

“*The Intensity of Looking*” at Karabasz, 2018

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The origins of particular documentary films are sometimes difficult to determine, precisely locate and capture in time and space. It is like searching for the source of a river. What marked the beginning of *Intensity of Looking*, a film about the great documentary film director Kazimierz Karabasz? The beginning of a documentary film’s creation determines the artistic process and elements that shape its strength, energy and main thought. These elements, which sometimes verge on intuition, guide this process, shaping the subject of the film, as well as its meaning, climate and aura. There is a thread connecting the author and the protagonist of the film, something that binds them together during work on the film, and sometimes lasts much longer. The three variants of what initiates the process of making a particular documentary film are as follows. The first is an encounter with a person who could be a character in a documentary film. The second is a thought, idea or problem that a filmmaker wants to address and discuss in a documentary by means of a certain character and story. The third is a return to a character who had been portrayed in a previous documentary film, to tell more about him or her. All three of these variants were the case in the making of Andrzej Sapija’s *Intensity of Looking*.

KEYWORDS: documentary film, Kazimierz Karabasz, Lodz Film School, WFD – Warsaw Documentary Film Studio, history, character in documentary, film observation, documentary ethics

Every film has its own story. The beginnings of these stories are often hard to define and difficult to locate and capture in space and time. It is like trying to find the exact source of a river. It is often hard to identify the place where the tiniest trickle of water appears, one which then becomes a stream ending up as a river. Should we consider the very beginning of movie-making the writing of the first draft of the script? A note regarding the topic, sketching out the form of the narration? The first idea about the film? After all, any written form of expression is the effect of a previous thought process, previous interest in an individual, situation or event, or simply a matter which seems important to the author, something (s)he wants to depict or treat in a film. Yet, many projects remain unfinished at the stage of the script. They remain a concept, which exists only in written/electronic form, but gives an idea about a film’s construction. But does this really matter, as what counts for viewers are the films that are made, those that are watched on TV and cinema screens?

For me as an author, they do matter. This proves itself when you try to describe the process of making a film. Or of describing a film itself. It is there, at the very beginning, where a certain process occurs that has crucial importance for the whole process of making the film. It

is there, where certain elements that generate and shape a film's power, energy or leading thought are located, often on the border of intuition, where the whole process begins. This is where the elements which shape the film, its meaning, vibe and aura are located. This is where the bond between the author and the character is born, something that connects them throughout the process of making the film, and often much longer. One of my subjects described it as a romance. It is not a romance per se, but there's something to this notion. It is a combination of fascination and curiosity, becoming with time a relation based on trust, expanding your contact zones in the area of emotions, building and strengthening your mutual sympathy, and finally, taking part in the character's life in a way that exceeds the spheres of work or art. To make a long story short, we can say that an author plays the part of a seducer and a thief at the same time: (s)he seduces and steals images, quotes and situations are recorded on film tape that contain elements of truth about the character. These moments record emotions, a unique atmosphere, and small details from which we build the portrait of the character.

The story of *Intensity of Looking* (*Intensywność patrzenia*, 2016) began in 2005, eleven years before I finished work on the film, when I made my first film about Karabasz. Its title was *Karabasz – Seeking an Ordinary Man*.

Kazimierz Karabasz was a classic figure in the Polish documentary film school. His films addressed new topics, introduced new characters, and displayed new technical, narrative and artistic solutions. His historical contributions to Polish cinematography – which recreated itself after WWII – are undisputable.

“We all came from Karabasz” – so say Polish documentarians. At least those whose practice belongs to the latter half of the 20th century. The list of Karabasz's students, alumni of the Łódź Film School, contains the names of people who shaped Polish and international cinematography: Kieślowski, Łoziński, Wiszniewski, Zygadło, Barański and Szumowska are just a few of them. Krzysztof Kieślowski in his autobiography notes that Karabasz, whom he met during his studies, was an important influence, stating directly that “he was a reference point”.^[1] Karabasz's film *The Musicians* (*Muzykanci*, 1960) is mentioned by him as one of the most outstanding in the history of filmmaking, the one he considered the most important, the most valuable, the one that most influenced his practice.

It was Karabasz who with such power, freshness and bravado introduced the topic of everyday reality to film. Normality and the casual life of regular people. Was Karabasz expressing his own sincere interests when he made his first student film, realised at the Łódź Film School in 1955, titled *As Every Day* (*Jak co dzień*), in which he portrayed the struggle of people who commuted between Warsaw and its suburbs, or had he merely stumbled on the theme for his film by chance? Bearing

[1] K. Krubski, et. al., *Filmówka. Powieść o Łódzkiej Szkole Filmowej*, Warszawa 1995, p.181.

in mind other circumstances, including his earliest photographs, taken in his youth, it seems that everyday reality had always been a concern for him.

In the field of film this interest mainly concerned labour. What is important here is the context of time and the socio-political circumstances of Poland in the 1950s. This was the time of building a new social reality – socialism – when the so-called “working man” stood at the centre of interest and was the focus of attention of both ideology and politics. Back then people did not work, they struggled. They struggled to realize or exceed the production plan, struggled to improve the quality of the goods produced, struggled to eliminate unwanted behaviour at work, such as loafing or drunkenness. In extreme cases, it was a struggle against saboteurs and the ideological enemies of the motherland and the political system. All of that took place in the context of an ideological war, the sense of which could be expressed in slogans. One of them called on people to struggle against the holdovers of capitalism. To struggle to create the new socialist man.

Labour in Karabasz’s films has a completely different meaning and sense, a different presentation, different image, and finally, a different aura than the image dominating in films of that time, both documentary and feature, realised according to the prescriptions and requirements of social realism, which dominated documentary filmmaking then. It was something, as noted by film critic Tadeusz Sobolewski, which lifted people’s spirits, enabled them to escape the ugliness and misery of life, and led them towards the beauty that it holds.

The depiction of everyday beauty, the discovery of beauty in the ordinary man and his longing for it, seems to me to be one of the greatest achievements of Karabasz. It was in *The Musicians*, one of the most outstanding and best-known films by Karabasz from the 1960s, that he first depicted this topic with such expressivity, power and artistic expression. What leads a group of old man, workers repairing tram wagons, to meet after working hours to practice and rehearse arduously, fixing their mistakes, in order to finally play a piece of music?

It is best described by Franek, the main character in a later film portrait by Karabasz (*The Year of Frank W.* [*Rok Franka W.*, 1967]). In his diary, written for the film, he notes:

I do not know nothing about music. I just like to listen to what they play. I do not really know why I like music, I guess there is no reason. Maybe someday I will try to learn some instrument, I would prefer the guitar the best, or something else.

Karabasz discovered in the motormen, and later in Franek, a sensitivity, a longing for beauty, that is often difficult to understand and describe, even for the characters themselves.

Karabasz was the first Polish documentary filmmaker to devote a full-length feature documentary film to a single character. *The Year of Frank W.* was first presented to viewers in cinemas and on TV – as

television had started to produce documentary films as well – in 1967. The character in the central role was not a figure from newspaper headlines, but an ordinary man, one of many, in whose life Karabasz saw “something meaningful and important”. A year-long observation resulted in a portrait of the life of a man who viewers had never seen before.

This portrait spoke with honesty, truth and poetics. Many young people saw themselves in this film. They, like Franek, were at the beginning of their lives, trying to follow their own path, and often stumbling during experiences that were new for them: their first night out on the town or at a bar, their first encounter with music, film or theatre, their first friendships and romances. *The Year of Frank W.* opened up a new genre in Polish documentary film: the documentary portrait. It was in some sense a ground-breaking point in the approach to this topic. No one before, neither among government representatives nor the people who dominated Polish cinematography, had thought about such an individual character as the focus of a documentary film. A character who was just an ordinary man was something unthinkable. It was not the ideological aspect that was problematic. It was a belief that the life of an ordinary man was not interesting enough to be the topic of a documentary film, and that viewers would not be interested in it. Using his directorial talents, Karabasz proved that things could be otherwise. The film was awarded several prizes both in Poland and internationally. Today it is viewed with interest and appreciation, while simultaneously offering a depiction of a historic reality.

Karabasz was one of my tutors at the Łódź Film School in the latter half of the 1970s. He was considered – and treated as – an icon. And rightfully so. He was treated as such by students and colleagues, who, like himself, are considered masters and icons: Wojciech Jerzy Has, Janusz Morgenstern and Henryk Kluba, just to name a few. For the majority of his films Karabasz used 35mm film. This was considered one of the “indicators” of the classical period in Polish and international cinematography, which was related to a certain state of technology, in this case, the film used. At first, it was 35mm film, then 16mm. The change in film format indicated a change in the size of the camera, which combined image and sound. It also had an important impact on new, experimental genres of documentary film, such as cinema direct or cinema vérité. The next crucial change was the introduction of digital cameras and data storage devices, which were first magnetic, then digital.

When I realised in 2004 that Karabasz, one of the “classic” names, had bought a digital camera and wanted to make an independent documentary about his friends (Stanisław Niedbalski, the cinematographer for the majority of Karabasz’s most acclaimed films; Jan Łomnicki, a film director, colleague from the Łódź Film School, and later a friend from the Warsaw Documentary Film Studio, where both of them worked; and Jerzy Mierzejewski, a painter and friend, associated with the Łódź Film School, where for a period of time he served as Dean of the Tel-

evision Direction Department), I instantly thought about turning this story into a film.

I dreamt about accompanying Karabasz in his romantic, albeit somewhat frenetic, film journey in an almost amateur format – autonomously, without a film crew, but with a sense of freedom – both in terms of creativity and production. He did not use additional light, and he was not accompanied by a soundman. There was no production manager or assistants. He was by himself with his character and a small digital camera. He set up the conversations and registered them. Luckily for me, Karabasz agreed to have me accompany him, demanding only that I try stay invisible and be absent when he met and talked with his friends.

It was then – as I see it with the perspective of time – that I learned Karabasz had bought a digital camera and wanted to make a film with it. This was the source that led me to the film *Intensity of Looking*. This was the first impulse that initiated, as it turned out, a years-long process. Back then, I did not intend to make a film-portrait of Karabasz. I was considering making a film about a certain artistic/film adventure taken by an older artist in the late period of his life, seeking freedom, independence from acceptance boards and television editors, feeling only (and still) the passion of a documentary filmmaker.

From the perspective of the film, I had – except for the point of departure, which seemed to me exciting – a good, positive topic for the film. Almost all of it was based on scenes related to observations of people.

The engagement of a character in a situation gives the author the ability to make observations, which is beneficial for the film. It leads to a situation in which the character does not think about the presence of the camera. This is one of the basic claims of and requirements for documentary filmmakers, ones which have often been raised by Karabasz. A large part of his energy as a film director was directed into taming the characters, freeing them from the awkward and inconvenient impact of the equipment and people involved in the film shooting and present on the set during filming.

Karabasz recalled an anecdote about a film set in the small flat (like most flats then) of an ordinary Polish family during the socialist period. For decades films were shot with large cameras, using film with limited light sensitivity and thus requiring large additional lamps operated by an electrician and an assistant. In addition, there was a soundman with an assistant who held a microphone on a pole. In total, there were usually 5–6 people on a documentary film set, plus the director. Then the director says to the character: please behave as if we were not here.

Karabasz told this anecdote: this statement was empty and ineffective, and did not result in any change in the character’s behavior. It did not impact the fact that both he and us – outsiders with recording equipment – were present.

Karabasz observed and commented on the revolution in technology – one which allowed filmmakers to register their material on video and later on digital devices – with jealousy. Newer-generation cameras limited the additional technological means which were necessary, such as lighting. They eased sound recording. In consequence, they allowed for a film set with less people present. They provided an opportunity to create a sense of intimacy and directness in the contacts between the director and the character, often on a one-to-one basis. In these new tools Karabasz also saw – despite their opening up new possibilities and offering uncontested benefits – great danger. As he wrote in one his books, “New tools impacted the emergence of a new language. Sometimes (though very rarely) it is truly great, depicting people in an extraordinary and insightful way – in most cases though, it is loquacious, without a sense of discipline, shallow and superficial”.[2] Limitations force you to be disciplined. Excess and easiness free you from it; they become a temptation to which few can say “no”. The majority subject themselves to it, marginalising the problem of self-control, choosing instead to have more and more filmed material. Most often, they seek salvation in the cutting room.

When I began to shoot my first film, I had a character who was fully engaged in his meetings and conversations. Karabasz did not pay any heed to me. Of course, I tried to remain invisible. However, what mattered most was Karabasz’s engagement. It impacted the truthfulness of the situations, the climate and temperature of the conversation. It made the characters be emotional in a natural way.

An additional value for me was the opportunity to observe Karabasz, the master of the documentary film, during his work and artistic process. This was a rare occasion and privilege. Not all the makers allow people to observe them and document them during the process of filmmaking. I really appreciated that, and felt that I was taking part in something unique. Both of us – Karabasz and myself – shot pictures and made our films independently. Both of us were one-man camera crews. Karabasz, however, was the main character in my film.

This is a specific mode of working, one which you need to learn and get an understanding of, based most often on your own personal experience making films. More and more filmmakers produce their films individually. This has been made possible by the rapid and sweeping advancements in digital camera technology. This equipment allows us to enter previously unexplored areas. It allows one to retain the atmosphere and spirit of a space, to avoid impacting the specificity of life, to approach the character in a way which was previously almost impossible, to create a personal, nearly intimate relation. In a one-person crew – just myself and the camera – the barrier caused by the camera and its technology is potentially smaller. Almost non-noticeable. This also relates to the priorities set by the author/director. It is a choice

[2] K. Karabasz, *Odczytać czas*, Łódź 1999, p.127.

between a spectacular image (good lighting, composition of the frame, sound effects, etc.) and the naturalness of the situation, the possibility of capturing a particular time, moments of truth and honesty with a character, the spirit of a place or situation.

Unfortunately, there is always a trade-off.

I do agree that this work requires tranquil, non-rushed personal contact. You have to bond with your character, to be able to create an atmosphere of sympathy, and sometimes make friends with your character. As Karabasz claims, you need “for the camera to stop being an intruder, and become something ordinary and natural, maybe even friendly”.[3]

Coming back to the initial stage of working on a film – in the case of *Seeking an Ordinary Man* – the thing that initiated the process of working on the film was information about a certain fact. This fact was Karabasz buying a digital camera and beginning work on a film. This initiated a series of events, and released the energy that generated a series of actions which then started to acquire sense and meaning.

There is also another source, another option for the beginning. It is a thought. A thought about a film, or rather its topic, a problem. We do not have a character yet; we do not have a fact or a situation. In short, we do not have anything concrete, just a thought describing the topic for a film. We then seek something that can be materialised in a film, with the potential to appear on screen. This thought is often an expression of a problem, containing an important question to which we try find an answer by means of film. This method was often used by Krzysztof Kieślowski. This is mentioned by him in a conversation with Karabasz, conducted in a book titled *Without Fiction (Bez fikcji)*:

One time we made a film titled *The Hospital (Szpital, 1976)*. This film was not made to depict the condition of the health care system, but to show people suffering greatly. I felt a need to make a film about brotherhood... To generalise... I have sought that in many different places, from a volleyball team to a Catholic monastery.[4]

Kieślowski gives the example of another of his films – *From a Night Porter’s Point of View (Z punktu widzenia nocnego portiera, 1977)*:

One day I thought that something dangerous started to appear in our country, (and perhaps all over the world) – the phenomenon of intolerance, brutality and hatred between people. Something like that is in the air. And it became too much to not notice it. It bothered me too much. As a human who lives, walks on the streets... Thus, my desire to find a man who would be a precise exponent of this idea...[5]

The third mode is continuation. This was the case of *The Intensity of Looking*.

When I finished the first film (*Seeking an Ordinary Man*), after certain time I thought about making another one devoted to the same

[3] K. Karabasz, *Cierpliwe oko*, Warszawa 1979, p. 46. [5] Ibidem, p. 91.

[4] K. Karabasz, *Bez fikcji*, Warszawa 1985, p. 90.

character, depicting his artistic journey, the philosophy of his life and practice. Why do we come back to our characters? Oftentimes it is to look at them after some time has passed. What has changed in them? Sometimes it is to complete a film-portrait, to supply it with new life episodes, to see the person from a different angle, to talk about a different sphere of life, time and practice, different problems and topics.

I often came back to my characters who were prominent authors. I made six films about Tadeusz Kantor. About the poet Tadeusz Rózewicz – four. After the first film about Karabasz was completed, I thought about creating a portrait depicting his *summa*, his complete artistic journey, his film philosophy, his approach to documentary making, to its changes, to the moment where it stands today. I also wanted for him to show his film past. For him to comment on it from a distance, perhaps complete, but definitely to describe it and explain what was interesting for him as a documentary maker and why. For him to try to answer questions about what he has done and how and why he did this.

After all, he was one of the most prominent Polish contemporary film makers of the “classical” period, i.e. the latter half of the 20th century. What was important in this thought about film – despite the obvious will to document something of archival and educational importance related to this particular period in Polish documentary film – was a will to combine a film portrait of an outstanding author with a certain problem, which for me is becoming more and more important, and linking the character to the contemporary moment. It is a situation in which a film portrait is linked to a significant issue. This gives the viewer an additional topic. Potentially, this also makes the film more interesting, urgent and important.

What is the problem? The problem is the ethics of the documentary filmmaker. The limits of freedom when registering reality. The relation between the author of the documentary and its subject – the character. The progress and status of current film technology enables the registering of images to be almost completely free of limits. Soon, we will be able to film almost everything. Enter every space, every situation. The obvious question is one of limits. Can we or should we document everything? This question stimulates and impacts another one: are we allowed to document a person in every circumstance – i.e. in a situation of psychical, emotional exposure, humiliation or death? Are we allowed to shoot a film in a situation where the object/character is not conscious that the documentation is taking place – i.e. in the circumstances of mental disease, or a condition of severe illness or alcohol intoxication? Generally, what is the relation, laws and obligations, including ethical ones, between the author of the documentary and its object/character? Karabasz remained principled when it came to such matters; he was a rigorist when it came to defending the rights of the film character.

The easiness of documenting comes with many temptations, from which the most important one is related to situations that are

extreme, emotionally powerful and often drastic. Almost nothing can be hidden from the camera anymore. The borders are drawn by the documentary filmmaker. In most cases, the character is innocent in front of the camera.

It is (s)he that is most often the victim.

Karabasz always treated his character with attention, sensitivity and respect. In the spheres of documentary ethics, he represents a rigorist and non-compromising stance, expressed in favouring the wellbeing of the character over the aims and artistic interests of the makers. This artistic integrity is simply decency in relation to the character. This is one of the most sensitive (and the most difficult) matters in documentary filmmaking. “What does it actually mean though?”, he asks in the book *To Read the Time (Odczytać czas)*.^[6] In the book he also gives an answer: it is loyalty to the character.

When I introduced my new project to Karabasz he was not overly enthusiastic, which I honestly had expected, although he did not say no. The crucial matter for him was: which films will be discussed? The idea for organising the plot and the narration of this film was a series of meetings in the cutting room. I wanted Karabasz and Lidia Zonn – his wife and, at the same time, the film editor of almost all of his pieces – to go through their films, to talk about the circumstances of making them, the related problems, the meanings and topics, the characters, and finally, the artistic and technological means employed.

An important aspect in my thinking about the future film was a desire to see the oeuvre of the character in the context and background of the period, both in terms of the history of Poland and the story of Karabasz himself. Thus, his privacy. I thought that Karabasz – the enthusiast of everyday life – would understand the meaning and importance of depicting his everyday life in the context of the everyday life of his characters.

Time both defines the specificity of and heavily impacts film production. You cannot make a film day-to-day, or month-to-month. If that is ever the case, it is a rare circumstance. In most cases, the literary preparation, as well work on the conspectus, script and documentation, and in the later stages, work on the budget and grant proposals, takes several months. Later on, a few months are required to seek funds for the film and the issuer (the place where the film is shown, whether it is the cinema or television). There are boards which rate the projects. There are accompanying deadlines. The ratings of experts. The revisions. Waiting for signatures on contracts. It all takes time. The characters also have their own lives, plans and deadlines. All of this needs to coincide in order to start shooting. In my case, nearly two years after the first thought and the acceptance of the character, I started shooting.

I requested the cutting room at The Warsaw Documentary Film Studio on Chełmska street, where almost all Karabasz’s films were made.

[6] K. Karabasz, *Odczytać czas*, op. cit., p. 22.

It was his studio. He started to work there just after graduating from the film school, Initially, as an assistant for the *Polish Film Chronicle* (*Polska Kronika Filmowa*).

We were kind of tagging along – recalls Karabasz – as something between the assistant to the cameraman and assistant to the editor (there was such a role). After four years of studying, and out of necessity, a separation from “regular life” – suddenly the whole country was open to us. The opportunity to encounter life on all levels: today you shot at the mill, tomorrow you interview a university professor, the day after tomorrow you visit a stud farm.[7]

After that, he became the leading, most awarded employee of the Studio.

Everything was on the best possible track to begin the film. I was excited to work on the project. Karabasz, the master of observing the ordinary man, had himself become a character in a documentary film. It is as if a painter, a master of the portrait, had become a model for another painter. He knows how it is done. He knows what it involves. He knows what the other – the author, the painter – expects and requires. That is what I counted on. For an understanding, a consciousness. And I did not get it. Already then, before beginning to shoot, I had to revise my plans.

What I encountered was a character’s severe resistance to letting me into an area of his life which did not relate to film, into the sphere of everyday life, and thus, into a sphere that the character himself valued most, one in which he was the most interested, and which had the biggest impact on his films. Well, I had to accept this. You cannot force a character to let you into his house with a camera. Thus, I assumed that we would keep the film in the cutting room. We would not go outside the sphere of film. We would not touch upon issues not related to it. But I also assumed that when we would begin shooting, when we would sit in the cutting room and turn on the camera, I would ask questions about his private life, about the family house, about memories from childhood, about the war and the Stalinist period, and so on and so on...

Then life and faith entered, which, as we know, “writes the best scenarios”. Often the best, but in this case, it was the worst scenario. The main character in my film became seriously sick. It was a severe illness. It made him unavailable – in terms of his duties regarding the film as well – for a few months. With time, the situation became even worse. His treatment did not lead to a full recovery. In the end, I had to accept the fact that I would not have the character fully appearing on the screen, that my character had not only physical limitations, but was even limited in his speaking. The idea of filming conversations in the cutting room now became impossible. During the first preview of the film – which was ultimately realised – one of the reviewers said that if his character had become practically non-present, he would have

[7] K. Karabasz, *Bez fikcji*, op. cit., p. 20.

stopped production of the film and withdrawn. I had made a different decision. Was it the right one? That should be left to the viewer.

I regretted all the effort I had spent preparing the film to be made. I regretted the time spent. I believed – and that is perhaps most important – in the necessity of completing this project. I was convinced that this film portrait, even if only for reasons of documentation and education, should be completed. When making a film we usually think primarily about its artistic values. A film should have a distinct topic, an important problem, an interesting narration and structure, and it should generate emotions. I felt that in this particular case, these values also included education and documentation.

What then was left from the initial idea for the film? Its first basic topic and its aim – the portrait of the author, his artistic journey, the range of problems that interested him, his artistic philosophy, including the notions of ethics. I had to achieve this with the use of different tools, through another matter. I could not think about the conversations with the character anymore. I decided to use what he said about his own films, working on them and the problems associated with it, through the books he has written and the interviews made with him. To that I added texts written about Karabasz by directors, critics and film historians.

I remained with two characters – I involved Lidia Zonn in the narration even though she at first resisted. What did I hope for? Where was my chance? In the honesty of the narration, in its personal touch. I made a decision that as the author of the film, I should be the narrator. It is me who plots the story about a film maker, his further films and their character, about the context of the times in which they were made, and finally, their form, style and artistic means. For a moment I was considering involving other people who could speak about Karabasz, most likely his colleagues and witnesses. I soon abandoned this idea, as it occurred that not many of them are still alive. There was only a handful, two or three, who had not even worked with him closely. This generation is leaving us.

The story of the film in the new format is ultimately simple and modest. A handful of meetings on my turf. A few times I brought the character and his wife to my house. It was summer. We were sitting on the terrace in the garden, between the greenery of the bush and blooming flowers. We were surrounded by dogs and cats, which received the most attention from Karabasz. At some point he told me that if he had the energy, opportunity and means, he would focus his attention and camera on them. He would make his next film about them. I observed him with happiness, as I knew that he felt good there, but also with a sense of regret, as I knew that we could not conduct longer conversations.

Later on we recorded a few statements, and shot a few images almost from hiding (at some point I became a thief), using a photographic camera with a video option. All of that took one hour in the house of the character. I think it was his name day. We ate a small cake

and had coffee. That was it. I also did some field shooting. I went to Bydgoszcz – Karabasz’s hometown. There we find the tenement where Karabasz spent his childhood, including the war. There is a basement there, where his neighbour – risking his life – listened to the radio and BBC news, passing the news on. From there, the young Kazimierz left to see the world, that is, Poland. First to Silesia, then to Łódź.

As a narrator, I started to compose my indie story about Karabasz. I looked for quotes, opinions, memories and archival statements. Both of the characters and the others. Just the typical editorial/directorial work. Finally, I completed the cutting. I did that myself. I am really interested in it. Then there was the review. The film was accepted. The financial side was settled.

It is difficult for me to fully judge this film. I am still convinced about its educational and archival value. Artistic matters? The reactions and reviews of the viewers are varied. Some of them appreciate the film, while others say it is interesting. I know what this means. What was important to me was an invitation to DOK Leipzig (International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film). Karabasz is known and appreciated in Germany. He is a member of the Deutsche Filmakademie. His films were awarded a prize at German film festivals several times.

Maybe I was too close to him, too close to the character? Maybe I lost the necessary distance, the cold and analytical thinking necessary at some point of working on a film? Thus, the history of this film does not have a fully happy ending. It does not matter for the viewer though. Films live their own lives, fully separated from the history of its making. Films often have several lives. There are films that live shorter, others that live longer. In the end, they die and are retained in the archives. Sometimes they reappear. They acquire additional value, meaning and sense only with time. They return to the screen because of some anniversary, or are recalled as a historical artefact related to some issue, historical period or lecture topic. This way or the other – the more and less successful ones – they form a part of our social memory, part of our culture and history.

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