

Cinema

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Preface

Over the last two decades, Lithuanian cinema has continued to attract international attention. The country's film industry is regularly represented by the films of Šarūnas Bartas, Arūnas Matelis, Audrius Stonys, Gytis Lukšas and Kristijonas Vildžiūnas. New names are starting to appear alongside these recognised directors, such as Kristina Buožytė and Mantas Kvedaravičius, who have had successful premières at the Berlin International Film Festival and the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. There is also a provocative new generation that is looking for roads that have yet to be travelled, such as Lina Lužytė, Dovilė Šarutytė and Jūratė Samulionytė, who highlight problems concerning the personal and social identity. The well-established tradition of auteur cinema in Lithuania is coming into contact with new stylistic and thematic trends, which we would like to present in this publication.

Documentary Cinema: The Flowing River of Time

By Živilė Pipinytė

Obscure Beginnings

Lithuanian cinema is one of the youngest in Europe. Professional national cinematography started relatively late, only in the mid-20th century. Its beginnings are to be found in the stories told by the early filmmakers. One of these legends marks the beginning of documentary cinema. The first views of Lithuania (which unfortunately have not survived) were filmed by a Kaunas resident by the name of Władysław Starewicz (also known as Ladislav or Vladislav Starevich) in 1909, who soon afterwards left for Moscow and became the world's leading pioneer of puppet animation. At the beginning of the 20th century, Lithuania was of great interest to Lithuanian émigrés. They were most numerous in the USA, which is why filmed images were shown to émigré communities there. After Lithuania became an independent country in 1918, a cinematic chronicle of events was begun at the initiative of the government. Official celebrations, exhibitions, presidents and officials, parades, and the ever more beautiful city of Kaunas were all recorded on. In short, everything that the young country wanted to or could be proud of.

Under the Sun of Stalin

Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet army in 1940, and the country was incorporated into the Soviet Union. One of the first steps taken by the new government was to establish the Lithuanian Film Chronicle Studios in Kaunas. The studio regularly produced documentaries, which advocated the 'new life'. It was in this way that the documentary film chronicle gained a hold that was not to be shaken off for 50 years. During the German occupation, the Nazis also filmed propaganda material in Lithuania. In 1944, when Lithuania once again became a Soviet republic, the film studio resumed its work. A series of film chronicles called 'Soviet Lithuania' began to be produced in 1946, while the first documentaries appeared in 1947. The falsified reality of the post-war period was more or less the same in all the Soviet republics: people were portrayed as participating exultantly in elections, being pleased with the achievements of their work, building factories, bringing in bumper harvests, while the images of a depersonalized life accompanied by the narrator's voice full of enthusiasm. But these embroidered images were at odds with the reality. The brutal

treatment meted out to partisans, deportations to Siberia, and forced collectivisation all remained off-screen. But the film industry grew. In 1949 the film studio moved to Vilnius, and Lithuanians went to Moscow and Leningrad in ever greater numbers to study film.

Documentaries Speak With Their Own Voice

The political 'thaw' that set in after Stalin's death was also evident in documentaries. Until that time, the people who were featured in documentaries had a certain social or ideological function, either as workers, farmers or Soviet intellectuals. However, at the end of the 1950s, a new school of documentary filmmaking began to appear. It had its beginnings in the films by Viktoras Starošas, such as *Svajos ir likimai* (*Dreams and Destinies*, 1961) and *Nenusimink, Virginijau* (*Don't Feel down, Virginijus*, 1962). The films show different generations and their dreams coming into contact with the reality, as they step into the world of adulthood. Starošas' films showed that the director's own voice was important in documentary cinema.

A revival of documentary filmmaking started at the beginning of the 1960s, with the return of Algimantas Dausa, Almantas Grikevičius and Robertas Verba from the Soviet film school in Moscow known as the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK). Their films changed the way the leading characters were portrayed. These were people with an interesting fate, who could express themselves. The aim of documentaries also changed. The recording of a superficial reality or event, and the commentary of an 'objective' narrator, were rejected. More metaphors appeared, and also a more refined montage sequence. Almantas Grikevičius' film *Laikas eina per miestą* (*Time Passes through the City*, 1966), which dealt with signs of the past reflected in Vilnius, does not contain a single spoken word. However, the images and sounds in the film create a tightly woven web of associations, which was already common in European cinema at the time.

Ideologised Documentaries and Poetic Cinema

Two main strands formed in Lithuanian documentary filmmaking at the beginning of the 1960s. The first was official documentary as a propaganda tool. Filmmakers were familiar with the manipulation of facts, in order to stage the so-called 'socialist reality'. The second was poetic documentary,

which appeared when documentary cinema experienced a boom not only in the Soviet Union, but throughout the Eastern bloc. A great effort was made to legitimise documentary cinema as a branch of art. Documentary filmmakers worked together with filmmakers from other republics, and their films were shown in cinemas.

In Lithuania, the poetic documentary tradition was formed by Robertas Verba (1932–1994). In his films *Senis ir žemė* (*The Old Man and the Land*, 1965), *Čiūtyta rūta* (1968) and *Šimtamečių godos* (*The Dreams of the Centenarians*, 1969), Verba showed the distinctiveness of the Lithuanian worldview. He often chose older people as his subjects, who talked about their ties with the land, their work, and the beauty of their native land. He also looked at the patriarchal world-view and values of country folk and the values of the countryside, which were being actively destroyed by Soviet propaganda. Verba's films created a local style of documentary cinema. His use of metaphorical images and minimalistic means of expression, so characteristic of his work, are still alive in Lithuanian documentary cinema today.

The tradition was continued by Henrikas Šablevičius (1930–2004), Edmundas Zubavičius, Kornelijus and Diana Matuzevičius, and Rimantas Gruodis. In their films in the 1960s and 1970s, these makers of poetic documentaries tried to show the world that was still around them, but which was beginning to disappear. Some did not shy away from mocking ideological dogma, and showed it as a kind of carnival, such as Zubavičius in his *Mums nebaisūs jokie priešai* (*We are not Afraid of any Enemy*, 1978). However, various eccentric people were happily chosen as the main characters in both feature and documentary films, people who did not fit into official or normal categories of life. Šablevičius became famous for his portraits of eccentric people in films like *Apolinaras, Žiniuonė* (*The Sorceress*) and *Kretingos medinukai* (*Wooden Figurines from Kretinga*). Self-taught artists, scientists with an artist's soul and policemen helped him to make the reality look strange, and to highlight its more grotesque side. This is why there are so many metaphors and so much poetic commentary and stylisation in his films.

An Undiagnosed Social Reality

Films of an overtly propagandist nature were made by people who were clearly loyal to communist ideals. They praised figures in the Communist Party, told stories of how Lithuanians supposedly welcomed the Soviet government, and 'unmasked' priests in their atheistic films.

However, in the 1970s, a new kind of socially aware documentary began to appear. This was closely associated with Viktoras Starošas and Rimtautas Šilinis. In Starošas' film *Aš myliu direktorę* (*I Love the Director*, 1978), he deals openly with children who have been abandoned by their parents. Šilinis' *Savojo „aš“ beieškant* (*Looking for Your 'I'*, 1978) and *Randas* (*The Scar*, 1985) attempted to discuss juvenile delinquency. Gediminas Skvarnavičius' satirical films criticised the 'socialist' reality in a different way. He analysed the problems of shortage of goods, poor service and even poorly made shoes with a sharp wit in his films *Prie mėsos reik drąsos* (*Meat Requires Courage*, 1975), *Galėčiau būti Apolonu* (*I Could Have Been Apollo*, 1978) and *Ko ašaroja Medėja* (*Why Medea Cries*, 1978).

With the beginning of Gorbachev's perestroika, Saulius Beržinis' film *Vėliava iš plytų* (*The Brick Flag*, 1988) came as a shock. For the first time in a Soviet film, the growing violence in the army was openly talked about. It told the story of a soldier from Lithuania who shot those who abused him. This was one of the first Lithuanian films to be selected directly by international festival organisers without having to go through Moscow.

All the same, the rather sparse analyses of the social environment, as well as social and historical change, are still a weak spot in Lithuanian documentary filmmaking. This is linked to a clear inertia among filmmakers. In the past as well as today, many documentary films have been made which are portraits of historical figures and artists. The portrait genre has proved to be the most durable, both in the mastery of the craft but also unfortunately in the amount of clichés that are used. Over the last few decades, the filmmakers Algirdas Tarvydas, Vytautas Damaševičius and Juozas Matonis have become what we could call cultural chroniclers. The younger generation of directors, including Vytautas V. Landsbergis and Agnė Marcinkevičiūtė, have also joined their ranks. Their films immortalise famous and forgotten cultural figures. One such figure is the stop-motion animator Władysław Starewicz, who has been called Europe's Walt Disney. He was the subject of the film *Vabzdžių dresuotojas* (*The Bug Trainer*, 2008) by Donatas Ulvydas, Rasa Miškinytė, Linas Augutis and Marek Skrobecki.

A Cinema of Change

The period 1985 to 1990 was a time of dramatic change. Not only did censorship collapse, but so did the production and distribution systems. Older filmmakers used the opportunity to talk about the post-war resistance and deportations, which until then had been banned. Many films

recorded the national awakening and the Sąjūdis movement. However, these films are at times rather contrived.

The 1990s ushered in a new generation. Young directors declared their views on cinema, and also on reality. The first documentary films by Šarūnas Bartas, Arūnas Matelis, Audrius Stonys and Valdas Navasaitis expressed a turn towards personal cinema. These young directors did not want to identify themselves with an idealised past, or with a present that was becoming more and more of a caricature, which had come about after the country opened up to consumer choice, and was flooded by Western mass culture. Bartas' film *Praėjusios dienos atnimimui* (*In Memory of a Day Gone By*, 1990), Matelis' *Dešimt minučių prieš Ikarą skrydj* (*Ten Minutes before Icarus Flew*, 1990), Stonys' *Neregių žemė* (*Earth of the Blind*, 1991), Navasaitis' *Rudens sniegas* (*Autumn Snow*, 1992) and Kornelijus and Diana Matuzevičius' *Iliuzijos* (*Illusions*, 1993) all showed a noticeable desire to speak about existential themes. In these films, questions are asked about loneliness, the meaning of life, and the temporariness of existence. Their world is seen as if through the films' characters, who have been marginalised by society or history. Their world is empty, dilapidated and collapsing. At the same time, the films are unique inner landscapes of the filmmakers. The directors deal relatively freely with reality, although they do not reject (or accept) the idea of observing it. The static camera likes to record time, and that is precisely what fills the frame all the more frequently, becoming the film's dominant feature.

Unusual experiments with documentary film language did not go unnoticed either: Stonys' *Earth of the Blind* received a Felix Award for Best Documentary in Europe in 1992. After 1988, documentary films from Lithuania, which during the Soviet period were rarely shown abroad, have regularly attracted attention at international film events.

The work by the famous avant-garde filmmaker Jonas Mekas had a huge impact during this time of change. His influence can be seen in the films by Artūras Jevdokimovas, Julius Ziz, Algimantas Maceina and Vytautas V. Landsbergis, who worked with him in New York at the beginning of the 1990s. The film *Juoda dėžė* (*The Black Box*) by Algimantas Maceina, about the removal of his grandfather's remains from Siberia to Lithuania, is still one of the most original experiments in Lithuanian documentary film.

New Names, New Ideas

Documentary cinema is changing, because the people who are making it are changing. However, until now the main approach or style that has been used is what is known as artistic documentary cinema. Matelis' film *Prieš parsikrendant į Žemę* (*Before Flying Back to Earth*, 2005), which shows the lives of children with leukemia, won a number of important awards, including the 2006 Directors Guild of America Award for Best Documentary. The film is a meditation on reality and death, and deals with the existence of miracles on earth. Audrius Stonys' thoughts on history, the body, family and loneliness in his films *Ūkų ūkai* (*Vanity of Vanities*, 2006), *Varpas* (*The Bell*, 2007), *Aš perėjau ugnį, tu buvai su manim* (*I Walked through Fire, You Were with Me*, 2010) and *Raminas* (*Ramin*, 2011) show how he delves deeper and deeper into the nature of documentary cinema, and experiments with the genre.

Romas Lileikis immortalises the disappearing local inhabitants of Vilnius' colourful Užupis neighbourhood in his philosophical films such as *K+M+B* (2001) and *Saša* (*Sasha*, 2006), and he has also directed a film called *Dangaus šešėlis* (*The Shadow of Heaven*, 2008) about the unusual story of the descendants of the famous Lithuanian artist Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, to whom he is also related.

Until independence, Bitė Pajėdienė and Laima Pangonytė were the only two female Lithuanian documentary filmmakers. The last few decades have seen a woman's point of view represented more often. The highly individual films by Janina Lapinskaitė are distinguished by her main characters, people who are outsiders or who have disabilities, the marginalised, and people living in the provinces. Her *Iš elfų gyvenimo* (*From the Lives of Elves*, 1999), *Venecijaus gyvenimas ir Cezario mirtis* (*The Life of Venecijus and Ceasar's Death*, 2002) and *Traukinys stovi penkias minutes* (*The Train Stops for Five Minutes*, 2009) opened up worlds that until then had gone unnoticed in Lithuanian cinema. Oksana Buraja courageously takes on all documentary taboos in films like *Dienoraštis* (*Diary*, 2004) and *Išpažintis* (*Confession*, 2009), while Inesa Kurklietytė's *Motery paslaptys* (*Women's Secrets*, 2005) and *Lengvas raganavimas* (*Mild Witchcraft*, 2004) deal with the mysteries of birth.

Giedrė Beinoriūtė is constantly searching for new methods of self-expression and themes. The main characters in her films *Troleibusų miestas* (*Trolleybus Town*, 2003), *Vulkanovka. Po didžiojo kino* (*Vulkanovka*.

After the Grand Cinema, 2005) and *Gyveno senelis ir bobutė* (*Grandpa and Grandma*, 2008) include eccentric fare dodgers on trolleybuses, people living in the Crimean Steppe involved in making a film, and deportees in Siberia who find themselves in a folk tale. Beinoriūtė together with her main characters fills her films with phantasmagoric storylines. In them irony and the grotesque, secrets and the almost unnoticeable scars of the soul all merge.

Lithuanian directors often look at the world through the eyes of those that fate has been unkind to. The main characters in the film *Upė* (*The River*, 2010) by Rimantas and Julija Gruodis are people in a village who are cut off from the world by a river. For a number of years, the young director Mindaugas Survila observed homeless people living by a landfill site near Vilnius. His film *Stebuklų laukas* (*The Field of Magic*, 2011) shows the everyday lives and the hopes of these people.

The première of Mantas Kvedaravičius' debut *Barzakh* (2010) took place at the Berlin International Film Festival, and was the opening film in the Panorama programme. Kvedaravičius, who is an anthropologist and spent some years in Chechnya, looked at people who had disappeared or who had been kidnapped. He has won recognition and prizes at many festivals for his poetic portrayal of the pain felt by the families left behind, the search for the missing people, and the experience of those who survived.

Giedrė Žickytė's ironic film *Kaip mes žaidėme revoliuciją* (*How We Played at Revolution*, 2011) provoked much discussion in Lithuania. The young director set out to examine the origins of the independence of modern Lithuania, such as the Sąjūdis movement and the Singing Revolution. Her film speaks to the younger generation in the accessible language of images.

Lithuania's new documentary cinema may appear ambiguous. Directors look for manifestations of spirituality in the lower depths of society. For the meaning of life by recording the flow of everyday reality. For the lessons of history by telling what at first glance look like tall stories about the main characters. Lithuanian documentary filmmakers look at reality as if they are refusing to separate what is temporal from what is eternal. They dive courageously into the flowing river of time.

¹ A refrain from a Lithuanian folk song, the first word is onomatopoeic and the second word means 'true'.
[Translator's note]

New Lithuanian Feature Films

By Renata Šukaitytė

Cinematic Ambitions and Challenges

Smaller in population than London or New York, and with an economy smaller than that of the State of Bavaria, Lithuania is one of the world's most modest film production countries. It gets relatively little public funding (mainly administered by the Ministry of Culture and the Lithuanian Film Centre) which explains the small amount of feature films produced. Lithuanian production companies are typically small in size and focus on producing from 1 to 3 feature film projects at a time. The average budget of a local feature movie is between 400,000 Euros and 1,000,000 Euros, which is quite small in comparison with the budget of an average European film. This is because of the modest subsidies for film and because of belonging to a small linguistic market (less than 3.5 million people live in Lithuania), as well as negligible private funding and support by local broadcasters. Therefore, the Lithuanian audiovisual industry depends very much on public funding, co-production with foreign companies and pan-European film support initiatives, such as the MEDIA programme and the Eurimages Fund.

However, these challenges have not stopped Lithuania in its cinematic ambitions to become a vibrant locale for the indigenous film industry and a film culture, as making films requires much more than large populations and enormous financial resources. It needs a unique historic and cultural experience, a rich and expressive language and, as Andrew James Horton argues, 'the essential ingredient of talent'. Actually, the latter in combination with a clear cinematic vision and high professionalism and dedication of the filmmakers precondition the emergence of films of extremely high quality even during economically unfavourable times for the industry. A perfect example of our filmmakers' capability to turn out marvellous films without having adequate funding are the first works of Šarūnas Bartas (*Trys dienos* (*Three Days*, 1991), *Koridorius* (*Corridor*, 1995) and *Few of Us* (*Mūsų nedaug*, 1996)) and Valdas Navasaitis (*Kiemas* (*Courtyard*, 1999)), which showed the path for some of the younger filmmakers to follow, namely Ignas Miškinis (*Diringas* (*Diring*, 2006)), Kristina Buožytė (*Kolekcionierė* (*The Collectress*, 2008)), Emilis Vėlyvis (*Zero II*, 2010) and some others, whose low-budget productions raised a significant part of their budget from private sponsors.

Auteur Voices

It is worth remembering that Lithuanian cinema rose to international prominence with a new (post-Soviet) cinema in the early nineties, which was distinguished and defined by art cinema texts. Both the state and the film industry had to be re-build after the collapse of the Soviet Union and re-localized on the world map. It should be noted that Lithuanian film quite quickly evolved from being a marginal to a transnational phenomenon due to the sympathy and great interest of prestigious international festivals and the combined efforts of filmmakers-auteurs who had started their careers during the Soviet period in Lithuania (including Vytautas Žalakevičius, Algimantas Puipa, Gytis Lukšas, Janina Lapinskaitė and many others) and those who debuted during the period of political and economical transition in the late eighties and early nineties (such as Šarūnas Bartas, Valdas Navasaitis and Audrius Juzėnas).

In the nineties the films of Šarūnas Bartas (*Three Days, Corridor, Few of Us*) and Valdas Navasaitis (*Courtyard*) became a marker of Lithuanian cinematic auteurism, which has been synonymous with the extremes of the art cinema style (the long takes, fragmentary narrative, minimalist acting and use of desolate and vanishing locations as central points of reference in their thematic preoccupations) and rejection of many of the tenets of mainstream filmmaking (a clear plot, action-based narrative, straight-forward characters, etc.). They both began their careers in documentary filmmaking before migrating to ascetic stylized features, which explains their preferences for a realistic approach and interest in the phenomenological exploration of time. The early works, as well as more recent films, namely *Laisvė* (*Freedom*, 2000), *Septyni nematomi žmonės* (*Seven Invisible Men*, 2005), *Eurazijos aborigentas* (*Eastern Drift*, 2010) by Bartas and *Perpetuum Mobile* (2008) by Valdas Navasaitis, which already contain some genre film (i.e. the crime drama and the road movie) elements are instantly recognizable for their long takes and fluid, sometimes sinuous camera movement, their picturesque mise-en-scène and ambient sound design; contrasting urban and countryside settings; de-dramatized narrative structure, and slow camera movements attuned to the traumatic experiences of disaffected, alienated, insular and existentially damaged protagonists facing up the new reality (the transition from the Soviet to the capitalist system) and dealing with traumatic memories from the Soviet past, what often feels like a slowly emerging apocalypse.

Reflecting the Past

It should be noted that the Soviet period is one of the most represented in historical Lithuanian cinema, as film directors lived in this time and still have fresh memories about it. Thus historic films came to prominence in the national cinema through the thoroughly personalized cinematic form, which was used as a certain vehicle for their major concerns and preconditions regarding the situation through which they lived and in which they were living. Gytis Lukšas is perhaps the best director (next to Bartas) to discuss, as his works remain among the most interesting and profound in dealing with the recent Lithuanian past. Lukšas' *Duburys* (*Vortex*, 2009), based on the novel by Romualdas Granauskas, is yet another apocalyptic image of Soviet Lithuania, which reveals the gradual degradation of Soviet citizens, both the colonized (the Lithuanians) and the colonizers (the Russians), as forced deterritorialization and reterritorialization makes people feel rootless and alienated even in their own country or town. The film is composed of stylish black and white images, uses mainly long takes for revealing the emptiness and stagnation of the place in which the main protagonist resides and interacts with others. However, the director leaves the viewer (and post-Soviet Lithuania) hope since at the end of the film the main protagonist surfaces from the vortex after trying to drown himself. Other filmmakers, such as Jonas Vaitkus (*Vienui vieni* (*Utterly Alone*, 2004)), Kristijonas Vildžiūnas (*Kai apkabinsiu tavę* (*Back to Your Arms*, 2010)) and Audrius Juzėnas (*Ekskursantė* (*The Excursionist*, currently in post-production)) are more explicit in dealing with historical issues in their films (than, for example, Bartas or Lukšas), and focus on personal rather than collective dramas in their highly visual and emotional cinematic dramas.

Literary Inspirations

It is worth noting that national literature is yet another important inspiration for local filmmakers. Adaptations of books by famous Lithuanian writers are among the most popular film genres, which have been brought to the big screen by filmmakers, e.g. Janina Lapinskaitė's *Stiklo šalis* (*A Land of Glass*, 2004), based on a story by the writer Vanda Juknaitė; Algimantas Puipa's *Dievų miškas* (*Forest of the Gods*, 2005), which is based on the novel of Balys Sruoga, and *Nuodėmės užkalbėjimas* (*The Whisper of Sin*, 2007) and *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* (*Fortress of the Sleeping Butterflies*, 2012), both of which were based on the literary work of Jurga Ivanauskaitė; Gytis Lukšas' already mentioned film *Vortex* (2009), based on the novel by Romualdas Granauskas; Donatas Ulvydas'

Tadas Blinda. Pradžia (Tadas Blinda: The Legend is Born, 2011), inspired by Rimantas Šavelis' novel. This film genre is the most admired by the local audience and the statistics prove this. For example, in 2005 the feature film *Forest of the Gods* climbed to the top of the domestic box office (186,523 Euros) and was viewed by approximately 650,000 cinema goers while *Tadas Blinda. The Legend is Born* broke all the records for attendance in Lithuania in 2011, surpassing even the American blockbuster *Avatar* with a box office of over 1 million Euros.

Generic Games

The recent Lithuanian cinema, specially produced by younger filmmakers, has become increasingly preoccupied with interrogating and adapting, and absorbing generic templates, themselves borrowed from Hollywood cinematic models and Western popular cinema. However, these films not only incorporate certain genre conventions, but also art cinema in general. The attractiveness of the generic formula to the young generation of filmmakers is evident – genre films tend to be suitable for dealing with current issues of modern life in Lithuania (migration, alienation, new forms of sexuality, cultural diversity, the emancipation of women, the expansion of the black market, etc.), to be cool to appeal to a young audience, and have the potential to cross over the national border. The economic development of Lithuania and the triumph of a capitalist modernity with all its advantages and disadvantages and new heroes (all kinds of dealers, a new creative class, gamblers, businesswomen, pop-stars, etc.) suddenly occupied the Lithuanian screen. Very visibly in the films of the 2000s, the city and urbanness in general have finally assumed a kind of cultural and ideological dominance. Several films, such as the drama *Nuomos sutartis (The Lease, 2002)* by Kristijonas Vildžiūnas, the films *Diringas (Diring, 2006)* and *Artimos šviesos (The Low Lights, 2009)* by Ignas Miškinis, the black comedies *Zero (2006)* and *Zero II (2010)* by Emilis Vėlyvis, Valdas Navasaitis' criminal drama *Perpetuum Mobile (2008)*, the musical comedy *5 dienų avantiūra (Five-Day Adventure, 2008)* by Žeraldas Povilaitis, the psychological drama *Kolekcionierė (The Collectress, 2008)* by Kristina Buožytė, *Nereikalingi žmonės (Loss, 2008)* by Maris Martinsons, sci-fi melodrama in Saulius Drunga's directorial debut feature *Anarchija Žirmūnuose (Anarchy in Žirmūnai, 2010)* and Kristina Buožytė's *Aurora (Vanishing Waves, 2012)*, as well as the musical drama *Narcizas (Narcissus, 2012)* by Dovilė Gasiūnaitė, are marked with an attempt to visualize the city since Vilnius (and the city in general) had been a 'missing discourse' in Lithuanian literary and visual culture for a while. It should

be noted that the city in these films is a city of the imagination that film directors (and city dwellers) inhabit and which inhabits them.

Transnational Gestures

Due to the generic, stylistic and thematic diversity and dynamism of transnational collaborative practices of the local cinema, it is becoming more internationalized and successful in attracting international funders, promoters and an audience. International collaboration is getting more important in producing features with a higher production value and easier access to international markets. Among the most successful recent international co-productions are *Kai apkabinsiu tave (Back to Your Arms)* directed by Kristijonas Vildžiūnas, coproduced by Studio Uljana Kim (Lithuania), Studio TOR (Poland), and Studio Pola Pandora Film, (Germany); *Eastern Drift* directed by Šarūnas Bartas, coproduced by Kino Bez Granits (Russia), Lazennec Films (France), Studio Kinema (Lithuania) which premiered at the Berlinale Berlin International Film Festival in 2009; *Vanishing Waves*, jointly made by Tremora (Lithuania), Acajou Films (France) and internationally premiered at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2012. The internationalization of the Lithuanian film industry made the films more successful in crossing national borders and attracting international film festivals such as the Cannes International Film Festival (*Seven Invisible Men* in 2005 and *You Am I* in 2006), The Berlin Film Festival (*Eastern Drift, 2010*), the Montreal World Film Festival (*Loss* in 2008, *Vortex* in 2009,), the International Film Festival Rotterdam (*You am I* in 2007, *Perpetuum Mobile* in 2008), the Cairo International Film Festival, (*Perpetuum Mobile* in 2008, *Loss* in 2008), the Shanghai Film Festival (*Loss, 2008*), the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (*A Land of Glass* in 2005, *The Collectress* in 2009, *The Low Lights* in 2009, *Vanishing Waves* in 2012), the Edinburgh International Film Festival (*The Vortex, 2009*), the Palm Springs International Film Festival (*Vortex* in 2009, *the Loss* in 2009), and the Tallinn Black Nights Film festival (*Eastern Drift, 2010, Back to Your Arms, 2010, Tadas Blinda. The Legend is Born, 2011*), among many others.

To sum up, notably from the nineties up till now Lithuanian filmmakers have continued to tread a cinematic path between, on the one hand, extreme auteurist films like Bartas' *Freedom* or *Seven Invisible Men*, which easily gain international visibility, and, on the other hand, so called 'audience' film by producing best-selling literary adaptations like *Fortress of the Sleeping Butterflies* or black comedies like *Zero II*, which have pulling power at the box-office.

Short Films

By Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

The growing popularity of short films is proven not only by the attention they have received from local audiences, but also by the accolades they have won at international film festivals. They are usually the work of beginning directors or students, and stand out with their unusual style, their search for different forms, and their attempts to express their directors' intentions. A new and ambitious generation of filmmakers who are employing clearly defined principles in their work are examining themes connected to the realities of life in their country, turning to the recent past, and trying to sum up the present in a concise way.

One of the most interesting films of recent years is *Jau puiku, tik dar šiek tiek* (*It would Be Splendid, Yet...*, 2009) by Lina Lužytė, which won prizes at festivals in Germany, Monaco, Poland and Azerbaijan. The story, which is brief but encompasses a lot in its meaningful nuances, describes the attempts of ordinary people to adapt to the new economic and political circumstances. The early years of independence (1992) are recreated by employing accurate details and subtle irony. At the same time, the question is formulated: how do you find your identity in a state of freedom, having emerged from a repressive regime?

Echoes of the Soviet period in contemporary society, the spread of popular culture, personal relationships dominated by envy: all these are issues that the new generation of directors is concerned with. One of them is Andrius Blaževičius; in his graduation film *Bergenai* (*Bergen*, 2009) and his second film *Dešimt priežasčių* (*Ten Reasons*, 2011), he contrasts people of different generations and experience, and examines the influence of mobile technology and television shows.

Childhood memories are often a source of inspiration for the acclaimed director Giedrė Beinoriūtė. She has made a number of documentary and short feature films, such as *Mama, tėtis, brolis, sesė* (*Mummy, Daddy, Brother, Sister*, 1999) and *Egzistencija* (*Existence*, 2004), in which there is an intermingling of seriousness and irony in an environment that is full of paradoxes. Her 2008 film *Balkonas* (*The Balcony*) was recognised as the best Lithuanian short film, and won a Silver Crane Award. The friendship between two children who begin talking on neighbouring balconies develops in the somewhat nostalgic atmosphere of the 1980s, in which

details from the Soviet period, such as matching uniforms, and similar interiors, cars and blocks of flats, are important.

The famous playwright and director Marius Ivaškevičius chooses the father as the central figure for his films *Mano tėvas (My Father, 2007)* and *Tėve mūsy (Our Father, 2010)*. The strength of his films is in the dramatic composition and the psychological portraits of the characters. *Our Father*, which is based on a true story of a daughter who was imprisoned and abused by her father, received the Young Jury Award at the Tous Courts d'Aix-en-Provence International Cinema Film Festival, as well as the prize for Best Short Film at the 2011 Kinoshok Film Festival in Russia.

New intonations and a widening array of genres are gradually appearing in short films. Jūratė Samulionytė's experimental work *Nerutina (No Routine, 2008)* stands out with its rebellious attitude and the distinctive techniques used. It is the first and the only photofilm to receive a Silver Crane Award, and has been shown at more than 20 international film festivals. The separately photographed frames and the animation created by using stop-motion are combined to make a film story about a middle-aged office worker called Henrikas. The objects around him try to help him break free.

However, very few Lithuanian short films are comedies or experimental films. Directors avoid new visual declarations when trying to put together a tight and concise plot, and portray the experiences and the inner states of the leading characters. The films *Aš tave žinau (I Know You, 2009)* and *Nesiseka šiandien (Not Lucky Today, 2010)* by Dovilė Šarutytė are marked by their more complex plots and elaborate filming techniques, as well as by their hints of documentary reality. Each of them won a Silver Crane Award as Best Short Film of the year.

The Artistic and Stylistic Features of Lithuanian Animation

By Valentas Aškinis

Animation occupies a comparatively small place in the cultural life of Lithuania; however, it stands out with its unusual form of stylistic expression and the sensitive subject matter.

The place of contemporary animation in the cultural market is changing rapidly, as fewer animation films are being made, while animation itself is becoming more a component of other kinds of visual art. Today animation content is flourishing in advertisements and on the internet, it is being used for games and mobile applications, and it is also becoming part of visual design. A good number of music videos are being made in Lithuania using 3D, as well as simple 2D animation. Pictures are made into animation, and filmmakers experiment with stop-motion methods to animate live characters.

The Beginning of Animation in Lithuania

Władysław Starewicz began working with film and animation in Kaunas. In 1910, he filmed the first puppet animation film, called *Lucanus Cervus*. He began to film another five animation films, which he was to finish only later in Moscow. True animation classics appeared on the big screen between 1910 and 1913, including *The Beautiful Lukanida*, *The Cameraman's Revenge*, *The Insects' Christmas* and *Insects' Aviation Week*. Starewicz is also considered to be the founder of Russian animation.

In 1937, the artist Petras Aleksandravičius, together with the cameraman Stasys Vainalavičius, filmed one of the first advertising animation films, called *Du litu – laimingas medžiotojas (Two Litas - a Happy Hunter)*, which was devoted to the lottery run by the Young Lithuania National Youth Union.

After Lithuania became part of the Soviet Union, animators worked at the Moscow-based Soyuzmultfilm, an animation studio. It was there that Gražina Brašiškytė made drawings for the animation films *The Enchanted Boy* (1955), *The Dragon* (1961) and *Cockroach* (1964). She also created the set and characters for *Gintarinė pilis (The Amber Castle, 1960)*, directed by Aleksandra Sniezhko-Blotskaya, with a script by Regina Januškevičienė and music by Julius Juzeliūnas), which is based on a Lithuanian folk legend.

The first hand-drawn animation film by Lithuanian animators was made only in 1966. The director Zenonas Tarakevičius created the film *Vilkas ir siuvėjas* (*The Wolf and the Tailor*) at the Banga Film Studio of the Kaunas Radio Factory. A few years later, the Commissioned Films Studio was established in Vilnius. It was not subject to ideological guidelines and did not receive state funding. The director Juozas Sakalauskas made the following animation films there: *Ežio namas* (*A Hedgehog's Home*, commissioned by the Firefighters' Union, 1968), *Telesforas gatvėje* (*Telesphorus on the Street*, commissioned by VAI, 1970), and *Gera turėti draugų* (*It's Good to Have Friends*, commissioned by the Soviet Union's Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, 1971). He also made the animation film *Strakalas ir Makalas* (*Strakalas and Makalas*, 2007) together with Valentas Aškinis at the Filmų štrichų studio. The director Antanas Janauskas made the animation film *Iniciatyva* (*Initiative*, 1970) at the Lithuanian Film Studios. However, animation did not manage to take hold at the state-run studio. No animation films were produced at the Lithuanian Film Studios right up to 1983.

Contemporary Lithuanian Animation: The Professionals Making Animation Films

One of the pioneers in the development of new Lithuanian animation was the director and graphic artist Nijolė Valadkevičiūtė. She made her first film *Medis* (*The Tree*, 1983) using cut-out animation. Later, she made an animation film every year, an enviable rate, including *Mįslė* (*The Riddle*, 1984), *Jūratė ir Kastytis* (*Jūratė and Kastytis*, 1989), *Laimės Žiburys* (*The Light of Happiness*, 1990), *Košmariškas sapnas* (*A Nightmare*, 1995), *Edeno sodas* (*The Garden of Eden*, 2007), and *Aš esu* (*I Am*, 2012). In her work, animation is a space for experimentation, where abstract ideas, such as waiting and hope, make an expressive graphic statement. Her graphic style is highly individual, and a drastic graphic form of cinema often frees itself from a standard plot, leaving us to delight in the images, as if we are in an interactive gallery.

The beginning of contemporary drawing animation at the Lithuanian Film Studios is closely associated with the caricaturists Ilja Bereznickas and Zenonas Šteinys, who after attending an advanced directing course in Moscow returned to Lithuania in 1985. Bereznickas' graduation animation film was *Paskutinė dovana* (*The Last Present*, 1985), followed by *Baubas* (*The Hobgoblin*, 1986), which was perhaps the most popular Lithuanian

animated film at that time. His other films include *Bermudų žiedas* (*The Bermuda Ring*, 1988), *Senelis ir senelė* (*Grandpa and Grandma*, 1999) and *Baubo aritmetika* (*The Hobgoblin's Arithmetic*, 2004). Bereznickas' work is characterised by its humorous style, instructive ideas, and bright colours. His films are usually intended for children.

After Šteinys' graduation film *Buvo, buvo, kaip nebuvo* (*It Was, It Was, How Couldn't It Have Been*, 1986), he made films at the Lithuanian Film Studios, including *Dosnumas* (*Generosity*, 1988), *Kadaise Lietuvoje* (*Once Upon a Time in Lithuania*, 1990) and *Batas* (*The Shoe*, 1996), which was finished by others after his death. He looked first and foremost for meaning, philosophical subtexts and depth of thought, often concentrating on images with a caricature-like flair, and spurned detail in order to make the main idea clear. His animation films are steeped in a metaphysical and contemplative mood. The film *Generosity*, which is based on the folk tale *The Generous Apple Tree*, reveals the four stages of a person's life, childhood, youth, maturity and old age. The restrained colours and the flowing pictures create a very distinctive atmosphere.

After a 16-year break, the director Antanas Janauskas once again began to make animated films. His animation film *Antspaudas* (*The Stamp*, a joint production between the Lithuanian Film Studios and Mosfilm) came out in 1986, while *Palankios aplinkybės* (*Favourable Conditions*, Lithuanian Film Studios) appeared in 1989. He made the films *Telegastrovizija* (*Telegastrovision*, 2000) and *Trumpas sujungimas* (*Short Circuit*, 2003) at his own studio AJ. They are optimistic stories full of paradoxes, in which the same character travels from one film to another, experiencing an overwhelming conflict with his surroundings. The character embodies the director and his ideas. The animation film *Urzgianti pagalvė* (*The Growling Pillow*) tells a story about people who have an idea that is so powerful it could blow them right off the face of the earth. In the film *Smalsi moteriškė* (*The Nosey Woman*), which foreign agencies have expressed an interest in, Janauskas deals with a struggle which, it seems, has dragged on and will never end, even though centuries have passed and the world has changed.

In the same productive year of 1986, the director Valentas Aškinis made the classic hand-drawn television lullaby *Dėdė Miegas* (*Uncle Sleep*, LTV, The Commissioned Films Studio). Later, he made *Kaktuso paslaptis* (*Mystery of the Cactus*, 1989, a joint production between the Lithuanian Film Studios and Mosfilm), in which he harmoniously combined graphics made up of black-and-white lines and a visual plasticity with original

music by Faustas Latėnas. In 1991, together with Antanas Abromaitis, with whom he established the Vilanima Animation Film Studio, he made the animated films *Trovas* (*Trove*, 1992), *Smaugliukas Džeikas* (*Jake the Snake*, 1993), *Meškinai - pasaulio gelbėtojai* (*Global Bears Rescue*, 1997) and *Normano arka* (*Norman's Ark*, 1995, 13 15-minute episodes), which was the first Lithuanian drawn animation film series. Soon afterwards, the animated film *Odiseja* (*The Odyssey*, 1998, artist Jolanta Šiugždaitė, new version *The Destruction of Troy and the Adventures of Odysseus*) appeared, which was the first full-length animation feature film made in Lithuania. This animation film was made using the classic method of celluloid animation. In his latest animation film *Senelės pasaka* (*Granny's Tale*, 2012), Aškinis together with Jūratė Leikaitė adapted a poem by the popular Lithuanian poet Salomėja Nėris for the big screen.

The director Henrikas Vaigauskas made the animated films *Medkirtys* (*The Woodcutter*, 1991), *Aeroplanas* (*Airplane*, 1997), *Jūros draugas* (*The Friend of the Sea*, 1999) and *Piratai* (*Pirates*, 2005) at the Lithuanian Film Studios after the country became independent. His animated films are characterised by extreme simplicity of plot, clear colours, funny gags, and the visual style of children's comic books.

The director Jūratė Leikaitė debuted in 1996, with a striking and bold animation film for adults called *Metamorfozės* (*Metamorphoses*), and later began making animation for children. In this way, several films were born one after another: *Braškės ant eglės* (*Strawberries on a Christmas Tree*, 1999), a trilogy about a snail called Maiva, consisting of *Sraigė Maiva* (*Maiva the Snail*, 2000), *Svajonių bokštas* (*The Tower of Dreams*, 2001) and *Solistė* (*The Soloist*, 2002), along with the animation film *100 klausimų apie pasaulį. Lietus* (*One Hundred Questions about the World. Rain*, 2003). A new stage in her work began with the film *Paparčio žiedas* (*The Fern Blossom*, 2003). Among her creative interpretations of Lithuanian legends, celebrations and traditions at Filmų štrichų studios, Leikaitė made *Užgavėnės* (*Shrovetide*, 2005), the most acclaimed animation film, which has garnered the most awards both at home and abroad. She also made the animated film *Marti iš jaujos* (*The Bride from the Barn*, 2006) in the style of black and white graphic art. The film *Margučių rytas* (*Easter Morning*, 2007) uses drawings and photographs, while *Šokančios Vilniaus verbos* (*Dancing Easter Palms of Vilnius*, with Valentas Aškinis, 2010) uses documentary material and animation. In 2011, she also made the animation film *Taip Laima lėmė* (*Laima Determines the Destiny*). Her animation films are closely linked

to Lithuanian folklore, folk tales and myths, and are distinguished by playfulness, a distinctive style of narration, and stylistic experimentation.

The director Ieva Bunokaitė also makes films using mixed techniques based on Lithuanian folk tales. She has boldly combined cut-out animation, ceramic puppets, woven textiles, thread, flowers and various dried materials in her animated films *Gudri duktė* (*A Smart Daughter*, Lithuanian Film Studios, 1995), *Lapė ir vynuogės* (*The Fox and the Grapes*, Vilanima, 1996) and *Bičių piemuo* (*The Bee Shepherd*, Lithuanian Film Studios, 1999). She made the film *Aš einu pas tave* (*I'm Coming to You*, Vilanima, 2002) using photographic animation. She brought to the big screen Jeronimas Laucius' story about a witch, a girl, beauty and love, in the film *Grožio paslaptis* (*The Secret of Beauty*, 2009) using ceramic puppets.

The directors Aurika and Algirdas Selenis made their first film *Arkliavagio gudrybė* (*The Horse Thief's Trickery*, 1998) at the Lithuanian Film Studios. They returned to the theme in *Čigonas ir drakonas* (*The Gypsy and the Dragon*, 2006), which they made at their own studio, Animacijos studija. Their films are playful, they present paradoxical situations, and have a didactic nature. In 2000, they began creating a series of films based on Lithuanian legends and folk tales, including *Vilniaus mergelė* (*Vilnius Maiden*, 2000), *Neringa* (2001), *Žemaitė - Žemaičių pramotė* (*Žemaitė - The Proto-Mother of the Samogitians*, 2002), *Eglė žalčių karalienė* (*Eglė, the Queen of the Grass Snakes*, 2003), *Lietuvių mitologiniai dievai* (*Lithuanian Mythological Gods*, 2006) and *Lietuvių mitologinės būtybės* (*Lithuanian Mythological Creatures*, 2008). Their earlier films are characterised by expressiveness both in the graphics and the colours, and by symbolism. In their later films the technique of successive phases of motion (where an image gradually disappears and is replaced by another in one second or less) is used, the animation is more stylised, and the works are constructed not so much as a synthesis of movement and narration, but as a renewal of images and moving cinematic pictograms.

The directors Šarūnas Jakštas, Vitalijus Suchockis and Juras Visockis have made animation films in the style of caricature. Algirdas Šimkus and Saulius Tamošaitis have made several animation films with puppets. Artūras Bukauskas is involved in making computer animation films. His earlier work includes *Telefono linija* (*The Telephone Line*, 1991) and *Lopšinė miestui* (*A Lullaby for the City*, 1995).

The New Generation of Directors Speak Out Loudly and Clearly Through Their Films

The young generation of directors tell Lithuanian folk tales and also their own tales in their animated films. They delve into universal questions of freedom and analyse sensitive issues in the relationship between themselves, the generations and the genders. With expressive graphics and a Kafkaesque style, the film *Tiltas (The Bridge)* by Ieva Miškinytė deals with issues of human existence; her new film *Saga (The Button)* examines stories about people and objects in which people wander, dream, search for something, long to discover, and long to be discovered. It is a deep allegorical story about buttons that are lost and found, and all of the invisible threads that bind them. Meanwhile, the sensitive and poetic film *Vaikystės dienoraštis (Diary of Childhood)* by Antanas Skučas tells the story of how a small girl gets well, and the child's special relation with nature.

Urtė Budinaitė made the symbolic-allegorical story *Nepriklausomybės diena (Independence Day, 2012)* at the Vilanima Film Studio. It is about a musician who escapes from a radio, a ship that crashes into a sugar spoon and sinks, the lost hopes of finding love on the other side of a door with a little heart, and finding a lost hat. A common thread running through all these stories is freedom. Budinaitė's animated film style is similar to caricature, with the characters portrayed in a humorous way. She does not give priority to the plot, but to the relationships between the characters and their emotions, which are highlighted by using a background that is simple, monochromatic, and not overburdened with detail.

For the film *Tiulis (The Tulle Curtain)* by the young directors Darius Jaruševičius and Inna Šilina, they chose to use a style of graphic design similar to that of children's drawings. The film delves into the global problem of war. There is an allusion to the Berlin Wall, which is embodied by a light tulle curtain with a dotted pattern of a mushroom cloud, dividing an area into two parts, in which different metamorphoses occur: a tulle curtain with concrete arches greets a poet, wraps a tank wrapped in a wedding veil, and turns into a barricade, canons and a place where ice fishing takes place.

One of the most striking student films of recent years is by Skirma Jakaitė. Her animated film *Galim susitikti, galim nesusitikti (We Might Meet, We Might Not, 2011)* tells a story about being a teenager, and the close and fragile ties between people who are very close. It is driven by constant

doubt, fear, distrust, hope and disappointment. The constantly flickering black-and-white graphics, the total animation and the meaningful introduction of spots of colour all create a mood of emotion and extreme anxiety that does an excellent job of expressing the main idea of the film.

The graphics in films by the director and book illustrator Rasa Jonikaitė are similar to illustrations for children's books. The animation film *Uodega (The Tail, 2007)* recounts the adventures on a fishing trip taken by a wolf and a fox, while *Brolis Bebe (Brother Bebe, 2009)* is a story that teaches goodness, love and caring for each other. The decorative style of her films, the combination of lively and colourful characters, together with cut-out animation and a cheerful musical background, create a folk-tale atmosphere.

Vladislav Berezok made the good-humoured and light-hearted animation film *Zuikio kopūstai (Rabbit Cabbage)*. It is an unusual folk tale that tells the story of the origin of wood sorrel ('rabbit cabbage' is a literal translation of the term in Lithuanian), using plasticine animation and colourful characters.

Films by the young generation of directors Monika Žeknytė, Justina Švambarytė, Jūratė Gečaitė, Sigita Kučikaitė, Reda Bartkutė, Greta Stančiauskaitė, Meinardas Valkevičius and Vita Lažinskaitė are all marked by a distinctively individual touch.

Giedrė Beinoriūtė
Rimantas & Julija Gruodis
Janina Lapinskaitė
Arūnas Matelis
Kornelijus & Diana Matuzevičius
Audrius Stonys
Šarūnas Bartas
Kristina Buožytė
Gytis Lukšas
Ignas Miškinis
Algimantas Puipa
Kristijonas Vildžiūnas
Lina Lužytė
Jūratė Samulionytė
Dovilė Šarutytė
Valentas Aškinis
Ilja Bereznickas
Antanas Janauskas
Jūratė Leikaitė-Aškinienė
Algirdas & Aurika Selenis
Nijolė Valadkevičiūtė

by Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

Giedrė Beinoriūtė has been making feature and documentary films since 1997. She studied film and television directing at the Faculty of Film and Theatre at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, and received an MA in 2011. She was awarded a prize for best professional debut in the arts by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture for her films *Egzistencija* (*Existence*, 2004) and *Vulkanovka. Po Didžiojo kino* (*Vulkanovka. After the Grand Cinema*, 2005). She founded the Monoklis studio in 2006, along with Antanas Gluskinas and Jurga Gluskinienė. All of her films stand out with her unique view of subjects that touch on social and historical themes. The animated documentary *Gyveno senelis ir bobutė* (*Grandpa and Grandma*, 2007) was inspired by her grandparents' memories of their exile to Siberia. Childhood, along with a light and sincere irony, which shines through even in the most difficult moments in life, mark many of her films. Closeness, the search for friendship, and the reality of Soviet life are brought back in the film *Balkonas* (*The Balcony*, 2008), which won the prize for Best Short Film at the National Silver Crane 2009 Cinema and Television Film Awards. Her latest documentary film *Pokalbiai rimtomis temomis* (*Conversations on Serious Topics*, 2012) does not contain any extraneous action, decoration, landscapes or special effects. It is a film about children and teenagers, who talk about loneliness, love and the world around them.

www.monoklis.lt



Film still

The documentary film duo Rimantas and Julija Gruodis have been working together since 1988. They choose as the main characters of their films simple people who pose questions about the meaning and the value of life. They remain true to classic values and the emotional plane of storytelling. They are attracted by extremes, by the periphery, because, according to Rimantas, 'a person's successes and failures are more vivid when they are further from the chaos of the city.' In 1994, they founded the Periferija studio, which made documentary films such as *Pirtis* (*The Bath House*, 1997, Best Documentary, Festival International du Film Indépendant in Brussels), *Šeimyna* (*Household*, 2001), *Kaliausė* (*The Scarecrow*, 2002), *Brasbendas* (*The Brass Band*, 2006) and *Lieknas* (*The Swamp*, 2010). The documentary feature films *Dievo paukšteliai* (*The Tiny Birds of God*, 2005) and *Pieno kelias – Paukščių Takas* (*The Way of Milk. The Milky Way*, 2007) examine painful themes in Lithuanian history, such as exile, the end of the Soviet occupation, and collectivisation. Their films have been shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and at festivals in Bilbao, Bornholm, Regensburg and Tampere. The documentary film *Upė* (*The River*, 2009) was named Best Documentary at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and Documenta Madrid, and won a Silver Crane at the National Silver Crane Cinema and Television Film Awards. It was chosen as Best Documentary of the Year by the Lithuanian Filmmakers Union, won an Audience Award at the Festival dei Popoli in Florence, and was a prizewinner at the Vilnius Documentary Film Festival.

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Film still

The film and television director, actor and scriptwriter Janina Lapinskaitė studied directing at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. Between 1975 and 1999, she worked at Lithuanian National Radio and Television. Since 1995, she has been teaching at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. Over the last 20 years, Janina Lapinskaitė has directed films with a style that borders on documentary and feature film. She focuses on eccentric characters and loners who, whether by their own accord or not, find themselves on the fringes of society. They live in front of the camera, and sometimes they act themselves. The documentary *Venecijaus gyvenimas ir Cezario mirtis* (*The Life of Venecijus and Caesar's Death*, 2002) won an award for work with amateur actors at the Deboshir Pure Dreams Film Festival in St Petersburg, and was chosen as the Best Baltic Film at the Riga International Film Forum Arsenals. From Eleonora, who has raised three dwarf children, in *Iš elfų gyvenimo* (*From the Lives of Elves*, 1996) and the inhabitants of the Antaviliai retirement home, looking as if they had stepped out of a play, in *Iš skruzdėlių gyvenimo* (*From the Lives of Ants*, 1995), to middle-aged models for artists in *Venera su katinu* (*Venus with a Tom Cat*, 1997) and abandoned children in *Iš avinėlių gyvenimo* (*From the Lives of Lambs*, 1998) or the inhabitants of a small town in *Traukinys stovi penkias minutes* (*The Train Stops for Five Minutes*, 2009), these are all people who are searching for human ties they have lost, as well as for harmony within themselves and with the world. Since 1994, Lapinskaitė has made 11 documentaries and one full-length feature film, *Stiklo šalis* (*The Land of Glass*, 2004), the protagonist of which is a woman living in a provincial town. The birth and the difficult illness of her newborn second child, and the coldness from someone close to her, fill her everyday life with worry, fear and anticipation. Based on a novella by the popular writer Vanda Juknaitė, it received an award for Best Director at the Tamil Nadu International Film Festival in India.

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Film still

The director and producer Arūnas Matelis studied applied mathematics at the Vilnius University, and graduated from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in 1990. His first documentary film *Dešimt minučių prieš Ikarą skrydį* (*Ten Minutes Before Icarus Flew*, 1990) was called the manifesto of a new generation of young filmmakers. He dealt with new themes, experimented courageously with aesthetics, and indulged his own voice as an artist. In 1992, Matelis founded Nominum, one of the first private independent film studios in Lithuania. It has produced more than 30 films, many of which have attracted international acclaim. Matelis became the first director from Central and Eastern Europe to receive an award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement by the Directors Guild of America. His 2005 documentary film *Prieš parsikrendant į Žemę* (*Before Flying Back to Earth*) was also awarded a Silver Wolf at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, and a Golden Dove at the International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film. The harrowing theme of children with leukemia is dealt with in a playful and poetic style and through carefully chosen details. In 2005, Matelis won the Lithuanian National Prize. He is a member of the European Film Academy, chairman of the Documentary Guild of the Lithuanian Filmmakers' Union, a founder and board member of the Lithuanian Film Academy, head of Lithuania's Oscar Selection Committee, and head of the Alliance of Auteur Cinema.

www.nominum.lt



Film still

The films by Kornelijus and Diana Matuzevičius continue the tradition of Lithuanian poetic documentary film, which emphasises man's bonds with nature, historical memory, culture, customs and traditions. Having received a degree in camera operating from the Moscow National State Cinematography Institute, Kornelijus Matuzevičius worked for a number of years with the well-known director Henrikas Šablevičius. In 1990, he won the Lithuanian National Prize for the films he made with Šablevičius. In the same year, he began directing with his wife Diana. The main characters in their films are prominent Lithuanian cultural figures, such as the writer Jokūbas Josadė in *Iliuzijos* (*Illusions*, 1993) or the priest Julius Sasnauskas in *Esu* (*I Am*, 2000), and ordinary people in *Sugrįžimai* (*Reminiscences*, 1996) and *Už slenksčio* (*Behind the Threshold*, 1995), *Horizontalai arba gyvenimas Luvruose* (*The Horizons or Life at Louvres*, 2005). In their 2008 film *Pensijų diena* (*Pension Day*), the directors follow four elderly women on a day that is particularly important to them, the day the postman brings their pensions. The mood of anticipation changes and takes on a note of concern, and reminds us of Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*. Their films have won a number of awards at prestigious festivals, including Best Short Documentary at the Cinéma du Réel at the George Pompidou Centre in Paris for *Šičionykštė* (*A Local*, 2001), the Best Short Documentary Film award at the Mediawave International Film and Music Gathering in Hungary for *Behind the Threshold* (1995), and the Main Prize at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen for *Illusions*.

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Film still

After studying at the Lithuanian State Conservatoire (now the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre), the director Audrius Stonys spent a residency at Jonas Mekas' Anthology Film Archives in New York in 1989. His first film *Atverti duris ateinančiam* (*Open the Door to Him who Comes*, 1989) appeared at the same time as the country's rebirth and the rebirth of its film industry. Pursuing the tradition of Lithuanian poetic documentary film, he began to delve into the mindset of the nation and the individual, and their hopes and feelings. The film *Neregių žemė* (*Earth of the Blind*, 1992), which revealed the inner world of blind people, won a Felix Award for Best Documentary Film from the European Film Academy. His later works are marked by symbolic images floating slowly by in silence, and a unique perspective on everyday life, such as *Griuvėsių apaštalas* (*Apostle of Ruins*, 1993) and *Skrajojimai mėlynam lauke* (*Flying over a Blue Field*, 1996). He was awarded the Lithuanian National Prize for his courageous experiments with film language, and his original analysis of today's reality in *Uostas* (*The Harbour*, 1998), *Fedja. Trys minutės po didžiojo sprogdimo* (*Fedja. Three Minutes after the Big Bang*, 1999), *Viena* (*Alone*, 2001), and *Paskutinis vagonas* (*The Last Carriage*, 2002). He is also a member of the European Film Academy and the European Documentary Network. He has had retrospective seasons in Switzerland, France, Russia, Israel, the Czech Republic and Japan, and all over Lithuania. His most recent films *Ūkų ūkai* (*Vanity of Vanities*, 2006), *Varpas* (*The Bell*, 2007) and *Raminas* (*Ramin*, 2011) reflect on the themes of memory and the passage of time.

www.stonys.lt



Film still

After graduating from the Moscow Film School, Šarūnas Bartas debuted with the documentary *Praėjusios dienos atminimui (In the Memory of a Day Gone By, 1990)*, which won an Audience Award at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. The same year, he founded Kinema, the first independent film studio in Lithuania. He refined his style further in the feature film *Trys dienos (Three Days, 1991)*, which won an Ecumenical Jury Special Mention at the Berlin International Film Festival, and the Fipresci Prize for its unique style, thematic importance and the beauty of its imagery. The world premières of Bartas' films take place at the official selections at Cannes, Berlin and Venice. The films *Koridorius (The Corridor, 1995)*, *Mūsų nedaug (Few of Us, 1996)*, *Namai (The House, 1997)*, and *Septyni nematomi žmonės (Seven Invisible Men, 2005)* feature philosophical subtexts, and also elucidate on the after effects of the Soviet regime, including confusion, hopelessness and the identity crisis. The characters' inner states are depicted by using documentary-style narration, landscapes and empty spaces (especially in *Freedom, 2000*). His 2010 feature film *Eurazijos aborigenas (Eastern Drift)* shows a break from his usual style. Instead of long and often silent sequences, he uses dialogue and develops the storyline of a crime thriller. He also shows a criminal wandering through Europe. *Eurazijos aborigenas* was recognised as Best Baltic Film at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, won the Main Prize at the 19th KinoShock 2010 Open Film Festival in Anapa in Russia, and a Silver Crane Award for Best Feature Film in Lithuania. Film retrospectives of his work travel all around the world. In 2012, the French minister of culture Frédéric Mitterrand made him a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

www.kinema.lt



Film still

One of the most promising young Lithuanian directors is Kristina Buožytė, who graduated with a degree in directing from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2008. Her debut feature film *Kolekcionierė* (*The Collectress*) appeared the same year. It tells the story of the lost ability to experience emotion. The main theme in this psychological drama is the relationship between a virtual image and reality. *The Collectress* was the discovery of the year: it not only attracted praise from viewers and favourable reviews from critics, but also a 2008 Silver Crane Award for Best Feature Film in Lithuania. *The Collectress* also won the prize for Best Director at the KinoShock Open Film Festival in Anapa in Russia. Her second feature film *Aurora* (*Vanishing Waves*, 2012) had its world première in the East of the West competition section at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, where it received a special mention. The film also received a special mention at the European Film Festival Palic in Serbia, a special mention at the Neuchâtel International Fantastic Film Festival in Switzerland, the Emeric Pressburger Prize at the Jameson Cinefest Miskolc International Film Festival in Hungary, the Méliès d'Argent at the Lund International Fantastic Film Festival in Sweden, and the 2012 Méliès d'Or as Best European Fantastic Feature Film. It collected four prizes at the Austin Fantastic Fest, for Best Film, Best Screenplay, Best Director, and Best Actress. It is an adventurous sci-fi love story. This modern story develops in two different places, and examines the nature of passion by revealing the problem of the dualism between the real world of the body and the ideal world of the thoughts. The film raises the question of what exactly controls a human being: instincts and inner desires, or the feeling of responsibility and control.

www.tremora.com



Film still

Gytis Lukšas, the president of the Lithuanian Filmmakers' Union, shows the underlying foundations of the nation's character, marked by a poetic world-view and lyrical tone. Over his entire career, since his first television film *Žvangutis* (1974), and his first feature film *Virto ažuolai* (*When the Oaks were Falling*, 1976), he has remained faithful to the work of Lithuanian writers. His film *Mano vaikystės ruduo* (*Autumn of my Childhood*, 1977), based on a novella by Juozas Aputis, tells the lyrical story of a village in Soviet times. It was followed by *Vasara baigiasi rudenį* (*Summer Ends with Autumn*, 1982), in which the heroes are afflicted by great tiredness and disappointment. *Žemės keleiviai* (*Pilgrims on Earth*, 1992) was the first feature film about post-Soviet life in Lithuania, and about people's spiritual mood at the time. His 1990 film *Žalčio žvilgsnis* (*The Serpent's Gaze*) covers a few decades at the turn of the 20th century, and examines the themes of temptation, guilt and betrayal. *Mėnulio Lietuva* (*Lunar Lithuania*, 1997), a tragi-comic story infused with mythological elements about postwar life in a small Lithuanian town, is full of well-founded irony, sarcasm and humour. The film *Duburys* (*Vortex*, 2009), based on a novel by Romualdas Granauskas, shows a turn towards psychological realism. The film's world première took place at the Montreal World Film Festival, and it was later shown in India, the USA, Germany, Sweden and Egypt. *Vortex* was also named Best Baltic Feature Film at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival. In 2012, Gytis Lukšas was elected to the Executive Committee of the Federation of European Film Directors (FERA).

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Film still

The graduation work of the director and scriptwriter Ignas Miškinis was the short film *Lengvai ir saldžiai* (*Easily and Sweetly*, 2003), which provoked a new wave of interest in Lithuanian cinema. It was the first commercially successful and well-received Lithuanian film. *Easily and Sweetly* was shown at a number of film festivals, including the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2005, the 2005 Melbourne International Film Festival, the 2004 Cottbus Film Festival, the 2004 Hamburg International Short Film Festival, and the 2004 International Short Film Festival Berlin. The full-length black comedy *Diringas* (*Diring*), which appeared in 2005, deals with the hypertrophied importance of image in contemporary society. The urban landscape of Vilnius is one of the main motifs of Miškinis' films. His *Artimos šviesos* (*Low Lights*, 2009) won the award for Best Feature Film at the National Silver Crane 2009 Film and Television Awards. The new style, along with its theme, is atypical of Lithuanian cinema. The action takes place at night on the streets of Vilnius, as three lonely characters, who desire, at least for a short time, to find closeness and escape the mundane in the search for true feelings in the modern world. *Low Lights* was also shown in German cinemas.

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Film still

Algimantas Puipa graduated from the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow with his 1974 debut film *Kelio ženklai* (*Road Signs*), and made his first feature film, called *Atpildo diena* (*The Day of Retribution*), with Stasys Motiejūnas at the Lithuanian Film Studios in 1975. In 40 intense years, he has made over 20 feature films, most of which are adaptations of literary works. His individual style of directing came out in his early dramas *Velnio sėkla* (*The Devil's Seed*, 1979), *Arkliavagio duktė* (*The Horse Thief's Daughter*, 1981) and *Moteris ir keturi jos vyrai* (*A Woman and Her Four Men*, 1983). His style is characterised by historical themes, psychological subtexts, visual paradoxes and lively female portraits. The themes of woman and the problems of materialist society come out in his later films, like *Žuvies diena* (*Fish Day*, 1989), *Bilietas iki Tadž Mahalo* (*Ticket to the Taj Mahal*, 1990), *Elzė iš Gilijos* (*Elsie's Life*, 2000) and *Nuodėmės užkalbėjimas* (*The Whisper of Sin*, 2007). He often employs a conditional allegorical form of narration, surrealist details, and a fable-like style. With films like *Vilko dantų karoliai* (*The Necklace of Wolf's Teeth*, 1997), the winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the Rouen Nordic Film Festival, and the epic *Dievų miškas* (*Forest of the Gods*, 2005), based on Balys Sruoga's novel of the same title, he focuses on the experiences of characters oppressed by totalitarian regimes, but who have not lost their dignity or their sense of humour. The classic *Amžinoji šviesa* (*Eternal Light*, 1988), the winner of the Grand Prix at the Locarno Film Festival, dwells on the painful historical fate of the nation, the consequences of sovietisation, and the unconquerable desire to survive, regardless of the circumstances. His latest drama, *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* (*The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies*, 2012), is based on Jurga Ivanauskaitė's novel of the same title. It interweaves a number of themes, including the marital crisis of a middle-aged couple, prostitution, and tragic aspects of life. It won four awards at the National Silver Crane Cinema and Television Film Awards in 2012.

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Film still

Before becoming a film director, Kristijonas Vildžiūnas was one of the leaders of the popular rock group *Šiaurės kryptis* (*Northern Direction*). He completed his studies in the Faculty of Film and Theatre at the Lithuanian Academy of Music in 1996. While he was still studying, he debuted with a short film based on Antanas Ramonas' novella *Likusios dienos* (*The Days That Are Left*, 1995). The world première of his first full-length film *Nuomos sutartis* (*The Lease*, 2002) took place in the Upstream official selection of the Venice International Film Festival. The world première of his second full-length film *Aš esi tu* (*You am I*, 2006) took place in the Un Certain Regard official selection of the Cannes Film Festival. Both films were recognised as Best Baltic Feature Film at the Riga International Film Forum Arsenals. His latest film *Kai apkabinsiu tave* (*Back to Your Arms*, 2010) won eight awards at the National Silver Crane 2011 Cinema and Television Film Awards. The story was inspired by a letter from the Lithuanian-American Dalia Juknevičiūtė to her husband, the poet Algimantas Mackus. It contained a description of a meeting between a daughter and her father in divided Berlin during the Cold War, which became an arena for competing political powers. The expressiveness and lyricism of his films are conveyed by the subtly created atmosphere, the complex characters, and the detective-like intrigue. The main characters are often forced to solve difficult moral dilemmas, and to look for answers to difficult questions that arise amidst the clashes of the period and the historical reality.

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Film still

Lina Lužytė is currently studying for an MA at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, where she has already received a BA in film and television directing. In 2005, she worked as a director's assistant at the production company Artbox. She has made several short films, including *Puiki diena bananžuvėms gaudyti* (*A Perfect Day to Catch Banana Fish*, 2007), *Katutis* (2008) and *Jau puiku, tik dar šiek tiek* (*It Would Be Splendid, Yet...*, 2009). The latter won prizes at the START International Youth and Student Film Festival in Baku in Azerbaijan, the Charity Film Festival in Monaco, the Young Cinema Art 2010 festival in Plock, and the Landau International Short Film Festival, where it won the prize for Best Foreign Film. It tells a story in the style of a tragi-comedy about Lithuania, which had just regained its independence, and a factory worker called Danguolė, an unofficial ambassador, who gets the chance to be photographed for the cover of an American magazine. The details and the behaviour of the characters in the background of this event provide sharp insights into the period of time that had just gone by, and into the present day. Lužytė's latest documentary, *Igrushki* (2012), was filmed in the town of Zhlobina in Belarus. According to her, 'It's not a film about the people of Belarus. It's a film about Lithuanians, Germans, Australians, everyone, because we all live in certain political 'regimes', in systems under certain rules.'

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Film still

Jūratė Samulionytė studied film and television directing at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, and received her MA in 2007. Her stop-motion film *Nerutina* (*Noroutine*) won a 2008 Silver Crane Award as Best Lithuanian Short Film. More than 80,000 shots were needed to tell the story of a middle-aged office worker who was stuck in a daily routine. It won the Jury Prize at the International Student Short Film Festival Amirani 2008 in Tbilisi, Georgia, and the Grand Prix at the International Kansk Video Festival in Russia. The style of *Nerutina* was formed by animating the movements of objects, combined with emotional subtexts and subtle humour. Her irony-infused documentary *Šanxai banzai* (*Shanghai Banzai*, 2010) focuses on the disappearing Vilnius area of Šnipiškės, an area of dilapidated wooden houses in the centre of the city inhabited by a multilingual community. In 2011, *Shanghai Banzai* won the Grand Prix in the New Baltic Cinema section at the European Film Forum Scanorama. It also won an Audience Prize at the Docudays UA International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Kyiv in Ukraine. In 2011, Samulionytė presented her third short film, *Laikinai* (*Temporary*), in which she analyses the issue of emigration and its consequences. It was recognised as Best Short Animated Film at the 2012 Schlingel International Film Festival for Children and Young Audiences in Germany, and won an Audience Prize at the Uppsala International Short Film Festival the same year. As part of her many creative activities, she also uses film in educational projects.

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Film still

Dovilė Šarutytė graduated with a degree in film and television directing from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2009. During her studies, her film *Bjaurus sapnas* (*Awful Dream*, 2008) caught the attention of her teachers at home, and abroad. *Aš tave žinau* (*I Know You*), one of her first works as a director, was voted Best Lithuanian Short Film at the National Silver Crane 2010 Cinema and Television Film Awards. The story revolves around the experiences of a teenage girl, including love and disillusion, which raise important questions about how we should live, how we should act in various situations, and what is right. How can we stay good and keep our dignity? The film won the Main Prize at the Young Cinema Art 2010 World Student Film Festival in Poland. In 2011 she won a second Silver Crane Award for the film *Nesiseka šiandien* (*Not Lucky Today*). This short ironic story deals with success in the familiar search for a plotline, and expresses strongly the psychological mood of the characters. Šarutytė is currently participating in the educational project 'Mokausi iš kino' (Learning from Film), and is teaching the secrets of film directing to schoolchildren.

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Film still

The animation artist, director and producer Valentas Aškinis graduated from Vilnius Construction and Engineering Institute in 1983 with a degree in urban planning and construction. He made the hand-drawn animation television lullaby *Dėdė Miegas* (*Uncle Sleep*, 1986) at the Commissioned Film Studio. The film *Kaktuso paslaptis* (*The Secret of a Cactus*, 1989), which was a joint production between the Lithuanian Film Studios and Mosfilm, helped him to qualify as an animated film director and to continue his career. Since 1991, he has been head of the Vilanima Animation Film Studio, where he has made many of his films, including *Sidabrinis mėnulio šuo* (*The Silver Dog of the Moon*, 2004) and *Laikrodukas ir dėdė Miegas* (*The Watch and Uncle Sleep*, 2006). Aškinis' 1998 film *Odisėja* (*The Odyssey*) is considered to be the first Lithuanian full-length animation film. The adaptation of this classic by Homer was filmed in 35 mm. Geographical knowledge and the world of Antiquity are converted into images through a vivid range of colours. He is currently making *The Golden Horse*, another full-length animated film. It is a joint production between Lithuania, Latvia and Luxembourg, and is based on the play of the same name by the Latvian writer Janis Rainis, as well as Baltic fairy tales. Aškinis has written the textbooks *Animacijos pagrindai* (*The Basics of Animation*), *Animacijos istorija* (*A History of Animation*) and *Animacijos kadruotė ir kompozicija* (*Animation Storyboard and Composition*). In 2003, he set up the International Animation Film Festival Tindirindis. Since 1999, he has been director of Animacijos mokykla (School of Animation), and a teacher of animation at Vilnius College of Design and Technology.

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Film still

The animation classic Ilja Bereznickas took his style from the world of caricature, which allows us to look at simple things from unexpected angles. On graduating in 1970 from Kaunas Polytechnic Institute with a degree in architecture, he turned to professional animation, and attended a special directing course in Moscow. His most famous film *Baubas (The Hobgoblin)*, came out in 1987, and won a Mio Award at the International Film Festival in Tomar in Portugal. An adventure story about the friendship between a girl and a hobgoblin, who has been imagined by her parents, it was an instant hit with children and adults. The film was so successful that Bereznickas made three more animated films about the Hobgoblin, and became a cult classic. We could call Hobgoblin the Lithuanian Shrek. Elements of parody and his brilliant way of making characters change in unexpected ways made it very successful. Over his long career, Bereznickas has worked in film studios in Lithuania, Norway, Israel and the USA. He has taught animation at Vilnius Academy of Art since 2002. In 2003 and 2004 he taught at the School of Visual Arts in New York. He returned to his immortal character Hobgoblin in 2004, with the film *Baubo aritmetika (Hobgoblin Arithmetic)* and *Baubo liga (Hobgoblin's Illness)*. One of the most brilliant aspects of Bereznickas' career can be found on the DVD *Baubas ir Co (Hobgoblin and Co)*.

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Film still

The director, screenwriter, animator and artist Antanas Janauskas graduated from the Telšiai School of Applied Art, and worked in the titling section at the Lithuanian Film Studios. In 1965 he began making animated insertions for documentary and feature films, and experimented with animation. His first animated film *Mergaitė ir velnias* (*The Girl and the Devil*, 1967) was a silent film. In 1970, he produced the black-and-white animated film *Iniciatyva* (*Initiative*), which was the first animated film to be made at the Lithuanian Film Studios in the postwar era. It alluded to the Prague Spring in 1968. Other films he made at the Lithuanian Film Studios include *Antspaudas* (*The Stamp*, 1986), *Užkrečiantis pavyzdys* (*A Catching Example*, 1987) and *Palankios aplinkybės* (*Favourable Conditions*, 1989). Janauskas founded his own studio in 1991, called A. Janausko animacinių filmų studija A.J, where he made films such as *Kėdė* (*The Chair*, 1996), *Ovacijos* (*Ovations*, 1998), *Telegastrovizija* (*Telegastrovision*, 2000), *Trumpas sujungimas* (*Short Circuit*, 2003) and *Urzgianti pagalvė* (*The Growling Pillow*, 2010). The film *Trumpas sujungimas* was praised at the 2004 Riga International Film Forum Arsenal for its ability to create 'a perceptive and fascinating story of one lifetime in a few minutes'. It also won a Spirit Award at the 2005 Brooklyn Film Festival. *Telegastrovizija* won the Grand Jury Prize in the Diesel Online Shorts Competition at the 2010 Miami International Film Festival. Janauskas' films are characterised by a well-defined narrative and recurring characters that experience an overpowering conflict with their surroundings, and embody him and his ideas. His mesmerising creative style is achieved without words, employing just the movements and mimicry of the characters, along with background music.

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Film still

The animator, producer, screenwriter and artist Jūratė Leikaitė graduated from the LSSR State Art Institute in 1986. She debuted with *Metamorfozės* (*Metamorphoses*, 1996), a brilliant and courageous film for adults, and later began making animated films for children at the Lithuanian Film Studios. That was where she created her trilogy about Maiva the snail, *Sraigė Maiva* (*The Arrogant Snail*, 2000), *Svajonių bokštas* (*The Tower of Dreams*, 2001) and *Solistė* (*The Soloist*, 2002). In 2003, she established the Filmų štrichų studio. The film *Užgavėnės* (*Shrovetide*, 2005), which was made with mixed animation techniques, has been shown at more than 30 international festivals abroad, as well as winning the Grand Prix at the International Animation Film Festival Tindirindis in 2005. She has developed a unique style in her interpretations of Lithuanian legends and traditions. Her animated films are characterised by playfulness, and by experimentation with the means of expression. She has also made the black-and-white animated film *Marti iš jaujos* (*The Bride from the Barn*, 2006), based on illustrations by the painter Viktoras Petravičius. Drawings and photographs are combined in the film *Margučių rytas* (*Easter Morning*, 2007), which won a Silver Crane Award for Best Animation Film in 2008. The hand-drawn *Taip Laima lėmė* (*Laima Determines the Destiny*, 2011) won two Silver Crane Awards for Best Animated Film and Best Composer (Kipras Mašanaukas). Leikaitė has brought out DVD collections of her animated and documentary films, called *Lietuvių animacija. Šventės ir sakmės* (*Lithuanian Animation. Folk Tales and Legends*, 2008) and *Mažosios pasakėlės. Lietuviška animacija vaikams* (*Short Tales. Lithuanian Animation for Children*, 2010).

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Film still

Algirdas Selenis graduated from the S. Žukas School of Applied Art in Kaunas, and worked at the Lithuanian Film Studios. He made his first film *Arkliavagio gudrybė* (*The Horse Thief's Trickery*, 1998) together with his wife Aurika. In 2000, they began making a series of films based on Lithuanian legends and fairy tales, including *Vilniaus mergelė* (*Vilnius Maiden*, 2000), *Neringa* (2001), *Žemaitė - Žemaičių pramotė* (*Žemaitė: The Pre-Mother of Samogitians*, 2002), *Eglė žalčių karalienė* (*Eglė, Queen of the Grass Snakes*, 2003) and *Lietuvių mitologiniai dievai* (*Lithuanian Mythological Gods*, 2006). The film *Vilnius Maiden* interweaves the storylines of various miraculous fairy tales and legends which are central in creating a rich kaleidoscope of colours and graphics. The modernised myth *Žemaitė: The Pre-Mother of Samogitians* revives the extraordinary tale of a girl who is destined to gather her people together and look for a new home. The films by the Selenis stand out with their symbolism, their unexpected humour, their playful and paradoxical action, and their didactic themes. They have gradually moved from plasticine animation to dissolve animation. In their later films, their animation has become simply cinematic pictograms. Their animated film series *Lietuvos legendinės moterys* (*Legendary Women of Lithuania*) was awarded a special prize for Best Film Series at the first-ever International Animation Film Festival Tindirindis in 2003. The Selenis established their own studio, called Animacijos studija, in 2004.

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Film still

The artist and animated film director Nijolė Valadkevičiūtė graduated from the LSSR State Art Institute in 1970. She graduated from the Postgraduate School of Scriptwriters and Film Directors in Moscow with a diploma in animation film directing in 1983. Her graduation work *Medis (The Tree)* was the first professional animated film to be made in the Lithuanian Film Studios. Her later work was driven by exploration and unusual experiments. With each new film, her animation took on a more expressive hue, and conveyed abstract ideas, such as hope, expectation and anxiety. Drastic graphic solutions began to dominate in her work, which freed itself from traditional plotlines. Her animated film *Mįslė (The Riddle)* was awarded a prize at the 18th All-Union Film Festival in Minsk in Belarus, while *Rytoj, 11 val. ryto (Tomorrow at 11 a.m., 1985)* won prizes at the 19th All-Union Film Festival in Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan. Her *Sezamai, atsiverk (Open Sesame, 2001)* won an Audience Award at the Visonaria International Film Festival in Siena in Italy. Her animation films *Edeno sodas (The Garden of Eden, 2007)*, *Prezidentas (The President, 2009)* and *Lietuvių vardas (The Lithuanian Name, 2010)* all received nominations at the National Silver Crane Film and Television Awards.

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Film still

Organisations

Actors Agency Lithuania	www.actorsagency.lt
Independent Producers Association of Lithuania	indy.prod.associationLT@gmail.com
Lithuanian Association of Artists	www.lmka.lt
Lithuanian Association of Cinematographers	www.lac.lt
Lithuanian Film Studios	www.lfs.lt
Lithuanian Filmmakers Union	www.kinosajunga.lt

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS

Ad Hoc: Inconvenient Films Human Rights Film Festival	www.nepatoguskinas.lt
European Film Forum Scanorama	www.scanorama.lt
International Animated Film Festival Tindirindis	www.tindirindis.lt
International Short Film Festival Tinklai	www.tinklai.net
International Short Film Festival Vilnius Film Shorts	www.filmshorts.lt
International Women's Film Festival Šeršeliafam	www.serseliafam.lt
Kaunas International Film Festival	www.kinofestivalis.lt
Vilnius Documentary Film Festival	www.skalvija.lt
Vilnius International Film Festival	www.kinopavasaris.lt

MUSEUMS AND ARCHIVES

Department of Image and Sound Documents, Lithuanian Central State Archive	n.gubanovas@archyvai.lt
Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum	www.ltmkm.lt

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