

Bellavista

Screening in the Time & Tide sidebar, BELLAVISTA is Peter Schreiner's lyrical portrait of three women in the Italian mountain village of Sappada. It's the kind of place that has witnessed history from afar. Nothing has changed for centuries yet everything is in a state of flux. The East-Tyrollean dialect may be dying but the currents of life are strong. It's a village from which some dream of escape and never succeed, others do manage and are inexorably drawn back, and others are content to live their lives in a place that is home.

The Bellavista of the title is the name of a local hotel. Giuliana, the sole daughter of Piero and Diana, has lived abroad, studied German and experienced two serious accidents and the suicides of two brothers. Now she is back, running the hotel with her mother and youngest brother. For more than two decades she has documented the local dialect.

Peter Schreiner, a filmmaker who appreciates the importance of time, as in also taking it, spent months in Sappada, becoming part of the community, in order to make his film from the inside, not as an outside observer. In this way he came close to two older women as well, Bernardina and Erminia.

Schreiner's decision to film in black and white was motivated, he says, "to promote audience concentration and most definitely not to make a tourist film. Nor did I want to make an ethnographic film about an old culture."

As BELLAVISTA unspools, Schreiner's intent is laid bare: "Most important for me," he says, "were life's coordinates of my generation and Giuliana, a confrontation with the basic questions of our existences, search for identity, hewn out of traditions and collectives."

BELLAVISTA is a film of universal truths as seen and related by three women. They tell of the personal and universal. Their tales are tragic yet resound with life: A life that will continue even when the narrators have passed away.

Simon Kingsley