

**“Do Not Be Afraid”
Transcending Barriers of the Heart and Mind
In Independent Narrative Filmmaking**

Professor Erik Knudsen

Abstract

The wholesale adoption of digital technologies in filmmaking over the past couple of decades has resulted in a significant liberation and democratisation of access to production, distribution and exhibition of narrative films. These seminal developments in narrative filmmaking practices have led to the emergence of a hinterland of independent creation and dissemination that has, paradoxically, both challenged traditional hegemonies and provided innovations that have helped strengthen the very hegemonies that traditionally dominated filmmaking. While there have, arguably, been a number of new narrative forms and approaches emerge, can we be confident that this liberation and democratisation of technologies has also led to the democratisation and liberation of the underlying stories independent filmmakers tell? In what ways have these developments helped, or hindered, independent filmmakers articulate authentic stories? Professor Erik Knudsen has over the past six years led an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded StoryLab Research Network project - with colleagues, Dr Nico Meissner from the Griffith Film School, Australia, Sarah Kuntoh, from the National Film and Television Institute, Ghana, Dr Carolina Patiño, from the University of Ibagué, Colombia, and Dr Iakovos Panagopoulos, from the Ionian University, Greece - which has explored the issue of independent and authentic filmmaking voices across diverse global cultures. The team worked with independent filmmakers and citizen filmmakers in Malaysia, Ghana, Colombia, USA and Greece. StoryLab developed an approach called ethnomediaology which it deployed as a method of ideation and story enablement. Professor Knudsen will in his talk, “Do Not Be Afraid”, outline this approach to story ideation, articulate the importance of authentic storytelling to a healthy society and explore one of his key findings. The key finding that will be discussed in this talk, relates to fear and the role of fear in erecting mental barriers that stifle creativity and the emergence of authentic storytelling. By way of example, he will contextualise these challenges within current fears related to artificial general intelligence and the border between machine and human. In so doing, he will aim to identify a way forward for the independent filmmaker seeking to tell authentic stories in a world with changing spiritual, mental and socio-political borders. The talk will include example audiovisual clips from StoryLab participants in Colombia and USA, as well as autoethnographic audio visual examples related to the theme of fear and courage in filmmaking.


