

Announcements *continued*

Emerging voices from Southeast Asia

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IDFA 2013
INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL AMSTERDAM
20 NOVEMBER – 1 DECEMBER 2013

LATELY MOVIES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA have been getting more success in attracting international attention. For example, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, from Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul, won the 'Golden Palm' in Cannes in 2010, and several films by Philippine director Brillante Mendoza were selected and awarded at leading film festivals in Cannes and Berlin. Following the successful developments of Southeast Asian cinema, IDFA (International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam) will be exploring the state-of-the-art of Southeast Asian documentaries in her upcoming festival, by organizing a thematic program: 'Emerging Voices from Southeast Asia'.

With this focus on Southeast Asian documentaries, IDFA is joining other initiatives, workshops and congresses that have been organized to stimulate the documentary industry, such as the 'Strategy Seminar' in Cambodia and the pitching forum 'Asian Side of the Doc' in Malaysia. Although there are big differences between Southeast Asian countries, there are sufficient similarities in film culture to speak of a 'Southeast Asian Cinema'.

Festival guest Rithy Panh

Thanks to technical developments – such as smaller, better, and cheaper cameras – not only is the number of films increasing, but so too is the quality improving. Filmmakers are able to work more independently, and as a result of the digital revolution they can reach a broader public. The Cambodian director Rithy Panh for example, confronts a number of Khmer Rouge camp guards with survivors of the regime, in his famous documentary: *S21, The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003). Again, in his latest film *The Missing Picture*, he portrays the quest for the significance of the Khmer Rouge regime, almost literally through a search for an image or other tangible proof of Cambodia's painful history. It is a good example of how Rithy Panh shapes the collective memory of Cambodia through film and photography. Panh's *The Missing Picture* won the prestigious 'Un Certain Regard Award' in Cannes last May. This award was introduced to recognize young talent and to encourage innovative and daring works.

Rithy Panh will be a festival guest during IDFA 2013 and a key person in the 'Emerging Voices from Southeast Asia' thematic program. He was born in Phnom Penh in 1964. In 1975, his family was removed from their home by the Khmer Rouge, and relocated to a refugee camp, where they later died. Rithy Panh fled to Thailand in 1979, but later ended up in Paris, where he became interested in film and eventually graduated from film school. Life under the Khmer Rouge and the legacy of that regime became the major themes of his films. Panh made his debut in 1989 with *Site 2*, and in the years that followed made a range of documentaries about life in Cambodia, eventually also returning to the country of his birth. Since then, he has been a key figure in the documentary industry of Cambodia, and not only because of his internationally recognized films, including *S21, The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003) and *Duch, Master of the Forges of Hell* (2011). Panh is also the founder and director of the Bophana: Audiovisual Resource Center in Cambodia, which aims to preserve the history of Cambodian film and photography. As a festival guest Rithy Panh has selected the IDFA Top 10, he will talk about his work and the Top 10 in a masterclass, and there will be a retrospective of Panh's own work.

The films Rithy Panh selected for the IDFA Top 10 partly reflect the notable development in Southeast Asian documentary cinema: small personal stories commenting on contemporary or historical events and issues. Among them are *A Man Vanishes* by Shohei Imamura (Japan, 1967), about the investigation into the disappearance of a businessman – just one of the many young men to disappear without a trace every year in Japan. Another Top 10 film is *A Tale of the Wind* by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loidan-Ivens (France/Netherlands, 1988). This playful work that balances between fiction and documentary, is in fact a small story about Ivens himself and a reflection on his life and career. In *Vanda's Room* by Pedro Costa (Portugal, 2000), is a deep journey into the Lisbon ghetto and the lives of its desperate inhabitants.

Making history

For scholars working on Southeast Asia the work of documentary makers like Rithy Panh is of significant interest. Much work has been done on how historiography has been recently impacted by specific historical events that have redrawn the political map in some of the Southeast Asian countries, and have required a coming to terms with a nationalist history that does not fit all. Considerably less work has been done so far on how visual images of history, like documentaries and new media technologies, change the interpretation of particular events and in its aftermath the writing of history by new interest groups and sections of society other than the traditional intelligentsia involved in such making of history. The recent 'underground tour' of *The Act of Killing* (Oppenheimer 2012), a film about the 1965 Indonesia killings, shows how film has a 'secondary' life on YouTube, Vimeo and similar internet based platforms, from where it can impact discussions on national histories.

To address questions related to these issues the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), and Leiden University will, in cooperation with IDFA, organize a seminar in connection with the IDFA's thematic program. The aim of the seminar is to bring together documentary makers and scholars, to discuss how documentaries help to rewrite national histories and to elaborate on the role of documentary makers as historians.

More details about the IDFA program 2013 can be found at: www.idfa.nl or by contacting Raul Nino Zambrano through raul@idfa.nl

More details about the seminar can be found at: www.kitlv.nl or by contacting Fridus Steijlen through steijlen@kitlv.nl

20 nov
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Cambodian director Rithy Pahn. (photo by Richard Dumas)

Below:
Still shot from Rithy Pahn's film 'S21, The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine'.

