

## **Recounting, Describing and Denouncing Reality in NYC**

Marina Melchionda (June 01, 2009)



Festival dei Popoli-New York Documentary Film Festival is an initiative devoted to promoting and studying social documentary cinema at an international level. The 2009 edition will take place on May 27-31 at the Anthology Film Archives in Manhattan



The Tuscany region is in New York to celebrate the Italian National Day. Among the initiatives scheduled, the New York Documentary Film Festival will take place from May 27 to May 31 at the [Anthology Film Archives](#) [2] (32 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10003). This year's edition was presented at the Italian Cultural Institute of New York today, May 26.

Simonetta Magnani, Cultural Attaché at the Italian Cultural Institute, welcomed the numerous Italian and American journalists attending the Press Conference and introduced the organizers of the Festival: Giorgio Bonsanti, President, Francesco Fadda, Vice-President of the [Fitzgerald Foundation of Florence](#) [3], and Luciano Barisone, Director of the Festival. Mrs. Magnani also read the greetings sent by the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute Renato Miracco who could not attend the event: "It is a great pleasure to support and collaborate with this new edition of the New York Documentary Festival, organized and produced by the Fitzgerald Foundation of Florence and Festival dei Popoli - International Documentary Film Festival, and supported by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities. I would like to congratulate the organizers and wish great success to the Festival dei Popoli".

It was Mr. Fadda who, right after the screening of the video presentation of this year's edition, explained to us the history of the Festival and told us something more about the calendar of the movies to be presented in these upcoming days.

We learned that the Festival was founded in 1959 as an initiative devoted to promoting and studying social documentary cinema. In fifty years, the collection has grown into an unparalleled

treasure of documentary films covering the history of non-fiction filmmaking. The 2009 program, organized in collaboration with the [Italian Cultural Institute](#) [4], [Mediateca Regionale Toscana Film Commission](#) [5], Regione Toscana, and [Toscana Promozione](#) [6], and presented by [Tribeca Film Institute - Reframe Collection](#) [7], the [New York Women in Film & Television](#) [8] (NYWIFT), and the [Producers Guild of America](#) [9], features three sections of documentaries with a total of 18 films, and also commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the Festival's first edition.

The first section, "A tribute to [Albert Maysles](#) [10]", honors the famous director's long-term relationship with the Festival and his contributions to the documentary as an art form. Maysles will present three of his less-known movies: his first production "Psychiatry in Russia", "With Love from Truman", and "Meet Marlon Brando", to whom the opening night of the Festival on May 27 will be dedicated.

The second section, "Italian Chronicles", is completely dedicated to the Italian documentary tradition. Three award-winning Italian documentary filmmakers, also with us at the Press Conference, will show the New York public the best of their works: Alina Marazzi will present her "We Want Roses Too" and "For One More Hour With You"; Leonardo di Costanzo his "Trial of State", and Bruno Oliviero his "Napoli Piazza Municipio". These two latter also collaborated in the production of "Odessa", which will also be shown during these days.

Finally, the third section "Fifty Years of Documentary (50th!)", is a selection of nine of the best documentaries of the last 50 years from the Festival dei Popoli's archive, featuring iconic International authors such as Agnès Varda (Mur Murs), [Alan Berliner](#) [11] (Nobody's Business), [Artavazd Pelechian](#) [12] (The Seasons), and [Volker Koepp](#) [13] (Holunderblut).

The Consul General of Italy Francesco Maria Talò is one of the major supporters of this initiative: "Last year we launched the idea of bringing the Festival dei Popoli to New York, it was an experiment but it went so well that we decided to do it again. Tuscany and Florence, the "crib of Renaissance", are reaffirming themselves as ambassadors of culture throughout the world and at the highest level. The Documentary Festival not only demonstrates its ability to produce culture, but also to function as a catalyst of international projects and exports them throughout the world. Tuscany is thus covering the same role it had during the Renaissance Era, and I am proud to support the Festival".

"We are the oldest documentary Film Festival in Europe, promoting a genre that powerfully represents reality through the eyes of its directors. They are inspired by the environment



surrounding them, by the people (and peoples) they meet. That is why we named this initiative Festival dei Popoli: everything comes from the people, and we have to give back to them”, said President Giorgio Bonsanti, who also added with pride that “Tuscany is affirming itself as a new pole for cinema production in Italy. Historically speaking Rome, Milan and Turin have always covered this role concerning fiction and movies. Documentaries has never been too popular in Italy, but thanks to this initiative and its international resonance, the sector is slowly acquiring prestige and consensus”.

The director of the Festival, Luciano Barisone, explained that times have been hard for documentary directors in Italy since the government always tended to devolve public financings to other mass media, especially the TV. But something is finally changing. We would define this evolution as the “democratization of documentary production”, since nowadays every one can potentially produce high-quality works at a relatively low cost”.

Italians really knew how to get the best from technological modernization, and achieve great results with very little means. To this regard, Mr. Fadda finally commented on the success of Italian documentary in the United States: “Many Italian directors have already a wide public here in America. The young directors we are presenting this evening have captured the attention of the Tribeca Film Institute and of the other sponsors of this edition, which have accepted to support us mainly because of the high quality of the films we have on the agenda.”

Is the documentary a means to denounce or to recount reality? We interviewed two of the three directors present for the occasion, asking them what is the message they want to hand down to the public through their work. Both Leonardo di Costanzo and Bruno Oliviero come from Naples, the city to which all their works are dedicated. “I want to demonstrate to people abroad the beauties of my city, its history, its culture”, said Mr. Oliviero. “Naples is at the center of many scandals nowadays. It is internationally known for Camorra organized crime and the garbage scandal. But my city is much more than this. In 1975 writer and journalist [Pier Paolo Pasolini](#) [14] said that Naples was the last place in the world where you could still find ‘genuine’ people. I believe that it is still the same, and I hope that my people will preserve these characteristics that make them so special and inspire my work”.

“I could not film anything outside of Naples’ borders”, added Mr. di Costanzo. “I have always represented my city which is a melting pot of many different worlds and cultures. I am particularly proud of “Odessa”, the documentary I directed with my colleague di Costanzo. My next project will still be focused on Naples, the city for which I became a documentary filmmaker. At first, I wanted to be a teacher. But there is way too much to tell when you live in Naples...”  
Stories, experiences, accusations: the Festival will present all of this to the city of New York, and much, much more.

Moreover, it is also a high-quality initiative that enhances the prestige of Tuscany worldwide, as Mr. Fadda finally commented: “It’s not by chance that we came here with the delegation from Tuscany in occasion of the celebrations for the Italian National Day. The region is using this opportunity to promote its beauties and products, attracting a potentially great number of tourists who will come and visit our breathtaking attractions very soon in the future. At the same time, we are showing the world another aspect of Italian excellence that today is still pretty much unknown to the great public : Italian documentary tradition and production”.

## **FULL PROGRAM OF THE 2009 EDITION OF THE New York Documentary Film Festival**

### **May 27 (7:00 pm)**

#### **7:00 PM** Opening Night

(TRIBUTE TO ALBERT MAYSLES) MEET MARLON BRANDO, by Albert Maysles (USA, 1966, 28') with Albert Maysles in-person

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**9:00 PM** (50TH!) DEAD BIRDS, by Robert Gardner (USA, 1963, 28')

**May 28 (7:00 pm)**

**7:00 PM** (50TH!) THE SEASONS, by Artavazd Pelechian (URSS, 1972, 28')

(ITALIAN CHRONICLES) ODESSA, by Leonardo Di Costanzo and Bruno Oliviero (Italy/France, 2006, 67') with Leonardo Di Costanzo and Bruno Oliviero in-person

**9:00 PM** (50TH!) UKU UKAI, by Audrius Stonys (Lithuania, 2006, 30')

(ITALIAN CHRONICLES) NAPOLI PIAZZA MUNICIPIO, by Bruno Oliviero (Italy/France, 2008, 55') with Bruno Oliviero in-person

**May 29 (7:00 pm)**

**7:00 PM** (50TH!) 10 MINUTES OLDER, by Herz Frank (Latvia, 1978, 10')

(ITALIAN CHRONICLES) FOR ONE MORE HOUR WITH YOU, by Alina Marazzi (Italy, 2002, 55') with Alina Marazzi in-person

**9:00 PM** (ITALIAN CHRONICLES) WE WANT ROSES TOO, by Alina Marazzi (Italy, 2007, 85') with Alina Marazzi in-person

**May 30, (4:30 pm)**

**4:30 PM** (50TH!) MUR MURS, by Agnès Varda (France, 1980, 90')

**6:30 PM** (50TH!) SCASTJE (PARADISE), by Sergei Dvortsevoj (Russia/Kazakhstan, 1995, 23')

(50TH!) NOBODY'S BUSINESS, by Alan Berliner (USA, 1996, 60')

**8:30 PM** (50TH!) A NECESSARY MUSIC, by Beatrice Gibson (USA/UK, 2008, 20')

(ITALIAN CHRONICLES) A SCUOLA (AT SCHOOL), by Leonardo Di Costanzo (Italy, 2003, 62') with Leonardo Di Costanzo in-person

**May 31, (4:30 pm)**

**4:30 PM** (ITALIAN CHRONICLES) PROVE DI STATO, by Leonardo Di Costanzo (France/Italy, 1998, 83') with Leonardo Di Costanzo in-person

**6:30 PM** (50TH!) HOLUNDERBLÜTE, by Volker Koepp (Germany, 2007, 98')

**8:30 PM** (TRIBUTE TO ALBERT MAYSLES) PSYCHIATRY IN RUSSIA, by Albert Maysles (USA, 1955, 14')

(TRIBUTE TO ALBERT MAYSLES) WITH LOVE FROM TRUMAN, by Albert Maysles (USA, 1966, 29')

The New York Documentary Film Festival will take place at the [Anthology Film Archives](http://www.anthologyfilmarchives.org) [2] (32 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10003).

**Related Links:** <http://www.thefgf.org> [15]

<http://www.festivaldeipopoli.org> [16]

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**Links**

[1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/9593new-york1243456013jpg>

[2] <http://www.anthologyfilmarchives.org>

[3] <http://www.implu.com>

[4] <http://www.iicnewyork.esteri.it>

[5] <http://www.mediatecatoscana.net>

[6] <http://www.toscanapromozione.it>

[7] <http://www.tribecafilminstitute.org>

[8] <http://www.nywift.org>



- [9] <http://www.producersguild.org>
- [10] <http://www.mayslesfilms.com>
- [11] <http://www.alanberliner.com>
- [12] <http://www.artavazd-pelechian.net>
- [13] <http://www.koepp-kollektion.de>
- [14] <http://www.pierpaolopasolini.com>
- [15] <http://www.thefgf.org>
- [16] <http://www.festivaldeipopoli.org>