

The winner of the 47th IFF EKOFILM is the Polish film *The Whale from Lorino*

Slovak film *The Golden Land* wins the Festival President's Award

BRNO/Czech Republic – A dangerous tug-of-war for survival in an almost fantastical landscape full of whaling traces, but also the hope of saving a nearly extinct bird or the hope that comes from people pulling together in a threatening situation. These are the themes of the competing films that won some of the awards at this year's 47th EKOFILM. The main prize of the Minister of the Environment, Richard Brabec, went to the Polish film *The Whale from Lorino*, directed by Maciej Cuske. The film offers a wordless reflection on who, in the clash of two disappearing worlds, has the right to kill: the hunting man or the hunted whale.

*The jury and I were really impressed by the documentary about a small community in northeastern Siberia, *The Whale from Lorino*. It shows without exaggeration how and at what cost it is possible to survive in one of the most desolate places in the world. To endure the local conditions is to merge with nature at its cruelest. This is what motivates us to think about our common place to live, Address: Earth, and to look for ways to live in symbiosis with each other,* explains Environment Minister Richard Brabec of his reasons for awarding the main prize.

The film's slow pace draws the viewer with its raw cinematography into an almost surreal landscape, full of traces of centuries of whaling. The only way to survive is through an ancient and still dangerous confrontation between man and the world's largest mammal, the whale. In small boats, with bare hands and primitive spears, the director tells the story of man's strange symbiosis with nature, says Dutch filmmaker and architect Jord den Hollander, who sat on the EKOFILM jury.

The Whale from Lorino also evoked strong emotions in jury member Veronika Khek Kubařová. *For this film, I wrote down after the ending that it was so intense that I almost gave up watching it. It was the only documentary I almost didn't finish. To get through it, I put my fingers in front of my eyes, like when I was scared of something on the screen as a child. Plus, I could barely see through the tears. The reality for the locals is that whales save lives and livelihoods; on the other hand, the whales lose their lives and all their, literally, enormous splendor to become food. I was also drawn in by the form of the documentary, where instead of the usual commentary in documentaries, it is the footage and real, unstaged situations that speak to the viewer,* says the juror.

The prize of the President of the festival Ladislav Miko, was awarded to the Slovak documentary **The Golden Land** by **Dominik Jursa**. *I consider it important to show that the state of the environment in specific places is mainly in the hands of the people who live there. The people in eastern Slovakia have come together and, thanks to their cooperation, have managed to save a beautiful piece of land from very unsustainable gold mining. They have managed to take care of the small part of the world for which they feel responsible and have shown the way for all of us,* says Ladislav Miko, the festival's president, about the motivations for the award.

The competition section Nature's Beauty was won by the **Czech film Czech Journal: Chicken, Virus and Us** by **Filip Remunda**. *The film is an enjoyable and informative take on a domestic reality show about the coexistence of a family with hens rescued from a cage farm, or from the cage to the countryside during the pandemic. It shows a big change not only for the hens but also for the family. The children decided they didn't want to go to a holiday camp, they wanted to be with the rescued hens, whom the family gave a chance for a longer and more pleasant life,* says Slovak director, producer and this year's EKOFILM juror Tomáš Hulík.

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The German film **Glorious Bustards** by **Henry M. Mix and Boas Schwarz** won the Central European Films section. *The German documentary Glorious Bustards captivates the viewer not only with its compelling story, but also with the professional approach of the filmmakers, led by directors Henry M. Mix and Boas Schwarz. Glorious Bustards is an odyssey about a group of enthusiasts in the German countryside who decide to save a bird species that is threatened with extinction,* adds Martin Čech, a juror, cinematographer and documentary filmmaker.

The best short film of the competition was **A Community under Fire** by **Harrison and Matt Thane**. *The jury decided to award this short film not only because it deals with the important topic of climate change, but also because it shows how to confront it, i.e. through solidarity and joint efforts. The story of a small Australian town during a season of extreme fires is intertwined with a group of volunteers who decided to help, even though their homes were not immediately threatened by the fires,"* says director and cinematographer Jan E. Svatos about the reasons for the award and the plot of the film.

All the winning films can still be seen on Saturday 23rd October at the Scala University Cinema from 4:00 to 8:00 pm.

The organizer of the 47th International Film Festival EKOFILM is the Ministry of the Environment.

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