

World premiere
**November 22
2020**
Tallinn Black Nights
IFF

film by
LAILA PAKALNIŅA



IN THE MIRROR

ĮUḠOḠḠ

STARRING:

Madlēna Valdbērga, Elza Leimane, Lauris Dzelzītis, Mykolas Vildžiūnas, Aivars Šmukstelis, Andrejs Dubanēvičs,
Dmitrijs Širjajevs, Gļebs Savins, Jānis Lācis, Kārlis Erlats, Pauls Jemeljānovs, Kaspars Gods, Gatis Gāga

SALES: ORATION TIMOTHY@ORATIONFILMS.COM

Selfie

A self-portrait digital photograph or video, typically taken with a digital camera or smartphone, which may be held in the hand (at arm's length) or supported by a selfie stick. Selfies are often shared on social media as self-presentation, self-assurance, and an attempt to communicate. A selfie may include multiple subjects.

Mirror

An object that reflects an image. A mirror is commonly used for inspecting oneself, hence the old-fashioned name "looking glass". Depicted mirrors can be seen as metaphors of knowledge and reflection and are thus able to remind the beholder to reflect and get to know himself. The mirror may function simultaneously as a symbol and a device of moral appeal.

Snow White

A 19th-century German fairy tale that is today known widely across the Western world. The Brothers Grimm published it in 1812 in the first edition of their collection Grimm's Fairy Tales and numbered as Tale 53. The fairy tale features such elements as the magic mirror, the poisoned apple, the glass coffin, and the characters of the Evil Queen and the Seven Dwarfs.

“In The Mirror” (2020)

Director Laila Pakalniņa's feature film combining all these elements.

Why is the Evil Stepmother the most interesting character in the story of Snow White? Because she speaks with the Mirror and is allowed to express herself in it as in a selfie. The film *In the Mirror* allows everyone to express themselves as well – each character documents everything that happens in selfies, and the world of the film is formed from these various mirror pieces.

TRAILER

LOGLINE:

Once upon a time there was rivalry; and there was also self-love.

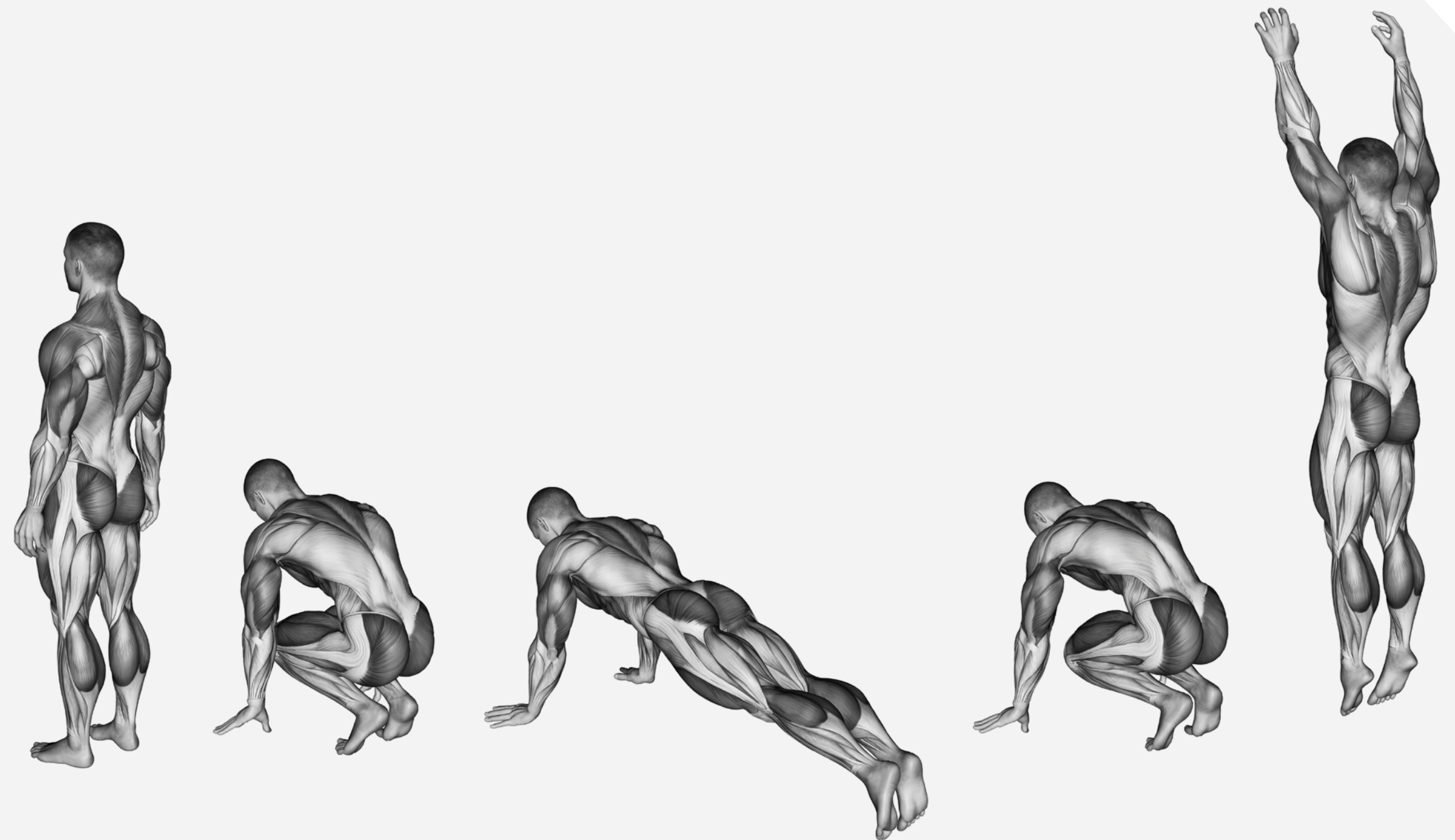
SYNOPSIS:

A CrossFit trainer becomes the father of a baby girl, Snow White. Her mother dies, and her father marries a young woman obsessed with CrossFit and herself. She works out all the time in order to be the best. And she really is the best – she can do 50 burpees. In the meantime, little Snow White plays and grows up in the CrossFit gym. Time passes, and one day it turns out – while the Stepmother can do 50 burpees, Snow White can already do 53...

FILM STILLS

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION:

Shooting format:	Alexa Mini 4:3 2,8K Anamorphic
Running time:	84 Minutes
Sound:	Digital 5.1
Screen Ratio:	CinemaScope / 1:2,39
Speed:	24 FPS
Language:	Latvian
Subtitles:	English
Country:	Latvia, Lithuania
Filming location:	Latvia
Year of Production:	2020



BTW: It's not important what a burpee is, because it could be anything and could be called anything. But, of course, we can describe it here:

A burpee is an exercise that encompasses several different movements and positions. It activates dozens of muscles and therefore requires a lot of energy to perform. A burpee can be done anywhere because it does not require any extra equipment, only the human body. It looks easy, but it is not.

Even though burpees are currently a fad, they originated in the 1930s. They are named after the American physiologist Royal H. Burpee, who developed the "burpee test". The test was used in the 1940s to assess the fitness of recruits in the American army.

ONCE UPON A TIME / IN THE MIRROR

King

The **CROSSFIT TRAINER** who lost his wife soon after the birth of their daughter; now he can only find and fulfil himself in the gym.



LAURIS DZELŽĪTIS, an actor and master carpenter who, since 1999, has played almost 70 theatrical roles, 10 cinematic roles, and 5 in TV series.

Evil Queen

The **STEPMOTHER** who marries the trainer after she has seduced him with her ability to do 50 burpees in a row – a feat no one else can do!



ELZA LEIMANE, the principal dancer of the Latvian National Ballet; she has been dancing on stage for more than 20 years – Giselle, Kitri, Juliet, Carmen, Raymonda, Aurora, Marguerite Gautier...

Snow White

The **TRAINER'S DAUGHTER** who, after her mother's death, grows up in the gym next to her father and, one fine day, is suddenly able to do 53 burpees in a row!



MADLĒNA VALDBERGA, a pole dancer and acrobat who performs in contemporary dance productions and is a student at the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Hunter

The **TAXI DRIVER** who is supposed to take the box containing Snow White far away, then burn it.



KASPARS GODS, an actor at the Liepāja Theatre since 1996; has played more than 60 roles. In 2011 he founded Theatre of Gods – an alternative space for independent performances.

Seven Dwarfs

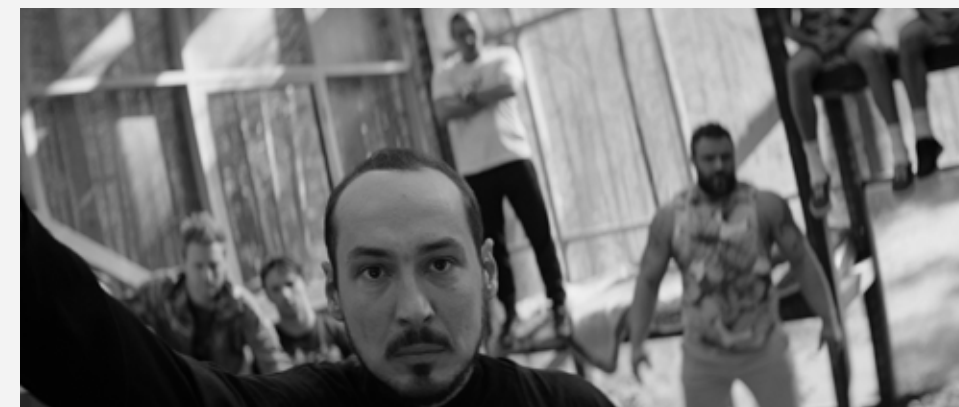
The **SEVEN FELLOWS** who live in a glass house in the forest; they work on their gymnastics skills daily by using the forest as a free gym with various pieces of equipment.



AIVARS ŠMAUKSTELIS, strongman, World Champion, **ANDREJS DUBANĒVIČS**, traceur, acrobat, **DMITRIJS ŠIRJAJEVS**, street gymnast, **ĢĻEBS SAVINS**, traceur, **JĀNIS LĀČIS**, bike trial rider, **KĀRLIS ERLATS**, street gymnast. **PAULS JEMEĻJĀNOVS**, street gymnast

Prince

The **CURATOR from the Modern Art Museum** who fails at making the installation *Glass Coffin Full of Water and Apples*, so he goes to the forest to seek inspiration and comes upon the Cottage of the Seven Dwarfs...



MIKOLAS VILDŽIŪNAS is a Lithuanian, still in Vilnius. In his twenty-year creative career he has played dozens of roles in cinema and TV, directed four documentaries, one feature film, and hundreds of episodes of TV dramas and TV shows.

The Brothers Grimm didn't come up with him.

Sailor

The **SAILOR** was looking for the sea and met Crossfit Trainer, who was looking for his daughter. So they started to search together.



GATIS GĀGA has for 20 years been an actor, director, musician and businessman – he manages the 3-hectare apple orchard Gaga's Apples

BEHIND THE SCENES / IN THE MIRROR



FILM CREW / IN THE MIRROR



writer, director and producer **LAILA PAKALNIŅA**

Laila Pakalniņa graduated from the Moscow Film Institute (VGIK), Department of Film Direction, in 1991. A director and scriptwriter of 31 documentaries, 5 shorts and 6 fiction features; altogether she has 42 films, 2 children, 1 husband, 2 dogs, and 2 bicycles. And many ideas for new films. Her films have screened in official programmes at Cannes, Venice, Berlinale, Locarno, Karlovy Vary, Rome, Tallinn and other international festivals, where they have won numerous awards.



cinematographer **GINTS BĒRZIŅŠ, LGC**

Bērziņš has been filming since 1990. He has worked with Pakalniņa since 1991, having made 10 of her documentaries (the 11th is in production), 6 short films, and 3 feature films. He is an internationally sought-after cinematographer who has received six National Cinema Awards for Best Cinematographer, and in 2016 – the Jury Prize at PÖFF | Tallinn Black Nights.



sound director **ANRIJS KRENBERGS**

The third member of Pakalniņa's permanent team. Krenbergs has been working in film production since 1984; together with Pakalniņa – since 1994 on 30 of her films of various length. Krenbergs is the most sought-after sound director in Latvia and has the longest filmography of anyone; he has received eight National Cinema Awards for sound direction.



art designer **ALDIS MEINERTS**

A film artist who learned the profession on the job – starting as a volunteer in the art department (1989) to being the production designer for professionally and artistically complex feature films as well as for international co-productions (since 2011). In the Mirror is his first film as Art Designer.



composers **PAULIUS KILBAUSKAS, VYGINTAS KISEVIČIUS**

Famous Lithuanian composers and performers, a “duo as a phenomenon” in the Vilnius music scene. Academically educated Kisevičius and self-taught Kilbauskas are very good friends who have been running their record studio for the last 11 years and have made numerous remarkable works related with various cultural fields – theatre, cinema, contemporary media art, etc.



co-producer **DAGNE VILDŽIŪNAITE**

Runs her own Vilnius-based independent production company Just a Moment; focuses on auteur films with high artistic value, daring analytic work, and experimental aesthetics. Together with co-production partners from Germany, Italy, France, Latvia, Croatia, Russia, Romania, Norway, Just a Moment has already (co)produced 21 titles, both feature and short documentaries as well as fiction films.

costume designer **LIENE DOBRĀJA**, make up artist **MAIJA GUNDARE**, colorist **PAVEL MARKO**, graphic designer **GATIS TRIKULIS**, editor **IEVA VEIVERYTE**, photographer **AGNESE ZELTIŅA**

QUOTE:

Laila Pakalniņa's films are primarily intended for those people who enjoy cinema as a kind of kaleidoscope through which it is possible to see ever more new combinations. And for those who look at the world with wide eyes and rejoice over the constant changing of the world.

(Dr. art. Inga Pērkone)



FROM DIRECTOR LAILA PAKALNIŅA:

The idea for this film came from a shock – I had just learned that, for the second time in a row, my latest script had been denied funding (a total of three years' work). Because I trust the experts, I do not submit the same script twice. But I receive any rejection badly. I can only get over it when I have come up with the idea for a new film, and which I then cling to so much that I forget the previous scripts.

So I was trying to deal with this shock while sitting on a ski lift (which is important to note because there was a lot of snow all around me). In addition, I had long had the feeling that in the selfie (i.e. when a person is communicating with someone but is looking at themselves) lies the film's potential and aesthetic challenge. The shock and the snow brought it together: of course – the fairy tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, because the Evil Queen talked to a mirror; she was, essentially, in a selfie. And that's why I found her to be the most interesting character in the Grimms' fairy tale. All we know about Snow White is that she was beautiful – well, more beautiful than the Queen (which is what the mirror told her), and that's it. The Father (a king by profession) seemed to me the most mystifying – his daughter goes missing and he doesn't even try to look for her. Why is that? Why don't we know anything about them? Because they didn't talk to the mirror. Of course, a mirror must be given to everyone. The title of the film came to me along with the idea for it.

Before the ski lift had reached the top, I already knew that Snow White would grow up in a Crossfit gym because her dad was a Crossfit trainer. I also knew that this father will look for his daughter and that the seven dwarfs will be seven young men. And that the film will, of course, be black and white. That's because the film had to be happy and simple and, in my opinion, black and white scenes are easier for viewers to perceive because a black and white composition and mise-en-scène are easier to align (the redundant, the clutter, falls away). In my opinion, the black and white aspect aids in concentrating on the film, in understanding the language of cinema, and in participating in the film instead of letting it overwhelm with its colorful vibrancy. In addition, the black and white stimulates (cultivates) the imagination; looking at a black and white image is more personal because it includes you. That's what I believe in.



1

With the third script in a row, I finally got the funding for a feature film. This is important to note because the number three plays an important role in fairy tales – at least in Latvian fairy tales.

At first, this film seemed to be imaginable, like all my previous films; when writing a screenplay, I write down what I see in my imagination, and then the cinematographer and I expand on what I've written as we create the scene sequencing. This seemed possible to do, and yet it wasn't. We came to understand a lot when conducting the camera tests.

If I had to name three things (but of course, three!), then they would be:

The actor must look directly into the camera lens, and also everyone in the frame must look directly into the lens. Mutual communication between two characters takes place through the third – the camera lens. We could not make it easier for the actors by allowing them to look at the monitor, no matter how close to the lens it had been placed. The selfie effect disappears as soon as the pupils slightly veer off (the theatrical screen is large, and slightly becomes a lot).

2

We had to connect the actor with the camera (which meant – through the camera and with the cinematographer, Gints Bērziņš). The actor had to hold on to the camera, but at the same time, they couldn't come too close to the lens because then the image would blur (it was important for us to film a *mise-en-scène* and a portrait at the same time). Frequently the actors had to hold on to the camera and, at the same time, lean back as much as they could. And on top of that, for example, move or run... and remember their lines. It was hardest for those with shorter arms.

3

And then there's the inherent problem of selfies and mirrors – what the actors see on their right in the reflection of the lens (the actors' only point of reference) is, in reality, on their left. So we needed very smart actors. And in some magical way, we got them. I could happily tell you a lot about each one of them.

And – regarding joy. It was clear to Gints and me from the very beginning that this film should be made with joy. Otherwise nothing would come of it. And we also told the group that. Because to do something like that, you need the kind of freedom that is possible only when you are working with joy.

FICTION FILMS BY LAILA PAKALNIŅA, World premieres:

CANNES IFF



Kurpe / The Shoe (1998)



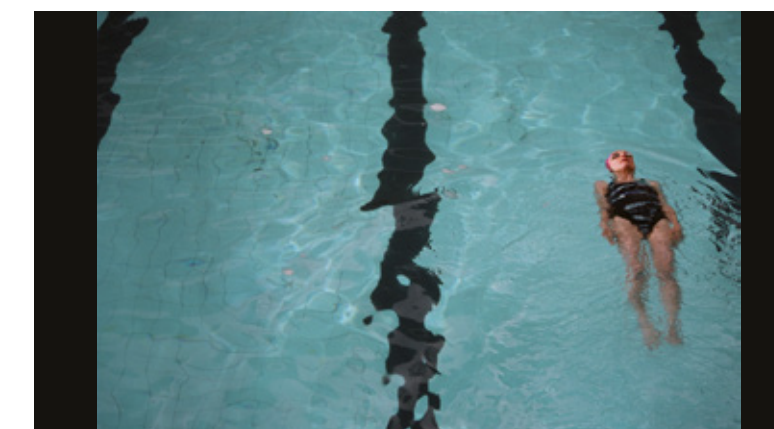
Klusums / Silence (2009)

VENICE



Pitons / The Python (2003)

BERLINALE



Ūdens / Water (2006)

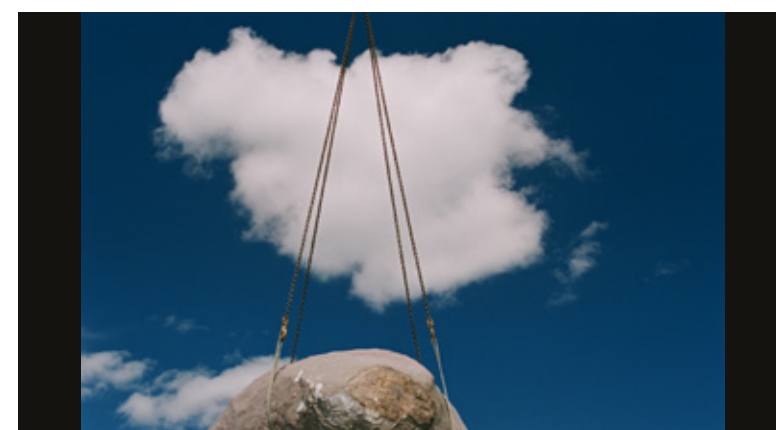
LOCARNO IFF



Kīlnieks / The Hostage (2006)



Uguns / Fire (2007)



Akmeņi / Stones (2008)

ROME IFF

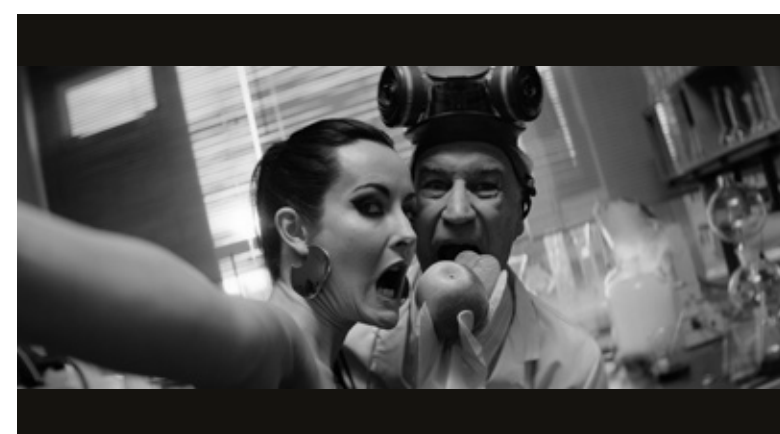


Picas / Pizzas (2012)

TALLINN BLACK NIGHTS / PÖFF



Ausma / Dawn (2015)



Spoguļi / In the Mirror (2020)