

In Memoriam: Karl 'Baumi' Baumgartner

Last Tuesday, 18 March 2014, we heard the sad news that film producer Karl Baumgartner – known in the film industry as Baumi – had passed away. Former festival director Emile Fallaux and the Supervisory Board, Management and Staff of IFFR remember him.

Baumi started out in the film industry in the 1970s, and from the 1980s played a leading role as a distributor and producer of art-house films in Europe. He was a regular visitor to our festival since that time, and from the 1990s also acted as an advisor to IFFR. Many IFFR staff, past and present, benefitted greatly from his insight and were deeply touched by his love for artistic cinema.

Rotterdam was regularly involved in the realization of Baumi's productions through the Hubert Bals Fund and CineMart. Over the years, IFFR screened dozens of films produced or co-produced by him and his company, Pandora Film Produktion: from Jan Svankmajer's *Faust* (1994) and the Quay Brothers' *Institute Benjamenta* (1995) to Pedro Costa's *No quarto da Vanda* (2000), Claire Denis' *35 Rhums* (2008) and Aki Kaurismäki's *Le Havre* (2011). He worked with directors from literally every continent: from Kim Ki-Duk to Martin Rejtman; from Leos Carax to Haile Gerima and Sergei Dvortsevov. The premieres of new films by Olivier Assays and Fatih Akin are scheduled to take place at the upcoming Cannes film festival.

Baumi was as inspirational in his personal touch as in his professional life: his completely open-minded approach to films from all over the world was paralleled by his dealings with the people he met. This made him one of the most curious, amiable personalities you could wish to meet – a man with an incredibly broad, open view of the world.

It is difficult to imagine the upcoming festivals without Baumi's presence. His intense love for cinema and his tireless search for new film talent will be with us always. We are deeply grateful for the many years during which Baumi was a part of our festival. During the period 1999 - 2009 he was a member of the International CineMart Advisory Board, acting as a true ambassador for and advisor to the festival and helping to set the festival's course throughout those successful years.

We will miss him enormously, as an advocate of the – at times vulnerable, but always crucial – artistic film. But above all, we will miss his warm personality and loyal friendship.

– Supervisory Board, Management and Staff of IFFR

In the early 90s, after the Rotterdam Film Days (now IFFR) installed me as its new director, we were eager to save the festival's intimate, informal, artistically adventurous and politically progressive (some say: anarcho-liberal) character. I need not have worried. The festival's heart and mind had seemed in peril after the death of Hubert Bals, its founder. But almost from day one our own hearts and minds were set to rest: the festival's core mentality was safely embodied by an international group of cinephiles who had been 'Rotterdam' supporters for years.

I encountered its dna in Baumi, the soft spoken but tenacious German humanist. Meet Karl Baumgartner, said another guardian angel of the festival's continuity, Sandra den Hamer. Karl and I shook hands. And that was all.

How is it that with some people one doesn't need words? Yes, for the next ten, twenty years we talked after shaking hands. But from the very first moment we knew where we were coming from. And that where we were coming from was where the festival had to be heading for. For Baumi his work was inextricably bound up with the world beyond cinema, the world at large, and more than anything with people. His loyalty to film directors and other colleagues is legendary, his commitment to social themes was clear to all, his quiet excitement for the success of hard-to-produce movies was great to share. And yes, from his Pandora's Box a good number of great films have sprung to excite us.

Baumi, you co-produced our first Hubert Bals Fund project, Chen Kaige's **Life on a String**. The string has broken and you're gone, but not what you have embodied.

– Emile Fallaux, director of International Film Festival Rotterdam from 1992 - 1996