



FERA

Federation of European Film Directors

FERA STATEMENT

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Love in the time of Corona: Developing Health and Safety Guidelines on Set, A Director's Perspective

For decades screen directors have been shooting dangerous stunts. Safely. "Selling" a punch between two actors by positioning the camera so it can't see the safe space between them is an early example of successful social distancing. But **dramatizing the deeper conflict between those two actors is the director's precious creative space, and without it an effective-looking punch is meaningless** – the audience may believe but they won't care.

As we restart production in the shadow of lethal Covid-19, every scene is going to be the equivalent of a stunt scene. Even "Mission Impossible" cannot boast such a tally. And it is not only the density of such scenes that is unfamiliar territory, it is the unknown nature of the risks posed by this novel coronavirus.

Emerging safe-shooting guidelines are built on industry-wide expertise in previous hazardous environments, and screen directors will embrace them. In the past a combination of the director's creative thinking, combined with low and high cunning, could sometimes allow a stunt scene to be shot as quickly as a "normal" scene. But usually stunt scenes take longer and demand more resources.

In the new normal of Covid-19 this very expensive situation is likely to be the default. **When the most chaste kiss can kill, we need to work closely with writers to creatively rethink the stories we can now tell with the resources available.** For some time there has been no fat on the schedules directors deliver. **If directors' creative space is now further reduced anorexia and even starvation loom.**

Audiences are hungry for fresh product. Yet we do not want our moving pictures to turn mechanical and dry. **What about those, after all, who approach cinema preferring real to fake? How can we continue to create nourishing cinema?**

Michelin-starred rotissier Alain Passard, the Caesar of Sirloin, Pontiff of Pope's Eye reacted to Mad Cow disease by forswearing all meat and restarting with a purely vegetarian menu at L'Arpège where he reignited his three stars with huge commercial success.

Maybe we need to consider options as radical as Passard's, exploring different kinds of engaging stories we can actually tell under Covid-19. **We will have to rethink intimacy in drama as much as proximity on set.**

Off-road genres like wildlife documentaries, films on art, architecture, urbanism, philosophy of habits, film essays, found footage films, experimental films, trans-European memory projects, animation of all kinds and virtual reality might yield unexpected and fruitful opportunities if we trust in the survival skills of the creative instinct.

There are many talents that collaborate to produce the many incarnations of our work, but it is ultimately the director that viscerally connects the story to its audience in real time. It is this connection that we all yearn for and directors need the creative space to deliver it. Now more than ever.

Note to Editors

Contact: Pauline Durand-Vialle, CEO – pdv@filmdirectors.eu

About us:

Founded in 1980, FERA represents the independent voice of European film and TV directors in Brussels. With 46 organizations as members from 34 countries, it speaks for more than 20,000 European film and TV directors, representing their cultural, creative and economic interests at national and EU level.

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Fédération Européenne des Réalisateur·euses de l'Audiovisuel / Federation of European Film and TV Directors

Rue du Prince Royal 85-87 – 1050 Bruxelles, Belgique

+32 (0)2 551 08 94 – office@filmdirectors.eu