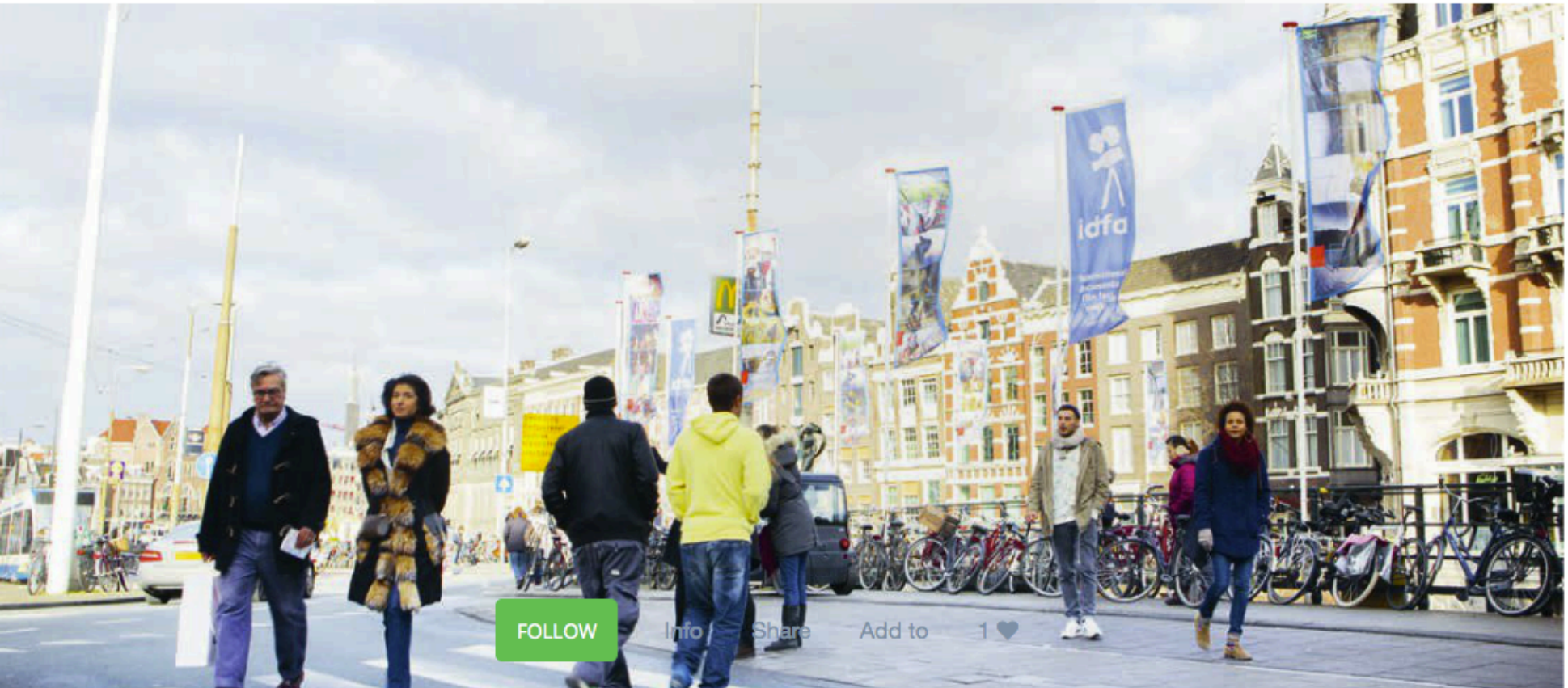
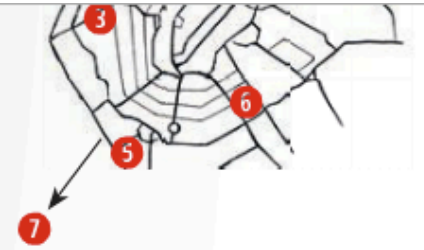


International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam

IDFA courts controversy, from framing reality to the female gaze.

text **Bregtje Schudel**



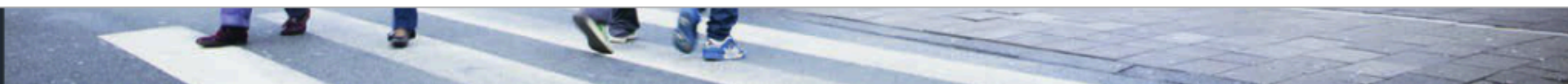
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IDFA
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Curating a programme about women and documentary films can be a tricky proposition. Would there ever be a programme – not counting the adult movie industry – called the ‘male gaze’, we have to wonder? Nevertheless, The Female Gaze, one of the main themes at the 27th edition of IDFA, does make for an intriguing line-up.

It’s an eclectic mix of 28 contemporary and classic films. Like the controversial *Portrait of Portrait of Jason* (1967), a talking-head documentary that says as much about the two interviewers (director Shirley Clarke and Carl Lee) as it does about the interviewee, Jason Holliday.

Fans of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* can see where it all began with 1990s cult classic *Paris is Burning* by Jennie Livingston. Don’t miss *The House is*

Black (1963), the only film from Iranian poet Forugh Farrokhzad.

The contemporary films range from the poetic – like *Good Things Await*, about a biodynamic farmer in Denmark – to the heart-wrenching, as in *Waiting for August*, where 15-year-old Romanian Georgiana has to take care of her six-odd siblings while her mother is off in Italy working as a housemaid. Also female and this year’s special guest is Dutch national treasure Heddy Honigmann. Her latest documentary feature, *Around the World in 50 Concerts*, following the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra on tour, will open the festival. She also compiled a list of her own favourites, including two documentaries by Johan van der Keuken, *Racetrack* by Frederick Wiseman and *The Lion Hunters* by Jean Rouch.

An even trickier subject (than female – or male – navel-gazing) in documentary is the question of reality. Documentaries are about depicting reality, but that doesn’t mean everything is real. The movies in Framing Reality put this issue front and centre, like Orson Welles’ *F for Fake* (1973), *I Want to See* (2008), starring Catherine Deneuve as a version of herself, and – of course – *Exit Through the Gift Shop* by graffiti superstar Banksy.

Also addressing the framing of reality will be *Of Media and Men*, the third main theme this year. How do the media affect our views and opinions? Why is net neutrality good? And whistle blowing necessary? *Killswitch* (Ali Akbarzadeh), *Citizenfour* (Laura Poitras) and *Silenced* (James Spione) will tell you all you need to know.

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