

Gastón Solnicki's films travel between documentary and fiction, inescapably intertwined through a shared language that draws inspiration from the reality that is closest to the director. Made of the material of the world, cinema resists any classification of tone or register; this is a trait that stands clear in Solnicki's work. We can say that his films are a way of taking a position: in this autocritical process, he gives himself to the characters he portrays. His favourite themes (music, food, cinema, relationships) permeate his work, evoked between one composition and the following one in a continuity – where even the protagonists eventually grow up and turn into fictional characters, from *Papirosen* (2011) to *Kékszakállú* (2016). Among these connections, cinema is part of life itself and even acts as a therapeutic component. Solnicki spreads out the boundaries between private and public dimensions and weaves a narrative based on his passions and affinities. With no shame in revealing intimate relationships, each film is an emotional and perceptive journey, precisely because Solnicki exalts cinema's link with time and memory.

Mauricio Kagel, the Argentinean composer at the centre of Solnicki's first feature film, *Süden* (2008), announced, 'One does not choose family, religion, or the place where he is born. All this is arbitrary'. For Solnicki, cinema is the means of piecing together his own 'familienbande', his clan.

*Introduzione all'Oscuro* is dedicated to and inspired by Hans Hurch, a respected and beloved spirit in the world of cinema and film festivals. In the film, Solnicki not only reveals his presence but performs in front of the camera, becoming the narrative thread himself. The director walks through the streets of Vienna looking for objects and places related to his flamboyant friend; memories that celebrate him and exorcise the pain of his disappearance. On the screen, all these elements are transformed and they become cinema themselves, Gastón Solnicki and Hans Hurch included. In *Introduzione all'Oscuro*, there is no longer a limit between reality and fiction, or, better said, this is another dimension.

In the exercise of time that is inherent in the language of cinema, Solnicki delivers delicate combinations of image and sound that gift small perceptual epiphanies and music to the soul.

The film is named after a piece by Sicilian composer Salvatore Sciarrino, and, touched by this inspiration, *Introduzione all'Oscuro* (in English, 'Introduction to the Dark') traces the uncontainable, the notion of something that is beyond any description, like that friend capable of pervading every person he knew, the city he inhabited, and the Viennale, the festival he personified for more than two decades. The film is permeated by a ghostly but loving presence – through hand-written postcards or Solnicki's recorded voice at the editing table – which is revealed to each viewer in a personal and secret way. I no longer know if I am talking about Hans or cinema itself.

Eva Sangiorgi is the Director of the Viennale.