

A celebratory opening in the cinema: The 64th edition of DOK Leipzig has begun

PRESS RELEASE
25 October 2021

The Saxon Award for the Best Documentary Project by a Female Director goes to Sarvnaz Alambeigi



Festival opening, DOK Leipzig 2019 | Photo: Susann Jehnichen

DOK Leipzig opened on Monday, 25 October with the international premiere of **The Rhine Flows to the Mediterranean Sea** in front of an audience of about 700 at the CineStar theatre.

64th International Leipzig
Festival for Documentary and
Animated Film
25 October to 31 October

Festival Director Christoph Terhechte introduced the crowd to the film's director Offer Avnon, who was on hand at the event. As an Israeli and the son of a Holocaust survivor, Avnon's work explores his impressions of Germany and his changed perspective upon returning to his hometown of Haifa.

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Presenter Julia Weigl and Christoph Terhechte led the event together.

Speakers included Dr Skadi Jennicke, Deputy Mayor for Culture and Arts of the City of Leipzig, and Sebastian Hecht, Head of the Culture and Tourism Division at the Saxon State Ministry for Science, Culture and Tourism (SMWK).

„For the city of Leipzig, the International Festival for Documentary and Animated Film is an irreplaceable highlight within the cultural landscape,“ said Dr Jennicke in her opening address. „It offers space to examine current political topics around the world and have shared encounters. I am all the more pleased that DOK Leipzig is returning to the city's cinemas this year along with international guests, sending a strong signal for present and future cinema culture.“

Festival Director Terhechte thanked Dr Jennicke for her many years of continued support, especially during the pandemic, which continues to pose special challenges for cultural institutions and festivals.

Sebastian Hecht lauded the festival's contribution to public discourse: „With this year's accompanying programme, DOK Leipzig is also creating a space for debate and engagement with art and cinematic narratives

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from around the world. By looking at other continents and grappling with political issues, the festival broadens our horizons and keeps us thinking.“

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Mr Hecht then presented the Saxon Award for the Best Documentary Project by a Female Director, which comes with a 5,000-euro prize. The award went to Iranian filmmaker Sarvnaz Alambeigi for her project **Broken Flower**. The SMWK sponsors the prize, for which projects by female directors selected for the DOK Co-Pro Market are eligible.

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In **Broken Flower**, Alambeigi will portray a young woman from Afghanistan who wants to become a Muay Thai athlete despite resistance from her patriarchal father. Jury members Fatima Abdollahyan and Natalia Imaz, who chose the winner in the run-up to the festival, said of the project: „We want to honour a filmmaker who is committed to her work and passionate about putting herself out there. Her multi-layered project already promises a strong film that combines a highly topical subject with a personal story.“

Festival Director Terhechte thanked Barbara Klepsch, the State Minister for Culture and Tourism, along with the SMWK and its division leader Sebastian Hecht for their commitment to this prize: „Access to the profession of directing is still significantly more difficult for women than for men worldwide. In this respect, the SMWK prize sends an important signal that aligns with DOK Leipzig’s policy of aiming for gender parity in the competitions.“

Terhechte then presented the Silver Dove to Dutch filmmaker Vincent Monnikendam for the film **Mother Dao, the Turtlelike**, which was awarded the prize in 1995. The statuette somehow never reached the director by post at that time, but 26 years later the honour was bestowed on location in Leipzig. The film can be seen in the Re-Visions series, in which DOK Leipzig looks back on its own festival history from a contemporary perspective.

Parallel to the opening event at CineStar 8, **The Rhine Flows to the Mediterranean Sea** was shown at Leipzig Central Station (Osthalle). Both the film’s director Offer Avnon and Festival Director Christoph Terhechte also spoke about the film before to the screening.

Already on the evening prior (24 October), a work from this year’s programme made an early debut: the video installation “Hey You!” by US film artist Shelly Silver. Sponsored by the US Consulate General Leipzig, it will be projected onto the exterior façade of the Museum der bildenden Künste (MdbK) daily from 5 to 10 pm during the festival week.

DOK Leipzig will present a total of some 170 films and XR works from 55 countries, including 37 world and 13 international premieres, at nine different venues in Leipzig. Included for the first time is the Regina Palast in eastern Leipzig. This year DOK Leipzig will once again present some of the films free of admission at Leipzig Central Station (Osthalle) and the Polnisches Institut.

The Golden Doves and other awards will be presented at two Festival Awards Ceremonies on Saturday, 30 October.

At all public events during the festival, the “3G” regulation for protection against COVID-19 will apply. Patrons aged 12 and over will need to show proof that they have been vaccinated or have recovered from the virus.

Alternatively, admission will be possible with a negative test taken the same day at an official testing centre (no self-testing). Exceptions are the opening event at CineStar and the screenings at the Polnisches Institut, to which only vaccinated and recovered persons will be allowed entry. A nose and mouth covering must be worn at all venues prior to taking one's seat.

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Find more information on the festival programme here: [DOK Leipzig 2021](#)

Logos, this year's poster design, festival impressions, and portraits of the programme directors can be found in the [press download area](#).

You can request film stills for your coverage of DOK Leipzig 2021 at presse@dok-leipzig.de.

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