



Press release

19 March 2024, Nyon

The eye of the storm: a resolutely current selection for 2024, in tune with the present

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Visions du Réel unveils the programme for its 55th edition (12 – 21 April 2024). A bold and well-rounded official selection of 165 films from 50 different countries, with gender parity for the second year running. With 88 world premieres and 14 international premieres amongst the 128 new films being shown, Visions du Réel reaffirms its position as Switzerland's second most important festival in terms of launching new films, and as an unmissable international event for non-fiction cinema. In addition to the three previously announced guests – Chinese filmmaker Jia Zhang-Ke, American author-director John Wilson, and French director Alice Diop – the Festival will, over the course of ten days, have the honour of welcoming key figures from the world of contemporary cinema such as Carlo Chatrian, Martín Rejtman, Carmen Jaquier, Eduardo Williams, and the author Christine Angot. The 55th edition will open with the Danish film *As the Tide Comes In* by Juan Palacios (co-directed by Sofie Husum Johannesen).

"The 128 new films selected this year once again offer our audience the opportunity to immerse themselves in the most contemporary of cinema, through a rich and varied range of forms, approaches, devices and subjective viewpoints, and an array of excerpts from real stories and narratives. The program, which is largely composed of films discovered from the 3300 films that were submitted – representing an increase in submissions of more than 10% this year – reaffirms the ambition of Visions du Réel to help support the emergence of new talents. For instance, the International Feature Film Competition alone includes ten debuts in its selection of fifteen films. Lastly, we are continuing to relentlessly strive towards gender parity, which, as was the case in 2023, we have once again achieved this year" – Emilie Bujès, Artistic Director of the Festival.

In terms of national output, the programme attests to the strength of Swiss production. The 55th edition includes a total of **25 Swiss (co)productions**, with a very strong representation of German-speaking talent. For the second year running, the International Feature Film Competition sees three Swiss (co)productions in contention, two of which were made by German-speaking filmmakers, and the Burning Lights Competition features two Swiss productions, both also made by filmmakers from the eastern part of the country. Visions du Réel asserts its crucial role as a national and international springboard.

International Feature Film Competition

The Jury for the International Feature Film Competition, comprising the outgoing artistic director of the Berlinale **Carlo Chatrian**, Swiss filmmaker **Carmen Jaquier** (director of *Thunder*, which premiered at TIFF and San Sebastian International Film Festival 2022 before becoming Switzerland's pick for the 2023 Oscars) and producer **Dora Bouchoucha** (whose films include *Hedi* and *Dear Son* by Mohamed Ben Attia, and *Foreign Body* by Raja Amari), will award the competition prizes from a shortlist of fifteen films, which include fourteen world premieres and one international premiere.

Including seven films directed by women, the International Feature Film Competition welcomes ten first feature films, several of which by directors who will be returning to Nyon following selections of their previous shorts or participation in the VdR-Industry activities in past editions. Amongst these are *Fragments of Ice* by **Maria Stolanova** (VdR-Rough Cut Lab 2022) which intersperses archive footage from both the filmmaker's childhood in Soviet Ukraine and the capitalist and luxuriant West, which her figure skater father accesses through his artistic performances abroad; *We are Inside* by **Farah Kassem** (Works-in-Progress 2020 and the short film *You Make a Better Window Than You Do a Door*, VdR 2017), set in crisis-struck Lebanon, in which she strives to find a common language in poetry with her aging father; or *Rising up at Night* by **Nelson Makengo** (Works in Progress 2023) which creates a nocturnal fresco within which to sketch a portrait of a Congolese population in search of light.

Other filmmakers with links to the Festival are returning in 2024 to present their new films, such as Swiss filmmaker **Nicole Vögele** (*Mrs Loosli*, VdR 2013, *Nebel* VdR 2014), who maps the spaces and the journeys of migrants in a Bosnian-Croatian border region haunted by the past with *The Landscape and the Fury*, or **Pierre François Sauter**, who examines the effects of offshore international tourism on a fishing village in Cape Verde in *Far West*. Following on from *Niñato* (VdR 2017), **Adrián Orr** films young adults in *To Our Friends*, mingling fiction and documentary to convey this highly singular moment of transition, while **Sofie Benoot** – who brought her film *Desert Haze* to Nyon in 2014 – takes a kidney stone as the starting point for a journey – part nature documentary, part philosophical tale – into the mineral world in *Apple, Cider, Vinegar*.

The International Feature Film Competition also includes films evoking familiar cinematographic universes or genres, such as *Where the Trees Bear Meat*, a western taking place in the Anthropocene era by **Alexis Franco**, produced by the filmmaker Roberto Minervini, which documents the fragility of the human condition in the Argentine Pampas. Similarly, *Mother Vera* by **Cécile Embleton and Alys Tomlinson** is a black and white portrayal of the eponymous protagonist's journey between a Belarusian monastery and horse rides in snow-covered landscapes. Alongside these, as if anchored in another time and imbued with a gentle nostalgia, *The Return of the Projectionist* by **Orkhan Aghazadeh** follows the trials and tribulations of Samid and Ayaz as they attempt to resuscitate the cinema in their village perched in the hills of Azerbaijan, while *Okurimono* by **Laurence Lévesque** accompanies its protagonist's return to Nagasaki after twenty years to clear a house and exhume its family memories.

Then, there is the question of conflict, an inherent part of non-fiction cinema and our modern times, which inevitably colours the selection and is tackled by a number of filmmakers, such as **Anas Zawahri** in *My Memory Is Full of Ghosts*, a visual elegy which retraces the past and present of the city of Homs through the self portrait of a benighted population simply seeking normality, or **Alina Maksimenko** in *In Limbo*, a *huis-clos* of the filmmaker taking refuge with her parents in their village, as the Russian invasion reaches Kiev. Lastly, *The Song of Others*, from a filmmaker and producer with close links to Visions du Réel, **Vadim Jendreyko**, weaves across Europe, through its history and heritage, in an urgent personal essay, whereas *Kamay* by **Shahrokh Bikaran and Ilyas Yourish** relates the destiny of a family from the oppressed Hazara minority, and in particular their daughter, until the Taliban takes control.

- *Apple Cider Vinegar* by **Sofie Benoot**, Belgium/Netherlands, 2024, 70', World Premiere
- *Fragments of Ice* by **Maria Stolanova**, Ukraine/Norway, 2024, 90', World Premiere
- *Far West* by **Pierre-François Sauter**, Switzerland/Portugal, 2024, 86', World Premiere
- *In Limbo* by **Alina Maksimenko**, Poland, 2024, 71', World Premiere
- *Kamay* by **Ilyas Yourish and Shahrokh Bikaran**, Afghanistan/Germany/Belgium/France, 2024, 106', World Premiere
- *My Memory Is Full of Ghosts* by **Anas Zawahri**, Syria, 2024, 74', World Premiere
- *Mother Vera* by **Cécile Embleton and Alys Tomlinson**, United Kingdom, 2024, 90', World Premiere
- *Okurimono* by **Laurence Lévesque**, Canada, 2024, 97', World Premiere
- *Rising Up at Night* by **Nelson Makengo**, Germany/Belgium/Burkina Faso/Qatar/Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2024, 95', International Premiere
- *The Landscape and the Fury* by **Nicole Vögele**, Switzerland, 2024, 138', World Premiere
- *The Song of Others* by **Vadim Jendreyko**, Switzerland, 2024, 137', World Premiere
- *The Return of the Projectionist* by **Orkhan Aghazadeh**, Germany/France, 2024, 87', World Premiere
- *To Our Friends* by **Adrián Orr**, Spain/Portugal, 2024, 90', World Premiere
- *Where the Trees Bear Meat* by **Alexis Franco**, Argentina/Spain/United States, 2024, 72', World Premiere
- *We Are Inside* by **Farah Kassem**, Lebanon/Qatar/Denmark, 2024, 177', World Premiere


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Burning Lights Competition

An international competition open to feature films and medium length films (two in 2024), Burning Lights is dedicated to the latest, most free and contemporary forms and perspectives in cinema. The 2024 Jury, which will examine fifteen world premieres and one international premiere, is composed of the programmer and curator **Lyse Ishimwe Nsengiyumva** (programmer for the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) and the founder of Recognition, a Brussels-based film screening initiative set up to highlight works made for and by the African diaspora), the film critic and programmer **Devika Girish** (editor of the US magazine Film Comment and Talks programmer for the New York Film Festival (NYFF)) and the filmmaker **Eduardo Williams** (*The Human Surge 3*).

In 2024, Burning Lights adopts various cinematographic forms such as reappropriated, reinterpreted or reorganised archives, science fiction, musical and choreographed comedy, family films in which society as a whole is reflected, filmed diaries, poetic quests, animal hunts, high concept cinema, haunted by the past or the present, and portraits which merge into tales of absurdity. Once again, this competition bears witness to the richness of contemporary non-fiction cinema and the freedom with which the filmmakers seek out and adopt the most diverse and adventurous approaches to embody their quests and accounts, whether personal or political.

- *A Fidai Film* by **Kamal Aljafari**, Palestine/Germany, 2024, 78', World Premiere
- *Billy* by **Lawrence Côté-Collins**, Canada, 2024, 107', World Premiere
- *After the Snowmelt* by **Lo Yi-Shan**, Taiwan/Japan, 2024, 110', World Premiere
- *Cambium* by **Maddi Barber** and **Marina Lameiro**, Spain, 2024, 45', World Premiere
- *Carropasajero* by **Juan Pablo Polanco Carranza** and **Cesar Alejandro Jaimes**, Colombia/Germany, 2024, 104', World Premiere
- *La Duna* by **Emerson Culurgioni** and **Stefanie Schroeder**, Germany, 2024, 93', World Premiere
- *Ever Since I Knew Myself* by **Maka Gogaladze**, Georgia, 2024, 85', World Premiere
- *Les Miennes* by **Samira El Mouzghibati**, Belgium/France, 2024, 97', World Premiere
- *Preparations for a Miracle* by **Tobias Nölle**, Switzerland/Germany, 2024, 89', World Premiere
- *Riders* by **Martín Rejtman**, Argentina/Portugal/Venezuela, 2024, 82', World Premiere
- *(Revolution, Fulfil Your Promise) Red Love* by **Dora García**, Mexico/Spain/Norway/Portugal, 2024, 95', World Premiere
- *Shahid* by **Narges Kalhor**, Germany, 2024, 83', International Premiere
- *Tamina – Will There Ever Be What Used to Be?* by **Beat Oswald**, **Lena Hatebur** and **Samuel Weniger**, Switzerland, 2024, 108', World Premiere
- *The Diary of a Sky* by **Lawrence Abu Hamdan**, Lebanon, 2024, 45', Festival World Premiere
- *The Dells* by **Nellie Kluz**, United States, 2024, 71', World Premiere
- *The Language of Fire* by **Tarek Sami**, Algeria/France/Qatar, 2024, 94', World Premiere

National Competition

The National Competition is dedicated to medium length and feature films (two in 2024), (co)produced in Switzerland. The Jury will select the winners among eleven films, including ten world premieres and one international premiere. It will be composed of the Swiss editor **Gabriel Gonzalez** who recently edited the 2024 Golden Bear winner *Dahomey* by Mati Diop, **Pauline David**, programmer and artistic director of the Belgian festival En ville, and **Bojana Marić**, an international sales agent for Lightdox (*Intercepted*, *As the Tide Comes In*, *Bye Bye Tiberias*, etc.).

The 2024 National Competition offers an extremely convincing and joyful overview of Swiss production. Including films made by Swiss filmmakers from every region; films made in Zurich, Rwanda, Myanmar, Sicily or during a scout camp, but also works (co)produced by Swiss production houses and directed by filmmakers from outside the country, it bears witness to the richness and strength of Swiss cinema.

- *An Ordinary Life* by **Alexander Kuznetsov**, France/Switzerland/United States, 2024, 93', World Premiere
- *Au Revoir Siam* by **Domenico Singha Pedrolli**, France/Switzerland, 2024, 31', World Premiere
- *Brunaupark* by **Felix Hergert** and **Dominik Zietlow**, Switzerland, 2024, 91', World Premiere


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- *Didy* by **Gaël Kamilindi** and **François-Xavier Destors**, Switzerland/France/Rwanda, 2024, 85', World Premiere
- *Everything Is Temporary* by **Juliette Klinke**, Switzerland, 2024, 66', World Premiere
- *Mes amis espagnols* by **Adrien Bordone**, Switzerland, 2024, 80', World Premiere
- *Feu Feu Feu* by **Pauline Jeanbourquin**, Switzerland, 2024, 65', World Premiere
- *Muzungu* by **Ben Donateo** and **Michel Passos Zylberberg**, Switzerland, 2024, 54', World Premiere
- *Sauve qui peut* by **Alexe Poukine**, Belgium/Switzerland/France, 2024, 98', International Premiere
- *Valentina and the MUOSters* by **Francesca Scalisi**, Switzerland/Italy, 2024, 81', World Premiere
- *The Miracle of Almería, Collective work*, Belgium/Switzerland/Netherlands, 2024, 75', World Premiere

International Medium Length and Short Film Competition and Opening Scenes

Visions du Réel is one of the last festivals to hold a competition dedicated to medium length films – combined with shorts in the same competition, but with separate prizes. In 2024, the **International Medium Length and Short Film Competition** comprises **35 films – 29 world premieres, five international premieres and one European premiere** – offering a varied range of cinematographic propositions, gestures, exercises or experiences, the adventurous approaches of which are facilitated by shorter formats. This 55th edition is particularly eclectic and flamboyant, from (science) fiction to cyborgs, via tales of emancipation, animal mysteries and love stories. Some of the featured filmmakers are already well known to the Festival, such as the artists **Karimah Ashadu**, **Pablo Guarise**, **Ruaidhri Ryan**, **Gerard Ortín Castellví** or Switzerland-based **Nikola Ilić**.

Also dedicated to short formats, **Opening Scenes** is the section for first short films or student films. It is run in conjunction with the Opening Scenes Lab, which gives young filmmakers access to a programme of activities, networking opportunities, and an introduction to the industry. In 2024, the trailer for the Festival is once again made up of clips from films from this section, representing tomorrow's talents.

Grand Angle | Highlights | Special Screenings

The **Grand Angle** competition presents feature length films competing for the Audience Award, films that have already won over audiences at other festivals or that will do so in the coming months. In 2024, it includes the international premiere of the Dutch film *Burning Out* by **Saskia Gubbels** (another Festival alumnus), a deep dive into a fire station in Amsterdam which is particularly resistant to societal changes. Further north, *Once Upon a Time in a Forest* from renowned Finnish filmmaker **Virpi Suutari** sketches a portrait of a group of young activists committed to protecting the forests of Finland, whereas *Union* by **Stephen Maing and Brett Story**, launched at the Sundance festival, documents the process to unionize Amazon workers in the United States and their struggle to improve their working conditions. Lastly, *No Other Land*, which won Best Documentary at the Berlinale and directed by a collective of four Palestinian and Israeli activists (**Yuval Abraham, Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Rachel Szor**), tackles the forced displacement of villages in the West Bank; and *Favoriten* by **Ruth Beckermann**, documents life at a school in a multicultural working class district of Vienna over a period of three years.

Highlights is a section created in 2023 which allows the programming team to share some feature length films deemed unmissable. These include *Reas* by **Lola Arias**, a genuine musical documentary where voices and bodies, both trans and cis, express the solidarity and determination of the collective in a disaffected prison, and *A Family*, a hard-hitting film first shown at the Berlinale. Its screening in Nyon will be attended by its director, the French writer and playwright **Christine Angot**. Other works include: *Grand Theft Hamlet* by **Pinny Grylls** and **Sam Crane**, which aims to re-stage the monumental works of Shakespeare inside the deadly constraints of the iconic Grand Theft Auto video game, and *My Father's Diaries* by **Ado Hasanović**, which revisits events leading up to the Srebrenica massacre through the archives of the filmmaker's father.

The **Special Screenings** at this year's edition will dive into literature, both with the legendary **Steve McQueen** and his saga *Occupied City*, inspired by Bianca Stigter's book, and with *Édouard Louis, ou la transformation* by **François Caillat**, which retraces the life of the French writer. Local star **Mathieu Rytz** will be making a return to his home city of Nyon – after *Anote's Ark* in 2018 and *Deep Rising* in 2023 – to present the world premiere of *The Man I Left Behind* (co-directed with Hubert Hayaud and Larry Towell)


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which intersperses filmed journal with images from the famous Magnum Photos agency photographer, Larry Towell.

Guests and Opening film

As is traditional, three prestigious guests will complete this edition's stunning program, including the Chinese filmmaker **Jia Zhang-Ke**, the 2024 Guest of Honour, who will receive the Honorary Prize on Monday 15 April, before the screening of his film *Ash Is Purest White* (2018). The Festival will screen twelve of his films – fiction, documentary and hybrid – and a masterclass will be held on Tuesday 16 April (at 2pm). French filmmaker **Alice Diop** will hold her masterclass on Saturday 13 April, also at 2pm, and her films will be screened throughout the Festival. American filmmaker **John Wilson**, the Special Guest for 2024, will take part in a public discussion on Thursday 18 April at 6pm, and will present a selection of episodes from his iconic series *How To With John Wilson*, a sample of his earlier shorts (including rarities!), or films that he has chosen after being given a Carte Blanche by the Festival.

Towards an inclusive culture

"For the 55th edition, our watchwords are **inclusivity and accessibility to the widest possible public**. For this reason, for the first time, Visions du Réel is offering two "Relax" screenings in 2024, where the audience can talk, move around, and come and go from the auditorium as they please. Furthermore, this year, access to all masterclasses will be free, and the masterclass from Alice Diop will be once again interpreted into sign language – after the success of the signed masterclass from Jean-Stéphane Bron in 2023. Lastly, the online offering which was launched as part of the 2020 digital edition will be extended for the first time outside of the Festival, from 18 to 28 April, with more than 50 films from the selection" explains Mélanie Courvoisier, Administrative & Operational Director.

Alongside the numerous activities offered each year, there will be a few major innovations in terms of cultural participation, including the new multicultural and multilingual programme **New Generations Days**, which will give ten young people from different regions of Switzerland the opportunity to immerse themselves in the heart of Visions du Réel. Over three days, they will be able to watch films from the selection, meet the filmmakers, and also take their first steps into cultural journalism. Lastly, amongst the other projects to highlight for this 55th edition is an **interactive dome** which will be set up in the Usine à Gaz courtyard: over the full ten days of the festival, this truly immersive installation will feature projections of a mosaic of video capsules made during a workshop which brought together people of all ages, origins and cultures.

Essential partners

"Visions du Réel is particularly grateful for the trust and support provided by all its valued partners, which includes a few new supporters this year. The renewal of our four-party agreement with the Canton de Vaud, the Région de Nyon and the Ville de Nyon for the period 2024 - 2027 underscores the importance that the parties attach to the Festival as a major cultural event which helps to raise the profile of the entire region both nationally and internationally. This solid and vital foundation gives us the security we need to continue working towards our goals and ensure the future of our activities", underscores Raymond Loretan, President of Visions du Réel. "This year, we are delighted to strengthen our collaboration with our long-standing principal partner, la Mobilière, around new projects. Furthermore, the Festival can also count on additional support from its key institutional partners such as Loterie Romande and private foundations (La Fondation Ernst Göhner, Jan Michalski and La Fondation de Famille Sandoz). Lastly, we are delighted to welcome Genève Aéroport as a new partner for this year. Together, the commitment of our partners, teams and donors allows us to offer our audiences unforgettable moments of joy, bursting with life".

Find the synopses and full programme in the press pack for this year's edition. Please do not hesitate to contact the press department for any information or requests for interviews.

Contact

Robin Corminboeuf
Press Office Manager
rcorminboeuf@visionsdureel.ch
+41 22 365 44 58

Gloria Zerbinati
International Press Officer
gloria.zerbinati@gmail.com
+33 7 86 80 02 82

Further information: visionsdureel.ch
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