



ANDRÉS DI TELLA: FICCIÓN PRIVADA

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8:30pm

presented by

REDCAT

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California Institute of the Arts

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ANDRÉS DI TELLA: FICCIÓN PRIVADA

REDCAT proudly presents the Los Angeles premiere of *Ficción privada* (78 min, 2019), the latest work of Andrés Di Tella, one of the most prominent documentary filmmakers from Latin America. Over several days and nights, a young actor and a young actress read through the love letters of the filmmaker's parents— Torcuato, from Argentina, and Kamala, born in India. The letters, written over decades between the 50s and the 70s, record their travels and speak of love and idealism, but also pain and broken dreams. Di Tella's family affair weaves together one of his most intimate and personal stories, on the one hand an exploration of his parents' epistolary relationship while simultaneously excavating his own role as a film director.

"In *Private Fiction* intimacy is always fraught. Communication halts and frictions expand, yet the interrupted communication with the past offers sustenance. For Di Tella, revisiting his parents' stories goes beyond intimacy; they recall a time when utopias seemed viable, or at least omnipresent."

—Ela Bittencourt, *Notebook*

One Art

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

—Elizabeth Bishop

ABOUT THE FILM

The starting point for this project was the death of my father, Torcuato Di Tella. The death of a parent is one of life's greatest losses. The loss is very concrete and specific, an exceptional event; but, at the same time, it makes us think that life is a succession of losses, that this is in fact the natural order of things. Everything that is lost in our lives reminds us to pay attention to the moment, appreciate those around us, and eventually rescue what is lost from oblivion.

This is a “work of mourning,” without a doubt, but, at the same time, it opens up for me the possibility of appropriating his story, making it mine, with all of the inner freedom that I would not have been able to allow myself during my father’s lifetime. In this way, I could give it all the necessary symbolic dimension so that it is no longer just the story of my father but the story of a father and a son. I then reduce my father’s story to the fragments of that story which resonate the most with me. Those fragments are like the tip of an iceberg—my father’s entire life—that remains invisible. How will viewers see that gigantic block of ice hidden under the water? They will have to imagine it, from the visible tip of the iceberg. And how will they imagine it? They will have no choice but to imagine it with the personal associations that these fragments trigger in them; that is, they will imagine it with their own emotions, with their own memories, with their own father. In that sense, my father, his story, will be nothing more than a vehicle, or a channel, for the viewer’s own emotional review of his own “family novel.”

The first thing that came to me was to write a series of poems: I don’t write poems! I was inspired by the great tradition of books on the death of the father, of which I have read everything that fell into my hands, from “La muerte del padre (A Death in the Family)” (literal) by Karl Ove Knausgård, to “Mi libro enterrado (My Buried Book)” by Mauro Libertella. But the decisive reading was the poem “Kaddish,” written by Allen Ginsberg on the death of his mother Naomi. In fact, as soon as I wanted to evoke my father, something strange happened, although not so strange: at the same time, my mother, Kamala Apparao, who had died twenty years ago, appeared on the road. She didn’t just come through Ginsberg’s poem, which is about the poet’s mother; she became present with the unexpected discovery, during a move that took place in those same days, of an old notebook that belonged to her. She became present through her neat and youthful handwriting and a series of beautiful photographs pasted in that same notebook. It was a travel diary from 1952: the first trip that Kamala and Torcuato made together, before they were Papa and Mama, they had just met. A three-month stay in a pioneer kibbutz in the desert of Israel: a symbolic journey to a place that, at that time, encapsulated the utopia of socialism and a different life.

It was no longer, then, about the “elegy” or “kaddish” for my father: it was about telling, in some way, the story of the two: Dad and Mom, Torcuato and Kamala. I remembered the bulky green folder Dad had given to me when Mom died (as I said, more than twenty years ago). I had never dared to read it. The time had come. And that correspondence would be the key.

I already made a film about my mother, a bit more than ten years ago: *Fotografías*. Although, to tell the truth, it was more about my relationship with her, that is, “my mother and I,” so to speak. Or, strictly speaking, of my relationship with her country of origin, India: “the country of my mother” (that was the original title for that project). Now it’s about telling the story of my father and my mother, their story, together, their relationship. And what better instrument to tell the story of a relationship than a correspondence? Through their own voices, rescued from the time tunnel, “History” also appears, with a capital letter; or better: how individual destiny is always part of a collective experience and how the Present of each one becomes the History of all.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master...

—Andrés Di Tella

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Andrés Di Tella (1958) is a filmmaker, writer and curator based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His work spans video art, installations and performance pieces, as well as TV documentaries for Channel 7 and Canal Encuentro (Argentina), PBS (USA) and Channel Four (Great Britain). His video installations have been exhibited at Espacio Fundación Telefónica and Centro Cultural Kirchner in Buenos Aires and Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Tabakalera in San Sebastián, Spain. His video art piece *Reconstruyen crimen de la modelo* (1990) is part of the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Cine Documental en América Latina (Cátedra, Madrid 2003), a reference book edited by Paulo Antonio Paranaguá, devotes a chapter to his work, placing him among the most significant filmmakers in the history of documentary in Latin America. Two books have been published about Di Tella's work: *Cine documental y archivo personal*, edited by Paul Firbas and Pedro Meira Monteiro (Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires, 2006) and *Inventario de regresos: el cine documental de Andrés Di Tella*, edited by Casimiro Torreiro (Cines del Sur, Granada, 2011). *El documental y yo: il cinema di Andrés Di Tella*, an extended essay and dossier by Daniele Dottorini, was published as a catalogue for the Festival dei Popoli (Florence, 2012). Di Tella himself has published a non-fiction book, *Hachazos* (Caja Negra, Buenos Aires, 2011) and the book of essays *Cuaderno* (Entropía, Buenos Aires, 2019).

As curator, he notably founded the Buenos Aires Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente (BAFICI), considered by many the principal film event in Latin America, which he directed in its first editions (1999-2001). From 2002 to 2011, he was the Artistic Director of the Princeton Documentary Festival, at Princeton University, where he has also been a visiting professor. From 2002 to 2010 he was academic director of the Latin American Film Projects Workshop organized first by Fundación Antorchas and then by Fundación TYP, where many figures of the new Latin American cinema were trained. He is currently teaching and curating at the Film Program at the Universidad Torcuato Di Tella.

His work has been widely distributed and over a dozen retrospectives of his films have been hosted across Europe and South America, from Madrid and Amsterdam, to Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro.

Selected Filmography

Montoneros, una historia (1995)

Macedonio Fernández (1995)

Prohibido (1997)

La televisión y yo (2002)

Fotografías (2007)

El país del diablo (2008)

Hachazos (2011)

¡Volveremos a las montañas! (2012)

Máquina de sueños (2013)

El ojo en el cielo (2013)

327 cuadernos (2015)

Ficción privada (2019)



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