


East Anglia film society

march 2016

the notes

Wednesday 23rd March 7.30pm

Diana Bullock Memorial Lecture

**LOCATION! LOCATION!
EAST ANGLIA ON SCREEN**

Kings Lynn Town Hall
Guest speaker: Sue Burge

This talk will explore the large number of feature films shot on location in East Anglia from the turn of the last century to the present day. There will be insights into key films (Barnacle Bill, The Silver Fleet, Revolution and The Go-Between) as well as a consideration of the impact of location shooting on tourism and the local community.

www.klccc.uk/events#mar2

Camera Buff

Krzysztof Kieslowski, Poland 1979

Polish title *Amator*

script by Krzysztof Kieslowski
and Jerzy Stuhr

Jerzy Stuhr Filip Mosz
 Malgorzata Zabkowska Irka Mosz
 Ewa Pokas Anna Wlodarczyk
 Stefan Czyzewski Director
 Jerzy Nowak Stanislaw Osuch
 Tadeusz Bradecki Witek Jachowicz
 Marek Litewka Piotrek Krawczyk
 Boguslaw Sobczuk Kedzierski
 Krzysztof Zanussi Himself
 Andrzej Jurga Himself
 Alicja Bienicewicz Jaska
 Tadeusz Rzepka Wawrzyniec

music by Krzysztof Knittel

cinematography by Andrzej Archacki, Krzysztof Buchowicz, Krzysztof Jachowicz, Jacek Petrycki and Stanislaw Szablowski

film editing by Teresa Miziolek and Halina Nawrocka

You have to want to make a film for other reasons - to say something, to tell a story, to show somebody's fate - but you can't want to make a film simply for the sake of it.

There is a telling moment about halfway through *Camera Buff* that defines its style. The hero, high on



self-regard and the company of intellectuals, boldly requests a copy of a cerebral film magazine at a shop counter. As he leaves, the next customer grumpily demands "any sort of razor blades". It is nominally a comedy about the well-meant delusions of a simple man out of his depth, but if poked at an angle, turns out to have some viciously sharp edges.

The simple man is Filip Mosz (played by Jerzy Stuhr, a prominent comic actor who co-wrote the film), a factory pen-pusher who lives with his wife Irka in the bleak concrete industrial town of Wielice. The birth of his daughter is the spur to get out a cherished clockwork 8mm movie camera and start a documentary of her life. The camera comes to the attention of his shifty boss, who commissions the

keen amateur to create a record of the factory's silver jubilee party, and lets him start a movie club from its cultural budget. From these clumsy beginnings, Filip tries for a career as a serious film-maker and soon finds that it helps to be careful what you wish for, and who you associate with to achieve it.

Camera Buff is about representation, and how it is done, and what people draw from seeing it. Though oblique, the film is also about how communism in particular wielded storytelling and ideas of "truth" to exert power and neutralise challenge. Finally, it is about playing with viewer assumptions: it is because Filip believes himself a reliable and honest man that he wanders so far into a world where firm facts fall away in the very act of grasping them. It begins with a spasm of found footage explained later as a dream, and ends with the nightmare of Filip talking into the clattering camera explaining how he started on this journey, recounting the opening scenes of the film itself.

Kieslowski, who decamped to France in later years to make the acclaimed *Three Colours* trilogy, was not unaware of the specifics of the film's time and place. "A Pole is a Pole", he declared in a 1995 interview. "In the negative sense of the word, he thinks he's the centre of the universe. Unfortunately, many Poles think that. Aside from the positive elements, like pride and a longing for freedom, this also has a number of negative elements: narrow-mindedness, provincialism, little attention to the people around us. We want things to be good, but in fact we love to be unhappy. We don't want to accept that it can be worse somewhere else, or better. That's very provincial, but I think I shed that quite a long time ago". There is also a specifically Polish hall-of-mirrors element in the real-life cameo roles of renowned director Krzysztof Zanussi (a screening of his 1977 film *Camouflage* forms Filip's moment of epiphany about the true "purpose" of the film maker) and film historian, actor and director Andrzej Jurka who acts as a militant conscience for quality and energy in film culture – up to a point, where his role as a TV commissioner begins to lead Filip beyond his personal bearings. It helped that Zanussi was internationally respected and

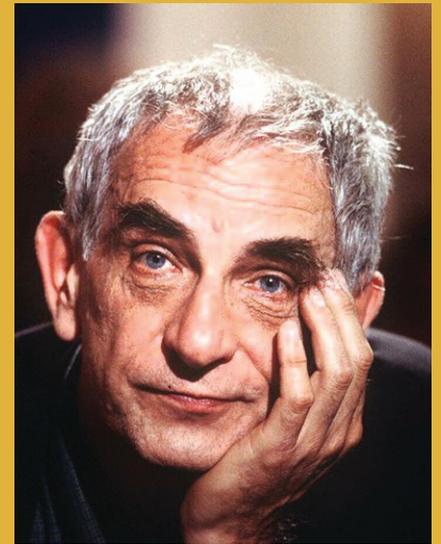
also the head of *Camera Buff's* production group, ZF Tor, but he too is ambiguous: a diffident and cerebral man, he visits the factory at Filip's request to view their latest piece of "life documentary" and makes polite murmurs at a toe-curlingly patronising portrayal of the factory's token disabled worker. The worker himself, however, is deeply moved by the film's itemising of his modest life: it is all the "truth" he could want to see. The viewers – us, Filip and his film club, Zanussi – all learn something about how elusive the pursuit of such insight actually is. Maybe Zanussi's cool ellipticism (camouflage, indeed) catches us more effectively, just as the hawk pounces on the hen in the opening allegorical shot.

It certainly captures Filip, who incrementally wrecks his marriage to Irka with his obsessive hobby that becomes a lifestyle. She represents his opposite: the home-lover who craves security and indifference to the world, focussed on her child and her husband, truly the deep conscience of Catholic womanhood and "People's Poland". Hers is the now, uninterested in explanation or intellectual challenge. Filip strays from that and finds things are different when poked.

The boss finally puts him firmly in his place: "It's simple. The world can be so beautiful. People live and love. You should look at that too. Your films are so bleak and gloomy". They look down from a hilltop to an idyllic river, a world away from the factory. ("The only way to shoot is from above. It'll win you all the top prizes", declares Jurka. It never quite works for Filip with his inept montages of street repairs and wandering pigeons.)

Throughout his career Kieslowski always explored this kind of oblique moralising, most notably in his major Polish project *Dekalog*, a series illustrating the Ten Commandments. In 1989, when *Dekalog* was first shown in New York, Kieslowski was asked by *Village Voice* writer Samir Hachem to name the 10 words he would keep if all other words were taken from him. He said, "Love. Hate. Loneliness. Fear. Coincidence. Pain. Anxiety. God. Responsibility." Told that he had named only nine, he added, "Innocence." One thing you can never get back, even if you don't try to capture it for the benefit of others.

KRZYSZTOF KIEŚLOWSKI 1941-1996



“ You make films to give people something, to transport them somewhere else, and it doesn't matter if you transport them to a world of intuition or a world of intellect...The realm of superstitions, fortune-telling, presentiments, intuition, dreams, all this is the inner life of a human being, and all this is the hardest thing to film... I've been trying to get there from the beginning. I'm somebody who doesn't know, somebody who's searching.”

NEXT MONTH'S FILM IS
BELLEVILLE RENDEZVOUS
(Sylvain Chomet, France
2003)

Monday 18 April

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