



European Children's
Film Association

Association Européenne du Cinéma
pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse

interviews

The Ape Star

A Butterfly's Heart

Last Days at Sea

Last Film Show

The School Garden



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Photo: The ape star

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ECFA GETS WHAT ECFA NEEDED: THE ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

ECFA is all about access; access to film, access to culture and from now on access to information, to numbers, statistics and interpretations. It is what we promised our members in our mission (*"Spreading relevant information among its members and beyond"*). From now on, this will be provided by the ECFA Academic Committee.

In the renewed Knowledge Section on the ECFA website, under the title [Research](#), a collection of reports and research data on children's film and media was carefully selected and curated by the ECFA Academic Committee. A group of experts meeting twice a year to present the most inspiring studies and publications.

The members of the ECFA Academic Committee represent an impressive gathering of expertise: Irene Andriopoulou (EKOME, Greece); Dr. Steffi Ebert (Martin Luther University, Germany); Alessandra Gariboldi (Fondazione Fitzcarraldo, Italy); Eva Novrup Redvall (University of Copenhagen, Denmark); Anne Schultka (KIDS Regio, Germany) and board members Margret Albers, Editla Bilaver, Elisa Giovannelli and Becky Perry. If children's film was rocket science, these people would fly you to Jupiter in no time. How come such highly profiled people have joined the band? Maybe because it will be fun, probably because it is such a great idea. But surely it is because ECFA is the right organisation to carry out this mission.

Take a look at what the committee selected for you! Every article comes with a curated introduction. In the light of preparing your upcoming Media application, this is where you'll find the data for a perfectly contextualized market description. If you're asked for numbers, you'll know where to find them.

The ECFA website presents you with yet another novelty, through the [Inspiration Section](#). When bringing together experts with a background in such varied fields of culture, it would be a shame to limit our interest strictly to the topic of children's film. When discussing audience development, establishing connections with youngsters, building structures for diversity and participation, we can just as much find inspiration in other segments of the cultural sector.

In the upcoming editions of the ECFA Journal we'll introduce you to the members of our Academic Committee and to some of the selected studies. It's ECFA's privilege to offer you our service.

—
Gert Hermans

On 12 September during the Zlin Film Festival, ECFA will organise the first physical encounter with our members since February 2020. Members are officially invited for this Extra General Meeting. Under the safest possible circumstances, we'll be celebrating a new future together.

Linda Hambäck about THE APE STAR

Cheaper for the poor, expensive for the rich

Jonna, a well-behaving orphan girl, dreams of finding a mother. That wish might come true when one day a gorilla comes knocking, asking to adopt her. It's not an typical situation, but ultimately they are having great times together. The odd couple naturally arouses suspicion among the decent citizens in town, but Jonna and Gorilla will gracefully disprove all prejudice, in a moving Swedish animated film by Linda Hambäck (GORDON & PADDY). Although Jonna is brave enough to drive a car, the story begins... with a bicycle!

Do you remember what it was like to learn to ride a bicycle?

Linda Hambäck: Yes, I had a red bike and my dad kept on running after me. I didn't know how to turn or how to stop; I just had to yell for him once the road ended. Finally I learned how to do it, to my parents' happiness and relief.

Throughout the film quiet and modest Jonna turns into a girl who

knows what she's fighting for.

Hambäck: For me Jonna always was an observer, with remarkable integrity. Due to her good upbringing at the orphanage, she has her feet firmly on the ground. Now she is getting curious how it would be like to have a real mom or dad. This fuels her curiosity for the world outside the orphanage.

There is quite a bit of speculation with real estate going on in the film! Do you have a personal feud with real estate agents?

Hambäck: No, but I do have a strong political interest and it is crucial for our society not to be determined by capitalism. Like the interesting vision on "fair trade" introduced at Gorilla's flea market: cheaper for the poor, expensive for the rich!

Having a monkey as a mother... In your story it is not an obvious option, but it's plausible anyway. Did you set a limit for yourself as to the absurdity of the story?

Hambäck: For Frida Nilsson, the au-



thor of the original book, Gorilla was the impersonation of her father. He is a special person; her 'personal Gorilla'. As for me, I have always liked working with animals, and through animation it becomes fairly easy to blend and integrate them into my world. For me, not everything needs an explanation; that is the magic of animation.

How did you give shape to a character as plump as a gorilla? How did you compose her facial expression,

despite the confusing positioning of her eyes and nostrils?

Hambäck: Our character designer Maria Nilsson Thore is the author and illustrator of several superb children's books; I just love her way of portraying bodies in her early works. Then Elinor Bergman further elaborated all characters in a way so that they could be animated. We paid a lot of attention to facial expressions; for instance when taking a closer look at Gorilla, you'll notice her eyes are not



the same size, just to make her more characteristic. I don't like perfection, I love a design with a twist.

The animation style has drastically changed compared to your previous film GORDON & PADDY. How do you decide what design a story needs?

Hambäck: To be honest... This time we had a bigger budget, so we could expand our universe. I did a lot of research with art directors Ola Larsson and Morten Lund Thulstrup, circling around for months and then closing in, until we had really defined our universe. It took me and Ola six months of research before we got anything up on the table. I kept Edward Hopper in mind as a reference – even though you probably wouldn't notice it in the final result. I always keep some works

of art in mind for inspiration, to make my film move into a certain direction.

You picture the orphanage as a place of dedication, which is probably closer to the truth than the horrifying image we often find in traditional literature.

Hambäck: Our orphanage is not a horrible place to grow up, and honestly, I'm fed up with that classic image, maybe because I myself was adopted. Even though I wasn't brought up in an orphanage, still I presume there are many great institutions in this world, doing a wonderful job. This is the story of a girl longing for a mother, but finding a gorilla instead. When Jonna signs her letter with "Jonna, daughter of Gorilla", that is our tribute to the motherly love that we embrace.



The story contains more than one reference to Charles Dickens. Is that inevitable in a film about orphans?

Hambäck: I suppose so. All great stories leave a mark on us. We carry them with us and sow little pieces of inspiration in the new stories we construct.

The music in THE APE STAR is modest and subtle.

Hambäck: Music is one of the key elements in the creation of my films. It took me so long to find the right composers; I tried and listened to so many of them but more and more I felt lost. Until one day, in the south of Sweden where I have my summerhouse, I went to a jazz concert. Listening to Minna Weurlander and Tania Naranjo, I knew right away this duo would be perfect for the film. We worked closely to-

gether for over a year and they were pure magic. I simply love their score!

–
Gert Hermans

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Inesa Kurklietytė about A BUTTERFLY'S HEART

“Set free to happily fly to the meadows”

“Can I touch your heart?” That is what Rugile literally asks her new friend Juozapas, who was born with a bizarre condition: the boy carries his heart outside of his chest, protected by a special armour. Always careful and cautious, what Juozapas likes most is spending time in a deserted mansion, where he keeps his collection of bugs, beetles and butterflies, a secret he shares with nobody but Rugile. In return, she will help him to overcome the insensitivity of his tougher classmates. Summer seldom looks as sweet as in the Lithuanian countryside, in a film that breathes a delicate lyricism and carries the smell of wildflowers.

The story is set in a small village, where you can sense some kind of magical atmosphere. Is that the typical Lithuanian charm?

Inesa Kurklietytė: We did create a bit of extra fairy-tale-like atmosphere, with a mysterious mansion containing many secrets and a traditional town centre surrounded by beautiful nature; forests, fast flowing rivers, a

wooden bridge and flowering meadows, which are important elements in the life of our main character. The story is set in current times, however small towns in reality are quite empty these days, as people have all moved to the cities. There are colourful houses and funny old ladies gathering by the church. The local people know each other well and children have installed a social hierarchy among themselves, defining who is the boss, and who is a loser. Breaking free from those social structures is a challenge, but Juozapas succeeds and he can maybe inspire other kids in the audience to do the same. We actually combined three different locations, so even for Lithuanians it could be tricky to guess where the filming was done.

In this village there is the old mansion where Juozapas keeps his insect collection, and that looks unique both on the inside and the outside.

Kurklietytė: I found this abandoned Šumskas Mansion by the Belarus border, even before writing the film



script. It was an obvious choice. The building represents several hundred years of Lithuanian architectural heritage, and throughout two world wars and other historical tribulations, it has kept its extraordinary spirit. The crickets from the film still live there since we left, and in winter I was surprised to see butterflies seeking shelter on the icy walls of the mansion.

In this idyllic landscape, kids are playing: driving a tractor, riding their bicycles, playing pranks with the classic ‘wallet’ trick... How much did they like driving around in

cars and tractors?

Kurklietytė: We have been observing the games children are playing these days, and we consulted our young actors. It is surprising how some games have remained popular since the childhood days of me and my co-author Modesta Jurgaitytė. The young actors indeed learned to drive an old Russian Niva car and were totally excited about it. The rest was left to the magic of cinema and the skills of our stunt team. The professional details will forever remain a secret among our film crew.



As charming and spontaneous as she is, what makes Rugile look somehow 'unconventional'?

Kurklietytė: We needed a peculiar girl to stand up to the main character, to inspire him and "kick his ass". She needed to be brave and smart. Since her early childhood I have recognised my daughter's talent for acting; her father and grandmother are actors too. That is why I assigned Rugilė's role to my 10 year old daughter Vilnė, which I haven't regretted for one second.

In one scene she is wearing the unique 'butterfly dress'.

Kurklietytė: In our crew were gathered some of the best film professionals. Our costume designer Neringa Keršulytė already astounded many theatre audiences, and she surely did it again!

Juozapas and Rugilė have a very natural, unspoiled way of being together, as if they immediately know they can trust each other (which is very rare at that age).

Kurklietytė: I have always admired those honest friendships between girls and boys, that are sometimes spoiled at the eve of adolescence. I am happy to hear that our actors Eli-



jus and Vilnė succeeded in conveying this connection, that had an important place in the script.

Dogs, cats, butterflies, bugs... Your set must have been one big animal farm. Were there any 'divas' among the insects?

Kurklietytė: Working with the animals was truly a challenge. We had a wonderful professional biologist, that we called our 'insect trainer' and to whom we are very grateful. He was in control of the butterflies and their 'stunt doubles', that were finally set free to happily fly to the meadows. Actually the audience can pick up a lot of information about the mysterious world of bugs and insects from this film.

There is this wonderful 'bug hotel'. Was it constructed especially for the film?

Kurklietytė: I saw my first bug hotel ever in Mannheim, Germany and I was carried away by this proof of human respect, taking care for nature. In the film, Juozapas has his own creation, a micro city, built by our designer Anželika Šulcaitė.

I'm trying to imagine all those fragrances on the set: the oranges, the boxes full of insects, the festive scene with the flowers...

Kurklietytė: In general, a child's senses (including the smell) will be experienced stronger, brighter, sharper. With our DoP Viktoras Radzevičius we

discussed how to convey the smells and colours of youth. As talented as he is, I think he managed. The scene with the flowers refers to the Lithuanian tradition to offer autumn flowers to the teachers on the 1st of September, celebrating the new school year. At the same time, this is a symbolic farewell to the joys of summer.

The film also traps the parents in the magic act of reading their children a bedtime story.

Kurklietytė: I have three daughters; I know all about the importance of reading together. I remember my parents' voices from my childhood – pure magic! I wish that we all could find the time to read with our children more often.

If you'd be an insect, which one would you be?

Kurklietytė: My mother once asked me this question. I answered her, a butterfly who has just crawled out from its cocoon and has not spread its wings yet. This is exactly how I feel nowadays, on the eve of the world premiere of A BUTTERFLY'S HEART.

–

Gert Hermans

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Olivier Pairoux about SPACEBOY

Me and my Rubik's cube

Olivier Pairoux talks about his film like a seasoned TV presenter... which he is! Full of enthusiasm, he tells about 12 year old Jim, who is passionate about *all things space travel*. His father is an astrophysicist who might soon take off on a space mission. But Jim has his own project: building a hot air balloon with his school friend Emma. Though when competing for young scientists, unexpected obstacles arise.

Jim has a particularly big dream!

Olivier Pairoux: Don't we all want to achieve things in life? It is so important to never give up believing in your dreams and fighting for them. That's what Jim will find out. But that doesn't mean everything is permitted; dreams can only be realised with the help of others: your parents, friends, etc.

Besides the director you were also the scriptwriter of SPACEBOY.

Pairoux: Which explains why you find so many aspects of myself in Jim. I've

always been passionate about space. As a child I often marvelled at the flickering starry sky with my mum, later I started reading about it. Even movies like STAR WARS intrigue me immensely.

Do you have more things in common with Jim?

Pairoux: I'm a sucker for robotics and Rubik's cubes; I have at least 50 of them at home that I like to play with. The film was also a return to my childhood years; I grew up in the 80's.

What was so special about that era?

Pairoux: We had so much freedom. I rode my bike far away from home or went camping with my friends in the forest, and nobody even cared about it. Unfortunately all this has changed. Today we don't let our children roam the streets, wandering carefree.

The film also tells about the relationship between fathers and sons.

Pairoux: I have two sons, Stan and Oliver. When I started working on SPACEBOY, they were still young. But



as they grew up, I came to experience fatherhood in a different way and added new insights to the story. My sons are now 10 and 5 years old, and throughout the screenplay I can detect the evolution I made as a father.

Basile Grunberger has to act out your younger self?

Pairoux: Above all, Basile was a hard worker, thoroughly prepping himself. His perseverance seems unlimited: for six weeks he gave the best of himself, every day from morning until evening.

Did you ask so much of him?

Pairoux: We shot this scene in a tropical garden: Jim and Emma are on the ground. When a snake comes crawling over them, they must not make a

sound so as not to be caught by the gardener. During the filming, Basile tried to control his fear of the five-meter-long beast, while he urgently needed to pee. He was lying there whispering *"I need to go to the toilet"* but he couldn't. So the stress you see in his eyes isn't just because of that snake...

What do you think: will you ever travel to space?

Pairoux: We've sent the film to the European Space Agency and they loved it. Perhaps somewhere in the audience there might be a child that wants to delve deeper into the matter, after seeing SPACEBOY. Imagine that kid later becoming an astronaut and embarking on a space journey, encouraged by my film. Isn't that a lovely thought?

—
Lukas De Block

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Europe's top animators gathered around one table

"Like a rushed, energetic, pounding heartbeat"

It must have been since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles that so many big shots were gathered around one table. A digital roundtable, where the Industry Days of the Kristiansand Int'l Children's Film Festival fired some questions at the crème de la crème of the European animation league. No wonder that moderator Frank Mosvold (who made his entrance to the feature animation stage last year with ELLA BELLA BINGO) was excited to sit together with *"some of his favourite animation directors"*

, being: Tomm Moore (WOLFWALKERS)

- Will Becher (SHAUN THE SHEEP – FARMAGEDDON).
- Kim Hagen Jensen (DREAMBUILDERS)
- Christian Ryltenius (PELLE NO-TAIL)
- Rasmus Sivertsen (CAPTAIN SABERTOOTH & THE MAGIC DIAMOND)

Here are some fragments of what they had to say on...

How to end up in animation

Tomm Moore: I began as a kid, making animations at home, but in the late 80's the equipment wasn't easy to find, I could only do some basic stuff on my computer. I joined the Young Irish Filmmakers, a group in my hometown Kilkenny. They had a camera and a few other things that I could use.

Kim Hagen Jensen: I started out doing comic books at home, which was my initial passion. Then I got into work practice at a Danish animation studio and later moved on to Ireland to work with Don Bluth at the Sullivan Bluth Studios.

Rasmus Sivertsen: My father was an animator of short films in the 80's. Whenever he applied for money and got granted, he took a year off from his job. Those were inspiring times for me and my brother, helping him out and constantly talking about animation.

Christian Ryltenius: I've always been fond of drawing, since I was a kid. I was lucky enough, very early on, to find out about a 2D animation studio one hour away from my hometown,



Captain Sabertooth & the Magic Diamond

where I was – believe it or not – working with Rasmus' dad. When he left, I got his job.

Will Becher: It started as a hobby in the 80's. What I made was very crude but I loved the fact that it was so instant. I started writing letters to Aardman, to see what I could learn from them. Amazingly, they wrote back and years later I found myself there with a job.

Their last feature

Moore: After THE SECRET OF KELLS and SONG OF THE SEA, co-director Ross Stewart and I thought it would be nice to complete an informal trilogy on Irish folklore. We wanted to set this one in our hometown, and re-

membered the legends about a kind of werewolves, the wolf people of Kilkenny.

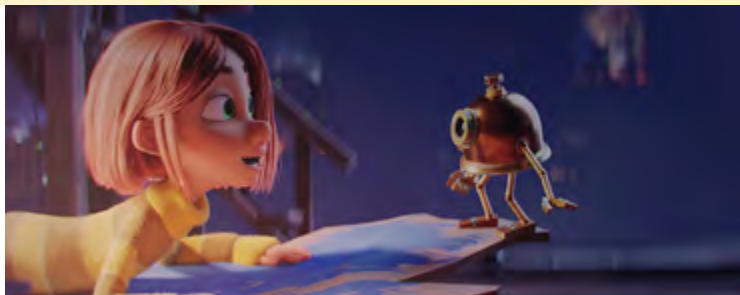
Sivertsen: The Sabertooth universe was already adapted into theatre plays and a live action movie, but I felt something really animated about it, with lots of magic and adventures and possibilities to do animated humour – which is something I'm always looking for.

Handmade authenticity

Moore: I'm a huge fan of Aardman; I love the workshopy feeling of handmade stuff. We try to keep that kind of feeling in our studio too, working with sculptures, painters, etc. Even if we're often using computers, we try

to secure that timeless, handmade feel, especially for a folklore tale like ours. I prefer to draw, I rather find a way to get paid to draw than anything else.

Hagen Jensen: As our story evolved we figured out there were a lot of atmospheric shots and details that we wanted for the lighting of the set, with characters stepping in and out of dreams. I thought 3D could work better than what was possible within our 2D budget, and I don't regret it. It suited the film well.



DREAMBUILDERS

is excited about exploring the world. We wanted her to be bright, colourful and magical.

Sivertsen: Our main character Sune has always been playing second fiddle, this is her chance to shine. Captain Sabertooth doesn't want girls on board, so we had this little Shakespearean twist where she dresses up as a boy.

Test screenings

Hagen Jensen: Throughout the process we had several test screenings with script consultants, who came with notes and remarks. But only at the premiere I learned the most about how children actually react to the film.

Moore: We show our animatic to an Irish-speaking primary school. It takes a couple of years to get the animatic

right, which means we go through different sets of 8 and 9 year olds. Their feedback is pretty honest, they don't hold back. Those are the notes I take seriously.

Ryltenius: In one test screening kids started to cry. That is when we realised we were doing some really scary, intensive stuff, and we decided to adjust one part of the story.



PELLE NO-TAIL

Becher: At Aardman we constantly – probably every four months – screen a rough cut to the company founders, which is incredibly useful.

Working with a crew

Moore: We want the crew at any stage to do more than just following technical orders. We encourage everyone to try and bring something up. Even the ink and paint artists had suggestions on how they could make scenes more interesting, playing around with smears and blurs. That is what I missed most since the pandemic. We had to finish the movie in our bedrooms and that was fine – animators were among the lucky ones – but it is not the same as everybody brain-ing together. Collaboration is such a powerful part of animation.

Female lead characters

Moore: When we wrote a first draft of the script with Robyn as a boy, it felt like we had to construct a conflict for him; in 1650 a boy wanting to become a hunter would have felt encouraged anyway. With a girl in the lead, the story got less contrived and more natural. Back then, more so even than today, women were not expected to do any of the things that Robyn dreams of. The vision of freedom that she sees in her friend Mebh becomes much more poignant.

Becher: Lula is a new character in the Aardman universe. Early on in the story she wasn't very engaging, but now she represents someone much like Shaun, she loves adventure and



SHAUN THE SHEEP - FARMAGEDDON

Working with actors

Sivertsen: We gathered all the actors playing out the movie beforehand, like a live action film. We spent a week together, recording the voices and shooting scenes with a video camera. Through the actors' improvisations, scenes were putting on extra flesh, with the writer adding all fresh ideas to the script as we were going. That worked out very well.

Moore: That is fascinating! Kemp Powers (co-director of SOUL) says that compared to live action, what we miss in animation is the spontaneity. Your method is a way for recapturing some of that.

Hagen Jensen: This was my first time working with actors. I started out sticking very much to the script until one day during a break, the actors started improvising. I thought that

was such fun material that we re-recorded many of the scenes, improvising on the original script. In that process completely new characters emerged, which made the production very complicated, but I was having so much fun. On my next movie I will have a lot more of that.

Moore: We did three recording sessions with Honor Kneafsey (Robyn)



WOLFWALKERS

and Eva Whittaker (Mebh) and I felt like capturing lighting in a bottle: surrounded by technicians and advisors, nervously staring at their script, all they did was just making friends. Some of what we captured there, is what made the movie work.

Becher: Shaun has no dialogue. The editors and I spend hours – you wouldn't believe! – picking out the right 'baaah' from 400 takes; because you have that particular one in your head and you just can't find it.

What do you enjoy most about animation?

Hagen Jensen: The storytelling! I've always been a storyteller ever since I did comic books as a child.

Moore: I enjoy the collaboration, as you get to work with more talented

people than yourself and you learn from them. What I don't like is that it requires a lot of meetings and management and human resources – I like to spend some time also drawing myself. Trying to get that balance right is the story of my life.

Your advice for young animators

Hagen Jensen: Go for it! Don't sit around, waiting for the perfect idea to come. Get it out there, show it to a producer, find someone to take a look at your work, and get some feedback on it.

Ryltenius: Apply to one of those fantastic animation schools; if you can't get in one year, maybe you can the next year.

Moore: Parents often come to tell me that 'my kid loves to spend hours alone in his room, drawing' but animation is the art of teamwork. The biggest thing to work on is your emotional intelligence and your ability to be an inspiring part of the team.

We send our massive thanks to the Kristiansand Int'l Children's Film Festival for changing a problematic situation in our favour, and raising great expectations for the future of European animated cinema.

CINEMA RITROVATO KIDS

Watching Russian hedgehogs

Probably the most delightful cinema goosebumps of the year, I got in Bologna during the Cinema Ritrovato festival, when during the open air screening of *VAMPYR* (Carl Theodore Dryer, 1932) on the Piazza Maggiore, church bells started to ring at the *moment supreme*. Pure magic! But isn't it a bit nerdy, a festival where the introduction speeches emphasise the restoration techniques that were used, and where restoration studios get more applause than directors? Among the audience you will find cinephiles, representatives of film schools and film museums, and children! Within this huge festival, a young audience section stands out not only for its unique programming, but also for the astonishing diversity of its audience.

Elisa Giovannelli and her team are running Schermi & Lavagne, the young audience section of the Cineteca di Bologna, presenting programmes for all age groups, from toddlers to teenagers, both during the festival and throughout the year. What I want to know from her is: how to reach out to



such a diverse audience? And why is it important to introduce children to archive cinema?

Elisa Giovannelli: I believe that cinema history is not a dusty thing from the past, it is something very much alive and we citizens of today are in the centre of it. Children are not only tomorrow's but also today's audience. It is also a way to open new horizons through rather unusual types of cinema. Apparently there is no limit to

what children can appreciate, as long as it is playfully presented for the right age group.

How 'unusual' do you go?

Giovannelli: We present not only silent films, but also experimental cinema, avant-garde with live electronic music, etc. On the other hand we sometimes screen traditional children's films; animated shorts for the little ones, feature films for the older ones. There aren't many titles availa-



ble on the Italian market, except the obligatory Disney and a few others.

Often it is said that children's cinema diet is getting more scarce, due to the commercialised film market, but could it be that nowadays, with access to digital media, they might be more open to less standardised formats of moving images?

Giovannelli: New technology made kids familiar with short videos as a way to express themselves, which is a positive evolution, but they should still understand what it can be like to see a film in a theatre, in terms of sharing a socio-cultural experience with others.

In media education referring to the cinema classics was always a French tradition.

Giovannelli: Yesterday it was the festival's honour to welcome Alain Bergala, who is considered to be the father of modern film education. Like him, we don't believe in a strictly chronological approach; instead of following a straight path, we rather prefer to

mix different elements. We share his vision that instead of entire films, you can compile extracts and clips. But ever since his theory was launched 30 years ago, society has evolved, and so have our perspectives. We insist on involving children with new technologies. In our work with schools and families, we mix the educational and the hands-on part.

You seem to be standing very close to your audience.

Giovannelli: In the run-up to the festival, we discussed several types of forms where the audience could write down their urgent questions. I decided to use none of them, and reply one by one to every single question from every single parent. Building up direct contact with our audience, meeting them outside the cinema, getting their feedback is crucial for us.

Is addressing families more challenging than addressing schools?

Giovannelli: Throughout the year, every Saturday and Sunday we organise a film club for young people, offering a programme with classics, previews or second releases, often followed by workshops or panels. Included is also the “Cinnoteca” – a word game with ‘cinno’, a Bolognese word for very small children – in which we

have screenings for kids aged 2 to 5. This initiative was warmly received (and we can only dream of re-launching this activity soon). And in summer we welcome children all day long in a ‘camp’, in collaboration with a Bolognese association for children’s literature. This is our gift to the parents



of Bologna, taking care of their children during the summer vacation.

In summer... you mean... right before the festival?

Giovannelli: Exactly. Our summers are pretty packed. For five years there has

been the Cinema Ritrovato Kids section. This is our final celebration, the climax of our work, and a treat for the families that followed us all year long.

How come this is possible in Bologna, and maybe only in Bologna?

Giovannelli: Bologna is a peculiar city,

with a strong cultural tradition. It’s a university city with a wide variety of interest groups. This open minded atmosphere is reflected in our audience and in the festival. I consider myself lucky to work in a city like Bologna.

The titles in your family programme are remarkable; Russian animation from the 70s, a selection of Estonian shorts... In most festivals such programmes are screened for empty theatres.

Giovannelli: Throughout the year in our film club, we build up a relationship of trust with families; they know our selection is well thought through, which they see as a “quality guaranteed” label. From there on, we’ve built up a tradition, step by step; it took us 10 years to arrive at this point. Do you know that several festival guests, coming from abroad, bring along their kids, leaving them with us to watch THE HEDGEHOG IN THE FOG while they go to Cinema Arlecchino to watch a newly restored classic?

You’re not only reaching out to the regular festival audience; you’re also targeting other groups.

Giovannelli: We also address families that normally would not come to us, because they don’t know about us, or because they can’t afford a ticket. We try to involve them through our cooperation with social services, local associations, a public housing company, etc. Thus, we’re building a network that hopefully can lower the threshold to welcome these kids in our screenings, alone, with their parents



or their educators. It's an intensive and time consuming method, but we strongly believe in it. What we offer is not just for the happy few.

So the audience that comes to watch Russian animations about hedgehogs...

Giovannelli: ... Is different, and it is mixed. We do not organise separate screenings, we just open our doors. We meet those families, we explain what we're doing and why we're do-

ing it.

How big is Cinema Ritrovato?

Giovannelli: Huge! This year we screen around 450 films in 10 theatres and in open air venues, and we welcome people from all over the world. Normally 70% of our audience is international, from Japan to Australia. Sometimes it feels like our festival is better known abroad than in Italy.

And the audience is a bit... nerdy?

Giovannelli: Not all of them are! Our catalogue ranges from obscure titles, to restored popular films in Technicolor. Last year Sergio Leone's western trilogy was screened at the Piazza Maggiore, often described as "the most beautiful cinema in the world". This brought back memories to Sunday evenings at my grandfather's. Only when there was a western on TV, he told us to be silent; "tonight I can't play cards with you because there is cinema on TV". For him only westerns were true cinema.

Somewhere in the back of this huge Cinema Ritrovato catalogue is the children's section. How do you position yourself within this big event? With a humble "thank you for having us"?

Giovannelli: It has been like that for a few years. But year after year we gained our place, as Cineteca director Gianluca Farinelli believes in the benefits of film education. We got our own space in the Cineteca – a small theatre with 64 seats – and due to the pandemic restrictions we have now established relationships with open air venues in the city, in courtyards, parks etc.

You also have a distribution project.

Giovannelli: Italy doesn't have a tra-

dition in distributing children's films, and in general the interest of the industry is low. We started distributing restored classics in theatres and on DVD. But after I saw the film *O MENINO E O MUNDO* by Alê Abreu, I discussed with my director the opportunity to launch a small distribution line for children. The film did well, and ever since, we have distributed one title for children per year. In recent years we picked up Magic Light productions, like *THE GRUFFALO* and next November we will launch their *REVOLTING RHYMES*.

After all those years, are there any particular screenings that you will always remember?

Giovannelli: There was one in a historic theatre in Imola, where *MODERN TIMES* was seen by 400 school kids from different age groups. Hearing their collective laughter was very impressive. And there was the screening of *O MENINO E O MUNDO* on the Piazza Maggiore for 3000 people – me presenting that film was one of the scariest moments of my life! But the screening was fantastic.

–
Gert Hermans

Venice Atienza about LAST DAYS AT SEA

“Somehow I wish I could be more like him”

Venice Atienza's first documentary feature closes in on 12 year old Reyboy, living in Karihatag, an isolated village in the south of the Philippines at the frontline of climate change. In 2014 Atienza visited the region with her camera, documenting how local people survive devastating storms. She promised Reyboy (and herself) to come back to capture the stories that he and the fishermen in the village had told her. But when she heard Reyboy would leave Karihatag at the end of summer to go to high school in the city, she decided to film the life he was leaving behind. **LAST DAYS AT SEA** had its virtual world premiere at the Berlinale 2021.

Its beautiful environment, its lack of aggression, its cheerfulness and its solidarity among different generations make Karihatag seem like a paradise. How to explain such a deeply humane togetherness in this seemingly uncompromising community?

Venice Atienza: Karihatag is not a paradise. In this isolated communi-

ty, people need to find ways to be self-reliant. They have a deep understanding of life's unpredictability, and have launched various systems for their community to survive, like a marine sanctuary for fishes, or protocols on how to survive storms. From the people of Karihatag, I understood how survival is not just an individual endeavour; it also depends on systems and structures. Many aspects, like the sea getting rougher all the time because of climate change, are beyond their control; they can't deal with it on their own. These are issues that need to be addressed by us, who are not locals. This situation concerns us too, even if we don't feel the effects as strongly as they do.

What do you really want to achieve with this film?

Atienza: I hope **LAST DAYS AT SEA** can make clear how the world's bigger issues also shape people's individual lives. I do not only feel sadness over Reyboy leaving home, but also a deep rage. Not having access to education, facilities, and stable employment, is

the reason why he and the other kids from Karihatag have to leave home at such an early age. Most of them go to study in nearby cities like Butuan, Cabadbaran, Surigao. These are decisions that more privileged people do not have to make. We all dream of wandering into the world, discovering new places, but there is a big difference between making a journey because you want to or because you have to.

I feel a deep intimacy between you and Reyboy.

Atienza: At some point Reyboy told me that he felt uncomfortable being observed and filmed when being alone with me. We honoured his request. Making a film about his last days at home, it was important to have him acting the way he would normally do. Reyboy loved to spend time near the shore at night, so with the crew we decided that when hanging out at the shore, we would not be filming, but only recording the sound of him and me, talking as individuals. Not many of those conversations



made it to the film, but the ones that touched me most, did. There were only four of us in the crew, and we all felt closely connected to Karihatag and to Reyboy. Our DoP Moshe truly admired the place and the skies over there. When watching the film now, looking at the clouds and sea, we feel what it was that Moshe felt as he looked onto the horizon. At first I was afraid to be visible in the film myself, but it somehow feels true to the story to have my voice there.





What did you personally pick up from the people of Karihatag?

Atienza: First and foremost, they showed me that to survive life's difficulties, we need others. I suppose I always knew that, but in difficult times I used to wonder how I could survive - taking into consideration what I needed most. In Karihatag, when the going gets tough - like when storms are coming or when a neighbour runs out of food - I saw people offering help, not only out of a sense of duty but because they truly care. Helping each other is not a romantic deed, it is at the very basis of survival. Reyboy is the type of guy who says what he thinks; when he is sad about something, he will tell you. He is curious about nature and about what lies

beyond our world. He is considerate because he knows how difficult life can be. He is carefree but at the same time, he understands how precious everything and everyone is. Somehow I wish I could be more like him.

Memories are taking an important place in your film.

Atienza: Our story is like a matryoshka doll. While constructing this "time capsule" (Reyboy's last days at home) I began to unearth things that I didn't know I had forgotten. When Reyboy told me his biggest wish, I realised that at some point in my life, I had dreams as big as his, but as I grew older, I learned to dream less and less. When spending time with him watching the stars and clouds, I



re-discovered how to really look at things around me. I'm not sure if he is aware of that. The time spent with Reyboy reminded me to hold on to all things precious, because one day, everything will become a memory. That is on the other end of survival. I hold on to things because I want to keep them forever, but to hold on to precious things means to take care of what is here, while it is here, because all things eventually will be gone one day.

You're also involved in a distribution project called Cinecaravan.

Atienza: Cinecaravan is actually a project by our colleagues in the DocNomads Master Degree in Documentary Filmmaking (Erasmus Mundus) where

my producer Fan Wu and I met as students. Cinecaravan screens films in small communities, where they also organise filmmaking workshops. The programme has already travelled to Portugal and Hungary, and inspired Fan and me. Now we hope to adopt the Cinecaravan concept and bring it to our side of the world, to the Philippines and Taiwan. We're hoping to screen our film in different coastal communities. Due to the pandemic, the plan was put on hold, but we haven't given up on our dream.

Are you ready now to share your film with the world?

Atienza: It took us a long time to finish *LAST DAYS AT SEA*, as if the film required me to grow up and become the director it needed me to be. The whole experience touched something deep inside me; now I hope that we can share with others what it felt like to get to know Reyboy and the people of Karihatag.

—
Uta Beth

CINEMINI Europe 2

A film education project for 3 to 6 year olds

How can we make watching films a meaningful experience for children? What can we teach children about film at an early age, as their early years are the most formative? How can we combine aesthetic experiences with creativity and foster the desire to play? Cinemini Europe 2 might be the answer.

Cinemini Europe 2, a film education initiative that has been running since January 2021, offers children aged 3 to 6, parents and educators the opportunity to discover the diverse world of the moving image in a creative and playful way. The project group consists of seven European film education institutions under the leadership of the DFF - Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum. Project coordinator Sebastian Rosenow (DFF): *"We believe that the primary goal is not to understand films, but to experience them. By watching, playing and reflecting we want to stimulate the development of creativity and critical thinking and inspire a love for film even among the youngest."*

Tried and tested

The result of the first phase of the project (Cinemini Europe 1) is a catalogue of 26 short films from all over the world - from the early days of cinema to today, from avant-garde to narrative animation. Films in the Cinemini catalogue are always under 15 minutes, do not use spoken or written language and were not necessarily made for children. Rosenow: *"All our films have been tried and tested many times with groups of children and are waiting for you to watch them on our website. They are accompanied by informative material, texts and activity cards that provide a historical and aesthetic context for the films and offer suggestions for a creative pedagogical approach."*

Free of charge

Film programmes compiled from this catalogue are now made available for international festivals under the title 'Cinemini on Tour', offering children a tailor made framework for play-



fully discovering the diversity of European cinema. These programmes, consisting of European short and animated films from various years, can be booked free of charge for family screenings as well as for groups from kindergartens and primary schools through the project's distribution partner LEMONADE FILMS.

Further training courses on early childhood film education with the Cinemini catalogue for a European professional audience are planned in Poznań, Porto and Frankfurt am Main, in 2021 and 2022. You'll be updated

about these initiatives through ECFA's communication.

More info: contact project coordinator Sebastian Rosenow;
rosenow@dff.film.
Booking a Cinemini programme for your festival? Contact festival distributor LEMONADE FILMS;
cineminiontour@refreshingfilms.com.

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LUCAS – Int'l Festival for Young Film Lovers

Docs are everywhere

LUCAS – Int'l Festival for Young Film Lovers (30 September – 7 October) sets a focus on documentary film. In addition to two live panels broadcasted via Zoom, several documentaries have been selected for competition, as well as a programme for the young-moviegoers. In cooperation with DOK.education, documentary workshops will be available for schools.

How can documentaries reach young audiences? At LUCAS #44, two live panels on 5 October will explore this question; from the perspective of film educators and from the viewpoint of filmmakers. The first panel will focus on the direct experiences of film educators. The question "How can we spread our love for documentaries among young people?" will be addressed by representatives of European initiatives in a Zoom panel. Among others, Sabine Costa (Documentaire sur grand écran, France), Judith Funke (REALITY BITES, Germany), Gert Hermans (Ket & Doc, Belgium), Isabelle Minguillon (Docs Barcelona/Learning by docs, Spain) and Ginte Zulyte

(Meno Avilys, Lithuania) are invited.

What are the specifics of successfully addressing young audiences with documentaries? What challenges does the market provide and how to improve conditions? In the conversation "Facing Reality: Documentaries for Young Audiences", US perspectives meet representatives of European cinema. The panel discusses how both sides can learn from each other and in which films this has already been achieved. Confirmed participants are Brigid O'Shea (Documentary Association of Europe, Germany), Eroll Bilibani (DOKUFEST, Kosovo), Maarten Schmidt (Storyhouse Film, Belgium), Maya Reichert (DOK.education, Germany) and Kim A. Snyder (director, US).

Panel 1: Film Education – 5 October, 14:00-15:00 CEST

Panel 2: Industry – 5 October, 15:30-17:00 CEST

Registration to lucas-welcome@dff.film; keyword: Panel 1 or Panel 2

Although making it far too rarely to the cinema screens, they do exist, those outstanding documentary films that can ignite a great passion in young people. The LUCAS programme is the best proof: in its competitions the festival presents energetic, moving and visually impressive titles. THE REASON I JUMP (Jerry Rothwell, US/UK), SOUL KIDS (Hugo Sobelman, France), SHADOW GAME (Eefjie Blankevoort & Els van Driel, the Netherlands) and US KIDS (Kim A. Snyder, US) deliver close insights into very different realities of life. They portray young activists making their voices heard after a high school rampage, tell of autistic youth, or show the reality of young people on the run. LUCAS also has an age-appropriate programme for the very young, introducing children to the peculiarities of documentary film in a playful way. The programme originates from the "Cinemini on Tour" project, in which the DFF and other European partners curated short film programmes for young children (see article page 16).



Another guest at LUCAS is DOK.education. The educational section of DOK.fest München offers students in grades 3 – 13 the opportunity to understand the truth and reality of a documentary film narrative in "Schule des Sehens".

Find all info about the 44th LUCAS – Int'l Festival for Young Film Lovers [here](#).



Around the World

Animation, France, Belgium, 2021

Directed by Samuel Tourneux & Gerry Swallow

Prod.: Cottonwood Media

World Sales: Studiocanal

Phone: ++33-1-71-35-35-35

www.studiocanal.com

A Brixton Tale



Feature Film, UK, 2021

Directed by Darragh Carey & Bertrand Desrochers

Prod.: Damned Crew, Paradox House, BWGTBLD

World Sales: Parkland Pictures

Phone: ++44-203-432-16-96

info@parklandpictures.com

www.abrixtontale.com

Brother's Keeper

Feature Film, Romania, Turkey, 2021

Directed by Ferit Karahan

Prod.: Asteros Film

World Sales: Intramovies

Phone: ++39-06-807-61-57

mail@intramovies.com

www.intramovies.com

Buster's World



Feature Film, Denmark, 2021

Directed by Martin Miehe-Renard

Prod.: Crone Ungfelt Film

World Sales: Sola Media

Phone: ++49-711-96-89-44-40

post@sola-media.com

www.sola-media.com

A Butterfly's Heart

Feature Film, Lithuania, 2021

Directed by Inesa Kurkietyte

Prod.: Fralita Films

World Sales: Beta Film

Phone: ++49-89-67-34-69-80

beta@betacinema.com

Captain Nova

Feature Film, the Netherlands, 2021

Directed by Maurice Trouwborst

Prod.: Keplerfilm

World Sales: Beta Film

Phone: ++49-89-67-34-69-80

beta@betacinema.com

Christmas in the Jungle



Feature Film, Estonia, Latvia, 2020

Directed by Jaak Kilmi

Prod.: Studio Locomotive, Stellar Film

World Sales: Stellar Film

Phone: ++372-600-18-11

evelin@stellar.ee

www.stellar.ee

Dragon Girl

Feature Film, Norway, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, 2020

Directed by Katarina Launing

Prod.: Storm Films, Evolution Films, Volya Films

World Sales: Sola Media

Phone: ++49-711-96-89-44-40

post@sola-media.com

www.sola-media.com

Dreams are like wild Tigers

Feature Film, Germany, 2021

Directed by Lars Montag

Prod. & World Sales: NFP neue film produktion

Phone: ++49-30-32-90-94-13

h.gotaut@nfp.de

www.nfp.de

Even Mice Belong in Heaven

Animation, Czech Republic, France, Poland, 2021

Directed by Denisa Grimmová & Jan Bubeníček

Prod.: Fresh Films & Hausboot, Les Films du Cygne,...

World Sales: Charades Int'l Sales

Phone: ++33-629-87-45-04

sales@charades.eu

www.micebelonginheaven.com

Goodbye Soviet Union

Feature Film, Estonia, Finland, 2020

Directed by Lauri Randal

Prod.: Exitfilm, Bufo

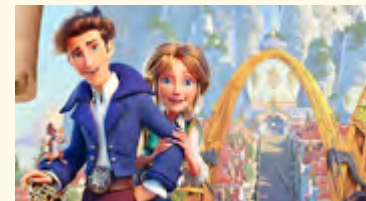
World Sales: One Eyed Films

Phone: ++ 44-20-87-40-14-91

info@oneeyedfilms.com

www.oneeyedfilms.com

Gulliver Returns



Animation, Ukraine, 2021

Directed by Ilya Maximov

Prod.: Animation Studio 95
World Sales: All Rights Entertainment
Phone: ++852-23-88-60-07
sales@allrightsentertainment.com
www.allrightsentertainment.com

The Hoop



Feature Film, Turkey, 2021
Directed by Ahmet Toklu
Prod.: Toklu Prod., Filmcode Prod.
World Sales: Digital 104
Phone: ++34-822-257-131
contacto@digital104.com

I Don't Wanna Dance

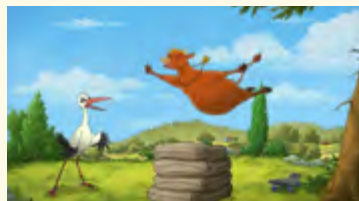
Feature Film, the Netherlands, 2020
Directed by Flynn von Kleist
Prod. & World Sales: The Rogues
info@therogues.nl
<https://therogues.nl/en>

Laura's Star

Feature Film, Germany, 2021
Directed by Joya Thome
Prod.: Westside Filmprod., Warner Bros., Rothkirch Cartoon-Film, ...
World Sales: Warner Bros. Germany

Phone: ++49-40-22-65-00
www.warnerbros.de

Mamma Moo Finds Her Way Home



Animation, Sweden, 2021
Directed by Christian Ryltenius
Prod.: SF Studios
World Sales: Reinvent
sales@reinvent.dk
<https://reinvent.dk>

Moon Bound

Animation, Germany, 2021
Directed by Ali Samadi Ahadi
Prod.: brave new work, Little Dream Entertainment
World Sales: Sola Media
Phone: ++49-711-96-89-44-40
post@sola-media.com
www.sola-media.com

My Lake

Feature Film, Albania, 2020
Directed by Gjergj Xhuvani
Prod. & World Sales: On Film Production

Phone: ++ 355-44-81-97-93
info@onfilmproduction.al
www.onfilmproduction.al

The Oggies – Welcome to Smellville



Animation, Germany, 2021
Directed by Jens Møller & Toby Genkel
Prod.: WunderWerk, Oetinger, Leonine, ...
World Sales: ARRI Media Int'l,
Phone: ++49-89-38-09-12-88
aexacoustos@arri.de
www.arrimedia.de/international

The Sentries of the Delta

Feature Film, Romania, 2021
Directed by Liviu Marghidan
Prod. & World Sales: Scharf Film
Phone: ++40-722-304-788
liviu_marghidan@yahoo.com

Snotty Boy

Feature Film, Austria, Germany, 2021
Directed by Marcus H. Rosenmüller & Santiago López Jover

Prod.: Aichholzer Filmprod., Arri Media
World Sales: Picture Tree Int'l
pti@picturetree-international.com
www.picturetree-international.com

Who We Love



Feature Film, Ireland, 2021
Directed by Graham Cantwell
Prod. & World Sales: Treehouse Media
info@whowelovefilm.com
whowelovefilm.com;
www.treehousemedia.eu

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

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

TAMARA BOS (the Netherlands)



Personal impression by Xiaojuan Zhou

It was an evening in a cozy Amsterdam hotel lobby. I sat there weeping, alone, on a couch. Here came in a few friends, also with a Cinekid badge. They saw my tears and showed concern. I confessed that I just finished reading a book about a boy who lost his dad, having to face his lifeless body... After I shared a few paragraphs with them, their eyes became as watery as mine. One of them, a big-hearted film producer from Turkey, was so moved that she took off a ring from her finger and offered it to me as a gesture of gratitude. I declined her gift and told her that we should thank Tamara Bos, who wrote the book and earlier that day gave me a copy of the Chinese edition (which I translated verbally in English to my comrades in that lobby). This anecdote proves the profound power of Tamara's writing.

Years ago I presented WINKY'S HORSE in a Montreal cinema to some small kids. One of the cutest post-screening questions came from a 5 year old: "*Est-ce que c'était vous, Winky?*" (Was it you, Winky?) Obviously she saw the Chinese that I share with the protagonist of the film. Ha, Tamara's script gave the little spellbound child quite a lot to imagine.

From MINOES and WIPLALA that she adapted from best-selling novels to original scripts such as FIDGETY BRAM and ROMY'S SALON, Tamara is like an unstoppable machine reaching the mountain tops of her profession, one after another. Like father, like daughter. She's carrying on the family film brand that her dad pioneered in the Netherlands and beyond. I had the pleasure of spending time

with her in Berlin, Amsterdam and China. In the film world she is a woman of words, but in real life she can be of few words. She can get lost in her imagination, but she is also a caring and affectionate soul. She is real. If her life were a script she's writing, her 3rd act is yet to come and promises to be exciting. Let's hold our breath.



WIPLALA

THE 'MEET THE MENTORS' Q&A

Tamara Bos, Award winning scriptwriter

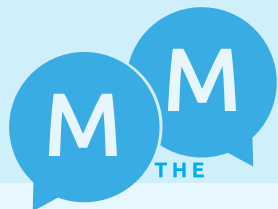
Most of your film scripts are for and about children. How did it all start?

Bos: When I started writing as an 8 year old child. But it really started after my graduation from the University of Amsterdam in 1992. As a student, I wrote poems, short stories and presentations for a youth TV programme, produced by my father's company BosBros. Then he asked me to do some text editing for his company. There, I heard that after the success of CHILDREN OF WATERLAND, they had the ambition for a follow up series. That could be something for me! I started writing short stories about little children, situated in the big city. My debut, called CLASS DISMISSED, was directed by the great Ben Sombogaart and won many awards, like the Prix Jeunesse and the LIRA script award in 1999. That was the start of my career. Since then I have written for grown-ups but mostly for children. I believe, like my father, that children should be taken seriously.

Who, fictional or real, inspired you the most?

Bos: Pipi Longstocking was the first one; I loved her power, humour and self-confi-





dence. I knew she was a fictional character but she gave me the power to believe in myself. And there were the great authors, like Astrid Lindgren, Annie M.G. Schmidt and Roald Dahl.

Already at a very young age, my father Burny Bos told me I was a writer. He knew it before I knew it myself! His willpower and strength in convincing people about the importance of his plans was very inspiring. I think I inherited some of that. Writing great stories for children is just as important as writing for grown-ups, that is what my father taught me. Just as much as healthy food for our bodies, children need healthy food for their brains. It is in this tradition that I am working.

WINKY'S HORSE was a smart story about the cultural shock of a little

Chinese immigrant in relation to the Dutch icon St Nicholas. How did that idea come to you?

Bos: It started with my love for this bizarre Dutch St Nicholas tradition. As a child I was a true believer, deeply touched by the magic of this fairytale figure, who came with gifts for all children. I had an idea for a story about a little girl that desperately wants a horse, and decides to steal one as a gift on St Nicholas Day (5 December). Until I realised that if a Dutch girl would ask for a horse, her parents would tell her this gift was way too big. End of the story! That is why the girl needed to be an immigrant's

daughter; her parents wouldn't know much about Dutch traditions, and she would have her own dream to fulfil. What type of immigrant should she be? Turkish? Moroccan? Egyptian? Then I thought about Chinese! In 2001 every Dutch village had its Chinese restaurant. The design of such restaurants (plenty of red and gold) would perfectly match the universe of St Nicholas, who wears a red coat with golden ornaments. In those days Chinese people were an isolated community in the Dutch society; it would be perfectly plausible that her father didn't know much about St Nicholas. This is what I had: the name Winky,



© Nienke Elenbaas

a Chinese restaurant, and a village by the sea. I did some research and Irene Chan, who came to the Netherlands as a kid, gave me some great feedback. I remember one particular piece of advice: Winky should work in the restaurant. *"All Chinese children have to help!"* Thus it became a story about living in two worlds, about adjusting to a new life in a new world, facing the values of the world of your parents. All these elements made the story much stronger and more universal and probably explain its global success.

You have successfully adapted some famous books by Annie M.G. Schmidt to film scripts. What were the biggest challenges?

Bos: Writing a script that really transmits the 'feeling' of the story, that makes you think: *"Oh yes, that was the book that I've been reading"*. Therefore certain interventions are needed, sometimes painful ones. And different from my own stories I never use a voice-over in adaptations. Another challenge is the length. Some books have 1,000 pages! In a book you can enter a character's mind, which is way more difficult in a film. The trick is to transform thoughts into action, into scenes that make us understand the character's motivation. You need



to think visually!

What are the do's and don'ts in writing for child actors?

Bos: Most child actors do not excel in dialogues. It often sounds better when you let them speak in their own words. Don't be too strict with dialogues, and use as little dialogue as possible. Children are often much better in 'action': walking, laughing, watching... In the casting it is most important to see if the eyes work well on camera; in my opinion that makes 50% of the young actor.

Child actors should feel free and confident on set. Therefore we always organise a day trip for them together with the grown-up actor(s), for instance to the zoo. We don't allow parents on the set to make sure the child will feel free, but of course there is a nanny, or a teacher, helping them with their homework.

How important is your own childhood memory when writing for today's or future children?

Bos: A kid's life nowadays might look very different from my own childhood in the seventies, but the main feelings remain the same. All the big issues that I experienced as a child (like strong beliefs, divorced parents, health decline of a grandparent) I now



WINKY'S HORSE

use in my stories. Of course, I also use my experiences with my own children (who have all grown up now). FIDGETY BRAM for instance (about a boy diagnosed with ADHD), was inspired by my own sons (and husband).

How do you keep yourself up to date on the interest of today's children and their vocabulary?

Bos: Through my children. But if you want your scripts to become 'classics', I reckon you better not use words that are too 'trendy'.

Some say that what's national is also international.

Bos: Only if you tell universal stories with strong themes. I love it when a

film shows me aspects of my world that I wasn't (yet) aware of, and at the same time touches my heart with universal themes such as love, friendship, courage etc.

We have to mention that there is another Bos who happens to be your father and that the two of you have worked on a number of films and series. Have you ever felt the need to outperform to make him proud?

Bos: My father has been very important in my personal and professional life. He introduced me to the world of film and television, and when he offered me a chance to write, I took it. As a newcomer, I was very sensitive about his feedback, as he knew much

more than I did. Now, 30 years later, I have written more scripts than he ever did. I still appreciate his opinions, but I don't need his solutions, I can find them myself.

Working for my father's company, I always wanted to perform well, but it wasn't my goal to make him proud. Although I remember that after the first screening of WINKY'S HORSE, seeing my father cry because he thought it was such a beautiful film, made me very proud!

You have achieved a lot. Do you still have some big dreams to realise?

Bos: That is not how I think about achievements. I love film and I love writing; I love creating great stories that touch people and might change their way of thinking and hopefully make them more empathetic. Life ain't always easy, and it's important to offer children (and adults) tools that might help them to live it.

Workwise I hope to write more books, and I sometimes dream about directing, but probably I am too soft to direct so many people on a set, I might be too much of a pleaser... In my personal life, I would love to become a grandmother. My children are 19, 23 and 25 and I miss those small kids around me!

Our Lives, Our Stories, Our Countries

Connecting countries through film

In the pilot project “Our Lives, Our Stories, Our Countries” produced by Wicked Wales Film (WW) and the Int’l Youth Media Summit (IYMS) young filmmakers explored what they had in common, no matter where they were from. Eight filmmakers aged 18 to 26 from Wales, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka collectively created a series of seven short films, in which they expressed their vision on their countries. These promotional clips for their homelands offered insights into rich cultures, languages and heritage.

Throughout their collaboration and research, participants were constantly alert for similarities and differences. Communalities as a foundation for bridges built between nations; that is why WW and IYMS brought young creatives together around stories of national identity.

WW and IYMS are both globally connected organisations, nurturing and showcasing young talent from around the world. Both are active members of the Youth Cinema Network - fos-

tering collaborations and having its members engaged in collective projects are among the main goals of the Network. *“As we see with both in-person and online collaborations, young people quickly realise how similar they are, no matter where they’re from. At the same time, they develop curiosity, understanding and appreciation for the unique aspects of the cultures of others. Their partnerships often lead to life-long friendships that know no borders”, said Evelyn Seubert, President of IYMS.*

Contributing

During the entire process, from pre-production up to the final premiere, both Welsh and IYMS’s filmmakers simultaneously contributed to each other’s work. In meetings they discussed ideas, shared references for inspiration, reinforced story outlines and finalised their plans. The premiere of the seven films was part of an online IYMS event, organised in Croatia on 30 July 2021, and streamed on YouTube. The films will also be



screened at the Wicked Wales Festival in September 2021.

Global catalogue

Wicked Wales Festival Director Rhianon Wyn Hughes expressed her aspirations for the future: *“It is hoped that longer-term we can develop this work and include more international partners, telling stories and celebrating different cultures, languages and heritage through the eyes of young people. We can then continue to record stories through a series of webisodes, creating a global catalogue of stories about life and society as they experience it.”*

“Our Lives, Our Stories, Our Countries” was made possible with financial support from Wales Arts Int’l,

part of the Arts Council for Wales and Wicked Wales Film.

—
Antonio Britvar (IYMS) &
Marija Ratkovic Vidakovic (YCN)

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.youthcinemanetwork.org.

GOLDEN LAND

Sitting on a goldmine



When producer Liisa Karpo (napa-films) introduced the Finnish documentary **GOLDEN LAND** during the Kristiansand Children's Film Festival's Industry Days, her pitch sounded totally convincing: *"When Finnish-Somali Mustafe discovers his ancestors' land in the horn of Africa is blessed with mineral riches, he doesn't think twice. Together with his wife and kids they decide to swap their boring life in the Nordics for Somaliland, in East Africa. As Mustafe struggles to dig the gold and copper from the underground, his children embark on a bumpy journey to find out where they really belong."*

Huh... "boring life in the Nordics"?

Hanna Karppinen: Let's say 'less adventurous'. In Finland their life went in circles: 'work, home, school'.

Inka Achté: Mustafe felt somehow trapped in the rat race of the Nordic society. How ambitious you may be, you don't get many chances to socially or professionally improve yourself as a black Muslim citizen named Mustafe.

What do we need to know about Somaliland before watching the film?

Hanna Karppinen: Somaliland is the northern part of Somalia; it is an unrecognised sovereign state, internationally considered as part of Somalia. It's certainly not a breeding ground for international terrorism; Hargeisa is a safe place compared to Mogadishu for example.

Inka Achté: Somaliland has its own flag, currency and government, and a strict 'safety & security' policy; there hasn't been any kind of armed attack for over 10 years.

How did you meet Mustafe?

Karppinen: Years ago, for another project, Mustafe helped me when searching for a Somali family. We became friends and had known each other for two years when he told me about his mining ambitions. Knowing him as a regular father, living in the suburbs with no knowledge about mining whatsoever, it all sounded too crazy for a family man to suddenly do something like that.

Achté: By the time Hanna introduced



me to Mustafe and his family, she got pregnant and was unable to follow this rather sudden move to Africa that the family was making. She asked me to follow up the project together, with me being the on-site director.

You did not completely take over the project?

Achté: Hanna had set up a solid story with a classic narrative, and inherent drama, and the most open, warm-hearted protagonists you could wish for; jumping into it wasn't too hard. Me and Hanna continued working together on the story between shoots, figuring out what scenes we still needed, how to shoot them, with

the right visual metaphors etc. The opportunity to bounce ideas together is definitely one of the reasons why the process felt so smooth.

When the family moves to Africa, the first thing to hit them is a massive culture shock. In Somaliland you get a driver's license at the age of 8! Even Mustafe, who had lived here until he was 12, is facing obstacles.

What did they discover through this adventure?

Karppinen: Their identity. They always saw themselves as both Somali and Finnish, but today being a Somali means much more to them.



Achté: They realised it is okay to have two native cultures. When in Finland, everyone sees them as Africans; when in Somaliland, everyone sees them as Europeans. I guess the reality is that they are both. This kind of two-fold identity is the reality for an increasing number of people nowadays.

What exactly makes the culture shock so striking?

Karppinen: That was different for each family member. Nadjah, the mother, had lived in Finland only for about 10 years, but now she got a bit disappointed with the quality of the accommodation that didn't meet the standards she is used to. And her relationship with Mustafe was much more on an equal level.

Achté: There was the lack of infrastructure, and the lack of privacy and "me time", both in good or bad times. Somali culture is quite communal. You'll have to come and see the film to understand.

GOLDEN LAND shows literally how it feels to be sitting on a gold mine. Isn't mining a hard job?

Karppinen: It surely is! It's even hard to get the paperwork and permits fixed. I salute Mustafe – he made countless efforts and went through a huge learning process. Most people

would have given up, but he's not that type.

He had big plans, until the disputes that fuelled a civil war in the late 80s started bubbling under the surface.

Karppinen: Somali culture is structured around a clan system, and the government didn't want his clan to

marily after personal wealth, rather he wanted to do his part to rebuild Somaliland.

Achté: It was about doing something for his community, something useful that would make a difference in society. As I said... that would be difficult to achieve in Finland, being 'different'.



get rich or gain power, least of all political. It was Mustafe's initial goal to give the mining project into the hands of the Somalis, but Chinese entrepreneurs had an eye on his land, as the story often seems to go in Africa. Most mines are owned by Chinese and the wealth never flows back to the local communities. He wasn't pri-

How did the family feel about a documentary maker following them along this rather insecure trajectory?

Achté: It was a long process, longer than expected. Even if they were utterly patient and polite, I think at some point they got fed up, even though this was never said out loud.

Our shoots were planned in sprints of 10 days, about twice a year; it's not like we were there with them all the time. But I don't think people will easily understand what it means to sign up for a film; it is an intense process. I hope we can share the film premiere with the family, celebrating together and we can make them feel it was all worth it.

Your sales agent is Cat&Docs.

Achté: This extremely reputable sales agency, based in Paris, has a very strong catalogue. I am super proud; them picking our film already feels like a kind of 'medal of honour'.

–
Gert Hermans

GOLDEN LAND

Estimated festival release: late 2021 / early 2022

A Finnish – Swedish – Norwegian co-production, produced by napafilms
International sales: Cat&Docs

DRAC MAGIC'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY INTERVIEW

Audio-visual culture at the centre of reflection

The thing with magic dragons is that they can appear everywhere, ready and willing to fuel a few fires. Drac Magic is everywhere – they have a hand in every step of the film dissemination process and they actively give shape to the theoretical and social framework in which they desire to work. Their ideas are outspoken, and so are their actions. Celebrating their 50th anniversary, they're still true to Drac Magic's initial ideals, but flexible enough to have them evolving according to the needs of today. The entire team sat together to find answers to ECFA's pressing questions.

"Drac Màgic was founded in Barcelona in 1971 with the aim of promoting children's film. It broke new ground in the dissemination of film and film education, organising screenings and workshops that drew thousands of children and young people. Over five decades, it has helped to push the audio-visual world into different educational, social and cultural spheres, framing film culture as a tool for critical thought and reflection. In this re-

gard, drawing attention to education, audio-visual content for children and the feminist perspective represent core issues that define our work."

As a social initiative cooperative, your mission is "to generate thoughts and actions around images to contribute to the construction of a responsible, active and creative society."

Drac Màgic's objectives have evolved over the past 50 years, due to changes in the social context, and the technological evolution. What has remained constant, however, is a desire to place audio-visual culture at the centre of reflection and action and highlight its social importance.

And "our projects aim to contribute to social transformation." Cinema can change our world?

Absolutely. In a world made of images, being able to interpret them, understand their tacit meaning, knowing who they serve and to what end is crucial to establish a critical relationship with the world. The images



Marta Nieto Postigo & Marga Almirall (Drac Magic)

and narratives broadcast by the media influence how our imaginations are constructed and transmit a series of embedded values that may lead, among other things, to a biased view of the world, including stereotyped attitudes regarding femininity and masculinity, misogynist violence, unequal perceptions of emotional and sexual relationships, as well as racist and colonial mentalities. Audio-visual education helps to decode the mechanisms of images and their messages. Drac Màgic's work is geared towards

imagining possible futures based on various forms of ecofeminism, an awareness of diversity and the prospect of peace. We want the audio-visual world to be a tool for developing a reality that does not yet exist.

When comparing the zeitgeist in which Drac Màgic was founded with that of today, what changes have you seen?

Drac Màgic was founded during a social and political period in which Spain was still under a Francoist regime,

culture was heavily censored and all languages other than Spanish were prohibited. The creation of a cultural cooperative that promoted children's film in Catalan was a remarkable milestone for the time. In 1976, Drac Màgic, together with two other Catalan associations, made possible the dubbing of the first children's film in Catalan. *THREE WISHES FOR CINDERELLA* (Václav Vorlíček) featured a determined heroine and would become a classic for many. And in 1993 the Barcelona Int'l Women's Film Festival was the first cultural feminist project to call attention to the contributions of women filmmakers. All in all, Drac Màgic has blazed an innovative path.

Is the focus of your work local, regional, provincial, national?

We work throughout Spain, yet particularly in Catalonia. For instance, most of our on-site activities revolve around the context of Catalonia. However, our interests lie in working with local agents, the cultural and social fabric, who work in the street in cooperation with local residents. We want to reach all corners of the country, from the largest city to the smallest town...

... facing different language barriers?



DRAC MAGIC'S KINOSAURE 2

To us, languages are not a barrier. On the contrary, they are an enrichment. Drac Màgic was founded for the purpose of contributing to the normalisation of Catalan. Accessibility has therefore always been our priority. We dub in Catalan, Spanish and Basque when we can and subtitle films with the dual aim of encouraging young viewers to read and making films accessible to a hard of hearing audience.

To reach your goals, you started a distribution brand under the name of Pack Màgic, operating in a competitive, commercial system.

Today, the way in which we consume films is very different. We carry them around in our pockets; when Drac

Màgic was founded, going to the cinema was a much more common activity. From 1977 to 2005, Drac Màgic had a children's film distributor called Distribucions Imatge, through which it distributed over 40 titles. In 2014, we used this experience to revive Pack Màgic. With this brand, we distribute 4 to 5 children's films a year that are screened in major cinemas, and also exhibited in a broad network of cultural centres, town halls, schools, museums... We also generate teaching materials, organise cultural activities around the films, engage in promotion and produce follow-on materials, all to extend the life of the films. We take great care when selecting the films we distribute, because we want them to remain relevant for a long

time.

Recently the online platform "Pack Màgic on Demand" was added to your distribution network.

We advocate watching film in cinemas, which is why we create numerous activities that promote the collective screening experience. However, we also believe that everyone should have the chance to watch these films. The "Pack Màgic on demand" platform enables people to watch our films online at home. Furthermore, at the height of the pandemic, we created the educational platform "Pack Màgic at school", which allows schools to show films in the classroom.

One of these cinema projects carries the intriguing name "Kinosau-re".

The Kinosau project extends the cinematic experience beyond the screen. The project transforms cinemas into spaces for play and imagination: the magical Kinosau creature travels the world collecting stories in the form of films. The project transforms cinemas through lighting and decoration and proposes participatory activities that introduce children to some of film's basic elements: light, movement, animation... The content and length of the films are adapted to

suit each age group. For instance, the Kinosaure can come with 30 minute programmes, short films... allowing us to screen a type of production that would otherwise never make it to cinemas.

To help us understand your criteria, can you name a few “typical Drac Màgic films”?

Drac Màgic has worked with numerous films that contribute to creating broader worldviews, respectful of diversity and free of violence. Recently, we are extremely pleased to distribute BINTI (Frederike Migom), due to its narration of the complex reality of migration from the point of view of a 12 year old girl; MARONA'S FANTASTIC TALE (Anca Damian), a unique work of art in motion; the historical rigour taken with FRITZI, A REVOLUTIONARY TALE (Matthias Bruhn, Ralf Kukula), which transports us through time and space to the falling of the Berlin Wall, and HELLO WORLD! (Anne-Lise Koehler, Éric Serre), a magnificent plunge into a pond populated by stop-motion paper animals.

Your anniversary is celebrated through a series of titles compiled in a “50 years, 50 films” list.

In the virtual exhibition “50 years of audio-visual culture stories” we have

made a symbolic selection of 50 titles which hold a special place in the history of Drac Màgic. These films include classics such as BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN and THE GREAT DICTATOR, films by directors such as Agnès Varda and Claire Simon and films distributed by our Distribucions Imatge and Pack Màgic brands, such as THREE WISHES FOR CINDERELLA and LONG WAY NORTH.

Among the celebrative events is also a virtual exhibition.

In “50 years of audio-visual culture stories”, delving into the Drac Màgic archives, we explore our innovative contributions in each line of action. And we'll be hosting several seminars on audio-visual education in December 2021. While they are due to take place in Barcelona, professionals throughout Europe can follow them online.

With the Women's Film Festival, you surpass the children's audience.

The Barcelona Int'l Women's Film Festival, launched in 1993, was the first cultural project to call attention to the contributions of women filmmakers such as Agnès Varda, Chantal Akerman and Alice Guy. 29 years later, the Festival has shown over 2,000 films by roughly 1,000 directors, with a line-up



THREE WISHES FOR CINDERELLA

of activities that runs throughout the year. In addition to activities in Barcelona, we also hold events in other cities, as well as online. In 2022, we'll celebrate the 30th anniversary of the festival with, among other events, a series of school activities, as part of a project revolving around human rights.

Isn't it discouraging to realise how our industry mainly targets white middle class children? Do you have specific strategies to break through that barrier?

There is no single guidebook for responding to the violence perpetrated by a patriarchal, colonial and ecocidal system. However, feminists have taught us to challenge male-orient-

ed, hetero-patriarchal and capitalist ways of doing things, and their ideas contain a number of valuable alternatives. Some of the lessons that may be applied include not imposing one single model for cultural events; taking the public's needs seriously and building ideas together; forming networks of cooperation; generating value dynamics that refrain from competitive practices; keeping a close eye on identity balance when organising activities; advertising events using non-male-oriented language and with respect for diversity, etc.

More info on [Drac Magic](#)

– [Gert Hermans](#)

How to make a Playground

Summer has arrived and we've just finished our 5th edition of Playground in Sheffield, UK. Playground is our interactive exhibition for children and families. All the pieces in the gallery are interactive – children and families can push buttons, pull levers, stamp their feet on pedals, and the exhibits will do something fun in response.

This year, Playground (1-11 July) ran in the centre of Sheffield at Site Gallery. Site is very much a 'white box' art gallery. The venue gives Playground a cool contemporary vibe which is compatible with what we are trying to promote to our audience.

Covid Conundrums

Covid-19 did bring its issues. We couldn't include 'running-around' games, or invite school groups into small workshop spaces. In previous years, Playground was open on a walk-up basis. This year everyone had to pre-book for hourly sessions with limited capacity. Exhibits had to be cleaned between sessions including finding ways to clean moisture-sensitive monitors and tablets. Despite

all of this we did have to shut for two days after a visitor tested positive.

We had to rely on social media to promote Playground. During the pandemic, Sheffield city centre became empty, so we had to use digital forms of communication to extend our reach. Looking at our post-event data for Sheffield, families (mums) are very much on Instagram, Facebook is now for oldies, Twitter is good for quick retweets and quick spread of info, our local Sheffield City Council What's On e-bulletin got a lot of traction.

Why Playground?

Playground began in 2016 (Curator Sharna Jackson) with the intention of bringing the most up-to-date cutting edge international artworks to our local children's audience. We all believe it is important to 'see behind the curtain' in film culture. In the same way, we believe it's important for young people to be able to look critically at the digital world, such as mobile phone games, AR, and interactivity. We want them to think that 'digital' can be creative practice as well as for



'techy science' people.

Curator Darren Chouings set the theme: "What If?". He wanted children to be empowered to imagine, investigate, and create art themselves, fully immersed in a world that celebrates them as artists and innovators. From a curatorial standpoint, he felt it was important for children to be front and centre when developing the show. All staff working on Playground made sure to respect this.

AR is the future

AR (augmented reality) is the new key format for working with children and interactivity. Darren had commissioned local artists TADO to design a 'Character Hunt'. For those who remember Pokémon Go, it's not dissimilar. Stickers with a QR capability had

been fixed to venues in town. Families could follow a map and go around town using a smart phone to click on the code which set off an animation.

The TADO Character Hunt was enormously popular - and we had something outdoors we could direct families to do. VR has become unpopular for children (and sharing headsets is unacceptable during Covid). We think that in the future AR is the format to look out for in children's art, entertainment and media.

Contact:

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 Darren Chouings; Curator; production@thechildrensmidiaconference.com
www.cmcplayground.com

Pan Nalin about LAST FILM SHOW

“A station that was nobody’s destination”

Must you be a film lover to become a filmmaker? If so, Pan Nalin, director of LAST FILM SHOW, must be a total film freak, as this story breathes a passion for cinema through every image. Once 9 year old Samay has picked up the taste of film, he sneaks inside the theatre every day. He even infects his gang of friends with the cinema virus, and together they try to construct a film projector. His father, owner of a tiny tea stall at the train station, is not happy with his plans and Samay has to take several beatings to cure him from the cinema disease. LAST FILM SHOW invites you into an Indian countryside cinema, where the audience – chanting and clapping – actively takes part in every screening. We can’t wait to see the same happening in Zlin, where the film is one of the showpieces on the festival programme.

Pan Nalin: Movies have always been our medium to dream, our ultimate escape from reality, and this idea is spread everywhere, from the deserts of Rajasthan and the high Himalayas to the tropical beaches of Kerala and

Tamilnadu.

But then, is being a filmmaker a decent profession? Samay’s father doesn’t think so.

Nalin: Things have changed enormously, since India has been swept by capitalism in the last two decades. But, for example, in the region where we filmed LAST FILM SHOW, many people who adore Indian movies would not let their children join the industry; they would certainly discourage their daughters (but maybe not through beatings, like Samay has to take from his father). Many still believe it is a glamorous world full of immoral people, there’s stories of suicides and sexual harassment, and above all the enormous greed for fame and fortune.

Even the light of the projector has an enchanting effect on Samay.

Nalin: Already before I discovered cinema, I found the element of ‘light’ totally magical; I used to bombard my parents with questions like: Where does the light come from? Who cre-



ates it? And where does it go to at night? Even when I finally came to understand the physics of light, shadow, reflections, and refractions in school, I chose to ignore them so as not to take away the magic. The adventures of Samay and his gang are partly autobiographical. Where I grew up, there was nothing except vast fields and open skies. Besides trains, the airplanes far up in the sky were our only connection with the outside world. My mother too was an excellent cook. My father became poorer and poorer as he saw his land, then his cows, and lastly his home being snatched away by his brothers, leaving him with nothing but a tiny tea stall on a remote railway station; the kind of station

that was nobody’s destination. I had never been to the movies till I was about eight.

The film opens and closes with a tribute to India’s greatest actors, and to directors from around the world.

Nalin: Being the biggest film buff in the universe; how can I hold myself back from paying tribute to some of the filmmakers who have left a deep impact on my life and my work? There are numerous subtle homages hidden in the cinematic treatment of LAST FILM SHOW. If you’re not a cinephile you might not notice them, but they surely are there.

The clips used in the film all come from original Indian movies?

Nalin: They surely do. These movies are very much "Bollywood"-rooted; those 'masala' movies come with all spices; a pinch of drama, action, romance, music, songs, melodrama, comedy and true Indian megastars.

In one scene Samay even dreams of diving into a mountain of celluloid.

Nalin: That scene was entirely shot in reality without any visual effects. My team went across India searching for 35mm celluloid prints. It was a massive challenge; almost all prints were destroyed ten years ago. The ones that remain are in archives. It took us nearly 8 months to locate and ship them, reel by reel. Rehearsing that

scene, we realised there was great danger involved; if you fall on these prints the wrong way the razor-sharp edges can cause deep cuts. But our young actor Bhavin Rabari brilliantly performed the scene not only once but five times!

You show the act of 'preparing food' in an almost sacral way.

Nalin: This is exactly how my mother used to cook; both my mother and father had a great talent for cooking. And my sister and brother continue to do it the same way. As a kid, in our house, there was only one subject that was discussed daily... food! While eating lunch, the topic would shift to what to eat for dinner, breakfast, snacks, etc.

There is a song in the film with the words "that dude is cool". That goes for your main actor Bhavin Rabari (playing Samay) too.

Nalin: Bhavin is the coolest dude! In the casting one thing was certain; the kids needed to be from the same remote part of Gujarat where I grew up, so that I would naturally get the right body language, the right dialect, and the right sense of growing up amidst vast empty spaces, under open skies. These kids come from modest families, they're used to having 'nothing' and developed an amazing sense of innovation. Playing Samay, for a nine year old kid who has rarely been to the movies, was a challenge; my crew and I had to cultivate lots of patience. After all, nearly the burden of the entire movie rested on Bhavin's shoulders.

The story is situated at the dawn of a new era; the projector is replaced by a computer, and the train doesn't stop in the village anymore...

Nalin: Life breathes on the impermanent nature of all things; Samay's name in itself means time. For better and for worse, we are part of the unstoppable machinery of capitalism. Time is no longer on humanity's side, and current pandemics, forest fires, floods, earthquakes... have proven

it. We have committed unspeakable crimes on ourselves in the name of progress. It seems that each time we try to progress, we regress and the reflux of that is visible all over the planet.

As was said in your film: to become something in life, you must learn English, and leave the countryside.

Nalin: That has been true for me, and for a million other kids. If you are not a landlord, an industrialist, or a politician there are no opportunities for you in the villages. I was told this is also the fact in many African nations.

And to become a filmmaker, you must be a mischievous boy or girl like Samay?

Nalin: No, you must be a storyteller! And for that, you need a certain light within you, regardless of age or gender. Only from that light come the two tools required for a storyteller, awareness, and awakening.

—
Gert Hermans
© Zlin Film Festival



POUR DE VRAI (aka FOR REAL)

"We've been friends since we were little. Since we were in kindergarten. There's not much else to say," says 11 year old Mady about his friendship to Merouane. Growing up together in the north east of Paris, the boys experience days full of fantasy, thrill and adventure.

In POUR DE VRAI we accompany Mourane and Mady playing and exploring, while sharing their dreams and fears with each other. The film captures the ups and downs of their friendship, portraying their close and natural-feeling bond without neglecting differences and conflicts. Through their eyes, we experience what growing up feels like.

Leaning against a bridge railing, they let their eyes sweep over a train yard. *"What a beautiful landscape!"* Rusting tracks as far as the eyes can see, framed by grey high-rises and the sound of heavy traffic in the distance. It is against this backdrop that director Maria Claudia Blanco captures the magic of childhood friendship. Where fights feel rough, but do not matter

the next day. Where the next adventure is just around the corner and everywhere is a playground. Watching POUR DE VRAI evokes a sense of nostalgia and makes you wistfully remember your own childhood attitude towards life, when all dreams were big and yet seemed undoubtedly possible.

The camera rarely only focuses on the two boys, but rather frames them within the city playground. We always meet them at eye level – personal, but never invasive. Maria Claudia Blanco manages to make the viewer feel like another like-minded friend that joins the conversation, rather than feeling like an intruder. When an argument breaks out between the two, they have to remind each other of the camera's presence, interrupting the viewer's immersion into their lives, but nonetheless giving the film, and Mady's and Marouane's story, a sense of honesty and realism.

Seriousness and cheerfulness, irony and sympathy combined in a mixture that makes the audience smile. In the



end, one thing transpires the most: Mady's and Mourane's friendship may have their ups and downs but they always keep it real.

POUR DE VRAI is nominated for the GROSSE KLAPPE Award at the 20th doxs! festival in Duisburg. Endowed by the Federal Agency for Civic Education the award is given since 2011 to productions with an outstanding aesthetic and political approach.

Director: Maria Claudia Blanco
 Producer: Antoine Devulder
 Production & Distribution: La Fémis France, 2020, 22'

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



Mark Verkerk about THE SCHOOL GARDEN

“Happily digging their hands into the soil”

In his documentaries, Mark Verkerk often dealt with nature close to our homes. Films such as *THE NEW WILDERNESS* and *THE WILD CITY* have intensively toured the young audience festivals. But in *THE SCHOOL GARDEN* children even get an active role to play. In school gardens in Amsterdam they take care of beds full of vegetables, as the beating heart of a bigger social movement. These green oases are also a surprising habitat for all kinds of wildlife. Anyone who has seen *THE SCHOOL GARDEN* will immediately feel the urge to start working in the garden or sinking their teeth into a fresh carrot. More than about making films, Mark Verkerk spoke with us about gardening, crops and animals that appear surprisingly close to the city centre.

School gardens were established about 100 years ago. Was the need for green urban oases different back then than it is now?

Mark Verkerk: 100 years ago many poor children in Amsterdam had malnutrition problems, and few chances



to escape from the hectic, polluted city. School gardens could help solve both problems. Today the city is a much nicer and healthier place to live, yet many children miss direct contact with nature and with the origins of healthy food. It is remarkable to realise that today's needs are in many ways just as important as they were back then.

The film shows children getting extremely excited by simple sensations as digging their hands into the ground.

Verkerk: Too often it is presumed that children only want to sit in front of computer screens. But if you'll give them a chance, they will be just as happy digging their hands into the soil. Providing direct contact with na-

ture is one of the main tasks of school gardens, a role they fulfil with flair.

THE SCHOOL GARDEN is nothing like traditional school TV.

Verkerk: We decided not to tell the story through a voice-over, but to follow the children in their activities throughout a whole year, as if we are walking by their side. The audience is drawn into their experiences as they live them.

There is an enormous diversity of animals in those vegetable gardens; from a lobster and a kingfisher to foxes and grass snakes. Have you guys been cheating a bit?

Verkerk: All these animals can actually be spotted in school gardens. Some gardens are connected to water, which explains the presence of kingfishers and snakes. In others you'll find plenty of rabbits, hedgehogs and foxes. My broad experience with nature documentaries came in very handy. During a standard school session children will not often notice these specimens; therefore you need



to look just a little bit closer. With our cameras we made them more aware of their environment and of nature's richness. In fact, all 13 school gardens in Amsterdam are important nature reserves.

We witness some very exclusive moments: the hatching of snakes, a fox parading in front of the camera, digging up a mole cricket... Which was the most remarkable moment for you?

Verkerk: Isn't it wonderful that after such a long time the grass snake returned to Amsterdam? Its numbers are



growing. This specimen is extremely shy, but with the help of urban ecologist Geert Timmermans we were able to capture it well. As humans we lend those grass snakes a hand by building compost heaps where they can lay their eggs.

The film mainly explains about the concept of school gardens, not so much about the children working in it.

Verkerk: Initially we thought it would be nice to have the camera following a group of children, but later on we understood that the school garden

phenomenon, and the effect it has on children on a universal scale, is what this movie really is about. We made one exception: we went home with the kids to watch them prepare the crops, underlining how these gardens have an impact on the community. Children often come home with bags full of home-grown vegetables, but parents don't know what to do with it. An added value of school gardening is to involve parents in the children's enthusiasm to bring vegetables on the table more often. Healthy nutrition is the basis of our fight against obesity. We might no longer live under

a constant threat of food shortages, but that doesn't mean that all children have healthy diet patterns. Due to the great diversity of children in Amsterdam schools, enjoying freshly harvested vegetables together on the spot became a way to share different food cultures.

The film makes you want to go into your own garden with a spade and rake immediately after watching it.

Verkerk: That would be great! Even if you don't have a garden, you can start on a balcony or windowsill. We all benefit from getting closer to nature and to the origins of our food.

–
Gert Hermans

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ECFA MEMBERS UNITE IN HOSPITAL PROJECT

Offering movies to children in hospitals... It sounds like an amazing plan that deserves everyone's support. But for ECFA, 'Film for kids in hospitals' is a model project not only because of its concept but also because of its unique growth structure. This is an example of how we dream the trajectories within our association: a model that works well in a certain country, gradually attracts new partners, and grows into a project that can inspire everyone within ECFA. And the good news is: there is still room for more partners!

The goals of the project can easily be summarised: offering children in hospitals and rehabilitation centres access to exclusive quality films and a possibility to celebrate their own film festival. Edita Bilaver, project coordinator of 'Film for Kids in Hospitals' and president of Kids Meet Art: "We now offer our services in six different languages on six national platforms, sharing a common catalogue of approx. 70 titles (both features and

shorts) that is updated every year. Currently, we're running our initiative in over 200 hospitals."

Initial project partners were the Antwerp-based JEF festival (Belgium), the BUFF Festival in Malmö (Sweden) and the Association Kids Meet Art (Croatia). The main focus was on broadening the festival scope, offering children in hospitals a festival feeling, even though they were unable to attend the event. To enhance this sense of festival experience, the project provides online audience engagement tools, such as quizzes, introductions to films by cast & crew, and the ability to rate the movies (acting as a festival jury) and leave comments. Thus the festival atmosphere was transported into the hospital wards.

For this year's third edition, new partners were found. Pack Màgic (Catalonia), Kinodvor (Slovenia), and Il Nuovo Fantarca (Italy) came with new per-



spectives that transcended festival boundaries. Research with hospitals made clear that apart from online content, there is a need for offline activities to safeguard a human touch. Rosa Ferro (Il Nuovo Fantarca): "Watching great films is not enough, there is a need for additional educational tools, introducing the kids to the magic and artistic value of cinema. And we must provide a way to exchange opinions after watching the films."

In the future 'Film for Kids in Hospitals' would greatly benefit from a pan-European network of hospitals and hospital schools, cultural institutes, and families. Bilaver: "Teaming up with a partner that could provide a dedicated platform, would open new perspectives and allow us to launch

a sustainable business model, bearing in mind that the online content should remain free of charge for our audience."

There is room for growth; with such a strong formula, it is inevitable that more organisations want to come on board. "Our future goal is to have a national platform for each European country, so that all hospitalised children can enjoy a high-quality film selection" say all project partners.

Is your organisation a possible future partner? Find more info [here](https://www.filmminhospital.eu) or send a request to info@filmminhospital.eu.

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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.

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.

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