



The Visual Spring Unfurls in Thiruvananthapuram

The 28th edition of International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) began on 8th December 2023. This is a unique gathering of film makers and artists and an enthusiastic group of genuine cineastes. IFFK will honor Polish film maker Krzysztof Pius Zanussi with the "Lifetime Achievement Award" of Rs 10 lakh and a statuette. Six films by Zanussi - Perfect Number, The Illumination, The Contract, The Spiral, Foreign Body, and A Year of the Quiet Sun - will be screened. The award ceremony is scheduled for the festival's closing day.

Zanussi is the recipient of the Golden Lion at the 1984



Venice Film Festival for "A Year of the Quiet Sun", the Jury Prize at the 1980 Cannes Film Festival for "The Constant Factor" as well as two Grands Prix at the 1977 and 2000 Gdynia Film Festival for "Camouflage" and "Life as

a Fatal Sexually Transmitted Disease" respectively.

The Kenyan filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu will be bestowed with the "Spirit of Cinema Award" which carries a cash prize of ₹5 lakh.

Wanuri has received several awards and nominations for the films which she directed, including the awards for Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best Picture at the Africa Movie Academy Awards in 2009 for her dramatic feature film From A Whisper. She is also the co-founder of AFROBUBBLEGUM, a media collective dedicated to supporting African arts.

■ Anna M Abraham

Wanuri Kahiu - The Kenyan Trailblazer



Wanuri Kahiu, the Kenyan film maker will be bestowed with the Spirit of Cinema Award at the 28th IFFK. She is known for her bold and innovative storytelling, which often explores social and political issues in Kenya and beyond.

Wanuri Kahiu, a distinguished Kenyan filmmaker born in Nairobi on June 21, 1980, has left an indelible mark on the African film industry through her compelling and socially conscious storytelling. Growing up in a household enriched with creativity, her father being a journalist and her mother a teacher, Kahiu's early

exposure to the arts sparked a passion for storytelling, leading her to write and direct plays during her high school years.

After completing her high school education, Kahiu embarked on a journey to the United States to delve deeper into the world of film production. She pursued a degree in film and television studies at the University of Warwick in the UK, followed by an MFA in film directing at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Upon completing her studies, Kahiu returned to Kenya with a fervent ambition to contribute to the local filmmaking landscape. In 2009, she released her first feature film, "From A Whisper," a poignant portrayal of the real events surrounding the 1998 twin bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The film received critical acclaim and earned Kahiu the Africa Movie Academy Award for Best Director. Subsequent to this success, Kahiu continued to make waves with her second feature film, "The Rapid Eye Movement," a romantic comedy exploring themes of foresight through a rare eye condition. The film garnered positive reviews and got several awards, showcasing Kahiu's versatility as a filmmaker.

However, it was her groundbreaking work "Rafiki" in 2018 that truly marked a turning point. The film, a love story between two young women in Kenya, not only captivated audiences but also made history as the first Kenyan film to be submitted for an Academy Award. This achievement further solidified Kahiu's status as a trailblazer in African cinema.

■ Bohlokoa Lephoi



Krzysztof Zanussi: A Cinematic Journey Through Time

Krzysztof Zanussi, born in 1939 in Warsaw, has emerged as a prominent figure in world cinema, blending his diverse educational background in Physics and Philosophy with a passion for filmmaking. Zanussi's upbringing as the only child of Jerzy Zanussi and Wanda in a family of Italian heritage laid the foundation for his later achievements. He pursued Physics

at Warsaw University and Philosophy at Jagiellonian University in Kraków before graduating from the prestigious National Film School in Łódź in 1967. Zanussi's directorial prowess garnered numerous accolades, including the David di Donatello Prize and the Cavalier's Cross of the Polonia Restituta Order. His film "The Constant Factor" received the Jury Prize at the 1980 Cannes Film Festival.

During the 1980s, Zanussi spent considerable time in the West, contributing to films like "From A Far Country: Pope John Paul II" (1981), providing a unique perspective on the complex history of modern Poland. In addition to his cinematic achievements, Zanussi penned insightful works such as "On Editing an Amateur Film," "Discourse on an Amateur Film," and the memoir "The Time to Die" (1997). Zanussi's 1996 film, "At Full Gallop," stands as his most autobiographical piece, offering a glimpse into his boyhood in post-World War II Communist Poland. Reflecting on his time as the head of TOR Film Studio, he acknowledged a degree of autonomy for filmmakers despite censorship during the Communist era. While Zanussi faced controversy with claims of being registered as a secret collaborator with the communist Służba Bezpieczeństwa, he maintained his innocence, openly discussing his interactions without admitting any wrongdoing. In 2012, he was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 43rd International Film Festival of India.

Co-founding the European Film Academy with Ingmar Bergman in the late 1980s, Zanussi initially left due to disagreements but later rejoined, emphasizing the academy's potential role in fostering European intercultural cinematography. Krzysztof Zanussi's cinematic journey, marked by creativity, controversies, and commitment to European cinema, continues to leave an indelible mark on the global film landscape.

■ Noble Mathew Ninan



Endless Borders Wins Golden Peacock at IFFI



Endless Borders, a Persian masterpiece directed by Abbas Amini, won the coveted Best Film Award at the 54th IFFI in Goa. The jury applauded Amini's audacious storytelling, noting the film's profound ability to transcend both physical and emotional boundaries. Stephan Komandarev claimed the Silver Peacock Award for Best Director for his compelling work in *Bloga's Lessons*. The film delivers a powerful and thought-provoking lesson through the lens of a woman navigating the delicate balance between ambition and values. Pouria Rahimi earned the Silver Peacock Award for Best Actor (Male) for his role in *Endless Borders*. French actress Melanie Thierry was honored with the Silver Peacock for Best Actor (Female) for her captivating performance in *Party of Fools*. Emerging filmmaker Reger Azad Kaya was acknowledged with the Award for Best Debut Feature Film of a Director for *When the Seedlings Grow*. The film delicately portrays a day in the life of a family amidst a nation's traumas.

■ George Thomas

First woman Director in the world and in India



Alice Guy-Blache of France



Fatma Beegam of India

■ Anugraha M S

KIFF fostered genuine interest in cinema

The Kuttikkanam International Film Festival (KIFF) Kalin-ga 2023, held from November 8 to 11, was a resounding success, showcasing the captivating power of cinema. This prestigious festival attracted hundreds of movie enthusiasts, who shared diverse and enriching cinematic experience. The festival's sixth edition, themed around the poignant subject of war, transformed the Marian College Kuttikkanam into a vibrant hub of cinephiles. The event was inaugurated by the renowned Malayalam film director and actor Johny Antony, setting the stage for an unforgettable cinematic journey. Seventeen films were screened in three theaters in the Marian campus enchanting audiences with their gripping narratives and thought-provoking themes. The festival also provided a platform for aspir-



KIFF - Inauguration by chief guest Johny Antony

ing filmmakers, hosting a short film competition that drew 39 participants. The award for the best short film went to "Vyadhi," a powerful and socially relevant film

against caste discrimination, written and directed by Anjitha V.P. Enhancing the festival experience were cinematography and scriptwriting master classes conducted by Sunny Joseph and Jeo Baby, respectively. These sessions proved to be a source of inspiration and guidance for budding filmmakers, fostering their creative aspirations.

KIFF's success lies in its ability to foster a deep appreciation for the art of filmmaking while providing a platform for emerging talents to showcase their work. The festival's enduring legacy lies in its commitment to nurturing the next generation of filmmakers and igniting a passion for cinema in the hearts of its audience.

■ Aiswarya Lekshmi M S

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Paban Kumar's 'Joseph's Son' Portrays the Manipur tragedy

Joseph's Son, directed by Haobam Paban Kumar portrays the hardships of Manipur amidst the violence. The Manipuri film brilliantly captures the ethnic violence and riot in the state through the story of a father who is in search of his son who has not returned home. The film also depicts the plight suffered by the natives in their daily lives. The film which gained popularity at the Shanghai International Film Festival will be screened at IFFK under the Indian Cinema Now category. The movies in this section include Bengali film 'Padatik', a fitting homage to Mrinal Sen, Gujarati film *Kayo Kayo Colour?* and Marathi film *Ghaath*.

The life of a Muslim family in a ghetto in Ahmedabad is depicted in the Hindi-Gujarati film *Kayo Kayo Colour?* The film serves as an observational prism through Razzak and his family's lives. The film screened at the Rotterdam International Film Festival is directed by debutant director Shahrukh Khan Chavada. *Rimdogittanga (Rapture)*, a frightening Garo language film directed by Dominic Sangma portrays the ethno-religious conflict, refugee crisis and structural violence. It has won an award at the Locarno International Film Festival.

The emotional connection that develops between a five-year-old kid named Kherwal and a Norwegian researcher named Samuel, as well as the fulfilment of their promise, are the subjects of Uttam Kamati's film *Kherwal*. The Marathi-Kannada film, *Follower* directed by Harshad Nalawade explores the future of India under a Hindu right-wing regime. Chhatrapal Ninawe's Marathi movie *Ghaath (Ambush)*, is a crime thriller that revolves around the life of a young Maoist woman trying to find the cop responsible for her brother's death.



Shaping Kerala's Cinematic Identity

The International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) has become a cultural cornerstone, enriching Kerala's cinematic landscape. By showcasing a diverse array of global films, IFFK has fostered a cross-cultural dialogue that transcends borders. The festival not only introduces international cinema to local audiences but also provides a platform for Kerala's filmmakers to engage with the global cinematic community. This exchange has catalyzed a vibrant fusion of ideas, styles, and narratives, shaping the evolution of Kerala's own cinematic language. IFFK's influence extends beyond the screen, fostering a film culture that values diversity, artistic expression, and creative exploration. As a dynamic hub for cinematic convergence, IFFK stands as a testament to the transformative power of cinema in shaping Kerala's cultural identity. As the International Film Festival of Kerala continues to evolve, its role as a cultural catalyst should be embraced and supported. The festival's ability to transcend cultural boundaries and elevate the art of filmmaking underscores the importance of its continued growth. In the years to come, IFFK should be nurtured to flourish, ensuring that it remains a beacon for real cinema—one that captivates hearts, challenges norms, and fosters a deeper appreciation for the transformative power of storytelling on the silver screen. Viva Cinema.

■ Anson Thomas

Women in African Cinema: A Force to Reckon With

Across the vast expanse of the African continent, a chorus of powerful voices has emerged, captivating audiences with tales of resilience, tradition, and the indomitable spirit of womanhood. These are the African women filmmakers, a vanguard of artistry and storytelling, whose cinematic masterpieces have redefined the narrative of African cinema.

A Legacy of Trailblazers: Safi Faye, Senegalese filmmaker.

From the pioneering works of Safi Faye, the Senegalese filmmaker who shattered the glass ceiling with her 1975 masterpiece "Kaddu Beykat," to the contemporary brilliance of Wanuri Kahiu, the Kenyan director whose film "Rafiki" became the first Kenyan submission for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, these women have fearlessly navigated a male-dominated industry, their voices resonating with authenticity and purpose.

Echoes of Resistance: Sarah Maldoror, Guadeloupean filmmaker.

In the cinematic landscapes of Sarah Maldoror, the Guadeloupean filmmaker whose films "Black Sun" and "Sambizanga" chronicled the struggles of colonialism and social injustice, and Amatr Essadqi, the Moroccan director whose works like "Haram" and "A Thousand

and One Mornings" explored the intricacies of gender and sexuality in Moroccan society, African women filmmakers have fearlessly delved into the heart of societal issues, their films sparking dialogue and challenging the status quo.

Stories that Transcend Borders: Dyana Gaye, Senegalese filmmaker.

The stories they weave are not just African; they are universal, resonating with audiences worldwide. In Dyana Gaye's poignant coming-of-age tale "An African Fairytale," we see the universal struggles of adolescence amidst cultural nuances, while in Kachonde Konde's groundbreaking films "Lumumba" and "Njinga: Queen of Angola," we are reminded of the power of female leadership and the fight for self-determination.

A Cinematic Tapestry of Resilience.

As their films continue to grace screens worldwide, African women filmmakers are redefining the narrative of African cinema, their stories transcending borders and cultures, weaving a tapestry of resilience, tradition, and the enduring strength of womanhood. They are the voices of Africa, echoing through the corridors of time, leaving an indelible mark on the world of cinema.

■ Themba Phakathi

"Inshallah A Boy": Jordan's Oscar Entry Tackles Gender Dynamics and Property Rights

'Inshallah A Boy' explores the gender dynamics as Jordan's official entry to the Oscar this year. 'Inshallah A Boy' discusses the property rights issues faced by women in Jordan. Debutant Amjad Al Rasheed, deals with the unexpected widowhood of a young woman.



The narrative unfolds through the heroine who pretends to be pregnant after realising that she will lose her property rights for not having a boy child. The film won the Critic's Week Award at the Cannes Film Festival serves as a crisp exploration of gender dynamics and societal expectations, offering a compelling commentary on the challenges faced by women in Jordan.

Exploring Cinematic Diversity

Nineteen films vie for Suvarna Chakoram

IFFK, one of the largest people centered film festivals in India is scheduled to screen 180 films from all over the world. Over 12000 delegates from India and abroad are participating in the eight day fest. Different categories in IFFK include International Competition, Malayalam Cinema Today, Indian Cinema Now, World Cinema, Country Focus, Retrospectives of major filmmakers, Contemporary Focus, Homages and various curated packages. In addition to film screenings, platforms like Open Forum and Master Classes by experts are also organized for the benefit of delegates. They can interact with film fraternities from all over the world. The annual Aravindan Memorial Lecture is also a major event of the Festival.

There are also nine categories of films to be screened, namely: The Female Gaze, The Master Mind, LTA-Krzysztof Zanussi, Spirit of Cinema, Country Focus - Cuba, International Competition, Malayalam Cinema Today, Indian Cinema Now, and Kaleidoscope.

The festival will feature an array of films titled Female Gaze, screen movies by eight female filmmakers. The films depict the concerns and anxiety of various women across the globe. Malaysian horror films 'Tiger Stripes', 'Footprints on Water' by the Malayali director Nathalia Syam, 'Four Daughters' by Kaouther Ben Hania, and the Korean film 'A Letter from Kyoto', the Korean film 'Next Sohee', directed by July Jung, Laetitia Colombani's 'The Braid', the French film 'Banel & Adama' by Ramata-Toulaye Sy, and Mounia Meddour's 'Houria' will be screened in this category. The films in the Masterminds category are Do not Expect Too Much From The World, Asteroid City, About Dry Grasses, A Brighter Tomorrow, Monster, Perfect Days, Fallen Leaves and The Old Oak. In the LTA-Krzysztof Zanussi category, A Year of the Quiet Sun, Foreign Body, The Spiral, The Contract, The Illumination, and The Perfect Number will be screened.

In the Spirit of the Cinema category, the movies Rafiki and From A Whisper, and Pumzi will be screened. In the country focus category of movies, With You Bread and Onions, City in Red, The Major, Marti the Eye of the Canary, Innocence, The Benny will be screened. In the Malayalam Cinema Today category, Valassai Paravakal, Aatam, Kathal the Core, Scheherazade, Ennum, Daayam, Five First Dates, and Neelamudi will be screened. In the Indian Cinema Now category, the movies Kayo Kayo Colour?, Rimdogittanga, Padatik, Kherwal, Joseph's Son, Follower, and Ghaath will be screened. The kaleidoscope category movies include Home, Stolen, Sthal, Moha, Kennedy, Guras, and Bahadur-the Brave and Adrishya Jalakangal.

The venues of the movie screening are in various theaters at Thiruvananthapuram - Nishagandhi, Tagore Theatre, Kala Bhavan, Kairali, Sree ,Nila, New Theatre, Ariesplex SI Cinemas, Ajanta, and Sree Padmanabha. The race for the Suvarna Chakoram at IFFK 2023 is fierce, with 19 compelling films vying for the prestigious honour.

■ Zacheriah John



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Nurturing Cinematic Excellence: Vital Role of the Media Cell @28th IFFK

The backbone of the 28th International Film Festival of Kerala is undoubtedly the Media Cell, comprising twenty dynamic students dedicated to shaping the festival's narrative. The Media Cell's activities kick off a week prior to IFFK, with students earning their spots through a rigorous entrance exam.

The Media Cell's primary responsibility is disseminating comprehensive information about main news, film reviews, promotions, press releases, open forums, and other pertinent topics to major news channels. A crucial aspect of their role involves generating buzz for the festival by providing extensive coverage in newspapers two days before the film showcases.

Operating from 9 a.m. until the festival's conclusion, the Media Cell works tirelessly to ensure seamless communication and publicity for the festival. In their spare moments, these dedicated students also seize the opportunity to watch movies, considering it a valuable chance for personal and professional growth in their respective fields. The Media Cell emerges not only as a communication hub but also as a group actively contributing to the festival's success.

■ Christy Mariya Varghese

Oscar nominated films in IFFK

The World Cinema category of IFFK includes five films directed by women; Tunisian director Kaouther Ben Hania (Four Daughters), Senegalese director Ramata Toulaye Sy (Banel and Adama), Mexican director Lila Avilés (Tótem), Malaysian director Amanda Nell Eu (Tiger Stripes) and Lithuanian director Marija Kavtaradze (Slow).

Uruguan movie Family Album, Bhutanese film The Monk and the Gun by director Pawo Choyning Dorji, Perfect Days by German director Wim Wenders, Argentinian film The Delinquents, Finland movie Fallen Leaves, The Teacher's Lounge by German director Ilker Çatak, Turkish flick About Dry Grasses, The Promised Land from Denmark, Romanian film Thunders, Opponent by the Swedish filmmaker Milad Alami, Italian movie Lo Capitano are some of the Oscar nominated movies in IFFK 2023.

The Yemeni film The Burdened which narrates the real life story of a young Yemeni couple who are left without a job following the civil war of 2015 and the Polish film The Peasants which is about a young woman left to find her own path in the late 19th century village are also in the list.

AWARDS @ IFFK

SUVARNA CHAKORAM

The Golden Crow Pheasant Award: a cash prize of Rs. 1,000,000/- (about US\$20,000) to the best feature film to be shared equally by the director and the producer.

RAJATA CHAKORAM

The Silver Crow Pheasant Award : (Rajata Chakoram) and a cash prize of Rs. 300,000/- (about US\$6,000) to the best director.

The Silver Crow Pheasant Award: (Rajata Chakoram) and a cash prize of Rs. 300,000/- to the best debut director.

AUDIENCE PRIZE

Rajata Chakoram and cash prize of Rs. 200,000 to the director of a film voted as the Best Entry in Competition by the festival delegates.

FIPRESCI AWARD

For the best film chosen by the Fédération Internationale de la Presse Cinématographique (The International Federation of Film Critics) gives award for the Best Film in competition and Best Malayalam Film of a debut director selected by the FIPRESCI Jury.

NETPAC AWARD

(Network for the Promotion of Asian Film Centre) award for the Best Asian Film in competition and Best Malayalam Film .

FFSI K R MOHANAN AWARD

Cash prize of Rs 100,000 to the Best Debut Director from India.

■ Alna Jeess Xavier



"IF IT'S A GOOD MOVIE, THE SOUND COULD GO OFF AND THE AUDIENCE WOULD STILL HAVE A PRETTY CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT WAS GOING ON."

- Alfred Hitchcock

"LIFE IS A TRAGEDY WHEN SEEN IN CLOSE -UP, BUT A COMEDY A LONG - SHOT"

- CHARLIE CHAPLIN



"Share Her Journey"

Promotes Gender Equality

'Share Her Journey' was started in 2017 as a five-year effort to promote gender equality in the film industry . It's a permanent project of the Toronto International Film Festival that supports women film makers. It's all about creating opportunities, empowering creators, and making sure women can succeed in shaping our culture through storytelling. The Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC) will produce four films this financial year, as a continuation of its project to promote the works of women filmmakers and filmmakers from SC/ST communities. Two of the films would be by women, while the other two would be produced by aspiring filmmakers from SC/ST communities

■ Sona Thomas



Deepika Susheelan



Vidhu Vincent



Sunny Joseph

Do we need an Artistic Director?

Do international film festivals essentially need the services of a curator or an artistic director to choose films? IFFK in the previous years sought the services of an artistic director to curate the films for the festival.

Deepika Susheelan was the artistic director last year but due to a controversy regarding the invitation sent to the Hungarian filmmaker Bela Tarr, she had to quit the job after the successful completion of the festival. Her colleagues accused her for extending invitation to Tarr who made some negative remarks about the communists. This post remained vacant when IDSFFK was conducted early this year. The old story of resignation surfaced again with a statement by Deepika Susheelan saying that she quit on her own, not removed by KSCA.

Vidhu Vincent, the young film maker says "the role of an artistic director facilitates film curation smoothly. It is not only the selection of movies but the negotiation to be done at the international level. Therefore, an artistic director is essential in conducting the IFFK.

Sunny Joseph, the renowned cinematographer says "the services of an artistic director is not essential as KSCA is capable enough to curate films with the help of different selection committees. Deepika, however asserts that artistic director should have a better understanding of world cinema and experience in curating films for at least seven International Film Festivals. It is not the post that matters but the person's experience in the field.

Rijoy K J, a programme manager in KSCA said, "this is not the first festival that is happening without an artistic director. There are many experienced curators in KSCA who could select films more efficiently."

■ Deepthi D