

Media Release | Award Winners & Festival Closing | 12 November 2023

27th Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur: «A Celebration of Each Individual Filmmaker's Uniqueness»

Over the past six days, the 27th Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur presented the full range of current Swiss and international short filmmaking: from 100-year-old Disney films to a 1948 Ovomaltine ad on 16 mm, «Das Satanische Dickicht» (The Satanic Thicket) by Willy Hans, political gay porn from Bruce LaBruce, and juju stories. The Main Focus: O Canada and the Country in Focus: Nigeria were very well received by viewers, as were the competition programmes. The Grand Prize of the International Competition goes to the fictional short «Oyu» by Atsushi Hirai from Japan; Basil da Cunha wins the Swiss Competition with «2720». The ZKB Audience Award goes to Mohammad Valizadegan for «And Me, I'm Dancing Too» (Iran, Czechia, Germany 2023); a moving portrait of a generation of young Iranians. The festival counted approximately 18 000 admissions. The 28th edition of Kurzfilmtage will take place from 5 to 10 November 2024.

«Oyu» (France/Japan 2023), winner of the Grand Prize, follows its protagonist into a public bath in a small Japanese town on New Year's Eve. The film enthralled the jury with the emotional depth with which it addresses grief as well as community. The latter is also at the centre of «Pacific Club» by Valentin Noujaïm (Qatar, France 2023), winner of this year's Prix George for the Best Documentary Form. The hybrid documentary portrays the Pacific Club, the first nightclub for Arabs from the suburbs of Paris, which was located in the basement of the La Défense business district. In the Swiss Competition, Basil da Cunha wins with a Portuguese-Swiss coproduction set in a clandestine neighbourhood in Lisbon.

Click [here](#) for detailed jury statements and a list of all award winners.

Current issues, subverted stereotypes, and lots of self-mockery

At first glance, the Main Focus on Canada and the Country in Focus, Nigeria, don't seem to have much in common. Yet commonalities quickly became evident, with global issues and universal themes emerging across various Focus programmes. The young filmmakers of the Nigerian New Wave are turning away from the melodramatic clichés of Nollywood as they increasingly produce for an international audience: «Even though I feel lucky to live in a country that has its own film industry – many countries in Africa and the world do not – there is an urge to tell other stories. Stories that stay true to Nigeria but that are also universally understood and appreciated», says Nigerian director Michael Omonua, who was also part of the international jury. Just as with the Main Focus: O Canada, the Nigerian programmes attracted much interest, as evidenced by very well-attended screenings and inspiring Q&As with filmmakers and viewers. Michael Omonua was pleased: «Kurzfilmtage is a place for filmmakers with a voice of their own who have something to say. The festival is a celebration of each individual filmmaker's uniqueness».

Thus, the festival more than fulfilled its promise to celebrate short films and cinema, as anticipated in this year's festival trailer by Nefeli Chrysa Avgeris. As artistic director John Canciani stated: «It was a celebration – not just of short film, but also of openness and curiosity on the part of both filmmakers and audiences. In addition to parties and entertaining programmes, we always bring new perspectives to Winterthur. These offer novel visual experiences, but they also involve open questions and contradictions that remain unresolved. Of course, this is easier to deal with in the context of a festival, where we have a community of filmmakers and film fans. This was especially noticeable this year». Thus, the Canada

programme Nature & Nurture celebrated majestic landscapes, yet it also showed how humans destroy nature or try to save it from the damage caused by globalization. But the festival also offered welcome escapes from everyday life, such as an excursion into «Bear Country» with experimental filmmaker Matthew Ranking and musician Nico Feer or a late-night workout on Friday with our second edition of Death by Sports.

At this year's Industry Events, artificial intelligence took centre stage: the Hollywood strikes are coming to an end after actors and writers reached an agreement with studios on better guardrails against the uses of AI. In Winterthur, film and TV producer Patrick Karpiczenko gave an entertaining keynote speech, summarizing what AI is already capable of and what's in store for the future. Working conditions in the industry are likely to change significantly – while AI will make work easier, it also brings with it the dangers of a manipulative machine.

Highlights and audience favourites

The programmes of the Swiss and International Competitions were very popular with viewers. The same goes for the programmes Nature & Nurture, Talk To Me, Behind The Masc, and There Is a Crack in Everything, That's How The Light Gets In from the Main Focus, Love & War, Beyond Nollywood and Tales of Emancipation from the Focus on Nigeria, but also Sparks II, Best-Of European Film Awards, Archival Disruptions, Züri Shorts, Hot Shorts, and the 100 Years of Disney anniversary programme, where young and old enjoyed the early adventures of Mickey Mouse and company – from black-and-white silent films to the well-known colour and sound versions still famous today.

The Upshot

The festival directors are very happy with this year's edition, which counted around 18 000 admissions. Managing director Stefan Dobler concludes: «In addition to the excellent numbers, which surpassed our 2019 admissions, I was particularly pleased with the generally full cinemas this year. Both the smaller special interest programmes and the screenings in the large auditoriums were very well attended. We've never had this many sold-out screenings before. And even outside the cinemas, the festival atmosphere and the shared passion for film among visitors and filmmakers was palpable well into the night.»

Information for Media Professionals

Login to view films: available by request from media@kurzfilmtage.ch

Film stills and festival photos

Portraits and film stills of the award winners and impressions of the 27th festival edition are available on Flickr.

For questions about this media release

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