

**PRESS RELEASE:**

**MAREK ŠULÍK'S *MS. PRESIDENT* WILL OPEN THE 28TH JI.HLAVA**

**FIRST TITLES AND RETROSPECTIVES HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED**

**Prague, September 18, 2024**

First titles were presented at the press conference of the 28th Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival. The festival will be opened by the world premiere of the anticipated time-lapse portrait of Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová, *Ms. President*, directed by Marek Šulík. The festival programme will offer new documentaries from across the world, retrospectives, the best of experimental filmmaking, a number of non-competitive programme sections and traditionally a rich industry programme for film professionals.

The 28th edition of Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, which kicks off in six weeks, is extended this year from six to ten days (October 25 – November 3).

**What do women face in key positions?**

The opening film of this year's Ji.hlava will be [Ms. President](#) by Slovak director **Marek Šulík**. **The time-lapse documentary chronicles Zuzana Čaputová's five years as Slovak President.** This intimate film portrait presents Čaputová not only as a president, but also as an (un)ordinary woman who takes a country in crisis into her hands and becomes a symbol of hope. The film crew filmed her in situations where other cameras could not. It captured not only meetings with world leaders, but also personal dramas and dilemmas.

*"The opening ceremony of this year's Ji.hlava IDFF will feature the film Ms. President, which is rare not only because of how close the director Marek Šulík was to the Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová, but also because of the speed with which it reaches the audience, as barely a few months have passed since the last shots were taken. At a time when a woman may become the next U.S. president, the film takes on yet another dimension, showing that Slovak society is perhaps even more divided than the American one. Ms. President is a universal testimony to the contemporary world. And it shows us up close what women face when they are in key positions in a system still dominated primarily by men. But despite everything, the film is above all an encouragement, namely to our own integrity and belief in values,"* said **Marek Hovorka** about the opening film.

*"We politicians must have power over our emotions. We have to control our thoughts because the way we think is the way we become. And above all, we all must become better people now,"* **Zuzana Čaputová** sums up her approach to the presidency in the film.

*"For me, the film has value on several levels. Personal, historical, political, civic... But the most important one is currently connected with Slovakia. I believe that the story it tells can have a cathartic value for many people who are frustrated by the dramatic change in political culture and who hesitate whether decency in life makes sense,"* says **Marek Šulík**, the director of *Ms. President*.

After its world premiere at the Ji.hlava IDFF, the film will be released in Czech cinemas by Aerofilms on 14 November.

### **Documentary comedy and documentary thriller**

*"The extension of the festival from six to ten days brings much more comfort in all types of accommodation and will allow us to show all competition and selected non-competition films two to three times. We believe that the first programme news already show that this year's programme will be truly exceptional,"* says festival director Marek Hovorka.

Slovak director **Peter Kerekes** will present his new film at Ji.hlava. The documentary comedy [\*Wishing on a Star\*](#), which was presented at the Venice IFF in early September, will give the audience a glimpse into the world of astrology and belief in the power of the stars. The heroine is the famous Neapolitan fortune teller Luciana, who believes that a person can change his or her destiny by taking a trip to a destination determined by the stars on his or her birthday. The film opens up the themes of impermanence and awkwardness and shows that it is never too late to look for love. *"My goal was to combine the cinematic feel of a feature film with the ability to capture the real emotions of real people. In addition, I wanted to emphasise the importance of chance, which plays a significant role in this film,"* says director Peter Kerekes about the film.

The Czech Joy competition will present the film [\*War Correspondent\*](#) by **Benjamin Tuček** and **David Čálek**. The documentary provides a look into the life and work of Czech Radio's war correspondent Martin Dorazín and captures a broader view of the current conflict in Ukraine. *"I was surprised by the mixture of the professions of journalist and humanitarian worker in the person of our hero. His commitment and help to those in need. My intention and wish was to convey to the film audience situations that I hope they will never experience first-hand,"* says filmmaker Benjamin Tuček.

### **Slovak state and Czech Dream in retrospectives**

A unique insight into the wartime period in Slovakia will be shown in the retrospective [\*We Have Our Film! Images of the Slovak State\*](#). The festival will present nearly twenty-five films from the period of the Slovak state (1939–1947). *"The cinematography of the Slovak state is relatively mapped in Slovakia but it is rarely the subject of critical self-reflection. This is related both to our still un-discussed relationship to wartime Slovak statehood and to the lack of*

*distancing of our current statehood from the fascist content of the explored period," says Petra Hanáková, Slovak film historian and programmer of the section.*

The retrospective entitled [Transparent Beings: Vít Klusák and Filip Remunda](#) will feature almost two dozen films by the renowned Czech film directors, including the award-winning [Czech Dream](#) about "the hypermarket that never existed", twenty years after its premiere in 2004. "On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the first screening of Czech Dream, we have prepared a digitally remastered version of our first feature film. This version will have its premiere in Jihlava and after the festival the Czech Dream will be released in cinemas," says Filip Remunda.

"The authorial approach of Vít Klusák and Filip Remunda has changed our perception of documentary film. With their interventions in reality, their work with absurdity and their desire to reflect the most current social issues in a substantial way, they have drawn the attention of the audience and the media to documentary cinema. The Czech Dream is rightly one of the most important Czech documentary films ever made," says Marek Hovorka, pointing out the other films that the retrospective will offer: [Steam on the River](#) (2015), [Matrix AB](#) (2015), [The White World According to Daliborek](#) (2017), or [Encounters with Film](#) (2006), which was made on the occasion of the tenth edition of the Ji.hlava IDFF.

### **Nixon, colonization and mamba**

The international titles at this year's Ji.hlava IDFF include, for example, the winner of this year's Berlinale: [Dahomey](#) by award-winning French-Senegalese filmmaker **Mati Diop**, whose films fight against the stereotypical view of Africa. The film focuses on the return of the treasure of the former Dahomey kingdom from France to its place of origin in today's West African Benin. The treasure, specifically 26 artifacts captured in 1892 on African territory during the colonial period, was returned by France to Benin in 2021.

The French film [Documerica, Self-Portrait of Nation on the Brink](#) is an original look back at the sprawling photographic project that was meant to document the (un)success of the American dream in the 1970s. **Pierre-Francois Dideka's** first feature film chronicles the work of hundreds of photographers who crisscrossed the United States for five years, photographing cities, towns, countryside, mountains and beaches. In nearly eighty thousand analogue images, they also captured its devastating impact on water quality, air quality, and interpersonal relationships.

**Rhett Cutrell**, the director of the American adventure documentary [Figures](#), will present his documentary about a Czech couple and their expedition to find poisonous snakes. Matěj and Zuzana introduce the public to animals that don't have the best reputation among humans, including mamba, one of the most venomous snake genera, which the couple set out to find in Togo, Africa. The film is not only a testament to how timely educational video content in zoology can be created, but more importantly, it highlights the authenticity of one journey through nature, partnership and life.

### The archaeology of artificial intelligence

The retrospective entitled [Computing Film](#) maps the field of the archaeology of artificial intelligence. It selects works that have worked with the modes of thinking we currently see in the functioning of AI tools, and with the processes of computation or pre-determined and calculated relationships between image and sound components. *"Translations of sounds into images, colours into rhythm, shapes into sounds have been taking place in the art of the moving image for a hundred years, and it is a fascinating area of creation and exploration,"* says **Andrea Slovák**, the section's programmer.

On the program are pioneering films that were created on computers with punch-labels – such as the animation of **Lilian Schwartz**, an explorer of computer-based filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s. *"We will begin our archaeology of computational thinking in the 1920s, when avant-garde filmmakers were able to evoke rhythm and melody by measuring the length of film strips and arranging visual elements. The exploration of various forms of the involvement of computers and other devices in filmmaking is revelatory, for example in the work of **Steina and Woody Vasulka**,"* Slovák adds.

### Virtual reality will search for survivors of the Holocaust

The Virtual Reality section will present recent works that depict real stories or characters to create immersive documentary experiences. For the tenth time, Ji.hlava will present a number of interactive installations and will also open a VR cinema showing 360° linear films, with the audience watching the same programme at the same time. Every year in this section we see where interactive and spatial documentaries are evolving, seeking to draw the audience directly into the action, stories or emotional world of current and past events. This year you can enter the everyday life of three Lebanese boys (***Dreaming of Lebanon***) or explore **Banksy's** murals in Ukraine (***Murals***). In ***Eternal Walkers*** by Korean filmmaker **Hayoun Kwon**, viewers embark on a journey alongside various groups of wandering people – from contemporary refugees to ancient Taoist deities. **Christian Zipfel's** work ***The Lost Time*** follows a Holocaust survivor and his search for family members. The motif of escape is also developed in ***Shadowtime*** by the creative duo Deniz Tortum and Sister Sylvester, who innovatively use virtual reality animation techniques to focus on how the climate crisis is affecting population migration.

### Inspiration Forum invites to the forest and offers free time

The forest, immunity, war, technology and leisure. These are the themes of this year's [Inspiration Forum](#), the Ji.hlava's popular discussion platform. Visitors can look forward to fifty guests from across the world. Not to be missed among them will be British environmental philosopher **Timothy Morton**, British feminist theorist **Helen Hester**, Micmac activist **Cheryl**

**Maloney** and Indian peace expert **Kirthi Jayakumar**. "*The Inspiration Forum is a place where we discover together how to live better,*" says head of the Inspiration Forum **Tereza Swadoschová**.

### **Industry programme extending towards East & Southeast Asia**

This year, **Ji.hlava Industry Days** take place between October 29 – November 1. The traditionally rich industry programme for over 1,000 participating film professionals features introduction of **Emerging Producers 2025**, up-and-coming generation of European film professionals, the meeting of dozens of film festival representatives **Festival Identity**, the presentation of new Czech docs entitled **Czech Joy in the Spotlight**, the **Visegrad Accelerator** activities focusing on film professionals from the region, the **Conference on Ethics in Documentary Film**, and more. The **Ji.hlava New Visions Forum & Market** will again present **upcoming documentary projects from wider Europe and the United States, adding an Asian thread this year**. "*We have recently been observing an interesting dynamics in the region of East and Southeast Asia and we therefore decided to extend the focus of the Ji.hlava New Visions Forum also on this region. Moreover, we realized that there are not many pitchings in Europe where European and Asian documentary filmmakers could effectively interconnect*", says Ji.hlava head of Industry Jarmila Outratová.

**Industry accreditations for film professionals are available for an early bird rate until September 30.**

The 28th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place on October 25–November 3, 2024. More information at **[www.ji-hlava.com](http://www.ji-hlava.com)** and on the festival's **Facebook** and **Instagram** profiles.