



The Council of Europe celebrates the Centenary of the cinema

STORIES OF THE EUROPEAN CINEMA

The production of ten short fifteen-minute films, dealing with the story of the cinema in Europe, that is the project launched, in close collaboration with the Council of Europe, by the GECT - European Group of Cinema and Television Schools - based on an idea proposed by the European Union of Broadcasting.

To begin with, about fifteen possible subjects will be circulated to fifty-four European schools and institutes. Each school will be able to propose three projects for scenarios, and the best ten will be chosen by a selection committee set up by the GECT. Once produced these short films will have to be shown by public television channels.

The aim here is evidently not to conceive a comprehensive story of the cinema, but rather to illustrate and paraphrase those important moments having marked its development in the course of this century. Comic means of the first films, "Soviet editing" of the twenties, discovery of speech with the multiple linguistic versions, appearance of colour, reality of the documentary are only some of the proposals being discussed at the moment.

The forms chosen will be as varied as possible, giving rein to the imaginary and to fantasy. Aimed at a large public made up of television spectators, different festivals are already showing an interest in this series, and they would like to deal with its promotion before it is passed on to the television.

GROUPEMENT EUROPEEN DES ECOLES DE CINEMA ET DE TELEVISION

Rome / Amsterdam, 14 - 8 - '94

To all members of the European Broadcasting Union.

What is GEECT ?

First we would like to introduce to you our European Association of Film and Television Schools GEECT. It comprises not less than a hundred schools in twenty-nine countries and is a subdivision of the organisation that works worldwide and gathers filmschools on all continents: CILECT (Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinema et de Television). Whereas CILECT has been founded in 1955, GEECT exists since 1988 and has been set up to stimulate specific European projects and cooperation.

GEECT was very interested when approached by Mr. Zeender of the Council of Europe to set up a specific project related to the Centenary of the Cinema which is to be celebrated in 1995. All schools thought of it as an excellent chance to show a general public our students talents and their capacity to develop original ways of filmmaking in our rapidly changing times. We would like to add that it was one of your colleagues from the Geneva headquarters, Mr. Clausen, who first developed this idea.

The Centennial Project

a. description

The project consists of the production of ten short films of twelve minutes each, to be written, directed and produced by the students of ten different film and television schools. They should be shown in cinemas, where this is possible (in various countries there are again possibilities to have shorts shown in cinemas), and on television screens throughout Europe.

The purpose of these films is to celebrate the Centennial of cinema. A short list with suggestions about possible subjects has been mailed to all our schools, and up till now already eighteen projects have been received. At the end of september we expect to receive many more. They are for the larger part fiction projects, some students opted for documentary. Some take a serious view, others have a wonderful light touch. A small committee of three persons, one internationally operating script-teacher, one producer and one representative from the EBU will select the most interesting projects and advise schools and students.

b. the educational moment

We shall then hold a meeting with the authors of the 10 projects that have been selected (two students for each short film). For a week all teams will propose and illustrate their projects and discuss them with the other nine teams under the guidance of two renowned teachers.

The purpose of this meeting is not only to enhance the quality of each individual short film, but also to make each team aware of the work of the others.

c. the function of the FOUNDATION in the production

The production of the films will be carried out by the schools as coproductions with an independent Foundation that will be set up with the sole aim of carrying out this very project.

This Foundation will act as main producer of the project and will hold the rights to the ten films.

The Foundation will gather also all possible means for the production and help the schools to produce their films. Thus the Foundation will sell the films and act as coordinator between the schools, distributors and television stations in the various countries that will broadcast (part of) the films.

d. presentation of the finished short films

The films will be presented all together in a festival that still has to be chosen. Since one of the aims of the project is to show to general public the work of these new filmmakers, it seems better not to look for one of the many student film festivals, but for a film festival that is willing and able to give real attention to the ten shorts.

The same twenty authors that participated in the first meeting will be invited to attend this presentation together with the two teachers/advisors, so that they will have the opportunity to analyse and comment upon their finished films.

Since such a presentation will be linked more with the idea of cinema than of television, another presentation will be set up in connection with the EBU to enable all members to see the works. (INPUT ?)

What we ask for

What we all hope for is to collect enough money to really assist ten schools with the production of their films. One of the things to bear in mind is that the financial situation of the schools vary enormously from country to country. And since we feel that schools with little means should be able to participate just like richer ones we want the foundation to be able to pay an amount of appr. SF 17.500.- to each school as an average.

A very generous start has been made on the money front by the Swiss based organisation Alliance Europeene de Culture et de Television. The Alliance will contribute SF 50.000.-, or 5.000.- per project.

The Council of Europe has promised to pay for the two students meetings.

We now ask your collaboration by doing a thing you hardly ever do:

to buy programs without precisely knowing what is going to be made, how and by whom. That we nevertheless dare to ask you this, comes from the fact, that the project is an investment in the future, that we do not talk big money, and that you can have confidence in our film and television schools, knowing that every year many of the students films are already broadcast, be it almost always only in one's own country.

This time there is more to it, the celebration of the Centenary of the Moving Image, of which television has become the most important, influential one. About eighty percent of all our students will work mostly or solely for tv. Therefore it would simply be a great opportunity if their films now could be shown internationally. Also the broadcasters could benefit from this experience and view it even as a pilot project for cooperation with students that later will be working in the industry and will want to meet the same high standards that still dominate many screens.

With all this in mind we ask you for your financial commitment to our project.

We do not hesitate to be realistic at the same time. Everyone knows that when you make ten films a few will be bad, a greater number good, and another few just excellent. Practice will be that a broadcaster will make a selection: say the best five will be shown. That is one hours television. What we ask you is the amount you all pay in your country for this one hours material to be purchased, plus the cost later on of transport and adaptations for your own use.

Probably additional money may be needed for the distribution (copies, versions, subtitles, dubbing) etc. For this we hope to approach among others the BABEL organisation of the MEDIA programme. There is reason to believe that this organisation will commit itself to the project also.

We are ready to answer any question concerning the Centennial Project. We hope that you are just as enthousiast about this project as our students are.

With kind regards,

Caterina d'Amico
(Rome)
Coordinator of GEECT

Rolf Orthel
(Amsterdam)
Centennial project

GROUPEMENT EUROPEEN DES ECOLES DE CINEMA ET DE TELEVISION

Amsterdam, 5 - 9 - '94

Dear colleagues,

This is to inform you about the CENTENNIAL PROJECT. As you will remember the Council of Europe asked GEECT to help organise production and distribution of ten short films of fifteen minutes each against the background of the celebration of hundred years of cinema. The idea was first developed by a collaborator of the European Broadcasting Union, Mr. Christian Clausen and proposed to us by Mr. Christian Zeender, the special envoy for the CENTENNIAL with the Council of Europe.

Since our last newsletter on this subject - that I send you again as a reminder - Caterina d'Amico and myself have met Mr. Schenker, chairman of the European Alliance for Culture and Television, who has offered to contribute 50.000 Swiss Francs to the initiative; and Mr. Clausen, who is bringing the detailed Project to be discussed in October in the next meeting of the European Broadcasting Union, in order to obtain further support.

So far we have received eighteen projects from twelve schools in ten countries. You will all understand, that, when the idea is to produce ten of the best shorts we can, eighteen is too low a number to choose from. There are indeed some very nice projects among them, but some are too vague or would have to be rewritten completely to fit in the fifteen minutes given.

Therefore we ask you in order to make the project a success to explain the project to your students once more and urge them to participate. When the list of subjects we gave earlier on is felt as negative, feel free to treat any subject related to the history of cinema you want. Some people write better when constricted, others are better when left alone with a very general subject matter. Only one condition is to be considered a real MUST, and this is the 15 minutes mark, which is felt as essential by the European Broadcasting Union representative.

When we cannot collect enough new ideas we would have to put off the idea altogether, given the too small number of really interesting projects.

And that of course would be a very sad matter.

We understand that it may be hard to make people write when there is no certainty yet that we can help the production financially with a relatively important sum. But this is also very much like life outside of any filmschool. Therefore we do not feel we ask the impossible.

One last remark, which is to us a very important point. We have realized that this Project was lacking pedagogical value. So we decided that once the 10 short projects are selected, their authors (two for each project, that could be the director and the writer, or the producer and the director, or others depending on the nature of the project)) will be invited to spent a week together to discuss the ten chosen projects under the guidance of one or two mentors who will help them in developing their ideas.

The same people will be invited again at the first presentation of the finished works, to discuss them together.

Mr.Zeender made it clear that most probably the Council of Europe will be willing and able to finance this part of the project.

ATTENTION:

There are a few schools that sent two or even three projects! Congratulations. Great. And the above remarks obviously do not apply to your students or school. But schools that so far did sent just one proposal: please go ahead if you wish.

And those students that did sent projects, but whose projects go straight over the 15 minutes mark, are invited to rework their ideas.

Please send your projects BEFORE NOVEMBER 1st to

- Rolf Orthel
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Phone and fax are my own numbers, since in cases of urgency I cannot always be reached at the school.

When you have any further questions please feel free to phone the above number.

Wishing you all possible pleasure in developing your projects,

with kind regards,



Rolf Orthel.