



**DOC
NOMADS**
JOINT MASTERS

DocNomads-12 2023-2025/2nd semester (Budapest)

DS / DOCUMENTARY SKILLS II.

Methods and Approaches

Mentors

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Course description

This module includes several different classes of the program that aims to develop skills and deepen the knowledge and experience in documentary research and directing. The classes are the following: *Directing Lectures*, *Research Consultations*, *Pitch*, *Directing Consultations*, *Advanced Cinematography*, *Photography Masterclass*, *Visual Storytelling Masterclass*, *Screening & Feedback*. As part of this course, students work on their first practical exercise (*EX01 Beyond Observation*) in the semester. During the course, students should gain knowledge of how to do research for a documentary subject. How to enhance their visual storytelling skills? How to develop and project their own vision onto the observed reality? How to develop their artistic point of view in order to find their own voices and individual storytelling skills.

During the *Directing Lectures*, we discuss theoretical and practical aspects of research and directing related to the concrete exercise. During the classes, students get familiar with research techniques and methods to learn how filmmakers project their personal vision onto the observed reality. Students also learn to identify and express what interests them in a documentary subject and how they can relate to the observed reality. The lectures intend to make the students more conscious of their artistic choices and decisions while researching their subjects.

After the *Directing Lectures*, the *Research Consultations* start in groups with the assigned mentors. During the group consultation, students learn and get inspiration from their peers as they get involved with each other's process. The research period ends with a *Beyond Observation Pitch* when the students need to introduce a concept, an approach, and a short trailer of their projects. During the shooting period, the students will have individual *Directing Consultations* with their assigned mentors. At the end of the course, the students present their films during the exam screening where they will get feedback from the directing mentors and guest professionals. The final evaluation is based on the student's active participation in the classes/consultations and the quality of their proposal, pitch, and exam films.

Name of the exercise: *Beyond Observation*

Brief: *Outside/Inside*

Length: 5-7 minutes

Exercise in pairs

Assignment:

Students need to make a short observational documentary etude putting emphasis on visual storytelling. They need to tell a story through images without using any interviews or voice-over. Instead of using verbal information, the film should be built through the use and exploration of visual storytelling techniques, associative montage, and dramaturgy. Atmospheric sounds, ambiances, and noises can be used artistically.

To go “Beyond Observation” the exercise proposes a creative challenge. Students need to include a so-called “mental sequence” in their films that expresses the inner feelings, emotions, dreams, or thoughts of the main characters who they are observing. This way they need to find a creative solution to how to step into the mind of their characters, the transition between the outside and inside world. For the “mental sequence,” they can use any kind of cinematic technique: lighting, montage, slow-motion, silence...etc..

This creative challenge makes them practice how to abstract from the elements of reality, and how to express the surreal, the unconscious, and the mental state of the minds of characters through the film language.

After their research students need to prepare a one-page written **proposal with photos** (log-line: 1-2 sentences; synopsis: what is the film about; what is the directors’ motivation, how the form expresses the directors’ vision, photos of characters, environments, moods)

Students also must present their ideas in the form of a documentary pitch (5 minutes, including a max. 1-2-minute-long sample material of 3-5 shots about the character and his/her environment).

After the presentations, the individual consultations can start with the assigned mentors.

Goals of the exercise:

One of the basic narrative elements of building a story is verbal information. So, questions raised are: what could happen when you remove verbality from a film? How can the director’s artistic point of view replace the ‘missing element’ to tell a story?

The exercise aims to develop sophisticated visual thinking, to make a short observational documentary while emphasizing the visual dimension of the film (point of view, composition, associations, editing). The exercise aims to challenge the conventional practice of observational documentary focusing on the importance of finding a clear artistic point of view. Hence the film needs to express the correlation between the filmmaker and his/her observed reality.

Course Schedule

Location: DocNomads room: 2.01.-2.02.

February 12th Monday

12.00-16.00

- Directing Lecture

- Introduction of the mentors and students
- Introduction of the guidelines and schedule of the *Beyond Observation Exercise*
- Research methods and approaches
- Individual exercise: Students need to go to a location that reminds them of a significant past memory. At the location, students are expected to interact with the space and people. They have to create a photo series of 11 photos, 3 photos about the place, 3 photos about the person/persons portrayed, and 5 pictures that express the subjective inner world/emotions/state of mind of the person.

Kuleshov effect:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gGl3LJ7vHc

Hitchcock on the Kuleshov effect:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96xx383IpiI>

The students bring the images to the next directing class, and we discuss them together.

February 26th, Monday

10.00-14.00

- Announcing pairs
- Presenting the individual research exercises
- Analyzing and discussing film examples of observational cinema in relation to the “mental sequence”.

February 27th – March 13th

- Researching possible subjects/characters
- Developing a concept
- Doing test and pre-shoots for finding the approach for the Beyond Obs. Ex.

February 29th, Thursday

10.00-14.00

- Group consultation about the research process of the Beyond Obs. Exercise with the assigned mentors

March 7th, Thursday

10.00-14.00

- Group consultation about the research process of the Beyond Obs. Exercise with the assigned mentors

March 13th, Wednesday

- Delivery deadline of the Beyond Observation Exercise's proposals (one page: log-line, synopsis, dramatic outline, directors' motivation, form/style, photos)¹

March 14th, Thursday

15.00-19.00

- Presenting / pitching the subjects of the Beyond Obs. Exercise (5 min, including a max. 1-2 minutes trailer)²

March 15th – March 24th

- Shooting period of the Beyond Observation Exercise

March 21st, Thursday

14.00-17.00

- Pair consultations about the cinematic concept and shooting approach of the Beyond Obs. Exercise

March 28th, Thursday

14.00-17.00

- Pair consultations about the narrative structure of the Beyond Obs. Exercise

March 25th – April 3rd

- Post-production period of the Beyond Observation Exercise

¹ See the detailed guidelines at the end of this document.

² See the detailed guidelines at the end of this document.

April 4th, Thursday

10.00-17.00

- Exam screening & feedback with Dorottya Zurbó, Bálint Bíró, Gábor Ferenczi, Attila Kékesi, Péter Kerekes

Evaluation

Students receive practical marks on their general work and participation of the different classes of the course: *Directing Lectures*, *Beyond Observation Pitch*, *Beyond Observation Directing Consultations*, *Screening and Feedback Session*. During the evaluation of the students, we consider the process of realizing their films and the quality of their proposal, pitch and the final film produced.

Students are expected to:

- Define a clear and meaningful point of view
- Find a strong film concept to express cinematically their point of view
- Develop a “script outline” aiming to attain a clear narrative structure and a justified dramaturgic purpose for each planned scene
- Shoot the film scenes with justified cinematic and dramaturgical choices
- Build an edited structure displaying narrative progression with dramaturgic value
- Develop coherent ideas for the sound design in the film
- A skilled accomplishment of image and sound in technical terms
- Perform the shooting, editing, the sound mix, the color correction and subtitling (English) of their films

The films are assessed on the following criteria:

- To develop a concept and an artistic point of view
- The quality of the proposal and the pitch

- The cinematic expression of going “beyond the real”
- The accuracy of observation
- Ability to express thoughts through images
- Using the visual language in a creative way in synthesis with sound
- The use of all possible cinematic elements to create a multi-layered film

Beyond Observation Exercise delivery deadline: 4th of April

Export an MP4 or MOV file no bigger than 2 GB in HD 1920x1080 using H.264 codec

Name the file in the following format:

DN12-2_BO_Names_Title_Date

One-page proposal guidelines

Basic elements:

They seem granted, but don't forget to state clearly:

- title of the project (also on each page of the project)
- format – length
- your name and contact details
- an appealing layout

Logline (1-2 sentences)

The hook of your project. What is your film about? In concise 1-2 sentences provide a seducing description of your film. (Best would be ONE sentence) Keep in mind that the logline is the “selling line” of your film. It should make the reader curious and willing to know more about your project.

Synopsis (1 page)

The main point of the synopsis is to **clearly communicate the story your film will tell**. Briefly provide contextual information to acquaint the reader to the subject, advising why the topic

is critical and why such a film is needed now. But remember that the synopsis should be the synopsis of the film, not of the content.

In the synopsis consider the following questions:

- who/what is the main character of the film? (The “main character” can be one protagonist, a group of people, a place, a theme...)
- what is its conflict / challenge / problem?
- what is the journey / the process / the evolvment the main character is going through?
- what is the central question your film is asking?
- how is it trying to answer it?
- the style of the film / your cinematographic approach

Consider narrative arc, point-of-view, and use of artistic elements. Try to convey the content in a “visual way”. Don't forget that you are making a film!

Some suggestions:

Give a short description of your film! Not about the topic or the context. The background information about the relevance of your topic, you can deliver in a chapter “*Background*” for example. Each project needs its own form. But for each of them it is important to seduce your readers. Make them want to read. Give them in the beginning the most important information. Make them curious to know more. Always remind that this is a “selling text”. You should have a longer description of your project ready to send it out if your readers want to know more.

One possible way to structure the short proposal:

- start with the logline
- personal motivation
- a short synopsis (1 page max.)
- main protagonist
- the cinematographic approach (how!? the form/style of your film is very important!)
- story outline
- universal message

Show photos of the characters, shooting locations and the mood of the film!

Name the file in the following format:

DN12-2_Beyond_Observation_Exercise_proposal_Name_Date

Pitching guidelines (max. 5 min.)

- **Introduction** (I'm D.Z. a filmmaker from Budapest, Hungary)
- **I'm here to introduce a 5-minute-long documentary called ...** (say the title)

- **My film is about** (log-line, subject, character) or **Imagine** a remote valley (try to create images in the head of the audience)... **Personal connection to the theme/character** (how did you get to know each other) Say something personal that immediately grabs the attention (first impression on the theme, when I saw that situation or place, I felt this and that, it reminded me to this and that)
- **Background information**
- **Narrative structure:** what is the current situation, what is it at stake, conflict, what kind of situations/scenes we are going to see in the film, dramatic development, how the character will change (important to be visual, to create a film in the head of the listener)
- **form/style, approach**
- how long u follow the character, **possible ending**
- **philosophy/message**, why is it important, why you are the best person to tell this story, how it will change the attitude of the audience...etc (say something universal) unique selling point (no films were made on this subject before)
- access, production stage and schedule
- ending you need to leave it open for the imagination, the audience should be still interested to watch the film

Show a max 1-2-minute-long sample material of 3-5 shots about the observed character and his/her environment (edit the sequence for the pitch).



DocNomads-12 2023-2025/2nd semester (Budapest)

ACE MC ph / MASTERCLASS: PHOTOGRAPHY

Instructor

Péter Korniss

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Biography

Péter Korniss was born in Kolozsvár (Cluj, Romania) in 1937, he has lived in Budapest since 1949. He has worked for many international magazines, including National Geographic, GEO Magazine, Fortune, Times and Forbes. He has published twenty-one books. As a documentary photographer he has spent fifty years recording the disappearing peasant way of life and culture. From the end of the 1970s he followed the life of a commuter labourer with his camera for eight years. From his work over these decades the more important books published include: Heaven's Bridegroom (1975), Passing Times (1979), The Guest Worker (1988), Inventory - Pictures from Transylvania (1998) and Attachment (2008). His pictures can be found in the following collections: The Hungarian Photographic Museum (Kecskemét), Musée Nicéphore Niépce (France), National Museum of Photography, Film and Television (UK). He had been a member of the Advisory Boards of World Press Photo (Amsterdam) and the W. Eugene Smith Foundation (USA). Since 2007 he is a founding member of Sony World Photographic Academy (UK). Exhibitions of his photographs have been held in various galleries and museums in sixteen countries. He was awarded the Balázs Béla Prize in 1975, the Kossuth Prize in 1999, and in 2004 the Pulitzer Memorial Prize.

Masterclass schedule

Location: DocNomads room, 2nd floor, room no.: 2.01-2.02

1. February 13th, Tuesday

10.00-13.00

Changes in the rural areas of Transylvania

Since 1967 I have been taking photos of the disappearing life and culture of the rural areas of Eastern Europe, mainly in Transylvania. In the late sixties and the seventies, in some Hungarian and Romanian villages, I found the traditional peasant culture almost intact. Since the nineties, the isolated areas had opened up and the signs of globalization had turned up everywhere in the villages.

For more than fifty years, as a documentary photographer, I have followed the life and the changes in the rural areas in Transylvania. In my presentation for DocNomads students, I'll be sharing the experiences of these decades in a slide show.

2. February 20th, Tuesday

10.00-13.00

The Guest Worker

The photos of „The Guest Worker” were taken on ANDRAS SKARBIT, a pick-and-shovel-man between 1979 and 1988.

His life was characteristic of that of a quarter of a million workers in Hungary in the seventies and eighties. He traveled from his tiny North-East Hungarian village to Budapest where he worked for five days a week and stayed in a worker's hostel. For the weekend he returned to his village and stayed with his family.

The title „The Guest Worker” was given to the story because in that period the economic, social, and cultural differences between his village and the capital Budapest were similar to - for example - a Turkish guest worker working in West Germany at that time.

3. March 27th, Tuesday

10.00-13.00

Contemporary Hungarian Documentary Photography

In Hungarian photography, the documentary tradition has always been very strong, and it is still popular among young photographers too.

In this presentation, I'll be introducing eight contemporary Hungarian photographers. Their subjects are different, and the photographers have various styles depending on their attitudes and personalities. Their works represent eight different ways of documentary photography.

Recommended readings:

Susan Sontag: On Photography

Beaumont Newhall: The History of Photography – From 1839 to the Present

August Sander: People of the 20th Century

André Kertész: Sixty Years of Photography

Brassai: Paris de nuit (Paris by Night)

W.Eugene Smith: Minamata

Jozef Koudelka: Gypsies

Robert Frank: The Americans

World Press Photo - Things as They Are – Photojournalism in context since 1955

Martin Parr: The Last Resort – Photographs of New Brighton

Sebastiao Salgado: Sahel. The End of the Road, Other Americas

World Press Photo - Things as They Are – Photojournalism in context since 1955

These photo albums can be seen in the library of **Mai Manó House** (Budapest, Nagymező u. 20)

Mai Manó Ház/ The House of Contemporary Photography: <https://maimano.hu/en/>

The website of Péter Korniss: website: <http://www.webdesign.hu/pkorniss/en>