

Culture

The colour, light and spirit of Provence

...on film



The New Yorker artist, Antonio Ferrera, talks to Provence Sun about his exhibit for the APART festival of contemporary art in the Alpilles and about his love affair with Provence.

What is the APART festival and what is the exhibit you are displaying?

APART is a contemporary art festival that displays artists' work in several different historical sites and villages across the Alpilles. Its aim is to make contemporary art more accessible and understandable for the general public.

My project is called VVG 365 (Vincent Van Gogh 365) and it's an 18 hour and 25 minutes film showing the changing seasons, colours and light of Provence. It is inspired by Vincent Van Gogh who, in his last year in Provence, made a painting a day. When I heard this I thought, "It would be great to do the same with film – (not video) – celluloid film." I thought how much fun it would be to take a spool of film that lasts about three minutes and make a series

of films throughout the year. I then project them all together to make a living cinema experience where people can come and see a film as many times as they like and have a completely different experience each time. I turn the whole cinema into a moving picture of the colour and light of Provence.

Why did you choose the medium of film rather than canvas?

I started as a kid making collages after my dad died. The experience of making those collages with scissors, magazines and glue is very similar to editing film and, as I grew up watching movies, I was fascinated by the magic of recording something with motion pictures. I saw *Young Frankenstein* when I was six and *La Strada* when I was thirteen and somehow when I attended NYU where I studied English Literature, I realized that

people did not only have to be doctors and lawyers and so on. I did the only thing one should do: follow the lark of your heart into the impossible and I decided to put my energy and love into making movies.

What is it particularly about Van Gogh that inspires you?

Van Gogh for me was the ultimate in the sense that he translated the emotions of life, light and landscape in a powerful way that leaps off the canvas. In a way, Van Gogh's works are motion pictures as well. I feel that he gave himself up to the environment and became the hand and heart of nature itself. Filming during the Mistral the other day, I realized where the waves one sees in his paintings come from. When looking at a wheat field from afar, I saw this ocean of waves moving and sparking with spines of light across



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the flowing hills of St Rémy de Provence. I flipped out! I was there with Van Gogh! Now people at the cinema all over the world might be able to get a taste of this magic when they experience the film I am making.

What is different about working in France compared to New York?

I really like France. I feel very happy walking through the land with my camera and being in my body and feeling this ever transforming place of colour and light. I love New York but it would be impossible to make a film of this magnitude and audacity in the United States. The French cinema and appreciation for

all cinema is unique in the world and it feels really good to be here. If I were to move to France to live and make films, I would be quite happy. The cinema here, and people's appreciation of it, is very great and the latitude of what one can make and show is far greater than the US. Most of my friends have moved west to Los Angeles – I am happy if I, on the other hand, move east to France. It worked for Henry Miller. ■ AdP

Antonio's work can be viewed at the bibliothèque municipale in Mouriès during the international festival of contemporary art, APART, 7th July until 17th August.

FESTIVAL
APART

7 JUILLET
17 AOÛT
2011

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