

## Craft makes a difference



I was invited last September as a speaker at the Cristal Apple Festival of Creativity in Istanbul. The festival is organized by the Turkish Association of Advertising Agencies Association (TAAA) for the last 25 years. It was held under the theme “to make a difference”

The choice of my presentation title was obvious. I just added a word to their line: “Craft” makes a difference.

Years back every festival in the world was celebrating the best advertising films only. Idea and “Craft” were closely associated. There was not such a category as Craft. With the development of internet and social media many new categories were created: Branded Content & Entertainment, Mobile, Interactive... thus, giving primacy to “idea” over “craft”.

The dictionary definition of craft (oxford) is: an activity involving skills in making things by hands. Skill in carrying out one’s work. This definition refers to somebody ability to do something well.

It is in my mind simplistic.

Nowhere the word Art is mentioned. However, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Cinema is recognized as the 7<sup>th</sup> Art. Of course, directors are Artists and we Producers discover them, promote them because we feel that they have talent and that we will know how to bring out the best in them.

We all know that the world is changing fast economically, technologically, socio culturally, geo politically... In spite of this and maybe because of those changes creativity flourishes. Many festivals throughout the world (this is a booming market) year after year reward the best work and they do not show any sign of decline in quality.

I’m impressed by the creativity of Directors such as We are from LA who won YDA in WebFilm and Broadcast categories in 2012. They directed Evian Baby & Me in 2013 as well as just now the already very famous music video for Pharell Williams “Happy”. They master the technology and they use it to convey their artistic vision. They are part of those talents of tomorrow who will reshape our industry. With them we also have to salute the work of their Production Company Iconoclast Paris who has fulfilled with success the Producer’s role in discovering and nurturing new directing talent.

YDA 2013 was also a very good year. I must say that I have been particularly impressed by the work of Gioacchino Petronicce who directed the YDA film “whisper” Gioacchino is a young photographer who was discovered by Moonwalk Films Paris.

Whisper is his first commercial. This film is a perfect example of a good idea which is artistically and beautifully executed. Without Gioacchino's talent the film would be lost among thousand of mediocre images you find days and nights on the web or on TV.

Shunpo, the film of Steven Briand produced by Partizan Paris is also brilliant. It won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize in YDA's new category Video Art. Films of this category are not commercially based. The director uses film as an artistic expression to convey his own vision.

Frenki by Sandin Puce won 1<sup>st</sup> prize on the Film School category. With his film Sandin gives us every reason to believe that the new generation of filmmakers is certainly as good if not better as the older one. He shows us as well that a director can be a good script writer when he has a free hand. Sandin is the living proof that the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg is one of the best film school in Europe today.

"Not giving in" the Rudimental Music Video by Josh Cole won 1<sup>st</sup> prize in this category but was also voted best film of all by the audience during the YDA award ceremony. What makes the success of that music video is that we watch it as if it was a movie. We don't need any dialogue. The great cinematography gives all the emotional punches of drama at its best.

The list of YDA 2013 young talented directors is long. I cannot unfortunately mention each of them. For those who want to know them all, I advise them to go on YDA [website](#).

However, if in our industry young is beautiful, "older" is also full of talent. It has something that "young" cannot have and which is extremely valuable and that is experience.

"I do not idealize the young. Man was made in god's image. Do you really think God has red hair and glasses?"

This line of Woody Allen makes me smile and I wish to praise the older generation which after so many years in the advertising business is capable of making better and better films. Like good wines which raisins grow in the best vineyards, the older they get the better they become.

Among those great "wines" I would like to praise more particularly Ringan Leadwidge from Rattling stick who won YDA in 1999. And who has since then won awards after awards. His latest film for Bailey "Christmas Nutcracker" is a masterpiece.

Noam Murro from Biscuit Film Uk won the best director of the year at Shots Award this year. Each of his 6 films which were entered is perfect. After seeing one you want to see the next. Noam has this great talent to capture the audience attention. Frank Capra said "there are no rules in filmmaking, only sins. And the cardinal sin is dullness." For sure there is nothing dull in Noam films.

All those directors I have just been writing about are among the best in the Commercial Film Production Industry. But let's not hide from the fact that this industry is in danger.

Great directors have emerged because Production Companies have been able to invest in what is the core of their business which is to discover, promote and nurture new talents. Nowadays, Production Companies have to battle not only with fierce competition and an everlasting economical crisis but also with their own clients. Over the last few years we have seen agencies creating their own in house production companies and/or post Production Companies. Thus, taking away from the producers a large part of their turnover, therefore their capacity to invest in R&D. Agencies justify this move by saying that they produce those films without “added production value” and let the producers produce the “best ones”. But they cannot do otherwise. The most talented directors are on the Production Companies rosters.

Times are difficult for everybody I can therefore understand why agencies are looking for new resources. But I cannot understand why clients accept this new formula. Competition is one of the keys to creativity and to best financial solutions. In house Production Companies and procurements from some of the larger marketer in the world are a real threat to the survival of a large number of Production Companies. As I said earlier filmmaking is an artistic activity it cannot be “bought” like any industrial product. Each film is a prototype and does not look and cost like any other. Commercial Film Production Companies are small entities. They do not have the financial and political clout of Marketers and Agencies but they are creative. Because of their size they are also extremely reactive. Filmmaking is a risky business. They know how to take risks. “The only safe thing is to take a chance” (Mike Nichols). Our industry will survive, keep pushing further and further away the limits of creativity with the emergence of new directors. We have seen that Production Companies and only them know how to discover and promote new talents.

There is not a good film without a great idea but there is not a great film without excellence in craft!

I do believe in a balanced relationship between the three actors (Marketers, Agencies, Production Companies) in the making of commercials. A relationship based on trust. This is how I understand Sir Alan Parker’s quote who started his career in the sixties in the (then) famous Agency CDP.

“A great movie evolves when everybody has the same vision in their heads”.