

Manifesto

Filmmaking as a conversation

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December 2022

Introduction

Current societal developments seem to demand new forms of documentary filmmaking: a new form of communication where it's less about 'transmission' (of sending a message from filmmaker to audience) and more about communication as *ritual* (of building a relationship between filmmaker and audience). This seems ever more important in an age of competing 'truths', when truth has less to do with empirical reality and more with whose vision it represents.

Famous filmmaker Victor Kossakovsky wrote the '10 Rules of Documentary Filmmaking'. Rules number 9 and 10 inspired me to write a new manifesto, which I see myself as a modern attachment to the rules Kossakovsky has written:

Rule number 9 – manifesto Kossakovsky

*Documentary is the only art, where every esthetical element almost always has ethical aspects and every ethical aspect can be used esthetically (...). **Maybe, nice people should not make documentaries.***

Rule number 10 – manifesto Kossakovsky

Don't follow my rules. Find your own rules. There is always something that only you can film and nobody else.

While reading Kossakovsky's manifesto, I was especially intrigued by the last sentence of rule number 9 (marked in bold): *maybe, nice people should not make documentaries*. I thought about this sentence a lot lately. Perhaps because I think that current times ask for kindness, nuances, mildness, connection and solidarity, instead of bitterness, detachment and polarization. We are living in divisive times where political, religious and environmental conversations are quickly polarized. The current polarization can create barriers between individuals and can hinder relationships building toward a better and *nicer* future. The intention of this manifesto is to address how film – and maybe art in general – can act as a cultural guide by approaching the ethical concepts of mercy, kindness and connectedness within a new framework – while still fighting for justice, equity and rights at the same time. Film can offer an open-ended space of thought, where opposition temporarily ceases. This manifesto is about taking on a more equivalent, transparent and reflective role as a filmmaker towards its audience and main character(s).

Filmmaking as a conversation

A fluid manifesto

1. A film should be a conversation: a dialogue. A film should always be a dialogue between filmmaker and main character in the first place. Later on, a film should be a dialogue between filmmaker and audience. Just like in a conversation, a filmmaker should be transparent about choices and methods.
2. A film project begins with curiosity. It looks for common ground while making room for disagreement. A filmmaker should be curious at all times and let itself be flowed by the sincere spirit of inquiry.
3. The filmmaker should be aware of the fact that power is the one who tells the story. Therefore, the filmmaker should do everything in its power to fight this unequal power structure.
4. The filmmaker should make its film in co-creation with its main character(s). The filmmaker should not only *get* something from its main character(s), but also *give* something in return. The filmmaker should be transparent towards its main character(s) about its intentions at all times. The filmmaker isn't allowed to record and/or film situations without permission of the main character(s). The filmmaker isn't allowed to use any materials without permission of the main character(s).
5. The filmmaker is only allowed to make a film about its own culture and/or community, unless it is in co-creation with other filmmakers/main characters within the other culture.
6. If the filmmaker is trying to prove its point by using existing research results, the filmmaker should add its notes, references, appendix and acknowledgements in the end credits.
7. Broadcasters and video on demand platforms should stop naming 'documentary' a genre. Documentaries should have its own category, divided in several genres, for example journalistic documentary and creative documentary. These genres will have sub genres like music documentary, sport documentary, mockumentary, true crime documentary, reports, etc.
8. There should be a new definition of **creative documentary**: A creative documentary uses reality as a starting point to tell a story. It chronicles real events, persons, settings and/or issues, told from the author's point of view. It is driven by the vision of the author and the author uses stylistic filmmaking tools (camera, sound, music, editing, graphic design, colors, visual effects) to strengthen its vision. The creative documentary is an art form, which means that the vision of the author is leading and the documentary isn't objective. It is - just like other art forms - intended to entertain, stimulate emotion or provoke thought.