**Winners of the 23rd Ji.hlava IDFF: *Fonja, Teach, Solo and Aphasia***

**The 23rd edition of the Ji.hlava IDFF has announced its winners. The best Czech documentary is *Solo* by French director Artemio Benki, the award for the most notable international documentary film was granted to *Fonja*. The jury of the Between the Seas section gave their award to Romanian film *Teach*, and Belgian *Aphasia* was appraised as the best documentary debut. The Contribution to World Cinema Award went to Kazakhstani director Sergey Dvortsevoy, the author of this year’s festival spot. The festival trophy of the 23rd annual Ji.hlava IDFF was designed by Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei.**

**Opus Bonum**, a section representing contemporary international documentary production, showed a selection of nine films. The section’s sole juror, Cristi Puiu, picked *Fonja* by director Lina Zacher. Ten juvenile delinquents from the largest detention institution in Madagascar have joined a four-month workshop to learn working with a film camera, editing, creating simple cinematic tricks, and telling their own stories. The award went to a collective of creators: Ravo Henintsoa Andrianatoandro, Lovatiana Desire Santatra, Sitraka Hermann Ramanamokatra, Jean Chrisostome Rakotondrabe, Erick Edwin Andrianamelona, Elani Eric Rakotondrasoa, Todisoa Niaina Sylvano Randrialalaina, Sitrakaniaina Raharisoa, Adriano Raharison Nantenaina, Alpha Adrimamy Fenotoky, Lina Zacher. “For the warmth, the intuition, the trust, the courage and generosity that are holding together a film that keeps on reaffirming the power of the innocent gaze while echoing the voices of the old masters,” said the statement of the juror. Special Mention went to the film’s director, Lina Zacher. “For the intelligent and inspired use of the cinematographic device in her search for the ineffable,” stated Criti Puiu.

The best Eastern and Central European film is *Teach* by Romanian director Alex Brendea. The jury of the **Between the Seas** section including American film theorist Timothy Corrigan appreciated the film as a “celebration of the unconventional”. This is an essential film that needs to be seen around the world. A math teacher working on the fringes of a failing educational system becomes a transformative mentor for a group of young students. Through his dedicated tuition, these young people discover the most important lesson in life: you must fall ‘tragically in love with what you do’. For its celebration of the unconventional, for its embrace of messiness, imagination and passion in teaching Between the Seas award goes to Teach,” says the jury statement. The authors of the winning film also receive a financial prize of 10,000 EUR.

*Life Could Be So Beautiful* by the duo of creators, Angelika Herta and Filip Jacobson emerged victorious from the **student competition of Between the Seas** section, comprised of seven film titles. “This film begins as a geographical and cultural bicycle road trip through France, on the trail of a Polish war time writer from the 1940s. But the real journey is a witty exploration of the dynamics of a relationship. For its free-flowing, unpredictable style, which subverts the conventional narrative of a masculine adventure, and for its wry, open-ended enquiry into the nature of historical trauma and memory,” says the jury statement. The jury also awarded a Special Mention: to the Czech film called *Daily Manure* by director Nikola Krutilová. “Using minimal cinematic means, in a series of intense and poignant sequences, it documents the crisis within the global environmental crisis. More than documented, it reveals the crisis to be as inevitable as it really is. In the course of four seasons we witness the cycle of a cemetery of human consumption and overproduction,” stated the jury. The authors of the winning film will receive a financial prize of 2.000 USD (in partnership with Current Time TV).

This year’s best documentary debut is Belgian *Aphasia*. “For its powerful ability to provoke a visceral response. For its capacity to elicit the violence it explores. This film succeeds in translating content into form and experience. This film focuses on the collective silence surrounding brutal historical crimes and the fragmentation of history,” said the jury of the **First Lights** section commenting on the film directed by Jelena Jureša. *Aphasia* also won the Student Jury Award. The jury appreciated especially its creative grasp of form as well as the advanced essayist style, forcing the viewer to rethink the boundaries of their past thinking and perception. “Based on an analysis of collective and individual inequalities, it makes people accept responsibility for how they have behaved and will continue to behave,” continues the jury.

The competition sections of the 23rd edition of Ji.hlava were comprised one hundred and twenty-seven film titles. **Czech Joy** showcased unprecedented twenty-one documentary films. The Czech Joy competition section has newly opened to Czech films made by other than Czech directors. “It is also thanks to this change that Ji.hlava will dish out perhaps the most varied offer of Czech docs, shown in their world or Czech premiere,” says Marek Hovorka. The best Czech documentary is *Solo* by French director Artemio Benki. “We appreciate the lightness, nonviolence and concentration used by the author to portray a strong human story of a suffering person and to get as close as possible without disturbing formal effects and pathos,” said the statement of the jury composed of last year’s winner of the Czech Joy section, Karel Žalud, and Slovakian writer Monika Kompaníková, among others. The authors of the winning film also receive a financial prize of 10,000 EUR.

Special Mention was dedicated to *Lost Coast* by filmmaker Jiří Zykmund. “An unobtrusive insight into the lives of outsiders attached to the past and a place that, despite dramatic changes, is still their home. The film moderately examines the basic questions of human being in an upside-down landscape. It is a metaphor of a world that is falling apart and that we are no longer able to understand,” stated the jurors. Irish documentarian Kris Kelly took home the student jury award for his film, *Kings of Šumava*. “The film *The Kings of Šumava* objectively deals with the issue of heroism in a relatively recent time, greatly important to young people. The opinion of the hero’s actions is distorted by the contemporary ideology and generally perceived in a negative way. The document states this fact and subsequently offers the views of both the parties dealt with to the same extent, so the document fulfils its primary function, i.e. it is an objective testimony. Thus, it becomes a great teaching material. The artistic and information value is of the same quality. The realistically conceived animation, which is artistically well done, depicts memories that can no longer be captured and the pictorial component of the film portrays the atmosphere of the time,” said the students in their jury statement. The jurors also granted the Special Mention: to *Apparatgeist* by director Marie-Magdalena Kochová. “Several shorter documentaries, all made by young filmmakers, have a different position in the list of films. These documentaries should be rated differently than longer formats and they also deserve a special award. Of these, the 11-minute *Apparatgeist*, which has the potential to evoke various responses, was the most appealing. Its well-styled execution intensifies the stories from smartphones, whose individuality and apparent incoherence perfectly illustrates the issue of disseminating information. The topic requires taking a stand, but this was not even the director’s concern. Her relaxed commentary on the film after the screening evidently showed a fresh talent,” said the student jury.

The most outstanding experimental documentary title is *Action, Almost Unable to Think* by Chinese director Haonan Mao. “For its visionary and dramatic approach to world-making, the film transforms a real life story into an apocalyptic cinematic journey,“ says the section’s jury. **Fascinations** will this year show twenty-four films. Special Mention went to visual miniature *abiding* by Ugo Petronin. “A stunning short that unravels and rediscovers the magic and the power of cinema through a personal new technique,” said the jury led by Andrea Lissoni, chief curator at Tate Modern.

**Fascinations: Exprmntl.cz** presented twenty experimental films. The best Czech experimental title is *Moréna Rex* by Marie Lukáčová. “Combining genres and styles from advertisement to videoclip, from documentary to doodling graphics, *Morena Rex* is an ironic attack to the patriarchal financial institutions and their impacts on societies,” says the jury justifying their decision. The authors of the winning film also receive a financial prize of 50,000 CZK (in partnership with 8smička – Art Zone).

Special Mention went to Franz Milec’s *Abstract Horror*. “Based on an interview with one of the most controversial thinker of our times this science-fiction journey collapses motion graphics - 3D imagery, in an innovative and uncanny way,” said the jurors.

The best film of the **Testimony on Nature** section is *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*. “This film by Edward Burtynsky, Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas de Pencier puts a human face on global destruction. Humans are affecting nearly all forms of life on the planet. With stunning visual imagery, stories from the people, and with the amazing animals that share this world with us, the filmmakers explain the complexity of our environment and warn about what could be a mass extinction. It’s as fast and brutal as the change that overwhelms is. A cry for help. A call for change,” said the jurors in their statement, including the Irish journalist and writer Clifford Coonan.

The award in the **Testimony on Politics** section went to *The Cave* by Feras Fayyad. “Why don't they stay and help out there?” were often the words said by opponents of receiving refugees during the war in Syria. Feras Fayyad’s documentary ‘The Cave’ shows the heroism of the doctors and medical staff who worked in the surrounded and bombed town of Ghouta. They had saved thousands of lives in their underground hospital, although they had limited equipment and had to face distrust and gender prejudice. Despite their high commitment, they were eventually forced to leave the town, facing an ongoing military campaign. The documentary shows human dedication and solidarity that cannot be broken even by the tragedy of war,” declared the jury.

The best film in the **Testimony on Knowledge** section is Finnish title, *The Other Side of Mars* by Minna Långström. “The film shows that even scientific photos of the planet Mars which we might perceive as a pure representation of reality are actually reshaping the reality into something we understand and expect. The extreme example of scientific picturing of an object which we have no direct experience with makes the audience ask: How are the pictures from all the current problems on the Earth reshaped by our expectations and ability to understand,” stated the jury.

The award for the best short doc in the **Short Joy** section goes to Argentinian director Ingrid Pokropek for her film *Shendy Wu: a Diary*, a personal documentary about writing two diaries and finding a lost childhood friend.

The **audience** was most impressed by *Two Roads* by Radovan Síbrt about the Czech band, The Tap Tap.

**Silver Eye** **Awards** for the best Central and Eastern European films of the East Silver market organised by the Institute of Documentary Film saw their eleventh edition. The international jury in the short-length category appreciated *Pripyat Piano* by Czech director Eliška Cílková as a “poetic film that is a convincing combination of sound, image and tone”. The Special Mention was granted to *Waiting for a Miracle* by Aljona Surzhikova. The award in the feature-length category went to Belgian-Swedish-Danish film *Transnistra* by Anna Eborn which according to the jury is an “exquisite 16mm film footage capturing a crucial turning point – the end of adolescence, the play of youth and light, set in the rural landscape in a country the status of which is not recognized”. Special Mention went to Polish-Slovak *The Wind*. *A Documentary Thriller* by Michał Bielawski.

The awards for the best festival poster was this year granted to the 54th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and Zubroffka International Short Film Festival 2018.

Tereza Reková took home the award for the best audio documentary for her film *Matěj* from the *Dobrá vůle* (*Good Will*) cycle that offers insight into the life of people with autism.

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