



## SARAJEVO REVIEW DAILY

### BH PROGRAM



#### SILENCE OF REASON

**VERDICT:** Kumjana Novakova masterfully contextualises archival testimony in her sensitive, formally inventive reckoning with violence against women as a weapon of the Bosnian War.

*Carmen Gray, August 15, 2023*

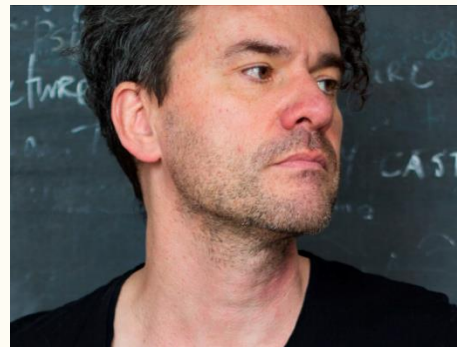
Macedonian director Kumjana Novakova returns to the documentary competition at Sarajevo Film Festival with world premiere *Silence of Reason*, another unflinching work bearing witness to atrocities committed in the Bosnian War of the '90s.

Novakova's work recognises that history is a seamless part of the lived present, and when it is heavy

with unprocessed pain, it has a way of haunting the buildings and images that remain as reminders of the horror. She confronted the collective trauma that subsists in the landscape and community of Srebrenica, a town now synonymous with the 1995 genocide of Bosniak Muslims by Serb forces that became a defining event of twentieth-

[\*Continues next page\*](#)

### Heart of Sarajevo honoree Mark Cousins on the cities that shaped him



Belfast-born documentarian Mark Cousins, returning to Sarajevo after 29 years, gave a masterclass on his career and creative inspirations.

*Carmen Gray, August 15, 2023*

Documentarian Mark Cousins received the Honorary Heart of Sarajevo Award for his contribution to the art of film at the opening ceremony of the Sarajevo Film Festival on Friday night. The decision to honour Cousins here was especially meaningful, because his love of cinema has had a very tangible impact on Sarajevo, and local resistance through creativity has

[\*Continues next page\*](#)

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**MARK COUSINS** *(Continued)*

Cousins' *THE MARCH ON ROME* Special Screening as part of its *Dealing with the Past* section

in turn had a strong influence on him. He elaborated on this, and the myriad other passions that drive his work, in a wide-ranging masterclass on his career held on Sunday in the Bosnian Cultural Center, housed in a former synagogue, and moderated by Bulgarian film academic Dina Iordanova.

Cousins visited Sarajevo in 1994, when he was still in his twenties and was director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival. It was the height of the Siege of Sarajevo, when Serb forces surrounded, blockaded and assaulted the city for 1,425 days. Cousins visited the Obala Art Centar cinema, where films were screened for besieged citizens. The Sarajevo Film Festival grew out of this cultural hub, and

Cousins was instrumental in rallying support internationally for its launch.

Sectarian violence is not new to Cousins, who grew up during The Troubles in Ireland, in a working-class family with a Catholic mother and Protestant father. "I was tenderised in Belfast," he said. "The only place I felt safe and relaxed was in a cinema space, where I could be entranced by the magic carpet ride of the movie screen, and that is one of the reasons I fell in love with cinema."

But this did not prepare him for '90s Sarajevo. "When I came here I felt like I'd been awakened. I saw the full spectrum of life, and felt it was the worst place I'd ever been. The tragedy, terror, aggression, and fascism. And yet within that, the wild creativity of the Obala Art Centar people. The complexity and amplitude of the experience has stayed with me today, and the way the people defied the Serb aggressors, saying 'You will not snuff us out, we will live fully.'"

Cousins's recent documentary *The March on Rome* (2022) screened in Sarajevo's *Dealing With the Past* section, an annual side-bar of international work curated to facilitate dialogue, reconciliation and healing in the former Yugoslav region from its own painful history.

[For Full Article, Click here](#)

**SILENCE OF REASON** *(Continued)*

century inhumanity in Europe, in her feature documentary debut *Disturbed Earth* (2021), co-directed with Guillermo Carreras-Candi. Poetry and research rigour characterised that experimental work, which blended archive material with current-day footage of survivors. *Silence of Reason* is her first sole-directed feature. In it Novakova, again with great sensitivity, endeavours to find a language to record, represent and comprehend the atrocities of the war committed in Foca, a town in Eastern Bosnia subjected to an ethnic cleansing campaign at the hands of Serb military, police and paramilitary.

*Silence of Reason* is about the mass rape and sexual enslavement of women specifically, and its use as a systemic weapon. It resists the false normalisation of rape as an inevitable symptom and side issue of armed conflict, and its marginalisation from official history and collective memory. The harrowing, relentless nature of the subject, combined with the documentary's formal experimentation and not-so-standard length...

[Full Review](#)

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## COMPETITION



### BOTTLEMEN

**VERDICT:** Director Nemanja Vojinovic's visually striking documentary finds poetry and beauty among the workers scrabbling to make a living from a giant Serbian trash dump.

*Stephen Dalton, August 15, 2023*

Billed as an “ecological western”, Nemanja Vojinovic’s *Bottlemen* is an immersive documentary about the invisible army of low-wage workers who scabble to make a living from a vast, toxic trash dump in Serbia. The subject matter may sound almost willfully grim but it also proves unexpectedly lyrical and strikingly

beautiful. On some level, this film is also a requiem for a lost way of life, though not one that many viewers will want to sentimentalise. World premiering in Sarajevo this week, Vojinovic’s second feature project is firmly pitched at niche audiences, but it should enjoy healthy festival play thanks to its high-calibre visuals and empathetic insights into an extraordinary working environment.

The breathtaking visual backdrop of *Bottlemen* is the Vinca landfill, a mountain of trash and rubble located on an ancient Neolithic settlement in the suburbs of Belgrade. Founded in the early 1970s, this vast man-made hellscape has since grown into Europe’s biggest rubbish dump and an ecological disaster area, ravaged by regular wildfires that send choking clouds of smog into the city. Trucks bring thousands of tons of garbage here every day, with teams of manual workers crowding around each new shipment to pick out items for recycling. Meanwhile, huge swarms of gulls swirl around them, scavenging for scraps of food.

Shooting across several seasons, Vojinovic frames this post-apocalyptic setting with a painterly eye, capturing its alien majesty and unexpected visual poetry. As shredded ribbons of plastic flutter in the summer breeze, the site resembles some kind of surreal sci-fi art installation.

[Full Review](#)

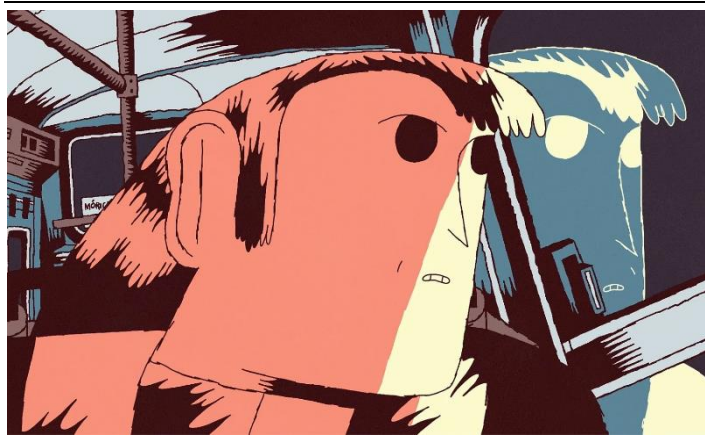
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## VERDICT SHORT



### FROM THE CORNER OF MY EYES

**VERDICT:** Domonkos Erhardt's student short 'From the Corner of My Eyes' uses the malleability of the animated image to great effect to capture a miniature moment of connection.

*Ben Nicholson, August 15, 2023*

*From the Corner of My Eyes* takes place primarily on a juddering old Budapest bus.

In fact, Domonkos Erhardt's heady short takes place primarily in the window reflection of such a bus – or at least it seems to. Made as the graduation film from

the director's master's at Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, the film bears the familiar hallmarks of a brief, contained student animation project but is inventively animated and its depiction of an instant of human connection is both relatable and oddly touching. The film premiered back at the Berlinale, where it got a special mention in the Generation 14plus section, and now it competes as part of the student competition in Sarajevo.

Alongside his work in animation, Erhardt is also a comic book artist and the visual style of *From the Corner of My Eyes* bears many resemblances to the kind of frames you might find in an indie graphic novel. Using bold blocks of light and shade, the aesthetic calls to mind lino or woodcuts, with pastel colour washes less interested in picking out detail than casting objects and people in their own unique, evocative hue. Even taken as static moments, the images have an other-worldly quality to them but the way that the film plays with light creates these almost expressionist sequences where movements seep from the shadows and people can be dragged into dreams. The glimpses of Budapest beyond the bus are atmospheric. Still, the action inside the bus is beautifully uncanny in the way the external darkness is impenetrable and the windows act as distorted mirrors.

[Full Review](#)

## Meet The Critic @ Sarajevo



THE FILM  
**VERDICT**

Carmen Gray is a New Zealander who lives in Berlin. A film critic and journalist, she has contributed to *Sight & Sound*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *Screen International*, and more. She has written liner essays for several Criterion releases, and was previously Film Editor of *Dazed & Confused* magazine in London. She contributes regularly to *The New York Times* with investigative journalism on culture and politics in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Caucasus, and has written chapters for books on Portuguese cinema and Peter Watkins. As a film programmer, she is on the selection committees of the Generation section of the Berlin International Film Festival and the Winterthur International Short Film Festival in Switzerland, and is a programme adviser for Open City Docs in London. She also consults on projects, and is a regular industry adviser on films at the editing stage for First Cut Lab. She frequently serves on festival juries, and has taught writing workshops in Poland, Serbia, Estonia and the Czech Republic.





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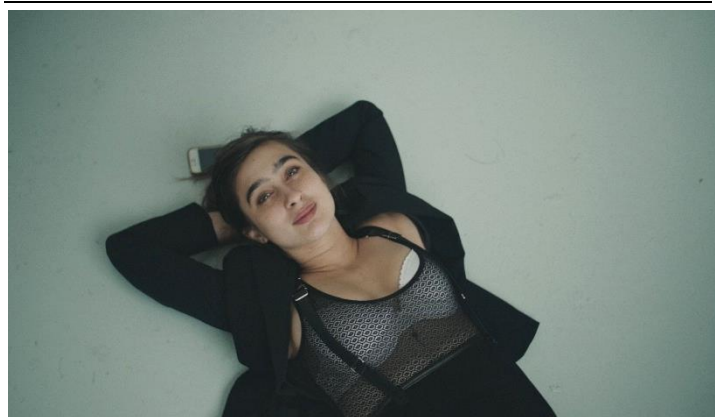
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## KINOSCOPE



### APOLONIA, APOLONIA

**VERDICT:** A multi-layered, intensely personal exploration of what's at stake in an artistic life, through a sprawling portrait of French painter Apolonia Sokol.

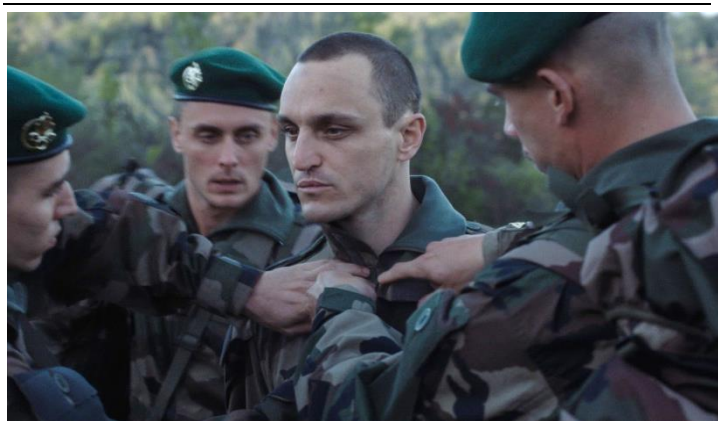
*Carmen Gray, November 12, 2022*

The question of what it takes for women to live a creative life, and what is at stake, is at the heart of Danish filmmaker Lea Glob's *Apolonia, Apolonia* (2022). Chiefly a portrait of French figurative painter Apolonia Sokol, but extending its thematic net beyond straightforward biography, the ambitious, sprawling documentary was filmed over thirteen years across multiple cities (mainly Paris, New York, Los Angeles and Copenhagen). Glob, who is also very much in the frame, started shooting Sokol in 2009 as a film school assignment, when the young French artist was living in the Lavoir Moderne Parisien, a ramshackle performing arts theatre in Paris that her parents founded in a nineteenth-century bathhouse. In a voiceover narration prone to sink into cliché, the director describes the Lavoir's lively community as just how she'd imagined Bohemia to be, far from her own Danish countryside upbringing. But any concern that the film will be limited to a wide-eyed portrait of an underground Parisian art scene romanticised as a free utopia quickly dissipates. Instead a multi-layered, intensely felt and complex examination of Sokol and several of the women she is closest to emerges. As they seek a sense of home and purpose in an often hostile environment, the documentary becomes as much about migration and marginalisation as it is about artistic self-expression, with the latter a life-raft that does not always stay afloat. Especially given its up-close insight into several familiar names within the worlds of art and activism, the film should find ready spots at festivals and possibly streaming.

[Full Review](#)



## KINOSCOPE



## DISCO BOY

**VERDICT:** Debutant director Giacomo Abbruzzese's Berlin competition contender is a stylish but silly yarn about disco-dancing soldiers and shamanic eco-warriors.

*Stephen Dalton, February 19, 2023*

Destiny sets two strangers on a lethal collision course in *Disco Boy*, one of the more stylish and intriguing world premieres in the main Berlinale competition this year. Featuring rising German screen star Frank Rogowski (*Victoria*, *Transit*, *Passages*) as a French Foreign Legion volunteer fighting armed ecological militants in Nigeria, writer-director Giacomo Abbruzzese's beautifully shot debut feature is visually impressive but thin as drama, its continent-hopping plot hinting at deeper revelations that turn out to be hidden shallows. Drawing spurious parallels between jungle warfare and dancefloor hedonism, *Disco Boy* feels at times like an *Apocalypse Now* (1979) remake directed by Nicolas Winding Refn.

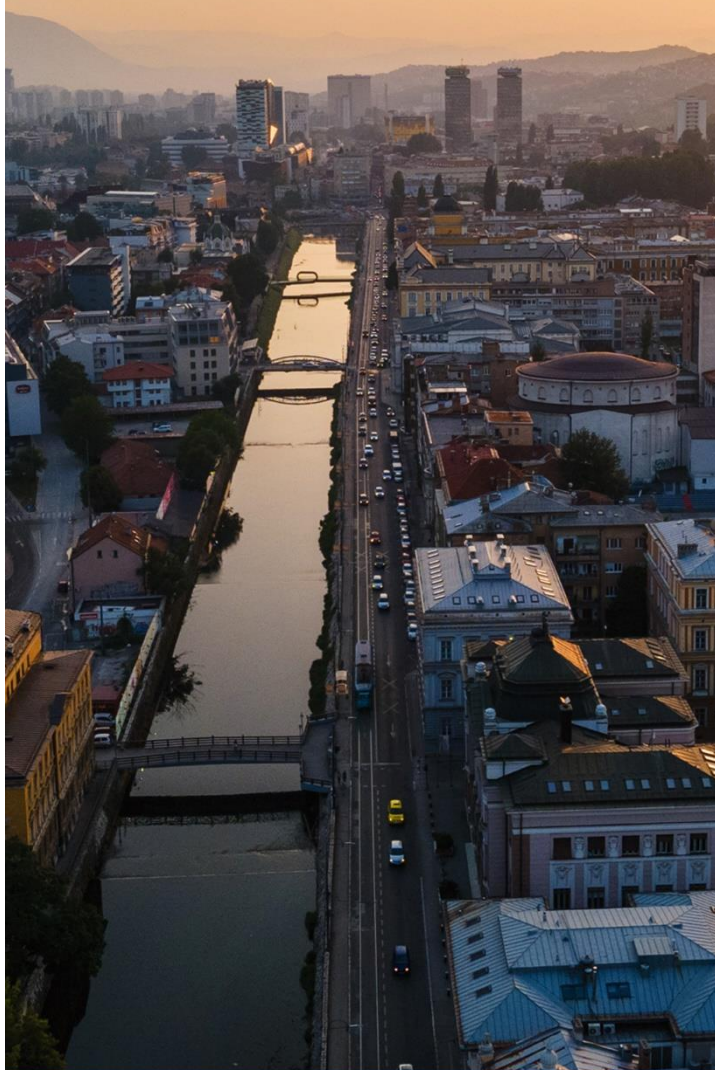
All the same, the Paris-based Abbruzzese's off-beat fantasy drama is enjoyable on its own terms, with compelling performances, imaginative visuals and a throbbingly sensual score by Vitalic, aka French electronic composer Pascal Arbez-Nicolas. Rogowski's growing international profile should also help with further festival bookings and niche art-house appeal. If you are the kind of blue-sky thinker who believes the best way to heal the lingering wounds of European colonialism in Africa is to stage an energetic dance-off in a glitzy Parisian nightclub, then *Disco Boy* is definitely the film for you.

The seed for *Disco Boy* was planted a decade ago following a chance meeting at a Paris club between Abbruzzese and a classical dancer who had previously been a soldier. The director was struck by some unexpected parallels between these two wildly different vocations, notably the extreme physical discipline that both require.

[Full Review](#)

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# AWARDS clips

## German Films receives twelve film submissions vying to become German Submission for Best International Film for the 96th Oscar® Competition



Afire: Photo: Match Factory



The Teachers Lounge; Photo: Judith Kaufmann / The PR Factory

The selection of the German entry for the 96th Oscar® Competition in the category “Best International Feature Film” will take place with an independent jury of experts on August 22 and 23, 2023 in Munich. The German Oscar® selection committee will be announced in the next few days.

### **ANSELM / DAS RAUSCHEN DER ZEIT**

Directed by Wim Wenders (Road Movies)

### **AFIRE / ROTER HIMMEL**

Directed by Christian Petzold  
(Schramm Film Koerner Weber Kaiser)

### **THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE / DAS LEHRERZIMMER**

Directed by Ilker Çatak  
(if... Productions Film)

### **THE ORDINARIES**

Directed by Sophie Linnenbaum  
(Bandenfilm Laura Klippel & Britta Strampe)

### **THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING / DIE THEORIE VON ALLEM**

Directed by Timm Kröger (ma.ja.deFiction)

### **A WHOLE LIFE / EIN GANZES LEBEN**

Directed by Hans Steinbichler  
(Tobis Filmproduktion München)

### **A WOMAN / EINE FRAU**

Directed by Jeanine Meerapfel  
(Malena Filmproduktion)

### **ELAHA**

Directed by Milena Aboyan  
(Kinescope Film)

### **ORPHEA IN LOVE**

Directed by Axel Ranisch (Sehr gute Filme)

### **SISI & I / SISI & ICH**

Directed by Frauke Finsterwalder  
(Walker + Worm)

### **WHAT YOU CAN SEE FROM HERE / WAS MAN VON HIER AUS SEHEN KANN**

Directed by Aron Lehmann  
(Claussen + Putz Filmproduktion)

The 15-title shortlist of films for Best International Feature Film will be announced on December 21, 2023. The five eventual nominated titles will be revealed on January 23, 2024. The Academy Awards® ceremony will take place on March 10, 2024.





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