

MoMA Celebrates Auteur Director Wim Wenders With Retrospective

Wim Wenders is a curious oddity within film history; his particular brand of art films is most fitting for a thorough MoMA retrospective. The museum brings the public exactly that, with a Wim Wenders career retrospective taking place at MoMA on March 2nd.

Wenders is a difficult director to pin down and often difficult to understand. Like some of the world's best visual artists, his work requires analysis and understanding on top of enjoying his film's visual aesthetics to fully appreciate the majesty of his work. Take *Wings of Desire*, the 1987 masterpiece that Wenders took the Best Director Prize at Cannes for, as an example. The plot, when read simplistically, comes off as rather kitsch: an immortal angel living (invisibly, of course) in Berlin falls in love with a trapeze artist and desperately desires to become human so that he can be with her. It sounds a little corny, right? Yes it does, and it even inspired the ultra-corny 1998 remake *City of Angels* starring Meg Ryan and Nicolas Cage. But when you actually watch the Wenders version, you can find yourself overwhelmed in the beauty, depth and curiosity of the film. The film begs the question, "Would one rather live and observe forever, or experience the pain and joy of one lifetime?" The existential question that furthers the plot is one that ultimately finds its way into much of the world's great art.



Bruno Ganz and Dennis Hopper in *Der amerikanische Freund* (*The American Friend*, West Germany/France 1977) by Wim Wenders. Image via MoMA

The MoMA retrospective comes almost a half-century after Wenders showed his second feature film, the *Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, as part of MoMA's New Directors/New Films festival in 1971. The retrospective carries 20 fiction and non-fiction films. Ranging from his fiction classics to his experimental shorts from the 1960s to his most recent feature, the *Salt of the*

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Earth, that profiles photographer Sebastião Salgado, the retrospective promises to capture Wenders' unique cinematic marrying of the avant-garde and pop culture.



By Dakota Wenders. Image via MoMA.

Don't miss out on the panel discussion on March 5 in which Wenders sits down with his longtime collaborator Peter Hadke, Hadke is responsible for writing the scripts for Wenders films *3 American LPs* (1969), *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick* (1971), *Wrong Move* (1975), and *Wings of Desire* (1987). The exhibition is being curated by Joshua Siegel, Curator, Department of Film, with Rajendra Roy, The Celeste Bartos Chief Curator of Film, MoMA; and Thomas Beard, independent curator.



Wim Wenders and Dennis Hopper during the production of Der amerikanische Freund (The American Friend, West Germany/France 1977) by Wim Wenders. Image via MoMA

Wenders has had monumental influence on both popular and avant-garde cinema. The time is ripe for a celebration of his work. The exhibition runs through March 17.