SAG HARBOR CINEMA

For Immediate Release
February 23, 2023

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UPDATED RELEASE: SAG HARBOR CINEMA ANNOUNCES 'TARNISHED ANGELS: DOUGLAS SIRK'S AMERICA'

Art exhibit and film retrospective, starting March 10th

Sag Harbor, NY - Following the success of the spotlight programs dedicated to the work of Peter Bogdanovich and Alan Pakula, SHC is holding a mini retrospective tribute to another seminal Hollywood filmmaker, Douglas Sirk. Of Danish origin and born in Germany, where he had established himself as a prominent director both for the stage and for the screen, Sirk fled Nazi Germany for the United States, like so many other great European directors of the time. Bringing his strong interest in melodrama to the backdrop of postwar American society, Sirk cemented his reputation as a master of the genre with a handful of masterpieces made in the '50s, among which are: *Imitation of Life*, *Written on the Wind*, *All the Heaven Allows*, *There is Always Tomorrow*, and *The Tarnished Angels*.

Sirk's influence looms large on the work of filmmakers such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Pedro Almodovar, David Lynch and Todd Haynes. The brilliant cinematographer Ed Lachman, who shot Todd Haynes' most overtly "Sirkian" work, *Far from Heaven,* will join the Cinema for a Q&A following a special 35mm screening of the film.

Curated by Founding Artistic Director Giulia D'Agnolo Vallan, **Tarnished Angels: Douglas Sirk's America** has been conceived in conjunction with an exhibit of paintings by local artist Sabina Streeter, a fan of Sirk's work, living between Sag Harbor and Europe, whose visual elaborations of Sirk's film frames have been exhibited in Munich and Berlin.

"When Sabina suggested we combine a tribute to Sirk's films with a showing of some of her paintings, I was thrilled. I always loved the heartbreak and the irony behind Sirk's beautifully stylized 50s melodramas; his heightened use of color and design; his brilliance with light and sound. The quiet doom that haunts his characters," says D'Agnolo Vallan.

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“The subjects of films have always been a central point of reference in my work, in particular the movies of the 1940s,1950s as well as the European Neorealists. In this exhibition I pay homage to the director Douglas Sirk, who was a close friend of my family in Munich, Germany. I strongly feel his films have a particularly timely relevance and should be introduced to a new audience. I am very honored to be part of ‘Tarnished Angels,’” says Streeter.

Tickets will be available on the cinema’s website, sagharborcinema.org.

For more information about the films, see below:

ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS
Dir. Douglas Sirk
USA, 1955; 89 mins, in English

When their romance prompts the scorn of her children and country club friends, a widow must decide whether to pursue her own happiness or carry on a lonely, hemmed-in existence for the sake of the approval of others. With the help of ace cinematographer Russell Metty, Sirk imbues nearly every shot with a vivid and distinct emotional tenor. A profoundly felt film about class and conformity in small-town America, *All That Heaven Allows* is a pinnacle of expressionistic Hollywood melodrama.

FAR FROM HEAVEN
Dir. Todd Haynes
USA/France, 2002; 107 mins, in English
Rated PG-13

The film tells the story of Cathy Whitaker (Julianne Moore), a 1950s housewife, living in wealthy suburban Connecticut as she sees her seemingly perfect life begin to fall apart. It is done in the style of a Douglas Sirk film (especially 1955's *All That Heaven Allows* and 1959's *Imitation of Life*), dealing with complex contemporary issues such as race, gender roles, sexual orientation and class.

IMITATION OF LIFE
Dir. Douglas Sirk
USA, 1959; 125 mins, in English

Douglas Sirk’s 1959 film was the biggest grosser in Universal’s history until the release of *Airport*, yet it’s also one of the most intellectually demanding films ever made in Hollywood. The secret of Sirk’s double appeal is a broadly melodramatic plotline, played with perfect conviction

yet constantly criticized and challenged by the film's mise-en-scene, which adds levels of irony and analysis through a purely visual inflection. Lana Turner stars as a young widow and mother who will do anything to realize her dreams of Broadway stardom; her story is intertwined with that of Susan Kohner, the light-skinned daughter of Turner's black maid, who is tempted to pass for white. By emphasizing brilliant surfaces, bold colors, and the spatial complexities of 50s moderne architecture, Sirk creates a world of illusion, entrapment, and emotional desperation. –Dave Kehr, *Chicago Reader*

THE TARNISHED ANGELS
Dir. Douglas Sirk
USA, 1957; 91 mins, in English

Based on "Pylon," a largely forgotten 1935 novel by William Faulkner, and shot in black-and-white CinemaScope, *The Tarnished Angels* is among Sirk's most self-conscious and artistically ambitious creations, a relentlessly bleak and disturbing work about the erotic attraction of death. Hudson, so self-effacing that he seems to be fading from the screen, is a reporter in 1932 New Orleans who finds himself morbidly and irresistibly drawn to LaVerne (Ms. Malone), a professional parachute jumper who herself is obsessively involved with her husband (Stack), a barnstorming pilot with a pronounced death wish. – Dave Kehr

WRITTEN ON THE WIND
Dir. Douglas Sirk
USA, 1956; 100 mins, in English

One of the most remarkable and unaccountable films ever made in Hollywood, Douglas Sirk's masterpiece turns a lurid, melodramatic script into a screaming Brechtian essay on the shared impotence of American family and business life. Sirk's highly imaginative use of color—to accent, undermine, and sometimes even nullify the drama—remains years ahead of contemporary technique. –Dave Kehr

About Douglas Sirk

Detlef Sierck was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1897 and died in Lugano, Switzerland in 1987. He spent his childhood years in Hamburg and in his parents' native country of Denmark before starting a career in theater in Germany. He was later hired by Universum Film AG (UFA), making his full-length debut with *April, April!* (1935) and directing films such as Schlussakkord (*Final Accord*, 1936) and *La Habanera* (1937). Joining numerous other European filmmakers who fled from Nazi Germany, Sirk soon attracted notice in America with *Hitler's Madman* (1943) and *Summer Storm* (1944) and began to establish himself in the industry, mainly with thrillers

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and dramas, but venturing occasionally into other genres such as the western (*Taza*, *Son of Cochise*, 1954). After changing his name to Douglas Sirk, in the early 1950s he signed for Universal and in 1953, with *All I Desire*, began the great cycle of melodramas – including titles such as *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956) and *Imitation of Life* (1959) – that would later gain critical acclaim in Europe for their skillful examinations of American society, hallmarked by an anti-realist gaze, exquisite aesthetic refinement and unprecedented feminist sensibility. After returning to Europe, Sirk settled in Switzerland, in Lugano, working again for the theater in Germany and teaching at the Munich-based Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen (HFFM), where he supervised the completion of three short films. During the summer of 2022, Douglas Sirk was honored with the first complete retrospective of his films at the Locarno International Film Festival.

About Ed Lachman

Celebrated cinematographer Ed Lachman is a two-time Oscar nominee and a 2017 ASC Lifetime Achievement Award winner. Collaborating with directors like Steven Soderbergh, Todd Haynes, Sofia Coppola, Paul Schrader, Larry Clark, and Mira Nair, Ed's body of work spans major hits, legendary independent films, music videos, and documentaries. His cinematography credits include *Carol*, *Dark Waters*, *Far From Heaven*, *Wonderstruck*, *Erin Brockovich*, *The Limey*, *The Virgin Suicides*, *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Ken Park* (which he also co-directed with Larry Clark), and many others.

About Sabina Streeter

Streeter met Sirk as a child in Switzerland, in the late 60's, where he and his wife settled after returning from the United States. Having befriended her parents, Sirk had asked Streeter's mother, the documentary filmmaker Eva Hassencamp, to assist him on what would have been his last film, *Homes Lost*, had not Sirk died in 1987.

Since the 1980s, Streeter has consistently used a figurative visual language in her works, which reinterprets the protagonists of cinema in close-ups on canvas or paper. She thus stands in the tradition of a generation of contemporary painters who refer to photographic and filmic references. Streeter's paintings and drawings often seem like frozen scenes from the cult films of these eras.

The characters in her pictures move between provocative triviality and captivating beauty - usually in dramatic situations. Sirk's films are often quoted as pictorial motifs.

In her process, Streeter selects from hundreds of film stills, which she photographs and alienates from the monitor. The characters oscillate between tangible proximity and psychological distance, which she reproduces by deliberately blurring her images.

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About the Sag Harbor Cinema

As a not-for-profit 501(c)3, community-based organization, Sag Harbor Cinema is dedicated to presenting the past, present and future of the Movies and to preserving and educating about films, filmmaking, and the film-going experience in its three state-of-the-art theaters. The Cinema engages its audiences and the community year-round through dialogue, discovery, and appreciation of the moving image – from blockbusters to student shorts and everything in between. Revitalized and reimagined through unprecedented community efforts to rebuild the iconic Main Street structure after a fire nearly destroyed it in 2016, SHC continues a long historic tradition of entertainment in the heart of Sag Harbor Village. SHC Members enjoy discounts on tickets and merchandise and have access to our member-only rooftop lounge, The Green Room.