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NEWS

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CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL DOCUFEST PROGRAM CELEBRATES THE BEST IN NON-FICTION FILMMAKING

Award-winners “El Gort” and “Echo of the Mountain” among eight in competition; non-competition notables include Frederick Wiseman’s “National Gallery,” Joshua Oppenheimer’s “The Look of Silence” and Emmy Award-winning Chicago filmmaker Gabe Polsky’s “Red Army”

CHICAGO, IL (October 1, 2014) – The 50th Chicago International Film Festival and Program Partner Columbia College proudly present Docufest, which is comprised of 18 exciting non-fiction features from around the world. Eight of these films are in competition—all of which are without U.S. distribution. Seven are making their U.S. or North American Premieres at the Festival. Winners are selected by a jury of film professionals with awards to be presented at the **Festival’s Award Ceremony on Friday, October 17 at 9pm at The Sofitel Chicago Water Tower, 20 E. Chestnut St., Chicago.** The Chicago International Film Festival runs October 9-23, 2014.

Films **in competition** include, “Algren,” “El Gort,” “Echo of the Mountain,” “Hotel Nueva Isla,” “Into the Clouds We Gave,” “The Iron Ministry,” “I’ve Seen the Unicorn,” and “Vive La France.” Docufest films **out of competition** include, “The Circle,” “A Dream of Iron,” “Evolution of a Criminal,” “Life After Death,” “The Look of Silence,” “National Gallery,” “Ne Me Quitte Pas,” and “Red Army.”

Chicago International Film Festival Programmer **Alex Kopecky** remarked, “We are very proud of the year’s documentary selection, and in particular the films participating in the competition, which deserve a wider audience in Chicago, the U.S., and beyond. We hope that the range of countries, stories, and approaches to documentary form reflect the current vibrant and diverse state of non-fiction filmmaking.”

World Premiere documentary “**Algren**” explores the life of Chicago author Nelson Algren, featuring evocative images by world-class Chicago street photographer Art Shay, as well as interviews with Chicagoans Billy Corgan of “The Smashing Pumpkins” and award-winning filmmaker William Friedkin.

“El Gort,” which won Best Director from the Arab World and the FIPRESCI Award at the Abu Dhabi film festival, makes a sharp commentary on contemporary Tunisia. Following two young men trying to make a living in the hay trade as their dreams of a carefree youth turn to despair, the film is a gritty chronicle of life on the margins of the Arab Spring.

“Echo of the Mountain” has already won awards for Best Mexican Film and Documentary Jury Special Prize at the Guadalajara International Film Festival. Echevarría takes the audience on a pilgrimage following the life and work of a great Huichol artist, Santos de la Torre. Despite having painted a great mural for the metro station Palais Royal at the Louvre, the artist, like his people, lives in obscurity. The film explores Santos' life and creative process across 385 miles of the "Peyote Route," following the making of a new mural that will illustrate the history, mythology and religious practices of the Huichol people.

In his latest engrossing institutional portrait **“National Gallery,”** master documentarian Frederick Wiseman explores the relationship between painting and storytelling as he takes audiences inside the inner workings of one of the world's greatest art collections.

“The Look of Silence” is director Joshua Oppenheimer's companion piece to his Oscar-nominated film, “The Act of Killing,” which focused on the unrepentant participants of government-sanctioned mass murder in 1960s Indonesia. In this unnerving and potent follow-up, Oppenheimer takes the victim's perspective, following a man whose brother was murdered as he confronts the killers still living around him.

Emmy award-winning Chicago filmmaker Gabe Polsky returns to the Festival to present an exciting Cold War drama played out on the ice rink. In **“Red Army,”** Polsky tells the inspiring story of the most successful dynasty in sports history, the Soviet Union's Red Army hockey team.

50th Chicago International Film Festival Docufest Competition Titles

“Algren” USA (Director: Michael Caplan) — As a passionate chronicler and champion of the underclass, Chicago author Nelson Algren (“The Man with The Golden Arm” and “Chicago, City on the Make”) was a literary genius second only to William Faulkner, according to ardent fan Ernest Hemingway. Illuminated by interviews with artists inspired by his work and embellished with a trove of Art Shay photographs, “Algren” is a long overdue celebration of an under-appreciated literary icon. *World Premiere* **Director Michael Caplan in attendance.**

“Echo of the Mountain” (Eco de la montaña) Mexico (Director: Nicolás Echevarría)—Chronicling Mexican muralist Santos de la Torre's pilgrimage to gain the gods' blessing for a new project, documentarian Nicolas Echevarría captures the creative process of an unsung master and the traditions of Mexico's marginalized Huichol culture. Simultaneously emotive and ethnographic, Echevarría's camera provides impressionistic views of a shrinking landscape dotted with healing springs and hallucinogenic cacti, as Santos' family performs ancient rituals of rejuvenation. *Spanish with subtitles. US Premiere* **Director Nicolás Echevarría in attendance.**

“El Gort” Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (Director: Hamza Ouni)—In this award-winning chronicle of life on the margins of the Arab Spring, two young Tunisian men eke out a living in the hay trade, slowly growing embittered as they feel their youth slipping away without hope of advancement. Though spanning six tumultuous years, including the corrupt rule of President

Ben Ali and the revolution that deposed him, the film's subjects have little time for politics when their struggle to make ends meet remains constant. *Arabic with subtitles. North American Premiere* **Director Hamza Ouni, Technical Director Mohamed Hedi Selmi, and Documentary Subject Khairredine Hajri in attendance.**

"Hotel Nueva Isla" Cuba, Spain (Director: Irene Gutiérrez)—This masterful observational documentary follows the elderly Jorge and his dog, living among and wandering the halls of an abandoned, run-down hotel, accompanied by occasional homeless friends. With a keen eye that is both highly stylized and intimate, Irene Gutiérrez captures Jorge's life, spent doing rudimentary "maintenance" on a building haunted by faded glory and craving a community on the outskirts of society. *Spanish with subtitles. US Premiere* **Director Irene Gutierrez and co-Director Javier Labrador in attendance.**

"Into the Clouds We Gaze" (*K Oblakům Vzhlížíme*) Czech Republic (Director: Martin Dušek)—With little interest in getting a job, Ráďa puts all his money and time into a singular dream: tricking out his aging Ford Escort. With this sweet ride, he earnestly pursues love and glory at "tuning" competitions for like-minded aftermarket car enthusiasts. Dušek's documentary takes a stylized and sympathetic look at Ráďa's life in a hypnotic and surreal world of glowing neon and pulsating Top 40 radio. *Czech with subtitles. US Premiere* **Director Martin Dušek and Editor Josef Krajbich in attendance.**

"The Iron Ministry" China, USA (Director: J.P. Sniadecki)—Shot over three years, *The Iron Ministry* is a documentary portrait told exclusively aboard the many trains that crisscross China: some pristine and nearly empty, others rickety and packed to capacity with exhausted riders. An alumnus of Harvard's Sensory Ethnography Lab (*Leviathan*), Sniadecki's approach embodies the group's filmmaking ethos, capturing artful images of train travel and observing passengers' candid conversations, together creating an engrossing snapshot of contemporary life in China. *Mandarin with subtitles. Chicago Premiere* **Director J.P. Sniadecki in attendance.**

"I've Seen the Unicorn" Canada (Director: Vincent Toi)—Independent since 1968, the island nation of Mauritius retains one highly visible legacy of British rule: horse racing. Toi's documentary follows the lead-up to the country's flagship event, the Maiden Cup, through the stories of a young fisherman who dreams of becoming a jockey, a Rastafarian gambler, a bookie, and stable owner. The result is both a thrilling sports film and a unique portrait of the vestiges of colonialism. *English, Creole, French with subtitles. US Premiere* **Director Vincent Toi and Producer Michael Massicotte in attendance.**

"Vive La France" Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Norway (Directors: Helgi Felixson, Titti Johnson)—As officials and scientists debate the environmental impact of France's nuclear program, the people of Tureia quietly continue their way of life despite living 100km away from one of the world's largest nuclear waste dumps. *Vive La France* reveals the willful existence of a small island community, while delivering a grave lesson on the ecological consequences of nuclear testing and the political ramifications of French colonialism in Polynesia. *French with subtitles. North American Premiere* **Directors Helgi Felixson and Titti Johnson in attendance.**

50th Chicago International Film Festival Docufest Out of Competition Titles

"The Circle" (*Der Kreis*) Switzerland (Director: Stefan Haupt)—Founded in early 1940s Switzerland and exploding in the post-war era, "The Circle" was Europe's grandest underground gay publication, which hosted a private club offering refuge for homosexuals at the time. It was also the site of a budding romance between shy teacher Ernst and flamboyant drag star Röbi,

still together to this day. Through lavish recreations, the film brings the world of "The Circle" to life, as the present-day couple reminisces about the joys and tragedies of the past. *Chicago Premiere Director Stefan Haupt in attendance.*

"A Dream of Iron" (Cheol-ae-kum) South Korea, USA (Director: Kelvin Kyung Kun Park)—Winner of a special prize at this year's Berlin Film Festival, *A Dream of Iron* fulfills the poetic, personal, and historical potential of the documentary form. After being spurned by a lover who left in search of a shamanic god, Kelvin Kyung Kun Park undertook a sprawling search for a deity among whales in the sea, a shipyard, and a steelworks factory. An essay film about faith, modernity, and Korea's industrial history told through rapturous imagery. *Korean with subtitles. Chicago Premiere*

"Evolution of a Criminal" USA (Director: Darius Clark Monroe)—When he was 16, Darius Clark Monroe and two friends robbed a Texas bank. Seventeen years later, and seven years in the making, *Evolution of a Criminal* analyzes the causes and reverberations of this one fateful day in the filmmaker's life. Through vivid reenactments of the heist, home videos, and interviews with friends, family, and witnesses, Monroe weaves an uncommonly perceptive piece of autobiographical cinema. *Chicago Premiere Director Darius Clark Monroe in attendance.*

"Life After Death" USA, Rwanda (Director: Joe Callander)—In this lucid critique of the complexities of international charity, documentary filmmaker Joe Callander chronicles the erratic life of Kwasa, a 20-something survivor of the brutal Rwandan genocide. Charming and yet helplessly irresponsible, he relies almost entirely on the generosity of two quirky Christian American couples. As wry and idiosyncratic as its subjects, *Life After Death* creates a compelling and complex portrait of life in the shadow of tragedy. *English, Kinyarwanda with subtitles. Chicago Premiere Director Joe Callander in attendance.*

"The Look of Silence" Denmark, Indonesia (Director: Joshua Oppenheimer)—Joshua Oppenheimer's essential follow-up to his landmark film *The Act of Killing* again confronts the legacy of government-sanctioned mass murder in 1960s Indonesia, this time from the victim's perspective. Still haunted by his brother's murder, a village optometrist spends time watching Oppenheimer's footage of the killers gleefully reminiscing about their atrocious acts, then confronts the responsible parties in person. Oppenheimer has crafted yet another powerful look at the intersection of personal and historical memory. *Indonesian and Javanese with subtitles. Chicago Premiere*

"National Gallery" USA, France (Director: Frederick Wiseman)—For his latest institutional portrait, Frederick Wiseman trains his ever-perceptive gaze on London's venerable National Gallery museum. By showing us the breadth of the Gallery's audience—from schoolchildren to elite donors—and its offerings—from high-profile exhibitions, such as a major Leonardo da Vinci show, to the fascinating process of painting restoration—Wiseman makes both an observational argument for how an arts organization stays relevant and lovingly celebrates the aesthetic experience. *Chicago Premiere*

"Ne Me Quitte Pas" Netherlands, Belgium (Director: Sabine Lubbe Bakker, Niels van Koevorden)—The year's breakout dark comedy alcoholism-themed bromance, *Ne Me Quitte Pas* is one of the nonfiction treasures of 2014. When his wife leaves him, sad-sack Marcel takes comfort in the bottle and the company of his stoically soused friend Bob. Hanging out in the beautiful Belgian countryside, the two navigate friendship, loneliness, and substance abuse in this unexpectedly entertaining and tender film that defies categorization. *French and Dutch with subtitles. Chicago Premiere*

“Red Army” USA, Russia (Director: Gabe Polsky)—“Red Army” is a documentary about the Soviet Union and the most successful dynasty in sports history: the Red Army hockey team. Told from the perspective of its captain Slava Fetisov, the story portrays his transformation from national hero to political enemy. “Red Army” follows a man who stood up to a powerful system and paved the way for change. *Russian and English with subtitles. Chicago Premiere **Director Gabe Polsky in attendance.***

Festival Passes, Ticketing and Theater Information

Festival Passes and Tickets are on sale now.

Pass options include:

Moviegoer (10 regular admissions): \$100 for Cinema/Chicago members, \$130 for non-members
Passport (20 regular admissions): \$190 for Cinema/Chicago members, \$240 for non-members

Individual ticket prices:

Regular films: \$11/members, students*, and seniors*; \$14/non-members (*with valid ID)
Weekday matinees (films only): \$7 tickets, Monday-Friday through 5:00pm
10 after 10: \$10 tickets, every day after 10:00pm
Special Presentations: \$16/members, \$20/non-members

Tickets and passes can be purchased online at www.chicagofilmfestival.com, by calling 312-332-FILM (3456), or in person at the Festival Box Office at AMC River East 21 (until October 9: 7 days a week, noon – 8:00pm; October 10-23: tickets will be on sale one hour before the start of the first show until the start of the last show).

Festival screenings will be held at the AMC River East 21 Theater (322 E. Illinois St.).

For the full schedule and ticketing information, visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com

FESTIVAL SPONSORS

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Columbia College Chicago is the program partner for Docufest.

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ABOUT CINEMA/CHICAGO

Cinema/Chicago is a not-for-profit arts and education organization dedicated to encouraging better understanding between cultures and to making a positive contribution to the art form of the moving image. The Chicago International Film Festival is one of the year-round programs presented by Cinema/Chicago, which also include the Chicago International Film Festival Television Awards, CineYouth Festival, INTERCOM Competition, International Screenings Program, and Education Outreach Program. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.

The Festival and its parent organization, Cinema/Chicago, were founded in 1964 by filmmaker and graphic artist Michael Kutza to showcase great international film, which was conspicuously absent from the city's theaters, and to bring celebrated filmmakers from around the globe to Chicago. Over the past half century, as we have grown to become a world-renowned event and evolved to reflect the changing times, the Festival has remained dedicated to its founding vision: to discover new and rising talents in filmmaking and to bring the best in international cinema and the artists behind the work to Chicago audiences. This year's 50th anniversary Festival will feature a selection of "50th anniversary screenings," featuring the work of returning filmmakers presenting past Festival films and/or personal favorites and important repertory films as well as new films by emerging and celebrated filmmakers alike.

The 50th Chicago International Film Festival runs October 9-23, 2014.

www.chicagofilmfestival.com