

DOKUDAILY

THREAD ISSUES

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THIS NIGHT HAS OPENED MY EYES
AND I WILL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN

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PHOTO: FERDI LIMANI

A STICK OF HOPE TO GET OVER THE WALL

A tank on a deserted street. A Palestinian comes out of his house, a bag of garbage in his hand, talking on the phone and approaching a garbage can. The tank's muzzle follows the man, walking left and right with a loud sound of the tank's hydraulic nozzle. At any moment I expect the tank to shoot the Palestinian who is talking on the phone.

This scene from the film "The Time That Remains" by the Palestinian director Elia Suleiman, who has created such a poetical film that can break one's heart and fill it with hope. My question at this time is this: is there any hope? - when the genocide of Israel against the Palestinians in Gaza is being broadcasted live and all the mechanisms against the genocide, build from the Holocaust, have failed? Human and international rights do not count for Israel.

When we say that it is wrong for kids to be bombed, the answer that comes back is that we are antisemites and that we are supporting terrorists. But why do kids have to pay the price? Israel has killed more than 18 thousand Palestinian children in these two years. This comes to killing 25 children each day, one child per hour. But those in power in this world assure us that this reality is normal. How can it be normal to kill a child every hour?

At the end of Suleiman's film, an athlete with a long pole vaults over the Israeli wall in a sign of revolt against the restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement. This new normal reality seems so absurd to me that I wish I were inside Suleiman's film - and that at the end of the film, hope awaits me.

Written by Ilir Hasanaj



DAILY PICKS

RIVER OF GRASS / 83'
INTERNATIONAL FEATURE DOX



DOKUKINO 17:30

HENRY FONDA FOR PRESIDENT / 184'
SPECIAL SCREENINGS



SHTËPIA E KULTURËS
(SALLA E MADHE) 18:30

MAY THE SOIL BE EVERYWHERE / 96'
GREEN DOX



DOKUKINO 19:30

THE TRACK / 91'
BALKAN DOX



KINO LUMI 20:00

THE MOUNTAIN WON'T MOVE / 91'
BALKAN DOX



KINO LUMI 22:30

SPECIAL OPERATION / 64'
INTERNATIONAL FEATURE DOX



DOKUKINO PLATO 22:30

On Films

All life mashed together On friends, festivals and ideas

In conversation with Pamela Cohn and Brett Story



DokuFest brings both old and new friends to Prizren during the festival week, and one of the most familiar presences at this festival is seeing Pamela Cohn near DokuKino. Brett, a filmmaker, professor, and geographer, is no stranger to Prizren. This year at DokuFest, Cohn is also here as the curator of the special program Spotlight: Brett Story.

Yesterday, DokuDaily met with filmmaker Brett Story and curator Pamela Cohn for a conversation about Story's films, touching on poetics, the personal, and the gentle unfolding of collective anxieties within everyday narratives.

Brett, a filmmaker, professor, and geographer, is no stranger to Prizren.

Their collaboration began out of a need for visibility: a challenge Brett Story had noticed years ago. They first met at a documentary film festival in Montreal, and from that moment, a connection was formed with the aim of having Story's work understood more fully and introduced to new audiences. Cohn says: "It's hard to get some traction. Sometimes we were talking about this and we talked about it a lot. And what a closed circuit sometimes it is so to be able to, like, bring someone and sort of share their larger vision is just, it's like a real privilege, I think, I mean, for me as a programmer."

The film works of Brett Story are presented in the format of a focus rather than a retrospective—this to allow her work to be seen in a different light. Cohn explained that this format supports the process of viewing a filmmaker's work in a way that helps communicate a significant gap: that emerging directors often struggle to find their place in the industry, and the non-exponential growth of success can sometimes leave a filmmaker in a canonical position that lacks momentum over time. However, there are also various spaces where all this work built over the years can find its audience in front of a well-shaped message.

We asked Cohn and Story about the films presented in this program, which includes six short films and two feature-length ones, covering themes ranging from the exhausting, repetitive, yet quiet articulation of human routine in the search for one's place in the world, to human rights and the fight against systemic and legal injustices, as well as reflections that frame collective issues through the lens of the personal.

Cohn offered us her own reading on how we might approach this program, explaining that she often meets the artists she works with only after she has seen their work, and that her curatorial practice is often guided by this initial encounter by what the filmmakers have already produced.

"I think that's what makes that's what an artist's and a curator's idea is, is that sort of these moments that feel collective, even as disparate as the places where the film might travel, there is a touchstone of some sort that feels very human, very centered in the human experience."

Their collaborative work is deeply connected to lived experiences, finding oneself in a tangle that slowly takes shape, while hoping that these films and the way they are received offer audiences a sense of shared experience and solace, in how the world weighs down on people's lives, and above all, that they are not alone.

"I'm not the only one that's suffering this mental anguish. So I feel that it's a very intimate way to have a collective experience. And each one, each person, whatever you're bringing to it, whatever it evokes for you, is exactly it's the hope you know that that will happen, that you'll walk out of the cinema somehow not comforted. Even better, to be connected and not so isolated." - says Cohn.

Regarding her films, we focus on "A Debtor's Prison" and on Foucauldian ideas about how the system, which produces discipline and aestheticizes punishment, turns into a vicious cycle of struggle for the individual but also on how the feeling of familiarity is created. Brett pauses on this word:

"I like this word familiar, because for me, it's, in some ways, both the starting point and also a necessary object to resist in my films, in the sense that I'm very interested politically in how we how we can come into a kind of consciousness that lets us see our own belief systems, especially the ways and the patterns of thinking that seem to us like as as natural as the air we breathe."

Collaborations are often relationships that can become complex, but both Pamela and Brett understand the joy of working with people who know how to process language and thought. All of this backstage dynamic of a friendship formed through films which is rarely found in the typical atmosphere of film festivals when rooted in deep discussions about ideas, can give rise to lasting collaborations. Speaking about her work as a curator, Cohn expresses it this way: "The curator is there to precisely, to make it a work of art all of a sudden, to, like, take it and let it live in a world of relations, rather than in this sort of singular and there and kind of narrow and not totally alive space of one's own imagination."

This lasting collaboration invites us all to reflect more on how we can perceive the world today and in a way capturing the world while tearing down its facades. This process relies on discussing, reading and really thinking about the world that we live in and on how we connect with each other. For all of you that are lucky to be in Prizren, we urge you to not miss The Masterclass session by Brett Story in conversation with Pamela Cohn happening on August 5 at the Music School "Lorenc Antoni" by 16:00.

DOKU.TECH

At the Crossroads of Art and Algorithm



PHOTO: SUER CELINA

In a world where artificial intelligence is becoming part of our daily lives, from our everyday work to the art we consume, the question is no longer whether we will use it, but how we will approach it. This was the opening of Ralph Talmont's speech, an expert in cultural communication and arts entrepreneur, at the 12th edition of DOKU.TECH within DokuFest, titled "Bringing The Future Closer Together." The event aims to explore the intersection of art and technology, focusing on authenticity at a time when we are already "invaded" by Artificial Intelligence.

"This is not going to be a talk about technology, but is going to be a talk about a necessary approach that we would be well advised to cultivate in relation to the technology," he said.

At the same time, he asks whether we should hate technology and immediately answers with a loud "No" in front of the audience gathered at the House of Culture in Prizren.

"It is hypocrisy to hate something we use every day, but it is vital that we cultivate a different approach toward it, because the consequences that follow will determine the course of our lives," explains Talmont.

Almost every hand in the audience went up when he asked how many of them use generative technology to carry out work in their professional lives, while even the author of this article was using a generative tool to transcribe what Talmont said. This strongly underscores the importance of organizing such a discussion; one that helps us talk about something we simply cannot avoid.

However, Artificial Intelligence cannot do everything, for example, it cannot instantly intervene with a delightful saxophone performance as Arian Randobrava, a musician from Prizren, did while Talmont spoke about the importance and impact of cultural workers on social development.

"AI cannot replicate the creative struggle that shapes authentic art. Rehearsal... is where the magic happens. The effort that you invest in the production of art is where the magic happens. Art is made through trial and error, through trying and failing and trying again", he adds.

Furthermore, he envisions a future where originality becomes a valued product, and clear ways of distinguishing human-created art from that produced by artificial intelligence will be essential.

In a world flooded by AI-generated art, the human, the authentic, and the real have the potential to gain in value. Research suggests that people tend to prefer art they believe is human-made, and

many look forward to the day when algorithms include verified labels that clearly distinguish genuine human-created content," Talmont predicts.

After another musical interlude by Randobrava, a conversation began between Ralph Talmont and Veton Nurkollari, Artistic Director of DokuFest.

Nurkollari expressed his disappointment, saying that people can sometimes be "ignorant," easily deceived by artificial art.

On the other hand, Talmont emphasized human "laziness" as a fundamental problem, explaining that technology and artificial intelligence encourage us to seek the easiest path, reducing real effort and genuine engagement.

Nurkollari also pointed out the lack of public awareness regarding the quality of cultural products.

"People in general are uninformed, with most having no training to recognize quality, whether in photography or other cultural products, and as a result, AI-generated content will become so convincing that most simply won't be able to tell," he said.

While Talmont emphasizes that there are things that the machines still cannot replicate.

"We're inherently lazy. This laziness or rather, a fondness for getting things done without much effort is a natural human trait. It's not necessarily a bad thing; in fact, it might even be beneficial. But when it comes to culture, there's still a lot that people can give to all of us, something machines still cannot replicate".

In this unfolding era dominated by AI's synthetic creations, we stand at a crossroads reminiscent of Neil Postman's Faustian Bargain. We are trading authentic human creativity for the seductive ease of automation.

As Nurkollari and Tarnot reveal, while people may be lazy or even "ignorant" in the face of overwhelming artificial content, there remains an irreplaceable spark in human art born from struggle, imperfection, and rehearsal.

Machines can flood the world with endless imitation, yet they cannot capture the messy, soulful essence that only humans bring to culture. The challenge ahead is clear: to resist drowning in the vast ocean of artificial noise and instead cultivate spaces where true creativity can flourish.

WRITTEN BY SHEFKET BUJARI

DokuTalks

Opening Windows, Breaking Silence: Women of Peace and Justice



PHOTO: FERDI LIMANI

The first panel of DokuTalks entitled “RESISTANCE – Women of Peace and Justice in Former Yugoslavia and Albania” discussed how women were impacted by the Balkan wars, and how they are now dealing with the profound aftereffects of the wars.

The panelists were Kumjana Novakova, Norika Sefa, Sanjin Pejkoć and Blerina Hankollari, and the moderator was Aurela Kadriu.

Norika Sefa said that it is important to keep researching, to keep digging for the truth about the violence towards women during the wars for many reasons: telling the victims stories restores dignity, allows bridges to be built between survivors, and to ‘put questions’ out there to society about these war crimes, so that they are not forgotten, and not repeatable.

Blerina Hankollari spoke about the struggles of women in Albania, victimized from the oppression of the patriarchy, and also from communism and its abject poverty and lack of civil rights inflicted on all in Albania in the recent past. “In Albania, we have a big problem facing our past honestly. There is a resistance to the truth, as it is both painful and embarrassing.”

A recent book co-written by Kumjana Novakova entitled “Resistance: women of peace and justice in former Yugoslavia and Albania” was also discussed briefly, and those attending were given a complimentary copy of the book. A summary of the book states “through the personal testimonies of 11 women, this book reveals their pivotal roles in defying patriarchal systems and nationalistic ideologies to champion peace, justice, and human rights. It captures their relentless fight for truth, reconciliation, and the recognition of war crimes, from documenting atrocities to organizing protests and leading humanitarian efforts.”

Sanjin Pejkoć spoke of the concept of a “clash of memories”, and how the co-opting of survivor stories is now being used to gain political power by nationalist actors, in the hopes of gaining more power. This means that the women who had to live through these horrors are now used for political points. He spoke about the importance of the work of prior researchers, and that those now involved in this effort are building upon their work, and must continue it, however uncomfortable it makes those who wish to forget the past.

Kumjana Novakova echoed the sentiment that the work must persist. She said she has been asked “Hasn’t the war been covered enough now, haven’t we told the story now?” and she replies with an emphatic “No! The story has not been told completely, and we must get the full picture.”

Aurela complimented Kumjana by saying of her film “It’s rare to see a film where the ego of the filmmaker come thru, but you did it.”

Aurela addressed many of the difficulties involved in accurately detailing past atrocities: finding the survivors, getting them to open up, realizing there will naturally be gaps in the information. She also spoke of avoiding ‘collectivizing’ the accounts, that each survivor must be given their own space, their own window: “Not just one, but many small windows.”

A window, what a fitting metaphor. It lets light in, healing light. It lets others see us, if we choose, and for us to see them. These many small windows into the souls of past victims of trauma, violence and oppression are critically important, as it let us see them, and hear from them. It is a powerful step towards healing, overcoming and accountability for the wrongdoers. Justice can only be delivered by these stories.

This event was organized in collaboration with Pro Peace and YIHR Kosovo.

Blue Heart – Coeur Bleu (2025)



Behind red linen, basked in hushed preaching, lies a blue heart. Waiting, waiting for an American dream. Blue Heart (2025) is a fictional film by Samuel Suffren, focusing on Haitian parents Marianne and Pétion as they wait for a call from their son, who has immigrated to America. As Marianne's health deteriorates under the weight of stress, Pétion is left to uphold the illusion of success and stability, a falsehood he carefully shields her from.

Suffren's film is a heartfelt and vividly human portrayal of the infectious idealization of America that has taken root in communities across the globe. It not only captures the immense stress families endure in their efforts to immigrate to the U.S., but also sits in the quiet erosion of those left behind. Utilizing a tight aspect ratio and a static camera, the film intensifies the sense of confinement surrounding the parents. Pétion's attempts at normalcy, including birthday bunting, hopscotch, and purchased dollar bills, feel all the more futile against this backdrop of constriction.

This is a film that glows with subtle criticism. Goats appear frequently throughout the film, symbolizing the domestic rhythms of Marianne and Pétion's life. When one is brought to slaughter, Suffren subtly challenges the endurance of this existence. Inviting the question: can a life sustained only by passivity and sacrifice truly endure? This question, along with its innate critique of the psychological toll of American imperialism, forms the dogma of this film, making Blue Heart a necessary and deeply compelling work.

Written by Carson Beale

After Colossus (2024)



This is a story about an Indonesian boy who took part in covert psychological experiments in his youth, and the damage it did to him. Unfortunately, he was tested again as an adult, and suffered further injury. This film had a scene reminiscent of The Exorcist, so the damage done to this poor soul was profound. It seems that the scientists involved crossed several hard lines, as they may have created a monster, a 'weretiger', half human, half tiger, but all bad, as it's now killing villagers. At the end, in the credits, this line: "At times, the line between the real and the constructed is difficult to discern." Is this a story based on actual events? Is it purely fiction? It was difficult to discern, but a thought provoking effort nonetheless. Youth is resilient, but a soul pulled too far, too hard, will break.

Written by Scott Hoy

Kneecap (2024)



THE POLITICS OF PARTYING

Kneecap joins the adventure and thrill, this is not something you can watch just by yourself: a trainride (interesting connection given its very obvious “Trainspotting” visual influence) where you can simply jump and go through all the motions with these insane characters. You laugh, you cry, you scream and you (poorly) try to sing along their Gaelic bits. If you know them from their real-life music, you’re gonna love their fiction. If you heard about the movie, you will love the reality behind what is now the most impactful Irish-language movie of the decade.

And it all began years ago in Dublin, where upcoming British director Rich Peppiatt went to see this hip-hop band in a local bar, and was blown away by their mixed-language, anti-establishment / butt cheeks “Brits Out” performance. The trio from Belfast, Northern Ireland, made of Mo Chara, Móglaí Bap and DJ Próvai, most probably had no idea that this encounter would give them a BAFTA, a Sundance, a BIFA and even an Oscars entry. And since this debut, they have fueled quite a number of pro-Irish language and anti-loyalist protests, which is also in line with the band’s long-standing Pro-Palestinian stance. What should have been a very normal act of singing in your mother’s tongue, becomes a revolutionary act when it comes to the oppressed, and whoever has even the slightest knowledge about colonialism and war, knows that assimilation starts with the language. That is in the forefront of Kneecap’s essence as a factual band and a fictionalised one, with the phrase “Every word of Irish spoken is a bullet for Irish freedom” is taught to the boys by the character played by Irish-German Michael Fassbender.

The self-mythologising biopic about this real-life trio, set against the complex political backdrop of 2010s Belfast, is full of drugs, track-suits and, generational trauma. Kneecap do not shy away from their drug use, as far as throwing ketamine bags in their shows, their political views and outrageous on-stage performances. And it’s through these in-your-face/raw acts that they do carry out the lingering consequences of war and colonialism, reinforcing the absolute power of art (and partying!) has on politics and society.

Written by Romina Ruda

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DOKUNIGHTS

It's Good to be Back!

The silhouette of a DJ against the backdrop of Prizren's glowing cityscape. Warm flashes of red and turquoise lighting up beautiful faces of a euphoric crowd. A couple, leaning against the old stone structures of Kalaja, heads nodding to the beat, eyes fixated on each other. It's good to be back: over a night that stretched until sunrise, DokuNights returned, once again casting a spell over the city.

First to take to the Sonar stage, an impressively designed feat of engineering packed with overhead lights, booming speakers and its centrepiece, a triumphant bronze oval looming in its background, was Rebiswan. They were immediately in their element: cigarette in one hand, full command over the deck in the other, their slick combination of thumping bass, propulsive percussion and flow-state house didn't so much warm up the crowd as set them on fire, proving why they're one of the most exciting talents to come out of Kosovo's underground scene.

Maintaining the immaculate vibes was Berlin-based Byron Yeates, first blasting disco from another planet before taking it up a notch, a slick and stylish shapeshifter of a set full to the brim with joy and surprise—at one point even veering into the guttural bass of industrial techno.

'WORK' blared the vocal sample of Melbourne-based IN2STELLAR's opening track, but their set was all about play, revving up the tempo with ecstatic abandon. Weaving catchy house grooves and melodic hooks seamlessly, eventually prompting their own troupe of impromptu stage dancers, their irresistible energy left the crowd in a state of unfiltered bliss, a mood that they carried to sunrise and beyond.

The highs of last night (and this morning) aren't gonna let up: in what is one of the hottest tickets of the entire festival, the party is kept going by Albanian sensation Shkodra Elektronique (Kolë Laca and Beatriçe Gjergji), who take to the Sonar stage tonight for their entrancing brand of jagged, pulsating folktronica. After capturing our hearts at this year's Eurovision with fan-favourite track 'Zjerm', they're here to wreak havoc on Kalaja, the dynamic duo concocting a scintillating combination of ancestral folk melodies and contemporary sonic soundscapes.

Asking the Prizren crowd about their excitement for the event, many noted that they can't wait to hear Zjerm live. "I've never heard her music live. They were at Eurovision—I would really love to hear it here." states Anjeza. Similarly, Shefket tells me that "They gave us so many emotions in Eurovision. I was telling all my international friends. Sadly, they didn't win, but they won our hearts." Not everyone is here just for the music, however. Era takes a different approach: "I just want to see what new outfit Beatriçe Gjergji wears."

Well, regardless of their priorities, the same throughline emerges: everyone in Prizren can't wait for Shkodra Elektronique's showing tonight. See you there, for another iconic moment in the history of DokuNights.

WRITTEN BY GUS EDGAR-CHAN

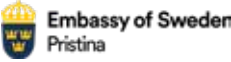


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