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SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF MYTH AND TRADITION
 **PARABOLA**

EXPLORE THE POWER OF MYTH IN FILM
AT MYTHIC JOURNEYS

*Award-winning documentaries “Cosmic Africa,” “Compassion in Exile” and “Genghis Blues,”
as well as a sneak preview of Michael Tobias’ “Mad Cowboy,”
to be shown in PARABOLA Magazine’s “Cinema of the Spirit” film festival at Mythic Journeys*

ATLANTA, GA...The role of cinema as sacred art will be explored with special showings of feature film documentaries and workshops, panel discussions and question-and-answer sessions with filmmakers during Mythic Journeys, a conference and performance festival celebrating the Joseph Campbell Centennial June 3-6 at the Atlanta Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Presented by PARABOLA Magazine, “Cinema of the Spirit” will feature a variety of films which examine myth, the sacred, journeys and the imagination. Among the highlights, **Michael Tobias**, a prolific ecologist/filmmaker and Parabola Focus Award-winner for 2004, will present the first public screening of *Mad Cowboy*, a powerful documentary which follows the efforts of Howard F. Lyman who went from rancher to an advocate against the cattle industry.

Other Atlanta premieres include *Cosmic Africa*, which explores how ancient myths enrich young African Thebe Medupe’s work as an astrophysicist. This beautifully-filmed documentary by Craig and Damon Foster (*Great Dance*) drew acclaim when screened this April at the Film Society of Lincoln Center’s 11th annual New York African Film Festival.

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Also among the 140 artist and academic program participants at Mythic Journeys will be **Mickey Lemle**, producer of such acclaimed biographical portraits as *Ram Dass: Fierce Grace*; environmentalist/filmmaker **Kevin Peer**, director of the School of Sacred Cinema; **Sam Keen**, co-producer of the award-winning PBS documentary, *Faces of the Enemy*; **Christopher Vogler**, Hollywood story consultant and author of *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*; **Alan Lee**, conceptual artist of the Oscar-winning *The Lord of the Rings* movies; **Eric Saperston**, the Atlanta-based filmmaker of festival favorite *The Journey*; and marketing diva **Paula Silver** whose breakthrough success *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* grossed over \$250 million and changed the rules of Hollywood marketing.

According to film critic and screenwriter Stephen Schiff, also a contributor to The New Yorker and member of PARABOLA's Board of Directors, film as sacred art—while unique and not the usual cinema experience—is possible, given the unique combination of filmmaker and audience.

“In the hands of someone possessed of what we might call spiritual sensitivity, all of cinema's disadvantages can turn into advantages,” he says. “Certain movies, fiction films and documentaries alike, have the power to instill a kind of joy in the viewer, an exhilaration that comes from our being in contact with a person or a world, or sometimes both, whose purity of spirit elevates our own.”

Through what he calls “active inner watching,” films “may be one of the keys to the sort of transformation many of us seek.”

The film festival will include two films on or by Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), the great authority on mythology:

THE HERO'S JOURNEY (Stuart L. Brown; William Free; Phil Cousineau; & Janelle Balnicke). The film follows Campbell's own quest, a pathless journey of questioning, discovery, and ultimately of delight and joy from childhood to old age. This biographical documentary is the perfect companion to Joseph Campbell's book, *The Hero's Journey*;

SUKHAVATI: PLACE OF BLISS. *A Mythic Journey with Joseph Campbell*. (Rochlin). A journey of transcendence and illumination: whether peering through the mists of the Bronze Age or contemplating the spiritual presence of an ancient forest, pondering the mysteries of the ruins of Ajanta or Ellora in India, Eleusis and Delphi in Greece; or Stonehenge and Glastonbury in England—Campbell reminds us that the human soul has always walked the same path in search of a place of bliss.

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Featured documentaries will include:

COSMIC AFRICA (Craig and Damon Foster), The film charts Thebe Medupe’s spiritual and scientific quest for the roots of astronomy in the African tradition, following him from ancient monoliths in the Egyptian Sahara to prehistoric cave paintings in Namibia to towering cliff dwellings in Mali;

GENGHIS BLUES (Roko and Adian Belic). The story of Paul Pena, a blind Creole-American blues singer's triumphant journey from San Francisco to the Republic of Tuva. Paul taught himself to throat-sing from a program he picked up from Radio Moscow on his short wave radio. When he sang for the first Tuvan throat-singers to perform in America, Paul was invited to participate in the next triennial contest of multi-harmonic singing in Siberia. This film was nominated for an Oscar and was the winner of the Sundance Audience Award;

A SENSE OF THE SACRED: A Portrait of Helen M. Luke . With an introduction by Thomas Moore and interviews with Peter Brook and Dr. Robert Johnson, this film is based on interviews the Jungian writer and counselor gave during the last two years of her life to illuminate her own journey.

MAD COWBOY (Michael Tobias). In its first public screening, *Mad Cowboy* follows rancher author Howard F. Lyman on his advocacy campaign to make the international public aware of the dangers of industrialization and abuse of livestock and poultry. As the camera accompanies the cattleman who no longer eats meat, the viewer meets many of those worldwide who are committed to a more humane treatment and growing of our food supply;

AHIMSA: NON-VIOLENCE (Michael Tobias). Tobias, who has made more than 100 documentaries, offers this study of the history and practice of the Jain religion in today's India. "Ahimsa" is the philosophy of non-violence, which expresses itself through awareness of the importance of the life of all sentient beings;

RAM DASS: FIERCE GRACE (Mickey Lemle). When Ram Dass “stroked” in 1997, both Lemle and Ram Dass agreed that the time had come to tell the story of the former Richard Alpert, Harvard professor, author and New Age teacher renamed by his guru in India. Mickey Lemle received the Parabola Focus Award for this film and his earlier biographies on His Holiness the Dalai Lama (*Compassion In Exile*) and Sir Laurens van der Post (*Hasten Slowly*);

COMPASSION IN EXILE (Mickey Lemle) An intimate portrait of Tenzyn Gyatso, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet. Inherent to the story is the plight of the Tibetan people and the brutal genocide they have endured since the Chinese occupation in 1950. For this film with music by Philip Glass, the Dalai Lama personally granted Lemle unprecedented access;

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WAY OF THE WODAABE (Kevin Peer). Environmentalist filmmaker Kevin Peer follows the last true cattle nomads of Africa to the remote site of their traditional rainy season celebrations where, for the first time since the devastating drought of 1984-85, the men perform their ritual dances of charm and beauty. Made for the National Geographic EXPLORER;

CRATER LAKE STORY (Kevin Peer). Released in 1983-1984, this film dramatizes a Native American myth about the volcanic creation of Oregon's Crater Lake and reveals how the lake has inspired people of widely differing cultures and belief systems for hundreds of years. Made for the National Park Service, Crater Lake National Park;

MASTER ARCHER (Kevin Peer). Peer's documentary on the art and discipline of Zen archery;

NAVAJO SANDPAINTING (Kevin Peer). Made in 1986, this film explores the conflict between the use of sand painting as a powerful traditional healing ritual and as a profitable commercial art form that provides an income for hundreds of families on the Navajo Indian Reservation. Producer/Director for *National Geographic EXPLORER*;

The journeys of independent filmmakers will also be screened during Mythic Journeys. These include:

BURNING MAN THROUGH IRISH EYES (Karen Koski/Sherece Lamke). Documentary short featuring a group of Irish men and women who brought their ancient and soulful culture—and their pub—to the middle of Nevada's Black Rock Desert for a Burning Man gathering in 2003;

THE JOURNEY (Eric Saperston). Eric Saperston loaded up his 1971 VW bus, intending to follow the Grateful Dead. With the passing of Jerry Garcia, he and his band of adventurers decided to travel the country instead, asking VIPs to join them for coffee and some talk. Guests include former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, architect John Portman who introduces them to the works of Joseph Campbell, Betty Sue Flowers and Henry Winkler—the Fonz—and many others throughout this 1,825-day odyssey;

A SEAT AT THE TABLE (Gary Rhine; Phil Cousineau). In December 1999, 7,000 spiritual leaders converged on Cape Town, South Africa, to participate in the Third Parliament of The World's Religions. Professor of Religious Studies, Huston Smith hosted one-on-one conversations with eight Native American leaders.

Mythic Journeys will take place in two segments, beginning with an intimate two-day In-Depth Pre-Conference June 3-4 and followed by the main weekend event June 4-6 for a larger number of attendees.

A complete list of program participants and sponsors, including registration rates and the full schedule of events, is available at www.mythicjourneys.org or by calling (404) 832-4127. More info on the Cinema of the Spirit festival can also be found at www.cinemaofthespirit.org.