

17TH VIENNA SHORTS FESTIVAL BECOMES “ONLINE EDITION”

International short film festival takes place on a specially developed streaming platform due to coronavirus – Kick-off for design relaunch with new logo – New compliance rules as measures for a fair festival

The date has long been set: From 28th of May to 2nd of June 2020, the 17th edition of Vienna Shorts will again celebrate outstanding films up to 30 minutes in length. Due to the worldwide health and social challenges however, the festival will not take place at various venues in downtown Vienna this year, but will only be accessible online. It is planned to present all competitions (about 100 films in four categories) as well as selected additional film and supporting programs on a new streaming platform, which is currently being developed in cooperation with several international festivals.

Like many other festivals, Vienna Shorts has been faced with the difficult decision to cancel or postpone the event—or rethink it. “An international film festival like ours is ultimately a big machine”, co-festival director Daniel Ebner describes the considerations. “150 international filmmakers and 650 accredited professional guests who are invited and looked after; a 200-page book that is written, designed and printed in six weeks; 300 film copies that are procured and prepared for the cinema; and so on. It makes little sense to launch an undertaking of this magnitude without being able to guarantee a regular implementation of the festival and the health of the audience, the industry, the filmmakers and the team.”

No replacement for cinema experience, but a platform worthy of a festival

The festival now prefers to focus its energies and concentrate on giving the films and their makers a good and festival-worthy presentation online. “The flair, the cinematic experience and last but not least the encounters on location can of course not be replaced online”, says co-director Doris Bauer. “But the works of the filmmakers, the trust they have placed in the festival with their submissions, and not least the work of the entire festival team to date deserve a platform that we want to give them this year as well—not as planned, but still worthy.”

To rethink and organize the festival, which usually attracts around 10,000 visitors in five and a half days, so drastically at short notice is not only a technical challenge, but also a feat of strength for the whole team, which courageously supports this path. Many thanks also go to our funders, whose strengthened confidence makes it possible to change the form of Vienna Shorts. Ultimately, the online implementation should also contribute to maintaining the value of cultural events in turbulent and challenging times, to strengthening them and to ensuring that they can be consumed at a low level.

Start of design relaunch with new logo

While details of the festival’s online edition will only be announced in the coming weeks, today marks the start of the festival’s visual relaunch by the design agency TEAM. At the beginning, the focus is on the dissemination of the new logo, which already refers to the goal of precision and conciseness by means of distinctive aesthetics and clear sign language. “In the focus of design are semiotic abbreviations and cinematic references”, TEAM duo Benjamin Hammerschick and Axel Just explain the new graphic concept.

With its geometric formal language, the signet borrows from absolute film and narratively refers “to the temporal restriction and associated intensity of the genre of short film”, according to Hammerschick/Just.

Supplemented by a 30-step layout grid based on the maximum length of a short film (30 minutes), the logo also refers to the boundaries of canvas or screen and is just as variable in size and arrangement as various film formats, which can often change from one film to the next, especially in the case of short film screenings.

New compliance rules as measures for a fair festival

Together with the first steps of the graphic relaunch, we are pleased to make available online a new paper that we have been working on over the past few months: The new compliance regulations contain measures for an international film festival that is organized in an ecologically sustainable manner and under fair conditions for employees, filmmakers and partner institutions.

As the only qualifying festival for the Oscars® and the European Film Awards in Austria, as well as a founding member of the Forum of Austrian Film Festivals and the Fair Festival Work Now initiative, we feel not only a certain responsibility towards the outside world, but also a voluntary commitment towards the inside—and we want to set a good example accordingly.

Fair conditions in festival work include, for example, a commitment to ecologically sustainable action, appropriate remuneration and social security within the team, but also to paying screening fees and artists' fees and to taking into account the representation of female directors in the film program.

“This all sounds so obvious”, say festival directors Bauer and Ebner in unison, “but we know from our own experience that this is not a matter of course. That’s why it was all the more important to establish these measures for ourselves and to initiate a change in perspective.” We are convinced and hope that the compliance paper can also serve as an example for other cultural event organizers in Austria and internationally.