

PRESS RELEASE

AWARD-WINNING FILMS OF THE 28TH JI.HLAVA IDFF

Jihlava, October 31, 2024

The 28th Ji.hlava IDFF has announced the award winners. The Best Czech Documentary Film is *The Impossibility* directed by Tomáš Hlaváček and the Best World Documentary Award went to *Ms. President* by Marek Šulík. The Award for Best Debut this year went to the film *Grey Zone* by Daniela Meressa Rusnoková. The audience appreciated *Dajori* by Martin Páv and Nicolas Kourek. For his Contribution to World Cinema, the leading figure of Taiwan's New Wave, Tsai Ming-liang, was honored. Ji.hlava continues online until November 17.

Tomorrow evening, **Ji.hlava Online** kicks off. It will run until November 17 and will offer over 150 films from this year's live festival program. All films will be available for viewing only within the Czech Republic.

Opus Bonum: Ms. President

Opus Bonum, a section showcasing contemporary world documentary production, included 13 film titles.

Out of them, the three-member jury selected **Ms. President** by Slovak director Marek Šulík as **the winner of the competition section**. *"A fascinating and absorbing character study of Zuzana Čaputová's five years as Slovak President addressing the ethical and political shifts in Slovak society during this time. Ms. President presents a personalized and intimate portrait with a particular focus on gender and familial dynamics along with her political undoing by opposition populist leader, Prime Minister Robert Fico. The film gives the viewer a profound sense of the challenges facing women in politics today,"* says the statement of the jury composed of Australian philosopher Robert Sinnerbrink, acclaimed Chinese director Xiaoshuai Wang, and Czech filmmaker and composer Eliška Cílková. The creators of the winning film will receive a financial prize of 10,000 USD.

As part of **Opus Bonum** section, the jury this year also awarded a prize to the **best film from the Central and Eastern European region**. The award went to Czech film **Happiness to All** by Filip Remunda. *"A powerful and unsettling observational character study of a disaffected, marginalised individual, which explores the social context in which Putin's nationalist populism has taken root. Happiness to All is a challenging and insightful work that sheds light on the disturbing side of contemporary Central European politics,"* said the jury in its statement. The creators of the winning film from Central and Eastern Europe will receive a financial award of 5,000 USD.

The Best Editing Award was given to [Goodbye](#) directed by Toia Bonino. *“The Goodbye unfolds a complex and revealing examination of family history focusing on Toia Bonino’s discovery of her grandfather’s links to fascism as an aide to Benito Mussolini. The film shifts to an intuitive and reflective exploration of gender relations and the intertwining of familial, cultural, and political history. Many layers of editing and complex narration are edited masterfully together here in ways that remain open and thought-provoking,”* appreciated the jury.

The Award for the Best Cinematography went to [In Praise of Shadows](#) by Canadian filmmaker Catherine Martin. *“A mesmerising visual meditation on shadows and their significance in relation to cultural experience and artistic expression. In Praise of Shadows is visually engaging with excellent cinematography resulting in a poetic evocation of different ways of rendering light and shadow inspired by Japanese author, Junichiro Tanazaki,”* says the jury statement.

Thomas Fürhapter was recognized for his [Cleaning & Cleansing](#) which received the **Award for the Original Approach**. *“An absorbing and arresting cinematic study of everyday cleaning and cleansing practices in a diverse range of work, institutional and social settings, from slaughterhouse to space station. Cleaning & Cleansing is rigorously formal and precise, with strikingly 'clean' editing and sound design complementing the images perfectly. Our modern Western obsession with cleanliness and hygiene are put under the microscope here in a surprisingly engaging way,”* states the jury in its statement.

The Student Jury Award in the Opus Bonum section went to Argentinean film [Goodbye](#) by Toia Bonino. *“The jury has selected The Goodbye by Toia Bonino. This distinctive documentary reveals the relationships between the men and women of an Italian-Argentinian family. Toia discovered an unexpected family legacy in the form of her grandfather’s negatives, sparking a bold journey into her family roots. Instead of traditional documentary storytelling, Toia Bonino combines diverse footage, photographs and texts to unfold the tensions between the men and women in a family where women silently bore the burden of the family’s past. The jury selected the film for its original perspective, unexpectedly vibrant mosaic of micro-stories, metaphors and often willingly unclear circumstances of family history,”* remarked the Student Jury.

Czech Joy: The Impossibility

This year, the **Czech Joy** section comprised 21 competition films. The jury picked [The Impossibility](#) by Tomáš Hlaváček as **the best film**. *“The awarded documentary is a haunting film that weaves together footage taken over many years into a seamless whole in which time disappears and a convincing picture of individual criminality and systemic failures remains. Against the backdrop of the exploitative tactics of a slum landlord, it captures the despair and the rising voice of the Roma women trapped in impossibility. The best documentary in the Czech Joy section for 2024 goes to The Impossibility,”* notes the five-member jury including: musician and writer Vladimír Merta, aesthetician Tereza Hadravová, poet and Jihlava based publisher Aleš Kauer, producer Pavlína Kalandrová and Slovak filmmaker Pavol Pekarčík who took home the main award in this category last year together with Ivan Ostrochovský. The creators of the winning film will receive a financial prize of 200,000 CZK.

The jury also awarded a **special mention**, honoring [Happiness to All](#) by Filip Remunda. *“A powerful and unsettling observational character study of a disaffected, marginalised individual, which explores the social context in which Putin's nationalist populism has taken root. Happiness to All is a challenging and insightful work that sheds light on the disturbing side of contemporary Central European politics,”* describes jury in its statement.

The Best Editing Award went to [Echt – The Art of Jan Merta](#) directed by Tomáš Merta. *“We appreciate the gentle way in which the editing of this film drew us into the inner world of its main protagonist, caught between introversion and engagement, as well as into the tension in his paintings. The Czech Joy jury awards the prize for the best sound to Echt – the Art of Jan Merta,”* appreciated the jury.

The Award for the **Best Cinematography in the Czech Joy section** was given to [Fakir](#) directed by Roman Ďuriš. *“In this film, life between prison and the circus is narrated using an agile and action-packed cinematography that manages to capture the overall situation and draw you into the atmosphere of the depicted world without leaving the intimate space of the protagonist. The Czech Joy jury awards the prize for the best cinematography to the film Fakir,”* notes the jury statement.

The Award for the Best Sound Design was won by [once i got in, it was hard to get out](#) by filmmaker Nora Štrbová. *“The Jury of the Czech Joy competition appreciated the artistically sensitive use of the soundtrack which helps distinguish the protagonist's inner world from the outer reality. This approach creates a unique mythical and poetic atmosphere in the film once I got in, it was hard to get out,”* the jury recognized the film.

The Award for the Original Approach was taken home by Martin Páv and Nicolas Kourek for their film [Dajori](#). *“The Czech Joy jury decided to present the award for Original Approach to a film that focuses on care, concern and love in a Romani family and that stands out and inspires us by its sensitive listening to the protagonists. The award goes to the film Dajori,”* the jury evaluated the film.

The Student Jury gave appreciation to [World Between Us](#) by Marie Dvořáková. *„Our jury decided to award this film because it gave us a refreshing feeling of optimism and hope that something can be done. It inspired us and made us want to do something. We found ourselves wanting to see the film again and again, once is just not enough! It focuses not only on Marie Tomanová's photographic career but also on her extraordinary relationship with her husband Thomas. In this way, the film also speaks a unique language, as it looks for the most interesting in even the most ordinary people and ordinary relationships. It portrays with optimism and lightness the personality of the photographer and her work of portraits, and shows that we can find ourselves on the other side of the world. We think all young people should see it so that they are not afraid to follow their dreams,”* agreed the students.

First Lights: Grey Zone

The Ji.hlava IDFF granted awards for **the best film debuts and second films** created. The **First Lights** section gave its main award to [Grey Zone](#) by Daniela Meressa Rusnoková. *“We admire*

this film for its sensitive approach document longitudinal reverberations, powerful first-person cinematography and narration, and archival contextualization. For its raw and cinematic qualities, the award for the Best Documentary Film goes to Daniela Rusnoková's Grey Zone," said the jury that also appreciated the film for the best sound design. The Jury composed of American curator and editor-in-chief of a documentary film magazine, Abby Sun, Czech director Tomáš Klein and Argentinian filmmaker Laura Ruggiero, recognized the film *"for its transportive design connecting several types of images into one cohesive whole".*

The Special Mention in the section went to Austrian film [Becoming Outline](#) by Miriam Bajtala. *"In this film, the narrative construction, multilayered staging, and courageous excavation of the filmmaker's own life created a thoughtful and insightful experience. We award a Special Mention to Miriam Bajtala's Becoming Outline,"* agreed the jury.

The Best Cinematography Award went to [World Between Us](#) by Marie Dvořáková. *"For creating an intimacy that truly conveys the spirit and personality of the protagonist, the award for the Best Cinematography goes to Marie Dvořáková for World Between Us,"* says the jury in its statement.

The Award for the Best Original Approach went to [Me + You](#) by director duo Zohra Benhammou and Romy Mana. *"We were happily surprised by this film's unique and authentic hangout structure, where shared moments are more important than dramatic storylines, which deeply touched us. The award for Original Approach goes to Zohra Benhammou and Romy Mana's Me + You,"* claims the jury in its statement.

Visegrad Award: Grey Zone

Award for the **Best Documentary Film in the Visegrad Region** went to [Grey Zone](#) by Daniela Meressa Rusnoková. *"For an extremely brave and aesthetically accomplished film that combines historical archives with the most personal experience of cruelty and isolation that a mother can face, taking us on a universal journey filled with love and strong family bonds, the Award for the Best Documentary Film in the Visegrad Region goes to Grey Zone,"* said the jury composed of: Chinese producer Xuan Liu, program manager Galya Stepanova and American documentarian Kirsten Johnson.

A special mention was awarded to Polish filmmaker Joanna Janikowska for her film [Comrades](#). *"The film delicately illustrates the intertwining paths of three young idealists, fighting with an old political frame as well as with their own future. The director brings a unique perspective on European democracy with her three characters, who enthusiastically participate in the political activities in their own ways aiming for a better society. The images are creatively unified from her initial rough materials into a beautifully and intelligently crafted film despite limited production resources,"* agreed the jury.

Fascinations: Saigon, Kosovo

The **Fascinations** section showcased 24 films. The **award for the best experimental film** went to [Saigon, Kosovo](#) by Mexican director Tina Dirdamala. *"Portraying two distinct human lives, this emotional film explores the sense of uprootedness, revealing how separation from one's*

roots, identity and original language can lead to unexpectedly positive outcomes,” appreciated the family jury of the experimental section including visual artist Dominik Gajarský and his mother Romana Gajarská.

The Special Mention in the category went to Indian film [Dinosaur’s Egg](#) directed by Sruthil Mathew. *“A poetic exploration of family history through the search for places charged with memories of grandparents’ passing. In sensitive and sometimes performative ways, Sruthil presents the myths associated with these places to the audience,”* concluded the jury.

The second Special Mention went to [space invaders.exe](#) by Syrian director Malaz Usta. *„ Malaz employs archival material to narrate the stories of displaced people from both history and the present. He uses a distinctive film language and collage techniques, as well as visual elements from computer games. To convey this emotionally charged topic, he isn’t afraid to incorporate hyperbole,”* agreed the jury.

Exprmntl.cz: Hopeful Visitors and Grieving Guides: Notes from the Travel Notebook of a Dark Tourist

Fascinations: Exprmntl.cz showcased 14 films. The jury selected **the best Czech experimental film** and awarded the film [Hopeful Visitors and Grieving Guides: Notes from the Travel Notebook of a Dark Tourist](#) by duo of filmmakers, Jiří Žák and Matěj Pavlík. *“Experiential travel takes on various forms. Jiří and Matěj traveled to Norway to measure the sculptures of Gustav Vigeland, to confirm whether they truly align with Nazi doctrine, or to the infamous island of Utøya, the site of a cold-blooded terrorist attack committed on a group of young people in 2011,”* noted the jury in its statement.

The section’s Special Mention went to [Ruvja and Morena](#) by filmmaker Julie Slovenčíková. *“If Věra Chytilová were still with us, she would surely have appreciated the rough and raw use of film language as well as the sincerity and playfulness of the two main characters in this short film depicting their time spent by the water,”* agreed the jury.

The second Special Mention was given to [Pyramid](#) directed by Matěj Smetana. *“Matěj Smetana decided to share his human possessions with the neighbors from the insect realm. He built a small replica of Djoser’s pyramid out of sugar next to a large anthill and waited for the reactions of its inhabitants and other curious passers-by,”* remarked the jury.

Testimonies: The Sky Above Zenica

The **Testimonies** section showcased 15 films. The main award went to [Sky above Zenica](#) by Bosnian director Zlatko Pranjić and Danish filmmaker Nanna Frank Moeller. *“For its deep access, and longitudinal lens on the human costs of corporate greed and the searing power of a community taking a stand, we award the best film on Politics, Knowledge and Nature in the Testimonies category, to The Sky Above Zenica by Nanna Frank Moller and Zlatko Pranjić,”* remarked the jury composed of documentarian Katerina Cizek, Norwegian peace expert Siri Aas Rustad and Mikmak activist Cheryl Maloney.

Special Mention for Best Film on Politics went to [The Day Iceland Stood Still](#) by American filmmaker Pamela Hogan. *“Weaving first-hand interviews with archives and animation, this inspirational documentary reflects on the early days of first wave feminism in Iceland. It tells the story of a powerful collective of shrewd, funny, creative matriarchs who overcame fear and deployed a genius strategy to cross political and class lines and mobilize a stunning 99% of the country’s women to strike for their rights. For its gently-paced, witty and elegantly clear account of a pioneering feminist movement in Iceland, we award the special mention for best film on Politics in the Testimonies category, to The Day Iceland Stood Still, by Pamela Hogan,”* says the jury statement.

The Special Mention for the Best Film on Knowledge went to [Pistachio Wars](#) by duo of creators Yasha Levine and Rowan Wernham. *“This fiercely independent documentary, valiantly supported through crowdfunding, follows the money behind California’s growing water emergency, and lands at the doorstep of pistachio tycoons who meddle with waterways, toxins, exploitative labour practices and global geopolitics to turn a wide profit on monocropping. This story unravels of a vast secret network of corruption, hiding in plain sight. For its razor sharp investigation, analysis and connecting the dots of a draught to corporate greed,”* said the jury.

Third Special Mention for the Best Film on Nature went to Australian filmmaker Sally Aitken for her [Every Little Thing](#). *“This intimate nature documentary follows a human hero who is resoundingly compassionate, down to earth in her daily mission to rescue the smallest birds on earth, the hummingbirds. By saving these little creatures in her sanctuary in the city of angels, she saves herself. For its moving testimony of how hope and patience can heal broken hummingbird wings — and human hearts,”* remarks the jury statement.

Best VR: Dreaming of Lebanon

The section’s winner is [Dreaming of Lebanon](#) by duo of authors Martin Waehlich and Cynthia Sawma. *“Dreaming of Lebanon* uses impressive elements of virtual reality to share the experience of a time and place in crisis. It combines documentary and illusory elements to highlight individual engagement in collective responsibility. We award this film for its use of VR as an empathetic medium,”* says the jury statement, which included Slovak film historian Katarína Mišíková, French artist Gwenola Wagon, and Czech documentarian Andran Abramjan.

Contribution to the World Cinema Award was given to acclaimed director and renowned filmmaker of the Taiwanese New Wave **Tsai Ming-liang**. *“We are honored that this year’s Award for Contribution to World Cinema will be accepted in Ji.hlava by Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-liang, one of the most prominent Asian filmmakers. In his films, he portrays human vulnerability and loneliness, restoring dignity to people on the margins of society, often migrants working in the most menial jobs,”* says festival director Marek Hovorka.

The **Audience Award** this year went to [Dajori](#) by the filmmaker duo Martin Páv and Nicolas Kourek.

The best **Short Joy** film is the Indian [Only if the Baby Cries...](#) by Shadab Farooq. It was selected through the voting of the audience at DAFilms. The winning film will receive distribution and promotion on the DAFilms platform valued at 3,000 EUR.

Traditionally, Ji.hlava also awarded the prize for outstanding contribution to producers (APA World Excellence Award), which was accepted by Slovak producer Zuzana Mistríková.

The physical edition of the 28th Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival will conclude on Sunday, October 3. From 6:00 PM, the festival will continue as Ji.hlava Online, offering over 150 films for streaming to all accredited participants. With an active festival accreditation, participants simply need to log into their personal profile on the Ji.hlava website via their Visitor Page account. Films will be available to stream until midnight on Sunday, November 17. Films are geoblocked and will be accessible only within the Czech Republic. All films will be available from the start of the Ji.hlava Online program until its end.

For more information go to ji-hlava.com and the festival's [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [TikTok](#) profiles.

28th Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival

25. 10.—3. 11. 2024

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