

Filmphobia - Director's statement

Arachnophobia, flower phobia, acrophobia, color phobia, claustrophobia, airplane phobia, sea phobia, dog phobia, snake phobia, approach phobia, man phobia, dirt phobia, needle phobia, darkness phobia, blood phobia. Fear, repugnance, anger, panic, lack of control, hate.

For a long time, I have played with the idea of making a film about fear. I could exercise this in my latest movie, a feature length documentary called "Acts of Men" (World premiere in Berlinale 2006 – Forum). In this film I went to "Baixada Fluminense" (a city close to Rio de Janeiro – Brazil) where 29 people were killed by a death squad comprising police officers. The massacre had occurred few days before filming, so I had to face strong fear.

The desire of working with fear was not fully satisfied in this experience. From this desire comes "Filmphobia", my first non-documentary film. One of the sources of inspiration for this project is "Phobia" (1980), a horror movie directed by John Huston that had little repercussion. But, in a totally opposite way, the proposition of "FilmPhobia", has nothing to do with a horror movie.

Dealing with fear in the contemporary society: There are several thinkers that point out the fact that the present society is not moved by the idea of spectacle that has guided social life in the last few decades. These thinkers point out fear as the main present mean of domination. The United States and, especially, its president George W. Bush, abuse of the excuse of the American fear of terrorism in order to justify their genocides around the world and to use internal machines of surveillance.

Many Americans agree with the violation of their privacy because of fear of terrorist attacks. In Brazil, fear has also a political roll. Besides the population's eternal fear that there is a comeback of inflation, the fear of violence changed many platforms of political candidates to a suggestion of a police-driven management of fear.

Just like Time, Death, Violence, Space, Faith and Sex, Fear is one of the great themes of philosophical, scientific, and artistic investigation. The

challenge of “FilmPhobia” is to approach fear in an intimate atmosphere individualized in phobias – always a symbolic fear.

It is a pleasure for me to work with Jean-Claude Bernardet as my main character. He is 71 years old, from Belgium, and has a B.A. from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris) and Ph.D. in Arts from the Escola de Comunicações e Artes of the University of São Paulo. He has been a film professor at University of São Paulo for many years and the author of many books, essays, and articles about films. He also works with novels, film scripts, and sometimes works as an actor in some films. In FilmPhobia we put together some aspects of Jean-Claude’s real life and, on the other hand, a lot of fake aspects.

About the film language of “FilmPhobia” the first intention is simplicity. The film has no pyrotechnical vocation. No special effects, the “effect” of the film will be motivated by a tension in the overlapping of narrative elements and rhythm. For some phobias the camera doesn’t move, working – and this is an ironical idea – as a resource that can assimilate “reality”. On the other hand, for some phobias, it is an unstable camera (in the hand) that spies and corrupts the space, clearly opposes two systems of image production. The film is conceived amidst this tension.

During the entire movie an alternating game between extremely wordy and silent situations take place. Sequences are crossed in a way that in some moments the words are fundamental and, in many others, only images lead the purpose of the movie. The rhythm is the opposite of hurry and vertiginous speed. An experience symmetrically opposed to the temporality of commercial films: silence and time for deep immersions. In no time will the film long for beauty. “FilmPhobia” will interest more because of its dirty aspect – speech contradictions, images, and human weaknesses – than by an apologetic language. I have blood phobia and, during the film, I am the man who makes the making of.