



**CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL
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Presented by Cinema/Chicago

**53
NEWS**

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53RD CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES NEW DIRECTORS COMPETITION SELECTIONS

16 Films by First- and Second-Time Directors from around the World
Compete for the Gold Hugo



Los Perros



Killing Jesus



The Reconciliation

CHICAGO - The **Chicago International Film Festival** today announced the 16 films selected for the **New Directors Competition**, celebrating first- and second-time feature filmmakers. With nearly half of the films directed by women—a new milestone in this competition—each filmmaker makes their World, North American, or U.S. premiere at the Festival's 53rd edition. The films in the New Directors Competition introduce audiences to the world's next generation of remarkable talents.

The New Directors Competition has long represented the defining spirit of the Chicago International Film Festival, which has been discovering and showcasing the work of new and rising talents for more than five decades. This year's Competition continues this tradition; two of the directors whose work is competing are returning to the Chicago International Film Festival after winning awards with their short films. Romanian **Andrei Cretulescu** is presenting his debut feature, *Charleston*, after winning a Silver Plaque for his short film *Ramona* in 2015. Chicago-based filmmaker **Anahita Ghazvinizadeh** will present

the U.S. debut of her first feature *They*, after winning the Silver Hugo Award in the live action short category for her film *Needle* in 2013.

“I have always found the films in this competition to be particularly compelling,” said **Artistic Director Mimi Plauché**. “They represent the promise of cinema now and for the future, showcasing the freshest, the most exciting, and the most commanding voices from around the world. This year’s New Directors lineup is particularly distinguished by the number of films directed by women, but all sixteen filmmakers exhibit singular voices and exceptional talent.”

The sixteen films competing in the New Directors Competition are listed below. The New Directors Competition is supported by the John and Jacolyn Bucksbaum Family Foundation.

NEW DIRECTORS COMPETITION LINEUP

Bitter Flowers – Dir. Olivier Meys, Belgium/Switzerland/France

Thirtysomething Chinese-born Lina borrows money to move to Paris to pursue her entrepreneurial dreams, leaving behind her husband and son in Dong Bei province. But once in Europe, nothing goes as planned, and she is forced into a line of work she never would have imagined. When her flighty sister-in-law shows up on her doorstep, Lina becomes entangled in her own web of lies. *Mandarin with subtitles. 95 min.*

The Cakemaker – Dir. Ofir Raul Graizer, Israel/Germany

This tender drama about a closeted love affair unfolds through the eyes of Tomas, a Berlin pastry chef who learns that Oren, his Israeli lover, has died in a car accident in Jerusalem. Unmoored by his loss, Thomas journeys to Israel to begin the process of healing. Desiring to better know his now lost love, he inserts himself into the life of Oren’s wife and young son. This expertly crafted film is a moving portrait of grief and catharsis. *English, Hebrew, German with subtitles. 104 min.*

Charleston – Dir. Andrei Cretulescu, Romania/France

For his feature debut, the writer-director of the acclaimed short *Ramona* crafts an adroit black comedy about grieving widower Alexandru, who receives a surprise visit from his wife’s former lover, Sebastian—a younger man having trouble coping with his own grief. Together, the unlikely duo attempts to find closure in this wry, entertaining examination of the unusual contours of love. *Romanian with subtitles. 119 min.*

The Charmer (Charmøren) – Dir. Milad Alami, Denmark

From his perch at an upscale Copenhagen wine bar, the impeccably dressed Iran-born Esmail scours the room, looking for a vulnerable Danish female to ply with his charms—he desperately needs a live-in relationship to enhance his otherwise weak immigration application. This intense psychological drama explores what prompts someone to leave their home to start a new life at the other end of the world. *English, Danish, Farsi with subtitles. 90 min.*

La Familia – Dir. Gustavo Rondón Córdova, Venezuela/Chile/Norway

Hard-working single dad Andrés is doing his best to raise 12-year-old Pedro in a violent neighborhood on the outskirts of Caracas. When Pedro unexpectedly gets entangled in a gang-related knifing, Andrés must do whatever it takes to keep his son safe. The slow-burning *La Familia* presents drama-filled insight into the world of a Venezuelan teenager discovering the consequences of his actions and the unquestioning love of a father for his only child. *Spanish with subtitles. 82 min. Also screening in Cinemas of the Americas.*

Hunting Season (Temporada de Caza) – Dir. Natalia Garagiola, Argentina/France/U.S./Germany

After his mother dies, a troubled teen is sent to live with his estranged father, who works as a hunting guide in the Patagonian forests. In the untamed southern environment, the grieving boy struggles to contain his aggressive frustration with adapting to his father's new family and the rugged natural and social environment. In this measured, carefully crafted debut, Garagiola demonstrates a masterful command of the intricacies of human interaction, in which the smallest gesture can convey a world of meaning. *Spanish with subtitles. 105 min. Also screening in Cinemas of the Americas.*

In the Shadows – Dir. Dipesh Jain, India/United Kingdom/Germany

In the walled city of Old Delhi, a reclusive shopkeeper spends his days obsessively watching people through hidden closed-circuit cameras. When he overhears a boy being beaten, he begins to frantically search for the child. As he becomes lost in the labyrinthine alleys of the city and recesses of his mind, his grasp on reality falters, until he eventually stumbles across a shocking truth. *Hindi with subtitles. 117 min.*

Killing Jesus (Matar a Jesús) – Dir. Laura Mora, Colombia/Argentina

Two men on a motorcycle; shots are fired; another man is left dead on the ground: Paula's father has been assassinated. She is a typical, dreamy college student; he was an admired professor. The authorities offer no answers. With revenge in her sights, Paula desperately sets out to find her father's killer. By chance, she meets him—dancing, smiling—at a nightclub. The two grow closer. His name is Jesús. He wants to be with her. She wants to kill him. *Spanish with subtitles. 99 min. Also screening in Cinemas of the Americas.*

Life Guidance – Dir. Ruth Mader, Austria

In a dystopian near future, society is divided into “top achievers”—the cheerful, efficient middle class, and “minimum recipients.” Straight-laced businessman Alexander appears to be a blissful top achiever until a comment he makes to his son sets off alarms, and an agent from Life Guidance is sent in to recalibrate his mindset and optimize his potential. Resistant to this supervision, Alexander begins to rebel against the system. Mader's sinister sci-fi thriller presents an exacting depiction of a world that is uncannily familiar. *German with subtitles. 101 min.*

Never Steady, Never Still – Dir. Kathleen Hepburn, Canada

In director Hepburn's steely, sensitive debut, Shirley Henderson delivers a powerful performance as a woman with Parkinson's disease struggling to maintain her independence in a rural blue-collar Alberta community. As her son, Jamie, struggles to adjust to the roughness of life working in the oil fields and come to terms with his own sexuality, Judy learns to live as an empty nester. The physical obstacles that Judy faces daily are poetically echoed by Jamie's emotional turmoil as the two fend for themselves in uncharted territory. *111 min.*

No Date, No Signature (Bedoune Tarikh, Bedoune Emza) – Dir. Vahid Jalilvand, Iran

A seemingly minor traffic collision has far-reaching consequences in this story of a well-meaning medical examiner haunted by the death of a child he might have prevented. As the story unfolds, his fate becomes inextricably bound up with that of the grieving family. In only his second feature, Jalilvand coaxes brilliantly understated performances from a superb cast for this compelling, considered meditation on guilt and grief. *Farsi with subtitles. 104 min.*

Oblivion Verses (Los Versos de Olvido) -- Dir. Alireza Khatami, Chile/France/Germany/Netherlands

Tormented by the disappearance of a loved one, a retiring Chilean gravedigger spends his last days at the cemetery trying to arrange for the proper burial of an unidentified young woman. When the authorities discover he has knowledge of the whereabouts of the missing corpse, he resorts to unconventional measures to rescue the body and himself. Chicago-based Iranian director Khatami presents a sublimely lyrical film about small acts of defiance and the search for redemption. *Spanish with subtitles. 92 min.*

Los Perros – Dir. Marcela Said, Chile/France

Mariana has always felt more comfortable around animals—the family dogs, her riding horse—than people. A member of the influential upper class, she has lived in the shadow of the dominating men in her life. Things change when she meets her riding instructor, an enigmatic figure with a seemingly sinister past. As she grows increasingly closer to him, his dark secrets threaten to upend her own family in this brooding, dramatic mystery. *Spanish with subtitles. 94 min. Also screening in Cinemas of the Americas.*

The Reconciliation (Zgoda) – Dir. Maciej Sobieszczanski, Poland

Sobieszczanski's prize-winning debut feature centers on a doomed love triangle inside a Communist Security Service labor camp in Poland in the latter days of World War II. Young Franek enlists as a guard with the secret agenda of saving his first love, Anna. But their friend Erwin, who also loves Anna, is incarcerated in the camp, too. Trapped in a savage, chaotic environment where making ethical choices becomes near impossible, the trio gives in to complex, ambiguous urges. *Polish with subtitles. 87 min.*

Scary Mother (Sashishi Deda) -- Dir. Ana Urushadze, Georgia/Estonia

Fifty-year-old housewife Manana struggles with a dilemma: choosing between her family life and a love for writing she has repressed for years. When she finally decides to follow her passion, she is ready to sacrifice everything for it, mentally and physically. With wins for best debut feature at international film festivals, Urushadze's powerful mix of domestic drama and psychological thriller proves that she's a talent to watch. *Georgian with subtitles. 107 min.*

They – Dir. Anahita Ghazvinizadeh, U.S./Qatar

This stunning impressionistic slice-of-life drama follows J., a Chicagoland teenager in the process of transitioning, who must make important choices relating to their gender identity. Chicago-based Iranian director Ghazvinizadeh (Chicago International Film Festival 2013 short winner *Needle*) studied with master filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, and his influence is evident in *They's* entrancing ambiguity and profoundly sensitive look at childhood and the fluidity of self. *English, Farsi with subtitles. 80 min. Also screening in City & State and Out-Look Competition.*

The 53rd Chicago International Film Festival is October 12-26. Screenings take place at AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois). Tickets go on sale to Cinema/Chicago members on Wednesday, September 20 and to the general public on Friday, October 22. Tickets are available by calling 312-332-FILM (3456), online at chicagofilmfestival.com, at the Festival Box Office at AMC River East at 322 E. Illinois Street, and at the Festival Pop-Up Box Office at 400 S. Dearborn.

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About Cinema/Chicago

Cinema/Chicago, the presenting organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, is a year round non-profit arts and education organization dedicated to fostering better communication between people of diverse cultures through the art form of the moving image. In addition to the Chicago International Film

Festival, Cinema/Chicago's programs include: International Screenings Program, Chicago International Television Festival, CineYouth Festival, and year-round Education Program. Celebrating its 53rd edition October 12-26, 2017, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.

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