

# Women's Worlds at International Filmfestivals

## TERRE DES FEMMES at the 25th International Filmfestival of Havana

At the 25th Festival of the New Latin American Cinema in Havana, Cuba, from 2nd to 12th of December 2003, TERRE DES FEMMES cooperated in a Program of films made by women, named "De cierta manera", which screened 60 films from 20 countries. As well TERRE DES FEMMES organized within the filmfestival, together with PALOMAS, Cuba, Feminale Film Festival and the Superior School of Arts and Media, both Cologne, Germany a conference, entitled "The feminine look in audiovisual production and distribution and its contribution to a culture of peace".

The conference was attended by over 300 women from Cuba, Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Israel, Germany, USA, among others. They came as film directors, producers, TV journalists, film editors, film festival directors, distributors or social scientists linked to the creation of audiovisual works.

It became the best attended event of the festival, and received as well the highest reactions of the media, press and TV - to the astonishment of some festival visitors, who had expected it to be one of the less important issues exposed at the Festival. Ten representatives from Cuba, Germany and the USA made their presentations about their experiences and perspectives, which were discussed afterwards with the attending public.

Irene Jung, TERRE DES FEMMES presented an exposé about "[Women's rights in the audiovisual production](#)". She referred to her experiences at the Film Festival in Tübingen, Germany, "Insights into women's worlds", which deals with the human rights issues fought for by TERRE DES FEMMES. She also talked about their strategies of multiplication and the discussion among the directors that attended the 3rd Film Festival 2003 about "Human rights for women in regions of crisis – a cineastic look".



Lizette Vila, director of "PALOMAS", Cuba and Irene Jung, director of TERRE DES FEMMES Film Fest in conversation.

Two years ago they had started to plan the activity of the women at the film festival. One year later the first meeting of women cineasts was organized at the eve of the film festival 2002, with 150 women from six countries attending. Then the film festival Feminale and the Superior School for Media, both from Cologne, joined in the effort and thus broadened the effects of the event.

Shira Richter from Israel, who had presented two weeks earlier her film at the TERRE DES FEMMES Film Festival and attended the discussion among the directors, referred to the theme "Peace initiatives by women". Her film "Two states of mind" represents an important contribution to this perspective. She stated, that the media are more interested in showing the horrors of war, than the efforts of parts in the conflict to create comprehension and harmony among them. However, in Cuba this perspective received an enormous feed-back: Shira was practically overrun by the media, who informed widely about her film and it's implication for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The most beautiful and meaningful event was the screening of Shira's Film for the Israeli community in presence of the Palestinian ambassador in Cuba. At the common dinner afterwards they went on discussing the perspectives of solutions to the conflict.

Mariví Rodríguez presented an investigation into the participation of women at the International Film School San Antonio de los Baños, which was founded by Gabriel García Marquez. Reason for hope is given by the fact, that women don't interrupt their studies at the school as much as men do.

Darcis Fernandez however showed the other side of the coin: deep rooted attitudes that make it more difficult for women to participate in social life and the audiovisual production.

Christine Moser presented the work of her Film Festival in Cologne, Feminale, and their efforts to support innovative perspectives developed by women filmmakers. Rita Schwarze from the Superior School of Arts and Media from Cologne talked about her experiences with the exchange program between her school and San Antonio de los Baños.

Debra Zimmermann from the USA presented the work of "women make movies" which distributes films made by women from all over the world. Her experiences made her focus as well the production by women filmmakers, for which "women make movies" realizes co-productions with independent women filmmakers from the USA.

Kathrin Gebhard-Seele referred to her project of the women's film festival B-Movie in Munich, in connection with an alternative arts cinema and a joint media project of Uruguayan and German women filmmakers.

Brigitte Krause, who had presented her latest film at the festival, talked about this fascinating project, in which five women from five continents had worked at a common theme and had made together this film "Trading Images". Soledad Cruz ended the series of exposés with the perspectives of how cultural creation can contribute to peace processes.

In the following discussion one expectancy resulted in being the common goal: that this kind of discussions and sharing should continue in form of a permanent Forum, and should not wait one year to be continued.

At least the continuation of the conference "The feminine look in audiovisual production and distribution and its contribution to a culture of peace" next year is already part of the established plans of the persons and institutions that organized this year's event.

## **Impressions from the Conference**

### **“The feminine look in audiovisual production and distribution and its contribution to a culture of peace”**

The conference was attended by over 300 women from Cuba, Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Israel, Germany, USA, among others. They came as film directors, producers, TV journalists, film editors, film festival directors, distributors or social scientists linked to the creation of audiovisual works.



The press conference in the Hotel Nacional de Cuba was one of the most attended ones of the Havana festival, where the organisers presented the conference and the four day long retrospective of the works of women filmmakers.

From left: Rita Schwarze (organisation), Julia Mirabal (org.), Soledad Cruz (lecturer), Lizette Vila (org.), Gloria María Cossío (moderation), Deborah (interpreter), Christine Moser (org.), Shira Richter (lecturing filmmaker), Irene Jung (org.and lecturer), Brigitte Krause (lecturing filmmaker .)



Also the conference was attended by a crowd of enthusiastic women who participated passionately in the discussion round after the exposes were held.

The Israeli filmmaker Shira Richter was our guest at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Filmfestival Women's Worlds in Tübingen – the intense cooperation with festival director Irene Jung directly went on in the halls of the Hotel Nacional de Cuba and the cinema halls, where her film “Two States of Mind” was received with utter enthusiasm.



Shira Richter was practically overrun by the media, who informed widely about her film and its implication for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as for "Peace initiatives by women" in general. Her film "Two states of mind" represents an important contribution to this perspective and received an enormous feed-back in Cuba. Shira mentioned as well, that in the UN the notion is growing that women have to be involved more in official political peace initiatives.

A very special moment: Shira's Film "Two States of Mind" was presented in a special screening for the Israeli community in Cuba....



... in the presence of the Palestinian Ambassador in Cuba, who shared some evocative words before the screening. Afterwards the discussions went on at the joint dinner, still controversial but in amicable atmosphere, similar to the two heroines of the film.

The Projekt „Palomas“, main organiser of the women's conference from the Cuban side, awarded the president of the Havana Film festival, film veteran Alfredo Guevara, with the Palomas-Peace award. The award is being delivered by singer Omara Portuondo to filmmaker Fernando Perez, who has just been several times awarded himself for his latest film „Suite Habana“. He receives the award in the name of Alfredo Guevara



## **Conference of Women filmmakers at the 25th International Filmfestival of Habana**

**“La Mirada femenina en la producción y distribución audiovisual y su alcance y fundamento para una cultura de paz. ”**

(Spanish/Español on page 8)

**“The feminine look in audiovisual production and distribution and its contribution to a culture of peace”**

**5th of December 2003, Havana, Cuba**

**“The contribution of audiovisual works to the defence of human rights for women”,** lecture by Irene Jung, TERRE DES FEMMES

I am here representing an organization for the defence of human rights for women worldwide called TERRE DES FEMMES, from Germany. With our public work we want to insist on the fact, that women´s rights ARE also human rights, not a private issue or internal family affairs.

One of the most impacting ways of doing this public work we think to be the organization of a Film Festival, we have called “Insights into Women´s Worlds”. In the city of Tübingen, Germany, we present in November for the International Day “NO to violence against women” a week-long program of films, videos , feature and documentary. They deal with the specific issues that TERRE DES FEMMES is focusing at: women and child trafficking, genital mutilation, the exploitation of textile workers, forced marriage, assassination in the name of “honor”, domestic violence and others more. But they shed a light also on women´s stragies, their solidarity, their strength for fighting against these evils. THUS we want to fight against clichés, provoke empathy, comprehension and thus create active solidarity.

To accomplish that we have a double strategy: we choose for a broad public excellent works of the cinematographic art, and – for a specialized public, often activists of human rights, women´s, Third world groups, documentaries about the specific human rights violations. Our aim is, that these different kind of spectators start to mingle, to find people among the broad public for active solidarity. And as well, that the specialized public start to appreciate cinema art works. Because, for this purpose: the image and imagination are more important than information.

Examples of the films which we have screened and which provoke imagination: “At 5 in the afternoon” from Iranian Samira Makhmalbaf, awarded in Cannes, “Silent Waters” by Pakistani Sabiha Sumar, awarded in Locarno, “The day I became a woman” from Iranian Marziyeh Meshkini, 13 times awarded at international festivals, “Real women have curves”, by Patricia Cardoso, awarded at Sundance festival. But we show also videos from totally unknown directors, who had found us on some page in the Internet and who have something important to say about some specific violation of women´s rights.

We accompany the screenings by discussions between our referees for specific issues

and the public. We invite other organizations to discuss and to present their local work, to offer the spectators forms of concrete solidarity they could develop.

We also organize round table talks among the directors and pass them on our most urgent questions: How can we contribute with films to the defence of human rights for women? Which representation is doing justice to these violated women? How can we provoke solidarity? How should we distribute these works as to reach the audience we want to reach? With these discussions and reflections we want to influence as well future audiovisual works.

One example is worth bringing forth with respect to the question: how can audiovisual works influence directly in the defence of human rights for women?: it is the film "Señorita Extraviada" by Lourdes Portillo. I saw it last year at the Havana Festival. I was so impressed by this case of Ciudad Juárez, that I proposed TERRE DES FEMMES to include it in our urgent actions and the 2004 campaign. We had read about these young women workers being murdered in the press, but nothing prepared me for seeing in this film the immeasurable impunity of violence in this unhappy Mexican town. The Festival Jury that awarded the film contributed with it to its dissemination throughout the world and that has certainly caused more reactions like ours. This is a motivating example for us who are organizing film festivals.

Finally we try to take our festival farther than Tübingen. We offer the activist groups of TERRE DES FEMMES in other cities packages of films or videos, contacts with distributors, information and propaganda material, contacts with cinemas, sometimes even direct logistic support, so they could organize small reproductions of our filmfest. Thus we are giving multiple use to the works of enormous costs, which implies the organization of a film festival. This is even more important in a globalized economy, where funds for cultural and social projects are being reduced at a breathtaking speed.

As you can see, our festival does not have as a criteria that its films have to be directed by a woman. It's THE ISSUE that has to be women's rights. But, it is no casualty, that three quarters of our films are directed by women, although there are men who have the sensibility to focus with empathy the situation of women. But – there are also men and women, who focus their works in a way we reject, as they are hurting the dignity of women. Some of our films are made by German women – many times about women in Third World countries – but the big majority should be made by directors from these countries. Because it is important, that they represent their culture, their women, that – although being critical – they will not impose an unrespectable view or prejudices about these cultures.

One of the ways that hurt the dignity of women – and that was an important point at our recent round table talk with directors - is the representation of violated women as victims, nothing else. That these women be represented as objects, that they be instrumentalized as symbols. That they are not given the characteristics of a subject with the capacity of struggling, their capacity to develop perspectives, their capacity of active solidarity.

And – finally – I want to cite some of the hypothesis and agreements from this unfinished conversation among the directors about the contribution of audiovisual works to the defence of these rights.

Franziska Müller, a Swiss referee on feminist peace policies, festivals like ours are part of a peace policy. Because, in spite of exposing common goals throughout the different works, they offer a wide variety of perspectives. And in wars the perspectives become

unique and one sided , and thus make it possible, that women are being instrumentalized. For her it is also important that in situations of warlike conflicts women themselves have access to the audiovisual production, as in wars the spectrum of social roles diminishes as well as the capacity of self representation of women. Therefore they work in an empowerment project in Gaza, Palestine, that includes a project of video production. They – the women that film their own situation – thus question the dominant discourses which define peace in very different terms as the affected women do.

Shira Richter insisted that the psychological factors be taken into account – that emotions have to be fundamental in a film, because the conflicts are being perceived at an emotional level, women communicate on that level, and emotions are an important part of their life. She emphasised as well, that there has to be a connection between the issue treated in a film - relations of respect, of comprehension, of dignity – and the relations among the film crew. Because these are often characterized by disrespect and an inhuman context.

Beate Neuhaus exposed the capacity of audiovisual works to offer a tortured people – in this case the Guatemalan people – a mirror of part of their history und thus initiate a process of mental healing. Because, after the screenings the women start to talk about their traumas. This was the explicit intention of her film which was solicited from her by the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission.

Another point of discussion was the question, for which media should audiovisual works be conceived: if for TV with it's massive public, but where there is no feed-back of spectators to directors? Or through independent documentaries for intimate festivals like ours with its close contact to spectators? Ulrike Baur thought, that the spectators from these festivals don't compare with a TV public of two and a half million that have seen her film about women trafficking. That even with a TV production you can get direct feed-back by spectators, as she discussed her film with many women's groups which invited her. As well she called upon the directors, to feel responsible for the space occupied by TV, to not abandon it, fight for it, because in Germany the TV is being more and more sensationistic, with stupid talk shows US style, with few transmission spaces and less and less money for social issues.

For her there should be no contradiction between classical documentaries, TV documentaries and feature films, because "they all function only, when a good story is worked at a good technical and as well emotional level". I want to finish here with a beautiful image, she gave us at the end of our discussion: a good film should go from the womb, place of our most instinctive emotions, through the heart, site of our more conscious feelings, to the head, to our conscious reasoning. From the womb through the heart to the head.

**Español / Spanish**

## **“La Mirada femenina en la producción y distribución audiovisual y su alcance y fundamento para una cultura de paz”**

exposición de Irene Jung

### **“Los derechos humanos de la mujer en la producción audiovisual”**

Estoy aquí representando una organización de derechos humanos para las mujeres del mundo llamada TERRE DES FEMMES, de Alemania. Con nuestro trabajo público insistimos que los derechos de las mujeres también SON derechos humanos y no asuntos privados, asuntos internos de familia.

Como una de las formas más impactantes para este trabajo público hemos identificado la realización de un Festival de Cine, que lo hemos llamado “Miradas a mundos de mujeres”. En la ciudad de Tübingen, Alemania, presentamos siempre en noviembre, para el “Día Internacional de NO a la violencia contra mujeres” por una semana películas, vídeos de ficción y documentales. Tratan sobre los temas específicos que enfoca TERRE DES FEMMES: tráfico de mujeres y niñas, mutilación genital, la explotación de trabajadoras textiles, el matrimonio forzado, los asesinatos en nombre del “honor”, la violencia doméstica y otros más. Pero también echan una luz sobre las estrategias de las mujeres, su solidaridad, su fuerza para enfrentar estos males. Con esto queremos combatir clichés, provocar empatía, comprensión y así crear solidaridad activa.

Para ello tenemos una doble estrategia: escogemos para un público amplio excelentes obras de las artes cinematográficas, y para un público especialista documentales sobre las violaciones específicas. Intentamos que se mezclen estas dos clases de públicos, para ganar más gente solidaria, activa entre el público amplio. Y también, que los especialistas empiecen a interesarse por obras del arte cinematográfico. Porque la imagen y la imaginación son más importantes que la información.

Ejemplos de las películas que hemos proyectado y que ofrecen imágenes para provocar nuestra imaginación son: “At 5 in the afternoon” de Samira Makhmalbaf del Iran, premiada en Cannes, “Silent Waters” de Sabiha Sumar, de Pakistan, premiada en Locarno, “The day I became a woman” de Marziyeh Meshkini del Iran, 13 veces premiada en festivales internacionales, “Real women have curves” de Patricia Cardoso, premiada en el festival de Sundance. Pero también mostramos vídeos de directoras totalmente desconocidas, que nos encontraron en alguna página del Internet y tienen algo importante que decir sobre específicas violaciones de derechos de mujeres.

Acompañamos las proyecciones con discusiones de nuestras especialistas en determinado tema con el público, invitamos otras organizaciones a que discuten y presenten su trabajo concreto a nivel local, para ofrecer al público formas de solidaridad concreta que puedan desarrollar

Además organizamos mesas redondas entre las directoras, donde les pasamos nuestra pregunta más urgente: ¿de qué forma podemos contribuir con películas y videos a la defensa de los derechos humanos de las mujeres en el mundo? ¿Cuál mirada le hace justicia a estas mujeres violentadas? ¿Cómo provocamos solidaridad? ¿De qué forma debemos distribuir estas obras, para que lleguen al público al cual queremos dirigirnos?. Con estas discusiones y reflexiones queremos también influir en futuras producciones audiovisuales.



Un ejemplo vale la pena ser mencionado aquí para la pregunta, como trabajos audiovisuales pueden directamente apoyar en la defensa de los derechos humanos de las mujeres: es el caso de la película, "Señorita extraviada". La ví el año pasado aquí en el Festival de la Habana. Me impresionó tanto este caso en Ciudad Juárez, México, que propuse a TERRE DES FEMMES de incluirlo en nuestras acciones urgentes y la campaña del 2004. Sabíamos por años del caso de jóvenes trabajadoras asesinadas, por artículos de prensa, pero nada me preparó para ver en esta película la inmensurable impunidad de la violencia en este infeliz pueblo mexicano. Aquel jurado del festival que la premió, contribuyó con ello a que fuera diseminada más por el mundo y que haya provocado más reacciones como las nuestras. Este es un ejemplo muy motivador para nosotras que estamos organizando festivales.

Finalmente tratamos de masificar nuestro festival, más allá de Tuebingen. Ofrecemos a los grupos de activistas de TERRE DES FEMMES paquetes de películas o de videos, los contactos con distribuidores, materiales de información y propaganda sobre las películas, contactos con cinemas, a veces apoyo logístico directo, para que ellas organicen pequeñas réplicas de nuestro festival en su ciudad. De esta forma se saca mucho más provecho de los trabajos de enorme costo que significa la preparación de un festival de cine. Esto a su vez se vuelve más importante en una economía globalizada, donde los fondos para proyectos culturales y sociales son cada vez más escasos.

Como vieron, en nuestro festival no es el criterio que una película sea dirigida por una mujer, tenemos unas cuantas películas hechas por hombres. EL TEMA es los derechos de la mujer. Y allí no es casual, que tres cuartas partes de nuestras obras son hechas por mujeres aunque haya hombres que tienen la sensibilidad de enfocar con empatía la situación de mujeres. Pero también hay algunos hombres y también mujeres que enfocan sus obras de formas que nosotras rechazamos, porque atentan contra la dignidad de la mujer. Algunas de nuestras películas son hechas por directoras alemanas - muchas veces sobre mujeres en países del 3. Mundo -, pero la gran mayoría debe ser de directoras provenientes de estos países, porque es importante que ellas representen la visión de su cultura, de sus mujeres, que - aunque siendo críticas - no van a imponer una mirada irrespetuosa, o de prejuicios sobre estas culturas.

Una de las formas que atentan contra la dignidad de la mujer, y ese fue un punto importante en nuestra reciente mesa redonda, es la representación de las mujeres violentadas como víctimas, nada más. Que estas mujeres sean mostradas como objetos, que sean instrumentalizadas como símbolos. Cuando no se les concede el carácter de sujeto con la capacidad de pensar y de actuar. Para TODAS las directoras esta fue la intención más importante, de mostrar las mujeres como sujetos, de mostrar su fuerza, su capacidad creativa, su capacidad de lucha, su capacidad de desarrollar perspectivas, su capacidad de solidaridad activa.

Y, quiero finalmente citar algunas de las tesis y conclusiones de esta conversación no terminada sobre el aporte del trabajo audiovisual a la defensa de estos derechos:

Según Franziska Müller, especialista suiza de políticas feministas de paz, Festivales como el nuestro son parte de una política de paz. Porque a pesar de que las diferentes obras tienen fines comunes, ellas ofrecen una variedad amplia de perspectivas. Porque en las guerras las perspectivas se vuelven únicas y unilaterales y así hacen posible que se instrumentalice a la mujer. También es importante para ella que en situaciones de conflictos bélicos las mujeres mismas tengan acceso a la producción audiovisual, ya

que en las guerras se reduce la oferta de roles sociales como también la capacidad de autorepresentación de las mujeres. Por ello ella trabaja con un proyecto de empowerment en Gaza, que incluye un proyecto de producción de videos. Ellas – las mujeres que filman su propia situación - de esta forma cuestionan los discursos dominantes que definen la paz en términos muy distintos a las mujeres afectadas.

Shira Richter insistió en los factores psicológicos – los sentimientos deben ser fundamental en una película ya que los conflictos son percibidos a un nivel emocional, las mujeres se comunican también en un nivel emocional y las emociones son parte importante en sus vidas. También enfatizó, que debe haber una relación entre el tema que se está planteando en una película – relaciones de respeto, de comprensión, de dignidad – y las relaciones entre el equipo de filmación. Porque muchas veces estas relaciones son caracterizadas por el irrespeto y un contexto inhumano.

Beate Neuhaus expuso la capacidad que tienen trabajos audiovisuales de devolver a un pueblo torturado – en el caso de ella el guatemalteco – parte de su historia y de esta forma iniciar un proceso de saneamiento mental, porque después de las proyecciones las mujeres empiezan a hablar sobre sus traumas. Esta fue la intención explícita de su película encargada por la comisión de derechos humanos de Guatemala.

Se discutió también, para que espacios deberían producirse trabajos audiovisuales, para que sean eficientes en defender los derechos de mujeres: si por un lado para la televisión con su público masivo, pero donde no hay retroalimentación de los espectadores hacia las directoras? O en los documentales independientes para festivales íntimos como el nuestro, con un cercano contacto con el público? Ulrike Baur planteó, que los espectadores de esos festivales no se comparan con el público televisivo de dos y medio millones que vieron su película sobre el tráfico de mujeres. Que aún con una producción hecha para la TV se puede encontrar retroalimentación directa con el público, porque ella pudo discutir su película con muchos grupos de mujeres que la invitaron . También hizo un llamado a no dejar de sentirse responsable por este espacio de la TV, no abandonarlo, luchar por él, porque en Alemania la TV está siendo cada vez más sensacionalista, con tontos talk shows estilo EE.UU., con poco espacio y cada vez menos dinero para temas sociales.

Para ella no debe haber contradicción entre documentales clásicos, documentales de TV y películas de ficción, porque “todos solo funcionan, cuando una buena historia se trabaja bien a un nivel técnico y también emocional.” Y quiero concluir con una linda imagen que ella nos dió al final de esa mesa redonda: una buena película llega del vientre (donde radican nuestras emociones más instintivas) a través del corazón (donde están ubicados nuestros sentimientos más concientes) a la cabeza – a nuestra racionalidad conciente. Del vientre a través del corazón a la cabeza.

La discusión entera entre las directoras se puede encontrar en nuestra página del Internet [www.frauenrechte.de/filmfest](http://www.frauenrechte.de/filmfest), bajo Filmfestival 2003, Round Table Talk.

Gracias.