

cashmere / KASCHMIR

In rund 50 Minuten folgt der Dokumentarfilm der cashmere-Faser von den Nomaden im nordindischen Ladakh in den Knäuel des Kaschmir-Konflikts und erzählt Geschichten von Abhängigkeit - vom Klima, von Kultur-Differenzen, Machtpolitik und Weltwirtschaft. Ohne die Nomaden zu verklären oder die Politik zu beschönigen, stellt der Film die Schönheit - der Landschaften, ihrer Produkte und auch der Musik, auf die der Film weitgehend geschnitten ist, - einfach neben die Härten der Geschichte.

Der Film ist kein aktueller Frontbericht, sondern zeigt Hintergründe und Muster auf, ausgehend von einer einfachen, textilen Metapher: Die "Kette" eines Webstuhls (oder eines Kulturraums) ist als Tradition etc. vorbestimmt, während der "Schuss" immer quer dazu steht und oft Schick-sal ist - die "Schüsse" der Geschichte. In der kurzen Coda wird das Faser-Thema auf eine globalere Ebene gehoben, in die industrielle Verarbeitung von 85% der Welt-Produktion in China und der Mongolei.

Rezeption: Oekomedia-Festival in Freiburg-D (Premiere, Oktober 2001), Endausscheidung ECOMove Berlin (Schlussrunde von 3 Doks, kein Preis), SF DRS 02. 01. 02 und 20. 4. 02 (Filmszene Schweiz)

cashmere / KASHMIR (The voice-over in English available on this site is a draft.)

One of the roughest regions of the earth - the Tibetan Plateau - produces the raw material for one of the world's finest and most expensive fibres: cashmere wool. Traditionally, the wool was woven into shawls in Kashmir, which is now more fatally known for one of the fiercest conflicts.

"cashmere / KASHMIR" is a two-ply yarn: it plies the story of cashmere-wool with the history of the Kashmir conflict on the basis of a simple metaphor: the warp versus the weft. The warp - whether of a fabric, a region or a people - is always fixed, by tradition and the conditions of life. The weft then depends on the vagaries of the market and those of politics. The short coda shifts the topic to a global level: the industrial processing of cashmere in China and Mongolia (contributing 85 percent of the world output) drive the facts home: the nomads, Kashmir as a region and their one percent share of the market don't count in any sense. Large parts of the editing are «in tune» with music from those regions.

One could make the fable clearer, but let us not provoke the geese - Krylov

1. In its present form, the film wavers between a very political statement and what I - half a theologian by background - call a parabolic one. While the material filmed is strictly documentary, it lends itself to an interpretation on a "higher" level, because both cashmere and Kashmir are paradigms of exploitation and adulteration. Linking the qualities of Kashmir's staple tree to the qualities power politics require of its people must strike one as a daring idea at first. From a historical AND a very material viewpoint, the comparison holds water enough to be drawn. Etre résilient c'est absorber les chocs sans se déformer. I'm walking in the footsteps of Herman Melville and his scrutinizing of whale skeletons and flukes for bits and pieces of the structure of the universe.

2. There is a certain tension between, on the one hand, the authorial bird's eye view on the history of a fairly complex conflict and, on the other hand, the textile (and almost tactile) quality of the images and the way they're woven - edited - into a film. If handled properly, this tension makes the film special; two pitfalls are to be avoided: first, the failure to supply the information needed to cherish the tension and, secondly, destroying the artistic pleasure by too much "telling" commentary. It's the problem of proper timing we also encounter in the act of seduction or that of making love.

music credits, passages from:

- Nawang Khechog, «Finding it Within» and «Kindness as the Key» | Sounds True, 1988
- Roland van Straaten, «Moon Call Blues» and «Les Mystères» | Zürich Catania, Phonag, 1998
- Shivkumar Sharma & Hariprasad Chaurasia, «Love» and «Peace» | The Valley Recalls, Navras, 1995
- Paul Giger, «Bombay (Good Night)» | Schattenwelt, 1993, ECM
- Yungchen Lhamo, «Om padme mani hung» | Real World, 1997
- Mich Gerber, «Issa» and «Marinda» | Mystery Bay, Suisa, 1997
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