BFI WORKSHOP on FILM PRACTICE/FILM THEORY: THE WORK OF RITWIK GHATAK

This workshop explores the idea of filmmaking as a collaborative practice through which film theory materializes, hybridizes, and circulates, by looking at the links between the films, theoretical writings, creative collaborations, and intermedial inspirations of Ritwik Ghatak (1925-1976), widely considered to be one of the most original, politically committed, and formally innovative filmmakers from India.

Ghatak’s films and writings on film are animated by a heightened awareness of film form and a passionate interest in experimenting with it. His experimental urge ‘to find the limit, the end, the border, up to which the expression of film can go’ was also a deeply political one, stemming from what he described as his ‘commitment to contemporary reality.’ His formal innovations were part of an attempt to forge a cinematic idiom capable of registering the devastating emotional impact and continuing socio-economic aftershocks of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, and of jolting Bengali viewers, his primary target audience, into a critical engagement with both the cinematic image and with their contemporary reality.

In this interactive session, we will look at film clips and excerpts from Ghatak’s writings to consider the following question: How did his experimental cinematic practice intersect with his political commitment, theoretical writings, and creative collaborations, leading to a unique formulation of film theory? How might these intersections help us think about the convergence between film practice and film theory?

Further Reading Suggestions

Biswas, Moinak. “Two Articles by Ritwik Ghatak.” *Cinema Journal*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2015, pp. 11–13.

Ghatak, Ritwik, and Moinak Biswas. “Human Society, Our Tradition, Filmmaking, and My Efforts.” *Cinema Journal*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2015, pp. 13–17.

Ghatak, Ritwik, and Moinak Biswas. “On ‘Subamarekha.’” *Cinema Journal*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2015, pp. 18–20.

Ghatak, Ritwik. *Rows and Rows of Fences: Ritwik Ghatak on Cinema*. Ritwik Memorial & Trust Seagull Books, 2010.

Dass, Manishita. “**The Cloud-Capped Star: Ritwik Ghatak on the Horizon of Global Art Cinema**.” In *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories*, ed., Rosalind Galt ; Karl Schoonover. Oxford University Press, 2010. pp. 238-251.

Dass, Manishita. “Unsettling images: cinematic theatricality in the cinema of Ritwik Ghatak,” Screen, Volume 58, Issue 1, Spring 2017, pp. 82–89.