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South African short wins the Africa in Motion short film competition

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By Katie Miller

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A silent and visually stunning experimental documentary from South Africa, has won the 2nd annual Africa in Motion (AiM) short film competition. 3SAI: A Rite of Passage is the work of South African film-maker Paul Emmanuel.

The film challenges the viewer to empathise with fresh recruits at the 3SAI military base as their hair is shaved. Undercut with ambiguous and abstracted images of the vast plains of the Karoo, the monotony of the action and their initial indifference evolve to reveal intimate mirror images of their faces and feelings, exposing a vulnerability behind the rhythms of a production line set-up.

The film was screened as part of the Africa in Motion Film Festival (October 22-November 1, 2009), the UK's largest African Film Festival, which takes place at the Filmhouse in Edinburgh. The winner was awarded £1,000 to help them with their filmmaking career.

The judging panel consisted of filmmaker, journalist and regular on BBC 2's The Culture Show, Zina Saro-Wiwa; Director of the Scottish Documentary Institute, Noe Mendelle; and respected film critic, writer and producer Mark Cousins.

Film-maker Paul Emmanuel spoke of his delight at winning the competition: "I am absolutely thrilled to have my film selected for such a prestigious festival, and winning this competition is a wonderfully affirming experience for me! It is so exciting that an interpretive, and experimental film is being shown beyond the art gallery or museum-going-audience too! I hope that others from my country will be inspired to take this leap of faith and realise their dream!"

Jury member Mark Cousins says of the competition: "Short films are the spurts of life, the new shoots, of the film world. It is great that Africa in Motion is focusing on them. That's where the discovery and vitality is. The short film competition, and its considerable prize, is a brilliant way of putting the festival's money where its mouth is, and giving a fillip to the zingy and daring new African directors. I am delighted to be part of it."

So what is the 14-minute 3SA, a 2008 experimental production about?

This film challenges the viewer to empathise with fresh recruits at the 3SAI military base while their obligatory hair shave changes them irrevocably. Undercut with ambiguous and abstracted images of the vast plains of the Karoo, the monotony of the action and their initial indifference evolve to reveal intimate mirror images of their faces and feelings, exposing a vulnerability behind

the rhythms of a production line set-up.

Paul Emmanuel was born in 1969 in Kabwe, Zambia. He graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa in 1993.

In 1997, The Ampersand Foundation made Emmanuel the first recipient of the prestigious Ampersand Fellowship, which afforded him a three-month residency in New York. His first solo show in 2000, at the Open Window Gallery, Pretoria, was followed by three subsequent solo exhibitions in the Western Cape and Johannesburg in 2003 - 2005. Paul Emmanuel was in 2002 awarded first prize for AIR ON THE SKIN, in the Schumann-Sasol Wax Art Competition.

Emmanuel employs various media, including photography and film, to reveal layered visions concerned with his identity as a young white male living in post-apartheid South Africa. In 2004, Phase I of his ephemeral memorial installation, THE LOST MEN PROJECT, was launched on the Grahamstown National Arts Festival main visual arts programme to public acclaim. In April 2007, phase II of this project took place in Maputo, Mozambique. In September 2008, his touring museum exhibition entitled TRANSITIONS premiered at The Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, featuring his critically acclaimed short art film, 3SAI A RITE OF PASSAGE. Emmanuel lives and works in Johannesburg.

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