



ROAD MOVIE

A film installation by Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky (Public Studio)

World Premiere
at
Toronto International Film Festival
Future Projections programme

Thursday, September 8 to Sunday, September 18, 2011

O'Born at 51 Wolseley

(51 Wolseley St. Toronto)

Sunday–Thursday: noon–6 p.m.

Friday–Saturday: noon–9 p.m.

Opening Reception

Saturday, September 10

6 p.m.-9 p.m.

Artists' Talk

Sunday, September 11

Sunday, September 18

2-4 p.m.

www.oborncontemporary.com/exhibitions/2011_Road_Movie.html

For more information:

Jennifer Mair, NFB Publicist, O: 416-954-2045, C: 416-436-0105, E: j.mair@nfb.ca



ROAD MOVIE

Artist Statement

DESCRIPTION

Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky's powerful new installation offers a unique chronicle of lives rarely seen and voices seldom heard. Comprised of a series of individual journeys, and shot using stop-motion animation that captures the landscape frame by frame, the work is presented on three large double-sided walls. **Road Movie** is the result of year-long travels—with passage through segregated West Bank roads, during which the artists met a cross-section of people living in the region. An episodic odyssey through haunting landscapes, **Road Movie** also features an evocative soundscape created by acclaimed audio artist Anna Friz.

ARTIST STATEMENT

As artists we are interested in reflecting the complexity of our current world by looking at how political strife shapes people's lives and transfiguring that into intimate and nuanced gestures that can reshape our preconceptions. Our recent work looks at both the fragility and violence that is emerging in protests and political discord the world over. We work in film, film and sound installation, web projects, photography and architecture to capture in frames some of the moments we have witnessed and have, in turn, attempted to reveal.

In 2009, we went to live in Palestine for a year in order to get a better understanding of the situation on the ground. Flanders, who was raised in Jerusalem, felt that in order to really connect with people and daily life, she needed to live inside Palestine, not just visit. Sawatzky had become interested in the architectural aspects of life under Occupation and together they decided to make a film that looked from the inside out. While much work exists about all aspects of this particular conflict, we approached this from another dimension—we take you, the viewer, into the landscape, into the land in meticulous detail, and allow you to move around in an installation, to give you an immersive and contemplative experience. We shot our films in stop-motion animation, a technique that allowed us to capture, frame by frame, the minutia of this often over-exposed place. Like surveyors, we track the land step by step, taking you with us into each frame.

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ROAD MOVIE

Q & A

A CONVERSATION WITH ELLE FLANDERS

Q. How did you come upon the idea for this project?

A. When Tamira and I were living in Palestine in 2009, we were asked by a friend if we could photograph some highways she was reporting on. This was the first we had heard of a segregated road system. We became so fascinated that it became the sole focus of our research that year.

Q. How did the project develop from initial filming to the finished installation that visitors will experience?

A. We spent the year filming each and every road and criss-crossed the West Bank doing so. We often took people on trips with us, just so we could hear their stories as we travelled. We were photographing Palestinian landscapes for another project and realized that we wanted to find a way to mimic these difficult stills we were shooting and translate this back to **Road Movie**.

Q. Describe the inspiration behind your creative choices.

A. There is often much media attention given to Palestine and it is one of the most filmed places on earth. It became a challenge to find new ways of representing what we saw in our everyday lives. We felt the imagery needed to slow down, to be thought through with time and space, not racing through the landscape. It became clear to us that we needed to shoot this film using a stop-motion animation technique to capture the place in frames. Like an animated film that is strung together from separate frames, so too **Road Movie** was shot in this way, at one frame per second, capturing and halting, allowing the viewer a chance to really see. It began to evolve as a more experimental work and fit quite nicely with my previous installation work and my last feature doc, which was co-produced by the National Film Board of Canada, on Israel Palestine, *Zero Degrees of Separation*—also a meditation on the effects of occupation in people's daily lives.

After *Zero Degrees of Separation*, I turned my attention to film installation and interactive work with a piece called *Bird on a Wire: A Five City Symphony* that premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival. It was a two-channel film accompanied by a live music performance. The musicians would improvise to the work and as it was performed in cities across the world, the musicians each interpreted the work culturally differently each time. Doing this kind of film installation excited me and I wanted to continue to explore this with **Road Movie**. When I began working with Tamira, who is an architect, it opened up even more possibilities in terms of form and film in relation to space. So here we are.

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Q. How did you find the characters whose voices are heard?

A. Many of the characters were people we met while living in Ramallah. Some we sought out, like lawyer and writer Raja Shehadeh. We were mesmerized by his book *Palestinian Walks* and as he was one of the key people who knew all the legalities about the road system, we wanted to meet him. So we took him for a drive! Other characters on the Israeli side were known to me through my family, like the Israeli tour guide who we interview. He is a fellow who takes my mother and her friends through the region almost yearly. Others were hitchhikers going from their settlements to Israeli cities and towns. One was Ezra, the lead character from my film *Zero Degrees of Separation*.

Q. How long were you filming?

A. We were living in Ramallah for almost a year and filmed this work for about six months.

Q. Any interesting stories or experiences while working on this project?

A. So many! I think some of our most amusing and frustrating was when we considered smuggling our Palestinian landlady (who was like our Palestinian mother) to see her cousin in Haifa, Israel. She had waited months and months to hear from the Israeli authorities about a permit to leave Ramallah and enter Israel to get to Haifa, and they turned her down. This happens often. We considered at this point that perhaps we would just drive her there ourselves and pretend she was our mother! We were very close to doing it, but then we realized that if caught, she would probably never get another permit again and probably get arrested. The thought of our 72-year-old landlady behind bars was not an image we could abide.

There was one other time, when we were travelling with an Israeli woman who worked for Peace Now. She was a “settlement watcher,” and she documented illegal building, growth, etc. We were returning to Jerusalem after a trip to north of the West Bank, to a volatile settlement called Elon Moreh. En route, she wanted to show us one of the roads to Nablus that had been closed by a checkpoint and now only available for commercial trucks. It was a Friday afternoon and she told us that the soldiers closed the checkpoint completely at 3:00 p.m. for the Sabbath. We arrived at 2:30 and the gates were already closed. There didn’t seem to be anyone around other than some frustrated Palestinian truck drivers with goods that needed to get to Nablus. They were lined up with no one in sight to let them through. We looked around, went to the guard tower, called for soldiers, but no one came out. It also seemed that the gate was closed only with a piece of string. Well, no harm in untying it, right? Well, not exactly. We opened the gate and the trucks started to pass through. After about five minutes, soldiers raced out of the guard tower. We were detained, our passports taken, and eventually escorted to the Ariel settlement police station, where we were held for another few hours. All in all, six hours later, we headed back to Jerusalem.

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ELLE FLANDERS, DIRECTOR

Elle Flanders is an award-winning filmmaker and artist based in Toronto. She was raised in Montreal and Jerusalem and holds both an MA in Critical Theory and an MFA from Rutgers University. Her work has been exhibited at museums and festivals internationally, including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Berlin International Film Festival. Together with Tamira Sawatzky she founded Public Studio, with recent works including: *Kino Pravda 3G*, a multi-channel video installation, and *What Isn't There*, a photo installation. She directed the award-winning feature documentary *Zero Degrees of Separation*, which has screened worldwide and has been broadcast on the Sundance Channel, the Documentary Channel and MTV. Flanders is a PhD candidate in the Visual Arts Studio Program at York University, where she also teaches.

Select credits for Elle Flanders:

Films/Installations (Director, Writer)

Kino Pravda 3G #3, single channel projection, 2011

Kino Pravda 3G #2, single channel projection, 2011

Kino Pravda 3G #1, 6-channel installation, 2010

Road Movie (6 short films commissioned by Toronto Palestine Film Festival), 2009

Road Shots, series of large-scale photo-based works, 2009

Eddie and Thea: A Very Long Engagement (Producer), feature documentary, 2009

What Isn't There, Photo Installation, MOCCA Mural, 2011, Exhibition 2009

Bird on a Wire, Film Installation with Live Music Performance, dual screen projection with live music performance, 25 min, 2006, Commission, Freunde Der Deutschen Kinemathek and Canada Council Commissioning Media Arts Program

Zero Degrees of Separation, 16mm/digital video, 89 mins, co-produced by the National Film Board of Canada, 2005 (Winner: Best Documentary, Creteil International Film Festival 2006; 2nd Place: Best Documentary, Mumbai International Film Festival 2006; Michael J. Berg Jury Award, Frameline Festival 2005, San Francisco; Best Documentary Audience Award, Barcelona Mostra Internacional de Films de Donnes 2005.) (Producer)

Recent Group Exhibitions

Flux Factory, NY 2011, *The Typhoon Continues and So Do You*
AGYU Centre for Incidental Activism, 2011

Function 13, Toronto, E-Fagia, *Kino Pravda 3G*, 2010

McIntosh Gallery, London (ON), *Nature. Disaster.* 2010

Forum Expanded, Kunstwerke Center for Contemporary Art and Kino Arsenal, Berlin, 2006.

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Biographies

TAMIRA SAWATZKY, DIRECTOR

Tamira Sawatzky is an award-winning architect and artist working in Toronto. In addition to an ongoing architectural practice, her recent art work includes: *Kino Pravda 3G*, a video installation; *What Isn't There*, a photo installation; and *Road Shots*, a series of still photographs. Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, the Art Gallery at York University (AGYU) and Flux Factory in New York.

Select credits:

Films/Installations

Kino Pravda 3G #3, single channel projection, 2011

Kino Pravda 3G #2, single channel projection, 2011

Kino Pravda 3G #1, 6-channel installation, 2010

Road Movie (6 short films commissioned by Toronto Palestine Film Festival), 2009

Road Shots, series of large scale photo-based works, 2010–2012

What Isn't There, Contact Photo Installation, MOCCA Mural, 2011

ANNA FRIZ, SOUND INSTALLATION

Anna Friz's sound-making practice draws directly on disciplines such as soundscape recording and composition, audio art and experimental music, with a consistent use of voice, text and cinematic elements in both installation and performance works. With nearly 15 years experience composing for broadcast radio, she has worked with radio waves in many forms, including the creative use of FM transmitters, VLF antennas, walkie-talkies and shortwave radio. In both her personal work and in her sound design for theatre and dance, she creates a variety of multi-channel pieces utilizing unusual arrangements of speakers or radio receivers, chosen for their sound quality. Recent works include *Respire*, a multi-channel installation of 250 radio receivers at Nuit Blanche 2009, Toronto (Zone B).

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ANITA LEE

Anita Lee is an award-winning producer at the National Film Board of Canada. Her current productions include *Stories We Tell*, a theatrical documentary by Sarah Polley, and *Home Again*, a dramatic feature by Sudz Sutherland. Her documentary credits include *The Bodybuilder and I* (Best Canadian Documentary Feature, Hot Docs 2007, Best Canadian Feature Documentary, Atlantic Film Festival 2007), *FLicKeR*, (Special Jury Prize Best Canadian Feature Documentary, Hot Docs 2008, 2009 Gemini Nomination Best Arts Documentary) and *Tiger Spirit*, (winner Donald Brittain Gemini Award 2009). Lee has also produced dramatic feature films: *Proteus* by John Greyson (TIFF 2003, Berlin 2004), *Late Fragment* (TIFF 2007, SXSW 2008) and co-produced *Heaven on Earth* by Deepa Mehta (TIFF 2008, Canada's Top Ten 2009).

SILVA BASMAJIAN

Silva Basmajian's more than 75 NFB films have garnered numerous awards and screened at more than 200 international festivals including Berlin, Toronto and Sundance. Since her appointment as Executive Producer in 2004, she has explored innovative ways to tell Canadian and international stories and championed cutting-edge projects like the NFB Filmmaker-in-Residence project at St. Michael's Hospital and the award-winning interactive web documentary HIGHRISE.

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Credit List

CREDIT LIST

Directors: Elle Flanders & Tamira Sawatzky

Producer: Anita Lee

Executive Producer: Silva Basmajian

Sound Installation Artist: Anna Friz

Editors: Jared Raab and Graydon Sheppard

Original Composition: Dave Wall & Checkpoint 303

Technical Director: Priam Givord

Produced by the NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA and presented in collaboration with O'BORN CONTEMPORARY.



O'Born Contemporary is a commercial gallery dedicated to exhibiting and disseminating recent works by living artists. The gallery opened its doors in 2008, settling in Queen West/Ossington in September 2010, where it validated its position among leading contemporary galleries. OBC continues to seek out the best in the contemporary art field with a particular commitment to the discovery and promotion of Canadian emerging artists. The artists represented and exhibited at OBC do not necessarily commit themselves to a single mode of expression but all contribute to the ongoing dialogue of photography's place in contemporary art practices. OBC currently represents 14 artists and collectives working in every medium, including photography, digital assemblage, painting, collage and as of June 2011, film installation. In September 2011, O'Born Contemporary introduces auxiliary programming, geared toward a wider audience and including artists' resources. Events include performances, studio and collection tours, critiques, portfolio reviews, film screenings and collaborative ventures.

Canada's public producer and distributor, **the National Film Board of Canada** creates [interactive works](#), social-issue documentaries, auteur animation and alternative dramas that provide the world with a unique Canadian perspective. The NFB is developing the entertainment forms of the future in groundbreaking interactive productions, while pioneering new directions in 3D stereoscopic film, community-based media, and more. It works in collaboration with emerging and established filmmakers, digital media creators and co-producers in every region of Canada, with Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities, as well as partners around the world. Since the NFB's founding in 1939, it has created over 13,000 productions and won over 5,000 awards, including 4 Webbys, 12 [Oscars](#) and more than 90 Genies. Its <[NFB.ca](#)> Screening Room features over 2,000 productions online, including high-definition and 3D films. The NFB also puts the experience of cinema into the hands of Canadians everywhere through its acclaimed mobile apps for the [iPhone](#), [iPad](#) and [Android](#) platforms, as well as a pre-loaded app in the [BlackBerry PlayBook](#).

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