

MEDIA RELEASE

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES NEW SCREENABILITY PROGRAM

The 64th Sydney Film Festival today announced Screenability, an exciting new platform for screen practitioners with disability, in partnership with Screen NSW and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services.

Screenability will showcase six cutting edge works - features *My Name is Emily* and *Pulse*, documentary *Lust for Sight*, and short films *Drumming is Like Thunder*, *Struck*, and *Milky Pop Kid* – all by filmmakers with disability, at this year's 7-18 June event.

Filmmakers: Australian **Daniel Monks** (*Pulse*) and Switzerland's **Manuël von Stürler** (*Lust for Sight*), will attend the Festival as guests to introduce their screenings, and take part a discussion panel and workshop in partnership with the Australian Film Radio and Television School. All Screenability filmmaker Q&As and introductions will be Auslan interpreted.

"Screenability is an international program showcasing films by filmmakers with disability from France, New Zealand, Australia and the UK. These titles offer gripping insights and unique perspectives, with creatives with disability leading the narrative," said **Sydney Film Festival's Screenability Programmer Sofya Gollan**.

"The programming of films for Screenability has been an exciting process, revealing a depth of talent and professionalism, as well as startling, provocative, and authentic cinema.

"The stories range from the viewpoint of an artist losing his most vital sense, to the experience of queer teen with disability in a body-swapping sci-fi, and a tale of teenage love told by a filmmaker immobilised by motor neurone disease. These films, made by those with lived experience of disability, are boldly breathing new life into storytelling," she said.

Gollan will present a free Sydney Film Festival discussion: **Bluffer's Guide to Cinema** on **17 May** (6.30pm) at the **City of Sydney Kings Cross Library**, focusing on the stories that filmmakers with disability are creating worldwide.

The Festival has also expanded its access and inclusion policy, introducing audio described and open captioned screenings, and a relaxed screening (*My Life as a Zucchini*) to complement the Festival's program - which includes over 90 English subtitled films.

Screenability at the Sydney Film Festival is part of a suite of initiatives by Screen NSW designed to boost the participation of underrepresented groups in the screen industry. The focus of Screenability is to grow participation with a wide range of industry professionals, showcasing films by filmmakers with disability in a festival context.

"This is one of the few festivals that focuses on people with disabilities driving the programming behind and in front of the camera," said **CEO, Create NSW Michael Brealey**.

"The Festival is just one aspect in a program of initiatives that will deliver on an open-ended policy commitment by Create NSW to work with industry to grow participation in the screen sector by

Australians with disabilities.”

"People with disability will see themselves and their experiences reflected in a purposeful way for the first time in 2017 at one of the world's longest running film festivals," said **Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Raymond Williams**.

“Screening great films by Australian and international film makers with disability creates new visibility and awareness and adds new dignity, authenticity and value to this stellar event, while also promoting careers in filmmaking for those with disability,” he said.

The SFF 2017 Screenability program includes:

FEATURES

LUST FOR SIGHT

Director: Manuel von Stürler | Switzerland, France | 84mins | In French and English with English OC | Australian Premiere

When a filmmaker is told by his doctor that he can't see colours, he sets out to define what it means to see. The knowledge that he may lose it all fuels his lust for sight. Director Manuel von Stürler (*Winter Nomads*, SFF 2015) takes us on an autobiographical journey to find the origins of his encroaching blindness and discover who really knows what he can actually see – his doctors or himself. It's an intimate and compelling experience, shot in a way that draws us deep into his viewpoint as an artist losing a vital sense. As we explore his options for treatment and the impact on his friendships, von Stürler visits an island where one in three inhabitants inherit the same condition he has, discovering kindred spirits as they share their coping mechanisms. This is a gripping insight to an unsettling truth, that what you see is often not what I see.

MY NAME IS EMILY

Director: Simon Fitzmaurice | Ireland | 94mins | English with OC | Australian Premiere

On Ireland's misty coast, Emily (Evanna Lynch, *Harry Potter* series) is flung into foster care after her father is institutionalised. She prepares a daring escape. Starting at a new school, Emily is labelled a loner and a freak by her classmates – but she catches the attention of shy Arden (George Webster). When her father (Michael Smiley; *Kill List*, SFF 2011) forgets to send a card on her 16th birthday, Emily enlists Arden and his canary yellow hatchback to help break her father out of the psychiatric hospital. As they grow to depend on each other, Emily and Arden learn about life, love, loss and letting go. Set in Ireland's misty coastal landscape, this sweetly beautiful debut feature is complemented by *It's Not Yet Dark* (screening at SFF 2017), detailing director Simon Fitzmaurice's work while immobilised by motor neurone disease.

PULSE

Director: Stevie Cruz-Martin | Australia | 84mins | English with OC

Pulse is the ambitious debut of the talented Daniel Monks, who writes and stars in this body swap drama blending sci-fi with sexual teen angst and identity crisis. Olly is a gay teen with disability who discovers that his two straight best friends are dating each other. Frustrated by his body, he chooses to undertake a pioneering medical procedure: a transplant that puts his mind into the body a beautiful young able-bodied woman. When his friends see through the beautiful, blonde façade to the troubled boy within, Olly discovers having the perfect body doesn't fix unrequited love or a broken home. Self-destructive and at risk of losing all that is good in his life, Olly must decide whether his beautiful new identity is worth it. With its understated sci-fi underpinnings, *Pulse* is a highly sexed-up modern parable on what it is to be young, with disability and queer on the verge of adulthood.

SHORTS



DRUMMING IS LIKE THUNDER (screens with PULSE)

Director: Alyx Duncan | New Zealand | 4 mins | English with OC

You can take away Duncan Armstrong's drumkit, but you can't take away his desire to make music and perform. A story of the inspiration of music.

STRUCK (screens with LUST FOR SIGHT)

Director: Aurora Fearnley | UK | 14mins | English with OC

On the sand dunes of her local beach a female jogger returns to a traumatic place looking for closure.

MILKY POP KID (screens with MY NAME IS EMILY)

Director: Johanna Garvin | Australia | 7 mins | English with OC

With a twinkle in her eye, actor and disability consultant Jules attempts to share with actor Craig what life is like living with a disability. Jules however has the last laugh.

The full Sydney Film Festival program will be announced on Wednesday 10 May at 11am.

Note: Flexipasses and subscriptions to Sydney Film Festival 2017 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit <http://www.sff.org.au> for more information.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Amber Forrest-Bisley, Publicity Manager, Sydney Film Festival

E: amber@cardinalspin.com.au P: 02 8065 7363 M: 0405 363 817

Amy Owen, Communications Advisor

E: amy@cardinalspin.com.au M: 0404 977 338

*****Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)**

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 7 June to Sunday 18 June 2017**, the 64th Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, international guests and more.

Sydney Film Festival also presents an Official Competition of 12 films that vie for the Sydney Film Prize, a highly respected honour that awards a \$60,000 cash prize based on the decision of a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals. Previous Sydney Film Prize winners: *Aquarius* (2016); *Arabian Nights* (2015); *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011); *Heartbeats* (2010); *Bronson* (2009); and *Hunger* (2008).

The Festival takes place across Greater Sydney: at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, Dendy Newtown, Skyline Drive-In Blacktown, Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Randwick Ritz, Casula Powerhouse, the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall and SFF Outdoor Screen in Pitt Street Mall.

The Festival is a major event on the New South Wales cultural calendar and is one of the world's longest-running film festivals. For more information visit: www.sff.org.au.

The 64th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

