

Himalaya Film Festival 2010 New York

FAIRYTALE OF KATHMANDU

Film maker Neasa Ní Chianáin began this project as a portrait of Cathal Ó Searcaigh, an influential and openly gay poet well-known in his native Ireland. At nearly fifty, he recently found his spiritual home not in rural Northwest Ireland where he grew up, but rather in Nepal. This feeding of the soul fascinated Ní Chianáin.

Since she was a student, she had admired Ó Searcaigh's use of poetry as catharsis for the pain of lost love. For him to have found true inspiration in supporting young students in Kathmandu was a refreshing thought, so she eagerly accepted his invitation to join him on one of his annual trips to Kathmandu.

It's clear Ní Chianáin initially trusts Ó Searcaigh. She has faith in his generosity, which is mirrored in the smiles and warm welcome he receives in Nepal. The young men whose education he finances are eager to please the man seen as a father figure by boys on the streets of Kathmandu. She finds the world to which he seems to belong.

However, as the trip progresses, Ó Searcaigh continually surrounds himself with young companions: always boys, usually sixteen or a little older. Ní Chianáin's faith begins to falter, and her suspicions are confirmed when she discovers Ó Searcaigh's young friends often stay overnight with him. During that trip, the poet neither confirms nor denies the power he exerts over the boys – all over the age of consent – but then Ní Chianáin doesn't ask.

'This was not the story I wanted to tell,' says Ní Chianáin, who can't hide her discomfort at the ambiguities of Ó Searcaigh's provider-cum-seducer role. Her honesty permeates this accomplished film and we share her intense disappointment when she finally confronts an uncomfortable Ó Searcaigh about his actions, reinforcing the fact that the loss of innocence is not just confined to fairytales.

Neasa Ní Chianáin

Duur: 60 minuten

