

Press Release



Forum 2019: Risk Before Perfection

Arsenal - Institute for Film and Video Art is putting on the *Forum* as part of the Berlinale for the 49th time. The main programme consists of 39 films, 31 of which world premieres. This year's Special Screenings are entitled "Archival Constellations" and will be announced in a second press release.

The *Forum 2019* main programme doesn't consider itself some sort of 'best of' list, but rather gathers together a selection of films that try things out, take a stance and refuse to compromise. Some look back at the history of the 20th century, while others focus on what's to come, even as they remain anchored in the here and now. Numerous films take the written word as their starting point, drawing on or making explicit reference to literature or working with letters, poems and other writings.

In the hands of Kelly Copper and Pavol Liska from the Nature Theater of Oklahoma, Elfriede Jelinek's ghost novel "Die Kinder der Toten" thus becomes the Super 8 silent film *Die Kinder der Toten*, in which doppelgangers, the undead, a Nazi widow, a suicidal forester and a family of Syrian poets haunt Styria- at once a heimatfilm with a brass band soundtrack and an exercise in home movie horror.

With its magnificent costumes and opulent images, Rita Azevedo Gomes' adaptation of a Robert Musil novella *A portuguesa (The Portuguese Woman)* seems almost classic by comparison. The ruptures in this story of a young woman freeing herself from solitude are provided by none other than Ingrid Caven in the role of a minstrel.

Jessie Jeffrey Dunn Rovinelli carries out a literal re-reading of Ronald M. Schernikau's "So schön" - black cloth cover, pink title - in *So Pretty*, superimposing the lives and politics of the West German gay scene of the 1980s onto a group of queers sharing an apartment in present-day New York. Both now and back then, the same question persists: how to organise being together and in love.

The Plagiarists by Peter Parlow hands just as pivotal a role to a book, in this case one of the volumes of Karl Ove Knausgård's novel series "My Struggle". Following an impromptu drinking session in the country, an amusingly verbose young couple - he a wannabe director, she a wannabe writer - wonder months later what precisely happened that evening. This slyly deceptive work pits film against literature: Are books better than films?

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Literary references equally abound in *A rosa azul de Novalis (The Blue Flower of Novalis)*, an ever-shifting documentary portrait by Gustavo Vinagre und Rodrigo Carneiro which turns the São Paulo apartment of the 40-year-old HIV positive Marcelo into a veritable stage for his life. Marcelo's closest confidants appear to be his books, first and foremost the novel fragment "Heinrich von Ofterdingen" by Novalis, from which he recites passages stark naked and in a most unorthodox reading position.

For its part, *MS Slavic 7* by Sofia Bohdanowicz and Deragh Campbell opens with a close-up of a poem, going on to show how a young woman views the correspondence of her great-grandmother, a Polish poet who emigrated to Canada, as the literary executor of her estate: a work of fiction about the sensuality of written documents, their materiality and message - with a library call number as its title.

Rosa Luxemburg's letters from prison form the backbone of Ghassan Salhab's essayistic collage *Une rose ouverte / Warda (An Open Rose)*. Luxemburg's lyrical descriptions of nature bear witness to a joie de vivre undimmed by the political situation of the time and are not seen, but rather heard - in both German and Arabic. In connection with images of a wintry Berlin, a polyphony of different overlapping visual and acoustic layers is produced.

Berlin documentarian Thomas Heise returns to the *Forum* with his new film *Heimat ist ein Raum aus Zeit (Heimat Is A Space in Time)*, in which letters are an equally central element. Based on written correspondence, diary entries and many other documents, he traces out the story of his family over four generations between Vienna and (East) Berlin, narrating at the same time nothing less than the history of Germany in the 20th century.

Jean-Gabriel Périot too revisits the past in *Nos défaites (Our Defeats)*, restaging scenes showing strikes, resistance and labour disputes from films about May '68 with pupils from a secondary school in Ivry-sur-Seine. Performance is then followed by reflection: As the group are interviewed on their roles, the views of the younger generation on politics and political cinema alike come into sharp focus.

Another notable documentary filmmaker and frequent *Forum* guest also screens his latest work in this year's selection: In *Erde (Earth)*, Nikolaus Geyrhalter shows humans moving mountains and shifting soil on a grand scale at seven locations ranging from Sacramento in California to Carrara in Italy: In the age of the Anthropocene, the very earth itself is being violently reshaped.



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Camila Freitas' debut *Chão (Landless)*, one of a total of three Brazilian films in this year's selection, is about how soil can be farmed in ecologically-viable fashion and the struggles of the Landless Workers' Movement. Since 2015, an area of land has been occupied by a group of workers, who demand that it be redistributed. The documentary finds arresting images to give a glimpse of an everyday life in resistance, equal parts agricultural work and political activism.

Rural Brazil is also the setting of Helvécio Marins Jr.'s feature *Querência (Homing)*. Marcelo gives up his job as a cowboy following a raid on the ranch, eventually finding a way out of his melancholy and a new life as the master of ceremonies at rodeo shows. The specific culture and mood of the Brazilian pampa are captured in winning fashion, whose population feel largely cut off from the rest of the country.

Three essayistic explorations of the African continent form another focus of this year's programme. *African Mirror* by Mischa Hedinger is comprised entirely of archive material, drawing on a rich seam of documents to reveal how Swiss filmmaker and travel writer René Gardi left his mark on how a whole generation viewed Africa from the 1950s onwards. The film doesn't just highlight Gardi's colonialist way of thinking, but also functions as a reflection on the projections of Africa of today.

A look into a mirror brings Lemohang Jeremiah Mosese's *Mother, I Am Suffocating. This Is My Last Film About You.* to a close, a farewell hymn to his homeland of Lesotho from a director now living in exile. Black and white images of a mystical beauty and raw voiceover merge into a chronicle of radical grief, building from a personal farewell to the mother to a renunciation of the motherland in full political awareness of what that means - an unconventional lament for a story of African migration.

In *Serpentário (Serpentarius)* by Carlos Conceição, a young man drifts through an emptied-out African landscape in search of the ghost of his mother - a glittering journey between past and future that borrows from different film genres along the way.

The films of the 49th Forum:

African Mirror by Mischa Hedinger, Switzerland - WP

Aidiyet (Belonging) by Burak Çevik, Turkey / Canada / France - WP

Bait by Mark Jenkin, United Kingdom - WP

Breathless Animals by Lei Lei, United States - WP

Chão (Landless) by Camila Freitas, Brazil - WP



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Chun nuan hua kai (From Tomorrow on, I Will) by Ivan Marković, Wu Linfeng, Germany / People's Republic of China / Serbia - WP

Demons by Daniel Hui, Singapore

El despertar de las hormigas (Hormigas) by Antonella Sudasassi Furniss, Costa Rica / Spain - WP

Erde (Earth) by Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Austria - WP

Fern von uns (Far from Us) by Verena Kuri, Laura Bierbrauer, Argentina - WP

Fortschritt im Tal der Ahnungslosen (Progress in the Valley of the People Who Don't Know) by Florian Kunert, Germany - WP

Fourteen by Dan Sallitt, United States - WP

Fukuoka by Zhang Lu, Republic of Korea - WP

Heimat ist ein Raum aus Zeit (Heimat Is A Space in Time) by Thomas Heise, Germany / Austria - WP

Kameni govornici (The Stone Speakers) by Igor Drljača, Canada / Bosnia and Herzegovina - IP

Kimi no tori wa utaeru (And Your Bird Can Sing) by Sho Miyake, Japan - IP

Die Kinder der Toten by Kelly Copper, Pavol Liska, Austria - WP

Lapū by César Alejandro Jaimes, Juan Pablo Polanco, Colombia

Malchik russskiy (A Russian Youth) by Alexander Zolotukhin, Russian Federation - WP

Man you (Vanishing Days) by Zhu Xin, People's Republic of China

Monștri. (Monsters.) by Marius Olteanu, Romania - WP

Mother, I Am Suffocating. This Is My Last Film About You. by Lemohang Jeremiah Mosese, Lesotho - WP

MS Slavic 7 by Sofia Bohdanowicz, Deragh Campbell, Canada - WP

Nasht (Leakage) by Suzan Iravanian, Iran / Czech Republic - WP

Ne croyez surtout pas que je hurle (Just Don't Think I'll Scream) by Frank Beauvais, France - WP

Nos défaites (Our Defeats) by Jean-Gabriel Périot, France - WP

Olanda by Bernd Schoch, Germany - WP

Oufsayed Elkhortoum (Khartoum Offside) by Marwa Zein, Sudan / Norway / Denmark - WP

The Plagiarists by Peter Parlow, United States - WP

A portuguesa (The Portuguese Woman) by Rita Azevedo Gomes, Portugal

Querência (Homing) by Helvécio Marins Jr., Brazil / Germany - WP

Retrospekt by Esther Rots, Netherlands / Belgium

A rosa azul de Novalis (The Blue Flower of Novalis) by Gustavo Vinagre, Rodrigo Carneiro, Brazil - IP

Serpentário (Serpentarius) by Carlos Conceição, Angola / Portugal - WP

So Pretty by Jessie Jeffrey Dunn Rovinelli, United States / France - WP

Gli ultimi a vederli vivere (The Last to See Them) by Sara Summa, Germany - WP

Une rose ouverte / Warda (An Open Rose) by Ghassan Salhab, Lebanon -



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WP

Weitermachen Sanssouci (Music and Apocalypse) by Max Linz, Germany -

WP

Years of Construction by Heinz Emigholz, Germany - WP

Press Office,
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