



Monday 10 June at 6:30 pm

Cameraperson

USA 2016

Director/Photography: Kirsten Johnson
Producers: Kirsten Johnson, Marilyn Ness
Production co: Big Mouth Productions, Fork Films
Editor: Nels Bangerter
Music: Wellington Bowler, Carla Kihlstedt, Dino Rešidbegović

102 mins, Blu-ray. M offensive language

To be a documentary cameraperson often demands an occupational commitment to mute invisibility. In the face of documentary film's illusory immediacy, we would do well to remember the camerapeople who work to bring images back to us. A cameraperson is placed at the nexus of intimate, precarious, and often dangerous relationships between places and bodies. Far from invisible, she must be almost freakishly hyperpresent – both vulnerable to the moment and able to manipulate it as it unfolds, amenable to the strangest and most unpleasant of circumstances, all while framing images that have the potential to delight and instruct. She must be self-aware and able to transcend the confines of self-consciousness at the same time.

Johnson has built a career extracting footage from the thorniest of material. Her credits include two of the most successful and controversial documentaries of the past few decades: the highest-grossing documentary of all time, Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and Laura Poitras's *Citizenfour*. Despite these successes, Johnson's efforts had received little mention, her presence deliberately effaced within her body of work. In *Cameraperson*, Johnson is intensely present, as she is the chief object of inquiry. Her second feature-length solo directorial effort, the film delves into 25 years of past footage, shot mostly as a cinematographer for other directors, to stitch together a cinematic self-portrait. Johnson's extraordinary and poetic film accomplishes for documentary cinematography what Christian Frei's *War Photographer* did for photojournalism, illuminating the complex ethical, philosophical, and political stakes behind a craft that remains mostly concealed from the lay consumer of images.

Lauren Du Graf, *Los Angeles Review of Books*

The film has no narrative, no thesis to prove, and no obvious throughline, simply minutes of footage that change in location, subject, visual composition and tone, over and over again. There are lawyers, midwives, grandmothers, children, boxers, and animals. There are locations like New York, Foča, Bosnia, Sana'a, Yemen, Pennsylvania, Zalengei, Darfur, and Kabul, Afghanistan. There are conversations about rape, abortion, PTSD, and watermelons. The combination of repetition and juxtaposition slowly begins to create a series of thematic connections: life, death, the struggles of women, the anger of men. These are palpable, resonating feelings that, despite the geographical and cultural differences between subjects, all feel interconnected.

Tina Hassannia, *RogerEbert.com*

Johnson's footage is rarely beautiful; this is no sizzle reel of magic-hour lens flare or startling symmetries. Rather, Johnson has opted for moments in which her camera jiggles, fails and bumps into things. Behind it, we hear her sneeze, gasp, curse and cry – and frequently just not know what to do next. To behave, in other words, not as an impartial, impassive human camera, nor as an artist constantly fired by divine inspiration, but as a working person and emotional being. *Cameraperson* reminds us that the fluidity and cohesion of a film is as illusory in documentary as in fiction filmmaking – not the reproduction of a complete, naturally occurring and "true" narrative, but the product of a long chain of choices, biases, compromises and chance occurrences.

Hannah McGill, *Sight and Sound*



Monday 17 June at 6:30 pm

A German Youth

Une jeunesse allemande – Eine deutsche Jugend
France/Switzerland/Germany 2015

Director/Writer/Editor: Jean-Gabriel Périot
Producer: Nicolas Brevière
Production co: Local Films, Alina Film, Blinker Filmproduktion, RBB
Music: Alan Mumenthaler

93 mins, DCP. Censor's rating tbc
In German, French and English with English subtitles

Exploring the rise and fall of the Baader-Meinhof Group (aka the Red Army Faction) through student movies, protest films, news broadcasts and other audio-visual records of the epoch, this densely layered documentary reveals how members of a disillusioned post-war generation... transformed into left-wing militants whose actions would have deadly consequences for all involved.

Covering the decade stretching from 1965 to 1975 – a period that saw leftist movements sprout up in the US (the Vietnam War protests), France (May '68), Italy (The Red Brigades) and elsewhere – Périot begins by providing context for what would happen in Germany, where children born before or during WWII were raised by authority figures they could no longer trust. "Parents have lost their credibility due to their identification with Nazism," claims the highly articulate Ulrike Marie Meinhof, who worked as a journalist for a left-wing magazine, and also directed a few short films, before co-founding the RAF along with artists-turned-radicals Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, and the lawyer Horst Mahler.

At the same time that West Germans took to the streets, the Berlin-based DFFB film school was founded, and some of its pupils quickly joined the fight. Among them were Holger Meins, whose various short movies – artful pieces of left-wing agitprop – are intercut with coverage of events that gave rise to the student-led revolution, including the killing of Benno Ohnesorg by riot police and the shooting of Marxist agitator Rudi Dutschke by the anti-communist Josef Bachmann. These two incidents, along with growing protests against news magnate Axel Springer (a sort of German Rupert Murdoch of the time) would inspire the Baader-Meinhof Gang to take action in 1970.

With no commentary beyond audio clips and visuals composed almost entirely of historical footage, Périot uses the radicals' own images and words to show how their discourse evolved over 10 years from progressive to militant, with the RAF carrying out several bombings in the early 70s before they were hunted down and then arrested or killed. (Ulrike Meinhof committed suicide in jail under mysterious circumstances.) Périot also reveals how certain filmmakers of the era – including Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni and RW Fassbinder – found themselves mixed up in the movement... Essential for anyone interested in cinema and politics – Jordan Mintzer, *Hollywood Reporter*

Périot has always probed society's wounds, questioning events – Hiroshima, the G8 summits, even coming out – by forcing viewers to confront common perceptions, sources of information, and the ways official reports are designed to prop up the powers that be. In *A German Youth*, he refuses to romanticize the actions of the Red Army Faction (RAF) yet similarly offers no condemnation, demanding that [we] consider the political and social atmosphere of the period. Utilizing news footage, TV programs, crude activist films and the like, Périot (always his own editor) builds his arguments almost invisibly, guiding the viewer while trusting his audience to use their heads. How refreshing to have a director refuse black-and-white conclusions, knowing that formulating questions is the best way to probe the past and its ramifications.

Jay Weissberg, *Variety*