

Agnieszka Zwiefkaâ??s timely documentary Silent Trees screening at Slamdance

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson



One of the incredibly timely documentaries screening at Slamdance (February 20-26) this month is Agnieszka Zwiefkaâ??s Silent Trees. The film, which will make its U.S. Premiere, shines a light on the global refugee crisis. The film follows a Kurdish teen and her family as they find their lives on the cusp of being forfeited due to a dirty political power play between Belarus and Poland. Due to their circumstance, she has no choice but to assume the role of an adult well beyond her years if they are to survive in their new home.



Zwiefka said, â??We are thrilled to be making our film festival debut in the United States at Slamdance, which is noted for frequently featuring films that tell the story behind the story, challenging audiences on the perspectives they had prior to having access to films filling out the details in the picture, like ours.â?• She added, â??This film began as a refusal to remain silent. As many others, I have watched the refugee crisis unfold in Europe until it landed at my doorstep. Hopefully, we are providing an intimate look at the stories of so many out there by focusing on one familyâ??s journey, and one girlâ??s efforts to rise above it all and keep hope alive where most others would give up.â?•

Producer Zofia Kuwajawska said, â??For me this film has always been a fight for human dignity. Our main drive, from the very beginning, was to give a face to the nameless statistic, and show the humanity and spirit that we saw in Runa and] her family, that represented countless others.â?•

Silent Trees screened previously at prestigious international documentary film festivals CPH: DOX and Hot Docs, effectively establishing the filmâ??s journey to reach audience saround the world via the top film festivals via its first three outings (including Slamdance). The film introduces us to Runa, a 16-year-old Kurdish refugee and her family who have been stranded in an icy forest in the Belarusian-Polish border, denied entry into either country. Runa is forced into responsibilities beyond her years, caring for her younger brothers and being a support for her father after her pregnant mother dies due to the harsh conditions. Eventually placed within a Polish refugee camp, the family grapples with the trauma of their loss while struggling to adapt to a new life in a new country.

While her father desperately tries to find work to feed and take care of his family while hampered by language barriers and other seemingly insurmountable hurdles, Runa finds comfort in drawing, which the film morph into animated sequences that capture her dreams and nightmares. ***Silent Trees*** is a remarkable coming-of-age story and harrowing journey of one family among countless others fighting to survive and keep the hope of a better future despite the daily horrors of the global refugee crisis.



One of the things that adds to the style and art of the film is its use of animation. Animating Runaâ??s drawings provides ***Silent Trees*** with stark imagery, offering a glimpse into the abyss she and her family faces each day, as well as finding a hopeful light in that darkness, and giving the telling of her story another depth via the illustration of her thoughts and fears. Zwiefka said, â??Runaâ??s animated sketchbook serves as the perfect vehicle to portray the unfilmable aspects of her world, akin to the style of Marjane Satrapeâ??s *Persepolis*.â?•



Agnieszka Zwiefka will attend the screening and participate in a post-screening Q&A and provide more on-the-ground detail about the European refugee and the experience of working to capture the story of Runa and her family with heart and sensitivity. At a time, when this countryâ??s government is seemingly looking to turn a blind eye toward the global refugee crisis, Slamdanceâ??s screening of the film and discussion afterward take on an entirely greater level of import.

Category

1. Slamdance

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