



8½ Screens

Atom Egoyan

2010

4 minutes, loop ■ 35mm, Black and White

Commissioned for TIFF Bell Lightbox, 2010.

Atom Egoyan's discomfort and fascination with the relationship between viewer and viewed finds a perfect match in the famous projection room sequence in Federico Fellini's *8½*. Egoyan reverses the relationship between projector, audience and screen in this bravado deconstruction of our Cinema #4. A projector stands on stage, boldly spewing out light. Screens catch that light at different points throughout the venue; Fellini's various audiences – some angry, some in love, some bored, plus a freaked-out director – occupy their own spaces. The audience is left to work out their own place in this upside-down world. Gradually, we feel their interconnectedness; then we begin to reconstruct an alternative mode for viewing films through Fellini's eyes. This composite, non-linear experience gently critiques the Essential 100 list itself by elucidating the powerful subjectivity of the film-viewing experience and our consequent unreliability as judges of the work; our ecstatic engagement with great cinema, Fellini asserts, should preclude a simple logical ordering of the film-watching experience.

The work also reveals some of the key features of Egoyan's feature film strategies. Famous for his ability to layer various forms of voyeurism within his narrative structures, *8½ Screens* becomes a partial Egoyan taxonomy, a breakdown of the various mechanisms we use to understand desire and the gaze, within and outside the cinema space. One finds moments of *Exotica*,

Felicia's Journey and especially *The Adjuster* in the faces on these screens.

Egoyan is one of the few major filmmakers working today who moves consistently back and forth between installations and feature filmmaking. The relationship between the two is a complex one for him; sometimes the dialectic feels preparatory for future work and sometimes feels like a double barrel approach to accessing cultural and historical information. In some of his best work (like 2006's *Citadel*), the final product becomes a legacy gift, an album of images and thoughts for his son. Perhaps then *8½ Screens* also functions as a cautionary tale, an explanation of why one becomes a creative person and the frustrations that such a choice can provoke in the people around us.

■ Noah Cowan

With fourteen feature films and related projects, **Atom Egoyan** has won numerous awards, including five prizes at the Cannes Film Festival (including the Grand Prix, International Critics Awards and Ecumenical Jury Prizes), two Academy Award® nominations, eight Genie Awards, prizes from the National Board of Review and an award for Best International Adaptation at The Frankfurt Book Fair. Earlier this year he had a full retrospective of his films at the Filmoteca Española in Madrid, following similar events at the Pompidou Centre in Paris and The Museum of the Moving Image in New York.

Presented at TIFF Bell Lightbox, Cinema 4.
 September 12 to October 3.

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