"I FILM IN TASCA (Pocket films) – filmmaking & media studies through creative use of mobile phones" (Bari, Italy, October - November 2014)

Within the European project "Children's Film First"

The project "I Film in Tasca" (Pocket Films – filmmaking & media studies through creative use of mobile phones) is one of the activities under the Children's Film First label, a project by ECFA and its partners Il Nuovo Fantarca, Schlingel Film Festival, Ciné Jeune de l'Aisne, The Children's Media Conference, Jekino Distributie and Bundes Verband Jugend & Film. The project is co-financed by the European Commission through its Creative Europe programme.

In Bari (Italy), Il Nuovo Fantarca, a social cooperative which has been working for over twenty years in the field of media studies and video art therapy, decided to investigate an issue that is currently highly sensitive for parents, educators and teachers alike; responsible use of smartphones. All of us sooner or later have come across situations in which a young person might use social networks and mobile phones in a way that is unfair towards his classmates, sometimes ending up committing acts that constitute legal offences. Often working with children serving non-custodial sentences, we often found that young people had absolutely no idea what the consequences might be, nor what moral and psychological damage they might be guilty of. This ignorance on the part of so-called digital natives reflects a lack of guidance on the part of schools and families. What interests us is to experiment how the concept of responsibility can be coupled with that of creativity: how can image studies be planned, starting not only from film, but also from images and video stories made by young people using smartphones? This requires a connection between media studies and those children who do not generally accept education, school rules, discipline, so-called 'difficult' or special needs kids or young people who spend most of their school time out on the streets. For this reason, the initial objectives of the project were to:

- Identify creative ways to make short films with mobile phones;
- Identify teaching methods for media studies using mobile phones;
- Encourage school inclusion and facilitate the participation of children and young people who usu ally have a short attention span and take little part in school life.

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The Three Directors

To investigate these issues, we invited three directors who make short films using mobile phones, each used to working with young people, to help come up with an educational approach: Giacomo Verde, Laura Halilović and Andrea Caccia.

Giacomo Verde is a cross-media artist, in the sense that he blends video images with other arts such as (puppet) theatre, music, poetry and painting. Giacomo Verde's "Poetry Video Cell" project combines the language of images with that of poetry. Verde: *"Smartphone video creates a new dimension for shooting video: personal everyday images become easy to share, clearly highlighting that the personal is only an aspect of the collective.*
But if we are to grasp the shared value of what could end up being just personal video, it needs to be declared openly. That is where words come in, to give a work its title, a context, a key to interpretation. A meeting between phone video and written text that reflects each medium's respective needs: this is what the Poetry Video Cell project sets out to achieve."

Narrative Freedom

During the seminar on October 30, Giacomo Verde touched on several examples of video poetry, drawing the audience's attention to the search for images that are not necessarily clear or codified: *"The starting point does not necessarily have to be a storyline. Rather, the filmmaker looks for images in the real world, even ones that may seem banal or insignificant, and attempts to give them a new meaning."* Verde describes several techniques, such as attaching a phone to one's ankle and walking along, throwing the phone into the air, tying it onto our back, or filming a pigeon until it decides to fly away. For every clip, we tried to figure out what it evoked.
This composition technique sets itself apart from the classic script. Here, the writing part is done after filming, putting together various "materials" in order to achieve a vision that will handle the tempo of aesthetic perception.

workshop with Giacomo Verde

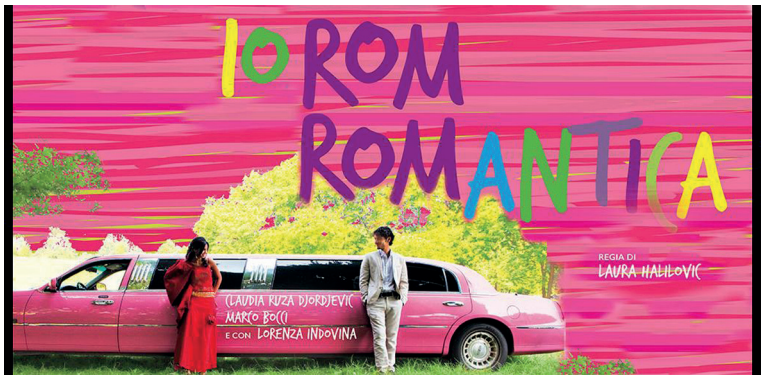
Verde focused on the educational aspects of his video-poetry, emphasizing freedom from the constraints of the narrative, as its starting point. Indeed, Verde suggests starting from images, and using them together with words/verses worth sharing.
This narrative freedom facilitates people who have particular difficulties, with constructing a classical narrative, given that young people today have much lower writing skills, due to the short timespans of the prevailing forms of communication on the internet. Verde also focused on technical aspects, such as the free downloadable video-making programmes available. The audience was fascinated.

The young people at the seminar included two classes of students who the next day took part in workshops with Verde. It was crucial, before moving on to the practical side, to convey to the participants just how creative filmmaking with a mobile phone can be. The next day, Verde had the young people working hands on, with their mobile phones; he taught them how to set up their own class YouTube channel, in private mode. Once they had made their short videos in class, they learned to upload everyone's work to the YouTube channel, where that same morning the video and audio channels were edited, and titles added. An extremely simple and immediate opportunity to experiment. We arranged to meet up with both classes one month later, which left them plenty of time to create their own videos, during or outside school hours, on topics either of their own choice, or discussed with their teachers.

Roma Kids

The second round of the "I film in Tasca" project was arranged in celebration of November 20th, the anniversary of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by presenting the film IO ROM ROMANTICA (Me, the Romantic Roma Girl). Roma girl Laura Halilović (born in 1989) is the first to make a film about the Roma community, highlighting its narrow-minded prejudices and traditions towards girls. Halilović made her first feature film using low-cost technology and even experimented with smartphones. The screening was attended by 280 young people, half of them Italians and half from various Roma camps around Bari (Romanian, Serbian and Bosnian Romas).

It was the first time such a large number of Roma kids had been to a screening with their Italian counterparts. Indeed, the majority of them said it was the first time they had ever been to the cinema at all. The closing debate was fascinating, with the public chatting to the director and to actress Dijana Pavlović, who is also an activist for the Roma's political integration. The comments from Roma girls in particular, were moving. Egged on by the spirit of the film, they opened their hearts, expressing all the difficulties of growing up as Roma women, as well as their need to break with traditional patterns by which girls are married off by their fathers while they are still children, which deny them the opportunity to study or choose a lifestyle in keeping with their desires.



Laura Halilovic & Dijana Pavlovic

Nickname Fellini

The third round, on 28 November 2014, was held by Andrea Caccia who made his first feature film in 2008, created entirely with seventy phones given to seventy young people from different high schools in Milan. Each boy or girl filmed significant moments of their daily lives: thousands of files that Caccia moulded into VEDOZERO, a film diary chronicling the lives of teenagers exclusively through their own eyes.

Workshop with Andrea Caccia

The educational value of Caccia's work is of the highest level, enabling teachers to transform image, cinema and audiovisual studies from being based on films by great directors to being based on what young people themselves film. The course can then analyse the scenes they filmed and explain, for example the camera movements, the lighting and the camera position, to compare them with images by great directors. Caccia explains that this approach stimulates their curiosity to find out something more about cinema classics. For example, when assigning a nickname to enable them to download materials onto the server, Caccia would name them Rossellini, Kubrick or Fellini who they had never heard of but often prove to be a beautiful inspiration!

Caccia met the two classes who had worked with Giacomo Verde at the previous workshops, to take another look at their video-poems. We were pleased to find out that the young people had really worked hard over the previous month to create beautiful, heartfelt, sincere videos, doing everything themselves without the help of their teachers (who are less adept at using smartphones creatively than their pupils) and had great fun doing it. Andrea Caccia analysed their work with them, highlighting its strengths as well as areas that could be improved. A great learning experience. Even the most unruly, poor school performers did some interesting work. The videos were then screened to a much appreciative audience, with the young directors present. This approach provided adult participants with a highly practical idea of what young people are capable of creating and what different generations (teachers, parents, educators and young people) can do together, in a kind of educational pact that

In total, the project "I Film in Tasca" led to two seminars, four workshops, a screening at a cinema followed by a debate with the directors and actors. Seminars were attended by an average of 70 people, including adults (teachers, educators, parents and psychologists) and young students. The workshops were attended by an average of 45 students.

Rosa Ferro - Artistic Director Nuovo Fantarca