

CAPTURING REALITY

A film by
Pepita Ferrari

97 minutes, color, 2009



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JENNIFER BAICHWAL / MANFRED BECKER / MICHEL BRAULT / NICK BROOMFIELD / JOAN CHURCHILL / EDUARDO COUTINHO / PAUL COWAN
JEAN-XAVIER DE LESTRADE / MOLLY DINEEN / JENNIFER FOX / DENIS GHEERBRANT / SERGE GIGUÈRE / PATRICIO GUZMÁN / WERNER HERZOG / SCOTT HICKS
HEDDY HONIGMANN / SYLVAIN L'ESPÉRANCE / JEAN-PIERRE LLEDO / KIM LONGINOTTO / KEVIN MACDONALD / ALBERT MAYSLES / ERROL MORRIS / STAN NEUMANN
ALANIS OBOMSAWIN / LAURA POITRAS / VELCROW RIPPER / HUBERT SAUPER / RAKESH SHARMA / BARRY STEVENS / SABIHA SUMAR / NETTIE WILD / PETER WINTONICK / JESSICA YU

"Real life is so much more interesting than anything you can make up."

KEVIN MACDONALD, DIRECTOR OF *ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER*, *TOUCHING THE VOID* & *THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND*

THE FILM

Filmmakers have been turning their cameras on the real world since the time of the Lumière Brothers – and the documentary genre has sparked impassioned creative debate ever since.

What comes into play when filmmakers set out to represent reality?
What ethical concerns arise when portraying real people on screen?
How does music condition our emotional response to film?

From cinema-vérité pioneers Albert Maysles, Joan Churchill and Michel Brault to maverick moviemakers like Errol Morris and Nick Broomfield – some of the doc world's brightest lights reflect upon the unique power of the genre in *Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary*.

Articulate and entertaining, provocative and thoughtful – the remarkable cast includes such luminaries as Chilean filmmaker Patricio Guzmán, the innovative British director Kim Longinotto and Alanis Obomsawin – the First Lady of First Nations cinema.

Studded throughout are intimate interviews with over 30 directors and clips from 50 films – classics such as *Grey Gardens* and *The Thin Blue Line*, as well as such arresting recent work as *Darwin's Nightmare* and *The Day I Will Never Forget*, offering insight into various aspects of the complex creative process.

Provocative pranksters, courageous activists and consummate storytellers – directors as diverse as Pakistani feminist Sabiha Sumar, new media guru Peter Wintonick and Brazilian master Eduardo Coutinho discuss the multiple creative choices involved in making documentary cinema.

Director Pepita Ferrari fashions the kaleidoscopic mix into her own engaging narrative, deftly charting the documentarian's journey, while probing the perennially contested status of the "truth." Can film capture reality? Some contemporary directors challenge the original tenets of cinema-vérité, while the iconoclastic Werner Herzog abandons facts altogether in his quest for the "ecstasy of truth."

Combining an unalloyed joy in moviemaking with a deep knowledge of film culture, *Capturing Reality* explores the contemporary documentary scene with intellectual rigour, stylish originality and a fresh sense of discovery.

THE FILMMAKER



Pepita Ferrari has been directing documentaries for over 15 years. Her films have received recognition from Le festival international du cinema au féminin du Bordeaux, the Canadian Society of Cinematographers and the Columbus International Film & Video Awards. Previous documentaries include

By Woman's Hand, *The Petticoat Expeditions*, *Joseph Giunta: A Silent Triumph* and *The Unsexing of Emma Edmonds*.

THE PRODUCER



Michelle van Beusekom has worked in the Canadian film and television industry for fifteen years, joining the National Film Board of Canada in 2006 as the Assistant Director General of its English Program.

Prior to joining the NFB, Michelle worked as the Manager of Program Development at CBC Television-Montreal, at W Network (formerly WTN) as a Production Executive, and was co-programmer of Planet in Focus: The Toronto International Environmental Film & Video Festival.

Written and Directed by: Pepita Ferrari

Produced by: Michelle van Beusekom

Editor: Barbara Brown

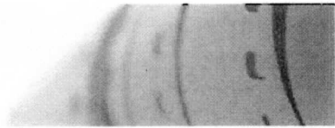
Original Music: Robert M. Lepage

Cinematographer: Marc Gadoury

Running Time: 97 min

CAPTURING
REALITY
THE ART
OF DOCUMENTARY





Doc on docs bows at doc fest

by: Marc Glassman

Nov 24, 2008

AMSTERDAM -- Dispelling fears that it would be too "inside" the genre, the blessedly jargon-free feature *Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary* drew an enthusiastic response at its world premiere here at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. Director Pepita Ferrari (*The Unsexing of Emma Edmonds*) joined forces with the National Film Board's Michelle van Beusekom to produce the sprightly and thought-provoking survey of the contemporary documentary scene.

The film, which premiered over the weekend, features luminaries Werner Herzog, Michel Brault and Joan Churchill as well as a lively assortment of directors who have films in at this year's festival -- Brits Kim Longinotto (*Rough Aunties*) and Nick Broomfield (*Battle for Haditha*); Brazilian Eduardo Coutinho (*Playing*); Canadians Velcrow Ripper (*Fierce Light*), Paul Cowan (*Paris 1919*) and Peter Wintonick (*PilgrIMAGE*); and American Errol Morris (*Standard Operating Procedure*).

Rounding up this stellar group "wasn't that difficult," says Ferrari. "Pretty much everyone who was asked agreed to come on board."

The project came out of a series of master classes that the NFB has held off and on for decades. In January 2007, Jennifer Fox (*An American Love Story*), Hubert Sauper (*Darwin's Nightmare*) and Rakesh Sharma held a session dealing with politics, character and art, which inspired van Beusekom, formerly in program development at CBC, to look further into the form.

After a talk with NFB director general Tom Perlmutter, she was told, "It's time to do something about the art of the documentary. Take a look at the footage of older master classes and find out if there's something we can use."

Van Beusekom, who is assistant director general of the board's English Program, chose the independent Ferrari because she "has a genuine appreciation of documentary and its history. Pepita has lamented to me about the decline in the craft in some docs over the last few years, bad framing or a lack of rhythm in the editing really upsets her."

For Ferrari, "this was an amazing opportunity to survey the field from experimental, Velcrow Ripper; to artistic, Errol Morris; to political, Hubert Sauper."

Capturing Reality will have its Canadian launch in the spring of 2009, the 70th anniversary of the board. "We want to emphasize the tradition of quality at the NFB. This film fits within that framework. We went international in scope in *Capturing Reality* because it's important to place the NFB in that context, as one of the most illustrious places for documentary filmmaking," says van Beusekom.

"It's so much a part of the history of documentary -- particularly in the glory years of the '60s, '70s and '80s when Colin Low, Pierre Perrault, Roman Kroitor, Michel Brault and Donald Brittain were producing work."

Capturing Reality has been presold to Super Channel, which has the first window. The Documentary Channel has the second, while Mongrel Media has home video/DVD rights.

<http://www.playbackonline.ca/articles/daily/20081124/idff.html>

Realscreen >> The ethics of docmaking, discussed through the NFB's meta-doc

features

The ethics of docmaking, discussed through the NFB's meta-doc

by: Lindsay Gibb

Jun 11, 2009 | Share

Pepita Ferrari's doc *Capturing Reality* is the ultimate meta-doc. The film uses interviews with 33 documentary filmmakers and clips from their films to discuss the concept of non-fiction filmmaking and the conflicting "rules" that each director lives and works by.



One of the most conflicting sequences in the film concerned the ethics of documentary filmmaking and how much of a film can be scripted or pre-planned. For instance, in a segment about interviewing subjects, Nick Broomfield (pictured) says that he sees a habit has formed with directors who come into subjects' homes or workspaces and move around their furniture and light the space a certain way to get the optimum effect. While he thinks this is destroying their environment and essentially losing the truth in the situation, Errol Morris admits he's done it and he stands behind it.

Likewise, director Barry Stevens uses Werner Herzog's *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* as an example of fudging the truth. He says that Herzog asked his subject, a man who had been in the Navy, to open and close his front door a number of times to illustrate his need to feel like he's not locked in. While Stevens says it made a strong image in the film, he also feels it wasn't true. While some people might say 'don't let the facts get in the way of a good story,' Stevens believes that when it comes to documentaries, you absolutely *should* let them get in the way.

During a Q&A at a Toronto showing, doc director Jennifer Baichwal advised the audience not to let anyone tell them that there is a right and a wrong way to make a documentary. However, she feels that audiences will lose their faith in a doc and a filmmaker if re-enactments or fabrications are misrepresented.

Ferrari, who began work on this film in early 2007, says that making it was like doing her MA in documentary. A doc veteran of over 15 years, Ferrari tried to keep an open mind while interviewing the many subjects of her doc, which included Albert Maysles, Kim Longinotto, Molly Dineen, Nettle Wild, Peter Wintonick and Paul Cowan. She didn't want to take anyone's side on the many aspects of documentary filmmaking investigated throughout the doc, which, in addition to ethics, included editing, sound, music, interviews, camera work and narration.

After spending so much time thinking and talking about docs, Ferrari says she thinks the future for documentaries is looking good. "It's blown wide open more than before," she says. However she still feels that there hasn't been a change in the quality versus quantity of the docs that are made. "Jennifer Fox said to me, 'There are more documentaries out there, but there aren't more great documentaries out there.'"

The [Capturing Reality website](#) features four hours of bonus material that didn't appear in the film.

A guide to docs you really want to see



JOHN GRIFFIN

The pull quote on the NFB promo sheet for Pepita Ferrari's great new movie Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary, reads "Real life is so much more interesting than anything you can make up."

The man behind the quote is Kevin MacDonald, director of Touching the Void and The Last King of Scotland, two indisputably excellent films that took great pride in playing with conventional notions of reality.

That slippery word, "truth," is at the core of Ferrari's film about the documentary, a genre that trades in truth.

In interviewing 30 people who make them, from cinéma vérité pioneers Albert Maysles and Michel Brault to contemporary artists like Errol Morris, Werner Herzog, Nick Broomfield, Jennifer Baichwal and Peter Wintonick, Ferrari provides both a roadmap to the genre and a forum for vigorous debate.

Just what is the truth, anyway? "It works for two audiences," says the veteran documentary director, and old friend, of the film that screens in its French version, with discussion, at the NFB tonight and tomorrow.

"There's the general audience, interested in learning about documentaries now Michael Moore and movies like Supersize Me have made them more commercial. And there are those who want to make their own documentaries, and watch it as part of the learning process."

Capturing Reality came out of an original idea by NFB head Tom Perlmutter about the state of the documentary, given the Board's

crucial role in its development and this year's 70th anniversary NFB celebrations.

A series of NFB workshops with some of the world's great directors was planned for 2007. "If all these great filmmakers were coming to town, why not take advantage of the situation and film them? It grew from there."

By the time it stopped growing, Ferrari had watched 150 docs and flown all over North America and

Europe, interviewing passionate, articulate, interesting filmmakers like Molly Dineen, Jennifer Fox, Kim Longinotto, Velcrow Ripper, Hubert Sauper and Jessica Wu. They're people whose work you now really, really want to see, because Ferrari has intercut the formal talking heads bit with brilliant film clips.

"It was a nightmare," Ferrari laughs, remembering the editing process. "There were so many possibilities, so much nuance."

She did make a 97-minute cut and it's available now on DVD. You will absolutely want to check out four hours of extra material, accessed by director or topic, on the DVD and on the NFB website. That's www.nfb.ca. Follow the links.

Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary screens at the NFB Cinema, 1564 St. Denis, tonight and Sunday at 7 p.m. Discussions with documentary filmmakers, and the director, will follow. Admission is free.

If you don't know or care that this year marks the 40th anniversary of Woodstock, please let Warner Video remind you. To celebrate the occasion of three days of peace, music and mud two hours north of New York City near the bucolic burg of Bethel in the summer of '69, there's a new, overstuffed Woodstock DVD package in stores Tuesday.

In an epic fit of cynical rebranding, the countercultural event dedi-

cated to changing our relationship with the Earth, consumer society and each other is now seen as one more occasion to make money from staged nostalgia.

Among many things we really don't need, Woodstock: The 40th Anniversary Ultimate Collector's Edition comes wrapped in a tiny fringed vest that cost some poor cow its life. Inside, a lucite paper-weight with images from the festival bound for landfill near you; an iron-on Woodstock badge for your tragic jean jacket or neglected guitar case; a miniature 60-page commemorative reprint of the boring Life magazine pictorial; a boring fact sheet of something that happened generations ago; and repros of the \$8-per-day concert tickets that few of the estimated one million gatecrashers bothered to buy.

Getting to the actual discs themselves, check out two hours of as-yet-unreleased material by, among others, Joan Baez, Paul Butterfield, Creedence Clearwater Revival, the Dead, Johnny Winter, and the Who, in their unfortunate Tommy period.

Why, you could be musing to yourself, has this precious music from these great artists - and Sha Na Na - been kept from us all these years? Too long, too bad or too out of tune, mostly. For Woodstock archivists only. As for the trip through The Woodstock and 1960s Museum at Bethel Woods featurette, think theme park, and take



CAPTURING REALITY: THE ART OF DOCUMENTARY



Reflecting Images - Panorama

In *Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary* director Pepita Ferrari goes toe-to-toe with the leading lights of the documentary filmmaking world to create a fascinating and authoritative record of the creative processes deployed by each in their work.

Shot against a simple background, each interviewee is given free reign to talk about every phase of the documentary process, from inception to delivery. Kicking off with Hubert Sauper - 'documentary... is absolutely the freest [form] of cinema, you have the most enormous spectrum of possibilities' - the list of contributors reads like a who's who of the doc world, including the likes of Nick Broomfield, Errol Morris, Kim Longinotto, Albert Maysles, Jennifer Fox and Werner Herzog.

HOME RECORDINGS

Premieres of the Lovelands

A World Premiere in IDEA's Premieres of the Lowlands programme, *Home Recordings* by Finnish filmmaker Mari Soppela is a penetrating and candid examination of the filmmaker's own 'multicultural' marriage, to Dutch composer Leo Anemaet (who also scores, edits and co-produces). Using a great deal of the couple's own home movie footage, old black & white footage and intercut with more recent footage of the couple's everyday life and filmed conversations on the living room sofa, *Home Recordings* recreates and examines a relationship through the years, set to a beautiful, operatic score. Initially holding hands, messing about and joking, we are made privy to the ups and downs and underlying stresses of the filmmakers' relationship to one another - including the milestones in many relation-

ships: early intimacy, holidays, visits to a therapist and moving house - all are covered with frankness and candour. As the atmosphere becomes more serious, there are nevertheless moments of humour and understanding, even in the frank exchanges between the couple tackling their problems head-on in front of the camera. Perhaps the abiding lesson of *Home Recordings* is that art (in this case documentary filmmaking) is the best form of therapy of all.

HOME RECORDINGS

Mari Soppela

26/11 18:15 Tuschinski 4

27/11 20:15 Tuschinski 3

28/11 11:00 Mont 09

out. "But we wanted to make a very coherent film that didn't need voice-over or narration, one that would just hang together by matching up the interviews to make for a natural conversation flow."

"When I was asked to make this film, it was like I had been given the best present in the world as a documentary filmmaker. It was incredible to be able to discuss in detail the filmmaking processes of all these filmmakers, and it led to a certain level of discovery for myself as a documentary filmmaker. That's why this project was very personal to me. I think that the film is a sort of love letter to documentary. There are huge amounts of personal investment at every level within documentary filmmaking that are seldom recognized. Documentary is an unacknowledged gift to the world because it can teach us so much. I don't mean this in a didactic way - I mean it simply as human beings to human beings. As a couple of my subjects in the film say, documentary is a mirror of ourselves and therefore provides a wonderful opportunity for the human race to really get to understand itself better." NC.

CAPTURING REALITY: THE ART OF DOCUMENTARY

Pepita Ferrari

26/11 20:00 OBA

27/11 16:30 Tuschinski 5