



International
Documentary
Film Festival
Amsterdam

Amsterdam, Tuesday, October 19th, 2021

IDFA 2021: Premiere sections Luminous and Frontlight unveiled alongside first competitions, IDFA on Stage

The **International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA)** is delighted to unveil the **selected films in premiere-only sections Luminous and Frontlight**, with both sections **including a majority of world premieres**. The festival also presents its **first competition selections** today in the **IDFA Competition for Short Documentary** and the **IDFA Competition for Youth Documentary**. Finally, IDFA also announces the selected titles in interdisciplinary program **IDFA on Stage**, chief among them the world premiere of the newly restored **Dziga Vertov** film ***The History of the Civil War***. The 34th edition of IDFA takes place from November 17 to 28 in Amsterdam.

Luminous

The **premiere-only section's 21-film** lineup includes **eleven world premieres**. A wide range of styles and formalist approaches dot the **Luminous** selection, from observational to personal to experimental. Collectively, the selection expresses a highly intimate engagement with our fellow humans—those who resiliently strive to overcome adversity.

Young perspectives shine across the program, whether in young characters, as in **Maasja Ooms' *Jason***, a daring portrait of a young man's trauma at the hands of the welfare system; or in young filmmakers, as seen in films such as ***The Moment of Transition*** by newcomer **Chiara Marotta**, on the power of religion to break families apart.

Other films offer more perennial experience on the bittersweet swirl of art, performance, and identity: **María Alvarez's** personal and quietly reflective ***Near and Dear*** enters the close world of 91-year-old twin pianists in their Buenos Aires apartment; ***The End of Wonderland***, the debut feature by **Laurence Turcotte-Fraser**, spotlights an aging trans fetish supermodel as she faces eviction.

Still other films appeal to the documentary artform as a profoundly physical affair. In ***Mafifa***, director **Daniela Muñoz Barroso** creates a sensory feast that uses the power of cinema to share the experience of progressive hearing loss. ***On the Zenith's Edge***, on the other hand, takes filmmaker **Natyvel Pontalier** back to her ancestral roots, re-igniting centuries of Gabonese musical and spiritual traditions.

[Frontlight](#)

The **premiere-only section** includes **nineteen films**—of which **twelve are world premiering**—that take an artistic approach to exploring the urgent issues of our time. This year, many films in the selection tend towards the experiential, transcending journalistic or explanatory labels.

Democracy and civic life come to the fore in several titles in the selection. **Oeke Hoogendijk's** legal drama ***The Treasures of Crimea*** poses questions of nationhood in relation to a traveling Crimean art exhibition. ***Judges Under Pressure*** by **Kacper Lisowski** contrasts a new age of civic engagement with the authorities who are trying to obstruct it, following a Polish judge who is made public enemy by the ruling party. ***The Case***, the debut feature by **Nina Guseva**, takes this theme to Russia with a stark portrait of the lawyer defending a detained opposition activist, and her desperate struggle against the legal system. **Peter Nicks' *Homeroom*** explores the problem of policing at a predominantly Black and Latinx high school in Oakland, following the young students who are standing up for their rights.

Other films explore the harsh reality of human displacement and forced resettlement, as seen in **Danis Tanović's** new film with co-director **Damir Šagolj**, ***When We Were Them***, a powerful indictment of the inhumane treatment of refugees in Bosnia. ***Resources*** by **Hubert Caron-Guay** and **Serge-Olivier Rondeau** cinematically observes the asylum-seeking workers behind Québec's brutal meat packing industry, whereas ***Nosema*** by **Etna Özbek** follows an Assyrian couple as they repeatedly flee and return to their Turkish mountain village before disappearing without a trace.

[IDFA Competition for Short Documentary](#)

With an influx of young filmmakers, the **IDFA Competition for Short Documentary** has grown in scope, with **twenty selected titles** that showcase a healthy boom for the short film form. A mosaic of styles and themes defines this selection, exploring everything a short documentary can be: from animation to personal archive films to classic documentary cinema, with plenty of experimenting in between. Next to a strong offer of student filmmaking, the selection presents several award-winning films and new works by seasoned filmmakers who have made the jump from features to shorts and back. Overarching themes include digging up the filmmakers' family histories and how those connect to larger colonial histories. Elsewhere, different lifeforms, both animal and human, creatively expand our sense of the world, showing us other ways to inhabit this unique planet.

[IDFA Competition for Youth Documentary](#)

With **nine selected films**, the **IDFA Competition for Youth Documentary** (formerly the IDFA Competition for Kids & Docs) presents a world-class offering of documentary films for audiences aged eight to thirteen. This year's selection is particularly international, with films from production countries such as India, Spain,

Iran, and Belgium—a strong indication that documentary filmmaking for young audiences is taking off around the world. Other notable trends include more feature-length titles than in previous years, defying the notion that youngsters lack focus in a world of bite-sized entertainment. The selection is an affirmation that today's youth documentary film is, first and foremost, film.

[IDFA on Stage](#)

With **seven selected titles**, the **IDFA on Stage** selection presents a boundary-breaking program of live cinema events—bridging film, new media, and the performing arts—that mark artists' return to the stage after a lengthy period of online performances.

After disappearing into the archives for a century, **Dziga Vertov's** long-lost masterpiece ***The History of the Civil War*** makes its world premiere at IDFA on Stage. Meticulously restored over two years by film historian and restoration expert **Nikolai Izvolov**, the first ever public screening of *The History of the Civil War* promises to be a watershed event in cinema history. Covering key events and figures of the Russian Civil War, among them Leon Trotsky, the grandiose cinematic work can be considered one of Vertov's first author experiments and a steppingstone to his iconic *Kino-Pravda* series. Screening only once during the festival, the film will be shown in **Tuschinski 1** on **November 20**, accompanied by a live score composed and performed by **The Anvil Orchestra**, with Izvolov in attendance for a discussion after the screening.

Other titles in the IDFA on Stage selection include ***Spectral Transmissions***, a live cinema program in nine chapters by **Michael Palmieri** and **Donal Mosher**, reimagining ghost stories with contributors such as filmmakers **Maya Daisy Hawke** and **Kirsten Johnson**. In ***Terra Femme***, director **Courtney Stephens** attempts to uncover a female gaze in a live-narrated, illustrated travel lecture with breathtaking found footage filmed by women who traveled the world in the first half of the twentieth century. More to be announced.

About IDFA 2021

The 34th edition of IDFA will be an in-person event, celebrating the art of documentary film from November 17 to 28 in cinemas across Amsterdam. In accordance with the Netherlands' National Institute for Public Health and Environment (the RIVM), the festival will feature comprehensive [health and safety measures](#), prioritizing the wellbeing of all in attendance and updating attendees as soon as the situation changes.

Tickets go on sale November 1 for Friends of IDFA and accredited guests, and general ticket sales begin November 3. [Accreditation](#) for industry professionals is now open. The final competitions and opening film will be announced on November 1 during the IDFA 2021 press conference.

IDFA's competition program is supported by [Ammodo](#).

IDFA's audience program is made possible by [Vriendenloterij](#), [VPRO](#), [Fonds 21](#), [de Volkskrant](#), [Gieskes-Strijbis Fonds](#), [WeTransfer](#), [Ammodo](#), [NPO 2DOC](#), [Oxfam Novib](#) and [IDFA Vrienden/DikkeVrienden](#).

Editors' notes

For film stills, please [click here](#).

For more information, please [click here](#) or contact our press office.

International Press Officer:

Petra Blašković / petrablaskovic@idfa.nl

For more information about **what's on offer when visiting IDFA**, please visit our website or just [click here](#). You can also find all **key dates here**.

The final competition titles and opening film will be announced on Monday, November 1, during the IDFA 2021 press conference—available to stream online at idfa.nl.