

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2 January 2014

Imagine

Fritz Göttler: Pure adventure cinema. The boys finally dared to cross the street. Alexandra Maria Lara tries to walk in heels for the first time. They are blind and they all live in the safe world of their community. Ian (Edward Hogg), who is new there, plucks them out of their safe world. Yes, he isn't completely honest, he's crafty, a bit of a trickster but he knows the magic of the cinema. Andrzej Jakimowski's film should be watched on a big screen. Powerful close-ups, the hidden; a game of the visible with the invisible. And Lisbon; a city which is an adventure in itself.

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(caption beneath the photo) Both blind: Ian (Edward Hogg) and Eva (Alexandra Maria Lara)

Interplay of the senses

The choreography in Andrzej Jakimowski's *Imagine* follows different rules than those linked to sight and takes you into a magical world beyond sight.

Lisbon is an open city, which the cinema loves. The sun, the air, the light, the sea. On top of that the famous tram which slows glides through even the narrowest streets.

A city that is open to be experienced by all the senses, a beautiful place to grow up. The children in Andrzej Jakimowski's *Imagine*, however, are cut off from it; they live in a clinic for the blind and have to learn to move around and orientate themselves without relying on the sense of sight. But they are happy when they feel light on their faces.

One day Ian (Edward Hogg) arrives at the clinic in order to help teach, but/because he is also blind. He is very confident and cheeky, stomping with heavy boots on the cobbles, his behaviour provocative from the very beginning. With the confidence of a travelling salesman. We don't need a cane, he says, only using one to strike the desk during lessons. The camera is totally on his side when he raises his gaze, he shows the blue sky; this look is usually called a subjective attitude. What in this film is subjective and objective, or imagination and reality submit to spontaneous verification.

Echolocation is Ian's thing. He uses tongue-clicking and snaps his fingers when he walks, using sound waves reflecting off objects to build his own space in his imagination. This gives him the courage to go to the city centre, cross a busy street, stand under trees, go to a café, or a harbour. He carries others along with him; people who trust him, building up a defiant boldness and lust for life, with the young Eva, played by Alexandra Maria Lara, at the head. Ian chooses for her the most daring, bold shoes, judging them only by the sound their high heels emit when Eva first teeters in them in the shoe shop.

The classes in this film are tough and unsentimental. The children ruthlessly test Ian; they are accustomed to that in their sightless world. They provoke him and he has to prove he is one of them. They don't want to have any illusion, no false hopes. And from time to time, for a few seconds a trace of sadness appears on Ian's face, because he knows that every prophet finally turns out to be false.

In Ian's space there is no gap between reality and unreality and in this sense he is a true cinematic creature, like Walter Mitty. The imagination is the true sense of reality in the cinema; the camera works most intensively when it broadens the field of view beyond the film screen.

When Ian moves it sounds as though he were tap dancing, and his lively lessons are like a dance. They have the tone and the classic touch of a magic Hollywood musical; the purest cinema anyone could imagine.

Fritz Göttler

Imagine, France/United Kingdom/Poland/Portugal 2013 – **Director, Screenplay:** Andrzej Jakimowski. **Director of Photography:** Adam Bajerski. **Music:** Tomasz Gąssowski. **Editing:** Cezary Grzesiuk. **Sound:** Guillaume Le Braz. **Featuring:** Edward Hogg, Alexandra Maria Lara, Melchior Drouet, Francis Frappat, João Lagarto, Alix Planco, Antonio Rolo, Claudia Soares and Denilson Gomes. Neue Visionen, 105 min.