

DIRECTORS: SHAPING OUR FUTURE

Foreword

For a director releasing a low budget film, a cinema is obviously the traditional way for the film to find an audience. But a traditional theatrical release is a great deal more. For an emerging filmmaker looking to establish their career, the value of a low-budget feature can go well beyond the film itself. Through curated post-screening Q&As, published profiles, and press reviews, it's a way for the director to share their artistic vision as well as personal and production stories. Even if the film finds only the smallest audience, it places a director on the radar, helping them to establish a profile as an artist and creator – a vital step towards a sustainable career.

But in an era of internet-focused distribution, when theatrical releases are being squeezed, those important advantages are disappearing. Not only are smaller, low budget films struggling to find an audience – but those marketing and press opportunities are disappearing along with them. It can be a vicious circle, as shrinking audiences obviously have a negative impact on the revenues generated, further impacting this traditional model. And if the future lies in the digital space, then audiovisual authors are already struggling to share in the economic success of their works online.

At the same time, European film and funding agencies continue to fund films in this traditional way while seemingly unable to prevent the coming crisis: that these films struggle to be seen, that the old distribution model is no longer sustainable for European arthouse films. At a time when isolationist forces threaten the European idea, and populist movements are overtly challenging filmmakers and national audiovisual policies, these agencies face the political challenge of reinventing themselves in our new era – a vital step which requires new thinking and a broader conversation about the industry's future direction in which filmmakers must be involved.

But there is, perhaps, a glimmer of hope - as directors and producers embrace new paradigms, embracing the opportunities for online distribution to find and build audiences in a completely different way. While theatrical release should always form a part of those release strategies, these new approaches point to a more joined-up way of thinking about the life of the film, engaging audiences and fans from the very beginning in a conversation about the work, in a way that can build and enhance careers. New internet tools – from crowd funding, to carefully targeted social media campaigns, mean that films can now find new audiences, and even make money.

The future is out there for us to shape, but we need to be ready to move fast, think on our feet and be ready for things to change – all things that as directors we excel at.

FERA General Assembly 2017
September 22-24 – Zürich, Switzerland

Friday, September 22 – Afternoon

Opening programme

« Switzerland in Focus »

- Welcome Address by Host ARF/FDS representative and introduction of the team in charge
- FERA GA 2017 Opening Speech by FERA Chair **Dan CLIFTON**
- Keynote Speech on the 'Digital Shift' by **Alex STOLZ**

- Panel « What visibility for our films in the audiovisual ocean of the digital era ? »

Cinema attendance figures across Europe are at a record-high, but arthouse cinema is struggling like never before to find its audience. How can directors make a difference ? How is our craft affected by the digital shift in content, dramaturgy and aesthetics ? Are there authors-friendly models in theatrical and online distribution ? How are we challenged as creators by the possibility of taking a more active role in promoting our work ?

With **Pablo Carrera**, IHS Markit (UK) ; **Samir**, Director, co-initiator and co-owner of KOSMOS, cinema and cultural center (Switzerland) ; **Elisabeth O. Sjaastad**, Director, Nettkino project manager (Norway) ; **Andrea Štaka**, Director (Switzerland) ; **Alex Stolz**, Film Disruptors (UK) ; **Pascal Trächslin**, Distributor (Switzerland)

- Introduction of **Ivo Kummer**, Head of Film Department at the Federal Office of Culture, by ARF/FDS president **Barbara Miller**, Director, ARF/FDS President
- Update on Gender campaign in the Swiss audiovisual industry

Throughout the EU, gender equality campaigns were launched to finally give female filmmakers equal opportunities in the audiovisual sector. What were the actual effects of Gender equality research and of the Swiss Women's Audiovisual Network (SWAN) campaign ? What are the next challenges to tackle ?

By SWAN co-founders **Nicole Schroeder**, Head of Department CrossFOCAL at FOCAL ; **Stéphane Mitchell**, screenwriter, introduced by **Ursula Häberlin**, ARF/FDS CEO

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- Screening – Swiss directors' film extracts
- Directors in dialogue discussion « How to foster a diversity of creative voices in the digital era ? »

New distribution models impact production and national audiovisual policies, which are built to foster creative diversity. In Switzerland, documentary filmmaking is traditionally strong and successful both with the Swiss box-office and in international festivals. Can it inspire other film authors to assert themselves, in a time where market pressure challenges directors' creative choices? How is that successful model affected by the digital shift? How might this challenge be also an inspiration to our creativity and to author's films?

With directors **Christian Frei** (Switzerland), **Adela Peeva** (Bulgaria) in discussion with ARF/FDS representatives **Kaspar Kasics** (Director, ARF/FDS board member and former President) and **Gabriel Baur** (Director, ARF/FDS board member)

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Saturday, September 23 – Morning
General Assembly Session 1

- **Statutory agenda**
 - General Assembly 2016 draft minutes approval
 - 2016 accounts approval
 - 2017 provisional budget approval
 - Activity report approval
 - Perspectives and call to action

- **Briefing on digital shift**

A snapshot of the impact of the digital shift on the audiovisual sector in Europe : who is our audience today ? Where and how are they watching our films ?

By **Pablo Carrera**, Principal Research Analyst – Cinema & Programming, IHS Markit

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Saturday, September 23 – Afternoon
General Assembly Session 2

- **Panel « *Directors in Custody: Remake of the history we were not prepared for* »**

“Politics is no longer about the common good and cooperation in solving the country’s problems but about enemies who need to be destroyed and friends who need to be supported, regardless of the moral or political cost.” Grzegorz Ekiert (On Hungary and Poland)

Russian TV news anchor made an announcement of the verdict, saying as following: “Ukrainian art film director and terrorist Oleg Sentsov has just been sentenced to 20 years in high security jail.” It may be the clumsy wording or just a subconscious slip. However, the fairly unoriginal Idea that the art film and terrorism are different levels of the single felony never before went out in public on such an official level. During our panel we will try to

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confirm with accuracy that Oleg Sentsov is a director with serious artistic inclination, indeed. But is he a terrorist? Not likely so. His trial gave a strong impression of a staged parade, preformed with obvious lack of subtlety, with too many sordidly absurd elements. Oleg interrupted production of RHINOCERUS, his new film, to be taken to Siberia, in order to spend horrific part of his future in the most ugly prison you may think of. We are about to show the video that was following the case. (At least we'll show the most important clips.) You will see the prosecuted, prosecutors and witnesses, including some members of Oleg's family. You'll get quite close to all of them, it is quite an honest doc. Idea is to make you sense for yourself the force of State and smell the political Power, set in destructive motion against the young filmmaker.

Oleg was not imprisoned because of the film he made, one may notice. As you will be able to judge yourself, however, he would never be chosen as an object to this process, unless he was a prominent filmmaker. Prior to getting into political debate on the state of the artist in contemporary world, let us exchange among ourselves practical proposals on helping Oleg, as we should help any one of us. Facts about given legal, political and personal disaster are too often overheard. National Governments pertinently choose other topics and other priorities when in dialogue with Putin's administration. Can we change it a bit? We think it is possible.

Also, there will be time to reflect, we hope, the other confinements, restrictions and limitations to personal and artistic freedom of filmmakers. Those limitations may be set otherwise, on other places, on different levels, but we may find some common ground to the diversified chain of recent mishaps. Putin may seem far away, but within the EU we see at least two "Putinesque" regimes emerging. Both of those regimes grew a sinister attitude towards their filmmaking communities. And the tension keeps growing, with intention to spill over further. Let us have courage to face the facts and take a guess about who of us may be the next, taken on the same ride?

With **Karolina Bielawska**, Director (Poland) ; **Marion Döring**, European Film Academy Director

Moderated by **Hrvoje Hribar**, FERA Executive Committee member (Croatia)

Screening of extracts « THE TRIAL : The State of Russia vs. Oleg Sentsov »

Courtesy of Rise and Shine World Sales UG

Documentary, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, 2017

Runtime: 71min.

Director: Askold Kurov

Production: Marx Film, Message Film

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Oleg Sentsov is a Ukrainian filmmaker, Euromaidan activist and native of Crimea. After the Russian annexation of Crimea, he became an active opponent of the occupation. In May 2014, he was arrested by the Russian security service, charged with planned terrorist attacks and transported to Moscow. After over a year in custody, he was sentenced to 20 years in prison, despite the fact that the testimonies were given under duress and evidence was insufficient. Sentsov never pled guilty.

Director Askold Kurov follows the progress of the trial and the attempts of Oleg's family, friends and lawyers to save him from prison. The notorious case inspired protests around the world: the European Film Academy and many renowned filmmakers such as Pedro Almodovar, Wim Wenders, Agnieszka Holland, Ken Loach, Johnny Depp and others called for Oleg's release. Kurov's investigation gradually reveals an absurd and frightening Kafkaesque story about how anyone can become a victim of a ruthless state machine.

Festivals:

Berlinale 2017, One World Prague, CPH:DOX, Docudays UA, Lecce EFF, GoEast, Sheffield DocFest, Motovun FF, Two Riversides, New Horizons, Manaki Brothers Macedonia

- **Election of FERA Honorary President 2017-2019**
- Presentation of Executive Committee Member Candidates
- **Election of Executive Committee 2017-2019**

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Sunday, September 24 – Morning

General Assembly Session 3

Members' Forum

« How to flourish and make a living as a European director in the digital era ? »

- Panel « *Handling our economic rights : licensing, negotiating and remuneration throughout the EU* » followed by 30mn open discussion

What actions can be launched to increase directors' pay and upfront remuneration ? How do we negotiate with the new digital distribution players ? What new ways to license filmmakers' rights and secure royalties' payment in the future ?

With **Bill Anderson** (Directors UK), **Marianne Kleven** (Directors Guild of Norway), **Sandra Anne Piras** (DFD – Denmark), **Alberto Simone** (100autori – Italy)

Moderated by **Klemen Dvornik** (DSR – Slovenia)

- Q&A « *The EU copyright reform impact on directors' economic rights* »

With **Pauline Durand-Vialle**, FERA CEO

Moderated by **Dan Clifton** (Directors UK)

- **Closing Statements**

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