

64. KRAKOWSKI
FESTIWAL
FILMOWY
64th KRAKOW
FILM
FESTIVAL

kino+online
26.05–2.06.2024

PETRYCKI TOUCH

Very impressive filmography! Obviously, the numbers are not the most important here; nevertheless, let me present the count of the films with cinematography by Jacek Petrycki. Here it comes: he was a director of photography of 133 Polish documentaries, his specialty, where the largest group is made of 23 films by Marcel Łoziński, including such important works as *A Visit* (1974), *Recipe for Life* (1977), *The Microphone Test* (1980), *Katyń Forest* (1990), *89 mm from Europe* (1993), *Poste Restante* (2008) and *Tonia and Her Children* (2011). Additionally, there are 11 documentaries by Krzysztof Kieślowski with such pictures as *First Love* (1974) and *The Hospital* (1977), and two films by Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz. Please, note that the latter will grow soon as the two artists continue to work together. Obviously, there are more, i.e., 10 foreign documentaries, including British documentary feature *The Betrayed* (1995), directed by Clive Gordon, about Russian mothers looking for their sons who went missing in Chechnya, which secured a BAFTA for Petrycki. The list continues with 26 Polish feature films, including *Camera Buff* (1979) by Kieślowski, *Fever* (1980) by Agnieszka Holland and *Interrogation* (1982) by Ryszard Bugajski; 14 foreign feature films and 21 television theatre performances. In total, the number must exceed 200. In this context, six films under the direction of Petrycki seem a modest figure. Indeed, this year's *Dragon of Dragons* for the first time goes to a cameraman, i.e. a director of photography.

At this point, one must cite the argument provided by Marcel Łoziński as a member of the Festival Programme Council in the discussions on this year's candidates: 'Jacek Petrycki is more than a DOP. He is a co-author of all the films in which his name features in the opening credits. It is so because his participation in all

the production stages– from the idea through the development of the film concept to the final touches – goes beyond the regular workload of a cinematographer.’

To convey what it means in practice, I will employ an illustrative example of the 23 films directed by Marcel Łoziński with cinematography by Jacek Petrycki. *Poste Restante* – like a classic documentary from the golden era – continues for just 14 minutes and is devoid of any off-screen documentary. Its striking effect on the viewer was achieved thanks to the means of expressions applied in the film. Jacek Petrycki significantly contributed to all of them, except for the music of Wojciech Kilar. Obviously, it was Marcel Łoziński, the film author, script writer and director in one, who was responsible for the compositional framework – the film begins at a waste tip where rubbish is delivered by a shredder and ends with the image of a plume made of individual paper offcuts flying up into the sky. This choice, however, must have been influenced by the provocative beauty of the images created by the cinematographer. Except for the memorable one addressed to God, we cannot see the content of other undeliverable letters that are destroyed before our very eyes, but the message is conveyed to us through the body language of postal workers captured by the perceptive cameraman. It was the twenty second film made together by the duo of Łoziński and Petrycki, who had had sufficient time to develop joint decision-making mechanisms as to the camera position and the duration of each take. When the viewers could see a dedication to Kasia Maciejko-Kowalczyk at the end, they knew it was from both of them as their editor of many years and an author of *Benek Blues* (1999), a brilliant picture with Petrycki’s cinematography, passed away just before the premiere of *Poste Restante*.

A long time ago, Jacek Petrycki described it in detail to me what such a long-term collaboration between a director and a cameraman was like. In the spring of 1997, I recorded his testimony for the purpose of a post-mortem monograph of Krzysztof Kieślowski. At that time, his text was entitled ‘When we still liked to record the world.’ The phrase was in the plural, but in fact it applied only to the director of his favourite film *Peace*, whose resignation from the position of a rebellious realist was bitterly conceded by the cinematographer. When 27 years later I read what he had said, I could see that Jacek Petrycki did not change his position. Just like in the old times, he likes to record the world but with one reservation only, which was articulated in that interview with me back then. He confessed that he and his colleagues from the feature film school of anti-feature filmmakers based in Poland

under the communist regime, i.e. Tomasz Zygadło, Piotr Jaxa-Kwiatkowski and Witold Stok, were at that time guided by the following principle: 'you need to multiply meaning. For each scene, each character's response, you need to multiply interpretation platforms. It was a consequence of the-then popular convention of Aesopian language, a common habit of reading in between the lines in a newspaper.' Reviewing the entire filmography of Jacek Petrycki now (still far from finished), I would add that in the most fortunate cases, thanks to his cinematography, the laureate of this year's Dragon of Dragons was able to add an element of poetry to the indispensable element of credibility. This was the case in all his works mentioned above. This selection may be expanded by many other films, in particular those made by Andrzej Titkow in the late 1980s, a perfect correlation with Petrycki's artistic temperament. Some examples include *Such a Place* (1985), an impression recording the end-of-era atmosphere of Krakow's district of Kazimierz just before its revival after 1989 or, in particular, the film *Give Me That* (1988) shot during Wojciech Eichelberger's psychotherapy classes – a poignant portrayal of the need of intimacy experienced by everyone and extremely rarely satisfied.

In the most fortunate cases, this combination of credibility with poetry became vocal in the works made by Jacek Petrycki as a director. First, it could be observed in his film *My Notes from the Underground* (2011), which was subtitled by the artist as 'My personal collection edited using only the footage shot with amateur cameras in 1982-1987.' At that time, Petrycki was a member of an informal group of the opposition filmmakers gathered around Bohdan Kosiński (by no coincidence the first laureate of the Dragon of Dragons). Many years later, when he edited the footage collected during that period, he was able to capture the inimitable climate of the era. Later, rebellion was successfully married to poetry in my favourite documentary by Jacek Petrycki, *The Return of Agnieszka H.* (2013, co-directed by Krystyna Krauze). It is a faithful and at the same time remarkably casual portrayal of the famous director under whose tutelage he made five films, including *Quid pro Quo* (1977) and *Europa Europa* (1990), and whom he continues to admire. In this picture, which opens with the scene of his mirror reflection, Jacek Petrycki introduces himself in the most thorough way.

Tadeusz Lubelski