

## CHEMI SABNIS NAKETSI

A FOLD IN MY BLANKET

## Zaza Rusadze



## BIOGRAFIE

Geboren 1977 in Tiflis, Georgien. Er arbeitet einige Jahre beim georgischen Fernsehen. 1996 begann er ein Regiestudium an der Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen Konrad Wolf in Potsdam. Während des Studiums jobbte er als Cutter für TV-Sender und als Übersetzer bei der Berlinale. Nach seinem Studium sammelte er erste Erfahrungen als Regieassistent unter anderem von Otar Iosseliani.

## BIOGRAPHY

Born in Tbilisi in Georgia in 1977, he worked for Georgian state TV for several years. In 1996, he began studying directing at the University of Film and Television in Potsdam. Alongside his studies, he has worked as a TV editor and translator at the Berlinale. After graduating, he gained experience working as an assistant director for, among others, Otar Iosseliani.

**FILMOGRAFIE** Auswahl: **1997** OSKAR ODER MALEN NACH ZAHLEN, Kurzdokumentarfilm · **1999** ZU WEIT UND WEITER, Kurzfilm · **2003** BANDITS, Dokumentarfilm · **2005** A STAR FOR ANETI, Dokumentarfilm · **THE MAN FROM THE EMBASSY**, Regie: Dito Tsintsadze, Co-Autor, Regieassistent · **2009** CHANTRAPAS, Regie: Otar Iosseliani, Regieassistent · **FOLDS AND CRACKS**, Kurzfilm · **2013** TIME FORWARD, Dokumentarfilm · **CHEMI SABNIS NAKETSI**

Dimitrij unternimmt immer wieder einsame Kletterexkursionen. Er flieht vor der zermürend surrealen Konformität der georgischen Kleinstadt, in der er lebt, und dem eintönigen Alltag im Justizgebäude, in dem er arbeitet. Dort regiert sein Vater als Richter ebenso despotisch wie zu Hause am Abendbrotstisch.

In der Nachbarschaft verteilt ein Mann verblichene Fahnen. Eine Tante hat sich in ihren alzheimerkranken Kopf gesetzt, dass ihr Schwager sie bestohlen habe. An monotonen Nachmittagen trifft man zusammen, um die Zeit mit Tortenverzehr, Selbstgesprächen oder Opernarien totzuschlagen. Als ein Fremder mit Namen Andrej auftaucht, überredet Dimitrij ihn, sich seinen Kletterausflügen anzuschließen. Immer enger zieht er den Mann in seinen Kosmos hinein, entschlossen, ihn zu seinem Freund machen. Dann ist Andrej verschwunden. Als Dimitrij alles verloren glaubt, folgt er, von seiner Fantasie getrieben, rätselhaften Spuren.

Atmosphärisch beklemmend zeigt Zaza Rusadze eine Kleinstadtgemeinde im Hamsterrad ihrer Gewohnheiten. Souverän und scheinbar beiläufig zeichnet er zugleich in magischen Bildern die Vorstellungswelt seines Protagonisten und legt dessen Gefühlslandschaft frei.



Tornike Gogrichiani, Tornike Bziava

Dimitrij loves going off on solo climbing expeditions. He'll do anything to escape the gruellingly surreal conformity of the small Georgian town he lives in and the monotony of the courthouse where he works. His father, the judge, presides over the courthouse with the same despotic manner he rules the dinner table at home.

A man hands out faded flags in the neighbourhood; an aunt suffering from Alzheimer's is convinced her brother-in-law has robbed her; and people come together on dreary afternoons to kill time eating cake, pouring forth monologues and listening to operatic arias. One day, a stranger named Andrej turns up and Dimitrij convinces him to accompany him on his climbing expeditions. He pulls Andrej ever closer into his world, determined to befriend him. But then Andrej disappears. Dimitrij believes all is lost before his imagination persuades him to pursue a series of mysterious leads.

Zaza Rusadze's film is an oppressively atmospheric portrait of a small town community caught up in the treadmill of habit. With magical images illustrating the central character's vivid imagination, this assured work casually reveals the protagonist's emotional world.

## Georgien 2013

Länge 75 Min. · Format DCP · Farbe

## STABLISSE

Regie, Buch **Zaza Rusadze**  
 Kamera **Goga Devdariani**  
 Schnitt **Tamuna Karumidze**  
 Musik **Natalie Beridze, Kai Lillich**  
 Szenenbild **Wouter Zoon**  
 Kostüm **Polina Rudchik**  
 Herstellungsleitung **Jana Sardlishvili**  
 Produzent **Zaza Rusadze**  
 Ausführende Produzentin **Els Vandevorst, Ineke Smits**

## DARSTELLER

Dimitrij **Tornike Bziava**  
 Andrej **Tornike Gogrichiani**  
 Flagman **Giorgi Nakashidze**  
 Alexander **Avtandil Makharadze**  
 Jacob **Zura Kipshidze**  
 Irina **Ljudmila Mgebrishvili-Artemieva**  
 Anna **Marina Janashia**  
 Medea **Maka Makharadze**  
 Elisso **Daredjan Kharshiladze**  
 Vladimer **Shota Qristesashvili**  
 Lasha **Akaki Khidasheli**  
 David **Giorgi Gorganashvili**

## PRODUKTION

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# SCREENDAILY

## A Fold In My Blanket

8 February, 2013 | By Lee Marshall



Dir/scri: Zaza Rusadze. Georgia. 2013. 70mins

**One of those films that you come out of not sure what you've just seen, Georgian director Zaza Rusadze's feature debut is, just possibly, a mix of gay love story, satirical reflection on today's Georgia and its political miasmas, and poignant generational comedy. But it never quite declares itself to be any of these things – and it's this shape-shifting nature that makes *A Fold In My Blanket* such an intriguing and at times frustrating viewing experience.**

Though it's head-scratching more than life-affirming, *A Fold In My Blanket* is nevertheless original enough to score some action in urban arthouse markets.

Say 'Georgian bittersweet comedy' and Rusadze's compatriot Otar Iosseliani immediately springs to mind, but in fact the tone here is altogether less sentimental and more deadpan. Roy Andersson, Nanni Moretti, Walter Mitty, Chekhov, Ionesco and even Kafka are all lurking there in the background; but so too is a more recent post-realist strand of European arthouse cinema that includes films like *Lourdes* or *Yella*, in which parable-like stories are artfully staged and characters are not quite of this world.

Though it's head-scratching more than life-affirming, *A Fold In My Blanket* which opened the Berlinale's Panorama sidebar, is nevertheless original enough to score some action in urban arthouse markets. Its short 70-minute running time could prove problematic, but this never feels like less than a complete film – and the director was probably right to stop where he did, as quirkiness is a difficult mood to sustain over the full two hours.

Although the film is shot on location in Georgia, there's little to identify the setting for those not familiar with the country. Sad-eyed, rather aimless twenty-something Dimitrij (Tornike Bziava) has returned here from some foreign clime, and is given an administrative job at the courthouse where his father (Zura Kipshidze) works as a magistrate. Life for Dimitrij pans out between the Soviet-era courtroom offices and a series of stuffy, retro domestic interiors belonging to his parents; his Alzheimer-afflicted aunt Irina (Ljudmila Mgebrishvili-Artemieva) and her sister Anna (Marina Janashia); and an elderly doctor, Alexander (Avtandil Makharadze), who appears to be an old flame of Irina's.

Dimitrij's only escape is going climbing in the hills outside of town. When he meets Andrej (Tornike Gogrichiani), a handsome, restless young man of his own age., Dimitrij soon persuades him to accompany him on a climbing expedition. Later, perhaps they return to the hills and explore a cave; or perhaps this is all in Dimitrij's head. Meanwhile, a uniformed flag-man – a dig, perhaps, at Georgian nationalism, though he's a mild-mannered sort of chap – is going around the neighbourhood distributing flags for people to hang from their balconies. Andrej's fury with the flagman, or what he represents, will represent a dramatic crux towards the end – though this said, this is not really a film that deals much in drama; it's more of a deadly serious comedy.

Rusadze keeps firm control over the film's deadpan tone, helped along by some Felliniesque casting, Wouter Zoon's wonderfully arch retro-Soviet production design and a varied soundtrack that mixes opera with Georgian ballads and Krautrock-infected disco. *A Fold In My Blanket* is an acquired taste, perhaps – but many will agree that it's a taste worth acquiring.

Production companies: Zazarfilm, Studio 99

International sales: Media Luna New Films, [www.medialuna.biz](http://www.medialuna.biz)

Producer: Zaza Rusadze

Executive producers: Ineke Smits, Els Vandervorst

Cinematography: Goga Devdariani

Editor: Taruma Karumidze

Production designer: Wouter Zoon

Music: Natalie Beridze, Kai Lillich

Website: [www.zazarusadze.com](http://www.zazarusadze.com)

Main cast: Tornike Bziava, Tornike Gogrichiani, Zura Kipshidze, Avtandil Makharadze, Giorgi Nakashidze

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### Berlin Film Festival 2013: 'A Fold in My Blanket' review



Première in the Panorama section of this year's 63rd Berlin Film Festival, ***A Fold in My Blanket*** (*Chemi sabnis naketsi, 2013*) is the debut feature from Georgian filmmaker and former Berlin resident Zaza Rusadze. Ignoring the usual gritty and harsh approach to social commentary, Rusadze's examination of the social constraints of a small Georgian community is an incredibly atmospheric and patently dark black comedy with a surrealist twist. Set in a quiet town in which "everyone has Russian names now", local protagonist Dimitrij (Tornike Bziava) feels sorely out of place from the very outset.

Having recently returned from travelling around Western Europe, Dimitrij stands out even more, with his 'relaxed attitude' ostracising him from a populace that finds pleasure in displaying flags, collecting guns and spending tedious afternoons listening to opera and eating stale cake. However, Dimitrij manages to find escape from this insular sect through his one passion - rock climbing. One day, a strange young man (Andrej, played by Tornike Gogrichiani) interrupts Dimitrij's cheerless life and he soon finds he has a companion to integrate into his rural excursions. However, when this clandestine young man is subsequently arrested for murder, Dimitrij must try to save him or forever be reliant on his vivid imagination to escape this emotionally numb world of tradition and monotony.

To truly decipher the rich tapestry of ideas that lie beneath the polished veneer of Rusadze's ***A Fold in My Blanket*** is to book yourself a one way ticket to the realm of insanity. Surreal to point of near complete bafflement, this complex work of cinema will undeniably alienate the majority of its viewers. Yet, whilst it plays out primarily as a complex metaphor for the various desires to escape the depressing elements which infect our lives, there's little denying that Rusadze's latest is a work of undisputed beauty. Shot like a collection of live action realist oil paintings, every frame is meticulously lit and held just long enough for your eye to appreciate its stark beauty and warmth - a real treat, for the eyes at least.



Not dissimilar to the vibrant urgency of Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki, ***A Fold in My Blanket*** is comprised of unnaturally sharp lines and contrasting pastel shades which create a dreamlike backdrop for this vividly atmospheric and brave directorial debut. Combine these beguiling visuals with a penchant for the surreal dreamlike narrative approach of post-***Lost Highway*** Lynchian cinema, and you have a courageous and fearless film that might test your patience, yet undeniably still demands your undivided attention.

So darkly comic that it's almost entirely opaque, ***A Fold in My Blanket*** is a near-impervious diversion into the vivid imagination of a surrealist filmmaking mind. However, for those that like to painstakingly decrypt their cinema, there's certainly plenty of opulent philosophies to be harvested from this Georgian oddity.

The 2013 Berlin Film Festival runs from 7-17 February. For more of our Berlinale coverage, simply follow [this link](#).

Patrick Gamble

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## The Berlinale Blog: Stepping out – or stepping up?

by **Eve Lucas**

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"The Grandmaster"

Eve Lucas sees some twinkle-toed commonalities in two of this year's opening films: jury president Wong Kar-wai gets the ball rolling with "The Grandmaster" (out of competition) whilst "A Fold in My Blanket" opens the Panorama section.



Represented in previous years at the Berlinale's Forum and Shorts sections, this year's jury president Wong Kar-wai returns to our city – and an abiding concern with missed opportunities in **The Grandmaster**. But has he missed this shot at the epic genre?



Wong Kar-Wai and Tony Cheung at the press conference for "The Grandmaster"

Fans of Wong's aesthetics will relish the almost ubiquitously tenebrous visuals in this story that pits Ip Man (Tony Leung Chiu Wai), legendary founder of the Wing Chun martial arts school, against a younger female nemesis, Gong Er (Zhang Ziyi), from whose father Ip Man has taken over a leading position in a southern Chinese kung fu school. Already embroiled in the wider conflict between southern and northern fighting traditions, the struggle (and failed romance) between Ip Man and Gong Er is further complicated by the political turbulence of the 1937 Japanese invasion and the Chinese Civil War. Even with a score that alerts us to multiple story lines by quoting Deborah's theme from *Once Upon a Time in*

*America* – that's a lot to take in.

The stunning fight scenes, choreographed by *Matrix* master Yuen Woo-ping (one memorably shot by DP Philippe le Sourd in slow motion against the backdrop of a moving train), are an obvious constant

as the wider action moves around between 1930s Foshan, the 1940s in Japanese-occupied northeastern China and the 1950s in Hong Kong: timing and skill turn fight scenes into meta-reflections on the epic Grandmaster themes of patience and humility. Unlike his more evenly paced earlier work, however, Wong's psychological choreography here is not as convincing: alternating action scenes with close ups of the main protagonists immersed in inner processes is not enough to make these Wongian moments of self-awareness and regret stand up to scrutiny.

For my money, ***A Fold in My Blanket*** (Chemi Sabnis Naketsi) from Georgia does better – and not because it aims lower. Choreography of a different kind sets the pace in this disturbing tale of Dimitrij (Tornike Bziava) for whom the measured tread of rock climbing is an escape from a stultifying existence in small town contemporary Georgia. In an early scene, an expedition takes him into tentative exploration of a dark subterranean area (calling Dr. Freud) from which a door opens into the light. Shortly afterwards, we see other doors opening and closing in a courthouse corridor where Dimitrij works under the strict eye of his father. The movement of men stepping in and out segues into a white-collar ballet with distinctly surreal overtones, further exploited in the scenes that follow: of Dimitrij and his *über*-parents at a family gathering at which only the Alzheimer afflicted aunt says what she thinks whilst the rest merely occupy roles and repressively snug arm-chairs.

Director Zaza Rusadze is a graduate of a local film school in Potsdam. His debut feature invokes the work of at least four great directors: Buñuel's stilted ennui, the fluidity of Tartovsky's in-between states, Visconti's operatic homo-eroticism and Cocteau's descending Orpheus. But these are referential bonuses. The narrative works equally well at the far more basic level of a young man's sentimental education. When Andrej (Tornike Gogrichiani), the rebellious 'outsider', arrives in town with his parents, Dimitrij senses an ally. He takes an him rock-climbing, but it's when the two men leave that measured ascent and descend haphazardly into the beckoning, subterranean space of the film's opening sequence that they change, emerging mysteriously altered in a way that Visconti might also have appreciated. The consequences, however, prove overwhelming.

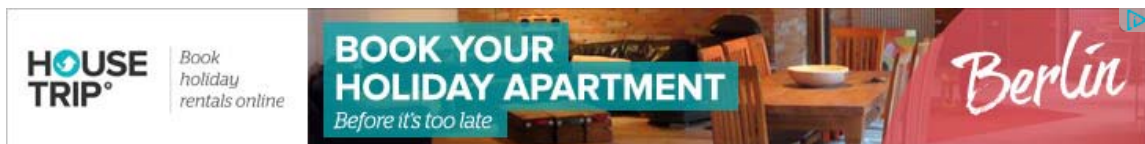
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February 7, 2013

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Berlin

## A Fold in My Blanket

**Chemi sabnis naketsi  
(Georgia-Netherlands)**

By LESLIE FELPERIN

A Zazarfilm production in association with Stout & Smits, N279 Entertainment. (International sales: Media Luna, Cologne.) Produced by Zaza Rusadze. Executive producers, Ineke Smits, Els Vandevorst. Directed, written by Zaza Rusadze.

With: Tornike Bziava, Tornike Gogrichiani, Giorgi Nakashidze, Zura Kipshidze, Avtandil Makharadze, Ljudmila Mgebrishvili-Artemieva, Marina Janashia, Maka Makharadze. (Georgian, Russian dialogue)

**Ambitions exceed grasp on both story and filmmaking levels in "A Fold in My Blanket," a debut for Georgian-born, Europe-based writer-helmer Zaza Rusadze. Although occasionally visually arresting and atmospheric in its own weird way, the pic attempts to blur a character's fantasies with reality, resulting in a mostly baffling blend of small-town drama, homoerotic longing and rock climbing. "Blanket" will remain tightly tucked up on the fest circuit at best.**

After some time abroad, Dmitrij (Tornike Bziava) has returned to the small burg in Georgia where he grew up, and has taken a part-time job at the local courthouse where his stern father (Zura Kipshidze) is a judge. At a gathering of family and old friends, Dmitrij reconnects with Andrej (Tornike Gogrichiani), a friend from childhood. Dmitrij tries to turn Andrej on to the joys of rock climbing, and a frequently replayed scene in a cave suggests something mysterious happens on one expedition, but then that might just be Dmitrij's daydream. Various older characters shuffle about, but the whole never coalesces into the Lynchian weirdfest it clearly wants to be. Lensing looks nice at least.

Camera (color), Goga Devdariani; editor, Tamuna Karumidze; music, Natalie Beridze, Kai Lillich; production designer, Wouter Zoon; costume designer, Polina Rudchik; sound (stereo), Nika Paniashvili; sound designer, Kai Lillich; re-recording mixers, Ansgar Frerich, Lillich; line producer, Jana Sardlishvili; assistant director, Guram Bakradze; casting, Leli Miminoshvili. Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival (Panorama, opener), Feb 9, 2013. Running time: 73 MIN.

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# A Fold in My Blanket: Berlin Review

7:22 AM PST 2/8/2013 by Jordan Mintzer



## The Bottom Line

An inscrutable and innocuous bit of Georgian surrealism.

## Venue

Berlin Film Festival (Panorama)

## Writer-Director

Zaza Rusadze

## Cast

Tornike Bziava, Tornike Gogrichiani, Avtandil Makharadze

**Writer-director Zaza Rusadze's debut feature follows the exploits of a young man caught in a bizarre triangle of family, bureaucracy and mountain climbing.**

BERLIN -- Filled with as many WTF moments as can be squeezed into 70 minutes, but none the more compelling for it, Georgian writer-director-producer **Zaza Rusadze's** *A Fold in My Blanket* (*Chemi Sabnis Naketsi*) follows the exploits of a young man caught in a bizarre triangle of family, bureaucracy, and, well, mountain climbing. A baffling choice to open up Berlin's Panorama section, this Hubert Bals Fund joint will probably find a few additional fest berths before folding away into obscurity.

Not that Rusadze doesn't attempt, at least in the film's opening scenes, to deliver something oddly intriguing: In a mix of shadowy photography and layered sound, we see Dimitrij (**Tornike Bziava**) descending into a cave and opening a magical door. Next, he's applying for a clerk position inside a provincial courthouse, whose stifling, absurdist atmosphere Rusadze manages to render in a few cleverly framed moments.

**PHOTOS: European Film Market: 10 Titles to Track in Berlin** <sup>[5]</sup>



Thereafter, *Blanket* quickly flies off the rails, tossing in a handful of inscrutable characters, including a scruffy local (**Tornike Gogrichiani**) accused of killing a government flag bearer (**Giorgi Nakashidze**), and an Alzheimer's sufferer named Irina (**Ljudmila Mgebrishvili-Artemieva**), whose total incomprehension of her surroundings seems to reflect that of the audience watching the movie.

Only an hour or so in does the murder plot -- if it can be called that -- fully come to light, but it's too little, too late for a film that rarely bothers to justify its surrealist set-up. The press notes, which include not one but two loglines, followed by three different synopses, only deepen the confusion, and whatever statements Rusadze is trying to make about modern Georgian society will likely fall on deaf ears.

Technically speaking, the movie shows some promise, with cinematographer **Goga Devdariani** aptly capturing the lush summer landscapes where Dimitrij travels to escape the oppression of his hometown. A closing title card, which reads "In Loving Memory: Your Lost Illusions," wraps up this pretentious package perfectly.

*Production companies: Zazarfilm*

*Cast: Tornike Bziava, Tornike Gogrichiani, Avtandil Makharadze*

*Director, screenwriter: Zaza Rusadze*

*Producer: Zaza Rusadze*

*Executive producers: Ineke Smits, Els Vandevorst*

*Director of photography: Goga Devdariani*

*Production designer: Wouter Zoon*

*Music: Natalie Beridze, Kai Lillich*

*Costume designer: Polina Rudchik*

*Editor: Tamuna Karumidze*

*Sales Agent: Media Luna New Films*

*No rating, 69 minutes*

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Konstanty Kuzma

## **Down the Rabbit Hole**

*A Fold in My Blanket*, one of the two Georgian films selected for this year's Berlinale, sets out far off from reality. The protagonist of the film Dimitrij (Tornike Bziava) enters a cave, and, accompanied by odd sounds matching the magical situation, is seen opening a door. Cut to an office building where Dimitrij hopes to find a job, and we're in modern-day Georgia. Zaza Rusadze takes us down the rabbit hole, which is just as much the setting of his film as reality is. The first-time director adopts the "reality vs. illusion" approach, arguing (in a rather conventional manner) that the boundaries between reality and fantasy are porous. The scarce plot revolves around Dimitrij's struggles to deal with a reality he can't identify with, and, late into the film, around his attempt to free his childhood friend Andrej (Tornike Gogrichiani) of his legal troubles. In between, Dimitrij visits nature (the only sane place on earth, we are told, and the one where phantasy is within reach), meanwhile meeting an array of characters in the "real world": relatives, friends, neighbors, and co-workers; roles that feature some established Georgian actors who are unable to help the generally mediocre acting.

Politically and socially speaking (we are at the Berlinale after all), Rusadze is ambiguous. Clearly, the film is set in a Georgia at crossroads, as public buildings around Dimitrij's anonymous hometown are gradually covered with political flags and banners, while the many scenes acted out in Russian refer to post-Soviet times (due to the difficult diplomatic ties between Georgia and Russia – the low-point was a war in 2008 -, the Russian language's popularity among Georgians is in fact rapidly decreasing). But the film doesn't develop any of these references, and so its political and social ambitions remain as blurry and vague as the homoerotic tension between Dimitrij and Andrej. While we learn quickly that there is something bugging our protagonist, none of the problems Dimitrij faces are dramatically unsettling: there is a drunkard beating up an old man (which, on the terms of Rusadze's realist/surreal universe, may not even have happened), mean employers, and a crazy aunt. Throughout the film, Rusadze fails to develop a setting into a stance, and hence Dimitrij's fantastic excursions do not translate into a proper message. The film is a hike in the forest, not a trip to Georgian reality.

Dimitrij's odd encounters keep accumulating, and yet attempts to grasp a discernible plot line are in vain. The short spanning time (70 minutes) was wisely chosen, as Rusadze's fondness for spacious locations and well-framed landscape shots creates a ghostly atmosphere that is enjoyable, but devoid of magic powers:

unfortunately, the lack of an emotional or narrative tension remains too great a challenge to tackle with visuals alone. There is a scene in the middle of the film when Dimitrij asks Andrej to pull himself together: "Haven't you looked at yourself?" Unlike Andrej, Dimitrij is vigilant. He acknowledges that the corrupt and monotonous reality he is facing should unsettle him. But like Andrej, he, too, is unable to come up with a satisfying solution, and so he seeks refuge in nature and fantasy, incapable of helping Andrej to tackle his problems. Rusadze, then, seems to face the same dilemma as Dimitrij: he rejects the reality he is confronted with, but is unable to provide us with an alternative one that is appealing enough to enchant us. Here is a young director who knows what he wants, but doesn't seem to have figured out how to get it yet.

*February 2013*

## Zaza Rusadze on *A Fold in My Blanket*



*We met Zaza Rusadze at the Berlinale, where his film opened the Panorama section of the festival. The Georgian director speaks about the direction of Georgian cinema, its tradition, and the lack of critical culture in his home country.*

***At the screening of your film, you said that you wanted to make your first film in Georgia. Why is that?***

It was a decision based on my belief that every artist and filmmaker should work within the context of his own culture and with the material which is close to him. Regardless of the fact that I left Georgia to study in Germany, the world I grew up in, the one that I am preoccupied with, and the one that inspires me is still Georgia.

***Is “A Fold in My Blanket” a film for a Georgian audience?***

I never thought it would be a film for Georgia – in fact, I never had a particular audience in mind. Even though the story is set in Georgia, I think it has a universal appeal. In a way, the fact that we opened the Panorama section of the Berlinale supports this view. I went to one of the last screenings of my film yesterday and I couldn't help but stay in the hall and see how the audience reacts. It was a great screening. People laughed – not carefully, but genuinely. I was very happy about these reactions which confirmed to me that the film is able to cross cultural boundaries.

***What role does cinema play in a country like Georgia? Do you think that there is a “new generation” of filmmakers emerging?***

There were few films produced in Georgia before, and now this picture is changing. Young and upcoming directors are hopeful of the new opportunities created by the Georgian National Film Center. It may be too early to speak of a Georgian New Wave, but I'm pretty sure that in a few years we will look back at this year and remember it as a new start. I think art has a huge responsibility to address the important topics Georgian society is facing, but fails to deal with – to change, if not initiate a discourse around social and political issues. I am happy that German reviewers, who I'm very fond of, recognized that Georgian directors are ready to deal with post-Soviet traumas.

***Do you think Georgian directors are “hard enough” on Georgia? Issues like nationalism or homophobia aren't truly addressed. It seems that the picture of Georgia one gets from festival films is that of a very open and critical society ready to deal with its past.***

I don't agree Georgia is idealised in new Georgian cinema. Certainly, there were films which used cinema as a quasi-propagandistic tool to show what a beautiful and modern country Georgia is, but I don't think that the young generation of Georgian filmmakers has the same approach. We have a more radical one, not just by criticizing, but also by igniting discussions. Levan Koguashvili's recent *Street Days* for instance dealt with very important issues: a lost generation, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the civil war and economic hardship, factors which triggered widespread drug addiction (which is luckily decreasing now). Although our films are quite different in nature, I think that *In Bloom* [dir. Nana Ekvitishvili, Simon Groß] or my film are similarly hard on Georgia.

***In your film, what is Dimitrij trying to escape? Is there a connection to something in real-life Georgia?***

One of the main themes of the film is the question whether the boundaries between reality and phantasy can be blurred in such a way that at some point you cannot distinguish between the two anymore. Having lived in Germany for many years and having returned to Georgia, the question of escape became important to me. The changes happening in the post-Soviet space are so big and so intense that you get the feeling that as your day starts, you're not really given the chance to reconnect with the world. Georgia is changing, but it's still struggling to deal with its identity and issues like homophobia. If I had to deal with



these problems on a daily basis, that would impede my freedom so greatly I decided that rather than fighting it, I want to create a space where I can tackle it. In the film, this leads to this sad notion of escape, a complete retreat to fantasy which is strongly associated with nature.

I am quite cynical of trying to rebel every time we are unhappy with a situation. I find this creation of an alternative space to be a more efficient approach. Slavoj Žižek said this: art should start creating utopian ideas, that should be the function of art. I identify with a more conceptual understanding of art. If we just show how difficult life is in our countries, this is reporting. Art should go a little further than that, whether it is through escape or by presenting a new model for the future. My personal approach is that by distancing ourselves from reality, we can reach out to it. We are so tangled up with this notion of reality presented to us by TV that freeing ourselves from it is almost like a philosophical method.

***Are you inspired by the Georgian 60s movement? Though for quite different reasons, they, too, often used a fantastic language after all.***

Of course I am very influenced by these wonderful films and directors I grew up with. I feel very much in contact with their magical realism and a metaphorical and poetic way of expression. I know that some of my colleagues will have a different opinion and desire a more radical break with the tradition, but I feel like this is something Georgian cinema shouldn't lose. When art gets into a crisis situation – and surely we were facing one -, it needs a historic reference point. Think of the Renaissance, that's how it emerged.

In Georgia, we are accused of neglecting our national identity, but in the West, festival audiences and critics seem to acknowledge the continuity of Georgian cinema. I enjoy being in dialog with the older generation of filmmakers. I worked with Otar Iosseliani and Dito Tsintsadze, and the experiences were very enriching both personally and professionally. It is important to me that the memories of these generations get transported to me.

***Did you have a chance to show the film in Georgia yet?***

No, and actually that was a conscious decision. Technically, we weren't done with the film until shortly before the Berlinale, but you can always make a screening with a cut that hasn't been finetuned. Everyone was pushing me to show it and of course I can understand them – especially the crew and actors who worked on it. But I wanted to have the world premiere here at the Berlinale, and I'm extremely happy that it worked out. It's a space with a great tradition of criticism, and I'm glad the critical discourse is starting here, not in Georgia. Evidently, I'm looking forward to the screenings in Georgia, but I'm also afraid it will trigger some pointless discussions.

Someone – a film student in Georgia – reposted the trailer of this film and wrote how it was mystical when the country was collapsing. "Who needs this film?," he wrote. I wasn't sure whether I should engage in a discussion with a person who criticized my film without having seen it. You can criticize anything, but I am

just missing the right sort of criticism in Georgia. In the end, I did contact this guy (although I hadn't known him before) and we had a great discussion even though we disagreed.

Dito Tsintsadse, a colleague of mine who I respect greatly, wrote to me after the screening in a worried tone that he wanted to let me know prior to anyone else that he didn't like my film. Tomorrow, Dito and I will have an interview on a Georgian radio station, and I asked the interviewer not to give Dito the chance to be indirect or soft on the film, because that is what we really lack in Georgia. My relationship towards my film is not going to change because of critics, my happiness to be working on it and to see it premiere in front of an international audience won't be spoiled by reviews or personal opinions. My relationship with my film is like that of a parent and his child: I will love it even if it's one-eyed or one-legged. This careful attempt of not criticizing each other's work is bogus, and film critics in Georgia also need to catch up. When they observe a "falseness in dialogues," they should also speak about their measuring tools to figure out whether the dialogue is really false. But this lazy and unargumentative criticism is something we should really give up.

***Thank you for the interview.***

*Interview conducted by Konstanty Kuzma in February 2013*