

Fredi M. Murer to be the guest of honor at the 14th annual Lessinia Film Festival

Authoritative and independent voice of Swiss cinema, Walserian cantor, and subtle interpreter of his native land – a place where he still lives and from which he continues to draw inspiration – Fredi M. Murer will be the honored guest of the 14th edition of the Lessinia Film Festival, taking place in Bosco Chiesanuova (Verona) from August 23-31, 2008. Perhaps it is not surprising that the director, frequently invited to film festivals around the world (his last film, *Vitus*, appeared in Berlin, Locarno, San Sebastian, and Rome) accepted the invitation to this small festival, the only one (in Italy) dedicated exclusively to mountain life, history and traditions.

Fredi M. Murer will present two of his (self-described) “most beloved” films at Bosco Chiesanuova. The films lend a voice to the mountains that he has spent his career – begun in 1962 when he was only 20 years old – exploring. In 1974, a 108-minute long work carried the long and proverbial German title *Wir Bergler in den Bergen sind eigentlich nicht schuld, dass wir da sind*, loosely translated in English as “Don’t blame us mountaineers for living in the mountains”. The director’s original idea was to bring five legends of Uri, a Swiss canton, into the modern day. Yet, after months of research, Murer was forced to admit that the old myths and legends had disappeared. He thus transformed his conversations with the people of Uri into a reflection upon the problems of industrialization, mountain depopulation, and the transformation of mountain shepherds into those people who no longer worked the land. The film, with its significant political and moral overtones, allowed Murer and his non-conformist outlook to approach the kind of people that we see in his earlier works—mountain residents living at the margins of society, like Indians on their reservations.

With his film *Höhenfeuer* (The Bonfire), the second film to be presented at the Lessinia Film Festival, Murer reached the height of his career in 1985, winning the Golden Pardo award at the Locarno Film Festival, and the Bronze Hugo award at the Chicago Film Festival. The film recounts the story of an incestuous relationship that takes place in an isolated cabin in the Swiss mountains. It is here that a deaf-mute—a boy who will remain nameless throughout the entire film—lives with his parents and sister (who will become his lover). By subtitled the film “A Love Story”, Murer takes the film beyond its tragic dimension. The tender, familial gestures counter the dark atmosphere of a desolate mountain backdrop constantly shrouded in fog, thus creating a kind of poetry in the wild. The film treads lightly—respectful but at the same time highly critical of the social reality where isolation and marginalization heighten sexual taboos and superstition.

Special events are planned in honor of Fredi M. Murer, who will be in Bosco Chiesanuova on August 28 and 29, 2008 for the presentation of his films and to meet those attending the Lessinia Film Festival.