

THE NORDIC COUNCIL FILM PRIZE – 2019

Purpose

The purpose of the Nordic Council prizes is to raise interest in the Nordic cultural community and in environmental co-operation, as well as to recognise outstanding artistic and environmental initiatives. In addition, the prizes seek to raise the profile of Nordic co-operation, and increase its visibility.

The prize-winning film

The winner of the prize will be announced on Tuesday 29 October 2019, during the Session of the Nordic Council in Stockholm. The prize is awarded to an artistically significant, Nordic-produced full-length feature film with cinema distribution. The film must have had its cinema premiere between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019. The DKK 350,000 prize will be shared equally among the screenwriter, director, and producer, underscoring how film as an art form is brought about by the close collaboration of these three main contributors.

Criteria for nomination

The nominated films must have deep roots in Nordic culture, be of high artistic quality, distinguish themselves by their artistic originality, and combine and elevate the many elements of film into a compelling and holistic work of art.

National and Nordic juries

Each national jury consists of three members appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers (Ministers for Culture). The members are selected from prominent figures whose work relates analytically and critically to film. Each national jury has a three-year tenure.

The members of the national juries for 2019 are:

Denmark:

Per Juul Carlsen, Jacob Wendt Jensen, Eva Novrup Redvall

Finland:

Jaana Puskala, Harri Römpötti, Mikaela Westerlund

Iceland:

Hilmar Oddsson, Börkur Gunnarsson, Helga Pórey Jónsdóttir

Norway:

Inger Merete Hobbelstad, Kalle Løchen, Britt Sørensen

Sweden:

Kristina Börjeson, Emma Gray Munthe, Gunnar Bergdahl (did not participate in 2019 because of a conflict of interest)

The Nordic jury is made up of the heads of each of the national juries.

Previous winners of the Nordic Council Film Prize

The prize was first awarded in 2002, to the Finnish film *Mies vailla menneisyyttä* (*The Man Without a Past*) by Aki Kaurismäki.

Since the prize was made permanent in 2005, it has been awarded on an annual basis.
The winners to date are:

2005: *Drabet (Manslaughter)*, directed by Per Fly, scripted by Kim Leona, Dorte Høgh, Mogens Rukov and Per Fly, and produced by Ib Tardini for Zentropa, Denmark.

2006: *Zozo*, written and directed by Josef Fares and produced by Anna Anthony for Memfis Film, Sweden.

2007: *Kunsten at græde i kor (The Art of Crying)*, directed by Peter Schønau Fog, written by Bo Hr. Hansen (based on a novel by Erling Jepsen), and produced by Thomas Stenderup for Final Cut, Denmark.

2008: *Du levande (You, the Living)*, written and directed by Roy Andersson and produced by Pernilla Sandström for Studio 24, Sweden.

2009: *Antichrist*, written and directed by Lars von Trier and produced by Meta Louise Foldager for Zentropa, Denmark.

2010: *Submarino*, written and directed by Thomas Vinterberg, written by Tobias Lindholm, and produced by Morten Kaufmann for Nimbus Film, Denmark.

2011: *Svinalängorna (Beyond)*, written and directed by Pernilla August, written by Lolita Ray, and produced by Helena Danielsson and Ralf Karlsson for Hepp Film, Sweden.

2012: *Play*, written and directed by Ruben Östlund and produced by Erik Hemmendorff for Plattform Produktion, Sweden.

2013: *Jagten (The Hunt)*, written and directed by Thomas Vinterberg, written by Tobias Lindholm, and produced by Sisse Graum Jørgensen and Morten Kaufmann for Zentropa, Denmark.

2014: *Hross í oss (Of Horses and Men)*, written and directed by Benedikt Erlingsson and produced by Friðrik Pór Friðriksson for Hrossabrestur, Iceland.

2015: *Fúsi (Virgin Mountain)*, written and directed by Dagur Kári and produced by Baltasar Kormákur and Agnes Johansen for RVK Studios, Iceland.

2016: *Louder Than Bombs*, written and directed by Joachim Trier, written by Eskil Vogt, and produced by Thomas Røsbak for Motlys, Norway.

2017: *Little Wing (Tyttö nimeltä Varpu)*, written and directed by Selma Vilhunen, and produced by Kai Nordberg and Kaarle Aho for Making Movies, Finland

2018: *Woman at War (Kona fer í stríð)*, directed by Benedikt Erlingsson, written by Ólafur Egill Egilsson and Benedikt Erlingsson and produced by Benedikt Erlingsson for Guldrengurinn, Marianne Slot and Carine Leblanc for Slot Machine, Iceland

2019 NORDIC COUNCIL FILM PRIZE NOMINATION

QUEEN OF HEARTS

SYNOPSIS

Anne, a brilliant and dedicated lawyer specialising in children and young adults, lives what appears to be the picture-perfect life with her doctor-husband, Peter, and their twin daughters. When her estranged teenage stepson, Gustav, moves in with them, Anne's escalating desire leads her down a dangerous rabbit warren which, once exposed, unleashes a sequence of events that threatens to destroy her world.

Queen of Hearts explores the making of a tragic family secret step-by-step, as the consequences of hubris, lust, and lies conspire to create an unimaginable dilemma.

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR MAY EL-TOUKHY

May el-Toukhy was born in Copenhagen in 1977 to a Danish mother and Egyptian father. She graduated from the Danish National School of Performing Arts in 2002, then as a director from the National Film School of Denmark in 2009.

Her first feature film and national breakthrough *Long Story Short* (2015) won Best Actress (Mille Lehfeldt) and Best Script (el-Toukhy, Maren Louise Käehne) at the Danish 'Bodil' film critics' awards, and a national Robert Award for Best Supporting Actress (Trine Dyrholm).

El-Toukhy's second feature film *Queen of Hearts* is another collaboration with writer Maren Louise Käehne, and producer Caroline Blanco, who she met at film school. The feature drama had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival 2019 where it won the Audience Award from the World Cinema Dramatic Competition section.

The film also won Best Nordic Film, Best Actress, and the Audience Award at the Göteborg Film Festival, as well as Best Director at the Transilvania International Film Festival.

In addition to her feature films, el-Toukhy has directed radio dramas, stage plays, and episodes of the award-winning Danish television series *The Legacy* and *Ride Upon the Storm*.

SCREENWRITER MAREN LOUISE KÄEHNE

Maren Louise Käehne (born 1976) graduated as a screenwriter from the National Film School of Denmark in 2009. She then studied screenwriting at Columbia University, New York.

Her writing credits include May el-Toukhy's films *Long Story Short* and *Queen of Hearts*, Ali Abbasi's debut film *Shelley*, and episodes of the acclaimed series *Borgen* and *The Bridge*.

PRODUCER CAROLINE BLANCO

Caroline Blanco (1980) graduated as a producer from the National Film School of Denmark in 2009. She has produced May el-Toukhy's award-winning films *Long Story Short* and *Queen of Hearts*. She is also behind the youth films *Danny's Doomsday* by Martin Barnewitz and *Anti* by Morten BH.

PRODUCER RENÉ EZRA

René Ezra (born 1971) works at Nordisk Film Production in Denmark. He graduated as a producer from the National Film School of Denmark in 2003. His extensive list of credited productions includes the Academy Award-nominated short film *Helmer & Son* (2006), Michael Noer's award-winning films *R* (co-directed by Tobias Lindholm) *Northwest*, *Key House Mirror*, and *Before the Frost*, as well as Tobias Lindholm's *A Hijacking* and Oscar-nominated drama *A War*. He is also associated with the successful franchise series *The Reunion* (1-2-3), and the children's animation film *The Olsen Gang in Deep Trouble*.

Queen of Hearts is his first collaboration with May el-Toukhy.

Ezra was named *Producer on the Move* at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	<i>Dronningen</i>
Director	May el-Toukhy
Screenwriters	Maren Louise Käehne, May el-Toukhy
Producers	Caroline Blanco, René Ezra
Principal cast	Trine Dyrholm, Magnus Krepper, Gustav Lindh
Production company	Nordisk Film Production
Running time	127 minutes
Domestic distribution	Nordisk Film Distribution
International sales	TrustNordisk

FINLAND

AURORA

SYNOPSIS

One night at a hot-dog stand in Finnish Lapland, the commitment-phobic party animal Aurora meets Iranian Darian. Darian needs to marry a Finnish woman to get asylum for him and his daughter. Aurora turns him down, as she is planning to move to Norway, away from her miserable life. However, after meeting his sweet daughter, she agrees to help him. As Aurora introduces numerous women to Darian, the two of them grow close. When the perfect wife candidate comes along, Darian and Aurora are faced with a difficult choice: pretend to be happy or finally stop running.

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR MIIA TERVO

Miia Tervo (born 1980) is a writer/director from Finnish Lapland. Her short films have been screened around the world and received numerous accolades. *The Little Snow Animal* was nominated at the European Film Awards 2010 and won Best Student Documentary at Palm Springs, *Santra and the Talking Trees* was bestowed an Honorary Mention at IDFA's Nordic Panorama section, while *Clumsy Little Acts of Tenderness* won Best Script at the Heart of Gold International Film Festival, Australia and the Audience Award at the 2015 Vevey International Film Festival.

Aurora is her debut feature film. The film opened the Göteborg Film Festival in 2019 and has been

screened at a dozen other festivals, such as South by Southwest in Austin, Oslo Pix, and the Edinburgh Film Festival. It was nominated for the Eurimages Audentia Award.

PRODUCER MAX MALKA

Max Malka (born 1986) works as a producer for Helsinki-based Dionysos Film.

She graduated with a Master of Arts in film production from Aalto University. The producer met director Miia Tervo at film school and collaborated with her on the short film *Little Snow Animal* (2009).

Malka's production credit includes the children's film *Tatu & Patu*, which was the third best-selling Finnish film in 2016, and the web-series *Nerd: Dragonslayer666*. The series became a phenomenon among youngsters in 2017 and won the Finnish TV Award for Best Children and Youth Series.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	<i>Aurora</i>
Director	Miia Tervo
Screenwriter	Miia Tervo
Principal cast	Mimosa Willamo, Amir Escandari
Producer	Max Malka
Production company	Dionysos Films
Running time	106 minutes
Domestic distribution	Nordisk Film
International sales	Level K

ICELAND

A WHITE, WHITE DAY

SYNOPSIS

In a remote Icelandic town, an off-duty police chief begins to suspect a local man of having had an affair with his late wife, who died in a tragic accident two years earlier. Gradually his obsession for finding out the truth builds and inevitably he begins to himself and his loved ones in danger. A story of grief, revenge, and unconditional love.

SCREENWRITER, DIRECTOR HLYNUR PÁLMASSON

Hlynur Pálmason (born 1984) is an artist and filmmaker born in Iceland.

He started out as a visual artist and ventured into filmmaking by pursuing an education at the National Film School of Denmark. His graduation film *A Painter* (2013) won Best Short Film at the Odense International Film Festival and was nominated for a Robert Film Award in Denmark. His short film *Seven Boats* (2014) premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Pálmason's debut feature film *Winter Brothers* (2017) had an outstanding career, winning more than 30 international awards such as Best Director at the Thessaloniki Film Festival, Best Film and Best Actor (Elliott Crosset Hove) in Vilnius, and Best Cinematography at the

Seville European Film Festival. The film won nine awards at the national Robert Awards including Best Film. It was nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize in 2018.

His second feature film *A White, White Day* had its World Premiere at the Critics' Week in Cannes where Ingvar Sigurðsson won a Louis Roederer Foundation Rising Star Award.

PRODUCER ANTON MÁNI SVANSSON

Anton Máni Svansson (born 1984) is co-owner of Reykjavik-based Join Motion Pictures, together with writer/director/producer Guðmundur Arnar Guðmundsson.

Svansson studied psychology and screenwriting at the University of Iceland. Since founding Join Motion Pictures in 2007, he has focused on building strong partnerships with talented writer/directors, such as Guðmundsson and Hlynur Pálmason.

Guðmundsson's debut feature film *Heartstone* won over 30 international awards including the Politiken Audience Award at CPH PIX, and Best Director at Iceland's national Edda awards. The film was nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize in 2017.

Svansson co-produced Pálmason's short film *Seven Boats* and the director's acclaimed debut feature film *Winter Brothers*, which was nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize in 2018. He went on to produce Pálmason's *A White, White Day*, selected for Cannes' Critics Week 2019.

In 2017 Svansson won the Lorens Award (ex aequo) in Gothenburg for Best Producer with the film *Heartstone*. The same year he was selected as 'Producer on the Move' at the Cannes Film Festival.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	Hvítur, Hvítur Dagur
Director	Hlynur Pálmason
Screenwriter	Hlynur Pálmason
Producer	Anton Máni Svansson
Principal cast	Ingvar E. Sigurðsson, Ída Mekkín Hlynisdóttir, Hilmir Snær Guðnason
Production company	Join Motion Pictures
Running time	109 minutes
Domestic distribution	Sena
International sales	New Europe Film Sales

NORWAY

BLIND SPOT

SYNOPSIS

Blind Spot is the deeply heartrending story of a mother's struggle to understand the capacity of her teenage daughter's mental illness. With extreme sensitivity the film explores the grey zones, or blind spots, in mental illness that are difficult for parents and society to appreciate, while simultaneously problematising contemporary ideals that seem only to be built around happiness and success. How do we open up about difficult thoughts and problems, when perfection is the only thing we are expected to project to the outside world?

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR TUVA NOVOTNY

Tuva Novotny (born 1979) started her career as an actress at the age of 16. She has appeared in a long list of productions, including Tobias Lindholm's Oscar-nominated film *A War*, Alex Garland's *Annihilation*, Janus Metz's *Borg vs. McEnroe*, and television series including *Crimes of Passion*, *Dag*, and *Nobel*.

In 2010 she made her directorial debut with the series *Dag* for TV2 Norway, followed by a few episodes of the Netflix series *Lilyhammer*, as well as writing the television series *Rot* for NRK.

Blind Spot is her feature film debut as a writer/director. This real-time drama shot in one take has won multiple-awards at international festivals such as the Silver Shell-Best Actress for Pia Tjelta at San Sebastián, FIPRESCI Award at Gothenburg, New Talent Grand PIX at Copenhagen's CPH PIX, and Best Film at Bratislava. The film also won Best Film and Best Actress at the Norwegian Film Critics' Awards.

Novotny has also directed the Swedish film *Britt-Marie Was Here*, based on Fredrik Backman's best-selling novel.

PRODUCER ELISABETH KVITHYLL

Elisabeth Kvithyll (born 1985) works at Nordisk Film Production in Norway.

Since graduating from the Norwegian Film School in 2012, she has produced the award-winning short films *To Guard a Mountain* by Izer Aliu (Student Academy Awards nominee 2013, Best Short Film at the Amanda Awards 2012), and *Yes We Love* by Hallvar Witzø (Special Mention, Cannes Film Festival 2014).

Her first feature film *Blind Spot*, has been celebrated both nationally and internationally since its cinema release in August 2018.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	<i>Blindsone</i>
Director	Tuva Novotny
Screenwriter	Tuva Novotny
Producer	Elisabeth Kvithyll
Principal cast	Pia Tjelta, Anders Baasmo Christiansen, Oddgeir Thune
Production company	Nordisk Film Production
Running time	102 minutes
Domestic distribution	Nordisk Film Distribution
International sales	TrustNordisk

SWEDEN

RECONSTRUCTING UTØYA

SYNOPSIS

Six years after the Utøya terrorist attack of 22 July 2011 in Norway, Rakel, Mohammed, Jenny, and Torje – all Utøya survivors – gather in northern Norway to remember and reconstruct what happened. They are joined by twelve young Norwegians who want to help and understand. A psychologist is involved throughout the entire project. Together, in a film studio, they reconstruct

the survivors' memories of what happened on Utøya. The survivors tell their story for their own sake, as well as for ours. For the present, as well as for the future. *Reconstructing Utøya* documents that process.

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR CARL JAVÉR

Carl Javér (born 1972) is a writer/director/editor, and co-owner of the company Vilda Bomben Film based in Gothenburg. He made his debut in documentary filmmaking in 1996 with the television movie *Tel al-Zaatar, The Road Back*, co-directed with Anders Berggren. His 2014 film *Freak Out!* Aired on ARTE and was nominated for the Dragon Award-Best Nordic Documentary in Gothenburg and won ten awards.

Reconstructing Utøya had its international premiere at the 2019 Berlinale Generation 14plus sidebar and won Best Director and Best Documentary at the Swedish national Guldbagge film awards.

Javér is also a regular lecturer and consultant in documentary filmmaking all over Scandinavia.

SCREEWRITER/PRODUCER FREDRIK LANGE

Fredrik Lange (born 1964) is a writer and producer, and co-owner of Gothenburg-based Vilda Bomben Film company.

He started his career in theatre before turning to film production. He graduated with a master in film production from the Valand Academy at the University of Gothenburg in 2010. His production credits include a dozen documentary films including Carl Javér's *Freak Out!* (2014) and *Reconstructing Utøya*, co-written with Javér. The film was selected at a dozen international festivals and won several awards, including two Swedish Guldbagge Awards for Best Documentary and Best Direction.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	<i>Rekonstruktion Utøya</i>
Director	Carl Javér
Screenwriters	Carl Javér, Fredrik Lange
Producer	Fredrik Lange
Production company	Vilda Bomben Film
Running time	98 minutes
Domestic distribution	TriArt
International sales	Cinephil