

DUTCH FILM FUTURE QUEST

REPORT OF THE TOWN HALL DEBATE On THE DUTCH FILM FUTURE QUEST

Sunday September 28th 2014

Host: Marten Rabarts

Report Esther van Driesum

“Too many films are made by people who like to be in film...”

“Get rid of the art house films”

“Consider making fewer films for more”

“If TV is driven by audience demand, what is the answer for your national cinema?”

These statements were made during the Dutch Film Future Quest¹ held on Sunday September 28th. A Town Hall Debate addressing the ambitions of national film industry and the engagement of audiences. Together with co-hosts **Henning Camre** and **Paul Trijbits**, host **Marten Rabarts** led the discussion that focussed on four sub-topics: creating of content, the role of funds and finance, the importance of talent development and the influence of markets and festivals. Prior to the Town Hall debate national and international experts attended Round Table Sessions in which the sub-topics were discussed. In the Town Hall Debate the moderators of the Round Tables briefly presented the conclusions of their table whereupon the guest speakers and the audience were engaged in a broader discussion. This report addresses the highlights of the discussion regarding the four sub-topics followed by conclusions and further Food for Thought.

Content of the report

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The Market; Festivals, Art house & Multiplexes
Talent; Education & Training
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¹ The Dutch Film Future Quest was organized by Film Producers Netherlands and the Holland Film Meeting

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1. The Town Hall Debate

Voice & Meaning. Creating Content.

Round Table moderator **Ido Abram** started by saying that the table is positive; we like the films we're making. We believe filmmakers should make films and find the audience for these films. There is a tendency to think that others across the borders are always better but actually our grass is green enough.

Outcome of the round table discussion:

- A crucial mistake is the distinction between art house films & audience film. This distinction/ labelling is too much based on numbers/statistics.
- Flexibility in the development process is key, a more tailor made approach is necessary
- In the current structure there's not enough continuity for filmmakers. Consequently no failure is possible.
- Stories should reflect more on our society and identity. That does not mean that the stories should be national: After all, the Dutch travelled the world for centuries!
- There is enough diversity. Look at where we were 15 years ago. We do see progress; more quality, more success.

Marten Rabarts:

Is there something like Dutch Identity? I know from the days – years ago – when I worked in the UK that their view on Dutch Cinema was: it's about incest, sometimes suicide, and best of all: both! This understanding has now shifted...but what is Dutch Cinema?

To define national cinema we could take a look at the situation in Denmark?

Henning Camre:

No one is going to see a film BECAUSE of its national identity; it's about quality (personal voice, having something to say etc.) Too many films are made by people who like to be in film...

I would advise:

- Get rid of the term *art house*, instead: films with a personal view, personal voice
- You get an audience by being truthful to yourself, to your story.
- Strength/Characteristics Danish Film/TV: writers who concentrate on stories they find worth it to tell: surprise your audience, tell people new things

Paul Trijbits:

When we talk about national identity, it's important to realise that we only label AFTER the event. Did we for example ever had that moment of: Let's have a Danish wave?! Holland was not very good in serving its national identity to the outside world, but this has changed.

Marten Rabarts concluding:

You can't design a national cinema. But we need to mention it somehow in the market in order to sustain and grow.

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Funds and Finance. What is the language of money?

Round Table moderator **Katriel Schory**: We believe that there should be a heavy weight on development. Investing in the actual production is necessary. We also concluded that waiting is killing, filmmakers should keep moving: so the ongoing career needs to be supported. Funds should be more connected to the market. Distribution needs to be the responsibility of the funds.

Outcome of the round table discussion:

- The emphasis should be on development
- Flexibility is necessary; super low budget and high budget films should be supported
- Find a balance between taking risks and giving chances
- Stay connected to the market, including genre cinema – from horror to romcoms
- There should be a combination of selective and automatic schemes. Both are needed.
- Marketing and distribution is part of the responsibility of Film Funds

Marten Rabarts:

Paul Trijbits, you set up a new fund in the UK. Why was it set up alongside the other funds?

Paul Trijbits:

In the UK as far as public funding is concerned we started British Screen, which changed into the UK Film Council and then into BFI. In 2000 I was appointed as the Head of New Cinema at the UK Film Council we had £5 million a year to support talent and encourage innovation, backing lower-budget pictures and shorts. I had a great team working with me but in the end as Head of the Fund, I made the decisions. I made some good decisions, I made some bad decisions. There were just too many people who made a first film and who never made a next one. So basically we developed an upward trajectory. It was all about talent development. So the idea was: do something, do anything, digital short, pilot, low budget tv film! You could come to us any time, stepping into the system from anywhere.

Marten Rabarts: This is maybe slightly different from the "Deltaplan"?

Doreen Boonekamp:

There is a misunderstanding of the Deltaplan. One doesn't HAVE to go through it in a certain order step by step, you can come in anywhere, any time. In addition I'd like to say that applicants should be more applying from their own point of view and not trying to anticipate what the funds want. This way we'll get clearer and stronger projects on the fund desks. Therefore the advice for the filmmakers/producers is: work from the strengths of your own project!

From the audience: Result of the current system is that young filmmakers are taught to think in boxes. They should be able to break free from the preconceived paths and use their energy to be creative.

Henning Camre:

What is the purpose of a film fund? We can continue producing films without any industrial backing. Audience must be considered. In Denmark we reduced the public funding, after all the funds are not MAKING the films. It worked somehow. The system is now built around a new generation of producers. As soon as films

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come out of a bureaucratic system, it doesn't work. Film needs to work with people who want to improve films.

Important aspects in my opinion are:

- For the funds a crucial question is: Do we support or strengthen?
- It's important that funds don't have too many boxes. The system should be flexible enough to pick up what is interesting.
- Dutch budgets are too low, so you could consider making fewer films for more.

Marten Rabarts concluding:

For the filmmakers: take advantage of the infra-structure of the fund created for filmmakers to apply.

The Market Festivals, Arthouse & Multiplexes

Round Table moderator **Claudia Landsberger:** Our main conclusion is that producers should play a much more vital role in the distribution of their films.

Outcome of the round table discussion:

- Distributors should become more creative in different ways to distribute, example was the Turkish new distribution outlet 'every day is a festival'
- Producers should realise that more platforms make the industry more competitive. Now more films are released also on DCP and can reach more audience next to the regular cinema release. Example is Boyhood.
- Producer's expectations of the box-office of their films are too high.
- These days there is a strong competition with other content like TV series / other activities. The discussion should be opened with TV and other platforms to change the windows to be more flexible in the release on all different type of platforms.
- The label "Art house" is stigmatizing films in a negative way.
- Producers should get more support for distribution, (not everybody agreed on this).

Paul Trijbits:

The more we talk about the special label of art house film the more we risk and forget to talk about TV. Television is undergoing a great revolution and delivering the biggest threat (to film) at the same time. Making drama series is definitely the way to reach your audience in today's market. And as you know a number of major of filmmakers such as David Fincer, Jane Campion are working for TV and creating series. The model is different; it's fundamentally driven by audience demand. The question I would like to raise is: If TV is driven by audience demand, what is the answer for your national cinema?

Marten Rabarts:

It's important to know whom we are speaking to, who are the people behind the subscribers box?

The audience discusses partnership with television and the definition of audience: don't only focus on the figures of the box offices but do count television viewers as well. Take your audience in consideration right from the early development.

Talent: Education & Training

Round Table moderator **Franz Rodenkirchen:** For us there were no real conclusions, instead a few more questions were raised. We should ask ourselves:

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What are we training people for in this fast changing landscape? And while asking this question we should be aware of the fact that training and education are not the same thing. We believe that we are educating people for tomorrow not for today. Next to that we think that we should educate the audience, it's about film literacy and film literacy is something that needs to be taught.

Outcome of the round table discussion:

- Training & Education are different things
- We need to educate people at school level how to "read" culture
- Not everyone will be able to execute what they trained/were educated for.
- Eventually it is all about money! Investment in training and education is crucial.

For reasons of time, Marten Rabarts concludes the Dutch Film Future Quest. Below point by point the conclusions of every sub-topic and further food for thought.

2. Food for Thought / Conclusions

Creating Content

- Get rid of the term *art house*, instead: films with a personal view, personal voice
- You get an audience by being truthful to yourself, to your story.
- Strength/Characteristics of the Danish Film/TV are the writers who concentrate on stories they find worth it to tell. Keep in mind: surprise your audience, tell people new things.
- You can't design a national cinema (but we need to mention it in the market in order to sustain and grow)
- We do make universal stories but language is a block sometimes
- Take risks allow failure

Funds and Finance

- Don't anticipate what the funds want. Work from the strengths of your own project!
- For the funds a crucial question is: Do we support or strengthen?
- It's important that funds don't have too many boxes. The system should be flexible enough to pick up what is interesting.

The Market

- Making drama series is the way to reach your audience.
- If TV is driven by audience demand, what is the answer for your national cinema? Whom are we speaking to, who are the people behind the subscribers box?
- Films are already determined to fail if they don't take the audience into consideration.
- It's important to count ALL spectators, not only visitors. Readdress how we qualify audience.

Talent : Education and Training

- Educate the audience, film literacy is important
- Train people in all key functions, it'll take some time (success of the Danish film is entirely due to the film school generation)
- Producers should constantly change the way they produce, encourage producers to work with young talents

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3. Biographies key note speakers and overview participants Round Tables

Henning Camre

Henning Camre was born in Denmark in 1938. He was educated at the University of Copenhagen and at the newly founded National Film School of Denmark as a cinematographer.

In the first half of the 1970s he worked with Danish directors Jørgen Leth and Henrik Stangerup. In 1971 he won a Bodil Award for his cinematography on Stangerup's *Give God a Chance on Sundays*. He was also the cinematographer on Leth's *The Perfect Human, Life in Denmark* and all his 'anthropological' films. In 1971 Camre became Head of the cinematography at the Danish Film School and in 1975 he became its principal, a position he held until 1992. He completely re-organised the school, introduced new key specialisations in a 4-year curriculum. The school acquired international recognition and gave rise to the New Danish Cinema lead by graduates like Lars von Trier, Lone Scherfig, Susanne Bier, Niels Arden Oplev, Thomas Vinterberg, Anthony Dod Mantle and producers Peter Aalbaek, Bo Erhardt, Birgitte Hald and many others.

In 1992 he moved to England to become the principal and chief executive of the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. The NFTS was in need of modernisation, its curriculum was revamped, its premises expanded, Ealing Studios acquired as the future site of the school and new finance brought in to stabilise the school's operation.

1998 saw him returning to Denmark to head the reorganization of the expanded new Danish Film Institute. Its programme for production support was Among other developments an experimental computer based film studio 'Film-X' was set up to give school children the creative and technical experience of film making.

In 2007 he retired as CEO of the Film Institute to establish the European ThinkTank on Film and Film Policy and to become its President. The ThinkTank engages in analysis and research and in devising policy initiatives at national, regional and European levels.

Paul Trijbits

Paul Trijbits is co-CEO of FilmWave and currently Executive Producer of J.K.Rowling's *THE CASUAL VACANCY* for The Blair Partnership and BBC Television and of Disney's BAFTA and Golden Globe-nominated *SAVING MR BANKS*, starring Tom Hanks and Emma Thompson. He was formerly Managing Director of Ruby Film & Television and before that the Head of the UK Film Council's New Cinema Fund.

Paul spent six years at Ruby Films where he executive produced and produced critically and commercially successful films including *JANE EYRE* for Focus Features, Andrea Arnold's *FISH TANK* and Stephen Frears's *TAMARA DREWE* among others. In his role at the UK Film Council, Paul was responsible for titles such as Peter Mullan's *MAGDALENE SISTERS* (winner Golden Lion Venice), Kevin McDonald's *TOUCHING THE VOID* and Paul Greengrass' *BLOODY SUNDAY* (winner Golden Bear Berlin). Paul's previous television credits as executive producer include Stephen Poliakoff's Golden Globe winner *DANGING ON THE EDGE* for

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BBC2, CASE HISTORIES for BBC1 and Emmy award-winning and BAFTA nominated SMALL ISLAND.

FilmWave is the film production company that Paul founded alongside Christian Grass, the former President of Production and Acquisitions, Universal Pictures International. The company is currently developing and producing a diverse slate of quality commercial film and television projects for the international market.

Marten Rabarts

New Zealander Marten Rabarts moved to Mumbai in 2012, having been appointed Head of Development of the National Film Development Corporation of India, ending his 12 years as Artistic Director for Binger Filmlab, Amsterdam. He started his film career as an editor in New York in the 1980s. This brought him to the PolyGram Filmed Entertainment group, relocating to London in 1990 working in World Sales and in 1992 as Associate Producer with Working Title Films. He developed and series-produced the HIV/AIDS awareness film collection *Red Hot On Film* with International TV partners, BBC, Arte, VPRO and TVE (Berlinale 1995). His tenure at Binger Filmlab delivered many award winning feature films and theatrical docs include the 2012 Oscar nominee *Bullhead* and four features from his various labs were selected in Cannes 2013, including Critics Week hit *The Lunchbox* & Grand Prix winner *Salvo*, and Cannes Un Certain Regard selected *TITLI* in its 2014 lineup.

Marten splits his time between Mumbai and his European base in Amsterdam where he operates the new international creative consultancy **inciteable** providing a broad spectrum of services and expertise to clients including Torino Filmlab, The Danish Film School, Dutch Film Fund, Sarajevo Film Festival, Istanbul Film Festival and Holland Film Meeting among others

Table Voice & Meaning Creating Content

Moderator

Ido Abram (NL) Director of Presentation / EYE Film Institute Netherlands

Participants

Denis Vaslin (FR/NL) Producer Volya Films

Martijn Maria Smit (NL) Director/ Writer (Films including *C'est déjà l'été 2010*, *Under the weight of clouds* (2012))

Marjan van der Haar (NL) Managing Director Film Producers Netherlands

Bero Beyer (NL) Film consultant Screen NL Netherlands Film Fund, Producer Augustus Films, NL

Table Funds and Finance. What is the language of money?

Moderator

Katriel Schory (ISR) Executive Director Israel Film Fund

Participants

Martina Bleis (DE) Advisor Connecting Cottbus

Doreen Boonekamp (NL) CEO Netherlands Film Funds

David Verbeek (NL) Director (Films including *How to Describe a Cloud* (2013) *R U There* (2010))

Roel van de Weijer (NL) Delegate Producer Column Film & partner at Cinecrowd, NL

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Table The Market: Festivals, Arthouse & Multiplexes

Moderator

Claudia Landsberger (NL) Head of EYE International at EYE Film Institute Netherlands

Participants

Marit van den Elshout (NL) Head of Industry/CineMart Manager at International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR)

Gülin Üstün (TUR) Head of Meetings on the Bridge Istanbul Film Festival

Leontine Petit (NL) Producer Lemming Film

Nanouk Leopold (NL) Director / writer, NL (films including *Boven is het stil* / *It's All So Quiet* (2013), *Brownian Movement* (2010))

Frank Peijnenburg (NL) Head of Screen NL Netherlands Film Fund

Table Talent: Education & Training

Moderator

Franz Rodenkirchen (DE) script consultant and owner Solace 23

Participants

Satu Elo (LUX) Workshop Manager EAVE

Marc van Warmerdam (NL) Producer Graniet Film

Bart Römer (NL) Director of the Netherlands Film and Television Academy

Mieke Bernink (NL) Head of Research (lector) Netherlands Film Academy

Dorien van de Pas (NL) Film consultant New Screen NL – Talent development Netherlands Film Fund