



flying cranes

media produktion

Melchiorstraße 26 10179 Berlin

TALES OF A BALTIC ULYSSES

1000 YEARS OF HISTORY AS AN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA- PRODUCTION

Ulysses undoubtedly is the most familiar mythical hero of the Occident. Maybe because he is the closest one to the European soul - if something like a European soul ever existed. European history since the Trojan War is not only a history of wars, but also a history of ideas and their destructive or peace bringing power.

After a vast array of battles and strategies failed, it was the reasoning of Ulysses which succeeded. Ulysses knew the vulnerability of his enemy: the Trojans mystic atavistic thinking. It was an idol which made the mighty indestructible fortress fall after the most powerful machines of siege failed. Troy fell; a splendid empire got extinguished from the map of the ancient world. It was the victory of Pallas Athena – the goddess of reason - who took Ulysses under her very special patronage.

But what was gained by this war which destroyed the old system of the world? The famous Greek heroes got killed like the Trojans, like pieces in a chess game in an exchange without any sense. What was left were the defeated and the winners for whom it took decades to recover from their victory.

Does this metaphor sound familiar to us? In two of the most horrible wars of mankind a world system was destroyed; all political ideas and illusions invented by Europe since Homer seemed to have dissolved.

Geschäftsleitung: Josephin Jahnke
Künstlerische Leitung: Robert Thayenthal
Tel. +49 3841 360 765 / Mobil +49 172 85 19 893
robert.thayenthal@flying-cranes.eu / www.flying-cranes.eu



Even Ulysses was unhappy with his victory. The gods started to fight. In the Olympus the revengeful old ones fought against the emancipated young ladies like Pallas Athena. Ulysses had to experience the sea he used to travel, as if in his private pool, as a hell, which he had to cross with challenges and disasters he never imagined. With the waves Ulysses' soul busted open. The monsters escaped out of him, like the Cyclopes and Scylla and Caribides, and the sirens that sung so tempting and sat on a mountain of human bones. He wanted to listen to their songs and asked his fellows to bind him at the flagpole. The destroyer of Troy didn't avoid any temptation nor any challenge. Now he had to develop strategies of reason to rescue his own existence. Any hell he entered, he discovered and explored a part of himself. He denied his name to the Cyclopes, he dared to go to the world of shadows, he denied his position as a King when he came home to Ithaca, peacefully, wise and old. Bloodless in a gentle revolution he reconquered his kingdom; and maybe he owned it for the first time. Later we will come back to this point.

The German philosopher PETER SLOTERDIJK wrote in his Essay published in 1994 IF EUROPE WAKES UP about an "Absence" like a coma that came over Europe after the destruction by the two World wars. The end of WW II coincided with a world-political and geopolitical lesson, which was prepared since the end of the 19th century. American and Russian powers took Europe on German ground in a pincer to break the fascistic systems and make peace. But the ruins of Europe became a battlefield of a new war, the Cold War which took place mainly in the minds, but all the more disastrous.

Europe also overcame this war. In the "wind-shadow" of new world-political constellations and conflicts it experiments with a fundamentalist understanding of democracy. The first steps that this new Europe tried were like the movements of a political Frankenstein after a long coma and still insecure. A body of 25 nations has to be coordinated. In each of these nations more than 1000 years of experience and history is stored like a genetic code; like a long series of experiments; and not each



of them failed. America interfered in both world wars because on this continent the holy graves of its democracy are situated.

How can one do justice to this history? How can one keep a feeling for the Odyssey that Europe enterprises, inventing itself new again and again. How can this journey be pictured and be made accessible to a big audience?

Perhaps as a fairy tale? Fairy tales condense the big questions of life to a simple and magical form.

A fairy tale of the Amber-Coast narrates about a fisherman who makes a pact with the devil. The fisherman is hungry and greedy and very thoughtless. He promises the devil the soul of the first living creature that he encounters when he returns home. Unfortunately, it was his son Jan. The father sends his boy to the sea, because on sea the devil has no power. With this decision Jan starts his Baltic Odyssey. He must pass the most horrible examinations to break the curse.

We take this story as a starting point of the long journey of a hero. And we expand the narration with desirable and melancholy images as well as over boarding sensitivity. We narrate the look of an amazed boy (later a man) to the adolescence of Europe through the centuries. Like a Flying Dutchman Jan flees from coast to coast shocked by cruelty and seduced by the beauty he encounters. He gets thrown into wars and revolutions. The devil's breath that follows him is effective like a breath of immortality. His odyssey lasts a thousand years. Again and again our Hero loses his belief in mankind and in the progress of peace and reason. He tries to help, to warn. But history repeats itself. Armies march, fleets get drowned, women and children get massacred, religions and political systems get dismissed and founded anew till – in a moment when no one yet believes in it – a handful of surprised demonstrators bring the Iron Curtain to fall like a handkerchief.



This end is so unbelievable because it is true. It's part of our history, a history that lets hope arise. Beyond entertainment we want to make films that aim to force us to understand a part of our identity in a historical context.

"We" means FLYING CRANES, a media production settled in Wismar and Berlin. It consists of experienced writers, producers and film professionals, who focus on culture and history of the Baltic Sea. Over a period of 5 years we develop a team-project with all neighbored countries of the Baltic Sea under the title of BALTIC ODYSSEY – 1000 YEARS OF DESIRE. It consists of feature films, documentaries, books and exhibitions that aim at presenting the Baltic region with all its diversities and contrasts to a broad international audience. The story of the restless traveler between time and space, as we indicated before, is the heart of this project.

THE DEVIL'S BREATH: an adventure film cycle of nine episodes. The peculiar thing in this case is the fact that for the first time artists of all nations around the Baltic Sea will work with equal rights and input on a big common puzzle. That means, they write, produce, shoot in their own language, with their own historical background for their own market, but also for the bigger common market. A central story department coordinates the material and the productions with respect and sensitivity to the individual character of every co-producing nation.

The development of the teamwork with its episodes in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany is an adventure of multicultural and multilingual experience in Europe.

A project of this dimension can only be realized over a longer period of time. Story and script development will take about three years, consisting of research, coordination with other episodes of the cycle and the frame story. This project should be supported by public film funds and sponsors. The production will be



carried out by established companies in the individual countries, in coordination with the FLYING CRANES story department.

During this time, FLYING CRANES will release a series of documentaries, books, reports, exhibitions and publications. These releases will be thematically related to the cycle of the featured length films, THE DEVIL'S BREATH.

The documentaries will explain historical facts, while feature film productions present them as a great dramatic adventure. The interaction between media creates valuable "synergy-effects" which will entice the public to read and look and want to know more. We want the audience to be immersed in the world of a "Baltic Aegean Sea" that has lost its image as a sleeping beauty und rediscovers its sex-appeal.

We present an extraordinary multicultural adventure film cycle enriched by a broad panorama of other medias that deepens the understanding of an sometimes underestimated neighborhood.

The Communication with co-workers in so many other countries will take place as symposia at a variety of locations. The first symposium will take place in Wismar in September 2007. The writers from the several countries who prepare themselves with sketches and ideas for the writing of the screenplay will meet historians from all over the Baltic Region to exchange ideas and thoughts.

A sample selection of questions could be e.g.: Which spiritual, cultural, social and political forces have to work together in order to move history? Does a momentum of war and peace exist? How crystallized the claim on freedom and democracy from law of the jungle. Can the political "Change" we experienced be a model, a happy end? Or is it just a transition to something else? What can we learn from history? Can political experiences be transferable to other cultures?

The answers to these questions might be as diverse as the experiences of nations of their origin historical process.



Later on we shall use the material of this symposium as the source of inspiration and knowledge for our creative work. The intense brainstorming by a team of high professional experts puts us on a high level of quality that this big plan requires from us.

Films are fairy tales of the 20th and the 21st century. Due to some mysterious reasons, Europe stands in a wretched position against Hollywood and Bollywood. Nonetheless it owns the Holy Graves of film history – the Lumière-Brothers presented their first films on the cinematograph in Paris, Charles Chaplin and Jack Warner came from London, Billie Wilder and Fritz Lang from Vienna, Bergmann from Uppsala, Fellini from Rimini, Polanski from Poland, and Orson Welles certainly had a Irish grandma. 99% of all Hollywood films base on a plot curve that was invented by some Greek fellow called Aristotle. On this subject we MUST also awake from coma. Europe is getting bigger, creating its own network, owning a sophisticated audience that is interested in politics. The European Cultural Funding is unique in the world. The economy around the Baltic Sea is booming. There are Sponsors, donations, concepts and projects by the European community. The courage to use all this must start from the ones who are the creative. This is the focus of our concept.

There is a wide distance of open sea in front of us. We are sure to succeed and reach the coast if our idea about an extraordinary teamwork should prevail. However, we need support for this.

The feature length film cycle THE DEVILS'S BREATH will be released in the year 2011 when it will be 20 years after the Iron Curtain fell. We want our work to make sure that the long odyssey to this freedom will not be forgotten.

* * *