



Press release
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Kelly Reichardt awarded the 2026 Honorary Award



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From left to right: Emilie Bujès, Kelly Reichardt

Visions du Réel presented its 2026 Honorary Award to filmmaker Kelly Reichardt, a central figure in American independent cinema. The award ceremony opened with a tribute to the filmmaker delivered by Emilie Bujès, who is also marking her final edition as head of the Festival's artistic direction, followed by a homage from Canadian filmmaker Brett Story, a member of the 2026 International Feature Film Competition Jury. The evening continued with the premiere screening of *The Mastermind*, Kelly Reichardt's latest feature film, which subverts the heist film motif in Framingham, Massachusetts. Her masterclass – in collaboration with the Swiss Cinematheque, ECAL University of Art and Design Lausanne and the Fondazione Prada – took place the following day in the early afternoon (2 pm) at the Théâtre de Marens, and the retrospective and Carte Blanche that the Festival has devoted to her work completed the first night of celebration. It is an immense privilege for Visions du Réel to be able to offer audiences the opportunity to (re)discover a compelling body of work that seeks to renew representations of America and its prevailing narratives. To offer a new way of navigating its territory.

For her final edition as head of the Festival's artistic direction, Emilie Bujès was visibly moved as she paid tribute to Kelly Reichardt, a filmmaker who, in her own words, is dear to her: "It is a tremendous privilege to welcome one of the great voices of contemporary cinema. Film after film, Kelly Reichardt sketches fragments of history and lives in remarkably refined and elegant narratives which, through their rejection of the spectacular and their sensitive attention to detail, reveal a fascinating relationship with reality".

The moviemaker Brett Story gave a moving speech and paid tribute to Kelly Reichardt. She concluded her intervention with some words: "As a fine portraitist of ordinary lives, Kelly Reichardt is a visual geographer; her films appreciate landscape as that thing which shapes all our roughest and softest edges, but also that thing that we're inadequate to, which is what makes the landscape, in film as in life, sublime".

While rooted in fiction, Kelly Reichardt's oeuvre nevertheless flirts with "cinema of the real" in many respects: a certain antisensationalism, economical production, a certain narrative and formal restraint, the considerable time devoted to location scouting, the adaptation of the script to the filming contexts, and the immersion of her teams in the living conditions of the places filmed, form the very foundations of a unique and distinctive method and cinematic approach. Through her attention to everyday gestures, places and marginalities, the filmmaker transforms fiction into a sensitive and ethical tool for observing the world.

With this award, Kelly Reichardt joins a prestigious group of filmmakers honoured by the Festival, including Barbet Schroeder, Lucrecia Martel, Werner Herzog, Claire Denis, Alain Cavalier, Claire Simon and, more recently, Marco Bellocchio, Jia Zhang-ke and Raoul Peck.

Biography

Reichardt directed her first feature film, *River of Grass*, in 1994. It is often described as a disenchanted *Bonnie and Clyde*, a cross between a road movie, a romance and a crime film. Selected at Sundance and Berlin, it revealed her interest in marginal territories and understated narratives. At the turn of the 2000s, Reichardt moved away from feature films to explore lighter formats, shot in Super 8 and made without constraints: *Ode* (1999), a contemplative medium-length film, followed by the short films *Then a Year* (2001), filmed in Portland, Oregon, which is based on a sound collage of excerpts from TV crime programmes, and *Travis* (2004), based on a reconstructed interview with a mother from Portland whose son was killed in Iraq.

Since the 2000s, Kelly Reichardt's films have sought to capture the political, economic and social realities of contemporary America and place them at the heart of her narratives. Set against the backdrop of the Bush years and the Iraq War, *Old Joy* (2006, Tiger Award IFFR, Rotterdam) offers a discreet meditation on friendship that reveals a society fractured between gentrification and decline. With *Wendy and Lucy* (2008, Un Certain Regard at Cannes), inspired by the widespread precariousness observed after Hurricane Katrina, Reichardt continued to focus her attention on marginalised groups, charting with extreme restraint the social decline of a young woman confronted with poverty.

The filmmaker also explored the origins of American society through two anti-westerns: *Meek's Cutoff* (2010, Venice Film Festival) and *First Cow* (2019, Festival de Cannes) deconstructed the heroic narrative of the conquest of the West by revealing the forms of labour, domination and dispossession that it has long obscured. This focus on the moral and political consequences of actions also runs through *Night Moves* (2013, Venice Film Festival), a pared-down eco-thriller, as well as *Certain Women* and *Showing Up* (2016 and 2022, Festival de Cannes), sensitive portraits of ordinary lives grappling with the constraints of everyday existence.

With *The Mastermind* (2025), also presented in competition at the Festival de Cannes, her most recent project, Kelly Reichardt relates the story of a burglary in an art gallery and its consequences, set against the turbulent 1970s backdrop of the Vietnam War and the women's liberation movement.

Kelly Reichardt's films have been the subject of numerous retrospectives, notably at MoMA, the Centre Pompidou, Anthology Film Archives, the Walker Art Center, and the American Cinematheque in Los Angeles, as well as during a European tour (*The American Landscape: The Films of Kelly Reichardt*). Reichardt received the Carrosse d'Or at the Directors' Fortnight at the Festival de Cannes in 2022, and has been awarded several major grants, including the Guggenheim Fellowship. She also has experience in teaching film studies, notably at Harvard University in 2019 and currently at Bard College.

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