

## The idea behind the project

Right after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Berlin Film Festival screened a special documentary program that consisted of documentaries made by the Riga Documentary Film School that due to their specific poetic language have become classics of the documentary cinema.

The poetic mode of documentary filmmaking creates the story in a very special way when the visual aesthetics and image tell more of than the actual story-line of the film. By producing documentaries, Riga Film Studio created a system of picturesque and poetic publicistics that showed that documentary cinema can be valuable content-wise even without text and that the main constituent is mainly the visual image and that it's potential is endless. Poetic approach featuring a strong subtext in the visual material, metaphoric shots and editing, while basing the story-line in stories of the city, was the sign that marked the Riga poetic documentary film school and characterized the filmmaking of such renowned directors as Herz Frank, Ivars Seleckis and Uldis Brauns, Ivars Krauklītis. They created films that followed more the technique of a poesy that is filled with such an emotionally energetic experience that the viewer refers to it as his own experience. This changed the meaning of documentality. Their works (documentaries: *The White Bells*, 1961; *The Crossroad Street*, 1988; *Ten Minutes Older*, 1978) have repeatedly inspired several Latvian and foreign filmmakers.

Documentary *The Crossroad Street* by Ivars Seleckis received the award of Best European Documentary Film in 1988, by balancing the power of journalism and the quality of image in the story. Through human stories the film lets the audience learn about a world-model that was developed in city in various historical, political and social conditions. Documentary of one street represents not only one city but an entire century, which had left imprints on human lives, relationships, and activities.



*The White Bells* (1961) by Ivars Krauklītis created a poetic story towards the conditionality of the urban environment as a remark to the French documentary *The Red Balloon* (1956). Through the image it showed the urban environment of the Soviet city that had never been seen before.



*Ten Minutes Older* (1978) by Herz Frank became the ultimate classic of documentary cinema that resulted in a project created in 2002. *Ten Minutes Older* is a 2002 film project consisting of two compilation feature films titled *The Trumpet* and *The Cello*.

The project was conceived by the producer Nicolas McClintock as a reflection on the theme of time at the turn of the Millennium.

Fifteen celebrated film-makers were invited to create their own vision of what time means in ten minutes of film. The music for the compilations was composed by Paul English and performed by Hugh Masekela (Trumpet) and Claudio Bohorques (Cello). *The Trumpet* was first screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival. *The Cello* was premiered in the official Venice Film Festival 2002. Both films released internationally. The two films are dedicated to director Herz Frank and cinematographer Juris Podnieks who made the 1978 short film, *Ten Minutes Older*.

The idea of documentary Force Majeure is by using the approach developed by the authors of *Riga School of Poetic Documentary* as a source of inspiration, create a new documentary by seven of the most striking European documentary filmmakers that will reflect on the city and its stories.

This is a film - manual, manual on how views can differ regarding one and the same historical situation. It is also a movie about a documentarist place and sense in relations with its recordable object. It starts in the past, where a specific geographical location has been associated with a strong documentary tradition and now (present) has developed the mission to see this tradition prints in the same place. Thus, each autonomous short film tells something of the past, but the parallel explains the present and possibly future.

Urban environment here is attributed to the metaphor of a book, the "reading" of which changes with time – in youth, middle age, or old age. All the characters remains there, but the morals, values, explanation of consciousness of character etc. have changed. Different places in the city, offered to authors, as well as their own approach and style differences are these alternative "book readings" – Riga "readings". Riga in the story of this documentary is only a conidntinal metropolis of Eastern Europe, it represents a sort of a historic stage that allows each of the filmmaker (invited to participate in this project) to create his own subjective short film that is based in their personal associations and poetics.

There may suddenly appear love, hope, and death, but it can reveal entirely different categories – poverty, social inability of understanding also, in the end the city can be "read" as a fully formal, extremely aestheticized body. Film will consist of seven documentary "poems" created in the language of cinema with the objective to return to the artistic language of documentary cinema. Through knowledge of style of *Riga School of Poetic Documentary*, all directors of the film will come to their own inspirations of images of modern European and Eastern European city.

At the moment when the viewer is offered such an alternative vision kit, it is confused by "text" scale, which does not offer object for identification. Thus, to realize the link between the viewers with the film, it is necessary to create two types of heroes. The first type of hero are movie directors themselves, we get to know them as authors of each alternative "reading" and those build a copula between them and their interpretation. The second type of hero clearly mismatches hero's circuitry, but rather is an image - a metaphor. In this case, it is a little girl from the film *The White Bells* by Ivars Kraulītis.

Her image helps us to overcome the borders of different "readings", leading us through these stories and, at the same time, also shows links to the documentary tradition in Riga. Literally this figure may appear in shorts, but it can also be kind of a clear metaphor. This dialectical approach allows us to interpret the spectrum of emotions and thoughts in the field, let's say, what is a meaning of love at a young age, and what it means at old age, or what is the meaning of regret in the different moments of life? And in this movie emotions and thoughts in the field remains the most important reminder that the images are present. The only specific to the reader a sense they are moved from one place to another, from one emotion in the next phase.

All of the directors involved in the film will deal with a particular part of the urban environment of the city that is characteristic to any European or world city, may it be cats, ports, fishermen, some historic footprint or individual stories of people living in the city. All of these elements make an integral body, sort of an urban symphony of the city. Audience who will watch the film will freely be able to identify themselves as inhabitants of this metropolis.

Audrius Stonys (Lithuania), Jaak Kilmi (Estonia), Jon Bang Carlsen (Denmark), Bettina Henkel (Austria), Sergei Loznitsa (Belarus) – these directors will make a reflection to the style of the *Riga School of Poetic Documentary* to the best advantage.