

## The benefit of not being able to go to Rotterdam—2022

51th International Film Festival Rotterdam, which took place from January 26 to February 6, 2022, was still under the influence of covid-19 at the time, and those of us living in Tokyo who could not attend onsite were given the chance to watch online. This was a boon for Japanese critic like me due to the strict exit restrictions. The Rotterdam Film Festival is famous for screening cutting-edge and diverse new films from around the world that are not screened in Japan, and it is an important opportunity for reviewers who follow certain trends to deepen their thinking. Then in May, it was announced that the festival team would be restructured, and I can only hope that it will retain its diversity in terms of program.

The film trend I am following is the relationship between documentary and fiction and the development of theater=cinema in the films screened at the festival. The masters of contemporary cinema, Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Marie Straub, who died this year, have also progressed this trend. First, in the Harbour section, Jonas Trueba's *Quien lo impide/Who's stopping us* continues the cinema-vérité of *Nouvelle Vague* and Jean Rouch, and like Luis Lopez Carrasco's *El Año del Descubrimiento/the year of discovery*, as well as in the great tradition of Spanish documentaries by Pere Portabella and Joaquim Jordà. While Trueba's previous film *Los Ilusos* fascinatingly documented the bodies of the filmmaker's contemporaries as they oscillated between fiction and documentary, *Quien lo impide* captures the great precariousness and radiant strength of much younger people. In shots that captures two students answering questions from outside the frame, more fascinating is his/her face as he/she reacts vivaciously next to the one who answers. The poetic scenes captures the young people's faces as they react to the fireworks or the band playing, sometimes silently, and allows us to hear the monologue on their faces, documenting the most fascinating moments of adolescent humanity.

By choosing as its subject matter people whose job it is to perform fiction, the film allows the audience to follow the transformation of the body in space and time. In *Stomp/Shavittu* (Shinos Rahman, Sajas Rahman), the rehearsal of a play for a bureaucratic, local event is ultimately futile, but the bodies of the performers make a strong impression on the audience. In *What beat you nothing* (Lyubov Arkus), actress Alla Demidova, a great veteran who has played in the films of maestros Tarkovsky and Muratova, is of course introduced in those footages from the Soviet era, and finally captures her reading, which is still powerful at the age of 86. In *Jiongjiong Qiu's Mr. Zhang Believes* and *A New Old Play*, featured in *Focus*, the performing arts are an excuse to allow free narration as fiction and fantasy. In Clara Law's *Drifting Petals* (a big screen competition), a pianist (reminding us of the exile after the October Revolution) plays Rachmaninoff and a fugitive girl from Hong Kong and the ghost of the December 3, 1966 riots (the narrator's brother), who wander the streets of Macau. The storytelling is like Nagisa Oshima's *Sing a Song of Sex* and Yoshishige Yoshida's *Heroic Purgatory*, but it is also a documentary about the performers.

As Jonas Trueba has done, off-screen sound is now the most important element of cinema as an art form that critiques the visual guidance of the medium. In Ricky D'Ambrose's *The Cathedral*, the use of off-screen sound and primary colored backgrounds to differentiate the position of the shot-counter-shot is outstanding and valuable even in American cinema. The Brooklyn School with Ted Fendt, Graham Swon (he is also their producer), and D'Ambrose are the most notable American films now. And as for off-screen sound, Corsini interpreta a Blomberg y Maciel/Corsini Sings Blomberg & Maciel by Mariano Llinas of Argentina is the most advanced, aggressive, and enjoyable film. 14 hours film *La Flor* filmmaker's condensed experiment, the previous film, *Concierto para la batalla de El Tala*, was an ascetic attempt to visualize an operatic theme with performances, off-screen narration, and subtitles, but this time, the freedom of the film is the most enjoyable of all, with the director, cinematographer and singer talking to each other from outside in the making-of and shots taken outside from the car, a montage of pauses, and a narrative doubled by a rapid-fire narration. I hope to see Pampero Cine with Llinas and Alejo Moguillansky featured in Tokyo in the future.

*Eles transportan a morte* (They carry death) by Samuel M. Delgado and Helena Girón, from Galicia, another of the most important regions in the world, was interesting, and *Drawn* by Lim Sang-Su was an excellent thriller, starting with Hitchcock's *Psycho* and blending it with Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Retribution*. Lim Sang-Su has the ability to use long shots effectively after close-ups. *Neptune Frost* by Anisia Uzeyman, Saul Williams was a surprisingly cleverly done sci-fi musical. It's interesting that the colorful fluorescent colors against the darkness of the night and the black skin become an opportunity to move back and forth between dream and reality. From the Bright Future section, Tamara Dondurey's *Stand By Me*, which focused the audience with a hand-held camera following the protagonist and an off-screen voice, were brilliant. It is tragic that so many young Russian filmmakers have been forced into exile by Putin's invasion of Ukraine, like Ekaterina Selenkina (*Detour*) and Kira Kovalenko (*Unclenching the fists*). One can only hope that they can continue their works.

It was wonderful to see the new film *CE2/Third Grade* by Jacques Doillon, a veteran of the French post-Nouvelle Vague generation with Jean Eustache and Philippe Garrel, also known in Japan. A hard and impressive encounter and farewell between an 8-year-old girl with a good family and a boy from a broken family. It's a rare film for Doillon to depict both family environment (but he's no Ken Loach, he's a thorough director). The final scene makes me shed a tear, but his usual stern direction is still there on the cinema scope frame. I am deeply grateful to the people at the Rotterdam Film Festival 2022 for providing such a rich program online, and I have high expectations for the next edition.

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