



# *Le beau danger*

by René Frölke

In a world where everything seems  
programmed, even chaos, chance or  
surprise, you've got to defy logic  
and bewilder people.



You've got to make the fools  
believe that you control se-  
cret links to which they have  
no access.



Thought after thought kept passing  
through the skull of receptionist  
Anatol Dominic Vancea Voinow, known  
as Tolea; his brain circuits were  
working nonstop, in perpetuum mobile.



**Le beau danger** is a cinematic arrangement between documentary portrait and literary text. Interwoven with the moving image and divided into one hundred and seventy black and white text screens we read the work of the Romanian author Norman Manea. It is the attempt to have image and text question each other and respond to each other. Arising from the observation of the present of the author, which is also our present, the inner conflict of our time becomes visible, a conflict in which information becomes the counterpart of experience and therefore also of the memory itself.



*»Norman Manea, born in Bukovina in 1936,  
was deported with his family in 1941.  
He survived the concentration camp and was  
a freelance writer in Bucharest from 1974 on.  
He has lived in New York since 1986.«*

This short biography taken from the blurb of the German edition of a novel was a starting point for this film. The terseness of these lines, their formal contrast to what they actually say, fascinated me – and so did the question of how to narrate a biography against the background of a work that is itself very autobiographical... a phenomenon I confronted again and again as a real scene while shooting the film: the public person and the representation of the writer.

The oral narration of this biography, especially in an interview situation, never met the expectations I had developed from reading his novels and short stories. The pressure of public attention and the oral form seemed to force to simplify and abridge.

But what enthralled me about these scenes was the constant repetition – the ceremony of introduction before an audience, always the same interview questions and similar answers. The routine without which, it seems, one cannot survive in the literary business.

*Le beau danger* is a cinematic arrangement of documentary footage and literary writing of the Romanian author Norman Manea. His writing runs through the film in one hundred and seventy black-and-white panels. In the course of the film, these readable images constantly interrupt the cinematic picture and challenge the viewer to seek a text behind the text.

The film is in the end an attempt to have text and image question one another. It also seems to me an observation where the discrepancy of our time becomes visible, a discrepancy in which information becomes the adversary of experience and thereby also of the memory itself.

*René Frölke*

*In your film, you depict the Romanian writer Norman Manea in some different situations of his life, and in different places. He is very often in front of an audience, but almost never talking about his work, neither with you. Was this choice - an unusual way of making a portrait, at the core of your film from the very beginning?*

I often find it difficult to talk about the work of an author without imposing certain categories on him and his work. I think this is an art for itself. My idea was to keep the view onto his work as free as possible, as for myself during the making of the film and for the spectator of the film as well. At one hand you have his work, a short story and the fragments of a novel, as pure as possible, and on the other hand you wander with Norman Manea through several situations of his daily life as a well-known writer. Questions arise: How are his surroundings? How is he approached by an audience, the public? How is he introduced at the stage of the market? How is he seen? And from that point my questions was: Is it possible to peace his work and fragments of this cinematic observations together, where can I find or create connotations between the two?

*His writings are very present, already from the very beginning, as a kind of screen-texts. They are intertwined with the images in many different ways: sometimes they relate to the situation depicted, or they seem to be a commentary, and other times they create a kind of autonomous narrative. How did you choose the texts? How did you shape the relationship between text and image?*

After observing all these interviews conducted with Norman Manea, oftentimes focusing on his childhood, I thought this is what I have to look for in his books too. I very much liked the short story ‚We might have been four‘, the idea about the forest as an ambiguous place, a place of protection and of threats at the same time, and of course, it is a very visual place too. Into which the story of four people is placed, like a ‚Kammerspiel‘, a very intimate play. The characters are bound to each other and create a common history because of their strong individual longings. The story is written from the perspective of a young boy, but behind the text the author becomes visible as well. The fragments from the Novel ‚The Black Envelope‘ are used in a different way, much more fragmentary. They don't carry a story anymore but rather an atmosphere. For the relationship between text and images, it is very simple, during the editing I tried to treat and look at the text the same way as I would do with an image. Not seeing them as different from each other but as something from the same kind.

*You use both silent B&W 16mm and DV color. Could you explain these choices?*

I tried to produce fragments myself. The Bolex camera only allows short glimpses, it creates accidents. The DV-Camera, a technology now already mostly out of use,

produces a different kind of image. All these shattered peaces force you in the end, during the editing, to compose something out of it and this enables a different unrealistic perspective on the subject.

*In several scenes, there is no sound at all even if people or Manea himself speak. How did you conceive the connection between sound and image?*

The sound as an element of the film should have the same importance as image and text. All three elements should have equal rights. Sometimes I would feel the need to hear the actual sound, in an interview for example, but then from a certain point on the sound can distract from what is actually said, it becomes too noisy, so I have to cut it off and we can look at the text and see it more clearly. Same goes for the image, the image can distract our perception of the textual layer or the sound too, so it has to be cut off at certain times too, while the other two elements go on. All this has an interesting side effect for the spectator, the means of film making become visible. Cutting off the sound makes us discover that there is a manipulated sound or image. So while watching the film the spectator can reflect its making.

*The film is not chronological, nor related to some specific works. What guided the structure of the film?*

The structure of image and sound follow the texts. If it was meaningful to place certain images around certain passages I would do this. For the forest in the beginning for example. But there is also one long text passage of almost ten minutes where I couldn't find any meaningful images in the material, so the text stays alone there. But again, the basic idea is that everything is equal, the literary short story is present at the book faire the same instant as the author. Like Billy Pilgrim in Vonnegut's 'Slaughterhouse 5', Pilgrim can slip through time and space, being a small boy and an old man at an instant and he thinks this as something very natural.

*What could you say about the title?*

The title is taken from a book long interview with Michel Foucault. Conducted by Claude Bonnefoy it circles around how Foucault came to writing and his relationship to writing. In the specific passage the title is taken from he addresses the problem of author and work often being confused as being alike and calls this confusion 'le beau danger'. That is one question I found intriguing too, where to separate work and author, also bearing in mind that maybe no one but the author is closer connected to his work.

Questions by **Nicolas Feodoroff**



René Frölke was born in 1978 in GDR. He has worked as a freelance editor, cinematographer and director for many years. In 2007, he began studying art in Karlsruhe, but dropped out in 2012. In 2010, he made his first featurelength documentary, *Of the Salamander's Espousal with the Green Snake*.

#### **Films**

*Jour de grève* (2007, 14') | *Ropinsalmi* (2008, 12') | *Of the Salamander's Espousal with the Green Snake* (2010, 94') | *Führung* (2010, 37'; Forum Expanded 2011) | *Jeremy Y. call Bobby O. oder Morgenthau Without Tears* (2012, 84') | *Le beau danger* (2014, 100')

**joon film** positions itself between production company and open platform for artistic collaborations. The company's approach is finding ways of producing and making visible film works which are situated outside the market and traditional hierarchies of film production.

**[www.joonfilm.de](http://www.joonfilm.de)**

*Le beau danger* (2014 | 100')  
by René Frölke  
Berlinale Forum 2014, FID Marseille 2014

*Yugoslavia – How Ideology Moved our Collective Body* (2013 | 60')  
by Marta Popivoda  
Berlinale Forum Expanded 2013, Sarajevo Int. FF (Special Mention), TATE London, MUHKA (Antwerp), Beurschouwbourg (Brussels)

*The Snake in the Jar*  
by Luci Lux (2013 | 34')  
Visions du Réel 2013, Signes de Nuit (Paris), EPOS (Tel Aviv)

*Jeremy Y. Call Bobby O. oder Morgenthau without tears* (2013 | 84')  
by René Frölke (photo exhibition & film)  
Duisburg Filmfestival 2013, Hamburger Kurzfilmtage, Milchhof (Berlin)

*No Peace without War* (2012 | 37')  
by Lorenzo Castore & Adam Cohen  
Visions du Réel 2012, Plus CameraImage FF (Best Short Film)

*Guided Tour* (2011 | 34')  
by René Frölke  
Berlinale Forum Expanded 2011, Oberhausen, Viennale, CPH:DOX (Special Mention)

*Of the Salamander's Espousal with the Green Snake* (2010 | 94')  
by René Frölke  
Duisburger Filmfestival 2010 (ARTE-Award for Best Documentary)



Germany 2014  
100', mono, bw/colour

**Concept, Image & Realization**  
René Frölke

**Production**  
Ann Carolin Renninger / joon film  
René Frölke

**in association with**  
Paolo Benzi / Okta Film

**Funded by**  
Robert Bosch Stiftung  
Filmwerkstatt Kiel / Film Förderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein

**Supported by**  
Romanian Cultural Institute, Polirom / Romania,  
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania  
National Book Centre, Romania, il Saggiatore / Italy  
Romanian Cultural and Humanistic Research Institute, Italy,  
Bard College / Annandale-on-Hudson, USA,  
German Films



Filmförderung Hamburg  
Schleswig-Holstein  
FILMWERKSTATT KIEL

Robert Bosch **Stiftung**

**Distributed by**  
Arsenal - Institut for Film and Video Art



institut für film und videokunst e.V.



Ann Carolin Renninger  
Tel. +4917624089634  
[www.joonfilm.de](http://www.joonfilm.de)  
[ac@joonfilm.de](mailto:ac@joonfilm.de)

Trailer: <http://joonfilm.de/en/index.php?/projects/le-beau-danger/>