



BORDER

A video by Laura Waddington

PREMIERE

THE 57th LOCARNO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2004

AWARDS

FIRST PRIZE VIDEOEX 2005, ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

SPECIAL MENTION OF THE ECUMENICAL JURY, OBERHAUSEN, 2005

GRAND PRIX EXPERIMENTAL-ESSAI-ART VIDEO, COTE D'AZUR, FRANCE 2005

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CREDITS

Directed, Produced..... Laura Waddington
Co-produced.....Love Streams Agnes b. Paris
Written, Camera, Editing..... Laura Waddington
Music.....Simon Fisher Turner
Voice.....Laura Waddington
Sound Mix.....Jean Guy Veran
Premiere.....The 57th Locarno International Film Festival, Switzerland, August 2004
Collection.....Musée National d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris (upcoming)
..... The International Film Festival Oberhausen, Film and video archive, Germany
.....INVIDEO Archive A.I.A.C.E, Milan, Italy
.....The Cinematheque de Tangiers, Morocco

France/UK, 2004	In English (or English with French subtitles)
Running Time: 27 min.	Colour, Stereo, Digibeta PAL/ Beta SP PAL

SYNOPSIS

In 2002, Laura Waddington spent months in the fields around Sangatte Red Cross camp, France with Afghan and Iraqi refugees, who were trying to cross the channel tunnel to England. Filmed at night with a small video camera, the figures lit only by the distant car headlights on the motorways, **BORDER** is a personal account of the refugees' plight and the police violence that followed the camp's closure.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In the days, if you wandered along the motorways and the wastelands, you could see the refugees everywhere: waiting on the roadside or headed to the port and the freight trains. They travelled in twos or threes or sometimes in groups of twenty or thirty.

At night, I'd walk along the roads with them. It took two or three hours to reach the spots on the channel tunnel fence, where they'd start to cut the wire. Then came the arrests and the police bus back to the camp. A few hours later, they'd re-emerge and the perverse game of cat and mouse would start again.

Most of the refugees were from Iraq and Afghanistan. They'd taken six or seven months to get to France, paying traffickers to smuggle them in trucks across Iran, Turkey and the Balkans. Many had nothing left but the clothes they were standing in. In their countries, they'd been teachers, university professors, medical students, and bricklayers.

Some men died in the tunnel, others had their arms or legs cut off by the moving trains. I remember, one boy who lost his leg was out on the road, the week he was released from the hospital, trying to escape again. The months passed in limbo. I couldn't believe we had just left them there, as if our backs were turned to them

Laura Waddington 2002

PRESS QUOTES

“A thousand miles away from the television reports that vainly tried to give a hypothetical identity to these displaced bodies, Laura Waddington’s desperate camera scrupulously avoids the refugees’ faces to convey an animal condition, a status of hunted beasts. Nothing predatory, no social dogma, just real empathy in this worried and audacious filming. And if the image is superb, at times pushing **BORDER** towards the boundaries of video dance and thus annoying certain guards of the temple of ethics, this is primarily due to a technical necessity, the camera’s shutter wide open to compensate for the lack of light, resulting in a large trembling grain, an impression of slow motion, movements like so many imprints.”

-Bertrand Loutte, LES INROCKUPTIBLES, Paris

“But the shock of the festival is the cinema of Laura Waddington, 34 years old, English, she lived illegally in New York, then spent a few years travelling with the world’s exiles in the most dangerous places. Due to a plane phobia, she made these journeys on buses, cargo ships, hitchhiking. But aside from planes, Laura Waddington is afraid of nothing and her video camera carries all her courage and her conscience. Slung across her shoulder. **BORDER** is the trace of the months she spent in Sangatte, hidden in the fields, each night, with Afghan and Iraqi refugees. Shot secretly, the shutter wide open, almost in slow motion, the images create an aesthetic experience of fear, of terror, as if fallen out of a nightmare, peopled with out of focus figures. **BORDER** links the fields of Sangatte to that terrified part of our imagination, hidden deep within all of us.”

-Philippe Azoury, “Caméras Libres”, The 57th Locarno Film Festival”, LIBERATION, Paris

“Subtle and powerful, the work of this English filmmaker, nomadic observer of the world and devoted translator of fear and hope, as in the film **BORDER** (International Competition/ Special Mention) a tragic document about the powerless attempts of Afghan and Iraqi refugees to escape from France to England and the violent police repression that followed the closure of the camp of Sangatte.”

-Elena Marcheschi, IL MANIFESTO, Italy

“The astonishing work of a young woman who, during several months in 2002, glued to her mini DV, captured images of Afghan and Iraqi refugees, around the Sangatte Red Cross camp, who were trying to cross the channel tunnel to England. Laura Waddington recounts her experience through images she transforms without complacency, using slow motion, breaks in sound, a grainy picture and heightened contrasts. Through form, she lends the drama unfolding before our eyes a completely new dimension, revealing the concept of cruelty, beneath a chance beauty, nonetheless extremely real.”

-Olivier Bombarda, ARTE TV website, France

“There's a heroic compassion of quasi-Kurosawa'ian dimensions to each image, a justness to each movement that in its humbleness speaks gloriously of all the growth and learning done in all those years on the road.”

-Olaf Moeller (European Editor FILM COMMENT) The 51st Pesaro International Film Festival catalogue

“Laura Waddington (1970, also honoured with a retrospective of her work) literally opened her eye, the lens of her tiny DV camera for thousands of refugees and illegal immigrants that reside in the French Red Cross camp at Sangatte. The searchlights cut the darkness into pieces, shadows appear and disappear, the mere shades of human beings that often more than two year before fled from Irak or Afghanistan. Hour after hour they try to escape from the camp, hoping to enter the Chunnel and cross their final border, between France and England. The images from **BORDER** contain a silent and sad beauty that does not need to be understood. They pilot you in something more essential: the actual experience of sweat, cold and alienation.”

-Dana Linssen, *FIPRESCI report Oberhausen*

“Juxtaposed with eloquent images that suggest way more than what they actually show. The result is simply astonishing: an expressionist piece with a visual and sound design that wondrously exposes, in a reflexive manner, the pain and suffering of others as though it were your own.”

- Pablo Suárez *BUENOS AIRES HERALD, Argentina*

“At 35, this talented English mixer transgresses codes and conventions to create other images, which are sensitive and personal. Emblematic of a movement which draws its creativity from a telescoping of disciplines... **BORDER** follows the traces of the refugees of Sangatte, combining formal sophistication with raw information... From this risk filled shoot with extreme technical constraints, she brought back images filmed on the run, fragile, distorted, grainy.”

-Mathilde Blottière et Laurent Rigoulet, *TELERAMA, Paris*

“An attempt to make us feel we are there, hunted men and hunted women, waiting for the train, silhouettes of children and adults on the road to the camp, faces that suddenly surge up and scream, when the men with their faces and their uniforms use their violence and batons”

-Federica Sossi *JGCINEMA.ORG CINEMA E GLOBALIZZIONE, Italy*

“The best film in international competition **BORDER** shows refugees on the French side of the Eurotunnel. They dive in and out of fields and through the night like shadows in slow motion, filmed with a simple tourist camera. The only faces we see clearly, for a brief moment, are those of the police, who strike them during a demonstration.”

-Christof Meueler, *JUNGE WELT, Germany*

“**BORDER** bears witness to the harsh reality of shadows, to a group of invisible people at the side of the road and is the most eloquent political and artistic metaphor ever expressed.”

- *MAR DEL PLATA FILM FESTIVAL CATALOGUE, Buenos Aires, Argentina*

“Far removed from familiar reportage formats, the director confronts us with unusual images of a political tragedy. As a person crossing the borders between the visible and the invisible herself, she gives a profile to the shadowy faces of people living in darkness.”

-*Ecomenical Jury Statement, The 51st Oberhausen Intl Short Film Festival, Germany*

“When a France, that is helmeted and dressed in blue, treats the voyager as a barbarian, the precarious beauty of a silhouette on the horizon becomes a shout, a weapon... **BORDER** is a vulnerable film and it is this quality which makes it a film resistant to the cold, the humidity and the barbarity of the police “

-- Antoni Collot “*Border*” *Manéci, France*

“FREE CAMERAS” BY PHILIPPE AZOURY, LIBERATION

The 57th Locarno Film Festival is marked by four exceptional films, including the shock “BORDER”, which render out of date a sluggish competition, for the moment saved by the lively “Andre Valente”.

How can an hour and a half of a completely worn out formula compete with a burst of oxygen of twenty five minutes? It can't. And that's the first news, neither good nor bad, we'll bring back from Locarno. The 57th edition of the world's fourth largest film festival (after Cannes, Venice and Berlin) will be remembered for that: the split between on the one hand a mediocre cinema, produced according to the purr of the industry, speaking an insipid Esperanto and displaying a glossy image, in which nothing is allowed to disturb the good taste of its humanism; and on the other hand, a few works, that use the camera in an extraordinary and subjective way. From henceforth this split is wide open...

Bus, stop, cargo. But the shock of the festival is the cinema of Laura Waddington, 34 years old, English, she lived illegally in New York, then spent a few years travelling with the world's exiles in the most dangerous places. Due to a plane phobia, she made these journeys on buses, cargo ships, hitchhiking. But aside from planes, Laura Waddington is afraid of nothing and her video camera carries all her courage and her conscience. Slung across her shoulder. **BORDER** is the trace of the months, she spent in Sangatte, hidden in the fields, each night, with Afghan and Iraqi refugees. Shot secretly, the shutter wide open, almost in slow motion, the images create an aesthetic experience of fear, of terror, as if fallen out of a nightmare, peopled with out of focus figures. **BORDER** links the fields of Sangatte to that terrified part of our imagination, hidden deep within all of us.

- Philippe Azoury, “Caméras Libres”, LIBERATION, Paris, August 11, 2004 (Translated)

FESTIVAL SCREENINGS (SELECTION)

The 57th Locarno International Film Festival, Switzerland, 2004 (*World premiere*)
The 33rd Montreal Festival of New Cinema and New Media, Canada, 2004
The 19th Festival International du Film de Belfort, France, 2004
The 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2005
The 59th Edinburgh International Film Festival, United Kingdom, 2005
“La Semaine des réalisateurs, 2005” FESPACO, Ouagadougou, Burkinao Faso, 2005
The 51st Oberhausen International Short Film Festival, Germany, 2005 (*Special Mention of the Ecumenical Jury*) (*Int. Comp and Retrospective “Crossing Frontiers: Laura Waddington”*)
The 12th New York Video Festival 2005, Film Society of Lincoln Center, New York, 2005
The 6th Seoul Film Festival, South Korea, 2005
The 41st Pesaro International Film Festival, Italy, 2005 (*Homage to Laura Waddington*)
Côté court 2005, 14th Festival du Film Court, Pantin, Seine Saint Denis, France, 2005
(*Grand Prix Experimental-essai-art video*)
Videoex 2005, Festival of Experimental Film and Video, Zurich, Switzerland, 2005 (*First Prize*)
One World, International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, Prague, 2005
The 33rd La Rochelle International Film Festival, France, 2005 (*Tapis, Coussins et Vidéo: Laura Waddington*)
Le 28ème Festival du Court Métrage de Clermont-Ferrand, France, 2006
The 21st Mar del Plata International Film Festival, Buenos Aires, 2006

Also screened in the European Parliament Brussels

(Extensive screening list at: www.laurawaddington.com)

“THE TWO SPEEDS FRONTERA” – INTERVIEW

By Filippo Del Lucchese,

JURA GENTIUM: As Hannah Arendt speaks about “The human condition” your work suggests a reflection on the “migrant condition”. Why did you decide to speak about and prepare this project?

LAURA WADDINGTON: I think there were a lot of reasons. I lived illegally in the US for seven years. I was living very well but I came into contact with people living in bad circumstances. I knew some young Mexicans. They were working in restaurants and living ten or twenty to a room. They told incredible stories of how they’d come, literally swimming and walking across the frontier. At one point, I was arrested on the Canadian border and put in an immigration cell. It was a very frightening situation and I had the feeling anything could happen there. I came away with the impression that people without papers have lost all human rights in our society. When I returned to live in Europe, it too had become a desired destination for refugees. I saw a lot of racism, people being arrested and taken off trains etc. And I really wanted to talk about this situation. In 2001, I travelled in the Balkans and Kurdistan, where I met people, trying to get to Europe. I became fascinated by the journey they were making from Iraq and Afghanistan. I travelled along part of the route but ultimately I realised what interested me was Sangatte, the fact that this unbelievable situation was happening in France, only an hour and a half from Paris, where I was living.

There’s a strong contrast in the film between people and goods travelling very fast through the Channel between France and Great Britain, on trains, at a speed as high as that of globalisation, with people trying to catch onto the bottom of these trains, hoping to be able to pass the border, taken away at that same speed. It’s like two globalisations, very different but very close at the same time.

LW: Yes, I was constantly struck by this contrast, the collision of two worlds within one space. The refugees moved through the landscape almost like ghosts and I tried to portray them as such. It was very difficult for me to understand the co-existence of these two realities. The camp was only one hour and a half from Paris. Each night, hundreds of men were running through the fields, risking their lives, trying to jump on the trains, chased, like animals by the police. A few minutes away people were sitting watching television in their homes. In the film there are a lot of car headlights. For the refugees I met, these headlights represented the people of France, with whom they had very little or no contact. I never saw any French people walking along those roads. It is a big contrast between the refugees, who are always walking and the lights of the cars constantly rushing past.

What was the most difficult thing during the shooting in Sangatte?

LW: At times, it was difficult because of the police presence. Most journalists, who were there, were the equivalent of embedded journalists. They were official journalists, working mainly in crews and with the permission of the Red Cross, who were themselves there under the auspices of the French government. I decided not to go through the Red Cross but to stay on the roads and in the fields. There were some strange incidents. I remember one night several soldiers with machine guns surrounded me and told me it was too dangerous to carry on. They said something might happen to me and that the refugees were dangerous. However, the refugees weren’t dangerous and the only danger I could see was their machine guns.

The police violence is not shown so often on TV. How were you able to film the repression and the violence without consequences?

LW: In France, it's illegal to film a police intervention if the policemen's faces are identifiable. It was important to move quickly and think one step ahead. I always made copies of what I'd shot, hiding one copy and sending the other copies away from there. When the police came to tell me I couldn't film or that I'd filmed illegally, I would insist that legally they couldn't stop me. Since, they were following orders, if I sounded convincing, they'd grow confused and wouldn't know what to do. I'd try to divert them and find a way to leave, while they were debating what to do. There were other pressures but I was determined to keep my tapes and continue making my film. I felt it was important to leave a trace or document of what I'd seen, however small because I had the impression the French and English governments didn't want people to fully understand what had happened in Sangatte. On the 24th of December 2002 they tore down the camp. When I came back two days later, no trace remained. They left no memory, not even a sign or a statue.

You speak about the fact that most people came from Afghanistan or Iraq, trying to flee wars and poverty. Would have it been very different if they weren't really fleeing something, if they were trying just to find a new life for them and their families?

LW: There were many people in the camp from Iraqi Kurdistan, who were living under a government, which was considered relatively safe at that time. A lot of these people had come for economic reasons. They weren't fleeing war. I didn't talk about this aspect in the film because I felt anyone who made such a difficult journey, leaving their family and friends and often travelling two or three years under terrible conditions must have a reason. I felt it wasn't for me to judge them. However, the more time I spent in Sangatte, the more I realised how little I understood of the situation. It was extremely complicated. I was there in the period after September 2001 so among the men arriving in the camp, there were not only Afghans, who'd fled the Taliban and been on the road since years but also Taliban, fleeing the Americans. There were a lot of contradictions and different stories. I remember in 2002, I also met people from Iraqi Kurdistan, who were extremely worried. They talked about the presence of Al Ansar in the hills around Halabjah and their fear that Iraq would soon be the centre of a disastrous war. Later, I felt Sangatte was a mirror held up to the world. And that we had chosen to turn our backs to it.

Why did these people try so much to reach Great Britain instead of staying in France or other European countries?

LW: Not everyone had set out with the intention of getting to Britain. Some people had been constantly pushed on from other countries in Europe and Britain was their last hope. The smugglers encouraged everyone to dream of England because they could charge very high prices to get them there. There were also cultural and social reasons. Many of the Iraqis and Afghans had family or friends living in the UK and spoke English, not French, so they knew it would be easier for them to find work there and that the work would be better paid and the social security benefits higher and easier to access. At the time, it was much easier to be illegal in the UK because there was no identity card system. In France a policeman could stop someone at random on the street and ask for their identity card. In England this was not possible, although unfortunately that is now changing.

What about women in Sangatte, we don't see many of them?

LW: There were very few women in the period I was there, in 2002. The situation in Sangatte had become so hard that many men decided to leave their wives and children further back along the line, for instance in Rome or Greece and to continue to Sangatte alone. They intended to find a way to send for their families once they reached England. Several families got split up along the journey. I met many women and children in parks in Rome who'd been separated from their men when the smugglers put them in different boats or trucks.

But also I was filming in the fields and the women didn't go this way but hidden in trucks with smugglers. The fields were the only area of Sangatte not controlled by the smugglers and passing through them to try to jump onto the trains was the most dangerous way of crossing. Only the poorest refugees, who couldn't gather money to pay smugglers, such as many of the Afghans who'd fled war and had no one to send them money, went this way.

And what about the people of Sangatte, was there only racist or disinterested people?

LW: There was a group, not from Sangatte but from the area around Calais, who tried to help the refugees. They played a very important role after the closure of the camp in December 2002 because hundreds of refugees continued to arrive. They were sleeping outside and the situation became very difficult and violent. This group helped the refugees by bringing food each night to the bunkers, where they were hiding from the police and sometimes giving them showers, medical attention or refuge in a church. They were put under a lot of pressure. The government passed a law, saying it was illegal to help people, who had no papers. Their phones were tapped and two people from the group were arrested and charged with being smugglers. Eventually, they were acquitted. However, the situation and the police violence continue today.

Let's speak about your previous film, CARGO, that was also a tale of a journey. How are the film related one's another?

LW: The Rotterdam Film Festival commissioned me to make **CARGO** for their 30th birthday with films by nine other filmmakers for a project called "On the Waterfront". They asked us to each shoot a video diary in a port of our choice. I decided to travel on a cargo ship to the Middle East with sailors from Rumania and the Philippines. The sailors, I filmed, were living in a sort of limbo, transporting Europe's goods but not allowed to go ashore. In making this film, I became interested in the idea of Europe's backdoor, the double life, existing on its borders. Like the refugees of Sangatte, the sailors in **CARGO** move through the landscape, almost like ghosts.

"The Two Speeds Frontera" Interview by Filippo Del Lucchese, JGCINEMA.ORG CINEMA E GLOBALIZZIONE, Italy, February 2005, www.jgcinema.org

“THE DAYS AND YEARS OF MY TRAVELS” BY OLAF MÖLLER

Laura Waddington is afraid of flying: She doesn't board a plane, ever (well, ever....). Instead, she travels by bus or train or ship - the latter, the most archaic in a lot of ways, being the locus of two videos, **ZONE** (1995) and **CARGO** (2001). The old-fashioned ways used nowadays mainly by those lacking the funds for luxuries like time (by the way: train never means 1st, always 2nd or 3rd class, and ship more often than not means freighter, not cruise ship.) The world slows down like that while growing back again to an older yet more natural size. It's 19th century redux, befitting an oeuvre with a social agenda which for so many of the airplane-internet-mobile-set, Today's People, feels passé but isn't for the majority of human beings on this planet, Earth. The slowness makes one see peculiarities and uniquenesses - no such flippancies as, “This-and-that film from Taiwan perfectly expresses the economic malaise of Peru”, or some such. That's the way the world looks from an airplane hurrying the skies across borders and peoples and cultures, blurring all differences into a single superficial movement. It's the market's, the management's perception, Globalizorama.

Laura Waddington, instead, is always precisely There, crossing all those land and seascapes, often for weeks and months, becoming one with the moment, place and time, savouring its particular flavour. It's a way of moving in the world which gets one close to - often in close quarters with - people others just pass by, not noticing them or taking their presence=service simply for granted. To fully experience such journeys, their potentials, one has to be open enough and willing to accept one's occasional needs - for help, food, shelter, love and/or friendship - and one has to be unafraid, open, also for strangers and their kindness.

One cannot see this in the works themselves. Or rather, it's there but not on the surface. It becomes present only when one knows. (When introducing her works, Waddington more often than not pretty soon starts talking about her fear of flying and how that influences her artistic approach=process, so...).

Another approach, actually a kind of trajectory or even vector, is to be found in the work itself, always the best place to start anyway. One doesn't need to look too deep, it's pretty much out there in the open, for Waddington's works carry their heart on their sleeve, as they want, need to be understood. Starting with her 'maiden film' **The Visitor** (1992) and ending with **BORDER** (2004) - after which, she says, something completely different has to come and happen - the work 'describes' a movement out into the open. From the enclosed spaces of work and home in **The Visitor**, breeding desire, which is (also) the need to get away - each fuck another country, and each desire squashed the go-by-go nobody wants. On with **ZONE** and **CARGO** to the enclosed spaces of journeys by ship in the company of some of the most wretched human beings on earth, seaman whose working=living conditions have considerably worsened in the last 20, 30 years. A tribe of the working class that in several ways has no fatherland. More often than not they're prisoners of their vessels, its flag, as well as their own passports (if they have one): they can't leave when the ship enters a harbour, more often than not they have to contain with looking at yet another country. On to a most symbolic final destination, the Red Cross-refugee camp at Sangatte in **BORDER**, where she stayed for months with refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq, men and women who've crossed thousands and thousands of miles escaping certain-seeming doom and who're now trying to catch an illegal ride through the channel tunnel to yet another promised land, the one of hope and glory. It's her sole video that's basically set only in the wide open, with refugees, silhouettes in the sheltering darkness, moving in the wind and the rain, crossing landscapes, anonymous to the eye yet known by name to the narrator, Laura Waddington.

That her first cinematographic journey - for that is her oeuvre till now: a journey, also to herself - would end among refugees has a certain logic in Waddington's own life. She lived for several years as an illegal immigrant in the USA, and her current life in France is also not without problems; in her fatherland, England, she doesn't want to stay, for artistic reasons.

So, in a certain way, it's also Laura Waddington standing there in **BORDER**, finally being able to face that which is there. As for a long time she was afraid of even looking through a camera, making the images herself. **The Lost Days** (1999) was made by asking friends around the world to shoot images for her which she then refilmed and refilmed until they got the unified look of somebody not really looking, just passing and taping. **ZONE**, then, was made with a spy camera filming 'accidentally'. **CARGO**, it's true, has Waddington again looking through the view finder, making the images, but it seems that she's still a little reluctant to truly be there – or, let's say, she's getting back into the motions. With **BORDER** she has, if one might say so, finally found herself. There's a heroic compassion of quasi-Kurosawa'ian dimensions to each image, a justness to each movement that in its humbleness speaks gloriously of all the growth and learning done in all those years on the road.

Also, something got lost on that journey: the need to shield oneself by a layer of fiction. **The Lost Days** is, if compared with Waddington's following works, fictitious on several levels. There's the fiction of the story told - a woman running away from a relation(=)ship wrecked - a story that was there before the images. And there's the fiction of the images made by so many yet made over by just one. And there's another layer: Waddington doesn't narrate the story herself - and thereby authenticate the images – (That, too.) There's the voice of Chantal Akerman for the prologue (mirroring somewhat the prologue of her "*Histoires d'Amerique: Food, Family and Philosophy*" (1989)) and there's Marusha Gagro for the story itself.

That said, **The Lost Days** is actually supposed to be the story of somebody alien to herself: Travelling the world but seeing only the same everywhere which, in the end, is the blurred self one cannot confront, one's loneliness (in **The Visitor** and **The Lost Days** homosexuality becomes, for the self-centred/lost protagonists, a symbol of exclusion. Men reject her in her essence... Read: The body as prison, a fortress of solitude). **ZONE** and **CARGO** both still feature comparable stories of love lost/fled but in a more muted key and used more obviously as distancing devices. It ends with **Border**: There's no need anymore to distance oneself - now, there's the need for contact, to be there.

Finally, there's something deeply erotic to Waddington's works, particularly since **The Lost Days** when she stopped - then out of material necessity - to work with images running at normal speed and started to use slowed down moments made more passionate by Simon Fisher Turner's soundscapes. Travelling becomes one with loving, the drawn-out, hyper-present moments become memories grasped at, the way one commonly tries to elongate the flow, fleeting moments of passion. The difference between passion and compassion vanishes, borders fall, each body a vessel of change.

- Olaf Möller "The Days and Years of My Travels" for THE 51st PESARO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL CATALOGUE

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Laura Waddington, born 1970 in London, studied English literature at Cambridge University, before moving to New York, where she worked in independent cinema and made short films. Inspired by electronic musicians, who she met making and distributing work from their apartments, she became interested in alternative modes of production and began shooting video. **ZONE** (1995), filmed with a spy camera on the QE2 and **The Lost Days**, the story of a woman's journey around the world, directed via the Internet with camera people in 15 countries, experimented with the possibilities of the medium. **The Lost Days** marked the start of an ongoing collaboration with English composer Simon Fisher Turner (Derek Jarman's *Blue*, *Caravaggio*, *The Garden*).

In 1998, she left New York and lived briefly in Lisbon and Barcelona before moving to Paris. Travelling widely overland on ships, buses and trains, because of a plane phobia, she began to focus on borders and people she met trying to cross them. In 2000, the Rotterdam Film Festival commissioned her to make a video for the project "On the Waterfront" a series of digital diaries, shot by ten filmmakers in ports around the world. **CARGO** (2001) is an account of her journey on a container ship to the Middle East, with sailors from Romania and the Philippines.

In 2002, following extensive travels in Kurdistan, Europe, The Middle East, and the Balkans, researching refugee routes into Europe, she spent months in the fields around Sangatte Red Cross camp, filming Afghan and Iraqi refugees who were trying to cross the channel tunnel to England, (**Border**, 2004)

Laura Waddington's work has screened at numerous international film festivals, including Locarno, Rotterdam, New York Video Festival, Film Society of Lincoln Center, Edinburgh, Montreal Festival of New Cinema, on ARTE television and in museums such as The Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid, The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, The Pompidou Centre, Paris (upcoming). She has had screenings in over thirty countries, including locations such as the European Parliament, Brussels. In 2002 Six Pack Film presented a focus on her videos at the Austrian Film Museum, Vienna. In 2005, she had a retrospective at The 51st International Oberhausen Short Film Festival and a homage to her videos at The 41st Pesaro International Film Festival. She has received awards including the ARTE Prize for Best European Short Film, The 48th International Oberhausen Short Film Festival, First Prize ex aequo, Videoex 2002, Zurich, (**CARGO**) Grand Prix Experimental-essai-art video, Cote Court 2005, France and First Prize Videoex 2005, Zurich (**Border**). Articles and interviews about her videos have appeared on ARTE television, Radio France Culture, and in *Les Inrockuptibles*, *Télérama* magazine, and *Film-Dienst* magazine among others. She presently lives in Brussels.

SELECED FILMOGRAPHY

1992 The Visitor
1994 The Room
1995 ZONE
1996 Letters to My Mother
1999 The Lost Days
2001 CARGO
2004 Border