

CRIME (A WORKING TITLE)
Project Proposal / Description

BACKGROUND

As part of the 2006 Advancing Performing Arts Project (APAP), a European Union program of place-specific projects by emerging international artists, I have begun research and preparations for CRIME (a working title), a series of 6 related 10 minute film installments interweaving documentary and narrative story lines to investigate the ways in which 6 different European communities deal with a specific local criminal case that has ruptured or called into question the local social order and identity of the town. The APAP partner towns are Berlin, Germany / Salzburg, Austria / Torres Vedras, Portugal / Bythom, Poland / Kortrijk, Belgium / Castiglioncello, Italy.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CRIME (a working title) will be a series of six interrelated 10-minute films, which investigate the reception of recent criminal cases that have occurred in six different towns across Europe and have captured the local public imagination. The installments will focus less on the "truth" of the specific cases so much as the way in which people from each town attempt to *retell the story* of each incident as a way to make sense of what happened. CRIME will ultimately be a series of short films about storytelling and the uncertain power of narratives to suture wounds.

The six installments will focus on a common set of questions: How do people see their community? How would they describe its character? Do they identify with it or not? How do people treat one another in this town? What are people afraid of? How do they deal with this fear? Has this crime confronted the perceived identity of their town in any way? Or has it reconfirmed it? How do people navigate the uncertainty of their identity vis-à-vis the fact that this crime happened there? And just what happened exactly?

The six installments will eventually be laid next to one another to form a single 60-minute film. The aim is to achieve a series of riffs on a common theme that offers the possibility for comparing and contrasting shifting identities in an expanding Europe. These identity shifts entail questions of both how new large European cultures are being enfolded into a greater Europe and how local communities deal with the unexpected repercussions of opening their physical and financial borders in terms immigration from the third world, the collapse of industry, youth leaving for new opportunities elsewhere, old people left behind, etc

The films will focus on individual people caught in the tides of changing expectations, opportunities and assumptions. All of this will be focused and refracted by a single incident in each place: a crime, social wound or enigma. I will investigate how this incident is incorporated into the multifarious, simultaneous running narratives of a town.

CASE CRITERIA

The cases will be chosen with the assistance of the individual APAP partners in each country. Each case will have taken place in the past 7 years and have entered into the public imagination. It will be something that nearly everyone in the town will know about and have an opinion on. Ideally the case will reverberate with current social tensions or provide the locus for some type of "open wound."

CASES I AM CURRENTLY CONSIDERING (WITH APAP PARTNER ASSISTANCE)

BERLIN / GERMANY: This past year a young Turkish/German woman, Hatin Surucu, was shot and killed by her youngest brother as they walked together to a bus stop near her house. The case is thought to be part of a phenomenon in Germany of "honor killings" in which Muslim women have been killed by family members in order to restore a type of honor to a traditional family that has transported a particular value system from rural Turkey to urban Berlin.

SALZBURG / AUSTRIA: There are several possible cases. One is the story of a well-respected Austrian musician at the music conservatory who killed his Japanese girlfriend and put her in a suitcase. He was caught as he tried to take the suitcase through the middle of town, trailing blood behind him. Another is the case of a homeless man known as "the Professor" who was killed by three teenagers on a bench in the hills surrounding Salzburg where many people go running and take walks on Sunday afternoons. Another is a story of a city council member who was accused of beating his wife. The case became public because an anonymous source covered the whole town with flyers claiming that he beat his wife. It was a trial by rumor and anonymous accusation.

BYTHOM/POLAND: The cases that are emerging all have to do with the collapse of the mining industry, which, prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, was the primary source of employment in the area. This industry has buckled, and Bythom, now rife with criminality, is currently known in Poland as "sin city." There are cases of teenagers setting indigent men on fire at the train station, or recent waves of confidence-scams to rob old women of their life's savings.

KORTRIJK/BELGIUM: The case of a Jewelry Store in the middle of town that was robbed in broad daylight by three men from Eastern Europe. The storeowner shot all three men; killing one on the spot, one was mortally wounded while the third eventually escaped from a hospital.

CASTIGLIONCELLO/ITALY: The Solvay soda bicarbonate bottling company was partially closed due to environmental scandals and has left the local population largely unemployed. We are looking into specific cases revolving around the closing of the plant.

TORRES VEDRAS/PORTUGAL: Still to be determined.

WORK METHODOLOGY / AESTHETICS

Each installment will focus first on how people in each of these towns perceive where they live. How they describe their home to someone from the outside. Using a common set of questions, I will interview both those directly and indirectly involved in the cases as well as those who simply live in the town where the case took place.

The questions will begin by focusing on the perceived identity of the town. "What kind of town do you live in?" "How would you describe it?" "What are people like who live here?" "Is it safe to walk around alone at night?" "Do neighbors look after one another?" "What do you like most about living here?" "What do you like least?"

These sets of questions will eventually expand to address the specific criminal case. "What happened?" "Where did it take place?" "Who was involved?" "Why did it happen?" "How did it happen?" "Was the person who did it from here?" "What do you know about him or her?" "Why did he or she do it?" "Who was the victim?" "What can you tell me about him or her?" "The perpetrator and victim, are they normal people from here? Abnormal? How? Why?" "Has anything like this ever happened here before?" "How was the case resolved?" "Was justice served?" "Has the town changed since then?" "Has your feeling about living here changed in any way?" etc

I will look to film the interviews in various types of locations depending on the character and details of the crimes as well as the “flavor” of the town. For example, I begin by focusing on key physical aspects of the town, which point up some essential part of its identity: In Bythom Poland - the old coal mines. In Castiglione della Pescaia Italy - the sea, beaches and the Solvay Soda Bicarbonate factory. In Berlin Germany - the cafes and high schools in the multiethnic neighborhood of Kreuzberg. I will film in people’s homes, streets, bus stops, the mines, the port, cafes, etc. Eventually the focus will narrow to concentrate on places directly implicated by the case concerned – the bus stop where Hatun Surucu was shot by her brother in Berlin, the bench where “the professor” was murdered in the hills around Salzburg, or the train station where men were set on fire in Poland.

I will look to have the places “speak” as much as the people who are interviewed, much the way in which the Austrian Filmmaker Ulrich Seidl films his interviews as installations in which the space where the interview takes place frames and perhaps even contradicts what is being spoken. I am fascinated by the way in which quotidian quirks and people’s gestures, the way they hold their bodies and what they surround themselves with, have the power to reveal parts of their personalities.

TIME LINE:

I will spend several months during the spring and summer of 2006 investigating these various cases, traveling to the different countries, filming and collecting testimonials, opinions, and intimate stories of people either directly or peripherally involved in or affected by the cases. This research and footage will provide the basis for each 10-minute film. Any additional footage needed will be shot from September until December and assembled at the end of the year to be ready for distribution by early 2007.

The 60-minute film will be prepared for both Television and theatrical release. Each installment will also be shown individually in each of the towns as a series in a tour, which will include community forums. With the help of the APAP partners, forums will enable the people who were filmed or otherwise interested in the case to watch the documentary together in the same place at the same time and communicate directly with one another. And finally, the entire series will be made available to see online with internet forums allowing people in different countries to correspond with one another.

WHY CRIME? WHY ME?

I was raised in Detroit, Michigan during the time it was known as “Murder City.” Crime was everywhere. People I know were shot just walking down to the corner store. Theft and burglary were rampant. Kids shot other kids over a pair of shoes. The day before every Halloween, known as “Devil’s Night,” the city would erupt in flames as people set abandoned houses all over the city on fire. And at the end of each Halloween itself, I spent the evening running my candy through metal detectors at the local police precinct. In the late 70s, because of a spree of child murders, there was a curfew forbidding kids under 18 to be on the streets without a parent or guardian. These more extreme examples filtered through to every aspect of life. Violence permeated the air. On New Years Eve, I remember having to lie down on the ground away from the windows because people were firing guns in the air. Or when the Detroit Tigers won the World Series, the only images that remain in my memory are of the catcher Marty Castillo catching the last pop up to clinch the game, and the images of fans flipping cars over downtown and setting them on fire in celebration.

The violence of my hometown has been a sort of badge worn wherever I go, and forms some fundamental part of all of us who grew up there. Even now, no matter where we are, we all walk a certain way down the street, hyper-aware of all movement, both sidling languidly to show no fear, yet always ready to bolt if necessary. For however traumatic it might all sound, the crimes and responses to crimes often provided the mortar, which bound us all together, taught us to rely on one another for support, solace and protection and which created our communities. We learned to use stories to hold us all together and make us strong. And this fascinates me.

How do people use these wounding events to define and bind themselves? What are the shapes of the cicatrices? And how do we all go about the awkward tasks of finding meaning and life-energy through the effort of suturing open social wounds?

SHORT BIO

Jeremy Xido, originally from Detroit, graduated *cum laude* in Painting and Comparative Literature from Columbia University in New York and trained at the Actor's Studio with Barbara Poitier, Arthur Penn and Andre Gregory. He has trained with Earl Mosely at the Alvin Ailey Dance Center in New York, Sasha Waltz, Jordi Cortes, Frey Faust, Ivan Wolfe and Curt Hayworth. He plays Capoeira Angola with Mestre João Grande, Mestre Laercio and Mestre Moraes in Brazil, New York, and Europe.

In 1998 he was part of the Forum for Young Theater Artists at the Berlin Theater Festival and in 2000 received a Fulbright Grant to develop the company Cabula6 in Barcelona. He was Artist In Residence at General Eléctrica in Barcelona where, with Cabula6, he created "the love project" and more recently "eixam." In 2003 along with Claudia Heu he was commissioned by the Tanzquartier in Vienna to create the audio-tour and theater piece, "Trace" as part of their factory season. Trace has premiered in New York City, Bucharest, Vienna and Salzburg as part of the Sommerszene where it won the Audience Award. At the end of 2005, he created "Angel Central" as part of Tanzquartier's "Rent an Angel" project and for 2006 Cabula6 has been invited to take part in the Advancing Performing Arts Project (APAP) a European Union project to take place in 6 theaters across Europe. Cabula6 has performed in The United States, Spain, Holland, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Serbia. Their latest project, Café Bon Bon was developed in residency at the Choreographic Center in Linz and premiered at the Austrian Dance Platform 2006. It will be presented at Tanzquartier Wien in October 2006.

As an actor and dancer Jeremy has worked with Esther Balfe and Tanztheater Wien, Lawine_Torren, Laroque Dance Company, Cia Diagonal, CATARACTS, Jay Scheib, the onnotheater and at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin under the direction of Stephan Mueller. In the United States he has worked, among others, at the California Shakespeare Festival, Virginia Shakespeare Festival, and Drama League in New York. He has shot several feature films including Brad Anderson's, "The Machinist" as well as TV series for the BBC in London, TV3 in Barcelona and Law and Order in New York. As a filmmaker he has completed 4 short films: The Love Project, Trace Vienna, Trace Napoo and Monger's Cut.

Jeremy Xido / Cabula6

+1 917 346 0007

+ 43 650 282 0330

jeuxjeux@cabula6.com

www.cabula6.com