

ANIFILM

Mezinárodní festival animovaných filmů



INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ANIMATED FILMS

ANIFILM

2 – 7 MAY 2023, LIBEREC

Anifilm 2023 Has Announced the Winners of the International Competitions and Is Coming to a Close

The International Festival of Animated Films Anifilm is coming to a close, the awards ceremony for the international competitions in the film and game categories will take place today in the auditorium G of the Liberec Technical University.

The international competitions sections offered 10 feature films, 36 short films, 35 student films, 22 music videos, 23 abstract and non-narrative films and 12 VR films. 15 computer games also competed to gain the festival's recognition.

The Main Award in the International Competition of **Feature Films for Grown-ups** has gone to ***My Love Affair with Marriage***, a film by independent Latvian-American filmmaker Signe Baumane, with the jury saying, *"This artistically and technically exemplary movie was chosen because we find it important that this film will change a lot of people and free a lot of souls."* The Main Award for **Best Feature Film for Children** has been awarded to the French film ***Ernest and Celestine: A Trip to Gibberitia*** (dir. Jean-Christophe Roger and Julien Chheng), which the jurors praised for being *"beautifully done, visually delightful, charming"*

movie. It is also deeply moving and relevant today. Its substantial message is not didactic but talks about the importance of fighting for freedom of expression and against restrictive, totalitarian regimes. It also carries topics of personal responsibility, resolving family issues, and nurturing the loving friendship between the two main characters, which is also parental, is valuable and unique.”

The prize for **Best Short Film** has gone to **Ice Merchants** by Portuguese director João Gonzalez. „The story of a touching, intimate relationship between father and child dealing with loss and facing threat. It is shown with simplicity and gentleness and yet plays with our basic instincts as we await the fall,” the jury declared in the statement.

Out of **Student Films**, the jury has ruled in favour of **The House of Loss**, a film from Tokyo University of Performing Arts made by Jinkyu Jeon, which tells the compelling and slightly chilling story of a caregiver and the clients of a nursing home. The jury praised the story and its treatment with the following words, “The beautifully drawn film tackles a difficult subject with sensibility, compassion and understanding of the traumas of the old generation.” The award for **Non-Narrative and Abstract Animation** has gone to **Sliver Cave** by Chinese director Caibei Cai, the 2019 winner of the same category. And the prize for **Best Music Video** stays home for the second year in a row as it has gone to **Lenka Dusilová: Bílé konie** directed by Miloslav Frič. The category of **VR Films** was dominated by German directors Pedro Harres and Andre Correias and their film **From the Main Square**. The prize for **Best Computer Games for Children** has gone to **Lost in Play**, a project of the Israeli studio Happy Juice, and the prize for **Best Computer Game Visual** has been awarded to **Pentiment** by the American studio Obsidian Entertainment. One of the awards was chosen by the audience vote during the festival. The **Audience Award** of the Region of Liberec has gone to the Hungarian feature film **Four Souls of Coyote**.

At the opening ceremony of Anifilm, prizes of the national competition **Czech Horizon** were announced, which were chosen by the Council of Animated Film. The **Czech Television Award** for **Best Czech Animation** went to the short film **Dede is Dead** by Philipp Kastner. The **PPF Foundation Award** for **Best Czech Short Film** went to Husa, directed by Jan Míka. The winner of the Czech Television Award, **Dede is Dead**, also became the **Best Czech Student Film** (the prize comes with a EUR 6,000 sound post-production in the BEEP studio). The prize for **Best Czech Series** went to Matej Mihályi and Thanh Mai Tran for **Wunderbaum** (episode **Stone**) and the prize for Best Czech Music Video went to **Oberka: King of Bhangra** by the creative duo of Eliška Oz and Lee Oz. The competition of commissioned works was dominated by the large creative team of Barbora Halířová, Diana Cam Van Nguyen, Magdalena Hejzlarová, Michaela Režová, Ondřej Slavík, Thanh Mai Tran and Zdeněk Durdil for their series **Design and Transformation: Stories of Czech Design 1990-2020**. The national competition **Czech Horizon** featured a total of 55 films in several categories. Anifilm also saw the very first edition of pitching for the **Czech Horizon Grant supported by the PPF Foundation**, whose objective is to support production of Czech creative professional short animated films. The jury chose three out of ten submitted projects, namely **9 Million Colors** directed by Bára Anna Stejskalová, **Kill Kokeš Kill** directed by Jan Míka and **Machine Mountain** directed by Terezie Unzeitigová.

About This Year's Anifilm Programme

This year's **International Festival of Animated Films Anifilm** took place in Liberec **2 to 7 May**. The **international and national competition**, as every year, presented the best and the latest work that is being created in contemporary animation across the world. The main theme of the festival's non-competition programme was **Japanese animation** in its various forms – from the essentially original to popular anime. Thanks to this, it was possible to meet a number of Japanese artists in Liberec, including the legendary **Koji Yamamura**. He arrived to introduce his films but also his drawings at the exhibition **Four Flashing Figures** that was held at the Regional Gallery of Liberec. **Mirai Mizue** and **Sarina Nihei**, who represent the

new and award-winning Japanese animation, also came all the way from Japan to introduce their work at Anifilm and sit on the jury.

Other leading figures who came to Liberec to be part of the jury at Anifilm included **John Stevenson**, an Oscar nominee for *Kung Fu Panda*, and **Kim Keukeleire**, the main animated of Wes Anderson's and Guillermo del Toro's films. To introduce their films in competition at the festival, a number of directors arrived in Liberec, including **Jean Christopher Roger** (*Myška a medvěd na cestách*), **Rasmus A. Siversten** (*Tři zloději a lev*) and **Nikita Diakur** (*Salto vzad*). And last but not least, Anifilm also announced the winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award, which went to **Alfons Mensdorff-Pouilly**, who came to the festival to personally accept the award, introduce his films and give an animation workshop.

However, Anifilm is not just about meeting celebrities of the world of animation but first and foremost about films and animated production in its many forms. Children could enjoy programme designed for them, especially **Animo** and **School of Animation supported by the PPF Foundation**. Almost every day was concluded with the festival's traditional **midnight portion of scary and saucy films**; the centennial anniversary of Czech Radio was celebrated with the **collection of animated films with the radio in the lead**; the historical square in Liberec hosted **Bilance** that offered a summary of the last year's animated features. Rare **films of Czech amateur filmmakers** from the 1930s to the 1990s were screened, accompanied by live music. The **Born in Liberec** section served to honour one of the Liberec natives, actor **Oldřich Kaiser**. And Anifilm also commemorated this year's centenary of distinguished Czech authors – director **Břetislav Pojar** and artists **Miroslav Štěpánek**. The festival's **Industry Programme** featured a number of presentations, masterclasses and lectures. **Game Zone** was dedicated to presentation and playing of the games in competition. There were also exhibitions, concerts, puppet theatre, animation stop-motion van ANICIRCUS, a week-end **dubbing studio of Czech Television**, etc.

But yes, what would be the sense of the festival, if it wasn't for the most important thing of all: the programme of this year's edition of Anifilm has attracted **more than 35,000 visitors**.

Stills from all awarded films and games as well as some photographs from Liberec during the festival can be downloaded until 13 May at <https://we.tl/t-0oclllUV13> (just copy the link in your browser address bar) ...or give us a shout and we'll be happy to send them to you.

For more on Anifilm go to www.anifilm.cz

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This year's winners are listed below.

2023 ANIFILM WINNERS

International Competition of Feature Films for Grown-Ups

Jury: John Stevenson (Great Britain), Sébastien Sperer (France), Veronika Bednářová (CR)

My Love Affair with Marriage

(My Love Affair with Marriage)

directed by **Signe Baumane**



Latvia, United States, Luxembourg, 2022, 108 min

Technique: 2D computer animation, drawings on paper, mixed media

Producers: The Marriage Project Llc. (Signe Baumane, Sturgis Warner), Antevita Films (Raoul Nadalet), Studio Locomotive (Roberts Vinovskis)

Statement of the Jury:

This artistically and technically exemplary movie was chosen because we find it important that this film will change a lot of people and free a lot of souls.

Synopsis:

Seven years in the making, this long anticipated feature film by independent Latvian-American director Signe Baumane was completed thanks to contributions from various cultural and grant institutions and almost 1,700 individual donors. The film premiered in New York in June 2022 and only a few days later, it was awarded Jury Distinction at the Annecy Festival. From an early age, songs and fairy tales have convinced Zelma that love will solve all her problems as long as she abides by societal expectations of how a girl should act. But as she grows older something doesn't seem right with this concept of love: the more she tries to conform, the more her body resists. The 107-minute-long story of inner female rebellion is remarkable in many respects. Baumane animated almost the entire film herself (she made 40,000 drawings using 662 pencils) and the film combines real settings with hand-drawn animation. *"I like animating on paper because the pencil becomes an extension of my hand, and the impulse goes from my gut into my heart, through my shoulder into my fingertips and when I draw the line, I become one with the line, I become one with the pencil and that is an expression of what I feel and who I am. And so, pencil and paper inspire me in a way that no software, no computer program can,"* explains the director.

International Feature Film Competition for Children

Jury: John Stevenson (Great Britain), Sébastien Sperer (France), Veronika Bednářová (CR)

Ernest and Celestine: A Trip to Gibberitia

(Ernest et Célestine: Le voyage en Charabie)
directed by Jean-Christophe Roger, Julien Chheng
France, 2022, 81 min
Technique: 2D computer animation
Producers: Mélusine Productions (Stephan Roelants), Folivari (Didier Brunner, Damien Brunner)



Statement of the Jury:

It is a beautifully done, visually delightful, charming movie. It is also deeply moving and relevant today. Its substantial message is not didactic but talks about the importance of fighting for freedom of expression and against restrictive, totalitarian regimes. It also carries topics of personal responsibility, resolving family issues, and nurturing the loving friendship between the two main characters, which is also parental, is valuable and unique.

Synopsis:

This film is a sequel to the excellent and artistically captivating feature film *Ernest & Celestine* (2012, directed by Stéphane Aubier, Vincent Patar and Benjamin Renner). It was directed by Julien Chheng and Jean-Christophe Roger, who send our favourite heroes – talkative mouse Celestine and pensive bear Ernest with a penchant for music – on a trip from their peaceful town to a peculiar distant land. The thrilling adventure revolves around Ernest's broken violin. Celestine would like to have it repaired, but that can be done only in Ernest's homeland of Gibberitia stretching across high mountains full of cable cars, narrow streets and romantic places. After arriving in Gibberitia, however, Ernest and Celestine find out that something's wrong. Local law says that you can only sing and play one approved tone and there's even a special police unit enforcing the law and even cracking down on singing birds! But Ernest and Celestine have no intention of following this nonsensical law, especially after they meet heroic members of the local musical resistance. Together, they try to remedy the injustice and make sure that the bear land is once again full of the music and joy it inspires. While fighting for a better future, Ernest reconciles with his father, with whom he had been in conflict for many years.

International Competition of Short Films

Jury: Kim Keukeleire (Belgium), Marta Pajek (Poland), David Súpup (CR)

Main Award

Ice Merchants

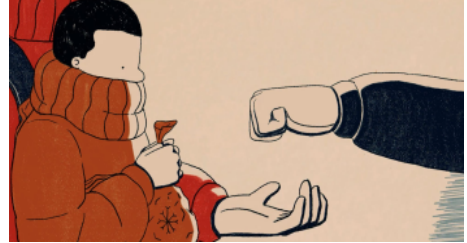
(Ice Merchants)

directed by **João Gonzalez**

Portugal, France, Great Britain, 2022, 14 min 33 s

Technique: 2D computer animation

Producer: COLA Animation, Royal College of Art, Wildstream



Statement of the Jury:

The story of a touching, intimate relationship between father and child dealing with loss and facing threat. It is shown with simplicity and gentleness and yet plays with our basic instincts as we await the fall.

Synopsis:

This somewhat chilling but compelling story portrays not only the age-old strength of family bonds but also the current issue of global warming. At a dizzying altitude, the authors unfold an existential drama using a captivating artistic style and impressive animation. Although a father and his son lose the source of their income, in the end their downfall is not as hard as it may seem.

Special Mention

Dog-apartment

(Koerkorter)

directed by **Priit Tender**

Estonia, 2022, 14 min 7 s

Technique: puppet animation

Producer: Nukufilm



Statement of the Jury:

The author of this film brings us into a surreal and absurd world, which offers neither answers nor a way out, but somehow mysteriously leaves a tiny spark of hope.

Synopsis:

This film filled with absurdity depicts the life of an ordinary person living in an extraordinary house. It presents a captivating mix of surreal dreamy motifs bordering an anxious and desperate nightmare as if reflecting the atmosphere of Eastern European peripheries where a routine represents a certain kind of assurance but at the same time, a threat. The mood of the film is excellently underlined by its puppet animation.

International Competition of Student Films

Jury: Kim Keukeleire (Belgium), Marta Pajek (Poland), David Súpup (CR)

Main Award

The House of Loss

(상실의 집)

directed by **Jinkyu Jeon**

South Korea, Japan, 2022, 9 min 47 s

Technique: 2D computer animation

Producer: Tokyo University of the Arts



Statement of the Jury:

The beautifully drawn film tackles a difficult subject with sensibility, compassion and understanding of the traumas of the old generation.

Synopsis:

The elderly at the nursing home have their heads shaved. The protagonist who works there sees them but can't read their expressions. However, all of a sudden, he finds himself looking closely at their faces. This impressive graduate film from the Tokyo University of Arts evokes a slightly chilling sensation.

Special Mention

Soaked In

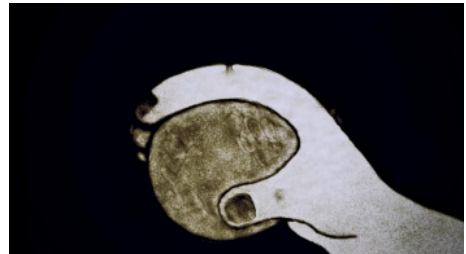
(泡)

directed by **Shiyu Tang**

China, 2022, 4 min 15 s

Technique: stop-motion, drawings on paper, sand

Producer: East China Normal University



Statement of the Jury:

In this hypnotic film, the author sheds light onto a dark and painful time in China's history, telling the story with subtlety and force at the same time.

Synopsis:

The young author of this film used an experimental method to address one of the topical and dark themes of contemporary Chinese society. Using the demanding animation of sand, she depicts the phenomenon of abortions forced on women by society and the state. As a result of this policy, Chinese society now must tackle gender imbalance.

International Competition of Abstract and Non-Narrative Animation

Jury: Mika Johnson (USA), Mirai Mizue (Japan), Sarina Nihei (Japan)

Sliver Cave

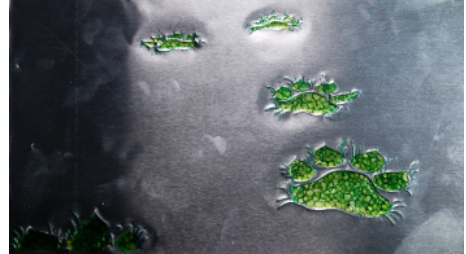
(Yin Mu)

directed by **Caibei Cai**

China, 2022, 14 min 24 s

Technique: mixed media

Producer: Dongyu Culture Media



Statement of the Jury:

We were surprised with the possibility of not seeing anything specific, but being reminded of so many things by it at the same time. The piece is created with an unexpected approach. The combination between music and animation creates a mysterious atmosphere.

Synopsis:

Stepping into a cave, vision fluctuates by the firelight. Left to right, top to bottom. The same goes for the screen in front of you. It is a borderless tunnel, presenting domestication and desire. The winner of Anifilm 2019 returns with a technically remarkable and original film.

International Competition of Music Videos

Jury: Mika Johnson (USA), Mirai Mizue (Japan), Sarina Nihei (Japan)

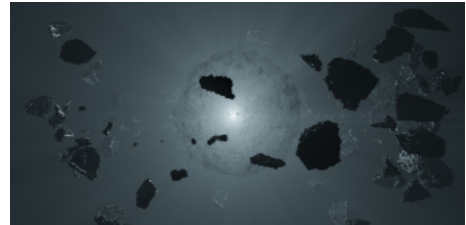
Lenka Dusilová: Białe konie

directed by **Miloslav Frič**

Czech Republic, 2022, 6 min 55 s

Technique: 3D computer animation

Producers: Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín



Statement of the Jury:

The approach of this music video creates an immersive atmosphere. The video gave us the feeling of an infinite void of space simultaneously being created or destroyed. We got absorbed into the unified musical and visual experience instantly.

Synopsis:

Music video for the opening track of Lenka Dusilová's latest album titled Řeka. Řeka (River) takes the listeners on a journey through time, space, bloodstreams, structure and their own history. River cleanses the silt of ballast and ripples the riverbed so that everything can sink down again and give people a new perspective to perceive things. Water becomes the driving force in all processes. It opens everything up, cleanses it, and eventually dissolves it.

International Competition of VR films

Jury: Mika Johnson (USA), Mirai Mizue (Japan), Sarina Nihei (Japan)

Main Award

From the Main Square

Pedro Harres, Andre Correa
Germany, 19 min, 2022

Statement of the Jury:

In VR, we awarded a subtle but powerful piece which comments on our contemporary world, where loss surrounds us. We were impressed by this piece for its excellent use of animation, sound, and unique interactive quality.



Synopsis:

At the beginning, several people gather around a fire. But if you look around, the space starts transforming into a fictitious square. It's a busy intersection of stories, buildings, hopes and conflicts. Joyful encounters are followed by various class conflicts and the sequence of events keeps moving forward. This interactive VR project with satirical and political undertones invites the viewers to observe the rise and fall of a divided human society.

Special Mention

Walzer

Frieda Gustavs, Leo Erken
Netherlands, 10 min, 2022

Statement of the Jury:

We also chose to award a special mention, as this piece takes us on a nonlinear tour of photographs from the first wave of feminism, all within a world that feels magical and filled with discoveries.



Synopsis:

Walzer is an intuitive VR experience linking several women's rights stories from the first wave of feminism taking place at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. While travelling through a virtual photographic landscape, you are guided by Walzer himself. This non-linear narrative project builds upon feelings rather than a concrete narrative and is based on thousands of personal photographs found at flea markets, internet marketplaces and in personal collections.

International Competition of Computer Games

Jury: Jakub Špiřík (CR), Zuzana Slavíková (CR), Gregorios Kythreotis (Great Britain)

Best Computer Game Visual

Pentiment

Obsidian Entertainment, USA, 2022

Statement of the Jury:

For a considerate, authentic and creative adaptation of sources and for a brilliant and original work with typography.



Synopsis:

16th-century narrative adventure set in Upper Bavaria, following Andreas Maler, a journeyman artist working in the bygone scriptorium of the Kiersau Abbey. While finishing his masterpiece, Andreas becomes entangled in a series of murders. Peasants, thieves, craftsmen, monks, nuns, nobles and even saints must be investigated and interrogated to expose the truth.

Game for Children

Lost in Play

Happy Juice Games, Israel, 2022

Statement of the Jury:

For an amazing playful game design and overall visual style including animation, and for a natural accessibility for a wide range of players.



Synopsis:

Go on a feel-good adventure with a brother and sister as they explore dreamscapes and befriend magical creatures. Lost in their imagination, Toto and Gal must stick together and solve puzzles to journey back home. This whimsical puzzle adventure game will make you feel like you're playing a cartoon.

Audience Award – Award of the Region of Liberec

Four Souls of Coyote

(Kojot négy lelke)

directed by **Áron Gauder**

Hungary, 2023, 103 min

Technique: 2D computer animation, 3D computer animation

Producer: Cinemon Entertainment Kft. (Réka Temple)



Synopsis:

A construction site somewhere on the North American plains below a towering hill. A sacred place where members of the young generation of native Americans gather to protest against the construction of an oil pipeline on the land of their ancestors. This time, Hungarian director Áron Gauder, whose acclaimed, uncompromising and original film *The District!* is known to Czech viewers from local distribution, turns to ancient North American myths of creation, reminding us of the place that humans hold among other creatures. In this accessibly stylised and superbly animated story of a Coyote who's the only creature that wasn't created, but rather born of a dream, we immerse ourselves deeply in the essence of humanity and the world we inhabit. The film tells a remarkable mythical tale and thanks to its rhythm and message, it can captivate a wide spectrum of audiences. It also brings hope in a time when global society is rattled by an environmental crisis. Accompanied by songs of native North Americans, it shows that the wisdom of their ancestors is more than topical today.

"Surprisingly, these archaic myths depict the interrelations of the world quite similarly to modern scientific results. The former represent the only alternative to a capitalist society," adds Áron Gauder.

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