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NEW DIRECTORS/NEW FILMS FESTIVAL REVIEWS

New Directors/New Films Festival Continues World Tour

 By [MANOHLA DARGIS](#)

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The 35th annual New Directors/New Films festival continues its cinematic world tour with selections from such ports of call as Ireland, Russia, the Netherlands and Texas. Today and tomorrow you can also catch

encore screenings of "[Eleven Men Out](#),"

"John & Jane Toll-Free," "Old Joy" and "[Iron Island](#)," along with almost half a dozen documentaries that were shown in past festivals. For further information about all these titles and for ticket availability: www.filmlinc.com.

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Film Society of Lincoln Center

Carthusian monks at a Roman Catholic monastery in France in a scene from "Into Great Silence," a documentary by Philip Gröning.

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Pavee Lackeen

Directed by Perry Ogden
6 p.m. today, Walter Reade Theater; 8:30 p.m. Friday, Museum of Modern Art

For this fiction film about Irish travelers, the British photographer Perry Ogden weds the visual and rhetorical strategies of the observational documentary to the flimsiest of narrative conceits. With a hand-held digital camera and the cooperation of a real traveler family, the first-time filmmaker paints a grim,

doggedly unromantic portrait of a people under siege, both external and internal: young Winnie, her boozier mother and untold number of siblings live in third-world squalor in a single cramped trailer. They yearn for a better life but are supremely ill equipped to achieve it. The children draw the family's drinking water from a roadside spigot and dig through a goodwill bin for clothes; every so often the law comes knocking, as does a social-services worker offering generally useless advice. Mr. Ogden makes the case that the larger world wants nothing to do with these nomadic outsiders, but intentionally or not, he also

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makes the case that the reverse is equally true. MANOHLA DARGIS

First on the Moon

Directed by Alexey Fedorchenko

8:45 p.m. today, Museum of Modern Art; 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Walter Reade Theater

A 15-minute joke that runs to 75, the faux documentary "First on the Moon" explores the sky-high hopes and dashed dreams of the former Soviet Union. With a cinéaste's love of the medium, the director Alexey Fedorchenko spins a revisionist history of the Soviet race into space using faked and real newsreels and state propaganda, and grand gestures recycled from Soviet classics like Eisenstein's nationalist epic "[Alexander Nevsky](#)." The ostensible focus here is the secret history of the Soviet space program, but the truer subject is the soul-deadening tactics and legacy of a country that now feels as distant as Atlantis.

"First on the Moon" is playing with a 30-minute Dutch short called "Still Life," about a journalist with a doppelgänger with the unfortunate name of K. who comes to feel that the world is awash in mediocrity. Given how egregiously the director, Elbert van Strien, has ripped off [Chris Marker's](#) masterpiece "La Jetée" — adding insult to injury with a happy ending — it's easy to understand how the guy feels. MANOHLA DARGIS

Texas

Directed by Fausto Paravidino

6 p.m. Thursday, Walter Reade Theater; 1 p.m. Sunday, Museum of Modern Art

In its opening 10 minutes, "[Texas](#)," a comic free-for-all set in northern Italy's hilly Piedmont region (the country's supposed equivalent of America's Lone Star State), introduces a dozen different characters (including one who speaks in burps) all living in the same small town. Raucous, hard drinking and buffoonish, these restless yokels, many in their 20's, suggest an updated version of the losers from Fellini's "Vitelloni" cavorting on the set of "Hee Haw." The movie, set on three Saturdays, is too flighty to tell a coherent story until about halfway through, at which point it settles down to become a strident small-town soap opera. When Maria ([Valeria Golino](#)), an unhappily married local schoolteacher, falls in love with Gianluca (Riccardo Scamarcio), a handsome deadbeat with a longtime girlfriend, the town is scandalized. The first film directed by Mr. Paravidino, a popular actor, this teeming mess of a film hasn't traveled well. STEPHEN HOLDEN

Into Great Silence

Directed by Philip Gröning

6 p.m. Thursday, Museum of Modern Art; noon Sunday, Walter Reade Theater

A German documentary about Roman Catholic monks who

barely utter a word, "[Into Great Silence](#)" runs 162 minutes — 162 engrossing, entrancing, enlivening minutes. Operating the camera himself, the director, Philip Gröning, brings us inside a world as mysterious and often as silent as the dark side of the moon, a charterhouse of Carthusian monks in the French Alps. Founded in the 12th century, the Carthusians are among the most rigorous of all Catholic orders, since the monks (and separately accommodated nuns) mostly live alone in their individual cells. In an overwhelmingly noisy world, the Carthusians seek God in solitude; all things considered, including the enviable tranquillity and focus of their lives, you soon understand why.

Because solitude is the essential vocation of the Carthusians, "Into Great Silence" is purposely low volume, with no voice-over and little exegesis. (Indeed I found most of my facts about the Carthusians at the order's helpful Web site.) Framed by the seasons, the film opens in a wintry hush with the introduction of two initiates. In the days and seasons that follow, the filmmaker takes us in and around the charterhouse and cells, following the initiates and monks as they eat, pray, work — planting, cooking, sewing — and sometimes play. Through unrushed rhythms and a harmonious mise-en-scène, Mr. Gröning finds beauty in a mote of dust, a patch of newly tilled earth and the long white eyebrows that hang over an aged blind monk's eyes like a curtain. Grace, it seems, makes little noise.
MANOHLA DARGIS

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