



Press release 24.10.2020

## **Ethnographic Film festival (1.- 3.12.2020)**

The Ethnographic Film Festival of the Department of Anthropology and Cultural Research at the University of Bremen will take place in December 2020 for the ninth time. Employees and students of the Department (of Anthropology and Cultural Research) have as always put together an exciting program.

The selected films make use of very different narrative strategies and document a wide range of social and cultural phenomena: a portrait of Indian society based on four people from entirely different backgrounds; the negotiation of one's own identity as a Person of Color; stories about grief, well-being and resistance by three women, belonging to the indigenous group of Dalit; a process of redefining a community by jointly performing a ritual; stories of nets and holes that metaphorically stand for and embed the stories and living circumstances taking place around them; the accompaniment of a young trans man in Lesotho and his activist work, as well as conversations of a professor teaching ethnography with people from the Tekoa settlement in Israel, situated directly on the border of a Palestinian village.

This year the festival will take place online. All filmmakers will be available for questions during an online discussion, after the screenings. We look forward to exciting and stimulating debates.

After the registration per e-mail to [filmtage@uni-bremen.de](mailto:filmtage@uni-bremen.de), a Zoom-link will be sent to all participants. Further information can be found on the institute's website <https://www.uni-bremen.de/kultur/ethnografische-filmtage>.

Contact us for further informations: [filmtage@uni-bremen.de](mailto:filmtage@uni-bremen.de)

## Program overview

All films will be screened online. Before the screening, they will be introduced in a Zoom-meeting. The access links to the films will be sent to all participants during the Zoom-meetings.

The films will be screened in their original version with English subtitles.

**Tuesday 1.12.2020**

**Online Screening 18:00**

### **Strangers**

Laura Kansy & Oskar Zoche, Germany, 2019, 75 min

### **E-mails to My Little Sister**

Solomon Mekonen, Germany, 2018, 35 min

### **In Thunder Lightning and Rain**

Rajesh James, India, 2018, 39 min

**Wednesday 2.12.2020**

**Online Screening 18:00**

### **Okinami**

Can Tamura (John Wells), Japan, 2019, 24 min

### **Knots and Holes**

Mattijs van de Port, The Netherlands, 2018, 74 min

**Thursday 3.12.2020**

**Online Screening 18:00**

This year, the third day of the festival will take place under the motto "Solidarity" and thus connects to the theme semester and the "One University - One Book - Project" on Solidarity in 2020. The films screened on this day make us aware of the importance of solidarity in conflictual situations. Further information on the theme semester can be found at <https://blogs.uni-bremen.de/solidaritaet/>; on the project "Re-question solidarity: the University of Bremen reads Albert Camus' The Pest: <https://blogs.uni-bremen.de/camus4solidarity/>

### **I am Sheriff**

Teboho Edkins, South Africa, 2017, 29 min

### **Unsettling**

Iris Zaki, Israel, Great Britain, 2018, 70 min

## Detailed program (Information about the films)

**Tuesday 1.12.2020**

From 18:00 Online Screening

### **Strangers**

Laura Kansy & Oskar Zoche, Germany, 2019, 75 min  
Original version: English, Hindi, Bengali

Four strangers whose paths would never cross in real life enter into a cinematic dialogue in this intimate portrait of Indian society in turbulent times. As a Muslim, Jiaul strives for mutual respect and equality of religious minorities, while Ram, member of the highest Hindu caste but still living in poverty, is eager to uphold traditional Hindu values. In his lovesickness, the homeless drug dealer Manoj finds distraction from his daily struggle for survival, while the young student Tashi has difficulties coming to terms with her role as a woman in Indian society. The sudden demonetization plunges the whole country into chaos. Which social attributes determine whose word is heard and whose not?

**Laura Kansy** studies cinematography at the HFF in Munich. 2016 - 2017 she studied at the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute supported by the DAAD. She is working as a director and cinematographer for documentary, fiction and experimental short and feature movies in Germany and abroad. Her films were screened at various film festivals in Europe and won many prizes. Currently she is working on her diploma film.

**Oskar Zoche** studied social anthropology from 2011-2015 in Munich. In 2013/14 he spent half a year at St. Xaviers College in Bombay. He wrote his bachelor thesis about the post-ghandian Indian freedom fighter Vinoba Bhave. In 2015 he moved to Berlin where he started a masters course in Southasian Studies at HU Berlin. His focus was on questions of nationalism, subaltern studies and gender in the realm of south Asia. In 2018 he started to study film directing at the DFFB in Berlin and is working on his pre-diploma film right now.

Further information: <https://laurakansy.de/Strangers>

### **E-mails to My Little Sister**

Solomon Mekonen, Germany, 2018, 35 min  
Original version: Amharic

Emails to My Little Sister is an anthropologically intended film created as part of an MA thesis project concerning the phenomenology of Blackness in Berlin. The film, however, takes place in Ethiopia where becoming Black is reflected back on siblings' email conversations. The film is a result of an autoethnographic research of the author and deals with a historical and ongoing relationship between the West and Africa: a brother who lives in the north of the Mediterranean and a sister in the south of it discover what that relationship entails and how it affects and shapes their lives.

**Solomon A. Mekonen** is a Berlin-based filmmaker, interested in visual storytelling grounded in anthropology. He has a master's degree in Visual and Media Anthropology from the Freie Universität of Berlin. His research interest includes decolonisation, queer studies and imagining alternative futures.



### **In Thunder Lightning and Rain**

Rajesh James, India, 2018, 39 min

Original version: Hindi

In *Thunder Lightning and Rain* depicts the endurance of three women against their ostracization in the society. The three women - a footballer, a fisher and a cremator - tell their sagas of woes and weal, resistance and endurance in the film. These three contemporary Shakespearian witches are etched against the carnivalesque urban space of Fort Kochi. They visit the masculine space of carnival. The camera intently listens to them with an intense zeal to film their identity.

**Rajesh James PhD** is an independent documentary filmmaker and an Assistant Professor of English at Sacred Heart College, Kochi (India). His major documentary films include *In Thunder, Lightning and Rain* (2019) *Naked Wheels* (2017) and *Zebra Lines* (2014). Shaped by the conventions of Cinema verite and ethnography, his key thematic concerns are gender, caste and, subalternity as refracted through the prism of labour. He was awarded Riyad Wadia Award for the Best Emerging Filmmaker, India in 2017.

Further information: <http://rajeshjames.shcollege.ac.in>

**Wednesday 2.12.2020**

From 18:00 Online Screening

**Okinami**

Can Tamura (John Wells), Japan, 2019, 24 min

In Okinami, a small, seaside settlement on the Noto Peninsula, Japan, a deity is said to have drifted for an eternity in the sea before finally coming ashore there. Each year, the people of Okinami perform a ritual for this deity with large, heavy lantern floats to ensure bountiful catches of fish and safety of fishers at sea. The performance of this ritual depends on having approximately 200 people who are able to carry these heavy lantern floats for the entire twoday event. Faced with the challenges of an aging and declining population, Okinami has come to depend on the help of outsiders for this physically demanding task, such as university students who volunteer to help perform the ritual. This film explores the phenomenon of how social memory in Okinami is maintained and how a community is redefined through the combined and strenuous efforts of bodies – locals and outsiders – in ritual performance.

**Can Tamura (John Wells)** is filmmaker, artist, and anthropologist. He earned his BA in film at Antioch College (USA) and MA in Visual Anthropology, Media and Documentary Practices at the University of Münster (Germany). Working primarily in Japan, Turkey, and Mongolia, he makes experimental documentary films that explore the intersection between ethnographic film and art.

Further information: <http://japandocumentary.com/okinami>



## **Knots and Holes**

Mattijs Van de Port, the Netherlands, 2018, 74 min

Original version: Portuguese

On his journey through the rainforests and cities of Brazil, Mattijs van de Port searches for nets, grids and gratings. Whether in the actual or metaphorical sense: these “knots and holes” are of universal significance, as they emerge everywhere and in all circumstances. In order to follow these universal phenomena, Mattijs van de Port draws on his own experiences and deals with his homosexuality. The filmic mise-en-scène encounters social science theory against a very personal background. A film that invites the spectator to reflect and empathise.

**Mattijs van de Port** is a visual anthropologist at the university of Amsterdam and at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He conducted research in Serbia, in the Netherlands and since 2001 also in Brasil. Besides his work as a filmmaker he is the author of three ethnographic monographies.

Further information: <http://www.mattijsvandeport.eu/www.mattijsvandeport.eu/gate.html>





**Thursday 3.12.2020**

From 18:00 Online Screening

**I am Sheriff**

Teboho Edkins, South Africa, 2017, 29 min

Original version: Sesotho

“I am Sheriff” follows a young man as he travels the mountain kingdom of Lesotho showing his film in remote villages, schools and communities. Sheriff was born with a girl’s body, but as the grandmother in his film recounts, he refused to wear dresses and always wanted to play with boys. “My name is Sheriff now”, he says, “if you want me to come home and visit my home village you must learn to call me by my name.” Through his film and his personal narrative Sheriff talks to his public about sexual identity and about the frustration of being born with the “wrong” sex. His spectators react with surprise and curiosity, but also offer remarkable warmth, love and acceptance, that ultimately encourage him to take his decision.

**Teboho Edkins** grew up in Southern Africa, Lesotho and lives and works in Cape Town and Berlin. He studied photography and fine art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, South Africa and at Le Fresnoy Studio National des Arts Contemporains in Tourcoing, France. This was followed by a degree in directing at the Deutsche Film und Fernseh-akademie in Berlin (dfffb). Teboho Edkins’s films have shown at many festivals, group and solo exhibitions, including at the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Weserburg-Museum für Moderne Kunst, Bremen. Some of the over 500 film festivals his films have screened at include the International Film Festival Berlin (Berlinale); International Short Film Festival, Oberhausen; and International Film Festival (IFFR), Rotterdam.



### **Unsettling**

Iris Zaki, Israel, Great Britain, 2018, 70 min

Original version: Hebrew

Tekoa is a trendy hippie colony for Israeli settlers on the West Bank, where none of the controversial residents want to speak to the media. From the moment Iris Zaki arrives, tension fills the air. She sets up a small pop-up film studio in the middle of the small town and stays put for over one month in order to meet the young settlers face to face. A simple intervention,



which creates a complex chain of reactions from those who eventually agree to talk to her. From a woman who in the middle of an interview admits to being a fascist, to another who has survived a knife attack by a young Palestinian – and has forgiven him. 'Unsettling' is made by Iris Zaki alone as a social experiment that highlights the contrasts and contradictions of the settlers' self-perception, but which does so in something as rare as an active conversation with them. A conceptual ploy that places Zaki's film in the field between artistic practice and political activism, and which reaches beyond blind criticism.

**Dr. Iris Zaki** is an award-winning documentary filmmaker who uses quirky first-person narratives to depict communities. She finished her PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London, in which explored her innovative interviewing technique: 'The Abandoned Camera', as well as community representation and documentary ethics. Her films screened at hundreds of festivals and universities around the world, received many awards and featured on TV and on NY Times.



