



THE FILM

# VERDICT

01 SEPTEMBER 2023



## VENICE REVIEW DAILY

### COMPETITION

#### FERRARI



Eros Hoagland/Venice Film Festival

**VERDICT:** In his first feature film in eight years, director Michael Mann passionately captures a life where the drive for success and the threat of disaster were intricately intertwined.

*Alonso Duralde, August 31st, 2023*

The “man of genius” narrative is catnip for male auteurs, who often seem to be crafting stealth

autobiographies by paying tribute to brilliant risk-takers. Yet Michael Mann’s portrait of Enzo Ferrari never fawns in its portrayal of the legendary automotive entrepreneur or of the literal and emotional devastation he often left in his wake.

The screenplay for Ferrari — by [Full review, click here](#)

## Beatrice Fiorentino

*Beatrice Fiorentino on Emerging Filmmakers and Collaboration*



Beatrice Fiorentino

**VERDICT:** The General Delegate of the International Critics Week discusses her philosophy for the Venice sidebar.

*Max Borg, August 31st, 2023*

Like every year, Beatrice Fiorentino will be covering the Venice Film Festival for the Trieste-based daily newspaper *Il Piccolo* (the three movies she’s most looking forward to are Michael Mann’s *Ferrari*, David Fincher’s *The Killer*, and Bertrand Bonello’s *La bête*).

And, like every year since 2016, [Full interview click here](#)

**DOX** Leipzig

8.10.–15.10.2023



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COMPETITION

EL CONDE

**CINE VERDICT:** El conde, la oscura sátira de horror cómico revela que convertir a un monstruo de la vida real en el protagonista de su propia película de monstruos es una efectiva manera de lidiar con la tragedia histórica.

Alonso Duralde, August 20th, 2023

Los artistas siempre han luchado por vislumbrar el corazón de las tinieblas, por transmitir la naturaleza malvada de la humanidad en su peor momento. Con El Conde, el director y coguionista Pablo Larraín toma un monstruo (específicamente, el dictador chileno Augusto Pinochet) y crea una película de monstruos. Las capas de sátira y de comedia familiar disfuncional que envuelven a este demonio sirven para acentuar, en lugar de disminuir, sus numerosos crímenes contra la humanidad. Es un cambio un tanto radical para Larraín, nacido en Chile, cuyas películas recientes Jackie y Spencer fueron retratos compasivos de mujeres lanzadas a los reflectores por sus matrimonios con hombres poderosos. Aquí no hay compasión por Pinochet y el desfalco genocida que marcó su reinado

[Full Review, click here](#)



Netflix

COMPETITION

EL CONDE

**VERDICT:** Pablo Larraín’s darkly comic horror-satire reveals that turning a real-life monster into the protagonist of his own monster movie is an effective way to process historical tragedy.

Alonso Duralde, August 31st, 2023

Artists have always grappled with staring into the heart of darkness, with conveying the evil nature of mankind at its worst. With El Conde, director and co-writer Pablo Larraín takes a monster — specifically, Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet — and creates a monster movie. The layers of satire and dysfunctional-family comedy that

surround this demon serve to accentuate, rather than diminish, his many crimes against humanity.

It’s a bit of a radical shift for the Chilean-born Larraín, whose recent films Jackie and Spencer were compassionate portraits of women thrust into the spotlight by virtue of their marriages to powerful men. There’s no compassion here for Pinochet and the genocidal larceny that marked his 17-year reign of terror, though; Larraín refuses to avert his gaze from Pinochet’s sins or from the rotting corruption that infects the dictator’s family, his servants, or even the thoroughly complicit Catholic Church.

We learn from the English-language narrator (Stella Gonet)

[Full Review, click here](#)

GERMAN FILMS IN VENICE



VENEZIA 80

THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING

by Timm Kröger



FUORI CONCORSO

HOLLYWOOD GATE

by Ibrahim Nash'at

german films



# OUT OF COMPETITION

## HOLLYWOODGATE

**VERDICT:** A sobering observational documentary shot at an air force base in Afghanistan, where director Ibrahim Nash'at embedded himself in order to bear witness to the Taliban mindset.

Jay Weissberg, August 31st, 2023

It's two years to the day since the U.S. abandoned Afghanistan to the Taliban, making for a painful but appropriate world premiere for Ibrahim Nash'at's documentary Hollywoodgate. Embedding himself for a year at a Taliban air force base, the director received extraordinary access to the Commander of the Air Force and a lieutenant on site,



UTA

resulting in a chilling, narrowly-focused observational portrait of the Taliban's methods and outlook. Those expecting a general account of Taliban atrocities should look elsewhere; Nash'at was constrained by extremely limiting restrictions, and yet within that cage, he managed to do the opposite of what the Commander wanted by show-

ing not so much their triumphs but their inexperience, blind fanaticism and incompetence. Though significantly harmed by Volker Bertelmann's melodramatic score, Hollywoodgate is a sobering look in the belly of the beast.

Egyptian-born Nash'at has a background as a journalist but also [Full review, click here](#)



### Spanish Screenings XXL September 26-28

Creative Inverstors' Conference  
Zinemaldia Startup Challenge



+ info:  
industria@sansebastianfestival.com sansebastianfestival.com

# SSIFF 2023 September 22/30 71

CRITICS WEEK

GOD IS A WOMAN

**VERDICT:** Nearly fifty years after a film documenting Panama’s Kuna community was lost, Swiss-Panamanian director Andrés Peyrot tracks it down and screens it before an emotionally engaged crowd in this fascinating though flawed documentary.

Jay Weissberg, August 31st, 2023

Swiss-Panamanian documentary director Andrés Peyrot expects a lot from his audience with his fascinating though flawed debut *God is a Woman*. Wary of the problematic nature of an outsider’s gaze when shooting indigenous communities, and mindful of the post-colonialist dictum that it’s not the responsibility of non-hegemonic groups to explain themselves to those in power, Peyrot allows most of this story of a rediscovered



Pyramide International

film shot among Panama’s Kuna people to be told by those within the community. While laudable in principle, the result in this case is that so many questions remain unanswered that we’re moved by the emotions generated yet mentally taken out of the film by all the unaddressed issues and details. It’s a true Catch-22 situation: do you make a documentary for the people you’re filming, or do you make it for an international art-

house crowd who’ll be sympathetic in a neoliberal sort of way? Regardless, *God is a Woman* has a strong enough story and visuals to earn it an enviable passport.

In 1975, French filmmaker Pierre-Dominique Gaisseau, winner of the 1962 best documentary Oscar for the now forgotten *The Sky Above, the Mud Below*, traveled with his wife and daughter to

[Full Review, Click here](#)



MAX BORG

MEET THE TFV CRITICS & WRITERS WHO ARE AT THE VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

THE FILM VERDICT

Finnish-born, Swiss-based journalist Max Borg joined *The Film Verdict* as a Feature Writer in August 2022, covering international festivals via topical stories and interviews. He writes for various print and online publications in Switzerland, Italy, Denmark and the US, and has served on critics juries in Venice, Toronto, Zurich, Karlovy Vary and Gothenburg, among others. His specialist subjects include Swiss and Nordic cinema, genre films, and festivals. He also works as a translator and writer for the Locarno Film Festival, most notably as part of the editorial staff of the in-house *Locarno Daily*.





## BIENNALE COLLEGE CINEMA



### UPON OPEN SKY

**VERDICT:** 'Upon Open Sky', a Mexican road movie full of restraint and some surprises, premieres in Venice's Orizzonti section.

*Lucy Virgen, August 31, 2023*

Road movies, born in the American cinema of the Seventies, are transgressive by nature. Their characters behave as they would not in the place where they live; their relationship with weapons, romantic adventures and motorcycles is relaxed, and the viewer doesn't need to suspend reality to consider it natural. The actions are circumscribed to a specific moment and there are no consequences, at least we do not see them on screen. What happens on the road, stays on the road.

In *Upon Open Sky*, a terrible road accident in which the father of teenage brothers Fernando and Salvador dies, stays with the boys and haunts them. Two years later, Fernando is obsessed with doing amateur forensic reconstructions of car accidents. Salvador, who was with his father in the accident, says he does not remember anything that happened.

The trauma of the accident obsesses them and becomes so heavy that they decide to go to the place where it occurred, in the state of Coahuila, to look for an explanation about what happened. They are accompanied by their stepsister Paula and her boyfriend Eduardo.

For each of the participants in the expedition, the trip means something different: for Fernando revenge, for Salvador closure. Eduardo sees it as an opportunity to

[Full Article, Click here](#)



### A CIELO ABIERTO

**CINE VERDICT:** Road movie mexicana con una controlada dirección y varias sorpresas se estrena en Horizons in Venice 2023

*Lucy Virgen, August 31, 2023*

Las road movies, nacidas en el cine norteamericano de los setentas son transgresoras por naturaleza. Sus personajes se comportan como no lo harían en el lugar en donde viven, su relación con las armas, aventuras románticas o motocicletas es relajada y el espectador no necesita suspender la realidad para considerarlo natural.

Las acciones están circunscritas a un momento específico y no hay consecuencias, al menos no las vemos en pantalla. Lo que pasa en el camino, se queda en el camino.

Pero en *A cielo abierto* lo que pasó en el camino, un terrible accidente en el que muere el padre de los hermanos adolescentes Fernando y Salvador, se queda con ellos y los obsesiona. Dos años más tarde Fernando está fascinado en hacer reconstrucciones forenses amateurs de accidentes automovilísticos. Salvador, quien iba con su padre en el accidente, dice no recordar lo que pasó. El trauma del accidente los obsesiona y se vuelve tan pesado que deciden ir al lugar en el que ocurrió, en el estado de Coahuila con intenciones de venganza, acompañados de su hermanastra Paula y su novio Eduardo.

Para cada uno de los participantes en la expedición, el viaje significa algo diferente: para Fernando venganza, para Salvador terminar con el pasado, el novio de

[Full Article, Click here](#)

# AWARDS clips

## European Film Awards this year's Documentary Film Selection for the upcoming Awards



Orlando, My Political Biography



Smoke Sauna Sisterhood

**APOLONIA, APOLONIA / APOLONIA, APOLONIA**

Denmark, Poland  
Written & Directed by: Lea Glob

**BETWEEN REVOLUTIONS / ÎNTRE REVOLUTII**

Romania, Croatia  
Directed by: Vlad Petri  
Written by: Vlad Petri, Lavinia Braniste

**FOUR DAUGHTERS / LES FILLES D'OLFA**

France, Tunisia, Germany, Saudi Arabia  
Written & Directed by: Kaouther Ben Hania

**IN THE REARVIEW / SKAD DOKAD**

Poland, France, Ukraine  
Written & Directed by: Maciek Hamela

**PARADISE / PARADIS**

France, Switzerland  
Written & Directed by: Alexander Abaturov

**ON THE ADAMANT / SUR L'ADAMANT**

France, Japan  
Directed by: Nicolas Philibert

**OUR BODY / NOTRE CORPS**

France  
Directed by: Claire Simon

**MOTHERLAND**

Sweden, Ukraine, Norway  
Written & Directed by: Hanna Badziaka, Alexander Mihalkovich

**ORLANDO, MY POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY / ORLANDO, MA BIOGRAPHIE POLITIQUE**

France  
Written & Directed by: Paul B. Preciado

**LIGHT FALLS VERTICAL / ARA LA LLUM CAU VERTICAL**

Spain, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands  
Written & Directed by: Efthymia Zymvragaki

**SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD / SAVVUSANNA SÕSARAD**

Estonia, France, Iceland  
Written & Directed by: Anna Hints

**WHO I AM NOT / WHO I AM NOT**

Romania, Canada, Germany  
Written and Directed by: Tunde Skovran

**THE HEARING / DIE ANHÖRUNG**

Switzerland  
Written & Directed by: Lisa Gerig  
Written by: Lisa Gerig

*Titles in red, click for TFV review*

*Full list, [click here](#)*

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# Location Flashback

## Piazza della Bocca della Verita / The Mouth of Truth *Roman Holiday (1953)*

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### Screened at the 14th Venice International Film Festival

In this scene, undercover reporter Joe Bradley (Gregory Peck) takes “Anya Smith” (Audrey Hepburn), a young woman he met the night before – but who he knows is actually an incognito HR Princess Ann, on a tour of Rome and a stop at the “Mouth of Truth,” A sculpture said to bite the hands off of liars. Needless to say they are both a bit shy to put their hands in the mouth of fate.


The film was shot at the Cinecittà studios and on location around Rome during the “Hollywood on the Tiber” era. In 1999, *Roman Holiday* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant”. The film has been considered one of the most romantic films in cinema history. Blacklisted director Bernard Vorhaus worked on the film as an assistant director under a pseudonym. Hepburn won an Academy Award for Best Actress for her performance; the story and costume design also won. The script was written by John Dighton and Dalton Trumbo, though with Trumbo on the Hollywood blacklist, he did not receive a credit, and Ian McLellan Hunter fronted for him.

Mouth of Truth is located in Piazza Bocca della Verita and is one of the most famous symbols of Rome. The ancient marble mask was most likely a sewer cover from the Roman age dating back to the reign of Tarquino the Superb, the last of the seven Kings of Rome. The name Mouth of Truth originated in 1485 and is linked to the medieval legend of biting off the hands of liars.



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# Venice Memories by Peter Cowie



Peter Cowie is the former International Publishing Director of *Variety*, author of numerous books on the cinema, and chair of the annual panel on the Biennale College Cinema program in Venice. A long-time friend and colleague and an early supporter of The Film Verdict project, his enthusiasm and intelligence applied to film offers a constant source of inspiration for those seeking a “third way” between art and commerce. In this three-part series, he reflects on the history of the Venice Film Festival and those who have shaped it.

## Peter Cowie concludes his history of the festival with a look into the future.

In the new century, Venice finally came up with a formula that answered the need for a market. Under the leadership of first Marco Müller, and then Alberto Barbera, the Mostra decided to get involved at the conceptual, rather than “finished sales” stage. By the beginning of 2012, the main thrust of the modern Venice Mostra had taken shape. Two key initiatives marked the partnership of Paolo Baratta, as president of the Biennale, and Alberto Barbera as artistic director.

The first step was the establishment of a quasi-market, the “Venice Production Bridge”, where deal makers could gather before flying on to the more commercially oriented Toronto festival. Under the leadership of Pascal Diot, this would soon comprise “Final Cut in Venice” (projects seeking completion funds and facilities), a “Book Adaptation Rights Market”, and a “Gap Financing Market”.

The second significant development was the Biennale College Cinema. Each year four feature films would emerge from the chrysalis of this programme, each financed wholly by the Biennale



Venice Production Bridge 2020

to the tune of €150,000 (and since 2022, €200,000), and guided along the way by a fleet of tutors and film industry experts to ensure that each film could reach its maximum potential – as well as being completed in time for a world premiere screening in Venice during the festival. Several of these films have enjoyed distribution and festival exposure around the world – among them Tim Sutton’s *Memphis*, Alessandro Aronadio’s *Hotel Salvation*, Anna Rose Holmer’s *The Fits*, Kohki Hasei’s *Blanka*, or Lemohang Jeremiah Mosese’s *This Is Not a Burial, It’s a Resurrection*.

One of the delights of the Venice Festival has been the ability to get into virtually any screening – providing you plan ahead with prudence. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, you need to be a dab hand with a smartphone, negotiating the programme online and ensuring you don’t reserve seats for movies that are being shown at the same time in different venues! Almost all the screening venues at the Mostra can be accessed in a few minutes one from another.

Then there are the lovable quirks and oddities of the Mostra.

*Continues next page*

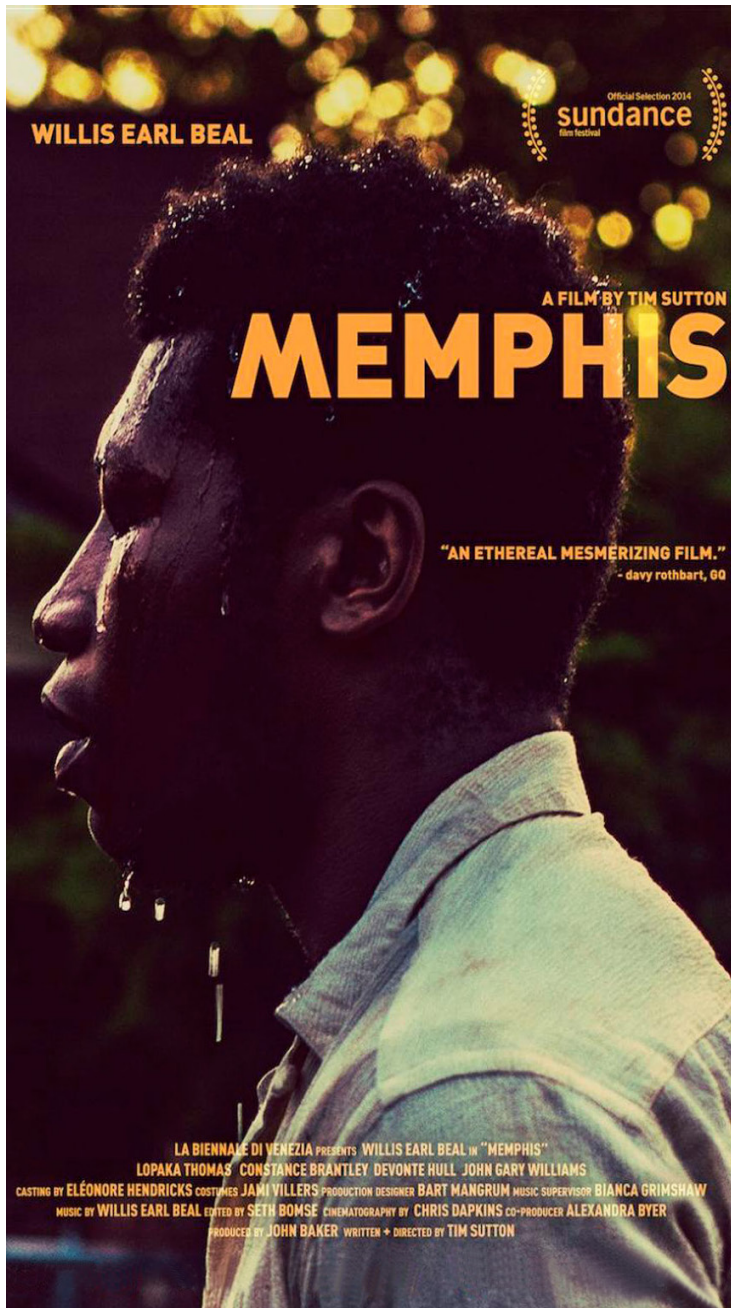


Venice Memories cont'd

Only in Venice, for example, could a former leper colony (the Isola Lazaretto Vecchio) be used to present the Venice Immersive section of the Mostra. Or the time-hallowed practice of announcing the presence of each member of a film's delegation just before the premiere screening in the Sala Grande. And not forgetting the astute measures introduced during the 2020 and 2021 festivals, in the

midst of the pandemic, such as discreetly but firmly taking the temperature of everyone entering the festival area, and leaving a seat free on either side of each spectator in the auditorium. Alberto Barbera and his team, staunchly supported by Roberto Cicutto, the current president of the Biennale, have maintained the size of the Mostra within bounds, avoiding the gigantism of certain other festivals, making each annual

gathering avoyage of discovery rather than ten days of mere consumption. And, if this cornucopia of international films proves insufficient, you can always visit the Biennale, held in the Giardini and the Arsenale (a short boat ride from the Lido), as well as Forte Marghera. This year it's Architecture, under the rubric "Laboratory of the Future". Come to think of it, that description can also be applied to the Mostra.

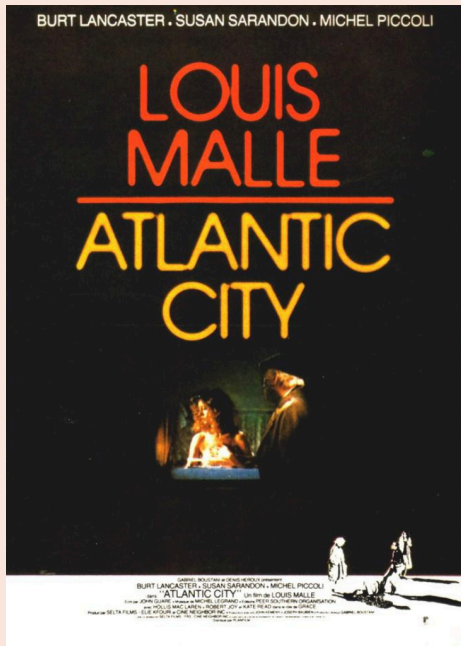




# VENICE FAST FACTS

Biennele celebrates 80 years

**1980**



The Golden Lion was re-introduced, with an ex aequo award for Louis Malle (*Atlantic City*) and John Cassavetes (*Gloria*).



# Today@The Italian Pavilion



Italian Pavilion @ 68 Cannes

## September 1

14:30 – 16:00

### CINEMA IN THE NEW MEDIA TIME

The current media scenario - which sees the film industry no longer as a separate segment, with its own writing and production rules, but as an integrated part of multimedia entertainment - will be the focus of the panel New Image, New Lifestyle. Cinema in the New Media Time, Capture Your Own Story (1 September, 14:30-16:00), in collaboration with Infinix. The meeting will be attended by: Roberto Stabile; Jacqueline Fernandez, actress; Anish Kapoor, CEO, Infinix India; Kobi Mizrahi, Founder, KM Productions; Dalmira Tilebergenova, Film Director and Screenwriter.

## September 2

11:45 – 13:30

SPOTLIGHT ON HONG KONG

15:00-16:50

THE ANTI PIRACY LAW AND THE FIRST EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CAMCORDER

Events open to all

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## CINECITTÀ



PROGRAM  
31 AUGUST  
4 SEPTEMBER  
2023

### THURSDAY, 31 AUGUST

- 09:00 - 11:00  
**FOCUS ON CHINA** | VPB SPECIAL SCREENING | Sala Volpi  
Blue Planet Sci-Fi Film Festival: Short Films Selection
- 10:30 - 12:00 | VPB SPECIAL SCREENING | Sala Pasinetti  
When Your Eyes Linger by Hwang Da-seul
- 12:00 - 13:40  
**FOCUS ON KYRGYZSTAN** | VPB SPECIAL SCREENING | Sala Pasinetti  
The Gift by Dalmira Tilebergenova
- 12:00-14:30 | VPB SPECIAL SCREENING | Sala Casinò  
Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms by Wuershan
- 14:00 - 15:30  
**FOCUS ON CHINA** | The Most Beautiful Shooting Locations in China  
*in collaboration with Xinhua*
- 16:00-16:50  
**PANEL** | Co-Producing with Japan:  
New Opportunities for the Italian Film Industry
- 17:00 - 18:00  
**FOCUS ON KYRGYZSTAN** | Cooperation Strategies & Perspectives  
*in collaboration with the Cinema Department - Minister of Culture, Information, Sports, and Youth Policy of Kyrgyzstan & Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic to Italy*

### FRIDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER

- 14:30 - 16:00  
**PANEL** | New Image, New Lifestyle. Cinema in the New Media Time,  
Capture Your Own Story  
*in collaboration with Infinix*

### SATURDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER

- 11:45 - 13:30  
**PANEL** | Spotlight on Hong Kong Film Industry:  
The Past, Present and Exciting Future  
*in collaboration with Create Hong Kong*
- 15:00 - 16:50  
**PANEL** | The New Anti-Piracy Law:  
Opportunities for the Audiovisual Industry  
*in collaboration with FAPAV*
- 18:10 - 19:10  
**FOCUS ON CHINA** | Blue Planet Sci-Fi Film Festival Cooperation Forum  
*in collaboration with Xinhua*

### SUNDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER

- 10:30 - 12:15  
**PANEL** | Genre Trends in Global Film Production  
*in collaboration with C-stars Consulting*
- 15:00 - 16:30  
**PANEL** | Next Generation Movie Creatives: from Schools to Showbiz.  
Spotlight on Animation  
*in collaboration with MPA*
- 18:10 - 19:00  
**FOCUS ON CHINA** | Unravelling China's  
Cultural Tapestry through Wine and Film  
*in collaboration with LIPP & NYSH Productions*

### MONDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

- 15:00 - 17:00  
**PANEL** | We Are Stories Campaign: Protecting Creativity  
and Supporting Young Talents  
*in collaboration with FAPAV*

Events: Open to all  
Focus on Kyrgyzstan: Italian/Russian with translation  
All the other panels: Italian/English with translation

Screenings: Gold and Trade Accreditation  
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