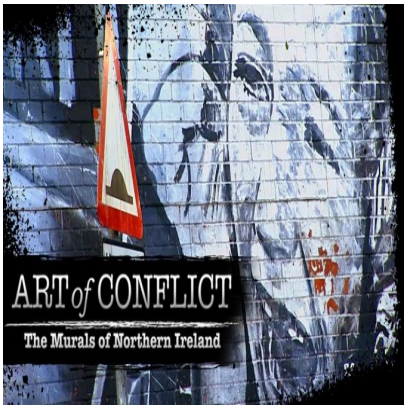

Film Capsule: The Art of Conflict (Vaughn, 2012): USA

Description

The Art of Conflict, reviewed by Larry Gleeson during the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, is a well-researched documentary directed by Valeri Vaughn and narrated by younger brother, comedic actor, Vince Vaughn. *The Art of Conflict* tells the acrimonious story of the conflict in Northern Ireland with large wall-sized building murals scattered throughout the various neighborhoods in Northern Ireland. The conflict originated from the territoryâ??s religious, social and economic struggles of the mid to late nineteenth century. Vaughn focuses her storytelling on the period known as â??The Troublesâ?• (the early 1970â??s) and thereafter brings the conflict into present day.

During the Q & A following the viewing, both Vaughns presented and fielded questions from the audience. Vince tended to dominate the conversation as he began by providing the background to the filmâ??s birth. He happened to be in Ireland and decided to partake in a Black Cab taxi tour. Along the

way he began noticing several murals as the cabbie showed him the sights while filling his ears with some local history. As the Vaughns are of Irish heritage Vince became intrigued. This was in 2005.

Without missing a beat, he claims he immediately telephoned Valeri about the possibility of her undertaking the subject matter of the murals as a project knowing Valeriâ??s early penchant for making documentaries. Valeri acquiesced and agreed to do it.

The Art of Conflict was seven years in the making including several visits to the Emerald Isle. Numerous interviews and many hours of footage later, a very real piece of art began to emerge as the peace process undertaken at the time began showing aspects of progress evidenced by thematic changes in the mural landscape.

Some of the changes were a concerted effort by the two primary opposing groups, the Catholics and the Protestants, as they tried to peacefully co-exist and to allow the peace process to provide some relief from the tensions of an existing war carried out in their respective neighborhoods and business establishments.

It seemed that the Irish Nationalists, predominantly Catholic, wanted peace a bit more. I donâ??t believe the Vaughnâ??s depiction of the conflict was tilted towards either side. A point was made during the Q & A that every effort was made to ensure the piece was as balanced as possible.

With the long history of repression, to me it stands to reason, that the Catholic Nationalists would want peace more as they have fought for rights historically back to the Land Use Agreement.

Literally, Vaughn very well could have produced a Burnsian-style documentary detailing the conflict and its origin. On one hand itâ??s remarkable she didnâ??t. While on the other hand, itâ??s remarkable what she did do.

She captured a very unique time in history using wall murals as an impetus for further inquiry. She delved into the major events and characters of the times and bars no holds eschewing historical photographs, archival footage and present day interviews in telling the story of a bloody, soulless conflict pounded home by the murals and their shapelessness and faceless depictions.

It appears Ms. Vaughn has embarked on a journey of storytelling here that is just beginning. Wholeheartedly recommended.

Category

1. #SBIFF
2. Documentary
3. Santa Barbara International Film Festival

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Date Created
November 20, 2016
Author
hollywoodglee