

WELCOME TO **FILM PANIC** #5

The Underground Film Studio was founded in 2011 when we made *Savage Witches*, our first feature film together. This film grew from a deep passion for art and filmmaking and from an absolute belief in the transformative power of art. *Savage Witches* was our personal investigation into the nature of moving images and grew as a dialogue between us about what cinema is and can be. Through the course of the 18 month production we interrogated and explored the question that has interested us ever since: how can cinema be liberated to a place of total creative freedom and fulfil its potential as an art form.

We have always been interested in the question of what cinema is and what cinema will become in the 21st century. There are lots of conflicting definitions of cinema, but for us any definition that does not include work produced in the past, present and future is unsatisfactory – we are interested in definitions that open and expand, rather than close in and exclude.

There are those that say that cinema is dead, that what cinema was in the 20th century dictates its limits for the future, but we disagree. We believe cinema is a definable thing but it is also in a continuous evolution and in recent years it has been gradually mutating into something new, something that will no doubt be alarming to some. Change can often feel like a death. Cinema has already been through several deaths and rebirths in its short history, the transition from silent to sound being one of the more extreme transformations. We should not resist change, it is inevitable, we must instead surrender to it and as artists we must ask what these changes reveal to us.

Our own work is one part visual experimentation (in the tradition of the avant-garde), one part performative (in the tradition of silent movies and experimental theatre) and one part exploration into the possibilities of cinema narrative (drawing upon all forms of cinematic storytelling). It always felt natural for us to bring these things together, all that we love about cinema can be expressed through these elements, but what we have discovered is an unexpected resistance to the kind of films we make. Almost as soon as we set out on our journey we hit up against external obstacles when trying to communicate what our work is, and when seeking screenings and funding. What seemed natural to us jarred with the preexisting boundaries and theoretical frameworks of the cinema establishment.

What we encountered was a total disinterest in cinema that was truly exploratory or experimental. On the whole, organisations that use the terms artist moving image, experimental film and underground film etc, see the terms as genres with clearly defined characteristics based on what has been established in the last century, and are not open to work that isn't clearly understood within these categories. Initially we were confused, frustrated and disheartened with this situation, it was not just the odd critic or festival here and there but an across-the-board problem that meant that our work was excluded simply for not fitting neatly into the boxes.

We work intuitively and we only make the kind of films that feel right for us – you would not believe the amount of times we have been given advice about re-editing our films so they fit into the dominant criteria, or make work specifically to fit into the modes of experimental film circles. This absurd idea goes against our very nature and our belief that art should grow directly from the imagination and craft of the artist, and is not to be dictated from the outside. There never has been or never should be only one kind of cinema – to quote Jonas Mekas: “The cinema, like any other art, is like a big tree with many, many branches. Some are bigger, some are smaller, but all of them are important”.

So with all this in mind we set forth regardless and determined to not compromise. We realised very quickly that the only way to survive and to create change was to take charge of the situation and do it ourselves. We knew there must be other filmmakers out there who shared our ideas and who were hitting against the same problems. We decided we must seek them out, join forces and help each other.

In 2013 we started FILM PANIC, initially as the research arm of The Underground Film Studio, a place to share our thoughts on cinema and filmmaking and to interview people who interested us. Later it also became a banner under which we screened work. It is through the magazine, the screenings and the associated Facebook page that we have eventually managed to meet and join forces with other like-minded filmmakers. As people started to pop up on our radar and we began talking, we became aware of a deeper current running below the surface of all our work, a tendency towards a certain kind of cinema experience, shared attitudes and creative processes. This has led us to believe that all of these artists, who are undoubtedly following their own singular paths, are nonetheless reacting to and expressing a complementary vision of a particular kind of cinema that could only exist now, fully ripened in the 21st century. We are calling this undercurrent THE NEW VISIONARY CINEMA.

In our cover article to this issue of FILM PANIC we make the first attempts to articulate what this is and how it has come about. This is clearly a beginning and hopefully the instigator for further exploration and discussion. This is not a manifesto conceived as a group but our personal attempt to articulate what we see and what we feel is happening. To accompany our article we have included here several texts by other filmmakers who are dedicated to the pursuit of a deeply personal filmmaking practice, and in whose words and works we see the emergence of an insight into the nature of contemporary cinema parallel to our own. It is necessary for us to write these words, as filmmakers and as champions of cinema. We, like our friends and collaborators, live cinema. It is our daily work, it is the sense organ with which we move through this world. We write in order to understand and to help us move forwards and dig deeper. FILM PANIC exists in order to document and celebrate the work and the unique creativity of those who inspire us constantly with their dedication and passion for this wondrous thing we call cinema.

Thank you for reading FILM PANIC!

Daniel & Clara

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