

BERGAMO FILM MEETING

International Film Festival

43rd edition, March 8 - 16, 2025

Bergamo Film Meeting pays homage to filmmaker Wojciech Jerzy Has, on the centenary of his birth.

On the centenary of the birth of Wojciech Jerzy Has (April 1 1925 - October 3 2020), the 43rd edition of Bergamo Film Meeting, taking place from March 8 to 16, pays homage to the Polish filmmaker, one of the most visionary and representative authors of the "Polish school". The image for this edition of the Festival, created by the visual communication and graphic design Studio Suq, is also dedicated to Has.

Significant is the great love nurtured for him by Martin Scorsese, who wanted to support the restoration of his films, notably *The Manuscript Found at Zaragoza* (1964), considered by the American director to be one of the cornerstones of the artistic and cinematic production of the last century. Luís Buñuel, Jerry Garcia, David Lynch, Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola joined in the appreciation.

Wojciech Jerzy Has was born in Krakow on 1 April 1925. Between 1945 and 1957, he studied painting at the Akademia Sztuk Pięknych (Academy of Fine Arts) and directing at the Instytut Filmowy (Film Institute). In 1946, he worked as an assistant director at the film studios in Łódź, while between 1947 and 1950, he worked at the Wytwórni Filmów Dokumentalnych (Documentary Film Studios) in Warsaw. From 1950 until 1955, he worked at Wytwórni Filmów Oświatowych (Educational Film Studios) in Łódź, shooting a dozen educational films, mainly about the industrial world.

In 1957, he made his feature film debut with *Pętla* (*The Noose*), based on the novel by Marek Hłasko: the film tells the existential journey of an alcoholic, but without the writer's realistic style, but with an expressionism that suggests the protagonist's mental projections.

An exponent of the "Polish school," characterized by an interest in national issues and the bearer of an intimate and personal cinema, Has chooses not to delve into social or moral issues but, rather, to elaborate through a surrealist and personal way the dominant topics among the filmmakers of his generation, leading the protagonists of his films down a road of no return, into a territory on the border between reality and imagination. He was always fascinated by projects destined to go unaccomplished, by individuals who futilely oppose events by times long gone. *Pożegnania* (*Farewells*, 1958), awarded at the Locarno Film Festival, is based on the novel by Stanisław Dygat and tells the story of a frustrated intellectual who assumes a bored and detached demeanour to conceal his failure. He then returns to the theme of wishful intellectuals in *Wspólny pokój* (*One Room Tenants*, 1959).

In the 1960s, Polish cinema began to shift away from the ethical issues of the early postwar years, and themes became more personal. This is reflected in *Rozstanie* (*Goodbye to the Past*, 1960), from Jadwiga Żylińska's short story by the same name.

Praised by Polish critics, *Rozstanie* is about a woman who returns to the small town where she was born for a few days. The director's gaze also turns to the past in such modern-set films as *Złoto* (*Gold*, 1961), about the lives of workers in a large industrial complex, and *Jak być kochaną* (*How to be Loved*, 1962), from the novel by Kazimierz Brandys, in which an actress travelling on an aeroplane recalls the suffering she endured under German occupation.

Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie (*The Saragossa Manuscript*, 1964) is perhaps Has's most famous film and certainly the one that made him known in the West. A historical superproduction, *The Saragossa Manuscript* is an original adaptation of the novel *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* by Polish author Jan Potocki. The story is set in the Napoleonic era. It features Captain of the Royal Guard Alfons van Worden (played by Zbigniew Cybulski, Has's favourite actor), who experiences incredible and fascinating adventures during his travels from Andalusia to Madrid. *Szyfry* (*The Codes*, 1966), is the self-discovery journey of a father searching for his son in post-war Poland. In 1973, Has won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival with *Sanatorium pod klepsydrą* (*The Hourglass Sanatorium*), based on the cycle of short stories by the Jewish author Bruno Schulz, one of the greatest European writers of the twentieth century and one of the many victims of Nazi racial hatred. The film is a portrait of a Jewish community in southern Poland: the main character arrives at a hospital where he meets his long-dead father and relives everything he has already experienced; when he returns to the village, however, he finds that everything has been destroyed forever and now those people no longer exist. The themes of death and the meaning of life are also at the centre of Has's subsequent films: *Nieciekawa historia* (*An Uneventful Story*, 1982); *Pismak* (*Write and Fight*, 1984); *Osobisty pamiętnik grzesznika* (*Memoirs of a Sinner*, 1985) and *Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera* (*The Tribulations of Balthasar Kober*, 1988).

In 1974, Has began teaching filmmaking at the Film School in Łódź, where he directed the Rondo (Tesa) production unit. There, he also held the position of Dean from 1990 to 1996. Has died in Łódź on October 3, 2000.

The tribute to Wojciech Jerzy Has was curated in collaboration with the Polish Institute in Rome.

Titles featured in the retrospective

Pętla (*The Noose*, 1957)

Pożegnania (*The Farewells*, 1958)

Rozstanie (*Goodbye to the Past*, 1960)

Jak być kochaną (*How to Be Loved*, 1962)

Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie (*The Saragossa Manuscript*, 1964)

Szyfry (*The Codes*, 1966)

Sanatorium pod klepsydrą (*The Sanatorium Hourglass*, 1973)

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