



PROJECT MUSE®

Editorial

Drake Stutesman

Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media, Volume 49, Number 1,
Spring 2008, pp. 5-6 (Article)

Published by Wayne State University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/frm.0.0005>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/252623>

Editorial

How can we think about *art* at a time like this? A friend wore this as a pin to a MoMA opening, and I've always found it funny and realistic. Art never leaves the active world, thankfully. It's at its core. This past summer, 2007, filmmakers Michelangelo Antonioni, Ingmar Bergman, and Ousmane Sembène died, but it was their birth dates—respectively 1912, 1918, 1923—that jumped out at me in thinking about them because their lives, so influential in radical modern culture, virtually span the radically transformative twentieth century. Intensely associated with their home countries—Italy, Sweden, Senegal—and what outsiders assume are the sensibilities of those countries, each director (and in Sembène's case, also writer) reworked, often brilliantly, European and African consciousness to shift our aesthetics and our view of narrative structures and thus our politics. Each director forced change out of his art.

Antonioni had a paralyzing stroke in 1985 yet remained involved in filmmaking, but even into their eighties, Sembène and Bergman directed films. Their last ones were as powerful as any before, maybe even more so, because they were so utterly streamlined. Sembène's *Moolaade* (SN/FR/BF/CM/MA/TN, 2004) attacked civil society and was a tightly composed, incisive argument against female circumcision, and Bergman's *Saraband* (SE/IT/DE/FI/DK/AT, 2003), about family lies, attacked private society and was more fluid, shocking, and contained than many of his previous films. For all their worth, these two directors still struggled for backing and, thus, recognition, as is evident in their last projects' multiple financiers. In *Framework's* tributes, Astrid Söderbergh Widding, Chair of the Ingmar Bergman Foundation, sets Bergman squarely in his time, a man in touch with art and the world; Samba Gadjiro, Sembène's biographer, knows Sembène as a man

in touch with real people (a trait also emphasized in Kwate Nee Owoo's 1989 interview); and scholars, Laura Rascaroli and John David Rhodes put Antonioni palpably and abstractly in touch with place.

In the dossier *Morphing Realities*, guest edited by Nitzan Ben Shaul and taken from the June 2006 conference held at Tel Aviv University, the essays consider how "realness" operates in art and how it is formulated through perception or defense against perception. These vantages are taken, in a sense, from a series of parallels, superimposed over one another as layers within memory, repressed or expressed, either personal or national. There is a special emphasis on the Israeli/Palestinian war, Jewish identity, and Reality TV. Philippa Gates and Laura Podalsky also dig out layers of social subtexts within changing perceptions. Both show how cinema reflects politics: Gates in her exposure of the shifts in masculine performance during the 1930s and 1940s, visible in remakes of *The Maltese Falcon*, and Podalsky in her gloss of shifts in Mexican youth films in the 1980s and 1990s.

My special thanks goes to our wonderful *Framework* Web editor and my friend, Jim Sielaff, who so thoroughly edited the *Framework* Web site this last year with great enthusiasm and thoughtfulness. Only in his fifties, he died suddenly on August 25, 2007, and is very much missed.

—Drake Stutesman