

INTERNATIONALES FRAUEN FILM FEST DORTMUND+KÖLN

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Dortmund+Köln

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Press release, 23rd of April 2024

41. IFFF Dortmund+Köln, 16.–21. April 2024

Aslı Özarslan wins International Debut Feature Film Competition 2024 with ELBOW

choices Audience Award goes to documentary COPA 71 about one of the best-attended women's sporting events of all time, Copa 71 in Mexico City

The Festival presented altogether six film prizes worth 17,000 euros at the award ceremony.

Aslı Özarslan received the 10,000-euro prize for best director of a debut feature film at the IFFF Dortmund+Köln award ceremony on Sunday evening in Cologne. She was one of eight international participants in the international competition. The decision was made by a jury consisting of German actress and activist **Thelma Buabeng**, director and president of the Spanish film-makers' association CIMA, **Cristina Andreu Cueavas**, and US film-maker **Jennifer Reeder**.

The members of the jury explained their decision as follows:

»We are recognizing a film that is a vibrant celebration of girlhood and a harrowing portrait of systemic intolerance. The message is both timely and overdue. It reflects where women are now and implores us to ensure that women are in a better place tomorrow. Coming of age is not the same for all young women and sometimes seems an impossibility altogether, especially if you are perpetually the outsider, simply trying to survive the day. Such is the case for the protagonist of this film, who embodies endless vulnerability and endless resilience simultaneously. For her, female friendship is a survival strategy and yet when this film ends, we are unsure of how she will survive the next day. This film has an urgent energy and presents astonishing authenticity from the performances in front of the camera to the collaborations behind the camera. Such sisterhood is never a given and it is evident in every frame of this film, which will stay with us all as a battle cry for change and there must be change. Women carry the whole weight of this world. We are smart. We are beautiful. We are angry. We have voices. We have elbows.«

ELBOW is the film adaptation of the novel by **Fatma Aydemir**, which premiered at the Berlinale in February. It is the story of Hazal, a 17-year-old girl from Berlin, who struggles with constant marginalisation in Germany's mainstream society. She wants to train for a job, longs for happiness. After a bouncer turns her away from a night club on her birthday, a fatal accident occurs, prompting Hazal to run away to Istanbul.

ELBOW kicked off this year's Festival and was enthusiastically received by audiences at a total of four sold-out screenings. This is the first major film prize for ELBOW, which Aslı Özarslan accepted in person at the award ceremony in the

Filmforum NRW. It is also the first time a German production has won the Debut Feature Film Competition in Cologne. Frankfurt-based distributor, and also co-producer of ELBOW, jip film&verleih will release the film in Germany this autumn.

The 41st edition of IFFF Dortmund+Köln was one of the most successful in the history of Germany's longest-running international women's film festival, which also ranks among the world's largest. The Festival venues *Filmhaus Köln*, *Filmforum NRW*, *Odeon*, *Filmpalast* and *Schauburg Dortmund* were packed and tickets often sold out. The event drew a record-breaking attendance of over 500 accredited delegates from the film industry, media and universities.

Dr Maxa Zoller, artistic director of the Festival, expressed great satisfaction and optimism for future events: "This edition of the Festival has broken records and paved the way for many new endeavours – both cinematically and in terms of expanding female filmmaker networks. The crucial question now is whether policymakers will also strive to achieve gender equality in the film industry and enshrine quota support in the Film Funding Act – demonstrating their commitment to supporting women."

The other award winners at IFFF Dortmund+Köln 2024

ECFA Short Film Award for PUFFERFISH by Julia Ocker

The Festival has been presenting the ECFA Award to the best short film for children since 2020. European films featured in the Festival's Kids and Young Adults programme that are less than 30 minutes long are eligible for nomination. The 2024 jury consisted of members of the European Children's Film Association: Julia Fleißig (Lucas Festival Frankfurt), Tessa van Grafhorst (De Kinderbioscoop, Amsterdam) and Hilde Steenssens (Film'On Festival, Belgium). The award went to the 4-minute German animated film PUFFERFISH, which explores how a small, peace-loving pufferfish can drive away large, threatening fish...

The statement of the jury:

»Why do we often pump ourselves up, pretending we are someone else? Appearances could be misleading. In this film we connect to a small playful fish, which blows itself up when it feels threatened by a bigger fish. The filmmaker created a new film, in her unique humoristic, graphic and compact style. She succeeded again in telling a subtle and layered story in a bright film. The director dares to go literally out of the frame, to make her point clear of the small fish getting to its limits. Julia Ocker made it again, she created a jewel in her universe. This year's ECFA Short Film Award goes to PUFFERFISH.«

SHOOT Award 2024 goes to Laura Engelhardt KHM & IFFF Dortmund+Köln Award for Female Artists of the Academy of Media Arts Cologne

Sponsored by the Academy of Media Arts Cologne, the emerging talent prize SHOOT recognises the outstanding artistic achievements of a film graduate. This year's 1,000-euro prize went to **Laura Engelhardt** for her film MASCHA. The jury

consisted of **Conny Beissler** (cinematographer), **Elke Kania** (film scholar) and **Nicole Rebmann** (curator).

The statement of the jury:

»Laura Engelhardt's MASCHA about a self-empowered young woman is an intense film that stays with you and makes you reflect on societal grievances, without losing sight of humanity. Her latest work is a superb example of cinematic storytelling: story and form are skilfully fused with an exceptional sense of timing and rhythm. Mascha carries only the bare essentials around with her. Each shot is carefully considered and impeccably crafted. Dialogue is kept to a minimum, with the film's economical narrative relying on cinematic imagery. The compactness and compression lend the film a timeless quality. Laura Engelhardt's minimalist drama unfolds gradually. She explores a state of crisis that severely restricts her protagonist's options. Despite all the hardship, she is not a victim. Her decisions are based on wisdom, self-empowerment and independence. She is portrayed as strong, dignified and unpretentious. The way Mascha reacts to financial hardship and her precarious situation, her composure and her pragmatism set the tone for the rest of the film. The fictional film makes clever use of documentary elements. The sensitive and realistic portrayal of a virulent social issue endorses the film's authenticity and urgency.«

National Competition for Women Directors of Photography

The award winners were selected and announced in the run-up to the Festival. The two prizes in the feature film and documentary categories went to directors of photography **Caroline Spreitzenbart** for the hybrid documentary LIFE IS NOT A COMPETITION, BUT I'M WINNING and **Greta Isabella Conte** for her feature film ABOUT THEM. Directors of photography **Yoliswa von Dallwitz**, **Antonia Kilian** and **Agnesh Pakozdi** made up the jury. **Jana Bauch** also received an honourable mention for her documentary WAS BRENNT (ON FIRE).

Launched in 2001, the competition is internationally unique. Awards worth 2,500 euros each were sponsored for the first time this year by the Dortmund camera rental company CineOne and sPOTlight Dortmund.

choices Audience Award

The *choices* Audience Award worth 1,000 euros went to the British production COPA 71 by **Rachel Ramsay** and **James Erskine**. Their documentary film traces the story of one of the best-attended women's sporting events of all time – Copa 71 in Mexico City, which has been more or less completely forgotten. What could have been the launch pad for international women's football failed to attract any further support. The film celebrated its German premiere at IFFF Dortmund+Köln and took the lead in the audience vote after the last ballots were counted.

All current Festival films made within the last two years and with a running time of at least 60 minutes were eligible for the award.

All prizes were presented at the awards ceremony on Sunday evening in the *Filmforum NRW*.

In 2025, the Festival's main programme will take place in Dortmund again in early April.

For all Festival information and press material, go to: frauenfilmfest.com

Funders of the Festival

Ministry of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia; Stadt Köln Kulturamt; Stadt Dortmund / Kulturbüro; Film- und Medienstiftung NRW; Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media; Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

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