

## Sense and Sensibility

Some films seem to be just what we were waiting for.

*Germania*, a documentary film by Lion Bischof, observes a *schlagende Studentenverbindung* (a fraternity-type association in German-speaking regions) in Munich during their sports training, weekly meetings, and beer-fueled parties. The film seems like an ominous commentary on the debate flaring up in Austria about the influence and presence of nationalistic tendencies that emanate from these associations and are now represented in the government since the last parliamentary elections. It is a coincidence that the film focuses on an association with the same name as the student fraternity in Wiener Neustadt, whose song books include National-Socialist texts and which is now to be forbidden.

*Team Hurricane*, a feature film by Annika Berg, observes an adroit troop of girls resisting the closure of a youth center. *Playing Men*, a documentary film by Matjaž Ivanišin, observes men as they, quite simply, play. Both films seem like liberating commentaries on the current #metoo and Time's Up movement against sexual harassment and gender discrimination. One is an accolade for the impact of young women, thanks to trash and punk references, and the other a poetic homage to the beauty of competitive (male) play.

These films could not be more topical. Yet they also seem timeless and like something from the past: corporations, fraternities and other (right-wing) conservative student associations have existed for centuries, girl power is hardly a new buzz word, and male competition has been a perpetual presence throughout the history of humankind.

So is it a coincidence that these films seem to be so topical?

In the viewing phase for this year's Cinema Next Europe program, when over a hundred films by up-and-coming filmmakers were recommended to us or caught our attention, there were not all that many direct filmic reactions to current events – apart from the refugee movement that still grips Europe. The young filmmakers do not react to news, but act instead as constant sensors of a society. They do not leap into the echo chambers of raging topics, but instead listen and watch, perceive and translate that into a personal filmic work.

The three short film programs in our selection this year can be read in the same way: one program tells poetic stories of individuality and intentional solitude and how fragile living together can be. One program brings together constant streams of movement in Europe, which is not a topic only since the opening of the Balkan route: a young musician from Portugal can also leave his home country to try to find a better life in Berlin. And one program observes the fine cracks in everyday life: a run-away rabbit or a broken teapot can affect the dynamics of friendship and families.

The filmmakers' observations are sensitive and precise, and they show us the world and how it works from their view. And by fortunate chance, they hit exactly the nerve of our time.

*Dominik Tschütscher (Cinema Next)*

*Film selection: Wiktoria Pelzer & Dominik Tschütscher, Christine Dollhofer*