

***[Stasa Baja]: Your first film Japan Japan was done with a small budget, with a lot of scenes shot docu-style and unscripted. People often talk about the freedom this approach gives them, but what would you say are its limitations?***

[Lior Shamriz]: Of course the limitations are endless, independent filmmakers, DIY filmmakers don't like to talk about it – it's easier to brag how there's no producer or TV commissioning editor around to make them change the editing of the film, put a different ending etc, but in fact making films in the so-called "docustyle" – basically I could call this "as is" approach - this is a total different approach to making pictures, and I think also as a viewer – what you are enjoying, appreciating and experiencing when you watch such a film is very different then what you are looking at when you are watching a more "produced" picture.

At the time of making Japan Japan to be honest I really did not care about producing "proper" films, I wasn't very interested in framed pictures, I was interested in dramatic scenes that work as a "collection of performance documentations".

So of course, if you don't have money you can hardly control anything that happens in your exteriors shots – who's going where on the street, or in the interior shots – you will likely just shoot wherever you *can* shoot and subsequently the film you will make will present the world your social milieu and your own daily life rather than any drama that the story is embedding. The actors are the people around you, and the locations are where they live, and they will look pretty similar to how they normally look.

With Japan Japan, I was really interested in launching every scene as a meeting point of me, coming with the camera, and the people who perform, and therefore to capture something that's beyond dialogue or drama but rather something that is happening between us in the time that we are making the scene.

I was hoping, and I'm still hoping, that through this journey you are able to be presented by my thoughts and experiences, while still remaining yourself, not losing yourself, and by that you could more *truly* empathize with me, who's making the film and with my life situation, and we could have this mediated connection.

***[S.B]: A lot of the films we will see at the festival are radical and challenging in its form, but also in the way they are made. A good example is your film Before***

***The Flowers of Friendship Faded ~~The~~ Friendship Faded. Can you describe how the film actually came about?***

[L.S]: Before *The Flowers of Friendship Faded* *Friendship Faded* was made the way it was made because of an urge to *feel* a story I wanted to tell as soon as I could, to have a sensual experience of it. It was perhaps a failure at postponing urges you could say. I came back home late at night from meeting an old friend. I was still new in the city and this was one of those friends from Israel who moved to Berlin before me. Every time, since we were teenagers he would get me very high, and talk preach and lecture me for a couple of hours while I'm sitting pretty much silent. This kind of a relationship. And so I got home pretty high and had all kinds of things I wanted to tell him and a few other friends. But writing them wasn't satisfactory to me, so I found myself recording them into Logic on my computer, and step by step editing them into a conversation, adding music and sounds etc, constructing some sort of a conversation, without having pictures or script, just by writing a sentence, reading it, editing it on the computer and so on. A few hours later I had a full 7 minutes soundtrack, a "Hörspiel" of sorts, edited with music I just composed, and a short excerpt from a piece by Cesar Franck, I already had all kinds of atmosphere sounds et cetera. After that I went into making a film out of it – by casting the actors, choosing the locations, and then filming the 7 minutes film like a video-clip, standing on the street with a camera and a loud stereo system, and letting the actors lip-sync the dialogue of the film.

***[S.B]: Interestingly, also in both L'Amour Sauvage and Cancelled Faces it feels like the images and the narration have switched places - what we see seems like a possible version of events. Tell us a little bit about how you developed this illustration-like style to filmmaking?***

[L.S]: I find pictures fascinating because of the ambiguity of being potent and powerful yet manipulative and deceitful. Hell, I would say, is the place where what your eyes see is the truth and reality is only what your eyes see. When telling stories with films, I'm trying to present the viewer with a collection of moments, attractions, rather than a hermetic space that presents itself as a universe. Instead my film is a sculpture, with spaces, rooms, through which the viewer could journey. Telling stories with a voice over is a liberating action because it allows the pictures to be partial and this opens the possibility for the viewer to imagine and complete the picture (think about a frame of a person looking towards something that's outside of the picture, and think about how this triggers your imagination as a viewer to what's outside). Noel Burch describes the

Banshees in early Japanese cinema – “silent” era cinema. They were narrators, live on stage, who tied the story for the viewers and also to help the viewer to decipher certain elements in the newly arrived art form. In the same time this allowed the pictures to take certain freedoms that were later lost. Of course, “my” Banshee is quite different. This is because my viewers are pretty different. They are well trained in deciphering stories of motion pictures, but they are trained in a certain monolithic way. So, instead of needing someone to help them decipher the images, they require someone to push them away from the images they see, to hint to a reality that’s beyond or before the images or the way they think is ultimately the one and only way to interpret images, and in some ways this is what my narrator is pushing them to do.

***[S.B]: Your first feature was about a man in Tel Aviv dreaming of Japan, In Saturn Returns it is Americans in Kreuzberg and you yourself are an Israeli living in Berlin. Some would say it is a unique perspective, or would you say that artists position is always the one outside, looking in?***

[L.S]: I used to think that the artist’s most respectful position is always to be the outsider looking in, that this allows a deeper understanding of the states of things which is crucial for the making of good art. Perhaps this is why I kept and keep moving around to maintain this perspective, but in fact this is just a myth unfortunately, a myth that I was wrongly submitted to by mean and deceitful people I cannot name.

In reality of course the world belongs to the insiders and this includes the art world. The insiders are closer to where the money and the power is and their voice is better heard.

When I made Saturn returns I was trying to be loyal to geography – so I preferred making films in the location where I was – if I chose to leave Israel and live somewhere else, the decent thing to do with integrity is to make films in that somewhere else. I felt it would be a betrayal to go back and make a film in Israel if I don’t live there anymore – I always feel this is a question of who you’re representing – who are you “working for”, selling your product, who’s the audience, who’s voice is coming from your body.

***[questions by Stasa Bajac. Published in Serbian on Seecult]***