

CINEMA CNC PRESENTS... THE MID-WINTER SERIES

JANUARY 21ST – FEBRUARY 11TH, 2012



January 21: THE SKIN I LIVE IN Dir: Pedro Almodóvar
Cast: Antonio Banderas, Elena Anaya, Marisa Paredes, Jan Cornet
116 minutes Spain 2011 Spanish with English subtitles

A psychosexual, melodramatic thriller based on Thierry Jonquet's crime novel *Tarantula*, this is trademark Almodóvar: an artful study of masks and identities, sex and flesh, bodies and power. Dr. Robert Ledgard is a handsome and wealthy plastic surgeon with a tragic past. His nefarious obsession with transgenic therapy — a way of strengthening human skin through the use of animal genes — incites contention among his colleagues and prompts his withdrawal from the community. From the isolation of his mansion on the outskirts of Toledo, he's able to test the validity of his theories on the beautiful young Vera. Dr. Ledgard's only confidant is his housekeeper Marilia, who ensures that the macabre surgeries performed in the private operating theatre adjoining his home remain secret. The story unfolds through meticulously realized plot twists — and turns, and somersaults — that reveal increasingly disturbing information. Throughout, Almodóvar's characteristic audacious humour leaves us uncertain whether we should laugh or faint.

Adorned with a rich palette and lush decor, the mansion setting boasts elegant furniture and magnificent art pieces, adding a gravitas to the already dense atmosphere of hushed crimes. At its most profound, *The Skin I Live In* ponders the question of what makes us who we are through the unwilling transformation of Vera, who practices yoga poses in a desperate effort to strengthen the deepest essence of her being — the one part of her that Dr. Ledgard cannot alter.



January 28: THE ARTIST Dir: Michel Hazanavicius
Cast: Jean Dujardin, Berenice Bejo, John Goodman, James Cromwell, Penelope Ann Miller 116 minutes France 2011 Language: English

This is a love letter to 1920s Hollywood. Shot entirely in black and white, without dialogue and utilizing a traditional 1.33 aspect ratio, the film remains faithful to the period it represents, avoiding the trap of pastiche through a sincere appreciation of the cinematic possibilities offered by classic silent film. Jean Dujardin plays George Valentin, an actor whose matinee-idol good looks and arrogant but good-natured charm evoke Douglas Fairbanks at his best. George is at the height of his career in 1927, when he accidentally bumps into a beautiful and aspiring actress named Peppy Miller, and the ensuing press coverage sets her on the path to unexpected fame. George, however, quickly finds himself on the opposite track, as sound begins to dominate the screens. Refusing to accept this modern innovation, he finances his own silent feature in 1929 and loses it all. His wife leaves him and his fans forget him. Broken and alone, George fades into the shadows of old Hollywood. At the same time, new It-girl Peppy finds herself at the forefront of the sound phenomenon. As her star status rises, she never forgets the man who gave her the start she needed, and

she resolves to help George in any way she can. *The Artist* tells a familiar story, reminiscent of classics, but Hazanavicius and cinematographer Guillaume Schiffman breathe new life into an old tale. Their skilful handling makes *The Artist* a joyous look back to a golden age, and will leave audiences nostalgic for a cinematic form that, as Hazanavicius proves, hasn't lost its resonance.



February 4: LE HAVRE Dir: Aki Kaurismäki

Cast: Kati Outinen, André Wilms, Jean-Pierre Darroussin
93 minutes Finland 2011 French with English subtitles

No other contemporary filmmaker manages to blend deadpan, ironic humour with social commentary in quite the same manner as Finnish master Aki Kaurismäki. In *Le Havre*, the moody, retro ambiance of the film's titular Norman port city enhances a tidy plot that blends the noir-like elements of a Jean-Pierre Melville film with the gentle humanism of Jean Renoir at his best. Atmospheric, quiet and completely assured, Kaurismäki employs these diverse elements to tell a highly contemporary story about illegal refugees. The film circles around Marcel Marx, a bohemian artist who has retreated to the French port city of Le Havre and taken up work as a shoeshine man - a profession with a limited future, as everyone seems to be wearing running shoes. He is married to a woman with a heart of gold and, despite poverty and limited means, they find joy in their local neighbours, all of whom seem as if they have emerged intact from a 1930s movie. One day, Marcel befriends Idrissa, a young African hoping to make his way to England with other illegals. Marcel is determined to help, but the law, in the form of Inspector Monet, is equally determined to

stand in his way. An intricate dance of hide-and-seek ensues, Marcel using all his ingenuity to hide Idrissa while the nefarious Monet keeps hot on the trail. Kaurismäki's humour is always inclusive, insightful and intelligent, here deployed to assist what is in effect a realistic fairy tale. As with all fairy tales, surprises abound along the way. What's most telling about *Le Havre*, however, are the effortless performances he evokes from a range of actors both French and Finnish.



February 11: THE FIRST GRADER Dir: Justin Chadwick

Cast: Naomie Harris, Oliver Musila Litondo 98 mins. UK 2011

→ SPECIAL SCREENING FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH ←

Based on a true story, *The First Grader* is an inspiring tale about the universal human desire to improve ourselves. The story follows Kimani N'gan'ga Maruge, an eighty-four year old man who shows up on the doorstep of a rural school after the government of Kenya announces it will offer free primary education. Having never had the opportunity to learn and attend school, he figures it's never too late to start. A Mau Mau veteran, Maruge helped liberate Kenya from British colonial rule. He spent his youth fighting for freedom and now his final goal in life is to learn to read. But when he arrives at the school gate, teacher Jane must turn him away. She has no legal reason, so she says he'll need books and a pencil. Maruge returns with both. When she tells him he'll need a uniform, Maruge comes back wearing a school uniform — short pants and all. Impressed with his resilience, she brings the old man into her school, giving him a chance to learn to read, as well as to come to terms with his difficult past. Director Justin Chadwick delivers a timeless story with warmth and humanity, and Litondo is superb as Maruge, showing both the strength and humour the

old man possessed. Although he depends on a walking stick to get around and his eyes aren't what they used to be, he's living proof that you're never too old to learn something. "Stow your cynicism and give this lesson in continuing education the response it deserves." — Rick Groen, *The Globe and Mail*

All shows are in room 1-306 at the College of New Caledonia... Showtimes: 7 & 9:30
Passes: \$24 [4 movies] Single Tickets: \$8 regular; \$7 student, senior, unemployed
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