

# ARRAS\_

## 2022 | DAYS

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Book of projects  
November, 12-13

# ARRAS

## 2022 DAYS

## THE JURY

### NERINA KOCJANCIC



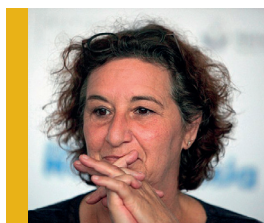
She has written film reviews for Slovenian newspapers, magazines and different publications. In 2001, she wrote and directed a 30 min documentary *People from the Planet Orient* for TV Slovenia. In 2011, she wrote a booklet about Slovenian Actress Majda Potokar. In 2017, she finished *Dialogues with Filip*, a dialogue book with Slovenian film director Filip Robar Dorin. Since 1995 Nerina Kocjancic has spent most of her time at the Slovenian Film Centre, where she is responsible for the promotion of Slovenian films. From 2005, she is representing the Slovenian Film Centre in the European Film Promotion. She is member of the European Film Academy.

### PAOLO BERTOLIN



Paolo Bertolin is a film programmer, writer and producer. He joined the programming team of Venice International Film Festival in 2008. In 2019 and 2020 he was a member of the selection committee of Cannes' Directors' Fortnight. Between 2016 and 2021, he retained a position as Artistic Consultant of the Open Doors initiative of the Locarno Film Festival. He has worked for several international film festivals and film institutions, including IFFRotterdam, the Doha Film Institute, Annecy Cinéma Italien, Cannes' Semaine de la Critique, Nyon Visions du Réel, Mumbai IFF, Beijing IFF, IFFBratislava, Hanoi IFF.

### 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*. DW is actually developing films in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Israel, South Africa, Kenya and Bhutan...

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.

In 2022, the ArrasDays inaugurate a new formula. Each year, the Arras Film Festival will focus on a country to discover its creative dynamic. For this first edition, the guest country is Slovenia. The 5 projects presented will be 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.

It will also mark a turning point for the ArrasDays event: it has become a co-production forum for European cinema 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.

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

Long live to cinema!

**Éric Miot and Nadia Paschetto**  
**Artistic Director and Executive Director**

## TWO DAYS TO DISCOVER PROJECTS AND MEET PEOPLE

### ROUND TABLE

**on Saturday 12 November, 10.00am to 11.00am - Hôtel de Guînes**

A round table jointly organised with the ARP, the ACAP and Pictanovo on the subject of "The adventure of the début film" will be held at the opening of the pitches session.



#### Key participants:

Director and screenwriter **Thomas Lilti**

Director, screenwriter and producer **Charlène Favier**

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

**on Saturday 12 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

**Paolo Bertolin** (festival programmer, producer and journalist),

**Nerina Kocjancic** (director of promotion and sales of the Slovenian Film Fund)

**Dominique Welinski** (producer, consultant and founder of the program La Factory).

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.

### WORK IN PROGRESS

**on Sunday 13 November, 10.00am to 11.00am**  
**Mégarama**

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, Slovenia. 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.

1989

Peter Monsaert (Belgium)

**SYNOPSIS**

Valerie De Wispelaere is a tough-as-nails business woman and the chosen successor of her father Robert in the family's woodworking business. When Robert is beaten up one night, Valerie discovers her family's dark history and realises she is part of a bloodline where cruelty and deceit are inherently present. How will she deal with this, and can she fight the ruthlessness she feels within herself?

**DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

The idea for this film originated after watching the documentary *Hitler's Children*, in which descendants of notorious Nazi leaders talk about dealing with their fraught family history. I want to explore the idea of *genetically inherited cruelty* in a chronicle of four generations. The grandfather who made a fortune during WWII by collaborating with the Germans, his son-in-law Robert, who viscosly rapes a Polish prostitute in 1989, and Valerie, his granddaughter, who ruthlessly takes over a Polish company, without any remorse for the owners or employees.

The final scene of the film provides us with a grim foreshadowing of cruel behaviour in her son Stan, the fourth generation that is haunted by the same burden. In Robert's words: 'The beast hides inside us, and it's there to stay. Only circumstances determine when and how it will rise its head again.' Valerie claims not to believe in genetics, because 'it makes her weak, and nothing but the slave of the flesh she is born in.'

In this film, I explore both options, only to find out that things are not that black and white and both nature and nurture play their part. *1989* is a logical fourth film in my career. Thematically, it relates to my previous work, but this time I aim for a larger European film. The thriller structure will allow me to appeal to a broader audience, without having to renounce my own individual themes and approach.

**Peter Monsaert**

Peter Monsaert studied audiovisual art at the KASK in Ghent. His 2012 debut feature *Offline* received numerous awards. Monsaert also won prizes as director and co-author of the screenplay. The film was selected at many film festivals, including Film Fest Ghent, Amiens and Aubagne. In 2016, his second feature film, *Le Ciel Flamand* came out in theaters, again starring Wim Willaert and Sara Vertongen in the lead roles. *NowHere* is Monsaert's third feature film. It was shot in full corona. The film opened the Ostend Film Festival in March 2022.

# CATERINA

**Petr Vaclav (Czech Republic)**

## SYNOPSIS

Caterina is a soprano, a rising star in the star system of 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian opera. Of poor extraction, this adulated and even divinized woman is also despised, scorned, slandered, oppressed, abused... Rich, without a husband or guardian, independent, she fascinates. But she has to face the prejudices and the different forms of domination that her time has in store for her.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In order to be able to write the script for *Il Boemo*, I did a lot of research which took me about two years. I had to study biographies of other composers, the lives of singers, the nobility for whom these musicians worked for. All this work represents a knowledge and inspiration that could not be deployed in a single film. The 18<sup>th</sup> century is a universe that caught my attention. I don't want to leave it. I find myself in the same position as other directors before me, who made a first film in costume and felt to make another film to deepen their experience. That's why I have the project to make a film about a female singer, a rebellious woman, a true story.

Her name was Caterina Gabrielli. She was born in Rome in 1730 and died there in 1796. Her life is a novel. She is the best paid singer, the most admired, the most maligned Italian opera of the eighteenth century, known for many escapades. The film is her portrait but also an observation of the relationships of domination, sometimes chilling and sardonic. I study the human being, the most selfish and vile animal, but also the thirsty for freedom, capable of love, of the most tender culture, of the sense of beauty, of creativity and the most generous aspirations.

I want to end up with a film that could be flatly called a "dramatic comedy", a cross-genre that marries drama and comedy. The social criticism is woven into the sumptuous settings and the world of theater. The vaudeville meets the suspense film, the action full of twists and turns leaves room for moments of pause and immersion in the complex soul of the protagonist.

## Petr Vaclav



Former resident at Villa Medici. Graduate of the FAMU. Intern at the Fémis. Czech and French nationality. *Il Boemo* (2020) *Skokan* (2017) *Confessions of a Disappeared* (FIPA d'Or at the Biarritz Festival 2016). *Nikdy nejsme sami*, Readers' Prize of the Tagesspiegel newspaper at the Berlinale 2016; *Zaneta*, ACID Cannes; *Parallel Worlds*, in collaboration with Marie Desplechin, finalist for the NHK Screenplay Award at Sundance; *Marian*, Silver Leopard at Locarno in 1996; *Ms. Le Murie*, Best Documentary Award at the International Film Schools Festival in Munich, 1994.

# MOTHER

Teona Strugar Mitevaska (Macedonia)

## SYNOPSIS

*Mother* is an elaborate story of three characters, a mother superior, a nun and a priest living in a convent in the heart of Kolkata, and while the Bengali famine rages outside the convent's walls, the three are forced to deal with essential questions of existence, purpose and life. Mother is ambitious; giving herself completely to her life calling, to serve the church. Her dream is to create her own order, that would serve the poorest of the poor. Agnieszka, the nun that is her designated successor is in great trouble, pregnant with a love child, secret, unacceptable situation. Father Frederick, Mother's confessor, is a man in love. After years of waiting, Mother receives a letter from Vatican with the permission to start her own religious order. This is where her dilemma arises and doubts overwhelm her.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I have always wanted to make a film about a historical female figure and delve into the person behind the myth. During the preparation for the documentary film *Teresa and I*, I discovered many aspects of Mother Teresa's life that fascinated me. In her personal writings, she openly speaks about her doubts and fears regarding the existence of God, her personal dilemmas concerning her role as a woman, a mother, a lover and the ambition to leave a legacy. The central aspect of the story is the dilemma between motherhood and ambition. This is why the character of Agnieszka is introduced; whose existence is a manifestation of Mother's dilemma. Placing the story in a historical and political context bears directing and screenwriting challenges. It is very important to understand the era in which the story occurs; Kolkata in the 1940s, the Bengal War and Post-Nazi Europe, and how they affect the protagonists and the choices they make. By recontextualising history, we draw to the surface new truths and realities. I have long respected and admired the work of Goce Smilevski, the author of *Freud's sister* and I'm honored to be able to merge creative forces with him. There is excitement and beauty in the banality of Mother's life, which I find extremely appealing. It reveals the complexity of character and challenges the cinematic form.

## Teona Strugar Mitevaska



Macedonian born Teona Strugar Mitevaska started as a child actor, trained as a painter and graphic designer and studied film at NYU-Tisch School of Arts. She directed her first short, *Veta*, in 2001, and has been making films ever since, including *I am from Titov Veles*, 2007; *The Woman who Brushed off her Tears*, 2012. *God Exists, Her Name is Petrunya* was premiered in competition in Berlinale 2019, awarded the Ecumenical Prize, as well as the German Guild Film Prize and received more than 30 awards internationally, most notably the 2019 LUX Prize by the European Parliament. Her newest film, *The Happiest Man in the World* made it's world premiere at Venice Film Festival and Toronto Film festival 2022.

# JUGOSLAVIA

Ivan Bakrac (Montenegro)

## SYNOPSIS

After her husband dies and her son moves abroad, Jugoslava spends her days mostly alone. On her 55th birthday, she decides to make changes in life. In order to fight loneliness, and to distant herself from the family home packed with memories, she uses a summer vacation in searching for a new flat. With each new tour, Jugoslava becomes visibly happier. She is also becoming obsessed with the lives of other people in their intimate spaces. However, that quest will change her life in different way than she imagined. While touring one of the flats, Jugoslava finds herself in the game of destiny.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*Jugoslava* is an intimate tale about unbearable loneliness of our lead protagonist, whose life is, in essence, pretty simple. The idea is inspired by the motives of a real-life event that happened a long time ago and of which I know very little, so the main motive figures only as an inspiration and I developed the storyline according to my own interests. Jugoslava roams the lost identity of the nation, searching for answers about her own life. She doesn't care for political opinion even though her environment is very politically colored and divided. Since I come from former Yugoslavia, I know what the influence of the past can be, and that is exactly what I am trying to convey in this project and also to question the position of women in the transitional Balkan society. What is the function of a middle-aged woman, if she doesn't have a husband and children to serve them? What happens when a woman herself begins to doubt her own purpose? Those and many other similar questions I discussed with my mother who is about the same age now. In the monotony of Jugoslava's daily life, even the smallest novelty seems like a challenge. All the events «destined» to happen in the story are but her escape from boredom. But that's way she opens some seemingly closed questions. In her dreams, she sees her husband's last drive, and that further pushes her not to give up searching for the right answers in her current affairs.

## Ivan Bakrac



Ivan Bakrac (1987, Montenegro) graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Design in Belgrade with the MA degree in film directing. He has written and directed films that participated in many international festivals and won awards. Participated in various programs such as Berlinale Talents, Talents Sarajevo and Zurich FF Academy. His debut feature *After the Winter* was premiered at the Karlovy Vary IFF. He also works as a festival programmer. A member of EFA. Films: *Wars* (2013, medium-length); *Our skin is going to gray* (2014, short); *Malesh* (2016, short); *After the Winter* (2021, feature).



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## Alexandru Baci and Maria Popistasu (Romania)

### SYNOPSIS

Olga, her father and her two sisters have been living a carefree life thanks to the fortune of her grandmother, a former lawyer. Her sudden death disturbs the family balance. The most affected is Olga, who bears the burden of a deathbed confession her grandmother made: the international adoption files she handled after the Romanian Revolution are riddled with shortcomings and not much is known about the fate of some children. In order to uncover proofs that could clear Ileana's name and her own inner conscience, Olga is forced to dig up the past and make peace with it.

### DIRECTORS' NOTE

Our project originates from the overlap of two areas of interest. An autobiographical story about responsibility versus hypocrisy in relation to the benefits provided by one's wealth is layered upon a deeper story about chance and heredity. We hope the result sparks a conversation about the limits of empathy and the conscience as a cultural construct. Both of us grew up during the 90s, a troubled period that is too little documented. From a personal point of view, we find it natural and necessary to try to explore in a fictional way some less flattering episodes from Romania's recent history.

Our script inevitably touches upon the family issue and forces it to define itself. Should one call forth genetic reasons or is it enough to have experienced the warmth of affection to claim one belongs to a family? What chance does the world offer to those who weren't lucky enough to have experienced such an emotional transfer?

## Alexandru Baci & Maria Popistasu



Having studied film directing, Alexandru Baci is known for his work as a screenwriter and his long-term collaboration with Radu Muntean and Razvan Radulescu for titles like *The Paper Will be Blue* (2006), *Boogie* (2008), *Tuesday, after Christmas* (2010), *One Floor Below* (2015), *Intregalde* (2021).

Maria Popistasu is a trained theatre and film actress. With an acting career of 20 years, she worked across Europe in Belgium, France, Austria, Germany and England in films with strong festival presence.

# THREE KILOMETERS TO THE END OF THE WORLD

Emanuel Parvu (Romania)

## SYNOPSIS

Adi, a 17-year-old teenager in a poor village in the Danube Delta, studies in a bigger city. During the summer vacation, he falls in love with a student from Bucharest vacationing there for a few days. After the two boys were seen kissing by the locals and holding hands at a disco, Adi is badly beaten. Confronted with the truth about their son's sexuality, their parents express themselves differently. For the mother, Adi is possessed by the Devil and he needs the help of the church. For the father, being gay is bluntly unacceptable. That also stands for the vast majority of the people in the village.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Setting the action in our times allows implicit access to the story for the viewer without forcing him to imagine things. Furthermore, I intend to access a subliminal acceptance of the story, based on recognition more than on imagination, as a way of emotional involvement of the viewer. The viewer should experience a paradox: Danube Delta, the shooting place, is a visual paradise that contrasts aggressively with the events. The human actions are contradicting the nature, closing the horizon on a child by closing his future. And that could only lead to tragedy. Structure wise, the film is divided into chapters, each chapter following an important character: the boy, the mother (the closest being), the father (the role model), the policeman (the law and social protection), the priest (the guidance of the religion).

The camera work sustains the metaphor behind, following the main character from each chapter. The camera serves as a "human observer", allowing the viewer to find out each character's understanding of facts and, thus, to empathize with each of the characters. The shots will be long and continuous, the camera will be on a SteadyCam and we will only use 50mm lens. The edit will also follow the way the character feels about that particular situation: some are anxious, some are focused on solving the problem. The sound design lacks music. As trying to be close to reality, as trying to pass realism to go for naturalism, only the sound of the surrounding reality will be designed.

## Emanuel Parvu



Emanuel Parvu is known as an actor in Cristian Mungiu's *Graduation* and *Tales from the Golden Age*, Bogdan Apetri's *Miracle*. His filmography includes 6 shorts: *A family*, 2009 (Sarajevo IFF, Valladolid IFF), *Chicken, fries and a coke* (2012), *2* (2013), *Square One*, 2013 (part of the omnibus *Actors behind Camera*), *Meda*, 2016 (Rotterdam IFF), *Everything Is Far Away*, 2018 (Best Short at Valladolid IFF, Rotterdam IFF, Sarajevo IFF) and 2 features: *Meda or The Not So Bright Side of Things*, 2017 (Best Director & Best Actor, Sarajevo Film Festival), *Mikado*, 2021 (San Sebastian Film Festival, New Directors Competition).

# GLYCERIN

Milos Pusic (Serbia)

## SYNOPSIS

Jova, a washed-up punk rocker nearing forty, works as a deliveryman. Burnt out, despondent and embittered, he half-asses his job and life with no ambition at all. He reminisces about the “glory days” of his forgotten and obscure band *Glycerin*. With most of his friends having moved on to functional adult lives, Jova spends his days mostly alone, going to punk gigs and arguing on the internet about what makes “real punk”. After a chance encounter with a lone fan, he decides to get his old band back together, to the excitement of absolutely no one.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

There is a very specific type of mythomania among ex-Yugoslavians: the tendency to perceive the Yugoslavian rock scene as the most important in world rock history. And that sentiment kind of trickles down from the top, and all the way into a very local and small context. We grew up in and around a small town punk scene, and there is no shortage of self-aggrandizing egomaniacs, thinking they are the biggest thing ever. When you turn older than 17, and if by then you develop at least a bit of common sense, that gets kind of funny. And then sad. And then funny and sad at the same time. So that's what motivated us to start writing *Glycerin*.

The first idea about the script was a little bit bitter and jaded. And then we fell in love with the characters, and we finally understood what was the story we wanted to tell. The story of a guy that really really loves something, and wants to get it really really bad. He loses his soul in the process, but decides to get it back and stay true. And that is the point of *Glycerin*: staying true. That's why we fell in love with the main character. We feel very safe in saying that in the Balkans, there was never a movie like this one. It should have a heavily improvisational feel, and be steeped in the dirt of a small town punk scene. On the very edge of low- and high-brow.

## Milos Pusic



Born in 1980. He works as a director and a producer. He directed one short film *Lullaby for a boy*, 2007, screened at festivals worldwide, and three feature films: *Autumn in my street*, 2009, premiered at Sarajevo Film Festival and *Withering*, 2013, premiered at Karlovy Vary. Recently he produced the feature *My morning laughter* 2019, directed by Marko Djordjevic. It premiered at Rotterdam IFF. *Working class heroes* is his third feature film. He signed as a producer and a director. The film premiered at Berlinale Panorama 2022.

## GUILT

Michal Blasko (Slovakia)

### SYNOPSIS

The story of an immigrant family having to decide their future during a single night in their flat. Young Sydu comes home and confesses to his parents that he and his friends have hurt someone. As the night progresses, Sydu's family gradually discovers the extent of his guilt. The narrative of the story does not revolve around the individual's guilt or innocence; instead, the film analyses and exposes the family's inner motives. How will they respond to the truth? Will they decide to unconditionally support Sydu and thus put the welfare of their family over the good of the whole community?

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As in *Victim*, the main characters in *Guilt* are immigrants living in a foreign country. The situation they find themselves in is therefore very particular and threatens to bring about consequences that would not arise in other circumstances. The chamber setting of the film - a single night in the family flat - allows us to tell an intimate dramatic story that denudes the protagonists' characters and poses the question of whether the fate of the individual is more important than the fate of the family or the whole community. *Guilt* is a character study that forces the audience to decide whose side they are on, leading them to the conclusion that determining one's guilt and meting out appropriate punishment is far from easy.

### Michal Blasko



Michal Blasko studied film and television directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava and FAMO Pisek. His short films were premiered at the most prestigious film festivals around the world and won several awards. His bachelor short film *Atlantis*, 2003 premiered at the Cinéfondation in Cannes. Besides reaping awards on the festival circuit ARTE bought the film for its schedules. Except for successful short films, Michal has a lot of experience as a director of TV series e.g. miniseries *Suspicion* that premiered at Berlinale. *Victim* is his feature film debut.



# 5 NEW PROJECTS FROM SLOVENIA

## WORKS IN PROGRESS



SLOVENSKI  
FILMSKI  
CENTER  
JAVNA  
AGENCIJA  
SLOVENIAN  
FILM  
CENTRE

## THE LAST HERO

Ziga Virc

### SYNOPSIS

A man is trying to prevent a German retailer chain from tearing down a statue of his father, a decorated World War II hero, and building a store on the site. Aiming to preserve the memory of the resistance movement, he is unwittingly destroying the life of his daughter. In less than twenty-four hours, life turned completely upside down for everyone involved in a series of tragicomic events.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*The Last Hero* is about a clash between three generations. The main character named France is filling the void in his intimate life by relying on the ideals and ideologies of times of the past. His father John, who is supposedly a war hero, never gives his son the approval he desperately needs. On the other hand, France's daughter Vida tries to live today, thinking about the future, but she is constantly pulled back in the past due. She thinks that tradition is a peer pressure of dead people. In the background of France's story, the film questions traditional and modern values. In turbulent times with an uncertain future, should we fight for past ideals that may not have even existed? Or perhaps, none of this is important at all and we should strive to remain in the present. The film aims to grapple with these questions in a relatable way.

From the beginning of writing, the screenwriting approach has been primarily drama in the broadest sense of the depth of characters, relationships, and situations. But they say, and sometimes it gets written down as well, that my typical approach is well-seasoned with humor. Preferably black and on the verge of good taste, as my co-writer would have probably remarked at this point. The producer, however, says it's a drama with elements of absurd humor. In my first feature film *Houston, We Have a Problem!*, the concept of an outwardly engaging and intriguing story, laced with inwardly with depth and philosophical themes, proved to be a successful combination.

### Ziga Virc



Film and television director Ziga Virc graduated from the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana. His graduation film *Trieste is ours!* was a Finalist at 2010 Student Academy Awards. His feature-length debut *Houston, we have a problem!* made its premiere at Tribeca in New York in April 2016, and its European festival premiere in the Karlovy Vary competition program. The film was Slovenia's candidate for a foreign language Oscar. His short feature film *A New Home* had its world premiere in September 2016 at the Toronto International Film Festival and has since been accepted to more than 150 festivals and won 10 awards.

# OBSERVING

Janez Burger

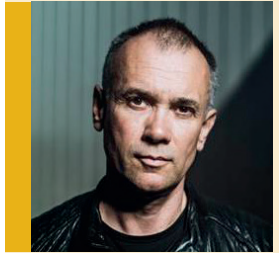
## SYNOPSIS

The film follows Lara, a paramedic intern, who helps bring a young man into hospital, after he was brutally beaten and live-streamed on Facebook. The clip was seen by 20.000 people and no one called the police. Although he is in a coma, Lara starts to receive video clips from his FB profile, showing unidentified persons watching him got beaten. She reports this to a detective, who starts an investigation. All the observers, who appear in the video clips, will become a nightmare in her real life. She soon realizes that she is also an accomplice in this horrible event.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I have never been one for apocalyptic visions of the world, but it's becoming increasingly clear to me that today's situation has gone beyond a joke. And we are doing nothing about it. I am seriously concerned about the ubiquitous passivity. This is not about passivity in terms of activity, where we are constantly struggling to secure a more or less satisfactory standard of living, but we are drowning in another form of passivity that is destroying the very foundation of humanity - empathy. Without empathy and its consequences, we cease to be human beings. And we stop being a society. Never in the history of humanity have we been so connected and yet at the same time so alone. Atomized. Empathy is the foundation of humanity. I am talking about empathy, which comes at a very intimate level of each individual. When you empathize with another person. Sometimes all it takes is an understanding look, a word, a conversation, and a call for help. Minimal effort is required for this kind of empathy. This is a form of passivity that is hidden deep within us. Most of the time we are not even aware of it, but it slowly eats us up from the inside, and thus dehumanizes us. An intimate passivity with global dimensions. Without a shift in our minds that redefines us as inwardly active, sentient beings, we will not be able to turn the tide of events that are leading to the disintegration of our society and ruining humanity. This is the passivity I want to talk about in the film *Observing*.

## Janez Burger



Janez Burger was born in 1965 in Slovenia. He studied at the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana and at FAMU in Prague, where he graduated from film and TV direction in 1996. His first feature film *Idle Running* premiered at Karlovy Vary IFF in 1999 and has been presented at more than 60 festivals worldwide. His second film *Ruins* premiered at Rotterdam IFF in 2005. In 2009 he shot his third feature film *Silent Sonata*, a film without dialogue, presented in Arras Film Festival. He won several awards at Slovenian and International film festivals. He also works in theater and opera.



## PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT



SLOVENSKI  
FILMSKI  
CENTER  
JAVNA  
AGENCIJA  
SLOVENIAN  
FILM  
CENTRE



# BLOCK 5

Klemen Dvornik

## SYNOPSIS

When nerdy, lonesome Mia realizes that the playground in her new block would be turned into a parking lot, in order to save it from destruction, she teams up with local skateboarders led by Rudi, her secret crush. While preparing the rebellion and fighting against the adults, Mia has to find her voice within the group, while Alma, a fierce tomboy and Rudi's best friend, doesn't make it easy for her.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Kids' movies such as *E.T.* made a great impression on me in the 80s. A certain nostalgia for honest friendships, childlike indifference and a sense of omnipotence is encoded in these childhood films which have accompanied me from a young age. When I read the *Block 5* script, I was immediately attracted to the story's affirmative idea. When your heart and will are in place, it's worth the fight. The main character is a young girl named Mia, who is active, determined and courageous, which I consider extremely important. Having two young children myself, I observe their exploration of the world, their relationships, their encounters with success and slip-ups. The demolishing of a playground for the sake of construction is a modern-day allegorical parable on how, in the name of progress, we tend to forget what we are losing. As the pure and honest conscience of society, with their resistance to the community, the children emplace a mirror to ultimately come up with a balanced solution that works for everyone.

To me, as a director, *Block 5* is a unique opportunity to bring my personal experience to the film screen and also to create a communicative and inspiring cinematic experience for today's generation.

## Klemen Dvornik



Klemen Dvornik (1977) is a film director from Slovenia. He holds a degree in Film and TV Directing from the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana. He has directed music videos, commercials, live music concerts, entertainment shows and documentaries. He has directed 5 short films, 5 TV series and 2 full-length feature films. He has received numerous awards for his work. His latest work was TV series *The Lake* which premiered at Sarajevo Film Festival 2019. In addition to directing, he is also an active member of the Directors Guild of Slovenia and was Chair Executive Committee of FERA.

## THE LOST SON

Darko Stante

### SYNOPSIS

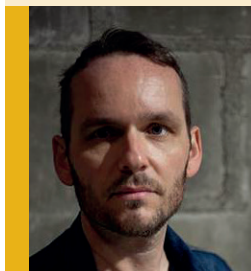
To suppress his painful emotions of traumatic and abusive childhood 38 years old successful detective Andrej decided to cut all ties with his family and never even told anyone about them, not even to his girlfriend Anna. When Andrej's brother Kristian comes into his life after more than ten years, Andrej's world spirals out of control. *The Lost Son* examines the complex reality of the vicious cycle of violence, which opens powerful questions about human relationships.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Officially every fifth woman in Slovenia is a victim of physical violence and every second one a victim of mental violence. Every fourth child is affected by violent relationships in the family. These are the statistics that we often hear about, but I am not sure if we are aware of the consequences brought following the acts these data record. The traumas of individuals that are passed from one generation to the next traumatize entire nations. I want to shoot this film because it is partly based on my own experience with violence in my family and at my daily job as a youth care worker in a youth detention center. In *The Lost Son*, I am trying to answer the questions: Is it at all possible to definitely step out of the vicious circle of violence that is passed on from one generation to the next? Is it possible to create new foundations based on healthy family relationships and a generation raised without being burdened by the violence of the fathers?

In *The Lost Son*, we follow the story of Andrej, the main character, who lives a seemingly perfect life at the beginning, but when he meets Kristian his past catches up with him. I want to show how under a perfect surface hidden secrets are lurking which could destroy Andrej's life, if he will not confront them. I would like to tell the audience how important it is to face your past because otherwise you will never be able to really move on.

### Darko Stante



An award winning director and scriptwriter Darko Stante lives and works in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He has a master's degree in Film direction from the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana. *Consequences* (2018) is his debut feature. Its world premiere took place in the Toronto International Film Festival 2018 and it has been selected for more than 40 festivals. It received many awards and has also been sold and distributed among others in the USA, France, Germany, Taiwan, the UK and Canada.

# NEITHER VOICE

Ester Ivakic

## SYNOPSIS

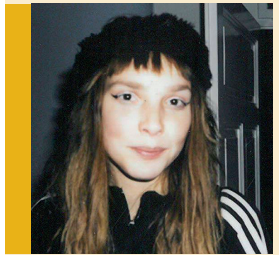
Ida is growing up in 1970's Yugoslav countryside, listening to obituaries and watering flowers at the nearby graveyard with her Grandma. When Grandma falls ill, the only thing that helps her is a mysterious song resounding over the cemetery. Amazed by this, Ida decides to join the school choir. But she's an awful singer and only manages to pass the test with the help of her schoolmate Terezka. The joy does not last long as Ida finds out about her Dad's affair and soon leaves with her Mom to Serbia where she will spend the summer. Upon returning home, the singing becomes the least of her worries..

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I see *Neither Voice* as a way to show my protagonist's own little bubble she is made up to live in, to protect herself from fear, especially the fear of loss. I was very similar to Ida as a child, the adult world around me very hard to understand but much easier to feel. I walked around the neighborhood and played by myself a lot, escaping to strange places and creating a fun world for myself in which everything was possible. I imagine Ida's world to be very similar. Never-ending flat fields make her feel alive, imaginative, joyful. Meanwhile at home, Ida feels a familiar warmth but also senses some bitterness, and even death approaching. The film's atmosphere will express these feelings, using a warm and colorful palette, with greasy, dirty, disgusting food at the table. Random people always around the house. Air that is hard to breathe.

This is a playfully melancholic, poetic and funny film. It is trying protecting Ida from the things a viewer might identify as morbid a lot quicker than she does. She is focused on her love of animals, her adventures with a new friend Terezka, a magical ghost living next door, and the Virgin Mary; all of this will create an uplifting and sweet atmosphere. Prekmurje, the wonderful region of Slovenia acting as our setting, is a great opportunity for me to explore, too. The people there and their local dialect will give the film a special touch, and so will setting the story in a different time in this remote area of the world.

## Ester Ivakic



Ester Ivakic works as a director, scriptwriter, animator, and video artist. She has so far worked on a number of short films, music videos and animations. In 2016, she finished her bachelor's degree at the School of Arts in Nova Gorica (Slovenia) with her short film *Srdohrd* for which she received a Special Jury Mention at the Festival of Slovenian Film. She directed her next short *Assunta* in 2018 as part of her master's degree in film directing at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana.

# ARRAS

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# 2022 DAYS

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