

# arras | days

13th  
edition

2024

**BOOK OF PROJECTS**  
November, 16-17



## THE JURY

### MILJA MIKKOLA



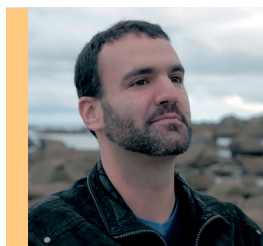
Trained as a projectionist, she studied film theory at Brunel University in London and visual journalism at the Finnish University of Tampere. Since 2005, Milja Mikkola has been part of Midnight Sun Film Festival, the renowned annual film celebration in the Arctic Circle, where she currently is its Programme Manager. She is a member of the recently formed Europa Film Festivals network, which aims to formalise a system for sharing information, strategies, and culture amongst festivals to build a strong voice for film in Europe. She is also a member of the programming and co-director of the Viva Erotica Film Festival, which celebrates the history of sex with rare films screened in their original format.

### LAURENT DANIELOU



He started as a Cultural Attaché to the French Embassy in Moscow (1988-1993) and in Los Angeles (1993-1998), where he founded the "French Hollywood Circle" chaired by Jean-Jacques Annaud. He also collaborated as a writer with newspapers such as Le Monde and Les Cahiers du Cinéma. Back in Paris, he co-founded two successful magazines, Synopsis and Zurban. From 2003 to 2014, he was the Managing Director of Rezo Films International, a world sales company based in Paris. From 2011 to 2016, he was the Chairman of the French Film Export Association, which represents all the French sales companies. In 2015, he created Loco Films, a new production and world sales company, based in Paris.

### DARIO VECCHIATO



After a master degree in International Production at the Filmakademie Stuttgart, Dario has worked in marketing at Wild Bunch and as an Acquisition Assistant for the French distributor Rezo in Paris. For 4 years he's been Acquisitions Manager for Indie Sales, a French independent sales agent and producer. Since 2017, he is Head of Acquisitions and Development for Gapbusters, a sister company of Frakas and Tarantula, two of the most respected and successful production companies based in Belgium, specialized in international co-production. He is also a consultant in international development and financing for production companies in France, Italy and Germany, as well as a Eurimages reader and teacher at the Accademia Cinema Toscana.

## EDITORIAL

Born at the initiative of the Arras Film Festival, this co-production platform is innovative and atypical in concept, and it offers an introduction to yet-to-be-screened European film projects still at the writing stage, most of them seeking co-production partners.

For us, this constitutes a new way of supporting the directors and producers presenting a film in the European Competition, Eastern Visions or European Discoveries during the current edition of the festival. In coming here to present their film, they are able to submit their very latest project for consideration by a jury. In most instances, these have never before been shown. So the ArrasDays are a unique and precious opportunity to experience this absolutely premiere and to be the very first to see up-and-coming works.

A turning point in 2022, the ArrasDays has become a co-production forum offering French and European producers and directors the opportunity to meet public and private institutional players in the film industry, key actors in the world of cinema from various countries, regions, support funds and distributors. This project is part of our creation support strategy, our objective being to bring on young creatives in the field of fiction in the Hauts-de-France Region.

Since 2022, the Arras Film Festival will focus on a country to discover its creative dynamic. For this edition, the guest country is Czech Republic. The 5 projects presented are in various stages of development, from treatment to full scenario or Work in Progress. With no competition at stake, this component aims to introduce you to talents they will come and talk to you about their work and their needs.

We would like to thank the Czech Film Center, and in particular Marketa Santrochova, Head of Czech Film Center and Barbora Lochmanova, Festival relations for their sound advice and invaluable help in selecting the Czech Focus projects.

We wish you all two intense days of exchanges and meetings.

**Nadia Paschetto and Dany de Seille**  
Executive Director and Industry Project Coordinator

## 2 DAYS TO DISCOVER PROJECTS AND MEET PEOPLE

### ROUND TABLE

**Saturday 16 November, 10.00am to 11.00am - Hôtel de Guînes**

Round table on the subject "Producing and directing a first film for the cinema: a challenge." will be held at the opening of the pitches session.

Key participants:

**Pauline Seigland**, Producer (Films Grand Huit),

**Jonathan Millet**, Director (*Ghost Trail*),

**Bruno Deloye**, Broadcaster (Canal+, director of Ciné+).

Moderator: **Guillaume de Seille** (Arizona films)

This project is part of our creation support strategy, our objective being to bring on young creatives in the field of fiction in the Hauts-de-France Region.

### PRESENTATION OF NEW FILMS PROJECTS

**Saturday 16 November, 11.00am to 5.00pm - Hôtel de Guînes**

Project proposers will have 30 minutes to present their films in front of an audience of film professionals and a **Jury** made up of:

**Milja Mikkola**, Festival Programmer (Midnight Sun Film Festival, Finland),

**Laurent Danielou**, Sales Agent (Loco Sales, France),

**Dario Vecchiato**, Producer (Beluga Tree, Belgium).

To support the development of these new projects, two grants are awarded by the jury: one for €7,500 granted by the Arras Film Festival and the other for €5,000, granted by the Town of Arras.

### FOCUS ON CZECH REPUBLIC

**Sunday 17 November, 10.00am to 11.00am - Megarama**

The festival sees the start of a major European tour with one particular country featured: this year, the focus is on a new European centre of dynamism, **Czech Republic**. The festival presents five projects, from screenplay stage to WIP, whose makers will come to talk about their originality and explain their needs for these films, be they in the making or near completion.

During those two days, professionals who wish to do so will be able to meet project leaders during individual meetings.



## PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

## FLEUR DE SEL

Nadejda Koseva (Bulgaria)

### SYNOPSIS

After a terrible accident, the arrogant and estranged from her family film director Nina (30s) is forced to enter rehabilitation, where she meets Irini (50s), a salt flower harvester and self-proclaimed healer with a dubious gift who believes that the body cannot be healed in isolation from the soul.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The sun kisses the sea. The salt is born.

*Fleur de sel* tells the story of a young, modern woman who is climbing the steep path to the world's heights of fame, when she realizes that first she needs to walk the difficult path to her own inner self. The story is ordinary, even banal, but one that reveals vivid characters wounded with different sorts of pain and gifted with different sorts of love. We will seek deep into the shadows of their souls and will enlighten their hidden secrets and traumas. This is the only way we can overcome pain – to illuminate it, realize it and accept it. Our film will be a ray of light. It will enlighten. Will bring hope. The hope that we will be forgiven, we will be loved even into the dark corners of our souls. The amazing and timeless landscape of a salt mine is the place where our story is told. To distance the characters and their relationships from a concrete time and place. To underline the universal message I would like to tell "Love heals!".

### Nadejda Koseva



Bulgarian director, writer and producer. She directed and co-wrote the short fiction *The Ritual*, part of the omnibus film *Lost and Found* which premiered at Forum Berlinale '05. Her next shorts *Omelette* won a Special Mention at Sundance '09 among other awards worldwide and *Take Two* traveled around the world after winning a Special Mention at its premier at Sarajevo FF '11. *Irina* was her debut feature which won more than 20 awards following its premier in Warsaw IFF'18. Her second feature *The Trap* was premiered in Sao Paolo IFF '23 and was the opening film in Sofia IFF'24.

### CONTACT

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## MY OTHER PERFECT ME

Veronika Liskova (Czech Republic)

### SYNOPSIS

Actress and singer Tereza has been living with an eating disorder for ten years. She has already become accustomed to her «bad neighbor», as she sometimes calls her bulimia. When the disease threatens to permanently damage her voice, she decides to fight a new round in her struggle for recovery...

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*My Other Perfect Me* will be a personal documentary exploration of the roots of an illness that manifests itself in various distorted relationships to food. In the upcoming film, we will look at the topic of eating disorders as a symptom of an aching soul crying out for help, which manifests in eating habits. Starvation leading to binge eating, constant dieting, refusal of many food ingredients, excessive exercise, laxative abuse, vomiting after every meal, biting into food and spitting it out - these are, according to therapists, ways of numbing unwanted emotions and experiences that are not dissimilar in nature to alcoholism or other addictions or self-destructive behavior.

The film narrative will follow how Tereza's bulimia takes a toll on her voice and how fear of losing her voice becomes a major motivation to embark on a journey of recovery, leading her to participate in therapy. Parallel to this external drama, we will also follow Tereza's internal drama - the gradual realization of her own ambivalence and the incongruity between her real personality and the desired image she must gradually remake or destroy in herself in order to heal. My aim is to create a story that will blur the lines between documentary film and fiction and bear witness to a non-stereotypical life with an eating disorder accessible to female and male viewers across age groups, contributing to social debate and eliminating taboos of the issue.

### CONTACT

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### Veronika Liskova



She originally studied cultural theory and screenwriting and dramaturgy, but eventually started to devote herself to documentary directing at FAMU in Prague. Her first documentary, *Daniel's World*, premiered at the Berlinale, her second *The Visitors from the Arctic Svalbard* premiered at the Locarno Festival and was subsequently screened at more than 40 festivals worldwide. Her father died during her teenage years, so when working on *Year of the Widow*, her feature debut, she relied on her own intense experience with the loss of the closest family member, which she transmitted into the character of Dominika.

## NEW WORLD

Margaux Elouagari (France)

### SYNOPSIS

Soso, a ten-year-old boy, lives alone with his over-indebted grandmother Monique on a mining estate in the afflicted town of Denain. When the neighbourhood's main drug dealer is forced to flee, Soso tries to get closer to his lonely mother Nadia, to take advantage of the money left by her son.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

For *New World*, as for my short films *La Ducasse* and *Princesses*, I wanted to set the story in the Nord region of France, and more specifically in Denain, where I grew up. This area, once prosperous thanks to mining and metallurgy, is now abandoned, a victim of the economic and social degradation that affects so many other French territories. The film explores this state neglect through the story of Soso.

Soso is a child who, with all his strength and intelligence, goes in search of the love, the family and the environment he dreams of but is deprived of. I wanted to construct a fairly novelistic scenario, linking deep-seated social issues with dense dramatic writing, combining tension, love and betrayal. I want to hold the viewer by these emotions and build a dynamic narrative that never dwells on context. I love cinema because it allows us to see other things, other points of view, other ways of living. It's to show other faces that I want to make films.

Visually, I want to shoot in scope to fully capture the environment: the dilapidated houses, the closed-down stores, and the singular architecture of northern cities. For the texture, I'm imagining a warm, sunny image, with a light grain that corresponds to the seasonality of the film, but which will above all contrast with the harshness of Soso's life. Finally, I'd like to work once again with non-professional actors who are close to the characters and able to understand the issues I'm talking about.

### CONTACT

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## LITTLE MAN, WHAT NOW?

Stijn Bouma (Netherlands)

### SYNOPSIS

A near, dystopian future: Johan and Emma are desperately trying to find a home to start their family in a city that is marred by poverty and social unrest. As the veneer of civilization wears increasingly thin, the love for each other becomes their biggest possession. Based on Hans Fallada's 1932 novel *Little Man, What Now?*

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Western democracies are under tremendous pressure. Parties with totalitarian tendencies are on the rise in the USA, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, the Netherlands and France. The disappointment and despair of the masses are politically mobilized towards scapegoating of the 'Immigrant Other' and the desire to return to a 'Pure and Glorious Past'. These parties propose idealistic and tough reforms that undermine fundamental democratic values and yet they never realize what they promise: a better life for ordinary people.

During the Great Depression in 1930s Berlin, Hans Fallada took up his pen to describe the devastating consequences for a young couple in the novel *Little Man, What Now?* This gentle and humane portrait of a couple in their early twenties, as they struggle for their livelihood, against the backdrop of a society in decline, moved me tremendously. They want simple things that are constantly out of reach: a home of their own and a job with some dignity.

Currently 69% of young Dutch people are struggling financially and many are unable to rent or buy their first home as housing is scarce and extremely expensive. Young adults are forced to live with their parents well into their thirties. I intend to make a cinematic experience by adapting Fallada's story and spirit to reflect on these big challenges facing our societies, whilst staying focussed on Johan and Emma and the only thing they possess: love.

### CONTACT

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Director

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### Margaux Elouagari



Margaux Elouagari graduated from the University of Lille 3 with a degree in film studies, and then followed complementary courses organised by Pictanovo. She then wrote and directed *La Ducasse*, her first short film produced by Les Quatre Cents Films and selected in competition at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival. *Princesses*, her second short film, was also selected for the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival (in national and international competition). She is developing her first feature film, *New World*.

### Stijn Bouma



Stijn Bouma (33) graduated with a Master's degree of Film Studies in Amsterdam. From 2014, he studied for 3 years in a school set up by Béla Tarr, the film.factory in Sarajevo. There he studied filmmaking by filmmakers such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Carlos Reygadas and Pedro Costa. His 2<sup>nd</sup> year student film *Lejla* premiered in the Cannes Cinéfondation (2017). Other shorts premiered at Karlovy Vary and Clermont-Ferrand. After 2 mid-length documentaries about the 'Child Benefits Scandal', he presents his 1<sup>st</sup> feature film - about the same topic - *The Hunt For Meral Ö.* at Arras Film Festival.

## FLUID

Vuk Rsumovic (Serbia)

### SYNOPSIS

When a deeply unfulfilled housewife becomes obsessed with her privileged friend's enigmatic housekeeper, a fatal car crash plunges her into a surreal journey of identity displacement. Awakening in her friend's life, she pursues her fascination, only to discover that reality is more fluid than she imagined, leading to a savage liberation from her suffocating existence.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*Fluid* is a psychological thriller that delves deep into the complexities of class and privilege. The film examines the concept of displacement - both physical and psychological - and the constraints that social expectations place on individuals. Milica is a well-situated housewife and mother, seemingly content with her life and family. However, beneath her composed exterior lies a growing unease - a sense of disconnection and discontent that sets the stage for a journey that will challenge her view of self and others.

The film employs surrealist elements to mirror the fragmented nature of Milica's psyche as she grapples with the fluidity of her existence, shifting between her and Eva's life. Through her fascination with Zainab, gradually evolving into an obsession, the story examines the allure of the 'other' and the primal desire to inhabit and possess another's existence. The medium of film allows me to seamlessly - with a sense of irony - blend identities and realities. Inspired by Chantal Akerman, Claude Chabrol, Julia Ducournau, and David Lynch, I want to explore the disturbing depths of our fears and desires. Through nuanced characters, surreal imagery, and an unsettling tone, I aim to create a visceral experience that resonates on a deeply emotional level. To me, *Fluid* is an exploration of the human condition in all its complex, messy, and fluid glory.

### CONTACT

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## REBORN

Iveta Grofova (Slovakia)

### SYNOPSIS

A film about faith, CCTV cameras and a talking dog. A drama, a romance and a dark crime thriller with an existential dimension. A story of a reasonable man who has almost lost his mind. A story of a pastor who has almost lost her faith in God. To be able to live again it was only enough to believe in one another.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

An eccentric romance about a relationship of two very different characters of Vanda and Martin united by a desire to make the world a better place happens on the scheme of a classy genre - dark detective story. The main story represents the search of a safety technician Martin for the missing Evangelical pastor Vanda. Martin's ability to precisely and responsibly approach details at work and in life leads him to traces, which elude others and so gradually he reveals the mystery of the pastor's disappearance. The more Martin knows about Vanda, the more his life is confronted by absurd situations contradicting Martin's imagine of a safe and exact approach to life and they often become a source of humor. A detective search for the missing person is therefore, based on inexplicable circumstances, transformed into a genuine search for love and a soulmate.

Except for merged genres of drama, romance and detective story, our story has absurd or even mysterious shift, which therefore categorizes it as the kind of film mostly labeled as "Mindfuck movies". As M. Cioran mentions, it concerns a striking coincidental character of existence, seeking a way where the anchor of the past vanished in diversity and doubts about everything... We search, just like in a detective story, for a new anchor, our true personal values and for something that holds us together giving us the strength to go on. The relevant stories are often invisible and happen directly inside us.

### CONTACT

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### Vuk Rsumovic



Vuk Rsumovic is an award-winning writer and director who studied film & theatre in Belgrade and Analytical psychology in Belgrade and Zürich. His feature debut *No One's Child* premiered at Venice Film Festival Critics' Week, winning three major awards and then at Arras Film Festival. He is a full-time professor of Screenwriting and Film Directing at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade and works in theatre. His latest film *Dwelling Among the Gods* has its French premiere at Arras Film Festival. *Fluid* is his third feature film.

### Iveta Grofova



She is a Slovak film director and writer. She studied Animation and Directing Documentaries at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Her first feature film, *Made in Ash* (2012) was internationally premiered at Karlovy Vary IFF as the opening film of East of the West competition. Her second feature film *Little Harbour* (2017) won Crystal Bear at Berlin International Film Festival and was presented at Arras Film Festival. Her third feature, *The Hungarian Dressmaker* (2024) was premiered at Karlovy Vary IFF's Crystal Globe Competition. Slovakia selects *The Hungarian Dressmaker* as Oscar Contender.

## A BRIGHTER WORD THAN BRIGHT

Belkis Bayrak (Türkiye)

### SYNOPSIS

Osman finds himself on trial for the tragic death of Ziya, whom he met and befriended in the army. He takes the blame for a crime he didn't commit to honor Ziya and her fiancé, Yaren. After his release from prison, his new life is deeply shaken when he meets Yaren again. Osman must confront a choice between forgetting and remembering.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When a man undergoes conscription, he enters a unique lifestyle defined by rigorous discipline, collective action, and a loss of personal identity. The daily routine transforms him, leaving him feeling like an immature child. Relationships deepen, often turning romantic, while expectations rise, creating a profound disconnect between the environment and their true selves.

I find this tragic contrast deeply moving. My father retired from the armed forces, and both of my uncles served as well. One of my uncles faced marital struggles and tragically took his own life at 32. The burden of his choice weighed heavily on those he left behind. Just like Osman, my father's gentle nature helped him navigate life's challenges, but my uncle's harsh temperament led to his untimely end. We've seen countless films set in military and war zones that glorify heroism and masculinity. Unlike those films, I want to explore the long-lasting effects of this experience on individuals. Having witnessed the social ramifications of suicide, I'm passionate about telling Osman's story. My film will highlight the struggle between fragility and toughness, life and death, remembering and forgetting.

### Belkis Bayrak



Belkis Bayrak is born in 1984 in Malatya (Turkey). She received her Master's degree in Film and Television at Istanbul Bilgi University. In 2018, she founded her own production company Saba Film. Her previous short films *The Apartment* (2018) and *Cemile* (2021) have shown at several international festivals. Presented in 2024 at Toronto and San Sebastian, *Gülizar* is her feature debut. She is an alumnus of Torino Film Lab, Reclaim The Frame's Filmnomics Program and a member of EWA.

## TOZ BABA

Mehmet Bahadır Er (Türkiye)

### SYNOPSIS

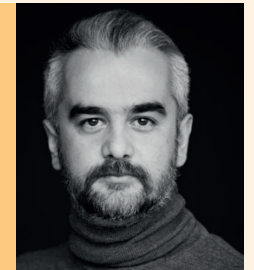
Volkan, who had to flee the country he lived in (Europe) because of the crime he committed, had to hide in the mosque of an extraordinary Sufi group in Istanbul, and brings together other dervishes to establish his own community and miracle.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In *Toz Baba*, I explore the life of Volkan, a young Turkish-immigrant man who was born in Europe caught between addiction and the constraints of his conservative upbringing. The film delves into his struggle with faith, identity, and societal expectations. Unlike his father, who preserves traditional values in Europe, Volkan sees no future within these confines and seeks to escape through addictions. But the social status they are in is such that making a mistake could lead to their downfall. His journey-flee from Europe to Istanbul offers a chance to confront his past and explore cultural and religious differences, seeking redemption.

I relate to Volkan, having grown up in a traditional family and interacting with various religious and political groups. Not only the story of a young man seeking a way out of his troubled life, but also; *Toz Baba* portrays the complexities of addiction, the clash of desires, self-discovery and the quest for inner peace. It shows Volkan's path from a multicultural, libertarian life in Europe to the unusual Sufi community in Istanbul, where he finds the opportunity to start anew. One of my goal is creating an original group, which is seen by society as incomplete or flawed, to create their own harmony, heal one another, and generate a fun with dynamic energy.

### Mehmet Bahadır Er



He is a visionary Turkish filmmaker whose cinematic journey has been marked by a deep exploration of human nature, cultural conflicts, and the complexities of modern society. A graduate of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, he has shaped a compelling career that blends both Turkish and global narratives. In addition to his achievements as a director, he has also found great success as a producer, leading international coproductions that have garnered significant acclaim: 2024 *Gülizar* (Producer), 2022 *Klondike* (Producer), 2019 *Omar and Us* (Director), 2013 *Love Me* (Director), 2009 *Black Dogs Barking* (Director).

### CONTACT

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# TWINS

Eva Neyman (Ukraine)

## SYNOPSIS

Born a couple of minutes later than his brother, the younger twin is destined to have his brother's face, body, his desires and dreams. The resemblance becomes a damnation, driving him from murder to love, from happiness to death. Until the end, his own shadow pretends to be the ghost of his dead brother, following him as his inflexible fate.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The psychological thriller, which the Twins project is based on, attracts me primarily because it has a potential to achieve an original and expressive fusion of the form and the content, as a result of which the film will capture the imagination and attention of adult viewers in a way like only a magic fairy tale captures those of a child.

As for the visual concept, I rely on the rigor of forms, simplicity and clarity of the image. The composition and lighting solution of some sequences will resemble ancient Greek vase paintings. For instance, I see the scene of fratricide on the pier as silhouettes against the background of the sea sparkling in gold. The problem of the image of the twins will be solved with help of the VFX magic in post-production, since I am going to work with the same actor playing both twins. The subject of the film itself makes me aware of the technical requirements. I am going to play with a seeming symmetry, turning it into an organic frame for the drama unfolding on the screen and, therefore, into a hallmark of the film's visual concept. I will shoot in Odessa, setting its very unusual and delicate light and color as a color paradigm for the film.

My goal is to create a film of irreplaceable footage, irreplaceable in its artistic value. This will require precise preparation and will only work when the "choreography" of the actors and the crew members is clearly defined.

## Eva Neyman



Born in 1974 in Ukraine in the family of an engineer and a musicologist. From 1997 to 2006, she studied at the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin. In 2000, Eva has stated her career working on the set as an intern on the film of Kira Muratova. She emigrated to Germany and currently lives in Berlin. Eva's two previous feature films, *House with the Turret* (2012) presented in competition in Arras, and *Song of Songs* (2015) have been widely awarded in international festivals such as, Fribourg IFF, Karlovy Vary IFF, Odessa IFF, Tallin Black Nights and others.



## 5 NEW PROJECTS FROM CZECH REPUBLIC

## WORKS IN PROGRESS

czech  
film  
fund

## CONTACT

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# THREE WEEKS UNDER THE SEA

Martin Kuba

## SYNOPSIS

Ukraine after Crimea's annexation. Misha returns for his father's funeral, only to find a stranger in the coffin. Pulled into a dangerous web of mobsters, arms theft and past and present loves, Misha must confront his father's dark past. But even he realizes that the burden of his father's legacy is too great to bear, he decides to face it.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*Three Weeks Under the Sea* is a deeply personal exploration of identity, memory, and the haunting grip of the past. The quiet Ukrainian town where the film unfolds is more than just a setting - it's a character itself, reflecting my own deep connection to Ukraine. My formative experiences there, built through years of close friendships and a relationship with a Ukrainian girlfriend, have profoundly shaped me.

My previous short film *Vinland* tackled the exploitation of Ukrainian migrants on the Czech black labor market. Working with Ukrainian actors and real-life migrant workers allowed me to shine a light on these urgent themes. My passion for exploring Ukrainian stories has only intensified, especially after my time in besieged Kharkiv during the war. As a photojournalist for Ukrainian NGOs and Czech media, and while supporting groups like the "Hospitalers" paramedics, I witnessed firsthand the resilience of the Ukrainian people.

For me, the ongoing war in Ukraine is part of a longer history of violence in Eastern Europe, echoing back to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. This film is my way of confronting those shared histories to ensure they don't repeat themselves.

Despite its imaginative genre, *Three Weeks Under the Sea* is grounded in authenticity, reflecting Misha's personal history, and capturing the traumas and hopes of a region still haunted by its past but striving for a brighter future.

## Martin Kuba



He is born and grew up in the East Bohemia region of the Czech Republic. He studied Film Direction at FAMU in Prague. His professional experience includes assistance on the HBO original series *Wasteland* (2016), spots for the cinema art magazine "Film a Doba" and an intern dramaturgist position at Black Camel Pictures in Glasgow. His short films include *The Celebration* (47<sup>th</sup> Montreal WFF) *The Lion*, *The Antelope* and *The Beautiful Blonde* (Warsaw 2016) and *Vinland* (KVIFF 2022). *Three Weeks Under the Sea* is his feature film debut. It took part in the TorinoFilmLab TFL Extended development program in 2018.

# WIRBEL

Tomas Hubacek

## SYNOPSIS

Burnt-out city man inherits an abandoned house in a remote borderland, whose soul turns out to be as broken as his own. Just before leaving, he meets a mysterious girl. Thanks to her he learns about an ancient composition inscribed in the surrounding fields. This mystery is not only a key to save her life but also a way to find a new identity.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*Wirbel* is a film about "a man in a landscape".

This basic premise relates to all the other topics: Man's responsibility towards the landscape which he cocreates by living in it. The search for a home or rather for "the ability to have a home". Walking through the landscape as a form of searching one's personal identity and a possible cure for a townsman's rootlessness. The mystery of the landscape as a therapy for the burnout syndrome.

At the same time *Wirbel* is a mystery drama. I believe a genre film - especially the one with a mystery-solving plot - is a perfect vehicle for delivering deeper topics.

The script is inspired by real stories I have collected in the Czech-German borderland, where the expulsion of original inhabitants after WWII and unscrupulous land management during the communist era completely erased the old farmer's wisdom and culture. However the story is not necessarily related to this region as the above mentioned topics are universal.

We put a big emphasis on working with mise en scène to build a strong atmosphere. For this we have developed specific methods to shoot the landscape: my ambition is to allow the audience, together with the main character, to "sink" into the magic of the field patterns. That is why I also compose the film score myself: a minimalistic pulsating soundscapes using (among other instruments) the stones found on the fields during shooting. However I also leave enough space for the music of the nature: the wind.

## Tomas Hubacek



Tomas Hubacek is a screenwriter, director, composer, sound designer and script editor based in West Carpathians. He studied film directing at Tomas Bata University (Czech Republic). After a decade of mostly composing music for documentaries, TV and theatre, he came back as a director with an experimental dance short *Fibonacci*, which was screened in over 50 countries and won 13 awards. Currently he is working on his feature debut *Wirbel*.

## CONTACT

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## PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

**czech  
film  
fund**

## EUROPA

Jan Gebert

### SYNOPSIS

In order to become a human, you have to find the ape within yourself.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Europe is a place that has long been considered as the pinnacle of culture and civilization. At the same time, however, it has also witnessed some of the worst atrocities in human history when the most primitive instincts have found expression in extreme totalitarian ideologies. Honorable citizens became the perpetrators of previously unthinkable crimes. On a larger scale the film is meant as a commentary on the growing conflict within the Western world - between those who value the liberal order and those who praise authoritarian rule, people that consider themselves alienated by the democratic system and those who defend it, the "successful" and "losers". Two worlds tore apart.

The tension between the student Tomas and the teacher Klíma follows the same pattern. Tomas comes from an economically disadvantaged background but at first he actively refuses to follow the path of his parents. The teacher Klíma is at first glance an well-adjusted character, leading the life of a relatively successful scientist, with a happy family. The hidden social cleavages suddenly come to the surface when Klíma learns of Tomas dating his daughter and might become part of his family clan. Tomas radicalizes himself against the world of those who humiliated him. Those who are sending him back "where he belongs".

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## Jan Gebert



He studied History, Ethnology and Ibero-American studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, Charles University in Prague. He also studied in Spain, Mexico and the United States. His documentary debut, *The Game of Stone* (2012), was awarded the Special Jury Prize at the Jihlava IDFF. His second film *When War Comes* (2018) was premiered in Berlinale Panorama, received Czech Film Critics Award (Best Documentary, 2018), and major festival awards at Astra IDFF, Zagrebdox, Let's Cee, Liburnia, One World Slovakia.

# HOTEL MOLDAU

Jan Svejkar

## SYNOPSIS

A cabaret dancer from Berlin is hired as a decoy in a highly confidential mission, ordered to help stop anti-Hitler radio transmissions from a secluded Hotel in Czechoslovakia. Amidst all the mysteries she meets an unlikely hero and befriends him. As the mission's countdown ticks away, things fall apart under the growing pressure of lies and deceit.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The subject of my film is the crucial question of what exactly took place in the winter of 1935 when a pair of Nazi agents came to kidnap a real historical character Rudolf Formis, who was holed up in an empty summer hotel in the middle of the winter, building his transmitter in order to broadcast his version of the truth. In my eyes, this man is one of the few German heroes that went into exile and yet actively used his talents to oppose the Nazi propaganda.

Similar to Agatha Christie's stories, I would like to build the story in such a way that the viewer gradually uncovers layers of truth and deception. At the centre of the action are characters trying to keep up a « facade », putting on a front but confronted with an ever worsening situation and escalating tensions. Therefore, until the last moment, the viewer has no idea who gets killed, and suspicion continually spills over from character to character. I try to stick to the real story, but I also like to retell the story in a way that is relevant to the present. The story is told in a linear fashion, so we don't work with a reconstruction of the murder through flashbacks, but our characters are gradually boiled in an imaginary crucible of lies and pretence. Hotel Moldau is a probe into the relationships between people who don't tell each other the truth because they can't. It's a look at the discomfiture of a prewar society that views the truth with real confusion. A comparison to the similar situation that we face today.

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# IN GOOD FAITH

Anna Wowra

## SYNOPSIS

In a small Polish town, fifteen-year-old Hanna, a devout catholic, enjoys a close-knit family dynamic but have to confront her moral dilemmas when her sister becomes unexpectedly pregnant, leading her on a journey of self-discovery and challenging her perception of faith and family.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Growing up in a Polish satellite town in a family of a former priest, I took many things for granted. Leaving Poland seven years ago to study in the Czech Republic drastically changed my worldview. Breaking free from a church-driven reality, I viewed my homeland more soberly. Polish law allows abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or when the mother's life is at risk, prohibiting all other reasons. In 2022, only 161 legal abortions were performed in Poland, while approximately 34,000 women had illegal abortions. This restrictive move mirrors a broader global trend. In *Good Faith*, my feature debut, is inspired by real stories of women risking their lives to terminate unwanted pregnancies. These stories compelled me to write this film, focusing on Paula's teenage pregnancy, risking her life to regain control over her body, and told through the eyes of her sister Hanna, who struggles between faith and sisterly love.

This film reflects my inner conflict: my upbringing versus my experiences. I explore where our values come from and how they shape us. Through Hanna's journey to autonomy, I map a family background where radical views hinder intimacy. Although fictional, the story is rooted in real events, aiming to reflect reality. However, it is important to note that while the subject matter is serious, our aim is to present a nuanced family drama infused with comedic elements. By balancing the gravity of the situation with moments of lightness and humor, we hope to create a film that resonates deeply with audiences, offering not just reflection but also warmth and connection.

## CONTACT

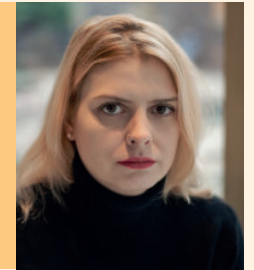
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Jan Svejkar



Jan Svejkar studied film and editing at Charles University and FAMU in Prague. Over the past 10 years he has directed many commercial spots for top brands across the Czech Republic and other parts of the world and is renowned for short-form storytelling. As he is now ready to work on his debut, he wants to build on his exceptional visual sensibility, sense of atmosphere and a talent of working sensitively with actors. He is a recipient of Cannes Lions Awards and the 2024 Gold ADC Award for Film Craft Direction.

Anna Wowra



Anna Wowra is a Polish director living and working in Prague, Czech Republic. She is pursuing a Master's degree at FAMU. Previously, she also graduated from the Wajda School. Her short film, *Stuck Together* (2023), premiered at Future Frames during the 57<sup>th</sup> KVIFF and was awarded at Tirana FF: Best GENERATIONS and at Młodzi i Film. She is currently developing her debut feature *In Good Faith*, which was selected for Go Long! at Tallinn Black Nights and for Talent Village at Les Arcs. She is interested in social and cultural themes, emphasizing ethical issues in the context of the modern world.



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