

Students participating in Film Festivals: a pedagogical aspect

An activity of high educational value can be students' participation in a film festival. Films screened there, usually are non-mainstream films and 'in the air' you can feel that you are part of an audience who views films as intellectual products and manifestations of sophisticated artistic expression. Especially for students who participate in youth juries and nominate some kind of distinctions (the Camera Zizanio in Olympia Festival comes to mind), this can be an exceptional experience with remarkable personal impact. Such activities develop student's positive attitude toward cinema, respect for cultural differences etc.

Even if, sometimes, young students are exposed to violent and deviant scenes, the context of artistic quality and critical appreciation that prevails in film festivals ensures that such scenes are perceived as constructive stimuli for reflection, dialogue and critical thinking. In a Film Festival context, watching a 'difficult' or 'unusual' film is perceived as a totally different experience from watching the same film in a usual cinema hall as an anonymous spectator or privately on a laptop, as a devoted researcher.

For any young participant in a film festival, an omnipresent message is emitted:

- "You take part in the formulation of future cinema trends".
- "You watch bold and often extreme forms of artistic expression created by known artists and young filmmakers who, through your involvement, will become tomorrow's awarded artists. As their films' distribution hasn't started yet, audience's and jury's opinions may determine their financial future".
- "You experience an environment of intercultural dialogue where artists from all over the world, having different life priorities, speak different languages, reflecting different cultural and ideological contexts bring their ideas in public. All these expect to be 'judged' by juries of local and foreign critics who, beforehand, accept the responsibility of going beyond their personal preferences showing their respect to different modes of artistic expression".
- "Since your opinion matters, you have the responsibility of an active participant that is to express your opinion arguing in public discussions with as much clarity and structure as possible".
- "To play your role as an active participant responsibly, you have to accept unusual conditions of screening such as the use of subtitles of two different languages at the same time, introductory presentation of each film and after the screening dialogue with the creators supported by translators, intensive screening program which calls for daily successive screenings of very different films, continuous flow of information through conventional and digital media etc."
- In one sentence: "you participate in a context of critical dialogue".

We should also consider the significant implications for the film industry, which are often determined by audiences in festivals.

In terms of Film Education, the merits of the above are obvious. In a film festival context, the student viewer would be hopefully transcended into a tolerant, mature and autonomous citizen.

Menis Theodoridis, 2019.