

## **ALL ABOUT ME ?**

All about our festivals.

Festivals are like the films they show. They seek to reaffirm their specific identity and go back to their local, regional and cultural roots. On the other hand, they have a desire, fed by insatiable curiosity, to discover the world at large, its endless diversity, its enthralling beauty and its distressing ugliness. The festivals of Yamagata and Nyon are, in Asia and Europe respectively, events noted for the quality of the films they discover and the questions they raise on the art of film making. One such question, a crucial one on the intimate relationship between film and video makers, digital video film makers, and the world at large, is marked by the spectacular emancipation in exceptional circumstances.

All about the revolution.

We are currently witnessing a technological revolution owing to the recording of images on small, handy digital video cameras. This revolution builds on technological developments that have led to an unheard-of ease of camera handling, sensitivity to the lowest of lights, and computer programmes that enable immediate film processing. The most important factor, however, is economic. The said tools are affordable even to those of slender financial means, and no monopoly (political, national or commercial) can prevent access to these tools. On the contrary, the globalized, capitalist audiovisual market is ensuring that they become ever more affordable by the greatest possible number of consumers. Film production has been radically transformed, in many ways simplified, and so made accessible to a large number of people who previously would hardly have dreamed of making a film.

All about the video generation.

For over ten years, now, the younger generations have been seizing on constantly developing audiovisual technology to put forward their pictures, their stories, their points of view. There can be no doubt that without this digital revolution, a considerable number of representative works would never have seen the light of day. Worth mentioning in particular is the dawn of a fresh wave of digital film makers from China, who are giving the world unexpected narratives of their lives and their country. But the same also holds true of film makers in Japan and Switzerland, who have quickly learnt to master the new technology and now put it to use with a great measure of inventiveness. Digital video simply removes a lot of barriers between the wish to express oneself in images and the possibility of doing so.

All about me.

It is this manifest tendency in contemporary cinema (we will continue to speak of cinema here even though the vast majority of the works in question are based on digital video) that has prompted the close collaboration between Japan and Europe, between Yamagata and Nyon. It is about me-films, an approach which places the

authors themselves at the centre of the process, a centre from where they lay claim to and question their own identity as well as their relationships with the outer world. The 16 Swiss and Japanese films represented were each selected in terms of how much interest the presence of the film maker at the heart of his or her production manages to arouse. We are convinced that the expression of their individuality is a privileged mode of access to their vision of the world, which in turn opens a window for us to the collective mentality of the society they come from. With the media distorting our perception by endlessly harping on the virtues of a world turning into a global village thanks to the constant flow of goods, services, people and communication, the voice of each "small", independent film based on the perception of an individual is a precious form of resistance. Each one is a representation of unique human experience which enriches our understanding of a particular culture by depicting some of its fascinating complexity.

All about them.

So are we going to learn everything about Sato Makoto and Ivo Zen, Naomi Kawase and Robert Frank, Maeda Shinjiro and Peter Mettler, Setoguchi Miki, Sonobe Mamiko and Martina Jacoma, Yaël Parish, Kawanaka Nobuhiro, Hagiwara Sakumi, Suzuki Shirouyasu and Peter Liechti, Aya Tanaka and Lionel Baier? Far from it, thank goodness! But their films are captivating on the basis of the emotions and trains of thought they provoke. We need to become attuned to these film makers, young and old, accomplished and beginners, authors of short and feature films, to share the sound of their inner voices, their encounters and dialogues.

All about the ways to tell.

It will intriguing to discuss – in Yamagata, then in Kyoto and finally in Nyon in April 2006 – the different aesthetic and narrative approaches the various authors use to tell their tale. Experimental forms, rigorous concepts, chronological accounts, set-piece films and accounts of inner and outer journeys are all means of giving an image to reality. What bearing do the individual shots, their centering and length, the editing and the position of the camera – rarely fixed on a tripod, more like a part of the film maker's body – have on the story to be told? And not to forget what are the authors' social and political preoccupations are. This kind of me-cinema is among the most creative strands of contemporary filmmaking, in which risk-taking is part of the philosophy. It is one of our festivals' ambitions to highlight the key creative features of contemporary cinema.

All about us all together.

Such films with a strong autobiographical trait, ranging from stimulating narcissism to sustained interest in others, raise issues such as memory and mourning, intimacy and its representations, always flirting with voyeurism, and the body in all the aspects of its cinematic presentation. And what a great opportunity for us Europeans to catch a glimpse behind the seemingly impenetrable screen of what is quintessentially Japanese. The psychoanalyst Takeo Doi distinguishes between omote (outward-facing side) and ura (its reverse, inward-facing side), which together bear witness to

the double structure of Japanese consciousness. (\*) According to Doë, omote and ura are sometimes manifested in the form of tatemae, which refers to the façade and principle of the Japanese "contrat sociale", and of honne, which expresses individual truths and sentiments held deep inside oneself. Both the Swiss and Japanese films selected focus more on honne, without neglecting or ignoring the tatemae side... So this will be a journey of discovery of what characterises our distinctive voices, our daily experiences, our mutual symbols, our nightmares and our fantasies. The images weave a unique tapestry made up of enclosed gardens and endless landscapes, and fragments of truth that both reaffirm our identity and take us beyond ourselves in moments of joy.

Jean Perret

(\*) quoted from Hisayasu Nakagawa in "Introduction à la culture japonaise" (Introduction to Japanese Culture), Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2005.

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