



STORIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS

created and produced by



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CULTURAL
EVENT 2008



FILMMAKERS and ARTISTS

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culture

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

Belgrade (Serbia) 1946, lives in New York

Dangerous Games

Laos, HD, col., 3 min. 34 sec.

In a small house with oversized furniture, located in a rice field in Asia, some children wearing army clothes and weapons, start playing war, creating between each other two armies and using children's toys, laser weapons, machine guns and helicopters. Slowly, as the game progresses, they start imitating war scenes as seen on TV, such as negotiations and death scenes. At the end of the film, the children are coming out of the house and they deposit their weapons in front of it. The smallest child comes out in the end with a burning bramble stick in his hand and lights the pile of weapons. All the children leave while the pile is burning.

In over twenty countries around the world, children are direct participants in war. Denied a childhood and often subjected to horrific violence, an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 children are serving as soldiers for both rebel groups and government forces in current armed conflicts.





DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER & ANGE LECCIA

Strasbourg (France) 1965, lives in Paris
Minervù (Corsica, France) 1952, lives in Paris

Des Films à Faire

France, HD, col., 3 min. 20 sec.

Inside one small white room in the “Ligue des Droits de l'Homme” building, a group of people are sitting together around a large table talking about cinema. We hear them discuss the distribution of independent movies, the subsidizing of film production, the encouragement of a less commercial vision of cinema, the support of small independent theatres, the complex relation between the number of copies produced and the number of spectators, etc. The exchange of words and ideas among the group is shot in a documentary manner, with a wide angle view of the whole group interspersed with close-ups of faces of those who speak or listen and fictional images such as bare foot walking on stones, a white desert and a face with covered eyes.





WALTER SALLES & DANIELA THOMAS

Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) 1956, lives in São Paulo

Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) 1959, lives in São Paulo

Voyage

Brazil 16mm, col., 3 min.

At dawn a dark-skinned young man wakes up, startled, in the bunk bed of a tiny bedroom. We hear clicking sounds, as he fiddles with something off-screen. Carrying a long black case under his arm, he climbs down the narrow corridors and stairways of a favela. Eyes follow him at every turn, focused on the black case. Standing in a crowded bus that crosses the endless sea of favelas in the outskirts of Rio, he makes people uncomfortable with the case. Next, he is in a train, eyes lost in the distance. Later in his long journey, he is in another bus in a richer part of town. As he finally gets a seat, clutching his black case, he makes the girl next to him very anxious. Time passes, he falls asleep alone in his seat. The sound of a police siren wakes him up. He opens the black case. Inside we see the shine keys of a clarinet. Fingers move over the keys, as we hear *Melodia Sentimental* by Hector Villa-Lobos. Slowly the image reveals that the young man playing the clarinet is our traveller, and that we are in a stately room where a young orchestra plays the beautiful Villa-Lobos piece.





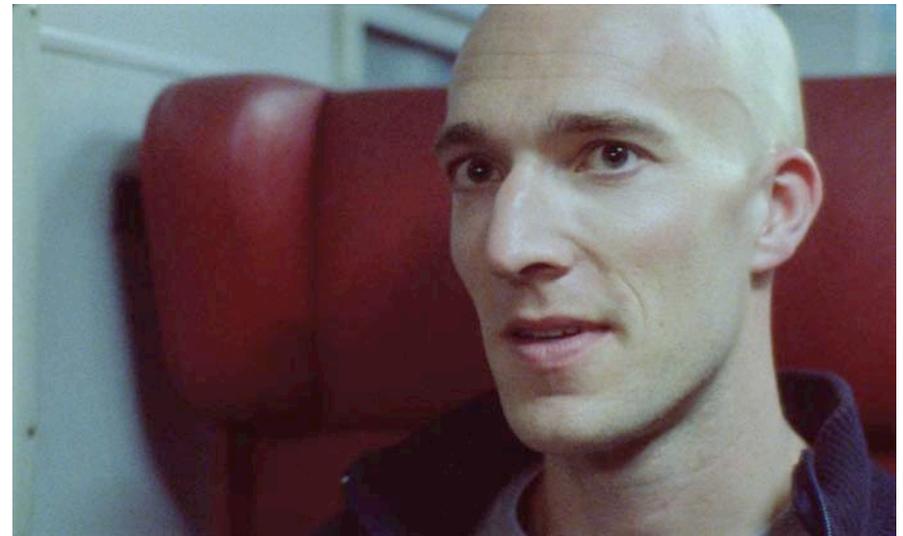
BRAM SCHOUW

The Hague (The Netherlands) 1979, lives in Amsterdam

Impasse

The Netherlands, 16mm, col., 3 min. 49 sec.

Midnight. A train rumbles through the darkness and its motion is shaking the passengers asleep. A young man with a bald, shaved head is staring out the window when an African girl enters the train. She puts her luggage in the rack above his head. She is very close to him. Except for him and the girl, everybody is asleep. He looks at her, but when she looks back, he turns his head away. A drop from a leaking perfume bottle hits his bald head and he smells the scent intensely. His heart is bouncing so loud he can almost hear it. When the girl gets off, he turns his head to look at her, revealing a tattoo of a swastika on the back of his neck.





development

SERGEI BODROV

Khabarovsk (Russia) 1955, lives in Moscow

The Voice

Russia, HD, col., 3 min.

In an orphanage, a nurse takes a 6-months-old baby from a bed and walks with it to the office of the head manager where a married couple is waiting. As soon as the wife gets the baby and holds it in her arms, the head manager comments that they still miss one document to finalize the adoption. Although the couple confirms that everything has been organized over a period of one year and that they were there for the third time, it becomes clear that the head manager is asking for money. While the husband is furious and the wife becomes desperate, the head manager tells the nurse to bring the baby back to the room, since those are not the “right parents”. While the adults are shouting at each other, the baby is crying and, once back in the bed, the nurse puts pieces of tape on its mouth. The baby continues to cry, but the voice can not be heard anymore.





MURALI NAIR

Kerala (India) 1966, lives in Hyderabad

The Crossing

India, 35mm, col., 3 min. 8 sec.

In an Indian village set in a valley bordered by an express highway, a tribal lady on her way back from grazing fields, intends to cross the express way with her herd of cows. Passing traffic wouldn't let her cross. When she eventually finds a gap to cross the road, a huge truck zooms in and the lady runs back, separating her from the herd. Anxiously the woman steps again into the traffic and gets squashed between two school buses. After the collision, traffic stops, cows run around and the angry villagers starts smashing everything in protest. A man wearing dark goggles and electronic gadgets appears on the scene. He waves the body of the tribal lady which – flat like a piece of cardboard – is brought to the ambulance car.

In a sophisticated workshop, technicians work on her body and create a doll out of her. Later, presumably at the launch of the doll in a modern shopping mall, with the loud rock music, a caricature of the cow comes alive: a dancing cow with the smiling head of the tribal lady. Big smile on the face of the man in goggles.





IDRISSA OUEDRAOGO

Banfora (Burkina Faso) 1954, lives in Ouagadougou

La Mangue

Burkina Faso, HD, col., 3 min. 6 sec.

Koro, a 6-year-old girl, picks up a mango stone, she holds it in her hands and later digs it in the ground in a public square, ignoring friends who are laughing at her. She waters the growing plant and tries to protect it, while people continuously step on it. Day after day, the girl takes care of the plant which is, just like her, growing and growing. When Koro – now a woman – falls in love and gives birth to her own child, ripe mangoes are falling from the tree. The film ends with Koro's young daughter who collects the mango stone and plant it in the village ground.





dignity & justice

SHIRA GEFFEN & ETGAR KERET

Tel Aviv (Israel) 1971, lives in Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv (Israel) 1967, lives in Tel Aviv

What About Me?

Israel, HD, col., 4 min. 7 sec.

A man in suit with a donkey comes to a checkpoint in the middle of nowhere, where a short stressed soldier and a scrawny, neglected dog, are sharing canned meat. He wants to cross, but when he shows his yellow ID, one of the officers tells him that on that day only people with purple IDs can pass. He is about to give up when his donkey insists he wants to go through. After a series of strange encounters the soldier and the man in the suit will find themselves closer than they've expected, sharing the same fate.





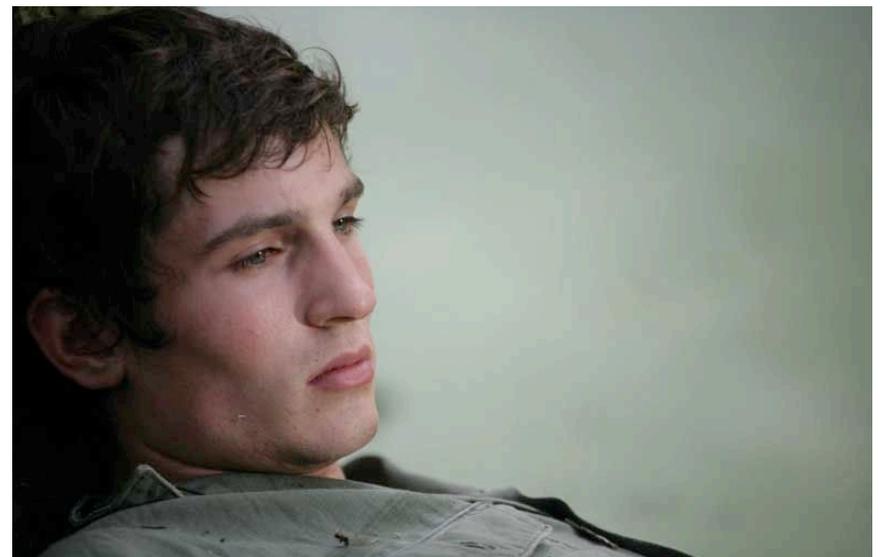
RUNA ISLAM

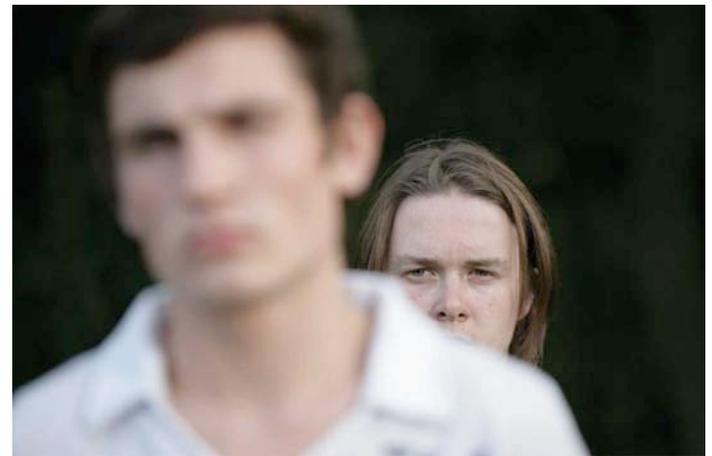
Dhaka (Bangladesh) 1970, lives in London

Trust

United Kingdom, 35mm, col., 3 min.

The film opens with a static scene of a pond in a forest where stark shadows of a willow tree fall across the green algae surface. Framing in closer, the camera pans over the algae to the edges of the pond, focusing in on every detail. In a continuous movement it passes to the roots of a tree revealing the close-up of a young man resting against the trunk. For an extended moment the camera dwells on his expressionless face. In a jump cut, the same man's face is seen in close-up, shutting his eyes and falling back and out of focus. He is in fact playing the game 'Trust'. With another jump cut, we are back in the forest; a long shot portrays the unmoving man in profile slumped at the bottom of the tree. In a second cut, the previous scene continues as the falling man is caught by another figure out of frame – and again we are returned to the forest. Here we witness the slow zoom out and pan away from the 'dying man', leaving only the view of the wind blowing through the willows. A final return to the 'trust' scene shows the young man making a strident upward movement and resurrecting himself to his feet and back to his starting mark. As the camera refocuses upon his distant gaze, the closing scene returns us to the opening scene.





ABDERRAHMANE SISSAKO

Mauritania, 1961.

What Does Dignity Mean?

Women, men and children, young and elderly people from modest social background, partly unemployed and sick, are asked to answer the question “What does dignity mean to you?” in front of a camera. Ten short scenes lasting approximately 5 to 7 seconds each, feature different people such as a woman with a sick child in her arms standing in the road; a man stopping to cultivate his field silently staring into the camera, sweating; a woman marching on a trail with a heavy packet on her head, among others.

All the protagonists reappear a second time, they smile as if they are about to answer the question.

PABLO TRAPERO

San Justo, Buenos Aires (Argentina) 1971, lives in Buenos Aires

Sobras

Argentina, HD, col., 3 min

Private companies or public, supermarkets and department stores, airlines, restaurants, families, individuals. We all throw away food. These foods may help combat hunger in many places, however are discarded. Cargo trucks, administrative papers, warehouses and sheds, garbage, garbage dumps, decomposition. And dozens of people running, climbing, reviewing, dismissing through these mountains of waste to retrieve, analyze and consume these foods lost among the garbage. The segment *Sobras*, follow the trail of these foods. The operational of waste. The bureaucracy of waste. They could be images of apocalyptic science fiction, could be dissonant sounds or notes, could be Kafkaesque labyrinthine sentences; could be a portrait of our society dumbly celebrating inequality.



APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL

Bangkok (Thailand) 1970, lives in Chiangmai

Mobile Men

Thailand, HD, col., 3 min. 15 sec.

Two young men in a pickup truck are filming themselves. Belonging to different parts of the world, through the use of a camera they are discovering each other. In a windy atmosphere, they initially film each other with close ups on parts of their bodies, then, little by little, they shoot their full figures. As the camera lenses change, a landscape of rice fields and a cinema crew get into the frame. The camera then reshoots the road and the men, as if we were witnessing a film rehearsal. When the frame goes back to shoot one of the two main characters who has tattoos over his body, the man lifts his shirt up and tears off a wired microphone that is taped to his chest. He then pastes it on the tattoo and cries out from the top of his lungs. The microphone picks up the heavy wind noise and the camera moves to capture his face. He looks directly at the camera, smiling.





environment

ZHANG KE JIA

Fengyang, Shanxi Province (China) 1970, lives in Beijing

Black Breakfast

China, HD, col., 3min.

A tourist, equipped with a camera and a tour guide, arrives in a provincial town where she hopes to see a city full of cultural relics and historic sites. But, contrary to her expectation, she finds herself in an industrial urban area, with blurred and patchy road signs eroded by smoke and pollution. The tourist, by instinct, takes pictures of these city signs: stop boards, street and road signs. Later, leaving the city, she waits for a bus on a highway, where an endless stream of heavy lorries carrying coal passes by, and the cloud of coal dust flies over the sky in a spectacular scene. As the cloud disperses, she notes a group of workers eating breakfast in the coal dust: their faces are of the color of coal and hardly recognizable. Sitting in the dust among them, she has to enjoy a “black breakfast”, her face as black as those of the locals.





FRANCESCO JODICE

Naples (Italy) 1967, lives in Milan.

A Water Tale

Kazakhstan, HD, col., 3 min.

An old fisherman and a young boy are driving through a landscape and, while traveling, they are talking about the importance of water. At some point they stop to get water from a fountain, as they will face a long day working on the sea.

When they get to the place, we see them on a boat, ritually preparing their fishing equipment. The sea is never shown, what we see is only the two characters and the boat rolling, and we can hear the sound of the water without actually seeing it. The old man and the boy then throw the fisher's net which lands on the sand. We now see the whole scene: the two characters are standing on a boat wreck in the middle of a desert. The sound of water dramatically disappears.





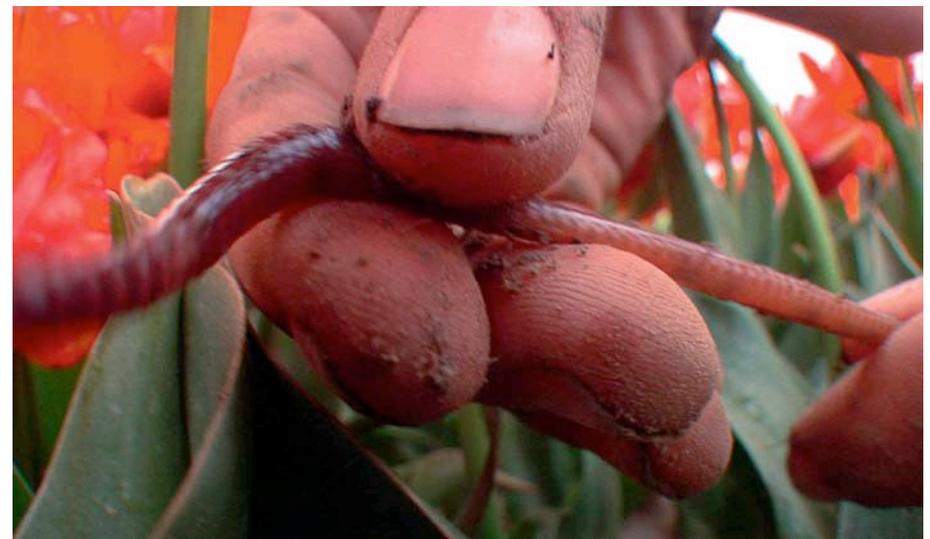
PIPILOTTI RIST

Grabs (Switzerland)1962, lives in Zürich

I Drink Your Bath Water

Switzerland, HD, col., 2 min. 32 sec.

The short movie is a “audiovisual poem” treating the human body as a landscape: hairs are trees, skin is earth, wrinkles are paths and eyes shine as lakes. The belly is a mountain shown by breathtaking travel over the surface of a human body in macro dimension mixed with landscape images. The protagonist is lying in a bathtub watching her toes, while a warm wet towel is alighting on her face and snow is falling. She takes a deep breath and bows up, getting out of the water. She walks to a fruit bowl, takes two fruits, smashes one to the wall, and peels the other one to eat. She drinks a glass of water and then dries herself. On one area of her skin a bleeding wound is visible, slowly closing. The glade in the forest is opening. She becomes a planet.





SARKIS

Istanbul (Turkey) 1938, lives in Paris

La victoire sur les sachets

France, HD, col., 3 min. 15 sec.

In numerous African regions, plastic bags thrown out into the nature pose a real problem, dangerous to nature and human beings alike. All the inhabitants have difficulties to find a way to manage waste. Some people recycle the plastic bags through creative procedures into musical instruments, in particular the most traditional percussion instrument, the *djembé*, played by millions of people all over the world. As this instrument is traditionally made of wood, the new practice also helps to stop deforestation and to create new jobs. 2 000 *djembés* recycle 20 tons of plastic waste and save 100 tons of wood.

In the short film the well-known African percussionist Guem plays on a *djembé* visibly made of recycled plastic waste. He improvises throughout the whole film by referring to the history of the instrument. While he plays, we see images of devastated fields of plastic bags on the African continent and their negative influence on people's lives.





gender

ARMAGAN BALLANTYNE

Wellington (New Zealand) 1972, lives in Titirangi (New Zealand)

Lily and Ra

New Zealand, 16mm, col., 3 min. 50 sec.

Ten year old mates, Ra and Lily, are playing outside an abandoned factory. When Ra hits a bird with his slingshot, Lily bravely rescues it and enlists Ra in it's care. Under her guidance the boy finds compassion where before there was nothing but anger and he is so proud when the bird comes back to life. The fragility of the moment is broken when the kids turn up at Ra's house to find the father standing over his crying mum. At the door Lily turns to her friend, "come home with me", she says, but things have changed with Ra. "Keep your stinking bird", he says, and Lily walks away, leaving him a lonely figure standing in the doorway, his eyes downcast.





SAMAN SALOUR

Borujerd (Iran) 1976, lives in Tehran.

The Final Match

Iran, HD, col., 3 min.

Two girls, Maryam and Sara, walk through town after school and, behind a car, change their dark school uniform with a Western look. Along an alley, they see football matches on screens in a shop window and are very excited about this male-dominated sport that they are not allowed to play. When they pass a football court, where some boys are playing, the ball comes to a stop in front of Maryam's foot. After the boys start mocking the girls, Maryam shoots the ball very professionally and makes a goal, to everybody's amazement.

Some days later, the girls discuss about a football match they arranged for that day. Sara is scared and thinks about placing watch-posts while they play, in order to avoid boys mocking them while they play. Later, the two girls are playing football with other teenage girls on the roof of a building, hidden from everybody. The only sound you can hear is the joyous shouting of the girls who have scored.





TERESA SERRANO

Mexico D.F.(Mexico)1936, lives in New York and Mexico City

Glass Ceiling

Mexico, HD, b/w, 2 min. 17 sec.

In the short film - voiceless and with the camera from different angles - we follow a man and a woman, both middle-aged and dressed in casual business clothes, climbing a wide and high open staircase. The man has a coiled rope in his hand. They climb slowly and independently from each other, the man lassoing the woman every time she gets a step or two ahead of him. The screen splits in two, showing the different actions. At the top of the stairs there is a large glass door leading to the building's floor of offices. The man walks through and crosses the hallway, without a backwards glance nor spoken word, while the woman is left alone standing rigidly and emotionless. Then she walks back a few steps and with strength throws her heavy bag against the glass door, which breaks into pieces. A dazzling light fades out to the end.





participation

HANY ABU-ASSAD

Nazareth (Israel) 1961, lives in Nazareth

A Boy, a Wall and a Donkey

Palestine, HD col., 3 min. 35 sec.

Three boys stand in front of the intercom at a villa's door, taking turns and speaking into it. Alerted by a security camera above their heads, the maid comes out and throws water at them to scare them away. They explain that they just wanted to record a film but since they did not have a camera, they decided to record it at the intercom camera of the door. The maid laughs and tells them that there is no tape in the camera, which is why they should go to a security camera that works.

Taking her seriously, one of the boys leads the others to the wall where they position themselves in front of a turning and recording camera in order to record their movie. Each of them wants to be first, and they all recite their dialogues. When an army jeep approaches in the final scene, they wonder if these are the people who bring them the tape of their movie.





CHARLES DE MEAUX

Istanbul (Turkey) 1967, lives in Paris

Garish Sun

France, HD, col., 3 min.

A young Asian woman, with an open book in her hands, is walking and reading at the same time. She reads Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, an English edition, a little bit used. She walks in the middle of clumsy and cheaply remade buildings of the Renaissance in Italy, an attraction park with remade sights. It is impossible to make out where it is situated. In the background one can see a miniature Colosseum next to an Amsterdam quay.

This young woman will never see the Italy of Romeo other than in a polyester decoration like in this theme park. The words of the novel, known around the world, which she is whispering with her melodic voice and with her hard-to-identify accent, unveil the melancholy of this fake trip.





JASMILA ŽBANIĆ

Sarajevo (Bosnia-Erzegovina) 1974, lives in Sarajevo

Participation

Bosnia-Erzegovina, 35mm, col., 2 min. 59 sec.

In a silent room of an old people's home, three old ladies take a coffee. On their coffee cups there are baroque pictures of young couples chasing each other. Suddenly one of the ladies' mobile phone rings, with the famous song "The Internationale". It takes her a lot of time to take it out of her bag and when she finally has it out, the ringing stops. In the same room some men play chess, other ladies walk around and hospital attendants do their daily work, while the music – now a soundtrack to the images – starts playing again.



