CRIME AND TRANSCENDENCE:
The Films of Aleksei Balabanov

Aleksei Balabanov (1959-2013) was arguably the most original, and certainly the most controversial director to have emerged in post-Soviet Russia. The films he created during his brief career mingle shocking violence, astonishing beauty, unforgettable enigmatic characters, a pop sensibility and gritty naturalism into gripping, complex reflections on contemporary Russia and on 20th-century Russian history. This near-complete retrospective during Spring 2015 at Yale, one of the largest ever held in the United States, will offer audiences a rare look at the full range of Balabanov’s work. Each film will be introduced by a different scholar of Russian film or guest speaker, and will be followed by a post-screening discussion in which audience members are invited to participate. All films presented with English subtitles, and all features except ME TOO (2012; DCP) will be shown on 35mm film.

January 21, 7 pm: BROTHER (1997, 96 min.).
The legend of Danila Bagrov, hired killer, music fan and defender of the weak. Balabanov’s breakthrough, and perhaps the signal film of the Russian 1990s.
Introduction by John MacKay, Slavic Languages and Literatures and Film and Media Studies, Yale.

February 4, 7 pm: TROFIM (1995, 25 min.);
OF FREAKS AND MEN (1998, 93 min.).
Peasants and pornography: Balabanov’s stylish, perverse reflections on the early years of cinema in Russia.
Introduction by Marijeta Bozovic, Slavic Languages and Literatures and Film and Media Studies, Yale.

February 18, 7 pm: HAPPY DAYS (1991, 86 min.).
Balabanov’s surreal feature debut sets Samuel Beckett’s absurdist drama in a crumbling St. Petersburg.
Introduction by Dominika Laster, Lecturer in Theater Studies, Yale.

March 1, 7 pm: THE CASTLE (1994, 120 min.).
Brueghel meets Buñuel in Balabanov’s “intellectual thriller” based on Kafka’s unfinished novel.
Introduction by Henry Sussman, Visiting Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Yale and author of Franz Kafka: Geometrician of Metaphor.

April 1, 7 pm: CARGO 200 (2007, 89 min.).
Balabanov’s most shocking and controversial film, this horror-comedy set in the pre-perestroika USSR administers a harsh antidote to Soviet nostalgia.
Introduction by Dasha Ezerova, Slavic Languages and Literatures, Yale.

April 15, 7 pm: RIVER (2002, 50 min.);
THE STOKER (2010; 87 min.).
Two tales of outcasts, by turns blackly humorous and lyrical, bound by common Siberian motifs.
Introduction by Oksana Chefranova, Visiting Fellow in Film and Media Studies, Yale.

April 29, 5:30 pm: Double Feature & Reception
MORPHINE (2008, 110 min.).
A young doctor in the provinces succumbs to morphine addiction during the revolutionary year of 1917 in this Bulgakov adaptation.
Introduction by Dasha Ezerova, Slavic Languages and Literatures, Yale.

ME TOO (2012, 83 min.).
Balabanov’s hilarious and moving final film sets a group of outsiders on a quest for transcendence.
Introduction by Mihaela Mihailova, Slavic Languages and Literatures and Film and Media Studies, Yale.

Sponsored by Renova, the MacMillan Center, the Whitney Humanities Center, Yale Film and Media Studies, and the Yale Slavic Film Colloquium.