

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCO POLO

Biographies

Denis Belliveau and Francis O'Donnell met on an archeology dig in France in 1984. After leaving the School of Visual Arts, where they both studied, they traveled together to a variety of countries, including Mexico, most of Latin America, Europe and Nepal, before deciding to follow in the footsteps of Marco Polo.

Denis Belliveau

Born in 1964 in Whitestone, Queens, Denis attended the New York City High School of Art & Design. He attended the School of Visual Arts in New York where he earned an Associates Degree in painting, sculpture and fine arts.

In 1987, when his father became ill, Denis joined his parent's wedding photography studio and became an accomplished portraitist. In the wedding "off-season," Denis would travel. It was during this time he started joining various professional photography organizations, including Kodak, which would later award him the prestigious *Gallery Award* and helped sponsor the Marco Polo trip by providing film. In 1991, Denis decided to leave the family business and was packing for a trip to Nepal when Francis suggested following Marco Polo's route from Venice to China and back.

In 1999, Denis met Lisa Taylor and the two of them later moved to London, where Denis came up with the idea to use the video shot on their journey and make a film. Denis and Lisa now have two sons and reside in Douglas Manor, Queens. Denis is the Director of Photography and Senior Cameraman for the national public television series *Real Moms, Real Stories, Real Savvy*. Denis plans on starting another history-based documentary.

Francis O'Donnell

Born in 1958 and living most of his life in the New York City area, Francis credits his great-grandfather, an immigrant from Italy, and his mother, for instilling in him his love of art. He credits his father for his love of history.

Francis joined the Marines after high school. Francis then enrolled in the School of Visual Arts where he majored in Advertising and Media Art. He trained under the renowned sculptor Joel Perlman and was part of the team that restored and expanded a rare Mies Van Der Rohe masterpiece.

After graduating in 1984, Francis spent the next 15 years traveling and exhibiting his sculptures and paintings. Upon his return from a trip to India, his mother gave him an atlas that included the route of Marco Polo. Envisioning the art and ways of life Polo must have experienced, he immediately suggested the trip to Denis.