

Work in progress

by José Luis Guerín



Spain - 2001 - 125 min

STUDENT SHEET



> *Work in progress (En construcción)* is part of a collection of European films: the CinEd collection, a film education programme for young people.

> This student sheet allows me to rediscover the film, to go through it in words and images, to know more about where the characters live and their time, to create and invent, to go further by discovering other works: films, books, music, photographs, paintings...

By participating in CinEd, I share the discovery of films with young people from other countries, all over Europe!

- A** The film
- B** In Europe and elsewhere
- C** The film and me
- D** To go further



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)



(7)



(8)



(9)



(10)

(1) Demolitions on the site, seen from the outside and from several house interiors.

(2) Juani and Iván are talking in the room.

(3) The three chimneys of the Poble-sec with a crane.

(4) Discovery of the Roman cemetery. Children, young people and old people make comments.

(5) Demolitions in the neighbourhood and streets.

(6) Building the stairs and dialogue between Juan and his son Juanma.

(7) Looks between Juanma and Sonia on the balcony.

(8) The children build a cabin on the construction site.

(9) Lunch with the stove. Santiago, Abdel Aziz and Abdelsalam.

(10) Mr. Antonio and his friend Luis at the bar.

A

The film

2

Heard in the film

Juan: You do your best and then they plan a wall there so no one can see what we've done.

Pedro: It's hidden, but you know it's there.

Juan: That's it. Like a person, their soul is within them. A person's soul is almost a secret and the soul of a structure is concealed.

Pedro: You see what's pretty, but not the interior.

3

Said about the film



Reflections by José Luis Guerin

« When you film a person you wonder how to extract the most representative, unique and beautiful aspects of them. Whether a professional actor or not, to a certain extent you are asking the same questions as the classical painters did when they considered questions such as where to situate this person, where the look should be projected, what situation to create in order to capture the person being painted, which gestures to look for and how to achieve them, what staging objects are available, how to arrange them in space, etc. [...] The pleasure of extracting what I call the "revealing gesture", which is something that goes far beyond the boundaries between documentary and fiction.»

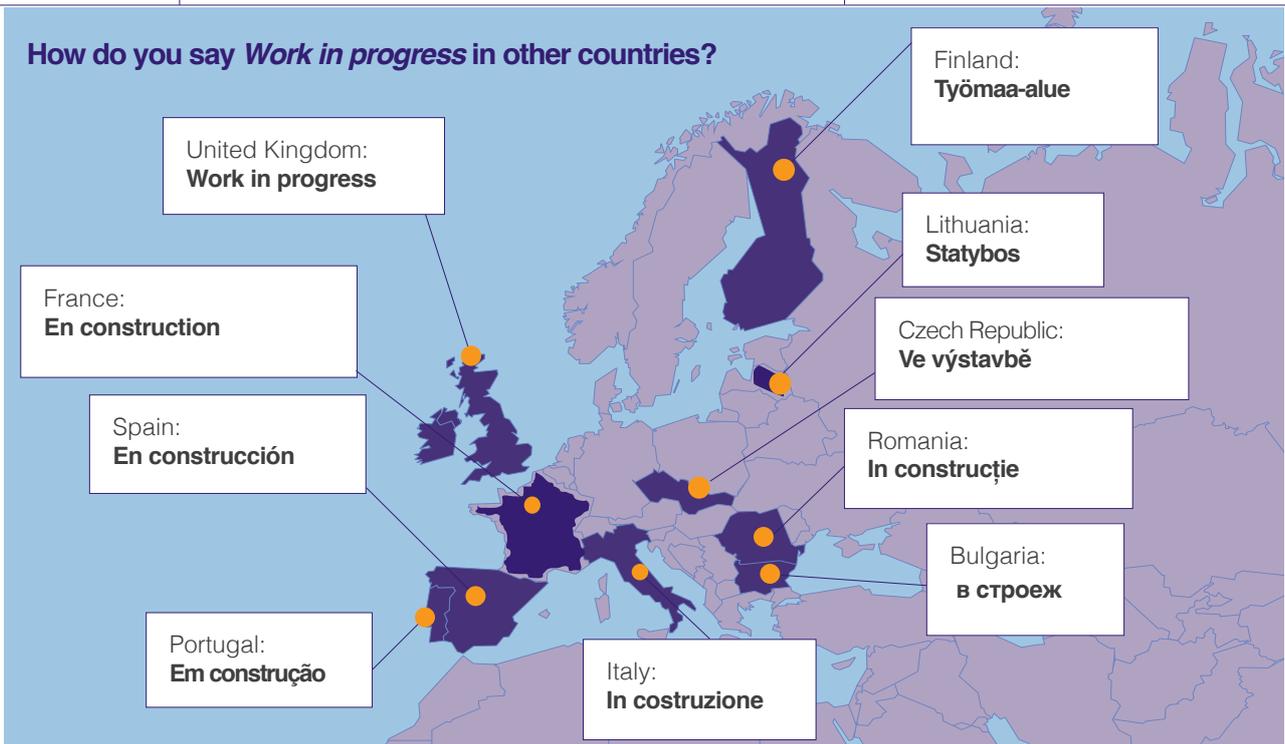
B

In Europe and elsewhere

1

A film, several titles

How do you say *Work in progress* in other countries?

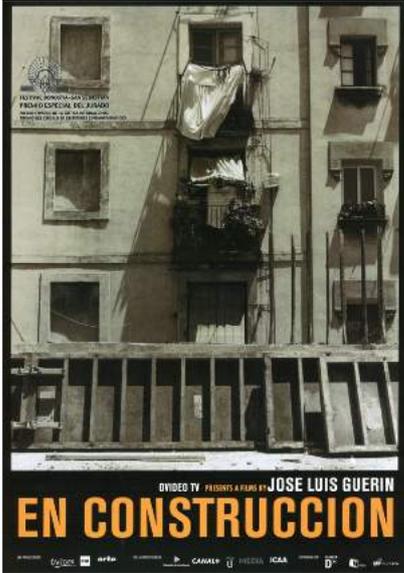


B

In Europe and elsewhere

2

The film and its era

Film poster:**Context:**

Work in progress (En construcción) is set in the heart of Raval, the district of Barcelona with the longest history, one which has always welcomed immigrants, where people of different origins coexist, and also home to prostitution and the underbelly of society. Around 2000, coinciding with the years following the Olympics being held in Barcelona (1992), it was one of the areas of the city to undergo the greatest transformation in pursuit of modernisation in a process known as "gentrification": the expulsion of the original population of a district due to the arrival of a population with higher purchasing power.

It was also a particularly intense time in terms of certain historical events such as the the Kosovo war.

Work in progress was widely acclaimed by both critics and the public which, together with the effect of other films such as *To Be and to Have* by Nicolas Philibert (*Être et avoir*, 2002), showed that documentary films were perfectly suitable for public screening and that they responded to the public's desire for reality.

C

The film and me

1

I learn and I imagine

- ▶ If I could give *Work in progress* another title, it would be...
- ▶ What would you like to know about the transformation in Barcelona and other large cities in Europe over the last two decades?
- ▶ What would you like to know about the trades and jobs you have seen in the film?
- ▶ Imaginary diary of a character
Many residents are forced to leave their homes due to urban regeneration. Write a letter or an entry from your diary as if you were one of these residents several days before they are forced to leave.

Dear José...

Write a letter to José Luis Guerin to talk about, for example, the moments you find most powerful, what moved you about the characters or your most intense memories of the film.

C

The film and me

2

Choosing and creating images



► I put images in interaction with one another.

Do these three images from *Work in progress* make you think of other images you are familiar with? These can be other films, paintings, comics, photographs, video clips, advertisements, etc.

► I make my own poster of the film.

► I choose images from the film (using the Young Spectator Space) or I produce my own shots.



► Photographs in the style of *Work in progress*:

Just as José Luis Guerin shows the city of Barcelona at different times of day, look for a window, a balcony or a terrace from which to take a photograph or film a view of your city or town in the light from different times of day: at dawn, at midday, at dusk, at night, etc.

► In the Young Spectator Space choose the 10 images that have most marked, moved or affected you (whatever the emotion you felt). For example, you could follow a route through the city at different times of the day or focus on specific particularly intense moments in the history of the characters which most interest you.



Work in progress



Young Spectator Space
cined.eu/en/youngsters-space

CinEd — Student sheet

D

To go further

Some extracts of *Work in progress* are available in the educational films: "At the table", "Looks", "Distance".

If I liked *Work in progress*, I might also like:

► *Il posto* (1961, Italy)
 by Ermanno Olmi

(FILM IN THE CINEd COLLECTION)

Il Posto is also a film about a boy, Domenico, trapped between childhood and adulthood: this young boy is expected to have adult attitudes (for example, working in an office, in a suit-tie, and surrounded by older people) ; he is experiencing, at the same time, his first love encounter with Magali. Moreover, *Il posto* is part of an Italian film movement, neo-realism (1940-1950), which focused on showing the reality of life, with few resources.



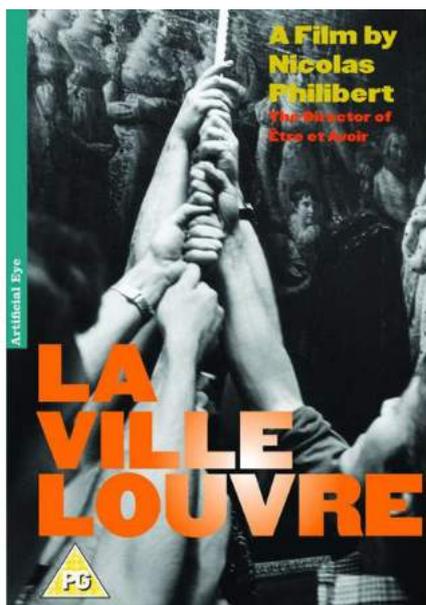
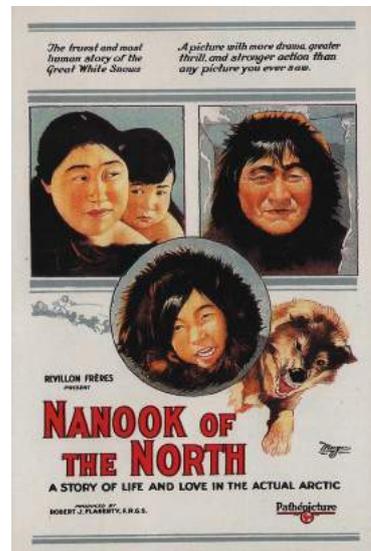


◀ *Lumière's films* (1895-1899)

These early filmmakers are among Guérin's great masters, since he is one of those filmmakers who trust reality and hope that it takes part in their films. Fixed framing and careful and sensitive observation of reality are some of the features Guérin shares with the inventors of cinematograph.

▶ *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922), Nicholas Ray

Considered as the first feature-length documentary in the history of cinema (after the first films of the Lumière brothers), it is one of the films most loved by José Luis Guerin, who considers Flaherty to be a master of both the expectation and the relationship he manages to create with the people he films. According to Flaherty himself, his intention in the film was "to show the ancient majesty of these people (the Eskimos) while it was still possible, before the white man came to destroy not only his culture but also the people themselves".



◀ *La Ville Louvre*

(Nicolas Philibert, 1990)

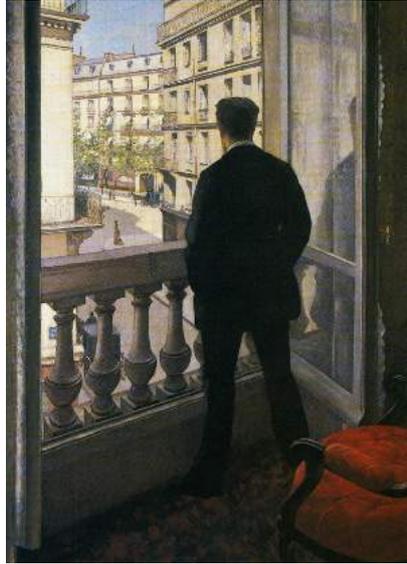
In 1988, during the museum's renovation, when the crystal pyramid was added to the classical buildings, Philibert plunged into its premises for five months to portrait aspects usually unseen by us visitors.

To go further

These painters:



Gustave Caillebotte
(Paris, 1848 - Gennevilliers, 1894)



Antonio López
(Tomelloso, 1936)



▲ **and Giorgio Morandi**
(Bologna, 1890-1964)

These photographs:



Xavier Miserachs
(Barcelona, 1937 - Badalona, 1998)

He had a go in photography when he was a 15-year-old secondary school student. Between 1962 and 1964 he took more than 7.000 pictures of his hometown, Barcelona. 371 of these pictures eventually were part of his book *Barcelona en blanco y negro*, a portrait of great photographic intensity showing a city in transformation, its neighborhoods and suburbs, a portrait of the people of Barcelona and their celebrations.



Berenice Abbott
(Springfield, 1898-Monson, 1991)

After a dazzling career portraying artists and art patrons in the 20s in Paris, Abbott came back to United States to portrait the streets of Manhattan, a city which was then immerse in a process of deep mutation. In her project *Changing New York*, she captures not only new buildings, but also people's diversity, their working places, their homes and the city's particular life.



These poets:



The poems of Jaime Gil de Biedma (1929-1990)

A prominent member of the so-called generation of the 50s. His poems have an autobiographical origin and tell us about daily life: the city, love and disaffection, friendship, tedium, moments of happiness... always using a rigorous, precise, personal and non-rhetorical language.



Persian poetry of Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967)

Born in Teheran amidst the peak of westernization, she is one of the greatest voices of Iranian contemporary poetry. If we enjoy Abdel's words in *Work in Progress*, we will also enjoy Farrohzad's verses. Besides being a poet in her texts, she is also a poet in her films, above all in the extraordinary *La casa es negra* (*The house is black*, 1965).

Music:



The music of Silvia Pérez Cruz (1983)

Born to musician parents, her music is a fusion music anchored also in tradition: flamenco, jazz, Catalan traditional music, Iberic and Latin American folklore are mixed all together in singular, profound, intimate songs. One of the most singular and moving of the last years.

The author of this student sheet is A Bao A Qu.