

Ferzan Ozpetek Showcases His Italian Movies at the Museum of Modern Art in New York

Marina Melchionda (December 12, 2008)



MoMA dedicates the second appointment of its series "Filmmaker in Focus" to Turkish-Italian director Ferzan Ozpetek. During the press conference at the Italian Cultural Institute, Laura Delli Colli's book



“Ferzan Ozpetek: Eyes Wide Open” was also presented

Ferzan Ozpetek, one of the most praised Italian directors, is now in New York to present his movies to the American public. The Museum of Modern Art, in collaboration with Cinecittà holding, has dedicated to him the event “Filmmaker in Focus: Ferzan Ozpetek” during which all of his works will be screened in MoMA’s Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres from December 5 to December 14. For each movie the organizers have scheduled several projections, so that they can be seen by the widest public possible.

This exhibition is part of the Filmmaker in Focus series, whose aim is to highlight the contributions and innovations of mid-career directors from all over the world.

This is only the second event in the series, the first having taken place in September 2008 and featuring the works of Carlos Reygadas

“His secret life” (Le fate ignoranti), “Saturn in Opposition” (Saturno Contro) and “Facing Windows” (La finestra di fronte) are just some of the few titles that gave Ozpetek fame almost worldwide and especially in Europe. His works portray contemporary society from a singular point of view, that of ordinary people dealing with everyday problems and deep existential doubts. In many cases, they have to face and confront the most common prejudices and every possible kind of discrimination to survive in an epoch that, although considered “in the vanguard”, still remains very conservative on several issues. Their love stories, friendships and careers are deeply affected by them, up to the point of overwhelming their entire lives. Their microcosm is essentially based on the value of “family”, which has always been an important reference point also in the director’s life: “If I hadn’t had a family who stood by me, I would not be at this point in my life. I think the family is not limited to the parents and children, it also includes friends”, he said.

Ozpetek knows how to represent his scripts: he uses original and advanced cinematographic techniques while his actors shine on the set playing beautifully written, multi-faceted roles. The environment surrounding them is rich in colors and cultural symbols, while exotic or kind or ethnic-sounding scores mirror their state of mind, humor and attitude in every moment.

Director Ozpetek met Italian and American journalists on the 4th of December at the [Italian Cultural Institute of New York](#) [2]. He was accompanied by two of Italy’s most renowned actors, [Isabella Ferrari](#) [3] and Stefano Accorsi. They both expressed their desire to work with him again: “I already played in two of your movies, and in Italy they say that ‘there is no two without three’ so you better hurry up and write another script” said Isabella Ferrari. Stefano Accorsi, on the other hand, lives in France now but with great respect, devotion and gratitude affirmed “I would be ready to go play again in Italy if Ozpetek wanted me again”. It was thanks to him and to the movie “His secret”, in fact, that this young actor shot to fame, propelling him into what is now a solidly established career.

The press conference was also in occasion of Laura Delli Colli’s new book “Ferzan Ozpetek: Eyes Wide Open”, edited by Mondadori. The work, a monograph on the life and career of the filmmaker, is the result of an intense collaboration between Ozpetek and the author. “I wrote the book on the basis of my personal researches, but the phone calls I had with Ozpetek have been precious: he recounted and shared with me moments of his life and personal stories that I couldn’t have found in any published biography of him, nor on the web, nor in magazines. This is what enriches my book the most.”

Right after the conference, we had the opportunity to ask Ozpetek a few questions:

Mr. Ozpetek, have you ever thought of filming a movie in the US?

No, never. The reason why I always worked in Italy and in Turkey is because I know those two countries, I have experienced the life-style people carry on there, I can speak their language. I truly believe that before filming or setting a movie in a particular country, a good director should live there and meet the local people, share a sort of quotidian life with them.



So, given your position, isn't it a contradiction to present your movies here?

You know, I have been contacted by many producers from Los Angeles, New York... They asked me to direct many movies, but they wouldn't change the scripts, even slightly. So the projects failed: I need to know that I am making "my" movies, and I can understand that without knowing my public I cannot customize the scripts the way I think I should. Now I am proposing my movies to the American public, the ones that have enjoyed great success in Italy and in Europe. I take it as an experiment, and also as a way to get to know these people, what they might like or not.

We know that Americans have always loved Italian cinema. From the times of De Sica, Rossellini, Fellini, they praised our movies as some of the best contemporary productions. In your opinion, is this sort of "attraction" still strong or is it gradually declining?

I don't know. I think that the popularity of an Italian movie depends on different factors, such as the period in which it is released, its director, its producers, its cast... and in many cases it is completely random. I would love to think that the American public "automatically" loves our cinema, but it is not true at all.

What do you think of contemporary Italian cinema?

I love it. Some of the newest movies are extraordinary, both in terms of the plot and the techniques used to direct them. It could have a bright future but, and it is sad for me to say so, it all depends on the government and on the amount of funds it is going to invest to support us filmmakers and the production houses. But I do hope for the best: there are people like Gaetano Blandini, the head of the Italian Film Board, who are doing a lot for us and for our international visibility. It is thanks to him, in fact, that movies like "Gomorrah" and "Il Divo" were produced.

Projects for the future?

I don't exactly know now. But I want to make a funny movie, that's for sure. Maybe I will set it in Sicily, an island full of colors, of nature, of sun. I want to laugh, I want to enjoy life and, most of all, I want my job to be pleasant and funny as it has always been.

For the calendar of the event "Filmmaker in Focus: Ferzan Ozpetek" see attached file

Related Links: <http://www.ferzanozpetek.com> [4]

<http://www.moma.org> [5]

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[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/ozpetek-accorsi-ferrari1229060409jpg>

[2] <http://www.iicnewyork.esteri.it>

[3] <http://www.isabella-ferrari.net>

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