



Press release

Nyon, 17 April 2026

For immediate release

Critical perspectives, diverse viewpoints: a first weekend brimming with discoveries and in tune with reality



Visions du Réel returns this Friday 17 April for its 57th edition, celebrating over ten days a rich programme featuring a record 164 films from 75 countries. The opening ceremony, to be held in the presence of Alain Berset, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Nuria Gorrite, State Councillor, Daniel Rossellat, Mayor of the City of Nyon and Carine Bachmann, Director of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture, will also be marked by the attendance of Oscar-winning filmmaker Laura Poitras, who will present *Cover-Up*, her latest film dedicated to the major investigations conducted by renowned investigative journalist Seymour Hersh. In addition to the screenings and numerous world premieres, several events will make for an unmissable opening weekend. On Saturday 18 April, Sergei Loznitsa, Special Guest of this 57th edition, will deliver a public masterclass in collaboration with Arte and the Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD). In addition, several screenings will give Festival audiences an opportunity to discover the latest documentary productions from Southeast Asia, a region strongly represented during the opening weekend. Other highlights from the Théâtre Grand-Champ in Gland include: the opening of the photographic exhibition *Une rencontre éphémère*, scheduled for Saturday at 6.30 pm in the presence of Hayahisa Tomiyasu – the photographer at the heart of this 57th Festival edition’s visual identity – as well as a screening in collaboration with the Festival Cinéma Jeune Public, which will take place on the same morning at 11 am.

Swiss cinema in the spotlight during the opening weekend

This year, once again, the Festival’s various sections include Swiss productions and co-productions, whose diversity of forms and plurality of narratives demonstrate the remarkable vitality of Swiss documentary cinema, while underscoring the ability of emerging talent to deliver ambitious projects that offer truly fresh perspectives on reality and its representations. To illustrate this trend, the Festival invites audiences to discover six debut feature films among the thirteen Swiss productions to be screened during the opening weekend. These cover both the main competitions and the new “Borderlight” section, dedicated to fiction features that maintain fertile connections with documentary approaches.

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Adopting a distinctive formal approach that seeks to convey something of the experience of deafness, **Mathias Joulaud** and **Lucien Roux** join the ambitious Burning Lights Competition with *La Voix du troupeau*, having previously presented a short film at the Festival in 2022. The world premiere will take place on Saturday at 1.45 pm, at the Théâtre de Marens. **Lauren Dällenbach** and **Liam Erlach**, meanwhile, adopt a nuanced approach to the questions of loneliness and being trapped in one's body in their debut feature films, *Nicole Nicole*, screened on Sunday at 4 pm, and *First Lap Crash*, which has its world premiere on Friday at 6.30 pm, both as part of the National Competition. The body is also at the heart of *Safe Spaces* by **Sarah Horst** (its premiere is scheduled for Saturday evening at 8.30 pm), which is also featured in the National Competition alongside two other particularly innovative debut works: *Common Ground* by **Jonathan Jäggi** (Sunday 19 April at 6.30 pm), which explores grief while wandering in Zürich's Allmend, and *What Comes From Sitting in Silence* by **Sophie Schrago** (Sunday 19 April at 1.30 pm), a closed room drama set within the first female Islamic court.

Visions du Réel is also pleased to welcome filmmakers closely associated with the Festival or more widely established within the Swiss film industry. **Stéphane Goël** presents *En terrain neutre*, co-directed with investigative journalist **Mehdi Atmani**, as part of the National Competition. Questioning the concept of Swiss neutrality, the film offers an alternative perspective to the narrative of a long-established myth, and its two screenings – on Saturday at 11.15 am and Sunday at 2.00 pm – are already among the must-see events of the opening weekend. Also in the National Competition, **François Kohler** and **Edgar Hagen** each offer an original take on the portrait genre. While the former employs it in *Eternal Snow* – screened on Sunday at 5 pm and Saturday at 4 pm – to portray the daily lives of two Nepalese brothers against the backdrop of climate change, the latter neutralises its strictly individual dimension to turn *The Roots of Madness* – whose premiere will take place on Sunday morning – into a collective lens trained on the chaos fracturing our democracies. With *Tricontinentale, lettre à ouvrir au cas où* – which will be screened on Sunday at 8.15 pm – **Laura Cazador** draws on historical archives to retrace the journey of Michèle Firk, an internationalist filmmaker who became deeply involved in the Guatemalan guerrilla movement. This opening weekend will also feature two highly anticipated screenings: *Dentro*, on Sunday at 6.15 pm, from experienced filmmaker **Elsa Amiel** (who previously directed *Pearl* in 2018), and *Tristan Forever*, a film by **Tobias Nölle**, which will be screened on Saturday at 1.30 pm. The first, presented in the International Feature Film Competition, explores the transformation of the prison space – through the lens of renowned playwright Armando Punzo, who will also honour the Festival with his presence – into an emancipatory experience of freedom. The second marks a return to Nyon for Tobias Nölle, two years after the screening of *Preparations for a Miracle*, who will be introducing his new hybrid film to audiences shortly after its premiere at the Berlinale.

Beyond the screenings, to echo *Cover-up*, the opening film by **Laura Poitras** and **Mark Obenhaus**, La Grande Colombière will host Priscilla Imboden (REPUBLIK), Agathe Duparc (Public Eye) and Serge Michel (Heidi.news) for a special discussion on the role of investigative reporting in our democratic societies

(Re)discovering Sergei Loznitsa

The spotlight on the documentary work of **Sergei Loznitsa**, Special Guest of the Festival, is undoubtedly one of the highlights of this opening weekend. This afternoon at 4.15 pm, the Ukrainian director is being honoured with a double screening of his short, *Champ de Mars* – presented as a Swiss premiere – and his film *Austerlitz*, a work that records the transformation into a spectacle of the Nazi concentration camp at Sachsenhausen which has, over time, become a popular tourist destination. The retrospective of his work continues on Saturday and Sunday with screenings of two Ukrainian chronicles – *Maidan* on Saturday morning at 10.30 am, and *Donbas* the following day at 10.45 am, – which seek to appraise the political situation in Ukraine, whether by retracing the civil uprising against pro-Russian militias or by capturing the outbreak of the Donbas war in the east of the country, fought between supporters of Ukrainian unity and pro-Russian separatists. The masterclass on Saturday at 2.30 pm, presented in collaboration with Arte and the Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD), will give the director the opportunity to discuss his approach and career with Emmanuel Chicon, a member of the selection committee, and Violeta Bava, a member of the Industry selection committee. This immersion in the filmmaker's body of work and these discussions – which promise to be as engaging as they are valuable in the current context – promise to be among the highlights of this opening weekend. In 1997, Sergei Loznitsa graduated with a degree in film studies from the renowned Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow. Since then, he has developed his art internationally, making 28 documentaries and five fiction films.

A Southeast Asia in focus during the opening weekend

With 75 countries represented among the selected works, Visions du Réel once again affirms its position as a festival with an international reach and attractivity. Even more significantly, this figure strongly reflects the vitality of non-fiction cinema on a global scale. While the Festival is pleased to be including feature films from relatively rarely represented countries, such as El Salvador, Yemen, Palestine, Sudan, Ecuador and others, there is equal enthusiasm for the strong presence of films from Southeast Asia, with six works being screened during the opening weekend.

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In the International Feature Film Competition, **Viv Li** and **Xisi Sofia Ye Chen** present *Two Mountains Weighing Down My Chest* (Saturday at 3.45 pm) and *From Dawn to Dawn* (Saturday at 6 pm) respectively, two powerful works dealing with identity – Chinese or otherwise – and its ambiguous relationship with heritage and family traditions. The same themes are also found in *Time and Tide* (Saturday at 8.30 pm), the first feature film by **Vee Shi**, a Chinese director based in Australia, and *Baby Jackfruit Baby Guava* (premiering on Sunday at 5.45 pm) by **Nông Nhật Quang**, a filmmaker of Vietnamese origin. With very different sensibilities – one exploring the moral dimension of filial duty while the other adopts a more comedic approach – the two filmmakers are part of the Burning Lights Competition. The poetic *Whispers in May*, by Chinese filmmaker **Dongnan Chen**, also emerges from intimacy to offer a delicate and inclusive coming-of-age story. Screened on Saturday at 1.30 pm as part of our Grand Angle section, the film is sure to appeal to Festival audiences. Through a restrained approach, **Chouwa Liang** succeeds with *Replica* – also selected in the Grand Angle section and screened on Sunday and Saturday evening with French audio subtitles – in pulling off an ambitious feat: portraying three women who fall in love with AIs, to offer a compelling exploration of a Chinese political context in which the social pressure around marriage and success has become, quite literally, suffocating.

[Press page](#)

[Image](#)

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