

III Docu-MENTAL Film Festival Events

From October 8 to 11, six films about people with mental disabilities were shown as part of the III Docu-MENTAL Film Festival followed by discussions.

8 October (Thursday)



The Film Festival was opened by **Natalia Treushnikova**, President of the Union for Mental Health, who noted the importance of understanding of people who suffer from mental disorders that positively affects not only their fate and their well-being, but also the fate and well-being of the entire society.

The third Docu-MENTAL Film Festival focuses on problems associated with child mental development, inclusive education, and discrimination against people with mental and behavioral disorders. This event is part of the social and cultural program of the III Congress on Mental Health: Meeting the Needs of the XXI century" - "CHILDREN, SOCIETY and FUTURE", an international interdisciplinary scientific and practical event that was postponed to October 2021 due to the pandemic.

On October 8, the **Award Ceremony for the Winning Films of the Docu-MENTAL Competition** was held. The contest is organized by the Union for Mental Health in collaboration with CoolConnection and the Pilgrim platform. The jury included: competition curator **Ekaterina Vizgalova**, Director **Elena Pogrebizhskaya**, actress **Yulia Aug**, editor-in-chief of the journal Psychologies **Natalia Babintseva**, and psychologist and festival curator **Selena Valyavkina**.

"A total of 110 applications were submitted for selection, which is almost a third more than last year. Most of the films were documentaries, about 15 works were feature films, of which two were full-length. Genres and artistic styles are diverse, and various aspects of mental health were also reflected. The selection included 30 films showing characters with mental illnesses and mental characteristics, having different gender, age, profession and social status. The characters include people with autism, down syndrome, PTSD, people with schizophrenia, multiple personality syndrome, depression, obsessive — compulsive disorder, and people who practice self-harm.





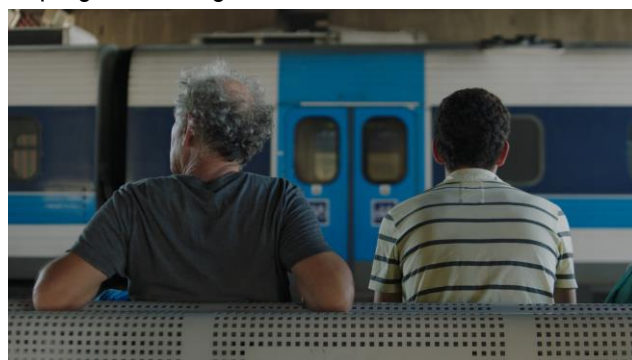
Several films are devoted to life in special communes and psychoneurological boarding schools, several – to rehabilitation of people with mental disorders, hospital clowning, the work of psychiatrists and psychotherapists," — said the curator of the competition Ekaterina Vizgalova.

Out of 110 submitted applications and 30 works selected for the competition, the best was the web series **#PSYCHO**, directed by Lyubov

Kamyryna (Germany). The four characters live in Berlin. They work, go to clubs, raise children. But everyone also has a "second life" — a mental diagnosis that they have to deal with every day. Every day, they keep video diaries and openly, on camera, tell how they are trying to overcome the disease.

"The Film Festival program turned out to be differentiated and reflects mental health issues from different sides. The main focus of the program was on destigmatization of people with mental illnesses, on how to live a person with a diagnosis or in a difficult psychological situation, how to communicate with other people, with relatives and friends. The main idea of the program: a diagnosis or difficult life circumstances that cause disorders is not a cross on a person," says film expert and teacher **Vsevolod Korshunov**, a member of the jury.

The opening film of the III Film Festival was the only feature film of the program, the Israeli drama **"And here we are"**, which entered the line-up of the 73rd Cannes Film Festival. This is a story about a father and his son with autism disorder who go on a spontaneous journey on the eve of separation.



Aaron gave up everything — his career, his job, his friends — to raise his son URI. His son is in his twenties and has an autism spectrum disorder. He is able to shave in the morning because "all good people shave and Charlie Chaplin doesn't have a beard," but he can't handle the simpler actions. He can't go through the automatic opening doors in case they slam him. Can't see fish being eaten. And he needs to constantly ask his father: Do I love this shirt? Do I like the color yellow? Do I love my mother? Nevertheless, separation occurs, and the son remains to live in a specialized home with his peers. And this is his first independent decision.



9 October (Friday)

"Solo" (Argentina, Czech Republic, 2019, Director: Artemio Benki, 16+) - the story of virtuoso pianist Martin Perino, who struggles with paranoid schizophrenia, became the film of the second day of the Festival. Four years ago, the pianist Martin Perino was in the largest psychiatric hospital in Latin

America with a diagnosis of "paranoid schizophrenia". As a child, Martin heard praise only outside the house, so very early he stopped feeling the world around him as real. Music helps the adult Martin organize the fragments of the perceived, and heavy medications do not allow them to crumble again. But it becomes much easier for the hero only among people — he plays for more infirm patients, takes on small concerts and lectures, works on a new composition with a friend-a dancer who understands Martin by the notes he wrote. Very soon, the hero's hospitalization will end, and the camera will follow him to his father's

apartment, which does not have a single musical instrument. While working on "Solo", Benki was struggling with a terminal illness, so the resonance between him and Martin Perino is the main theme of this film — Symphony. The Spanish — language film, directed by a Frenchman from the Czech Republic, tells a personal, but not national, story about parental perfectionism, childhood trauma, psychosocial therapy and the search for strength to fight.



After watching the film, a discussion took place about life "in and out of illness" and about the place of creativity, which was attended by: **Alina BELYAT**, journalist, presenter, author of the podcast "One disorder"; **Sasha Starost**, artist, musician, journalist, translator, who has experience of mental illness, and **Alexey Pavlichenko**, PhD, psychiatrist, psychotherapist, senior teacher of the Training center of the Alekseev Psychiatric Clinical Hospital No. 1. Alina BELYAT noted how important it is to understand what people with mental disabilities face, what they feel and experience, and expressed the hope that the film festival will

contribute to the destigmatization of people with mental disorders and show them that they are not alone. Sasha Starost raised the problem of stigmatization of psychiatry and psychiatrists, when they believe that psychiatry is a punitive apparatus that will certainly destroy a person. She noted that despite the fact that it remains a practice in which psychiatrists do not consider patients as customers, when often people do not inform their diagnosis, the names of drugs that they are treated in the hospital, developing a steady cooperation of a psychotherapist and a psychiatrist, the psychiatrist and the user of mental health services, which increases the chances of people to recover. Sasha stressed the need for collective action, creating a community that can speak for itself and articulate problems for society. There may be people who do not have any disorders, and many people who have diagnoses and are engaged in self-advocacy. Another important topic of discussion was the stigma that hinders the employment of people with mental disabilities. Alexey Pavlichenko noted that, unfortunately, now he cannot advise his clients to voice their diagnosis to the employer due to the fact that in society the perception of a person, his professional competence is often associated with his illness and stressed the need to debunk these stereotypes. He spoke about the importance of improving the training of both specialists and non-specialists, users of psychiatric services in the field of mental health, which should be based on an interdisciplinary approach and cooperation.

10 October (Saturday)

This day was particularly stressful for the Film Festival, as it presented three films at once, raising the problems of inclusive education and the lives of people with mental disabilities in specialized institutions.

The film "Jun Ha Planet" ("**Jun-ha-ui-haeng-sung**", South Korea, 2018, Director: Hong Hyun-Suk, 12+) tells the story of a fourth-grader Jun Ha, who does not always remember how to express certain feelings. Instead of words of



gratitude, the boy begins to spit, and when he becomes "stuffy", fists are used. Teachers patiently observe the child, try to understand his motivations and establish a pattern of behavior. Teachers at an alternative Seoul school have eliminated the racing element in favor of lessons in mutual aid and non-toxic communication. Children are taught not to avoid or fear Jun Ha, and their level of empathy is astounding even for inclusive education professionals: "At their age, I couldn't do that," says one teacher. This movie is not about magic techniques, but about detailed collective work. Everyone here is engaged in creative work, trying to hear the melody that sounds on the Jun Ha planet.



After watching the film, there was a discussion on inclusive education, which was attended by: **Natalia Klimchuk**, mother of a child with autism, Director of the Bang Bang Education school of design; **Igor Shpitsberg**, Head of the Center for Rehabilitation of Disabled Children "Our Sunny World"; **Svetlana Alyokhina**, Vice-rector for inclusive education of the Moscow State Psychological and Pedagogical University; **Yegor Bachilo**, Director of the Union for mental health and **Sasha Starost**, who this time acted as a moderator. Participants noted the amazing ability

of all the people who surround the boy with special mental health needs, children and parents of classmates, teachers, educators, employees of Bicycle workshops and local stores, to interact collectively for the benefit of one child who needs understanding and patience on their part. This is something without which inclusion is not possible in principle. Svetlana Alyokhina emphasized that inclusion means opening each student not only through the educational program, but also taking into account the needs and special conditions necessary for the student and teachers to achieve success. Igor Shpitsberg noted that the process of inclusion should be mutual and bring mutual benefits – a student with mental disabilities becomes a member of the team, gains self-confidence, and children without disabilities are brought up responsive and humane. However, the organization of this process requires special training, first of all, specialists of educational institutions, psychologists, teachers, tutors, as well as special techniques, which, unfortunately, in modern practice does not have a systematic application.

Two Russian-language films: "**Barsky Dom**" (Russia, 2019, Director: Anna Altukhova) and "**Place of love**" (Belarus, 2019, Director: Lyubov Zemtsova, 16 +) told about the life of people with mental disabilities in specialized social institutions.

The half — hour "**Barsky Dom**" (Lord House) is the only film in the program that is directly related to academic research. The project was made with the support of the European University in St. Petersburg, and the team of its creators-anthropologists Ilya Utekhin and Anna Klepikova, the



author of the high — profile documentary novel "Probably I'm a fool" about adults and children from specialized boarding schools. The viewer looks at the world through the eyes of heroes who participate in a project for Russia on the social integration of people with intellectual disabilities. Each of them dreams of a family, but they say it out loud for the first time. Now this is a real chance, and not a distant lordly privilege.



"Place of love" is the last film work of the famous Belarusian documentary filmmaker Lyubov Zemtsova, who died in a car accident this spring along with her colleagues in the video project "Unknown Belarus". This is a film about a love quadrangle in the Bobruisk leisure center for people with disabilities. Tanya is 38, Vadim, Olya and Denis are twenty years younger. Like all of Luba's works, this is a

movie about invisible people with big open hearts. Zemtsova contrasts stereotypes about the emotional life of people with disabilities with impressionable and very vulnerable characters. They quarrel, make up, dream of love, worry about the future, and most importantly – they can and want to talk about their feelings.

How do adaptation programs for people with disabilities work? This topic was discussed by: **Nadezhda Stepunina**, Director of the Center for Adaptation and Development "Emerald City", psychiatrist, psychotherapist, PhD; **Selena Valyavkina**, festival curator, psychologist, film therapist and **Tatiana Felgenhauer**, journalist, correspondent, "Echo of Moscow", Deputy editor-in-chief, who acted as moderator.

"The Belarusian film "Place of love" made a strong impression. It's about young people with intellectual disabilities who meet in a day care center and fall in love with each other in a circle. And they do not feel borders, pursue each other, change, promise to marry. And it's all a bit like a Playground "let's be friends?" - "come on", and then "let me love you, and you love me" - "come on". And the sea of tenderness and naivety, of course, and passion, and bitterness. And I inwardly cringed a little while watching, imagining the course of discussion of such a hot topic as the right of people with disabilities to love and intimacy. But we talked about inclusion in General. It was very interesting to talk, but this sore subject was only touched upon in passing... Here's what I realized today. Inclusion is not just about being ready to accept "them" — it's about accepting ourselves, about more complete us. We are not just them - we do not accept ourselves in our weaknesses and limitations, naivety, defenselessness, helplessness. We are afraid to recognize ourselves in them, they seem to us to be "aliens", but they are us, you only need to look more closely. And then my friend suddenly realized the same thing - that we are afraid to look in the mirror and see how similar we are, so we build prisons for them, try to isolate ourselves in every possible way, "what kind of normality is this»...",- we think that this quote from Nadezhda Stepunina's post very accurately conveys the atmosphere and texture of the discussion.



11 October (Sunday)

The film "**Self Portrait**" ("The Self Portrait", Norway, Directors: Katja Hegset, Margaret Olin, Espen Wallin, 16+) completed the Film Festival program.

Lena Marie Fossen is twenty-eight and has never gone through puberty. At the age of ten, the heroine stopped eating and has since suffered from a severe form of anorexia. But taking up portrait photography, Lene Marie realized that you can stop time without self-destruction. She goes to the Greek island of Chios, where she takes pictures of local residents, Syrian refugees, and makes a series of self-portraits in an



abandoned leper colony. From a hermit, the girl turns into the "black sun" of world photography, participates in festivals, and shares her experience on TEDTalks. But soon Lene Marie gets a neck injury, and her weakened body, which has long absorbed only protein drinks, begins to give up. Who died in 2019 from cardiac arrest, Lene Marie Fossen managed to watch the final editing of this film and called it a potential shield against the insidious all-consuming disease. The heroine describes anorexia as a Nazi regime inside her own body — painful not only in itself, but also because of the censure from others who perceive anorexia as a personal whim. In her poignant monologues, Lene Marie tells how as a child she was afraid to be left alone with the world, and out of a sense of self — preservation, she locked herself in her own body, not knowing how unbearable this form of struggle would be.

After the show, there was a conversation about eating disorders, which was attended by writer **Olga Breininger**, who had experience of anorexia, **Olesya Khomenko**, Head of the Psychological Department of the Center for the study of Eating Disorders, and **Yulia Kuzishina**, a producer of the Docu-MENTAL Festival. Olga Breininger shared her experience of living with an eating disorder and said that the onset of the disease felt like following internal motivations to be more productive due to the stress caused by studying. Olesya Khomenko shared her experience of working with teenagers and adults with various forms of eating disorders, and also spoke about ways to work with seriously ill people and their needs. The guests discussed the importance of friendly and family support for people with eating disorders, the difficulties in recognizing it for both the person with the disorder and their loved ones, and talked about genetic predisposition and how it may or may not manifest itself taking into account life circumstances.

