

28TFF

TORINO FILM FESTIVAL

Wednesday December the 1st, 12:30, readers Club

Press Conference on *Requiem for Detroit?* by Julian Temple.

Alice in Decadence-Land

The reason why I accepted to make this movie was basically that I needed money! I knew nothing about Detroit, I'd been there once, I knew the music and obviously the car factory. When I and the producer got to the airport, and driving by car, we left that anonymous place to go into town, I realized I was living a particular experience. It was like being inside Alice in Wonderland: following a path that makes you feel progressively wrapped up in a crescendo of decadence and devastation.

The end of the American Dream and the opportunity of a new dream

Detroit was the flywheel of the American Dream: The car Industry, The invention of traffic lights, of freeways, of shopping malls, all building blocks to mass production, which brought wealth to the American society throughout the Twentieth century. The drama in this portrait is even stronger because of the emblematic character of this city: In front of a disaster of such proportion, questioning yourself on how the civilization that created it could have been so crazy, comes out natural. Yet it's not the story of a nightmare. The city population's ability to react, leaves some hope for the re-birth of some sort of new dream, maybe more human, more civilized. The contemporary art scene in Detroit is flourishing and could be considered the expression of this unrest, this need to go on finding a new model, different from the brutality imposed by a mass society (a failing format). This is the reason for the punctuation in the title that wants to underline the questioning nature of the movie. It's not celebrating the death of Detroit but only the falling of one of its versions. The movie is a Requiem, a funeral chant with no prejudice, which on the contrary opens on the opportunity of a new birth from those ashes.

The risks of the model

What is described in the movie is a paradigmatic example, however since the circulation and the rooting this social and economical model has had also outside the United States, the risk is to find similar scenarios also in Europe. Bridgewater for example is a small South-Western industrial town, next to where I live, which is completely going to pot because of its industry based economy. Many urban realities are risking a similar outcome due to the industrial crisis within an even more dramatic international economic context. This crisis has substantial repercussions right on the minorities and the immigrants; we're witnessing an increase of racial based division, and not only in the U.S.. Detroit is a city signed by apartheid, no point denying it, and the condition of Afro-Americans is ever more critical compared to that of Whites, who've, in hundreds and thousands, left the city. Once more Europe isn't alien to such issues: In Great Britain the crisis and the new political choices of the Government in charge, more willing to defend the interests of the economical ruling class – bankers in particular – than the welfare

state, fell down like an ax on on the weakest social classes. It's a general risk, maybe less felt in Italy since its a much older civilization, however not impossible, especially if clowns like Silvio Berlusconi keep ruling the country...

Trees and survivors

There's an emblematic figure in the story that is the old woman. She's sixty-nine years old, therefore she's lived in person the whole parable from Ford's development years to today's decadence. She stands a chance to find a complete, long term, perspective and see the situation in its whole, a little bit like the trees that were there before and still are there today, looking to the future and drawing new strategies of conversion and re-assessment which will allow their survival and re-birth.