

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## THE MASTER, THE REBEL, AND THE ARTIST: THE FILMS OF OUSMANE SEMBÈNE, DJIBRIL DIOP MAMBÉTY, AND MOUSSA SENE ABSA

**Museum of the Moving Image and Institute of African Studies, Columbia University, present film series, personal appearances, and roundtable discussion April 2–10**

The Senegalese filmmakers Ousmane Sembène (1923–2007) and Djibril Diop Mambéty (1945–1998) pioneered cinematic creativity in Africa. Among the many filmmakers they inspired is Moussa Sene Absa (b. 1958), a protégé and former assistant to Mambéty. Museum of the Moving Image and the Institute of African Studies, Columbia University, will collaborate to present a two-week series of film screenings, personal appearances, and discussions, including rare theatrical screenings of key films by the three filmmakers at the Museum, and a roundtable discussion at Columbia University. The film screenings, curated by June Givanni, will take place on weekends from April 2 through 10, 2011. All film screenings are included with Museum admission. The roundtable, organized by Mamadou Diouf, will take place at Columbia on Monday, April 4, which is Senegalese Independence Day.

Among the highlights of the Museum film series are personal appearances by: Moussa Sene Absa, one of Senegal's leading contemporary filmmakers, with his films *Madame Brouette* and *Yoole: The Sacrifice*; Wasis Diop, brother of Djibril Diop Mambéty and a key collaborator on the film *Hyenas*, which will be screened along with Wasis Diop's new short film *Joe Oaukum*; Sada Niang, Mambéty's biographer, introducing a screening of a newly restored 35mm print of *Touki Bouki*; and Samba Gadjigo, Sembène's biographer, presenting Sembène's last feature film, *Moolade*.

"This is a very rich program," said David Schwartz, the Museum's Chief Curator. "On each day of our series, visitors can see one film apiece by Sembène, Mambéty, and Absa, which will give a sense of both the continuity and development of Senegalese cinema. We are especially pleased to be working with June Givanni, one of the world's most respected curators of Pan-African cinema, and with Mamadou Diouf, head of the Institute of African Studies. The Museum film series and Columbia roundtable provide an immersive experience for anyone interested in the recent history of African cinema."

"All three directors give voice to the African people through their films: They were screen griots whose work has much in common," said June Givanni, who has programmed African film for the Toronto International Film Festival and the British Film Institute. "In their films, women are portrayed centrally as agents of change and as risk takers, reflecting their true revolutionary role in Senegalese society. The directors also choose to focus on the 'little people' of everyday life. A less central but nonetheless frequent impulse in their work is the recognition and embrace of a pan-African relationship to the continent and the diaspora, a tension between the homeland and the West."

The roundtable discussion will provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the relationship between these films and Senegalese society in the post-independence era. As Mamadou Diouf explains, "the goal of the roundtable is to revisit the political, aesthetic, and ethnographic elements of the cinema of Senegal's most acclaimed filmmakers. Of particular interest are their staging (mises en scène) and imaging (mises en images) of Senegalese society. We are anticipating an intellectually exciting and productive conversation that will bring these filmmakers and their films into greater historical context."

### **The Master: Ousmane Sembène**

Sembène—docker, trade unionist, prolific novelist, and filmmaker for four decades—is widely known as the master of African cinema. This title reflects not just his storytelling and visual mastery, but his vision of the role of cinema in social development, echoed in his famous quote about the function of African cinema not just as entertainment but as "night school for the masses." Sembène's films have almost always involved women characters in central roles, from his first feature, *Black Girl*, to his last, *Mooladé*. Sembène has said: "Africa can't develop without the participation of its women." As Sembène told his biographer Samba Gadjigo, "I think that Africa is maternal. The African male is very maternal...According to our traditions, a man has no intrinsic value, he receives his value from his mother."

### **The Rebel: Djibril Diop Mambéty**

Speaking of his parents' disappointment about his decision to become a filmmaker, Mambéty said "I was a rebel at a very young age." His avant-garde, modernist urban style of filmmaking chimed with the radical impulses of cinema in the 1960s. As British film critic Mark Cousins wrote "Mambéty should have been on T-shirts like Che Guevara... He was the most wildly talented filmmaker to emerge from Africa at the end of the 1960s—many would say ever." Mambéty's films combine a wide range of influences from theater and film, in works marked by subversion, complexity, artistry, humor, and pathos. Mambéty worked closely with his brother: the internationally renowned musician, Wasis Diop, who scored many films over the years, including Mambéty's *Hyenas*, and whose music was featured in the remake of *The Thomas Crown Affair*.

### **The Artist: Moussa Sene Absa**

A painter as well as a filmmaker, Absa draws heavily on performance art and other visual art forms in his feature films. As he once said, “I see the décor as a character, and this character is just as important as an actor. The sets speak to us. I like cinéma vérité, and I am inspired by reality.” Absa’s work exemplifies a generation of Senegalese filmmakers (including Mansour Sora Wade and Dyana Gaye) whose use of color, stunning imagery, and close collaboration with various forms of performance art is inspired by the culture’s ‘Masters.’ Absa presents a Senegal that recognizes the value of all of its people, speaking to and valuing the old and the young, men and women, the politics and the poetry of his society.

### **SCHEDULE FOR ‘THE MASTER, THE REBEL, THE ARTIST: THE FILMS OF OUSMANE SEMEBÈNE, DJIBRIL DIOP MAMBÉTY, AND MOUSSA SENE ABSA’ (APRIL 1-10, 2011)**

All film screenings take place at Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria. The April 4<sup>th</sup> roundtable discussion is at Columbia University, 1501 International Affairs Building, 420 W. 118<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan.

#### **Xala**

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

#### **Introduced by June Giovanni**

Dir. Ousmane Sembène. 1975, 123 mins. 35 mm. With Thierno Leye. This satire about post-independence Senegal is a critique of the incoming African nationalist leaders, their Western supporters, and the departing colonial officers. The story, about a member of the petit bourgeoisie who buys his way into power and takes a third wife who is the age of his daughter, is a vehicle for Sembène’s sharp scrutiny of corruption, class, and gender politics. June Giovanni is an independent curator who has programmed for the British Film Institute and the Toronto International Film Festival.

#### **Madame Brouette**

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

#### **Introduced by Moussa Sene Absa**

Dir. Moussa Sene Absa. 2002, 104 mins. 35mm. With Rokhaya Niang. A woman, known as Mrs. Wheelbarrow because of her fruit and vegetable cart, has killed her husband. The story is told in reverse: A man enters her house; seconds later, he comes out staggering and collapses. He was hopelessly drunk, and dressed as a woman; we learn more as the story unfolds. More than a murder story, it is a profound look at Senegalese society, about women’s fate and struggle to survive, crafted with Absa’s signature use of lush color, theatrical settings, and song.

#### **Touki Bouki**

Saturday, April 2, 7:30 p.m.

#### **Introduced by Sada Niang**

Dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty, 1973, 85 mins. Restored 35mm print from Cineteca di Bologna. With Magaye Niang, Mareme Niang. Djibril’s first feature is an experimental classic of modern

African cinema. Mory and Anta are a couple who have little in common with their surroundings. They ride around town on a motorbike, sharing a dream of escaping to Paris, their lives filled with luxury. When just such an opportunity arises, they unexpectedly choose different paths. Sada Niang, University of Victoria, is the author of *Djibril Diop Mambéty: A Filmmaker Against the Tide*.

### **Hyenas (Hyènes)**

Sunday, April 3, 1:00 p.m.

#### **Introduced by Wasis Diop**

Dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty. 1992, 113 mins. 35mm. With Ami Diakhate, Mansour Diouf. Mambéty's second feature is often regarded as a sequel to *Touki Bouki*, as it centers on a young woman who left Senegal years before—as Anta did in *Touki Bouki*. However, the circumstances are very different for *Hyenas* protagonist Linguere Ramatou, who leaves the remote village of Colobane. She returns years later, wealthy and famous. She will donate money to her desperate town, but only with some shocking strings attached. Richly allegorical, *Hyenas* is a parable about corruption and colonialization.

Preceded by **Joe Ouakam** (Dir. Wasis Diop. 2011, 28 mins.) Renowned Senegalese musician Wasis Diop has chosen one of his favorite artists as the subject of his first film. Diop follows the feet of Joe Ouakam through the streets of Dakar and back to his 'cours' where he lives and works and maintains a permanent exhibition. Ouakam walks a lot through the streets and alleys of the city and it is this energy that Diop captures, along with his deeply reflective personality. Joe Ouakam was a life-long friend of Djibril Diop Mambéty, the brother of Wasis Diop.

### **Moolaadé**

Sunday, April 3, 4:30 p.m.

#### **Introduced by Samba Gadjigo**

Dir. Ousmane Sembène. 2004, 124 mins. 35mm. With Fatouma Coulibaly, Maimouna Hélène Diarra, Salimata Traoré. Sembène's last feature film, *Moolaadé*, takes place in a rural village where the traditional practice of female genital circumcision is still prevalent. Sembène dramatizes a clash of values at the foundation of African culture; he has described this as the most African of all of his films. The film was the second in a planned trilogy exploring the heroism found in daily life, people Sembène called "heroes to whom no country gives any medals." Samba Gadjigo, Mount Holyoke College, is Sembène's biographer, the author of *Ousmane Sembène: The Making of a Militant Artist*.

### **Yoole: The Sacrifice**

Sunday, April 3, 7:30 p.m.

#### **Introduced by Moussa Sene Absa**

Dir. Moussa Sene Absa, 2010, 75 mins. Digital projection. Absa's latest film returns to subjects explored in his 1997 feature film *Terranga Blues*, but this time as a poetic documentary. In April 2004, a boat was found in Barbados with eleven dead bodies on board; the boat had left Senegal four months earlier. Absa, lecturing in Barbados at the time, went home to find out more about the dreams and ambitions of the men found on the boat. He talks to youngsters who speak of betrayal by the Senegalese government. This poignant, moving film is a cry for love.

## **ROUNDTABLE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY:**

### **"Ethnographies and Politics: A Roundtable Discussion of the Films of Ousmane Sembène, Djibril Diop Mambéty, and Moussa Sene Absa"**

Monday, April 4 (Senegal Independence Day)

12:00–2:00 p.m.

**Guest speakers: Wasis Diop, Moussa Sene Absa, Samba Gadjigo, Sada Niang**  
**Location: 1501 International Affairs Building, 420 W. 118<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan**

The Institute of African Studies at Columbia University will present a roundtable discussion with film director and internationally acclaimed singer Wasis Diop, film director and glass painter Moussa Sene Absa, Ousmane Sembène's biographer Samba Gadjigo, and Djibril Diop Mambéty's biographer Sada Niang. The event takes place in the context of the celebration of fifty years of independence in Senegal and reflects upon the political, social, and cultural debates, and controversies of Senegal's first two generations of filmmakers. The roundtable was organized by Mamadou Diouf, Director of the Institute of African Studies. Free admission. For more information, call 212 854 4633, or visit [www.ias.columbia.edu](http://www.ias.columbia.edu).

## **Black Girl (La Noire de...)**

Saturday, April 9, 2:00 p.m.

Dir. Ousmane Sembène. 1969, 65 mins. 35mm. With Mbissine Thérèse Diop. Sembène's first feature film signaled the emergence of African cinema. The film tells the story of a nanny who, on being taken to Paris by her expatriate employer, commits suicide in response to the abuse and alienation she experiences. The modern style eschewed spectacle and exoticism, and laid the foundations for a direct approach to portraying contemporary life.

Preceded by **Borom Sarret** (Dir. Ousmane Sembène. 1969, 20 mins. 16mm. With Ly Abdoulay.) This short film about a day in the life of a Dakar cart driver was influenced by 1940s Italian neorealism. One journey takes him from the "African" side of the city to the "European" side. His horse and cart are confiscated, and he must make his way home without the means to make his livelihood.

## **Badou Boy**

Saturday, April 9, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty. 1970, 56 mins. Digital projection. With Laminé Ba. Mambéty's first fiction film, takes the viewer on a wild chase through Dakar's streets. Badou Boy, who usually spends his time loitering on city buses, is forced to outrun an overweight policeman. Mambéty uses a blend of Chaplinesque physical comedy, psychedelia, mocking socio-political commentary, and extraordinary non-synchronised sound, while creating a vibrant chase around the big city. Like all of Mambéty's films, *Badou Boy* upends the common perception of African cinema as predominantly realist and didactic.

Preceded by **Contras City** (Dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty. 1969, 22 mins. Digital projection.) Mambéty's first film is a deeply ironic and biting commentary on the divided city that was Dakar in 1969: on the one hand, colonial, affluent and pompous, on the other, indigenous and poor but genuine.

## **Tableau Ferraille**

Saturday, April 9, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Moussa Sene Absa. 1997, 92 mins. 35mm. With Ismaël Lô, Ndèye Fatou Ndaw, Thierno Ndiaye. Absa examines the social confusion on the continent today through the story of an idealistic young politician's rise and fall. Daam must choose between two wives. The first is the village beauty. Unfortunately, the couple is unable to conceive a child, so Daam takes the European-educated Kiné, who is eager to get ahead by marrying a politician. Around this simple story, Moussa has created an intense domestic and political drama, exposing a corrupt post-colonial elite's exploitation of the promise of African independence.

### **Le Franc**

Sunday, April 10, 2:00 p.m.

Dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty. 1994, 44 mins. 35mm. With Dieye Ma Dieye. This funny and poignant tale is about a poor and eccentric musician who buys a lottery ticket that he sticks to the door of his humble abode, to be sure not to lose it. He wins the jackpot, but the ticket is stuck to the door, so he must go through the city with the door on his back.

Screening with **Le Petite Vendeuse de soleil (The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun)** (Dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty. 1999, 45 mins. 35mm. With Lissa Balera.) In the Dakar streets, a little girl on crutches begs for alms. After she is jostled by the street boys who have a monopoly on the sale of newspaper the *Sun*, she is determined to become a paper seller too.

### **Faat Kiné**

Sunday, April 10, 4:00 p.m.

Dir. Ousmane Sembène. 2001, 121 mins. 35mm. With Venus Seye, Mame Ndoumbé, Ndiagne Dia. *Faat Kiné* is the first of Sembène's trilogy about the daily heroism of African women. Faat Kiné, a woman who owns a service station is raising her two children as a single parent. Her mother, who was attacked by her father, who deemed her responsible for their daughter's condition, moves in with her. Three generations of women live according to their ideals. The film was Sembène's homage to the African woman; some critics called him 'Africa's first feminist.'

### **Teranga Blues**

Sunday, April 10, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Moussa Sene Absa. 2007, 95 mins. 35mm. With Lord Alajiman, Juliette Ba. Absa's sprawling urban tale opens with a shot of a Senegalese musician being deported from Paris. Ashamed and angry, he finds himself drawn into a weapons trafficking operation by an old friend. A kind of Dakar urban rap musical, or contemporary urban opera, *Teranga Blues* is a reflection on the social mutations affecting the pride of the Senegalese people. It is surreal, lyrical, carnivalesque...and real. It shows how the opening and closing of the border has transformed the lives of the young—a subject to which Absa has returned with his new film, the documentary *Yooke*.

### **Contact:**

Tomoko Kawamoto / 718.777.6830 / tkawamoto@movingimage.us

## 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. **Holiday Openings: Monday, April 18, and Monday, April 25 (Spring Recess for NYC public schools), 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 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.

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; 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>