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The films of Joris Ivens

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**NUMEGEN**

André Strufken, director of the Ivens Foundation and curator of the DVD collection, said during the presentation: ‘In his lifetime, the films of Ivens were seen by many millions, and since then they have become part of film history, and they continue to be screened at numerous film festivals all over the world. I'm very pleased that with the release of this box-set, the films of Joris Ivens will finally be available to everybody.’ 300 film copies have been extensively researched in numerous collections all over the world, and great care has been taken to find or restore every film to its (most) authentic state. Even of such a short film like Regen / Rain (1938), 38 copies and 11 different versions exist, making the reconstruction of the original version a complex and painstaking task. Bouke Vahl, head of the audio-visual company Edit B, together with his colleague Ozan Oral, worked intensively for the last two years on the digital restoration of the material, a mammoth task entailing a total of 600,000 manual corrections. To shed some light on the process, the first 15 hours of work were published as well. The DVD collection is the result of a collaboration between the European Foundation Joris Ivens, which produced the box, CAP Films in Paris, and the Filmmuseum in Amsterdam.

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**COLOGNEN**

European Foundation Joris Ivens

European Film Stichting Joris Ivens

Fondation Européenne Joris Ivens

Europese Stichting Joris Ivens

European Foundation Joris Ivens

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light on this complex work, a short documentary highlighting the restoration process is included as a bonus in the DVD collection.

**SEMINAR**

During a debate between Marceline Loridan-Ivens, German filmmaker Edgar Reitz (of the acclaimed Heimat-series), film scholars Tom Gunning (University of Chicago), Michael Chanan (University of Roehampton) and José-Manuel Costa (University of Lisbon), the importance of Ivens’ film oeuvre, as well as his personal influence, were discussed. Edgar Reitz referred to Heimat 2, which contains a short sequence where the protagonist puts a rose on Ivens’ grave in the Parisian cemetery where he is buried. Edgar Reitz: ‘When we were shooting Heimat 2, in the middle of the week, we received word of Ivens’ death. I was completely shocked, and cancelled filming for that day instead. I told my staff and my team how I first met Joris Ivens and Marceline.’

The next day a seminar further explored Ivens’ work, including lectures by Reitz, Gunning, Chanan and Bert Hoogenkamp and André Stufkens in Nijmegen.

3 View of the seminar leach in Nijmegen.
4 Marceline Loridan-Ivens and Sylvain De Blecker, © Storm Stufkens.
5 The Ivens-Netherlands Family.

**AMSTERDAM**

A few days later the box was presented in Amsterdam, during the IDFA (International Documentary Film Festival) to four women: Marceline Loridan-Ivens, Tineke de Vaal, Alfy Derks and Sandra den Hamer. When André Stufkens handed over the DVD box to Alfy Derks, director of IDFA, she said: ‘I’m very proud that IDFA has named the festival’s main award for international competition after Joris Ivens. Without any doubt we will continue to do so with even more pride in the future’. Sandra den Hamer, director of the Filmmuseum, which organised an extensive retrospective of Ivens’ films, underlined the collaboration between the Filmmuseum’s archive and the Ivens Foundation.

**PARIS**

In March of this year, the Cinémathèque Française (CF) in Paris also held an extensive Ivens retrospective, showing 50 of his films and spanning almost his entire career. This event coincided with the release of the French edition of the Ivens DVD collection by ARTE Editions. Before an audience that filled the entire Henri Langlois Hall Serge Toubiana, director of the CF, remembered the words he wrote when Ivens died in 1989: ‘Some day we will look at all his films again as pebble stones on the road to History, and make up the balance. For one thing is certain: until his final breath, this man didn’t renounce cinema. And now it’s time to see his films again, an oeuvre of documentaries that is dense and crucial, covering a large part of the 20th century’. The presentation was attended by Marceline Loridan-Ivens and Richard Leacock. André Stufkens thanked Adrienne Fréjacques, head of ARTE Editions, for the collaboration to make a perfect French version of the Ivens DVD collection. A few weeks later a debate was held by the CF on the Vuiking-series, and the Institut Néerlandais in Paris organised an evening honouring Ivens’ film oeuvre.

**REVIEWS**

- Watching Ivens is watching the birth of the creative documentary. The bulky book that is released together with the box appears essential for the true appreciation of Ivens’ work: next to the production process, the structure, context and audience- and critical reception of each film is thoroughly discussed. ****

- ‘I am very proud that IDFA has named the festival’s main award for international competition after Joris Ivens. We will continue to do so with even more pride in the future’. Sandra den Hamer, director of the Filmmuseum, which organised an extensive retrospective of Ivens’ films, underlined the collaboration between the Filmmuseum’s archive and the Ivens Foundation.

- ‘This is truly terrific that this wonderful box-set, containing 5 DVDs and a book on Ivens, only costs €49.95. It makes the work of this groundbreaking cineaste accessible (to a wide audience) and will surely contribute to the enduring legacy of Ivens’ name. The films have all been carefully restored and the bonus materials add exceptional value. For every film lover this box-set is a must-have.’ - Lars van der Las, FOK.nl, 4 February 2009

- ‘The Joris Ivens DVD collection has been nominated for the Il Cinema Ritrovato DVD Award 2009 in Bologna.

- ‘The beauty of the DVD medium is that each disc can store multiple versions. While watching Rain, one can choose either the music that Lou Lichtveld made for the sound version in 1932, or the score by German composer Hanns Eisler.’ - André Waardenburg, NRC, 19 November 2008

- ‘Each film in the DVD-box has been carefully preserved and digitally restored. The optional Dutch and English subtitles appear on screen in a well-suit and readable typeface. The sound tracks are, apart from a slight hiss and a few ticks, undamaged. The music, commentary voices and dialogues flow in a clear sound from the speakers. The most valuable extra that is contained in the Joris Ivens - Wereldcinema DVD-box, is the accompanying book of more than 50 pages by André Stufkens. Every film that has been included in the collection is discussed extensively, in which the author addresses aspects such as content, film production, context, Ivens’ film language and meaning, audience- and critical reception of the films and quotes from reviews. The book offers a thorough and detailed insight into Ivens’ oeuvre.’ - Guido Franken, Nieuwlandsfilm.nl, 24 January 2009
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‘As the 21st century gains an identity, the previous century must come into focus as offering both warning and promise’

The last century enacted dramas of hope and betrayal, of extraordinary technological progress and unavoidable barbarism – with the one often enabling the other. The cinema may have offered, as pioneer figures such as D.W. Griffith once claimed, the possibility of an international language laying a new foundation for peace and understanding between nations. But cinema, in its participation in policies of war and genocide, may also have already, as more recently between nations. But cinema, in its participation in policies of war and genocide, may also have already, as more recently...
Politics of Documentary

"We are here to celebrate the work of Joris Ivens, and in particular to launch upon a world which sadly doesn’t know that it needs them, a set of DVDs of some of his major films. I would like to focus here on a set of problems about this endeavour, which such a revival is always liable to produce, but in this case is perhaps particularly acute. I refer to the political nature of the work, which will undoubtedly present certain difficulties in age which has forgotten the promises of communism and remembers only its failures. In particular, I should like to address, albeit indirectly, the possible misinterpretation of the revival of these films as a case of nostalgia. I want to insist that it is the responsibility of the documental film-maker whom I have always regarded as a past-master of a craft which in a smaller way, I also claim as my own.

One of the themes which emerged yesterday - everyone seems to agree upon it - is that documentary is not objective. On the rather obvious point that one of Ivens’ first films is that I have my doubts that Joris Ivens would agree quite so readily. He would at least have wanted to qualify the proposition. After all, he was wedded to a materialist conception of the world, dialectical materialist to be precise, and stemming from this, a realistic aesthetic which saw the camera as a recording instrument, albeit subject to the poetic, and just as important, ideological instincts of the film-maker. Hence his criticisms of the work of the Grierson school in Britain, when he said, for example, about Housing Problems: "If the British films had been sponsored directly by social organisations fighting the bad housing conditions instead of by a gas company, they would have closed in on such dramatic reality as rent strikes and protest movements." The issue is not that what Housing Problems shows isn’t true because it isn’t objective, but that what it shows is the result of certain ideological choices. What it shows is a half-truth, and the problem with half-truths is that they tend to show the wrong half.

On the other hand, Ivens would have agreed that a waterfront definition of documentary is effectively impossible – many people have tried to provide one and they all came unstuck, Grierson included; although if you must have such a definition, then Grierson’s creative treatment of actuality is as good as any. However, it would be better to think of documentary in the same way that Wittgenstein taught us to think of forms of life like games, which new technology and are related by family resemblance. In this scenario, it’s perfectly possible to have two grandchildren who both resemble a common grandparent but look nothing like each other.

One of the troubles with the attempt at defining documentary is that often a film comes along which breaks the rules while clearly remaining documentary - this was true, for example, of Joris Ivens’ Summer Thus the breaking film remains rooted in socio-historical reality. This I would say is true of Joris’ oeuvre, and this has important implications. He himself expressed this problem in his own way - also referred to yesterday - when he said in his autobiography that documentary is a creative no-man’s land, an interloper in the genre system. This is also to say that documentary tends to escape the control of the studios, or maybe they don’t like it precisely because it deals in reality. Think of it this way: When you stage a fiction, in the studio or on location, you are suspending time and date and entering a temporality corresponding to the narrative to which the scene belongs. When you film a documentary, what you capture in the camera is a moment grabbed from the day and time given by the calendar and the clock - although of course it’s true that this is frequently manipulated, and often obscured in the course of editing to fit the temporality demanded by the argument of the film.

Joris’ last film is not just a personal quest, but a metaphor for the documentary endeavour.

What this means is that while we’ve become suspicious of the claim that documentary is objective, this doesn’t mean that in the end there is no difference between documenta- tion and fiction, or that documentary is only a special form of fiction, whatever Godard has claimed. The question, then, is not how to define the beast, but how to understand what makes it different from fiction.
movies, inheriting the narrative paradigms of nineteenth century novel and drama, bourgeois forms modified by cinema’s populist vocation, appeal directly to the spectator’s emotional and sentimental life, their private subjectivity – even when dealing with public, historical or political subjects. Documentary, on the other hand, speaks to the viewer as citizen, as a member of the social collective, as putative participant in the public sphere. The public sphere is its home ground. Without it, the public sphere isn’t working properly.

Or as Paula Rabanovits has put it in a book called They Must Be Represented - the phrase comes from Marx, of course - classical Hollywood narrative binds its spectators through psychologically-motivated characters and conventions which enhance verisimilitude and invite the viewer’s identification. The apparatus situates the viewer as the subject of a desire which is private and internal. By contrast, the documentary mobilises the viewer as a social subject, situated in history. ‘This subject clearly desires too, but the desire is directed toward the social and political arenas of everyday experiences as well as toward world-historic events shaping those lives,’ and away from the psychological manifestations which characterize the fetishes of narrative desire. She adds that this is not to pose a clear-cut distinction between inner and outer forms of desire, but to suggest that these are interrelated differently in fiction and in documentary, which makes different kinds of claims about reality.

However, there is an important rider: to be political in this sense is not necessarily a question of advancing an ideological position, militating for a cause or campaigning for anything. It isn’t even necessary to mention politics. Because what the documentary can do is to call public attention to its subjects and concerns sometimes just by bringing them to light, without being wrapped in the narrative plots of fiction and drama, but instead turning stereotypes back into real people with their own names and in their own living environment. In a world dominated by fantasy images, the return of documentary is therefore a healthy sign of a return to reality – although once again it’s not so simple. For example, first-person political documentary is liable to encourage the narcissism of a Michael Moore or a Nick Broomfield, something quite alien to Ivens, and the result is a form of inquiry which betrays both the political impotence of the inquirer and the loss of an organised radical political culture to orient their critique. But this is not a personal criticism of these two film-makers. It’s a problem about the political and ideological environment in which they work.

In the end, therefore, the work of Joris Ivens presents us with what Derrida would call an impossible paradigm, in which, in order to follow his example, we can no longer make political films in the same way at all, because the ideological context which they answer to is no longer with us. Our publics remain in urgent need of a cogent interpretation of the world we live in - today more than ever - but quite rightly have become sceptical of easy solutions. For the documentaryist, therefore, who wishes to honour the example which the work of Joris Ivens represents, the only solution is to return to his notion of documentary as an active no-man’s land, and to respond to the paradigm he offers by means of deliberate and strategic creative betrayal. (To which I can only add a metaphor taken from Samuel Beckett: ‘Failed again. Try again. Fall again. Fail better.’)

This question, I believe, hangs on the role of documentary in the public sphere. If the public sphere is the arena of free speech, the network of dialogue in which public opinion is formed and those in authority are held to account, then the history of documentary – first its exclusion from the cinemas, and then the split between television and independent documentary – is a clear demonstration that this is not a single and unitary space of free and equal debate, but a network of parallel and overlapping zones, often of limited extension, and with unequal access to the mainstream forms of publication and broadcasting.

In other words, there are central media and peripheral ones, and documentary is clearly peripheral. But these zones are not disconnected, they overlap and rub off on each other. The small publics of the latter often consist in the most active members of civil society, organised in trades unions, campaigns and pressure groups, nowadays often employing their own publicity officers and political lobbyists to create a presence in the wider arena. Ivens was a pioneer precisely in working with groups like these.

In short, the mainstream media which serve both the state and civil society as the central means of communication are never completely closed off, but on the contrary, always to some degree permeable to ideas and opinions arising in the interstices, the margins and from below. Documentary is one of the forms through which new attitudes enter wider circulation, through the form of its advocacy and the articulation of the social actors who participate as subjects.

Moreover, documentary is ready to take up the political challenge because politics is in its genes, though not always expressed. But the documentary camera is always pointing directly at the social and the anthropological. These are spaces where the lifeworld is dominated, controlled and shaped by power and authority, sometimes visible, mostly invisible but often palpable. The problem for the documentary there is how to render the invisible in visible form (also alluded to yesterday). In this sense, Joris’s last film is not just a personal quest, but a metaphor for the documentary in the end, therefore, the work of Joris Ivens presents us with what Derrida would call an impossible paradigm, in which, in order to follow his example, we can no longer make political films in the same way at all, because the ideological context which they answer to is no longer with us. Our publics remain in urgent need of a cogent interpretation of the world we live in - today more than ever - but quite rightly have become sceptical of easy solutions. For the documentaryist, therefore, who wishes to honour the example which the work of Joris Ivens represents, the only solution is to return to his notion of documentary as an active no-man’s land, and to respond to the paradigm he offers by means of deliberate and strategic creative betrayal. (To which I can only add a metaphor taken from Samuel Beckett: ‘Failed again. Try again. Fall again. Fail better.’)
Beijing Normal University
Sun Hongyun, Postgraduate,
Sun Jinyi, Ph.D., To commemorate the 110th anniversary of the birth of Dutch film maker Joris Ivens, an international academic conference titled ‘50 Years of Joris Ivens and China’ is held on November 18th to 20th 2009 in Beijing. Thanks to the sponsors, including Art and Media School of Beijing Normal University, Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio, China Film Archive and other institutions, the committee successfully invites more than thirty experts in documentary film all over the world. In addition, Ivens’ previous colleagues, collaborators, and interpreter in China also came to attend the conference and depict their experience with the documentary master Joris Ivens.

Joris Ivens 110 in Beijing
Seminar ‘50 years of Joris Ivens in China’

It is on November 18th which is Joris Ivens’ birthday that the conference opening ceremony followed by an academic seminar is held in Art and Media School of Beijing Normal University. Among those experts, Professor Si-Tu Zhaodun of Beijing film Academy who visited Ivens with his father firstly states that Ivens’ documentaries indicate an individual social sense and humanism. However, misleading toward him and his films still exist. Not only does Mr. Si-Tu Zhaodun disagree with the ideological analysis to Ivens, but also refutes that Ivens has a sort of particular ‘China Complex’. According to the materials Ivens chooses and methods he uses, Si-Tu Zhaodun concludes that Ivens’ documentaries in China belong to mainstream documentaries at that time. It is a way for Ivens to try to explain a period of Chinese history.

Thomas Waugh, a Canadian professor studies Ivens’ works, defines The Four Hundred Million (1938) as ‘solidarity film’. He points out that Ivens adopts a mode—the mise-en-scène approach when shooting spontaneously—which could be called a halfway style between Hollywood and Newsreel. Kees Bakker, a French expert from Institute Jean Vigo, compares The Four Hundred Million (1938) and Fighting Soldiers (1938) by Fumio Kamei from a perspective of hermeneutics. Documentaries of both directors are based on their deliberately choosing from things happening. Because of this, he says they are like horses with blinders on. Professor Zhang Tongdao of Beijing Normal University thinks one of the most important factors in Ivens’ life is China and his films about China. Obviously, there is a film legend between Ivens and China since during the 50 years friendship, he shows his ideological experience, experiences severe conflict and frustration, and finally successfully communicates with China in term of culture. Another article titled ‘Documentary Re-enactments: A Paradoxical Temporality’ is delivered by Professor Bill Nichols of San Francisco State University. He takes one of the Ivens’ films: ‘Dreaming of a revolution’ as an example to illustrate reenactments contribute to a vivification of that for which they stand. They make what it feels like to return to a certain situation, to re-perform a certain action, to once again adopt a particular perspective more vivid. Ivens’ former assistant in France, Mr. Jean Pierre Sergent, looks back Ivens’ complicated emotions and final understanding toward China from 1938 to his last years. He believes that Ivens is a great artist with individual independence and dignity. He acted as the world citizen he had always been, and as a man among the men. This was the Chinese Dream of Joris Ivens. René Seegers, a Dutch film maker introduces situations of Ivens’ films in western countries by a speech named ‘The Unfortunate History of Screening of Yukong’.

Moreover, Nie Xinru, a professor of East China Normal University tries to explain why Ivens shoots How Yukong moved the Mountains (1938) and in his opinion, reasons could be attributed to the foreign policy of China government at that time. Professor Zhang Xiaoming of Beijing Film Academy holds an opinion that there is a misleading. Ivens is a topic of minority in the world while in China there are a major of people talk about him. Professor Shan Wangli of China Film Art Research Center summarizes the present researches on Ivens’ works in China. Dr. Sun Hongyun analyses both Yukong by Ivens and China by Antonioni. According to comparing their different motives, approaches, distinct inclinations and their perspectives of screen writing, she points out that their works depict situations in China differently even though they shoot them more or less in a same period. Furthermore, there are other experts deliver their academic speeches about Ivens and his films.

The next day, former colleagues, collaborators and interpreter of Ivens in China attended the oral history section in China Film Museum. Lu Ming, a director of Yan’an Mov- ies Corps recalls that the camera which was confidentiality given by joris ivens in 1938 makes a great contribution to the film cause of CCP in the initial stage. Then staff of ‘Early spring’, ‘How Yukong moved the Mountains’, ‘A tale of wind’ reminisce their experience working with Joris Ivens. Wang Decheng, a photographer of Early Spring says Ivens requires photographer to take camera with him everywhere and to wait for appropriate opportunities to shoot at any time. Qian Liren, a group leader of ‘Yukong’ reveals that they try their best to meet Ivens’ requirements to shoot in name of Culture Revolution and with a recommendation of Premier Zhou Enlai. However, referring to their demotions to countryside, they could by no means let Ivens know. Another former group leader, Ms. Ye Shichun believes that Ivens insists on reality and nature of film making and definitely denies re-enacting. However, during the Culture Revolution period, Ivens couldn’t have an idea that local people might do some preparations before he comes. In addition, Ms. Lu Songhe, the interpreter for Ivens in films Yukong and A Tale of Wind recalls that Ivens not only requires her to be a language assistant but also wishes she could be sensitive to interesting new things and provide some shooting suggestions. Yang Zhiju, one of the photographers of Yukong recalls that Ivens requires their cameras to participate incidents instead of merely sooming in and out. Besides, Ivens also emphasizes actual sound in his films. A lighting engineer, Guo Weijun retrospects that Ivens pursues completely nature light when he shoots Yukong. Subsequently other staff and some figures in his films recall their memories with Joris Ivens.

During the period of the conference, China Film Archive screens Joris Ivens’ films: The Four Hundred Million (1938), Early Spring (1938), Football (1938), A Tale of the Wind (1938). These films again receive an intense reverberation among audiences.
Ivens’ films screened continuously in museums

The ongoing trend of the last few years continues: on an increasing scale, films by Joris Ivens are permanently screened in museums, as part of exhibitions on modern art and culture. In the Hygiene Museum in Dresden, the films by Ivens on nature played a prominent part in the exhibition titled “Weather, Climate and Man. This large-scale interactive exhibition studied the delicate relationship that exists between mankind, nature and atmosphere through multimedia installations, hands-on elements, natural objects and other exponents. The Academy of the Arts in Berlin, Germany, showcased the great variety of different forms of ‘notation’ in modern art during the 20th and 21st century. The exhibition, titled Notation, travelled on in 2009 to the Centre for Contemporary Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany. Accompanying the exhibition, an authoritative catalogue was published (see page 42).

In the Museum for Contemporary Art in Barcelona, Spain, (MACBA), four Ivens’ films were part of the successful exhibition Universal Archive – The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia. This exhibition focused on the reliability and validity of the photographic image in this post-modernage of digital photography, which is by its nature prone to manipulation. The exhibition also addressed the question whether photography is able to produce a truly universal visual archive. In 2009 the exhibition travelled to the Museum Berardo de Lisboa in Lisbon, Portugal. ‘A fascinating exhibition’, Le Monde commented, ‘with an excellent catalogue’ (see page 42).

Tilda Swinton’s film festival

Actress Tilda Swinton (1960), star of such acclaimed and eclectic productions as Edward II (1995), Orlando (1992), the War Zone (1998) and more recently Adaptation (2002), The Chronicles of Narnia (2005/07), and whose performance in Michael Clayton earned her an Oscar, is the founder of a new film festival. This festival, directed by both Swinton and film expert Mark Cousins, took place in Swinton’s hometown of Nairn, in north-east Scotland. For the first edition she selected the early Ivens’ film Rain (1934). To a certain degree the event is meant as an antithesis to the pomposity of most current film festivals. Swinton and Cousins aim to revive the pure, romantic fascination with film. To this end Swinton rented an old ballroom in her hometown, the Ballerina, and so the festival was dubbed ‘The Ballerina Ballroom Cinema of Dreams. The costs for the event have so far been met by Swinton. Glamour, as well as big budget premiers will be absent during the event. Visitors pay only £3 admission fee, or else a tray of self baked treats, to be shared with the audience, will do just as well to earn a place on the beanbags from which the films can be enjoyed.

The seminar on Ivens and China in Beijing

In the year that the China Film Archive celebrated its 50th anniversary, an International Academic Symposium was organised on ‘Joris Ivens and 50 Years of China’s Film’ (see p. 12-11). The relationship between Ioris Ivens and China started in 1980, when he filmed The 400 Million in China. He secretly handed his Bell & Howell camera and some film stock to cinematographer Wu Yueshan (Street Angel, 1957), who smuggled this precious tool to the Red Base in Y’anan province. With this equipment the Ya’an Film Group shot their first documentaries. A key moment in China’s film history, according to film scholar Chris Fujikawa, ‘Ivens’ gift, evidence of a great filmmakers idealism and perseverance, is also a symbol of cinematic solidarity’. In 1983 the Ya’an Film Group merged with other film groups to form the Central Newreel and Documentary Film Studio in Beijing, where Joris Ivens was active as both teacher and adviser. For decades Ivens trained young Chinese filmmakers in the appliance of Western camera techniques, and in the practice of filmmaking.

Mr. Fu Hongxing, director of the China Film Archive, explained in his speech the importance and influence of Ivens on Chinese filmmaking: ‘Ivens was a great man with a strong sense of justice.’ The symposium was hosted by professor Huang Huilin and attended by filmmakers and film scholars from China, as well as those from France, the Netherlands, the USA and Canada. The seminar was sponsored by the China Film Archive, the College of Arts and Media of Beijing Normal University, China Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio, China Filmmakers Association, Huaxia Film Distribution, China Scientific Education Film Studio, China Film Museum, China Projection Association and China Film Producers Association. The scholarly journal ‘Studies in Documentary Film’ will publish in July 2009 five lectures held at the conference by Thomas Waugh, Kees Bakker, Jean-Pierre Sergent, Zhang Tongdaos and Sun Hongyun.

Meetings with the China Film Archive in Nijmegen and Paris

In Paris Mr. Fu Hongxing, head of the China Film Archive, visited Marcelle Lordan-Ivens to discuss various subjects concerning Ivens and China. Being a filmmaker himself (Zhouenlaiwa/jiaoyu fengyu, 2000) he demonstrated vividly
THE COVER OF THE LAST ISSUE OF THIS MAGAZINE (NO. 18, 2007) SHOWS JORIS IVENS USING A KINAMO CAMERA TO FILM THE LIFT BRIDGE IN ROTTERDAM IN 1928. HE HAD WORKED IN THE KINAMO ASSOCIATION (KINA) IN DRESDEN UNDER EMANUEL GOLDBERG. THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF THE KINAMO AND THE INFLUENCE OF GOLDBERG ARE ACKNOWLEDGED IN IVENS’ MEMOIRS AND ARE ROUTINELY MENTIONED IN BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNTS OF IVENS’ EARLY YEARS. A BIOGRAPHY OF GOLDBERG ALLOWS A FULLER EXPLANATION.1

EMANUEL GOLDBERG BEFORE THE KINAMO

Emanuel Goldberg was Russian, born in Moscow in 1881. He graduated in Chemistry at Moscow University, but left Russia to avoid antisemitism and settled in Germany. He studied photochemical reactions at the University of Leipzig and became an employee at the Photochemistry Laboratory at the Technical University in Berlin-Charlottenburg. From 1907 to 1917, he was head of the department of photography at the Königliche Akademie für graphische Künste und Buchgewerbe (Royal Academy of Graphic Arts and Bookcraft) in Leipzig and published papers on photography and printing techniques. His early inventions related to gelatin wedges (the ‘Goldberg wedge’) and the Densograph for measuring the characteristic curves of photographic emulsions.

In 1917 Goldberg became a director of Ica, the international camera and film company. In 1922, Goldberg’s assignment was two-fold: to help modernize the firm, and to develop new military products, but military products were soon outlawed by the Treaty of Versailles. Ica was then reorganised into two divisions: one for still cameras and related equipment, and the other, under Goldberg, for movie equipment. In 1926 Ica merged with Ernemann, Contessa, and Goerz to form a new company under Goldberg’s leadership, Zeiss Ikon. The Carl Zeiss Stiftung owned most of the shares and exercised close control.

Ica was already making movie equipment in 1917 and Goldberg foresaw a large market among amateurs making home movies, especially if cranking were eliminated. He opted for a spring-driven motor, a challenge because the diminishing tension of the spring has to be converted into an even movement driving the take-up spool and its slipping clutch as well as the shutter and film gate.2

THE KINAMO

The Kinamo was the smallest of competing, compact 35mm movie cameras brought to the market in the early 1920s.3

The Debiere Sept, a spring-driven 35mm camera marketed in 1920, held five metres of film, enough to film for only 17 scenes, and appeared in 1923. Studio cameras acquired electric motors and hand-cranked cine cameras were soon obsolete.

The initial model was the basic, hand-cranked Kinamo N25 for cassettes of 25 metres of 35mm film. A variant model took 15 metre cassettes.3 The spring motor attachment was in experimental use in 1923 and marketed, with an optional delayed shutter release, in 1924. The Kinamo was very compact. The N25 model took 35mm film 6 cm wide, 15 cm high, 13 cm deep and 1 cm wide (6 x 5 1/2 x 4 inches). Film cassettes were easily changed even in sunlight. Pressing a button would mark the film at the end of a scene. Film speed could be reduced for trick photography and slow movement. A model with four film speeds and an attachment that enabled it to copy films, the Universal Kinamo, was also marketed from 1924.3

During the 1920s cinematography progressively differentiated into three markets: professional studio work; semi-professionals, business, sport, documentation, and experimental films; and home movies. Ica promoted the Kinamo for everything other than studio production of feature films. The Kinamo was used with Ica’s ‘Goldberg Mikrophot Microscope Attachment’ for filming through a microscope.3 The 1920s saw a rapid increase in the use of microfilm in scholarship, libraries, record keeping, and the mechanization of office procedures. The Kinamo was used in a data processing system for preparing telephone subscribers’ monthly bills.6

 Goldberg himself had been learning the characteristics of the Kinamo by producing short dramas with himself, his wife (Sophie), his son (Herbert) and daughter (Renate, now Chava Gichon), and friends as actors. To increase Kinamo sales Ica (and later Zeiss Ikon) added intertitles to these films to create four short films promoting the Kinamo: Feiertage am Matterhorn (Holidays at the Matterhorn), 1924; Zeltleben in den Alpen (Camping in the Dolomites), 1925; and Die verzauberten Schuhe (One better Kinamo Tripple—The Magic Shoes: An Amusing Kinamo Tragedy), 1927. In 1927 Goldberg made a skiing drama with a group of students: Ein Sprung . . . Ein Traum: Eine Kinamogeschichte aus dem Studenendeckel (A Jump . . . A Dream: A Kinamo Story of Student Life, 1927). These films reveal skilful composition, crisp editing, and sophisticated use of backlighting, shadows and entrances.4

JORIS IVENS USES THE KINAMO

In 1927 Ivens used a Kinamo to experiment with free-form, hand-held filming inside a Zeissig bar and liked the tonal quality of the resulting film: ‘But, even better, with my camera held in my hand, the marvellous Kinamo of Professor Goldberg. I was, naturally, freed from the rigidity of a tripod, and I had given movement to what, normally, would have had to be a succession of fixed shots. Without knowing it, filming flexible and without stopping, I had achieved a continuity. That day I realised that the camera was an eye and I said to myself, “If it is a gaze, it ought to be a living one!”’.6

IVENS USED THE KINAMO FOR THE BRIDGE (1928).

For me the bridge was a laboratory of movements, tones, shapes, contrasts, rhythms and the relations between all these. . . . What I wanted to find was some general rules, laws of continuity and movement. . . . I used a borrowed camera from my father’s store, a Kinamo with three lenses. . . . The
The Bridge

The Bridge is a fast-paced, rhythmic series of patterns and movements in and around the bridge: shadows, girders, wheels, steam, seagulls and boats. It is both a study of movement and also a portrait of the bridge, the steam trains that cross it, the boats that pass under it, and life around it. Ivens had consciously explored what his camera could do. The first image is of the bridge, but in the second and third shots we circle up and down.

While Ivens was filming the bridge in Rotterdam he was simultaneously filming microscopic objects at Leiden University. It is not known what equipment he used, but it is probable that, like others, he used a Kinamo (perhaps the very same camera as for The Bridge) to film through a microscope using the Goldberg Mikroskop Microscope Attachment.

Ivens used the Kinamo in several films. Borminge (1933) was filmed mainly with Kinamo by Ioris Ivens and by Henri Storch, who had been trained in Kinamo use by Boris Kaufman. Borminge was filmed surreptitiously, and, being so small, the Kinamo was easily concealed from the police, which, on at least one occasion, prevented Ivens from being arrested and deported.1 Indonesia Calling (1944) was filmed using a borrowed Kinomo camera.

Goldbergs and Ivens in Dresden in 1931

Ivens' screening at the 1931 Congress in this 1963 tribute to Emanuel Goldberg.

Goldenberg became an important and respected figure in photography and cinematography. He was best known for his work on sensitivity and a book, On Duplex, de photo-

graphiques Images (The Construction of the Photographic Image).2 A founder of the German Movie Technology Society (Deutsche Kine-technische Gesellschaft), he received the society's Meister Medal for services to cinematography. Everything changed on 9 April 1933, when Goldberg was kidnapped from his Zeiss Ikon office by Nazi thugs. Re-

leased a few days later, he moved to France, then, in 1937, to Palestine, where he established a laboratory in Tel Aviv which became Goldberg Industries and, later, a major firm Electro-Opticals Industries (El-OP) in Rehovot. Engineers trained by Goldberg played a substantial role in the develop-

ment of Israel's high tech industry. He lived until 1970, honoured in Israel but largely forgotten elsewhere. The Na-

zis would not give credit to a Russian Jew, his publications receded from view as time and scholarship advanced, and also ambitious, Heinrich Ullmann, Hannes Busch and J. Edgar Hoover, took or concealed credit for his major achievements: the design of the Contax 35mm camera, his search engine, and microdot technology, respectively. Even his several years as the founding chief executive of Zeiss Ikon were subsumed in successive Zeiss corporate histories in 1913, 1951, and even in 2000. It is a case study in how thoroughly the memory of a well-known figure can be erased.1

Commentary

In the mid-1920s, Ivens made ‘visual research’ using a spring-driven camera. The creator of this film was Joris Ivens.

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Ivens in Chile

When Chile’s film history began to be written, it suffered from a violent cut during the ’70s. After the coup d’état, the cinematic activity stopped, and every film, document, and everything that could be used as a means of expression was destroyed. In this context, the copies of a film made in Chile by the Dutch master Joris Ivens, were burned or sold clandestinely. During many years, this film and two other produced in our country in co-production with Argos, France, and the University of Chile, El circo más pequeño del mundo (The World’s Smallest Circus [Le petit Chapeau] and El tren de la Victoria (The Victory Train / Le train de la victoire), could not be seen.

During the long cultural silence in Chile of the military dictatorship, the Experimental Cinema Center of the University of Chile was closed down, bringing to an end the film production and the place where young filmmakers of the New Latin-American Cinema Movement used to meet for cinematic reflection and analysis. Three years ago and after 35 years, the film School was re-opened under the Image and Communications Institute (ICEI) of the University of Chile. Different generations of filmmakers have met again with the formation of students as a common project. In the context of the reconstructive project, the research Ivens in Chile: Three films and his legacy has got together academics and filmmakers to know details of the Dutch expert’s visit, his activities, and the production of the three films he made during his stay in order to establish his influence in the national cinematography. Chilean filmmakers Sergio Bravo and Pedro Chaskel, who worked with Ivens, agree that this visit was important, but still today there is no specific information about this event, its consequences in our cinematography, or the influence of his working methodology.

This research was rewarded by the Audiovisual Promoting Fund of Chile (Fondo de Fomento Audiovisual) and sponsored by the ICEI of the University of Chile, the National Film Library, the Netherlands Embassy, and the European Foundation Ivens. The research team is formed by Tiziana Panizza, Pedro Chaskel, Judith Silva, Tatiana Diaz and Viviana Erepel, who are working at the moment on the interviews to the people who worked with Joris Ivens, in order to establish the motivation and developing of his stay, the Chilean context of those years, his influence, and the search for the lost copies to know their state of conservation.

The results of this investigation will be published in a bilingual web page, where audiovisual and photographic material can be found. A catalog with unidentified information on the production of the three films will also be published. Finally, after 45 years, the public screening in Chile of... A Valparaíso will be organized, in addition to the release of the other two films.

As academics and researchers, we are sure that the presence of Joris Ivens’ films in Chile will contribute to the recovery of our collective memory and identity inscribed on the international cinematography.
More than 500 years ago, three brothers that were born in the city of Nijmegen, had already proven to be able to immortalize reality with astonishing details in books of hours like the Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry – The Very Arch Hours of the Duke of Berry (1412-1416), which ranks among the most famous artworks in the world.

On the 18th of November 2008, coincidentally the very same day that the Ivens DVD collection was launched in Nijmegen, the Amsterdam Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum and the Metropolitan Museum in New York are all scheduled to exhibit their exquisitely refined art in the Fall of 2009.

The three brothers Herman, Paul and Johan lived between 1435 and 1465. They spent their childhood in the Bruilsteeg, situated in the centre of Nijmegen, a mere three streets away from the place where Joris Ivens was born in 1898. Are there any similarities to be found in the art of these fellow citizens?

The landscapes of Nijmegen

Thinking of Holland, a foreigner will picture flat land, flat polders under sea-level, criss-crossed by dikes and protected by dams. Nijmegen on the other hand is 'not looking at all [like] a real Dutch town,' wrote Ivens at an early stage 2 This oldest city in The Netherlands, which received its market rights from Emperor Hadrian 2000 years ago, is situated close to the German border and built on five hills at the banks of the River Waal, the river that connects the industrial Ruhr area with Rotterdam. It is at Nijmegen that the soggy Dutch delta ends, and the dam that indicates the European continent begins.

From an historical point of view, Nijmegen has always been a pivoting point, between cultures and world empires, a border town as well as a frontier town, a city that knows both influx and outpouring of people. This was was Roman civilisation ended, at the northwest frontier of the Roman Empire, since the tribes that lived above the rivers refused to let themselves be subdued. This was the border between the catholic south and protestant North of Holland. This was the Allied liberation force halted in 1944, after the impossibility of an offensive on Arnhem had become clear.

Following the failed operation Market Garden, an Allied force half a million strong amsed in the vicinity of Nijmegen which, when the ensuing operation Veritable had commenced, proceeded to recapture Germany from the Nazi's with an attack led from the west front 3

Nature and history

The strategic location of Nijmegen has attracted army commanders, merchants, foreign adventurers, and artists through the centuries. On the hills of Nijmegen the Romans built a large garrison settlement housing 20 000 men. Charlemagne established one of his three palatinate there and Emperor Frederic Barbarossa built the largest stronghold in the Netherlands: the Valkhof Castle (The Falcon Courtyard Castle). From this hill a total of twenty-eight emperors, from Constantine the Great up to Napoleon I, beheld the grandiose spectacle that unfolded beneath them, lending a view on the river that winds itself through the countryside, and the valley with the impressive cloud-filled sky above. On this place Nature and History coincide, it was here that the Batavians rose up in revolt against their Roman occupiers in 69 A.D., an event that has been regarded for centuries as the symbol of the Dutch struggle for independence, the birth myth of a nation. Many artists were inspired by the magic of this location, the view from and onto this particular place, the cosmic unity of time and space, of Nature and History ranging from the Limbourg Brothers, Albert Cuyp, Jan van Goyen, Salomon van Ruysdael, up to Joris Ivens and Nesio.

The Valkhof / The Falcon Courtyard

Joris Ivens lets his first autobiography begin at this place: 'One of my earliest memories is of my father taking me by the hand and leading me to the top of the highest of the five hills on which Nijmegen was built. There, at the top of the highest hill, under the stump of ancient trees, was a tablet which my father read to me and which later I often read to myself. 'Here, in the year 70 A.D., Claudius Civilis, leader of the Batavians, took refuge here and looked down with grinding teeth over the Rhine – watching the legions of Rome marching into the country...' At this height grandfathers, fathers and husbands with cameras to capture with great perfection and skill photographs of the castle’s ruins and the ships gliding up and down the Waal River. Father Efphrem had imprinted on his mind the magic and historical importance of this place when he had a photograph taken of the castle’s ruin including, through the trees, a vista of the bridge spanning the Waal River, a construction that had been realised on his initiative and through decades of persistence. ‘After eleven centuries...’ father Ivens noted under the photography, in which he referred to the fact that Charlemagne, and even the Romans before him, had tried to subdue the river at this exact spot.

Father Efphrem felt part of history and is imprinted on his son Joris the necessity to also leave his mark on the times in which he lived. Joris Ivens has never filmed the Valkhof, but apparently a panoramic view, a documentary style and the filming of historically important landscapes seem to have been passed on to him genetically. Anyone who looks at the opening images of The Spanish Earth (1937), as well as those of The 7th Parallel (1968) will notice that Ivens films a grand panoramic image from a height, using a master-shot which shows a valley with a river below, and a bridge on the right even amidst the chaos of war, the memory of this childhood view never left him. The very same view that was such an influence on the Limbourg Brothers.

Unique families from Nijmegen

Just like Joris Ivens, the Limbourg Brothers grew up in a Catholic family, that originated from Germany. Their grandfathers emigrated to Nijmegen to take up a new trade. Johannes de lymborge, grandfather to the three brothers, left the small town of Limbourg, situated between Aachen (Germany) and Liège (Belgium), Joris Ivens grandfather, Wilhelm Ivens, said goodbye as a young man to his family in a small village near Cologne (Germany).

From an early age the three brothers, as well as Joris Ivens, were initiated in the secrets of their crafts in the workplace of their families, grandparents en parents. The Brothers were tutored early by their uncles, Herman Maeuwel, a heraldic artist, by their father, Arnold van sylbom, a wood carver, who were both in the service of the Duke of Cleve, and by their great-uncle Johan Maeuwel, painter of royalty at the Burgund court in Dyen (France) 1.

The young Joris Ivens grew up among the cameras, photographic- and film material of his grandfather’s photo studio and fathers photography shop. The looking at and digesting of visual impressions was essential to both families. Only because of this familial context they perfectly honed their skills and visual concentration accumulated, allowing their craft to mature at such an exceptionally high level. Both fami- lies provide unique evidence, within three generations, of how an old art form transformed, through innovations of the youngest generation, into a new art form. Within the...
Herman, Paul and Johan left at an early age – the oldest was 18 years of age, the youngest 11, for Paris, to perform their trade in the goldsmith and painters district. Through bitter competition and rivalry in the acquiring of commissions, the artists soon developed an astonishingly rapid artistic development. The prodigious talent of the brothers, with their brilliant use of colours, lavish splendour, and close observation of the natural world, was almost instantaneously noticed by Jean de France, Duke of Berry and important patron of the arts at that time. It is supposed that the brothers, at least the most gifted on the Île-de-France.

...à Valparaiso

...à Valparaiso

Wilhelm Ivens, Een treinreis naar de Rijn, 1975. © CAPI Films

Joris Ivens, Film still from Before Spring, 1958, © CAPI Films

Joris Ivens, Film still from Pour le Mistral, 1953, © CAPI Films

Joris Ivens, Film still from The Valkhof and river Waal, 2009. © CAPI Films

Joris Ivens, Film still from Before Spring, 1958, © CAPI Films

Joris Ivens, Film still from Before Spring, 1958, © CAPI Films

The 17th Parallel, 1966

Pour le Mistral

Before Spring (1958),

The Wind

Wilhelm Ivens, Voyage en Thailande, 1952. © CAPI Films


...à Valparaiso

Visual and unembarrassed view of their naked crotches. This has nothing to do with eroticism, but is instead a constant rooted in an old peasant culture, which attaches little value to the human body, to which these artists from Nijmegen employ, resides therefore not in that which is depicted, but instead in the use of scenery, editing and the thematic relationship that people have with each other and with nature. Both the idealistic scenarios of the books and the films visualise the deeply felt utopian desire for harmony and justice between men and in nature, on a everyday and human level. In spite of the misery they witnessed in the world around them.

TRANSLATION

Within the framework of their respective fiction, the books of hours by the Limbourg Brothers, as well as the documentary films made by Ivens, reflect their era better than many other artworks. The books of hours herald the birth of humanism, the transition from a feudal medieval world to a bourgeois culture during the Renaissance. In Ivens’ film oeuvre, the turbulent transition of a seven-thousand year old agrarian society into a modern industrial world has made visible on a global level. A world of geographical and cultural migration, of economic and mental globalisation. In the last ten years of his life, Ivens grows more aware of the limitations of this modernist world view, of ideologies, and of science and technology. It becomes evident in a film about the wind in China, in which Ivens says: ‘It is not only science that works miracles. I also believe in magic! ’ In its form, neither a feature film nor a documentary, A Tale of the Winds (1982) is a film that looks ahead at the film art of the 21st century, in which genre boundaries continue to blur. Through its content the film tries to convey that spiritual values are important for a modern world, for both living and survival.

The 21st century will be a century of the spirit, or not at all, prophesied Ivens in the Nijmegen Museum with its view of the Waal River. “In my long life I have discovered that metaphysics and the dream are a form of reality, that metaphysics form a bridge between past and future.”

CORES

The metaphysical aspect is apparent in the miniatures painted by the Limbourg Brothers, the earthly scenes at the bottom of the calendar miniatures form a reflection of the heavenly order that is painted above in a semi-circle. The hours and days of the prayers are mentioned therein, the signs of the zodiac and the position of the moon. All this fitted in a penetrating blue, painted with priceless lapsi alta. The same blue hue that lingers on after seeing A Tale of the Winds . A Volapük or Pictor Mistic The cosmic implications of the 21st century, in which genre boundaries continue to blur. Through its content the film tries to convey that spiritual values are important for a modern world, for both living and survival.
polder landscape. Since no jet fighter is made available the plan never sees fruition. Iverson returns to it himself when, in 1972, he visits the mountains and clouds of Xijiang and Ti-bet, and conceives a ‘sequence aérien’ as part of the Yulong series. He develops this in a screenplay entitled ‘The Roof-top of the World’, which uses exclusively aerial sequences filmed from an aeroplane, from the highest mountain peaks of Tibet to the east coast of China, and from there into the ocean and the depths of the sea.” Eventually, all that is realised from this concept are the aerial scenes from A Tale of the Wind, involving the landscapes and mythical monuments of the wind.

**Blue**

Even this cosmic notion to embrace heaven and earth can be traced back to a childhood memory of Joris Iverson when, in the summer of 1932, he is lying on his back on the small beach that borders on the Waal River by Nijmegen. To his loved one he writes: “Yesterday I was on the Waal, the day was a godsend, the sky clear and deep blue, a day on which it feels good to lie on your back and look at the sky and suddenly shake your head, arms spread wide apart, when you feel a power growing within yourself – a vast sense of freedom, like gazing ever deeper into the blue – as in eyes you want to peer into it. These days I’m just a horrid layzbone.”

The Brothers undoubtedly have had a similar experience on the banks of the Waal. On their August vacation the first nudes in Western art can be seen without any classical or religious connotatation. In the waters near the castle of Stempel, some farmers are seen relaxing and swimming, looking for coolness in the sweltering summer heat. A commonplace experience that, through the visual imagination of the brothers, similar to that of Iverson, has nested itself permanently in art- and film history. A commonplace experience that, through the visual imagination of the brothers, similar to that of Iverson, has nested itself permanently in art- and film history.

**Visual, very visual**

Joris Iverson has repeatedly pointed out the importance of the visual arts in relation to his cinematic oeuvre: ‘Many ask me which director is my strongest influence on me, and I answer that most of it does not come from other filmmakers, but from the art of painting from my own intuition in the tradition of Dutch painting’.

The visual arts have a revolutionary influence on me, because my talent is purely visual. Very visual! And that is part of our Dutch culture. Herein lie the roots of my visual perception, the sense of reality.”

I’m a Dutch realist. I speak the language of Van Gogh and Brueghel."

That Iverson does not refer to his world famous fellow inhabitants of Nijmegen is hardly surprising. The books of photos by the Limburg Brothers belong to the national treasures of France (Musée Condé, Bibliothèque Nationale) and the US (Metropolitan Museum). As late as 1995 the city archivist of Nijmegen, Friedrich Gorissen, founded in the Nijmegen municipal archives evidence that links the background of the Limburg Brothers, who before that moment had been described as Flemish artists from the Meuse region, directly to the city of Nijmegen.” It then took a further fifty years before their birthplace once again embraced these prodigious sons as their own.

Through these artists a Dutch-Rhine cultural tradition comes to light, which marries an acute observation of the mundane in the physical world – paying attention to even the most trivial details – to metaphysics. This Dutch-Rhine cultural sub-sector, situated roughly between the cities of Utrecht and Cologne, with Nijmegen as navel between east, west, north and south, in the greater part of Dutch history, played a more prominent role than the county of Holland. This cultural context of Nijmegen’s artists sheds a new light on Iverson’s oeuvre.


2. The Limburg Brothers (Anne of France, Duke of Berry, Yale University Press.


13. Speech held by Joris Ivens before the city council of Nijmegen at the acceptance of the town’s Honorary Citizenship, 4 October 1968.


15. Joris Ivens, ‘Scénario pour la séquence anémiée’, manuscript 18 December 1972, and ‘Notes sur la Séquence: La physionomie géographique de la Chine’, manuscript 17 December 1972, JA.


This annual festival for the documentary film, held in Serpa, in the remote Alentejo region in Portugal, reaches its eighth edition this year. Structured around a central theme, the festival offers many documentary films, followed by collective debates, the purpose of which is to establish a dialogue between the filmmakers who are present and the audience. This debate serves greatly to deepen the experience of the specific films, and also offers a reflection on documentary film art in general. Its different stylistic and cultural approaches to film art serves as a reflection of the time.


Is there such a thing as a ‘political image’, as opposed to a political film? I think they are both part of the same equation. It’s hard to talk about political films and not at the same time include in that definition political images as well, since they very much belong to the same medium, share the same entity. I think that the concept of the political film has changed, and that it is harder to define nowadays.

Current directors don’t seem to be interested in teaching anymore, their focus seems to be more on understanding much belong to the same medium, share the same entity. I think for a film to be called political, it needs to present a level of awareness are created for the people who see the film.

Of course. Naturally, the political issues vary during different decades, and the way films reflect these differ as well. The sense of radicalism that you saw in the 1960s is gone. Someone like Michael Moore for instance, I would not typify as a political director. I don’t mean to put down his work, but I regard him as more of a showman than as someone who is seriously politically active. I do feel that film has become a more democratic medium, and with that I mean that the means to make films have become more widely available to people.

Do you consider yourself to be a political filmmaker? Absolutely not. I don’t believe that film can change society’sills, that is a notion that we have cured ourselves of. Politics may be able to change society, but it is not up to art to do that. All one can hope for is that film may be able to change individuals, but society as a whole will not be changed by art.

Your films, especially Meditation on Revolution 5 that we just saw, and some striking resemblance with the film Rain. Of course it’s different in many ways but the rainy sidewalks, the footsteps in the puddles, the close ups of metal and above all it’s all filmed in grainy black and white.

You can see what I mean. The dark images at night in rainy New York. People walking in the street. But this is another movie. It has its own theme.

Yes I can see that. Maybe you have a similar way of working? Ivens, when he filmed Rain, would go into the street with a hand-held camera and improvised. He only knew that he wanted to film rain. There was no detailed scenario that he followed. It’s similar to your approach.

Yes, the way that Ivens held the camera was very innovative. And the fact that he had one theme, rain, and that he filmed very freely is something that I myself do very much. I usually start a film with an idea. Something that I want to investigate. But I also try to let the circumstances of the location, what happens when I arrive, have a huge influence. So there is an idea like you saw in Meditation on revolution. It has an overarching theme. I explore the theme in different contexts. I went to Cuba, Rio, Mexico City and Mississippi and made different films. But they all deal with the notion of revolution.

And what is then your way of working on this theme? I go into the street and improvise. I always remember what come the director of the film. Starting from the steps, every-day something happened.

Is it not dangerous to let it just happen? Isn’t there the risk that you lose control over your theme and the film might scatter? No. As an artist you always have enough obsessive quality. Chantal Akerman’s obsession led her to particular spacial-ites that she wanted to document. And through those obses-sions a structure emerged. In one instance, she returns to one part of the wall. This becomes the place where she re-turns to. That allows a transition to take place and rethink what you are looking at, what you have already seen. So I think there is no fear that it’s going to scatter. Maybe when ten filmmakers made a film about a subject, and you want to combine all the images that they made together, it could get scattered. But I do believe that an author has a direction, and sense will come out of exploration. I go into a project, a theme, and I’m going to find and find how to speak of the project through my eyes. Maybe in a similar way that Ivens had found a way to speak about the rain. He didn’t go with a pen and paper. He went with his camera, and his images are going to bring me to to that other spot, that speaks of rain in a cinematographic alphabet.

Eduardo Escorel was born in 1945, in São Paulo (Brazil). After obtaining a degree in Social and Political Science at the University of São Paulo, he started his film career as an assistant editor. Soon after, he founded his own film company, the first film he directed was as assistant editor. In 1965 to 1975 he worked as an editor on several films by one of the most acclaimed directors of the Brazilian Cinema Novo movement, Glauher Rocha (1938-1981). One of those films, Terra em transe / Earth Entranced (1969) is also part of this year’s film program of Doc’s Kingdom. This production, Rocha’s most influential film abroad, offers an intense, operatic spectacle that conveys a true sense of the violence and irrationality that characterize electoral politics in Brazil. The protagonist is a poet-journalist who abandons his elite milieu for radical politics, but becomes disillusioned with his new comrades as he was with the cultural class. In 1975, Eduardo Escorel directed his first feature film. Love, Lessons, and has been working as a director ever since. Several of his documentary films, O Assalto ao Poder / Assault on Power (2002), (2008) O Temp de o Lugar / Time and Place (2008) are being screened during this year’s festival. Eduardo Escorel lives in Rio de Janeiro.

Robert Fenz is an original young filmmaker. He worked as a cameraman and assistant director together with Chantal Akerman. In 2003 he directed his first feature film, His name is a good example of film being a democratic medium, available to a large group of people, as well a political medium, as it carries within itself that revelatory element: the audience learns something about a culture they have been unfamiliar with before, and they are being taught by the Indians themselves through film.

Jean Couteau said: ‘If you don’t have a concrete idea, then go into the world and improvise.’ I agree with that. You can discover a lot but it takes training. You have to learn to document your camera, you have to learn how images speak and that takes practice. When you are able to improvise it allows you to go into the street to find images that communicate so much more than just at random shooting. So it’s not about taking the idea literally. It’s rather to give a sense of feeling about the subject. Joris Ivens did that, but nowadays a lot of film-makers are working in this way. Chantal Akerman when she filmed c’iautre côté she had a certain idea about what she wanted. But what happened there, shaped the film. Robert Gardner, what he noticed while making Forest of Bliss, was the steps in Benares. So he decided to go every morning with his camera to the steps and let in a way the steps be...
Research in Photo collections

Thirty silver gelatin prints made by Robert Capa in China in 1938 in the photography collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam formed the starting point for my photo historical research with a focus on the ‘photographs as objects’, following their historic trajectories from origin towards usage. One of the main questions is how and under which conditions the photographs were made by Capa in China and in what way and to what extent they influenced or determined our image of the Sino-Japanese War. Besides the photos in the Print Room of the Rijksmuseum, the archives of the Robert Capa and Cornell Capa Archive at the International Center of Photography (New York), Sparaanstad Photo (Haarlem), Filmmuseum Amsterdam, Special Collections of the University Library Leiden and the European Foundation Joris Ivens (Nijmegen) among others were of special interest.

Under control

In Europe the Sino-Japanese War was generally seen as the Eastern frontier of a battle similar to the one which was fought in Spain at that time: the resistance against violent fascist elements. Therefore, many turned their eyes to the developments in China. Japan had taken control of the northern province Manchuria in 1932 and there reigned a constant fear of further Japanese advance and the escalation into war. These expectations indeed became reality when the Chinese Nationalist army lead by ‘generalissimo’ Chiang Kai-shek refused any further concessions with the Japanese at the Marco Polo Bridge near Beijing. This military encounter heralded the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese War and in 1941 merged into World War II. Their common enemy caused the Chinese Nationalist government and the Communists to join forces after a decade of political and military clashes.
After their arrival in China, in early March 1938, which was followed by a month of negotiating with the Chinese censors, Capa was received as the authorities as a member of the film team, rather than an independent photojournalist. The censors, who worked under the supervision of Chiang Kai-shek, appointed a general to accompany Ivens, cameraman Fernhout and Capa on their journey through China. A Chinese cameraman would join them with a 16 mm camera to record simultaneously as they were filming scenes for The 400 Million. Only after approval of these film reels was Ivens permitted to send his own footage to Hollywood for developing. While Ivens and Fernhout had their troubles with the censors, Capa felt concerned about his own work. The obligations towards Ivens and the filming, the constraints forced upon them and his dependence on the work and travel schedule of the production of The 400 Million left him little freedom. In April 1938 Capa wrote to his agent in New York: ‘They are very fine fellows, but their movie is their private affair (and they let me feel that) and the still pictures are completely secondary.’

Not an easy task

In the first week of April, Capa and the film crew were finally allowed to travel closer towards the war front. When the Battle of Taierzhuang was fought, the Chinese authorities gave them permission to enter the war ground. This battle in the little village Boos km northeast of the government headquarters in Hankow was considered to be the first great victory for China since the outbreak of the war and therefore an event not to be missed by the foreign reporters. For Capa it must have been a relief to finally be able to get close to the actual events of the war, after sitting idle for more than a month. But he felt the burden of the ‘adjusted’ agreement with Ivens and Fernhout: ‘The pictures of Taierzhuang are not bad, but it really was not easy to photograph well if you have a big film-camera on your back, 4 censors around, then to help [...] the film-operator and then not to photograph anything that appears in the film. In one word, I have to photograph the side to photograph the side and don’t have many time to do it either.’

Robert Capa nevertheless did manage to produce a considerable number of photographs of the Sino-Japanese War: stories on the Battle of Taierzhuang, the bombings of Hankow, the Yellow River floods, the strategic importance of the Chinese railroads and portraits of general and Madame Chiang Kai-shek would be some of his journalistic work. His reports would be published in Life, with whom he had arranged an assignment for China, and numerous other international illustrated magazines like the French Le Soir and Regards, the English Weekly Illustrated, the Dutch Katholieke Illustratie and Het Leven and the Swiss Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung. The Robert Capa and Cornell Capa Archive at the International Center for Photography in New York, which contains the most comprehensive collection of his photographs, negatives and written documents, holds around 800 gelatin silver prints of his journey through China. The majority bears the stamp Pix Publishing Inc. on the verso; it was this photo agency that represented Robert Capa while he worked in China.

Human misery

For the first time in his career Capa saw himself confronted with a large distance between the work in the field and the process of getting his work published. Not only the literal distance between him and his agents, colleagues and family in Europe and the U.S. was unprecedented, but also the language barrier, his isolated position within the film team and the controlled working conditions enforced by the Chinese censors made that his adaptability and patience was tested. Above all, the lack of freedom of movement resulted in a distance between his camera and the subject. A distance also Joris Ivens recollected when recalling looking back at his first trip to the country with which he would develop a lifelong relation. Still, Ivens claimed to have seen ‘the visual signals of the war – the broken or mutilated bodies, the [...] refugees, the distress, the fear, the human misery, but also the courage, and despite the regrettable efforts of my censors my camera had caught a few glimpses that [...] accused the war. All wars.’ Both Capa and Ivens had, within this restricted space, to look for signs and details which would represent the larger picture of the Sino-Japanese War.

Work photos

During the study of Capa’s photographic reports from China, in press prints and published form, I came across a separate body of work which had a completely different character: photographs that possess little or no news value, but are visual accounts of the working conditions of the film team. They were made by Capa, and some of them by John Fernhout and the Chinese crew members; most likely they exchanged their still cameras occasionally. ‘Those work photos’, or ‘photographs behind the scenes’, are not only part of the collection of the Print Room at the Rijksmuseum: the most extensive collection (around 80 prints) can be found in the archives of Joris Ivens at the European Foundation Joris Ivens in Nijmegen. The work photos provide a unique insight into the relationship between the members of the film team (for the larger part consisting of Chinese officials and helpers), their (means of) travel, their waiting and working. An important aspect is their function in the identification of places, events and people.

A striking example of the work photograph as means of identification is shown by the portrait (inv. no. 4424) of John Fernhout and Joris Ivens meeting general Sun Liang-chung (Li Tsung-jen) of the 35th division of the Kuomintang (Taierzhuang, April 1938). Another image (inv. no. 4059) shows the core of the film team, together with production assistant Jack Young, a Chinese with American education, in the foreground, who is sitting next to Ivens and Fernhout in front of a map that shows what appears to be the interior of a train. Capa is leaning forward on the window sill, next to him with glasses and a camera, looking in the camera, is the Polish Jewish journalist Epstein who worked for the American news agency United Press and accompanied the team for a part of their journey. The third example of a work photo (inv. no. 4564) functions as a bridge between the published stories and the working conditions. On this photograph, most likely made by John Fernhout, we see the subject of both the filmmakers and the photographer. The large Debiro Parvo 35 mm film camera on a tripod is pointed at camouflage artillery, near Taierzhuang. In the last half of the 400 Million pictures of this artillery are included. In the right corner of the frame, Robert Capa can be seen in action with his compact Contax IIb Zeiss ikon. From this angle he must have taken a picture of the working conditions, with the film camera and probably Ivens in sight. But in Capa’s archived ‘stories’, a photograph taken with a similar point of view as this image can be found: it was published in 1938 in the Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung and in Life as a part of photo stories on the Chinese defense and the battle of Taierzhuang. It shows how the work photos may be regarded as key documents in understanding the creativity and skills of both the war photographer and the filmmaker in reporting of a war in a framework of strictly controlled conditions.

Robert Capa

The Hungarian-American war photographer Robert Capa born as Kodos Pál in Budapest, Hungary, 1913 - Bhim, Vietnam 1954 lived since the early thirties in exile in Germany and studied Political Sciences at the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik in Berlin. In this period Capa had his first publication of his photographs: he portrayed Leon Trotsky in Copenhagen (1933). In 1935 Capa left Paris foranoi.Nazi ideology caused a hostile climate towards Jews. In Paris he invented-together with his great love and colleague photographer Gerda Taro- this pseudonym Robert Capa and shaped his strong ambition to become a ‘famous American photojournalist’. He first established international fame through the publication of his photographs from the Spanish Civil War. The image of the falling Spanish soldier (1936) taken at the very moment he is hit by a deadly bullet became an iconic and a great boost to Capa’s starting career. Other reports which were widely published in the international press included China (1938), The battle of Nanshen (Spain, 1937), Refugees from Barcelona (1939), D-Day (France, 1944) and the liberation of Leipzig and Paris (1945). Together with colleagues photographers Edward Weston, Henri Cartier-Bresson and David Seymour, he founded the cooperative photography agency Magnum Photos. It has grown since into a worldwide famous agency with offices in New York, London, Paris and Tokyo and its photographers have chronicled world events from a highly respected documentary practice. Robert Capa died in 1954 in Vietnam, which was occupied by France.

1 Letter by Robert Capa to Peter Köster, Hankow, April 25, 1938, New York, HP, BCCU, inv. no. 7:4. The letters from China are originally written in Hungarian and German and are translated into English.
2 Letter by Robert Capa to Peter Köster, Hankow, April 25, 1938, New York, HP, BCCU, inv. no. 7:4.
3 Pix Publishing Inc. (not inconnu) received Capa’s exposed negatives and negatives scans of the picture. The picture was printed and published in several offices in New York, London, Paris and Tokyo and its photograph may be regarded a key document.
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6 Pix Publishing Inc.: hand in hand in New York, received Capa’s exposed negatives and negatives scans of the picture. The picture was printed and published in several offices in New York, London, Paris and Tokyo and its photograph may be regarded a key document.
7 The three black-and-white prints (inv. no. 4059, 4424, 4564) were offered to the DAI in 2002.

1088-1097.
703. Robert Capa, press print with stamp Pix Publishing Inc. on verso, April 1938, silver gelatin print, 18 x 24 cm., Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-F-2005-107-137.
705. Robert Capa, press print with stamp Pix Publishing Inc. on verso, April 1938, silver gelatin print, 18 x 24 cm., Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-F-2005-107-137.
709. Robert Capa, press print with stamp Pix Publishing Inc. on verso, April 1938, silver gelatin print, 18 x 24 cm., Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-F-2005-107-137.
710. Robert Capa, press print with stamp Pix Publishing Inc. on verso, April 1938, silver gelatin print, 18 x 24 cm., Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-F-2005-107-137.
As China began to re-establish diplomatic relations with Western democracies in the 1970s, Premier Zhou Enlai invited two renowned European filmmakers, Michelangelo Antonioni and Ioris Ivens, to visit the People’s Republic with their cameras. Both filmmakers sought to bring back “a just image” of a country and a revolution that had been so idealized among the Left in Western Europe. Nevertheless, first released in 1972, Antonioni’s Chung Kuo was denounced in ‘The People’s Daily’ for having “a vicious motive” and “despicable tricks,” and the entire Chinese population were then of the Maoist enterprise in a glorious light, into the shadow of oblivion.

Moreover, both films had practically disappeared from public circulation except for occasional retrospectives of their auteurs at film festivals. Fortunately, Chung Kuo has become available on DVD in 2007, while two films of the Ivens/Loridan series—Chung Kuo—Cina and the new pair of pants she had bought—since she has only one—were well used to playing their parts in a Maoist mise-en-scène that had long pre-existed the presence of the foreigner’s cameras.

As scholars point out, the Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966, created “an elaborate pattern of daily life that puts enormous premium on forms - forms of speech, behavior, bearing, and countless other ritualistic details.” Thus, one of the great contributions of Chung Kuo and Yukong has been to document the Cultural Revolution’s repertory of theatrical postures in the clothing, speech, and gestures of their ordinary subjects. For instance, Antonioni filmed two scenes of kindergarten children doing song-and-dance dances in praise of Chairman Mao, and it is both touching and Frightening to watch their not-quite-disciplined little bodies imperfectly enacting certain grandiose and rigid patterns. In the same film, youths are often seen to march in squads on the streets, carrying spades as if they were rifles. Ivens and Loridan, on the other hand, filmed the movements of crowds in various celebrations and parades, where gongs and drums, red flags and ribbons endow the ocean of people in monotonous blue Mao suits with an incredible atmosphere of festivity. Apart from such occasions, they also reveal through the voiceover that crowds gathered whenever they see the film camera, and even more if Ivens and Loridan are present, so there is something inevitably spectacular about everything that they filmed, even if it was just an interview with a small group of workers. In fact, Yukong rarely if ever features a private interview—all interviews are conducted within a work team, a family, or another kind of group setting, thereby showing another fact of the Cultural Revolution: no one can escape surveillance from others.

After some thoughtful commentary on one or both films from renowned film and cultural critics such as Umberto Eco, Susan Sontag, and Serge Daney in the late 1970s, these monumental works have received but minimal critical attention. Moreover, both films had practically disappeared from public circulation except for occasional retrospectives of their authors at film festivals. Fortunately, Chung Kuo has become available on DVD in 2003, while two films of the Ivens/Loridan series—Chung Kuo—Cina and the young woman excitedly shows her elders one of the most remote villages and peripheral ‘autonomous regions.’ Even if they did not own televisions and rarely saw films, the Hunan villagers Antonioni encountered and the Kashgar ‘masses’ disposal were well used to playing their parts in a Maoist mise-en-scène that had long pre-existed the presence of the foreigner’s cameras.

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The 1950s and 1960s had seen the advent of new techniques and technologies of cinema verité and direct cinema, in particular the lightweight steen cameras with synchro- nous sound. For the Ivens/Loridan films, Ivens and Loridan brought their crew to Xinjiang, a region that was to become the first phase of production weaving their Chinese cinematographer Li Xezhang from the tripod, insisting that he keep the camera rolling even when nothing exciting appeared to be happening, and asking him to keep his ears as well as his eyes open so as to adjust his camera movement accordingly. By filming meetings and interviews with the techniques of direct cinema rather than reducing them to sound bites, Ivens and Loridan also allow the audience to discern a power struggle beneath the liturgy of clichés, between teachers and students, between workers and management, sometimes even tensions within the same family. In one film, a young woman excitedly shows her elders a new pair of pants she had bought—since she has only one pair—but is criticized by her family for her ‘petit bourgeois materialism’ and for ‘forgetting revolutionary values.’ As we watch such grandiose reproaches that make the young woman hang her head, however, it is not hard to see a domestic economy in strained circumstances. If images and voices from the quotidian realm humanize the heroes of the YUKONG films, the ‘lives of life’ captured in Chung Kuo are more wont to contradict, underscore, or even undermine the credibility of omnipresent heroic im-

The Maoist Mise-en-Scène: ANTONIONI, IWEN, AND THE CHINESE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Jie Li

Michelangelo Antonioni in Shanghai, 1945; Joris Ivens in China, 1973

Michelangelo Antonioni during the shooting of Chung Kuo—Cina, 1972

Bracket against Antonioni’s film Beijing, 1973

Michelangelo Antonioni, Helsinki opening screening Chung Kuo—Cina, 1972

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Comment Yukong deplaça les Films, 1976. © CAPI

Fromanger, Peter
Comment Yukong déplaça les montages, 1976 © CAPI
Films

Yukong deplaça les Films, 1976. © CAPI

Yukong deplaça les Films, 1976. © CAPI

As we later learn from the annals of political and diplomatic history, the real target of the campaign against Chung Kuo had been Zhou Enlai, the premier who invited Antonioni and Ivens to China in the first place. Still in the process of editing Yukong, Ivens and Lordion were also later called upon to publicly criticize Antonioni, which they quietly declined.1 The criticism campaign had also implicated their film: when Ivens and Lordion sent their cinematographer Li Zeixian to do some additional shooting, they also discovered that he seemed to have ‘forgotten’ everything he had taught him about direct cinema—the campaign against Antonioni apparently served as a much more forceful counter-pedagogy.

In early 1976, Lordion and Ivens screened a rough cut of a few finished films of the Yukong cycle to a committee of leading cinematic and cultural representatives, and the Ministry of Culture came up with 61 ‘suggestions for revision,’ many of which were similar to minor criticisms of Chung Kuo, such as grey skies, an old woman’s bound feet, the figure of a handicap puller, etc. Indeed, the Yukong film might have suffered a similar condemnation or might have been altered beyond recognition had Zhou Enlai not passed on a message to Ivens: ‘Take your film, leave immediately and don’t ever come back.’

Fortunately, in another year, the cultural Revolution would come to an end, and filmmakers would be free to look more candidly and with less ideological baggage at the reality around them. As Chinese cinema since the 1980s has become globally visible for the first time, filmmakers of the fifth and sixth generations—many of whose works are closely connected to the documentary genre—have gone even further than Antonioni and Ivens/Lordion to break the official molds of mise-en-scène and to bring China’s most marginalized peoples into the realms of representation. Defined as ‘the solicitude for the human spirit, attention to the rock bottom of society, and a bottom-up perspective,’ China’s new documentary movement produced such films as Wang Bing’s nine-hour three-part epic West of the Tracks (2003) on northeast China’s industrial area as millions of workers undergo a painful transition from state-owned industry to a free market. Based on techniques like sync-sound, long takes, follow-shots, and interviews, this sequel on the fate of China’s working class is perhaps the closest in spirit to the Yukong cycle in style and content, except that there is no more faith in the redeeming power of a political, social, or cultural revolution.

6 Li Zeixian. ‘Filming New Yukong Weeded the Mountain with Ivens’ in Imaging China: Ivens and China 2004. p. 44.
9 Philip, Peter. Documentary films, 1976 © CAPI Films

Xuan Phuong and Le 17ème Parallèle

‘Since a long time I had a dream: returning to Vinh Linh and trying to find out what happened with these courageous people, living near the 17th parallel, what had fate in mind for them who suffered so much. I had been appointed interpreter of the film crew in 1967, but also took care of Joris Ivens’ and Marceline Loridan-Ivens’ accommodation. I understood that filmmaking is tough and difficult, but also very interesting, needing a patient look, in order to point in her life again. With the support of both filmmakers she decided to become a filmmaker herself.

A turning point

Xuan Phuong is probably the best testimony to make this film. She was appointed interpreter of the film crew in 1967, but also took care of Joris Ivens’ and Marceline Loridan-Ivens’ accommodation. She had studied medicine. She already collaborated with Joris Ivens during the shooting of Le ciel, le terre one year earlier. The relationship between her and Ivens/Lordion intensified enormously during the two months at the war front. In Vinh Linh they lived underground, in tunnels and caves, where the citizens had built a complete village many meters inside the earth to protect themselves against the US bombings. After the shooting was finished Xuan Phuong wrote to Ivens: ‘I’ve guided many dear Vietnamese people to my own village, in the north, I’ve seen, I’ve learned and a lot, but yet this is not the same. With you I feel more reflected, I’ve grown I understood that filmmaking is tough and difficult, but also very interesting, needing a patient look, in order to point in her life again. With the support of both filmmakers she decided to become a filmmaker herself.

Bare foot

This was not the first switch in her adventurous life and proofed not to be her last. At 16, Xuan Phuong left her family and her country. She revisited her dream of mine was realized when in April 2007 Vietnamese National Television decided to make this documentary. Xuan Phuong and Le 17ème Parallèle

She had the chance to go back and see what happened with those Vietnamese people, living near the 17th parallel, where Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens filmed their impressive documentary Le 17ème Parallèle. Xuan Phuong decided to go back and see what happened with those Vietnamese people, living near the 17th parallel, where Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens filmed their impressive documentary Le 17ème Parallèle. Xuan Phuong decided to go back, to try to find out their fate. She became a filmmaker herself.

Speaking out

Although her family connections and knowledge of French helped her build a comfortable life, Xuan’s status in the country has been somewhat precarious, she says. In part, her upper-class origins are a mark of suspicion despite her past heroism. Now 80, she has spoken out in her autobiography Ao Dai. My War. My Country. Published in France, the book has had limited distribution in Europe and the United States. Phuong laments in Vietnam’s successful flight to become independent of the French and the Americans. But her pride is tinged with sadness over the increasing divide between rich and poor. ‘After such a long life, it’s so sad to see so many things that have gone wrong,’ she said.

Returning to Vinh Linh

Arriving in Vinh Linh in April 2007 the film crew was warmly welcomed by the president of the Quang Tri region. In front of the camera he thanked Joris Ivens and Marceline Lordion-Ivens for sharing their solidarity with the people of Vietnam during the most difficult and dangerous moments of hardship. Four villagers spoke about their memories of the shooting, one peasant of 90 years old and another 101! After four days of research we were most happy to find that some of these people who were interviewed for Ivens’ film on 6 June 1965 He is now 49 years old, an teacher in mathematics at a secondary school in Vinh Linh. He is living happily with his wife and four children in a house surrounded with pepper trees. He is the immediate remembered me and invited me to be a family member, which real friends affected him. That night the woman was a young girl in the film the Le 17ème Parallèle again to the villagers of Vinh Moc. Some laughed when watching the caption of an American pilot by pupils, others had to cry when they saw relatives, who were not living anymore and they had not seen for decades. The youngsters of Ho Xa who never experienced war were a mark of suspicion despite her past heroism. Now 80, she has spoken out in her autobiography Ao Dai. My War. My Country. Published in France, the book has had limited distribution in Europe and the United States. Phuong laments in Vietnam’s successful flight to become independent of the French and the Americans. But her pride is tinged with sadness over the increasing divide between rich and poor. ‘After such a long life, it’s so sad to see so many things that have gone wrong,’ she said.

C’est merveilleux, LA VIE !

1 Xuan Phuong in her letters to the Joris Ivens Archive, September 2008.
2 Xuan Phuong, in a letter to Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens, 5 August 1967, Joris Ivens Archive
4 Bill Sayre, ibid.
5 Xuan Phuong, see note 1.

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An old friend of the Chinese people

Don’t film China as a rose’ was Prime Minister Chou En-Lai’s advice to director Joris Ivens in 1955. Joris Ivens, who had visited China in 1936, was constrained in government agencies, to be allowed to present China to the outside world on such a large scale. The film was a cultural-historic event: 350 million people watched the film. Never before in history did so many people get acquainted with ordinary Chinese people and saw glimpses of daily life in China. However, Prime Minister Chou En-Lai had taken precautions to avoid that Ivens was a Maoist himself. ‘What do you see when you travel somewhere?’ he asked. ‘For the most part, I’d say this is ‘progressive’ film work for the unions from 1935 – 58.’ When Joris Ivens became President of the Jury at the World Festival of Youth and Students in Warsaw in 1955 he awarded a Gold Medal to an Australian film The Hungry Mile (WWF Film Unit, 25 minutes, 1954). During a film I made in Australia a selection of WWF Film Unit films were ‘surprised’, and even ‘disappointed’. It was Ivens’ precedent that created a fertile environment for the initiative of the WWF unit’s Norma Dish, Keith Cow and Jock Levy who went on to produce an important body of ‘progressive’ film work for the unions from 1935 – 58.

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Huit jours après l'avant-première, j’ai reçu un énorme bouquet de fleurs. Joris m’envoiaient une brassée de roses. Huit jours après l’avant-première, j’ai reçu un énorme bouquet. Il n’avais jamais vu son père. Il avait du mal à quitter les femmes, il ne les affrontait jamais.


Avec Joris, une autre vie a commencé. Même si les débuts furent longs et difficiles, entre nous et nos salubres. Puis Joris m’a emmenée dans un endroit glauque, chez lui, rue Guisarde, au sixième étage sans ascenseur – avec son asthme ! Au secours ! Pour se sauver, on utilisait les W-C, qui faisaient en même temps douche. Un homme si célèbre qui vivait si pauvrement. Moi, j’habitais alors dans un appartement certes pas très confortable mais vaste, genre loft.


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À la fin de la projection de… à Valparaiso, je me suis approchée de Joris. Mais il a reconnu? Je l’ignore. Je me suis présentée comme une jeune réalisatrice qui revenait d’Algérie, qui peinait sur le montage, et je lui ai demandé si j’avais pu donner des conseils. Joris m’a répondu qu’il n’avait pas le temps, mais il a tout de même noté mon adresse et il m’a donné le numéro de téléphone de son monteur. J’ai appelé cet homme, et il s’est chargé du montage du film qui deviendrait Algérie année zero.

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Et puis Joris m’a emmenée dans un endroit glauque, chez lui, rue Guisarde, au sixième étage sans ascenseur – avec son asthme ! Au secours ! Pour se sauver, on utilisait les W-C, qui faisaient en même temps douche. Un homme si célèbre qui vivait si pauvrement. Moi, j’habitais alors dans un appartement certes pas très confortable mais vaste, genre loft.


In October 2008 Éditions Robert Laffont published Marceline Loridan-Ivens autobiography Ma vie balagan. It was written in collaboration with Elisabeth D. Inandiak, journalist (correspondent for ‘Courrier International’ and ‘La Croix’). The book was nominated for ‘Le Prix Elle’ (April) and received ‘Le Prix Méiri pour la Mémoire 2009’ in June 2009. It was translated into English (‘My Life in Chaos’), Japanese (‘Anya no seishun’), Italian (‘La mia vita Balagan’) and Dutch (‘Mijn leven in Chaos’). Marceline Loridan-Ivens is a member of ‘Les Filles de Charlotte’ (China’s Association of Women in the Film Industry). In 2008, she was awarded by ‘Les Femmes du Cirque’. In 2009, she was decorated with the Order of ‘Les Femmes du Cinéma’ in France.
**The Story of the Century: The History of Documentaries (VUOSIOSETTAIN) Dokumenttителokuvan historia) By: Peter van Bajg the first ten years since its (1934) were the prevailing mode of the new art, 42 43 Not quite a tsunami, but a substantial wave. Dokumentttielokuvan historia)

**New books and DVD's**

What film's rain tells us about modern art. It is an avant-garde city symphony. It has a non-dramatic narrative, structured along music lines, like a piece of notation. And it tries to capture an atmosphere, a flow, created during a long two year process, with many trials and errors. Rain was part of the intriguing exhibition ‘Inhabit’. Berlin and Karlsruhe Notation and Form in the Arts. In 20th century art, notation and notational systems have been crucial. Not only in music, but also in the visual arts, dance, theatre, architecture, literature and film. John Rajchman writes in an essay for the exhibition catalogue, that the increasing importance of notation shows a profound change in ‘the idea of art itself, the ways it is made, talked about, or received.’ With Modernism's notation and notational systems have been part of the reconsideration of modern art, and the mapping out of distinctions and parallels to both the idyllic Power and the Land in the US. The politics of the documentary. Michael Chanan. By: Michael Chanan

**JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS**

Film, even when it is ‘archived’, is a living art, powerful, capable of explaining complex developments in a clear way, while at the same time focusing on striking details. For instance Esfir Shub's 'Komsomol, Patron of Electrification' (1935), saved by Chanan from oblivion.

Not quite a tsunami, but a substantial wave. Not quite a tsunami, but a substantial wave.

**What is the history of documentaries?**

The films of the ‘fifth art’ are a new landmark in this niche. Its notation and notational systems have been part of the reconsideration of the context, the film language, the different origins of these sculptors show that Ivens was, while filming A Requiem in Four Acts focusing on the films itself. Although Ivens’ oeuvre has often been divided into militant films and poetic films, or into films for the communist ‘Komsomol, because the radio waves in the Komsomol, as well as the new insights were included.

Accompanying the DVD collection of the same title, André Stuflens wrote an extensive book to describe the 20 films included. Of every individual film the book explains the content, the film production (almost on a diary-like level), the context, the film language, the different versions and restorations, the reception history (both critical and public) and quotes from film critics. This book provides the most complete study of Ivens’ films, and is based on recent worldwide film scholarship. Dissertations, theses, articles and books about individual films by Ivens provided up-to-date source material and facts. Many new insights were included, focusing on the films themselves, while Ivens’ oeuvre has often been divided into militant films and poetic films, or into films for the communist ‘Komsomol, as well as the new insights were included.

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The Bridge

seen in the perspective of the programme

by Peter Bosma

INTRODUCTION

My opening question is: How has The Bridge been screened in recent decades? Which conventions can be identified in programmes for The Bridge and what are their implications? We are now in a position in which we can look back at sixty years of screening practices around The Bridge. Given that the effect of a film is influenced by the context in which it is shown, it might prove interesting to review the options for positioning The Bridge in a public screening. Being a short film, The Bridge will inevitably be presented in a mixed programme. But the core question is: Which other films should feature in this programme?

This is a choice taken by the programme-maker on the basis of artistic vision. Here, I briefly review a few options for programming The Bridge: first in relation to the oeuvre of Joris Ivens (the director as author); second, in relation to the oeuvre of Germaine Krull (the cinematographer); and third, in relation to the oeuvre of S. van Ravensteijn, a cameraman who worked for Ivens.

THE OEUVRE OF JORIS IVENS (1899 - 1989)

The Netherlands Film Museum has mounted Joris Ivens retrospectives on various occasions, often as a birthday tribute during Ivens’ lifetime. Ivens died in 1989. The posthumous view of his oeuvre was given a powerful boost five years later with the publication of the Ivens’ retrospective project at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA 1994). In 2008 the presentation of the DVD box containing the collected works of Ivens prompted the Film Museum to present a retrospective at the IDFA again, this time entitled ‘110 years of Joris Ivens’ (for a detailed inventory of all his works, see John Caged’s essay on Ivens in 1988). In the book, I refer the reader to my article in Dutch at the website of the European Foundation Joris Ivens.

My primary thesis is that The Bridge marks the transition from amateur to professional filmmaker in the oeuvre of Ivens. It may be described as an exercise in style, a sort of cinematographic sketch pad, a study in movement, but also as a masterful debut piece. His masterful skills are clearly traceable in a chronology of his films. The Bridge further presages the later work of Ivens ‘the author’. This is clearly displayed in the link between The Bridge (1928) and De valpaviljoen (1936). The Chimán port is built on five hills, the affluent members of society ascend and descend by cable car while the poorer inhabitants go up and down never-ending flights of steps. The rise and fall of the cable car is reminiscent of the rise and fall of the vertical lift bridge. The film from the sixties contains traces of Ivens’ reflectivity and a resonance of his poetic inclination, this time mixed with social engagement.

THE SCREENING AT THE NETHERLANDS FILM LEAGUE (MAY 1928)

The world premiere of The Bridge took place on 5 May 1928 during the eleventh production of the Netherlands Film League. The programming of the Netherlands Film League was characterized by an explicit vision of filmmaking. This lends itself perfectly as a context for the screening of films and was applied for the first time in 1968 when film historian and guest programmer Nico J. Rieders presented ‘The history of a film culture’ for the Dutch Film Museum. In the season of 1999/2000 the Film Museum organized an itinerant programme consisting of eight reconstructions of Film League productions. In 1999 a reconstruction of the eleventh production of the Film League, as compiled by Joris Ivens in 1928, was presented exclusively in the Film Museum. The Bridge was shown with two Soviet films Zvenigorod (Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 1928) and Baby Ryazanskie (Women of Ryazan, Ivan Pravov & Olgia Probrozhenskaya, 1927). In 1999 the American film historian Tom Gunning positioned The Bridge in relation to the Film League and the international avant-garde films of the inter-war period: ‘The Bridge demonstrates the principle that a film needs to discover and explore its own language, based on dynamic composition and montage rhythm. Ivens described The Bridge as ‘well-considered laboratory work’, thereby heightening the affinity between the League productions and his own work as a filmmaker. Both stemmed more from discovery, exploration and experimentation than from traditional ideas about the making or screening of masterpieces. Both were seen as a step towards the realization of the inherent potential of the film. The Bridge was immediately hailed as a landmark in the development of the international avant-garde film and is now part of the canon. It is an ode to industrial technology and fits into the modernist movement of the inter-war years. In The Bridge (1936) Ivens analyzes the different movements around the then-brand-new vertical lift bridge with, on the one hand, the crossing horizontal lines of ships and trains, with cyclists and cars in the distance and, on the other hand, the rise and fall of the bridge itself (visualized by, amongst others, the movement of the counterweights).

NATIONAL CINEMA IN THE NETHERLANDS AROUND 1928

For Ivens The Bridge marked the transition from amateur to professional filmmaker. In what kind of film climate did he begin his professional career? Who else was making films at that time? What kind of Dutch films were being shown in the cinemas and which amateur filmmakers were on the scene? In her dissertation, film historian Susan Aauwer places...
Ivens within the context of the amateur film in the Neth-
erlands of the nineteen twenties. In 1928 amateur film-
makers began to organize themselves in the ‘Kino’ section of the Netherlands Association of Amateur Photographers (Nederlandse Amateur Fotograaf Vereniging). The Nether-
lands Cinefilm Association (Haagse Film Industrie) was founded by Mannus Franken in 1931, with support from Jo-
ris Ivens and J.C.Mol (see Aasman 2004, p. 56-59). Film histo-
rian Bert Haas sets The Bridge in the context of the Dutch film in the inter-war period, which puts Ivs-
en in the company of Willy Mullens, the Polygoenjournaal, Jan Hinx, de Haas and again J.C. Mol (see Hogenkamp, 1988, p. 48).
The Bridge can also be set in the context of the films being shown in the cinema around 1928. ‘De Rotterdamse school #8: stilte stad, levende muziek’ (Rotterdam School #8: silent city, living music) presented an uncomprehensive version of this perspective in 2007 (curated by Frank van Berkelt). A collection of documentary images, newsreels, cinema advertisements and avant-garde films gave the audience a chance to see the railway bridge ‘De Hef’ from three dif-
ferent cinematographic angles (Paul Schuitema, Krieger, Joris Ivens), with the musical renditions of three contemporary composers (Koos van der Giend, And-
Dr Nijs, Oscar van Drimm) in Maasbruggen (1997) director Paul Schuitema focused on two railway bridges: we see the traffic flow, hordes of cyclists and vehicles, being tamed by a policeman or the barrier of the bridge. The camera is di-
rected at the ground much of the time; the railway bridge appears incidentally. Pooram van de Koningshaven (Panorama of the Koningshaven) (1992) is a conventional cinema documentary made by the company Haafilm (short for Haagse Fotografische Assm) with a superbly of different emblems. Paul Schuitema employs very few cre-
date, with a stupendous sense of shared memory.

The Bridge

When Ivens showed The Bridge in the Soviet Union, he was reportedly barraged with practical questions from an audi-
caller who must have had a Ph.D. in cinema: How many tons does the bridge weigh? How low is it? How high? How much cargo passes through every day? Where did those trains come from? And were they heading? Similar down-to-earth ques-
tions might just as easily come to a modern audience. The railway bridge that crosses the Koningshaven in Rotterdam can now be named as ‘place of shared memory’ (Ruuk de memorie), which resonates with impressions from out-
side the film. In 1985 a monograph had already appeared about ‘De Hef’. In 1993 the railway bridge went out of use.

The Bridge

I would like to express my gratitude to the European Foundation Joris Ivens (see Schreurs, 2002) for its support and the National Film Institute (Cinetone, Cineco, Haaghefilm) for their comments and help.

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ment van de familiefilm, Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2004. • André Stufkens, ‘Restoring Joris Ivens’ Digital’, in: The Ivens Magazine, nr 12 (de-
cember 2004) p. 3-7, URL: www.iens.nl. • André Stufkens, Restoring The Hef, in: The Ivens Magazine, nr 13 (de-

P.S. THE DISTRIBUTION PRINT OF THE BRIDGE

A public screening is only possible if the distribution print is authentic, complete and in good condition. What is the situation regarding The Bridge? Ivens spent three months in the winter of 1927 and the spring of 1928 working on the film. Despite the savings of this period, he had accumulated around 1,000 metres of rushes on 35mm, which he processed into a final version comprising 35 metres of film (Commission Report, 1928). This would result in a screening time of 17 minutes for a projection speed of 18 images per second (15 minutes for a projection speed of 18 images per second). The Netherlands Film Museum has twenty-one different conserved elements of The Bridge (including a negative print, a positive print and an intermediate, 35mm projec-
tion print), which have come from various laboratories (Cinetone, Cinco, Haaghefilm) and sources. In 1991, when the nitrate print was found to be in poor condition, a project was set up headed by Sonja Snoek and Bert Hogenkamp, to commission new prints for the restored film. The conserved films were screened in December 1994 at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (see IDFA catalogues) and at the National Film Institute with the film Mu-
useum, the Film and Science Foundation (Stichting Film en Wetenschap) and the European Foundation Joris Ivens. The programme was described in a separate Film Museum publica-
tion (see Reijnhoud, 1994, p. 21). The different versions of The Bridge should be further re-
considered. In the conserved version of 1994 the optimal ver-
sion, with the original length and sequence? Film historian André Stufkens doubts that the original camera negative (a superfluity of intermediate prints, which have come from various laboratories (Cinetone, Cineco, Haaghefilm) for their comments and help.

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Since August this year, the likeness of Joris Ivens can be seen travelling between the cities of Nijmegen (his place of birth) and Roermond. His portrait is part of a series that has been placed upon railway cars by Dutch transport company Veolia. This company provides transport by buses and trains in the provinces of Gelderland and Limburg. From the end of 2009 onwards, Veolia has introduced a total of sixteen new trains on the so-called Meuseline (named after the River Meuse, which connects both provinces). This has been done to accommodate the growing number of passengers on this section. To indicate the special relationship between the trains and the route on which they travel, portraits of people who have been of importance to this particular region have been placed upon the trains.

Shanghai will visit the Ivens Archive to make a documentary on Ivens.

As the grand finale of a conference on Hanns Eisler’s film music in Berlin, a world premiere was arranged with no less than four different versions of Rain (Ivens/Franken, 1939). Following the original silent version from 1929, the sound version composed by Lou Lichfeld (1992), Hanns Eisler (1948) and Ed Hughes (2000) were also performed. Film scholars, composers and musicologists gathered to discuss the relationship between image and sound and Eisler’s visions regarding this topic. The ‘Ensemble Klangeexistente’ with conductor Manuel Nawri had some minor problems with the synchronisation, but the result was overall convincing and attractive.

DOK’s Leipzig 2009: Ivens retrospective.

The German Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv organises an annual retrospective during the DOK’s Leipzig. This year (at the end of October) the subject will be the film oeuvre of Joris Ivens. Former collaborators of Ivens, as well as film scholars, will focus on the films that Ivens made in Germany. An accompanying publication will be published during the retrospective. During the festival, the German version of the Ivens DVD box-set will also be presented.

Antoni Muntadas wins Velázquez Prize.

On June 9th the Spanish artist Antoni Muntadas was presented with the 2009 Velázquez Prize by the Spanish minister of Culture with a cash award of 125,000 euros. The award was bestowed in recognition of his outstanding and intense career and contribution to contemporary national and international art. Born in Barcelona in 1942 and a resident of New York since 1971, Muntadas is a pioneer in electronic art. The Velázquez Prize has been presented since 1992 to artists like Antoni Tàpies, Juan Soriano, Antonio Lopez and Luis Gordillo. Muntadas created in 1993 the multimedia environment La Siesta / The Nap, for the project Beyond the Bridge, initiated by the Ivens Foundation and MonteVideo/TimeBasedArt. Muntadas portrayed Ivens connecting scenes from early films of Ivens with the siesta as a leitmotif, and has been exhibited worldwide since.

The Stuttgart Staatsgalerie: Film and Photo: An Homage.

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the exhibition ‘Film und Foto’ organized by the German Werkbund (Work Federation) in Stuttgart in 1929 the Staatsgalerie will exhibit origins from the artists involved. In 1929 some 1,200 objects by 190 artists of various nationalities demonstrated the aesthetic developments that characterized a new era of photography. The ‘Fifo’ reaped widespread recognition already then, and to this day is considered one of the epoch-making international exhibitions of the twentieth century. Also Joris Ivens’ avant-garde were screened at that time and now again (from 4 July – 2 November 2009).