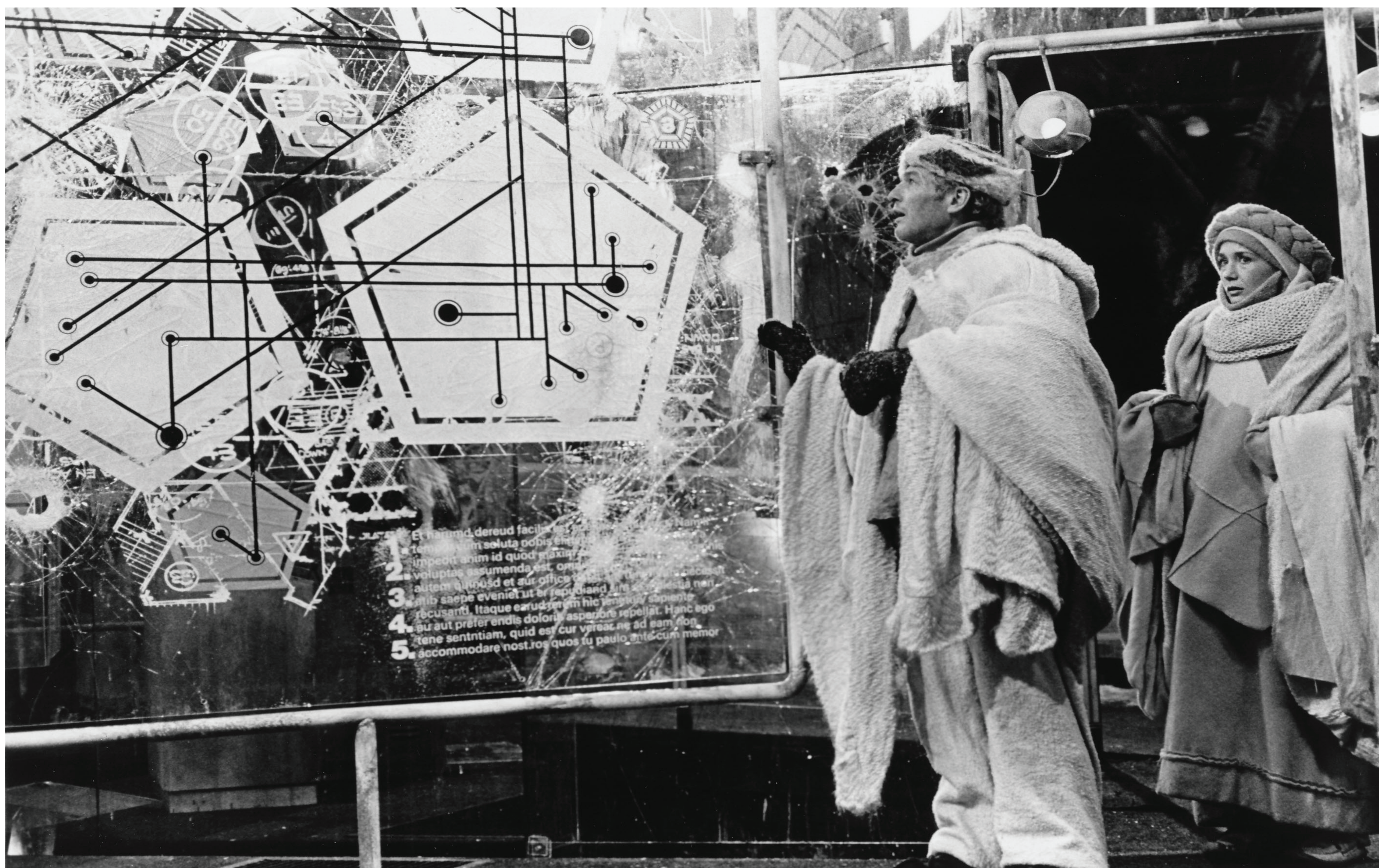


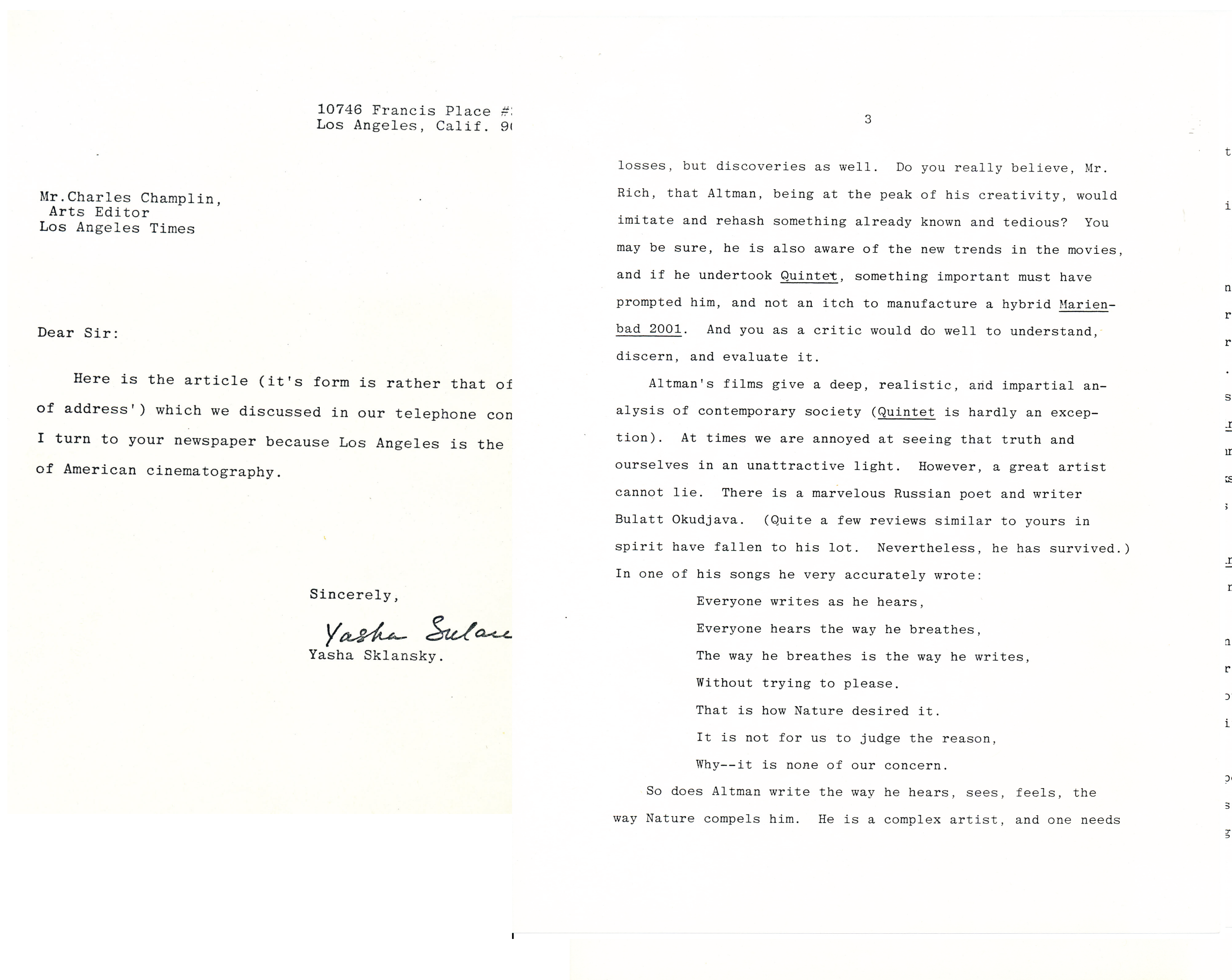
Quintet [1979]

Quintet is Altman's post-apocalyptic science-fiction film. Set during an ice age, this society "occupies its time by playing a board game called 'Quintet.' For one small group, this obsession is not enough; they play the game with living pieces ... and only the winner survives." Overall, this film was not well received by critics or the public. However, the archive documents the unpublished efforts of one fellow filmmaker to urge critics to take another look -- Russian-born cinematographer Yasha Sklansky.

In summer 1979 Sklansky wrote an article-length letter to the *Los Angeles Times* concerning a movie review of *Quintet* by Frank Rich in *Time* magazine. In it, he staunchly defended the Altman film and the director's work, stating that the review by Rich was almost communistic, "unobjective, biased, and malicious." Sklansky recognized Altman as a complex artist, demanding both intellect and motivation to be understood. The newspaper was intrigued, but did not publish the piece, whereupon Sklansky sent it to *Time* magazine, which also refused it.



Lobby card for *Quintet*.



"I read it and could not believe my eyes. It could just as easily have been an article in a Russian newspaper: just as self-assured and unsubstantiated, similarly unobjective, biased and malicious...it seems important for me to respond."

"He is a complex artist, and one needs both intellect and a keen heart to understand him. His films are not aimed at commercial success. Their worth lies elsewhere: in the search, in the discovery, the influence on society."

"The editorial staff of Time may well take note that since its magazine is one of the largest in America, its duty to society is, I think, to protect the talent in this country and not to fulminate against it. An artist whose way of thinking differs from that of the greater part of society is a treasure, not vice, of that society." - Yasha Sklansky