

## JORIS IVENS COMPETITION

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## SILVER WOLF COMPETITION

In *Enemies of Happiness* Eva Mulvad reports from the final days on the campaign trail of a young woman candidate running for the Afghan parliament, who has survived repeated assassination attempts.

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## REFLECTING IMAGES

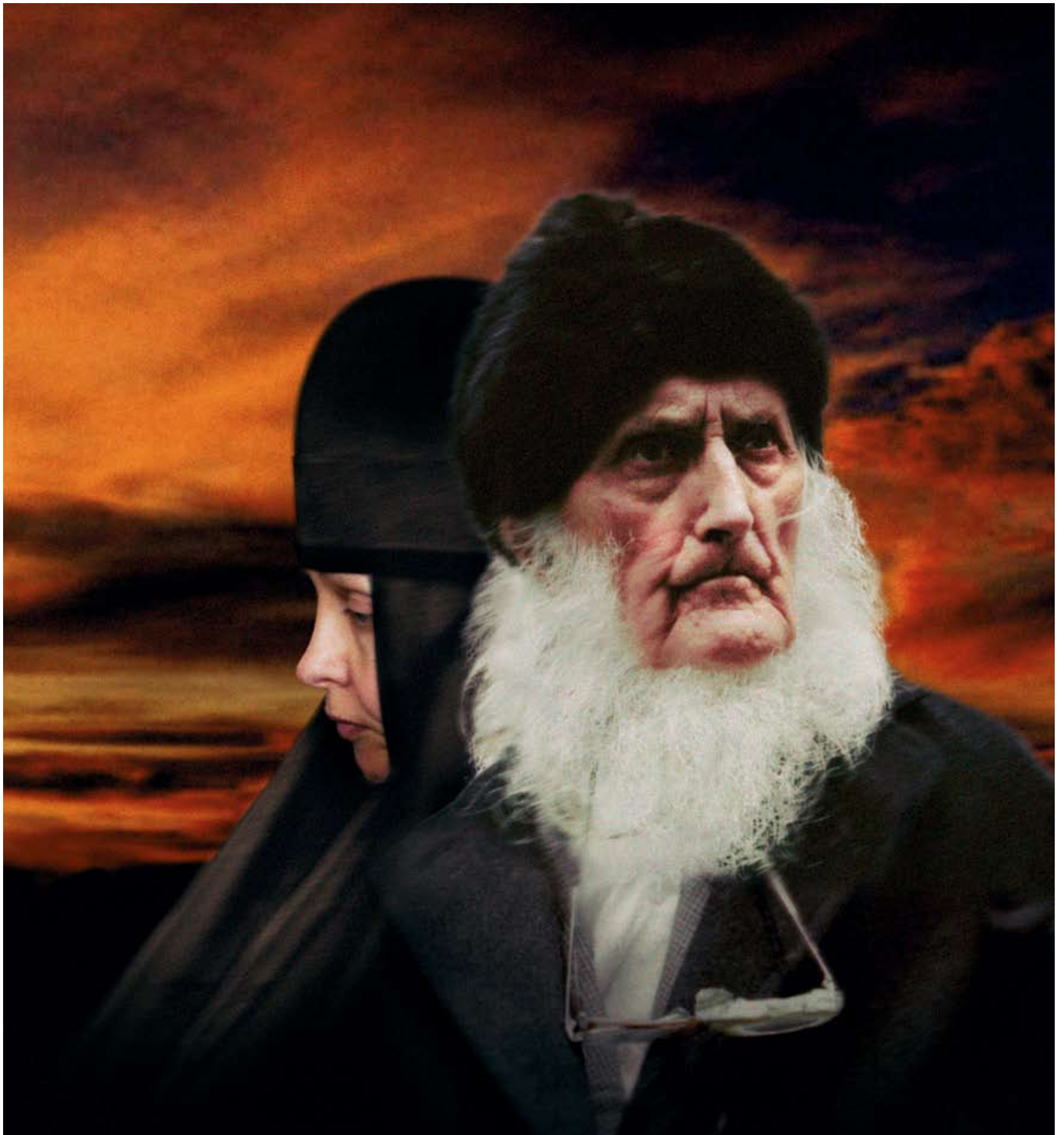
Selected for Reflecting Images is Jennifer Fox' *Flying - Confessions of a Free Woman*, exploring female values in the 21st Century; and Asger Leth's *Ghosts of Cité Soleil*, a devastating look at a Haitian slum.

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# FILM

# #53

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FILM#53/ IDFA ISSUE



The Monastery



Enemies of Happiness



My Eyes



Ghosts of Cité Soleil



The Planet



Small Faces

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is screening Asger Leth's *Ghosts of Cité Soleil*, a devastating look at life in the slum of Port-au-Prince, and Jennifer Fox' *Flying – Confessions of a Free Woman*, which explores female values in the 21st Century.

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If you don't have to, don't do co-productions! This used to be the most expressed sentiment by experienced producers, tutoring newcomers to the international documentary community. Today, that's history. Internationally oriented production companies are all co-producing now, directly with broadcasters or with each other. Because they have to, financially. Or, and this is a new one, because they want to. Read what Danish producers say about co-production in seven profiles of companies operating internationally.

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*The Planet* is a theatrical feature and a four-part TV-series on the state of our world. A tour-de-force presentation of global images, environments and experts, it asks: If we know the environment is threatened, why don't we act? Fox Media of Denmark is a coproduction partner.

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Other articles include an introduction to two generations of 'Wivel-documentarists'; a presentation of DFI's documentary talent development strategies, and a new initiative for promoting documentaries through individual tailoring of marketing and distribution.



The Monastery. Photo: Frej Pries Schmedes

# THE MANIFOLD NATURE OF LOVE

**Pernille Rose Grønkjær's *The Monastery* is a lavish documentary about lifeworks and dreams set in a ramshackle castle. The main characters are an old man with a dream and a Russian nun with practical sense and a humble awareness of God, as well as the filmmaker herself. A final element is beauty. Enthralled, former DFI film consultant Allan Berg Nielsen reports from a world of stubborn wills and serious qualms.**

BY ALLAN BERG NIELSEN

"Mr. Vig, Matushka brought an icon for you..."

"Oh!"

"This is an icon for you. It's our present for you. To start a monastery here."

"I like that. I like that one. I like that one very much. Oh, it's beautiful. It's beautiful."

"You can kiss it."

"Oh, thank you very much..."

Amvrosya, a nun, and Matushka, her superior, have arrived at Jørgen Laursen Vig's castle and he reverently admires the icon they have brought him as a gift from their monastery in Russia. He makes the sign of the cross, he praises the beauty of the artwork, he is sincerely pleased. But he does not kiss the icon. He does not submit to its holiness. He wants to transform his castle into a Russian-Orthodox monastery with Amvrosya's help, but he balks at making the final commitment.

Later in the film, when several nuns have moved in, a procession is organized. Reluctantly, he joins in. He sees that the whole castle has been redone and incorporated into the holiness he invited in but whose consequences he had not quite foreseen.

They fix up the room he set aside for a chapel

prior to their arrival, but now Vig says it has to be a temporary arrangement. No, Amvrosya explains, once the chapel has been consecrated it can no longer be changed.

Vig has come a long way toward holiness in the three renunciations of the monastic vow. For 86 years he has lived in chastity, he clearly leads a humble life of poverty in the ramshackle castle. But he cannot submit to obedience; devotion is his trouble.

Grønkjær's film is about this holiness.

## LANDSCAPE AND CHAPEL

The Danish landscape around the castle is beautiful and the camerawork eloquently describes this beauty. Beautiful, too, is the Russian art that, first in the single icon given to Vig, then in volume, gradually fills the chapel with fragrant, colour-saturated imagery captured by the camera in long, caring shots. The iconostasis, a sacred backdrop for immersion in the readings, is depicted against the seasonal changes of the landscape as Vig continues his free life. Both are depictions of beauty, the Russian art in the chapel against the Danish countryside outside in the gardens and the fields. Nature and culture, the prayer hours and the

seasons, winter scenery and the iconostasis, the nun's kitchen and Vig's library. The secular and the sacred. Grønkjær's film details two different kinds of beauty. Like Vig, it cannot choose one over the other, depicting them side by side, closely cut together.

## LOVE

Sexuality is for making babies, Vig says. For a few weeks, a few times in a lifetime. Yes, he had a love once a very long time ago, but since then that side of life has been covered by other passions, studies, books and travel, a series of projects, culminating in the foundation of the monastery. Love - he doesn't know much about it. Sure, he has had the feeling, he has loved.

The film is not content to leave it at that, however. The nature of love is multi-faceted and inclusive. Vig does not elude it in the long run.

A warm relationship evolves between him and Amvrosya.

He falls asleep during prayer. With the book in his lap. The book he has begged so to get, the book he labours at harder than any physical thing in the house is his entrance to the world. Now he has fallen asleep and gently she walks over and turns



The Monastery. Photo: Frej Pries Schmedes

the page to the current place in the prayer. He wakes up and sees that he is keeping up. It is a gentleness that does not call attention to itself. With caring and respectful resolve, she serves him his meals at a table in the kitchen. He maintains his status and dignity. He is worth loving.

The third actor in the film, the filmmaker with her camera, becomes entangled in a relationship of complex fascinations. The camera gazes at the old man with increasing tenderness and, for his part, he draws the filmmaker into all his deliberations, talking to the camera as if that were the most natural thing in the world. In their long conversations, the small instrument is a prosthesis for memory that, in eagerness and engrossment, is more easily overlooked than a pad on a stenographer's knee, the black octave of note-taking.

Grønkjær's film charts the manifold nature of love.

#### THE ACTION

Vig lives alone in the derelict main house of picturesque, neo-Renaissance Hesbjerg Castle near Odense. He has the fixed idea that, working with the Patriarchy in Moscow, he can convert the castle into a monastery. When Grønkjær and we first meet him, he is about to go to Russia to discuss his plans with the church leaders. The story begins with him self-consciously posing, as if he were the patriarch, in front of the city's old Christian centre. He makes a deal with the church leaders that a delegation will come and inspect Hesbjerg. The filmmaker and her subject return to Hesbjerg. He starts tidying up, fixing things and decorating. All very haphazardly.

Then he waits. The Russians arrive. Two nuns on inspection. One of them is knowledgeable about construction. She has energy and charisma. This is Amvrosya. From her first scene, she fills the third position in the story and provides its momentum. Immediately, she points out the main problems, the broken heating system and the leaky roof, and from that point on the film picks up those two elements (fire and water) as specific, instantly intelligible storylines. After all, there is a castle to fix. This she deems possible and she promises to speak favourably of the project when she returns to her superiors in Moscow. Months pass. Vig and the film wait. E-mails go back and forth. Vig makes repairs and uncovers further problems with the building. Then the nuns appear, fix up the chapel and kitchen, walk in procession and gently but firmly take over Hesbjerg Castle for God. One icon becomes many. The new beauty lives in order and regularity - times for prayer, for work, meals and rest. Vig has to adapt or remove himself to the margin of events - in dignity, Amvrosya sees to that, while bit by bit she wrenches the construction side of the project away from him. All along, with delicacy, determination and daring, she approaches the most difficult business, current financial issues and, in the longer term, the matter of the inheritance. In this, she lends the film a third line of real suspense, of not knowing, of deferment, thrills. What happens, who will win? During a crucial negotiation, she shows almost musical timing, hitting on the decisive fifth clause of the contract, the distribution of power. In so doing, she establishes a plot point reaching beyond the time period covered by the film. Vig finally gives in

and, like a stranger to himself, he ultimately submits to God in the most beautiful of the sacred acts in the chapel. Chaste, poor and obedient.

#### SHOOTING

Grønkjær shot all the footage herself from the first time she met Vig in 2000. For a while, she lived in a trailer at Hesbjerg, tracking the changing light and endlessly shifting colours of the landscape as a backdrop for the old man's daily life and all his scattered attempts at maintaining his property, which had long since gone to seed. She had a camera on permanent loan from Zentropa Real, while tenaciously, though unsuccessfully, seeking funds for her film. She did not have a lot of footage to show yet. Consultants and editors told her no. Apart from the essential equipment deal, she had no backing. Still, there was a freedom in this phase. She could spontaneously pursue any inclination. Her shooting schedule had no limits. Five years passed this way, as she slowly accumulated footage. Like Vig, she was working on a project most would have abandoned. Vig understood her. He had been working even longer on his own project.

#### THE EDITING SCRIPT

Grønkjær met the producer Sigrid Dyekjær at an EDN pitching workshop, *Twelve 4 the Future*. In the, by now, extensive footage, Dyekjær could see the outlines of the film Grønkjær had wanted to make all along. It was the right time to reapply for financing. Development subsidies from the Danish Film Institute enabled Grønkjær, along with the editor Per K. Kirkegaard and the dramaturgical



Director Pernille Rose Grønkjær. Photo: Erik Molberg Hansen

consultant Jens Arentzen, to spend three weeks concentrating on all her shots. Their efforts resulted in an editing script that revealed unexpected layers in the material, defined the three participants' interrelations and in general specified the elements and sequence of the story.

Now, the film could be financed and the work of finishing it could begin. Kirkegaard was prevented from editing the film, so Grønkjær and Dyekjær started looking for a new editor and made a fortunate discovery in Pernille Bech Christensen. Working from the editing script, Christensen gave the film its drawn out, lingering pace, highlighted the beauty of shots that struck her and maintained a balance in the acts of the three ambitions, the development of the three main characters.

#### CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Vig changes over the years. In the film, he describes a dramatic arc from something approaching humbleness, as he prepares the building's transformation, to uncertainty and outright crisis, and ultimately on to resolve and readiness for battle before the final negotiations regarding the future finances and transfer of ownership.

Amvrosya changes in an almost opposite direction. When she begins her work, she is assertive and officious. As the work progresses, her demeanour softens and she shows ever more tolerance and love in dealing with Vig. She sets her mind to the important things, fixing the two basic construction problems. Her firmness at the key negotiation is even charming. She is secure about her task and unshakeable in her conviction that the

other party is a good person.

Finally, we start seeing more of the filmmaker, who steps out from behind the camera and actively interferes. Her attitude changes from curiosity to comprehensive understanding of what is going on and eventually she takes a stand. She increasingly takes Amvrosya's side. The filmmaker, then, interferes in the film. Leaving her camera on the tripod, Grønkjær steps into the frame to help Vig lift a heavy rug. Weighing in and making arguments, she influences events and changes their course.

#### KEY SCENES

The presentation of the icon at the nuns' first visit is a key scene. Another comes later on. Vig is in front of the greenhouse, hoeing. From behind the camera, the filmmaker asks him:

"Why is it so interesting to have a monastery here?"

Vig answers: "It is an old ambition of mine to leave a legacy. That's a banal thing, of course. One would like to do something that persists – it is an ambition."

"I don't get it," the filmmaker challenges.

"Huh?"

"I don't get it," she repeats.

"You don't get it?"

"No."

He looks up from what he is doing. "You don't want to make a film that becomes part of history, a documentary?"

"Um, yes," she admits.

"You want to make something of quality. There you go." And he continues his gardening. "There

you go," he repeats and crouches to deal with a weed.

#### THE CHOICE OF TITLE

"The title has evolved into a singular standout detail of any work. A beautiful title, an exciting title, is like a grand model for undertaking the work, as well as for the reader's, the viewer's, expectations," the Danish writer Peter Seeberg once wrote. A title is a plan, or a reference to a key scene, or, in this case, the physical setting for the events, the old castle and its fate. In Danish, Grønkjær's film is called *Slottet* (The Castle). The title describes the physical setting for the events, the old house and its fate. Moreover, the film is an essay about a great cultural shift, the pain of parting with something and the joy of creating. For oneself, for the idea and for God. Pernille Rose Grønkjær's film is a deep meditation on the idea of a lifework. The film ends without answering the question of whether Vig's opus will be completed now that it is in Amvrosya's hands? As a work of God. There is honesty in the documentary depiction: we enter in the middle of the story and we leave in the middle of the story. The story continues, while the film stands like a statue in the gardens at Heshbjerg.

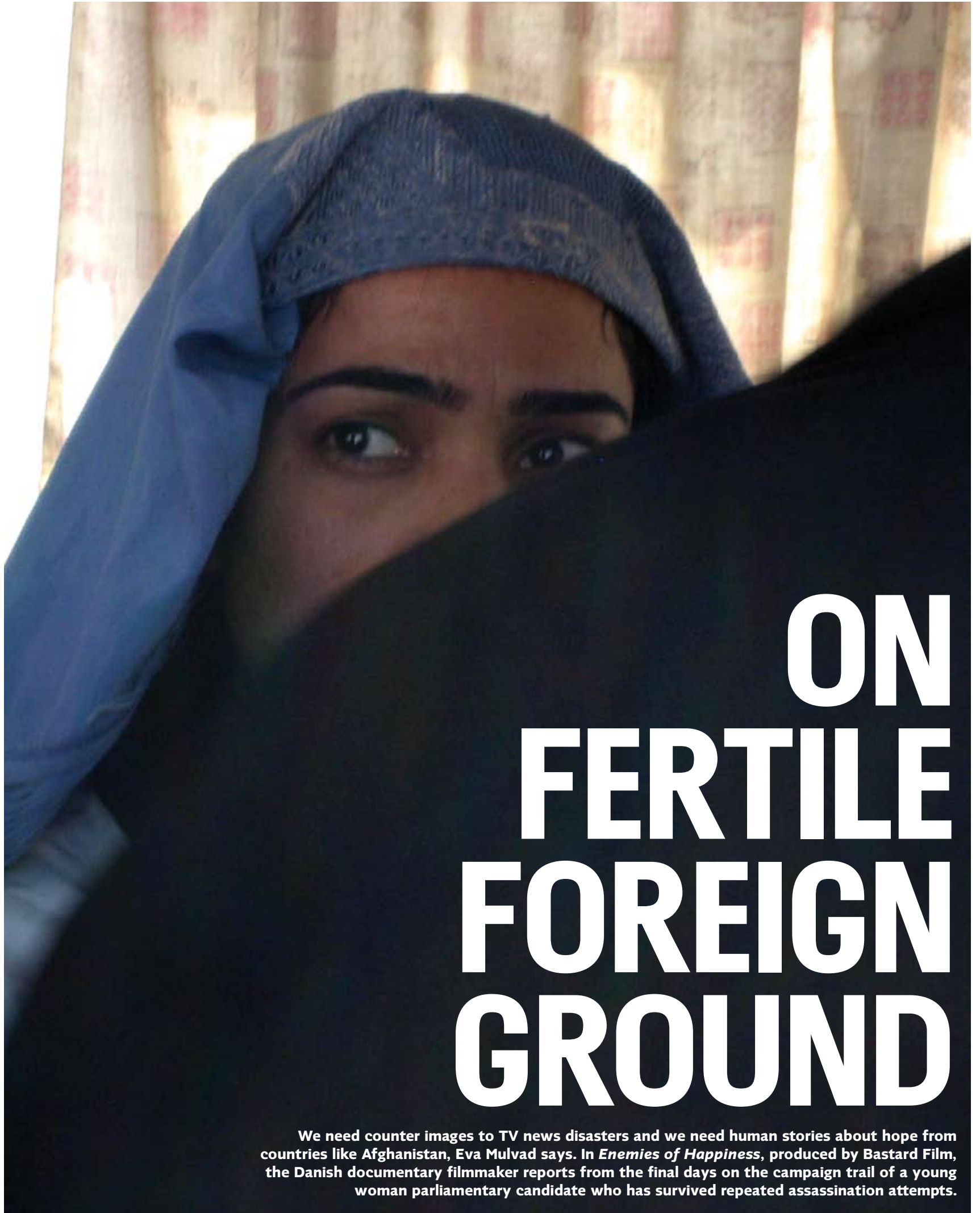
*For further information, see catalogue section in back of this issue.*

#### TJU BANG FILM

Founded 1997 by filmmakers Søren Fauli, Niels Gråbøl, Jacob Thuesen, Sigrid Helene Dyekjær and Per K. Kirkegaard. Originally formed as a creative working collective, the company today produces their own films including fiction and documentaries. From 2005 owned by SF Film, thereby widening the scope towards feature films. Releases (a selection): *Omveje til frihed/Detour to freedom* (Sidse Stausholm, Mikala Krogh, 2001). In 2004 came *Min morfars morder/My Grandad's Murderer* (Søren Fauli, Mikala Krogh, 2004), winner of Fipa d'Or, Biarritz, and First Prize at Sevilla: Pernille Rose Grønkjær's *The Monastery*, selected for IDFA's Joris Ivens Competition, and *Beth's Dagbog/Beth's Diary*, directed by Kent Klich, Mikala Krogh and Beth.

#### PERNILLE ROSE GRØNKJÆR

Born 1973, Denmark. Graduated in documentary direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 1997. Directed *Min morfar forfra/Repeating Grandpa* (2001), selected for Input 2002 at Rotterdam. *The Monastery* (2006), selected for the Joris Ivens Competition, IDFA.



# ON FERTILE FOREIGN GROUND

We need counter images to TV news disasters and we need human stories about hope from countries like Afghanistan, Eva Mulvad says. In *Enemies of Happiness*, produced by Bastard Film, the Danish documentary filmmaker reports from the final days on the campaign trail of a young woman parliamentary candidate who has survived repeated assassination attempts.

BY EVA NOVRUP REDVALL

For most Western Europeans, images from Afghanistan equal TV news footage of war and terrorist threats. We rarely get to see everyday life in Afghanistan. The desire to make an alternative portrait was a major reason why Eva Mulvad got involved as a director in a film about Afghanistan's 2005 parliamentary elections and the many challenges of introducing democracy.

The resulting film is a powerful portrait of Malalai Joya, an Afghan woman who was just 26 last year when she ran for parliament despite constant threats on her life. In 2003, Joya had challenged her country's former Mujahideen leaders when she accused them of trying to hold onto power under the new system, even though they were warlords with blood on their hands who should be tried by an international court. Her comments drew fire and four attempts were made on her life, but Joya stubbornly continued her struggle for a better Afghanistan and two years later she was running for parliament. Documenting her radical struggle for change, *Enemies of Happiness* offers compelling evidence that it takes more than military might and diplomats to hold democratic elections in a country where few people know how to read or write and many say votes can be bought and sold.

#### THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

Mulvad became involved in the project after another Danish filmmaker, Anja Al-Erhayem, had done the initial research about Afghanistan's first democratic election in 30 years.

"When I saw Anja's material, I thought it seemed like an obvious film for me to start on," Mulvad says. "Before film school, I took a year of political science at university and when I was quite young I worked on the monthly magazine Press. Politics always interested me. But when you land at the National Film School of Denmark, you get into other things. There, the focus is always on the human, personal story. Anja's research sketched out a film that combined the two, a human story with a political angle.

"I felt that I could make an exciting story and I wanted to create counter images to media portraits of the world's hot spots. Reporters continually cover the world's conflicts, but only rarely do you get a sense that ordinary life goes on in war-torn countries. I wanted to give an impression of how people are doing there, and do so in a different narrative form than reporters use. Tell a story that is otherwise only told factually and intellectually, in a way that would get people emotionally involved. Tell a story of hope and faith in change and not have it be all about disasters. And show that you might learn something from a woman from one of those countries."

"While I was making the film I was very affected by the notion that it is possible to make a difference. In Denmark, that may not involve standing up in front of people who want to kill you, but it's about standing up where you can. In that respect, the film's protagonist is very inspirational to me and I hope the film conveys that inspiration," Mulvad says.

#### SURVIVAL TRAINING

Al-Erhayem's research focused on two women candidates in the parliamentary election. Mulvad chose to concentrate on Joya, in part because there was archival footage of her condemning warlords in the transition government. Opening with this footage, the film instantly provides an impression of a strong personality and the high stakes involved.

Mulvad and the British camerawoman Zillah Bowes travelled to Kabul five weeks before the election. Back home, they had been told they could take a plane to Harat province and drive the rest of the way, but there were no planes and the locals

advised against driving because of bandits. After ten days, they had almost given up hope of ever making it to Farah city, in Farah province, when they finally stumbled on a way.

"We met some Danish soldiers who told us about a military transport plane that was stopping in Farah. The soldiers offered to find out if we could hitch a ride on their plane. Eventually, we learned that transport planes were leaving at least once a week. So we had a way to get there and also a way to get out again, if everything got screwed up.

**"Reporters continually cover the world's conflicts, but only rarely do you get a sense that ordinary life goes on in war-torn countries. I wanted to give an impression of how people are doing there, and do so in a different narrative form than reporters use."**

"Before leaving for Afghanistan, we went to Wales for a course that trains reporters going to that kind of place. I really appreciated that course, because I was incredibly naïve. I don't have any special survival gene or a desire to live dangerously. It was good to get a basic introduction, to first aid for instance. There are no doctors out there, so when do you call for a helicopter or not? We also got a rundown of the most common weapons. What does a Kalashnikov look like and how can you tell if the safety is on? It's all about making the right decisions. The course also covered such basic safety systems as calling home every night at a certain time to say you're all right. If you don't call, then what? Who does the negotiating if you're taken hostage? We spent a lot of time preparing for that kind of contingency. It was important groundwork," Mulvad says.

#### TRUST IS FUNDAMENTAL

Three days after Mulvad arrived in Farah, a British security chief was kidnapped and killed. That had not happened in this area before and getting a whiff of real danger was very unnerving, Mulvad says.

"But apart from that one unpleasant experience, we never felt any danger. For us, it was mainly about getting over being foreign and feeling exposed. Stories are always circulating about one thing or the other. But ordinary life goes on, and people were incredibly hospitable and forthcoming."

Since neither Mulvad nor her camerawoman spoke the language, they were totally dependent on their local interpreter. Mulvad has no doubt that trust was essential in a project of this kind. You have to trust that you are getting good advice. If you think you can figure it out on your own, you are lost. The recorded footage was continually translated in rough and much did not become clear until selected scenes were translated in detail during the editing process. Shooting the film was a weird process, Mulvad says.

"It is obviously not ideal that you don't know what people are saying, but those are the terms. Arguably, it would be better if local people made these films, but no one does. We have the opportunity to tell these stories. Also, I find it interesting that, being from another culture, we can mediate between cultures. The things Afghans find interesting are not the same things we find interesting. Accordingly, there is a strength in having an outsider's gaze and having to overcome certain barriers."

#### COMMUNICATING EMOTION

Far too many films about other cultures are overly patronizing, Mulvad says, and it was important to find a common ground for understanding Joya's struggle and courage. Mulvad's main sources of inspiration include American pioneers like Frederick

Wiseman and the Maysles Brothers, as well as the work of the British filmmaker Kim Longinotto. Reality is the most important thing. Still, a filmmaker should not be afraid to try and recreate emotion.

"I admire the old masters of scenic documentaries, but, like so many filmmakers of my generation, I am not ascetic about images," Mulvad says. "I'm not afraid to crank up the volume a bit and take inspiration from fiction. It's about finding a level where you don't ram moods and emotions down people's throats, while still offering some of the slickness that makes people lean back and feel you are taking them by the hand and guiding them through the film.

"Adam Nielsen, the film's editor, has worked on a lot of fiction films and he is not afraid that the material will come apart if you start working it. As he says - and I happen to agree - to understand what it's like to be somewhere, it's not always enough just to show an image of what being there is like.

"In our film, for example, it was hard to understand that Malalai's life is in danger when she walks from one building to another. For us, there is nothing very dangerous about crossing a street. We don't read that feeling into the material if we don't understand her circumstances. Music is among the effects you can use to underscore such a feeling. Some might find it over the top, but I think it helps communicate how she feels - and we're not exaggerating, considering how I know she feels. I consciously opted for some of the more dramatic effects, like music," Mulvad says.

#### "BECAUSE I CAN"

*Enemies of Happiness* follows Joya through thick and thin in the final days before the election. Mulvad found Joya to be an excellent subject: she wanted to see her work documented.

"She knew what makes a good story. She was skilled at getting people's permission to film, so we were always in the thick of things," Mulvad says. "On election day, I went out filming without her and I immediately saw that people were scared of

being filmed and showing their faces. I hadn't experienced that before, because I had been so much inside her world. People trusted us when we were with her, we got images on film that would otherwise have been very hard to get."

Joya heads a hospital in her hometown. Moreover, she runs a kind of welfare office where people can go to get help. Up to the election, she campaigns under extensive security precautions, making speeches and meeting voters. It is a tough schedule and the pressure is crushing. In one scene, she asks for the camera to be turned off because she is starting to cry. Even so, the camera keeps running. Mulvad wanted to include emotions in the portrait of this strong woman.

"Malalai often tells people not to cry, because it's a sign of weakness," Mulvad says. "She doesn't want to be shown at an unguarded moment, but when she asks us to stop filming it is in her own language. She does not ask me directly in English and I think she approves of our presence, because somewhere inside she understands that it is important to include her weakness. That's why I don't think it's invasive to keep filming. We need to see how tough her struggle is. At least we do in our narrative culture, which is premised so much on psychology.

"In our culture, we constantly wallow in people's emotions publicly. In Afghanistan, that's not such a big deal, which was a very interesting experience. I always wanted Malalai to tell me why she was doing the things she was doing. Why do you put yourself in harm's way and so on? She simply said that she did it because she could. She has the opportunity to do it, because she has the support of her family and the aptitude for it. And, she says, if she didn't do it, someone else would.

"So, why do I go to Afghanistan and make this film? Maybe I do it because I can. That I'm doing it may not really be all that interesting. It's more interesting that it's been done. That this film has been made."

*For further information, see catalogue section in back of this issue.*

#### BASTARD FILM

Founded in 2000 by journalists Søren Steen Jespersen, Thomas Stokholm Vorf and Miki Mistrati. Producer Helle Faber has joined the company as co-owner. Bastard Film has received several national awards, among these the prestigious Cavling Prize awarded by the Danish Union of Journalists. Documentaries include *Det røde guld* (Signe Mølgaard, 2004), about a unique invention, a gene-modified plant that changes colour from green to red when it comes into contact with landmines; *CPH Remix* (Ulrik Gutkin, Rúnar J. Gudnason, 2005) takes us on a journey through the streets of Copenhagen, exploring the world of street art. 2006: *BZ; Punk Royal - et brand på røven/Punk Royal - a Brand on the Arse*; and *Vores lykkes fjender/Enemies of Happiness*, selected for IDFA Silver Wolf Competition.

#### EVA MULVAD

Born 1972, Denmark. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark (2001). Director of documentaries for DR TV since 1997. Winner of the 2006 WIFT (Women in Film and TV) award for young film talents. 2006: *Vores lykkes fjender/Enemies of Happiness*, selected for IDFA Silver Wolf Competition.



Director Eva Mulvad. Photo: Erik Molberg Hansen



*Enemies of Happiness*. Photo: Zillah Bowes





My Eyes. Framegrab

**In *My Eyes*, Erlend E. Mo wanted to explore the world of the blind using a subjective film language. *My Eyes* is about people's infinite capacity to sense the world's beauty. The director hopes the film will remind us 'tired' viewers that each day presents us with an opportunity to rediscover a world brimming with simple everyday miracles.**

BY ALLAN BERG NIELSEN

At a pivotal point in Erlend E. Mo's film *Welcome to Denmark* (2003), a woman crosses the floor with quiet resolve to where her husband sits despondently fingering the keys of a piano in the deserted hall of a church, where they are in hiding. She puts her arms around him from behind and embraces him, exercising the emotional surplus she maintains through all their tribulations. They are from East Slovenia and, together with their four children, they risk deportation. Faithful and critical, like an educational film, *Welcome to Denmark* traces the classic dramatic arc of this refugee's tale with journalistic thoroughness. Yet the scene at the piano is a lyrical depiction of an everyday meeting of lovers. Their bond is the film's deepest content, its material, poetry and insight. The final scenes of the film show the family, after many heart-wrenching ordeals, safely housed in Tórshavn. A last embrace between the woman and the man confirms the stable condition of their love. She puts the children to bed. They speak in hushed, loving tones.

In Mo's next film, *Can You Die in Heaven?* (2005), a boy and his two brothers talk together confidentially. About difficult things, too. And his mother talks to him about things. Death. His father died not long ago and he may follow soon. The film tracks cancer's progression, from treatment to recovery or death - straightforward, factual reporting including all relevant details, so everyone gets it. That's Mo's didactic mission and he never loses sight of it. This film, too, explores the bonds among close family members, the breadth of their confidence and the nature of love.

# I LOVE THAT SOUND!



**BEAUTY**

Mo insists on a dual ambition in his projects. So, too, in his latest film, *My Eyes* (2006). He is loyal and thorough about his task of informing. The subject this time is education for blind children. Mo narrows his focus on understanding the bonds between mother and daughter, student and teacher, expressed in affectionate interactions founded on an appreciation of beauty.

First beauty. Katja, at the piano, has to learn a few measures of a Bach piano concerto, but it's difficult at first. The film keeps returning to the motif of hands. The teacher takes her slender hand and shows her how to strike the chord they are practicing, how to easily reach beyond a full octave, until she feels the gesture of the octave in her hand. Beauty now rests intrinsically in something physical. Nearby in the music room, Cathrine and her mother sit listening. Their hands are constantly touching. Caresses, you would assume, though touching is how they see one other when they are together. Beauty rests in these hands that see. The other's face is the physical element of the music.

The tangible orientation of hands is supplemented. Hearing comes in. The music teacher proposes they now listen to a recording of the Bach passage. The film is unhurried. It takes its time, listening. The mother's hands, the daughter's hands. Faces listening. Two sets of closed eyes. Concentration.

A brief intercut takes us outside the room. We see hands carefully exploring the bark of a tree in the cool spring air. For Katja's thoughts turn to spring. Bach's music makes her think of the season outside. It is Cathrine who inhabits the free, open space that Katja describes in words. She sees the space as she tells her teacher about it, and Cathrine and her mother are still in the first row listening in.

**DIDACTICS**

The editing of these lyrical scenes of illumination follows and demonstrates the didactics that are the film's other ambition. Without even discussing blindness, the film is at home in the world of the blind as a matter of course, wrapping itself in the unfathomable reality of a blind person. Of course the world looks the way the sensitivity of hand and ear perceives it. That is beauty in nature and in music. That is beauty in another person.

The image disappears, the screen is black. Only sound remains, and with our newfound perception we see the sound: wind moving leaves, a woodpecker clinging to rough bark, vigorously working to get to the bugs inside.

Katja's monologue about the world she sees without being able to see it extends the educational intention. Behold, the space of nature! There is another space, an artificial space corresponding to Bach's music, beside the sounds of the woodpecker and the wind. She enters a church. Casper Høyberg's camerawork, which began as documentation in the music room and turned to nature study in the associative clips, itself becomes performing art, pure poetry, in the church scene.

**STUDIES**

Before the camera has looked twice, however, the condition turns to Katja's gift. Her POV is darkness

and sound. The sound of a large room, the echo reverberating in the room and the sounds of the city outside the muffling walls. We see the room as she sees it, while Høyberg's camera views her in a halo of backlight. Even the cool documentation of her hands tracing the ornaments on the baptismal font becomes mental image.

Line Schou Hillerbrand's editing sticks to the camera's motif, fingers that see. In their intimate interaction, mother and daughter explore the lines of their hands, the lengths of lifelines, the fact and insignificance of age as reflection. The film is all study now, unbound. No longer pedagogy. The interaction is play, existence and emotion. Portraying it, the film is devoted, lyrical. Cathrine tickles the keys on a piano. She is more a child. Katja talks about the sound of the church bells that, even in no wind, fill the mind's room with peace and great joy, as she puts it with a maturity beyond her years. In the music room, everyone is still listening, perceiving the music on all levels, everyone seeing in the dark, as the music keeps playing. Images are projected behind closed eyes.

#### FEAR AND CONSOLATION

Subtly, the film steers us toward art's understanding of the small corner of the riddle of existence lifted by the documentary idiom. The montage has a refined simplicity. In nature, Cathrine has to learn to do things that scare her. She has to negotiate a steep stream bank. Her step-grandmother is at the ready. It is a learning process and she nails it. The filmmaker describes the moment poetically, with great tenderness, as fear is replaced by a feeling of triumph. "I love that sound," Cathrine exclaims when she discovers the stream at the foot of the bank.

In traffic, she has to learn to watch out for real dangers. Her mother positions her on the extreme edge of a railway platform. The train passes so closely. The sequence is rendered dramatically, like a scene in a thriller. Cut to darkness. Stripped of the visual preparation, the overpowering noise of the train is a shock. But consolation is close at hand: her mother picks her up and hugs her. Her discovery of the world can continue. At home, Cathrine safely moves around by herself. Her experienced hands locate the stereo and a CD. The beauty of Handel's music is an effect of educational effort, as is the beauty of the Victorian scraps her fingers see as sharp contours and a refined system of smooth and rough surfaces. At last, an embrace.

#### LEARNING

Back in the music room, the union of teaching and beauty, filmic reporting and filmic poetry, has been established as a given. Katja now has to memorize the words to a poem. It's hard, but she will figure it out and the poem is beautiful. Cathrine is in the big Pompeian hall at Copenhagen's Glyptotek. In the echo of a bouncing ball, she experiences the volume of the room. The film's didactics, the child's play and the museum architecture merge in the authenticity of the scene, its naturalness. Katja is quick to learn the words. The mechanics of learning become literary content. She likes what she memorizes. "Neat text, actually," she says. The crosscuts continue, cautiously suggestive: at the museum, Cathrine's hands take in

a sculpture the same way Katja earlier, in the church, saw the font. Now an intermezzo. School is out and Katja's body moves, untroubled and competent, underwater in a pool.

For a spell, that was something completely different. Back at the piano, she is making progress with the Bach piece. It is time for a final crescendo: Cathrine and her mother are still listening, soundlessly speaking in their hands' caresses. The music teacher sings the theme the whole world knows by way of Gould. Acknowledging its basic inspiration, the film crosscuts to caresses, togetherness, seeing with one's fingers. Finally, all we have is music, though now it is dedicated. And familiar darkness.

"I love that sound," Cathrine exclaimed when she had overcome her fear of the steep embankment and heard the water moving calmly and forcefully. Soon, her hands would feel its cool, wet flow. The little blind girl saw the stream and was happy, for another moment.

*For further information, see catalogue section in back of this issue.*

#### TALENTDOK

Producer Lise Lense-Møller, head of Magic Hour Films, and Erlend E. Mo received a production subsidy for *My Eyes* from the Danish Film Institute's TalentDok scheme. This scheme enables 90:10 financing (the subsidy amount and the producer's investment). Mo had reached the point where he wanted to challenge himself as a filmmaker, play it less safe than before, take his personal

documentary language as far as it would go, allow himself complex solutions. The TalentDok scheme was designed specifically for such edgy work, as a laboratory for filmmakers. The project received a subsidy for the difficult task of representing a visual world neither Mo nor anyone else on his crew had seen. Read more about TalentDok page 26.

#### MAGIC HOUR FILMS

Founded in 1995 by Lise Lense-Møller, who has had her own company since 1976. Has a comprehensive production covering numerous documentaries and short fictions, followed by a number of feature film. Has acted as producer and coproducer on several international projects. Documentaries are largely oriented towards philosophical, historical and aesthetic content, such as *Med ret til at dræbe/With a Right To Kill* (Morten Henriksen, Peter Øvig Knudsen, 2003), about the execution of Danish informers during World War II; *Kan man dø i himlen/Can You Die in Heaven* (Erlend E. Mo, 2005), a touching portrait of Jonathan, a boy ill with cancer; *I soldatens fodspor/In the Soldier's Footsteps* (Mette Zeruneith, 2005), selected for IDFA Amsterdam; *Inden for mine øjne/My Eyes* (Erlend E. Mo, 2006), selected for IDFA Silver Cub Competition.

#### ERLEND E. MO

Born 1967 in Norway. Studied literature and Scandinavian languages at Oslo University, and film and TV at Volda University College. Has produced and directed for NRK's Children and Youth Department and DR's Children and Youth Department. Director and screenplay: *Forbudt kærlighed/Forbidden Love* (1998), awarded the Terje Vigen prize at the Norwegian Short Film Festival, and nominated for the Dutch Prix Iris, 1999. *Velkommen til Danmark/Welcome to Denmark* (2003), awarded Best Documentary at Odense Film Festival, 2003. *Kan man dø i himlen/Can You Die in Heaven?* (2005) awarded Best Documentary by the Youth Jury at Odense Film Festival, 2005; Best Children's Doc at Pärnu International Documentary and Anthropology Film Festival, Estonia, 2006 and won the Gulddok for Best Documentary for Children/Youth at CPH.DOX, 2005.



Director Erlend E. Mo. Photo: P. Wessel



*Ghosts of Cité Soleil*. Framegrab

***Ghosts of Cité Soleil* is a devastating look at life in a slum of half a million people on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. A visual bombardment awash in music, Asger Leth's breakthrough documentary is launching the first-time filmmaker into the upper stratosphere of the international film circuit.**

# THE BALLAD OF

BY LARS MOVIN

In early October, Werner Herzog was the centre of attention at a two-day seminar at the National Film School of Denmark. Asked if he could point to any new trends in documentary film that he found particularly interesting, he mentioned a single title: *Ghosts of Cité Soleil* – the directorial debut of Asger Leth, a 36-year-old Danish filmmaker (and his Serbian co-director Milos Loncarevic).

The film was shot in Cité Soleil, a rapidly expanding slum on the outskirts of the Haitian capital that the UN once named as the most

dangerous place on the planet. The film's timeframe is the months around New Year 2003-04, an especially tumultuous period, when President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was first elected in 1991, finally had to back down and flee, leaving Haiti in a state of bloody anarchy. The film's central characters are two brothers, Bily and 2pac, prominent leaders of the so-called *chimères*, heavily armed, vigilante militias surreptitiously backing Aristide while, in a blend of idealism and gangster methods, trying to maintain a semblance of justice in the slum. The story strikes to the heart of the chaos in a place that is usually out of bounds to reporters or filmmakers,

where gang leaders manoeuvre from day to day in what is, mildly speaking, shark-infested waters – pressured from below by the abject poverty of the general populace and from above by the morass of corruption, power abuse and brutality that has marked Haiti almost without interruption since 1804 when the country became the first black republic to gain independence.

#### LIKE A BROKEN RECORD

That Haiti became the setting of Leth's first film is no coincidence. For the last 20 years or so, Asger has been spending a few months every year in Haiti,



*Ghosts of Cité Soleil. Framegrab*

# BILLY AND 2PAC

**“The most dangerous thing, probably, was that we were at the mercy of the chimère leaders. If they were killed, while we were filming, that layer of protection would suddenly be gone and we would certainly have been killed as well.”**

because his father, the filmmaker Jørgen Leth, lives there. All along, he has been following his father’s film production up close. In recent years, moreover, father and son have been working together on a more professional level: Asger Leth was co-writer and second unit director of *The Five Obstructions* (2003), Lars von Trier’s impish challenge to Jørgen Leth.

“Working on *Obstructions* unleashed a lot of creative energy in me,” Asger Leth says. “At the time, I was married and living in the US, but I was divorced shortly after and suddenly felt that now was the time to start doing my own thing. I entered a phase of actively looking for a story I could do.”

A story began to take shape in 2003, when international pressure compelled President Aristide to jail one of the more visible chimère gangsters, Amiot Métayer, leader of the so-called Cannibal Army (armée cannibale). The reaction from rank-and-file chimère militants was swift. They sprang Métayer from prison and shortly after he threatened Aristide to tell the international press about the secret pact between the president and the gangsters. Aristide responded by having Métayer assassinated, triggering a full-fledged revolt. Métayer’s brother returned from exile in Florida to assume leadership of the Cannibal Army; two other exiled haitians – a

former chief of police, Guy Philippe, and Louis Jodel Chamblain, a former army commander – seized the moment, returning to the island to take part in the uprising.

“At that point, I already knew I had a story and I more or less knew where things were heading,” Leth says. “Haiti’s history is like a broken record. It’s stuck in the same groove. The same things happen over and over again. It’s so banal you almost cannot believe it. The uprising usually begins in a town north of Port-au-Prince called Gonaïves and once carnival time rolls around, you know that the president, or whoever is in power, is about to be forced out of the country. Sure enough, the revolt that broke out around New Year’s 2003-2004 started in Gonaïves. So I knew, if I could only get access to the chimère leaders in Cité Soleil, I had both the backdrop and the dramatic bones of a story. Now what I needed to satisfy my ambitions in storytelling was strong personal stories playing off the political drama and the search was on.”

The solution came in the form of two hardened, audacious Europeans, who were among the few white people able to move around in Cité Soleil: Lele (Éléonore Senlis), a Frenchwoman who worked for a charitable organization, and Milos Loncarevic, a Serb who grew up during the Balkan War and was now running around taking stills in the slum. Both were on friendly terms with the chimères and they hooked Leth up with two brothers, Bily and 2pac, powerful gang leaders who, as fate would have it, were both fighting for Aristide, but with completely different perspectives on the political system. Bily believed in the president, while 2pac hated Aristide and would rather write derogatory rap songs about him than fight on his side, though he was forced to under the circumstances.

#### SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

Leth now felt he had his story. Even before leaving for Haiti, he had staked everything on his project, rounding up all the film and video equipment he could get his hands on and drumming up a slim credit line. Having found his two main characters he now sat down and knocked out the brief outline of a story, which turned out to fit what actually happened.

“It was almost Shakespearean,” Leth says, “with the two brothers: 2pac, who was poetically inclined, who wanted to get out of the slum and make rap music, and who had lost faith in Aristide; and Bily, who was more of a Che Guevara type and earnestly fought for Aristide. Around them was the big political power game between the president and his people, on one side, and the rebels from up north on the other. It was ruthless and, as each day passed, you knew that 2pac and Bily were getting closer to dying in a battle neither of them really wanted to fight. And on top of that, they were both in love with the same girl!”

*What was their motivation for letting you film them?*

“I think they realized they would soon be dead, and it’s a universal human trait that no one wants to leave this world without a trace. Perhaps they saw the film as their shot at immortality. A small part of it might also have been them hoping that the presence of a film crew would give them some kind of protection.”

*What was the most dangerous thing about filming in the slum?*

“The most dangerous thing, probably, was that we were at the mercy of the chimère leaders. If they were killed, while we were filming, that layer of protection would suddenly be gone and we would certainly have been killed as well. Plus, some of the militants were on crack or other drugs and completely unpredictable. These are the kind of things you should try not to think about when you are in the situation, because then you cannot work. Once that is said, I am happy to add that Milos, the film’s co-director, shot most of the footage from the slum, while I mainly handled the political level, the rebels and the shots in and around Port-au-Prince. Milos was friendly with the gang leaders and could move around fairly freely. Using a camcorder was fairly new to Milos, but his raw talent and camera handling had a savage presence that really added to the film.” Besides Milos, the film was shot by Frederik Jacobi and Leth himself.

*It’s a very intense film. Apart from a few slow segments, it runs on high octane all the way through. Do you have any role models in terms of film grammar?*

“I would say my dad’s films taught me a few things about the importance of pauses. But apart from that, my inspiration comes from an entirely different place: feature films. I have an entirely different pace than my father. From the beginning when I wrote the first outline, it was the breakdown for a movie story: there are some strong characters, they have a mission, they have to go from point A to point B, someone opposes them and finally there is a clash. That was also how I broke it down to Peter Brandt and Adam Nielsen, who did a terrific job

of cutting the promo halfway through shooting: I wanted them to cut it like a feature. That’s about the choice of lead, how an individual scene is cut, the use of music and sound effects, etc. And that’s also how Adam Nielsen and I later insisted on focusing the editing of the film.”

*Ghosts of Cité Soleil* has already attracted a lot of attention. And not just from Werner Herzog. The film had its world premiere at the prestigious Telluride Film Festival in Colorado, which selects just 22 titles every year. Then it was shown at the Toronto Film Festival, where it also caused a stir. Next up was cph:dox and IDFA, plus a line of other festivals. The plan is to release the film in theatres, not least in the two big target markets, the US and the UK. We will not reveal here what eventually happened to Bily and 2pac. Suffice it to say that Asger Leth made the right choice when he decided to plunge into the film before the financing and other formal conditions were in place. *Ghosts of Cité Soleil* is a one-of-a-kind film made at exactly the right time. The movie chronicles a small story that can never be repeated. Meanwhile, the larger story of Haiti grinds on like a needle stuck in the same groove, sinking deeper into the abyss.

*For further information, see catalogue section in back of this issue.*

#### ASGER LETH

Born 1970. Started working as an assistant director on music videos and commercials while studying law. Assistant director on Danish documentarian Jørgen Leth’s *Nye scener fra Amerika/ New Scenes from America and De fem benspænd/The Five Obstructions*. *Ghosts of Cité Soleil*, selected for *Reflecting Images*, IDFA, 2006, is his debut as a documentary director.



Director Asger Leth. Photo: Erik Molberg Hansen



*Small Faces: Football. Framegrab*

# A PLAYFUL WORLD

**Two short documentaries, *Small Faces: Racer* and *Small Faces: Football*, about children's creativity, friendship and play, have been chosen for Kids & Docs.**

The two films are part of the series *Small Faces* (10 short films of 5 minutes each). Each film tells the story of a game.

One film is about Zambian boys making their own football out of plastic bags, another is about girls fashioning accessories for their dolls out of dirt, a third one is about girls skipping with homemade rubber ropes.

Focusing on creativity, friendship and play, the stories are edited dynamically with hip-hop music to foster identification with the world that western children grow up in.

At the heart of *Small Faces* is the notion of children's rights – that all children have the right to a childhood, with time to play with their friends.

The first set of documentaries looks at children in Zambia, Guatemala and Sri Lanka.

Sussie Weinold is the director of *Small Faces*.

"The idea for *Small Faces* emerged during one of my trips around Africa," she says. "Doing research in the villages, I saw that, no matter how difficult their circumstances, African children always had energy to spare to play together using available materials.

"The film has the message that children in Third World countries are inventive and superbly creative. We wanted to point this out to Danish children, using a contemporary visual and sound grammar they are familiar with from Western media. The underlying intention is to provide a nuanced look at Third World children by showing that their lives are about all the same things that matter to Danish children, like play, friendship and happiness. How they master the art of play just as well as Western children – despite their lack

of material goods.

"In my past film work, I developed a tight, aesthetic visual style. As I went along, I realized this style would work just as well for communicating Third World issues to a target audience of younger children. Children today see a visual challenge in anything they encounter.

"I wanted to work with a simple message in a visually well-composed form, with graphics and sound that appeal to children and with content they can identify with, and which might even provoke them a little bit.

"It is my hope that the series, in its visual form and expression, will build a bridge between Western children and children in developing countries. Perhaps that can make a difference in terms of understanding the huge problems faced by the Third World. And hopefully help promote children's rights to food, schools and education all over the world," Weinold says.

#### EASY FILM A/S

founded in 1984 by the sound recordist Niels Bokkenheuser, the company has grown into a major production and media house, providing a wide range of products from documentaries, commercials and educational films to entertainment, fiction and digital communication (see also page 18). Contact: [www.easyfilm.dk](http://www.easyfilm.dk) / [www.drsales.dk](http://www.drsales.dk)

#### SUSSIE WEINOLD

born 1960, has a law degree. She has worked as a copywriter and creative director at an advertising agency. From 2000-2005, she developed and directed campaigns for DanChurchAID, a Danish NGO. Since 2002, Weinold has directed a number of documentaries and television programmes.



Director Sussie Weinold. Photo: Easy Film

# WOMAN IN THE GLOBAL CITY



Director Jennifer Fox. Photo: Zohe Films

**What does it mean to be a free woman? Does a woman's freedom depend on her owning and controlling her sexuality? In the six episodes of *Flying - Confessions of a Free Woman*, American director Jennifer Fox sets out to explore female values and sexuality in the 21st century. Inspired by the narrative form of American series like *Sex and the City*, Fox chronicles her own life and mirrors her personal narrative in the stories of women she meets around the world. *Flying* is a Danish co-production, produced by Easy Film, directed by Jennifer Fox and edited by Niels Pagh Andersen.**

BY ANETTE OLSEN

Presence is at the core of Jennifer Fox's filmmaking approach. In *Flying*, the ambition was to go below the surface of some very personal issues. Since Fox wanted to make a film that connected her to other women and their stories, it was essential to find a method of filming that would make room for both Fox's own story and the dramas of other women, creating an equality in the film between the characters and the filmmaker.

Fox explored a new shooting technique that allowed for intimacy and openness: simply letting the camera pass from the interviewer to the interviewee shifts the roles and the balance of

power. The idea was to convey the natural circular movement in women's conversations and the process of sharing and giving advice on equal terms.

"I got this image of a horizontal circle going round and round," Fox says. "Since my goal as a filmmaker is to capture something from reality, my first fear was that, once I bring in a camera into a woman's conversation, all intimacy will fly out the door."

"In a woman's conversation, you don't have to put up your guards. We guard for a lot of different reasons: we guard ourselves from judgement, and from advice - a lot of times we don't want advice. A camera in a third position, either with a person behind it or on a tripod, would have that quality

of judgement - I'm taking and you're giving - and I wanted to avoid that. The camera had to collude with the scene. It should be like a coffee cup in the room, part of what we were chewing on, so that we in a sense observe each other equally, but we don't judge with the camera. In its nature, the camera is not a judgemental source, but often we use it that way. In 'passing the camera,' both people take and both people give, and the camera is used in its purest form, as a witness," Fox says.

## THE PERSONAL IN THE GLOBAL

Presenting the ambition to shed light on universal issues all women face, such as sexuality, children, family and marriage, *Flying*, on paper, was the kind of film nobody wanted. But as soon as the potential financiers saw the research footage Fox had shot during her travels all over the world, they were hooked.

The project started out as a one-off feature documentary, but it soon became clear to Jennifer Fox and the Danish editor, Niels Pagh Andersen, that the material called for a series. They just didn't know how many episodes. With more than 1,400





“The real core of the project is the ‘passing-the-camera’ idea (...) Not only as form but also as content. After all, the whole concept of the film is a central character who evolves when she is reflected in other women. It makes her smarter, it pushes her and makes her move on in life.”



why I, as a storyteller, thought it would be really interesting to do. As far as I knew, I had never seen this done before – of having a personal narrator and other characters that the main character mirrors herself in. In a 90-minute film, there would only be room for Jennifer’s story.”

women’s stories, we lost the audience. We followed an axis in editing that balanced the personal with the other stories. It was all about adjusting the scales.”



For Fox and Andersen, the challenge was to find a narrative form to match their ambition of combining the personal with the universal. Fox had been inspired by the first-person narration of the American series *Sex and the City*, whose main character addresses issues of sexuality and female dilemmas in a self-deprecating way.

#### SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

*Flying* will be shown as a Special Event at IDFA, Amsterdam. Moreover, Fox and Andersen will be giving a master class during the festival. They will be showing examples of what worked and what didn’t work in their film and discuss their decisions on the problem of balancing the personal with a more global story.



*Flying - Confessions of a Free Woman* Photos: Zohe Films

In *Flying*, Fox puts herself in front of the camera and bravely shares her personal life with the audience, openly discussing troubles in her love life, her miscarriages, her relationship to her own family, her longing for, and fear of having, a child. Making herself the main narrative motor in a film lets audiences identify, as Fox’s story creates a frame for a larger mosaic of women and their stories. The personal resonates in the global and vice versa.

*Flying* was one of Jennifer Fox’s most important projects ever, but in terms of financing it was quite a struggle.

“In the creative process – at least for the kind of filmmaker and open-ended artist I am – I think the material and the idea should find themselves and their own shape,” she says. “I didn’t want to make six episodes. I would have been much happier to make a feature. It’s a more successful unit, it’s an easier unit, everything is better as a feature, but for the hypothesis of this project we needed time.” As this goes to print, Fox is still in the cutting room with Andersen, finishing the film.

hours of footage and a multilayered ensemble cast, a series was the only way of utilizing the broad range of characters.

Far less simple was getting the financiers to commit to the idea of a series. Fox knew that would be a challenge.

“I made *An American Love Story* which is more than ten hours, and it took me seven years to finance. It looks so easy, but it was such a struggle to get it accepted, and if it wasn’t for Niels agreeing with me, I don’t know if I would have the stomach for that again”, Fox says. In a career spanning 25 years, she has made several award-winning documentary series and features.

Andersen, an editor with a long track record of his own, was intrigued by the idea of passing the camera. It was a new challenge.

“The real core of the project is the ‘passing the camera’ idea,” he says. “Not only as form but also as content. After all, the whole concept of the film is a central character who evolves when she is reflected in other women. It makes her smarter, it pushes her and makes her move on in life. It’s also why the project became a series and not a feature. And

“Test screenings have shown that people have a need to follow my story,” Fox says. “The film is driven by my story, of course, but it’s not only about me. The requirement to put so much of me into it as a drive to keep an audience makes me a little nervous.”

“I don’t want to make a film about me, I want to make a film that connects me to other women and their stories. The challenge is to trust that, because I have a tendency to go further away from myself. I would like to let some of the characters run for a while longer, but as a storyteller I know that we can’t do it. I have to be really connected to every scene. First and foremost, Niels and I are storytellers, so we’re struggling to keep the audience with the story and yet give them other characters,” Fox says. Fox and Andersen operated with three story levels: the personal, the ensemble (Fox’s friends and family) and a survey level including the women she met on her trips.

“The hard thing was weighting Jennifer’s story and the other women’s stories. We began by getting a grip on Jennifer’s story and focusing on that, but then we moved away from it. I think Jennifer started getting a bit tired of herself – and I was getting a bit tired of her myself – but if we pulled too far back, it became too much of a survey and everything fell apart,” Andersen explains.

“We realized that the personal, thematically or directly, had to relate to where Jennifer was in her project. If we began to focus too much on the other

For further information, see catalogue section in back of this issue.

Jennifer Fox and editor Niels Pagh Andersen are giving a master class on *Flying* at IDFA.

#### EASY FILM

Founded 1984 by sound recordist Niels Bokkenheuser. Originally a small company, primarily involved in postproduction. Has since developed into a production and media house, supplying a wide range of products including commercials, educational films, documentaries, fiction and digital communication. Owns two subsidiaries, Jensen & Kompagni and Easy Hell in Poland. Documentaries (a selection): *Arif Hossein - ETV, Dhaka* (Ole Tornbjerg, 2002), winner of 2nd Prize in Chicago; *Min... /My...* (2002), a series of six films by women directors about someone dear to them; the children’s shorts *Min allerbedste ting/My Very Best Thing* (Jon Micke, 2003); *Mathias skal i skole/At School* (Lars Gudmund Hansen, 2005); and *Flying - Confessions of a Free Woman* (Jennifer Fox, 2006), selected for IDFA Reflecting Images.

#### JENNIFER FOX

Born 1959, USA. Formed own production company Zohe Film Productions, 1981. Work includes *Beirut: The Last Home Movie* (1988), sold to over 17 countries, awarded Best Film of the Year and Best Cinematography, Sundance, and Best Documentary, Cinema du Reel; a 13-part series *Project 10* (2003) for SABC, about 10 years of freedom from apartheid; and the award-winning feature film *Love and Diane* (2001).

“Co-production represents an important opportunity for critical exchange of artistic strategies. It should grow out of a need to develop deeper insight into the mechanisms of cultural exchange, both in the process of filmmaking and in the meeting between the film and its international audiences.”  
(Bonfils)



DFI Film Consultant Dola Bonfils. Photo: Jan Buus

# INSPIRATION COLLABORATION CO-PRODUCTION

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

It is a jungle out there. Long gone are the days when producers relied on one and only one financial source. All across Europe, co-production is flourishing, mainly because public broadcasters are no longer able to pay big money for independent productions but still need many hours of documentaries for their programming.

To do co-productions, you need a network and knowledge about the market. You have to travel to

**If you don't have to, don't do co-productions! This used to be the most expressed sentiment by experienced producers, tutoring newcomers to the international documentary community. Today, that's history. Internationally oriented production companies are all co-producing now, directly with broadcasters or with each other. Because they have to, financially. Or, and this is a new one, because they want to. Read what Danish producers say about co-production in the following seven profiles of companies operating internationally.**

make yourself and your company known. The last fifteen years have seen radical changes on the scene: support from the EU MEDIA Programme has made

the IDFA Forum and the Sunny Side of the Doc possible. It has spawned new festivals and created the Danish-based European Documentary Network



DFI Film Consultant Michael Haslund-Christensen. Photo: Jan Buus

**“In making co-productions, the important thing is to create a project that doesn’t sacrifice the creative potential of the film crew solely because of possible financing from another country. A project aimed for co-production should be developed between the co-producers at an early stage, since a continuous working relationship between producers from different countries is the main condition for a positive outcome for every film.”  
(Haslund-Christensen)**

(EDN) with its many workshops in Southern, Eastern and Central Europe, plus the Baltics.

It has become important to acquire pitching skills, whether on paper, verbally, or visually, via trailers. Again, MEDIA-supported training programmes (EAVE, Eurodoc, Discovery Campus, etc.) have been, and remain, useful tools and gathering points for producers from all countries.

Meanwhile, for Danish producers, the EDN has not been the only important aid in internationalisation. Filmkontakt Nord has strengthened ties within the region, via Nordic Forum and the Nordic Panorama festival. It is only natural that most Danish companies go Nordic before they go south.

#### **NOT (ONLY) FOR THE MONEY**

A new generation of Danish filmmakers has been inspired to search not only for money but also for stories outside their own country. According to Dola Bonfils, a DFI film consultant, “Of 39 productions in the making in 2006-2007, 20 titles focus on international subjects or stories and 15 of them are seeking financial support internationally.”

In these generally good times for the documentary, with much more public attention than before and an increase in theatrical screenings, producers are reconsidering co-production as a relevant option.

They know that co-production is a necessity to make a realistic budget, but they also recognise how important it is not to compromise on quality.

Several companies, like Cosmo Doc and Final Cut,

have teamed up with colleagues in other Nordic companies. They share an ongoing dialogue and, just as important, chemistry. As Lise Lense-Møller of Magic Hour puts it, the driving force is “access to talent, expertise, profiles, and money.”

Michael Haslund-Christensen, a DFI documentary consultant and a producer with an international career, stresses that:

“In making co-productions, the important thing is to create a project that doesn’t sacrifice the creative potential of the film crew solely because of possible financing from another country. A project aimed for co-production should be developed between the co-producers at an early stage, since a continuous working relationship between producers from different countries is the main condition for a positive outcome for every film.”

#### **LOOKING FOR QUALITY**

Though foreign investment in Danish documentaries remains underwhelming, there are loyal partners for Danish documentary filmmakers. One is YLE, a Finnish broadcasting company. In Århus for Nordic Forum, I stopped Erkki Astala, the head of co-productions at YLE, in a corridor to hear why his company invests in Danish documentaries.

“When we invest in documentaries, on the whole we are looking for quality. And I believe we find that in many Danish documentaries. What I think I see in the best Danish documentaries is a combination of a creative eye and a personal signature with a good sense of the subject and the substance. The filmmaker not only has an interesting way of telling

us something but clearly also has a will and a need to say something important about the world we’re living in. What more can you expect?”

Finns invest in Danish films and Danes invest in Finnish films. One of the most successful examples in recent years is *3 Rooms of Melancholia*. Directed by Finnish Pirjo Honkasalo, co-produced by Danish Magic Hour Films and edited by Danish Niels Pagh Andersen, the film perfectly fits the requirements of Malene Flindt Pedersen, Head of Development at DFI:

“DFI can support co-productions if a Danish producer is involved. It is a priority, however, that a Danish input be engaged on the creative team.”

Lack of efficient distribution is often mentioned as the main obstacle to documentaries reaching audiences. However, things are getting much better now, through technical developments (Internet, podcasts, DVDs), but also because of an increase in co-productions. The cultural aspect follows the money. When Danish companies manage to get financing from a number of TV channels upfront, their projects end up being broadcast in those countries.

Concerning documentary as an art form, Dola Bonfils, the DFI film consultant, says: “Co-production represents an important opportunity for critical exchange of artistic strategies. It should grow out of a need to develop deeper insight into the mechanisms of cultural exchange, both in the process of filmmaking and in the meeting between the film and its international audiences.”

## COSMO DOC / A SELECTION OF CO-PRODUCTIONS

*Prostitution Behind the Veil* (directed by Nahid Persson), won 15 awards, received an Emmy nomination and sold to 16 broadcasters including BBC; *The Swenkas* (directed by Jeppe Rønede), screened in Cinema Delicatessen, on Channel 4 UK, National Geographic worldwide, nominated for Joris Ivens Competition at IDFA 2004; *Smiling in a War Zone* (directed by Simone Aaberg Kærn and Magnus Bejmar), second place in Audience Award at IDFA 2005, screened at various festivals and on PBS in the US, BBC and others; *Gasolin'* (directed by Anders Høgsbro Østergaard), best-grossing cinema doc ever in Denmark (215.000 admissions), will be sold on dvd and aired in Sweden and Norway.

For further details and co-productions in the pipe-line, please go to: [www.cosmo.dk](http://www.cosmo.dk)

# COSMO DOC

**“Each co-producer contributed very specific knowledge or skill to the film. I think that’s the key to successful co-production: having partners for specific reasons.”**

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

This year Cosmo Doc made Realscreen Magazine’s Global 100 list, ranking it among the most influential production companies working in the world of non-fiction entertainment today.

No matter what you may think about such lists, what Cosmo Doc has achieved is deeply impressive. In the few short years since its founding in 2004, the company has launched a string of productions with notable domestic and international success. The young company is an offshoot of Cosmo Film, which was started in 1992 by Rasmus Thorsen and Tomas Hostrup Larsen, who both are products of the National Film School of Denmark. In 2004 Jakob Høgel joined them to set up Cosmo Doc, a production company specializing in high-end documentaries for broadcast and cinemas in Europe. As the Cosmo website puts it, “We believe in creating an environment for creative directors that develops talents and skills as much as specific projects. Our aim is to be a European player in the field of internationally financed, creative documentaries.”

International ambition comes naturally to Høgel, a world traveller since childhood. Educated in the UK, Høgel has made a few documentaries himself and he got to know the European documentary landscape during his years as a film consultant at the DFI. He served as a tutor at the EDN workshops and took part in the South African Steps for the Future programme as a developer and a close partner of the Finnish YLE commissioner, Iikka Vehkalahti.

Høgel has operated in the Middle East and is currently part of Tokyo Modern, an international series of co-productions directed by Pirjo Honkasalo, Viktor Kossakovski, Sean MacAllister and Thomas Balmès.

Høgel and his team of producers at Cosmo Doc have attracted such directors as Jeppe Rønede (*Jerusalem My Love*, *The Swenkas*), Anders Østergaard (*Tintin and I*), Nahid Persson (*Prostitution Behind the Veil*) and Simone Aaberg Kern & Magnus Bejmar



Producer Jakob Høgel. Photo: P. Wessel

(*Smiling in a War Zone*) – all successful theatrically released documentaries that were well received by critics in Denmark and abroad.

This is good for the documentary genre in Denmark and good for Cosmo Doc. FILM met Jakob Høgel at Cosmo’s office in Copenhagen to discuss co-production.

*Why do you co-produce?*

“Because we produce films for the international market. In order to do so, we need to know about other film traditions, markets and forms of distribution. Co-production is a good way to do that and to obtain wider financing for our productions.”

*What kinds of films are suitable for co-productions?*

“Films that are conceived, produced and distributed internationally.”

*Who are your co-producers?*

“We have a semi-formalised network of Nordic peers called Scandinavian Documentary Systems, which consists of Finnish Klaffi, Swedish Story and Norwegian Medieoperatørene. We meet at least once a year to discuss productions and other initiatives.”

*How do you co-produce? Where do you find your partners?*

“Apart from our Nordic partners, we have sometimes sought partners for specific projects. Usually, it’s word-of-mouth, research and, of course, personal meetings that determine who we work with.”

*If you were to name a successful co-production, which would it be?*

“*Smiling in a War Zone*, a co-production with Swedish Hepp Film, German Network Movies and Finnish Klaffi. This may sound like a hell of a lot of cooks stirring the broth, but in fact it all went very smoothly. Each co-producer contributed very specific knowledge or skill to the film. I think that’s the key to successful co-production: having partners for specific reasons.”



Producer Mette Heide. Photo: P. Wessel

# TEAM PRODUCTIONS

**“I think that only talent can make a film better. In co-productions, you sometimes experience what, in Samuel P. Huntington’s words, I will call “clashes of civilisation” - conflicting perspectives on the film. Only a strong vision for the film can block such common co-production conflicts.”**

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

Team Productions was founded in 1999 by producer Mette Heide and director Michael Christoffersen, who continue to run the company today. Next year, their documentaries about the trials of Milosevic and Saddam Hussein will be broadcast on more than 20 TV stations

## TEAM PRODUCTIONS / A SELECTION OF CO-PRODUCTIONS

*Liberace of Baghdad* (directed by Sean McAllister), Special Jury Prize at Sundance 2005. Best Documentary at the British Independent Film Awards 2006.

For further details and co-productions in the pipe-line, please go to: [www.team-productions.com](http://www.team-productions.com)

worldwide.

Heide has direct access to top editors commissioning documentaries at broadcasters like BBC, Arte, YLE Finland, SBS Australia and NHK Japan. In a few short years, aided by another Mette (Hoffmann Meyer, TV2 Denmark), she has earned respect and trust for her professionalism. This was heavily underlined in 2004 when she produced *Liberace of Baghdad*, directed by the British documentarian Sean McAllister.

Heide has been working in Danish film for a long time. During her stint at the Danish Ministry of Education, she influenced the acquisition of films for the National Film Board catalogue in creative ways (one acquisition was Molly Dineen’s documentary masterpiece, *Heart of the Angel*). Later, she worked for Dansk Novellefilm (Short Fiction Film Denmark), where she learned a lot about production from Ole John, now lecturer at the National Film School of Denmark.

I reached Heide on the phone and asked her about her job.

“Well, the main business of our company is producing international documentaries. Currently, however, we’re also co-producing a series for the domestic market, with another Danish production company.”

*What kinds of films are suitable for co-production?*

“Universal stories.”

*Who are your co-producers?*

“We mainly co-produce directly with broadcasters, though we have on occasion also co-produced with other European companies and done offshore co-productions.”

*How do you co-produce? Where do you find your partners?*

“We have built up good relationships with such broadcasters as TV2 Denmark, the BBC, SVT, YLE, NRK and ZDF/ARTE. We prefer to work with the commissioning editors we already collaborate with. We have the same broadcasting partners on the films about the Saddam and Milosevic trials. These are very difficult films to produce, and the editors understand the conditions and have been very supportive.

*Mention a successful co-production.*

“I’m currently executive producer on a series called *Why Democracy?* - 10 films about contemporary democracy by some of the world’s best filmmakers, including Alex Gibney (*Enron, The Smartest Guys in the Room*) and Jehane Noujaim (*Start-up.com*). Twenty-five broadcasters from all over the world are involved and we expect to reach an audience of 150 million viewers. The films will be broadcast simultaneously in October 2007 and will be accompanied by an extensive web presence followed by a major global on-the-ground educational initiative. The website will feature daily podcasts and debates. It will be the biggest factual media event ever. I think the films will have a strong impact on our understanding of contemporary democracy.”

*Does co-production make films better?*

“I think that only talent can make a film better. In co-productions, you sometimes experience what, in Samuel P. Huntington’s words, I will call “clashes of civilisation” - conflicting perspectives on the film. Only a strong vision for the film can block such common co-production conflicts.”

## EASY FILM / A SELECTION OF CO-PRODUCTIONS

*Arif Hossein, Etv, Dhaka* (directed by Ole Tornbjerg, 2002), winner of 2. Prize at Chicago International Children's Film Festival; *FC Barcelona Confidential* (directed by Daniel Hernández and Justin Webster, 2004), winner of PRIX EUROPA, Berlin, and a Grimme Award; and *Flying - Confessions of a Free Woman* (directed by Jennifer Fox, 2006), screening in IDFA Reflecting Images.

For further details and co-productions in the pipe-line, please go to: [www.easyfilm.dk](http://www.easyfilm.dk)

# EASY FILM

**“A more interesting field of co-production involves films about local issues or stories that transcend the local. In such cases, the collaboration is the best possibility for reaching a truly creative level.”**

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

Founded by Niels Bokkenheuser more than 20 years ago, Easy Film today operates in all genres. The company employs some fifty staff in its five divisions and has ambitions to expand, both domestically and internationally. On top of that, Easy Film is a technical facility house.

The key executive for Easy Film's television and documentaries is Claus Ladegaard, who has a master's in communications from Denmark's Roskilde University. Ladegaard is much in demand as a teacher of television formats and narration. He is a powerful spokesman for his peers at the Danish Producers Association and, as a producer, he refuses to limit his work to one documentary subgenre or another.

One of his biggest Danish hits is *Generation 0*, which follows Danish families that had babies at the start of the year 2000. The prize-winning series, which has the potential to evolve into a Danish equivalent of the UK's *Seven Up*, is one of several Easy Film TV series that aim at a wide audience and deal with contemporary Denmark and Danes. *The Wrong Murder* is something else entirely, investigating alternate versions of the backdrop for the 1986 murder of the Swedish prime minister Olof Palme. In 2005, Easy Film co-produced *FC Barcelona Confidential*, an inside look at the famous Catalan football club. Here is Ladegaard on the subject of co-production.

*Why do you choose to co-produce?*

“It enables us to produce films that we could not do without international support – either because the costs are too high or because there is no place for the films on the Danish market. But we are very choosy about the projects we enter into. Co-production very often means a lot of work and little money, especially if we aren't the major production partner.”

*What kinds of films are suitable for co-production?*

“Most obviously, films with a theme or link to something



Producer Claus Ladegaard (from December 2006 Head of Production & Development, Danish Film Institute). Photo: P. Wessel

that has international appeal. Then come the productions where the partnership is mainly financial. A more interesting field of co-production involves films about local issues or stories that transcend the local. In such cases, the collaboration is the best possibility for reaching a truly creative level.”

*Who are your co-producers?*

“We often co-produce with relatively small companies who need a bigger partner. Right now, we are co-producing with JWP Productions in Barcelona, Zohe Films in New York and Laika in Sweden.”

*How do you co-produce? Where do you find your partners?*

“We have no specific targeted strategy for finding co-production partners. We might locate projects at festivals or markets or by direct inquiry from them or from us. It depends on the project.”

*Mention a successful co-production.*

“IDFA this year is showing *Flying*, a co-production between Easy Film A/S and Zohe Film of the US. It's a co-production that not only has an economic rationale but co-developing the series has a high priority. The director of the series, Jennifer Fox, had a very personal story to tell and was looking for a way to get it across to an audience. She is teaming up with a Danish producer (me) and a Danish editor, Niels Pagh Andersen, who masters the uniquely Danish tradition of very personal documentaries. This mix, for sure, has given us a much better film by bringing together different experiences and narrative traditions.”

*Does co-production make films better?*

“I think so. Sometimes films improve and sometimes co-production simply gives the film the possibility of being made.”



Producer Sigrid Dyekjær. Photo: Phie Ambo

# TJU-BANG FILM

**”With co-productions you need to have a common goal. If I were to do a co-production with, say, Speranza Film in Norway, with Thomas Robsahm and Margreth Olin, it would be because we all want to - because we share a certain filmic point of view.**

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

Tju-Bang Film’s Sigrid Dyekjær is a producer whose energy and enthusiasm shine through as she talks about documentary directors she has worked with in recent years: Mikala Krogh (*My Grandfather’s Murderer*, 2004, a Tju-Bang production co-directed by Søren Fauli, which won Best Documentary in Biarritz, France and Servilla, Spain), Phie Ambo (*Family*, 2001, a Cinevita Film Company production co-directed by Sami Saif, 2001, which won the Joris Ivens Award at IDFA Amsterdam) and Pernille Rose Grønkjær, whose new film *The Monastery*, produced by Tju-Bang, is selected for this year’s IDFA Jori Ivens competition.

As Dyekjær tells FILM, creativity is at Tju-Bang’s core. The company’s whole team is available to

## TJU-BANG FILM / A SELECTION OF CO-PRODUCTIONS

*Detour to Freedom* (directed by Mikala Krogh), in competition at IDFA, screened in Danish cinemas; *Freeway* (directed by Jacob Thuesen); *Stargazer* (directed by Christina Rosendahl), screened in Danish cinemas, *My Grandfather’s Murderer* (directed by Søren Fauli and Mikala Krogh), awarded generously; *Gambler* (directed by Phie Ambo), screened at various festivals, *Monastery* (directed by Pernille Rose Grønkjær), selected for Joris Ivens Competition at IDFA 2006.

For further details and co-productions in the pipe-line, please go to: [www.tjubangfilm.dk](http://www.tjubangfilm.dk)

directors who wish to use them. “We are not producer-steered. Here reigns a collective creative spirit,” she says, stressing the importance of having in-house editing suites for the often very long process of editing documentaries.

Tju-Bang Film was founded in 1997 by four good friends: the film editor Per K. Kirkegaard and three directors, Søren Fauli, Niels Gråbøl and Jacob Thuesen. The partnership later expanded with the arrival of the producer Sigrid Dyekjær, the film editor Theis Schmidt and the documentary filmmaker Mikala Krogh.

Dyekjær, who joined the company in 2000, focuses on “people and projects that I can be passionate about - because creatively investigating filmmaking is a long-term commitment with no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and I am the one who has to make the tenth call to the DFI or some TV channel to get funding.”

*Why do you co-produce?*

”With co-productions you need to have a common goal. If I were to do a co-production with, say, Speranza Film in Norway, with Thomas Robsahm and Margreth Olin, it would be because we all want to - because we share a certain filmic point of view. So far we haven’t worked together, but at some point I certainly hope we will.

“We currently have a co-production in the pipeline - Phie Ambo’s new film *Mechanical Love* - with Kaarle Aho from Making Movies, Finland, and I have a good feeling about it. The Finns provide us with the composer Sanna Salmenkallio, who also wrote the score for Pirjo Honkasalo’s *The 3 Rooms of Melancholia*.”

*Who are your co-producers?*

“I’d rather dwell a little on the minority-majority aspect of co-production. I have had some pretty disenchanting experiences with certain co-producers, both as a minority and a majority co-producer. As it turned out, the other parties were too busy with projects of their own and failed to commit enough time and effort to the partnership.

“Then I can mention *When the War is Over* by South African filmmaker Francois Verster, where we started out as the minority producer but ended up with the main creative responsibility for the film. We invested a lot of energy and money to make a good film and it has travelled the world. It may be because of our strong editing capacity that we so often end up as the creative responsible producers.”

*How do you co-produce? Where do you find your partners?*

“Festivals and markets mostly, but people also come to us with projects, because they have met one of our directors. Francois Verster, for example, had seen Jakob Thuesen’s *Under New York* and was fascinated by it.”

*Mention a successful co-production ...*

“From a creative point of view: Francois Verster’s *When the War is Over*. It had good financial backing and a strong distributor, First Hand Films.”

*Does co-production make films better?*

“Yes, if you can identify the qualities of the individual companies, then the films can be improved. You have to do that instead of focusing on finances.”

## BASTARD FILM / A SELECTION OF CO-PRODUCTIONS

*The Beautiful Game 1-4* (directed by Thomas Stokholm, Andreas Rocksén, Jens Weinreich), nominated for PRIX EUROPA, 11 MM Berlin; *Enemies Of Happiness* (directed by Eva Mulvad, 2006), selected for IDFA Silver Wolf Competition; *Death at the Pitch* (directed by Miki Mistrati, Adam Tatt).

For further details and co-productions in the pipe-line, please go to: [www.bastardfilm.dk](http://www.bastardfilm.dk)

# BASTARD FILM

**“We co-produce primarily to achieve funding for our projects. So far, we have mostly co-produced with broadcasters, who have collaborated without dramatically interfering in the filmic, artistic expression. That’s a major advantage.”**

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

Founded five years ago by three journalists – Miki Mistrati, Søren Steen Jespersen and Thomas Stokholm – Bastard Film has won a host of awards for their investigative TV documentaries. In 2004, their critical four-part football series, *The Beautiful Game* (produced for SVT in Sweden and including seven other TV financiers), was sold to more than 20 countries.

The addition of a fourth partner, Helle Faber, to the executive mix, has leavened Bastard Film’s journalistic profile with a more classical documentary approach, as is evident in *Enemies of Happiness* (IDFA-selected, Silver Wolf competition) directed by Eva Mulvad.

Today, Bastard Film is one of Denmark’s most productive independent companies. FILM met with Faber to discuss co-producing.

“We co-produce primarily to achieve funding for our projects. So far, we have mostly co-produced with broadcasters, who have collaborated without dramatically interfering in the



Producer Helle Faber. Photo: P. Wessel

filmic, artistic expression. That’s a major advantage.

“As for co-productions with other companies, we have been asked a few times. However, for now I prefer to focus my energy on our own projects, since I know how much work is involved in international co-productions and how insignificant the financial rewards are.”

“Currently, we are developing a big Nordic project with Swedish Leica Film and Norwegian November Film. Our aim is to produce some broader journalistic programmes for the three major Nordic TV stations. We are trying to identify subjects that none of the broadcasters can afford to pay for themselves, because it makes sense if we can offer them high quality for a third of the price they would have to pay on their own.”

*If you were to name a successful co-production of yours, which would it be?*

“*The Beautiful Game*, especially the part about the controversial FIFA boss, Sepp Blatter, and his corrupt abuse of power, has been in demand. On this production, we collaborated with a German journalist, who provided invaluable creative input from outside Denmark. Another example would be *Enemies of Happiness*, which had the collaboration of the brilliant English camerawoman Zillah Bowes.

“Our new football film, *Death on the Pitch*, co-financed with SVT and NRK, may also turn out to be a success. Time – and sales – will tell...”

*Does co-producing make better films?*

“Sometimes, absolutely. Still, it’s hard for me to see how a film like *Enemies of Happiness*, would have gained from being a real co-production. We got support for that film from NRK, YLE and the Nordic Film & TV Fund. None of them was involved in the creative process, whereas the involvement of the commissioning editors of DR/TV and the DFI proved very valuable. Their ‘fresh eyes’ on the material were very inspiring, as was knowing their expectations.”





Producer Mikael Opstrup. Photo: P. Wessel

# FINAL CUT FILM PRODUCTION

**“The money you can raise through co-production definitely provides the conditions for making films better. And genuine, creative co-operation can make them a lot better.”**

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

Final Cut Film Production was started up in 1993 by Thomas Stenderup. Shortly after graduating from the National Film School of Denmark in 1989 Stenderup was made secretary general of Documentary in Copenhagen, an EU MEDIA office. He was a founder of the IDFA Forum and Dox, a leading international magazine about documentary film. Today, Stenderup is in charge of Final Cut's fiction production, leaving the documentaries to Mikael Opstrup and Signe Byrge Sørensen.

Opstrup, a Final Cut co-owner and producer since 2002, is no newcomer to documentary

## FINAL CUT / A SELECTION OF CO-PRODUCTIONS

*Walking On Water* (directed by Fredrik Gertten and Lars Westman); *The German Secret* (directed by Lars Johansson), selected for IDFA Joris Ivens Competition, awarded Best Documentary at Nordisk Panorama, Grand Prix at Odense International Film Festival, and also awards at ZagrebDox, Guangzhou Documentary Film Festival; *Letters from Denmark* (directed by Phie Ambo, Morten Arnfred, Erik Clausen, Rumle Hammerich, Per K. Kirkegård, Jens Loftager, Vibe Mogensen, Sami Saif, Birgitte Stærmosse, Janus Billeskov Jansen); *Frozen Heart* (directed by Stig Andersen and Kenny Sanders), in competition at IDFA, second prize at Valladolid; *Weightless* (directed by Sigve Endresen), screened at Nordisk Panorama, IDFA and Norwegian International Film Festival in Haugesund.

For further details and co-productions in the pipe-line, please go to: [www.final-cut.dk](http://www.final-cut.dk)

film. Once active in distribution and theatrical release of documentaries, he has worked as a freelance production manager, attended EAVE and arranged film festivals. For four years, he was a production adviser at DFI and he is still a tutor at EDN workshops as well as EDN-boardmember.

The most successful Final Cut documentary in recent years is *The German Secret* by Lars Johansson. The film got a lot of exposure at festivals around the world, putting Final Cut on the map as a company with big ambitions for cinematic quality. Incidentally, Arte, the leading European broadcaster of documentaries, was involved in the production of the film.

FILM met with Opstrup at Nordic Forum in Denmark in late September, just before he was off to investigate a possible co-production in Damascus, one year after the Danish cartoon controversy.

“I’ve never come across a co-production that didn’t have the financial aspect at its source – which is, of course, completely legitimate. But you have to be aware of this, because financing partners who require co-production in order to support the film (film institutes, MEDIA, Eurimages, etc.) want genuine collaboration in terms of production and creativity. If you try to make it a purely financial partnership, there is a big risk of running into problems.”

*What kinds of films are suitable for co-production?*

“Mostly, films where a co-producer can offer special production knowledge or creativity; films with shooting or post-production in a country where you need local knowledge and contacts; or films where you really want to use the creative skills of a filmmaker in another country.

“Overall, co-production is for films where you can identify and isolate the jobs you need your co-producer to do – editing is a good example.”

“I prefer to co-produce with companies I know and have a good relationship with. We have a partner in Norway, Motlys that we always co-produce with. In Sweden, we have formed a company together with a Swedish producer, Mantaray Film. Co-producing with these companies makes life simple, a joy! I have also tried co-producing with companies I did not know beforehand – and some of those projects were living hell!”

“I have found my partners at international events where we do things together – EAVE, pitching sessions, etc. – and through personal recommendations from people I believe in.”

*Can you name a successful co-production?*

“*The German Secret* was a financially successful co-production in the sense that the money we needed could only be found through co-production. That’s what happened and I think the production values show in the finished film. Another example, *Do you love me?*, by Lars Westman, was a creative success because the combination of a Swedish director and a Danish editor, Niels Pagh Andersen, worked out perfectly.”

*Does co-producing make better films?*

“The money you can raise through co-production definitely provides the conditions for making films better. And genuine, creative co-operation can make them a lot better.”

## MAGIC HOUR FILMS / A SELECTION OF CO-PRODUCTIONS

*The 3 Rooms Of Melancholia* (directed by Pirjo Honkasalo), among others, recipient of Human Rights Prize, Venice, cph-dox Award, IDFA-Amnesty International Award in 2004; *Närvarande* (directed by Jan Troell); *State of Dogs* (directed by Peter Brosens and Dorjkhaydn Turmunkh), recipient of numerous international awards; *Julia's Madness* (directed by Hannes Schönemann); *Light, Darkness And Colours* (directed by Marie Louise Lauridsen, Marie Louise Lefevre, Henrik Boëtius), among others, recipient of Grand Prix Leonardo; *Arne Treholt - The Man And His Destiny* (directed by Morten Henriksen), in competition at Haugesund, Copenhagen and Lübeck, the following year at Cinéma du Réel, and festivals Estonia and Umeå.

For further details and co-productions in the pipe-line, please go to: [www.magichourfilms.dk](http://www.magichourfilms.dk)

# MAGIC HOUR FILMS

**“If you manage to keep the focus on the project, and don’t allow yourself to get bogged down by the logistic and financial puzzle, co-production can definitely add to a project. If not, it can be a disaster.”**

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

Lise Lense-Møller, a dedicated producer, has been fighting for decades to create better conditions for Danish documentary film production. As a member, at various times, of every important national film board, she has always stressed that quality takes time and development – and, it goes to follow, good budgets.

Her credits are extensive. She has an obvious passion for making documentaries about and for children and young people, a passion that has bred several small masterpieces.

Erlend E. Mo, a Norwegian-born director (*My Eyes* – selected for the Silver Cub Competition, IDFA 2006), after years working for television found a new home at Magic Hour Films where he could further develop his filmmaking skills. Last year, the company launched Mette Zeruneith, an editor, as a director of the much acclaimed *In the Soldier's Footsteps* (IDFA 2005).

More than anything, Lense-Møller has produced the Danish documentaries that everyone on the international documentary scene knows. As the Magic Hour Films website puts it, “Producer and managing director Lise Lense-Møller is a European expert in production. For the last 15 years, she has been lecturing and leading international workshops, and working as a group leader for the MEDIA training programme EAVE. For the same reason, the company has an extensive European network.”

FILM met Lense-Møller at Nordic Forum in Århus where she was pitching *Balcony Tales*, to be directed by Helle Windeløv, another new talent shooting into an international orbit with Lense-Møller’s help.

*Why do you co-produce?*

“To be inspired and challenged and help get good projects made. To meet people and ideas, and to maintain and build networks around the world, networks that will give me access to talent, expertise, profile, and money – though not necessarily all at once.”

*What kinds of films are suitable for co-production?*



Lise Lense-Møller. Photo: P. Wessel

“If you can create interest in the project among financiers and audiences in more than one country, three types of projects are suitable for co-production: natural co-productions, where the content of the film demands pan-national cooperation of some kind; high-profile projects with recognized talent; and, finally, projects that fit into strategic partnerships.”

*Who are your co-producers?*

“People I trust, who have creative and ethical goals not too far from mine. But also people that can bring something different to a project, people who are strong in areas where I am less strong.”

*How do you co-produce? Where do you find your partners?*

“I have been doing workshops, especially for producers, all over Europe for the past 15 years, so I have a wide network, but I also meet people at events like the Forum or at festivals.”

*Name a successful co-production.*

“My first co-production, *300 Miles to Heaven*, a feature film directed by Maciej Dejczer, was a Danish, Polish, French co-production that went on to win numerous awards, including the Felix (European Film Academy) for Best Young Film in 1989 and the Cannes Junior in 1990, and was distributed in many markets. Also, one of my latest, *The 3 Rooms of Melancholia*, Pirjo Honkasalo’s feature-length documentary, was a Finnish, Danish, Swedish, German co-production that was theatrically released in 14 countries and took home international awards in 2004-2005, including the CPH:DOX Award (shared with *Darwin's Nightmare*) and The Amnesty International – DOEN Award at IDFA.”

*Does co-producing improve films?*

“If you manage to keep the focus on the project, and don’t allow yourself to get bogged down by the logistic and financial puzzle, co-production can definitely add to a project. If not, it can be a disaster.”



The android robot and the inventor. Photo: Tju-Bang Film

## MECHANICAL LOVE

**Director Phie Ambo and producer Sigrid Dyekjær from Tju-Bang Film are pitching *Mechanical Love* at IDFA Forum 2006. The film is about people who have overcome their reservations about dealing with robots and embrace the new opportunities this technology offers.**

In all industrialised nations, robots are replacing humans in trivial manual tasks. Robots are cheaper, more reliable and more durable. Now, there is a new kind of robot, from Japan: the therapeutic, “mental commitment” robot to keep us company, at home or in nursing home environments. These are robots designed to be personal companions. Some can make small talk, check your e-mail, recommend movies and transmit images of your loved ones.

*Mechanical Love* is about people who have overcome their reservations and embrace the new opportunities that robot technology offers.

Paro is a cute little baby-seal robot developed over the last 13 years by one of Japan’s most prominent robot developers, Professor Takanori Shibata. Extensive research has gone into the hardware underneath its fluffy coat. Paro weighs the same as a newborn baby and has a body temperature of 30 degrees. Programmed to be entirely autonomous, it has its own way of living and is able to learn.

Holding the little seal has been proven to alleviate dementia and it helps children in hospitals recover faster. Paro stimulates our need for bodily and emotional contact.

Professor Takanori’s Paro has been introduced at nursing homes and

hospitals in Sweden, France, Germany, Japan and Italy.

At the Department of Adaptive Machine Systems at Osaka University, Professor Hiroshi Ishiguro dedicates his time to copying humans. He has already copied his daughter and the next logical step is copying himself. As he says, “It’s very practical to have the master nearby!”

Professor Ishiguro doesn’t create androids to work at factory assembly lines. He intends his robots to eventually be used in social services. In the film, we will follow Professor Ishiguro as he works on the world’s most complex android, the copy of himself. The complex task of copying himself has made Professor Ishiguro wonder what it takes to be human. He works closely with psychologists and programmers to hone in on what qualifies us as human and copy such qualities. How far apart do we stand when we talk together? How exactly do we move our body when we think we are sitting still? How do we physically react to emotional input? How does the physical experience of a lifetime express itself?

In the film, we will see a seven-year-old girl snuggling Amanda and holding her close to her heart. We will see how she cares for the doll round the clock as if it were a baby.

Can a human love a robot? Can a robot love a human? And can robots bring people together? By using the robot and the latest robot technology as a prism, filmmaker Phie Ambo will look at what constitutes a human being. Who are we? What does it take to build relationships? And what is love?

Read more: [www.tjubangfilm.dk](http://www.tjubangfilm.dk)

# THERE IS ONLY ONE PLANET AND IT HAS ITS LIMITS

***The Planet* is a theatrical feature and a four-part TV series on the state of our world. A tour-de-force presentation of global images, environments and experts, it asks: If we know the environment is threatened, why don’t we act? Fox Media of Denmark is a co-production partner. The film is selected for IDFA Joris Ivens Competition.**

*The Planet*, a hybrid of factual documentary, music video and feature film, is edited, co-directed and scored by Johan Söderberg, the innovative Swedish editor and composer who edited Erik Gandini’s *Surplus* and Jonas Åkerlund’s Madonna documentary *I’m Going to Tell You a Secret*, among many others. Clearly a change from traditional science films, it’s also one of the most expensive Scandinavian documentaries ever – the total cost of the TV series and film is nearly 3 million euros. Over two years, the film’s crews visited more than 25 countries around the world. The film will premiere in Swedish cinemas and later be broadcast on national television in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, France and Germany.

Charon Film of Stockholm is the main producer in co-production with Robert Fox of Fox Media. International audiences will remember Fox from *Flash of a Dream* (2002), his portrait of Jacob Riis, the Danish photographer and social warrior who used his camera as a weapon against poverty and deprivation in the slums of late-

19th-century New York.

Fox co-produced *The Planet* because of his firm conviction that the project was an important one and, he says, “Because it’s very close to what I have been doing in my previous films, fusing science, music, shorts and documentaries.

“It was interesting to be a producer on another director’s film. And a learning experience, because you see the process from a different angle,” Fox says.

Ask Fox how he learned production and he will tell you it’s from working for his own most difficult client: himself.

*The Planet* is a hot-from-the-oven attempt to find answers about the truths and untruths of the alarming global changes many say are already in motion. But it’s also a film about much more than climate change. It’s about the Earth as a whole and the general global changes we are going through right now.

Read more: [www.charon.se](http://www.charon.se) / [www.foxmedia.dk](http://www.foxmedia.dk)



The Planet. Photo: Fox Media

# OBSERVATIONAL CINEMA & THE DANCING MIND

**For a lifetime Anne Wivel has contributed to defining Danish documentary film. Now, her son Ulrik Wivel, is among the new talents putting their imprint on contemporary documentaries. Moreover, they often produce under the same roof. FILM met them for a conversation about film language and their sources of inspiration. Representing two generations of documentary filmmakers, mother and son talk about their images of reality.**

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER / FREELANCE FILM CONSULTANT, TEACHER

The Wivel name has generally been associated with a very personal signature in documentaries. For decades, Anne Wivel has been an inspiration to younger generations of documentary filmmakers in Denmark. What's more, since 2000, she has run Barok Film, a documentary production company focusing on developing new talent.

In recent years, the lingering, steady images and essayistic, philosophical montages that made her name have been complemented by another documentary style bearing the Wivel name. Today, choreographic, scenic films with an entirely different feel, courtesy of Ulrik Wivel, are starting to attract attention. So, it seems appropriate to open this conversation by asking,

*What are the distinctive differences between your views?*

UW: Clearly, there's no generational rebellion. My generation honestly looks up to those filmmakers – Jørgen Leth, Jon Bang Carlsen, Anne, all those people. It's not about distancing yourself but finding your own language and moving on.

AW: I think there is a difference in how younger filmmakers are much more aware of 'the good story.' In that sense, they are competing head to head with society, which is chockfull of good stories. Your generation have an almost somnambulist tendency to discuss things as stories or call them dramas.

The young people around me at Barok Film are bursting with stories that deal with the world. They got their training from Arne Bro, who heads the TV department at the National Film School and is very sought after at film schools around the world.

They understand what the human element is, because they got to make these penetrating films as part of their film-school training. It has honed the alertness required when you take on big assignments – just look at what Eva Mulvad did in her Afghanistan film, *Enemies of Happiness*.

My generation came up with Wiseman and Andy Warhol in our baggage. With a radical, artistic sense of language that was on a collision course with all things mainstream at the time. Young filmmakers today are in another place, balancing between the mainstream and the avant-garde, and they tend to take a poetic, humorous view of the conditions of the industry. I am pleased to see so many of them working in television, carrying on skills they received during their training.

*An observational documentary like Anne's Face to Face – which was shot at a seminary school, runs three hours and has a lot of dialogue – is that a completely alien concept to you?*

UW: Not really. What's interesting is whether there's a subtext. I'm talking about something bigger than 'the now'. There are always other layers. My own films often have a direct layer and a scenic layer that I use in working with the subtext. It's not just about the volume of words, it's more about having room for emotions in between the words.

AW: We never limited ourselves to only discussing my own documentaries in our family. We talked about films like everyone else talks about films. Ulrik is not particularly indoctrinated with 'the documentary,' but it's fun to see that he is doing something with it anyway.

*Dancer, your film with the ballet dancer Nikolaj Hübbe, seems to me to have some of the flavour of a classic documentary.*

UW: Yes, it's a lot like the old school.

*Okay, here's the generational comment! What is this old school?*

UW: It's about recognizing that reality is central. My generation, for its part, is occupied more with mixing documentary and fiction with other ways of storytelling to create new views of the world. Anne's generation really started the evolution that has made documentaries the most happening place for art in films today.

*What makes them the most happening place?*

UW: It's the freedom to use reality to tell our stories.

There's a tremendous sense of freedom in working across all boundaries. I personally have the option to pick and choose from every shelf.

AW: It's funny, because that's how I felt when I started out. I went straight from art school to film school, and I was surprised to find that apparently I was the only one who realized that documentaries, in effect, also are a kind of fiction.

Later, when I started making films with the cinematographer Dan Laustsen, a film-school buddy who worked in advertising and fiction, we were really using fiction gambits. There he was, floating around on his dolly, while I forbid people to wear red clothes and covered the walls to block out any distracting elements.

But I have always been consumed with 'reality' – documentaries are my way of discussing reality. They afford some shelter and let you have your own secret senses of language. Perhaps that's why I chose this genre. Because it deals with real things, things you can discuss with other people. I always liked that no one really thinks a documentary about a prison, at heart, is about the filmmaker's own sense of imprisonment.

*Have documentaries become more entertaining?*

AW: They are more conscious of the need for entertainment value. I think, in your generation, you allow yourselves to be more entertaining.

*Ulrik, what's the image of documentaries among young people? For instance, what do the dancers in your films think?*

UW: They probably think of documentaries as pretty highbrow, delicate things. I like that delicacy. Many people think the so-called documentaries they watch on TV every night are real documentaries, though 70 percent of the time the label is misapplied to TV shows that are slapped together in no time and often have a sensational angle – and never take an emotional stand. To me, those aren't documentaries.

*How do you want your films to affect the audience?*

UW: I hope they give people a great experience, a different take that might open a door to new things. But I really don't have a lot of ambitions for my audience. That would be unbearable.

*But you do, Anne, don't you, in The Land of Human Beings – My Film about Greenland?*

AW: I think we both have a great desire to be in touch with our own material. You spend so much energy getting a film made, because you're convinced humanity needs to see your specific film! As for my Greenland film, I simply said we needed a new film about modern Greenland. In Denmark, we have a longstanding tradition of treating our old colony, Greenland, as an artistic subject. So I joined that tradition.

*Ulrik, it's fair to say there have been a lot of ballet films. Why do you make yours?*

UW: I don't make ballet films, I make love stories – and there are plenty of those, too. Plus, few films have been made about the environment I choose.

I think I'm artistically secure enough to feel that what I do is original and thus valuable – that my films will appeal to other people than myself.

AW: Ulrik's filmmaking style shows his background and training as a dancer. He's very savvy about where to place the camera and has a sure sense of spatial description. He stages individual elements in a space with a musical approach to the physical movements in a scene.

I used Ulrik as a cameraman on *My Film about Greenland* and the footage he came home with was surprisingly plastic. My approach to film is rooted in visual art and my ear for language.

UW: Fundamentally, you could say, it doesn't matter where something comes from or where it takes place – if something is good, it's because a human story is driving it.



Directors Ulrik Wivel and Anne Wivel. Photo: P. Wessel

#### ANNE WIVEL

Born 1945. Graduated in painting at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, 1977. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 1980. Founder and leader of the production company Barok Film. Achievement award: the Danish Film Institute Roos Award.

Selected documentaries: *David eller Goliath/David or Goliath* (1988) awarded Nordic Film Prize; Frederick Wiseman Special Prize and Filmer à Tout Prix. *Giselle* (1991), awarded Special Prize for Music and Arts at Prix Italia; Silver Medal at Dance on Camera, New York. Recent films: *A Madman, A Lover or A Poet – Hans Christian Andersen* (2006); *Menneskenes land – Min film om Grønland/The Land of Human Beings – My film about Greenland* (2006).

#### ULRIK WIVEL

Born 1976. Ballet dancer and director. Soloist at the Royal Danish Ballet, 1986-1992. Guest performer with the New York City Ballet, 1996-1998. Has worked on a number of films, including *Søren Ulrik Thomsen – Poet* (1999). Wivel has also directed portraits of New Yorkers, including *Staceyann Chin*, as well as three documentaries on dance: *Danser/Dancer* (2000), *Urge* (2004) and *Jeg dig elsker/! You Love* (2005).

#### BAROK FILM

Founded 2000 by director Anne Regitze Wivel. Originally a documentary company, having since expanded into the field of feature films. Was formerly a sister company to Skandinavisk Film Kompagni. Became independent in 2002.

Among a substantial body of documentaries are *Rejsen på ophavet/Max by Chance* (Max Kestner, 2004), *Min fars sind/The Mind of My Father* (Vibe Mogensen, 2005) and *Menneskenes land/The Land of Human Beings* (Anne Regitze Wivel, 2006). The company's first feature film is *Silkevejen/Silk Road* (Jytte Rex, 2004), followed up by their second, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn, 2006), an epic tragedy set in the 1920s depicting the threats of civilization on Inuit life.

# PUSHING THE LIMITS

**TalentDok, a subsidy scheme at the Danish Film Institute (DFI), introduced 2005-2006, was devised to uncover the documentary talent mass in Denmark and forge links between new talents and the professional film industry. From 2007, the DFI will continue to encourage talent development under a permanent subsidy scheme at DFI's New Danish Screen.**

**FILM talks to some of the people behind TalentDok: Dola Bonfils and Michael Haslund-Christensen, DFI consultants for short and documentary film; Prami Larsen, who has carried out a similar project at the DFI Film Workshop (Boost the Dox); and the filmmaker Mikala Krogh, who made *Beth's Diary* with the Swedish photographer Kent Klich.**

BY LARS MOVIN

"As a consultant, it's been very rewarding to try out new ways of dialoguing with applicants," Michael Haslund-Christensen says, consultant for short and documentary film at the Danish Film Institute (DFI).

"The usual application procedure mainly involves saying yes or no to projects," Haslund-Christensen says. "It's hard to know how much you can influence the applicants – or how much they even wish to be influenced. TalentDok made it legitimate to step in and really push people and provoke them to burst their own boundaries. The film industry generally is very quick to assign roles. This director makes that kind of film, that cinematographer uses that kind of shot, that editor has that style. So it's been interesting for us consultants to have room to work, allowing us to challenge those roles and try to bring out new aspects of people."

Dola Bonfils, another DFI short and documentary film consultant, adds, "The way I see it, the project's aim was giving a shot in the arm to the development process as a whole. We have done this in several ways, testing new forms of project development and combining disciplines in new ways. For example, two editors, Nanna Frank Møller and Per K. Kirkegaard, have come out as directors, while the director Mikala Krogh had her wish come true when she got to cut her own film.

"This has been one way to explore the untapped talent mass among working filmmakers who may find themselves locked down in one thing, making it hard to try out other aspects," Bonfils says.

"Moreover, we have encouraged directors to call in writers or dramaturgists already in the research phase. In documentaries, it's not common practice to apply for a writer or a dramaturgist during research, and we wanted to try that. Likewise, we wanted to challenge directors to think aesthetics into the process. Why shouldn't documentaries be conceived in aesthetic terms from the beginning?"

Then, there's the financial aspect. According to Haslund-Christensen, the project has been rewarding in that sense as well.

**"TalentDok made it legitimate to step in and really push people and provoke them to burst their own boundaries." (Haslund-Christensen)**

"Normally, the process is all about getting supplementary financing, especially from broadcasters," he says. "In TalentDok, the DFI fully finances the projects – apart from the 10 percent the producer has to put up. It's been great to get to talk



*Beth's Diary* by Mikala Krogh is produced under TalentDok. Photo: Kent Klich

about film, get down to the bones of the film straight away, instead of constantly having to talk strategy. In the case of *Beth's Diary*, just four months or so passed from the time we received the application to the film was finished."

## NEW ROLES

The projects in TalentDok can roughly be divided into two groups. In one group are filmmakers who have already shown talent and now get an opportunity to take it to the next level, so they avoid getting locked down in making the same kind of film over and over again. In the other group are filmmakers who have made a name for themselves in a certain function – as directors, editors, DP's or other – and now want to try their hand in a new capacity.

From the first category comes *Dear God* by Lise Birk Pedersen, who graduated in direction from the TV department at the National Film School of Denmark. The film follows daily life at the Dead Letters Office in Jerusalem. The local postmaster is responsible for forwarding letters addressed to God, a task he takes extremely seriously. Preparing for the film, Pedersen went to Jerusalem with a screenwriter from the Film School, which resulted in a draft of a story and a handful of characters. Though it proved impossible to stick to the details of the storyline while shooting, the clear dramaturgic structure still shows through in the finished film.

From the second category comes Maria Mac Dalland's *Black at Heart*, an experiment combining the filmmaker's background as an animator with the documentary format. The film tracks a group of Iraqi families at a Danish deportation centre who have been denied asylum. Minimalist documentary sequences, showing a stagnant daily routine of waiting, alternate with animated vignettes of a lone figure trekking through a windswept desert, an image of an asylum seeker's state of mind.

"Another example is Erlend E. Mo's new film, *My*

**“We have encouraged directors to call in writers or dramaturgists already in the research phase. (...) Likewise, we wanted to challenge directors to think aesthetics into the process.” (Bonfils)**

Eyes,” Bonfils adds. “The challenge there was how to work with blind people. How do they picture the world when they can’t see it and how does the filmmaker represent that? Then, there’s the added ethical dimension of how much you permit yourself, how close up can you go? On top of that, the DP, Casper Høyberg, did a technical experiment, shooting in a combination of 16mm and HD and putting it out on HDCAM SR.”

#### BETH’S DIARY

One of the filmmakers who got a chance to spread her wings under the TalentDok scheme was Mikala Krogh. Since graduating in directing from the TV department at Denmark’s National Film School in 2001, Krogh has directed several productions, including *Detour to Freedom* (2001), selected for IDFA First Appearance, and *My Grandad’s Murderer* (with Søren Fauli, 2004). In *Beth’s Diary*, an intimate portrait of a junkie prostitute, Krogh used still images as a narrative element and got to try her hand as an editor. *Beth’s Diary* is recipient of cph:dox GuldDok Award, November 2006.

“Working under TalentDok was great for me,” Krogh says. “Both because I got to try out things I couldn’t have done under the usual subsidy scheme and because everyone involved was willing to depart from their normal roles.”

*Beth’s Diary* actually began as a video installation. Krogh was contacted by the Swedish photographer Kent Klich, who had been following Beth, now a former drug addict and prostitute, for 20 years. Klich was considering adding a video installation to an upcoming exhibition of his photographs in Copenhagen.

“We discussed it back and forth a bit and came up with the idea of giving Beth a camcorder so she could make a video diary,” Krogh says. “Kent had been photographing her for 20 years and we thought it would be interesting to see how she saw herself. When I looked through the footage, I thought it called for an actual film, as well. Both because Kent’s pictures are so unique and because Beth’s own footage quite unexpectedly turned out to have a dramaturgical storyline. We then divided the work, with Kent gathering the material while I did the post-work.”

*Beth’s Diary* takes place in the days around Beth’s mother’s 80th birthday, a milestone Beth wasn’t sure she was up to celebrating until the last minute. We never see her mother in the film, but she is a constant presence in Beth’s video notes. Near the end of the film, the real reasons for the tense relationship between mother and daughter are revealed. The film intersperses the video notes with montages of stills, mainly Klich’s black

and white shots from the past 20 years but also private snapshots, silently describing a life of drug abuse, prostitution, disease, humiliation, physical deterioration and the struggle to make it through each day.

Overall, Krogh says, the biggest advantage of working under TalentDok wasn’t only the opportunity to test my skills as an editor or the purely technical experiments but the whole development and financing process.

“As a director, it was incredibly rewarding to start out by meeting an entire editorial committee that had familiarized themselves with your project and discussed it among themselves, and then have as close a dialogue with a consultant as I did with Dola Bonfils.

#### BOOST THE DOX

While TalentDok ran, the Film Workshop – located on the top floor of the DFI building in central Copenhagen – carried out a similar initiative called Boost the Dox, within the Film Workshop’s special subsidy conditions. Apart from an almost symbolic production subsidy of 6,700 euros in cash, the projects, more important, had access to the Workshop’s technical facilities. Meanwhile, the filmmakers, who are all 30 or younger, prepared for the task by attending a series of seminars on political documentaries, historically and today.

**“Overall, the biggest advantage of working under TalentDok wasn’t only the opportunity to test my skills as an editor or the purely technical experiments but the whole development and financing process.” (Krogh)**

“The idea for Boost the Dox emerged in the wake of Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, when I wanted to organize a seminar on political documentaries,” Prami Larsen says. He has headed the Film Workshop since 1995. “I looked around in the field of Danish filmmakers for people who make personal, socially committed documentaries, but I practically didn’t find any, certainly no younger filmmakers. I think that’s a real deficiency. We need to hear some young voices on these issues, so I decided to do an outreach project.”

Unlike TalentDok, which mainly targets filmmakers with a certain level of experience, Boost the Dox – and this is entirely in the spirit of the Film Workshop – aimed to dig deeper into the potential growth layers and discover untried documentary talent. Filmmaking experience was not a requirement, Larsen says. As the main criteria, they had to be under 30 years old and express an interest in getting involved in a socially relevant issue and making a film about it.

The project kicked off in September 2005. The first Film Workshop seminar had 178 participants and 98 of them submitted project proposals. The applicants were then put to school in a lecture

series on the history of documentary film, their production, ethics, reporting, etc.

“An important aspect was that filmmakers weren’t allowed to administer the money themselves,” Larsen says. “They had to make alliances with a production company. Right away they were thrown into the professional industry, where they will be operating in the future.”

In the end, five projects were selected for production: *Jorden er giftig*, a film about pollution with a personal premise; *En vej frem* (formerly *Mellem tre verdener*), a film by two anthropologists about a youth-integration project in Acasieparken, a socially and economically deprived housing complex in Copenhagen; *En forening i modvind*, a portrait of the Danish-North Korean Friendship Society; *Kærlighedspolitik*, about the increasingly restrictive Danish immigration laws; and *500 stenkastende autonome voldspsykopater fra Helvede* (formerly *Ungdomshuset*), a collective film about a self-governed youth house facing closure after the City of Copenhagen in 2001 sold the premises to a Christian sect despite the protests of the young people who use the house. All five films premiered at the cph:dox festival in November, 2006.

“In the last few years we have seen a lot of introspective films about people finding their father or mother, about roots and identity – and that’s certainly called for in an age of globalization, when everything is challenged and everyone is anxious,” Larsen says. “So it was amazing to see the commitment of these young people throwing themselves into projects dealing with issues about everything but their own navel. Even better, we are starting to see a rub-off effect overall. Political documentaries are simply starting to take up more space in our submissions pile.”

*For further information on Beth’s Diary, see catalogue section in back of this issue.*

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#### TALENTDOK

The purpose of the Danish Film Institute’s TalentDok subsidy scheme was to explore the field of Danish filmmakers and documentary talents, forging links between them and the professional film industry. Between 2004-2006, TalentDok was to develop about 15 ideas for films, of which 10 or so would be made into finished productions. The films had to run around 30 minutes, be shot in Denmark and stay within a financial framework of 20,000 euros for development and 100,000 euros for production. These goals have largely been met. In all, 47 proposals were submitted and 15 were developed. At the time of writing, nine films have been completed.

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#### BOOST THE DOX

A DFI Film Workshop project to support a new generation of socially committed documentary filmmakers. They were offered workshops, seminars and concept development by professional consultants. Five films received subsidies of 6,700 euros and equipment was made available to them.

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#### DOX NETWISE

is the latest DFI initiative to support the development of documentary film. The aim of the pool is to subsidize projects that use the Internet in innovative ways. The project might involve a new work concept or new ways of the work meeting its audience.



Dox-on-wheels and cph:dox festival director Tine Fischer. Photo: Polfoto

# DOCUMENTARY ROAD SHOW

**A new Danish initiative, dox-on-wheels, will promote documentary films by tailoring marketing and distribution to individual films. The dox-on-wheels team shares a secretariat with cph:dox, Copenhagen's international festival of documentary film. Tine Fischer is the director of the cph:dox festival and the driving force behind the establishment of dox-on-wheels.**

BY LARS MOVIN

The question is: What do you do about the many excellent documentaries that either go directly to broadcast or, worse, aren't seen at all? And how do you get documentaries into cinemas? Answers are provided by the people behind the cph:dox documentary film festival, who have succeeded in getting people to see documentaries in a festival setting. Since it began in 2003, cph:dox has established itself as one of the biggest documentary film events in Europe. The festival attracts more than 20,000 cinemagoers every year.

"We are trying to draw on some of our experiences from cph:dox. By creating a unique event around a film and adapting the promotional effort to it, we can generate substantial press coverage, even though the film is only shown twice at the festival. We hope this will raise the profile of documentary film in general and help fill some of the other slots that are available to individual films later on: education, lending at libraries and, of course, television, which remains the main platform for documentaries," festival director Tine Fischer says. "Many of the biggest European festivals – Sheffield, Leipzig – offer deals where they send packages of films from their line-up on tour. But only films that have already been shown at the festival. Then there is the US where they have so-called limited releases, which is probably closer to our model. These can be films that run at Film Forum in New York for a week and then go on the campus circuit for four months. For now, we have elected to focus mainly on cinemas. You have to start somewhere. But in the long run we hope to build a network of many different types of institutions – universities, corporations, libraries, community centres, etc."

## FILMS ON TOUR WITH DOX-ON-WHEELS 2006

*Gambler* (2006), Phie Ambo's portrait of Pusher-director Nicolas Winding Refn; *The Land of Human Beings* (2006), Anne Wivel's film about Greenland; *Me and You* (2006), Max Kestner's portrait of singer/songwriter Rasmus Nørh; and *Smiling in a War Zone* (2005), Simone Aaberg Kærn and Magnus Bejmar's international festival hit. Coming soon: *Leonard Cohen - I'm Your Man* (2005), a portrait film by Lian Lonson.

## ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE FROM LOCAL CINEMAS

"We typically turn to provincial cinemas, which are often the only cinemas in their communities," Fischer says. "These can be art houses or club cinemas or they can be ordinary cinemas with a mixed programme. Generally, they are run by people who feel a big sense of responsibility as local cultural entrepreneurs but rarely have the resources to whip up these types of one-shot events from scratch. So they are grateful when we offer them a finished package that even includes lending a hand with the local press efforts, direct mailings and so on. When we sent *Smiling in a War Zone* (Simone Aaberg Kærn, First Appearance IDFA 2005) on tour, local operators could fall back on the massive exposure the film had already had in the national press. Individual cinema operators could never have generated that kind of attention on their own and it had a very positive effect on our partnership efforts. When we first began, we used to spend a lot of time just trying to get through to cinema managers. Today they call us and ask when the next film is coming."

*How many events are typically in a tour?*

"It depends. In part on how much the filmmaker is willing to get involved personally. And as far as that is concerned, I think a change of mentality is called for. Margreth Olin sets aside three months to do public relations after a film and that has been instrumental in making her such a big name in Norwegian documentaries. Many Danish filmmakers start working on a new project as soon as they finish a film and we need to get them used to the fact that public relations is a job, too. Moreover, I think people should factor the distribution options into their production process at a much earlier stage than they do today – that's the case in fiction films where marketing is an issue already in the development phase," Fischer says.

## EXPERIENCES

"Most documentaries on some level engage in a dialogue with a social system," Fischer says. "So it's important that there are options for experiencing the films in a communal space. It's fine for documentaries to end up on television, where the big audience is, but it's a shame if they completely disappear from the communal space and are only experienced in the private sphere. Working with our model, we can put the films in the public eye, both by the events we create around the films and by the press coverage those events generate. The 100 or 150 people who show up for an event with a film screening and discussion represent a broad range of professional contexts. When they return to those contexts, they spread awareness of the film, and what it represents, in a way that would not be possible otherwise."

Indicating a potential future perspective for dox-on-wheels, some commercial distributors have started calling, because they are sitting on a category of films they would like to distribute but are afraid to throw a big PR budget at. Here, dox-on-wheels offers a cheap alternative. This fall, they are launching their first American picture, *Leonard Cohen - I'm Your Man*.

"In Copenhagen, we are planning a concert around the film," Fischer says. "And now theatrical distributors around the country are starting to contact us with similar ideas on the local level. Maybe 'enlightenment' isn't the right word, but this all confirms that dox-on-wheels is contributing to creating a culture around documentaries."





**FILM REGISTRATION: DEADLINE MAY 15, 2007**

**GUEST REGISTRATION: OPENS APRIL 1, 2007**

**POEM**

**OULU**

**FILM  
KONTAKT  
NORD**

**AVEK**  
THE PROMOTION CENTRE FOR  
AUDIOVISUAL CULTURE



## DFI KEY CONTACTS / IDFA AMSTERDAM 2006



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