

## **ANTHOLOGY FILM. THE FUTURE IS NOW: FILM PRODUCER AS CREATIVE DIRECTOR**

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**Abstract:** Anthology film is a collection of multiple short films, each conceived and directed by a separate director while all of them are commissioned around a central theme. Producers of such anthology films may supervise multiple production teams, each with its own unit and a producer. Anthology films have become quite prominent over the past two decades, particularly in Europe. The focus of this study is to examine the role of the producer of anthology film is distinct and breaks new ground in filmmaking. It is a step to bring the study of anthology film in academic film studies. This article presents four areas in that define their role as producers of anthology films and make them distinctive in the production process: their common vision for all films, role as creative directors, editors of the collection and as advocates of short film as part of the collective process. These roles are elaborated through a close study of their practices and interviews/conversations with producers. Finally, the approach to production developed by producer Emmanuel Benbihy pushes the threshold in conceptualizing these as seamless narratives where the producer determines the sequencing of short films and allows each film to be a part of the collective in the most innovative process.

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Film producers have had to work within paradigms of existing practices of production. They have performed various roles, responding to the prevailing practices and institutions. They have been executive staff members of large studios, collaborative entrepreneurs, supporters of independent directors, director-producers on projects and sometimes, lone visionaries. However, it is their creativity and a will to establish new horizons for filmmaking that defines their work, well beyond the existing paradigms. As Mel Brooks's popular film *The Producers* (1968) reminds us, there is no fixed formula for their success; they work within the magic of the system that is so unpredictable that they could well be "successful" even when they want to fail!

One of the most intriguing and innovative challenges for the role of the producers has come from the burgeoning genre of "anthology" films. Also termed as omnibus or portmanteau film, anthology film has been a prominent feature in world cinema. It has made a mark at film festivals, social movements and occasionally in theatrical releases. Although anthology film has been around as a major presence worldwide, it reached its peak in the 1960's in Europe, and then spread with steady presence elsewhere, including Asia and the United States (Betz 2009; Bordwell 2007). There are several reasons to study anthology film as a distinct film form. It brings forth issues of collective texts brought together for a realm intertextuality and identification; it raises important dimensions in reception of multi-vocal texts; its achievements in raising (often) conflicting as well collective perspectives on identities are complex and

it appears to transcend our current conceptions of transnational and national cinemas. Anthology films are important also for the unique and path-breaking role they present for the producers as they engage with projects that have a common mission but involve multiple directors and production teams. It is a role that is a neglected as is the serious study of anthology as a film form. The focus of this study is to highlight that specific role for the producer in a form that defies the existing conceptions of film production. There is good reason to believe; judging from the trends in transnational and particularly European cinema, that this form of film and the role it offers to producers will become more prominent in the years to come.

Although ideas and formats of anthology/omnibus films abound, the specific form of concern here is a collective film that runs the length of a feature film, consisting of several short films, each produced by an individual director. All short films are commissioned for a single, central purpose or a theme that is highlighted in the compilation. Films like *Lumiere and Company* (1995) and *Spotlights on a Massacre* (1998) appear to be setting the tone for such productions, with a mix of European and world filmmakers. *Lumiere and Company* (1995) celebrates 100 years of cinema with short films made by 40 directors, with a camera prototype similar to that of Lumiere Brothers, compiled together with interviews and impressions in a single feature-length. *Spotlights on a Massacre: Ten Films Against Ten Million Landmines* (1998) brings together ten directors to produce short films for a campaign against the dangers of landmines. Commission and production of such films opens up forms of filmmaking that is collective, collaborative with the producer playing a role that goes beyond control over the logistical and marketing of films.

Before I focus on the role of the producers in these unique and now challenging projects, it is important to delineate the precise conception of an “anthology” film. The current usage of all the terms associated with what I have termed “anthology” film is broad and quite un-circumscribed. As Betz points out in his recent and so far the only major study of the form, it is crucial to distinguish between anthology, omnibus, and compilation, composite, episodic and collective films. (Betz 2001: 51). Most of these are variations of compilations, some collected as works of a single director, specific period or genre in film or such. These are also “after-the-production” compilations in various forms. Anthology and omnibus films, on the other hand, tend to be commissioned to be part of collections with a common theme, with each film made by a different director.

While Betz (2001, 2009) makes a finer distinction between anthology and omnibus films, he prefers the term ‘omnibus’ for films that are multi-director ventures sharing the same theme. Anthologies are often compilations on the same shared theme but not produced for collective projects. However, his list of 747 omnibus films from 1930 until 2007 includes all varieties of this broad group: television compilations, series, composites, collections, episodic films, etc. (Betz 2009: 245-285). The term omnibus on the other hand has a rather amorphous meaning, connoting more heterogeneity, mostly associated with legislative framework suggesting a disconnected collection of items. I prefer “anthology” as a more specific term for films that are conceived, commissioned and produced to be a part of a collection that bears a focused theme. It is closer to the usage prevalent in literary genre where anthology is more

focused on a single theme. It is possible to conceive of anthology of short films deliberately produced and brought together in a single project.

Given this nomenclature, collections like *Cinema 16: European Short Films* (2007), which are short films compiled but not produced for the single project are to be recognized as omnibus productions. They share a loose connection of being European in geographical sense, without necessarily sharing common European themes or identities. The two films mentioned earlier, *Lumiere and Company* (1995) and *Spotlights on a Massacre* (1998) are clearly anthology films with contributions produced for the shared thematic purpose. The producers of these two films, respectively, Sarah Moon and Bertrand Tavernier could be characterized as producers of anthology films. It is the role of such producers that is the focus of this study.

In his seminal study on the form of 'omnibus' films, Betz (2009: 192-195) sums up the reasons for the emergence of such films during the 1960's. While his mapping is specifically related to that period, it does shed light on why such films have tended to become favored production projects. Betz finds that production of omnibus films increased during 1960's because of three broad factors: the rise of pornography (where a number of such films were motivated by packaging of scandalous projects), the value of post realist problem film (that focused on social problems such as women's issues), and the attractiveness of packaging recognized auteurs into a single package with an eye on the box office. This last factor also appears in Bordwell's (2001) observations on the increased presence of such films in the 1960's and even later in 1990's. The contemporary popularity of anthology/omnibus films is to be attributed to several diverse and relatively undefined factors. It is also important to emphasize here that the current rise in popularity of anthology films is observed around the world, with a rather intense activity on the European scene. While notable directors from world cinema are present in some of these anthologies, the concepts and productions are not centered entirely on their work. Film makers who are just cutting their craft on world stage or European stage easily outnumber the established auteurs. The focus of such productions also does not appear to be on revenues at the box office since many of these films do not acquire broad theatrical distribution but target particular events, occasions or interventions in social conversations on the issues. A set of diverse motivations is in play here to inspire both producers and directors to engage with the form of anthology film. I will examine these reasons and present the case of Emmanuel Benbihy, a prominent (and financially successful) producer of this form in Europe who has taken anthology film to a different level of challenge in terms of production as well as aesthetics.

## Producers as Leaders

Singular, focused themes distinguish anthology films from their similar counterparts. A collection of diverse shorts films are produced with a central focus, a theme that emerges from cultural, policy or artistic prerogatives outlined by the producers. Two separate forms of anthology films dominate the European scene. The first, collective and collaborative anthologies are made across national boundaries, across cultures, bringing together a group of filmmakers to interpret and express a common theme. These projects are by their very nature "transnational" in some sense, even as one of the objectives of the projects is to search for and establish a context or parameters of a new

entity, the collective, multinational form of European Union. The anthology film *Europaische Visionen: 25 Filme, 25 Regisseure/ Visions of Europe* (2004) was produced by 25 directors from the member states of the expanding European Union. The stated aim of this project was to make a film with “Twenty-five countries, twenty-five visions from respected film directors from each of the respective countries that form the new European Community. Each director will give a personal vision of current or future life in this coming cultural melting pot.” (Visions of Europe, 2004) According to Michel Olsen (2009), a producer at Zentropa, the idea was to underscore “complete artistic freedom” for and from each of the countries especially as European Union was on the verge of admitting newer members such as Latvia, Slovenia and others.

The multinational production from Austria, *Across the Border: Five Views From Neighbours* (2004) embodied an equally strong commitment to the idea of an expanding community in Europe. The funding for the project came from MEDIA Programme of the EU, whose stated aim has been to promote and develop projects that “encourage cross-border collaboration.” (Wood, 2007: 1) The producers, in the words of one of them, Markus Glaser, were “driven by curiosity” to find out more about the neighbours on the Eastern borders of Austria, where the EU was expanding its community. In addition to the inspirational and seed funding from the MEDIA Programme, Austrian production enterprises as well as TV stations of the countries of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia also funded the project.

Producers for an equally engaging multinational project involved younger film makers from Eastern Europe who are part of a larger filmmaking community in Europe. *Lost and Found: Six Glances at a Generation* (2006) represents an anthology of film makers from Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Hungary and Serbia. The common vision in this anthology is rather inexplicit, to give voice to the “other” Europe and to broaden the perspective of the community through film (Kontakt, 2006).

The impulse for producing anthology films in such collective projects has only grown on European soil, with producers from Europe leading the way for projects that have even broader scope outside of the continent. The famed director of Cannes Film Festival Gilles Jacob (2007) celebrated 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Festival by indulging in the moment to “allow reflection and a new burst of energy” by producing his anthology with 35 international directors. This ode to cinema (*Chacun son Cinema/ To Each His Cinema*, 2007) and its nostalgia in a historically significant moment allows 35 film makers to share their passion and reflection on cinema in an anthology that has become something of a pronouncement that the art form is still much alive around the world, even in the face of coming waves of new technologies that promise to re-write its fundamentals in production and distribution.

Noé Mendelle (2009) of the Scottish Documentary Institute was asked by the Gulbekian Foundation in Portugal to punctuate a historical moment with film as many of such anthology projects are meant to do. Along with Luis Correia, she produced *O Estado do Mundo (State of the World*, 2007) a theme collectively portrayed by directors from Thailand, Brazil, India, China, Portugal, and France.

Two of the more celebrated anthologies, *11'09"01 - September 11* (2002) and *Lumiere and Company* (1995) were also marked by important historic events and occasions. It is a testimony to the insights of the producers and the vision of this form of

filmmaking that the medium of cinema has been at the center to interpret such events in a collective gesture. Nicolas McClintock (2009) was inspired by the theme of time and cinema to produce an anthology of 15 directors in two parts, *Ten Minutes Older: The Cello and The Trumpet* (2002), while Emmanuel Benbihy has envisioned a series of anthology films that focus on life and love in world's major cities, beginning with *Paris, je T'aime* (2006). As I will discuss later, Benbihy has put to practice a franchise of anthology films that attempts to write a template of production practices as well in his series, *Cities of Love*.

Along with individual organizations and funding agencies, various worldwide bodies have turned to European producers to mark important events with anthology films. *Stories on Human Rights* (2008), an anthology of 25 short film contributions commissioned by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights was produced by Art for the World in Italy while anthology called *8* (2008), a collection to mark the goals of the Millennium Development Fund was produced by Marc Oberon and Lissandra Haulica of LDM Productions in France.

European cinema has also witnessed, in addition to these "multinational" productions, strictly national productions as well, where they have chosen national contexts, issues and events as their common themes. Some of them are clearly produced in response to the vast cultural and political changes brought about by the European Union and some in the face of common concerns throughout the "new" Europe, the issue of diversity, immigration, the presence of the "other," etc. Hungarian anthology *Európából Európába/From Europe to Europe* (2003) contemplates the Hungarian identity in the wake of its entry into European Union, Norway's *Folk flest bor i kina/Most People Live in China*, 2002), meditates on the political ideologies dominant in the nation in the form of narrative parables; Switzerland's *ID Swiss* (1999) collects tales of diversity for the changing nation; *The New Ten Commandments* (2008) allows Scottish directors to examine Scott identity through interpretation of the human rights, *Tales from the Golden Age* (2009) provides reflections on how the nation has coped with the memories of the past, anthology film *15* (2009) from Bulgaria presents fifteen interpretation of important moments in the life of a nation and *Zagreb Stories* (2009) thinks of the state of its capital through stories that are about its people and their conditions. Along with the explicit multinational anthologies produced, these films constitute an important moment in film production on the continent and share with their multinational counterparts practices of production embodied in the role of the producers. In all these cases, the films were inspired by occasions that call for cinematic reflection underscoring the importance of the medium to capsule such moments for collective reflection.

Funding for the production of such anthology films come from three kinds of sources. First, various transnational funding agencies have placed their faith in this form of film making, which brings diverse voices from around the world/Europe together to reflect on or to broaden the message of a certain cause, perspective or historic moment. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights stood behind the production of *Stories on Human Rights* (2008) or the organization Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders was engaged with the production of *Invisibles* (2007), anthology films about the 40th anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration and an attempt to refocus attention on "forgotten crises," respectively. There are also

anthology films with all European contributors for a Europe-centered theme, such as *Visions of Europe* (2004) or *Across the Border: Five Views From Neighbours* (2004), where funding has come from the formal organizations of the European Union, such as MEDIA Programme or Eurimages. The second impetus for the production of anthology films in Europe comes from national funding agencies and the focus of such anthologies is strictly on themes concerning the nation. Austria's *Zur Lage: Österreich in sechs Kapiteln/ State of the Nation: Austria in Six Chapters* (2002), Hungary's *Európából Európába/ From Europe to Europe*, 2003 and Switzerland's *ID Swiss* (2003) were funded by national agencies/production companies to represent and promote a common vision of the nation. The third form of funding comes from individual entrepreneur-producers who have a faith in the form of anthology film and have kept an eye on its appeal or distinct visibility either at the festivals or in theaters. The most notable among these will include Nicholas McClinton of *Ten Minutes Older: The Trumpet and The Cello* (2002) and Alain Brigand and Nicholas Mauvermay of *11'09'01 - September 11* (2002). These producers were inspired by the themes and assembled the team of directors and secured funding. Emmanuel Benbihy, whose work will be discussed later in this article, belongs to this group as well as he has seen anthology film as the most desirable form in which to work, inspired by the theme the cities around the world, bringing diverse group of film makers together.

For producers, the motivations for producing anthology films operate on several levels, from funding to the dedication to the cause. The first two groups of producers indicated above find that much of the funding is secured for producing a multi-director anthology film. The budgets for individual films are clearly marked and limited and then the task of producing is as much maintaining a common vision as coordinating several short film productions together. In case of Adelina von Fürstenberg (*Stories of Human Rights*, 2008) and Noé Mendelle and Nick Higgins (*The New Ten Commandments*, 2008) as there is with others, the commitment to the social causes and art only propels them further in producing anthology films. The last group of producers present an intriguing case for the study of anthology films and to some extent shed some light on why such films have become popular in various situations around Europe (and around the world as well). Anthologies are produced less for their box office appeal but rather as social or cultural statements, as interventions in situations or as statements of faith in cinema as a medium to express collective visions of the people.

The third group of producers, those who have sought funding on their own and have launched such ambitious multi-directorial projects may be termed "engaged producers." They are dedicated to the form of anthology films. They present a transnational, collaborative formula where several directors can present a collective vision that is otherwise difficult to construct or glean from a set of feature films. The attraction of fostering a conversation among the works of several directors on a single theme holds some value in cinematic terms and perhaps in terms of attracting attention at festivals and on singular historic moments. Most producers interviewed for this article agreed that the task of producing an anthology film is more taxing than producing a feature film as several different directors and their crews have to be held together for a single project, while at the same time meeting the demands of the funding agencies and maintaining integrity of the common theme. This intrinsic faith in the form of anthology films, despite the challenges it presents to the directors (particularly

those who raise funds on their own) is also shared by a number of funding agencies around the world who have come to anthology films as a preferred form of collaborative film making. It is one of the reasons why anthology films are being produced consistently and in large numbers in various situations around Europe and elsewhere. A number of such films, some of which are discussed in this article, are committed to active social causes, from human rights and child welfare to moments of historic remembrance and as collective eulogies to individuals. All of the underscore the potential of anthology films and serve as a testimony to the “engaged producer.”

### Producers as Creative Directors

Betz (2009) has suggested that “omnibus” films in European context may be characterized by the third “mode of production” outlined by Allen and Gomery; that is, it is collective. (Betz, 2009:216, 331; Allen and Gomery, 1985: 86). For Betz a “mode of production” includes “the overall structure of production organization of a film: the reasons for making the film, the division of production tasks, technology employed, and delegation of responsibility and control, and criteria for evaluating the film.” (Betz, 2009). If such tasks of production are carried out in collective enterprises, efforts that defy the studio mode of centralized production, then for Betz (2009: 217), the case of “omnibus” films ‘falls between the cracks’” in the given frameworks of film studies. Anthology film production under examination here may not constitute a single or coherent movement but the films and practices of production do share some common features that connect the practices with the form of the narrative. While I agree with Allen and Gomery (1985: 81-91) that a given narrative does not necessarily reflect the mode of production, in case of anthology films, there is certainly a relationship between the practices of production and the resulting form of the narrative. Two are intricately and almost uniformly connected. Such is the evidence from the examination of such practices and the interviews with the producers.

If the traditional role of the producer is to take on the “responsibility and control” to coordinate the production process, then that role has undergone quite a change in the role of the producers of these anthology films in contemporary Europe. There is plenty of evidence, most rigorously collected by Betz (2001, 2009) himself, that the production of such films in 1960-the time of their Renaissance in European art cinema- the producers were more concerned with packaging the known directors into a single feature length film. This was done to keep up the revenue in “multiple-billing.” Omnibus films of the time also included excessive emphasis on the erotic appeal (*Love and the Frenchwoman*, 1960 and *Boccaccio '70*, 1962) as well as showcasing of the auteurs of art cinema (*Love in the City*, 1953 and *Ro.Ga.Pa.G*, 1963). There was little concern for common production or themes.

With multiple directors working on a collective project, the role of the producer resembles that of a coordinator as on some television productions/ serials. It is not simply multiplying the logistical difficulties of a production process, as all the producers testified to this in conversations, but maintaining the common vision ahead of all of them while allowing for distinct, independent works to flourish under the umbrella of an anthology project. While each producer selects and commissions particular film director who s/he believes will embody the vision of the anthology, in all cases, both national and multinational European anthologies, the directors were given

complete independence to articulate their own vision. There is then a fine combination of skills to oversee the progress of the production in purely logistical terms and maintain a vision that is still shared amongst all.

Betz (2001, 2009) makes an indisputable case that anthology films have been ignored by academic film studies. In popular press, there is a general disappointment that these collections are uneven and difficult to watch because of their discontinuous nature and their diversity. This is a rather odd standard for evaluating films. It is as if the demand on presenting a uniform and consistent vision increases in a film that is directed by several directors, even more than what is demanded of a feature film director. It is indeed a given feature of any anthology film that the statements by individual directors are rarely if ever perfectly in harmony with each other. Thus, they offer an experience that is disjointed, often incongruous or heterogeneous for what spectators have come to expect of films in a viewing. Much of this has to do with the nature of production and engagement of producers with individual directors. A production like *Europaische Visionen (Visions of Europe, 2004)* that brought 25 directors from different countries together, the control over production process was uneven and engagement with each company in a separate country that was hired to choose its own director was relatively remote. The entire project, while original in its conception as well as execution, is uneven also because it combines its auteurs like Peter Greenaway with a relatively larger budget while film productions from countries like Lithuania, Latvia and Cyprus receive a smaller share and lesser known profile in the collective. Anthology films like this (and other discussed in a moment) do not necessarily produce effective contributions from the well known auteurs but their uneven character is a result of relatively remote control from the producers of the entire project. .

The general principle or code that seems to govern production of anthology films has to do with independence of each director who works separately from each other. Each director has preferred to work independently of others, maintaining contact for logistical reasons, with the central producer of the entire anthology. Such separation and independence indeed make sense in a collective artistic endeavor as some producers testify that a certain degree of coordination is essential for a more cohesive and not uniform vision. What they mean by this “cohesive” vision could be different in each case as these anthologies are often considered as “uneven” productions. That is, the specific treatment of the common theme by each director has varied. The task for the producer is to encourage a relative independence for each director while making sure that the overall vision of the anthology is still maintained. This is a difficult task indeed and the results are often evident in the final work itself. While many of the anthologies studied here followed the concept of strict independence, producers of films like *Across the Border: Five Views From Neighbours (2004)*, *Zagreb Stories (2009)* as well as *11'09"01 - September 11 (2002)*, *15 (2009)*, and *The New Ten Commandments (2008)* believed and exercised a more supervised control over the individual contributions not so much to prohibit directors or censor individual contributions as to share the passion of their own vision. It is truly a collective form of filmmaking, which then has resulted, in a marked sense, into more cohesive anthologies than others.

In all cases so far, the individual productions for each anthology film have maintained their own production crews, their own actors and their own staff. Their

assignment has always been to produce individual contribution within a given budget and a fixed time frame. The central producer of the anthology project provides only leadership and supervision and less logistical or content interference. Anthology films offer a veritable combination of different cinematic styles and treatments. Nicolas Mauvermay (2009), one of the producers of *11'09"01 - September 11* (2002) maintained that anthology films are invaluable as cinematic treasures alone as they offer differing styles of the “cinematographic form” in individual contributions. Nicolas McClintock concurred that his *Ten Minutes Older: The Cello and The Trumpet* (2002) have become, judging from their enthusiastic reception similar feasts of cinematic styles and treasure-houses of variety that a single film can offer through diverse treatment of the same subject. The former provided eleven different perspectives on the events of September 11, 2001 in the U.S. from film makers around the world while the latter offers cinematic treatments on the notion of time in 15 short films dedicated to the subject.

### **Producers as Editors of Anthology Films**

As each director completes the project within a given time frame, executing the common vision falls on the producer. It is here, in another step, that the producer of the anthology film has become more of an exemplary exception to the traditional role of producers. This is the last step of creative control, which hitherto was defined by budgetary conditions and by common thematic parameters. It is in this area that each anthology film has differed from other as each exercises separate aesthetic and editing principles to present the shared vision. It is one of the given features of anthology form that the producer of the film will exercise that control over the process, involving both sequencing/positioning of each contribution and transitions from one contribution to the next.

It is difficult if not impossible to discern any logic in the arrangement of the individual contributions. In most cases, sequencing has depended on the vision of the producer, without any external or principled logic governing the process. It is where the creative vision of the producer has taken over, making the producer a “directors’ director.” Often, a collective or collaborative group of co-producers share this task as the more experienced or “cinematic” visionaries amongst them providing this vision. In each case, the producer demonstrates intimate and possessive vision of the whole project as the final compilation is done. For most, this is the most joyous part. For Nicolas McClintock (*Ten Minutes Older*, 2002) the compilation also allowed him to cement his long cherished dream of treating time in an extensive and creative manner amongst some of the most notable film directors in world cinema. For Markus Glaser (2009) of *Across the Border* (2004), this is the culmination of the intense involvement, as he believes in “active role” for the producer throughout the process. For Martichka Bozhilova (2009) and her co-producers for the anthology *15* (2009), the theme itself dictated the sequencing of the film where all episodes had to have a chronological order. Noé Mendelle and Nick Higgins (2009) (*The New Ten Commandments*, 2008), found this to be a challenging task as did many others who produced anthology films. In their case, as cases of many others, their own experience as filmmakers guided their vision.

Some producers have also taken the opportunity of creative intervention or control on the final editing process to introduce their own signatures onto the films. *Lost and Found: Six Glances at a Generation* (2005) utilizes the sixth film as a transition in between the five shorts. Mait Laas's animated *Gene +Ratio* serves as a transition while it depicts the thirst for water. Nicolas MacClintock introduces intermediate shots of flowing water, with a specific choice of sound track that allows him to name his anthology *Ten Minutes Older* (2002) in two parts, *The Cello and The Trumpet*, the two musical instruments that mark the transitions. Other than these exceptions, producers have exercised their creativity in sequencing rather than creating transitions between the films.

The producer according to his/her vision controls the sequencing of individual short films in an anthology; the very form of anthology film often belies such attempts. If these films are “compilations” of short films, where each short film is presented as a separate unit, with its own title and credits, then it becomes amenable to separation in the distribution/screening process or at the level of reception by audiences. The most salient example of this is the anthology *Visions of Europe* (2004), which presents 25 short films from participating European nations. Some countries chose to screen (in theaters) and broadcast the anthology in its entirety and some preferred to play only the contribution of that specific country. What was meant to be a contiguous project was cut into a separate entity. Gilles Jacob's *Chacun son Cinema/ To Each His Cinema* (2007), meant to celebrate 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cannes Film Festival, was screened as individual shorts before feature films during the festival. The success of *Ten Minutes Older: The Trumpet and The Cello* (2002) as well as other anthology films on DVD format has underscored how individual films achieve greater recognition through isolated viewing although the producer with great care and vision put the entire anthology together. The changes brought about my distribution system and the possibility opened up by flexible modes of viewing- the Internet and DVDs- do not undermine the role of the producer in arranging short films in specific sequences. It is possible that the impending changes and trends may alter that role in the future. On the other hand, these vicissitudes of the form are overcome by an entirely different vision of Emmanuel Benbihy who has approached his role of a producer in a more creative way in his anthologies as short films in his anthologies are not presented as a distinguishable sequence of shorts but as a continuous stream of films with subtle transitions in between and without any credits.

I have emphasized an active, creative role for the producers in anthology films. While it is true that in most cases, producers who engage in anthology films have taken on single projects. Even successful and committed producers among these have not had a chance to place an imprint of their style on sequencing or presenting anthology in a certain order, to make a statement. To that extent, a single producer has not been able to produce a distinct style as some producers have done it in Hollywood. Consider for example, the case made by (Bernstein 2008) for producers like Daryl Zanuck or Jerry Bruckheimer who have become “producer-auteurs” by seeking out various directors who realize their vision and create a consistent signature style in a series of films. It is possible that producers like Adelina von Fürstenberg who are beginning to engage in their second or more anthology film projects will be able to exert such creative

signature for themselves or that Emmanuel Benbihy who has two commercially successful anthologies to his credit have already accomplished that feat.

### Short Film as Constituent of Anthology Film

Anthology films are “collections” of short films, where the value of the film is not simply its measure in time but its brevity in achieving the aims assigned to it. At the heart of it, anthologies give a reverent importance to short films as an art form. The challenge to established auteurs as well as other filmmakers is to imagine their perspectives on given themes in this specific form. Short films allow producers to achieve broad diversity of viewpoints in feature-length films of 90-120. This is yet another dimension that separates the anthologies produced in Europe in recent years to the pronounced production of the 1960’s where three to four directors would comprise a feature length film. The challenges now have been varied as the length of short films varies from three minutes to 25-30 minutes, where most anthologies choosing shorter length contributions.

This centralized significance of short films in anthology films is recognition that short film is a challenge in capturing vision with brevity and economy. There is a greater respectability to short films as a distinct form in European film practice than there has been in other parts of the world, including the U. S. Often, short films are staple of film school productions, and/or used as stepping stones or “calling cards” used to showcase director’s skills in search for a feature length project, which has been the coveted focus of the industry in film history. Some of this is cultural as well as historical. While film studies have ignored short film as a distinct art form in itself, shorts have been quite prominent in experimental or avant-garde cinema. That is, short films have existed outside of the ordinary economic and distribution networks. In Europe, the situation has been different as there has been a wide spread recognition and support for short film. Various initiatives exist through organizations such as the European Film Academy, MEDIA Programme, Eurimages/ European Cinema Support Fund, etc. to support production of short films as well as their distribution. European films have been dominant in recent years in sheer numbers at world film festivals, where a number of them are devoted to the art form. That there is much resurgence of anthology films in Europe over the past two decades is a testimony to the culture of short film production in Europe over the years.

Short films have existed outside of the revenue structures of the mainstream industry; their focus has been to make artistic or interventionist statements in the public sphere, with an incision and a vision that works outside of the economic pressures of the industry. Anthology films, with very few exceptions, exist mainly within the realm of the mainstream industry. Many of these films, particularly those occasioned by specific historic or commemorative moments were shown at public events. Most notable amongst them, the “first Bulgarian omnibus” called *15* (2009), with its full tag line, *15 Authors, 15 Years, 15 Short Films*, was screened in the city during normal working hours. The event, according to producer Maritchka Bozhilova worked as an occasion of public and (because of broadcast) national exercise in reflection on nation’s memory. Since that event, the anthology *15* (2008) has been one of nation’s major contributions and a pronounced one at that at Film Festivals around the world. One of the shorts from the anthology, *Omlette* (2008) by Nadeja Koseva has had broader

circulation and recognition even in competitive festivals. Various producers welcome and utilize this opportunity of releasing short films separately from the anthologies speak of a true dispersion of the film as well as the potential of short films to continue to have broader impact either on behalf of or independent of anthology films. *Mama Mia* (2009), the Short film from *Zagreb Stories* (2009) received similar circulation and recognition. Producers of anthology films have also discovered that the broadcast and Internet distribution of anthology films can occur in short film form. This allows for broader and selective distribution as it serves to broaden the appeal of anthology films for funding from broadcast networks.

### **Emmanuel Benbihy: New Thresholds, New Paradigms for Producers**

If systematic study of anthology films is rare in scholarly field, one producer has thought through these issues more than any other, perhaps more systematically than most practitioners of the form today. Emmanuel Benbihy, the main producer and visionary behind the project, *Cities We Love* has dedicated much of his energies in producing anthologies with a conceptual framework that is unique and distinctive for this form. He has produced *Paris, je T'aime/ Paris, I Love You* (2006) and *New York, I Love You* (2009) and is engaged currently in the production of *Shanghai, I Love You* (2010). There are other projects in the works; for Jerusalem and Rio de Janeiro through the franchise he has created to produce (exclusively) anthology films in major cities around the world. He terms his *Cities We Love* project as a “franchise,” where producers from around the world may take on the theme and produce anthologies of specific cities.

Benbihy (2008) has called his projects “anthology films,” “collective feature films,” and “omnibus films,” or “multi-director films.” The central purpose of his ambitious enterprise is to engage several directors in making short films about a city that shapes the lives of its inhabitants. The perspective of “love” is to be interpreted broadly, as it turns out to be love about the city as much love in the city. His thematic commitment is firm and continuous through all anthology film projects. This is to be attributed to him and the team of producers he has assembled together.

In Benbihy’s involvement as a producer, he envisions the project himself and provides an entirely different production process than what the other produces have practiced. He believes in providing a single, centralized crew to individual directors, whose involvement is limited to coming with a partial production team, only with scriptwriters and the acting ensemble. The limits on length of the films are in place (often 3 minutes) as are the production schedules. His production team is involved in the project both as participants and facilitators. While individual directors shape their short films, the creative control of the production process of the entire anthology rests with Benbihy and his team.

The format practiced here is challenging. In his projects, shorts are not simply compiled but edited into a seamless, single feature film where one narrative ever so subtly moves into another. Individual shorts are not separated by credits and cannot be viewed in isolation from others (even on a DVD). What others like Bordwell (2007) have found irritating about this format, that watching the shorts becomes a game of guessing which auteur’s style is best reflected in segments just watched, becomes a defensible strategy in Benbihy’s view. “Interruption makes for a different meaning” for

Benbihy as he believes this experience is superior and more mature than that offered in other anthologies. His goal, which he often states fondly, is to “create unity within diversity.” That is, although short films are separate entities in themselves, they ought to be allowed to become a part of a broader stream of film experience, where they can speak to one another. If a short film is attributed to a single auteur, as is the practice in most anthology films, it becomes an isolated part and not a part of the collective. This approach from a producer to shape individual director’s work as it is compiled and edited into continuous film allows for an experience that is different from any other. It is Benbihy’s belief that anthology films that employ this strategy assume a higher degree of sophistication in film audiences and thus appropriate for the times in which we watch films. This is a rather strong position but it takes the form of anthology film onto a distinct level. Benbihy says that “identification in cinema is a mystery” and that multiple identifications must be allowed in a given film. A single director “cannot create diversity.” This is a very different role for a film producer, one that elevates what I have called directors’ director on another level.

Among all the anthology films that have emerged from Europe and indeed from the world cinema, Benbihy’s productions have been targeted more directly for theatrical releases, in addition to the Festival screenings. His commitment here is to both, anthology films and to short films. “Short films need to be removed from their ‘non-profitable ghetto,’ he says. The challenges to anthology films are unique and must be dealt with in contemporary cinema. This daunting challenge is just taking shape in his production and in increasing number of other anthology films produced in Europe today. Perhaps Benbihy summarizes the condition aptly as he says that the challenge to anthology films is much like the challenge to the European Union; that is to create unity within diversity. The emergence of both at this historic juncture may be a telling moment.

Each film festival and each major occasion brings the news of an anthology film. Most major events in recent years, from the expansion of the European Union to the commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall, are used as key moments of reflection in anthology films. And yet the range of their concerns is broad and expanding. This is a new avenue in filmmaking as it is a fresh horizon for producers to shape collective film productions. Lana Ujdur (2009), the producer of *Zagreb Stories* (2009) captured it well to say that anthology films are a “channel for new generations of directors and also for discovering new talents and cooperation for all those involved in it.” It is possible to say that thanks to the efforts of the producers, anthology film has arrived.

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