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CROSSING EUROPE Film Festival Linz – First Update

Festival Director Christine Dollhofer is pleased to be able to look back on a successful festival year 2016. Not only does the extremely positive feedback from the audience, industry guests and media suggest that 2017 will be equally successful, but the current economic figures also indicate a promising future.

Work on the film program for April is already well under way, but it is still possible to submit films – for the European sections as well as for the LOCAL ARTIST section – until 9 January 2017. The competition for the CROSSING EUROPE | Art Prize of the Energie AG is still open until 15 January 2017.

It has meanwhile almost become a tradition to announce the TRIBUTE for the coming festival year before Christmas – in 2017 the festival devotes the TRIBUTE section to the Polish artist duo Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal: the first survey show of their film work at a festival anywhere, for which they will both be in Linz to present their works in person.

LOOKING BACK at a Successful Festival Year 2016

For nearly fourteen years now CROSSING EUROPE has been devoted to the idea of a low-threshold presentation of **sophisticated European filmmaking** in Linz and offers an opportunity for direct exchange with filmmakers present from all over Europe – and the same is true again this year. For six days the city center of Linz is transformed by the traditional festival district around the Upper Austrian Cultural Quarter and the festival cinemas Movimiento and City-Kino into the throbbing heart of the festival. **22,000 visitors (including about 150 film guests)** were counted in 2016, thus reaching the previous record again. This can be seen as confirmation of the orientation of the festival program. Not only the **positive feedback from the audience, industry guests, and the media** (there were extensive reports on CROSSING EUROPE in about **1,200 press clippings** from Austria and abroad), but also the current survey of economic figures are extremely encouraging and highly motivating for the next festival year.

In conjunction with a study on the situation of film festivals in Austria, commissioned by FÖFF (Forum Austrian Film Festivals) in 2015 and presented in 2016, the CROSSING EUROPE festival audience was surveyed and the **economic effects of the festival** on the city of Linz and the Federal Province of Upper Austria were investigated. The results of the study include the findings that, from the perspective of the funders, one Euro of funding that flowed into the CROSSING EUROPE budget generated **€ 4,63 in additional value creation**, that festival tourism brings **additional purchasing power** to Linz and this in various areas, and that the achieved **economic effects** will continue to **grow** in the coming years.

// The study was conducted and supervised by the paul und collegen consulting company. Final results: Vienna, February 2016. The survey was online for 5 ½ months starting 20 February 2015.//

SAVE THE DATE: 25 to 30 April 2017

In 2017, now for the **fourteenth time**, **CROSSING EUROPE** puts the provincial capital city of Linz right at the center of the European festival map and seeks to arouse enthusiasm for unconventional cinema with **hand-picked current socio-political films** and numerous film guests present. For the coming festival, which takes place from **Tuesday, 25 April, to Sunday, 30 April 2017**, the presentation of around **160 European feature films and documentaries** is planned. In addition to numerous **Austrian premieres**, international award-winning film highlights from the past festival season can also be seen on the screens in Linz. In addition, **CROSSING EUROPE** makes an attractive forum for the presentation of new works again in 2017 for the **regional film scene** from Upper Austria with the program section **LOCAL ARTISTS**.

The arrival of several hundred film entries from all over Europe has already signaled the start of the intensive viewing phase, but there is still just about a month left to [submit](#) current work (Deadline: 9 January, 2017).

TRIBUTE 2017: Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal (PL)

In April 2017 **CROSSING EUROPE** will be the first film festival to present a **complete retrospective of the film work** by the Polish artist couple Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal, which will open with their **current feature film SŁOŃCE, TO SŁOŃCE MNIE OŚLEPIŁO / THE SUN, THE SUN BLINDED ME** (PL, CH 2016). The film premiered at the renowned film festival in Locarno and received high praise from critics for its political topicality and artistic quality. The two **TRIBUTE** guests are no strangers to the festival audience in Linz, as they have already been represented in the festival program twice in the past. In 2012 they won the main prize with **Z DALEKA WIDOK JEST PIĘKNY / IT LOOKS PRETTY FROM A DISTANCE** (PL 2011), which had premiered in Rotterdam, and then returned with **HUBA / PARASITE** (PL, UK 2014).

Anka Sasnal was born in 1973 in Tarnów in Poland and studied Polish literature and gender studies in Krakow. As a screenwriter, editor, and filmmaker, she lives in Krakow together with Wilhelm Sasnal, who was also born in Tarnów and studied architecture and painting in Krakow. **Wilhelm Sasnal** attracted international attention as a visual artist with a series of solo and group exhibitions in renowned galleries and art institutions (including the Centre Pompidou, Tate Modern, Frankfurter Kunstverein, MoMA New York, Whitechapel Art Gallery London, and Guggenheim) with visual art in the form of paintings, comic books, drawings, photographs, and videos.

Their first longer collaborative film work is **ŚWINIOPAS / SWINEHERD**, created in 2008, in which the eponymous swineherd – the film is based on Hans Christian Andersen’s literary fairy tale “The Swineherd” (1842) – goes into service with an unpleasant farmer in the Polish province and secretly smuggles a lesbian couple’s love letters back and forth. Shot in black and white, the surreal filmic result is emphasized more than a straight narrative. Performative elements alternate with documentary and experimental film fragments, while a bombastic score, which usually starts unexpectedly, comes in with numbers ranging from Elvis Presley all the way to contemporary atonal pieces.

In this first joint film project **significant characteristics** of their artistic collaboration are already visible: the intensive **focus on language, texts** and literary models, which they transform into an image language or moving image that suits them. In interviews they both stress that they are not interested in conventional storytelling; while the plot of a story is secondary for them, the cinematographic **image language and atmosphere** are all the more important. At the same time, they always seek a **balance**

between abstract images and reality. “The way we think about film comes from literature, but not because of the plot, but rather the poetry and the structure. We experiment a lot during shooting.” (Monopol - Magazine for Art and Life, online edition, 12.2.2014). Asked about their **role models in film**, they come up with names like Bruno Dumont, Ulrich Seidl, Michael Haneke, early Andrzej Wajda, Jerzy Skolimowski, and representatives of the “Romanian New Wave”.

An explicit **political stance** can be noted in their films – thematically Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal circle around the current state of Polish society, rising xenophobia, the relationship of Polish society to the Catholic church, and especially the recent Polish past – Poland was long considered or regarded itself exclusively as a victim of the National-Socialists, but around the turn of the millennium Polish entanglements and involvement in the crimes of the Nazi regime were publicly discussed and treated artistically. In the film *ŚWINIOPAS / SWINEHERD* the “Nazi past” is already washed to the surface, specifically in the form of dishes with a swastika on them, revealing the swamp.

A **dystopian world view**, although not so much a pessimistic one – as they say themselves – may certainly be attributed to their work, along with an undisguised interest in the “dark” side of human beings.

Their second joint feature film already attracted major international attention and was shown at various international film festivals: with **Z DALEKA WIDOK JEST PIĘKNY / IT LOOKS PRETTY FROM A DISTANCE** (PL 2011) there was also a literary text at the beginning of the creation process, specifically a poem, the first line of which then became the title of the film. This essayist, documentary-realistic fictional feature film tells a metaphorical story about a Polish village and its inhabitants, and about the uncomfortable truth that human nature can reveal its cruel side at any time and in any place, regardless of a political system – whether in the here and now or during World War Two. Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal attribute a special significance to the land or the Polish landscape, both generally and in this film quite obviously. Following Claude Lanzmann’s epic film *SHOAH*, the land is never to be considered “innocent” or neutral, because everything is charged with history and emotions, and in part it is literally “blood-soaked”.

During the search for a motif for **Z DALEKA WIDOK JEST PIĘKNY / IT LOOKS PRETTY FROM A DISTANCE** the two directors happened to come across a small village in between Krakow and Tarnów, where they became acquainted with the eponymous protagonist of **ALEKSANDER** (PL, US 2013). The “portrait of a simple man”, as it is called in the subtitle, was originally conceived as a fictional feature film project, but during the two years of shooting, the boundaries between the genres increasingly blurred, and the question of the construction of reality in film ultimately led to the decision to make a documentary work with fictional elements. Here too, the focus is on rural life in Poland, and in terms of image design – carefully composed lighting moods and close-ups – some of the shots bear a surprising resemblance to landscape painting of the nineteenth century. The subject matter of the film, shot on 16mm, revolves around everyday work on the farm, monotonous activities, and a feeling as though time had stood still here.

HUBA / PARASITE (PL, UK 2014) celebrated its world premiere at the Berlinale 2014. The central motif of the feature film, the factory is a reference Tarnów, both directors’ city of birth. The industrial grounds shown several times in the film are interwoven in a documentary way and are also one of the four protagonists in the film – along with the old man (played by an amateur actor), whose life is inseparably linked with his biography as a factory worker and who is now being devoured by an illness – the “parasite” – and the two further protagonists, a young woman and her newborn child, which is

literally drinking all the life energy of its own mother dry like a parasite. This aesthetically radical film dispenses almost entirely with dialogue, portrays the constraints of the living conditions, and takes a critical look at the theme of motherhood.

In their current feature film, which premiered in Locarno, SŁOŃCE, TO SŁOŃCE MNIE OŚLEPIŁO / THE SUN, THE SUN BLINDED ME (PL, CH 2016), two literary references are also noticeable, one being Albert Camus' novel "The Stranger" (1942) and the other the dark fairy tale "The Shadow" by Hans Christian Andersen. Symbolic images, a stringent image composition, little dialogue, numerous omissions, and recourse to a current political topic mark the fifth collaborative film by Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal. As with Camus, the story develops in an absurd direction, emphasizing the absurdity of human existence. The main figure Rafał feels strange in his own life world; isolated from the outside world, he remains by himself in his daily routines until a turning point comes, when a "stranger" (in the person of a refugee washed up on the beach) comes into his life, and he has to decide how to deal with that.

Feature-length films (D: Anka Sasnal, Wilhelm Sasnal)

// ŚWINIOPAS / SWINEHERD (PL 2008), 85 min., fiction – *Austrian premiere*

// Z DALEKA WIDOK JEST PIEKNY / IT LOOKS PRETTY FROM A DISTANCE (PL 2011), 77 min., fiction – *Austrian premiere during Crossing Europe 2012 (Crossing Europe Award Competition Fiction 2012)*

// ALEKSANDER (PL, US 2013), 58 min., documentary/ docufiction – *Austrian premiere*

// HUBA / PARASITE (PL, UK 2014), 66 min., fiction – *Austrian premiere during Crossing Europe 2014 (European Panorama Fiction)*

// SŁOŃCE, TO SŁOŃCE MNIE OŚLEPIŁO / THE SUN, THE SUN BLINDED ME (PL, CH 2016), 74 min., fiction – *Austrian premiere*

In addition to the longer works already described above, the TRIBUTE 2017 also includes **seven short films by Wilhelm Sasnal**, which were made between 2005 and 2015. Except for the film BRAZIL (2005), shot in Super 8, he chose 16mm as his format. Clear references to other art forms and works are also found in these films: INHUMAN HUNGER (2014) is loosely based on another Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, "The Girl Who Trod on the Loaf" (1859), for instance, or in the film AFTERNOON OF A FAUN (2015) there is an obvious reference to Claude Debussy.

Short Film Program I (D: Wilhelm Sasnal)

// MARFA (2005), 28min.

// EUROPA (2007), 3 min.

// BRAZIL (2005), 20 min.

Short Film Program II (D: Wilhelm Sasnal)

// INHUMAN HUNGER (2014), 6 min.

// KACPER (2010), 12 min.

// COLUMBUS (2014), 27 min

// AFTERNOON OF A FAUN (2015), 5 min.

A total of **12 films** (in seven programs) by Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal are planned for screening during the Tribute 2017. Our Tribute guests Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal will be present in person for the film discussions, and a **Directors' Talk** is also planned during their stay.

CALL FOR FILMS: Invitation to Submit Films

Film- and video makers are again invited to submit their **current work** (year of production 2016 or 2017) for the coming CROSSING EUROPE Film Festival Linz. **Deadline for entries** for all program sections (European feature films and documentaries and Local Artist – key word: music videos from Upper Austria) is **9 January 2017** without exception. Films submitted for the European sections must have a minimum length of 60 minutes. The submission form and details on conditions and submission regulations and the festival awards are available on our web site: <https://www.crossingeurope.at/en/program/film-entry-2017.htm>.

Competition – CROSSING EUROPE | Art Prize of the Energie AG 2017

Until 15 January 2017 artistic projects can be entered for the **CROSSING EUROPE | Art Prize of the Energie AG**, with the motto "the best idea wins." Since 2013 projection works are shown in public space during the film festival CROSSING EUROPE. The Art Prize of the Energie AG is intended to promote the further development and strengthening of an exploration of film/light.

The CROSSING EUROPE | Art Prize of the Energie AG will be awarded again, now for the fifth time in 2017, as a project scholarship to an artist from Upper Austria: in 2017 the energy provider company, in cooperation with the Art University Linz, announces this project scholarship amounting to **€ 4,000** for an outdoor projection in the Upper Austrian Cultural Quarter during the CROSSING EUROPE Film Festival. As third partner, the Upper Austrian Cultural Quarter provides production means and technical assistance. In addition to Christine Dollhofer (Festival Director CROSSING EUROPE), Franz Prieler (art commissioner for the Energie AG), Genoveva Rückert (curator OK in the Upper Austrian Cultural Quarter), Siegfried A. Fruhauf (artist/filmmaker) and Gitti Vasicek (head of the Institute for Media/Art University Linz) have also been nominated for the **jury**.

The winning project will be **realized and presented** during the 14th CROSSING EUROPE Film Festival from **25 to 30 April 2017**. The presentation site will again be the facade of the office building in the **OK-Platz**.

Deadline for entry is **15 January 2017**. Conditions and regulations for entry can be found here:

www.crossingeurope.at/news/details/ausschreibung-crossing-europe-kunstpreis.html

Upcoming Dates

Deadline film submissions: **9 January 2017**

Deadline competition CROSSING EUROPE | Art Prize of the Energie AG: **15 January 2017**

Program press conferences Linz & Vienna: **12 April 2017**

Festival dates: **Tues., 25 to Sun., 30 April 2017**

Photo Material & Updates

Photos & Film Stills: <https://www.crossingeurope.at/en/xp-presse/pressefotos/>

Festival Impressions: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/crossingeurope/collections/>

Logo & Festival Motif: <http://www.crossingeurope.at/en/xp-presse/logos>

Regular **updates** and **current information** on CROSSING EUROPE 2017 can be found, as ever, on our website: www.crossingEurope.at and our social media channels [Facebook](#), [google+](#), [Flickr](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).