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## ND/NF '08 INTERVIEW | "Soul Carriage" Director Conrad Clark and "Japan Japan" Director Lior Shamriz



Scenes from Conrad Clark's "Soul Carriage" and Lior Shamriz's "Japan Japan." Images courtesy of the Film Society of Lincoln Center.

In the third installment of short interviews spotlighting emerging filmmakers in the current series **New Directors/New Films**, indieWIRE received remarks from "Soul Carriage" director **Conrad Clark** on his story of urbanization set against the backdrop of an evolving China as well as "Japan Japan" director **Lior Shamriz** on his film about a boy adrift. Both films are screening in ND/NF, co-hosted by the **Film Society of Lincoln Center** and the **Museum of Modern Art** through April 6 in New York.

### "Soul Carriage"

Desperately in need of cash, Xinren, a young worker at a Shanghai construction site, takes on the onerous task of returning the body of a co-worker who died on the job to his family. Nasty as the chore may be, it seems simple enough, but nothing is simple in a changing China. As Xinren works his way from the city to the countryside -- in opposition to the direction most workers go for jobs -- looking for someone, anyone, who will acknowledge the dead man, we witness his growing isolation, as his only companion is the body in the back of his van. First-time filmmaker Conrad Clark (who received the New Directors Award at the **San Sebastian Film Festival**) spent two years in China researching the country's shift towards urbanization and has created a daring work in which the environment is a major character. Beautifully shot, this story of modernity overtaking tradition serves as a metaphor for Chinese migrant workers searching for material -- and spiritual -- fulfillment. (Description provided by the Film Society of Lincoln Center).

[Responses by Conrad Clark, director of "Soul Carriage"](#)

#### What initially attracted you to filmmaking?

Its scope. Its uncertainty, undecidability. Here was something that was part writing, part drawing and mostly musical. And so the possibilities seemed vast, until I started to make films that is.

#### What was the inspiration for "Soul Carriage?"

A simple story that got me from A to B, combined with an environment that could act on the story. That could create a rhythm and a displacement of the narrative. That could possibly even become the narrative.

#### Please elaborate a bit on your approach to making the film...

Well, the first feature film, you have no idea how to pace yourself, or your film. But as I started shooting I found a pace and stuck to it. Even though I tried to change this pace in the editing, it wouldn't let me, and so what I had felt and established in the shooting came through in the end.

I combined my research into Chinese mentality and approach to problems with a design element to help reflect this in the physical environment.

#### What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in making and completing the film?

Writing a script based on many non narrative elements and moods that I wanted for the film. A script seemed to be the wrong format to present the film to financiers, but it is the only format we have.

Time -- having to shoot very quickly and therefore wasting time by trying to shoot scenes that can't be shot quickly.

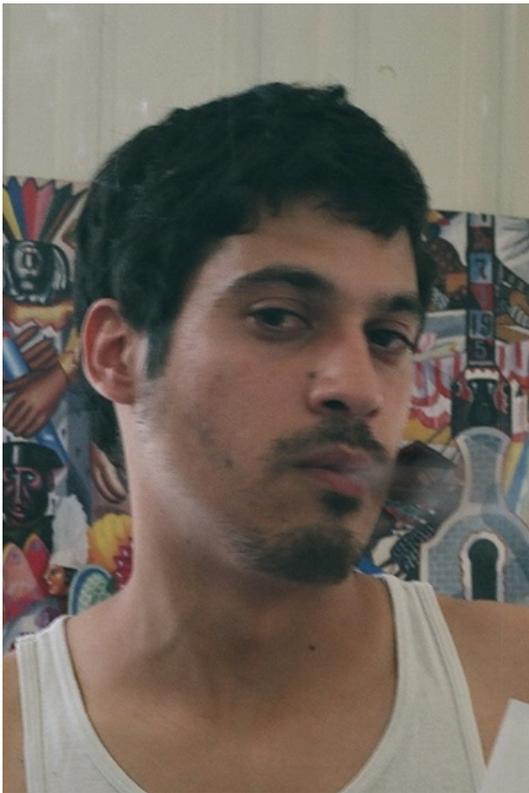
You have to find the important blocks and shoot them exceptionally well, rather than try and squeeze everything out.

#### **What are your goals for the New Directors/New Films?**

No real goals as such. Perhaps to see and feel an American audiences reaction to the film. To watch many other films and keep learning.

#### **"Japan Japan"**

A young man adrift and in search of stimulation leaves his small-town home and moves to the fertile sexual terrain of the big city. Director Lior Shamriz takes this age-old scenario and updates it for an era when the unimagined limits of adventurousness arrive and dissolve at light speed online. His hero, Imri, unable to concentrate on the frivolity of a pointless job, cruises cinemas for boys, chills with aspiring artists and surfs the Web for fantasies in foreign lands. Set in the ultimate 21st century cutting edge-city, Tel Aviv, Shamriz's film creates a post-exotic cinema where a war zone borders a metropolis, precision redirects to chaos, and subtle grace links to graphic pornography. "Japan Japan" is the fabricated land that, unlike a metaphor, delivers the real potential for instant escape from the familiar. (Description provided by the Film Society of Lincoln Center).



"Japan Japan" director Lior Shamriz. Image courtesy of the Film Society of Lincoln Center.

#### Responses by Lior Shamriz, director of "Japan Japan"

##### **What initially attracted you to filmmaking?**

Unfortunately I've been telling stories and fibbing since the day I learnt how to talk. I'm attracted to cinema as a simultaneously reduced and enhanced version of reality. Filmmaking for me is a means of toying with the relations between different and sometimes contradictory forms that are usually used separately as representations of life.

My belief in these representations as autonomous entities might be the reason why in my work narrative is often used for psycho-dramatic purposes, in my life or in the character's.

##### **What was the inspiration for "Japan Japan?"**

In my early twenties, I was studying Japanese, dreaming of moving to Tokyo and finally "becoming" Japanese (This was between my German and French phases).

As a filmmaker in Israel I knew that my films would often be perceived as a window to an exotic place in the midst of a political conflict. In this film I wanted to question the place of exoticism and orientalism in cinema and in my life.

**Please elaborate a bit on your approach to making the film...**

I wanted to juxtapose different styles of storytelling that are usually not mixed together, but definitely not as pastiche. Some scenes were pre-scripted and dramatized, others were actual events visited by the actor/hero, one scene was shot like a home-made musical. I shot the film alone, without any recordist or other assistant and used as actors mainly people I knew well and already worked with.

This intimacy gave the people the opportunity to come up with spontaneous ideas, and to feel free, natural and creative. For example, the footage from New York, where I've never been, was shot independently by the actress who only followed general guidelines, but was expected to do whatever she wanted.

**What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in making and completing the film?**

One interesting challenge was how to create an interesting viewing experience in a film where it is impossible for the viewer to experience the film through the hero's eyes. As the hero says himself: "Whoever looks at me, expects to see the drama or the thoughts, but the face is empty."

**What are your goals for the New Directors/New Films?**

If possible, I would like to come back from the festival a better person.

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