Annual Report

2010

Yangon Film School

Non-profit Association for the Promotion
of Young Burmese Film and Video Artists
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## Annual Report

### Summary of Activities in 2010

The year 2010 marked the Yangon Film School’s sixth round of workshops in Myanmar. With no fewer than eight workshops and three teaching modules resulting in some 17 new titles, it was something of a record year. The school’s plentiful output in Myanmar was matched by copious activities in the international arena; these included Visiting Fellowships abroad to Prague and London for three outstanding students, as well as presentations of 16 YFS films at international film festivals in Italy, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Switzerland and Thailand. The broad variety of activities once again reflects the project’s ability to fulfil its brief to support Myanmar’s burgeoning civil society by nurturing a growing community of talented film professionals in Myanmar and finding platforms for their work.

### Democracy at Work at YFS

The year 2010 was election year in Myanmar. YFS also held its own first election, by secret ballot, of a seven-member **YFS Committee**. This YFS Committee now meets regularly to make decisions on an array of YFS-related issues including advocacy, staffing, interviewing of potential candidates, equipment loans, production and crewing of films for NGOs and other projects. Following its successful introduction in 2009, the Training of Trainers programme continued in 2010, with more experienced YFS students assisting as student trainers during Editing Workshops. YFS graduate Myo Min Khin also led teaching modules on DVD Design and HD workflow.
In 2010 the Yangon Film School held **eight workshops** and **three teaching modules** in two blocks, as follows:

a) **How Films Work**, held in Yangon between 14 and 24 June, was a two-week **film analysis course** led by Finnish editing tutor **Tuula Mehtonen**. Attended by 18 students (nine women and nine men) the course was designed to give emerging filmmakers the ability to distinguish between different editing methods in fiction film and to understand how editing can be used to build a film’s intensity.

b) This was followed by the four-week **Introduction to Editing** course which took place in Yangon between 26 June and 24 July. Led by YFS film editing tutors **Tuula Mehtonen** (Finland) and **Jessica Ehlebracht** (Germany), this course gave 17 YFS students (eight women and nine men) the opportunity to gain a basic understanding of the technical, organisational and storytelling aspects of digital documentary film editing according to international standards.

c) Taking place between 2 and 28 August, the four-week **Advanced Editing Course: The Art of Storytelling** gave 17 Yangon Film School students (nine women and eight men) the opportunity to develop their own projects in the editing room with guidance from editing tutors **Melanie Sandford** (Australia), **Stewart Young** (Australia) and **Jessica Ehlebracht** (Germany).

The **second block of YFS workshops** kicked off in October 2010 with two parallel workshops held between 11 and 22 October:

d) Led by Finnish director and producer **Jouko Aaltonen**, the **Creative Producer: Film Production** workshop provided ten female and seven male participants with a general overview of how professional film production is organised in Europe and other parts of the world and to explain the role played by the producer as practical and creative figure in the filmmaking process.

e) Taking place in alternative sessions with the Creative Producer workshop, the **Other Ways of Seeing II: Film History and Film Language** workshop, filmmaker and Film History Tutor **Frances Calvert** deepened nine female and nine male YFS students’ understanding of different styles of filmic expression and build students’ awareness of the factors involved in making their own films for the ‘True Fictions’ course.

f) From 15 to 18 November, **YFS graduate Myo Min Khin** conducted a teaching module on **DVD Design** for three female and three male participants.
g) From 20 to 22 November YFS graduate Myo Min Khin conducted a teaching module on **Technical Workflow for True Fictions Projects** for two female and five male participants.

h) The **True Fictions II Workshop** was led by YFS Screenwriting and Directing Tutor Rachel Mathews. It ran from September to December 2010. YFS Production Management Tutor Helke Madry was in Yangon to provide a teaching module on **Production Management** and oversee pre-production and production from 25 October to 20 November. She was joined by Directing Tutor Rachel Mathews, Cinematography Tutor Lars Barthel, Sound Tutor Ivan Horák and Editing Tutor Regina Bärtschi who travelled to Yangon to monitor filming and editing from 14 November to 11 December. Eight women and seven men took part in this workshop. It resulted in two short fiction films with a documentary sensibility using non-actors in actual locations. Both films were shot from scripts developed during the 2009 Screenwriting Workshop, one by experienced older writer Dr Aung Min, one by young Chin writer, Anna Biak Tha Mawi. Both stories were written from personal experience and are based on real-life events in Myanmar.

i) From 6 to 19 January, 2011, the school’s Sound Tutor Ivan Horák travelled to Yangon to conduct a two-week workshop in **Sound Design**. The course was attended by five female and four male students who have a particular interest in sound and music recording and mixing, but also in installation art.

j) The **True Fictions Editing Workshop** was conducted in Yangon by YFS Editing Tutor Regina Bärtschi from 23 January to 16 February 2011 for two female YFS editing students working on separate edits of the two ‘True Fictions’ productions: ‘Bungkus’ and ‘Has the Water Risen’, filmed during the ‘True Fictions II Workshop’ in November/December 2010.

During the course of 2010, the Yangon Film School also:

a) Cooperated from June to September 2010 with the **European Burma Office** and the **Charles Wallace Trust Burma** to send YFS student Lay Thida to the UK to attend the National Film and Television School’s **SummerDocs** course, during which Lay Thida independently researched, filmed and edited a short documentary entitled **Wrong Side Up** about a Burmese street musician in London.

b) Cooperated with clients **Pyoe Pin, Shalom Foundation** and the **Local Resource Centre** to send **Flying Mentors Jessica Ehlebracht** and **Regina Bärtschi** to Yangon to oversee the edit and post-production of the projects **Rice: Towards a Better Future**; **Hidden Wounds** and **Respectful Encounters**.

c) In August 2010 YFS Director Lindsey Merrison travelled to **Douarnenez** in France to present a selection of five YFS films at the annual Festival du Cinéma.

d) In September the Yangon Film School held a **Brunch in Berlin** to present the work of YFS student Lay Thida to an audience of tutors, YFS board members and those interested in Burma or working in other development projects in this country.

e) In November 2010 YFS Director and two YFS students currently studying at FAMU in Prague, **Thu Thu Shein** and **Thaiddhi** presented several YFS films at a
f) Also in November, YFS student Maung Okkar travelled from Yangon to Munich and Wiesbaden to present his first documentary Charcoal Boy (YFS, 2009) in competition at the Munich Festival of Student Films. He also presented a selection of four other YFS films at exground Film Festival in Wiesbaden. He was accompanied by YFS Editing Tutor Jessica Ehlebracht.

1. Breakdown of the YFS Management / Project Plan

January 2010 – March 2010:

During this period the YFS Director and Project Assistant undertook the following:

- Preparation of financial and narrative reports of 2009 workshop
- Supervision of subtitling and post-production of 14 films made in 2009
- Grant writing and other fundraising activities including:
  - Funding missions, visibility actions such as screenings of YFS work to potential clients, festival organisers, NGOs, donors
- Pre-workshop organisation including:
  - Devising courses
  - Sourcing and selecting of participants, tutors and staff
  - Workshop permit applications
  - Coordinating travel arrangements
  - Researching and purchasing of equipment and teaching materials
  - Cash flow and fund management
- Coordination of the YFS Flying Mentorship Programme
- Submitting YFS films to festivals and coordinating YFS students’ participation at international festivals and events
- Creating individual DVDs and portfolios of students’ work
- Year-round mentoring of individual projects for NGOs as well as individual films by YFS students
- Year-round mentoring of YFS students in all organisational and contractual aspects of running the YFS as a media resource
- Establishing contacts to broadcasters, festivals and other organisations to pave the way for co-productions, training programmes and scholarships

14 June – 29 August 2010

YFS Project Coordinator Helke Madry travelled to Yangon to:

- Supervise Film Analysis and Editing Workshops and support tutors
- Prepare the workshop venue with students
- Prepare teaching materials
- Liaise with the Workshop Manager on catering and shuttle service
- Re-negotiate workshop venue/hotel rates with hotel owner
- Organise meetings between students and tutors about course work
- Oversee the work of the YFS local Accountant, Project Director and Project Assistants
- Finalise contracts with tutors and YFS staff
- Organise election of YFS Committee Members
Prepare True Fictions project pitch meeting

10 August – 20 August, 2010
YFS Director Lindsey Merrison travelled to Yangon to:
- Monitor progress of Editing Workshops and individual projects
- Meet with NGO clients to discuss progress of commissioned projects
- Attend a Management Committee meeting and oversee the election by YFS students of a seven-member YFS Committee
- Interview candidates for 2011 Beginners’ Workshop

1 September – 12 December, 2010
True Fictions II Workshop preparation in Berlin and Yangon followed by workshops proper. Project Coordinator Helke Madry supervising in Yangon from 10.10. – 18.12.10; Lindsey Merrison in Yangon to monitor progress from 25.11. – 12.11.10

6 January – 17 February, 2011
YFS Sound Tutor Ivan Horák travelled to Yangon to hold the Sound Design workshop; YFS Editing Tutor Regina Bärtschi travelled to Yangon on 22.01.11 to mentor the True Fictions Editing Workshop

December 2010 – May 2011:
Supervision of the online edits and post-production of the 17 films produced in 2010 (includes fine cutting; subtitles, colour correction, rights clearance, credits in Burmese and English, sound mix, edit of workshop film, production of four NGO DVDs, three workshop DVDs, cover design, inlay text), preparation of financial and narrative reports and individual audits.

2. Fundraising

In spite of having attracted one-off funding from a new donor – Singapore-based Freedom to Create – it was not possible to secure all the funding required to cover the initial 2010 budget of 283,000 Euro. This situation was compounded when in May 2010 regular YFS funder Heinrich Boell Foundation announced an unexpected budget cut of 50% of their usual contribution. This required a stringent reworking of the budget and a marked reduction in equipment purchases, so that the planned upgrade of YFS equipment to comply with internationally prevalent HD specifications had to be abandoned. The two 10-week blocks of workshops could however go ahead as planned thanks to funding pledges from SIDA, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Goethe Institute Jakarta.

(i) Comments

The YFS Director’s bid to secure funding for the school for the next three years was partially successful thanks to a 43-page funding application she prepared and submitted to the Europe Union for the years 2011 and 2012 which was approved in December 2010. At the time of writing, the Finnish Media Foundation VIKES has also confirmed a second three-year term of funding for YFS for the period 2011-13. Together, these pledges constitute approximately 46.5% of the budget required to fund the YFS’ current activities. Nonetheless, the YFS Director is still needs to bridge to gap of 150,000 Euro annually in order to fully-fund the project.

However, if the YFS is to continue to expand and diversify at its present rate, substantial funding still needs to be found to finance the school as a permanent – and possibly even regional – training centre with a regular curriculum, housed in its own building. This building should be large enough to house residential workshops, regular screenings, several edit rooms, as well as office and post-production facilities.
The YFS Director would welcome suggestions from the school’s regular donors as to how such funding could be secured.

3. Schedule, Methodology and Tutors

Mindful of the need to give students an opportunity to ‘digest’ what they learn during workshops and have sufficient time to work on films independently, in 2010 YFS tutors decided to offer trainings in two separate semesters. Hence the first block – devoted to Editing – was held over a ten-week period from June to August, whilst the second block, held from October to December, concentrated first on film production and film language and then, following a two-week break for pre-production, dovetailed into the True Fictions Workshop and edit.

As usual, the workshops were taught in a mixture of classroom teaching, practical exercises, screenings, feedback sessions and individual mentorship, culminating in several short documentaries and two short scripted films with a documentary aesthetic. This year, approximately half the workshops were residential.

The Editing Analysis and Introduction to Editing workshops were led by editors Tuula Mehtonen (Finland) and Jessica Ehlebracht (Germany); Jessica later led the The Art of Storytelling: Advanced Editing workshop for which she was joined by co-tutors Melanie Sandford and Stewart Young from Australia. The Creative Producer course was led by Finnish filmmaker and producer Jouko Aaltonen; Australian filmmaker and lecturer Frances Calvert led the Other Ways of Seeing II: Film History and Film Language course and British director and screenwriter Rachel Mathews led the True Fictions workshop. She was joined by co-tutors German cinematographer and filmmaker Lars Barthel, Czech sound engineer and designer Ivan Horák, German editor Regina Bärtschi and German production management tutor Helke Madry, who also supervised both workshop semesters. YFS students received feedback on all projects and ongoing tuition in subtitling from YFS Director Lindsey Merrison who was in attendance during workshops in Yangon.

4. Permits, Participants and Implementation

Thanks to ongoing advocacy efforts, YFS has been able to maintain good relations with the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation (MMPO), Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise (MMPE) and the Ministry of Information. In particular, cross-pollination between YFS and other institutions such as the University of Culture (where several YFS-trained students teach), the broadcaster Myanmar International Channel (where two YFS students Su Su Thaing Win and Lwin Ko Ko Oo are working as Production Manager and Programme Managers respectively), MRTV (in 2010, MRTV editor Myint Myint Kyi, who is also a teacher at the National University of Arts and Culture, joined the YFS How Films Work: Film Analysis Course) and the MMPE’s film laboratory (where YFS student Han Linn Aung is Lab Manager), helps to consolidate the role of YFS within Myanmar’s media sector. As a result of this strategic collaboration, YFS was once again issued with the necessary Permits in order to implement all activities at the venue of choice and with beneficiaries of our choosing. Business Visas were also issued to all international tutors. As of 2011, YFS intends to apply for year-long permits to enable greater flexibility in planning.

The first semester of Editing Workshops (June–August) was consistently well attended. However, as Directing and Screenwriting tutor Rachel Mathews explains in her report about the True Fictions workshop, crewing of the two ‘True Fictions’ films proved challenging since several experienced students were unable to attend due to their involvement in other
projects at the time of the 2010 Election in Myanmar. In view of this situation, tutors and YFS Committee members exceptionally decided to give promising YFS Screenwriters an opportunity to take part in the second semester of workshops so that production of both ‘True Fictions’ films could go ahead.

(i) Workshop Venue

The Princess Hotel on Than Lwin Road in Kamaryut Township has been the home of YFS workshops for the past six years. Situated in a quiet part of Yangon and with a diversity of rooms to accommodate tutors, students, screenings, teaching and editing, the hotel had always proved ideal for workshops. In 2010 the hotel was leased to new management. Although the new manager and his wife were initially accommodating and workshops were conducted there successfully, the hotel, which now derives most of its income from renting out rooms to largely nocturnal clientele at an hourly rate, has gained a reputation that makes it very difficult for our female students in particular to feel comfortable about staying there. In addition, the nightly comings and goings regularly robbed several tutors of their sleep. Sadly, this has made the hotel untenable as a workshop venue. Finding a new location for YFS workshops will therefore be one of the first, daunting tasks in 2011.

5. Student Trainers

In 2010, YFS continued its policy, commenced in 2009, of inviting YFS graduates and student trainers to teach at workshops. During the Introduction to Editing workshop held in July, student trainers Hnin Ei Hlaing, Pe Maung Same, The Maw Naing and Zaw Win Htwe were asked to observe participants with little or no previous knowledge of Final Cut Pro editing suites and assist where necessary as they learned how to set up, digitalise and prepare projects for editing. These student trainers were also called upon to share their knowledge during classroom sessions.

In a pair of two-day teaching modules prior to the True Fictions II workshop in November/December, YFS graduate and digital editing software specialist Myo Min Khin firstly described How to Design and Produce DVDs of finished films. Subsequently, in preparation for the True Fictions Workshop that was to follow, he explained the High-Definition Technical Work Flow necessary in order to capture and synch up separately recorded soundtracks of HD projects.

(i) Comments

Involving more experienced YFS students as trainers once again proved to be a successful move: teaching was more direct as it was being conducted in Burmese, and student-trainers enjoyed consolidating and transferring their knowledge to their peers. Integrating students into teaching not only enables tutors to monitor student trainers’ knowledge, but the tutors
themselves were also delighted to learn from IT specialist and YFS graduate Myo Min Khin, who has agreed to support YFS as a technical consultant.

6. **Election of YFS Committee, Management, School Regulations**

August 14, 2010 was an historic day for YFS since it marked the election into office of a seven member YFS Committee. Of 35 participants eligible for voting, 27 took part in the secret ballot (some votes were received via email) and the following three female and four male YFS students were duly elected: **Lay Thida, Hnin Ei Hlaing, Eh Mwee, Ko Thiha, Pe Maung Same, Zaw Win Htwe** and **Nyi Linn Seck**. No sooner did the Committee take up its work than members were asked to address a number of urgent management issues including staffing, responsibilities of individual staff members and equipment loans.

From the minutes of the first two Committee meetings it was apparent that the process of learning good governance is a gradual one. Although much discussion took place, there appeared to be an inherent reluctance to come to a decision. As part of the process of acquiring the skills of democracy in action, members have since begun to realize the need to find solutions and make decisions in order to move on and allow YFS to grow and mature as an organisation. At a Committee meeting at the beginning of 2011, the members came back to the set of Regulations that had been meticulously drafted in by the YFS Director and students at the end of 2009 and decided that it should be ratified by all YFS students.

At the time of writing the YFS Committee has appointed the following staff at the YFS house: one **Project Director** (Eh Mwee), one **Local Accountant** (Ni Mar), one **Project Assistant** (Hnin Ei Hlaing), one **Permit and House Manager** (Pe Maung Same), one **Editing Equipment Manager** (Khin Kin Hsu). The **Camera and Sound Equipment Manager** position is still currently under discussion.

The Committee has also raised the sociological concern that, when the position of YFS Project Director is assumed by a YFS filmmaker, this makes it difficult for the person in question to a) manage their peers and b) make their own films as well as manage commissioned works. To resolve this difficulty, the Committee has independently decided to outsource the position of YFS Project Director and is currently interviewing candidates from the development and media sectors.

7. **Company Registration, Licences**

Having been away attending a cinematography course at the FAMU film school in Prague for most of 2009, in 2010 the YFS member responsible for the company registration subsequently took up a Masters Degree course at the same school and so it was not possible to make any progress on this application during 2010. It is hoped that this YFS member will be able to pursue this application when they return to Yangon in June 2011.

However, YFS continues to renew on an annual basis licences issued by local authorities for filming, production and editing. These licences enable YFS to operate in the media sector.
II How Films Work: An Introduction to Film Analysis
A two-week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 14 – 26 June 2010

Report by YFS Editing Tutor Tuula Mehtonen

1. Rationale for the Course

The idea of the course was to give emerging filmmakers the ability to distinguish between different editing methods in fiction film and to understand how editing can be used to build a film’s intensity. The course was an introduction to observing and analysing, emotion, form, structure, dramaturgy and content. The main goal of the course was the development of individual, creative thinking based on experience.

(i) Participants

This analysis course was open to all YFS-students and initially the plan was to take in 6-12 students. Later, 6 screenwriting students clamoured to be admitted to the course which meant that there were 18 students all together. Although the group was rather large the contribution of the screenwriting students was useful because they were clearly more used to leading discussions than the other students. The difference between the beginners and more advanced students was also quite marked, but it didn’t disturb the overall high level of discussions.

(ii) Teaching and Working Methods

The course was taught in a classroom and contained a mixture of lectures, screenings, shot-by-shot viewings, group work, discussions, preparation of assignments and, finally, independent presentations.

The course was taught in two six-day weeks plus one extra day. During the first three days of the first week the emphasis was on lectures and sample films. The three films to be analysed were screened at the end of the week; each film was screened twice during the course of one day. One half of the second week was devoted to intensive group work and the other half to each group’s presentations.
2. Week One: How Films Work

The first theme of the course was emotion. We began by taking a look at various prevalent theories about emotion. We also talked about how emotions are connected to expectations, as well as to interruptions and delays in fulfilling these expectations, and how the spectator can adopt either a trusting-incorporative or a suspicious-aversive mood. In our first exercise, over one hundred stills were placed on the table and the students were asked to think of their own either current or recalled emotions and express those emotions by means of the still photographs. The chosen images were then analysed and discussed in order to explore how far each student’s individual emotional reaction could also be regarded as universal.

Carlos Saura’s film *Cría Cuervos* (Spain 1978) edited by Pablo G. Del Amo was then screened and the emotional response discussed. Overcoming the students’ natural reticence (imbued by their cultural practices) about discussing emotion proved arduous but ultimately successful. Students learned there are no ‘right’ answers and that their own feelings are the right tools for future film-makers and film editors. In cross-cultural exercises they also learned to understand intentionality by watching body language. Not unexpectedly, the girls were more perspicacious but also shy about speaking in front of the group. I therefore called on everyone to speak, which made the discussions somewhat more elongated but culturally productive.

The second theme of the course was different levels of meaning – from the bare-bone plot summary to more abstract and general meaning. This entailed a lecture on the basic components of film language and another on how to help an audience identify with the characters in a film. *Cría Cuervos* was screened a second time and the difference between the plot and the theme of the film was discussed, first in small groups and then all together in the classroom. I also created a timeline of the film in preparation for exercises in analysis that were to follow.

Two versions of Krzysztof Kieslowsky’s film *A Short Film about Love* (Poland 1989) edited by Ewa Smal, were screened as an example of how it is possible to edit different films from the same material. The cinema version of *A Short Film about Love* is 86 minutes long and the television version is 58 minutes. When comparing the two, the participants saw how a film’s length can allow the filmmaker to explore its content more deeply.

Three more films were screened. Each film was screened twice, and each time, the above-mentioned approach to group work and discussions was used. These films were: *In the Mood for Love* (Hong Kong 2000) directed by Wong Kar-Wai and edited by William Chung; *The Crash* (USA 2004) directed by Paul Haggis and edited by Hughes Winborne; *Mulholland Drive* (USA 1999) directed by David Lynch and edited by Mary Sweeney. Between these screenings, I gave a talk about the different structural approaches used in these films. It transpired that the initial translations of the handouts were not always very good and so I had them re-translated, with assistance from course participant Pe Maung Same and YFS translator Aung Ming Tun. For much of the film-specific vocabulary we decided to stick to the English terms rather than try to translate them into Burmese; instead, I explained the meaning of each term in detail and the translator put my explanations into Burmese.

At this point in the course the students were divided into groups in order to prepare a summary of their discussions. There were six groups altogether; in each group there
was one screenwriter. We were also careful to include one advanced and one less experienced film students and maintain a good gender balance in each group. Two groups were each given the same film to analyse; the first group was to analyse the first half of the film, and the second group, the second half. The desired result was achieved as by this time, everybody seemed very keen to talk.

### 3. Week Two: Exercises in Film Analysis

In the second week the groups were given two days to create a more detailed analysis of their film. During this exercise, the groups were asked to describe the contribution of each scene to the whole film and to evaluate each scene in terms of the overall structure of the film. Groups were asked to create a timeline for the characters and themes, identify plot points and anything else of interest that occurred to them in the film they were analysing. The groups were also asked to choose one scene and draw a floor plan of the scene on white board. In this way, they learned about the various set-ups, image sizes and camera angles and learned to analyse the meaning of every cut.

#### (i) Final Assignment: Presentations

Each group was given one day for their presentation. In a move from addressing me or the translator, the participants learned how to address to whole audience and present their ideas and timelines and defend their decisions. Translation from Myanmar into English and vice versa was lengthy and slow and, since there was plenty of discussion, this made our days rather long and exhausting!

#### (ii) Evaluation

By the end of the course, all the participants had viewed each film three times and looked at them from differing points of view. Firstly, films were viewed from an emotional point of view; after the second screening we concentrated on what happened in the film, and asked ourselves what the theme was, as well as the possible message, and finally, we listened to the presentations by each of the six groups, during which the film was scrutinised scene by scene.

The course was demanding for the normally non-opinionated Burmese but I am confident that the participants learned how professional and careful analysis of films is essential in acquitting the skills involved in filmmaking and in editing in particular.

#### (iii) The Cultural Perspective

I was very curious to see how the Burmese students would react to the selected films. There were fewer cultural differences in the way the films were received than I had expected. However there was a significant difference between the more advanced students and the beginners, especially when it came to their ability to find the film’s theme. The students also expressed their uneasiness in watching sex scenes. I had to explain how the sex scenes in these films are there not for their own sake but on account of their deeper emotional meaning which can be detected only by examining one’s own true feelings while watching.
In a revealing exercise in cross-cultural reception, also screened a few scenes of an Hungarian film *Angi Vera*, directed by Pal Gabor because the opening of this film is a good example of how to build audience identification with the protagonist. When I screened the same excerpt in Finland and asked students to imagine what will happen to the protagonist later in the film all the Finnish film students were convinced that the protagonist was sincere and believed things would end badly for her at the end of the film. The Burmese students however immediately saw that the protagonist would survive and that she would be prepared to ‘sell her soul’ for her own good.

**4. Recommendations**

It is extremely important for a filmmaker to watch many films and analyse them carefully. For the future I have three different suggestions in order to improve participants’ skills in editing and structural analysis:

1. More advanced students such as Pe Maung Same, The Maw Naing and screenwriter Aung Min are, I believe, in a position to lead this kind of course for less experienced students. They now know the method. I would like to suggest that participants should select a film in groups of two or three and then take a week to analyse the film together. At the end of this period, each group should present their analysis to the others. The time frame would be: one week for preparation, one and half days for each film screening and presentation.

Tuula Mehtonen and YFS Student The Maw Naing

2. I would also like to suggest that this analysis course could become a regular part of future courses so that in addition to general analysis, a certain film from the classical or contemporary canon could be analysed from the point of view of cinematography, sound design, and editing by professionals from each of these fields.

3. Similar analysis courses could also be held on documentary film, accompanied by lectures on different types of documentary filmmaking.

**II Introduction to Editing Documentary**

A four-week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Yangon, Myanmar, from 28 June – 24 July 2010

Report by YFS Editing tutors Tuula Mehtonen and Jessica Ehlebracht

**1. Aims**

The aim of the four-week *Introduction to Editing Course* held by the film editors Tuula Mehtonen (Finland) and Jessica Ehlebracht (Germany) in Yangon, Myanmar in summer 2010 was to give Yangon Film School students the opportunity to gain a basic understanding of the technical, organisational and storytelling aspects of digital documentary film editing according to international standards.
Theory and technical lectures were accompanied by practical editing exercises to give the participants the chance to look closely at key elements of documentary storytelling such as how to approach observational material, how to deal with filmed conversation and how the use of voice-over changes the meaning of images.

2. Participants

All YFS members interested in film editing were invited to take part in the Introduction to Editing Course – from absolute beginners to students with some prior or even more regular editing experience. Since YFS successfully introduced the TOT (training of trainers) idea in the 2009 workshops, our plan was to involve the technically more experienced students in the beginners’ education in order to try to get the best result out of each student. The core of participants comprised 18 participants (eight women and ten men) which we divided up into six working groups. Three YFS screenwriting students who had barely engaged with documentaries and computers before were also taken on board to give them the chance to delve into the world of digital documentary film editing.

3. Course Structure

Since there was a huge difference in the course participants’ prior knowledge, we decided to keep the schedule flexible and update it according to the students’ progress. We wanted to be sure that they had enough time to understand the technical aspects and to think and reflect thoroughly on the content of the editing exercises. Material for all the editing exercises was taken from the documentary Rice – Towards a Better Future, an NGO production filmed by YFS members in 2009.

Basically, the Introduction to Editing Course consisted of:

- classroom lectures on technical and organisational aspects i.e., following the natural workflow of the documentary editing process; basic editing rules; the documentary editing process; dramatic structure and film editing history
- hands-on exercises on preparatory steps i.e., setting up the editing suite; creating a new Final Cut Pro project and capturing material and the editing process itself
- one-to-one tutoring of the students in the editing rooms during the editing process
- screenings and discussions of rushes and the edited exercises with the whole group
- screenings and analyses of documentaries edited by the tutors and other professionals.
4. Week One

We began the course in the classroom, teaching the components of the digital editing suite, the basics of Apple Macintosh computers and the editing software (Final Cut Pro) as well as the preparative steps in the editing process, such as logging, capturing and organizing the filmed footage. All available editing laptops were brought into the classroom to help the students practice directly what they had been shown. The course participants were then asked to move into their individual editing rooms, to repeat for themselves the steps that had been taught and to prepare their material for the first editing exercise. The idea of pairing absolute beginners with the more advanced students really paid off – all the teams were able to help each other without much recourse to the tutors.

Participants practicing in the classroom

The material used for the first editing exercise was thirty minutes of observational material from a YFS-produced film Rice: Towards a Better Future introducing two different ploughing methods: one with buffalos and one using tractors. After watching the rushes together on the big screen the students were free to assemble the material in either a one or two-minute sequence or a two-minute short film.

In view of the world soccer championship taking place in South Africa, the documentary The Final Kick (edited by Guido Krajewski) was screened during this week. It showed how the magic of editing can blend the expectations and emotions of football supporters from all over the world into one exiting and dramatic adventure!

At first, I thought: if the editor has a script and the materials then all they have to do is put them together. I now realise what a key role the editor plays!

Su San (pictured right), participant, YFS Editing Workshops 2010

5. Week Two

The students worked on their first editing exercise and we circulated around each groups’ editing room twice a day, viewing the cuts and giving feedback on content and technical input according to the students’ own goals, and charting their progress.

In the middle of the week we all met up in the classroom to screen and discuss the outcome of this exercise. There was an atmosphere in the classroom of committed and constructive work and the participants were really astonished by the different interpretations that the editing of one piece of material can offer.
The second editing exercise was designed to help the students learn how to edit interviews. They received 15 minutes of images in which a rice farmer worships the field spirits and a choice of three conversations in which the protagonist himself talks: 1) about the tradition of worship, 2) about his family life and 3) about his experience of Cyclone Nargis. The students were asked to choose one of the interviews, edit it and use it as voice-over or on camera for the scene of worshipping.

By way of showing one approach to filmed conversation, Jessica introduced her working method and showed the students how to do a “paper edit” using a transcript of the interview and Tuula gave a lecture on the basic rules of editing.

The documentary The Cutting Edge – The Magic of Movie Editing (directed by Wendy Apple) was screened to broaden the students’ minds as to the endless possibilities open to the film editor and the editor’s power, and as well to introduce the students to the historical background of film editing.

6. Week Three

Week Three began with the course participants working on their second editing exercise in their rooms and us circulating, watching and discussing their cuts and individual approaches.

A lecture on how to overlay the edited interview onto a cut sequence was given and the method of creating subtitles was taught.

Jessica screened parts of the film Rivers and Tides (directed and edited by Thomas Reidelsheimer) to give an example of the use of voice-over and interview in a documentary film.

The screening of the second exercises in the middle of the week opened up a valuable discussion as to how the editor can carve the best out of filmed material or destroy its power by neglecting its real potential. The latter case was well revealed when one of the screenwriting students worked the whole night through to finish his sequence, but instead of really trying to see the footage he was given and deriving the editing structure from it, he imposed his own theoretical interpretation on it and made an enormous number of cuts which in the end nobody understood.

The third and final editing exercise was introduced by a lesson from Tuula about dramatic structure in documentary film editing, a screening of the film A Portrait of a Man (edited by Tuula herself) and a talk about her editing process and co-operation with the director.

For this exercise we decided to provide 45 minutes of footage about the process of rice transplantation for the beginner editors and asked them to cut one two-minute piece from it. We gave the advanced students 3.5 hours of footage of several scenes from the Rice film (about a spirit festival, rice growing and rain) for a free associative 5-7 minute sequence. Music was allowed to be used in this exercise.

As in the previous exercises, all of the rushes were screened to the whole group in the classroom and this time the students found out how tiring it can be to watch an apparently endless amount of rushes. Then the students went to work on their final exercise.

7. Week Four

Week Four was all about finishing the final exercise. The students worked day and night in the editing rooms to finish their given task successfully and we were constantly present to support them.
A lecture on sound issues in editing was given by Jessica and while she was talking about fading audio, one of the students “faded” himself out due to exhaustion and amused the class with his snores.

The final two workshop days were reserved for the screening and discussion of the final exercises and on these two days it became clear that this element in the course was one of the most important as it aroused endless topics for discussion.

The smaller exercise, in which young girls were transplanting rice in heavy rain while men were standing by, evoked a major, heated discussion on gender in the class. The bigger exercise in turn stirred up a discussion about Buddhist practice: Buddhist beliefs compared with spirit worship. We all finally agreed that the editing of a film is good when people begin to talk about the questions it raises and forget to discuss the film itself.

During the course we were quite worried about one particular student who had already edited a hundred Burmese films and who had really absorbed a formulaic and rather unthinking method of editing as a result. However, with the third exercise, something happened to him and he surprised us with two very different and excellent sequences. His first one was a political metaphor of what happened during the uprising in Myanmar in 1988 and with the second he succeeded in creating a beautiful poem of rice fields and rain. By the end of the course, thanks to him, all the students saw a really good example of the magic of editing.

8. Results

Being able to focus solely on the topic of film editing for four weeks was the great advantage of this Introduction to Editing Course. Documentary film editing and digital documentary film editing in particular is a broad field with many different aspects to understand and learn. During this course there was an atmosphere of lively concentration all the time. The students appreciated the value of taking a profound look at all the aspects: technical issues, the content of film editing and interpersonal questions regarding the job. More advanced students assisted the beginners as a matter of course while the beginners did not hesitate to ask for help if needed.

The Introduction to Editing Course helped those students who had some experience of editing to study and deepen their knowledge while the beginners were able to gain an initial impression of the complexity of the work of a documentary film editor.

We are sure that some of the course participants now feel motivated to continue as editors; for example, Snow, Khin Khin Hsu, May Htoo Cho should have the chance to edit as much as possible and receive the help and feedback of the YFS tutors.
Others who worked hard and made huge leaps during the course included Zaw Win Htwe and The Maw Naing. These two could attend a similar kind of workshop focusing on using personal or essayistic voice-over with images in an effective and expressive way.

They would also benefit from structural analysis of a selection of documentary films. A combination of analysis and prepared lectures, together with somewhat broader tutored exercises and discussions would strengthen their skills as editors.

The beginner students have now gained a glimpse of film editing, and who are obviously interested in learning more are Khin Myo Myat, Su San, Lwin Ko Ko Oo, Sann Maw Aung. We could offer another basic editing course where they could have the chance to do more editing themselves.

### III The Art of Storytelling – Advanced Editing Course

A four-week YFS workshop held in Yangon, Myanmar from 2 – 28 August 2010

Report by YFS Editing Tutor Jessica Ehlebracht, Berlin, 2010

1. **Aims**

The aim of the 4-week *The Art of Storytelling – Advanced Editing Course* held in Yangon, Myanmar in August 2010 was to give six Yangon Film School students the opportunity to develop their own projects in the editing room with guidance from the editing tutors Melanie Sandford (Australia), Stewart Young (Australia) and Jessica Ehlebracht (Germany). YFS filmmakers had the choice to either edit their projects themselves or to ask another YFS member to act as an editor for them.

The focus was not on finishing the editing during the course, but to use the time given to explore and experiment with the raw material, to try to work as independently as possible and to find the best way to tell the film’s story in an interesting and engaging way. Students were able to work on either a documentary or a ‘true fiction’ (docufiction) piece.

2. **Participants and Projects**

We were pleasantly surprised to learn how many YFS students had filmed material during our absence and were willing to take part in the Advanced Editing Course. We decided to take on board as many students as possible and ask some of those with smaller projects to share an editing room and work in shifts. A couple of students even brought their own computer to be able to edit as much as possible during our presence in Yangon. Those who had only just learned the basics of editing during the *Introduction to Editing Course* one month previously were also keen to keep on learning and some of them grasped the opportunity to act as assistant editor on a project or even edit a project themselves.

May Htoo Cho working with a Shan translator on her version of ‘Unreported Story’
In the end we had ten different projects to be cut during the course (one of them to be edited twice by two different YFS students) and 17 students (nine women and eight men) taking part as editors, directors, editor-directors or assistant editors. All projects were documentaries.

3. Course Structure

The students were asked to capture and prepare their filmed material in the spare week before the Advanced Editing Course so as to be able to keep as much time of the course as possible for the editing process itself.

Each of us editing tutors was given three or four projects to mentor and we individually made appointments and schedules with our students according to their process and their needs in the editing room.

One project was a commission for the Burmese broadcaster MRTV international (The Game – about traditional Myanmar boxing) and had a deadline to be finished during the course.

The Advanced Editing Workshop Projects


**The River** (WT) – a poetic documentary about Myanmar’s largest river. Directed by Tay Zar Win Tun, edited by Pe Maung Same. Assistant Editor: Su San. Editing Mentor: Stewart Young.


**Young Gay** (WT) – a film on the topic of a young gay’s coming out. Directed and edited by Hnin Ei Hlaing. Assistant Editor: Khin Myo Myat. Editing Mentor: Jessica Ehlebracht.


**Clinic** – a documentary on challenges facing a Myanmar doctor on a daily basis. Directed by Dr Aung Myint, edited by The Maw Naing. Editing Mentor: Stewart Young.


**Unreported Story** – a documentary about a young Shan woman who tells us the unbelievably painful story of her life. Directed by Lay Thida, edited by Eh Mwee (Version one) and May Htoo Cho (Version two). Editing Mentor: Jessica Ehlebracht.
Retrospection (WT) – a film in which the director’s father looks back on his glamorous life as a well-known Myanmar screen actor but also the sad story of his failed marriage. Directed and edited by Aung Nwai Htway. Editing Mentor: Stewart Young.

4. Week One

To get all the projects and students going at the same time was a big challenge for us tutors at the beginning of the Advanced Editing Course. We started off with an introductory meeting in the classroom to get to know each other’s projects and the students’ expectations. We aimed to follow everyone’s process throughout the course and to gather everyone together again for rough cut screenings and discussions and to glean how fruitful their encounters had been during the Introduction to Editing Course. We then put participants into little groups (each tutor with his/her students) to clarify the projects’ status and to devise a schedule of work for the first few days of the workshop.

Those students who did not have the time to prepare their rushes in the spare week prior to the Advanced Editing Course began to log and capture their footage into the computers and to transcribe their filmed conversations which were then translated by an interpreter. Those who had already finished their preparatory steps sat down with their tutors, watched rushes, discussed them and considered how best to start the editing process.

Role allocation and responsibilities were among the initial topics in those editing rooms where students had decided to work together as director, editor and assistant editor.

A student who had won the YFS Pitching Competition at the end of 2009 with his idea for a documentary about his own family history, Aung Nwai Htway, and who, due to his employment in a local NGO, had not found the time for filming before, decided to use the period of the workshop to shoot his film and Stewart, as his mentor, sat down with him to develop a filming schedule.

5. Week Two

Time for dramatic structure and paper edits in several editing rooms. Students were asked to think about the emotional and argumentative goal of their films before starting to map out their documentaries using paper, pens, scissors and tape. All available space in the edit suites at the workshop’s venue was used to work on the puzzle.

Interesting cultural discussions were raised between us tutors and the students while looking at topics such as education or homosexuality in Myanmar. Some students were asked to do pick ups or to organise photographs for the ‘gaps’ in their story. One student, The Maw Naing, struggled with his responsibility as an editor to discuss the material’s limitations with the responsible cinematographer and ask him to reshoot to obtain more suitable rushes.
6. **Week Three**

Students started to turn their paper edits into a first cut in their computers. We tutors toured the editing rooms in order to provide them with all manner of support and advice. All technical, structural and content questions were raised and answered individually. May Htoo Cho and Eh Mwee – the two editors of the touching film “Unreported Story” – faced the additional challenge of working with a Shan translator in order to be able to cut their film’s conversation and put it into the order they wanted.

7. **Week Four**

Time flies – as everyone realised during the final week of the course and students put on a spurt in order to try to finish rough cuts of their films. The project for MRTV which was edited under pressure was screened to the group for final comments. Whilst everyone agreed that both the director and the editor had worked extremely hard in getting the editing done during the course, many felt that more time for the editing process would have been much better to enable the editor to play around more with the various story elements and really try to get the best out of the film.

Those students who had managed to make it to fine cut were given an introduction to colour grading. They also found out how to prepare their final cut for the sound mix as well as other post production steps.

8. **Challenges**

Given the slow pace of life and decision-making in Myanmar, the pace at which students worked was much slower than we had expected. Although we did not ask students to finish their editing during the course, it seemed to take some of them a long time to achieve even a basic assembly that, in the end, there was sadly no time left for the more enjoyable part of the edit, in which there is normally room for experimentation.

Many students had other commitments alongside the workshop (some attended a British Council English course; others had day jobs) so their energy and concentration for the editing process was not always optimal. Nevertheless some students surprised us with their dogged persistence – like Khin Myo Myat who worked in a hospital as a nurse during the day, but was determined to continue assisting Hnin Ei Hlaing with her project (about a young gay man) every night.

We also faced quite a lot of technical difficulties because our editing equipment – some of which is over five years old – seems to have got a bit long in the tooth. This problem of ageing equipment was to try our patience increasingly during the subsequent **Advanced Editing Course**.

9. **Results**

On a positive note, we noticed that those students who had taken part in the **Introduction to Editing Course** that had taken place prior to this workshop had a real advantage over those who had missed it. In future we believe that participation in a basic editing course should be compulsory for all students wishing to work as editors.

One conclusion that participants of the **Advanced Editing Course** might have been able
to draw is that a documentary that works really well cannot be edited over night – you really need to have ideas, be decisive and bring creativity with you in order to be successful.

In this sense the Advanced Editing Course was a real touchstone for all participants to find out whether the role of the film editor really suits them.

10. Comments from Editing Mentor Melanie Sandford

Editing is the most complex of filmmaking skills; the only way to really master the art is by ‘doing, doing and doing some more’. It involves highly complex technical and storytelling skills; it also involves the use of the editor’s emotional responses, analytical intelligence, attention to detail and observational qualities as well as a good understanding of the use of sound and music. These things can only be acquired from experience.

By the end of the workshop, Darli had mastered the technical side; Shin Daewe had completed a first edit of her film, and wanted to ask a musician to compose some music for it. Khin Khin Hsu discovered that she is a natural editor who needs very little input from her mentor. She and everyone else were extremely happy with the film she found in the material Tay Zar had given her to edit. Tay Zar learnt valuable lessons about coverage and editing; he is a versatile cameraperson and director and has the makings of a good editor, but, like most; needs practice.

Melanie, Shin Daewe and Mya Darli Aung watching rushes from the film ‘Family’

11. Comments from Editing Mentor Stewart Young

I was involved in four projects during the Advanced Editing course: The River; The Clinic, The Game and Retrospection (WT) a film by Ko Nwai about his father, for which I helped set up the shoot and edit. Directed and shot by Tay Zar and edited by Pe Maung Same, The River has some beautiful cinematography in it and some very good story ideas so that But I have to say that construction of the story in the editing room still proves to be a major weakness. A lot of editing skills are acquired by watching films; I also think a deeper understanding of the film storytelling process and how to shape a film’s flow would be a great help. Technically, both filmmakers have mastered documentary camera and sound, but they both need to spend more time working with the images and working together effectively as director and editor to find a project’s form.

The Clinic directed by Dr Aung Min describes a day in his life and certainly shows the state of medical care in Myanmar today. This film suffered from an inexperienced camera operator (a friend of Dr Aung Min’s) and so editor The Maw Naing and I went through the rushes and explained the problems and the range of choices which the material generated and how some scenes would and some would not cut together. There was a re-shoot of some of the material and the difference was astonishing. The Maw Naing managed to get
the best out of some initially very rough material; his editing skills are sharp and he has a keen eye for detail.

The film Retrospection (WT) by Ko Nwai was one of last year’s pitch winners. A full-time editor at an NGO, Ko Nwai devoted his entire annual leave to the filming and editing of this film about his father. Emotionally the conversation with Ko Nwai’s father (filmed by Ko Nwai – a difficult thing for anyone to achieve) was very good but the camerawork was unimaginative and required a re-shoot. However, with two solid conversations and some clever editing it should make an interesting film. Ko Nwai’s editing techniques have improved since he first joined the school in 2006 (back then he had a tendency to over-cut; his pacing was also far too fast and did not allow the material to breathe). Editing was commencing as I left and I am sure Ko Nwai will make an interesting and thoughtful film.

The boxing film The Game directed by Okkar and edited by Zaw Win Htwe was a joy to mentor – despite a two-week deadline. They were a good team and the amount of work that went into this project in the limited time was admirable. The editor could see the director’s vision of the story and it had good energy and rhythm. The rough cut that emerged was about 35 minutes long and I felt was close to its final structure.

V The Creative Producer: Film Production
Yangon Film School Workshop held in Yangon, Myanmar from 11-22 October 2010, led by Jouko Aaltonen

Report by YFS Production Tutor Jouko Aaltonen

1. Aims

The aim of the film production workshop The Creative Producer was to introduce the students to the world of commercial production so that they are equipped for all eventualities in their careers. The course sought to provide a general overview of how professional film production is organised in Europe and other parts of the world and to explain the role played by the producer as practical and creative figure in the filmmaking process. At the same time, the practical goal was to help students prepare their own ‘True Fictions’ docufiction projects scheduled for November 2010.

2. Methodology and Structure

The basic strategy of this course was to follow the logic of the production process, starting from script analysis and breakdown, moving on to budgeting, financing, scheduling and
organising the production, pinpointing the producer’s responsibilities during the shoot and postproduction, as well as marketing, distribution and clearance of rights for the project. A particular emphasis was placed on agreements, co-productions and copyright issues. One of the central aims of the course was to convey the nature of film production as a uniquely creative and cumulative process, one in which a producer plays a central role as the driving force and motor, a dedicated, often charismatic figure who has the ability to inspire a team to work together as a whole.

During the course different examples of international industry practice were provided. Copious documentation (budget forms, release forms, call sheets) was also provided so that students will be able to this not only during the ‘True Fictions’ shoot that followed but also continue to use this as they integrate international standards into their own filmmaking practice. Homework included script analysis, script breakdowns, storyboarding, budgeting and production scheduling.

There were four components to this workshop, which was taught in twelve four-hour sessions:

- Lessons during which information and ‘hard data’ was conveyed
- Screenings of films and analyses of their production processes as case studies
- Homework for producers working on ‘True Fictions’ projects
- Discussions

3. Content

Day One: Opening, introduction, course schedule, what is a producer? The script as the basis for planning. Homework: script analysis & synopsis of the scripts
Day Three: Budgeting, different budget forms (Europe, USA, YFS) Homework: Budgets of ‘True Fictions’ projects
Day Four: Financing, production proposals. Homework: Financing plan for ‘True Fictions’ projects
Day Five: International financing, co-productions, presales, financing forums.
Day Six: Production Preparing to shoot, location scouting, the recce. The roles of the crew, casting, test shootings.
Day Seven: Cinema distribution. The artistic elements of the producer’s task. The storyboard.
Day Eight: Contracts, ownership and copyright. Consent forms, production meetings. Homework: both ‘True Fiction’ crews had production meetings.
Day Nine: Copyright, rights for music, photos and archive footage. Organisation at the location. Homework: one call sheet as an example.
Day Eleven: Film festivals and alternative distribution methods.
Day Twelve: Breakdown of the storyboards. Following up, reporting, rights clearance of a project. The run-up to the shoot.
4. **Results**

- Successful transfer of seminal knowledge about film history, critical analysis and film production to YFS students
- Students developed confidence in discussing and managing film productions
- Participants will be able to diversify and professionalise their film output in the future
- Students were able to implement their new-found skills as producers and directors during the production of two short ‘True Fictions’ projects in November/December 2010.

5. **Evaluation and Recommendations**

On the whole I think the course worked well. Unfortunately, the timing of the course was not optimum and several of the students found that, due to an unexpected conflict of commitments, they were not able to take part in the workshop every day. This affected the continuity of homework assignments and meant that some of the students did not benefit from the feedback they needed in order to prepare for the True Fictions workshop that followed in November. Nonetheless, given the fact that the students are constantly working with each other on a wide range of projects, I am confident that, over time, the students who were in attendance on a regular basis will be able to disseminate to their peers in the YFS group the knowledge and practical information they obtained during the course.

*I was impressed by the practical and organisational aspects of the workshop. Although the students’ level of English meant that teaching had to be done via interpreter, I was surprised at how well this worked – not least on account of the excellent interpreters employed by YFS. Teaching at Yangon Film School was a fascinating and most enjoyable experience and I am delighted to have been given this opportunity to make a contribution.*

YFS Film Production Tutor Jouko Aaltonen

Frances Calvert (top row left) and Jouko Aaltonen (second row, far right) with their students
Aung Myin Tun, the school’s chief interpreter is pictured top row right.
VI Other Ways of Seeing II: Film History and Film Language
A Yangon Film School Workshop held in Myanmar from 11-22 October 2010, led by Frances Calvert

Report by YFS Film History Tutor Frances Calvert

1. Aims

1. Building on a Film History course of 2009, the 2010 course sought to make students more aware of film art, more sensitive to its nuances, textures, rhythms and more perceptive in ‘reading’ it multilayered blend of image, sound, colour and motion.

2. A second aim was to build students’ awareness of the factors involved in making their own films for the ‘True Fictions’ course.

2. Methodology

A blend of theory (written handouts) and visual material (film clips and stills) was used. The course covered cinematography, mise-en-scène, composition, movement, texture, editing, sound and music. Further ideas were explored: creating drama, even in documentary; point of view, auteur documentaries; manipulated documentaries as well as ‘what is a ‘True Fiction’ film?’

3. Content

1. Hana Makhmalbaf’s ‘True Fiction’-style Buddha collapsed Out of Shame proved a rich source of material for the study of True Fictions’ in the following areas:

   • Casting and directing non-professional protagonists and especially children

   • Working in a foreign language (especially useful for those preparing to film in Chin language)

   • Sensing the relationship of trust and friendship between the filmmaker and protagonists

   • Speculating on production factors affecting a True Fiction shoot - weather, continuity, scheduling, etc.

   • Close critical analysis of the theme and ideological elements in Hana Makhmalbaf’s Buddha collapsed Out of Shame, proved fruitful.

2. This film was contrasted over several days with Phil Grabsky’s long-term observational documentary The Boy Who Plays in the Buddhas of Bamiyan. The students showed great sensitivity to the manipulations in that film.

YFS Film History tutor Frances Calvert
3. **Auteur documentaries** were screened for students to extract their authorial **Point of View**, e.g., Werner Herzog’s *Fata Morgana*, Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* and *Man of Aran*.

4. Lectures were given on **motifs, symbols, metaphors, allusions, emblems, allegory, iconography and codes** in film. Cultural differences in perception by Eastern and Western viewers were illustrated and discussed, e.g., how everyday objects become imbued with meaning specific to the film. Film examples included clips from Zinnemann’s *High Noon*, Eisenstein’s *October*, Kurosawa’s *Seven Samurai*, Bergman’s *Seventh Seal*, Murnau’s *Tabu*, Maya Deren’s *Meshes in the Afternoon*.

5. At the students’ request, a day was devoted to studying **drama** in documentary. Examples included excerpts from Maysles Brothers’ *Grey Gardens*, Malle’s *God’s Country*, Rosselini’s *Ladri di Bicicletta*.

6. **Documentaries about art and artists** were particularly popular as the students often film artistic fellow artists: singers and musicians, puppet shows, dance, and balletic types of sport as well as the work of NGOs such as the music school Gitameit. Film clips of art documentaries included Greenaway’s *Cage* and *Monk* (about the avant-garde composer John Cage and the perfformative singer Meredith Monk).

7. Students’ sensitivity to **sound and music in film** was honed by means of close scrutiny of the classical soundtrack in Disney’s *Fantasia* and Fischinger’s drawings for the Bach Toccata and Fugue sequence, also Prokofiev’s role in Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin*, *Ivan the Terrible* and *Alexander Nevsky*; the documentary 4, about Vivaldi’s Four Seasons arranged and performed in four different countries, and the New Age music of *Baraka*. The importance of hearing original dialogues with their own intention and colour was stressed. Scenes were studied for how an effective sound design can trigger a response in one’s imagination far greater than any visual image.

8. The importance of **framing and composition** and how placement of objects in the frame and proxemic space acquire so much meaning was explored. Examples included clips from *Hommage à Noir*, *The End of August at the Ozone Hotel*, Peckinpah’s *Straw Dogs*, Polanski’s *Macbeth*, Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, *Lifeboat* and *Rear Window*; *Life of O-Haru* (confined space); *The Lady in the Lake* (for the totally subjective POV); *Baraka* as an example of essentialising people and landscapes.

9. **Editing** was studied using excerpts from Eisenstein’s *Ivan the Terrible*; in surrealist films such as Bunuel’s *Un chien andalou* and Maya Deren’s *Meshes in the Afternoon*. Hitchcock’s editing was scrutinised including his own elaboration of the Kuleshov Effect, where he uses himself as an example!

10. The ‘**essay**’ documentary with an intellectual theme proved somewhat obscure to the students at first but after watching extracts from Errol Morris’ *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control* and *The Thin Blue Line* they grasped the author’s intentions. Other brief examples were shown from Herzog’s *Fata Morgana* and Nick Broomfield’s *The Leader, his Driver and...*
the Driver’s Wife. These films also proved fertile ground for discussions of interview styles, how to approach even odious interviewees, how to maintain irony in questioning, the self-reflexive film-maker wondering about the impact of what he/she is saying and doing.

11.  **Third World cinema** was covered in a lecture about POV, ethnocentrism, multiple interpretations according to cultural standpoints (e.g., Milani’s *Legend of a Sigh*) and filming legends for entertainment e.g., *Diabolo*, a ‘Gollywood’ film from Ghana.

12.  True Fictions: to help raise students’ awareness of the difficulties of filming a **script with non-professional actors**, examples of such films were screened including the Makhmalbaf family’s films. To acquaint students with the team roles on a film set, the first act of Tom di Cillo’s *Living in Oblivion* was read as a screenplay and then viewed. Three scenes from Jonze’s *Adaptation* highlighted the agonies and ecstasies of the screenwriter with writer’s block; whether to follow a screenwriting ‘guru’ (debating ‘rules’ versus ‘guidelines’) when writing feature film scripts. The agonies of casting were encapsulated in the casting scene from *Guns Upon the Clackamas*.

13.  True Fictions: the problems of writing, financing, shooting documentaries and True Fictions arose at every lecture session but on the last day the students’ attention was drawn specifically to alternative types of production. This was designed to complement the parallel course being taught on Creative Production. Taking the credits of *The Boy who Plays in the Buddhas of Bamiyan* and *The Age of Stupid* as examples, students learned about Internet sites for eliciting direct donations, government and NGO funding, corporate and private donors; raising funds amongst a country’s diaspora, charitable and philanthropic organisations; tax-deductible donations, etc.

14.  The two-week, 12-day course finished with a **recap of the main topics** (handout) and remarks directed at students’ personal interest in filmmaking. A call for feedback revealed that the film clips were especially welcome as they introduced students to a kind of ‘canon’ of previously unknown film classics.

The second element in the feedback was an **intense interest in Iranian film** and I would recommend further close study of more Iranian films for their wonderfully elliptical story-telling through objects, poems, looks, smiles and metaphorical dialogues. The Iranian ‘Law of Commitments’ (censorship, taboos on how to film women and couples, emphasis on children’s stories so as to circumvent taboo adult subjects) sparked a response in our students. I speculate that the talented Burmese filmmakers of tomorrow will find ways of telling their poignant stories with the same cleverness as their Iranian counterparts.

3. **Results and Recommendations**

The students’ English is generally poor and could do with improvement. The translator is excellent and is now well versed in film language himself and can explain unclear concepts to the students on his own. Reading scripts and the stories or novels on which scripts are based would be helpful. Articles about film style and film interpretation are also very good. I deposited three articles on Iranian cinema in the Yangon Film School library, one of the best of its kind in the country.
VII  The True Fictions II Workshop  
Yangon, Myanmar, September – December 2010  

Report by YFS Directing and Screenwriting Tutor Rachel Mathews

1. Overview

The True Fictions II Workshop ran in Yangon from September to December 2010 and resulted in two short fiction films with a documentary sensibility i.e. using non-actors in actual locations. Both films were shot from scripts developed during the 2009 Screenwriting Workshop, one by experienced older writer Dr Aung Min, one by young Chin writer, Anna Biak Tha Mawi. Both stories were written from personal experience and are based on real-life events in Myanmar.

The first two months of the workshop involved the students working independently to develop the scripts, scout locations, cast the films and prepare production schedules and budgets. During this time they were supported by The Creative Producer Workshop run by producer Jouko Aaltonen and the Other Ways of Seeing II film history workshop run by film historian Frances Calvert in October in Yangon. Production tutor Helke Madry oversaw the entire period of development, pre-production, production and post-production and was a valuable point of continuity for both the students and her fellow tutors during the workshop period.

Bungkus was written to be shot in Anna’s native Chin homeland. Whilst efforts were made to accomplish this within the workshop – e.g. by making arrangements for a tutor-mentor to travel with the crew to Chin State to oversee the shoot – this ultimately proved impossible. Foreigners are not allowed in the region where the script was set and it would have been difficult for tutors to watch and give feedback on the rushes during the shoot. Hence, Anna substantially rewrote her script, setting it amongst the Chin community in Yangon. Dr Aung’s script, ‘Has the Water Risen?’, was set in the delta region about an hour and a half’s drive from Yangon. Hence students were able to travel back and forth to this location during pre-production.

The final 10 days of pre-production and the 6-day shoots were mentored by camera tutor Lars Barthel, sound tutor Ivan Horák, writing and directing tutor Rachel Mathews, editing tutor Regina Bärtschi and production tutor Helke Madry from 14 November to 12 December 2010 in Yangon. Regina Bärtschi returned to Yangon in January 2011 to mentor the editing process.

2. Participants

There were 13 students in the Workshop. They were a mix of Advanced (6 students who have taken 3 or more YFS courses) and Beginners (4 students who joined YFS in 2009) with 3 Screenwriters taking assistant crew roles. The gender balance favoured females (8) over males (5). The students were from a mix of ethnic backgrounds, with Shan, Burmese and Chin nationals in major crew roles. ‘Bungkus’ was shot in the Chin language using an all-Chin cast. Parts of ‘Has the Water Risen?’ were shot in the Kayin language and the film featured Kayins in the majority of roles.
3. **Aims**

1. To give Advanced YFS students who have already received training in fiction filmmaking (in the 2008 True Fictions Workshop) the opportunity to become heads of department in the development, shooting and editing of a short fiction film.

2. To give Beginner YFS students who have not yet received such training the opportunity to assist these heads of department and thereby learn the principals of ‘True Fiction’ filmmaking.

3. To give YFS Screenwriting students the experience of seeing their screenplays realized on the screen.

4. To give YFS three or four successful 10-15 minute short films which can be entered into film festivals around the world both to promote the talents of the individual filmmakers and to further raise the profile of the school.

The Workshop fulfilled aims 1-3 very well. Advanced students who had not yet had a chance to shine in film production – for example, Mya Darli Aung – came into their own as they took head of department roles, in Darli’s case as DOP for Crew A. Beginner students received a wealth of training and experience with some also becoming heads of department e.g. Kyaw Ko Ko as DOP for Crew B; Khin Khin Hsu as director for Crew A. Screenwriting students not only had the experience of seeing their script made into a film but also participated in the production with Lu Sann and Anna Biak Tha Mawi as production managers for Crew A and B respectively and Su San as 1st AD for Crew A.

Due to the timing of Myanmar’s General Election in early November 2010, only two, rather than three or four short films were made. Thiha Thwe’s project was postponed to 2011 to allow Thiha to fulfil his duties as a journalist during the Election.

4. **The Films**

Both films are currently in the final stages of being edited. They will both have a running time of around 15 minutes when completed, which makes them very suitable for entry into a wide selection of short film festivals.

**i) CREW A - 'Has the Water Risen?' (WT)**

Written by poet and novelist Dr Aung Min, who has been a YFS screenwriting student since 2007 and was a screenwriting TOT in 2009, the film was directed by Khin Khin Hsu, a YFS Beginner in 2009, and produced by experienced Advanced student Shin Daewe. The story is taken from the Dr Aung’s personal experience as a doctor trained in Yangon who then spent time after qualifying amongst the Kayin people in the delta region south-west of city. The Kayin have their own customs and traditions. They are often Christian rather than Buddhist and bury rather than cremate their dead. They are a rural community, largely made up of rice farmers, fishermen and bamboo growers.
The film’s protagonist is a young male Doctor from Yangon who travels to the Delta by boat and meets an old Kayin man who has nurtured a bamboo grove his entire life and who is now dying of cancer. The Doctor believes it is his duty to persuade his patient to travel to Yangon for treatment in a modern hospital. But the Old Man resists, preferring instead to take folk remedies (such as snake tea). The Doctor is at first frustrated and then angry when his patient refuses to take his advice. However, as the bamboo grove - which is of great importance to the old man - begins to work on the emotions of the Doctor as well, he finally accepts that his patient will be better off dying peacefully in his Kayin homeland.

“The biggest challenge was in making decisions. The crew were always waiting to see what I would do. No matter how nervous I was feeling, I had to make a decision and that was pretty tough.”

Khin Khin Hsu, Director, ‘Has the Water Risen?’

As a director, Khin Khin Hsu (pictured above) is a young student (in her early 20s) who had very limited filmmaking experience before this workshop. However, her father was a successful screenwriter during the brief flourishing of an independent film industry in Burma in the 1960s. He has clearly shared his passion for film and his understanding of the medium with his daughter. Khin Khin Hsu has the makings of an impressive director: calm, well-organised and with some excellent ideas. She built a good rapport with her (non)actors and, alongside her cinematographer Mya Darli Aung, devised some very cinematic and ingenious individual shots and demonstrated an excellent understanding of how to construct a scene.

The film is being edited by Hnin Ei Hlaing, (pictured right), a YFS student since 2007. In the past year this student has come into her own as an editor, working on an impressive number of productions (personal, YFS and NGO). Having been trained in documentary filmmaking and sound recording, this is her first experience of fiction editing. She has brought her documentary sensibility to this project whilst also developing a keen understanding of the use of time within a fictional story and of shaping scenes to realise their full dramatic potential. She has worked extremely hard on the project, dedicating long hours in the editing suite. Khin Khin Hsu has often joined Hnin Ei Hlaing in her role of director and together the two students have achieved a promising fine cut of the film. They are currently overseeing the production of incidental music and deciding whether or not to use a voiceover (written by Dr Aung) to introduce the action and provide a brief resolution. Since ‘Has the Water Risen?’ no longer makes sense as a title (the delta is tidal but we don't actually see this in the film), they are also deciding upon a new title.

It is impossible to second-guess the decisions of film festival selection committees. However, ‘Has the Water Risen?’ stands a good chance of festival success. The delta landscape is photogenic and looks particularly cinematic in the images produced by the Canon EOS camera. The performances of the old Kayin man and the Doctor are engaging
and convincing. There is also the novelty of any kind of short fiction film coming out of Burma - a country which has very limited film releases and where short fiction films are almost unheard of. 'Has the Water Risen?' is an interesting and accomplished piece of work, especially considering the inexperience of its director.

Mya Darli Aung, DOP on 'Has the Water Risen?'

ii) CREW B - 'Bungkus' (WT)
Written by Anna Biak Tha Mawi and directed and produced by YFS Advanced Student Lay Thida. 'Bungkus' – which means 'parcel' in Malay – is based upon the phenomenon of sending young Myanmar woman abroad as a ‘parcel’ to marry a man who may be a Burmese emigrant but is more likely to be Malaysian or Singaporean, etc, to enable them to send money back home to their families in Myanmar. Often the women will not have met their husband-to-be before the day of the wedding. They frequently end up as poorly paid servant-wives in a wealthy man's household. This practice is particularly prevalent amongst the Chin community in Myanmar, many of whom come from impoverished rural backgrounds. Anna has had personal experience of family members and friends being sent abroad as 'parcels' in this way. She felt compelled to write the script after a boat filled with illegally emigrating Chin nationals - including many young female 'parcels' - capsized off the Thai coast on 7 December 2007, drowning everyone on board.

The story's protagonist is Zing Zing, a young Chin woman living in Yangon, who is in love with Asang, a Chin boy from her neighbourhood. When Zing Zing's older brother - who is sending money back to the family - dies abroad, Zing Zing's mother decides to send her daughter as a 'parcel' to Malaysia where a successful Burmese emigrant is looking for a wife. When Zing Zing discovers her mother is going blind and that only the money received from her being a 'parcel' will pay for an eye operation, she sadly agrees to leave Asang and travel illegally overland and by boat to Malaysia. Zing Zing becomes one of the passengers on the boat which capsized in December 2007.

Because this story is so rooted in the Yangon Chin community and raised an issue which has affected many of them, the churches (Chin nationals tend to be Christians) and individual people enthusiastically supported the project and were keen to help Anna and the film's producer-director, Lay Thida, becoming involved either behind the scenes e.g. by volunteering their homes to be filmed in, or in front of the camera as cast members. After extensive casting sessions, Lay Thida chose a Chin teenager, Bathsheba Zing Thluai Cin (pictured left), to play Zing Zing. This was a real boon to the project. An unassuming young woman who is training as a lawyer, Bathsheba really shines onscreen and provides the emotional heart of the film. Lay Thida also got strong performances from the Chin woman who played Zing Zing's mother and from the young man - a friend of Anna's - who took the role of Asang.

Although having the Chin community so heavily involved in the film was helpful to the production it did have one drawback: in order to promote natural performances, it was decided to allow the non-actors to speak their lines in Chin rather than in Burmese. This presented a serious challenge to Lay Thida, a Shan national who has no knowledge of Chin. She could use the Burmese-written script s a guideline but she was uncertain what the
actors were saying in individual takes. This has also proved to be a hindrance during the film’s edit.

Being one of the original intake of YFS students from 2005, Lay Thida is a director with considerable experience of directing documentaries - YFS projects, personal films and NGO commissions. However, the challenge of directing a cast whose language she did not understand meant she struggled with 'Bungkus'. Matters were further complicated by Lay Thida's other commitments: after Cyclone Nargis, she set up an NGO to help rebuild destroyed houses and communities in the delta. She has been very successful in this and now has 35 staff under her. This is a full-time job and she was stretched combining NGO work with directing her first fiction film. This illustrates the difficulties many filmmakers face trying to combine a day job with filming. YFS can help on such occasions by paying discretionary bursaries to students who have to give up income generating work to participate in workshops. However, in Lay Thida's case, it wouldn't have been practical for her to stop work on her NGO.

The naturalistic but emotionally touching performances in 'Bungkus' - particularly from Bathsheba as Zing Zing - and the highly topical subject matter are both assets in this film. The project has had to overcome challenges e.g. moving location from Chin State to Yangon. Being shot in the Chin language with a Burmese editor (Khin Khin Hsu), has led to a lengthier editing process than 'Has the Water Risen?' However, there is real merit in this film and it is hoped it will enjoy festival success.

5. Challenges

i) Crews

A key challenge in the TF II Workshop was finding enough students to participate. The timing of the General Election played a major factor: at least four Advanced Students were involved in film projects associated with the Election and were unable to commit to the Workshop. In addition, two Advanced Students were out of the country studying at the FAMU Film School in Prague and two others have left Myanmar due to political difficulties.

In some ways, the lack of Advanced Students was an advantage, since it meant more Beginner and Screenwriting students could participate in the Workshop and benefit from training and experience they would not otherwise have received. Nevertheless, the Crews – in particular Crew B – were smaller than optimum. This put particular pressure on Lay Thida as director of 'Bungkus': she also had to take on the role of Producer and was without an Assistant Camera and Assistant Sound person. Camera Tutor Lars Barthel stepped into the Assistant Camera role to support DOP Kyaw Ko Ko, who had very little camera experience.

ii) Preparation

Encouraging the students to undertake the bulk of development and pre-production independently in September and October was a good idea, in theory. However, in practice, neither film was near enough to being ready for production when the tutor-mentors arrived in mid-November. The students had a packed summer of editing workshops, many – as
discussed – were involved in film projects about the General Election and others were working on YFS NGO projects. It may have been that the tutors were asking too much of the students during this busy period.

When the tutor-mentors and TFII participants met for a general debrief after the shoots, many students raised the issue of preparation and vowed to be better prepared in future. It is a fact of filmmaking that there is never enough time. However, hopefully the experience of last minute preparation in this workshop – and the stress and anxiety this caused – will encourage the students to be better prepared in future, whether on personal projects, YFS films or NGO commissions.

iii) Shooting in the Chin language

*There’s often no equivalent for a Chin word in Burmese. A certain word may not be liked by the director but it’s more effective when spoken in Chin.*

Screenwriter and Production Manager Anna Biak Tha Mawi on ‘Bungkus’

‘Bungkus’, was written in Burmese by a Chin writer (Anna, pictured left). However, when it came to shooting the film, the actors spoke Chin. As discussed above, this proved to be a challenge for the film’s director, Lay Thida. Although using the Chin language gives the story a great sense of authenticity, it was very difficult for a first time fiction director to direct in a language that she did not speak.

iv) Shooting in the delta

The tutor-mentors were not allowed to travel with Crew A to the delta which is off-limits to foreigners. Tutors were anxious to watch the rushes of ‘Has the Water Risen?’ as soon as possible after the day’s shoot in order to give feedback to Khin Khin Hsu and her crew. Hence a production assistant (or in some cases the producer, Shin Daewe) travelled up from the delta to Yangon each evening with the memory card containing the day’s rushes. The tutors watched these alongside the student and sent written feedback back with them the following morning.

Delta inhabitants have little experience of film crews and, consequently, the students attracted quite a lot of attention during the shoot, some of it unwanted. The participation of Han Linn Aung – one of two students YFS has been obliged to take in order to comply with the school’s permit regulations – was helpful in this case. When a government official in the delta challenged the legitimacy of the shoot (and demanded a large payment), Han Linn Aung was able to confirm that the students were on legitimate business supported by the YFS permit and that no additional payments would be necessary.

v) New Canon EOS cameras

Camera tutor Lars Barthel (pictured below with students) introduced the new Canon EOS cameras during the Workshop. These are stills cameras with an HD video facility. Film camera lenses can be used with the EOS to produce high quality HD images. However, the camera’s inbuilt microphone is not of sufficient quality to film drama. Hence, a separate microphone and mixer was used and this necessitated the use of a clapperboard to identify and mark the shots (so image and sound could be synched in post-production). The focus on these cameras is extremely sensitive and demands a good eye and steady hand.
The camera and sound students had a lot to learn – such as choice of lens, use of the clapperboard, focus pulling – in a short amount of time. There were some difficulties with focus, particularly in Crew A where DOP Mya Darli Aung has problems with her eyesight anyway (Camera Tutor Lars Barthel has since researched the possibility of having a special eyepiece made to suit Darli’s prescription). In spite of these issues, both crews met the challenge of the new cameras and produced high quality images which are equal to those shot on 35mm film.

6. Achievements

As stated, the two TFII films are in the final stages of the edit. Thus, at the time of writing, it has not been possible to screen them to anyone outside of YFS or to predict the kind of life they will have on the festival circuit and/or television. However, both films promise to be interesting and engaging pieces of work. The images created by the Canon EOS camera are impressive and give the projects the aura of a much higher production value than their limited budgets would suggest. The performances from the non-actors are naturalistic and convincing and both films make excellent use of their Burmese settings, with ‘Has the Water Risen?’ revealing the hidden landscape of the delta and ‘Bungkus’ the Chin community in Yangon. Both films are not only grounded in the culture and traditions of Myanmar but also offer a window onto two ethnic minorities within the country: the Kayin and the Chin. Both films tackle stories which have important real-life counterparts: the conflict between medical advancement and achieving a ‘good death’ and the ‘parcel’ phenomenon of young women being forced out of financial necessity to go abroad.

7. Benefits for Students

In terms of what the TFII Workshop has achieved for the students, the pre-production, shoots and editing process has led to 13 YFS students – advanced and beginners – being trained in the art of fiction filmmaking with a strong documentary ethos. Individual students who have particularly shone in this workshop are Khin Khin Hsu, who bears great promise as both a director and editor; Shin Daewe who was an unflappable and organised presence for Crew A; Hnin Ei Hlaing, who is becoming an increasingly accomplished editor; Mya Darli Aung who, if she can address her sight problems, has the potential to develop as an interesting DOP; Dr Aung Min who is now translating his skills as a prose writer and poet into success in screenwriting and Anna who not only wrote and rewrote ‘Bungkus’ with great dedication and determination but who also facilitated the involvement of Yangon’s Chin community in the making of this short film.
8. **Future Plans**

In spite of having so many other commitments on their time in 2010, not least the country's General Election, the YFS students who wanted to and were able to take part in the True Fictions II Workshop appeared to get a lot out of the experience. Documentary will always be the cornerstone of YFS, but fiction filmmaking is both a worthwhile pursuit in its own right - for example, filmmakers can tell some stories in fiction that it would be impossible to pursue as documentary; there tend to be more film festivals and television slots showing fiction than documentary material - and can feed back usefully into documentary film practice: as stated, the rigorous preparation required for a fiction film shoot made the TFII students aware of how much they need to develop up all their pre-production skills, both for fiction and documentary projects; the focus on the development of a story arc in a fiction film can be usefully applied to many documentary pieces, etc.

Hence, YFS would like to continue with its fiction film training in the future and run a True Fictions III short filmmaking workshop in 2012 to give the 2011 cohort of students a chance to be trained in and experiment with fiction storytelling.

YFS is also committed to supporting the students' **personal fiction film projects**. Thi Ha Thwe is shooting his short fiction film (postponed from the TFII Workshop) 'A Twist of Fate', based on a popular short story in Myanmar, in June 2011. This film's edit will be supported in the YFS Editing Workshop over the summer. Anna Biak Tha Mawi is determined to make her original version of 'Parcel', set in Chin State. Writing tutor Rachel Mathews believes this script has the potential to be a full-length feature film (with a running time of around 90 minutes) and will be mentoring Anna in the development of her script as soon as she has finished her work on 'Bungkus'. Screenwriter Dr Aung Min is developing a fiction feature film project set in a monastery - and expanded from his short film script 'Zawana The Novice', written during the 2009 Screenwriting Workshop - with YFS student The Maw Naing. The latter is currently at the FAMU Film School in Prague where he will be developing this project further. YFS is keen to continue working with screenwriting students Su San, Lu Sann and Thet Ko Ko, hopefully developing their current short film scripts to be made into films on the proposed True Fictions III Workshop in 2012.
VIII Production Management Teaching Module

Led by YFS Workshop Supervisor and Production Management Tutor Helke Madry in Yangon from 25 November to 3 December 2010

Report by YFS Workshop Supervisor and Production Management Tutor Helke Madry

1. Aims and Approach

Building on the workshop Creative Producer: Film Production led by Jouko Aaltonen in October, the Production Management teaching module provided practical, hands-on coaching while students organised and prepared the shoots of the two ‘True Fictions II’ projects. Teaching was conducted in sessions of twos and threes, sometimes with production departments of both crews and at others individually. Teaching took place in regular group and individual sessions of between 1-3 hours throughout the pre-production, production and post-production period and focussed on preparation, logistics, financial planning and filming, but also the production manager and producer’s tasks and responsibilities after filming is over and covered the following key areas:

- Job descriptions of Producer, Production Manager and Assistant Director
- Explanation of film-specific terminology
- How to plan and conduct a recce
- How to plan logistics and how to run a film set
- Creation of shooting schedules based on a screenplay
- Creation of a budget
- Creation of a daily filming schedule
- Cost controlling and financial reporting
- Permits and contracts with cast and crew members

The tuition took into account both international standards in film and television production but also specific conditions in Myanmar.

2. Participants

This teaching module was compulsory for all students who were taking on production and/or organisational roles during the True Fictions II workshop i.e. producers Lay Thida and Shin Daewe, production managers Anna Biak and Lu San and assistant directors Khin Myo Myat and Su San. The entire crews of both films attended sessions during which protocol on film sets and responsibilities were explained.

Since some of the more experienced YFS students were not able to take part in the True Fictions II workshop, crews for the two projects included a mixture of advanced students, screenwriting students and students who had completed just one or two previous YFS courses. The roles of production manager and assistant directors were therefore filled by students without any prior knowledge of fiction filmmaking. This meant that they needed intensive individual mentorship from Tutor Helke every day in order to create filming schedules, reccees and daily schedules.

Having worked previously on both fiction and documentary at YFS, the two films’ producers Shin Daewe and Lay Thida demonstrated solid skills in drawing up and managing budgets, which was gratifying. Nonetheless Tutor Helke continued to meet the producers and check contracts, rights agreements, budgets and financial reporting both during and at the end of the shoots.
3. Challenges

Major script changes that were required at the last minute meant that pre-production was cut to the bone and at one point the tutors were concerned as to whether filming could go ahead at all. Team A’s location was a Kayin village 1.5 hours away from Yangon in the delta (tutors were not allowed to travel there) and this created a number of challenges mentioned on page 36. Obtaining signatures from protagonists and owners of locations on release forms proved to be a particular challenge, since this practice is completely alien to most people in Myanmar – even those working in film – and often provoked mistrust among communities where filming took place. Producers of both films needed good communicative skills and sensitivity. Team B’s crew and production department were stretched to the limits and had difficulty coming in on budget. Very long filming days quickly led to an exhausted crew and required a restructuring of the schedule, after which the situation improved.

4. Recommendations

Production management is the pillar on which the artistic aspects of a film rest and should therefore be included as a permanent fixture of YFS courses. Good management skills will encourage greater efficiency in filmmaking – whether under the aegis of the school or in the private sector. It will also help YFS filmmakers, and by extension, media workers throughout the sector to become more professional and independent.

IX The True Fictions II Sound Workshop and Sound Design Workshop

A Yangon Film School Workshop held in Yangon by Ivan Horák in Two Parts: 14 November – 5 December 2010 and 6 – 19 January, 2011

Report by YFS Sound Design Tutor Ivan Horák

A) The True Fictions II Sound Workshop

1. Aims and Participants

The first part of the YFS True Fictions II sound workshop was dedicated to introducing all students but particularly the sound students Kyaw Myo Lwin, Hann Lin Aung, Hnin Ei Hlaing and Zaw Win Htwe to the new sound equipment. The shift to HD technology was a new addition to YFS in 2010. There has been a greater demand for HD quality formats across the world and Burma is no exception. This trend has involved a number of often expensive technological changes, including new cameras, high-performance editing suites and a different sound recording technology.

2. Challenges

At YFS we opted for the True Fictions workshops to shoot using the relatively inexpensive Canon EOS camera. This compact camera provides excellent image quality and is sensitive to low-level light conditions. In this set-up the cinematographer and sound recordist are no longer connected by a cable and can move about freely. This had advantages but also drawbacks: on the one hand the use of wireless microphone systems allowed filmmakers to capture dialogue without having to use large microphones on a boom pole which often attracts more attention than the camera. However, students also had to learn how to use the clapperboard and record sound externally. In the post-production stage, footage needed
to be synchronized with the externally recorded soundtracks – a process that can be problematic and painstaking if – as the students soon discovered – the correct technical procedures have not been carried out properly during the shoot.

B) The Sound Design Workshop

1. Aims

To build on previous Sound Design workshops held in 2009 and 2008 and help students to familiarize themselves with the theory and practice of sound design, as well as reacquaint themselves with Pro Tools sound editing software.

2. Participants

Sound Design is virtually non-existent in Burma and so the third edition of the Sound Design course was met with a great interest from the students, as well as other film professionals and artists. Advanced students in the class included Hnin Ei Hlang, Mya Darli Aung, Kyaw Myo Lwin, Wai Mar Nyut and Pe Maung Same; intermediary students were Khin Khin Hsu, Su San, and Zaw Win Htwe, and we also welcomed visual artist and performer Ko Jeu.

3. Methodology and Structure

During the course, tutor Ivan Horák explained the basics of finalizing sound in documentary, docu-fiction and highly stylized audiovisual works. The course was divided into individual sections, as we gradually moved from theory to practice.

The first four days were devoted entirely to the theory of film sound, a subject that is essential to develop an ear for sound design. Students cannot learn about sound design and its aspects merely from watching films. It is very important to understand the way image and sound works together; it is equally important to become familiar with all elements of the soundtrack.

During the course, students also learned how to use a ProTools digital audio workstation: each student picked a scene or a sequence from one of the following YFS films: Rain (by Zaw Win Htwe); Thursday’s Child (by Tay Zar Win), and a sequence from the unfinished The River (by Tay Zar Win and, Pe Maung Same). The students were free to try out the features of the ProTools system, and to experience the possibilities and effect of sound within a film. The class used three ProTools sound suites by Digidesign / AVID company.
This was followed by an overview of a sound designer’s creative approaches to video art. The students and tutor selected a ten-minute silent film called *Sudden Death* by Wai Mar Nyunt. This film is composed of a single shot with no original sync sound from filming, which enabled the students to become creative in their treatment of sound. Experimenting in creating different soundtracks for this film also proved a useful exercise in the principle of ‘unity and contrast’ – which is needed in order to keep the viewer’s attention, and entails the sound designer preventing the soundtrack from becoming either monotonous or overpowering. All filmmakers, artists, film editors and sound designers need to be familiar with this rule and know how to apply it. The final rhythm and sound of a film is not just the work of the sound designer; during the shoot the director and later the editor both contribute to creating a good soundtrack.

The course was again supplemented by a music recording session (see pic above right, taken at Gitameit Music Center) in improvised conditions, both with professional and amateur musicians. Students learned how, when recording music, a sound designer and director must be able to guide musicians or a composer. Everyone involved needs to share a creative vision about the emotions to be conveyed by the film. Students also learned how useful it is when music is composed after consultation with the sound designer and director or improvised under the supervision of the sound designer. In one exercise, students were asked to create their own piece of music to accompany a section of filmed material, using high-performance digital instruments with a MIDI keyboard and an iPad tablet and a selection of pre-installed instruments.

4. The Cultural Perspective

The YFS Sound Design students proved to be very creative, thoughtful and resourceful despite the fact that, unlike in Europe or in the United States, sound design in Burma does not have a long tradition (indeed, there is no tradition at all). Cultural differences between Burma and the Western world are however striking. For this reason sound tutor Ivan Horák was concerned to allow the students to decide themselves how best to approach the storytelling. Theravada Buddhism is a complex religion that demands full focus on the mind, or ‘mind fullness’. Working on a creative process such as sound design with Burmese students, many of whom are deeply influenced by Buddhist concepts, is a fascinating and challenging experience for a European or westerner tutor.
5. **Results**

Fostering a new generation of sound designers is important in every country, including Burma. Sound is one of the key, if not the most important, emotional components of a film. If one turns off the sound while watching a film, the emotions are immediately lost.

In Burma, where sound design has been sadly neglected for decades, the YFS Sound Design course had several important functions:

- Provided specialized training in Pro Tools software, a very efficient system used internationally by many film sound professionals.
- Participants were sensitized to the importance of sound design and developed an ear for creating authentic yet imaginative soundtracks.

6. **Recommendations**

The students were all very enthusiastic and creatively involved in the classes. It was an honour to share my knowledge with them and I look forward to teaching them in future editions, in more advanced classes that should take on more demanding technical and stylisation tasks.

X **The True Fictions Editing Workshop**

A Yangon Film School Workshop held in Yangon by Regina Bärtschi from 29 November – 10 December 2010 and 22 January – 17 February, 2011

Report by YFS Editing Tutor Regina Bärtschi

1. **Technical Challenges**

The new high definition digital recording technology that was used to film the two ‘True Fictions’ projects produced some impressive images but required a much more complex and painstaking workflow in the edit room. As YFS Student Trainer and digital software specialist Myo Min Khin explained to YFS editors and tutors during his teaching module in December 2010, this process requires:

- The compression or ‘downgrading’ of large amounts of data for processing in the edit suite.
- Synching up of separately recorded sound and images.

These processes were both extremely time consuming. For this reason, the first half of the editing workshop (held in December 2010) was devoted to importing the filmed material, a task that would normally have been the responsibility of a full-time assistant editor. Synching up proved to be particularly troublesome – particularly when clapperboards were nowhere to be seen.
2. Participants

The initial plan for the True Fictions edit was for four editors – Kyaw Myo Lwin, Zaw Win Htwe, Lay Thida and Hnin Ei Hlaing – to work on the material. In this scenario, two editors would have worked on each project, producing two versions of each film. However, Lay Thida was suddenly called away to work for the NGO Better Life which she has founded, and Kyaw Myo Lwin and Zaw Win Htwe were obliged to finish editing other projects. For this reason, YFS Editing Tutor Regina Bärtschi decided to invite Khin Khin Hsu, who directed ‘Has the Water Risen?’ and had shown potential as an editor following her work on ‘Thursday’s Child’, to work on the edit of ‘Bungkus’. Hnin Ei Hlaing took up work on ‘Has the Water Risen?’

3. Editing Fictional Material

Many people mistakenly believe that, since a fictional film is based on a script this somehow makes editing a feature film easier than editing documentary. However, of fictional editing too is an art that requires the ability to recognise when the story unfolding is not working and how to correct this.

One of the most important tasks of the feature film editor is to discover which of the myriad narrative possibilities best serves the storyline. Since every situation is filmed often repeatedly, from various perspectives and shot sizes, the editor must exercise great skill in choosing which shots to put together. This work is assiduous and requires a great deal of sensitivity.

Another challenge is to edit shots together in such a way that the dialogue retains a naturalistic feel. This task was made more difficult in that in the ‘True Fictions’ workshop the crews were working with nonprofessional actors who sometimes improvised their dialogue. This made it much trickier to preserve the continuity of dialogue and action.

4. Benefits for Students

At the time of writing the edits for both films are nearing completion. I am delighted with the way in which Khin Khin Hsu and Hnin Ei Hlaing have applied themselves to the task – in spite of considerable artistic and technical demands. Hnin Ei Hlaing has succeeded in creating a well-paced, atmospheric rough cut of ‘Has the Water Risen?’. She now needs to learn how to improve the film’s dramaturgy. Khin Khin Hsu’s task as editor of ‘Bungkus’ was almost insurmountable: not only was she called upon to edit dialogue in a language she does not understand (which entailed working with the Chin screenwriter in the edit room), in addition, the scenes for this film had not been well blocked. Nonetheless, she has managed to create moments of emotional intensity. The challenge now is to embed the story within the Chin community – which may involve some additional filming.

XI YFS Annual Rooftop Screening

The Yangon Film School held its annual Rooftop Screening on the roof of its workshop venue, the Princess Hotel on Saturday, 4 December 2010. The audience at this event numbered over 80 people and included diplomats, representatives of development organisations and aid agencies (local and
international) as well as Burmese media workers (Myanmar broadcaster MRTV4, the Myanmar Filmmakers Organisation), filmmakers, artists and writers.

The 2010 show was designed to demonstrate the breadth and diversity of the YFS students’ work over the past year. For this reason, the programme included both works commissioned by NGOs such as the Save the Children film Listen to Us, directed by YFS student Lay Thida, but also a number of films that had emerged from YFS workshops held in 2009 and 2010. The aim of these workshops was to help students find the poetic in everyday life: Dreaming in Colour therefore observes a group of men working at a batik dying factory; Falling Blossoms combines images of toddlers at a kindergarten with the voices of two octogenarians contemplating love and death, and Between the Pages watches the tender interplay between the sexes at a Yangon bookbinders. One astonishing contrast was the juxtaposition of a five-minute promo made for Pyoe Pin about a new rice-growing initiative entitled Rice: Myanmar’s Future with two films also set in the delta, but with an entirely different approach. The first, Rain, was edited from the same material used to create the Rice film, but is a more subjective, lyrical take on the subject of humankind and the elements. The second, Thursday’s Child, is a sensitively filmed piece of observational filmmaking about a family of itinerant field workers. After the screenings, the filmmakers took part in a lively Q & A session with the audience – a first for YFS! The students subsequently continued discussing their work with the guests in a relaxed and cordial atmosphere.

XII Direct Results of YFS Workshops and Activities in 2010

1. Visible outcomes

In 2010, YFS participants took part in, produced or are developing:

- 4 residential workshops
- 4 non-residential workshops
- 3 teaching modules
- 3 ‘Flying Mentorships’
- 11 short documentaries ranging in styles from the observational to the poetic
- 3 films made for NGOs of between 15 and 32 minutes in length: Rice – Towards a Better Future (for Pyoe Pin); Hidden Wounds (for Shalom Foundation) and Respectful Encounters (for the Local Resource Center)
- 2 ‘True Fiction’ docufiction films with the working titles: ‘Bungkus’ and ‘Has the Water Risen’

The films marked in bold, as well as two short films about the Editing and True Fictions workshops held in 2010 including comments from both participants and tutors, will be available on three Yangon Film School DVD collections: Finding Poetry in Everyday Life – Yangon Film School Workshops in 2010, Stories from Myanmar 2010: Films made for Development Organisations by students of the Yangon Film School, and True Fictions.
2010 – a Yangon Film School Docufiction Workshop held in Myanmar, which will be released in June 2011.

2. Benefits for Target Group

• Training in the art of fiction filmmaking with a strong documentary ethos that has the potential to flourish in Myanmar
• Students are exposed to a variety of cinematic styles and are able to develop their own individual identities as filmmakers
• Unique opportunity to live and work alongside industry professionals from all over the world in a relaxed but structured atmosphere in which cultural barriers melt
• Participants acquire solid media skills (particularly editing skills) that are becoming increasingly desirable in a growing marketplace – at home and abroad
• Positive psychological effects as participants begin to take pride in their abilities, assume responsibility and acquire a deeper understanding of themselves, their immediate environment and the world at large

3. Dissemination of YFS Films

(i) Commissioned Projects for the Development Sector

In 2010, Yangon Film School filmmakers continued their fruitful cooperation with development organisations and completed three films for the development sector. Filmed over a period of almost eight months, the thirty-two minute Rice – Towards a Better Future is a beautifully shot, elegiac description of a rice-growing project in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta which, if implemented all over the country, has the potential to improve the lives of millions relying on this staple foodstuff – either as producers or as consumers. The project was commissioned by international NGO Pyoe Pin who is currently using the film as a tool to convince the authorities about the rice project’s efficacy. Local NGO Shalom Foundation approached YFS to create a film from sixty hours of material that a member of their trauma healing group had filmed over a period of eight months in the Delta following Nargis. The resulting documentary, Hidden Wounds takes us on a journey to some of the affected communities and describes the delicate process if of helping those suffering from invisible wounds to regain a sense of security that will eventually lead to psychological well-being. Finally, Respectful Encounters, a short documentary which was made for the Local Resource Center and also filmed in the Delta, takes a look at the importance of the concept of ‘accountability’ as an integral but sometimes underestimated part of community-based response.

(ii) New Commissions

Among commissions currently under discussion are:

• A documentary for Shalom Foundation following the work of an Asian MP which will be used to help newly elected MPs in Myanmar to acquaint
themselves with the day-to-day responsibilities of a politician in a democratic system

- A documentary for **FXB Myanmar** about street children
- Two members of YFS have volunteered to help YFS filmmaker and development worker Lay Thida make a documentary about the activities of the NGO **Better Life** which she founded with a group of like-minded social workers in 2007
- A documentary for the **British Council** in Yangon following this organisation’s diverse activities over a period of eight months

(iii) **Other Projects and Partnerships**

- Thanks to generous sponsorship from **The British Council**, in 2010 five YFS students were awarded scholarships to take part in six months of British Council English-language classes in Yangon
- YFS has also been approached by the **British Council** in Yangon to help develop a theme for a **Film Competition**, similar to a Competition launched by the British Council in Singapore.
- YFS filmmakers and YFS plan to join forces with the FAMU film school to mount the **Wathan Film Festival** in Yangon in September 2011

(iv) **Independent Projects by YFS filmmakers**

YFS filmmakers continue to develop their own projects, without YFS input, some of which are for the development sector. **Shin Daewe** has directed short documentaries for **Caritas Myanmar** and **Metta Development Foundation** (edited by YFS-student **Kyaw Myo Lwin**) about Nargis response and HIV awareness in Kachin State respectively. In 2009 she also began work on a long-term chronicle of the elections. Meanwhile, **Tay Zar Win Tun** took his camera to the Delta to portray a monastery education project; as well, **Wai Mar Nyunt**, who returned to Myanmar in June having completed a nine-month course in Multimedia at the FAMU, teamed up with fellow YFS-student **Pe Maung Same** to work on a project about the General Election with the working title 7/11.

(v) **Yangon Film School Films at International Film Festivals**

In March 2010, five short films by YFS students were screened at documentary film festivals in **Jihlava** and **Prague**. In August Shin Daewe’s portrait of artist Rahula, ‘An Untitled Life’ opened the Film Caravan Festival in **Imperia**, in Italy’s Liguria district. It was also one of a programme of five YFS films (the others were ‘A Million Threads’, ‘Like Father, Like Son’, ‘Water Boy’ and ‘The Change Maker’) presented by Lindsey Merrison at the French film festival **Douarnenez** during the same month. The Maw Naing’s ‘Again and Again’ was screened at the Zurcher Theaterspektakel in **Switzerland**, and in September, Shin Daewe and Mya Darli Aung travelled to Bangkok in present no fewer than seven YFS films including ‘Far From Home’, ‘A Sketch of Wathone’, ‘Beyond the Tsunami’, ‘A Farmer’s Tale’, ‘A Million Threads’, ‘Like Father, Like Son’ and ‘My Positive Life’ at the **Thai International Short Film Festival**. The Bangkok screenings proved to be so popular with audiences (including many Burmese exiles) that extra screenings had to be arranged. The festival later included these YFS films in their touring programme which travelled to a number of venues across Thailand.

A scene from the film ‘Charcoal Boy’
In October, The Maw Naing’s ‘... are not as’ was shown at the Zebra Poetry Film Festival in Berlin, and in November, Okkar, who took part in the YFS Beginners’ course in 2009, travelled to Munich to present his first documentary, ‘Charcoal Boy’ (right) in Competition at the Munich Student Film Festival; he subsequently put in an appearance at the exground Film Festival in Wiesbaden, where his film was shown alongside four other YFS films.

Finally, in November, YFS filmmakers Thu Thu Shein and Thaiddhi travelled from Prague to Berlin to present a selection of YFS films at an event organised by the Heinrich Boell Foundation at the renowned cinema Kunstkino Babylon.

(vi) Myanmar Television, YFS Crews

YFS is still committed to building contacts to MRTV but – even post-election – this still appears to be something of a grey area. In mid-2010 YFS filmmaker Okkar was commissioned by a member of MMPE to make a film about Myanmar kickboxing for Myanmar International Channel. However, unaware at the time of the need for a deal memo, Okkar was left in the dark by his broadcasting contact who, it transpired, had not secured a pre-sale from the channel, but was merely hoping to acquire world rights for himself for Okkar’s film for very little money. Since the sponsor in question was not inclined to meet a representative of YFS to negotiate terms for their cooperation, it was decided that the best course of action in this case would be to return the sponsor’s original investment in order to retain the rights for future exploitation. This incident serves to make clear the importance of creating the parameters for ‘best practice’ within the media sector and building a solid working relationship with broadcasters as a future employer and platform for the work of YFS filmmakers.

On a more positive note, the NGO Pyoe Pin, for whom YFS has made three films focussing on development topics (Rice – Myanmar’s Future, A Bright Future and Our Forests, Our Future) was successful in 2010 in obtaining permission from the then Ministry of Forestry to broadcast Our Forests, Our Future on MRTV. After a hiatus following the General Election, Pyoe Pin has now resumed negotiations with Ministries of Agriculture and Education and hopes that the other two films will also soon be passed for broadcast to a wide local audience.

YFS continues to be one of the first ports of call for both local mediamakers but also visiting filmmakers and/or production companies from Asia and Europe. In 2010 Italian filmmaker Fabrizio Polpettini worked with a YFS crew to producer his short music video entitled ‘The Houses there Wear Verandas Out of Shame’.

(vii) Study Trips Abroad

In July 2010 YFS student Lay Thida (pictured right in her edit suite at the NFTS), received grants from the UK-based Charles Wallace Burma Trust and the European Burma Office to enable her to take part in the National Film and Television School’s Summer Docs course in the UK. She was the first Burmese student ever to attend a course at this prestigious school. During this ten-week course, she was given the opportunity to research, film and edit a short documentary on a subject of her choosing. A task which would have been daunting for any filmmaker presented a considerable challenge to Lay Thida, who had never set foot in the UK before, but she managed to acquit herself with astonishing determination and self-confidence:
I researched, filmed and edited a 15-minute documentary film entitled *Wrong Side Up* about a Burmese busker in London. The discussions with my fellow students helped me to learn about different ways of thinking and storytelling. The best thing was that, coming from isolated Myanmar, I was able to broaden my knowledge and see how other filmmakers adapt to working in different filming environments.

Lay Thida

Continuing its cooperation with the Czech film school FAMU in Prague, in September 2010 YFS students Thu Thu Shein and Thaiddhi commenced Masters Degree courses in cinematography. They plan to return to Yangon in June 2011 and have agreed to share their knowledge as Student Trainers during the next YFS Beginners’ course.

XIII Conclusions and the Next Step

As the Yangon Film School enters its seventh year of activity, demand for a broad range of filmmaking courses on the part of current students and new candidates alike remains unabated. Coupled with YFS’ cooperation with the development sector in Myanmar in the shape of productions that help to incite change and growth, the continued success of our trainings – now attracting increasing attention far beyond Myanmar’s borders – serves to confirm the pivotal role that capacity building in the media can play in the country’s development post-Election and beyond.

(i) Assessments and Suggestions

- Thanks to the ten-week focus on film analysis and editing in the first half of 2010, this year’s workshops successfully addressed the students’ need to learn how to shape their material into engaging films; of the eighteen students involved, four students display genuine talent as editors – arguably the most complex area of filmmaking. The number of independently filmed projects brought to the workshop was a further indication of students’ desire to find their own, individual voices as filmmakers
- The involvement of Student Trainers during editing workshops and as Tutors in DVD design and technical workflow marked a further stepping stone towards Student Trainer-led courses
- Storytelling skills were again honed during the True Fictions II Workshop in the second half of 2010 – though problems in finding sufficient crew members due to
conflicting assignments and projects on the part of several regular participants underlined the need for ‘new blood’. This problem will be addressed by an **annual intake of beginners** from 2011 onwards. Cases of absenteeism during some of the courses will be offset by the introduction in 2011 of **Registration Fees**, refundable by 85% attendance.

- Tutors have also mooted the possibility of introducing appoint system leading to **Graduate** and **Teaching Certificates** to students who have attained sufficient proficiency in their field. This will enable tutors and students alike to assess students’ progress and suitability as Student Trainers.

- The election of the seven-member **YFS Committee** in mid-2010 now enables students to play a more active role in decision-making processes, but members must be encouraged to meet regularly and find solutions to problems if the Committee is to have a genuine function.

- The challenges of being both filmmaker and Project Director have led to the Committee’s decision to outsource this position; a similar decision to outsource the Equipment Management position is still under discussion.

- In 2010 16 YFS films enjoyed successful screenings at international festivals. YFS filmmakers were in attendance at some of these events thereby strengthening their links to an international community. In future students would benefit from additional coaching in project presentation and Q & A sessions following screenings.

### (ii) Workshops in 2011

A workshop held in the first half of 2011 will focus on a course for 12 beginners. The topic for 2011 will be ‘ethnic minorities in Myanmar’. For this reason, six of the new intake will comprise members of Myanmar’s myriad ethnic minorities. Recruitment will take place in Yangon in May 2011 with 1-2 YFS Committee members and the YFS Director conducting joint interviews. The second half of 2011 will be devoted to Editing with courses for beginners and more advanced editors as well as a module devoted to post-production. Courses between the two semesters will concentrate on analysis of documentary editing and an introduction to the history of film form. Workshops will once again be rounded off at the end of the year by further tuition in Sound Design.

Film Production will be taught in modules by the YFS Director and Workshop Supervisor based on students’ ongoing individual projects; the YFS Director will continue to advise the YFS Committee on all management and other issues with a view to handing over as much of the decision-making as possible to the Committee.

Funds permitting, in 2011 YFS workshops will focus on the following:

- Beginners Workshop: the Art of Documentary Filmmaking using Student Trainers wherever possible, working under tutors’ supervision
- Film Analysis – the Documentary Edit
- Editing and Post-Production
- Sound design and mixing
- History of Film Form
- Film Production: Creativity and Commerce
- Flying Mentorships of NGO commissions and students’ individual projects
(iii) Flying Mentorships

Once again, the YFS Flying Mentorship programme proved an invaluable asset as students struggled to meet deadlines and respond to the sometimes challenging briefs of NGO clients. Whilst YFS endeavours to encourage its filmmakers to take on as much responsibility as possible for these commissions, students still lack the experience to be able complete commissions quickly and efficiently. In 2010, Jessica Ehlebracht and later, Regina Bärtschi supported YFS student editor Kyaw Myo Lwin as he strived to identify a structure for the NGO-commissioned film, *Hidden Wounds*, about trauma healers working with Nargis victims in Myanmar’s Delta region. Regina also co-edited with Kyaw Myo Lwin the half-hour, long-term observational film made for Pyoe Pin, *Rice: Towards a Better Future*, while Jessica Ehlebracht supervised the same student during the film’s post-production. Finally, Regina was once again editing mentor to Project Director and filmmaker Eh Mwee as she edited the Local Resource Center-commissioned project, *Respectful Encounters*, which she had also directed.

Lindsey Merrison, YFS Director, Berlin, April 2011