

Cinema under Siege: Imperiled Visions from Beirut to Baghdad

A film series sponsored by the College of Arts and Letters and the Department of English

As part of the “Year of the Arts and Culture” at MSU, the Department of English is pleased to present a series of films and videos that were made under the conditions of war, siege, and occupation. Each of the films bears the traces of these perilous circumstances in its visual style, formal structure, and rhetorical address. Ranging from three-minute shorts from Lebanon to the epic Israeli-Palestinian collaboration *Route 181* to Werner Herzog’s lyrical images of the burning oil fields in Kuwait, each film tells a story about the embattled Middle East by bringing us in close proximity to the violence that threatens people in front of and behind the camera. The filmmakers highlighted in this series strive to make visual sense of the complex social history, politics, culture, and geography that give rise to these unsettled and unsettling states of affairs. Many of the films included in the series have had little or no theatrical release in the United States.

MSU faculty will introduce the films and lead discussions with the audience after. This series has been generously supported by the College of Arts and Letters. We also thank the Residential College for use of new media studies facility.

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All of the screenings will be held in C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall (home of the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities). Films are *free* and open to the public, and will be presented on DVD.

Summer 2006, Palestine (various directors, 2006, 35 min)

Friday, February 15, 2008, 7:00 p.m. C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall

Thirteen Palestinian filmmakers came together in a filmic experiment designed to capture the “mood” of the summer of 2006, when Gaza and Lebanon were subject to military strikes. In three minutes or less, each filmmaker was asked to tell the story of contemporary Palestine in a single evocative shot.

We Are Here: Short Videos from Lebanon (various directors, 2006)

Saturday, February 16, 2008

7:00 p.m. Program One (71 min.) C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall

9:00 p.m. Program Two: (62 min) C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall

During the summer 2006 Israeli assault on Lebanon, artists and activists made use of new digital video technology to record their immediate experiences related to the war. The compulsion to construct a visual document of the violence came not only from a desire for an alternative to broadcast media, but also from an eagerness to compile an archive from the perspective of those directly affected.

Route 181: Fragments of a Journey in Palestine and Israel (Khleifi and Sivan, 2004, 240 min.)

Friday, March 21, 6:00 p.m. C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall

Israeli filmmaker Eyal Sivan and Palestinian filmmaker Michel Khleifi retrace the border between Israel and Palestine based on the United Nation's 1947 Partition Plan. The directors interview an array of people affected by the decree, and investigate the contemporary terrain and entrenched politics along the contentious border. This complex, ambitious and critically acclaimed documentary has been virtually unseen in the United States. Screening will include an intermission.

Gunner Palace (Epperlein and Tucker, 2004, 85 min.)

Saturday, March 22, 7:00 p.m. C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall

In this documentary focusing on the US soldiers of the 2/3 Field Artillery (known as "the Gunners"), the camera follows the American men and women who live in Baghdad's Green Zone and struggle to make sense of their missions in Iraq.

The Dreams of Sparrows (Daffar, et al. 2004, 74 min.)

Friday, March 28, 7:00 p.m. C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall

This is the first feature film made by the IRAQeye Group, a production collaborative of American and Iraqi filmmakers. Several Iraqi documentarians capture life in Baghdad under US occupation and in the process introduce us to a cross section of Iraqis who experience the fateful transition from liberation, to occupation, to what seems like civil war.

Lessons of Darkness (Herzog, 1992, 54 min.)

Saturday, March 29, 7:00 p.m. C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, retreating Iraqi soldier left the oil fields of Kuwait a raging inferno. Werner Herzog and his small intrepid crew fly into these blazing fields and give us terrifyingly sublime images of otherworldly destruction. This is not a documentary in a conventional sense. Rather, for Herzog, this is a science fiction film, a film of catastrophe, in which Earth, as we know it, no longer exists.

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