



# YFS POLITICAL DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL

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This year YFS organized the first ever Political Documentary Festival, in what is hopefully to become an annual event. Among invited guests were Elle Flanders, a York University graduate and Professor John Greyson. After showcasing some of their work, there was a brief discussion explaining their process and inspirations, followed by a question and answer period.

During the presentation, guests spoke of the importance of giving a voice to disenfranchised folks and shedding light into ignored problems, referring to these acts as “political filmmaking.” Elle Flanders is a Toronto based filmmaker who was raised in Montréal and Jerusalem. Her background thus plays a major role in her work, as she often focuses on anti-occupation activism in both Israel and Palestine alongside her partner, Tamira Sawatzky. Titles such as Zero Degrees of Separation uses a queer lens to illustrate how intersectionality plays a role in a macro structural level, as well as on an individual basis. By examining the lives of two couples that work under the occupation, the film illustrates the form activism takes in such countries and how oppression manifests itself in different everyday realms.

Some of her other work includes What Isn't There, which through the use of inclusive exhibits, highlights the landscape of preexisting Palestinian villages versus what remains, allowing the film to come to life through a more three-dimensional medium. Her work incorporates the classic documentary form and combines it with the video essay medium, with emphasis played on queer perspectives and the role of landscapes.

John Grayson is a film professor at York and a filmmaker who uses trans media platforms to showcase stories that are ignored in mainstream media. One such example is Last Car, where Grayson composed a forty-part murder mystery, divided between thirty-second clips displayed at subway platforms, combined with a complementary thirty-soundtrack piece (that can be found online), as a method of taking on issues of transphobia and gender roles.



Another of his projects showcased at the festival was a small sample of his Interrobang series, where he tackles sociopolitical laws such as Kathrynne Wynne’s controversial HIV laws, and the censorship of the BDS, which clouds the issue at hand. This is achieved through satire and song, alongside public domain footage.

Overall, the festival was an inspiring look into how art and activism can go hand in hand, and the importance on taking a stance for what you believe in. But most importantly, it sheds light onto why it is crucial to our generation to face up to these problematic subjects and to further discuss and question these issues.

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