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20 films start in the documentary film competition at the 55th Krakow Film Festival

On 27 April 2015, the organisers of Krakow Film Festival have announced the results of the selection for the Documentary Film Competition. Twenty films from around the world will compete for the Golden Horn.

It is the ninth time when the documentary film competition accompanies the Krakow Film Festival. This year, the viewers will see, among others, films dealing with the subject of otherness, understood in various ways, and the courage of being oneself. Out of twenty films in the competition, six are Polish productions (or co-productions).

The motif of discovering the truth about the past of one's family members occurs in two films. "Amnesia" by Jerzy Śladkowski is a record of the return of Piotr Piwowarczyk, who lives in Puerto Escondido by the Pacific Ocean, to his home city of Kielce. During his emigration, Piotr discovered that his grandfather participated in the pogrom of 1946 as a perpetrator. In turn, the story of "Grandmother Ruth and her daughters" is told by her granddaughter, and at the same time the film's director, Joanna Schartau. Building the smaller model of her father's family house, she returns to the tragic story from the past, which used to be taboo for years. For the viewer, the film which observes the work of people who find the drowned and give the bodies for the experts to analyse, will be also a kind of violating the taboo ("Floating Bodies" by Nelleke Koop).

The last bastions of the world which ceased to exist a long time ago can be found in the documentary film "A French Laundry" made by Elisabeth Vogler. The eponymous laundry belongs to 89-year-old François. Hidden under the facade of a ruined building from the tumult of contemporary times, there is his fascinating story. The equally mysterious protagonist of the documentary film by Anna Shisova "On the Edge" of the world, in a Russian town in the Kostroma Oblast, finds refuge by a local Orthodox priest and a nun. The forgotten town is hidden in the shadow of a large prison, though according to the assertions of its citizens, it is a paradise on earth.

A house on the seaside was meant to be such a paradise for retired sailors, however, a building is not a ship, and the elderly sailors closed on "Roadstead" (dir. Alessandro Abba Legnazzi) watch the restless waves with yearning, dreaming about the return to the wide seas.

The protagonists of the documentary film "Casa Blanca" by Aleksandra Maciuszek live in a fishing village in Cuba. The ailing Nelsa and her thirty-year-old son Vladimir, suffering from the Down's syndrome. The man has to take care of his mother, otherwise they would have to part.

Within the frames of the competition, one can see two films from Israel. In the first of them, called "The Last Stop" the director, Julie Shles, watches the people visiting the main bus station in Tel Aviv, a meeting place of Israeli from around the world as well as illegal immigrants from Africa. The film creates an extraordinary panorama of contemporary Israel with its problems and the mix of nations and religions. A different kind of meeting was portrayed by Nitzan Ofir in the documentary film "Almost Friends". In her film, the lives of two girls are intertwined: Israeli and Palestinian. Their acquaintance, initially only on-line, gradually transfers into the real world. Another film confronting different nationalities and religions is "The Dybuk. A Tale of the wandering souls" by Krzysztof Kopczyński. The director spent eight years making the film in Uman, Ukraine - a sacred place for Hassidic Jews, whose presence changes this Ukrainian city, and local nationalists have their say.

Different ethnic background is also shown in the film by Agnieszka Zwiefka "The Queen of Silence," eleven-year-old gypsy girl cannot hear or speak, but in spite of these disabilities, her passion is Bollywood dance. Art therapy, or to be precise, singing therapy, is shown by Peti Akar in the documentary film "Sing your heart out", whose protagonists, the members of London choir, treat their depression in this way. In a way, we have the opposite situation in "Shoulder the Lion", where Graham, rock musician for whom music is entire world, cannot perform because of his condition: tinnitus. Also the lives of the rest of the film's extraordinary protagonists tell about the struggle against physical adversities: 80-year-old Alice, who begins to take photos after losing her eyesight and Kate, a female boxer, who damages her brain by injuries inflicted during one of her fights and will never return to the boxing ring, which was her passion, and tries to find solace in sculpturing.

Thomas Wallner also tells about his struggles with his own condition in the film "Before the last curtain falls." It is a record of the last performance of the play "Gardenia," which was shown on the theatre stages of the entire world for two years. The actors in the play are ageing transsexuals and drag queens. On the occasion of this ground-breaking moment in their lives, they tell about the loneliness resulting from their sexual identity. Also the members of the lesbian community in Thailand, portrayed by Ruth Gumnit, struggle with the lack of acceptance. In "Visible silence" they tell about their struggle for recognition and acceptance of their sexual orientation in the eyes of traditional Buddhist society. A similar problem - lack of acceptance from the closest family - also affects the protagonist of the documentary film by Karolina Bielawska, "Call me Marianna," who makes a difficult decision to change her sex and begin to live in accord with her sexuality.

By entering "Love Hotel" with his camera, Philip Cox shows places used - in addition to prostitutes and their customers - also by fleeting lovers and couples married long ago, who search for new experiences. The houses of pleasure are a part of Japanese tradition, however, under the influence of recent conservative political and moral changes, they had to alter their character.

The competition includes also films returning to the times of communism. last year's winner of the Dragon of Dragons, recognised master of documentary film, Bogdan Dziworski, will show his latest film made after a 25-year-old break from directing, "Plus Minus or Fly trips to the East" Phantasmagoric record of the journey to Georgia on the footsteps of the leader - the character from the director's childhood - Joseph Stalin. In turn, Giedrė Žickytė in his film "Master and Tatyana" tells the story of a special artist, Vitas Luckus, Lithuanian performer and photographer who stood out on the background of a grey Soviet reality. The axis of the story is his relationship with the eponymous Tatiana. Elements of that reality can also be found in "Battles," which deal with contemporary times. The director, Isabelle Tollenaere proves that war never really ends, and the echoes of homo sovieticus have not subsided in spite of the years that passed.

Below we present the results of the selection for the documentary competition.

1. Amnesia, Jerzy Śladkowski, Poland, 56'
2. Grandmother Ruth and Her Daughters, Johanna Schartau, Sweden, 60'
3. Battles, Isabelle Tollenaere, Belgium/Holland, 88'
4. Casa Blanca, Aleksandra Maciuszek, Poland/Mexico, 60'
5. The Dybbuk. A Tale of Wandering Souls, Krzysztof Kopczyński, Poland/Sweden/Ukraine, 85'
6. The Queen of Silence, Agnieszka Zwiefka, Poland, 80'
7. Love Hotel, Philip Cox, UK/France, 75'
8. Master and Tatyana, Giedrė Žickytė, Lithuania, 84'
9. A French Laundry, Elisabeth Vogler, France, 84'
10. Call me Marianna, Karolina Bielawska, Poland, 75'
11. Shoulder The Lion, Patryk Rebisz, Erinisse Rebisz, USA, 74'
12. Roadstead, Alessandro Abba Legnazzi, Italy, 70'
13. On the Edge, Anna Shishova, Russia, 49'
14. Last Stop, Julie Shles, Israel, 77'
15. Visible Silence, Ruth Gumnit, Thailand/USA, 43'
16. Plus Minus or Fly Trips to the East, Bogdan Dziworski, Poland, 48'
17. Floating Bodies, Nelleke Koop, Holland 2014, 55'
18. Almost Friends, Nitzan Ofir, Israel, 60'

19. Sing Your Heart Out, Peti Akar, UK/ Hungary, 47'
20. Before the last curtain falls, Wallner Thomas, Germany/Belgium, 88'

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