



Press Release

Playing with Fire, Gaps in Memory: The 39th *Forum* Presents a Programme Full of Connections, Contradictions, and Mirror Images

The 39th *Forum* of the Berlinale will be showing a total of 48 films from 31 countries.

The selection will take festival-goers around the world - not so much in terms of the number of countries represented, but rather in the abundant connections to be discovered between the films, their often shared concerns and kindred worldviews, as well as their contradictions and mirror images. Eleven films are debuts, 25 world premieres, and twelve international premieres.

This lineup includes a diverse sample of current German filmmaking, with documentaries by Hans-Christian Schmid, Ulrike Ottinger, Harun Farocki, and Thomas Heise, as well as Sebastian Schipper's new feature.

Goethe's *Elective Affinities* has inspired numerous films, but never has it appeared as it does in Schipper's *Sometime in August*: a playful and sun-drenched experiment in storytelling. Marie Bäumer, Milan Peschel, Anna Brüggemann, André Hennicke, and a lonely house in the country play the leads in this contemporary adaptation refreshingly unencumbered by historicism. The soundtrack was composed by rock poet Vic Chesnutt.

Hans-Christian Schmid in *The Wondrous World of Laundry* turns his attention once again to the changed conditions on both sides of the German-Polish border. His film follows dirty washing from Berlin hotel rooms to an industrial laundry in Poland, listening in on what the people whose hands it passes through en route have to say about their lives. Harun Farocki's latest film, *By Comparison*, takes a look at different brick-making techniques, from handmade clay bricks to high-tech precision building components. While Farocki seeks out his subjects in Burkina Faso, India, and France, Thomas Heise turns to his own archives, and thus to the past: in *Material* he brings together previously unreleased footage he shot during the period surrounding the fall of the Wall in 1989. The result is a panorama that challenges us to recollect, but that is above all concerned with the gaps the progress of history leaves in memory. Ulrike Ottinger also sets out on a journey in her latest film *The Korean Wedding Chest*, which explores the relationship between tradition and modernity in the megacity of Seoul.

Documentaries, particularly when they venture into the domain of narrative cinema, play an important role in the *Forum*. It is striking how many of the documentaries in this year's programme investigate the ways in which public

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opinion is formed. Together these films make up a portrait of a world in which knowledge has been commodified and shaping public opinion means playing with fire.

The ignominious role of the state as aggravator of conflicts forms the backdrop of the Thai documentary *Citizen Juling*, for instance. After a fanatical mob brutally attacked two school teachers in the spring of 2006, filmmaker Ing K and politician and human rights activist Kraisaak Choonhavan set out on a journey across Thailand, a country divided by violence and prejudice. *Citizen Juling* is the attempt to use film as a tool of reconciliation, and the same is true for two films addressing violent conflicts on the African continent. A selection of four short documentaries by the South African collective "Filmmakers Against Racism" grapples with the xenophobic violence that shocked the country in May 2008, while Christophe Gargot's documentary *From Arusha to Arusha* is concerned with the longterm effects of the 1994 genocide in Ruanda, in which close to a million people were killed. His fascinating and illuminating film contrasts the prosecution of the crimes by the international tribunal in Arusha with the struggle to cope with the trauma on an individual and interpersonal level.

Defamation by Yoav Shamir (whose *Flipping Out* showed in the *Forum* in 2008) was originally intended to be a film about contemporary, often highly subtle varieties of anti-semitism. But Shamir's research surrounding the New York-based Anti-Defamation League (ADL) put him on the trail of quite a different phenomenon—the delicate matter of confronting the aura of the perpetual victim. The documentary *Letters to the President* by Czech filmmaker Petr Lom appears as the mirror image of the Israeli film: here the subject is the letters that millions of Iranians, encouraged by state propaganda, write to their president. All too often these letters are indicators of the successful manipulation of public opinion by the state, which reinforces religious Muslims in their belief that they are the victims of world-wide persecution.

Two other films in the programme also focus on the turmoil caused by the politics of hate and its longterm effects. Simone Bitton's investigative documentary *Rachel* takes up the case of American peace activist Rachel Corrie, who was killed in 2003 while trying to prevent the destruction of houses in the Gaza Strip. In *The One Man Village*, Simon El-Habre from Lebanon paints a portrait of his uncle Semaan, the sole inhabitant of a mountain village turned into a ghost town by the Lebanese civil war. Despite its sadness, this wonderfully photographed film is also a story about the joy of a life lived in peace.



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The Films of the 39th *Forum* of the Berlinale

Aguas Verdes (Green Waters) by Mariano De Rosa, Argentina (WP)

D'Arusha à Arusha (From Arusha to Arusha) by Christophe Gargot, France/Canada/Ruanda (IP)

Beeswax by Andrew Bujalski, USA (WP)

Calimucho by Eugenie Jansen, The Netherlands (IP)

Cea mai fericită fată din lume (The Happiest Girl in the World) by Radu Jude, Romania/The Netherlands (WP)

Citizen Juling (Polamuang Juling) by Kraisak Choonhavan, Manit Sriwanichpoom, Ing K, Thailand (EP)

The Day After (Eoddeon gaien nal) by Lee Suk-Gyung, Republic of Korea (WP)

Deep in the Valley (Yanaka boshoku) by Funahashi Atsushi, Japan (WP)

Defamation (Hashmatsa) by Yoav Shamir, Israel/Austria (WP)

Doctor Ma's Country Clinic (Ma dai fu de zhen suo) by Cong Feng, People's Republic of China (EP)

L'encerclement (Encirclement) by Richard Brouillette, Canada (IP)

The Exploding Girl by Bradley Rust Gray, USA (WP)

H:r Landshövding (Mr Governor) by Måns Månsson, Sweden (IP)

Hayat var (My Only Sunshine) by Reha Erdem, Turkey/Greece/Bulgaria (IP)

Help Gone Mad (Sumashedshaya pomosh) by Boris Khlebnikov, Russia (WP)

Kan door huid heen (Can Go Through Skin) by Esther Rots, The Netherlands (IP)

Die koreanische Hochzeitstruhe (The Korean Wedding Chest) by Ulrike Ottinger, Germany (WP)



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Land of Scarecrows (Heosubideuleui ddang) by Roh Gyeong-Tae, Republic of Korea/France (IP)

Letters to the President by Petr Lom, Canada/Iran (WP)

Love Exposure (Ai no mukidashi) by Sono Sion, Japan (IP)

Man tänker sitt (Burrowing) by Fredrik Wenzel, Henrik Hellström, Sweden (WP)

Marin Blue by Matthew Hysell, USA (WP)

Members of the Funeral (Jangryesigeui member) by Baek Seung-Bin, Republic of Korea (IP)

Mental (Seishin) by Soda Kazuhiro, Japan (EP)

Mitte Ende August (Sometime in August) by Sebastian Schipper, Germany (WP)

My Dear Enemy (Meotjin haru) by Lee Yoon-Ki, Republic of Korea (IP)

Naked of Defenses (Mubōbi) by Ichii Masahide, Japan (EP)

Ne me libérez pas, je m'en charge (My Greatest Escape) by Fabienne Godet, France (WP)

The One Man Village (Semaan Bilda'ia) by Simon El Habre, Lebanon (EP)

Rachel by Simone Bitton, France/Belgium (WP)

La sirena y el buzo (The Mermaid and the Diver) by Mercedes Moncada Rodríguez, Mexico/Nicaragua/Spain (WP)

Soundless Wind Chime (Wu Sheng Feng Ling) by Kit Hung, Hong Kong/Switzerland (WP)

Sweetgrass by Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Lisa Barbash, USA (WP)

Treeless Mountain by So-Yong Kim, USA/Republic of Korea (EP)

Un chat un chat (Pardon my French) by Sophie Fillières, France (WP)



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Winterstilte (Winter Silence) by Sonja Wyss, The Netherlands/Switzerland (IP)

Zum Vergleich (By Comparison) by Harun Farocki, Germany/Austria (WP)

Special Screenings

A History of Israeli Cinema by Raphaël Nadjari, France/Israel (WP)

Araya by Margot Benacerraf, Venezuela/France (WP of the restored print)

The Beast Stalker (Ching yan) by Dante Lam, Hong Kong (IP)

Filmmakers Against Racism:

Affectionately Known as Alex by Danny Turken, South Africa (EP)

Angels on our Shoulders by Andy Spitz, South Africa (EP)

Baraka (The Blessing) by Omelga Mthiyane, Riaan Hendriks, Marianne Gysae, South Africa (EP)

The Burning Man by Adze Ugah, South Africa (EP)

Generasi biru (The Blue Generation) by Garin Nugroho, John De Rantau, Dosy Omar, Indonesia (WP)

Langsamer Sommer (Slow Summer) by John Cook, Austria

Material by Thomas Heise, Germany (WP)

Schwitzkasten (Clinch) by John Cook, Austria

Soul Power by Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, USA (EP)

When it was Blue by Jennifer Reeves, USA/Iceland (EP)

Die wundersame Welt der Waschkraft (The Wondrous World of Laundry) by Hans-Christian Schmid, Germany (WP)

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