



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Documentary Films – Competition
WORLD PREMIERE



A FILM BY AUDRIUS STONYS & KRISTĪNE BRIEDE

BRIDGES OF TIME



TRAILER LINK >>

STILLS & PRESS MATERIALS >>

KRISTĪNE BRIEDE and **AUDRIUS STONYŠ'S** meditative documentary essay portrays the less-remembered generation of cinema poets of the Baltic New Wave. With finesse, they push beyond the barriers of the common historiographic investigation in order to achieve a consummate poetic treatment of the ontology of documentary creation.

PRESS AND SALES CONTACTS @KVIFF:

VFS FILMS, Uldis Cekulis, producer

+371 29298077 / uldis@vfs.lv

STUDIO NOMINUM, Arunas Matelis, producer

+370 69870337 / am@nominum.lt

SYNOPSIS

At the beginning of the 1960s, when the French pioneers of cinéma vérité set out to achieve a new realism, and when direct cinema in Québec began to vie for notice, the Baltics witnessed the birth of a generation of documentarists who favored a more romantic view of the world around them. This meditative documentary essay – from a Latvian writer and Lithuanian director whose composed touch has long dovetailed with the stylistically diverse works of the Baltic New Wave – pushes adroitly past the limits of the common historiographic investigation to create a portrait of less-clearly remembered filmmakers. The result is a consummate poetic treatment of the ontology of documentary creation. Or a cinematic poem about cinema poets.

Martin Horyna

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival programmer

FILM SPECS

Original title: **BRIDGES OF TIME**

Native titles: **LAIKA TILTI** (LAT), **LAIKO TILTAI** (LIT), **AJASILLAD** (EST)

Production countries: **Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia**

Year: **2018**

Length: **78'**

Original languages: **Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Hebrew, Russian**

Subtitles: **English**

Produced by: **VFS Films** (Latvia), **Studio Nominum** (Lithuania), **Vesilind** (Estonia)

Genre: **creative documentary**

Categories: **art, culture, human interest, society, author driven, film history**

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Screen Ratio **1.85:1**

Sound **5.1**

Frame Rate **25fps**

Shooting Format **4K**

Screening Format **2K DCP**





DIRECTOR'S NOTE AND SHORT BIO

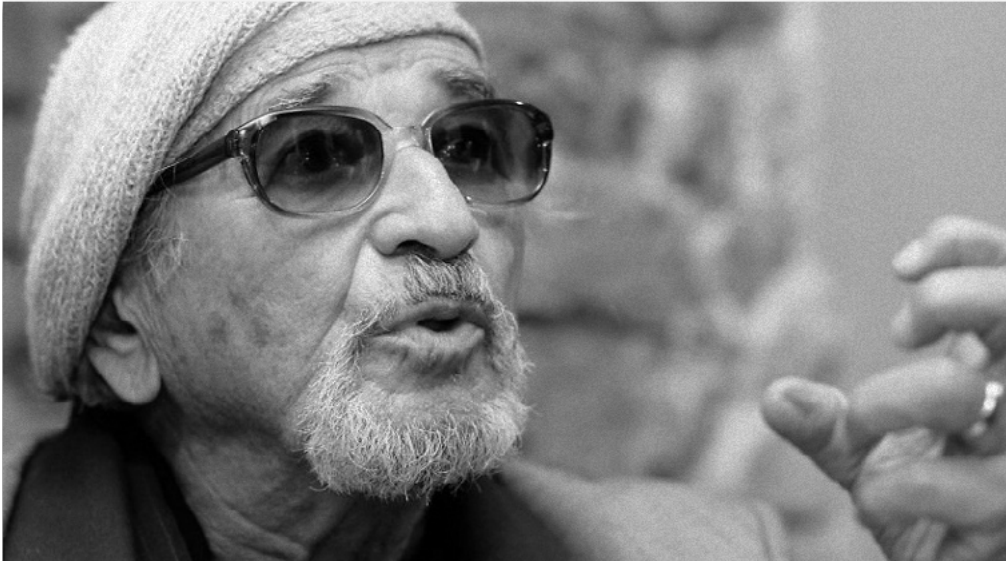
Some time ago meeting with two film directors changed the direction of my life. Lithuanian director Henrikas Šablevičius brought me to cinema, while Latvian director Herz Frank opened a whole new perspective of possibilities for documentary cinema. Such as revealing that 10 minutes of a silent child's face can reflect the deepest secrets of a human's soul. Times changed. Many of the directors from this "golden" film era with pioneers like Frank and Šablevičius left us. However the films they have created with their aesthetical, and, most importantly, ethical values still continue to affect our cinema and life today. It's like a map made a long time ago by an old and wise cartographer that lasts for centuries and guides us through this vast and constantly changing, stormy time.

AUDRIUS STONYS is a globally acclaimed Lithuanian documentary filmmaker. In 1992 he was awarded a Felix Award from the European Film Academy for his documentary *Earth of the Blind*, and in 2002 he received the Lithuanian National Prize of Culture and Arts. Stonys' documentary *Ramin*, which was created in collaboration with VFS films, was the Lithuanian nomination for the Oscar in 2012.



I grew up with black and white poetic documentaries, among filmmakers who made them, and love everything about these films – the air, the style, the message. It is essential for me to have a contemporary look at these masterpieces and re-discover their authors, document them. There are moments it seems a channel of communication between the generations and nations is opening up, and there is a key – laying in our hands. It matters today as it used to matter in the 60ties when the pioneers of creative filmmaking launched their way and thought us not only to look, but also see.

KRISTĪNE BRIEDE is Latvian filmmaker and producer of cultural and social projects. In 2006 awarded by Latvian Culture Ministry prize "Three brothers" for the K@2 Karosta project – the regeneration of a former Soviet military base, establishing of the New Media Arts programme at the University of Liepāja; has received a numerous recognitions for her projects in Latvia in the fields of art, cinema and society integration. Has produced and directed more than 10 documentaries and short films.



HERZ FRANK (1926-2013)

Probably the most known name for the international audience - a director, philosopher, photographer and writer Herz Frank – one of the main founders, ideologists and promoters behind the Poetic cinema style. Having graduated from the Law school in Sverdlovsk, Frank returned to Riga as a journalist and advertisement specialist. Being the son of a photographer, Frank started to work in the photo laboratory of Riga Film Studio, but already two years later his script “White Bells” was chosen by a debutant director Ivars Kraulitis as his diploma work graduating from The Film Institute in Moscow.

Later Frank both wrote the scripts as well as directed documentaries himself. He was most famous for his fine understanding of human

psychology and was able to reach deep into human soul. The unusual integration of the fact and the symbol was his “brand” as well as desire to discover secrets in relations between a human being and the surrounding world.

Frank has directed one of the most important films in the history of documentary cinema - “Ten minutes older” is used in all the leading film schools of Europe as an outstanding example of pure, meaningful cinema made in one shot.

Among other masterpieces by Herz Frank are: White Bells (1961) – screenwriter, 235 000 000 (1967) – screenwriter, Year in Review (1965) – screenwriters Herz Frank, Imants Ziedonis, director Aivars

Freimanis. The Restricted Area (1975), Ten minutes older (1978), The Last Celebration (1980)

Herz Frank is not with us anymore, but he has left a rich heritage behind. At the disposal of the authors there is a unique one hour long personal audio interview with Herz Frank where he reveals his memories on his professional “family” – the colleagues and works done together, some really amazing behind-the-screen curiousness and most importantly - his views upon the meaning and significance of Poetic cinema.

ULDIS BRAUNS (1932-2017)

With confidence Herz Frank names Uldis Brauns being the true flag- man of the Baltic poetic cinema.

His arrival at Riga Film Studio after graduation of the State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow was a fresh breeze and groundbreaking precedent of a new and daring cinematic language. He invented a whole new visual code system and encouraged the audience not only to watch, but to watch, see and think along.

Poetic masterpieces by Uldis Brauns include: White Bells (1961) (cinematographer), Trilogy: The Beginning (1961) / The Construction (1962) / The Worker (1963), 235 000 000 (1967) (director & one of cinematographers).

Shortly after the liquidation of Riga Film Studio (the only film producing company in Soviet Latvia) in the early 1990ties, he together with his wife Dainuvite moved from Riga to the countryside cottage near Kuldiga – the land of his childhood. The post-Film studio period was dramatic in terms of survival - both were forced to roll up the sleeves and turn into real farmers growing their own food.

Uldis Brauns is a man with an extraordinary life story. His parents were deported to Siberia leaving the 14-year-old-boy and his sister behind. Uldis – a countryside boy, a student of agricultural school got carried away with cinema when a crew of documentary makers came to his school to shoot a newsreel. The next year he left agriculture behind and went to Moscow to study cinematography...





IVARS SELECKIS (1934)

Also Ivars Seleckis came to filmmaking through agriculture – he was a student of Agricultural academy in Jelgava (Latvia) when started to fiddle with the camera.

After graduation from the Academy Ivars put his diploma aside and started to work in Riga Film Studio from the very bottom – as an assistant. Only later he entered the Film Institute in Moscow to become an educated cinematographer. Cinematographer later successfully turned into a director – imaginably with a great help of his wife – film editor Maija Selecka. Ivars claims that the narrow corridor in Riga Film Studio where all those young and crazy newsreel makers met daily was the real school and university in filmmaking.

Poetic masterpieces by Ivars Seleckis include: Send-off (1963), was “shelved” for 50 years (cinematographer), The Coast (1963) (cinematographer), Year in Review (cinematographer), Valmiera girls

(1970) (director, cinematographer), A Woman Who is Waited (1978) (director, cinematographer), Cross – Road Street (1988) (director, cinematographer).

Seleckis is 83 now, but claims his inner time does not match with the one offered by the calendar. Ivars Seleckis is alive as mercury. He looks the same as 40 years ago and is not bothered by the age. In the morning of his 80th birthday after the adjusting the projectors of the cinema for the anniversary screenings he is literally running to catch the trolleybus... Ivars is a real city man. His days are filled with tasks and works and haste. He is organizing the events of his anniversary, digitizing his films and promoting digitalization of the films of his colleagues. He is correcting the subtitles for the television – the work some- body else is obliged to do, but as Ivars not satisfied with the quality he sets off to do it himself...

Ivars Seleckis is the most awarded director in Latvia – he has won Felix for Best European film, Joris Ivens Award in Amsterdam, Robert and Frances Flaherty Prize, many Latvian National prizes and recognitions – mostly for his masterpiece Cross-road street (1988).

In 2014 together with his wife director Maija Selecka Ivars Seleckis was regarded the award for Lifelong Contribution from Latvian National film festival “Big Kristaps/Lielais Kristaps”. But his contribution is not over - the latest mega-project by Ivars Seleckis is to restore and improve the European Documentary Film symposiums – theoretical and analytical brain storming kettle that he in collaboration with close confederates was organizing in Latvia for 30 years since the end of 1970s. In 2007 the last symposium took place, but Seleckis as one of the main founders and driving force behind it is not willing to accept its fall...

CHARACTERS

THEY DID NOT WANT TO LIE

THEY COULD NOT TELL THE TRUTH

THEY JUST WANTED TO MAKE FILMS

AIVARS FREIMANIS (1936-2018)



The way into filmmaking for the young journalist Aivars Freimanis started with being fired from the daily newspaper for impudent writing style. He continued the same style – with the air of resistance about it – in filmmaking and it turned out to be more successful this time. He started writing a small small texts for voice overs at the Chronicles department and ended up being director – first exclusively for documentaries, later also feature films.

Poetic masterpieces by Aivars Freimanis include Send-off (1963), was “shelved” for 50 years, The Coast (1963), Year in Review (1965), Frescoes of Kuldiga (1963), The Catch (1969).

It seems there is a particular tendency for aging documentary filmmakers to move out to countryside leaving the busy city life and its stresses behind.

This is definitely the case. In an old fisherman’s farmstead on the Baltic coast resides now director and writer Aivars Freimanis.

Freimanis has always been very interested in Latvian folklore and often use the “wrong way round magic” when he speaks. Such way of expression was used by ancient Latvians in their folk songs (which is also the greatest inspiration source for the poetic film language) – you just say that black is white and white is black in order to get it right.

Also the spiky and sometimes black humor used by old filmmakers of that generation is a characteristic sign of Freimanis expression. Being the author of several books revealing the behind-the-scene passions of the filmmaking process in the past, he just managed to finish a serious novel about “Kurzemes cauldron” – a story set during the Second World War.

ANDRESS SÖÖT (1934)

The Old Grand Man of Estonian film Andress Sööt is also a “mystery man”. It is not easy to reach out to him as he is turning down most of the requests for interviews as well as is very evasive about possible celebrations meant to honor him.

He started his way in cinema like many others – in The Sate Film Institute in Moscow. The studies there he values high and remembers his teachers and mentors with great warmth and thankfulness.

Sööt is a person who does not like to talk much about himself. Sooner he lets his work tell the story – his films are among the finest jewels of Estonian cinema.

Early poetic masterpieces by Andress Sööt include *The 511 Best Photos of Mars* (1968), *Conductors* (1975), *St. Johns Day* (1978). Nowadays Sööt claims not to be interested in film anymore. He turns down any request to share his experience with student audiences “I cannot talk to the youngsters of today”, he claims. “We are speaking two very different languages and do not understand each other”. At this moment, being at the age of 83, Sööt says he is at the cross-road of his life. He cannot decide what to next in the future as there are so many possibilities...

Having the school of survival in Siberia on his back – he was deported as a small child and spent 7 years in the prisoners camps, he is now in excellent health condition. Tanned and sporty world traveller – besides other destinations he implemented a 400km long pilgrimage foot walk in Spain in 2011 (and made a video film about it).

Right now Andress lives alone in a small flat in the outskirts of Tallinn and is thinking about to move to somewhere else. Sööt has an excellent sense of humor which is easy to spot in his films and is never bored by himself.

He is very modest when speaking about his contribution in documentary film and his own persona as such, but spends his days exploring, observing, doing, living...





MARK SOOSAAR (1946)

Always energetic and overfilled with ideas, dressed in a specifically patterned sweater from Kihnu island, the great Estonian filmmaker, politician and activist Mark Soosaar – the author of more than 50 films has chosen a tiny island Manilaid as his residence. Manilaid is situated in half a kilometers distance by water from Kihnu island and in wintertime when the ice covers the waters, Soosaar drives his white old Ford bus directly over to reach Kihnu and lead his weekly radio program on local radio studio in Kihnu language. The program analyses the current events of the world.

Kihnu became world famous itself after several great documentaries made by Mark in the 70ties there. "Women from Kihnu", "Men from Kihnu" are the most known. Now he is shooting a film or se-

ries of smaller films about a boy and his interaction with nature, so hopefully we will be able to see children from Kihnu soon as well...

Mark Soosaar is a multi-tasker and multi-doer. He is rebuilding his house to look like a ship, every morning and evening milks his goats, organizes European funding for the reconstruction of Museum/ Country club of Manilaid, publishes books, leads the the Museum of New Art in Pärnu as well as Pärnu International Documentary and Anthropology Film Festival which he established 30 years ago together with later to become Estonian president Lennart Meri - also a filmmaker and screenwriter in his youth.

Parallel to all the other tasks Mark is also producing and directing

films. He has a young and charming wife who likewise Mark walks around the island dressed in the national dress of Kihnu. Although both are intellectuals and work a lot outside the Manilaid, they love to come back to their house, take care of animals and spend the time observing the nature.

Poetic masterpieces by Mark Soosaar include Woman from Kihnu (1973), Man from Kihnu (1985), Miss Saaremaa (1989), Father, son and holy thorium (1997).

CHARACTERS

THEY DID NOT WANT TO LIE _____ THEY COULD NOT TELL THE TRUTH _____ THEY JUST WANTED TO MAKE FILMS _____



ROBERTAS VERBA (1932-1994)

The pioneer of Lithuanian poetic documentary, chronicler of Lithuanian national revival, director, cameraman and a scriptwriter made over thirty documentaries, filmed hundreds of videotapes for a historical chronicle of that period. He graduated from All-Union State Institute of Cinematography as a cameraman. His 1965-1970 films, according to film critic Zivile Pipinyte, "shaped the genetic fund of Lithuanian documentary film – its stylistic features, the taste for metaphoric image as well as minimalism of a means of expression."

His life was not as great as his films. Verba died lonely and abandoned.

Poetic masterpieces by Robertas Verba include *The Old Man and the Land* (1965), *Čiūtyta rūta* (1968), *Centenarians Look Back* (1969), *To the Feast* (1970), *Last Summer of a Farmstead* (1971), *Love Bloomed on Sunday* (1976), *We Are Made of Wood and Songs* (1979), *Far from Homeland* (1983), *Wings of Lithuania* (1983).

CHARACTERS

THEY DID NOT WANT TO LIE _____ THEY COULD NOT TELL THE TRUTH _____ THEY JUST WANTED TO MAKE FILMS _____

HENRIKAS ŠABLEVIČIUS (1930–2004)

A laureate of Lithuanian National Prize, the founder of the Department of TV and Film at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and a classic of Lithuanian documentary film. Henrikas Šablevičius was a teacher for several generations of Lithuanian documentary filmmakers. He continued and re-shaped the tradition of poetic documentary that existed as an opposition to the Soviet ideology of official documentary. His filmography includes many original documentary portraits of people.

Almost everyone loved Šablevičius. He kept drumming and laughing, but was extremely demanding in his work. Šablevičius - the cinema magician who loved people in life and behind the camera.

His masterpieces: *Our Summer* (1963), *Reflections* (1968), *A Trip Across Misty Meadows* (1973), *Apolinaras* (1973), *A Sage* (1975), *A Man Going Home* (1986), *Good Day* (1992), *Gathering of the Tribe* (2000).





Director JĀNIS PUTNIŅŠ talks to the director AUDRIUS STONYS

remained young forever. It is possible in cinema. Not in life. The parents still get old, they pass away but film preserves them young forever.

"Now that we can photograph our loved ones, not only in stillness, but as they move, as they act, as they make familiar gestures, as they speak – death ceases to be absolute." This text was published in the newspaper La Poste de Paris already in 1896 after the first screenings by the Lumière brothers.

Certainly the aspect that you talked about that people pass away but their work keeps on living, that is true, but then again, there are very many people whose works remain but they leave, yet their work does not possess anything like what the work by your film characters has. The screen shots that you selected are literally enchanting.

And the footage made by these film directors and your screen shots emanate a certain authenticity, it is like a thought that has not yet been fully tied in a tight knot. Perhaps this is what makes your film so powerful?

I believe that this is kind of pristine cinema. The shots made by these authors, they literally emanate light and they are built upon pure love for cinema, not even cinema but reality. You can just feel with what love they shot it all. Well, this is a shot that vibrates with this love... Together with the cameraman we sat down to examine a frame from "235 000 000", it has a scene when they are bidding farewell to leave for the army, and this cannot be explained in purely cinematic terms because it has nothing special, there are no special effects, it's a plain black and white print and yet it conveys some kind of love bonds among them, it has certain transparency – and I do not mean the texture of the imagery but a certain internal transparency of this shot that is simply staggering. It is everywhere – you can find examples in Brauns and Freimanis, and Seleckis, and Verba. And this was also important for me because we are losing it.

We live in a post-modern world where everything is being calculated; everything is kind of measured and weighed out – how it will work, if it works/does not work, how it will influence the spectator. And this cinema is disappearing too. And for me passing away of Freimanis is very symbolic. I do not want to judge, it would be very plain. New times come – it is exactly what Soosaar says: every time brings new rhythms, new vision of the world. And this vision, as sad as it may sound – and I am much attached to it because I learned from these directors – I think it is vanishing. And for me it has an after-taste of sadness. Such a light sadness. This cinema will always be with me – I will keep watching the films, they will inspire me but as a phenomenon it is disappearing. It is impossible to stop it, new people arrive, they see the world differently, perhaps this world will be more interesting, more dynamic, and more social, it could have more of everything but I believe it will be missing some quality and some kind of innocence. It breathes some sort of innocence, a sort of cleanness, for instance, this pure shot has been born out of love, and I believe this is also a very important aspect. I am asked: why do you speak with such undertone of sadness, why are you sad? At first I somehow could not answer, but it is sad not only to lose people, it is sad not only that we lose some landscapes – this is also sad, but we are losing a certain whole world that these great filmmakers had been creating.

This is a certain perception of the world that is being lost.

Lost. It is different. I am not making comparisons, I am not saying "it was better there" – no, it was not better, it was different. Even one of the characters in the film, the Lithuanian film director Verba says: "I am very sorry that I will not make those films. Of course, most probably someone else will make the films about the same themes, and probably make them better and more interesting but I will never make them in a way only I could do it with my expe-

This film is so very sensual that one must live through it, let it through one's senses and apparently any attempt to treat in over-intellectually might downplay this material. Therefore it is fairly difficult to talk about this film. And yet – how did you find such an approach that has practically no informative dimension?

There were different options and different approaches were discussed, since after all there two directors and we coordinated the vision of this film differently. But from the beginning a very simple question was important for me, it concerned me greatly and I believe it is at the foundation of the entire cinema. The question is as follows: what have these authors preserved for us – what landscapes, what faces, what representations of life, and the other question is – what has been lost forever? What has remained and what has been lost... To simplify it even more, the question is what the time has taken away from us and what cinema has managed to preserve.

Cinema, documentary film in some way is a battle with time. Time keeps depriving us of something, keeps removing something but documentary film preserves it all for some sort of eternity. That newborn baby on the screen might be sixty now but in the film he will be a newborn forever. In my childhood I had a dream... I saw people growing old and I kept thinking: what if my parents

riences and my perception of the world.” He is not claiming that his films are better and yet something, some authenticity is lost. This vision of the world is missing. I knew Herz Frank and I do not meet such people in the documentary film world any more. He was a singular person.

I believe he was also a kind of person who could very well reflect on what he was doing.

Yes. He is the only one from the Baltic cinema; there is no other personality either in Latvia or in Lithuania and Estonia who could come up with such generalizations. And thank God we had him. In his case it was also very important that cinema for him was a moral act. As Tarkovsky said, it is not an aesthetic but ethical activity. This was very important for him. He did not make “good” cinema, his goal was not “good” cinema. It was important for him to convey something, to change something in this world, he strongly believed in some kind of, I don’t know, mystical power of cinema that transforms the world, makes it better. He was a very special person, as well as his vision of the world.

If we watch films by all the heroes of this film, then it is obvious that they are all very different. Paradoxically, despite the fact that this vision might be very diverse, very personal, it can still be called as one mode of looking at the world – with children’s eyes that are still free from constraints imposed by the surrounding world.

Like in “10 Minutes Older”. This open and innocent gaze at the world, accepting and suffering, feeling happiness – this is all like a manifesto of that generation. But you can look ironically too, even with a sort of Estonian sarcasm, one can look with a smile of Šablevičius or from a philosophical perspective of Herz Frank or Uldis Brauns but still there is something of a childlike gaze – it is like seeing the world for the first time like no one has seen it before – I think this is a unique feature and the basic principle of this poetics.

Are you not afraid that when this film will come out there will be a numerous reactions that will say: what is it, where is the story about our heroes, where is the story line that could be easily understood, where are the names, dates and facts?

You know, I could answer with the words by the classic of Lithuanian cinema Šablevičius. One of his students who is a well-known cameraman now, went up to his teacher after screening of a film and said: “Dear Henrikas, I want to say that I understood nothing in your film”. Šablevičius said: “That’s right – I don’t make films for fools.” It’s a joke but different people have different expectations and I understand it and it is natural and I accept it that someone will certainly say that they did not learn anything. If they stop at that it is very sad. But if someone will have the craving and he will say: “I did not learn something, but I would like to get to know something more about these authors” and will find and watch their films that means, that’s it, the film has worked. And if there will be people who will decode and understand this very simple idea about innocence of the gaze, the vanishing innocence of the gaze, it will also be a success. Of course, I don’t expect this to be a block-buster which thousands of spectators will rush to see in cinemas, but again quoting Sokurov this time – when he was asked if he was not afraid that he will remain alone in the cinema hall with his strange films, he said: “No, I’m not afraid. I don’t think I’m that unique.”

I think that if something concerns and worries me, there will be people who will be affected and concerned with the same things.

Apparently there will be people who will not appreciate this film, it will irritate them, but this is the way things are – there is no universal cinema, it does not exist. Some love me but some don’t, but what can I do about it? I cannot every time adjust my own self. The same about the film – it does not lie, I think that together with Kristine we did our utmost to make a truthful film, we didn’t do anything phoney. Some people will perceive this frankness, some won’t.

I think that the film as it is now can not only open eyes to those who will find out for the first time about the film directors from this film but I believe, and that is important, rekindle the belief that cinema can be made also today.

That is why we are dealing with such giants, we are dealing with very important film directors who have a very long period of creative activity, who have huge filmography, who have very different films and we try to squeeze it into an hour or hour and a half – I always thought it was useless. How is it possible to squeeze seven film directors into one film, explain how significant they are, to show their cinema and the context, and censorship, and all that communist system, all that pressure. This is unreal task and the best approach is this one. If they fall in love with this cinema, if they see... But as for me... I must have seen it a thousand times – when you edit, when you watch again and again – I still do not get tired watching these excerpts. Now the dance with that helicopter in “235 000 000”. I watch it and never get tired of watching. Even if I run it through during editing I say: “Let’s watch it.” Because there is so much in it, such energy!

Or children running downhill.

They run downhill and fall. Yes. You can enumerate many things there. You see, if spectators will get infected by this love, they will find this information, and they will find who they are. I remember once there was a lecture and they showed a shot from the film by Werner Herzog “Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit”, but his films were not screened in the USSR at all. And this single shot when two deaf and dumb and blind grannies are flying by plane, this little scene was shown, and it affected me so much that I found everything I could find about Werner Herzog, and more than that – I made a film about blind people myself. I still wanted to expand this world, delve into it, and touch it with my own hands... A single scene was enough for that... I think the whole point is in that.

Director JĀNIS PUTNIŅŠ talks to the director KRISTĪNE BRIEDE

The film impressed me a lot. I think such a film is very hard to make today. You need courage to choose such an approach instead of taking the path of information and fact provision. I read the script – it was interesting and yet something totally different. How did you reach such a solution?

It happened during the process. The main idea I had at the beginning was to document these great film masters, and make an attempt to do in a poetic style that they worked in. Certainly, each of them worked in a different manner but the aim was to give them homage in a language the directors used in large part of their own films. And it also seemed important to me to make them known in the world because in those days it was fairly hard to get behind the iron curtain. Now the film is screened in Karlovy Vary where the whole retrospective show is presented which means that the two main tasks have been fulfilled, and I am very satisfied.

I must admit that initially I had imagined this film more story-based but then Audrius joined in and his films are always visually very impressive. Now we had two roads from which one had to be chosen. I think that both would be interesting since there are these life stories and each of them is a unique personality but they are very difficult to combine in one film. Attempts like that have been made – for example, in Estonia they have made the whole series. To find in some way the unifying element (the initial title of the film was “The Baltic New Wave”) visually seemed to be the right solution that is easier to be perceived when talking about three countries.

We already talked with Audrius about the child's gaze that was characteristic for these people, about the extremely deep interest in life that emanates from those shots. And something similar is characteristic to the footage that you have chosen to add – it also is alive and searching. How did you make the film, did you give the camera-man certain guidelines, how did you select this footage, did the idea to use similar material exist already before filming? To what an extent there was an attempt to capture THAT by yourselves?

Shooting and editing period went parallel. We worked very carefully with the old masters because there were different health issues therefore there was no continuity in shooting process, everything happened with long breaks. There was a scene with a tractor and Brauns... They are great guys – sparkling with life, with huge interest, but things happen as they do, everything happens in a very restricted way. And when you manage to get some action you hold on to it. We took the footage home, tried to edit it and then we thought – what's next? We were also looking for characters from all the films, those who are still alive. It is very interesting how the environment has changed and the characters aged. Only few are in the film, because we could barely recognize some of them. We have to remember that the film is about film directors and they know very well what the screen can do with them. They are not made of wax either, everyone had his own character. For example, Freimanis – we did our bet but he said calmly: “I won't talk at all. I have worked with text, I know.” And in general he hates synchronous texts, he usually used only the voiceover. He said: “I'm not interested in this. I'll keep quiet.” Or, for instance, Seleckis – he is totally uncontrollable. He keeps directing himself.



It was shown in the film very well.

What is to be done with him? It's all clear! We go to the old places, let him go wherever he wants and see what happens.

It took a long time to get to Brauns, since he had been aging very dramatically during the last few years. Towards the end it became very hard, he got tired quickly. Not to mention Estonians at all... Andres Sööt is such a discovery! On the one hand he is very deep personality but on the other hand he is a big jester – we were laughing our heads off. Several of Latvian film scholars do not know those Estonian and Lithuanian films too well at all. I do hope they get interested in them after our film and watch them. Some time ago there was at least that film symposium...

Yes, but it was a closed event.

The differences can be seen slightly also in the film – for Lithuanians it is slow-paced narrative, Estonians are more into modernism. They supplement each other. We certainly examined what footage is available for us. There is lots of footage about Herz Frank that was not put in the film. Initially the idea was that his leitmotif would run through the entire film.

Perhaps you should have made a 4 hour long film?

It wouldn't make it better. Had the film been about Latvians only, then yes.

The difference is also that both Lithuanians have died quite long time ago. That creates a certain inconsistency.

But I actually like the inconsistencies – perhaps it's Audrius' influence. I like it that there is no single scheme. We had a variant that each will be given 10 minutes and they will all merge nicely together. But then we understood that we must let the film go off those rails. If everything is too neat then the whole work becomes

too homogeneous, too monolithic. I think that one should not implement the conception at any cost, it's better not to stick to it too strongly.

I also thought it was great that there are characters that appear at the beginning and end and some characters appear briefly, like Seleckis.

Although you would like to have him more, wouldn't you?

He is great.

Yes, he is terribly great. He is a doer, he always has a plan, and he is always active. From all those filmmakers only one – Herz Frank – is a speaker and philosopher, all the others are doers, visualists. Most of the old filmmakers were telling only tall stories therefore one should not try to get out of them some philosophical reasoning. They have already told what they wanted. They stress themselves that they are no dissidents, that in fact everything was filmed for the public money. In fact if they wanted, they could manage. If not in a certain way, then in some other way – somehow differently.

I think that directorial episode with Ivars Seleckis tells a lot about him. Much than one could do with a narration.

I was surprised that everything happens in the world of these directors completely differently. For example, work with the cameraman. They had never been following the cameraman showing what is to be filmed, no specific tasks were given. Only the main things – the mood and atmosphere. Herz Frank often even didn't go to filming at all. He went once and then analyzed the footage. Today everything is planned to detail, all that project life...

Yes but that is also shunning the responsibility because it is the most convenient solution – tell me what I have to do.

Did you formulate my task precisely?

So what? I know nothing, just pushing the button.

It seems fantastic to me that these guys could work in tandem – Brauns was cameraman, Seleckis was cameraman, Freimanis directed. It is some kind of thought that you convey to the cameraman and they make it alive with their vision.

They had no video control – whatever they see through the camera viewfinder that's it.

And even the director, what can he see? He doesn't even know what the cameraman does. It is that direct force of reaction. Focus and trust.

It is obvious that there are certain goals set – like the shot in "The Coast" with a little ship that sails by. It's not pure chance. But there are also so many unplanned miracles!

Such a mode of filming would not be possible at all today. One has the feeling that in those days people were not afraid of the camera, that they were very open in front of the camera.

But it is a separate story. For example, in "The Catch" those fishermen are so natural. But those documentary filmmakers lived with them for the whole summer! Who can afford that today!

Well, yes – that is a method when you get used to someone and eventually take no notice of them at all.

Exactly – take no notice... "The method of long-term observation". That's what it was called. But, well, yes – that is only possible after living together for long.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES



VFS FILMS

VFS FILMS is an independent production company which houses a group of talented filmmakers around a tight nucleus – best at telling human stories through award-winning creative documentaries. Most of VFS produced films such as “Roof on the Moonway”, “Theodore”, “The Deconstruction of an Artist”, “Liberation Day”, “Wonderful Losers. A Different World” have travelled and received awards around the world, including nomination for the European Film Academy Documentary Award 2005 for “Dreamland” by Laila Pakalnina. Lithuanian official Academy entry for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012 was creative documentary “Ramin” by Audrius Stonys. In 2015 IDFA Special Jury Award went for “Ukrainian Sheriffs” by Roman Bondarchuk, which also resulted as the official Academy Award entry in 2016, this time from the Ukraine. VFS FILMS is a member of the European Documentary Network.

More: www.vfs.lv

S T U D I O N O M I N U M

Studio Nominum is one of the first independent film production companies in Lithuania – established by Arūnas Matelis – producing documentary films since 1992. Among the titles are award-winning films, such as “Before Flying Back to the Earth”, “Alone”, “Wonderful Losers. A Different World” and others.

The films produced in Studio Nominum were selected for the Cannes (Directors’ Fortnight, Critics Week), Warsaw, IDFA, Leipzig, Torino, Oberhausen, Rotterdam, Moscow film festival, screened at MoMA and G. Pompidou. Also received over 20 international awards: main documentary prizes at IDFA, Leipzig, Warsaw, Directors Guild of America Award for the Best Documentary, European Film Academy nomination, Minsk Li-stapad, Trieste, ZagrebDox, Oberhausen, prizes at Brooklyn, Documenta Madrid and more.

Studio Nominum produced films have achieved one of the best box office results of documentary films in Lithuanian cinemas, VoD and DVD. The documentaries also have been broadcasted in tens of countries in Europe and Asia.

<http://arunasmatelis.com>



Vesilind is an independent Estonian production company (established in 1996) producing documentary films and TV-programs. Through its existence Vesilind has produced and co-produced over 40 documentaries and hundreds of TV programs. The company started 20 years ago with mountaineering films, then developed wildlife and environmental documentary production, which for now has grown to the production of creative documentaries.

<http://vesilind.ee>

BRIDGES OF TIME

featuring directors

HERZ FRANK

ULDIS BRAUNS

IVARS SELECKIS

MARK SOOSAAR

ANDRES SÖÖT

ROBERTAS VERBA

HENRIKAS ŠABLEVIČIUS

AIVARS FREIMANIS

directed by | AUDRIUS STONYS
KRISTĪNE BRIEDE

written by | KRISTĪNE BRIEDE
AUDRIUS STONYS

co-written by | RAMUNĒ RAKAUSKAITĒ
ARŪNAS MATELIS
RIHO VÄSTRIK

cinematographers | AUDRIUS KEMEŽYS
VALDIS CELMIŅŠ
JOOSEP MATJUS
JĀNIS ŠĒNBERGS
LAISVŪNAS KARVELIS

editors | KOSTAS RADLINSKAS
ANDRA DORŠS

original score | GIEDRIUS PUSKUNIGIS

sound design and mix | ARTIS DUKAĻSKIS

producers | ULDIS CEKULIS
ARŪNAS MATELIS
ALGIMANTĒ MATELIENĒ

co-producer | RIHO VÄSTRIK

the project was developed within the framework of the

BALTIC SEA FORUM FOR DOCUMENTARIES



MEETING POINT VILNIUS



LAST STOP TRIESTE



produced by

a VFS FILMS & STUDIO NOMINUM production



S T U D I O N O M I N U M

in co-production with VESILIND



with the support of

NATIONAL FILM CENTRE OF LATVIA



LITHUANIAN FILM CENTRE



EURIMAGES



CREATIVE EUROPE/MEDIA

Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



ESTONIAN FILM INSTITUTE



STATE CULTURE CAPITAL FOUNDATION



THIS FILM HAS BEEN CREATED WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE LITHUANIAN TAX INCENTIVE FOR FILM PRODUCTION

in collaboration with

LATVIA 100



LATVIA STATE ARCHIVE OF AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTS



Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs

LATVIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTER



RESTORED LITHUANIA 100



LITHUANIAN CENTRAL STATE ARCHIVES



LITHUANIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTER



ESTONIA 100



RIGA FILM MUSEUM



ESTONIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTER



