

BIOGRAPHY OF DIRECTOR

Helena Třeštková

Helena Trestikova graduated from the Department of Documentary Film at FAMU, Prague. Since 1974 she has worked as a professional documentary filmmaker, and has made around fifty documentary films of various lengths and formats, mostly on the themes of human relationships and various social issues.

Later on she started to specialize on so called time-lapse documentaries – long term observation of people's destiny. Since winter 2002 she became a professor at FAMU, Documentary department. Last years she started to closely cooperate with Negativ production, that produced in 2007 Helena Trestikova's documentary Marcela. A film was awarded „Best Czech documentary“ prize in Pilsen 2007 and also in Sevilla IFF the prize for the „Best European documentary“.

Selected Filmography

"Romeo, Juliet and the Children", 1974 – Film essay on family education

"The Miracle", 1975 - Observation of a young woman expecting a baby, through the birth to the son at six months of age. Following the transformation of a woman to a mother. The film won several domestic awards as well as receiving prizes abroad, in Leipzig.

"Two Jubilees of Jan Zrzavý", 1976 - Portrait of a seminal Czech painter.

"Help Line", 1977 – A film on telephone assistance provided to children in distress.

"World of Colors", 1978 – A film on the creativity of children.

"A Touch of Light", 1981 – An exploration of the life of blind children, with quotes from a book by a blind writer and music by a blind composer. A contemplation on the ability to overcome hardships. The film won several awards, mostly abroad – in Bilbao, Lausanne, Lille. Also received the Zlaté slunce award in Trutnov.

"A Thousand Years of Sobriety", 1984 – A contemplation of alcoholism and its treatment. Eventually Helena Třeštková specialized in the method of "time-lapse" shooting – the observation of human life over an extended period of time. She made several large-scale documentary cycles using this method.

The first cycle traced the everyday life of six young married couples for six years, beginning on their wedding day. The film crew subsequently paid regular visits to them, documenting their problems, dreams, struggles, and in some cases their crises, divorces, and reconciliation. This resulted in the six-part television cycle "Marital Etudes" - 1987, and two feature-length documentaries, "For Love", 1987 and "Looking For Ways", 1988 – which both won awards at annual retrospectives of Czech cinematography, in 1988 and 1989 respectively.

"Life is An Accident", 1988 – A film essay on the consequences of abortion.

"Grammar School", 1989 – A film concerned with issues within the school system.

"Theatre Za Branou", 1990 – A portrait of the famous theatre director, Otomar Krejča.

In 1991, together with her colleagues, filmmakers and sociologists, she established the Foundation Film and Sociology, the aim of which is to provide new perspectives on a society undergoing vast political changes.

"If Anything Needs our Help, it is Freedom", 1990 – A portrait of one of the student leaders of the Czech "Velvet Revolution."

"Behind Bars", 1990 - Czech Critics' Award for 1991 – A film on a juvenile prison for kids 15-18 of age

"I Created You", 1991 – A film on the return of nuns (religious orders were banned under communism).

"Tell Me Something About Yourself" - A loose cycle of time-lapse films on the lives of young delinquents who had gone through juvenile prisons. The crew followed their lives after prison, heavily marked by their criminal "careers", for a period of 3 to 6 years. This project has to date produced 5 films:

"Pavína" 1992 - the story of a young drug addict, who repeatedly promises to give up her addiction. This resolution is most intense when she gives birth to a son. Even the love for her child, however, cannot win over her addiction. This story was observed for three years, and the filmmaker is preparing a sequel. FITES Award, 1991.

"René" 1993 – the story of a young thief, who gradually ever more strongly identifies with the role of a renegade and desperado, even burglarizing the apartment of the director who tried to help him all along. Awarded at Nyon (Switzerland) 1993.

"Lád'a" 1994 – the story of a youth who keeps changing prisons and girlfriends, as well as moods. If he is in a bad mood, he swallows sharp objects. If he is in a good mood, he writes romantic love letters.

"Martin, or, to Have or to Be", 1994 - A young man oscillating between God and the dolce vita. He spends the rest of his time in prison in front of the television, watching the world "outside" change. The film was made between 1989 and 1993, at the time of dramatic historical changes in Eastern Europe.

"The Incubation of Evil", 1997 - The hero of this film, Milan, lived with a family only for the first six years of his life. Ever since then, it has been children's homes and prisons. Perhaps that is the reason why he has not learned to distinguish right from wrong. The film was awarded the Academia Film Olomouc Prize in 1998.

The time-lapse method was used also in making a film about a young actor, director and theatre entrepreneur, **"Jester"**, 1993 which follows a young theatre student obsessed with the idea of his own theatre, striving to bring it to fruition. As he does so, he happens to take part in the Velvet Revolution, which was initiated by students, finishes his studies, gets married and then divorced, founds his theatre and loses it...

In the years 1994-1996, the director has made several portraits of luminaries for the documentary cycles Gen and Genus:

Tomáš Halík (1994) – on the Catholic priest, philosopher, and Professor of Charles University, Prague.

Olbram Zoubek (1995) - on the eminent sculptor.

Lída Rakušanová (1996) – on the exile journalist, who helped strengthen the resistance against the totalitarian regime through her work for Radio Free Europe.

Jiřina Šiklová (1996) – on the well-known nonconformist sociologist who works on the issues of feminism, student movements and societal relationships toward minorities.

Karel Čáslavský (1997) – on the film historian who has saved a great number of unique archival film material for posterity.

For the cycle VIP:

Jiří Ruckl (1996) – on the Czech Senator, who also renewed the activities of his family glass factory.

Projects realized for Czech Television:

"The Story of Lucerna", 1995 - All that took place in Prague's most famous concert hall and ballroom, in the turbulent years 1920-1995.

"Sweet Bittersness of Lída Baarová", 1995 – A portrait of the pre-war film diva, Lída Baarová. Art Film Trenčianské Teplice Award, 1996.

Together with her husband, the journalist and publisher Michael Třeštík, she established the foundation *Person and Time*, which specializes in time-lapse projects and films that reflect the passage of time and the changes that go along with it. Within this foundation she made **"Attempt at an Anniversary"** in 1995 - a contemplation of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and **"Rudolf II and Prague"** in 1997 – a film on a monumental exhibition project held in the Prague Castle.

In 1998 this foundation, in co-production with Czech Television, finished a film on the lives of several female political prisoners of the 1950s, entitled **"The Sweet Century"**, which was awarded the Grand Prix for Documentary at IFF Karlovy Vary 1998 and the FITES Award 1998, and the film **"People, I Love You"** on the controversial personality of the executed journalist and critic Julius Fučík and the myth that he later became.

"Carmen Story" 1999 – A film on a production of Carmen at the National Theatre, featuring two explosive personalities – diva Dagmar Pecková and director Josef Bednárík.

"Expelled from Literature" – A film on the political trials of Catholic intellectuals in the 1950s. TRILOBIT

Award, 1997.

"Ten Years in the Life of a Young Man ", 1999 - Time-lapse portrait of the controversial young director Jakub Špalek.

"The Challenge", 1999 - Time-lapse portrait of the wheelchair-bound actor, Jan Potměšil.

"A Kind of Happiness", 2000 - Time-lapse film about a family who practice a lifestyle of voluntary modesty and poverty.

In 2001 and 2002, Helena Třeštíková worked on a loose cycle of time-lapse films:

"Women at the Turn of the Millennium ":

"Fortes and Pianos", 2001 – A portrait of opera diva Dagmar Pecková.

"Bára B. (live)", 2001 – A portrait of pop singer Bára Basiková

"Trapped", 2001 - The experiences of a young drug addict. Awarded at Karlovy Vary IFF 2001, and TRILOBIT Award, 2001.

"Pleasure Without Risk", 2001 - stories of Prague street prostitutes and a psychologist who performs theatre with them – a documentary in two parts.

"To Be Roma Girl", 2001 – Following the experiences of a young Roma intellectual, Jarmila Balážová.

"The Winner is the One who Doesn't Give Up", 2001. The experience of a woman with a mentally retarded child, who does not succumb to her lot, but instead works to help others.

"Nurses", 2002. A film tracking the life of several students of a secondary healthcare school during their studies since 1989, then returning five years after their finishing school, and observing their professional life. The film attempts to capture the transformation in Czech society over seven years, starting with the Velvet Revolution.

"I Am a Woman Oriented on Women", 2002, and also the films:

"To Be Roma Boy", 2001 – Dealing with the experiences of the Romany musician and activist Vojta Lavička.

"Prague 2000 - European City of Culture", 2001 - An emotional documentary about a unique cultural event.

"Hitler, Stalin and I ", 2001 - The fascinating life of the survivor Heda Margolius-Kovály.

"Women and Drugs, Drugs and Women" and **"Trapped, and still Trapped"**, both films 2003, from the cycle **"When You Must You Must"**.

"I Served Karel Čapek", 2003 - Karel Čapek's housekeeper tells about her life alongside the great writer and how she saw him.

"Pavel Tigrid - European", 2004 – A portrait of the cultural and political figure Pavel Tigrid.

"My Lucky Star", 2004 - The experiences of a young Jewish girl during Second World War

"Skies Over Europe", 2004 - The experience of several Czech combat pilots, who served in the RAF in England during the Second World War.

"Married Couple's Etudes After Twenty Years" 2006 – continuation of time-lapse project

"It wasn't in vain" 2006 – portrait of Jaroslav Skála

"Events of Pavel Štecha" 2006 – a portrait of a famous photographer

"Untellable" 2007 – a film about the history of a family camp in Auschwitz

"Marcela" 2007 – a documentary about an extraordinary life of an ordinary woman