

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI RETROSPECTIVE CELEBRATES POLISH DIRECTOR'S SINGULAR CAREER

June 10–July 3, 2011

***Director to make personal appearance with June 10<sup>th</sup> screening of  
Essential Killing, new film starring Vincent Gallo***

With his intense poetic style, Jerzy Skolimowski has been one of the most distinctive voices in international cinema since he emerged as a leading figure in the 1960s Polish New Wave. A painter, poet, and writer, Skolimowski made films throughout Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, and then abandoned cinema in the 1990s. He made an impressive return to filmmaking in recent years with *Four Nights with Anna* and his boldly enigmatic film *Essential Killing*, starring Vincent Gallo.

From June 10 through July 3, 2011, Museum of the Moving Image will present a major retrospective devoted to the film director, which will be the first stop in a national tour of the films that also includes the Harvard Film Archive. The series, ***The Cinema of Jerzy Skolimowski***, will include eleven feature films as well as a selection of short films made while he was a student at the prestigious Lodz Film School. The retrospective opens with a personal appearance by Skolimowski on June 10<sup>th</sup> with a screening of *Essential Killing*. [6/6/11 update: personal appearance cancelled.]

Many of the films in the retrospective are not in distribution in the United States and not available on DVD. Among the highlights are several semi-autobiographical films, including the rarely shown cult favorite *Deep End*, starring Jane Asher and John Moulder-Brown set in a London bath house; the Polish films *Identification Marks: None* (*Rysopis*), *Walkover*, and *Hands Up!*—known together as the Andrzej Leszczyc trilogy—and all featuring Skolimowski as actor as well as director; his “French” film, *Le départ*, starring Jean-Pierre Léaud; and *Moonlighting*, a humorous yet scathing tale of Polish laborers renovating a London flat starring Jeremy Irons. The series also features more recent films made in Poland: *Four Nights with Anna* and *Essential Killing*, the controversial thriller starring Vincent Gallo as an escaped Taliban fighter—a role which won him a best actor prize at the Venice Film Festival.

“Jerzy Skolimowski’s films are mesmerizing cinematic experiences that often have multiple meanings, and range freely from the poetic to the political,” said Chief Curator David Schwartz, who organized the series. “We are thrilled that Skolimowski will be with us to open the retrospective with his audacious new feature, *Essential Killing*.”

Jerzy Skolimowski (b. 1938) made a series of highly original and exciting films that captured the contradictions and energy of postwar Poland. At the Lodz Film School he had Andrzej Wajda as his teacher and Roman Polanski as a fellow student (the two collaborated on the script for *A Knife in the Water*). In 1967, a battle with censorship over the film *Hands Up!* caused him to flee Poland. After living and working around the world (including in Los Angeles where he acted in several American films), Skolimowski's self-imposed exile ended in the early 1990s; among the films he produced in Poland was the critically acclaimed *Four Nights with Anna* (2008).

*The Cinema of Jerzy Skolimowski* is presented with support from the Polish Cultural Institute in New York, and additional support from the Polish National Film Archive in Poland. The series is presented in collaboration with the Harvard Film Archive. Special thanks: Natalia Babinski (Polish Cultural Institute New York), Haden Guest (Harvard Film Archive)

**Press Contact:** Tomoko Kawamoto / [tkawamoto@movingimage.us](mailto:tkawamoto@movingimage.us) / 718 777 6830  
Screeners and images are available.

### **SCHEDULE FOR 'THE CINEMA OF JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI,' JUNE 10–JULY 3, 2011**

All screenings take place at Museum of the Moving Image (36-01 35 Avenue, Astoria, NY) and are included with Museum admission unless otherwise noted.

All films are directed by Jerzy Skolimowski and presented in 35 mm print.

#### ***Essential Killing***

Friday, June 10, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 11, 7:30 p.m.

#### **With Jerzy Skolimowski in person at the June 10 screening**

2010, 83 mins. With Vincent Gallo, Emmanuelle Seigner. Skolimowski's new film follows a Taliban terrorist who is captured, tortured, and then escapes into the frozen Polish wilderness. Vincent Gallo's mute performance as the man on the run won him the best actor award at the Venice Film Festival. *Essential Killing* is a deliberately ambiguous film that will leave you puzzling over its political and existential meanings.

#### ***Identification Marks: None (Rysopis)***

Saturday, June 11, 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 12, 6:30 p.m.

1965, 73 mins. With Jerzy Skolimowski, Elzbieta Czyzewska. Skolimowski completed his first feature film, and the first in the Andrzej Leszczyc trilogy, at the Lodz Film School. *Rysopis* follows Andrzej during his last hours before military service. Through scenes of chance encounters, spying, interrogation, and overheard conversations, Skolimowski creates an atmosphere of distrust in his portrayal of Poland's postwar generation.

#### ***Deep End***

Saturday, June 11, 5:15 p.m.

Sunday, June 12, 4:00 p.m.

1970, 90 mins. With Jane Asher, John Moulder-Brown, Karl Michael Vogler, Christopher Sandford, Diana Dors. A teen boy working at a public bath in London falls for a beautiful, seemingly unattainable older girl. Filled with comedic interludes of botched seduction and strange run-ins with the patrons of the baths, *Deep End* takes a tragic turn with one of the most beautiful and darkly ironic finales in contemporary cinema.

### ***Le départ***

Friday, June 17, 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 18, 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 19, 6:30 p.m.

1967, 93 mins. With Jean-Pierre Léaud, Catherine-Isabelle Duport. In some ways a deeper exploration of two characters from Godard's *Masculin Féminin*, *Le Départ* follows Marc (Léaud), who tries to steal a Porsche with the help of his girlfriend, Michèle (Duport), in order to achieve his dream of racing cars. Filmed in Belgium, this is Skolimowski's first cinematic foray out of Poland and his closest in spirit to the French New Wave.

### ***Barrier (Bariera)***

Saturday, June 18, 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 19, 4:00 p.m.

1966, 77 mins. With Joanna Szczerbic, Jan Nowicki, Andrzej Herder. A medical student tries to diagnose his alienation, in this psychological fantasia that explores its themes of romance and the generation gap with inventiveness and bursts of slapstick and jazz. "*Barrier* has the exuberance of a youthful work," wrote Bosley Crowther in the *New York Times*.

### ***The Shout***

Friday, June 24, 7:00 p.m.

1978, 86 mins. With Alan Bates, Susannah York, John Hurt, Tim Curry, Jim Broadbent. Based on a story by Robert Graves. A mysterious man claiming to be a practitioner of Aboriginal magic insinuates himself into the lives of a North Devon couple. An atmospheric, nonlinear horror story told by an unreliable narrator, *The Shout* presents an unsettling portrait of a family overtaken by madness and the fear of primal magic.

### ***Walkover***

Saturday, June 25, 4:00 p.m.

1965, 77 mins. With Jerzy Skolimowski, Aleksandra Zawieruszanka, Krzysztof Chamiec, Andrzej Herder. The second in a trilogy starring Skolimowski as engineering student Andrzej Leszczyc, *Walkover* begins six years after *Rysopis*. Andrzej wanders the country as an amateur boxer before he falls in love with a young woman. This highly personal film features Skolimowski's own poetry, and is the work of a confident young director eager to challenge the traditions of narrative cinema.

### ***Moonlighting***

Saturday, June 25, 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 26, 4:00 p.m.

1982, 97 mins. With Jeremy Irons. Made while Skolimowski was living in self-imposed exile in London, during the imposition of martial law in Poland and the rise of Solidarity, *Moonlighting* stars Irons as a Polish contractor brought to England to manage the renovation of a countryman's flat. "*Moonlighting* is a wickedly pointed movie that takes a simple little story, tells it with humor and truth, and turns it into a knife in the side of the Polish government," wrote Roger Ebert.

### ***King, Queen, Knave***

Saturday, July 2, 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 3, 2:00 p.m.

1972, 94 mins. With David Niven, Gina Lollobrigida. Based on the novella by Vladimir Nabokov. A young man goes to Germany and quickly falls in love with his aunt, who in turn decides to seduce the boy into killing his uncle. A black comedy about love and greed, *King, Queen, Knave* is also a subversive critique of the upper class.

### ***Hands Up!***

Saturday, July 2, 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 3, 5:00 p.m.

1967/1981, 76 mins. With Jerzy Skolimowski, Joanna Szczerbic, Tadeusz Lomnicki, Alan Bates. Initially banned, released as it was in 1967, at the height of Stalinism, *Hands Up!* was rereleased in 1981. Adding 25 minutes to his original film, Skolimowski was able to include a first-person prologue that recontextualizes the film, and to incorporate his response to the recent political climate. Considered by Skolimowski himself to be his best film, *Hands Up!* is an effective portrait of personal and national identity.

### ***Four Nights with Anna***

Saturday, July 2, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 3, 7:00 p.m.

2008, 87 mins. With Kinga Preis, Artur Steranko, Redbad Klynstra, Jerzy Fedorowicz. Described by David Bordwell as a "GOFAM—a Good Old-Fashioned Art Movie," *Four Nights with Anna* follows a mysterious voyeur and prowler. Revealing details slowly and methodically, Skolimowski creates a suspenseful and ambiguous portrait of a man obsessed. Of his first film in seventeen years, Skolimowski told audiences at Cannes, "To those who like me—I'm back. And to those who don't like me—I'm back." He certainly is.

## **MUSEUM INFORMATION**

Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 10:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (Closed on Monday except for holiday openings).

Film Screenings: See schedule above for schedule.

Museum Admission: \$10.00 for adults; \$7.50 for persons over 65 and for students with ID; \$5.00 for children ages 3-18. Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free. Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. Paid admission includes film screenings (except for special ticketed events and Friday evenings) Tickets for special screenings and events may be purchased in advance online at [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us) or by phone at [718.777.6800](tel:718.777.6800).

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: R or M trains (R on weekends) to Steinway Street. N or Q trains to 36 Avenue.

Program Information: Telephone: [718.777.6888](tel:718.777.6888); Website: <http://movingimage.us>

The Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and its operations are made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation). The Museum also receives generous support from numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. For more information, please visit <http://movingimage.us>