

HIPPODROME silent film festival

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WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH - SUNDAY 26 MARCH 2017

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Thursday 23 March | 19:30 HippFest Commission Together

Dir. Lorenza Mazzetti | UK | 1956 | 52m
With: Eduardo Paolozzi, Michael Andrews

Performing live: Raymond MacDonald and Christian Ferlino (saxophone and percussion)

Commission made possible by funding from the Community Schools 2008 Charity
Supported by the Italian Institute Edinburgh

Introductions and post-screening Q&A enhanced by BSL interpretation plus electronic note-taking.

Together was included in the first Free Cinema Programme that the British Film Institute funded in the mid-fifties. Free Cinema was loosely connected to a nationwide scheme under the umbrella tag of Observation Britain which aimed to document and present - mainly through photography and film - the nature and state of British society in the post-war era. *Together* however was markedly different from the other short 16mm documentary films that were produced at that time by the BFI. It was shot on the much larger format of 35mm, and had a considerably longer fictional constructed narrative in which the story focuses on two deaf London Dockers - played by the young artists Eduardo Paolozzi and Michael Andrews. Where *Together* did link up with the other Free Cinema films was in its use of non-professional local people and its locale setting of a working class urban environment. As the film shows in all its raw detail, the East End of London remained badly scarred by the Blitz even a decade after the end of the War. The street-kid gangs still played on gaping bombsites while they and their parents lived in century-old slum conditions.

Yet for all the evident social deprivation and economic poverty that is clearly the lot of this tight-knit community, *Together* is neither pessimistically sentimental nor politically polemic. Rather it seems more like a piece of visual, lyrical poetry echoing similar evocative feelings and responses as De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* and Visconti's *La Terra Trema*. These two 1948 masterpieces of Italian neorealism had a powerful influence on the documentary approach of Free Cinema film-makers. However, it maybe took a fellow Italian, Lorenza Mazzetti, to see through the grim social realism of such films to their underlying poetic expression of profound human experience in which community and friendship hold strong. The other Italian connection in *Together* is of course the presence of Eduardo Paolozzi as one of the two main protagonists. In a 2013 interview Mazzetti recounts that she was desperately searching for someone to play the part when, by chance, she spotted the figure of Paolozzi at a Francis Bacon exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. She immediately felt that this striking stranger was the one whom she was looking for for her film. With



a great deal of trepidation she approached the formidable Paolozzi, who was only finally persuaded to take the part when she reassured him that he had no lines to memorize!

After he agreed, Paolozzi apparently never spoke to Mazzetti the whole time they worked together.

For those more familiar with Paolozzi's vivid and jazzy Pop Art work from the 1960s onwards his involvement in *Together* might seem rather different to their expectations. In the 1940s and 1950s however his work was closely connected with the austere angst-ridden zeitgeist of the Post-War and Cold War era; where existentialism and the avant-garde movement known as Art Brut were the dominant influence on young artists and film-makers. Thus Paolozzi's sculptures at that time were made from the derelict material that might easily have been found scattered over the open waste grounds and rubbish dumps that are such a feature of the locales of *Together*. Another possible area of connection between Paolozzi's work and the film are systems of visual communication. This interest he shared with his fellow members of the radical Independent Group (including Richard Hamilton and Lawrence Alloway), who had a similar investigating agenda to that of the Free Cinema Group. One of their main interests was the semiotics of advertising and popular culture. In addition to this, Paolozzi was also fascinated by other sources such as children's play and their drawings - and these are a conspicuous part of the film's look - through their street games and their graffiti, chalked on the crumbling buildings. Paolozzi was also fascinated by the world of science in all its forms. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the heightened and intense visual world of the D/deaf-without-speech would attract him, as well as their created system of communication. Finally there may be another cinematic connection here - this time a popular cultural one. In the previous year the film which swept the Oscars had a similar gritty dockland setting - *Kazan's On the Waterfront*. So it is likely - and Mazzetti suggests this in her 2013 interview - that Paolozzi was also keen to try his hand at method acting in *Together* - whether he matches Marlon Brando's Oscar nominated performance is for you to decide.

By Bill Hare, Honorary Fellow (History of Art), Edinburgh College of Art



We're raising money for a piano for HippFest - donations of any size and help spreading the word greatly appreciated

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