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"Radioactivists" – a documentary at the One World festival explores Japanese protests in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster

08-03-2012 15:09 | Sarah Borufka

As part of this year's edition of the One World International Human Rights Film Festival, which is currently on in Prague, the German-produced independent documentary Radioactivists – Protest in Japan provides a rare and up-close look at Japanese protests in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. It is being shown in the Youth Quake category, which features films that portray young people's struggle for change in countries around the world. I asked co-director Clarissa Seidel, who made the film together with her good friend Julia Leser, about Japanese protest culture and whether she was at all interested in the country prior to the film project.

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"I was interested in Japan before, and it was through a close friend who made the film with me, Julia Leser. She was still studying Japanese studies and was in Japan at the time. I visited her, we were there during the earthquake, and then we went back to Germany together and started planning the film."



'Radioactivists'

What was it like to film in a country that had been struck by such a huge catastrophe?

"That is really closely connected to the main focus of our film, it is pretty central to our film. We made it because we were really surprised by the positive atmosphere and the positive attitudes of people who went out to demonstrate, that is what our film is about. So the catastrophe was certainly a horrible thing to happen, but it brought out some positive things, and we wanted to capture the energy of these protests in our film."



Julia Leser, Clarissa Seidel

The stereotype most people have about Japanese people is that it is not a loud culture, that it is very demure and quiet. So it is hard for an outsider to picture the Japanese screaming and protesting on the streets. What does protest in this culture look like?

"That is actually the reason we made the film. It is something very special if people in that culture take an issue to the streets and protest. They used to do that in the late 1960s but since then, there have not been any major

demonstrations. So the Japanese imported a new way of demonstrating, with sound demos and dancing, and that was really crucial to gather so many people."

The Fukushima disaster happened about a year ago. Are you keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in Japan? Where is the country now?

"There is a big opposition to nuclear energy now and that is very special. But it will take a lot of work to get this opposition into the parliament, because the stance of the government is still very different from the people's opinion."

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to rethink energy policy. Do you think that is a positive thing?

"Of course it is, and that decision is a model for other countries as well. Although a lot of people forget that previously, there already had been a decision to scrap nuclear power plants. But I am glad we returned to that thought and hope that we can stay on that course."



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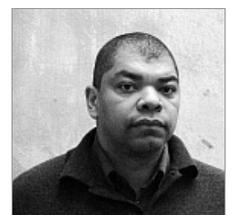
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