

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Connecting Edges

Rick Meghiddo · Wednesday, February 19th, 2020

***Connecting Edges* is a film about five unrelated events that I experienced during the second week of February 2020: DocuDay, the Oscars, a pre-screening of the TV series *Hunters*, *Frieze Los Angeles*, and a presentation by Jane Fonda of the restored film *F.T.A.* from 1972.**

I thought of connecting dots between subjects that they contained: war, the threat to democracy, inequality, art, and architecture-related contradictions. Putting them together attempts to sound a warning for the times we live.

The Events

1. **DocuDay** is a yearly event organized by the International Documentary Association. The day preceding the Oscars, ten nominated documentaries — five features and five shorts — are shown from 8:30 AM to midnight. Q&As follows each screening.
2. Watching the **Oscars**, together with another 23 million people. I correctly predicted two winners: the Korean *Parasite* and Joaquin Phoenix acting in *Joker*.
3. Pre-screening of a pilot for a television series, *Hunters*. The message: fighting anti-Semitism.
4. **Frieze Los Angeles**, an international contemporary art fair showing emerging and established artists alongside a program of talks, films, and artists' projects. The three-day event happens at the backlot movieset of Paramount Pictures Studios.
5. **A presentation by Jane Fonda of the film *F.T.A.* from 1972**, restored by HFPA (Hollywood Foreign Press Association,) at the American Cinematheque.

Connecting Dots

War. The two Oscar-nominated documentaries, *The Cave* and *For Sama*, both showing the crude realities of Syria's civil population being bombarded daily by President Bashar Hafez al-Assad forces and by Russians airplanes. It has been realized by extraordinarily courageous filmmakers (four crew members lost their lives during the filming of *The Cave*.) Listening live to surviving witnesses – the main characters of both films – was heartbreaking. And listening to Jane Fonda presenting the anti-war film *F.T.A.* almost half a century after it was done raises the question: will we ever learn?

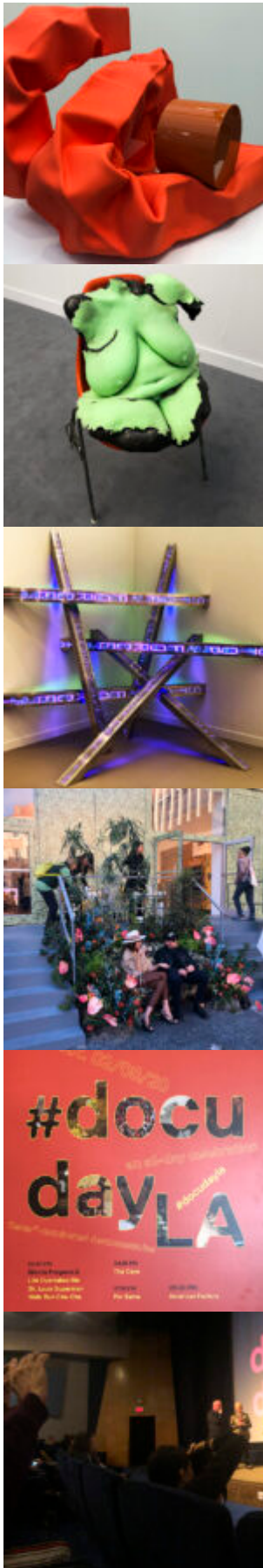
The threat to democracy. The Brazilian documentary *The Edge of Democracy* shows a reality that could spread to other democratic countries, including the United States. The resemblance between far-right President Jair Bolsonaro ("Well, the pope may be Argentinian, but God is Brazilian") and President Trump ("I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters, OK?") is amazing. The dots also connect to Joaquin Phoenix's speech at the Oscars and to some aspects of *Joker*'s message. Warnings about the dangers of resurrecting Fascism are also present in the TV-series *Hunters*.

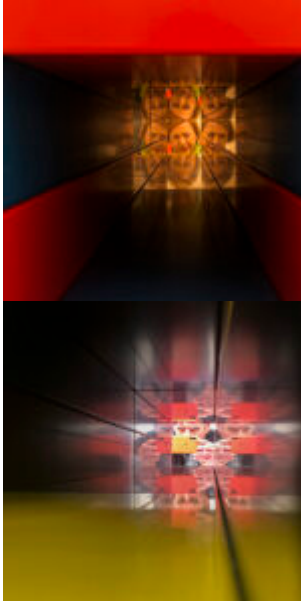
Inequality. Director Bong Joon-ho's film *Parasite* is more than just Oscar's big winner. It is a film that also sends a warning about inequality and what it may lead to. A new French Revolution?

Art. The film *Honeyland* is one of the most poetic documentaries I have seen. Some of the scenes seem to be painted by Caravaggio. It also brings us to see a hidden world in a remote land, where resilience is key to survival. Its authenticity is in plain contrast to much of the artworks that I have seen at *Frieze*.

Architecture-related contradictions. Putting together images of Paramount's backlot fake New York facades, of Brasilia's out-of-human-scale formalisms, of *Honeyland*'s main character house

and of the caravan in which her new neighbors live open serious questions about the future of architecture as expressed by Frank Lloyd Wright: “The future of architecture is the future of humanity; if humanity has a future, so will architecture.”





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