CAMERA THREAT

नोमसाला फिल्मस प्रा. लि.

कैमरा का डर

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भित्र/बाहिर/दिन/रात

M.22

a film by Bernd Lützeler

DIRECTION & EDIT BERND LÜTZELER STARRING MANSI MULTANI, PUSHPENDRA SINGH & GIRISH PARDESHI

VOICEOVERS HARISH BHIMANI & SHAI HEREDIA MUSIC GUIDO MÖBIUS

A NOMASALA FILMS PVT. LTD. PRODUCTION

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für Kultur und Medien

Berlinale
67 Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum Expanded

CAMERA THREAT - CAMERA KA DARR

idea, direction, edit	Bernd Lützeler
production	NoMasala Films, Germany / India 2017
dimensions	29 mins 59 sec, 1 : 1.85, 24 fps, Hindi & English
double projection version	35mm & DCP, 5.1 audio, English subs
alternate digital version	DCP, 5.1 audio – or ProRes 422 HQ, stereo English, German or Portuguese subs

starring	Mansi Multani, Pushpendra Singh & Girish Pardeshi
voices	Harish Bhimani & Shai Heredia
cameras	Bernd Lützeler, Janantik Shukla, Shakir Shaikh & Shashank Peshawaria
music	Guido Möbius
audio mastering	Johannes Hampel
opticals & titles	Satish C Ajgaonkar
director's assistants	Swapnil B Sarnaik & Shashank Peshawaria
production manager	Philip Widmann
with financial support from	German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media - BKM

trailer	https://vimeo.com/197611943
vimeo screener	https://vimeo.com/204748890 Password: whiff of films
contact	Bernd Lützeler	+49.172.3947635	filmi@gmx.de www.bernd-luetzeler.de	vimeo.com/nomasala

synopsis

Somewhere in the rather dreary spheres of Mumbai's film industry, stuck between star-cult, superstition and the daily gridlock, Camera Threat explores the ambivalent, and sometimes paranoid relationship that this film city has with the moving image as such. Seated on a casting couch, two actors are getting trapped in their impromptu conversations on the unwanted side effects of a world that no longer bothers to tell facts from fiction. An expanded multi-genre film within the constraints of the so-called Masala Formula popularly known from Indian cinema.

man: *"Shooting in Mumbai is not allowed because of* Camera Threat*!"*
me: *"Excuse me, sir, what do you mean? What is '*Camera Threat*'?"*
man: *"*Camera Threat *is ...* Camera Threat*! It's* Camera Threat*!"*

artist's statement
This conversation took place as I was negotiating through the daily Mumbai gridlock a couple of years ago, determined to capture time-lapse shots for my previous film *the Voice of God*. But placing my 16mm camera with a cluster of release control, wires and batteries into a Mumbai traffic jam for several hours was sheer impossible, since every inch of asphalt in this city is being exploited commercially. When the rush hour starts, it's seen as an opportunity by thousands of hawkers to set up their shops right into the traffic. This attracts huge hordes of customers, who seem to enjoy this sort of high-density shopping experience. Whatever looks like a good spot to place a camera in the morning will be overrun by an avalanche of humans and vehicles a few hours later. And if I wasn't already being pushed away by the traffic itself, I would be bothered by the locals, asking for my shooting permission and trying to extract baksheesh from me. So after innumerable failed attempts to capture this mad traffic onto celluloid, I decided to change my strategy and started hiding my camera in a sports bag. On this particular day I was looking for an ideal spot to put my bag: a busy railway junction with enormous traffic crossing through all day. Just a few minutes after setting up the camera I noticed I had already attracted the attention of two gentlemen who were standing a few meters away, indignantly talking about the lens peeping out of my bag. To avoid any potential trouble, I went over to them and asked if there was perhaps any problem. And there was a problem. And the problem had a name: The problem was *Camera Threat*.

background
Ever since I had borrowed my very first Hindi movie, coming on a worn-out VHS tape with no subtitles and full of drop-outs and sound glitches, I became fascinated by the inconsistency in space, time, and genre in popular Indian cinema. This narrative form, also known as Masala Formula, prioritizes the spectacular over logic, by stringing multiple film genres together into one storyline. Love or family dramas get interrupted by action sequences, which get interrupted by romantic songs, which get interrupted by comic sub-plots, which get interrupted by melodrama, which get interrupted by dance routines. I always wanted to experiment with this crude but exciting film structure.

In the end it took fifteen years until I realized that during my travels to Mumbai so many materials, found footage, and ideas had piled up, enough to become the source for a Masala experiment, where all those heterogeneous fragments of film and video would come together on screen. During my previous films I had worked on 16mm and 35mm celluloid with local technicians and film labs in Mumbai. Now, for this new project, I decided to work with them again. But soon after we got started, I saw most of them running out of business, closing their doors forever, or even worse – still sitting in their studios day by day waiting for the phone to ring. With some of them, I was literally their last customer. The worldwide digitization of the film industry had finally reached Mumbai and at the climax of this hostile takeover I decided to make a hybrid film in which both mediums can peacefully coexist. Since I was already combining all sorts of analogue and digital formats, I expanded the concept of my Masala experiment: in the screening, analogue and digital images would be projected side by side, from a 35mm and a digital projector, and finally the two light cones would merge on screen.

**double projection 35mm & DCP vs. digital version**

The film is available in two different versions:

• As a double projection 35mm & DCP, with a 35mm projector and a digital projector simultaneously running side by side, with both images merging (=superimposing) on screen.

• The second (easier but less exciting) option is a simple, digital version, played from a DCP only.

• In both cases the film is intended to be watched in a black-box viewing situation (like cinema).

35mm film

digital

superimposition

double projection

double projection – requirements

• cinema with one intact 35mm and one digital projector installed side by side

• the 35mm projector should offer hard-switchable film speeds 23-24-25 FPS (operated by the filmmaker)

• the digital projector should allow to adjust the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the image

• it is necessary to run a test in the venue prior to the screening (approx. 3 - 4 hours)

• presence of the filmmaker in the projection booth during the screening is required
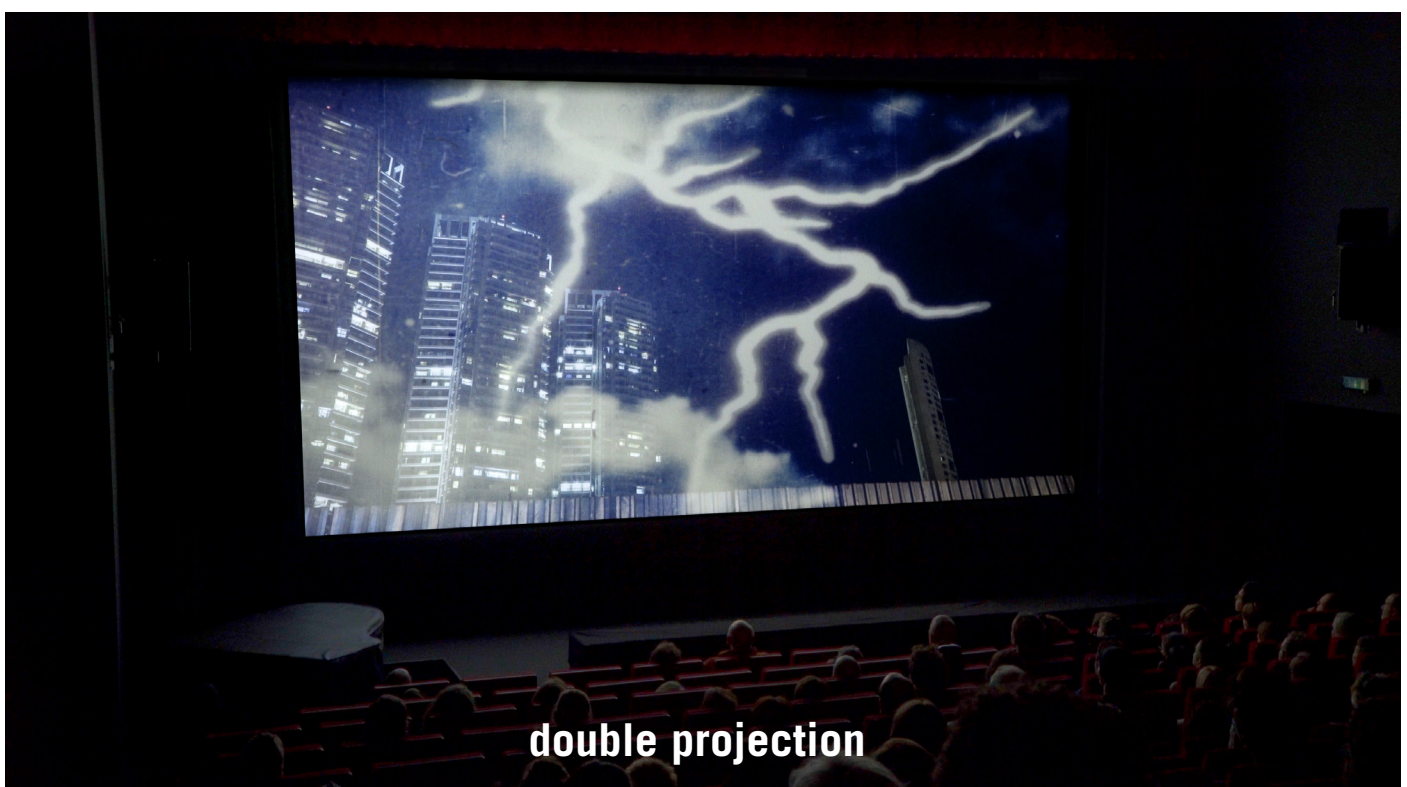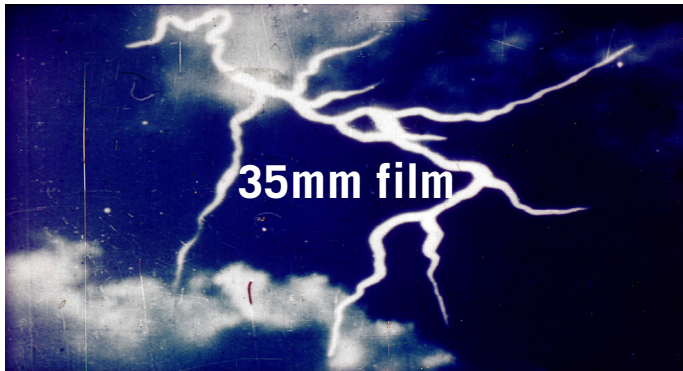
reviews

Matt Turner, film critic on MUBI Notebook
At the start of Bernd Lützeler's Camera Threat*, [a voiceover] announces with deliberate pomposity that "without a camera, there cannot be a film." Pushpendra Singh, playing an archetypical [chauvinist] Bolly-wood director, flirts smugly with a potential actress, bombarding her with film theory and empty aphorisms. "I don't distinguish between filmmaking and real life," he quickly plants, both a working statement for this film as meta-exercise and declaration of his expectation that she perform her romantic role both on and off camera. Surprised to find her welcoming these advances, he retreats, intimidated. Sat opposite each other on a casting couch, often occupying two sides of a split image, they continue their dialogue as equals now rather than artist and subject. As they conduct an unravelling, part-satirical, part-celebratory conversation about filmmaking practice and the surrounding industry, Lützeler introduces visual examples of the discussed elements to match.*
Camera Threat *vibrates with the spirit of the cinema it sends up, a celebration of filmmaking in all forms with a specific fondness for the 'masala film,' Bollywood movies that mix genres and styles — complex aesthetic exercises served in a popular form. The voiceover — delivered in the somewhat ludicrous style of a television info-documentary — examines Mumbai's relationship with cinema in between how-to segments breaking down the craft of filmmaking. At one point, the narrator explains the 'camera threat' of the title, noting it as the moment "when the machinations of the object produce material results." This is apt, as Lützeler's film is both a satirical object and an aesthetic one too. Designed as a double projection,* Camera Threat *consists of a 35mm film and a digital file than are ran over each other, the images mostly operating in different fields but occasionally intermingling and overlapping - juxtaposition and superimposition. Utilizing techniques specific to celluloid and to digital filmmaking, Lützeler manages to have the pleasure of parodying film format fetish-ism whilst indulging in it himself, mocking materialist traditions ("this is the digital age, after all, everything is liberating") in the text, whilst experimenting with them playfully in the visuals.*

Tanul Thakur, film critic in The Wire (excerpts)
The 30-minute short Camera Threat *opens to a muhurat shot. These visuals, blending the traditional and the modern, have a playful quality to them. The voiceover, though, by the veteran Harish Bhimani, is telling its own story. The chances are high that the first few minutes of* Camera Threat *will make you wonder, "What's going on?" What's really striking about* Camera Threat *is that it keeps you guessing, keeps defeating your expectations, and, at the same time, refashioning new ones. "What's going on?" you may want to ask again, but the film's determined refusal to simplify itself intrigues you further.*
Camera Threat*, among other things, is an ode to Hindi masala film. And just like the cinema it doffs its hat to,* Camera Threat*, too, juggles different aesthetics. There are random shots from B-grade movies and old Hindi films; there's footage of an old film party; some bits, like the scenes between the actress and the director, have been written and performed for the short. In several scenes, the celluloid and digital images are super-imposed on each other; in some, they're juxtaposed. In some scenes the split frames remain static, in some they shift. At times, half of the screen blacks out mid-scene. The camera in* Camera Threat *acts like a truant: restless, rebel, carefree.*
Camera Threat *tackles disparate themes: the transition from celluloid to digital (although it's refreshing to note that the director, Bernd Lützeler, isn't overly sentimental about the former); a movie camera's relation-ship with the city, Mumbai, and its people; the conventions of masala cinema, which, just like this short, is informed by constant interruptions and calculated randomness; the strivers — directors, actors, technicians — of Maximum City trying to find solace in art. Some parts of the film are factual, some fictional.* Camera Threat *is a glorious head-scratching mishmash.*
At the short's Berlinale screenings, the analog and digital images were projected side by side, from a 35mm and a digital projector, the two images merging simultaneously on screen. Camera Threat *is championing neither the past nor the future. It simply seems to be telling us, "Let's make do with what we've."*

Lalitha Gopalan, author, editor & lecturer in film studies
Your film is brilliant!! I just finished watching it and couldn't help smiling at its wit, formal rigor, and love for Bombay!

Jaime Pena, film critic, Caimán Cuadernos de Cine on Twitter
And the projection of Camera Threat *(Bernd Lützeler) combining and superimposing DCP and 35mm on the same screen. Pure virtue!*

Christian Hain, art critic in World of Arts Magazine - wartsmagazine.com
Bernd Lützeler's self reflective Camera Threat *deals with the makings of a film, and making your star. Another German filmmaker doubles as an "exotic": This is not Bollywood, but a pseudo documentary. Great.*

Indian Film Festival Stuttgart, Short Film Jury review for Honourable Mention 2017
Camera Threat *[is a] playful dialog between analog and digital footage, actress and film director on a casting couch. It shows a strong filmmaking voice characterized by a unique stylistic and non-narrative/linear approach. Watching this skillfully arranged mosaic, the film takes us on a journey through the Indian film tradition and the desires connected to it. And this time, we travel beyond genres and categories. The jury wants to acknowledge the great experimental and self-referential approach.* Camera Threat *was a welcome departure from the majority of narrative fiction. Quirky, insightful and completely original.*

Migues Dias, director of Curtas Vila do Conde International Film Festival , Portugal 2017
Bernd Lützeler is a German artist who divides his work between Berlin and Bombay. His trips to India have had a significant impact on his work, where his gaze on the aesthetics of popular Indian cinema has gained a prominent place. Lützeler's fascination grew, according to himself, from having watched an Indian film on a VHS cassette without subtitles (it was "Chahat" by Shah Rukh Khan, so the legend goes): not understanding the dialogues highlighted "the narrative formula known as Masala Formula which prioritises the spectacular over the logical. Love or family tragedies are interrupted by sequences of action, romantic songs or dances." Besides this tribute to Masala cinema, "Camera Threat" *deals with the disappearance of celluloid, absorbed as in the rest of the world by the digital. This idea, aided by the filmmaker's experience working in different analogue and digital formats, coupled with the concept of the film, conceived to be screened in a double projection (35 mm and digital) that blends with the screen. Lützeler is a member of LaborBerlin, a collective lab of analogue cinema managed by artists and filmmakers.*

Ori Levin and Ohad Landesman, Jury of Horn Experimental Film Festival Jerusalem 2018
The first prize goes to Camera Threat *for its unique and original essayistic form on the digital age in the context of the Bollywood industry.* Camera Threat *is refreshingly funny, and elegantly merges home movies and amateur photography within its overly aestheticized and coherent filmic world.*

Themythking, 4.5 rating on Letterboxd, Mumbai 2018
Extremely fun, creative, and smart. By the end we've delved so far down the rabbit hole that it turns into a passive sparring match of over used talking points but still manages to add a lot to the conversation about film and filmmaking.

Sumira Roy, Filmmaker 2018
Yesterday I binge watched a lot of your films and loved them! You do have a unique sensibility and I love how you get all the nuances and eccentricities of India, especially Mumbai. I have always loved experimental films and you are a master at them :))

festivals & screenings (so far)
Cinema Can Do Performance, Kino Arsenal, Berlin, Germany 2024
Kino Fotografic, Prague, Czech Republic 2024
Chitrangan International Film & Theatre Festival, Rewa, India 2021
Space Cafe, Tokyo, Japan 2020
Art Center Ongoing, Tokyo, Japan 2019
Save the Archives Film Festival, Milwaukee, WI, USA 2019
Aurora Picture Show, Houston, TX, USA 2019
Echo Park Film Center, Los Angeles, USA 2019
Harkat 16mm Film Festival, Mumbai, India 2018
Pori Film Festival, Pori, Finland 2018
Antimatter [Media Art], Victoria, BC, Canada 2018
The Unseen Festival, Denver, USA 2018
Ferfilm Festival, Ferizaj, Republic of Kosovo 2018
Horn Festival for Experimental Films, Jerusalem, Israel 2018
Oak Cliff Film Festival, Dallas, Texas, USA 2018
Moviate Underground Film Festival, Harrisburg, USA 2018
Filmfest Dresden, Germany 2018
Chennai International Documentary and Short Film Festival, India 2018
Go Short International Short Film Festival, Nijmegen, Netherlands 2018
Athens International Film+Video Festival, USA 2018
That One Film Festival, Muncie, USA 2018
Bucharest International Experimental Film Festival, Romania 2018
Ann Arbor Film Festival, Michigan, USA 2018
Asian Film Archive, Singapore Arts Museum 2018
Big Muddy Film Festival, Carbondale, Illinois, USA 2018
Smita Patil Documentary and Short Film Festival, Pune, India 2017
Madurai International Documentary and Short Film Festival, India 2017
Experimenta India, Bangalore, India 2017
Kasseler Dokfest, Dokumentary Film- and Video Fest, Germany 2017
Blicke Film Festival of the Ruhr Region, Bochum, Germany 2017
Unesco World Day for Audiovisual Heritage, Film Museum Potsdam, Germany 2017
Festival Bollywoodského Filmu, Prague, Czech Republic 2017
Festival international Signes de Nuit, Paris, France 2017
Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, Berwick-upon-Tweed, UK 2017
Dobra Festival Internacional de Cinema Experimental, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 2017
Indian Film Festival Stuttgart, Germany 2017
Moscow International Experimental Film Festival, Russia 2017
EXIS Moving Image Forum, Seoul, South Korea 2017
Curtas Vila do Conde Festival Internacional de Cinema, Portugal 2017
Experimenta India: Films from the Indian Avant-Garde, Los Angeles Filmforum, USA 2017
Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kerala, India 2017
Berlinale International Film Festival, Germany 2017

awards
First Prize at Horn Festival for Experimental Films, Jerusalem, Israel 2018
Kodak Cinematic Vision Award at Ann Arbor Film Festival, USA 2018
Honorable Mention at Big Muddy Film Festival, USA 2018
Honourable Mention at Indian Film Festival Stuttgart 2017

distribution

for double projection & digital version
Arsenal – Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V. Berlin
+49.30.26955.250
distribution@arsenal-berlin.de
screening fees: 50 Euro in Germany, 60 Euro abroad

for digital version
Light Cone Paris
+33.1.4659.0153
lightcone@lightcone.org
screening fees: 60 Euro

Bernd Lützeler - biography
Bernd Lützeler is a Berlin-based artist and filmmaker. His work spans experimental film, expanded cinema, and multimedia art, often exploring the interplay between analogue and digital technologies. Drawing inspiration from his extensive travels to Mumbai, he often incorporates elements of popular Indian culture and even Bollywood into his projects. He is an active member of LaborBerlin, a collective of filmmakers, dedicated to analogue and hand-made film. Bernd's works have been shown in film festivals, galleries, and cultural institutions worldwide - such as Centre Pompidou in Paris, Berlinale International Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Ann Arbor Film Festival, Views from the Avant-Garde or Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen.

Bernd Lützeler - filmography
2025   *Analogue Natives* – experimental film, double projection 35mm & DCP, 26 min
2023   *Vintage Wisdom from the Ether* – visual documentation, 16mm, 8 min
2022   *How to Build a House out of Wreckage and Rags* – found footage film, Super-8, 8 min
2018   *Fultu Faltu Filim* – experimental film, 35mm, 2 min
2018   *_galore* – experimental video, DCP 4K, 9 min
2017   *Camera Threat* – experimental film, double projection 35mm & DCP, 30 min
2017   *A Soundfilm* – found footage film, Super-8, 6 min
2016   *Batagur Baska (by Guido Möbius)* – music clip, Super-8, 8 min
2014   *Nola's saloN* – room installation with 3 Super-8 loops and sound
2014   *Traveling with Maxim Gorkiy* – found footage film, Super-8, 11 min
2011   *K⁰ Act 2* – multimedia theatre performance, 30 min
2011   *the Voice of God* – experimental film, 35mm, 10 min
2005   *Rapid Eye Love* – experimental film, Super-8, 4 min
2003   *True Love is just Filmi* – experimental video, 15 min
1998   *The Suspect Usual* – experimental video, 18 min
1998   *Eternal Showdown* – film loop for Loop-o-Rama, Super-8
1996   *Schallmann* – radio play, 6 min
1995-00 *Loop-o-Rama* – film installation, various Super-8 loops
1994   *Walls Projection Project* – slide installation with sound, 20 min
1993   *Rauschlitanei* – experimental video, 1 min loop
1992   *Zeit im Bild* – painted film animation, Super-8, 2 min

The camera is just
a technicality, a formality.