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Watershed November 2010 Podcast

This month sees our annual celebration of short film at the **Encounters International Film Festival**. This year sees the welcome return of Animated Encounters, which features a rich programme of films and events showcasing the best in animation. Every year when I do the selection for what is now rebranded Brief Encounters I am always struck by the energy and ideas contained within the short film form. I have said this before and I'll go on saying it – there is more creativity in the short film than their more celebrated longer form – and this year's line up certainly proves it yet again.

Watching so many films together – 400 over the summer – themes begin to emerge. I was struck by a strand portraying the experiences of older women. Films such as Rosa, Ella and Mickey Bader give a powerful insight into the lives of women. Women who have lived through the holocaust, women who create and escape to Majorca in their German rural backyard, women who despite being abused retain a strong sense of self and individuality.

Last year we introduced a **shorts2features** strand to look at the experiences of short filmmakers who make the transition to features. In most short filmmakers is a feature director bursting to get out but the path is fraught and littered with unfiled scripts. However this year we have three feature films and their crew on hand to talk about how it happened. Alicia Duffy's **All Good Children** opened at the Cannes Film Festival this year and is a striking debut feature. Ken Wardrop has long been championed by Encounters and his first feature **His n Hers** premiered at the Sundance Film festival earlier this year. Finally Esther Rots **Can Go Through Skin** I saw at the Berlin Festival two years ago and have been trying to screen it ever since and finally here it is. It's an intense feature debut about a woman's recovery in the countryside after being attacked in the city. The film brilliantly manages to convey the woman's fragility and strength. The music also is extraordinary and is by Dan Geesin for those who are into these things he, it transpires is Ron Geesin's son, the same Ron Geesin who worked with Pink Floyd

in the early days and who mapped out a whole route of playful experimental music. Dan will be at the festival to talk about working on *Can Go Through Skin*.

Encounters and Animated Encounters runs from 16 – 21 November go to <http://www.encounters-festival.org.uk/> for more information

I was doing some research in to **Mike Leigh** recently, partly thinking about his new film **Another Year** – which is mature Leigh, poignant and hugely entertaining – and partly because I had missed him when he was talking at Watershed a couple of years ago. He did a talk for a group of Bristol based filmmakers about directing which is published on our DShed website (<http://www.dshed.net/mike-leigh>). The questions and answers are terrific. Leigh, who has a reputation as a prickly interviewee, is wonderfully open and generous and gives a vivid insight into his directing practice.

He talks about his early days being commissioned by the BBC and I was struck by this concrete example of what his contemporary Ken Loach in a recent lecture at the London Film Festival has said is lost in current television. Leigh describes the experience of working with the BBC in the 70s as this: they kept a slot open for a certain strand eg play for today and directors were commissioned to fill the slot. That was as simple as it got. Leigh and his contemporaries e.g. the aforementioned Loach, Stephen Frears and the like, went off and made the films. There was very little to no interference. Compare that with today as Loach points out in his address. There has to be script approval, the commissioning editors are very hands on, everyone is interfering with the creative process so what possibility is there for the creative voice to be heard?

As a footnote In the Watershed workshop Leigh is asked about being always referenced along side Ken loach and gives an excellent account of their different approaches.

Another Year opens on Fri 5th Nov.

Apichatpong Weerasethukul's (or Joe as he is more commonly known) Palme d'Or winner **Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall his Past Lives** is released this month on Sun 21 Nov. We presented his work as part of our **Decalogue** season running all

this year at Watershed and it struck me how he moves so easily between the film and the visual art world and that what he does is makes films and makes the viewing process like an immersion into a dreamlike world. Jean Cocteau would have approved.

For the discussion on Joe visit watershed.co.uk/Decalogue and go to Tropical Malady.