KARUN, Shaji N. (1952-)

Shaji N. Karun is an Indian film director and cinematographer from the South Indian state of Kerala. With various national and international awards to his name, a long-lasting relationship with film festivals like Cannes and his activist involvement in institutional matters, Karun must be regarded as a major figure in Indian Parallel Cinema and the (South) Indian cultural sphere in general. His work as cinematographer for directors such as K.G. George and M.T. Vasudevan Nair helped shape the look and aesthetics of Malayalam Parallel Cinema; of special note is his collaboration with G.Aravindan. Often shot with natural light in the Academy or European widescreen format, Malayalam art films of the 1970s and 1980s tend to be austere in style, the region’s distinctive rural landscape often becoming a character itself. Instead of relying on dialogue as Popular South Indian Cinemas do, there is a strong emphasis on visuals and visual texture which lends the films a sometimes abstract quality. Karun’s early work as director is marked by realism and social critique with grief as the main theme of both his debut *Piravi* (1988) and his sophomore effort *Swaham* (1994). Later on, his interest switched to character studies and Keralese performance traditions in films like *Vanaprastham* (1999), *Kutty Srank* (2010) and *Swapaanam* (2013). In the seemingly long stretches between his feature films, Karun keeps himself busy making documentaries as well as promotional and industry films with a pronounced interest in cultural subject-matter.

References and further reading:

Hood, J.W. (2009 [2002]) *The Essential Mystery. Major Filmmakers of Indian Art Cinema. Second revised and enlarged edition*, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 537-540.

Rajadhyaksha, A.; Willemen, P. (1999) *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema. New revised edition*, London: BFI, 122-123.

List of works:

Piravi (1988)

Swaham (1994)

Vanaprastham (1999)

Kutty Srank (2010)

Swapaanam (2013)

Kanchana Sita (1977, G.Aravindan, DoP only)

Thampu (1978, G.Aravindan, DoP only)

Esthappan (1980, G.Aravindan, DoP only)

Pokkuveyil (1981, G.Aravindan, DoP only)

Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback (1983, K.G. George, DoP only)

Meenamasithile Sooryan (1985, Lenin Rajendran, DoP only)

Chidambaram (1985, , G.Aravindan, DoP only)

Oridathu (1986, G.Aravindan, DoP only)

Paratextual materials:

http://www.shaji.info/

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