

Boris Frumin

The Student Films of Thea St.Omer

Thea St.Omer took directing classes at NYU with Pascal Aubier. Her first sound narrative project was called *A Touch of Tutelage*. It is about an office meeting between a departing woman student and male professor. It is about suppressed desire, about imagining sexual relationships which did not take place. Thea directed this project at a time when “political correctness” had become the norm. It is not a “politically correct” project. Instead it is about the ambiguity of simple routine. The intellectual treatment is done in close-ups (the young woman taking off her sneakers), in dream flash shots (sliding onto the professor’s knees), in combination of “on screen” phone talk (professor) and background love confession (woman). This project includes elements that distinguish Thea St.Omer’s directing—attention to face, attention to silence, attention to word (which could become excessive and explanatory), attention to static shot (vs. “fancy” movements), controlled editing. The project is honest, simple, challenging.

Thea’s St.Omer’s “documentary” project is called *Love in an Elevator*. This film is about a “love couple” in a nursing home. The kiss between the old people is unique and the close-ups are outstanding (hand with walking stick, old hands playing piano, old people’s faces). Routines are observed (waking up in the morning, Mass, playing lotto, lunch, the old man feeds the old woman and himself, and so on). This project is about love between an elderly Jewish woman and a Catholic man. Her work is patient, detailed, compassionate. Some close-ups are brutal. At the beginning of the film, Thea St.Omer gives the video camera to each of the older persons to record each other. Her voice in the background is kind. This is who Thea St.Omer was: she was a kind person. She was beautiful woman. She was a stubborn artist, without compromises.



Boris Frumin taught at NYU's Tisch School while Thea St.Omer was a graduate student and she remained in touch with him after her graduate studies were completed, especially valuing his guidance. A key Soviet filmmaker in the 1970's, the Latvian director and screenwriter was later censored and emigrated to the US in 1978. Among his works, *The Errors of Youth* screened at Un Certain Regard at Cannes in 1989 and *Black and White* (1991) received multiple awards.