

# BREACHES IN REALITY: INTERVENTION STRATEGIES IN THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

MANUEL DE LA FUENTE

TRANSLATED BY MARTIN BOYD

In recent times the documentary film has come back to life. This is certainly not to suggest that it was ever dead, but merely that it had been excluded from mainstream production and distribution networks, relegated largely to television or restricted to specific genres, such as music documentaries. However, the exhaustion of the Hollywood fiction formula and the collapse of the welfare state has resulted in a demand to see films in the movie theatres that prompt the viewer to reflect on certain issues. And here the documentary film has reclaimed its place, conquering the territory it lost after the Second World War. While in the post-war period mainstream audiences turned to sheer entertainment in the context of the leisure culture, now a certain trend in the opposite direction is observable.

Obviously, public interest is focused on documentaries with a political dimension, activist and interventionist films that clearly address certain issues to question our prosperity in a time of cri-

sis. It is now widely assumed that the starting point for this new trend came shortly after 9-11 with the box-office hit *Bowling for Columbine* (Michael Moore, 2002), whose success established a model that has found its way regularly into major theatres. It is a model for a type of mainstream political documentary that has turned its directors into stars – and not only in the case of Michael Moore – in contrast with the sniper style that has traditionally characterized the genre.

And in view of the proliferation of studies on the question, we address the need to explore the strategies and traditions of the activist documentary in this monograph, which begins in the present – with Moore's latest film, released just a few months ago – and then looks back in time, returning to the silent film era (Donna Kornhaber's article) and the years when Hollywood made use of the documentary as a key tool for mobilizing the people (as explored by Jaume Antuñano), without forgetting documentary-making in Europe (the

## INTRODUCTION

contributions of Ignacio Ramos, Lourdes Monterrubio, Ricardo Jimeno and the final article by Sergi Sánchez and Ana Aitana Fernández). Complementing all these articles is a four-way debate between four filmmakers with extensive experience in the field of activist or militant documentary-making, and an interview with Pere Joan Ventura, one of the major exponents of the genre in Spain. Throughout this issue, and going beyond the US-Europe axis, questions are explored in an effort to explain why political documentary films have always been important and why this importance is now propelling them into a prominent position that they never should have lost. ■

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#### Abstract

Introduction to the contents of issue 22, about political documentary film.

#### Key words

Political documentary; militant cinema; crisis; mainstream.

#### Author

Manuel de la Fuente is Associate Professor in Media Studies at the Universitat de València (Spain). He has been researching the political effects of the popular culture while his main teaching interests focus on the documentary film, Spanish film and popular music. He has also served as a research fellow and a visiting professor both in Europe and in South America, at the Université de Genève, Paris 12, Virginia, Newcastle, Valdivia, Valparaíso and Temuco. He has published many articles dedicated to music and cinema in various international journals and the books *Frank Zappa en el infierno* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2006) and *Madrid. Visiones cinematográficas de los años 1950 a los años 2000* (Neuilly-sur-Seine, Atlante, 2014). Contact: manuel.delafuente@uv.es.

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### BRECHAS DE REALIDAD. ESTRATEGIAS DE INTERVENCIÓN EN EL CINE DOCUMENTAL

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#### Resumen

Introducción a los contenidos del número 22, dedicado al documental político.

#### Palabras clave

Documental político; cine militante; crisis; *mainstream*.

#### Autor

Manuel de la Fuente es profesor de Comunicación Audiovisual en la Universitat de València. Su investigación se centra en las implicaciones sociopolíticas de la cultura e imparte clases sobre cine documental, cine español y música popular. Ha realizado estancias de investigación y ha sido profesor invitado en universidades europeas y americanas, como Ginebra, París 12, Virginia, Newcastle, Valdivia, Valparaíso y Temuco. Es autor de artículos sobre cine y música en revistas internacionales y de los libros *Frank Zappa en el infierno. El rock como movilización para la disidencia política* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2006) y *Madrid. Visiones cinematográficas de los años 1950 a los años 2000* (Neuilly-sur-Seine, Atlante, 2014). Contacto: manuel.delafuente@uv.es.

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