

## ***Sunday School with Franz Hinkelammert***

Directed by Jim Finn (49 min, 2012)

### ABOUT THE FILM:

The violent overreaction to 9/11 and to the revolutions of the 1960's cannot be explained only with fear and politics. Franz Hinkelammert, a German-born economist, philosopher and liberation theologian, brings religion front and center to the discussion in a unique way. The emptiness felt by the those at the margins of a free-market utopian ideology has been filled by an extreme millenarian Christianity and other religious fundamentalisms that justify murder and torture as preemptive self-defense. In place of a suicidal theology of death based on defeating or marginalizing others, Hinkelammert advocates an economics that promotes coexistence by looking towards liberation theology and the preferential option for the poor.

Any analysis of how Latin America went from military dictatorships and neoliberal capitalist austerity to the rise of the center-left governments of the last decade cannot simply focus on policy failure. Alternatives came from the grassroots: from activists, unions, base Christian communities and centers like the D.E.I., Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, based in Costa Rica and co-founded by Hinkelammert after his exile from Pinochet's Chile. For over 30 years it has brought together thousands of people from Christian community and popular movement groups all over Latin America to discuss, write, research and swap nonviolent solutions to the problems of economic, religious and political exploitation.



During the socialist government of Salvador Allende (1970-1973), Franz Hinkelammert worked at the Catholic University of Chile, where there was a theological battle between the left-wing liberation theologians and the right-wing Opus Dei Catholics who decried Allende as a godless communist sizing them all up for a future of gulags and breadlines. After the Nixon-Pinochet coup d'etat, Hinkelammert moved to Costa Rica. Books he wrote at the D.E.I. included *Ideology of Submission* (1977) and *Critique of Utopian Reason* (1984) and his influential *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (translated by Phillip Berryman, 1986).

Not content to retire as an elder scholar, Hinkelammert is still writing: his 2004 book *Property for People, Not for Profit* was a prescient analysis of the failure of casino capitalism and the bubble that was about to burst.

The film is based on his research and covers three days of interviews with him shot in various locations around the D.E.I. It includes historical footage as well as new footage shot at former Argentine and Chilean torture centers and CIA black sites in Poland—spaces that are physical reminders of the lengths power will go to when threatened.

#### ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

"Steeped in the obsolete language of revolutionary art," *The New York Times* said Jim Finn's films "often play like unearthed artifacts from an alternate universe." His award-winning movies have been called "Utopian comedies" and "trompe l'oeil films". The trilogy of communist features is in the permanent collection of the MoMA, and he has had retrospectives in seven countries. His movies have screened widely at festivals like Sundance, Rotterdam, Sao Paulo, AFI and Edinburgh as well as museums and cinematheques. He has been making films, videos, revolutionary needlepoint pillows and photographs for over a decade. His first feature film *Interkosmos* was called "a retro gust of communist utopianism" by the *Village Voice* and "charming and fantastic, so full of rare atmospheres" by Canadian filmmaker Guy Maddin. His second feature *La Trinchera Luminosa del Presidente Gonzalo* was put on the *Village Voice's* Top 10 Year in Experimental Film. And *Variety* called *The Juche Idea*, his film about a North Korean art residency, "brilliant" and said all three films "upturn notions of documentary and fiction, propaganda thought, reality and restaging, and even what an 'experimental film' actually is." He is featured in a 2010 Phaidon Press book called *Take 100—The Future of Film: 100 New Directors*. He was born in St. Louis and is currently teaching at Bard College in New York. He is currently working on a new project about liberation theologian and economist Franz Hinkelammert.

#### SELECTED GRANTS / AWARDS / DISTINCTIONS

- J. Hoberman's Top 10 Films of 2010 (*The Juche Idea*)
- Best Experimental Film, Rio de Janeiro Short Film Festival, *Dick Cheney...* 2009
- Distribution Grant for N.Y. Artists, free103point9 & N.Y. State Council on Arts 2009
- Hallwalls Artist-in-Residence Project (NEA-funded), Buffalo 2007-8
- Montalvo Artist Residency, Saratoga CA 2009
- Best Narrative Feature, *The Juche Idea*, Chicago Underground Film Festival 2008
- Closing Night Film, *The Juche Idea*, New York Underground Film Festival 2008
- Honorable Mention, *The Juche Idea*, Ann Arbor Film Festival 2008
- Electronic Arts Teaching Assistantship/Full tuition scholarship, RPI, Troy, NY 2006-8
- Closing Night Film, *La Trinchera Luminosa...* Chicago Underground Film Fest 2007
- Opening Night Film, *Interkosmos*, New York Underground Film Festival 2006
- Illinois Arts Council Special Assistance Grant 2003, 2005
- Chicago Underground Film Fund Grant 2004
- Blue Award for *wüstenspringmaus*, Thaw Film/Video Festival 2003
- Made in Chicago Award for *super-max*, Chicago Underground Film Festival 2003
- Black Maria Director's and Program Staff's Citation for *Decision 80* 2004

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