

A BREAD FACTORY

-PART ONE-



A BREAD FACTORY

-PART TWO-

Logline

A community arts center fights for survival when a celebrity couple—performance artists from China—build an enormous complex down the street and catapult changes in their small town.

Synopsis

Forty years ago, Dorothea and Greta moved to the town of Checkford and bought an abandoned bread factory. They transformed it into an arts space. Here they host movies, plays, dance, exhibits. All types of artists visit. It's where civic groups and immigrant communities can meet, where there are after school programs for children.

Now a celebrity couple—performance artists from China—have come to Checkford. They've constructed a huge building, the FEEL Institute, down the street. It is a strange sight for a small town.

Dorothea and Greta learn about a new proposal to give all the funding from the school system for their children's arts programs to the FEEL Institute. Without this funding, the Bread Factory would not survive. They quickly rally the community to save their space. The commercial forces behind the FEEL Institute fight also, bringing a young movie star to town to help make their case. The school board meeting turns into a circus where the fate of the Bread Factory hangs in the balance.

producers

DARYL FREIMARK
MATT MILLER
PATRICK WANG

production company
VANISHING ANGLE

writer & director
PATRICK WANG

director of photography
FRANK BARRERA

editor
ELWALDO BAPTISTE

production designers

BEKKA LINDSTRÖM
KATIE LOBEL

costume designer
MICHAEL BEVINS

sound designer
MICHAEL SUAREZ

composers
AARON JORDAN
MELISSA LI
CHIP TAYLOR

casting
CINDI RUSH CASTING

CAST

dorothea	TYNE DALY
greta	ELISABETH HENRY
jason	JAMES MARSTERS
elsa	NANA VISITOR
sir walter	BRIAN MURRAY
jean marc	PHILIP KERR
jan	GLYNNIS O'CONNOR
max	ZACHARY SAYLE
jordan	JANEANE GAROFALO
may	JANET HSIEH
ray	GEORGE YOUNG
karl	TREVOR ST. JOHN
grace	AMY CARLSON
sandra	MARTINA ARROYO

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Logline

A community arts center rehearses a production of HECUBA, but the real theatrics are outside the theater where the small town is being invaded by bizarre tourists and mysterious tech start-up workers.

Synopsis

Checkford hasn't been the same since the school board meeting. Mysteriously, the reporter who runs the local newspaper disappears. Bizarre tourists start to show up, then come mysterious tech start-up workers. With all the new people, real estate is booming.

Amidst all these distractions, Dorothea and Greta try to continue their work. They are rehearsing a production of HECUBA by Euripides. On the day they open the play, Dorothea gets the news that the Bread Factory will lose an essential piece of their funding.

The beautiful opening night performance of HECUBA plays to a tiny audience. Brokenhearted, Dorothea and Greta must decide whether to give up their work at the Bread Factory because their community and support has disappeared, or to continue in their struggle to build community through art.

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jean marc	PHILIP KERR
max	ZACHARY SAYLE
teresa	JESSICA PIMENTEL
may	JANET HSIEH
ray	GEORGE YOUNG
karl	TREVOR ST. JOHN
mariano	JONATHAN IGLESIAS
sandra	MARTINA ARROYO

PATRICK WANG

IN THE FAMILY | THE GRIEF OF OTHERS

CRITICS' PICK: **NEW YORK TIMES, TIME OUT NEW YORK,
NEW YORK MAGAZINE, CHICAGO READER**

INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARD NOMINEE

"AN INDIE MASTERPIECE" –ROGER EBERT

ON OVER 100 BEST-OF LISTS

FILMMAKER MAGAZINE – 25 NEW FACES OF FILM

PREMIERES AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL & SXSW



One senses that [Wang] is rediscovering the rules of cinema on his own. This is a career to keep an eye on.

NEW YORK TIMES

A major filmmaking talent. Wang's realism is closer to 19th-century literary giants obsessed with daily life and family relationships.

HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

Wang's meticulously modulated storytelling never flags. Shows remarkable, almost subliminal powers of observation.

VARIETY

A bold new quadruple-threat talent with an assured and singular style.

MONTREAL GAZETTE

Patrick Wang is slowly becoming the most dependably sensitive and inventive independent filmmaker in America.

SCREEN RANT

Human with a capital "H". He restores the reputation of this hackneyed descriptor.

STUDIO CINE LIVE

There are no villains in Wang's cinema. It is sublime.

PREMIERE

He invigorates the everyday through his arresting visual sense.

FILM COMMENT

John Cassavetes can finally rest in peace. His true spiritual son may just have been found.

REQUIEM POUR UN FILM

A renewed humanism in movies and a return to stories about everyday lives.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

A chronicler of complex emotional collisions and reflections who expresses himself profoundly.

SLANT MAGAZINE

Wang understands what the viewer needs, even if it's nothing we've ever seen before.

ASIA PACIFIC ARTS

A thunderclap in the too blue sky of American independent cinema.

LES INROCKUPTIBLES

A coronation. Nothing less than the birth of a great filmmaker.

PLAYLIST SOCIETY

A leading filmmaker who will find a prominent place in ever more prestigious selections.

LIBERATION

A name many are willing to bet on. A filmmaker who, on thorny issues, rejects any form of easy emotion or affectation.

ARTE

I can't wait to see what intricate world he decides to build next.

SLATE

A BREAD FACTORY

Director's Statement

I have made two films, and they feel like training to have the tools I need to face this new project: a pair of films that looks at the state of art, community and commerce in our lives. This is no small thing. Arguably, it is the soul of everything.

The question of commerce is not new to me. I trained and worked as an economist for many years. But I thought like an old world economist, those who were called worldly philosophers. They were as likely to write treatises on empathy as on trade; they saw all these strands crossing in the same social fabric. It is this complex social fabric that interests me, and to study it, I pull at different threads in my own life.

My introduction into the arts took place in theaters, mostly under the tutelage of women. Women were my directors, my teachers. In the way my first film let me reflect on father figures, this film has given me the opportunity to think back on mother figures. Those golden days were marked by twin loves: my newfound love for dramatic art, and the generous love I received from my mentors.

These warm memories help me face colder contemporary forces. Laughter helps also. In the past, I've experimented with different forms of dramatic expression, and now it is exciting to use a wide range of comedy: behavioral, physical, visual, situational, verbal. Comedies often confine themselves to a narrow set of tools and conventions within a single film. Not doing so can quickly become a confused mess. However, a careful mixture of styles can be a unique way of shaping the rhythm of a film, injecting it with the excitement of unpredictability. To me this feels new but natural.

Weaving multitudes into coherence is the recurring task of these films that take place in a small town bursting with characters, plots and ideas. I was frequently on the lookout for aesthetic organizing principles that could gather multiple strands into braids. For example, early on I thought I was writing a musical. But when I tried writing musical scenes, I struggled with the strong stylistic change that comes when characters suddenly start singing. What the song added never seemed to be worth the jolt it created. Then it occurred to me to align the jarring change of characters singing with the jarring changes happening to the town. So all the new tourists coming to town sing, and this bursting into song interrupts the lives of the locals the same way it interrupts the style of the film. It is also performative in the way many

contemporary communications are performative. The musical form then becomes a perfect tool for expressing what is happening in the story. The idea then starts to elaborate, and I think of the idea of a chorus of real estate brokers. I give them the most alluring music, singing the siren song of real estate, seducing you with the dream life you wish you could buy.

All the changes that occur in this small town are counterbalanced by a very old anchor: the classical Greek play “Hecuba” by Euripides. This beautiful and deeply humane poetry appears throughout the movies. It is an old echo to the contemporary pains of the characters. I have very particular views of how classical verse drama can be performed in our time. It has been a passion of mine on stage, and it was tremendously exciting to film it.

The two-film form doesn’t sound particularly extraordinary at first, but then you realize how few films have been designed in this format. These movies aren’t just sequels, they intentionally use the two-film form to house a dramatic and aesthetic structure that can’t fit elsewhere. These films are about loss. The first film looks at loss using a more traditional dramatic structure: there is a defined fight to protect something. The second film is about a more subtle, disturbing type of loss: when things slip away because we are not paying attention. It therefore has a slipperier dramatic structure that requires the groundwork of the first film before the audience is prepared to accept it. There is a lot of talk these days of serialized drama, but that talk is almost all confined to television. I believe this is a missed opportunity as film can approach the form asking the most bold, dense and existential questions.

A BREAD FACTORY

q&a with director patrick wang

Where did the idea for this story/film begin?

When I was on tour with my first film, one of the places that invited me to come and speak was a theater in Hudson, New York. I had never been there before, but the moment I stepped inside, I knew the place. It was like all the small community theaters where I first learned to put on plays. The two women who ran the place reminded me that it was almost all women directors, writers, and designers who taught me in my early years. The film began with those very warm memories. They don't provide the characters and plots, but they are the spirit behind it all.

Then how did the characters and plots develop?

I'm not sure I ever know for certain. Art, commerce, community, and technology were on my mind, and I was trying to make some sense of the shifts we are seeing. I was on a ship in the Mediterranean when I started writing the films. I spent a lot of time staring out at sea and in the ship's library, reading Simon Leys and early 20th century Russian writers. Some details in the story are tributes to Linda and Claudia who run Time & Space Limited, the theater where we shot. At one point I was supposed to direct a radio production of Euripides' "Hecuba." The production never happened, but the play was on my mind. Some of the characters were from short plays I had written in the past. There were so many sparks that a lot of the writing process felt more like directing traffic or cleaning out a storage space. But then pieces started fitting together with resonances beyond the individual parts. Things really came alive when the characters started doing things that shocked me at the moment, but then made beautiful sense.

When did you realize it needed to be two parts?

It was pretty early. Before I got off that ship, I knew. To think about such big themes and to look at multiple characters in a community with some breadth, I knew it would spill over a standard feature length. At first I thought maybe it would be a miniseries. I'm a big fan of how Bergman used the form. Also Rivette in "Out 1" and

Fassbinder in “Welt am Draht.” So I was probably biased to want to make it a miniseries. But then the film very naturally split into two pieces, where the dramatic structure of each piece (the first one more traditional, the second slipperier) aligned perfectly with the content of each section. Also, I learned a lesson making “The Grief of Others” that when you have a fractured story, a compact form (holding the fragments close to each other) helps the fragments resonate with each other. So that means fewer sections. I couldn’t get fewer than two, and two films turned out to be a beautiful and balanced form. The running times are almost exactly the same. They are narratively continuous but end up being wildly different movies. It reflects the jarring difference I feel between the recent past compared to the present moment.

How did your background in theater and literature help form the film?

There are many different types of theater, and I mostly worked on: realistic drama, absurdist drama, classical drama, and musicals. So for this film it helped that I was comfortable with music, dance, poetry, and Beckett. In general, my experience in theater taught me to value dramaturgical tools and the power of an actor’s performance (which can be easily undercut in film). And it didn’t have to be this way, but theater happened to be where I learned about design. The setting doesn’t feel as rushed as film, and I think this helped someone like me who had no experience in design.

As far as literature, I think engaging with literature just makes you a better person. That helps with film and life.

How did your theater training influence the way you filmed the long theater sequence towards the end of the second film?

The guiding philosophy behind filming the “Hecuba” scenes was to try to capture the magic of the black box theater. Most theaters I’ve worked in have been black box theaters, an intimate space where you don’t have a defined stage. For me it’s a miraculous canvas, I guess like the puppet theater was for Bergman. You can use your imagination to constantly transform space in a black box, and small lighting gestures can be powerfully transporative. Performances in a black box also work well at a human scale.

One of the things the cinematographer, Frank Barrera, and I determined early on was not to film any of the scenic indicators that would tell us we were on a stage: like stage curtains or stage lights or audience. The style of speech and lighting would

be enough to separate the sequence from the rest of the film. Then our work was to try to recreate that joy we feel watching theater. Fortunately, we both love theater. It's hard for me to describe exactly what we did that sets that section apart because it was led by emotion rather than technique. But whatever it is, I love it.

As you mentioned before, you also love Russian literature. Did Russian novels and their depictions of familial sagas specifically influence these films?

Without a doubt, the Russians interfered in the making of these films, and I thank them for it. And although I love Tolstoy, it wasn't really from the family focused novel that I borrowed. I was more directly influenced by the short story writers: Teffi, Ivan Bunin, and Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky. These writers are as funny as they are insightful. (Beware the unfunny Russian.) They are respectfully attentive to form at the same time they experiment with it. Teffi and Krzhizhanovsky were heavily involved with the theater. Teffi and Bunin began their careers as poets, and their prose takes on a poetic precision. There's a lot to love. They each get tributes in the film, Teffi's name is invoked, Sir Walter's "Tanya" story is inspired by Bunin's "Dark Avenues," and some of Krzhizhanovsky's expressions are paraphrased in the lyrics of a song. But these are all surface things; their real influence is that they've changed how I see people and raised the bar for how I try to express myself.

You have a very personal way of expressing each character's psychology. How do you develop that?

Part of that is mine to develop and part belongs to the actor. And I feel most of my work in drawing a character's psychology happens not as a director but as a writer. I once wrote a book of 75 short plays, each one in the form of a monologue from a different character. That process taught me a lot about how to hear different voices. I try to write dialogue in the form of a character's thought process, with attention to choice of words, how careful or free they are, the rhythm of hesitation and urgency. I also try to pay attention to how these thoughts develop as a person speaks, so it's never one consistent thing once they open their mouths. I find that when I do this well, and when an actor is sensitive to these subtle psychological cues in the dialogue, there's very little work left to do. If anything, I need to be careful not to stifle the variety inherent in multiple characters (and actors). It's very easy for directors to flatten individual personalities.

You shot “A Bread Factory” and “The Grief of Others” on super 16mm. Was it for the same reason? Did you have a similar experience?

One of the reasons was the same: I like the discipline and focus shooting on film brings to a set. It changes the way you see your set and raises the stakes for performance. The aesthetic reasons are different between the projects. For “The Grief of Others” grain was a terrific tool for the language of dissolves used in the film. For “A Bread Factory” I knew that I wanted a higher contrast, higher saturation image. Film is more elegant than electric in holding these elements.

The experience was pretty similar for me. For Frank it was very different because we had an AC this time, so he didn’t have to load and download magazines all the time. The AC helped me figure out how to be more aggressive about shooting out short ends. Also, finding enough reliable film magazines is a problem. It was a problem last time, it was a bigger problem this time, and I expect it will be an even bigger problem in another few years as more of these magazines wear down.

You were a writer on a number of the songs in the movies. Is that something you’ve done before?

I wrote one song in high school for an English project, and I wrote one song in college for a composition class. I’ve written lyrics for songs, and I’ve helped to reshape music on some new musicals I’ve directed, so the idea of writing songs wasn’t so far fetched. I really loved doing it. My writing partner, Aaron Jordan, was an ideal collaborator, a far better musician than me who never let me feel that way.

I’m also happy there are five composers on the project. They are each wonderful on their own, but because of how many characters and perspectives there are in this story, I wanted the music to have that same sense of diversity.

You once said that, “Even if a situation is difficult, you have to find something useful in this pain.” Once again in these new movies there are situations where people are struggling, going through pain, but it’s useful and hopeful at the end. Could you tell us more about how you applied this idea to these films?

When I started writing the films, I joked that the reason they were comedies is that since the situation was hopeless, you might as well laugh. But as I wrote, a very organic hope did emerge that I was not expecting. What writing my films have

taught me about hope is to not try and manufacture it, indeed not even to look for it. Instead, I look for the tucked-away parts of people, the parts that are very easy to miss if you feel you already know someone. Here I find “villains” acting human and at times endearing. And here I find quiet, generous moral acts from “ordinary” people that are the glue for our families and our societies. These acts can occur at the same time many terrible, painful things are going on. Given the right window of opportunity, these quiet acts can lead a character down a path where hope blossoms for us all.

But in these films is another lesson I learned about struggle. I learned it when I was touring France with “The Grief of Others.” So many wonderful theaters in beautiful cities welcomed us. In some ways, the tour looked so impractical. No one really knows who I am, so I am not attracting many people to come to the theater. These theaters don’t contribute huge revenues in the release of the film. So I am not solving the theater’s problems. They are not solving my problems. But it was almost comical how elated we were to meet and be with each other. It taught me that we struggle in part for solutions, in part for communion. Solutions resolve the struggle. Communion builds our resolve for the struggle. Both have value.

“In the Family” was a long film, running almost three hours. The two parts of “A Bread Factory” total four hours. Does the long form of both these projects serve the same purpose? Is the creative process different than for a shorter film?

I feel like “A Bread Factory” combines two lessons of time from the previous movies. It uses the long engagement of “In the Family” to deepen experience and investment in the characters’ lives. And it uses the density and compactness of “The Grief of Others” so that it doesn’t lose its way over such a long time period with so many characters. I tend to think of time not as a single dimension but as part of a ratio. How much material and meaning have we accumulated over the period of time. As long as this ratio remains high, we’re doing fine.

As far as the creative process, the budgets for each of my films has gotten lower and lower per minute of run time. So no matter how long the project is, with each successive film we’ve had to accomplish more in less time.

How did you work with so many characters and actors?

Fortunately, they don't all show up on the same day. I tried to spend the month before the shoot on calls with the actors to try to start our conversations about the characters. During the shoot, our schedule every week was to start with two days of rehearsal, followed by five days of shooting. The reason it all worked is that we had two casting directors who were terrific collaborators in finding the types of actors I work well with, a very dedicated crew to manage the logistics, and a patient cast.

What was the shoot like for the films? Did you shoot one film, then the other?

Our shoot was 24 days total for both films. On most days we shot scenes from both films. Our scheduling was mostly based on grouping cast and locations. We shot on location in Hudson, New York. It's a great city that played an important visual and spiritual role in the movie. On paper, it looks expensive and time consuming to travel a lot of our cast and crew from New York, but once you're in town, it's a three minute walk to location. It was an exhausting shoot, but not having to commute at the beginning and end of each day made it bearable.

This was the most intense shoot I've had. For "In the Family" we averaged shooting 9.4 minutes of the movie each production day. For "The Grief of Others" we averaged 8.5 minutes. For "A Bread Factory" we averaged 10.1 minutes. In addition, the scale of production elements and cast were far beyond the demands of the other two projects. To make it work took: a lot of detailed planning; my producers Matt Miller and Daryl Freimark who were completely committed throughout; many department heads I had worked with before; hard work; and a lot of luck.

People have noted how you seem to make films independent of any organization or funding source. Is this an important condition to be able to make three films that feel so artisanal? Do you hope to work differently one day, with more resources?

First, I will insist that I have made four movies. Each part of "A Bread Factory" is on its own as full, complete, and unique as any other film I've made. Over the years I've tried to find partners for my projects, but no one has been interested. There was an exception with "A Bread Factory" where my friend Paul Greenwood put up some of the money. I will always be so grateful to him for that. Also, I have to say that the

New York State film tax credit has been a big part of why I've been able to continue making films.

As far as working with more resources, there are some projects I've wanted to do that can't be accomplished on the kind of budgets of my previous films. I think it will be a very strange thing if one of those projects ever happens. But very strange things seem to happen from time to time.

Can you tell us a bit about how your work is released and seen around the world?

It's not.

I remember I bumped into a friend after the New York premiere of his film. He was heading out of town and asked where I would be going next with my film. I told him, "I'll be playing in Europe the next few months." He got very excited and listed a dozen European countries where he would be going next with his film, hoping he could see my movie and we could meet. I corrected myself, "I'll be playing in France."

France is the only country where my films are released in a traditional way. I released my first movie in theaters and on home video in the US. A few festivals around the world have been attentive and good enough to show the films. I hope the next time I am asked this question, the answer will be longer. Who knows. Very strange things seem to happen from time to time.

Are you working on something else now?

Yes.