

# FESTIVAL FOCUS

## GLOBAL SNAPSHOTS

As a sociologist and a film lover, I am immediately drawn to movies that reveal something about the world around us. I have worked in a cinematic environment for the majority of my life. At the age of 13, I worked in a neighborhood movie theater—my first job. As a college student in my twenties, I managed the box-office of an independent and foreign film house and helped program films that would shine on its screen. In graduate school, I noted the intersectional dynamics of social theory and film theory and how film aided societal exploration. Today, I am a program director for one film festival, a guest curator for another, and I teach a sociology of film course at a local college. I aspire to one day work on my own documentary film. Movies were an obsession in my youth that transformed me into a curious boy. When I watched a movie, I traveled away from my confines and gained a new experience. These filmic experiences fostered a fascination with the social world and its representations, and in this way, a sociologist and film critic was born.

My passion for film is quenchless, especially in a mainstream movie vacuum. Sure, you'll see me at the multiplexes, because I love a good popcorn movie as much as the next person, but I also recognize the amount of dirt that must be sieved to find a satisfying movie. Social life is much more fluid and complex than the typical multiplex movie allows us to see, and many moviegoers are tired of trite and clichéd movie formulas that yield limited narratives, especially when there are more valuable untold stories. In fact, there are many films waiting for distribution or multiplex screen showing that explore the culturally diverse realms of our lives. Thank goodness for that, and thank the heavens for film festivals like this one!

This is my second year of involvement with the Ybor Festival of the Moving Image. Thanks to H.C.C. and David Audet, I have the opportunity to curate a selection of films that entertain and portray the lives of people around the world—diverse identities.

This collection of films, Global Snapshots, is a mere sampling of invaluable narratives begging to be seen. Film festivals, such as the Ybor Festival of the Moving Image, provide that opportunity!

The prevailing cinematic choices of multiplexes offer up versions of social life in which dominant social ideologies appear to be natural and desirable, but are, in fact, limited. Global Snapshots is a sampling of innovative films that challenge preexisting notions and mediocre representations of the world and therefore captivate emotions and senses. This collection aspires to move beyond projections placed upon people in their everyday lives and to recognize the experience of lives affected by patriarchy, social constructions of race and gender, cultural dominance, poverty, and the arbitrariness of labels and structures as defined by the dominant machinations of society. Whether you identify with a teenager coming of age in *Whole New Thing*, the impoverished of *Favela Rising*, the bonding in *The Outdoorsmen*, the eccentricity of *I Like Killing Flies*, the sci-fi slapstick of *G.O.R.A.*, the heroism of *Beowulf and Grendel*, the philosophical quest of *The Big Question*, or any other of a multiplicity of experiences within this entourage, each of the films provides a smart and liberating experience.

Once you have poured over this program guide, bought your tickets and settled in with your popcorn, keep in mind that Global Snapshots is simply what its focus title suggests: a small album of filmic expression. It would take a large album to hold all of the independent artistry and glimpses of social diversity that exist. Comparably, this is only one film festival, but one whose album pages are never empty.

Enjoy the films!

—Joseph J. Cook