



CA' FOSCARI SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

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4-7 MAY 2022

WIDESPREAD IN VENICE

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INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

30 short films from the most prestigious film schools and universities from all around the world, representing 27 countries:

Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Chile, China, South Korea, Estonia, Finland, France, India, Iran, Iceland, Italy, Kosovo, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Czech Republic, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United States, Ukraine, Turkey

(All of the films will be shown in the original language with English and Italian subtitles)

CONGENITAL

Directors: Saman Hosseinpour, Ako Zandkarimi

School: Sepehr Art University, Isfahan

Iran, 2021, Kurdish, 23'57", *fiction*

The film starts with the wedding of an arranged marriage between a girl and a religious elder. The twenty-year-old protagonist Roja is distressed more than ever at her future prospects and even her family can't properly celebrate her marriage. Indeed, the ceremony, accompanied by the *tombak* – a typical percussion instrument – takes place in a constant series of glances, whispers, and a general bad mood. The turbulent home environment of the newlyweds is filled with long silences which underline the climate of fear and the suffering caused by the impossibility of self-determination in a context pervaded by a suffocating tradition. Set in rural Kurdistan where marriages are just an exchange currency, topics like non-conforming sexualities and identities and queer relationships remain mostly unexpressed, although, as the title suggests, they are *congenital*.

VIVIR TODA LA VIDA - LIVING ALL OF LIFE

Director: Marlén Ríos-Farjat

School: Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica, A.C. (CCC), Mexico City

Mexico, 2021, Spanish, 27'52", *fiction*

After years of marriage, Susana is abandoned by her husband. In the silence of her apartment, past memories and a deep resentment resurface, leaving the protagonist stuck in the past. Gloria, a noisy and expansive neighbor, as well as the perfect antithesis of the inflexible protagonist, will gradually succeed

in making Susana understand the true meaning of existence, that must always be fulfilled and celebrated in the present. Latin music and dance connect the souls of the two protagonists, even though a deep and sincere friendship is never exempt of hardships.

PO PIERWSZE... - FIRST...

Director: Adam Hartwiński

School: Warszawska Szkoła Filmowa, Warsaw

Poland, 2021, Polish, 26'37", *fiction*

Marysia and Krzysztof are expecting a baby. Still, the joy turns into pain when the couple discovers that, due to a rare malformation, there is no hope of survival for the little one. The tension reaches its peak when Marysia, determined to have an abortion, discovers that her son could save the life of her nephew, who needs a kidney. In a crescendo of emotions stirred by memories of the past and fears for the future, Marysia finds herself facing a crucial doubt. Her private pain becomes collective, involving the public in a harrowing dilemma that moves, frightens, and makes us reflect.

PUPUS

Director: Miriam Cossu Sparagano Ferraye

School: Experimental Center for Documentary Cinematography, Palermo

Italy, 2021, Italian, 30'00", *documentary*

At the Teatro Carlo Magno of the Mancuso family, famous medieval figures are brought back to life thanks to the "Opera dei Pupi". Set in the Borgo Vecchio district of Palermo, *Pupus* follows the story of Carmelo, the puppet master's son as he approaches the art of ventriloquism with fascination and ardor by imitating his father's performances. The viewer gets immersed in the world of puppets from the very first minutes thanks to the beginning in *medias res* in which Carmelo and his brother play – without lacking interpretative seriousness – to give voice to the pieces of wood in the shop. The child, curious and involved in the magic of stories, embodies the continuity of tradition, which is a theme represented by suffused images and sensitive and spontaneous dialogues.

AYNI GECENIN LACIVERTİ – SAME NIGHT DIFFERENT BLUE

Director: Nuri Cihan Özdoğan

School: Çukurova Üniversitesi, Adana

Turkey, 2021, Turkish, 15'40", *fiction*

Two professional thieves, an equally experienced old antique dealer, and his henchmen are ready for anything. These characters are involved in escaping and being chased after, with the hope of succeeding with the former and avoiding the latter, to engage in what could be called "a masterstroke". After all, even a microscopic and seemingly insignificant object can be invaluable... The compelling and dynamic plot, the interplay between filmed and animated parts in noir style and the dark and vivid atmospheres are the main ingredients of this short film that keeps the viewer in suspense from the first to the last scene.

OTVÁRAM DVERE A NEVIEM, ČO SA S NIMI DEJE POMALY VRZGAJÚ OČI SA DÍVAJÚ – I AM OPENING THE DOOR AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG

Director: Kristián Grupač

School: Vysoká škola múzických umení, Bratislava

Slovakia, 2021, Slovak, 29'19", *fiction*

A man lying in a coffin is awakened by an injection and taken back to a kind of nursing home. It turns out that the man in question, Crimson, suffers from a very particular 'disorder', that of immortality, which he tries to get rid of in every way, though apparently in vain. For this reason, he undergoes a series of tests – never conclusive – in a crumbling and dilapidated center, where a crippled director and ambiguous assistants make him face disturbing and mysterious experiences. Played on the border between nightmare and reality, madness and everyday life, Crimson remains stuck – like all of us in our realities – in a series

of events of which he has no control, without being able to get out of that life and its dynamics, often incomprehensible and distressing.

LAAL JAMA – THE RED FROCK

Director: Ashiqur Rahman Anik

School: University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, Dhaka

Bangladesh, 2021, Bengali, 13'40", *fiction*

In the tragic beginning of the short film, the fisherman Chan Mia finds in the river the body of a little girl who died as a result of sexual assault. Chian Mia's daughter has a weakness for the color red, this is the selfish reason that pushes the fisherman to strip the victim of her red dress to give it to his daughter. The gesture, however, triggers an inner struggle in him that leads him to be constantly tormented by feelings of guilt. The dark atmospheres, often nocturnal, the contemplative rhythm and the suffused landscape, make *The Red Frock* a short film with dramatic tones, able to accurately outline the psychological disturbances of the protagonist in the few minutes that make up the work.

SU, UI DONGSEON – THE LINE OF SLEEP

Director: Lee Seok Yun

School: Sungkyul University, Anyang

South Korea, 2021, korean, 25'11", *fiction*

Su, the main character, works at a missing child station. One day, he notices a child reported missing, and from that moment on he sees the child while sleepwalking, without knowing for sure if the child is real. Su can't sleep because he's also dealing with a family trauma at the same time, which forces him to dwell on a picture of his childhood and on the sound of an unknown female voice that he hears. The mood and the warmth that permeates during the daytime scenes is highly opposed to the anguish caused by the whispers of the lady during the main character's tormented nights. This perception of widespread disquiet seems to evoke the feeling of abandonment in which the story is immersed.

UNA HISTORIA DE AMOR IMPOSIBLE – AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE STORY

Director: Javier Alonso Mardones

School: Instituto de la Comunicación e Imagen (ICEI) de la Universidad de Chile, Ñuñoa

Chile, 2021, spanish, 26'14", *fiction*

The death of the whimsical punk Esteban disturbs the placid everyday life of the Chilean town Santiago. Esteban's premature demise seems to go unnoticed, but it will be Miguel, a young man smitten with him, to give value to the boy's short life. An impossible love as a matter of fact, a love that finds dry soil in a closed and judgmental society, incapable of welcoming the diversity of who cannot blend in. The thoughts and sensations of Esteban are found by Miguel in the pages of a secret diary, where Miguel witnesses fragility, misunderstandings, loneliness, and difficulties with self-acceptance. The diary is clearly a poetic necessity of auto determination and self-expression to keep from imploding. The two main characters will find themselves in imagination and poetry, the only place where Miguel's love for Esteban can finally live.

JANKO ŽONTA

Director: Aleksander Kogoj Jr.

School: Akademija za gledališče, radio, film in televizijo, Ljubljana

Slovenia, 2021, sloveno, 25'25", *fiction*

In a small city, a man called Janko Žonta goes to the local police station every month to confess he committed a murder. Everyone knows that his reports are made up, but police officers have to investigate anyway every time. One night, just before the end of agent Damjan's shift, Janko comes again to the police station and reports a homicide. Damjan, who manages the routine report, escorts Janko to the alleged crime scene, certain that no corpse will be found like usual. After entering the apartment he's completely shocked by what he's witnesses: this time there is really a corpse in the room. This story shows the ab of words in affecting the mind and how words make you afraid of realizing your deepest fears.

HÄLLILAU – LULLABY

Directed by: Ville Niemi

School: Baltic Film, Media and Arts School, Tallinn

Estonia/Finland, 2021, Estonian, 18'30", *fiction*

Klaara comes from an Estonian family. She goes to kindergarten, spends time at the playground and draws just like any other four-year-old child. Her mother, Laura, seems sweet and caring; her father, Sander, looks rather aggressive and quick-tempered. Soon enough, we understand that Laura is diagnosed with a mental disorder, and therefore she was denied custody of her daughter. *Lullaby* plays with the audience's expectations: firstly, the spectator is pushed to empathize with the mother, worrying about the way her ex-husband wants to harm his family. Then, there is a change in perspective, which presents a completely different reality from the one initially imagined.

LA VENTRIÈRE – THE MIDWIFE

Directed by: Anne-Sophie Bailly

School: La Fémis, Paris

France, 2021, French, 28'55", *fiction*

Herbalist and midwife Else lives in a village on the French side of the Jura Mountains at the end of the Middle Ages. One day, while she is teaching her job to her apprentice Nicole, a mysterious man on the back of a horse arrives at the village and gathers all the women inside a church. The foreigner blames Else for the death of a woman in labour, and other unfortunate events that, to his belief, were guided by the Devil. After receiving the order from the villagers, the man must therefore eliminate the supposed witch. Else becomes then a scapegoat for the people's beliefs and superstitions, the designated victim of ignorance. Unable to find scientific evidence behind all complex phenomena, the people choose to put the blame on a supposed evil being living inside Else's body.

CÉU DE AGOSTO – AUGUST SKY

Directed by: Jasmine Tenucci

School: Columbia University Film School, New York

Brasil/Ireland/USA, 2021, Portuguese, 16'18", *fiction*

Lucia comes from Brazil; she is pregnant and works as a nurse at the São Paulo city hospital. Every day she goes to work and takes care of her grandmother, whose physical and mental health are compromised. Following the news of a fire destroying Amazonia, Lucia experiences a crescendo of irrational fears since the very beginning of the short film. These will bring her close to an Evangelical Church and a new friend, Nicole. The use of dark, opaque colours creates an eerie atmosphere that increases the feeling of constant danger of Lucia's fears.

ZAPAH POLYA – THE SMELL OF THE FIELD

Direction: Andriana Yarmonova

School: Kyiv National I. K. Karpenko-Kary Theatre, Cinema and Television University

Ukraine, 2021, Ukrainian, 20'08", *fiction*

Kolya is 8 years old and lives in a difficult family situation: the mother abuses alcohol and is prone to nervous breakdowns, while her stepfather is a perpetrator of domestic violence. Kolya manages to walk away from this terrible everyday life thanks to her friend Misha, who experiences a similar situation. Together they meet again in their hiding place: a field near their homes, where they play and have fun in fragrant lawns. Here they find themselves dreaming about a new life and expressing wishes for the future, watching the planes that land nearby, in a story that narrates of promises, the desire of being loved and the consequences of the choices people make in life.

UNEN

Direction: Wang Haonan

School: Beijing Film Academy
China, 2021, Chinese, 24'57", *fiction*

A happy family of four is completely shaken by the death of their father. This leads the widowed mother to have mental health problems and to prevent her from getting lost during her rides, the son decides to take away Unen, the father's favorite horse, who goes into the forest. Unen will manage to find his way home and in that moment the mother, in the grip of hallucinations, will see her husband riding the horse again. Through the use of *flashback*, the ethnographic exploration linked to the popular songs of the woman and the representation of imaginary scenarios - mirror of her mental instability - the story tells the love of a son for his mother and the will of the boy to save her from herself.

LES LARMES DE LA SEINE – THE SEINE'S TEARS

Direction: Yanis Belaid, Eliott Benard, Nicolas Mayeur, Etienne Moulin, Hadrien Pinot, Lisa Vicente, Philippine Singer, Alice Letailleur

School: Pôle 3D Digital and Creative School, Roubaix

France, 2021, French/Algerian, 8'42", *animation*

Paris, October 17, 1961: thousands of Algerian workers peacefully demonstrate in the streets of the Latin Quarter against the curfew imposed by the Parisian prefect of the Police. In a climate of protest, the streets of Paris teem with rebellion and hope, when the gunshots of the police officers and the unprecedented violence against the innocents bring silence. With the splendid metaphor of the water of the Parisian river that opens and closes the short film, the massacre of the Algerians is brought back to the surface so that it's not forgotten. The violent repression is, however, accompanied by a festive, almost spiritual narrative, capable of highlighting the importance of sharing and the enthusiasm for life.

XÚN – SCAVENGER

Director: Nicholas Ong Kok Weng

School: Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore

Singapore, 2021, Mandarin, 30'14", *fiction*

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the already complicated lives of homeless people are further aggravated and reduced to the extreme by various containment measures. In an increasingly inhospitable and desolate Singapore, the director follows the movements of the elderly homeless Zhi Lian harassed by the imminent celebration of his wedding for which he must prepare the indispensable ritual objects. Scavenger tells the story of a lonely woman who lives on the margins of modern society, made invisible by the metropolis. It highlights the difficulties that distinguish the daily routine and the hostility that characterizes the rare interactions of citizens with her. Despite this, or as a result, Zhi Lian – aware of every look and judgment directed against him – does not give respite, turns constantly thinking about his goal and, moved by blind hope, tirelessly pursues serenity.

FREEDOM COME

Director: Tochi Onwubiko, Precious Okpala

School: EbonyLife Creative Academy, Lagos

Nigeria, 2021, English, 11'15", *fiction*

We are in Katang, where Anan and Amena, two orphaned twins, live. Shortly before their twentieth birthday Amena has to separate from her brother to continue her studies. Three years after their separation, a civil war breaks out in Katang and Anan is forced to join the army. Receiving no more news from her brother, a great fear grows in Amena. A realistic and dramatic cross-section of life that confronts the theme of war and the voids that it irreparably leaves in the families of those involved.

NEON GHOST – NEON PHANTOM

Director: Leonardo Martinelli

School: Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio)

Brazil, 2021, Portuguese, 20'00", *fiction/musical*

In the streets of Rio de Janeiro lives João, a young Brazilian boy who, like many in his country, has lost his job due to the pandemic. Forced to accept a job as a rider, he realizes how much the reality he dreamed of is very far from his everyday life and how much the motorcycle he would like is a very distant goal. In an alternation of dialogues and choral choreographies accompanied by songs, the precarious and uncertain reality of the workers of today's gig economy is highlighted: little empathy and veiled threats from customers, the consequent and constant fear of receiving a bad review and being blocked on the platforms, the lack of protection and safety at work level. 'Not even neon lights make us visible': this is how João sums up the condition of this new working class that is struggling to be recognized the most basic labor rights.

PRESUDA - THE VERDICT

Director: Dora Jung

School: Fakultet za medije i komunikacije (FMK), Belgrade

Serbia, 2021, Serbian, 13'49", *fiction*

After the accusation of murdering her husband and brother of the Minister of Construction, Ana Knezevic is quietly awaiting her verdict. In charge of representing her, the lawyer David Klug, led by a deep and sincere desire for truth, tries to earn her trust to help her, but without any success. The atmosphere is made even more oppressive by the constant questions of the lawyer to the client, matured through an introspective development of the same. In a context of corruption and apparent justice, from which, however, an all-female solidarity emerges, waiting in silence is perhaps the only way to escape an even more threatening condemnation.

FRANCESKA

Director: Alberto Cano

School: Lightbox Academy S.L., Madrid

Spain, 2021, no dialogue, 7'29", *animation*

In this animated contemporary reinterpretation of Frankenstein's tale, the mad scientist Victor wants to bring back to life the diva Franceska, whom he craves and admires deeply. With the help of his awkward assistant Igor, he will try to challenge the human condition and to go beyond its limits. This animated short film condenses decades of Gothic/fantastic narrative and cinematic tradition, trying to eliminate gender stereotypes. It also proposes an original and modern interpretation, keeping alive a reflective and contemporary subtext.

SOFRA AND VARRIT - THE TABLE OF GRAVE

Directed by: Mirak Zymberaj

School: Universiteti i Prishtinës Faculty of Arts, Pristina

Kosovo, 2021, Albanian/Serbian, 15'52", *fiction*

Kosovo, 1999. With the aim of protecting his daughter and grandson from the Serbian militias which are killing civilians, a man builds them an underground hideout which looks like a tomb, so that they can hide there, breathing from a hole. He communicates with them and tries to reassure them thanks to an escamotage: playing a wooden board with bottles in the improvised cemetery to make them feel his presence. A cross-section that tells a piece of history close to us, rich of humanity and vitality, despite the constant presence of the tombs, highlighting the thin border between life and death and the strength of life.

SAFE

Direction: Ian Bariling

School: Tisch School of the Arts, New York

United States of America, 2021, English, 16'39", *fiction*

Atlantic City. A father must understand how far he is willing to go to prevent his son from being found and imprisoned by the police because of a quarrel that ended in tragedy. He faces a choice: to continue to protect his son from himself or to abandon the role of "father protector", thus making sure that the

boy can face his faults. Shot in 35 mm film, *Safe* focuses on the concept of security: the immense spaces of empty American casinos are transported into claustrophobic and inadequate places that do not provide a haven. The centre of the narrative is the reflection on the figure of the father and an excellent acting brings out the unspoken, thus putting the viewer in the position of observer, and at the same time, of participant in the emotional struggle of a father on the verge of a crisis.

WIEDERSEHEN

Direction: Helene Sorger

School: St. Pölten University of Applied Science

Austria, 2021, German/Russian, 17'30", *fiction*

Towards the end of World War II, two soldiers from opposite sides accidentally meet in an abandoned building, not too far from the battlefield. They speak different languages, but they demonstrate mutual understanding and generosity until they are abruptly brought back to the reality of the war. With the sounds of war in the distance, the space of the destroyed farmhouse becomes a place for the two soldiers to rediscover humanity and share feelings with someone much more similar than they could imagine.

UNE DERNIÈRE NUIT – ONE LAST NIGHT

Direction: Paul Vinet

School: 3iS Institut International de l'Image et du Son, Parigi

France, 2021, French, 16'04", *fiction*

Theo is a member of the so-called "vice squad", while Eva is a young prostitute who got in trouble. A series of unpredictable and bloody events leads the two to make a final journey looking for a way out in the middle of the night. Theo is prepared to do anything to protect his beloved Eva, but at night he will drag both into a spiral of pain and violence. One Last Night, through a crescendo of tension and flashbacks, stages the precariousness of human emotion. The secret, the anguish, and the passion can push anyone to make a heinous gesture, but the lack of lucidity brings inevitably painful consequences.

TEUNER

Direction: Ondřej Veverka

School: Film Academy of Miroslav Ondříček in Písek

Czech Republic, 2021, Czech, 28'36", *fiction*

František "Franta" Teuner is a former leader of the Czech Hitler Youth and now an inmate of a communist prison. Thanks to his role as a doctor inside the prison, he has earned the respect of many of the other inmates, but Karel Kalina is not one of them and she has been hostile towards him since his entry into the cell. The real story of Teuner produces a psychological drama of great depth which investigates on the acceptance of responsibility and the awareness of being condemned by the society, but above all it reasons on the desire for redemption, that Franta seeks in his role as a doctor within the prison.

SHIKHANDI

Direction: Sahil D. Vada

School: Whistling Woods International, Mumbai

India, 2021, bengali/hindi, 23'43", *fiction*

A young boy with a passion for theatre and with the dream of becoming a great actress, lives alone with his father, a violent man whom he has to hide his passion and his real identity from. One day, this boy, after being seen dressing a *sari*, decides to leave behind his father's abuses, through an unusual theatre company he finds a new family and the strength to express himself. The events of Shikhandi, an androgynous heroine from the epic poem Mahabharata, are so much the background to the boy's life to blend into one thing, creating a skillful plot between myth and reality: an intense journey in contemporary India for the discovery of a transgender identity.

THE HEADLESS MULE

Direction: Tamires Muniz

School: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, Tallinn

Estonia/Brazil, 2021, english, 12'32", *animation*

In the middle of the decadent nature in South America, a woman and a priest have an illicit relationship that God punishes turning the woman into a macabre creature, almost mythological: a mule without a head. The woman, chased by her lover, tries to escape - but at the same time indulging - a destiny made by hypocrisy, lust and sin. When the threat of an apocalypse comes, the question is: could a curse save a person's life? With graphic effects occasionally retrò and occasionally pop, with black and white scenes interrupted by others where colors explode, *The Headless Mule* combines folkloric music and sound effects to proverbs embroidered on fabric, where, inevitably, one word is replaced with one other, not before having marked it with a red thread.

UN AUTRE BLANCHE – ANOTHER WHITE GIRL

Direction: Medessè Agohoundjè

School : Institut Supérieur des Métiers de l'Audiovisuel (ISMA), Cotonou

Benin, 2021, french, 12'32", *fiction*

Sètchemè is an albino girl that lives her difference with extreme distress. Indeed, she feels lonely and keeps questioning herself about her existence. Sètchemè lives with her friend Mélanie who will help her in a process of personal growth and acceptance of her difference, encouraging her to smile, to dream and to think about love. During her path, Sètchemè will also find a new friend. Narrated in first person, from the main character herself, this work is able to express completely the complexity of personal acceptance.

MY BRAIN BURST OUT LAUGHING

Direction: Ali Astaraki

School: Soore University, Teheran

Iran, 2021, no dialogue, 7'15", *animation*

A bird put itself in a cage; a dead soldier stretches his arm from the gurney to play video games, a girl, sitting in her house destroyed by bombardment, watches television, unconcerned of rockets around her; a man plays sax while the ground under his feet has become a dump: images of a war's world, filthy and violent, where humans seem to ignore their own conditions and their own responsibilities. Scenes of a dystopian and bewildering reality move quickly in an animation which combines in a creative way different techniques, striking at the heart of the audience.