



CA' FOSCARI SHORT FILM FESTIVAL 14
20-23 MARCH 2024

WIDESPREAD IN VENICE

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INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

30 short films from the most acclaimed film schools and universities all over the world, representing 28 countries:

Bangladesh, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Mexico, Poland, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Syria, Spain, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, U.S.A., Hungary

(all works will be screened in their original version with subtitles both in English and Italian)

ACCIDENTALLY INTENTIONAL

Director: Kevin Rahardjo

School: Pelita Harapan University, Jakarta

Indonesia, 2023, Indonesian, 14'07", *fiction*

At sixteen, the male body experiences tensions and yearnings that Jovan, son of an Indonesian Christian family, tries to discover secretly from his mother, with whom he has a conflictual relationship. His foray into the world of pornographic videos is discovered by his parents, who punish him after screaming at him. However, they don't know that pornographic videos are just the tip of the iceberg of their son's "problem". *Accidentally intentional* is a short film that constantly upsets the viewer for fifteen minutes that zip by so quickly, leaving the viewer astonished. Sexuality, religious oppression, and teenage rebellion seem to be the central themes, but in reality they represent just the frame of something much wider and more complex than this, just like the inner world of the youth... sometimes in a disturbing way.

ALVIDA - THE LAST GOODBYE

Director: Dilu Maliackal

School: National Institute of Design, Madhya Pradesh

India, 2023, Hindi/Malayalam, 29'52", *fiction*

The courage and spirit of Miraal break like waves on a cliff on the day of her father's death, opening her eyes: she's changed. Being a woman in India is complex, society takes everything away from you, but it can't take the love she feels for her husband, who disappeared and is still waiting to be found. Miraal

decides to fight for herself, for her daughter and all the women who are confined in the prison of their condition. This work captures the viewer with its sharp tone, music, and photography that allows them to savour the hardships of the life of a woman who tries to make her voice heard. Her screams are primordial and display the sensitivity and will of a light that, despite the wind, tries to reunite with its shadow. Even if only for one last goodbye.

APNEA

Director: Natalia Bermúdez

School: Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica

Mexico, 2023, Spanish, 19'41", *fiction*

Renata has a secret affair with Liliana, her swimming instructor. As the national league is approaching, the line between love and hate gets thinner; Renata's position in the competition is compromised by the dangerous power play that ties her to this woman. When the veil of adolescent passion lifts from Renata's eyes, the young girl becomes aware that the swimming pool is not the only place in which she cannot breathe. This short film, very refined from an aesthetic perspective, addresses the delicate theme of abuse in educational contexts. The director masterfully captures the complexity and various nuances inherent in power dynamics, and bravely chooses to bestow willpower and decision-making skills to her victim.

ARTUMO JAUSMAS - CLOSER

Director: Augustė Gerikaitė

School: Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre

Lithuania, 2023, Lithuanian, 22'04", *fiction*

A divorced couple, Silija and Bernardas, decide to keep living together due to the increasing cost of rent in their city. They both, nevertheless, try to avoid each other as much as possible by setting rules for themselves. However, the arrival of a boy awakens powerful memories in Bernardas, leading him to reminisce about his first encounter and falling in love with his ex-wife. In fact, despite the divorce certificate hanging on the wall, the man feels that his feelings could come back. *Closer* is a work that analyses the several facets of love, a complicated feeling often made of hopes and reconsiderations.

BAGGAGE

Director: Hamid Bahrami

School: Tehran University of Art

Iran, 2023, Persian, 19'59", *fiction*

In a dystopian world, on an island, a hotel is run by an authoritarian yet easily corruptible owner who imposes strange and rigid rules on the guests. One night, a traveller enters the hotel carrying a red suitcase and requests to stay overnight. The owner, initially very suspicious, gives him a room with the promise of receiving a substantial amount of money in return. The situation takes a turn for the worse when a colonel suddenly arrives in search of a fugitive. The hotel – simultaneously a prison and a refuge for both guests and staff – seems to be under a spell, crystallised in an eternal present where time appears to have stopped. In this noir thriller, punctuated with flashes of comedy and a Tarantino-esque ending, the recurrence of the colour red, with its symbolic meanings, may perhaps be the key to interpreting the work.

THE BORDERS NEVER DIE

Director: Hamidreza Arjomandi

School: Iranian Youth Cinema Association

Iran, 2023, Kurdish, 14'50", *fiction*

During the war, a Kurdish couple goes on a journey to the border, seeking a second chance. Among the troubles of their path and the uncertainty of their fate the future of this family is being challenged. While the horrors of the war loom over their lives, every step forward freedom is arduous, scarred by sacrifices and tragedies. As suggested by the title, war and its consequences know no border: the difference between the pursuit of happiness and being doomed to an endless journey is subtle.

CHAI-COFFI

Director: Sanjoli Malani

School: London Film School

United Kingdom/India, 2023, Hindi, 22'49", *fiction*

Leaving behind the ease of her village, the housewife Lata goes on a journey in Kerala. Her goal is a tea plantation that Lata sees on a crinkled photograph. For our protagonist this adventure means both empowerment and closure following the death of her husband. Lata must face many difficulties and moments of discouragement. She is tempted to abandon her quest, but the courage of this atypical heroine and the friendship of a younger helper will be essential in this troubled route. A journey undertaken to find someone that has lost herself and her identity, despite the limitations imposed by ourselves and by others. A short film that should be watched at least twice: the first time to understand the subtle complexity of its subtext; the second to enjoy freely the vivacity of Southern India and its colors - an experience that brings cheer. A work that will warm the heart of the spectator like only a good cup of tea or coffee can do.

LE CHANT DES BÊTES – THE SONG OF THE BEASTS

Director: Titouan Ropert

School: La Fémis

France, 2023, French, 24'12", *fiction*

'When the killing of animals is also the killing of humans.' During the World Cup, a sports journalist, Ruben, receives an USB drive, full of images of animal abuse. It is the legacy of a man who has put an end to his life: after having worked more than ten years in a slaughterhouse, he feels haunted by the cruelty to which he has contributed. Shaken by such deeds, Ruben decided to investigate further. This short film raises awareness of the brutality of slaughterhouses, making the audience reflect on this poignant issue. By broaching a subject often overlooked, *The Song of the Beasts* becomes an advocate for the tortured screaming animals and any witnesses to that inhuman violence.

DEVOTIONS

Director: Jessica Goh

School: California Institute of the Arts (CalArts)

Singapore/USA, 2023, no dialogue, 5'56", *animation*

A typhoon hits the house of a family. As the bad weather intensifies, a pregnant woman and her children take refuge in their house: they share gestures of familial affection, through which everyone tries to protect one another in their own way. With the storm raging in the background, the pouring rain mingles with a whirlpool of thoughts in a gripping trajectory towards an unexpected ending. The stylized drawings convey the delicacy of the family routine that permeates the scene, whereas the typhoon represents the 'divine' element and the challenge that the children and their mother have to overcome. The restlessness grows in the spectator as well as the sense of powerlessness: the actors show strength and patience in a childlike fantasy, where shapes are created and the feeling of loneliness is erased, by filling it with tenderness.

DIELLI

Director: Dritero Mehmetaj

School: Famu International

Czech Republic/Kosovo, 2023, Albanian, 20', *fiction*

Dielli is a volunteer at the local library while his father is fighting against his alcohol addiction. After a car crash, the two promise to change. However, when the father suffers a relapse, their relationship crumbles and the dreams and loyalty of Dielli are put to the test. This heartbreaking drama navigates addiction, forgiveness, and affection, and unveils the strength and the fragility of family ties. In between the possible redemption of a father and the potential surrender of a son, Dielli is a short film that can

embrace complex and insidious dynamics with tact and care. Thanks to the wonderful performances of the main characters and the distinctly human element brought by the cinematography, any form of prejudice leaves room for understanding.

FOX TOSSING

Director: Zénó Mira

School: Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Budapest

Hungary, 2023, no dialogue, 7'48", *animation*

At the beginning of the film, the viewer finds themselves in a baroque garden, next to what seems to be a stately European building. All of the guests are laughing, drinking and feasting in front of a laid table. This idyllic and bucolic frame soon takes on dark and bloody hues when a popular pastime of the eighteenth-century aristocracy is introduced: the throwing of the fox. Through a strong and incisive graphic sign, the director uses the extreme contrast between concepts of leisure and raw brutality as an opportunity to analyze power dynamics in which all can identify themselves.

FRAGMENTE VON UNS – FRAGMENTS OF US

Director: Ido Gotlib

School: Filmuniversität Babelsberg Konrad Wolf

Germany, 2023, German, 21'51", *fiction*

An experimental sound therapy allows you to relive your own past experiences. Samuel decides to undergo this procedure to relive the moments that shaped his relationship with his parents during the months before his father's death. The technology is pushed beyond limits. The work immerses the viewer in the family dynamics, skillfully mixing psychotherapy and technology in order to deal with universal themes: illness, social pressure, and the struggle to understand each other. The director shows us the portrait of a family like many others, complex and because of that, true.

HĀ'ŌYĀ'I MITHĀ'I - THE SWEETNESS OF AIR

Director: MD Rabbi Bhuiyan

School: Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University

Bangladesh, 2023, Bengali, 15', *fiction*

A motherless child wanders in the countryside following a cotton candy seller while a world in war unfolds around them. Unaware of the meaning and effects of the conflict, he wanders through the battlefield looking for bullet shells in order to exchange them with the seller and buy his favorite sweet. Moreover, during the night he talks with a woman dressed in black, lit up only by a small oil lamp. It is her whom the child refers to as his "mother". This woman could be a metaphor for his encounter and discovery of death, while, on the other hand, the mysterious seller could represent life and peace. That happiness and tranquility found again may be like cotton candy in the eyes of a child.

JACKPOT

Director: Márk Makkai

School: Babes-Bolyai University & Sapientia University

Romania, 2023, Hungarian/Romanian/Polish, 24'33", *fiction*

The film's protagonist, Manu, is a young gambler who starts working for the local gangster, in order to repay his debts. However, right from the start, nothing seems to go as planned, and a bizarre chain of events will thrust all of the characters into an extremely unpleasant situation. In this grotesque comedy that refuses to take itself too seriously, two narrative lines – apparently parallel – cross on several occasions, thanks to amusing flashbacks and paradoxical situations, culminating in a very unexpected final plot twist.

KHUTAA 'AB – FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

Director: Mohamad W. Ali

School: Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute

India/Siria, 2023, Arabic, 29'26", *fiction*

In Siria, between cold concrete walls riddled with holes because of the ongoing war, a mother attempts to protect her son from the loss of his father and keep him away from the attacks raging outside. Left completely to herself, the woman tries to assume the role of both mother and father, but soon finds herself overwhelmed. A raw and poetic drama which fully embraces the potential of the cinematic medium: what you don't see you feel. In *Father's Footsteps*, war, death and the paternal role are presences that the shots refuse to show, but which inevitably penetrate the storyline through the pain and solitude of the characters. The domestic setting itself falls victim to a kind of absence that undermines its very essence and warmth. To remind us of this poignant and constant interference, is a simple word, uttered by the grandmother afflicted with dementia: "cold".

KORAK NAZAD – A STEP BACK

Director: Sofija Nedeljković

School: Fakultet za medije i komunikacije (FMK)

Serbia, 2023, serbian, 23'13", *fiction*

Women have always been taught that one day they will have to choose between motherhood and a career. Dunja is no exception to the rule: from the moment her boss does her the 'favour' of firing her because she's pregnant, she has to deal with the new way people around her perceive her: bureaucratic problems, an emotionally absent husband, a mother ready to pass on the baton of the perfect housewife... Dunja will have to fight to make her voice heard. A highly symbolic short film, in which music allows the characters to express themselves and Dunja to emancipate herself. The film accurately portrays the condition of many women around the world and thus invites us to take inspiration from Dunja's story, so that steps forward can be taken in the recognition of women's rights.

MALAKIUN - NOT YOURS

Director: Lama Mohamad Youssef

School: Lebanese International University

Lebanon, 2023, arabic, 11'45", *fiction*

The protagonist is tormented by dark memories of his childhood, marked by sexual abuse from a family member. As he confronts his inner child through intense and visceral internal dialogues, the protagonist struggles with repressed anger and desire for justice. The film deals with the complexity of childhood trauma and the emotion associated with freeing oneself from the chains of the past.

The compelling and engaging narration offers a profound insight into the relationship one has with oneself and with one's own feelings of guilt, typical of those who struggle with healing from traumatic experiences.

MÀN-TÍNG – MANTING

Director: Shuyao Chen

School: New York University

Cina/USA, 2023, mandarin, 14'59", *Fiction*

Mantin, a mature woman, rediscovers her teenage love after several years. During a reunion with old classmates at a karaoke bar, the two women end up spending the night together, wandering the city and rediscovering an affection that was never extinguished despite many years of separation. From the long silences, to the exchange of glances, and the numerous close-ups of the protagonists' faces, it is evident that this love has left a very deep mark on their souls. Through a preference for those small gestures that to the viewer may recall those of a typical youthful love, such as holding hands or embracing, the director delicately documents the gradual reconnection of the two from both a physical and emotional standpoint, in a crescendo of intensity that leads to the finale.

MEMOIR RAMBLER

Director: Sira Buranasri

School: Chulalongkorn University

Thailand, 2023, thai, 11'35", *Documentary*

In this documentary, the director reflects on his relationship with his parents, specifically with his mother, and on the difficulties of their relationship. Unable to express his feelings in words, he decides to do so through this intimate and intense work, almost intended as a 'confessional'. In scenes of everyday life, such as a conversation at the table or a dialogue with a friend, themes such as the mother's fears for her son, his life choices, sacrifices made, and past loves are touched upon. In this sort of double interview that the director addresses to his own mother and to the self of the short film, the division is also chromatic and temporal: the colour sequences indicate the present, and the black and white ones indicate the past.

LA NOTTE

Directors: Martina Generali, Simone Pratola, Francesca Sofia Rosso

School: CSC Piemonte

Italy, 2023, no dialog, 6'30", *animation*

During the Venice Carnival, Pulcinella tries to sneak into a party filled with lavish masks, culinary delights, and female seductions. His aspiration to be part of this luxurious world, however, dissolves into a nightmare that leads him to reflect on the value of his simple yet authentic life. The breaking point occurs when Pulcinella accidentally bumps into one of the guests, shattering his mask and revealing something unspeakable about the nature of the party; the 'unmasked' man - as well as all the other guests - is a facade devoid of any soul, surviving solely on its appearance, on its mask. The series of events is accompanied by the evocative notes of Vivaldi's 'La Notte', creating a unique relationship between images and music.

OFF THE PAGE

Director: Joan Oliver Nadal, Diego Gomez Tejedor

School: University of Navarra

Spain, 2023, english, 20'21", *fiction*

Phill is devastated after learning from the doctor that his wife, Ana, has only a few hours left to live. However, his world is turned upside down when he discovers that his existence is nothing more than the plot of a novel of which he is the protagonist. From that moment on, Phill embarks on a race against time to try to 'escape from the page' and convince the author of the novel to save Ana. On the other hand, the writer will devise any obstacle his mind can imagine to prevent Phill from achieving his goal. This compelling short film invites the viewer to reflect on the faint boundary between reality and fiction and on who controls what. The two directors decide to leave room for interpretation in what can be read as a meta-reflection on power dynamics, but also an elaboration on the right to suffer.

OYUNBOZAN – GAME, INTERRUPTED

Director: Ilayda Iseri

School: Bogazici University

Turkey, 2023, turkish, 15'04", *fiction*

In a Turkish city, on the eve of the 1979 military coup, two brothers fight boredom by shifting from one game to another in their home. Mother is at work, grandmother is sleeping on the couch. First a gunshot, then someone knocks at the door. Their games interrupted, the two children try to alter the course of events before their mother returns home, using superpowers: imagination and fantasy. *Game, Interrupted*, inspired by an autobiographical story of the director's mother, depicts the tense atmosphere preceding the coup from a unique perspective, that of childhood, filled with dreams and nostalgia. Reality and fantasy intertwine inexorably, contributing to form a new reality, different and immune from the dramas of everyday life.

PANIQUE À LA NOCE – PANIC AT THE WEDDING

Director: Haythem Ben Hmida

School: School of Audiovisual and Cinema, Gammarth

Tunisia, 2023, arabic, 13'10", *fiction*

During a wedding a tragedy unfolds: the bride collapses lifeless on the ground. While on one hand her family is taken aback, at least initially, by grief, on the other hand, the groom's relatives are more concerned about the wasted money. Thus, the father of the newly widowed man sets out to find another girl among the guests to marry his son, and the celebration can resume as if nothing had happened. This pitch-black satire aims to reflect on the institution of marriage and how often it is anything but the celebration of a couple's love, going so far as to liken those who participate (wives and husbands) to martyrs.

PIERWSZY TANIEC W CHMURACH - DANCING ON A CLOUD

Director: Michał Mieszczyk

School: Polski Kieslowski Film School

Poland, 2023, polish, 23', *fiction*

Patryk tries to establish a solid foundation for his relationship with Maja by taking on parental responsibilities towards little Mati, whom he is not the biological father of. However, in his attempt to gather money to marry Maja, he falls victim to a drug trafficking scheme. Meanwhile, unexpectedly, Mati's biological father returns home, and Patryk sees in him everything he feels he lacks, especially stability and financial security. This work strongly portrays the sense of injustice and powerlessness felt by a man who has done everything - even beyond what is legal - to raise a child as his own and give him the opportunity to live happily, but who is denied the chance to continue being a father simply due to the lack of a blood relationship.

PUSTA NOC – EMPTY NIGHT

Director: Ina Hrabarenka

School: Warsaw Film School

Poland, 2023, polish, 12'23", *fiction*

On the eve of her mother's funeral, the protagonist receives the unexpected visit of her sister who, after years of addiction and estrangement from the family, reappears as a changed person ready to ask for forgiveness. Throughout the night, the two sisters seem to finally resolve the disputes that have separated them for years. Within such a delicate situation, the grief for the loss of their mother seems to seep through the cracks of a disjointed family to mend the relationship between those who are still alive. The night seems full of trust in change but empty of certainty about promises that may remain unfulfilled.

ROMEO

Director: Tynystan Temirzhan

School: Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University

Kyrgyzstan, 2023, Kyrgyz, 15'09", *fiction*

An abandoned theatre gives its stage to two love stories, centuries apart, that reconnect. Young boys, united by a passion for acting, prepare to stage the legendary story of Romeo and Juliet. Behind the scenes, however, Tybalt loves the young Capulet and is prepared to do anything to finally become her Romeo. The play presents a new love, perhaps because it is the first of a lifetime, managing to genuinely portray the difficulties of a boy who wants to show his feelings openly. The earthy tones of this region of the world give way to overwhelming and vivid sensations, which strike precisely due to their adherence to reality: anyone who has experienced love finds themselves confronted with a challenge, which for an adolescent is akin to a deadly duel fought with swords.

SASHA

Director: Maria Viktorova

School: High Courses for Scriptwriters and Film Directors, Moscow

Russia, 2023, Russian, 24'11", *fiction*

Sasha, a young gynaecologist, is on a train journey. Forced by pure chance to stop in his home village, he ends up staying there longer than he should. A mysterious elderly woman he met on the train follows him through some significant changes. Sasha's story revolves around the concept of destiny; the protagonist finds himself in the very place he escaped from, and the lady's presence seems to have

something to do with what happens to him. Is she, perhaps, the embodiment of a fate from which it is impossible to escape?

SOMETHING'S WRONG

Director: Polina Khalenko

School: Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography

Russia/Kazakhstan, 2023, Russian, 22'48", *fiction*

Panta rei, or 'everything flows', but how do our lives flow? The life of Gregory is like gushing water in the shower, like a washing machine that keeps spinning, or hands that endlessly clean and cook. He is confined within the walls of a grey house, thick with frustration and sadness, sentiments perfectly captured by a photography with greyish-blue tones. He leads a monotonous life that seems to infect everyone in the house, including his wife Ira and daughter Lera, who are busy during the day with work and university. The work shows precisely the frustration of the eternal routine of existences that are repeated day after day. However, the monotony of these lives is suddenly interrupted when Gregory notices that the two seem to be hiding something from him.

STABAT MATER

Directors: Hadrein Maton, Quentin Wittevrongel, Arnaud Mege, Coline Thelliez, William Defrance

School: Pôle 3D School

France, 2023, no dialogue, 13'09", *animation*

Just as the soundtrack from which it takes its title - Pergolesi's Stabat Mater - was composed feverishly only a few months before the author's early death, so too were the creations of the protagonist. Having dedicated his entire life to his art and unable to bear his own end as a creator, he is about to commit suicide. He feeds on pain and anger in order to evolve, grow and become something else. Using the split screen technique, the short film is a celebration of the work of art as a creation and at the same time a perfect extension of its own demiurge. The artist and his work have an almost father-son bond: on the one hand, the projection that a parent puts onto their own child, and on the other, the model that a parent represents for them: their search for validation and unconditional and sacrificial love. When the author dies, the parts of him which he represented in his art, eternal and universal, replace him by outliving him.

WE SHOULD ALL BE FUTURISTS

Director: Angela Norelli

School: CSC Rome

Italy, 2023, English/Italian, 11', *fiction*

Through some flirtatious letters, friends Rosa and Giorgina tell each other anecdotes from their intimate and private lives. They tell of the particular treatments Rosa undergoes to recover from her hysteria and of Giorgina's husband's passion for Futurist theories. Recalling precisely Marinetti's thesis on the man-machine, the two friends come to an exciting and unexpected conclusion: 'often machines are more efficient than the flesh and blood of men'. With a light-hearted and allusive tone, the short film presents the theme of female pleasure as if it were a secret shared only by women. The tastefully retro style of the work is achieved through the technique of re-editing silent films, accompanied by Tchaikovsky's pulsating Waltz of the Flowers.