

# ANTHONY REYNOLDS GALLERY

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## **COMEDIE** (1966)

SAMUEL BECKETT / MARIN KARMITZ

7 - 23 December 2000 and 3 - 13 January 2001 Tuesday - Saturday 10 - 6

**Preview Wednesday 6 December 6 - 8 pm (screenings at 6.15, 6.45, 7.15, 7.45)**

Samuel Beckett's **COMEDIE** (PLAY) was first staged in Berlin in 1964 and subsequently in London and Paris. In the same year, Beckett met Marin Karmitz, a 24 year old film director, and they agreed to make a film of **COMEDIE** with the original cast, Michael Lonsdale, Eléonore Hirt and Delphine Seyrig. Beckett and Karmitz were together for a year, talking, drinking a great deal and engaging in an experiment to regress to the moment of their birth, to experience the primal scream. At the end of this period the film was made.

Karmitz had already made a short film with Marguerite Duras. This extraordinary work amply demonstrated his phenomenal skills with extremes of black, grey and white and a heightened sensitivity to concurrences of visual and verbal language. These concerns were totally in tune with Beckett's own. Beckett's stage directions for **COMEDIE** with rapid-fire speech and instantaneous lighting switches from character to character could be realised with much greater precision through the medium of film. It seems he was not happy with the speed the actors were able to deliver the lines in the theatre. In the film version, voices are speeded up to a point of near indecipherability (without altering their tonality) developing an electric intensity that is complemented by the extraordinary lighting and camerawork.

Beckett was involved in every stage of the production of the film and was enthusiastic about the result. **COMEDIE** was screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1966. Rediscovered this year, it is apparent that not only is it a masterpiece but also a remarkable precursor of some of the internationally celebrated film and video work that artists have made in the last few years. Included in the recent exhibition *Voilà* at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris this showing in London marks the first time **COMEDIE** has been screened as a solo installation. A publication documenting the history of the film is in preparation.

The recently announced project to film all 19 plays by Beckett makes this opportunity to view Beckett's own interpretation all the more significant.

**COMEDIE** (18 minutes 43 seconds, French dialogue) will be screened every hour, on the hour and by request. **Marin Karmitz will be present for the opening.** **Further information, photographs and interviews can be arranged through the gallery.**