



TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

WEDNESDAY

JULY 18, 2018

7:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

ENCOUNTERS AT THE END OF THE WORLD

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



"There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization."

—Werner Herzog, "The Minnesota Declaration"



Leave it to Werner Herzog to create a National Science Foundation-backed documentary about Antarctica that highlights the continent's "professional dreamers," a "disoriented or deranged" penguin, and the eternal question of why chimpanzees don't ride goats. The film earned Herzog his first (and to date only) Academy Award nomination, and it inspired Roger Ebert—to whom the film is dedicated—to describe it as "a poem of oddness and beauty. Herzog is like no other filmmaker, and to return to him is to be welcomed into a world vastly larger and more peculiar than the one around us."

Herzog became interested in the project after watching underwater videography by Henry Kaiser, who went on to become the film's producer. Kaiser's material is seen throughout ENCOUNTERS, but Herzog first made use of it in his 2005 sci-fi film THE WILD BLUE YONDER. With no opportunity for advance scouting, Herzog and his frequent cinematographer Peter Zeitlinger shot ENCOUNTERS in seven weeks in late 2006 as part of the NSF's Antarctic Artists and Writers Program, which was established "to enable serious writing and the arts that increase understanding of the Antarctic and help document America's Antarctic heritage." Herzog's reputation as a documentarian is somewhat contentious due to his frequent staging and fabrication of scenes, often done without an acknowledgment to the audience that this has occurred. In 1999, he famously defended his approach with "The Minnesota Declaration," a list of twelve principles (expanded to 18 in 2017 to respond to our era of "alternative facts") that were given to combat what he saw as "something ultimately and deeply wrong about the concept of what constitutes fact and what constitutes truth in documentaries in particular." (Die-hard Herzog fans should listen for a paraphrased Principle 12—which begins with "life in the oceans must be sheer hell"—during his seemingly impromptu discussion with the biologist preparing for his final dive). Because of these unconventional practices, Eric Ames has noted that "Herzog may be the most influential filmmaker whose contribution to documentary is nowhere discussed in the major studies and standard histories of the form."

For Laurie Ruth Johnson, Herzog's "fervently anti-verité cinema is built upon the often-tenuous relation between what we see and what we think we know," and this is frequently evident in his complex treatment of landscapes. The Antarctica of ENCOUNTERS is one world on the surface of the ice sheet and a very different one in the icy depths below. Ames describes the landscape in Herzog's work as "a juncture of the material and the immaterial, the exterior and the interior, the visible and the invisible." "For me," Herzog has stated, "a true landscape is not just a representation of a desert or a forest. It shows an inner state of mind, literally inner landscapes, and it is the human soul that is visible through the landscapes presented in my films, be it the jungle in AGUIRRE, the desert in FATA MORGANA, or the burning oil fields of Kuwait in LESSONS OF DARKNESS. This is my real connection to Caspar David Friedrich, a man who never wanted to paint landscapes per se, but wanted to explore and show inner landscapes." Herzog's films often take place at pilgrimage sites, and he makes an explicit connection between the scientific seekers in ENCOUNTERS and the Russian mystics in his 1993 documentary BELLS FROM THE DEEP by shooting scenes in which members of both groups crouch in stillness with their ears to the ice, listening for sounds below. (In true Herzog fashion, however, the scenes in both films were staged, with Herzog inventing the listening practices and suggesting the poses.)

DIRECTED BY **WERNER HERZOG**
SCREENPLAY BY **WERNER HERZOG**
NARRATION BY **WERNER HERZOG**
(2008) 99 MINS.
FEATURING **SCOTT ROWLAND, STEFAN PASHOV, DOUGLAS MACAYEAL, RYAN A. EVANS, KEVIN EMERY, OLAV OFTEDAL, REGINA EISERT, AND DAVID R. PACHECO, JR.**

DID YOU KNOW: WITH ENCOUNTERS, HERZOG BECAME THE FIRST MAJOR DIRECTOR TO SHOOT FEATURE FILMS ON ALL SEVEN CONTINENTS. ALONG THE WAY, HE BLENDED FACT AND FICTION IN FILMS SUCH AS CAVE OF FORGOTTEN DREAMS (EUROPE), FATA MORGANA (AFRICA), FITZCARRALDO (SOUTH AMERICA), GRIZZLY MAN (NORTH AMERICA), WHERE THE GREEN ANTS DREAM (AUSTRALIA), AND LITTLE DIETER NEEDS TO FLY (ASIA).

NEXT UP: TREASURES TAKES THE MONTH OF AUGUST OFF, SO JOIN US ON **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 AT 2:00 PM** AS WE KICK OFF OUR FIFTH SEASON OF 35MM FILM PROGRAMMING WITH A SCREENING OF ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S **TO CATCH A THIEF**. CARY GRANT AND GRACE KELLY STAR IN THIS SUN-DRENCHED ROMANTIC THRILLER SET IN THE FRENCH RIVIERA. THE FILM IS HITCHCOCK'S FIRST TO BE SHOT IN THE VISTAVISION FORMAT, AND FEATURES THE OSCAR-WINNING (COLOR) CINEMATOGRAPHY OF ROBERT BURKS.