

WHAT IS THE LUX PRIZE?

Established in 2007, the LUX Prize is a film prize awarded each year by the European Parliament. The LUX Prize pursues two main objectives: spotlighting the public debate on Europe, and supporting circulation of European co-productions within the Union. Indeed, distribution is "the Achilles heel" of European cinema, weakened by language barriers. The LUX Prize aims at overcoming them.

The LUX Prize has helped European films to reach a wider audience by supporting their subtitling and distribution. Through the LUX Prize, the European Parliament supports cultural diversity and helps building bridges among Europeans.

WHAT ARE THE LUX FILM DAYS?

Screenings of the 3 films of the LUX Prize Official Competition across all 28 European countries during the same period of time - autumn 2013. For the LUX Film Days, as part of the LUX Prize, the 3 films of the Competition are subtitled in the 24 official languages of the European Union. The aim is to share the diversity and richness of European cinema with the largest possible number of Europeans and to debate the topics depicted by the films of the LUX Prize 2013. The subjects raised by these films are common to all of us, they tell our stories, touch our emotions, and address issues we all face.

HOW ARE THE FILMS SELECTED?

The films are selected by a group of film industry professionals who form the Selection Panel. The 3 films of the Official Competition are the outcome of the Selection Panel's choice.

The winner is decided by the Members of the European Parliament. This year, the award ceremony takes place on 11 December.

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC MENTION?

The Public Mention is the people's choice. It is your opportunity to elect your favourite LUX film or theme. Simply visit our website luxprize.eu or Facebook page and express your point of view. The result of the Public Mention is announced at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in June/July 2014. It symbolically closes the current LUX Prize edition and gives way to the new one - with the unveiling of the new 10 films of the Official Selection 2014.



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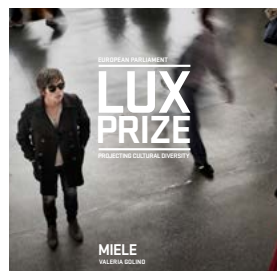
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LUX FILM DAYS

3 FILMS | 24 LANGUAGES
28 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
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MIELE

Director: Valeria Golino
Country: Italy, France
Year: 2013
Running Time: 100'
Cast: Jasmine Trinca, Carlo Cecchi, Libero De Rienzo, Vinicio Marchioni, Iaia Forte
Producer: Viola Prestieri, Riccardo Scamarcio, Anne-Dominique Toussaint, Raphael Berdugo
Production: Buena Onda, Les Films des Tournelles, Rai Cinema, Cité Films
Awards/Selection: Cannes 2013, Un Certain Regard, Brussels Film Festival 2013, LUX Prize Official Selection Competition, Globi d'Oro 2013, Best debut film, Best actress (Jasmine Trinca)

Synopsis

Irene lives a pretty isolated life alone. Her clandestine job is to help terminally-ill people to die with dignity by giving them a drug. One day she supplies a new "client" with a fatal dose, only to find out he's perfectly healthy. Irene is determined not to be responsible for his suicide. From this moment, Irene and Grimaldi are locked unwillingly in a tense and unusual relationship which will change Irene's life forever.



THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN

Director: Felix van Groenigen
Country: Belgium
Year: 2012
Running Time: 110'
Cast: Veerle Baetens, Johan Heldenbergh, Nell Cattrysse, Geert van Rampelberg, Nils de Caster
Producer: Dirk Impens
Co-producers: Frans Van Gestel, Arnold Heslenfeld, Laurette Schillings
Production: Menuet Producties, Topkapı Films
Awards/Selection: Berlinale 2013, Panorama Special Audience Award, CPH PIX 2013, LUX Prize 2013 Official Selection Competition, Tribeca Film Festival 2013

Synopsis

The Broken Circle Breakdown tells the love story between Elise and Didier. She has her own tattoo shop; he plays the banjo in a band. It is love at first sight, in spite of major differences. He talks, she listens. He is a dedicated atheist, although at the same time a naive romantic. She has a cross tattooed on her neck, even though she has both feet firmly on the ground. Their happiness is complete after their little girl Maybelle is born. Unfortunately, Maybelle, at six years old, becomes seriously ill. Didier and Elise respond in very different ways. But Maybelle does not leave them any choice. Didier and Elise will have to fight for her together.



THE SELFISH GIANT

Director: Clio Barnard
Country: United Kingdom
Year: 2013
Running Time: 93'
Cast: Sean Gilder, Siobhan Finneran, Lorraine Ashbourne, Steve Evets, Elliott Tittensor, Conner Chapman, Shaun Thomas
Producer: Tracy O'Riordan
Production: Moonspun Films, BFI Film Fund, FilmFour
Awards/Selection: Cannes 2013, Directors' Fortnight, LUX Prize Official Selection Competition

Synopsis

A contemporary fable about 13-year-old Arbor and his best friend Swifty. Excluded from school and outsiders in their own community, the boys meet Kitten, a local scrap dealer, and begin collecting scrap metal for him using a horse and cart. Swifty has a natural gift with horses and Arbor has a business brain and a way with words - they make a good team. But when Arbor begins to emulate Kitten by becoming greedy and exploitative, tensions build, leading to a tragic event which transforms them all irrevocably.

BECAUSE cinema has the power to move us and culture to enlighten us.

BECAUSE cinema and culture are ideal instruments to discover our common background as well as our diversities.

BECAUSE we are united in diversity and the European Union is our common space.

MIELE by Valeria GOLINO, **THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN** by Felix van Groenigen and **THE SELFISH GIANT** by Clio Barnard are on the programme of the 2nd edition of LUX FILM DAYS, organised by the European Parliament.

Taken together, these three remarkable films reflect the richness, depth and beauty of the European cinema. Each has its own take on the questions facing our society, approaching them realistically or imaginatively, harshly or delicately.

Go and see these films and discuss on luxprize.eu the problems of the legitimacy (or not) of alleviating others' pain when people cannot take this fatal decision freely (MIELE), or the way youngsters react when they are cast aside by society and institutions (THE SELFISH GIANT) or how a young European couple is suddenly hit by tragic events which question all their values (THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN).

28 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

BELGIQUE / BELGIË
BRUXELLES / BRUSSEL

БЪЛГАРИЯ
СОФИЯ

ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA
BRNO

DANMARK
KØBENHAVN

DEUTSCHLAND
BERLIN, KÖLN, MÜNCHEN

EESTI
TALLINN

ÉIRE / IRELAND
CORCAIGH / CORK

ΕΛΛΑΔΑ
ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ

ESPAÑA
BARCELONA, GIJON, LANZAROTE, SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, SEGOVIA, SEVILLA

FRANCE
ANGOULÊME, MARSEILLE, STRASBOURG

HRVATSKA
ZAGREB

ITALIA
ROMA, BOLOGNA

ΚΥΠΡΟΣ
ΛΕΥΚΩΣΙΑ

LATVIJA
RĪGA

LIETUVA
VILNIUS, KAUNAS, PANEVĖŽYS

LUXEMBOURG / LUXEMBURG
LUXEMBOURG / LUXEMBURG

MAGYARORSZÁG
BUDAPEST

MALTA
VALLETTA

NEDERLAND
LEIDEN

ÖSTERREICH
WIEN

POLSKA
WARSAW, WROCŁAW

PORTUGAL
LISBOA

ROMÂNIA
BUCUREȘTI

SLOVENIJA
LJUBLJANA

SLOVENSKO
BRATISLAVA

SUOMI / FINLAND
HELSINGFORS / HELSINKI

SVERIGE
STOCKHOLM

UNITED KINGDOM
LONDON, BELFAST, GLASGOW

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A CENTRAL THEME

Euthanasia is the obvious central theme of Valeria Golino's film and a controversial issue in many European countries. Whilst a few, such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland, have legalised active euthanasia in certain circumstances, most others regard it as murder and thus treat it as a serious criminal offence. Some countries, such as Norway, Finland, France and Spain, effectively turn a blind eye to passive euthanasia, for example through the withdrawal of medical care, when death is inevitable and when the patient concerned has freely given his or her consent. Other countries that are traditionally Catholic or Orthodox, such as Italy, Poland, Portugal and Greece, have banned euthanasia. In Italy, where Miele is set, active euthanasia is regarded as a crime punishable by 5 to 16 years in prison. This does not make the issue any less controversial, however, and Valeria Golino's film and the stance it takes on euthanasia will certainly make a worthwhile contribution to the debate.

However, the film cannot be reduced to a set of arguments for or against the legalisation of euthanasia. Miele tells a unique story that illustrates the main character's inability to reconcile her personal beliefs with a reality which is necessarily more complex and less clear cut and which will soon lead her to question her most fundamental convictions. Although Mr Grimaldi is quite old, he quickly announces that he is in good health and that he wants to commit suicide simply because he has lost the taste for life. Such a step is completely at odds with the rules that Irene (Miele's real name) follows – helping people whose suffering or disability has no possible cure or relief.

Although the young woman is breaking the law of her country, she is obeying a different

set of rules, which the film goes some way towards spelling out and which are now tested in a new way – should she accept, as Grimaldi suggests, that someone might want to commit suicide because they are tired of living? Is it right to help someone commit such an act? This moral debate is matched by a growing realisation on Miele's part of the true nature of the issues involved. During a conversation with Grimaldi, she contrasts his attitude with that of all the people she has helped to die in the last three years and who, deep down, wanted to live despite having to endure an unbearable existence.

The issue of rules – whether those imposed on us by society or those we set for ourselves – is at the heart of the film. When Miele realises that in spite of herself she has broken a law which she regards as fundamental, Irene becomes incapable of following even the most basic rules that she set herself when helping people to die (not using certain phrases such as 'see you' or 'would you like...,' which imply a possible future). She is also faced with the reaction of her accomplice and partner, who, when she describes Grimaldi's attitude, simply replies 'there are no rules!' Living in the absence of any rules, or any law in the strict sense of the word, proves unbearable for the young woman.

Through the main character's doubts, the film raises the issue of rules in Western society, where every law is the subject of democratic debate and no transcendent philosophy, tradition or authority (be it moral, political or other) can be imposed on society as a whole. At the same time, in the absence of recognised rules disputation in the original sense of the word, such as the one that pits Irene against Grimaldi, can also give rise to uncertainties, not to mention anxieties, which most people would find unbearable. Rather than let the old man make a free choice, Irene instead tries to convince him to

abandon his fateful plan. Although he hands over his bottle of barbiturates, his brutal suicide at the end of the film also illustrates the failure of the young woman to convince others of the rightness of her reasoning and her innermost convictions. The film thus highlights, in a rather pessimistic manner, the way fundamental disagreements can persist, whether between individuals, such as Irene and Grimaldi, or within a family, between a sick brother and his sister who is inwardly appalled by his decision, or even between European countries, since the two neighbouring countries which feature in the film, Switzerland and Italy, have profoundly different policies on euthanasia.

AN EXISTENTIAL QUESTION?

Setting aside the issue of whether or not euthanasia is a legitimate course of action if a person is dying or experiencing great suffering, Grimaldi's wish to end his life indirectly leads Irene to question the meaning of life: that of the engineer, her own and of all human beings. Why go on living, the old man asks, if we no longer have any ambitions or any appetite for anything?

Irene seems incapable of coming up with real counter-arguments – her existence now seems to be a largely empty one and she has few truly positive reasons for living. Her family now consists of just her father, who she lies to about her illegal activities, which seem to leave her no time for a job demanding real commitment. Even though Irene follows a personal ethical code, it is hard to believe that the prospect of personal gain plays no part in her actions at a time when Italy, like other countries in southern Europe, is suffering from a high rate of youth unemployment². When asked by Grimaldi if she has 'plans

AT A GLANCE

Miele, a young Italian woman, goes to Mexico where she buys a packet of Lamputal, a drug normally used to put sick animals to sleep, from a pharmacy. But when she returns to Italy, we discover that Miele is using the drug illegally to help people who are suffering terribly to die in the most dignified way possible.

Unbeknownst to those close to her, therefore, the young woman is leading a double life. Then, one day, a Mr Grimaldi, an engineer from Rome, asks for her help. When she asks why, his answer catches Miele¹, as she calls herself, completely off guard and leads her to question her convictions.

or ambitions', all she can talk about are her current 'activities' as these seem to constitute her only career.

Although she does engage in romantic relationships with two different men, these relationships appear to be lacking in passion, built on bigger or smaller lies and ultimately unfulfilling. Neither of these relationships seems likely to lead to Irene starting a family or having a baby. Irene's past, however, is presented as being a happy one, albeit in the form of a childhood memory of a skiing holiday with her father and her mother when she was still alive. It is also clear that Irene lacks any real support network.

In cinematographic terms, the characters, particularly Irene, are often filmed through screens and windows, which set up a barrier and create a gulf between them and others, symbolising their isolation. In the same vein, the music Irene listens to on her digital walkman isolates her as she wanders alone through the streets among people indifferent to her.

This visible loneliness can undoubtedly be seen as one result of the growing individualism in Western societies, marked in particular by the decline in the major political and religious ideologies and in socialising institutions, such as the family, trade unions and school³. But the resulting individual freedom also presents a new challenge, that of giving meaning to or finding meaning in our own existence, in particular at moments of crisis such as that triggered by Grimaldi's decision.

Even though they are not a direct response to this moment of crisis, Irene's only true passion are physically demanding sports, cycling and open water swimming in particular. The emphasis on this solitary activity, in icy water which makes a wetsuit essential, undoubtedly

reflects the young woman's psychological investment in swimming, which offers an escape from her fears (which are not explicitly stated, but become clear in the euthanasia scenes). But swimming is still an individual sport which creates no links with others.

Paradoxically, she seeks out a real human relationship with Grimaldi, based on trust and the freedom to be oneself, particularly after the death of a young disabled person which deeply troubles her. She confides her doubts in him and ultimately collapses in his arms in tears. The engineer's suicide, which she cannot prevent, triggers her existential fears once again. However, she finds a final, almost magical, response to it when she goes to the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul. The scene where a piece of paper is carried away by an upward gust of air, in a way which Grimaldi had spoken about, is open to a number of different interpretations, but it certainly represents a sign of hope in a disillusioned world.

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¹ Miele means honey in Italian.

² In 2011 unemployment among the under-25s was more than 40 % in Italy and Portugal and more than 50 % in Spain, Greece and Croatia.

³ François Dubet, *Le Déclin de l'institution*, Paris, Seuil, 2002.



SOME TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- *Miele/Irene*: the young woman's world seems completely compartmentalised at the beginning. However, the two theoretically separate universes in which she moves will gradually become intertwined. What could the reasons for this be?
- Music plays a key role in *Miele*: in particular it accompanies the assisted suicide scenes. But music is also used in other ways. What importance do the characters give to music? Why is it so essential for the scenes in which people die?

