MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

A PINEWOOD DIALOGUE WITH
HAL HARTLEY

Hal Hartley's films are marked by spare, precise visuals, a stylized approach to dialogue that allows characters to speak their innermost thoughts, and an intuitive gift for playing with the conventions of movie-making and storytelling. Playing off the contrast between cerebral characters and quotidian settings, Hartley creates comedic inquiries into the nature of belonging and the search for personal freedom. In the role of writer, director, editor and composer, Hartley exerts control over films about characters for whom control is a fragile and elusive concept. This dialogue took place at a complete retrospective early in Hartley's career.

A Pinewood Dialogue moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz (January 14, 1995):

SCHWARTZ: Please welcome Hal Hartley. (Applause)

HARTLEY: Thank you. Thanks for coming. I just want to point out that David and I went to college together, went to film school together, and when we were at college he was doing similar things, he was programming all the films that we saw on campus through the Student Senate. So I actually owe a lot to David for most of the films I saw when I started to watch films closely. If I didn't see them in class, I saw them in the evening at the Student Senate, courtesy of David Schwartz.

SCHWARTZ: We'll start with the Long Island questions. There is a movement—especially through *Amateur* (1994), which is off Long Island completely—from your student films to *Amateur*—a kind of a movement off of Long Island. The presence of the Long Island Railroad is very evident in *Trust* and *The Unbelievable Truth* (1989). What was the link for you between growing up and leaving Long Island, both for yourself and also in your films? How does it fit into your films?

HARTLEY: Well, practically it was just the only place I could make films. I was living there when I began to make films, but even when I was at college in upstate New York, when I had to make a film project, I would invariably go back to Lindenhurst, because that was just an environment that I could

control. Which is something I learned very early: most of the time when you go out to shoot and you don't get everything you want to shoot, it's because you don't have control over the environment. So I grew up on a street where a lot of Hartleys lived. (Laughter) They all had houses; different ones and backyards even; and you know, I had a lot of cousins I could use as extras. (Laughter) It was also just a supportive kind of environment, too.

But still, when it came time to make films that were not student films, there was still a little bit of that. *The Unbelievable Truth* I don't think I could have put together for that amount of money in any other kind of environment. I actually wrote it for the street I grew up on—not that it needed to portray that street, but I knew that I could shoot the scene in my father's backyard while the electricians were setting up a scene in my uncle's backyard. (Laughter) I mean, we shot like twenty pages a day on that.

Then with *Trust* (1989), it just seemed I had been writing—you know, that old adage, I think Steinbeck said it: you just write about what you know. Since at that point, I had spent most of my life there, that's what I knew. I knew about my frustration of living in the town I grew up in, as well as the little joys that I had.

So that was sort of natural. Things like the Long Island Railroad… living on an island, a railroad that takes you off the island is a significant thing. Ever since I was a kid, that was significant to me. In the neighborhood I grew up in, anyway, all the men got

on that train in the morning and went to New York City to work, and then they came back in the evening. All us kids and housewives stayed. As a seven-year-old, that was significant to me. I wondered, "Where do they go?" (Laughter)

As I got older, it was more important because I began to understand that that railroad wasn't just a way off *this* island, but to *other* railroads that would take you to *other* places. It was the way off in the most concrete of terms. And so I've always used it that way. I've always used the Long Island Railroad as a symbol. And they keep chasing me off the platform every time. I've never yet gotten a permit to shoot, and they always send the police! (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: You made *Simple Men* (1992) set on Long Island, but shot in Texas. What was it like artistically, being able to recreate a world from scratch? Not actually being on Long Island, but setting a film there?

HARTLEY: Well, it wasn't that hard, really. We have to face facts. Long Island looks just like every place else in the world (Laughter) at least in America. A suburb here and a suburb two hours outside of Houston, Texas, look exactly the same. And it's flat. I had known from traveling in Texas before that it was flat like much of Long Island is flat. And the foliage is pretty much the same. So when it became an issue that I wasn't going to be able to shoot *Simple Men* in New York, I figured, "Let's go to Texas."

I didn't have to work as quickly in Texas, and the light, the daylight, is a lot longer in Texas— maybe because it's further South, it was that particular time of the year. But for me, it's the film of mine that's the most "nature film." It's bucolic. It's a pastoral. I remember, you know, more than the other films, looking at the landscape a lot. Even watching it today, I haven't seen this in about two years, but it seemed that shot of Dennis coming up the street towards the place where he sees Elena— that's not the kind of shot you see in my films much. You know, it shows a lot. (Laughter) It shows it deep and it shows it wide, without putting up a wide angle lens; it's still 50mm. But it shows a lot of the landscape, and a combination of circumstance and inclination with the earlier films kept me from doing that.

SCHWARTZ: To go back to *The Unbelievable Truth* for a minute—because this was your transitional film out of school and it continued, in some ways, what you were doing in your filmmaking at [SUNY] Purchase. Just how were you able to get it made? How were you able to get that project off the ground? And then kind of a second, tangential question: Do you think about what would happen if you had never made that, and where you would have wound up? (Laughter)

HARTLEY: Well, if I hadn't made *The Unbelievable Truth*, I probably just would have made some other film—because one thing that's clear to me now is that I was put on this Earth to make films. I've never done anything so consistently.

There was a time when I wasn't that sure if filmmaking was what I should be doing. I'd been making a lot of short films, and *The Unbelievable Truth* was something that I had planned to do in 16mm—feature length but 16mm—for $20,000. My employer at the time, who was going to co-sign a loan I was taking out, suggested that I try to do another budget for the same project that would let me do it in 35mm, so that it would be a viable commercial product. And I did, and that came out to about $60,000, and then he got the money. He just put up the money; his company had some money and they invested it. So if that didn't happen, I probably just would have made *The Unbelievable Truth* in 16mm, first of all—which has actually become a lot more popular with first-time filmmakers now, which is good. A 16mm feature-length film is no longer a complete non-entity as far as commercial product, which is good. It's encouraging.

SCHWARTZ: When you're in film school, you take for granted that you make your own films as a type of personal expression. [SUNY] Purchase was definitely a school where nobody was making "calling-card" films, nobody was making the kinds of films that would land them in Hollywood. But to be able to continue doing that, making films that continue your personal themes and ideas—there aren't too many directors who are able to keep doing that. Even filmmakers like Scorsese go back and forth between commercial and personal projects. So, could you talk a bit about how you are able to maintain that?

HARTLEY: Well, first off, I mean it seems a little miraculous to me at times. (Schwartz laughs) But realistically, I mean, it's just money. I don't make a lot of money. If you don't want a lot of money, people will let you do anything you want. (Laughter) That's not to say that—you know, Martin Scorsese makes a lot of money, and sits in a lot of money. I think his interests are very different, too. But yes, I knew what my interests were and I had to admit that they didn't require a lot of money. So as long as I made reasonably profitable films, with reasonable budgets, it has not been a problem.

That's the dynamic: how much money you need; what do you want to do. Your integrity's over here, as you see it, and then how much money do you want to maintain your integrity? If you want $40 million to maintain your integrity, people will be a lot slower in coming up with investment. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: In some of the scenes we just looked at from *The Unbelievable Truth* and *Trust*, there are very clear statements from the characters, that are kind of philosophical statements. Audrey [in *The Unbelievable Truth*] talks about how life is just deals; the dialogue in *Trust* about love and respect and admiration. You've been able to create a style in writing and directing where these kind of statements can be expressed overtly. It's dangerous to get into that area—the danger of becoming heavy-handed. So I wonder if you could talk about how you're able to find the right tone to express this sort of thing?

HARTLEY: Well, comedy helps. If you want somebody to say something kind of heavy and to-the-point, un-naturalistically, you just figure out a way to have a joke right next to it, or to make it part of a joke that's in the process of being told. A lot of the people will be saying some kind of philosophical crap, and then eventually it'll turn into a really—you know—just a slapstick kind of thing.

I think of speaking as action. I think of people having ideas as action, because actions have consequences and so do ideas, you know. As long as I understand why the character is speaking that way. Sometimes they're being jerks; they're being full of themselves. Sometimes they're being really naive. Other times they're being very sincere. In my experience, watching a character be sincere is probably the most difficult thing for an audience to

watch, to endure. Sincerity is about the hardest thing for any audience to do. (Laughter) That interests me. That's why I think I kind of play around with what sincerity looks like, how it expresses itself.

SCHWARTZ: The characters frequently move back and forth between these kind of lofty ideas and then very earthly concerns. So in the scene...

HARTLEY: Well but you see, that's a way. That's one of the ways to make the highfaultin dialogue acceptable: by somehow grounding it in earthiness and regular, ordinary situations.

SCHWARTZ: So I mean, the seduction scene: Josh in *The Unbelievable Truth* really seduces Audrey by talking about how gears work and...

HARTLEY: Yes, but she's an easy mark. (Laughter) He doesn't have to try too hard to seduce that girl, actually.

SCHWARTZ: In a lot of ways, the women in your film are easier to read—it's easier to get inside their heads—whereas the men in your film tend to be a bit more enigmatic and difficult to read. So I wonder if you could talk about different approaches to men and women characters?

HARTLEY: Yes. Maybe it's because I think the men's motives are so obvious they don't need to be treated in any special way. (Laughter) But I think it's also my fascination with women; that they will be mysterious, and I'm interested in that. It could be argued that my treatment of the characters is uneven, you know. It's heavier on the female characters because I have more questions about the female characters.

I hesitate to just stop there, because something like *Simple Men* really was, for me, a reaction to having dealt in a woman's world, and trying to understand women so much—almost to the exclusion of everything else—in the previous film, *Trust*. And then I said, "Wow, I really want to concentrate on men a little bit here." I think the way you ask questions about something that you think you understand a lot more is different. The kinds of questions you ask will be different. This ultimately leads us to the point that you've made, which I think is that the women seem more... Well, you said the men seem more enigmatic. I think the women seem

more mysterious, even if I do get into their heads… Well, maybe they don't; we'll ask people later. (Laughter) To me they do. That's why I write about them: I have to see if I cause any kind of illumination.

SCHWARTZ: (Laughs) The characters in your films always seem to be trying to control their lives; to come up with ways to control things; control destiny. They're always making deals. Audrey is always making deals; and characters are always, in all your films, making some sort of deals. But at the same time there's a lot of kind of chance occurrences, and things that just come totally out of left field. How much control do you think your characters really do have?

HARTLEY: Well, I think they *only* have control, really. It's just when do they realize it? I think they have control over their lives more than... you know, it's not just destiny; it's not just chance. But recognizing that you do have control and doing something about it is usually what I try to move the stories towards. The characters may flounder around a bit getting into trouble of one kind or another before they realize it. Yes, I think they have a lot of control—given that I also don't believe that there's any real freedom. They may be looking for freedom; it's just a wrong approach. You know, we're not free. We're constricted by... That's why deals, I think, are such a useful tool for me: because they illustrate the way in which you don't get anything for nothing. You can't have something for nothing. To me, that's just the most obvious example of a lack of freedom, fundamentally.

SCHWARTZ: A lot of the constriction that your characters feel has to do with the work that they do. There's a real interest in people; what kind of jobs people take; and there's a sense that the kind of nine-to-five job is very constricting. Martin Donovan's character in *Trust* could never work nine-to-five without blowing up the building. In terms of these ideas about control and people deciding what they want to do—how much does this tie in to your ideas about work, and the jobs that people have?

HARTLEY: Well, I don't think it has so much to do with nine-to-five. I mean, I know plenty of people who work nine-to-five. I even, myself, tried to work nine-to-five. The point is that doing work that you

don't love diminishes you. And you know, you can get around that any way you want: lie to yourself or whatever, or go out and find yourself a job that, in one way or another, doesn't diminish you. The choice of how we intend to spend the moments of our life is important. It seems really simple, I guess, but if I chose to be a hit man, or if I chose to be a drug dealer, or if I chose to be a priest, it expresses [my] connection to the world. I mean, I know most people don't think this way about employment… (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: There seems to always be a struggle to find that right place. I mean, you have characters who have this...

HARTLEY: Oh, it certainly is a struggle. That's what I meant before, about there [being] no freedom. And certainly it's a struggle. What does Fritz Lang say in *Contempt* (1963)? "To live is to suffer; to live is to struggle." I mean, you can't get around it. But I do think the only freedom we do have is the freedom of choosing what particular struggle we're going to engage in. Is it any easier to strive to be a poet today, writing really flowery poetry (or something like that) that nobody reads, and insisting on that, than it is to try to become a fighter pilot? You know, it's hard. If you want to do it and you want to do it your way, it's going to be difficult.

SCHWARTZ: Often you have characters who seem to be in these dichotomous jobs. I mean, you have a nun who had been once a nymphomaniac; you have philosopher mechanics; you have people who seem split in two different directions; radical terrorist short stop... (Laughter)

HARTLEY: Yes, well everybody's looking for the in-between jobs. (Laughter) Well, those people are on the margins. You know, they're probably at that moment probably where they're deciding, "No, I can't keep doing this, I have to do that." I think that's when they're in a crisis. People are more interesting when they're in a crisis. You never see movies about people who are completely content, who have no wants, you know. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: Speaking of malcontents, I want to ask about Martin Donovan. (Hartley laughs) You tend to work with the same people over and over, and he's someone who seemed to become an alter ego, starting with your second film. I know you said that

Amateur might be the last film you do with him for a while, but he seems to be really perfect in your films: his kind of straightforward, deadpan approach on the outside, but a lot going on under the surface. Can you talk about how you started with him, and how you found him?

HARTLEY: Well, it was just through casting. I'd seen a play that he was in at Cucaracha Theatre Company, which is a theater company down in Tribeca. I thought he was pretty good. I thought it was very probable that he could work with me well. I talked to him and it was still a year before I had him come in and read for [the role of] Matthew [in *Trust*]. I think what drew me to him was that I recognized a common rage that's suppressed, and common ways of suppressing it. You know, Martin is a very kind, quiet person. But when he wants to be enraged, and the way he'll talk about rage is exciting! (Laughter) When we made *Trust* we recognized that we had that in common.

It's funny because a lot of the times it's mystery about the actor that keeps me wanting to work with them. It's not just comfort—because really, Martin is not a comfortable person to work with. He's very demanding. He's extremely self-critical. He's really—he's a great actor; it's not easy to work with him, though. Again, but we choose to struggle that way rather than get somebody who'd just fit in nice and easy, and not give me a hard time. (Laughter) Yes, and he does. I like watching Martin on the screen. He expresses mysterious rage that I feel, and yet am not qualified to act out.

SCHWARTZ: In *Amateur* he plays a character with amnesia. In all of the previous three features, characters are always trying to escape their pasts. Usually it has to do with their parents; they're trying to escape their parents or some secret in the past. Could you talk about this; how this comes to play in dramas? I mean, films are always trying to move forward, and narrative is always stuck in the present and future, but how [does] the past come into play?

HARTLEY: Well, first of all, we don't have a character unless we know our past. Just think, how would you know you're David Schwartz if you didn't remember your past? So I think those questions of... what did you say about the earlier films?

SCHWARTZ: Well, that they all have characters who are trying to either escape their parents, or are trying to escape the past.

HARTLEY: Yes, they're trying to escape their parents. It sort of led naturally to this. Because Martin and I had done—up through *Simple Men* and some work after that—some of my favorite characters, and some of my favorite work with an actor. But we were getting sick of working with each other, I think, a little bit. (Laughs) You know, just ambitious to work in other ways—on his part a lot more than on mine. So I said, "Okay, let's make one more film because I want to do something really difficult. Let's start with this premise. You play somebody who has amnesia. You have no past." Because, you see, this is the thing that most actors will do when they're developing a character, and you have to give them this: they'll go home and they'll make up a whole past history of the character, and it's the soil out of which they start forming their character. So it was a little like gym class! (Schwartz laughs) I said, "All right, no past. Let's start from scratch. See what you can do." And it was hard, and it was very vulnerable too, I think, for Martin. Because every single tiny decision that Martin makes as an actor in the confines of the film contributes to his building of his character. He has no past to draw on, so he can only draw on his experience: what he sees, what he hears. So it is a really challenging way to do it.

SCHWARTZ: The major areas of authorship in film are writing, and then directing, composing music, and editing, of course. And since you really control all these areas in your films, I just wanted to ask which you think are the most important, or how you feel about these different stages? Hitchcock is somebody who said that the film is basically over once it's written. So, in terms of writing, directing and composing…?

HARTLEY: Well, I try not to distinguish. You know, I try to just think of the writing, the directing, and the editing as all the same process. It's all making a film—and the composition too, the music composition, which I consider part of the editing. You know no single part of it should be autonomous. The script isn't literature. It's a blueprint for the painting that you're going to do.

SCHWARTZ: In all these areas there's always, especially in your work, a distillation process, and

an attempt to get to the core of things, the essentials. Your screenplays are incredibly lean in every aspect of these areas. So can you talk about what this process is like? I mean, after seeing *Simple Men*, you talked about all of the things you had cut out of the film along the way.

HARTLEY: Yes, well I think the screenplays appear a lot leaner as they're published because that's the "as produced" screenplay. I do cut a lot out. I don't know, it's just the exercise of taste and sensibility. I have certain aesthetic prejudices. It's like composing music. You just hear something and it doesn't … there are too many notes in this phrase; and there are too many words in this interchange. For me, I just try to get rid of everything that doesn't contribute. What I'm trying to contribute to is different from scene to scene, as well.

SCHWARTZ: Do you have the feeling that there's only one right way to do a scene? There are directors, like Bresson certainly, or Lubitsch, or Hitchcock, where you feel like there's only one possible place to put the camera, one possible way to cut the film. On the other hand there are directors, like Altman, who seem to be catching life as it goes on.

HARTLEY: No, I don't think there's—I mean, it just depends on the person. I do believe that each person, if they work enough and are conscientious about it, and honest, will admit after a certain point that they like to see things in a particular way. They like to show things in a particular way.

Right now, I feel like I know how I like to see things, but I did in college too, and [now] it's totally different. So you change. I don't think there's one right way, because most of the time I think what makes a scene interesting is a combination of what's being said, what's being done, and the interpretation. More and more it's interpretation of things that is interesting to me. Subject matter, what the story is about, isn't really that interesting to me anymore. I'm interested in how certain subject matter, whatever it is, is interpreted.

That's what I like about the short projects. They were just handed to me. They just said—they didn't give me a script—they just said, "Make something about New York. It's got to be ten minutes long in video."

SCHWARTZ: There's a real balance in your films between a very close observation of life and how people act, and how they behave—and the fiction side, which is that people do things and say things in your films that are very "movie-like," that they wouldn't do in life. So what does "true fiction," the name of your production company, mean to you?

HARTLEY: The term "true fiction" is something I wrote down when I was at Purchase. At a particular time at Purchase I was really knee deep in [director] Wim Wenders; [SUNY Purchase film professor, director, and editor] Aram A. Avakian; and John Gardner, the novelist. All three of them, from different perspectives, were talking about the same thing: fiction.

Wenders had said in an interview about *Paris, Texas* (1984) that he found it dishonest to write the end of the movie, because how would he know, really, what the end of the movie would be? Sure, he's got a general idea of the situation and even the characters, but those characters are going to be played by real human beings. Over the course of time, you really discover that the character's no longer just a character, but an amalgam of a character as written and the actor. And that has got to be able to change your interpretation at the end. I like that. I like that kind of talk. Because I mean, it means he takes—as I try to take—fiction very seriously, because it's a way of being attentive to the world.

John Gardner was talking about the same thing. He said that there comes a point when making a fiction—I'm paraphrasing him now—but the making fiction becomes an exercise in humility. There comes a point that even though you've started the situation, you've invented some characters, but every step those characters take define that character and the more steps they take, the less control you have over what's really going to happen. I mean, if you really want to be honest, and make fiction that's grounded in character, and is interested in taking a look and asking some hard questions about what people are really like.

So he said this humility thing. And Wenders had talked about honesty. And Aram talked all the time about lying, in class. You'd look at a picture you made last weekend and you're showing. And you cut into the film and he says, "That's bullshit. You

don't believe that at all. You're just trying to finish this film. You're just trying to make this have a nice ending because you have this preconceived idea about what the film is and how it should end. But nothing that's happened in the first twenty minutes of your half hour film would lead me, as open minded as I am,"—I'm speaking as Aram Avakian right now—"would lead me to believe that these characters would resolve the situation this way." So, you had to be true. And that's where "true fiction" comes from.

SCHWARTZ: As you once said, "true fiction" could also be called "real bullshit."

HARTLEY: Yes, yes. (Laughter) And it is, very often.

SCHWARTZ: If we can bring up the house lights a bit, let's take some questions from the audience.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: As someone who makes short films, I wonder if you could talk about the controversy at the Academy Awards last year?

HARTLEY: (Repeats audience question) He's asking as a person who continues to make short films, what was my reaction to the controversy at the Academy Awards last year when there was some question of abolishing the short film category? Yes, I think that's just stupid. (Laughter) Although I was not aware of the controversy. I don't watch the Academy Awards. (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is more of a technical question: How do you think sound should function, and how does money—having more of it—change that?

HARTLEY: I take sound very seriously the more I learn about it. I was standing in the back before listening to the clips of the three films and I forgot how thin the sound of *The Unbelievable Truth* was. That was eight tracks, you know. Whereas *Trust* probably got up to about fifteen tracks at any given point, and then *Amateur* is a twenty-four track mix. And we had more time. I mixed *The Unbelievable Truth* in one day (Laughter) and I spent the better part of a month with *Amateur*. So it is important.

It could get crazy too. Sound should be part and parcel of... I try not to get into the habit of thinking like, "I have a film and I'm going to put some sound on it." The movie and the sound are all together. Deal with it as one thing. That's how I try to deal with it.

Money changes your ability to make choices. I mean, there are whole parts of *Amateur* that only have two tracks. It's just the recording that we made—the "production recording" we call it when we're shooting—and maybe some birds or something. And I like that a lot. With the shorter work I've been doing, whether it's videos, like we watched before, or shot-on-film projects, I'm working with fewer and fewer tracks and trying to make that production recording as dynamic as possible.

SCHWARTZ: Okay, right down here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I enjoy your dialogue style very much; it's very vivid. I'm wondering, are you at all influenced by people like David Mamet?

HARTLEY: Well, I read David Mamet now because people used to say that a lot (Laughter) and I have to admit I was not well-read. I think now that I know Pinter and Mamet well—I mean, I wasn't actually influenced by them, but I could see where we all fit into a common vein, which comes from Beckett. The word is just really important.

SCHWARTZ: Okay, right here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have kind of a two-pronged question.

HARTLEY: A *two-pronged* question? (Whistles) (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Two-part! I noticed that characters in your film will always be walking around with a book. What personal experience made you make that aesthetic or artistic choice? The second part of the questions is: did you ever notice that Eric Rohmer does that in a lot of his movies?

HARTLEY: Ah yes. *Amateur* has books too. (Laughter) Books are just a part of my life, you know. And ideas and articulation is something that... Well, I would say that my frustration in growing up where I grew up had to do with the fact that there wasn't a book in sight, ever. So I needed

those, you know, I needed them. Reading, passing on ideas—to me, that's a real part of, of life. Even though it's very often as being like a very un-naturalistic thing, in the world I move through, there are books all over the place, you know.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was just wondering what your favorite Godard film is?

HARTLEY: Today, my favorite Godard film? It changes all the time. I mean, I try not to think that way anyway, because I think it's very important, especially for an artist of his stature, to not think about an individual, but to think of the body of work. But everything from about the mid 1980s to this point I think is great. We will be showing *Helas Pour Moi* (1993) [as part of the Hal Hartley film series at the Museum of the Moving Image]. Also, at The Public, starting this week, they're showing *JLG/ JLG* (1995). It's his portrait film, a self-portrait film he made. And also *Allemagne Neuf… Germany, Year Zero, 1990* (1991), which is also great.

SCHWARTZ: Okay, right down here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How much of an idea do you begin with when you start writing? And then, how much does that change—from what you started with, to what you end up with?

HARTLEY: Well, I start with probably a handful of ideas, and they change constantly. They start changing less the closer you get to making the film. But in the writing, it can go on for months and months changing. What I think I'm writing today, at the early stages of writing, two months from now might not even exist—but it will get me to something else.

SCHWARTZ: Do you start with titles? You have such elemental titles. They're so evocative. Do they come at the beginning of the...?

HARTLEY: No, they come out through it. My notebook tends to be a little cryptic that way. Also, I was an art student at one time, more weighted towards the graphic arts end than to fine arts, so I like to look at words on the page. And if they can mean more than one thing then that's better.

SCHWARTZ: Okay, we can take one more question here and then we're going to go out into the lobby [for a reception]. Right here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Who are your favorite directors?

HARTLEY: Who are my favorite directors, right now? Well, I mean, Godard, obviously. Wenders. They tend to be like a sort of older brother group, you know. One generation or two.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you like Jim Jarmusch? A lot of people compare you to him.

HARTLEY: Yes. They compare me to Jim? That's interesting. (Laughs) I don't know... I like Jim Jarmusch's films, although I don't really see the connection. Although he was a huge encouragement, you know. I got out of film school in 1984, which is when his first film, a very individual kind of film, was a success, and it was really encouraging for a lot of us. Spike Lee, too; same year. These two really popular, really successful, good, idiosyncratic films were a big hit. So that helped a lot of us to get the gumption to continue.

SCHWARTZ: Please join us again tomorrow afternoon, and we'll be out in the lobby in just a minute. Thanks a lot. (Applause)