

***Ingrid Bergman: In her Own Words: An interview with Stig Björkman (director) and Dominika Daubenbüchel (editor)***

Dagmar Brunow and Ingrid Stigsdotter

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**Bio**

Dagmar Brunow is a senior lecturer in film studies at Linnaeus University, Sweden. Her research interests include media memory, film archives, video collectives and feminist filmmaking practice. She is the author of *Remediating Transcultural Memory. Documentary Filmmaking as Archival Intervention* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter 2015). Her current research project "The Cultural Heritage of Moving Images" (2016-2018) was financed by the Swedish research council.

Ingrid Stigsdotter is a researcher in Cinema Studies at Stockholm University, whose research interests include reception and representation. She collaborates with the Swedish Film Institute on the research project "I-Media-Cities" (2016-2019), funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme, and in 2017 she coordinated the "Women's Film History Network: Norden" with funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers' gender equality fund.

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The internationally acclaimed documentary *Jag är Ingrid (Ingrid Bergman: In her Own Words)* (Björkman, 2015) makes extensive use of archival footage, especially from Ingrid Bergman's private archive of home movies and sound recordings, beginning already when Ingrid Bergman started filming with her own camera in the 1930s. This newly retrieved archival footage reveals a more complex image of Bergman than her public persona has conveyed. The film presents the story of the Hollywood legend narrated through her own words and images.

DB<sup>1</sup>: Your documentary *Ingrid Bergman: In her Own Words* is a collaboration of many talents: it was directed by Stig Björkman, who is also co-author, along with Stina Gardell, who is also the producer, and Dominika Daubenbüchel, who is also the editor. One of the many notable aspects of the film is its use of archival footage, and this will be the focus of our conversation. How did you go about your search? Which archives did you use, and what kind of footage were you looking for?

SB: I met Isabella Rossellini at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2011, when Isabella was head of the Berlinale jury. I was in Berlin to talk about Ingmar Bergman on the occasion of the exhibition about him that was then on display at the Deutsche Kinemathek. Also in Berlin was the actress Harriet Andersson, who had also been asked to talk about Ingmar Bergman in the context of the exhibition. One evening Harriet and I were out having dinner at a restaurant, when a festival attendant told them that Isabella was on her way there -- she wanted to meet with Harriet. So Isabella came, and they were all talking together. And then -- in the middle of the conversation -- Isabella suddenly and very unexpected turned to me and said: 'Shall we make a film about *mamma*?' So, what does one say to a suggestion like that? I said 'yes', of course.

DD: Almost all of Ingrid Bergman's home movies, diaries, photographs and letters can be found at the Wesleyan Cinema Archives in Middletown, Connecticut. Isabella Rossellini, her

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<sup>1</sup> The interview was conducted via e-mail in April 2017. It was translated from Swedish and edited by Dagmar Brunow and Ingrid Stigsdotter.

sister Ingrid Rossellini, her brother Roberto Rossellini and her half-sister Pia Lindström granted us access to all the archived material.

Ingrid's father was a photographer. He took lots of pictures of his daughter, who was an only child, and he would occasionally film her with a 16mm camera he had borrowed. In this footage, we can see Ingrid as a little girl together with her mother. As an adult, Ingrid bought her first film camera as early as the late 1930s and she kept shooting film on small gauge throughout her entire life. Over the years, her film cameras would become more and more sophisticated.

When we started editing *Ingrid Bergman: In her Own Words* we had approximately ten hours of film footage shot by Ingrid herself. We were about to finish the editing process, when Pia Lindström found even more material from the 1930s in her New York apartment. The footage included scenes of Ingrid Bergman in Germany with her first husband Petter Lindström. Working with archival footage was thus an ongoing process.

Ingrid would collect basically everything and would not discard anything during her lifetime. This is why a lot of photographs still exist, both from Ingrid's early years and from throughout her career. The same goes for letters she had written herself or received from relatives and friends, and also for a number of her diaries. She had started keeping a diary at the age of ten and would continue to do so until the late 1940s.

All of these different materials became the foundation for our film. During the editing process we constantly evaluated the material while Stig returned to the archive several times to study letters, images and photographs. Several months before the editing process started, our researchers Frida Neema Järnbert and Jonas Goldman were looking into archival material from Sweden, Italy, France, the UK and the US. During the whole editing process they would continue to search for material related to Ingrid Bergman: film clips, interviews with both her and her colleagues from film and theatre, but also photographs, letters and newspaper articles, film posters, screen tests, feature films, radio interviews and even audio recordings that were produced as research material for newspaper articles and books. As audio-visual footage from her earliest years was rare, we included fragments from her – very personal – diaries and letters in the newly written voice-over instead. It was also difficult to find material from the later years of her career, during the late 1970s and 1980s. We wanted to have as much material as possible featuring her voice. In addition we needed historical archival footage to convey the atmosphere of the period in which she lived.

IST: How did property rights affect your work with the archival footage?

DD: For economic reasons we had to skip some of the archival footage we would have liked to include. For example, when it comes to foreign film material, such as scenes from Ingrid's feature films or a short clip showing an older Ingrid Bergman in the film *A Woman Called Golda* (Gibson, 1982), about Golda Meir, we were supposed to pay \$10,000 per minute. For 30 seconds of archival footage with Ingrid and Alfred Hitchcock we were asked to pay \$10,000. But through negotiations we were eventually able to include at least some of this material. When forced to work with alternative archival footage we also came up with good, creative solutions, so we never had the impression that our final film suffered from these circumstances.

DB: Did ethical considerations, either your own or others', prevent you from including footage in your film?

DD: We checked all images according to our understanding of Ingrid's life, and of course we examined them from an ethical perspective, but we cannot recall having eliminated footage for ethical reasons. We included those images and sounds that matched the way we wanted to depict Ingrid and the people she met. Our guiding questions were: How do you want to depict a person? Where are the boundaries between the private and personal and the public? At the same time our aim was to come as close to Ingrid as possible, and not to skip any aspect of her life that we happened to know about and that was important for our narrative. We refrained from including all of her relationships, though, because it would have felt too speculative, and we do not think it would have brought us closer to her. We had two reasons for not including material: either the footage did not fit into the film because it was too long or because it wasn't interesting enough.

IST: What was the relation between archival footage and voice-over? Did you use the archival footage to illustrate your argument? Or did your argument develop from your work with the footage?

DD: Our initial idea was to use the private archival footage that Ingrid and her family had been filming as a basis for the film, not only to employ it for the purpose of illustration. Yet in a number of instances the material is used in a more illustrative manner. For example, when Ingrid Rossellini talks about when she and her brother and sister used to speak to their father on the phone, taking turns on the telephone receiver, we used footage that showed the kids taking turns speaking on the phone. Another example is the footage of Isabella Rossellini, her leg in a plaster cast, being picked up by an ambulance. The same goes for stills from Ingrid's childhood and youth, which we have inserted occasionally when we needed to illustrate what

was being told. However, even in those cases we tried to include them in an associative manner, selecting footage that felt right for the story.

The external historical archival footage was sometimes also used in a more illustrative manner, to convey the feeling of the times she lived in, for example, when Ingrid breaks off her relation with Robert Capa and we see her riding a horse. Often the choice of images for the text became a very personal one, but we always discussed our decisions.

The newly shot Super-8mm footage (filmed by Eva Dahlgren) has usually been employed for the purpose of illustration, and especially to create a link between old and new film sequences. For instance, in one scene we see the twins Isabella and Ingrid as little children, dancing to the music from the record-player on the patio before we see newly shot footage of them as adults entering Isabella Rossellini's house. This happens right before the interview sequence in which all three Rossellini kids describe their mom. Or we see the footage of the Rossellini kids as young children, followed by Super-8mm footage of Isabella Rossellini walking along the beach, before we see her in an interview situation. We also see Roberto Rossellini (junior) at the island [Dannholmen] today and later on a yacht as a child.

DB: In what ways did you alter the footage you included? Did you change its speed, its framing, its colour or did you animate it?

DD: All audio-visual archival footage from Ingrid's archive in the US was digitally scanned and restored. The same goes for the material from Cinecittà in Rome. New lighting was added. We tried to improve the image without altering it.

Overall we kept the original format for all material, apart from still images and newspaper articles. Sometimes we animated the stills slightly in order to create a more coherent flow in conjunction with the moving images, and we used details from the stills to be more precise.

On some occasions we used slow motion to enhance the feeling or to prolong the duration of the film images. When we hear Ingrid Bergman talking about what it is like to work in Hollywood without being able to meet her daughter Pia, we see her driving away in a car, away from Pia. In this sequence we used slow motion in order to extend the moment of parting. When Alicia Vikander is reading the letter from Ingrid Bergman to her daughter Pia on the occasion of Ingrid's divorce from Pia's father Petter Lindström, we employed footage showing Pia as a child sitting on her father's shoulders. The final image is a freeze frame. We wanted the audience to linger over this moment and to absorb the words being read from the letter.

Sometimes we wanted to convey a feeling of time, maybe not standing still, but at least slowing down in order to be absorbed and experienced as a memory. For instance, we slowed down the speed in the sequence when we see Ingrid Bergman swimming with Ingrid Rossellini. Before this sequence we have just heard Ingrid Rossellini talking about how she misses her mom and how she longs for her, so this is an attempt to stop time in order to absorb what has been said. Since Ingrid deliberately recorded some of her footage in slow motion herself, it felt natural to employ this effect.

IST: How did you work with sound in the film? Tell us a bit about the way you reflected on the use of sound and music.

DD: We wanted to avoid adding sound effects to the archival footage and tried instead to make the sound as clear and clean as possible. The home movie footage therefore merely has a sound design by Mario Adamsson. Music, on the other hand, was supposed to play a vital role in the film. Therefore Stig Björkman decided to commission Michael Nyman to write the film score.

Ingrid's voice sounds very different, depending on the source of the material and its production context. In the beginning we were a bit worried whether we would manage to cohere her different voices into a unity. We wanted her voice to dominate, whereas the rest of the sounds should be more restrained. Occasionally we added sound effects, but mainly when working with the more historical archival footage. For example, when Ingrid takes a plane to the US for the first time we hear the sound of an airplane in the background. Or when she comes to the US to meet David Selznick, we hear the sound of cars in the streets.

DB: Do you think the film's use of archival footage will change our understanding of Ingrid Bergman?

SB: Without the archival footage, especially from Ingrid's home movies, and her own writings it would have been much more difficult to get close to Ingrid. The material hopefully conveys a sense of proximity and privacy. During the work with the film we learned more and more about her. The material we got hold of shaped our understanding of her, even though not all of it ended up in the final film.

Her children are, of course, an important contribution to our story. By generously sharing their memories of Ingrid, they allowed us to get closer to her. While we were working with the film, our understanding of Ingrid Bergman changed from seeing her primarily as a talented and successful actor to realising that she was a multi-layered woman living far ahead of her time. She was a very modern woman, attempting to combine her career and her private life.

Film and TV references

Gibson, Alan (1982), *A Woman Called Golda*, USA: Harve Bennett Production /  
Paramount Television.