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Jean-Luc Godard



In an emblematic scene from “Breathless” (1960), Jean-Paul Belmondo suddenly addresses the camera directly. “If you don’t like the sea, if you don’t like the mountains, if you don’t like the city... then you can go f*** yourself!” The first films produced by French-Swiss filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, who died on 22 September 2022, caused quite a sensation in the 1960s. The unknown actors, raw dialogue, spontaneous script writing, filming from the shoulder and using natural light, and jerky editing, with the soundtrack seeming to evolve on its own, were all elements of Godard’s filmmaking that constantly subverted cinematic conventions. And the radical changes he implemented have since spread like a wave throughout the industry and to such an extent that his legacy is now everywhere. His filmography is vast and multifaceted, including some 50 films and around ten documentaries. The director continued to create right up until he died, using every medium available, from smartphones and video to painting and collages. Godard was also well known for his pithy quips. “When you go to the cinema, you raise your head. When you watch television, you lower it,” he once remarked. The man loved tennis, but he also objected stridently to the way it was presented on TV. He came up with his own vision of documenting the sport. “I’d film some guy, any qualifier. He’s in Paris, doesn’t have much money, he’s looking for a cheap hotel. He takes the metro, he plays his match. And then he’s beaten. In the next round, I’d focus on the player who beat him, and then the winner of that match, which would inevitably take us to the final.” And that was Godard the star, commenting on life with his Vaudois accent – a quaint reminder of his roots to anyone with an ear to hear it.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Kim de l’Horizon wins the German Book Prize

One of the most prestigious literary awards, the German Book Prize, has gone to Switzerland this year: Kim de l’Horizon was awarded the prize for their debut novel “Blutbuch” (“Blood book”), which has thus now been recognised as the best German-language novel of the year. Kim de l’Horizon identifies as non-binary, and the protagonist of their prize-winning novel does not identify as a man or as a woman either. The jury felt the novel’s non-binary narrator “sought their own voice with tremendous creative energy”. The prizegiving ceremony at the Frankfurt Book Fair was also a sensation in the visual sense: as a gesture of solidarity with oppressed women in Iran, Kim l’Horizon shaved their head during their acceptance speech.

(MUL)

Ignazio Cassis visits Volodymyr Zelensky

The Swiss federal president and foreign minister, Ignazio Cassis, made a surprise trip to Ukraine on 20 October. According to Cassis himself, he wanted to form his own impression of the situation and discuss the reconstruction of Ukraine with Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv. He was quoted as saying “We also want to support Ukraine’s efforts to rebuild itself innovatively.” The challenges posed by the coming winter were also reportedly discussed. Cassis’s visit took place only hours after numerous Ukrainian cities were bombarded with kamikaze drones, marking a further escalation of the war.

(MUL)

No referendum on fighter jet purchases

The Swiss population will not get the chance to vote on the procurement of the F-35 stealth fighter jet. The initiators of the popular initiative, which has gathered over 100,000 signatures, have now withdrawn it. There was no point in offering a pseudo-referendum, said National Councillor Priska Seiler Graf (SP) on behalf of the petition committee. The actions of the Swiss Federal Council and Parliament in mid-September made a popular initiative entirely obsolete: in spite of the pending referendum, the decision was taken to purchase 36 fighter jets. Even a No vote at the polls would have been unable to stop the 6-billion-franc deal.

(MUL)

Swiss glaciers shrink considerably

This year has been bleak for Swiss glaciers. According to glaciologists, glaciers shrank more rapidly this year than in any previous year since records began. Glaciers lost a total of 3.1 cubic kilometres of ice. This is more than six percent of the total volume of all glaciers. The Pizol (SG), Vadret dal Corvatsch (GR) and Schwarzbachfirn (UR) glaciers totally disappeared in 2022. The disappearance of the glaciers was exacerbated by a combination of unfavourable factors: low snowfall during winter, a heatwave as early as May and an extremely dry summer with virtually no precipitation.

(MUL)