

Crossing Bridges is part of a journey for young filmmaker

Rama Luksiarto's autobiographical documentary explores the challenges faced by a gay immigrant

By **Mark Robins** - August 3, 2017



Rama Luksiarto is both director and subject in Crossing Bridges

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The annual Vancouver Queer Film Festival gets underway on August 10, featuring more than 50 films in the annual curated festival celebrating queer cinema. Among the films to be screened this year is the autobiographical documentary, [Crossing Bridges](#).

The first outing for Ryerson University graduate [Rama Luksiarto](#), the film is a personal view of Luksiarto's life as a gay Asian immigrant. But telling his own story wasn't the filmmaker's first choice.

"Initially I didn't want to tell my story as I didn't have confidence," says Luksiarto. "I wanted to tell a story about the gay Asian community, but my professor challenged me to tell my own personal story, which turned out to be much harder."

One of the difficulties he faced was in being both filmmaker and subject.

"In creating a film about someone else I could be more objective," he says. "As both subject and director often I found myself having lots of insecurities, and it brought up lots of internalized homophobia."

Luksiarto also found it difficult to turn the lens on himself given his cultural background.

"Indonesian culture is about family and other people," he says. "Telling personal stories is not something I grew up with, and putting the spotlight on myself was hard."

While finally making the decision to tell his story, Luksiarto's original idea was to tell it from the perspective of friends and family. He was guided back to telling it from his view with the help of his Ryerson professor.

"It was my first film and I was just learning about documentary film making," he explains. "I didn't realize my role as both director and subject were conjoined, and I struggled with where to place myself."

Luksiarto characterizes his film as part of an ongoing self-discovery, and as reconciliation between his upbringing and homosexuality. His journey began when he moved to Canada in 2006.

Having the choice of moving to study in Singapore, Australia, or Canada, Luksiarto chose the furthest location.

"Subconsciously I think I wanted to remove myself from the Indonesian community because I struggled with being gay," he says of his decision to move to Canada. "I wanted to be as far away so no one would know me. I ran away from home to become myself."

While Luksiarto may have chosen Canada as a means of escape, he did have some ties to his new home, as his brother was already living here. Eventually finding himself in Ontario, it was there where he faced his biggest challenges as an immigrant.

"The language was really hard," he says. "I didn't speak English very well and the culture was even harder. Coming into high school if you don't understand the language or culture you become ostracized."

While he knew at the time he was gay, it wouldn't be until his first year at university when he would finally come out to his family. His mother was first, and while it was difficult for her to hear, Luksiarto says she remained supportive.

"She is the type of person who would try to understand what it was like to be gay," he says. "At the time there wasn't a lot of resources so we went to the library."

Coming out to his father though was much harder, and still very much a work in progress.

"I wasn't close to him, and he is Muslim and from a very traditional family," he explains. "It took years for him to become comfortable. He was angry for the longest time, and thought I could still come back to being straight again."

Things began to change with his father when Luksiarto introduced him to his partner.

"I found my partner four years ago, and he is now part of the family," he says. "It is an ongoing process, but we can talk about things more freely, especially after filming the documentary."

He credits the film in also helping to create a closer bond with his father.

"In a lot of ways creating the film was another coming for me and my dad, to be able to talk about being gay," he says.

Still on a journey of self-discovery, Luksiarto sees *Crossing Bridges* as a beginning.

"My next journey is to help other people by creating more films and highlight what it means to be a minority and part of a marginalized community, and give voice to that community," he says. "All of our experiences are different and the more we open up our stories the more we can have conversations to heal and grow together."

***Crossing Bridges* screens along with *The Migrant Mixtape* on August 17 as part of the Vancouver Queer Film Festival. Visit <http://queerfilmfestival.ca> for tickets and information.**

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