

The Art of Leaving

A Portrait of Florin Ion Firimita

A Documentary by Brian Kamerzel

VISIT THE FILM'S WEBSITE AT: www.theartofleaving.com

2003, USA, 57 minutes, Color / B&W,
Aspect Ratio 1.33:1. 4:3 TV, Stereo,
English, Romanian portions subtitled in English

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TAG LINE (16 words)

A journey of self-discovery for a Romanian immigrant trying to regain the past through painting

SYNOPSIS, *The Art of Leaving* (176 words)

As an attempt to asking questions and finding answers, could art become the unifying bond behind a puzzle with most of its pieces missing? Could art redefine a life and become a source of growth for the newly transplanted roots of an immigrant artist who left his past behind in the need to find himself?

The Art of Leaving is a documentary about the life and art of Florin Ion Firimita. Born and raised in Romania during the Cold War, orphaned at the age of sixteen, he survived an oppressive police state, participated in the anti-Communist Revolution of December 1989, and later began a new life in the United States.

Based on the artist's private journal entries over the past twenty years, this portrait explores how the artist's internal and external journeys have influenced the progression of his process and meaning of his art. Using a variety of mixed media, the film mirrors the techniques of Firimita's style, which incorporates childhood postcards, family photographs, and letters in his series of paintings: "Remembrance of Things Past".

SYNOPSIS, *The Art of Leaving* (115 words)

Could art unify the missing pieces of a puzzle, and become a source of growth for the newly transplanted roots of an immigrant artist who left his past behind in the need to find himself?

The Art of Leaving is a documentary about the life and art of Romanian born artist Florin Ion Firimita. Based on his private journal entries over the past twenty years, this portrait explores how the artist's internal and external journeys have influenced the process and meaning of his art.

Using a variety of mixed media, the film mirrors the techniques of Firimita's style, which incorporates childhood postcards, family photographs and letters in his series of paintings: "Remembrance of Things Past".

SYNOPSIS, *The Art of Leaving* (49 words)

The Art of Leaving is a documentary about the life and art of Romanian born artist Florin Ion Firimita. Based on his private journal entries over the past twenty years, this portrait explores how the artist's internal and external journeys have influenced the process and meaning of his art.

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The Art of Leaving FESTIVALS & SCREENINGS

Official Selection
Santa Fe International Film Festival
(Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA)
December 3-7, 2003

Official Selection
Big Muddy Film Festival
(Carbondale, Illinois, USA)
February 20-29, 2004

Official Selection
Durango Film Festival
(Durango, Colorado, USA)
March 6-17, 2004

Official Selection
Artist Film Festival
(Los Angeles, CA, USA)
April 22-28, 2004

Williamsburg Arts Festival
(Brooklyn, New York, USA)
May 2, 2004

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PRESS

The Winsted Journal

Winsted, Connecticut, USA newspaper (Sept 19, 2003)
Front page article of the “Art & Film” section (article by Michael Marciano)

www.NewEnglandFilm.com

Web Magazine (December 2003 issue)
featured article about the of making “The Art of Leaving” (article by Mattias Frey)

Voices

Southbury, Connecticut, USA newspaper (January 21, 2004)
a two page featured article (article by Jean Dunn)

Republican-American

Waterbury, Connecticut, USA newspaper (February 1, 2004)
featured article of the Metro section (article by Kevin Tampone)

Evenimentul Zilei

Bucharest, Romania newspaper (December 8-12, 2003)
published three separate articles about the film in the Social / Cultural section, including
one interview with Florin Ion Firimita in the social section

Log Line (25 words)

A documentary about how the internal and external journeys of Romanian born Florin Ion Firimita’s life have influenced the process and meaning of his art

Press Release (content & style of the film)

“The Art of Leaving” is about the life and art of artist Florin Ion Firimita. Born in Romania during the Cold War, orphaned at the age of sixteen, he survived an oppressive police state, participated in the anti-Communist Revolution of December 1989, and later began a new life in the United States. Based on his private journal entries over the past twenty years the film explores how the artist’s internal and external journeys have influenced the process and meaning of his art.

Using a variety of mixed media, the film mirrors the technique of collage in Firimita’s series of paintings: “Remembrance of Things Past”. Here he attempts to recreate pieces of his childhood memories through the use of shape and color, old family photos, pages from journals, and fragments of letters between his parents.

In reflecting this process and visual language the film is not confined by a style or genre, but combines and crosses between the boundaries of documentary, fiction, experimental, essay and portrait piece. Serving as a reflection for people to see that everybody has a story, and that everyone’s life, filled with words and images, could become a rich source of inspiration for art.

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Directors Statement

“My life always seen in fragments like a shattered mirror. My art began as an attempt to put the pieces together and see my full self in the restored mirror.”

I kept in mind these words that Florin wrote in one of his journal entries. For me it holds the idea of how someone sees their self through art, and how this road they travel seeks the truth about themselves and the world around them. Making a film about a painter seems like a natural choice for these ideas, but it was in learning about Florin’s life and his willingness to explore it through paint that began the idea in the first place.

Memories are a difficult thing to explore, they change and move with us through out our life. In trying to understand how someone’s life experiences can translate into images I tried to see what memories drew the strongest lines through Florin’s life. This idea became the foundation on which to base the work of the film. To do this I felt that it was essential to try not and impose a preconceived way of making the film onto the material, but let the material determine the structure and ways of exploring the subject in it’s own way. I felt my job was to try and listen as best I could to what the images and words were telling me, and to follow the path they were leading me on.

In reflecting this process the film is not confined by a style or genre, but combines and crosses between the boundaries of documentary, fiction, experimental, essay and portrait piece. The film is open to the viewer, letting them in to explore someone’s internal life, and come out with an understanding of what someone’s art is and what it means to them.

My hope is that the film will serve as a reflection for people to see that everybody has a story, and that everyone’s life, filled with words and images, could become a rich source of inspiration for art.

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Technical Notes

Format: (*mixed media*) 16mm, Super 8mm, 35mm stills, Beta SP, DVCam, Mini-DV

Aspect Ratio: 1:33:1 FILM, 4:3 TV

Countries of Production: USA, Italy, Switzerland

Years of Production: 2001 – 2003

Year of Completion: 2003

Length: 57 minutes

Picture: Color / B&W

Sound: Stereo

Language: English

Subtitles: Romanian portions subtitled in English

Cameras: 16mm Arri-S, 16mm Bolex, Super 8mm, Beta-Sp, PD-100 DVCam,
Lomo: 35mm still camera

Film Stock: 16mm Color Eastman Kodak EXR 50D - 7245

16mm B&W Eastman Kodak High Contrast Positive Film II 7363

Length of Footage Shot: 3 hours of FILM, 72 hours of VIDEO

Number of Shooting Days: 75 days

Exhibition & Screening Formats: (NTSC) Digi-Beta, Beta-SP, DVCam, Mini-DV, DVD
(PAL format also available)

Preview Formats: (NTSC) DVD, VHS (PAL format can also be made available)

Production Notes

The film began as a suggestion from my mother who teaches fifth grade across the hall way from Florin's art class. She knew that I was looking for something to do, and although I never made anything like a documentary before, she said that his writings and paintings were very interesting and I should ask to take a look at them.

Over the next few months in the spring of 2001 I studied his paintings and writings. As I started thinking about images and what the possibility of making a film could be I approached Florin about the idea of trying to make a film about his life and his work. Like his art he was open and excited to the idea and willing to give it a try.

Production began on the film in the Summer of 2001 and would continue as editing began shortly after until nearly the end of post-production in the fall of 2003. Writing, shooting and editing, were process' that were combined in balance to one another in the attempt to mirror the process in which the artist worked. The entire production of the film was made possible and based out of *The School of Visual Arts*, in New York City, where I worked from the Fall of 2000 till the Winter of 2003.

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Florin Ion Firimita: Subject of Documentary & Co-Writer

Artist's Biography

FLORIN ION FIRIMITA was born in Romania in 1965, where he started painting at the age of five under the influence of his father, an amateur photographer, and his mother, a fashion designer and a decorative arts teacher. He worked for many years as an assistant and apprentice to renowned artist Constantin Ciocarlie, then studied studio, mural painting and art history. Between 1986 and 1990, he worked as the Set and Costume Painter and also as the Production Manager for the Art Department at the National Theater of Opera and Ballet in Bucharest. He survived the December 1989 Bucharest uprising, which ended with the fall of the last bastion of the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe. In the summer of 1990, he immigrated to the United States. A year later he started learning English, and made the first attempt to write in his new language.

In the United States, Mr. Firimita graduated in May 1997 from Central Connecticut State University, with a degree in Art Education. Today he teaches, paints, exhibits, lectures and writes art-criticism, essays and stories about his experiences. He has been an artist-in-residence for both public and private schools in Connecticut, and worked as an art advisor for the Connecticut State Department of Education, during the 2000-2001 International Art Exchange Program, in The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. He has been recently appointed Director of the Summer Visual Arts Program at Central CT State University.

In the past years, his artwork has become widely collected and requested in numerous exhibits in the US, Europe and Australia. In 1992, Mr. Firimita received an Honorable Mention at the National Arts Program, and in 1994 he was the recipient of the National Prize for Literature awarded by the New York University. In the United States, his writing has appeared, among others, in The Literary Review, The Sun, House Beautiful, and The Hartford Courant. In Europe, his fiction was published in England and France. He is currently working on his first novel, "The Garden of Eden," and was recently included in an anthology entitled "New American Writers". Mr. Firimita has received his American citizenship in 1995, and moved in 1998 to the foothills of the Berkshires, where he lives with his cat, Matisse.

Artist's Statement

In the summer of 1990 I came to the United States from Romania. During my years there, the art scene was tightly controlled by the Communist government, and gray seemed to be the official color. For many years, I had no desire to paint because I believed that all the colors were dead.

In my adoptive country, I soon started searching for my own colors and my own voice, and although I have been painting for many years, the past several years have been particularly fruitful. For the first time I felt that my art has evolved from purely depicting/

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describing an external environment, to a much more profound visual confession, a truer reflection of my inner world. Several years after leaving behind a surreal existence highlighted by fear, I finally started this excursion into regaining my past.

My paintings are about time, about hope and loss, speed and slowness, about ever-present absences, about the benefits of solitude. Through the use of shape and color, old family photos, pages from my journals, fragments of letters between my parents, I am trying to recreate an intricate puzzle. On this level, these paintings function as complex conversations between me and my freedom, meditations about ideas that I find meaningful, glimpses of colored light at the end of a long, dark tunnel.

I have always believed in parallel universes in which the past and the present coexist in different dimensions, meeting from time to time through gates that no one could precisely define or locate. I see my art as a way of searching for those gates.

Brian Kamerzel:

Director, Producer, Editor, Co-Writer, Cinematography, Videography

Director's Biography

Filmmaker Brian Kamerzel has written and directed three short films: THE OCEAN AND THE ROSE, SARA, and THE YELLOW AIRPLANE. A graduate of The School of Visual Arts where he studied painting and film, Brian was co-production designer and co-sound recordist of the short film WARMTH which was selected to the 2000 Venice Film Festival, winner of the Alternative Student Academy Award, and 2nd place winner of the IFP in the same year. Brian is involved in theater and works as an editor while living in New York City. THE ART OF LEAVING is his first documentary.

Director's Filmography

“The Art of Leaving” (2003 / 57 mins / Documentary / mixed media)

“The Yellow Airplane” (2000 / 14 mins / Experimental / 16mm)
(Thesis Film, School of Visual Arts)

“Sara” (1999 / 10 mins / Experimental / 16mm)
(Third Year Film, School of Visual Arts)

“The Ocean and The Rose” (1998 / 5 mins / narrative / 16mm)
(Second Year Film, School of Visual Arts)

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David John Ackerman: Music: David John Ackermann has written works for orchestra, chamber, ensemble, jazz, dance, theater, and film. He is a guitarist and multi-instrumentalist, having performed in both jazz and classical traditions, as well as experimental and electronic forms. Ackermann has composed music for nine films, including *Eventually There* and *Warmth*, which won the Student Academy Award for Best Alternative Film. His musical influences range from French Impressionism to Miles Davis, from the sounds of Bartok's Eastern Europe to John McLaughlin's Shakti. He is currently at work on a CD which forges a bridge between classical chamber tradition and electronic glitch techniques. His music has been heard on National Public Radio.

Natalie Zwillinger: Lomographer Lomo: is a small 35mm Russian made camera
Natalie Zwillinger, a visual artist. Born and raised in Israel. Graduated from The School of Visual Arts, film department, New York City. Has shot edited and directed over a dozen 16mm projects, many of which are music videos. Main Focus in the past 10 years: photography. Natalie does not manipulate her work with computers or filters. Always working with cross processed materials. She has been loading her own film stock and sometimes changes outcomes by the use of strange fluids, such as cleaning detergents or water from the Dead Sea, affecting the color, texture, and total feel. For the past five years she has been a Lomographer. In 2001 she won first place in the *A-Z Lomographic Challenge* that took place in Soho, NYC. In 2002 she won first place in the *Lomographic World Congress* a four day competition that took place in Budapest and mainly Vienna. For the past year she has been working as the Lomographic Ambassador of Tel-Aviv.

Tom Lino: Sound Designer & Mixer: Thomas Lino has been designing sound for films for eight years, working most recently on the animation in Michael Moore's Academy Award winning documentary *Bowling For Columbine*. His focus has been small independent films, as well as a steady flow of broadcast television shows. Location sound recording is his latest undertaking, and Mr. Lino has been returning to his first love, camera operator. "DV has opened up a whole world of filmmaking that was previously closed off by financial limitations. The independent film community is now flooded with wonderfully personal stories that we would never have seen five years ago" says Tom, "and I'm glad to be a part of it."

CONCENTRATE, LLC: Effects Sequence

Jason Roth: Effects, Michael Harry: Producer, Dave Brown: Slide Scanning

Contact: www.nowconcentrate.com

CONCENTRATE is a multimedia content studio in New York City. Our team of artists: filmmakers, graphic designers, illustrators, web designers, and computer artists are anything but strangers to the industry. With countless, combined years of experience in the art and entertainment industry in every field, this virtual network of artists come together under one group to ensure that each client has the most experienced, passionate, and talented team working with them from conception to distribution. Our current client list includes: Diesel USA, Inc., MTV, Oppenheimer Capitol, Time Life Video, The Gay Mens Health Crisis. Optolom, The Manhattan Bureau, Duckdown Records, JazzReach, and Princeton Montessori School.

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The Art of Leaving Credits

Written by.....Florin Ion Firimita & Brian Kamerzel

Produced, Directed, Edited by.....Brian Kamerzel

Music by.....David John Ackermann

Sound Design and Mixing by.....Tom Lino

Effects Sequence by.....Concentrate, LLC

Effects.....Jason Roth

Effects ProducerMike Harry

Slide Scanning.....Dave Brown

Lomographs by.....Natalie Zwillinger

Girls in Art Class.....Sara Sheehy & Ariel Matthews

Woman Infront of Painting.....Julie Torsiello

Boy on Beach.....Peter Cimmino

Cinematography & Videography.....Brian Kamerzel

Additional Camera.....Aaron Yanes

Camera Assistants.....Damian Ward & Shanon Hayes

Additional Travel Footage.....Atsushi Funahashi & Ema Takahashi

Studio Lighting.....Mike Simmonds

Bolex Provide by.....Mike Simmonds

PD 100 DV Camera Provided by.....Joan Brooker & Mike Harry

BETA Camera Provided by.....Igor Pshenitchnyi

Pixel Vision Cameras Provided by.....Bradley Crumb & Jason Silva

English to Romanian Translation by.....Adina Dobrescu

Archival Researcher.....Rosemary Rotondi

Archival Footage Provided by.....Budget Films & F.I.L.M Archives

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Original Jazz Music by.....Kevin Thaxton
Piano.....Yuiko Ono
Drums.....Eric Reubelt
Bass.....Kevin Thaxton
Sound Engineer.....George Whittam

Arisio in A flat for Viola & Piano
Music by.....Aaron Severini
Viola.....Adam Hyman
Piano.....Terrence Wilson

Requiem – “Agnus Dei” K. 626
Composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Performed by La Grande Ecurte at la Chambre du Roy
Conducted by Jean-Claude Malgoire
“Courtesy of Sony Classical” (SBK 46344)

Production was made possible by.....The School of Visual Arts
Film Chair.....Reeves Lehmann
Director of Operations.....Salvatore Petrosino
Assistant to Film Chair.....Susan Bennett
Avid Lab.....Tien-Li Wu
Film and Video Repair.....Randy Wagner
Angel Beltre

School of Visual Arts Production Office
Film Production Manager.....Michael DelVecchio
Video Manager.....Christopher Faulkner
Production Office.....Jason Gambrell
Gretchen Hogue
Craig Hettich
Dustin Chang
Deron St. John
Alistair Wallace
Rossana Rizzo

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