

# MAHLER & LEWITT STUDIOS

Michael Blackwood Productions  
MICHAEL BLACKWOOD PRODUCTIONS

Bloomberg  
Philanthropies

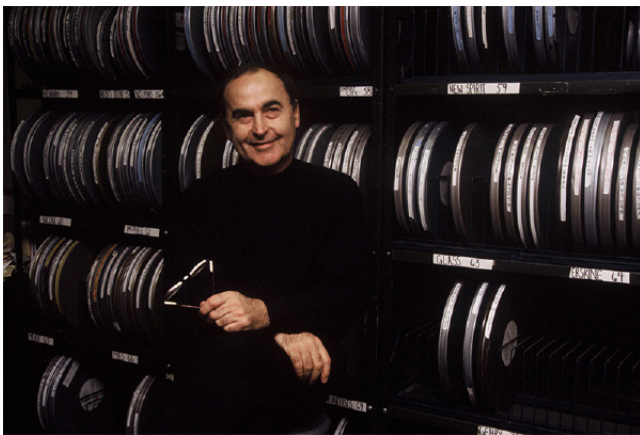


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## Artists on Camera: Michael Blackwood Productions

*A film series for the Festival dei Due Mondi, Spoleto, Italy, 24 June - 10 July 2022*

*Presented by the Mahler & LeWitt Studios, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies*



[<<More portraits of Michael Blackwood>>](#)

As part of the Festival dei Due Mondi 2022 in Spoleto, Italy, the Mahler & LeWitt Studios is pleased to present *Artists on Camera: Michael Blackwood Productions*, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies. Michael Blackwood is one of the most established and prolific art documentary makers and has produced over 150 films from the 1960s to now, chronicling the stories of the most impactful creative minds of their day. One of Michael Blackwood's early films, *Spoleto 1967*, documented the 10th anniversary of the Spoleto Festival (this film will be screened at Casa Menotti, the Festival documentation centre). This is the first review of Michael Blackwood's work; 15 films will be presented across four venues, including Sala Pegasus, a cinema in a 12th century church, and the Collicola Arena, an outdoor cinema screen in the courtyard of the Palazzo Collicola Arti Visive, the modern art gallery of Spoleto.

The *Artists on Camera: Michael Blackwood Productions* film series highlights historic work by a diverse group of artists working in a range of disciplines, bringing their stories to the attention of a new generation of artists and audiences. The series opens with Blackwood's earliest film *Broadway Express*, 1959, a portrait of New York through the city's subway system, shot in a vérité style he would establish in all his films. We screen *Sol LeWitt: 4 Decades*, 2001, and *Isamu Noguchi*, 1972, partly shot in Spoleto with Buckminster Fuller and Ezra Pound. *Christo and Jeanne-Claude*, 1995, who wrapped several buildings in Spoleto for the 1968 festival, is followed by *Elizabeth Murray: 4 Decades*, 2006. Two of Blackwood's important survey films, *The Sensual Nature of Sound: 4 Composers*, Laurie Anderson, Tania Leon, Meredith Monk, Pauline Oliveros, 1993 and *4 Artists: Robert Ryman, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, Susan Rothenberg*, 1988, are followed by the recently remastered *Monk* and *Monk in Europe*, both 1968, a two-part portrait of the great jazz composer and pianist. Other films being screened throughout the festival include: *Philip Guston: A Life Lived*, 1981, *Making Dances: Seven Post Modern Choreographers*, 1980 (screened during the visit of the Trisha Brown Dance Company to

the 2022 Festival), *A Composer's Notes: Philip Glass and the Making of an Opera*, 1985, *Butoh: Body on the Edge of Crisis*, 1990, and *Spoletto USA: A Festival Discovers America*, 1977, which documents the first US Spoleto Festival, which continues today in Charleston.

Date	Time	Screening	Location
Friday 24 June	17.00 – 19.00	<i>Spoletto 1967</i> , 58mins (and screening continuously from 28 <sup>th</sup> June - 10 <sup>th</sup> July)	Casa Menotti
	21.30	<i>Broadway Express</i> , 1959, 19mins	Collicola Arena
	21.50	<i>Isamu Noguchi</i> , 1972, 30mins	Collicola Arena
	22.20	<i>Sol LeWitt: 4 Decades</i> , 2001, 58mins	Collicola Arena
Saturday 25 June	21.30	<i>Christo and Jeanne-Claude</i> , 1995, 58mins	Collicola Arena
	22.30	<i>Elizabeth Murray: 4 Decades</i> , 2006, 57mins	Collicola Arena
Sunday 26 June	11.00	<i>The Sensual Nature of Sound: 4 Composers</i> , Laurie Anderson, Tania Leon, Meredith Monk, Pauline Oliveros, 1993, 53mins	Sala Pegasus
	12.00	<i>4 Artists: Robert Ryman, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, Susan Rothenberg</i> , 1988, 47mins	Sala Pegasus
	21.30	<i>Monk</i> , 1968, 58mins	Collicola Arena
	22.30	<i>Monk in Europe</i> , 1968, 58mins	Collicola Arena
Friday 1 July	22.30	<i>Making Dances: Seven Post Modern Choreographers</i> , 1980, 89mins	Collicola Arena
Sunday 3 July	11.00	<i>Spoletto USA: A Festival Discovers America</i> , 1977, 58mins	Sala Frau
	12.00	<i>Philip Guston: A Life Lived</i> , 1981, 58mins	Sala Frau
Sunday 10 July	11.00	<i>A Composer's Notes: Philip Glass and the Making of an Opera</i> , 1985, 89mins	Sala Pegasus
	12.00	<i>Butoh: Body on the Edge of Crisis</i> , 1990, 89mins	Sala Pegasus

Casa Menotti: *Via dell'Arringo, 1*  
Sala Pegasus: *Piazza Bovio, 1*

Collicola Arena: *Palazzo Collicola, Piazza Collicola, 1*  
Sala Frau: *Vicolo S. Filippo, 16*

[www.michaelblackwoodproductions.com](http://www.michaelblackwoodproductions.com) **Michael Blackwood Productions** is an independent production company that has produced over 150 documentaries on the arts and its contributors. The collection features over 1,000 participants or subjects, and spans over six decades of documentation, beginning in the 1960s and including earlier material, through the second decade of the 21st Century. The films serve as primary documents for educational and archival purposes, as well as informative and special interest pieces for the general public. A growing number of educational institutions, libraries, museums and various media outlets are acquiring the films around the world. The collection itself is one of the largest and most significant of its kind.

[www.festivaldispoletto.com](http://www.festivaldispoletto.com) **The Festival dei Due Mondi** was founded by the popular opera composer Gian Carlo Menotti in 1958 and was one of the first multi-disciplinary arts festivals of its type. It quickly garnered international recognition for developing and promoting avant-garde art, often in public environments. It takes place in June and July each year and makes use of the plethora of exhibition and performances venues boasted by the town of Spoleto - including the Teatro Romano, two opera houses and the many Piazzas. The newly appointed Director of the Festival is Monique Veaute, formerly of Palazzo Grassi and also director of Roma Europa Festival.

[www.mahler-lewitt.org](http://www.mahler-lewitt.org) **Mahler & LeWitt Studios**: Our residencies and special projects are established around the former studios of stone sculptor Anna Mahler (1904-1988) and conceptual artist Sol LeWitt (1928-2007) in Spoleto, Umbria IT. The Torre Bonomo, a medieval tower once used as a residency and exhibition space by the gallerist Marilena Bonomo (1928-2014), is also central to the program. Recent special projects include *Tai Shani: The Neon Hieroglyph* and *Lina Hermsdorf: Bona Dea* (both 2021), and *Allison Katz: Traforati* (2019). The residencies provide a focused and stimulating environment for artists, curators and writers to develop new ways of working in dialogue with peers and the unique cultural heritage of the region.

## NOTE TO EDITORS

Please contact us for permissions to view the films prior to the Festival. Captions for images and filmstills will be provided on request. More filmstills and portraits are also available. Do let us know if any url links on the following pages appear broken.

Contact: Guy Robertson, Mahler & LeWitt Studios, [guy@mahler-lewitt.org](mailto:guy@mahler-lewitt.org), 0044 7735459614

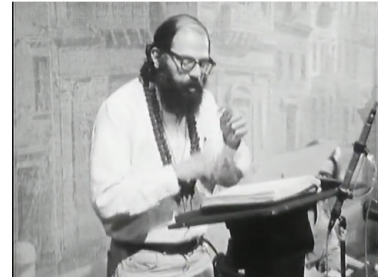
## Spoletto 1967

1967, 58mins, Casa Menotti, 24th June, 17.00-19.00 (and screened continuously 28/06 - 10/07)



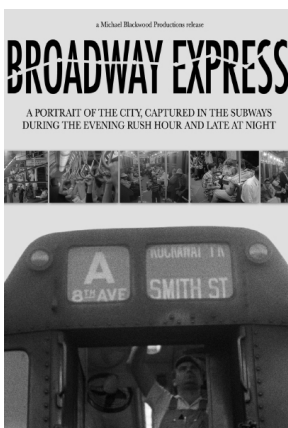
This film documents the tenth anniversary of the Spoleto Festival, or the Festival dei Due Mondi, which was founded by Gian Carlo Menotti in 1957. Menotti's idea involved bringing American artists to Italy for performances and exhibitions, so it seemed appropriate for the American filmmaker Michael Blackwood to document the anniversary. Highlights of the film include interviews with Henry Moore regarding his stage designs for Menotti's *Don Giovanni*, poetry readings with Allen Ginsberg and Giuseppe Ungaretti, Buckminster Fuller explaining his geodesic dome, and recordings from Jerzy Grotowski's staging of *El Principe Constante* by Calderón, presented by the Warsaw Lab Theatre.

[More information and watch trailer>>](#)  
[Film stills>>](#)



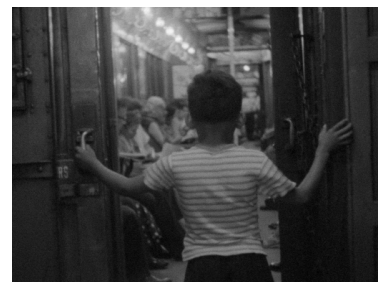
## Broadway Express

1959, 19mins, Collicola Arena, 24th June, 21.30



Shot in 1959, Michael Blackwood's first film *Broadway Express* is a portrait of New York's diverse population, as captured in the city's subways during the evening rush hour and late at night. The film is a portrait of the city through the faces of the passengers held captive for the ride.

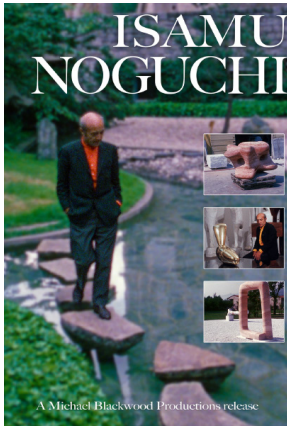
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# Isamu Noguchi

1972, 30mins, Collicola Arena, 24th June, 21.50



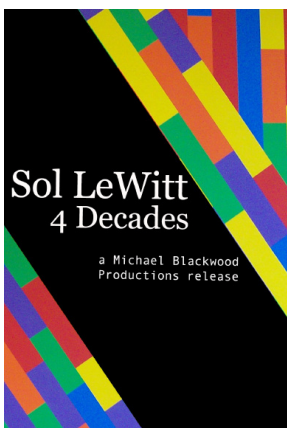
An intimate portrait of the influential artist Isamu Noguchi and his lifelong involvement with sculpture, Japanese gardens, theatre and furniture making. Parts of the film are shot in Spoleto with Noguchi's lifelong friend Buckminster Fuller. Noguchi's sculpture 'Octetra', created for the 1968 edition of the Festival dei Due Mondi, is today sited in the courtyard of the Palazzo Collicola Arti Visive. The artist's career spanned six decades, from the 1920s to the 1980s. The film presents Noguchi at the height of his artistic achievement; he is shown at work on new projects, visiting important finished works, and explaining his progress from the days of his apprenticeship to Brancusi. While explaining how Michelangelo was told to collect his marble from Monte Altissimo di Nago, Noguchi dwells on the importance of recognizing the relationship between nature, art and technology.

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# Sol LeWitt: 4 Decades

2001, 58mins, Collicola Arena, 24th June, 22.20



Sol LeWitt never liked the idea of being filmed or photographed. He always felt he was best represented by his work. After twenty years of urging him to make an exception, he finally consented, on the occasion of a major retrospective exhibition. Michael Blackwood kept it simple: a walk-through of the exhibition with the artist and its curator Gary Garrels, discussing the work on view. It was taped in Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art, the midway stop of the show on its way from San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art to New York's Whitney Museum. Garrels spent three years on the creation of this exhibition, in close cooperation with LeWitt. He leads the artist through the key works he produced over four decades, from the 1960s to 2000. The large number of spectacular wall drawings, for which LeWitt is especially recognized, are the highlight of the exhibition.

[More information and watch trailer>>](#)  
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# Christo and Jeanne-Claude

1995, 58mins, Collicola Arena, 25th June, 21.30



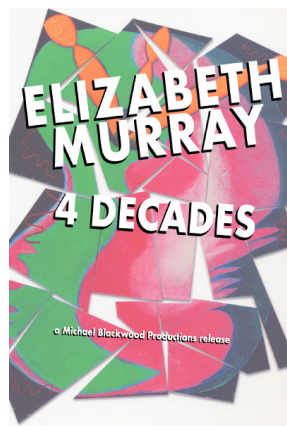
Christo and Jeanne-Claude met in Paris in 1958, and so began an extraordinary adventure in art, a series of spectacular public artworks in many parts of the world that reached its zenith with the wrapping of the German Parliament, the Reichstag, in Berlin in June 1995. For the 1968 edition of the Festival dei Due Mondi in Spoleto, they wrapped the fountain in the Piazza del Mercato and the lookout tower at the end of the Ponte delle Torri, the medieval aqueduct spanning from the old town to Monteluco. This film reviews all of their major projects since 1958, including *Wrapped Coast* (Australia, 1969); *Valley Curtain* (Colorado, 1972); *Running Fence* (California, 1976); *Surrounded Islands* (Miami, 1982); *Pont Neuf* (Paris, 1985); *Umbrellas for Japan and California* (1992); and *Wrapped Reichstag* (Berlin, 1995).

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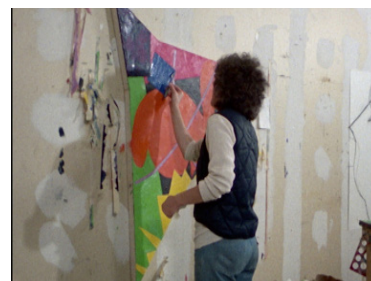
# Elizabeth Murray: 4 Decades

2006, 57mins, Collicola Arena, 25th June, 22.30



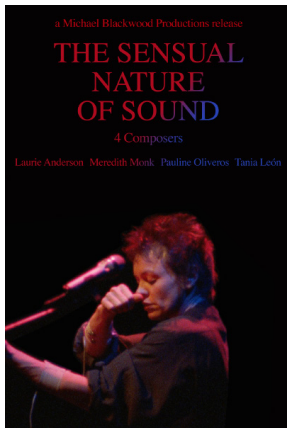
*Elizabeth Murray: 4 Decades* tracks the artist's career as she fearlessly moves toward new shapes and concepts in her unique style of painting. Inspired by artists of the Abstract Expressionism movement, such as Willem de Kooning and Philip Guston, Murray was privy to their technique and motive. Significantly, among her early influences, were the Sunday comics which she grew up with, as well as popular culture in general. The Museum of Modern Art acknowledged her position in contemporary art with a large retrospective exhibition curated by Robert Storr. In this film, Murray and Storr discuss the many milestones of her development as an artist, discussing many pertinent works in a radiant exhibition. In August 2007, at age 66, Murray died of cancer after many months of struggling to stay alive. This documentation represents her last recollections of the progress she made with her work.

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## The Sensual Nature of Sound: 4 Composers, Laurie Anderson, Tania Leon, Meredith Monk, Pauline Oliveros, 2001, 58mins, Sala Pegasus, 26th June, 11.00

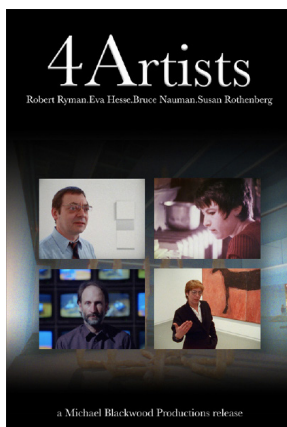


*The Sensual Nature of Sound* is an important document portraying the personalities and work of four influential New York based experimental composers and performers. Although they share a pursuit of lyrical storytelling, each artist has pioneered a distinctive voice. From the early 1980s, Laurie Anderson used electronic music and performance art as the foundation for the multi-media stage shows that would become her trademark. Cuban born Tania Leon composes orchestral music that is an intricate weave of Afro-Cuban and Latin jazz elements embedded within a classical Western concerto format. Meredith Monk experiments with new ideas in music theatre and developed a unique genre of opera. With concepts such as 'deep listening' and 'sonic awareness', Pauline Oliveros drew on ritual, myth, meditation, and improvisation, creating as she did a visionary body of work. Filmed at rehearsals and performances in the United States and abroad, *The Sensual Nature of Sound* examines the contributions of these diverse composers to contemporary American music.

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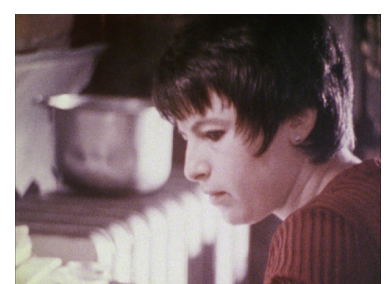
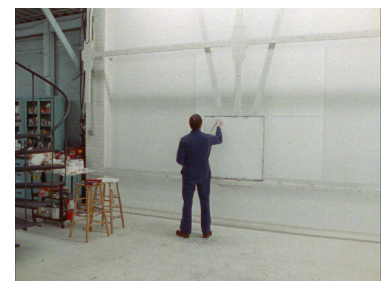


## 4 Artists: Robert Ryman, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, Susan Rothenberg 1988, 47mins, Sala Pegasus, 26th June, 12.00



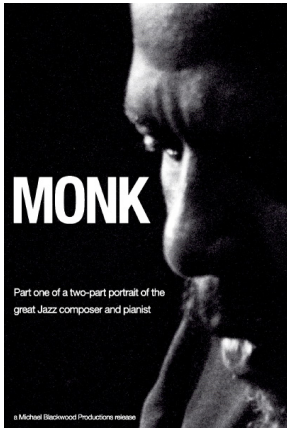
*4 Artists* acts as a collective portrait of Robert Ryman, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, and Susan Rothenberg, artists linked only by their stated intention of expressing ideas through art, unconnected to traditional concepts of beauty, storytelling or pictorial representation. The film offers the opportunity to see a large body of work in each artist's studio. The artists discuss how their work and the public's perception of it have changed. They describe the context in which the works were made as well as their critical concerns.

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# Monk

1968, 58mins, Collicola Arena, 26th June, 21.30



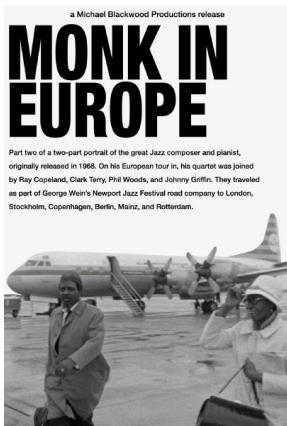
Thelonious Monk is indisputably among the greatest jazz musicians of the 20th century. *Monk* is part one of a two-part portrait of the great pianist and composer, made by brothers and co-directors Michael and Christian Blackwood. The Blackwood's austere inconspicuous directing style captures an understated genius and a man of few words, whose seemingly intoxicated off-stage aire of distracted mumbling and childlike stumbling virtually melts away once he is planted behind the piano. Monk sits stone-faced on his throne, his legs askew and his feet alive with erratic scuffs and taps that thump the floor to the rhythm, while his heavy, ring laden fingers hammer the keys to make his Steinway sing with dissonance. In New York his quartet plays at the Village Vanguard and at recording sessions for Columbia Records; in Atlanta they appear at a Jazz Festival organized by George Wein. The members of the quartet were Charlie Rouse, Larry Gales, and Ben Riley.

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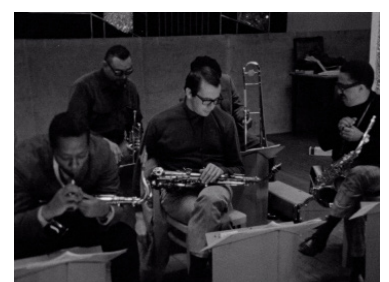
## Monk in Europe

1968, 58mins, Collicola Arena, 26th June, 22.30



*Monk in Europe* is the second instalment, from Michael and Christian Blackwood, of a two-part portrait of Thelonious Monk. It follows the legendary jazz pianist and composer along with his quartet on their European tour, where they are joined by musicians Ray Copeland, Clark Terry, Phil Woods, Jimmy Cleveland and Johnny Griffin. They travelled as part of George Wein's Newport Jazz Festival road company to London, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Berlin, Mainz, and Rotterdam.

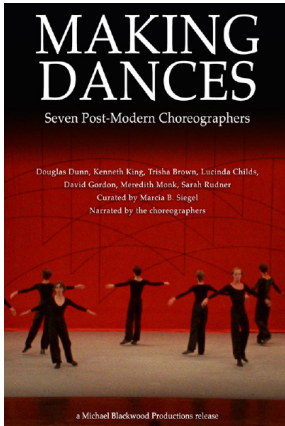
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# Making Dances: Seven Post Modern Choreographers

1980, 89mins, Collicola Arena, 1st July, 22.30



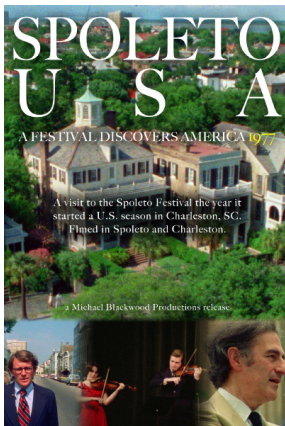
*Making Dances* explores a flourishing contemporary dance scene through the work of seven New York-based choreographers — Douglas Dunn, Kenneth King, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, David Gordon, Meredith Monk, and Sarah Rudner. They discuss the nature of contemporary dance and the evolution of their own work. Filmed at rehearsals, performances, and in conversation, the film is a unique primary source. The artistic roots of these seven artists can be found in Martha Graham's interpretation of modern life as a subject for dance and in the work of Merce Cunningham. In the 1960s, the interaction of art forms generated choreographic innovations. Especially influential was John Cage, whose radical ideas served as a point of departure for much of the new choreography. Each of the choreographers in *Making Dances* draws inspiration from the Graham/Cunningham tradition, yet each makes a highly distinctive statement. Structure, movement in non-fictional time and space, and the nature of movement itself are recurring themes.

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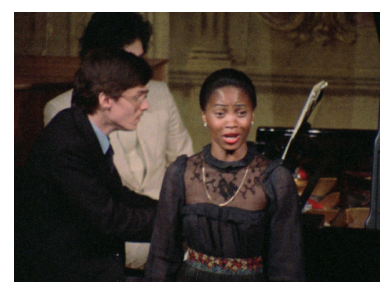
# Spoletto USA: A Festival Discovers America

1977, 58mins, Sala Frau, 3rd July, 11.00



When Gian Carlo Menotti created the Spoleto festival in 1958, he imagined it existing in two worlds, Europe and America. After years of debate as to where the beloved festival should take place in the United States, the city of Charleston was chosen. Charleston, much like Spoleto, is a place rooted in history. It was Charleston's grand cultural allure — home to many churches, houses and theatres from the late 18th Century — that secured it as the rightful spot for Spoleto USA. Menotti thought of the festival as a celebration of music that would link the old world with the new. By opening the floor to both emerging talent and long-time masters, Menotti merges the past and future in cities that are doing very much the same.

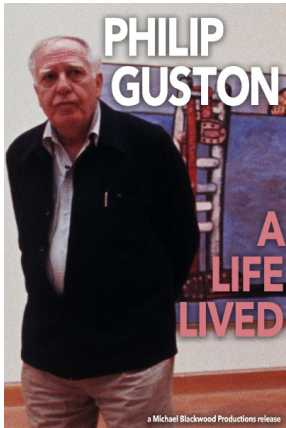
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## Philip Guston: A Life Lived

1981, 58mins, Sala Frau, 3rd July, 12.00



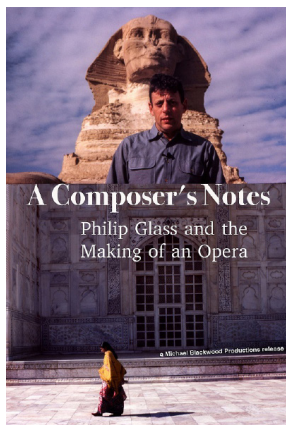
One of Michael Blackwood's most candid artist portraits, *Philip Guston: A Life Lived* is set against the backdrop of a retrospective exhibition that would be one of his last before his death in 1980. We are also taken into Guston's studio and watch him work on his canvases. The film captures the artist at his most introspective and reflective point in life. With succinct levity and charming wit, he relays his thoughts on a wide range of topics, from describing his inspirations and failures to dwelling on his experience with sickness and his fear of death. "Nothing is ever solved in painting," said Guston in reference to the diversity within his work, "it's a continuous chain that sometimes doesn't go in one line, but goes in a serpentine line or in crooked paths, detours, which have to be investigated."

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## A Composer's Notes: Philip Glass and the Making of an Opera

1985, 89mins, Sala Pegasus, 10th July, 11.00



*A Composer's Notes* takes us on a personal and intimate journey with Philip Glass as he takes on the production of his third opera, *Akhnaton*. The composer shares his creative process while giving us a glimpse into his world of rehearsal and performance. His practice and productions in both Germany and the United States demonstrate Glass's dedication and passion towards his work as he incorporates elements of inspiration from Egypt to India, a country whose music influenced Glass in his formative years. The film also looks back at two earlier Glass music-theatre works: *Einstein on the Beach* and *Satyagraha* offering a broad depiction of the composer's applauded career.

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# Butoh: Body on the Edge of Crisis

1990, 89mins, Sala Pegasus, 10th July, 12.00



*Butoh: Body on the Edge of Crisis* explores what is often viewed as Japan's equivalent of modern dance; however, it has little to do with the rational principles of modernism. Butoh, a unique theatre of improvisation rooted in post-war Japan, places the personal experiences of the dancer centre-stage. A Dionysian art of nudity, eroticism, and sexuality, Butoh's scale of expression ranges from meditative tenderness to excessive grotesqueness. Whilst dealing with existential angst and the violence of the 20th century, Butoh incorporates spiritualism and aspects of traditional theatre, including the Buddhist death dances of rural Japan and traditional music and mask work. An alliance of tradition and rebellion, Butoh is one of the most fascinating underground dance movements. *Butoh: Body on the Edge of Crisis* is a visually striking film portrait shot on location in Japan and in Venice with the participation of the major Butoh choreographers and their companies.

[More information and watch trailer>>](#)  
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