

Fest Anca #19 Unmasks Fakes

What kinds of masks do we wear? What is the relationship between fiction and reality, and who's pulling the strings? These questions and more are explored in the festival's main theme – FAKE. The theme can be found in the work of the festival's main guest, Boris Labbé, as well as in the iconic Japanese anime *Paprika*. From 30 June to 5 July, the Fest Anča International Animation Festival will screen a selection of the very best animated films from around the world, accompanied by a great programme of side events. Start your summer with Fest Anča in Žilina and enjoy our unique atmosphere, one-of-a-kind artistic experiences, and entertainment for adults and kids.

Chaos, Illusion, or Myth

We welcome French multimedia artist **Boris Labbé** – whose work explores themes of hybridisation and the expansiveness of animated film – in Žilina this year. He seeks to question the relationship between visual art and cinema, and between reality and fiction, perceiving chaos as a creative force. At Fest Anča, he will present his unique films in the retrospective *The Algorithm of Eros and Thanatos* and lead a creative process masterclass. His films have also been presented at festivals in Venice, Annecy, and Cannes' Semaine de la critique.



The Fall - Boris Labbé

The 'fake' theme will also be explored in the six-section **Curators' Pick** programme of animated shorts – curated by dramaturge Ema Nemčovičová and programme director Jakub Spevák: *Once Upon a Time, Does Life Really Imitate Art?, 2+2=5, Persona, Persistence of Memory, and Behind the Red Curtain*. These sections will focus on themes such as illusion, manipulation, masking, simulation, memory, and myth, which will be further examined in curatorial introductions before each screening.

VR at FA

The 19th edition's programme **virtual reality section** will be curated by **Ondřej Moravec** (director of the ART*VR festival), who will also present a lecture. The programme directly responds to the festival's main theme and will provide audiences with a completely new experience. Rosenfeld Palace will screen films such as *Kristine is Not Well*, about online censorship; *Fallax*, which connects virtual reality with physical theatre and circus; and *Big Cube*, a film exploring the geometry of reality through minimalist visual language.



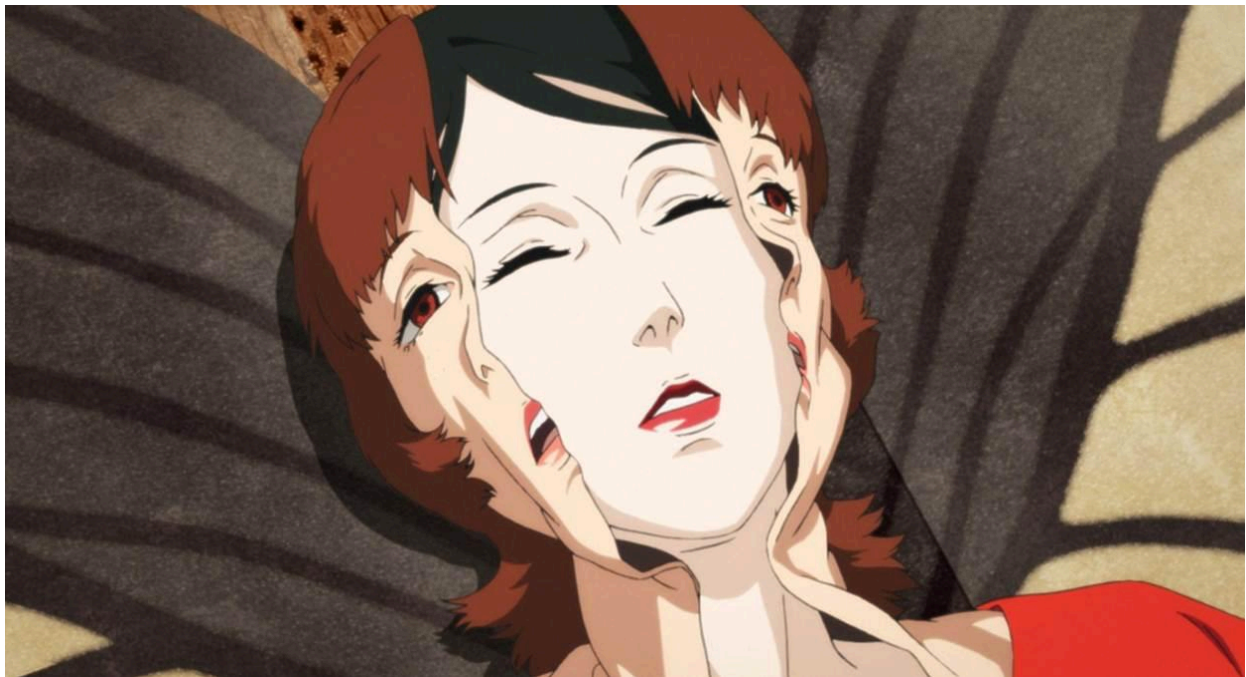
Fallax - Owen Hindley

Check Out Unique Screenings

Don't miss Alberto Vázquez's **Decorado** – about a mouse convinced that the world is just a stage set - at Sterio Kino Žilina. This Spanish director – and four-time winner of the prestigious Goya Award – is also the creator of *Unicorn Wars*. *Decorado* arrives directly from Annecy, and its eponymous short film counterpart will also be screened in the *Curators' Pick*.

The festival's feature films will also tackle the 'fake' theme: **Bouchra** tells the story of a queer coyote filmmaker in New York on a journey of self-discovery; **Dog of God**, a dark and atmospheric midnight screening, explores the fragile line between faith and hysteria, as well as the destructive force of collective fear; and **Dukla**, a domestic puppet feature, examines what happens when humanity loses to ideology.

The twenty-year-old cult classic **Paprika** by Satoshi Kon, which inspired films such as the Hollywood blockbuster *Inception*, fits perfectly into the festival programme. It deals with themes such as slipping through multiple layers of reality, questioning the familiar, endless masks, dream logic, and mind control. Imagine a revolutionary device that would allow scientists to enter and record your dreams... This astonishing story is a must-see.



Paprika - Satoshi Kon

The surreal **Prometheus' Garden** – a 1988 short film by legendary Seattle artist Bruce Bickford inspired by Greek mythology – is accompanied by live music by Nathanael

Mevel. As Prometheus created the first mortals from clay, so the director crafted a clay stop-motion film filled with dark yet dreamlike scenes that draw viewers deep into the story.

In cooperation with the Slovak Film Institute, the opening ceremony will honour the late **Rudolf Urc**, a formative figure of Slovak cinema in animation and beyond who passed away this January. We will also screen films by leading 1980s animator **Vladimír Pikalík**, and launch a DVD collection of his works released by the SFI.

Žilina Welcomes Important Figures of Animation

This year, Fest Anča received a record-breaking 1,823 submissions from 86 countries, including Ghana, Paraguay, Pakistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The pre-selection committee (Jakub Spevák, Ema Nemčovičová, and Peter Gašparík) selected 233 films to create a diverse official selection for 2026. Most of these titles will be screened in their Slovak premiere, and the winning films will be announced by the international jury on Saturday, 4 July at Žilina Town Theatre.

The awards for *Best Animated Short* and *Best Student Animated Short* will be decided by Norwegian producer and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences member **Lise Fearnley**, prominent Hungarian animator **Luca Tóth**, and Stockholm-based experimental filmmaker **Philip Ullman**, whose work will also be featured in the *Curators' Pick*.



Lise Fearnley, Luca Tóth, Philip Ullman

The Anča Award for *Best Slovak Animated Short* will be presented by Canadian animator **Daniel Sterlin-Altman**, Czech animator and educator **Michaela Režová**, and Polish director **Tomek Popakul**, creator of *Acid Rain*, which has won more than 30 awards and screened at 90 festivals worldwide.

The award for *Best Animated Music Video* will be judged by **Patricio Cejas Martinez**, who is also this year's musical guest, and **Marek Jasaň**, co-creator of the Fest Anča trailer and a speaker at the Student Forum. Completing the jury will be Ukrainian filmmaker **Anastasiia Faileieva**, winner of last year's Anča Award for *I Died in Irpin*, which achieved major success on the international festival circuit.

Fest Anča Welcomes Students and Professionals

International guests will visit Žilina via the unique **Student Forum** European platform, which has been an integral part of the festival for five years. Over three intensive days, students and teachers from 17 European universities – including institutions from Hungary, Poland, Belgium, Estonia, Romania, and Ukraine – will take part. Alongside long-term partner institutions, the forum will welcome two new members this year: the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and KASK & Conservatorium in Ghent. Selected parts of the Student Forum programme will also be open to the public. One of the main topics this year is mental health and sustainability in creative work.



The Slovak animation community will take centre stage during **Slovak Industry Day** (3 July, New Synagogue bar) when the local animation scene will present current projects and discuss topics such as animation hybridity. Slovak documentary filmmaker Viera Čákanyová will present her experimental immersive film *Bardo*, which uses generative AI to explore darkness and create a psychological and sensory space. And for the first time, the programme will also be accessible to accredited visitors.

We are committed to making the festival more accessible to disadvantaged audiences. Our team has completed an inclusion workshop, and continues to cooperate with OZ Myslím (Deaf Culture Centre) and Cinema Without Barriers. The festival programme will feature the following inclusive screenings: *Best Animated Films for Children 2025*, *Best of Fest Anča 2025*, and the feature film *Arco*. These screenings will be accessible to hearing-impaired audiences thanks to descriptive subtitles and interpretation into Slovak sign language directly on screen.

Programme For Children and Families

Children and young audiences will enjoy *The Websters: Spider's Adventures* by Žilina-born director and producer Katarína Kerekesová Urbanová. The film follows a spider family during a traditional festive season full of magical atmosphere and hectic

preparations. What happens when the spider father suddenly falls ill and has to rest instead of helping out?

Another family highlight is international hit **Arco**, which in 2025 triumphed in Annecy and was nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe. The film tells the story of a girl helping a time-travelling rainbow-caped boy from the future return to his own era. This colourful story abounds with themes of friendship and family.



Arco - Ugo Bienvenu

The Best Children's Animated Short Award will once again be decided by those who know best – the kids themselves. Which story will pique their interest most: a boy lost in a magical mushroom world, or a chipmunk and a squirrel? Žilina's Artforum will come alive with magical stories for children – and adults will love them too.

Fest Anča will also present the **Forest Five** animated series about the adventures of five animals, as well as **Hola Frida**, about a girl who finds refuge in her imagination. Families with children will also enjoy non-film events such as *Animate with Fest Anča* (two unmissable stop-motion animation workshops) and a performance by **Divadlo Š.E.M.**

Festival Nights

Evenings at Fest Anča are truly unforgettable thanks to a great curated programme and a super-friendly atmosphere! Alongside popular sections such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *Anča in Mordor*, visitors can also enjoy the *Animation Karaoke Battle* and the premiere of *Fest Anča Karaoke Night*. The music programme will include rising talent **Nowalover's** energetic set, Ukrainian DJ **IRRENAFFORD's** genre-blending techno-to-jungle mix, and DJ **Karma je zdarma's** crowd-pleasing hits. Beyond the evening entertainment, the non-film programme will also include exhibitions, lectures, discussions, and the *Breakfast with Authors*.

Partners And Support

The 19th edition of the Fest Anča International Animation Festival 2026 is financially supported by the Audiovisual Fund, the LITA Fund, and the SPP Foundation.

Organiser

ANČA Civic Society

Co-organisers

- Žilina Town
- Stanica Žilina-Záriečie Cultural Centre
- New Synagogue Žilina
- Žilina Town Theatre
- University of Žilina

Patronage

The event is held under the patronage of the Mayor of Žilina, Peter Fiabáne, and the President of the Žilina Self-Governing Region, Erika Jurinová.

Main Partners

- Festival is financially supported by The Audiovisual Fund
- Animation Festival Network
- Creative Europe MEDIA

Main In-Kind Partners

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- AfB-Group Slovakia

Partners

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