Flaherty Revisited Seminar

Lisbon, 25-27 February 2022

Hybrid: Live/Online (registration needed*)



BACK TO FIELDWORK

Presented by John Burgan & Robert Rombout

"Go out looking for one thing, that's all you'll ever find."
Robert J. Flaherty

The Story

In late 1931 Robert Flaherty travelled to the isles of Aran in Galway Bay, off the West coast of Ireland. Over the next two years the American set up base on Inis Mor, explored locations, built a laboratory and a small studio, searched for islanders that matched his vision, finally casting locals Maggie Dirrane as the woman and Coleman "Tiger" King as the *Man of Aran*. The result, premiered internationally in 1934, straddled the border between fiction and documentary. By directing reality, Flaherty strove for a balance between what was real and honest, and what looked real and honest. His working motto: "One often has to distort a thing to catch its true spirit"

Nine decades later in 2021, an international group of documentary filmmakers and teachers led by Robert Rombout and John Burgan travelled to the Aran islands for a week. Less a pilgrimage on the tracks of the mythical "father of documentary", the primary purpose of this *Flaherty Revisited* event was to investigate his working methods in order to produce new approaches to creative work with film students: in short, a laboratory on documentary-film practice. The director of Man of Aran was not selected as an example to be imitated, but rather to provide a rich and complex perspective from which to explore the contradictions and paradoxes of film practice in the field. In Spring 2022 the team will reunite to unveil the results of their journey, this time in Lisbon, Portugal where Lusófona University will host a two-and a half day public seminar on 25-27 February 2022.

Firstly, the team will present insights and discoveries on the specific challenge of teaching documentary fieldwork at film schools. Typically as film teachers we focus on project development at the beginning of the process (researching ideas, finding characters, writing a treatment); and towards the end of the project we are frequently present in the edit suite during post-production; but we rarely appear on location during research and shooting. This is very different from fiction teaching where hands-on workshops and studio exercises with actors and student filmmakers are a common element of the pedagogy. Logistics aside, we ask whether this rather comfortable status quo can be challenged.

Secondly, the group will outline future plans and propose two new projects, namely The Flaherty Think Tank and also the Island Diary Workshop (September 2022 Gavdos, Greece)

Thirdly, they will screen two brand new films made during the inaugural event in Ireland: *The Making of Flaherty Revisited* and *The Film School Wolves*. Last but not least, together with the audience, they will revisit films by Robert Flaherty. Film practice also implies physical work in an increasingly standardised cerebral environment. For instance how do coaches and teachers engage with students during online sessions, far removed from the four elements? Research is frequently interpreted by students as "google search", whereas, according to Werner Herzog: "The world reveals itself to those who walk."

Schedule of Public Events: 25 to 27 February 2022, Lisbon, Lusófona University, Auditorium Fernando Lopes

date / location	time	event
Friday, February 25 Lusófona University, Auditorium Fernando Lopes	19h30 - 21h30	Intro: John Burgan & Robert Rombout Screening of *Louisiana Story* by Robert Flaherty (USA, 78', 1948) *Revisiting Louisiana Story* (excerpt)
Saturday, February 26 Lusófona University, Auditorium Fernando Lopes	10h00 - 11h00	Greetings and intro by Manuel José Damásio, Director of Cinema and Media Art Department of Universidade Lusófona & GEECT President Screening of short report *The Making of Flaherty Revisited* (Xavier Solano, Marlen Dirven, Belgium, 15', 2022) Presentation of **Flaherty Think Tank** by John Burgan & Robert Rombout
	11h00 -11h15	Coffee Break
	11h15 - 13h00	Theme Panel Flaherty Think Tank (public / online Zoom meeting) Documentary Fieldwork & Research within Film Education Discussion with Rod Stoneman
	13h00 - 14h00	Lunch Break
	14h00 - 15h00	*Documentary Fieldwork and Research within Film Education* Public / online Q&A with Flaherty Think Tank panel
	15h00 - 15h30	Coffee Break
	15h30 - 16h30	Presentation of future plans FTT: Gavdos Workshop Documentary Diary (September, 2022)

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Sunday, February 27 Lusófona University, Auditorium Fernando Lopes	10h00 - 11h00	Intro by John Burgan & Robert Rombout Screening of *The Film School Wolves* (Pavla Rút Sobotová, Michal Dvořák, Czech Republic, 2022, Work-in-Progress)
	11h00 – 11h15	Coffee Break
	11h15 - 13h00	*Travelog, a hidden sense of reality*: Karine De Villers & Mario Brenta Excerpts from: *Ailleurs, Partout* (Belgium, 63', 2020) / *Calle de la Pietà* (Italy, 60' - 2010) / *Delta Park* (Italy, 68' - 2016) / *Îles* (Italy, 78' - 2021)
	13h00 - 14h00	Lunch Break
	14h00 - 15h15	Intro Diary: Anastasiya Maksymchuk Screening of *É Na Terra Não É Na Lua*, Part 1 (Portugal, 186', 2011) Director: Gonçalo Tocha
	15h15 - 15h30	Coffee Break
	15h30 - 16h15	Intro Diary: Anastasiya Maksymchuk Zoom meeting and Q&A with Gonçalo Tocha, the director of *É Na Terra Não É Na Lua*
	16h15 - 17h00	Presentation of the Documentary Diary project (September 2022, Gavdos, Greece) Online presentation by Denis Daniilidis on Gavdos: facilities, travel, lodging
	17h00 - 17h30	Drink
	17h30-19h00	Screening of *É Na Terra Não É Na Lua,* Part 2 (Portugal, 186', 2011)



Lusófona University of Humanities and Technologies

Campo Grande 376, 1749-024 Lisboa, Portugal

*Registration requiered. To sign up, click here.

Contact:

Ines Santa	organisation & logistics
Anastasiya Maksymchuk	organisation & media
Ninah Somer	assistance & reception
Marina Bento Bertolami	assistance & reception

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LSF LUSÓFONA FILMES

Kilmurvey Beach, Inishmore, Aran Islands, September 2021



On the left the cottage where Flaherty lived and worked,
on the beach the first FFT group reflect on fieldwork in documentary.