



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

interviews

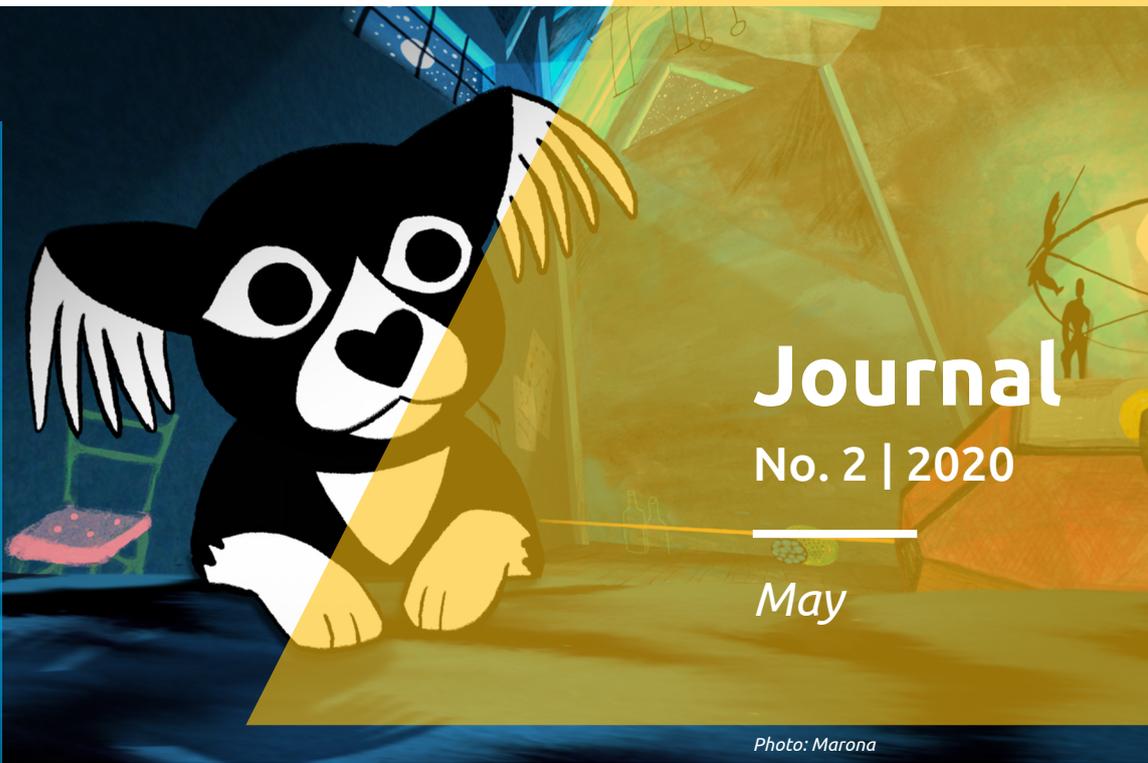
Marona

Los Lobos

Ket & Doc

Champ

The Scent of Oranges



Journal

No. 2 | 2020

May

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Festivals will be booming

In these turbulent times, with cinema audiences locked up in their houses, a huge amount of audio-visual content has been made available online. Some of it is closely associated with the core of our profession, like learning courses such as *40 days to learn film* (by film essayist Mark Cousins) or *Film education: a user's guide* (for which BFI, DFI and Vision Kino joined forces), or disclosed festival archives (IDFA, Olympia, etc.).

But within ECFA the hardest hit are probably the festivals, living in permanent uncertainty. In an online meeting for festivals 'in the danger zone', organised by ECFA, it became clear that not everyone is willing to go for the 'fully online' option. Big festivals like Kristiansand, Zlin and Schlingel would rather search for alternatives. Marketa Pasmova (Zlin Festival): "*It is our aim as a festival to help children discover the sensation of cinema, more than to make them watch films.*" Eventual online additional webinars, debating directors or workshops are, for a children's audience, a too feeble surrogate to compete with 'the real thing'.

For those festivals still considering going online, this ECFA meeting was an opportunity. The Oberhausen Short Film Festival was kind enough to share their experiences, a piece of solidarity that might help others to bite the bullet. We are grateful to Franziska Ferdinand

and her colleagues for sharing this insight, on the eve of their event.

However there are reasons to be cheerful.

- A French survey showed that a trip to the cinema is what people are second most looking forward to for the post-lockdown period. On top of the list was "having a beer". Just for your information, these two can easily be combined.

- With the red numbers of the last quarter in mind, cinemas will fully focus on blockbusters. Dankert Monrad-Krohn (Kristiansand Festival): "*Festivals will boom! With only blockbusters in the theatres, festivals are the only alternative for people who want to see something different.*"

Over the last months we have witnessed a race among ringleaders. Who has the most advanced ideas? Who can outsmart the others? Haven't we reached a point where we should do some introspection, rather than ruthlessly re-inventing the wheel under a suffocating pressure to be the most innovative leader of the pack? Everything entering your home through your laptop screen is just a fraction of what life can be. We want to offer children quality media, but also a life outside of that.

-
Gert Hermans

Anca Damian about MARONA

“My film is a like a sausage”

In her final moments, the adorable street dog Marona reflects upon her life. On the cute puppy she once was and on all the people she loved unconditionally: an acrobat, a construction worker and a little girl who promised to always be there for her.

Rarely a film, not even an animated feature, dazzles as much with colours and movement and artistic exuberance as MARONA does. The swirling animation makes MARONA's graphic universe a stunning beauty. The director of this French-Rumanian co-production is Anca Damian, and we spoke with her at the JEF festival.

MARONA seldom misses its effect. In a sense that you'll often find yourself surrounded by the sounds of sobbing and sniffing. Do you never feel a tiny little bit guilty about all those tears being shed?

Anca Damian: Not at all! The more people tell me how heartbroken they were, the happier I am. It is not all about crying, because everybody is

laughing as well. After every dramatic scene, I cut to a funny one. Combining emotions with humour and adding a strong visual identity to it, that complete package lends the film its specific voice. Life is a paradox; it is never black or white. Each joy inherently contains the sadness about the moment not lasting forever. Disguised as a family film, this is a deeply humane story.

How did dogs get into your life?

Damian: For his 16th birthday, my son got offered a dog for a present. I begged him not to accept it – *“Knowing myself, I will forever be the slave of that dog. Soon I'll be sitting on the floor while offering him my place on the couch.”* My son told me: if you don't let me keep the dog, I will move out. So we kept the dog ... and then he moved out and left me with it – a classic story. What I specifically like about dogs is that even when they grow old, they still have the soul of a child, they still want to play. My dog is more than 11 years old and after



every long walk, I can feel the pain in his old bones. But still he feels this urge to run and play, like a baby that never grows up. I recognise in him the joy of a 5 year old child.

Marona's character is somehow based upon a real dog?

Damian: One day when I was out walking, a stray dog followed me. This dog had something so pure and I couldn't stand the idea of leaving it out there on the streets. I tried to find a foster family for it, and every time that dog changed the dynamics within those families, its presence had an impact

on the internal relationships. I realised that through this dog I could tell a story about how people relate to each other. It got the name Marona, meaning “brown” in Romanian. We decided to change its looks in the film, but kept the same name, as a tribute.

There are so many different dog breeds. Marona is not a Labrador, nor a Chihuahua or a Pitbull. Why does she look the way she does?

Damian: Character designer Brecht Evens from the beginning decided Marona's colours should be black and white, having all other colours





reflected upon her. Her heart-shaped nose, her socks and ears that look like wings lend her an identity of her own. In his role as a consultant, Brecht was standing very close to the true spirit of the movie. Working with people like him, you don't feel like walking, you are flying.

And what about you? You were director, producer, author...

Damian: There was no budget for an assistant, a line producer, a production nor post production coordinator. I took a lot upon myself until I went beyond my physical limits, putting my health at stake. It was hope that kept me going, knowing that one day all

this would result in a beautiful movie.

Combining different graphic styles and with every style you create a new atmosphere, a new universe. And still through all those various styles, you succeed in presenting the film as one 'unity'.

Damian: My method is to transmit the story into a concept, that is at the bases of every decision I make. People sometimes ask me: can you develop a concept for my project? Of course, I can, but you won't be able to implement it. You can't follow the concept, because every day you have to make small decisions according to it, and you will not understand if it doesn't

live and breathe inside you. Even if people steal my script, they wouldn't be able to make my movie. My entire film is a sausage, I'm holding it together, stuffing it with different ingredients. A vegetarian promoting sausages... that sounds weird.

This doesn't leave much freedom to the animators.

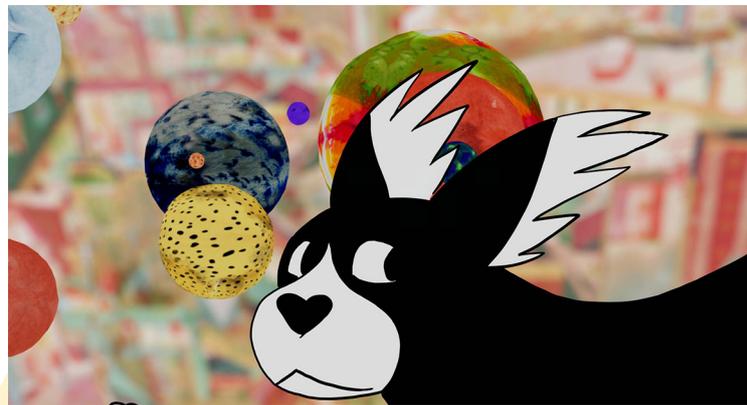
Damian: I'm in control of everything, but at the same time I want to engage them in the movie making process. Every animator has his own character to work on – they are not animating scenes, but they are animating one character throughout every scene. My

storyboarding leaves a lot of space for further development throughout the creative process. I speak with the animators and give them references and after a few months all the hard work pays off, as they now know their characters inside out and come up with suggestions and ideas. Even their mistakes can contribute to the final result.

Asking kids for a first impression, they usually say: I've never seen a film like this before.

Damian: That is a pity for the film industry. How can kids ask for something if they don't know it even ex-





ists? Of course, the film in the first place should be entertaining, but what more do we want? There are so many topics that we can address. MARONA tells about happiness. What is the happiness we are pursuing all our lives? For this film death is a starting point, but it is a story about life.

Do you feel like this film somehow fits in a certain tradition?

Damian: In film school I was educated as a DoP, following certain rules and preoccupations that are specific to the job. But when I came to animation, I educated myself. Romania has no tradition, not even a school for animation. Nothing obstructed me in developing my own language all in

freedom, without any preoccupations or prejudices.

I haven't seen many films before speaking that same language. I can only think of the Brazilian animation THE BOY AND THE WORLD (O MENINO E O MUNDO, by Alê Abreu).

Damian: Exactly. In my director's intent I wrote: I see this film like THE GIRL AND THE WORLD. That was my reference. While the boy discovers the world by searching for his father, my story is about a girl discovering the world by emotionally relating to it.

The film puts a certain spotlight on the relationship between humans and animals.

Damian: I believe we are not the only creatures in this universe, and still we claim all the rights, even the right to kill. There is no respect for other creatures around us. We are not properly using the gift that we were given, and soon it will be payback time. Embracing the love for animals and other beings is in the core of this story.

Marona travels from one owner to another. There's an acrobat, a worker, a little girl... Why did you specifically pick these people?

Damian: Manole the acrobat responds to the childhood years, when everything was possible. Istvan the worker who is emotionally blocked, responds to the teenager years. Sol-

ange's storyline is about accepting people for who they are. No one is 100% good or bad, Solange saves Marona but she also sets her on her way to a tragic ending. There is yet another layer to the film: Manole's episode looks like it is set in the fifties, Istvan's episode depicts the eighties consumerist times, and Solange is situated nowadays. Like a journey through time, while seeing yourself reflected in a dog.

–
Gert Hermans

Samuel Kishi Leopo about LOS LOBOS

A love letter to my mother

After LOS LOBOS premiered in October 2019 in Busan, the Mexican film by Samuel Kishi Leopo had its moment of glory at the Berlinale 2020, where it won not only the Grand Prix of the Int'l Generation Kplus jury but also the Peace Film Prize. According to the jury statement "this sensitively and tenderly told film radically takes the side of humanity. In this film children speak to children and even adults cannot help but listen to them. Poetic, courageous and combative, the film shows us what it means to build up a new existence in another country."

"You are strong wolves. Wolves don't cry. They bite, howl and protect their home." That is what Lucia instills in her 8 and 5-year-old sons Max and Leo, before locking them into their shabby apartment every day when she goes out to earn a living, working in an industrial laundry. She entered the US on a tourist visa from Mexico, pretending to be on a trip to Disneyland. Which is indeed what she promised her children, but only after they

mastered the alphabet, the numbers from 1 to 20 and the two first lessons in the English grammar book. We follow the story from the brothers' perspective, spending their days waiting for mum's return, with nothing more than a few toys, crayons and their code of conduct recorded on an old cassette recorder. When they finally have completed their task but still didn't go to Disneyland, Max breaks the agreement and dares to leave the apartment...

Samuel Kishi Leopo: I initially wanted to make a love letter to my mother who immigrated with my younger brother and me in 1989 from Guadalajara to Santa Ana in California – without any language skills, housing or work. At that time I was 5 years old and my brother Kenji was 3, even younger than the boys in the film. My mum, who had divorced my dad, rented a small apartment in a violent district with multiple ethnicities, and worked till the point of total exhaustion. But she had no chance to im-



prove in life. As all immigrants up till now, she was like a ghost in the system, invisible. When I got older I realised what she had put at stake for us, how brave and smart she was. I dedicated this film to her, Marcela Leopo Flores. My brother, who composes the music for my films, me and the wonderful actress Matha Reyes Arias, we all got selected as Berlinale Talents this year – what an honour!

Why didn't you shoot the film in Santa Ana?

Kishi Leopo: Because the place did change a lot, it became a trendy, expensive spot. But in the Albuquerque "war zone" I found the same feeling, rooted in *gangsterism*, poverty, drug addiction and solitude, like in my childhood years. But at the same time there was this wonderful solidarity among the weak, who can communicate even without any knowledge of English, Chinese, Cambodian or Spanish. That is why I came up with this bizarre Chinese couple helping Max, Leo and finally also Lucia. During





my research I saw many children like me. Also Valeria Luiselli's novel *LOST CHILDREN ARCHIVE* has been a great source of inspiration. The situation now is worse than in the early nineties – nowadays we could get separated from our mother and be locked up in different children's camps. But all those measures won't halt migration. It's a global political, economic and social problem that asks for a radical change in the system.

How did you become an artist?

Kishi Leopo: It all started with a big fight with my mum at the age of 16. I ran away from home and lived alone. In my small apartment I found a book: Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE*. After reading

it, I started to read more and began to watch films. My heart was growing, I realised I had a lot of passion in me and I wanted to tell something to the world. In cinema I discovered my real voice - it seemed that on screen I could express more than I could say in words - all thoughts, images and sounds came together in cinema. I studied audio-visual arts at the University of Guadalajara and made several short films that were screened at festivals, like in Clermont-Ferrand and Cannes. My feature debut *SOMOS MARI PEPA* was presented at the Berlinale Generation Section in 2014.

Who are your idols in cinema?

Kishi Leopo: Billy Wilder and Alexander Payne, because their films are

a bridge for people who watch commercial cinema but might take up an interest in arthouse films. And I adore the Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki's neo-realistic storytelling. His characters are often confronted with big social responsibilities but nevertheless full of hope. Every time I see a Kaurismäki movie, I cry. His brother Mika Kaurismäki is also good, but Aki is my idol.

Do you think the isolation in Santa Ana had an influence on your and your brothers creativity?

Kishi Leopo: My mother played an important role in this. Whenever she had the time she read us stories. In her younger years she dreamed of becoming a journalist. At a certain moment

we returned to Guadalajara, when my father came to pick us up from Santa Ana and took us all home... until they divorced again. That's when my mum started studying and found a job at a radio station, where she had her own radio show. While I was doing my homework I always listened to my mum asking her audience this question: what did you see last night? People told her the craziest things. Those surrealistic stories occupied the imagination of my brother and me.

–
Uta Beth

KET & DOC - Flanders

Presenting five new young audience documentaries



Q&A with the directors at the JEF festival

Five young audience documentary projects were selected for the first Ket & Doc edition. Before going into production, filmmakers and producers went through a series of workshops, organised by the Flemish Film Fund (VAF). For the emerging filmmakers, this was a unique opportunity to get acquainted with a genre that is relatively new to the Belgian market.

After their premiere at the JEF festival in February, all the short documentaries (15' each) were broadcasted on national public TV. We present them one by one through short extracts from the directors' Q&A with the young audience at the JEF festival, where BERTHA AND THE WOLF-RAM already won its first documentary award.

CIRCUS WITHOUT A TENT

Romy will spend her summer in a French amusement park, performing with her circus family. Romy and her brother Quentin are having fun, strolling through the park after closing time or paddling on the pond. The desolate park unleashes big dreams about owning a circus tent of their own someday.

Are you a circus fanatic?

Nina Landau: One of my favourite books as a child was "Martine goes to the circus." It made me dream away about being a contortionist or an acrobat in a marvellous costume. When making a film for kids I thought why not about the circus? I always had such a big circus tent in mind, so I was disappointed to find out this family didn't have its own tent. Until I realised that this tent could become the common thread throughout the story.

What was it like filming in an empty amusement park?

Landau: A bit creepy. In the evening the park is empty and there is no lighting. We needed a flashlight to find the exit. But for Romy and Quentin it's fun to try out the attractions



after closing time, without queuing.

What if your child one day wants to join the circus?

Landau: I would show him the movie to make him understand that there are likes and dislikes to the circus life. You have to work hard, practice constantly and miss your friends for a long time. It should really be your passion to make it your profession.

Why is Romy always chewing gum?

Landau: I want to show things as they really are. Asking her to spit out her gum, would be like showing a cleaned-up version of reality. I allowed her to chew on, eventually with an open mouth.

Director: Nina Landau, film contact: info@adirector.be



RADIO FELIX



Felix is like a radio station in itself. The news reports he is reading out are a representation of his daily reality: noisy classmates, chaos in the classroom, frictions with fellow students. For children with an autism spectrum disorder, school is a challenge. But if Felix manages to get a grip on himself, Radio Felix might soon be broadcasting more positive news.

How did you experience Felix as a person?

Laura Van den Heede: Felix is obsessed with the news, watching news shows on BBC and CNN. He wants to know everything about politics and economy. He knows so many things, like the dates on which cyclists won races long before he was even born. Felix is also funny, we laughed a lot. And he can't stop talking.

Was it difficult to make the movie?

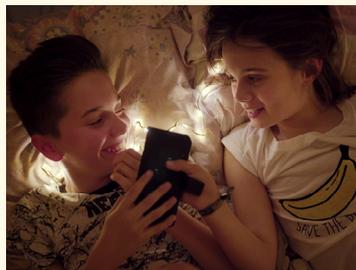
Van den Heede: It was important to convince Felix that I should film him while he was making radio. No one, except his parents, had ever witnessed that. It made him feel a little embarrassed. It was only when I gained his full trust that I dared ask him. He had to think about it, then he said, okay, I'm doing it. He thought it was important that the film was made so that other children could understand how people with autism think.

Are there any special things to consider when working with a person with autism?

Van den Heede: We had a very good relationship from the start. Felix has let me in on everything he thought and felt. He enjoyed talking our heads off about world politics. You have to be honest with him, and tell him exactly when you will show up and what you will film.

Director: Lauranne Van den Heede, film contact: info@adirector.be

FIEN, JIP & FIEN



11 year old Jip is in love for the first time. His little sister Fien wants to know everything about it. She is curious and a little jealous. Will love break their inseparable bond? And isn't it stupid that Jip's sweetheart is also named Fien? A summer campsite is the ideal scenery for a story about first love.

Why did you think it was important to make a film about love between children?

Pollard: As a child we didn't know what love was about, but we were very curious how it would feel. Kissing looked weird, but somehow interesting. We wanted to make a movie that perhaps was a bit naughty, but that raised a topic that children often don't dare to talk about. Therefore we used a few tools: a book, Siri the

computer voice, mobile messages etc.

How will Jip feel when watching this film again in 10 years?

De Hert: We talked about that with Jip and his parents. Jip thinks he will enjoy remembering how he was as a child and he will not feel ashamed.

We see but one Fien in the movie, but in fact there are two.

De Hert: We focus on the brother and sister story, the other Fien is only present through the messages they sent all the time by phone.

Where are their parents?

Pollard: They were at home while we stayed at the campsite with Jip and Fien. We thought there was no place for parents in a story about first love. There are hardly any other people in the picture. We were lucky: the weather was bad so there were few children at the campsite. And when they were visible somewhere in the background, we erased them with the computer.

Directors: Marie De Hert & Ellen Pollard, film contact: maarten@story-housefilm.com



DADMAGNET



Kwinten loves playing outside, and he loves his dad. As a commander on a naval vessel dad is spending three months at sea. Kwinten seeks comfort with a donkey, a dog and a pig, counting down to the moment of dad's return. DADMAGNET tells about children coping with missing someone.

Missing someone is an emotion. That seems difficult to visualise.

Daphne van den Blink: Not everyone shows their grief in the same way. Kwinten is a tough boy, standing strong. He's not going to cry or anything, he rather turns in upon himself. Kwinten is not the kind of boy who talks a lot or shows feelings easily.

For how long did you follow Kwinten, and how did you do that?

van den Blink: We have been work-

ing on the project for a year, but we only filmed him for five days. We often visited the family, until everyone felt at ease and behaved normally. We became like flies on the wall with our little film crew, observing the people unnoticed. Kwinten was very easy with the camera, he did not care much about it and sometimes almost forgot that we were there.

How difficult was it?

van den Blink: The most difficult part was filming on the boat. We spent a day on that gigantic ship on which 200 soldiers were living, working and sleeping. Such a boat is all the time in motion, all corridors are narrow, steps are steep, you are always getting in the way of someone and you can - like me - get seasick.

Why did you want to make a youth documentary?

van den Blink: If you look and listen closely, you might find many beautiful stories up for grabs on your doorstep.

Director: Daphne van den Blink, film contact: an@timescapes.be

BERTHA & THE WOLFRAM



Bertha fights a heroic battle with her ultimate enemy: wolfram! The doctor explains what wolfram exactly is: a disease affecting her neural system. Bertha's secret weapon is her creativity. Even if ultimately she can't win the fight, she immerses herself in the battle. Together with a befriended artist she prepares an exhibition.

Your film explains about the symptoms of an illness.

Tijs Torfs: The wolfram syndrome is quite mysterious and it is not entirely clear what exactly it might do to you. In Bertha's case it is mainly about her vision getting worse, and about diabetes. But all kinds of other symptoms can appear eventually and unpredictably. I had to include information without knowing if it was completely correct.

You have portrayed Bertha's struggle through the use of animation.

Torfs: That was a way to situate the syndrome in a kind of fantasy world. When Bertha told me about her fight with wolfram, it always sounded like some wild beast. I wrote the story that I wanted to evoke, and then an animation artist brought it to life in an incredible way.

May we feel sorry for Bertha?

Torfs: That is not the intention. Bertha is full of strength, she wants to achieve things, she is creative and very mature for her age. This film shows how Bertha deals with life's obstacles. Maybe she can be a source of inspiration for others. From the start, me and Bertha discussed together what we wanted to convey and how we would do it. We somehow made this film together.

Director: Tijs Torfs, film contact: info@lasbelgas.be

APART (aka SPOLU SAMI)

"It's a cramp in your whole body."

APART offers an insight into the lives of three young adults who have lost a parent. How to cope with death suddenly separating you from a beloved person? What does it mean to care for a terminally ill parent? Diana Cam Van Nguyen made a beautiful and important film, and managed to explore painful feelings without too much exposure. Through the use of animation, this intimate portrayal invites the audience to listen from a respectful distance.

The protagonists tell about their relationship with the parent, being their moral compass, supporter, or role model... That relationship changes when a parent gets sick and a child has to fill in as a caregiver. For others the loss comes unexpectedly, leaving an empty void. The picturesque animation technique emphasises these narratives through the remarkable accentuation of selected details. A subjective point of view sometimes conveys panic – as if the audience itself would take part in the narrative.



On the sound reel stereotypical music is left out, to make room for silence. The different styles and animation techniques help you to experience the gradual process of trying to understand a painful loss. At the beginning all is dark, with disruptive and abstract lines, but as time passes the animation gets more colourful and detailed. Diana Cam Van Nguyen (remember her animated documentary THE LITTLE ONE) filmed the narrators and painted over the images, thus inventing a language to visualise emotions that are hard to describe and portray.

Can time heal all wounds? These youngsters learn how to move on and find peace with their loss, how to have fun again without feeling guilty about it. They experience moments of ease, still feeling the comforting presence of the parent: *"She is able to help me despite being incredibly far away."*

The three stories are intertwined with one another, making it hard sometimes to distinguish who exactly is talking, but just as much offering the audience a feeling of togetherness. This cinematic equivalent to the experience of "being-alone-together" conveys the message for young peo-

ple that they will find ways to eventually cope with their loss. As the doxs Youth Jury stated: "We hope the film will inspire young adolescents to start a dialogue about these feelings."

At the doxs! film festival 2019, the Youth Jury honoured APART with a GROSSE KLAPPE award. The GROSSE KLAPPE is a European film prize for political children and youth documentary, sponsored by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb).

Director & Screenplay: Diana Cam Van Nguyen, Czech Republic, 2018, 10'. APART is a student film from FAMU, the Academy of Performing Arts, Film & TV in Prague.

The Doxspot column is published with the help of the [doxs! festival](#) for children & youth documentaries in Duisburg and other cities in the Ruh Area. www.do-xs.de.



TWICE UPON A TIME

Nika is 9 years old and the spoiled, rebellious princess of the Paper Kingdom. Many years after her mother's death, she is still trying to win the attention of her father, the Poet King. Only after being kidnapped, she finds out that her father's absence and neglect are caused by his split personality, the Warrior King. The two kings are rivaling with each other, thus ruining the kingdom with their opposed strategies. Nika now has to save herself, save the kingdom and, most importantly, help her father overcome the loss of her mother, which was the initial cause of his split personality. **TWICE UPON A TIME** was successfully pitched at the CEE Animation Forum, where we spoke with Vojin Vasovic (director & producer) and Milorad Kocic (producer).

TWICE UPON A TIME takes you to a fairytale universe made of paper and cardboard to meet two interesting protagonists - father and daughter, trying to save each other from their sorrow. The little princess Nika starts off a little 'brut', self-confident and irresponsible, though still cute enough to win the hearts of the audience. Only when she learns about respon-

sibility, she can turn from a spoiled into a caring child. Vojin Vasovic: "Using Nika's perspective allows us to introduce a certain superhero idiom to the story." But the identification is also with the Poet King, who wants to write a song so sad that it could kill a dragon. "When problems break out, we find out that we all have talents and capacities that can be used in different ways to make different things happen. The two kings make clear there is a flip side to every coin."

"After working on the script with co-author Dunja Petrovic for four years, it was our task to make it less complicated and more accessible for our target audience. Think about **INSIDE OUT**, being so complex but still very comprehensive in its essence. Dunja and I always 'write in four hands' (as a split writer you may say), making different versions merge together into a more solid form. A few original twists were added, which was the trademark of Phil Parker, our script supervisor in the CEE Animation Workshop."

"Aren't we all familiar with a kind of



'inner split'? Don't we all talk to ourselves from time to time? We all have colliding inner wishes and carry a certain grief and regret about the things we haven't done in our lives. There is also an emotional layer to the story that is based on my own life, getting a double citizenship in Canada but then returning to Serbia." The fact that his father had a split of his own as "a poet and a warrior" added to Vasovic's fascination for the subject. "This is not a Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde story, it is not about good versus evil. Also the Poet King, a positive character in itself, has its weaker sides. He is not there at moments when he is needed the most. This film speaks about duality and contradictions – wishes that

are both good and bad, times that are both happy and sad, inner voices that puzzle our mind. I hope that family audiences will identify not only with the young rebel Nika, but also with both kings (or should I say: both sides of one king?) to get a better understanding of mankind's never ending duality."

TWICE UPON A TIME, a Serbian animation co-produced with Canada, was granted a wild card to participate in the CEE Animation Workshop, which was an ultra-positive experience for Vojin Vasovic and Milorad Kocic. "We felt very much connected all together, like a bunch of small companies supporting each other. We even made



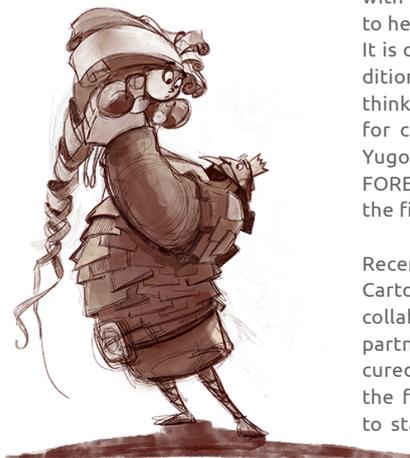


some preliminary cooperation deals, carried away by a wave of enthusiasm about each other's projects."

Kocic: "We believe that this film has a strong chance to go in production, the signs are all good. Every plan in the pipeline has already been tested, both production and animation wise. We did tests with the photogrammetry technique, that is based on the use of 'scanned objects' in the animation process." Meanwhile the project was also pitched at the Warsaw Kids Film Forum, where it won the award for Best Feature length Animated Project in Development. "We're aiming for a €6,7 million budget, including European support (MEDIA), private investments and fundraising."

TWICE UPON A TIME is produced by

the Serbian studio To Blink Animation and its Canadian affiliated society, with support from MEDIA and the Film



Centre of Serbia (who – by the way – launched their first call for children's films last year). "We are negotiating with them our terms of instalment, to help the production move forward. It is our ambition to improve the conditions for Serbian animation. I can't think of a single animated feature for children produced in the former Yugoslavia since THE ELM-CHANTED FOREST in 1986. We're hoping to be the first one in a long, long time."

Recently the project was pitched at Cartoon Movie in Bordeaux where the collaboration with a 3rd production partner from Luxembourg was secured. TWICE UPON A TIME is now in the final development phase, aiming to start the production in Canada in

the beginning of 2021.

–
Gert Hermans

Contact: www.toblinkanimation.com,
e-mail: vojin@toblinkanimation.com &
milorad@toblinkanimation.com.

Visuals provided by Nikola Stepkovic, art director of the film.

Blue Eyes and Colorful My Dress

Documentary, Germany 2020

Directors: Polina Gumieła
 Prod. & World Sales: DFFB
 Phone: ++49-30-25-75-91-52
p.palmer@dffb.de
www.dffb.de



Calamity – A Childhood of Martha Jane Cannary

Animation, France, Denmark 2020

Director: Rémi Chayé
 Prod.: Maybe Movies, Nørlum
 World Sales: Indie Sales
 Phone: ++33-1-44-83-02-27
info@indiesales.eu
www.indiesales.eu



The Castle

Feature Film, Lithuania, Ireland, 2019

Director: Lina Luzyte
 Prod.: Artbox, Samson Film
 World Sales: Wide Management
 Phone: ++33-1-53-95-04-64
wide@widemanagement.com
www.widemanagement.com

Cocoon

Feature Film, Germany 2020

Director: Leonie Krippendorff
 Prod.: Jost Hering Filmprod., Amard
 Bird Films, ZDF
 World Sales: m-appeal UG
 Phone: ++49-30-61-50-75-05
sales@m-appeal.com
www.m-appeal.com

The Crossing

Animation, France, Germany, Czech Republic, 2020

Director: Florence Mialhe
 Prod.: Les Films de l'Arlequin, Xbo
 Films, Balance Film, Maur film
 World Sales: Indie Sales
 (see address above)

The Crossing

Feature Film, Norway, 2019

Director: Johanne Helgeland
 Prod.: Maipo
 World Sales: TrustNordisk Film Sales
 Phone: ++45-36-86-87-88
info@trustnordisk.com
www.trustnordisk.com

Dreambuilders

Animation, Denmark, 2020

Director: Kim Hagen Jensen
 Production: First Lady Film
 World Sales: Sola Media
 Phone: ++49-7-11-96-89-44-40
post@sola-media.com
www.sola-media.com



Ella Bella Bingo

Animation, Norway, 2020

Director: Atle Blakseth
 Prod.: Kool Prod., Gimpville
 World Sales: Studio 100 Media
 Phone: ++49-89-960-85-50
info@studio100film.com
www.studio100film.com/en

Forgotten Christmas

Feature Film, Norway, 2019

Director: Andrea Eckerborn
 Prod.: Fantefilm Fiksjon
 World Sales: Sola Media
 (See address above)

Gunda

Documentary, Norway, 2020

Director: Victor Kossakovsky
 Prod.: Sant & Usant, Louverture Films
 World Sales: Cinephil
 Phone: ++97-25-44-96-11-14
info@cinophil.com
www.cinophil.com

Jumbo

Feature Film, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, 2019

Director: Zoé Wittock
 Prod.: Insolence Prod., Les Films
 Fauves, Kwassa Films
 World Sales: What the Films
 Phone: ++33-1-42-61-09-83
sales@wtfilms.fr
www.wtfilms.fr

Madison – A Fast Friendship

Feature Film, Germany, Austria 2020

Director: Kim Strobl
 Prod.: Dor Film
 World Sales: ARRI Media Int'l
 Phone: ++49-89-38-09-12-88
aexacoustos@arri.de
www.arri.de/international



Oskar & Lilli

Feature Film, Austria, 2020

Director: Arash T. Riahi

Prod.: Wega Film

World Sales: Les Films du Losange

Phone: ++33-1-44-43-87-10

sales@filmsdulosange.fr

www.filmsdulosange.fr



Our Lady of the Nile

Feature Film, France, 2019

Director: Atiq Rahimi

Prod.: Les Films du Tambour, Chapter 2, France 2

World Sales: Indie Sales

(see address above)



Paradise Drifters

Feature Film, The Netherlands, 2020

Director: Mees Peijnenburg

Prod.: Pupkin Film, VPRO

World Sales: Orange Studio

Phone: ++ 33-1-57-36-11-11

contact.orangestudio@orange.com

www.orange-studio.fr

Pinocchio

Feature Film, Italy, France, UK, 2019

Director: Matteo Garrone

Prod.: Archimede, Le Pacte, Rai Cinema

World Sales: Hanway Films

Phone: ++44-20-72-90-07-50

info@hanwayfilms.com

www.hanwayfilms.com



Raggie

Animation, Estonia, Denmark, 2020

Directors: Meelis Arulepp & Karsten

Kiilerich

Prod.: A Film Prod.

World Sales: LevelK

Phone: ++45-48-44-30-72

tine.klint@levelk.dk

www.levelk.dk



Summer Rebels

Feature Film, Germany, Slovakia, 2020

Director: Martina Saková

Prod.: Projector23, Silverart, RTVS

World Sales: Projector23

Phone: ++49-30-64-83-96-50

martin@projector23.de

www.summerrebels.com



Sunburned

Feature Film, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, 2019

Director: Carolina Hellsgård

Prod.: NiKo Film, Flickfilm, The Film Kitchen

World Sales: Picture Tree Int'l

Phone: ++49-30-42-08-24-80

pti@picturetree-international.com

www.picturetree-international.com;

www.sunburnedfilm.de

Sune – Best Man

Feature Film, Sweden, 2019

Director: Jon Holmberg

Prod.: Unlimited Stories, SVT, Nordisk Film

World Sales: Global Screen

Phone: ++49-89-24-41-29-55-00

info@globalscreen.de

www.globalscreen.de

The Test of Time

Animation, The Netherlands, 2019

Directors: Joost van den Bosch & Erik Verkerk

Prod. & World Sales: The Film Kitchen

Phone: ++31-20-233-56-25

info@thefilmkitchen.nl

www.thefilmkitchen.nl



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

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

Cassandra Offenberg about CHAMP

“We’ve set a rose and a bed on fire”

Cassandra Offenberg is carefully accosted by an employee of the doxsfestival: if she can please stay in Duisburg for one more night to attend the closing ceremony? That implicates two times good news: she might win a festival award (indeed, the ECFA Doc Award) and we have the opportunity to interview the director of yet another rock-solid documentary under the Dutch Kids & Docs label.

Esma is a 14-year old kickboxing talent with a big dream of becoming the world’s greatest fighter. At the same time, she experiences a constant fear of losing her mother, who is severely ill. Now she is preparing her hardest battle ever, but how does one fight for a future that is as exciting as it is frightening?

As a guest teacher, you teach about art direction and design in documentaries. “How to transcend the usual talking heads? How can choices in form make your film more appealing?” How did that work for CHAMP?
Cassandra Offenberg: We shot some

scenes on celluloid to explore the world of Esma’s dreams and nightmares. Such a technical choice has its visual consequences: the colours and patches of light ensure a dreamy feeling. To further pervade into that world we set a rose and a bed on fire, we let the camera fly down a hall etc. But only beautiful images will get you nowhere. You need a solid story first. Regarding CHAMP I am especially happy about the purely documentary scenes, the parts that were beyond my personal control.

There is a deeply human story behind the sporty facade.

Offenberg: Around me I see people everywhere who always want to win. In sports as well as in the film world, you are only considered someone if you are the best in everything. While I think there is nothing wrong with losing every now and then. How can setbacks help you move forward in life? For Esma, it’s more about boxing than about winning. She pursues her dream while learning from her mistakes.



You were not exactly looking forward to Esma’s great victory?

Offenberg: In fact, I was hoping she would lose the game so I could show how she coped with that. I knew for sure: whether she wins or loses, Esma will get there. She is so strong. Losing the match is also a metaphor for her mother’s illness that she constantly has to deal with. Her coaches give her pep talk, but they are also there for her whenever she is facing defeat. Then they throw an arm around her

shoulder and cry together. Esma has a strong bond with them, they give her strength and love, every day, as if it were her brothers.

Are they some sort of substitute family now that Esma’s home situation has become so difficult?

Offenberg: Esma comes from a very warm family, they treat each other lovingly, but her mother has been chronically ill for many years, she often has to be hospitalised. That caus-





es a lot of stress and insecurity with Esma. Nowadays, she can convert that extra adrenaline into something positive through her sport. In the film I don't give too much concrete information about the mother's situation. We didn't want the disease to become the biggest drama of the film. I wanted the story to stay with Esma, as a person she is so much more than the daughter of a sick mum. In a fascinating way she is at the same time tough and full of anger, but also very vulnerable. We followed her for eight days, and sometimes she suddenly turned into a tiny, restrained girl.

Sometimes it feels as if we're in the boxing ring, together with Esma.

Offenberg: We filmed up close with a wide lens. This way you get very close to your character, but you still pick up a lot from the environment. Things are always happening around you that you can't control but that are there nevertheless. The camera moves with the boxers and in the colour correction we chose a combination of raw and magical: grim tones with sometimes dreamy accents. Those colours were fixed in advance in a mood board that I discussed with the cameraman.

What can you tell us about shooting the scene with the burning bed?

Offenberg: Our art director brought us this old hospital bed that a pyrotechnician wired with gas pipes. The flames should reflect in the puddles on the ground. The fire brigade was nearby anyway, as toxic substances could be released, while that scene was simply shot on "the little neighbourhood square" near Esma's house.

The film was produced within the Kids & Docs project.

Offenberg: It is a marvellous opportunity for young filmmakers. It is some-

times said that the formula has been eroded a bit, but then it is up to us to add something extra to that fixed pattern. Everyone is familiar with the narrative framework: a child facing a challenge has to overcome certain barriers. But it is up to this generation of filmmakers to tell these kinds of stories in a new and innovative way.

Contact info: Hazazah Pictures (in co-production with NTR), moos@hazazah.com; www.hazazah.com.

–
Gert Hermans



Film can be a language without borders

In 2018 three Film Education agencies - BFI, Danish Film Institute and the German Vision Kino - collaborated on a project to explore whether film viewing and conversation could foster integration between groups of children in schools. 80,000 children in the three countries came to the cinema, tuned in online, and watched a selection of 7 features and 3 shorts that had an angle on what it's like to move to an unfamiliar place. The project was called 'Film: a language without borders', and a research team turned the title into a question: 'Can film work as a language without borders? And if so, then how?'

Migration of children into and across Europe has become part of the new normal. How can film education help teachers, parents and children to learn from each other, to get settled, to feel they are seen and heard by their new community.

Researchers across the three countries observed cinema sessions and follow-up classes, interviewed teachers and looked at the works made by children. They concluded that:

- film is like a universal language that children from different backgrounds can access together;
- some films enable children from marginalised backgrounds to feel they can be represented;
- films can enable children to share thoughts and feelings in a 'common space';
- films enable children to reflect on values and experiences that are not so close to their own;
- films can help to build tolerance and empathy towards others;
- and least surprisingly, films themselves help children understand the language of film.

Read the project report and associated research [here](#).

Press releases can be found [here](#)



Open Online Courses for everyone

'Film: a language without borders' was the latest of a series of European projects that reveal how important teacher training is in the implementation of film education. Professionals in many different sectors (and countries) are united by a common belief in the power of film and the value of learning about it, but there are no spaces available for developing common ideas, sharing practice and trying new approaches. BFI has for some years worked with the online learning platform [Futurelearn](#) and experienced how its global reach (and technical quality) would enable educators to cooperate.

A project funded by Creative Europe



The 'Information Celebration' section is curated by KIDS Regio, a lobby initiative for high quality and multi-faceted European Children's Films. It functions as an agent between policy and society, the film industry and the scientific world in order to form a network and discuss new synergies.

All of you commissioning or working on research, please share your findings through our network. Let us know about your big or small research projects and get in touch with journal@ecfaweb.org or with project manager Anne Schultka (KIDS Regio), schultka@kids-regio.org



Co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union

enabled BFI, DFI and Vision Kino to bundle expertise from 15 European countries into 'Film Education: a user's guide'. The course was designed around 10 areas of film education, from definitions to evaluation, and was launched on 23rd March. Futurelearn MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) run over 8-10 weeks, and you can stay on the course to finish it for a further 4 weeks, for which you must sign up before the end of May. If you miss that deadline, the course will return mid-September, and you can sign up to Futurelearn and add the course to your 'wishlist'.

So far, the course is a hit, with nearly 3,000 people joining from all over the world (118 from Egypt, for example). The power of collaborative learning becomes visible in the number of comments made as part of the project – over the course of four weeks around 50 'steps' or tasks invite participants to interact, and nearly 5,000 comments have been posted.

Most successful of all is the range of material contributed to the course by European participants, with strong input from Denmark, Greece, Germany, France, Slovenia and the UK. The global reach indicates a gathering of voices from Europe, Africa, Asia, North and South America.

And they do it online

Unusual times ask for unusual methods. Online film classes, festivals and workshops are becoming a part of our "new reality". How did members of the Youth Cinema Network (YCN, representing more than 50 festivals, organisations and media teachers worldwide) react to this tendency? Here are three short stories from around the globe about...

- Brazilian animator Alexandre Juruena launching a series of online animation workshops;
- the Fresh Film Festival (Ireland) making the online switch two weeks before the festival opening;
- the YCN holding their annual Conference online.



Brazilian animator Alexandre Juruena



When Brazilian animator Alexandre Juruena couldn't reach out to his young pupils, he came up with a solution. "My specially created online animation course addresses all age groups, from children to youth, or even film teachers. In the first lesson I introduce them to homemade modelling clay, made with kitchen ingredients: salt, wheat flour, soy oil and water. In another lesson, I talk about making natural paint by the use of glue, coffee, saffron or other pigments and spices. I talk about making tripods (for cameras, tablets and smartphones) from household objects. Finally, I encourage young

filmmakers into several small tasks using different animation techniques. Sometimes I invited my 6 year old son Tiago to participate, in order to stimulate other kids."

"In my courses I encourage children to not only prepare their own materials (like modelling clay and paint) but also their own puppets. Every possible domestic object, even seeds, grains or flowers can be animated and transformed into a character. These lessons are available in Portuguese, but I'm currently translating them in English."



Fresh Film Festival

Scheduled for the end of March, the [Fresh Film Festival](#) had its programme ready. Guests were already packing their suitcases for Limerick when two weeks before the event, the world went into lockdown. Ciarda Tobin: “We needed to react fast. One part of the programme we could put online, and we decided to postpone workshops for the autumn. We had a call out for ‘How To’ videos made by young filmmakers that we post as they come in. We organised Instagram and Facebook interviews with young

filmmakers and approached alumni who are now at film school or active professional filmmakers for online Q&A’s.”

What about watching film? Tobin: “The finalists were screened online. We decided not to host the films on our professional Vimeo account, as we thought YouTube is what filmmakers would benefit most from. Our channel is not monetised, comments are disabled and everybody can watch it at home. We launched a ‘Most Viewed Online Award’, just for fun, as the main awards were decided by the juries. We had a total number of 23,000 online views.”

“It is the young filmmakers themselves that requested to have a live awards ceremony, which I find remarkable. It underlines the importance of youth festivals as a meeting ground and reminds us of how important this community feeling is to young filmmakers.”

More festivals for young filmmakers were organised online due to Covid-19, like the [Swiss Youth Film Days](#) (Zurich) and [Fish – Filmfestival im Stadthafen](#) (Rostock).

Youth Cinema Network Conference



The Annual [Youth Cinema Network](#) Conference was supposed to be held in March within the framework of the Plasencia Encorto Youth Film Festival (Spain) with three days of discussions, learning and networking. After consideration, YCN decided to replace it with an online conference during the FiSH festival (Germany) in May. On the schedule were closed discussions, and a public panel on “Youth Film Festival Online” with 37 members present. “The meeting was surprisingly effective and we saved a lot of time and money. Maybe this is what the future will look like. On the other hand, I miss the social interaction and the informal part, which is an important element of our network,” says Hermann Greul (Nordic Youth Film Festival). These words somehow resemble the comments of Irish filmmakers regarding the Fresh Film Festival, who pointed out that online events can bring an

added value to an event, but nothing can beat human interaction. To quote Alexandre Juruena once more: “I believe that art is an excellent therapy, and artistic activities conducted from a distance can add to the development of people’s creativity, especially in difficult times like we are experiencing now.”

The Youngsters Making Film column is curated by YCN (Youth Cinema Network), a worldwide network of youth film festivals, organisations and film & media educators. YCN focusses on films made by young people, using their right to express themselves through moving images. For more info about Youth Cinema Network, check www.youthcinemane트워크.org.

FreshFilmFestival
21 Apr at 15:50 • 📍

Tips and Tricks Tuesday! Heres some quick tips to make filming with your phone easier!
#freshfilm

10 TIPS FOR MAKING BETTER VIDEOS WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

By Robb Montgomery, Director, Smart Film School, Berlin

- 1. Wipe the lens clean**
Your phone spends a lot of time in your pocket and on surfaces. Wiping the lens of your phone's camera before you start filming. In a pinch, you can use the hem of a clean t-shirt. Wipe the lens clean. Don't use your fingers.
- 2. Be aware of vertical video**
Video clips over 10 seconds long are less favored algorithmically. Remember, we live in a world of wireless cinema. 90% TV and laptops. If you are filming a Snapchat story, then of course vertical is the way forward. These should be kept when the camera cases roll over.
- 3. Hold camera motion before filming**
Hold moving your camera just because you can. Sometimes a camera move can highlight content. For example, holding a phone steady and moving close-up of a subject's face. Then cut cameras and move. Holding the phone and zooming in to hold the star and holding it for the camera. When the camera zooms are called "handies" and are helpful when editing.
- 4. Don't use the "zoom" controls**
When you zoom in on a camera "Zoom" on "your camera phone." A digital zoom control is not being used. It usually just crops the image and you are losing resolution quality. For better results, use your hands to bring your subject closer your face!
- 5. Sunshine on your shoulders**
Pay attention to the quality and direction of the light for the scene you are filming. Avoid direct sunlight and window light when filming indoors. Avoid shadows cast by your hand. Use a reflector to bounce light back into the face.
- 6. Lock exposure and focus**
In the camera app tap, tap and hold on the screen and a lock icon will appear. This will lock the exposure and focus. On an iPhone hold hold a white box that appears displaying the text "AE/AF LOCK". You can then adjust exposure up or down, by sliding your finger up to the top of the box.
- 7. Get your microphone close to your subject**
The key to capturing clear audio is to get a microphone as close to the subject as possible.
- 8. Learn Picture Language**
To learn how to plan and produce video stories

Josep Arbiol about MiCe

Buccaneer with a mission

From a one-man project in Valencia to a worldwide network of festivals in which the work of professional directors is appreciated, yet remains in the shadow of films made by children. Josep Arbiol, founder of the MiCe festival in Valencia, is a buccaneer who sees opportunities that others ignore. With lights twinkling in his eyes, he is trying to put the funk back in media education. A clown with a mission, about which he tells with great passion.

The MiCe festival is well known for their presentation of films made by children. Do you remember one particular moment when you realised: this is what I want to do?

Josep Arbiol: About 20 years ago, as a teacher working in media education, I travelled to Camera Zizanio in Pyrgos, Greece. A festival only screening films made by children was an eye-opener for me. Then a few years ago, coming back from the BIKY festival in Busan, South Korea where I had been invited to talk about my work, on the long flight back to Valencia I had all the

time to reflect. That is when I decided to start a small film festival: for 4 days we showed films made by children and a few ones made by professionals, I invited some like minded friends from around the world (who paid for their tickets) and it worked. We had an audience, we had our name in the papers, and it felt like this formula could become successful.

And did it work?

Arbiol: For us it was crucial that children should find their way to the festival. With our small budget we succeeded in attracting around 9,000 visitors. Then a request came from several communities in the region: it is impossible for us to bring children from the villages to Valencia to attend the festival, but can you bring the festival to the villages? We did! We showed films in isolated mountain villages where there is no cinema theatre. One focus point in the policy of the Valencian government is to stop the exodus from the inland villages towards the city, and our event fitted perfectly into that policy. In the 8th



MiCe festival (in the middle Josep Arbiol)

edition we will have 70 villages cooperating with us. Last year we reached out to 48,000 children and this year we will double the amount of participating villages.

All in the region of Valencia?

Arbiol: We curated a few editions of MiCe in Madrid, but the situation is different there. Making a festival in Madrid is more expensive, but our main problem is in politics. We will always depend upon the balance of power in the local government. MiCe is a festival for children, it is not about

left or right, but politicians will always have difficulties to see it that way.

You named BIKY and Camera Zizanio as two festivals that have inspired you.

Arbiol: My first time in Camera Zizanio was like a dream. In Valencia we usually screened the results of our filmmaking workshops only to the parents of participating children, and that was it. But this festival was entirely dedicated to the work of children, and the atmosphere was unbelievable. And in BIKY I found out about the importance of mixing professional films and



films made by children in one festival. The difference is that in BIKY and Camera Zizanio, the main part of the festival is the professional competition. In MiCe the films made by children are the most important festival section. We have the same spectrum but the focus is different. Our focus is entirely with the young filmmakers.

What is MiCe's biggest achievement in Spain? Is it about the amount of children participating?

Arbiol: I think it is about the teachers, who feel that MiCe really is their festi-

val. In other festivals teachers will often feel treated 'second class', it is the filmmakers who are the stars. Maybe we are not experts in the art of cinema, but we are experts in children. As a teacher making films with children, the most important thing is not the result but the process. The Valencia city council once offered me the help of a professional filmmaker. When he saw the results of our work, he thought it looked horrible, and not at all professional. So we gave a workshop together and as an excellent professional he did 5 or 6 takes of every scene. The children went mad. The result looked better indeed, but the process with the children had been so different. It is not about making the best film, it is about making their film. After 8 MiCe editions I'm more confident in my contacts with professionals. I have my own experience now, with MiCe as my signboard.

This brand you're now ready to export to Latin-America?

Arbiol: Last year the Cuban government opened the door for MiCe. We have launched MiCe affiliates for instance in Argentina, Ecuador and Mexico, but MiCe Cuba should be the beating heart behind our work in Latin-America. In Cuba, the cradle of Lat-



in-American culture, I want to establish an educational festival, screening films made by professionals and made by children. We had a screening in a huge theatre in Havana with 1,200 children watching SUPA MODO. Cuba gives great importance to schools and education in general, but there is a lack of good media education. There are some individual initiatives outside the schools, but in my opinion media education belongs inside the school, in the curriculum. We should now find a convenient festival formula. We have a long way to go, but I'm sure together we can develop something worthwhile.

In every country a different approach is needed?

Arbiol: We can't copy MiCe Valencia into MiCe Havana or MiCe México. It all depends on the culture, the economy, the education, the traditions, the politicians and the money. Maybe the goal can be the same, but the approach should be different. MiCe Mexico takes place in Guanajuato, a middle class city, while in Havana a middle class doesn't even exist. And working with Argentinian people I often stay behind the scenes. Buenos Aires is like Paris, so that asks for a different sort of cooperation.





What about your plans for MiCe Sahara?

Arbiol: Sahara was once the last remaining Spanish colony. When Spain left, the Sahara territory was no longer a nation, it mainly became part of Morocco. There is still a population of 300,000 Spanish-Arabic people and their situation is generally neglected in Europe. We simply don't know about their problems. Organising MiCe Sahara feels like something I have to do, going there to work with the people, to serve. With MiCe Sahara we will make films in refugee camps and screen films for the local community. Therefore we first need

to educate the teachers. MiCe Sahara will have the same director as FiSahara, the well-known Sahara International Film Festival.

You might not have the budget, but you have the energy. That is how we all know Josep Arbiol.

Arbiol: In Europe the first question usually is: what is it that you're selling, and how can we make it profitable. Not in Latin-America. Cultural education is an important weapon for the people's development. Our Latin-American partners are thinking about the bigger social context, not about viability. Many of our local part-

ners are investing their own money in this initiative. You can ask them to do that once or twice, but we can't keep on asking them forever. That is why we are talking with the Cuban authorities about how to implement MiCe on a large scale.

Where do you see MiCe standing in 10 years?

Arbiol: After establishing MiCe in Latin-America, I might like to go to Africa, or India, or the Philippines... I am dreaming big. I never thought MiCe would grow like this. It is often easy to do a first or second festival edition, but the difficult part is to continue.

That is why you left MiCe Valencia in the hands of a new director?

Arbiol: Voro (Salvatore) Huertas has a background as a teacher and filmmaker. It will be his challenge to make MiCe a more stable and coordinated event. A festival needs a strong personality to prepare the way. He will do that in his own style, which might be different from mine.

On the other hand, you're not the clown you're pretending to be, are you?

Arbiol: Oh yes, I am a clown and I'm happy to be one. I respect people working with an intellectual approach,

but in Cuba I was happy to arrive at the first festival screening in a pink convertible. Maybe some colleagues can do a better intellectual speech, but then maybe my dancing is better.



MiCe Film Festival

www.MiCeValencia.com;

www.facebook.com/MICEbyJordiElMussol

Eszter Vuojala about the Abloom Festival

“Is it set in stone that our audience should live on the streets?”

The Abloom festival has a unique audience profile: people who can't afford to buy a cinema ticket. Disabled children, especially with a minority background, don't find their way easily into the cinema theatres. The 9th edition of the Oslo-based festival will take place in November, but co-programmer Eszter Vuojala has been earning her merits in the world of children's film for many years already.

Eszter Vuojala: The festival is aiming at people that seldom have access to quality cinema. Our main target audience are disabled children with a minority background. Our support is in screening them good films, but also in talking about their situation. That is where inclusion starts. The word 'Abloom' is adopted from the English language: it states that every child has the right to blossom and come to full bloom.

Disabled children with a minority background, isn't that narrowing down your profile too much?

Vuojala: Abloom is a very welcoming festival, attracting visitors with very different geographical and social backgrounds. There is a huge amount of vulnerable people feeling somehow excluded from our society. Even if these categories are often brought up in the political debate about 'the universal design' (everyone has access to every place), you'll find in reality this is not the case. This is what we found out in the contacts with our audience.

How did you realise the need for a festival like Abloom?

Vuojala: When festival founder Faridah Nabaggala gave birth to a child with a disability, she discovered that parents with a minority background know little about the services offered by our society. For Norwe-



gians it is relatively easy to find their way through this labyrinth of options and opportunities, but when you don't speak the language, you stay inside your circle and your problems will seldom transcend your own community.

Does this make Abloom a community in itself, offering much more than just cinema?

Vuojala: We deal with many other issues and activities, sometimes in an organised structure, sometimes popping up spontaneously. We organise activities for minorities year round. But film is the best way to bring up problematic issues, and makes it easier for people to think and talk about

them. As a filmmaker, Faridah understood this was a way to bring people together.

What is the festival's official mission? Does your funding come from the Culture or the Healthcare Department?

Vuojala: Both. Social healthcare is part of our core business, but our focus obviously is on film. We've set an appointment with the new Norwegian Minister of Culture, who – by the way – has a minority background. Also the Foreign Affairs Department has shown an interest in our activities. Faridah is in contact with the leaders of several small religious communities. As an articulate Muslim woman



speaking about the rights of disabled children, she stands out and has the power to make a change. Like the declaration, recently launched by Abloom, stating that disabilities are not God's punishment.

Disability as a religious penalty?

Vuojala: People have been hiding their disabled children because they are ashamed, or even afraid that the stigma will be passed on for generations. This declaration will be one of our focus points for the next few years and it is getting attention from policy makers, ministers and religious leaders.

How much is the community itself involved in organising your activities?

Vuojala: Deeply. We invite children into the Abloom studio to work on small documentary projects introducing us to specific problems they are facing. Like this testimony from a child with a hearing disability who took the train. When the train suddenly stopped, she was the only person who didn't know why, because she couldn't hear the information spread through the intercom. And we organise school workshops, for example we have architects working with children to plan the city of the future. What



Faridah Nabaggala & Eszter Vuojala

would 'the perfect Oslo' look like for you? It is not set in stone that our audience should live on the streets among drug dealers and alcoholics. They dream about clean parks, sports facilities and recreation centres.

And what about the grown-ups?

Vuojala: We have only minority people as staff members, which helps to establish contact with all the individual communities. On our Conference Day we invite professionals to talk about all aspects of disabilities and we show films. In 2019 the Indian film CHUSKIT perfectly fitted the occasion, as it speaks about disability and how it can be influenced by a sense of community. That was exactly what we wanted. Now we are searching for the next



Norwegian Minister of Health signing the Abloom declaration

CHUSKIT. It is not like our audience only wants to see films about disabilities but we're always looking for films that emphasize how normal and recognisable our people are, and not how different.

Is every Norwegian cinema complex equipped to welcome your audience.

Vuojala: Having our own cinema would be our ultimate goal. Norwegian cinemas in general are very well equipped, but not for a disabled audience. I remember those multi-functional community centres where chairs could easily be removed, for instance to turn the place into a local disco. That would be perfect for us, as you can choose to combine normal seats with room for wheel-chairs.

But then why would you need a cinema if you can make it a disco? What would you do if you had an unlimited budget?

Vuojala: We dreamed about an amusement park for disabled children. For example for an autistic child there is not much fun to be found in a normal amusement park. To develop this, we would need true experts. Most architects that we consulted, found it very hard to understand what exactly we were looking for. Such a project could only be started from scratch.

How did you get involved? We know you as the programmer of the children's film festival in Oulu (Finland) who retired after her 25th festival edition...

Vuojala: ... which felt like the perfect moment to pass the torch to the next generation. But I still had plans on my mind. Then for personal reasons, me and my partner moved to Oslo. Almost immediately I was contacted by a friend who told me about a festival that maybe could use my help. I met Faridah and said 'yes' to her project, but only if I could work as a volunteer. I don't want to wake up any more in a hurry to go to my job. Now I do the things that I'm experienced in, but I do them in my own way and in my own time. And that is such fun.



Are there any other European organisations you feel connected with?

Vuojala: I found festivals with a similar focus in San Francisco and Australia, not in Europe. I would love to network but I don't see many opportunities. Abloom's unique profile is making my work as a programmer easier. I focus on specific topics and I don't have to compete on the market. But since we want to offer only good films, we have a 'quality standard' to maintain.

You specifically asked to combine this interview with an article about the short film TOPRAK. Why did you want us to pay extra attention to that film?

Vuojala: It is a coming-of-age short

film, speaking about problems that minorities are confronted with. There is this boy who has to understand so many things over the course of one day, that it makes him grow up fast. Which is necessary to fully understand the tragedy threatening his family. There are so many elements in this film for our audience to relate to. We invited director Onur Yagiz for a screening supported by the Turkish embassy. They appreciated so much how their country was represented in a positive way. Now they insist on having another Turkish film in the next edition.

About the [Abloom Declaration](#)
Watch the [festival video](#)

Onur Yagiz about TOPRAK

The ultrasound of an 8 year old boy

Toprak is an 8 year old boy with a Turkish background, living in Paris with his parents. His mother is expecting twins. After joining his parents on a visit to the gynaecologist, his interest shifts from his initial question 'will they be boys or girls?' to a much more important question 'will they be healthy?' As an interpreter for his parents, he is asked to pass on impactful news. Over the course of one hospital visit, Toprak turns from a boy into a man. When evening falls, the question about boys or girls is no longer on his mind.

The hospital visit is an impactful moment for this family. Can you outline this moment in a broader time context?

Onur Yagiz: What preceded that moment and what might happen afterwards is left to the audience's imagination. I don't want to limit their perception by giving away the details that I deliberately left out of frame. Actually, I myself served as a translator for my parents, just like Toprak, and when I was about his age, I had to

translate to my mother that my sister was suffering from a rare disability and would never be able to walk. I can't exactly recall that memory, but I still remember how I felt; powerless. The moment I started feeling that way, I knew I was no longer a child.

How does it feel for a mother in such a moment to be surrounded by people that you don't even understand?

Yagiz: My mother gave birth to me in France while she barely knew how to speak the language. When asking her about it, she told me the nurses were very kind. My mother would never tell me about her pain. She surely would have preferred to give birth surrounded by Turkish speaking people, but she simply had no choice.

All adults in the film are depending upon one child.

Yagiz: As for the parents, they are used to this situation and they accept it. The doctor at first is amused, but when he needs Toprak to translate bad news, he starts feeling embarrassed. However, neither the parents





nor the doctor fully realise that Toprak is at a place where he shouldn't be, fulfilling a role he shouldn't fulfil.

The doctor compliments Toprak for fluently speaking two languages.

Yagiz: That compliment I often heard as a child. But people didn't know it also can be a burden, this film was made to show how speaking two languages is not always a blessing. Being a translator grants you a privileged status, you are holding true power in your hands. But that is not something you have been asking for, it is the parents who imposed this on you. But I don't blame them, they simply have no choice. Most immigrant parents, like mine, are working so hard that

they don't have time to learn a new language.

The family seems to be very concerned with the mother.

Yagiz: His responsibility makes Toprak feel more involved and very concerned. I can tell this is even part of some kind of Oedipus complex, constantly arguing with his father for his mother's attention. Finally he sleeps with his mother and the twins, whom he loves dearly, even if they are not brothers. The humanity with which he comforts them, cuddling his mother's belly, strongly contrasts with the bestiality he and his father are expressing in the first frame.

Do twins' hearts really beat as one?

Yagiz: That sometimes happens, I was told. But I mainly used it as a metaphor. Also, I wanted to show how Toprak learns the word 'synchronized' from the doctor, then brings it home and teaches it to his mother. That is beautiful, isn't it?

Can you describe the colour palette more precisely? It looks like black and white, but with countless shades and colours in between.

Yagiz: When I finished writing the script and thought about the mise-en-scène, I wanted form and content to come together. The film tells about a family going to the hospital for a pregnancy ultrasound, that allows

you to observe the evolution of a baby in the mother's belly. How does an ultrasound look? It is a black and white image in a four by three aspect ratio. So I decided to use this imaging for the design, making the film itself look like an ultrasound. TOPRAK is like the ultrasound of an 8 year old boy, growing up two times the speed. I wanted the audience to witness his evolution from childhood to an age that definitely can no longer be called childhood.

—
Gert Hermans

Ivan Pokorný about THE SCENT OF ORANGES

Rules are to be broken

Darek has to look after his eight year old, mentally handicapped sister Ema, ever since his father has difficulty coping with life. And then there's the harassment by one of his classmates, but the summer season looks promising. A herd of sick horses that have become useless to their owners arrives on the farm, and Darek takes a liking to these fast trotting "angels". Then there is Hanna, a charming girl that beguilingly smells of oranges. In the Film'on festivals in Brussels, I speak with Ivan Pokorný, director of a vibrant teenager story with an opening scene that drags you into the film with its fast paced editing.

Ivan Pokorný: Addressing a specific target group with this film, adolescents in their most turbulent years, I needed the opening scene to set the tone. It could be a little tough, probably not very pedagogic, but it should grab them by the throat. I secured enough time – I calculated two days – to make that scene as strong as

possible, and we had stunt doubles on the bicycles. Apparently that paid off well.

The rhythm of that scene is built up very punctually.

Pokorný: I've been searching a long time to find this village, located on a hillside. Through the streets you could see the mountains in the distance. But we shot the scene in autumn and exactly on this day there was a fog. Such a shame! Visually it could have been more stunning with this panoramic effect.

From that scene on there is an in-



tensity that you had to balance throughout the entire film.

Pokorný: That credit goes to the author of the script, my wife Iva Procházková. She wrote several books for youngsters, always targeting the same age group as our own children, so she had an insight into the world of her readers.

The story is set in an intriguing location.

Pokorný: The region is called Lusatia, the border area between Czech Republic, Germany and Poland. Both on the Polish and the German side the situation is problematic with unemployment, social uproar, Nazi extremists etc. But on the Czech side things are going well. People from Prague came here to buy houses for a cheap price and renovate them. We also had to renovate the house that is our main location, surrounded by grassland for the horses. When we found it, it was a total ruin, much worse than in the film.

Some locations, like the graveyard, the windmill and the garage are like landmarks with a strong impact on the overall imagery.

Pokorný: With a touch of irony I sometimes make this statement: when you have the right actors and the right lo-



cations, the movie is practically done. In other words: finding the right locations to me is crucial. The important spots I search for myself. I get in my car and drive around, alone, instead of throwing in my lot with a location scout. Google maps is a big help if you know exactly what you need. This is actually how I found our location. Thinking visually is an essential part of the cinematic language that unfortunately is sometimes neglected when it comes to children's film.

You don't seem to be very satisfied with today's youth film production in general.

Pokorný: There is a lack of quality films



for adolescents, diplomatically speaking. Good films are made for kids up to the age of 12, and then there is a vacuum until they are 18. Often festival juries get enchanted by films with young protagonists, while the young audience was bored to death. I'm very careful not to generalise too much, as I find it very important for movies to tell an engaged story, but finding the right social or political theme doesn't automatically guarantee that you've made a good film. Last year in the Schlingel festival my greatest recognition was the teachers coming to tell me they never saw their pupils so attentive before in the cinema.

THE SCENT OF ORANGES had a very

physical appeal, with close ups of bodies and skin and...

Pokorný: ...Let me tell you this. It was my first time working with German DoP Jürgen Rehberg. In our first meeting he asked me: what is our visual concept? I had problems giving him the correct expert's description, and he had problems understanding my emotional and fragmented answer, and that discussion continued over several meetings. Until one day I told him: "Jürgen, I found out what our concept is. We don't have one! We'll rely on our instinct in every specific situation." In that sense I'm very un-German, non-conceptual. I tend to shoot my scenes the way it is need-

ed according to the emotional curve. Rules are there to be broken, which is more interesting than holding on to a dogmatic approach. This being said, collaborating with Jürgen was a great pleasure for me.

On screen there is a sweet tenderness between Darek and his sister Ema.

Pokorný: For Tomáš Dalecký (Darek) this is his film debut. He is a clever boy with a sweet appeal. I had to emphasize the few moments when he was making a more manly impression, because his natural aura is very soft. And the actress Hana Bartonova (Ema) was a true miracle. The script mentioned a "mentally disabled person" without further specification. At first I was reluctant to really cast a disabled person, I couldn't imagine it would work. We looked for girls with some specific personality traits, but couldn't find the right one. Then suddenly this girl with down syndrome came walking in. This was a different case than all the other candidates we'd been seeing. In one minute she had us all enchanted. I am very grateful for the help we got from Hana's mother. She was all the time with me behind the monitor to intervene whenever obstacles appeared. Every scene they rehearsed together, preparing signals

that would guide her through the dialogues. Hana was well aware of her role as an actress and she could improvise if needed.

On the set you had teenagers and horses. Which ones were more difficult to keep in control?

Pokorný: Definitely the horses. To make them look starving, we followed a long procedure, controlled by a veterinarian. The process turned out to be rather complicated, so we used make-up to emphasize the horses' ribs and make them look skinny. It worked, somebody from the village even reported us to the police for animal abuse.

Do you see THE SCENT OF ORANGES somehow fitting into the great Czech children's film tradition?

Pokorný: Our tradition was part of a policy, financed and controlled by the government. Nowadays we're still producing Czech fairytale movies, but the tradition of realistic cinema unfortunately has been interrupted. I don't see myself fitting into any tradition. I prefer to piss against the wind.

—
Gert Hermans



Two main actors at the Zlín festival



ECFA Journal

Published by ECFA

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ECFA's goal is to support cinema for children and youth in its cultural, economic, 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.

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ECFA Journal No. 2-2020

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