

Akira Kurosawa's *The Lower Depths* (1957)

including a discussion of its use of 'War Photography and Avant-Garde Performance'

Humanities Research Centre Film Screening

Monday 19 December 2016, 1-4pm

Speaker

Assistant Professor Olga Solovieva, University of Chicago, US

Theatrette, Ground Floor, Sir Roland Wilson Building, ANU.

Kurosawa's *The Lower Depths* (1957) has been seen exclusively as a literal adaptation of Maxim Gorky's drama with no content on its own and therefore as a merely formalist exercise in transforming a theatre play into a film. This talk contextualizes the film within the 1953 Japanese debate on 'beggar photography' and photographic realism. Morphing the iconography of post-war misery together with the iconography of the Tokugawa period, Kurosawa's cinematic rendition of Gorky's play not only countered the ideological tendency of post-occupation Japan to avoid realistic representation of its war-inflicted destitution but also linked this representation to its causes in the nationalist and militarist past.



Olga Solovieva teaches in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago. She received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Film Studies from Yale University. Her current book projects, *The Russian Kurosawa* and *Thomas Mann's Russia*, examine the political, philosophical and mediating function of the reception of Russian literature in East and West.

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This lecture is free and all are welcome.

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