

Italian Neorealism in Cinema

Italian Neorealism, was a national film movement (1943–1952), that emerged from the post-World War II disillusionment and the hardships of socioeconomic conditions in Italy among the underprivileged in a non-judgemental, humanistic approach. A group of like-minded, socially aware and talented film directors and displayed through their films –without any attempt of “beautification” in a documentary style cinematography– the feelings of defeat and frustration through the harsh conditions of everyday life, such as struggle for survival through an environment of injustice, poverty, oppression and despair.

This Open Philately exhibit aims to present the first phase of Italian Neorealism film movement spanning from the film releases of Luchino Visconti’s “Osessione” in 1943 to Vittorio de Sica’s “Umberto D.” in 1952. The exhibit’s content includes the influences from earlier literary and cinematographic art movements, the major figures and Neorealist films as well as its impact to subsequent film-making worldwide.

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Bibliography

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During the pre-War Mussolini's regime period Italian films, known as "*Telefoni Bianchi* - *White Telephones*", were imitating American comedies and were characterized by their glamorous settings and superficial themes providing an idealized image of Italy filled with propaganda.



Il signor Max, a 1937 "white telephones" comedy film, directed by Mario Camerini with Vittorio de Sica starring.

After the end of WWII, the harsh realities faced by ordinary Italians and the widespread disillusionment called for a totally dissimilar cinematographic approach than before. During the end of WW II the famous Cinecittà studios were bombed by the Western Allies.



That situation was represented by "*Neorealismo*" the New Reality of post-War Italy, that focused on the society, economy and politics in everyday life its "actors" the real, unprivileged people.



Main Characteristics of Italian Neorealism in Cinema

- Shoot on Location and mostly Outdoors (not in studios)
 - Often use Non-professional Actors
- Realist – Christian Humanist – Marxist approach to the less privileged
- Show things as they are and focus on everyday reality rather than the exceptional
 - Everyday – colloquial language and Dialects as in “*The Earth trembles*”
- A documentary visual style as in “*People of the Po Valley*” by Michelangelo Antonioni



The Literary and Ideological influences of “Neorealism by :

The *Verismo* literary movement, characterized by the works of Giovanni Verga with its stark, impersonal, and often fatalistic portrayals of human experience as well as his sensitivity to regional dialects and customs were praised as inspiration for a relevant cinema.

Neo-Marxism and Antonio Gramsci's notion of cross-fertilization of politics and culture and in the importance of art as a catalyst for breaking down regional barriers and establishing national identity related directly to cinema.

Christian Humanism of Da Vinci and Erasmus for its compassionate view for human suffering.

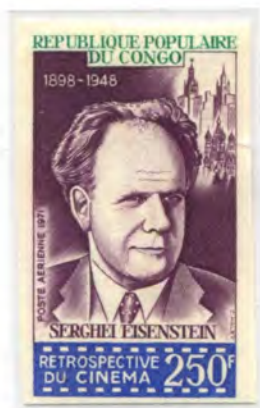


and the Cinematographic influences by :

Soviet Expressive Realism of Sergei Eisenstein

French Poetic Realism of Jean Renoir

Films by Ozu, De Oliveira, Fei Mu and Antonioni's documentary “*Gente del Po*”



Neorealism as defined in the film-makers own words



"I try to capture reality, nothing else " as Roberto Rossellini stated



with Vittorio De Sica saying "My film is dedicated to the suffering of the humble "

Luchino Visconti's Filmography

Luchino Visconti was one of the fathers of Italian Neorealist Film movement contributing three remarkable films during the 1st phase of Italian Neorealism : "*Ossessione* " (Obsession) in 1943, "*The Earth Trembles* " in 1948 and "*Bellissima* " in 1951.



OSSESSIONE
 LA TERRA TREMA
 BELLISSIMA
SENSO
 LE NOTTI BIANCHE
 ROCCO E I SUOI FRATELLI
IL GATTOPARDO
 VAGHE STELLE DELL'ORSA
 LO STRANIERO
 LA **CADUTA** DEGLI DEI
 MORTE A VENEZIA
 LUDWIG
GRUPPO DI FAMIGLIA
 IN UN INTERNO
 L'INNOCENTE

Antonio Pietrangeli was the film's screenwriter, who transformed an American film noir into an Italian masterpiece of Neorealism that reflected Italy's reality of the time.



"*Ossessione* ", the first and one of the most emblematic films of Italian Neorealism –based on an adaptation of James M. Cain's 1934 novel "*The Postman Always Rings Twice* " – was directed by Luchino Visconti. This film noir-like crime drama depicted the harsh reality of rural Italy and it was a striking contrast with the polished "Telefoni Bianchi" cinema of the time.

"Ossessione" main themes were the intense passion, crime and guilt. The film's protagonists were *Massimo Girotti* as Gino and *Clara Calamai* as Giovanna.



In 1947, Visconti filmed on location –at the impressive scenery of the seaside village of Aci Trezza with basalt sea stacks – “ *La Terra Trema* ” (*The Earth Trembles*)” based on 1881 the Verismo novel “ *I Malavoglia* ” (The House by the Medlar Tree) by Giovanni Verga. Visconti’s initial plan was to film “ *La Terra Trema* ” as a documentary displaying the hardships of the Sicilian fishermen, but it finally became a hybrid of documentary and fiction.



The plot was about a Sicilian family of fishermen in Aci Trezza who attempt to break free from poverty and the exploitation middlemen. After mortgaging their home to buy a boat that due to a storm is sunk, the family is ruined and they are forced to return for work to the wholesalers.

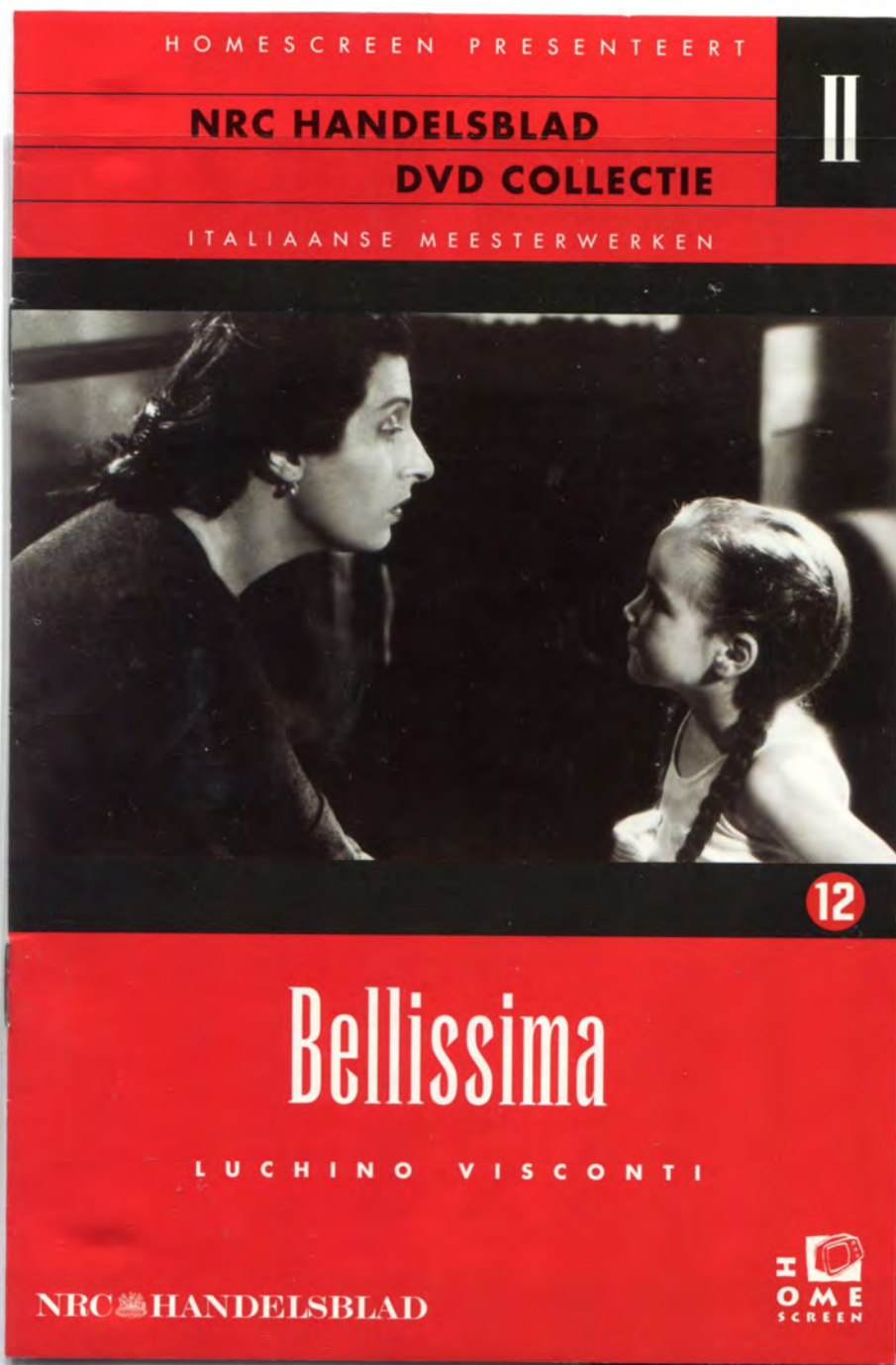
The film actors were the local fishermen and residents of Aci Trezza speaking in their local Sicilian dialect and this masterpiece of Italian neorealism, is noted for its on-location shooting, raw, authentic portrayal of poverty, and poetic, operatic approach to documenting working-class life.



The film positioned Italian Neorealist film-making at centre stage after receiving the Special International Award of the 9th Venice International Film Festival in 1947.



Visconti third film of the first phase of Neorealism approaches from a different social angle the struggle of a working-class mother to "escape" from the hardships of everyday life by trying to make her little daughter a movie star.



The 1951 "*Bellissima*" is a satirical drama directed by Luchino Visconti that explores the harsh realities of the post-war film industry through the lens of a working-class mother's desperate obsession – played by Anna Magnani as Maddalena Cecconi – to make her daughter, a movie star but the mother soon realizes the brutal nature of the glamorous show-business, returning to the safety of her modest family nest.



NRC HANDELSBLAD
DVD COLLECTIE

In 1945, Roberto Rossellini's "Roma, città aperta" (Rome open city) was released describing the Italian resistance of the Italians to the Nazi occupation.

The film was shot shortly after the historical events, at war-torn locations in Rome.

Rome, open city, along with *Paisan* (1946) and *Germany Year Zero* (1947), formed Rossellini's "Neorealist War Trilogy."



Screenwriters of this powerful documentary-style narration were Rossellini himself and Federico Fellini with Sergio Amidei who were nominated for the Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar in 1947.



The film depicted communist resistance fighters, a catholic priest Aldo Fabrizi as *Don Pietro Pellegrini* and Anna Magnani as *Pina*, widow of an executed partisan.



CITTÀ
APERTA
ROMA
cancellation
25.7.1944

"Rome open city"
had an impact
both to
audiences and
the film industry,



The Hollywood film director **Otto Preminger** declared " the history of cinema is divided into two eras : one before and one after " *Roma, città, aperta* ".



It was one of the first post-war Italian pictures to gain major acclaim and accolades internationally, winning the prestigious Palme d'Or at the 1946 Cannes Film Festival.

Roberto Rossellini's " *Rome, open city* " has markedly, and permanently changed the landscape of film history by reinventing modern cinema.

Even nowadays, it has an enormous impact on the concept and structure of film-making.



Posted letter from Cannes "Festival du Film" on 22 9 1946

to Bâle (Basel), Switzerland with postage of 10F and commemorative vignette

"GERMANY YEAR ZERO" is part of Rossellini's War Trilogy that looks through the eyes of Edmund, a 15-year old boy in ruined and occupied Berlin after WW II, who is trying to survive himself and his family.



Allemagne année zéro

Germania anno zero

Un film de Roberto Rossellini
avec Edmund Meschke,
Ernst Pittschau, Ingetraud Hintze

Scénario Roberto Rossellini, Carlo Lizzani, Max Colpet
Image Robert Juillard
Montage Eraldo Da Roma
Musique Renzo Rossellini
Production Tevere Film, Salvo d'Angelo, Sadfi, UGC

ITALIE • 1947
FILM N/B • SON MONO
DURÉE 74 MN

Langues disponibles

- version originale allemande
- sous-titres français

Écrans

- chapitrage
- filmographie de Roberto Rossellini

Chapitrage

1. Allemagne année zéro
2. Le trafic d'Edmund
3. Le poids du père
4. La prostration

PAL Format plein écran

édition

écrans graphiques

authoring

avec la participation du CNC
et du Plan Media II
de l'Union Européenne

Dans Berlin en ruines occupée à sortir du cauchemar nazi, Edmund, un jeune garçon de 15 ans, vit de rapines pour faire survivre sa famille, tout en cherchant des repères dans un monde qui n'en a plus... Evitant tout sentimentalisme ou effet spectaculaire, refusant de porter le moindre jugement, la caméra de Rossellini continue à appliquer la leçon du néoréalisme : regarder pour comprendre. En suivant l'odyssée d'Edmund, *Allemagne année zéro* nous dévoile le désarroi moral et social d'un pays en quête d'une nouvelle identité.

Du même auteur, et disponibles en DVD dans la même collection, les deux autres opus de la «trilogie de la guerre», *Rome ville ouverte* et *Paisa*.

Allemagne année zéro

Rossellini's look is non-judgmental trying to understand & record through Edmund's struggle, the moral and social disarray of post-war Germany.



"*Riso Amaro*" (Bitter Rice) is a 1949 Neorealist Film written and directed by Giuseppe De Santis with commercial success both in Europe and America. In 1949 entered in Cannes Film Festival and in 1951 at 23rd Academy Awards was nominated for Best Story.

The film due to its combination of melodrama and crime elements with social commentary on the harsh working conditions of female rice workers in the Po Valley as well as its sensual imagery had a great appeal to audiences.

Giuseppe De Santis

Director – Screenwriter – Actor

Vittorio Gassman,
as *Walter* a petty thief
with his female partner
"Francesca"



run into Silvana Mangano,
as *Silvana*
a peasant rice worker.



€6,50 French Cinema Ticket

While "Francesca"
opts for a quiet life
in the countryside,
Silvana pairs up with Walter
in his adventurous lifestyle.



Vittorio de Sica's 1948 "*I Ladri di Biciclette*" (The Bicycles Thieves) is a landmark of humanist filmmaking, narrates the dramatic struggle for survival of a desperate father to find his stolen bicycle that he depends on for his work hanging posters around war-torn Rome.



The film's protagonists was Lamberto Maggiorani –a factory worker and not a professional actor– "*Antonio Ricci*" and his film son "*Bruno Ricci*" played by Enzo Staiola.



In 1949, Vittorio De Sica won the Special Prize of the Jury at the Locarno Film Festival and in 1950 the film received an Honorary Award by the Academy Board of Governors as the most outstanding foreign language film released in the United States during 1949.

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The story and screenplay by Cesare Zavattini –one of the main theorists of the Neorealist movement– was based on the novel by Luigi Bartolini. Zavattini and De Sica's productive partnership created more than twenty films, including such neorealist masterpieces as *Sciuscià* (1946), *Ladri di Biciclette* (1948), *Miracolo a Milano* (1951), and *Umberto D.* (1952).

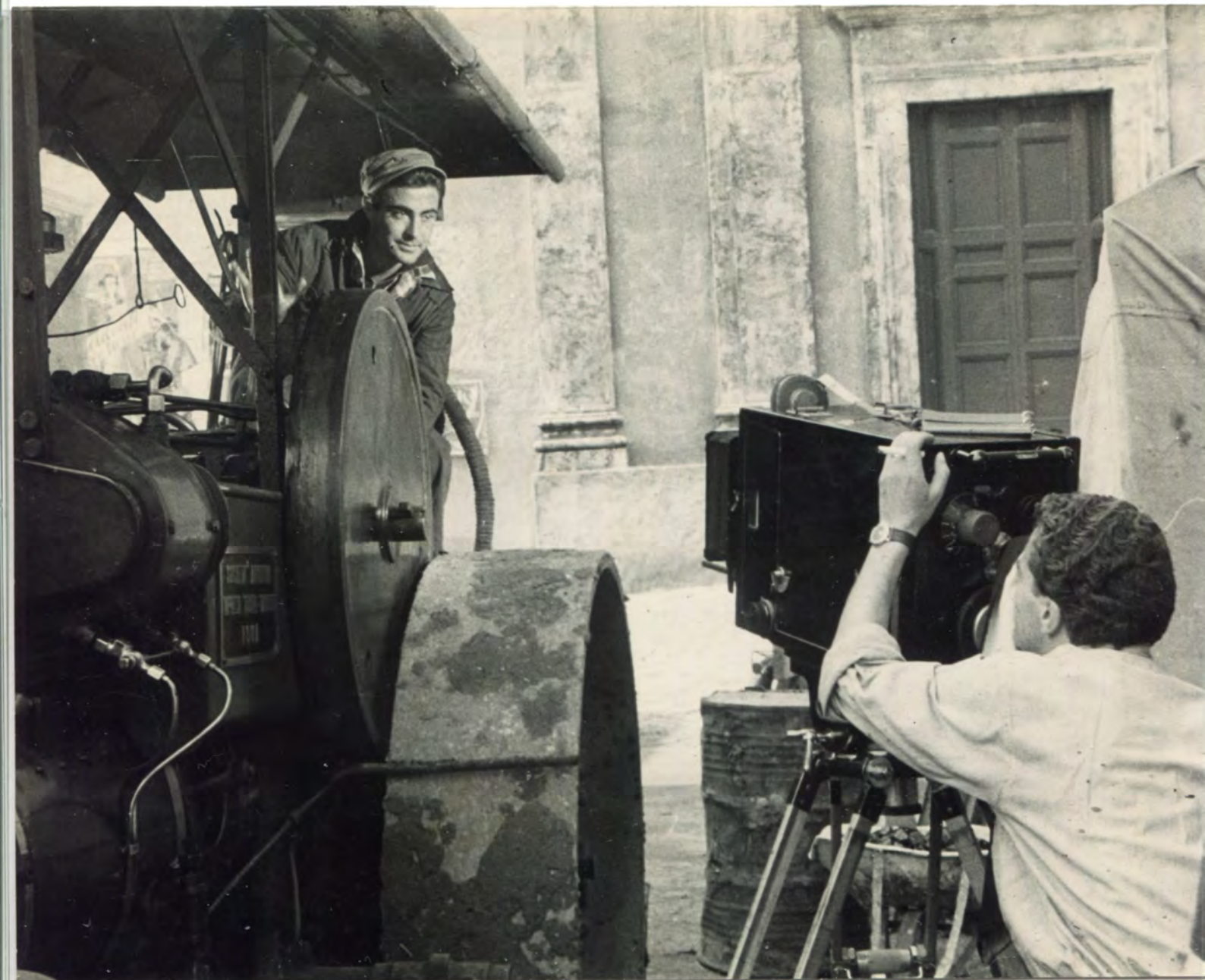


Commemorative Cancellation for V. DE SICA and C. ZAVATTINI, 11.5.2002

Based on a true-life event of a tragic accident, "Roma ore 11" (Rome 11 o'clock) was a 1952 Italian drama film was written by Cesare Zavattini and directed by Giuseppe De Santis and one of the best Neorealist films.

In postwar Rome, two-hundred women answer an ad for a low-paid secretarial position, hoping to improve their grim everyday life. The applicants crowd the staircase waiting to be interviewed, telling among them their individual stories. When the staircase falls down because of the weight of hundreds of women waiting for a job interview as a secretary, their dream of getting a job collapses too.

Original photo of "Rome, 11 o'clock"
with non-professional actor Massimo Girroli
as Nando, an unemployed worker.



Vittorio De Sica's 1952 film "*Umberto D.*", played by non-professional actor Carlo Battisti, is humanist "docu-fiction" written by Cesare Zavattini.

A film De Sica his best one and dedicated it to his father.



Fight against Poverty



This is the "story" of a retired civil servant, struggling with his low pension to make ends meet in post-war Italy with no relatives and friends but his little dog "*Flike*".



In 1947, then then Dutch Minister of Social Affairs, introduced the *Emergency Old Age Pensions Act*, providing income support to elderly people aged 65 and older who were living in poverty following World War II.

Umberto Dominico Ferrari is living in a meagre room rented out by a landlady that threatens him with eviction due to his overdue rents. This leads Umberto D. to absent thoughts, desperation, depression and psychological stress. He finally decides to throw himself in front of a train holding the dog in his arms: at the last moment, the dog jumps from him and cringes away in terror.



With no possible solution to his problem, the old man tries to regain the dog's confidence and, in the delight of succeeding, runs joyously away into the distance, his dog restored to him, the problems of his physical existence unresolved.

The impact of Italian Neorealism in Cinema and its influence on later film directors was immense because it placed film-making as a means of reflecting reality and not as a means of entertainment.

Antonioni's documentary like *People from the Po River* (1947), was considered a form of neorealism. Later he focused on existential alienation, communication failure, and the emptiness of modern life of the upper middle classes. His three most famous films, "*L'avventura*", "*La notte*", and "*L'eclisse*", are an unofficial trilogy dealing with themes of isolation, alienation, and existential angst of the upper middle class of the early 1960's when there was an economic boom in Italy. These same themes, but in an economic context of poverty, are central in De Sica's "*Umberto D.*"

MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI



FERRARA CENTRO
10.3.2013

FERRARA CENTRO
★ 10.3.2013 PT
Lo sguardo di
**MICHELANGELO
ANTONIONI**
e le arti
Palazzo dei Diamanti



FEDERICO FELLINI 1920 - 1993



Fellini began as a screenwriter and co-director (*Luci del varietà*, 1950) whilst his early films like *La Strada* (1954) and *Il bidone* (1955) combined neorealist aesthetics with increasing focus on character psychology.



PIER PAOLO PASOLINI 1922-1975



Pasolini in his early films such as "*Accattone*" (1961) and "*Mamma Roma*" (1962) used non-professional actors and focused on social outcasts in Roman suburbs. The "raw and harsh" filming neorealist approach with blended with profound iconoclast social critique within a context of poetic symbolism.

Italian Neorealism influenced films all over the world

The impact of Neorealism has been enormous not only on Italian film but also on French New Wave cinema, the Polish Film School, as well as in Asia & Latin American.

In European Cinema notable film cases that were influenced by Neorealism are :

1959 François Truffaut's "*The 400 Blows* ", a *Nouvelle Vague* film, heavily influenced by Italian Neorealism, adopting its gritty, authentic style.



1964 Luis Bu  uel's "*Viridiana* "
Winner of the Palme d'Or at the 1961 Cannes Film Festival.

Andrzej Wajda was profoundly influenced by Italian Neorealism, leading to the creation the Polish Film School. Wajda employed filming on location, using natural lighting, and documenting the struggles of ordinary people moving away from the then dominant film approach of Socialist Realism.



Neorealism influences Latin American Third Cinema in Bolivia....

Jorge Sanjin  s' 1969 film "*Yawar Mallku* " (Blood of the Condor) is a landmark of Latin American "Third Cinema" adapting the Neorealist techniques to a Bolivian context. highlighting indigenous struggle, cultural imperialism, and social injustice in Bolivia.



and in Brazil's Cinema Novo (1950s to early1970s)

that focused on urgent social realism, political engagement, and on-location filming. Spearheaded by directors like Glauber Rocha, it adapted neorealist aesthetics to tackle poverty, land reform, and underdevelopment.

India's Parallel Cinema movement film directors including Satyajit Ray (who directed the award-winning *Apu Trilogy*) were heavily influenced by Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948).

