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Wednesday, 11 March – Wednesday, 18 March 2020

22nd Documentary Film Festival – DFF

www.fdf.si

Festival sections

Competitive films

Human rights films dealing with some of our world's most urgent problems, from the rights of discriminated women, minorities, migrant workers and political asylum-seekers, to ecological issues or religious fundamentalism. The section serves as a reminder to present-day mass media which tend to disregard numerous important and meaningful stories due to their apparent lack of attractiveness.

The Best Human Rights Award is presented by Amnesty International Slovenia.

Relevant, socially-critical films

Documentaries that relate to (and complement) the competitive section, but – also due to a bigger budget – generally feature stories that arouse stronger interest and enjoy more media coverage.

Myths, icons, media

By including films about innovative individuals, social phenomena, media issues or unexplored stories, the section highlights more popular aspects of contemporary life and recent history.

Intimate and global portrayals

As the title suggests, the section features private, carefully woven tales that concern either an individual or a certain region and time.

Retrospective

East German Documentary Cinema 1946–91

Work Ethic

Approximately ten years ago, the Documentary Film Festival featured a theme section titled *The Death of a Worker*, which, needless to say, dealt with the difficult situation faced by the labour force. Today, in these precarious times, when people work under deplorable conditions and languish on the margins of society despite having a permanent job, this problematic topic remains a burning issue both locally and globally. Nevertheless, the topic of work is not necessarily pessimistic, for example, the common thread running through American literary genius Kurt Vonnegut's short stories was "Work Ethic vs Fame and Fortune."

Work ethic in extreme circumstances and commitment to one's vocation regardless of financial compensation are some of the (conditionally optimistic) topics that emerge from this year's DFF selection. They quietly made their way into our programme without anybody planning them; in view of the fact that they testify to an unobtrusive, nonpartisan programming (well, working) zeal, such coincidences are most welcome. Is there an ode to life and a profession more beautiful than a medical team working at a makeshift underground hospital during the unrelenting bombardment of Aleppo (*For Sama*)? Or Lea Tsemel, an Israeli human-rights lawyer who, contrary to all expectations, has indefatigably defended the disregarded and systematically stymied Palestinian political prisoners for over five decades (*Advocate*)? Or Filipino domestic workers getting ready to face the uncertainty, homesickness and possible abuses inherent in overseas work (*Overseas*)? Or the British journalist Robert Fisk who has devoted his entire career to war reporting (*This Is Not a Movie*)? Or another team of journalists relentlessly exposing the atrocious corruption and appalling state of the Romanian healthcare system (*Collective*)? Or a Macedonian apiarist who remains faithful to traditional methods and the golden rule of beekeeping in a secluded mountain village, and has inspired a documentary that was nominated for two Academy Awards and became a global sensation in less than a year (*Honeyland*)?

Indeed, the world is not just beautiful and optimistic, although some prefer to believe so, e.g. the modern-day teenage influencers (*Jawline*) whose potential meteoritic rise to stardom could turn them into assholes overnight, which is the subject examined by the humorous Canadian documentary *Assholes: A Theory*. Those who have crossed the line now contemplate crime and punishment, some in Lithuanian prisons (*Exemplary Behaviour*), others in Neapolitan suburbia after being released from prison (*Daughter of Camorra*). The cult of personality has earned communist tyrants posthumous fame (*State Funeral*), and enabled others to distance themselves from heated political controversies and let the public be the judge of their work (*The Makavejev Case*). As a rule, artists dislike talking about themselves and their work, but Andrey Tarkovsky discussed his art and life passionately and openly, even religiously (*A Cinema Prayer*). Cinema is not commonly a place where people come to pray, it's more likely a place to indulge in yearning. The choice of stories is more than varied. You're welcome to pick and choose.

Simon Poppek
Cankarjev dom Film Programme Director

People Want Their Stories to Be Heard

We are looking forward to another collaboration between Amnesty International Slovenia and the Festival of Documentary Film, where the three members of our jury will pick the best human rights documentary for the 12th year in a row. The depiction of human rights in art is important for promoting their understanding and subsequent adoption, and documentaries are in a unique position to realistically and comprehensively hold up a mirror to reality. That is why we believe it is important to support such creativity through our competition and give it additional exposure.

The films competing this year are extremely diverse – they explore the issues of punishment and forgiveness for a crime (*Exemplary Behaviour*), a woman's experience of war (*For Sama*), the story of an Israeli lawyer fighting for the rights of Palestinians (*Advocate*), the broken Romanian healthcare system (*Collective*) and modern-day slavery (*Overseas*). The documentaries are as diverse as the fates of people, with whom Amnesty International has been working to make the world a better place.

Our work centres on people, who bring human rights to life, but on the other hand also frequently violate them. While documentaries give a voice and visibility to their protagonists, providing a platform where they can share their stories with others, human rights organizations create a platform that brings the testimonies of these people to the political and/or social sphere.

When we talk to the survivors of human rights violations, they often want their story of suffering and trials to reach as many people as possible. This shows their touching hope that others will understand this was wrong, if only they learned about the injustice. When we went on a research mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018, the asylum seekers who were pushed back at the Slovenian border huddled around us to tell us why they were there and what happened to them. When a two-month Roma baby died in Ribnica, after spending his short life in a shack with no water or electricity, his grandmother and entire family were determined to get this horrifying tragedy to the media. That shows hope that putting their story in the spotlight would reveal that there are people living in such conditions amidst us, because the government does practically nothing to provide such essentials as water and electricity. Or that knowing will be the first step towards acting.

This is the same hope that fills Amnesty International – that exposing violations will mobilize people and force the governments to remedy the situation. It often works! The path to victory is never easy or short, but through years of working with people whose rights have been violated we have learned how extremely precious just knowing they are not alone is to them. Again and again, people with whom we work tell us about the strength they found in the letters of support from our members and supporters.

The latter write the letters after they hear about injustices from us. Passing on such information is one of the greatest powers of documentary films on human rights. Perhaps the events shown in them will challenge our worldview, frequently shaped from our place of comfort. This is an unpleasant experience, however, it is absolutely necessary in this connected world, where our lives depend on mutual solidarity. It is for these reasons that we are delighted that the films competing at FDF will once again bring us together. If the new awareness has inspired you to act, join us at www.amnesty.si.

Nataša Posel
Amnesty International Slovenia Director

Kosovel and Linhart Halls, Slovenian Cinematheque, Kinodvor cinema

Admission: EUR **5.50**

Discounts:

- EUR **4.50*** for younger than 25 and older than 65, as well as retirees
- **10 %** when buying five tickets and
- **20 %** when buying ten tickets

Discounts are non-combinable.

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Festival partners
Amnesty International Slovenia
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Kinodvor cinema

Press conference

You are cordially invited to attend a press conference announcing the 22nd Documentary Film Festival at Cankarjev dom's Lili Novy Glass Hall **on Monday, 2 March 2020, at 11am**. This year's programme and accompanying events will be outlined by Festival Director Simon Popek.

Press accreditations

You are requested to submit your accreditation online at www.fdf.si no later than **Wednesday, 4 March 2020**. You will be notified by Monday, 9 March 2020, whether or not your accreditation has been approved.

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