

The Flaherty Presents

THE 53RD ROBERT FLAHERTY FILM SEMINAR



SOUTH OF THE OTHER

June 16-22, 2007 • Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY



SUNDAY, JUNE 17 AT 9AM

SURVIVING SABU

Ian Iqbal Rashid, Director
1997, 15 min., UK

The father-son relationship, complicated by the complexities of modernity and sexual identity, is at the heart of *Surviving Sabu*. Working together on a documentary about the late Indian film icon Sabu, the son and father cannot agree about the role and legitimacy of age-old tradition on one hand, and “new ideas” on the other.

ELEPHANT BOY

Robert J. Flaherty and Zoltan Korda, Directors
1937, 80 min., UK; b&w

Based on the story “Toomai of the Elephants,” from Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*, *Elephant Boy* stars Sabu at the age of thirteen. It is the tale of Little Toomai, who seeks and wins adulthood and professional stature as an elephant herder by witnessing the secret and sacred nighttime dance of the elephants. While a Kipling “child’s” story, *Elephant Boy* is also a story about the cooptation of myth and history, evoking the paradigms of treachery and colonial sleight of hand.

Discussion with: Mahamat Saleh Haroun
Moderators: Anna Siomopoulos and Patricia Zimmermann

SUNDAY, JUNE 17 AT 2PM

UK: LONDON: MR. LOUW’S VIEWS ON CONGO INTERVENTION

1960, 1 min., UK
(Archival Newsreel; b&w)

THE CONGO – WHAT NOW?

1961, 1 min., UK
(Archival Newsreel; b&w)

Harrowing footage of Lumumba’s arrest and Congo’s capital city, Kinshasa, during transitional occupation.



A LOVE DURING THE WAR

UN AMOUR PENDANT LA GUERRE (A LOVE DURING THE WAR)

Oswalde Lewat-Hallade, Director
2005, 63 min., Cameroon/Congo
(In French, Lingala, and Swahili with English subtitles)

The sudden return of civil war keeps Aziza, a journalist from Bukavu, with her three children thousands of miles from her husband, who has gone away on what was supposed to be a short trip. After acclimating to their reunion in Kinshasa, Aziza feels a responsibility to revisit Bukavu to see about women there with whom she has forged strong bonds. Despite her husband’s protestations, she returns to find that the legacy of violence continues to infect the lives of women young and old. However, not everyone remains a victim. This docudrama is both reportage and story.

AL OTRO LADO (TO THE OTHER SIDE)

Natalia Almada, Director
2005, 66 min., Mexico/USA
(In Spanish with English subtitles)

Like many in Sinaloa, the drug capital of Mexico, twenty-three-year-old Magdiel faces two choices to better his life: trafficking drugs or illegally crossing the border into the United States. Yet Magdiel has a special talent that could be his ticket out: composing *corridos* – ballads about the narcotics underworld and illegal immigrant life. For more than 200 years, corridos have been Mexico’s musical underground newspaper and the voice of people who rarely see their ideas reach the outside world. From Sinaloa, Mexico, to the streets of South Central and East L.A., *Al Otro Lado* explores the world of drug smuggling, illegal immigration, and the corrido music that chronicles it all.

Discussion with: Natalia Almada and Oswalde Lewat-Hallade
Moderator: Margarita De la Vega-Hurtado



TO THE OTHER SIDE

MONDAY, JUNE 18 AT 2PM

ALL WATER HAS A PERFECT MEMORY

Natalia Almada, Director

2001, 19 min., Mexico/USA

(In English and Spanish with English subtitles)

Inspired by Toni Morrison's essay "The Site of Memory," this experimental documentary explores the effects of tragedy and remembrance on a bicultural family. Through personal recollections narrated by each family member, including her brother, Almada incorporates Super-8 home movies, photographs, and fabricated images to weave together a touching and moving visual memory of Ana Lynn, the filmmaker's sister who drowned as a child. This moving piece serves as a meditation on the cultural and gender differences between the filmmaker's American mother and Mexican father in the face of their daughter's death.



STAND VAN DE MAAN (THE SHAPE OF THE MOON)

Leonard Retel Helmrich, Director

2004, 92 min., Indonesia/Netherlands; b&w

(In Bahasa Indonesian with English subtitles)



Lyrical shot in the tradition of cinema verité, this documentary traces the story of a widow living with her son and granddaughter in Jakarta. The rise of militant Islamism provides the background for familial tension, however loving, between the Christian mother and her recently converted Muslim son. Sociopolitical meta-narratives are employed in the minutest detail as we witness the day-to-day sojourn of three generations of the Sjamsuddin family, as they adapt to the changes within their society while simultaneously retaining memories of their lives before religious fundamentalism played such an overwhelming political role.

Discussion with: Natalia Almada and Leonard Retel Helmrich

Moderator: Irina Leimbacher

MONDAY, JUNE 18 AT 8PM

MOSCOW MEETS FRIENDS: CHE GUEVARA VISITS MOSCOW

1960, 20 min., USSR

(Archival Newsreel; b&w)

A Cuban governmental economic mission, led by Ernesto "Che" Guevara, visits Russia. In Moscow and Leningrad, members of the mission dialogue with dignitaries and the general populace. Visiting factories, cultural centers, and state headquarters, the Cubans and Russians celebrate and explore their common political aims.

DARATT (DRY SEASON)

Mahamat Saleh Haroun, Director

2006, 96 min., Chad/France/Austria/Belgium

(In Arabic, Chadian, and French with English subtitles)

In an alluring exploration of the theme of forgiveness, Atim (meaning, “the orphan”) is sent by his blind grandfather to revenge the murder of his father at the hands of a war criminal, Nassara. When Atim winds up under Nassara’s tutelage as an apprentice, the story raises exciting and poignant questions about relationships between men and within families. In the end, Atim does not have to forgive or forget. And yet, he becomes an awesome hero.



DRY SEASON

Discussion with: Theo Eshetu and Mahamat Saleh Haroun

Moderators: Dale Hudson and Scott MacDonald

THURSDAY, JUNE 21 AT 9AM

EL GENERAL (WORK IN PROGRESS)

Natalia Almada, Director

2007, 18 min., Mexico

(In Spanish with English subtitles)

A work in progress, *El General* is a historical documentary about the director’s great grandfather, Plutarco Elías Calles, a controversial figure who served as President of Mexico between 1924 and 1928. Interweaving the familial with the political, Almada attempts to uncover and understand both her family and Mexico’s political past.

BLOOD IS NOT FRESH WATER

Theo Eshetu, Director

1998, 57 min., Ethiopia/Italy

(In Amharic, English, and Italian with English subtitles)

Blood Is Not Fresh Water is an ardent journey to Ethiopia, one of the director’s homelands. Bypassing Eurocentric frameworks, the story is both biography and the history of the world’s first nation, contextualized through interview and narration by Ato Tekle Tsadik Mekuria – the filmmaker’s grandfather and, also, the foremost historian of Ethiopia.



BLOOD IS NOT FRESH WATER

Discussion with: Natalia Almada and Theo Eshetu

Moderator: Tsitsi Dangarembga

THURSDAY, JUNE 21 AT 2PM

BEPANDA (WORK IN PROGRESS)

Oswalde Lewat-Hallade, Director

2007, 5 min., Cameroon/France

On March 20, 2000, a decree by the President of the Republic of Cameroon set up an Operational Command Unit to tackle rampant banditry in the Douala region. After being commended by an enthusiastic populace, the Unit introduced what amounted to round-ups and a curfew. In one year, sixteen hundred people disappeared or were killed. On January 23, 2001, a squad from the Operational Command Unit arrested nine young men, following a complaint by a neighbor who claimed to have been robbed of a gas bottle. On February 9, a newspaper published the case of the nine missing men for the first time. A committee was created and the matter was submitted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. After some legal proceedings and disciplining, the accused from the Operational Command Unit were found guilty of failure

GUEST ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



NATALIA ALMADA, an award-winning documentary director and producer, was born in Mexico to a North American mother and a Mexican father. Her experimental documentary *All Water Has A Perfect Memory*, an official selection at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, also won best short documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival and a gold plaque award at the Chicago International Film Festival. It is currently distributed by Women Make Movies and has been broadcast on the Sundance Channel. In 2003, Almada received a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in film; she has also won two grants from the New York State Council on the Arts. In addition to *Al Otro Lado—To The Other Side*, a selection at the 2005 Tribeca Film Festival, she has directed and produced *El General*. Almada received her M.F.A. at the Rhode Island School of Design and is currently working as a freelance filmmaker in New York.

DANTE CERANO BAUTISTA has explored questions of cultural identity for the past decade. His documentary, *Día 2/Day 2*, about a P'urhépecha wedding, won the Best Artistic Creation Award at the 7th Festival Americano de Cine y Video de Pueblos Indígenas in Chile in 2004. Cerano is the first indigenous filmmaker in Mexico to work in fiction. In 2003, he received the Young Creators grant given by the Mexican arts foundation Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y de las Artes (FONCA). He was a member of the jury for the 2002 Geografías Suaves video festival in Mérida, and spoke about indigenous media at the 2004 Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia in Mexico. Cerano leads youth media training workshops through the organization Exe Video, and produces traditional and contemporary P'urhépecha music. He is from Cheranatzicurin, Michoacán.



XIMENA CUEVAS was born in Mexico City in 1963. Between 1980 and 1990 she worked on more than twenty feature films and held such diverse jobs as script supervisor, assistant director, art director, and stand-in. In 1991 she bought a Video-8 home movie camera and “retired” from film. Cuevas is obsessed with the micro movements of daily life, with the border between truth and fiction, and with the “impossibility” of reality. Her work redefines the meaning of documentary: she relentlessly seeks out the layers of lies covering the everyday representations of reality and systematically explores the fictions of national identity and gender. Her videos have been shown in festivals such as the New York Film Festival, Sundance, Berlin, and Montreal, and she was a featured artist in “Video Viewpoints” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She has been an invited speaker at numerous events, including those sponsored by the Pacific Film Archive in San Francisco, the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, and most recently at the Guggenheim Bilbao.