

# ARRAS\_

# 2021 DAYS

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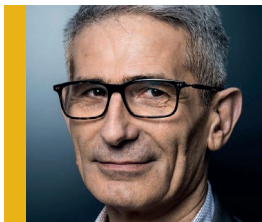
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13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> November

# ARRAS

## 2021 DAYS

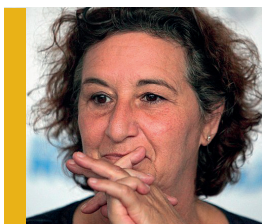
## LE JURY

### CHARLES TESSON



Artistic Director of Critic's Week at Cannes Film Festival from 2012 to 2021. He is a film critic in Cahiers du Cinéma since 1979, and a former editor of this magazine. He teaches cinema, history and esthetics at La Sorbonne Nouvelle (Université Paris III). He is the author of several books and essays on cinema, including *Satyajit Ray* (1992), *Luis Buñuel* (1995), *Photogénie de la Série B* (1997), *Théâtre et cinéma* (2007) and *Akira Kurosawa* (2008). He edited several special issues for Cahiers du Cinéma - including *Made in Hong Kong* (1984) with Olivier Assayas and *Made in China* (1999).

### DOMINIQUE WELINSKI



In 2012, after more than 20 years in distribution, Dominique Welinski founded DW, a production company. Since then, she curates and produces the Factory for Director's Fortnight in Cannes. She did produce or co-produce among others: Sanjeeva Pushpakumara's *Burning Birds*, Alireza Khatami's *Oblivion Verses*, Midi Z's *Road to Mandalay*, John Tengrove's *The Wound*, Suba Sivakumaran's *House of my Fathers* and Yona Rozenkier's *The Dive*. Dominique Welinski is actually developing films in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Israel, South Africa, Kenya and Bhutan...

### DENNIS RUH



He studied cultural sciences, audiovisual communication, social science and history. He worked for the Oldenburg International Film Festival from 2008 to 2011, where he was in charge of programming, sponsoring, marketing and personnel, and became a co-director in 2011. In 2012, he switched to German Films, the organization for international promotion and distribution of German films. There, he was the department head for international festival relations. He is the director of the *European Film Market* (Berlinale) since 2020.

At a very early stage, the Arras Film Festival engaged in a proactive policy to promote young European cinema. Back in 2004, we launched the Inédits d'Europe section for new European releases and presented the works of such film-makers as Joachim Lafosse, Giorgio Diritti and Emily Atef, at the same time offering the opportunity to discover all the richness of Eastern European cinema.

A new milestone was achieved in 2009 with the creation of a competition aimed at encouraging access to the French market of the selected new releases. This strategy bore fruit and every year a number of films appear on screens across France thanks to the Festival's backing. In our conversations with directors who were here at Arras to present their work, my colleagues and I felt that they had many concerns around the financing of their new film. And so it was that the ArrasDays saw the light of day in 2012.

For us, this constitutes a new way of supporting the directors and producers of the selected works. 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 screening and to be the very first to see up-and-coming works. The most important thing about our event is exchange, discussion, meeting with a producer. Today, the goal of the ArrasDays is nothing less than to become a new co-production platform for European cinema and its young directors.

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

**Éric Miot**  
Artistic Director

## UNDER PRESSURE

Nynne Selin Eidnes - Producer (Denmark)

### SYNOPSIS

The midwife Maren (38) is competent, but the work pressure is getting her down, and the time with her daughter Sille (6) is sparing. On an extremely busy day, things go wrong. Sofie (29) and Mads (35) are ready to become parents, but due to understaffing, Maren might be responsible for their stillborn baby. The young couple doesn't support each other. Mads reacts with anger driving him to stalk Maren and Sille, though he quickly realizes it's wrong. Sofie can't imagine a life without her child, which drives her towards Sille. Sofie kidnaps Sille, and Maren now fears for her daughter's life.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Being responsible for someone losing their child? It's almost too scary a thought to even think it. It's probably the most horrific thing we can imagine as humans. What would I do if my child died? Or if I was responsible for someone else losing their child? Under pressure examines this existential horror. It's about Maren and Sofie, two women whose lives are intertwined by circumstance. Maren's the midwife responsible for Sofie's child being stillborn, not because she's bad at her job, but because the workload is unreasonable. Maren's a single mother who tries to create a good life for herself and her daughter. Sofie has a hard time handling the grief of her stillborn child, and this becomes a story of two women, who needs to learn how to move on with their life.

My motivation for telling this story stems from my own experience of having a stillborn daughter in 2005, where I felt alone with my grief, and that my child was invisible to other people. It was like she'd never existed. Life seemed unfair and I caught myself wanting someone to blame. But no, I must carry this on my own shoulders. This film's a drama, where the story is driven by the guilt Maren carries and the pain Sofie feels. Inspired by films such as *Manchester by the Sea* I want to bring the audience inside the minds of these characters. It's a story of destiny, which is a theme I'm preoccupied with. It's also a critique of the state of our healthcare institutions, which are under a lot of financial pressure.

### Nynne Selin Eidnes



Nynne Selin Eidnes entered the Danish Film Industry in 1994. She has produced documentaries, films, tv-series and animated films with her own company First Lady Film. She has recently produced 3 tv-series for DR: *Overcooked*, *Ditte & Louise II*, for which she won a Danish Academy Award (Robert) in 2017, and *The Magic Talisman*, which was Robert nominated in 2019. Her latest feature *Erna at War* is currently in festivals and cinemas around the world. She is one of the founders of the independent film school Super16, and in 2020 she was named one of Variety's 10 Producers to watch.

# LEONORA IN THE MORNING LIGHT

**Lena Vurma & Thorsten Klein (Germany)**

## SYNOPSIS

Leonora rebels against the British upper-class world around her from early on. The cannons thunder as she goes on a journey into the subconscious with the Surrealists in Paris, during which she loses her mind. In Mexico, Leonora finds a way to personal and artistic freedom through the encounter with the indigenous culture. Today Leonora Carrington is considered one of the most important female surrealist painters. *Leonora in the Morning Light* is based on the bestseller *Leonora* by Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Leonora suffered from a schizophrenic psychosis, which after a breakdown in the South of France reappeared in weaker forms again throughout her whole life. A serious condition, that even today is not fully understood. In most cases those affected like Leonora have to learn to live with the fact that the madness returns once in a while. Besides this, Leonora was struggling with the expectations of her upbringing. She decided to reject the demands of her environment. Instead of marrying into the English upper-class, she decided to pursue her own nature. By doing that, she disappointed her family and exposed herself to uncertainties.

On the surface this seems to be a film about madness. But *Leonora in the Morning Light* is actually about self-acceptance, inner strength, female spirituality and a mysterious sunken city in the jungle.

A film that not only finally puts one of the most important representatives of surrealism in her deserved spotlight, but will also inspire contemporary audiences through her story of suffering and love.

My longtime collaborator Thor Klein and I cannot wait to show Leonora Carrington's fascinating way of composing visually and interweaving mythology and autobiography on the big screen.

## Lena Vurma & Thorsten Klein



*Leonora in the Morning Light* is the third feature Lena Vurma and Thor Klein are realizing together. Their current film *Adventures of a Mathematician*, a German-Polish-British co-production played more than 40 festivals and was sold to over 20 territories (currently on release in the US by Samuel Goldwyn Films and on Dec 1st in cinemas in France by Rezo). Klein & Vurma are graduates of the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (dffb) and are based in Berlin and Scotland. They just shot a portrait about the award-winning scientist Martin Hairer for the Breakthrough Prize 2021, USA.

# SKINTOWN

**Kieron J. Walsh (Ireland)**

## SYNOPSIS

*Skintown* depicts growing up in Northern Ireland in the 1990s - small town life bubbling with sectarian violence, and the British army patrolling the streets. Nowhere else in Europe can compare. Throw into this simmering world two teenagers desperate to escape before it's too late. But escape is easier said than done. Out of the blue they are offered the once in a lifetime chance to earn enough money to escape by selling ecstasy for some paramilitaries at a rave a hundred miles away. It's an insane thing to consider but the opportunity is too tempting to turn down.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*Skintown* will be witty and playful, even in the darkest of moments. The tone will be informed by the character of Vinny, who's sardonic inner voice is central to the story and will seek to strike a balance between the dark political setting and the humorous energetic characters of both boys as it juxtaposes sectarianism and the British army on the streets with the carefree antics of two best friends on the edge of manhood. Films like *Submarine* (2010) or *Babyteeth* (2019) are a stylistic influence on the mise-en-scene coupled with the youthful energy of films like *Trainspotting* (1996), *Run Lola Run* (1998) or *La Haine* (1995). Music also will be intrinsic to the tone of the movie as it played such an important part of young people's lives in the 90s. The film will bristle with the kinetic energy of foolish youthful abandon. It will be a deeply emotional and transformative experience as we witness the heart-breaking loss of an innocent life, and begin to understand the futility of violence as seen through the eyes of a young man trying to find his way in the world. It's 27 years since the 'ceasefire' in Northern Ireland was announced after years of vicious sectarian murder and bloodshed between Catholics and Protestants. Many young people in Northern Ireland have no first-hand memory of 'The Troubles'. Now in 2021 we are starting to witness the re-emergence of sectarian violence due to Brexit. The question is, will history repeat itself? It's important to capture the spirit of this special time in Ireland's history, which hasn't been seen on screen before and I believe *Skintown* could strike a chord with the young. Perhaps even allowing them pause for thought...

## Kieron J. Walsh



Kieron J. Walsh is a director from Dublin. He has directed award winning television drama and feature films. He directed his first feature film *When Brendan Met Trudy* written by Roddy Doyle, which premiered at TIFF. He also directed and co-wrote the award-winning feature film *Jump* which also premiered at TIFF. His latest feature film *The Racer* was selected to premiere at SXSW 2020 in March 2020 and was the opening film of the 65<sup>th</sup> Cork International film Festival 2020. It also screened at Tallinn Black Nights 2020.

# BLEACH

**Kaltrina Krasniqi (Kosovo)**

## SYNOPSIS

Fatime (50) is a domestic worker from Prishtina outskirts, a mother of two, and wife to Avdi, a forklift driver. She has built her experience working in other people's homes since she was a teen. When an opportunity to work as a cleaner in a city company comes her way, she accepts, expecting a safer and more transparent work environment. The company is run by Elvira (40s), a charismatic woman, who charms Fatime to the point of believing the two have become friends. But an incident that discloses Elvira's private life to Fatime tarnishes their relationship so badly that no bleach can clean up.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In 2017 I became a mother. Despite the fact that I was 35, I was not ready. Despite the support system I had, I was desperate for a nanny. I posted an ad online and to my surprise, more than 300 women contacted me in less than four weeks. I interviewed most of them for the job - this circumstance provided me with access to a vulnerable world of care and domestic workers of Kosovo.

The women I met were from the age of 22 to 45. The majority of them were married with kids. Often, for safety reasons, they came to the interview with husbands or other family members. After all, the meetings were happening in our apartment, behind closed doors. Approximately 70% of them had enrolled in elementary education which was either disrupted by war or poverty. They talked of past work experiences exclusively in emotional terms, which in the beginning was very confusing.

In these early encounters, I understood that life in the margins teaches women to make themselves available to the needs of others. Therefore, when employed in the informal economy, this readiness to be available is transposed to work relations. Care and domestic services are tailored to the desires of the employer. Therefore, the employer's happiness is the measure through which the work performance is evaluated. Care work blurs the boundaries between employer and employee. In this give-and-take economy, exploitation comes in many forms and more often than not is orchestrated by another woman in power.

## Kaltrina Krasniqi



Kaltrina Krasniqi is a film director and researcher working in film and digital humanities since 2000. She is a founding member of Kosovo Oral History Initiative - a digital archive of personal histories of people of Kosovo; and a co-founder of Dit' e Nat' - a non-formal setting for promotion of film, literature and music. Kaltrina studied Film Directing In University of Prishtina and Film Producing in University of California, L.A (UCLA). Her feature debut film *Vera Dreams of the Sea* premiered in Venice International Film Festival 2021, and was awarded Edipo Re and Authors Under 40 Awards.

## CONFIRMATION

**Darko Sinko (Slovenia)**

### SYNOPSIS

Present. In a smaller village in the Slovenian countryside, everybody is preparing for the upcoming catholic ritual of confirmation. Among the kids are also teenage best friends Mate, Peter and Gaber. Due to the heavy raining, a landslide has swept away the road leading to the church. The villagers try to fix the road; but they are stunned by a drug found under the famous organ in the church, which is operated by Veronika, a really cool girl from the city. It turns out that our three friends are involved in the drug business. Their friendship is put to the test which it seems it does not stand.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*Confirmation* is visually rich, fast-paced film with numerous vivid characters and intense happening. It is touching and emotional, at the same time it flirts with irony, grotesque, and satire. It tends to be a communicative film that is entertaining and moving.

There are three core things in this film. One is kids-teenagers - both co-writer Andreea Vălean and I find them deeply interesting and have dealt with them in our previous work. The second is friendship, betrayal, and disillusion - a theme that is characterising my work in general. The third one is the countryside which has - with its picturesqueness, characters, and customs - interested me since forever.

As mentioned, I am working on the script together with the renowned Romanian scriptwriter and director Andreea Vălean. Her work is characterised by a bitter-sweet tone, full of humour.

The Confirmation symbolically means entry into adulthood. It offers a contradictory combination of highflying metaphysics, pathos, and kitsch. A similar contrast can be found in the relation between youthful ideals and the tough trials these face during the passage to adulthood.

Betrays in big friendships bring great disappointments. On the other hand, the courage and sacrifice, as performed by Gaber and Peter in the film, give friendship its meaning and beauty that are hard to evaluate.

### Darko Sinko



Darko Sinko (1979) is film director from Ljubljana, Slovenia. He graduated from the Film academy (AGRFT) in Ljubljana. He has directed and produced several documentaries, e.g. *Critical generation* and *Little houses*. His short film *Schoolmates* received Vesna award for the best screenplay at the Slovenian Film Festival 2015. His first feature film *Inventory* was premiered at San Sebastian film festival 2021. It also won 5 awards (best directing, best leading male role, best supporting male role, best music, best debut film) at the Slovenian Film Festival 2021.



# BLACK LIKE JESUS

**Fred Baillif** (Switzerland)

## SYNOPSIS

At 12, Buda, son of an immigrant father living in London, whitens his skin to be accepted by others. At 14, after joining a gang, he is sent back to Rwanda to straighten up. As a teenager, he becomes a promising ballet dancer but a nervous breakdown forces him to give up. Later, as a dancing teacher, he looks into his past and befriends a compatriot, unaware that he is responsible for his mother's death in Kigali, twenty years ago. Child of an immigrant, son to a slaughter mother and to a father who refuses to use his African name, teenager lost in a gang, exceptional ballet dancer, unstable adult questioning his sexual identity and struggling to find meaning in his past... Who is Buda?

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

While I was giving a film workshop in Kigali in 2015, a student told me about Ishimwa's story and I right away decided to make a film about his life. As soon as I met him in England, I also decided that he would play a bit of his own part in the film. As an eccentric young man, marked by deeply affecting personal stories, he quickly inspired me a mix of *Black Swan*, *Moonlight* or *Billy Elliot*. Unlike other Rwandese I had the opportunity to meet throughout the years who rarely talk about their story as if speaking would have terrible consequences, Ishimwa was willing to share who he (thinks he) is and what brought him there, sometimes going too far, his words exceeding his thoughts... and I actually like his self-centeredness, his way of reconstructing himself.

It took many years to reach the point of a full trust with him which is exactly what I experienced with the girls of *La Mif* but it payed off. Beyond his story linked to the Rwandan genocide, what really triggers me in him, is the story of a man in search of his identity. A story of "hors-champ" violence, of trauma and mental illness. A story of a fragile resilience. A story of silences and what to make of them, how to deal with reconstruction. A story with questions because there are no answers to be given. A story of images that are not shown. As far as I am concerned, what we don't see is often stronger than what is shown on screen because the audience can freely imagine it.

## Fred Baillif



Born in 1973, Fred Baillif, social work graduate and self-made director has directed many cinema and tv docs, tv prime time shows and 3 features. With a very social look he has developed a personal "cinéma du réel" style. *La Mif* fitting to that category, won Berlinale Generation, ZFF and Namur before its selection for the European films Awards in 2021. The film is in competition in Arras Film Festival.

## HESITATION WOUND

Selman Nacar (Turkey)

### SYNOPSIS

On the day of the sentencing hearing for a murder suspect whom attorney Nesrin believes is innocent and has been defending for a long time, she comes face to face with her own conscience.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I have been deeply interested in the concepts of crime-justice-morality ever since my student years at the faculty of law. My debut film *Between Two Dawns* was a film that questioned these concepts. With my second feature film, I have decided that I want to take a deeper look into these matters. *Hesitation Wound* is a film that covers less than 24 hours, forms around a hearing, and focuses on Nesrin's moral preferences which affect her personal and professional life. Even though I prefer to shoot the film subjectively, I am not interested in the goodness or the badness of Nesrin's choice; because my main focus is not the outcome of her choices, but the consequences of her process.

I imagine a camera that roams through a small town's courtyard, its corridors, its courtroom; and hovers among lawyers, prosecutors, judges, and bailiffs. Whilst filming the courtroom scenes, I will be using a different method compared to the rest of the film. For example, while I plan to shoot the courtroom on a tripod in fragments, I plan to shoot the other scenes as long shots with a moving camera. I prefer such an approach to highlight the difference between real-life which progresses without interruption, and the tense, dull, and fragmented passing time within the courthouse. I imagine the film to have a dark atmosphere. I will be preferring to use natural lighting. The framing and the art direction will be representative of Nesrin's stuck state.

### Selman Nacar



Selman Nacar is a filmmaker, with a Film in Directing MFA from Columbia University in New York City. He gave lectures on fictional filmmaking at the same university. He graduated from Istanbul Bilgi University Faculty of Law in 2015. He is an alumnus of the Berlinale Talent 2019, and the First Films First 2020. He produced *The Pillar of Salt* (2018) and *Belonging* (2019), both of which have premiered at the Berlin Film Festival Forum Section. His debut *Between Two Dawns* premiered at 69<sup>th</sup> San Sebastian Film Festival and is in competition in Arras Film Festival.



ARRAS 2021  
FILMFESTIVAL

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Informations

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[www.arrasfilmfestival.com](http://www.arrasfilmfestival.com)

DANS LE CADRE DE L'ARRAS FILM FESTIVAL

BOURSES ATTRIBUÉES PAR



ARRAS\_2021  
FILMFESTIVAL

LES ARRASDAYS SONT ÉGALEMENT ORGANISÉS AVEC LE SOUTIEN DE

