



**European Children's
Film Association**
Association Européenne du Cinéma
pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse

Interviews

Vitello

Paradise '89

Invisible Sue

Obon



Journal

No. 4 | 2018

November

Photo: Vitello

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3 VITELLO

Interview

6 OBON – Interview Andre Hörmann

Dox Spot

LATVIAN YOUNG AUDIENCE FILM SPECIAL**8 A boost for Baltic children's films****10 Children's Film Call****11 Centenary line-up****12 JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS**

Work in Progress

13 PARADISE '89

Interview

16 FILMS ON THE HORIZON**18 KUAP**

Short Cut

19 ECFA Film Literacy Seminar

Event

20 INVISIBLE SUE

Interview

22 OF UNWANTED THINGS AND PEOPLE

Work in Progress

23 Olympia Pitching Lab

Project

24 FILM EDUCATION GOES DIGITAL?

Event

Stand up for our mission

Over the last weeks and months we have often insisted on your attention regarding the new guidelines for Creative Europe's upcoming policy for 2021-2027. A joint stand was taken by ECFA and KIDS Regio and spread among our members. We really hope that you will follow up this policy by contacting your national Media Desks and Members of the European Parliament.

Lobbying for our common interest – European quality films for children – in all sectors (production, distribution, exhibition, education) is certainly needed. Because the commitment of policy makers seems not to be growing but decreasing.

For instance in the results of the film festival support by the Creative Europe programme, within the deadline of November 2017, 6 actual children's film festivals were supported, together with 4 festivals that have a substantial children's film section in their overall program. Within the deadline of April 2018 however, there were only two children's film festivals included and 2 with a children's section "on the side". Underneath you will find an overview of the selected festivals. Knowing that ECFA has about 60 festival members, it is clear that many of them are missing out!

This is an evolution to be really worried about; certainly because we were informed that also in another

Creative Europe section (Distribution – selective support) the positive discrimination for live action children's features will disappear in the next guidelines.

Therefore we will welcome your lobbying efforts and we kindly ask you to continue and even intensify them.

–
Felix Vanginderhuysen

Creative Europe Film Festivals deadline 23/11/2017

Schlingel (Chemnitz); Filemon (Brussels); Kino Dzieci (Warsaw); Zlin FilmFestival (Zlin); Buster (Copenhagen); Cinekid (Amsterdam) are children's film festivals. Kurzfilm - Mo & Friese (Hamburg); Kurzfilmtage (Oberhausen); Riga IFF (Riga) and Nordische Filmtage (Lübeck) all have a substantial young audience section on the side.

Creative Europe Film Festivals deadline 26/04/2018

JEF (Antwerp) and Olympia Filmfestival (Pyrgos) are children's film festivals; Black Nights (Tallinn) and Leeds International Film Festival (Leeds) have a substantial young audience section on the side.

All of the festivals mentioned above are members of ECFA.

DORTE BENGTONSON ABOUT VITELLO

“Maybe it’s a Viking thing”

In many ways, Vitello’s life is totally fine. He gets plenty of spaghetti with butter, he lives in a nice neighbourhood surrounded by many friends, he has a fast lawn mower and a slingshot... What more can you wish for? A dad perhaps? Since mum refuses to tell him who or where his father is, Vitello sets off on a quest in search of a dad of his own.

In a scarce and somehow crooked visual style, though yet very lively and dynamic, this Danish animation has a warm heart for all things human. VITELLO observes mankind’s awkwardness with mild compassion. Dorte Bengtson’s feature animation debut is a Danish-Scottish co-production.

Why Scotland? Was it just a matter of bringing together some of the most remarkable accents on the continent, or was there more to it?

Dorte Bengtson: When Zentropa, Ja-film and I met with Scottish co-producer Bob Last, we found out Scots and Danes seem to be very much

alike, with a similar sense of humour. Maybe it’s a Viking thing. What initially started as a financial construction, turned out a perfect match.

If you would have had a bigger budget, would VITELLO have become a different film?

Bengtson: From the start, I wanted this film to have a sketchy, minimalist look. But money would have allowed us a bit more time. Now the budget forced me to find solutions on how to use all tools and talents at our disposal in the best possible way. The team gave me their very best, and I had then to make the right choices. We’ve surely cut back in the details.

The film was not only defined by the budget but also by the original material it’s based on: a famous series of children’s books.

Bengtson: I really admire the original books written by Kim Fupz Aakeson, even though the looks are very basic: a main character with a big head and a few props. We decided to stick to



that minimalism, which I found very challenging. There were so many limitations, and so little elements to frame the story correctly for the audience. A child that adores the original book, shouldn’t be disappointed when seeing the film. It should feel like that very same universe is now unfolding, with a few backgrounds and surroundings and voices, but still very minimalist.

And with a very reduced colour palette.

Bengtson: The books have all these pastel colours; every page comes with a different background colour. Niels Bo Bojesen who’s drawing these

books, shared with me his palette of pastel colours – everything starts with that. I developed an emotional colour script for the film, as if the entire emotional scale is captured in certain colours. We did the same with the music. Our very talented composer could do all sorts of symphonic things, but then I asked him to try to do a piece of ‘Italian disco’. Finally all characters were represented in both colours and musical themes.

The minimalism of those backgrounds is perfectly illustrated by your version of a starlit sky, a very unpolished image that is...

Bengtson: When polishing things too



much, you don't do justice to reality. Life isn't perfect, and kids should know that. Some came to ask me honestly: 'Don't you know how to draw?' Actually that was the most difficult part of the animation process: making these very talented artists draw as if they weren't capable. The background designers made sketches and then didn't get a chance to perfect them, so that kids came to tell us afterwards: 'Maybe you should attend drawing classes.'

The film contains a lot of 'playing'. The kids are playing all the time in their world of imagination.

Bengtson: Kids don't play anymore

these days, that's how it seems to me. Both the writer Kim Fupz Aakesson and me, in our childhood years, we just played. We ran out into the field looking for something to do and always something happened. VITELLO doesn't have a big narrative arch. There is a storyline about a kid longing for a father, and while following him, always something happens, although none of it seems to be planned. That's what being a child is all about.

While playing, an entire gender discussion unfolds. Boys and girls playing the same game, from very different angles.



Bengtson: We broadly discussed if we would dare to make Vitello's friend Kamma a real girl. In terms of political correctness, these days their roles should be reversed. We made her a girl, but not a princess. She wears a dress, but she also loves cars. Just like I always did. It's not about boyfriends and girlfriends, it's about being good friends. She can tell him things that the other boys still don't understand. Like, she knows that it's not okay to have three dads.

What's your connection with horror? You're serving us some crazy zombie scenes there!

Bengtson: I've only seen the old horror classics, I'm not good at watching scary movies. Every child in the audience recognises this feeling of going to bed, being left alone with your dreams. I remember those fears: when my foot is bungling out of the bed, maybe snakes will come and bite it. Such little stories are connected to children's everyday lives in an almost documentary way.

Now that you mention documentaries... What is this thing that is always on when they watch television, there is the same film on about crocodiles eating zebras?!

Bengtson: That's a comment on Danish children's television. Since in Denmark the funding for children's TV was cut down, they're broadcasting the same stuff again and again. In VITELLO this is represented by this horrifying film about life in the savannah, with crocodiles in a water pool lurking for zebras. Why would you show that to a small child? What a lack of respect for your young audience. "It's about animals, so children can see it." The voice actress doing that TV host is a Danish comedian and I asked her to sound as bored as possible.

The voice acting is remarkable. With an ordinary kid doing Vitello's voice, instead of an experienced actor putting on a childish voice.

Bengtson: I hate that! We casted about 100 ordinary boys to play Vitello and among them we found one perfect. I didn't want him to read the script, so we worked together on every dialogue. Vitello is the only character with a normal voice. He's supposed to be a real boy, despite his big head. He is in the centre of the story and kids should connect with him, so no overacting was allowed. His best friend William sounds rather normal too and Max and Hasse, who are a bit annoying, sound that way.



From there on we move in concentric circles, with every grown-up sounding weirder and weirder, because that's how Vitello sees them. The further we move away from his childhood world, the crazier the character. You might not notice it when watching the film, but you'll definitely feel it.

Causing the most extreme reactions in today's screening at the Film'on festival were the kissing scenes. Apparently normal people shouldn't kiss in animated movies, except maybe princes and princesses.

Bengtson: Since the audience is with Vitello, they indeed feel like him. He finds that kissing repulsive. Fair

enough. In Sweden VITELLO can't be screened because of the swearing, while in Norway the audience seemed to like the film a lot. Apparently there are very different opinions, even among the Nordic countries, about how to connect with children.

You picture the life of a single mum rather unglamorous, I'm afraid.

Bengtson: Vitello's mum is deeply human, and a loving mother, even if it takes time to realise that. There is a lot of singles in Denmark pretending to look perfectly fit, but that's a myth. Vitello's mum is much more real. She's absent, sometimes lazy and not in shape, she likes red wine (although



you never see her drinking) and prefers her couch over going to the gym. But she's pure and she's there when Vitello needs her, raising a child all by herself.

Now VITELLO is going to be a TV-series.

Bengtson: After a few shorts, VITELLO is my first feature. In Denmark we topped 35,000 admissions, which is fantastic for a 3-6-years-old audience. Since the books are full of amazing stories, we have worked on a series of 13 episodes, each of them telling a separate story. That was already included in the financial plan of the feature film, and now we'll try to make

the next 13 episodes happen.

–
Gert Hermans

OBON, winner of the GROSSE KLAPPE award



OBON, by German filmmakers André Hörmann and Anna “Samo” Bergmann, won the GROSSE KLAPPE award at the 2018 doxs! festival, a prize chosen by the youth jury for the best political film for children and adolescents.

“Fire everywhere, burning bodies and an insufferable heat – all hell was breaking loose over the city.” In OBON, the nuclear attack on Hiroshima is remembered by one of its last survivors. Despite the memory still being painfully vivid, the 93 year-old managed to find a spark of light in the devastating darkness the catastrophe caused: While her father was an authoritarian traditionalist, the horrors of the event changed him. Finally, she is able to experience the fatherly love she was longing for.

For their film, Andre Hörmann and animator Anna “Samo” Bergmann set off on unusual paths regarding its form. They combined their protagonist’s

detailed story with drastic animated images, thus creating a hybrid documentary composition.

The youth jury, comprised of students from Bochum, Moers and Duisburg, proved impressed by the film’s ability to present an historical event intertwined with a touching family story. *“The filmmakers forego the use of demonstrative archive material, using animation to revive the past instead – which can occasionally have an unsettling effect on its viewers. The film’s imagery and realistic sound design induce a touching effect.”*

Thomas Krüger, president of the Federal Agency for Civic Education and award donor, emphasised OBON’s potential for political education: *“You cannot talk about history without addressing the present. Particularly questions revolving around armed conflict resolution are more present than ever.*



The youth jury’s decision reminds us that peace has to be earned and actively maintained.”

The GROSSE KLAPPE award is endowed with €5,000 and presented in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education to honour documentaries promoting an aesthetic approach to documentary culture and the political consciousness of children and adolescents.

The Doxspot column is published with the help of the doxs! festival for children & youth documentaries (Duisburg, Germany), www.doxs.de.



ANDRE HÖRMANN ABOUT OBON

At the doxs! closing ceremony we met with director Andre Hörmann during a vivid Q&A with the young GROSSE KLAPPE jury members.

Andre Hörmann: In 2012 a stipendium allowed me to go on a research trip to Hiroshima where I interviewed survivors of the atom bomb. Their stories were dark and gruesome. Then I met Akiko Takakura, she was the only one who had a ray of hope shining through her story.

We only see her as an animated character.

Hörmann: We’ve been considering a

long time whether to show her picture in the end. It was my gut feeling telling me not to do it, to sustain a more collective feel to the story. The animation is based on drawings that survivors made about the disaster, which seamlessly guarantees a certain subjectivity in a project that didn't ask for an objective approach.

There exists a collection of such drawings?

Hörmann: They are collected in a book, and they've all drawn very similar scenes, with the same traumatic elements recurring: melting faces, eyeballs falling out, fire that is everywhere.... Also those fire demons came up in many of those drawings. The opening scene with the dead bodies floating on water, refers to a nightmare that haunts many of the survivors, even till today.

That's where the animation started.

Hörmann: We figured out the style very quickly. Anna made a rough animatic and we recorded the voices of the Japanese actors to define the rhythm of the scenes. That was all new to me, as this was the first time I worked with animation. I'm used to the rhythm of documentary making, which means you can make a 15' film

in approx. 10 days. While this 15' film took us two years. For me that was a struggle. Only after half a year, when we had about five minutes ready, I could get a proper feeling of the film. One thing about animation is that you have total control, while usually filmmaking is the total loss of control, because the bloody world acts different from what you imagined. We could discuss every single detail. In that sense the animation process was nice and smooth, even if it was difficult for me to be so patient, but I'd love to do it again.



You entwine the tragic historic event with an element of family history.

Hörmann: In my films I always put a strong emotional connection in the heart of the story to create an emotional bond with the protagonists. In this case the father-daughter bonding created the storyline. Without that, the film would have been unbearably

cruel to digest. That week in Hiroshima was really tough and I had difficulties falling asleep at night.

Are you still in touch with Akiko Takakura?

Hörmann: Somehow. She is 93 years old now and bed-ridden. But I've sent her a copy of the film, and since it took us so long to finish it, I'm happy she was still alive to see it.

How does it feel to actually be in Hiroshima nowadays?

Hörmann: Every time when being in Japan I felt alienated. But Hiroshima felt much more alive, as if people there are celebrating life more intensively. Due to the element of 'surviving', they have reasons to embrace life. The city was destroyed and had to be rebuilt completely. Not many buildings remain from those days except a few, like one bank that we used as a reference for our bank scenes. And there are these incredible shadows of people, whose contours are now burned into stone by the lightning of the bomb, as a horrible visual memory of that specific moment in time.

You tried to capture one of the biggest catastrophes in modern histo-

ry, one split second of pure horror. Did it put any pressure on you for trying to capture something that big?

Hörmann: That's why I choose one personal perspective and just followed that. It's not my film anymore: it's her words, her experiences. And I constructed a story out of it.

OBON is actually the name of a Japanese celebration.

Hörmann: Like on the Mexican Day of the Dead, people visit the graves of their beloved ones. Especially in Hiroshima Obon is celebrated very intensively, because of their shared memory.

Will you give animated documentaries another try?

Hörmann: I already started working on one. We're currently recording stories in Mexico City in a home for retired prostitutes, where I find myself surrounded by 75-year-old ladies. Most of them are retired now, but not all. And I'm preparing a fiction project for the Besondere Kinderfilm programme.

—

Gert Hermans

BALTIC CHILDREN'S FILM BOOST

Latvia celebrates Centennial with at least 5 new young audience titles

All three Baltic states are in a festive mood these days. The celebration of their 100 years of existence showers Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians in cultural events, historical evocations and... loads of films. In Latvia, film production has been boosted by the Centenary programme, especially for young audiences. We went to The Latvian National Film Centre with urging questions: Why celebrating with cinema? Why suddenly all these children's films from a country where production over the last decades was so limited? And what new titles should we look forward to?

In 2014 The National Film Centre made a first open call for films to celebrate Latvia's Centennial: "high in quality, diverse in genre and socially significant, portraying themes related to Latvian history, statehood

and national identity." A second call followed, and finally 16 projects got selected. With Managing Director Dita Rietuma as a spokesperson, The National Film Centre convinced the Latvian government that a vast additional budget was needed to support this ambitious film production line. Only extra funding would enable the industry to present such a precious cinematographic gift to the audiences and to the country. Now, four years later, is the time to deliver. Dita Rietuma: "The Latvian film industry has been working on its gift for Latvia's Centenary for quite a few years and now it's ready – 16 full-length films for a wide range of audiences." At least five of them could undisputedly be categorised as "young audience films". All 16 titles have passed the entire funding procedure: for development, production and post-production.



JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS

What were the selection criteria?

In the film selection procedure, a special Centenary commission took in account certain guidelines, looking at both the creative elements and the market potential. The main goal was to reach a broad audience with fairly accessible films.

Keywords for this commission were diversity and balance, in genres and in topics. Thus guaranteeing room for children's films, both live action and animation. Five titles for young audiences were selected: the two animations, JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS are for a very young audience, while BEFORE THE DAY

BREAKS addresses the older ones on a more philosophical tone. PARADISE '89 is a lyrical coming-of-age story, GRANDPA MORE DANGEROUS THAN A COMPUTER serves traditional entertainment, while BILLE is a quite rough story, based on a well-known book. TO BE CONTINUED, a documentary observing five children over the course of two years, is probably more about children than for children.

Why celebrating with film?

The centenary festivities embrace much more than cinema. It's a huge programme, spread over the course of five years, in which (extra funding for) several art forms is included. The





Dita Rietuma: "The Centenary programme feels like vitamins for the industry"

Ministry of Culture has an entire department dedicated to this project, and cinema is just one aspect of it. But the film chapter is indeed gaining a lot of attention. Film is an accessible media that documents society at every given moment in time. Producers and scriptwriters can choose to focus on historical or contemporary content, they can research into historical questions, tell stories about iconic Latvian personalities, adapt books by Latvian authors etc. That's the added value of cinema.

What about the audience?

Results from a summary of local box office statistics for the first half of 2018 show impressively positive dynamics. During this period, overall attendance for newly released Latvian films exceeded 290,000 – almost 100,000 viewers more than in all of

2017. Films produced within the Centennial's framework have been a decisive element in this evolution.

In the concept of the Centenary funding programme, a budget was foreseen to invest in publicity and marketing. To make that happen The National Film Centre worked hand in hand with the producers. Throughout the entire country, a distribution network was installed to bring these films to every small village, reaching out to every segment of the Latvian audience. In that sense the domestic coverage of the Centenary films was much better than any other title on the Latvian market. After years of struggling with a lack of confidence from the audience, the Centenary programme feels like fresh vitamins for the industry, a festive revitalisation of the market.

More information about the increasing audience numbers for Latvian films can be found [here](#).

This new era for Latvian cinema already speaks from the funding facts & figures. There was a clear evolution in The National Film Centre's funding budget over the course of a few years:

In 2015: €5,7 million
In 2016: €6,7 million
In 2017: €10,5 million

A similar leap forward was seen in Estonia, where the funding budget raised from €7 million in 2015 upto €12,5 million in 2017.

Baltic co-productions

Since all Baltic states are celebrating simultaneously, and a strong Baltic co-production tradition was established long ago, co-production seemed like an obvious choice. But now that governmental support was so substantial it was affordable to keep those films strictly Latvian productions. Moreover the topics of the films were often rooted in national history. They speak about local incidents or Latvian personalities, which is less interesting for the international co-production market.

What now?

With GRANDPA MORE DANGEROUS THAN A COMPUTER, the first Centennial film was already released in 2017, the others celebrate their premieres in 2018 and 2019. The success of the programme might even increase Lat-



BEFORE THE DAY BREAKS

vian film budgets in the upcoming years, as it proved that film is essential and the audience is longing for it. See it as a statement from the industry: investing more government money pays off both in terms of quality and in numbers of admissions. Still the construction is rather shaky, as the consequences of recent elections and the new government-to-be can not yet be estimated.

This is also the moment for a change of generations. The Centenary call has inspired young artists, ready to come up with something new. It opened new doors to the industry. This could just be the start of a renewed tradition, also for children's film.

Information: National Film Centre of Latvia, nkc.gov.lv/en/latvian-films/

*–
Gert Hermans*

LATVIAN NATIONAL FILM CENTRE LAUNCHES FIRST CHILDREN'S FILM CALL

Since Latvian independence in 1989 local children's film production was flying low. In animation some of the old standards were maintained, but in live action only every few years a Latvian title entered the market, often directed by Varis Brasla for Studio F.O.R.M.A. Other producers didn't see children's film as an option. Even in this year's edition of the IFF Pitching Forum for Children in Riga, hardly any Latvian productions were represented.

In the slipstream of the Centenary project, the Latvian National Film Centre has now launched a call for young audience films. A total support of more than €1 million will be given to four feature-length young audience fiction film projects that should hit the screens in 2019-2020. Finally the time has come for new names, new companies and a new generation to stand up and take up an interest in children's film. To select these projects, special experts were invited in an advisory role, among which was ECFA member Kristine Simsons, children's

programmer at the Riga International Film Festival.

The four selected projects:

- * Young director Matiss Kaza will showcase his preference for the western genre in WHERE THE ROAD LEADS, a romantic adventure story.

- * In the Latvian-Estonian co-production CHRISTMAS IN THE JUNGLE by Jaak Kilmi, a family relocating to Indonesia comes to the verge of collapse when both daughters experience their own problems in this foreign land.

- * Highly acclaimed director Laila Pakalnina has never worked for a young audience before. Her film IN THE MIRROR will have a creative approach to the cinematic language through the use of "selfie stylistics". A new version of the Snow White fairy-tale with a fitness-obsessed stepmother and seven extreme-sports-enthusiast dwarves.

- * In Dace Puce's THE PIT, targeting a 10-14 year old audience, children suffer emotional abuse from growing up without parents.

Atom Art in Latvian animation

Quality standards in Latvian animation are maintained by plenty of small animation studios and a few bigger players on the market. Animācijas Brigāde has unmeasurable experience in puppet animation. Rija Films has Vilnis Kalnaellis and his son Reinis working on (among other titles) APPLE PIE'S LULLABY. That project has been promoted for many years at their Berlinale stand, where they've often lent a helping hand to colleagues trying to sell their products at the market.

A relatively young company for which The Latvian National Film Centre has high hopes is Atom Art. Their JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS is one of the flagships of the Centennial programme, but currently Atom Art's most popular product is THE SHAMMIES, a



THE SHAMMIES

TV-series reaching out to a pre-school audience. In short playful sketches, puppets in fabrics act alongside a living cat, playing around with objects and materials. Check out the 2 minute episode [HOW SHAMMIES GUESSED](#) here. Atom Art's leading director is Edmunds Jansons (his PIGTAIL AND MR. SLEEPLESSNESS has been screened in numerous festivals) but when taking young directors on board, they seem to have a nose for good creative collaborators on every level (composers, animators, designers etc.).

Contact: Atom Art, producer Sabīne Andersons, sabine@atomart.lv, www.atomart.lv.

CENTENARY LINE-UP

Besides JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS (see next page), four more films were made for young audiences in the Latvian Centenary programme.



GRANDPA MORE DANGEROUS THAN A COMPUTER

During the summer holidays in the countryside, grandpa is assigned to protect his grandson Oskar from the dangerous influences of the internet. Oskar's visit gets off to a bad start, but when grandma becomes the victim of a scam, the two join forces. Over the last decades Valdis Brasla and his production company Studio F.O.R.M.A. seemed to be the only Latvians with a passion for live action features for children. Most of Brasla's films, like WATERBOMB FOR THE FAT TOMCAT and NAUGHTY EMIL were shot in Kuldiga, a charming Latvian town dating back to the 13th century.

Director: Varis Brasla, screenwriter: Alvis Lapins; Prod. Company: Studio F.O.R.M.A.; 94'

Sales: Rija Films; info@rijafilms.lv; www.rijafilms.lv.



PARADISE '89

Madara Dislere's feature debut PARADISE '89 takes you back to 1989, when Latvia starts its road to regain independence from the Soviet Union. Two sisters arrive in a country town to spend the summer holidays with their cousins. The girls enjoy their freedom, seemingly living like grown-ups. In the centre of the action is the introverted Paula, who makes friends with a Lithuanian dissident on the run for the military police. While the fear of an imminent war is growing, interactions between the girls become strained.

(Read more in the interview with Madara Dislere)

Director & screenwriter: Madara Dislere, 89'.

Production: Tasse Film; alija@tasse.lv; alise@tasse.lv; www.tasse.lv.

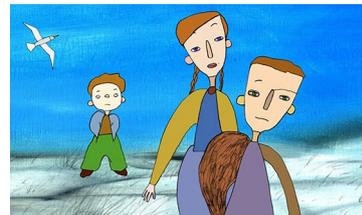


BILLE

Based on the autobiographical novel by Vizma Belsevica, one of the classics of Latvian literature, BILLE is witty story full of hope. Growing up in the late 1930's, seven-year-old Bille lives in a world where the rich and the poor each have their own streets. Bille is deprived of motherly love and is reminded that she is a rough child and no good will come of her. Director Inara Kolmane made an impressive attempt to present the streetscapes of Riga as closely as possible to the feel of the 1930s. A large part of the film was shot on authentic locations, including the house at 6 Varnu Street, where the author spent her childhood.

Director: Inara Kolmane, screenwriter: Arvis Kolmanis & Evita Sniedze; 110'.

Production: Studio Devini; devini@devini.lv; www.devini.lv.



BEFORE THE DAY BREAKS

BEFORE THE DAY BREAKS is a visual poem by Latvia's first and foremost iconic animation artist Roze Stiebra. With a career started in the 1960s, she now rounds up her work with a tale about Latvia, the daughter of the sun. The sun's love is unconditional, it gives light and warmth to everyone alike, not dividing or judging. This main message of light, warmth and consciousness is presented in a humorous and exciting animation.

Director & screenwriter: Roze Stiebra, art designer: Ilze Vitolina; 70'.

Production: Locomotive Productions; office@locomotive.lv; www.locomotive.lv.

WORK IN PROGRESS: JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS



When producer Sabine Andersone pitched JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS two years ago at Cinekid, it was clear that this was a project with enormous graphic qualities. But how would it fit with the ambitions of the Centenary programme? "The story takes you to existing locations and is set in a romantic Riga suburb. It is as much the story of a neighbourhood as of the kids (and the dogs) living there" stated Andersone.

Seven-year-old city boy Jacob has to spend the holidays at his uncle's house

in a suburb called Maskachka (aka the Moscow district). The boy discovers an environment he has never seen before, makes friends with his "know-it-all" cousin Mimmi, and his uncle, a former sailor. On top of that he meets Boss, the leader of a bunch of talking dogs, who call themselves 'The Guards of Maskachka'. When Mimmi and Jacob find out that evil businessman Manny Pie plans to ruin this romantic district by building impersonal skyscrapers, the kids are determined not to let this happen. Therefore they join forces with the pack of hyper-ver-

bal, four-legged hoods.

The film presents a remarkable bunch of characters. There's the inquisitive Jacob, his self-confident know-it-all cousin Mimmi and Boss, the leader of the 'talking dogs'. And there is a wealthy tycoon, who chooses glass skyscrapers, offices and shopping malls over a peaceful neighbourhood where people live in a warm-hearted community. Elina Braslina, the film's art designer, spent a lot of time exploring the particular Maskacka district, in order to get a better feel for the location.

Director, animator and graphic designer Edmunds Jansons: "For a long time I have been looking for the right story for a full-length animated film for children, which I finally found in a Latvian children's book by Luize Pastore. She's young, very talented, and the book was highly appreciated equally by children and grown-ups. I felt immediately this was great material: a charming story with poetic elements and fascinating characters. And a plot full of exciting details that combines realistic elements from everyday life in the city, with loads of imagination and fantasy." JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS targets the 6-9 year old audience and will be released in

2019, as one of the last titles in the Centenary programme.

Edmunds Jansons is internationally known for his short films, but JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS will be his first feature-length film. "The film's idea developed slowly" he says. "At this stage, the film has become a commentary about how I see my city – maybe also about a country in which people, like Jacob and Mimmi, don't put up with the absurdities happening around them but do their best to improve their lives." Edmunds Jansons is also the founder of the independent animation studio Atom Art. After gaining support from the Polish Film Institute's minority co-production scheme in 2017, the film is now a joint production between Latvia's Atom Art and Poland's Letko.

JACOB, MIMMI AND THE TALKING DOGS, 70', Latvia, 2019

Director: Edmunds Jansons; Scriptwriter: Līga Gaiša; Production Designer: Elina Brasliņa; Producer: Sabine Andersone for Atom Art, sabine@atomart.lv; www.atomart.lv. Release: 1 February 2019

World sales: New Europe Film Sales.

–
Gert Hermans

MADARA DISLERE ABOUT PARADISE '89

“With a drop of nostalgia – like summer when it’s almost over”

Summer, 1989. Sunlight softly falls in delicate rays over the village where city girls Paula and Laura come to spend their summer holidays. Four girls in flowery skirts, unattended, playfully imitating the life of adults, while in the background the signs of a national uproar against the Russian occupier can no longer be denied. Paula even befriends a young dissident on the run from the state police. The tastes of adult life force the girls to make life determining choices.

At the Film’on festival in Brussels, director Madara Dislere can’t emphasize enough how deeply the film is based on her own childhood experiences. *“It’s about a young girl’s farewell to the life she had so far, and the start of a new era.”*

What exactly is that paradise you mention in the title?

Madara Dislere: It has many meanings. This film is telling my own story and I definitely had a paradise-like childhood, full of freedom and fun. Latvia was a part of the Soviet Union and we

were not a free country, but as children we were free. Nowadays in a free country, children have less freedom than we had. One girl in the movie asks: what is paradise? The other one answers: it’s the place where you have everything you’re dreaming of. That is why the word here is also used in a slightly ironic way, because for children and adults, paradise doesn’t have the same meaning.

Were you familiar with life in the villages in that time?

Dislere: I was nine years old in ‘89. Everything that happens in the movie, happened to me, my sister and my cousins during that summer. We came from the city and my cousins lived in a village not far from Riga. All my memories I collected in that script. I wanted to have everything as precise as possible, all the locations, the props, the words, the feelings, were very important to me. All the exterior shots were filmed in that same village where I spent my childhood summer, in that same house. Over the years, almost nothing had changed there.



Madara Dislere: “Our country was fighting for freedom in an almost childlike way”

When the film speaks about independence, that is as well the independence of a country and of the girls. Both are growing independent together?

Dislere: Exactly. It was the idea to show how the girls and the country were growing up simultaneously. Even the way our country was fighting for freedom, was almost childlike. When we were standing there, holding hands, who could even imagine

this could lead us to freedom? We didn’t know how to do it, we were just improvising. Just like the girls.

Children were very much left to themselves.

Dislere: All people of my age remember their parents being very busy, having two or three jobs to earn a living, and many of them meanwhile had a political commitment in the Popular Front. My generation very much





grew up by itself. Today we take much more care of our children, like flowers growing up in a greenhouse.

You talk about the innocence of childhood, but this film is also about the loss of innocence. Every paradise sooner or later comes to an end?

Dislere: The bible says that when you do something wrong, you're chased out of paradise. Every child loses its innocence at a certain moment, probably when turning into a grown-up. Paula is still a child, but her paradise might soon come to an end and she

realises that. She arrives in the village as a well-behaving child, very strict with her sister, not yet having her own ideas, but she starts becoming the person that she will be. It's already in the title of the movie: there's the digits 8 and 9, but afterwards comes 10, like a countdown: 8-9-10... and you're out!

In the beginning of the film Paula is so reluctant and earnest, as if she doesn't dare to live her life.

Dislere: She learns a lot from observing her cousin Maija. She wants to be just like her. Like Maija, she wants to

enjoy doing whatever she wants. *"Our parents don't allow us anything at home."* In Maija, Paula sees the freedom she's lacking. Later she'll understand that freedom comes with consequences and difficulties, and she realises Maija is not telling the whole truth. From then on, Paula starts looking at life from her own eyes. She decides to choose her own way and live her own life. *"Don't teach me how to live,"* she says.

There was a refreshing amount of natural nakedness in the film.

Dislere: I did it to emphasise this feeling of innocence. In my childhood, nowhere was it taboo to run around like that, and unfortunately this isn't the case anymore. It's a sign of the times.

There is a scene in the film with a long queue, stretched out all over the marketplace, waiting to sign a document for independence. I was surprised by the diversity of people there. There's hippies and punks, there's farmer's daughters and fashionable girls, there's old ladies and young men...

Dislere: And they all wanted the same: freedom. As children we really stood in that queue and signed that document, we wrote our names and got the badges of the Popular Front, and

we were so proud we did it. We knew that we did something good, but then afterwards got scared when a neighbour told us we'd be sent to Siberia.

A TV set is often playing in the background. What was on TV those days?

Dislere: In every house, radio or TV were on all day long. Everybody wanted to hear the news. In the movie you'll pick up a glimpse of a popular TV programme GOOD EVENING LATVIA, which was on at midnight, once per week. Everybody was watching it, as this was the only programme that would tell us what was really happening and speak about the growing amount of demonstrations and protest. The film also shows the archive images of the Russian speech, officially reacting to the Baltic uproar, stating that what we did was wrong.

For a young audience it's difficult to understand the right context and circumstances of the story: the civil war, scarcity in the shops, the language confusion... Did you ask yourself how much youngsters today would understand of it?

Dislere: When writing the script, I only thought about Latvian family audiences, as a movie just for ourselves, about ourselves. I tried to bring generations together in a movie for children,



parents and grandparents. In Latvia, kids go to the cinema together with their parents. I was hoping after the screening they would have a dialogue about those times, the values and the history. To trigger that dialogue, the narrative of the girls is combined with a political background story. Children at school still learn about this period but personal stories about real people will bring Baltic children closer to their recent past and will form their political consciousness.



But still they'll always ask you about that dead cat!

Dislere: They do! They always want to know. The dead cat is there, because that really happened to Jonas, the dissident I met. When he was hiding, all he had was a radio and a cat. And then it died! I want to show that in life, good and bad things happen and they're not always clearly defined. Everybody makes mistakes, but we all

try to do good as well. This goes for all my characters. In reality Jonas was indeed taken to the militia, but then was sent home. Nowadays he's doing fine, working as an artistic director for a film company.

One of the things striking me from the very first scenes, was the visual elegance.

Dislere: For the entire film I wanted to maintain the sunny summer feeling, corresponding with my warm memories. Sunny, with a drop of nostalgia – like summer when it's almost over. Like the paradise they're in, but already with one leg out. Gints Berzins is a fantastic DoP who worked on many beautiful poetic movies. I myself am inspired by the great classic directors, like Tarkovsky, Kieslowski, Bertolucci...

All of them men! While in your film I can feel a strong female touch all over.

Dislere: You can't escape from yourself. As this is my first, and very much autobiographical feature, I allowed myself to do it in a feminine way. Most of the men in the film are quite weak. I think men were like that in those days, while women were working hard and carrying all burdens upon their

shoulders. You know why? In World War II many women lost their men, and we grew up with the idea we had to protect them all. That caused another paradox. All this motherly care and protection didn't let them to become real men.



Your young actresses together are a marvellous ensemble.

Dislere: For every role, 500 girls were applying. I started to look for them at quite an early stage, because one year before the shooting I had to film a teaser to convince financiers. So I casted them quite young, as they still had one more year to grow before the shooting. Through that test, I understood I could really work with them. All the girls were pretty similar to the role they played. Before the shooting started, we went to the house, they had to put on the dresses and we lived there for three days to get into the right atmosphere.



Did your parents see the movie about their daughter's childhood?

Dislere: At the premiere, my mum was crying. "I never knew life was so hard for you. Only now I understand how it was for you to be so all alone, while we were busy." For my generation there was no hugging, no physical affection, never was love spoken about. That was not the way emotions were expressed. PARADISE '89 showed her a perspective that she never even thought about before.

–
Gert Hermans

ANNA'S WAR

Feature Film, Russia, 2018

Director: Aleksey Fedorchenko
 Prod.: SAGa, Metrafilms, 29th February Film Com.

World Sales: 29 February Film Com.

Phone: ++7 343 257 16 61

www.29f.org/en

BOYZHETKEN – SHE'S ALL THAT



Feature Film, Kazakhstan, Russia, 2018

Director: Abdel Fiftybajew
 Prod.: Alma Pictures, Remedy
 World Sales: Antipode

Phone: ++ 7 499 978 73 14

elena@antipode-sales.biz

www.antipode-sales.biz

THE ELEPHANT QUEEN

Documentary, UK, Kenya, 2018

Directors: Victoria Stone & Mark Deeble

Prod.: Deeblestone

World Sales: Mister Smith Entertainment

Phone: ++44 20 7494 1724

info@mistersmithent.com

www.mistersmithent.com

FINDUS MOVES HOME

Feature Film & Animation, Germany, 2018

Director: Ali Samadi Ahadi
 Prod.: Tradewind, Senator, ZDF, etc.
 World Sales: Wild Bunch Germany

Phone: ++49 89 444 55 66 44

office@wildbunch.eu

www.pettersons-und-findus-derfilm.de

GIRL



Feature Film, Belgium, The Netherlands, 2018

Director: Lukas Dhont
 Prod.: Menuet Prod., Frakas Prod., Topkapi Films

World Sales: Match Factory
 Phone: ++49 221 539 70 90

info@matchfactory.de

www.the-match-factory.com

IN THE MIGHTY JUNGLE

Feature Film, France, 2018

Directors: Caroline Capelle & Omblin Ley

Prod.: Macalube Films

World Sales: Les Acacias

Phone: ++33 1 56 69 29 30

acaciasfilms@orange.fr

www.acaciasfilms.com

INVISIBLE SUE

Feature Film, Germany, Luxembourg, 2018

Director: Markus Dietrich

Prod.: Ostlicht Filmprod.

World Sales: Attraction Distribution

Phone: ++1 514 846 12 22

info@attractiondistribution.ca

www.attractiondistribution.ca

JERRYMAYA'S DETECTIVE AGENCY – THE FIRST MYSTERY

Feature Film, Sweden, 2018

Directors: Josephine Bornebusch

Prod.: SF Studios

World Sales: Svensk Filmindustri

Phone: ++46 8 680 35 00

international@sf.se

www.sfindernational.se

JILL, JOY AND THE SLEEPING CLOCK

Feature Film, Finland, 2018

Director: Saara Cantell

Prod.: Zodiak Finland

World Sales: TrustNordisk Int. Sales

Phone: ++45-3686 87 88

info@trustnordisk.com

www.trustnordisk.com

LAND OF GLASS



Feature Film, Denmark, 2018

Directors: Jeppe Vig Find & Marie Dalsgaard Rønn

Prod.: Pilot Film

World Sales: LevelK

Phone: ++45 48 44 30 72

tine.klint@levelk.dk

www.levelk.dk

MINUSCULE – MANDIBLES FROM FAR AWAY

Animation, France, 2018

Directors: Thomas Szabo & Héléne Giraud

Prod.: Futurikon, Ifilmfilm Entertainment, France 3 Cinéma

World Sales: Futurikon

Phone: ++33 1 44 61 94 61

standard@futurikon.com

www.futurikon.com



THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE WORLD



Feature Film, Germany, 2018

Director: Aron Lehmann

Prod.: Tobis Film Prod., Rialto

World Sales: Telepool

Phone: ++ 49 89 55 87 60

telepool@telepool.de

www.telepool.de

PETER'S ODYSSEY

Feature Film, Russia, 2018

Directors: Anna Kolchina & Alexey

Kuzmin-Tarasov

Prod.: IE Constantine Lusignan

World Sales: Intercinema Art Agency

Phone: ++7 095 255 90 52

post@intercinema.ru

www.intercinema.ru/petersodyssey

PONY AND BIRDBOY

Feature Film, Finland, 2018

Directors: Mari Rantasila

Prod.: Citizen Jane Prod., Yle

World Sales: EastWest Film Distrib.



Phone: ++43 1 524 93 10

office@eastwest-distribution.com

www.citizenjaneproductions.fi/en

RAFIKI



Feature Film, South Africa, Germany, etc., 2018

Director: Wanuri Kahiu

Prod.: Big World Cinema, Afrobubblegum, MPM Film, etc.

World Sales: MPM Premium

Phone: ++33 9 52 22 07 22

sales@mpmfilm.com

www.mpmfilm.com

SHÉHÉRAZADE

Feature Film, France, 2018

Director: Jean-Bernard Marlin

Prod.: Geko Films

World Sales: Films Boutique

Phone: ++49 30 695 378 50

info@filmsboutique.com

www.filmsboutique.com

THAT'S LIFE

Feature Film, Italy, 2018

Director: Francesca Mazzoleni

Production: Warner Bros. Italia, Indigo

Film, Roma Citizen

World Sales: True Colours - Glorious Films

Phone: ++39 06 37 35 23 34

catia@truecolours.it

www.truecolours.it

THE TOWER

Feature Film, Norway, France, Sweden, 2018

Directors: Mats Grorud

Production: Tenk.tv, Les Contes Modernes, Cinenic Film

World Sales: Jour2Fête

Phone: ++33 1 40 22 92 15

www.jour2fete.com

WILDWITCH

Feature Film, Denmark, UK, Sweden, etc., 2018

Director: Kaspar Munk

Production: Good Film Company ApS, TV2, Nevision, etc.

World Sales: TrustNordisk Int. Sales

Phone: ++45 36 86 87 88

info@trustnordisk.com

www.trustnordisk.com

WINTER FLIES



Feature Film, Czech & Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Poland, 2018

Director: Olmer Omerzu

Production: Endorfilm, Česká Televize, Cvinger film, etc.

World Sales: Cercamon

hello@cercamon.biz

www.cercamon.biz

More information on all these films you will find on our website:

www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/feature-films

KUAP

Tadpoles do not develop simultaneously – and neither do humans



In our world things often reach a point where all you want to do is turn your head and look away. But, fortunately, plenty of short films for children actually do deal with those issues. The current trend is: take a closer look where it hurts, and where the protagonists never give up. They keep on trying, again and again, to make the best out of a situation.

For adults, especially, it would be worth taking a look at some shorts for a young audience and see how open minded children can be towards 'being different'. One example is Nils Hedinger's KUAP (Switzerland, 2018), a short animation with a live action background, about a tadpole who somehow misses out on becoming a frog and is left behind.

Nils Hedinger: With certain frog species, it can happen that a tadpole stays in the water over winter and only develops into a frog the following year. All winter long these tadpoles grow bigger and bigger. When I heard about this frog-peculiarity I thought to myself this would perfectly fit a short film about late bloomers. That's where the story began...

Did you have children or adults in mind as audience?

Hedinger: Since Kuap is a tadpole, thus a 'frog-child', and the film is related to a topic that was important to me in my childhood, I always thought about it as a film for children. During the writing process I presented the story to pupils in a primary school, and they gave great feedback. Some scenes were modified due to those reactions.

KUAP is running successfully at festivals all over the world and is screened to children and grown-ups – did you notice any differences in their reactions?

Hedinger: The reaction of young audiences in general is much louder and more direct, which is obviously great fun. With the adults you never know instantly whether they like the film or not. Moreover they both laugh at different moments. The scenes which are more "slapstick", are popular with the children; more subtle elements rather work with adults.



Who is asking more questions?

Hedinger: Children of course. Mostly their questions are better and more direct.

KUAP is a coming of age film – but besides the little tadpole being a bit slower than the others, it also deals with metamorphoses in general...

Hedinger: On one hand the film tells a very human story, on the other hand it gives you an insight into nature and evolution. Tadpoles are perfect for showing the development of characters, as their transformation is so visible. I like the frog metamorphosis

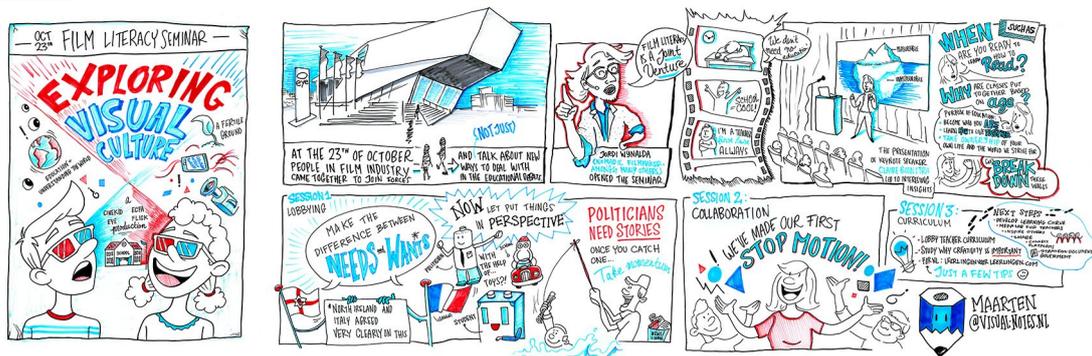
very much and as a child I often used to play with tadpoles. Nature in general is very important to me. That's why I insisted on showing the peculiar beauty of the pond by using this live action background as naturalistically and directly as possible.

KUAP by Nils Hedinger; Camera: Antonia Meile; Animation: Nils Hedinger, Simon Eltz & Fela Bellotto; Music: Julian Sartorius; www.kuap.ch

MO & FRIESE

The Short Cut column is published with the help of the [Mo&Friese KinderKurzFilmFestival](http://www.moandfriese.ch) dedicated to short films. As a part of the Hamburg Short Film Agency the festival aims to present documentaries and experimental films in addition to animation and short films as well as to arouse the curiosity of children and to stimulate their imagination.

FILM LITERACY SEMINAR: EXPLORING VISUAL CULTURE



The seminar was summarised and illustrated by Visual Note artist [Maarten Kersten](#)

On the 23rd of October ECFA partnered in the Film Literacy Seminar: Exploring Visual Culture, organised in cooperation with Cinekid, Eye and FLICK and perfectly hosted by Eye.

After a keynote speech by Claire Boonstra, each participant could dig deeper into a particular topic in one of the so called Zoom-into-sessions focusing on:

- Lobbying
- Collaborative projects
- Film education in the curriculum

© Photo's: [Corinne de Korver](#)



Film Literacy Seminar Sold Out!



From left to right: Margret Albers, Floor van Spaendonck & Florine Wiebenga



Keynote speaker: Claire Boonstra



Hands-on



Zoom-into-cooperation



Zoom-into-lobbying

MARKUS DIETRICH ABOUT INVISIBLE SUE

“I’m good in superhero trivia”

12 year old lone wolf Sue is a fan of comic books. Especially the ones about superheroes. But she never expected to gain superpowers herself. Though after an accident in a lab, where her mum works as a scientist, she is suddenly able to become invisible. Shortly after, her mother is abducted. With the help of her new friends Tobi and App, Sue has to rescue her mother and hunt down the kidnappers.

INVISIBLE SUE tells a hectic story about an unlikely superhero and her odd friends. The pace is rapid, the storyline complex, there’s flickering lights and sinister locations. The film by German director Markus Dietrich premiered at the Cinekid festival in Amsterdam.

Markus Dietrich: That was decided by our sales agent Attraction. For them Cinekid could just be the right place to start the worldwide promotion. We wondered if it would be okay to

premier abroad with a film from the German ‘Besondere Kinderfilm’ programme. But INVISIBLE SUE has a very European feel. The Berlinale doesn’t give much visibility to domestic productions and the film is probably too mainstream for their competition. Today we had a screening with Dutch children, they reacted perfectly well. Now we know the film works as good for an international as for a German audience, and we know now Attraction was right - they already sold the film to several territories.

While your debut film SPUTNIK was strongly rooted in German history.

Dietrich: SPUTNIK was very important for me, as it was telling my own story – that girl Frederike, that was me. I simply had to make a film about that key moment in my childhood years: the fall of the Berlin wall. But I decided to make my second movie more universal.

Both films have a thing in common:



a female main character, both truly empowering heroines.

Dietrich: Because they are able to solve situations themselves, with very little help from boys. There are two reasons for that. I have a strong daughter with a powerful fantasy, and I should offer her stories to which she can relate. The other reason are my childhood heroes. I grew up with PIPPI LONGSTOCKING. RONJA ROBBERS DAUGHTER was my very first cinema experience, back then in the DDR, and up till now it’s one of my all-time fa-

vorites. I have a deep admiration for characters like them, strong and real. We even named our daughter Selma after Torun Lian’s film IKKE NAKEN (and after the first female Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Selma Lagerlöf).

There’s the clinical setting in the lab versus a castle-like manor and a skyline referring to Gotham City. You must have had a terrific set designer.

Dietrich: For three years I’ve worked



intensively with my old friend Stephan von Tresckow on the creation of this world. We made the story not German or Luxembourgish, but situated in its own world, 'somewhere' on the planet. Finding locations that fitted this big story was an absolute priority.

One location that you found particularly spectacular?

Dietrich: The factory ruins! When I saw that wasteland, I changed the script just to enable us to shoot on that location. Those scenes initially were to be shot in a forest, but these run-down industrial facilities were a true superhero set. Nothing had to be constructed – everything was there.

Sue is invisible in more than one way. She's seldom noticed and even called 'a monster' and 'a freak'.

Dietrich: The starting point was a superhero with passive powers. The power to become invisible is only useful when she smartly uses her brain. Sue is an outsider, a nobody. It's a universal question for children: Who am I? How visible do I want to be? And where would that get me? That's what she has to learn.

Her quest urges you to tell a story that is getting more and more com-

plex. At certain moments we can't but wonder: who is where, doing what for what reason? You challenge your audience narratively.

Dietrich: I don't like movies telling obvious stories, I want to surprise the audience with big questions. Who can I trust? Do I really know my parents, my family, my friends? As Aunt Lore says: people are often not what they seem. As a child I loved my grandfather deeply, he was my hero. Later I found out that behind this old man's friendly façade once was a brutal and alcoholic father and my whole world fell apart.



What about all that inventor's mumbo jumbo? Was any of it scientifically substantiated? Were you advised about chemical reactions?

Dietrich: Only about the formula on the whiteboard in the lab. All other scientific modifications are pure non-

sense. Luckily my wife is very good at natural sciences, while on the other hand I'm good in superhero trivia. The mutations in Sue's blood are not impossible. They're plausible, although only to a certain degree.

These days so many films have drone-shot scenes. You went one step further: using a drone to film a drone.

Dietrich: I admit... When Kaya is on the square playing with her flying gadget, we used a drone to film this beautiful location from up in the air. These days technology allows you to shoot marvellous pictures in no time. After some recent accidents though, Luxembourg has very strict regulations on the use of drones, especially when flying over people. We made them very nervous! But safety first – we do have a big responsibility towards the actors, the people on the set and the city's inhabitants. We were shooting in Luxembourg city!

The home of your co-producer Amour Fou who – I quote you – "saved your ass".

Dietrich: The Besondere Kinderfilm fund was with us from the very beginning, but still we needed like €300,000 to close the budget, and

we didn't find any German investors willing. Behind the scenes were ongoing discussions if this type of film was actually worth being made. Then German producing company Ostlicht Filmproduktion met Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu and Bady Minck from Amour Fou, who loved the script but never did a children's film before. What I really appreciated: when applying with the Luxembourg Film Fund, a director gets to meet the board to defend his project and explain his vision. Only through that money we could make the film.

I'm sure you were involved in many discussions about superpowers. You must be an expert now!

Dietrich: In general, kids wish they could fly. About 90% of them seems to have this Superman fixation. If we'd ever make a sequel, flying will be unavoidable. I'd rather prefer teleporting, while Lui Eckhardt (playing Tob) wanted to time travel, a very creative but equally dangerous superpower.

–
Gert Hermans

Juraj Krasnohorsky about OF UNWANTED THINGS AND PEOPLE



Four short stories for children, by four directors from four countries. That's the ambition of a project that grew among four producers. One thing that all stories should have in common is a certain melancholy for unwanted, forgotten, undesired objects or people. There's children left alone after the loss of their parents, there's monsters that once lived in an apple yard and there's a continuous stream of tender magic realism in narratives and aesthetics. At the VAF (Visegrad Animation Forum) pitching forum, we spoke with one of the coordinators behind the project, Slovak producer Juraj Krasnohorsky (Artichoke Film).

Juraj Krasnohorsky: The project was born right here, sitting around the table with producers whom all met through VAF: Wojtek Leszczynski (Poland), Kolja Saksida (Slovenia), Martin Vandas (Czech Republic) and me. *"Why wouldn't we set up a co-production? Let's find a story that suits us all."* Martin came up with a book by Czech author Arnost Goldflam that perfectly fitted the occasion.

How to fit four stories together under one umbrella?

Krasnohorsky: Every episode will share the same aesthetics. We're working with one art designer, one sound designer, one composer, one

group of puppet designers... Consider it one story with four chapters. All the experts gave us similar advice: find that one thing that makes the stories feel as one. We should get the four episodes more entwined with each other through various narrative techniques, as if the stories all take place in one location, in one world.

In your presentation you showed a scene with a cat transforming into a lady, which looked brilliant. Such sense of magic realism will be omnipresent?

Krasnohorsky: Not exactly a Harry Potter-kind of magic, but Arnost Goldflam's proper poetics. We're talking about the kind of magic that reveals the true nature of things and makes unexpected things acceptable. We have to think carefully how to include these magic elements, there's still a lot of work in terms of dramaturgy. But the stories are all there, and what we have in our hands is really strong material. Now it's a challenge to translate it into visual language, into film. Making sure that the visuals, the narration and the dramaturgy will be appealing to our target audience.

Do you have specific visual examples in mind?

Krasnohorsky: Our basic reference would be what is generally considered as typical Central-European stop-motion, not super clean and smooth, you can still recognise some of the initial materials. We want to promote that East European quality animation standard across Europe.

Which brings us back to our initial starting point: the Visegrad Animation Forum. Or should I say the CEE Animation workshop?

Krasnohorsky: For the future we're planning to gather all VAF activities (forum, workshops etc.) under one bigger brand named CEE Animation. Eight years ago, the word Visegrad was mainly there for financial reasons, because there was a fund supporting joint activities. But the entire Visegrad concept is no longer valid. Besides the four traditional Visegrad countries, Slovenia now plays an important role, and so are the Balkan and the Baltic States. We're currently bringing together producers from 19 different countries.

—
Gert Hermans

1ST OLYMPIA “CREATIVE IDEAS” PITCHING LAB

Developing ideas for young audience shorts



The 1st Olympia “Creative Ideas” Pitching Lab will take place from December 1-4th in Pyrgos, as part of the Olympia International Film Festival. In specialised courses participants will be trained in the particularities of young audience cinema by six educators from Greece and abroad, further developing the participants’ ideas. The best idea will receive a €2,000 award by ERT, to encourage the next steps of the production process.

With the “Creative Ideas” Pitching Lab, the Olympia Film Festival for Children & Young People is aiming towards:

1) Educating – especially young – film-

makers in the distinct characteristics of films dealing with aspects of childhood and youth.

2) Providing know-how and support in all stages of film creation, from the development stage to commercial and alternative distribution.

3) Developing initiatives towards collaboration with ERT, GFC, EKOME and other institutions, in support of production and distribution of young audience films in Greece and abroad. The Olympia International Film Festival will fully support not only the winning idea but all interesting projects presented in the “Creative Ideas” pitching lab.

Basic principles

Ideas taken in account for the pitching lab can refer to fiction (max. 20’), animated or documentary (max. 30’) films, addressing an audience from preschoolers upto the age of 18.

Basic principles:

1) These films should look at the

world through the eyes of children or young people.

2) The directorial approach must take into consideration the perceptive abilities of the age group the film is primarily addressing.

3) Subjects promoting violence, sexism or racism (including discrimination because of race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin, descent, religious or other beliefs, disability or chronic suffering, age, family or social state, sexual orientation, identity or gender characteristics) will be eliminated.

Educators

- Felix Vanginderhuysen (Belgium), children’s film distributor, producer of educational film programmes, Secretary General of ECFA

- Andrei Roman Jazevic (Poland), author, director, producer, Member of the Academy of Polish Filmmakers and BCTU (London)

- Lina Yannopoulou (Greece), producer, member of the Olympia IFF organisation committee



Dimitris Spirou, initiator of and educator at the Olympia Pitching Lab

- Agathi Darlasi (Greece), storytelling consultant, director, screenwriter

- Tzortzina Kakoudaki (Greece), director, theatre theorist, theatre educator

- Dimitris Spirou (Greece), director, screenwriter, Artistic Director of the Olympia IFF

- Sannette Naeye (The Netherlands), consultant, former director of Cinekid, Honorary Member of ECFA.

Application Form

Fill out [this application form](#) and email it to festival@olympiafestival.gr under the title “Application for Creative Ideas Pitching Lab”. Deadline: November 20th 2018.

- [Pantelis Panteloglou](#)

FILM EDUCATION GOES DIGITAL?

FLICK lines up strategies and best practices

Filmbildung digital?

Film education goes digital?

On September 21st the Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum hosted an international conference on digital film education in Germany and Europe within the framework of the European FLICK project. The aim of the conference was to enrich the educational policy debate on the use of digital tools in schools and universities.

In her welcoming words, Ellen Harrington, Director of the Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum, pointed out the importance of film education. The recent and systematic expansion of the Department of Film Education has underpinned this central role in the mission of the house. Head of that Department is Christine Kopf, who presented an idealistic approach

to her work: The focus is on cinema as an art form. Film education is not to be understood as preventive media pedagogy, but rather focuses on the aesthetics of the cinema experience and the sharpening of perception. In a digitalized era, film education must develop digital strategies and methods - but a sensory film perception in a cinema environment should remain the maxim of the work.

In the current German debate on the „Digital Pact“, the aesthetic and content-related exploration of media threatens to be marginalised in favour of an instrumentalized media concept, says Dr. Petra Missomelius from the University of Innsbruck. The implementation of film education in a school context achieved to date, could get lost in such an understanding of „digital education“ as action-oriented media competence training.

The presentations by Martin Brandt-Pedersen (Danish Film Institute) on the [Filmcentralen](#) platform

and Olivier Demay and Bérengère Delbos (Les Enfants du Cinéma) on the [NANOUK](#) platform showed how film education platforms are currently designed in a digitally networked world. While Filmcentralen is connected to almost every Danish school as a central streaming portal and provides about 775,000 streams a year,

NANOUK is conceived as a tool to accompany the French school cinema programme and mainly offers materials for contextualising a film seen in the cinema.

Florine Wiebenga and Maartje Hillige (EYE Filmmuseum, Amsterdam) plead for increased lobbying efforts



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to anchor film education in schools. In Dutch schools moving images are mainly used to illustrate the contents of learning. A central (streaming) platform for (school) film education is also to be created in the Netherlands through high-profile campaigns such as the “Film Teacher of the Year” award, but also through networking with the film industry and political decision makers.

In Germany too, are exemplary initiatives at state level, as Detlef Endeward (Gesellschaft für Filmstudien, Hanover) demonstrates with the example of the Niedersächsischer Filmkanon. Film classics can be downloaded from a password-protected education server. A model that will hopefully be applied beyond the federal state borders in the future, even if the acquisition of comprehensive licenses requires a high level of commitment. A legal regulation that would actually facilitate the use of films for educational purposes is long overdue.

Fun in a Filmmuseum

A second part of the conference was dedicated to the use of digital film



analysis tools. In the vast majority of cases, this happens in a school context. In preparation of the conference, various tools, websites and apps were tested by students in Frankfurt and the surrounding region. Overall, their feedback was mixed. They praised in particular the sustainable education provided by a number of offerings, providing extensive explanatory texts on film concepts and terms. But in comparison with non-digital communication concepts - such as visiting the permanent exhibition of the Deutsches Filmmuseum - the digital tools weren't convincing. Students came to the conclusion that *„in a museum you learn more, while having more fun“*.

A project of the Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum is currently attempting to make tested methods of film education usable in digital con-

texts. Rhizom Film History is an online tool equipped with film beginnings that offers explorative, curated and analytical access. Dr. Ines Bayer from the Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum, offered the prospect of creating a sensory and intuitively operable web environment for conveying German film heritage, while explicitly refusing to focus on schools as a framework for action.

In a final panel, in which Katrin Willmann (Bundeszentrale für pol. Bildung), Christine Kopf, Detlef Endeward, Michael Jahn (Vision Kino) and Merten Giesen (Medienzentrum Frankfurt) participated, the desire for a central national (streaming) platform was articulated. This promised a bundling of work to be done, for example in the clarification of rights and a better findability on the Internet. However, the federalist structure of the education system currently makes it almost impossible to even think about concepts or platforms on a larger scale.

In terms of lobbying, the keyword was ‘open educational resources’. In the future, film cultural institutions must network more closely in order to jointly form a strong lobby for film ed-

ucation. The maxim must be to insist on the necessity of appropriate film education work. In addition, there is an urgent need for concepts for film-specific teacher training and for the development of a new generation of film educators.

So will film education now become digital? In addition to existing opportunities, film cultural institutions must claim the importance of the content-related and aesthetic examination of media in the context of „digital education“. Only then can film education also succeed in digital contexts.

–
Jan-Henrik Branding

More sources and tools (if freely accessible):

Filmsprache-App (Film language App): [for Android](#) or [iOS](#)
[Murnau Educational Package](#) Top-Shot-App: for [Android](#)



ECFA Journal

Published by ECFA

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ECFA's goal is to support cinema for children and youth in its cultural, economical, aesthetic, social, political and educational aspects. Since 1988 ECFA brings together a wide range of European film professionals and associations, producers, directors, distributors. ECFA aims to set up a working structure in every European country for films for children and young people, a structure adapted to Europe's multicultural interests.

For more information and memberships (€ 250 per year):

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The European Children's Film Distribution Network:

www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/network

Databases on children's film festivals, sales agents, distributors and TV-programmers interested in European films for children.

ECFA Journal No. 4-2018

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