

Nantes 2004

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FESTIVAL DES 3 CONTINENTS NANTES 2004

Festival des 3 Continents (November 2004) in the Atlantic city of Nantes, France is the best place to be in late autumn for film lovers who seek to discover little-known territories and the program this year was no exception. Images of Afghanistan have been on our TV screens for some time thanks to Mr Bush, but who has ever seen an authentic Afghan film that pre-dates post-invasion co-productions? Latif Ahmadi's *Hamesh Ishq* (*The Epic of Love*, 1986), a Romeo and Juliet story involving two rival *buskashi* teams and *Akhter Maskaneh* (*Akhter, the Joker*, 1981) about a poor alcoholic clown whose humiliation by his rich 'friends' leads him to crime were delightful to watch. Toryalai Shafaq's *Mujasema ha Mekhandan* (*The Statues are Laughing*, 1976), an existential tale about the predicaments of an artist was a revelation. *Ishq Wa Dost* (*Love and Friendship*, 1946) could easily compete with Bollywood. (This film is officially acknowledged as the first Afghan film and it is shot mostly in Lahore.) Eleven feature films from 1946 to the present, plus seven shorts and also the complete works of Siddik Barmak (feature film, *Osama* and four shorts) revealed a cinema rich in imagination and creativity.

This year's program was very stimulating in other sections as well. In competition, among the ten films, *Tarfaya* (2004) by Daoud Aoulad Syad from Morocco focused on the plight of women in the Muslim countries through the story of one woman who is determined to leave the country at all costs. From Israel, Ronit and Shlomi Elkabetz's *Ve Lakachta lecha Isha* (*To Take a Wife*, 2004) interrogated traditional family structures in modern lives. Ronit Elkabetz who is a well-known actress scripted and directed this film with her brother and she also plays the leading role. *Boutique* (2004) from Iran, the first feature film of Hamid Nematollah exposed the realities of Iran for the young generations through the story of a seventeen-year-old girl from a poor background who dreams of changing her circumstances. Wang Chao from China, who has made a name with his minimalist first film, 'The Orphan of Anyang' (2001) entered the competition with *Ri Ri Ye Ye* (*Night and Day*, 2004), a film on the ramifications of the new economy on the rural lives, in a humorous but touching story.

Out of competition, of particular interest, was the Afghan film, *Khak wa Khakester* (*Earth and Ashes*, 2004), a simple, silent but touching tale about the tribulations of Afghani people who have lost almost everything except their dignity, codes of honour and traditions. *Schizo* (2004) by Guka Omarova, a Kazakh protégée of Sergei Bodrov, was a remarkably acted story of growing-up in a wasteland.

In a section called *Nouveaux Regards*, five films, two from China and one each from Iran, Malaysia, Mexico and Peru that displayed new tendencies were shown. The most talked about was Malaysian James Lee's absurd comedy, *Mei Li De Xi Yi Ji* (*The Beautiful Washing Machine*, 2004) about a second-hand washing machine that comes alive.

The competition for documentaries included six films, two from China, two from India and two from Iran. *Final Solution* (2004) by Rakesh Sharma about the Gujarat killings of 2,500 Muslims in 2002 was the best of all and well-deserved the *Montgolfière d'Or*.

A tribute was made to Tu Duu-Chich, considered as the best Asian sound artist, who has worked with the likes of Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Wang, Ho Ping, Wong Kar Wai and Tsai Ming-liang. Ramses Marzouk, the Egyptian cinematographer had a tribute in the Films for your Eyes section. In the Three generations of Mexican Cinema section, homage was paid to the Bracho family, an icon of Mexican cinema.

However, the one that stole the show was the master of Iranian cinema, Abbas Kiarostami, who introduced an original exhibition of his photographs at the Museum of Fine Arts. Some of his films from the 1970s were also shown. *Experience*, *The Passenger*, *First-Year Pupils*, *The Wedding Suit*, *Two Solutions for One Problem*, initially made for children, are all delightful to watch even for adults and after so many years.

If you think the festival organisers, the Jalladeau brothers by now have exhausted uncharted territories, think again. The country of focus in 2005 is Libya!

References

AWARDS

Golden Mongolfier: *Ri Ri Ye Ye (Night and Day)* by Wang Chao (China)

Silver Mongolfier: *Bombon el perro* by Carlos Sorin (Argentina)

Special Jury Award: *Una de dos (One Out of Two)* by Alejo Taube (Argentina)

Best Directing Award, tribute to Jacques Demy: *Ri Ri Ye Ye* by Wang Chao (China)

Best Actress: Golshifteh Farahani in *Boutique* by Hamid Nematollah (Iran)

Best Actor: Juan Villegas in *Bombon el perro (Bombon, the Dog)* by Carlos Sorin (Argentina)

Young Audience Award: *Ri Ri Ye Ye* by Wang Chao (China)

Audience Award: *O Heroi (A Hero)* by Zeizeì Gamboa (Angola)

Documentary section

Golden Mongolfier: *Final Solution* by Rakesh Sharma (India)

Special mention: *Zairat* by Bahman Giarostami (Iran)

Author Information

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