



# Astra film

Jurnal de Festival. Prima zi  
(filme și spectatori, cafele și legende)

2

Perspectiva celorlalți  
(două filme documentare maghiare  
despre un sat transilvănean)

4



During Astra Film Fest, the film can be watched at the video bar of the Festival.

## Scream of the Stone

directed by  
Ton van Zantvoort,  
The Netherlands,  
2007, 60 minutes

Until two centuries ago, Potosi in Bolivia used to be one of the richest towns in the world. Even though they still remember the prosperous times from long ago, its present inhabitants are forced to face a completely different reality. The famous mines which brought them so many riches in the past are devoid today of almost any kind of resources. Nevertheless, eight thousand villagers still use them on their own, in search of silver. Their hard life is barely suggested in this documentary, the director preferring instead to follow in parallel the destiny of a character who succeeded in avoiding the general fate of the others (including the male representatives of his family) and, due to the English language courses attended at a university in another town, to become a guide for the tourists eager to visit the mines.

In a nutshell, this is the story of Scream of the Stone but, if we were settle for the dry recount of moments, we would commit a great injustice, because each shot is heavy with the spirit of the place and of the people. It's a funny, intriguing and, in any case, unique thing the habit of the miners to offer tobacco and pure alcohol at the end of the day to the devil of

the mines, who is represented in the shape of a strange doll they call Tio, to gain its goodwill in order to discover pure ores. It's not entirely clear how much the villagers believe in this superstition, if we take into account that they are always relaxed and mocking, but it doesn't matter too much considering that this custom is so deliciously picturesque. Moreover, the directions given by the guide (called Pedro Montes) to the tourists before climbing the mountain where the mines are located are in their turn memorable. He offers coca leaves (natural drugs, as they are commonly called) and advises them to chew the leaves while walking, due to their benefic effects on someone unaccustomed to the atmospheric pressure in the depths. In other words, the respective drug is almost essential for any visitor of the mines. The subsequent discussions of the tourists are just as interesting, because they come as a natural completion of the events lived in there. After the explosions they witness in the mines (one of the tourists compares them with war bombardments), after the efforts they make to resist in this harsh environment, hard to bear by a novice, the conclusions they draw at the end, in the

warmth given by the safety of a clean restaurant, seem hilarious and, at times, even pointless.

One of the strong points of this documentary (and of its director) is the fact that it manages not to condemn, not to mock and, even though it doesn't necessarily present characters to which you can relate, it conveys the image of a world, a place, a community, with its small joys, jokes, traditions and grieves. At the end, when we witness a union demonstration of the workers, followed by a funeral for one of them, we might have the impression that Scream of the Stone turns on a propagandistic track. However, we are silenced by the last shot when, almost without reason, a group of workers grab a drunkard from the street, take him to the place of one of them and start a party in the real sense of the word. In other words, the author uses this occasion to show us another vital truth: the main character of the film is not a man, but life itself, the life in every inhabitant, or stone, or silver ore in Potosi, Bolivia.

Andrei Rus,  
adapted by Andrada Romagno

In 2006 a modern coke plant was opened in China. Its building is a boom for the respective Chinese industry, which is suddenly upgraded with 20-30 years. Nothing special so far, but a similar industrial giant had been built in Dortmund 14 years before. It cost 650,000 euros and it functioned only for eight years, being considered at that time the most modern in the world. For economic reasons, the coke produced became more expensive than the imported one, therefore it was sold to China. A team of Chinese workers along with the remaining German technicians dismantled the plant for one year and a half.

Losers and Winners is the story of this gigantic work, in which two different work mentalities meet and a way of perceiving life in general. While for the Germans the process of dismantling the plant in which they worked is a sad one, for the Chinese is just a common drill, which doesn't require any feelings. Their human side appears when, answering the questions of the two directors, the workers speak about what

## Losers and Winners

Directed by Ulrike  
Franke and Michael  
Loken, Germany, 2006,  
96 minutes

is waiting for them at home, about children, marriage, parents. The most hard-working of them are placed on the board of honour, being photographed with a big, red funny-looking bow. The one who is most worthy of the rank is the chef who manages to feed an entire team with only three helps and few resources, offering them meals as varied as possible.

The Chinese are being paid 400 euros per month, they work from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., while unemployment allowance of a German is over 600 euros. Hereby the title of the documentary is intentionally ambiguous, because you cannot decide which of the two teams are the winners and which are the losers. During work both teams learn from each other, but misunder-



During Astra Film Fest, the film can be watched at the video bar of the Festival.

standings between often occur. If the Germans consider the Chinese as being irresponsible concerning the environmental protection and the life of their owned employees, some accidents having taken place, the others observe that Germans have become lazy workers. They come to work between 8-9 a.m., and the lunch and smoking breaks last more than the working hours. A distinct

person is the director of the Asian part, a philosopher in love with Mercedes, who expresses his feelings by writing maxims about the corresponding natural phenomena. We can see him visiting a showroom, driving an SUV and stating economy theories which are full of optimism. The end of the film is entirely his. "I would like the next plant we dismantle from

Germany to be Airbus and to move it entirely in China and therefore the Germans can build spatial houses." For the moment two other coke plants similar to the one dismantled are already being built, for the grace of the hard-working Chinese people, while two plants from the Ruhr tank will close.

Jean-Lorin Sterian