

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

My Love Affair with Marriage

Elisa Leonelli · Monday, July 11th, 2022

As an entertainment journalist in the Hollywood Foreign Press, it was my pleasure to interview [Signe Baumane](#), an artist from Latvia, writer/director of the animated feature *My Love Affair with Marriage*, that premiered June 11 at the Tribeca Film Festival. I was sent a preview link to watch this amazing film, and it touched a chord from my own experience as a woman growing up in Italy in the 1960s.



My Love Affair with Marriage

The director said about the theme of the movie, that is inspired by her own life: "For thousands of years marriage has been considered a pivotal moment in a woman's life. Having a husband and children was the only pathway to personal fulfillment. Times may have changed, but attitudes of many have not. Girls and women still face pressure to be submissive to their husbands, partners,

boyfriends and male counterparts.”



Signe Baumane © The Marriage Project

Living in the United States since 1996, Baumane started writing the script in 2015, when “we thought it would be possible to have a woman president.”

So I asked her how different was the position of women in her country, as opposed to Western Europe.

“The Soviet Union was based on this idea that all genders are equal, but in fact there were never any top party officials who were women, not a single woman was ever allowed as a member of the Politburo. So, on paper, our society said that we were all equal, but in practice, we were not. If you were a woman, you were expected to be a teacher, to have these nonthreatening jobs that will never lead you to become a holder of power, men were the only ones who could have power. That was the reality I lived in. And once the Soviet Union collapsed and the Wild West capitalism kicked in, then the attitudes that were already there, that men are better than women, really went way out. Nothing was even formal, nobody said, ‘Men are the money makers. They take risks, they deal with the mafia and make millions of dollars,’ and women have to adjust in order to survive; but that’s how I saw it and I wanted to show that time in the movie.”

I then asked about Latvia, how that Eastern European country is doing today. “That period, the nineties, after the Soviet Union collapsed and Latvia got independence, inflicted a wound on my psyche. My country fell apart and it wasn’t an easy time for anyone. But now Latvia is stabilized, it’s part of the European Union; and it’s not the richest country, but it has quite a good standard of living and people are creating movies.”

I had to ask a follow-up question on how she felt about the Russian invasion of Ukraine. “What is happening in Ukraine breaks my heart every hour and every day. I participate in protests, I donate

my time and money to support Ukraine; but one individual can only do so little, and as a person, I feel so helpless. In some ways I'm not surprised because I grew up in the Soviet Union, I know a lot of Russian people and Russian history, but what is happening is outrageous and unjust. This war has to stop and only one person can stop it, so it feels insane. Latvia is in the bullseye of all that, and I still have my family and friends there, I dearly love Latvia; so I don't want any invasion to happen there.”

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