

«MOUNTAIN IS A BUDDHA. BUDDHA IS A MOUNTAIN!»

GE BIZHOU



THE FILM

The Giant Buddhas

Documentary, Switzerland 2005
by **Christian Frei**

35mm, 1:1,85, Dolby Digital, 95 Min. 11 Sec.

With

Nelofer Pazira Writer and Journalist

Xuanzang Master 602 - 664 AD

Sayyed Mirza Hussain Cave Dweller in Bamiyan

Taysir Alony TV-journalist «Al Jazeera»

Zémaryaläi Tarzi Archaeologist

Synopsis

In march 2001, two huge Buddha statues were blown up in the remote area of Bamiyantal in Afghanistan.

The dramatic event surrounding the ancient stone colossi - unique proof of a high culture that bloomed until the 13th century along the Silk Road – is the starting point for a cinematic essay on fanaticism and faith, terror and tolerance, ignorance and identity.

Oscar nominated director Christian Frei's thought-provoking film journeys along a perimeter that both divides and unites people and cultures.

**«I REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT THE STATUE OF
BUDDHA WAS NOT DEMOLISHED BY ANYBODY.
IT CRUMBLLED OUT OF SHAME.
OUT OF SHAME FOR THE WORLD'S IGNORANCE
TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN.»**

MOHSEN MAKHMALBAF, IRANIAN FILMMAKER



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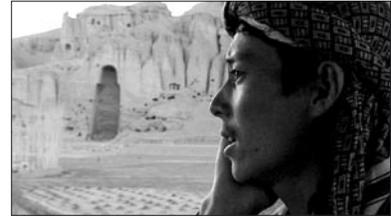
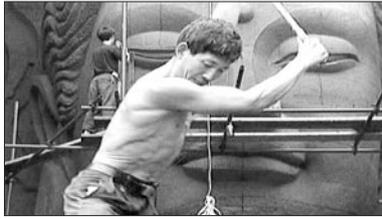
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THE FILM

Synopsis by Sean Farnel

How did it look and sound here fifteen hundred years ago? How did it smell? Conjuring the past, sifting the present, Swiss filmmaker Christian Frei is seeking the elusive, the poetic, the profound. We are in Bamiyan, the great valley in Afghanistan, site of what were once – not long ago – two giant Buddha statues. At fifty-three metres high, one of them was the tallest-standing representation of Buddha in the world.

But that was another world. In February of 2001, the Taliban issued an edict that all non-Islamic statues be destroyed. By March, the Buddhas were blown to bits. There was international outrage and this hypocrisy is one of the subjects of Frei's beautifully meandering inquiry. He quotes the Iranian filmmaker, Mohsen Makhmalbaf: «I am now convinced that the Buddhist statues were not demolished. They crumbled to pieces out of shame, because of the West's ignorance toward Afghanistan.»

On another path, in another period, Frei follows the footsteps of Xuanzang, the seventh-century Chinese monk famed for his sixteen-year spiritual quest along the Silk Road to India. Bamiyan was one of his pit stops. Xuanzang's journals tantalize with evocative descriptions of the Bamiyan Buddhas and tease with mention of an even grander Buddha at a nearby monastery. Estimated to be three hundred metres long, it would be the largest statue in human history, an eighth wonder. Fascinated by the legend of the «sleeping Buddha,» a French archaeologist begins to excavate even as he decries the plundering of Afghanistan's history. «Squeezed dry like a lemon,» he says of the country.

In Canada, Afghan writer and journalist Nelofer Pazira reflects on an old photograph of her father posing before the giant Buddhas. Yet another time and something more ephemeral – music and laughter, also squeezed dry. In Leshan, China, a kitschy attempt to rebuild the Bamiyan Buddha as a tourist attraction; in Zurich high-tech reconstructions using «photogrammetry»; UNESCO asking for «anastylosis.» Frei joins the search.

But what are they seeking on this quest, on which, centuries ago, a Chinese monk encountered «bewilderment and disorientation»?

© Sean Farnel, Toronto International Film Festival



THE FILM

Statement from Christian Frei

I view my film as a hymn to the diversity of opinions, religions and cultures. Nobody – neither the Taliban nor American politics – should force the rest of the world into homogeneity and uniformity. The dispassionate way in which I narrate the fanatical iconoclast perpetrated by the Taliban, is also my political message. Of course it is an act of ignorance to knock off the head of a defenceless statue and to destroy it. Yet the response to this ignorance shouldn't be countered by further ignorance.

Shooting of the film started two weeks before the outbreak of the war in Iraq in March 2003. Cinematographer Peter Indergand and I managed to get an interview with «Al Jazeera» star reporter Taysir Alony. He was the only journalist permitted to film the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas. I was aware that he had excellent contacts to the inner circle of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Nevertheless, I was deeply shocked when Taysir was arrested in Spain just a few weeks after shooting was complete. The public prosecutor accuses him of having regular phone contact with and providing support for terrorists.

The blowing up of the two colossal Buddhas in the remote Bamiyan valley in March 2001 was a beginning. Just six months later the attack on the Twin Towers in New York followed. However, «The Giant Buddhas» is not a film about terror, rather a film about transience, a film about the loss of cultural identity, about the search for truth, beauty and diversity. I was simply interested in looking back on an event that shook the world and decided to embark on a film journey.

A journey along a multi-faceted line that both connects and divides people and cultures.

«ALL THINGS CHANGE. NOTHING IS PERMANENT.»

BUDDHA



MAIN LOCATION

Bamiyan – The valley of the giant Buddhas

For fifteen hundred years, two gigantic Buddha statues stood in their niches cut in the cliff flanking the remote Bamiyan valley of present day Afghanistan. The smaller of the two statues, thirty-five metres high and referred to as «Shamama» (Queen Mother), was hewn into the soft conglomerate of the two kilometre long rock face in the year 507. Painted blue and with a golden face, the figure was supposed to represent the Buddha Sakyamuni. The second statue – the «Salsal» Buddha («light shines through the universe») – was built fifty years later. At fifty-five metres, this was the greatest standing Buddha statue in the world.

The present dwellers in this valley are proud of their pre-Islamic past. They talk of the old times when Bamiyan, the main link between central Asia and India, provided the main access to the Silk Road and was the trading centre for thousands of caravans. It was this prosperity that was responsible for the Buddha statues being hewn into the soft rock face with a complex system of steps, niches, balconies, meeting rooms, altar rooms with cupolas and dwelling quarters, all cut into the rock and nestling between the two colossal figures.

For hundreds of years the Bamiyan valley, lying in the Hindukutch, was one of the most important and attractive pilgrimage sites for practising Buddhists, a true global centre of Buddhism, a melting pot of cultures.

However, in the spring of 2001, Taliban leader Mullah Omar in a fatwa, gave the order to destroy the two Buddha statues. The world was up in arms. Years of looting of Afghanistan's cultural heritage and the religious mania of «God's warriors» and its devastating consequences on the people of Afghanistan provoked little interest yet, all of a sudden, UNESCO hastily sent a special envoy to Kabul and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York offered to purchase and preserve the statues. But to no avail.

At the beginning of March 2001, the great Buddhas of Bamiyan were blown up by specialists belonging to the al-Qaeda terror organisation.



PROTAGONISTS

Sayyed Mirza Hussain – Life between the Buddhas

During the course of history, the 750 caves hewn into the vertical rock face in Bamiyan like a honeycomb initially served as prayer grottoes and dwelling for pilgrims and monks. Today, many of these caves are still occupied – by refugees. Several dozen Hazara families cook, sleep and live on the cliff side. These are modern cave-dwellers. They keep domestic animals, bake bread and bring up their children. One of these cave-dwellers is called Sayyed Mirza Hussain. He is one of the very few people to have directly witnessed the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas.

Sayyed relates how the Taliban initially attempted to hack away at the Buddha and the frescoes adorning the niches. And then how they attacked the statues with tanks, grenades and anti-aircraft missiles. But even these attacks resulted in a lot less damage than was expected. Finally in a fit of pique the Taliban placed large quantities of mines, grenades and bombs at the feet and shoulders of the statues and ignited the whole lot. The torso of the giant figure, however, remained intact. Only after around 20 days of senseless attacks at the beginning of March 2001, were specialists flown in to blow up the two giant Buddhas professionally.

For Sayyed Mirza Hussain, it was as if he had just witnessed an execution.

Following the destruction of the Buddhas the world suddenly began to take an interest in the remote Bamiyan valley. The «liberators» arrived, journalists and charity organisations and, once again, life on the cliff face took a dramatic turn. Since spring 2004, the caves and grottoes on the cliff face have been abandoned and are now empty. Sayyed Mirza and the other families have been resettled and live in a sterile village of huts on a high plateau, at least two hours walking distance from the bazaar. A windy place, without water and devoid of any social cohesion. What had happened? The governor of Bamiyan and a French charity were of the opinion that the cliff and the Buddha niches are now part of UNESCO's global heritage and dwellers were no longer welcome. UNESCO was outspoken in its protests. They had always been firmly against any resettlement plan for the cave-dwellers since, according to UNESCO, people have been living on the cliff in Bamiyan for centuries. After all, the residents would protect the frescoes in the caves from looting. But the protests were in vain.

The cave-dwellers of Bamiyan are now forbidden from living on the cliff.



PROTAGONISTS

Taysir Alony – Witness to the destruction

Taysir Alony was in Afghanistan for years as a correspondent for «AlJazeera». During this time he was responsible for capturing the most spectacular «scoops». He enjoyed close relationships to Taliban officials, to Mullah Omar and al-Qaeda. He was responsible for organising interviews with bin Laden and he was also responsible for shooting the famous video footage of the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas. Those pictures broadcasted around the globe. How did Taysir Alony get permission to film considering that the Bamiyan valley was hermetically sealed off to journalists in March 2001?

«I had very close contacts with the local Taliban who were very sceptical if not downright opposed to the destruction», declared Taysir Alony. The burning question was «why did the Taliban resort to such measures?» «They felt that the world had cheated them» countered Taysir Alony. «They realised that nobody was interested in the disastrous consequences of the economic blockade. Internationally, the Taliban were completely isolated. I believe that with the destruction of this symbol of Buddhism they wanted to set a political agenda. And I also think the international appeals and protests regarding the Buddhas made the Taliban ruthless. The world showed little interest in the fact that hundreds, yes even thousands of children in Afghanistan suffered from malnutrition or were maimed as the result of mines. Now, because of two old stone figures, the world reacted with cries of horror.»

During shooting in September 2003, Taysir Alony was arrested in his house in Granada in Spain, as he was about to attend a Peace Congress. In spite of not being in the best of health the star reporter remains either in custody or under house arrest. The process commences in July 2005 and the investigating judge, Baltasar Garzón, has charged Alony with being a member of a terrorist organisation.

**«FIRST, WE DESTROYED THE SMALL STATUE.
IT WAS A WOMAN. THEN WE BLEW UP HER HUSBAND.»**

ABDUL HAIDI, TALIBAN COMMANDER



PROTAGONISTS

Xuanzang – The search for the truth

Xuanzang was a pilgrim, monk, scholar, translator, searcher of the truth and a popular Chinese hero. Born in 602 AD, the stately and good-looking man already turned to Buddhism as a teenager. In 629 AD, Xuanzang wanted to leave Changan, the former capital of China, to discover the truth about Buddhism in India. However, the Emperor put a stop to the journey. Nonetheless, the young monk set off from his home on foot in a cloak-and-dagger operation, on the 16,000 kilometre journey. He crossed the Gobi and Taklamakan deserts, the snow-covered mountains of Pamir and the Hindukutch. Robbers, demons and thousands of dangers were always lurking.

Xuanzang took 16 years to reach his destination. His «Buddhist Records of the Western World», *Si-yu-ki* is a Chinese classic. His legendary journey is filled with countless traditional stories and fables. Xuanzang was also a meticulous documentarist. He was very painstaking when writing down everything he saw and experienced. Thus in the film, he is treated as a real, living figure. Cinematographer Peter Indergand retraces Xuanzang's footsteps through sand dunes and snow plains and off the set we are able to listen to his recordings that in many places, sound like a personal diary:

«For guidance, travellers often have no other reference points than human remains and the skeletons of dead animals left behind by the caravans. Sometimes, a type of singing and whistling could be heard, sometimes cries of agony. Looking around and listening carefully, there is a feeling of total bewilderment and disorientation.»

Xuanzang in the film «The Giant Buddhas»

Xuanzang overcame blizzards, mountain gods and bands of robbers and, finally in 632 AD, reached his destination – Bamiyan. As the exhausted traveller witnessed the valley of the giant Buddhas before him for the first time it must have completely taken his breath away. Thousands of monks live in the caves on the cliff. And each evening, the curtain covering the face of the great Buddha is slowly drawn aside. On seeing the red-painted colossus the pilgrims fall to the ground powerless, one after the other. However, Xuanzang's fastidious report not only mentions the two standing Buddhas in their niches. Without emotion and in an almost matter-of-fact way he describes a third Buddha in Bamiyan. And this «sleeping Buddha» is more than three-hundred metres long.

Has an even greater Buddha managed to sleep through the wanton destruction of the Taliban?



PROTAGONISTS

Zémaryalai Tarzi – Where is the sleeping Buddha to be found?

Zémaryalai Tarzi has been mulling over this for the past 36 years. According to Xuanzang's report, the Buddha statue, supposedly more than 300 metres long, is buried somewhere in Bamiyan. The 65-year old professor has absolutely no doubt about the existence of the colossal Buddha statue. Tarzi is an Afghani and studied archaeology in Strasbourg. In writing a thesis about the Buddha statues of Bamiyan chance had it that the report from the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang fell into his hands. He studied the writings and came to the conclusion that the sleeping Buddha really does exist.

«Why should a third statue, referred to in the report simply be fantasy?»

Professor Tarzi in the film «The Giant Buddhas»

In 1973, Tarzi was the senior archaeologist in Afghanistan and head of the national preservation of sites of historical interest. Finally, in 1977, he had sufficient funds to start excavations in Bamiyan. Unfortunately, though, the Russian invasion thwarted the researcher's plans. Tarzi had to flee for his life.

Today, Professor Tarzi teaches at the Marc-Bloch University in Strasbourg. During each summer holiday he goes for his excavations in Bamiyan. And, when summer is over, he is more convinced than ever that he has at least pinpointed the monastery referred to in Xuanzang's report, or even the tips of the toes of the sleeping Buddha... or perhaps the plinth on which he is resting.

As the only film team, we witness Tarzi's excavations in August 2003. We film the one-hundred and fifty Afghan workers who, under Tarzi's friendly but military dictum, work feverishly digging a trench up to six-metres deep. The work is not without danger. But the men earn 3 dollars a day, a princely sum in Bamiyan. As soon as a workman discovers something, he puts his pick and shovel aside and Tarzi and his archaeological team uncover the fragments carefully. With small scrapers and brushes and a lot of patience. The camera always close by...

And we are witnesses to wonderful discoveries...



PROTAGONISTS

Nelofer Pazira – The journey to Bamiyan

The Afghan/Canadian author and actress Nelofer Pazira grew up in Kabul at the time of the Soviet occupation. When she was just 16 years old, the family fled to Canada. That was in 1989. Twelve years later, Nelofer played the leading role in the film «Kandahar», produced by Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf. The film became a worldwide success. Nelofer Pazira lives and works in Toronto and the first scenes show her reviewing the printers' proofs for her book «A Bed of Red Flowers – In search for my Afghanistan». Nelofer calls her father to ask him a few questions...

In his student days her father, Habibullah Pazira, like many educated Afghanis before the war, visited Bamiyan with his fellow scholars. They sat on the head of the 55 meter high Buddhas and played their instruments. Nelofer studies the photos of her father and his friends in Bamiyan. As her father proudly poses in front of the head of the great Buddha. How her father recalled the echo that reflected the voices of the singing students as if they were sitting in a circle. And her burning desire to be able to set eyes on the giant Buddhas, just once.

Nelofer flies to Kabul. The journey from the airport to the city brings back memories of her childhood: of a city with green parks, a thriving culture and a lot of poetry. Nelofer visits Afghanistan's National Museum that once housed one of the world's most priceless collections. Sadly at the beginning of the 90s, the museum located outside Kabul in the immediate vicinity of the parliamentary palace came under fire from warring factions of the mujaheddin. Thanks to the extraordinary courage of the museum director, Omara Khan Masoodi and his staff, at least part of the treasures could be brought to safety. But the museum was severely damaged and looted and thus became a symbol for a country that has lost its cultural past as no country before.

«A nation stays alive when its culture stays alive»

Inscription above the entrance to the National Museum

Nelofer sets out on the journey to Bamiyan. Although the valley is only 240 kilometres from Kabul, the bumpy drive in a jeep takes a whole day. Finally she reaches Bamiyan. Devastated, she stands in front of the empty niche of the former giant Buddha. The muezzin in the nearby mosque calls the faithful to evening prayers. Nelofer observes the empty niche and the rubble inside. For a few precious seconds she has the feeling that the great Buddha, once again, is standing in the niche.



OTHER LOCATIONS

Leshan – The disappearance of a kitsch replica

Each year, thousands of Chinese tourists visit the seated Buddha in Leshan which, at 71 meters, is the largest Buddha statue in the world. And in mysterious looking poses, they all have their photograph taken in front of the 14-meter long giant head. The photos should give the impression that the subjects are touching the 7-meter long ear, or the 5-meter long nose or the one-meter high forehead. Rumour has it that this brings luck and a long life.

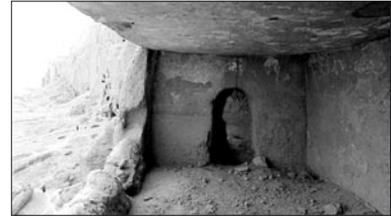
The commercially operated «Oriental Buddha Kingdom Park», with over three-thousand Buddha replicas – a sort of Disneyland for Buddhism –, is very near the Leshan Buddha. Immediately after the destruction of the Buddhas in Afghanistan, the park owner had the idea of reconstructing the giant Bamiyan Buddha. In autumn 2001, three-hundred stonemasons under the directions of the «Sichuan Art Academy», began with the construction of the Bamiyan replica. Archaeological details or authenticity had little meaning for the stonemasons. As the original Bamiyan Buddha had lost its wooden and metal face hundreds of years ago, the Chinese stonemasons decked out «their» Buddha with a fantasy face.

«Our Bamiyan Buddha looks down on a beautiful landscape. I'm sure he's happier here than in the desert in Afghanistan.»

Liang Enming, Oriental Buddha Park Chairman

As cameraman Peter Indergand and director Christian Frei wanted to visit and film Leshan's Bamiyan Buddha in October 2003, the figure was nowhere to be seen. And, in questioning the park-keepers, they received very odd and evasive answers. This Buddha is being repaired and is not on view... it's no longer here... closed... Finished... it's in Afghanistan and not here in China... the Buddha is undergoing a facelift and is temporarily closed to viewing... there was never anything like that here.

Why all this secrecy? Why may nobody see this Buddha again? Finally, the abbot of a Buddhist monastery put the filmmakers on the right track.



OTHER LOCATIONS

ETH Zurich – Reconstruction, thanks to Swiss high-tech?

When university graduate Fabio Remondino puts on his 3D-goggles and measures two superimposed images of the giant Bamiyan Buddha using a floating mark, one could imagine watching a science-fiction film.

Thanks to photogrammetry it has been possible to make a virtual reconstruction down to the last detail of the Bamiyan Buddha on computers at the ETH Zurich. The Buddha is there again; three-dimensional, with centimetre precision, just as he looked before the destruction. This data could be used to assist physical reconstruction in Bamiyan. That would punish the ignorance of the iconoclasts, promote tourism and hand back a piece of Afghanistan's cultural identity.

There are numerous projects around the globe for reconstructing the Bamiyan Buddhas. But the Swiss project headed by Paul Bucherer and Professor Armin Grün is the one having the greatest chance of success.

In the film «The Giant Buddhas», there is a sequence in which for just a few seconds Nelofer Pazira has the feeling that the giant Buddha of Bamiyan is once again standing in the niche. Patrick Lindenmaier and Paul Avondet of Andromeda Film AG, who have been working for months in close collaboration with the ETH Zurich, were responsible for the visual effects which made this «miracle» come true. Thanks to precise image data provided by the Afghanistan institute in Bubendorf, Switzerland, and Kyoto University in Japan, Nelofer's vision of the giant Buddha of Bamiyan gives the impression of being completely authentic. Not only the Buddha, but all the frescoes, look exactly as they did before being destroyed by the Taliban.



OTHER LOCATIONS

UNESCO – The debate surrounding authenticity

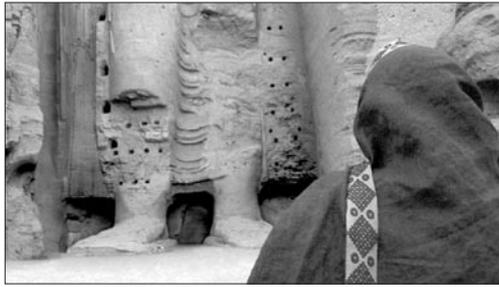
The debate surrounding possible renovation, restoration or reconstruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas is, of course, interesting for a documentary filmmaker as it involves authenticity and veracity. Christian Manhart from the UNESCO headquarters in Paris is responsible for Afghanistan but he has other priorities in Bamiyan: A reconstruction of the Buddhas is not at the top of his list. However, the niches in which the Buddhas once stood were damaged by the explosions and have to be stabilized. And the remaining frescoes should be restored and afforded protection.

The film accompanies the UNESCO team of experts to Bamiyan and we discover that the final decision on the future of the Bamiyan Buddhas is still to be taken. Should a memorial be laid out on the ground? Should a laser hologram illuminate the niche at night? Or should the Buddha be reconstructed from fragments using anastylosis?

The voices of the narrators in the film summarise the views of the team of experts as follows:

Time has come for the experts and their Power Point presentations, for meetings and scientific debates. Thanks to the magnetic alignment of the minerals, it is possible to determine, to the exact centimeter, where each fragment of the Buddha comes from. And then? What use is all this knowledge? Will the Buddha ever be resurrected? No question, the remaining frescoes need to be preserved, the broken parts in the niches protected and identified. The niches themselves need to be stabilized. They have been damaged by the explosions and are on the verge of collapse. Sensors are installed everywhere. Steel anchors drilled into the cliff. Everything conscientiously noted and logged. I wonder, does a memorial really require such exactitude? The niches won't collapse for a couple of hundred years, proclaims one of the engineers. In a few million years, a geologist counters, the whole cliff won't be here any more.

What did Buddha say again? «Everything changes. Nothing remains.»





PRODUCTION

Locations

Between March 2003 and December 2004, cameraman Peter Indergand and director Christian Frei spent 14 weeks shooting in seven different countries. Together with 6-weeks of research the film journey spanned half a year.

Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan

Kabul, Afghanistan

Al Jazeera TV-Station, Doha, Qatar

Mogao Caves and **Gobi Desert**, Dunhuang, China

Xingjiao Temple, Xian, China

Leshan Grand Buddha and **Oriental Buddha Park**, Leshan, China

ETH Zurich, Institute of Geodesy and Photogrammetry, Switzerland

UNESCO Headquarter, Paris, France

Marc Bloch University, Strasbourg, France

Munich, Germany

Toronto, Canada



PRODUCTION

The Crew

Written, directed and edited by
Christian Frei

Cinematography
Peter Indergand SCS

Assistant Editor
Denise Zabalaga

Sound Design and Mix
Florian Eidenbenz

Visual Effects
Patrick Lindenmaier
Paul Avondet

Narrators
Stefan Kurt German
Peter Mettler English

Initiated by
Bernard Weber
And upon an Idea by
Peter Spoerri

Advisors
Paul Bucherer
Swiss Afghanistan Institute

Armin Grün
ETH Zurich

Christian Manhart
UNESCO Paris

Music by
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Jan Garbarek
Steve Kuhn
Arvo Pärt

Music Advisor
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ZDF / ARTE
Martin Pieper

and Suissimage

Supported by
Bundesamt für Kultur BAK
Stadt und Kanton Zürich
Kanton Solothurn
Filme für eine Welt
Volkart Stiftung
Succès Cinéma
Succès Passage Antenne



PRODUCTION

Original Theatrical Version

The Giant Buddhas

35mm, 1:1,85, Dolby SRD, 95'11" (100' with 24 frames/second)

English Narration with English Subtitles

Narrator: Peter Mettler

The Giant Buddhas

35mm, 1:1,85, Dolby SRD, 95'11" (100' with 24 frames/second)

German Narration with German/French Subtitles

Narrator: Stefan Kurt

Original Languages

The film was shot in the original languages:
Dari, Arabic, Mandarin, French and English.

TV-Versions

The Giant Buddhas

Digital Betacam, 16:9, TV-Mix, 95'11"

English Narration with English Subtitles

Narrator: Peter Mettler

Les Bouddhas Géants

Digital Betacam, 16:9, TV-Mix, 95'11"

French Narration with French Voice-Over

Narrator: N.N.

Im Tal der grossen Buddhas

Digital Betacam, 16:9, TV-Mix, 95'11"

German Narration with German Voice-Over

Narrator: Stefan Kurt

I Buddha Colossali

Digital Betacam, 16:9, TV-Mix, 95'11"

Italian Narration with Italian Voice-Over

Narrator: N.N.

PRODUCTION



Christian Frei – Producer, Director and Editor

Christian Frei was born in 1959, in Schönenwerd, Switzerland. He studied Visual Media at the Department of Journalism and Communication at Fribourg University. He shot his first documentary in 1981, and has been working as an independent filmmaker and producer since 1984. He works regularly for Swiss National Television SF DRS.

In 1997, he shot his first feature length documentary, «Ricardo, Miriam y Fidel», the tale of a Cuban family torn between loyalty to the revolutionary ideals and the desire to emigrate to the United States.

In 2001, his «War Photographer» followed photo-journalist James Nachtwey during his various missions. The film received an Academy Award Nomination for «Best Documentary Feature» and won 12 International Filmfestivals.

«The Giant Buddhas» is his third feature film.

PRODUCTION



Peter Indergand – Cameraman

Peter Indergand, a Swiss citizen, was born in Crest, France, on February 26, 1957 and currently lives in Winterthur, Switzerland.

Leaving school with the baccalaureate, he subsequently studied art history and English language and literature for 6 semesters at the University of Zurich. Thereafter, he attended the American Film Institute AFI in Los Angeles and completed his training dedicated to the camera in 1982.

Between 1977 and 1981, a number of films were produced by a group of enthusiastic friends and these gave Peter Indergand the opportunity to gain his spurs as a cameraman: *Fiori d'autunno*, *Onore e riposo*, *L'alba*.

Together with Rolando Colla, with whom he later shot feature films such as «Le monde à l'envers», «Oltre il confine», the TV film «Operazione Stradivari» and the short films «Einspruch II and III» (Protestation II and III), he founded the Peacock film production company in 1984. Indergand left Peacock in 1989 and has been working as a freelance cameraman ever since.

In recent years he has shot numerous feature films and documentaries in different countries. The film «War Photographer», a documentary about the photographer James Nachtwey, achieved great international acclaim, resulting in an Oscar nomination in 2002 and Indergand receiving an Emmy nomination in 2004.



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