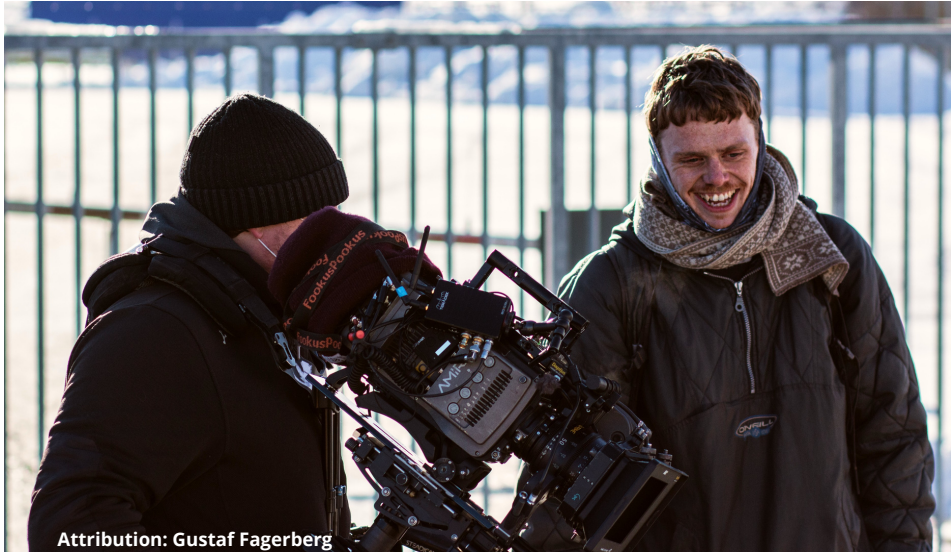


Meet Our MEET EU Emerging Filmmaker



Attribution: Gustaf Fagerberg

Behind the scenes on Elvås' graduation film, *A Swedish Defence*.

Simon Elvås, a Swedish filmmaker, is MEET EU's first Virtual Resident Filmmaker.

In partnership with the Jean Monnet Center of Excellence at Florida International University and the Center for European Studies at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, the ESC is launching a range of activities under the initiative “MEET EU: Making Encounters, Engaging Transatlanticists.” In addition to activities like a short film competition, Model EU teams, virtual presentations for K-12 education, and expert career panels, the initiative includes hosting an emerging EU

virtual filmmaker resident. During the virtual residency, Elvås will remotely engage with the artistic communities and academic life of the three universities, and, if possible, will travel to spend a week at each institution. Elvås's film will also be screened and promoted in the three locations.

GUILTY PLEASURES

"My guilty pleasure is business movies with fast-paced dialogue."

- *Margin Call* (2011)
- *The Big Short* (2015)
- *The Newsroom* (2012–2014)
- *Succession* (2018–)

INSPIRATIONS

- Claire Denis, *Beau Travail* (1991)
- Leos Carax, *The Lovers on the Bridge* (1991)
- Kelly Reichardt, *Old Joy* (2006)

Having recently graduated from the Stockholm University of the Arts, Elvås applied with *A Swedish Defence*, a short film about a Swedish weapons engineer and his anti-war activist daughter and a protest that interrupts an international arms deal. Elvås sees his project as thinking through Europe and Sweden's self-image, so the residency's emphasis on European identity and relationships. “The themes I’m continuing to come back to are shame and the search for family and family connections, and [for] the last two years I’ve been trying to find ways to talk about bigger subjects through these smaller themes.” He has been particularly interested in Swedish weapon export, since Sweden has been in the top ten of weapon sellers for the last ten years. “It sits very badly with our values – we are known as being an open country that takes in a lot of refugees, that stands up for what’s right and wrong, or at least that’s our self-image, but this doesn’t really correspond with also selling weapons to the same countr[ies] that we sometimes save refugees from.”

During the residency, he will be working on a feature-length film that investigates these issues surrounding a Swedish weapon deal with Thailand that started in 2006 and ended in 2013. The deal sold Swedish fighter jets to the military, and “the last deal, the last jets [Sweden] gave them, was just a couple of months before they had a military coup.” Elvås's film will thus follow a father and daughter to Bangkok in this time, exploring the tension in their relationship as the father, a weapons engineer, works on the deal and the daughter meets teens in Bangkok and begins to question her political values. Elvås recently received a grant from the Swedish Art Council to travel to Bangkok in August 2022 for a research and planning trip.



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Elvås is drawn to considering the gray areas in these types of big political issues, likely, he says, because of his parents. “My mother was Vice-Chairman of the Swedish Peace [and Arbitration] Society in the 80s, so she’s been very active against weapon systems. And my father, on the other hand, was State Secretary for the Social Democrats, which is the political party here in Sweden that is in charge of the majority of weapons sales...so basically [there was] a lot of arguing about this, and it created this feeling in me that, oh, this is so complicated, and it really does have different sides and I would like to try to create something that brings both of these [sides] up.”

Follow our social media and website for more discussions with Elvås and his work when his residency begins in mid-November!

Moving Images: Transatlantic Connections

In addition to funding Elvås's residency, the MEET EU funding allows the ESC, alongside our collaborators at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill and Florida International University, to host a short film competition for young people in the three states. Elvås will be one of the judges for the finalists, which will be screened at the 2022 Pittsburgh EU Film Festival. More information can be found [here](#).

The inaugural competition asks young people to create a short film (documentary or non-documentary) responding to the theme “Transatlantic Connections”. **Submissions are due November 28, 2021.**

MEET EU: Making Encounters, Engaging Transatlanticists is a grant generously funded by the European Union through the European Union Delegation to the US in Washington, DC.



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