

wat niet
bestaat
moet je
dromen



What must the Netherlands Film and Television Academy (NFTA) do, or refrain from doing, to inspire its students to greater feats of imagination? How can their narratives be made more eloquent? How can they create work with greater depth? How can all available techniques be fully exploited to enhance the story and bestow meaning?

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Tricky questions. And there are no unequivocal answers. But the NFTA considers it to be its responsibility to pass on this burden to the film talents of the future, so they can contribute to the development of Dutch film culture.

The NFTA has asked Artist in Residence Peter Delpout to enter into discussion with directors of studies and lecturers, seek out sources of inspiration, advise on the specifics of certain parts of the curriculum, initiate the reevaluation of commonly accepted norms, stimulate experimentation and to encourage an openness of the senses throughout the entire filmmaking process.

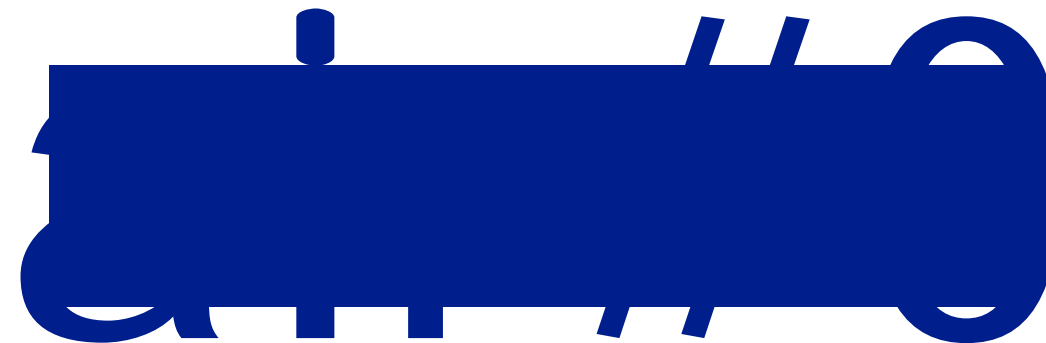
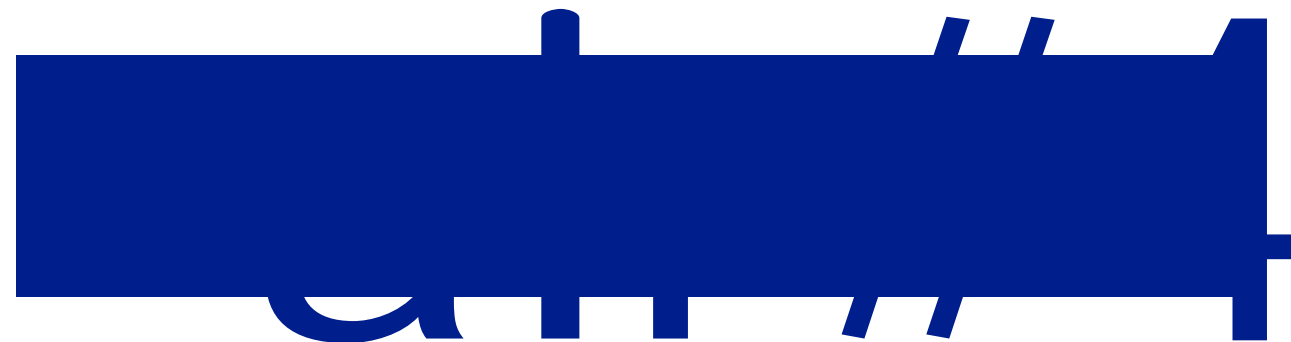
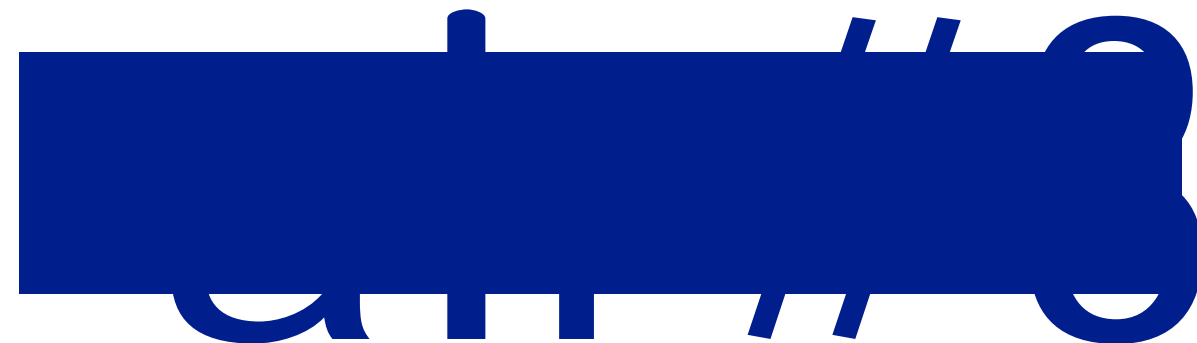
Inspire,
advise,
challenge...

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Peter Delpout

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air #2



The paradox of art education / Peter Delpout

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INGEKOMEN -- DEC. 2004

Werkgroep verbeelding

Beste studieleiders en docenten Filmacademie,

Ik ben nu een aantal maanden officieel Artist in Residence op de Filmacademie. De afgelopen maanden heb ik geprobeerd met een kritische en analyserende blik naar het onderwijspakket en de organisatie daarvan te kijken. Ik heb willen onderzoeken of er aan het curriculum onuitgesproken vooronderstellingen ten grondslag liggen waarover niemand zich nog gedachten maakt. Dat heeft geresulteerd in een eerste rapportage.

Tegelijkertijd vind ik dat er ook een meer fundamentele vraagstelling aan mijn opdracht ten grondslag ligt: wat is eigenlijk verbeeldingskracht? Een brede vraag, maar wel interessant om over na te denken. Mijn interventies zijn immers weer gebaseerd op mijn eigen onuitgesproken ideeën. Ik wil dit onderzoek echter niet louter tot mijn studeerkamer beperken. Daarom wil ik degenen die daar interesse in hebben, uitnodigen om deel te nemen aan een werkgroep.

Laat me snel weten of je wilt deelnemen, ik beleg dan een eerste bijeenkomst in januari.

Peter Delpout

The paradox of art education / Peter Delpout

5 At the start of his tenure as Artist in Residence at the NFTA Peter Delpout wrote an article for the film magazine *Skrien* in which he laid out his ideas on art education. In it he states his position, defines his area of attention and reports on his explorations of the Academy.

jeugdig talent /
in het diepe gooien

Whenever young filmmakers asked Francois Truffaut if they could attend shoots of his latest film in order to learn the craft, he invariably advised them to use the time to make a short film themselves. There was no better way of learning, thought Truffaut, than to throw oneself in at the deep end: the real talents taught themselves to swim. For that was what Truffaut himself had done. He had scraped some money together and started filming.

But in truth it was not that simple. Before shooting his debut short, *Les Mistons*, Truffaut assisted Roberto Rossellini for a year; not a bad mentor I would say – especially considering his later didactic films – for a young, film-hungry moviemaker. And the fatherly presence of film theorist Andre Bazin probably also did little harm to the young talent of the still wild and undirected Truffaut. He was too much of a humanist to deny the influence of these two father figures, but he had learned filming, he maintained, by doing it. And, he sometimes added, by writing film reviews. By briefly summarising the story, he had become practised in thinking incisively and analytically about film scenarios. This is the perfect approach. If I were to recommend a single textbook for young filmmakers it would not be the much-praised book of interviews with Hitchcock (that is next on my list), but the collection of reviews written by Truffaut in the 1950s. They remain pearls of film analysis to this day, although there is not a word of theory to be found – unless that word is 'auteur': Truffaut loved filmmakers with their own story, a personal touch.

grondig /
verregaand gestructureerd

I was reminded of Truffaut when I was going through the 390 pages of the 2003–2004 Study Guide of the Netherlands Film and Television Academy. Would he still have urged young filmmakers to make short films? Has it not become even more simple with new digital equipment? Or would he have advised them to first become film critics, to hone their abilities to lucidly and critically condense and recount stories? And would that help them to develop their own visions of life and cinema, to become personalities? To become auteurs? Or would he have been as impressed by the syllabus of the NFTA as I am and have advised budding auteurs to attend?

It would be no easy task to formulate a more well-considered or thorough curriculum for a filmmaking education. The school promises a combination of general, formative courses and in-depth specialisations. Great attention is paid to the attainment of dramaturgic and technical skills, provided by carefully selected and stimulating tutors. In many respects this is the school I dreamt of when I attended the Film Academy in 1980: structured and methodical. >>

I was reading through the Study Guide because I had been asked, in my function as Guest Professor/[^]Artist in Residence, to perform 'research into the fostering of imaginative power'. With admirable candour, the school's director Marieke Schoenmakers informed me that she often found this aspect lacking in her student films. During international student festivals, the NFTA's films were often far superior technically to the average but – and here I summarise in my own words – she missed mischief and rebelliousness: the individual voice. 'They aren't auteurs,' I thought when she said this. But how can you educate someone to become a personality, to transform an aspect of one's cultural self into an emotive film narrative? How can you educate someone to become Truffaut?

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echte schoolgids / ondeugendheid wordt iets om te leren

In preparation for a second conversation I read through the Study Guide once more, as if through the eyes of the mischievous student, some kid brimming with great ideas. And it was changed by this: it became a regular school guide. The NFTA is a school (if only because it is financed and regulated by the Ministry of Education) and a characteristic of schools is that they assume everything can be learned. That may seem self-evident, but within the context of an artistic education it is nonetheless important that this aspect of education is viewed critically. The core of the NFTA curriculum consists of standard situations and ideas. The narrative film is fundamental to it. And the foundations for this are laid by the trinity of producer, director and scriptwriter. Their collaboration with each other and with other crew members is trained in strictly regulated simulation exercises in which the principle of egalitarianism (everyone having equal rights to educational quality time) is paramount.

The most surprising aspect of the NFTA curriculum is that this strategy is not concealed in obtuse language, rather it is explicitly stated. This is not merely a syllabus, it seems, it is an ideology that lays down how films are made, or rather, *should* be made. The students are fed the ideal of partnership, based on the BBC model, whereby producer, screenwriter and director each take their own responsibility within the project, but the group takes responsibility for the project as a whole. That this idea has been picked up by the students is made clear by the number of final exam films in 2003 presented as 'a film by everyone', thus setting aside classical autership once and for all. What would Truffaut have thought of that?

In order that the syllabus not appear too inflexible, some voices of dissent are built into it, and here the 'chair legs' (the actual title of one of the workshops) are kicked away. But however subversive sections of the course may seem with titles like Inspiration, Art Film, and Cultural History of the Relationship between Men and Women, they are – as befits an educational institution – embedded in the general curriculum. In this way, mischievousness also becomes a learnable skill. >> p.12

Tien keer een bankje
en een koe /
Ten benches and
one cow /

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In Loving Memory (2001) / Alongside the railway from Leeds to Carlisle in England stand many wooden benches dedicated to deceased loved ones. Who put them there? And why? *In Loving Memory* sees Peter Delpout journey from bench to bench, intertwining their stories with the history of the railway, the construction of which claimed 200 workers' lives through hunger and exhaustion.





Felice... Felice... (1998) / Late nineteenth-century Japanese photographs form the basis of *Felice... Felice...*, which recounts the story of the impossible love affair between the Western photographer Felice Beato and the Japanese O-Kiku. Delpout combines photographs with excerpts from Felice's letters to his brother.

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Een gesprek
met ogen, een korte
aanraking en een
glimlach /
*A silent exchange
of looks, a fleeting
touch and a
smile*

standaardisering versus individualiteit / paradox / waar blijft de verbeelding?

I think this clearly illustrates the paradox of art education. Fundamental to education is regulation, standardisation and technique; what sets art apart is creativity, individuality and content. The first threesome can be learned and repeated in simulation exercises according to predefined guidelines. The second is to a high degree dependent on the moment, the spirit of the time, the personal development of the maker, and maverick thought processes; not only in relation to content but also to equipment or notions about how activities on the film-set should be carried out. This last – art – is driven by the powers of imagination.

Just like any other institution of professional art education, the NFTA is a hostage to this paradox. But it may be true to say that film education suffers more from it than other arts. Even the most individual filmmaker is dependent on the cooperation of others if he wishes to realise his work. Not only technically, but also creatively, because a cameraman who is merely a technician is a bad cameraman. Filming is a strictly regulated activity, chiefly because it demands organisation. Moreover, purchasers of film products increasingly require that the maker works within strict formats of duration and theme. It is, then, unsurprising that the syllabus concerns itself primarily with that regulated, prescriptive side of the business. The ability to deal with these restrictions is a principle requirement for a filmmaker who hopes to even survive in the filmmaking business.

The downside is of course that one begins to wonder what place there is for the wayward individualistic interpretation within this rigidly organised process of filmmaking. Where is the imagination?

visie / culturele bagage / verhalen

During one of the first lectures I attended by my own mentor, Eric de Kuyper, he made a remark that has remained with me ever since. 'Filmmakers', he said, 'are a very particular breed of intellectual'. While it is true that they do not avail themselves of the academic orations of the universities, this does not make them less intellectual. Filmmakers respond to the world with stories. Using film, they dissect the world's hidden relationships: sociological, anthropological, psychological, etc. To De Kuyper, Fellini or Antonioni and Nicholas Ray or Douglas Sirk were intellectuals whose stories were attempts to penetrate and understand the world, or history – and often the future too. A film director should preferably be someone who cogitates, someone with a vision. That may sound grand and all-encompassing. And it is meant to, for it demands a great depth of cultural awareness: content.

Whenever a lack of cultural awareness is detected, the youthfulness of the current generation of film students is invariably pointed out, by way of exoneration. But Truffaut was only 25 years old when he made *Les Mistons*, and 26 when he astonished the world with *Les quatre cents coups*. Born in 1932, Truffaut grew up during the Second World War, and perhaps that made him mature more quickly. From an early age, Truffaut devoured any books he could get his hands on, so he did not just sit in the cinema: literature was his great passion; a natural erudition was his trademark.

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13 But this great intellectual never managed to grasp the English language, for example, even after many serious attempts.

Filmmakers are a different breed of intellectual, not the academic kind. Something simple, such as learning another language, might be beyond them, but we should nonetheless treat them as intellectuals, as thoughtful filmmakers who will project their visions onto the world with their narratives. I suspect that if we want young filmmakers with imagination, then we must seek the solution in this area. Imagination is vision, not the creation of an unusual camera set up. It begins with the awareness of one's culture and ends with contemplation of it. That is why imagination can be taught, but not by following the regulated paths of the normal educational system that seem so grimly to resemble the well-worn paths of the film production process. How, then, can it be taught? This is the challenge that is set before all film schools. At some point, the tension between the various technical disciplines and the individual vision must be made productive. Pasolini could do it, Hou Hsiou-hsien can do it and so can Kiarostami. Why would Dutch film students not also be able to do the same? And why should ways not be found to help them on their way, past the paradox of art education?

Peter Delpout / attended the Netherlands Film and Television Academy after studying Philosophy and Film Theory. He is a former film journalist and assistant director of the Netherlands Film Museum. He makes features, documentaries and shorts, and publishes essays and books. In 2004 Peter Delpout was one of the ten artist filmmakers to whom the Netherlands Film Fund gave carte blanche and financial support to develop a plan for a long feature film. 14

Filmography /

- 1984 / *Emma Zunz*, feature film
- 1986 / *Stravers*, feature film
- 1987 / *Trouble Ahead*, 'home movie'
- 1988 / *Toreador In Hollywood/Budd Boetticher*, documentary
- 1988 / *Pierrot Lunaire* (Moonstruck Pierrot), feature film
- 1989 / *Ghatak*, documentary
- 1990 / *Lyrisch Nitraat* (Lyrical Nitrate), documentary
- 1992 / *The Forbidden Quest*, feature film
- 1993 / *E Pur Si Muove* (And Yet She Moves), dance film
- 1995 / *Cinema Perdu* (Lost Cinema), television series
- 1996 / *De Tijdmachine* (The Time Machine), documentary
- 1998 / *Felice...Felice...*, feature film
- 1999 / *Diva Dolorosa*, documentary-compilation
- 2000 / *Schatkamer Rijksmuseum*, (The Rijksmuseum: Treasure Chamber), documentary
- 2001 / *In Loving Memory*, documentary
- 2003 / *Go West, Young Man!*, documentary
- 2004 / *Dromen van Holland* (Dreams of Holland), documentary
- 2005 / *Op de Grens* (At the Border), documentary

Bibliography /

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- 1998 / *Felice...Felice...*, novella, Meulenhoff
- 1999 / *Diva Dolorosa. Reis naar het einde van een eeuw* (Diva Dolorosa. Journey to the end of a century), essayistic travel book on research into Italian film divas of the first decade of the last century, Meulenhoff
- 2003 / *De Grote Bocht. Kleine filosofie van het fietsen*, (The Big Curve. A small philosophy of cycling), essayistic travel book on the pleasures of long-distance cycling, Augustus
- 2006 / (in preparation) *Het Vergeten Seizoen* (The Forgotten Season), novel

Stervende zwaan/ *Dying swan* (1990)





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Lyrical Nitrate (1990) / consists of sections of silent films found in the archives of the Netherlands Film Museum. They are chiefly last surviving copies and often incomplete and damaged. *Lyrical Nitrate* makes us only too aware of how much of our cinema history has been lost and what a wonderful industry it was - from its earliest beginnings. It could be the cinematic history of another world. One short story or disjointed segment follows another. Sometimes we catch just a glimpse of actors behind a large bubble of corroded nitrate, as if they are spying on us from their world.

- 19 Peter Delpout analysed and advised the Academy. He wrote a number of pieces for internal purposes that arose from his findings. These contain strong, concrete recommendations calling for space for the imagination in the curriculum. In reaction to this analysis, and at our request, Gertjan Zuilhof wrote about his vision of auteurship and young directors, and whether this is a subject it is possible to teach.

cultureel onvergelijkbaar /

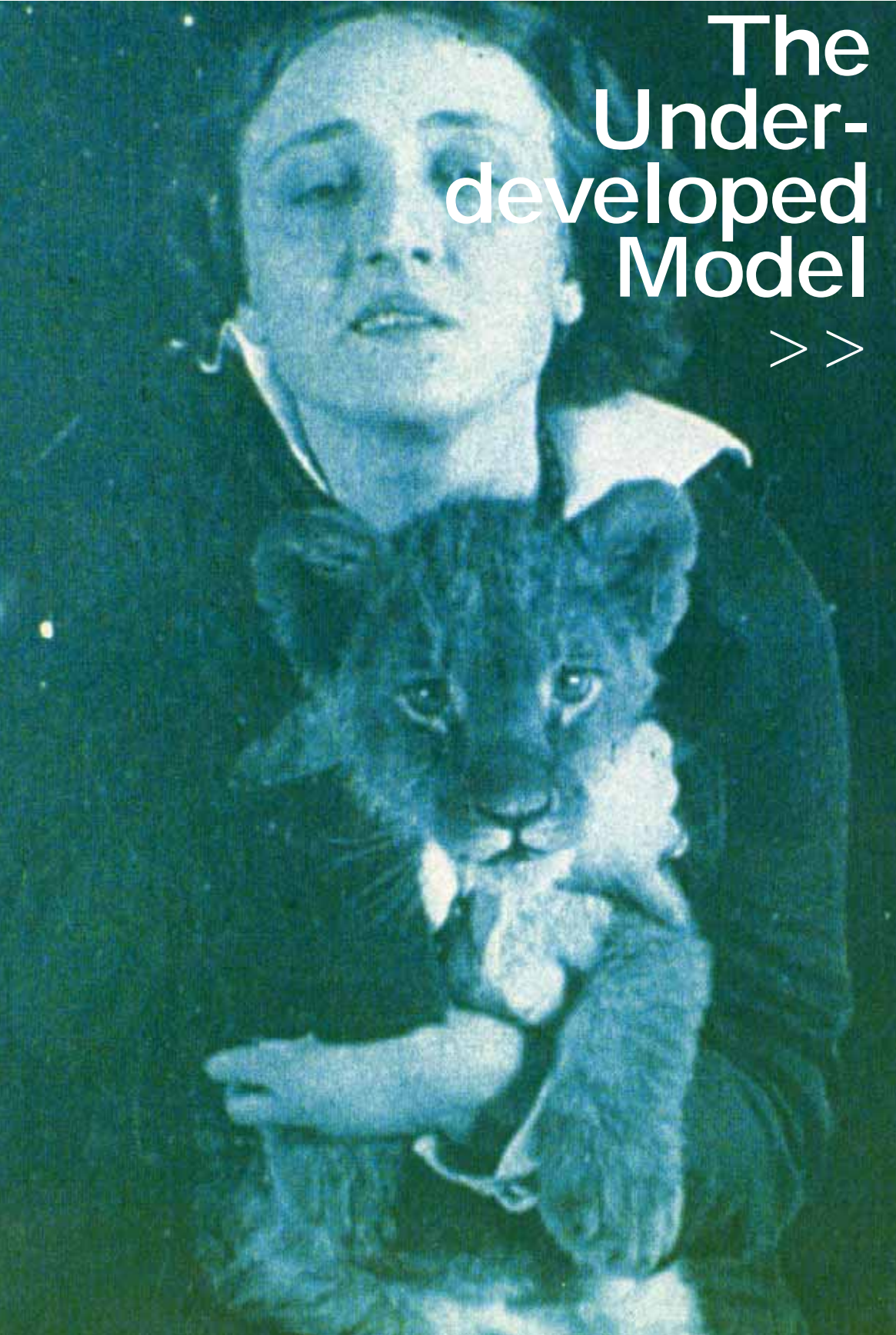
This article is not about the education of filmmakers in the Netherlands. Neither is it about Dutch film. Nor even about comparable countries or situations. As programmer of the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) and member of the board of the Hubert Bals Fund (HBF), I have most frequently encountered situations and circumstances that are not comparable with those in the Netherlands. They are uncomparable economically and uncomparable culturally. Indeed, especially culturally. Because I think that comparing the uncomparable is not always futile – even if it is only to fully comprehend the differences – in the following I will provide a number of examples. Fairly arbitrary examples it is true, but not chance examples.

extreem / maleisische new wave

During the 2006 IFFR in Rotterdam we screened a number of short Malaysian films; there were sufficient to fill two programmes. Titles from the first programme include *A Moment of Love* by James Lee, *It's Possible Your Heart Can Not Be Broken* by Woo Ming Jin, *La Invitation* by Lim Lay Kue and *Company of Mushrooms* by Tan Chui Mui. These are short films by young, and sometimes very young, filmmakers. Lee is probably the oldest at 30, and I suppose Lim is the youngest. She is probably only just 20. Nonetheless, all these filmmakers already have a number of films to their names, including full-length feature films. They also know each other well and sometimes work very closely together. Lee was the cameraman for almost all these films, and he also produced one of them. Tan, meanwhile, produces all Lee's films and also acts in a number of them, including the abovementioned *It's Possible...* She also writes scenarios for other filmmakers. By the time she was 26 she had produced more than one feature film, written more than one, acted in more than one and had already made a series of shorts that were actually not all that short.

Is it, then, particularly easy to make an independent film in Malaysia? Those who know even a little about Malaysia and countries like it will have seen this for the rhetorical question it is. Cultural policy in Malaysia is extremely conservative: it is deeply beholden to the most powerful religious movement, Islamism. Furthermore, the filmmakers mentioned earlier belong to the resident Chinese community and choose to make their films in their own language. Only films in which Malay is spoken are eligible for government support, so they depend entirely on their own resources.

It is clear that without the development of digital video (making cheap film production possible without recourse to the film infrastructure, its laboratories and so forth) the rise of a Malaysian NewWave would have been unthinkable. However, I see the vital-



The Underdeveloped Model



ity of filmmaking in Kuala Lumpur as distinct from any technical development. This technology is, after all, available all over the world, and there are few places where it leads to a blossoming of such stimulating film activity. The Malaysians not only make a lot of films, they are often also worth watching. They have learnt well from the modern masters of Asian cinema – especially the Taiwanese Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming Liang – but they do not copy them slavishly. Their own daily lives give colour to a subtle realism, and an often very mild irony ensures a humourous undertone.

informele beweging / de piraten-dvd-school

The young Malaysian film community has also produced an essayistic and documentary filmmaking talent in Amir Muhammad, who is also influential as a writer and organiser. Muhammad and people like him play an important role in the spreading of the fame of the Malaysians in Southeast Asian countries where conditions are comparable, such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

The Malaysian filmmakers amount to an informal movement. They organise presentations of their own films and those of other makers in order to screen them together and to find an audience for them. A young filmmaker selling DVDs of his films at the entrance is a common sight.

While we are on the subject of DVDs: rampant Asian DVD pirating is a blessing to these young filmmakers. In a culture without a movie-rental or arthouse tradition, cheap illegal copies are the only means by which they can gain admittance to cinema history. They are enthusiastically sought, bought, collected, exchanged, and watched together. I have met some young filmmakers in Asia with astonishingly extensive knowledge of European cinema. It is, then, not far-fetched to discern the influence of, say, Bresson or Antonini in the work of young Malaysians.

The pirate DVD trend; the collaboration in varying functions and combinations (whereby a cameraman may be a producer, and the scriptwriter an actress); the necessity to break out of the position of an ethnic (Chinese) minority; the possibly coincidental presence of a number of extremely talented filmmakers (such as Ho Yuhang, who took part in the IFFR Tiger Competition in 2005 with *Sanctuary* and played a leading role in Tan's *Company of Mushrooms*): the blossoming independent cinema of Malaysia seems to me to be rooted in a set of specific and local circumstances.

geen censuur / geen onderdrukking / geen armoede

It is not easy to explain why one developing country, such as Argentina, can suddenly have an interesting film movement, while another, Brazil, has not had one in some time. I do not suppose that a successful formula in one country can be applied to another, but we must nonetheless be able to learn something from the Malaysian achievements. Even a Dutchman must be able to do that. The Dutch will not have it easy emulating the success of the Malaysian model, though: there is no censorship here, no poverty, no official oppression of minorities and also no obvious necessity to work for nothing on someone else's film. A cameraman does not need to produce so he does not produce. And neither does he learn to do so. But I think it is precisely this aspect of the Malaysian situation that we can learn the most from. Very often these filmmakers have worked on sets, performed all manner of duties, scraped

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budgets together, and got their names on to the credits. And then they presented and defended the films before audiences containing many fellow filmmakers, and finally they published on DVD. The word 'compartmentalisation' that appears so frequently in Peter Delpeut's contributions is evidently not applicable to the Malaysian situation. On the contrary: the day may come when they have to learn that division of tasks and specialisation can have a positive effect on the quality of the results. But for now I think it best not to bother them with such advice.

The Malaysian model, which of course does not want to be a model, and which it perhaps should not become, is first and foremost a practical working method. Born out of necessity. The jury is out on how long it will survive and whether it can yield another kind of filmmaker – a filmmaker who has mastered all the disciplines and who, perhaps by force of circumstances, is more of an autodidact than a professional. Might the notion of what an auteur is be changed by this? What would happen to a film if so many self-taught directors were on the set of the same film? If the cameraman and the producer and the director were all one and the same person? If the actress was the scriptwriter? And so on. Where would the director's signature be?

Necessity has given rise to another trend in Malaysia, and throughout Asia, where filmmakers easily breach the boundaries between genres. They not only shoot commercials (a global practice I surmise), but after a serious political documentary they might turn their hand to a horror film, for example. Amir Muhammad did just that: shooting the commercial horror film *Susuk* after completing *The Last Communist*. Muhammad and others like him are perhaps entirely uninterested in their directorial signatures. He seems more interested in trying out a new style for each film he makes: *Tokyo Magic Hour* was an outright experimental film in which all forms of distortion and colourisation that digital techniques had to offer were tried out. Muhammad offers no excuses for his commercial activities. He does not say that the horror film makes the experimental film possible. His interest in the horror film is sincere, and ultimately that of a genuine film lover.

de niet-auteur / nonchalance / veel doen

This means that the model of the Malaysian auteur – actually a non-auteur – is perhaps a more exciting proposition than the Malaysian production model, which would not be easily imitated in an economically pampered country like the Netherlands. What the two models do have in common is that they both assume a high level of production – quantity wise. In a country such as ours, where film production excels in being uptight and self-restrained, fluency and nonchalance are seriously undervalued qualities; plenty of filming, plenty of being on the set, plenty of everything in fact, could do much to reinstate them.

This article does not presume to have recommendations for Dutch film production or film education. It is intended as a rumination on one single phenomenon far away from the Netherlands. In an interview with Ger Beukenkamp for the VPRO TV Guide Peter Delpeut says 'Anyway, what did I have to say when I was 26?' By this he is actually asking 'What can one expect from young Dutch filmmakers?' I only want to point out that in my travels through Asia I met young filmmakers who do have something to say, and just for a moment you might want to reflect on why that is the case.

Filmmaken en verwonderen
Presentatie filmwerk Peter Delpeut

Ik loop al een paar maanden rond op de Academie om onderzoek te doen naar het bevorderen van de verbeeldingskracht. In een artikel voor Skrien en een interview met de VPRO-gids heb ik een aantal van mijn ideeën over de opleiding naar buiten gebracht. Voor degenen die mijn werk als filmmaker niet kennen, kwamen die opmerkingen vaak uit de lucht vallen. Anderen, die mijn werk wel kenden, konden ze beter plaatsen. Daarom wil ik graag een kleine presentatie van mijn filmwerk geven. Om een context aan mijn opvattingen over filmonderwijs te geven. Of, zoals de acteur Gerard Thoolen het ooit uitdrukte: 'Alles komt ergens van'.

In een programma van ruim twee uur zal ik diverse fragmenten uit mijn films tonen. Om daar enige samenhang in aan te brengen heb ik het thema 'verwondering' gekozen. In de meeste van mijn films is dat een belangrijk gegeven. Verwondering over mijn onderwerpen: vaak oude films, maar ook schilderijen, foto's of onooglijke bankjes langs de kant van de weg in Engeland. En verwondering over wat met het medium film allemaal mogelijk is: de kracht van montage, hoe een film pas tot leven komt door geluid.

Als een heuse diskjockey zal ik mijn plaatjes aan elkaar praten. Fragmenten uit found footage films, speelfilms, documentaires - en de mengvormen die daarmee mogelijk zijn.

Iedereen is meer dan welkom!

Peter Delpeut

Een ijsbeer op de Zuidpool / *A polar bear on the South Pole* (1992)





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The Forbidden Quest (1993) / An actor recounts the story of a disastrous journey to Antarctica, which only he survived. The visual accompaniment to the narrative is a succession of scenes from some twenty silent films (documentaries and features) about journeys to the North and South Poles. The segments of silent film make almost palpable the cold, the wind and the hardships that the polar explorer must endure. The intermittent sounds that Delpout has added resonate through the surrounding silence.



Peter Delpout's three-stage rocket / Interview with the Artist in Residence

Peter Delpout's three-stage rocket /
Interview with the Artist in Residence / René van Uffelen

- 27 It will have escaped few people's notice that filmmaker Peter Delpout has been connected to the Film Academy for the past year as Artist in Residence. *Dutch Angle* spoke to Delpout when his year at the Academy was almost over and he was taking stock of his experiences.

The past year is the first in which the position of Artist in Residence has been filled at the Film Academy. This post and similar ones at the other academies in Amsterdam were created to draw in people who could contribute something to them, outside of the curriculum. This was implemented differently at each Academy. The Film Academy wanted to find out about the imaginative power of its students and the manner in which its teaching methods stimulate and encourage the development of the imagination. I was commissioned to investigate the matter and to reflect upon it.

technische grenzen /

Initially I shared the clichéd view repeated in the press in response to the final exam presentations. That is to say: the films all look fine, but there's no substance to them. Of course that's not entirely true; it's too easy to say that Academy films express no imagination. But through my conversations about, and reflections on, what goes on in the school, I have ascertained that there are problems that need to be addressed. One of these problems is that throughout the school there is a lack of consistency in the consideration of imagination.

My key analysis is that the school has constructed its educational approach on a foundation of technical competence rather than content-oriented competence. This is made clear by the fact that the exercises students do are often limited by technical feasibility, while content can be selected by the students. This creates an apparent freedom, but in practice it means that people are largely preoccupied with all manner of technical issues: recording time, the intended length of the film and filming equipment have become more important than the content, the urgency of the story that must be told. I think it should be turned on its head. If all the tutors and directors of studies kept in mind that content should come before technology, many exercises could remain as they are and so could most of the imposed technical limitations, but something intrinsically different would happen to the films. You'd make it clear to the students what it's all about in the film world anyway: first you have a story to tell and then you gather the technical means to tell it. I'd just love to bring that reversal about, but it's not simple.

Determining why it's not simple is the second part of my analysis, which is much more practical in nature. During the years of expansion to 75 students per academic year, a process developed whereby the technical classes withdrew into their own subjects. When that happens, the tendency is to defend the subject's territory. And this in turn leads to an emphasis on the technical parameters of the exercises. The individual subject classes are excessively categorised – preoccupied with their own affairs. Leading on from this to the third part of my analysis: I find the subject classes take too little responsibility for the education of students of other disciplines. Ultimately, a film can only be any good if your fellow crew members appreciate your

function in the process. The key figure in the process is the director, the film's artistic leader. A film needs such a figure to give it its own voice, to ensure it really articulates something unique. So you have to make sure that this individual has some idea of what is involved in the various specialisms on which he or she is going to depend. I think that as well as their own students, the technical classes should take more responsibility for the education of directors, and by extension the screenwriters and creative producers. It is from this creative trinity that the story, the content of the film, must come, but it is obviously receiving too little sustenance from the well of knowledge in the technical classes. I could say a lot more about this three-stage rocket, and there are very many practical problems associated with it, but it must be possible to use it to take a look at alternative ways of organising the school.

To my mind, the solution lies mainly in a shift in balance. At the moment, too much weight is given to communicating specialist knowledge in a very categorised form, and this must change. The funny thing is, I originally thought I'd be carrying out my research on a fundamental level, but now it turns out I'm making very practical proposals. Logical really, because as a filmmaker I am well aware that an abstract idea only becomes interesting if you combine the parts – a high quality image, sound and edit – into a meaningful whole.

noties overbrengen /

There were, of course, mixed reactions to my three-stage analysis within the various school departments. In my discussions I found the directors of studies and lecturers very receptive to my views, but still the secondary reflex is to maintain the status quo – that's most evident within the technical specialisms. And I can understand why. Those departments have had to battle for the last ten or fifteen years to get the curriculum they have. They'd got everything sorted out and along comes someone complaining that they should look further than the boundaries of their own fields. But I think the cameraman or editor only truly shines when the film is a success. And a film succeeds because there is one person who knows how to combine all his colleagues' talents and tell a story. Otherwise it's just a display of technical wizardry, and the audience will ultimately also be disappointed. Almost anybody watching a film wants to get something out of it or feel something, and that only happens if all the elements that make it up combine to say something. That's why I believe a film is only as good as its director.

I'm often asked if the directing course is the main problem, but that's only part of it. Most importantly, the directing course is much more difficult than most others at the school because the director has to know about more aspects of the process. The cameraman and production designer can focus more or less exclusively on their own parts, but the director must maintain an overall view. That doesn't mean that the director is more important or more special, but it does mean that he has that much more of a difficult time of it than the others. That's why you'll often see the director walking around like a nervous wreck on the set. But I don't think the directing course would have to be so difficult if the student received information from the other disciplines about the concepts that he has to communicate about. The director doesn't need to know how the camera works, but he must be able to convey what he wants.

29 The communication of this concept is not the sole responsibility of the directing class, but of all disciplines in the school. If a screenwriter and a sound engineer collaborate in a workshop to make a radio play, the screenwriter will grasp the importance of sound in the relating of his story. The responsibility for accomplishing this rests on the shoulders on both departments involved: Scenario *and* Sound. In my opinion, these fundamental notions can be communicated more quickly by carrying out more small-scale exercises. I think that something like a workshop, in which something really has to be made, would be much more effective than a formal lecture or an introductory lesson like in the first year.

verhalen vertellen /

If the selection procedure has proceeded as intended there should be students at the school who want to tell stories and reflect on the world in that way. They're different from people who look at the world from an academic perspective. That's why I think that formal lectures are rather inefficient, because it's not a method of knowledge transference that makes much of an impression on that kind of student. They should be thinking in stories, so make sure that they are engaged in stories; practical exercises should be coupled with lectures in which the more theoretical aspects of the subject of the exercise can be explored. If they have to make a film with the theme 'friendship', for instance, then invite a philosopher or a psychologist to talk on the subject, and let a film historian show ten films on the theme. Then the knowledge will sink in, because it is linked to the reason why the students came here: to tell a story. This doesn't only apply to those studying scenario, directing or production, but to everyone; camera people and sound people are storytellers too.

To think about the route the Film Academy should take is think about where Dutch cinema should be in ten years time. The criticism of Academy films is suspiciously similar to criticism of Dutch films in general. The school must reflect on what it stands for: do you think that the essence of Dutch film is to be found in a children's film such as *Pietje Bell* (Peter Bell, 2002), or in a modern drama such as *Het Zuiden?* (The South, 2004). I wonder if there is a consensus within the school on the subject. Perhaps, under the surface, but it is not openly discussed in my experience. There is compartmentalisation here, too. I'm aware that there are progressive ideas in the school but it seems to me that the Directing Department's idea of progress is different from that of the Camera or Editing Departments'. Let me give an example: if editing students are given the exercise of editing a horror film, shouldn't the directing students also be engaged in genre films. What we should really be discussing is whether the students should master the making of genre films at all. And if we think that the editing students should be able to, then why shouldn't the directors too. If it was up to me, I'd set up a workshop in which the directors are immersed in a genre and make something that adheres to the rules of that genre. It seems odd to me that the Editing Department supposes that their students must know something about the horror genre but that no one in the Directing Department is occupied with the subject at all. Education within the various disciplines consists of very many ad hoc initiatives. It would be a good idea to apply an overall vision to it.

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