



Truth and Objectivity

Film Laboratory

2 October – 20 November 2014

Join us for a unique film series to explore documentaries associated with historical truthfulness and objectivity. Various ways of investigating, revealing, and verifying truth are detailed in each film through uncovered footage, interviews, observations, or re-enactment of past events. Just as the filmmakers incorporate different approaches and methods, so these themes are echoed in the CEU course called, *Historiography: Themes in Its History and Approaches to Its Theory*.
Programmers: Ioana Macrea-Toma, István Rév and Zsuzsanna Zádori.

Free admission to all films!

Seating is on a first come, first served basis. Seats available from 5:30pm

Location: OSA Archivum at Central European University, 1051 Budapest, Arany János utca. 32.

Opening film: Thursday, 2 October at 6:00 pm

I, Pierre Rivière, Having Butchered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother...

By René Allio, France, 1976, French with English subtitles, 130 min

I, Pierre Rivière... carefully assembles multiple perspectives on the infamous countryside murders that it re-enacts, an unusual approach that illustrates the ways that narrative produces truth. Allio shot the film entirely on location, using farmers from the Normandy region where the violence occurred. After far more than simply a grisly retelling of the grim events, Allio's film reflects on the deeper patterns of rural life imprinted on the land and its customs – the passing of the seasons, the raising of livestock, the harvesting of the crops – revealing the amazing continuity of these rhythms and traditions that stretch

back from the 1830s to the present day. A haunting and beautiful pastoral epic that anticipates Ermanno Olmi's *Tree of the Wooden Clogs* (1978), *I, Pierre Rivière...* also offers a profound mediation on history la longue durée, and the inherent instability of fiction and non-fiction within the cinema.

Next screenings:

Thursday, 9 October at 6:00pm

Echoes from a Somber Empire

By Werner Herzog, Germany, 1990, French with English subtitles, 93 min

An Associated Press journalist Michael Goldsmith presents Jean-Bédél Bokassa, dictator of the Central African Republic from 1966 to 1979, through eyewitness testimony. Having followed Bokassa's coronation ceremony for his newspaper, Goldsmith is treated as a spy and is taken prisoner due to an unfortunate circumstance. Returning to the places where he was imprisoned, Goldsmith also remembers the violent regime through the evocative sites of power he visits: the dictator's villas, his zoo and his prisons. This violence is also brought to light through interviews: we hear the words of the dictator's last wife, Augustine Assemat, his lovers, his numerous children, as well as David Dacko, President of the Central African Republic before and after Bokassa's reign, and Bokassa's lawyers. These images alternate with scenes from Bokassa's trial (he was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison), along with photographs of people tortured and the farcical coronation ceremony in which he proclaimed himself emperor.

Thursday, 16 October at 6:00pm

Blockade / Блокада

By Sergey Loznitza, Russia, 2005, silent, 52 min

Blockade provides a remarkable insight into the siege of Leningrad during the Second World War. Loznitza managed to track down reels of unused footage that had been sitting in the archives for over half a century. The material offered snapshots of everyday life amongst Russian civilians during the siege. The reels had not been used by the state because they were deemed inappropriate for propaganda purposes. Loznitza's Blockade seems to be the total opposite of typical Soviet representations of the siege of Leningrad with their lofty pathos, celebration of martyrdom, and scenes of heroic labor. It is remarkably non-sensationalist, it has neither music nor running commentary – a cinematographic example of what Barthes famously termed “writing degree zero”. Yet it manages to capture and freeze in time the spirit of suffering in the struggling city. The depth of the shots and their graphic minimalism work to create a truly epic narrative, one that leaves room for the viewer's very own, un-mediated response.

Respite / Aufschub

By Harun Farocki, Germany & South Korea, 2007, Silent, 40 min

Westerbork camp was established by the Dutch government in October 1939 to intern Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. From 1942 to 1944 it served as a transit camp for Jews and Roma before they were deported to extermination camps. In these years, a freight train left every week for Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sobibor, Bergen-Belsen or the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Westerbork was a very strange place. There was a school, a hair-dresser, an orchestra and even a restaurant. These "comforts" were designed by the SS in order to avoid problems during further deportations. Harun Farocki resurrects footage shot by temporary inmate Rudolf Breslauer, who was commissioned by the camp's SS commandant to produce a glossy film about camp life. Breslauer devoted much of his footage to the varied work and activities of the inmates, and also filmed the unloading and loading of incoming and outgoing trains. A close study of the surviving 16mm footage discloses chilling details of everyday life at Westerbork, but also questions generally accepted visual

understandings and impressions of the concentration camp system.

Thursday, 30 October at 6:00pm

The Act of Killing

By Joshua Oppenheimer, Denmark, 2012, Indonesian with English subtitles, 159 min (director's cut)
Throughout the thirty-one years of General Suharto's military-backed government, the country sanitized its bloody history through an official narrative that glorified its 1965-66 purges, which saw around one million alleged Communists murdered by bloodthirsty militias. In 1965, Anwar and his friends were promoted from small-time gangsters selling movie theatre tickets on the black market to death squad leaders. In less than a year, they helped the army kill over one million alleged Communists, ethnic Chinese, and intellectuals. Anwar and his friends have not been forced by history to admit they participated in crimes against humanity. Instead, they have written their own triumphant history, becoming role models for millions of young paramilitaries. The Act of Killing is a journey into the memories and imaginations of the perpetrators, offering an insight into the minds of mass killers. It is a nightmarish vision of a frighteningly banal culture of impunity in which killers can joke about crimes against humanity on television chat shows, and celebrate moral disaster with the ease and grace of a soft shoe dance number.

Thursday, 6 November at 6:00pm

The Tailenders

By Adele Horne, 2006, English subtitles, 70 min

The Tailenders is a captivating look at a missionary group's use of ultra-low-tech audio devices to evangelize indigenous communities facing crises caused by global economic forces. Global Recordings Network, founded in Los Angeles in 1939, has produced audio versions of Bible stories in over 5,500 languages, and aims to record in every language on earth. The film traces their journeys in the Solomon Islands, Mexico, India and the United States, where they distribute the recordings, along with hand-wind audio players, to "the Tailenders": the last people to be reached by worldwide evangelism.

Thursday, 20 November at 6:00pm

Odessa

By Florin Iepan, Romania & Germany, 2010, Romanian with English subtitles, 52 min

Florin Iepan embarks on a process to reveal the largest mass execution perpetrated by an ally of Nazi Germany in Odessa (now Ukraine) which should lead to a public debate about Romania's fascist past and conclude with an official reaction on behalf of the Romanian people. At first hand, this seems to be an impossible mission. In a story full of spectacular turn of events, with the director in front of the camera, we discover his weaknesses, his doubts, the self-irony, the ups and downs of his campaign. Unorthodox measures are employed in order to put the topic on the public agenda.

During four years of conferences, news coverage, TV programs and internet commentaries, Florin Iepan managed to attract hostility and hatred from thousands of Romanians and from public figures known for their anti-Semitic and nationalist opinions. At the same time he is encouraged by other fellow Romanians who understand that if we don't act now, when the country faces an economic crisis and a weak democracy, history can repeat itself.

Free admission to all films!

Seating is on a first come, first served basis. Seats available from 5:30pm

Location: OSA Archivum at Central European University, 1051 Budapest, Arany János utca. 32.