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Hawick celebrates the best of international artists moving image

Alchemy Film & Moving Image Festival continues to break boundaries with its eighth edition, in Hawick from 3 to 7 May 2018. For five days, the Scottish Borders town becomes the centre for some of the world's most respected and acclaimed moving image artists, presenting the most groundbreaking experimental film and artists' moving image from around the world.

Audiences have their pick of more than 130 film screenings, 36 world premieres, 12 film installations, expanded cinema performances, a filmmaker symposium and film walk.

This year, the festival celebrates the power of the imaginary to reshape our lives with a special tribute to the work of legendary Czech filmmaker Jan Švankmajer, an acclaimed pioneer of surrealist cinema who has influenced Terry Gilliam, Guillermo Del Toro and David Lynch. Alchemy honours his lifelong achievements with the UK premiere of *Insect*, the film Švankmajer says will be his last, along with a programme of his early short films and panel discussions with the UK's leading experts on his work.

Art is a necessity, a life-enhancing force that can enable us to transform repression and personal trauma into creative action. This is powerfully brought to light in the World premiere of *Aftermath*, a haunting four-part biopic from Canadian auteur filmmaker Mike Hoolboom, through a kaleidoscopic exploration of the lives of four artists - Fats Waller, Jackson Pollock, Janieta Eyre and Frida Khalo.

The UK premiere of Turkish artist Didem Pekün's searing and beautiful *Araf*, juxtaposes the figure of Icarus with the unimaginable violence of the Srebrenica genocide, a timely reminder of the potential consequences of current political instabilities. In the Scottish premiere of Sasha Litvintseva's *Salarium*, we are invited into the sinkhole of history in a film of quietly devastating poignancy. The film connects economy, ecology and military force in the derivation of both 'salary' and 'soldier' from the word 'salt', manifested in the ecological reality of the sinkhole.

A key part of the festival has always been supporting Scottish filmmakers and celebrating the country's rich cultural impact. This year Alchemy has commissioned two expanded cinema pieces featuring live music which will stretch the boundaries of what we consider to be Gaelic filmmaking. For "Experiments in Gaelic", artist MacGillivray will present *Gàradh Gàidhlig nam Marbh (The Gaelic Garden of the Dead)*, a cinematic alphabet of trees featuring cinematography by Anonymous Bosch and a live score performed by MacGillivray, Stafford Glover (Extreme Noise Terror) and Hardeep Deerhe. In the same evening, a new collaboration between Borders based writer/filmmaker Dorothy Alexander and experimental musician Nicoletta Stephanz will explore the elemental and psychological constructs of Gaelic song and myth.

Fresh from its world premiere in Glasgow, Ela Orleans's performance of her live score for Guy Maddin's film *Cowards Bend the Knee* will close this year's festival. This event will also feature the World premiere of Orleans's kaleidoscopic short film *Apparition*, inspired by portrayals of biblical femme fatale Salome in music, film and art.

Alchemy's diversity is further highlighted in guest programmes. Poetry film is presented by Berlin based *ZEBRA Poetry Film Festival*, a touring programme of 16mm films from *Ann Arbor Film Festival* in the USA, a feminist film programme from Borders based *Behind The Curtain*, and a focus on female Chinese artists' film from HOME in

Manchester, with curators all in attendance.

In celebration of Scotland's Year of Young People 2018, the exhibition programme includes *Fr@gile*, which explores communication in the digital age and the everyday barriers young people face. Created by Scottish Borders group Young Alchemy Moving Image Makers, the installation is the result of a series of workshops funded by Youthlink Cashback for Creativity. Another group, the Young Alchemy Programmers, have been mirroring the same selection processes used by the Alchemy team, learning to curate their own programme of short films through a series of critical workshops. These budding curators will present their final selection, *Reality Makes You Sleep, Dreams Keep You Awake*, as part of the main auditorium programme on Sunday 6 May.

Full details of the 2018 programme and booking information will be available from 3 April 2018 at www.alchemyfilmfestival.org.uk. The 2018 festival is supported by EventScotland, part of VisitScotland's Events Directorate. Alchemy was also recently awarded Regular Funding by Creative Scotland to deliver the next three editions of the festival. It is the first Regularly Funded organisation in the Scottish Borders.

Richard Ashrowan, Creative Director of Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival, said:

"The great diversity in our programme this year reflects the astonishing breadth of work being made today, much of which might never be seen outside the context of festivals like ours. We'll be hosting the work of one of the true masters of surrealist film, while presenting urgent and vital new voices exploring political activism, the dystopian invasion of virtuality, feminism and female artists, poetry-film, Chinese artists, and Gaelic language film and performance. This year's festival aims to show us why creative action matters, and why it is so important for all of us to be part of it."

Alchemy has grown over its last eight years to be an annual focus for our national and international filmmaking community, while equally it has become a vital player in the cultural and economic regeneration of the Scottish borders. We deeply value the support of our local audiences in making Hawick such a welcoming and receptive place for such a vitally important artform."

Mark Thomas, Screen Officer, Creative Scotland, said:

"Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival have established a strong international reputation through bold and imaginative programming and we are very proud to continue our support. As ever, their programme presents an excellent opportunity to experience a showcase of exceptional domestic and international experimental film and artists' moving image."

Paul Bush OBE, Director of Events at VisitScotland, said:

"EventScotland is delighted to be supporting the Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival again this year, through our National Events Programme. Richard and the team have brought together yet another innovative and ambitious programme, providing the perfect stage for some of the best Scottish and International filmmakers and artists to showcase their work. It is also great to see that in Scotland's Year of Young People, Alchemy will shine a spotlight on the festival's local young participants, giving them the opportunity to showcase their creative skills and talents."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact James Coutts on 07510 011 294 or email james@jamescoutts.co.uk

2018 PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

WORLD PREMIERE *Firestack* - Julie Brook (Scotland) 3-6 May, Peter Scott

Based on Skye, Brook returns to Alchemy with *Firestack* – an immersive installation documenting a fire stack on the Isle of Lewis becoming gradually overcome by the tide. Working with the land, Brook has lived in a cave on an island in Scotland, and

in deserts and mountain landscapes in Libya, Namibia and Syria. *Firestack* was also used as a BBC One ident.

EUROPEAN PREMIERE *Relics of Lumen* - Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof (Canada) 3-6 May, Crown Buildings

Experimental filmmaker Pruska-Oldenhof brings together 5,000 photos from Ryerson University's (Toronto) and NASA's collections in this installation. Showing the major events of the 20th century, including our first step on the moon, the images merge to form larger visuals and create an immersive environment of mosaics and collages.

EUROPEAN PREMIERE *Celebrate Super 8*, 4 May, 9.30pm, Auld Baths

An evening celebrating the resurgence of artist interest in Super 8, embracing the visceral, performative potential of the format. Featuring a presentation by Dutch filmmaker Jaap Pieters ("The Eye of Amsterdam"), a new piece from Scottish Borders-based artists Sarahjane Swan and Roger Simian (*The Bird and The Monkey*) and the European premiere of *Draft for A Scenario* a performance piece featuring live Super-8 editing and real time projection from Canadian artist Kyle Whitehead.

WORLD PREMIERE: *Aftermath* – Mike Hoolboom (Canada), 4 May, 4pm, Main Auditorium, Heart of Hawick

Our opening night film by Canadian artists Mike Hoolboom is a four-part bio-pic that narrates moments from the lives of Fats Waller, Jackson Pollock, Janieta Eyre and Frida Khalo. This quartet of hauntologies reframes the cruel reductions of biography to focus on death and doubles.

EUROPEAN PREMIERE Curated Programme: *Ann Arbor Film Festival 16mm Touring Programme*, 5 May, 10am, Main Auditorium, Heart of Hawick

Ann Arbor Film Festival's Executive Director Leslie Raymond curates a selection of films for Alchemy. The oldest and most important avantgarde and experimental film festival in North America, which Alchemy itself drew inspiration from, Ann Arbor Film Festival is based in a rural town in Michigan similar to Hawick.

UK PREMIERE: *The Rare Event* – Ben Rivers (UK) and Ben Russell (USA), 5 May, 4pm, Heart of Hawick

"The Bens" present a 16mm documentary set in a recording studio in Paris during a three-day philosophical discussion about the Resistance (French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard's exhibition). Sitting with the speakers is an actor in bright green body suit who provides a magical presence to the debates by a cast of academics, curators and artists.

SCOTTISH PREMIERE NOW: *A dialogue on female Chinese contemporary artists Vol. 1* – HOME, Manchester, 6 May, 10am, Main Auditorium, Heart of Hawick

HOME in Manchester bring a collection of films by female Chinese artists. Curated by Bren O'Callaghan, Senior Producer of HOME visual art, NOW shows that cultural differences are often much smaller than we might presume with films incorporating performance, blind audio, new media art and experimental digital SFX.

LISTINGS

Alchemy Film & Moving Image Festival is an international festival of experimental film and artists' moving image. Alchemy Film & Arts was founded in 2010 and has produced seven editions of the Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival. The festival is produced in partnership with Heart of Hawick in the Scottish Borders. The 2018 festival will screen 130 films over five days; with 36 world premieres, 18 European premieres, 24 UK premieres and 20 Scottish premieres; and over 45 filmmakers in attendance. The next edition of Alchemy Film & Moving Image Festival will take place on 3 – 7 May 2018. Full details of the 2018 programme and booking information will be available from 3 April 2018 at www.alchemyfilmfestival.org.uk

ALCHEMY FILM AND MOVING IMAGE FESTIVAL

Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival is an international festival of experimental film and artists' moving image. The Festival was initiated in 2010 as a collaborative project between Alchemy Film & Arts (a registered Scottish charity), Heart of Hawick (a venue and cultural regeneration initiative run by Scottish Borders Council) and Creative Arts Business Network (CABN). It is now run as a partnership project between Alchemy Film & Arts and Heart of Hawick. In 2017, Alchemy curated Scotland's national exhibition at the Venice Art Biennale, presenting a major new film commission by the artist filmmaker Rachel Maclean. Alchemy has recently been awarded three year funding by Creative Scotland to deliver the next three editions of the festival, alongside a year-round exhibition programme, local filmmaking workshops, film commissioning, residency programme and touring.

CREATIVE SCOTLAND

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. We enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. We distribute

funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information about Creative Scotland please visit www.creativescotland.com.

EVENTSCOTLAND

EventScotland is working to make Scotland the perfect stage for events. By developing an exciting portfolio of sporting and cultural events EventScotland is helping to raise Scotland's international profile and boost the economy by attracting more visitors. For further information about EventScotland, its funding programmes and latest event news visit www.EventScotland.org. Follow EventScotland on Twitter [@EventScotNews](https://twitter.com/EventScotNews). EventScotland is a team within the VisitScotland Events Directorate, the national tourism organisation which markets Scotland as a tourism destination across the world, gives support to the tourism industry and brings sustainable tourism growth to Scotland. For more information about VisitScotland see www.visitscotland.org or for consumer information on Scotland as a visitor destination see www.visitscotland.com.

YEAR OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- The Scottish Government's themed year for 2018 is the Year of Young People (YoYP 2018), following the Year of Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology 2017.
- A global first, YoYP 2018 is a platform for young people aged 8 to 26 years old to have their voices heard on social issues and their talents celebrated.
- A year-long programme of events and festivals are taking place across the whole of the country for all ages to enjoy, led by EventScotland part of VisitScotland's Events Directorate. More information at visitscotland.com/yoyp2018
- Local authorities, schools, youth groups and organisations are running their own YoYP 2018 activity. Search #YOYP2018 on Twitter for the latest news.
- Young people co-designed the Year. A group of young leaders, Communic18, lead on all key decision making. More than 500 Ambassadors based across every local authority are championing activity.
- The Year is delivered in partnership between the Scottish Government, EventScotland, Young Scot, Scottish Youth Parliament, Children in Scotland, YouthLink Scotland and Creative Scotland.
- Scottish Government activity focuses on six themes chosen by young people: culture, education, participation, health and wellbeing, equality and discrimination and enterprise and regeneration. More information can be found at scot, searching @YOYP2018 #YOYP2018 on Twitter or by emailing yoyp2018@gov.scot



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