



## 37. TRIESTE FILM FESTIVAL

16-24 gennaio 2026

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From January 16 to 24 in Trieste, Italy's leading event dedicated to Central and Eastern European cinema, for over thirty years a permanent laboratory on the New Europe

## Beyond history, across the geographies of vision: dreams, rebirths, and memory at the 37<sup>th</sup> Trieste Film Festival

A journey through more than **120 events**, including feature films, documentaries, short films, masterclasses and talks. Italian premieres include **"Franz" by Agnieszka Holland**, a portrait of Franz Kafka; explorations of the hidden stories of 20th-century authoritarian regimes with the premieres of **"The Disappearance of Josef Mengele" by Kirill Serebrennikov** and **"Two Prosecutors" by Sergei Loznitsa** (who is returning to the festival). The programme also features films by some of the most compelling voices in contemporary cinema, including **Ildikó Enyedi, Šarūnas Bartas, Christian Petzold, Mascha Schilinski and Nastia Korkia**. Alongside the competitions for feature films, documentaries, short films and Italian productions, the festival presents the thematic sections "Queer Visions", "Wild Roses", the retrospective "The Second Shift: Women at Work", and TSFF for the Little Ones.

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Trieste, 9 January 2026 – Stories returning from the past, from the pages of literature and from the forgotten folds of History; memories—more recent ones—of a nearby and vibrant world; tales of Eastern Europe, which reveal the voices of a new continent in the making: these are **the protagonists of the 37th edition of the Trieste Film Festival**, the most important Italian event dedicated to Central and Eastern European cinema.

Directed by **Nicoletta Romeo**, **the festival will take place in Trieste from 16 to 24 January, with over 120 events including feature films, documentaries, shorts, masterclasses and meetings** with the great masters and emerging talents, both directors and actors, whose stories build bridges between East and West.

The festival's director Nicoletta Romeo explains: "May these visions become new compasses for all of us, capable of guiding us through an increasingly complex human geography. We wish you an enriching journey through the dialogue and beauty of our festival, and extend our deepest thanks to all those who made this collective endeavour possible: to those who inhabit it on screen, to the directors who entrusted us with their works, and to those who, from the darkness of the theatre, continue to bring it to life each day with their unwavering and extraordinary curiosity."

The festival will take place in Trieste at the **Politeama Rossetti, Teatro Miela and Cinema Ambasciatori**. There will be three competitive sections: the international competitions for feature-length films, short films, and documentaries.

The festival will open on Friday 16 January at Teatro Miela with **Franz by Polish director Agnieszka Holland** (distributed in Italy by Movies Inspired), who returns after the success of *Green Border*. Selected as Poland's submission for the 2026 Oscars and shortlisted for the EFAs, the most ambitious project of the director's career also arrives as an Italian premiere: a biopic dedicated to the iconic 20th-century Bohemian writer Franz Kafka, a kaleidoscopic mosaic that traces the author's imprint on the world, from his birth in 19th-century Prague to his death in post-World War I Vienna.

As per the festival's traditional double opening, on 20 January—when the doors of the splendid Politeama Rossetti open—***The Disappearance of Josef Mengele* by Kirill Serebrennikov** (distributed in Italy by Europictures) will be making its Italian debut after its world premiere in the Cannes Premiere section. At its center is the life and story of the man known as the “Angel of Death.” In the period following World War II, Josef Mengele, the Nazi doctor of Auschwitz, flees to South America to rebuild a life in hiding: through the eyes of his son, who finds him again, Mengele is forced to confront a past he can no longer ignore. Director Kirill Serebrennikov will hold a **masterclass the following morning** (21 January, **11:30 a.m., at the Rossetti Theatre**), **moderated by Joël Chapron**, a longtime collaborator of the Cannes Film Festival and an expert in Russian and Soviet cinema.

The festival's closing will instead be dedicated to ***Silent Friend* by Ildikó Enyedi** (Italian distribution Movies Inspired), already in competition at Venice—where actress Luna Wedler won the Marcello Mastroianni Award—and shortlisted for the EFAs, on the evening of Saturday 24 January at the Politeama Rossetti. On the same day, again at the Rossetti at 5:00 p.m., **the Hungarian director will meet the audience in a masterclass**. At the heart of a botanical garden in a medieval German university town stands a majestic ginkgo tree: this silent witness has observed over more than a century the quiet rhythms of transformation across three human lives. From 1908 to 1972, and finally to the last one in 2020, we follow the protagonists' uncertain attempts to connect, as they are transformed by the silent, enduring and mysterious power of nature.

**Sergei Loznitsa returns to Trieste: the Italian premiere of *Two Prosecutors***, already in competition at Cannes and also shortlisted for the EFAs (to be released in Italy by Lucky Red in future), will be screened. After last year's participation (with the documentary *The Invasion*), which earned him the Eastern Star 2025 award, the Ukrainian director returns to fiction, specifically to the Soviet Union in 1937. Thousands of letters from prisoners falsely accused by the regime are burned in a prison cell: against all odds, one of these letters reaches its destination, landing on the desk of the newly appointed local prosecutor Alexander Kornev, who will do everything possible to meet the prisoner, a victim of the corrupt agents of the secret police - the NKVD.

Also among the special out-of-competition events, the festival presents ***Lagūna* by Šarūnas Bartas, one of the leading figures in Baltic cinema**, with an intimate and powerful work. At its center, his own family: on the peaceful coast of Mexico, in the land his daughter Ina Marija had chosen as her home before dying too young, her father—the director himself—and his younger sister Una embark on a journey to retrace her steps, in a lagoon struck by hurricanes, yet perpetually reborn.

Also scheduled as an **Italian premiere is *Mirrors No. 3* by Christian Petzold**, already screened in the Quinzaine des Cinéastes at Cannes (released in Italy by Wanted): one of the most lyrical examples of contemporary cinema, the film introduces Laura, a piano student from Berlin who miraculously survives a car accident during a trip. Physically unharmed but deeply shaken, she is taken in by a local woman who cares for her with maternal devotion.

Winner of the Lion of the Future Award at Venice, the section will also include ***Short Summer* by Nastia Korkia**, a portrait of everyday life in Russia: Katya, 8 years old, spends the summer with her grandparents in the Russian countryside. Here time seems to have stopped, adults fall silent, and a war in the background destroys lives.

Also in the program is ***In die Sonne schauen* (*Sound of Falling*, distributed in Italy by I Wonder Pictures)**, the second feature **by German director Mascha Schilinski**, Jury Prize winner at the Cannes Film Festival and Germany's submission for the 2026 Oscars in the Best International Feature Film category. The film tells the story of four girls, separated by time but united by a place—the farm where they spend their youth—and by a traumatic event that resurfaces, their lives mirroring one another.

Numerous titles from across Europe will be in competition: **the festival will present 8 feature films, 10 documentaries, 14 short films, and 6 Italian titles (for the Salani Award)**. Among the other sections, following last year's successful debut, ***Visioni Queer*** will return, dedicated to stories that aim to create a window into the contribution of Central and Eastern European cinema to the rights of LGBTQ+ communities, in many countries where freedom of expression is under threat.

Among the focuses featured in the festival program, there will also be ***Wild Roses*, the section dedicated to European women directors, which this year celebrates female voices in Slovenian cinema**. It is curated by Nerina T. Kocjančič, Head of Promotion and Distribution at the Slovenian Film Centre in Ljubljana.

As always, the festival prepares to **return, together with its “travel companion”, the bora wind**. The wind sweeps through the city in January, concurrent with the festival, and is, this year, also featured on the festival's posters, where a woman and a man in 1950s Trieste trudge forward against the wind, grasping onto their hats

and coats. The photographs are by **Ugo Borsatti**, the great Triestine photographer who passed away last year; a witness to the 20th century, to whom the symbolism of the posters is dedicated, with playfulness and irony.

## **THE PROGRAMME**

### FEATURE FILM COMPETITION

There will be **8 feature films in competition, all Italian premieres**. From Poland comes **Brat (Brother) by Maciej Sobieszcański**, the story of fourteen-year-old Dawid, torn between caring for his younger brother and looking after his mother, a woman who wants to leave behind a past with a violent husband and start over, searching for a way to save the family.

**Elena's Shift by Stefanos Tsivopoulos** tells a story of freedom, love and struggle: the protagonist is Elena, a Romanian single mother in Athens who dreams of a better future and a sense of belonging long denied to her; when she is unjustly fired, a long-suppressed activist spirit awakens in her.

Presented at Locarno and among the titles in the Wild Roses section, the program will also include **Fantasy by Slovenian director Kukla**, about the rebellious girls Mihrije, Sina and Jasna, just over twenty, best friends who refuse to conform to the conservative system in which they grow up: their world is shaken when they meet Fantasy, a transgender woman.

First Cannes, then Toronto, and now, Trieste: **Mama by Or Sinai** also comes to the festival. The film is centered on Mila, forced to temporarily leave her job abroad—and her secret relationship—to return to her family in a remote Polish village: here tensions resurface in a complex return to her roots.

In **Renovacija (Renovation)**, the debut by **Gabrielé Urbonaitė**, presented in Karlovy Vary, Sarajevo and Tallinn, Ilona is 29 and a natural perfectionist; she feels the pressure to achieve stability in life and results before turning thirty. At this crucial moment in her existence, she begins to question how she truly wants to live.

**Sbornistr (Broken Voices) by Ondřej Provazník** takes us back to the 1990s in the Czech Republic, where thirteen-year-old Karolína earns a place in a world-famous girls' choir and her voice soon attracts the attention of the admired and enigmatic choirmaster Machá: after her triumph, she begins to understand the disturbing price of that privilege. Inspired by the case of the "Children of Prague," the film explores the fragile line where innocence collides with abusive power.

**Sorella di clausura by Serbian director Ivana Mladenović** follows Stela, an educated woman unable to hold down a job, who falls in love with a Balkan musician after seeing him on TV: a simple infatuation soon turns into an obsession that consumes her life.

Finally, **Svečias (The Visitor), the debut feature by Lithuanian director Vytautas Katkus** (previously cinematographer of *Toxic*, winner of the last Trieste Film Festival), brings us into the life of Danielius, 30, as he returns to his hometown: rediscovering people and places that no longer belong to him, he is pervaded by a silent sense of loneliness, which he decides to explore.

The films in competition will be judged by a jury composed of Rebecca De Pas, member of the selection committees of Visions du Réel and Rotterdam IFF and project manager of the Fondazione Prada Film Fund; Reta Guetg, Deputy Director of the Zurich Film Festival and member of the Swiss Film Academy and the European Film Academy; and Mariëtte Rissenbeek, Executive Director of the Berlinale from 2019 to 2024 and since then consultant and creative producer.

### OUT OF COMPETITION

In the Out of Competition lineup is the Italian premiere of **No One Will Hurt You by Dino Hodić**, an intimate and painful journey into rediscovering one's roots and identity thirty years after the Srebrenica massacre, which Hodić managed to escape by fleeing to Switzerland, told through the voice of Hasan, one of the few survivors of the tragedy.

A portrait of female emancipation set against the backdrop of World War II, **À Bras-Le-Corps (Silent Rebellion, released in Italy by Trent Film) by Marie-Elsa Squaldo**, follows fifteen-year-old Emma, who becomes pregnant after rape and embarks on a path of self-determination, confronting the moral hypocrisy of her village. The film—also the focus of a special morning screening for schools, open to the public—is part of the educational program that connects the festival with local high schools.

Also scheduled is the Italian premiere of **Ether, a short film by Trieste-born director Vida Skerk**, in which a couple confronts repressed tensions while trying to communicate about roles and responsibilities; **Cos te costa, a short by Trieste filmmaker Davide Del Degan**, completes the section with a story of division and

memory, straddling Italy and Yugoslavia, a moving tribute to Gorizia, split in two in the immediate postwar period.

The section concludes with “accessible screenings” for people with hearing and visual disabilities, thanks to the collaboration with INCinema, the first festival in Italy accessible also to people with sensory disabilities: **Caravan by Zuzana Kirchnerová**, a project launched in Trieste within the work-in-progress section *This is IT* and presented at the latest Cannes Film Festival, an intimate and poetic road-trip movie that addresses the desire for freedom and the experience of parenting a child with disabilities, told with sensitivity and without stereotypes; and the winners of the “**Corti senza confine**” call by the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia – Central Directorate for Culture, in collaboration with FVG Film Commission – PromoTurismoFVG, a selection of seven short films made by European directors that portray the cross-border territory, selected by director Gabriele Salvatores.

## DOCUMENTARIES IN COMPETITION

The festival will present 10 documentaries in competition as Italian premieres, this year also selected from countries beyond Europe’s borders. They address themes such as socio-economic precarity and the struggle for survival, wars, diaspora and migrant stories, and stories of people and places transformed by historical events—never portrayed as victims, but rather in their everyday resistance, amid fragile, ironic and poetic moments.

Starting with **Militantropos by Yelizaveta Smith, Alina Gorlova and Simon Mozgovyi**, which premiered at the Quinzaine des Cinéastes in Cannes and shortlisted for the EFAs, a work that captures the human condition through the fragmented realities of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine: amid devastation and atrocities, the human being is absorbed by war—and war, in turn, becomes part of the human being.

In **9-Month Contract by Ketevan Vashagashvili**, the focus is on the story of Zhana, a Georgian mother who turns to surrogacy to secure a roof over her daughter’s head. What begins as a quick way to earn money turns into a profound sacrifice, testing the limits of maternal love.

**Active Vocabulary by Russian director Yulia Lokshina** addresses how the school system is used by the Russian state to justify its aggressive expansionist actions, both through external military violence and through internal ideological violence and the persecution of dissidents.

**Atameken (We Live Here) by Zhanana Kurmasheva** takes us to the desolate Kazakh steppe, to a former Soviet site once used for nuclear testing: a harsh and poetic warning about the future of humanity, recalling how between 1949 and 1991 more than 456 nuclear tests left the area with radioactive contamination and suffering.

Set in a remote Moldovan village, **Electing Ms Santa by Raisa Răzmeriță** follows Elena, 42, as she embarks on a journey to free herself from social and family conventions and take control of her life and her new dreams: by day she is a simple farmer, elsewhere she becomes the soul of the village, distributing gifts to young and elderly people living alone while dressed in a Christmas costume.

**Grudzień (December) by Grzegorz Paprzycki** explores the lives of refugees hiding in the forests along the border between Poland and Belarus during the cold month of December, while the world joyfully awaits the holidays—a powerful documentary that gives voice to their silent cries.

Presented at IDFA in Amsterdam, **Outliving Shakespeare by Inna Sahakyan** documents what happens in a dilapidated Soviet-era Armenian nursing home, where a theater director decides to stage *The Sins of Shakespeare* with a cast of residents, sparking conversations about love, life and loss.

**Tykha Povin (Silent Flood) by Ukrainian director Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk** tells the story of a closed religious community in Ukraine that has chosen to live in a beautiful landscape once crossed by front lines, where the community’s peaceful life is often interrupted by floods and wars—two moments that become points of comparison in their collective memory.

**Qartlis Tskhoveba (The Kartli Kingdom) by Tamar Kalandadze and Julien Pebrel** investigates exile, trauma and shared resilience during the 1990s war in Abkhazia: the term “Kartli” refers both to the medieval kingdom of Georgia and to a sanatorium in Tbilisi that sheltered war refugees more than thirty years ago, a decaying building that has become a sort of village.

Finally, in **Welded Together (Unite) by Anastasija Mirošničenko**, Katya is a young woman who works as a welder. Abandoned as a child, she embarks on a personal journey to rediscover her lost family, to “weld” it back together again—just as she welds metal at work.

The jury for the documentary competition consists of Davide Abbatescianni, critic and journalist, managing editor of *The European Animation Journal* and contributor to *Cineuropa*; Vanja Jambrović, producer and

lecturer at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb; and Marko Stojiljković, critic and freelance journalist for international outlets, and co-founder of *Ubiquarian*.

## OFF THE BEATEN... SCREENS

*Off the Beaten...Screens* is the space dedicated to new languages, cinematic forms and unprecedented perspectives, and this year it presents two titles:

**Vetre, pričaj sa mnom (Wind, Talk to Me)** by Serbian director **Stefan Djordjević**, a story inspired by the director's real-life experiences that explores the unbreakable bond between mother and son through a cinematic and introspective journey, presented in Rotterdam and awarded in Sarajevo; and the Italian premiere of **Zemljo Krast (Stealing Land)**, a brilliant Slovenian dramedy by **Žiga Virč**. When a child declares himself to be Palestine during a game of "stealing lands," the game ends up involving the parents as well, bringing deep tensions and hypocrisies to the surface and revealing how quickly the boundary between childhood innocence and adult aggression can blur.

## CORSO SALANI AWARD

The Corso Salani Award presents six independent Italian works at the festival that have not yet been distributed in national theaters, starting with the world premiere of **On Defiance by Giovanni C. Lorusso**, a story from distant Gambia, centered on a father awaiting his wife's return, between hope and faith.

From deep Africa to the remote areas of Sardinia, **Nella colonia penale (In the Penal Colony)** by **Gaetano Crivaro, Silvia Perra, Ferruccio Goia and Alberto Diana** immerses viewers in the last open-air labor colonies still active in Europe—prison regimes far removed from our society, yet at the same time reflective of contemporaneity.

Also included is **Leila** by **Alessandro Abba Legnazzi, Clementina Abba Legnazzi and Giada Vincenzi**, a fairy tale that blends reality and fantasy, centered on Clementina, a 10-year-old girl who turns her mother's absence into a magical adventure; and **Paul a Mayerling - A Portrait**, a personal and collective account by **Antonio Pettinelli** of the figure of director and screenwriter Paul Vecchiali.

The section concludes with **Abele** by **Fabian Volti**, a portrait of nomadic pastoralism from the Middle East to the Mediterranean that investigates the signs of a distinctive human condition, and **White Lies** by **Trieste-born director Alba Zari**, where the author's most intimate and painful past—being born into the controversial sect of the "Children of God"—emerges through a confrontation with her mother and grandmother, in an attempt to understand the reasons that led them to join the cult and that left a deep wound in the family.

Awarding the Italian films will be a jury composed of Maurizio Di Rienzo, member of the SNGCI board and director of ShortTS; Renata Santoro, consultant for the *Giornate degli Autori*; and Giuditta Tarantelli, screenwriter and producer, who in 2002 founded the production company Officina Film together with director Mirko Locatelli.

## SHORT FILM COMPETITION

Room is given to experimentation and short-form cinema with the Short Film Competition, which in this edition presents fourteen titles. Starting with **Found&Lost** by **Reza Rasouli**—already winner of the Best Short Film award at the festival in 2025 with *Night of Passage*—which investigates the evolution of social values at a time when good intentions can give rise to major misunderstandings.

From its Cannes premiere to Trieste screens comes **Eraserhead in a Knitted Shopping Bag** by **Lili Koss**, which sees cinema as the only escape for a twelve-year-old poised between childhood and adolescence, amid crumbling friendships, stolen cigarettes, and David Lynch's *Eraserhead*, and **The Spectacle** by **Bálint Kenyeres**, which reveals the double face of the media—from success to collapse—through the eyes of a young Roma boy gifted with an unusual talent.

Family-centered stories are also present, such as **Nedostupni (Unavailable)** by **Kyrylo Zemlyanyi**, already presented in the Orizzonti section at Venice, in which a young man desperately tries to reestablish contact with his mother living in an occupied territory of Ukraine; **Traje Veliko Finale (Grand Finale)** by **Luka Galešić**; **Sunny** by **Andreea Parfenov**; and **Stiina** by **Elizabeth Kužovnik**—heterogeneous explorations of the parent-child bond—as well as the Polish drama **Chłodno (Coldness)** by **Lena Jaworska**.

Also in the program are the journey of ***Drumul spre casă (The Road Home)*** by **Marian Fărcuț**, and the melancholic atmospheres of the Serbian ***Tamo gde je nekad bila voda (Where the Water Used to Be)*** by **Vanja Vujin** and the **Slovenian *Temno Brdo (The Dark Hill)*** by **Vanja Miloš Jovanović**.

Closing the programme are ***Last Tropics*** by **Thanasis Trouboukis**, ***Index*** by **Radu Muntean**, presented at the Locarno Film Festival, and ***I Erimos (Desert, She)*** by **Ioanna Digenaki**.

The jury for the short film competition is composed of Silvia Carobbio, programmer and distributor, coordinator of the "Zalab View" platform; Oana Ghera, Artistic Director of the Bucharest International Experimental Film Festival (BIEFF) and coordinator of European Short Pitch; and Eléna Laquatra, coordinator of the Lab Femmes de Cinéma think tank.

## VISIONI QUEER

The exploration of queer lives in Central and Eastern European countries, launched last year, continues in this edition of the festival with a selection of 10 titles offering as many opportunities for reflection and discussion, addressing contemporary issues through feature films and shorts, fiction and documentaries.

Produced between 2023 and 2025, the films represent a filmography in progress, inhabited by characters called upon to express and reveal themselves—often in hostile environments where LGBTQ+ rights are opposed—on a journey that stretches from Lithuania to Greece, from Bulgaria to Croatia, passing through Poland, Italy and Germany, with a detour to Colombia.

Italian premieres include the Polish ***Jesteśmy idealni (We Are Not Perfect)*** by **Marek Kozakiewicz**, where more than 300 people apply for Poland's first casting call aimed at non-binary and trans people, an audition for the role of a trans boy in a Netflix film, and ***Endless*** by **Wojciech Puś**, in which lonely and searching for their identity, XIA begin a new and complex relationship with Frank, becoming drawn into a disturbing emotional game that puts their feelings to the test.

Nationalism is addressed head-on in ***Aktyvistas (The Activist)*** by **Romas Zabarauskas**, also an Italian premiere, starring young Andrius, who infiltrates a radical neo-Nazi group to find the murderer of his boyfriend, an LGBTQ+ rights activist.

Premiered at the Giornate degli Autori and shortlisted for the EFAs, ***Bearcave*** by **Stergios Dinopoulos and Krysiana B. Papadakis** is set in Tirna, a village on a mountain in Greece, and centers on the relationship between Argyro, an introverted farmer, and her best friend Anneta, the most popular girl in town who works as a manicurist.

After its premiere at the Festival dei Popoli in Florence and winning the Special Jury Prize in Sarajevo, Ivo Dimchev returns to Trieste (after being the focus of a special musical event last year) with ***In Hell with Ivo*** by **Kristina Nikolova Dalio**, a documentary retracing the career of the Bulgarian queer artist and singer-songwriter, following his path of transforming personal and social struggles into public and intimate performances of strong provocative impact.

Also in the program are the short films ***Erion*** by **Marius Gabriel Stancu**, telling the story of a meeting in the early 2000s between university student Christian and Erion, a young man of Albanian origin, during a holiday in southern Italy, and ***Marina*** by **Paoli De Luca**, already screened at Venice Critics' Week, which meets its protagonist one year after the beginning of her gender transition, still in conflict with her body and emotions.

Among the shorts are also national premieres of ***Poluotok (Peninsula)*** by **David Gašo**, part of Locarno's Pardi di Domani, about a park that becomes a place for casual encounters; ***Skin on Skin*** by **Simon Schneckenburger**, presented in Karlovy Vary, a brutal synthesis of the crossing paths of two men's lives in a slaughterhouse—Jakob, a security guard, and Boris, an employee; and ***Tatuaje (Tattoo)*** by **Kamil Dobrosielski**, a world premiere and a South American excursion into a tattoo studio in Medellín, where Sandro, a non-binary artist and rapper, retraces their past marked by anger and violence.

## WILD ROSES

Among the focuses featured in the festival program is Wild Roses, the section dedicated to European women directors, which this year celebrates the female voices of Slovenian cinema. Curated by Nerina T. Kocjančič, Head of Promotion and Distribution at the Slovenian Film Centre in Ljubljana, it places Slovenian women filmmakers at the center of attention with 13 feature films—both documentaries and fiction—and 10 short films. Highlights include the debut feature by **Urška Djukić**, ***Kaj ti je deklica (Little Trouble Girls)***, distributed in Italy by

Tucker Film and Slovenia's official submission for the 2026 Oscars, a story of friendship and early conflicts between young women, and above all of the awakening of female sensuality; and *Fantasy*, the first feature by Kukla, also presented as an Italian premiere in the feature film competition.

Also in the program is ***Ida Who Sang So Badly Even the Dead Rose Up and Joined Her in Song***, the debut film by **Ester Ivakič**, winner of the Special Jury Prize at the most recent Turin Film Festival, portraying the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Further titles include the return of **Sonja Prosenc** to Trieste with ***Zgodovina ljubezni (History of Love)***, in which teenage Iva immerses herself in a world detached from reality to process the loss of her mother; ***Cent'anni (One Hundred Years)*** by **Maja Doroteja Prelog**, a portrait of Blaž, a survivor of terminal illness who embarks on a demanding celebratory Giro d'Italia, an unfiltered testimony to love and change; and ***Duhovnica (Woman of God)*** by **Maja Prettner (2023)**, an intimate and existential story of a Lutheran priest.

## THE SECOND SHIFT: WOMEN COMRADES AT WORK

Among the festival sections that look to the past to bring the present into focus, this year features a selection of films—**curated by film critic Călin Boto**—that brings back to the big screen images, stories and portraits of women at work, starting from the moment when the film industry itself began to document labor: the early communist-era films set in factories, among male and female workers.

Communism (or the various forms of communism) in Eastern Europe introduced groundbreaking gender policies. For the first time, women were granted equal rights and promised equal opportunities. Drawing on titles rescued from archives, the retrospective now seeks a connection—also critical and polemical—with our present through a showcase of bodies, desires, rebellions and hardships that history has not fully processed.

Thirteen short and medium-length films explore women and manual labor during communism, crossing countries, decades, ideologies and visions. From factories to construction sites, the camera's eye was already attentive to women's morale, and the struggle for equality was inscribed within the class struggle—yet always in second place: a 'second shift'.

The section thus examines how, despite battles for equal rights, attitudes remained patriarchal, with inescapable responsibilities toward the state, the family, the workplace and the home. These fragments are brought together here: films that depict the 'double burden' borne by women—from female workers on screen to films made by women directors—largely produced by so-called 'secondary' institutions of the Eastern European film industry, such as documentary studios, short-film units and film schools, addressing the theme in ways distinct from mainstream cinema (politically, aesthetically, professionally and ethically).

The theme ultimately became a genre in itself, with recurring rhetoric. **With a spirit of research, the section seeks to rework and present a cinematic and formal celebration, in order to imagine, today, the end of the 'second shift'.**

## TSFF FOR KIDS

It is never too early to start discovering the world of cinema: the festival, therefore, offers films for children and for the whole family. For the second consecutive year, the section benefits from collaboration with the Budapest Film Archive, featuring gems of Hungarian animation from the 1960s to the 2000s. The selection of Hungarian shorts, curated by Alberta Mutti, is divided into two programs: ***The Magic of Hungarian Animation***, dedicated to schools, and ***Peter and Friends Discovering Nature***, presented during the first festival weekend at Teatro Miela.

This year's section also includes two Czech feature films: ***Tales from the Magic Garden***, a stop-motion film by **David Súpup, Patrik Pašš, Leon Vidmar and Jean-Claude Roze**, premiered at the Berlinale 2025 in the "Generation Kplus" section and shortlisted for the EFAs, tells the story of three children who spend the night at their grandfather's house and, to fill the silence after the loss of their grandmother—the family storyteller—invent tales and discover the power of imagination.

Also presented as an Italian premiere is ***Secret Delivery by Ján Sebechlebský***, from the most recent Locarno Film Festival in the "Locarno Kids Screenings" section, set at the end of the Nazi occupation in the snowy Giant Mountains on the border between the German Reich and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, where a heroic group of children comes to the aid of a downed French pilot.

## AWARDS

Films in the programme compete for numerous awards, including: the **Trieste Award (€5,000)**; the **Alpe Adria Cinema Award for Best Documentary in Competition, offered by Opificio Neirami (€2,500)**; the **TSFF Shorts Award offered by the Fondazione Osiride Brovedani (€2,000)**; **Audience Awards (Best Feature Film, Best Documentary, Best Short Film)**; the **CEI (Central European Initiative) Award for the film that best interprets contemporary reality and intercultural dialogue (€3,000)**; the **Corso Salani Award 2026 (€2,000)**; the **Eastern Star Award 2026**, presented to one of Europe's leading filmmakers; the **Cinema Warrior Award 2026**, recognizing the persistence, sacrifice and madness of those "warriors"—individuals, associations or festivals—who work, or rather fight, behind the scenes for cinema; the **"In Direzione Donna" Award, presented by the Goap anti-violence center of Trieste to a film that gives voice to women, transforms perspectives and reshapes contemporary imagination (€2,000)**; the **Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa Award for Best Documentary in Competition**; the **Cineuropa Award for Best Feature Film in Competition**; the **PAG Youth Jury Award – Progetto Area Giovani of the Municipality of Trieste**, awarded by a jury of young people aged 18 to 35, representatives of youth associations, **for Best Short Film in Competition**; the **SNCCI Awards for Best International Film by Critics and Best Italian Film**; the **Laser Film Award**; the **HBO Europe Award**; the **Film Center Montenegro Award**; the **Arte Video Prize**; and the **Oubliette magazine Award for Best Film in the Corso Salani Award section**.

## EXHIBITIONS

On the occasion of the festival, the city is further enriched by three major exhibitions that expand its narrative and artistic boundaries, alongside the exhibition that **opened on 29 December, 25 Years of the FVG Film Commission: A Visual Story of Films Shot in the Region, organized by Casa del Cinema**.

The program begins on **10 January at Sala Veruda** with the multidisciplinary exhibition by Serbian artist **Živorad "Zico" Mišić**, titled **On the Currents of Art**, realized with the support of the Municipality of Trieste – Department of Culture and Tourism Policies. The exhibition features 100 works—including original panels, framed pieces and digital creations—centered on the figure of **Nikola Tesla** and the graphic novel *Tesla: The Lord of Lightning*.

**From 14 January to 21 February**, the cultural association **Cizerouno** hosts the visual research project **Yugo Logo at Cavò, curated by Ognjen Ranković and Antonio Karača**, presenting a selection of over 600 historical logos from a country that no longer exists, yet left behind a legacy of highly modern and innovative design.

Finally, **from 15 January, the EContemporary gallery, in collaboration with Alpe Adria Cinema – Trieste Film Festival, presents Beyond Human Skin / Invisible Coexistences**, an exhibition curated by **Elena Cantori** that shifts the focus to the deeper nature of human beings. Through the work of Italian artist **Martina Martonsky**, the exhibition invites reflection on our responsibility toward the planet, starting from the recognition of the infinite forms of life we host within and around ourselves.

## SIDE EVENTS

Alongside the film program, numerous side events will take place, including meetings, book presentations, performances, guided tours and tastings. Among the musical events is an evening with one of the most explosive voices of the contemporary Balkan scene—the Italo-Bosnian rapper **Doppelgänger—on Saturday 17 January at 9:00 p.m. at Hangar Teatri**. The concert will open and close with DJ sets by the collective *Let's Get in Touch*, for a night uniting music, identity and cultures.

The TSFF also offers a rich calendar of editorial presentations—thanks in part to collaborations with Bottega Errante Edizioni and Meridiano 13—along with talks, workshops, guided tours, performances and tastings, bringing key voices of contemporary literature and activism to Trieste.

The literary program opens with a cycle curated by Bottega Errante Edizioni, offering a deep dive into Balkan history and identity. **On 19 January at Caffè San Marco**, Croatian writer **Robert Perišić presents La gatta alla fine del mondo (The Cat at the End of the World)**, named by *The Wall Street Journal* as one of the best books of the year, in conversation with Rai journalist Walter Skerk.

The following day at **Ubik Bookstore**, **Dora Šustić** discusses her debut novel **I cani (The Dogs) with Giorgia Spadoni**, a story of youthful freedom in Andalusia that won the Drago Gervais Award. The cycle concludes **on 21 January at Minerva Bookstore with Dejan Atanacković, in dialogue with Luigi Nacci, presenting Lusitania**, winner of the NIN Award, which tells the story of the birth of a utopian community in occupied Belgrade in 1915.

On 18 January, Lovat Bookstore hosts the talk *Il Cuore Scoperto – Re-making Love* (add editore), a moment of political and cultural reflection on new forms of relationships, inspired by the Italian edition of Victoire Tuaillon's book, moderated by Marta Improta, **with Marta Pacor and Rosa Monicelli**. **On 23 January**, again at **Lovat**, the focus shifts to graphic novels with **Boban Pesov's *C'era una volta l'Est (Once Upon a Time the East)***, Tunué publishers). The author will be in conversation with rapper **Doppelgänger**, reflecting on shared experiences shaped by the post-1990s Balkan diaspora, as well as on rap and graphic novels.

**On 18 January at Antico Caffè San Marco**, historian and writer **Eric Gobetti** will give a lecture bridging cinema and history, analyzing how Italian cinema has portrayed Yugoslav partisans and how Italian occupiers were depicted in Yugoslav cinema.

**Meridiano 13** broadens the international horizon **on 22 January at Ubik Bookstore**, bringing together stories from Yemen and Bulgaria with **Eleonora Sacco and Giorgia Spadoni**. On the same day, a panel moderated by Mitja Stefancic on alternative Slovenian music will feature **Boris Benko and Petar Stojanović**, exploring the legacy of artistic and musical movements of the 1980s and 1990s in former Yugoslavia.

Trieste itself becomes a narrative through **guided tours led by Marzia Arzon and Francesca Pitacco**. Six itineraries range from discovering Slovenian Trieste to revisiting the city's working-class past, from stories of philanthropy in Barriera Vecchia to a visit to the Borarium in Opicina. There is also a route dedicated to children and a cross-border walk between Gorizia and Nova Gorica designed by Gianluca Guerra for the Set Discover app.

The festival experience is further enriched by "offbeat" events, such **as the participatory performance *Yugo Yoga*, conceived by Lara Ritosa-Roberts, which on 24 January** will transform the **Covered Market** into a space of collective movement inspired by socialist culture and "fiskultura." Other events include the **ArtiFragili Speed Date on 20 January** and the cine-narratives by **Quadrato Culturale T.E.T.R.I.S.S., curated by Margherita De Michiel, Associate Professor of Russian Language and Literature at SSLMIT**, at the Ridottino of the Teatro Miela on 16 January.

On the film criticism front, two volumes dedicated to the analysis of contemporary cinema and film festivals will be presented. Roy Menarini will discuss *I film del XXI secolo* (Cuepress) **on 18 January with Beatrice Fiorentino**, while the **CUC – Consulta Universitaria del Cinema will present *Festival e Critica: una storia incrociata (Meltemi)* on Tuesday 20 January at Libreria Umberto Saba**, in conversation with journalist **Paolo Lughi**.

**On 19 and 20 January at Sala CEI**, the study days ***Reframing European Film Festivals: Transitional Histories, Cultures and Identities* will take place, organized by the CUC in collaboration with the TSFF**. The **CinéTalks** also return, a film literacy program for high schools, this year focused on gender-based violence and developed in collaboration with the **GOAP anti-violence center**, with meetings in various Trieste schools and a matinée screening at Cinema Ambasciatori on **Wednesday 21 January**.

Finally, the culinary experience is not neglected, with **wine tastings from the Rojac winery on 17 January at Caffè San Marco** and a macrobiotic showcooking of Eastern European traditions on 18 January. Reservations are required for guided tours, tastings and the showcooking ([prenotazionitsff@gmail.com](mailto:prenotazionitsff@gmail.com)).

**Accreditation requests** can be submitted via the online procedure at:

<https://triestefilmfestival.it/biglietti-e-accrediti/>

All information is available on the website: [www.triestefilmfestival.it](http://www.triestefilmfestival.it)

## The Festival on Social Media

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/@TriesteFilmFest>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/triestefilmfestival>

**Letterboxd:** <https://letterboxd.com/tsff/>

**WhatsApp Channel:** <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Vb2ZqRDA89Mcazn03T1r>

## The Festival on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/@TRIESTEFILMFESTIVAL>

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## **Countries Participating in the 37th Edition**

Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Moldova, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Principality of Monaco, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United States, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, Hungary.

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is a member of the European film festival network **MIOB-Moving Images Open Borders** (Les Arcs Film Festival - France, Film Festival Cottbus - Germany, Crossing Europe Film Festival - Austria, Palić Film Festival - Serbia, Scanorama - Lithuania, Sevilla Film Festival - Spain, Trieste Film Festival - Italy)