

## Life in Europe Pathway

2019

### **Movements of a Nearby Mountain**

Sebastian Brameshuber

Austria, France, 2019, 86 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



If you've ever owned an old car, you may well recognize the phenomenon: a flyer under the windshield wiper with a phone number, asking whether you'd like to sell your old banger, whatever its make, model or year. Damage no problem.

Cliff works on these old cars on an abandoned industrial site near an old ore mine in the Austrian Alps. Bumpers and mirrors are stripped off and engines are packed up to be shipped to his home country of Nigeria. His daily activities in the workshop, conducted calmly and in solitude, aren't limited to work: he cooks between the piles of tires, hangs his laundry on the fence around the site, and shaves on the hood of a car.

The events become less humdrum when memories of a past friendship are awakened, and—in the light of a mysterious legend—present, past and future begin to overlap.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/1f28be33-7ed4-4b3e-8e36-67de74a299ca/movements-of-a-nearby-mountain>

### **Where We Belong**

Jacqueline Zünd

Switzerland, 2019, 78 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



How do children experience their parents' break-ups? We hear from five children from three families: the twin sisters Alyssia and Ilaria, brother and sister Carleton and Sherazade, and the slightly older Thomas. They talk about the run-up to their parents separation, and the aftermath: how their mother left, for example, or how they had to choose between their father and mother, and adapt to the new reality.

In a matter-of-fact and often surprisingly mature way, they tell their stories and share their insights—not just about themselves and their own feelings, but also about their parents. They also express what they learned from the separation. The interviews are accompanied by atmospheric images of the children at the fair, by the sea, at a bowling alley, in the car—while the parents remain in the background. The sometimes dreamlike, contemplative atmosphere is enhanced by the poetic sound design and meditative music.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/03453a23-b6d3-4300-a392-ee5e1c1b7b58/where-we-belong>

**Collective**

Alexander Nanau

Romania, Luxembourg, 2019, 109 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



Director Alexander Nanau follows a number of key figures in the aftermath of the disaster, from the point where we learn that 37 of the injured died of bacterial infections in local hospitals. We hear from newspaper journalists who discover that the hospitals use diluted disinfectants, the minister of health in the temporary technocratic government, and the victims of a corrupt health care system in a dysfunctional state.

Nanau avoids sensation and remains detached from the powerful emotions that surround the story, exposing the grim face of the corruption that plagues his country all the more. On October 30, 2015, a serious fire broke out at the Colectiv nightclub in Bucharest. It was one of the worst disasters in recent Romanian history, with an initial 27 people killed and 180 injured. Within a few days, fierce protests erupted, leading to the resignation of the Social Democratic government.

Linkt to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/6cb9b849-ad1c-470a-9d4c-5eb7de45fa5b/collective>

**#387**

Madeleine Leroyer

France, 2019, 63 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Mid-Length Documentary,  
Focus: It Still Hurts



On April 18, 2015, a ship carrying at least 800 refugees sank off the Libyan coast. A year later, the salvaged wreck is brought to a Sicilian military base, where a forensic pathologist and her team are waiting to discover the identity of the victims. At this point, all that remains of victim #387 are remnants of clothing and decaying photographs and letters. Sim cards, soaked banknotes and a tube of toothpaste: these simple belongings have now become macabre still lifes.

In this investigative documentary, others employ their own methods to identify those who died. A researcher visits cemeteries where victims are buried as numbers, and works laboriously through various archives. Meanwhile, a Red Cross worker hopes to speak to possible family members in African villages, to discover the victims' stories and give them a name.

This cinematic journey with a detective feel reveals the drudgery of humanitarian work, but above all it serves as a testament to the value of human life.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/16ee6f5f-4217-4af6-8462-4e6a4f431a1d/387>

### **All Against All**

Luuk Bouwman

Netherlands, 2019, 103 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Dutch Documentary

After the Second World War, around 200,000 Dutch citizens were arrested for collaborating with the enemy. Most were soon released into a society in which they could fully participate, and even have great careers. Anton Mussert, the leader of the Dutch Nazi Party or NSB, was sentenced to death.

An archeology of fascism in the Netherlands, this richly illustrated historical documentary investigates the mechanism of nationalist feelings that radicalize. It shows how fascism was on the rise even a decade before the founding of the NSB, due to a number of anti-democratic initiatives led by a millionaire with a predilection for one-legged women, a market vendor, a cleric, and an artist. Historians, writers and collectors of fascist curios reveal how an initially marginal and fragmented movement grew into a radical populist party.

The film opens with an audio recording of market vendor and fascist leader Jan Baars, over a magnificent aerial scene of a misty river landscape, in which he describes how he addressed a “herd” of voters. It was the fire of his words that stirred the masses—his message was entirely unimportant.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/2d840e8a-2708-4a79-8f8a-5817e2d13930/all-against-all>

### **The Death of Antonio Sánchez Lomas**

Ramon Gieling, Salvador Gieling

Netherlands, 2019, 86 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Dutch Documentary



On All Saints’ Day, the inhabitants of the southern Spanish village of Frigiliana remember their dead. The assembled villagers all know each other, and they bring flowers and candles. But the apparent serenity belies the deep divisions in the village. The murder of Antonio Lomas by the Guardia Civil in 1952, during the dictatorship of General Franco, has caused a collective trauma. Everyone—elderly witnesses and their descendants alike—conceals their sorrow and grievances with a paper-thin layer of civility. There’s no obvious solution in sight. In that regard the village is much like many other places in Spain where similar tragedies, disappearances and unprocessed pasts reverberate into the present.

Ramon and Salvador Gieling settle into the picturesque village, where they question local people about what happened. Their stories create a vivid image of the painful events of 1952, which still stir up powerful emotions. In an effort to help the villagers come to terms with the past, the janitor of the local school and the Gielings decide to dramatize the events together with the locals. Not everybody is enthusiastic about the idea. Why open up old wounds?

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/58a17442-2525-4b58-9a8e-a524dbcbb4b9/the-death-of-antonio-s%C3%A0nchez-lomas>

### **In a Whisper**

Heidi Hassan, Patricia Pérez Fernández

Spain, France, Switzerland, Cuba, 2019, 80 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Feature-Length Documentary



Childhood friends Patricia and Heidi grew up in Cuba, where they both went to the film academy. As children of the 1970s, they were brought up with the communist ideals of Che Guevara, but the promised bright future failed to materialize. Independently of each other, they fled the malaise and censorship of their homeland. Heidi ended up in Switzerland, Patricia in Spain. They had no contact for years.

Now both 40, they seek a way to approach each other again, choosing the medium that suits them best: video letters. Both have continued to film their lives, even though it seemed unlikely that they would ever work in film again. In their frank audiovisual communication, the two migrants recount all the roundabout routes they have taken in their lives: Patricia's years selling mojitos, Heidi's search for work and connection with society in Geneva, and the struggle with alienation and nostalgia for a country that no longer exists.

The result of the letters, ingeniously edited into a chronological yet freewheeling whole, is a sensitive, two-sided account of uprootedness, motherhood, love of film, friendship and freedom.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/554da948-819f-4c7d-a5ce-a0c6d21e5e12/in-a-whisper>

### **Europa, “Based on a True Story”**

Kivu Ruhorahoza

Rwanda, United Kingdom, Switzerland, 2019, 92 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Feature-Length Documentary



The Rwandan director Kivu Ruhorahoza (*Grey Matter*, *Things of the Aimless Wanderer*) decides to film his new movie, *A Tree Has Fallen*, in London. It is to be a stylish drama about Simon, a mysterious Nigerian man (Oris Erhuero), who returns to London to make amends with Anna, his mixed-race lover (Lisa Moorish) and Bruce, Anna’s white ex-husband (Matt Ray Brown).

Progressively, this love triangle mirrors the increasing social and racial tensions in Great Britain and Europe. In parallel to his narrative fiction, Kivu documents these tensions by filming a series of rallies in the streets of London. But inevitably, the ‘hostile environment’ immigration policy of the ruling Conservative Party comes back to haunt the reunited lovers and to disrupt Kivu’s filmmaking effort.

Sensing that his London stay is coming to a forced end, Kivu attends a far right protest to try and understand the rising xenophobia of the Brits and of his character Bruce.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/c3e1cae8-e511-497b-9437-3f612bd2bb72/europa-based-on-a-true-story>

## **Faith**

Valentina Pedicini

Italy, 2019, 94 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Feature-Length Documentary



“Warrior Monks” and “Guardian Mothers” they call themselves, the martial arts champions who are members of an Italian sect living together in a monastery. Led by a Kung Fu master, they are like Shaolin monks but with a Catholic twist. Utterly devoted to their faith, they train constantly so they are able to combat evil in the name of the Father. Director Valentina Pedicini was granted access to a way of life defined by discipline, and the resulting black-and-white film is surprisingly intimate.

The shaven-headed warriors (men, women and children) rarely step beyond the walls of the monastery. In fact, we’re already half an hour into the film when the camera enters daylight for the first time—and even then the acolytes remain on the monastery grounds. This close-knit group has replaced its members’ own families. They are warm and open towards one another, but tough as nails when it comes to training.

It’s truly astonishing that Pedicini has managed to get so close to such an isolated sect. These people have no secrets for each other or for the camera. Everything revolves around blind devotion, and *Faith* invites us to be part of that.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/b487dc09-67c8-4b6e-93d2-e93a6eee4a23/faith>

## **Solidarity**

Lucy Parker

United Kingdom, 2019, 75 min, International Premiere, IDFA Competition for First Appearance



To what extent are workers' rights subordinate to the machinations of the capitalist system? *Solidarity* follows the activities of the Blacklist Support Group, which stands up for the victims of a blacklist system in the British construction industry.

Employees who were members of a trade union and criticized working conditions or terms of employment were put on a secret blacklist. The list was maintained for many years and had serious consequences for the workers concerned. They were often never employed again, and some became so despairing that suicide seemed the only way out. The scandal was revealed in 2009. Alarming, evidence has even shown links to the use of undercover police, who deceived women activists into relationships.

Filmmaker Lucy Parker gathers testimonies of employees who ended up on the list, follows the activities of law students studying the case, and attends public meetings with union members. She reveals the painful consequences of a dubious and astonishing practice, demonstrating the vulnerability of human rights in a Western democracy.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/f903da8c-1982-4ae3-a411-da3111ccb3b/solidarity>

## **Becoming Black**

Ines Johnson-Spain

Germany, 2019, 91 min, World Premiere, Luminous



Imagine that your parents and brother are white, but your skin color is dark, and you're being told that this is pure coincidence. This is what happened to a girl in East Berlin in the 1960s. Years before, a group of African men had come to the town as students, and the German woman Sigrid fell in love with Lucien from Togo. Sigrid had a child by him, but she was already married to Armin.

The child is filmmaker Ines Johnson-Spain. Meeting her stepfather Armin and others from her childhood years, she tracks the astonishing strategies of denial her parents and those around them came up with. In what's both an intimate portrayal and a critical exploration, she brings together painful and confusing childhood memories with matter-of-fact accounts that testify to a culture of rejection and tight-lipped denial.

But there's also the movingly warm meeting with Johnson-Spain's Togolese family. *Becoming Black* develops into a highly-personal reflection on themes such as identity, social norms and family ties.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/8e9e22a2-d96f-429b-b0bb-1f32143358a8/becoming-black>

### **Who Are We?**

Edgar Hagen

Switzerland, 2019, 97 min, World Premiere, Luminous



According to our concept of human rights, all humans are created equal. But what that means doesn't go without saying, as the mother of the disabled Helena discovers. Helena is 19 years old, and although officially an adult, she's unable to live independently. She recently moved into a special home where she receives intensive support.

The parents of 11-year-old Jonas and his younger brother Felix have their hands full taking care of their boys, who came into the world severely disabled. Despite this, they both attend a regular elementary school, where their classmates actively involve them in school life.

In Edgar Hagen's deeply compassionate portrait of young people and their caregivers in Switzerland and Germany, he voices existential questions about their view of the world, and about expectations, sorrow, acceptance, and how rich a life with limitations can be. *Who Are We?* also shines a light on how the Western world perceives these young people and their place in society. Contemplative scenes and panoramic drone shots are occasionally intercut with intimate archive footage of Helena and her mother.

Link to film/trailer: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/76a5364b-b15f-4bfe-828e-8c0cde86efe8/who-are-we>

**2020**

**The Blue House**

Hamedine Kane

Belgium, Senegal, Cameroon, 2020, 56 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Mid-Length Documentary



Alpha is a migrant artist who's been living for a long while in Calais Jungle, the notorious refugee and migrant encampment near Calais, France. He's turned his self-built cabin into an artwork. Filmmaker Hamedine Kane, who is also an artist, follows him in the months leading up to the camp being demolished. Alpha has named his cabin The Blue House, surrounded it with objects he found in the camp—such as a sculpture made of plastic chairs—and decorated a tree with old audio cassettes and water bottles.

He strums on his guitar while he talks about the long journey he has made. Originally from West Africa, in 2005 Alpha was a fisherman in Istanbul. After that he worked in a hotel in Greece—illegally, which landed him in jail. Now he finds himself in this no man's land. He knows everyone who passes by, from sex workers to the village idiot. Alpha has attracted the attention of journalists and is now something of a local celebrity. But when he calls home, they no longer recognize his voice. His nomadic life may have come to a standstill here but, unfazed, he calmly carries on building and drawing.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/77811b0b-6b98-4393-b3b7-15612c235923/the-blue-house>

## **Dusk**

Bálint Bíró

Hungary, Belgium, Portugal, 2020, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Student Documentary



In a rural region of Hungary close to the Serbian border, an invisible danger looms—as any villager can tell you. Figures sneak across the fields, unknown cars are spotted, dogs in yards behave strangely, and children are scared when it gets dark.

Sandor, a father of eight, has taken up a job as a “landguard” to protect the small community in which they live. He patrols the border with his car and night vision goggles, assisted by his eldest son, on the lookout for anything suspicious. Although we don’t actually see any intruders and they are only spoken about in veiled terms, the threat always feels tangible, especially for the children.

News reports that the father and son see on their smartphones at night provide some background to all the suspense. Wide, static shots combined with ambient sound create an ominous atmosphere: cars in the distance, crickets chirping at dusk, frogs croaking, and dogs barking in the darkness.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/da3baa22-d2b6-4fa6-8ae3-d8ef43d644df/dusk>

### **Fire at Sea**

Gianfranco Rosi

Italy, France, 2016, 108 min, Retrospective: Gianfranco Rosi



“In the past 20 years, 400,000 migrants have landed on Lampedusa. In the attempt to cross the Strait of Sicily to reach Europe, it is estimated that 15,000 people have died.” These words appear onscreen at the start of *Fire at Sea*, the winner of the Golden Bear at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival in 2016.

We are shown two utterly separate worlds. The activities of several local people are combined to form a mosaic of everyday life on this tiny Italian island: a woman prepares lunch, the DJ at the local radio station broadcasts a music request show, a man dives for sea urchins. The most important of these islander figures is 12-year-old Samuele: he has to go to school and learn English, but he’d much rather be out with his catapult, shooting at birds. It’s difficult to imagine a starker contrast than between these everyday scenes and the dire needs of the African boat refugees. Our guide in this world is Dr. Bartolo, who shows us the horrors taking place from the moment they are picked out of the sea to their arrival at the refugee camp. These images underscore his appeal for more humane treatment.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/nl/film/4f1cf062-1a80-49f6-92bd-cac3b9763351/fire-at-sea>

### **The Foundation Pit**

Andrey Gryazev

Russia, 2020, 70 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



Countless Russian citizens are making their voices heard by using what they see as their last resort: social media. Some post from the cameras in their cars; others report from their kitchens, or the streets. All over the country, people tell of their frustration, unhappiness, and rage. Sometimes the issue is a relatively personal one and the focus of their ire is a local policymaker. More often, their discontent is squarely aimed at Putin and members of his party. They see that these corrupt and greedy figures are growing ever richer while the rest of Russia slumps into poverty.

Andrey Gryazev found his compatriots' heartfelt pleas and tirades online and spliced them into an effective protest that is sometimes comical and absurd, but more often downright shocking. The film's title comes from Andrej Platonov's eponymous dystopian novel, in which the construction of a building for members of the proletariat in the early days of the Soviet Union never gets past the construction pit stage.

In this film, footage of construction site accidents and building sites with no apparent purpose or where shady activities take place serves as a prelude to a collective fist raised by the Russian people against their government.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/7db5aa1f-b9bf-4b31-ae68-ec2313b8bd2b/the-foundation-pit>

**Gorbachev. Heaven**  
Vitaly Mansky

Latvia, Czech Republic, 2020, 100 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Feature Length Documentary



Mikhail Gorbachev, the 89-year-old former leader of the Soviet Union, receives Russian filmmaker Vitaly Mansky at his house just outside Moscow. In a light and pleasant atmosphere, weighty topics come up for discussion, as Gorbachev looks back over his life. The conversation revolves around the reforms he implemented as party chief in the 1980s, as well as the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the collapse of the Soviet empire. Also discussed is how the Russian people were not grateful when the new freedoms proved to come at the price of unemployment and hunger. Mansky questions Gorbachev about the drastic choices that also affected his own life.

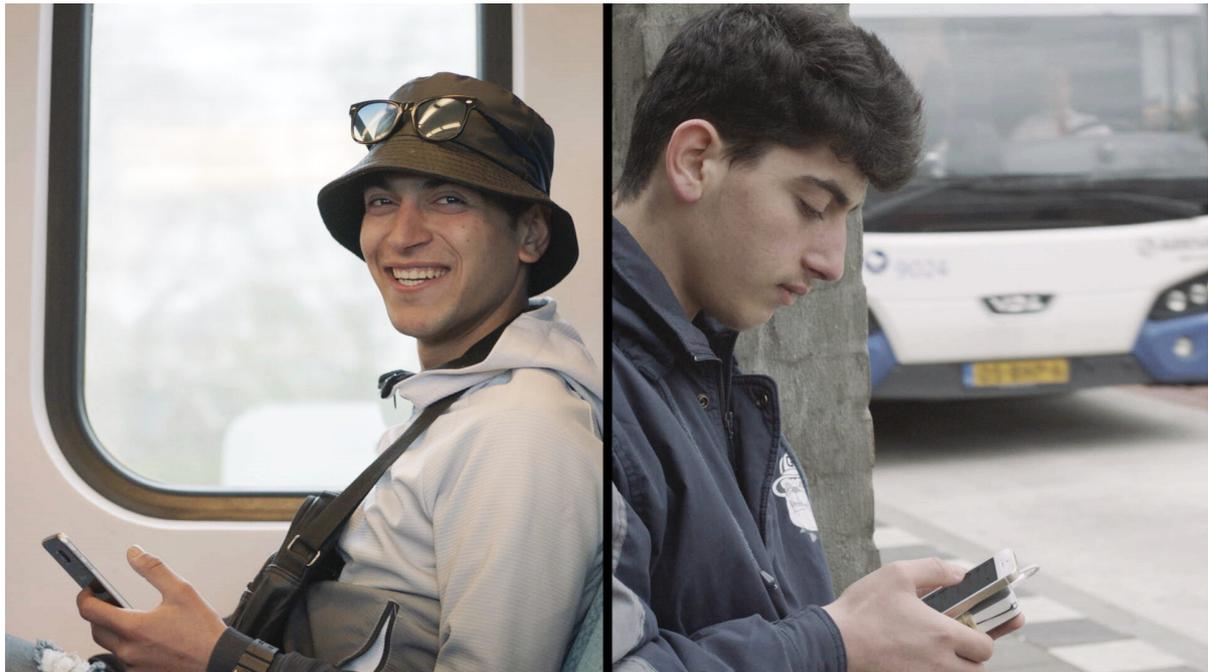
Jokes, spontaneous interruptions, or suddenly remembered folk songs and poems bring lightness to the reflections on political decisions. Gorbachev also talks about his inseparable bond with his late wife Raisa. And would the filmmakers perhaps like something to eat? Endless set tables, gherkins with vodka, New Year's Eve with friends: typical Russian everyday life illustrates a feeling of wistfulness.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/df9ea40a-174b-4ac0-b331-1e40d25e1223/gorbachev-heaven>

### **Jano & Shiro, a Brothers' Journey**

Els van Driel, Eefje Blankevoort

Netherlands, 2020, 35 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Kids & Docs, IDFA School Program



The brothers Jano and Shiro are inseparable. When war breaks out in Syria, they flee together in search for a better life for themselves and their family. The boys are 18 and 15 when they set off on foot, heading for the Netherlands.

They cross snowy landscapes and meet aggressive border police on their way. Some footage of this trip is shot by the brothers on their phones. The accompanying music, ranging from tense to dreamy, sometimes makes their story seem exciting and adventurous. When the brothers temporarily lose each other, the screen is split; it feels as if they are playing the lead roles in their own video clip.

The dreamed-of destination is less idyllic than the brothers had expected. Due to their age difference, they are separated from each other: for Shiro, as a minor, a different policy applies than for Jano. While Shiro learns the language and makes friends, Jano spends his time waiting. He escapes the stress about his uncertain future and the nightmares about his past by smoking cigarettes and cannabis. After a year and a half, the decision from the immigration service finally arrives.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/2f81036b-92c0-4ce1-b1fe-78a57a0f1d94/jano-shiro-a-brothers-journey>

### **Lost Kids on the Beach**

Aline Manolache

Romania, 2020, 70 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



Filmmaker Alina Manolache was born 1990, the year after the fall and execution of Romanian dictator Ceausescu. It marked the beginning of a new, post-communist era. At the start of the film, she calls out to people who had ever been lost on the beach in the nineties to get in touch with her. This seemingly random appeal leads to her traveling around the country and having conversations with a large number of peers about their memories of the experience, and about their life now.

These children of the 1990s seem to be doing well, although some of the conversations take on a darker undertone when the subject turns to concerns about the country and the shadow of the past. Manolache's interviewing style is light and casual in tone—she often appears in the frame—as she pieces together a portrait of her peers. The word “lost” is frequently applied to her generation, but that turns out to have many different meanings. What it doesn't apply to, however, is their optimism and hope for the future.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/7bdb06bd-948b-45d3-99a8-511a5377b32e/lost-kids-on-the-beach>

### **Made for Walking**

Hélène Baillot, Raphael Botiveau

France, 2020, 18 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Short Documentary



It's nighttime in the French Alps and an army of vehicles are preparing the snow for another day of winter fun. Meanwhile, volunteers scan the mountain peaks with their binoculars. They're on the lookout for young West-Africans trying to cross from Italy to France on foot—wearing snow boots given to them by Italian volunteers. This prevents the migrants from getting frostbite while they try to avoid the strictly guarded border post on the mountain pass. Once they've reached their destination, their French counterparts take the shoes back across the border.

In the dark, the young men—wearing thin clothing and carrying small backpacks—push on through the knee-high snow. On arrival in the French ski resort of Montgenèvre they are brought to a shelter nearby, where they get coffee and a foot bath. Then they return their boots for the next migrant, who does the same. The mountain landscape is the silent witness to their crossing. So too the group of sympathetic mountain dwellers who approach this new problem in a movingly pragmatic way. Meanwhile, in the background, the jarringly carefree skiers complete their descent.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/f271ddc8-471d-4f95-a9fc-b96b4fc59eae/made-for-walking>

### **The New Gospel**

Milo Rau

Germany, Switzerland, Italy, 2020, 107 min, International Premiere, IDFA Competition for Feature -Length Documentary



In the past, both Pier Paolo Pasolini and Mel Gibson filmed the crucifixion of Jesus in the southern Italian city of Matera. In 2019, Matera became the backdrop for a new passion play. This time, Jesus was played by the Cameroonian political activist Yvan Sagnet, who defends the rights of the illegal workers exploited by a mafia-led agricultural system. Many of these workers are refugees from Africa who have nowhere else to go.

*The New Gospel* is both a live recording of the play, and a glimpse behind the scenes. We see Sagnet grow into his role as Jesus, while in between mobilizing groups of laborers working nearby Matera into a large-scale protest dubbed the “Revolt of Dignity.” And dignity is precisely what this film is aiming towards in its portraits of activists and actors alike. The Swiss director Milo Rau is also artistic director of the Belgian city theater NTGent. He wants his work to “not only portray the world, but change it.” This project, then, is more than simply a film or a play, because it has led to better housing for the migrants, and the founding of a Fair Trade label for tomatoes.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/b928fa95-4921-4829-855d-a08187d98728/the-new-gospel>

### **Notes from the Underworld**

Tizza Covi, Rainer Frimmel

Austria, 2020, 116 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Feasts



This unique document of an era centers on the Viennese singer Kurt Girk (1932-2019) and his buddy Alois Schmutzer, the “king of the underworld.” Girk’s connections with illegal gambling led to this much-loved interpreter of popular folk songs becoming known as the Frank Sinatra of Austria. Butcher Alois was one of his best friends, a strapping bear of a man who didn’t need a gun to rub someone out.

In *Notes from the Underworld*, which received a Best Documentary special mention at the Berlin Film Festival, directors Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel give both men ample opportunity to talk about their wartime youth marked by violence, gangster rivalry and courtesy, and the miscarriage of justice that would scar their lives.

In long, penetrating close-ups in black and white, the camera patiently absorbs the body language of the two men as they sit in their kitchens or local cafe telling tall tales and sharing painful memories. The stories told by these charismatic rogues are interspersed with contributions from the other figures involved, as well as archive footage, and Girk’s world-weary ballads.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/01e7cacd-9825-49db-8c9c-2334a042da5c/notes-from-the-underworld>

### **Oeconomia**

Carmen Losmann

Germany, 2020, 90 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



A clearly narrated and precise view into the innermost workings of the capitalist system. Director Carmen Losmann sets out to understand why over the past decades, in parallel with economic growth, debt has increased, and the gap between rich and poor has grown. Her attempts to make contact with those in the financial sector are incorporated into the film. Some telephone conversations had to be reenacted because those involved later decided that they preferred to remain anonymous or didn't want to cooperate. For reasons of privacy or secrecy, other financial service providers simulate meetings or a conversation with a customer about a mortgage.

However, several significant insiders, such as the chief economist of the European Central Bank, do speak to Losmann, although they struggle to answer questions such as “Where does profit come from?” and “How is money created?” Losmann summarizes the essence in highly simplified diagrams. We see for example that growth depends on loans, but loans are only granted if growth is expected. The obvious question is whether this system is sustainable.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/6c44e663-3562-445f-8d38-fa6ecef2b66/oeconomia>

### **Silence of the Tides**

Pieter-Rim de Kroon

Netherlands, 2020, 103 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Dutch Documentary



With its glorious sunsets, diverse wildlife, and landscapes that change twice a day, the Wadden Sea has proven itself to be a photogenic place. Yet the largest tidal wetland in the world has never been depicted as breathtakingly as it is here. In *Silence of the Tides*, director Pieter-Rim de Kroon lets the images speak for themselves. As in *Dutch Light*, which won him a Golden Calf in 2003, he often leaves the camera in a fixed position for extended periods to capture stunning scenes of nature. Shots from different times of day merge into each other almost imperceptibly, so a dry seabed magically changes into a rippling expanse of water. Sophisticated sound design and the interplay of light complete the wonder. Military exercises, newborn lambs, mating oysters—all this life passes by without commentary. Over four seasons, the tides, people, and wildlife constantly come and go. A beautifully designed portrait of pulsating nature that invites viewers to find their own associations and meaning.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/5753c3c5-6ba5-47e7-ae09-4f97c91c485b/silence-of-the-tides>

### **A Way Home**

Karima Saïdi

Belgium, Morocco, France, Qatar, 2020, 90 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for First Appearance



When filmmaker Karima Saïdi's mother Aïcha develops Alzheimer's at the end of her life, Karima decides to make a film portrait of her at her Brussels care home. Before oblivion descends for good.

Aïcha is becoming increasingly confused, and Karima takes her on mental journey back into her past. The filmmaker uses Aïcha's stories and a wide range of family archive material to create an impression of Aïcha's life. We start with her youth in Morocco, are shown how her husband brought her from Tangiers to Belgium, and how she later went on to raise her children as a single mother.

Aïcha's answers to her daughter's many and often repeated questions reveal the extent to which she has struggled with tradition, the position of women, and living between two cultures. And then there is the complex relationship between the two women themselves: Aïcha and her youngest daughter Karima. The daughter sparingly interweaves scenes of her mother as she is now with her personal history, in loving and poetic moments that capture life's finite and fragile nature.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/fee6c22c-2956-4a46-bce8-8d2016d5e56a/away-home>

**Silent Voice**

Reka Valerik

France, Belgium, 2020, 51 min, World Premiere, IDFA Competition for Mid-Length Documentary



Khavaj, a young mixed martial arts fighter from Chechnya, has gone into hiding in Belgium. He's lived in fear for his life ever since his brother found out that Khavaj is gay. Everything he's been through has left him in such a state of shock that he's lost his voice.

With the help of a Belgian organization that protects young men like Khavaj, he learns to speak again and tries to find his way in a new country. Interaction with his family is impossible—his only contact with home is a string of voicemail messages from his mother.

Meanwhile, the tyrannical Kadyrov regime is hot on his heels. It's possible that members of the Chechnyan diaspora in Belgium will inform on him, so he needs to create a new identity. We follow him very closely, and witness his titanic struggle to reinvent himself. The results are harrowing but also moving.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/418da64b-3829-41df-a2af-0f73da343d81/silent-voice>

**2021**

**The Balacony Movie**

Pawel Lozinski

Poland, 2021, 101 min, Dutch Premiere, Masters



Director Pawel Lozinski is a visual anthropologist studying the subjects on his doorstep. From his balcony, he directs his camera at the sidewalk in front of his apartment building. On this gray strip of pavement, sandwiched between dull green grass and a tall wire fence, a colorful procession of locals, relatives, passersby and homeless people walk by. Lozinski tries to strike up a conversation with everyone. He asks who they are, what they do, and what they think about the meaning of life. Some pass by in a hurry, but most answer at length and tell half their life story in the process.

With a frank approach, his camera and microphone always present, Lozinski captures minor frustrations and personal dramas. His street confessional of sort attracts a great variety of unique stories. Creating a space for dialogue, he turns the sidewalk in a quiet Warsaw neighborhood into a stage presenting every facet of contemporary Polish life.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/00b7b14a-322e-4d10-aa23-18b1cfc9fc68/the-balcony-movie>

### **Darkness There and Nothing More**

Tea Tupajic

Netherlands, Croatia, 2021, 88 min, World Premiere, Envision Competition



Filmmaker Tea Tupajic was seven years old when the civil war in the former Yugoslavia reached her hometown Sarajevo. The scars the war left play a major role in her work as an artist. She asked Dutch war veterans Frank and Harm to spend a night in conversation with her. The empty theater gradually darkens. Tupajic wants answers to some painful questions, but she also tries to discover something in the two men that can give her hope.

A woman, a man, and a camera: through this simple set-up, *Darkness There and Nothing More* concentrates all attention onto the words, gestures, and acts in these two meetings, often captured in tightly framed shots. Despite a shared longing for some kind of deliverance, the frames show a dialog between two worlds that simply won't combine. Harm carries a huge sense of guilt, while Frank is entirely locked off from his emotions. Tupajic tries to explain that none of her family and friends, despite being alive, really survived the war. Are they ever going to understand each other's grief?

*Nominated for the IDFA Award for Best First Feature and the IDFA Award for Best Dutch Film*

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/8ba68dc5-be38-4932-85a4-c1fffa0f2b79/darkness-there-and-nothing-more>

### **The Empty Center**

Hito Steyerl

Germany. 1998, 62 min, Focus: unConscious Bias



IDFA 2021's guest of honor Hito Steyerl examined the large parcel of land between former East and West Berlin with an archeological eye for her 1998 graduation project *Die leere Mitte*. After the fall of the Wall in 1989, Potsdamer Platz had to again become the center of the city, as it had been in the past. But it's no easy thing to erase history, and walls live on even after they have been demolished.

Steyerl shows us old and new boundaries, captures the rising xenophobia and racism of post-unification Germany, raises questions about a reconstruction financed by multinationals, and reveals that few people benefit from gentrification. Much more than a portrait of an era, this ingeniously edited film is a kaleidoscopic dive into central Berlin's past: from the destruction and renovation of the Reichstag to the boundaries of colonial Germany that were defined there. We discover that the center is a place from which people are always excluded.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/6e9497b8-0be1-43c0-bc18-b3fd77a3cc71/the-empty-center>

### **Flee**

Jonas Poher Rasmussen

Denmark, Sweden, Norway, France, 2021, 90 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



No one else knows all the details of his escape, not even his partner. The film's director Jonas Poher Rasmussen nonetheless manages to get his school friend Amin to open up about his journey from 1980s Afghanistan to Denmark of today — with the promise that he will remain completely anonymous.

Rasmussen maintains Amin's anonymity mainly by animating his story, which is at times thrilling and at times emotionally moving. In hand-drawn 2D animations, the director outlines Amin's long journey through the no-man's-land between citizen and "illegal," encountering corrupt Russian police and ruthless people smugglers in a life marked by tedium alternating with life-threatening tension.

But even more, *Flee* is a film about how a person's mind is affected by such conditions, about how you can't stop hiding your true self even when you do have all the right documents. As a gay man working in the business world, Amin had no alternative but to construct a false identity — one that now, at last, safely concealed by the animations, he is gradually gathering the courage to discard.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/ab18661a-5e49-4a2b-8395-4bb4ddb8fbe8/flee>

### **Futura**

Pietro Marcello, Francesco Munzi, Alice Rohrwacher  
Italy, 2021, 108 min, Dutch Premiere, Masters



Are you more afraid of the past or the future? How important is education to you? And how do you view adults? In *Futura*, a topical yet timeless documentary about ambitions, fears, and unfulfilled desires, Italian teenagers open their hearts in a range of interviews.

Filmmakers Pietro Marcello, Francesco Munzi, and Alice Rohrwacher spent months traveling through Italian towns and villages, listening respectfully and with an open mind to what teenagers have to say. Young people from every part of society seize the opportunity. They talk about uncertainty, social pressure, and inequalities in society. And about their dreams for the future, which now look like they may never be realized due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Futura* offers a broad stage to teenagers, who often feel ignored in a world that is changing too slowly. The result is an incisive portrait of a generation, packed with thoughtful, moving, and confrontational perspectives on our future.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/fb340edf-f1ab-42da-95c4-abb58a0f8aa8/futura>

### **The Home Front – A Journey in Italy with Domenico Quirico**

Paola Piacenza

Italy, 2021, 110 min, World Premiere, Frontlight



Human technology has made great leaps forward in recent decades, but what about humanity itself? Post-industrialization is causing distressing social changes, and *Home Front: A Journey in Italy with Domenico Quirico* shows what that means in practice.

Filmmaker Paola Piacenza accompanies journalist Domenico Quirico to various Italian cities in his search for the root causes of modern poverty. A homeless man talks about the cocktail of medications he gets to alleviate his pain. Teachers working with a troublesome class spend more time managing the kids than teaching them. Itinerants and asylum seekers depend on organizations such as food banks and the Red Cross.

In the illuminating closing conversation, sociologist Marco Revelli relates this need for help to the social failures of the business world—because even with a job you can still be poor. Revelli and Quirico sit together in the gaping void of a factory site that once provided employment and income for an entire city. It's a painful and bitter symbol for the times in which we live.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/05740849-2e1c-4894-a08d-df70d8ce7516/the-home-front-a-journey-in-italy-with-domenico-quirico>

### **In Flow of Words**

Eliane Esther Bots

Netherlands, 2021, 23 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



How would it affect you to have to translate gruesome court testimony? Three interpreters at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague discuss the gulf between professionalism and the intense emotion generated by their work.

One of them had to stop translating when he saw the video of homicidal Serbians forcing a man to call out to fellow Muslims who had hidden in the woods that they would be safe and could come out. Another stayed drunk for a month after hearing the testimony of a Serbian chauffeur who drove Muslims in Srebrenica to their place of execution—the interpreter was unable to cope emotionally with the idea that when the chauffeur was left with a boy, he phoned a commander during the night, who got up to go out and shoot the child. “Who gets up at 3, 4, 5 o’clock in the morning to kill a boy?”

The harrowing interviews are juxtaposed with impassive interior shots of the courtroom, making the disconnect between detached professionalism and the intense emotions felt by the interpreters all the more potent and palpable.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/bdd123c5-cb3a-4d81-b55f-ebd6abf5d819/in-flow-of-words>

### **Judges Under Pressure**

Kacper Lisowski

Poland, 2021, 87 min, World Premiere, Frontlight



Poland, judicial independence has been under serious pressure since the right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS) came to power. Judges whose rulings are not to the government's liking are at risk of being fired or arrested. The new government portrays judges as elitist and incompetent at best, and at worst as dissidents.

The judges refuse to sit by and let this happen, and are trying to turn the political tide through demonstrations, as well as workshops and presentations at large music festivals. 2020 saw the biggest protest in Polish history, with countless concerned Polish citizens and fellow lawmakers from across Europe expressing their solidarity and calling attention to the flagrant constitutional violations.

The film follows Judge Igor Tuleya, the face of the protest movement, as he works both inside and outside the courtroom. His black humor brings an occasional note of lightness to this urgent and shocking topic, without detracting from the seriousness of the constitutional horror scenario unfolding in this EU member state.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/ffa59473-a174-4340-9668-8f07a64ba676/judges-under-pressure>

### **Letter from Eusapia**

Andrés Cornejo Pinto

Portugal, Hungary, Belgium, Ecuador, 2021, 19 min, European Premiere, IDFA Competition for Short Documentary



Filmmaker Andres Cornejo Pinto sends cameras through the sewers of Brussels. He mainly records sewage and rats, but he mixes this report of his everyday work with a story about the underground city of Eusapia, illustrated by archive footage. During the Cold War, it was said to have stored artworks. But a simultaneous experiment with mushroom cultivation proved fatal for some of the artistic treasures.

While the filmmaker explores the depths of Brussels with robotic cameras, his father in Ecuador similarly explores the innermost parts of the human body as he performs advanced keyhole surgery. However, the surgeon is powerless when a virus emerges for which there is no cure, and patients—including his own sister—die en masse in the hospital.

Father and son are connected by telephone, bridging the distance between continents, and between the pseudo-mythological Eusapia in decline and the current Covid-19 pandemic. Existential questions about life, death, and “being at home” hang heavy in the air.

Link for trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/a83d80f5-0c27-44f0-9756-81d4aa863a39/letter-from-eusapia>

### **Mr. Bachmann and His Class**

Maria Speth

Germany, 2021, 217 min, Dutch Premiere, Best of Fests



Maria Speth's small crew spent months being a fly on the wall in 6B, the class of Dieter Bachmann, a teacher at the Gerhard Büchnerschool in Stadtalendorf, Germany. From hundreds of hours of filming, Speth edited a monumental portrait of a natural educator at work. With endless patience and humor, Herr Bachmann teaches his 12 to 14-year-old students how to live life together. Lessons include lots of music and a little juggling now and again. And if the students get tired, they can just take a break on the sofa.

Herr Bachmann sometimes wonders whether he should be paying a little more attention to German and mathematics. The viewer, totally absorbed in the fascinating microcosm of 6B, has long since realized that what he offers his students is much more important. He encourages self-reflection, has them talk through their conflicts, and teaches them that there are some rules you really have to abide by.

In the meantime, he helps them steadily build their self-confidence. And this is certainly not an unnecessary luxury for these children, who are often vulnerable and largely come from multicultural backgrounds.

Link for trailer/film; <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/5e080513-fe3d-4511-a5c6-2817f8d90420/mr-bachmann-and-his-class>

### **Name of the Game**

Trond Giske

Norway, 2021, 102 min, World Premiere, Frontlight



The politician Trond Giske was for many years the “crown prince” of the Norwegian Labor Party. But when this left-wing party loses popularity and the #MeToo movement raises awareness about sexual harassment, the tide turns for the once-so-popular Giske. Long-standing rumours of inappropriate behavior towards young staff members at parties are thrown into sharp relief when a number of women accuse him of sexual assault. The flood of media attention, leaked videos and testimonials, and the ensuing political power struggle, bring about his downfall.

But Giske, now in his fifties, is not prepared to give up: he travels the country in a self-refurbished caravan painted red to convince his voters that he deserves a second chance. Filmmaker Håvard Bustnes follows him on this tour, and interviews politicians and journalists who look back on the political drama—making quite a contrast with Giske calmly discussing his political objectives with his supporters in his caravan. Meanwhile, Bustnes wrestles to understand how he himself has become an object of Giske’s game of power.

Link for trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/1d4da724-b7b7-408c-9529-dc967a827316/name-of-the-game>

### **A People’s Radio – Ballads from a Wooded Country**

Virpi Suutari

Finland, 2021, 27 min, Dutch Premiere, Masters



What fires the soul of a Finn? An array of scenes of summery Finnish landscapes, in the city as well as the countryside, accompanies messages from listeners to the popular radio program *Kansanradio*, meaning “People’s radio.” They speak their minds, to no one in particular, on a broad spectrum of subjects, ranging from a plan to stop using shampoo to airing political views, and from the grief over a lost partner to struggles with religious faith and rage about a neighbor’s noisy drilling.

Alongside the rural beauty familiar to tourists—of midsummer-night lakes, cabins, and birch forests—we also see scenes of a more everyday Finnish reality. They, too, have their rained-out amusement parks and drab housing projects, although here you’re a lot more likely to see a reindeer ambling through the shot. These images combine with the amusing, melancholic, and sometimes defiant radio voices to form a quiet declaration of love to Finland and its inhabitants.

Link for trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/c55b4f8f-896c-4406-8a73-ea2a3152c4df/a-peoples-radio-ballads-from-a-wooded-country>

### **The Treasures of Crimea**

Oeke Hoogendijk

Netherlands, 2021, 82 min, World Premiere, Frontlight



It was a fateful coincidence that in 2014, just when the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam was staging an exhibition of Crimean artworks, Russia annexed the region. So now the question arises of who should the artworks be returned to? To the museums in Crimea who had been so kind as to loan them out? Or to Ukraine, perhaps, the country Crimea belonged to before the annexation? What should the museum's director Wim Hupperetz do?

Veteran documentary filmmaker Oeke Hoogendijk (*The New Rijksmuseum*) is just the woman for the job when it comes to turning this complex issue into an exciting film, and finding the human dimension in a tangled judicial tug-of-war. Political, emotional, personal, cultural, and historical interests all jostle for position as lawyers arguing from a purely judicial perspective present their case and distressed museum directors face big gaps in their collections.

While archaeologists in Crimea continue their groundbreaking historical work, it looks like their previous finds are going to be re-buried in the Netherlands—shut off from the world in a warehouse, they are perhaps the biggest losers in this conflict.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/cacf0ef8-ceed-4c78-934f-80796d684822/the-treasures-of-crimea>

### **The Voice of the People**

Andreas Wilcke

Germany, Greece, 2021, 96 min, World Premiere, Frontlight



“We will reclaim our country and our people,” a leading figure in the right-wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) tells his party colleagues on Bundestag election night in 2017. They are celebrating as the AfD, founded four years earlier, surges into the German parliament with 94 seats, instantly making it the third largest party. *The Voice of the People* follows four MPs—all men—for three years as they seek to extend their power.

In this fly-on-the-wall documentary, the camera is present when they’re drafting their speeches and delivering them in Parliament, in the streets and in taverns—always trying to adjust to the situation and the prevailing mood of their audience. Through this close look on their communication and framing strategies we learn firsthand, and in quite some detail, how right-wing populism operates. As one of the social media strategists in the film puts it: “If you polarize, you mobilize, and that’s good.”

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/443833cc-268a-4ab9-b459-77c0b9bf4cae/the-voice-of-the-people>

**We**

Alice Diop

France, 2021, 116 min, Dutch Premiere, Focus: unConscious Bias, Best of Fests



The regional RER B train route transects Paris and its suburbs from north to south. Alice Diop gets off at various stations and meets a Malian car mechanic in Le Bourget, a district nurse (Diop's sister) in Drancy, the writer Pierre Bergounioux in Gif-sur-Yvette, and a band of deer hunters in the Chevreuse valley.

Diop interweaves her calm observations with memories of her father, who came to France from Senegal as an immigrant in the 1960s, and of her mother, who barely appears in the old family photos and films she finds. To her dismay, her mother is never more than a silhouette at the edge of the frame, about to disappear. Diop movingly redresses this image of her mother.

All the while, the RER rolls on and the disparate stories she collects come together organically. Diop chooses not to accentuate the differences between people, but to look and listen closely, and to pay attention to small gestures. All these individual slices of life ultimately form a compelling and moving whole—a possible 'we'.

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/1fcc92c6-ca53-4000-8719-8b0f4acbd274/we>

### **When We Were Them**

Danis Tanović, Damir Šagolj

Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2021, 15 min, International Premiere, Frontlight



“In the middle of Bosnia’s nowhere, far from where they want to be, thousands of migrants suffer,” says the voiceover. Drone footage shows a camp in a forest surrounded by high fences, reminiscent of a prison. This is precisely how the refugees experience it, so many of them escape from this “sub-zero hell of a mountain camp.” They seek shelter in abandoned, derelict buildings in the cities. Without running water or electricity, they try to survive in the cold. Some choose not to wait, but attempt to flee to Western Europe.

*When We Were Them* is an indictment of European refugee policy, but directed specifically at the people of Bosnia. How can it be that people who in the recent past were themselves subjected to deadly hatred should now treat refugees as criminals? “Do we remember when we were them?”

Link to trailer/film: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/d254370f-0b2d-4110-8b5f-ff3eccde2e01/when-we-were-them>