



Press Release

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## The official 2023 selection, the real is out there

Visions du Réel has unveiled the official selection for its 54th edition (21 to 30 April 2023). It is a powerful and dazzling programme that showcases the strength of contemporary non-fiction filmmaking. In all, 163 films – including 82 world premieres, 11 international premieres, 2 European premieres and 26 Swiss premieres – offer a panorama that often challenges the boundaries between fiction and reality. 46 countries are represented in the selection, while 37 Swiss (co)productions are featured in all sections of the Festival, highlighting the fertile momentum of Swiss documentary production. The programme is complemented by three main guests: Argentinian filmmaker Lucrecia Martel (Guest of Honour) alongside Italian Director Alice Rohrwacher (Special Guest) and Swiss Director Jean-Stéphane Bron (Atelier). The programme features an equal number of films from female and male directors. The 54th edition will open its doors on Friday 21 April with the world premiere of *Nightwatchers* by Juliette de Marcillac, with Federal Councillor Elisabeth Baume Schneider, State Councillor Nuria Gorrite, and Daniel Rossellat, the Mayor of Nyon in attendance.

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*"We feel optimistic and enthusiastic about this edition. The format of Visions du Réel, which has changed enormously over recent years, proved to be a success with audiences in 2022. The Festival is now on a firm footing and moving with the times. We are of course well aware of the crises and difficulties that we are going through, and those that we will face. That is why we want to encourage greater cooperation, both with our partners – to constantly improve our offering – and with participants from the film industry through new collaborations. In this context we can for example cite the closer ties we are forming with foundations, particularly regarding cultural participation, but also with Swiss distributors to support getting films into cinemas,"* says **Raymond Loretan**, Festival President.

The 2023 programme is rich, with a wonderfully wide range of formats, approaches and countries represented. The **131 films** selected from the **3,000 entries** – a figure that has remained stable over several years – bears witness to the great freedom that non-fiction filmmaking enjoys today. *"I am thrilled to see that Visions du Réel is confirming both its role as a trailblazer – **there are 24 first feature length films** whilst **82 of the films screened are world premieres** – and strong ties with filmmakers who return to the Festival this year, including important and established Swiss and international directors,"* enthuses **Emilie Bujès**, Artistic Director. *"In terms of the countries represented, the 2023 International Feature Film Competition is particularly interesting and open, with films coming notably from Venezuela, Burkina Faso, South Korea and Thailand, whilst in the Burning Lights International Competition there are films from Costa Rica, Iran and China, amongst other countries."* A total of 46 countries are represented. Documentary production is more flexible and does not worry about definitions, it freely borrows from the codes of fiction, cultivating a fertile hybridisation. *"Visions du Réel aims to achieve a selection made up of personal and original films that are one of a kind, to go off the beaten track, but also to offer cinematographic colours and vocabularies that are as varied as possible, to embrace the world and filmmaking in all its diversity*

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and complexity," adds Emilie Bujès. Non-fiction film is also, finally, enjoying greater recognition, as illustrated by recent awards at the Berlin International Film Festival and the Venice Film Festival.

In 2023, the Festival is consolidating the developments of the latest editions. "After great changes last year, particularly in terms of the infrastructure and hosting amenities, this year we are building on what is in place with an aim of improvement that some audiences are bound to appreciate," adds **Mélanie Courvoisier**, the Festival's new Administrative Director. "This year, for example, we can offer the first signed Masterclass, with Jean-Stéphane Bron, which will make it possible to include people who are deaf and hearing impaired. Not to mention the prolongation of our online platform, which will be online throughout the Festival, including around fifty films from the official selection. Although this platform was created in a specific context in previous years, it has proven to be appropriate in the long term, offering access to a greater number of films to audiences that are prevented from seeing them in person for all kinds of reasons."

## The first guests of the 2023 edition

The 54th edition will play host to prestigious guests, presenting retrospectives of their work. The Guest of Honour for 2023 will be Argentinian filmmaker **Lucrecia Martel**, who will receive the Honorary Award, which will be presented by French director **Céline Sciamma**, before the screening of *La ciénaga* (Monday 24 April), her first fiction film which revealed her on the international scene. Lucrecia Martel will give a Masterclass on Tuesday 25 April (2 pm).

Emilie Bujès adds: "This year, audiences will have the opportunity to delve into three unique and bold styles of filmmaking. The Guest of Honour for 2023, **Lucrecia Martel**, who until recently had made a name for herself in fiction, represents our artistic positioning that enjoys investigating the porous nature of the boundaries between genres. It will also be wonderful to have **Céline Sciamma** here to present her with the Award. The same goes for **Alice Rohrwacher**, who we have been hoping to have at the Festival for years and who is sure to win over the audience with a filmography coloured by magical realism. Together, these three women clearly represent an exciting and enthusiastic vision of contemporary filmmaking. Finally, it is so relevant and exciting to welcome Swiss director **Jean-Stéphane Bron**, who is an essential figure in the Swiss film industry and international non-fiction making."

This year's Special Guest, **Alice Rohrwacher**, will also give a Masterclass on Saturday 22 April (2 pm). She will be joined for the occasion by her editor **Nelly Quettier**, another big name from the industry, who has worked with Claire Denis and Leos Carax. **Jean-Stéphane Bron**, will give his masterclass on Thursday 27 April (10 am). They will be joined in Nyon by prestigious jury members, including Brazilian filmmaker **Kleber Mendonça Filho**, the Senior Programmer for Film at the Lincoln Center **Florence Almozini**, and filmmakers such as **Zeynep Gütel** from Turkey, **Elena Lopez Riera** from Spain and **Alaa Eddine Aljem** from Morocco. Many delegations will be here to promote their films in the competitions throughout the Festival. The full guestlist for the official selection will be unveiled soon.

## International Feature Film Competition

The Jury for the International Feature Film Competition is made up of **Florence Almozini**, Senior Programmer for Film at the Lincoln Center, Swiss Producer **David Epiney** and filmmaker **Kleber Mendonça Filho**, who will award the prizes amongst the 14 competing films, including **12 world premieres** and **2 international premieres**, with a number of Spanish entries for the first time and three Swiss (co)productions, alongside works from every continent.

The competition will be marked by the return of the great Swiss filmmaker **Peter Mettler** (Atelier 2020) with his filmed personal diary *While the Green Grass Grows* – from which he will present two of the seven parts – duo **Piotr Pawlus** and **Tomasz Wolski** (Special Mention VdR 2021) with their meticulous *In Ukraine* that delves into the new normal of a country under siege, and **Mattia Colombo** (VdR 2022) who teams up with **Valentina Cicognia** to powerfully tell the tale of one doctor's fight for the rights of migrants to a proper grave in *Pure Unknown*. The selection also offers a series of vibrant first films that bear witness to the interest of the next generation in non-fiction filmmaking: the Swiss solar (co)production *Antier Noche* from **Alberto Martín Menacho**, which follows young people in the Extremadura region where the population is in decline; a story of migration and resilience with an infinite tenderness from Thai filmmaker **Komtouch Napattaloong** with *Hours of Ours*; and a stunning mystical tableaux from **Pablo Lago Dantas** in *O Auto das Ánimas* where ghosts from the past mix with the mists of the Galician coast.

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Many of the films reveal the natural and close rapport between documentary and fiction, from the point of view of the formal grammar or the references they make. *My Father's Prison* by **Iván Andrés Simonovis Pertñiez** tells the extraordinary and impressive story of the filmmaker's father, a former member of the Venezuelan special forces and a prisoner of war, whilst in *The Bilbaos* director **Pedro Speroni** sublimes the daily brutality experienced by an Argentinian family, lighting up the harshness of their social condition. Alongside them is the sensory exploration of *Grasshopper Republic* from North American **Daniel McCabe**, who builds an authentic dramaturgy around the ritual hunting of grasshoppers in Uganda; and the sharp framing and editing of *Fauna* from **Pau Faus**, which offers a quirky interweaving of the scientific and animal worlds during a pandemic.

There are family stories scattered throughout the competition, including *Machtat* by **Sonia Ben Slama**, which follows Fatma and her daughters during their traditional wedding music activities in Tunisia, which are simultaneously a source of emancipation, sisterhood and conflict; or the theatre of family quarrels in *Al Djanat – The Original Paradise* by **Chloé Aïcha Boro**, which paints a picture of the inner courtyard of her family home and bears witness to the great shifts in identity provoked by western modernism. The issue of identity also arises strongly in other films, such as *Defectors* by **Hyun kyung Kim** that uses a double narrative device to depict a portrait of defectors from North Korea and of the filmmaker, who left behind his loved ones to go to the USA; or even the striking saga of the *Oubliés de la Belle Étoile* by **Clémence Davigo**, an anthropological enquiry into abuse in a catholic children's rehabilitation centre, which reveals the lasting stigma left by the violence on these now retired men.

- *Al Djanat – The Original Paradise* by **Chloé Aïcha Boro**, France/Burkina Faso/Benin/Germany, 2023, 85', International Premiere
- *Antier noche* by **Alberto Martín Menacho**, Switzerland/Spain, 2023, 106', World Premiere\*
- *Defectors* by **Hyun kyung Kim**, Republic of Korea (South Korea)/USA, 2023, 84', World Premiere\*
- *Fauna* by **Pau Faus**, Spain, 2023, 74', World Premiere\*
- *Grasshopper Republic* by **Daniel McCabe**, USA, 2023, 94', World Premiere\*
- *Hours of Ours* by **Komtouch Napattaloong**, Thailand, 2023, 85', World Premiere\*
- *In Ukraine* by **Piotr Pawlus** and **Tomasz Wolski**, Poland/Germany, 2023, 83', International Premiere
- *Les Oubliés de la Belle Étoile* de **Clémence Davigo**, France, 2023, 106', World Premiere\*
- *Machtat* by **Sonia Ben Slama**, Lebanon/Tunisia/France/Qatar, 2023, 82', World Premiere\*
- *My Father's Prison* by **Iván Andrés Simonovis Pertñiez**, Venezuela, 2023, 81', World Premiere\*
- *O auto das ánimas* by **Pablo Lago Dantas**, Spain, 2023, 73', World Premiere\*
- *Pure Unknown* by **Valentina Cicogna** et **Mattia Colombo**, Italy/Switzerland/Sweden, 2023, 93', World Premiere\*
- *The Bilbaos* by **Pedro Speroni**, Argentina, 2023, 74', World Premiere\*
- *While the Green Grass Grows* by **Peter Mettler**, Switzerland/Canada, 2023, 166', World Premiere\*

## Burning Lights Competition

**Burning Lights** is an international competition for medium and feature length films, dedicated to free and contemporary forms and outlooks for film. This competition offers an innovative selection of audacious aesthetic mindsets and adventurous narratives through 15 films, including **13 world premieres** and **2 international premieres**. The 2023 Jury is made up of the Italian curator of the Fondazione In Between Art Film, **Leonardo Bigazzi**, programmer for the International Film Festival Rotterdam, **Michelle Carey** (who also worked on the Cannes Film Festival Directors' Fortnight until 2022) and filmmaker **Elena López Riera** (whose first feature film *El Agua*, presented at Visions du Réel 2023, was a big hit with critics at Cannes 2022).

Emilie Bujès: "*With family films, films shot entirely in a survivalist zone online, works made up of photographs or archives, 'making-of' films, portraits, explorations of real or invented lands, fragmented works, and films using technical devices to exacerbate their message, the Burning Lights Competition is made up of joyful and eclectic films that highlight the exuberance of modern non-fiction filmmaking.*"

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- *An Inhabited Volcano* by **David Pantaleón** and **Jose Víctor Fuentes**, Spain, 2023, 66', World Premiere\*
- *An Owl, a Garden & the Writer* by **Sara Dolatabadi**, Iran/France, 2023, 83', World Premiere\*
- *Apocryphal County* by **Geoffrey Lachassagne**, France, 2023, 70', World Premiere\*
- *Astrakan 79* by **Catarina Mourão**, Portugal, 2023, 64', World Premiere\*
- *Caiti Blues* by **Justine Harbonnier**, Canada/France, 2023, 84', World Premiere\*
- *Dreamers* by **Stéphanie Barbey** and **Luc Peter**, Switzerland/Germany, 2023, 84', World Premiere\*
- *Filming* by **Samuel Moreno Alvarez**, Colombia, 2023, 42', World Premiere\*
- *Guián* by **Nicole Chi Amén**, Costa Rica, 2023, 75', World Premiere\*
- *Knit's Island* by **Ekiem Barbier**, **Guilhem Causse** and **Quentin L'helgoualc'h**, France, 2023, 95', World Premiere\*
- *Landshaft* by **Daniel Kötter**, Germany/Armenia, 2023, 97', World Premiere\*
- *Má Sàì Gòn (Mother Saigon)* by **Khoa Lê**, Canada, 2023, 100', World Premiere\*
- *Natalia* by **Elizabeth Mirzaei**, USA, 2023, 75', International Premiere
- *Still Film* by **James N. Kienitz Wilkins**, USA, 2023, 72', International Premiere
- *Taxibol* by **Tommaso Santambrogio**, Italy, 2023, 50', World Premiere\*
- *This Woman* by **Alan Zhang**, China, 2023, 91', World Premiere\*

## National Competition

The **National Competition** is devoted to medium length and feature films (co)produced in Switzerland. The selection offers an overview of the abundant Swiss production, and underlines its diversity and ambition. Comprising Swiss programmer **Anne Delseth** – who now works at the Marrakesh International Film Festival after more than ten years spent working on the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes – Italian filmmaker **Francesca Mazzoleni** (Grand Prix VdR 2020) and French producer **Eugénie Michel-Villette** – who has often presented films at the Festival in recent years – the jury will award the competition prizes amongst the 12 films, including **11 world premieres** and **1 international premiere**.

Emilie Bujès: *"With a rich and impressive National Competition, Switzerland is cementing its excellence in documentary film, not only with the well-known names and/or those associated with Visions du Réel, but also younger filmmakers, including a lot of women. With 37 (co)productions across all sections of the Festival, Switzerland is a major player this year."*

- *Allo la France* by **Floriane Devigne**, Switzerland/France, 2023, 78', World Premiere\*
- *Chagrin Valley* by **Nathalie Berger**, Switzerland, 2023, 62', World Premiere\*
- *Chienne de rouge* by **Yamina Zoutat**, Switzerland/France, 2023, 96', International Premiere
- *Floating Islands* by **Nicolas Humbert** and **Simone Fürbringer**, Switzerland/Germany, 2023, 95', World Premiere\*
- *Follow the Water* by **Pauline Julier** and **Clément Postec**, Switzerland/France/Chile, 2023, 51', World Premiere\*
- *Full Tank* by **Benjamin Bucher** and **Julia Bünter**, Switzerland, 2023, 63', World Premiere\*
- *Hawar, Our Banished Children* by **Pascale Bourgaux**, Belgium/Switzerland, 2023, 74', World Premiere\*
- *La Maison* by **Sophie Ballmer**, Switzerland, 2023, 40', World Premiere\*
- *Le Fils du chasseur* by **Juliette Riccaboni**, 2023, 55', World Premiere\*
- *Para no olvidar* by **Laura Gabay**, Switzerland/France/Uruguay, 2023, 62', World Premiere\*

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- *Ruäch – A Journey into Yenish Europe* by **Andreas Müller** and **Simon Guy Fässler**, Switzerland, 2023, 118', World Premiere\*
- *The Wonder Way* by **Emmanuelle Antille**, Switzerland, 2023, 96', World Premiere\*

## A new wave for non-fiction film, a homage to JLG and the Queen of disco

Alongside these three headline competitions, on top of the **Grand Angle** competition and the **Highlights** selection that have already been announced, the 54th edition also spotlights less conventional formats in the **International Medium Length & Short Film Competition**. A lively competition with 32 films, including **28 world premieres**, with well-known names from contemporary filmmaking such as French filmmaker **Guillaume Brac**, Swiss-Portuguese director **Basil Da Cunha**, and Swedish director **Jennifer Rainsford**. As for the **Opening Scenes** section, it promotes promising newcomers from both Switzerland and abroad, with 15 films, including **14 international premieres**.

Finally, there will be special screenings throughout the edition, including two previews in collaboration with Swiss distributors to support their arrival in theaters: *Sur l'Adamant* by **Nicolas Philibert**, winner of the Golden Bear in Berlin this year, which is playing at a free pre-opening screening on 20 April (release date: 26 April), and *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* from Oscar-winning director **Laura Poitras** (release date 26 April). This year, the non-competitive section also offers the opportunity to support documentary production by Ukrainian filmmakers, one year after the Russian invasion, with a selection of short films, after the online discussion in 2022, and to pay homage to **Jean-Luc Godard** (with whom *Visions du Réel* produced the *Livre d'image* exhibition in 2020 that later travelled to Berlin during Berlinale 2022) and **Alain Tanner**, who recently passed away. To conclude, the Queen of disco will be here with the flamboyant documentary *Love to Love You, Donna Summer* presented as a Swiss premiere, whilst **Matthieu Rytz**, a filmmaker from Nyon, will present *Deep Rising* after its launch at Sundance.

## The 2023 Festival offering

Visions du Réel will be held in Nyon and Gland from 21 to 30 April in person and online, with its streaming platform available from 24 to 30 April. Everyday, from Monday 24 April, a series of films from the official selection will be available online for a limited period. The **VdR-Kids** label offers all sorts of activities, screenings and events for families and children. Finally, the **VdR-Industry** programme, for professionals, has already been announced and will present over thirty projects at every stage of production. This programme is complemented by a vast range of discussions, panels and encounters for people with accreditation, which will be presented in greater detail at a later date.

You can find the synopsis of the films and the full programme in the presskit for the edition. Feel free to contact the Press Office for any information and to request interviews.

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54th edition of Visions du Réel: 21 – 30 April 2023

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