



56th Chicago International Film Festival
October 14-25, 2020

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Rob. Walton | Chicago International Film Festival publicity2@chicagofilmfestival.com |
312-399-8206

Alejandro Riera | Chicago International Film Festival publicity@chicagofilmfestival.com |
773-726-1833

POLAND'S *SWEAT* AND IRAN'S *CARELESS CRIME* TAKE HOME TOP INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILM PRIZES AT 56TH CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, WHILE HUNGARY'S LILI HORVÁT AND VENEZUELA'S IGNACIO MÁRQUEZ EARN NEW DIRECTORS AWARDS

Trans-focused Films *Things We Dare Not Do* (Mexico) and *Little Girl* (France) Win the Festival's Top Documentary Prizes

Chicago, IL (October 23, 2020) – The **56th Chicago International Film Festival**, North America's longest-running competitive film festival, this morning announced the winners of its 2020 competitions. In a virtual ceremony live-streamed on YouTube, 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 Roger Ebert Award were also presented.

Taking home the top prize in the International Feature Film Competition was ***Sweat***, a Polish-language film by Swedish director **Magnus von Horn**, hailed by the jury for its directorial vision that is “exciting and coherent, with breathtaking framing and compositional choices that work beautifully together with its art direction.” The Silver Hugo Jury Prize was presented to ***Careless Crime*** (Iran) directed by **Shahram Mokri**, while the Silver Hugo for Best Director was awarded to **Andrei Konchalovsky** for his film ***Dear Comrades!*** (Russia).

Director **Lili Horvat** took home top honors in the New Directors Competition with a Gold Hugo for ***Preparations to Be Together for an Unknown Period of Time*** (Hungary), while the Silver Hugo in this competition went to **Ignacio Márquez** for ***The Special*** (Venezuela/U.S.). The Roger Ebert Award, presented to an emerging filmmaker with an innovative and forward-looking perspective, went to director **João Paulo Miranda Maria** for ***Memory House*** (Brazil/France).

In the Documentary Competition, the Gold Hugo was awarded to director **Bruno Santamaría's *Things We Dare Not Do*** (Mexico) for its “compassionate story of queer adolescence focusing

on small stories in a specific place,” and the Silver Hugo was presented to director **Sébastien Lifshitz’s *Little Girl*** (France), “a film of grace and empathy...that doesn’t ignore the hardships faced by transgender youth in an uncomprehending world.”

Things We Dare Not Do also earned the top prize, the Gold Q-Hugo, in the Out-Look Competition, honoring superbly crafted perspectives on sexuality and identity from across the globe. The Silver Q-Hugo Award went to director **Tsai Ming-Liang’s *Days (Rizi)*** (Taiwan), “an original poem of loneliness and the need for human connection.”

The Chicago Award, presented to a film from the Festival’s City/State section, went to co-directors **Andre Mui** and **Danielle Alston** for their short film ***Patois***. This year, Panavision will present the winners of the Chicago Award with a grant valued at \$30,000 of gear rental from one of their U.S. facilities.

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

“This has been such an extraordinary and challenging year in so many ways, but one important constant has remained -- the capacity of exceptional cinema to inspire, captivate, and move us,” said Artistic Director **Mimi Plauché**. “This year’s award winners are a testament to the enduring power of film, and we congratulate and express our gratitude to all of the filmmakers, who shared their work, and to the juries, who were generous and thoughtful in their consideration and appreciation of the films.”

The International Competition Jury includes film producer, curator, and programmer **Violeta Bava**; screenwriter and director **Chinonye Chukwu**; Academy Award-winning production designer **Adam Stockhausen**; actress **Eliane Umuhire**; and film writer **Boyd Van Hoeij**. For a listing of all competition jury members, click [here](#).

All award-winning films, with the exception of the Ivory Coast’s ***Night of the Kings (La nuit des rois)***, are available to screen throughout the Festival, which closes at 11:59pm Central Time on Sunday, October 25. The complete list of honorees is as follows:

International Feature Film Competition

Gold Hugo

[Sweat](#) (Dir. Magnus von Horn | Poland, Sweden)

The jury awards the Gold Hugo to *Sweat* for its formidable filmmaking. The storytelling is skillful, subtle, full of nuance, and buttressed by powerful performances across the board. The directorial vision is exciting and coherent, with breathtaking framing and compositional choices that work beautifully together with its art direction, creating a cinematic world that is focused and compelling.

Silver Hugo – Jury Prize

[Careless Crime](#) (*Jenayat-e bi deghat*) (Dir. Shahram Mokri | Iran)

Inspired by the true incident of the burning of a movie theater in Abadan, on the eve of the Iranian Revolution, the film articulates the past and the present in a film within a film, creating a displacing labyrinth, equally complex and fascinating. In this ambitious and provocative piece, cinema proves to be the magic that can save us from a tragic fate.

Silver Hugo – Best Director

[Dear Comrades!](#) (*Dorogie Tovarischi!*) (Dir. Andrei Konchalovsky | Russia)

Andrei Konchalovsky is a master storyteller and proves this once again in *Dear Comrades!* His precisely staged Soviet-era drama, in bleak black-and-white, tells both a socio-politically specific story from that time as well as a universally resonant tale of a distraught mother whose political, familial and moral allegiances become opposed to one another after a traumatic event.

Silver Hugo – Best Performance

Yakusho Koji, [Under the Open Sky](#) (*Subarashiki Sekai*) (Dir. Miwa Nishikawa | Japan)

Yakusho Koji skilfully and yet organically brings to his character depth and a true range of emotions that allow us to journey with him as he struggles to gain a certain normal life in an apparently not easily forgiving society, solidly building the whole movie on his strong performance.

Silver Hugo – Best Ensemble Performance

Mala Emde, Noah Saavedra, Tonio Schneider, Luisa-Céline Gaffron, Andreas Lust, Nadine Sauter, Ivy Lissack, Hussein Eliraqui [And Tomorrow the Entire World](#) (*Und morgen die ganze Welt*) (Dir. Julia von Heinz | Germany)

This strong ensemble of performances is grounded in emotional depth and contributes greatly to the power and resonance of the film.

Silver Hugo – Best Screenplay

Stavros Raptis, Christos Nikou, [Apples](#) (*Mila*) (Dir. Christos Nikou | Greece)

The screenplay of *Apples*, delicately constructed and sketched with impressive economy, manages to create a world with its own odd rules, even as the element that breathes life into this world is the fact it so clearly parallels our own experiences and understanding of the world we live in. The main character's gradual coming into his own, as he navigates between a past and future unknown, is beautifully modulated, blossoming from an anonymous avatar into a fully fleshed out human being.

Best Cinematography

[Night of the Kings](#) (*La nuit des rois*) (Dir. Philippe Lacôte | Côte d'Ivoire, France, Canada, Senegal)

By contrasting the flickering ochre light of oil lamps inside a dark prison with the brightness of its sun-scorched exteriors, the cinematography of *Night of the Kings* contributes greatly to creating a vividly drawn world in which fact and fiction might seem opposed but gradually seep into one another as the act of telling of a story becomes even more transfixing than the story itself.

Best Sound

Pierre-Jules Audet, Emmanuel Croset, [Night of the Kings](#) (*La nuit des rois*) (Dir. Philippe Lacôte | Côte d'Ivoire, France, Canada, Senegal)

The particularly rich sound work in *Night of the Kings* lends the film an almost Shakespearean grandeur, extending the factual and fictional worlds of the movie far beyond what's visible on screen at any one time.

Best Art Direction

Jagna Dobesz, [Sweat](#) (Dir. Magnus von Horn | Poland, Sweden)

From shopping malls and Sylwia's glass-box apartment to her mother's birthday party, the pitch perfect locations and detailed set dressing choices in *Sweat* help to vividly define the world of the film and its characters' lives.

New Directors Competition

Gold Hugo

[Preparations to Be Together for an Unknown Period of Time](#) (*Felkészülés meghatározatlan ideig tartó együttlétre*) (Dir. Lili Horvát | Hungary)

For its captivating and engaging love story that immerses us into the minds of two neurosurgeons and its dissection of the thin lines between romantic feelings, obsession, and madness. For its heartfelt portrait of a woman, carried out by a fascinating actress, and her attempt to find her place in a city that she had left, a chauvinistic hospital that needs her, and a man she's not able to read. For its rich, deep colors, exquisite framings, and timeless look that are enhanced by the use of 35mm film.

Silver Hugo

[The Special](#) (*Especial*) (Dir. Ignacio Márquez | Venezuela, U.S.)

Because of its highly atmospheric and multisensory cinematic universe, immersing us in the world on the quest for understanding the development of a unique relationship between a father and a son, this coming of age movie not only deals with confidence and a sense of humor the difficult issues of disability, trauma and acceptance, but also has a soundscape filled with brilliant Latin Jazz tracks that sets a tone of masterful performances.

Roger Ebert Award

[Memory House](#) (*Casa de Antiquidades*) (Dir. João Paulo Miranda Maria | Brazil, France)

A timely, challenging reflection on isolation and racism bringing ancestral spirits and allowing them to enter into the present as last guardians for the sanity of the indigenous people. A daring debut that pictures a collapsing world as if in a bizarre shamanic trance with its dream sequences and hallucinogenic visions guiding us into the deep powerful realm of archetypes and myths.

International Documentary Competition

Gold Hugo

[*Things We Dare Not Do*](#) (*Cosas que no hacemos*) (Dir. Bruno Santamaría | Mexico)

The Gold Hugo goes to *Things We Dare Not Do*, by director and cinematographer Bruno Santamaría. What begins as a free-floating portrait of youth in a village on the Pacific coast of Mexico grows into a compassionate story of queer adolescence, as *Things We Dare Not Do* brings us into the life of a 16-year-old who wishes to dress as a woman. Her bravery inspires Santamaría's intrepid yet tender camerawork, which sheds warm light on everyday life in a close-knit, complex, and sometimes violent community. Focusing on small stories in a specific place, this film imparts a deep sense of what it means to grow up in Mexico – and everywhere.

Silver Hugo

[*Little Girl*](#) (*Petite Fille*) (Dir. Sébastien Lifshitz | France)

The Silver Hugo goes to *Little Girl* by Sébastien Lifshitz, which follows one loving family's efforts to support an eight-year-old daughter confronting gender dysphoria. A film of grace and empathy, Lifshitz wisely focuses on scenes of joy, but doesn't ignore the hardships faced by transgender youth in an uncomprehending world.

Animated Short Film Competition

Gold Hugo

[*Tie*](#) (*Elo*) (Dir. Alexandra Ramires | Portugal, France)

Two figures wander a landscape that is either prehistoric, or post-apocalyptic; they are souls disconnected from their corporal bodies in ways that only animation can visualize. They are perhaps sole survivors, but their disconnection also reflects a more pervasive disconnect with mind and body, brain and heart, that humankind has wandered into. A beautiful inverted palette of black and white pulls us in immediately, and a great deal of quiet keeps us there. For its perfect melding of beauty and horror, we give the Gold Hugo to *Tie (Elo)* by Alexandra Ramires.

Silver Hugo

[*Step Into the River*](#) (*He An*) (Dir. Weijia Ma | China, France)

This beautiful film explores the extended history of gender prejudice in China, from the valuing of boys over girls to female infanticide. With pastel colors and wonderful child acting, Weijia reflects her own memories as a girl growing up in China in this powerful and important film. This story unfolds illustratively at first, but then takes a turn to the magical realism of the ghost world, in a land haunted by infant spirits. For its bravery and unforgettable images, we give the Silver Hugo to *Step Into the River (He An)* by Weijia Ma.

Documentary Short Film Competition

Gold Hugo

[We Have One Heart](#) (Dir. Katarzyna Warzecha | Poland)

The film tells the heartwarming story of an unlikely family reunification across several generations and geographical distance, masterfully weaving family archival materials with animation and compelling narrative voices to produce a highly unique and intimate visual documentary tapestry worthy of this important distinction.

Silver Hugo

[How to Disappear](#) (Dirs. Robin Klengel, Leonhard Müllner, Michael Stumpf | Austria)

The documentary offers an insightful anti-war essay on the history of desertion by bringing audiences into the visual world of the Battlefield video game. Through its well-paced discussion of the rules that order the game, the filmmakers effectively level an intelligent critique of the structural forces that discipline world conflict today, raising important and timely questions about human agency.

Live Action Short Film Competition

Gold Hugo

[The End of Suffering \(a proposal\)](#) (Dir. Jacqueline Lentzou | Greece)

The Gold Hugo goes to *The End of Suffering (a proposal)*, a haptic voyage that suspends in time and space. Through otherworldly imagery, atmospheric sound, and the interplay of the frenetic and static, texture and void, chroma and light, Lentzou offers an expansive outlook on outer space, being, and cosmic connectedness for a reverie of the existential + intergalactic.”

Silver Hugo

[Gramercy](#) (Dirs. Jamil McGinnis and Pat Heywood | USA)

We are thrilled to announce *Gramercy* as this year's Silver Hugo Award recipient. We were impressed by its deft and light-handed approach to storytelling, bestowing its characters with an uncommon fluidity, complexity and authenticity. *Gramercy* deals with pressing issues in both grounding and transcendent ways, bringing together naturalism and lyricism to tell a singular story.

Chicago Award

[Patois](#) (Dirs. Andre Muir, Danielle Alston | U.S.)

The Chicago Award – presented to a Chicago or Illinois film, short or feature – goes to this poetic film that authentically unravels the ineffable immigrant experience of distancing oneself from the mother (and the motherland) in order to belong. With sparse dialogue and evocative imagery of intimate moments that painfully capture adolescent belonging, the filmmakers present a complicated and striking character study of a young

woman striking a balance between traditions of her homeland and life at an American school. The powerful lead performance from Chicago actor **Mariah Gordon** is as unique as it is universal, and the filmmakers serve her considerable talents with grace and skill. The result is the kind of cinematic achievement that's possible when gifted storytellers are empowered to tell the stories they care about. This year, Panavision will present the winners of the Chicago Award with a grant valued at \$30,000 of gear rental from one of their U.S. facilities.

Out-Look Competition

Gold Q-Hugo

[Things We Dare Not Do](#) (*Cosas que no hacemos*) (Dir. Bruno Santamaria | Mexico)

A Latin American portrait of the complexity between guilt and freedom. A unique cinematic jewel of devastating intimacy that resists definitions of genre while offering profound access, intimate authorship, and relationship-building through a nuanced portrait that resists easy narrative conclusions. It is an exceptionally close and fearless take on a life of contrasts, courage, and radical hope that inspires us to take up our cameras and share our own narratives.

Silver Q-Hugo

[Days](#) (*Rizi*) (Dir. Tsai Ming-Liang | Taiwan)

An original poem of loneliness and the need for human connection, portrayed with the utmost respect for the characters and the cinematic medium, made even more profound by the current times we are living through. This film offers the audience moments of self-reflection and introspection in the way only great cinema can: through stunning framing, ambitious storytelling, cinematic intimacy that results in new capacities for thinking about queer cinema.

About the Chicago International Film Festival

Celebrating its 56th edition October 14-25, 2020, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival. Showcasing the best in international and independent films from around the world, the 56th edition will be virtual and present more than 50 feature films and nine short film programs from around the world, bringing audiences together through virtual screenings, one-night-only live events, virtual tribute events with directors and actors, as well as movie club-style gatherings for audiences. From dramas and thrillers to documentaries and comedies, the Festival presents a vast diversity of offerings, including numerous competitive categories and several highlight programs such as Black Perspectives, Cinemas of the Americas, International Comedy, Women in Cinema, Out-Look, After Dark and the City & State program (showcasing films made in Chicago and throughout Illinois.). www.chicagofilmfestival.com

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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](#), [Summer Screenings Program](#), [CineYouth Festival](#), and year-round [Education Program](#). For more information, please visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#).

More information can be found at <https://www.chicagofilmfestival.com/>.

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