

FICC at the Krakow Film Festival

June 2, 2024. The Krakow Film Festival (KFF), one of the most enduring European festivals, has completed no fewer than 64 editions. Before I went there, I knew very little about Krakow and Poland, beyond the great suffering during World War II, the motivations of Karol Wojtyła's Papacy or the great national interest and competition in Fencing. In cinema, Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Trilogy of Three Colors* had awakened my first passions for the seventh art.

A week later, I leave Krakow with the conviction that the KFF is a worthy heir to the best Polish cinema that flourished in the last century. Both for the quality of the selected filmography, as well as for its impeccable organization and its international vocation, the festival crosses borders to talk about cultural diversity and cinema.

It is very difficult to give a single Quixote Award from the International Federation of Cineclubs, in the international short film competition (animation, fiction and documentary), from a festival like this. As jury, it made sense for us to choose a film that we would like to share with the cineclub we are part of, in my case the Cineclub Akira in Sant Pol de Mar, together with fellow jurors Holger Twele (from the Bundesverband Jugend und Film e.V. in Frankfurt/Main) and Pawel Herman (from the Polska Federacja Dyskusyjnych Klubów Filmowych).

The prize went to *Buzz of the Earth* (Czech Republic, 2023, 29'), directed by Greta Stocklassa, a short film that oscillates between documentary, fiction and experimentation. In *Buzz of the Earth*, Czech humor accompanies a cosmic challenge for humanity: if until now Prague has been the center of Europe, when the European Space Agency chooses it as the base of a new mission, the city inevitably places it at the center of the universe... with great irony and depth, a group of academics and a housewife debate the past, present and future of our species. The debate takes place in a not so round table, talking about existential, economic, environmental or gender issues, and ends up making a universal portrait of all of them.

The FICC 2024 Quixote Prize Mention went to an animated short, *On the 8th Day*

(France, 2023, 8'), directed by five young graduates of the Pôle 3D school in Roubaix: Agathe Sénéchal, Alicia Massez, Elise Debruyne, Flavie Carin and Théo Duhautois.

On the 8th Day shows how it took seven days to create the world and a single day to destroy it. The directors invite the viewers to a beautiful land, woven with colored threads and tufts of wool, where the seas are full of fish and the sky with birds, the jungles and savannahs inhabited by animals that live in symbiosis. Unfortunately, darkness and gloom engulf space and life.

Without realizing it, we had awarded 5 female directors and 1 male director.

If we had the possibility, at Cineclub Akira in Sant Pol de Mar we would screen many of the short films scheduled for the festival, such as the wonderful *Diamond Beauty* (Hungary, 2023, 30'), a grotesque story about cosmetic surgery and the need to feel loved and dear ones; *An orange from Jaffa* (Poland/Palestinian Territories/France, 2023, 26'), a display on a personal scale of the absurdity of the long Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and even *Better this way* (Romania, 2023, 15'), a thriller as tough as necessary to denounce that homophobia often starts at home, next to the people who should love us.

The Krakow Film Festival literally takes over the city for a week, with screenings in various theaters (Agrafka, Kijów, ASP, Pod Baranami, Sala Niebieska, Mikro, Paradox, Sfinks) and on the banks of the Vistula River (this year with the retrospective of experimental director Godfrey Reggio, awarded with the Dragon of Dragons 2024), conferences of Central European filmmakers, meetings of the film industry, concerts in the old Jewish quarter of Krakow and other cultural proposals to discover this old capital of Poland that has an historic center registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I leave with the happy feeling that this festival is one of the great cultural bets of the Cracow City.