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Introduction by the Director of the 73rd Venice International Film Festival, Alberto Barbera

Description



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In the face of changes which could almost be defined momentous â?? the evolution of Chinaâ??s film market (whose audience numbers have surpassed those of the American market); the threat streaming poses to the centrality of cinemas; the rampant emergence of Virtual Reality, which is taking on the dimensions of traditional film â?? the progressive shift in the development of the festival formula seems truly unimportant. Although the festival rite, defined by unchangeable paradigms such as its entrenchment in a physical place and the

physical presence of filmmakers and producers, remains basically the same (but it would be illusory to think it could evolve into something else on its own), it must be stressed that many things have changed profoundly in Venice over the years. The screening rooms have been restructured and now conform to the most advanced technological standards. The Biennale College has produced excellent results and, in just a short time, has become a model of reference for similar initiatives, helping to launch new filmmakers on the international circuit. The possibility to view online many of the films in the Orizzonti section as they are being presented in Venice broadens the range of potential Festival viewers, thanks to the new possibilities offered by the Web. Commercial operators who in recent years had decided to skip the festival in Venice have been lured back thanks to the creation of a â??light market.â?• Other changes are ongoing, confirmation of the aim to follow a progressive transformation, albeit a prudent one averse to unrealistic ambitions.

The festivalâ??s market has changed radically, starting with its new name â?? Venice Production Bridge â?? which reflects its nature as a virtual space chiefly dedicated to offering selected projects in search of financers and co-producers. Moreover, it is not limited to films but is open to the new narrative forms and the new media: documentaries, TV series, web series and Virtual Reality. A new section has been created, which keeps the name of the successful experiment inaugurated last year â?? Cinema nel Giardino â?? but whose size and reach have been expanded. This endeavor has been facilitated by the new screening room created after the excavation site (which for years had defaced the area in front of the Casino) was covered over, enhancing the range of structures at the festivalâ??s disposal. This new section not only satisfies the need to host a few more films (a decision which is apparently in contradiction to the often declared desire to maintain the program as lean as possible), its intent is to stretch the limits of what can and must be shown at a festival. In its scope and horizons, the Festival has never neglected to satisfy its public, which can and must grow even further if, through our combined efforts, we are to once more close the progressively growing distance between art house films and commercial cinema â?? a dichotomy we had hoped to lay to rest long ago but which instead has been resuscitated in recent years by a market which is clearly struggling. The â??Cinema nel Giardinoâ?• evenings, free of charge and open to all, offer a wide-ranging choice of different and heterogeneous movies which share the more or less openly declared intention of attracting as vast an audience as possible, in turn doing away with or reducing the distance between cinephiles and those spectators who are primarily in search of singular entertainment. It has never been true that festivals â?? and in particular the Venice Film Festival â?? are exclusively interested in movies which the greater public ignores. This juxtaposition only exists in certain specious simplifications. But, if it is true that it would make no sense to dedicate the Festivalâ??s competition to movies which donâ??t need the showcase and the promotion of a festival (which by definition is dedicated to the cinematographic art), then it is just as true that, today, a different consideration must be made. There is a type of cinema which does not cater strictly to the more radical authorial demands, which proposes to follow the pathway traced by a type of cinema which used to be called â??regular â?• and which we no longer know what to call, dedicated (perhaps in a confused manner) to searching out narrative methods which can involve a vaster public than the (increasingly limited) one which still frequents art houses. A type of cinema which does not intend to give in to rampant vulgarity, which doesnâ??t settle for the simplifications of a â??disposableâ?• product, which doesnâ??t renounce being a mirror of the present, an

intelligent divertissement, a show for many. A type of cinema which, today, deserves to be supported and encouraged, defended and promoted, at least to the same degree as that which, for the sake of convenience, we continue to call auteur cinema. This, too, is something that Festivals do.

Alberto Barbera
Director of the 73rd Venice International Film Festival



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