

Latvian directors will make films for European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024

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The Latvian filmmakers Andris Gauja and Viesturs Kairišs have been selected to be part of the European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 Arts of Survival Documentaries to capture Southern Estonia on the topic of *“Arts of Survival”*, the artistic concept of European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024. The collection of films will be released to the audiences in the spring of 2024.

The aim of the contest was to find renowned authors who would present Southern Estonia in the most artistically exciting ways. The short films are a work of their own but at the same time would form a single cultural code – the collection of short films *“Arts of Survival”*. In total, 27 ideas from Estonia and 16 ideas from international filmmakers were submitted to the contest.

Gauja’s contribution to the Tartu 2024 Arts of Survival Documentaries film collection will be *The Art of Looking* (Film Tower OÜ, producer Margus Õunapuu) about the findings of astronomers who look through telescopes and see that the universe has a structure, juxtaposed to slime mold researchers, who look through microscopes and see that the tiny organisms form similar patterns.

“‘The Art of Looking’ will tell us the story of two seemingly different groups of people — the astronomers who try to understand the world by looking through their telescopes, and the slime mold researchers who zoom into the micro world of the tiniest organisms. Both of them come to similar conclusions about the way things are, and both show that our natural curiosity is probably our main driving force,” says Gauja.

Kairišs contribution to the Tartu 2024 Arts of Survival Documentaries film collection is *Border Island* (Nafta Film OÜ, producers Esko Rips, Olga Hartšuk; Ego Media, producer Guntis Trekteris). The film is about the Russian world hidden on the small island Päärissaar, located on the very border of Estonia and Russia and explores if there is a single lonely island on Earth where Russian peace (mir-world) can exist without war.

“The film is inspired by the particular time and space in which ancient customs and communities mirror the reality of our modern

world. Cultural conflicts, embodied in a symbolic environment, create important associations and make us reflect on the sense of the contemporary conflict and its unchanging nature as well as the possibility of harmony and coexistence”, says Kairišs.

Andris Gauja has produced, written and directed several documentaries, including the award-winning *Family Instinct* (2010) as well as two narrative films, *Nothing Can Stop Us Now* (2019) and *The Lesson* (2014) which received several awards and nominations. Viesturs Kairišs latest film, *January* (2022) is the most watched Latvian film last year, it also received a wide international recognition - it premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and won Best International Narrative Feature.

As a part of the release, Arts of Survival Documentaries opens a traveling “Doc Box” which will arrive at locations in Southern Estonia associated with the films. The selected films will be introduced and the opportunity to participate in a raffle will take place, a Arts of Survival stay in the spring of 2024 at the island centering in Kairišs’s film, Piirissaar. Audiences can also sign up for the raffle online at tartudok2024.ee.

The six other filmmakers chosen to the Tartu 2024 Arts of Survival Documentaries film collection are Andrey Paounov (Bulgaria), Ülo Pikkov (Estonia), Jaan Tootsen (Estonia), Eva Kübar (Estonia), Carl Olsson (Sweden) and Maria Aua (Estonia).

Arts of Survival Documentaries are in the main programme of the European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024. The production of short films is financed by Tartu 2024 Foundation, the Estonian Film Institute and Creative Europe. The selection was made by the jury consisting of Tartu 2024 creative director Kati Torp, Estonian Film Institute film expert Filipp Kruusvall, directors Moonika Siimets and Kaur Kokk, cinematographer Erik Põllumaa and artistic director of Arts of Survival Documentaries Kaarel Kuurmaa.

More information:

Selected films: <https://tartudok2024.ee/en/films/>

[Tartu 2024 Arts of Survival Documentaries](#)

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