

Introduction

John Canciani

This edition of OnCurating is based on the panel “The Future of Short Film”, which was held at the Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur. The former artistic director Reto Bühler invited Lars Henrik Gass (Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen), Maïke Mia Höhne (Berlinale Shorts), Peter van Hoof (International Film Festival Rotterdam), Jukka-Pekka Laakso (Tampere Film Festival) and Laurence Reymond (Quinzaine des Réalisateurs Cannes) to present a short film not longer than 10 minutes and to talk about the future of short films from an artistic point of view and not from a technical one, knowing that this often cannot be separated.

The guests were asked to describe a utopian vision of what they think the future could look like, and not to deliver a prognosis which had to be based on facts and would be 100% accurate. Catherine Colas, who is responsible for fiction and shorts at ARTE Germany, hosted the panel.

Giving a utopian vision seems easy at first sight. However, delving deeper into this question, it turns out that it is not at all an easy task. It is also a strange momentum for a curator to take a standpoint on this (even if we all do, or rather should) when we talk about film and art. When it comes to the future, adopting a clear position creates an uncomfortable expectation in people (especially in filmmakers), who seem to be daring to hear what the relevant festivals like or dislike. Often however, these discussions do not say anything about taste, but want to highlight new voices and trends. As often as not, curators show what is produced at the moment, in the hope that this could be a hint in which direction cinema could eventually go, or they just try to catch a current wave of filmmaking. The urge of some festivals seems to be to catch those tendencies in an early stage, to satisfy their inherent enthusiasm for new discoveries. Outside of competitions, it is mainly about contextualizing films and artists into topics, ideas or historical timelines. In the end our common goal is to celebrate cinema.

It is clear that programmers and curators do not create the future, but give it visibility; the future is designed by the artists themselves.

The panel was an attempt to talk about the visions of each curator. The discussion was guided by personal views on films that they saw in 2012. As they were only allowed to choose one film (with a time limit), it was impossible to express what they see as the future of the short film, but it gave them a base for a discussion. The main essence of this discussion was that so called “hybrid films” seem to be very appealing at the moment. This is a trend which is getting stronger, and as well can be found within formal practices and contents: For example not only by mixing techniques but also by mixing genres. Laurence Reymond came up with the expression “hybrid films” when she described why she chose her film, since the expression is very rarely used in film terminology. At first she didn’t directly mention the word hybrid but rather the word “métis”, which comes from “métissage”. “Métissage” means interbreeding. In the discussion she mentioned that film will be going further in the direction of hybridizing, and she thus captured in a nutshell what best suited everyone’s descriptions.

Different aspects of curatorial practices were discussed within the panel, even if this was not originally the panel's main target. Therefore I decided to dedicate the interviews (and also the essays) mainly to the discussion of "hybrid films" and curatorial practices.

Concentrating on the format of short films (we define short films not as a genre, but as a format) in an issue of *OnCurating* makes sense, since a major part of art and experimental films are thus produced. It gives off a wrong impression to see short films as part of the entertainment industry and as a platform for only presenting student projects. Short films have always played a major part within the avant-garde of the audiovisual arts, and have not lost their importance. The definitions of short film and art film are only very vaguely discussed in literature; one may find interpretations based on historical facts or general descriptions. However, these are not based on quantitative or qualitative facts, but rather on the opinions of experts. The only binding rule for the definition of short film is its length. It follows that it is the festivals themselves that define what is a short film by: a) making rules for competition and b) choosing films curated for non-competitive sections. The regulations of the most renowned festivals determine the length of a short at an average of 40 minutes, and in one case with a maximum of 59 minutes.

This issue starts where the panel, "The Future of Short Film" at the Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur started, by presenting the films each curator on the panel has chosen (Each film will be accessible online, following the links provided in the text, from the 3rd of May 2014 to 6th of July 2014.) together with the statement the curators made.

Laurence Reymond (Programmer Quinzaine des Réalisateurs Cannes) worked for 8 years for French film distributors such as Ad Vitam and Le Pacte. At the same time, she was a regular film critic for various magazines and websites such as *Score*, *Cinéastes* or *Flucutat.net*. In 2011, she selected the films for the European Middle Length Film Meetings of Brive, and joined the selection team of the Director's Fortnight in September 2011; where she is now programming the short films section. Since June 2012, she is also the programming coordinator and programmer for the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma in Montréal. She presented the film:



Leonardo Sette, Isabel Penoni, **Porcos Raivosos** (2012/Brazil)
<https://vimeo.com/90024413> (password: pigs)

After finding out that their husbands have mysteriously transformed into raging pigs, the women of a village decide to take action.

Laurence's Statement:

"How to make a form evolve and still surprise us? Maybe one way is to go further into hybridization, playing with genres and audience expectations, and create a film that defines its own nature."

Maike Mia Höhne (Head of Programming Berlinale Shorts) is a director, photographer, author and, alongside many other things, the curator of Berlinale Shorts at the Berlin International Film Festival since 2007. She studied visual communication from 1994 to 1999 at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg, at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Havana, as well as at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión, in San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba. After a work stay in Buenos Aires, she completed the foundation study program focusing on film, at the University of Fine Arts of Hamburg. Since 2001, she has worked in various contexts as a freelance author, curator, producer, publisher, photographer and director. Additionally, she has been active for years as a lecturer, and as a host for film events. She presented the film:



PARKing CHANce (PARK Chan-wook, PARK Chan-kyong),
Paranmanjang (2011/ South Korea)
<http://muvi.es/w4329/133989> (Link to trailer)

A man casually sets up for a fishing trip at the water's edge. Evening comes and a tug on his line presents him with the body of a woman. While he tries to disentangle himself from the fishing lines she comes alive. The scene changes and the woman is now a shaman priestess in a funeral ritual for a man who drowned in a river. He speaks through her to his relatives, asking for forgiveness.

Maike's statement:

"The Future of Short Film is a Journey Into emotion, a time travel, a journey of the soul. Production is freed of all constraints. The soul seeks its own path. Musician's sing of their view of things, and the camera moves above all heads, and through all waters. Mythology and ethnology are connected, material and story - only few manage to face the total freedom of form and contents, and to use this freedom to allow themselves a look at life and death."

Lars Henrik Gass (Director Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen) studied literature, theatre and philosophy, at the Freie Universität Berlin. He received his doctorate with a thesis on the French writer and filmmaker Marguerite Duras, which was published as a book in 2011. In 1996-97 he headed the European Documentary Film Institute in Mülheim an der Ruhr, and was also the editor of the book series *Texts on Documentaries*, and the Magazine "DOX – Documentary Film Quarterly". Since 1997, he has headed the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen. He has held various teaching posts on film and cultural management, and is co-editor of the book *Provoking Reality. The Oberhausen Manifesto and its Consequences* (2012) and editor of the book *Film und Kunst nach dem Kino* (2012). He presented the film:



Michel Klöfkorn, **Ich fahre mit dem Fahrrad in einer halben Stunde an den Rand der Atmosphäre** (2011, Germany),
<https://vimeo.com/19987591>

I try to understand society, I try to understand economy, I try to understand the nation, militarism, history; I ride to the edge of the atmosphere in half an hour on my bicycle, it is only 14km.

Lars's statement:

"The short film of the future is something I can't predict either, but I hope that it will be similarly unfathomable as "Ich fahre mit dem Fahrrad in einer halben Stunde an den Rand der Atmosphäre" by Michel Klöfkorn. What the animation techniques give him is an understanding of society. They make it visible that things carry with them a surplus of meaning; in short: energy turns into animation, updating of language."

Peter van Hoof (Head Short Film section International Film Festival Rotterdam) has a background as an independent cinema programmer, first at the Squat Cinema Filmhuis Cavia in Amsterdam, then as a founder and programmer of Cinema De Balie: the independent cinema department of the political cultural centre De Balie, in the heart of Amsterdam. He is also one of the founders of, and current contributor to, Stichting De Filmbank, a small organization for the promotion of Dutch Experimental Cinema. As a programmer for IFFR, Van Hoof heads the Short Film selection committee. Besides the Short Film section, Van Hoof selects the features and documentaries from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. He presented the film:



Jonas Staal, *De Bunker – Het Wennen – Het Wachten – Het Licht* (2011, Netherlands)

<http://vimeo.com/91297362>

The password to access the video is: OnCurating-JonasStaal
(Available until July, 3rd, 2014)

A film about *Closed Architecture*, a concept for a new type of prison by right-wing PVV politician Fleur Agema, clearly illustrates her take on humanity. A sober portrayal of the 'control society' in which people are conditioned to serve order, efficiency and productivity, but are also watched to shape everyone into a model citizen. 'A society that doesn't need prisons any more, but has itself become a prison,' according to Staal.

Peter's statement:

"The Future is short, the future is political. While old-fashioned capitalism conquered western civilizations, ignorance took over social life and politics has been dominated by populists. Where were the artists? Under a rock studying their belly buttons, while taking shelter from the shit stream of imagery that flooded our senses. It was a depressing time during these last few years."

Jukka-Pekka Laakso (Director Tampere Film Festival) has acted since 1998 as the executive director for the Pirkanmaa Film Centre, a non-profit organization that runs an art-house cinema in Tampere. Jukka-Pekka is chairman of the National Council for Cinema, a member of the National Council for the Arts and of the European Film Academy. He worked for several years as a programmer at the Tampere Film Festival and is the director since 2002. He presented the film:



Kote Camacho, *La gran carrera* (2010/Spain)

vimeo.com/kotecamacho/lagrancarrera

1914: a horrible crime is suddenly committed in the Lasarte racetrack. How it happened is a mystery. Only one thing is for sure: the best horses in the world have been registered, and heavy betters have gathered for a race with a never-before-seen prize for the winning horse, the Grand Prize worth half a million.

Jukka-Pekka's statement:

"The Future of Short Film is Bright. More people watch short films more than ever before. And there is nothing in sight that could change this. The big challenge of the future will be to defend an independent production of "good", "serious" or "valuable" short films against the financial interests of the film industry on the one hand and the limiting mechanisms of the high art market on the other hand."

Captions

- 1 *Porcos Raivosos*, 2012, © Leonardo Sette, Isabel Penoni
- 2 *Paranmanjang!*, 2011, © PARK Chan-wook, PARK Chan-kyong
- 3 *Ich fahre mit dem Fahrrad in einer halben Stunden an den Rand der Atmosphäre*, 2011, © Michel Klöfkorn
- 4 *De Bunker - Het Wennen - Het Wachten - Het Licht*, 2001, © Jonas Staal
- 5 *La Gran Carrera*, 2010, © Kote Camacho

John Canciani is the artistic director of the Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur and is programmer at the Filmfoyer Winterthur. He curated several programs with Short and Feature Length Films like "Moving Art II – O Cinema where are thou?", "Heavy Metal", "VROOOM!", "Ivan Ladislav Galeta" Retrospective, "George Méliès and Turntables", "Who's afraid of the Public?", "9/11", "Women in early Japanese Film", "Tattoo im Film". He was co-curator for the Kunstkammer Schlieren "SAME(difference)_sculpture in relation 3 – social processing" and curated "Asedio" with Humberto Díaz. He has worked as a programmer for the Swiss Youth Film Festival and Kurz und Knapp. He was a film critic for Radio Stadtfilter and his film "Tokyo Rock ,n' Roll" was shown at 18 Festivals including IFF Leeds, EMAF Osnabrück, Art le Havre. At the moment he is finalizing his Master of Advanced Studies in Curating at the ZHdK.