



The Films of José Luis Guerín



In conjunction with our week-long premiere run of his new film, *The Academy of Muses*, Anthology presents a comprehensive retrospective devoted to Catalan filmmaker José Luis Guerín.

Few contemporary filmmakers have demonstrated such a delight in ranging freely across cinematic modes and forms as Guerín. Though working mostly in feature-length filmmaking, he has shown little interest in narrative conventions. While his most famous film, *In the City of Sylvia*, is ostensibly a fictional narrative, it is at its heart an impressionistic essay on the act of looking (and by extension, filming), a quality confirmed by its frankly experimental companion film, *Some Photos in the City of Sylvia*, which tells very nearly the same story predominantly by means of still photographs. *Innisfree*, *Train of Shadows* and *Work in Progress* are nonfiction films whose formal dexterity and highly personal nature renders them impossible to pigeon-hole: at times resembling straight documentaries, they variously extend into the realm of essay filmmaking and avant-garde experimentation.

José Luis Guerín will be present for the [premiere run of *The Academy of Muses*](#). More details will be available soon.

INNISFREE

- On August 24 at 6:45 pm, August 28 at 4:30 pm and August 31 at 9:15 pm.
- With Bartley O’Feeney, Pádraig O’Feeney, Anne Slattery.
- Spain 1990, 35mm, color, 110 minutes.
- In English and Spanish with English subtitles.

Guerín’s second feature film is this unusual portrait of the Irish town of Innisfree, where John Ford shot his 1952 classic, *The Quiet Man*. Establishing Guerín’s fascination with the interplay between fiction and reality, as well as his ability to

FILM
NEW YORK

Wed, August 24–
Thu, September 01, 2016

Venue

Anthology Film Archives, 32 2nd Ave,
New York, NY 10003

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Credits

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balance cinephilia with a passionate engagement with the world around him, Innisfree reveals the still-lingering effects of Ford's visit, a case of the cinema impacting reality in both subtle and unmistakable ways.

TRAIN OF SHADOWS

- **On August 24 at 9 pm, August 27 at 7 pm and August 29 at 7 pm.**
- With Juliette Gaultier, Ivon Orvain, Anne Celine Auché.
- Spain 1997, 35mm, b/w and color, 88 minutes.
- In French and Spanish with English subtitles.

On November 8, 1930, amateur filmmaker Gérard Fleury stood on the shores of Normandy's Lake Thuit, watching the sun rise in preparation for an upcoming shoot that would never take place; he died later that day under mysterious circumstances. Out of this information, Guerín constructs a haunting meditation on the photographic and cinematic image, on loss and decay, on the passing of time, the recounting of history and the blurring of fact and fiction. He uses both re-enactments and decayed images to render ambiguous past and present, historical record and speculation, and to make poetry out of loss.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- **On August 25 at 6:45 pm, August 27 at 9 pm and August 31 at 6:45 pm.**
- With Juana Rodríguez Molina, Iván Guzmán Jiménez, Juan López López.
- Spain 2001, 35mm, color, 125 minutes.
- In Spanish and Catalan with English subtitles.

Exceptionally in a career spent shooting films in other countries, Guerín's *Work In Progress* takes place in his native Barcelona. The film's ostensible subject is the construction of a building of condominiums in the city's "El Xino" quarter. This rough neighborhood is a home to workers, immigrants, squatters, prostitutes and drug dealers. The construction site represents an attempt to "improve" the neighborhood –by pushing some longtime residents out. Such is the backdrop to the film, which is made up of staged and semi-staged episodes featuring neighborhood residents and workers at the construction site. Guerín magically spins spellbinding cinema from the simplest elements of urban interaction.

MEMORIES OF A MORNING & THE SAPPHIRE OF SAINT-LOUIS

- **On August 25 at 9:15 pm and August 28 at 6:45 pm.**
- *Memories of a Morning*: 2011, 47 minutes, digital. In Spanish with English subtitles.
- *The Sapphire of Saint-Louis*: 2015, 35 minutes, digital. In Spanish with English subtitles.

[*Memories of a Morning* is a] magnificent contemplation of death and community. Sometime after Guerín moved to a flat in Barcelona's Eixample neighborhood, a violinist named Manel



jumped to his death from a window in a nearby building. Considering it a galvanizing event that brought together neighbors who seldom spoke to each other, Guerín visits several of them to glean their eyewitness accounts and reflections. Strongly recalling his masterpiece *Work in Progress, Memories of a Morning* manages to unify into an elegant whole the power of music, life's transitory nature, and big-city existence, among other elements.

—Robert Koehler, *Variety*

In 1741, a ship called the Saphir sets sail from a port in La Rochelle, France, on its way to the New World. On board are 30 crewmembers and 271 slaves. Somewhere off the coast of Santo Domingo, a slave revolt erupts. This little-known moment in history was memorialized in an obscure 18th century painting that hangs in the Saint-Louis Cathedral in La Rochelle. Guerín peers into this painting to vividly re-tell the story, capturing, in the process, a snapshot of the political, historical, economic, and social realities of the time.

SOME PHOTOS IN THE CITY OF SYLVIA

- **On August 26 at 7 pm, August 30 at 9 pm and September 1 at 7 pm.**
- Spain, 2007, documentary, video, b/w, 67 minutes.
- In Spanish with English subtitles.

This remarkable companion piece to *In the City of Sylvia* offers a compendium of images recorded by Guerín in Strasbourg while searching for the traces of a (fictional?) brief encounter some years earlier with a young woman named Sylvia. The beautiful black and white digital cinematography alternates between moving and still images, stitching together a unique kind of film journal, a cinematic sketchbook for *In the City of Sylvia*, a reworking of the photographic and documentary roots of cinema, and something absolutely new.

IN THE CITY OF SYLVIA

- **On August 26 at 9:15 pm, August 30 at 7 pm and September 1 at 9:15 pm.**
- With Pilar López de Ayala, Xavier Lafitte, Laurence Cordier.
- Spain / France, 2007, 35mm, color, 84 minutes.
- In French with English subtitles.

An unnamed young man arrives in the foreign city of Strasbourg for reasons unstated. He waits at a hotel, visits a café, sketches passersby... Eventually his motives are revealed, but it is not a traditional narrative that Guerín is after so much as the urban experience of watching, waiting, absorbing. Out of these materials Guerín builds a spellbinding film that reminds us of cinema's powerful ability to evoke the tugs of memory, desire and the transitory. An extraordinary city film, *In the City of Sylvia* almost entirely eschews dialogue to instead give a symphonic voice to the city itself through a rich and fully immersive soundtrack of urban sounds, explosions of music and strange echoes.



CORRESPONDENCE JONAS MEKAS – J.L. GUERÍN

- **On August 27 at 5 pm and August 29 at 9 pm.**
- Directed by Jonas Mekas and José Luis Guerín.
- Spain / USA, 2011, 35mm, color, 99 minutes.
- In English and Spanish with English subtitles.

José Luis Guerín takes an idea coming from Jonas Mekas: Film is a response to life. With this concept in mind, they start exchanging a series of letters and develop a personal relationship which reveals the impressions and similarities of two filmmakers linked by their wish to share opinions and concerns. They establish a unique relationship through a correspondence displayed in the eyes of the viewer and in search of his sympathy, thus creating a new intimate space for thought. *Correspondences: José Luis Guerín – Jonas Mekas* shows the experimentation with the expressive language and the visual reflections of two artists who have found a new form of creation and use of images.

GUEST

- **On August 28 at 8:45 pm.**
- Spain, 2010, documentary, 35mm, b/w, 124 minutes.
- In Spanish with English subtitles.