Intimités
Everyday Life in Contemporary Afro/French Cinema

LA COUR DE BABEL / SCHOOL OF BABEL

Screening + conversation with Jennifer Wild, Veronica Vegna and Nadine Di Vito

Teenage asylum seekers, aspiring musicians, and refugees from conflicts around the globe meet in a Paris school for recent arrivals in this revealing portrait of the youth immigrant experience. In an age of resurgent uneasiness with all that is foreign, these teens from Senegal, Mauritania, Libya, Serbia, Venezuela, Rumania, Brazil and China provide a powerful antidote to fear and suspicion as they recover from the trauma of displacement and build new lives together. Screening followed by conversation with series co-curator Jennifer Wild (UChicago Cinema & Media Studies, Romance Languages and Literatures), Veronica Vegna (UChicago Romance Languages and Literatures), who specializes in teacher training, foreign language acquisition and contemporary Italian cinema, and Nadine Di Vito (UChicago Romance Languages and Literatures) who specializes in sociolinguistics, second language acquisition and teaching.

School of Babel (Julie Bertuccelli, 2013, 89 min) follows a year in a Paris schoolroom for young people who have recently immigrated to France. Using a surprisingly intimate fly-on-the-wall style, the documentary gives us unforgettable glimpses into the lives of tweens and teens as they learn French, combat homesickness, juggle weighty familial responsibilities and emerge from previous lives of social and economic devastation. The film’s triumph is in its remarkably succinct manner of creating complex portraits of the children and capturing the diversity of their experience.

This event is part of the Cinema 53 spring 2018 series, Intimités: Everyday Life in Contemporary Afro/French Cinema, curated by Jennifer Wild and Jacqueline Stewart (UChicago Cinema & Media Studies, Gray Center for Arts + Inquiry).

Thursday, April 19, 7pm
Harper Theater | 5238 S Harper
Free admission