

**KINO LORBER**

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# **THE IMAGE BOOK**

A film by Jean-Luc Godard

**\*\* Special Palme d'Or | 2018 Cannes Film Festival\*\***  
**\*\*Official Selection | 2018 Toronto International Film Festival\*\***  
**\*\*Official Selection | 2018 New York Film Festival\*\***  
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Do you still remember how long ago we trained our thoughts?

Most often we'd start from a dream...

We wondered how, in total darkness  
colours of such intensity could emerge within us.

In a soft low voice  
Saying great things,  
Surprising, deep and accurate matters.

Like a bad dream written on a stormy night

Under western eyes

The lost paradises

War is here

**The legendary Jean-Luc Godard adds to his influential, iconoclastic legacy with this provocative collage film essay, a vast ontological inquiry into the history of the moving image and a commentary on the contemporary world.**

Winner of the first Special Palme d'Or to be awarded in the history of the Cannes Film Festival, Jean-Luc Godard's *Le livre d'image* is another extraordinary addition to the French master's vast filmography. Ever the iconoclast and always the enquirer, Godard eschews actors and any pretence of narrative in this dazzling and brilliant film essay.

Displaying an encyclopedic grasp of cinema and its history, Godard pieces together fragments and clips them from some of the greatest films of the past, then digitally alters, bleaches, and washes them, all in the service of reflecting on what he sees in front of him and what he makes of the dissonance that surrounds him. He uses his own voice, reminiscent of those of Leonard Cohen or Bob Dylan in the twilights of their careers, to guide us through the fascinating labyrinth of his mind. In some cases it is to reflect on the metaphysical properties of the world - time, and space, and where meaning is found - but more importantly it is the image, the thing that has obsessed Godard for his entire career, that anchors this film. His ontological enquiry into the image continues to be one of the most moving in history.

But, as always with Godard, the key issues he raises have to do with the legacy of the last century and its horrors: the incomprehension of Hiroshima and Auschwitz, events that coincided with cinema but which have somehow eluded its gaze. And, movingly, *Le livre d'image* also reflects on orientalism and the Arab world, grounding the new film very much in the present.

**PIERS HANDLING, Toronto International Film Festival**

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**Q&A with Handling & Fabrice Aragno from 2018 Toronto International Film Festival:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkn4lcDTzBs>

Dear Jean-Luc,

Thank you for your invitation to see The Image Book (...)

You have recreated pictorial matter from various sources and formats. Deformed, re-colored, enlarged by the grain, and re-framed.

Blocked all seduction of images, text also, stuttering, quavering, interrupted, covered up.

In the constant interruptions, being split between what is represented and the machine of the cinematograph, with its unspooling, its perforations, its decomposition.

Rediscovering discontinuity by digital means.

The beautiful and accurate definition of counterpoint gives a key.

Waves, flames, bombardments, armies, history and the world as a thundering spectacle à la Dovzhenko, or Vidor.

A great symphonic surge. But not to tell as story. Not longer truly 'cinema'. As per the first reader of Moby Dick (according to Giono):

- This is not a book - No, said Melville.

This is not something to make you popular, in the face of digital, digital that shows all, and nothing behind. (I experienced this on Vigo's films, and hope to have avoided it in the end).

That's assuming that what you say is heard. That is what is astonishing in your film.

"It is becoming necessary to draw attention," in fact. But it hasn't been shown like this; said, occasionally, with Victor Hugo's "government of wild beasts."

Marx invented remakes with his Louis-Napoleon. History repeats itself, but here, not as farce. Moral errors get confused with crimes of the States. There are criminals who exist only because of war. Humanity is destroying itself. For years now, war has been everywhere, more and more literally, in the sense of Goya or Joseph de Maistre's (this is how we explain the presence of the latter). Habituation follows.

To say that The Image Book is an act of courage, that it is unprecedented, is a platitude. But this is the feeling that keeps coming back to me.

It is true, as the young people who write to you in Lundi matin say, that you are the only one who, etc... (They don't know how right they are, I'm curious for them to see this one).

You have always been "in" history, since you consider that that is what cinema should serve.

From Histoire(s) on, this was what it was always about, first and foremost, more than cinephilia telling its little stories (not bad!)

This time the matter itself, is history.

In fact you're not turning away from cinema, it's simply no longer a dominant love.

It is as useful as the printing type case from which Fuller's illiterate typesetter finds the characters, at top speed.

And you, you keep the character, the hieroglyph of which Eisenstein dreamed. (He too, his three apparitions are magnificent: the owl, the hands on the bible and the Teutonic knight. He wanted to build his cathedral of the Arts, all by himself. His resistance was already that of hope, and his solitude too)

You find all the images in films, and shabby newsreels. It's only justice. All the better if Ridley Scott serves to fill a printing type case.

And to not have turned your back on cinema, the two long shots from *Le plaisir* suffice, where we see moving bodies, giving a definition of precisely that.

Thought evolves through images and sound ("a thought / will come / to be continued"), as in a collage a friend had made using texts from the screen of *Histoire(s)*.

It is a bloc, and it is articulated like the five fingers... another one of these things I didn't understand on paper.

Lastly, even if the re-uses of *Histoires* are what I am least curious about - one doesn't change his handwriting - I very much like the idea of immortality through liquid films, from *Vertigo* to *Ruby Gentry* by way of *The River*.

And the peaceful moments of a happy Arabia where I see something of Barnett's joy: sunset, a boat on the glittering sea, the banal corners of the Maghreb playing for the whole of Arabia, the Arabia we have behind our eyes.

Again, thank you.

Warm regards,

Bernard Eisenschitz

(Critic, Historian, Director)

CREDITS

Director: Jean-Luc Godard

Writer: Jean-Luc Godard

Subtitles: Jean-Luc Godard

Producer: Fabrice Aragno

Producer: Mitra Farahani

In association with: Hamidreza Pejman

In association with: Georges Schoucair

Cinematographer: Fabrice Aragno

Editor: Jean-Luc Godard

Production Designer: Jean-Paul Battaglia

Researcher: Nicole Brenez

Press Attaché: Mathilde Incerti

A Swiss production from CASA AZUL FILMS, Fabrice Aragno, Lausanne

in coproduction with ECRAN NOIR productions, Mitra Farahani, Paris.

84 minutes

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In coproduction with RTS Radio Télévision Suisse

Hamidreza Pejman, Georges Schoucair, Nader Mobargha

Filmed in Switzerland and the world in sites of cinema and performance

Autumn 2018

The Image Book Cannes 2018 Press Conference Transcription - May 12, 2018

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWfMQbrAYqE&t=> (Q&A begins at 01:30)



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Reporter – Good morning.

**JLG** – Good morning.

Reporter – It's very odd to talk to you in this way. Good morning, how are you?

**JLG** – I'm OK.

**Reporter** – I see you have a cigar – you're looking pretty well. I have a question for you. In your film *The Image Book*, you share ideas and thoughts about the Arab world – Syria, Iran, Palestine. The region is going through a critical moment with the transfer of the U.S. embassy in Israel. What does this moment mean to you? What does it inspire by way of thought?

**JLG** – Well, I just make films. I'm interested in facts. Given my age, I'm interested in facts more than anything else. What's interesting in a fact is not just what's happening but what's not happening, and the two go together, and you have to link them together. You can't just talk about what's happening, but people talk more about what's happening than what's not happening. And what's not happening can lead to a total disaster – a catastrophe – so personally I can't say much more, unfortunately. We show very little intelligence at the present.

Reporter – Thank you Jean-Luc.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter** – Good morning Mr. Godard. I wanted to ask you a question. You're back in Cannes 50 years after May '68, which was a major political moment. What is it like being back in Cannes in

**competition fifty years after May '68? To talk about politics, for you, is this a political film? You talk about wars in the Arab world and the manner in which the West is behaving towards the Arab world. So, for you, is this a very political film?**

**JLG** – No. I wanted my film to be based more on a novel. And I wanted to show how the Arabs don't really need other people because they can fare well all by themselves. They invented writing. They invented many things. They have oil – more oil – than is necessary, practically. So, I don't know. I think they should be left alone to deal with their own affairs.

We can't dictate anything through film. I quote (Palestinian American academic, political activist, and literary critic) Edward Said in my film together with other writers. You know, a film is not designed to dictate anything. A film shows what's happening. Most of the films in Cannes this year and in preceding years show what is happening, but very few films are designed to show what is not happening, and I hope that my film, therefore, will show just that dimension. It depicts what is not being done – what is *not* happening. I think one has to think with one's hands and not only with one's head.

**Reporter – What about May 1968 and the fact you're back in Cannes 50 years after May 1968?**

**JLG** – It's very prescient, you know. At one point in time a long time ago there were 100,000 people who saw each of my films and I wondered, well, after 50 years or 100 years will so many spectators still come to see my films? Of course, often it's older people who come to see my films. And I have many memories of May 1968 of people who are now departed.

Reporter – Thank you.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Hello Mr. Godard, it's Peter Howl from the Toronto Star Newspaper in Canada. Congratulations on your new film. Hope you can hear me ok...shall I begin? I have a question for you. There's a quote famously attributed to you where you say, "A film should have a beginning, middle and end, but not necessarily in that order." I wonder with *The Image Book* whether you are revising that concept and if you could also talk about what constitutes a film in the year 2018?**

**JLG** – Well...if I said that quite some time ago, it was to go against Spielberg and others who said there has to be a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. So, as a joke, I said to them that things shouldn't be in that order. There can be these three components but in a different order. Of course, I didn't make this a real battle horse, but once I drew a parallel which wasn't very successful. It was an equation – 'x+1='.' A child in primary school can easily understand that equation if 'x+3=1' then 'x=-2,' and when you produce an image -- be it of the past, the present or the future – you have to do away with two images each time to find one really good one. It's like the equation. That's the key to cinema, to a good film. But when you say 'it's the key,' you shouldn't forget the lock as well.

Reporter – Thank you.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard. Daniel Kutensch from Frankfurt, Germany. You've missed a great, great premiere. It looked beautiful. Your film looked wonderful and it sounded marvelous. It was wonderful. I was wondering, people think the cinema as a theatrical experience might be dying out shortly. What is your expectation? Will the theater as an**



**experience for big audiences to see intelligent films and sensual experiences continue to survive?**

**JLG** – Well I can't really answer that question. I can just speak of my own personal experience. I really don't know how to answer your question. The film you saw, in any event, has a lengthy tale behind it. The producer – the French producer – gave up on the film and then I received some support from a small Swiss association represented by Fabrice Sauvignon. The film kindly agreed to take up [the invitation] to come to Cannes for the purposes of advertisement so that this little association or NGO could find some support and money, above all, so the film may be finished. And we thought therefore that as we'd been given up on by the film producer, we had to reach abroad to find support.

Of course, there are some countries where we can't screen our film because there's no proper sound system in the movie theater. And sometimes films need practically to be shown on a canvas. In the next 10 years, we think that in a very few movie theaters, which are quite avant-garde and really keen on culture, that there they will screen my film, of films in general, and they will be sort of militant movie theater. We believe that this should be a very joyful event which leads people to think deeply.

Reporter – Thank you.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard. I've been eagerly awaiting this conversation for quite some time and I always hear French so I would be in a position to understand your films in the original language. First of all, I'm very sorry that your assistant Pierre Rissient died -- you worked with him on *Breathless*.**

**JLG** – Yes, I remember Pierre so well. I have great thoughts -- wonderful thoughts about him. He was a splendid person who loved the cinema.

**Reporter – There are three points to my question. First of all, in terms of *In Praise of Love*, I read somewhere that you said that the actual shooting of the film bored you. In this feature film, you've done away with filming. There are just archival images.**

**JLG** – Absolutely. That's what filmmaking is all about. We have archival footage and also talk about the future. The cinema has done a lot when it comes to depicting what is happened in the past -- the things one might hope will happen in the future. So, for me, I quickly understood what was most important is not what we call the actual shooting but the editing, and the editing comes first. Filming is a sort of post-production, in fact. One can thus be much freer.

One can think much more because editing, even digital editing, is done by hand. And as we say in the film, man needs to think with his hands. Just imagine, for a few minutes, that you were forced to live for a whole day without using your hands at all. How would you manage? How would your head move? How would you eat? How would you love without your hands? You can't do anything without your hands. That's why my film, right at the very beginning, shows that everything is based on the five fingers, and when the five fingers work together, they make up a hand.

**Reporter – You based yourself on a title and the title gives rise to a film. Have you found your next title? Because you already said that you use a title, in fact, to make a film.**

**JLG** – No, I haven't found a forthcoming title. Maybe a title will find me if I'm fortunate to live for a few more years.

Reporter – Thank you.

(Next reporter approaches)

Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard.

**JLG** – Good morning.

Reporter – I come from Moscow.

**JLG** – Ah, Moscow!

Reporter – [Laughs] Sorry for English. It's an honor to talk to a living legend for the first time.

**JLG** – Speak Russian! It's a very beautiful language.

**Reporter – My question is very simple. There's a lot of Russian film extracts in your latest movie. Which Russian films are most significant for you? And if I may ask, what do you think about the latest young Godard movie when Garrel plays you.**

**JLG** – I didn't really understand the end of your question.

(translator clarifies question in French to Godard)

**JLG** - There are several Russian filmmakers whom I love. We also have my film *The Kids Play Russian*. What did I want to say? I can't remember now. I wanted to say...ah, yes...I think perhaps some of the most interesting films were in black and white. You see a man who's about to strike a blow and a woman who listens. What interests me...ah, what's the name again...[indecipherable] said to me that he didn't really understand the title of the sequence called "The Central Region." Of course, "The Central Region" is a tribute to Michael Snow's new film. I couldn't dwell on it at length of course, in my film. The central part, or 'central region', is called that because of the five fingers of the hand, and you have a central region in the hand. The central region represents love, because there's something interesting in today's world. Democracy is shrinking in Europe. Children are less pro-European, whereas in Africa the Africans are making more children, whereas in Europe there are fewer and fewer children. It strikes me that perhaps there's more love in Africa than in Europe now.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard, Paolo from Portugal. I remember you in Lisbon some years ago when you were presenting the film *Nouvelle Vague*. I have a very simple question. There's a key question when you see your films, "What is the Cinema?" Have you found an answer to this question which runs through most of your films?**

**JLG** – There is no key or central question. There are key questions or central questions but peripheral questions too, on the sidelines, and they all go together. Mao Zedong did many massacres but he did indeed talk about these things that go together. The cinema, as I said to one of your colleagues, should consist not so much in showing what's happening because you can see around you every day. Films should show what's not happening, and which you never see anywhere, including on Facebook.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard, Rodrigo Franseca from Brazil. It's a pleasure to talk to you today. It's a wonderful movie, but I would like to understand the editing process of the film and the sound engineering of such a beautiful film like this.**

**JLG** – Well, when it comes to the editing, I watch perhaps more films in the space of four years than Thierry Frémaux has seen in his entire career at the festival. I wanted to see whether certain images and sounds in all the film that I've watched really became meaningful, brought together in a film of mine because there had to be some kind of a story. There had to be some kind of a storyline, and bit by bit I gathered together these different images. Look at the title. The title changed to start with. It was *An Attempt at Blue* and then it changed any number of times.

Reference was made to images and to words. I think that there are things that a text or language cannot convey. The voice is not the same as speech, and speech is not necessarily language. When it comes to the sound, ask Fabrice how all this was done. It took quite a lot of time of course. The aim was to separate the sound from the image. We didn't want the sound to just be an accompaniment of the images. We wanted there to be a true dialogue – a true commentary – a running discussion – between the sound and the images.

I firmly believe that the [Lumière Brothers], when they filmed *Arrival of a Train at a Station*, they were thinking of all this – as Langlois did – in a very small film. Light is very important in impressionism. What the impressionists brought into art is light, and then Cézanne brought color, and color has something to do with speech. Even if we're talking about Heidegger here. The sound should not be too close to the images for me. A perfect screening would be in a café instead of on a TV screen. You'd see the film as a silent film and then the sound would come from here and there from a loudspeaker and suddenly the person sitting in the café would realize that the sound and the images go together. Of course, that may take as long as a 100-years war, but I think it would be worthwhile to have that kind of experience.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard, Brian Johnson from Canada. Thank you for this very beautiful film, which was scary at the same time. I wonder where you find the courage and the hope and the energy to continue making films because you are kind of a passenger on board this history, which is full of horrors yet very intense at the same time. Will you continue to make films?**

**JLG** – Of course! Yes, absolutely, if I can. It doesn't really depend on me...it depends on my legs, it depends a lot on my hands, and it depends a little bit on my eyes. Of course, I might refer once again to courage. Most people today, and for quite some time, have had the courage to live their lives but they often don't have the courage to imagine it any longer. I have the courage at least to imagine my life, and this makes it possible to continue. And to board that train – the train of history – I'm also thinking about all those people who board a train in the morning to go to work but who don't really have the courage to show much imagination, apart from those who work at startups.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard. It's an honor. My name's Antonin, I come from Moscow. I work for a cinema newspaper. You have images in your film of joyful Arabia. What about what is real and what is imaginary? What about Russia, in those terms? Does today's Russia exist for you or is it just Eisenstein and other old films that you remember?**

**JLG** – Russia is a country that has had two or more revolutions. I cannot of course talk about Mr. Putin because I don't actually know him. I don't know Mr. Macron's [inaudible] either. I'm

interested in other things. In my preceding film, *Goodbye to Language*, we said that when the Russians belong to Europe or belong to Asia, that day, they will cease to be Russian. There's something in Russia, still today, which touches me to no end. We have to be kind to Russia. Dostoevsky used to say, "One shouldn't ask too much of the soul." One has to be charitable and kind, and I will always be that way towards Russia.

Reporter – Thank you.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard. I'm sorry, I speak English. My name is Aya Koishizu from Japan for movie press.**

**JLG** – Ah! All these Japanese, all these Russian, all these French people who speak English and who don't speak their own language!

**Reporter - \*speaks Japanese to Godard\* [audience laughter] Well, actually I'm sharing my birthday with you, December 3<sup>rd</sup>. I was born in 1965, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, and that year you made *Pierrot Le Fou*, I think, because that film is now the icon of this year's festival. This year I was taken by the innovative film, *The Image Book*, but now it seems you don't believe in acting, or not? That is my question, thank you.**

**JLG** – Well, I can't really say. I don't want to quarrel with anybody. Actors and actresses, above all, have helped me to no end. I think that, at present...I don't know. I guess it's their problem. I don't know, I really can't say. At the beginning we made films without actors – any number of them, in fact. I think it's really a problem more of fiction and documentaries. For us, it's something similar. For actors and actresses, perhaps it's different. I think they're perhaps involved in politics, not in the sense of current affairs. But you know, not so long ago there was a writer and a philosopher, who said modern democracies have turned politics into a separate way of thinking. Modern democracies contribute thereby to totalitarianism. I think that a lot of actors today contribute to totalitarianism in terms of the images filmed as opposed to images that are actually thought, or that one has in one's mind.

Reporter – Thank you very much.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – I'm sorry for my English. I am Eric from Italy. I am really happy to speak with you. For me, you're the most brave of modern directors now. I want to know, if possible, of the connection between the ending of *Histoire(s) du cinema* and the ending of *The Image Book*. Thanks.**

**JLG** – Yes, of course. Not the whole history of the cinema. You saw certain excerpts, you saw many great well-known names. We didn't go to cinema school at the time. We went to film libraries. And at film libraries we saw films which struck us as very contemporary, but they weren't films shot in the past. Even if they were quite old films, they felt very contemporary even if they were 100 years old. Look at the way the DOP filmed a scene for ten minutes. In the past, the spools lasted for ten minutes, but look at how the DOP's work today. They film the same scene, be it for Facebook or TV. You don't learn much. You don't learn much compared with these images shot in the past. That's why TV without sound makes you think, well, if you get sound, you hear a commentary that just describes the image, so you don't learn anything more. We're living in a very strange, surprising world. I guess we just have to get used to it. But we can do things in a different way, too.

Reporter – Thank you.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard, I'm Kyle Buchanan from New York Magazine. I noticed that you used footage from the film *13 Hours*, which was directed by Michael Bay, in *The Image Book*. I guess I'm curious what your feelings were about that film and if you're generally familiar with his works.**

**JLG** – Just remind me what you actually see in that part of my film, then I'll probably remember the reference. But I don't remember either the title of the film or the name of the person. I think if I inserted that footage there it's because it contains something that I didn't find anywhere else.

**Reporter – It's the film set in Benghazi. I believe it was sort of a military fire. It was in the Arabian portion.**

**JLG** – No...I don't think that these images come from that film, but—

**Reporter – It's in the credits.**

**JLG** – Maybe you should show me the film right away! On your mobile phone! We could use digital technology.

**Reporter – Maybe after the press conference.**

**JLG** – For me, I didn't put an excerpt from that film in mine, but maybe I'm wrong. You'll need to prove it to me. People always say 'all you need to do is just to find the proof with a single click!' So, do the 'click'!

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning. I work in Italy. I'd like to thank you for your tribute to my language in your films and also, in terms of *The Image Book*, you refer to hands right at the beginning of the film – a filmmaker who referred to beauty in the quattro-cento period of Italian art. Do you think that images and the cinema are really a matter of beauty? Beauty as construed by artists in the past?**

**JLG** – Well, I've only seen a reproduction of that painting that you referred to. In this painting, you sensed real thoughts. I might refer to image. Image plus sound. That's what you see in my film, and that's what I'd like to reply.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard. I work in Spain. I would like to know why you refer to Catalonia. Is it because of George Orwell or the current situation?**

**JLG** – During the editing, the events occurred in Catalonia, and Orwell...well, you have to remember that the first title of Orwell's book was "1948" and as the editor's took fright, they decided to call it "1984". Later, Orwell wrote his homage to Catalonia. So, I do believe indeed that the real cinema, that of Eisenstein and others – many of the classics – that kind of cinema is very close to anarchists. That is why I wanted to refer to Orwell and Catalonia today. I believe that the cinema as I conceive it is a tiny Catalonia, which finds it difficult to exist.

(Next reporter approaches)

**Reporter – Good morning Mr. Godard. I adored your film. I think it's one of the greatest so far in the festival. It's a wonderful work of philosophy. You show quite a lot of violence – images of violence. You also refer to the mind and the spirit and its calm. Could you perhaps talk about that?**

**JLG** – This is an excerpt from a book by Edward Said, who's Palestinian and lives in New York. It's a beautiful work. It's more than a book; it's a whole system of thought and philosophy. Almost all the films I have made up until three or four years ago did refer to violence. But deep within the images, things are actually very calm. I'm currently reading a book. It's a book on Cézanne. There was a lot of violence in Cézanne yet a lot of inner calm at the same time. I believe one can combine the two things, and in my film I pay tribute to these facts. And I think it's normal that all this violence be expressed in the Middle East currently.