

BAMcinématek presents *The Films of Robert Frank*, Aug 4—Sep 22, a survey of 25 films over eight Thursdays

“One of the most important and influential American independent filmmakers of the last half-century.” —Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*

The Wall Street Journal is the title sponsor for BAMcinématek and BAM Rose Cinemas.

Jul 7, 2016/Brooklyn, NY—Thursday evenings from August 4 through September 22, BAMcinématek presents *The Films of Robert Frank*. Since the publication of his landmark collection *The Americans* in 1958, Swiss born Robert Frank has been regarded as perhaps the single most influential photographer of his generation. Less well known—but no less groundbreaking—is Frank’s work as an independent filmmaker. Like his photographs, Frank’s restlessly inventive films have a deceptively spontaneous quality, capturing fragments of everyday existence that reveal volumes. Showcased in this full-career retrospective, with prints courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, are his rarely screened film works encompassing records of mid-century counterculture which examine boundaries between documentary, fiction, and the autobiographical.

The series begins on August 4 with Frank’s first short film, *Pull My Daisy* (1959—Aug 4), a definitive slice of Beat life including poets Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, and Gregory Corso with narration by Jack Kerouac. Frank revisits these subjects in his feature film, *Me and My Brother* (1968—Aug 11), a documentary-fiction hybrid that focuses on Allen Ginsberg’s life partner Peter Orlovsky and Peter’s schizophrenic brother, Julius. Frank utilizes both documentary and fiction in *Keep Busy* (1975—Aug 18), an improvisational portrait of island inhabitants in Nova Scotia (then Frank’s home). Nova Scotia is the backdrop again in *Paper Route* (2002—Sep 15), where Frank accompanies a newspaper deliveryman on his rounds, *Life Dances On* (1980—Aug 18), and again in *Candy Mountain* (1988—Sep 1).

Frank’s filmmaking turns personal in his autobiographical documentary *Conversations in Vermont* (1969—Aug 4), where he inquisitively interviews his teenage children. In the haunting *Life Dances On*, Frank honors the living and the dead, and further explores this theme in *Sanyu* (2000), an homage to the Chinese painter; *Fernando* (2008), a tribute to Frank’s friend and Swiss artist Fernando; *Flamingo* (1996); *I Remember* (1998); and *True Story* (2008—Sep 15, screens with *Paper Route*), where Frank confronts the deaths of family members and friends. *Sanyu*, *Flamingo*, and *I Remember* will screen together with the self-reflective short, *The Present* (1996) and the Patti Smith music video *Summer Cannibals* (1996) on September 15.

Ever associated with 60s and 70s counterculture, Frank’s films serve as a treasure of artistic interpretation and documentation. *Life-Raft Earth* (1969—Aug 14), documents a weeklong, California hippie “starve in,” and screens with a film initially about music in America, *About Me: A Musical* (1971), that evolves into a fractured portrait of Frank himself. *C’est Vrai* (1990—Sep 8) is an ingenious portrait New York City captured in one-single shot and *Home Improvements* (1985), documents Frank’s personal and artistic life in both New York City and Nova Scotia. The collaboration between Frank and *Two-Lane Blacktop* screenwriter Rudy Wurlitzer again brings the two resonant locations together in *Candy Mountain*, which follows a guitarist (Kevin O’Connor)

from New York City to Nova Scotia in search of fame and a reclusive guitar maker. Frank revisits the Beat generation in ***This Song for Jack*** (1983), featuring candid footage of famous authors filmed at a conference dedicated to Jack Kerouac, and ***Energy and How to Get It*** (1980), a documentary spoof starring William S. Burroughs. *Home Improvements*, *This Song for Jack*, and *Energy and How to Get It* will all screen together on August 25.

The series also includes ***The Sin of Jesus*** (1961—Aug 4), ***O.K. End Here*** (1963—Aug 4), ***Hunter*** (1989—Sep 8), ***Tunnel*** (2008—Sep 15), and ***Last Supper*** (1992—Sep 15).

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The Films of Robert Frank Schedule

Thu, Aug 4

7pm: Robert Frank 1959-1961
8:45pm: Robert Frank 1963-1969

Thu, Aug 11

7, 9pm: *Me and My Brother*

Thu, Aug 18

7pm: Robert Frank 1969-1971
8:45pm: Robert Frank 1975-1980

Thu, Aug 25

7, 9pm: Robert Frank 1981-1985

Thu, Sep 1

7, 9:15pm: *Candy Mountain*

Thu, Sep 8

7pm: Robert Frank 1989-1990
9:15pm: *Last Supper*

Thu, Sep 15

7pm: Robert Frank 1996-2000
8:45pm: Robert Frank 2002-2008

Thu, Sep 22

Screenings to be announced

Film Descriptions

Candy Mountain (1988) 103min

Directed by Robert Frank & Rudy Wurlitzer. With Kevin J. O'Connor, Harris Yulin, Bulle Ogier.
This collaboration between Frank and *Two-Lane Blacktop* screenwriter Wurlitzer is a wry, casually profound road movie in which a guitarist (O'Connor) sets off on a journey from New York City to Nova Scotia in search of fame and a legendary, reclusive guitar maker. Along the way there are appearances from a host of musicians, including Tom Waits, Joe Strummer, David Johansen, Dr. John, and Arto Lindsay. 35mm.

Thu, Sep 1 at 7, 9:15pm

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Last Supper (1992) 52min

Directed by Robert Frank. With Zohra Lampert, John Larkin, Taylor Mead.

In an empty lot in Harlem, guests at a book signing party (including downtown icon and former Warhol superstar Taylor Mead) wait for an author who never comes, in his absence chattering incessantly as they dissect his life, career, and perceived status. The famously spotlight-shunning Frank's irony-laden commentary on art world celebrity is rife with autobiographical overtones.

16mm.

Thu, Sep 15 at 9:15pm

Me and My Brother (1968) 91min

Directed by Robert Frank. With Julius Orlovsky, Peter Orlovsky, Christopher Walken.

Frank's first feature film is a provocative mix of narrative and non-fiction, in which documentary footage of poets Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, and Peter's schizophrenic brother is interspersed with staged reenactments (with a young Christopher Walken playing Frank). The result is "a tangibly emotional experience as it struggles poignantly with the limits of understanding another person's mind" (Ed Halter, *Village Voice*). 35mm.

Thu, Aug 11 at 7, 9pm

Robert Frank 1959-1961 68min

Pull My Daisy (1959), Frank's first film, is the definitive Beat movie. Poets Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, Gregory Corso, et al. cavort, crack wise, and upend a dinner party, accompanied by Jack Kerouac's jazzy, Beatnik-speak narration. Its unruly, improvisatory spirit stands in contrast to Frank's second film, *The Sin of Jesus* (1961), a Biblical fable based on an Isaac Babel story, which displays a poetic formal control.

Thu, Aug 4 at 7pm

Robert Frank 1963-1969 56min

Frank channels Nouvelle Vague cool in *O.K. End Here* (1963), an exploration of alienation centering on a disaffected Manhattan couple (one half played by Martin LaSalle of Bresson's *Pickpocket*). His filmmaking took a turn for the personal with *Conversations in Vermont* (1969), an unflinching, pioneering work of autobiographical cinema, in which Frank turns the camera on himself and his teenage children to confront their fraught relationship.

Thu, Aug 4 at 8:45pm

Robert Frank 1969-1971 72min

This program brings together two freewheeling documents of the late-1960s/early-'70s counterculture. *Life-Raft Earth* (1969) is a cinéma vérité record of the Hunger Show, a weeklong, California hippie "starve-in," organized by Wavy Gravy and Whole Earth Catalog publisher Stewart Brand. In *About Me: A Musical* (1971), what was supposed to be a documentary about music in America becomes a searching, fractured self-portrait, with an actress playing Frank.

Thu, Aug 18 at 7pm

Robert Frank 1975-1980 60min

This program presents two approaches to autobiography. *Keep Busy* (1975) melds documentary and fiction into an absurdist, improvisatory portrait of people living on a remote island off Nova Scotia (then Frank's home). Made in the wake of a series of personal tragedies—including the death of his daughter—*Life Dances On* (1980) is Frank's most hauntingly emotional work, both an elegy for those he has lost and a record of those who remain.

Thu, Aug 18 at 8:45pm

BAMcinémathèque

Robert Frank 1981-1985 87min

Frank's works from the early 1980s display his restless creativity, from the wild documentary spoof *Energy and How to Get It* (1980), starring William S. Burroughs and Robert Downey, to his first video diary, *Home Improvements* (1985). In between, he revisited the Beat generation in *This Song for Jack* (1983), filmed at a conference dedicated to Kerouac, and featuring candid footage of Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, John Clellon Holmes, Gregory Corso, Herbert Huncke, and other major writers.

Thu, Aug 25 at 7, 9pm

Robert Frank 1989-1990 96min

Two road movies, of sorts. *Hunter* (1989) is a Kafka-inspired journey through Germany's industrial Ruhr region, with Frank, in his own words, as "a man whose destiny is – not to find a destination." *C'est Vrai* (1990) is an ingenious, one-hour trip through Lower Manhattan shot in a single take, Frank's camera catching both staged happenings and random events. The result is "a minor miracle...both street theater and an urban road movie" (J. Hoberman).

Thu, Sep 8 at 7pm

Robert Frank 1996-2000 66min

Frank's wide-ranging creative vision is on display in this diverse program, which includes the elegiac diary film *Flamingo* (1996), the delightful *I Remember* (1998), in which Frank and friends reenact the artist's visit to the home of photographer Alfred Stieglitz, and *Sanyu* (2000), an homage to the major Chinese painter who was Frank's close friend, and the self-reflective *The Present* (1996). Plus: the Frank-directed Patti Smith music video *Summer Cannibals* (1996).

Thu, Sep 15 at 7pm

Robert Frank 2002-2008 65min

This program of Frank's recent films presents revealing snapshots from his life and portraits of those around him. In *Paper Route* (2002) the artist accompanies a newspaper deliveryman on his daily rounds in rural Nova Scotia, while in *Fernando* and the intensely emotional *True Story* (both 2008), Frank confronts the deaths of friends and family members, including his son Pablo. This program also includes the short film *Tunnel* (2008).

Thu, Sep 15 at 8:45pm

About BAMcinémathèque

The four-screen BAM Rose Cinemas (BRC) opened in 1998 to offer Brooklyn audiences alternative and independent films that might not play in the borough otherwise, making BAM the only performing arts center in the country with two mainstage theaters and a multiplex cinema. In July 1999, beginning with a series celebrating the work of Spike Lee, BAMcinémathèque was born as Brooklyn's only daily, year-round repertory film program. BAMcinémathèque presents new and rarely seen contemporary films, classics, work by local artists, and festivals of films from around the world, often with special appearances by directors, actors, and other guests. BAMcinémathèque has not only presented major retrospectives by major filmmakers such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Manoel de Oliveira, Shohei Imamura, Vincente Minnelli (winning a National Film Critics' Circle Award prize for the retrospective), Kaneto Shindo, Luchino Visconti, and William Friedkin, but it has also introduced New York audiences to contemporary artists such as Pedro Costa and Apichatpong Weerasethakul. In addition, BAMcinémathèque programmed the first US retrospectives of directors Arnaud Desplechin, Nicolas Winding Refn, Hong Sang-soo, and Andrzej Zulawski. From 2006 to 2008, BAMcinémathèque partnered with the Sundance Institute and in June 2009 launched BAMcinemaFest, a 16-day festival of new independent films and repertory favorites with 15 NY feature film premieres; the eighth annual BAMcinemaFest ran from June 15—26, 2016.

Credits

The Wall Street Journal is the title sponsor of BAM Rose Cinemas and BAMcinémathèque.

BAMcinémathèque

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General Information

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn's only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAMcafé, operated by Great Performances, offers a bar menu and dinner entrées prior to BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances. BAMcafé also features an eclectic mix of spoken word and live music for BAMcafé Live on Friday and Saturday nights with a bar menu available starting at 6pm.

Subway: 2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater)
D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue
Train: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal – Barclays Center
Bus: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM
Car: Commercial parking lots are located adjacent to BAM

For ticket information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org

