

Warsaw, 16.10.2025

15. **E**DUKINO Empowering Film Festival

MINUTES OF THE JURY MEETING

The Jury, composed of:

- Dariusz Regucki, Director/Composer – Jury Chairman
- Prof. dr hab. Joanna Polak – Animation Film Specialist and Director
- Aleksandra Chwedorowicz – Filmologist and Theatre Critic
- Marek Brodzki – Director and Academic Lecturer – Festival Artistic Director

after watching all the films selected for the main **GOLDEN COPERNICUS** award and special mentions, has selected the best films. The Jury notes that all films awarded in the main competition are strongly aligned with the themes of this year's festival and are of a very high standard.

SPECIAL MENTION

Festival Director's Special Award for the US production

All I Want for Christmas Is You

Dir. Ashish Chanana

- **How does the Festival Director justify his award?** Citing the title of the film, which is part of the song: "All I want for Christmas is you. I don't care about the presents under the Christmas tree, because you are the best gift..." The film focuses on authentic dilemmas of youth concerning friendship, first love, and family relationships during the holiday season. Young people can find their own experiences and problems in this film.
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SPECIAL MENTION

For the US production

Last Rung On The Ladder

Dir. Jeff Blankenship

GOLDEN COPERNICUS AWARDS IN THE MAIN COMPETITION GRANTED BY THE JURY

ANIMATION FILM

Category – Struggles with fate, pain, fear, loneliness...

Reni's Worlds – Argentine production

Dir. Claudia Marcela Ruiz

- A beautiful film, full of joy, hope, and the colour of life. Excellently made at a very high standard. The idea, pace, and rhythm of the film are balanced and cohesive. And when, at the end of the incredible adventures, we hear the sentence: "Vamos a casa" – "Let's go home," it's impossible not to be moved by this story and to share the joy of returning, along with the film's protagonists.

Category – Choices, values, the truth about oneself

Heritage – Polish production

Dir. Barbara Koniecka

- We congratulate the director, Ms. Barbara Koniecka, on the idea and execution of the film. An excellently made film where the classic animation technique seamlessly transitions into computer animation. And our protagonist? Each of us has our roots and heritage. The patina of time has covered up bad memories, and she returns to her nest, because, after all, you can't pretend to be from nowhere. How far does a child's imagination reach? Are external conditions, in this case, Silesia in the 70s, able to cover dreams with dust and grime? No, and again, no. And even though the monster of ideology and ugliness tries to devour dreams, in the end, it devours itself, and the world regains its beauty.

Category – Global issues, humanity facing humanity

A Silky Scarf – Polish production

Dir. Maciej Kądziela

- When a young alchemist sets out with his sister to obtain an antidote for the plague that has taken over the spider village, we settle into our seats from the very first shot and journey with them. The director managed to create an excellent, suspenseful film, and although we might guess the ending of this adventure, we cheer for our heroes the whole time. From a craft perspective, there is nothing to critique. All the principles of film art and language are precisely executed. And the message? How can we not rejoice that people are full of altruism and a willingness to help, and in this battle between good and evil, good always triumphs in the end.

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY

Category – Struggles with fate, pain, fear, loneliness

No Frills – Polish production

Dir. Ewa Ewart

- "How close must death pass by us for a person to understand their destiny?" Bob Dylan asked. And although Heidegger said that man anticipates his death from birth, in the life of our protagonist, Magda Atkins, the natural course of her story is disrupted by cancer. This film is not an abstraction of life, powdered and painted in a make-up process. Magda invites us into her life, and we see her dramatic struggle on various levels of emotion and the fundamental question: What is the meaning of our life when illness is destroying us, taking away the breath of joy, and pain appears in our eyes? How to cope with loneliness when your partner leaves you, and you realize that the beautiful words that "Love is presence" turned out to be a slogan in our protagonist's life. The film is magnificent because the protagonist is magnificent. Magda's honesty is striking, and we believe her from the first to the last minute. This beautiful film was made by Ms. Ewa Ewart, who opened up to our protagonist in an extraordinary way. To make a documentary "no frills," not for one's own glory or clickbait fireworks, but with immense humility for the subject and the protagonist, is mastery and shows the director's class. If we add to this a great sense of form and skillful cinematic storytelling, along with an artistic concept, we end up with a complete film. And that is the kind of director Ms. Ewa Ewart is. She made a film where we constantly brush against death, yet we finish optimistically. And we should remember death every day to live life to the fullest. Illness allowed Magda to tame death. After all, we have the imperative for life inscribed in our DNA.

Category – Global issues, humanity facing humanity

Land of the Mustaches – US production

Dir. Leon Joosen

- It is impossible to tell the story of the hundreds of millions of suffering women, children, and refugees that have occurred in human history. The director focuses on a single protagonist whose life was spent in World War II concentration camps, and whose family was destroyed by two totalitarianisms: German and Soviet. This is a great idea because it is easier to focus on a single story. Over one hundred million people in the world are refugees. And each of these people is a specific tragedy. The film is masterfully executed. Excellent acting, editing, music, and VFX effects. The mixing of documentary and fictional conventions, along with original and modern animations, makes this an exceptional film. How much beauty and tragedy are contained in the choices of a person who asks themselves in the hell of the Gulag: With whom should I make an alliance, with

the demon or with God? How to endure hunger and the suffering of separation from family? These are global issues, and although 80 years have passed since World War II, they remain current, because totalitarianisms and dictatorships are still strong.

Category – Struggles for meaning, self-realization, dreams

Process – Polish production

Dir. Krzysztof ESTE Łyszkowski

- The film's protagonist, Robert Knapik, says that this film (quote) "...was made out of the ass..." But when we watch it, I have no doubt that it was made from the heart. The truth of this film is striking, and Robert is credible and painfully authentic. That is one side of the coin; the other is the protagonist's words that social media is a "fucking facade." Someone might say that this film is indeed an interesting topic for the director but concerns a small group of depraved young people. Is that really the case? In 2024, the number of suicides in Poland was 4845 people, of which 127 were minors. How much does the pain of existence hurt? The struggle for meaning? Where to draw hope from? Robert, who succeeded, talks about this. This film was also created because the director Krzysztof ESTE Łyszkowski appeared, who must have the patience of a saint to withstand being on set with such an original character as Robert. The director had an idea and took care of every detail of the cinematic language, which means we watch a very good film at every stage of execution, and the casting of the main character in the triple role: accused, prosecutor, and judge, is brilliant. When an interesting story and a conscious director meet, an extraordinary film is born. And that is the case here. That's why we say thank you to Robert, the director, and the entire crew.

SHORT FICTION FILM

Category – Struggles with fate, pain, fear, loneliness

Reaping – Polish production

Dir. Karolina Bogus

- Is it possible to tell the whole life of an elderly person in a short feature film? Director Karolina Bogus succeeded in this. Or rather, it wasn't just *succeeded* because that would suggest something accidental. No, it's a great idea, realized with full consistency, that ultimately resulted in a film that cannot be ignored. The story of two elderly brothers, in the excellent creations of Janusz Nowicki and Dymitr Hołowko. A universal story that touches every human being. And the fear and anxiety of death? Who is afraid? The one who wants to leave, or the one who will be left with their loneliness? Or maybe one should allow that person to leave?

Although it is a film about pain and dying, it is ultimately an affirmation of life and fraternal friendship. Józef, the dying brother, says that his brother, Andrzej, won't be able to carry him to the lake so he can enjoy it and comfort his memories.

Andrzej replies: "You fool, my brother is never too heavy for me."

Category – Choices, values, the truth about oneself

I am not – Polish production

Dir. Daniel Le Hai

- Is there an element of good in every person? Does a ruined alcoholic father have the right to his children's love? How to reconnect broken relationships? Piotr came home after years and had to confront childhood traumas. And his father's words that he is good unleash fury in him. He cannot find common ground with his younger brother. A very good film led by the skillful hand of a director who knows what he wants to achieve and what language to use to tell the story. This film hurts, and it must hurt, so that a kind of catharsis occurs at the end, as in Piotr's life, who discovers what love is and what it tastes like. An outstanding role by Andrzej Grabowski, who played/showed a study of the disintegration of an alcoholic in a way that is neither exaggerated nor ridiculed.

FEATURE FICTION FILM

Category – Struggles with fate, pain, fear, loneliness...

The Summer that Snowed – Iranian production

Dir. Nasim Forough

- What can cause a relationship to fall apart? Sometimes an unnecessary secret, built up by misinterpretation, is enough, and sometimes it's small lies, lack of communication, and forgiveness. This is a film about the fact that silence screams the loudest, and that scream is full of despair and longing for things to be as they were before. The story of Mahi and Amir's marriage and their daughter is shown in a convention of long shots, silence broken by an outburst of resentment. Do we still know how to talk to each other, or do we only communicate? This is an interestingly made film, not free from formal and execution errors. The cultural context of Iran is an additional asset, and the story told shows that the settings/scenography may be different, but the human problem is always the same around the world. We want to love and be loved.

Category – Global issues, humanity facing humanity

Old Heart – US production

Dir. Kirk Wahamaki and Leslye Witt

- Should the age bracket be the boundary of calling out for love? Tom - a widower, the 85-year-old protagonist of our film, has no doubts. He gets on a plane and flies from America to the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Europe to find his love from the time of World War II, which could not be realized, even because of racial prejudice. Tom is a Black man, and Sarah is European. A beautifully made film at every stage of production and post-production. Everything is balanced. A noble line of shots, colours, pace, rhythm, and excellent dialogue. The film moves you, evokes a smile and positive emotions. And Sarah's words resonate in your ears long after watching the film: "If there is only desire, we can leave at any moment, but if there is love, the lovers are locked in dreams..."

And that is what I wish for you. Do not lock the doors of your dreams, and come to the EDUKINO festival in subsequent editions. Here you will see films made by people with sensitivity and for people who still ask themselves important questions about the meaning of life, the condition of our humanity, suffering, and love.

Jury Signatures