



Island of the Hungry Ghosts wins Amsterdam Human Rights Award 2018

Amsterdam, Tuesday 20 November 2018

Today, Amsterdam alderman Rutger Groot Wassink presented the Amsterdam Human Rights Award 2018 to *Island Of The Hungry Ghosts* by Gabrielle Brady. The footage of migrating crabs on Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean would not be out of place in a nature film. But in her first feature-length documentary, Gabrielle Brady contrasts this phenomenon with another form of migration. Idealistic trauma therapist Poh Lin visits the heavily guarded Australian detention centre sited on the island to hold illegal immigrants, many of whom are held there for years without any prospect of release. The calm way in which the conversations Poh Lin conducts with these migrants, together with other observations of the tropical island, make up an intuitively composed, metaphorical mosaic. Nature conservationists rush to the aid of the crabs and the local Chinese community cares for the restless spirits of workers who died on the island a century ago.

With the inauguration of the Amsterdam Human Rights Award in 2017, the City of Amsterdam seeks to focus international attention on Amsterdam as a city of human rights. The award also contributes to raising consciousness of the importance of human rights, both among inhabitants of Amsterdam and beyond. The Amsterdam Human Rights Award consists of € 25,000 and recognises a filmmaker who has portrayed the theme of human rights with great cinematographic force. This year, the nominees for the Amsterdam Human Rights Award were: Wang Bing, *Dead Souls*; Gabrielle Brady, *Island of the Hungry Ghosts*; Leonard Cohen, *Flavours of Iraq*; Sarah Fattahi, *Chaos*; Sahra Mani, *A Thousand Girls Like Me*; Natasha Neri & Lula Carvalho, *Police Killing*; Dalia Kury, *Privacy of Wounds*; Anand Padwardhan, *Reason*; Arthur Pratt, *Survivors* and Nebosja Slijepcevic, *Srbenka*.

The jury's considerations

"It was a great honour to be part of the jury for the Amsterdam Human Rights Award. The nominated films in this category all have crucial stories to share. The filmmakers show unique access to their characters and personal involvement with their subjects and stories. The films we saw give rise to debate and are emotionally disquieting; they provide insight and knowledge. We saw strong testimony, courageous documentaries, forceful confrontations and new human perspectives – films that can influence our perception of history."

About Island of the Hungry Ghosts

"The Amsterdam Human Rights Award goes to Gabrielle Brady, an artist who, through the language of film, proposes an exceptional way to see reality not only as a story. She also makes powerful use of metaphors in a filmic allegory dealing with contemporary issues of migration. There are hundreds of films about refugees, but this film gives us something special. This film declares that everyone who is involved in this crisis is suffering. It creates an extremely sensitive, disturbing world in which we can feel (physically) how cruel we, human beings, can be towards one another. Brady gives us the feeling that we are all lost souls in search of a home. When people dedicated to helping people in distress succumb to a lack of hope, this represents a very serious situation for us as human beings."

The jury is made up of

Darya Bassel, programmer and coordinator of the industry platform at the Docudays UA International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Kiev, Ukraine.

Bruno Jorge, a filmmaker who produces his own projects through the production company João de Barro, founded in São Paulo in 2003.

Kristine Ann Skaret is the co-founder of and a producer with Norwegian-Danish production company Stray Dog Productions, represented at IDFA 2017 with *Aleppo's Fall*.

– *End press release* –

Editors' Notes

Press

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About IDFA

IDFA (International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam) offers an independent, inspiring meeting place where audiences and professionals can see a diverse, high-quality program. The diverse nature of the event applies to the form and content of the films as well as to the cultural backgrounds of the filmmakers. IDFA offers an alternative to mass entertainment and uniformity, confirming that there is an increasing need among audiences for high-quality films that delve deep and urge us to reflect. Since 2007, the festival's New Media program IDFA DocLab has been showcasing the best interactive non-fiction storytelling and exploring how the digital revolution is reshaping documentary art.

In addition to the festival, IDFA has developed several professional activities, contributing to the development of filmmakers and their films at all stages. At the co-financing and co-production market IDFA Forum, filmmakers and producers pitch their plans to financiers; at Docs for Sale new documentaries are on offer to programmers and distributors; the IDFA Bertha Fund supports filmmakers and documentary projects in developing countries and the IDFAcademy offers an international training program for up-and-coming documentary talent.

IDFA 2018 takes place November 14-25 in various locations in Amsterdam.

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