

Cultural Event

Seventh Annual Arkhaios Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Film Festival

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The Seventh Annual Arkhaios Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Film Festival took place in Columbia, South Carolina on October 10-13, 2019. The Festival is organized by Jean Guilleux, Director and Founder of Arkhaios who formerly organized and hosted the festival in Hilton Head Island, SC. Over the past few years, he has organized it long-distance from Pittsburgh with the help of local volunteers. The Columbia iteration of the festival has undergone some growing pains as various venues and schedules were experimented with, but this year's festival was a winning combination of venues and time slots. 2019 was a rather eclectic mix with more films on cultural heritage than archaeology, and fewer films than in previous years, but the films in general were much longer. Although Jean Guilleux is committed to showcasing films from and about South Carolina heritage, this year there was only one local film, *The Planter at the Gate* (Directed by Jamie

and Chris Koelker) about the Battle of Secessionville.

The Festival kicked off with a Thursday evening screening of underwater archaeology films at the Richland County Public Library-Main. The underwater archaeology track is a new one for Arkhaios. The films were introduced by James Spirek the South Carolina State Underwater Archaeologist who not only gave context to the films we saw, but to the enterprise of underwater archaeology as a whole. The first film, *The Lions of Lissa* (Directed by Nicolo Bongiorno, an Italy / Croatian co-production) could not have been a better choice for the first film of the festival. Making its American debut, this poetic and hypnotic film is loosely about a battle between ironclad warships that took place on the Mediterranean island of Lissa in 1886. In truth, the film is more about how the sea transcends boundaries, creating communities of shared culture and language along its coasts and in the

ships that ply them. Separation is less about horizontal geography than it is a matter of air and water. Things that sink are gone forever, and even now it is only certain people who can enter the "sacred twilight" of the deep. Unsurprisingly, *The Lions of Lissa* took the prize for the best underwater archaeology film. (See Pages 18-19) on the article on the underwater track of the film festival by James Spirek.)

The Arkhaios Grand Prize and the Audience Favorite Film Award went to *Eating Up Easter* (Directed by Sergio Rapu, a USA / Easter Island production). This was the first film of Friday's screening, hosted by the Greater Piedmont Chapter of the Explorer's Club at the very pleasant venue of Senate's End. *Eating Up Easter* is a sympathetic exploration of tourism and globalization on Easter Island from the perspective of its indigenous peoples. The film starts with a discussion of garbage, which arrives daily on the island but has no way to get off, and this becomes something of a central metaphor for the film. Rapa Nuians are not yearning for a fictitious Edenic past but are trying against enormous odds to build a sustainable future of their own choosing that participates in the global community without being overwhelmed by it. The story comes alive through its local characters, starting with Mama Piro to whom the film is dedicated. We meet her the first time at the recycling center where she works, dressed in old clothes and talking smack to Sergio Rapu who is trying to interview her. As with all characters in this film, she is not at all what she initially seems. *Eating Up Easter* is a funny, sweet, and thought-provoking study of a small island with an outsized reputation. Significantly, the famous Moai have only a minor role in the film.



Figure 1: Stalagmite structures associated with Neanderthals in the depth of Bruniquel Cave in southwest France. (Courtesy Arkhaios)



Figure 2: Actress Eunice Olsen telling the story of *Becoming Singapore*. (Photo courtesy of Arkhaïos)

There was a great deal of buzz about the American Premiere of the film *Neanderthal, the Mystery of Bruniquel Cave* (Directed by Luc-Henri Fage, France), which won for Best Archaeology Film (Figure 1). The film follows archaeologists as they reinvestigate structures made of stalagmites in the depths of a cave in southwest France. The application of new archaeological methods reveals that these structures are associated with Neanderthals, and a number of interesting facts about what they did there. The film was followed by an interview with director Luc-Henri Fage conducted by Dr. Karl Heider. Apparently, as we were screening his film at Arkhaïos, it was simultaneously being rebroadcast on the television channel Arte-France where it is very popular.

The best Cultural Heritage Film award was a tie. *Becoming Singapore* (Directed by Tom St. John Gray, Singapore) (Figure 2) tells the story of Singapore's history through archaeology, history, and the personal story of Eunice Olsen, former Miss Singapore and a well-known Singaporean TV personality. *Versailles Rediscovered* (Directed by Marc Jampolsky, France) (Figure 3) is about the reconstruction of parts of Louis XIV's palace and gardens using archival materials, plans, and 3-D imaging. While most of us know about the size and expense of the palace, this film highlights the kinds of details that might be overlooked in the presence of so much, such as the elaborate water management

systems that ran the fountains, the bird songs piped into the gardens, and the humor and commentary injected into elaborate sculptures. *Versailles Rediscovered* also won a special mention for Discovery of Past Cultures Gained from Archaeological Research. An honorable mention in this category went to *ArtQuake* (Directed by Andrea Calderone, Italy), which was shown here for the first time outside of Italy. This beautiful film looks at what happens to artworks, including architectural works of art when they are subjected to Italy's frequent earthquakes. The film is most interested in how people live with art in the churches and buildings that have been around for centuries, and the importance of restoring art to its proper place within their lives after a disaster has taken place. It also looks at the serendipity of forgotten art being

revealed through earthquake damage, and the surreal experiences of restoration such as of putting together a smashed Giotto fresco like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Art that has nearly been lost takes on new symbolic meanings, and new art is created in the wake of disaster.

Two films received special mention for Depiction of Cultural Change. *Foundations* (Directed by Olivier D. Asselin, Canada) (Figure 4) is about Mathieu Collette who is working to preserve knowledge of traditional blacksmithing through a school at his forge. The film chronicles his struggles to keep the forge open. Collette is pragmatic about traditional knowledge—it is important to preserve it because it produces a better product. There are ample reminders throughout the film about the compromises we make daily in order to have things cheap and fast. *The Gesture and the Material* (Directed by Beatrice Mohr, Switzerland) (Figure 5) is also a meditation on traditional knowledge, but in this film, we have a potter, Pierre-Alain Capt, who makes faithful reproductions of ceramics from the time of the Gauls and the Romans. He does not make pots that merely resemble the originals, but he studies their techniques of manufacture, digs clays, and collects fuel from their same sources and seeks to thoroughly understand how pottery was made in its original environmental and social context.

In previous years, we have seen a number of films by the French Director Agnes Molia for the TV channel ARTE

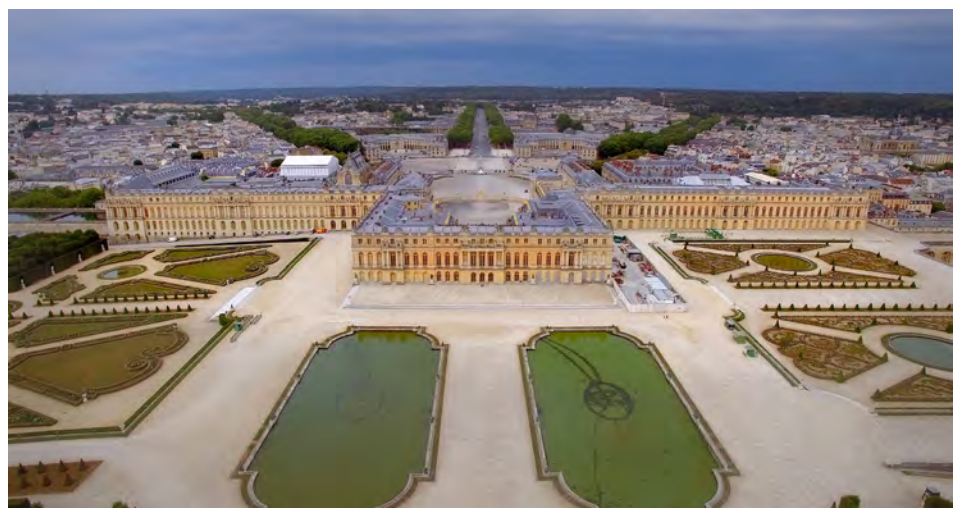


Figure 3: *Versailles Rediscovered*. (Photo courtesy of Arkhaïos)

France. This year there were two short films from the series ArKeo: *Titicaca*, *The Sea of the Tiwanaku* and *Pachacamac*, *The Lourdes of the Pre-Columbian Era*. These were both beautifully shot films with lots of juicy archaeology, hosted by Peter Eeckhout. In *Titicaca*, Eeckhout visits Christophe Delaere who is undertaking underwater archaeology, and in *Pachacamac* he shows his own work at this spectacular Peruvian site. Eeckhout, a pleasant, if low key host in *Titicaca* and other films in the series, fairly leaps off the screen with infectious enthusiasm in *Pachacamac*. Although marred somewhat by the narration and dubbing, *Titicaca* received an honorable mention in the Underwater Archaeology category.

The screening committee and the audience were split on whether they loved or hated *The Origins of Music* (Directed by Andrea Spalletti and Daniel B. Arvizu, Spain). It is a beautifully made film with amazing cinematography and animation, but its heavy-handed behavioral evolutionary approach was problematic for some.

Thank you to Arkhaio Donors, Volunteers, Screening Committee Members, and the Jury

Ernest L. Helms, III MD, Nena Powell Rice, Dale Boozer, The Greater Piedmont Chapter of The Explorers Club, Chistina H. Myers, James Borton, Sam and Gina



Figure 5: Potter, Pierre-Alain Capt demonstrates techniques of manufacture of pots produced during the time of the Gauls and Romans featured in the film, *The Gesture and the Material*. (Photo courtesy of Arkhaio)

McCuen, Bill Bridges, COSCAPA, the Archaeological Society of South Carolina, Carolyn Hudson, Jan Ciegler, Jane Barnhill, Neal and Cathy Konstantin, Larry Reed, Karl and Bea Thomas, Allegheny Chapter #1-Society of Pennsylvania Archaeology, Steven Folks, Jury President, Filmmaker, Executive Producer and Project Manager at South Carolina ETV in Columbia, South Carolina; Dr. Robert Clift, Documentary filmmaker and media studies scholar, Assistant Professor at

the University of Pittsburgh; Dr. Karl Heider, Retired Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at USC, Filmmaker, Authored books on Ethnographic Film; Lynne Cope Hummell, Writer and editor for more than 30 years, currently editor of *The Bluffton Sun* and *The Hilton Head Sun*; Dr. Jonathan M. Leader, SC State Archaeologist who teaches and lectures at the University of South Carolina. and Dr. Joanna Casey for the excellent introductions to most of the films.



Figure 4: Illustration of historic forge in the film, *Foundations*. (Photo courtesy of Arkhaio)