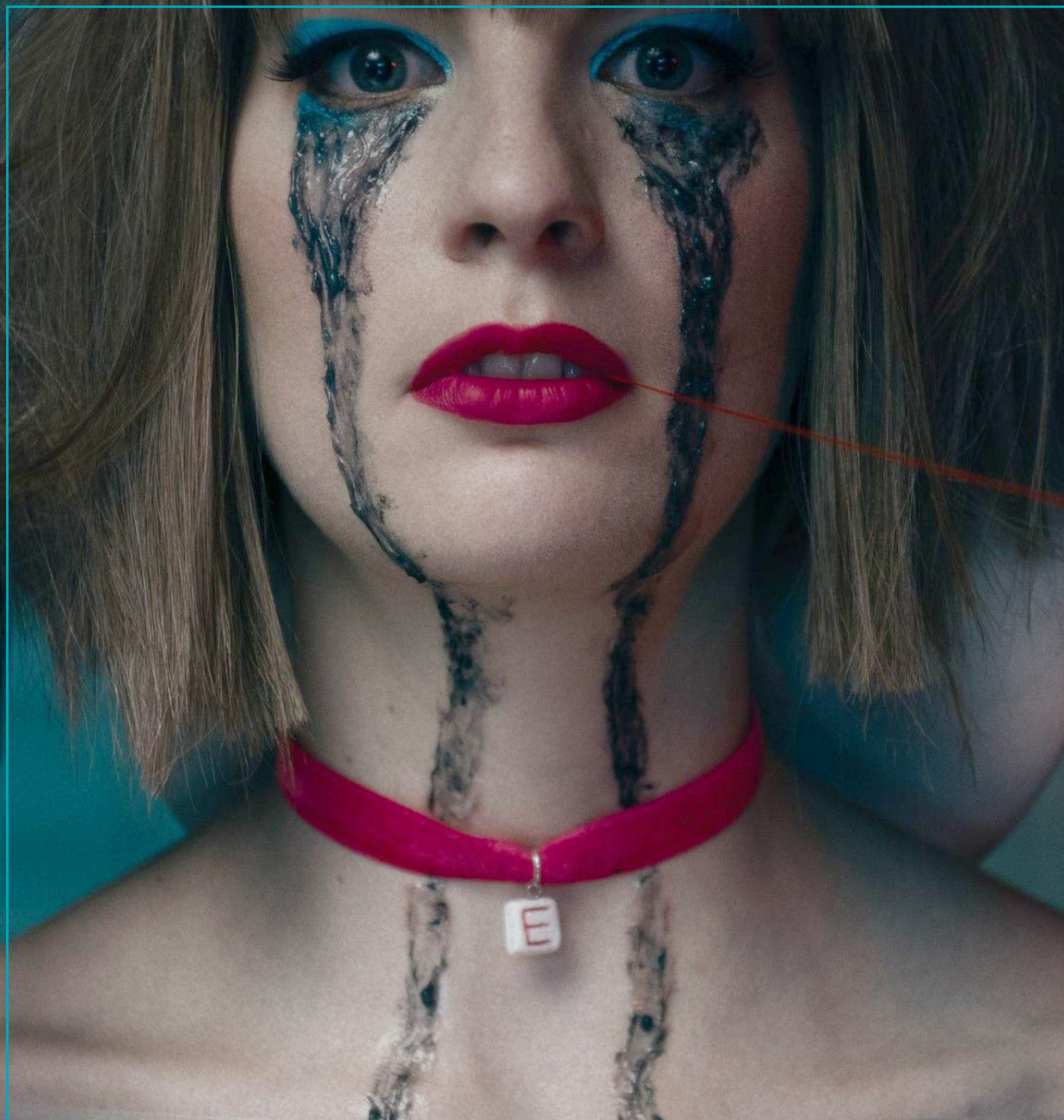


Slovak Film
Institute

May 16 — 27
2023

What's Slovak



Festival de Cannes | Electra | Producers on the Move
Marché du Film | Slovak Film News
Czech & Slovak Pavilion Village International Stand No. 136

in Cannes?



La Cinef – Electra

Interviewed by Lea Pagáčová

Electra will have its world premiere at the Festival de Cannes in La Cinef selection. Film's lead animator Marek Jasaň answered some of our questions.

La Cinef

How did this collaboration on *Electra* come about and what preceded it?

I think the biggest contributing factor to my collaborations of the last few years (including *Electra*) was the fact that I was invited to join the team making Filip Pošivač's stop-motion feature film *Tony, Shelly and the Magic Light*. Frankly, it came as a surprise to me, since I had little experience with puppet animation at that time (just one school assignment). I thought of it as a challenge, though, as well as an opportunity to expand my skill set, so I accepted the offer and moved to Prague where the film was being made. I met many profes-

sionals from the field there, including Daria Kashcheeva. Our first meeting was very ordinary. Only later did Filip tell me that she was already searching for animators for her project *Electra*, and Filip recommended me.

Could you tell us what does the job of a lead animator encompass?

Personally, I see it as the role of an advisor and a connecting element between the director and animators. It's the person you go to when you need to clear up some doubts about what happens onscreen, or when you're not sure how to comply with the director's wishes from a technical or

animation-related point of view. In our smaller teams, however, that was never really needed, as we always discussed any problems either with the directors themselves, their assistants, or other colleagues. Each of us has their strengths and weaknesses. Together, we helped one another, commented on each other's shots, and exchanged experiences. And in my eyes, making *Electra* was the same way, even if there were only two animators. We were equal partners learning from one another and with time, we became better at different types of shots. Vojto Kiss worked mostly with life-sized puppets and I preferred real

actors. I only learnt that they labelled me as the lead animator after the film had been shot already, but even if I knew about it sooner, it wouldn't change a thing in our collaboration.

Could you describe the film's animation technique in more detail? In what way was it specific, or new to you?

The film combines pixilation, puppet animation, and slow-motion shots. I've never done any of it at such great length. The work with actors was especially challenging, since many principles an animator is used to do not apply to pixilation of real people. You have to account for the fact that people have a limited supply of energy. Every shot with an actor was designed to be filmable within three hours, and even that was sometimes borderline doable. If you fixate a puppet properly, you can have your lunch break or even let it sit overnight, so you could be filming a shot over several days. With an actor, I had to make the shot without any breaks. I think this was quite strenuous for both sides at first. It took the actors a while to get accustomed to the animator determining their movement paths instead of themselves.

We also used puppet stop-motion animation which, with most of the objects used, meant also working with the fabric material, the actors' make-up, and custom-made life-sized posable mannequins. And the third technique we made use of was a slow-motion variation of classic filmed shots. The actors had to play out all actions about five times slower while they were being filmed by a camera with a higher frequency. Then, the shot was sped up in post-production and a few frames were cut out so that it resembled pixilation. We only resorted to it for a few shots which would be very difficult to make with the previous two techniques.

The film *Electra* is going to the cinemas already, but I assume you're also working on other projects right now. Could you tell us a bit more, maybe even introduce them?

Speaking of bigger projects, I'll mention the animated feature project *Of Unwanted Things and People*. Once again, I occupy the role of an animator. It's a co-production of four countries (France, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia). The Slovak part is produced by Artichoke and directed by Patrik Pašš Jr. Again, it's a puppet project that has to overcome new technical challenges and will offer new combinations of animation techniques which the viewers might find interesting. In the film, family members tell stories relating to the theme of uselessness. Each mini-story is made in a different country and the Slovak one revolves around two boys that discover the secret of an abandoned garden with an apple orchard. Aside from that, I also work on smaller animation jobs for commercial clients as well as art projects.

Last year in Cannes, *Electra* won **Focus WiP** – the Short Film Corner | Rendez-vous Industry's grant for short films in production or post-production.

ELECTRA

CZ – FR – SK | 2023 | 25 min. | animated short film

Director & Scriptwriter

Daria Kashcheeva

Production MAUR film (CZ), FAMU (CZ), Papy3D Productions (FR), Artichoke (SK)

Slovak Co-Producer Juraj Krasnohorský

Artichoke

juraj@artichoke.sk

www.artichoke.sk



Marek Jasaň graduated in animation from the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava in 2017. He collaborated on various animated advertisements, festival spots, games, and short films.

SCREENING ►

May 24 | 14:30 | Buñuel Theatre
*World Premiere



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
LA CINEF
2023 OFFICIAL SELECTION

Juraj Krasnohorský Is Producer on the Move

Interviewed by Lea Pagáčová

This year, twenty promising film producers from different European countries have been brought together by the Producers on the Move initiative once again. The programme is aimed at connecting young, enterprising European producers with potential co-production partners, strengthening their industry networks, and at the same time, providing a solid and visible platform for this next generation of European filmmakers. This year, Slovakia is represented by Juraj Krasnohorský, the producer of successful films such as *White Plastic Sky* (d. Tibor Bánóczki, Sarolta Szabó) which just premiered at the Berlinale.

Do you have any specific expectations regarding your participation in the Producers on the Move programme?

Personally, I see the main purpose of the programme in the meetings arranged by the organiser at Cannes. We get to meet selected representatives of the European film industry, which is an exclusive opportunity to present our projects. That is precisely what brings me there, as we have just finished the development of the fiction film *The Fall*. Patrik Pašš Jr. wrote the script and Juraj Lehotský is set to direct it. We want to make it a European film – collaborate with international partners, cast top-notch international actors, and film it in English. This constitutes a new

challenge for me, but there are also some elements which would be new in the context of Slovak cinema. The Producers on the Move platform will actively make us visible at Cannes, which will help me find the right partners.

You also work on the film *Electra*. What other projects of yours are currently in the process?

Besides *Electra*, the much-anticipated second film of the Oscar-nominated Daria Kashcheeva, another short animated film from our production will premiere this year – Hungarian director Olivér Hegyi's *The Garden of Heart*. Then, we hope we'll finish two more animated shorts next year – director



Juraj Krasnohorský (1980) was born in Bratislava where he works for Artichoke as film producer and for the international education programme for producers, CEE Animation Workshop, as head of studies. He studied physics, mathematics, and film in Geneva, Bilbao, and Paris, and has been directing and producing films in Slovakia since 2008. He is an EAVE programme graduate, a Slovak Association of Animated Film Producers member, and a CEE Animation board member. He is also a pedagogical contributor to European and Asian workshops for creative producers.

UPCOMING FILM

The Fall – Pád
feature drama – in development
d. Juraj Lehotský

Contact Artichoke
juraj@artichoke.sk

Producers on the Move

Jan Saska's *Hurricane* and Slovak director Marta Prokopová's *Everything We Missed*. Regarding feature animated films, this year we are shooting *Of Unwanted Things and People*, a puppet film for kids. Another project that brings me joy are new episodes of *Icons*, the successful docuseries about Slovak architecture. Aside from the second Slovak series, it is set to also make an international, Central European version.

Artichoke's finished projects and works in progress include fiction films and a documentary series, but animated works are undoubtedly the most prevalent. In Slovakia, it's mostly animated films' directors that get to produce them. What has drawn you towards animation the most?

I've always found animation appealing. Even as a beginning director, I had the ambition to make animated films too. It has never been about the technique for me, not even later when I started working as a producer exclusively. If animation is the best way to tell a story, then it simply works. This was the case for the well-known *Waltz with Bashir*, for instance – no one ever starts to wonder whether it would be better as fiction. However, my work on animated films in the last ten years also made me grow fond of the people from the field of animated film, mostly due to the initiatives related to the international CEE Animation association. The educational training titled CEE Animation Workshop, which I established and have been in charge of, is part of it. In comparison to fiction film creators, animation folks have always appeared less competitive and more easy-going to me, in a way.

Your production company, Artichoke, co-produced the film *White Plastic Sky*, which just premiered at the Berlinale. What gave rise to this collaboration? Why did the project catch your interest?

White Plastic Sky is one of the success stories of CEE Animation, the international collaboration of producers from Central European associations of animated film. It has become a large structure organis-

ing workshops as well as a pitching forum, which is where I met the film's producers and directors ten years ago. At that time, they were teaching at the prestigious MOME in Budapest. When they had the idea for a film set somewhere in between Budapest and Tatras that would combine 2D and 3D technologies – meaning work could be easily split among two teams in two different countries – it felt natural to join our creative forces, capabilities, and finances to try to make the ambitious project come to life.

And what part of the script caught my attention? To me, the script seemed to be the absolute best one I've ever read in my life. I've always had a thing for sci-fi, but the human story and the environmental and philosophical dimensions resonate very strongly here. It felt as if I was reading one of the classics of the genre, but a one yet undiscovered. It's a love story of two people in a world where nature disappeared and humans are the only thing left. It is modern and topical since it clearly raises the question of what will we do when climate change takes a turn for the worse, which is what all the evidence suggests. In some ways, it's reminiscent of the story of Adam and Eve. In other aspects, it's like the ancient tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice, it is mythological, even. Moreover, the idea of depicting our Central European region, Budapest and the Tatras, in the 22nd century seemed like a great idea to me. In general, films depict the future in this part of the world very rarely.

What do you feel are Slovak animation's strong suits capable of catching the interest of international producers?

Considering how relatively small our film industry is (especially when it comes to animation), Slovakia has surprisingly many talents of European significance, which is very positive. For years, Kata Kerekesová with her series *Mimi and Lisa* and *The Websters* has been a successful example for the entire Central European region. We have excellent, talented young directors which have already earned international recog-

nition with their first works, and can now make bold films. And at least in my experience, we have proven to be a strong partner even to big European projects, especially in relation to 3D animation. Our contribution lies not so much in a large number of experienced people, but rather in ingenious solutions where a smaller work team would suffice. I'll mention the animated feature film *The Siren* by Sepideh Farsi that also premiered at the Berlinale in the Panorama section, for instance. It's a big French-Belgian-German-Luxembourgish co-production in which we haven't participated as co-producers, but thanks to a great idea and excellent work of a small team from Blue Faces studio located in Bratislava, we made almost 30 minutes of animation in the film.

So two of the films you collaborated on, *White Plastic Sky* and *The Siren*, made it to this year's selection of the Berlinale. Now, *Electra* will compete in the Cannes' La Cinef section. What is the secret besides the hard work?

I would like to emphasise that for us, the 33% cash rebate in Slovakia is a very important instrument when it comes to extensive co-productions. This financing system is well-known to European producers and it is what makes us competitive on the European level. I feel that even though our market is small, we can play a key part even in big and costly European films thanks to good ideas. This has vividly put us on the map of European film in the last years and I dare say that our brand will rise in the upcoming years.



Peek Into the Future of Slovak Cinema

Slovak Film News

Text by Tomáš Hudák,
Head of BID

Since 2016, Bratislava Industry Days (BID), part of the IFF Febiofest Bratislava, has been the place where both domestic and international film professionals can get to know contemporary Slovak cinema systematically. Each March, some 10 - 12 upcoming Slovak films are publicly presented – it's a mix of fiction, documentary, and animation in various stages of development/production. More than 50 films previously presented at BID Works in Progress have been completed, including international hits like *Victim* (d. Michal Blaško, Venice IFF 2022), *107 Mothers* (d. Peter Kerekes, Venice IFF 2021), or *Servants* (d. Ivan Ostrochovský, Berlinale 2020).

Of 10 selected projects for this year's BID, six were fiction films (including two shorts), three were documentaries, and one was an animated short. The documentaries include a deeply personal experimental film *Rocks* (d. Paula Ďurinová), an observational project about a Romanian village slowly sinking into toxic sludge *The Valley of the Widows* (d. Miro Jelok), and some 10-years-in-the-making *Hanging Without Walls* (d. Jana Durajová, Lena Kušnieriková) about the reconstruction of the Slovak National Gallery. Last year's La Cinef participant Alica Bednáriková presented her new short drama *The End of Jarmila*, while 2021 Future Frames participant Kateřina Hroníková is finishing her short sci-fi *Shedding the Mist*. Successful Ukrainian director Roman Bondarchuk pitched his latest production

The Editorial Office about a small-town newspaper and Slovak filmmaker and visual artist Andrej Kolenčík presented his film *The Singing House* inspired by real events, depicting a woman who was playing opera arias from her house at an irritatingly high volume for 15 years, annoying all her neighbours. In the end, three projects were awarded: a World War II drama *The House in the Middle* (d. Dominik György) received Cineuropa Work in Progress Award, a young-audience queer comedy *My World Upside Down* (d. Daniel Rihák) received Pop Up Film Residency Visegrad Award, while the main Best Febio Pitch Award worth €3000 went to an animated short about menstruation *Period Drama* by Michaela Mihalyi, co-author of the 2019 Venice entry *Sh_t Happens*.

Discovering Hidden Treasures or L'Âge d'or of Slovak Cinema

Text by Rastislav Steranka,
Director of the National
Cinematographic Centre

On 29 November 2022, *LaCinetek*, an auteur-driven French VOD portal dedicated to the greatest films of the 20th century unveiled a special curated selection of classic Slovak films provided by the Slovak Film Institute. With the aptly titled *Hidden Treasures* section, the VOD platform aims to rediscover classic films, to make invisible films visible. The Slovak Film Institute joined an exclusive *Hidden Treasures* club, and thus joined institutions such as *La Cinémathèque française*, *La Cinémathèque de Toulouse*, *Deutsche Kinemathek*, *L'INA*, *Lobster Films*, *Gaumont*, *L'Agence du court métrage* and *Cinémathèque royale de Belgique*. All the institutions themselves had carefully searched their vaults and hand-picked gems that *LaCinetek* proudly made available for viewers in the French and German speaking territories.

The Slovak Film Institute's *Hidden Treasures* is a tailor-made curated programme of films titled *The Golden Era of Slovak Cinema* (a selection from the golden decade of Slovak cinema, from the liberal 1960s until the beginning of the normalization in the 1970s). It offers six films digitally restored by the Slovak Film Institute. Each of them is accompanied by a newly filmed short video introduction (narrated by Mária Ferenčuhová, shot and edited by Róbert Šulák). The video introductions and the two newly commissioned short doc-

umentaries produced by the Slovak Film Institute (on the films *The Sun in a Net* and *Dragon's Return*, both directed by Maroš Brázda) shed light on the context and the times the films were made in.

The approach to the Slovak selection itself was based on the idea of exploring terra incognita, i.e. bringing the best, the most interesting pieces to audiences with no prior knowledge of classic Slovak cinema: in the beginning was... *The Sun in a Net* by Štefan Uher (1962), a film widely consid-

ered to be the start of the Czechoslovak New Wave, with Štefan Uher being its John the Baptist. *The Sun in a Net* is authentic in its depiction of ordinary lives, combining then-unacceptable social and political themes with sexual openness and a free-wheeling approach. *The Barnabáš Kos Case* by Peter Solan (1964), a story of the rise and fall of a conscientious musician, a mundane triangle player in a symphony orchestra, offers a study of the invincibility of absurdity inspired by Franz Kafka and the Theatre of the Absurd. Eduard

Slovak Film News



Grečner's *Dragon's Return* (1967) brings a radical fusion of folklore and experimental modernism set in an uncompromisingly harsh world where "hell is other people". *Birdies, Orphans and Fools* by Juraj Jakubisko (1969) presents a playful, surreal and increasingly nightmarish piece of cinema evoking François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Luis Buñuel. Elo Havetta's *Wild Lilies* (1972), a black & colour war film set in the aftermath of World War I, is a visual feast formally based on the principle of polyphonic musical compositions. The selection from the golden decade ends with Dušan Hanák's *Pictures of the Old World* (1972), a deeply humane, unique portrait of people left behind by the modern world. A true masterpiece exploring the fundamental levels of human experience.

The selection offered by *LaCinetek's Hidden Treasures* undoubtedly represents the best of Slovak classic cinema, even though there is still more to discover. Those who visit it will not be disappointed. Rather, they might be pleasantly surprised by the mere existence of such national cinema and its exceptional films, proving that even a small cinema like the Slovak one, in its brief but golden period, was once among Europe's best. What happened to it after August 1968, when it was forcefully replaced by socialist realism prescribed by the normalisation for years and years to come (until 1989), is, sadly, another story...

How Is Slovak Animation Doing? Between Clermont-Ferrand and Annecy

Text by Lea Pagáčová



Animation may constitute the smallest segment of Slovak cinema, but in recent years, it has seen dynamic development and has been gathering significant international attention, as proven by Daria Kashcheeva's *Electra* which is competing at Cannes in La Cinef section and will later also be presented at Annecy. What other treasures does the trove of contemporary Slovak animation hold?

Young and talented short film creators continue bringing original topics, animation techniques, and visual art renditions to the silver screen for yet another year. *Criss Cross* by directing duo Nina Rybárová and Tomáš Rybár fuses old-time embroidery patterns with the world of video games. The feelings of anxiety and overcoming one's demons will be manifested in Olivér Hegyi's *The Garden of Heart*. Michaela Mihályi's *Period Drama*, a short animated dramedy inspired by menstruation, sets high expectations for the more

distant future. So far, it has won Best Fabio Pitch Award at the Works in Progress event, forming part of Bratislava Industry Days and it will be presented again during the Mifa Pitches in Annecy.

Feature films also attest to the superb condition of Slovak animation. Only some months ago, Michaela Pavlátová's *My Sunny Maad* won the prestigious César Award for Best Long Animated Film. Katarína Kerekesová's *The Websters Movie* has at first reaped success at festivals, and has

now entered German cinemas. In February, *White Plastic Sky* by Tibor Bánóczki and Sarolta Szabó had its world premiere in the Berlinale's Encounters section, and it will soon be competing at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival together with stop-motion feature *Tony, Shelly and the Magic Light* by Filip Pošivač.

Slovak Film News

SLOVAK & CZECH PAVILION STAND NO. 136 Village International

With friends and colleagues from the Czech Republic, at the umbrella stand "Czech & Slovak Pavilion", the Slovak Film Institute offers an informational and promotional point for Slovak cinema and a networking place for Slovak film professionals and their international counterparts.

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