

BADY MINCK

Festival favourite opens Luxembourg film week

Bady Minck is perhaps Luxembourg's most unique director. Splitting her time between Luxembourg and Austria, Minck has made some fascinating films using techniques not often seen in modern cinema. Duncan Roberts spoke to her about her work, Luxembourg and the difficulty in financing films.

352: Your style is very unique - why did you decide to use this sort of stop-motion technique?

Bady Minck: It was very important for me that the protagonist was a real writer, to counterbalance the rich visual world of *In the Beginning Was the*

Eye. To intensify the expression of this man of letters I used certain camera techniques. The sequences in which the main character appears were shot at 6 frames per second [the usual camera speed for feature films is 24 frames per second], while Bodo Hell, the writer and actor, moved four times slower than usual - a technique we trained together for several weeks before shooting began. This slowing down of his movement gave the film four times as much intensity in his gestures and mimics.

In the scenes in Eisenerz and Salzburg I used time-lapse technique to show in a short time how people use public spaces differently today compared to the past. To emphasise this, I showed the old views from postcards in montage with the contemporary views.

352: You studied fine art - how difficult was it to jump from a very personal

and solo form of expression to one where you have to rely on others - producers, actors, technical crew etc.?

BM: Oh yes, that was really a long and laborious process - and at the same time I was stepping from the world of pictures into the world of words.

As a fine artist, I never explicitly expressed myself in language - it was never the focus of my art. When I made my first film at the age of 18, I simply drew storyboards. Slowly, from film to film, more and more words made their way into my sketches. And with the words, came new dimensions.

Years later, when I had a bigger budget for the first time, planning suddenly became important - simply from a technical aspect. Because a precise description of what is going to happen is unavoidable if you want to tell 40 technicians what you want to happen.

In *Mécanomagie* (1996) I made my first attempt to allow my actors to speak - but instead of words, stones came out of their mouths. In *In the Beginning Was the Eye* is the first film in which I give words their own space. I asked poets Ernst Jandl, Friederike Mayröcker and Bodo Hell to write texts for the walls and furniture on the film set, and while I was working with them their whispered words found their way onto the film soundtrack.

This film is the turning point in my career: I have arrived at a point where I can express myself artistically with words as effectively as I could with pictures before.

352: Your two best known films - *Mécanomagie* and *Im Anfang...* - seem also to be homages to the landscapes of Luxembourg and Austria. Is nature an important element in your films?

BM: Yes, I love exploring countries and culture by taking a look at the landscape that has shaped them. I always notice the strong connection between people and their landscape and I think these days that relationship is undervalued. In some ways, we are made of earth, and the earth is made of us. Humans return to the earth at the end of our lives, when our decayed bodies mix with the earth. That means that the ground on which we move is made up of millions of human bodies.

The landscape of my childhood - the Luxembourg Ösling - is very important to me. I always return there because I feel a connection with the landscape. As soon as I feel sated by this connection, I feel drawn to explore new worlds - maintaining this balance is very important in life.

352: How important is the festival circuit to developing your career?

BM: Definitely very important. My films have gained a reputation through the big international festivals. They seem to have a universal appeal, because ever since *The Man with Modern Nerves* [Minck's first short film] was invited to Cannes in 1989, my films have been shown at major festivals on all five continents. As well as the festival circuit, the films have also been shown at significant film and art collections, especially in the USA and France, such as in the Centre Pompidou.

352: Many producers have said that obtaining finances for films has been more difficult since 9/11 - is this true, and are governments and the EU doing enough to support European filmmakers?

BM: It has certainly become more difficult to finance films in recent years; though I don't necessarily think that 9/11 is the reason (I am speaking for continental Europe), but rather the idiotic neo-liberal politics that has dominated Europe since the mid-90s. I am sure that the EU's economic measures in preparation for monetary union also contributed to budget cuts, but not 9/11. This is even more reason to join France in combating the proposal that film will be no longer by treated as an art but as a commercial product in the new round of GATT negotiations. The consequence of this would be the dismantling of the subsidy system that has made European cinema so successful over the past few years.



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Cover photo taken from Bady Minck's *Im Anfang war der Blick* - courtesy of Minotaurus Films