

## GENERAL PROGRAMMING CURATORS' NOTE

The IAWRT Asian Women's film festival is a platform to showcase films made by Asian women living anywhere in the world. The general programming section of the 13th edition of this festival will showcase 17 films of various genres – short fiction, fiction feature, short and long documentary. The programming team watched over 200 films that were part of the official entry to the festival, including many wonderful films from various corners of Asia and the world. The works that eventually made it as part of the final selection are films that tell a unique story of the world around us, and that are formally inventive.

The selection of films was not restricted to those that only spoke of issues of gender, but multiple lenses through which women filmmakers experience the world and negotiate complex social and political issues and everyday life; films that captured the intersection of experiences while pushing the boundaries of cinematic possibilities and imagination.

The selected films speak to multiple ideas and form. While the opening documentary film *Inja Sandaliha khalist/Here the Seats are Vacant* is about an artist's journey in a country that changed the fate of the arts with the Iranian revolution, the closing film of the festival *League of Exotique Dancers* is a playful look at women burlesque dancers in their sixties and seventies who revisit the arena of their performance and the lives they lived. The fiction feature films that are part of the selection deal with a range of stories – from a fictional biopic of a well-known Assamese folk singer (*Sonar Baran Pakhi*), to the story of a Yakshagana artist (*Harikatha Prasanga/Chronicles of Hari*) to a film that deals with the lives of three people in a small town in Assam, as seen through the eyes of the protagonist who returns from a city (*Bokul*). These are films

made by directors pursuing their own cinematic journeys. The long and short documentary section consists of films from various parts of Asia and around various themes - from the story of an underdog basketball team from *Baglar* (also the name of the film), whose fight is not just about the game but also about Kurdish identity, to *Soz: A Ballad of Maladies* which explores the fraught nature of the conflict in Kashmir through the work of Kashmiri artists, to the reasons behind the decision of a modern Iranian couple to end their marriage and continue living together (*Scenes From a Divorce*), to the story of Bangladeshi migrants in Madrid where the city becomes a canvas of their mindscapes (*In Between*), to looking at the idea of gender beyond the binary of male and female (*Calalai In-Betweenness*). Many of these films push the notions of what we assume documentaries to be.

While all selection processes are subjective, we have tried to choose films that address a range of thoughts and preoccupations. The films provide certain insights and invite us to reflect on our own relationship with cinema and what it means in our lives.

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