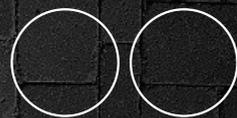


Lithuanian Cinema

Special Edition for Lithuanian Film
Days in Poland 2015



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Introduction

Over the past decade, Lithuanian cinema has experienced a period of intense change. The production of films in Lithuania has been on the increase, as has the audience's interest in films produced domestically. Founded in 2012, the Lithuanian Film Centre, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, implements important strategic guidelines concerning cinema policy. Lithuanian cinema has received increasing international recognition: film premieres take place at international film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, San Sebastian and Sundance. For a long time, the generation of filmmakers that lived during the most recent turning point in Lithuanian history have continued to put forth works of distinction. These include such film directors as Šarūnas Bartas, Valdas Navasaitis, Arūnas Matelis and Audrius Stonys, who created their first films in the late 1980s. After the restoration of the independence of Lithuania, they established their voice and unique shooting style characterised by ellipses, slow rhythm, mythologised space, and artistic and philosophical undertones.

Such filmmakers as Audrius Juzėnas, Kristijonas Vildžiūnas and Ignas Jonynas, who made their debut later, reflect on the themes of historical memory and delve into the consequences of the failed communist system and the new social challenges and moral dilemmas. They seek to understand and reveal the duality of human nature and the juxtaposition between ideals and reality. The films by these directors can be easily defined as the first films of this type. *Vildžiūnas' Kai apkabinsiu tave (Back to Your Arms)*, which recreates the Cold War era, was made in collaboration with Studio Filmowe TOR and was the first Lithuanian and Polish co-production. *Ekskursantė (The Excursionist)* by Juzėnas is the first Lithuanian feature film about the mass deportations of people to Siberia. *Lošėjas (The Gambler)* by Jonynas is the first joint Lithuanian and Latvian feature film in 20 years of independence. The youngest generation

of Lithuanian filmmakers is also pursuing new opportunities and original forms of expression. Films by such female film directors as Alantė Kavaitė, Kristina Buožytė and Giedrė Žickytė exude confidence. They bring the complex world of human emotions, aspirations, inner experiences, and relationships, and the conflict between carnal passions and reason into the spotlight. Freely collapsing the space between a fictional and a documentary film, these filmmakers experiment with different genres and expand the boundaries of reality and fantasy.

We are pleased to introduce you to the key stages in the development of Lithuanian cinema and the country's most famous film directors in this catalogue dedicated to Lithuanian Film Days in Poland. Prominent film critics, historians and theorists have contributed to the preparation of this material. We hope that the articles, interviews and insights provided in this catalogue will lead to better knowledge of Lithuanian cinema.

Editor Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

Lithuania and Poland. Neighbourship in Filmic Form in the Cinema of the 1960s

By Anna Mikonis

There is a perception of Lithuanian cinema which has hitherto maintained a lively grip in Poland. It is conceived of as oscillating between the Romantic Mickiewiczian representation of *Dziady* (*Forefather's Eve*), Czesław Miłosz's magical and sentimental valley in Tadeusz Konwicki's auteurist interpretation and the latter's nostalgic depiction of the land of his childhood, as portrayed through the lens of Andrzej Wajda. Meanwhile, if we were to turn that point of view on its head and try looking at Polish cinema from the Lithuanian perspective and look for connections between Lithuanian cinema and filmmakers and the cinema of their neighbour, what would become evident is a marked divergence from the romantic and sentimental vision of "kith and kin from Lithuania", to use Tadeusz Lubelski's description. It is a topic that is beyond the limits of this short essay, but that nevertheless endeavours to encapsulate it in a concise whole, giving a brief presentation of the themes common to the filmmakers of both countries, as well as the sources of inspiration that Lithuanian cinema found in its neighbouring counterpart during that most fascinating and really rather complex political era that was the 1960s.

Together with the "thaw" in political relations between the Soviet Union and the West that occurred during the 1960s, interest arose not only in American culture, but also in the culture of other Central and Eastern Europe states. The first links with Polish cinema originated in political directives from the Soviet nomenclatura and they were intended to support mutual collaboration between Lithuanian filmmakers and those of the other "people's republics". Early in 1958, the USSR's Minister of Culture issued an ordinance on the improvement of relations between the film industries of the Soviet Union and the other

Warsaw Pact countries. Then, in November of the same year, Michalina Meškauskienė, Lithuania's deputy minister of culture who held the brief for cinema, welcomed a Polish delegation as it crossed the border of her country. Its members were Tadeusz Zaorski, the deputy minister of culture and the arts, who was also the head of Polish cinema at the time, directors Stanisław Lenartowicz and Witold Lesiewicz, film historian and critic Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, and Helena Lemańska, the editor-in-chief of the *Polska Kronika Filmowa* (*Polish Film Chronicle*). The notion of making what would have been the first co-production in the history of Lithuanian cinema was discussed. Unfortunately, with the authorities exercising firm control over the initiative, nothing but a politically oriented concept for collaboration found favour. The film to be made by the "two nations" was to show the staunch struggle of the Polish and Lithuanian communist movement under the leadership of "outstanding Polish communist" Jan Przewalski against the "bourgeois" nationalists. Witold Lesiewicz was commissioned to direct the picture, with the screenplay being assigned to Juozas Baltušis, an author popular during the Soviet era and Jerzy Stawiński, the Polish Film School's foremost screenwriter. However, the common friendship declared at the highest echelons failed to materialise on the ground. The screenplay was never written.

In the meantime, changes of a more vital nature were taking place within the creative *milieu*. In the late 1950s, the cinema of Lithuania and Poland alike belonged to the upcoming generation, and they were changing its face. The Polish Film School was born on the wave of revival that followed Stalin's death, while the 1960s proved to be a period of thriving debuts in Lithuanian cinema. It was then that the voice



Polish delegation on a tour in Trakai (1958). From the right: 1. Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, 2. Tadeusz Zaorski, 3. Stanisław Lenartowicz, 6. Witold Lesiewicz, 7. Helena Lemańska. Source: Lithuanian Central State Archives, photo by M. Baranuskas.

of a new generation of promising filmmakers made itself heard. Alumni of the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in the main, they were thirsting to create a wholly different model of cinema. They all made their debut, be it documentary or feature, on their home soil, at the Lithuanian film studios; Vytautas Žalakevičius began with a full-length feature, *Adomas nori būti žmogumi* (*Adam Wants to be a Man*, 1959), while Arūnas Žebriūnas and Marijonas Giedrys contributed two of the four films that constituted *Gyvieji didvyriai* (*Living Heroes*, 1960), in other words, *Paskutinis šūvis* (*The Last Shot*) and *Mums nebereikia* (*We Don't Need It Anymore*). Shortly afterwards came Raimondas Vabalas' debut with *Žingsniai naktį* (*Steps in the Night*, 1962) and Almantas Grikevičius' poetic documentary about the history of Vilnius, *Laikas eina per miestą* (*Time Walks Through the City*, 1966).

As this new generation of artists stepped into the Lithuanian film studios, the former, ideologically unequivocal works, with their axiological

division into good and evil central characters and their roots firmly set in the dominance of dialogue, gave way to a more interesting visual form and auteurist individualism. The image of the cinema that the young Lithuanians sought to create was one they had acquired both from the film school and from the creative atmosphere of metropolitan Moscow. All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), one of the first institutions devoted to film education, functioned as a true melting pot of nationalities and cultures, and it was while studying there that Vytautas Žalakevičius struck up a friendship with Jerzy Hoffman and Edward Skórzewski and cinematographer Donatas Pečiūra talked the nights away with his roommates, Jerzy Grotowski and Roman Farat. Both Hoffman and Žalakevičius had Mikheil Chiaureli as their tutor, but it would seem that Stalin's "court" filmmaker neither influenced the works of the former nor lent wings to those of the latter. They both graduated in 1955 and, in addition, they were linked by the creative concepts they shared. Hoffman's and Skórzewski's

graduation film, which marked the beginning of the “black series” in Polish documentary cinema, was a creative impulse for Žalakevičius as well. Over the next decade, inspired by the ruling idea of the two Poles’ documentary debut, *Uwaga, chuligani!* (*Attention, Hooligans!*, 1955), he made *Vienos dienos kronika* (*One-Day Chronicle*, 1963); innovative in terms of feature-film form, it reflects the selfsame central theme¹. This conviction as to society’s passivity and collective responsibility for the spread of hooliganism was to become a motif common to Hoffman and Skórzewski’s documentaries and Žalakevičius’ feature films alike.

Moreover, at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), the students were introduced to films from all over the world and this, of course, was one of the factors that influenced their development and did so in a way so evident as to need no explanation. For they had unlimited access to the Gosfilmofond film archives, which held not only world cinema

¹ In *Attention, Hooligans!*, the unseen narrator snatches a newspaper from the hands of an elderly lady, saying, ‘Look! You’ve got to look! Just a step away from you, a crime’s been committed. That’s it, that’s what your indifference leads to’. In Žalakevičius’ work, the central character stands under a tree, watching passively as, nearby, two young hooligans knife a passer-by to death. Off-camera, the judge’s voice asks, ‘Why did you stand there, under the tree, while a person was being killed nearby?’ And the witness to the event replies, ‘It was raining.’

classics and the latest productions from the French New Wave and Italian Neo-Realism movements, but also Polish works. It was not by chance that the students and directors learned to speak of the tragic fate of their nations from those films, as Andrei Konchalovsky recollected:

“Oppositional political thinking came to us not from the West, but from our own, socialist Gulag. [...] The first world-class, anti-Soviet film was *Popiół i diament* (*Ashes and Diamonds*). It came as an absolute shock. [...] How I envied the Poles! And there they were, complaining that there was no freedom in their country”.

The latest films made behind the Iron Curtain also came to film festivals in Moscow and, when Polish films were screened in the cinemas of the Soviet Union, it was standing room only. Years later, Vladimir Baskakov, the most important censor of this “most important of arts”, recalled:

“The state film distribution departments had no fear of Andrzej Wajda’s *A Generation*, nor of his *Ashes and Diamonds*, nor of Jerzy Kawalerowicz’s *Mother Joan of the Angels*, even though those films met with enormous criticism in official circles at the time”.

During that period, Lithuanian filmmakers found inspiration not only in French poetic realism,

under the influence of which Vytautas Žalakevičius made his full-length feature debut, *Adam Wants to be a Man* and in the French New Wave, as can be seen in the works of Almantas Grikevičius, but also in the Polish cinematic oeuvre. Much later, Almantas Grikevičius admitted:

“I’ve always liked and admired Polish cinema. I felt a great affinity with it. And I wasn’t the only one; so did other Lithuanian directors. Most probably because a shared history connects us, particularly the history present in Andrzej Wajda’s films”.

Depicting the history of a subjugated society is a motif shared by, and connecting, Polish and Lithuanian cinema during the period in question, as is the form we use to interpret it. In 1958, Andrzej Wajda set *Ashes and Diamonds* in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, telling a metaphorical tale of a young hothead who lifts his hand against the Soviet authorities. Two years earlier, in *Kanał* (*They Loved Life*, 1956), he had recreated a realistic picture of the Warsaw Uprising resistance fighters perishing in the sewers beneath their capital. Less than two decades later, the ruptured and dissonant history of Lithuania’s post-war reality was unfolded by Vytautas Žalakevičius in *Niekas nenorėjo mirti* (*Nobody Wanted To Die*, 1965), Raimondas Vabalas in *Laiptai į dangų* (*Staircase to the Sky*, 1967) and Almantas Grikevičius together with

Algirdas Dausa in *Jausmai* (*Feelings*, 1968). Their dramatic representation of the fate met by the Lithuanian resistance movement was constructed by means ambiguous in expression and both metaphoric and Aesopian in idiom. The Poles clothed their catastrophic post-war realities in the costume of young men’s tragedies, while the Lithuanians clad them in family and individual dramas. A value both crucial and common to all these works was the understanding of history as viewed from the perspective of individuals and the difficult choices they faced within a politically entangled society. Here, history takes the stage not by way of storming crowds, spectacular battles, revolutionary headquarters, or frenzied rallies, but as embodied in individual people shown in all their existential complexity.

In all of these works, we are also looking at that refined and subtle cinematic idiom which is Aesopian language. This symbolic, visual space, filled with double meaning, is present in the films of Almantas Grikevičius, Vytautas Žalakevičius and Andrzej Wajda. The white horse of Andrzej Wajda’s *Lotna* (1959) steps majestically into Almantas Grikevičius’ *Time Walks Through the City* to wander the backstreets and alleyways of Vilnius as a symbol of the shared history of the two nations, a history passed over in silence. Maciek, dying in agony on the rubbish heap of history and the crucifix hanging upside down



Lucyna Winnicka’s and Alicja Sędzińska’s visit to Vilnius (1966). Second from the right is Vytautas Žalakevičius, next to him Alicja Sędzińska and Lucyna Winnicka. Source: Lithuanian Central State Archives, photo by M. Baranauskas.



Advertisement for Polish film week in Vilnius (1970). Source: Lithuanian Central State Archives, photo by M. Rebi.



A shot from A. Grikevičius’ *Laikas eina per miestą* (*Time Walks Through the City*).



Birutė Žibaitė and Donatas Banionis. A shot from R. Vabalas’ *Marš, marš, tra-ta-ta* (*Go, Go! Rub-a-Dub!*). Photo from the archive of cinematographer Donatas Pečiūra.

in *Ashes and Diamonds*, the village horses somnolently hauling the Soviet truck through the oak forest, with a Pensive Christ, symbol of agony and sorrow, affixed to one of the trees visible in the background in *Nobody Wanted To Die*; these are just a few of the visual metaphors with which the works in question are endowed. Here, the symbols construct a world that has shifted out of kilter and where traditional values have ceased to exist; they are also a metaphor, silent, yet so very eloquent, for a subjugated society.

On the other hand, Raimondas Vabalas' political pamphlet, *Marš, marš, tra-ta-ta (Go, Go! Rub-a-Dub!, 1964)*, is very far removed from cinematic drama. The director, who was born in Paris and is descended, on his mother's side, from a noble Polish family, the Górkis, uses grotesquerie to tell the story of a Lithuanian youth, Zigmas, and his love for a Polish girl, Jadwiga, a tale which is played out against the backdrop of two battling political factions, Centia and Groszia. The source of the film lay in a screenplay entitled *Kiškis (The Hare)*, by Lithuanian-Jewish writer Grigorij Kanovičius and the prematurely deceased Ilja Rudas-Gercovskis. That work was a light-hearted tale inspired by Andrzej Munk's *Zezowate szczęście (Bad Luck, 1960)*. In a manner both colourful and supremely comic, it told the story of a noble but hapless official whose doings lay bare the vices of a small town in the pre-war borderlands of Poland and Lithuania. The script also spoke with profound irony of the political tension in relations between the two countries, which the eponymous hare heedlessly inflames by accidentally crossing the border.

The fascination of Lithuanian directors with Polish cinema was also reinforced both by their travels on the festival circuit and by friendship. Vytautas Žalakevičius came to know Andrzej Wajda, and Krzysztof Zanussi's friendly support and advice helped Almantas Grikevičius get through some difficult moments in his life. Arūnas Žebriūnas got to know Roman Polański's work at film festivals and, years later, this creator of Lithuanian poetic cinema remembered:

"Roman Polański's *Dwaj ludzie z szafą (Two Men and a Wardrobe, 1960)* made an enormous impression on me. The irrational scene where the two men pull the wardrobe from the sea is the most beautiful in the history of cinema. It's a masterpiece".

Towering over friendship and fascination alike, though, was the sparkling penmanship and perception of a man enamoured of Lithuanian cinema, Janusz Gazda. It was, indeed, thanks to the writings of this film critic for *Ekran* that Lithuanian cinema has a place in the reflections of Polish 20th century film scholarship, as well as being appreciated and written about.

It was also thanks to Poland's film-oriented print media that her cinema permeated the consciousness of Lithuanian audiences. At the time, it was the only foreign press of its kind to reach the Soviet market regularly with what was, for the time, something of a mass circulation. *Binders of Film, Ekran and Kino* can still be found today in the libraries of Lithuanian directors, film critics and cinema lovers alike. Polish actors Daniel Olbrychski, Zbigniew Cybulski, Beata Tyszkiewicz, Lucyna Winnicka and Pola Raksa enjoyed a great deal of popularity, with their photos being clipped out of magazines and used to adorn the front windscreens of thousands of lorries on every road in the Soviet Union.

It is also worth mentioning an initiative that was never to see the light of day. The 1960s came to a close at the Lithuanian film studios amidst the turbulent atmosphere of the work on Almantas Grikevičius' *Herkus Mantas*, an historical epic about the Great Prussian Uprising against the Teutonic Knights in the Middle Ages. One of the factors determining the undertaking of such a major venture was Lithuanian audiences' rather ambiguous reception of Aleksander Ford's *Krzyżaków (Knights of the Teutonic Order)*. The studio decided to portray its own vision of the nation's struggle against the Order, although the way in which the filming of an historical epic was approached was learned from the Poles. Shooting took place in Malbork and the Polish

Army was used in the battle scenes. As the film correspondent for *Głos Wybrzeża* reported from the site:

"The crowd scenes feature the Polish army, under the instruction of six experienced stunt artists, as well as sixty-five horses and grooms from the stud farm in Starogard and the Pedigree and Thoroughbred Breeding Station in Gajowo. The Starogard mounts are already seasoned film extras. After all, they won their on-camera "spurs" in *Knights of the Teutonic Order*".

However, work on the film was interrupted and the material shot by Grikevičius, with all its verve, its extraordinarily evocative battle scenes and its notable injection of naturalism, was thrown out by the censors, shattering the director's life².

It also seems only right to look at one more historical connection, even though this means moving slightly ahead. The turn of the 1960s is marked by events of a singular nature that took place in Poland and Lithuania alike; the "human candles" lit in self-immolation as an act of dissent against the USSR. In the 10th Anniversary Stadium in Warsaw in 1968, Ryszard Siwiec set himself ablaze in protest against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. In 1972, 18-year-old Romas Kalanta set himself on fire in the municipal square in Kaunas, leaving a note that read, "Please blame the Soviet Union for my death". The fact that film versions of both these profoundly moving manifestations exist is down to the initiative of documentary maker Maciej Drygas, who, incidentally, is the husband of Vita Želakevičiūtė-Drygas, Vytautas Žalakevičius' daughter. In 1990, Raimondas Banionis made *Vaikai iš "Amerikos" viešbučio (The Children of the Hotel America)*; the screenplay, which tells of the Soviet authorities' repression of Lithuania's youth as a result of the events of the spring of 1972, was written by Drygas and translated into Lithuanian by Želakevičiūtė-Drygas. A year later, the Felix

² A film about the Prussian leader was made in 1972, with the same title but less successfully, by another director, Marijonas Giedrys.

A Short Review of Lithuanian Cinema

By Linas Vildžiūnas

Cinema is the only art form that does not have a patron muse, yet the exact date of its birth is well known: 28 December 1895. On that evening, two brothers, Louis and Auguste Lumière, presented a public viewing of moving pictures in the basement of the Grand Café in the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris. They called their first camera and projector a cinematograph. This invention, which astounded the audience, was destined to become not only the most popular form of entertainment in the 20th century, but also a fine art that perfected the distinctive and evocative language of images. Although a quick end was predicted more than once for the so-called Tenth Muse, especially with the invention of television, films even now continue to rule over the public's feelings and minds, while the art of cinema is seen as an integral part of every nation's culture.

The Lumière brothers' cinematograph reached Lithuania relatively quickly. The first showing in the terrace theatre of the Vilnius botanical gardens (now the Bernardine Gardens) took place on 3 July 1897. After a decade, Kaunas became the birthplace of puppet animation. Władysław Starewicz, who later became a famous director in Russia and France, in 1910 created here the first spatial animation in *Walka żuków (The Battle of the Stag Beetles)*. However, due to unfavourable historical and economic circumstances, cinema became more popular only half a century later in the context of national culture.

The young independent Lithuanian state in the 1920s and 1930s was unable to create its own cinematography, and the Lithuanian film studios founded during the Soviet regime, which in the post-war period made only film chronicles and documentaries, performed mainly propagandistic functions. The few Lithuanian-themed features that appeared at that time were directed by directors from Russia who artificially included

the local colours into schemes of socialist realism.

The sudden breakthrough of real Lithuanian cinema was sudden and unexpected. At the end of the 1960s, the Lithuanian film studios saw the rise of a new generation of young film directors, supplemented by students returning from the Moscow Institute of Cinematography. This was the generation of directors Vytautas Žalakevičius, Arūnas Žebriūnas, Raimondas Vabalas, Almantas Grikevičius, Marijonas Giedrys and Algirdas Araminas; cinematographers Jonas Gričius, Algimantas Mockus and Janas Tomaševičius; and documentary filmmakers Robertas Verba and Henrikas Šablevičius. They searched for ways to express the distinctive Lithuanian worldview through cinema and reveal the dramatic theme of the postwar period. Drawing inspiration from national literature and art, this time they created an original style of Lithuanian cinema characterised by slow, thoughtful narrative, poetic metaphors, and the evocative plasticity of monochrome. Of course, the rise of Lithuanian cinema coincided with the easing of the political system, the so-called "thawing". The 1970s was the heyday of cinema in Russia and the other Soviet republics, but Lithuanian, as well as Georgian, cinema stood out even in this bright spectrum, and more than once garnered acclaim at festivals held in the Baltic States, in the Soviet Union, and internationally. It was not a free expression of creativity. Cinema, as a collective and financially and ideologically dependant art, had to fight against censorship and the ignorance of officials and learn to bypass certain obstacles by creating new, sometimes very sophisticated, authentication codes, although the audience could easily comprehend them. For them, this art form was emotionally close, appealing to their common identity.

The pioneering film of Lithuanian cinema was Vytautas Žalakevičius' *Adomas nori būti žmogumi*



Inga Mickytė. A shot from A. Žebriūnas' *Gražuolė (The Beauty)*. Source: Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum.

(*Adam Wants to be a Man*, 1959). However, the calling card for our cinema was the anthology film *Gyvieji didvyriai (Living Heroes)*, directors Marijonas Giedrys, Balys Bratkauskas, Arūnas Žebriūnas and Žalakevičius), which was created a year later and awarded the main prize at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. The individual sections of *Living Heroes*, uniting into a harmonious whole different creative styles and themes, foreshadowed the diversity in genre and stylistics in Lithuanian cinema.

The short film *Paskutinis šūvis (The Last Shot)*, which creates a broad portrait of a girl in a polka-dot dress and expresses the contraposition of the pure world of a child against an adult's harsh world, was expanded on by Žebriūnas in his films *Paskutinė atostogų diena (The Girl and the Echo)*, awarded the Grand Prize at the Cannes Youth Film Festival, the television film *Mirtis ir vyšnios medis (Death and the Cherry Tree)*, 1968), and somewhat differently in *Gražuolė (The Beauty)*, 1969). The conflictive temperament

of Vytautas Žalakevičius and his talent as a cinematic playwright are reflected in the publicistic pathos and innovative form of *Vienos dienos kronika (One-Day Chronicle)*, 1963). In his most famous film, *Niekas nenorėjo mirti (Nobody Wanted to Die)*, 1965), Žalakevičius searched for an artistic generalisation of the post-war period, utilising the structure of a metaphorical epic ballad. Understandably, this was a glimpse not from the "perspective of the forest". Therefore, once Lithuania regained its independence, the film was sharply, but straightforwardly criticised. However, for the viewers of the time, *Nobody Wanted to Die* imagined the recent history that people had previously feared to even speak about.

In a historically and psychologically convincing manner, Raimondas Vabalas' *Laiptai į dangų (Stairway to Heaven)*, 1966), a film rich with stern realism and based on a novel by Mykolas Sluckis, revealed the post-war period. The film *Jausmai (Feelings)*, 1968), by directors Almantas Grikevičius and Algirdas Dausa, from the background of

historical upheaval, raises to the foreground the inner feelings of the characters. The film's rich atmosphere and multifaceted expressiveness was probably what drove its recognition as the best Lithuanian film as determined by film critics on the occasion of a century of cinema in 1995. Even today Griekvičius' talent to express complicated reflections on history only through visual associations in the documentary film *Laikas eina per miestą* (*Time Passes Through the City*, 1966) continues to fascinate.

Lithuanian cinematography was not abundant, but it was very diverse and ambitious. In the psychological drama, *Birželis, vasaros pradžia* (*June, the Beginning of Summer*, 1969) Vabalas, together with the writer Icchokas Meras, raised sensitive issues of social responsibility, while this director's perseverance in restoring the achievement of Darius and Girėnas in his film *Skrydis per Atlantą* (*Flight over the Atlantic*, 1983) was comparable to a civic feat, and the film was met with appreciation by audiences. The first and so far only historical epic film, *Herkus Mantas* (1972), was directed by Giedrys. Algirdas Araminas subtly explored the issues of a young person maturing in the films *Kai aš mažas buvau* (*When I Was a Child*, 1968) and *Maža išpažintis* (*A Small Confession*, 1971). Žebriūnas went in the direction of genre searching, and based on Kazys Boruta's novel *Baltaragio malūnas* (*Baltaragis'*

Mill) he created the stylish, still-popular musical *Velnio nuotaka* (*The Devil's Bride*, 1974) and the lyrical comedy *Riešutų duona* (*Walnut Bread*, 1977) based on a story by Saulius Šaltenis. Algimantas Puipa brought a breath of fresh air into Lithuanian cinema with his dramatic films *Velnio sėkla* (*The Devil's Seed*, 1979), *Moteris ir keturi jos vyrai* (*A Woman and Her Four Men*, 1983), and *Amžinoji šviesa* (*Eternal Light*, 1987), giving them a sense of the grotesque and paradoxical and stylistic deformation.

In 1965 the cinematographer Robertas Verba created a humble documentary with the symbolic title *Senis ir žemė* (*The Old Man and the Land*), which gave rise to a current of Lithuanian artistic documentary that continued for almost three decades. Its most important hero was a tenderly portrayed villager, while the most important theme was the connection with one's native land and inherited tradition and the cracking and systematic destruction of these bonds. If art in the conditions of captivity is a hidden form of resistance, than this feature was particularly represented by documentary films, which consistently captured the death of the traditional village and conveyed this social drama through a melancholic mood and visual symbols, sometimes speaking openly and sometimes simply poeticising old rural values. Among the many films using these poetic devices are such vivid

works as Verba's *Čiūtyta Rūta* (1968), *Šimtamečių godos* (*Centenarian Dreams*, 1969), and *Paskutinė vienkiemio vasara* (*The Farmstead's Last Summer*, 1971) and Henrikas Šablevičius' *Kelionė ūkų lankomis* (*Journey Through the Fields of Nebulas*, 1973), *Žiniuonė* (*Wise Woman*, 1975), and *Pabuvam savam lauki* (*We Were In Our Own Field*, 1988). Even during the years of independence this tradition was continued in the films of Diana and Kornelijus Matuzevičius, *Už slenksčio* (*Beyond the Threshold*, 1995) and *Laukimas* (*Waiting*, 1997). We can also find echoes of it in feature films as well: Gytis Lukšas' *Vasara baigiasi rudenį* (*Summer Ends in Autumn*, 1981); *Vakar ir visados* (*Yesterday and Always*, 1984), which was inspired by the poetry of Marcelijus Martinaitis; and the 2009 film adaptation of Romualdas Granauskas' novel *Duburys* (*Vortex*).

Naturally continuing the tradition of national cinema were also the first films created by the generation of directors in independent Lithuania: *Praėjusios dienos atminimui* (*In Memory of a Day Gone By*, 1989) by Šarūnas Bartas, *Dešimt minučių prieš Ikarą skrydį* (*Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus*, 1991) by Arūnas Matelis, *Neregių žemė* (*The Earth of the Blind*, 1992) by Audrius Stonys and *Rudens sniegas* (*Autumn Snow*, 1992) by Valdas Navasaitis. Their common features were visual associations containing multiple meanings, long takes, and internal emotional intensity. But

in their voice this cinema was already different, distancing itself from the so-called objective reality, sharing an author's expression, and conveying an individual's worldview. Although the new Lithuanian cinema was not engaged socially, the melancholy of irreversibility that encased it, the feeling of degradation, the weathering that pervades the image, reflected its own time and revealed the worldview of the socially fractured generation. The individualism of creation in part was driven by the fact that cinema was not systematically supported by the state and ended up at the fringes of cultural policy. Along with independence, almost all of the well-known cinematic masters had to withdraw from active work, while the younger generation learned to create films by producing them, founding studios, searching for foreign partners, etc. According to Stonys, cinema in Lithuania is created through blood and many compromises. Lithuanian cinema survived with the help of its artistic quality and international recognition. The pure visual suggestion of Bartas' films *Trys dienos* (*Three Days*, 1991), *Koridorius* (*The Corridor*, 1995), *Mūsų nedaug* (*Few of Us*, 1996), *Namai* (*The House*, 1997), and *Laisvė* (*Freedom*, 2000) became a synonym for Lithuanian cinema abroad, although they were often filmed outside Lithuania with the help of French and Portuguese producers. Stonys' 1992 film *Neregių žemė* was awarded the Felix Prize as the best European documentary



Antanas Šurna. Shots from M. Giedrys' *Herkus Mantas*. Source: Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum.



Remigijus Sabulis. Shots from R. Vabalas' *Skrydis per Atlantą* (*Flight over the Atlantic*). Source: Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum.

film. Matelis' touching film about the little patients in the leukaemia ward at Santariškės Children's Hospital, *Prieš parsikrendant į žemę (Before Flying Back to Earth, 2005)*, earned multiple awards at international film festivals, and in 2007 the director was honoured with a Directors Guild of America Award for artistic achievements in documentary cinema.

The high artistic status of Lithuanian cinema is affirmed by the National Cultural and Artistic Awards presented to Bartas, Stonys and Matelis. Despite difficulties with financing, it remains creative and varied. A personal cinematic chronicle is continuously being created by Romas Lileikis, various aspects of social isolation are explored by Kristijonas Vildžiūnas, Giedrė Beinoriūtė explores various genres of cinema, and more and more young filmmakers are making their debuts. Animated films, pioneered by Zenonas Šteinys and Ilja Bereznickas, almost did not have the conditions to allow them to develop further, but the debut film of Vilnius Academy

of Arts graduate Reda Bartkutė Tomingas, *Kaltė (Guilt, 2013)*, was the first Lithuanian film invited to participate in the Annecy International Animated Film Festival. The Berlin Film Festival's Panorama Programme in 2011 began with the debut of anthropologist Mantas Kvedaravičius: a film about the Chechen tragedy, *Barzakh*, the creation of which was supported by the famous Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki. The artistic identity of Lithuanian cinema is beautifully described in these words by Matelis: "Our films come from similar homes: from not speaking, the growth of silence. In films one can feel the shared experiences of us all. Few can understand our feelings, for example, regarding January 13th. But even the most banal song that was heard in those days can unite us. We are from another island. You can neither run nor not run from it. In our experience, there have been moments that are important and meaningful for only us. And those moments will be the cause of an intangible commonality of sight or silence."

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1895	The first private screening of projected motion pictures was held by brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière in Paris in 1895. Léon Gaumont's film company Comptoir général de Photographie was founded.		
1896	One of the earliest films by the T.A. Edison film company – William Heise's <i>John C. Rice-May Irwin Kiss</i> brought the first demand for film censorship. The Pathé-Frères Company was founded by Charles Pathé.		
1897		The first screening of projected motion pictures by brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière took place in the Bernardine Garden in Vilnius.	
1898			Publication of Vincas Kudirka's poem <i>Tautiška giesmė (The National Hymn)</i> , which later became the national anthem, in the newspaper <i>Varpas</i> .
1899	The Vitagraph Company of America was founded.		Publication of the translation by Vincas Kudirka of the 3-scene drama <i>Dziady (Forefathers' Eve) (Part 3)</i> by Adam Mickiewicz in the newspaper <i>Varpas</i> . The first public performance of <i>Amerika pirtyje (America in the Bath)</i> was staged in the Lithuanian language in Palanga.
1900	James Williamson's film <i>Attack on a China Mission</i> . George Albert Smith's <i>Grandma's Reading Glass</i> , one of most famous films of the Brighton School.		Publication of Juliusz Słowacki's drama <i>Mindowe. Król litewski: Obraz historyczny w pięciu aktach (Mindaugas. The King of Lithuania)</i> (translated by Vincas Kudirka).
1901	James Williamson's film <i>The Big Swallow</i> .		Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis' symphonic poem <i>Miške (In the Forest)</i> . Publication of <i>Lietuviškos kalbos gramatika (Lithuanian Grammar)</i> by Jonas Jablonskis in Tilsit.
1902	International success of Georges Méliès' film <i>Le Voyage dans la Lune (A Trip to the Moon)</i> .		
1903	Edwin S. Porter's film <i>The Great Train Robbery</i> .		Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis painted the series of paintings <i>Laidotuvijų simfonija (Funeral Symphony)</i> .
1904	Robert W. Paul's film <i>An Extraordinary Cab Accident</i> .		Publication of the first Lithuanian language daily <i>Vilniaus žinios (Vilnius News)</i> in Vilnius (published until 1909). The ban on publications in the Latin script was withdrawn (May 7).
1905	The premier of the first Italian film <i>La presa di Roma (The Capture of Rome)</i> , director Fileteo Alberini.	The first permanent cinema buildings were erected in Vilnius and Kaunas. Up to 30 cinemas were built before 1914.	The Great Seimas of Vilnius (December 4–5).

Feature Film after 1990: Generation Change, New Aspects and Challenges

By Renata Šukaitytė

Together with its Baltic neighbours Latvia and Estonia, Lithuanian film production is one of the world's most modest. It rose to international prominence in the early 90s with a new identity, which was distinguished and defined by art cinema works. 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 and Janina Lapinskaitė) and those who debuted during the period of political and economic transition in the late eighties and early nineties (such as Šarūnas Bartas, Valdas Navasaitis, Romas Lileikis and Audrius Juzėnas).

In the 90s the films of Šarūnas Bartas (*Trys dienos* [*Three Days*, 1991], *Koridorius* [*Corridor*, 1995], and *Mūsų nedaug* [*Few of Us*, 1996]) and Valdas Navasaitis (*Kiemas* [*Courtyard*, 1999]) became a marker of Lithuanian **cinematic auteurism**, which has been synonymous with the extremes of the art cinema style (long takes, fragmentary narrative, minimalist acting, and the 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.). The early works, as well as more recent films, namely *Laisvė* (*Freedom*, 2000), *Septyni nematomi žmonės* (*Seven Invisible Men*, 2005), and *Eurazijos aborigentas* (*Eastern Drift*, 2010) by Bartas and *Perpetuum Mobile* (2008) by Valdas Navasaitis, which already contain some genre film elements (i.e. crime drama and road movie) are instantly recognisable for long takes and fluid, sometimes sinuous, camera movement; picturesque sets and ambient

sound design; contrasting urban and countryside settings; and de-dramatised narrative structure and slow camera movements attuned to the traumatic experiences of disaffected, alienated, insular, and existentially damaged protagonists facing up to the new reality (the transition from the Soviet to the capitalist system) and dealing with traumatic memories from the Soviet past, which often feels like a slowly emerging apocalypse.

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 **historical films** came to prominence in the national cinema through the thoroughly personalised cinematic form, which was used as a certain vehicle for filmmakers' 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 and reveals the gradual degradation of Soviet citizens, both the colonised (the Lithuanians) and the colonisers (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 and 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



A shot from Š. Bartas' *Laisvė* (*Freedom*).

filmmakers, such as Jonas Vaitkus (*Vienui vieni* [*Utterly Alone*, 2004]), Kristijonas Vildžiūnas (*Kai apkabinsiu tave* [*Back to Your Arms*, 2010]), and Audrius Juzėnas (*Ekskursantė* [*The Excursionist*, 2013]) are more explicit in dealing with historical issues in their films and focus on personal rather than collective dramas in their highly visual and emotional cinematic works.

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 that 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 written by Balys Sruoga; *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; and 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



Elžbieta Latėnaitė. A shot from K. Vildžiūnas' *Kai apkabinsiu tave* (*Back to Your Arms*).

example, in 2005 the feature film *Forest of the Gods* climbed to the top of the domestic box office (186,372 euros) and was viewed by approximately 70,917 cinemagoers, while *Tadas Blinda. The Legend is Born* broke all records for attendance in Lithuania in 2011, surpassing even the American blockbuster *Avatar* and garnering a box office of over 1 million euros.

Recent Lithuanian cinema, especially the films made by younger filmmakers, has become increasingly preoccupied with adapting and experimenting with **generic templates** borrowed from Hollywood cinematic models and Western popular cinema. However, these films incorporate not only 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 appeal to a young audience, and to 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.) have suddenly occupied the Lithuanian screen. Very visibly in

the films of the 2000s, the city and urbanity 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, the criminal drama *Perpetuum Mobile (2008)* by Valdas Navasaitis, the psychological drama *Kolekcionierė (The Collectress, 2008)* by Kristina Buožytė, *Nereikalingi žmonės (Loss, 2008)* by Maris Martinsons, the sci-fi melodrama in Saulius Drunga's directorial debut feature *Anarchija Žirmūnuose (Anarchy in Žirmūnai, 2010)* and Kristina Buožytė's *Aurora (Vanishing Waves, 2012)*, the musical drama *Narcizas (Narcissus, 2012)* by Dovilė Gasiūnaitė, and *Lošėjas (The Gambler, 2014)* by Ignas Jonynas are marked with an attempt to visualise the city in what 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 the transnational collaborative practices of the local cinema, it is becoming more internationalised and successful in attracting

international funders, promoters, and audiences. International collaboration is getting more important in producing features with higher production value and easier access to international markets. Among the most successful recent international co-productions are *Back to Your Arms*, directed by Kristijonas Vildžiūnas and coproduced by Studio Uljana Kim (Lithuania), Studio TOR (Poland), and Studio Pola Pandora Film (Germany); *Eastern Drift*, directed by Šarūnas Bartas and coproduced by Kino Bez Granits (Russia), Lazennec Films (France), and Studio Kinema (Lithuania), and which premiered at the Berlinale Berlin International Film Festival in 2009; *Vanishing Waves*, jointly made by Temora (Lithuania) and Acajou Films (France) and internationally premiered at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2012; Emilis Vėlyvis' *Redirected!* (2014), which was coproduced by Kinokultas (Lithuania) and Wellington Films (UK) became a national hit, and in one month earned more than 1 million euros; and Alantė Kavaitė's *Sangailės vasara (The Summer of Sangailė, 2014)*, a coproduction of Fralita Films (Lithuania), Les Films d'Antoine (France), and Viking Film (Netherlands), which was selected to the programmes of prestigious film festivals such as Sundance and Berlinale.

The internationalisation of the Lithuanian film industry has 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 *Aš esi tu [You am I, director Vildžiūnas]* in 2006), the Berlin Film Festival (*Eastern Drift* in 2010 and *The Summer of Sangailė* in 2015), the Montreal World Film Festival (*Loss* in 2008 and *Vortex* in 2009), the International Film Festival Rotterdam (*You am I* in 2007 and *Perpetuum Mobile* in 2008), the Cairo International Film Festival, (*Perpetuum Mobile* in 2008 and *Loss* in 2008), the Shanghai Film Festival (*Loss* in 2008), the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (*A Land of Glass* in 2005, *The Collectress* in 2009, *The Low Lights* in 2009, and *Vanishing Waves* in 2012), the Edinburgh International Film Festival (*The Vortex* in 2009), the Palm Springs International Film Festival (*Vortex* in 2009 and *The Loss* in 2009), and the San Sebastian International Film festival (*The Gambler* in 2014).

To sum up, since the 90s, Lithuanian filmmakers have continued to tread a cinematic path between extreme auteurist films like Bartas' *Freedom* and *Eastern Drift*, which easily gain international visibility, and on the other hand, the so called audience film by producing best-selling literary adaptations like *Fortress of the Sleeping Butterflies* or black comedies like *Redirected*, which have pulling power at the box office.



Julija Steponaitytė and Aistė Diržiūtė. A shot from A. Kavaitė's *Sangailės vasara (The Summer of Sangailė)*.



Povilas Budrys and Jurga Kalvaitytė. A shot from J. Lapinskaitė's *Stiklo šalis (A Land of Glass)*.



Giedrius Kiela and Oksana Borbat. A shot from G. Lukšas' *Duburys (Vortex)*.



Vytautas Kaniušonis. A shot from I. Jonynas' *Lošėjas (The Gambler)*.

Raimundas Banionis:

Film Plots Dictated by Reality



Raimundas Banionis.
Photo by Evgenija Levin.

You created full-length features for over a decade (1980–1992). This was a period of important historical changes for Lithuania, when Sąjūdis (the reform movement of Lithuania) took shape and the aspirations for independence strengthened. Although indirectly, this atmosphere is reflected in your films. So could the censorship of films finally be disregarded?

The film *Neatmenu tavo veido* (*I Don't Remember Your Face*) already reflected changes in the mood, because the rallies of the Sąjūdis movement had started that year in Vingis Park. I took this film to Romania, a very interesting country that at the time was at odds with America, Israel and the Soviet Union. When I returned to Lithuania around 1988, just before shooting *The Children from Hotel America*, I was invited to speak to a person from the state security. I thought that maybe they were interested in what things were like in Romania. I told them my experience as a tourist. The man calmly listened and then asked, "And how about at your film studio? Who is saying what?" Realising that they were trying to recruit me, I angrily said, "So, you want me to squeal on people?" You can imagine where I would have gone had I said those words 30 years earlier. However, before saying good-bye he just wrote his name, Kostas, and his phone number.

Raimundas Banionis was born into the family of theatre actors Donatas and Ona Banionis. Since his first feature films Greitis mano dievas (Speed is my God) and Mano mažytė žmona (My Little Wife), he has worked with young Lithuanian actors and chosen themes concerned with youth. Released in 1990, his film Vaikai iš "Amerikos" viešbučio (The Children from Hotel America) marked the beginning of the independent Lithuanian cinema.

I used this phone number only once: in my film *The Children from Hotel America*. There was a scene where Kostas (played by Arūnas Sakalauskas) was interrogating Jagger (played by Augustas Šavelis), and then after threatening him, Kostas tells Jagger to call him if he remembers anything about his friends. *The Children from Hotel America* was the first independent film. Moscow allocated money for it, but it no longer controlled the production. We filmed it in 1990 when the Soviet Union announced its blockade of Lithuania. We were going from Vilnius to Klaipėda and came across only two cars on our way. There was no fuel. We needed a helicopter, so we hired it in Latvia, because they still had some fuel left. Although we did not have the money, our enthusiasm was overflowing. We filmed in the summer and half a year later, in February, the film premiered in a fully packed cinema.

The introductory credits of *The Children from Hotel America* read "Kaunas 1972". This was the year of the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta in Kaunas. Did this event affect the worldview and thinking not only of the heroes of the film, but also of your generation?

I believe so. I called my generation the "shaved off" generation. After Kalanta's self-immolation,

things changed. Modris Tenisons, the legendary founder of the Kaunas Pantomime Group and Latvian film director and artist, was thrown out of Lithuania. Prominent theatre director Jonas Jurašas was in two years' time forced to emigrate. And the editor of *Nemunas*, an advanced, non-ideological magazine, was replaced. The police tried to catch us in the seaside town of Palanga for having long hair and wearing jeans; this continued throughout the summer. We would go to a dancing place laid out in front of Tyszkiewicz Palace in Palanga, and there they were waiting for us: policemen with dogs. It was a different epoch that broke a lot of people. There was a longhaired guy in Kaunas, totally innocent, had nothing to do with hippies. After the events in May, one day he joined us and we noticed he had short hair. We asked, "Juozukas, did they shave you too?" "No, I did it myself" was the reply.

So was the plot for *The Children from Hotel America* dictated by reality?

Yes it was. Kalanta set himself on fire on 14 May, and five days later there was an amateur film festival for schoolchildren in Kaunas. My father did not want to allow me to go, but I went. I remember walking around Kaunas, it was a warm spring day and there was no trace of the riots. The city was clean, beautiful and tidy. Someone was washing Lenin's head (a monument – editor's note) and there was nothing else there. We learned

from rumours what had happened. It was a very strong impetus for my generation and led to people taking interest in the history of Lithuania and its national symbols and formed a perception of freedom. Before that an independent state was something well in the past and we knew little about it. All of a sudden these things became relevant. So the film emerged as a story of my generation. I wrote the script together with my course mate Maciej Drygas in 1988–1989. At that time I also completed the documentary film *Fontano vaikiai* (*The Fountain Children*). The witnesses who were still alive talked about their experiences.

The film *The Children from Hotel America* also talks about freedom. Interestingly enough, it has remained very highly watched to this day. My colleague Artūras Jevdokimovas presented the film in Latvia, Croatia, and last year in the Czech Republic. Now I have an invitation to go to California. The film continues to live because it talks about what was prohibited by the Soviets. They prohibited basic innate human freedoms: to listen to and say what you want and to live where you want. And also to believe what you are saying and to say what you are believing. After all the practice was to say one thing and to do something totally different. Andrei Tarkovsky liked to say that beauty would save the world. It's absolutely clear to me that only tolerance can save it. Once we stop destroying people or suppressing them



Augustas Šavelis and Gabija Jaraminaitė. Shots from R. Banionis' *Vaikiai iš "Amerikos" viešbučio* (*The Children from Hotel America*).

because they think or speak differently, and these people stop hitting back for suppressing them, we will start to live better. In the times of theatre director Juozas Miltinis, it was most important that after the stage performance you would start to think about the man and the meaning of his life. Now I often see a circus on the stage or in the cinema, yet people say – he acted well and he acted badly; the music was good or the music was bad. Art has lost its original, inherent meaning.

Interviewed by Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Greitis – mano dievas (Speed Is My God, 1979, short fiction, 30 min., 35 mm, colour)

Mano mažytė žmona (My Little Wife, 1985, feature, 75 min., 35 mm, colour)

Šešiolikmečiai (Sixteens, 1986, feature, 200 min., 35 mm, colour)

Neatmenu tavo veido (I Don't Remember Your Face, 1988, feature, 81 min., 35 mm, colour)

Fontano vaikai (Fountain Children, 1988, short documentary, 20 min., 35mm, colour)

Vaikai iš "Amerikos" viešbučio (Children From the Hotel America, 1990, feature, 93 min., 35 mm, colour)

Džiazas (Jazz, 1992, feature, 90 min., 35 mm, colour)

Adomas Mickevičius 1798-1855. Realybės versijos (Adam Mickiewicz 1798-1855. Versions Of Reality, 1998, documentary, 40 min., Beta CAM, colour)

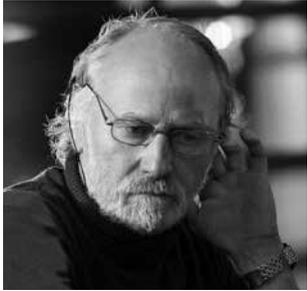
Juozas Miltinis. Nežinomas interviu (Juozas Miltinis. An Unknown Interview, 2000, documentary, 40 min., Beta CAM, colour)

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1906			The first Lithuanian opera <i>Birutė</i> was staged.
1907			The Lithuanian Scientific Society was founded. Publication of the social, political and cultural newspaper <i>Viltis (Hope)</i> in Vilnius (published until 1915). The first exhibition by Lithuanian artists was opened in Vilnius. The first Congress of Lithuanian Women took place in Kaunas.
1908	The premier of the first Russian feature film <i>Stenka Razin</i> (director Vladimir Romashkov). André Calmette and Charles de Barguy's film <i>L'Assassinat du duc de Guise</i> (<i>The Assassination of the Duke de Guise</i>) presented by Film d'Art. The first international success of Italian cinema – Arturo Ambrosio and Luigi Maggi's film <i>Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei</i> (<i>Last Days of Pompei</i>). Pathe Studio was the first in the world to begin the cinema newsreel <i>Pathé-Journal</i> .		
1909	D.W. Griffith became the principal director of the Biograph Studio.	Władysław Starewicz from Kaunas shot <i>Nad Niemnem (Beyond the River Nemunas)</i> . Antanas Račiūnas arrived in Lithuania from the USA to shoot images of the country.	Publication of the first translation of Adam Mickiewicz's <i>Sonety krymskie (The Crimean Sonnets)</i> (translated by Motiejus Gustaitis).
1910	Urban Gad's film <i>Afgrunden (The Abyss)</i> with Asta Nielsen. Filmmakers start moving to Hollywood.	Władysław Starewicz made the first model animation film <i>Walka żuków (The Battle of the Stag Beetles)</i> in Kaunas.	
1911	<i>Aleksandr Khanzhonkov</i> created the first full-length Russian film <i>Oborona Sevastopolya (Defence of Sevastopol)</i> .		Kazimieras Būga published a study entitled <i>Apie lietuvių asmens vardus (Lithuanian Personal Names)</i> .
1912	Mack Sennett set up the Keystone Film Company in California. Thanks to the studio, such comic performers as Mabel Normand and Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle came to fame. Carl Laemmle founded Universal Pictures.		
1913	Production of one of the most popular series, Louis Feuillade's <i>Fantômas</i> . Stellan Rye and Paul Wegener's film <i>Der Student von Prag (The Student of Prague)</i> . Yevgeny Bauer's film <i>Sumerki zhenskoi dushi (Twilight of a Woman's Soul)</i> .		Publication of the first Lithuanian literature and art magazine <i>Vaivorykštė</i> (published until 1914).
1914	Vaudeville actor and pantomimist Charles Chaplin started his career in film. Giovanni Pastrone's (Italy) film <i>Cabiria</i> , a prototype of all spectacular and monumental epic films. Paramount Pictures and Fox Films were founded in the USA.		

Algimantas Puipa:

My Work Starts Where the Novel Ends



Algimantas Puipa.
Photo by Kristina Sereikaitė.

You are by far the most prolific Lithuanian film director. What has helped you to retain your creative energy for such a long time and to generate new ideas?

When making films, I use literary works, although these aren't screen adaptations. A literary work is perhaps more like a map for the film and supplements the shortage of scripts. I read a lot of literature. Sometimes, after a while, images I've read about come back to me and I understand that the text is calling to me. If the idea happens to coincide with my idea, I start to interpret. My work starts where the novel ends.

How did this "addiction" to literature start?

By coincidence, I got to know Vytautas Žalakevičius, one of the most prominent figures in Lithuanian cinema. He wrote the script for the film *Velnio sėkla* (*The Devil's Seed*), based on the works of the Lithuanian writer Petras Cvirka. Of course, there is an unwritten rule that literature and cinema are two completely different genres. Literature often defeats cinema, because the book can convey thoughts in a much more interesting and compelling way than do the tools available in cinematography. Moreover, each reader creates his own image of the text and it becomes difficult

Puipa is one of the most famous Lithuanian film directors who generally uses Lithuanian classical and contemporary literature for his films. The filmmaker has over 20 films in his portfolio and has won numerous awards at international film festivals and competitions. With a creative biography spanning over four decades, Puipa remains an intriguing film director able to convey the original relative world.

to accept a different version of the same text. Stanley Kubrick said that the most important thing was to break the code of the book. Then you become free and can work with the book as a personal piece of work.

When does the dialogue with the writer start? What is the relationship with the writer and to what extent do you take the wishes of the writer into consideration?

I have worked with writers who were also authors of the script. On the one hand, it's nice and makes life a lot easier when you don't have to worry about how to create a screenplay yourself. But there are moments when, inevitably, you start to argue. For example when shooting *Amžinoji šviesa* (*Eternal Light*), writer Rimantas Šavelis kept repeating, "Trust my literature. Why don't you respect it?" to which I used to reply, "In literature there could be an image, which in the film may look highly didactic. For example, I can't cut up the bells at the end as you wrote." When making *Ir ten krantai smėlėti* (*Over There the Shores Are Sandy*), I did not communicate with Juozas Aputis, on whose works I relied. After watching my film, he said, "I've written so many stories that I don't remember half of those used in the film". There is a perpetual conflict between filmmakers and



Janina Lapinskaitė. A shot from A. Puipa's *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* (*The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies*).

writers. I admired the cooperation between film director Krzysztof Kieślowski and screenwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz. But I, however, haven't found anybody with whom I could venture on a lifetime travel to that world of fantasy.

Your films *Nuodėmės užkalbėjimas* (*Whisper of Sin*) and *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* (*The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies*) based on Jurga Ivanauskaitė's works contain erotic motifs. Do you think cinema is capable of revealing the nature of physical senses?

In global cinema many authors have proved that cinema has huge potential for revealing those senses. Take, for example, the outrageous Lars von Trier. With each new film he is still looking for a new letter in the alphabet of cinema. Meanwhile Michael Haneke successfully explores the inner world and the stream of the subconscious. Anyhow, those who are in the forefront regularly prove that cinema has numerous means of expression. When we had to film erotic scenes, there were many problems.

There were negotiations regarding each centimetre of the naked body. In *Whisper of Sin*, there was quite a lot of open eroticism, because that was what the book called for. Since I did not have experience in the field, I kept reinventing the bike.

How important is the search for your own style to you?

I would assign myself to the proponents of the visual narrative. When I start thinking about the film, I check out many photographs and art books and seek inspiration there. I always think about who my cameraman will be. Sometimes it is enough to show several reproductions to the cameraman and I don't have to look through the lens of the camera again, because he has already understood the basic principles of the composition.

That's why there is a great focus on visual presentation in your films?

Yes, the cameraman's opinion is important to me.

The cameraman is my eyes and the soul of the film. I find it interesting to work with Rimantas Juodvalkis (*Eternal Light*, *Bilietas iki Tadž Mahalo* [*Ticket to the Taj Mahal*], and *Over there the Shores are Sandy*). Viktoras Radzevičius changed my style, which I first envisaged in my TV film *Žaibo nušviesti* (*In the Light of Thunderbolt*), and gave it a “soft” image; in *Vilko dantų karoliai* (*A Wolf Teeth Necklace*) he outright dominated. There was one frame in *A Wolf Teeth Necklace* that was just like a painting. Then Wiktor Grodecki, one of the most controversial Polish directors who had worked for a long time in Hollywood, noticed Viktoras. Now they are inseparable friends. I have been cooperating with Viktoras for twenty-six years now.

You depict women vividly in your films. What is fascinating about the woman’s world?

The roots for this are in *The Devil’s Seed*. In his script Žalakevičius was masterful in crafting the main characters. Morta was played by Eugenija Pleškytė, who later admitted that, after her part as Kotryna in Marijonas Giedrys’ play *Herkus Mantas*, this was one of her most beloved and strongest parts in cinema. I became interested in the woman’s world, because it’s not familiar to me. I have no insight into it. I collaborated with Žalakevičius in *Moteris ir keturi jos vyrai* (*A Woman and Her Four Men*). It was he who

suggested this novel and the main character was again a woman. The Lithuanian cinema of the Soviet era was dominated by men, again, not without the help of Žalakevičius. And it just happened to me that the literary adaptations I wanted to make contained that dramatic male-female conflict that helped new actresses to be discovered or gave them a dominant part.

You have touched on the post-war theme in your early films *Eternal Light* and *Ticket to the Taj Mahal*. Later, you dropped it, although many film directors successfully exploited it. Why did you do that?

Back in the Soviet era, following the release of Žalakevičius’ film *Niekas nenorėjo mirti* (*Nobody Wanted to Die*), the post-war theme started dominating. There was hardly a director who would not explore this topic. My films appeared in independent Lithuania. I did not use state support in producing *Ticket to the Taj Mahal* and I was therefore completely free. I remember when Werner Herzog saw this film in Munich he said that it was the most beautiful film he’d seen that year. For me, this was the highest recognition. I realised that in spite of an autonomous subject, these signs are understood by others too. *Eternal Light* won the Grand Prix at the San Remo Film Festival in Italy. Even though we talked about specific things, the form in which they were presented was universal. Over time, I became interested in other themes, new ideas emerged.

Currently you are working on your latest film *Edeno sodas* (*The Garden of Eden*). The action of the film transposes us into a prosperous future Lithuania, where all the wealthy emigrants return to their homeland to die. What inspired these future predictions?

It is a delicate utopia depicted by writer Janina Survilaitė in her novels *Vila Edelveisas* (*Villa Edelweiss*) and *Pašnekesiai su Helvecija* (*Conversation with Helvetia*). Originally I wanted to specify the year in which the action takes place, namely 2025. Then I would be the same age as my protagonists. But I dropped the date and stuck to a more abstract time for the painful joys of

old age and the fragility of existence to unfold. I was thinking of shooting a funny film about old age and death, but then I realised that there was nothing funny in it. As a result, I turned to what is eternal and unchangeable. This is a sensitive topic or perhaps more a reflection on the passing of time that we cannot turn back.

Interviewed by Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- Kelio ženklai* (*Road Signs*, 1974, short fiction, 20 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Atpildo diena* (*The Day of Retribution*, 1975, feature, 76 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Nebūsiu gangsteris, brangioji* (*I Won’t Be a Gangster, My Dear*, 1978, feature, 75 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Velnio sėkla* (*Devil’s Seed*, 1979, feature, 69 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Arkliavagio duktė* (*A Horse–Thief’s Daughter*, 1981, feature, 80 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Moteris ir keturi jos vyrai* (*A Woman and Her Four Men*, 1983, feature, 91 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Elektroninė senelė* (*Electronic Grandmother*, 1986, feature, 63 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Amžinoji šviesa* (*Eternal Light*, 1987, feature, 89 min., 35 mm, b/w)
- Žuvies diena* (*Fish Day*, 1989, feature, 89 min., 35 mm, b/w)
- Bilietas iki Tadž Mahalo* (*Ticket to the Taj Mahal*, 1990, feature, 88 min., 35 mm, b/w)
- Ir ten krantai smėlėti* (*Over There the Shores Are Sandy*, 1991, feature, 89 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Procesas* (*Process*, 1994, feature, 136 min., Beta CAM, colour)
- Ašarų pakalnė* (*A Hill of Tears*, 1994, short feature, 54 min., Beta CAM, colour)
- Žaibo nušviesti* (*Hit by Lightning*, 1995, feature, 93 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Vilko dantų karoliai* (*A Wolf Teeth Necklace*, 1997, feature, 97 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Elzė iš Gilijos* (*Elze’s Life*, 2000, feature, 129 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Trys mylimos, arba Paskutinė diena* (*Three Beloved or The Last Day*), 2002, short feature, 40 min., video, colour)
- Dievų miškas* (*Forest of the Gods*, 2005, feature, 110 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Nuodėmės užkalbėjimas* (*Whisper of Sin*, 2007, feature, 98 min., 35 mm, colour)
- Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* (*The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies*, 2011, feature, 120 min., 35 mm, colour)



A shot from A. Puipa’s *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* (*The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies*).

Gytis Lukšas:

I Measure My Life in Films



Gytis Lukšas.
Photo by J. Matonis.

Over the four decades of his creative career, film director Gytis Lukšas has created more than ten feature film adaptations of Lithuanian literary classics: *Virto ąžuolai* (When the Oaks Fell), *Mano vaikystės ruduo* (Autumn of My Childhood), *Vasara baigiasi rudenį* (Summer Ends with Autumn), *Žalčio žvilgsnis* (The Serpent's Gaze), *Žemės keleviai* (Pilgrims on Earth), *Mėnulio Lietuva* (Lunar Lithuania), *Dieviškoji šviesa* (Divine Light), *Duburys* (Vortex), etc. Lukšas is currently the president of the Lithuanian Union of Filmmakers.

You started your creative path in the 1970s, the period of Soviet ideology. Nevertheless, from your very first feature films, *Žvangutis* (*The Handbell*) and *Virto ąžuolai* (*When the Oaks Fell*), you emphasised Lithuanian national themes. Why?

In 1973, I released my debut, a comedy called *Telefonas* (*Telephone*), in the three-part feature film *Linksmos istorijos* (*Funny Stories*). This was the first Lithuanian film commissioned by Soviet Central Television. I remember how our famous filmmakers Arūnas Žebriūnas and Raimondas Vabalas laughed and said, “finally, a man who will make comedies has appeared in the Lithuanian film industry”. God, how wrong they were! I never became a creator of comedies. I was free to do what I wanted and what was dear to me. In 1982, at bleakest point of the Brezhnev era, I released *Summer Ends with Autumn*. In the film, bulldozers, like tanks, are destroying an old Lithuanian farmstead, a metaphor that is obvious even today. Two characters played by Algimantas Masiulis and Valentinas Masalskis are sitting on the edge of the ditch and singing: “But for the golden summers, but for the blue cornflowers”. This was a song sung by people being deported to Siberia. I was summoned to the KGB for that song. I was threatened and I was told that they could destroy my whole life in a day. But we’d

learned to fight against Soviet censorship. It was most important to me to talk about my land and the roots of my fathers and forefathers in my films.

How did Lithuanian literature, which has served as the basis for nearly all your film scripts, affect your creative work?

Most films are literary adaptations. It does not matter whether the film is made in Hollywood or in Europe; literature is the basis. When I read a book and I feel that I am shaking all over, because it resonates with something in my soul, I try to turn it into a film. This is how I created *Autumn of My Childhood* by Juozas Aputis or *Summer Ends with Autumn* and *Vortex* by Romualdas Granauskas. And all the writers whose works I brought to the screen, although they were older than me, sooner or later became my friends. Then we could no longer distinguish where the creative process ended and human communication in general started. Romualdas Granauskas, Juozas Aputis and Marcelijus Martinaitis, who are no longer with us, and Kazys Saja and Rimantas Šavelis, who still are, become my lifelong friends. That’s why they allow me to choose their works, because they trust me as a human being, because we see the world and understand life in a similar way.

In your films *Vortex*, *Lunar Lithuania*, *Vakar ir visados* (*Yesterday and Forever*), etc., you

reach back into the past, into Lithuanian villages and farms. Is this nostalgic gaze caused by the national literary tradition or the desire to capture what is inevitably disappearing?

I have no roots in a village and I’m not trying to produce anything specifically about villages. Maybe I find something real there, something that is disappearing like smoke. Each farm is like a miniature model of my life. A metaphor for the entire space we occupy. In my films I speak, however, from the present. I cannot reproduce the past accurately, so I talk about what is and must be important today. Is it easier to retain one’s own self or personality today or in the past? It is most important for me to reveal relationships between people and the development of those relationships. In any historical period, people fell in love with each other and desired happiness. The most dramatic stories can be conveyed through different tones. You don’t need special scenery or mass scenes; two people are all you need. I want to have time to understand them and reveal it. I want my greatest special effect to be the blink of the hero’s eyes.

How did you opt for the model of psychological realism based on classical dramaturgy and the strong inner conflicts of characters?



Dainius Kazlauskas and Antanas Šurna (sitting). A shot from G. Lukšas’ *Žalčio žvilgsnis* (*The Serpent’s Gaze*).

Time passed. I myself changed and increasingly wanted to discard any secondary elements from the frame. If it were my choice, I would not use any props or scenery. I find it interesting to focus on my characters as if peering at them through a microscope and seeing the structure of their cells. I tried to do this in my film *Vortex*. I discarded colours and used light differently from the way light had earlier been used in filmmaking. I said this to cameraman Viktoras Radzevičius: “Let the spotlight act as a scalpel or a narrow beam that illuminates only a certain part of the body or space”. In addition, shadows can sometimes be more effective than images. They are reminiscent of an etching technique in graphic arts. Then, there is a different way to arrange the composition of the frame, and the camera must be placed differently than usual.

Actors bear a great burden in your films. Nevertheless, they open up from an unexpected side, for example, as Algimantas Masiulis did in *Autumn of My Childhood* or Oksana Borbat in *Vortex*. What objectives must a director express for actors to discover themselves in a way they did not suspect they could?

Masiulis was already a recognised actor, when he played Teofilis in *Autumn of My Childhood*. Imagine the situation: a classic, one of the greatest theatrical actors and a star in films in Lithuania



Rimas Tuminas. A shot from G. Lukšas’ *Žalčio žvilgsnis* (*The Serpent’s Gaze*).

and Russia agrees to work with a young, still unknown director. He gave me wonderful lessons. And then suddenly, one night I had a call from Yalta where he was shooting a film. He said in an angry voice: “Do you know what you’ve done to me? Now I understand that I can play not only intellectual fascists. You have shown what I did not know I had”.

I love actors, and when I write a script, I know which actor I am writing it for. I hate screen tests of actors and try to avoid them. Actors helped me to discover myself. I am concerned not only with the outcome of the film, but also with the time spent together with actors and the sensitive people close to me. I measure my life in films. It is then that I am my true self. I could have been wrong or missed something, but what I did occupied my entire life.

You are the president of the Lithuanian Union of Filmmakers. What does this activity mean to you and what processes could you highlight as essential in the national film industry?

For me, this activity means the same thing as filmmaking. I care about the legislation about cinema and the centres that are established here. I have proposed guidelines for the establishment of a Lithuanian film centre and made proposals regarding the Law on Cinema. As for the processes, they are similar both in overall culture and in art. An increasing number of simulacra are appearing. I have never been against entertainment, but it must be professional and tasteful. Everything is turning into a one-day value and losing its essence in one day. The Soviet years gave birth to a Lithuanian school of cameramen (I mean the professionalism of our cameramen such as Jonas Gričius and Algimantas Mockus) and an entire group of the finest actors such as Algimantas Masiulis, Vytautas Tomkus, Bronius Babkauskas, Donatas Banionis, Gediminas Karka, Regimantas Adomaitis, and Juozas Budraitis. Looking at recent releases, I question what we’ll leave today to others. Of course, we have interesting young artists who produce fascinating documentaries and feature films. A generational change is taking

place; there are debut films by young directors who tell authentic stories.

Interviewed by Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Linksmos istorijos (Funny Stories), 1973, a novel *Telefonas (Telephone)*, feature, 79 min., 35mm, colour

Žvangutis (The Handbell), 1974, feature, 80 min., 35 mm, colour

Virto qžuolai (When the Oaks Fell), 1976, feature, 88 min., 35 mm, colour

Mano vaikystės ruduo (Autumn of My Childhood), 1977, feature, 76 min., 35 mm, colour

Vasara baigiasi rudenį (Summer Ends with Autumn), 1982, feature, 90 min., 35 mm, colour

Anglų valsas (Waltz), 1982, feature, 70 min., 35 mm, colour

Vakar ir visados (Yesterday and forever), 1984, feature, 63 min., 35 mm, colour

Žolės šaknys (Grass Roots), 1988, feature, 2 series, 35 mm, colour

Žalčio žvilgsnis (The Serpent’s Gaze), 1989, feature, 95 min., 35 mm, colour

Žemės keleiviai (Pilgrims on Earth), 1992, feature, 92 min., 35 mm, colour

Mėnulio Lietuva (Lunar Lithuania), 1997, feature, 100 min., 35 mm, colour

Dieviškoji šviesa (The Divine Light), 2005, documentary, 44 min., video, colour

Duburys (Vortex), 2009, feature, 140 min., 35 mm, b/w

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1915	David W. Griffith’s film <i>The Birth of a Nation</i> . Louis Feuillade’s <i>Les Vampires</i> (<i>The Vampires</i>) series.		Beginning of the German occupation. The first Lithuanian gymnasium was established in Vilnius.
1916	Victor Sjöström’s film <i>Terje Vigen (A Man There Was)</i> . Charles Chaplin’s film <i>The Tramp</i> . Yakov Protazanov’s film <i>Pikovaya dama (The Queen of Spades)</i> .		
1917	David W. Griffith’s film <i>Intolerance</i> . Vsevolod Meyerhold started work on the literary adaptation of Stanisław Przybyszewski’s <i>Mocny człowiek (A Strong Man)</i> .		
1918	Yakov Protazanov’s film <i>Otets Sergiy (Father Sergius)</i> was the highlight of the Russian pre-Revolution cinema.		Establishment of the independent state of Lithuania (February 16).
1919	David W. Griffith’s film <i>Broken Blossoms</i> . Abel Gance’s anti-war film <i>J’accuse</i> . Charles Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, David W. Griffith and Mary Pickford established United Artists Corporation.		Antanas Smetona was elected president of Lithuania. Women were granted the right to vote (women voted for the first time in 1920). Tautos teatras (The National Drama Theatre) was established in Kaunas.
1920	Robert Wiene’s film <i>Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari (The Cabinet of Dr Caligari)</i> gave a start to German Expressionism.	Production of Lithuanian newsreels started.	Suwałki Agreement with Poland was signed. Vilnius was taken by a unit of the Polish Army General Lucjan Żeligowski.
1921	The FEKS (the Factory of the Eccentric Actor) group was founded in St Petersburg. Victor Sjöström’s film <i>Körkarlen (The Phantom Carriage)</i> .		Publication of Jonas Basanavičius’ study <i>Apie trakų-prygy tautystę ir jų atsikėlimą Lietuvon (Regarding the National Origin of Trakai-prygai and Their Settlement in Lithuania)</i> . Lithuania joined the League of Nations.
1922	F.W. Murnau’s film <i>Nosferatu. Eine Symphonie des Grauens (Nosferatu. A Symphony of Horror)</i> featured the first vampire character. Robert Flaherty’s film <i>Nanook of the North</i> .		Lithuanian University (since 1930 – Vytautas Magnus University) was founded in Kaunas. Publication of the avant-garde manifesto <i>Keturių vėjų pranašas (Prophet of the Four Winds)</i> . Antanas Stulginskis was elected President of Lithuania. Adoption of the permanent Constitution of Lithuania. Adoption of the Land Reform Act (land was granted to about 65,000 poor and landless residents of Lithuanian).
1923	Cecil B. DeMille’s film <i>The Ten Commandments</i> . Abel Gance’s film <i>La Roue (The Wheel)</i> . Fernand Léger’s film <i>Ballet Mécanique (Mechanical Ballet)</i> .		Lithuania took over Klaipėda region.
1924	Erich von Stroheim’s film <i>Greed</i> . Sergei Eisenstein’s film <i>Oktyabr (October)</i> .	Publication of the film magazine <i>Apžvalga (Review)</i> .	The first Lithuanian Song Festival was held. Publication of the culture magazine <i>Židinys</i> (published until 1940).

Valdas Navasaitis:

Everything Is a Private Matter



Valdas Navasaitis.
Source: Studio Uļjana Kim.

Starting with *Autumn Snow*, all your films are a kind of a glimpse into the life cycle of humans. You associate it with the cycle in nature. You talk about the inevitability of life and death, autumn, winter and spring. Reality and the everyday routine that exist there outside the window are not your focus.

Well, after all, inevitability isn't marked with a minus sign. Cinema is a way of understanding the world. For some, the environment and the buzz have a major influence and change their philosophy. There are people, however, who are essentially unaffected by what is happening, it is of little importance to them. For example, the word *morality* has for the past seven years just been a cause of laughter for many. It has become a declarative concept. On the other hand, it's just funny – *public morality*. Morality is everyone's private matter. I call the buzz an imitation of life and joy. Those imitating and demonstrating are deceiving themselves. I don't respond to it at all.

Speaking about today's cinema in Lithuania, the issue of the spectator is often raised. Film directors are often reproached, at least behind the scenes, that they don't try at all to define or imagine the person to whom they address their films.

Let's remember that a while ago film production was a regulated process. After the restoration of

Valdas Navasaitis is the creator of such documentaries as Tofolarija (Tofolaria; co-production with Šarūnas Bartas), Rudens sniegas (Autumn Snow), Pavasaris (Spring), and Diapausis (Dia-Eared) and the feature films Kiemas (Courtyard) and Perpetuum Mobile. In 1999 Navasaitis founded his own film studio, VG Studio, where young directors created their films. Giedrė Beinoriūtė created her Troleibusų miestas (Trolleybus City) and Dovilė Gasiūnaitė made her short film Kas miega šalia tavęs (Who is Sleeping Next to You) in this studio.

independence in the country, conditions changed. There was the additional activity of finding funding for films. But this is a meat grinder. Relationships in the production process have changed. For the older generation of filmmakers, this transition both their hope and desire to do anything. Many are simply tired. In addition, today most film directors find it very difficult to admit that they are the same as everyone else. I would understand if it was actors who found this difficult. Directors should make an effort. And the exaggerated sensitivity towards one's own self can't help with living.

Does the concept of national film, in your opinion, have any substance in any sense? Can we talk about trends?

Although I have never studied at the Lithuanian film school, my films are presented as Lithuanian cinema. I don't know what it is today.

There are films made by several individuals and these can be recommended to anybody from any part of the world interested in the art of cinema. I doubt whether you have to attach the word *Lithuanian* to them. Just because these films, in terms of their cinematic language, are of high or world quality?

Life in cinema is not as intense as it is, for example, in the theatre. Therefore, many things may seem



A shot from V. Navasaitis' *Kiemas (Courtyard)*.

accidental. [...] In addition, it is not expected that everyone working in film industry produces at the top standard. After all, there are many theatre directors too, but there are few good stage performances. This is normal. In cinema, the opportunities are even fewer. It's hard for young people to start making films. But not everyone is aware that, if they have an opportunity to make a film, they have a great chance to actually test their profession. And if you don't grab that chance – everything is finished.

The situation can be illustrated by the following. When I was shooting *Courtyard*, it was reported in the professional magazine *Screen International*. The producer of the film in France immediately had about twenty calls from various film schools and institutes. The callers were asking for permission to come to the film set. Just to have the opportunity to see the process and to participate in it. The opportunities were, to put it mildly, limited, because everything was taking place in the Lithuanian language. But one Belgian managed to get to us and stayed with us for a month. There

was not a single student from Lithuania. They are all geniuses. Well, at least before they start making a film.

And yet, in your studio you work with young people. This means that there are young people who want to make films. You are



A shot from V. Navasaitis' *Perpetuum mobile*.
Photo by D. Matvejev.

doing your best to make sure that they make films, and finally you help them by assuming some responsibility.

Responsibility is really a strange feeling. I never get involved in any creative matters. I can give my opinion when I'm asked for advice, but not more. It's normal when people make mistakes. It's one thing to think about how you will work, it's quite another to work. It's very difficult to materialise your vision. There are many corrections and compromises to be made. When working on your first film, there are numerous questions. A person who is more sensitive and wiser will always be afraid. This is a good feeling, if, of course, it doesn't paralyse you. Then you must get to the bottom of the causes and act upon it, so that the person isn't afraid. This doesn't mean that you have to speak about films to such a person – there are many possible solutions to the problem. What is the true desire to make a film? I know that only when you really want to create a film, you start to have that fearsome feeling and doubt about whether you should proceed.

Interviewed by Rasa Paukštytė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Tofolarija (Tofalaria), 1986, co-directed with Šarūnas Bartas, short documentary, 16 min., 16 mm, b/w)

Rudens sniegas (Autumn Snow), 1992, short documentary, 16 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Pavasaris (Spring), 1997, short documentary, 20 min., 35 mm, colour)

Kiemas (Courtyard), 1999, feature, 90 min., 35 mm, colour)

Diapausis (Dia-Eared), 2000, short documentary, 16 min., DVCAM, colour)

Dviese ant tilto (Two on the Bridge), 2004, co-directed with Marius Ivaškevičius, short documentary, 25 min., video, colour)

Perpetuum mobile (2008, feature, 90 min., 35 mm, colour)

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1925	Sergei Eisenstein's film <i>Bronenosets Potyomkin (Battleship Potemkin)</i> . Charles Chaplin's film <i>The Gold Rush</i> .		Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Picture Gallery was opened in Kaunas.
1926	Fritz Lang's film <i>Metropolis</i> .	Film companies Akis and Lietfilm were founded.	Kazys Grinius was elected president of Lithuania. As the result of a coup d'état, Antanas Smetona became president of Lithuania.
1927	The first Alfred Hitchcock's film <i>The Lodger</i> . Buster Keaton's film <i>The General</i> . The first ceremony of the Academy Awards (the future Oscars) took place. The first "talkie" <i>The Jazz Singer</i> by Alan Crosland.	Short comedy <i>Gydytojas per prievartą (Shotgun Doctor)</i> (was never released or survived).	
1928	Carl Theodor Dreyer's <i>La passion de Jeanne d'Arc (The Passion of Joan of Arc)</i> .	Jurgis Linartas' short feature <i>Kareivis - Lietuvos gynėjas (Soldier - Defender of Lithuania)</i> (did not survive) commissioned by the General Staff. The film was released in 1931.	
1929	Dziga Vertov's film <i>Chelovek s kino-apparatom (Man With A Movie Camera)</i> . The first Luis Buñuel's film (made with Salvador Dali) <i>Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog)</i> – a surrealist manifesto.		
1930	Joseph von Sternberg's film <i>Der blaue Engel (The Blue Angel)</i> initiated the myth of Marlene Dietrich. Alexander Dovzhenko's film <i>Zemlya (Earth)</i> .		
1931	Fritz Lang's film <i>M (M)</i> . Bela Lugosi plays a vampire in 'Tod Browning' film <i>Dracula</i> .	Petras Malinauskas' short film <i>Sužeduotinis per prievartą (Shotgun Fiancé)</i> , (has not survived). Vladas Sipaitis' full-length feature <i>Jonukas ir Onutė</i> (has not survived). Publication of the weekly magazine <i>Kinas (Cinema)</i> (until 1932); in 1934 the publication was resumed as a biweekly magazine (until 1935), editor-in-chief Vytautas Alseika. It was resumed as a monthly in 1972 and as a quarterly from 1998.	Publication of the weekly cultural magazine <i>Naujoji Romuva</i> (published until 1940; publication resumed in 1994).
1932	Howard Hawks' film <i>Scarface</i> and William Wellman's <i>The Public Enemy</i> marked the beginning of the gangster film genre. The first film festival was held in Venice.	Cinemas were instructed to play Lithuanian newsreels before films – at least 330 metres of tape. <i>Naujoji Romuva</i> published the article "How to Prevent an Influx of German Films" signed P.A.K.	
1933	Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's film <i>King Kong</i> . Alexander Korda's film <i>The Private Life of Henry VIII</i> .		
1934	Directorial debut of Billy Wilder. Jean Vigo's film <i>L'Atalante</i> .	Petras Babickas' documentary <i>Tautos vado sukaktuvis (Anniversary of the Leader of the Nation)</i> .	

Audrius Juzėnas:

Evil Is Not an Abstraction; It Influences Our Destinies



Audrius Juzėnas.
Photo by Rūta Juzėniėnė.

The creative career of film director Audrius Juzėnas started with contemporary films: the fictional feature film Rojuje irgi sninga (It Also Snows in Paradise) and documentaries. The filmmaker earned international recognition with his recent feature-length films Vilniaus Gėtas (Ghetto) and Ekskursantė (The Excursionist), which reach back into the tragic moments of Lithuanian history in the 20th century. The films also raise the philosophical and moral issues of whether it is possible to resist evil and save humanistic ideals.

What drives you to explore the legacy of the 20th century and emphasize the conflict between ideals and reality?

When I think about it, I feel as if I were looking at myself straight through my image in the mirror. I don't always understand what I really see and I become anxious about the immeasurable gulf that lies there. As a result, there is a wish for something clear, secure and real. Ideals are the aggregate of human values and collective experience. With the help of ideals, we create bridges to the future and without ideals we are just a gang of ignorant monkeys with atomic clubs. Therefore, the collective experience and, in other words, an ideal or a myth referring to it is perhaps the most important signpost for the survival of humanity. After all, hope is all that remains. It's the same as the mirror in which you cannot see through yourself, but you can feel that your struggle is eternal. And there are neither victories nor defeats here.

The Excursionist is the first Lithuanian feature film about the mass deportations of people to Siberia. Nevertheless, the focus of the story is on a girl who managed to escape from a train with deportees. Why did you decide to focus specifically on

the dangerous journey of a teenager back to her homeland?

The topic of exile is complicated. I've seen many films by different filmmakers in which people are divided into executioners and victims. All the rest falls outside the framework of the genre. But then, the key element of the vitality of life is missing.

In *The Excursionist* our girl from the train with deportees is like a light in which the world is changing and shining with all the colours of the rainbow. She is more than just a deportee or the protagonist of the film. She is our collective experience, our pursuit of meaning, our common denominator, and the whole of Lithuania. Her story is all our experiences in which human ideals and the efforts of the many – scriptwriters, producers, actors, film crew, director, film critics, film experts, and viewers – intertwine. If any one of them is missing, the pyramid of our collective experience will collapse and so will any meaning. Without her, we are just pitiful fellow travellers from Marija's train with deportees.

The screenwriter of the film, Pranas Morkus, relied on documentary material. Because the film is not an accurate reconstruction of historical events,

what impact did this material have on the storyline?

Pranas Morkus is a very specific and disciplined playwright. Everything he creates is a real reflection of reality or inspiration. It is sometimes hidden behind the symbols, between the lines in dialogues, or just in the atmosphere. *The Excursionist* conveys the story of a genuine refugee. Cinema, however, is more than just cognitive educational reality. It is actually a hybrid reality or projection that changes into a personal experience. Therefore, sometimes, in order to achieve their objective, screenwriters can express far more through artistic reality than people or the story that has inspired it. The protagonist created by Morkus is no exception. She is not devoid of certain "artistic" digressions; I mean the surreal dreams, which can hardly be replicated, but this works well as an artistic tool within the framework of a given work.

Russian film stars Raisa Ryazanova, Kseniya Rapoport and Sergey Garmash played memorable parts in *The Excursionist*. How and why did you choose these actors and what is special about the Russian school of acting?

Lithuanians are not Russians. The screen does not lie, you cannot deceive the viewer or yourself, and neither tricks nor costumes or makeup will help. Movements, manners and gaze differ. A



Anastasija Marėenkaitė. A shot from A. Juzėnas' *Ekskursantė* (*The Excursionist*). Photo by Rūta Juzėniėnė.

different soul is looking at you both in life and from the screen. You cannot mistake Russians even in cosmopolitan Hollywood films. What is real should be real if you are telling a true story; otherwise lies have short legs. Therefore, Russian actors came to play in a Lithuanian film. They have seen and experienced a lot, and they are talented and lively. They turn the post-war period, the times of Stalin's rule and the terrible story into a reality. They are professionals and I think are an example for many Lithuanian actors, because they work both in the theatre and in films.

Not only a long journey, but also many challenges lay ahead of the heroine of the film, eleven-year-old Marija, played by Anastasija Marėenkaitė. How did Anastasija, whose film debut it was, perceive the emotional experience and internal transformations of the heroine?

Anastasia listened to what I told her on and off the set. She tried to understand not only the character's motivation, but also the rules of the game. She is just a gift from God to this film, the director, and any producer. There is an impression that she lives on the screen rather in life. It just happens that her instincts are those of a real actress.

How did you manage to recreate the period of Stalin's rule and the vast expanses of the Russian taiga? What problems did you face?



Anastasija Marėenkaitė. A shot from A. Juzėnas' *Ekskursantė* (*The Excursionist*). Photo by Jurij Grigoroviė.

The post-war period and the end of Stalin's rule was in one or another way familiar to people of my generation from the stories of our parents and grandparents. Of course, the stories were grim. In my childhood years, the overall atmosphere changed little: red-nosed father frosts, swearing war veterans, total and mass parades in gratitude to the Communist Party, Communist ideology, Russian songs, mass drinking, and many other attributes of a "happy childhood". We were "nearly" the same as Russians, because everyone was one grey mass, the Soviet people. So this was quite familiar to me. Therefore, it was not difficult to relocate the characters of the film to a bygone era. It was a lot harder with the vast Siberian and Altai landscapes, because the majority of deportees were sent to this area. We hoped to go on an expedition with the group and looked for ways to get at least to the north of Finland, but the crisis in Lithuania and the total tightening of belts to the extent of losing consciousness turned the fate of our film in a different direction. Despite everything, we did what we could; we shot in the environs of Vilnius, in the ethnographic region of Dzūkija, and in the town of Anykščiai, anyplace that resembled the forests and rivers of the north and Siberian railways, cities and villages. The talent and experience of art director Jurijus Grigorovičius turned the whole film in the right direction, and cameraman Ramūnas Greičius and costume designer Daiva Petruilytė made their contribution. What was not possible to shoot was produced by computers.

The film has earned international recognition; it was awarded a Silver Crane by the Lithuanian Film Academy and a Nika by the Russian Film Academy. Did you expect such popularity when you were making the film?

No, because I doubted whether the topic was at all interesting to viewers. Times have changed. We would like to forget our nightmares and look to the future with the naive eyes of a child. After producing *Ghetto*, I never thought of wading into the same river of darkness. I easily accepted the proposal to shoot this film, however, as a job that had to be done, because no one, not a

single director wanted to do it. I happen to have a persistent character, like a bull terrier, and if I cling to something with my teeth, I won't let go even if my death is imminent. Only now do I realise that the film might have never been completed. At some point the producer wanted to "put it on the shelf of the Ministry of Culture". Later, the film started to have a life of its own, and critics and film academicians appeared along with festivals and audiences, who somehow felt or understood the essence and the idea of this film. They felt sympathy and even love for us, and hatred for historical injustice and evil. Evil is not some abstraction; it influences our destinies. What happened to us could have happened to other Western cultures had Stalin's generals not been satiated with violence and atrocities in Berlin, Königsberg, Prussia, and elsewhere. But *The Excursionist* is also about what unites us and makes us human.

Interviewed by Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Rojuje irgi sniega (*It Also Snows in Paradise*, 1994, feature, 81 min., 35 mm, colour)

Neatrasti skraidantys objektai (*UFO*, 1996–97, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Gyvoji kontrabanda (*Live Contraband*, 1996, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, colour)

Bosnia via Denmark (1997, short documentary, 20 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Fronto linija (*Front Line*, 1999, documentary, 53 min., 35 mm, colour)

Vilniaus Getas (*Vilnius Ghetto*, 2005, feature, 100 min., 35 mm, colour)

Ekskursantė (*The Excursionist*, 2013, 110 min., 35mm, colour)

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1935	Boris Barnet's film <i>U samogo sinego morya</i> (<i>By the Bluest of Seas</i>).	Jurgis Linartas and Feodijus Dunajevs set up the film company Mūsų Lietuva, which had a film concession between 1935 and 1940 and became a major Lithuanian film producer. During the 1935–1940 period, the company produced the newsreels <i>Mūsų Lietuva</i> (<i>Our Lithuania</i>).	
1936	Charles Chaplin's film <i>Modern Times</i> .	The first Lithuanian "talkie" <i>Kaunas melodijų nuotaikoje</i> (<i>Kaunas in a Melodic Mood</i>) (directors Alfonsas Žibas and Stasys Vainalavičius).	
1937	Jean Renoir's film <i>La Grande Illusion</i> (<i>The Great Illusion</i>).		
1938	Marcel Carné's film <i>Le Quai des Brumes</i> (<i>Port of Shadows</i>).	The first short-length puppet film <i>Storulio sapnas</i> (<i>Dream of a Pudge</i>) by directors Henrikas Kačinskas, Stasys Ušinskas and Alfonsas Žibas.	
1939	Victor Fleming's film <i>Gone With the Wind</i> . Jean Renoir's film <i>La Règle du jeu</i> (<i>The Rules of the Game</i>).		Klaipėda region was annexed to Germany. According to an agreement with the USSR, Vilnius was returned to Lithuania. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed (23 August). According to the Secret Protocols of the Pact, Lithuania came under the "sphere of influence" of Germany.
1940	Charles Chaplin's film <i>The Great Dictator</i> . John Ford's film <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> .	Cinema was nationalised. A studio for Lithuanian newsreels (later – Lithuanian film studios) was founded in Kaunas. Screening of the newsreels <i>Mūsų Lietuva</i> (<i>Our Lithuania</i>) was banned.	Lithuania was occupied by the USSR; fake elections were held and Lithuania "joined" the USSR. Censorship was introduced.
1941	Orson Welles' film <i>Citizen Kane</i> .	The German occupation government distributed the documentary <i>Raudonoji migla</i> (<i>Red Mist</i>) about the crimes of the NKVD in Lithuania.	The Lithuanian SSR Art Decade in Moscow. The first mass deportations of the Lithuanian population to Siberia started. The June Uprising took place and the Provisional Government of Lithuania was formed. The Jewish genocide started in Lithuania. Lithuania was occupied by Germany.
1942	Michael Curtiz's film <i>Casablanca</i> . Luchino Visconti's film <i>Ossessione</i> (<i>Obsession</i>).		
1943	Shooting of Marcel Carné's film <i>Les enfants du paradis</i> (<i>Children of Paradise</i>) started. The film was released in 1945.		
1944	Sergei Eisenstein's film <i>Ivan Grozny</i> (<i>Ivan the Terrible</i>).	The Lithuanian film studios was re-established in Kaunas.	Lithuania was again occupied by the USSR. Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance started (continued until 1953). Speech by Antanas Sniečkus, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, about the Sovietisation of culture.

Kristijonas Vildžiūnas:

Finding Historical Truths



Kristijonas Vildžiūnas.
Photo by Audrius Kemežys.

Since 1995, film director Kristijonas Vildžiūnas has created three short films and three full-length films. The world premiere of his feature debut, *Nuomos sutartis* (The Lease), took place at the Upstream Competition of the Venice International Film Festival. The world premiere of his second feature *Aš esi tu* (You am I) took place at Un Certain Regard Competition of the Cannes Film Festival. His film *Kai apkabinsiu tave* (Back to Your Arms) was recognised the best Lithuanian film in 2011.

The story of *Back to Your Arms* reaches back to the Cold War era. What dilemmas did you face in making this historical film or finding historical truths?

The era depicted in the film is on the borderline of historical memory. Before creating the film, I remember going on a subway in Berlin and looking at an elderly man reading a newspaper and thinking how my film could be interesting to him. My film will probably have nothing to verify his personal attitude to history. The division of Berlin was a drama to him, his family, and his community, whereas for me, a representative of another generation and another country, this is only the means to reflect on and to express a universal theme. It was evident that the young woman sitting at the other end of the carriage would perhaps accept the film better. To pupils in Lithuania, the story of the Berlin Wall is only a not particularly interesting history lesson that they will forget at the end of the trimester. It is not possible to integrate everyone's perspectives on history into a single film. I realised that not everybody would accept my interpretation of the epoch.

The storyline was inspired by a letter written by Lithuanian-American Dalia Juknevičiūtė for her husband, the poet Algimantas Mackus. How did you

come across this letter? How much time had passed before the idea became a screenplay?

This is the film that took the longest time for me to create. The first version of the script was written back in 1995. But I couldn't debut with this project, could I? So I turned to other films and in 2007 I returned to the idea. I received the letter written by Dalia Juknevičiūtė from my father, who had read it in a magazine. In 1995, Juknevičiūtė's experience in Berlin seemed very interesting. Our country was just out of the clutches of being isolated from the rest of the world. It was very interesting to find out what had happened to us, Lithuanians, behind the Iron Curtain. Berlin was a very symbolic city, as if a brother in arms.

The most important thing was to understand what the Lithuanian story in Berlin could tell us about the common fate of Europe, which we were a part of and have become a part of again. So I was forced to sacrifice the form of a diary containing the subjective experiences of a young woman and to introduce more characters and parallel action.

Each historical film also tells about the times in which it was created. What do you think *Back to Your Arms* tells us about ourselves and the people who live next door to us?



Jurga Jutaitė and Andrius Bialobžeskis. A shot from K. Vildžiūnas' *Aš esi tu* (You Am I).

Bridging past and present with this film, I ask the viewer and myself whether we are able to understand what we want and what we are pursuing as individuals. Do we understand our desires and fears? Do our personal traumas prevent us from being masters of our own destiny and entrench us in illusions? And, finally, are our weaknesses used by the system that aims to control us?

Where did you shoot the film? Did you have to put a lot of effort into locating the appropriate spaces and artefacts?

We filmed in Kaunas and a few scenes in Berlin. We focused on costumes and props, because we could not financially afford to build scenery. There are a number of authentic interwar interiors still left in Kaunas. We looked for apartments and furnished them with post-war furniture and items brought from Berlin. From the start we put all the filming locations together into a puzzle and only then started shooting. Sound also played a visual function in the film. You can hear the sound of the ships going along the River Spree and screaming seagulls in the background.

What was most important in trying to find the correct form for the film?

The main challenge was to fuse archive material with the material we shot. We had to provide sound to silent archival material as if it were our own material. The trick worked. The archival material does not differ from the part actually filmed by us, although we didn't even try to hide it. We sometimes inserted archival material in the scenes of the film. As a result, the whole film is shot in the style of a documentary, without aiming for a pictorial effect.

Both actors, Andrius Bialobžeskis and Jurga Jutaitė, also played in your *You Am I*. Why did you decide to try them in another role?

I knew that they would play in a convincing, not banal, manner. Andrius had minimal means of expression, but for example he played brilliantly in the scene where the father is standing with his back to the camera and putting gifts into the suitcase for his daughter. You can feel his emotions from his hand movements.

How did you select Elžbieta Latėnaitė, the main character in the film?

I saw her for the first time in the play *Three Sisters* directed by Rimas Tuminas in Vilnius. Elžbieta has energy and a high emotional intelligence. I knew it would be difficult to work with her, but I really wanted to try.

Back to Your Arms is the first Lithuanian and Polish co-production and was made in collaboration with the film company Studio Filmowe TOR, which is managed by the famous Polish film director and producer Krzysztof Zanussi. What did this cooperation give to the film?

I consider Krzysztof Zanussi to be one of my teachers. As a student I visited his workshop and his thoughts about films later helped me make *Likusios dienos (The Days Are Left)*, my graduation work. Krzysztof liked the screenplay of *Back to Your Arms*. In his opinion, the idea was relevant to Central European countries, and this was later backed up by the reviews of the expert commission of the Polish Film Institute. The film could not have been created without the help from Poland. But even with their support and aid from the European Cinema Support Fund Eurimages, the budget of the film was minimal. After editing the material, I went to Warsaw to show the draft version to Zanussi. He immediately asked where I found such a great

actress for the main role and reassured me that the film was not bad. I was very happy, because I had been overcome by deep doubts.

Antoni Komasa-Lazarkiewicz, a young Polish composer, wrote music for the film. What assignment did you give him and why did the song "Back to Your Arms" become a leitmotif in the film?

I knew I had chosen a simple style and therefore I was going to use minimal off-screen music. As a result, the entire load concerning the meaning of the film fell to the song "Back to Your Arms". Antoni wrote four songs, all sung by his wife, the singer Mary Komasa. Three songs were written for the dance club scene and the fourth song for the end of the film. The last song is heard against the images of the construction of the Berlin Wall, which absorb the energy of personal drama, universalise it, and at the same time provide hope, because we know that the wall will ultimately be destroyed. So far, we still live in a world in which shake-up is necessary so we can grow spiritually and become wiser.

Interviewed by Elena Jasiūnaitė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Likusios dienos (The Days Are Left), 1995, short fiction, 30 min., 35 mm, b/w

Biblioteka (Library), 1997, short fiction, 35 min., 35 mm, b/w

9 vartų miestas (9 Gate City), 1999, documentary, 40 min., Beta CAM, b/w

Nuomos sutartis (The Lease), 2002, feature, 90 min., 35 mm, colour

Aš esi tu (You Am I), 2006, feature, 90 min., 35 mm, colour

Kai apkabinsiu tave (Back To Your Arms), 2010, feature, 90 min., 35 mm, colour



A shot from K. Vildziūnas' *Kai apkabinsiu tave (Back to Your Arms)*.

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1945	Roberto Rossellini's film <i>Roma città aperta (Rome, Open City)</i> marked the start of Italian neorealism. The first film festival in Cannes was held.		Resolution of the Lithuanian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and of the People's Commissariat Council of the Lithuanian SSR regarding the use of cinema for Bolshevik propaganda.
1946	The first film by Ingmar Bergman <i>Kris (Crisis)</i> . René Clement's film <i>La Bataille du rail (The Battle of the Rails)</i> .	Newsreel <i>Tarybų Lietuva (Soviet Lithuania)</i> was launched.	
1947	Actor's Studio was founded. Wanda Jakubowska's film <i>Ostatni etap (The Last Stage)</i> .	Starting in 1947, all Lithuanian-themed feature films were made at the Mosfilm and Lenfilm film studios.	
1948	Vittorio De Sica's film <i>Ladri di biciclette (Bicycle Thieves)</i> .		Publication of Adam Mickiewicz's <i>Konrad Wallenrod</i> and <i>Sonetų krymskie (The Crimean Sonnets)</i> (translated by Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas).
1949	Carol Reed's film <i>The Third Man</i> .	The Lithuanian film studios was re-located to Vilnius.	Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance commanders signed the Declaration of Lithuania's Liberation Movement.
1950	Akira Kurosawa's film <i>Rashōmon</i> .		
1951	Elia Kazan's film <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> . The first issue of the <i>Cahiers du Cinéma</i> magazine. Robert Bresson's <i>Journal d'un curé de campagne (Diary of a Country Priest)</i> .		
1952	Vittorio De Sica's film <i>Umberto D.</i>	Full-length documentary colour film <i>Sovetskaya Litva (Soviet Lithuania)</i> was awarded the Stalin Prize.	
1953	Yasujiro Ozu's film <i>Tōkyō monogatari (Tokyo Story)</i> . Kenji Mizoguchi's film <i>Ugetsu Monogatari (Tales of the Silvery Moonlight in the Rain)</i> .	Alexander Fainzimmer's feature film <i>Aušra prie Nemuno (Dawn Near the Nemunas)</i> was the first feature film about collective farms (also known as the <i>kolkhoz</i>) in Lithuania made in the context of presumptions of social realism.	
1954	Akira Kurosawa film <i>Shichinin no samurai (Seven Samurai)</i> .		
1955	Nicholas Ray's film <i>Rebel Without a Cause</i> initiated the myth of James Dean. Agnès Varda's debut film <i>La Pointe Courte</i> .		
1956	Alain Resnais' film about the Holocaust <i>Nuit et Brouillard (Night and Fog)</i> . Andrzej Wajda's film <i>Kanał (They Loved Life)</i> – start of the Polish Film School. Satyajit Ray's film <i>Pather Panchali</i> .		
1957	Ingmar Bergman's film <i>Smultronstället (Wild Strawberries)</i> . Andrzej Munk's film <i>Eroica</i> .	Vytautas Mikalauskas' first full-length film <i>Žydrasis horizontas (The Blue Horizon)</i> based on the works of Romualdas Lankauskas, was the first feature film made at the Lithuanian film studios in Vilnius.	

Kristina Buožytė:

Film Is the Door to a Specific World



Kristina Buožytė.
Photo from a personal archive.

Kristina Buožytė, a film director representing the younger generation of filmmakers, released her debut feature film, Kolekcionierė (The Collectress), in 2008. Her second film Aurora (Vanishing Waves), which was four years in the making, has earned the director worldwide recognition. It was awarded Best European Science Fiction Film at the Sitges Festival in Spain in 2012 and earned the best film, best director, best screenplay, and best actress awards at the Fantastic Fest Festival in Austin (USA). It continued its momentum by winning the special programme East of West Prize at the Karlovy Vary Festival in the Czech Republic.

Starting with the full-length feature *The Collectress*, your graduation work, you continued creating only feature films. This, even in financial terms, is a far more complicated undertaking for a young director than working on other types of films. Why did you choose feature films?

I don't know. It was a natural choice, though to watch and to discover something unexpectedly is very interesting. I'm frightened that in a documentary I wouldn't be able to control the situation. I've been in the film industry for only a few years. I think that if you want to do something good it requires a lot of input. If I'd chosen to make documentaries, I'd have to dig deep until I get to their essence. It takes a long time to understand how to purify the theme of a film, how to "access" its characters, and what language to speak to them. I'm trying to find this essence in feature films.

What do you think is important in a feature film?

An opportunity to talk about topics that are relevant to me. And to search for ways to talk about it, to create in a film a new world that resembles reality as closely as possible, and to direct it. You wish to make the world of the film compelling, so that the viewer can *empathise*, follow the progress of the storyline, and feel something.

Does it all start from the theme?

No, it doesn't. Filmmakers usually say so, but in reality it doesn't. There is some sort of concept, an image or a fragment of something. You spot it and start adding new aspects to it: philosophical, social and emotional. Everything connects and little by little becomes a logical whole.

How did the idea to create *The Collectress* come about?

The film was based on intuition. At that time, I had no idea how to create a feature film. Later, when I understood how to write a script, I started to integrate themes, action, new characters, and problems; I started to work in an entirely different way. The starting point for *The Collectress* was a fragment of a story about a woman watching films and being able to experience emotions only through a film.

And how about *Vanishing Waves*?

It was prompted by the desire to create a love story. At the same time, I wanted it to be an adventure. In general, a film for me is the door to a very specific world, and you want it to be an exclusive, suggestive journey.

Over the summer, I watched a lot of Michelangelo Antonioni's films. They were the first inspirations for *Vanishing Waves*. Antonioni's films are not

based on a story. The story can be conveyed in one sentence, but after the end of the film, his characters continue to live on. This is something magical, some kind of alchemy. To me this is a sign of professionalism in filmmaking.

Why did you choose the genre of science fiction for your film *Vanishing Waves*?

I love science fiction and in my teenage years I read a lot of science fiction and enjoyed the fantasy films of the 60s and 70s. In *Vanishing Waves*, the science fiction genre is only a platform for expressing thoughts and talking about problems. The budget of the film was not large. My colleague, writer Bruno Samper, came up with the idea: "What if we create an adventure in the human mind rather than in reality?" I really liked the idea. Then we started to think about what to do to give science fiction a real basis; we wanted the story to be based on true scientific information rather than depict conversations that have nothing to do with reality. We communicated with scientists and doctors, and we discussed whether science in the future could take this path and whether similar effects could then be achieved.

Since your first film, you have collaborated with screenwriter Bruno Samper and cameraman Feliksas Abrukauskas. How is their participation important in the creative process of the film?

Bruno is my creative partner. I've always looked

for a person with whom I could write screenplays. I don't think it's fair that in Lithuania a film director must also be a screenwriter. Each must do what he knows best. Since Bruno is strong at visualising and conceptualising and I am good at communicating, we complement each other. When working with him, I'm continually convinced that a film means thinking and talking in images and that it isn't only telling a story. All that is left after watching a film is a kind of image that cuts into your brain. When I try to remember any film, there is always some kind of scene that affects me and is imprinted in my memory.

As for Feliksas, he challenges me. He's a great cameraman who sets high standards for both himself and those around him. When you meet people with whom you can create and share, when your attitudes and certain standards (we are all perfectionists) coincide, you just don't let them go.

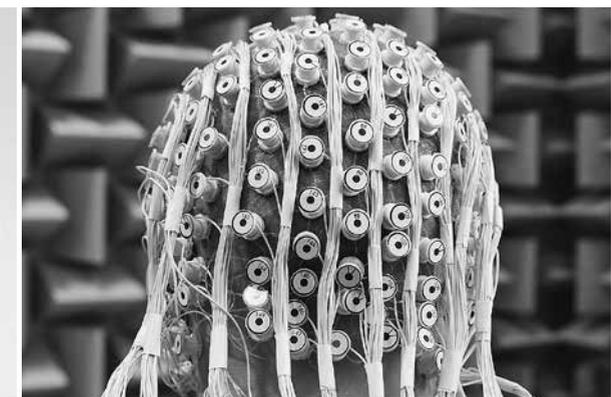
Interviewed by Elena Jasiūnaitė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Pakeisk Plokštėlę (Change the Record, 2005, short fiction, 19 min., video, colour)

Kolekcionierė (The Collectress, 2008, feature, 80 min., colour)

Aurora (Vanishing Waves, 2012, 126 min., colour)



Jurga Jutaitė and Marijus Jampolskis. Shots from K. Buožytė's *Aurora (Vanishing Waves)*.

Ignas Jonynas:

I Belong to a Generation Very Rich with Experience



Ignas Jonynas.
Source: Vilnius IFF Kino pavasaris,
photo by Frgmts.

You worked as a stage director and created commercials for a long time. What does this experience give you in making a full-length feature film?

Although I worked in the theatre, I was always thinking about films. Some people even described my stage productions as “cinematographic”. But theatre is of course a far more intimate and quieter place than a cinema. In the theatre I learned improvisation with actors, which is handy in filmmaking. My experience in the production of commercials helped me to understand the entire shooting process. I learned to work with filmmaking equipment and gained organisational experience.

How did you discover the theme for your debut feature film, *The Gambler*? Why did it seem important to you?

I belong to a generation very rich with experience. This generation graduated from secondary schools in Soviet times and began their higher education under capitalism. At the junction of two regimes and two centuries, the duality of human nature, spontaneous attempts to adapt to the new conditions, and the revaluation of moral values came to the fore. I wanted to talk about it,

*For 10 years film director Ignas Jonynas worked at the State Youth Theatre in Vilnius and created commercials. He then made his debut as a film director with his short films *Sekmadienis toks, koks yra* (Sunday As It Is) and *Šokantis kirminas* (Dancing Worm). In 2013, he released *Lošėjas* (The Gambler), the first film from the Baltic countries to have its world premiere at the San Sebastian Film Festival. The film won the Special Jury Prize at the Warsaw Film Festival.*

but I needed time for a perspective, a temporal distance to understand what was going on with us. In the face of the economic crisis and all the perturbations in Lithuania and the world, the issue of moral choice become relevant as never before. I felt that this was the perfect moment to sum up my experience. Together with Kristupas Sabolis, the co-author of the screenplay, we started looking for borderline situations that would best reveal the duality of human nature. I remember that Kristupas told me about a few friends in Italy who jokingly bet on which celebrity would pass away from a drug overdose or from some other reason that year. I proposed moving this idea to an ambulance unit, and we gradually developed a scheme for the game.

The generation that lived at a turning point in Lithuanian history is the focus of the film, and you are one of the representatives of that generation. Who and what kinds of people represent this generation, and how important do you think the experience of this generation is?

I think that the main feature of this generation is its ability to adapt, both in the positive and negative sense of that word. These are realists who are pretty critical about the environment. My generation has



A shot from I. Jonynas' *Lošėjas* (*The Gambler*).

a range of conflicting characteristics: a mixture of idealism and cynicism, despair and faith, and the fight for well being and going with the flow. These are experiences of different political systems. Contradictions born out of these systems affect the behaviour or outlook of this generation.

There are very many different ways to put a theme on the screen. What was important in choosing the form of *The Gambler*?

I wanted to provoke and to find an attractive form to address an unattractive issue. I like different kinds of films, for example, those of Carlos Reygadas and David Fincher. Both are brilliant professionals and both deal with complex topics, but both are going along radically different paths. One deliberately ignores the principles of classical narrative in a film and looks for a new artistic language, and the other very strongly controls the film's narrative and tries to involve a broad range of viewers into the story by employing the measures typical of Hollywood productions. I find it interesting to combine both paths: to

discover an artistic form that would be attractive to the viewer who demands higher artistic quality, but at the same time would not discourage mass-production film buffs.

What was most important when choosing actors for the film? What were the



Oona Mekas. A shot from I. Jonynas' *Lošėjas* (*The Gambler*).

requirements for Vytautas Kaniušonis and Oona Mekas, who were in the leading roles?

To a certain extent I already imagined my film heroes while writing the script, but screen tests often adjusted my preconceived ideas. In some cases, the discovery of a suitable actor led to changes in the age of the character and the qualities of his character. I was looking for unknown faces. The story is fictional and very specific. I didn't want the audience to have any questions about its authenticity. As a result, we discarded all familiar faces from the world of TV and entertainment. It was necessary to discover characters from real life, the ones you might meet in your stairwell or in a queue in the supermarket. It took us more than half a year to select the actors. But the result was not disappointing.

I was looking for a man who would not stick-out from a group of passers-by for Vincent's role: a person doing his work in good faith, but not getting adequate consideration and showing no special emotional involvement in what is going on in reality; a person who is going with the flow and is not very emotionally satisfied either with his work or gambling. For the part of Eve, I was looking for a character who stood out from the crowd, a woman whose appearance and internal attitudes differed from others. Oona appeared to be precisely such a person.

You wrote the script for the film together with philosopher Kristupas Sabolius. Now you are working on your second film. Why did you choose Sabolius and what does this cooperation provide you?

I work with Kristupas because I like when the boundaries of collaboration dissolve. We rewrite each other's scenes, share ideas, and correct each other's dialogues. We are sufficiently different, but at the same time tolerant people who are able to agree on a compromise. It is not always easy, but in six years we have already honed each other's sharp edges. We stick to the rule that if you are able to convince each other with arguments, this is a sign that the viewer may also be convinced.

The Gambler is a Lithuanian and Latvian co-production. How did Latvians become involved in the creative process, why you chose them, and what did it add to the film?

Janis Eglitis, the cameraman, is not only a great professional, but also my friend, and we have produced a lot of commercials together. I shared the idea of the film with him, he willingly agreed to join, and then I thought that maybe it would be of interest to a Latvian producer. Janis recommended Roberts Vinovski and this is how our cooperation began. Our common historical and cultural experience apparently helped find a common language in the film too. We are very pleased that this is the first joint Lithuanian and Latvian feature film in 20 years of independence. As far as I know, there are more projects like this now.

Interviewed by Elena Jasiūnaitė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY
Sekmadienis toks, koks yra (Sunday as It Is, 2003, short feature, 31 min., 35 mm, colour)
Šokantis kirminas (Dancing Worm, 2006, short feature, 20 min., 35 mm, colour)
Lošėjas (The Gambler, 2013, feature, 109 min., colour)

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1958	Andrzej Wajda's film <i>Popiół i diament (Ashes and Diamonds)</i> .		Publication of Adam Mickiewicz's <i>Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)</i> (translated by Justinas Marcinkevičius).
1959	Alain Resnais' film <i>Hiroshima mon amour</i> . François Truffaut's film <i>Les quatre cents coups (The 400 Blows)</i> . Billy Wilder's film <i>Some Like It Hot</i> . Jerzy Kawalerowicz's film <i>Pociąg (Night Train)</i> .	Vytautas Žalakevičius' film <i>Adomas nori būti žmogumi (Adam Wants to Be a Man)</i> based on Vytautas Sirijos Gira's story <i>Buenos Aires</i> heralded the beginning of a national film tradition.	
1960	Jean-Luc Godard's film <i>À bout de souffle (Breathless)</i> . Federico Fellini's film <i>La Dolce Vita (The Sweet Life)</i> . Michelangelo Antonioni's film <i>L'Avventura (The Adventure)</i> . Aleksander Ford's film <i>Krzyżacy (Knights of the Teutonic Order)</i> .	Novella film <i>Gyvieji didvyriai (Living heroes)</i> which consists of four short films by directors Marijonas Giedrys, Balys Bratkauskas, Arūnas Žebriūnas and Vytautas Žalakevičius was awarded the Grand Prix at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival.	Resolution of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party regarding ideological shortcomings in the publication <i>Ekrano naujienos (Screen News)</i> .
1961	Pier Paolo Pasolini's film debut <i>Accattone</i> . Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's film <i>Chronique d'un été (Chronicle of a Summer)</i> .	The screenplay "Gott Mit Uns" by Grigorijus Kanovičius and Vytautas Žalakevičius was published in the magazine <i>Pergalė</i> (No. 9). The story was about a priest who hid a Jewish boy and a Soviet partisan during the Nazi occupation. By order of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party the film was banned from being made.	Resolution of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party regarding incorrect selection of films for public screening.
1962	David Lean's film <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i> . Agnès Varda's film <i>Cléo de 5 à 7 (Cleó from 5 to 7)</i> . Terence Young's film <i>Dr. No</i> – the first film about James Bond. Andrei Tarkovsky's film <i>Ivanovo detstvo (Ivan's Childhood)</i> .		Resolution of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party regarding measures to strengthen control over cinematography. Resolution of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party regarding the celebration of the anniversary of the 1863 Uprising.
1963	Federico Fellini's film 8½ started the theme of filmmakers and filmmaking. Roman Polanski's film <i>Nóż w wodzie (Knife in the Water)</i> .	Vytautas Žalakevičius' film <i>Vienos dienos kronika (A Chronicle of One Day)</i> was the first Lithuanian film of the "thaw" period in the Soviet Union.	
1964	Michelangelo Antonioni's film <i>Il deserto rosso (Red Desert)</i> . Bernardo Bertolucci's film <i>Prima della rivoluzione (Before the Revolution)</i> . A heavily censored version of Marlen Khutsiev's <i>Mne dvadtsat let (I'm Twenty Years Old)</i> , originally entitled <i>Zastava Ilyicha (Lenin's Guard)</i> , was released. Wojciech Ha's film <i>Rękopis, znaleziony w Saragossie (The Saragossa Manuscript)</i> .	Arūnas Žebriūnas' film <i>Paskutinė atostogų diena (The Last Day of Vacation)</i> marked the beginning of the poetic trend in the Lithuanian cinema and films about children and teenagers. Raimondas Vabalas' film <i>Marš, marš, tra-ta-ta! (Go, Go! Rub-a-Dub!)</i> , a satirical grotesque experiment about Lithuanian and Polish relations before Second World War in an original film form.	

Šarūnas Bartas

By Renata Šukaitytė

Šarūnas Bartas (b. 1964) is the most esteemed and acclaimed auteur in Lithuania. He consistently deals with the multiplicity of the experiences of *homo sovieticus* and the process that those living on former Soviet territory go through to form new identities. His interest in this problem could be explained by the fact that Bartas launched and nurtured his cinematic career as an experimental film maker just on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union and produced his first professional film, *Praėjusios dienos atminimui* (*In Memory of a Day Gone By*, 1990), during the period of political and cultural shifts just after Lithuania announced its independence. Bartas' obvious artistic talent, coupled with his entrepreneurial outlook and strategies, made him an inspirational figure for the 1990s generation of local filmmakers, many of whom were influenced by his filmmaking style, with its lack of emphasis on narrative, non-verbal storytelling, long takes, ambient hypnotic sound, amateur actors, etc. In all his works starting with *In Memory of a Day Gone By*, Bartas reflects on and reveals small joys and passions, inner conflicts, fears, and longings for freedom of a man in the presence of societal, economic and political stasis and shifts. Bartas' early films accurately document the vanishing

remains of a once "powerful" empire and question the loss and disappearance of a previously common territory and form of shared belonging. The films do this, among other things, through an emphasis on close ups and long shots. The characters in the films (who unmistakably are anti-heroes) silently observe the outside world and each other, but are not able to establish sensible relations with each other, or change their lives. They are closed inside their own world, which consists of an assemblage of recollections and dreams and a sense of an unstable present. The editing in these films intentionally lacks logical connections so as to give an impression of spontaneity and uncertainty with reference to the newly crystalizing nation and state. These films have the feel of a kind of mnemonic, a sort of artificial memory, referencing a past associated with sadness, uncertainty and alienation. His 1991 film *Trys dienos* (*Three Days*) manifested the first full expression of this unique style, which became a common denominator of the national *auteur* film and was further nurtured in *Koridorius* (*Corridor*, 1995), *Mūsų nedaug* (*Few of Us*, 1996), *Namai* (*The House*, 1997), *Laisvė* (*Freedom*, 2000), *Septyni nematomi žmonės* (*Seven Invisible Men*, 2005), and *Eurazijos Aborigenas* (*Eastern Drift*, 2010).



Oksana Chernych. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Namai* (*The House*).

Šarūnas Bartas' films can also be perceived as a bridge of communication linking post-communist Eurasia with Western Europe. He depicts different post-communist groups (Russians, Tofalars, Lithuanians, Ukrainian, Tartars, and people in Kaliningrad Oblast) healing historical traumas and grappling with the issue of post-1989 identity, including the damage of an artificially created

multi-cultural and multi-national belonging. Bartas' films implicitly suggest the increasing threats of moral and mental deprivation in traumatised dystopian societies. However, he leaves some hope for the viewer and indirectly talks about the necessity for a new human sensitivity, as well as for healing historical social traumas.



Dmitri Podnozov and Rita Klein. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Septyni nematomi žmonės* (*Seven Invisible Men*).



Šarūnas Bartas. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Eurazijos Aborigenas* (*Eastern Drift*).



Katerina Golubeva. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Mūsų nedaug* (*Few of Us*).



Piotr Kishteev. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Mūsų nedaug* (*Few of Us*).

Šarūnas Bartas:

The Philosopher of Lithuanian Cinema



Šarūnas Bartas.
Source: Studio Kinema.

Did you create your first feature film *Trys dienos (Three Days)* after completion of your studies in Moscow?

Not exactly. I started making *Three Days* during my third year of studies. I was in a rush, because there was not really much for me to do in Moscow, nor indeed for many others. *Three Days* was the first independent Lithuanian film (not sponsored by the Lithuanian state budget) co-produced with Estonians. Nothing like this had ever happened in Lithuania before, so everyone was very suspicious of me. Halfway through shooting we had to terminate our cooperation with the Estonians because of disagreements related to the content of the film. Furthermore, at that time we also established the first independent film studio, Kinema, in Lithuania. And then all the events leading to the restoration of Lithuania's independence, like the economic blockade and other events, started. We suspended the shooting of *Three Days* but continued shooting documentary material with the money that was left. Some of the footage of the events at the Seimas (Parliament) building was later used in my film *Koridorius (Corridor)*, 1995).

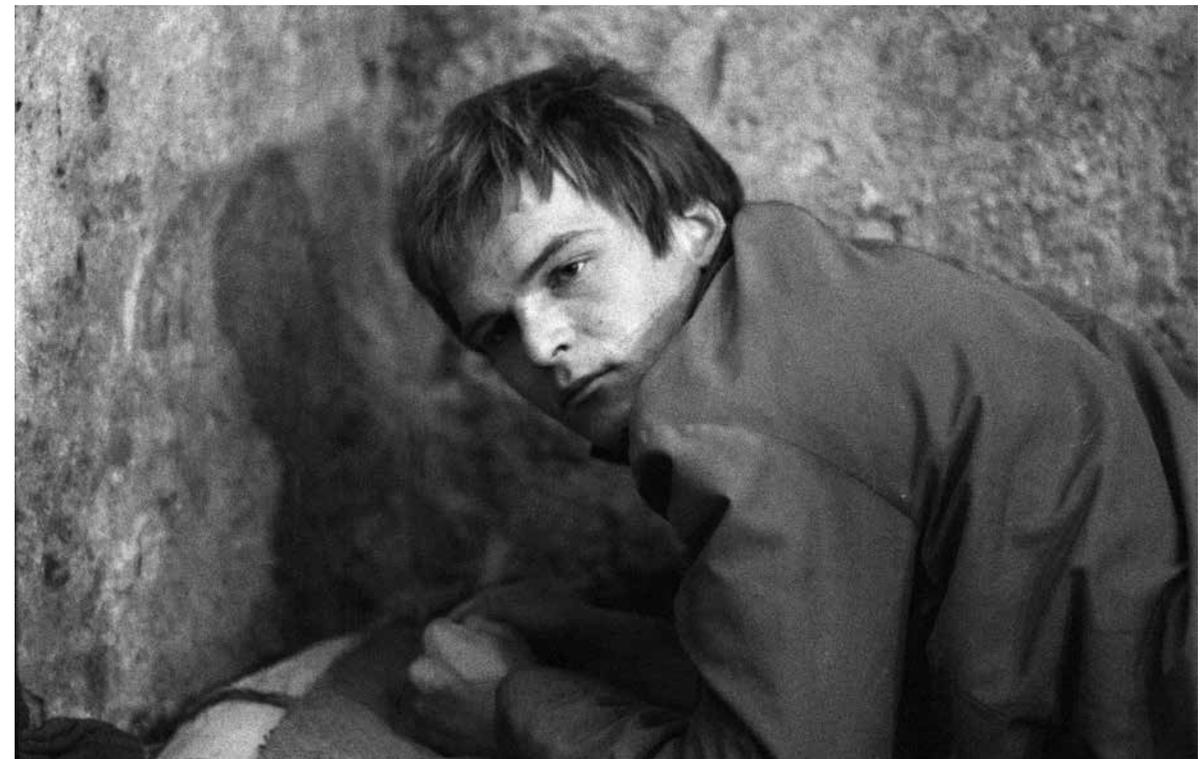
When you started your film *Three Days* you were only 23 years old. What effect

did historical and social change have on the themes of the young filmmaker and his subsequent creative work? Did this changing context affect the state of mind of the film director?

It's hard to say. I think it probably never had a profound effect, although, of course, we live in a certain period of time and shoot what we know. For example, the shooting of the documentary film *Praėjusios dienos atminimui (In Memory of a Day Gone By)*, 1990) started and was completed in the Soviet period. Had it not been for perestroika, the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow (VGIK) might not have allowed me to make it, though at that time there were indeed attempts to prevent and prohibit it. And concerning the developments in Lithuania at that time, they are directly reflected in my later film *Corridor*.

Can we compare you with those realists who tried to document and reflect reality in their films instead of constructing it?

You see, everyone constructs reality in films, whether reflecting it or not. Realism in films is an entirely different matter. We can't tell what is real and what isn't. Each of us even has a different perception of reality, because we rely not only



Audrius Stonys. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Trys dienos (Three Days)*.

on what we are looking at, but also what has happened to us earlier in our life. We may be looking at the same point, but for one of us the reality would be at this angle (*showing*), while the other may forget what he is looking at and may at that time think and "see" their interlocutor's face. So these would be two different realities at the same time. Even in a single four-dimensional space there could be many realities.

Reality should also be separated from stylisation. Reality in cinema is mutilated. For example, the action showed in my *Three Days* takes place over a few days, but my film lasts only one and a half hours, so time is compressed and quite different laws apply than in reality. We are probably talking about a reality that in order to make the show easier and happier is deliberately further stylised and simplified for the show to take place. This is not a bad thing, because this is a spectacle with its own laws. It should be noted that even as the show is being created, attempts are made to reproduce an illusion of reality. All creators or producers are trying to recreate an interval in time. A

very short interval of time is even recreated in a painting. It is presented to a viewer, who looks at it and his life becomes easier, because after seeing a little piece of the world with someone else's eyes, the viewer finds more points of reference. It becomes easier for him to find his own place and to understand himself. Perhaps this is why such



Katerina Golubeva. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Trys dienos (Three Days)*.

art has been created since ancient times and has been in demand.

Many of your films contain features characteristic of a documentary film (a realistic depiction of the environment, non-professional actors playing themselves, the use of diegetic sounds, etc.). What do you think about the difference between a documentary and a fictional film?

I think that there is hardly any clear boundary between a documentary and a fictional film. Documentary films can be divided into journalistic-style reporting, TV, or other documentaries, but in each case we record a certain interval in time and the extent to which it seems *real* to us depends on how much effort we put in for it to look so. I disagree that non-professional actors who play in my films bring my films closer to reality. You are wrong to say that they're playing themselves, because this isn't indeed so at all. These actors can be compared with the people in some American films who have also been picked up on the street and who are certain types in the film. Federico Fellini, who could never be called a documentary filmmaker, picked up nearly all his actors on the street, but they didn't play themselves. There is no such expression as *playing oneself*; a good actor doesn't act at all.

What are the most important features for you in an actor?

In each film, even in the so-called entertaining films, actors who can't act are the most valued. If someone says, "that actor really knows how to act", it means that he acts pretty convincingly. Acting is a part of our communication, because we are social creatures and constantly convey something to others with our expressions (face, gestures and language). We usually don't understand the emotions of animals (well, perhaps only tail wagging), because we are different. But we understand each other, because we are united by our means of communication. When we can see that a person is lying, it means that he is a poor actor. Of course, there are people who know how to lie very well, which means that they believe what they're saying.

Acting is not a profession that can be learned, just as it is possible to learn to sing, but it is impossible to learn to have a very good voice. Recreation and saving one's energy are a professional actor's skills that are usually quite easily learned, but the essence of a good actor is different. On the other hand, a person may seem completely realistic, but be bland and uninteresting. Directors choose models for the characters in their films in the same way that painters choose models for their paintings.

There are often no precise time and space boundaries in your films, and an action usually develops in an abstract, distant and unfamiliar space in an indefinite time, so I want to ask: how much time in which we live is important to you when making a film?

We probably can't even use the word *important* here, because the time in which I live is all I have, which is the same for any one of us. It is that foam of life that came to the surface and that we carry forward into the future. It is at this time that we are foaming and are alive. None of us, no matter how young, will be here one hundred years later, so the time in which I live is the entire essence, because I don't know any other time. On the other hand, our imagination is based on memories and these, as we know, wear out. The brain arranges our memories the way it likes. Therefore, we can hardly grab even the time in which we live by the tail.

In your films (especially the early ones) there is little dialogue, the language is minimalist, and the storytelling is almost static, unlike usual narrative cinema in which language is a very important link in the story. Do you agree that the language of images in cinema is more important than words?

I don't know. Both the image and sound must have their place. There could be fewer or more words. Sometimes the text can say more, because it helps the viewer to understand more about the scene or character, though I don't see the need to illustrate each image with a sound. This is all related to TV, in which series, where practically everything is

conveyed by text, play an important part. And this is happening for a reason, otherwise a person would not be able to do household chores or make pancakes with the TV on. Everything on TV is conveyed by the text and the image becomes just a background. Of course, I think that filmmaking also tries to simplify the whole business. This is done for the purpose of distributing the film more broadly and making it more understandable. After all, if someone has a couple of hours available and walks into a cinema, that person isn't always in the mood for anything heavy. He just wants to relax, forget about something, or whatever. And he'll be unhappy if any effort is required. We know that many works of art, books, films, or stage performances require an effort on the part of the viewer. But not everyone wants to do that, so there are other stories available for those who don't want to do that.

You probably know that your films are often compared with the works of other directors. I wonder what film director (or directors) has had a strong impact on you?

I've heard such comparisons, but in my opinion they have no real grounds, because this is done after the fact and often based not on real similarities, but rather differences. In much the same way music is popular, modern or classical, there are attempts to categorise film directors. Back when I had nothing to do with films, I was

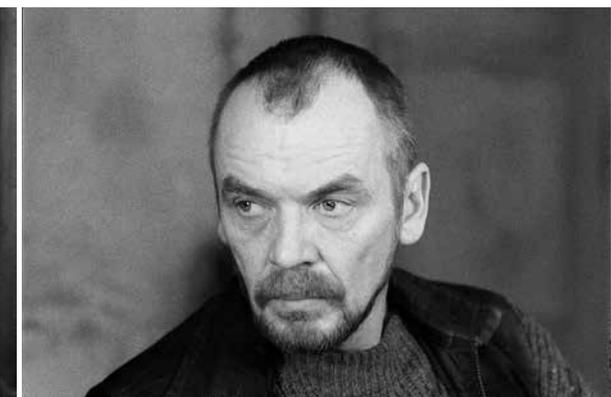
impressed by Roman Balajan's film *Flights in Dreams and in Reality (Polyoty vo sne i nayavu)*. I didn't even know that such films existed, because before that I had only watched films about American Indians. When I saw Balajan's film, I was fifteen years old, but I've never forgotten the impression it made on me. Later I was also very impressed by Fellini's films. Then the whole of Europe flocked to cinemas to see them, so they were very commercial, but today, behold, they've become almost experimental (*smiling*). So the development of films has its own ups and downs. The Italians can be a great example, because today they hardly create anything very interesting, although they have given the world many of the all-time greatest film directors. The development of the cinematography requires a lot of time. First for canonisation, then for breaking down the canons, as it was in painting.

You not only direct your films, but also perform other technical functions: you are a cameraman (in the film *Septyni nematomi žmonės [Seven Invisible Men]*), a sound engineer, and you are even going to act. Is this the true model of an auteur film?

First, without the knowledge of all the professions of filmmaking, it would be foolish to imagine that you could manage everything. Imagine that a conductor does not know how to play the violin or he can play the piano, but knows



Viacheslav Amirhanian. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Koridorius (Corridor)*.



Eimuntas Nekrošius. A shot from Š. Bartas' *Koridorius (Corridor)*.

nothing about other instruments. Conductors can play virtually all instruments and are fully aware of their potential (*smiling*). Therefore, it would be ridiculous to say that you can create an image without knowing how the main tools for doing it work.

But conductors themselves don't play, and in order to conduct it's sufficient for them to know how the instruments work.

Of course, but if it was really necessary they could play. But this depends on the case. As for me, as I said, I did a lot of shooting prior to my studies at All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK). Then I did not have any assistants and I had to figure out what, where and how. Therefore, I can work professionally with the camera, but if I don't have to, I don't do it. In my opinion, directors must intervene in any process that's not going the way they think it should be going. After all, you can't say in the credits that someone on the creative team has failed.

Interviewed by Lukas Brašiškis

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Tofolarija (Tofalaria), 1986, co-directed with Valdas Navasaitis, short documentary, 16 min., 16 mm, b/w

Praėjusios dienos atminimui (In Memory of a Day Gone By), 1990, short documentary, 40 min., 35 mm, b/w

Trys dienos (Three Days), 1991, feature, 76 min., 35 mm, colour

Koridorius (The Corridor), 1995, feature, 80 min., 35 mm, b/w

Mūsų nedaug (Few of Us), 1996, feature, 105 min., 35 mm, colour

Namai (The House), 1997, feature, 120 min., 35 mm, colour

Laisvė (Freedom), 2000, feature, 94 min., 35 mm, colour

Nieko nepraranda vaikai (Children Lose Nothing), 5 min. segment in feature having several creators, *Visions of Europe*, 2004, 140 min., 35 mm, colour

Septyni nematomi žmonės (Seven Invisible Men), feature, 2005, 116 min., 35 mm, colour

Eurazijos aborigenas (Eastern Drift), 2010, feature, 90 min., 35 mm, colour

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1965	Elmar Klos and Ján Kadar's film <i>Obchod na korze (Shop on the Main Street)</i> . <i>Repulsion</i> , the first film by Roman Polanski created in the West.	Vytautas Žalakevičius' film <i>Niekas nenorėjo mirti (Nobody Wanted to Die)</i> was the first film centred round the post-war clashes between Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance fighters and Soviet government representatives in a Lithuanian village. This film became the best known Lithuanian film across the USSR. Robertas Verba's documentary <i>Senis ir žemė (The Old Man and the Earth)</i> marked the beginning of the Lithuanian poetic documentary trend.	
1966	Ingmar Bergman's film <i>Persona</i> . Věra Chytilová's film <i>Sedmikrásky (Daisies)</i> . Jiří Menzel's film <i>Ostře sledované vlaky (Closely Watched Trains)</i> .	Almantas Grikevičius' film <i>Laikas eina per miestą (Time Passes Through the City)</i> – reflections on the history of Lithuania were conveyed through associative images of Vilnius. Raimondas Vabalas' film <i>Laiptai į dangų (Stairway to Heaven)</i> , based on a novel by Mykolas Sluckis, initiated a different approach to the portrayal of the post-war Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance struggle in the Lithuanian cinema.	
1967	Luis Buñuel's film <i>Belle de Jour</i> . Andrei Tarkovsky's film <i>Andrei Rublev</i> .		
1968	Stanley Kubrick's film <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> . Roman Polanski's film <i>Rosemary's Baby</i> . Pier Paolo Pasolini's film <i>Teorema</i> .	Almantas Grikevičius and Algirdas Dausa's film <i>Jausmai (Feelings)</i> was allowed to be screened only in Lithuania. In 1988 it was, however, "removed from the shelves". In 1995 it was recognised the best Lithuanian film of all time. After his role as the spy Ladeinikov in Savva Kulish's film <i>Myortvyy sezon (The Dead Season)</i> the Lithuanian actor Donatas Banionis became one of the popular Soviet stars. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lithuanian actors regularly appeared in films made in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and other Soviet republics.	
1969	Dennis Hopper's film <i>Easy Rider</i> . Éric Rohmer's film <i>Ma nuit chez Maud (My Night at Maud's)</i> . Andrzej Wajda's film <i>Wszystko na sprzedaż (Everything for Sale)</i> . Sergei Parajanov's film <i>Sayat Nova (The Color of Pomegranates)</i> .	Raimondas Vabalas' film <i>Birželis, vasaros pradžia (June, the Beginning of Summer)</i> was allowed to be screened only in Lithuania. Robertas Verba's documentary <i>Šimtamečių godos (The Dreams of the Centenarians)</i> , one of the key films of the Lithuanian poetic documentaries.	
1970	Luis Buñuel's film <i>Tristana</i> . Don Siegel's film <i>Dirty Harry</i> .	Marijonas Giedrys' film <i>Vyrų vasara (Men's Summer)</i> uses the Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance struggle as the basis for an adventure film about a KGB officer among Lithuanian partisans.	

Jonas Mekas' Diary Films

By Maksim Ivanov

At the age of 93, Jonas Mekas (b. 1922) is one of the oldest active filmmakers in the world and remains an avid practitioner of the diary film genre, which he famously pioneered in the second half of the 20th century.

Mekas' films have been screened extensively at some of the world's biggest film festivals and contemporary art venues, and he is often considered to have played a crucial role in the emergence and formation of the New American Cinema of the 1960s, significantly influencing the global scene of avant-garde filmmaking of the following years.

Born in a small agricultural town in Lithuania as the fifth child in the family (with the sixth soon to follow), Mekas left his homeland with his younger brother Adolfas in 1944, when they were in danger of getting arrested for their participation in the anti-Nazi resistance movement. Without ever reaching their destination, the two spent the next few years moving from one displaced persons camp in Germany to another, until landing in the USA in 1949.

Two weeks after his arrival in New York, Jonas bought a Bolex camera and started recording bits of his day-to-day life. In the beginning, it was merely a way of getting acquainted with the filming process and keeping the necessary skills in shape, without any intention of incorporating the collected footage in a proper film project. Little did he know that documenting the everyday on film would become his life-long obsession.

Despite being critical of the avant-garde film scene at first, Mekas had become one of its prominent figures by the mid-1960s. His leadership skills and organisational abilities paved the way for the establishment of an entire underground film industry, fully independent from Hollywood's network of film studios, cinema chains, and distribution companies.

In 1954, Jonas and his brother started the seminal magazine, *Film Culture*, which would go on to become the agora of avant-garde filmmakers and their supporters. In 1962, Mekas and twenty of his colleagues organised the Film-Makers' Cooperative, aimed at the distribution of avant-garde films.

From 1964 to 1967, he presented a series of New American Cinema festivals and expositions, which toured the USA, Europe, and South America. In 1970, he founded Anthology Film Archives, a unique centre for the preservation, study and screening of independent, avant-garde and experimental films.

The year 1961 saw the release of Mekas' own feature debut, *Guns of the Trees*, which not only had a plot and a cast, but also included spoken interludes by the legendary Beat poet Allen Ginsberg. In 1964 *The Brig*, a filmed version of The Living Theatre's performance of a play of the same name, came out. The film was awarded the Grand Prize in the documentary section of the Venice Film Festival.



A shot from J. Mekas' *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania*.

Mekas made his first major diary film, the three-hour-long *Walden: Diaries, Notes & Sketches*, in 1969. Since then, he has focused almost exclusively on this type of filmmaking.

His next diary film was the *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania* (1971–1972), which depicted his and Adolfas' reunion with their family after 27 years of separation. In 2006, the film was added to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in recognition of its cultural, aesthetic and historical significance.

Some of Mekas' other notable diary films include *Lost Lost Lost* (1976), *He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life* (1985), *Scenes from the Life of Andy Warhol* (1990), *Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas* (1992), and *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000).

Many of Mekas' works, although centred on a particular topic, group of people, or series of events, manifest a diversity of material, ranging

temporally from the filmmaker's first days in the USA to the moment of the film's editing. Yet the main focus is almost invariably on the close-knit circle of his family, friends, and fellow artists or filmmakers.

The earlier films normally contain soundless footage, set to the accompaniment of either separately recorded, desynchronised sound or selected musical pieces, as well as Mekas' voice-over commentary. The newer films, more often than not, feature synchronised sound, giving way to voice-over here and there. Mekas also consistently uses stylised written intertitles to both distinguish between separate sequences of the film and provide relevant information about their respective subjects.

Persisting throughout Mekas' filmography, the voice-over is usually self-reflexive, with the filmmaker contemplating the very activity of making a film about the people he cares about and the times that have irrevocably passed. In this context, filmmaking appears as a way of escaping



Jonas Mekas. Photo from a personal archive.

the confines of time and preserving the past. Such an approach to cinema culminated in 2007, when Mekas would post a film each day on his website as part of “The 365 Day Project”.

After Lithuania regained independence in 1990, Mekas embraced the new opportunities to take part in the cultural life of his country. In the 1990s and 2000s, he helped popularise in Lithuania the heritage of fellow Lithuanian-born American artist and founder of the Fluxus movement, George Maciunas. In 2007, the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center opened in Vilnius.

Mekas was also partly involved in the activities of the Ministry of Fluxus, a one-year-long art project established in Vilnius in April 2010. In addition, he has had several books of poetry and essays, his dream journal from the 1970s, and a book about George Maciunas, Yoko Ono and John Lennon published in Lithuania.

Mekas’ recent films include the five-hour-long *Lithuania and the Collapse of the USSR* (2008), which is composed of American television newscasts of the 1989–1991 events, shot off Mekas’ home television, and the more traditional diary pieces *Sleepless Nights Stories* (2011, premiering at the Berlin International Film Festival) and *Outtakes from the Life of a Happy Man* (2012).

The latter two show Mekas as an aging artist, for whom filmmaking is perhaps the best means of reconciling with the passing away of his friends.

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1971	The first Steven Spielberg’s film <i>Duel</i> and George Lucas’ first film <i>THX1138</i> . Bernardo Bertolucci’s <i>Ultimo tango a Parigi</i> (<i>Last Tango in Paris</i>). Luchino Visconti’s film <i>Morte a Venezia</i> (<i>Death in Venice</i>).	<i>Iskusstvo kino</i> (No. 1), a film magazine published in Moscow, featured Boris Runin’s article “Images, Symbols and Hieroglyphs”, which for the first time identified and critically reviewed the Lithuanian cinema tradition.	
1972	Francis Ford Coppola’s film <i>The Godfather</i> . Bob Fosse’s film <i>Cabaret</i> . Andrzej Wajda’s film <i>Wesele</i> (<i>The Wedding</i>).	Marijonas Giedrys’ historical epic film <i>Herkus Mantas</i> , which tells the story of the uprising of a Baltic tribe – Prussians – against the Crusaders.	
1973	Federico Fellini’s film <i>Amarcord</i> . Martin Scorsese’s film <i>Mean Streets</i> . Werner Herzog’s film <i>Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes</i> (<i>Aguirre, the Wrath of God</i>). Krzysztof Zanussi’s film <i>Iluminacja</i> (<i>The Illumination</i>). Wojciech Has’ film <i>Sanatorium pod klepsydrą</i> (<i>The Hourglass Sanatorium</i>).	The Lithuanian film studios started making TV films commissioned by Gosteleradio (Soviet Central Television and Radio). Henrikas Šablevičius created masterpieces of the Lithuanian poetic documentary – the short documentaries <i>Kelionė ūky lankomis</i> (<i>Journey Through the Fields of Nebulas</i>) and <i>Apolinaras</i> .	Vytautas Žalakevičius’ film <i>Eto slakoje slovo svoboda</i> (<i>The Sweet Word Freedom</i>) made at the Mosfilm film studio was awarded the Golden Prize of the 8 th Moscow International Film Festival. Speech by Juozas Petkevičius, chairman of the KGB of the Lithuanian SSR, at an operational staff meeting regarding the ideologically harmful views of the intelligentsia.
1974	Wim Wenders’ film <i>Alice in den Städten</i> (<i>Alice in the Cities</i>). Andrei Tarkovsky’s film <i>Zerkalo</i> (<i>The Mirror</i>).	The first Lithuanian musical <i>Velnio nuotaka</i> (<i>The Devil’s Bride</i>) by Arūnas Žebriūnas.	
1975	Steven Spielberg’s film <i>Jaws</i> . Andrzej Wajda’s film <i>Ziemia obiecana</i> (<i>The Promised Land</i>).	Algimantas Puipa’s, one of the most devoted authors of literary adaptations in Lithuanian cinema, debut film (co-directed with Stasys Motiejūnas) <i>Atpildo diena</i> (<i>The Day of Retribution</i>).	
1976	Martin Scorsese’s film <i>Taxi Driver</i> . Nagisa Ōshima’s film <i>Ai no korida</i> (<i>In the Realm of the Senses</i>). Nikita Mikhalkov’s film <i>Neokonchennaya Pyesa Dlya Mekhanicheskogo Pianino</i> (<i>An Unfinished Piece for a Player Piano</i>).		
1977	George Lucas’ film <i>Star Wars</i> . Andrzej Wajda’s film <i>Człowiek z marmuru</i> (<i>Man of Marble</i>).	<i>Iskusstvo kino</i> (No. 1) featured Vidas Siliūnas’ article “Poetry and Truth”, which promoted a discussion about the situation of Lithuanian cinema and its relation with national literature. Petras Abukevičius’ documentary <i>Nauji Nidos nuotykių</i> (<i>New Adventures of Nida</i>) launched a cycle of educational films about nature.	
1978	David Lynch’s film <i>Eraserhead</i> .	Arūnas Žebriūnas’ film <i>Riešutų duona</i> (<i>Nut Bread</i>) – one of the most popular Lithuanian films of all time. Viktoras Starošas’ documentary <i>Aš myliu direktorę</i> (<i>I Love the Director</i>) was the first to tell about children abandoned by their parents.	

Documentary Film after 1990

By Rasa Paukštytė

The first years after the restoration of the independence of Lithuania were a time of recovery, breakthrough, diversity, and creative ideas in the Lithuanian documentary film industry. Some of the ideas, the moral and ethical beliefs, and the requirements of high artistic quality that matured at that time shaped the documentary film scene in Lithuania today.

After long years of Soviet censorship, where genuine and honest documentary filmmaking provided a permanent refuge for creators who aimed to remember and to remind their audiences of one's own self and identity and where the style of Aesop became the main instrument of the language of film, Lithuanian documentary filmmakers took the opportunity of the period of reformation and openness and spoke out about previously suppressed historical traumas, analysed the rapidly changing here-and-now, and summarised the most important, dramatic events in the country. *Vėliava iš plytų* (*The Brick Flag*, 1988), an investigative documentary by Saulius Beržinis, was a particularly important film of the transitional period. This is a story about Artūras Sakalauskas, a Soviet Army private from Lithuania, who shot the soldiers who had humiliated and

abused him. The story therefore became a diagnosis of the society of the late Soviet era.

Changes in the style and format of films took place. Short films were replaced by full-length films and poetic films were replaced by journalistic-type reporting films. Henrikas Šablevičius, master of the short poetic documentary, created some detailed and coherent film narratives aiming to expose many themes that were forbidden during the Soviet era: stories of Lithuanian freedom fighters and their struggle against the Soviets in the film *Už tėvynę Lietuvą* (*For Lithuania, the Homeland*, 1991), the memoirs of political prisoner Balys Gajauskas in *Sustingęs tvermės metas* (*The Frozen Time of Endurance*, 1990), and the story of a visit to Jonas Pajaujis, a former participant in the resistance movement and an inhabitant of the island of Gotland, in the film *Laba diena – God Dag* (*Good Day – God Dag*, 1993). Film director Edmundas Zubavičius, an observer of social realities with a hallmark lyrical style, and cameraman Romualdas Damulis went on to create many films featuring the wounds left by the Soviet period, but the two epitomising works of the period were their *Dar sykį Lie-tu-va* (*Once Again Lithuania*, 1990)



A shot from A. Stonys' *Neregijų žemė* (*Earth of the Blind*).



A shot from L. Mikuta's *Pietūs Lipovėje* (*Dinner*).



A shot from O. Buraja's *Liza, namo!* (*Lisa, Go home!*).

and *Lietuva. Žodžiai į sąžinę* (*Lithuania. Words to the Conscience*, 1991) dedicated to the path leading to the restoration of the independence of Lithuania. This diptych perhaps most accurately reflects the type of films being made by the older generation of documentary filmmakers in the first years of independence.

Among the documentaries that reflected the general mood and problems of the nation, several stood out. The film *Sala* (*Island*, 1990) by film director Rimtautas Šilinis and cameraman Viktoras Radzevičius depicted a mental hospital as a metaphor for the post-Soviet society. There was also a series of four films by Rimtautas Šilinis together called *Penktas Dievo įsakymas* (*The Fifth Commandment of God*, 1991–1994). These films were dedicated to the most important political events of 1991, including the attack on the TV tower in Vilnius and the victims of that attack (13th January), the massacre of border officials at Medininkai (31st July), and a timeline of the events that took place during the August Coup in Moscow.

The young generation that set out on its creative path in the early years of independence could only rely on themselves. It was difficult for the new country to support the expensive film industry (and this partly explains the abundance of documentaries and dearth of feature films at that time). The Lithuanian film studios, earlier the only base for film production, became just one of several studios in the country. Financial independence encouraged many young directors to become film producers and control the fate and distribution of their own productions. The Kinema Studio established by Šarūnas Bartas became one of the most important centres of attraction for young creators.

The film directors of that generation focused on unusual spaces and identified with marginalised people, thus communicating the message of the separation of the directors from the crowd and rediscovering the suggestiveness of the poetic mode of expression in the new reality. The noise of rallies and speeches were juxtaposed with the silent heroes and a prayer at the foot of the Gates

of Dawn (*Praėjusios dienos atminimui [In Memory of a Day Gone By, 1889]*, director Šarūnas Bartas), the incoherent mutter of Misha, a resident of the Užupis area in Vilnius (*Dešimt minučių prieš Ikarą skrydį [Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus, 1990]*, director Arūnas Matelis), the silence of the blind (*Neregių žemė [Earth of the Blind, 1992]*, director Audrius Stonys), the creaking of snow underfoot during a funeral procession (*Rudens sniegas [Autumn snow, 1992]*, director Valdas Navasaitis), and the sounds of the daily life of Roma in the Pavilnys area of Vilnius (*Kirtimų idilės [The Idylls of Kirtimai, 1992]*, director Artūras Jevdokimovas). The works of these filmmakers also showcased a silent protest against the spirit of films containing a lot of dialogue. They projected slow, contemplative images that were a declaration of their desire to create anthropological films or what they considered to be pure films. These images captured stories filled with internal energy about human loneliness in the vortices of history and about the universal and currently relevant pursuit of inner spirituality in our everyday life. The new film dissemination opportunities that opened up for this generation brought international recognition to filmmakers. In 1992 *Earth of the Blind* by Stonys received the European Film Award for Best Documentary of the Year from the European Film Academy. (The particular contribution of Rimvydas Leipus, the cameraman and co-creator of many films made during the transitional years in Lithuanian history, must be emphasised in creating the story and visual expression of *Earth of the Blind*). Films by Navasaitis and Matelis earned awards at Oberhausen, Pärnu, Paris (*Cinéma du Réel*), Babelsberg, and other festivals.

The focus on the self, the spiritual world, and individuality is the trademark of the generation of filmmakers of this period, and older filmmakers followed this trend. Kornelijus Matuzevičius, the cameraman of Šablevičius' films, and his wife, film director Diana Matuzevičienė, continued the tradition of the 1960s poetic mode in documentaries in their *Šičionykštė (A Local, 2001)* and *Šiandien (Today, 2003)*, while their most famous creation, a story about writer Jokūbas Josadė told in the documentary *Iliuzijos (Illusions,*

1993), reminds us that the creative world and culture have always been very important subjects for documentary makers in Lithuania. Film director Vytautas V. Landsbergis and film chroniclers such as Vytautas Damaševičius and Juozas Matonis have immortalised many figures of culture in their films.

After a traineeship at Jonas Mekas' Anthology Film Archives in New York, film director Algimantas Maceina created his memorable experimental film, *Juoda dėžė (Black Box, 1994)*, which featured the then unusual film diary form. In this film the director tells about his trip to bring back the remains of his grandfather who had been deported to Siberia by the Soviets. Film director Janina Lapinskaitė, who at that time had just started her career in TV, chose to depict odd people and outcasts who live next door to us in her films: *Iš skruzdėlių gyvenimo (From the Life of Ants, 1995)*, *Venecijaus gyvenimas ir Cezario mirtis (The Life of Venecijus and Caesar's Death, 2002)*, and *Traukinys stovi penkias minutes (The Train Stops for Five Minutes, 2009)*. Documentary filmmakers Rimantas and Julija Gruodis portray a consistent and subtle anthology of today's life in Lithuania's outlying areas and the work and joy of ordinary people in *Pirtis (The Bathhouse, 1997)*, *Šeimyna (Household, 2001)*, *Brasbandas (The Brass Band, 2006)*, *Upė (The River, 2009)*, and *Sėkmės metai (Lucky Year, 2014)*.

Documentaries by Matelis and Stonys, the filmmakers of the generation that lived at the turning point in Lithuanian history and laureates of the National Culture and Art Award, have remained important representatives of the Lithuanian world of film at the most famous international festivals and events. With a portfolio of nearly twenty documentary films, Stonys is one of the most creative and prolific filmmakers of the middle generation of Lithuanian filmmakers. His films *Kenotafas (Cenotaph, 2013)*, *Raminas (Ramin, 2011)*, *Varpas (The Bell, 2007)*, *Ūkų ūkai (Uku ukai) (2006)*, and others accommodate a clear visualisation of reflections on existence and rough everyday life, randomness, experimental spirit, and loyalty to his own cinematic voice. Meanwhile, Matelis is the creator of unique

film projects, a producer, and an initiator of civil campaigns. His most famous films have been awarded at Leipzig, Amsterdam, Cannes, and other prestigious film festivals. His films *Sekmadienis. Evangelija pagal liftininką Albertą (Sunday. The Gospel According to Lift-Operator Albertas, 2003)*, a grim joke of a film reminiscent of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, and *Prieš parsikrendant į Žemę (Before Flying Back to Earth, 2005)*, a riveting fable about transience and eternity dedicated to children suffering from cancer, are today part of the "golden collection" of Lithuanian documentary films. The film racked up awards at several international festivals and became the only documentary film created outside the USA to receive recognition from the Directors Guild of America.

Over the past decade, trends concerning the making of history-centered and social documentaries have been coming into focus. These types of documentaries were often compromised in the Soviet era and therefore were viewed with distrust for a long time. Now documentary filmmakers more frequently opt to examine social life, however. The international premier of *Liza, namo! (Lisa, Go Home!)* by Oksana Buraja took place at the Leipzig International Documentary and Animated Film Festival in 2012. The film, which has featured at dozens of international festivals, tells the story of the divide between the worlds of childhood

and adulthood and also talks about the trap of belonging to one social layer or another. The "bottom" layer of society is a vicious circle for the hero of *Galutinis tikslas (Final Destination, 2013)*, which was directed by Ričardas Marcinkus. The film reveals the director's attempts to change the hero's life and the tenacious reality threatening to steal the hero's attempts to change.

Answers to important questions about the world and life are provided by children from difficult backgrounds in *Pokalbiai rimtomis temomis (Conversations on Serious Topics, 2012)* directed by Giedrė Beinoriūtė, who pursues sincerity and authenticity by using radical minimalism. Young filmmakers Linas Mikuta and Kristina Sereikaitė regularly bring representatives of socially marginalised groups of the population to the screen: *Dzūkijos jautis (Dzūkija Ox, 2013)* and *Pietūs Lipovkėje (Dinner, 2014)*. Compassion, social survey, and reflections of the Lithuanian poetic film tradition are the constant themes of these films.

In recent years we have also witnessed the increased attention of documentary filmmakers to the world at large, and therefore the geographic and thematic arena of Lithuanian films is rapidly expanding. The social implications of everyday life in different countries, unfamiliar cultures, or the scars of aggressive political policies have become objects of exploration. Memorable



A shot from M. Survilā's *Stebuklų laukas (The Field of Magic)*.



A shot from A. Matelis' *Dešimt minučių prieš Ikarą skrydį (Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus)*.

debuts in recent years have put filmmakers such as Maratas Sargsyanas (*Tėvas* [Father, 2012]), Lina Lužytė (*Igruški* [Igrushki, 2012]), and Tomas Smulkis (*Rojaus beieškant* [Paradise Road, 2012]) on the map.

Director Audrius Stonys avails of his extensive experience in documentary filmmaking in order to observe what he has always found interesting – the spiritual content of human life and its manifestations. The once famous Georgian wrestler Ramin Lomsadze in Stonys' film *Ramin* (The Grand Prize at Pärnu International Festival Award in 2014) feels lonely among his fellows and dreams of meeting his old love and bringing back the illusions of the past stolen by time. In his recent film *Avinėlio vartai* (*Gates of the Lamb*, 2014), Stonys aims to depict the meaning of baptism. He studies sacred rituals of various nations and people of different ages and social backgrounds and creates a seemingly generalised sense of faith.

UB Lama (2011), Vertelytė's film made in Mongolia, shows the efforts of a mischievous boy to get closer to his dream of becoming a Buddhist monk. Young film director Julija Zubavičienė set out together with her grandmothers on a trip across Europe in her film *Lida, Vanda, Liusia* (2014) to get to know themselves and their relatives better and to discuss the experiences

of women, who lived through the Soviet period, within the context of current everyday life in Europe.

Anthropologist Mantas Kvedaravičius' film *Barzakh* (winner of the Ecumenical Jury Prize at the 61st International Berlin Film Festival and the Amnesty International Film Prize) and naturalist Mindaugas Survilāš film *Stebuklų laukas* (*The Field of Magic*) were born from the belief in the power of the camera. Kvedaravičius spent three years filming Chechen people waiting for the return of their missing relatives. The director seeks to present the condition between life and death, hope and illusion, and knowledge and uncertainty. The existential, even mystical sense of being in this film has reporting and political undertones. Survilāš created an anthropological and moving film about the people we encounter on a daily basis and who are considered invisible as they happen to live below the poverty line. The films *Barzakh* and *The Field of Magic* have been created by sharing life with the heroes and facing their pain or poverty.

Historical reflection in films has also been gaining momentum. In her *Gyveno senelis ir bobutė* (*Grandpa and Grandma*, 2007), Beinoriūtė offers a unique creative documentary and animated film project reminding us of the deportations to Siberia. A trilogy interpreting Soviet myths and realities is offered by Giedrė Žickytė in her *Baras* (*Bar*, 2009), *Kaip mes žaidėme revoliuciją* (*How We Played Revolution*, 2011) and *Meistras ir Tatjana* (*The Master and Tatyana*, 2014). Vytautas V. Landsbergis has created a film about the last Lithuanian partisans of the post-war period (*Trispalvis* [Tricolour, 2013]). Interest in films made by these film directors is a sign that Lithuanian history awaits interpretation and deeper exploration to help people to better understand the genesis of the spiritual condition of today's society.



A shot from M. Kvedaravičius' *Barzakh*.

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1979	Krzysztof Kieslowski's film <i>Amator</i> (<i>Camera Buff</i>). Francis Ford Coppola's film <i>Apocalypse Now</i> . Woody Allen's film <i>Manhattan</i> .		
1980	Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film <i>Berlin Alexanderplatz</i> .		
1981	István Szabó's film <i>Mephisto</i> . Margarethe von Trotta's film <i>Die Zeit bleierne</i> (<i>Marianne and Julianne</i>).	Almantas Grikevičius' film <i>Faktas</i> (<i>Gruppa krovni nol / Fact</i>) was shown at the Cannes Film Festival competition. Yelena Solovey won the award for Best Supporting Actress in this film. The Lithuanian film studios made the anti-Western propaganda film <i>Medaus mėnuo Amerikoje</i> (<i>Honeymoon in America</i>) – the only film not to have the name of the director in the credits.	
1982	Steven Spielberg's film <i>E.T.</i> Ridley Scott's film <i>Blade Runner</i> .	Vytautas Žalakevičius returned to Lithuania and made the film <i>Atsiprašau</i> (<i>I'm Sorry</i>).	
1983	Nagisha Oshima's film <i>Senjō no Meri Kurisumasu</i> (<i>Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence</i>). Juraj Jakubisko's film <i>Tisícročná včela</i> (<i>The Millennial Bee</i>).	Raimondas Vabalas made the film <i>Skrydis per Atlantą</i> (<i>Flight over the Atlantic</i>) about Darius and Girėnas' flight in 1933 in the plane <i>Lituanica</i> . The film became the most watched domestic film and its record remains unrivalled. Lithuanian film studios started making animated films: Nijolė Valadkevičiūtė's debut film <i>Medis</i> (<i>The Tree</i>).	
1984	Jim Jarmush's film <i>Stranger than Paradise</i> . Sergio Leone's film <i>Once Upon a Time in America</i> .		Instruction by Juozas Petkevičius, chairman of the KGB of the Lithuanian SSR, to local units regarding the control of video distribution.
1985	Claude Lanzmann's film <i>Shoah</i> .	Raimundas Banionis' debut love drama <i>Mano mažytė žmona</i> (<i>My Little Wife</i>).	
1986	David Lynch's film <i>Blue Velvet</i> .	Theatre director Jonas Vaitkus' debut <i>Zodiakas</i> (<i>Zodiac</i>), an experimental film about Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis.	
1987	Wim Wenders' film <i>Der Himmel über Berlin</i> (<i>Wings of Desire</i>). Krzysztof Kieslowski started working on his TV series <i>Dekalog</i> (<i>The Decalogue</i>).	A retrospective of the documentary films of the Baltic countries at the 19 th Nyon International Documentary Film Festival (Switzerland) was the first comprehensive presentation of Lithuanian documentary films abroad.	

Audrius Stonys:

Showing the Invisible



Audrius Stonys.
Photo by Evaldas Ivanauskas.

Film director Audrius Stonys set out on the path of filmmaking in 1989 and has produced over 20 documentaries since, most of which have won awards at various festivals. In 1992, his *Neregijų žemė* (Earth of the Blind) received the European Film Award for Best Documentary of the Year from the European Film Academy. Stonys is a voting member of the European Film Academy and a member of the European Documentary Network.

Your films continue the Lithuanian poetic documentary tradition. How would you describe your relationship with this tradition?

The relationship with the national poetic documentary mode is undeniable. Arūnas Matelis, Valdas Navasaitis, Šarūnas Bartas and Giedrė Beinoriūtė, everyone who had anything to do with the creative work of Henrikas Šablevičius or communicated with him became “infected” with poetry. The essence of poetic documentary does not lie in the poetic depiction of beautiful images, but rather in the attempt to cast a view on the other side of reality in the belief that in addition to fact, character and incident, there is some kind of space and it would be very interesting to see it. It seems that nothing is happening in Šablevičius’ films; for example his *Kelionė ūkų lankomis* (Journey Through the Fields of Nebulas) depicts a man sitting by his cottage, railway workers replacing rails, and then a train travelling into the mist. Yet watching the film, one is thinking about lost values, human simplicity, and innocence. Or, for example, in *Šimtamečių godos* (Dreams of Centenarians) by Robertas Verba, old people talk about their lives and that’s it. But behind their conversation is a huge layer of meaning.

Lithuanian poetic film is closely linked with black-and-white photography, and as a result it is

very visual. We peer at a person’s face and try to read the story in it. It is true that today this kind of film is undergoing a transformation, becoming more sociable and communicative; there is much less silence and more action in it.

You are the only director in Lithuania who has been awarded the Felix, the European Film Award for Best Documentary, by the European Film Academy for your film Earth of the Blind in 1992. What does this recognition mean to you?

The award has made my path easier, but it did not destroy me. I was only 26 and all my life was before me, so it made no sense for me to stop and bask in the honour of receiving such an important prize. I wanted to search for untried means of expression and new themes. My next film was *Griuvėsių apaštalas* (Apostle of Ruins), in which I rejected metaphors and used the Georgian language and colour, because I wanted to do something completely different from what I’d discovered in *Earth of the Blind*. My story was inspired by my acquaintance with Alexander Oboladze, a Georgian who had once been a party animal and a lover of restaurants, but suddenly became infinitely lonely. The next film was *Antigravitacija* (Antigravity). Two years after the completion of *Earth of the Blind*, I still had the impression that a man climbing a big



A shot from A. Stonys’ *Avinėlio vartai* (Gates of the Lamb).

chimney had made on me. I had a desire to share this impression when one’s breath is taken away at a high altitude. I am curious to see objects and phenomena that are right by our sides and yet are often unnoticeable. I have never been aiming at global recognition, and for this reason I accepted the Felix as an unexpected quirk. When I found out about the nomination, I thought, “Ah well, perhaps they’ll invite me to Berlin!” That was all I expected.

How does the cooperation with cameramen take place? They often appear to be, whether it is Rimvydas Leipus, Audrius Kemežys or Laisvūnas Karvelis, thinking in a similar vein as you.

In documentary filmmaking the input of a cameraman is altogether crucial. If you wish to achieve what you are dreaming of achieving, then during filming the director and the cameraman must understand each other without words. At this point other senses are activated. I strive towards a creative relationship. I understand that the

outcome will largely depend on the cameraman’s approach and the “dialogue” between us. When I feel that there is an inner connection between us, we can get down to work. In a documentary, the cameraman is very independent, especially during filming.



A shot from A. Stonys’ *Avinėlio vartai* (Gates of the Lamb).

How long does filming take? After all it is necessary to find a common language not only with the cameraman, but also with the characters at whom the camera is directed?

It depends. It took 14 days to shoot *Ramin* and two years to shoot *Kenotafas* (*Cenotaph*). The production of my current film, *Moteris ir ledynas* (*The Woman and the Glacier*), has also been taking quite a long while. It took two years to shoot *Avinėlio Vartai* (*Gates of the Lamb*). Each film requires a different shooting time. One of the components of the film is establishing relations with the main character. Furthermore, there are many other things that influence the duration of the filmmaking process. Sometimes even mystical experiences are triggered when you feel that you can no longer shoot, that there's something in the way, that there's something you can't find. A month or two or three pass and suddenly you realise that something had to be resolved inside yourself. You realise that had you not waited those three months, the film may not have appeared at all. It's a kind of internal, yet palpable logic, but difficult to understand. We could have shot *Cenotaph* faster, but then the final scene where the soldiers remain unburied would have been lost, and the film would have had a different meaning. In a documentary film, you must obey a certain rhythm dictated by reality.

The film *Uku ukai* emerged from a desire to expose the beauty industry, but in the course of shooting your attitude changed radically. Does it often happen that life adjusts preconceived visions?

Perhaps not a single one of my films was unaffected by this. The idea changes, because reality turns it upside down and destroys it. At first I was very frightened; it seemed to me that was it, that was the end. I had an idea and everything took another turn. Then I understood that this was supposed to be so. None of my films are as I originally conceived them. In *Uku ukai* both the theme and the character changed. Instead of a strong, healthy, young man who goes swimming every day irrespective of whether it rains or snows, we have a tiny old woman tip-toeing across her room. *Viena* (*Alone*) was supposed to be about a girl who was going to visit her mother who was in prison and talking what she sees and feels, but instead I made a completely silent film. *Tas, kurio nėra* (*New Martyrology*) was supposed to show a man who died unbeknownst to anybody, but instead the Lithuanian film director Augustinas Baltrušaitis, whom fate and circumstances tossed into complete oblivion, became the protagonist of the film. When shooting *Cenotaph* it seemed that the film was about the meaning of reburial, but it turned out to be about meaninglessness. The initial concept is therefore diametrically

opposite. When I was shooting *Trys minutės po didžiojo sprogimo* (*Three Minutes after the Big Bang*), it seemed that a simple person would say very profound truths, but it turned out that it was all the same to this man: he didn't care a fig. So I had to look into the mirror. But this is just a natural thing in documentary filmmaking. The moment you think you know everything and it only remains to capture your "discoveries", the truth of life takes over and turns against you. So, I let my visions be transformed. The essence lies in the quest. Subsequently, the films will live lives of their own.

Interviewed by Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Atverti duris ateinančiam (*Open the Door to Him Who Comes*, 1989, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Baltijos kelias (*Baltic Way*, co-directed with Arūnas Matelis, 1989, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Neregijų žemė (*Earth of the Blind*, 1992, short documentary, 24 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Griuvėsių apaštalas (*Apostle of Ruins*, 1993, short documentary, 18 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Antigravitacija (*Antigravitation*, 1995, short documentary, 20 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Skrajojimai mėlynam lauke (*Flying over Blue Field*, 1996, short documentary, 20 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Uostas (*Harbour*, 1998, short documentary, 10 min., 35mm, colour)

Fedia. Trys minutės po Didžiojo sprogimo (*Fedia. Three minutes after the Big Bang*, 1999, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, colour)

Skrydis per Lietuvą arba 510 sekundžių tylos (*Flight over Lithuania or 510 Seconds of Silence*, co-directed with Arūnas Matelis, 2000, short documentary, 8 min., 35 mm, colour)

Viena (*Alone*, 2001, short documentary, 16 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Paskutinis vagonas (*The Last Car*, 2002, short fiction, 28 min., 35 mm, colour)

Tas, kurio nėra (*Countdown*, 2004, documentary, 42 min., 35 mm, colour)

Ūkų ūkai (*Uku ukai*, 2006, documentary, 30 min., 35 mm, colour)

Varpas (*The Bell*, 2007, documentary, 56 min., colour)

Keturi žingsniai (*Four Steps*, 2008, documentary, 42 min., colour)

Aš perėjau ugnį, tu buvai su manim (*Through Fire I Went, You Were With Me*, 2010, documentary, 38 min., colour)

Raminas (*Ramin*, 2011, documentary, 58 min., colour)

Kenotafas (*Cenotaph*, 2013, documentary, 61 min., colour)

Avinėlio vartai (*Gates of the Lamb*, 2014, documentary, 61 min., colour)



A shot from A. Stonys' *Ūkų ūkai* (*Uku ukai*).



A shot from A. Stonys' *Ūkų ūkai* (*Uku ukai*).

Arūnas Matelis:

Films Emerge from Sensations



Arūnas Matelis.
Photo by Martynas Ambrazas.

Arūnas Matelis is the first director from Eastern and Central Europe to earn the Directors Guild of America Award (2007), one of the most important awards in the film industry, for Outstanding Directorial Achievements. His film *Prieš parskrendant į Žemę* (Before Flying Back to Earth), a story of children who are ill with cancer and of lessons of love, faith and strength, was noticed and recognised across the world.

Your first films, *Baltijos kelias* (The Baltic Way) and *Dešimt minučių prieš Ikaro skrydį* (Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus), appeared in 1990 when our country experienced historic transformations. Did these transformations inspire your creative work or were they on the contrary a challenge that had to be overcome?

This historic turning point essentially gave me very much, because the system had changed. On the other hand, it was very difficult because many film directors were seduced by the easiest option, flag waving. But in that case, there wasn't any place for a film, only for one-day political reporting. When everything is bubbling around, it's hard to understand where the artistic truth is, whether we'd better go to the barricades and defend the homeland or whether we should continue shooting films. My colleagues and I opted for a kind of dissenting position. The old film editors at the Lithuanian film studios were asking, "Where are your films with flags and songs? Why are you shooting a courtyard in Užupis?" I had to decide what really was important and what I wanted to talk about. Everything seemed to have been opened up, but a choice had to be made. That turning point in the history of Lithuania inspired me immensely or maybe I only needed time to mature.

How did the flight motif appear in your films?

Very simply. I was born three days after Gagarin flew into space. Maybe when I was in hospital, the radio was broadcasting news of the first flight. This is a theme that got stuck in my mind.

After Gagarin's flight, the Communists insisted that there was no God. Your films however contain prominent religious and mythological allusions and attempts to guess how and why we are here.

For me, as a former mathematician, it's clear that we are not alone in this world. Therefore, one of the most important things is to invite people to communicate and to learn. There is a phrase that in feature films the director is God, in documentary films God is the director. Life is infinitely big and full. You can't plan everything to the fullest. Generally, a sensation that is hard to explain gives rise to a film. You just need to be honest and sensitive and to wait for the appropriate moment.

What factors encouraged you to talk about children ill with cancer in the film *Before Flying Back to Earth*? People are often afraid to cross that threshold and see the pain.

In a sense it was easier for me to take that decision, because I'd already had experience when my daughter was ill. On the other hand, this was

one of the greatest experiences in my life, perhaps equivalent to 13th January 1991 in the life of our country [*as a result of clashes with Soviet military personnel, 13 civilians were killed on that day in Lithuania], when I felt that the skies had opened up. It was like a flash of lightning and suddenly I understood a lot of things, even what people had experienced during the Holocaust. I wanted to share that experience. It became clear that many things just began at the oncology hospital. Yes, there is pain, uncertainty and loss there. But at the same time there are many warm and bright moments. Human strength and the ability to be happy open up, which when you are healthy often don't even make you content. My arrival at the hospital was natural, although the filming crew (Audrius Kemežys and Giedrė Beinoriūtė) found it difficult. I said, "We're going to make a film only if you come to realise that you want to be here. We can't come for an hour, do the shooting and leave." We used to go to the hospital without a camera and walk around. Two months later, the mother of one patient phoned me and said that we could come back again, because she had to collect her benefit payment. Then we understood we could do the shooting, because there was a sense of community between us; people began to trust us.

You left the camera to the children and they could freely record their lives and hospital rituals. How did the heroes of the film become creative collaborators?

We wanted to achieve a sense of playfulness. If it were my choice, I'd give the main prize to Andrius, one of the main characters, for his contribution to the film. He made some fantastic shots about how he communicated with the nurse and how medicines worked. But for those shots, the film would have been different. We wanted Andrius' view from within. The story has a difficult ending, but Andrius did what no one had so far done before. A child who'd had a first relapse of a severe case of leukaemia filmed his magic and funny moments of life full of happiness.

The speeded-up image of clouds passing and changing seasons outside the hospital walls and the relief image of the Earth. Did you conceive this form of storytelling during filming?

You don't start shooting on impulse, but build and think everything over. Of course, each day can bring different frames that form a certain shape. There were things that had been quite clear from the start. There were discoveries; for example, the boy filmed by Kemežys who could break a piece of wood with a knifehand strike. Perhaps only Robert de Niro could perform so eloquently in an entire story involving a single piece of wood. Surprisingly, I write a lot before filming, but after the film is made, many things come out differently from what I wrote. For example, episodes that I wrote as theoretical ones appeared in the frame.



A shot from A. Matelis' *Prieš parskrendant į Žemę* (Before Flying Back to Earth).

A shot from A. Matelis' *Iš dar nebaigtų Jeruzalės pasakų* (From Unfinished Tales of Jerusalem).

The flight had already been filmed four years before the film was shot.

Did you expect the film to be such a huge success?

During the creative process you don't think about success. I just wanted people to appear who after the screening of the film would like to help those children. Obviously, it's pleasant to receive a prize on the same stage with Martin Scorsese, but to me human understanding is more important. For example, after a screening in Aachen, the audience decided to collect a large sum of money and build a small rehabilitation centre for the children, where they could, at least for a short while, forget about their illness. Or the 100 Japanese musicians who, after watching the film, came to Vilnius at their own expense and organised two charity concerts. The money that was raised was used to buy children's cancer diagnostic equipment for Kaunas Clinics. These are the most important awards.

In addition to your work as a director, you are also a producer. You were among the first in Lithuania to establish your own independent film studio, Nominum. Lately you have produced films by such young directors as Oksana Buraja, Eglė Vertelytė and Ramunė Rakauskaitė. Why did you choose this course of action?

I want to encourage film production, because it's too difficult to give so much of yourself each time. However, even producing a film, I am closely involved in the creative process. It's very interesting for me to create and to participate when new films are born from a joint effort. This process allows me to keep my form and to nurture my other works rather than just to sit and wait for an inspiration or a favourable opportunity to appear. I'm very pleased with Buraja's film *Išpažintis* (*Confession*). For me, this is one of the least conformist films in Lithuania.

There is also the new documentary film, working title *Gladiatoriai. Kita planeta* (*Gladiators. A Different World*) in the making. What will it be like?

The title is not yet clear. Either *Gladiators* or *My Beloved Losers*. As long as the film hasn't been made, I'm afraid to say anything. I've been waiting for the film for a very long time, perhaps seven years. We were perhaps the first after 40 years to obtain a permit to send our team to the Giro d'Italia and to do the shooting. I've ridden one of those bikes myself, and I tried to get through those mountains where the athletes compete. It's almost impossible for an ordinary man to complete this route, but still it's interesting to identify with those whom you are making a film about.

Interviewed by Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Pelesos milžinai (*Giants of Pelesa*, 1989, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm b/w)

Baltijos kelias (*Baltic Way*, co-directed with Audrius Stonys, 1989, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Dešimt minučių prieš Ikaro skrydį (*Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus*, 1991, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, colour)

Autoportretas (*Self-portrait*, 1993, 10 min., short documentary, 35 mm, b/w)

Iš dar nebaigtų Jeruzalės pasakų (*From Unfinished Tales of Jerusalem*, 1996, short documentary, 26 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Pirmasis atsisveikinimas su Rojum (*First Farewell to Paradise*, 1998, short documentary, 15 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Priverstinės emigracijos dienoraštis (*The Diary of Forced Emigration*, 1999, short documentary, 22 min., video, b/w)

Skrydis per Lietuvą arba 510 sekundžių tylos (*Flight over Lithuania or 510 Seconds of Silence*, 2000, co-directed with Audrius Stonys, short documentary, 8 min., 35 mm, colour)

Sekmadienis. Evangelija pagal liftininką Albertą (*Sunday. The Gospel According to lift-man Albertas*, 2003, short documentary, 19 min., 35mm, colour)

Prieš parsikrendant į žemę (*Before Flying Back To The Earth*, 2005, documentary, 52 min., 35 mm, colour)

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1988	Martin Scorsese's film <i>The Last Temptation of Christ</i> . Sergei Parajanov's film <i>Ashug-Kerib</i> .	Algimantas Puipa's film <i>Amžinoji šviesa</i> (<i>Eternal Light</i>) won a prize at the San Remo Film Festival (Italy). A retrospective of the documentary films of the Baltic countries at the 38 th Berlin Film Festival Panorama Programme. Saulius Beržinis' documentary film <i>Vėliava iš plytų</i> (<i>The Brick Flag</i>) was the first film about <i>dedovschina</i> (abuse of new conscripts in the USSR army). The film won a prize at the Oberhausen Film Festival. Robertas Verba filmed all the rallies and events of the Reform Movement (<i>Sąjūdis</i>) of Lithuania.	The initiative group of the Reform Movement (<i>Sąjūdis</i>) of Lithuania was founded.
1989	Giuseppe Tornatore's <i>Nuovo Cinema Paradiso</i> (<i>Cinema Paradiso</i>). Tim Burton's film <i>Batman</i> .	Šarūnas Bartas established the first independent film studio Kinema bringing together such filmmakers of the youngest generation as Audrius Stonys, Arūnas Matelis and Valdas Navasaitis.	
1990	Tim Burton's film <i>Edward Scissorhands</i> .	The collapse of the Soviet film production, promotion and distribution system. The Cinematography Committee of the Lithuanian SSR was repealed and a cinema department was established under the Ministry of Culture. Raimondas Vabalas' film <i>Miškais ateina ruduo</i> (<i>The Reflection of Autumn Coming in Forests</i>) based on a novel by Marius Katiliškis. This was the first censorship-free film. Arūnas Matelis' documentary <i>Dešimt minučių prieš Ikaro skrydį</i> (<i>Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus</i>) won the main prize at the Oberhausen Film Festival.	Restoration of the independence of Lithuania.
1991	Joel and Ethan Coen's film <i>Barton Fink</i> . Ridley Scott's film <i>Thelma and Louise</i> .	Šarūnas Bartas' film <i>Trys dienos</i> (<i>Three Days</i>) was screened at the Berlin Young Film Forum. The film won the Ecumenical Jury Prize and the FIPRESCI Prize. Gytis Lukšas' psychological drama <i>Žemės keleiviai</i> (<i>Pilgrims on Earth</i>) won the Silver Grape Award at the Central and Eastern European Film Festival in Łagów, Poland, in 1993.	Collapse of the USSR. The independent state of Lithuania begins to be recognised by the rest of the world.
1992	Clint Eastwood's film <i>Unforgiven</i> . David Lynch's TV series <i>Twin Peaks</i> .	Audrius Stonys' documentary <i>Neregių žemė</i> (<i>Earth of the Blind</i>) won the Felix, the European Film Award for Best Documentary.	
1993	Jane Campion's film <i>The Piano</i> . Krzysztof Kieślowski's first film of the trilogy <i>Trzy kolory. Niebieski</i> (<i>Three Colours. Blue</i>).	Lithuanian film studios started providing services to German, American and French filmmakers who were shooting films in Lithuania.	
1994	Quentin Tarantino's film <i>Pulp Fiction</i> . Steven Spielberg's film <i>Schindler's List</i> . Béla Tarr's film <i>Sátántangó</i> (<i>Satan's Tango</i>). Kazimierz Kutz's film <i>Śmierć jak kromka chleba</i> (<i>Death as a Slice of Bread</i>).	Janina Lapinskaitė's directorial debut <i>Tai mano likimas</i> (<i>This Is My Destiny</i>), which established her as a director of both documentaries and feature films, and, also an actress.	

Janina Lapinskaitė:

Heroes Carry Their Sadness Along with Them



Janina Lapinskaitė.
Photo by Martynas Vidzbelis.

You were a student of film director Henrikas Šablevičius. What influence did your communication with this filmmaker have on your films?

I'm from the first group of students who were trained as film directors in Lithuania. Before that all filmmakers were trained at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow (VGIK). We started our studies in 1970 and after graduation went to work in television. Our training course was a bit experimental, and there were a lot acting courses, which later affected my creative work.

Šablevičius was my teacher and there was no escape from his influence. He taught me to love my heroes. My documentaries are sometimes referred to as creative and feature documentaries. I think that this style also features in Šablevičius' films. For many years he was my teacher and then he was my colleague. I still think that the most beautiful documentary is Šablevičius' *Kelionė ūkų lankomis* (*Journey Through the Fields of Nebulas*).

Your creative biography includes only one feature film, *Stiklo šalis* (A Land of Glass). Why then did you opt for documentary films?

The characters portrayed by film director Janina Lapinskaitė are like new friends who teach you a new outlook on life. Lapinskaitė has gained diverse experience as a director, actress and teacher. She teaches future film directors and heads the Department of Film and Television at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. Lapinskaitė has directed such documentaries as Iš skruzdėlių gyvenimo (From the Life of Ants), Venera su katinu (Venus with a Cat), Iš avinėlių gyvenimo (From the Life of Lambs), Venecijaus gyvenimas ir Cezario mirtis (The Life of Venecijus and Caesar's Death), and Traukinys stovi penkias minutes (The Train Stops for Five Minutes).

As second director I worked a lot on feature films of Algimantas Puipa and that was enough. Even now, when asked whether I will return to directing documentaries, I say yes. My path is documentaries and I always long for them. Perhaps this is the influence of television, where I started. Whatever the times, television provided an opportunity to meet with people in towns or outlying areas. The possibility to immerse oneself in human simplicity was a very interesting, very important experience. Later, this began to unfold in my documentaries.

In most cases your protagonists are weirdoes, people who live on the edge of society. How do you find them?

You know, the theme comes to me first, but not the hero. The theme starts "torturing" me, whether it's the theme of loneliness or miscommunication or, which happens in all times, lack of goodness or kindness. When the theme takes possession of me, it seems that I become magnetised and start to attract the characters, messages and information. Everything slowly starts to build into a whole. For example, when I wanted to rethink the topic of alienation, it resulted in the film *Iš elfų gyvenimo* (*From the Life of Elves*). I wanted to find the



A shot from J. Lapinskaitė's *Traukinys stovi penkias minutes* (*The Train Stops for Five Minutes*).

burgeoning seedlings of goodness and this family, whom I called elves, was just what I needed.

When I wanted to make a film about loneliness, I discovered the character of Venecijus from the countryside. I found loneliness and his life with his piglet called Caesar. When I was very hurt by the journalistic approach to an individual, by their aim to find a hero, draw him out, and identify what is interesting to them rather than the hero's inside, I found the heroine of the film *Šokanti ant stogų* (*Woman Dancing on the Roof*). When I watched how easily she undressed on TV shows, it seemed to me that this woman was hiding many more interesting things. In my film, however, she does not undress physically. So my films commence with the theme.

Loneliness and sadness are often pervasive in your films. Is that a conscious choice?

It seems to me that joy is a transient euphoric state. When the sun is shining, it is warm, and there are good feelings, but they generally do not call for further reflections. However, when

it is raining outside the window, I am angry and generate many deeper, more meaningful thoughts. Although my heroes carry their sadness and pain along with them and we may conclude that their lives are not very successful, I understand when communicating with them that in spite of everything they are still optimistic.



A shot from J. Lapinskaitė's *Iš elfų gyvenimo* (*From the Life of Elves*).

You said that your films are often called feature documentaries. Do you allow yourself to re-enact situations on a set?

Yes, I do, because I am not filming with a candid camera hidden under a bed. But the characters in my documentaries never behave in a way that they wouldn't in real life. If, rather than using the environment and habits of the protagonist, you started asking the protagonist to do what was alien to him, I think that would no longer be a documentary.

It is important for a maker of documentaries to “tame” characters. How do you approach them?

None of my heroes asked to be filmed. I come and I am in the position of one who is asking for something. I try to tell them what I want to talk about and why I want to film them. A documentary filmmaker is a kind of psychologist. Once he steps into the environment of the hero, he must understand whether he can step into his home too or whether he can only talk to the hero in his yard. And after the “taming” part, there comes this state, as I put it, when we all begin to “play a film”. When the period of getting settled in and taking the first steps into the hero's life is over, it is easy to work. But afterwards, it is very difficult to leave. We communicate as friends and when we have to say goodbye, it hurts everyone. It's as challenging as getting acquainted. Earlier it seemed that I would be able to communicate with all my heroes until the end of life, but this is not true. All our lives move on.

Interviewed by Elena Jasiūnaitė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Tai mano likimas (This Is My Destiny), 1994, short documentary, 20 min., video, b/w)

Iš skruzdėlių gyvenimo (From the Life of Ants), 1994, short documentary, 24 min., video, b/w)

Iš elfų gyvenimo (From the Life of Elves), 1996, short documentary, 25 min., video, b/w)

Venera su katinu (Venus with a Cat), 1997, short documentary, 24 min., video, b/w)

Iš avinėlių gyvenimo (From the Life of Lambs), 1998, short documentary, 23 min., video, b/w)

Kelionių magija (The Magic of Travelling), 1999, documentary, 34 min., video, colour)

Aktas (Nude), 2000, documentary, 35 min., 35 mm, b/w)

Venecijaus gyvenimas ir Cezario mirtis (Venecijus' Life and Cezaris' Death), 2002, documentary, 50 min., Beta CAM, colour)

Stiklo šalis (A Land of Glass), 2004, feature, 68 min., 35 mm, colour)

Našlių pakrantė (The Widows' Coast), 2006, short documentary, 28 min., Beta CAM, colour)

Šokanti ant stogų (Woman Dancing on the Roof), 2008, short documentary, 25 min., Beta CAM, colour)

Traukinys stovi penkias minutes (2009, documentary, 57 min., Beta CAM, colour)

Vakar bus rytoj (Yesterday Will Be Tomorrow), 2013, short documentary 27 min., colour)

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
1995	Emir Kusturica's <i>Podzemlje (Underground)</i> . Dogme'95, a manifesto signed by Lars von Trier and a group of other directors.	Šarūnas Bartas' <i>Koridorius (Corridor)</i> was screened at the Panorama Programme of the Berlin International Film Festival. Vilnius International Film Festival Kino Pavasaris was held for the first time, has become the biggest film festival in Lithuania.	
1996	Joel and Ethan Coen's film <i>Fargo</i> . Lars von Trier's film <i>Breaking the Waves</i> .	Šarūnas Bartas' film <i>Mūsų nedaug (Few of Us)</i> was shown at the Un Certain Regard Programme of the Cannes International Film Festival.	
1997	James Cameron's film <i>Titanic</i> . Abbas Kiarostami's film <i>Taste of Cherry</i> . Luc Besson's film <i>Le Cinquième élément (The Fifth Element)</i> .	Šarūnas Bartas' film <i>Namai (The House)</i> was shown at the Un Certain Regard Programme of the Cannes International Film Festival.	Retrospective of Krzysztof Kieslowski's films was held in Vilnius.
1998	Terrence Malick's film <i>The Thin Red Line</i> .	Algimantas Puipa's film <i>Vilko dantų karoliai (The Wolf Tooth Necklace)</i> , 1997) won the Grand Prix at the Rouen Nordic Film Festival in France.	Retrospective of Agnieszka Holland's films was held in Lithuania.
1999	Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's film <i>Rosetta</i> . Andrzej Wajda's film <i>Pan Tadeusz</i> .	Algimantas Puipa's film <i>Elzé iš Gilijos (Elze's Life)</i> featured at the Panorama Programme of the Berlin International Film Festival.	Beginning of Polish Cinema Weeks in Lithuania.
2000	Wong Kar-wai's film <i>Fa yeung nin wa (In the Mood for Love)</i> . Sir Ridley Scott's film <i>Gladiator</i> .	Šarūnas Bartas' film <i>Laisvė (Freedom)</i> was screened in the Competition of the Venice International Film Festival.	
2001	Jean-Pierre Jeunet's film <i>Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain (Amélie)</i> . Michael Haneke's film <i>La Pianiste (The Piano Teacher)</i> .	Šarūnas Bartas received the National Culture and Art Award; this was the first such award for a filmmaker in Lithuanian cinema.	
2002	Roman Polanski's film <i>The Pianist</i> . Martin Scorsese's film <i>Gangs of New York</i> .	Kristijonas Vildžiūnas' film <i>Nuomos sutartis (The Lease)</i> was shown at the Upstream Competition of the Venice International Film Festival.	Retrospective of Marcel and Paweł Łoziński's films was held in Vilnius.
2003	Sofia Coppola's <i>Lost in Translation</i> . Andrey Zvyagintsev's film <i>Vozvrashchenie (The Return)</i> .		Wiktor Grodecki's film <i>Nienasycienie (Insatiability)</i> based on the novel of Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz was shot at the Lithuanian film studios (cameraman Viktoras Radzevičius).
2004	Michael Moore's documentary <i>Fahrenheit 9/11</i> won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.		Lithuania joined the European Union.
2005	Ango Lee's film <i>Brokeback Mountain</i> . Cristi Puiu's film <i>Moartea domnului Lăzărescu (The Death of Mr. Lazarescu)</i> .	Audrius Juzėnas' feature <i>Vilniaus getas (Ghetto)</i> (based on a play by Joshua Sobol) about the Vilnius ghetto theatre.	
2006	Jia Zhangke's film <i>Still Life</i> . Pedro Almodovar's film <i>Volver (Return)</i> .	Kristijonas Vildžiūnas' film <i>Aš esi tu (You Am I)</i> was shown at the Un Certain Regard Competition of the Cannes Film Festival. On the eve of the premier of Ignas Miškinis' film <i>Dringas</i> , young filmmakers published the Cinema Manifesto inviting people to explore new directions in Lithuanian cinema and stop stagnating.	

Julija and Rimantas Gruodis:

We Are Trying to Walk on the Bright Side of Life



Rimantas and Julija Gruodis.
Photo by Algimantas Gudelis.

Your full-length documentaries *The Tiny Birds of God* and *Pieno kelias – Paukščių takas (The Milky Way)* focus on the painful themes of exile, escaping from the Soviet occupation, and collectivisation. What does historical memory mean to you?

Julija: After the restoration of the independence of Lithuania, there were quite a few TV and feature films about partisans, deportees, and political prisoners. Lithuanians in the USA have constantly been interested in the history of Lithuanian refugees. Unfortunately, all you had in Lithuania were “happy” collective farmers. There was even such a poem: “We are happy collective farmers, the sun of the Soviets shines upon us”. But no one was interested in those former “happy” collective farmers. We saw how the generation of collective farmers was going away. You could see those old women looking through the windows in apartment blocks. Most of them had been widowed for a long time. So they hung around like that until one day you couldn’t see anybody in the window. They can no longer tell anyone anything. The time of our parents (that they spent suffering, mourning, drinking, stealing) is being ousted from our memory, and no one wants to delve into it. We

The documentaries of Julija and Rimantas Gruodis such as Pirtis (The Bathhouse), Šeimyna (Household), Dievo paukšteliai (The Tiny Birds of God), Brasbendas (The Brass Band), Upė (The River), and Sėkmės metai (The Lucky Year) accommodate both social concern and poetic intonation. The films show respect for their heroes who live in Lithuania’s outlying areas and often on the fringes of society.

dedicated *The Milky Way* to our grandparents and parents.

Rimantas: Julija was born and raised on a collective farm. From an early age she did all the hard work very much like her mother, aunts and uncles did. My grandparents and great-grandparents were eternal exiles. The first time the Gruodis family was deported to the areas beyond the River Volga after the 1863 uprising. They then managed to return in their horse driven carts to free Lithuania, spent two decades at home, and again were all deported. My father was born in exile. When my grandparents finally returned to their farm in 1960, they found it completely ravaged by the collective farm. Rusted parts of machinery that belonged to the collective farm were lying scattered around the well in the meadow, the water in the well was contaminated, smelly tractors were in the spacious barns, the doors of the building were all damaged, and all ornamentation had been removed. When they saw this picture, they could not stand the idea of living there and therefore moved to the city not to see the horror.

One of the characters in *The Milky Way* says, “We saw how masters became beggars and now beggars have become masters. We’ve



A shot from J. and R. Gruodis’ *Upė (The River)*.

witnessed it all except that we can’t do anything.” Do you think a documentary film is capable not only of saying something, but also of changing something?

Rimantas: It can’t. Neither can a line from a poem. It can cause us to think more deeply or stir certain feelings if a person who is watching or listening is sensitive.

Julija: During post-production of *The River* in Warsaw, we met a young Polish documentary filmmaker. We were stunned by his pessimism. “A man today doesn’t get help even from the heavens. Only hot black asphalt is falling from it,” he said. Maybe because we are not that young we believe that we should walk on the bright side of life. You can then have a better view of the mysterious and frightening depth of life and its tragically fragile beauty.

Rimantas: On the other hand, you don’t want to take away all hope from yourself and others.

***The River*, which was released in 2009, became the best-known and most award-**

winning film in your biography. It was recognised the Best Documentary at the 45th Karlovy Vary Film Festival, won the First Prize of the Jury at the Madrid International Documentary Film Festival, and was awarded a Silver Crane, a Lithuanian film and TV award, for the Best Documentary of the year. What makes this work important to you and where does its success lie?

Julija: The key dimension in *The River* is sensuality. If the viewer is not caught by what is happening on the screen, he is not going to “enter” these people’s lives, and the film will appear shallow and cold. The best Lithuanian, and not only Lithuanian, films are imbued with feeling, although there must also be moderation.

Rimantas: The Czechs found the film remarkably expressive. For example, they laughed when they heard the little heroine of the film say, “My father has no money; no one has money. Only gran has money [...] We have two cars, but neither is working.” In such cases, you realise that words spoken behind the scenes can mean very much: to

convey the relationships and obligations invisible to the naked eye. On the other hand, we saw some really good films with interesting themes, but some of them were so verbal, lacked focus, or were too long. Documentaries created by filmmakers from large countries are particularly verbal. They obviously have the time and money. Furthermore, I can't help but boast that the juries of international festivals, especially the Czech film critics, highly praised the visual side of *The River*, which is the contribution of cameraman Viktoras Radajevs. Without him the film would have been different. Viktoras was well aware of what we needed and this made the story richer, clearer and brighter.

In 1994, you set up your studio Periferija and have produced at least one documentary per year since, but you've avoided publicity. Why?

Julija: We didn't do anything on purpose. It just happened that way. We don't like to babble on about the film before it's completed, but when the work is finished we are pleased to present it to the Lithuanian people if there's an opportunity. In addition, some films such as *The Bathhouse*, *Kaliausė (The Scarecrow)* and *Household* were screened at the New York Museum of Modern Art, at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, at the Belem Cultural Centre in Lisbon, on TV abroad, and at international film festivals. So

the films haven't been sitting on a shelf, but we just haven't been trying to make a buzz or make ourselves seem important.

Interviewed by Auksė Kancerevičiūtė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Ona ir Mykolas (Ona and Mykolas), 1990, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, colour

Giesmė (The Dirge), 1991, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, colour

Dykra (The Waste), 1993, documentary, 60 min., 35 mm, colour

Slogutis (The Pain), 1995, documentary, 30 min., video, colour

Pirtis (The Bathhouse), 1997, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, colour

Teritorija (Territory), 1999, short documentary, 12 min., video, colour

Šeimyna (Household), 2001, short documentary, 10 min., 35 mm, colour

Kaliausė (Scarecrow), 2002, short documentary, 9 min., 35 mm, colour

Meistras (The Master), 2004, short documentary, 18 min., 35 mm, colour

Dievo paukšteliai (The Tiny Birds of God), 2005, documentary, 80 min., video, b/w

Brasbendas (The Brass Band), 2006, documentary, 60 min., 35 mm, colour

Pieno kelias. Paukščių Takas (The Way of Milk. Milky Way), 2007, documentary, 78 min., video, colour

Upė (The River), 2009, documentary, 30 min., 35 mm, colour

Lieknas (The Swamp), 2010, short documentary, 28 min., video, colour

Sėkmės metai (Lucky Year), 2013, short documentary, 28 min., full HD, colour



A shot from R. Gruodis' *Sėkmės metai (The Lucky Year)*.

Cinema Timeline

Date	Events in World Cinema	Events in Lithuanian Cinema	Events in culture, art, history and politics of Lithuania
2007	Cristian Mungiu's film <i>4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile (4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days)</i> won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. Joel and Ethan Coen's film <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .	Arūnas Matelis' documentary <i>Prieš parkrendant į Žemę (Before Flying Back to Earth)</i> received the Directors Guild of America (ARG) Award.	
2008	Arie Folman's animated film <i>Vals Im Bashir (Waltz with Bashir)</i> . Steve McQueen's debut film <i>Hunger</i> .	A documentary film about Władysław Starewicz <i>Vabzdžių dresuotojas (The Bug Trainer)</i> (directors Donatas Ulvydas, Linas Augutis, Marek Skrobecki and Rasa Miškinytė).	
2009	Michael Haneke's film <i>Das weiße Band (The White Ribbon)</i> .	The Law on Cinema of the Republic of Lithuania was adopted.	
2010	Roman Polanski was awarded the Silver Bear for the Best Director (film <i>The Ghost Writer</i>) at the Berlin International Film Festival. Sergei Loznica's film <i>Schaste moe (My Joy)</i> .	The Lithuanian Film Academy was founded. A Silver Crane, the Lithuanian Film and TV Award, was founded. Kristijonas Vildžiūnas' film <i>Kai apkabinsiu tavę (Back to Your Arms)</i> was the first Lithuanian and Polish (Studio Tor) co-production.	
2011	Terrence Mallick's film <i>The Tree of Life</i> won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. Lars von Trier's <i>Melancholia</i> was recognised the Best European film by the European Film Academy.	Mantas Kvedaravičius' documentary <i>Barzakh</i> opened the Panorama Programme of the Berlin International Film Festival. Donatas Ulvydas' film <i>Tadas Blinda. Pradžia (Tadas Blinda. The Beginning)</i> was the start of the producer's foray into the production of commercial films exclusively for the domestic audience.	
2012	Michael Haneke's film <i>Amour (Love)</i> garnered the main film awards.	The Lithuanian Film Centre was established. Kristina Buožytė's film <i>Aurora (Vanishing Waves)</i> was the first Lithuanian science fiction film. Marat Sargsyan's documentary film <i>Tėvas (Father)</i> received a prize at the Krakow Film Festival.	Greg Zgliński's film <i>Wymyk (Courage)</i> was the winner of the New Europe-New Names Programme of Vilnius International Film Festival Kino Pavasaris.
2013	Paolo Sorrentino's film <i>La grande bellezza (The Great Beauty)</i> . Joel and Ethan Coen's film <i>Inside Llewyn Davis</i> won The Grand Prix at the Cannes International Film Festival.	Ignas Jonynas' film <i>Lošėjas (The Gambler)</i> (Lithuanian-Latvian co-production) won the Special Jury Prize at the Warsaw Film Festival.	Slawomir Fabicki's film <i>Miłość (Loving)</i> was the winner of the New Europe-New Names Programme of Vilnius International Film Festival Kino Pavasaris.
2014	Richard Linklater's film <i>Boyhood</i> . Paweł Pawlikowski's <i>Ida</i> . Lars von Trier's film <i>Nymphomaniac</i> .	Emilis Vėlyvis' comedy <i>Redirected / Už Lietuvą! (Redirected)</i> was a Lithuanian box-office hit. Premier of the first Lithuanian full-length animated film <i>Aukso žirgas (The Golden Horse)</i> (directors Valentas Aškinis and Reinis Kalnaellis).	Paweł Pawlikowski's film <i>Ida</i> won the Best Director at the Baltic Gaze Programme of Vilnius International Film Festival Kino Pavasaris.
2015	Paweł Pawlikowski's film <i>Ida</i> won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Małgorzata Szumowska's film <i>Cialo (Body)</i> , won the Silver Bear for Best Director at the 65 th Berlin International Film Festival.	Alantė Kavaitė won Best Director at the Sundance Film Festival (USA) for <i>Sangailės vasara (The Summer of Sangailė)</i> . The film was screened in official Panorama Programme of the Berlin International Film Festival. Actress Aistė Diržiūtė became the first Lithuanian actress to participate in the Shooting Stars project of the EFP. <i>Peace to Us in Our Dreams</i> by Šarūnas Bartas screened at Director's Fortnight Programme of the Cannes International Film Festival.	

Giedrė Žickytė:

Film is an Emotion



Film director Giedrė Žickytė has been producing documentaries since 2006. Rebellious and equally talented artists who lived and worked in the Soviet period are frequent protagonists in her films. A series of her portrait documentaries – Baras (Bar), Kaip mes žaidėme revoliuciją (How We Played Revolution) and Meistras ir Tatyana (The Master and Tatyana) – delve into the unofficial world of the culture of Soviet Lithuania and the world of complex human feelings, aspirations, and internal experiences.

Giedrė Žickytė.
Source: Vilnius IFF Kino Pavasaris,
photo by Frgmts.

You created a few short films and then proceeded with full-length documentaries. What was the reason for that?

The themes and stories I discovered and found interesting could best be told in a documentary. For example, when developing the idea for *How We Played the Revolution* I was at the same time thinking of a feature film. I even wrote a script with Kęstutis Navakas, but once I found archival video material, I understood that there would be nothing more authentic and evocative than that. I'm currently working on documentary projects, because reality surpasses imagination in the stories I've found. I don't know what will be next.

Three films – Bar, How We Played the Revolution and The Master and Tatyana – are often seen as an unofficial cultural trilogy. Why did you choose three artists who were prominent figures in the Soviet period for your films?

In fact, I never thought that this could be a trilogy. The protagonists in my films are not an ordinary musician, photographer, and independent filmmaker in Soviet times. They are prominent, distinctive figures of the time and by exploring them I can access the world that surrounded them and the reality in which they lived and get insight into topics that excite

me. In the finite time in which my heroes lived, questions of moral choice and the confrontation between adaptation to the system and loyalty to one's ideals were at issue. I also love to dig through the past and archives "in search of lost time" and create my own interpretation and history based on the images of the past, and with the help of history, to understand my identity and historical memory.

How did the idea for the film How We Played the Revolution come about?

I got a proposal to make a film about the music group Antis. When I started collecting and going deeper into the material, I realised that the film would not be just about the group. My parents were architects. When I was little, they used to take me to the concerts of their colleagues, the group of architects called Antis. I remember how they were getting ready for the New Year carnivals organised by architects, and then together we went to the rallies of the reform movement (*Sąjūdis*). Everything around was very phantasmagorical, and it seemed that life entailed regular dances and songs, flags, poetry, prayers, and rallies. Twenty years passed, and I found the archival material and saw that this was not only a childhood tale. Life at that time was in fact like a never-ending festival that could not have been subject to any laws of logic or normal

daily rhythm. Everything was hyperbolised. But the country had to live through this surreal stage for the transformation to happen. Then I started to make my film.

Why did you choose the story of the restoration of the independence of Lithuania as a leitmotif for the film?

If I'd thought I was making a film about the history of Lithuania, I'd have been terrified of the responsibility and would probably have produced nothing. I was interested in Antis and the fairy tale that surrounded them. Antis became a mask that allowed me to make any interpretations and to be free to create. The magic story of Antis helped me to build the backbone of the film and the musical path of the group perfectly coincided with the path of Lithuania to independence. I wanted to tell this playfully rather than didactically. In fact, the historical truth of the film lies in the archive footage and human emotions.

And the word played used in the title of the film is the connection with the fairy tale?

In the English title *How We Played the Revolution*, the word *played* has two meanings: to play a game and to play music. In the Lithuanian title, however, there is only one meaning: to play a game. Our revolution was full of games and lightness. If we compare the Lithuanian revolution with other revolutions that have taken place or are taking

place, ours was really bright and playful, except, of course, the victims of 13th January. The history of the Lithuanian revolution is a euphoria turning into a tragedy, but still with a happy ending, a classical Hollywood screenplay.

Even so, you had to use objective history and archival footage for the story. How did this work?

I spent several years making this film. I am one of those people who, before starting to do anything, must collect all available material. Only then the idea of the future film crystallises. Of course, I read all the contextual history and conducted a lot of interviews. But the most interesting part for me was working with the archival material. I used the official information available in the Lithuanian State Archives. But I mostly looked for private archival material, which, in my opinion, gave the film a lot of charm. The archival material I discovered altered the film script. For example, I knew I had to talk about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. But how was I supposed to talk about it? I could put a historian in front of the camera and he would explain everything, but that wouldn't be interesting. And then I found archival footage depicting an emotional discussion of teenagers about the pact. Such gems allowed me to build the backbone of the film. My aim was to tell an objective history through the situations and the archival material.



A shot from G. Žickytė's *Kaip mes žaidėme revoliuciją* (*How We Played Revolution*).



A shot from G. Žickytė's *Meistras ir Tatyana* (*The Master and Tatyana*).

But the leader of the group, Algirdas Kaušpėdas, remained in the film as a man with a mask. Was this done deliberately?

He saw the film for the first time during the premiere and then shared his impressions with me: “I was watching and everything looked nice, but at the same time I’m thinking: aren’t you going to show me as I am today? Almost as if I were dead? And at the end, bang! It’s like in Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, at first mystification and then unmasking.” So some sort of disclosure did occur. Or one mask was replaced with another. Kaušpėdas was indeed supposed to be like a mask. And what is behind the mask is a story for another film.

So what you like in a documentary is an opportunity to put individual masks on objective history?

A film for me is a subjective emotion rather than facts that can be found on the Internet or read in books. I dare say that it was not so important in this film on which day of 1988 our tricolour was raised. It was much more important that grandmas burst into tears at the sight of the flag.

Interviewed by Elena Jasiūnaitė

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Vaidmuo (The Role, 2004, short documentary, 20 min., video, b/w)

Europa (Europe, 2006, co-directed by Rudolfas Levulis, short documentary, 10 min., video, colour)

Baras (2009, TV documentary, 49 min., video, colour)

Paskui saulę ir ožkas (After Sun And Goats, 2010, documentary, 30 min., video, colour)

Kaip mes žaidėme revoliuciją (How We Played Revolution, 2011, documentary, 67min., video, colour)

Meistras ir Tatjana (The Master and Tatyana, 2014, documentary, 80 min., DCP, colour)

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TRANSLATION OF TEXTS TO ENGLISH, EDITING AND PROOFREADING OF ENGLISH TEXTS: UAB
Magistrai

TRANSLATION FROM POLISH TO ENGLISH OF THE TEXT "Lithuania and Poland. Neighbourship in Filmic
Form in the Cinema of the 1960s": Caryl Susan Anne Speed

TRANSLATION OF TEXTS TO POLISH:

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