

Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society (Wide Angle Books)

By Professor of Film History Scott MacDonald

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As the most successful and influential film society in American history, Cinema 16 was a crucial organization for the creation of a public space for the full range of cinema achievement in the years following World War II. A precursor of the New York Film Festival, Cinema 16 screenings became a gathering place for New Yorkers interested not only in cinema, but in the use of media in the development of a more complete, effective democracy. For seventeen years, many of the leading intellectuals and artists of the time came together as part of a membership society of thousands to experience the creative programming of Cinema 16 director, Amos Vogel. What audiences saw at Cinema 16 changed their lives and had an enduring impact not only on the New York City cultural scene, but nationwide. Vogel's distribution of landmark documentary and avant-garde films helped make a place for many films that could never have had commercial release, given the pressures of commercialism and censorship during the postwar era.

Vogel's commitment to the broadest range of cinema practice led him to develop a programming strategy, inherited from the European cine-club movement, that involved confronting audiences with such a wide range of cinematic forms that viewers left the theater considering not only the often remarkable films Vogel showed, but the place of Cinema itself in modern life.

Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society is the first book on Cinema 16. Scott MacDonald provides a sense of the life and work of the society, using the complete Cinema 16 program announcements, selected letters between Vogel and the filmmakers whose films he showed; selections from the program notes that accompanied Cinema 16 screenings, theoretical essays by Vogel on curating independent cinema; conversations between MacDonald and Cinema 16 members; photographs and stills; and a variety of other documents.

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Editorial Review

Review
"The ABCs of independent film-making in the 20th century. From Kenneth Anger to Luis Bunuel to John Cassavetes, these letters, programs, notes, and conversations reveal the vibrant history of the Cinema 16 Film Society and its central role in the development of independent film. This insider's view is an essential read to filmmakers and film lovers alike." --Michelle Citron, Professor, Radio/TV/Film, Northwestern University; media artist; and author of Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions "The largest and most seminal of American film societies, Cinema 16 was an important sponsoring institution for the great post-war explosion of non-commodity American filmmaking. Scott MacDonald's lovingly-edited new collection of documents provides fascinating historical insights into Cinema 16, and gives at last recognition to Amos and Marcia Vogel's long-overlooked contributions to this vital and socially-responsive era of American culture." --David James, Critical Studies, School of Cinema, USC

From the Publisher
The history of Cinema 16—the nation’s first film society—through letters, programs, interviews, and the society’s own documents.

About the Author
Scott MacDonald is Professor of Emeritus of English and Film at Utica College of Syracuse University. He is the author of seven previous books, including the acclaimed, multi-volume A Critical Cinema.

Users Review

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