

Trailblazing films by women filmmakers showcased at PIFF 2024

- Vinaya Kurtkoti

Picture a film director, and names like Stanley Kubrick, Quentin Tarantino, or Jean-Luc Godard may readily come to mind. Yet, in thinking of a female director, perhaps Greta Gerwig enters the frame. Her 2023 film 'Barbie' catapulted her into international acclaim, challenging the narrative in a historically male-dominated field. While strides have been made with more women directing movies today than ever before, the stark reality remains – women remain significantly outnumbered by their male counterparts in the world of filmmaking.

Despite being a fraction of the cinematic landscape, films directed by women hold a treasure trove of narratives waiting to be unearthed and celebrated. A poignant example is found in Dutch filmmaker Stefanie Kolk's 'Milk,' a profound exploration of a woman's grief following a stillborn delivery, navigating her healing journey by donating breast milk. When female storytellers weave their narratives, they infuse films with their distinctive experiences, offering their unique emotions and perspectives.

Featured in Pune International Film Festival's (PIFF) 'World Competition' is 'Schlamassel' by German filmmaker Sylke Enders, which immerses viewers in the journey of a young female journalist navigating the complexities of grief over her grandmother's death. Simultaneously, she delves into an investigation surrounding a photograph depicting a female concentration camp guard, unraveling a narrative that weaves personal loss and historical inquiry.

Another film to watch out for is 'How To Have Sex?', the directorial debut of Molly Manning Walker, a coming-of-age film that explores the ideas of sex education and consent in the post #MeToo world. Adding a delightful teen rom-com twist to the coming-of-age genre, French-Canadian filmmaker Ariane Louis-Seize presents 'Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person,' a captivating film that promises a unique blend of humor, romance, and the complexities of adolescence.

A Canadian film 'Days of Happiness' that delves into toxic family dynamics while pursuing excellence by Chloé Robichaud takes us into the world of Emma, a young orchestra conductor in Montreal. The film's central conflict unfolds as Emma contends with the delicate balance between her career, her relationship with her father, and the burgeoning romance with a cellist.

All these films depict varied experiences of female characters across different corners of the world, as they navigate the complexities of life as women. From France, a film exploring LGBTQIA discrimination in the world of sports is 'Marinette', based on Marinette Pichon's autobiography. Made by Virginie Verrier, the film has been critically acclaimed for portraying the struggles of one of the greatest footballers in French history.

On the other hand, 'Pedágio' (Toll) a Portuguese takes us on a different journey. Director Carolina Markowicz's protagonist falls into a life of crime to raise funds to send her son to expensive conversion therapy. The story reflects the complicated mother-son relationship and holds a mirror up to the hypocrisy and zealotry of society while being sympathetic to the protagonist, who is just a mother trying to protect her son and is shown to be a product of society.

An unconventional film you must not miss at PIFF this year is Japanese filmmaker Kiyohara Yui's 'Subete No Yoru Wo Omoidasu' (Remembering Every Night). This film follows the lives of three women in the suburbs of Tokyo as their paths cross and narratives intertwine.

The 22nd edition of the Pune International Film Festival kicking off on January 18, 2024, will feature several more films by female filmmakers such as Crossing (by Jacqueline van Vugt), Elaha (directed by Milena Aboyan, and Europa (by Subadeh Mortezaei). Watch all these films and more by purchasing

a pass for Rs. 800 at www.piffindia.com. A complete schedule of the festival can be found here:
<https://www.piffindia.com/pdf/2024/22nd-piff-screening-schedule.pdf>