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Migrant fest drops media clichés for a reality check

Two African migrants in a scene from the award-winning opening night feature *Those Who Jump*.

By Pablo Suarez

International film showcase kicks off today with slate of 80-plus productions from 25 countries

Coming at a time when forced migrations take their toll on an almost daily basis, the 7th edition of the International Festival of Migrant Cinema (IFMC) couldn't be any timelier. The selection of productions featured this year truthfully depicts the tumultuous social and political realities of African, Latin American, European and Asian nations. You'll find stories of migrants, but also of immigrants, portrayals of political migrations, as well as internal, economic, and religious migrations.

In stark contrast to the increasingly stereotyped reports fed by the media, the IFMC aims at offering a true-to-life and profound meditation on some of today's most important social, political, and cultural movements. This year's edition features some 80 films from more than 25 countries programmed into many sections that connect migration with globalization, work, health, education, human rights, refugees, gender, and childhood. There are competitive sections for feature and short films, non-competitive theme-based sections, two "Focus" sections on the works of Armenian director Harutjun Katchatryan and Austria's Peter Schreiner, and two sidebars dedicated to the Hamburg Film Festival and Film Madrid.

Two not-to-be-missed retrospectives are those of Italian filmmakers Gianluca and Massimiliano de Serio, leading figures of the new Italian cinema whose documentaries explore the fate of individuals seeking to set themselves apart from the Other, and in so doing assuming a new identity in a hostile social environment — whether they are youngsters in Burkina Faso, art students and teachers in Albania, or young migrants in Moldavia. Some of the films included are: *The Xhod's Exam* (2007), *Bakroman* (2010), and *Seven Acts of Mercy* (2011). Gianluca and Massimiliano De Serio will also offer a masterclass and a laboratory of visual arts, together with the ENERC.

The opening night feature is the *Those Who Jump* ("Les sauteurs," Denmark, 2016), by Estephan Wagner, Moritz Siebert, and Abou Bakar Sidibé. The film won the Ecumenical Jury Award in Berlin this year. In the form of a home movie and also in the vein of experimental filmmaking, *Those Who Jump* carefully examines the lives of a group of African migrants who try to get to Europe by scaling a barrier between Morocco and Melilla (Spain).

A new and important section is Urgent Cinema, which takes a closer look at the recently created Centre for the Detention of Migrants in Argentina. This category includes among its highlights the Swiss documentary *Vol Special* ("Special Flight," 2011), by Fernand Melgar, winner of the Junior Jury Award and the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at Locarno. Melgar's unflinching feature immerses viewers in a nine-month-period at the detention centre of Geneva, one of the 28 deportation centres in Switzerland, a country where hundreds of illegal residents are arrested yearly without trial and imprisoned for 18 months before being deported.

Another remarkable production is the French short film *La France qui se lève tôt* ("Early Rising France," 2011), by Hugo Chesnard, winner of the Audience Award at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, which portrays the situation of many migrants who work long hours, pay taxes and pension funds, and yet are never granted citizenship.

Also, there's the Spanish feature *Fronteras invisibles* ("Invisible Frontiers," 2010), by Edu León and Olmo Calvo, which includes testimonies from migrants from all over the world who talk about many types of abuse endured in Spain while trying to enter the country.

In the section *The Movement of the Body as an Insurrection Act*, a key French feature is *La mécanique des flux* ("Flow Mechanics," 2015), by Nathalie Loubeyre, which unveils the violence hidden beyond the euphemism of "control of flows" used on a few key sites of the migratory routes of Europe to exert control on men, women and children.

From Senegal, featured in the section *Creative Resistances*, *The Revolution Won't Be Televised* (2015), by Rama Thiaw, is set in 2011 when three friends decide to head a national movement against self-proclaimed president Wade, and so millions of citizens take to the streets in the name of democracy. After having earned their place in history, these three activists will try to become artists too.

Though already released in Argentina, it's a true and welcome surprise to find the award winning *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014), by Ana Lily Amirpour, a unique horror movie with a good dose of romance set in the Iranian ghost-town *Bad City*, a place that smells of death and lonesomeness where the townspeople are unaware of being stalked by an alluring vampire.

One of the most appealing special activities is the 2nd Latin American Meeting of Urban Art, which will take place in different public spaces throughout the city, boasting special guests such as Bastardilla (Italy) and Gleo (Colombia) in attendance. Among the international guests, there's French visual artist and professor Clarisse Hahn, co-curator with Italian political scientist Sandro Mezzadra of the section The Movement of the Body as an Insurrection Act.

When and where

October 11-19. The International Festival of Migrant Cinema is organized by the National Film Board (INCAA), the ENERC, the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo of the Universidad Nacional Tres de Febrero, and the Paco Urondo Cultural Centre (UBA), with free admission to all screenings and special activities. For more information: www.cinemigrante.org

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