



**CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL** Oct. 10 - 21, 2018  
Presented by Cinema/Chicago

**54  
NEWS**

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***HAPPY AS LAZZARO AND ASH IS PUREST WHITE*  
ARE TOP WINNERS AT THE  
54<sup>TH</sup> CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Alice Rohrwacher's *Happy as Lazzaro* wins the Gold Hugo for its poetic cinematic language while Jia Zhangke's latest masterpiece takes home the Silver Hugo for Best Director and Best Actress

Films from Vietnam, Australia, Peru, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Mexico and United States are among the major winners across the Festival's other competitions

CHICAGO – The 54<sup>th</sup> Chicago International Film Festival tonight hosted its Awards Ceremony at AMC River East 21, 322 E. Illinois St., celebrating the films chosen as the award winners by the Festival juries. Prizes were awarded to films in the following categories: International Feature Film Competition; New Directors Competition; International Documentary Competition; Out-Look Competition; and Short Film Competition. The Chicago Award and the Founder's Award were also presented.

Taking home the top prize, the Gold Hugo for Best Film, in the International Feature Film Competition, is director **Alice Rohrwacher's *Happy as Lazzaro*** (Italy/Switzerland/Germany/France), a film the jury recognized for its poetic cinematic language and formal rigor. The Silver Hugo for Best Director was awarded to **Jia Zhangke** for ***Ash Is Purest White*** (China/France) and the Silver Hugo Special Jury Prize was awarded to **Joy** (Austria), directed by **Sudابه Mortezaei**. Director **Ash Mayfair** took home top honors in the New Directors Competition with a Gold Hugo for ***The Third Wife*** (Vietnam) and the Silver Hugo was awarded to **Joël Karekezi** for ***The Mercy of the Jungle*** (Belgium/France/Rwanda). The Roger Ebert Award, presented to an emerging filmmaker with a fresh and uncompromising vision, was awarded to directors **Andréa Bescond** and **Eric Métayer** for ***Little Tickles*** (France), and the Chicago Award was presented to **Michael Paulucci** for ***Hashtag Perfect Life***. The Founder's Award, given to one film across all categories that captures the spirit of the Chicago International Film Festival for its unique and innovative approach to the art of the moving image, was presented to **Felix van Groeningen's *Beautiful Boy***.

For images of the films, [click here](#).

“Each year, the films presented in our competitions represent the excellence and diversity of filmmaking from around the world, and this year was no exception,” said Festival Artistic Director **Mimi Plauché**. “We are proud to honor these extraordinary films from around the world and here at home, saluting a diverse lineup of singular filmmakers and their work.”

Select award-winning films will be screened during the Festival’s Best of the Fest program on Sunday, October 21. The complete list of honorees is as follows:

### **International Feature Film Competition**

#### **Gold Hugo: Best Film**

##### ***Happy as Lazzaro***

Italy/Switzerland/France/Germany

Dir. Alice Rohrwacher

The Gold Hugo for Best Film goes to ***Happy as Lazzaro*** (dir. Alice Rohrwacher, Italy). For profoundly enchanting, surprising, and moving us through a poetic cinematic language that is both genuine and rigorous, while intertwining past and present into a highly original, engrossing, layered, and uncanny viewing experience that invites us to face our own humanity with mystery, grace, and lyricism.

#### **Silver Hugo: Special Jury Prize**

##### ***Joy***

Austria

Dir. Sudabeh Mortezaei

The Silver Hugo Special Jury Award goes to ***Joy*** (dir. Sudabeh Mortezaei, Austria). This film shows in an honest and raw way the conflicts of two sex workers of Nigeria in Europe, showing in a truthful and consistent style the cycle of exploitation. Moral dilemmas and guilt are exposed carefully in this sincere social drama.

#### **Silver Hugo: Best Director**

##### **Jia Zhangke, *Ash Is Purest White***

China/France

The Silver Hugo for Best Director goes to **Jia Zhangke** (China) for *Ash Is Purest White*, which was shot with masterfully crafted mise en scene that allows us to observe the complexity of its characters and the evolution of a country.

#### **Silver Hugo: Best Actor**

##### **Jesper Christensen, *Before the Frost***

Denmark

The Silver Hugo for Best Actor goes to **Jesper Christensen** (*Before the Frost*, dir. Michael Noer, Denmark), whose face shifts like the world around him. He leads us through the crevices of his soul as he tries to catch hold of his desires and dreams that keep slipping from his grasp.

#### **Silver Hugo: Best Actress**

##### **Zhao Tao, *Ash is Purest White***

China/France

The Silver Hugo for Best Actress goes to **Zhao Tao** (*Ash Is Purest White*, dir. Jia Zhangke, China). who plays the role of Quio, who takes us on a 20-year journey through the fast changing landscape and morays of her country. Tao burns with brilliance, wit, and ferociousness as a woman whose steps are haunted by her history and what may come next.

### **Silver Plaque: Best Screenplay**

**Stéphane Brizé and Olivier Gorce, *At War***

France

The Silver Hugo for Best Screenplay goes to **Stéphane Brizé** and **Olivier Gorce** (*At War*, dir. Stéphane Brizé, France) for articulating and bringing light to an important political issue which reflects the anxiety of our contemporary society and the precariousness of our livelihood.

### **Silver Plaque: Best Cinematography**

**David Gallego, *Birds of Passage***

Colombia/Mexico/Denmark/France

The Silver Plaque for Best Cinematography goes to **David Gallego** for *Birds of Passage* (Colombia). Its stunning compositions and expressive use of color reflects the deep emotions and conflicts the characters experience.

### **Silver Plaque: Best Art Direction**

**Angélica Perea, *Birds of Passage***

Colombia/Mexico/Denmark/France

The Silver Plaque for Best Art Direction goes to **Angélica Perea** for *Birds of Passage* (Colombia) for its exquisite and poetic use of the spectacular locations of the desert of Guajira to tell the rise and fall of an indigenous family ravaged by the drug trade.

### **New Directors Competition**

#### **Gold Hugo**

***The Third Wife***

Vietnam

Dir. Ash Mayfair

The Gold Hugo goes to ***The Third Wife***. **Ash Mayfair's** lush, assured debut feature follows a 14-year-old girl as she enters a wealthy household. Mayfair's unshakeable vision grants the women of this world an individuality their society rejects, treating them as creations as wondrous as the natural world that surrounds them, as the film builds to a staggering climax that devastates and thrills in equal measure.

#### **Silver Hugo**

***The Mercy of the Jungle***

Belgium/France/Rwanda

Dir. Joël Karekezi

The Silver Hugo goes to ***The Mercy of the Jungle***, an intimate two-hander set at the outbreak of the Second Congo War. Separated from their unit, a Sergeant and a Private take to the jungle as their only means of survival, a setting that swallows the camera and the audience as completely as the war itself envelopes the lives of these two young men, countless innocent civilians, and the land itself.

### **Roger Ebert Award**

***Little Ticks***

France

Dirs. Andréa Bescond, Eric Métayer

The Roger Ebert Award goes to ***Little Ticks***, a visceral, personal, and endlessly inventive portrait of a woman whose memories and present actions are continuously and irrevocably shaped by horrific childhood sexual abuse. Writer/directors **Andréa Bescond** and **Eric Métayer** dive unflinchingly into the mind of dancer Odette (played with staggering vigor by Bescond), using the mutability of memory and the expressions of the body to steer the audience and protagonist alike toward healing, reconciliation, and something like peace.

### **Documentary Competition**

#### **Gold Hugo**

### **[Censored]**

Australia

Dir. Sari Braithwaite

The Gold Hugo goes to **[Censored]** a film that stitches together decades-old archival fragments of male violence into something shockingly contemporary, a film that distills the essence of a cinematic patriarchy through tightly woven montage that is unflinching and difficult to watch, yet essential.

### **Silver Hugo**

#### ***Ex-Shaman***

Brazil

Dir. Luiz Bolognesi

The Silver Hugo goes to ***Ex-Shaman*** for its hauntingly lyrical and deeply cinematic variations of the themes of colonialism, oppression, alienation, dignity and rebellion. This film, a collaboration with the Amazônia tribe 'Paiter Surui', achieves a powerful and mysterious lucidity. This work is even more important because the highly corrupt racist Jair Bolsonaro is likely to become the next president of Brazil, which could deal a deathblow to indigenous people's desire for autonomy and access to ancestral lands.

### **Silver Hugo**

#### ***The Raft***

Sweden

Dir. Marcus Lindeen

For the expertly crafted, visually inventive and absorbing retelling of one long strange trip across international waters and into the depths of human nature – the jury awards the Silver Hugo to **Marcus Lindeen's** riveting film, ***The Raft***.

### **Out-Look Competition**

#### **Gold Q-Hugo**

##### ***Retablo***

Peru/Germany/Norway

Dir. Alvaro Delgado Aparicio

Through a discreetly powerful mise en scène, ***Retablo*** is a delicately crafted story of art, transmission, and voyeurism. Using magnificent cinematography, creative direction of already nuanced actors, and a stunning attention to detail, this film delivers a precious, striking portrait of a land, a community, a family, and a man-to-be.

### **Silver Q-Hugo**

#### ***Rafiki***

Kenya/South Africa/Germany/Netherlands/France/Norway/Lebanon

Dir. Wanuri Kahiu

A marvelously vivid film filled with color and hope, ***Rafiki*** was initially banned in its native Kenya for its sensitive, gripping portrayal of two young women falling in love across boundaries of class, politics, and mobility. Its undying heart, however, cements its narrative vitality in a period of global human rights retrenchment.

### **Special Mention**

#### ***Hard Paint***

Brazil

Dirs. Filipe Matzembacher, Marcio Reolon

For its courageous invention and for situating queer identity within carefully observed intersectional economic and political concerns, we give ***Hard Paint*** an honorable mention.

### **Documentary Short Film Competition**

**Silver Hugo:**

***Circle***

U.K./Canada/India

Dir. Jayisha Patel

A cinematic masterpiece, *Circle* is made with a raw intimacy that is uncomfortable, personal, painful, and necessary. Patel articulates the universal cycle of abuse that women endure and, through this story, the pain of women across the globe.

**Gold Plaque:**

***Edgecombe***

U.S.

Crystal Kayiza

Beautiful imagery and discreetly powerful sound design gracefully reveal the immeasurable strength and hope that spans well past the three generations shared by the protagonists.

**Special Mention:**

***Black 14***

U.S.

Dir. Darius Clark Monroe

Black 14 earns this honorable mention for its masterful mining of the past, showing us the present, and shaping the future with a film that is beautifully edited and executed with a sharp storytelling eye.

**Animated Short Film Competition**

**Silver Hugo:**

***Bloeistraat 11***

The Netherlands

Nienke Deutz

For its innovative blend of animation techniques and careful use of material, the film creates an embodied awareness of its coming-of-age topic. It visually expresses the awkwardness of growing up with confidence and clarity.

**Gold Plaque:**

***Weekends***

U.S.

Trevor Jimenez

This film is honored for its exacting grasp of the medium that carries a human warmth of narrative.

**Special Mention:**

***Opening Night***

U.S.

Margaret Bialis

The film is a humorous and succinct grasp of human psychology through relationships and song.

**Live Action Short Film Competition**

**Gold Hugo**

***Mamartuille***

Mexico

Dir. Alejandro Saevich

Recognized for stylistic distinction in direction, cinematograph, social relevance, satirical commentary, and performance quality, the film is a timely, subtle, and poignant accusation of the limitations of government told through a smart, humanistic examination of the leaders behind the decisions that shape our world. Such a portrayal is becoming increasingly relatable globally; the film is an exemplary use of the medium.

### **Silver Hugo**

#### ***Hair Wolf***

U.S.

Dir. Mariama Diallo

The film is honored for its lush, eye-popping production design and its confident and sharp writing and performances. *Hair Wolf* is a simmering and wicked commentary on cultural appropriation, power, and love in the soul-sucking age of social media.

### **Special Mention**

#### ***Nyi ma lay***

Singapore

Dir. Wei Liang Chiang

In one single continuous shot, ***Nyi Ma Lay*** captures both the fragility and the mystery of the human condition. This short film provides an enormous amount of tension and pathos and is engaging across all cultures and languages.

### **Chicago Award**

#### ***Hashtag Perfect Life***

U.S.

Dir. Michael Paulucci

This year's Chicago Award goes to ***Hashtag Perfect Life***, a darkly comic, brilliantly acted, formally bold short film that tackles, with startling incisiveness, the grinding, soul-numbing superficiality of the digital age. Underneath its hilarious and queasy surface, **Michael Paulucci's** satirical fable is a profoundly sad requiem for a kind and thoughtful world.

### **Founder's Award**

#### ***Beautiful Boy***

U.S.

Dir. Felix van Groeningen

The Founder's Award is personally presented by Festival Founder Michael Kutza to the single film across all categories he feels best embodies the spirit of curiosity, optimism and love of film that led to his starting the Chicago International Film Festival 55 years ago. "*Beautiful Boy* is an emotional drama which remains full of hope and humanity with two of the most stunning performances of the year," remarked Kutza.

For a press release listing jury members, click [here](#).

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### **Festival and Ticket Information**

The 54th Chicago International Film Festival runs Oct. 10-21, 2018 at the AMC River East, 322 E. Illinois St., and features more than 150 films, with a vast diversity of offerings, with numerous competitive categories and several highlight programs such as Black Perspectives, Cinemas of the Americas, International Comedy, Spotlight: Italy, Women in Cinema, Out-Look, After Dark and the City & State program (showcasing films made in Chicago and throughout Illinois.)

Individual tickets (\$8 to \$20) and Gala Presentation tickets (\$20 to \$150) are now on sale. Discounted parking is available at AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois Street). For more information, visit [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com) or call 312-332-3456.

### **Festival and Ticket Information**

The 54th Chicago International Film Festival's sponsors include Premiere Sponsors: Bloomberg Philanthropies, Wintrust Community Banks; Official Wine Sponsor: Chloe Wine Collection; Education Sponsor: HBO; Participating Sponsor: British International School of Chicago; Airline Partner: LOT Polish Airlines; Headquarters Hotel: St. Jane Hotel; Event Partners: AMC Theaters, The Gwen Hotel, Little Goat Diner; Platinum Media Partner: NCM; This program is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency. Additional support provided by the Illinois Film Office, Chicago Film Office, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), and Lagunitas Brewing Company.

### **About Cinema/Chicago**

[Cinema/Chicago](#), the presenting organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, is a year-round nonprofit arts and education organization dedicated to fostering better communication between people of diverse cultures through the art of film and the moving image. Cinema/Chicago's programs include the Chicago International Film Festival, International Screenings Program, Chicago International Television Festival, CineYouth Festival, and year-round Education Program. Celebrating its 54<sup>th</sup> edition October 10-21, 2018, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival. For more information, please visit [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Vimeo](#) and [Twitter](#).

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