

A collective cinematic love letter...

-Samuel B. Prime



With David Thomson Tom Luddy Marina Goldovskaya Janet Peoples
David Peoples Peter Scarlet Tim Greenberg Erica Marcus
Michael H. Shamberg Daniel Potter Dirk Kuhlmann Margaret Collins
Guillaume-en-Egypte

Executive Producer Jed Riffe Composer Chris R. Brown
Sound Edit & Mix Philip Perkins Colorist Gary Coates Online/Conform Jesse Spencer
Partially funded by the Rockefeller Foundation Media Arts Fellowship

www.chrismarkermovie.com

ALAN LAU Sept. 2012

TO CHRIS MARKER, AN UNSENT LETTER

A film by Emiko Omori

An Icarus Films Release | 2013 | USA | 78 min | Color | CC

2012 Mill Valley Film Festival
2013 Hong Kong International Film Festival
2013 Barcelona International Film Festival



SYNOPSIS

A collective cinematic love letter to the elusive French filmmaker Chris Marker in documentary form, Emiko Omori's timely film captures the persona of a filmmaker who is at once both contradictorily present in and distant from his body of work. Notoriously private, self-described as the "best known author of unknown works," Marker is widely known for a few key cinematic works such as *LA JETÉE* (1963) and *SANS SOLEIL* (1983), but his wider filmography remains undiscovered. Through interviews with Marker's many colleagues and admirers, Omori lovingly describes a man whose preference for personal privacy has rendered him perhaps cinema's most famous enigma: a man who is his works. Marker's films have affected many, both those who know him personally and those who only know him through his films. Omori pays tribute to the legendary and ephemeral filmmaker, the "cat who walks by himself," Chris Marker.

Samuel B. Prime

Melnitz Movies Director

FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

Who is, or rather was, Chris Marker? For ten years thinking about and creating this homage to him, it is hard for me to accept his recent return to the planet from whence he came, the stranger from the future that appears, observes, listens, creates, then vanishes. Fantasies about him fill the void.

We met in 1974 at a film conference. Like most film students, *La Jetee* had blown my mind. It was the only Marker film I had seen when we briefly crossed paths in that sumptuous upstate New York setting. After his screening of *The Train Rolls On* about the Russian filmmaker Alexander Medevkin, he related an anecdote about his surprise at encountering Medevkin, in Berlin I think, who he thought had not survived the Stalin purges. *La Jetee* and the brief encounter with the author of this magnificent work has stayed with me. Looking back I see that my path is littered with Marker-isms. This is most evident in my documentary/memoir *Rabbit in the Moon*. We stayed in touch sporadically through faxes, then emails and occasional visits. He loved the immediacy of faxes and emails. He was not one to write letters except, of course, in his films.

I had thought about an homage for years. In 2002 I bought my first small digital video camera freeing me from the constraints of renting a camera. With this I felt I could finally do this project. That same year I met Chris for tea at his favorite cafe in Paris. As at other meetings, he ordered tea but never touched it. In fact, I don't remember ever seeing him eat. I summoned up my courage and asked his permission to make an homage. Taken somewhat aback, he said rather gruffly, "But I won't be in it." At least he didn't say no! Before I left Paris, he gave me a photo of himself looking through his camera next to his beloved cat Guillaume. That, I thought, was practically a yes. So I proceeded.

The original title was *Portrait of an Invisible Man* knowing that he would not be photographed or interviewed. I would assemble people who knew him and fans who knew him only through his films. The "portrait" would be built on the Rashomon principle - impressions and (imperfect) memories from various points of view - interpretations of their own reality while watching Marker's reality. During the editing, it became a kind of letter to him, the one I never wrote. *Portrait of an Invisible Man* became *To Chris Marker, An Unsent Letter*.

I completed a version in 2003. We both had some misgivings about the project. His stern appearance disguised a shy man never wanting to be in the spotlight. I suspect he was not comfortable with being at the center of a film. The project went on the shelf until the fall of 2011. In the intervening eight years I collected images from my travels. Chris had mentioned that this was the way he worked collecting images, sounds and stories on his world travels that eventually coalesced into a movie or a book or museum installation. Often the word "travelogue" is used to describe some of his works.



In early 2012 news arrived through friends that he was not well. This prompted me to send a package in April with a book of cat photographs by famous photographers, a DVD called *The Cats of Mirikitani* and a rough cut of the film. Around that time he went into hospital. In late July just as I finished editing, word of his death reached me. One of the last times we communicated, he said something like wait until I am on the "journey to paradise" before releasing the film. Coincidence or permission?

Ten years have passed since he wrote me "Seems we're not so lucky with technicals. Your fax is still better than a decidedly uncooperative email, yet your page is plagued with a long white strip on the left which makes at times your reading as tricky as the Rosetta stone. Yet I understood you had 'a project on me'...Perhaps you mentioned it already, and my unconscious simply erased it, for obvious reasons. If you knew how much I'd prefer to be forgotten now. The films are there, I did my share, the rest is silence."

Emiko Omori



ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

EMIKO OMORI, Producer/Director/Videographer/Editor

Omori began her career as a filmmaker and cinematographer in 1968, when there were few camerawomen and fewer still Asian American camerawomen. Her first job was as camerawoman/editor on the KQED program, "Newsroom." Since 1972 she has freelanced as a cinematographer on many award-winning projects as well as producing her own films. In 1991 she wrote and directed the highly acclaimed drama, *Hot Summer Winds*, a co-production of American Playhouse and KCET. In 1999, her documentary/memoir, *Rabbit in the Moon*, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, was broadcast on POV, and won a National Emmy and numerous other awards. At Sundance she was awarded the Best Documentary Cinematography for two documentaries: *Rabbit in the Moon* and for Academy Award nominee *Regret to Inform*. She produced the series *Pacific Diaries* and directed *Skin Stories* for Pacific Islanders in Communications. In 2005 she produced and directed *Ripe for Change* for the PBS series *California and the American Dream*. Her documentary, *7,500 Miles to Redemption*, premiered at the Oregon State Penitentiary and the Salem Film Festival in 2007.

Her documentary, *Passion and Power: The Technology of Orgasm*, premiered at Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center at the Scanners Video Festival in 2007. Her 2011 documentary on the visionary tattoo artist, *Ed Hardy TATTOO THE WORLD* screened at many film festivals and museums including the Mill Valley Film Festival, New York Museum of Modern Art, De Young Museum in San Francisco, won the Audience Award at the Alexandria Film Festival, the San Francisco Art Institute and the Honolulu Academy of Art. She has just completed her feature documentary *To Chris Marker, An Unsent Letter*. She lives in San Francisco with her cat Wyatt.

For more information, contact filmmaker Emiko Omori:
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IN THE PRESS

"Emiko Omori's *To Chris Marker, An Unsent Letter* pays tribute by combining testimonials and travelogue, uncannily mirroring its subject's singular style." —**Brad Richason, CityPages**

"Affectionate and mysterious ... captures the essence of the man."
—**Peter Schilling, Perisphere.org**

"Impressively successful!" —**Jeremy Mechler, Joyless Creatures**

"A global romp through Marker's intentionally murky past... Perhaps Omori's greatest tribute to Marker is in honoring his beautifully manicured mystery, the ambiguous outlines of his life and art."
—**Steve Seid, Pacific Film Archive**

"Lively and engaging!" —**Cinesource**



"The 35th Mill Valley Film Festival, which runs through Oct. 14, is particularly strong on local filmmakers' work, and one of the most intriguing is Emiko Omori's rumination on the maker of the great 1962 science fiction short *La Jetee*. Marker, who died July 29 on his 91st birthday, was one of the most influential independent filmmakers ever, and Omori worked with him as a cinematographer in the 1980s. Her *To Chris Marker* is a video essay that has the inquisitive, reflective yet easygoing observational style that any Marker fan should recognize - especially those who have seen his other great film, *Sans Soleil*. Weighing in on Marker's legacy are critics, filmmakers and fans, including noted film historian and author David Thomson and Berkeley screenwriters David and Janet Peoples, who adapted *La Jetee* as *12 Monkeys* for Terry Gilliam."

-SFGate

"*To Chris Marker, An Unsent Letter* by the Emmy-winning, Bernal Heights resident Emiko Omori, is a brilliantly composed love paean to the late great French new wave photographer-filmmaker. From its opening frames and mesmerizing soundtrack, Letter traces the enigmatic Marker - perhaps best known for his 28-minute 1962 science fiction featurette *La jetée*, which inspired director Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* - and an astounding body of profound, socially relevant work. Marker passed away at age 91 in July."

-The Potrero View

"They say Marker watched Hitchcock's *Vertigo* 19 times before producing his 35-minute homage, *La Jetee*. Bay Area filmmaker Emiko Omori concocts a most affectionate tribute from the French filmmaker's wide circle of fiends - a film that rushes by with barely a glimpse of the notoriously camera-shy artist, but which has plenty of shots of his cat. Rian Johnson's new Joe Levitt science-fiction thriller *Looper* is also said to contain a loving tip of the hat to Chris Marker."

-The Bay Area Reporter

FILM CREDITS

Producer/Director:

Emiko Omori

Executive Producer:

Jed Riffe

Videographer/Editor/Narrator:

Emiko Omori

Composer: Chris R. Brown

Sound Edit and Mix:

Philip Perkins

Colorist:

Gary Coates

Music Supervisor:

Rena Kosersky

Additional Videographers:

Witt Monts

Andy Black

Online/Conform

Jesse Spencer

Participants (in order of appearance)

David Thomson

Film Critic and Historian

Tom Luddy

Co-Founder/Co-Director

Telluride Film Festival

Marina Goldovskaya

Filmmaker

Janet and David Peoples

Screenwriters *12 Monkeys*

Daniel Potter

Web Master

Dirk Kuhlmann

Computer Scientist

Erica Marcus

Producer/Filmmaker

Margaret Collins

X-ray Technician

Michael H. Shamberg

Producer/Filmmaker

Peter Scarlet

Executive Director

Abu Dhabi Film Festival

Tim Greenberg

Filmmaker

Producer "Daily Show"

Tomoyo Kawai

Owner Jetée Bar

Guillaume-en-Egypte

Chris Marker's Advisor



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