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KARLOVY VARY IFF UNVEILS OFFICIAL SELECTION AND JURIES OF THE 57TH EDITION

The Official Selection of the 57th Karlovy Vary IFF Revealed

„It has been an incredible adventure for the programming team to get acquainted with this year’s state of the arthouse cinema via almost two thousand submissions. We are proud of the selection and simply cannot wait to share it with the audience,” says Karel Och, KVIFF’s artistic director.

Diverse in genre and style, the **Crystal Globe Competition** brings together nine world and two international premieres of films by respected directors, who garnered previous experience at major film festivals, as well as contributions from exceptionally talented debutants. Eagerly awaited new works by Pascal Plante, Stephan Komandarev, Tinatin Kajrishvili or Babak Jalali will compete alongside Ernst De Geer, Itsaso Arana and Cyril Aris, talented filmmakers to watch and names to remember.

The **Proxima Competition**, which made its debut at last year’s KVIFF, aims to be a space for bold works by young filmmakers and renowned auteurs alike. This year, the section comprises of ten world and two international premieres, of which nine are fiction features and three are documentaries. Playfulness, courage and freshness can be found in the new films by renowned Swiss auteur Thomas Imbach, Poland’s Olga Chajdas, Cyprus-born Kyros Papavassiliou, French filmmaker Émilie Brisavoine and Romanian documentarist Alexandru Solomon, among others.

The 57th KVIFF will present eight films in its **Special Screening** section. While rich in its topical, stylistic and genre variety, the program of five fiction features and three documentaries – shown exclusively in their world or European premieres – aims to complete KVIFF’s official selection. Renowned French documentary filmmaker Jean-Gabriel Périot will introduce his *Facing Darkness*, while the Sundance-awarded *Slow* by Marija Kavtaradze will be shown for the first time in Europe.

CRYSTAL GLOBE COMPETITION

Les chambres rouges / Red Rooms

Director: Pascal Plante

Canada, 2023, 118 min, World premiere



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The day Kelly-Anne has been waiting for has arrived. The trial begins for Ludovic Chevalier, accused of the brutal murder of three underage girls. Unlike most people, Kelly-Anne is fascinated by the man, she becomes obsessed with him and attends every single court hearing in the hope he'll give her at least a fleeting glance. The border between reality and fantasy starts to blur, however, until Kelly-Anne ceases to be a mere passive observer. Pascal Plante once again expresses an interest in female subjectivity, nevertheless, this time he has come up with an arthouse thriller about the perilous attraction of evil. At the same time, the interplay between what we can and can't see, and what is explicit and what is conjecture, develops into an almost physical viewing experience.

Las chicas están bien / The Girls Are Alright

Director: Itsaso Arana

Spain, 2023, 85 min, World premiere

It's summer and a group of young women head off for a week to a house in the country in order to rehearse a play. In the peace and quiet of their natural surroundings, which provide a refuge from the intense heat of the sun, the women go through the text and dress up in their ruffled period costumes, while in easy conversation they share their secrets, and also have little adventures. This enchanting debut by Itsaso Arana, who co-wrote and starred in *August Virgin* (Official Selection-Competition, KVIFF 2019), provides an opportunity to stop for a moment, to breathe in the warm air and settle back in the open embrace of this company of women. After all, what kind of summer would it be without girls, a campfire, songs and a touch of magic?

Citlivý člověk / A Sensitive Person

Director: Tomáš Klein

Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, 2023, 120 min, World premiere

"Growing old isn't for sissies," states one of the characters from Jáchym Topol's acclaimed novel, which, according to one reviewer, is "a comical and brutal report from the flipside of life" and now appears loosely adapted into a film by Tomáš Klein, one of the most talented Czech directors. This darkly grotesque drama sets off down more than one path. There's the real path – at times grim, at times crazy – via which Dad Mour, an itinerant actor, his wife Mum and their two sons try to return home; and then there's the imaginary one – more meandering and dusty – along which stirring intellectual youthfulness (or immaturity, as pessimists would have it) feuds with circumstances that force the protagonist to acquire wisdom. A restless and zesty cinematic feerie about love, fear of loneliness, and sons gazing intently at their father.



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Dancing on the Edge of a Volcano

Director: Cyril Aris

Lebanon, Germany, 2023, 85 min, World premiere

A catastrophic explosion in the Port of Beirut on August 4, 2020, devastated not only a large part of the Lebanese capital, but also what remained of its inhabitants' hopes for a dignified life in a country without corruption. The trauma also paralyses a film crew in the middle of production. The question of whether to keep on pursuing their dream project becomes increasingly obtrusive. And what of destiny, and its near-fatal impediments? A film about (the genesis of) a film; a vivid account of the state of an exquisite, ailing country; a dramatic ballad depicting a terrible dilemma: Should one remain in a beloved homeland, even if this means living below the threshold of human dignity? Should one press on with a journey rendered in the words of Lebanese poet Nadia Tueni: "*I choose the sea in spite of shipwrecks*"?

Fremont

Director: Babak Jalali

USA, 2023, 88 min, International premiere

Getting up after a sleepless night, greeting neighbours, going to work, where she spends her days making fortune cookies. This is the life of Donya, an Afghan immigrant who has now made her home in Fremont, USA. Loneliness and insomnia are problems the young woman is trying to address, initially on her own and later with the help of a quirky therapist. It's unclear whether it's harder for her to come to terms with her traumatic past or with her current unsettled existence. Will Donya find a solution by hiding a message in one of the thousands of fortune cookies that get sent out? A lightly wistful comedy about a quest of self-discovery that asks whether refugee status is a condition of geographical location or whether it's a state of mind. It's also a film about hope coming along when we least expect it.

Hypnosen / The Hypnosis

Director: Ernst De Geer

Sweden, Norway, France, 2023, 98 min, World premiere

André and Vera are both life and business partners trying to get a women's reproductive health mobile app off the ground. On the eve of a weekend programme for promising start-ups, where they aim to attract the attention of potential investors, Vera tries hypnotherapy to help her quit smoking. However, the experience comes with an unexpected side effect: she starts to lose all her social inhibitions. Ernst De Geer's debut is a fresh, modern satire which profits from situational humour and piercingly precise dialogue. At the same time, the irony of what's going on is plain to see. An individualistic society may well encourage



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us to be ourselves, nevertheless, it remains uncompromising in its demands as to how we ought to behave.

Il vento soffia dove vuole / Where The Wind Blows

Director: Marco Righi

Italy, 2023, 108 min, World premiere

“... You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going,” Jesus tells Nicodemus (The Gospel According to St John, 3:8). This subtly pervasive film by Marco Righi presents a provocative and exceptionally mesmeric interpretation of a key passage in the New Testament. In a small village somewhere in the Apennines, taciturn Antimo divides his time between the local church, his tedious work on the farm and his chaste meetings with his girlfriend. His pivotal encounter with the wild loner Lazzaro awakens in the devout young man the desire to reach the very core of a faith far removed from the regular Sunday sermons delivered by a representative of the Church – a powerful institution for which freethinking and devotion to God represent incompatible ideas.

Mokalake Tsmindani / Citizen Saint

Director: Tinatin Kajrishvili

Georgia, France, Bulgaria, 2023, 100 min, World premiere

On the main square of a mining town stands a cross depicting a saint, regarded by the local miners as their protector. One day, the cross is taken down for repair and the statue of the saint suddenly vanishes. When a mysterious stranger subsequently appears among them, the residents put two and two together... In her third feature, a satirical parable about a saint who descends the cross to live among mortals, Tinatin Kajrishvili wonders what it is exactly that people want to believe in. Do saints have greater significance as inanimate symbols, or do they have the right to exist as living human beings? The carefully composed black-and-white images from experienced cameraman Krum Rodriguez underscore the oppression of life in the mining town and also the absurdity of the emerging situation.

Toorhaye khali / Empty Nets

Director: Behrooz Karamizade

Germany, Iran, 2023, 101 min, International premiere

Amir and Narges, two people in love, who might be described as having been born under an unlucky star. The young man is from a poor family background and, after he is laid off from his job as a waiter, he is forced to find work in a fishing community. Narges has a higher social status and comes from a “good family”. For the time being, they are keeping their relationship a secret. In order for them to marry, Amir has to earn enough money for a dowry. To add to his problems, he discovers that the fishery employing him is also



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involved in dishonest business practices... Behrooz Karamizade's feature debut is a realistic drama set in contemporary Iran which eschews embellishment in order to depict a struggle for the right to love, an entitlement that shouldn't be contingent on money.

Uroctite na Blaga / Blaga's Lessons

Director: Stephan Komandarev

Bulgaria, Germany, 2023, 114 min, World premiere

Blaga is a seventy-year-old recently widowed former teacher and a woman of firm morals. When telephone scammers con her out of the money that she had saved for her husband's grave, her moral compass slowly begins to lose its bearings... Stephan Komandarev's past films have systematically criticized the inauspicious social situation in post-communist Bulgaria, and *Blaga's Lessons* is no different. In this evocative drama featuring a masterful performance from Eli Skorcheva as Blaga, Komandarev aims his lens at the lives of today's senior citizens – a vulnerable group whom politicians so often promise the right to a dignified life... but reality is much different.

Úsvit / We Have Never Been Modern

Director: Matěj Chlupáček

Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, 2023, 117 min, World premiere

Amidst a thriving Baťa-esque town, nestled in the scenic foothills of the majestic Tatra mountains, lies a factory, whose young director is, for his day (it's 1937), pleasingly modern in approach. Yet, don't be fooled, the film's protagonist is actually his wife Helena (Eliška Křenková). The aspiring doctor is soon to give birth, yet her resolute gaze into her family's rosy future is suddenly darkened by the discovery of the body of a newborn baby in the vibrant factory's courtyard. Helena's innate empathy, intensified by her pregnancy, isn't satisfied by the conspicuously prompt solution to the mystery. A stirring detective drama with a progressive and profoundly human perspective on a theme controversial not only shortly before the unexpected war, but also decades later.

PROXIMA COMPETITION

Arsenie. Viața de apoi / Arsenie. An Amazing Afterlife

Director: Alexandru Solomon

Romania, Luxembourg, 2023, 96 min, International premiere

Arsenie Boca, a priest, theologian, and mystic persecuted by the communist regime, is considered holy by many believers, although he has yet to be canonized. Documentary filmmaker Alexandru Solomon and a group of selected believers set out on a pilgrimage in



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the footsteps of this holy man. Under the filmmaker's direction, the members of the entourage re-enact scenes from Boca's life, discuss the miracles ascribed to him, and reflect on the current state of the world. Solomon presents viewers with a colorful, often humorous picture of today's society seeking to preserve faith in miracles in an era full of contradictory information and global threats.

Birth

Director: Ji-young Yoo

South Korea, 2022, 155 min, International premiere

Jay, a promising young writer, is publishing her new book, while her boyfriend Geonwoo, who teaches at a private language school, is tipped for promotion. They love each other, take care of each other, and have a great rapport. Until an unplanned pregnancy throws them off course. They didn't want a child and starting a family would jeopardise their career prospects. Yet who's to have the last word if they can't agree on a solution to the situation? The Korean director presents a tale eclipsed by a sense of dejection in a subtle portrayal of a couple arriving at a crossroads in their life together. When else should one break the taboos of parenthood and the preconceptions of motherhood than when a woman's right to decide what happens to her own body is again called into question.

Brutální vedro / Brutal Heat

Director: Albert Hospodářský

Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, 2023, 75 min, World premiere

A massive segment of the Sun has broken off and is heading for Earth, whose surface is slowly heating up to an unbearable level. A strange mood pervades a debilitated world: anything could happen, virtually anywhere, without warning. Even in a sleepy town, where an 18-year-old lad gets stranded on his way to the family cottage. The fact is that no-one knows at what temperature the human character starts to melt... While other filmmakers might adopt a catastrophic premise to tell a story of panic and man's animal fear, the fresh, creative voice of Albert Hospodářský looks elsewhere. In extreme situations, who runs wild and who remains docile? And can a solar eruption engender harmony as well?

El canto del Auricanturi / The Song of the Auricanturi

Director: Camila Rodríguez Triana

Colombia, Argentina, 2023, 100 min, World premiere

For many years Rocío thought her mother Alba was dead but now she reunites with her for the first time since her childhood. She wants to tell her that she is pregnant. Alba, however, suffers trauma from the war she experienced firsthand and has stopped talking. While Rocío searches for a way to communicate with her mother, people in the vicinity are dying and tension is growing in the face of an uncertain future. For her feature debut



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Camila Rodríguez Triana drew on her familiarity with visual art and documentary filmmaking, conceiving the piece as an oppressive audiovisual work, in which the nightmarish events are kept out of shot. This intimate study of maternal love thus unfolds in a powerful atmosphere of fear and distress induced by a premonition of evil.

Embryo Larva Butterfly

Director: Kyros Papavassiliou
Cyprus, Greece, 2023, 91 min, World premiere

Penelope and Isidoros live in a world where today they are lovers but the following day they scarcely know one another. It is a place where time doesn't flow, where the days appear randomly in the past, the present, and the future – if these concepts even apply here. Their relationship is constantly changing; it is one continuous uncertainty marked by shared searching and reassuring. Somewhere next to their world is another where time is linear. It is possible to travel from arbitrary time to linear time, but the conditions for such a journey are mysterious and the price is high... An imaginative film about the paradoxes of time and of romantic and other relationships.

Les Enfants Perdus / The Lost Children

Director: Michèle Jacob
Belgium, 2023, 83 min, World premiere

Ten-year-old Audrey and her three siblings find themselves abandoned in an old house, where they were meant to be spending their summer holidays with their dad, but he disappears suddenly during the night. Initially, the kids wait in vain for him to come back, but they soon realise they'll have to take care of themselves, which nonetheless won't be easy. The forest surrounding the secluded house doesn't seem to want to let the little castaways through, and bizarre things start to happen, especially after dark. Mysterious monsters afraid of the light, tunnels where time is simply lost – the youngsters have to face all this in a psychological horror which unites the terror and distress of children and adults alike, sensations that, alas, can't be relieved merely by shining a torch on them.

Guras

Director: Saurav Rai
India, Nepal, 2023, 114 min, World premiere

Life in Darjeeling in northern India passes by uneventfully. Every now and then, the quiet days are enlivened by a village ritual or an expected drama, as when nine-year-old Guras's beloved dog Tinkle goes missing. Perhaps he was merely taken by someone from the neighboring village, and not eaten by the leopard prowling the area. The young girl's family, however, has other things to worry about: the cardamon harvest is not going as planned, and they are struggling for their mere existence. Guras is left on her own to look



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for her four-legged companion, but in this magical land of tea plantations, good advice awaits in surprising places... A mystical odyssey of painful loss that shows the different ways of mourning of children and adults.

Imago

Director: Olga Chajdas

Poland, Netherlands, Czech Republic, 2023, 113 min, World premiere

It is 1987 and the wind of change will soon also be sweeping across communist Poland. Ela is a young woman seeking refuge from the insipidness of a life hallowed by the regime, mixing with artists on the alternative scene, singing in clubs with her post-punk band, and attending alcohol-fuelled parties... In her second film director Olga Chajdas summons up vital energy to invigorate the music scene of the Baltic Tricity and, aided by the charismatic actress and co-scripter Lena Góra, she offers the viewer a vivid portrait of a multilayered character – an inspirational artist forever enveloped in cigarette smoke, a woman struggling with her inner demons, yet also a fragile creature yearning for motherly love.

In Camera

Director: Naqqash Khalid

United Kingdom, 2022, 96 min, World premiere

20-something Aden has no other ambition in life than to become an actor. Most of his time is spent making videos as he applies for roles he'll never get. After a string of dreadful auditions, where bizarre and humiliating requests are made of him, he makes a radical move: he will take full responsibility for finding a role that primarily he, himself, wants to play. This self-assured debut, playful in form and narrative with a fairy-tale edge to it, examines both the commercial work ethic and the concept of identity, which it presents as multi-layered and also questionable. At the same time, in its exploration of the given themes, the film doesn't deny itself a socio-critical tone, nor does it resist the temptation to tease the viewer a little.

Maade Tarik / Dark Matter

Director: Karim Lakzadeh

Iran, 2023, 83 min, World premiere

An actor and actress are brought together during a casting for a mainstream film. They don't get the roles, so they decide to make their own film instead. This will be a movie which defies the censorship rules, a film in which anything goes, and its makers won't be held back by anything or anyone. The pair become a threesome when they get hold of a cameraman and director named Ziya, and the enchanting adventure can now begin. A burglary (the movie has to be financed somehow) marks the start of not only the shoot, but also a joyride, a game and a celebration of friendship and film. *Dark Matter* is a latter-day



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nod to the French New Wave and likewise a highly contemporary piece that reminds us why films are both a joy to make and to watch.

Maman Déchire / Keeping Mum

Director: Emilie Brisavoine

France, 2023, 80 min, World premiere

“Ever since my son was born, I have been having nightmares about my mother.” Without ceremony and with disarming sincerity, renowned French documentarist Emilie Brisavoine draws us into the universe of her somewhat distinctive family. After launching a charm offensive in Cannes eight years ago with a portrait of her half-sister and her family in *Oh La La Pauline!*, she now fixes her searching and troubled gaze on a fascinating and destructive element named Meaud: A punk mum who gave her daughter the gift of life and then kept running away from life itself; a spontaneous feminist and a beguiling grandma. A mesmeric, intimate odyssey into the very depths of the soul, and a powerful cinematic cry from a filmmaker seeking traces of withheld emotion.

Say God Bye

Director: Thomas Imbach

Switzerland, 2023, 122 min, World premiere

“JLG is like a sun, as soon as you get too close to it, you burn. If you ignore it, you miss the light.” Respected Swiss director Thomas Imbach on the “god of film” who, as both man and filmmaker, has kept him spellbound his whole life. Chancing upon images of the ailing grand master, he was inspired to set off on foot on a pilgrimage from Lakes Zurich to Geneva to pay tribute to Godard and to attempt to persuade the latter to film with him. An original and playful video diary recorded during the trip, where loyal pilgrim Imbach looks back at his own career and conducts a dialogue with his magnetic role model. A road movie conceived – literally, “on his own two feet” – as an informed Godard masterclass about perceiving the world through film and much else besides.

SPECIAL SCREENINGS

Bod obnovy / Restore Point Director: Robert Hloz

Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Poland, Serbia, 2023, 111 min, European premiere

It's the year 2041, and humanity has reached the point where it can cheat death. Anyone who dies an unnatural death has the right to be brought back to life. All you have to do is to create a backup of your personality – a restore point – at least every forty-eight hours. But there exists a movement of people who try to sabotage this concept. Agent Em finds



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herself drawn into a case that is not as simple as it first seemed and the consequences of which reach to the highest levels of politics. Director Robert Hloz's feature film debut is a gripping tale, an extraordinarily inventive visual experience, and a polemic with the idea that technological progress is always a good thing.

Facing Darkness

Director: Jean-Gabriel Périot

France, Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, 109 min, World premiere

A searing account of the four-year siege of Sarajevo, which lasted from April 1992 to February 1996. Renowned French documentary filmmaker Jean-Gabriel Périot takes two different approaches to his film. First, he works exclusively with archival footage, letting us see the street fighting through the lenses of young filmmakers who defended the city with weapon and camera in hand. In the second part, the same people look back on the past a quarter century later. A sketch of the traumatic experiences of the civil war is thus transformed into a portrait of a wounded creative spirit. *Facing Darkness* is film as document and film as therapy; it asks whether, face to face with cruelty, we can escape the darkness.

Gimiliani Sakartvelo / Smiling Georgia

Director: Luka Beradze

Georgia, Germany, 2023, 62 min, World premiere

During his 2012 election campaign titled "Smiling Georgia," President Mikheil Saakashvili promised his country's poorest residents new teeth in exchange for their vote. Dentists began to pull people's decayed teeth, but after Saakashvili lost the election his trusting followers never received their new pearly whites... In his bitterly humorous documentary, Luka Beradze takes us to a sleepy Georgian village, introduces us to its inhabitants, and shows that it rarely pays to believe the promises of populist politicians and to vote for purely selfish reasons. In the broader context, the film asks questions regarding the value of ordinary people in the eyes of political leaders.

Hadí plyn / Snake Gas

Director: David Jařab

Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Romania, 2023, 112 min, World premiere

This loose adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* follows Robert Klein (Stanislav Majer) on a journey to find his brother, who disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Klein finds himself on a journey where nothing is familiar or certain, a journey during which he is forced to reassess his relationship to his culture, to himself, and to his brother, whom he thought he knew so well... David Jařab's latest film is a highly original exploration of the conflict of cultures that we are permanently forced to reckon



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with, about the patriarchal superiority of the “white man,” and about the right to plunder natural resources that are slowly but surely running out.

Přišla v noci / She Came at Night

Director: Tomáš Pavlíček, Jan Vejnar
Czech Republic, 2023, 85 min, World premiere

Jirka and Aneta are a young couple who enjoy the routine of their quiet relationship and are in no hurry to make big decisions in life. One night in their inherited flat, the doorbell rings and standing at the door is Jirka’s mother Valerie. An initially brief visit turns into a never-ending stay by an intense and caustic diva whose presence fundamentally disrupts the couple’s privacy. Certainties are shaken, boundaries broken. Although the film’s directorial duo works with a familiar premise, they subvert any dark humor with a sense of tension more commonly found in horror movies, all of it wrapped in the penetrating question: Is the mother’s unbearable smothering legitimate or are mothers sometimes the biggest monsters of all?

Richelieu / Temporaries

Director: Pier-Philippe Chevigny
Canada, France, 2023, 89 min, European premiere

Arine’s difficult financial situation forces her to return to her hometown, where she takes a job interpreting between a farm’s seasonal workers from Guatemala and their Canadian employers. Although she is supposed to remain impartial, when she repeatedly witnesses the migrant workers’ mistreatment, she cannot remain silent. She may possibly be the only person who sees them as more than wagger laborers – for they are above all human beings. Pier-Philippe Chevigny’s self-assured debut is a gripping tale of injustice that emphasizes the importance of compassion and the determination to fight for what is right. In fact, it is empathy that has the power to unite us instead of dividing us.

Slow / Slow / Slow

Director: Marija Kavtaradze
Lithuania, Spain, Sweden, 2023, 108 min, European premiere

One day, dancer Elena meets the sign-language interpreter Dovydas. She feels comfortable with him, as if she’s known him for a long time – and yet the bond that forms between them is like nothing she has experienced before... In her sophomore outing, director Marija Kavtaradze explores the themes of closeness and intimacy between two people in a relationship that defies stereotypes, expectations, and simple definitions, doing so with a remarkable tenderness, delicacy, and understanding for her protagonists and their feelings. *Slow* premiered in competition at Sundance, where it was enthusiastically welcomed by audiences and reviewers and also took home the Directing Award.



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Všetci ľudia budú bratia / All Men Become Brothers

Director: Robert Kirchhoff

Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, 2023, 116 min, World premiere

Alexander Dubček, a contradictory figure in Czechoslovak history. The man who symbolised hope during the Prague Spring. The man who rose to the highest echelons of political power, only to be later removed from office. Conceived as an organic whole, Robert Kirchhoff's documentary presents Dubček from his childhood, moving to the period of his greatest glory, when his popularity rivalled that of a pop star, then to his subsequent departure from public life and his attempt to return to high-level politics after 1989. With the aid of archive footage and contemporary testimonies, the filmmaker pieces together the "Dubček phenomenon", which had an unquestionable influence on the course of history and still has an impact to this day, when his legacy is continually revisited and reinterpreted.

Patricia Clarkson and Barry Ward Among the Jury Members of the 57th Karlovy Vary IFF

CRYSTAL GLOBE JURY

Dora Bouchoucha

Dora Bouchoucha has been a film producer since 1994. She has produced and coproduced several award-winning documentaries, shorts and feature films, including *Satin Rouge*, *Buried Secrets* and *Foreign Body* by Raja Amari, and *Hedi* and *Dear Son* by Mohamed Ben Attia. Dora Bouchoucha established the Carthage Film Festival Projects' Workshop in 1992 and Takmil in 2014. She also founded the SUD ECRITURE workshops in 1997, which she has been running since that time. Dora Bouchoucha is actively involved in training and promotion for southern cinema. She was a permanent member of the International Rotterdam Festival CineMart Board for more than ten years and was consultant for Arab and African films for the selection board of the Venice Film Festival from 2007 to 2011. In 2010 she was appointed head of Fonds Sud, and in 2012 she was named President of CNC's "Aide aux cinémas du monde". She was head of the Carthage Film Festival in 2008, 2010 and 2014, and directed the Manarat Mediterranean Film Festival in Tunisia in 2018, 2019 and 2021. She was the godmother of La Fabrique Cinéma de l'Institut français at Cannes in 2023.

Patricia Clarkson

Patricia Clarkson made her big-screen debut in Brian De Palma's *The*



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Untouchables (1987). Her performance in the series *Six Feet Under* earned her two Emmy Awards. For her role in *Pieces of April* she was nominated for a 2004 Oscar and Golden Globe. Clarkson has worked with many renowned directors, such as Lars von Trier (*Dogville*, 2003), Woody Allen (*Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, 2008), and Martin Scorsese (*Shutter Island*, 2010). Her filmography also includes *October Gale* (2014), *The Bookshop* (2017), *The Party* (2017), *Out of Blue* (2018), *She Said* (2022) and *Monica* (2023). In 2019 she was awarded a Golden Globe for her performance in *Sharp Objects* (2018) and a Crystal Globe for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema at KVIFF.

John Nein

John Nein is a Senior Programmer and Director of Strategic Initiatives at the Sundance Film Festival, where he has worked since 2001, programming feature films and the festival's conversation events. He also curates Sundance Institute's film preservation initiative, the Sundance Collection at UCLA. John grew up in Europe and the United States, studied history as an undergraduate at Carleton College and earned his MFA in Film Directing from the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television. He created and curates the Library Foundation of Los Angeles' popular film culture conversation series *Lost & Found at the Movies* at the downtown Central Library and serves as the consultant for American cinema at the Locarno Film Festival.

Olmo Omerzu

Born in Slovenia, Olmo Omerzu studied at FAMU film school in Prague, where he developed a curiosity for making films that explore human nature, family relationships, and people's expectations of themselves. Olmo's first two films premiered at the Berlinale and San Sebastian film festivals, while his third feature, *Winter Flies*, earned him the Best Director award at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2018, along with six wins at the Czech Lion film awards; it was also selected for the Toronto IFF in 2018. His latest film, *Bird Atlas*, premiered at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2021.

Barry Ward

The Irish actor made his debut at 13 years of age in the BBC's *Family*, directed by Michael Winterbottom. He continued his education (eventually graduating with a degree in philosophy and English literature) while juggling TV and theatre work (he has starred in 20 theatrical productions). He played the titular character in *Jimmy's Hall*, directed by Ken Loach, enjoying its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in 2014. His next feature, *Blood Cells*, premiered in Venice that same year. Currently, he can be seen in three BAFTA-winning TV shows: as Leslie in *The End of the F***ing World!* on Netflix; as Fergal Loftus in Apple TV's *Bad Sisters*; and as Barry in Sky Atlantic's *Save Me*. Soon-to-be-released projects include detective drama *Clean Sweep* for RTE/Sundance Now TV and *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, directed by Pat Collins.



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PROXIMA JURY

Dana Linssen

Dana Linssen is a film critic, writer and freelance curator from the Netherlands. She is a long-term critic for the daily national newspaper *NRC* and contributor to the film magazine *de Filmkrant*. She is programmer for Critics' Choice at the Rotterdam IFF, the section focusing on video essays produced for the big screen. Dana was the founder of the Slow Criticism Project and she teaches at the Utrecht University of the Arts and the ArtEZ Theatre Academy in Amsterdam. She is a member of the selection committee for Berlinale Talents and a long-standing mentor of film critic workshops at Berlin and Sarajevo. When she is not writing about cinema, she develops texts for theatre and other performance events. She is also a time traveller.

Marija Razgutė

Lithuanian film producer Marija Razgutė has been running the film production company M-Films since 2008. To date she has produced 5 feature films as a major producer and 3 as a minority coproducer, as well as 10 short films (feature, documentary and animation). *Slow*, a sophomore feature by Marija Kavtaradze – a Lithuanian, Swedish and Spanish coproduction – won the Directing Award at Sundance 2023. Her previous production, *Runner* – the second feature by Andrius Blaževičius – was released in 2021; its female lead Žygimantė Elena Jakštaitė was named a Shooting Star that year. *Nova Lituania* by Karolis Kaupinis premiered at KVIFF 2019 in the East of the West Competition, Marija Kavtaradze's *Summer Survivors* premiered in 2018 as part of Toronto's Discovery program, while *The Saint* by Andrius Blaževičius premiered in competition at the Busan IFF in 2016 and at Warsaw. These last three won Best Film at the Lithuanian Film Awards in 2020, 2019 and 2017 respectively. Marija has also been working as a minority coproducer since 2016, collaborating on films with Spain and France – *Tres (Out of Sync)* by Juanjo Giménez Peña (Venice Days and TIFF 2021) and *Trote* by Xacio Baño (Locarno and San Sebastian 2018), and also with Germany and Georgia – Ioseb "Soso" Bliadze's *Otar's Death* (Karlovy Vary IFF 2021).

Šimon Šafránek

Director of the feature-length documentaries *King Skate*, about the birth of skateboarding in Czechoslovakia (2018, Czech Lion for Best Documentary, winner of the Paris Surf & Skateboard Film Festival) and *Meky*, a film about musician Meky Žbirka (2020, Audience Award, KVIFF Tady Vary), and the documentary web series *RapStory* (2021). In 2023 he completed a television profile of musician Ivan Král, *Ivan: Král tří akordů (Ivan: Three-Chord King)*. He also created TV music documentaries (*Apollo, Země revivalů / Revival Country, Kombo*) and numerous video clips for the bands Kill The Dandies, Tata Bojs and Sunshine. Author of the novel *Fleischerei 36* (2008) and the novella *23* (2005). Film and culture columnist, currently also programmer for the festival Days of European Film.



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Barbara Wurm

Barbara Wurm is an author, researcher and curator who took Slavic studies degree programmes in Vienna, Moscow, Munich, Leipzig and Berlin. An expert on Eastern European film, she wrote her dissertation on Soviet educational film and has co-edited books on various subjects, including Dziga Vertov. Her research and educational focuses at Humboldt University in Berlin are Eastern European cultural studies, as well as film theory and history. She contributes to newspapers and magazines as a film critic. Barbara Wurm has worked on the selection committees of DOK Leipzig, the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, the goEast Film Festival and Berlin International Film Festival (Competition + Encounters), and has recently been appointed the new head of Berlinale Forum.

Meng Xie

Meng Xie is the founder and CEO of Rediance and a partner of Blackfin. His producing credits include Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Memoria*, Miguel Gomes's *Grand Tour*, Anthony Chen's *The Breaking Ice*, *Break Away* and *Wet Season*, Geng Jun's *Manchurian Tiger* and *Free and Easy*, Eduardo Williams's *The Human Surge 3*, and Ben Rivers and Anocha Suwichakornpong's *Krabi, 2562*. Rediance's sales titles include *An Elephant Sitting Still*, *Balloon*, *Ripples of Life*, *The Science of Fictions*, and *Whether the Weather Is Fine*, and more than 30 award-winning films were widely distributed on key international markets. He was a jury member at a number of festivals, such as the Toronto International Film Festival, CPH: DOX, FIDMarseille, the Beijing Film Festival and FIRST Film Festival Xining, and he received the International Contribution to Chinese Cinema Award from the Pingyao International Film Festival in 2021.