



JOANNA HOGG: INFLUENCES

## The Exiles

### Bunker Hill

Director: Kent Mackenzie  
©: University of Southern California  
Production Company: University of Southern California Department of Cinema  
Production Managed by: Merl Edelman  
Faculty Adviser: William Mehring  
Written by: Kent Mackenzie  
Photographed by: Robert Kaufman  
Edited by: Kent Mackenzie, Robert Kaufman  
Sound Recorded by: A.K.M. Haque, Pieter Van Deusen  
USA 1956©  
18 mins  
Digital

### The Exiles

Directed by: Kent Mackenzie  
©: Kent Mackenzie  
a Mackenzie production  
Produced by: Kent Mackenzie  
Production: Ronald Austin, Sam Farnsworth, John Morrill, Erik Daarstad, Robert Kaufman, Beth Patrick, Sven Walnum, Paula Powers  
Crew: Ken Nelson, Marvin Walowitz, Ron Honthaner, Lawrence Silberman, David McDougall, Stuart Hanisch, James Christensen, Mindaugis Bagdon, Stan Follis, Vilis Lapenieks, Ramon Ponce, Charles Smith, Judy Bradford  
Written by: Kent Mackenzie  
Photography: Erik Daarstad, Robert Kaufman, John Morrill  
Additional Photography: Sven Walnum, Nicholas Clapp  
Archive Photographs: Edward Curtis  
Editing: Kent Mackenzie, Warren Brown, Tom Conrad, Erik Daarstad, Thomas Miller, Beth Patrick  
Music: Anthony Hilder, The Revels, Eddie Sunrise, Robert Hafner  
Sound: Sam Farnsworth  
With:  
Yvonne Williams, Homer Nish, Tommy Reynolds, Rico Rodriguez, Clifford Ray Sam, Clydean Parker, Mary Donahue, Eddie Sunrise, Eugene Pablo, Jacinta Valenzuela, Matthew Pablo, Ann Amador, Sarah Mazy, Delos Yellow Eagle, Gloria Muti, Louis Irwin, Arthur Madbull, Norman St. Pierre, Ted Guardipee, Marilyn Lewis, Ned Casey, Bob Lemoyne, Jay Robidaux, Ernest Marden, I.J. Walker, Frankie Red Elk, Julia Escalanti, Chris Surefoot, Danny Escalanti, Sedrick Second, Della Escalanti, Leonard Postock, Tony Fierro  
USA 1961  
72 mins  
35mm

35mm restored print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive

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Kent Mackenzie first conceived of *The Exiles* during the making of his short student film *Bunker Hill* while a student at the University of Southern California. In March 1956 he read an article by Dorothy Van de Mark in *Harper's Magazine* entitled 'The Raid on the Reservations' about government attempts to obtain Indian land. Mackenzie travelled to Arizona, visited some of the reservations there, and decided to document an Apache's relocation to Los Angeles.

Mackenzie and his filmmaker friends had grown weary of glossy Hollywood escapist films with pat stories and clear-cut endings. Instead, they were excited by the documentaries of Robert Flaherty, Joris Ivens, Basil Wright, Humphrey Jennings, Georges Rouquier, Sidney Meyers and George Stoney and by the realist fiction films of Jean Renoir, Jean Vigo, Vittorio de Sica, and John Huston. Mackenzie thought that all these great filmmakers shared a common thread – their 'concern with physical reality was not for its own sake but to create living and vital images and symbols from recognisable elements of everyday life.'

At this time there were many young directors around the world feeling the same way. These 'realist' directors like John Cassavetes, Lionel Rogosin and the French New Wave filmmakers took advantage of the new technological innovations – including lightweight cameras, zoom lenses, highly directional microphones, small battery lights and portable sound equipment – and started a revolution in cinema. Their films challenged established standards of casting, storytelling, cinematography and editing.

In July 1957, Mackenzie began to hang around with some of the young Indians in downtown Los Angeles, starting in the bars close to Third and Main Streets. After a couple of months, he broached the subject of making a film that would present a realistic portrayal of Indian life in the community. After hearing his companions' concerns about false stereotypes of Indians in films, Mackenzie said he wanted them to help write the script, do their own narration, and be partners in the production.

In November 1957, Mackenzie first wrote down his idea of a documentary on the Indians to be titled *The Trail of the Thunderbird*. Later shortened to just *Thunderbird*, it was partly a tribute to the Indians' heritage and partly to the inexpensive fortified wine that they favoured. Other titles later included *The Night Is a Friend*, *A Long Way Home* and *Go Ahead On, Man* before the team settled on *The Exiles* in 1960. Rather than telling the story of the relocation of Indians from the reservation, Mackenzie decided that the film would focus on the people already living in Los Angeles' Bunker Hill area. He chose this neighbourhood because he was already familiar with it and because the city was threatening to take it over for commercial development.

From the Bunker Hill residents he had befriended, Mackenzie chose Yvonne Williams, Homer Nish and Tommy Reynolds as his main characters. With their help, Mackenzie worked and reworked a script based on their own experiences. The cast was interviewed and these recordings were later used on the soundtrack to convey the characters' inner thoughts as voice-over monologues. As participants in the production, the cast and crew were promised back-end money after the film was released. Personal letters from his files indicate that Mackenzie was almost obsessive about fulfilling his promises to them. In later years he hired a private detective to find some of the investors and cast in order to pay them their share of the royalties.

In making *The Exiles*, Mackenzie wrote, 'I tried very hard not to be attracted by the strangeness of the environment as opposed to my own, and to avoid the "romance of poverty". I had seen many of the so-called "ash-can" documentaries in which the squalor and horror of poverty were emphasised to the exclusion of all else, and I hoped that I wouldn't superimpose any such illusions on these people. I wanted to show their own point of view in the film if I could.'

## JOANNA HOGG: INFLUENCES

### Criss Cross

Tue 17 Oct 20:40; Sun 26 Nov 18:40

### Suspicion

Wed 18 Oct 20:45; Sat 21 Oct 18:20

### The Exiles + Bunker Hill

Thu 19 Oct 18:20; Tue 24 Oct 20:40

### Lady in the Dark

Fri 20 Oct 18:10; Sat 11 Nov 12:20

### Margaret

Sat 21 Oct 20:10; Sat 4 Nov 17:30

### The Killers

Sat 28 Oct 12:30; Wed 8 Nov 20:45

### Ticket of No Return

 Bildnis einer Trinkerin

Sun 12 Nov 18:30; Sat 25 Nov 20:30

### Journey to Italy

 Viaggio in Italia

Fri 17 Nov 18:20; Tue 28 Nov 18:15

### Italianamerican + The Neighborhood

 + extract

from **My Voyage to Italy**

Tue 21 Nov 20:40; Mon 27 Nov 18:20

## INTERNAL REFLECTIONS: THE FILMS OF JOANNA HOGG

### Unrelated

Mon 16 Oct 20:35; Sat 25 Nov 18:10

### Exhibition

Thu 19 Oct 18:10; Wed 29 Nov 20:50

### Archipelago

Thu 19 Oct 20:30; Sun 26 Nov 15:00

### The Souvenir

Fri 27 Oct 20:30; Thu 30 Nov 18:10

### The Souvenir: Part II

Sat 28 Oct 20:30; Thu 30 Nov 20:40

### Short Films

Sun 29 Oct 18:10; Tue 28 Nov 20:45

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Mackenzie and cinematographers Erik Darstaad and John Morrill considered *The Exiles* to be a documentary because it was based on scenes that had happened in the Indians' own lives. Seen today, the film needs to be evaluated in the context of late 1950s filmmaking. The standards for what constitutes a documentary have changed over time. Robert Flaherty's *Moana* (1926), the first film ever labelled a 'documentary', featured staged and re-shot scenes. Later on, during the 1960s, the cinema verité movement emphasised capturing the actual moment without editorialising or editing. In more recent years, techniques of re-enactment and dramatisation have become popular again. For Mackenzie it was important that the scenes in *The Exiles* were scripted and rehearsed in a free and collaborative manner. He also always pointed out that all film is subjective by nature. And watching the reactions of the cast when they first saw the film, Mackenzie reported, was exactly like paging through a family album: Here was an old acquaintance! Didn't her hair look great? Do you remember that friend's old apartment?

The shooting of *The Exiles* began in January 1958 and the first trial composite print was privately screened in April 1961. Premiering in the Venice and San Francisco Film Festivals that year, the film received acclaim from many critics. In May 1961, responding to audience reactions, the filmmakers added a short historical prologue featuring Edward S. Curtis' early photographs of American Indians. However, distributors labelled the film as 'too difficult'. *The Exiles* remained on the festival circuit for several years including the 1964 inaugural New York Film Festival. That same year distributor Pathé Contemporary acquired the film, but rather than bear the expense of a theatrical run, Pathé created a 16mm negative and offered the film only on the non-theatrical market. By the late 1970s, *The Exiles* was shown mostly on poor quality video for occasional classroom screenings. Sadly, Kent Mackenzie died in 1980, largely forgotten by the film world.

It was Thom Andersen's compilation documentary *Los Angeles Plays Itself* which kicked off the rediscovery of this lost masterwork. Andersen contacted the daughters of Mackenzie to receive permission to use footage to illustrate the lost neighbourhood of Bunker Hill. When Cindi Rowell, then director of acquisitions at Milestone Films saw the documentary, the company began to inquire about acquiring the film. However, it appeared that the only existing print of *The Exiles* was a 35mm print that the director had donated to USC's Cinema Archive. Also on a closer inspection, there seemed to be dozens of 'interior' songs played throughout the film that would require expensive music clearances. So the idea of distributing this wonderful film was reluctantly shelved. Two years later, Milestone received a phone call saying that when cinematographer John Morrill inspected the materials at USC he had discovered both the original negative and the fine grain interpositive for the film. Co-DP Erik Daarstad then called to explain that music rights were not a problem because all the many songs were created by the same composer, Norman Knowles, and performed by his group The Revels. As 'works for hire' they were written and performed expressly for the film. The Revels' other famous appearance in cinema occurs in *Pulp Fiction*. Their song 'Comanche' plays over Bruce Willis' samurai scene. Norman Knowles writes, 'I remember recording "It's Party Time" for the movie. Kent screened the scene with a projector, showing the clip on the wall. The piano playing [by Tommy] on the table at the bar was made up on the spot. I think we also did "Revellion" for the movie. "Comanche" was written for the movie and cut out.'

Although the original negative and fine-grain (interpositive) existed for the film, it was decided that a theatrical distribution of the film could put the materials at risk. So Milestone, in cooperation with USC's film archivist Valarie Schwan, brought the film to the UCLA Film & Television Archive. There, preservationist Ross Lipman (responsible for the restoration of *Killer of Sheep* as well as films by John Sayles, Kenneth Anger and John Cassavetes) spent many months creating preservation materials and making sure that the new prints would sparkle. John Morrill assisted on the approval of the new prints.

Milestone Films