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Peter Kosminsky – Making Mischief at BFI Southbank in December 2011



Peter Kosminsky has made some of the most important and revelatory television of the past three decades, working in documentary, drama and drama documentary. Throughout December to mark his 30th year working in British television, **BFI Southbank** celebrates this controversial filmmaker's career with a season of screenings that will include opportunities to see a number of his early television documentaries such as **The Falklands War – The Untold Story** (1987) and powerful dramas, **The Life & Death of Philip Knight** (1993) and **No Child of Mine** (1997). There will be an example of his film work with a screening of **White**

Oleander (2002) as well as a special on stage interview with **Peter Kosminsky** in conversation with **Francine Stock** that will follow a screening of **New York – The Quiet Catastrophe** (1987) on **Tue 13 Dec.**

Peter Kosminsky began his directing career by working for the BBC's Nationwide news magazine programme. Moving to Yorkshire Television's highly respected documentary department, he began to work on a series of meticulously researched documentaries in the **First Tuesday** strand that would make his name - including the definitive Falklands documentary **The Falklands War – The Untold Story** (1987).

Proud of his documentary roots - and the research methods employed in factual television - he increasingly turned to the hybrid form of drama-documentary, drawn to the additional emotional power that drama can provide. **Ken Loach** has remarked of the director, 'He understands the medium of film and draws people in to those contentious issues'. Owing much to "radical" predecessors such as Loach and Alan

Clarke, Kosminsky is interested in 'making mischief and causing trouble'. His motivation for making television is to shake people out of their political apathy.

Working with a small favoured group of writers and finding his writing soul mate in the late **Leigh Jackson**, he has been able to tackle the most epic of subjects such as the genocide of the Bosnian war in **Warriors** (BAFTA best Drama Serial 1999); Kosminsky's genius is to use intensely detailed private personal testimonies and invest them with the resonance of the wider political issues at stake. This unique ability was again in evidence in the much praised and recently transmitted **The Promise** (2011) in which he explored the British responsibility for the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

A recurrent theme emerges in Kosminsky's work (viscerally evident in his drama **Britz**, 2007): that we are all complicit in injustice if we do nothing to hold our elected representatives and institutions to account. In an age when so much television has so little to say Peter Kosminsky's principled voice rings out all the louder.

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The Falklands War – The Untold Story (First Tuesday Special)

Yorkshire ITV 1987. Dir/Prod Peter Kosminsky, Series Editor John Willis, Producer Michael Bilton . 104min

This award-winning documentary strand was the first on British television to tackle the Falklands War since the end of hostilities five years before. Kosminsky combines intimate firsthand accounts from the troops on the ground with previously unseen footage of the war. Kosminsky's was the first British crew in Argentina, and he was careful to interview combatants and families from both sides of the conflict.

Fri 2 Dec 18:30 NFT2

15 The Life & Death of Philip Knight

Yorkshire TV 1993. Dir Peter Kosminsky. With Daniel Newman, Holly Aird, Terence Beesley, Angus Macfadyen 145min

The '15' in the title refers to the age Philip Knight was when he took his life while held in prison; and this moving drama-documentary draws attention to the 365 other under-16s held in adult prisons in 1993. Sensitively highlighting the emotional turmoil of Philip Knight, rejected by his foster parents, this dramatised account (written by Jeremy Brock) shows the efforts of those social workers closest to him as they battled with an inflexible and underfunded system. Kosminsky's assured and measured direction draws us in to the story, and the film features some powerful performances. A disturbing tribute to a troubled life.

Thu 8 Dec 20:10 NFT2

No Child of Mine

Meridian 1997. Dir Peter Kosminsky. With Brooke Kinsella, Colin Salmon, Sharon Small. 90min

Written by Guy Hibbert and based on a true story, this BAFTA-winning film caused a furore at the time. It tells the story of a ten-year-old girl suffering systematic physical and sexual abuse from her parents, her stepfather and even when taken in to care. Despite its grim subject matter Kosminsky highlights the practical redemption offered by individual acts of kindness as well as making the wider political point about the lack of 'safe houses' for traumatised children. Kinsella's extraordinary performance makes us question the adult responsibilities we all share.

Tue 13 Dec 20:50 NFT3

The Project: Part 1 – Opposition

The Project Part 2 – Government

BBC 2002. Dir Peter Kosminsky. With Matthew Macfadyen, Naomi Harris, Paloma Baeza, James Frain. 102min and 107min

Described in the opening captions as being fully researched but with fictitious characters, this film written by Leigh Jackson (*Warriors*) dramatises a nine-year period in the Labour Party, during which it evolved into New Labour. Following the lives of a small group of party activists from student protesters to their careers within the party and the assumption of power in 1997, the film beautifully marries the personal and the political to show their growing disenchantment with the New Labour project and the compromises they are forced to make. With stand-out performances from Matthew Macfadyen and Naomi Harris, this is one of television's finest examinations of the price of power and its corrupting influence.

Sun 18 Dec 16:00 NFT2

Britz: Part 1 – Sohail's Story

Britz: Part 2 – Nasima’s Story

Channel 4/Daybreak Pictures 2007. Dir/Writer Peter Kosminsky. *Sohail’s Story*. With Riz Ahmed, Manjinder Virk, Mary Stockley, Chinna Wodu. 106min

Nasima’s Story. With Manjinder Virk, Riz Ahmed, Chinna Wodu, Zahra Ahmadi. 116min

Winner of the BAFTA Best Drama Serial and written as well as directed by Kosminsky, this is his first totally fictional work, a complex interlocking story of the reaction of a brother and sister, brought up as Muslims in contemporary Britain, to perceived Islamic terrorism. *Sohail’s Story* portrays a young Muslim man embracing his British identity to the extent that he is willing to help the British establishment weed out what he sees as those ungrateful enough to turn on their own country. *Nasima’s Story* shows how an accumulation of heavy-handed victimisation by the British authorities and the extreme experiences of family and friends subject to new anti-terrorist legislation leads to her own fateful radicalisation, although she is brought up in the same environment as her brother. Kosminsky asks the discomfiting question: in permitting institutionalised victimisation of Muslims, are we not all to blame for the radicalisation of Britain’s Islamic youth?

Mon 19 Dec 18:30 NFT2

New York – The Quiet Catastrophe (First Tuesday)

Yorkshire ITV 1987. Dir/Prod Peter Kosminsky, Series Editor John Willis. 38min

From the strand that made Kosminsky’s name, this documentary is a moving account of the plight of New York’s homeless under the presidency of Ronald Reagan. As rents spiralled out of control, many on lower incomes were priced out of the property market; the result was a massive increase in homelessness. The city’s response was to create vast shelters for men, women and children. An early example of Kosminsky’s ability to make documentaries that cut to the emotional and intellectual heart of the subject

+ Peter Kosminsky in Conversation with Francine Stock

An opportunity to hear Peter Kosminsky talking about his remarkable career and the films shown in our retrospective, as well as some of the titles we have not been able to include such as *Warriors*, *The Government Inspector* and *The Promise*. Peter will also be taking questions from the audience.

In association with:



Tue 13 Dec 18:20 NFT3

White Oleander

USA 2002. Dir Peter Kosminsky. With Michelle Pfeiffer, Alison Lohman, Robin Wright Penn, Renée Zellweger. 109min. **12A**

Based on the novel by Janet Fitch, this moving story of a 15-year-old girl (Alison Lohman) moved into a succession of abusive foster homes after her loving but selfish mother kills her lover is redolent of themes Kosminsky was drawn to in *15 – The Life & Death of Philip Knight* and *No Child of Mine*. All show how the young are victims of the dysfunctional adult world around them. A fascinating blend of Kosminsky’s unflinching honesty with a starry A-list cast makes this a must-see.

Fri 16 Dec 20:40 NFT2

Thu 22 Dec 18:10 NFT3

About the BFI

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- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £9.50, concs £6.75 Members pay £1.50 less on any ticket. Website www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

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The benugo bar & kitchen

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There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI Southbank /