

Streaming Festival – 2nd edition – interview

Morire Cuba, film : by Wilfried Agricola de Cologne

Who is Wilfried Agricola de Cologne?

This is a multi-disciplinary media artist, creator of experimental shortfilm/artvideos and the founder of [NewMediaArtProjectNetwork]:||cologne – www.nmartproject.net – the experimental platform for art and new media from Cologne/Germany.

Your film is about?

In 2006, I was visiting Havana/Cuba for 10 days, and the film is one of several filmic results. The film was shot in front of the Museum of Colonial Art in Havana, where old musicians during the day are performing traditional Cuban music to everybody who is passing by, tourists, as well as local people. The film shows this simple streetscene and tells by coincidence not just one, but different stories which are connected to each other via the Cuban life. The title refers to an old Cuban song, which forms the musical background, recorded during such a music performance in front the museum, saying in words that a real Cuban would only die on Cuba (while the real Cuban in the film would only live on Cuba).

How did you start with film? And do you have an educational background in art or film?

As an educational background, I visited the art academies of Stuttgart and Amsterdam, but studied art history, journalism, dramatic arts, and other art related fields like singing, dancing and acting in Munich. After my studies, I was immediately working as a free-lance artist, since I always wanted to be an artist and just an artist. I came to the film, after I decided in 2000 to dedicate my artistic work exclusively to new media technologies and working in and with the Internet as an artistic medium. Flash animations combined with digital video sequences, made in 2001 exclusively for the net, were the first moving pictures, whereby I recognized in sequence my strong affinity to digital video, the format in which I realise all my films currently.

Could you explain how you work, what themes or concepts and what is important to you?

I use mostly material which I record during my numerous travels and set this material in the thematical context of "memory and identity", two basic thematical aspects of my work, generally. However, in each film or video I try new forms of representations. It is always a challenge to find the adequate representation form for certain subjects via experimenting.

How does content relate to the form of your film?

This question is answered through the previous answer, already.

How did the film come about? Everything (carefully) planned or more intuitive?

When people are travelling, very rarely situations to be filmed can be planned, but they happen more or less by coincidence and intuitively. It is never good to hesitate, but much better to film spontaneously instead, since one never knows whether one is probably missing a chance. In the given case, I had waited too long before I started filming and other really interesting scenes passed by without return.

How do you finance your projects (by yourself, sponsors or subsidy)?

By myself, respectively also via the travels.

New Media; a challenge for film makers?

Yes, always a challenge, since the digital media give an enourmous type of freedom in creation, but also producing and editing, which a creative filmmaker can excute all by himself.

Streaming Festival – 2nd edition – interview

Morire Cuba, film : by Wilfried Agricola de Cologne

How does the internet influence contemporary art in general according to you?

Since I work basically with and in the Internet, besides when I create my films, it has a fundamental influence on my work, but it influences everybody's life, and this way even art of those people who are not open for other than old media influences. In an artistic sense, the Internet becomes really interesting in an exchange between virtual and physical space, and I practice it like that.

What possibilities of the web are yet to be explored? Which dangers do you see ahead?

During the years since 2000, the Internet, the visions on it and its perspectives for artistically working people changed profoundly, but also generally, of course. It is true everybody can publish material even for free on dozens of platforms, but what the price for it people are mostly not aware of it. Nobody ever explored the Internet as a medium for art in all consequences. Those who tried stopped doing so already at the beginning, since a lot of technological knowledge is needed for creative experimenting, and the perspectives to make one's living from working artistically on the net are nearly zero. Further, the Internet is changing from a medium of freedom to a medium which underlies more and more control and surveillance from the sides of commercial companies and much more in future also from state administrations. Most unpleasant became the Internet through a global industry producing spam, trojans and viruses and that kind of rubbish terrorism.

YouTube? Why or why not?

No YouTube!! Inacceptable conditions, bad quality, a big manipulation by a dangerously powerful instance.

Does your work often circle the festival circuits, and do you visit festivals regularly?

Films without an audience make no real sense. So, I try to show all my films basically on festivals or other interesting contexts, which is mostly, but not always successful. Some films are screened really many times, others just occasionally, and those which do not find an audience, there exist just a few, I remove. This system has the disadvantage, that it actually does not make sense to produce/create more than 2 or 3 films a year, since it is hardly possible to give all of them a good or equal audience. I also attend festivals, but mostly when I am directly invited, for instance for a special presentation, and the expenses are covered by the organiser.

Do you often meet and discuss with other film makers through the internet?

I do this often on my own platform, often via email, but never on other platforms. I actually prefer discussions with people in physical space, for instance on festivals.

How influential is the reaction to your film by the audience?

The audience starts already with those people who select films for festivals or screenings programs, this first audience, however, is most important in so far, since it creates the fundament for the broader audience of visitors. But neither the positive nor negative result of such a selection has any influence on my work, of course on the success of a work.

The audience as an anonymous mass is actually not reacting, but there are individual reactions, of course. It is interesting to discuss with individual people about my films, but until now I cannot see that this had any influence on anything, besides probably that social aspect to learn what people think.

What is your next project about?

I have several projects in construction simultaneously, but I do not know which will be completed first. Since I do not work with filmscripts, the development of these films are pure experiments and have generally more the character of an artwork starting without knowing the end already. And I do also not want to speculate now.