



A time to celebrate: This year's Berlinale marked the 70th anniversary of the Berlin International Film Festival.

Courtesy of Berlinale

In this augmented sound work titled Expedition Content, American director and sound artist Ernst Karel and Indonesian anthropologist Veronika Kusumaryati reflect on the Harvard Peabody Expedition, which took place in 1961 and lasted five months.

Katrin Figge

Contributor/Berlin

The joyous laughter of children at play, the lament of mourners at a funeral, the low rumble heralding a thunderstorm — audiences at this year's German film festival Berlinale were first irritated, then intrigued by *Expedition Content*.

Directed by American director and sound artist Ernst Karel and Indonesian anthropologist Veronika Kusumaryati, this unique project relied solely on sound and did not present any visuals except for a few subtitles and a sequence that showed footage shot in a cage.

Festivalgoers found themselves sitting in a dimmed auditorium, but instead of seeing images flickering on the screen, they listened to the sounds that were recorded during the 1961 Harvard Peabody Expedition to Netherlands New Guinea, or West Papua today. At that time, it was still a Dutch colony.

"We were interested to see how sound is used in anthropology and how we use it to understand others," said Veronika, who is currently a Harvard College Fellow in Anthropology and previously studied at the Jakarta Institute of Arts, majoring in Film and Media Studies.

"It also goes back to one of the fundamental questions of anthropology and subaltern studies: Can the subaltern speak? And the answer is, yes, it can, but are we actually listening?"

Expedition Content premiered at the Berlinale as part of the festival's Forum Expanded section, which is characterized by reflections on the medium of film, socioartistic discourse and a sense for the aesthetic.

"The programs aim to expand the understanding of what film is, to test the boundaries of convention and open up fresh perspectives to help grasp cinema and how it relates to the world in new ways," organizers say on the official website.

"What fits into the program is defined by the filmmakers' stance toward their medium rather than the question of what commercial potential a film may have. The cinematic form is never subordinate to the content. Both selection committees see their selections as a laboratory and a workshop."

For *Expedition Content*, Karel and Veronika went through 37



Courtesy of Veronika Kusumaryati

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hours of tape recorded during the Harvard Peabody Expedition, during which a team set out to study and record the Hubula, or Dani tribe, in Baliem Valley.

The expedition resulted in filmmaker Robert Gardner's documentary *Dead Birds* (1964), which is widely regarded as a landmark film in American anthropology, two books of photographs, Peter Matthiessen's book *Under the Mountain Wall*, as well as two ethnographic monographs.

Veronika explained that the expedition was significant because it marked a new direction of anthropological research by putting a stronger focus on using audio-visual technology. This new approach, which resulted in Gardner's film and the publishing of several books, meant the study also reached an audience outside of the usual academic circles.

"The expedition also took place during the transitional period from the Dutch colonial to the Indonesian colonial period," Veronika added. "It was the last territory colonized by the European power."

Funded by the Dutch colonial government, the expedition also received generous private donations, including from the Rockefeller family, one of the wealthiest and most influential families in the United States.

"Their son Michael was a Harvard graduate and wanted to join this expedition," Veronika said. "He came along as photographer and to record the sounds. When he disappeared, there were a lot of speculations about what happened to him, whether he was killed and eaten by the headhunting tribe of Asmat in the Southern part of West Papua or if he disappeared to 'become native', so to speak."

The disappearance of Michael Clark Rockefeller made headline news and catapulted the expedition into the spotlight. The work on *Expedition Content* began a few years ago when the Rockefeller family decided to donate the archive of Michael's audio recordings during the expedition to the Harvard Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

The 123 tapes, presumably recorded as accompanying material to aid Robert Gardner in making his film, reveal rare insight into Hubula culture, beyond the famous images of warfare.

"The images of the Hubula that we see across different media and also in Robert Gardner's film are very masculine and male-oriented," Veronika explained. "But when we listen to Michael's recording, we get a different understanding about the life of the Hubula. Michael was very close with the children and women, and we have a lot of sound coming from women's activities, like gardening and cooking — we see an aspect of the Hubula life that is otherwise not represented."

More than a testament of a historic moment in



Courtesy of Sensory Ethnography Lab

An experiment: *Expedition Content* reexamines the interdisciplinary 1961 Harvard Peabody Expedition through the medium of sound.

time, *Expedition Content* also invites the audience to reflect on colonialism, both past and present.

"There have been a lot of efforts worldwide to challenge and decompose the colonial gaze, which is very much a part of the history of anthropology. It was interesting for us to experiment with this. What if we don't use our eyes but only our ears and listen to others?" Veronika said, adding that they have been working closely with the Hubula over the last couple of years on revitalizing their culture and language as well as the preservation of artefacts.

Shortly after the 1961 expedition took place, the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority transferred the administrative functions of Netherlands New Guinea to Indonesia, with the promise of holding a referendum to let Papuans freely vote for their future.

However, the government intimidated tribal leaders to cast their vote in favor of remaining a part of Indonesia. The tension between indigenous Papuans and Indonesia remains. In September last year, racism-fueled riots broke out in Wamena, claiming dozens of life.

"Unfortunately, the situation for the Hubula today is not so different, maybe even worse," Veronika said. "What the Dutch did in the 1960s has been reproduced by the Indonesian government and military, including discrimination and the colonial gaze. It's a very complicated situation." (ste)



Courtesy of Sensory Ethnography Lab

Dynamic Duo: *Expedition Content* is the joint effort of Ernst Karel (left) from the United States and Veronika Kusumaryati from Indonesia.

Fashion designers recall their FIRST BIG CELEBRITY BREAKS

Alicia Powell

Reuters/New York, United States

For fashion designers having a major celebrity wear their clothing can immediately launch them into the limelight.

The big break for Badgley Mischka almost did not happen after the brand's designers spent their savings on a peach lace gown that Winona Ryder wore to the Academy Awards in 1996.

"It was a white lace dress the night before the Oscars and she wanted it to be blush colored. So, James and I had to dip-dye it in the kitchen sink," Mark Badgley said, recounting the drama with partner James Mischka.

The dress shrank six inches, forcing the designers to

come up with a creative solution.

"We bought a first-class ticket to Los Angeles, first class for the gown, and we tied 22 Campbell's soup cans around the hem. And by the time it got to LA that night, it had stretched out and she wore it. It was beautiful on her," Badgley said.

LaQuan Smith fondly remembered how singer Lady Gaga changed the trajectory of his brand in 2010 by wearing his racy 3-D mesh leggings.

"Then Rihanna one month later pops up in the cat suit in the 'Rude Boy' video," he said of his gold lame design. "And it was just like [a] domino effect."

Japanese designer Tadashi Shoji became a household name after actress Octavia Spencer won her 2013 Oscar wearing one of his gowns, and Michelle Obama wore several of his items while in the White House.

"I'm an immigrant from Japan and American First Lady is wearing my dress. It's kind of a dream," he said.

Obama was also a "game changer" in

2012 for Caroline Herrera's creative director Wes Gordon, who said it was "so, so exciting and incredible and surreal".

Naem Khan apprenticed for legendary designer Halston in the late 1970s, working with some of Hollywood's biggest stars including Liza Minnelli when he was just 18.

"She was my first ever glamor experience," Khan said.

Princess Diana was Irish designer Paul Costelloe's first celebrity patron, wearing his designs from 1982 until she died in 1997. "She was a wonderful ambassador for the brand," he said, recounting trying garments on her in Kensington Palace.

Princess Caroline of Monaco helped to launch shoe designer Christian Louboutin's career by stepping into his first store in November 1991.

"I used to call her my second fairy, because [...] she had a huge impact," he said.



Tadashi Shoji

AFP/Noam Galai/Getty Images for Tadashi Shoji



Wes Gordon

AFP/Yim/Getty Images for TRESemme