Making Narrative a Reality

This January, I started an internship with the Interdepartmental Program in Film Studies, supporting the 21st Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival. The theme of this year’s festival is called “Reality Narratives.” The theme is particularly exciting for me because of my Honors Project in narrative non-fiction. Each film features a story that exemplifies the intersection between creativity and reality, exploring the “blurred boundaries between documentary and fiction,” from the stationary camera-guided tour of Peru (Kimi Takesue’s Looking for Adventure), to a 60-minute reconstruction of the life of first female rabbi using only one surviving photograph (Diana Gróo’s Regina).

This year’s festival is different from past festivals because we are screening more films than before, with some weeks showing double or triple features of short films. We will also be hosting several directors throughout the festival, who will answer questions and share their experiences making the films. Since the festival is bigger than ever, so is the team behind it. Along with six other interns and the Film Studies staff, I’m responsible for making sure the festival runs as smoothly as possible. Sometimes this works, and sometimes adversaries like winter weather get in the way (as we experienced when our first scheduled screening, At Berkeley, had to be postponed). There are a number of different roles involved in making the festival happen, from researching the films, to designing the poster, to promoting each event online, to handing out programs and filming the speakers on screening nights.

I was amazed when I saw the turnout for the first screening we put up this year, Looking for Adventure. Over a hundred people gathered in 137 Isenberg to see Takesue’s film, and everyone seemed impressed by the work she shared with the audience. In an abstract collection of stationary shots, Takesue was able to tell a compelling story of the growing culture of group tourism and its response to native
Peruvian culture.

Though it is still early in the festival and there are many more films to see, I hope to be inspired by the work of these talented directors, and to learn from the cultures and topics they present. You can find the schedule of the screenings on the festival website.

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