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## Saris And The Other Words

SEA-Images presents a series of portraits on the Slovak film industry and its regional integration.

### FILMS IN SLOVAKIA - PART 3

This summer, a Slovak independent film production company came into the spotlights of the European media's following the success of a movie presented at the Czech International Film Festival of Karlovy Vary. The reason for this special attention came from the fact that; for the first time in the KIFF history, a feature documentary film won the Audience Award. The movie "*OTHER WORLDS*" (*INE SVETY*) was the audience choice from a total of 268 shown feature films.

Initially presented in the "Docu Talents from the East" section of the festival, the movie "*OTHER WORLDS*" by Marko Škop is the second documentary film from the production house ARTILERIA. The script background is set in the North-Eastern part of Slovakia, a region known before the World War II as Ruthenia – which territories overlapped Hungary, Poland, Ukraine and Czechoslovakia. Today, this region is struggling to find its position in the enlarged Europe.

The documentary story evolves around the town of Saris, which name is generally associated to Slovakian traditions. Folkdance enthusiasts would probably know the "*Šarišská Polka*" - a very dynamic traditional duo-dance, which seems to be performed in the air as much as on the ground. Beer connoisseur could long debate on the taste and quality of the fresh production of "Pivovar Šariš"; the largest brewery in Slovakia. In the fields of art and history, religious art amateurs may head to the local museum for the Slovakia's largest collection of icons.

What else could the region offer? Ah, yes, a "Pop Art Mausoleum!" Few years ago, Stanislaw Mucha; a Polish filmmaker was here for the shooting of "*ABSOLUT WARHOLA*" (2001) a documentary film about the Pop Art icon Andy Warhol, and his "clan". The artist origins are from the neighbouring Slovak town of Medzilaborce – where an unexpected Pop Art Museum had been erected. The artist Slovak relatives have only a vague idea of who Warhol was. "*His name has become a legend, a vision, a tangible link to a world they cannot comprehend, a world so big and so incredibly far away*" says the filmmaker website.

The distance to a world that cannot be comprehended, is also the subject of Marko Škop documentary "*OTHER WORLDS*". How can traditions survive in a fast changing Slovakia? To illustrate the question, and the author point of view, Marko decided to set the background in the town of Saris that he also calls "Little Babylon"; where the EU borders meet Ukraine. What mostly interested the film director is how the so-called globalizing process affects individual lives and people stories in a small border town. Saris, according to the filmmaker; is also unique for that it marks the "Borderline between rational individualism of the West and expressive emotionality of the East".

Without a film, this remote area could hardly catch the attention of the world. The audience of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival may have chosen a film that succeeded to give a voice to a forgotten region in Europe. Having the voice heard is of the most importance for all the Central European countries; which have for the first time democratically joined a "New bloc" that is the European Union. The recent integration comes eventually with an often heard concern among the populations; fearing to turn into minority groups of a larger Europe as described in "*OTHER WORLDS*".

But this is not all. The schemes of developments of new countries such as Slovakia recall realities that the Czech audience at the Karlovy Vary film festival can associate to the Czech Republic own transformations. For Martin Sulik - another Slovak filmmaker who, in his movie "*KRAJINKA*" explored the life of the people in the remote countryside through different portraits - "*The countryside is no longer the idyllic heaven that it used to.*"

With a past that cannot be kept, and a future that remains unpredictable, the Central European populations are still in search of new models.

It is these models that filmmakers are analysing in their different documentary films. The increasing number of co-productions seems also to say that, whatever are the transformations of the territories, some fundamental realities remain; "*people think similar, only the languages are different*" as it was reminded by Peter Zawrel at a discussion meeting about co-production possibilities for full-length films in Central Europe – an event organized by the [Plzen Film Festival - FINALE](#).

The common understanding of people across the borders is translated in the film industry by co-production deals such as for "*OTHER WORLDS*"; which is a co-production between Slovakia's ARTILERIA company and MIRAGE in the Czech Republic. To support these deals, the governments of the region have joined in existing funding networks, or they have created new-ones. Slovakia has recently join in the Network of European Film Promotion (EFP). It also hosts the headquarter of the Visegrad Fund, which among other funds; supports the film industry integration within the V4 region (Slovakia, Austrian, Poland, and Czech Republic.)

EURIMAGE continues to support co-productions from the larger Europe. For 2005 only, Slovakia co produced three feature films; two of them being Slovak majority. A look on the latest co-productions supported by EURIMAGE shows that Slovakian production houses not only think in a similar way as its direct neighbours, they also position themselves among the main groups of producers such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

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