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interview

PETR LOM

director,
international competition

"You have to develop a thick skin when you do this kind of work"

After a two-hour masterclass on "Being a Documentarian" - in which Petr Lom had long discussions with the audience about his latest film and about two of his earlier works, the director of "Back to the Square" reflects on some of the ethical challenges of being a human rights documentary filmmaker.

What is your impression on the reactions that the participants in the masterclass had?

I liked it, it was good, lots of different reactions.

Somebody from the audience criticized your choice of editing the first sequence in the film "Back to the Square" - the Facebook-girl story.

Yeah, she didn't like it, that's OK. Different folks, different strokes.

Do you get a lot of comments like that when you make films on human rights issues?

You always get some criticism, it's normal, it's part of the work. People have different tastes and different opinions so it's normal. You do have to develop a thick skin when you do this kind of work, otherwise if someone is negative, you come home all crushed and depressed. When you meet someone in person like this, it's perfectly fine to have different opinions, it's nice. I used to get really affected by critics, like when you get a bad review in Variety, you feel depressed for a month, it happened after I did my second film. Now I don't care anymore. People are entitled to their opinion, so it's OK.

Does it put things in perspective for you? Does it make you question how you edited it or...

No, it's part of being a director, it's my creative decision, so... The girl in the audience at the masterclass who criticized that sequence was very nice and polite; there was no reason not to be nice back. If she was aggressive or unpleasant I would tell her, go make your own film. I think her criticism was that I mixed humor with something serious - that can make some people feel uncomfortable.

There was another comment from the public that I thought was quite interesting. Somebody questioned your motivation for shooting "Bride Kidnapping", your first film, and he was asking why you



chose to film instead of intervening.

I think it's a bit of a naïve question. I think he doesn't understand the cultural context of what's happening, that's all. What was I supposed to do, throw my camera and go rescue the girl? That's ridiculous. It wasn't kidnapping in a western country, it was a custom. So, it's not your place to do that. And you can see that already. Because you've been allowed in this environment as a foreigner. So, it's not your world, not your place, you're allowed to take a picture of this world, but that's pretty much it. They can figure it out on their own, and the girls can, and you can see that in the film. They're not these helpless victims as these classic stereotypes would portray them. No. They're very strong women who, in the film, take their own lives in their hands and take their own decisions and that's what the film shows too. But I've heard these questions before. They are also very natural reactions - you see something emotional and very strong and you think you should do something. That's honorable, that's understandable.

Maybe filming is intervening.

With human rights films - I think that's a really difficult profession, it

takes a lot of risks and responsibilities. And part of it is this responsibility - when someone is criticizing me and saying "you should have done it differently, you're not neutral, you've done this and this and that"... I don't think people appreciate or show enough respect for the personal risks and the ethical risks that you take by making these kinds of films. For example, if someone says - "you should have intervened", then I tell them that it's important that you can show this story to a whole lot of people. But then, you're still criticized - "but why did you film that?". If you think that I'm a real jerk, that's OK. It's not emotionally or ethically safe that you can avoid everything. And things can go wrong, of course they can. Basically what I feel from a lot of this kind of questions is that someone would want you to get the perfect answer where everyone is safe and everything is OK. But it's not. And for me, that's the challenge of making this kind of films. You have to take that kind of responsibility when you make this kind of films. And I wish people would understand that better.

(continued in pagina 2)



Seven pieces of advice
for the aspiring
documentary photographer

event

KATHLEEN LARAIA MCLAUGHLIN
masterclass,
documentary photography

A very welcome addition to the various cinematographic approaches in the dozens of documentaries at Astra Film Festival was the photography masterclass held by Kathleen Laraia McLaughlin, professor of photographic art, whose images, part of the project "The Color of Hay: The Peasants of Maramureș" can be admired this week in the foyer of Casa de Cultură, where the festival takes place. Kathleen made an elaborate presentation of present day tendencies in documentary photography, backed up with examples of various approaches from renowned contemporary photographers. The illustrative examples included images from Donna Ferrato, whose project, "Living with the enemy", allowed her to intimately record countless cases of domestic violence, the photographic testimonials of Jim Goldberg's project "Raised with wolves", Dana Pop's research about human trafficking in Ukraine or James Nachtwey and Sara Terry's images about the aftermath of wars. All these told us not only the touching stories of the subjects, but also, indirectly, the lives of the photographers who dedicated themselves to their projects, abandoning themselves to the degree of negating their own personal lives - Donna Ferrato, for example, spent 10 whole years documenting her work, living with the families whose lives she was examining and frequently taking rides with the police squads, when they were called to appease some domestic conflicts. Kathleen herself spent no less than a year in Maramureș for "The Color of Hay", and the conclusions of her lecture were passed on to the audience as useful advices for the aspiring photographers:

- if you want to take documentary photos, find a subject that interests you, makes you curious or even afraid;
- it's difficult to find a subject which hasn't already been approached; go for the small stories and the local events;
- there aren't usually any money for the individual photographer, find an NGO with similar interests and work with it;
- find a proper introduction to the community you're interested in;
- be persistent, until familiarity leads to acceptance;
- have trust and respect for the people you're following; listen and communicate;
- be present with all your being, because you are their voice, the one who records their story for posterity.

CRISTINA PETRESCU

eveniment

PETR LOM

director, „Back to the Square“

Ethics and intuition in the profession of a documentarian



Yesterday afternoon, in the Studio Hall, filled to the brim with participants in the masterclass "Profession: documentarian", Petr Lom - director of "Back to the Square" (International Competition) - brought into discussion three of his films: the most recent one - a documentary that focuses on the consequences that the revolution in Egypt had for five people who participated directly in the events that happened in Tahrir Square; his first film - "Bride Kidnapping" - that tells the stories of four girls who were kidnapped in Kyrgyzstan for marriage and "On a Tightrope" - a documentary about the Uighur population, a muslim minority from China, held under strict supervision by the Chinese authorities and forbidden to practice their religion.

Asked the most diverse questions, Petr Lom spoke about the difficult process of finding the characters for "Back to the Square" and of finding the real subject of his film after realizing that the initial subject with which he had arrived in Egypt proved to be too weak and far away from

his real interests. Asked about the possible advantages of shooting in a different culture than his own (the author is well-known for his versatility in choosing the contexts in which his stories take place), Lom went straight to the point and said that the best advantage is that your intuition gets better.

Among the different reactions from the public, there were also some critical comments. Lom had to explain the creative process that led him to the decision of keeping the first sequence from "Back to the Square", stylistically and thematically different from the rest of the film. Also, the director was questioned about his motivation to shoot, instead of intervene in a very dramatic sequence from "Bride Kidnapping" - in which a girl, kidnapped from her home to be married, against her will, to a boy she had never seen before, struggles to be let go, with tears and helpless pleadings. Lom answered that his motivation was to show the world these unjust situations because, in spite of the fact that "Kyrgyzstan swarms with human rights NGO's, nobody was doing anything about this" and everybody was just taking for granted this "tradition" with uncertain origins.

Petr Lom's masterclass didn't just put forward different ethical and practical issues regarding the profession of a documentarist. It worked also as a catalyst for the audience to go deeper into Lom's filmography, which, luckily, looks into some of the most urgent matters out there.

ELIZA ZDRU

Gone Wild

Dan Cureau, Romania

Competition: Eco

Cinematograf, 84'

» Thursday, October 18th, 15:00

Letea is a village in northern Danube Delta. While its geographical location is clear, Letea seams, however, to come from a different time, or even different times - a time of magic charms; a time of three roaming wild horses; Ivan's time, a local child, filming the said horses on his cell phone; a time of inmates brought out to gather reed, work taken up by the villagers these days. In its short (less than 150 years) history, the most recent and probably most important moment was the setting free and abandonment of the horses left without an owner after the CAPs (former communist collectivization institutions) got dismantled. Dan



Cureau manages to capture, along the sad story of these horses with an uncertain future, the various aspects of living in this village and the impact of current times on its inhabitants. The fast pace of the horses' lives, turned almost entirely wild by now, subtly contrasts with the slow, almost non-existent pace of the change in Letea.

MILITON STĂNESCU

Chemical

Andrew Nisker, Canada

Special sections:

Astra Film Junior, 48'

» Thursday, October 18th, 13:00

The western civilization is obsessed with cleanliness. On the one hand, this obsession means that we have bigger chances of living a healthier, longer life - steering clear of microorganisms and diseases that took their toll a century ago. But what if, on the other hand, the same chemical products that we use to clean our houses are at least as harmful as germs? A usual American family (middle aged mother and father, three children, one of them - the teenager boy with spikes and another - your usual rebel teenager girl) take on the challenge put forward by Andrew Nisker and try to live for three months without any chemical products. The beginning is more difficult, but, after a couple



of bags full of chemical products are taken to be recycled, the five members of the family gradually discover that one can very well live without carpet detergent or cosmetics. And all this without having to smell like a bunch of cavemen. The chemicals are replaced with natural products, easy to be made inside the household and considerably cheaper. "Chemical", Nisker's second documentary on environmental issues, is a gripping and educational film, especially for the young audience. To stop using harmful products that exist on the market isn't only a very healthy thing to do; the transition process can also be extremely amusing.

CĂTĂLIN STURZA

interview

PETR LOM

director,

international competition

(follow from page 1)

But I was also thinking about intervening in the real sense of the world. You mentioned, for example, that "Bride Kidnapping" is now shown in Kyrgyzstan in educational purposes. So, it actually did change something. Yes, sure. But some people will still doubt your motivation - for example, they'll say you're just out for your career and for a good story for your film. You know, if someone wants to think that, it's OK. I guess it's called giving someone the benefit of a doubt.

When one watches "Back to the Square", one can't help but notice that the characters have a certain urgency to tell their story. How did you manage to gain their trust, as an outsider?

Egypt is different; it takes a lot of time. It was ten months of shooting. Wally's family was very suspicious.

After his first interview, when he tells his story behind the pyramids, after the first day, he never wanted to talk about it ever again. I don't know, maybe somebody scared him away. He had a lot of suspicion. And it took a lot of time. And then we came back a couple of months later and they just accepted us in the family because they heard we were doing something serious. And they said; now, we actually like you. And it was a lot easier then to work with them.

And what about the others?

It would depend. With the Mark Nabil story, it was quite easy. But even with him, there was some suspicion. But he got over it when I went to visit the jail. "Oh, somebody tried". And basically then, putting my film at risk for that... I'd be kicked out of the country for something like that, and then there's no film at all. With Salwa

it took a very long time. She was completely scared, basically, of everybody. She had done a lot of interviews with everybody, with a lot of journalists. With Lamiz and Mohammed - it wasn't that difficult, they were quite open and very trusting too.

You spent quite a long time in Egypt during this period. What's the strongest feeling that you got while witnessing the changes happening throughout the country?

The strongest feeling was anger and outrage that there was continuing injustice happening all the time.

You've done films in such different countries like Kyrgyzstan, China, Iran and Egypt. What's the most difficult challenge that a director has to face when delving in such different countries than his own?

Lots. First of all, don't be stupid, be very careful - try to leave all your prejudices behind, so you have both a really open heart and an open mind when you're filming. And then the biggest challenge is the feeling of confusion that you have most of the time and the feeling of being scared and in a panic that it's not really going to work out. And that can be very stressful for a long period of time. Because you don't really know if it's going to work out. It can go very wrong; you make a

bad decision and you get kicked out by the authorities. In Egypt, of course you're worried about your personal safety all the time. We basically almost got very badly hurt twice, but that's part of the work. We don't talk about these things because it's a reality and it's quite normal if you spend a lot of time in a country like this.

Do you plan on going back to show the characters the film? Have they seen it?

No. In China we showed the film to the characters. With "Back to the Square", no, we didn't show it to the characters. It was also because we were running out of time. Maikel Nabil and his brother Mark saw the film. They were both invited to the premiere. Maikel had just been released from jail and he couldn't come because he was too sick but Mark came and he saw the film. Maikel has now been to other screenings to talk about it and to debate about the film. The others no, they haven't seen it basically because there hasn't been any time. And with Salwa it's like maybe it would be better to just not show it to her. It's a feeling that we kind of want to protect her. That's what I meant when I was talking about these ethical dilemmas, I think Salwa's story is much more interesting than those in "Bride Kidnapping". I felt that

there is something inescapable in her story because you're doing documentaries and you want to show the truth. But her story is much more complex because it looks like she's falling into becoming a prostitute so, we showed that, in a gentle way - some people don't get it. It's not the most flattering way of showing the truth, she's not terribly positive in that way, so what do you with that? I don't know, it's hard.

But don't you think it's more important to tell the truth than to put the characters in a positive light?

Yes, of course it is. When you're a documentary filmmaker, you're dedicated to the truth but you're also dedicated to not hurting people. So, when those two things come into a clash, what do you do? You've got a problem. And you won't solve it. You're either going to make a worse movie, so you're not dedicated to your craft, or there is potential for hurting the subject. Fortunately this hasn't happened because we made this decision. You spend a lot of time making these decisions; I had lots of conversations with the two assistants that I'm working with, and that's the conclusion that we arrived at. Listen, the impact of this film in Egypt is zero, so we shouldn't worry about it.

Interview by ELIZA ZDRU

interview

LAURENȚIU DAMIAN

director, „Corpus“,
„Într-o furtună. Insula“

"Recently I dedicated myself to art documentaries"

You are celebrated, at Astra Film Sibiu 2012, through a "portrait of Laurențiu Damian" special section. What are the difficulties of being a documentarian professional, in Romania?

First of all, I want to express my gratitude for Astra Film Festival, which mediates, each year, the meeting with paramount art and visual anthropology documentaries. Let's say that being a documentarian is a profession, and maybe more, it's a vocation and, last, but not least, it's an adventure. Through the documentary film you make the ephemeral moments of life last forever; this takes patience, sacrifice and the hope that what you do will be seen and understood. But it is only now, I think, that the really hard part begins, as the documentary film has a very restricted circulation. Beyond the national and international festivals circuit, and some TV screenings, the documentary movies, as the animation movies, have almost no exposure whatsoever.

What chances does a young documentarian have to make his first documentary movie, in Romania - if he doesn't obtain the support of the state institutions? How abrupt are the ups and downs, in the career of a Romanian documentarian?

There is always some chance, and even if a project doesn't obtain the financing of CNC, there are people who can be convinced to invest in this kind of films. Still, those people are more and more rare, and many times the effort to find money for financing is much greater, much harder and much more tiresome than the effort to make a film. We all have to understand one thing: either we talk about a young director, or about an accomplished one, they would both have to start over with each movie. The sad part is when you get the feeling that your effort is in vain, that your movies won't shape human minds and won't produce the kind of emotion that you've intended.

At Astra Film Festival two of your documentaries will be screened -

"Corpus" and "Într-o furtună, insula". Those are two different kinds of movies, in terms of their subject and of their approach; one is a poetical movie, that received the UCR (The Romanian Film Union) Award, the other is a documentary about the creation process of a great theatre director - Silviu Purcărete. How do you choose your subjects?

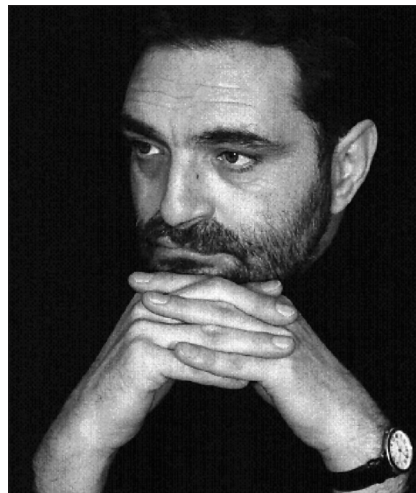
In the recent years I've focused my efforts towards the art documentary. When I meet personalities such as Liliana Iorgulescu or Silviu Purcărete, the desire to make a film is born almost immediately, as, when you make the portrait of a huge artist, either as an essay ("Corpus"), or using images which become, in time, a historical document ("Într-o furtună..."), the subjects come naturally, and the notion of authorship becomes, sometimes, inappropriate, because I, as a documentarian, I have just the quality of an eye witness.

How was your collaboration with Silviu Purcărete - which you have met during the staging of the play "Furtuna" ("The Tempest", an adaptation after William Shakespeare), at the National Theatre Marin Sorescu in Craiova?

I believe the director Silviu Purcărete has made a big effort to accept, in his proximity, a film crew. He is an artist who stays away from publicity and who is generally very reticent to let someone in his creative laboratory. I am grateful to him for accepting me. The fact that there are so few films that present the birth of a theatre play pushed me to be very persistent and I believe the film "Într-o furtună. Insula" is also a gift for myself.

"Corpus" is a documentary in a very different style, which combines poetry with photographic images and with dance. Aren't you afraid that you could be perceived as too lyrical? Is lyricism compatible with the documentaries?

"Corpus" is, first of all, an essay. The emotional and lyrical element comes from the whole philosophy of the body which,



gradually, turns into steam. It is strange that we invest so much time into caring for our bodies, and we very often forget about our souls which, I believe, are eternal.

Which is the film in your career most dear to you?

I love very much a movie that, practically, doesn't exist anymore - we're talking about "Cota zero", a film produced by the Sahia studios, which has brought me a great deal of trouble. In this film, the quota of the human value was zero, and maybe that's why, after an year of waiting on the censors' desks, the film was sacrificed. I'm sorry I wasn't able to hide it somewhere, because, right after I was almost forced to destroy it with my own hand, came the events in 1989; for this film, these events came too late. Today there's one VHS copy left, which is almost impossible to view. It is strange - when I was invited to Toronto with this tape, after a miserable screening, in terms of the video quality, the people raised and started to applaud. They weren't applauding the film - they were applauding my suffering.

Which are the first impressions, at Astra Film Sibiu 2012?

Astra Film Sibiu is and will always be, for me, the moment when the elite of the documentary movies, around the world, comes together, for a whole week, after a single roof.

Interview by Cătălin Sturza

competition

Nine things about nine movies in Eco CinematogrAFF

► The competition category that made its debut last year proves fast to reach maturity, with a turnout of nine films, five more than its inaugural edition.

► The wide range of subjects tackled by this year's feature documentaries (the controversial Roșia Montană story, the equally present in the media horses from Letea, water - globally polluted or overexploited by growing corporations - or the dangers of nuclear energy) is matched by the varied means of expression, be they observational, essay style or investigation documentaries.

► The obvious interest exerted by the category had an impact on other festival areas. Thus, the foyer of the Casa de Cultură a Sindicatelor will play host to the aptly named ReciclART exposition, which aims to draw attention to and propose solutions for the constantly growing amount of waste the world generates.

► Romania is featured in three of this year's feature documentaries: "Gone Wild", a film about Letea and the wild horses there; "Toxic" and Fabian Daub's "Roșia Montană, Town on the Brink"

► Astra Film Junior, AFF's little brother, bears Eco CinematogrAFF's influence, dealing with the omnipresent and vital resource, the deceptively unimposing water. The general intention is to educate the



next generation in the ecologic spirit, and encourage the potential future documentarians.

► Only two of this edition's featured films are signed by Romanian directors, the others coming from such countries as Iceland, Switzerland, Hungary, Belgium, France or Germany.

► Quite a few of the films have taken it upon themselves to send out a warning about issues that concern us all. We are being reminded of the dangers that lurk around the corner of a future that promises to come only too fast, lest we change our direction: "Back to Earth" (the depletion of the non-renewable energy sources), "Bottled Life" and "Silent Snow" (the abuse of Earth's water resources) and "Chernobyl 4 Ever" (the dangers posed by nuclear power plants) hope to wake us up before it's too late.

► Evolution, modernization, expansion - the contemporary trends are targeted by such films as "Corvin Variations" (the dramatic facelift of a Budapest neighborhood) and Snow (the constant development of a ski resort) that use local stories to make a bigger point.

► The importance gained by the young Eco CinematogrAFF can also be assessed by noticing that both Fabian Daub and Andrei Sota chose to have their feature documentaries' premieres during the festival - "Toxic" and "Roșia Montană, Town on the Brink" respectively.

MILITON STĂNESCU

until

The Astra Film Festival documentaries, also to be found at the video bar

This year's Astra Film Festival carries on another tradition, that of the video bar, a place where documentary aficionados have the opportunity to immerse themselves even further in this year's varied film offer. The location is Casa de Cultură a Sindicatelor's foyer, and the available selection will grow day by day,

consisting of the feature documentaries that have been showed at least once in one of the three screening halls - S?ucan, Marshall or Studio.

Wednesday is the first day the public will get the chance to use this facility, seeing how the first festival film screenings took place Tuesday. Those willing to watch again a cer-

tain film or who had to choose between two titles being shown simultaneously will now have the opportunity, upon presenting a festival ticket (regardless of type or issue date), to catch them on one of the six wide screen TVs available until the end of this year's festival.

MILITON STĂNESCU



interview

VINTILĂ MIHĂILESCU

anthropologist

"The love for reality is something one learns over time"

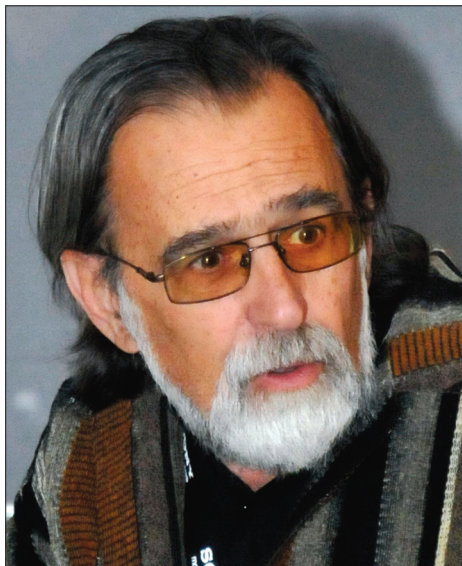
Vintilă Mihăilescu, cultural anthropology professor at the Bucharest Political Sciences National School, is a constant writer in the cultural weekly publication "Dilema Veche". Wednesday and Thursday he will be partaking in the "Roma Stories" masterclass within the Astra Film Festival.

The "Roma Stories" masterclass is built around the investigation of Roma people in documentaries. Wednesday, for instance, three movies on the subject have been scheduled - "The Gypsy Ball", "The Truth about the Holocaust" and "Helping Mihaela". Is this a new issue?

In a way this isn't a new subject, but it hasn't been thoroughly analyzed or tackled often enough. We're not talking about different subjects, it isn't a festival within a festival, it is a consideration of the approach, of the way we look at Roma communities, especially since, from this perspective, they are frequently stereotyped. This masterclass' philosophy is looking at two or three films on the same subject but from different angles. What we're interested in is becoming aware as much as possible of these perspectives, and not the subjects themselves, because that's being done anyway by politics and sociology.

To paraphrase Eco, in order to get approach literature, one has to make a fictional pact. What kind of pact is there when watching a documentary film? How do you approach it?

With a love for reality. Noting that (as trivial as the note is), a documentary film is not a reality cut/paste. I think there needs to be love for reality, because the amount of subjectivity and emotion is huge. What brings about the change in perspective is a certain kind of respect and empathy towards the people you are presenting or whose life you're following. That's what I mean by love for reality. Unlike the other kind, the love for reality is something one learns in time. Because you can be very willing and pass by reality or by



a whole series of tiny signs these reality manifests itself through. Or, since you mentioned Eco, what we've got here is a sort of reality semiotics, or semiology, to be a little more modest, which, as with any profession, one needs to learn. For instance, the fact that I'm drinking this coffee like this and not like this. These are trivial details, of course, but life is built out of trivial details.

...or out of sticking to the codes.

Obviously, a cultural codes analysis, first and foremost, because, this way, we can be by the way. And here we can get back to the Roma communities, which we understand entirely differently, because we're reading through our own codes. When you make a documentary film or when you make an analysis, you go beyond these appearances. On the other hand, of course there are not only larger cultural codes, but also communitarian signs. Ultimately, there is of course the individual personality, with its own means of expression. A documentary has to be able, firstly, to listen to the other. That's because there exists, anyway, the artist's twofold temptation, but also of the intellectual or the pundit, to say "no, no, I know better, I

understood what you were saying, I'll take over from now on, I'll stage it". Most documentary films, when they sin, they sin by going over auctorial role and statute. And when they don't have the patience to listen, you can instantly feel it. You can immediately realize if a film was willing or not to take the time to listen. Sometimes, though, you get a different level of problems - they didn't have the time to listen. They had to complete the film in a week, or three days - we're on very, very slippery ground here because you ask yourself what you can do in three days, three months or three years. It won't come out the same.

How relevant is to divide films into documentaries and features, given that sooner or later each seeks a narrative frame? How much fiction does a documentary film require and the other way around?

This festival's history responds in a certain way. I recall that, when it started, both indoors and outdoors, it could be defined as a sort of purism - "we only want to see genuine documentaries". There was a desire for truly anthropological films and nothing else; anything that didn't fit this profile was uninteresting, because it was something else. Time showed that this was a very hard classification to make. Proof stands the fact that, year after year, even the festival's name got more lax. It proved impossible to have a solely anthropological film, or a perfectly ethnographic one and nothing else. On the other hand, the auctorial and "voicing the people" have to be balanced. You always have to combine, otherwise we could make nothing out of a documentary film that would just set a camera on a character and allow him to speak indefinitely. That's the difference between a literary character, constructed but able to live, and a character that might be less "alive", less striking, simply because that's how they are in real life. You can sense they are really speaking though. It's impossible to grasp where (or

whether) the author is voiced and where the character, the real life human being. Hence, this is another hard line to draw. But, when you stray from the frontier between the two, you start really getting a feel of the differences. On the other hand, I think there are two types of films - the good and the bad. And that's that. Often, a fictional film can recount, explain or, anyway, express a reality more complex than a dozen documentaries, because it managed to capture that code, that essence of a social life better than a dozen hours of documentary films. That's the criterion based on which I was talking about good and less good films.

How would you define a good documentary? Accuracy, authenticity, distance kept from the followed subject?

I guess all of the above. And besides, a higher up film takes a different type of research than a fictional one. When making a feature film, a fictional film, you let things grow in your mind for a year, two, ten year, God knows how long, but there's no need for research on the subject, no need for any empirical documentation. When a documentary film lacks its serious, methodic research, there's always the risk it will show it just skimmed the surface, it's surfing, not a documentary. A documentary film needs to give itself time. A film completed in three days is, maybe, a television feature report - it's a chapter, a very noble and worthy effort, but not a documentary. It needs to give itself time for a very simple reason: people you talk to don't open up at first sight, they don't talk on basic principle to strangers. Whether it happens in Romania, Bangladesh, the Himalayas or the North Pole, it takes time until you can open up to a stranger, before you can talk, before you can stop looking into the camera. For an hour of filming, you need at least a week of chatting, tea or coffee drinking, sharing stories, talking walks and going through doors. There are films made on the other side of the door, and then there are films made around the table, in the house or on the terrace. You can feel that right away, from the atmosphere, the general air of the people, the way they talk, the way they look at you or the way they wave their arms when they talk. You can feel the relaxation or lack thereof. Anyone with an eye for things like this, anyone who has seen people can feel when that being on the screen can't find his place, being embarrassed, or when he answers beside the point. When the latter happens, you know the passing through hasn't been achieved. In short, a good documentary film is the one that manages to pass through the door, into the house, into the person's soul. Within the limits of decency, of course. But you have to feel it wasn't done over the fence.

Interview by LAURA DUMITRESCU

PARAGRAFF

ZIARUL ASTRA FILM
FESTIVAL SIBIU



Redactor-șef: Cristina Petrescu
Redactori: Cătălin Sturza, Robert Bălan, Laura Dumitrescu, Militon Stănescu, Eliza Zdru
Tehnoredactor: Nicu Ilie
Foto: Francisc Arrany, Eliza Zdru, Sebastian Marcovici

The Camp

Tomek Jeziorski, Poland
Competition, Student, 19'

» Wednesday 17 oct., 14:30, Săucan Hall
» Thursday 18 oct., 17:00, Studio Hall

The subject of Tomek Jeziorski is acute: organizing a camp where, through very touch trainings, preadolescents with weight problems are supposed to lose weight appears as a strange echo of a labor camp. The physical pressure of forced starvation is but the first avatar of physical torture, sometimes self-inflicted, sometimes imposed from outside, by a castrating institution which turns humans into brutes, without healing them of their ills. There are no treatments and there are no benign surrogates; there is only a sick bent of the children to assume a diffuse culpability, identifying with their own obsessions - "I'm a delicious pizza". The pimply children, with pubescent reactions, very susceptible to influence and very



easy to break, are observed in the intimacy of their need for love, of comfort and happiness. It is interesting to observe, in Jeziorski's movie, the therapeutic reversal, through the complementarity of the image and of the soundtrack: what is never expressed as an opportunity for a confession is tardily pronounced in a disco incantation which resound beyond the intro - "I wanna get my energy" by Martin Solveig or "Rejection" (Ian Carey Mix).

LAURA DUMITRESCU

vox pop

» During the opening day cocktail, two young people, each carrying a huge backpack, stand out in the crowd. "I'm from the Czech Republic; my wife's from Japan. We both came in Sibiu especially for the Astra Film Festival. I'm conducting a series of anthropological studies on the Romanian Orthodox Christianity and I spent a few weeks in Sâmba(ța de Sus, at the monastery. A monk told me about this place; as an anthropologist, I decided to visit Sibiu, and here I found out about the festival. Yep, we're planning on staying all week. [his wife]: We have a friend who invited us to stay over at his place, but we're looking for a hostel in Sibiu. [Ondrej, as we found out his name was Ondrej Landa]: We haven't seen the time table yet, but we plan on seeing as many films as possible, since you're not often presented with the opportunity to see this many documentaries on anthropology in the same place. Our only concern is that many of them are shown simultaneously, and we might not get the chance to see as many as we'd like."