likely be of sociological importance for generations to come. 1983, U.S., color, 16mm, 120 minutes.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 8 PM

Model

Model documents the harrowing attention to detail required by the men and women at work on TV commercials, fashion shows, print advertising, posing for magazine covers and ads for a variety of products: designer collections, fur coats, sports clothes, and automobiles. The film presents a view of the intersections of fashion, business, advertising, photography, television, and fantasy. "He highlights the mad perfectionism of TV-commercial-makers—rehearsals, retakes, huge crews, anxieties, tantrums, and exhaustion—all for a few seconds of film selling hosiery" (*The New Yorker*). 1980, U.S., BW, 16mm, 129 minutes.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1 PM

La Comédie-Française ou L'amour joué

La Comédie-Française is the oldest continuous repertory theater company in the world, founded in Paris in the late 17th century. This is the first time a documentary filmmaker has been allowed to look at all the aspects of the work of this great theatrical company: casting, set and costume design, administrative meetings, rehearsals and performances. The plays they are working on are classic French plays by Molière, Racine, and Feydeau. What emerges from this epic work of nonfiction is a rare glimpse into what makes theater theater and what makes film an art. 1996, U.S./France, color, 16mm, in French with English subtitles, 223 minutes.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 8 PM

The Last Letter (La dernière lettre)

This drama is set in 1941 in a small city in the Ukraine just seized by the Germans. Here a Russian Jewish doctor writes a final letter to her son, a famous physicist who is far from the front lines at a Soviet research institute. The letter, with its detailed observations of daily life in the ghetto, reveals the fear, courage, frailty, compassion, and dignity of this woman as she reviews her lie and faces her death. The screenplay, written by Vasily Grossman, is based on his book *Life and Fate*. Catherine Samie offers a rigorous and lyric performance in the role of the mother. 2002, U.S./France, black and white, 35mm, in French with English subtitles, 61 minutes.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 10:15 AM FREE

High School II

Made 16 years after *High School*, this epic documentary brings Wiseman to Central Park East Secondary School, an alternative high school in New York's Spanish Harlem that sends 85 to 95% of its graduates on to four-year colleges. The film illustrates the school's emphasis on "Habits of Mind"—weighing evidence, awareness of multiple points of view, seeing connections and relationships, speculating on possibilities, and assessing values. This approach, which parallels Wiseman's documentary methods, urges students to talk, listen, and think for themselves. 1994, U.S., color, 16mm, 220 minutes. There will be a half-hour break at 12 noon.

Free study guides are available for school groups viewing *High School II*. For information contact Susan Rotilie, 612.375.7614. For information on scheduling a tour group call 612.375.7609 or e-mail education.resources@walkerart.org.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 8 PM

Regis Dialogue: Frederick Wiseman and Jim McKay

\$12 (\$8 Walker members)

Auditorium

Frederick Wiseman talks onstage with film director/producer Jim McKay. Their dialogue explores Wiseman's life work, his sense of place, and his recent transition from documentaries to dramas.

**The Walker Art Center is located at 725 Vineland Place,
at Lyndale Avenue South, Minneapolis, one block off Highway I-94.
For public information, call 612.375.7622.
Gallery hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 10 am–5 pm;
Thursday, 10 am–9 pm; Sunday, 11 am–5 pm; closed Monday.
<http://www.walkerart.org>**