<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction: …I see you</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Carla Delfos, Kirsten Langkilde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is to be done?</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Viola Michely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faces of Modernity: Rethinking Modernism from Modernist Theory to Contemporary Cultural Complexity</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Knut Ebeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On Hardcore Filmmaking</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Mogens Rukov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zooming into Cultural Diversity – A Foundation’s Perspective</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Isabelle Schwarz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Seung Youn Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corrida de Moros / El Extranjero</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Marta Julve &amp; Myriam Rousseau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Velikij vam Privit (“Borders”)</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Peter Krupa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate States</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Sander Buyck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passport</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Ayman Alazraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frontières (“Frontier”)</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Vincent Loubère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Three Animations</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Raquel Leíva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deutscher Tanz</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Tarik Schürmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scottish Splendor
David Tennent

Hazlin
David Demjanovic

Three Prayers
Alexander Nowak

Text Fukkers: Lecture one
Marte Hodne Haugen, Marte Berger Walthinsen, Espen Lomsdalen

Babelgum
Esther Maso

Made in...
Liwen Ouyang & Xiaojing Yao

World in Vrútky
Zuzana Janecková

What makes you
Ryan Henderson

Interplay
Iselin Linstad Hauge

Melancholic Tourist
Marian Venceslá

Balcony Travelling
Miroslav Kohút

Reflections

The Teachers’ Perspective
Andy Dougan, Ignacio Olivera Mompeán, Anna Daučiková, Anna Anders

Getting a Bit Wiser about Differences in Europe
An interview with Ove Nyholm

Conclusion: Intercultural Dialogue in the Language of the Arts
An interview with Carla Delfos and Kirsten Langhilde
Introduction
The European Union designated 2008 as the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue” – a topical and complex theme that is close to the heart of the European League of Institutes of the Arts. From its beginnings in 1990, ELIA has been contributing to the dialogue between art students, teachers and leaders in Europe and beyond. So we were more than happy that the Network of European Foundations (NEF) decided to make a contribution to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and asked ELIA to develop a proposal that addresses intercultural dialogue from an artistic point of view through the medium of film. ELIA gladly took on the challenge, seeing this request as an opportunity to bring together students and teachers in the arts and empower European film students to cope with current issues by providing a cross-border collaborative artistic and political experience. The University of the Arts Berlin became a key partner in the project, and together with filmmaker Ove Nyholm the concept for the project was formed.

The aims of “...I see you: The Language of the Arts and Intercultural Dialogue” were to:
- Stimulate co-operation between art students and teachers from the different cultures and regions of Europe;
- Stimulate thought and awareness of cultural diversity through an intercultural dialogue with art students and representatives of foundations.

The project created an opportunity for art students from several European countries to develop – in cooperation with foundation practitioners and in an exchange with theoreticians – their own understanding of the specific European experience of cultural diversity and to reflect on the theme of “Intercultural Dialogue”. The task for this particular group of students was to document and express their perception of European cultural diversity and the intercultural dialogue and to address it in a personal and artistic way in a short film. This film should convey to a broader public an understanding of the value of the arts: the artistic experience that constitutes an extremely valuable resource for Europe in a globalising world.

With my knowledge and my prejudice, my ignorance and my tolerance, coming from one place, speaking a different language ...I see you.
I see you with curiosity, respect and expectations, but maybe also with fear and unease.
I can't get under your skin, but I can look you in the eye. We speak different languages, but we still communicate and we try to develop a dialogue. That dialogue, for us, is the essence of the project we want to introduce to you with this book.

...I see you
“In short, it seems that we are both outside and inside modernity, both repelled by its deadly violence and seduced by its most immodest aspiration or potential: that there might, after all, be a common planetary horizon for all the living and the dead.”

(Roger Buergel, Artistic Director of Documenta 12)

Following a “call” among higher arts education institutions and art universities in Europe, seven art and film schools were selected. The participating schools were: the University of the Arts Berlin (Germany), the École Supérieure de l’Image in Angoulême (France), Hogeschool Gent (Belgium), Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo (Norway), the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow (United Kingdom), the Universidad de Castilla – La Mancha (Spain), and Vysoká Skola Výtvarných Umení Bratislava (Slovakia). The schools themselves selected the students and supervising teachers that would be participating in the project.

The methodological aim was to provide the students with relevant knowledge to enable them to reflect on the theme both theoretically and artistically. Two seminars were organised in the framework of the Berlinale and Documenta 12. Those seminars gave them an opportunity to network, to discuss the progress of their work and to share experiences. During the second seminar, representatives of NEF were invited to participate, which resulted in a lively interaction between the students and representatives of foundations.

The seminars’ guest speakers were art critic and philosopher Knut Ebeling, script doctor Mogens Rukov of Den Danske Filmskole, film editor Ghita Beckendorff, Shaheen Merali of Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Gilli Mendel of the Jerusalem Film Center, Gottfried Wagner of the European Cultural Foundation, Dario Di-segni of the Compagnia di San Paolo di Torino, Christian Petry of the Freudenberg Stiftung, Tim Verbist of the Evens Foundation, and writer and curator Viola Michely. Both seminars provided the young artists with knowledge of the complexities of art, film, and the European condition.

An evaluative seminar was organised after the project in which Valerie Smith (Haus der Kulturen der Welt), Nelly van der Geest (Utrecht School of the Arts) and artist Francois Bucher each gave valuable input.
Artistic practice has been – and still is – part of an often painful learning process in the context of which the issue of cultural differences is addressed and shared. However, art and culture do not rest innocently outside the constellation of phenomena that we have learned to refer to as “modernism”. Regardless of whether it was created in the name of a nation, revolution, superiority or truth, artistic production has always taken sides, radicalising and reflecting a basic experience of cultural differences that can be found in abundance in the history of Europe and beyond.

Throughout the whole process, the role of the film director has been that of a supervisor and a consultant, working closely with the students and their teachers and giving advice on each film. This working relationship fostered the artistic growth of each of the film students and encouraged the students to bring their best work into the project.

The students’ contributions were edited into a consistent work of 45 minutes with a continuous visual impact. The film is sustained by a rhythm that reflects the multifaceted character of a culturally diverse Europe. The topics of the films are the topics of Europe itself: the diversity of language, culture and religions, crossing borders and meeting strangers, immigration and integration. The students have chosen a variety of styles, including documentary and narrative formats, digital, stop trick and cartoon animation, the language of commercials and video clips, experimental black-and-white film and combinations of different styles.

At the invitation of the Compagnia di San Paolo di Torino, the premiere of ...I see you was organised at the film museum in Torino. The film met with very positive reactions from the audience of approximately 100 representatives of European foundations and networks. The film was then disseminated via television channels, festivals, networks and national cultural institutes, as well as being made available for the use of foundations and civil-society platforms.

This book documents the process of the project in a selection of the lectures and describes the main focus of the individual students. It contains images from the films and includes a DVD with the full ...I see you film, as well as each individual contribution separately.

We wanted to publish this book to tell the story of the project, which we view as an example of how artists, both in art schools and as graduates, can contribute to the leading discussions of our times. We hope to have enriched in this way the thinking about methods of art teaching and about the role of artistic contributions in the process of the ongoing cultural project that is the development of Europe.

Carla Delfos
Kirsten Langkilde
What is to be done?

by Viola Michely

Documenta 12 was held in Kassel over the course of 100 days in the summer of 2007, from 16 June to 23 September. It was at that benchmark event for the state of the arts and the demands of the present that the second seminar of the ...I see you project was held and the students presented the concepts for their films. This article is based on the lecture delivered on that occasion.

When I go to a Documenta, I go there with a degree of tension, with expectations, hopes, and desires. I still believe in art as a utopia, more radically still, in creativity as the only possibility for constructing identity. I follow the definition of Donald W. Winnicott, a British psychologist, who said that creativity functions as the formation of identity. So in creating, you create something that is identical to yourself. The tension within me comes not only from looking at new productions, but also from encountering models for art-making, for curating, models of identity as an art historian, an art teacher, an educator. And I’m not talking about different professions here – we all work in the field of forming culture. With what kind of attitude, with what kind of goals do we do this?

I want to start with a British photographer included in the exhibition, Jo Spence, who is interested in photography in its relationship to power. Her background is in documentary photography. She’s represented here with a piece that she did when she was in hospital being treated for cancer. She took photographs of the doctors, the treatment – but then she realised that those photographs cannot show the power structure. She, the patient, was powerless, while he, the medic, had power over her body. She came out of hospital, did some research, and restaged the power structure in an album-like setting, restaging herself in the process. Her overall question was: “When do I begin to gain responsibility over my body?”

She resents photography as “window photography”, for that only grasps the surface phenomena, while her starting point was that if we believe that social and cultural identities are constructed and not genetic, then we have to start to change them, beginning by looking at ourselves.
Jo Spence thinks that photography is always based on a power structure between the photographer and the subject. In photographing herself, she tries to go beyond this power structure. It’s not basically self-portraiture, but rather an attempt to understand how her construction of identity is based on a power structure and what kind of structure that is. She wants to write a counter-history of power structures. Power struggles go on and on. They go on in families, between men and women, adults and children, in institutions, in everyday life.

I think that showing this work at a Documenta, where we expect to see contemporary work, is a political statement. This Documenta wanted to focus on attitudes toward art-making and the self-consciousness of power structures in art-making. Jo Spence also figures in an article in Documenta Magazine No. 2 that deals with her search for a common ground in production, in attitudes towards art-making, in the sense of an aesthetic ground, a political ground, so that “we confederate ourselves for educational solidarity, as a resource for intellectual refreshment”. Now that, I think, is utopian. And as I have understood from the seminar you had this weekend, that is also a goal you are also pursuing: to look for a common ground in artistic practice (the shared “modernism”) and in those areas where we could not find a common ground, to look for a constructive way of dealing with otherness and differentness.

What is the common ground, if there is one? I would like to introduce you to two artists and their work, which is shown in one room, in juxtaposition. It’s the work of Agnes Martin, a well-known American heroine of modernism, and Nasreen Mohamedi who, coming from India, is not as well known. The two artists have a common ground. They both work with lines drawn on paper and canvas. Agnes Martin draws horizontal lines and does not give an impression of space, because there is no rectangularity, no vanishing point, so there’s no perspective. And Nasreen Mohamedi does the same. She also does not give an architectural perspective; there’s no vanishing point, just horizontal or vertical lines.

This is a big topic in art history, going back to Mondrian, who constructed space in paintings as an ideal space, in the rectangles of verticals meeting horizontals. In not doing so, these two artists question Mondrian, and they question abstract art. They try not to represent space. Standing in front of their work, it’s like being in this space, in a certain time. If you stand in front of an Agnes Martin painting, you have the sense of being in time, but there is also a sense of continuity. And Nasreen Mohamedi creates the same impression. She makes very small drawings, and her vertical-line drawings are interrupted by little circles in pencil, like sound waves. The horizontal works have something like branches going up and down. So there is continuity and variation.
These two works are shown in one room, along with an 18th-century wedding arras with black-and-white horizontal lines and variations of geometric patterns. The wedding arras signifies a certain moment in life and continuity of lifetime. In showing the work of these two artists together with this wedding arras, the curators have tried to provide it with an anthropological basis. The juxtaposition is not a direct one. The Agnes Martin work is on the one wall, and the photographs by Nasreen Mohamedi are on the other. Those photographs show her attitude towards the space surrounding her. They are microscopic or macroscopic. And there’s one photograph exactly on the other side, where she looks into the world like a basic window-on-the-world picture, but there’s a non-rectangular grid in front of it.

The curators have tried to show the common roots of these two artists, one working in India, the other in the United States, both going back to the same work of Piet Mondrian. You can see this at many points in this Documenta: artists working in very different fields but going back to basically the same roots. They do not show them in the genealogical way that art historians are used to doing: “X went to see this work, copied it, and then went on to do that.” The hierarchies that art historians construct are based on a Western interpretation. That is tricky because the term “modern” is a Western term, while art is being produced in all parts of the world. I think the aim of the curators of Documenta 12 has been to look for artists working on the periphery, to search the common ground in art produced on the basis of modernist principles.

There are these three issues of Documenta 12:
- Is modernity our antiquity?
- What is bare life?
- What is to be done?

So there are works where bare life is not a common ground. These are works that have to do with exploitation, like George Osodi’s photographs of the oil fields in Nigeria. They are presented in a rhythmic sequence – you have the impression that you are seeing a film, but they’re photographs: they stand still. This stillness corresponds to the speechlessness you are apt to experience when you see these images. A woman walking on the oil pipes as a path through the landscape, with oil leaking out of them. Or a boy trying to get water, but the water is black.

There is also a video artwork by Amar Kanwar called The Lightning Testimonies. It’s about the experiences of women being abused, raped, murdered or put into camps in ethnic conflicts throughout the history of India at the borders. It is a full-room installation with seven screens. When you enter the room you are overwhelmed because you cannot see everything at once; you lose orientation, and every screen is telling a different story, a different aspect of this theme. So you cannot grasp the complexity of this topic. You feel isolated because you can only sit on little pedestals. At one point you realise that the images are being repeated, and then
there’s a moment when it’s still: there’s only one screen, where you see an actual protest of elderly women, naked, in front of an Indian army base, shouting: “Rape me! Kill me!” – which is a political statement.

Those experiences are somehow beyond my grasp. I haven’t experienced war, poverty or slavery. But, to refer back to Jo Spence, I have experienced power structures. I have experienced powerlessness: in growing up in a family, in education systems, in professional systems, in institutions. And I have also experienced power in talking about art, in writing about art, in curating, since in those cases I have the power to give to and withhold from this artist or that artist. And the Documenta curators are certainly very aware of their power in trying to give space – a lot of space – to artists who are not well known, who are outside the view of the modern art world, here, in Western Europe or America.

The term the curators use is “the migration of forms”. What is that about? The tribal masks by Romuald Hazoumé are an ironic play on tribal art, but at the same time, they show the ironic use of a modern technique: the ready-made. The Chinese artist Ai Weiwei invited 1001 people from China to give a statement about their experience here in Germany. That is colonialism reversed.

There has been an ongoing migration of forms, ancient and modern. You will have noticed a lot of old art around. There is an illuminated Islamic manuscript from around 1500, combining Islamic-style and Chinese-style landscape painting. There, two different cultures met, artists travelled, and forms migrated from one area to another. This is something that began very early, as far back as the 7th century, when the first desert castles in the Islamic world were painted in a Hellenistic way. New links can be observed. I think this is the aim of the curators: that, in a way, we start rewriting art history. It’s a very art-historical Documenta.

So here is a call for self-awareness: in how we perceive art, in whatever field we are working, in how we construct our own identity, in how we deal with power structures, and in how we construct culture. There is a reference back to Documenta 1, which took place in 1955, when culture, in Germany especially, was in need of restoration. The curators back in 1955 wanted to make a statement: that you are in a field and have to think about your position and then reconstruct what a modern approach would be in confronting the visitor in the entrance hall by human-size portraits of the artists. They also exhibited pieces that were not on the wall but freestanding, so that if you walked by you would encounter a piece of art one on one, and question yourself in your confrontation with that piece. You can still experience this confrontation now when you enter the Fridericianum and see yourself in the mirror-panelled entrance hall.
Faces of Modernity
Rethinking Modernism from Modernist Theory to Contemporary Cultural Complexity
by Knut Ebeling
Is modernity our antiquity?

(Roger Buergel, Artistic Director of Documenta 12)

Why are we talking about modernity again? Why are modernity and its ideals back on the aesthetic and artistic agenda? Roger Buergel's question was a Leitmotiv in the rhetoric of Documenta 12, which dealt in large part with modernity; and the 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art underwent the same struggle with the heritage of modernism. But instead of looking for the agents behind this tendency, this text will ask where our contemporary culture stands today in relation to modernity. It proposes a simple answer to this question: Living in the condition moderne is getting more and more complicated the more we grow away from modern ideas and ideals. If modernist thinking provided the cultural consumer with a fairly simple outlook on the world, the situation becomes increasingly complicated when one starts to face the inherent conflicts, contradictions and paradoxes of modernist ideology. Nowadays, cultural complexity arises at the point where the linear, temporal axis of the modernist progressive narrative and the warped lines of geographical, political and ethnographical discourses all come together.

The idea of modernity, which needs to be distinguished from artistic modernism, has always been linked to a certain set of ideals, to a linear narrative of endless progression in time. The great project of modernity equalled progress – this is the simplest way to sum up German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas' quest for Die Moderne – ein unvollendetes Projekt (Modernity – An Unfinished Project).

Indeed, modernity as such has been a gigantic historical, philosophical and political project, almost too grand to grasp – whereas what we call “modernism” is a somewhat smaller, but also more radical, artistic project in the arts, in design and in literature. The idealistic side of modernism, its connection to an entire range of ideas and ideals, might be the reason that most people have a positive notion of modernity. They seem to associate rather “positive” developments or processes with the historic rise of modern ideals and values; Modernity brought rationality, functionalism and light to the people, and with those a sense of reason and democ-
racy. It made possible not only women’s liberation, but also the emancipation and autonomy of any branch of society that nowadays, at least in Western cultures, functions independently from hierarchical power structures.

In aesthetic terms, modernity, or better yet: modernism, is associated with values such as functionality (form has to follow function), visibility and transparency. Art historians have interpreted the history of modern art using concepts like self-referentiality (any work of art refers only to itself) or medium-specificity (every work of art has to develop according to its own medial conditions, for example paintings are a flat pieces of canvas). They have all subscribed to the general idea of modernity as being a linear narrative endlessly developing in infinite time. But modernism’s aesthetic ideals did not develop independently from modernity’s political agenda. Modernist aesthetic ideals were almost always linked to “modern” political ideas. The Bauhaus, to cite one famous example, didn’t just promote its aesthetic ideals such as functionality and transparency; it was also an art school with a political message. At the Bauhaus, the use of transparent materials such as glass and steel served as metaphorical and ideological signs of a more transparent political culture.

As modernity consisted of a vast set of ideas, ideals, values and qualities that were all linked to one another, one can sum up the situation by saying that modernity was first and foremost a great challenge: it was a grand project, one of the greatest in the history of mankind. But it was also a challenge with its flaws and weaknesses; some of its political or aesthetic ideals failed while others succeeded. This is the interesting position in which we find ourselves in today: we can look at the history of modernity, we can evaluate whether its projects – good or bad – succeeded or not. One could say that we are the true heirs of modernity: we have inherited all of its great projects – and its great failures. And, truly, modernity’s failures are as important to our contemporary culture as modernity’s great successes are. Modernity was not only a great project; it has also led to great catastrophes, to political, aesthetic and artistic disasters, one of them being the fact that Mondrians can now be found on towels and plastic bags.

The popularisation of artistic production throughout the 20th century tells us a more general truth: Every aspect of modern culture has had its counter-effects that we are dealing with today. A too-radical application of any idea will turn it into its opposite: total democracy will turn into terror, and total functionality will produce dysfunctional side effects. The most obvious examples, of course, are the counter-effects of technological inventions and political ideals, for example the demise of regional traditions and identities that resulted from the move towards political universalism. So every political, aesthetic and artistic endeavour has had its negative aspects – and its artists, who exploited the situation and positioned themselves as being “after” the movement they cri-
ticised: from minimalism to post-minimalism and from modernism to post-modernism. But what is now more important than taking any one of those dualist options and declaring oneself postmodern or postminimalist is the ability to describe modernity’s paradoxes and catastrophes (many of which take place in our everyday lives).

One example of a highly artistic, and at the same time highly entertaining, way of describing modernism is the work of French film-maker Jacques Tati. Indeed, as Jean-François Chévrier, the theorist behind Documenta 10, has said: “There is no modernity without Tati.” Indeed, Tati developed a highly ironic yet comical attitude towards modernity using pantomime and slapstick as tools for his sardonic cultural critique. He didn’t just make fun of modernist culture, though. Much more precisely, he took up modernist ideals just like functionality or transparency and pushed them to their extremes.

In movies like *Playtime* (1967) or *Trafic* (1971), the protagonist walks into glass doors so transparent as to be invisible and through revolving doors spinning so fast they cannot be entered. Tati has shown us how functional design in practical, everyday life can lead to endless confusion and dysfunctionality. Today, we seem to have lost so much faith in modernity that we tend to associate transparent buildings no longer just with a democratic culture but now even more with the loss of intimacy and the possibility of monitoring systems.

It is sad but true: one can easily list every failure that has been brought about by any great modern ideal. The most obvious ones are the tragedies of modernity’s political ideals: the push for Enlightenment seems to have led to well-lit prison cells, and the fight for democracy has brought about wars on terror (to cite only the most drastic examples). The same situation holds for modernity’s aesthetic ideas: the idea of a self-referential painting, for example, led to hermetic paintings that referred only to themselves to the exclusion of the outer world. Likewise, the idea of media-adequacy put forward by Clement Greenberg led to a hermetic understanding of media and painting. Needless to say, modernity is a great but controversial project. Everything we say, see and touch seems to have been affected and influenced by the concept of modernity; everything we think is influenced and perhaps even determined by it. There is no escaping from it. Indeed, it is debatable whether this concept isn’t too big to be debated at all.

Ever since Arthur Rimbaud’s classic statement “Il faut être absolument moderne” (one has to be absolutely modern), there is no escaping from modernity anymore. But his classic formulation, that one has to be “absolutely modern”, also tells us that modernity is a radical, and perhaps also violent and even totalitarian, concept that forces everyone on the globe to be “absolutely modern”. Since its inception, modernity has turned into a self-fulfilling concept that exercises its power on every single person.
in the entire world, whether he wants it or not. And ever since Charles Baudelaire’s classic essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863),³ it is the art student in his natural environment, the art school, which serves as the nucleus of this development: Obviously the challenge to be “absolutely modern” is nowhere stronger and more powerful than in art schools, which serve as powerhouses of the competition of modernity. So even if the art student feels powerless and isolated from all movements in society, he is well in the centre of modernity’s great narrative, in which the arts (and the art student) play a decisive role.

But apart from the fact that the modern artist as cultural entrepreneur became the role model of the capitalist,⁴ one can go even further and broaden the argument to the history of modern art. The modernist narrative of the history of (modern) art in itself – as it is displayed, for example, most prominently in New York’s MoMA – is an interpretation of the challenge to be “absolutely modern”. In his desire to be “more modern” than his fellow artists, the modern artist inscribed himself into the meta-narrative of a linear, progressive history (of modern art), in which we should be able to state at any given time which artist might be “first”, that is to say the most “modern” and who is not. The very fact that this statement seems absolutely impossible today, where many histories, linearities and narratives reside peacefully next to each other, tells us that the modernist linear narrative collapsed into a confusing multitude of perspectives on history. Anyone who would take a look at any given time at the emerging worlds of art and design today would get confused. That confusion does not reflect any inability to read or make sense of the situation on his part, however. Rather, it reflects the increased complexity of the situation itself.

Modernity 2.0

This text puts forward a concept of modernity that differs from the linear and progressive narrative of modern society as we often receive it from the news and the media, and one that is well separated from the major cultural battles from the late 17th century onwards, when the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* surged around Europe. Those cultural battles have made it very clear that modernity is a very ideological term that has been exhausted in too many political and aesthetic debates since the 17th century. In these connections and intersections between aesthetic choices and political decisions, one sees very clearly that the battle around modernity has always been a violent one, that a certain violence has always been connected to the high ideals of modernity; and one might even get the impression today that these major cultural battles are not even over yet. But if one begins to think that these culture wars are not being fought out in Europe anymore – one only has to shift his attention away from the cities to the European countryside, to see that it is not true. One can see quite clearly that the lines of the cultural battle have only shifted to the peripheries.
What was most surprising about Roger Buergel’s Documenta statement, *Is modernity our antiquity?*, was the fact that while he took up the challenged concept of modernity once again, he didn’t seem to be participating in the cultural battle surrounding it. He took a step backwards in another direction, that was not looking for a simple yes-or-no answer to the question of modernity and was thus no longer engaged in the cultural battle around it. Rather than declaring himself a modernist or an anti-modernist (as so often happened in the debate between modernists and postmodernists that polarised the cultural scene very strongly in the 1980s and ’90s), Buergel seemed to be operating on a contemplative or reflexive level. He was thinking about modernity rather than fighting for or against it. Rather than judging the concept by declaring his allegiance to one side or the other (modernist or postmodernist), he tried to interpret the concept of modernity in order to understand where we stand today. His might therefore be called a hermeneutic or self-reflexive concept of modernity; it was more interested in our position today than in the historic experience of modernity. This is why it could also be called Modernity 2.0, because it has more to do with us today than with the past.

But the question remains: What’s the problem with modernity? Why did Buergel bring it up at all? To illustrate the theoretical problems of such a great concept like modernity – a problem that every art-school student will know from his own very practical experience – one could even take this term: “Modernity 2.0”. Reading as if it were the most recent update, this term demonstrates how what is new today will have grown old tomorrow. “Nothing’s more outdated than yesterday’s headline,” as the German saying goes. That’s also the theoretical problem linked to the concept of modernity: if modernity is always about the new, if the modern is always the latest and youngest update of everything – then these latest and youngest updates grow old very quickly. That’s modernity’s paradox: nothing grows old so quickly as “the new”; once something gets declared as “modern” (and thus “new”), it is tied to a specific moment in space and time – one that is already passed the moment it has been declared. So the ageing of the new and the modern is as inevitable as the fatigue of today’s fashion. Indeed, nothing reveals this dialectic between the old and the new better than the world of fashion or the news. But also the entertainment industry, the computer industry and the software industry (from which the metaphor “2.0” obviously derives) demonstrate quite well that nothing is pre-determined to grow old as quickly as the new. The moment you have bought something, the next model is already on its way.

The Landscape of Modernity

So the attractive simplicity of the progressive concept of modernity did not make things any simpler. On the contrary, it made them even more complicated in the end (just as new software “solutions” tend to do). But there is another problem linked to the inevitable ageing of modernity that seems to make things even more complex: modernity’s tendency to integ-
rate and assimilate its opposites. Modernity literally eats up its opposition and enemies until any opposition and antagonisms are gone. This assimilating tendency of modernity has been beautifully described by the first poem of Baudelaire’s famous Tableaux Parisiens (Parisian Scenes). In the first of the series, a classic poem named Paysage (landscape), he mentions the coexistence of chimneys and belfries:

Paysage
Je veux, pour créer chastement mes élogues
Coucher auprès du ciel, comme les astrologues,
Et, voisin des clochers, écouter en rêvant
Leurs hymnes solennels emportés par le vent.
Les deux mains au menton, du haut de ma mansarde,
Je verrai l’atelier qui chante et qui bavarde,
Les tuyaux, les clochers, ces mâts de la cité,
Et les grands ciels qui font rêver l’éternité.

Landscape
I would, to compose my eclogues chastely,
Lie down close to the sky like an astrologer,
And, near the church towers, listen while I dream
To their solemn anthems borne to me by the wind.
My chin cupped in both hands, high up in my garret
I shall see the workshops where they chatter and sing,
The chimneys, the belfries, those masts of the city,
And the skies that make one dream of eternity.

In the last two lines of the poem, “chimneys” and “belfries”, the new and the old, the modern and the traditional, are integrated in a new entity – a new entity that must therefore be called modern. The image of the modern integrates its opposite, like the view of an industrial chimney gets integrated into the skyline of an old town. Modernity eats up (or integrates or assimilates) its opponents, just like every modern artistic movement produced its counter-movement.

But the problem here is: if every artistic movement in modernity inevitably produces its counter-movement, what can we do with this obviously very confusing situation? How can one be absolutely modern if the truly modern is always the opposite of whatever has been modern before it? If this proves to be true, and the opposite is also always true, the modern is always also the anti- or not-modern. This is a problem that can drive one crazy, because how can one find the right way of doing something when its opposite is also true? Someone who developed such a crazy, modern logic (which therefore also had to be an anti-logic) was the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, the inventor of modern dialectics (for in Hegel’s view dialectics involved the ability of something to integrate its opposite). This ability is also what makes it so very difficult to read Hegel’s Wissenschaft der Logik, which is a practically unreadable and incomprehensible book, but especially also to evaluate the project of modernity today. How can we say whether modernity was a good or bad thing, if everything was modern?

If its dialectical and assimilating nature was one of modernity’s problems, another one was its tendency to be absolute and uncompromising. But whereas the discourse of the cultural critique of modernity is an old one, one can still look for innovative ideas, for example in Buergel’s Documenta statement. Interestingly
What is more interesting in Buergel’s statement is his introduction of temporality. He introduces a new temporality, implying that it is only now, today, that we can recognise and evaluate what modernity really was all about. This theory of temporality draws heavily (though tacitly) on Walter Benjamin’s idea of a “Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit” (a now of recognition), which is to say that it is only at certain moments of history, now, that we can recognise another time period. And according to Buergel, it could well be today, after modernity’s catastrophes, that we can recognise what that age truly signified.

By introducing this temporality into Documenta’s discourse, Buergel is questioning our own position towards the great project of modernity: Do we still find ourselves within the great movement of modernity or has that epoch now ended, so that we are the position of spectators looking at it from the outside? Is an outside perspective onto modernity’s dialectical processes even possible? And are we dealing with an ongoing process or rather with an epoch that starts and finishes at certain moments in time? Is it still going on or has it finished? Is modernity an “unvollendetes Projekt” (unfinished project), as German philosopher Jürgen Habermas stated, or is it a historical epoch? And is modernity foremost a political or an aesthetic, artistic project – and which of those came first?

As every way out truly leads deeper inside a given structure – at least according to Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst and philosopher – one cannot help, but get the impression, when confronted with these gigantic questions that both positions are right: we are standing both inside and outside modernity at the same time. On the one hand, we still seem to be standing inside modernity’s culture: its processes and historical narratives (of democratisation and emancipation, for example) still dominate our political culture. But on the other hand, modernity has been so contested and re-evaluated that we have come to have a position beyond it, from which we look upon modernity as a bygone period in a history book. That is what constitutes the present confusion and complexity, the sense that we are both inside and outside of modernity at the same time.

But today’s situation is even more confusing. The temporal confusion of our current position with regard to modernity and its ideals is increased by the geographical confusion brought about by globalisation. Whereas it used to be
that we were only confused by modernity’s time-scales and our place in them, today’s complexity is due to the regional variety and geographical knowledge made accessible by the globalisation. The temporal question of modernity is made even more confusing by the contribution of the spatial or regional question: modernity has been interpreted differently on every continent, by every nation and probably by every region of the world; likewise, modernism has had a slightly different face in every country or geographical region. Just by considering the examples of African or Asian modernity and modernism, one quickly realises how complex the question of modernity suddenly gets. Even though modernism called for a certain internationalism, it took a different face in every nation or region (just as tourists from different regions tend to look different from each other). There has never been a uniform modernity or a single modernism. Rather, every country, every region interpreted modernity’s message in a completely different way. Modernity’s message was adapted or warped by every individual region’s interpretation of it. Indeed, one might even go so far as to say that modernity always had a geographical face: German modernism signified something different from Croatian modernism or Swedish modernism. The Bauhaus style looks different in Weimar than it does in Oslo.

This is the tension that makes cultural production richer than ever today. Since every culture developed an interpretation of modernity that related to its universal ideals, those interpretations differed from region to region. Now every regional modernism refers to the same universal ideals, but the outcome differs from place to place. So the universal ideals produce differences here and there – differences that for cultural production are more important than the universal abstract ideals. This is also why we have to understand regional particularities not as aberrations, but as manifestations of cultural diversity and historical richness. This extreme richness of the regional interpretations of modernity is what makes up today’s complexity – and what turns cultural production into such a great challenge if one would rather not forget his roots.

But how can this challenge of working with complexities and presenting differences be taken into account in a concrete artistic or cultural production? Coming back to Buergel’s question, one might conclude the following: If modernity is our antiquity, and if the way people acquired knowledge about the antiquity was called archaeology, then the way we relate to this past epoch of modernity must also be an archaeological one. Our way of dealing with modernity should be less an interpretation and a discussion, and more a material archaeology of it. So relating to modernist forms and designs will always mean applying some kind of archaeology to that epoch. If artists use modernist forms, cite modernist examples, or even reappropriate modern designs, that might be called an archaeology of modernity. For where as history deals with the great and often abstract ideals and ideas of past times, archaeology
takes into account concrete findings, precise
topographies and tangible examples of cultu-
res. Artistic projects nowadays can therefore
include and possess what the great and ab-
stract notion of modernity excluded: “Particular
Time, Specific Place and the Truth of Mine”
as Chinese art historian Gao Minglu puts it in
the Documenta 12 magazine.8 An archaeology
of modernity takes the concrete and palpable
differences into account that are inherent to
and produced by the great project of moderni-
ty. Such an archaeology undertaken by cultural
producers around the globe could therefore
correct the abstract debate on modernity with
tangible findings stemming from a concrete to-
pographical and biographical situation.

1 See Documenta Magazine N°1: Modernity?, 2007 and When
Things Cast no Shadow, 5. Berlin Biennial for Contemporary
2 Jürgen Habermas, Die Moderne – ein unvollendetes Projekt,
Leipzig 1990; see: Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves and Seyla
Benhabib, Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity.
Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,
Massachusetts 1997.
3 Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life”, in: Charles
Baudelaire, Selected Writings on Art and Literature, trans. P.E.
4 See: Marius Babias, Kunst in der Arena der Politik: Subjektre-
5 See: Mark Lewis, “Is Modernity our Antiquity?” in: Documenta
6 See: Rasheed Araeen, “The Western Grip”, in: Documenta
Magazine N°1, pp. 120–132; Denis Ekpo, “The Abortion of
Africa’s Modernity”, in: Documenta Magazine N°1, pp. 133–137;
Olu Oguibe, “We were there, too” in: Documenta Magazine N°1,
pp. 138–139; Goenawan Mohamad, “Of Spaces and Shadows”,
in: Documenta Magazine N°1, pp. 152–162.
7 See: Helena Mattsson/Sven-Olov Wallenstein, “acceptera!
Swedish Modernism at the Crossroad”, in: Documenta
Magazine N°1, pp 60–77.
8 See: Gao Minglu, “Particular Time, Specific Place and the
Truth of Mine” in: Documenta Magazine N°1, pp. 166–179.
On Hardcore Filmmaking

by Mogens Rukov
I will not speak of hardcore sex, but I will speak of something very similar to it, which is hardcore filmmaking. Hardcore sex, as you know, is very direct: no caressing, no sweet words, no flowers or anything of the sort. And that is essentially the same thing I try to do with filmmaking. I go to the very core – I try to go to the very core – of filmmaking. So what exactly does filmmaking consist of? You will have one and a half hours to hear that.

Does it really take an hour and a half to find out what sex is about? In fact it’s very simple. And filmmaking is just as simple. It has the same very basic things in the making. And I would guess that not all of you are geniuses. Maybe you are geniuses in other fields, maybe in sex for example, but not in filmmaking. You are beginners, as far as I have understood. So I have one single essential piece of advice: don’t be original. Simply because you can’t. You aren’t good enough to be original. In fact, none of us are really good enough to be original. Not even Chaplin was original.

Because the appealing thing about film is that it sticks to the same basic elements – the narrative, the plot, the visual elements, the words – which you then change a little bit. And that is a basis of filmmaking: to make exactly what we are used to seeing and then to give it a little twist. But if you try to be original, to be weird, to be far out... if you try to make something you have the feeling has never been seen before, then first I can promise you it has been seen before, and second: the audience won’t care.

What the hell? That’s your idea. I’m not interested in your idea. It’s the same with any good film. You’re not interested in our ideas; you’re interested in your own life. You’re selfish, egotistical, and arrogant, too, towards other people. You want to hear about your own life. And that is what we are giving you when we show you very banal things with a little twist. Because the banality is your art.

You might think your art is exceptional. Ha! It is only exceptional for you. It is not exceptional for me. And you can’t come to me and get beneath my skin by showing how exceptional you are. We’re only really talking together if we’re using a certain kind of archetype to say: here’s part of my life that is also a part of your life. So now I’m sure of what you’re talking about, and now we have this contact. Now we’re talking together through this film. And I will show you some specific things from my life. But I can’t go on and show this film, before that contact has been established.

We did this in Dogma 95. Dogma was all about what I just told you: to get to the fundamentals of filmmaking. So that means that we were not original in any way! Except in the way of storytelling. That was what was such a relief for everybody who took part in these films. We didn’t have to worry about the presentation. We only had to say: this is a woman. Over there. And then we had to invent something about her that would be interesting.
We are used to — and we always use — the same kind of elements of expression. We call them “props”. They are the items you use to tell the story. We have certain kinds of props, for instance, a car. A car is a beautiful prop. When you see a car, you see a car. When you see a car as prop, you think, okay, this is a means of expression. Everybody knows what a car is. So that means we have something in common.

The characteristic thing about dialogue is also very simple: every dialogue is a kind of interview. People think that dialogue is dialogue, where people are talking together. But it’s not. It’s not conversation. That’s a really, really bad mistake. It’s an interview. And that is all what we want to hear. The dialogue is not you and I speaking together. Not even you and I. The dialogue is that somebody wants to know something. Probably it is the audience that wants to know something. But because I am in the film, I can pose the question that the audience wants to know the answer to. Where are you from? What are you going to do?

There’s an odd thing in very many textbooks on how to make films, because we’re not allowed to talk about what we see. We see it, so there’s no need to talk about it. But I can tell you that what we see is what we’re most interested in hearing. In fiction, that is because we’re interested in human beings. So we want to hear about their relationship to this and that. That is why we make an interview, very often, about the things we see. Because we see a beautiful woman, for example. And we see a man. And we want to know if he realizes that she’s beautiful. He could say: “I don’t know if she’s beautiful; she’s my sister.” So then I won’t expect a normal love affair. He could also say: “She’s beautiful.” In Hannah and Her Sisters, by Woody Allen, that was the main sentence in the whole film. “Gosh, she’s beautiful.” At that point we knew that he was lost. And the film is mostly about that.

In fiction, we want to know what the relation is to the visual world. And we want to have our normal perceptions corrected. “Yes, she’s beautiful, but I like brown hair.” Or whatever. But there’s another aspect. We want to hear about his plan. One thing you know about modern man is that he is always planning: we want to know what his plans are. We want to hear about the future. One thing we’re not so interested in is hearing something very smart. We want to hear about his relationship to things. Not about his knowledge.

When I read a script, I count the question marks. And if there are few question marks, it’s a bad dialogue. If a script has many question marks, it might be good.

By the way, as far as the length goes — what you have in five or seven minutes — the length of the intervention of dialogue, or interviews or whatever, shouldn’t be too much. Look at Bergman, who is so frightfully clever: he is always changing the aspect of the subject. Okay, it is about the past, about love, about discipline, about something... but he changes it.
He could be talking about anything. But all that time, you don’t want to bore your audience. So you stick with the same subject, but change the aspect. It’s a simple rule. Keep the subject, change the aspect.

And there’s another thing that I want you to consider: the stairs. A staircase is one of the archetypes of filmmaking. Think about what the advantage of stairs is. A stairway shows that people are on their way somewhere. We always know that: that they are going somewhere. That is the beauty of stairs. We know that people are on their way. So therefore we need to have a certain kind of uncertainty about their plans. But we know that they have plans. It is only very, very seldom that people just stay on a stairway. “Hello, I think I’ll sleep here on the stairs”. You only do that when you’re drunk.

When Thomas Vinterberg was looking for a place for Festen, he often asked me, “Which house should I take?” He didn’t show me any photos I wanted to see. And then one day he said: “Now I have to choose.” I said: “Okay, take this house, for example. What is so fascinating about it for you?” And he said: “The stairs”. And at that moment we decided to make six scenes on the stairs. The thing is, you can say almost anything connected to almost any kind of prop. You don’t have to be very clever to find one.

What I want to emphasise is: there have been a great many different films, but we are still using the same kind of expressions. The same elements. The same props. The same kind of attitudes towards the things that are happening. And that gives you a real opportunity for making films. Don’t be inventive in a stupid way, or confusedly original, but insist on the very simple expressions that are already on hand in filmmaking.

And you also need to see that you have to love the things that you choose, which means you have to choose things that you like, not just the things that are in the room. Not just those things that happen to be available, but things that you’d like… For example, a woman’s lower leg. Or someone’s mouth. Or a close-up of a pack of cigarettes. You should love them. You should learn to pick things that you love. Because those will make you interesting, and help you develop the vital parts of the story.

That, you need to realize when you’re making your five-to-seven minute piece – is what is your own. That is exactly how you can identify directors – by the things they choose: the props, the perspective, and so on. Because that is part of filmmaking. It is the hard-core of filmmaking.

We all have a number of natural stories in our head, and those are the stories that we deliver, that we use. It’s the same kind of banality. The filmmaker doesn’t invent the story. It’s already there, it’s out there! And we only have to use it for our own purposes. But keep the naturalness of the story. Keep it, so that we can recognize it. That is the beauty of filmmaking.

I hope that you can see that it’s very, very easy to make a film. But of course that’s a lie.
Zooming into Cultural Diversity: A Foundation’s Perspective

By Isabelle Schwarz
About two years ago, the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) embarked on a new journey. “The experience of diversity – the power of culture” became the Leitmotiv for all our initiatives, whether related to our grants for artistic or cultural cooperation projects, arts and media programmes, cultural policy work, or the provision of information on innovative cross-cultural projects. This voyage through the new fabric of our societies, brought about by migration and European integration, has been an invitation to go off the beaten track of intercultural dialogue. It has resulted in an organisational search on interactions of people and their cultures, an exploration of cultural diversity within and between societies, and an analysis of the role of diversity policies in creating the conditions for those interactions to gain ground in today’s Europe.

There are many different ways of working with diversity: ethnicity, gender, age, social groups, personal orientations, and so on. The ECF decided to zoom in on diversity through the lens of the arts and culture in their capacity to question assumptions, deconstruct prejudices and provide the means to “see the world through the eyes of others”. Art is about difference; culture is about meaning. Together with partners and among colleagues, we look at their particular role, potential and limits in dealing with diversity. Our approach is twofold: facilitating the permeation of diversity throughout our activities and launching a number of flagship projects that explicitly address the issue of dealing with difference. The recently released The Rainbow Paper – Intercultural Dialogue: from Practice to Policy and Back, to which more than 250 organisations and individuals contributed, offers a constructive path from intercultural challenges to interculturalism. It also proposes policy change in five areas: education, organisational capacity-building, the monitoring of policies, cross-sector mobilisation, and the resourcing of intercultural dialogue action.

The film …I see you: The Language of the Arts and Intercultural Dialogue is another way of supporting the exploration of diversity. The ECF wanted to encourage young artists to experiment with the subject of intercultural dialogue through the medium of film and video and to facilitate an open space of discussion and cooperation among young filmmakers, art schools and foundations. It convinced six foundations across Europe to invest in young talent and artistic experimentation with a highly topical issue both now and the years to come. The result is a kaleidoscope of visual expressions dealing with artistically challenging issues such as xenophobia, migration, ethnic hostilities and the crossing of both geographical and emotional borders. Aside from the project’s artistic and educational relevance, it also encompasses the added value of networking for young individuals with different cultural backgrounds and trajectories within an artistic research project. The film was a first collaborative effort, but it has already been followed up on different levels: between the participating art students through new projects and with new cooperative initiatives between the art schools and the foundations.
The approach adopted in the ...I see you film project reflects the ECF’s commitment to the artistic exploration of diversity. In order to develop sound responses to the needs of societies in flux, we convey individuals and organisations across a range of sectors to help us better understand the challenges at stake and guide us in adapting our practices and priorities. On an operational level, we will be manifesting our engagement with and advocacy for diversity by:

- diversifying our constituency: adjusting our choices in terms of target audiences, partnerships, and tools for participation and outreach;
- broadening our representation to be more open and inclusive of Europe’s new communities;
- investing in in-house reflection and training to devise diversity-sensitive programmes, and encouraging cross-sector cooperation;
- allocating funding to projects that explore in an exemplary way issues of cultural diversity, and providing incentive schemes for cultural cooperation across and beyond EU borders.

Diversity cannot be managed, yet creative management is needed to empower organisations to embed diversity effectively in their work. One challenge will be to make sure an organisation’s commitment to diversity is intrinsically mirrored in its structure and practice and not merely as an add-on or face-lift. For diversity to gain sense, it needs to be deepened in its understanding and practice as a fundamental value of an organisation.

For instance, the ECF likes to think of itself as a diverse organisation because we benefit from an international staff and governance structure, but to what extent do we actually reflect the society we live in and effectively tackle the issues that confront it? How are the views and perspectives of those we want to support included in the ECF’s programme and policy design? Although several other foundations have made efforts to adapt to Europe’s growing diversity, there still is a mismatch between the new face of Europe and the world of foundations in terms of their boards, staff, funding, programmes, beneficiaries, and partnerships. It is significant how slow foundations and other organisations are to adjust, and how reluctant they are to tackle the issue. Indeed, the consequences of taking diversity seriously are often feared, but that is the only way forward if we want to move beyond shallow adjustments that will have little or no impact.

Intercultural dialogue and diversity will remain at the top of the societal – and hence the political – agenda over the coming years. The challenge is to find a way to jointly and equally design our moving diversities and identities. Art and culture tell stories that allow us to look at their connectivity. In this way, the film project ...I see you, supported through the Network of Foundations (NEF), is exemplary. It links the particular to the general, the local to the global, our fears and our hopes, and it has resonance throughout Europe and beyond.
Isabelle Schwarz
Isabelle Schwarz is Head of Cultural Policy Development at the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) in Amsterdam, which she joined in 2002. Prior to that, she had been Executive Director of the European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres and had worked with the Council of Europe, the French Ministry of Culture and several independent cultural organisations in London, Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen.

Mogens Rukov
Mogens Rukov is Head of the Department of Screenwriting and Dramaturgy at the Danish Film School in Copenhagen. As a scenarist and script consultant, he was involved with Dogme 95 from the beginning, co-authoring the screenplay for Festen (1998), and acting as a consultant for The Idiots (1998).

Viola Michely
Viola Michely is an art historian, art critic and curator. She teaches art and philosophy at the August-Macke School in Bonn and wrote her PhD thesis on James Lee Byars. She is a contributor to Kunstforum International and other art publications. Together with Claudia Mesch, she edited Joseph Beuys: The Reader (2007).
Carla Delfos
Carla Delfos is Founder and Executive Director of the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA).

Kirsten Langkilde
Kirsten Langkilde is an artist with an international exhibition record. She is Professor of Fine Art at the University of the Arts Berlin. Through projects like Re:search – in and through the arts (with ELIA), New Morphology and Innovation Habitat, she has built up an arts-based research platform that focuses on new practices in the arts.

Knut Ebeling
Knut Ebeling teaches philosophy at the Institute for Aesthetics at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. As an art critic, he was awarded the “Carl Einstein Preis” für Kunstkritik in 1998. His recent publications include: Stadien. Eine künstlerisch-wissenschaftliche Raumforschung (with artist Kai Schiemann, 2008), Archivologien. Theorien des Archivs in Philosophie, Medien und Künsten (with Stephan Günzel, 2007) and Das Archiv brennt (with Georges Didi-Huberman, 2007).

Ove Nyholm
Ove Nyholm has produced and directed numerous short and documentary films, most of which have a scientific and/or political content. His most recent film, The Anatomy of Evil (2005), is his fifth feature-length documentary. It was awarded the “Robert Award” by the Danish Film Academy and the “Golden Documentary” by the Danish Film Producers Association and was selected for the Main Competition at the 2006 International Documentary Festival Amsterdam.

Ove Nyholm
Ove Nyholm has produced and directed numerous short and documentary films, most of which have a scientific and/or political content. His most recent film, The Anatomy of Evil (2005), is his fifth feature-length documentary. It was awarded the “Robert Award” by the Danish Film Academy and the “Golden Documentary” by the Danish Film Producers Association and was selected for the Main Competition at the 2006 International Documentary Festival Amsterdam.

Knut Ebeling
Knut Ebeling teaches philosophy at the Institute for Aesthetics at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. As an art critic, he was awarded the “Carl Einstein Preis” für Kunstkritik in 1998. His recent publications include: Stadien. Eine künstlerisch-wissenschaftliche Raumforschung (with artist Kai Schiemann, 2008), Archivologien. Theorien des Archivs in Philosophie, Medien und Künsten (with Stephan Günzel, 2007) and Das Archiv brennt (with Georges Didi-Huberman, 2007).

Kirsten Langkilde
Kirsten Langkilde is an artist with an international exhibition record. She is Professor of Fine Art at the University of the Arts Berlin. Through projects like Re:search – in and through the arts (with ELIA), New Morphology and Innovation Habitat, she has built up an arts-based research platform that focuses on new practices in the arts.
Seung Youn Lee
Tutor: Anna Anders
University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany
“I already had an impression of these very white, beautiful women from European paintings. Those give one an impression of what European women look like. But then when I started walking through the streets I was struck by how very different their faces were.”

(Seung Youn Lee)
Maybe ...I see you got its name from the image with which it opens: the bright eyes that slowly turn towards you and then look you straight in the eye at the beginning of *European*. In the background you can hear a bustle of voices saying ‘Europe’, but the faces themselves are silent. Then there are images from paintings, and more faces, and photos taken from magazines. In one and a half minutes, a cloud of eyes has been looking at you. When asked whether these faces are saying anything, Seung Youn Lee laughs and replies: “Well, clearly they are, aren’t they?” But she finds it hard to make it explicit just what that might be.

“I had already had an impression of these very white, beautiful women from European paintings. Those give one an impression of what the European woman looks like. But then when I started walking through the streets I was struck by how very different their faces are. The photos that I’ve matched together for this are really from rather plain women. I used only the eyes. But I wanted to show what the European face really looks like.”
How do you make a portrait of the “European face” when there are so many different faces? Can you compose it?
Well, I actually wanted to show the multicultural image. There is a traditional European culture, which is quite diverse, but it’s still called ‘European culture’. But where does it come from? It wasn’t just made by European people. I had wanted to use paintings as a symbol for European culture before, because when Asians think of European culture they always think of paintings. When they come to Europe they go straight to the museums. They associate Europe with its music and paintings. But since music is hard to visualize, for me it had to be paintings.

So why did you only use female faces? Obviously there are also male Europeans.
What I found remarkable in the paintings is that all the women looked the same to me, while the men all looked so differently. And they don’t always look good. But the women all do. I found that a bit strange. I wanted to comment on that, and that’s why I only used images of women. I wasn’t really thinking about gender identities or anything like that.

By photographing just the eyes, you have made these faces hard to recognize. For instance, I find it hard recognize the colour of the skin, whereas the colour of the eyes is much more clearly visible. What made you decide to do that?
Because that is the way one looks at paintings: through the eyes. All observation comes through the eyes. Ideas come through the eyes. You perceive through your eyes and you speak through your eyes. My eyes say what I think.

How many faces did you gather?
I don’t remember precisely. The number means nothing, really. I just wanted to show different faces. If it had been longer I would have brought in more things. But short films are not bad.
**Video Stills European**

Seung Youn Lee  
Tutor: Anna Anders  
University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany  

Duration: 1.10 Min
“In our film we portray the arrival in Spain of the North African immigrants that are coming by boat. Metaphorically speaking, the immigrant comes out of a bottle.”

(Marta Julve and Myriam Rousseau)
Instead of one film, Marta Julve and Myriam Rousseau have made two. “We observed that there were two dialogues between Spanish people and foreigners,” Myriam Rousseau explains. “In our opinion, we have a first dialogue with travellers coming from the ‘First World’, and another one with immigrants from the ‘Third World’. That’s why we decided to present two pieces.”

One is filmed on the beach, with the actors moving extremely slowly, but it is played at a faster speed to create an effect that reminds one of early twentieth-century movies as well as video games. *Corrida de Moros*, as the film is called, is a pun on *corrida del toros*, the bullfight arena. The film is a comment on the fate of African immigrants, who are called ‘the Moors’ by some in Spain. Trying to reach Gibraltar or the Canaries in open boats, they occasionally make the news when they wash ashore after a shipwreck or even after having been thrown overboard.

*Corrida de Moros* addresses the injustice being done to these immigrants, by playing on stereotypes. A torero – actually a woman in a bullfighter’s costume – finds a bottle on the beach. Out of it, as if from Aladdin’s lamp, comes a “Moor”, clad in traditional costume. They begin a bullfight, which is also very much like a dance, with slow, elongated movements. It ends with the torero being caught on the horns and killed, with a gentle lowering to the ground that might also be an embrace.
Video Stills Corrida de Moros

Marta Julve and Myriam Rousseau
Tutor: Ignacio Oliva Monpeían
University of Castile – La Mancha, Cuenca, Spain

Duration: 1.06 Min
“It is a message in a bottle. We wanted to play on the stereotypes that exist against the immigrants, and maybe on people’s fear of them as well. So we decided to make some sort of fairy-tale image. That was a way of addressing it indirectly. Because you wouldn’t reach people with an image that they’ve seen so often on the news.”

In Corrida de Moros, the matador and the Moor dance or fight to the melancholic tune of an electronically modified piano. In the other film, El Extranjero, we hear traditional Spanish songs from the ’30s and ’40s as if coming from the radio, while a blond boy from a northern country sits uneasily over his paella with his Spanish girlfriend and her parents. The father, again in bullfighter’s attire, looks suspiciously from under his torero’s hat, while the mother in a flamenco dress is waving defensively with her fan. Here, too, the actors move artificially on purpose, a bit puppet-like, with exaggerated gestures, and once again stereotypes are being played on. But the ending is less tragic: after many painstaking misunderstandings, the boy finally manages to be accepted when he darkens his face with a piece of burnt cork in order to look more Spanish.

But is it also specifically about Europe or a European identity?

No, not really. It’s rather about North and South or about Spain and the tourists. Actually, the actor is American.

Myriam herself is from Quebec, but it’s not exactly drawn from her experience.
Video Stills El Extranjero

Marta Julve and Myriam Rousseau
Tutor: Ignacio Oliva Monpeán
University of Castile – La Mancha, Cuenca, Spain

Duration: 4.15 Min
Velikij vam Privit ("Borders")

Peter Krupa
Tutor: Anna Daučíková
Academy of Fine Art and Design, Bratislava, Slovakia
“Before, there wasn’t a border. We had a common state. We used to walk across Rozdiel hill to Stužycja village. Afterwards, we weren’t permitted to meet each other. Elder people died and the young ones don’t know each other.”

(from: Velikij vam Privit)
For 60 years, the Slovakian-Ukrainian border has separated Nová Sedlica from Studčiya, along with many other villages in the region. People living there have not seen their relatives for all this time. Equipped with a laptop and a camera, Peter Krupa went to both villages to record video messages and responses. The villagers wished good health to the aunts and nephews they have never seen or greeted their neighbours and classmates from six decades ago. This is the project that is documented in Velikij vam Privit.

“The division goes back to Stalin’s era. The border was drawn without respect for natural boundaries such as valleys, rivers, nor were family ties taken into consideration. It’s sad that in Europe today we still can’t do away with rudiments of past dictatorships, even now the Iron Curtain has disappeared.”

“Ruthenia, this area along the border stretching towards the east is ethnically the same as the area just on the other side of the border. The people are also known as Rusyns. There is some support for Ruthenian culture in Slovakia now, broadcasts and so. Less so in Ukraine. It was only in 2007 that they were acknowledged on a regional level. The languages are very close. I can easily understand Ruthenian, better than Ukrainian.”
But why was the border kept strictly closed?
  Why? Because movements between political units would ‘open people’s eyes’.

In your film one of the old ladies asks her nephew to come and visit her, but he doesn’t sound too eager.
  That is a very broad topic to speak about. Try to imagine the economic situation: some of them don’t even have passports, and a visa would cost half their monthly budget. Some politicians are only just starting to face up to the status quo of the Schengen fence. There is some ritual dancing going on about how the Schengen border is not so bad, but that does not reflect a very involved attitude. The division was physical as well as being on a mental map; it made scratches in the social body, and no political ritual will properly heal the presence of the past.

You are not merely passing messages in your film. You’re also addressing social problems.
  I hope to turn the public’s attention to our eastern neighbours. On the mental maps of Slovaks, and of Europeans in general, everything points westwards, although this region is both socially and culturally part of Europe. It has become Europe’s appendix. I wanted to touch the outer ‘body’ of the EU as a way of speaking about Europe.

And this is a better way than simply “recording” the situation. It doesn’t put these people on display, but actually lets them speak. So there are two aspects: reuniting these people and the ‘message to Europe’. But how do the people you interviewed feel about that? Do they have a sense that they are talking to an audience?
  Reuniting the people is a very important part; it is essential for the film. It doesn’t only happen symbolically on the level of messaging and describing the situation on the border. The main aspect is that people are sending the messages and that happens as the real action. It comes directly to the audience. You are between the sender and the receiver. For the people in the film it was very unexpected and they reacted in a very friendly way and very spontaneously. For them, talking to their relatives was everything.

Indeed. That is what makes it different: you’re not just interviewing them, but actually doing something for them.
  It was one of most important things I had to do, not in an artistic sense but personally. I think it is a radical way to overcome the aesthetic role of art. The video uses regular documentary forms: these are real places, and there are no fictional dialogues. But I don’t think it’s totally documentary in character. I try to mediate both the communication among the people and the medium of film towards the audience. So I play an active role. But I had to balance that properly. Also, because it is a rural area, it is less overloaded with visual media – especially on the Ukrainian side. I did not want to ‘colonise’ the people, and I hope I managed to avoid doing that. Generally, the camera became familiar like a partner.
Video Stills Velikij vam Privit ("Borders")

Peter Krupa
Tutor: Anna Daučíková
Academy of Fine Art and Design, Bratislava, Slovakia

Duration: 6.45 Min
Brutte Kretser
("Broken Circuit")

Tom Daniel Reiersen
Tutor: Thomas Kvam
Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Norway
Mathilde: “When we came back, we settled down in Finnmark. We were acquainted with the fact that we were different. But we believed in love. During the first winter I became very ill, because I wasn’t used to all that snow and slush. In fact I started to corrode. The others up there, they’re made of non-corrosive materials. But I was not. I was not looking good at all, at the time.”

Roger: “It got very difficult regarding electricity. Because we all work on 220 V up here. My wife didn’t fit in. Because she uses 110 V.”

(from: Bratte Kretser)
Towards the end of the interview, when asked whether he will ever make a tragic movie, Tom Reiersen reacts with surprise: “Well, I already have. This was my first attempt at humour.” Brutte Kretser (“Broken circuits”) revolves around two robots, Roger and Mathilde, whose marriage collapses because he is from the coldest north of Norway while she is from the big city in the south. Not made of non-corrosive materials, and not wired to handle the 220V electricity supply up north, Mathilde literally does not “fit in” and is treated badly by Roger’s family and friends. In the end, she returns to the city, and Roger, after losing his job, has to move south too.

“Such things used to be common in Norway,” Tom Reiersen tells me. “We are a rich country, but we also have this issue of migration to the city. In the northern part of Norway, many factories have been closed down due to the centralised economy, and a lot of people from Finnmark in the extreme northeast corner of the country were forced to go to Oslo to find a job. There are the Samic people, who originally come from Finnmark and elsewhere in the north of Norway, but over fifty percent of them now live in Oslo. The male voice on the film is not a professional actor; it’s a superintendent who comes from that part of the country.”
You chose him because of his accent?
Yes, and that turned out very nicely. After a newspaper published an article about my film, I got a lot of positive reactions from Finnmark. I was very pleased with this, because I tried very hard not to offend them and it seems I managed not to.

How did you come up with the idea of using robots?
Actually, on that first trip to Berlin, in February or March 2007, I got the initial idea when Gilli Mendel showed those movies from Jerusalem, one of which dealt with the problem of coming from different religious backgrounds. This was transformed in my mind into coming from different places, with two different social backgrounds. That also makes it easier for a bigger part of Europe to identify with, because then you don't go into specific religions... and religious art is a bit hollow. The same problem could easily be done in another way.

So your initial idea was just the robots and the love story.
That's how we started out, yes. You immediately forget - when you see this piece of mine - after one minute you forget all about the robots. You just follow the story. For me it's a lot easier to talk about serious topics by using humour. It's a tool for me to disarm difficult topics.

Is the setting like real Oslo, or any other place?
Well, it was... you know, it's robots, so it's a parallel reality. The city does not look like a real city; it's only the city in contrast to the countryside. It's a sad story, so we made it look like a dystopian future.

It seems to be a pessimistic message. Even when they come from the same country, even when they love each other - even then they can't overcome their differences.
Well, maybe it is pessimistic, but I still believe in love, so... [laughs] But it's also a comment about the reality. My film is very much like what science fiction was in the '50s: they were commenting on the era in which they lived – the Cold War, the Atomic Age – and this is sort of the same thing. I believe in intercultural dialogue, but I don't believe in bogus.
Video Stills Brutte Kretser ("Broken Circuit")

Tom Daniel Reiersen
Tutor: Thomas Kvam
Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Norway

Duration: 8.50 Min

I had my house up north. And she just had a small flat downtown Oslo.

During the first winter, I became very ill.
Candidate States

Sander Buyck
Tutor: Dany Deprez
University College Ghent, Belgium
“I went to the candidate states, Croatia and Macedonia, on the margin of the European Union. I bought an InterRail pass so I could travel for one month and I explored for myself the ways of taking pictures on the street, just street photography.”

(Sander Buyck)
In the summer of 2007, Sander Buyck travelled through Macedonia and Croatia. In his own words, he “took one step back in order to take two steps forward”, exploring Europe’s cultural diversity in the candidate EU members states. He was struck by fierce discussions in Croatian cafés about “whether or not they wanted to be part of ‘Europe’” and by the mutual distrust between Macedonians and the Albanian minority in that country – Albanians living at a slower pace and Macedonians struggling to be “European”. He shot 2000 slides – “the old-fashioned way” – and made a selection by projecting them onto a screen.

“Take a look at that balcony. When I arrived in this village at night, there was a family standing on it, and they were just waving, with bullet holes all around them. You hear incredible stories. I was walking round and came across a building which was all collapsed, fully bombed out, and there was a woman standing there who began telling me about the people who had lived there, that she had known them, and that the entire family had perished in the bombardment. What passes through you at such a moment, when you hear something like that, that’s something you can’t capture on film. The way I experienced it is still different from the experience you get from the photos.”
On the other hand, if you look at this photo, for instance, you can see that there is a burial going on, but it is happening out of view. Your photos very strongly suggest that something is “gone”. That there are many stories behind the photos that you can’t see.

By focusing on what goes on in the margins, yes. Because you can draw many details from what is going on in the margins that tell more than the whole. This project is a sort of diary of my trip, which lasted one month. That always made me sort of a passer-by, someone who catches impressions. I don’t feel that I really worked out a subject. Of course it’s the region, but I think to really comprehend the situation it’s necessary to stay somewhere longer, to pick a subject, or even – like you said – something that goes on in the margins, the story of one person.

It sounds like Baudelaire’s flâneur, which you heard about in Kassel: the archetypal modern man who strolls round and catches impressions. Who puts on an identity...

What I’d like to say about that is that it’s easy to get forced into such a position. Without being aware of it, you arrive there as a European. It’s an identity you can’t get rid of. It’s hard to deal with that when you encounter people who have to struggle to be Western. There was someone who wrote down his phone number for me and said: ‘My son wants to be a football player in Belgium. Can you give this number to some kind of trainer?’ Everyone has his own dreams, and I believe for many people those include the West. I was walking round there as an observer. That easily turns you into a wanderer without identity. But I also have that feeling when I’m walking round here in Berlin – or in Brussels for that matter.

There are a few other films in this compilation that zoom in on a particular subject or place, like Hazlin and Borders. You seem to use the images to present an overview.

With photography, of course, some pictures can give an overview and others can go deeper into a subject. If you were to make a book about this region, you could start with a general picture, and then - I’m actually thinking of a specific situation that I didn't register. There was a family that was very interested in what I was doing. They gave me all kinds of typical dishes, like those pieces of bacon with 95% fat and 5% meat. I learned a lot in that respect more recently, by looking at other photographers, like Martin Parr. He wanted to tell something - I believe it was about Slovenia - so he took a photo of a sausage and enlarged it to an immense size, and that is his photo about Slovenia. For him that says it all.

But how would those people have felt about it if you had taken out your camera to photograph that piece of bacon?

[laughs] Oh, maybe right now I’d do that.
Video Stills Candidate States

Sander Buyck
Tutor: Dany Depecez
University College Ghent, Belgium

Duration: 7.33 Min
Ayman Alazraq
Tutor: Thomas Kvam
Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Norway
“This film is about a Palestinian who feels his life is empty, just looking round, not being part of society, but on the other hand he has this goal: he wants to get a Norwegian passport, because that little piece of paper would give him freedom. The paradox of that man’s situation, that was the paradox I wanted to explore.”

(Ayman Alazraz)
“The air in Ramallah is invaluable”, says the anonymous Palestinian. But he says this in Oslo, while waiting to get a passport to be able to go back. In Ayman Alazraq’s film Passport, we see him walking around in a shopping mall in the daytime and through the deserted streets of Oslo at night, alienated. Ayman is at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts with a scholarship, but he grew up in Palestine and worked for a local TV station in Ramallah for six years. “The paradox of that man’s situation, that was the paradox I wanted to explore.”
Why is he so desperate to get a passport?
You have to understand what a difference it makes. With a Norwegian passport, he can go anywhere. If he gets in trouble with a checkpoint, that passport can get him through. If they put him in prison, the Norwegian consulate will have to help him. They don't all go back to Palestine. And maybe if he did go back, he would leave again within six months. But he could go anywhere. He'd be a free man.

Are there many people like him in Norway?
Yes. And also in Sweden. It's where they stand the biggest chance of being admitted as refugees. And then if they wait for five years, they can get Norwegian citizenship. So there's a lot of Palestinians in Oslo who are waiting to get a passport and go back.

So what is their situation like?
The Norwegian government tries to distribute them all over Norway. After a few weeks in Oslo the cases are registered within the Norwegian system, so the refugees will be sent to different areas, mostly small villages in north and west Norway. In these villages, the social life is almost zero. They do not speak Norwegian, and not very good English generally, so it's difficult for them to integrate. As a result, they quit the system and become responsible for themselves – they move back to Oslo, as it's the biggest city in Norway. But then the state does not offer them any help or any language courses. So they don't blend much with Norwegians. They gather with other Arab people with whom they have something in common, start working together, sometimes on the black market, and establish a kind of social life outside Norwegian society.

Was it hard to gain their trust?
Well I'm Palestinian too, and I speak Arabic. But it took a long time interviewing him. There were long, long silences. Sometimes he'd just sit there raving about Palestine and I'd think: okay. So it took me some six months to get enough material.

In your film there is a sharp contrast between daytime Oslo and nighttime Oslo. But they both seem to exclude him.
Oslo is very different from Ramallah. There, people are out on the streets until late in the evenings, they come into each other's houses and spend a few hours there. Yes, there is the danger of Israeli patrols. But generally speaking, people have got used to living with that danger. It has become part of their lives, and they have decided not to stop having a normal life because of that.
Video Stills Passport

Ayman Alazrag
Tutor: Thomas Kvam
Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Norway

Duration: 6.35 Min
“I wanted to create a kind of tension: ‘pay attention, for something is about to happen’. The camera shakes more and more, the images become gradually more chaotic, and the dull rumbling of the sound makes you think of an earthquake. I also wanted the music to be enigmatic, almost disquieting. When the frontiers fell in Europe, people – and notably the French – were upset, in fear of losing their identity. I wanted to transcribe that doubt to the screen.”

(Vincent Loubère)
So where are we?

The first part of Frontières was filmed in Riga during a demonstration. I blended it with images from a legal archive. A great number of filmmakers that I admire have made experimental films from archival images. It’s called ‘found footage’. I used a technique called tirage à plat in French. Those images are at the beginning of the film and in the overlayers throughout.

The second part was recorded in the Pyrenees, where the checkpoints used to be along the French-Spanish border. From the chaos and distress of the first part, we come to a long stretch of travel by car on the open road. There is a sense of renewal and reconstruction. The advent of a Europe without borders.

In terms of the montage pure and simple, I wanted to create a kind of tension, like ‘pay attention, for something is about to happen’. The camera shakes more and more, the images become gradually more chaotic, and the dull rumbling of the sound makes you think of an earthquake. That’s the ‘collapse of frontiers in Europe’ seen in a purely filmic and metaphorical way, with simple editing techniques: stops, cuts, black screens, layering.
You say that the second part signifies things like hope and reconstruction. But the images of the open road also strike me as being somewhat uncanny.

As far as the drive through the mountains is concerned, I wanted the music to be enigmatic, almost disquieting. When the frontiers fell in Europe, people – and notably the French – were upset, in fear of losing their identity. I wanted to transcribe that doubt to the screen. The image and the sound are important in all my films. I want the viewer to physically resent the film before attempting to analyze and understand it. That’s why there is an important exchange between image and sound. It was made by a friend of mine called Davy Vrain.

Did you go to Riga specifically for this film? Did it have something to do with “exploring the frontiers of Europe”?

No. I went to Latvia for personal reasons, but as it turned out, I had already written the script for Frontières. There was a demonstration, and when I saw all these policemen and the barricades I took the opportunity to film it, and I immediately thought of using those images for my film. The impression of tension and fear that is so tangible in the film was very real there in Riga. But it had nothing to do with collapsing borders.

Could you tell me a little more about your aesthetic ideas? You seem to be searching for a certain beauty in anxiety. And you’re also commenting on real situations with aesthetic means.

I wanted to link, allegorically, the European project and the art of film. On the level of film, there is a focus on the border that exists between one image and another. I wanted to lay bare the very sequence of images, what underlies a movement, a gesture. You normally don’t see that in cinema. In the end, it’s by the sequence of images, the photograms, that cinema functions. You could say the same thing about the construction of Europe, and the impact of erasing the frontiers in particular. In effect, European history and culture have been constructed from the association of independent countries, each of which has its own culture, government and history. They all play a role in the creation of ‘Europe’. Erasing the borders has made this possible – in spite of all the fears. It has become real and concrete.
Video Stills Frontières ("Frontier")

Vincent Loubère
Tutor: Hubertus van Amelunxen
École Supérieure de l’Image, Angoulême, France

Duration: 2.51 Min
Three Animations

Raquel Leiva
Tutor: Ignacio Oliva Mompeán
University of Castile – La Mancha, Cuenca, Spain
“When you see the films, the intercultural dialogue is already there. You do not need words.”

(Raquel Leiva)
There’s a lot you can do with art. You can use a brush to paint a jacket on your shirt and then put it on. And you can snap a Polaroid image with your eye and have it come out of your mouth. And if you put your fingers in a pencil sharpener, you can use them to draw with. Or at least, those are the metaphors for the language of art that Raquel Leiva visualises in her *Three Animations*. Each one of her short films has been inserted in between different groups of films in the ...*I see you* compilation, perhaps a bit like bookmarks.

“"The images are a form of communication that everyone can understand. It was important to use the language of different media, different art forms. For me, the different techniques are like languages of art, they’re like English or German... For me, the languages of art are not frontiers, they cross borders. They describe something more simple and deeper: your feelings.”
In a sense they comment on the project, on what the language of the arts can do: that you can draw with your fingers and make a photograph with your eyes.

It’s that you feel the art inside the body. My relationship with art is more physical.

Was this also a very conscious choice, to do the theme without words?

Yes. When you see the films, the intercultural dialogue is already there. You don’t need words.

I came up with various ideas, but in the end I preferred these interpretations. The idea was to make images that are not fake.

That’s a great thing to say: that images are not fake.

Well, I have pencils on my fingers in the video, and in reality I do not. But the material is not false, the invention is not fake. It’s a metaphor.

Do you think these films also do something to the other films that they are combined with?

Not really. I think the compilation as a whole has a much more documentary character. My work is only short pieces, artistic pieces. But .../I see you was conceived of as the sum of several videos, and my clips work well within that. I worked with the Flash program. First you create a frame, and then, by drawing over it, you can change it. The music was created afterwards by Javier Jaén. I felt my pieces needed rhythm – they wouldn’t work as well without the music.
Video Stills Three Animations

Raquel Leiva
Tutor: Ignacio Oliva Mompeán
University of Castille – La Mancha, Cuenca, Spain

Duration: 0.11 Min; 0.15 Min; 0.14 Min
“I think my project is more about intercultural monologue than about dialogue.”

(Tarik Schürmer)
The “Deutscher Tanz”, Tarik Schirmer explains to me, was what the waltz developed from. “It was a sort of folk dance that was not done at the court because it involved people dancing very close to one another, bodies touching. And at the court, people always stood there nervously, five metres apart. So eventually they made their own version of it.”

In his film Deutscher Tanz we see three neo-Nazis in a “traffic park” surrounded by trees, dressed in bomber jacks and white-laced army boots. With juggling pins in both hands, they start to dance – first one, then all three – to the tune of “Das Rheingold”.

In presenting his concept, Tarik describes his film as an “intercultural monologue”.

“That wasn’t meant ironically. It was definitely a comment on the assignment, which was to make a film on “intercultural dialogue”. Monologues are also a part of that. These skinheads would say: ‘I don’t care for dialogue. I want to push through my own position.’ That was how it was meant, as a monologue. But not mine or theirs. That’s why I call it an intercultural monologue.”
One could see those neo-Nazis as comical, but for others it is also a scary film.

Part of my work is to show contrasts. Using images like these you can take away the fear and break through it. It becomes ridiculous. But those people are not funny. That’s something I don’t really like: to think they are funny. That would be obtuse.

Do people ever simply burst into laughter at your film?

Yes. Well, it’s not a side-splitter of course, but some people do find it funny. I’ve also showed it to some anarchists, but they didn’t find it funny at all. Chaplin said about the film he made about Hitler that if he had known that things would turn out the way they did, he would never have made it.

There is something dubious about it - the fact that you have made them seem a bit sympathetic by situating them there with those juggling pins.

They become somehow sympathetic by being ridiculous. They’re not all that scary anymore. When you see someone dancing like that, you know he’s not right in his mind. They look very much like the cliché of neo-Nazis, but when you think of that cliché you don’t expect them to dance. Instead, you think they’ll bash your head in. And because they don’t do that, but actually come off a bit ridiculous, you can identify with them a little.

You shot this film in a “traffic park” - a place where, as you say, “rules have to be observed”.

Indeed. It is a place where one does exercises and learns rules. It’s a sort of symbol for acquiring rules so that you can have a dialogue along those lines. When the topic is “intercultural dialogue”, I think it’s also important, in the context of Europe, to achieve communication. It takes practice. You can’t just go to Spain and speak German. You have to find a means to be understood. Maybe those juggling pins are also a sign of practising. You try something. They dance. They do gymnastic exercises. It’s a sort of attempt at dialogue, something that real neo-Nazis don’t do naturally. The real ones are combat groups. The counterpart is lacking. And I’ve never seen real skinheads dancing to classical music. The actors are not dancers of course, and they should be untrained. It shouldn’t be perfect: far from perfect.

You mentioned that your actors didn’t like it all playing neo-Nazis.

No, definitely not. One of them in particular had a problem with it because he has the poetic view that you should internalise the role and embody it - which is something they obviously shouldn’t do at all.
Video Stills Deutscher Tanz

Tarik Schirmer
Tutor: Anna Anders
University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany

Duration: 3.00 Min
Scottish Splendor

David Tennent
Tutor: Andy Dougan
Royal Academy of Music and Theatre, Glasgow, Scotland
“You are a disgrace to our great nation. A nation that has given birth to many a household name. Your music is nothing but an assault on the eardrums. In fact to call it music is an insult in itself. Your constant disrespect of property in acts of vandalism... Graffiti isn’t art, it is the inane scribblings of our simple brother. You are a proverbial wart on our society. You’re a living, breathing caricature and we’re sick of you.”

(from: Scottish Splendor)
Scottish Splendor begins as a quasi-documentary. In 2005, Glasgow Prestwick Airport promoted itself with the slogan “Pure Dead Brilliant”, which aroused some controversy. It is a peculiar Glaswegian slang expression taken from the mouth of Mary, wife of the Glaswegian alcoholic Rab C. Nesbitt in the sitcom of the same name. As the voiceover relates, many felt that it was not so funny, because it stood for precisely the negative image that Scotland was trying to get rid of – at that time, Scotland was also being advertised as “the best small country in the world”. And then the first thing you see of Scotland would be “Pure Dead Brilliant”.

Promising to locate “the true origin of this colloquialism”, the documentary zooms in upon the worst that Scotland has to offer: the type of short-shaven lower-class youths in sportswear and baseball caps known there as “Neds”. And that is where the documentary breaks down. The camera runs to a stop, a figure from the past taps the screen to fix things, but instead, the “Ned” gets transported into a white room, where he is harassed by microphones and reproached by the voice of God or Scottish History. (Tapping the screen is John Logie Baird, the Scottish inventor of television.)
David explains: “It’s a take on modernism and the way that history and other contexts that have been shown on the screen represent modernism. What happens is, the ‘Ned’ gets transported into a white room, which represents the frame: the frame of the screen, adopting the idea of modernism as a blank slate, exposing it as just what it is.”

What then develops is a kind of dialogue between low and high culture, for the main plot of the film is that the “Ned” defends himself against the voice behind the camera, claiming that he is just as much part of this culture, that he is free to choose the life that he likes, and that it’s just nonsense to say that graffiti isn’t art and house isn’t music. There is more than a touch of postmodernism as he addresses the camera, turns down the volume of the classical music, and puts his headphones over the microphone.

There is nevertheless some discussion about whether the film really exposes the “Ned” for what he is. David and his teacher, Andy Dougan, agree to disagree on whether he has “idealised” the “Ned”. “I grew up in an area where real ‘Neds’ are,” Andy says, “and I can tell you they’re usually not that eloquent. Some politically correct right-wing politician came up with ‘Ned’ as an acronym for ‘non-educated delinquent’. But that’s not the true origin of the expression. In fact it’s slang from the street gangs roaming Glasgow. In any case, David was aware that, being English, he was looking in on them. It was almost anthropological. And as a consequence of that, I guess he wanted to make it look as stylised as possible; but from a charitable perspective.”

*Scottish Splendor* could be a comment on the phenomenon known as “Scottish miserabilism”: the grey social realism and kitchen-sink drama prevalent in TV and movie productions funded by Scottish Screen. Ryan Henderson (who made *What Makes You*) comments: “It derives from a certain era of Scottish culture - with its violence and drug culture - and from the fact that we never have sunshine... Well, everyone I’ve come across feels the same about Scottish film, that this is the image they want to portray, and the thing is that those kinds of films, those kinds of stories seem to win a lot. They do well on the international market, so that’s why people will continue to make this sort of films.” So the image that *Scottish Splendor* and the “Pure Dead Brilliant” slogan play on is, in effect, a state-funded brand. Adding irony to an already ironic catchphrase, and blending the language of documentary and commercial, *Scottish Splendor* takes serious issue with marketable images.
Video Stills Scottish Splendor

David Tennent
Tutor: Andy Dougan
Royal Academy of Music and Theatre, Glasgow, Scotland

Duration: 8.35 Min
David Demjanovic
Tutor: Anna Daučíková
Academy of Fine Art and Design, Bratislava, Slovakia
“The village where I came from is known in the area for often having fights. There is some irony in showing my country in that light – don’t go there, we’re still barbarians.”

(David Denjanovic)
David Demjanovic grew up in Hazlin, a city famous for its constant fighting. “We from Hazlin have Tartarian roots, that why we have so much temperament,” an elderly man explains.

“Now, for young people, it is just something like a ‘town legend’,” David says. “But I remember ugly struggles at discos from the late ’90s, when I was 13, 14 years old. Then it was very fashionable to be a neo-Nazi skinhead in Slovakia. Most of it was against Gypsies, but in our village there is no Gypsy community, so they fought each other or people from other villages. The difference of our village is that we are Roman Catholic, and every other village around is Greek Orthodox. Also, we are the third biggest village in the county of Bardejov, with some 2000 inhabitants, while other villages have 350 or 600 – so we feel some power.”

“I’m missing in my movie this latest generation of brawlers (those wannabe skinheads) from the late ’90s. Some of them don’t want to speak to camera or microphone, and I don’t have enough courage to ask, because they are still not normal. They are very paranoid, think that I’m working for the police or something. So there are no former skinheads in my film. Just guys from the ‘old school’, ’80s and early ’90s. They are now around 35–45 years old.”
So the town had this reputation before? There's nothing like a moment “when it all started”?
    I didn't find it. It's for as long as the old people remember.

But now it has become a sort of “town legend”, you say? Is it hard to find out what is true and what is fiction?
For me, the initial idea was to find the truth about this story about the chainsaw at the discotheque.
I asked the guy, because he himself is a town legend, [laughs] and he said it wasn't true. His story
was that an old man had just come in from the forest with a chainsaw - because he had been cutting
wood for the winter - to have a beer after work, and this party was just open. So that was how the
legend started.
But five minutes later he told me how he had set the wooden stairs on fire at another discotheque.

So how does this man feel about being a “town legend”?
He thinks that he is respected, but young people just tell stories about him. He is 37, single, and an
alcoholic. But he has a job, so things aren’t so bad with him.

It seems like you could have made a really major documentary about Hazlin, about its reputation and this fellow.
Yes, I have a good interview with this ‘town legend’. And I’m now making a video about the curious
local Christmas traditions. But I’m not a documentary type. People don’t trust me. There are many
villages that have problems with violence like Hazlin, but only Hazlin has this hype about flying
daggers and chainsaws. There is some irony in showing my country in this light - ‘Don’t go there,
we’re still barbarians’. I’m now studying in Bratislava, so I only go there every two months or so.
Bratislava is a totally different story. Hazlin is in the northeast of Slovakia. People from western
Slovakia hate eastern Slovaks.

This movie is very ‘exotic’ for western Slovaks, because it was made in the eastern Slovak dialect.
There are a lot of nuances and untranslatable swear words. I’m not showing this movie in Slovakia
even though I know it could become very popular in some Internet voting competitions for short
films. I don’t want to show these people like some kind of attraction. People from abroad will be
seeing them as Slovaks. In Slovakia they are eastern Slovaks.
Video Stills Hazlin

David Demjanovic
Tutor: Anna Daucíková
Academy of Fine Art and Design, Bratislava, Slovakia

Duration: 4.18 Min
...that's why we're so temperament.

...and now come closer, bastards...
“In a white space, three men are praying out loud: a Christian, a Muslim and a Jew. Since their prayers blend and there is no translation, you can only guess at what they are saying – there is even some confusion as to who is who.”

(Alexander Nowak)
It appeared to me that the Jewish chant was dominant. You hear the Jew much clearer than the Christian or the Muslim.

That was largely due to chance. They simply prayed according to their religious background. The Muslim didn’t recite much. He mumbled a few lines. The Jew, on the other hand, recited loudly all the time. He was also a priest, so he would be more apt to speak outwardly, and the Muslim more apt to speak inwardly.

But Muslims also have an art of recitation. Or is that not experienced as prayer?

Yes, it is. But I didn’t ask him to make such a recitation. I didn’t ask any of the others either. It just turned out that way.
And you didn’t bring them together. They all prayed separately. Indeed. Unfortunately they couldn’t even meet.

Pity. That would have been interesting. For me at least. But really, my aim was rather to get them lined up with the gestures. Not just the prayers, but also their performance, the movements.

So you put them in a white room, in a fixed spot. I wanted to have a neutral space, with no distractions. That they didn’t move around was just because they don’t do that while praying. I didn’t tell them: ‘Don’t move around’.

You say no distractions. But in the film they are all talking at the same time, and except for the Christian you can hardly understand anything. So where is the focus? What should you focus on? First, on the gestures. And also, on the idea that the focus is being disoriented, that the spectator is being disoriented. So there is nothing that is brought into focus, nothing put there because I wanted it that way. No concrete statement is being made about ‘the three world religions’. My film functions rather as an installation than as a movie. You can pop in and out at any point. It doesn’t go from A to B.

Another problem with these believers praying in front of the camera: Are they acting or are they praying? I don’t know.

But didn’t they experience it as a dilemma, having to stand in front of the camera and pray in a film? No, they didn’t. For the Muslim, it doesn’t matter where he prays. He prays at home or somewhere else. No, really, I said, ‘If you want to, you can start,’ and then when they began, I started the camera. Then I left and came back to switch it off. I didn’t give any directions.

So these are veritable prayers? Not really, because it takes place in front of the camera. So in the end you can say they are acting, also because it does not match with reality, this white room. But then I didn’t say that I was making a documentary movie and trying to catch the reality in it.
Video Stills Three Prayers

Alexander Nowak
Tutor: Anna Anders
University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany

Duration: 3.47 Min
Text Fukkers: Lecture One

Marte Hodne Haugen, Marte Berger Walthinsen, Espen Lomsdalen
Tutor: Thomas Kvam
Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Norway
“The face of minimalism
is the face of capital
The face of authority
The face of the father

Minimalism and the rhetoric of power

Nothing exceeds the power of discourse, and nothing escapes from the discourse of power
The face of capital
The face of authority
The face of the father

Minimalism and the rhetoric of power
Oh yeah, the rhetoric of power

Money, the phallus, the concept, as operators of meaning
Art that generated a space above all personal feeling
The most wonderful thing, made of a single stone
The length and height which were the same and the whole a single block
Fluorescent light in a tube, it’s all plainly phallic
The specific end of a boy’s fixture represents the erect cock

Nothing exceeds the power of discourse, and nothing escapes from the discourse of power

The face of capital
The face of authority
Oh yeah, the face of the father

Minimalism and the rhetoric of power
Minimalism and the rhetoric of power
Oh yeah, the rhetoric of power
Oh yeah, the face of the father”

(Lyrics by Marte Holme Haugen, adapted from: Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power”, Arts Magazine, January 1990, pp. 44-63)
“It was half an hour before we were going to meet Ove. I was with the other Marte, and all we knew was
that we wanted to do something with a band. So we sat down and we thought out the project in a very
short time”, Marte Hodne Haugen recalls. That was how the Text Fukkers were born: an “art theoretical
band project” that brings “art theory to the people” by transforming art theoretical texts into song lyrics.
In .../I see you, they are on stage with their lead singer behind a lectern, dressed in garbage bags and
sometimes with cubic cardboard boxes over their heads, singing that “nothing exceeds the power of
discourse and nothing escapes the discourse of power” and summing up “money, the phallus, the concept,
as operators of meaning”.

These lyrics are drawn from “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power”, Anna C. Chave’s attack on modernism
as the art form of male chauvinist pigs. Since then, the Text Fukkers have also done renditions of writing
by Kosuth or Adorno and Horkheimer, among others.

1 Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power”, Arts Magazine,
January 1990, pp. 44–63
Why did you pick this text?

Well, I was reading a lot of texts at that time, and we picked this one because it had so many good sentences that you could put together in a pop song. It is very explicit and to the point, and kind of metaphorical. ...It almost sounds as if I’m saying that I believe it right now. [laughs] I don’t think it’s true, I don’t think you can say that art theory is true, ‘cause it’s theory. Making a song from it is not exactly saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to it.

What, then, is your relation to art theory?

Art theory is part of the language of art. It’s a big part of it now. It’s not that we’re against art theory, but some of the students I went to school with sometimes used to pick some reference to art theory and then say, ‘Oh, I’m so influenced by that’. We wanted to do something with art theory and turn it into something different. To present art theory as art.

That’s why you have this slogan: “Art theory to the people!”

Yes. We want both to educate the public and to make fun of the source of the education. We use commercial models like rhymes, rhythm, flow and other clichés from the music scene. On stage we mix it with the traditional lecture setting using overheads, projectors and equipment from the classroom.

We start with the text, and then Espen makes some drum beats, and I will try to sing the text to the drum beats to see if it fits. And then, if it fits, Marte will try out some bass lines. Usually we have some kind of opinions about what we’re trying to do with a text. We had this text by Adorno and Horkheimer, about the culture industry, and we all wanted that to be dark and sad, with a massive doomy bass, and we have an echo on my voice...

[And in Lecture One, she points at the flipchart with a whip, which is also used to sound the triangle and to slap Espen.]

But what does this have to do with intercultural dialogue?

Well, there’s high culture and low culture. Intercultural dialogue need not be between a German and a Norwegian; it can also be between a Norwegian and a Norwegian. And the things we’re doing with the texts - turning them into popularized lyrics -makes them more into, well, maybe not low culture, but pop culture.

[But she also remarks: “Well, maybe it’s more about the language of art.”]
Video Stills Lecture One

Text: Fukkers: Marte Hodne Hungen, Marte Berger Walthinsen, Espen Lomsdalen
Tutor: Thomas Kvam
Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Norway

Duration: 4.42 Min
Art that

Art that generated a sphere above all

The face of capital
Esther Maso
Tutor: Anna Anders (University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany)
Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam, the Netherlands
Makes no sense at all

(Esther Maso)
“If you look at something with a sense of humour, it becomes easier to swallow. And I also think it’s more apt to stick in your mind that way. But that’s a personal thing.” So Esther Maso made a humorous image of intercultural dialogue: people who can’t understand a word of each other’s language get into a much more lively dialogue when they all start chewing bubblegum and prattling with their mouths full. In the end, they turn out to be advertising the miraculous Babelgum, which “makes no sense at all”.

“I was an exchange student in Berlin when I worked on this project, and it was a situation where you were packed together with all the other exchange students. It was mainly exchange students that I spent my time with. I found it fascinating to see how people communicate in such circumstances. You always end up with English, but it becomes a different language somehow. There were some people whose English was rather limited, so we would say: ‘Throw in a word of your own.’ Or if there were two Italians or Icelanders sitting together, they would start talking in their own language. So you have a sort of hodgepodge with all these different voices. One of my teachers showed me a piece from a Jacques Tati film where people also just talk out into the blue, and a sort of gibberish develops between different languages with lots of different words. That’s how you come closer, step by step, to the piece that you’re going to make.”
What these people are saying in your film, in their own language - I figured out that the French was something of an absurd story about a five-coloured wig, and there was something in a Scandinavian language about a crocodile...

[laughs] The idea was that they all had to tell a joke. But then, nobody understands the punch line. So they start chewing the bubble gum and then it doesn't matter anymore. In a way, they now all understand each other, because they are all babbling the same nonsense and creating a new language. I found this track from Outkast in my music collection: ‘Makes no sense at all’. That’s how I got my slogan.

So that’s why they’re already laughing even before they start chewing the bubblegum, because they’re telling a joke?

Yes, that was a funny situation. When you’re telling a joke, you’re already in the mood and giggling before you get to the end. And all the others were standing around, not getting the point at all. But when you see someone laughing, you naturally get the urge to start laughing yourself. And that was really a good thing, because some of them were a bit nervous and it’s really a ridiculous thing to keep on talking while chewing bubblegum. And it’s also somewhat unnatural to laugh on command. They were not actors, after all.

There’s also something problematic about humour: it’s a way to connect and bridge differences, but it’s also something that excludes people sometimes.

Indeed. You have very specific meanings in each language, and I often notice while watching television that the subtitles can’t get the joke across at all. But it also depends on the level. Everyone understands slapstick. Maybe there’s also a difference between countries, but when you get to more sophisticated jokes, it really becomes harder for everyone to get it. In that sense, it would be better if we could all chew a piece of Babelgum.
Video Stills Babelgum

Esther Maso
Tutor: Anna Anders (University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany)
Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Duration: 1.28 Min
Made in...

Liwen Ouyang and Xiaojing Yao
Tutor: Anna Anders
University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany
“We were struck by the fact that the same clothes, the same style, could be bought anywhere. We asked people to show their ‘Made in’ labels. Nobody knew where their clothes came from.”

(Liwen Ouyang and Xiaojing Yao)
*Made in...* revolves around clothes and even looks a bit like a commercial, showing them in split screen with colourful dots and a soundtrack from Bonobo. But the actual focus is on the tiny labels on the inside that say where the clothes came from, the “Made in...” labels. “No, it’s not meant as a commercial,” Liwen Ouyang says. And Xiaojing Yao adds: “It’s something between documentary and video clip I think.”

Liwen: “It would have been very difficult to make a documentary with such a short duration. We felt that only filming those ‘Made in’ signs would have been too concrete and too superficial. For what we’re putting into question is on an abstract level. That’s why we made these two levels. With the split screen and the transparency, we bring the two layers together.”
Could you also tell me something about the dots in your film, like how they match with the music and the labels?

Xiaojing: The colourful dots... the idea for that came from one my projects to try and describe our global economy in a picture. The global market has something of a kaleidoscope. I use the dots to show the keywords ‘Made in...’ – Made in China, Made in Germany - and they match with the music on the one hand and the labels on the other. I think it is a powerful image to make people think about our global society.

It’s a strange idea, the number of countries you actually wear on your body.

Liwen: Actually, one doesn’t really notice it while shopping. What we did was simply to ask people to show their ‘Made in’ labels. And everyone did. And nobody knew where their clothes came from. So the first question was simply, ‘Made where?’ and then the second question was, ‘Did you have any idea?’ You are wearing the globalisation around your neck.

But now that we have an international clothes market, does that make us more different or more alike?

Xiaojing: We can choose every kind of clothes to describe ourselves, and maybe to showing our character in a way similar to others. To my mind, dressing is a way of introducing yourself. It tells something about your character, your mood, your special tastes, your hobbies. It is a silent language, a language of impressions.

Liwen: Coming from Asia - from a different culture - we were struck by the fact that the same clothes, the same style, could be bought everywhere. When we were buying things, we had to be careful not to buy something made in China. Especially when we were buying gifts for our family.

You’re both from China. That must have been quite a culture shock.

Liwen: Not really. We’d seen enough films about Europe, news, and other information, we read history and such, we got all the information on TV and the Internet. The culture shock wasn’t that big really. Well, actually there was something. Many years ago, my teacher said it like this: ‘There are two parallel circuits, modernisation and westernisation, that we bring together in China.’ Modernisation, in the sense of urbanisation, is happening very fast in China. And then when I came here to Germany, I found that the culture and the cities had been so well preserved. So then we noticed that we might have misunderstood westernisation. That westernisation and modernisation are not the same. So that was something of a culture shock.
Video Stills Made in...

Liwen Ouyang and Xiaojing Yao
Tutor: Anna Anders
University of the Arts, Berlin, Germany

Duration: 1.28 Min
World in Vrútky

Zuzana Janecková
Tutor: Anna Daučíková
Academy of Fine Art and Design, Bratislava, Slovakia
“Various restaurants in Vrútky have foreign names. Few ordinary people know what they mean, where those names come from... Or the pharmacy shops. Why do they have such names from all over the world, and not Slovak names? We take the words but don’t know the meaning.”

(from: World in Vrútky)
Like everywhere else in the world, the inhabitants of Vrútky have a taste for the exotic. They give their places foreign names. So in this small Slovakian railway town, there is an apartment block called “Mexico”, a nightclub called “Shanghai”, ‘Italian’ ice cream parlours and coffee bars, a café called “Orient” and even a “Lake Ontario”. Zuzana Janecková, who grew up there, invited her friend Elka to come sightseeing and drew up a comic tourist map of all the signs with exotic names. They took a camera and a bike and went on a “world tour” to shoot *World in Vrútky*.

One question comes from another student, Tom. He wondered how it is possible that all these parts of the town with these foreign names could not to have old names. The interest in the Americas must date from just a hundred years back. This really puzzled him: do they have two names, an old one and a new one?

It’s not official. Well, some of the pubs are, but if you look at the map, you won’t find the ‘Mexico’ apartments there. Or the ‘Lake Ontario’, which is the ‘White Coast’ officially. But people like to use these names, not the official ones. Sometimes it was impossible to find out where these foreign names came from. For instance, the man in ‘Mexico’ had been living there since 1923 and had no idea why it was called that way. I found out for one name: my grandfather knew a man, Mr. Hvizdak, who had been to Ontario, and he named this lake after Lake Ontario there.
But do you think you would have got more out of them if you had asked them more pressing questions?
I don’t think so. Because I was trying to find the right person who I thought would know – the chronicler
of Vrútky, and also the person who had been chronicler before him – but they weren’t able to tell me.
Just one other person from the town office told me a story, but it was just a story. I think that if I had
pressed more I would only have heard more stories, but not the right answers. I’m not sure if that is
really the most important thing.

As a title, World in Vrutky is a bit ironic perhaps, because you go on a world trip, you go to ‘Shanghai’ and
‘Ontario’. But isn’t it the same everywhere else in the world?
Like Las Vegas. Everything is also in Las Vegas, only newer. I like the idea that somewhere in Slovakia
there is the little town of Vrútky where there is a train that goes HRRRRRR. From the sound and the
visuals you can see that it is not a very important town, so people try to make it nicer and bigger
with these names.

You said you had also done other work on signs.
Yes, that was about titles and how titles are used in art. If they’re just for talk and traders and critics,
or if they’re really part of the artwork. Because these days, the titles are often so important, some
are more important than the works themselves. If you don’t read the title, you can’t figure it out.

When you watch the other films in the ...I See You collection, what strikes you about them in comparison to
your own?
I notice that mine uses a lot more different media. With the others: if they’re doing animation, it’s an
animation; if they’re doing documentary, what you see is documentary. If you look at my piece, you
are not sure what it is. For me, that looks more natural. When I look around, I see different things,
which are not really connected together. The film has some freely associated images: Frida Kahlo for
‘Mexico’, Agatha Christie for the ‘Orient Express’. Maybe those are also what other people first think
of when they hear those names. Because that’s natural. And that’s also why I put in the cartoons. It
was the natural thing for me to do.

You’re not from film?
No, fine art. I learned a lot from this project. For I never do that: going out to ask people questions.
And working with the camera. But now I’m not scared of it anymore.
Video Stills World in Vrútky

Zuzana Janečková
Tutor: Anna Daucíková
Academy of Fine Art and Design, Bratislava, Slovakia

Duration: 4.18 Min
What makes you

Ryan Henderson
Tutor: Andy Dougan
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, Scotland
“Make sure that I have really good friends, who will be there for me when I need them.”

“I like to see the sun come up in the morning when I get up. Seeing my family, that makes me happy.”

“I like the kindness of strangers.”

“Fruit, fruit makes me sad.”

“The things I said to my dad, who passed away a couple of years ago. Just things I regret saying, but there’s nothing you can do about it.”

“Naivety and ignorance because in the world today you can’t be ignorant to what goes on around you. I think that’s the worst.”

“People see something, something can be done about it, and we choose not to do it. The fact that people will tolerate something that can be avoided makes me very sad.”

(from: What makes you)
What makes you happy? What makes you sad? What makes you angry? Ryan Henderson recorded people from Edinburgh answering these questions, and then filmed their silent faces.

The first thing that strikes me is that they seemed to find it surprisingly easy to talk about those things. What was it like getting them to talk about their feelings?

Well, I don’t know how easy it was for them to give their own opinions, their own answers to the question. All I know is that I find it quite difficult to talk about these things, and from a personal approach, as a filmmaker, I found it interesting to ask people about what may well be some of the simplest things, but which we can’t find the answers to right away. And I was very surprised by how open they were, how eager they were to express themselves. And the moment they start expressing themselves, they just unload: a heap of different things that were just a big surprise for me. And there was one guy who really started unloading things about his dad. He was a friend of mine, and I didn’t know these things, so the fact that he allowed me to bring that into the film was quite brave, quite honourable.
Do you think he did that because of the camera?
I don’t know. Well, I think we’ve been trying to bring something to film, somehow ‘printing it’ to tape, and there’s a broad sense of honesty that comes out of people which maybe you wouldn’t get otherwise, like if they were saying the same thing face to face. If it’s being recorded you feel even more of an obligation to be honest about it. People feel the need to be honest in front of a camera, since like it or not you’re entering history. If I were to do it, I’d rather be honest than live like a liar the rest of my days... [laughs]

But why did you put the track of them talking together with a different shot of them just being silent?
I wanted blank expressions. There was a great Russian filmmaker from the ’30s, I don’t know who it was, Kuleshov I think, who used to put people with just a neutral face in the same shot together with a fish, or a crying baby, or a glass of wine. That way, you’d think that the man was happy, or hungry, or that he needed a drink. So that was my thought: if you have blank expressions overlaying these three types of emotions, the blank expression would be able to express the emotions.

Was it also to prevent them from acting?
Yeah, I don’t find that real people tend to act - no, that’s a lie, I do find that real people tend to act - when they talk in front of a camera. So I felt that, by telling people: ‘I don’t want anything in particular, just give me a blank face, please’, I got more from them than if I had said ‘Act happy’ or ‘Act sad’, which could have just ended up being a bit... melodramatic or even clown-like. At the end of the day, I found that the emotion would come through what they said, not through what their faces were doing.

It’s also a bit of a Scottish story - I mean all those images of Scottish stereotypes, Scottish landmarks - and you didn’t specifically look for people to represent the whole range of world cultures.
I felt that, living in Scotland, I’ve already been living in a multicultural society, from school on, so I didn’t go looking for specific ‘groups’ of people because I’d always be around them. The faces, the blank faces, the expressions: they’re the landscape of my country, and if you go to other places you would have the landscape of the world.
Video Stills What Makes You

Ryan Henderson
Tutor: Andy Dougan
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, Scotland

Duration: 7.33 Min
Iselin Linstad Hauge
Tutor: Thomas Kvam
Oslo National Academy of Art, Norway
“My first concept involved a book which was about perspective and individuality in the West, how linear perspective developed in painting at the same time that the sense of individuality grew. I went to a seminar where the speaker talked about how in the West we say: ‘I think, therefore I am’, whereas in Africa one would say: ‘I am in a relation to other people, therefore I am’. And that was how I could see a link between perspective and intercultural dialogue.”

(Iselin Linstad Hauge)
Did you already have those images of walking people in groups, filmed from the back?
That was something I had filmed a month before this. I had it, but I didn’t know I was going to use it in this way. It’s people walking in the main street of Oslo. It was one of those days when we were celebrating something, and there were a lot of people in the street and I was out there, filming.
Then there is the image of these girls, filmed from the back, dressed in blue...

It's just one, actually. I doubled it. If you see this individual – that was what I was trying to do, with this whole mass of people walking together and then this one person, and also with the green fences moving all the time, a constant confusion of the perspective. There are more layers. And then you have this one person standing at the end there and this other person coming; they are two, but they're also identical. You're not alone, but it's the same person also. You are part of the masses as well. There's a conflict there.

It kind of started with these green fences, which I filmed in a shopping mall that was under construction. It was closed at night, and I went there to film these fences where they were going to have the storage area. So they're real: they're not computer generated. Well, the black lines are, but the green hue is just from images in different colours, layered on top of each other.

Did you collaborate with the composer on this piece, or did you tell her that you would be using her piece as the sound score?

I had been working on this for a while and trying out different soundscapes – usually I make my own soundscapes in my videoworks, but for this piece it didn't quite work out. I knew about Cecilie's piece, so I tried it out and it fitted so perfectly that I called her and asked if I could use it. Luckily, she said 'yes'. It has so much energy in it, and the crescendo is perfect. Plus the tempo of the violin matched the movements. It's kind of scary, too, which fits in well with the video since it's so abstract and it needed a strong soundtrack. The music is at least half the film.

You talked about having a lot of theoretical input for this project... So what is your relation to art theory? Do you think of it as a source of inspiration, or is it also something that you should argue with as an artist?

Both. It's interesting to have it as a contradiction but also as a starting point to work from. The way ELIA did this project was really theoretical, with many seminars, and there was a lot of emphasis on that, so I felt it needed a strong theoretical basis. But there's a dilemma there. Because you can get all caught up with it, and it can stop you from playing around. You have an idea but then you think it's too theoretical, or not theoretical enough. Now that I'm out of school, it has been a challenge for me to remember what I learned but at the same time to try to forget it all and play a bit again. To kick myself out of it and just do it anyway. It's also a field of its own, I think. It's linked to art but it's also a lot about language. In a way, when you're doing something visual, you're sometimes working on things you don't want to put into words. That's why some people express themselves visually. But they work well together, the theorist and the artist.
Video Stills Interplay

Iselin Linstad Hauge
Tutor: Thomas Kvam
Oslo National Academy of Art, Norway

Duration: 2.04 Min
Melancholic Tourist

Marian Venceslá
Tutor: Ignacio Oliva Mompeán
University of Castille – La Mancha, Cuenca, Spain
“It’s melancholic. Trying to get into the Arab world but not getting into it. That’s the sad thing about the story. It has happened to me as well. If you don’t take care, you can go to see a new place but not see what is really there.”

(Marian Venceslá)
“I don’t want to talk on behalf of interculturality,” Marian Venceslá remarks. “It’s my own point of view.” When she was looking for a subject for her film, she started by looking around, looking at the place where she was living. That place was Grenada. “When I was supposed to work from this multicultural perspective, I looked around me and started thinking about how this city was multicultural, also in the modern day, with tourists coming from all around the world. So that’s the point of view.”

*Melancholic Tourist* consists of two parts. The first part shows the romantic ideal of the city, with the gardens and the Moorish wall, as if recorded from old postcards – but with an ironic edge to it, for the pictures are actually moving images in Super-8 format, and at the end of it, someone is even using his cell phone. Still, the effect is poetic: “Still images, but not really still. You can somehow see the passing of time.” The other part is called an Epilogue. In cold pictures from a digital camera, it records the tourists going round Grenada, looking for the tourist spots. One tourist with a camcorder even “films back”.

144
In a sense, it is also a film about a failed intercultural dialogue, about people looking for something that’s not there.

   Yes. That’s why it’s melancholic. Trying to get into the Arab world but not getting into it. That’s the sad thing about the story. It has happened to me as well. If you don’t take care, you can go to see a new place but not see what is really there.

Have you also asked the tourists what they thought of it?

   Not exactly. It might have been a bit aggressive, to start asking them, and that was not the goal of the project.

Your film seems critical of tourism, but...

   No. It’s not criticism, just a reflection about it.

But still, you suggest that tourism is not the way to engage in intercultural dialogue.

   Well, maybe sometimes it is, but normally it isn’t. It’s not something that I want to change. It’s just something that happens, and as a person who lives in this city and who knows it better than the tourists, I feel all right about it. I mean, it’s good to go out into the city and see all the people that come because they feel the place you live is special.

In this case it’s Grenada. But I’m sure you could shoot those images in many other places. Well, in the movie you see very specific points of view: the castle and the mountains that surround the castle, the Sierra Nevada. These mountains are very much tourist attractions, because people go there to ski. But Grenada is not really a place where snow falls, naturally. For years now, they have had to generate it artificially. Because people like to ski in a place where it’s also warm.

   I took these pictures in the summer, when there is no snow. There were no tourists at all. It was a desert with all the ski lifts. I have very few images of it, because the roll of film burned up when I was there. I’d like to have more images of it, because it’s so decadent: all this equipment, no snow, no people. Like an amusement park after a hurricane.

   I work with landscape a lot. I’m from La Mancha, which is a place that is turning into a desert. My present project is about how people are getting accustomed to that, identifying themselves with the desert. It’s something not really nice for them, but it’s there, and there’s nothing to do about it. There are not many big cities there; the people live in the countryside. There are six-year-olds there who haven’t seen rain. There’s a link there between landscape and identity.
Video Stills Melancholic Tourist

Marian Venceslá
Tutor: Ignacio Oliva Monpeán
University of Castile – La Mancha, Cuenca, Spain

Duration: 3.23 Min
Miroslav Kohút
Tutor: Anna Daučíková
Academy of Fine Art and Design, Bratislava, Slovakia
“My parents have never travelled. I remember my childhood summers spent in front of the balcony window. I think this topic is very important because it’s some sort of secret that everybody knows. On the one hand, it’s absolutely personal; but on the other hand, there are many people like this who share the same predicament.”

(Miroslav Kohút)
“My work for this project is about travelling; it’s about my parents, who have never travelled. I remember my childhood summers spent in front of the balcony window. So I made life-size pictures of them and took those to Bulgaria, where people would go on holiday under communism. It used to be the only place where you could go to see the sea. I used an old-style projector for diapositives to project pictures on the water. Those were pictures of my parents when they were young. In a way, I used those projections, and the life-size pictures, to get them in contact with the place.”

“So I filmed this and took this virtual memory back home, and then I showed it to my parents, to supply these memories to them. The funny thing is that this movie keeps travelling from one gallery to another. It has been to Italy, so that’s very strange for me to think that my parents can somehow travel.”

You couldn’t make such a film about people who were not your parents?

I don’t think so. I think this topic is very important because it’s some sort of secret that everybody knows. I could knock on the door of somebody who could be in the same position, but I don’t think they would share that kind of information with me. My parents were not really comfortable about it. I filmed them from behind; they didn’t want it to be face to face. And they wouldn’t have let someone else film them like this. It was a kind of favour to their son. But my mother said, ‘Be careful with this tape.’
So, in a sense, are you practicing art as self-investigation?

I can say that all my video works are a sort of self-investigation. They analyze where I’m from and what actually surrounds me, to what extent I can form that, what my limits are. In one of my performances I was dressed like a blind man, with a white stick and sunglasses, feeding the pigeons on the street, creating a confrontation of the pigeons and the crowd, and at the same time I was feeding these pigeons in the direction of a McDonald’s restaurant. In another one I was attacking people with a fake knife in a crowded street. It was a bit sexually tinted, more like dancing. I didn’t want to scare people, so it was a really fluid movement, cutting my way through the crowd. It has to do with the fact that I have hitchhiked a lot, and also that I still have to work abroad in the summer to pay for my studies. For me, travelling is not just fun; it is a very basic human need. As soon as I could, I went away, even though I had no budget for it. Testing the conditions and trying to travel, in spite of the fact that I couldn’t afford it.

And that’s essential to your being an artist?

Yes. Being an artist is a fucking privilege. Indeed, an artist has a responsibility to react in a certain way, challenging the public. My work mirrors the past and present situation: political, economic, social. As I see it, I can do it by self-investigation, for the crucial thing for me is to pose the questions. I don’t want to be in the position of giving the answers.

But how can you investigate a theme like “intercultural dialogue”?

Well, I’m living that problem. So I’m not an intruder: this investigation is about my actual feelings. It’s not in the reading but in the feeling, the sensing. To investigate a theme like ‘intercultural dialogue’ one needs to stay in motion, to collect experiences, to travel and meet people. Without experiences, our knowledge is just a collection of adopted ideas. Some can be good, some can be bad, and you never know when you slip into prejudices. On one hand, it’s absolutely personal: the touchy topic of my family, my parents; but on the other hand, it’s being aware that there are many people like this who share the same predicament. It says a very basic thing: even now that the borders are open, there are still people who struggle with the aftereffects of communism and have trouble moving on. Maybe it’s the remnants of communism in the minds of the people.
Video Stills Balcony Travelling

Miroslav Kohút
Tutor: Anna Daucíková
Academy of Fine Art and Design, Bratislava, Slovakia

Duration: 4.18 Min
The Teachers’ Perspective

Andy Dougan, Ignacio Oliva Mompeán, Anna Daučíková, Anna Anders
Although my own participation in the ...I see you project was largely limited to my role as a mentor, there is no doubt that the project was a good experience for those students at the RSAMD who took part. I think in the first instance it boosted their confidence enormously to have been selected for the project. Then they were able to go ahead and make a well-funded short film of their own devising without having to worry about how this would articulate with the assessment criteria of the course. Creatively, they were given complete freedom, and we were delighted to support them with kit and logistical help.

The most gratifying aspect of the experience - and I say this without false modesty - is the maturity of the projects that were realised by our students. I honestly believe that making a film which was part of a greater whole contributed to lifting their own horizons. David Tennent and Ryan Henderson ultimately graduated from the course with First Class Honours, and I think the ...I see you project played a significant part in their development as young filmmakers.

The project enabled them to see a world beyond their own city and provided them with valuable networking opportunities with like-minded contemporaries from all over Europe. As all of the participants in the ...I see you project grow and develop, this will surely stand them in good stead for the future.
"The Language of the Arts and Intercultural Dialogue" is a good subject to make a film about with art schools throughout Europe. It is not easy to shoot a collective film with students who do not know each other and have never done anything together before, but after this exciting experience of more than a year, I must say that it was a very positive experience. Two things I liked in particular: first, the discussions and the exchange of ideas about art and present-day Europe, and second, working in a free project with students, trying to help them with my experience as a teacher and independent filmmaker. And we did all of those things. We worked freely, in different countries, each on his or her own film, and we explored different points of view in form and content. We had good and deep conversations in Berlin, Kassel and Torino during the process. .../see you, at the very least, shows how a new generation of artists thinks and feels about problems and situations in our global society.

Interviews and documentary forms play a large role in some parts of the film. Those parts are oddly reminiscent of Pasolini’s Comizi d’Amore (“Love meetings”), where Pasolini goes out in search of both “the real Italy” and himself by interviewing ordinary Italians - though with a slightly different topic. Perhaps the documentary element of our film could have been more prominent in the final cut in order to emphasise a kaleidoscopic idea of Europe, like voices from and about Europe right now.

On the other hand, the compilation is lacking non-narrative concepts of film. In art schools and film schools today, we work with both narrative concepts of the language of film and non-narrative concepts. I miss the latter point of view here: quiet vantages, thinking through seeing. I wonder what that might have contributed to the kaleidoscopic image, to the perhaps utopian ideal of a common Europe, in .../see you.
I can say that for all of us, students and teachers, the project “The Language of Arts and Intercultural Dialogue” was an extraordinary experience and the inspiration for finding new forms in terms of teaching a wide-ranging practice- and theory-based kind of video making. For the students from seven art academies across Europe it was an exclusive opportunity to learn about video making in a short period of time, to create ideas and accomplish a video piece while finding themselves in most favourable conditions.

The workshops were an especially fruitful part of our cooperation, with intense lectures and meetings with experts from various fields including visual arts, theory, cinema, culture and foundations. In the discussions we focused on important topics such as the contemporary artistic thought offered at Documenta 12, the production of art and the role of the artist in culturally mixed communities, the rapidly changing European society, migration and coexistence in diversity. The opportunity to visit exhibitions in Kassel and the film festival in Berlin was an invaluable impulse for further creative work at our home institutions.

The theory came together with the practice of filmmaking in scheduled working visits by professional filmmakers to the respective schools. They direct counselled the students on their film projects, introducing to them specific aspects of filmmaking and shared their professional knowledge with both students and teachers. During the meetings, the students could develop their personal and artistic engagement and enlarge their understanding of collaborative practice.

We have learned from each other, and the students managed to produce a lot of precious work. Many of their videos deal with the challenges of cultural and economic globalisation and the position of the individual within the globalised world or with humour and the local human condition, while other students succeeded in focusing on barriers within the individual: the psychological and geopolitical borders. We also had a opportunity to ask questions about the role of art and culture in the lives of young people, the potential for re-engagement among citizens in Europe and about responsibility in developing intercultural dialogue.

The final version of ...I see you shows this wider context by creating a new narrative composed from students films, and in a poetic streak unfolds unexpected connections and ties between the various students' perspectives.
During the ELIA project “The Language of the Arts and Intercultural Dialogue”, I worked with a group of six students at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK). The participants came from different departments within the university (Visual Communication, Experimental Media Design, and Architecture), as well as from four different countries. Alexander Nowak and Tarik Schirmer are both from Germany. Esther Maso, from the Netherlands, took part in the Erasmus exchange program at the UdK. Xiaojing Yao and Liwen Ouyang, both from China, and Seung Youn Lee, from Korea, enriched the project with their Asian perspective. At first we met every two weeks, but during the production period we saw each other every week.

We began by discussing what the title “The Language of the Arts and Intercultural Dialogue” meant and implied to each of us and how that could be translated visually into short videos. The topic appeared to be open and undefined, allowing the participants to develop very individual and free artistic approaches. But this vagueness was also the main problem, the challenge being how to find a personal subject and form. In the end, as one can see from their films, they all found a unique aspect of this theme to concentrate on.

Anna Anders
Professor for Time-based Media, Design Faculty
Berlin University of the Arts
In his video *Prayers*, Alexander Nowak broaches the subject of three world religions. The film shows a Jew, a Muslim, and an African Christian praying peacefully next to each other, while at the same time we know that these faiths, unfortunately also generate a lot of conflicts in our world.

Esther Maso’s video *Babelgum* plays with the effect that chewing gum has on the way we speak. At the end, a jingle advertises “Babelgum”, which “makes no sense at all” and therefore solves all language problems. That forms a very nice reference to our historical search for a common language.

In their video clip *Made in...*, Xiaojing Yao and Liwen Ouyang focus on a very important economic aspect of globalisation, zooming in on clothing labels to reveal that most our clothes are manufactured in foreign countries.

Seung Youn Lee’s *European* assembles a number of famous European portrait paintings from the 18th and 19th centuries and questions our concept of female beauty.

The video *Deutscher Tanz*, by Tarik Schirmer, was the most provocative and ambivalent work. A group of (fake) skinheads perform an oddly martial dance to Wagner’s Ring des Nibelungen. Tarik wanted to point out that globalisation also evokes nationalistic reactions. However, because it is a controversial topic, his video has led to a lot of emotional discussions.
Getting a Bit Wiser about Differences in Europe

An Interview with Ove Nyholm
“Before …I see you, I was working on a very sad project: The Anatomy of Evil. So I was focusing for years on how ordinary people could do things like that, like committing genocide. So it was a pleasure – after I finished that film, which had really worn me out – when I got this offer from Kirsten: Why not work on, and direct in the background, a project with art students reflecting on diversity and all those kinds of things? I felt it would be a really good idea to help, working on a project where you are not the director, but where you are trying to help inspire others. So I felt like I was coming from the dark side of life to the light side. It’s about youth. And I think we made very wise decisions in choosing the academies in Europe. Take a look at this map. You can see this landscape of needles, right? Those were schools we chose from. And here you have this circle in Europe, to the north, in Oslo, and then Berlin, Bratislava, and the very southwest with Cuenca, and Angoulême, and then Glasgow. And Ghent in the middle. So there was a very good diversity in the choice of academies.”

“So the issue was to evaluate all this information that was coming in while at the same time maintaining this geographic diversity. And what was also very important here is that we got Bratislava to join in. Simply because it represents the southeast corner of Europe. One of the things I have experienced is that if you are feeling like you are on the fringe of Europe, you will look toward the centre.”

Actually, in their perception, they are not in the “southeast corner” of Europe, but rather near the centre of Europe.

Yes, but within the European Union, they are on the fringe. And that’s what we’re talking about.

What was the initial concept for this project? I’m asking this because it seems there was some ambiguity as to whether it would be a compilation of student films or a collage of student films. Did you initially expect it to be more of a collage?

Yes. Well, it still is a collage, I would say. You could question whether the pieces in the collage should be of shorter or longer duration. Because we shortened them. That was part of the problem in the project. And I thought that maybe we could intertwine them. But when we tried that, it didn’t really give a meaning. Because then they went into pieces. And then it would have been in comprehensible, in many of the films, as to what they were all about. It seems like all of the films have their offset, and their middle point, and their conclusions. And if you would split that up too much, you would lose the theme. I would have loved to have this sort of DNA string [spirals his hands up in the air] of pieces, intertwined. And the two seminars we held, plus my travelling around to the academies, all that was done with this same purpose: to try to make it as diverse in themes and filmic expressions as possible.
But that would seem to be at odds with the idea of making it a collective project.

Of course it should connect to the overall theme. But on the other hand, they all come up with their kind of diversity. In Bratislava, for instance, they made two films about their own hometown. So they were somehow fixed to their own region, searching for some kind of safe ground.

What should one do about that? I could not ask them to do another project. Many times, when I talked to the students and tried to press them more, I felt I should be a bit reluctant about imposing things on them that come from someone twice their age. I did do that once. I said, "I think you should not do this project, because this is not your project. It is your grandfather’s project. And you’re taking a burden upon you in trying to carry it through." And this young man was relieved when I said that. Because it was really so.

One thing that helped with this problem was that we put these video statements here in the beginning. That “I want to do this...” and so on - gave a very good dynamic introduction to the film. “I want to do this. I want, I want.” Maybe you’ll succeed and maybe you won’t. We’ll see. I’d been thinking very much about how I could start the workshops when I went to each academy. Then I thought to myself, “You need to create an event.” So how do you bring it to a new level and make it into something a bit special in comparison to the rest of their days at the academy? Then I thought, “Well, if I film them stating their ideas, that will get their minds working and they and they will feel that this is an event.” It was something where you would have to go a little bit over the edge and really have to think about your words. And think about your hopes, your visions, for the film.

Ryan Henderson, when I interviewed him, said that when you’re on camera, you’d better be honest or else you’ll be known as a liar for the rest of your days.

Yes, and that fits into this analysis. We didn’t think in the beginning that this would be part of the film. But later on we experimented with it, and I think it works very well.

It also gives makes the film seem a bit like a documentary, with those interviews at the beginning.

Yes.

But in fact the film is not a documentary. It is a collection of student films.

But as soon as we started shortening them, we realised that if we intertwined them any more, they would fall apart. If you take Borders, for example, you need some information to get into the problems. You have to focus your attention on a certain place in southeastern Europe where people have not seen their relatives for sixty years, although they only live a few kilometres apart. You cannot simply play around with this theme in music-video style, adding a few elements that are open to interpretation.
Yet the decision was made to make it one film, not a compilation of all films individually.

No. I think it was very important to make it one film. Because there were some considerations in terms of the order we put them in, how much we abbreviated them, and so on. And in the end I think it is very important that it ends with this very essential film from Glasgow, *What Makes You*. There we come to the very basic human things. “Having my friends who’ll be there when I need them,” as the girl says. “That’s the most important.” That hits right home.

Do you think that the character of the individual films also changes by their being part of this compilation, being part of the larger narrative?

Maybe they were better because they were abbreviated and shown in this context. Because they might have some shades that the others don’t have. But in the long run, it creates shadows and moments of brightness. I think after seeing them all again, and thinking about it, it has some kind of diversity in itself. And I think that one is getting a bit wiser about the differences in Europe.

There are large differences in the production values. And putting them into a collage makes that all the more visible. The films from Glasgow look much more polished than those from Bratislava.

That’s right. But that’s also partly due to the fact that Glasgow is a film school. Berlin is fine art. Bratislava is fine art. So there are different traditions and different skills. Because there are differences. There is diversity in the spectrum of big questions and topics. And that’s what we utilised as much as we could.

This project is also somehow a mapping of the learning process. Because it had this spun-out structure with various workshops and seminars that the students took part in. But was it also a learning process in terms of learning to work on a theme, to visualise a theme, to develop ideas?

My first response to that question is that we tried to elaborate the theme as well as we could. The seminars with Rukov and Ebeling, the Documenta in Kassel – there we hoped that they would start to reflect. But as a consequence of the method, we had to wait for the first offer from them themselves. After the first seminar they had to go home, reflect, and come up with something. And then I went there to ask them about that. There was session of one or two days where they presented their drafts, their synopsis. One had to be very careful about how one reacted to those. Because their concepts were fragile. It was in the beginning, and one could also be very quickly get locked into only one route. So I thought very much about what I would tell them when they asked me. I told myself: “Don’t go too fast and don’t go into it too much.” But on the other hand, I think that some of them were bound to their own ideas, maybe from months before, about films they would have made anyway. In most of those cases, they would not reflect directly on input they got from the seminar.
But did you also think, after you had collected their ideas: “This film is going to be entirely different from what I thought it would be?”

Well, I don’t think you can talk about it in that way, that it would be entirely different. I did not have a preconception of the whole film. Of course not. It is an atomised film, and it should be, made by individuals from different areas of Europe. I could not have possibly foreseen what they would come up with. We could only fuse them together. This diversity idea was very good. It’s very open.

There is still the problem of who is making a point here. To some extent it seems to be everybody’s project. So the question is: what is the specific contribution? What does such a project contribute to intercultural dialogue, the dialogue about intercultural dialogue, the understanding of intercultural dialogue, or whatever?

Well, the broad aim was to create intercultural dialogue both through the organisation of the project as a whole and within each individual project. So we did everything we could do to mix and inspire people and to let them inspire each other back and forth. But we cannot come in and make the films for them, or censor their films. We had to accept that we would somehow get a film from each author.

So in a sense you were asking to be surprised.

Yes! Yes, I hoped to be surprised.

But the way you describe it, it couldn’t not have been an intercultural dialogue, for the simple reason that it involved different people from all around Europe making different films from different backgrounds. That doesn’t yet define what it contributes.

I’m not exactly sure how to answer that. I guess I’m seeing a pattern in Europe, with youth, art students, that I haven’t seen before – collected in one film that has many contradictions, many failures, but that is also very frank. One can easily read it. It’s an honest film, in a way. Because there’s also something unfinished in it. It involved young people who, sometimes for the first time, were doing little pictures. But it also has a storytelling in it that is very strong. So in that sense, it works!
Conclusion: Intercultural Dialogue in the Language of the Arts

An interview with Carla Delfos and Kirsten Langkilde
Let me start by asking how the idea for the project came up.

Carla: It started with a question from Gottfried Wagner, from the ECF. He called me to say that finally, after much long pleading, NEF was interested in doing something with culture. The theme of intercultural dialogue was something we had already been discussing in the organisation since 2008 was the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue”, so that put the issue into focus: What exactly does it mean? How can we address that theme?

And of course that theme is also one that concerns us as ELIA. It’s quite simply one of the main challenges of today, also for artists.

Kirsten: That was the assumption. Because there’s a difference between making an art film and making a theme-based film, presenting the students with a problem that they have to solve. For them it’s a very different way of working compared to just receiving funding to make their own work. You have to have the willingness, as well, to delve into a theme. But for the art schools, too, it is a different way of talking to fine art students: Do you want to take part in a discourse in society? Do you want to commit yourself to trim or develop your own authorship? But it was this - relating to a theme, and acquiring the tools to be capable of dealing with it so that it won’t become superficial or merely intuitive – that was the major challenge. To develop the right method and to choose the right attitude.

There was also a dilemma there, because on the one hand the students were doing their own projects, and to some extent they had to, because it was supposed to be an artistic contribution, while on the other hand, you wanted them to develop a stance, to engage with the topic. If the ‘intercultural dialogue’ was just about bringing them together, then it could not fail. But if you wanted an individual message and a debate and a collective message, then it could not succeed. So my question is: what is the contribution of such a project? What is the specific value for promoting intercultural dialogue and exploring cultural diversity, and who is contributing what?

Kirsten: That’s where we get to what is so interesting in this project as well: How can the arts, including film, produce knowledge? How do we prepare young people for that? As we are living in a knowledge society, and we cannot just leave the students to themselves without tools that will bring them to the same level as others in society. And this is what we have tried: to find ways of giving them the right input and to show them how to select knowledge to include in a creative process and to give it artistic depth. We hope that this method will be something they can use for other projects as well. And this is what we want to show, and make transparent for others, through this book.

Carla: The idea was not to make political, theoretical films about intercultural dialogue. Rather, it was to consider the theme of intercultural dialogue and what it means for you, personally, as an artist.
Kirsten: In the final editing, the aim was to create a structure that would allow a maximum of differences. This idea of the co-existence of differences, of negotiating difference, is what the final film is about.

Carla: Perhaps for the viewer, for the public, this will be more difficult to digest. Because what they see is diversity. But also, you can never have just one idea or one opinion in such a diverse group. But that is not what we wanted to achieve. The intercultural dialogue is about meeting each other. That meeting can be short: a short meeting can have a great impact on the rest of someone's life. And sometimes the differences may become stronger because of the intercultural dialogue.

Kirsten: So the input they had introduced them to the official discourse on the topic - from a philosophical point of view just as much as from an art-theoretical point of view - getting them to understand the status, the position of the individual in Europe. And that's why we had to return to modernism, which is a very Eurocentric position, but we had to take it as our starting point. We visited the Documenta, which questioned the European-centred discussion and ways of identifying the individual. I think it was very helpful for the next generation of filmmakers to have had a chance to review their own position as an author, as a coming artist.

Carla: And as to your question, about how this project contributes to the intercultural dialogue in Europe, I think it will have the effect of throwing a little stone into a lake. Because Europe is a huge, very complex and ongoing project. And intercultural dialogue is also an ongoing project. If you try to imagine what Europe will look like in fifty or hundred years, it will help if people can speak to each other, can communicate about how they will work. This is a stone in the water and it will have an influence on the people: the students, the young people. For us, that's the most important thing. And also on other people who watch the film - and we have learned that it is not an easy film to watch, because you get so many impressions and emotions thrust upon you, and people will often react quite strongly to that.

Kirsten: It is complex. Everyday life in our culture is complex. And the film is valid, it's believable. Most of what has been written about intercultural dialogue is very distant: it does not involve the author, it talks about other people who fail at this and that. Not so here. The filmmakers are involved, it's their own experience. And as for the results, I'd say I was stunned by some of the themes. I had expected something different. I had expected a more rosy, sunny view on Europe. But it's not that.
So perhaps you could say this project shows that Europe has some critical friends.

Carla: Yes. And that’s very healthy. Through the seminars we had, the discussions that took place and the things they’ve seen and read – for we also compiled a reader – we’ve seen a certain awareness start to grow and an ongoing discussion among them, which resulted in those films that were, to our surprise, really critical. And that is great, because they are young people, and Europe is still in the process of being built.

It is also a project of today. It is no longer about artists working all on their own. This was the product of an international collaboration, and it tends towards forms of artistic research. It couldn’t have been made even ten years ago.

Carla: Definitely. It’s really something of today, and not even of tomorrow. Ten years ago the technique would have been different, but also the thinking about Europe. The themes would also have been different. If you would do the same thing in ten years’ time, you would get a completely different picture. It’s really a document of now.

Kirsten: But you mentioned artistic research. I think I would be careful there: I wouldn’t say artistic research. We have created a method here, giving access to aesthetic impressions, discourse and theory. But to talk about this project as being research-based, I would say: no, it’s not. We wanted to create a sum of knowledge. And the result is a sum of aesthetic expressions, it’s a mixed mythology. It touches upon what is happening now.

In a sense, it’s breaking ground. At present, this is the sort of project that only comes from European organisations and foundations. Ultimately, you would want for artists to do it of their own accord, regardless of whether they are receiving funding, but also hoping that, if they do it, it will find an audience.

Carla: Exactly, because artists tend to be very inward-looking, working within their own ivory towers, which is why they are often on the margins of society and generally not getting paid very much. So I would like to create awareness among young artists and make them understand there are many opportunities for them to be in the middle of everything and to influence things with their art and their way of thinking. Maybe art schools should play a more proactive role in that regard. I think artists should learn to think about political themes and in the language of politicians, and then make contributions in their own voice. Even the European Commission, which proclaimed the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, could not come up with a clear-cut statement: this is what we mean. The discussion is taking place very much on a theoretical level; much has been written about it and there are many theories about it. Then our contribution is an artistic one: it’s to the point and in the language of the arts.
Project leaders
Kirsten Langkilde, Universität der Künste Berlin (UdK Berlin)
Carla Delfos, European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA)

Artistic and educational directors
Ove Nyholm, Copenhagen
Kirsten Langkilde, Universität der Künste Berlin (UdK Berlin)

Supervisors
Anna Anders, Universität der Künste Berlin, Germany
Anna Daucíková, Vysoká Skola Výtvarných Umění Bratislava, Slovakia
Andy Dougan, David Liddell, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, Scotland
Ignacio Oliva Mompeán, Universidad de Castilla – La Mancha, Spain
Thomas Kvam, Bodil Furu, Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo, Norway
Dany Deprez, Hogeschool Gent, Belgium
Hubertus von Amelunxen, École Supérieure de l’Image, Angoulême, France

Contributors
Seung Youn Lee, Esther Maso, Alexander Nowak, Tarik Schirmer, Liwen Ouyang, Xiaojing Yao, Universität der Künste Berlin
David Demjanovic, Miroslav Kohút, Peter Krupa, Zuzana Janecková, Vysoká Skola Výtvarných Umění Bratislava
Ryan Henderson, David Tennent, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow
Marta Julve, Raquel Leiva, Myriam Rousseau, Marian Venceslá, Universidad de Castilla – La Mancha
Ayman Alazraq, Iselin Linstad Hauge, Marte Hodne Haugen, Espen Lomsdal, Tom Daniel Reiersen, Marthe Berger Walthinsen, Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo
Sander Buyck, Hogeschool Gent
Vincent Loubère, École Supérieure de l’Image, Angoulême

Graphic design
Marc-Christoph Koldewey, Universität der Künste Berlin

Editing & mix
Ove Nyholm, Copenhagen
Torben Skjædt Jensen, Copenhagen

Authoring DVD
Dirk Holzberg, Universität der Künste Berlin
Publication
Contributors  Knut Ebeling, Berlin
              Viola Michely, Bonn
              Mogens Rukov, Copenhagen
              Isabelle Schwarz, European Cultural Foundation (ECF)
              Carla Delfos, ELIA
              Kirsten Langkilde, Universität der Künste Berlin

Interviews  Floris Solleveld, ELIA

Photographs  Dirk Holzberg, Universität der Künste Berlin
              Johan Deeder, ELIA

Layout and design  Marc-Christoph Koldewey, Universität der Künste Berlin

Coordinating editor  Floris Solleveld, ELIA

English editor  Tom Johnston, Amsterdam

This publication has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Network of European Foundations (NEF)
The Network of European Foundations (NEF) is a flexible not-for-profit international organisation. Its headquarters are located in Brussels (Belgium).
NEF is an operational platform of foundations that offers its members the possibility to develop joint projects, also with other types of organized philanthropy, as well as programmes related to Europe and the role of Europe on the global stage. It gives a European perspective and opportunities for European experience to regional/local initiatives.
NEF’s areas of intervention are: migration, European citizenship, European integration, youth empowerment, Europe in the world.
"...I see you" is a joint artistic and cultural initiative of seven NEF foundations, initiated and chaired by the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam (ECF).
www.nefic.org

European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA)
The European League of Institutes of the Arts – ELIA is the primary independent membership organisation of major arts education institutions and universities representing all subject disciplines and has a membership of more than 350 arts institutions in 47 countries. Through its membership network ELIA promotes dialogue, mobility, research, sharing of best practice and activities between artists, teachers, administrators and leaders, altogether representing more than 250,000 art students.
ELIA is grateful for the support it receives from the European Commission through an "Operating grant for Organisations active at European Level in the field of Culture" and from its members, among others.
www.elia-artschools.org

University of the Arts Berlin / Universität der Künste Berlin (UdK Berlin)
During the last 300 years, the University of the Arts Berlin (UdK Berlin) has grown into one of Europe's leading art universities, organised into four Colleges - Fine Arts; Architecture, Media and Design; Music; and the Performing Arts.
www.udk-berlin.de

The film project was financed by the cultural cluster of the Network of European Foundations (NEF) and coordinated by the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) and the University of the Arts, Berlin (UdK Berlin).

The following foundations supported this NEF project: