

3 / 2023

## 2023 ZF Short Film Prize and 2023 ZF Art Foundation Audience Award go to Austrian film director Paul Ploberger.

**The Filmtage Friedrichshafen Film Festival *Now or Never* celebrates its live comeback at the Kiesel. Austrian film-maker Paul Ploberger wins the ZF Short Film Prize and the ZF Art Foundation Audience Award.**

For the fourteenth time in a row, the Filmtage Friedrichshafen Film Festival *Now or Never* was held from March 2 to 6. After the Covid-related online edition of September 2021, festival-goers attending the popular film festival were once again able to experience short films and documentaries from Germany, Austria and Switzerland as well as an international children's short-film programme live at the Kiesel in Friedrichshafen. The highlight of the festival was the short-film competition featuring fourteen very different short films by young film directors competing for the ZF Short Film Prize and the ZF Art Foundation Audience Award. Late into the night the audience enjoyed the entertaining competition programme in the special atmosphere of the Kiesel venue and eagerly awaited the announcement of the award winners.

The festival jury comprised Daniel Hadenius-Ebner, festival director of the international short-film festival VIENNA SHORTS, film-maker and author Marcus H. Rosenmüller, cultural journalist and author Anke Sterneborg, actor Tomasz Robak and Regina Michel, executive manager and curator of the ZF Art Foundation. After an intense session the jury decided in favour of the short film *Nackte Männer im Wald* [Naked Men in the Woods] and awarded the ZF-Short Film Prize worth EUR 15,000 to this delightful comedy by Austrian film director Paul Ploberger.

The jury was 'thrilled and touched by the refreshingly different look at life's big moments artfully showcased in *Nackte Männer im Wald*: a cancer diagnosis, a coming-out within a marriage, and a child that goes out into the world – all told in an original and entertaining way, yet always truthfully. Tragic situations are not captured with shock or horror, but with levity. Moments that are embarrassing or filled with shame are never ridiculed, but treated with humanity and disarming humour. And although the storylines become ever more bizarre, they remain grounded in real life and believable in a sympathetic way. In what is seemingly a simple story, the director manages to subtly lampoon the toxic speechlessness in family and society as well as the pressure to hide illnesses, proclivities and fears in order to maintain the appearance of an idyllic family. Everything could be so simple if people just spoke plainly, in ways both pragmatic and humorous. With a fine balance of precision and truthfulness, we were moved by the entire cast, right down to the smallest cameo role,' to quote the statement by the jury.

The charming comedy about 'toxic speechlessness in family and society' was also the clear favourite with the audience, which meant that the ZF Art Foundation Audience Award worth EUR 1,000 also went to *Nackte Männer im Wald* by Paul Ploberger. The young Austrian film-maker was overwhelmed and, indeed, initially speechless. Visibly deeply touched, he then proceeded to express his thanks to both the jury and the audience.

Paul Ploberger was born in Austria in 1986. After training as an actor and engagements both as an actor and a photographer, he decided to step behind the camera. He was accepted at the Vienna Film Academy where he enrolled in the film directing course and, during his studies,

produced several short films that were screened at international festivals, picking up a number of prizes. He currently works as a screenwriter and director.

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**Press Photos**



Paul Ploberger, winner of the 2023 ZF Short Film Prize, © David Ploberger



Paul Ploberger receiving the 2023 ZF Short Film Prize from Regina Michel, Executive Manager ZF Art Foundation and jury member, photo: Jürgen Heppeler © Kulturbüro Friedrichshafen



Group photo of the winners of the 2023 ZF Short Film Prize with the jury and festival directors: Melanie Eisele, Daniel Hadenius-Ebner, Regina Michel, Anke Sterneborg, Paul Ploberger, Tomasz Robak, Marcus H. Rosenmüller, photo: Jürgen Heppeler © Kulturbüro Friedrichshafen



Marcus H. Rosenmüller reading out the jury's statement in turn with other members of the festival jury, photo: Jürgen Heppeler © Kulturbüro Friedrichshafen



Tomasz Robak and Anke Sterneborg reading out the jury's statement, photo: Jürgen Heppeler © Kulturbüro Friedrichshafen