

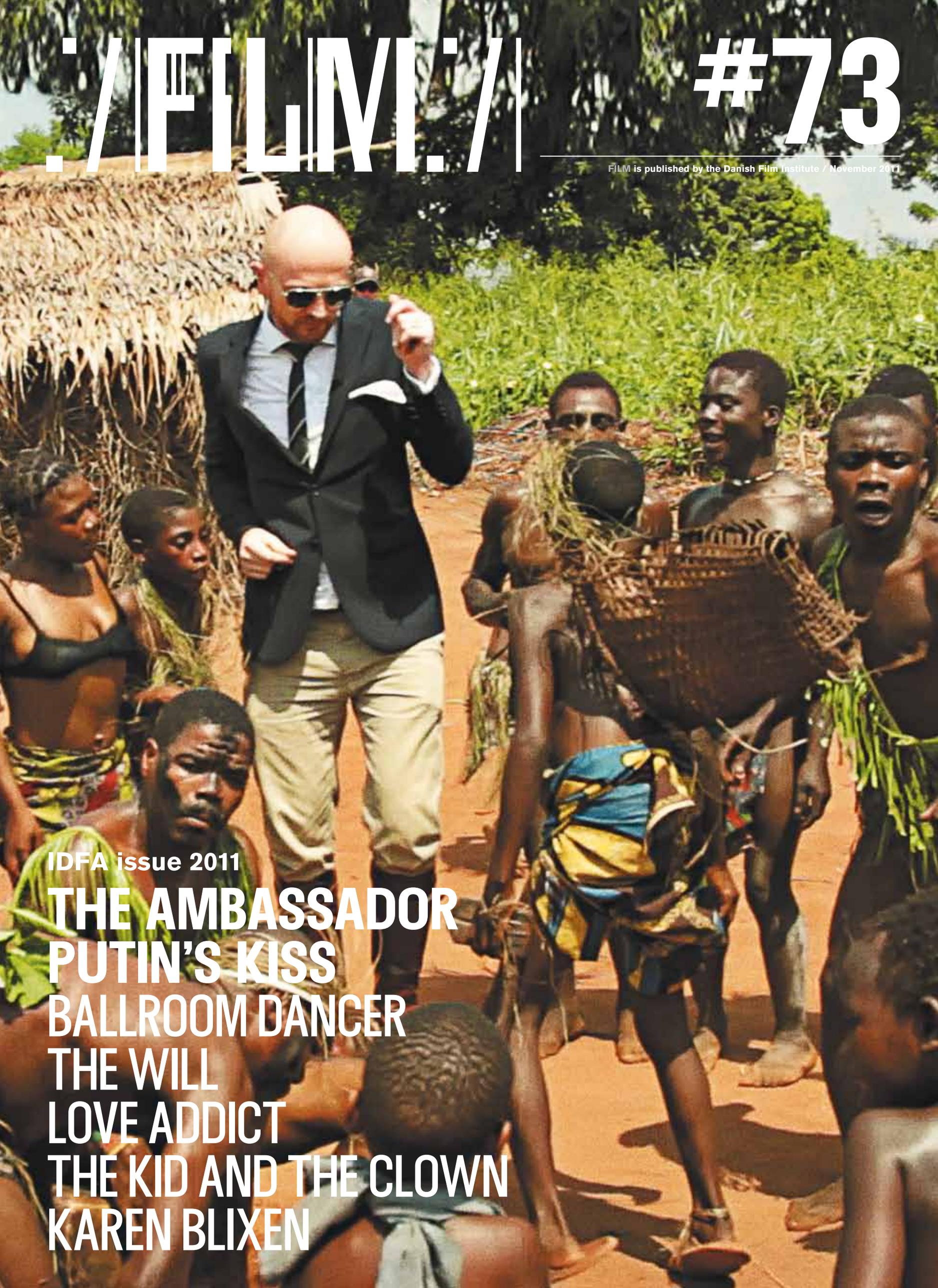
# ./FILM./

# #73

FILM is published by the Danish Film Institute / November 2011

IDFA issue 2011

**THE AMBASSADOR**  
**PUTIN'S KISS**  
**BALLROOM DANCER**  
**THE WILL**  
**LOVE ADDICT**  
**THE KID AND THE CLOWN**  
**KAREN BLIXEN**

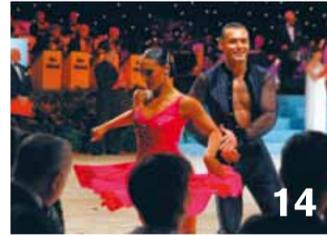




05



10



14



16



22

## INSIDE



FILM#73 Amsterdam issue  
November 2011

**Published by** Danish Film Institute  
**Editor** Susanna Neimann (SN)  
**Co-editor** Annemarie Hørsman (AH)  
**Editorial support** Lars Fil-Jensen (LFJ), Anders Budtz-Jørgensen (ABJ), Anne Marie Kürstein, Malene Flindt Pedersen, Klara Grønning-Harris, Helle Hansen, Dorthe Hoeg Brask  
**Translations** Glen Garner  
**Design** Rasmus Koch Studio  
**AD/design** Pernille Volder Lund  
**Type** Holton, Akzidenz-Grotesk, Cendia  
**Paper** Munkens Lynx 100 g  
**Printed by** Rosendahls-Schultz Grafisk  
**Circulation** 4,000  
**ISSN** 1399-2813 (print version)  
**ISSN** 1903-7511 (online version)  
**Cover** *The Ambassador*. Photo by Johan Stahl Winthereik  
Most of the articles are written by freelance film critics and journalists.

FILM is the Danish Film Institute's international festival magazine

Issued prior to the three festivals in Berlin, Cannes and Amsterdam, the magazine brings articles and interviews presenting the films in competition, films in progress, young talents and news stories. Catalogue in the reverse section gives a view of current Danish documentaries and short films.

The Danish Film Institute is the national agency responsible for supporting and encouraging Danish film and cinema culture.

**Danish Film Institute**  
Gothersgade 55 / DK-1123 Copenhagen K  
T +45 3374 3400 / susannan@dfi.dk  
www.dfi.dk/English

- 03 Editorial and short news**
- 05 The Ambassador**  
/ IDFA Feature-Length Competition  
Mads Brügger takes his intricate role-playing to a new level in *The Ambassador*. The questionable nature of his method is part of the message.
- 09 The Ambassador in perspective**  
That a diplomatic passport can be bought points to a key feature of Brügger's film and the world we live in today, says researcher Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen.
- 10 Putin's Kiss**  
/ IDFA Feature-Length Competition  
Seduction and politics are two sides of the same coin, Lise Birk Pedersen discovers in her new film from Russia.
- 14 Ballroom Dancer**  
/ IDFA First Appearance Competition  
For two years Andreas Koefoed and Christian Bonke followed Slavik, the former number one in Latin dance.
- 16 The Will**  
/ IDFA Reflecting Images: Panorama  
We come extremely close to Henrik's ups and downs in Christian Sønderby Jepsen's story about a family split to pieces by a heavy past.
- 19 Love Addict**  
/ IDFA Reflecting Images: Masters  
A development grant helped Pernille Rose Grønkjær jumpstart her next film after the success of *The Monastery*.
- 22 The Kid and the Clown**  
/ IDFA Reflecting Images: Panorama  
Shooting her film about Tobias and the hospital clown Angus, Ida Grøn wanted to make sure that the story took precedence over her ego as a filmmaker.

- 24 Karen Blixen – Behind her Mask**  
/ IDFA Reflecting Images: Panorama  
Karen Blixen, an icon in Danish literary history, once told Morten Henriksen's father that she had formed a pact with the devil.
- 26 Four Danish films at IDFA Forum**
- 28 Hybrid films**  
The trend of mixing the methods and vocabulary of fiction and documentary is not new, says Jakob Høgel, artistic director of New Danish Screen.
- 30 To watch out for**  
Meet two documentary directors to watch out for.
- 31 Turning**  
Charles Atlas and Åsa Mossberg joined forces on Atlas and Antony's new film *Turning*.
- 32 CPH:DOX, LAB AND ART**  
Scandinavia's largest documentary festival is constantly looking to inspire new creative collaborations.
- 33 Omar Shargawi**  
*1/2 Revolution* is an eyewitness account of the Arab Spring.
- 34 Why Poverty?**  
A new international project speaks about global poverty through human stories.
- 36 Kaspar Astrup Schröder**  
What's up? The director is out next summer with a new film from Japan.
- 37 Helle Hansen**  
Meet the Danish Film Institute's new film commissioner.
- 37 DFI Key Contacts**

## IF YOU DON'T GO TO EXTREMES, WHY EVEN GO? / EDITORIAL

*If you don't go to extremes, why even go? the Danish COBRA artist Asger Jorn once said. His words naturally spring to mind when looking at the current crop of Danish documentaries. They go to extremes. They have guts and they take chances – artistically, thematically and personally.*

*A prime example is journalist and master of role-playing Mads Brügger. The cover of this magazine shows him dancing with a group of plastered Pygmies celebrating his plan to build a match factory in their village. Elsewhere in the magazine, a critic asks, "Is it okay for Brügger to travel in an African country as a diplomat, while filming his experiences as a documentarian and a reporter?" And the answer is, "Of course not! That's why The Ambassador hits home so hard." And perhaps that's why it was picked to open the world's most important documentary film festival.*

*There is no doubt that The Ambassador is out to provoke and stir debate – about the film's journalistic methods and handling of its characters.*

*But there is also no doubt that Brügger, putting himself on the line, is trying to tell a different truth about North and South, and the extent of our compassion, than the one presented to us in yet another well-intentioned primetime fundraising show. That's where his method is vindicated.*

*The Ambassador is supported by New Danish Screen, the talent development subsidy scheme whose purpose includes inspiring innovation of cinematic language and storytelling. Investigation and experimentation are encouraged to keep cinematic aesthetics alive and in motion. Talents get a chance to see if their offbeat ideas will translate to the big and small screens.*

*The courage to go to extremes can be manifested in a multitude of ways. The Danish documentaries at IDFA are products of filmmakers having the energy, skill and courage to go all the way.*

*Energy to track their characters at moments when life's drama comes to a head – in the arena of big politics or in the most intimate of relationships. The skill to find the cinematic device that is just right for resolving the story. And the courage to insist on a personal approach and a personal artistic expression.*

*Good documentaries need skilled filmmakers, an open-minded audience – and a broad framework. Here I'm thinking of the film-policy framework. A system that promotes innovation and focuses on talent development. A system that is willing to take risks. And, of course, it takes money.*

*Denmark's new Film Agreement has improved the opportunities for funding the development and production of documentary films in critical ways. Individual films really do have a better framework now. This is happening amidst a global financial crisis. It's happening because of, and out of respect for, the high artistic quality contributed by Danish documentarians in recent years. And with it comes an obligation. An obligation to keep going to extremes. Otherwise, why even go?*

Henrik Bo Nielsen, CEO



Director Janus Metz onboard the good ship Activ. Framgrab

## From Helmand to the End of the World

**JANUS METZ established his international documentary credentials in 2010 when he took home the top prize from the Critic's Week in Cannes for his tough film about a group of Danish soldiers in Afghanistan. Now the director is plunging into a collective project about the end of the world, because "it sounded too cool".**

Tracking a group of soldiers over six months in Afghanistan's Helmand Province, *Armadillo* exposes the human consequences of sending young people to war as ideals clash with reality. The fear of sudden death makes the soldiers increasingly wary and cynical about the Afghans they were sent out to help.

The film was a big hit in Danish cinemas and is now in wide international distribution. *Armadillo* triggered "an explosion of attention", launching Metz into a whole new orbit on the international film circuit. But more than anything, *Armadillo* meant a year away from active film production, as Metz had to service audiences and journalists all over the world.

Now, after a much-needed hiatus on the heels of all the hoopla, including an extended stay in New York with his family, the 37-year-old director is back.

With the Danish artist Christina Hamre, Metz earlier this year made a work entitled *Rupture* under a project funded by the Danish Film Institute's talent scheme New Danish Screen that teamed up four filmmakers with four artists to create a film/installation. A

physical and violent visual tale, *Rupture* centres on a woman and issues like sexuality, instinct and death. While Hamre challenged Metz's artistic temperament and method, the filmmaker also recognised a shared interest in the taboo and the subconscious.

"*Armadillo* went quite far in describing the shadow sides of the human psyche," Metz says. "I wanted to go into that space and explore it further. In a way, I was working with the same story but within an abstract framework. The chance to work in a fictional universe unleashed a virtual image storm in me."

From the nooks and crannies of the human mind, Metz is now venturing into a new collective film project. *The Expedition to the End of the World* is a journey into the innermost recesses of northern Greenland's fjord systems aboard the ship *Activ*. Loaded with scientists and artists, the ship is the frame around a story about the origin of the world, the demise of humankind and life continuing on the planet. Having finished first leg of the expedition, however, Metz is anything but pessimistic.

"We are probably trying to be a little bit funny at the expense of the doomsday hysteria of the climate debate. But the big question is whether our civilisation is just a tiny parenthesis between two ice ages and whether our enterprising nature will also be our undoing. As a civilisation – and in the film – we have set the stage for an ending where everything goes wrong. The question is whether it will go wrong in the cool way or the uncool way." SN

*The Expedition to the End of the World* is co-directed by Janus Metz and Daniel Dencik and produced by Michael Haslund-Christensen for Haslund Film. The film is pitching at FORUM, see page 26.



Director Michael Madsen  
Photo: Søren Solkær Starbird

## Visitors from Outer Space

**How would we react if we were visited by aliens? MICHAEL MADSEN, who is delighted to see his award-winning documentary *Into Eternity* moving into real political power forums, continues his speculative reflections in his next project which tests our**

**imagination with a story of humanity's encounter with alien intelligent life.**

Michael Madsen recently went to Moscow to present his film *Into Eternity* at a science film festival. In France the radioactive waste management agency, Andra, has asked the filmmaker to start a think-tank focusing on how to communicate with the future about radioactive waste. At the University of California Madsen recently gave a lecture in conjunction with an interdisciplinary course entitled Speculative Futures. And in New York his film was shown at the UN as a precursor to a summit on nuclear safety.

"I got an email from my American distributor saying that *Into Eternity* was on Hillary Clinton's desk. It's interesting to me that the film is starting to move into real power circles. That's necessary, of course, for anything to happen," Madsen says. "The film lives as a phenomenon out there, and I find that real-life dimension exciting."

Beyond winning a string of awards, Madsen has managed to raise awareness among central decision-

makers with his film that looks at the problems of storing nuclear waste, focusing on the construction of a Finnish repository that is supposed to last for 100,000 years. At heart, *Into Eternity* is propelled by philosophical wonder at humankind: What does our attempt to master a time horizon of 100,000 years really say about us?

Madsen brings a similar sense of wonder to his next project, *The Visit*, which turns science fiction into reality with a single intriguing question: How would we react if we got visitors from outer space? In fact, the premise is not just science fiction. The UN has an office in Vienna who ultimately would be the ones dealing with an alien visit.

"My project is a partnership with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs which thinks up scenarios for a visit to Earth by intelligent extraterrestrial life," Madsen says. "It took my producer, Lise Lense-Møller, and me four months to get our first meeting with them, because they took us for ufologists. When they realised that we were actually looking to showcase their knowledge, they wholeheartedly came on board.

"The interesting thing for me is to explore what an encounter with other intelligent life would mean to humanity's self-image," the filmmaker says. He wants the film to take a square look at such an encounter: How would we receive them, speak to them, treat them? If we were to give them an Essential Guide to us and planet Earth, what would be in it?

"We are planning a visual setup creating a kind of pseudo-3D-effect. This is to thematise the different view of reality that such an encounter would entail," Madsen says. Coming from a visual-arts background, he always makes experiments with form central to the experience of his films. In the same vein, Madsen has just completed Denmark's first 3D documentary, *The Average of the Average*, on objectivity versus subjectivity.

"The visual concept in *The Visit* will either be shit or gold," Madsen adds wryly. "But it's never been seen before, I'd say." AH

*The Visit is produced by Lise Lense-Møller for Magic Hour Films and is pitching at FORUM, see page 27.*

## Funding for Danish Documentaries up to 50%

**Danish documentaries are thriving: films by skilled directors are making a difference in the world and new talents are coming up strong. The artistic and popular success of the films is matched by political support, both in terms of production and distribution.**

The new Film Agreement 2011-2014 has upped the Danish Film Institute's funds for development and production of documentaries to 46.5 million kroner (approx. 6.2 million euros) annually, an increase of 50%.

On top of that, the two Danish public service TV stations, DR and TV 2, are committed to buying 10 million kroner (approx. 1.3 million euros) of broadcast rights every year.

The number of films that the Danish Film Institute will be supporting has been reduced, equalling more funds for fewer films, which will strengthen the economy of individual projects. The aim is to ensure reasonable financing and promote more ambitious films.

Furthermore, the DFI has set up an international office led by producer Noemi Ferrer to strengthen cross-border cooperation and help create international financing and partnerships regarding Danish documentaries as well.

In terms of distribution, the films are reaching a wider audience than before. The share of DFI-supported films shown in primetime on the public service TV stations has gone up from 2% to 25% over the past years.

The Danish Film Institute distributes more than 1,000 shorts and documentaries on its streaming service Filmstriben.dk, which is by now a stable success. A full 98% of the population has access to the films via their local library, while two thirds of the country's schoolchildren and their teachers can watch the films in the classroom via a school subscription.

It is the Danish Film Institute's goal to make documentaries freely available online for all Danes in the next few years.

*Get the latest news on Danish film at [dfi.dk/English](http://dfi.dk/English).*

## To Re-wire the Brain

**In her new documentary *Free the Mind*, award-winning director Phie Ambo follows one of the world's leading neuroscientists whose research shows that meditation literally can change the brain.**

For years Dr. Richard J. Davidson of the University of Wisconsin has done research into mankind's ability to create positive changes in the brain and reconcile with anxiety and fear.

Now he sets out to discover whether meditation is what will finally allow war veterans to lead a normal life, relieved of stress and anxiety.

Dr Richard Davidson is on a mission. He wants to make the world a better place. And the change must come from within the brain itself. Davidson conducts an unusual experiment. He is going to teach American war veterans breathing and yoga. Davidson's research shows that the brain is plastic, which means that we can actively contribute to the shaping of our own personalities and thereby change our life journey to the better.

By studying Buddhist monks Davidson has found that it is possible to re-wire the brain. Some of the effects are increased levels of altruism, compassion and calm.

In *Free the Mind* we meet three characters, two vets and a 5-year-old child, who all participate in Davidson's research program to learn yoga and breathing in order to concentrate better and be more aware of them-selves and their surroundings. For Phie Ambo who, like the professor, practices meditation on a daily basis, it is very good news that we all have the potential to change at any stage in life. SN

*Free the Mind is produced by Sigrid Dyekjær for Danish Documentary Production. Release in Spring 2012. [www.freethemindthemovie.com](http://www.freethemindthemovie.com)*



Director Phie Ambo Photo: Christoffer Boe



Director Mads Brügger in *The Ambassador* Photo: Johan Stahl Winthereik

# WAY OVER THE LINE

**Of course Mads Brügger goes over the line. He stretches his long legs and purposefully takes several steps beyond the rules, both written and unwritten. *The Ambassador* isn't honourable reporting. It's morally reprehensible, deceitful even.**

BY PER JUUL CARLSEN

That's exactly why *The Ambassador* is so refreshingly provocative, shocking and, indeed, truthful. In a time when the media have no qualms about treating politicians like reality show contestants and no one seems to question whether breaking the news first is always such a good idea, it's more than welcome to see someone deliberately cross the line and raise important questions. Is the line really in the right place? Who even put it there? And isn't it better to cross the line in an original manner than unthinkingly and uncritically toe it?

Indirectly, though loudly and clearly, Mads Brügger raises those questions in *The Ambassador*, a film that paints an unfathomably grim but also surprisingly funny picture of an Africa that is being ruthlessly raped by everyone, from Europeans and North Americans to Indians, Russians and Chinese.

To anyone blissfully deluding themselves that Mother Africa, humanity's womb, is finally recovering after years of civil war, massacres and general post-colonial madness: Don't see this film. It offers no hope.

### DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

*The Ambassador's* journalistic impropriety mainly lies in Brügger's method. He didn't travel to the Central African Republic as a conventional journalist jotting things down on his notepad. He went as the diplomat Mr Cortzen - which is not, by the way, a false identity.

Early in the film, Mads Johan Brügger Cortzen, as is our protagonist's full name, visits a pair of shady characters who offer to provide him with a diplomatic passport from an African nation. In Portugal, one of them, a British former elite soldier, takes Brügger aside and, not knowing that Brügger is carrying a concealed camera, tells him that the title of ambassador is immense valuable. If he uses it right, he could take an enormous amount of wealth out of Africa, protected by diplomatic immunity. If he screws up, he could end up dead in a ditch.

*Is it okay for Brügger to travel in an African country as a diplomat, while filming his experiences as a documentarian and a reporter? Of course not. That's precisely why *The Ambassador* hits home so hard.*



*The Ambassador* Photo: Johan Stahl Winthereik



*The Ambassador* Photo: Johan Stahl Winthereik

## MADS BRÜGGER ON THE AMBASSADOR

*I wanted to make an Africa film that had funny moments amidst all the horror and I wanted to make a documentary that took Africa back to Graham Greene and *The Wild Geese* – Africa of the 1970s. You can find that in the Central African Republic, a country that hardly anyone ever heard about.*



*The Ambassador* Photo: Johan Stahl Winthereik

*This essay first aired on DR TV's arts programme Filmland.*

*For further information on *The Ambassador*, see reverse section.*

As he waits for the Liberian authorities to process his new title, Brügger travels to the Central African Republic on a fake diplomatic passport. "If Congo is Africa's heart, the Central African Republic is the continent's appendix," he says. It is a forgotten country that has suffered the vagaries of several mad presidents. According to the country's chief of security, a Frenchman, the Republic is still being cynically controlled by its former colonial overlord, France.

### DRUNKEN PYGMIES

Under the cover story that he is looking to open a match factory, Brügger, aka Mr Cortzen, acts like a caricature of a white man whooping it up in Africa. Without much effort, he hooks up with a mine owner, Monsieur Gilbert, who is up for some shady business with Mr Cortzen. Since so much money is already flowing under the table, the Liberian ambassador meets with very little resistance wherever he goes.

It's all thoroughly disillusioning. Meanwhile, Brügger's

diplomat act gets him into situations that are beyond absurd. At one point, he visits a Pygmy village to find workers for his match factory – in some parts of Africa, Pygmies are believed to have magical powers, which would obviously be an advantage for Brügger's matches. As if it were the most natural thing in the world, Brügger's African connections have plied the entire village with alcohol, including the children.

### QUEASY MORBID HUMOUR

Clinking glasses with Mr Gilbert, Brügger pulls out a bottle of Moët & Chandon champagne, telling him it's the last thing Hitler drank before he took his own life in the bunker. This prompts Brügger's African assistant to tell a story of how Hitler had a pillow stuffed with the pubic hair of Jewish women. The Africans conclude that Hitler was full of funny stories. The whole grotesque affair is a good example of the picture of Africa painted in *The Ambassador*. It's queasy, morbid humour of the highest grade.

There are dozens of such moments. One of the best and most complex comes when Brügger takes a boat ride on a gorgeous river with two helplessly drunk Pygmies to the sound of Woody Guthrie's *This Land Is Your Land*. Irony doesn't get much more biting than that.

### FETISHISTIC BOYHOOD DREAM

But, is it okay for Brügger to travel in an African country as a diplomat, while filming his experiences as a documentarian and a reporter? Is it okay that Brügger is clearly acting out an old, fetishistic boyhood fantasy of strutting around darkest Africa in long riding boots, chomping on a cigarette holder? Of course not. That's precisely why *The Ambassador* hits home so hard.

This is no simple documentary. It scolds, it provokes, it hurts and it asks questions that are a lot more complicated, unpleasant and, not least, entertaining than any conventional piece of journalism could ever make them.

*The Ambassador* is far from pure in its tone or in its heart, precisely because it knows the questions are so much more interesting when you step out of the norms. Balancing on umpteen moral precipices, the film is at times so grotesque that you can barely believe your eyes. It's way over the line. But the crucial thing is that it crosses the line with an ingenuity that any reporter must admire ■



*The Ambassador* Photo: Johan Stahl Winthereik

*... a film about Africa stripped of NGOs, sarongs, Bono, child soldiers and kids with bloated bellies, a film about the kind of people you never see in documentaries on Africa: white businessmen and the diplomats, the fat cats in the urban centres, all the people who are in Africa having a great time.*



*The Ambassador* Photo: Johan Stahl Winthereik

*Going to Africa and playing a diplomat wouldn't be a problem for me. Diplomats aren't always asking to see each other's ID. But instead of playacting, I figured I'd go all in. The role of the diplomat is a lot like that of a journalist. They both have to go see everybody, talk to everybody. They get access to state secrets and a country's most powerful people. Only, diplomats can operate far beyond any ethical boundaries and still remain respected members of society.*

*Quotes are from Per Juul Carlsen's interview with Mads Brügger, *The Man with the Yellow Hat Gone Bad*, in FILM#72, available on [dfi.dk/English](http://dfi.dk/English).*

# BRÜGGER'S PERFORMATIVE JOURNALISM



The Ambassador Photo: Johan Stahl Wintherik

**Undercover reporter, documentarian, writer, TV personality and newly minted radio station manager. In his multifaceted work, media trickster Mads Brügger is unabashedly pursuing a clear ambition: challenging traditional journalism and documentaries and revitalising the genres. And it's okay to have some fun along the way, too!**

Mads Brügger has his own unmistakable style and methods. Over the last 15 years he has repeatedly pushed the envelope of what journalism can, and should, do.

In his new film, *The Ambassador*, Brügger takes his method a step further than the role-playing of his previous films *Danes for Bush* and *The Red Chapel*. He is not playing a diplomat in *The Ambassador* – he actually is the Liberian diplomat Mads Brügger Cortzen. Says Brügger.

“To show this Africa of the affluent, I use ‘performative journalism’. Instead

influences and events around us. “The people around me finish my story – they top my excesses. When I say something ‘horrible’, they double it,” Brügger says. “I play around with archetypes – the ‘black’ fantasy of a white man – and create a phantasmagorical figure. I code my persona down to the smallest details, in a near-semiotic orgy of meanings.”

Indeed. The persona of Cortzen is the product of countless cultural references, everything from *Tintin* (Dr Müller) to *Curious George* (The Man with the Yellow Hat), Graham Greene’s *The Honorary Consul* and Herzog’s *Echoes from a Sombre Empire*.

As Brügger stresses, this painstaking coding of a character is crucial, even if a lot of it doesn’t make it into the film.

“I familiarised myself with the dos and don’ts of diplomatic life. It gives me confidence to have the etiquette down pat, like how to wrap a napkin around a glass at a reception.”

Add to that, Moët et Chandon champagne, Anne Demeulemeester boots, Dunhill Reds and a silver cigarette holder, not to mention a copy of *The Phantom’s* “Good Mark Ring”. Plainly, Brügger, when he’s out of character, likes to wear the “Bad Mark Ring”, too. As Brügger says, the devil is in the details.

Most of the quotes originate from a master class held by Mads Brügger at the National Film School of Denmark in September. SN, AH

of disguising myself as a fly on the wall, neutrally observing, I dress up for the part and interact as an agent provocateur. With all the intentions of a journalist to expose an overlooked part of the world, I went to CAR as a rich white businessman with diplomatic credentials, pursuing all the perks that come with the title – reckless diamond hunting, power abuse, etc. – and became a respected member of their society.

“Precisely because I’m beyond role-playing by actually being a diplomat, I can forge a partnership with a very sinister diamond-mine owner replete with gold tooth and machete scars on his forehead. That would be highly problematic for a journalist. But it’s no problem for a diplomat.”

## THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Constructing his characters, Brügger consciously and actively works with other people’s expectations, drawing on both Jungian archetypes and recent cognitive neuroscience, especially the concept of mirror neurons that explores how brain cells copy or mirror

## MADS BRÜGGER

Born in 1972. Journalist, TV presenter, author and filmmaker. The author of several books, he has also written for magazines and newspapers, produced award-winning radio programmes and hosted the critically acclaimed late night TV show *The 11th Hour* as well as the daily news and discussion show *Deadline*. He is the creator of the satirical docu-series *Danes for Bush* (2004), the feature-length documentary *The Red Chapel* and *The Ambassador* (2011). Starting November 2011, he will be the station manager of radio24syv.

## ZENTROPA REAL

A production company founded by director Lars von Trier. Its catalogue includes Katia Forbert Petersen’s *Von Trier’s 100 Eyes* (2000), which explores *Dancer in the Dark* and von Trier and Jørgen Leth’s *The Five Obstructions* (2003), a journey into the phenomenon of filmmaking that was selected for festivals worldwide and won numerous awards. Von Trier’s *Dogme95* Code from 2002, the documentary equivalent of *Dogme95*, underlies six films by prominent Scandinavian directors, notably *Get a Life!* (Michael Klint, 2004). *The Ambassador* is produced by Peter Engel. (*The Red Chapel* from 2009 was produced by Peter Engel under the parent company Zentropa Productions).

## TWO ROLE-PLAYS BRÜGGER STYLE

### Danes for Bush (2004)

This satirical TV series follows two fake personas, Mads Cortzen and Jacob Boeschou, starry-eyed believers in the American way and staunch supporters of President Bush, as they travel around America in a camper to get out the vote for “Dubya”. Wearing red blazers and wielding buttons, balloons and bumper stickers, they try to convince ordinary Americans to give Bush four more years.

Worried that he might have made it too easy for himself, posing as a neoconservative in a democratic nation like the US, Brügger next came up with the idea of going to North Korea.



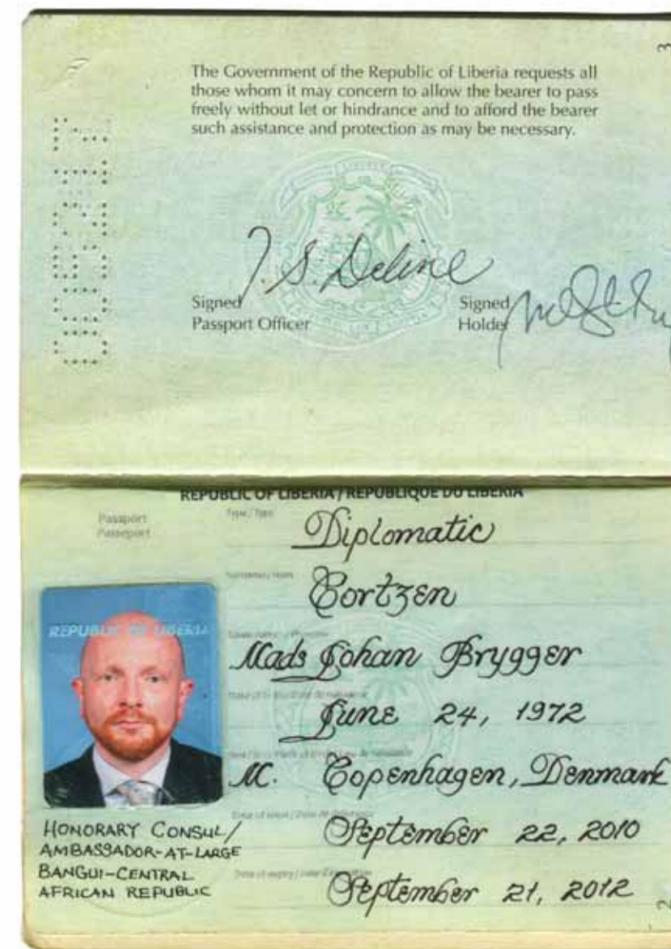
Danes for Bush Photo: DR TV

### The Red Chapel (2009)

Mads Brügger travels to North Korea with a spastic actor and a comedian as a small communist theatre troupe on a cultural exchange visit. In reality, it’s all a pretext. Their true aim is to describe, from within, how a dictatorship affects everything and everybody on a micro-cosmic level. *The Red Chapel* met with both fascination and criticism when it first aired on DR. Its blend of black humour and mortal seriousness made the TV series a cult hit in Denmark, though some expressed concern that the North Koreans might be punished now that the troupe had revealed its real mission. The subsequent film version won The World Cinema Documentary Competition at Sundance 2010.



The Red Chapel Photo: René Johannsen



Mads Johan Brügger Cortzen's diplomatic passport

# SOVEREIGNTY FOR SALE

**The Ambassador exposes a particularly dark side of global capitalism, says Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen who has studied the game of diplomatic titles brokerage.**

BY THOMAS GAMMELTOFT-HANSEN

Diplomatic immunity. Along with becoming a world-famous chef this was probably one of my most recurring childhood fantasies and, I am guessing, of Mads Brügger too. As a grown-up I still thoroughly envy those who are able to flash their diplomatic passport

when they pass me at the airport immigration line. The fascination with the notion of diplomatic immunity is that it grants you the possibility to move outside the ordinary game rules. Who doesn’t remember the South African diplomat in *Lethal Weapon 2* who indignantly invokes diplomatic immunity telling Riggs and Murtaugh that they cannot as much as give him a parking ticket, much less arrest him on charges of drug smuggling.

In *The Ambassador*, Mads Brügger walks a thin line between legal and illegal, reality and parody. Coming across as a mix between *Tintin’s* arch-nemesis

Rastapopoulos and the Man with the Yellow Hat from *Curious George*, Brügger’s factional character plays on all the postcolonial clichés. Yet, the fact that he supposedly holds diplomatic status makes his project eerily real, thereby giving the audience a glimpse into the normally impenetrable world of international diplomacy.

Brügger’s diplomatic papers allow him certain freedoms and protection, even in a country such as the Central African Republic. Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations anyone with full diplomatic status enjoys criminal immunity in the host country. On top of that the Convention provides that diplomats are allowed to carry a “diplomatic bag” intended for official use. In reality the “bag” is a flexible concept and may constitute anything from an envelope to a shipping container, the key point being that it cannot be searched or seized by immigration officers or any other law officials.

It is easy to see how diplomatic status provides the perfect setup for smuggling or other criminal activities. This is hardly limited to Africa however. There have been plenty of examples of serious abuse of diplomatic status in Europe and the United States, and in the City of London alone, for instance, embassies owe more than £30 million in unpaid parking and congestion charge fines.

Yet a diplomatic passport does not always equal a “get out of jail free” card. Looking at a recent example the United States, who never signed the Vienna Convention but applies a national statute, did not accept that the former head of the International Monetary Fund, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, had diplomatic immunity when he was charged with raping a maid, since his visit to New York was not in an official IMF capacity. Protection secondly depends on the continued support from the country issuing the diplomatic papers. Immunity belongs to the country, not the individual diplomat.

The notion that a diplomatic passport can be bought or sold just like anything else points to a key feature of Mads Brügger’s film and the world we live in today. Companies brokering diplomatic titles or, as is also the case, offering to take over diplomatic functions for small countries unable to keep up embassies around the world, is just one example of a much wider trend for states to basically sell off their sovereignty. The entire legal framework builds on the presumption that diplomats are the legitimate envoys of the sending state. Yet, the growing market for diplomatic passports suggests that more and more states are making

diplomatic titles available on a market basis to supplement the revenues of either corrupt officials and/or the government itself.

This “commercialisation of sovereignty” can be seen in a range of different areas. Liberia, the country from which Brügger obtained his papers, is incidentally also the world’s largest shipping nation. Since the 1960s Liberia has made a lucrative business of registering international ships under Liberian flag so they can avoid taxation, criminal prosecution and labor requirements otherwise applicable in the shipping company’s own country.

Similarly, commercial fishing along the West African coast is today dominated by European vessels since the EU has bought up national fishing quotas from these countries. A little further south the small island state of Sao Tome is making profits by renting out its phone lines to porn operators. And on the other side of Africa, Mauritius, inspired by places like Switzerland and the Cayman Islands, has become Africa’s leading tax haven.

The common theme to all these schemes is that governments are willing to sell or rent out what is otherwise considered an exclusive prerogative of the state itself. Traditionally, this has been considered either aberrations or a direct threat to states. Yet, the growth of these practices suggests that states are increasingly succumbing to global market mechanisms. Rather than trying to control and constrain these forces, governments spend more and more time figuring out ways to play the sovereignty game in such a way to attract international capital or avoid political and legal constraints.

Again, this is nothing unique to the developing world. From the privatisation of prisons and military services to the offshoring of terrorist detention and immigration control both Europe and the US are actively engaged in similar practices of bartering off and outsourcing otherwise core sovereign functions.

Most of the time, these practices are carried out far away from the public’s eye. The rare thing about Brügger’s film is that it exposes a particularly dark side of global capitalism where the line between public and private, business and government, is not only blurred but on occasion completely erased ■

*Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen is a Research fellow at the Danish Institute for International Studies and co-author of Sovereignty Games: Instrumentalizing State Sovereignty in Europe and Beyond, Palgrave-MacMillan, 2008.*

# A KISS WITH A PRICE TAG

Lise Birk Pedersen's fascination with Russia grew as she discovered another side to the poverty-stricken reality that she already knew so well. *Putin's Kiss*, selected for IDFA competition, portrays a generation of privileged youth in Putin's Russia who believe in the future but are caught in their leader's iron grip on the country.

BY ANNA BRIDGWATER

*Putin's Kiss* opens with footage from a youth camp in Russia: thousands of smiling young people partying in bright sunshine. The next scene is grainy CCTV footage of a violent episode in a city at night: a group of men kicking a figure lying crumpled on the ground.

A documentary about modern Russia under President Vladimir Putin, *Putin's Kiss* is full of contrasts: violence and happy young people, grey concrete apartment blocks and glittering skyscrapers, choreographed mass demonstrations and critical opposition voices.

One of the young people at the youth camp is Masha, the documentary's charming protagonist. The camp is organised by Putin's youth movement Nashi, and as we meet her in the opening sequence, Masha is one of the movement's leaders. The storyteller in the film is the liberal journalist Oleg Kashin who becomes friends with Masha and who plays an increasingly crucial role as the story progresses.

## RUSSIAN CONTRASTS

"When Nashi members throw posters of their enemies on the ground and stomp on them, to me it bears a frightening resemblance to other fanatic youth organisations of the past. Nashi is on the one hand represented by Masha's smiling face, and on the other hand is completely paranoid and has a goal that

nothing can be allowed to challenge the regime," the film's director, Lise Birk Pedersen, says.

Pedersen takes us to nouveau-riche Russia as well as to the drab universe left over from the Soviet days. We meet chic citizens with manicures and laptops, as well as pale, hunched-over young people transported like cattle to mass demonstrations. The director consciously attempted to capture Russia's contradictions in her documentary's aesthetics.

"I try to take in everything I see. Then I try to communicate my impressions to make the film visually mirror the narrative. My photographer, Lars Skree, and I worked hard to show the contrasts that make up modern Russia."

Pedersen first became aware of Russia's contrasts in 2008 while shooting the documentary *Nastya's Heart*. The film is about a troubled teenage girl in a halfway house in Saint Petersburg, but while she was filming, the director encountered a completely different side of Russia.

"I had never seen so many expensive cars or women in expensive clothes before. We went to clubs and met young people living it up. I was surprised at how much energy the city contained. I saw that there was another side to the poverty-stricken Russia I knew, and I wanted to explore that aspect of the country.

"I was already making *Nastya's Heart*, and I wanted to talk with other girls from the same generation to show the huge divide in the country. So I took a

*"When Nashi members throw posters of their enemies on the ground and stomp on them, to me it bears a frightening resemblance to other fanatic youth organisations of the past."*

research trip, where I focused on young people who were born 20 years ago, around the time the Soviet Union fell apart."

## PUTIN, I LOVE YOU

Eastern Europe, and especially Russia, has always fascinated Pedersen. Her fascination only grew when she met the country's privileged youth.

"Meeting Masha and the organisation Nashi was a huge eye-opener. Nashi is very seductive. Their headquarters were entirely done in red and white, and their flag and logo were absolutely everywhere. Then Masha sat down in front of me and said, 'Our plan is to turn Russia into the global leader of the 21st century.'"

The film owes its title to an episode at a youth meeting where Masha got up, went over to Putin and kissed him on the cheek.

"There is obviously a duality in the kiss. Was it a good or bad thing for her? Masha got something out



Masha in *Putin's Kiss* Photo: Lars Skree

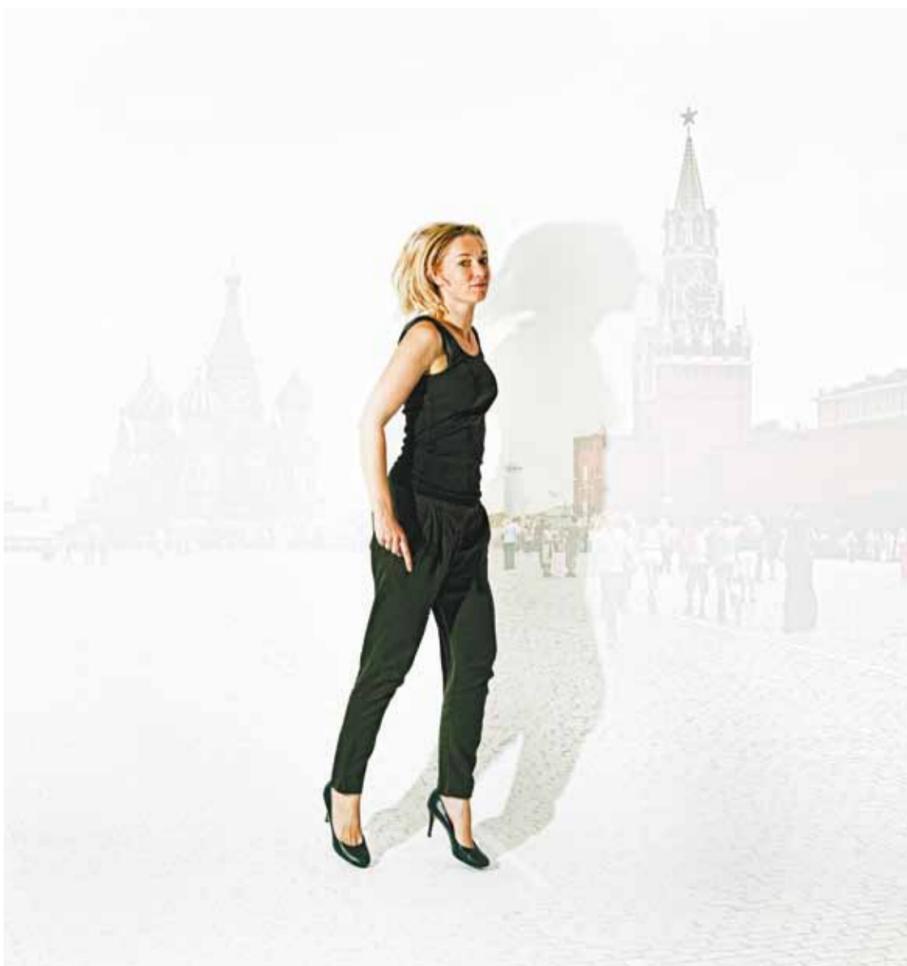


Masha with her family in *Putin's Kiss* Photo: Lars Skree

**Masha, a spokesperson for the political youth movement Nashi, comes to doubt the true ideals of the movement. The film traces the seductive powers of Nashi and Masha's growing unease. It all started with one bold kiss ...**



Putin's Kiss Photo: Lars Skree



Director Lise Birk Pedersen Photo: Per Morten Abrahamsen

of it, but at the same time total loyalty is expected. It was a kiss with a price attached," Pedersen says.

"Masha gets a good job at a television station. She has a car and her own apartment, while most people her age in Russia are still living with their parents."

The director is convinced that seduction is a

deliberate strategy in Nashi, where Putin is idolised like a rock star.

"Students from the Moscow State University's school of journalism made a calendar to celebrate Putin's birthday. In it, scantily dressed girls say, 'Putin, I love you' and 'Putin, you're simply the best.'

*"There is obviously a duality in the kiss. Was it a good or bad thing for her? Masha got something out of it, but at the same time total loyalty is expected."*

This form of communication is deeply rooted in Russia. Criticism isn't popular. There can only be one way forward, and that way is decided by Putin."

#### AN EDUCATION

Masha's transformation from enthusiastic Putin-supporter to her seriously doubting Nashi's methods forms the narrative backbone of *Putin's Kiss*.

"Masha meets a critical journalist, Oleg, and although he and Masha are very different, they become friends and can discuss their differences. The film charts her education," Pedersen says.

"We see Masha at Nashi and as she faces a number of moral dilemmas. At one point, she is forced to turn in some of her new liberal journalist friends to the authorities, and she suddenly becomes aware that the organisation she is so deeply involved in has a dark side. She is told that she has to choose between Nashi and her new friends. An impossible choice for Masha."

Masha is seduced by Putin's power and by the material rewards for her work for Nashi. But the seduction has a downside, and rejecting the seducer is not a popular option. In the documentary, we experience at close hand the extreme dangers you face criticising the regime, when one of the characters almost gets beaten to death.

In *Putin's Kiss*, the roles of hero and villain are clearly defined, as Pedersen is well aware. "It's hard to avoid portraying Nashi as the villain and the opposition as the good guys. After all, I live in Denmark, I believe in democracy, and that's apparent in the film. So, although both sides speak their minds, I'm the one making the movie. No one can totally leave their background behind."

At the end of the day, Pedersen says, this is also what the film is about: "Russia is still marked by its communist past. You don't throw that away in a single generation. That kind of transformation takes time" ■

For more information on *Putin's Kiss* and *Nastya's Heart*, see reverse section.

#### LISE BIRK PEDERSEN

Born 1974, Denmark. A graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 2003. Has made three films touching on Russian themes: her graduation film *Margarita* about a Russian teenager immigrating to Denmark, *Nastya's Heart* about a transit home in Saint Petersburg, and *Putin's Kiss* about a new generation of privileged youth, selected for IDFA competition.

#### MADE IN COPENHAGEN

*Putin's Kiss* is produced by Helle Faber of Made in Copenhagen, while Monday Production holds the rights. Helle Faber has produced a number of noteworthy documentaries, including IDFA and Sundance winner *Enemies of Happiness*, *Shanghai Space* and *The Dark Side of Chocolate*. Find more on Helle Faber's latest productions *Au Pair*, *The Samurai Case* and *Putin's Kiss*, in reverse section. [www.madeincopenhagen.net](http://www.madeincopenhagen.net)

# PUTIN'S YOUNG ELITES AND THUGS



Masha meets Vladimir Putin Photo: Polfoto/Ria Novosti

**Putin's Kiss offers a rare look at Nashi, the Russian youth movement that's even more interesting to examine now that its great icon, Vladimir Putin, is set to return as president of Russia.**

BY VIBEKE SPERLING

Numerous commentators, inside and outside of Russia, have described Nashi as Putin's "Hitler Youth". Indeed, elements of the movement act as storm troopers, attacking "enemies of Russia", the opposition to Putin.

Nashi gangs bash opposition members with clubs and baseball bats. Other times, they defecate on their cars. Nashi's agenda is not just to support the system Putin has created. The gangs on the organisation's extreme wing seek to terrorise the opposition into silence by using violence, and they are rarely put off by police intervention.

Nonetheless, Nashi also counts well-

mannered, articulate, ambitious young Russians like 19-year-old Masha, the protagonist of *Putin's Kiss*. A Nashi commissar and spokesperson, Masha is a middle-class girl from a Russian family that sporadically resides in the provinces, an altogether typical family. Masha is attracted by the career opportunities that membership in Nashi opens up, an express elevator to the heights of power. Joining the organisation at 16 and quickly rising through the ranks, Masha became the protégé of the minister of youth and Putin awarded her a medal. It was during a visit by Putin to the Nashi summer camp that Masha kissed him.

The otherwise reserved Putin obviously has a thing about kissing himself. He once kissed a horse and a tiger on TV. But judging from the reactions, he crossed the line when he pulled up the shirt of five-year-old Nikita on the street and kissed him on the belly. "It's not about homophobia. When a father does that to his son, it's sweet and fine. But kissing a random

*Nashi sees itself as a young creative elite in the new Russia dominated by Putin. In the opposition's view, "Nashi is crippling the morality of young people".*

kid on the stomach is abnormal and bizarre," someone wrote in a heated online discussion. Others considered it an expression of "Putin's enormous love for his people". As Putin himself explained it, he acted spontaneously and simply couldn't help himself.

Like Masha, Nikita refuses to wash away Putin's kiss. At the summer camp, everyone talked about "the girl who kissed Putin".

After losing an election to Nashi's leadership to a candidate who puts the fight against Russia's enemies at the top of his programme, Masha begins to doubt the movement she is in. She meets people with other political outlooks, notably the journalist Oleg Kashin, at a TV debate. Although they disagree wildly, they become close friends.

Masha's friendship with Oleg causes her no end of trouble at Nashi. All of a sudden, she is an enemy spy. She is greeted with suspicion in Oleg's circle, as well. When Oleg is attacked by "unknown assailants", Masha realises she can't keep leading a double life.

*Putin's Kiss* is the story of Russia's politicised youth. Meanwhile, the vast majority of young Russians stay away from politics. Nashi sees itself as a young creative elite in the new Russia dominated by Putin. In the opposition's view, "Nashi is crippling the morality of young people".

While youth from the opposition yell "Russia without Putin", Nashi yells "Forward Russia" and "Fight

Russia's enemies". The organisation is fighting for Putin's plan to rebuild the superpower. Nashi's young lions vie to be like Putin and get closest to the Kremlin trough.

As in the rest of Russian society, paranoia is rampant in the youth movement, which thunders against Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution. Like the Kremlin, Nashi is concerned that inspiration from Ukraine will wash over Russia. Though that never came to pass, Nashi ramps up its rabid witch hunt against the opposition.

While very few young people join opposition movements, Nashi boasts around 70,000 members between the ages of 15 and 25. Nashi draws 30,000 youths to pro-regime demonstrations in Moscow and to its summer camps.

"Shitting in public is the essence of Nashi," an opposition leader states after finding faeces on his car. But Nashi is a hatchery for new leaders. Many Russian commentators have been pining for a generational change in Russian politics. The Nashi troops marching into the regime's top tiers, after serving some time as toadies and thugs for Putin, will usher in generational change without the generational change ■

*Vibeke Sperling is the Eastern European correspondent for the Danish daily Politiken. A former Moscow correspondent for the national broadcaster DR. Author of books about conditions in Eastern Europe.*

# DANCING WITH DEMONS

For two years, co-directors Christian Bonke and Andreas Koefoed tracked former International Latin World Champion Slavik Kryklyvyy as he struggled to get back to the top. For the Ukrainian ballroom king, it's a battle not just against his rivals but also against his own inner demons. *Ballroom Dancer* is competing at IDFA.

BY ANDERS BUDTZ-JØRGENSEN

The spotlight outlines the silhouette of a man sitting on the dance floor. Violins fill the room with a mournful Russian air. A young woman enters. The rhythm changes. The dance begins and no emotion is too over the top. The show is on.

When Christian Bonke and Andreas Koefoed were introduced to the strange world of ballroom dancing a couple of years ago, they were filled with fascination and wonder at the abundance of sequins and shaved chests. The stage was set for a drama about winning gold as well as love. When they met the athletic, temperamental dancer Slavik Kryklyvyy, they knew they had a natural protagonist for their film. He simply outshined everyone else.

"Slavik was discovered rather late, at age 19. Within a year and a half, he was the best in the world. No one ever shot to the top so quickly before. He came out of left field and won the world championship," Koefoed says. But Slavik's reign was brief and for the next 10 years, with changing dance partners, he has tried, and failed, to get back on top.

*Ballroom Dancer* follows Slavik in his all-out assault on the world championship. His partner this time, Anna Melnikova, is also his girlfriend. But the trophies elude them and soon events are spinning out of control, both on and off the dance floor.

"He's probably the most talented dancer in the world. He's just not making the most of it, because his personal demons and internal resistance are always tripping him up. And he is so driven to win that he neglects his love for Anna," Bonke says.

Little by little, he pushes Anna away with his constant hectoring and perfectionism in front of the dance studio mirror. Nothing is ever good enough for him.

## DIRECTION IMPOSSIBLE

*Ballroom Dancer* is the two directors' first project together and

both say the collaboration was seamless. Bonke graduated in directing from the National Film School of Denmark in 2005. Since then, he has made a string of documentaries on subjects ranging from teenage love to realtors. Koefoed, who graduated in 2009, is already a veteran at IDFA. He has taken no fewer than four films to the festival over the last three years and also served on the jury for the Student Competition.

*Ballroom Dancer* is the first feature-length documentary for either. Though they both like to use direction in their documentaries, this production was very different. They had planned on helping the story along in various ways, for instance by asking Slavik and Anna to discuss certain subjects, but Slavik was so focused on himself and his dancing that that was never possible.

"We started out writing scenes for a kind of script, imagining the coolest possible story, so we would be dressed to get the scenes we wanted. But we never got a single one of the scenes we made up. We never even got close to asking them to do anything for us," Koefoed says. "However, the script gave us clarity about what kind of turning points we needed in order to let the story unfold."

Because they also chose not to do any interviews or other explanatory narrative elements, the two filmmakers had to work hard in the editing room to create understanding in the audience.

"We wanted the film to look like a fiction film. Everything should be told in scenes. We filmed it like a very pure documentary, but we cut it like a fiction film," Koefoed says.

Though they lacked the opportunity to apply direction, the two filmmakers had almost unlimited access to the two dancers' lives.

"Slavik is a very generous protagonist. We had extreme access to his life. We went with him everywhere and he only asked us to turn off the camera once or twice, even when he and Anna were breaking up. We went along for the whole ride as flies on the wall," Bonke says.

## PAYS A HEAVY PRICE

The dance floor is the stage of the performance, but the real drama is played out in the relationship between front stage and back stage. Life off-stage is a far cry from the polished dance floor.

"Those forced smiles are a wonder to behold. For most of the film, Slavik and Anna are not getting along at all off stage, but they still have to go on stage and act like they are madly in love, faking it the whole way through," Koefoed says.

"The world of ballroom dancing is an amazing scene, where the dancers are professional partners as well as lovers. It has drama and it is a very visual environment. The dance contests add a natural dramatic effect to the film, but we deliberately tried to ramp that down to avoid losing focus on the love story," Bonke says.

"It was essential to find a balance between the film's two main elements, dance and love. Both elements had to be in play. For Slavik, there was never a separation between dance and love," Koefoed confirms.

"It was a challenge to present Slavik in a way that would make the audience identify with him, because he is so tough and radical. Even so, there is something about him that most modern, ambitious men will probably recognise. High achievers who sometimes forget the girl at their side," Bonke says.

As the filming progressed, Slavik grew increasingly lonely. His world championship dreams were fading and Anna left him for a wealthy Lithuanian.

"His life fell apart and we were extremely close to everything. At the end, he called us up and asked us to come to



*Ballroom Dancer*. Framegrab

*"It was a challenge to present Slavik in a way that would make the audience identify with him, because he is so tough and radical. Even so, there is something about him that most modern, ambitious men will probably recognise."*

Cologne where he was doing solo training, because he had to tell someone about the heavy price he was paying for letting his love slip away," Koefoed says ■

For further information on *Ballroom Dancer*, see reverse section.

## ANDREAS KOEFOED

Born 1979, Denmark. A graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 2009, and in sociology from Copenhagen University, 2004. His short films *A Day in the Smoke* (2008), *12 Notes Down* (2008), *Albert's Winter* (2009) and *Pig Country* (2010) have all been selected for IDFA, followed this year by *Ballroom Dancer*, Koefoed's first feature-length documentary and co-directed with Christian Bonke.

## CHRISTIAN BONKE

Born 1973, Denmark. A graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 2005, and in multimedia design from Mouse, 1994. Films include *Between Peaks* (2004), *First Love* (2007), and *Real Estate* (2008). *Ballroom Dancer* is Bonke's first feature-length documentary and co-directed with Andreas Koefoed.

## DANISH DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION

See page 21.



Directors Andreas Koefoed and Christian Bonke Photo: Erika Svensson

Slavik, once the world's number one Latin dancer, has teamed up with his new lover Anna to make one final attempt to regain his title. Following their struggle on and off stage, *Ballroom Dancer* offers a rare glimpse into the glittering world of ballroom dancing.



The Will Photo: Henrik Ernst Steffensen



Henrik (driving) and his brother in The Will. Framegrab

Henrik's life is in a shambles. It's been going that way for years. With no job, no money, a wife that left him, Henrik, although sardonic about it at times, is at his wits end. But now his granddad just died, and he stands to inherit a fortune. A film fuelled by a darkly shaded family story akin to Vinterberg's *The Celebration*.

# THE INHERITANCE

**Diving deep into the intimate life of its protagonist, *The Will* is a documentary with all the energy and presence of a narrative film. We watch a guy have sex, crash his car, be disowned by his father and much more. How far can a documentary go in terms of revealing the most intimate details of someone's life? Per Juul Carlsen put the question to *The Will*'s director, Christian Sønderby Jepsen, who takes a long, hard think before answering.**

BY PER JUUL CARLSEN

41.76 seconds. That's how long he takes to think about it, as he stares up at the ceiling of his kitchen in Copenhagen. Maybe Christian Sønderby Jepsen is rewinding back to the weeks he spent filming in Skals, at the far end of the country, in "marginal Denmark". Maybe he's thinking about all the days he spent probing every recess of Henrik Steffensen's private life, documenting every little piece of the puzzle, every burnt-out joint, every empty beer bottle, every text message.

Maybe he realises that he is dealing with one of the most critical questions of the X Factor age, when everyone wants to be intimate in the media and the media wants to know every intimate detail. Maybe he just doesn't know how to answer the question, "Was anything too private to include in your film?"

#### ATTENDING A FUNERAL ON RECOVERY BEER

It's not a simple question. In *The Will*, Jepsen gets to live out his old dream of making a documentary of events as they unfold. The film follows Henrik, a young man biding his time as he waits for an inheritance from his grandfather, who made millions running a seaside hotel on the north coast of Germany. Ever since Henrik and his older brother, Christian, were little, they have heard endless stories of the fortune they had coming to them. Over time, the inheritance became a fairytale castle where they would live happily ever after.

When *The Will* opens, Henrik and his brother are speeding to their grandfather's funeral in Henrik's car,

with breathless eyes and buzzed on "recovery beers". They are about to bury a family member whose death they have been looking forward to their whole lives. That sets the tone. For the next hour and a half, we follow Henrik as he struggles to get his hands on his jackpot, his "dream castle" that's probably why he never really got a move on in life. He is unemployed and uneducated, his wife has left him and he is up to his eyeballs in debt, just waiting out the clock until his big payday.

#### STRAIGHT OUT OF A SOAP OPERA

"This is a really important story about unhappy people on the margins of the nation," Jepsen says. "There are a lot of great themes: the rags-to-riches dream, the human search for something greater and the family conflicts that the inheritance catalyses."

Only a few minutes into *The Will*, it becomes apparent that Henrik's family is like something straight out of an American soap opera, regardless of the thick Jutlandic burr. Passing a pile of chopped-down trees on his way to his father's farm, he quips that it reminds him of Isengard, the fortress of the evil wizard Saruman in *The Lord of the Rings*. When the farm appears on the horizon, he dryly states, "There's Fort Steffensen". These comments reveal three great qualities of *The Will*'s main character - his self-deprecating charm, his eye for dramaturgy and his willingness to reveal all, even the most intimate detail. The last quality, more than anything, is what gives Jepsen pause to think.



Director Christian Sønderby Jepsen Photo: Per Morten Abrahamsen

*“He told me he was ready to kill himself when we started the film. The film was a way for him to get it out. He’s a real performer.”*

“There were no boundaries in our relationship,” he says. “When he crashed his car and was bawling his eyes out, I asked him, ‘Is it okay if I film you now.’ And he said, ‘Sure, go ahead, this is one of the most important moments in my life.’”

#### DOC VERSION OF THE CELEBRATION

Henrik asked to be put on display. He responded to a listing asking for good stories from the real world that Jepsen and his production company, Bombay Bully, had posted on various websites, writing:

“I’m from a well-off family and my whole life growing up was full of letdowns and scandal. Now my grandfather is dying and I stand to inherit millions. A new beginning?”

Jepsen, who comes from that part of the country, flew to Skals on the Danish mainland of Jutland and found that the story was growing in intensity every day. Faced with this unfolding family drama, he got the idea to make a documentary counterpart to Thomas Vinterberg’s classic *The Celebration*. It’s hard to say anything other than he has reached his goal. *The Will* is a documentary, but it has the engine of a narrative film, thanks to its protagonist’s dramatic flair and desire to disclose *everything*.

Two scenes, in particular, have a dramatic construction that would get nods of respect in a narrative film. One comes at a point when the audience assume that Henrik and his brother always stick together. Christian, a recovering drug addict, calls up and tells Henrik that he “never cared much for Ceci”, Henrik’s wife. He

doesn’t know she’s listening in. The friction between Henrik and his brother not only adds fuel to an already inflamed family dynamic, it is also extremely cringe worthy. Yet no one turns to Jepsen and asks him to turn off the camera.

#### DISOWNING YOUR SON BY TEXT

Equally cruel is the sequence where Henrik’s father disowns him. A trained screenwriter might contrive a scene where the father barges in, crushing the last remnants of his son’s self-worth in an argument that ends with the son stabbing his father to death with a kitchen knife.

*The Will* presents a much more powerful solution: Henrik’s father sends him a lousy text message, informing him that he doesn’t want to see him anymore. Henrik holds his phone up to the camera, half laughing, half crying, showing us the full text.

Disowning your son by text speaks volumes about the father’s mindset. Later on, Henrik shows us videos from a *Bildungs*-trip to Thailand that the father took his two boys on. In one video, a prostitute is sucking Henrik’s fully erect member. In another, they are having intercourse on a sofa. It comes as no surprise when Henrik shows us photos of his parents’ wedding and says that his mother married a “demon” who drove her to fatal alcoholism.

*The Will* is about to be unleashed in Danish cinemas and at IDFA, the world’s most important documentary film festival. Is it healthy for someone to witness the world’s reactions to scenes of him

having explicit sex in Thailand and being disowned by his father?

“Henrik told me that one of the first things he did after meeting Ceci was show her the videos from Thailand. If he had shut himself up in a little bubble, his demons would just have kept growing,” Jepsen says. “He told me he was ready to kill himself when we started the film. The film was a way for him to get it out. He’s a real performer. He used to dream about becoming an actor. A lot of people with his kind of history do. They want to be seen and heard.”

Back to the question Jepsen took so long to answer. Was anything too private to include in *The Will*?

“No. The ethics was: If it’s the truth to Henrik and everyone else, it’s going in the film,” Jepsen finally says. “I could have gone much further with Henrik, but I saw no reason to.”

That’s worth thinking about for 41.76 seconds ■

For further information on *The Will*, see reverse section.

#### CHRISTIAN SØNDERBY JEPSEN

Born 1977, Denmark. Graduated in TV-documentary at the National Film School of Denmark, 2007. *Side by Side* (2008), a film about rivalry between neighbours, has screened at a host of venues, including the Toronto Hot Docs, and was honoured at film festivals in Indianapolis, Reykjavik and Leipzig. *The Will* (2011), selected for IDFA, is the director’s first feature-length documentary.

#### COPENHAGEN BOMBAY

Founded 2006 by producer Sarita Christensen and director Anders Morgenthaler. Holds a specific focus on films for children and young people and on crossmedia. Produced documentaries by Michael Noer, *Vesterbro* (2007) and *The Wild Hearts* (2008). First two feature films are the animated *The Apple & The Worm* (Anders Morgenthaler, 2009), and *The Great Bear* (Esben Toft Jacobsen, 2011). *The Will* (2011) by Christian Sønderby Jepsen is selected for IDFA. www.copenhagenbombay.com

# IN SEARCH OF LOVE

Jennifer in *Love Addict* Photo: Danish Documentary Production

**Love is a powerful feeling. To some, even destructive. Pernille Rose Grønkjær travelled to America and met Jennifer, Eliza, Tracy, Christian and other love addicts. In her film she tells their stories and explores the all-consuming nature of love when it has become a drug.**

**After her success with *The Monastery*, it was a challenge for Pernille Rose Grønkjær to start her next film. But a development grant from the Danish Film Institute allowed her to work in depth with her cinematic language and explore aesthetic strategies from the world of fiction to create a powerful story about a group of love addicts.**

BY EVA NOVRUP REDVALL

How do you move on after making a successful film like *The Monastery*? Finding a new film was a challenge for Pernille Rose Grønkjær after she won the Joris Ivens Award at IDFA in 2006 and was launched on a year-long tour of festivals with her tale of old Mr Vig and his dream of converting a ramshackle Danish castle into a monastery. When she finally touched back down in Danish reality, she started out by continuing *The Monastery*'s theme.

"I had found another old man and started filming. But the moment I turned on the camera, I knew it was wrong for me. I had been there and was not curious. It felt like I was done with the theme for now. Luckily, my producer could see it, too, and she helped me find a new direction," Grønkjær says when we meet to discuss how she developed her new film, *Love Addict*.

Grønkjær is a founder of the production company Danish Documentary, with producer Sigrud Dyekjær and fellow directors Eva Mulvad, Mikala Krogh and Phie Ambo. A huge advantage of sharing a base is having colleagues who know you well and want you to grow as a director, Grønkjær adds.

#### THE DRAMATURGICAL LAYER

For starters, Grønkjær put away her camera and let curiosity reign. The research phase initially was about different forms of dependency and gambling. Then she stumbled on an Arizona rehab centre that treated "love addiction" and she knew it was a subject she couldn't ignore.

"I had never heard about the term 'love addict' before. Why does love for some people become a dependency? And do they really need treatment for it? I started collecting information from different therapists. I wanted to find a professional path into the material and avoid the tabloid angle of extreme cases."

Based on this extensive research, Grønkjær started considering a possible structure for her film. She called in the dramaturgical consultant Jens Arentzen, who also contributed to the script for *The Monastery*, and they discussed how to make a thematic film with a large cast of characters feel like a single story is being told.

"*The Monastery* had the clear momentum of a project

that would either succeed or fail. *Love Addict* is more about recognition."

She and Arentzen arrived at a solution where the film would track the progress of a single love addict, or of her dependency, if you will, via encounters with many different addicts.

"Along the way, the film would uncover a variety of aspects but viewed as a single process. Also, we wanted the audience to identify with the story from the get-go. The thematic has to grip you before the storylines intensify."

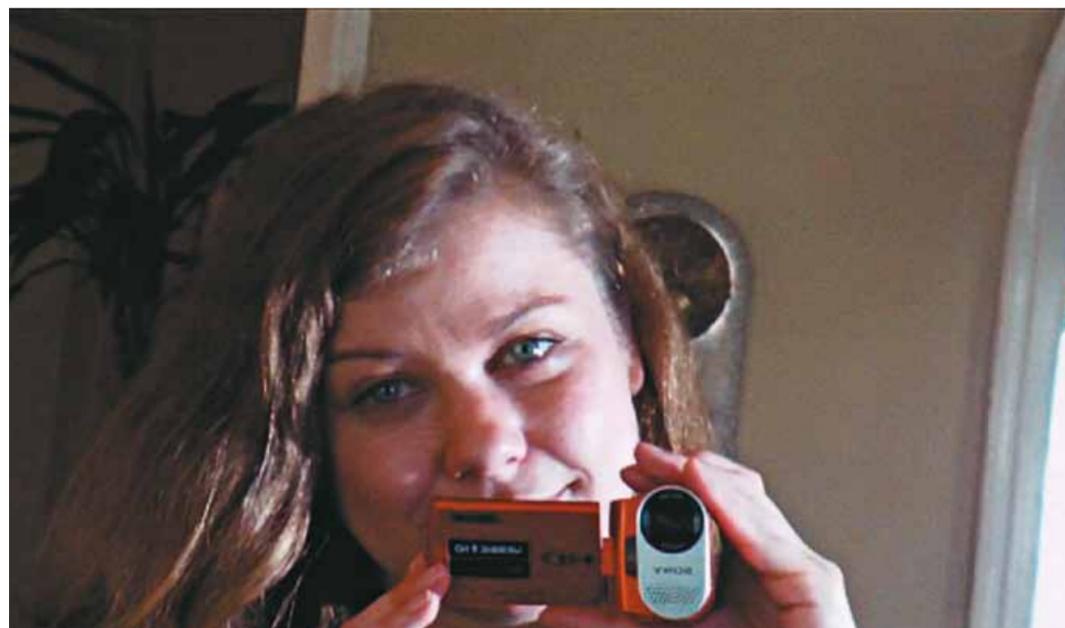
#### THE ETHICAL LAYER

As they batted around themes and dramaturgy, they decided to locate the film's core in the contemplations and insights that arise during the encounters with the people in the film. This then led to questions of the best way to film people to make the environments contribute to the storytelling. Where would they be discussing their experiences? Should they be filmed separately or together?

These reflections also touched on the film's ethical layer. How do you film people who feel bad about their dependency? The ethical discussions introduced the idea of staging certain scenes, which was put into play after Grønkjær met a young recovered love addict with acting experience. This was the motivation for adding a fictional layer to the film.

"Eliza is real and she draws on her own experiences. Her acting background made it possible to create an arc that moved the story forward. Also, I wanted to include the stalker element, but for moral reasons I didn't want to be hiding in the bushes with the camera. So, we could use Eliza's experiences to create something that's very close to reality, and that was really exciting to work with."

*"Eliza is real and she draws on her own experiences. Her acting background made it possible to create an arc that moved the story forward."*



Eliza in *Love Addict* Photo: Danish Documentary Production



Tracy in *Love Addict* Photo: Danish Documentary Production



Christian in *Love Addict* Photo: Danish Documentary Production

*"The development work allowed us to create a common language before we started shooting. The talks take root, so you have a much better idea of what you're looking for."*

#### THE VISUAL LAYER

A development grant from the Danish Film Institute, which made Grønkjær's extensive research and structuring of the film possible, allowed her to involve other creative parties to strengthen the visual format. This, for instance, enabled them to work in depth with the form of the interview situations and how they would blend reality and fiction. With her production designer, Niels Sejer, and her director of photography, Adam Philp, she developed a book of the film's visual strategies, exploring textures, colours and compositions for communicating moods like "loneliness," "normality" and "madness".

For Grønkjær, it was a gift to have a production designer on a documentary and time for nuanced conversations about lighting with a skilled DP.

"The development work allowed us to create a common language before you start shooting and have to react quickly. The talks take root, so you have a much better idea of what you're looking for," Grønkjær says. She was thrilled, for instance, to have had detailed conversations about what she calls the film's fantasy layer, which includes a scene of a young girl in a forest looking for Prince Charming.

"When you talk with love addicts, you notice all the references to childhood. I wanted to include that as a layer in the film, also to offset the harshness of reality. We had to be careful not to make it too banal, so it was important to really think it through."

Adding yet another visual layer to the film, Eliza's storyline was inspired in part by the horror aesthetics of *The Blair Witch Project*. But the bulk of *Love Addict* is based on people's day-to-day lives, and the filmmakers put a lot of energy into giving the interview sequences multiple layers as well. The frame for one interview, for example, a bench in Central Park, is redolent with the romance of Indian summer, even as the conversation is about a couple and the problems they are having. Other interview setups work with lighting to put a halo around words uttered in bulky American lounge furniture.

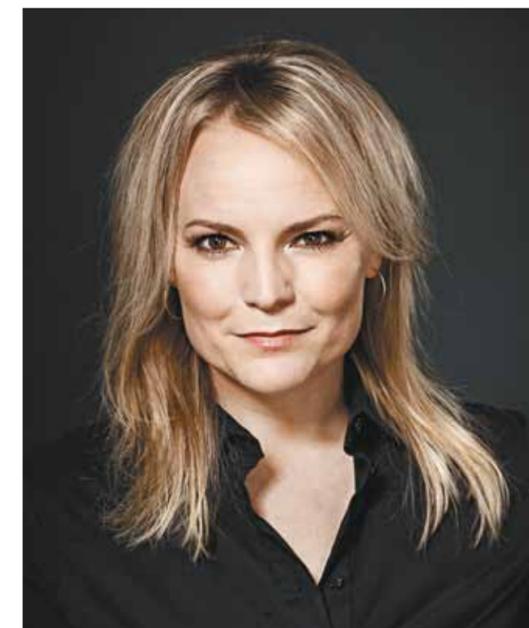
Looking back, Grønkjær was delighted with the development process for *Love Addict*. *The Monastery*, which she shot herself over a period of years, was a lonely process, so engaging in more dialogue has been constructive. And, Grønkjær adds, the early conversations about the film have been important not least in relation to working with a subject that requires you to tread carefully ■

#### PERNILLE ROSE GRØNKJÆR

Born 1973, Denmark. Graduated in documentary direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 1997. Co-owner of Danish Documentary Production. Director of the Joris Ivens awardwinner *The Monastery – Mr Vig and the Nun*, a story about old headstrong Mr Vig and a Russian nun whose paths cross in their common endeavour to turn an ancient, worn-out castle into a monastery. *Love Addict* is selected for IDFA 2011.

#### DANISH DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION

Founded 2007 by Eva Mulvad, Pernille Rose Grønkjær, and Phie Ambo, initially as a distribution platform for the directors' award-winning films *Enemies of Happiness*, *The Monastery* and *Mechanical Love*. Were later joined by producer Sigrud Dyekjær and director Mikala Krogh. Eva Mulvad's *The Good Life*, winner of the Best Documentary Award in Karlovy Vary, and Phie Ambo's *The Home Front* were both selected for competition at IDFA 2010, followed this year by Andreas Koefoed and Christian Bonke's *Ballroom Dancer* (see page 14) and Pernille Rose Grønkjær's *Love Addict*. [www.danishdocumentary.com](http://www.danishdocumentary.com)



Director Pernille Rose Grønkjær. Photo: Ty Stange

When Angus the hospital clown meets Tobias who is ill with cancer, a powerful relationship builds between them. Through Ida Grøn's ever observant camera lens, we witness a world full of contrast as Angus helps Tobias take on the fight against the cancer.



Tobias and Angus in *The Kid and the Clown* Photo: Ida Grøn

**Making *The Kid and the Clown*, Ida Grøn was tiptoeing through an ethical minefield. In her documentary about a hospital clown and Tobias, a boy with cancer, the director was determined not to reduce her protagonists to vehicles for conveying her own message.**

# STORY BEFORE EGO

BY NANNA FRANK RASMUSSEN

"I felt so mean. I kept asking myself whether it wasn't actually cruel to keep filming Tobias when he was in so much pain. Did the message justify my acts?"

Shooting *The Kid and the Clown* raised a lot of ethical questions for documentary filmmaker Ida Grøn that she is still debating. As an added challenge, she had nobody, apart from Angus, the hospital clown of the film, to share her experiences with for the first five months of a process that went on for nearly two years. Setting out to film as vulnerable a process as that of a child undergoing treatment for cancer, Grøn says, you have to ask yourself if what you're doing is for the sake of the film or the people in it. Scenes that give the audience goose bumps and knots in the stomach might traumatise the people portrayed.

"I'm pretty sure Tobias had no experience of me filming him in certain situations, because he was so far gone in his pain. But I still think it's hard to reach

any conclusion about whether it came at his expense a little bit," Grøn says. Nonetheless, she has the support of Tobias' parents. She remains in touch with them and they are convinced Tobias will appreciate the film when he gets older. For now, he just likes being a movie star.

When Tobias had a relapse after a year and a half of treatment, for long periods of time he was hovering between life and death. "I asked his parents several times if they wanted me to stop filming, but Tobias' mother wanted the film to include those times when everything was going south," Grøn says. "I don't think it would be respectful to them, either, or what they're going through, if you don't also show how incredibly hard it is. And I couldn't just let the film leave Tobias, as if I didn't care now that he was doing so badly."

## AN ADULT FRIEND

The premise of the film was to tell a story about the hospital clowns affiliated with the children's wards of



Director Ida Grøn Photo: Per Morten Abrahamsen

Danish hospitals. Though there is no scientific proof that having clowns around increases the chances of curing patients, there is no doubt in Grøn's mind that they perform an invaluable service. The engagement, and not least humour, with which a hospital clown meets a patient is priceless. "When everything else comes tumbling down, it's important that some things remain fixed. The hospital clown provides that stability," Grøn says. The clown becomes an adult friend. All he wants with the child is to play and be silly and listen. That way, the clown helps maintain a semblance of normality amid all the chaos.

Angus the Clown's real name is Ewan MacKinnon. Originally from Scotland, he has been employed as a clown in the children's ward of Skejby Hospital, Denmark's second-largest hospital, since 2001. *The Kid and the Clown* includes a video diary of MacKinnon describing what it's like to be so close to terminally ill children. Including those he has to say goodbye to forever.

"I had to get Angus to open up. He's so good at

keeping himself contained," Grøn says. To bring out a more vulnerable aspect of the clown, she left him alone in a room with a camera. Even then, she still had to push him beyond his limits at times to get workable footage.

"I needed him to confront himself and his own vulnerability. So I asked him specific questions and told him not to say anything for the first five minutes that the camera was rolling to really give him time to feel himself. Then I left the room, leaving him alone with the camera, and stood outside the door feeling incredibly cruel," she smiles.

## OBSERVATIONAL FILM

The line between right and wrong in the filming process is a theme Grøn keeps returning to in our conversation. She mentions compassion, engagement and respect as the over-arching feelings she was trying to portray and communicate. They also provided a lifeline at her moments of greatest doubt. The message should take precedence. But not if

it came at the expense of the people in the film. That was her mantra for *The Kid and the Clown*. In that regard, the form of the film was crucial. Loath to stick the "fly on the wall" label on her method, Grøn prefers to describe *The Kid and the Clown* as an observational film.

"The form was right at hand: an immediate, observant style that doesn't call any particular attention to the camera or the images themselves. Focusing more on me or using a conceptual style and expressive visuals, where the film would have called a lot of attention to itself as a film, would have prevented the audience from participating to the same degree. It would have created a distance between the audience and the events," she says.

"I use visual clichés, like the shot of Tobias looking out a window, because that's a language that's easy for a broad audience to read, and I want the film to have broad reach. People have told me it's like being there themselves, which is why it hurts."

## PARASITES ON REALITY

Does she consider it almost ethically indefensible for the filmmaker to call too much attention to herself when dealing with such a vulnerable subject?

"It's sensitive, that's for sure," she says. "I usually experiment a lot. In my class at film school, I was probably the one who experimented the most. But perhaps that's made me aware that there are times when it's not fair to your protagonists, or your message, to cram them, or it, into a too-tight form."

The director thinks there's a trend in today's documentary film of the personal voice shouting way too loudly. Maybe the fact that she went to film school in England has something to do with it. There's a British tradition of focusing more on socio-political subjects and looking out at society in general, rather than gazing down at your own navel. Grøn sees her documentary work as being ruled by a kind of idealism.

"Years ago, I actually thought of becoming a hospital clown myself," she says. "I figured if documentaries didn't pan out, I could be a clown. I was simply attracted to doing some good. I need to do some good."

*Can documentary filmmaking cover that need?*

"Yes, though we are also these parasites on reality. But I am driven by a kind of idealism. I want to give something back to the world. That's why it's so important for me that the message always outshine the filmmaker's ego. You shouldn't use your protagonists as brushes for painting your message. You should be their mouthpiece" ■

For further information on *The Kid and the Clown*, see reverse section.

## IDA GRØN

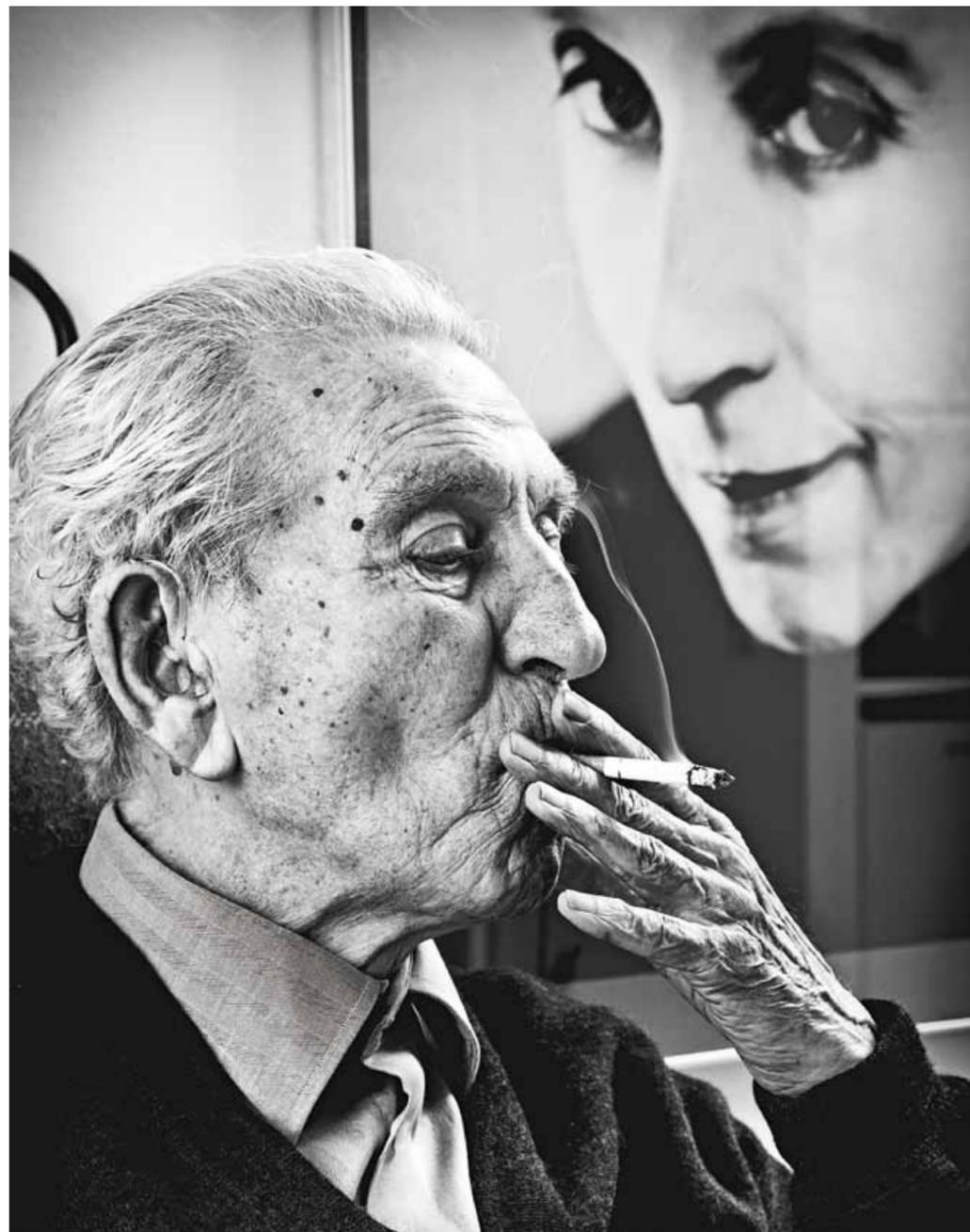
Born 1979, Denmark. Holds a MA in documentary directing from the National Film and Television School, UK, 2009, and a BA in Art History, Copenhagen, 2006. Has worked with various formats in documentary – poetic, experimental, observational, investigative. *The Kid and the Clown* (2011) is Ida Grøn's first documentary since her graduation.

## FINAL CUT FOR REAL

Founded 2009 by producer Signe Byrge Sørensen and Anne Köhncke, later joined by Monica Hellström. Among recent productions are *Football is God* by Ole Bendtzen, *Returned* by Marianne Hougen-Moraga, and *The Kid and the Clown* by Ida Grøn, selected for IDFA 2011. [www.final-cut.dk](http://www.final-cut.dk)

Karen Blixen, a charismatic figure in Danish literary history, once formed a bizarre friendship with the young man of letters Aage Henriksen. Now, many years later, Aage Henriksen's son Morten wants some answers. Why was he, as a young boy, made a confidant in his father's obsession to get behind Blixen's mask?

# KAREN BLIXEN'S MARK



Aage Henriksen and Karen Blixen Photo: Sune Magyar

**Director Morten Henriksen was just 10 years old when his father first involved him in his close personal relationship with the world-famous author Karen Blixen, also known by her pen name Isak Dinesen. Karen Blixen – Behind Her Mask is a dark, auto-therapeutic interview with the director's father, Aage Henriksen, a literature professor who suffered from life-long migraines after Blixen put her "mark" on him.**

BY LASSE LAVRSEN

Aage Henriksen had long since dropped out of touch with the much older Danish writer Karen Blixen, when she called him up one Sunday afternoon in 1958. For more than five years, he, like a number of other male Danish literati of his generation, had enjoyed a close, almost spiritual, relationship with the Danish author, who was 35 years his senior.

Ultimately, she had become so demanding and manipulative that he cut all ties to her. But now she was on her deathbed, she told him, and if he wanted to see her one last time, this was it.

Arriving at Rungstedlund, he found her laid up in bed. Sick and pale, weighing just 35 kilos, she was a feeble and dying old lady. But to Aage Henriksen, she looked just like the wolf in grandma's bed. Her face had a scarlet glow and a bright spot of light was flickering within the field. That's how Aage Henriksen saw it.

He sat on her bed and they talked in their old way about literature and her worlds, but within a few hours an odd silence crept up on them. They sat like that for a while, staring at each other, then Blixen broke the silence with a "Come on!". Not knowing exactly what was going to happen, he leaned

*Sick and pale, weighing just 35 kilos, she was a feeble and dying old lady. But to Aage Henriksen, she looked just like the wolf in grandma's bed.*

towards her and she gripped his neck with her long, white fingers, digging one finger so hard into his nape that a burning pain shot down his spine and his whole lower body cramped up. He wanted to say something, but she just asked him to leave.

## DAMAGED FOR LIFE

"She dislocated a vertebra in my neck," Aage Henriksen says more than 50 years later in *Karen Blixen – Behind Her Mask*, "and no chiropractor has been able to put it back since."

Blixen's mark begat chronic migraine attacks for Aage Henriksen that were a huge strain on the whole family, Morten Henriksen says today. For five years he has been working on this documentary about his father's relationship to Blixen.

"It disabled him. He would be in terrible pain for weeks and his head would be nodding like a bobble-head doll," Henriksen says.

"My mother never forgave Blixen for her relationship with my father. But I, who had become a part of it and wanted to understand, had to forgive her. That's why it was so important for me to make this film. To understand my father and free myself from him."

The film is a dark, auto-therapeutic interview with Aage Henriksen who tries to describe his deep personal relationship with the famous writer. How she came to mean so much to him and why he made his 10-year-old son his sole confidante.

"It's only now, when the film is finished and I have finally had a chance to question all the seams in the story," Henriksen says. "It was hugely liberating for me to be able to map this thing out, examining my dad at arm's length. I can hold up their relationship as a story now and that has demystified a lot of my memories. Also, I felt that I had some rights to this story, even if my father doesn't agree at all."

## A PACT WITH THE DEVIL

Blixen first sent for Aage Henriksen in the early 1950s. A young associate professor of literature at Lund University

in Sweden, he had written about Blixen's work and she asked him up to Rungstedlund. Deeply fascinated by the world-famous author, Aage Henriksen went to see her and they developed a close and confidential relationship. One day, when they were sitting on the veranda, this confidence took a turn for the unexpected.

"She looked at me and said, 'I am going to tell you something now that you cannot tell a soul,'" Aage Henriksen recalls in the film.

She told him that she had become ill in Africa and after travelling to Paris she was told that she was dying from syphilis. Blixen was whisked off to a hospital in Copenhagen and installed in a ward for tropical diseases, so no one would know the true nature of her condition. There she lay, all alone and lonesome, she told Aage Henriksen. Then one day it was like the air in the room thickened and she realized that she wasn't alone. The Devil was with her, she asserted, and ever since the Devil has been her best friend.

The Devil took away her sex life, but he gave her the ability to transform her life and her experiences into stories. She had made a pact, she said.

## THE CHOSEN ONE

"He who is told something for the first time that he can't tell anyone else feels chosen," Aage Henriksen says in the film. As he was drawn deeper and deeper into Blixen's occult universe, he too became increasingly obsessed with spirituality and magic.

He experienced supernatural phenomena, sought out spiritual milieus and cultivated mythic figures and Eastern mysticism. As Blixen confided in Aage Henriksen, so he confided to his son the secrets Blixen had told him. On long walks, he would talk to the boy about devil worship, moon dancing, faces aglow with infinite light, sexual powers and the strange clarity of vision he had gained by practicing yoga and opening up the so-called kundalini force at the bottom of the spine. All with emphatic admonitions not to tell anyone.

The stories Henriksen is probing in his film now have lain untouched since he was a child.

## THE GUILT OF COMPLICITY

As a child, Henriksen likewise thought of himself as his father's chosen one. Their relationship was special and it was he, not anyone else, who got to hear the stories about Blixen. Making the film has given him a more sober image of his relationship to his father.

"My mother didn't want to hear about Karen Blixen and my father didn't want to look like a madman in front of his friends. So it was probably less threatening and less compromising to tell these things to a child. His need and my curiosity came together."

*Were you ever angry that he confided these things in you?*

"Not because of what he confided in me. I did feel a kind of guilt of complicity, and I had no problem keeping mum. It was a bit like moving between different rooms. Of course, I was carrying some thoughts that weren't my own. But I also used to ask my dad a lot of questions about these things."

There is a point in the film where Aage Henriksen comes close to apologising to his son. Regret at probably having drawn his son too far into his relationship with the famous writer and at the inappropriateness of letting a child carry such secrets alone. But Henriksen was never looking for an apology.

"I think it was good to get all of this sorted out, and it has certainly demystified a few things for me. I now understand that it was all about him and Blixen, not me."

*Do you understand him?*

"It's hard to say. I was probably surprised at the radical decisions he made. He tells me several times over that he can never go back. Still, I'm surprised at the size of the losses he

was ready to suffer and how much he was willing to sacrifice in favour of what he was doing with Blixen" ■

*A longer version of this article appeared in the Danish daily Information. For more information on Karen Blixen – Behind Her Mask, see reverse section.*

## MORTEN HENRIKSEN

Born 1950, Denmark. Graduated in literature at the University of Copenhagen and in direction at the National Film School of Denmark, 1979. Made his first fiction feature with *The Naked Trees* (1991). Directed *The Magnetist's Fifth Winter* (1999) and the children's short *Hands Up!* (1997). *With a Right to Kill* (2003) is co-directed with Peter Øvig Knudsen. Henriksen's documentary *Karen Blixen – Behind her Mask* (2011) is selected for IDFA 2011.

## NO EXIT PRODUCTION

Founded 2009 by Morten Henriksen. Production company behind *Karen Blixen – Behind her Mask*, directed by Morten Henriksen and produced by Karen Baumbach.

## NEW FILMS ON KAREN BLIXEN

Two features about Baroness Karen Blixen (1845-1962), also known by her pen name Isak Dinesen, are in the pipeline. Bille August is in production with *Tanne* about Blixen's early years in Kenya 1914-31. Producer is Regner Grasten Film, expected release late 2012. Nimbus Film is putting the final pieces in place for an international co-production tracing the dramatic friendship between poet and author Thorikild Bjørnvig and Blixen. Expected release early 2013.

*"My mother never forgave Blixen for her relationship with my father. But I, who had become a part of it and wanted to understand, had to forgive her. That's why it was so important for me to make this film."*



Director Morten Henriksen Photo: Per Morten Abrahamsen

The Arctic schooner of *The Expedition to the End of the World* Photo: Simon Rubaudo

# APOCALYPSE NORTH

In the summer of 2011 a group of artists and scientists travelling onboard the good ship *Activ* ventured into the fjord system in Northeast Greenland to explore one of the last virgin territories on Earth. On the passenger list was a film crew led by directors Janus Metz and Daniel Dencik and producer Michael Haslund-Christensen who chronicle the voyage in their new film *The Expedition to the End of the World*.

With the same sense of wonder that drove explorers of the past to discover new continents, a team of scientists and artists raised anchor this summer to head for Northeast Greenland to see our planet at its purest. One of the last unexplored places on Earth these icy inlets have been buried under permafrost since the Ice Age. Now traces of life's beginning have become accessible to Man because of the melting Arctic – the same process that many believe will end life on Earth as we know it.

Joining the expedition was a trio of filmmakers, Janus Metz, Daniel Dencik and Michael Haslund-Christensen, in charge of a film crew documenting the journey. *The Expedition to the End of the World* follows the artists and scientists onboard collaborating in their attempt to measure, understand, explain and ask new questions about the natural world.

But the film does not so much focus on the facts and measurements gathered by the experts as on how we as human beings respond to nature and on our relationship to its vast and inexplicable beauty. Here lie the important truths as to who we are and how we understand our life on Earth.

Amid the sublime scenery of the Arctic where ice is king, the story takes a privileged look at Homo Sapiens, simultaneously part of and alienated from nature that we constantly try to control. Creating a kind of "Apocalypse North", the film is a journey into the "heart of lightness", as one of the expedition members is reported to have said: where enlightenment and ice might just be the greatest challenges on Earth.

*The Expedition* is an expedition film, but also a road movie where the journey itself is the narrative motor. Also, the mythology of the voyage is central, visualised by sails stretched by the wind and torn by storms, clear waters mirroring the moon, speed contrasted by slowness. However, this is a journey not only in the realm of physics. The vast nature reserve is a metaphor for the recesses of the mind, and so the journey is also a voyage of discovery towards the unknown territories of our understanding, in the film reflected through abstract images such as mysterious footage from underwater cameras.

The filmmakers are inspired by classical apocalyptic fiction film that mix seriousness with humour to portray the demise of civilisation. Calling their documentary a "tragi-comedy", they draw on the absurd contrast between microscopic human behaviour and monumental nature.

The trio is an experienced team. Director Daniel Dencik is best known for his editing work on award-winning films such as *The Five Obstructions* and *Into Eternity*, while Janus Metz is director of several feature documentaries, including his international breakthrough *Armadillo* about Danish troops in Afghanistan. Michael Haslund-Christensen has previously ventured into arctic territory with *The Track* (1988) and *The Prize of the Pole* (2006).

Read interview with Janus Metz page 3.

**THE EXPEDITION TO THE END OF THE WORLD / IDFA FORUM – ROUND TABLE**  
**Directors** Janus Metz, Daniel Dencik  
**Producer** Michael Haslund-Christensen for Haslund Film / www.ekspeditionen2011.dk



Break of Dawn Photo: M. Reza

# AIMING FOR THE STARS

Is it possible for an Iranian girl to become an astronaut? In *Break of Dawn*, Berit Madsen follows 16-year-old Sepideh's struggle to break away from traditions in order to pursue her dreams.

It is not easy to make films in Iran these days, but director Berit Madsen has unique access. She is married to an Iranian, which makes her an Iranian citizen, and she also

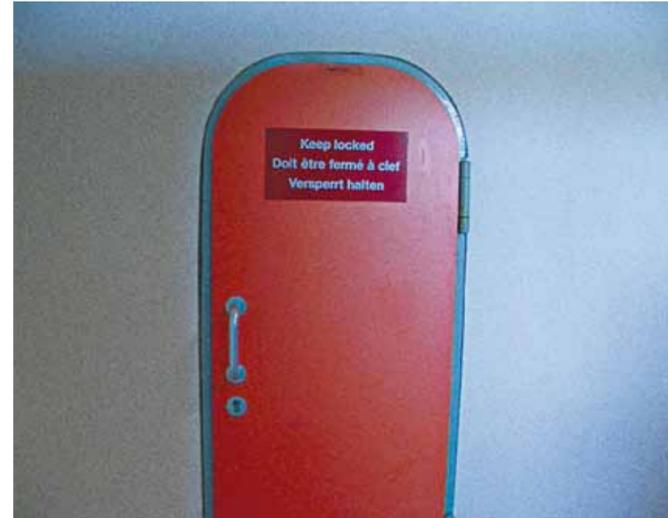
understands a good bit of Farsi. In *Break of Dawn*, Madsen tells the story of 16-year-old Sepideh who wants to become an astronaut. But that is easier said than done for the young girl who is tied by family traditions and cultural codes according to which nightly stargazing is far from being considered an appropriate occupation for a young girl. Sepideh's mother is concerned that the desert excursions may shame the family, and Sepideh's uncle, head of the family, opposes her insistence on spending the nights under the open sky. But Sepideh has promised her dead father to follow her dream.

With *Break of Dawn*, Berit Madsen wants to tell a universal story of a young girl at the crossroads between childhood and adulthood. At the

same time, Madsen sees much more in Sepideh than just another teenager. Her stargazing represents the conflicts between the Iranian traditions and young Iranians' desire to determine their own lifestyles, and Sepideh's story shows proof that it takes enormous courage to confront a conservative society.

The production is managed by Stefan Frost and Henrik Underbjerg who had their long documentary *How Are You*, about artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset, selected for a host of festivals.

**BREAK OF DAWN**  
**IDFA FORUM – CENTRAL PITCH**  
**Director** Berit Madsen  
**Producers** Stefan Frost and Henrik Underbjerg for Radiator Film / www.radiatorfilm.com

One of several recurring hatches in the UN Office in Vienna. From *The Visit* Photo: Magic Hour Films

# KNOCK KNOCK

"A cosmic documentary comedy" is the tagline for Michael Madsen's next big film project *The Visit* which takes a close look at how we humans would react if – or when – we are approached by intelligent life from outer space. According to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs the very first step in an alien emergency plan would be, quite simply, a phone call: "They have arrived."



Mercy Mercy Photo: Henrik Bohn Ipsen

# WIN-WIN ADOPTIONS?

For many Western childless parents adoption is a win-win situation. Unfortunate orphans are provided with parents and the childless are blessed with children. But behind the dream lies another reality. In *Mercy Mercy*, Katrine Kjær shows the flip side of international adoption.

It seemed a perfect match, until adoption became big business in

It's hard to fathom, but not entirely so for the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs who are responsible for devising a plan in the event that the unfathomable should occur: that one day we would be called upon by intelligent life from outer space. This setup proved to be too intriguing to ignore for filmmaker Michael Madsen who thrives on philosophical brain-teasers that stretch our imagination and understanding to the limits.

With his next project, *The Visit*, Michael Madsen once again attempts to make the essentially incomprehensible comprehensible. He and his crew will be working in collaboration with the UN Office in Vienna to bring us closer to a possible scenario which would unfold in case of an alien visit. In a sense, the film will serve as a kind of full-scale emergency plan putting the Office's knowledge and speculations into real-life perspective.

Madsen intends to look at such an encounter on a very practical level, starting from the very first phone call to the Office of Outer Space Affairs that "something" has landed. What would be the next step in a drill for an unexpected visit from far away galaxies?

*The Visit* introduces experts and scientists such as astro-biologists, space-psychologists, military experts, semiologists, theologians, and even chefs with a scientific approach to cooking, to uncover the human interests at stake, such as:

What kind of architecture would be suitable to house the aliens? Do aliens have human rights? What should we feed them, our main

concern being to dissuade them from developing a taste for human flesh? How do we communicate with them? Can we crack a joke or two and build friendships? Arriving from far they must be able to teach us about spacecraft engineering? Last but not least, what about all the questions we possibly cannot imagine?

With more than a touch of humour, Madsen's investigation into our possible reactions and precautions linked to an alien visit acts as a kind of x-ray on our society: What do these reactions say about us, our fears, our longings, our beliefs?

To fully transmit a sense of the strangeness in this encounter, Madsen is devising an imagery that reflects that we are being observed by something or somebody that is entirely other-worldly. For instance, Madsen's wants to suggest that we are looked upon by intelligent creatures that see in multiple perspectives and perceive time in multiple dimensions. Visually speaking, *The Visit* acts as a mirror in which the audience sees itself through the eyes of an extra-terrestrial entity.

The film, which is in an early development stage, continues the collaboration between Madsen and his creative team from *Into Eternity* with Lise Lense-Møller as producer, Heikki Färm as cinematographer and Stefan Sundlöf on editing.

Read interview with Madsen page 4.

**THE VISIT**  
**IDFA FORUM – ROUND TABLE**  
**Director** Michael Madsen  
**Producer** Lise Lense-Møller for Magic Hour Films / www.magichourfilms.dk

Kjær wishes to demonstrate that part of the adoption industry puts commercial interests above human needs and that innocent children are victims of an absurd supply and demand system.

Inspired by tales of globalisation such as Iñárritu's *Babel*, *Mercy Mercy* also draws on the epic style of Fridthjof Film's highly successful *Armadillo* which had Sara Stockmann as producer.

Katrine Kjær has worked as a director and producer of documentary, primarily for primetime TV, since 1999.

**MERCY MERCY**  
**IDFA FORUM – CENTRAL PITCH**  
**Director** Katrine Kjær  
**Producers** Miriam Nørgaard, Jesper Jack, Sara Stockmann for Fridthjof Film / www.f-film.com

# HYBRID = MIXING

There is currently a strong trend of mixing the methods and vocabulary of fiction and documentary films. The Nordic Film & TV Fund recently invited the commissioning editors of the Nordic film institutes to a seminar in Copenhagen on hybrid film. Jakob Høgel, artistic director of New Danish Screen, spoke on his view of the trend, emphasising that hybrid films act as a necessary, living laboratory for what films can be and should be.

BY SUSANNA NEIMANN

Hybrid films often raise ethical questions: Did the filmmakers go too far in manipulating their unsuspecting characters and duping their gullible audiences?

Hybrid films also challenge the institutions that support and distribute film productions. Which fund should pay, when one box says “Fiction” and the other says “Documentary”? Can a documentary film festival like CPH:DOX reasonably give its best documentary award, as was the case in 2010, to a film like the Italian *Le Quattro Volte* which clearly is “mostly” fiction?

Karolina Lidin, documentary consultant at Nordic Film & TV Fund, opened the seminar in Copenhagen by paraphrasing Karl Ove Knausgaard, the Norwegian author of an intimately confessional six-volume work that is categorised as fiction:

“How much fiction does it take to depict reality truthfully?”

## STARTING WITH SAMBO

The point of bringing together the Nordic film commissioners was, in part, to discuss how film organisations can openly embrace and accommodate the different genres and innovations.

As artistic director of the talent fund New Danish Screen, Jakob Høgel is in the privileged position that his fund’s statement of purpose directly says that NDS should support and inspire the development of



Jakob Høgel, artistic director of New Danish Screen Photo: DFI

cinematic grammar and storytelling and ensure that filmmakers continually strive to push the boundaries and create new experiences for the audience. That leaves everything wide open and, indeed, NDS has supported a long line of genre-busting filmic experiments *The Ambassador* is just the most recent example.

Høgel, who has a degree in anthropology, reaches back in history to the story of Sambo to analyse the origin of the hybrid phenomenon.

“Hybrid means mixing and is most powerfully used about the mixing of races. An example of a racial hybrid is Sambo, which before the time of the children’s book *The Story of Little Black Sambo* meant a mix of black and Indian blood. For a long time, Sambos were considered a dangerous experiment with nature and something to be avoided. Later, the image reversed entirely and Sambos were seen as a possible solution, because Blacks were ‘strong but lazy and difficult to discipline’, while Indians were ‘small and relatively weak but self-organising’”.

“So the very idea of mixing often carries strong moral undertones, at first negative, later positive,” Høgel says.

## FLAHERTY AND GRIERSON MADE HYBRIDS

While the hybrid trend has given way to a joy of mixing in the arthouse community, Høgel sees concern and scepticism in the world of film about mixing and creating “impure” breeds.

“Documentarians have for a long time expressed fear and a sense of loss regarding fictional elements and attitudes creeping into documentaries. The sense has been that documentaries are losing their grip on reality. Journalistic documentarians have tried to set up rules about what is allowed and what is not in order to maintain an idea of pure documentation. In fiction, the reluctance has been another: documentary elements have been considered low-grade, cheap pollution of artistic fiction.”

But, says Høgel, the moral scruples about mixing rest on the myth that *before* there were two separate things, docs and fiction, and *now* they are all mixed up.

“This is just a myth. Fiction and docs have always related to each other, from the very earliest films on. In fact, it is only by having a dialogue that we have been able to define one thing as doc and another as fiction.”

In that sense there is no *before* hybridity, Høgel argues, stating that the very films that we now use to define the documentary genre – such as the films of Flaherty and Grierson – would by our standards be called hybrid. In other words, the very definitions of the categories only make sense because there has been a battle between the two.

“Most films are made either as documentary or as fiction, but it is the films in between that have made it possible to reach some agreement about what documentaries and fiction respectively are. Documentary films have always been interested in staging reality, and fiction films have always been obsessed with authenticity. My contention is that hybrid film is not a new thing, and it doesn’t make sense to view it as a separate category or genre. Only by looking at specific films, and why they are made the way they are, does the term become meaningful,” Høgel says.

While indicating that hybrid films have always existed, Høgel sees a number of reasons why the form is so prevalent today.

“Doc and fiction are getting closer: in budgets, in distribution, in the people working on the films. We have had a period of broadcast monopolies, where investigative documentaries were a core value. Now that’s giving way to broader distribution, and broadcasters see a market potential in hybrids. Audiences under 35 don’t care whether they are watching documentary or fiction: they just want a cool experience – that is enlightening *and* entertaining.”

## CONTRACTS WITH THE AUDIENCE

Jakob Høgel sees four categories of hybrid film. His focus is on what a film does to an audience: What expectations does an audience bring to the film? What sense of a contract does the audience establish in the film? And, how can the audience work with what they experience in the film?

### 1. This is real – not!

“Documentaries that you watch thinking they are real until you realise that it’s all a setup. Though the audience’s experience is ‘documentary’, it is crafted as fiction. Some of the first mockumentaries were outright hoaxes. More recently, the picture has become more blurry – witness *Exit through the Gift Shop* or *I’m Still Here*, where the uncertainty about what is real was part of the advance buzz.”

### 2. I know that parts are made up (but they have an effect on what I see as real)

“The audience doesn’t care about authenticity as long as the film is funny, embarrassing or exciting. Examples of this category include *Borat* and now *The Ambassador*, where the protagonist acts a kind of catalyst. Like ‘agent provocateurs’, they expose and influence reality. The filmmakers perform an artistic intervention in reality.”

### 3. This could be real – authentic fiction

“These films use devices that connote authenticity and often refer to a doc style, e.g., by using non-actors, real locations and imitating documentary camera work. A recent Danish example is the prison film *R* by Michael Noer and Tobias Lindholm, which was based on a real story, shot in a former prison and had a cast, apart from the main character, of real inmates and guards.”

### 4. What is real?

“The films in the fourth category discuss authenticity in the actual fabric of the film, often in every single scene. An example is Birgitte Stærmosé’s *Out of Love*, where children from post-war Kosovo tell poignant stories about loss and hope in staged situations.

Both *Out of Love* and *The Ambassador* have been criticised for their handling of reality. Indeed, there has to be a very good reason for choosing a method that intervenes in reality and may have an effect on the people in the film. If you choose to employ a radical device, as many hybrid films do, there has to be a point. You should give the audience new insight and experiences” ■

## THREE HYBRID FILMS FROM NEW DANISH SCREEN

R

Directors Michael Noer, Tobias Lindholm

Noer and Lindholm’s feature debut is a gritty rendering of life behind bars for *R*, a young inmate faced with the challenge of navigating through prison culture with its hidden agendas and hard-hitting notions of honour and retribution.



Photo: Magnus Nordenhof Jønck

## THE AMBASSADOR

Director Mads Brügger

Journalist-cum-diplomat Mads Brügger puts himself at the center of a veritable Chinese box structure of narratives involving a match factory, a diamond hunt and the carefree life of a white diplomat in an Africa of the 1970s.



Photo: Johan Stahl Winthereik

## OUT OF LOVE

Director Birgitte Stærmosé

Portraying the lives of children trying to survive the aftermath of war in Kosovo, the film is based on interviews that were later rewritten as monologues by a screenwriter and then performed in front of the camera by other children in new settings.



Framegrab

New names, new stories, new angles. The documentary scene is budding with young talent. Meet two Danish directors to watch out for.

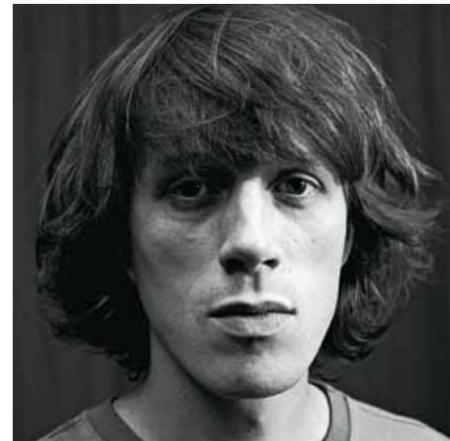


Photo: Timme Hovind

## CURIOSITY IS THE DRIVER

With an open mind and a camera under his arm, the self-taught, adventure-loving filmmaker Andreas Johnsen documents human lives around the globe.

Nicaragua, Brazil, Jamaica, Ivory Coast and Nigeria are just a handful of the countries Andreas Johnsen has visited with his camera. The 37-year-old director loves to travel. Filmmaking for him is about the fun of it, the driving force his curiosity about other cultures and his wish to "see everything".

Most of all he likes to go somewhere alone without preconceived notions. Talking with people he meets in the street or knows from past trips,

he finds his stories on location and films as he researches. This method has produced a story about Nicaragua's abortion law, *Murder*, and another about a Danish reggae singer's breakthrough in Jamaica, *Natasja*. The director's latest film, *A Kind of Paradise*, is a collective portrait of artists, musicians, poets and other creative firebrands in eight African nations.

"We are fed a negative media image and we tend to look down on Africans. I want to show that Africa is full of possibilities," Johnsen says.

The film includes a look at the Ivorian rap group Coupé Decalé which, Johnsen says, neither sings very well nor has the right instruments. But they love performing and they will sing, so they pull it off. "That's how I work. If I want to make a film, I just do it."

The director's best known film to date, 2009's *Murder*, is the story of at-risk women suffering under Nicaragua's strict ban on abortion. That subject notwithstanding, Johnsen does not consider himself to be a political filmmaker.

"It's all about people. I try to get a feeling of what it's like to be a woman in Nicaragua. I don't take a political position, and I'm not out to judge anyone." By Freja Dam

### FILMS

*A Kind of Paradise* (2011), *Murder* (2009), *Natasja* (2008), *Man Ooman* (2008), *Good Copy Bad Copy* (2007), *Curtain Raising* (2006), *Inside Outside* (2005), *Mr Catra The Faithful* (2004), *Stocktown* (doc series, 2003). See more at [rosforth.com](http://rosforth.com).

"It's all about people."



Photo: Anders Gustafsson

## WARPED CONSPIRATION

Parochial fiction meets new journalism in self-taught director Christoffer Dreyer's blend of film noir, thriller, comedy and documentary reportage in his second film, *The Detective*.

33-year-old filmmaker Christoffer Dreyer got his start in the business as an editor but increasingly felt the need to tell his own stories. In 2006, he made *The North Korean Friendship Society*, a tongue-in-cheek look at a society which is still fighting to convince the public that the official position towards North Korea is based on imperialistic lies.

His new film, *The Detective*, shines a light into an overlooked corner of Denmark, painting a portrait

of a small town in grotesque and conspiratorial shades.

Dreyer plays the lead in his own film, travelling to Denmark's southernmost town to open a detective agency. The project soon reveals previously unknown connections and unravels complex conspiracy theories. In kind of a Danish version of *Twin Peaks*, Dreyer finds something rotten wherever he looks.

"My thesis was: dig deep enough and you'll find drama hiding everywhere. But of course the film dramatises and exaggerates how thrilling things get in a place like that," says Dreyer who took on the role of detective to spoof his own craving for sensation.

"Detective is a funnier word for a wacky journalist who blows every little story out of proportion. Of course I'm playing a role, but the character is rooted in my personality. I, too, have a tendency to make a story seem more exciting than it is."

The director isn't out to make fun of the town or its people, he stresses. "I hope I'm the one who looks like a fool in this story," he says.

"It sort of lampoons the feeling in a lot of small towns that they are victims of forces greater than themselves. The railroad leaves town, the factory closes and the municipality announces improvements that never materialise. I play around with that feeling by taking a conspiracy theorist's approach to my sleuthing." By Freja Dam

### FILMS

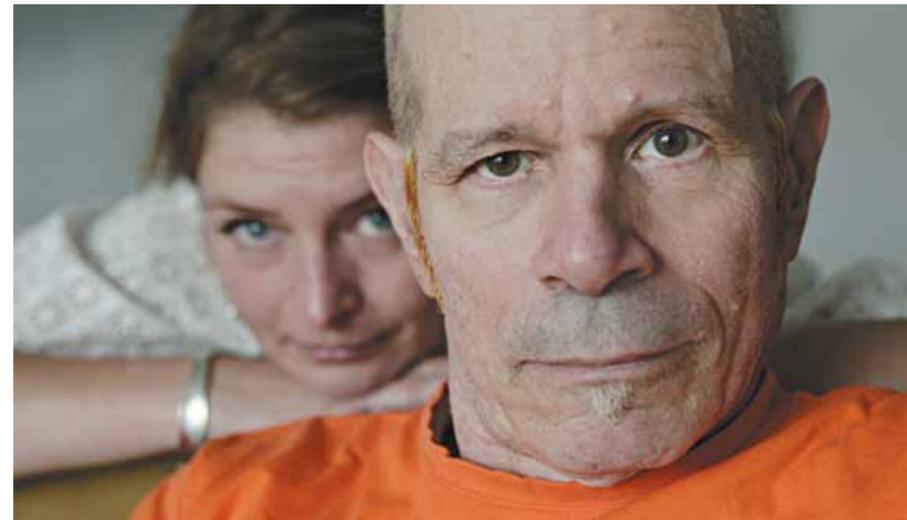
*The Detective* (2011), *The North Korean Friendship Society* (2006).

"Dig deep enough and you'll find drama hiding everywhere."

# THE DIVERSITY OF BEAUTY



One of the turning beauties in Charles Atlas' visual interpretation. Framegrab



Editor Åsa Mossberg and director Charles Atlas Photo: Bo Tengberg

Your dignity. Your beauty. Think about those two words when you're on stage tonight, Antony gently encourages the transsexual performers in the show *Turning*, as they prepare to go on stage, in London. The scene is from the upcoming music documentary of the same name. New York-based filmmaker Charles Atlas and Swedish-Danish editor Åsa Mossberg are showing us cuts from the film in a tiny editing suite at Bullitt Film in Copenhagen.

*Turning* is a true collaborative project on many levels. In 2006, Antony and the Johnsons and Charles Atlas were touring Europe with the show *Turning*, which they describe as a journey through an exotic terrain of innocence, metamorphosis and androgyny. Now the film explores the heart of that performance – the synthesis of Antony's magically alluring and vulnerable musical universe and Atlas' visual treatment of the 13 turning performers on stage.

Adding another layer, the film takes us backstage, where the performers reveal glimpses of their some-

times very hard lives and say how much it has meant to them to be in the performance. "*Turning* represent freedom, from society and from gender. I feel worthy, being a woman, an artist, a transsexual. Being OK!" as one performer puts it.

The film's editor is Åsa Mossberg. She was introduced to Atlas by the Danish producer Vibeke Vogel, of Bullitt Film, who has worked with them both before. Judging from the current mood in the editing suite, their meeting was a happy one. Working on the film, Atlas and Antony had reached the point where something had to happen.

"They needed a frame and a good editor to finish the film," Vogel says. "I thought maybe it could work. Åsa has a great talent for music and a God-given talent for emotion – that's an important gift."

So, Mossberg went to New York to meet Atlas and Antony. "I remember you had an orange T-shirt with a big question mark on it!" Mossberg says. "We were talking. I told you where I come from in filmmaking, my journey, what I liked when I was a kid. I tried to be as open as I could be..."

Atlas's answer to that question mark was always yes. "When Åsa came, she just started talking and I knew I could work with her. She's my kind of person. Åsa is very familiar with my kind of ideas. Antony and I had worked and come to an impasse, basically. I could have worked with Åsa on any film, but on this one in particular we needed someone who could also take care of Antony's concerns, and Åsa was that person. It's a miracle that we're all happy now, really a miracle. I told Vibeke, if she could produce this film, she gets a PhD in producing, because it's really advanced," he laughs. SN

For further information on *Turning*, see reverse section.

### CHARLES ATLAS

New York based video artist and filmmaker known for his long-term collaboration with choreographer Merce Cunningham. Has continued his passion for working with amazing performers. Films include works with Michael Clark, Douglas Dunn, Leigh Bowery, Marina Abramovic and Antony. Has made several installations and exhibited work at the New Museum, New York, and Tate Gallery, London, and many other places worldwide. Has collaborated with Vibeke Vogel on several productions such as *Super Honey* (1994), *The Legend of Leigh Bowery* (2002) and now *Turning* (2011).

### ÅSA MOSSBERG

Åsa Mossberg has edited more than 40 features and documentaries. Earlier this year she received a Swedish Guldbagga Award for her editing of Pernilla August's Best Film winner *Svinalängorna*. Mossberg was co-editor on *Antichrist* and edited Pernille Fischer Christensen's *A Soap* which won the Silver Bear in Berlin in 2006 as well as a Robert award for best editing. She recently co-edited *Ballroom Dancer*, which is opening CPH:DOX 2011.

### BULLITT FILM

Founded 2006 by producers Vibeke Vogel and Elise Lund Larsen. Production catalogue includes feature films *My Good Enemy* (2010), *Profetia* (2009) and *Preludium* (2008) and documentaries *Solange on Love* (2008), *Nobody Passes Perfectly* (2009) and *Turning* (2011). Had to say goodbye to their Chairman Uffe Elbæk in Autumn 2011 when he was appointed Denmark's new Minister of Culture.



*Accidentes Gloriosos*, one of the films resulting from DOX:LAB 2010, won an award at the Venice International Film Festival. Photo: DOX:LAB

# THE COURAGE TO THINK AND ACT

**DOX:LAB, which kicked off in 2009, is a CPH:DOX initiative to stimulate talent development across all borders and cultures with the overall goal of evolving the documentary film genre. While its focus is mainly on creative encounters and processes, the project has produced several highly watchable films.**

# WILDLY

BY KRISTOFFER HEGNSVAD

Pairs of filmmakers who have never met before get a small lump of money and a year to make a film together. That's the basic concept of DOX:LAB, a talent development programme created by the documentary film festival CPH:DOX matching young visual talents from Europe with young international filmmakers to co-direct documentaries outside of Europe.

"Since its first years, CPH:DOX has been strongly involved in inspiring continuing creative development of the documentary film genre," CPH:DOX festival director Tine Fischer says. "DOX:LAB is the next natural step in that vision. We want to create a space for artistic development, wild projects, unpredictability – without the accommodations that financing and distribution invariably entail.

"Bringing together two filmmakers from different cultural backgrounds within a lab-like framework that focuses on dialogue and process is a big help, I think, in unleashing cinematic development."

#### AESTHETIC COURAGE

Since its launch in 2009, 40 filmmakers have been through DOX:LAB, which starts with a joint workshop and culminates in a film. The idea is to let

European filmmakers and financing traditions get in touch with their non-European equivalents. Over the last few years, DOX:LAB has teamed up filmmakers from Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland with fellow filmmakers from Uganda, Bhutan, Malaysia, China, Syria, Argentina, Thailand, the Philippines, Burma, Lebanon, Palestine, Paraguay and Rwanda.

"The idea emerged because we have travelled a lot for the festival over the last decade and seen a lot of films from every corner of the world. And trust me, films are being made, often under very difficult production circumstances, that are cinematically innovative, aesthetically bold and far less homogeneous than a lot of the films that are produced in Denmark. It's a different world. When the financing landscape is weak or nonexistent, the courage to think wild thoughts is much more pervasive. Just as predictably, when you have a more stable financing system, you get a different kind of production culture with many stakeholders," Fischer says.

"DOX:LAB really is 'take the money and run'. Ten days of development, eight months of shooting and post-production – and 100,000 kroner (approx. 13,400 euros) to make it all happen. It's the craziest challenge. The speed of the process itself unleashes a different kind of energy. Plus, the collectivity that emerges within the group has a big effect on the creative process."

The Danish filmmaker Michael Noer agrees. DOX:LAB 2009 teamed him up with Khavn de la Cruz of the Philippines. Making *Son of God* together in Manila was a richly rewarding experience for the Danish talent.

"I have the greatest respect for Khavn de la Cruz. It was wild, being on the other side of the planet, in Manila, meeting a fellow digital warrior who was just as crazy as myself and jumping right into things without thinking about the bare-bones budget or my jetlag and delicate stomach. DOX:LAB was very valuable to my ongoing journey as a filmmaker," Noer says.

#### AWARD IN VENICE

*Son of God* got more attention than any other film from the first DOX:LAB. The second group that started out in 2010 has several promising partnerships, including the team-up of the Danish artist Jesper Just and the Thai documentary filmmaker Uruphong Raksasad. In September the Argentine-Swedish duo, Mauro Andrizzi and Marcus Lindeen, took their film, *Accidentes Gloriosos*, to the Venice Film

Festival and won the Orizzonti prize as part of the overall DOX:LAB concept.

Since DOX:LAB focuses on creative innovation through new encounters, it is pure gravy when the films turn out well.

"These are aesthetic experiments focusing on the process, but it would be a lie if I told you we aren't very interested in getting some finished films that can go to major festivals and be seen, create attention and foster discussion," Fischer says.

The 2010 group has done just that. In November 2011, a new group of DOX:LAB talents are in position in the lab to follow up on that success ■

For further information on DOX:LAB, see [www.cphdox.dk](http://www.cphdox.dk).

#### DOX:LAB / 2011-2012

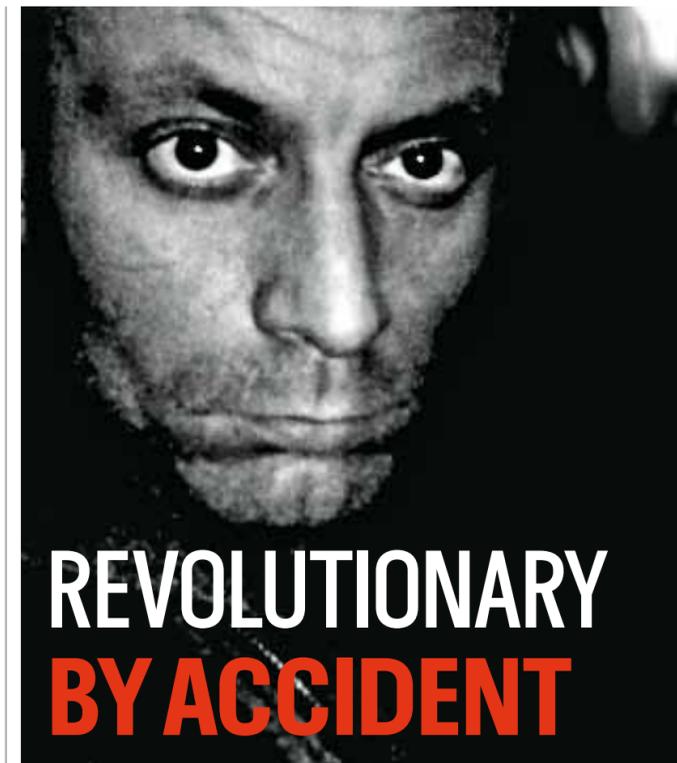
Andreas Koefoed (DK) & Ivan Fund (RA)  
Jacob Schulsinger (DK) & Nicolas Pereda (MEX)  
Mira Jargil (DK) & Fred Kigozi (UG)  
Michael Madsen (DK) & Rania Attieh (LB)  
Ionut Piturescu (RO) & Jakrawal Nilthamrong (TH)  
Peter Kerekes (SK) & Kazuhiro Soda (JP)  
Fia-Stina Sandlund (SE) & Alejo Moguillansky (RA)  
Marta Minorowicz (PL) & Laila Hotait (LB)  
Elina Talvensaari (FI) & Flora Lau (HK)  
Zeljka Sukova (HR) & Gustavo Beck (BR)  
Thomas Østbye (NO) & Edwin (ID)

## CPH:FORUM / ART AND FILM

Who "owns" the grey area between film and visual art? What films are being produced there, where are they shown, how are they developed and financed? These are some of the questions discussed at CPH:DOX's industry forum CPH:FORUM on cinematic works that inhabit the grey area between visual art and film.

Two other types of works crossing traditional boundaries are also in focus at CPH:FORUM: hybrid films that lie between documentary and fiction, and feature-length documentaries that work well in cinemas.

CPH:FORUM is in line with the festival's ambition to stimulate the financing, production and distribution of artistic documentaries. The idea is to connect artists, professional filmmakers and institutions from the worlds of film and art in an exchange of knowledge, ideas and contacts, while indicating new ways of collaboration.



## REVOLUTIONARY BY ACCIDENT

Director Omar Shargawi Photo: Aske Foss

**Omar Shargawi was preparing a film about street kids in Cairo when he was caught in the midst of the Egyptian revolution. 1/2 Revolution is his eyewitness account of the Arab Spring, shown at CPH:DOX's new section Free Radical.**

It all started on 25 January. A major demonstration against Mubarak was to take place, inspired by the upheavals in Tunisia. So, together with his friend and co-director Karim El Hakim, Omar Shargawi went out on the streets.

"We just wanted to get some footage and suddenly we became part of it. The police started shooting against the demonstrators. As we gave first aid to somebody who was injured, we were arrested and beaten by the secret

police who dragged us off to a military prison in the middle of the desert," Shargawi says. He and El Hakim were released only because they had western passports.

"It all happened very quickly. We started as spectators of a demonstration, and suddenly we were in the middle of a revolution. We saw more death and destruction during that time than we had experienced in our entire lives."

*1/2 Revolution* depicts the violent upheavals close-up and from a very personal angle. The two directors were able to document how revolutionary optimism was replaced by fear of the military's ruthless brutality, but the film is also a strong testimony to the Egyptian people's will to break years' of oppression. For more information, see reverse section.



1/2 Revolution. Framegrab

# AN AUDIENCE OF 500 MILLION

**Why, in the 21st century, do a billion people still live in poverty? To answer that question, the *Why Poverty?* project has enlisted some of the world's best documentary filmmakers to produce 8 one-hour documentaries and 30 short documentaries intended to stimulate global discussion.**

One tests the claim that a child's opportunities in life can largely be predicted at birth. Another tracks the state of the overcrowded Chinese job market, and yet another takes a critical look at the American dream in the 21st century.

These are three of the films by renowned filmmakers taking part in *Why Poverty?*, an international project to generate discussion about poverty and the possibilities and challenges of improving life for millions of people around the world.

**CREATE A MORE NUANCED VIEW** More than 40 broadcasters are backing the project and will be airing the films. The discussion will spread via websites and mobile platforms, while fostering dialogue and activities at universities and schools.

"Our goal is to move the understanding of poverty. We want to generate discussion about the world's poorest people, provide insight into the issues and create a backdrop for action," Mette Hoffmann Meyer says.

The head of documentaries at Denmark's national broadcaster DR is producing *Why Poverty?* with BBC documentary editor Nick Fraser and the South African producer Don Edkins.

"We want to create a more nuanced view of global poverty and rock the traditional NGO understanding of the global North as donating to the global South. For example, infant mortality among poor people in the US is higher than in some places in Africa," Hoffmann Meyer says.

"As public broadcasters, we want to engage people through films that set the agenda and stimulate greater understanding of the challenges we face in the world. A good story can get people out of their chairs emotionally and intellectually."

#### TOP FILMMAKERS

Steps International was behind *Why Democracy?*, a 2007 project of 27 films that reached 250 million people worldwide. The bar is even higher this time: *Why Poverty?* aims to engage 500 million people, when the films start airing in the last week of November 2012.

Hoffmann Meyer is a driving force in the project as one of three executive producers raising the 8 million euros – for production, Internet, promotion, etc. – that it takes for the project to achieve the desired quality and dissemination. A large chunk of the financing is provided by the many broadcasters that this time, in addition

to European and American networks, also include Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Malaysian and Brazilian television stations. A number of major charitable foundations have also contributed, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

"A well-told film works anywhere in the world," Hoffmann Meyer says. "So it's important to use the best storytellers there are. We opted for directors with some experience to ensure the necessary quality.

"What's more, I think international collaboration broadens the view and brings more authenticity and honesty to the stories. Obviously, a Chinese filmmaker will understand the Chinese school system better than we ever could by researching."

#### TO FORGE INTERNATIONAL TIES

Klara Grunning-Harris, film commissioner at the Danish Film Institute, which is supporting the films, thinks an important element of the project is how it will be creating new connections among documentary filmmakers.

"This is a great opportunity for the Danish film industry, and the Danish Film Institute, to play in the international arena with some of the biggest international actors, like BBC, ZDF, ARTE, NHK," Grunning-Harris says.

"The eight films we are supporting are made by some of the best filmmakers working today. We will be part of a big campaign that will generate dialogue and activity around the globe across all platforms, and we are in on the ground floor."

"We make good films in Denmark. We have a strong, aesthetic approach and we aren't afraid to take chances, but the Danish film industry needs to get out in the world and forge direct and lasting ties to production companies and broadcasters," says the DFI film commissioner. Her



Mette Hoffmann Meyer, head of documentaries at DR **Photo:** DR

own background includes years of experience working as a producer in the US.

"When you're from a small country, it can be hard to raise your film to the point where it can break through internationally – making it bigger and broader and more universal. The films in *Why Poverty?* will have budgets on a scale that makes it possible to do grade-A work. We hope they will inspire the industry that way." *LFJ*

## WHY POVERTY?

The project is initiated and produced by Mette Hoffmann Meyer of the Danish national broadcaster DR and Nick Fraser of the BBC, via STEPS International and its executive producer, Don Edkins. The Danish Film Institute is supporting the films with 350,000 euros. The films are scheduled for screening in November 2012.

Broadcasters co-financing the films' development: BBC/UK, DR/Denmark, SVT/Sweden, VPRO/Netherlands, NRK/Norway, YLE/Finland, PTS/Taiwan, ORF/Austria, TV3 CATALUNYA/Spain, MBC/Middle East, SABC/South Africa, CANAL FUTURA/Brazil, NHK/Japan.

#### SOLAR MAMAS

by *Jehane Noujaim & Mona Eldaief*  
See opposite page.

#### WELCOME TO THE WORLD

by *Brian Hill*  
Knowing the details of a child's birth largely makes it possible to predict how that child will fare in the future. The film takes a look at births in widely different parts of the world.



DFI Film commissioner Klara Grunning-Harris **Photo:** DFI

#### HOW TO DO GOOD

by *Bosse Lindquist*  
Who really benefited from campaigns involving international celebrities such as Make Poverty History, Live 8 and One? Can we learn from past mistakes and create change?

#### ANIMATED HISTORY OF POVERTY

by *Ben Lewis*  
In a radical mix of archival footage, reconstruction and animation, the film's 10 chapters relate different attempts to eradicate poverty.

#### STEALING AFRICA

by *Christoffer Guldbrandsen*  
The growing economies in the East and the established economies in the West profit from African corruption. Would stopping the corruption put an end to extreme poverty?

#### CHINESE DREAM

by *Weijun Chen*  
Chinese families set aside everything else to ensure that their child gets a college education. But does the overcrowded job market even have room for all these young graduates?

#### THE NEXT HARVEST

by *Hugo Berkeley and Osvalde Lewat*  
Who will be controlling a region of prime farmland in the African nation of Mali? Will education help secure farmers' rights to the crops from their land?

#### UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS

by *Alex Gibney*  
In America today 1% of the population owns 45% of the country's wealth. Alex Gibney takes a critical look at the American dream.

## SOLAR MAMAS

**Mette Heide is producer of *Solar Mamas*, one of the eight documentaries in *Why Poverty?*, a project that speaks about global poverty through human stories. The experienced producer warmly welcomes the opportunity to work with an international team of filmmakers which includes Arab-American co-directors Jehane Noujaim and Mona Eldaief.**

Rafea, who lives in a poor Bedouin village in Jordan, gets an offer to go to India and learn how to install solar panels. This could help raise the standard of living in villages all over Jordan. For Rafea it's a unique opportunity, but it also has major consequences for her family. She is the mother of four children, and her husband does not approve of her decision.

#### AN EYE ON AMERICA

*Solar Mamas*, which follows Rafea's struggle to make a difference in the world, is co-directed by Jehane Noujaim and Mona Eldaief, and for producer Mette Heide of Plus Pictures there's huge potential in developing films and composing crews across continents.

The two co-directors, Noujaim and Eldaief, come with a raft of advantages. They grew up in the US and were trained by top documentary filmmakers. And because they are half-Egyptian and speak Arabic, they can communicate easier with Rafea and the other people in the film.

The film follows other women, too, from Kenya, Columbia and Burkina Faso. At those locations, the crew was expanded with handpicked field directors. One was Andreas Koefoed, also from Denmark, who joined the shoot in India. The film's editor, Jean Tsien, is Chinese and was picked because she has experience with editing international productions and a knack for telling human-interest stories, Heide says.

Heide is drawing on the network she has built up from her many productions. As a producer, she has kept an eye on America.

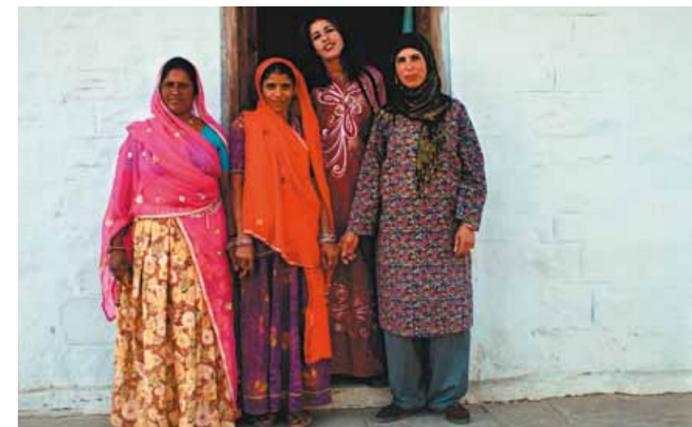
"I produce with talent from both the Danish and American scenes. The US is exciting from a producer's point of view, because Americans are conscious about the market in a way that's interesting to incorporate in documentary film production. Moreover, there is something about the American storytelling structure, and it's more interesting to speak to many millions of viewers instead of a few hundred thousand."

#### AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

Most of the photography for *Solar Mamas* is in the can. Rafea, the Bedouin woman, left for India and quickly proved herself to be one of the smartest students at the school. But midway through the course, she got a call from Jordan. Her husband was threatening to divorce her and



*Solar Mamas* **Photo:** Neil Davenport



Rafea, on the doorstep, in *Solar Mamas* **Photo:** Neil Davenport

take the children away. Shortly, she went back to her village in Jordan.

"When you produce international projects, it's important to give them broad appeal. Rafea's story is dramatic but also extremely inspiring to women in the West – and even more so to women in the Arab world."

Rafea went home, but she rebelled. Despite her husband's protests, she made up her mind to go back to India and finish her training. The film follows that whole turn of events.

"We need engaging and entertaining documentaries that give us other views of the world. Documentaries can do that. We can penetrate into unknown areas and relate real-life drama in a nuanced way. In this film, we want to avoid the stereotypes and show a reality we didn't know before. And we want to do this by telling a story with a strong main character and powerful dramaturgy," Heide says.

An extended theatrical feature, in addition to the TV documentary, will be ready in early 2012. The TV version is going out on 25 November 2012, along with the seven other documentaries under the project. *LFJ*

*"Rafea's story is dramatic but also extremely inspiring to women in the West – and even more so to women in the Arab world."*

#### PLUS PICTURES

Founded 2008 by Mette Heide. Among recent titles are *The Invention of Dr Nakamats* by Kaspar Astrup Schröder and *Last White Man Standing* by Justin Webster. [pluspictures.dk](http://pluspictures.dk).



Producer Mette Heide **Photo:** Plus Pictures



Director Kaspar Astrup Schröder Photo: Per Morten Abrahamsen

*“People used to ask me, How many hours do you have in a day?”*

**Kaspar Astrup Schröder has had two films shown at IDFA, *My Playground* and *The Invention of Dr Nakamats*. Both reflect a few truths about their creator: Schröder has the explosive energy of a parkour runner and the creative ingenuity of the Japanese patent holder Dr Nakamats. Meet a multi-talent who is finishing a new film from Japan and whose work ethic seems to be: Just go ahead and do it!**

Visual artist, photographer, composer, designer, filmmaker – take your pick. Kaspar Astrup Schröder is happy

to wear many hats. Audiences at international festivals will know the 32-year-old multi-talented director for his first two films, which were both selected for IDFA: *The Invention of Dr Nakamats*, about the eccentric Japanese inventor who is the father of the floppy disk and holds at least 3,500 other patents, and *My Playground*, which chronicles the urban phenomenon of parkour.

“My method is very ‘shoot from the hip,’” Schröder says. “When I get an idea, I just want to go ahead and do it. The research and financing can be worked out later. The worst thing that can happen is losing your drive and talking and thinking things to death.

# SHOOTING FROM THE HIP

Perhaps that’s why I do so many things myself. I produce, direct, shoot, do the graphics, colour grade and co-edit most of my own films. It’s not that I think someone else couldn’t do it just as well. It’s just that some things are fun to do yourself.”

## RENT-A-FAMILY

*Dr Nakamats* grew out of Schröder’s longstanding fascination with Japan, where he has travelled widely. His next film, which was selected for IDFA Forum last year, feeds on the same fascination.

“The film is called *I Want to Cheer You Up Ltd.* and is about a company that rents out family members. In Japan, it’s a big deal to have an equal number of people from both families attend a wedding. In the film a woman is about to be married but has never told her soon-to-be husband that she has no family, so she hires every actor at the company to play her family. Many hilarious situations ensue, of course. In fact, it’s really difficult to make a film that’s about keeping secrets.

“*I Want to Cheer You Up Ltd.* was supposed to have been finished this year but had to be postponed because of the tsunami and the earthquake. But we – my producer Mette Heide and I – will have it done by summer. We’re considering turning it into a fiction film as well, because the whole setup has so much built-in drama and comedy.”

## ONE-MAN CREW

Earlier this year, the director became a father for the second time. His short film *Mine Mine* is a documentary for the youngest audiences about becoming a big brother and having to share the world with a newcomer.

*“It’s awesome when people like what you do. That’s why I do it.”*

The protagonist is his own son Storm. Acting as his favourite own one-man crew, Schröder enjoyed being able to do it all himself. “It was great to be able to roll when I got a good scene. So I didn’t have to call up a photographer in the middle of the night and say, Storm is crying, can you be here in one second?”

Schröder has a record coming out in December and a show of his paintings in Japan. Still, the director says, he doesn’t have time for so many different things anymore now that he has children.

“Before, I could work evenings and nights. People used to ask me, How many hours do you have in a day?”

Schröder likes to keep a ball or two in the air, so he always has something new for his audience. “It’s awesome when people like what you do. That’s why I do it.” ABJ

For further information on Mine Mine, see reverse section.

## KASPAR ASTRUP SCHRÖDER

Born 1979, Denmark. Self-taught visual artist, photographer, composer, designer and director. His first two films, *The Invention of Dr Nakamats* (2009) and *My Playground* (2010), were both selected for IDFA. Releases in 2012 include the children’s documentary *Mine Mine* and *I Want to Cheer You Up Ltd.*, produced by Mette Heide for Plus Pictures.



Helle Hansen Photo: Robin Skjoldborg

# ESSENTIAL VOICES

**There is a common thread in all of Helle Hansen’s work. The Danish Film Institute’s new commissioner for documentaries has years of experience as a journalist and filmmaker. A driving force in every job she ever held, paid or unpaid, has been to give a voice to those who have a hard time being heard.**

Helle Hansen cut her journalist teeth at a left-wing weekly, where everyone

worked without pay. Later, she helped start up TV Stop. As an alternative to the established media, this community TV station was aimed to be a mouth-piece for vulnerable, overlooked groups and individuals in Denmark.

## 100 PERCENT BEHIND THE JOB

So it didn’t seem at all obvious when, in the early nineties, Hansen elected to continue her training as a journalist on a broad, primetime entertainment series on national television, but that’s what happened. She got a call asking if she would be interested in a job on a popular Friday evening show. Hansen knew it was a terrific opportunity. She was thrilled but also deeply conflicted.

“I actually cried after that call,” she says. “I asked myself if I really wanted to be responsible for goofy TV

segments with an animated mascot and weird fashion shows. I think you should be 100 percent behind the job you agree to do, whether you get paid for it or not. But I accepted and my worries were put to shame. I had to learn to give up some control, but all along I was able to stand by my reports. I learned so much and I’m actually very proud about a lot of the things I got to do on the show.”

## WORDS MATTER

The short reports Hansen made for the show and for a youth programme gradually grew into complete TV programmes and documentaries produced with funding from the Danish Film Institute. Her interest continued to involve giving a voice to vulnerable or unjustly treated groups of people.

Her films have tackled subjects ranging from the Danish squatters movement to Syrian refugee children forced to live underground. She once tracked a female health worker in Nepal and she recently put the finishing touches on a film about the tone of the Danish immigration debate, entitled *The Power of Words*.

“The film shows how the political rhetoric has changed over the past decades, from the time everyone laughed at the right-wing politician Mogens Glistrup and his ‘Out with the Mohammedans’ to the present day when condescending speech about immigrants has spread from the parties on the right to the parties on the left and, in turn, to the public discussion in general. There has been what I consider a highly troubling shift.”

## WHAT’S UP IN DENMARK

For the last seven years, Hansen has worked in close partnership with the journalist and commentator Jens Olaf Jersild, who has taken up social and political issues for serious treatment in a series of high-profile TV programmes on DR. Maintaining the open and humble basic attitude from her days of volunteering, she feels well prepared for her new job as DFI commissioner.

“I think I’m well equipped to see what’s going on in Denmark. Where is our society headed, politically, culturally, socially? In my opinion, good documentaries should make a difference. They are essential in our democracy. Films should make noise, be unpleasant, make us happy or angry. As long as they don’t leave people indifferent. I think there are a lot of courageous filmmakers, directors as well as producers, who are willing to take up difficult and controversial subjects. That’s a distinct and good trend,” Hansen says.

“The big challenge for me, and for us as a Film Institute, is to insist on the artistic quality that gives films a long life. Supporting the director in his or her visions. We have enough superficial snapshots as it is.” SN

## HELLE HANSEN

Born 1963. Journalist and director of numerous documentary films for TV. Hansen has since 2004 among other things worked with acclaimed journalist and commentator Jens Olaf Jersild on a series on politics for the national broadcaster DR. Hansen recently directed the documentaries *BZ* and *The Power of Words* for DR and the Danish Film Institute.

## DFI KEY CONTACTS / IDFA 2011



**CLAUS LAEGAARD**  
Head of Department  
/ Production & Development

clausl@dfi.dk  
Cell +45 4032 6212



**MALENE FLINDT PEDERSEN**  
Head of Development  
/ Production & Development

malenef@dfi.dk  
Cell +45 2744 2567



**KLARA GRUNNING-HARRIS**  
DFI Film Commissioner  
/ Short Fiction & Documentary

klaragh@dfi.dk  
Cell +45 2250 5835



**NOEMI FERRER SCHWENK**  
International Producer

noemis@dfi.dk  
Cell +45 5096 7411



**HELLE HANSEN**  
DFI Film Commissioner  
/ Short Fiction & Documentary

helleh@dfi.dk  
Cell +45 5096 6725



**JAKOB KIRSTEIN HØGEL**  
Artistic Director  
/ New Danish Screen

jakobh@dfi.dk  
Cell +45 2421 3584



**ANNE MARIE KØRSTEIN**  
Festival Consultant  
/ Shorts & Documentaries

kurstein@dfi.dk  
Cell +45 4041 4697



**ANDERS BUDTZ-JØRGENSEN**  
Press Contact

andersbj@dfi.dk  
Cell +45 2256 7020