

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 heartbreak. 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?

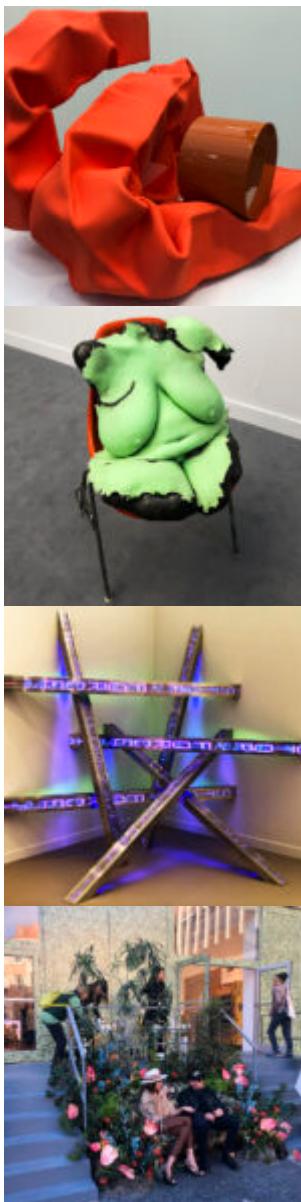
The threat to democracy. The Brazilian documentary *The Edge of Democracy* shows a reality that could spread to other democratic countries, including the United States. The resemblance between far-right President Jair Bolsonaro ("Well, the pope may be Argentinian, but God is

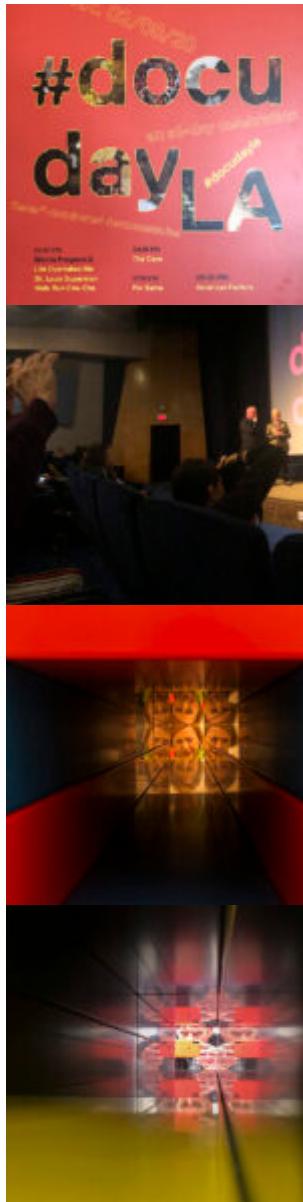
Brazilian") and President Trump ("I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters, OK?") is amazing. The dots also connect to Joaquin Phoenix's speech at the Oscars and to some aspects of Joker's message. Warnings about the dangers of resurrecting Fascism 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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