

Filma, Ukrainian feminist film festival

Interview with Filma collective

Tuesday 5 December 2023, by [Filma Collective](#), [LE TRÉHONDAT Patrick](#) (Date first published: 4 December 2023).

From November 27, 2023 to December 10, Filma, Ukrainian feminist film festival, offers films on its site accessible throughout Ukraine and around the world. "We call ourselves Filma because cinema can be a co-creative process, with equal opportunities for all participants, instead of the strict top-down favored by privileged directors. We call ourselves Filma because cinema can be less pro-government and more politically aware, less predatory, and more sensitive to humans and non-humans. We call ourselves Filma because cinema can be less red carpet/celebrity culture-oriented, and more inclusive and socially responsible. We call ourselves Filma because it is important for us to think about the possibilities and responsibilities of cinema in the long run, together. The festival was created by a feminist collective as a collaborative platform for films that meet the principles of intersectional feminism, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, inclusion, and a culture of consent. Conversations with the authors and protagonists of the films, as well as researchers and activists, are an integral part of the program» explain the festival organizers who were kind enough to answer our questions.

Please tell us about the history of the feminist film festival? How long has the festival existed?

Filma Feminist Film Festival started in 2021 as a platform for raising issues that were overlooked or silenced in the public discourse. In our first year we concentrated on themes of anti racism and especially anti homophobia, trans*rights and lives, concept of radical love as solidarity stand point. When the full-scale war broke in 2022 we managed to select and screen one program "When the Trees Bloom at Home Again" dedicated to migration due to military crises and connected stories not only from Ukraine, but from Syria, Palestine, also violence against migrants on the borders of Slovakia, Poland and Belarus. We wanted to show that people who are fleeing from dangerous situations deserve safety and protection, not based on their whiteness or citizenship. This year's programs are "United in Struggle" on labor rights, "This is an Address" on right to housing, "Art of Healing" selected from our open call and connects films that show difficult experiences, but also strengths in healing, building friendships and communities.

This year, while Ukraine is at war, you devote a significant part to the question of "labor rights". And struggles of working women outside Ukraine, particularly in Poland and Patagonia. Why this choice ?

Because we feel that this issue is important to discuss in our context. We are focusing not only on women in this program, but part of it is dedicated to this unbalanced divide in reproductive labor and its constant feminization. People are becoming more vulnerable in today's capitalist world and though levels of overwork and double work at home are rising, levels of poverty are strikingly high. Not to mention dangerous working conditions in many spheres that have severe consequences on one's health and well-being. It is relevant for Ukraine as much as internationally. War made a lot of

people even more precarious then before and we need to start this conversation on labor to envision potential scenarios that will be based on justice and support.

For Ukraine, you give an important place to the ReSew cooperative - Швейний Кооператив [1]. Of which you say “which politically and ecologically exists without bosses and subordinates and is united by the love of their work - sewing”. Do you think that this cooperative is an example of building an alternative to the oligarchic and patriarchal capitalism in Ukraine?

ReSew cooperative have been our friends for many years. We share their values and agenda on promoting alternative structures of work. But we know that building such alternatives is hard and surely it has to be more visible and supported on societal level to make systemic changes. And regarding your question we want to return it to you - do you think cooperatives are an alternative to patriarchal capitalism in Western Europe? We don't think that only in Ukraine these efforts should be made.

You do an enormous amount of work with subtitles or audio descriptions for films in Ukrainian. Are there so many of you organizing this festival? Tell us about your team.

Our collective consists of four people. But we have our extended team with whom we are working together on translations, PR and audio descriptions. SDH subtitles are created by our head of translation Zhenya Perytska. And we have our own process of production of audio descriptions: first the audio description is produced by the agency “Accessible Cinema” in written form and tested and approved by people who will be using this option. Then it is a process of recording in the home studio of our sound engineer Kateryna Herasymchuk and we inviting to collaborate our friends, activists and members of the collective in creation of audio descriptions for the films.

In addition we use Ukrainian sign language interpretation for all our discussions. We are trying to be as accessible as possible for our audiences.

Can you tell us a few words about the films of the festival ?

In “This is an Address’ ’ program we raised an issue on the right to housing, which is important to our context due to mass displacement of people as a result of war and inability to find decent housing or surviving in the situation of houslessness. Program consists of five films: “No Address” by Alanis Obomsawin, “Are You Listening!” by Kamar Ahmad Simon, “This is an Address” by Sasha Wortzel, “Dear Mandela” by Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza and “The Village of Roses” by Hannah Heilborn representing the struggles of First Nation population in Canada, queer and HIV positive people on the streets on New York (with valuable archive footage of Sylvia Rivera one of the frontrunners of Stonewall riots), homelessness due to climate change and natural disaster in Bangladesh, movement of dwellers of the shacks (Abahlali baseMjondolo) in South Africa and segregation and denial of access to infrastructure of Romani community in Italy. We worked on it together with Anastasia Bobrova, analyst and expert on social housing in Ukraine. We will have a discussion “We All Need a Home” with Sasha Wortzel and Dara Kell to think together on the universality of housing issues and how they can manifest in different environments - recording will be available on our website with English subtitles.

Second program “United in Struggle” as was previously mentioned dedicated to labor rights and presents five films “A Bonus for Iren” by Helke Sander, “The Women’s Strike Continues” by Magda Maria Malinowska, “Complicit” by Heather White and Jialing Zhang, “Globalization Tapes” by Vision Machine Film Project and laborers of plantations in Sumatra, “Rio Turbio” by Tatiana Mazú González. Three films mostly telling stories of women* in factories, mines, kindergartens on issues of harassment, violence on workplace, underpayment and reproductive labor. In the other two we

looking into capitalism as colonial project, exploiting laborers in Indonesia and China and subversing people to inhumane treatment, work overload and health hazardous working conditions. The program will also be accompanied by discussion “Solidarity in Cinema: When Art and Worker’s Struggle Meet” on 6th of December moderated by Tonya (Ton) Melnyk and Masha Ravlyk Lukianova from ReSew cooperative with filmmakers Magda Maria Malinowska, who is prominent labor union activist currently in struggle with Amazon, and Tatiana Mazú González, left-wing activist in Argentina.

“The Art of Healing” is our last program this year based on open call submissions that we received. Among more than 60 films that represented approaches to feminist filmmaking we selected five on surviving various challenging experiences, patriarchal violence, consequences of war and building communities and friendships along the way. “Botanical Documentation of Existence” by Darya Tsymbalyuk, “Tell me a Poem” by Ana Gurdiş and Elena Chirila, “Julie On Line” by Mia Ma and “Survivor Manifesto - The Art of Making Kin” by Dan Dansen (that we suggest to screen last as our curatorial advice) will be available worldwide. And “Mast-del” by Maryam Tafakori we are presenting at our offline screenings in Dnipro, Lviv and Kyiv.

In a way, your festival participates in the resistance against Russian imperialist aggression. You bring to life a political heritage of national and social emancipation but also on the question of gender. What do you think of this assessment?

We are trying to look beyond definitions and labels that are imposed on us, especially in the West. Because they make this general picture deprived of context and complexities of the situation we are facing everyday. As activists we designed our festival as a platform for silenced, overlooked and marginalized experiences that are resonating locally and internationally. And will continue with this direction we undertook in 2021.

Already have ideas for the next festival?

We thought about a program on eco feminist issues taking into consideration painful horrific events of the blowing up of Kakhovka dam and danger to many species of plants and animals endemic to these regions with ongoing war. And in overall consequences of war, extortion, capitalism on the environment. But programming is a very challenging process, so we will see which direction it goes next year.

Do you have any relationships with other feminist film festivals around the world?

We are following many festivals, activist and filmmaking collectives globally. Some of the activist grass root spaces are holding our screenings for their audiences and we are very moved by that. This year we want to send our gratitude to Lisa Smith from the festival of Romani film “Ake Dikhea?”, who helped to find the missing link in our program “This is an Address” and add Romani perspective on housing. We love to be inspired by others, support different collectives and spaces and of course to collaborate.

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P.S.

Page de Facebook de Filma

<https://www.facebook.com/filmafest>

[Website - Ukrainian - English](#)

Footnotes

[1] “Cooperatives are one of the ways to spread the principles and ideas of self-organization in society” interview with ReSew cooperative - Швейний Кооператив

<https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article68579>