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Follow new Slovak film titles and find out what's on the above pictures. Send the right answer to kinecko@kinecko.com and win a great original prize from Kinečko.

### Welcome! Dobro došli! **Bienvenue! Willkommen! Benvenuti! Youkoso!**

Our dear English-speaking readers, we very much appreciate your kind support so far. Here's our way of saying "Thank you!" - the first English issue of our magazine, under the title TheKINEČKO. Now you can enjoy more than just the sight of our pretty cover envelopes, the pics inside, and the bonus DVDs included with each issue. Our goal was to give you the chance to enjoy the content of this unique Slovak film magazine. Many of you that we have interviewed, met at festivals, organised discussions and projections with, but above all, become friends with, have been encouraging us to publish an issue that you would be able to read and understand.

To those not yet familiar with KINEČKO, we dedicate these words introducing our project:

KINEČKO is a new bimonthly magazine that reflects cinematography in the context of contemporary culture, presents to the public a profound non-conformist analysis of film, and supports writing about film as a relevant component of living cinematography. It also serves as a source of information and a platform for unofficial, yet well-founded debate between contemporary filmmakers and critics. The target group of KINEČKO comprises film professionals, students, festival-goers, film club members, film enthusiasts without limits, and those interested in sharing a bolder perspective on contemporary cinematography. Slovakia scarcely has 5 million inhabitants, its cinematography is very small, and therefore writing about film in our country was until recently considered a luxury. Some even saw it as a certain kind of unnecessary parasitism. That is why KINEČKO set the goal to raise awareness of film not only by means of writing about cinematography. We also provide opportunities for filmmakers and film critics to meet as equals, to reflect on the problems of cinematography, and to cultivate film conditions together. The choice of articles included in the Slovak version of KINEČKO is a little different from the English version you are reading right now. The Slovak KINEČKO tries to focus more on local activities, and emphasizes remarkable film enterprises that are neglected or ignored by the mainstream. It is divided into 5 sections: Around the World, Close Up of Slovak Film, Film Basement (an underground look at underground film), Beyond

Cinema (a section dedicated to video art and other crossovers of film with fine art) and D.I.Y. (legal counselling for producers). Apart from publishing the magazine, KINEČKO also organises debates and screenings related to the articles included in the magazine. As film distribution in our country lags behind world premieres, it is essential to us that viewers have the chance to see the contemporary creation that they read about.

We decided to adjust The KINEČKO to the interests and priorities of foreign readers who probably expect a Slovak magazine to convey information mainly about Slovak film and Slovak filmmakers. For this reason we have prepared a number of texts written and translated exclusively to briefly present you with the contemporary situation in Slovak cinematography. The overview you find here doesn't copy the statistics of film attendance that you can find on the internet. It abides by the original taste of The KINEČKO's editorial team. Apart from the Slovakia-related content, we have also included exclusive interviews with world renowned filmmakers.

In the following section entitled At our closest neighbours we crossed our border to track the situation in Czech cinematography. Czech film has played a very significant role in Slovakia. For almost half century we were united as one country and the languages we speak are very similar, so we have never regarded our neighbours as a "foreign country." However, it wouldn't be justifiable to include the account of Czech cinematography in the Slovak section. The last part of The KINEČKO will take you on a journey around the world. Even though most of you live in countries with first-rate film criticism and famous film magazines, countries abounding in quality film press, we couldn't help but share with you some of the most exciting encounters and most interesting interviews that we experienced last year on our festival trips. There were many, but unfortunately we had to pick just three to fit onto the 12 pages.

For the editorial team of KINEČKO, I would like to wish you pleasant reading, and in the name of young Slovak film, I hope you will find much inspiring information on the following pag es. And if you feel like sharing your ideas, reactions or advice, or to get some extra copies of The KINEČKO for your friends, colleagues or festivals, don't hesitate to e-mail us at kinecko@ kinecko.com. We will also be very glad if you befriend us on Facebook, or follow our activities at www.kinecko.com. Still haven't found out why we named this issue The KINEČKO? We wanted to give the international issue an international name, so we added the English article, but we also wanted to preserve the Slovak diacritical mark over the C, which most foreigners find so "cute" and characteristic of our language. By the way, did you know that the English translation for KINEČKO would be "little cinema"?

The KINEČKO doesn't approve of any walls or boundaries, so readers can enter without being afraid of going astray, and without worrying about any barriers that would impede their minds to move freely. However, we would like to offer you our guidance to make your excursion into this imaginary landscape more effective.

The picture you are looking at is a screenshot from one of the Slovak films mentioned in the following articles. If you can identify the film and are the first to send the correct answer via e-mail to KINEČKO, you will receive a small present and an opportunity to publish your own photo riddle on the cover of the next edition of The KINEČKO.

After you have finished reading the editorial, you will probably proceed to "Close Up of Slovak Film," the section introducing the most interesting pieces originating in Slovak film. It also reviews the rises and falls of last year's cinematography, and foreshadows some events to come this year. We introduce seven active young filmmakers through their answers to our questions, and you will also have the opportunity to read reviews of Slovak films.

EVA KRIŽKOVÁ (trans. by BD)

Production and distribution of magazine and DVD is financially supported by



# The Unforgettable Adventures And Experiences Of Kinečko In 2011

2011 was the first full year of Kinečko, and so the first to be reviewed by its editors as a whole. Life with Kinečko is colourful, sometimes demanding, sometimes hectic, and it is difficult to choose a "best of" list of events. That's why we have decided to concentrate on the Slovak region where about half our editors' activities are concentrated.

**Early melons** / student film festival (16. – 20. 3. 2011) www.earlymelons.com

Early Melons is an international student film festival founded by a group of enthusiasts who, after having graduated from the Film Faculty, haven't reconciled with the fact that they shouldn't organise student festivals anymore. They decided to run their own festival, a better one, unbarred by any institution. The festival is unique in its freshness, like having a chilled melon on a summer beach with no refreshment stands. Its selection of films, its side events, its visuals, and the PR, prove the personal commitment of the organizers. The films awarded at the last edition were published on a DVD included with Kinečko n°5. We were very sorry to hear that in 2012 the festival might not take place, most probably due to "material fatigue". Please look at its website and, if you have an interest in participating, write to the festival directors Eva uwe@earlymelons.com or Eva eva@ earlymelons.com (the co-mothers of Melons are Eva&Eva – much like the two of us here at Kinečko). Please urge them not to give up!

**DOC.sk** / documentary festival (13.–16. 4. 2011) www.filmdoc.sk

The second edition of the sole festival of documentary films in Slovakia slipped through our fingers – and we are sure as hell sorry to have missed it. The 2012 edition is firmly marked on the Kinečko calendar, with three exclamation points attached!

#### Art Film Fest / festival (17. 6.–25. 6. 2011) www.artfilmfest.sk

Veteran attendees of international film festivals regard the Slovak Art Film Fest more as a garden party than a relevant event in international film business. But is this really such a bad thing? It is for us Slovaks who don't have any more serious nor grander festivals. But the veteran festival-goer may welcome it as an extremely pleasant relief from their often too challenging agenda. Art Film Fest has two simultaneous venues: the larger city of Trenčín and the nearby Trenčianske Teplice health resort. It is especially this cosy spa town that is worth visiting: not only for its archiecture, both modern and historical, but also its beautiful surroundings and blooming flora at Festival time. And so, in spite of the festival boasting such program highlights as this year's Michael (a Cannes opener), the opening nights of the most important Slovak films, or the visits of stars such as Emir Kusturica and Jean-Claude Carrière, the true highlight might be having a glass of wine on the lovely terrace amidst the beautiful, lush green of the spa's park. Many gifted film makers, ones we might soon hear of in the near future, have grumbled here, though in a friendly tone, commenting on the fact that this beautifully set festival has no relevant industry agenda. Come and see for yourselves. And should you get a little lost in the park and not find the wine, just ask for Milka or Eva, and everything will be arranged for you as if with a magic wand.

### Midpoint, Forum / workshop www.midpoint-center.eu www.character-fda.eu

In spite of the absence of an industry agenda at Art Film Fest, its 2011 edition included two events for film professionals, extraordinary in the Slovak context by both their meaning and their stimuli – which might be a sign of a welcome take off. Firstly MIDPOINT, the international screenwriting and dramaturgy workshop aimed at the fresh graduates and senior students of five participating film schools (Bratislava's VŠMU, Prague's FAMU, and schools in Lodz (PL), Budapest (HU) and Bucharest (RO)). The first of its two instalments took place during the Art Film Fest in Trenčianske Teplice. Supervised by tutors renowned in the field of screenwriting, dramaturgy, film direction and creative production, the attendees worked on their screenplays, strived to present their projects publicly at pitching forums, joined lectures, and established their first models of international cooperation. MIDPOINT's most prized guest was Jean-Claude Carrière, the long-time collaborator of Luis Buñuel and Miloš Forman. In August, MIDPOINT ended with its second instalment. The final pitching forum ran at Prague's FAMU on September 2. The € 1,000 prize went to Momo, the best project for a short, and was awarded to Teodor Kuhn and Jakub Viktorin of VŠMU Bratislava (Slovakia), and a € 1500 prize went to *Bloody Easter*, the best project for a feature, to Magda Bittner and Lubomír Konečný of FAMU Prague (Czech Republic).

The last days of Art Film Fest belonged to the first edition of an event dedicated to the further education of film producers, directors and other creative staff, and to promoting Slovak films. FÓRUM focuses on the promotion of co-production, advertising, festival presence, and sales of Slovak films on international markets. Eleven projects in various states of production were chosen. Nine international professionals consulted the projects in one-to-one meetings, as well as giving public lectures (the Dutch producer Raymond Van Der Kaaij, the French producer Jean-Luc Ormières, also some famous characters from the fair and festival grounds such as Gabriele Brunnenmeyer, Martina Bleis, Florian Weghom, and Marzena Moskal).

### Ján Kadár in English / book in cooperation with SFU and VŠMU

At the same Art Film Fest, a monograph by the Slovak film historian Václav Macek on the Slovak film director and Academy Award Winner Ján Kadár was launched. With The Shop on Main Street (Obchod na korze), Kadár won the 1965 Best Foreign Language Feature Award, and later earned acclaim as a director, living in the USA and Canada. Attending the launch was Kadár's long-time collaborator and friend, Sharon Mann. Find out whether the book is available in shops near you. If so, add it to your best film books collection. If not, tell us and we'll let you know retailers.

Upstream / literature Marenčin PT Publishing House, in cooperation with SFU

Our greatest film journalist, the now ninety years-old Pavel Branko, has published his memoirs as Upstream (Proti prúdu). The title is accurate. This cordial and wise gentleman, whom you may even today encounter regularly in cinemas with his little knapsack and a smile on his face, has had his fair share of rough times during every historical and political era, and his personal life. Born on a ship, surviving a Nazi camp, persecuted by the communist regime, and a failed first marriage. For us film lovers, the most important is his ability to comment directly and without compromise, in an original way, and with deep insight into both Slovak and international films.

### Fest Anča / animation festival (1.7. - 3.7.2011)www.festanca.sk

In spite of financial hardships, the fourth year of the international festival of film animation has taken place in its most demanding form as far as production values are concerned. No money was left for the red carpet, though Fest Anča sharply dismisses it anyway – even though a red (not a communist) scarf remains a fetish. Though the weather played the foulest in Fest Anča's history, unfit neither for end-of-school atmosphere nor open-air agenda, the festival atmosphere remained aloof. A tent village next to the Žilina-Záriečie station emerged despite the rain. This year's increased attendance was a bit of a surprise, even though it had risen steadily in recent years. This was certainly due to the augmentation of venues: the City theatre Žilina and the Cinema City multiplex in the Mirage Mall. A grand agenda the biggest problem of which was to attend everything, a record attendance of international (but above all, precious and sweet) festival guests, and last but not least, the receptive public. All this created a four-day animation-friendly environment. On top of the traditionally untraditional program, Fest Anča has created a tradition of Animation Karaoke Battle – the live dubbing of animated film sequences. This latest edition of the festival, taking place at a train station, has marked Kinečko in many ways. Not only have we seen great films, drank great beer, and enjoyed healthy vegan food in the stands at the station. We also made acquaintance with the Swiss animator Frank Braun, and the French experimentalist Pip Chodorov. Frank invited us and warmly accommodated us during his Fantoche animated film festival; and Pip in his Paris publishing house RE:VOIR prepared a selection of the most interesting experimental films from the early 20th century to date that we made available as two DVDs with Kinečko issues.

### Cartoons / film

Animated films and documentaries thrive in Slovakia, they even seem to be getting ahead of feature production. We are delighted by the success of the film for children, Who's There (Kto je tam?) by Vanda Raýmanová (awarded in its category at Animateka in Slovenia), which saw the light of day in 2010, almost simultaneously with our Kinečko. And its director was our first interviewee. The children's film genre is long neglected in Slovakia. Therefore we welcome this successful, intelligent and witty kids' cartoon - pretty much as if we ourselves were the intended audience! We must not forget that with Kinečko, the specialized animated film magazine Homo Felix has also survived its first year. This year its editor-in-chief Ivana Zajacová-Laučíková finished the film *The Last Bus* (Posledný autobus) (in collaboration with Martin Snopek), and it has already won the Grand Prix Maestro at the Animateka festival in Slovenia. One of the authors of videos for Kinečko<sup>1</sup>, Peter Budínsky, was successful as well: his sick humour film about Siamese boxing twins was also chosen for the Animateka shortlist.

**4 ELEMENTS**<sup>2</sup> / festival (seminary) (11. – 14. 8. 2011) www.4zivly.sk

4 ELEMENTS calls itself a film seminary instead of a festival. The venue is Banská Štiavnica, one of the most picturesque and beautiful towns in Slovakia. It has a single genuine cinema, this fact being compensated for by scores of site-specific locations perfectly suitable for DVD or 16mm screenings: a mining gallery, various cafés, the Old Castle... The most important thing about 4 ELEMENTS is the opportunity to discuss films anywhere, including pubs; the organizers don't seek or plan to educate the audience. Rather, they choose a subtle way of drawing attention to themes that they consider to be of interest. This year's theme was memory and its diversified relation to film. In this year's framework, the first KinečkoWorkshop took place - a class on creative writing about film.

### House 3/ film

Despite the fact that *House* does not top its home box office, we at Kinečko see it as proof that Slovaks are capable of shooting an accomplished European film. Recently at the IFF Trieste, it was awarded the Best Feature Film prize.

Kino Lumière / a new cinema Address: Špitálska ul. č. 4, Bratislava

In today's era of mono-audience shutdowns, any new theatre opening (or reopening) produces a spark of joy. After years of courtroom battles with the previous tenant, the Slovak Film Institute has succeeded in reopening the cinema in the long defunct Charlie's Centre. Alas, the Institute's Director has paid for his willingness to serve cinephiles literally with his own blood the former tenant had him attacked and beaten. We all hope this is to be the last desperate outrage of the mafia obstructing art and culture. Ki<mark>no Lu</mark>mière opened its doors on September 5, 2011. At n°4, Špitálska St., four

sessio<mark>ns a</mark>re screened a day, in two thea<mark>tres.</mark> Both theatres were revamped: new projection screens were installed, the partly defunct technologies overhauled, the sound upgraded to Do<mark>lby S</mark>tereo. The program repertory has a wide range from alternative domestic, European and world cinema. With a few more improvements to be done, and a webpage soon to be launched, art film lovers in Bratislava will have a safe and comfortable haven – finally.

#### Saša and Katka (National Cinematographic Centre of the SFI<sup>5</sup>)

Official representation of Slovak cinema abroad www.aic.sk

Many of you already know the two charming, witty and smart young ladies from the Slovak navilion at international film fairs and markets - Alexandra Strelková, director, and her colleague Katarína Tomková, of the National Cinematographic Centre. Whatever you need festival, just ask them. (Girls, thank you for supporting Kinečko. May you feel a deserved and ever increasing sense of pride for the films you represent abroad. Keeping our fingers crossed!)

### KINEČKO (trans. by DJ)

- 1 You can see the advertising, report and interview videos produced by Kinečko and friends at www.vimeo.com/kinecko or at www.kinecko.com
- 2 The original Slovak title is 4 živly
- 3 The original Slovak title is Dom
- 4 More on House in an interview with Zuzana Liova in the article Have a bite.
- 5 Slovak Film Institute





### What's Ahead For Kinečko In 2012?

The life of Kinečko is pretty elemental and its path often unpredictable. Yet there are things in the future we very much look forward to:

### Comeback / film / www.mir@remo.sk

The documentary filmmaker Miro Remo is soon to hit the world stage. Remo, whose student film Arsy-Versy about a very different batman has scored high in many short film festivals – and not just at the student ones. Comeback is about convicts and their complicated return to freedom. We all hope that Arsy-Versy was not just a lucky draw, and that this full feature will confirm Mire Remo as a member of the vigorous generation o<mark>f Slo</mark>vak documentary filmmakers, such as Peter Kerekes, Marko Škop, and Zuza Piussi. We at Kinečko even feel that if such is the case, Miro with his "rural" freshness might even bec<mark>ome an extrao</mark>rdinary ph<mark>enomenor</mark> in a class of his own.

### All the way to a town called Ash / film

Finally this year a much expected major surprise will hit the screen. The feature All the way <mark>to a t</mark>own called Ash (Až do mesta Aš) by director Iveta Grófová is set on the Czech-German border. There, people from both sides gather, each looking for something. Girls looking for decent living as seamstresses in a clothing factory, and nearly-well-off Germans searching for cheap entertainment. It all melts down to a Babylon of values and tongues, with all established barriers being torn down. It was originally meant to be a documentary. After six years of filming it became clear that the feature form suits the theme better. The director has worked with non-actors and with naturals, deploying among them her secret force, the provocateur Silvia Silviová (who happens to be a collaborator of Kinečko as well. We use her as an agent provocateur too, mostly).

### Velvet Terrorists<sup>1</sup> / film

A trio of directors – Peter Kerekes, Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík – are finishing their mutual film on terrorist acts in the zakia. Many such acts barely left the heads of their initiators. Most never materialized; nevertheless such were lonely and heroic calls from the grey and homogeneous mass of "normalized" citizens. In the second plan, the questions of morality, the irrationality of terrorism as such, its meaning and lethal power in today's world are raised. We can see right now that this is going to be a trip, but let's hope a good one.

### The Goat<sup>2</sup> / film

For Ivan Ostrochovský, 2011 was a very strong year as far as his directorial activities are concerned. Apart from Velvet Terrorists, he will present his own documentary film about a flyweight-boxer, who engages on a desperate last European tour in order to earn enough money to save his relation, Michaela, with

whom he shares everything on the outskirts of a small town in Eastern Slovakia. He hits the road in the company of the local usurer, who sees an opportunity to make extra cash over the boxer's bruises.

### Miracle<sup>3</sup>/film

I am not speaking only for Kinečko when I say that we all await a *Miracle*. This time in the form of a feature film by Juraj Lehotský. His 2008 documentary Blind Loves (Slepé lásky) was the first film, after 37 years, to represent Slovakia at Cannes. Moreover, he did not return empty handed, winning the Prix de la CICAE awarded by the International Confederation of Art Cinemas. Now, Juraj has moved to the field of fiction features where, in his own words, he feels more at ease. Miracle is an intimate story of a 15-year old girl who for her great love turns up in a reformatory.

It is here that she defines her relation to her family and the world anew. She longs to love, but that is not permitted. In spite of all restrictions, she decides to live her life to the full.

### Thanks, Fine⁴ / film

It looks as if the young Slovak director Matyás Prikler, whom you might have encountered in Cannes two years ago with a short of the same name, has an unchanged mood. His upcoming feature is based on the previous short film, retains the title, and may turn out successful as well

### **The Exhibition**<sup>5</sup> / film

The project of documentary filmmaker Peter Begányi (Pornoromantik, Erotic Nation) and not-just-animation-artist Andrej Kolenčík<sup>6</sup> promises to be very innovative, witty and wild. A bitter comedy short with three nonactors taking the lead, exploring the quirky lives on the edge of society, mapping as well as staging the daily routine of lifetime losers. Looking at the postings on social networks shows that the most progressive and wicked members of our young generation of filmmakers take a share in this project.

### **Tigers in the City**<sup>7</sup>

/ film / www.artichoke.sk

You're turning thirty and fear realising your dreams? It may actually be a good thing.8

### Winter 4 ELEMENTS / festival (seminary) 24. - 26. 2. 2012, Banská Štiavnica

What would the "Elements" look like without bathing in the nearby mountain lakes, but skating on them instead? And do they have heating in the only cinema in Banská Štiavnica? The answers await us at the first winter edition of 4ELEMENTS, with "The Others" as the leading theme. The public's attention will primarily be drawn to the Slovak southern border and the divide running through its populace, making "The Others" of those being in the other camp. Film screenings, panel discussions and lectures shall unveil what Slovaks and Hungarians think of each other, as well as of other minorities living in their countries. Filmmakers, critics and also sociology and history experts will analyze the neighbours' relations and their evolution, aided by prime examples of Slovak and Hungarian cinema.

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### **DOC.sk** / documentary festival 17. - 19. 5. 2012, Košice

For the first time in its history, in 2012 the festival will award a Slovak documentary. At the same time it will introduce us to the newest Slovak and world documentaries, commemorate the beginnings of Palo Bielik, one of the first Slovak actors/filmmakers, and approach the experimental documentary genre. A significant ingredient to the festival will be the divide between documentaries and feature films that is being transcended by 'mockumentaries'. The festival is changing its content, but also its form of presentation. Many films will be shown in public spaces – at open-air screenings, or in site-specific design, elevating the film sensation to a new level. This year we will not let the opportunity pass. We have even reached agreement with the organizers on close cooperation. Kinečko's April issue will bear the colours of DOC.sk!

### FEST ANČA / animation festival 28. 6. - 1. 7. 2012, Žilina

Deadline for entries March 30, 2012

The principal events of the festival are around the Žilina-Záriečie train station. The main focus will be – what else – on animated films and their makers. This open-air event focuses **2** The original Slovak title is Koza on the multimedia character and great guests **3** The original Slovak title is *Zázrak* (a number of last year's guests intend to re turn). Hence, besides the screenings visitors can look forward to meeting the authors and film professionals in person; to workshops and lectures (focusing on rotoscope technology, recently made popular by the success of the feature Alois Nebel, but also VJ-ing and mapping), master classes, Animation Karaoke Battle, Pecha Kucha Ancha, concert performances, parties and exhibitions. Among the features, Max Andersson's hottest new Tito on Ice, combining documentary shoots with stopmotion sequences on the same 16mm material, will have its Slovak premiere. In both competition and off-competition sections, visitors will have the opportunity to see the newest animated films, often shown with great success at key festivals like Sundance, Annecy, and nominees for Academy Awards and the Cartoon d'Or. The international three-strong jury of professionals renowned in the field of



Still from Tigers In The City

film animation will award the main prize – the Anča Award – to the best short film. A special three-strong jury will decide on the best music video animation category and present it with the Anča Music Video Award.

Fest Anča traditionally brings retrospectives of world famous creators of animation, dips into its history, and introduces the public to major film schools and festivals. This year's special feature will be animation horror movies. A novelty is an art exhibition presented by Kinečko of Richard Loskot, a young Czech artist.<sup>9</sup> In the Plusmínusnula gallery in Žilina, Richard Loskot (1984) will show his latest works in the field of media art. In his opuses he treats mainly science, the universe, its laws and manifestations, and radio communications in aerial transportation. His multimedia installations have an almost science fiction like impression on the viewer, sometimes with a touch of metaphysics.

### ÁČKO / student film festival

Yet another debt to last year's agenda. The quality level presented at this festival of student films increases from one year to another. There's also an increase in the quantity of workshops by foreign scholars, and the party pics had a pretty sinful look. Too bad the editors of Kinečko were too busy finalizing a new issue at that time and missed all the fun. We put a big red "A" in our 2012 agenda.

By now it is pretty clear there will be much more for KINEČKO to experience in 2012. We'll keep you posted. Should you feel the urge to learn more about any of the above projects, don't hesitate to contact the editors' office at kinecko@kinecko.com.

### KINEČKO (trans. by DJ)

- 1 The original Slovak title is Zamatoví teroristi

- 4 The original Slovak title is D
- 5 The original Slovak title is Výstava
- 6 Andrej Kolenčík, apart from being an animator, is the art director of Fest Anča festival and this year, he premiered his 2nd theatre play.
- 7 The original Slovak title is *Tigre v meste* 8 More in the interview with Juraj Krasnohorský
- and Lucia Siposova in the article Have a bite. **9** The exhibition follows previous events by Kinečko in visual arts. The editors intend to connect the latest events in filmmaking and visual arts, removing the boundaries of the two. In 2011 our regular Beyond Cinema column was successfully complemented with exhibition examples, like the exhibition of two avant-garde artists, Jan Žalio and Petr Kocourek. This made it clear that the intertwining of an interview with a cameo of the artists in our magazine, together with their show presentation, is a good working model where all individual communication channels with viewers/readers mutually support and promote each other.

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### **Have A Bite!**



authors of Tigers In The City

In the last two years, Slovak cinema has harvested quite a few films by young filmmakers. KINEČKO (K) has participated studiously by harvesting interviews with their authors. You're welcome to have a bite of each right here:

### TO ALL LOVERS OF BIG EYES AND TINY BOOTIES<sup>1</sup> Face to face with Vanda Raýmanová<sup>2</sup> (VR).

and director of Who's There?

Vanda Raýmanová and a close team of collaborators have spent five years creating her 10-minute film Who's There? (Kto je tam?)<sup>3</sup>. Presently, she is solving the question of how to bring it to the intended audience - kids.

**K**: Your generation of animation filmmakers are typically moving away from kids' themes, experimenting with the genre, its form and techniques. This fact is in direct correlation with the overall expansion of digital animation. Why did you choose to do a film for kids? And what was your formal approach to its story?

**VR:** I decided to go for a children's theme because I have two kids. I wrote the material itself during maternity leave, having two ideal role models right there. Besides, I felt strongly about children's films not being produced around here – none which today's kids could really be interested in. They are bound to watch what was actually made for us, their parents' generation So here I was with obsolete films on one side, and overly commercial TV productions on the other. I see animated films as one of the few media truly capable of enriching children's emotional sensitivity. This attitude may be pretty much out of fashion, but what I was observing at home pushed me to create something that might attract other children too. As far as the technology is concerned, I never made it past cut-out animation. I love it.

The subject matter of this particular film aside, I always wanted to build something sky-high, and then demolish it. My ambition was to bring feature-film dynamics to it, to do something artistically satisfying. Then I went for a matching theme, one captivating enough for today's children. The real challenge was to find a producer. This is always a problem in Slovakia, especially when a project needs lengthy preparation before you even move to the animation process. In the end, I ended up producing it alone. I have put together a very small team. The entire film was born within a tiny community of friends. Being a visual artist and an animations filmmaker but not a computer expert, the first contact I established was with Mišo Struss<sup>4</sup>. The film animation was done layer-by-layer, but the film's individual plans were put together later in a computer. Together we produced an animatic outlining how the story might work, and pitched for funds. First we were awarded a contribution for the story development by the then-active Audiovízia, later also for the film's production. It was then time to find a proper animation artist. The decision went to a person of the older generation, Gabika Klaučová<sup>5</sup>. The negative cutter Samo Šmálik did all the pre-selections. In the meantime, Marek Šulík<sup>6</sup> went on with the editing. We've cancelled the idea of the film carrying subtitles. Being sure that the Slovak audience has a better ability to adopt translated film versions than is the case with English speakers, the whole dialogue was designed in English. And, having an English version at hand, we can find a distribution company specialized in kids programming more easily.

#### THE BORDERLINE DIRECTOR<sup>7</sup> Face to face with iveta Grofova (IG)

The action of the film All the Way to Town Called Ash<sup>9</sup> (Až do mesta Aš) takes place on the Czech-German border, where people from both sides of the frontier gather, each looking for something in their lives. The girls seek a decent living, working as seamstresses in a clothing factory. The nearly-well-off Germans are looking for cheap entertainment. It all melts down to a Babylon of values and tongues where all established barriers are torn down. **K**: How did your original intention of a documentary about seamstresses in Ash turn into a feature?

: At the beginning I kept visiting Ash, doing my research.



All the Way to Town Called Ash



Choosing the locations, meeting people, and preparing to shoot the documentary. Then I hit a problem. I realized that by shooting factory girls who gradually become hookers or escorts to local Germans, I had hit a vein where the involved women wouldn't share their experience openly and in total honesty anymore. So I chose the overlapping of staged action with documentary sequences. I hired two (non) actresses, Silvia and Dorotka, to infiltrate the milieu as agent provocateurs of sorts. They helped me develop the action of other characters, who themselves were real-life.

### **POST-DELIVERY DEPRESSION<sup>10</sup>** Face to face with Lucia Siposová (LS) and Juraj Krasnohorský (JK)

Post-delivery depression is the name chosen by Lucia Siposová<sup>11</sup> and Juraj Krasnohorský<sup>12</sup> for the state they were in after the shoot and prior to entering the editing room. They went through it already, and by now their film, *Tigers in the City* (Tigre v meste), has seen the light of day. An actress wrote the screenplay and an accomplished physicist ventured in the film's production. Juraj Krasnohorský was apparently interested by film editing from the age of 12, but he really got involved in filmmaking during his four-year stay in Paris – which may or may not be more than X years of studying film in Slovakia. Anyway the Project 100 chose his debut short, X=X+1, to precede Woody Allen's Whatever Works. It looks like this unconventional tandem may have the ambition to stir up the stagnant waters of Slovak film. **K**: What's the film going to be about? Could you put it down in a few words?

**LS:** My all-time inspiration lies in all kinds of funny characters and weirdoes; guys with strange hobbies, looks, and talks. With such characters on board, the story developed spontaneously. And, loving absurd comedy, I've decided to put them in an absurd criminal plot. We open the film with the audience being tossed right into the messy lives of our leading characters, their souls confused, and longing for change. About a week later (film's time), with one of the leading men being chased by a sniper, they somehow manage to tidy up. They tidy up their lives with a sniper on their heels. **K**: Your original ambition seemed to be pretty high. How do

you feel about it now, after the finished shoot? JK: It's not unlike a post-delivery depression. It's actually a pretty common feeling, the director seeing both the successes and the failures. But, the rule goes that at least a third of the filmmaking process is in the editing room. So we've shot evervthing that there was in the screenplay. Some things exceeded our expectations, some less so, and what comes out is in the hands of Marek Kráľovský, the film's editor. What I see as a big gain – the image is brilliant, a fact confirmed by those whom we've shown samples to. The colour coding we stressed is pretty interesting. The image really is one of a kind – not only because we chose to work with a famous French cinematographer<sup>13</sup>, but also because we chose to shoot in cinemascope, hand-held. We also gave lots of creative freedom to both the costume designer Diana Strauszová and the production designer Otto Häusler, who spent the last two weeks prior to the tching each and every element. We went to great lengths getting this right.

### WHAT IVAN OSTROCHOVSKÝ<sup>14</sup> IS WORKING ON

Face to face with Ivan Ostrochovský (IO)<sup>15</sup>

**K:** Ivan, you really work a lot these days. You have shot and produced Town to Town (Z mesta do mesta) TV series, taken part in preparing the *Slovak cine* project, and by now have

several films of your own in progress. One of the projects you are fond of is Goat (Koza)<sup>16</sup>, a social study of a Roma boxer taking knocks from virtually everywhere, and in every meaning of the word. The screenplay is written as if for fiction, while the main role is a real person. Moreover, the film has a genuine narrative, it even resembles an action feature. Tell me something about the method you opted for to shoot it. IO: Goat is not a typical documentary at all. I had three op-

tions: to cast Koza's part with an actor; to leave it to non-actors; or most likely, have real-life Koza sided by an actor. Koza is an ordinary Roma boxer, and to direct him in feature-film fashion poses a tough problem. That's why I need him sided by an actor. I've also found the appetite to try working with actors. I am not questioning what film genre or family this turns out to fit into. I care that it really *works*. What we did with Marek Leščák<sup>17</sup> was sit down, write the screenplay, and while doing so, make a vision of the finished film. Naturally, th<mark>ings</mark> don't go your way all the time. For instance, I wanted Koza to lose a fight. When you want to show a person's downfall, lost fights are a symptom. But he won, and I left that in the film. That's the documentary approach. Later in the dressing room, a "partner actor" waits for him, and here we are in a feature film. But you know that the ongoing discussion – of what still qualifies as a documentary, and where it starts to count as a fea<mark>ture film – has no meaning to me.</mark> **K:** You've never worked with a screenplay before? **10:** No. Maybe this is why I wanted to put it to the test.

K: So what method do you use in the case of the Terrorists project? And why terrorists?

IO: People ready to kill and die for an idea – that's a strong statement, a subject that will probably never cease to interest both authors and audiences alike. There is a thousand ways to approach this theme. Such is the case of films about partisans, terror<mark>ists, commu</mark>nist<mark>s... O</mark>ne of the reasons we have chosen the te<mark>rrorist theme is that it's so very profane these</mark> days, with everyo<mark>ne seeming</mark> to <mark>know</mark> what is "really" going on. We w</mark>ill try to undermine this media-generated image. Once again, the shape was given by the reality of "terrorism, Slovak style." The people we found simply characterize as small-time amateurs and dreamers. People often associate acts of terror with either a sophisticated worldwide network, or with a hairy guy garnished with bombs somewhere in Baghdad. What we show are people who fundamentally differ from this image and context. The perfection lies in the context being our own, which makes it all the more understandable to the "little Slovak man."

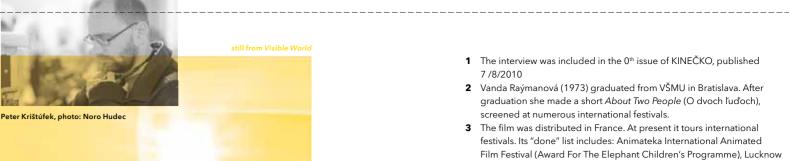
### HOUSEBOUND<sup>19</sup> Face to Face with Zuzana Liová<sup>20</sup>

What do screenwriters do after leaving school? Need money. Write sitcoms. If we're talking about major talents with enough luck and stamina, a break from this normal routine may occur and they will pursue something that has a deeper meaning for them. What did Zuzana Liová do after leaving school? She produced a feature film for television. And a documentary. And wrote sitcoms. In 2003 she was awarded the famous Tibor Vichta prize, which propelled her *House* (Dom) screenplay westward. In a gentle and quiet way. In 2007, ev erybody was surprised to hear the good news: at the Cannes festival, Zuzana had won the Krzysztof Kieślowski prize, the peak of her attendance in the ScriptEast program (MEDIA). **K**: In six years you wrote five versions of *House*<sup>21</sup>. What did the long intervals do to the screenplay?

**ZL:** I am not sure whether attending three workshops and returning to the same theme over a long period of time is a good way. I threw something out, something stayed in, and then again, and again. My own opinion on the subject kept changing. And, the eternal hesitation – is it the father's story or the daughter's? The structure seemed simple: three story lines.



Zuzana Liová, photo: Tereza Križková



But all of a sudden it was awfully difficult to come up with a Gestalt that would allow all three lines to interact. Right after finishing Silence (Ticho) I rewrote House again, this time with a more "filmish" approach. Then I took a break from it, writing a TV series. This has filled my head with trashy practice. When I went back to *House*, it was tough to get rid of that. K: With yourself directing, does your screenplay behave? ZL: I throw out what I want. I put in what I want, so far as it doesn't pose a production values problem. We had a scene shot, showing a turn in the relations of the father, his elder

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daughter, and her husband. It looked a disaster. Nothing w<mark>orked. It wa</mark>s bad, and I just knew I had to shoot it again, but I didn't feel like it at all, the thing annoyed me completely. Which made me think about this particular spot, and look at it from a different point of view. The entire sequence was spread over three scenes. In the end, I made a radical turn in the story line and condensed it into a single scene. For the better, I think.

K: House is a Czech and Slovak co-production. The sine-quanon of the Czech side was the production of two language ver sions. How was this put into practice?

**ZL:** It was really tough. First we did the readings in Slovak. We even started to shoot in Slovak. A moment came when Mr Krobot<sup>22</sup> stalled, feeling he didn't act as well as he could in Czech. So we carried on in Czech, finishing both versions in p<mark>ost-</mark>pro<mark>ducti</mark>on. I s<mark>pent</mark> three da<mark>ys w</mark>ith Mr Krobot befo</mark>re the shoot, co<mark>unting the syll</mark>ables in hi<mark>s individual li</mark>nes.

### "I WOULD RATHER BE A FREAK THAN A CRACKER"23 Face to face with Peter Krištúfek<sup>24</sup>

Slovak readers know Peter Krištúfek thanks to his novels. We want to introduce him as a film director. Just recently<sup>25</sup> his debut feature Visible world (Viditel'ný svet) premiered at the IFF Bratislava. In the film, he puts binoculars in the hands of Ivan Trojan<sup>26</sup> – a specialist in portraying weirdoes and all kinds of odd characters – and lets him loose to play the "lonely-Oliver-meets-the-unsuspecting-family-from-the-opposite-apartment" game. Peter Krištúfek has shot twenty-odd author's TV documentaries. His feature-length documentary Snapshots (Momentky, 2008) about the Slovak prog-rock legend Dežo Ursiny was shown at the 44. IFF in Carlsbad (CZ) in the Musical Odyssey section, and was shortlisted for the Silver Eye, a Central-European award at the 2009 International Documentary Festival in Jihlava (CZ).

**K**: How did this title spring to mind? Does it carry a deeper meaning?

**PK:** I spent a long time searching for a title. I was really taken by a quote of Sartre's – though I hate this kind of name-dropping, and find those who quote philosophers ridiculous – "Hell is other people". Later, I learnt that by saying this he meant something different, but my understanding back then was: we see the others as the bad guys and ourselves as the good guys. We always have a reason in favour of our own actions. So my original idea was to call the movie *The Others*, but there was a homonymous film with Nicole Kidman in Slovak distribution. I kept looking for some other name. Though not a religious person, I like to read the Bible. I don't remembe the place any more, but there is a full essay on "God rules the invisible world; the visible world was created by the Devil". The phrase "visible world" seemed to be exactly what I needed. This film is about somebody watching, and everything in it should be expressed from the leading character's viewpoint. I don't think you can reduce the theme to mere voyeurism, though. That would be too easy. The title also has a side context for me. I like dark subject matters. They have always made a strong impression on me.

JAILS ARE FULL OF "SMALL FRIES"27 Face to face with Miro Remo<sup>28</sup>

There's no need to dwell on introducing Miro Remo. He's the offspring of a country family full of amateur filmmakers who passed the trade on to him. He currently is both student and teacher at the same film institute (VŠMU), and has already earned considerable success, the most prominent being Arsy-Versy with its countless prizes from countless festivals. For the last three years however he has been working on a "prison" project. *Comeback* follows the lives of three people – two (male) multiple offenders to be released after serving long sentences, and one (female) journalist, monitoring their rehabilitation process. Our young director tells us about the pitfalls and surprises of shooting inside prison walls. K: You have many successful projects. How did you come up with this theme?

MR: Pure curiosity. In my secondary school years I commuted from Ladce to Trenčín, with a jail in-between. The sense of a place I had never been to stayed with me.

K: Much like your last project, this is also a portrait documen-

MR: By now I can't imagine doing any genre other than portrait. The compendium of these produces a new entity. It's the micro-design of the individual characters you interconnect. I always try to show everything through the human self. **K**: Arsy-Versy has influenced reality itself. Its protagonist just had the first show of his photographs. Are Comeback's ambitions likewise?

MR: This is something difficult to predict at all. With Arsy-*Versy* it was more or less an accident. I never thought *Arsy* would go global. I had rather thought that it would remain in the shadow of A Cold Joint<sup>29</sup>, which had far more to say. To me, Arsy-Versy was more like a light-hearted trip. **K:** What do you think got people hooked?

**MR:** The overdose of candour, the way the protagonist relates to the world, and how he defines himself opposed to the commonly accepted way of life and to the present.

**K**: Do *Arsy-Versy* and *Comeback* have something in common? MR: The common trait of Comeback and Arsy-Versy are people living off-roster, outside the common mechanics of our society. One may see it as extreme. Maybe this is what attracts me. I am fascinated by what's weird. And by life's extremes. **K**: How do you compare shooting *Comeback* compared to your previous films?

**MR:** It was much more demanding. We ran three cameras, sometimes simultaneously. This requires a completely different approach - to the set, the direction, the cinematography. But it suited us best: single-camera shooting is way too risky in that kind of environment. Our intention was to mime feature-style imagery.

**K**: Can you tell us anything about the convicts' lives? **MR:** Both are leaving the pen, but while one of them has a place to go back to, the other is totally defenceless, lost and forlorn. A matter of fact: a public-radio journalist follows their story. She really is *on* the story. And in a way, she's jailed, too. So it's three parallel lives watched over a period of two and a half years. The emotional peaks of the story appear condensed

Kinečko has voiced the questions through Eva Križková, Adela Zvalová, Mária Ferenčuhová, Dominika Miklošíková and Lea Krišková (trans. by DJ)

- 1 The interview was included in the 0<sup>th</sup> issue of KINEČKO, published 7 /8/2010
- 2 Vanda Raýmanová (1973) graduated from VŠMU in Bratislava. After graduation she made a short About Two People (O dvoch ľuďoch). creened at numerous international festivals.
- 3 The film was distributed in France. At present it tours international festivals. Its "done" list includes: Animateka International Animated Film Festival (Award For The Elephant Children's Programme), Lucknow International Children's Film Festival, India (Award For The Best Short Animation Film), CINEFRINGE, World Festival of Animated Film, Chesapeake Film Festival, International Animation Film Festival GOLDEN KUKER 2011, Uppsala International Short Film Festival, and many more.
- 4 Michal Struss (1976) graduated from VŠMU in Bratislava. In 1999 he filmed a short film shot in stop-motion, In the Box (V kocke). The film won several prizes at numerous festivals. He also collaboratedon on the film Blind Loves (Slepé lásky), premiering at the Directors fortnight at the Cannes festival. Recently has cooperated on Czech film for children directed by Petr Oukropec, called *Blue Tiger*.
- 5 Gabika Klaučová (1953) has worked in the Animated film studio Koliba as an animation artist
- 6 Marek Šulík (1974) is above all a documentary director, though he can be seen as a versatile artist as well. He participates in many projects as either DOP, story or film editor. His works include *The Beekeeper's Year* (Včelárov rok, 1996), Everything Used to be Different (Kedysi bolo všetko inak, 1998), The Unwanted Children (Nechcené deti, 1999), and The Road of Magdaléna Robinsonová (Cesta Magdalény Robinsonovej, 2008). 7 The interview was published in KINEČKO no. 1, 1/10/2010
- 8 Iveta Grófová (1980) graduated from VŠMU in Bratislava. Apart from documentary filmmaking, she works in animation and video. All the Way to Town Called Ash is her feature debut.
- 9 All the Way to Town Called Ash is in its last stage of postproduction. Its premiere will take place in 2012.
- **10** The article was published in KINEČKO *hits it,* 1/12/2010 **11** Lucia Siposova (1980) is a writer and actress. She published the book Hello. My name is Anča Pagáčová, a Slovak bestseller. She performed the female lead in the Czech feature by Filip Renč, Warden No7 (Hlídač
- čislo 7) 12 between his 14th and 28th year of age, Juraj Krasnohorský (1980) was raised, studied and worked in Switzerland, Spain and Paris, He holds a Master's Degree in Theoretical physics, Bachelor Degrees in Mathematics and Film theory at universities in Geneva, Bilbao and Paris. Later he turned to professional film making as a director, screenwriter, and producer. He authored several documentaries and short features. While in Paris he worked on several productions, and was in charge of film acting classes at the prestigious Cours Florent. In 2009 his first short theatre film, X=X+1, premiered in Cannes. Tigers in the City, shot in August and September 2010 is Juraj's feature debut.
- 13 André Bonzel was born in 1961 in Paris. He started in film as a grip, and later directed a few short documentaries. He graduated in cinematography at the INSAS in Brussels, meeting Rémy Belvaux and Benoît Poelvoorde. The trio co-wrote, -directed and -produced the "C'est arrivé près de chez Vous" (Man Bites Dog) feature, enjoying worldwide distribution, and prized at major festivals (three awards at Cannes; New York, Sundance, Toronto, Yubari, Sitges). He works regularly with the prestigious DVD collections editor, Criterion.
- 14 The article was published in KINEČKO glows 1/2/2011. 15 Ivan Ostrochovský (1972) graduated in film theory and documentary filmmaking at VŠMU Bratislava. His documentaries include Screenplay for a documentary (2001) and The Lesser Evil (Menšie zlo, 2004). He coproduced the documentaries Matchmaking Mayor (Nesvatbovo, 2010, Erika Hníková, director) and All the way to a town called Aš (2012, lveta Grófová, director).
- **16** The Slovak premiere of *Goat* is scheduled for September 2012. 17 Marek Leščák (1971) is a graduate of VŠMU in Bratislava. He co-authored screenplays for Martin Šulík's films The Garden (Záhrada,1995), The City of the Sun (Slnečný štát,2005), The Gypsy (Cigán, 2011) and Matyáš Prikler's Thanks, Fine. (Ďakujem, dobre!, 2010)
- 18 The Slovak premiere of the Velvet Terrorists (Zamatoví teroristi) is schedued for September 2012.
- **19** The article was published in KINEČKO *means it*, April 2011
- 20 Zuzana Liová (1977) graduated in screenwriting and dramaturgy at VŠMU. In 2005 she made her television debut, Silence (Ticho), writing the script and directing. The film has won several prizes at numerous festivals. *House* is her feature film debut.
- 21 House (Dom) was awarded many prizes at festivals all around the world: Cannes (best Central-European screenplay, 2007), Artfilmfest Trenčianske Teplice, IFF Karlove Vary, to mention but a few. 22 Miroslav Krobot (1951) is a Czech actor. His filmography includes Alois
- Nebel (2011), Leaving (Odcházení, 2011), and many more.
- 23 The article was published in KINEČKO hits the dance floor, 01/12/2011 24 Peter Krištúfek (1973) graduated in film and televison direction at VŠMU in Bratislava. Visible world (Viditeľný svet) is his feature film debut. Besides directing, he authored its subject and wrote both screenplay and music
- **25** The opening night of Visible world was November 5, 2011 26 Ivan Trojan (1964) is one of today's most sought-after Czech actors in film, television and theatre. Recently he starred in Alois Nebel (2011), The Karamazovs (Karamazovi 2008), Václav (2007), Loners (Samotáři, 2000), and many others.
- 27 The article was published in the KINEČKO *behind bars* issue, 1/2/2012 28 Miro Remo (1983) graduated at the studio of documentary filmmaking at VŠMU. His graduation project, the film Arsy-Versy (2010) was awarded twenty-two times at major festivals, e.g. the Uppsala International Short Film Festival, Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, Krakow Young Cinema Art Festival, New York International Independent Film and Video Festival, and many others.
- 29 A Cold Joint (Studený spoj, 2008) is a short documentary. Its lead is an 11-year old girl from a disadvantaged family in an industrial environment. Growing up, she discovers profound emotional distress in her own family. This film has won international acclaim at festivals around the world.



with Johny Depp

### Drawbacks of Film Production in Slovakia

The Slovak audiovisual environment has been struggling for independence since its inception. It has been radically influenced and continuously formed by various political, social and legislative aspects. Under the everchanging circumstances of film financing, we cannot really talk about a stable environment for audiovisual creation. Producers have to find ways to produce films, although their profession is often underestimated criticised and misunderstood.

In this article, I complemented my personal experience with the opinions of my colleagues. The interviewed producers evaluate the conditions for filmmaking from the points of view of the professional and technological equipment of production and postproduction, and from the angle of production financing. According to the words of Ján Oparty<sup>1</sup> "after the fall of the Koliba Film Studios<sup>2</sup> and the shutdown of dramatic production in Slovak Television, some professions disappeared from our region and their replacement is poor, because the continuity was broken..." Erik Panák<sup>3</sup> points out that technology is developing and this makes filmmaking easier; he even states that the new gadgets are a delight to work with. The worse thing is that it gets increasingly difficult to find efficient and reliable people as operators. Mátyás Prikler<sup>4</sup>, on the contrary, thinks that in Slovak audiovision there are many skilled, productive and creative people. Lívia Filusová⁵ claims that "the technological base has expanded thanks to a wide range of well equipped studios that provide a technological and professional guarantee for the production of all film formats." Ivana Laučíková<sup>6</sup> has a different opinion. She states that "in the field of animated film, there is no professional production background. The small number of animation films that are made, are produced in small studios or at animators' *homes.*" She adds that "*RTVS*<sup>7</sup> *doesn't offer any* type of cooperation to animators, and the only possible source for the financing of this kind of creation is the Audiovisual Fund". Milan Stráňava<sup>8</sup> also emphasises the problems related to the lack of financial support for film production: "Private stations are not interested in participating in independent film production and they try to push their own projects for the AVF<sup>9</sup> financing. The European fund Eurimages is almost unavailable for projects from this unstable background, and the same can be said about potential foreign co-producers whose opinion of our environment is not very flattering. In addition, filmmakers harm their own circles with spite and disunity."

Can we talk about the support of audiovisual creation in Slovakia as a systematic initiative?

Thanks to the foundation of the Audiovisual Fund (AVF) which has also served as an in spiration for our "closest" neighbours, the conditions for film production have improved considerably in our country. Among the most positive changes, we should certainly mention that the institution is more accessible to applicants than the Ministry of Culture (which had been responsible for the financing of audiovisual projects before). With the establishment of the Fund, more financial resources are invested in cinematography and the grants are not directly linked to the state budget. Despite some turbulence and media fuss that accompanied the initial process of adjusting the criteria and the system of its functioning, we can now say that many producers consider the establishment of the AVF as a positive event. The Audiovisual Fund is the only real backer of cinematography. Although RTVS-Slovak public television should also form part of the financing system, as its very essence is

to support domestic audiovisual creation, the conditions it sets for independent producers are mostly unacceptable and paradoxically, they often complicate the production process and represent a burden to producers. Private stations a priori don't encourage cinematography, since they focus rather on the production of their own series. As for sponsors, the low audience potential discourages them from investing in film production. The distributors' financing by means of a "minimum guarantee" system is not an option in Slovakia. Neither is "presale" by vendors. The banking sector is not very open to this kind of project, and regionbased film financing is an unrealisable utopia in Slovakia. There are two more institutions:

the Slovak Film Institute (SFI), whose role (among others) is to present Slovak films home and abroad, and then there is the Audiovisual Information Centre (AIC), that provides information on the situation in Slovak audiovision and cinematography. From my personal experience, I evaluate the cooperation with both these institutions as very positive. And though their resources are limited, I find them really helpful to producers, as they do activities that producers cannot afford. Many of our producers share these views, although with certain reservations. Lívia Filusová finds cooperation with RTVS insufficient, non-systemic, and she thinks that this institution acts according to its own interests: "Pretending transparency in the choice of so-called external projects is a ridicule of honest filmmakers who try to create quality projects that could represent an alternative to commercial stations..." Patrik Pašš<sup>10</sup> asserts that Slovakia hasn't vet managed to establish a complex system endorsing the continual development and growth of cinematography. With respect to RTVS, he says: "Lawmakers have long been avoiding the problem of sub-standard financing of RTVS, which resulted in a stagnation of human, technological and programme resources. So far, the parliament hasn't managed to create conditions to encourage original audiovisual creation in RTVS. The prolongation of this inactivity takes audiovisual creation back to the situation from 10 years ago, as it invalidates the existence of the second pillar of its financing system. The solution is up to those responsible mbers of parliament who will pluck up the courage to undertake certain systemic measures (e.g. to sign a contract with the State). As for the filmmakers, they should unite and support these measures constructively in order to achieve progress." Ľubomír Slivka11 is convinced that "similarly to Czech Television, RTVS could enhance its no systemic help for cinema digitalisation, save trademark supporting domestic film creation... films don't just represent expenses to television, they can also be a source of income if they man*age to sell abroad.*" He regards the cooperation

with SFI as very efficient. He also emphasises that "Slovakia is too small a country to have the luxury to finance national cinematography on her own.'

And because of this reason, I personally consider communication with foreign partners and the presentation of projects at the international level as essential, which has been proved by the examples of Slovak directors Peter Kerekeš, Marko Škop and Juraj Lehotský12.

Michal Kollár<sup>13</sup> adds that *"thanks to the support* of SFI, the film House (Dom) by Zuzana Liová could participate in the prestigious competition and be featured in the Variety's Critic Choice at Karlovy Vary. And I could take part in the 2011 European Film Promotion's Producer on the Move presentation in Cannes, which would not have been possible without their backing. They help to establish long-term cooperation with co-producers abroad and what is more, they encourage further propagation of films that have been produced."

AIC also has a very important role in these activities. According to Mátyás Prikler: "AIC has done a great deal to promote Slovak film abroad since it participates at importan<mark>t festi</mark> vals. It wasn't always like that, but in th<mark>e past</mark> few years it has become a standard, which is very significant."

Having overcome the problems with financing, there is another crucial task for producers - they have to get their work among viewers. Considering the size of our distribution market, the timing of a campaign and cinema release is essential. Unfortunately, attendance statistics suggest that these factors are rarely taken into account. Domestic film production represents a negligible part of distributors' portfolios, and to them it is just a marginal activity. Based on contracts for exclusive representation, foreign companies usually supply their distributors with whole film packages including complete promotion services. Thus distributors don't have to invest in any media campaign. What is worse, they expect the same approach from Slovak producers, which is completely inadequate. And so producers often have to substitute for distributors communicating with the mass media, producing distribution copies, bearing all costs related to film promotion including the costs for the press screening, hire of the cinema hall, charges for launching the film in digital cinemas, etc. As a rule, Slovak films are screened at the weakest projection times, and cinemas show them often for very short periods of time. Obviously, the reason can be found in the policies of multiplex owners, who give preference mainly to their own commercial interests.

#### What is the producers' view of the di of Slovak films, and what are the drawbacks they encounter most?

Marián Urban<sup>14</sup> emphasises that "...there is an increasing problem related to the closing of small, single- screen cinema halls, as there is some minor support by AVF." Lívia Filusová sees Slovak distribution as lamentable and she thinks that "a distributor should assume responsibility for the result - cinema attendance". Erik Panák believes that the main problem is competitiveness. Milan Stráňava says that "the range of themes and production activities is quite wide, and viewers don't respond to that. The peak attendances of Slovak films reach around 100,000 viewers, but usually the numbers range from ten to twenty thousand." Ľubomír Slivka shares this opinion and adds: "...Propagation is a huge problem. Film critics don't bother to indicate which films are aimed

for which target audience to help the potential viewer choose. Their self-conceit turns th<mark>em in</mark>to unintentional saboteurs." Patrik Pašš: "Slovak films have to compete with high- budget foreign movies to win the attention of the audience. This is an issue that creators, distributors and lawmakers haven't managed to solve so far." Ivana Laučíková points out that: "In Slovakia there is still an option to present a short film as a supporting film to a feature, which is an advantage to foreign countries. Unfortunately, this kind of release doesn't bring the producer any income, it just repr<mark>esen</mark>ts more expense. That is why small produce<mark>rs ca</mark>nnot afford it without support from instituti<mark>ons.'</mark>

To objectify the attitudes of distributors to Slovak f<mark>ilm,</mark> I h<mark>ave t</mark>o ackn<mark>owle</mark>dge that many Slovak films don't reach the artistic or commercial level that would attract viewers.

What is the biggest problem with Slovak film and cinematography according to Slovak producers, and how do they evaluate the character

of contemporary Slovak audiovisual creation? To Lubomír Slivka it seems that the biggest problem with our films is that they are Slovak: "It is a trademark that has gained a bad reputation. On the other hand, we have to admit that Slovak films lack attractiveness. They are mostly gloom<mark>y, w</mark>hich is something viewers don't like, for they have their own worries. Slovak film is still looking for its own face. There has been a gap in Slovak film creation caused by the lack of a whole generation of filmmakers. I believe that the young generation will revive film. If a film is made primarily for cinema, its target audience is usually up to 25 years old. Whether we like it or not, we have become a part of the film industry." Ivana Laučíková states that: "Contemporary Slovak short animated films are quite successful abroad. But because of their low production, they cannot find a place in distribution as a regular standard format. The creation of an animated series is almost unthinkable; feature-length cartoons are also very rare. The general knowledge of animation in Slovakia is very limited, therefore it is not a profitable audiovisual merchandise." According to Ján Oparty "the problem can also be found in the lack of good screenplays – exciting, dramatic and emotive literary texts. And it is also necessary to invest more pul lic resources in film, and to form legislative and fiscal conditions for the private sector (banks, financial groups, large companies) to motivate its cooperation on film production, if patriotism is not a sufficient motivation." Marián Urban claims that "Too many Slovak films are enclosed in local or regional "self-centredness," which limits their distribution options abroad."

A possible solution could be the support of young filmmakers' mobility, so they can confront the world, and gain experience at international events and competitions. At present they don't have enough courage to leave the line, use new ways of expression, or deal with less serious topics.

From the point of view of a young producer, I have to say that it is almost impossible to pursue film production in Slovakia without having other sources of income. All Slovak producers would agree with that. Each and every



poster of Revolution's Mer

audiovisual work in our country has originated only thanks to the stamina of the team of people who have found the strength and courage, and ove<mark>rcom</mark>e all of the impediments of our audiovisual environment. Filmmaking has become a question of personal enthusiasm and a struggle to create permanent values. Because of the weak backbone of the system and the size of the Slovak market, the role of a producer to ensure the recoverability of financial resources is almost impossible to accomplish. There are some exceptions, but these are often just a result of a lucky concurrence of circums<mark>tanc</mark>es, and not always can their success be assigned to producers' abilities. Unfortunately, we often see in practice the quote from Ivana L<mark>aučí</mark>kov<mark>á: "b</mark>y the s<mark>pirit</mark> of the age of market, <mark>those</mark> wh<mark>o create values i</mark>nstead of i<mark>ncome are</mark> considere<mark>d parasites. A</mark>rt and culture have become unwanted. Under such circumstances.

it is extre<mark>mely</mark> difficult not only to provide the resources to create a work, but most of all, to answer yourself the crucial question: why and for who<mark>m do I create?</mark>"

D<mark>espite all the</mark> drawback<mark>s and</mark> often also existential problems of filmmakers, film has retai<mark>ned the pow</mark>er <mark>to ca</mark>ptu<mark>re an</mark>d fa<mark>scinate.</mark> That is why most film producers remain faith ful to their profession, try to finish the projects they started, and believe that one day they will find a subject, a theme or a project that will capture them to such an extent that they will know their previous experience was worth it.

BARBARA HARUMOVÁ HESSOVÁ<sup>15</sup>

- 1 Ján Oparty producer and documentarist, executive of Alef JO Filmstudio
- 2 Koliba: Slovak film creation used to be represented by Koliba Film Studios. The non-transparent privatisation in 1989 resulted in the fragmentation of the film community and the decline of the technological base.
- 3 Erik Panák producer, works for ARINA 4 Mátyás Prikler - director, producer, executive of
- MPhilms 5 Lívia Filusová - producer, works for FURIA FILM
- 6 Ivana Laučíková animator, producer of animated
- 7 RTVS Radio and Television of Slovakia, public institution
- 8 Milan Stráňava producer, executive of JMB Film & TV Production Bratislava
- 9 AVF The Audiovisual Fund
- 10 Patrik Pašš pr<mark>oducer, editor, executive of</mark> TRIGON PRODUCTION, former chairman of the AVF Committee
- 11 Ľubomír Slivka producer, distributor, script editor, executive of ATTACK FILM
- 12 Peter Kerekeš documentarist, producer, Juraj Lehotský - dire<mark>ctor, Marko Škop - documentarist,</mark> producer for Artileria
- 13 Michal Kollár producer for Fog'n'Desire Films 14 Marián Urban - producer and executive of ALEF Film and Media Group
- 15 Barbara Harumová Hessová independent producer and executive of AH production, s.r.o.

### **Film Journalism Becomes Her**

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Zuzana Piussi got famous – in Slovakia at least – by pissing people off. With her fondness of topics that have a detonating impact on society and its communities. Her wanton choice of untypical representatives (Grandma, Angels do weep), or ones who recklessly betray their subordinates (Scrap). Her directorial decisions to focus on unsolved cases (Koliba); her outrageous editing that leads to unflattering or misleading analogies; her hybrid approach (cross-breeding journalism with stylization, or a reporter's story with staged action).

All this has earned Zuza Piussi the fame of a rebel filmmaker, a "She-Knight-Shining", with no shield or armour of documentary filmmaking principles. And with no scruples.

After the feature Grandma (2008) and the short Hero of our *Time* (2009), Piussi briefly diverted toward a tongue-in-cheek report on the best chicken wings in America, Chicken love (2011). With her latest two flicks she returns home: in *Third Power Ailing* (2011) and *Revolution's Men* (2012) she ventures into socially urgent, even agonizing topics. Also into one the public relates to with a heavy dose of nostalgia.

With these two films, Zuzana Piussi grew serious. She rejoined her tendency that had been already outlined in her student-time Scrap and deepened in Koliba: concentrating on social-political journalism, letting go of excessive authorship. The first film, Third Power Ailing, can be defined as engaged journalism. Piussi openly chooses her camp here, siding with the bullied Slovak judges who protest against the repressive policies of Slovak Chief Justice Štefan Harabin. She allows Harabin, the judges, as well as journalists and civil activists, to speak out. The picture Piussi delivers of the situation in Slovak justice is emotional. She can't help it actually. For she speaks not only about a profession, but also about individual judges: their destinies shaken by disproportionate disciplinary actions, themselves frustrated by the overall sense of fear in Slovak justice, and who, with utmost accuracy, diagnose its worst disease: on one side, the abuse of power; on the other side, the fear of the bullied.

Piussi also manages to label the disease of Slovak society: lethargy, indifference, minimal long-term civic involvement resulting in civic impotence. "A thousand people show at a protest rally, ten thousand sign a petition... and then, nothing", Zuzana Wienk of the Fair-Play Alliance says in the film. "People go to work, they get on with their lives." This is why the tyrant may continue to smile on camera, self-complacent, scot-free, and protected both by his office and by the sheepishness of the public. This is exactly why I would very much like to see this film act as a detonator.

The first part of *Revolution's Men* shows the contrasting era of the general public's mobilization, endowed (albeit temporarily) by an intense will to partake in the transformation of the political system and the functioning of society as a whole.

But it is exactly this picture of the "Gentle Revolution"<sup>1</sup> that Zuzana Piussi shatters. She lifts the veil of nostalgia and uncovers processes that the public, even their revolutionary leaders, did not know much about at the time. The first part of the film covers several months, from the end of 1989 to the first free parliamentary election in June 1990 (The second

part – the one I am curious about – covers the 20 next years.). With the first part's time this dense, Piussi succeeds in remaining true to her theme – the apparatchiks hand down their power yet re-emerge in its new structures; the state security's archives are destroyed yet certain materials reappear in deceptive and selective screenings. It is fascinating to witness how the protagonists of the Gentle Revolution self-advocate, cleanse, and reason their actions. Marcel Ophüls, the legendary French documentary filmmaker, once stated that when it comes to memories, he is less interested in whether the witnesses succeed in truly reconstructing the events. Rather, it is the way they relate – how they mislead, lie, exaggerate, or even defend themselves. How their statements morph in function of the later consequences of their actions. This applies to the statements of the *Revolution's Men* as well. Confronting two testimonies, Piussi does not probe which one is telling the truth: she is satisfied with showing *both* interpretations. Similarly, by means of intercutting, she shows the Czech vs. Slovak haggle about the politicians who were spared of screening, but who definitely would not pass if they were investigated: a Slovak politician points out that a majority of them were Czech, while in turn a Czech historian turns the spotlight on the Slovak ones.

Nonetheless, Piussi does not relativize nor does she resign from the search for the right version of history: she captures the state where any memory creates past events anew: since the witness knows the future of the past in question and hence, for the present, he (or she) selects the relevant subjectively.

Both Revolution's Men and Ailing Third Power alike mostly rely on "talking heads", complemented in a sober fashion by archive footage. The irritation these films may spark is not gratuitous. Instead, Piussi concentrates on naming the state of the society. She even looks for answers although she may not know the questions, pretty much like her audience. Therefore it seems to me that with these two films, Zuzana Piussi has finally found her place in the Slovak documentary film genre. A place she has a good view from, and one from which she succeeds in irritating and discomforting her audience in the best and most productive way.

MÁRIA FERENČUHOVÁ (trans. by DJ)

1 From the start. Gentle Revolution was the official title of the 1989's Velvet Revolution in the territory of Slovakia, distinguishing the future countries from day One

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### How To Make It **To Berlin**ale Without A Grant

En Face with the Czech film director Václav Kadrnka

He has managed to make one of those miracles that can be seen in the latitudes of the former Czechoslovakia only once in a blue moon. He shot and produced his first featurelength film without any state financial support. But the miracles do not stop there. The film premiered at Berlinale. Cinepur magazine described this strongly autobiographical minimalistic film, Eighty Letters (Osmdesát dopisů) set in the era of normalisation as "the most pleasant surprise of the past few years." Václav Kadrnka's enthusiasm is truly inspiring. We talked to him about Czech producers, alternative financing means, and the future of authorial film.



EP: Eighty Letters originated in quite a peculiar way. First of all, the director assumed the job of producer at the same time. What were the pros and cons of this unity?

**VK:** I was inspired to shoot the film by the letters my mum wrote to my father after he had emigrated from communist Czechoslovakia in 1968. I was thirteen years old then. From the very beginning it was my intention to shoot a personal film. That was one of the reasons I decided to take over both jobs. The second reason was that circumstances forced me to do so. It was the only way to bring an autobiographic film to life. In Czech cinematography, there is a certain pattern for financing and supporting films. New movies are financed from Czech Cinematography Fund grants, sponsored by television companies, or supported by co-production. At the beginning two producers were involved in the project, but as we were not assigned any grant or financial support, they walked out. That is when Jiří Soukop and I concluded that if we followed the standard procedure of film financing, it would completely ruin my mental experience that the film was based on. We would be forced to make things up, to create fiction. The experience itself would not be enough, because to meet the criteria of the standard scheme, it would be necessary to insert traditional narrative elements. And it was clear to us that this kind of procedure would have extinguished the vital element, the emotions and memories I carry inside. The decision to choose an unconventional way to shoot the film provoked serious doubts in the Czech movie community, and resulted in the withdrawal of the producers. When the role of director and producer merge in one person, the biggest advantage is that no compromises have to be made. Every institution that pumps money into a project also brings its own claims. One such demand is usually to make the screenplay more comprehensible, and in trying to achieve this kind of comprehensibility the author loses his autonomy. As for the drawbacks of this "biuniqueness," I have to admit that at some points of the shooting I was feeling lost. I couldn't tell when I should be hard on myself, and when it was all right to let myself go. In a way it was like schizophrenia. Nov I say to myself that I should have saved more energy and focus on the direction. But during the shooting, we really were in a kind of doit-yourself situation. Each of us was doing all kinds of jobs. Maybe that is also why the result fully conveys the intended emotion.

**EP:** So how does traditional film financing system work in the Czech Republic? And how do you see the future of Czech producers? Currently Czech producers seem to me like hybrids. They've created a system in which they have power over the film industry, but they don't give film anything. They are just its secretaries. I don't expect a producer to invest in a project if he does not have the money, yet I consider him obliged to protect the autonomy of the project, to preserve its authenticity. Instead, producers break their backs to receive a grant. The whole system is a huge bubble.

When applying for a grant, budgets are blown out of all proportion, everything is full of pretence, and the essence of the film is pushed aside. The development is no longer important. And this is reflected in the policy of the committee appointed to assign grants. Their members are not capable of recognising the quality of the subject matter as they are incompetent, and they want to please too many subjects, in particular producers, distributors and cinemas. The artwork in question comes last. Speaking from personal experience, a producer of *Eighty Letters* offered me that his contribution to the film would be that he could arrange a discount at a post-production studio. I objected that this was not an actual contribution, so he left the project. These people did not believe in the film. They warned me it was film-making suicide and that I would never shoot again. They didn't believe that it was possible to make an autobiographical, personal film with such a low budget, not to mention that it could gain international acclaim. So I decided to leave these mediators out and I contacted various companies in person. It was a very pleasant surprise to see them compete who would help me for the better price; I could even sense a certain gladness about the absence of a producer. All these factors encourage me to call on young filmmakers to forget about mediators, because in the end, producers only increase film costs, and that in my opinion goes against all logic. The creation, the film and the author find themselves in the lowest rank of importance, wherefore it seems impossible to me that this kind of system can keep working. **EP:** Filmmaking in the last place? That sounds quite sinister. Could you tell us about your personal experience of the support of film-makers by the state and the Czech Cinematography Fund grant system? **VK:** My experience with the institution has been awful. I've applied for grants several times without success. The commission is composed mostly of incompetent people and the sessions are intolerable. They don't even listen to what you have to say. Cooperation with the fund should be based on partnership, which it is not at all. There is no point in the bers. The more people responsible, the easier it is for each of them to avoid responsibility.

is completely embarrassing. There's not even a coherent philosophy that would define the goals of the fund or its existence. Since we are a small country, culture has always been a minority issue. And providing that film is part of culture, it is impossible that it should simultaneously profit, have artistic value and meet the criteria of a grant commission, a distributor, a cinema, a producer and a director. Therefore, the primary role of the fund ought to be the promotion of culture and art, and they should support the creation of films with certain artistic potential. If its ambition is to side with potboilers, then why is it a state fund and not a company? There are plenty of private television channels that sponsor mainstream films, so why should the

They are infamous for their venality, which

state cultural fund do likewise? The problem of *Eighty Letters* probably originated in the fact that I didn't want to just stage a literary screenplay. I work mainly with expression, image and sound, and these are elements you cannot formulate in a screenplay. The commission expects the filmmaker to be in the service of comprehensibility. They talk about respecting the audience, the majority. But a filmmaker's work shouldn't be subject to any kind of respect, because respect doesn't go together with creation or art. An artist must have his dignity, but he should never feel the need for respect. On the contrary, disrespect should be his inherent feature. That is why I gave up on this way of financing. Although now it could make my life easier, I refuse to take the easy way out. My goal is to create a completely new alternative way to make films

**EP:** And what should this 'new alternative way' be like?

**VK:** Friends, parents, uncles, to borrow money or steal a camera, to get hold of film technique in any way possible. Of course, I'm exaggerating. Technique is very affordable today. You can shoot a film on a photo camera, or you can borrow a movie came<mark>ra. T</mark>he subject and message are all that matters. If the topic and subject are strong enough, there will always be a way to find financial resources. At first I was scared, because I didn't have any previous experience and I was no producer. I was afraid that I would fail, but I had the right subject-matter, and a team of loyal people around me. The road towards shooting *Eighty Letters* was paved with thorough work in every aspect. And I am very proud of the fact that we managed to finish it without a grant.

EP: Neither was the distribution exactly standard. Apart from the cinema release you also screened the film in a gallery. What was the reason?

**VK:** Together with the distributor, Artcam, we decided to put the film in a different context and screen the film at the Tranzitdisplay Gallery. We combined the screening with a discussion about how normalisation is depicted in the film, and an audio installation er's letters. Eighty Letters is about a past we haven't come to terms with yet. When we talk about normalisation, we tend to trivialize and joke about it, but the truth is that it is part of our past that has not been processed by our society. And I am glad that the film works in new contexts. Maybe in the future, galleries will be the place to see films. While cinemas will provide a roof for blockbusters; art films and personal films may end up in galleries. Speaking from the perspective of a creator, I felt very comfortable in the gallery. **EP:** *Eighty Letters* was finished thanks to film festivals. Tell us about its journey from Karlovy Vary to the Forum section at Berlinale fer to keep to myself. 2011, and to Cannes.

**VK:** When a film has financial backing, its presentation in the "Work in progress" section EVA PAVLOVIČOVÁ is more or less obligatory. In the case of *Eighty* (trans. by BD) Letters, we didn't really have another option

than to try Karlovy Vary. I had no money left to finish the film, so I did what I could to move it to another level, to find some hope. When the shoot was over, we edited a 7 minute trailer and sent it to Karlovy Vary. The commission from Berlinale saw it, they contacted me and requested that I keep them informed about the film's progress. So I told them openly that I hadn't been assigned any grants or financial support, and I didn't know what was going to happen next. And more let downs from the grant commission were yet to come, but there were also bright moments such as the presentation at the River Film Fest in Písek.

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These small steps were essential for me to realize the great deal of help festivals represent for filmmaking. They actually "saved our necks." We were aware of the fact that we didn't have enough resources or experience to present the film as an accomplished work. Hence we proceeded step by step - and we always got some kind of response. This process taught me an important lesson: life should never be planned as a whole, but rather one has to deal with things one at a time. Right e, right now, uncompromisingly, and as good as one can. Only th<mark>en w</mark>ill there be a way to see a global solution. And so the film found its way to Berlin. I never saw it coming. My original idea had been to finish the post-production, organise a screening at the regional level, and maybe encourage some re viewers to write about it. Not even in my wildest dreams did I expect that it would come out as it did. It feels great to achieve success with an intimate film. I didn't have any determinate strategy or production plan. There was no lobby, no media campaign. It hadn't been my ambition to make it to an international festival. I shot my first film and wanted to gain experience and skills. Everything that followed can be assigned to the film itself. In the autumn of 2009, the future of the film was still not clear. We were short of money, having been refused vet another grant, and the worst thing was that we were running out of energy and started to doubt the project. At such a moment of hopelessness, we sent a provisional version to Berlin and before Christmas we got the answer that they had selected the film for ne Forum section. I his fact provoked publi interest, and we were helped to finish the film by the Ministry of Culture (not the fund). In no time we began to receive more invitations to festivals; the film was projected in Cannes

and was awarded a Zlatý Ledňáček for the best Czech film. In my view, festival distribution represents hope and the future for Czech authorial film-making.

**EP:** And what are your plans for the future, or at least for 2012?

VK: In 2012 I would like to dedicate myself to scriptwriting and to the pre-production of my next film. It should be related with my native land, Valašsko in Moravia. But the rest, I pre-

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## "Leaving" Of Czech Cinema (in 2011)

2011 for Czech cinematography was a year of substantial changes, expectations and disappointments. It was also a year of the slow transformation of Czech film that didn't seem to have any consistent basis and foreshadowed more changes to come, both positive and negative.

### An unnoticed transformation

How would we evaluate last year's changes in Czech cinema in the context of its evolution since 1989? It certainly wasn't a peaceful year. A legislative utopia moulded into the new Audiovisual Law, and Czech film production reached a seemingly steady balance between the number of genre and auteur films, Several Czech (and Slovak) films achieved international acclaim (Matchmaking Mayor, House, 80 Letters, Alois Nebel).

We could also observe a shift in the status of documentary film. In 2011, 46 films were premiered in Czech cinemas – 21 of which were documentaries. The cause of this exceptional position of documentary films can be found in the initiative of the MFDF Jihlava and One World festivals, in the active approach of experienced documentary makers, as well as the result of a combination of original themes, topicality, and production costs which are generally lower than those of feature films.

However, it is not easy to find significant milestones in Czech cinema indicating a possible transformation into a stable and respected position. There are too many variables to make this happen. All the changes take place unnoticed, only now and then do film publicists point out certain facts tha<mark>t cou</mark>ld lead either to the redemption or doom of domestic cin<mark>ema</mark>.

#### Film as a political issue (with good purposes)

The production framework, and the social, cultural and poli tical meaning, all form national cinematography much more than any creative ambitions - and it is essential to keep that in mind. The reinforcement of film creation, production, distribution and circulation (cinemas, festivals), as well as the reflection on cinematography has been conditioned on a longterm basis by one key source, the Czech State Fund for the <mark>Supp<mark>ort and Devel</mark>opm<mark>ent of Czech</mark> Cin<mark>ema</mark>tography. That is</mark> why the situation in the last few months has been marked by a struggle for its transformation.

Every year the Fund assigns approximately 300 million Czech crowns (€ 12 mil.) to sustain the life of the fragile film industry mechanism. In 2008, the Fund initiated the digitalisation of Czech cinemas, which considerably increased the competitiveness of single-screen cinema halls, and in fact helped them survive (32 were digitalised in 2011).

The efforts of the Ministry of Culture focused mainly on the modification of the outdated legislation, and on the revision of the Law on Cinematography. The passing of the Law was hindered by the persistent problems of Czech cinematography and culture: the lack of continuity and the unpredictability of the Culture Minister. The financing of the Fund has never been more insecure.

For the first time since the Velvet Revolution, we started to reassess our relation and attitude to the rich history of Czech film. In 2010, the Department of Mass Media and Audio-visual matters managed to conceive the Plan of the Digitalisation of Czech Cinematography Works. There is only one thing that im- As a result, numerous films reflecting real events appeared pedes its realisation: a lack of money. Although the investment in cinemas: the thriller about the escaped prisoner Kajínek lion crowns to digitalise the 200 most sig nificant features would be equal to the cost of constructing one kilometre of overpriced Czech motorway, under the government of "budget responsibility" these expenditures are unthinkable. A pioneer project was the digitalisation of the masterpiece by František Vláčil, the greatest Czech film of all times, Marketa Lazarová. It was re-released in a restored and remastered digital version at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival, unfortunately its comeback to cinema distribution administered by NFA (National Film Archive) was a failure.

### Loneliness and reconciliation with the past

2011 was marked by a number of great expectations. There is no doubt that the biggest was the first directorial oeuvre by Václav Havel, Leaving (Odcházení). It was a stubborn creative gesture from the internationally respected president, the man who became a symbol of revolution and who, in the 1960swasn't accepted in the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) for political reasons. But there were other anticipated events. Among others, we should mention the monumental historical inquiry Lidice, a film affected by many changes

during production that was, in the end, directed by Petr Nikolaev. And we cannot forget the exceptional animated movie by Tomáš Luňák, Jaromír Švejdík and Jaroslav Rudiš using the technology of rotoscopy, Alois Nebel.

Last year's events developed tendencies that had appeared in Czech cinematography in previous years. Yet we can call it a year that served as a balance sheet, a year of "leaving" in the broader sense of the word. The ambitious directorial project of Václav Havel, the auteur adaptation of his eponymous play, was an eagerly expected work. Unfortunately, the piece was buried by the following facts: antagonistic film critics and misunderstood reviews that preceded the premiere, and poor attendance that wasn't greatly stimulated even by an expensive distribution campaign. In addition, the shooting itself weakened the president's fragile health condition, and his passing away painfully emphasized the meaning of his last work. It was also a sign that other significant changes are happening in the Czech Republic apart from the fact that key figures of our history and culture are leaving us.

In fact, Havel's state of (not) being present forces us to refle<mark>ct on</mark> the ways we are reconciled with the past by means of fil<mark>mm</mark>aking in the past few years. In 2009, Marek Najbrt impressed us with his *Protector*, brilliant in form and bold aesthetically. A year later, the film *Walking Too Fast* (Pouta) by Radim Špaček and Ondřej Štindl, a daunting intimate story that takes place in the "normalization" era, was finished. 2011 brought a different view of the story of *Lidice*, a village burnt by Nazis in World War II.

Lidice contrasts with Walking Too Fast and Protector in many ways, in fact, it could be considered their direct opposite. It is a historical epic starring Karel Roden that symbolises Czech cinematography turning away from intimate, upsetting and unconventional motives, to genre high budget movies. Such movies attract crowds to (multiplex) cinemas, though these viewers are exclusively of Czech origin. The power of intimate testimonies seems too weak to fight spectacular ostentatious images about heroism, betrayal and redemption. 2011 surprisingly left historical motifs aside, and that may be why *Lidice* had success with the audience.

#### Moral and social hangover

The past two years were affected by the increasing engagement of filmmakers who felt the need to react critically or ironically to the vices of contemporary society - omnipresent corruption, political clientelism, increasing adhesion of public administration and business, deterioration of public morals, and mafia practices in state affairs. This wave of indignation was probably a reaction to the political and media stimulation called the "economic crisis." It was also a response to the anticorruption enthusiasm that preceded the elections in 2010 and the following hangover, disenchantment and total collapse of trust in politics caused by countless scandals and corruption cases

2010) by former stunt man Petr Jaki, a pair of ten "design" films, *Piko* (2010) and *Czech-Made-Man* (2011) by the young "star" Tomáš Řehořek. Edgers (Hranaři) by Tomáš Zelenka (2011) claims in its slogan to "trace the corruption relations in Czech business and its illicit connections to politics." Unfortunately, all of these movies use the atrocious reality only as a mise-en-scéne for genre stereotypes, tangles of visual, screenplay and dramatic clichés, and for their desires to "bring Hollywood to the Czech Republic."

Only a few authors in our region are able to react adequately, inventively and wittily to the lamentable state of society, to the tension between western developed democracy, and the Balkan post-socialist provincialism. Robert Sedláček is one of the exceptions. He is a director of remarkable observational talent and screenwriting skills. His debut Rules of Lies (Pravidla lži, 2006) suggested a considerable talent for direction. In Men in a Rut (Muži v říji, 2009), he chose to balance on the edge of communal satire, uncompromising, intelligent, thorny comedy and a critical pamphlet. Through his newest film Long Live the Family (Rodina je základ státu), he reveals the profundity of human self-seeking, the ineffectiveness of

Czech business and legislation, and the existential and ethical dimension of a wasted life of "Mr. Knew-It-All". In spite of critical acclaim, audience reactions to the films by Sedláček have been rather lukewarm, and because his works are bound to local life and institutions, they are unlikely to succeed abroad.

#### A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country

Last year was also significant for film criticism. A new tradition was established, the Czech Film Critic Awards, that should draw attention to the most remarkable examples of the year. In 2011 they pointed out *Alois Nebel*, *Sedláček's Family*, but above all the independent film miracle, 80 Letters (80 dopisů) by Václav Kadrnka. Kadrnka's case proves that the support of independent projects by the Fund is not as self-evident as it should be, and the warm reception of the film at international festivals (Berlinale) only underlined the irrationality of this fact. In his autobiographic, intimate account of his adolescence in the 1980s, Kadrnka has shown his knowledge of contemporary tendencies in world cinematography, in particular the issues of auteur direction style.

Not only Kadrnka, but also the classics of Czech film that are having a renaissance have not exactly had a favourable fate with the audience. The surrealist legend, Jan Švankmajer, made his comeback with the Freudian grotesque *Surviving* Life (Theory and Practice) (Přežít svůj život (teorie a praxe)), and he is currently preparing a Kafkaesque variation Insect (Hmyz). Juraj Herz in his Habermann (Habermannův mlýn) explored the controversial issue of the displacement of German families from the Sudety area during World War II, and Jan Němec confirmed his status as the enfant terrible of Czech Cinematography with the first Czech 3D film, the personal provocative essay Heartbeat 3D.

Besides the classics, last season was also marked by the notable discoveries of new directors who generally fail with cinema attendances. Their contribution to Czech film is often questionable, and many are rather signs of a gloomy future than gleams of hope. (Westernstory, Vendeta).

The outlook for 2012 ranges from insecurity and concerns about the future, to hope represented by new discoveries such as Václav Kadrnka, or late 2011 discovery, Blossoms (Poupata) by Zdeněk Jiráský. We can expect Jakub Kohák and his feature – length version of the popular TV series Local Team (Okresní přebor) set in a football environment to follow up with satirical comedies full of gallows humour. The strong tradition of Czech animated film will be enriched with the stylized poetic Blue Tiger (Modrý tygr) based on the eponymous art book by Tereza and Juraj Horváth. High hopes have also been incited by the director admired home and abroad, Bohdan Sláma, and his film Four Suns (Čtyři slunce) which premiered in Sundance, the ambitious fantastic science fiction The Last Children of Aporver (Poslední z Aporveru), and the film noir set in the 1950s In the Shadow (Ve stínu) directed by David Ondříček.

It has to be said that the question facing Czech film is whether it will win the fight for financial independence and broad critical audience response. The past has shown that the small Czech market cannot produce quality, bold and interesting work without state support, and that films made with commercial ambitions tend to be obsequious, populist and shallow.

When it comes to issues that matter to the public, cinematography keeps losing the struggle for its emancipation to social and economic problems. The main reasons are the divergence of interests and goals, and private tendencies that lead more to conflict than cooperation or solidarity. Among other things, Czech cinematography is still paying for the decisions made in the "wild 1990s", and it is as difficult to overcome their obligatory character as to fight with their results.

PAVEL BEDNAŘÍK (trans. by BD)

still from Alois Neb

### El adjetivo, cuando no da vida, mata...

Originally this article should have been an interview with Eugenio Caballero. The Mexican production designer and art director had accepted Kinečko's invitation a couple of months ago, and visited the Film Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava to present his work to Bratislava's film students, professionals and enthusiasts. We spent a very inspiring week with Eugenio, helping him to prepare the lecture, and in the end we had assembled so much material that the two hours reserved for his presentation were not enough. That is why we decided to give our readers, instead of an interview, some notes on production design that we put down during our talks with Caballero, as well as some fragments of his insights into the profession.

The Mexican production designer Eugenio Caballero is famous mainly for having received an Academy Award in 2007 for his work on Guillermo de Toro's movie, Pan's Labyrinth. But apart from that, he has also collaborated on various projects with such renowned filmmakers as Jim Jarmusch and Sebastian

drawing: Eugenio Caballero

Cordero, and famous cinematographers such as Christopher Doyle and Guillermo Navarro. He was born in Mexico, studied art history in Florence, and picked up scenography only after his return to Latin America. He is the son of an architect, and although he swore never to follow his father's profession, now his father can tease him about it. Or should we say: envy him? Production design and art direction are very close to architecture, but those who work in the former professions have the advantage that they can realize the plans that most architects can only dream of. Eugenio, in particular, compares his job to a big playground where he can build life-size trains and trees made of plastic, big enough to hide a huge frog or a living girl. He can create a dense mysterious forest in the place of an empty wasteland. He started his career as a production designer making music videos, for which he won several awards, including the MTV Award (Chillanga banda). Subsequently he began to work on films, as an assistant to the Academy Award winner Brigitte Broch, the production designer of various films by Alejandro González Iñárritu and many others (e.g. Romeo and Juliet, 1996). Then his work took its own course. You will get to know more about the movies Eugenio worked on by reading his observations about the filmmaking process, as he readily admits that he learnt most

about production design while making films.

### Scenography in film

In large countries, usually whole teams of professionals deal with the scenographic aspect of each movie. The position of production designer evolved from that of art director mainly thanks to William Cameron Menzies. He contributed to the visual aspect of Gone with the *Wind* (1939) to a much larger extent than was usual in Hollywood studios at that time. Since then, scenographers have ceased to be just employees that had to work on various phases of production simultaneously. They have evolved to become partners of directors and of masters of photography, co-creating a complex visualnarrative concept. This equality of positions in the triangle director-master of photography-production designer is very important to Caballero. He is responsible for the final look of all material aspects of each scene (architecture, props, costumes, etc.), but he creates such aspects by consulting with both the director and master of photography. In his work he always puts story requirements ahead of purely aesthetic criteria. Although cinematography gives a lot of freedom to the imagination, its appeal (unlike theatre) derives mainly from its capacity to mimic reality. In other words, a tree has to look like a tree. Very often, it is not the size of production or the budget that matter. The choice of location and the selection of small objects, especially those that attract the viewers' attention, are essential. Everything has to be both in the right place and there for a reason. An inappropriately chosen element in a story or scene can negatively influence the whole movie. Hence the poet Vicente

Huidobro's comment "El adjetivo, cuando no da vida, mata," ("Adjectives either give or take life") can be applied to production design.

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### Visual metaphors

... are the principal focus of production design. Although most viewers are not aware of the stylisation, subconsciously it makes them confide in the logic of the fictional world they are looking at, and to have belief in the characters and their interrelations. As an example, we can of view, Caballero's colour scale changes in cite some visual metaphors used in two films on which Caballero collaborated with the director Sebastian Cordero, and the director of photography Enrique Chediak. *Crónicas* narrates the story of investigative

journalists from Miami who arrive in Ecuador on the hunt for a sensational story about a serial killer. They witness the villagers attacking Vinicio, a man who accidentally ran over a child, about which they shoot a report portraying him as the victim. This contributes to Vinicio's release from prison, however, it turns out that he is indeed the murderer they had been looking for. The irresponsible journalists had stepped on the shaky ground of local society, and thus unintentionally helped a dangerous homicidal paedophile go free.

Before the introductory scene was shot, Caballero got a dry road to be covered with mud. As a result, the man dressed in white who had initially made an impression of purity, got filthy during the fight with the villagers. The intention was to visually support the account of a man who pretends innocence, but at whom new pieces of information and evidence cast more and more suspicion and dirt over the course of the film. Nevertheless, the exposition may strike us as the public defamation of a blameless man. Other visual metaphors can be found in how the dwellings of the victims and that of the murderer are constructed. Low ceilings (inferior living conditions) prevent the inhabitants from stranding straight and the

insecure bridges that connect the houses over the water help the viewer to comprehend the fragile social network of an Ecuadorian village. They also symbolize the delicate balance that can be infringed by imprudent journalists of contemporary mass media.

In the movie Rage, an old mansion seems to have a life of its own. The narrow kitchen doesn't let the maid move freely in her workplace, and analogically her actions are limited by the family she works for. On the other hand. the intricate system of corridors helps her lover – who accidentally killed a man – to hide inside the house and stay close to her. No one in the house ever sees him, even the girl is always separated from him by a delicate, yet unbreakable veil of glass, windows, and corners, a veil of light and shadow that he steps out of only under exceptional circumstances.

Pan's Labyrinth takes place in two worlds that differ in shape and colour. The film's scenes set in Franco's dictatorship abounds in right angles and cold colours, while the world of fantasy that becomes a shelter for Ofelia is depicted with warm colours with few right angles.

### Notes of a serial killer

... this is what Guillermo del Torro calls Caballero's work notebooks, in which he pastes inspiration from everyday life with the precision of a maniac. These notebooks form the basis for the visual universe of his projects. All references (photographs, drawings, art inspirations) are transformed into the complex visual mechanism of his films.

#### Colours

... are the basic element of production design. As the motif of The Limits of Control is the variability of the world depending on one's point accordance with the mental state of the characters. The protagonist passes through several stages on his spiritual journey.

Madrid - the main character is reclusive and he follows his pragmatic goal - the mission for which he was hired – without compromise: saturated colours, glossy surfaces.

Sevilla – the hero opens up to new stimuli, to the warm country, flamenco: warm colours, matt materials (when a refulgent limousine suddenly appears on stage, it is crystal clear that it represents a danger from another world, another sensual mode.)

Almeria – the protagonist approaches the goal of his mission as a hitman: shades of grey, almost no colours.

Back in Madrid - when the mission is completed, the protagonist recovers his mental and chromatic equilibrium. He is sitting in a gallery looking at an empty canvas: grevscale.

Return to everyday life: the protagonist changes into colourful civilian clothing and we see him coming out of the underground into a busy street illuminated by daylight: realistic colour scale

### Construction

Even those who do not consider *Pan's* Labyrinth as an art film of avant-garde directorial qualities and refined authorial approach, have to admire Caballero's artistry in production design that earned him an Academy Award. The film takes place in picturesque natural surroundings, but Caballero decided to build the set on a dusty plain. The only original elements he preserved were the pines, as their conical shape appealed to him. Having found that moss does not grow on this kind of tree, his team dyed sawdust green and stuck it on the trunks. Everything else, the mill, the labyrinth, even the big hollow tree inside which the protagonist struggles with a giant toad, was formed by Caballero and his team. working on this project, the architect's son fulfilled his dreams of constructions that could never be built in the real world. It was no surprise to us that at the Film Faculty in Bratislava he decided to screen particularly this film in its entirety, in order to explain and illustrate his approach to production design.

### **Digital effects**

Caballero also intended to use fragments of Resident Evil: Extinction to explain the different strategies of dealing with digital effects. However, due to time constraints this was omitted from his lecture at the Faculty. However, he told Kinečko that he prefers digital effects which save money and time, but which are not showy. He disdains film scenes where pixels "stand out". Technological progress is rapid and so digital effects date equally quickly. As far as Resident Evil is concerned, the production designer wasn't satisfied with

many of the scenes. When we were preparing sequences for the lecture, he slapped his forehead many times saying: "This really sucks." He was trying to explain how to use digital effects appropriately so that they are not evident. They should never be noticeable in the first level of the film by interfering with the ac tion. Their place is in the background, whe<mark>re</mark> they can be very useful.

To achieve a credible life-like effect, a phys cal model is often built to the height of actors, because it would be difficult to work the effects around them and these would hardly be realistic. But the background behind the actors' heads can be formed with digital effects. In Resident Evil: Extinction the scenes that take place in a shabby Las Vegas originated this way. The models of monuments (e.g. the Eiffel Tower) were erected to the height of the actors, and th<mark>e res</mark>t wa<mark>s ma</mark>de di<mark>gitally. A</mark> similar method was used shooting a scene in *Runaways*, when the protagonists meet under the famous Hollywood sign. The actual sign was already restored at the time of the shooting, but as the film takes place in the 1970s, it was necessary to mould - partly manually, partly digitally – another sign to resemble

the old on<mark>e. Of</mark> all the scenes in which he has used digital effects, Caballero is most satisfied with a sequence from the closing part of Pan's *abyrinth*, when Ofelia meets her father, the <mark>ıg,</mark> in a <mark>luxu</mark>rious<mark> hall</mark>. T<mark>hough it was n</mark>ecessary to use digital effects to achieve the impression of fairytale castle luxury, he succeeded in preserving a certain realistic impression.

Currently Eugenio Caballero is working on Impossible directed by Juan Antonio Bayon, starring Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor. The story is set in Taiwan during the 2004 natural disaster. Unfortunately, he was not allowed to show us any visual material, but he assured us that he is enjoying the shooting very much. Not only is he designing giant models of trees, something he already has experience with, but he is also building the houses that were swept away by the tsunami.

#### And what about the audience?

The small details of production design such as subtle colour conception, the positioning of walls and furniture or surfaces (in other words. the mise-en-scene) are barely noticeable to a general film-goer. However, these are precisely the elements that subconsciously influence the viewer's perception, and paradoxically, ever though they are inherently stylized, they provide the film's authenticity. Film is art, and as such it has to transform reality into the sphere of an authentic art world that complements the characters and their stories. This is rarely taken into consideration when we think about Slovak cinema. We usually attribute the failure of Slovak films to bad screenplays or actors whose performance is too theatrical. But the reason can be found in deficient or inadequate production design, which makes actors feel as if they were on a theatre stage. And it should be noted that it has not always been so. Suffice to mention the The Organ (1964), whose visuals were created by the trio Štefan Uher - Anton Krajčovič – Stanislav Szomolányi.

### ΕK

(trans. by BD)





### A 3D film for Pina

### "Dance, dance, otherwise we are lost"

Before Wim Wenders (WW) became a key figure of "New German Cinema", he had studied medicine and philosophy. Since his childhood he has devoted himself to photography, and he also worked for some time as an engraver in Montparnasse. In 1971, he was one of the 15 directors and screenwriters who founded the "Film Verlag der Autoren", a production company that also dealt with the copyright and distribution of young cinematography.

His feature-length debut Summer in the city (1970) was preceded by various short and documentary experiments (Schauplätze, Same Playe<mark>r Sho</mark>ots Again, Silver Ci</mark>ty, Polizeifilm, Alabama: 2000 Light Years from Home). Wenders has simply always been one step ahead, and he has always liked experimenting, though never against the nature of the story. His experiments are not merely superficial provo<mark>catio</mark>ns; they are r<mark>ather</mark> ways to find the most suitable form to conve<mark>y a p</mark>articular mea<mark>ning</mark>. From the interview he gave Kinečko – to our great surprise and delight – it is clear that the quickly evolving and permanently changing art called film keeps offering him new byways to explore.

EK: Fragments of Pina Bausch's choreographies were used by Pedro Almodóvar in his film Talk to Her. But there have to be more interesting dance videos of her, <mark>abou</mark>t her, or even by Pina herself. Are there any you would recommend?

**ww:** Pedro Almodóvar used a short piece of *Café Müller* as the opening of his beautiful Hable con ella, that's right. Fellini cast Pina Bausch in his film *E la nave va*. And there have been numerous great short films and documentaries about Pina Bausch, of which you can find countless excerpts on YouTube. By Peter Lindbergh for instance, or Chantal Akerman, or Lee Yanor, among others. Pina herself made one film, in 1990, which I like a lot: The Lament of the Empress. But that doesn't really answer your question if there are "interesting dance videos about Pina around the world." Of course there are! But what exactly do you mean by "interesting", and is "interesting" good enough, or appropriate enough, to explore Pina's universe? When Pina Bausch and I started to talk about a film together, it was mainly because Pina felt that we should try to find another "language" for her art. She was not very happy with any of the recordngs that had been made of her pieces. And I agreed: dance is a very difficult subject for film, and something essential is always missing. That's why we didn't make our film for 20 years, and that's why I only started it when 3D became an option how to film dance. That was the first time I felt that as a filmmaker I was given the right tool to approach dance. Frankly, I think it is still the only appropriate option. And I don't suppose that in the future dance films will be done in any other way.

**EK:** Which dance films do you find inspiring? What is your opinion on the films by DV8 Physical Theatre or the experiments by the director and dancer Mava Deren?

**ww:** I love Maya Deren's films! What she did was pioneering work and very courageous! My favourite dance film would be The Red Shoes.

"I'm not interested in HOW my dancers move. I'm interested in WHAT moves them.' Pina Bausch

**EK:** What do you regard as crucial in Pina's approach to dance and

choreography? **ww:** She defined her approach better than anybody else: "I'm not interested in HOW my dancers move. I'm interested in WHAT moves them." That is a fundamental reversal! Pina took dance out of the realm of the aesthetic and put it in the context of a universal human experience. What is dance saying about US? How do we express ourselves with our bodies? Pina did not impose any choreography on her dancers; she "extracted" her choreographies from their experiences, from the answers the dancers gave to her questions. On Pina's stage you see common humanity, not just well-trained and ascetic dancers, but young and old, short and tall, skinny and voluptuous, people that you would not find in other ensembles

**EK:** Pina died before you had the chance to finish the film about her. How did this fact influence the film and the work of the dancers who appear in it?

**ww:** Pina and I wanted to make a film TOGETHER, that was our common dream for more than 20 years. When she died, during preproduction, it was completely unforeseen, by all of us, her family, her friends, her dancers. I cancelled the shooting immediately. The film we had wanted to make had become impossible.

The film that exists now is a totally different adventure into which the dancers and I went together. It only took shape months later,

when we realized that we could not make the film WITH Pina anymore, but we could still make a film FOR her. And that's what we did. **EK:** The film doesn't tell us much about the personal or professional background of the dancers. Are they all professionals? How did Pina choose the dancers for her ensemble? Did they have to go through some kind of a casting or did Pina herself look for them? **ww**: Of course they are professionals and extraordinary dancers. They are more than that: they are great dancers AND they are actors at the same time. Most of them have been with Pina's company for decades. So there were not that many open spots and opportunities for new dancers. But every year Pina would hire a few young dancers, and there would be hundreds of applications from all over the world. Pina would watch each and every one, sometimes repeatedly, and would finally choose those who she felt would fit into her ensemble. There are only a handful of companies all over the world with a reputation like Pina's "Tanztheater Wuppertal". **EK:** Why did you choose this essavistic style of film composition instead of narrating facts about Pina's life and career? **ww**: The film takes people into Pina's universe. From the beginning, Pina established two rules: "No biography!" and "No interviews!" She wanted this to be a film about her work, not her person, in which dance would speak for itself. Our film does that, in a highly emotional way. And in this way it shows more about Pina's art than you could possibly gather from any conventional documentary that gives you "facts".

**EK:** When dance is performed on stage, the choreography is spread in space and the viewer can choose which part he or she wants to watch. But a camera narrows the angle. Did you adjust Pina's choreographies so that they could be filmed, or did you preserve them as they were and adjust the shoot to capture all the peculiarities of dance?

**ww:** I would not have dared to change the slightest thing about Pina's choreographies. This is a film about somebody else's art, somebody I love and admire immensely. So I myself had to step back as much as possible. And in fact a lot of my work consisted in showing Pina's work in the best possible way, in the most appropriate angles, so it would allow the audience to immerse completely in her world. **EK:** Dance and film are actually very close to each other. They are both based on movement. Why do you think "video dance" can still be considered as only a marginal film genre?

ww: Because dance is escaping film in many ways. Dance happens in space, and needs space to be understood. On film, "space" has always been a fiction. Whatever we did with our cameras, it always ended up on a two-dimensional screen. Film was always "looking in from the outside", it never really entered the very element in which dance is taking place, and that is space. Only 3D opened that screen and let it give us access to the physicality of dance. Before, I always found it rather unsatisfying to watch dance in movies. The loss between the stage experience and the screen experience was too big.

"I have been making films for 40 years, and I was very thankful to become an explorer again."

**EK:** As far as I know, this was your first dance movie and right away you decided to make it in 3D. It had to be very difficult for you. What was the hardest part of the process of making a dance film? ww: It was a huge learning curve, I can tell you. You have to imagine things differently in 3D, to shoot them differently, and to edit them differently. And when we were making PINA, those were the early days of 3D, its infancy. (We shot most of the film before "Avatar" even came out.) We shot on prototype equipment. Everything takes longer in 3D, you can't be impatient. But then you are awarded by work that is new, you are allowed to enter a whole new territory, and that is very exciting. I have been making films for 40 years, and I was very thankful and happy to become an explorer again. EK: There is a profession of "stereographer" in the credits. What does it mean?

**ww:** That is a new profession. You still need a cameraman, or director of photography. But for stereography, for shooting with two cameras that pretend to replace a pair of eves, you need a specialist. Your cameraman needs to take care of the light, and of the camera movements. Your stereographer needs to take care of the higher mathematics that is involved in stereo cinematography. It is, indeed, almost a science. If you can vaguely imagine the complicated process that makes our two eyes produce a three-dimensional mage in our brain, you can guess how difficult it is to im physiological process with two cameras. My stereographer was a Frenchman, very experienced. Alain Derobe had been a pioneer in the 3D field for more than 10 years, and had single-handedly built most of the equipment that was available in Europe at the time. **EK:** Do you dance?

**ww:** Yes, at parties. If the music is right I can dance for hours. **EK:** In your film *Lisbon story* there is a character of a director who learns to believe in film stories again. Peter Greenaway once said in an interview that there is no future for stories in film anymore. Do you still believe in stories? After seeing PINA, I would say you do... ww: I made a film myself, a long time ago, in 1980, *The State of* Things, in which the movie director says: "Stories only exist in stories." The film tried to prove his theory, but really proved the opposite: the little bit of story in there saved the film. Yes, ever since I have believed in stories. In PINA, there are many stories, even though it is not exactly a story-driven film.

ΕK (trans. by BD)



### **THE FILMS**

### **AND NON-FILMS BY JAFAR PANAHI**

In December 2010, Jafar Panahi (1960) was condemned for "assembly and colluding with the intention to commit crimes against the country's national security and propaganda against the Islamic Republic," just because he wanted to shoot a film. He was sentenced to six years in prison, and a 20-year ban on making any movie or giving any form of interview as well as leaving Iran. Thanks to the acclaim of the films he had made, immediately after the sentence was passed, numerous expressions of solidarity started to come from all over the world, and many petitions and calls were signed demanding his release. This initiative was joined by renowned film festivals. As a tribute to him, his newest "nonfilm" called This is not a film has been screened in Cannes and at many other festivals (although not in Slovakia). At the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, it was included in the closing ceremony

Panahi has had long-standing problems with the state power. His films have received many prestigious awards, yet they have been banned in Iran despite not being explicitly political. They rather focused on social problems, and the author likes to designate the films as "humanistic." One of his recurrent motifs is the position of women in Iran, and their efforts to extend their personal freedom by means of everyday activities.

However, movies by Panahi aren't just ordinary stories of humanism, their appeal also resides in the formal aspect. Similar to other Iranian contemporary films, Panahi leaves many things unexplained, he works with time in unusual ways (from real time sequences to "invisible" time gaps), and uses circular structure (The Circle) and self-consiousness (The Mirror). His earlier works are stylised as observation, which emphasises their realism, and his portrayal of society doesn't focus on individual characters.

His creation was considerably influenced by Abbas Kiarostami, the director associated with the Iranian New Wave from the end of the 1960s, and not only at the level of aesthetics. After Panahi had made several television films, he worked as an assistant director of Kiarostami's Through the Olive Trees (1994),

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and Kiarostami later wrote two screenplays for Panahi: *The White Balloon* and *Crimson Gold*.

The White Balloon (1995), Panahi's debut that earned him a Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, is the story of a girl who wants to buy a goldfish, but she loses her money on the way. She drops it through a grate of a sewer and tries to retrieve it throughout the film. In the meantime, she meets all sorts of people (but not stereotyped characters), which creates a portrait of Iranian society. The fact that the protagonist is a child enabled the director to conceal his critical views. She doesn't yet know all the rules of conduct, therefore she can question them with her childish naivety. The girl obstinately follows her goal, she stands up to her parents, but she also gets deceived by swindlers.

Iranian Cinema often uses child characters to expose particular phenomena. Another Panahi film, *The Mirror* (1997), awarded the Golden Leopard in Locarno, also builds on this pattern. This time a girl tries to get home on her own because her mother didn't come to pick her up. But in the middle of the film there is a surprising twist: the girl resigns her role, she refuses to act, and the rest of the film is about her "real" way home, during which she is "secretly" followed by the film crew.

Once more, we can observe a portrait of the society, but the forsaking of her role emphasises the realism in several ways. When the girl explicitly denotes the first part of the film as fiction, it inevitably makes the second part a "documentary" or an account of "reality." On the other hand, these two parts are so similar (the girl continues on her way home), that if the second part is "real", it makes us see the first part as very realistic, though it is a fiction. Panahi's third film represents a certain shift in his creation, even if the motifs emphasised in this work also appeared in previous films. *The Circle* (2000), awarded the Venetian Golden Lion, is the story of

a number of women who are afraid and powerless. There are scenes when we don't really get to know what their problems are, the film doesn't go into details. We just witness anonymous harm, pressure originated by the system, not by concrete people. We don't see the faces of policemen because they don't act as individuals, but as part of a system. As a rule, in Panahi's films there are no actual protagonists or antagonists.

The metaphor of the circle appears in this film at the level of narration, telling the stories of the particular women one by one. They pass the main role in the film among themselves at the moment they meet, as if they were passing one another a relay baton (in fact, Panahi was inspired by the pattern of a relay). In addition, the film ends where it started, in prison. But there is another level of the circular structure - the implicit one. The characters find themselves in a vicious circle from which there is no chance of escape. Their only possibility to find more freedom and room for life is to extend the radius of the circle. In this film we also do not get a closer look at the characters, everything is impersonal: we just observe small fragments of their lives. This way, the movie is more universal and it stops being related exclusively to Iran or to the position of women. It is about the personal freedom of all people.

*Crimson Gold* (2003) differs from the rest of this director's films. It abandons crude realism and is more melancholic. Through the character of a young thief, Panahi exposes the differences between the rich and the poor. In *Offside* (2006), his last film, that was awarded at the Berlinale with the Silver Bear, he returns to female characters. This time he follows the story of girls that try to get into a football match, something that is not allowed for women.

Many of the elements we find in these films are also present in his documentary

This is not a film. But here the victim of the anonymous evil is Panahi himself, and he is the one who has to learn how to expand the circle around him. Although it is evident that he became a victim of a politicized process, he doesn't designate the problem explicitly, he doesn't blame the government. Even when the demonstrations against the government appear in the film, he doesn't comment on them. Instead of an open fight, he protests with his art, making a film that is not a film. His gesture is comparable to the actions of the women characters in his films. When they try to get into a football match or light a cigarette in the middle of the street, these aren't actually acts of revolt, but in the given situation it makes them feel a little freer.

To him it is more important to orientate himself in the situation and to push borders as far as he can, to achieve as much personal freedom as possible. So when he isn't allowed to shoot a film, he tries to create it in a different way, by making it inside his mind.

The documentary takes place within the span of one day, when Panahi was still under house arrest, waiting for the decision of the Court of Appeal. We witness his everyday routine (he talks to his neighbors, plays with an iguana, calls his lawyer, etc.), which presents him in a similar way as he employed to depict his characters (and this retrospectively emphasizes the realism of his previous films).

However, the most interesting part of the film is the director's reflections about it. The most powerful scenes take place in his living room where he tries to stage his non-film according to the screenplay he wasn't allowed to shoot. He explains his vision and becomes an actor himself. He actuallyposes the question if what he does could be considered a film, or if a "true" film has to be shot on a film strip. Eventually, he realizes that there's no point in continuing the shooting. With tears in his eyes, he realizes that this is not a film. But right after that, he starts to talk with enthusiasm about his previous films and about takes in which he managed to capture something unique.

That is why the central motif of this nonfilm is the love of film, the passion for something forbidden (which brings us back to the theme of inner freedom). At the same time, this piece contains an ontological moment for cinema: What is film? Is it an audiovisual recording or is it rather the mental scheme of a director/a viewer? Are the scenes created in Panahi's mind a film? Or is it necessary that he shoots them with actors, and only then would it be considered a film? And if he shoots himself talking about his ideas about the film, will the recording be a film or will it just be some non-film?

In addition, there is the moral aspect of the whole situation that forces us to reflect on whether it is even possible for a director to make a film under such circumstances, or whether he is confined to making just nonfilms? And there is another angle: if the previous movies that Panahi made were considered non-films by the Iranian government and banned, if the rest of his films were not films, then this one cannot be a film either. Panahi's works offer countless impulses for consideration. In a way, we can (even) think about Magritte's painting, *This is not a pipe.*..

The title *This is not a Film* is obviously a message to the Iranian authorities. Even though Panahi is inside his flat throughout the film (save for the last few seconds), by means of this non-film he comments on the state of the entire society in which he lives. At the same time, the title claims something that should be questioned by the viewer. If (even) this is not a film, then what (the) film is?

томáš нирáк (trans. by BD)

25 km<sup>2</sup>



The short film **25**  $km^2$  by Jana Mináriková is childhood his life has been connected with j a profession that bears risks related to the sp is based on the fact that pieces of metal radi energy of lightning. But metals are not the o was filmed on an 8mm camera, not out of wh the film. The young Slovak director Jana Mináriková st the Department of Screenwriting of the Acad graduated in Documentary Creation at the sa

## KINEČKO

