

*LA LETTRE DU CINÉMA (The Cinema Letter)*



*To make you see. That - and no more, and it is everything.*  
Interview with Dominique Dubosc, by Christine Martin

He is seated on the couch, with great deference, next to his mother, flipping through an album of family photos. Looking at this scene, which reestablishes each in their proper genealogical order, one is overtaken, little by little, by a vague sense of the irreparable. His childhood suffering will not be recognized, it is a fiction... All that remains to him is to roam the further reaches of the world, which couldn't be more distant than his own mother. The next step: the tin mines in Bolivia, a radical montage that represents a definite rupture.

In 1989, twenty years after his directorial debut, Dominique Dubosc releases *The Documentary Filmmaker or A Childhood Tale*. This first of his "autobiographical" films foreshadows, through its declaration of sensitivity, the major themes of his past and future work: filming from a distance to create a sense of closeness. Filming others to come back to one's self. And, we might add, challenging himself *a priori* through the use of a constrained narrative, inventing a form whose boldness eliminates the need for a weighty storyline. Not that this is absent: the real details speak for themselves – the seemingly insignificant ones, more so than the explicit, allow what is real to be seen. In this way, the documentary filmmaker can observe his subjects through the prism of his barely-constoled pain (*Celebrations*), or can fully engage with those he encounters at random over the course of his extensive peregrinations around the world. This is how he has created over the past four years, through the course of repeated visits and patient multiple perspectives, an atypical portrait of Palestine, in

which the artistic rendering of his impressions predominates. It is the “type of film which allows one to slip into personal and secret experience of terror, which is, I think, to varying degrees, a universal experience,” as filmmaker Sobhi al-Zobaidi said of *“Palestine Remembered”*.

Can one simultaneously document the world and create a work of art? Freely choose subjects and see them programmed into a haphazard televisual space? Be as comfortable filming in a bourgeois salon as inside a factory on strike? This magazine has never interviewed a documentary filmmaker before. We are indeed fortunate that this meeting took place with a generous and clear-headed cineaste, unassuming enough for us to appreciate his irony, determined enough to continually reexamine the never-ending questions raised by his demanding nature, realistic enough to be worried about the future of his art at a time when television no longer allows documentary filmmakers to ensure the conditions of their creative and financial independence. For that as well, Dominique Dubosc does not lack ideas: a film is a product, one must be able to sell it. Computer editing tools that allow the digital creation of film, the publishing of DVDs and their dissemination via the Internet are examples of this freedom of movement that he would like younger generations to seize, so that they may, among other things, better perpetuate the famous “documentary pact.”

While waiting to watch or re-watch some of Dominique Dubosc’s films as part of the *pointlignepian* evening that will be dedicated to him at the beginning of 2005, we engaged in a very extensive dialogue. Have we covered everything? What a thought! We certainly hope not. We would just like to have “taken the trip,” as Jean Rouch said. Let us thank Dominique Dubosc for accompanying us on this voyage with his understated erudition and unadulterated passion.

Christine Martin

### **1. The cruelty of observation, the tenderness of the gaze**

- With the hindsight of your 35 years of experience as a documentary filmmaker, you bring a twofold approach to your work today: cruel observation, tender gaze. Can you talk about these two inseparable approaches and when do you think they first appeared in your work?

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