KINONIK

THE THOUSAND EYES OF DR. MABUSE (1960)

Directed by Fritz Lang

WEDNESDAY February 11th 7PM

SATURDAY MATINEE February 14th 2PM

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Fritz Lang fled Nazi Germany in 1933 after making The Testament of Dr. Mabuse, a film where he put Nazi slogans in the mouth of a criminal mastermind. Goebbels banned it immediately on grounds that it showed that a dedicated group could overthrow any state with violence.

Twenty-seven years later, Lang came back to make his final film. He was 70, nearly blind, and couldn't get work in Hollywood anymore. He returned to Mabuse. And this time, Mabuse won.

The Luxor Hotel was built by the Nazis during the occupation; cameras hidden in every room, two-way mirrors, microphones in the walls. Total surveillance infrastructure. The war ended but the hotel remained, surveillance system intact. Now it's 1960 and someone's using it. People check in to conduct their private business not knowing every word, every gesture, every moment is being watched. Mabuse himself barely appears; he doesn't need to. The system is Mabuse. The infrastructure is the villain.

Lang shot in stark black and white, cameras lingering on the technology of watching: monitors flickering, hidden lenses, the slow zoom revealing that what we thought was reality is actually being viewed on a screen. Who's watching whom? The film asks this constantly. The blind fortuneteller "sees" crimes before they happen. The police are shrouded in cigarette smoke. Everyone performs for cameras they can't locate.

Lang understood what we're living inside: the infrastructure doesn't go away when regimes change. The Nazis built the surveillance system; someone else just operates it. Ring cameras on every porch, Flock Safety monitoring vehicles, phones tracking every movement, social media companies selling your data to anyone who'll pay.

This is Lang's final warning, his last film before going blind. Mabuse isn't a person anymore—he's the condition of permanent visibility, the assumption that you're always being watched.