

Press Release  
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## Eight films compete for the € 10,000 prize in the International Debut Feature Film Competition

Internationales Frauen\*  
Film Fest Dortmund+Köln,  
29.03.-03.04.2022

Eight debut feature films are competing for the prize for best director in the International Debut Feature Film Competition. **Internationales Frauen\* Film Festival Dortmund+Köln** has this year received a record 150 submissions from 40 countries. Worth € 10,000 to the winner, the prize celebrates the innovative and experimental spirit of aspiring women film-makers. Films from China, Costa Rica, France, Haiti, Romania, Serbia, Spain and the US have been nominated this year and will be screened between **March 29<sup>th</sup> and April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022** in **Cologne**.

The international jury has a prominent line-up with author, playwright and director **Tsitsi Dangarembga** (Peace Prize of the German Book Trade 2021), cinematographer **Christine A. Maier** (German Camera Award 2021) and director **Ula Stöckl**.

The films present stories about major life decisions, challenges and friendships. A filmic journey around the world - covering everything from improvised formats and semi-documentary narratives to a screen-busting masterpiece in black and white - we encounter protagonists with a strength and resilience who thrill and inspire.

*»The tradition of feminist counter-narratives to mainstream cinema presents itself here with fresh momentum. This strong year reveals a generation of women filmmakers who are breaking cinematic ground with new confidence«,* says festival director Maxa Zoller.

Among these films are many works by actors also enjoying success behind the camera, such as French star **Noémie Merlant** with **Mi lubita, mon amour**. She plays an actress who meets 17-year-old Nino on her hen party trip to Romania. The two of them cautiously get to know each other and young love starts to blossom in the shimmering days of a never-ending summer.

By contrast, Haiti's vibrant cultural landscape plays a key role in **Freda**, a high-energy drama set in a poor Port-au-Prince neighbourhood by up-and-coming Haitian actor **Gessica Génésus**.

In **Crai Nou**, Romanian actor and director **Alina Grigore** focuses on a protagonist hellbent on escaping the aggressive chaos of her dysfunctional family, eventually turning from victim to perpetrator.

In a kitchen thick with cigarette smoke, the party guests in **Milica Tomović's** debut **Kelti** drink, flirt and talk politics, painting a picture of Serbian society after the breakup of Yugoslavia with top Balkan humour.

Asian-American student Riley is also caught up in party life and everyday banter in **Actual People**. Director **Kit Zauhar** captures the millennial mood with authenticity, improvisational verve and quiet humour in a film that is relatable and digs deeper than the archetypal college movie.

Emotions boil over in **Nathalie Álvarez Mesén's** cinematic coup **Clara Sola**. After years of being controlled and shielded from the world by an oppressively protective and pious mother, Clara's late-blooming sexual desire sparks in her something uniquely wild and fearless. She sets out on a liberating and self-healing journey to find her true nature.

In **Destello Bravío**, **Ainhoa Rodríguez** delivers a fable portraying the Spanish province as a bizarrely beautiful nightmare, where women have a magical resilience and archaic machismo is doomed.

Finally, **Queena Li** stages her road movie **Bipolar** as a hallucinogenic pilgrimage. Musician Kun travels from China to Lhasa. Accompanied by a sacred lobster, she encounters numerous oddball characters and slowly finds her way back to reality.

Nominees 2022

**Actual People** (Kit Zauhar, USA 2021, 84')

**Bipolar** (Queena Li, CN 2020, 110')

**Clara Sola** (Nathalie Álvarez Mesén, DE, BE, SE, CR 2021, 108')

**Crai Nou** (Alina Grigore, RO 2021, 106')

**Destello Bravío** (Ainhoa Rodríguez, ES 2021, 98')

**Freda** (Gessica Génésus, F, HT, BJ 2021, 99')

**Kelti** (Milica Tomović, RS 2021, 106')

**Mi iubita, mon amour** (Noémi Merlant, F 2021, 95')

Jury 2022

## Tsitsi Dangarembga

Film-maker, playwright and author Tsitsi Dangarembga set up her own production company Nyerai Film in Harare in 1992. She has been involved in numerous Zimbabwean feature films, including classics like **Neria** (1991), which is based on a story she wrote. She campaigns throughout Africa for women's rights and actively supports women film-makers. In 2021, the PEN Pinter prize-winner received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade.

We are showing her film **Karé Karé Zvako - Mother's Day** (Zimbabwe 2005), a Zimbabwean folk tale adapted for the screen as a feminist-cannibalistic splatter musical about archetypes. Tsitsi Dangarembga will discuss the film's context with film-maker **Ines Johnson-Spain**.

## Christine A. Maier

The well-known cinematographer collaborates closely with directors Barbara Albert, Amie Siegel, Sabine Derflinger, Ruth Mader and Jasmila Žbanić. For **Quo Vadis, Aida?**, Maier received the German Camera Award in 2021. The film was Oscar-and BAFTA-nominated in 2021 and won the Award for Best Film at the 2021 European Film Awards. Christine A. Maier co-founded the WOMEN CINEMATOGRAPHERS NETWORK in 2018.

She will be Sophie Mantigneux's guest in a Cinematography Workshop Discussion at the festival.

## Ula Stöckl

The auteur film-maker has produced over 20 films with a visual language that has repeatedly defied filmic conventions. They include three feminist classics **The Cat Has Nine Lives** (1968), **Erika's Passion** (1976) and **Sleep of Reason** (1984, German Film Award). She has been a professor of film at the University of Central Florida since 2002.

In our archive section **IFFF REVISITED**, we will be screening her film **The Old Song**, which was one of the first feature films to examine East-West realities after German reunification.

**The programme will be available from mid-March at [www.frauenfilmfest.com](http://www.frauenfilmfest.com).**

**Festival venues in Cologne:** Filmhaus Köln with the festival office and press centre,  
Filmforum im Museum Ludwig, Filmpalast, Odeon Kino

**Kino Dortmund:** Schauburg

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