

TITLE: PAOLO VENTURA, A VANISHING MAN, 47'

DIRECTOR: Erik van Empel

WRITER: Erik van Empel

PRODUCER: Joost Seelen

OVERVIEW: With the relics of human lives - objects found in a flea market – the Italian artist Paolo Ventura opposes the fleeting nature of life. In a barn on a secluded mountain he creates a world of his own built out of cardboard and poster paint and gives the found objects a new life.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY: Erik van Empel has been an acclaimed director of photography for more than thirty years. He shot over a hundred feature-length documentaries all over the world including most of the films made by prize winning director John Appel. Films that he shot were elected to be the opening film for the IDFA documentary Film festival twice and many of the films were awarded or nominated by juries around the world; the Grand Award at Docudays Kiev, Magnolia Award in Shanghai, Golden Calf Award for Best Camera in the Netherlands, the Joris Ivens award, the European Academy Award and the Prix d'Europe. In 2003 van Empel made his first feature-length documentary Tour des Legendes, on the subject of myths in the Tour de France, which premiered at the Visions du Reel film festival in Nyon and has had a theatre release in the Netherlands. In 2011 he made a very successful documentary about his brother, the acclaimed photographer Ruud van Empel. It was broadcast on Dutch television and was shown in the Groningen Museum for three months to an international and steady audience. This was followed by Paolo Ventura - Vanishing Man in 2015. Lately van Empel has been giving master classes to the IDFA scenario workshop and at the Netherlands Film and Television Academy. He is currently researching a documentary on digital manipulation in news photography, called RAW.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT: As a documentary director/cameraman my interest in how we tell our stories was at some point broadened by: how do still photographers tell their stories in photographs? Their images do not move or talk so must their ways of telling an intriguing story not be different?

My quest for interesting story-tellers in photography led me to the Italian artist/photographer Paolo Ventura amongst others, a man whose images triggered my imagination instantly. Paolo's subjects and the melancholic yet light-hearted way he presents them appealed to me. His stories have no clear narrative. They are open-ended and retain their mystery. And this is exactly the way I like to tell my stories.

A documentary director's curiosity to meet intriguing people is his passion and his profession. But there needs to be a story to be told. Such digging into people's lives is a tricky business. After all, who am I to point out what experiences, traumas, and anxieties helped to form the person I portray and the work that he produces?

The challenge that I seek in my storytelling is: Keep it open-ended and retain the mystery. But at the same time: tell an appealing story with enough elements for the viewers to trigger their imagination and set their minds in motion.

NETHERLANDS, 2015