



Press Release

Burrowing into Familiar Terrain: Young Independent Filmmakers in Confident Form at This Year's *Forum*

Among the many delights to be found in this year's *Forum* programme are the eclecticism and confidence of the next generation of independent filmmakers. After a year of global crises, economic instability, and military conflicts, this year's films surprise with their attention to detail, their willingness to draw from personal experiences, and their astonishing faith in their own filmic language. Despite their broad range of concerns, these young filmmakers share a readiness to see their medium as a challenge, instead of relying all too quickly on its universality: independent cinema at its best.

Within this year's globe-spanning *Forum*, Korea, the US, Romania, and the Netherlands all contribute films that delight in telling stories from close to home in emotional and social terms. The films burrow into familiar terrain, discovering fine fissures and ruptures that give these "little stories" an existential urgency. Many of these films are debuts, with most of them being shown as world premieres, thus further underscoring their topicality.

Three US independent productions will receive their world premieres at the *Forum* 2009. Andrew Bujalski's *Beeswax* is in many ways symptomatic of the search for a new autonomy of narrative. Using the gestures, manner of speaking, and props of everyday life, Bujalski discovers small dramatic episodes of an astonishing cinematographic quality. His laconicism and intimacy can be considered the marks of a trend; a special genre term has, in fact, already been coined to reflect the way the actors, mostly non-professionals, speak in his films: "mumblecore". This term can also be seen as an indication that the mumbling of everyday life all too often transmits the clearest signs of life.

While Bujalski is interested in the vagaries of oral communication, in *Marin Blue*, Matthew Hysell surrounds his characters with a puzzling silence that alludes to a traumatic past. In the perplexing void of Los Angeles's suburban architecture, the ruins of real estate speculation, they seek out temporary housing, and wait for their memories to return. *The Exploding Girl* by Bradley Rust Gray is another quietly staged emotional drama. During their summer vacation, Ivy and Al discover that a shift from "best friends" to lovers may be on the cards. It is, however, precisely their familiarity that now represents a barrier between them. One of the film's co-producers is So Yong Kim, whose own directorial work *Treeless Mountain* was, in turn, co-produced by Bradley Rust Gray. Kim's film tells the story of two sisters who, at a very early age, are confronted with a world that they do not understand

**59. Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
05. – 15.02.2009**

Press Office

Potsdamer Straße 5
10785 Berlin

Phone +49· 30· 259 20· 707
Fax +49· 30· 259 20· 799

press@berlinale.de
www.berlinale.de

Ein Geschäftsbereich der
Kulturveranstaltungen des
Bundes in Berlin (KBB) GmbH

Management:

Dieter Kosslick
(Intendant Internationale
Filmfestspiele Berlin),
Dr. Thomas Köstlin
(Kaufmännischer Geschäftsführer),
Dr. Bernd M. Scherer,
Dr. Joachim Sartorius

Vorsitzender des Aufsichtsrats:
Bernd Neumann

Amtsgericht Charlottenburg
HRG Nr. 96 · HRB 29357
UST ID DE 136 78 27 46



Press Release

and in which they are not welcome.

Unlike Kim's directing debut *In Between Days*, which was shown at the *Forum* three years ago, *Treeless Mountain* was made in South Korea, and thus forms one of a whole series of films in this year's program from a country that, following a period of prosperity, is now facing harder times. Whether elegant, like *My Dear Enemy* by Lee Yoon-Ki with the excellent lead actress Jeon Do-Yeon, subtle and existential, such as the debuts *Members of the Funeral* by Baek Seung-bin, and *The Day After* by Lee Suk-Gyung, a world premiere, or sparse and silent like *Land of Scarecrows* by Roh Gyeong-Tae: Korean cinema, which many sceptics have already seen as entering a crisis, pulls out all the stops in these films, emerging as a highly sensitive barometer for the longings that continue to lurk in the shadows, even when everything seems to be doing fine.

Among this year's narratively urgent and stylistically mature debut films is *Kan door huid heen (Can Go Through Skin)*, a psychological portrait of a young woman who, following two personal catastrophes, stubbornly attempts to deal with them on her own. Equally remarkable yet entirely different is Eugenie Jansen's *Calimucho*. For an entire season the director travelled with a circus through the small towns of the Dutch countryside, going on to stage a fictional story in which all the characters more or less play themselves in an atmosphere reminiscent of a fairy tale. The Dutch trio is completed by Sonja Wyss' directorial debut *Winterstilte (Winter Silence)*, which tells an archaic story of sexual awakening and religious mysticism in the director's Swiss homeland.

Radu Jude's feature film debut *The Happiest Girl in the World*, a Romanian-Dutch co-production, tells the story of Delia, a teenager who feels like she's entered another world after winning a car. When she is expected to play the "happiest girl in the world" in a TV advertisement in return, the shoot quickly becomes a crash course on growing up in this painfully telling film, a comment as relentless as it is comic on the situation in post-Communist Romania.

The complete programme of the 39th *Forum* is soon to be announced.

Press Office
January 8, 2009