

QUEERSCOPE

INDEPENDENT GERMAN QUEER FILM FESTIVALS

Presenting the 1st QueerScope Debut Film Award

The first QueerScope Debut Film Award will be given to the Swedish-American documentary "Kiki" on October 14th at Filmfest homochrom in Cologne. QueerScope, a co-operation of 13 German queer film festivals, will honour the achievements of director Sara Jordanö in her feature-length debut. Chi-Chi Mizrahi, one of the film's protagonists, will accept the award in person as proxy for Ms. Jordanö. Chi-Chi will then travel to the 23rd queerfilm festival in Bremen, which shows "Kiki" on October 16th as their closing film, and on to Hamburg, where the 27th Hamburg International Queer Film Festival will open with "Kiki" on October 18th.

In collaboration with co-author Twiggy Pucci Garçon, a Kiki activist, Jordanö was allowed to portrait an important and otherwise not very public part of queer life in the modern ballroom culture for four years. Despite the mainstream attention which voguing got in the early 1990s through Madonna and the documentary "Paris Is Burning", it more or less remained in the gay and transgender, or queer, community, where it had developed over decades. The confident and playful staging of self at the Kiki or vogue balls is not at the front, though, but the importance of places of refuge—an aspect of the queer community which had also been discussed in the context of the shooting in Orlando. The protagonists, many of whom are rather young, talk about the discrimination, ostracism and violence they experience because of being perceived as different because of being queer, of colour and oftentimes HIV positive. They know the hardships of poverty, homelessness, prostitution and drugs. It seems as though the environment in the neighbourhood of the National Monument Stonewall Inn and Christopher Street has not really improved much for a certain group of people. Sara Jordanö has to be given credit for looking behind the facade of aesthetic dancing and vivid impressions of the balls, instead pointing out the activism and vulnerable situations of her protagonists. She makes "Kiki" not only a sweeping, but a political film.

The co-operation of German queer film festivals under the label QueerScope exists for decades, but in the last years the number of festivals has grown to 13. Many of the festivals take place in autumn, being organized by non-profit associations, and have their jury or audience awards. They have a combined audience of more than 30,000. The festival programmers' expertise and knowledge of global queer filmmaking has only been reflected in their selection up to now.

The QueerScope Debut Film Award is the first national queer film award in the world which is being juried by the programmers of several festivals independent of the selection of individual festivals. In contrast to many other awards, there is no restriction

on films in one or several festivals. Thus films had also been considered, even though they had been released theatrically or directly on DVD, or could not be programmed for the QueerScope festivals for one reason or another. There were far more than 70 eligible queer fiction or documentary films from all of the world, directorial debuts of at least 60 minutes from 2015 and 2016.

The new and independent QueerScope Debut Film Award, endowed with 500€, is intended to encourage young filmmakers to deal with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer topics. The QueerScope festivals are delighted to award "Kiki", a film with important queer topics, as well as its directress. Festival-goers might be pleased that the film will indeed be shown at many festivals this autumn.

The presentation of the QueerScope Debut Film Award will be held at another festival each year. The first presentation will be held in the cinema Turistarama in Cologne on October 14th at 10 p.m. for the screening of "Kiki" at the 6th Filmfest homochrom, which initiated the award. After the screening there will be a Q&A with film guest Chi-Chi Mirzahi as well as a chill-out in the cinema.

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