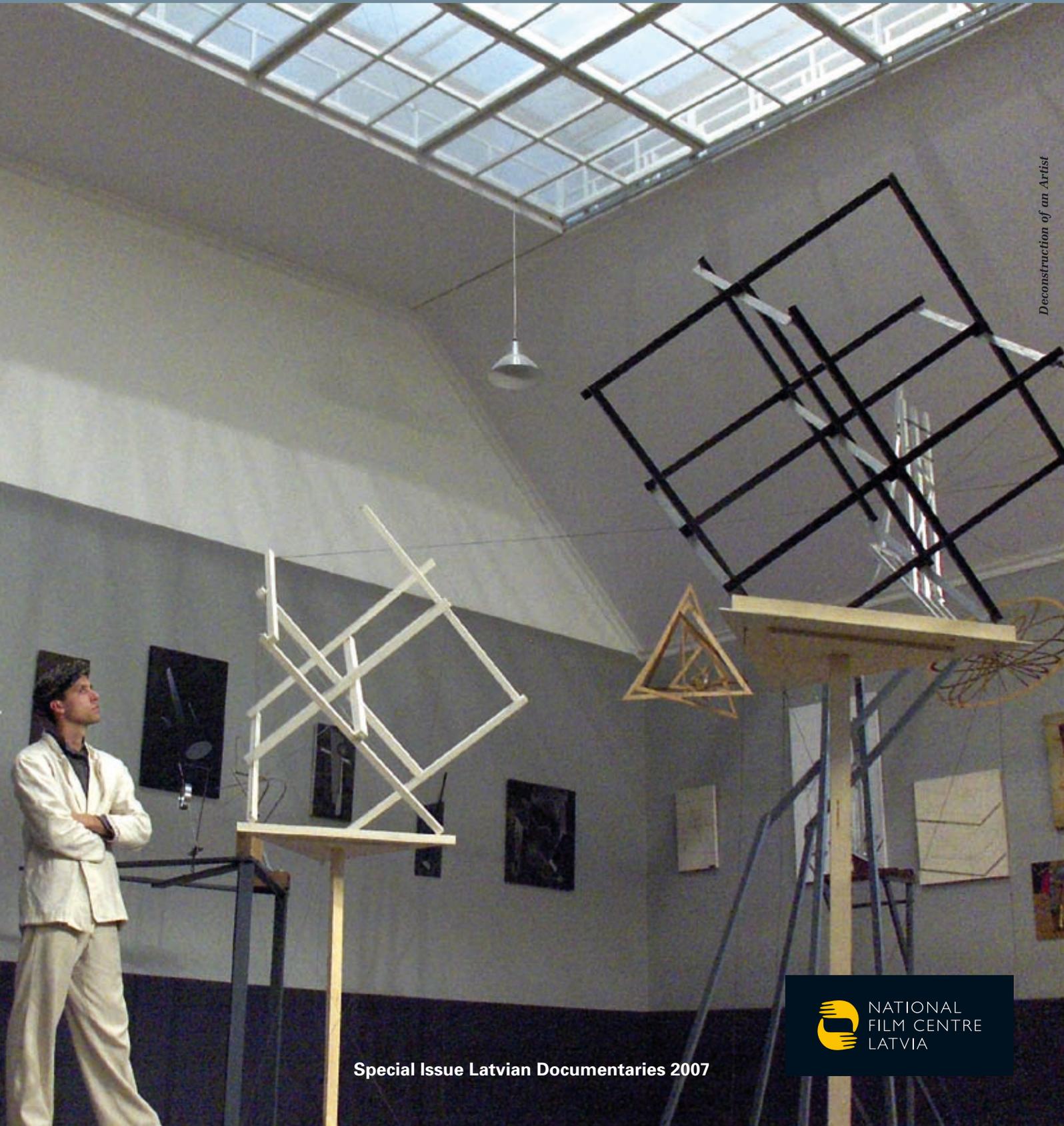


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Film News from Latvia



Deconstruction of an Artist



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Special Issue Latvian Documentaries 2007

Latvian Documentaries. A New Spiral Curve by Kristīne Matīsa, <i>Daily Neatkarīgā</i>	1
Latvian Documentaries – Arts & Culture	4
Latvian Documentaries – Ethnology and Sociology	6
Latvian Documentaries – History & Civilisation	6
Latvian Documentaries – Personal Viewpoint	9
Latvian Documentaries – Politics & Current Affairs	10
Latvian Documentaries – Social Issues & Contemporary Stories	12
Latvian Documentaries – Sports	12
Facts & Figures Latvian Documentaries 2006/2007	13
Baltic Sea Forum for Documentaries in Rīga	13

Latvian Documentaries. A New Spiral Curve

by Kristīne Matīsa
Journalist, daily *Neatkarīgā*

life isn't easy for Latvian documentary film directors, and not just because life isn't really a rose garden, the film industry doesn't receive a lot of national funding and creative work is often anxious searching and uncertainty and not at all an easy ride. It's hard for our directors, because a very high quality bar has been set by the historic fame of Latvian documentary film – the Riga School of Poetic Documentary Cinema. Still, this heroic past isn't an impeding factor but rather the opposite – in the 21st century, with Latvian documentary film rapidly taking new turns, it's clear that the parallels with past processes explain and even forecast many modern tendencies.

- In the beginning of the 1960s, the new age of Latvian documentary cinema was set in motion by young graduates of the famous Moscow film institute, the VGIK – Uldis Brauns, Ivars Kraulītis, Gunārs Piesis and others. In the mid 1990s, when Latvian film was going through a crisis and almost

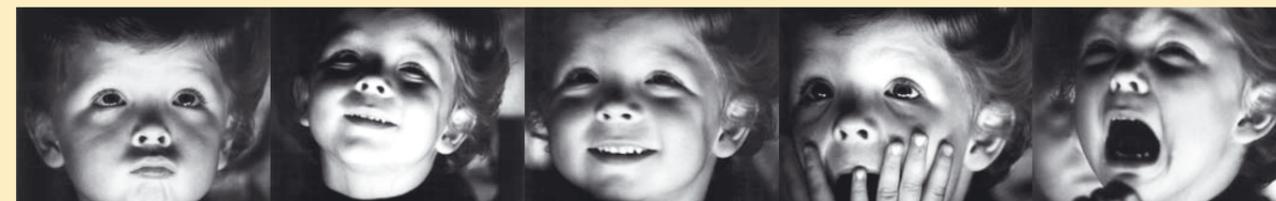
Latvian cinema, and many of them have proven themselves specifically through documentary films – Askolds Saulītis, Andis Mizišs, Arta Biseniece, Viesturs Kairišs, Māris Maskalāns, Aija Bley and others.

- Parallels can also be seen in the thematic development of documentary film and film-language processes. In the 1960s, disavowing the prevailing socialistically optimistic rhetoric and predictability, the Riga School of Poetic Documentary Cinema began to create sensitively refined and nuanced moods in their search for a new film-language – these times were heralded in by the film *The White Bells* (1961) by director Ivars Kraulītis, writer Herz Frank and cinematographer Uldis Brauns. At the time the film received awards at the San Francisco and Oberhausen festivals, but 30 years later at Clermont-Ferrand it was honourably listed as one of “100 Best Short Films” of all time. The brightest point of this trend was director Herz Frank's one-scene, unedited portrait of a child's soul *Ten Minutes Older* (1978), which to this day enraptures

turned to social journalism – Ivars Seleckis, Herz Frank, Juris Podnieks and others explored a wide spectrum of society, right up to a cross-section of an entire generation in Juris Podnieks world-famous film *Is It Easy To Be Young?* (1986).

- By and large the path of Latvian documentary cinema looks fairly similar in modern times – after the regaining of independence. During the first years it seemed – and actually was – that nothing could be more important than rejoicing in the newly found freedom, and that's why political and historical themes with adequately uniform means of expression dominated documentary cinema. Slowly and quite logically the emphasis shifted in the opposite direction – the focus of attention narrowed down away from the whole nation to the individual, with again the only escape from clichéd politicizing being the search for a new language of imagery. That's why artists became the heroes of documentary film – mystical swamp and forest-dwelling loners, representatives of weird professions, birds or even the music

Ten Minutes Older



every process had stopped, the film industry was restarted by a new wave of graduates – the first from the directors and producers course of the newly-established Latvian Academy of Culture. Today most of them make up the backbone of

veteran film critics, professionals and film students the world over.

- But by the beginning of the 1970s the potential of poetic imagery seemed slightly depleted and Latvian documentary filmmakers

of Mozart. And that is exactly why the Danish and Baltic film expert Tue Steen Müller liked to joke that a typical Latvian documentary is about an old man in the woods, a little crazy, but a true fighter for ideals.

- Still, our own history reminds us that documentary film can't forego its socially topical nature, and the newest-period Latvian films attest to that as well. Already at the turn of this century the documentarians couldn't well ignore the painful wounds that prostitution and narcotics were inflicting on our society, the fact that invalids and street kids existed in our midst, and that there are enough abiding problems that people are looking to escape through economic reason-

personal freedom in a post-Soviet setting – the first homosexual Pride march in Latvia stirred up and provoked a whole host of opinions, posing many questions. Just as socially important is Latvia's new experience with the first refugees from a third-world country. In Sandijs Semjonovs' project *Destination Lost*, seven Somalis cause everyone they encounter to take a concrete position on a question that has been thought of only in theory up until now, while reading about immigrant related problems in Old Europe.

(the film *Who is Ed. L.?*). The inventor of the brilliant little photo camera, the Minox, was based in Latvia (*Walter Zapp: Minox Was My Life*), and currently on the rise to fame – the young luge-racer and bronze medal winner at the Turin Olympics, Mārtiņš Rubenis (director Viesturs Kairiņš' project *Varka Kru*).

- Tue Steen Müller's joke still holds a certain truth though – Latvians do make films about lonely, old men, the most famous right now being Laila Pakalniņa's *Teodors*, which has already been screened in several noteworthy festivals. Continuing with the joke, we also have films about old ladies, like *Little Bird's*

Diary. Made in the non-traditional genre of documentary animation, it is actually the history of an entire generation in renderings brought to life from an optimistically strong woman's diary... And the *Sunny Side of the Doc* catalogue shows that there are many more themes and projects than those listed here.

- Recapping all of the above – Latvian documentary cinema is on a logical path of development, with a foundation in its legendary past, but scaling new heights today.



- In this time of globalization, no one social problem exists solely within a concrete country's boundaries – what ails the people of one nation relates to each of us, and is closely tied to political events. That's why Latvian documentary film directors are also travelling more and more to the world's hot spots to film and search for answers to global questions. Askolds Saulītis, who from his earliest films has proven himself to be a director interested in historically patriotic themes, is currently finishing work on the film *The Debt to Afghanistan*, looking for connections to Latvia and the world in the war-torn country. The same level of risk in filming is in little Chechnya, where director Aija Bley has discovered a symbolic story, *Mansur's War Dance*, about a small, heroic boy who is caught up in the cold-hearted games of the adult world.

fuelled emigration or religious fanaticism. The most resonating of the films dedicated to these themes that brought about active discussions in society – *But the Hour is Near* (2003) by Juris Poškus and *The Worm* (2005) by Andis Mizišs – confirmed that documentary film is especially called upon not only to create fine film imagery, but to dig deeper and dissect painful issues.

- Latvians are a small nation, and perhaps that's why those of us who have gone out from our little land into the big world and even made a mark on other nations and peoples, seem so important to us. Such as our legendary artist, the Lenin-praised and then betrayed, Gustavs Klucis (director Pēteris Krilovs' project *The Deconstruction of an Artist*), such is the Brazilian forest tiger hunter Aleksandrs Ziemeļis (director Andis Mizišs' *To Kill or To Die*) and the mysterious builder of the Coral Castle in Florida, Eds Liedskalniņš, to whom Billy Idol dedicated the song *Sweet Sixteen*

This tendency continues in the projects currently being developed and representing Latvia at the *Sunny Side of the Doc* event. For example, Kaspars Goba's project *Homo@lv* explores the highly controversial perception of the boundaries of



Deconstruction of an Artist

Arts & Culture Released

The Draughtsman

Documentary, 18', Digital Betacam, colour, stereo, Latvia, 2006

Director Dāvis Šimanis / Producer Roberts Vinovskis / Production company Locomotive Productions / Contacts: Locomotive Productions: Bruninieku 28-57, Rīga, LV 1011, / tel.: +371 67298538, office@locomotive.lv, www.locomotive.lv

Touch the paper, hear the sound of the pencil and always trace – those are the rules of Latvian artist Ilmārs Blumbergs. The story of a man who doesn't create art for around or within but has instead made it a constant state of being.

Released May 2006



Arts & Culture To be Released

1 x 1

Documentary, 52', Betacam SP, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia

Directors Daina Rašenbauma, Gints Grūbe / Producer Inese Boka-Grūbe / Production Company Labvakar Ltd. / Contacts: Labvakar: Šmerļa 3, Rīga LV 1006, tel.: +371 67521414, birojs@e-labvakar.lv, www.labvakar.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, State Culture Capital Foundation, Latvian TV

Since Latvia regained independence in 1991, only a small number of all those who emigrated during the 1940's returned, though many of them had been waiting for the occupation to end. This is about the first generation of Latvian émigrés - those who came back, those who chose to stay in the West.

To be Released November 2007



Chechnya With My Own Eyes

Documentary, 52', DVCAM / Betacam SP, colour, mono, Latvia

Director Aija Bley / Producer Elvita Ruka / Production company A.Bley Filmu studija / Contacts: A.Bley Filmu studija, Andrejostas 4, Rīga, LV 1045, / mob.: +371 22040066, aija@bley.lv, www.bley.lv / Created with the support of the State Culture Capital Foundation

A film that takes a look at Chechnya without the politics – into the lives of the people of this war-torn land who have, despite everything, managed to retain their dignity and honour their traditions. Seeing with one's own eyes breaks the negative stereotypes and lets us marvel at this long-suffering nation's moral endurance and self-respect.

To be Released September 2007



The Hands

Documentary, 60', HD/HDV, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Dāvis Šimanis jr. / Producer Roberts Vinovskis / Production Company Locomotive Productions / Contacts: Bruninieku iela 28-57, Rīga, LV-1011, tel.: +371 29298667 / +371 67298538, office@locomotive.lv, www.locomotive.lv / Created with the support of the State Culture Capital Foundation and Media Plus

Love, hate, power, and greed are just a small spectrum of human characteristics encoded in Richard Wagner's Die Walküre. It is universal opera and therefore creates a massive challenge to an artist's imagination. The Hands is an investigation of the director's mentality into and beyond the reality of staging the Walküre at the Latvian National Opera. Taking the Walküre phenomenon to an abstract level, the film seeks the fragile link between a pragmatically constructed performance and the world of the Unconscious that lies within the music and the narrative.

To be Released February 2008



Loner and Bacchanal

Documentary, 56', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Andis Mizišs / Producer Laima Freimane / Production Company Screen Vision / Contacts: Screen Vision, Baznīcas 31, Rīga, LV-1010, Latvia, tel.: +371 67291584, laima@screenvision.lv, www.screenvision.lv

Anšlavs Eglītis (1906-1993) – the only Latvian who was a member of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for more than 30 years. He was not only film critic but also talented writer, dramatist and poet, known for his deep cultural knowledge, sparkling wit and imagination. Afraid that he would make up the interviews, his editor ordered him to take pictures together with every celebrity he interviewed, thus creating an unique photo-archive of Anšlavs.

To be Released March 2008



Nude

Documentary, 26', Betacam SP, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Ināra Kolmane / Producer Jānis Juhņevičs / Production Company Film Studio Devīni / Contacts: Ludzas 24, Rīga, LV 1003, tel.: +371 29194607, devini@parks.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation

Some people collect family albums, but accomplished arts scholar, Sarmīte Sīle, takes a nude picture of herself every ten years. Behind this unique series of nude photos that span a lifetime is her story.

To be Released September 2007



Perpetual Rehearsal

Documentary, 60', Betacam SP, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Herz Frank / Producer Herz Frank / Production Company Film Studio EFEF, Kaupo Filma / Contacts: Film Studio EFEF, Kr. Valdemara 18-1, Rīga, LV 1010, Latvia, tel.: +371 67242611, herzfrank@yahoo.com / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, Keren Rabinoviz Culture Foundation, Israel

Observing the rehearsals of Yevgenij Arye, the founder and artistic director of Israel's world-famous Geshen Theatre over a ten-year period, shows an artist aiming for the ideal.

To be Released January 2008



In Bed with Surrealism. Sukuts

Documentary, 26', Betacam SP, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Ilona Bruver / Producer Ilona Bruver / Production company Kinolats / Contacts: Kapsēļu 3b, Rīga, LV 1046, tel.: +371 26440907, art.is@apollo.lv / Created with the support of the State Culture Capital Foundation

The international film festival *Arsenals* has been a fixture on the Riga scene for the last 20 years. It has introduced new film aesthetic and was one of the only creatively free events in Soviet times. Over the years the festival has influenced culture and society in Eastern Europe, continually dazzling us with its creative craziness. The film is a portrait of director Augusts Sukuts, the father of *Arsenals* and the trusty knight of surrealism.

To be Released January 2008



Talking on the Way

Documentary, 45', DVCAM / Betacam SP, colour, mono, Latvia

Director Aija Bley / Producer Elvita Ruka / Production company A.Bley Filmu studija / Contacts: A.Bley Filmu studija, Andrejostas 4, Rīga, LV 1045, / mob.: +371 22040066, aija@bley.lv, www.bley.lv / Created with the support of the State Culture Capital Foundation

Several Easter visits to the old-believers of Latgale have led to the discovery of a very vital way of life – seven "chants" form a colourful portrait of the old-believers whose worldly ways converge with ancient beliefs.

To be Released September 2007



Ethnology and Sociology To be Released

Child of the Big Bird

Documentary, 52', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Andis Mizišs / Producer Uldis Cekulis / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Riga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation and LTV

At the end of the 1950s, an airplane carrying a group of Latvian-Brazilian missionaries lands in the jungles of southern Bolivia. Among the missionaries there is a baby, Samuel. Fifty years later, Samuel has become the soul of the Baptist mission, and the only confidante of the Ayore Indians trapped in a dead end between the jungle and civilization.

To be Released January 2008



The Church will Arrive in the Evening

Documentary, 52', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Andis Mizišs / Producer Uldis Cekulis / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Riga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation, Baltic Media Centre, Denmark, MEDIA Development and LTV

In ice-free months Father Gennady captains a barge transformed into a floating Orthodox church on a mission along the Don River in Russia, bringing spiritual food to remote villages. But his good intentions are thwarted by his own passions and the imperfect world. A tragicomic drama about how a priest and his flock fail to see eye to eye.

To be Released October 2007



MEDIA

The Icebreaker and His Children

Documentary, 52', DV- cam, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Aija Bley / Producer Elvita Ruka / Production Company Vides Projekti / Contacts: Vides Projekti: Pils 17, Riga, LV 1050, Latvia, tel. +371 7225377, 371 29497441, elvita@studio.lv

"Crazy man leads children up mountains", say critics of Orthodox priest Andrejs Voronins. Heading the Extreme Children's Project and conquering the world's highest mountaintops, Voronins fosters orphans from the Kovalevska Children's Home through faith and arduous training, toughening them up for life in the harsh adult world.

To be Released November 2007



History & Civilisation Released

John Dored's Island

Documentary, 52', Betacam SP, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Dzintra Geka / Producer Dzintra Geka / Production company SB/ Contacts: Graudu 41a, Riga LV 1058 / tel.: + 371 67629960, dzintrag@inbox.lv, www.sibirijasberni.lv / Created with the support of the State Culture Capital Foundation

John Dored was the first Latvian cinematographer to train with the famous Pathe, actively film on the front lines of WWI, and the only foreigner who filmed Lenin's funeral, illegally. After emigrating to the U.S.A. he worked as a correspondent for Paramount News for 25 years and continued reporting from war zones. The film is based on the correspondence and journals of Dored and his wife Elizabeth – a portrait of a stellar career and of fate, love, life and death.

Released July 2007



My Husband Andrei Sakharov

Documentary, 52', Digital Betacam, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia/France, 2006

Director Ināra Kolmane / Producers Jānis Juhņevičs, Imants Mozers, Estelle Robin / Production Company Film Studio Devīni / Co-production with Odysseus Productions, France/ Contacts: Vitagraph (Distribution in Europe): Via Schiavonia 1 I-40121 Bologna, Italy, t / f +39.051.267150, vitagraph@libero.it, www.vitagraph.it / Film Studio DEVINI: Ludzas 24, Riga, LV 1003, tel.: + 371 29194607, devini@parks.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation, MEDIA TV Broadcasting, CNC

How did the "brains" of the Soviet regime and the "father" of the hydrogen bomb, an outstanding intellectual for whom all Kremlin doors were open, become an irreconcilable champion of human rights and an internationally renowned enemy of this system? Through a vast coverage of exclusive archive materials, interviews with ex-Soviet officials and personally narrated by his wife, Yelena Bonner, the story of the tragic life of Andrei Sakharov unfolds.

Released October 2006



Awards and Festivals: Grand Prix Short Film competition, Chicago International Documentary Festival / Jury's Special Mention, IX International Festival of Detective Films and Television Programmes, Moscow / Situations de la Creation Europeenne programma -20° FIPA – Festival International des Programmes Audiovisuels, Biarritz

Walter Zapp: The Minox Was My Life

Documentary, 52', Digital Betacam, 4:3, colour, stereo,

Latvia / Switzerland, 2007

Director Kurt Widmer / Producers: Wolfgang Frei (Switzerland), Guntis Trekeris (Latvia), Ray MacCormack (Switzerland) / Production companies: NZZ Television (Switzerland), Ego Media (Latvia) / Contacts: Ego Media, Stabu 17, Riga, LV 1011, / tel.: + 371 7291720, egomedia@egomediaweb.com, www.egomediaweb.com / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, State Culture Capital Foundation, NZZ Television, LTV

Who was Walter Zapp? He is known to photography enthusiasts as the father of the Minox - the revolutionary miniature camera he invented in 1935. Because the Minox was so small it became a legendary and sought after object for generations of spies – much to the displeasure of its inventor.

Released May 2007



History & Civilisation To be Released

The Courlanders

Documentary, 52', Betacam SP, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Andris Rozenbergs / Producers Ināra Kolmane, Jānis Juhņevičs / Production Company Film Studio Devīni / Contacts: Film Studio Devīni: Ludzas 24, Riga, LV 1003, tel.: + 371 29194607, devini@parks.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation

"God, guard us from Black Death and the Courlanders" was once written on a church bell on the Danish shore. Every ancient nation began with conquests, murder, robbery and rape - the Courlanders were no exception, and they did it extremely well. But where are these belligerent people now? Through stories told by their descendants, both in Lithuania and Latvia, the film strives to comprehend what happened to the Courlanders.

To be Released September 2008



The Deconstruction of an Artist

Documentary, 56', Digital Betacam, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia/France/Greece

Director Pēteris Krilovs / Producers Uldis Cekulis, Jean-Francois Le Corre / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija (Latvia) / Co-production with Dd studio (Latvia), Vivement Lundi (France) and ERT (Greece) / Distributor DR TV International Sales, Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Riga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, State Culture Capital Foundation, Riga City Council, MEDIA Broadcasting, LTV, LRT, ETV, YLE, RAI SAT, Planete, CNC.

Latvian artist Gustavs Klucis embraced the technological revolution of the early 20th century and applied it to his art, becoming a leading artist in the Russian Constructivist movement. He created photomontage and Lenin's public image. Killed by Stalin's regime, his artistic career poses unanswered questions. This documentary reveals many secrets and intimate moments of his dramatic personality – an unequal duel between the Artist and the Power.

To be Released November 2007



MEDIA

History & Civilisation To be Released

Double Portrait of a Coin

Documentary, 52', Digital Betacam 4:3, black and white, stereo, Latvia

Director Romualds Pipars / Producer Baiba Urbāne/Production Company Film Studio Ģilde / Contacts: Film Studio Ģilde, Amatu 5, Rīga, LV 1941, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67210022, pipars@mailbox.lv, www.gilde.lv / Created with the support of National Film Centre of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation

Using previously unpublished footage shot by amateurs in the era of 8mm cameras, the film is about the simple human life of those who lived in the Soviet Latvia from 1940 until 1991, a time when a double-moral reigned in society.

To be Released September 2007



To Kill or to Die

Documentary, 56', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Andis Mizišs / Producer Laima Freimane / Co-producer Uldis Cekulis / Production Company Screen Vision / Co-production with Vides Filmu Studija/ Contacts: Screen Vision, Baznīcas 31, Rīga, LV-1010, Latvia, tel.: +371 67291584, laima@screenvision.lv, www.screenvision.lv / Created with the support of National Film Centre of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation

Thousands of adventure lovers still read the bestselling TIGRERO, the story of the Latvian-born Sasha Siemel's life in the steaming jungles of Brazil. He was not afraid to challenge a jaguar to a fair fight, being the only known white man to learn to hunt them the Indian way – with a spear. He became incredibly popular in the 1960s by starring in Hollywood and National Geographic films, commercials and even comic strips. This film will uncover his unique personality through unseen film footage, testimonies of his former hunting companions and the witty stories of his widow.

To be Released December 2007



Nazis and Blondes

Documentary, 58', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia/Estonia/Lithuania

Director Arbo Tammiksaar / Producers Jaak Kilmi, Askolds Saulītis, Valdas Navasaitis / Production Companies Subjektīva Filma (Latvia), Kuukulgur Film OÜ (Estonia), VG Studija (Lithuania) / Contacts: Subjektīva Filma: Stabu 17, Rīga, LV 1011, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67295640, subjektivfilma@inbox.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation, Estonian Film Foundation, Eurimages

About the fate of Baltic film actors in Soviet period cinema. Not about the glory – the big roles and stardom – but about the darker side, the way the stereotype of the enemy was created by the Soviet era film industry.

To be Released September 2007



Who was ED.L.?

Documentary, 56', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Andis Mizišs / Producer Laima Freimane / Co-producer Uldis Cekulis / Production Company Screen Vision / Co-production with Vides Filmu Studija / Contacts: Screen Vision, Baznīcas 31, Rīga, LV-1010, Latvia, Ph.: +371 67291584, laima@screenvision.lv, www.screenvision.lv / Created with the support of National Film Centre of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation

The extraordinary inventor Ed Leedskalnis is said to have discovered the secret of pyramid building of Ancient Egypt. In the course of twenty years he single-handedly cut and moved over large distances huge blocks of coral rock to build the legendary Coral Castle in Florida. Since then, Ed's creation has been endlessly researched and examined, leaving the researchers as puzzled as ever. The film will unveil some of the countless legends, theories and stories around the Coral Castle.

To be Released December 2007



Personal Viewpoint Released

Ready and Done

Documentary, 23', DVCAM, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia, 2006

Director Inese Kļava / Producer Uldis Cekulis / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Co-production with AVE/ Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Rīga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the the National Film Centre of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation

New technologies are better than old ones, except that they make life boring. Sigurds operates a hundred-year-old lift in a large hospital in Riga, absorbing the sounds of daily hospital life while between floors. Meanwhile, in the adjacent shaft, a new, automatic lift is being installed.

Festivals: HotDocs 2007 (Canada)

Released June 2006



Theodore

Documentary 29', Betacam SX, 14:9 Letterbox, colour, stereo, Latvia, 2006

Director Laila Pakalniņa/Producer Uldis Cekulis / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija/ Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Rīga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation, YLE Teema and LTV

Every day, come rain or shine, Theodore used to bike the seven kilometres from his house to the centre of the village to sit and drink beer in the bus stop. For him, no doubt, this place was the centre of the Universe. With his death, the centre has moved elsewhere, and the bus stop is just a bus stop again.

Released June 2006



Awards and Festivals: The Best Baltic Film at the XVIII Riga International Film Forum ARSENALS / official selections: IDFA / 30th Göteborg International Film Festival / 42nd Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

Personal Viewpoint To be Released

Aging with Joy

Documentary, 52', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Ilze Ramāne / Producers Valdis Abols, Lukas Trimonis / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Co-production with Ultra Nominum (Lithuania) / Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Rīga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia and LTV

Three elderly ladies - Maiga, Velta and Mrs.Tone - meet every Tuesday at a Culture Hall in a Riga suburb to rehearse with some 40 other ladies from the "Granny Choir". Some may live more in the past than the present, but they have one extraordinary thing in common. Despite their age, low income and health issues, they seem to know how to grow old with dignity, humour and even joy.

To be Released October 2008



Imposed Double Life Of the Saamis

Documentary, Digital Betacam, 16:9, 52'

Director Dainis Kļava / Producers Uldis Cekulis, Riho Vastrik / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Co-production with Vesilind (Estonia) / Distributor DR TV International Sales/ Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Rīga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, Estonian Film Foundation, Estonian Cultural Endowment, ETV, LTV, LRT, SVT and MEDIA Broadcasting

The identity crisis which the Saamis face today stems from the conflict between leading traditional nomadic lives and living in the modern world. Are the Saamis still by definition reindeer people, or are they ready to define themselves differently?

To be Released October 2007



Personal Viewpoint To be Released

Little Bird's Diary

Documentary animation, 26', Digital Betacam, 3:4, b/w & colour, stereo

Director Edmunds Jansons / Producer Bruno Aščuks / Production Company Studija Centurms / Contacts Studija Centurms: Alberta 7-8, Riga, LV 1010, Latvia, tel.: + 371 6733 3043, bruno.ascuks@studijacenturms.lv, www.studijacenturms.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation

The first Latvian documentary animation film is based on unique drawings from the diary of 80 year-old Irīna Piļke, encompassing a period from the end of WWII until the beginning of the 80s. These drawings, where the author appears as a little bird, show everything around her...everything we call life. Through the eyes of the little bird, Chiz, we get a glimpse of an earlier age.



To be Released July 2007

Snow Crazy

Documentary, 52', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo

Director Laila Pakalnina / Producer Uldis Cekulis / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Riga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia and LTV

Downhill skiing is the most popular sport in Latvia despite the fact that there are no mountains. Indeed, there can't be too much optimism in life, and this will certainly be an optimistic film about people doing what they want, defying geography and logic.



To be Released November 2008

Stasys

Documentary, 52', Digital Betacam, 16:9, colour, stereo

Directors Māris Maskalāns, Laila Pakalnina / Producer Uldis Cekulis / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Riga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation and LTV

Stasys is a bachelor loner who lives in a remote place among fish ponds. Wild animals and birds are his closest neighbours. They have no fear of him and are always observing him. But Stasys is too busy to notice them; he has to get his own life organized.



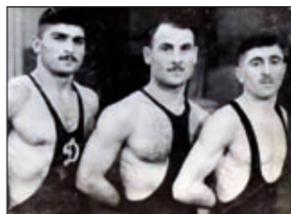
To be Released October 2007

The Unknown Wrestlers

Documentary, 52', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo

Director Temo Tsava / Producers Uldis Cekulis, Temo Tsava / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Co-production with Palestra (Georgia) / Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Riga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the LTV and Georgian TV

The Kaspi region in Georgia is home to a surprising number of world and Olympic wrestling champions. But a champion's title alone doesn't grant the wrestler the status of a local hero - his final test of prowess is a fight with some unknown fellow-villager in front of a group of aging connoisseurs. Only by winning the fight the champion will affirm his status. It's not seldom that they lose...



To be Released May 2008

Politics & Current Affairs Released

Us and Them

Documentary, 64', Digital Betacam, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia, 2006

Director Antra Cilinska / Producer Antra Cilinska / Production Company Juris Podnieks Studio / Contacts: Citadeles 2, Riga, LV 1010, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67216967, jps@jps.lv, www.jps.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation and MEDIA Development

The existence of two parallel communities - one Latvian, the other Russian, is the reality of present day Latvia. After the establishment of an independent Latvian Republic in 1991, the Russian speaking community began to see themselves as a threatened minority and started to depict themselves as oppressed. Where does truth lie? Are there victims? Or is it simply that the idea of integration, for both sides, does not work properly?



Released November 2006

The Debt to Afghanistan

Documentary, 58', HDV, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia, 2007

Director Askolds Saulitis / Producer Askolds Saulitis / Production Company Subjektīva Filma / Contacts: Stabu 17, Riga, LV 1011, Latvia, tel.: + 371 67295640, subjektivfilma@inbox.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation and MEDIA Development

There is an old saying attributed to Alexander the Great: he who will rule Afghanistan will rule the world. The film will portray "the roof of the Earth" and track the close links between this far-off country and Latvia.

Released June 2007



Politics & Current Affairs To be Released

Destination Lost

Documentary, 52', HDV, colour, stereo, 16:9, Latvia

Director Kaspars Goba, Sandijs Semjonovs / Producer Ieva Ūbele / Production Company elm media / Contacts: elm media: A.Čaka 83/85-19/2, Riga, LV 1011, Latvia, tel/fax: +371 7299722, ieva@elmmedia.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation

Seven Somali refugees escaped from their conflict-ridden land wanting to start a new life in Sweden, but accidentally ended up in Latvia - a country with no experience in accommodating refugees and rather conservative views about people of different races. The film will follow the Somalis as they try to integrate into Latvian society, both in the capital city Riga and in a small rural village.



To be Released December 2008

homo@lv

Documentary, 52', HDV, colour, stereo, 16:9, Latvia

Director Kaspars Goba / Producer Ieva Ūbele / Production Company elm media / Contacts elm media: A.Čaka 83/85-19/2, Riga, LV 1011, Latvia, tel/fax: +371 7299722, ieva@elmmedia.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, the State Culture Capital Foundation and MEDIA Plus

The film will reveal the multi-layered conflict and heated debates between gays and lesbians trying to come 'out of the closet' in Latvia and their numerous opponents upholding nationalism, Christian values and the traditional family model in the post-Soviet environment. The conflict will be viewed through personal stories, providing an opportunity for society to face its own fears, hatred and aggression and to understand the underlying causes and the roots of radicalism in Latvian society.

To be Released December 2007



Mansur's War Dance

Documentary, 52', Betacam SP, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Aija Bley / Producer Guntis Trekeris / Production company Ego Media / Contacts: Ego Media, Stabu 17, Riga, LV 1011, / ph.: + 371 7291720, egomedia@egomediaweb.com, www.egomediaweb.com / Created with the support of the State Culture Capital Foundation

Mansur Musaeov is a 12 year-old Chechen boy who has spent his childhood in wartime and as a refugee. He is slowly going blind. But Mansur is also an exceptionally talented dancer who has been performing since he was a toddler.



To be Released Autumn 2007

Films
from
Latvia

Politics & Current Affairs To be Released

Victor

Documentary, 52', Digital Betacam, 16:9, colour, stereo, Latvia/France

Director Roy Lekus / Producers Uldis Cekulis, Roy Lekus / Production Company Vides Filmu Studija / Co-production with Private Joke Productions (France) / Contacts: Vides Filmu Studija, Lapu 17, Riga LV 1002, Latvia, tel.: +371 67503588, vfs@vfs.lv, www.vfs.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, LTV and Provence Cote d'Azur

This investigative documentary tells the story of the Latvian rust-bucket cargo ship VICTOR and its crew abandoned by the ship's owner in France. Revealing the individual characters of the seafarers in an extreme situation, the film also exposes the dark side of shipping in an ex-Soviet country.

To be Released October 2008

Films
from
Latvia

Social Issues & Contemporary Stories To be Released

The Man from Varka Kru

Documentary, 52' / 80', Super 16 mm, 4:3, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Viesturs Kairiss / Producer Guntis Trekeris / Production Company Ego Media / Contacts: Ego Media, Stabu 17, Riga, LV 1011 / ph.: +371 7291720, egomedia@egomediaweb.com, www.egomediaweb.com / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia, State Culture Capital Foundation

Martins Rubenis is known as the most famous Latvian luger who won Latvia its first ever Winter Olympic medal. In the circles of alternative culture he is known as DJ Betons of Varka Kru. Martins also became the centre of international mass media attention when he participated in an organized hunger strike in front of the Chinese Embassy in Riga in 2006. As a practitioner of Falun Gong and an Olympian, he refuses to accept China as the venue of the 2008 Olympics.

To be Released Spring 2008



The Tourist (Hello, where are you from?)

Documentary, 52 / 90, HDV, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Roberts Vinovskis / Producer Roberts Vinovskis / Production company Locomotive Productions / Contacts Locomotive Productions: Bruņinieku 28-57, Riga, LV 1011 / tel.: +371 29298667 / +371 67298538, office@locomotive.lv, www.locomotive.lv

„Hello, where are you from?“ is the question tourists most frequently hear. I am from Latvia, a small Eastern European country increasingly visited by tourists. I am thirty years old, and during the last twelve years I have made several films and visited 38 countries. I can be fairly described as a „professional tourist“. Now I'm returning to some of the places I have visited in order to find an answer to a couple of seemingly simple questions – what is a tourist and what does a tourist expect and get from the places he or she visits?

To be Released December 2008

Films
from
Latvia

Sports To be Released

Working Class Ballet

Documentary, 60', Digital Betacam, colour, stereo, Latvia

Director Roberts Vinovskis / Producer Roberts Vinovskis / Production company Locomotive Productions / Contacts: Locomotive Productions: Bruņinieku 28-57, Riga, LV 1011 / tel.: +371 29298667 / +371 67298538, office@locomotive.lv, www.locomotive.lv / Created with the support of the National Film Centre of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation

Football is not just eleven madmen kicking a ball around a field and millions of spectators drinking beer in front of their TVs. From humorous football amateurs and drunken fans to the “backstage” of the Latvian National team, from the exultant streets of Paris and Lisbon to the tensions and the disappointments inside the European championships, this film explores football as an aesthetic and ethical barometer of modern society.

To be Released June 2007



TOP 3 Latvian documentary films screened most in international festivals all over the world in 2006

Dream Land / Leiputrija

Director Laila Pakalniņa, Producer Uldis Cekulis, Vides Filmu studija

There are places that we don't want to know anything about, places that we would rather pretend don't exist at all. One such place is a dumpsite. From the humans' point of view, it is a ghastly place, a stinking desert of trash. But it's a desert that is teeming with life. The astounding profusion of insects, reptiles, birds and mammals, all intertwined in an existential life-death relationship imparts to it with some strangely alluring dream-like quality.

11 international film festivals in 2006
28 international film festivals in 2005

Nominated as the Best Documentary
by the European Film Academy in 2005

The Best Naturalistic Film,

4th International Naturalistic Film Festival, Italy, 2006

The Best short Documentary,

National Film Festival Lielais Kristaps, 2005, Latvia

Grand Prix,

Ukrainian International Documentary Film Festival, 2005,

Ukraine

Main Prize,

International Film Festival Green Vision, 2005, Russia

Jury's Special Mention,

International Film Festival Ecocinema, 2005, Greece

Sea of Attractions / Piejūra

Director Dainis Kļava, Producer Uldis Cekulis, Vides Filmu studija

The narrow, sandy coastal spit is a neutral zone evenly divided – one half belonging to the sea, and the other half to the shore. This zone has something inherently unusual – it attracts people with an almost magnetic force, transforming the seashore into a kind of recreational ground where the old cohabits with the new, the primitive with the civilized, and the traditional with the modern.

9 international film festivals in 2006

Official selection – Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

Ex-Amen / Eksāmens

Director Inese Kļava, Producer Ivars Zviedris, Film Studio AVE

A struggling actress, a teacher, a former seaman, a policeman and a veterinarian all have a common line of work – conducting funerals. For one it's a passion, for one a duty, but for another it's a chance to earn a little extra...

7 international film festivals in 2006

Ecumenic Jury Prize at the XVIII Riga International Film
Forum ARSENALS

When: September 8-9, 2007

Where: Riga, Latvia

What is Forum: The Baltic Sea Forum is a documentary project market organized by the National Film Centre of Latvia, MEDIA Desk Latvia, European Documentary Network and Producers Association of Latvia and supported by MEDIA 2007 programme and Baltic Films.

Meeting Point of Documentary Filmmakers

The Baltic Sea Forum brings together Baltic, Polish, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Georgian producers and commissioning editors and representatives of film funds from all over Europe, looking for new and exciting documentary projects from the Baltic region and Eastern Europe.

A total of 25 projects will be selected to be pitched at Baltic Sea Forum to a panel of 12 commissioning editors from European TV stations and film funds.

Co-production workshop

The co-production workshop will be held on September 5-7 and will be lead by experienced and acknowledged European documentary film experts. Participants will be introduced to the latest developments in the European documentary film market, along with presentation of case studies of well-known international co-productions, and given insight to co-production contracts and other legal issues regarding co-production. The main focus will be on project development, story-telling and developing presentation skills.

Film Screenings

Screenings of documentary films under the title *Films that Changed the World* will take place during the week before the Forum and will be accessible to all Forum participants.

Impact

The Forum and the Workshop is a continuation of a well-established tradition that has brought new skills, knowledge, contacts and possibilities of cultural exchange to its immediate participants as well as indirectly to wider television audiences who see the films produced as a result of the Forum.

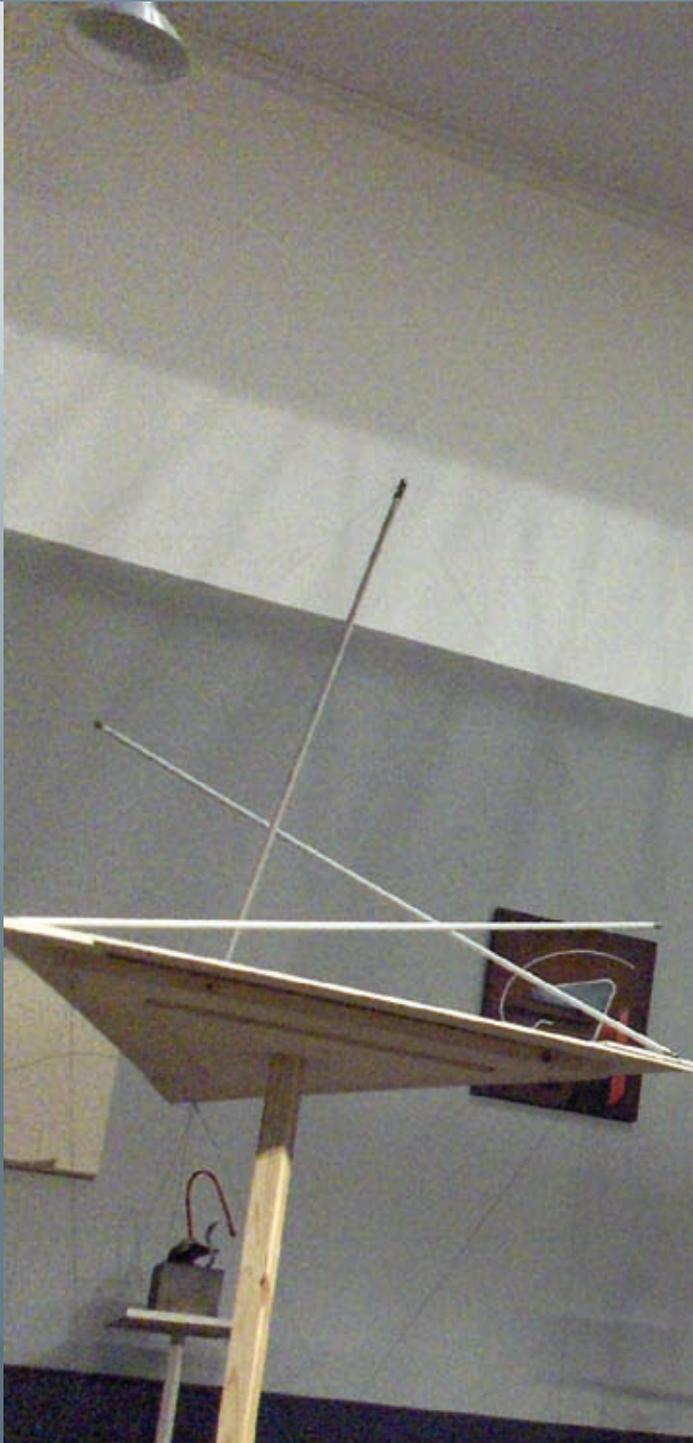
Over the last 11 years, the Forum has been the birth place of prize-winning films from such acclaimed directors as Herz Frank and Ivars Seleckis from Latvia, Peeter Urbla from Estonia, Audrius Stonys and Arunas Matelis from Lithuania, Alexander Krivonos from Russia and others.

The friendly and informal atmosphere of the Forum, film screenings and receptions provide an excellent place for networking among documentary film producers and filmmakers from many countries and presents a platform for future collaborations.



Welcome to the
Baltic Sea Forum
for Documentaries,
welcome to Riga
in September!

More information: www.mediadesk.lv



The National Film Centre of Latvia is a state financed governmental organisation overseeing the film branch in Latvia, granting governmental financial support to Latvian films, preserving the national audio-visual heritage, promoting Latvian films abroad, co-operating with the relevant international and national organisations and organising training for Latvian film professionals. We are members of

the EURIMAGES Foundation as of 2001 and MEDIA Plus as of January, 2002. At major international events we work together with Estonians and Lithuanians under the co-operation platform BALTIC FILMS. We are keen on attracting film, television, and video production to Latvia, stimulating inward investment, creating employment opportunities for creative staff, technicians and support service companies.

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