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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia’s First Experimental Film Festival Arrives in Moscow

By Ruth Moore

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Eyes to Me, 2014, film still **Rachel Maclean**

Moscow's International Experimental Film Festival (MIEFF) will open Friday night at the Trekhgornaya Factory — one of Moscow's oldest textile mills. It's a fittingly hip setting for a celebration of the best documentary and experimental film in Russia and abroad.

Over the course of the weekend the festival — a completely new addition to Russia's cultural landscape — will screen classic avant-garde works, entries from its competitive program and a unique collection of English-language documentary and experimental film. The festival hopes to shine a spotlight on little-known directors and expose the best creative cinematography to a wider domestic audience.

Katya Chitova, the curator of the festival, said she hoped MIEFF would encourage a new wave of filmmakers in Russia.

“With the support of the team, we really hope to bring experimental film to a higher level in Russia in order to help us achieve our main goal — to open up new opportunities for the development of the young, creative generation of Russian artists.”

The director of the festival, Vladimir Nadein, together with Chitova, selected the films on show at this weekend's festival. The innovative program sees the work of talented, upcoming filmmakers showcased alongside classics like Dziga Vertov’s 1929 experimental film “Man with a Movie Camera.” All in all MIEFF collected entries from 98 countries for the competition.

And it’s a diverse program. From Paulo Abreu’s “NYC 1991” — Super 8 film footage shot in New York City and edited 25 years later — to “Berlenga Grande,” a film by Portuguese director Vitor Carvalho. The haunting documentary explores an island resort only inhabited by lighthouse keepers during the winter.

The MIEFF jury includes critic, theorist and artist Pavel Pepperstein, the founder of the Moscow House of Photography Olga Sviblova and Sergei Demchev, art collector and founder of Moscow’s MARS Centre.

All competition films will be shown in original language with Russian subtitles, but MIEFF has collaborated with the Film London Artist’s Moving Image Network (FLAMIN) to provide two English language programs on Saturday and Sunday. James Richards, Shezad Dawood, Seamus Harahan and Elizabeth Price are just some of the artists featured on the FLAMIN program.

Chitova expressed her delight at the cross-cultural element to MIEFF. “It's been an incredible pleasure working with FLAMIN team from Film London — they have helped us all along to make sure we can reach out to the artists whose works we have chosen for the non-competition program.”

Given the overwhelming number of entries to this year’s festival, plans are already afoot to broaden MIEFF next year.

“We hope it will go well this year and we will be able to gain even more support for 2017, so that we can bring artists' moving images and the way they are perceived to the next level in Russia, and provide a platform for Russian artists to showcase their work side by side with talented filmmakers from all over the world,” said Chitova.

MIEFF runs July 22-24 at Trekhgornaya Manufaktura. 15/5 Ulitsa Rochdelskaya. Metro Ulitsa 1905 Goda. Tickets cost 200 rubles and can be bought online. Visit www.mieff.com *for more information.*

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