

# DOKUDAILY

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PHOTO: SUER CELINA



# ENDLESS GREED MENTAL VOID IS NOT A CONCEPT. IT IS A CONDITION.

PROVOKED SOME THOUGHTS.

Time is moving at a speed that is not ours. We feel outdated, and maybe that's why we have this strange anxiety. Beyond what's happening in our country, countries, which causes anxiety to many people, though many others don't seem to feel it. What makes us so special, so worth saving, in a time when humans feel more and more replaceable?

The acceleration of time. Now it feels like we're living all the old fantasies of the future.

But can we imagine a future?

I am a bit afraid to imagine a future.

It's too futuristic.

Not as human.

But what's human?

Flying cars. Robots. The inability to tell if an image is real or fake.

Yesterday was real. This, today, is also real.

The future we imagined as distant is so close, and space closes in because we now have enough distractions to stay locked up for long times.

Our space has shrunk.

We must try to see ourselves in the picture of the future. Because if we don't, we might not be in the picture at all.

Let's imagine.

# DON'T TELL ME STORIES. TELL ME THE FEELING OF IT. OR SHOW ME AN IMAGE. ONLY ONE.

AND WE SURELY CAN'T BE ALONE.

Enough distractions to stay awake, enough distractions not to look out the bus or taxi window. I hope the drivers don't look at their phones, though there are many accidents that show they do.

I looked at the window and thought in amazement: how mysterious. How delicate and strong. The body is a stubborn child, the language a very civilized adult.

A man is an ordinary vessel,  
drawn toward ordinary acts — not lost, just  
looped.

Cinema. Moralizing one that educates you in the belief that every character transforms into a series of clichés, reducing complex people to predictable narrative stereotypes for the sake of a moral message.

There is this constant need to identify, to think of us as linear beings, that we grow towards something... But identity runs contrary to this demanding stability. The world is full of need for condensation, chaos, drifts, repetition. For me it is key to understand that it is necessary to remember certain things.

Thank you, Dokufest - you've stirred a gentle vapor of thought.

Once again, I feel so close to you.

You take me back to when I was sixteen,  
It was here that cinema reached me, real, alive,  
possible.

We watched films, screened our own, as the future quietly stepped into me.

Written by Norika Sefa





# DAILY PICKS

INTERNATIONAL SHORTS



SHTËPIA E KULTURËS (SALLA E MADHE) 16:00

UNWELCOMED / 70'  
HUMAN RIGHTS DOX



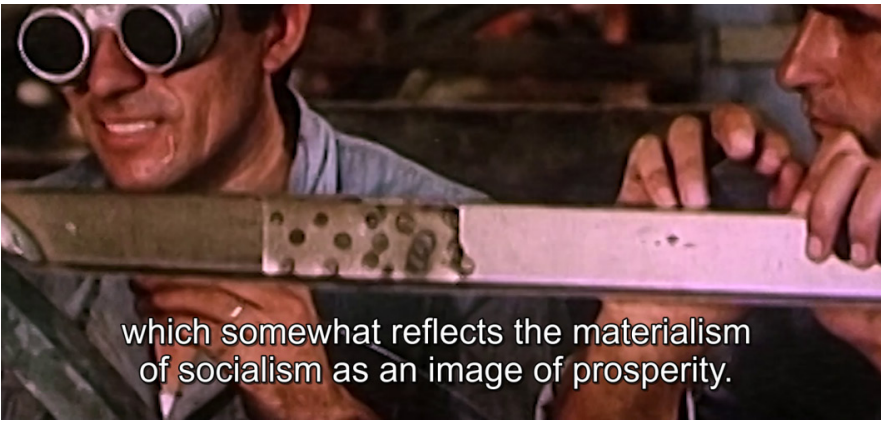
SHTËPIA E KULTURËS (SALLA E MADHE) 18:30

BRIDGING THE GAP &  
FUTURE IS HERE



KINOLUMI 20:00

NATIONAL



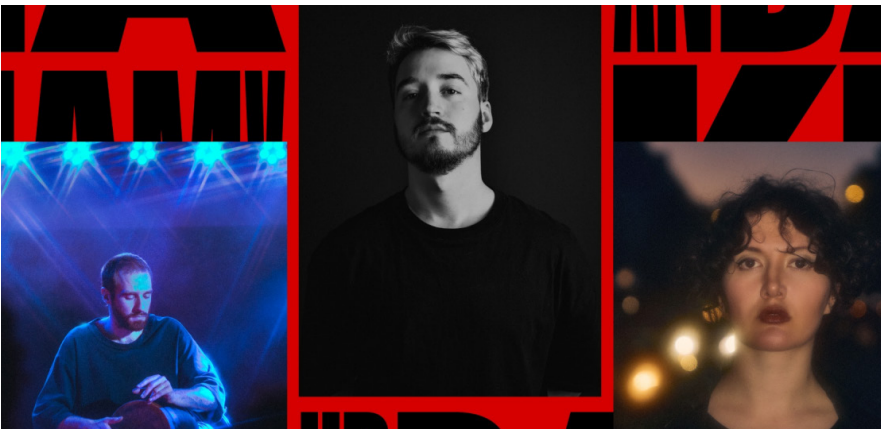
DOKUKINO PLATO 20:30

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WATCH?  
DOKUTALKS



SHKOLLA E MUZIKËS 'LORENC ANTONI' 17:00

CINNA PEYGHAMY,  
YAAND & URBAU  
DOKUNIGHTS



SONAR STAGE 22:30



## DOKUTALKS

Beyond Silence:  
Where the Past Still Speaks

At the 24th edition of DokuFest, a powerful conversation unfolded under the banner Beyond Silence, confronting the region's deepest wounds and long-unanswered questions. Held in the intimate setting of the Lorenc Antoni Music School, the panel gathered distinguished voices to speak candidly about war crime trials, truth-seeking, and the fragile path toward reconciliation in the Western Balkans.

This event, part of the Dealing with the Past program, aimed not only to break the silence surrounding the legacy of conflict but also to amplify the voices of those most affected.

With insights from Prof. Bella Murati, Lidija Zelovic, and Veton Surroi, moderated by film scholar Sanjin Pejkovic, the discussion offered a rare space where justice, memory, and healing were explored beyond rhetoric, through lived experience and unflinching honesty.

Veton Surroi stressed that the present and past are linked, that we cannot escape and forget the past because it has shaped our present, and that it is still connected to the present. He quoted William Faulkner: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

He stated that there is much 'unfinished conflict' in the Balkan region, and while we are not currently at war, we have not arrived at peace, and in fact will not arrive because we are still on the wrong path to peace. We are on the wrong path because the old conflicts were not properly settled, akin to a bone that was broken and then healed incorrectly.

Professor Bella Murati discussed the fact that the international organizations such as the UN must bear some blame for the current situation in the Balkans, where there are still strong animosities between states and cultures. "The internationals have wielded too much power, and we have relied on them too much" she said. Their administration of justice for war crimes has been selective and arbitrary when tried, and nonexistent at most times, this she termed a 'charity of justice.' They bear some responsibility for the current situation in the Balkans, she said.

She also stated that strife continues in Kosovo and the Balkans because parents pass along their viewpoints to their children, who are young and impressionable and will naturally be strongly influenced not only by parents but also by teachers and professors.

Lidija Zelovic, who was born and raised in the land of milk and honey, Yugoslavia, now lives in the Netherlands. She stated that Europeans are sadly uninformed about the Balkans and the reasons for the conflict in this region. She echoed the points Bella made about the failures of international organizations and powerful states such as America when trying to broker peace in the region, or 'keep the peace.'

Zelovic, who has made many films about the conflicts in the Balkans, was asked if films can help to bring peace. She replied with an emphatic "no" but said that is not a reason to stop making films. She also placed some blame on Europe and the EU, saying they are everywhere, trying, but on balance are misguided and destructive to lasting peace.

The phrase "the past is prologue," from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, underscores the idea that historical events lay the groundwork for what follows. While the past does not determine the future, it inevitably shapes the conditions in which the present and future unfold.

There is an inherent tension between confronting historical injustices and working toward reconciliation in the present. Examining the past is essential in order to prevent the repetition of past mistakes. However, remaining overly fixated on it can hinder progress. Reconciliation requires an honest reckoning with history, but also the capacity to move forward.

A comprehensive and accurate understanding of past wars and conflicts is crucial. Without it, societies risk falling into cycles of repeated violence and division. When interpreted thoughtfully, history has the potential to serve as a guide—helping to break patterns of destruction and encouraging pathways toward peace and coexistence.

This activity was made possible through the regional project EU Support to Confidence Building in the Western Balkans, which is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Written by Scott Hoy



## DOKUTALKS

Short Films, Big Hurdles:  
Rethinking Co-Productions in the Balkan Region

PHOTO: ELMEDINA ARAPI

What does it take for a short film to travel beyond its national borders in the Balkans? Is co-producing the only path forward or just one of many? This provocative question opened the floor at this year's DokuTalk titled *Co-Produce or Stay Small*, a deep-dive into the realities of regional and international co-productions for short films.

Held on August 5 at Shkolla e Muzikës "Lorenc Antoni," the talk brought together film professionals from Kosovo, Montenegro, and Scotland to unpack the tangled ecosystem of funding tools, institutional support, and creative cooperation across borders.

Moderated by Jing Haase, co-manager of the Short Film Forum, the session didn't shy away from exposing both the opportunities and the frictions inherent in co-producing short films in the region.

Kosovo's representative, filmmaker and Kosovo Cinematography Center member Blerta Zeqiri, emphasized the untapped potential and young talent in the country's film scene. However, the path for co-productions remains largely unpaved, especially for short films.

"We have funding, but we have more talent than money. So, we always feel like we need more. We're trying to increase the budget every year and it is happening, but slowly. And we're never fully satisfied, because we always want more. We truly believe we have an incredible amount of talent," Zeqiri said.

Although there's institutional enthusiasm, structured co-production frameworks are still in development. Zeqiri mentioned future plans for a minority co-production fund for animation, aiming to harness the high artistic potential in that genre.

Sanja Jovanović of Film Center Montenegro offered a more structured view: with a 2.5 million euro budget, Montenegro is already supporting minority co-productions, including shorts and student films. She says that Montenegro insists that co-productions to be organic, not forced by funding desperation.

Yes, we're mainly talking about our neighbors," she added, "and I think that's mostly because of the language also".

Flore Cosquer from the Scottish Documentary Institute highlighted how UK filmmakers often lean on organizations like the British Council to make their films happen.

Cosquer also introduced their ongoing residency partnership with DokuFest, a program designed to foster cultural exchange and artistic experimentation for Scottish and Balkan filmmakers alike.

The public Q&A turned toward deeper political and legal waters. Attendees raised questions about legal compatibility between Balkan countries and how regional branding might serve the film industries here. While Zeqiri admitted that legal clarity is still lacking, she acknowledged that shared artistic interests often overcome legal red tape.

Still, not all co-productions are created equal. Kosovo's difficult relationship with Serbia, for instance, presents concrete roadblocks, from film festival eligibility to ministerial cooperation. "We're in really good connections with all the other countries in the Balkans, and we don't know what the future bring? One thing I can say for sure that we don't have problems working with anyone.

The conversation didn't gloss over the downsides. Flore Cosquer emphasized the importance of legal literacy, especially when dealing with international partners.

Contracts, copyrights, creative control, all need close attention.

"I've seen some truly heartbreaking stories of films falling apart simply because contracts weren't signed. People were working with close friends and thought, 'What could go wrong?' Well, what can go wrong is someone running off with your idea—or worse," she emphasized.

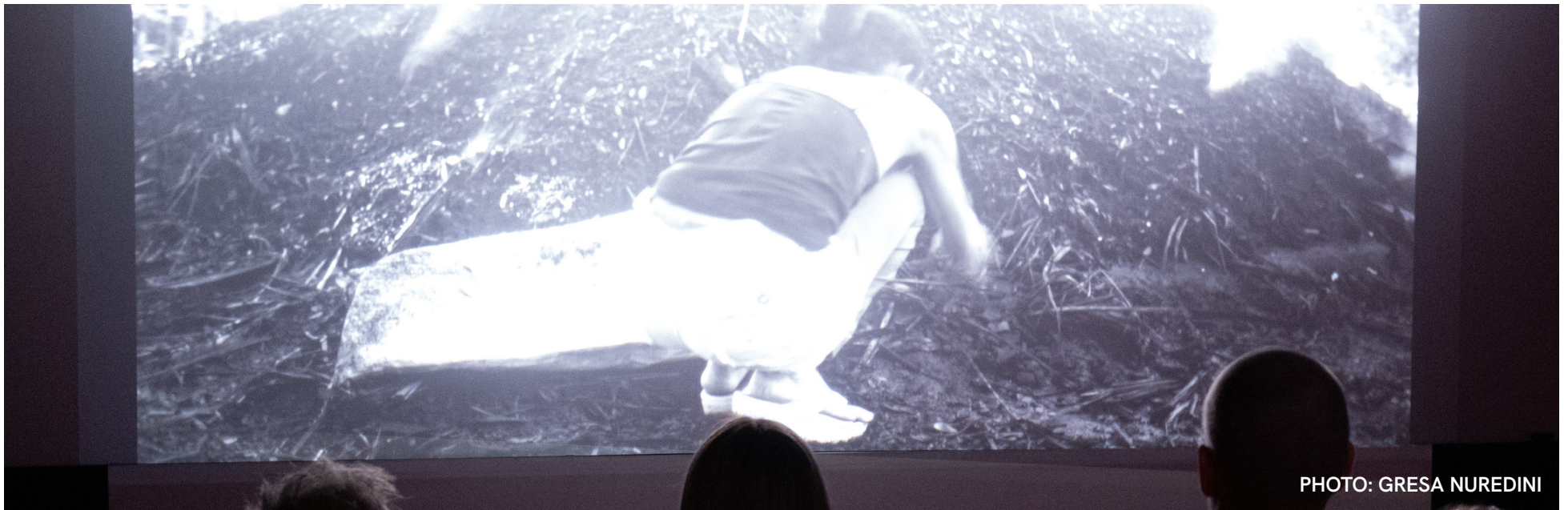
Sanja Jovanović echoed this caution, suggesting that filmmakers think twice before jumping into co-productions just to increase funding.

Whether you co-produce or go it alone, the final message was clear: there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Co-productions can offer access, growth, and visibility but only if the partners share more than just a spreadsheet.

As the Balkan film scene continues to evolve, this talk served as both inspiration and reality check. For many short filmmakers, it was a reminder that even in a region full of borders, creative collaboration can still find a way through.

Written by Shefket Bujari



ON  
FILMSEndurance, Silence, and Love: David Bim's  
Intimate Portrait of a Family in "To the West, in Zapata"

At the 24th edition of DokuFest, audiences were invited into the intimate, isolated world of a Cuban family through the black-and-white lens of David Bim's *To the West, in Zapata*. The film screening was followed by a deeply emotional Q&A with the director, who spent eight years crafting this poetic and powerful story.

Set in Cuba's Zapata swamp, a remote biosphere reserve, the film follows Landi and Mercedes, a couple struggling to care for their autistic son in the midst of economic hardship, political instability, and the isolation imposed by the global pandemic. Landi is forced to illegally hunt crocodiles to provide for the family, often vanishing for days into the swamp, while Mercedes endures the burden of uncertainty and loneliness at home. In this endless rhythm of reunion and separation, the film uncovers the daily heroism and quiet resilience of a family bound by love and stretched by survival.

In the Q&A session, Bim described his process as less about addition and more about subtraction. "Cinema is like sculpture," he said. "You don't add, you remove, until you reach the essence." Working alone over nearly a decade, Bim spent years without even turning on his camera, instead observing, listening, and waiting. The result is a film built not just on images but on presence, on a rhythm of life as lived.

Bim's aesthetic choices mirror this philosophy. The stark black-and-white cinematography isn't just a visual decision but a necessity turned into poetry. "I couldn't afford powerful equipment, and batteries were small. But also, black-and-white helped me create a different world. Not to copy reality, but to express it," he said.

Perhaps the most remarkable dimension of *To the West, in Zapata* is its sound design, which Bim also crafted with painstaking care. With limited electricity and no mobile signal in the swamp, he spent days capturing ambient sound, creating what he jokingly called a "mad collection of 80 gigabytes of sounds." Every chirping of birds, insect buzz, and breeze through the mangroves was catalogued and preserved in an Excel sheet, later used to build a layered, immersive soundscape that gives the film its emotional and geographic grounding.

"The soundtrack is not added," Bim emphasized. "It belongs to the territory. It reflects the life Landi and Mercedes hear every day."

Filming such an intimate story demanded a different kind of directorial presence. "Putting a camera between you and someone you love is violent," Bim admitted. "So I asked Landi: we film in silence,

like monks. We are together, but without speaking." That silent companionship formed the foundation of trust. Bim's friendship with the family predated the film—he began filming five years after his first visit—and that slow-building connection is palpable in every frame.

He spoke movingly of the ethical challenges: how do you capture someone's pain without exploiting it? "They don't want to be heroes," he said of Landi and Mercedes. "But they are, because they have no other choice."

For Bim, *To the West, in Zapata* is more than a documentary, it's a meditation on time itself. He draws parallels to literature, especially Dostoyevsky and Camus, noting that in Cuba, "time is vulnerable. It's always a countdown." Mercedes waiting for Landi is not just suspense, it's existential. "Two days of waiting may not seem long, but for her, it's a purgatory. A time of suffering in silence."

He referenced the myth of Sisyphus—endlessly pushing a rock uphill—as an allegory for the couple's struggle. "The worst thing is not pushing the rock," he said, "it's when the rock stops, because then, Landi hasn't returned."

Despite the hardship depicted in the film, Bim's message is ultimately one of hope. "When we don't have hope, it's the worst thing," he said. "But this family's daily acts of love—feeding their child, surviving another day—are a form of resistance."

His love for Cuba was palpable, even as he acknowledged the disillusionment of his generation, many of whom have left the country. "Everything is not lost if we still have love," he concluded. "And as long as we are alive, we still have hope. And if we have hope, we have a future."

The screening of *To the West, in Zapata* at DokuFest was more than a film presentation. It was a shared experience of silence, time, and deep human empathy. Through a minimalist lens and a maximalist heart, David Bim offered a cinematic journey that moves beyond documentation and into poetry, a sculpture in sound and shadow, carved over eight years, with the patience of someone who truly belongs to the story he tells.



# REVIEWS

## Soil and Wings (2025)



Ayten sits on the floor of the living room, her family around her. She is in a philosophical mood, and she is explaining the world, and life, to her family. They look straight ahead, as if they have heard this before.

Is there a place without work? She asks. She lives on a farm with her husband, she works harder than he does, so she is tired. "Just keep working, to keep the world moving." Ayten has opinions on the subject of drinking, specifically rakia.

"Those who claim we shouldn't drink because it's a sin? They're all liars. If you eat too much bread, that's also a sin! They say rakia is a sin. Rakia a sin? Rakia is a medicine! Back in the days of Yugoslavia, we had the best rakia in the world, such beautiful medicine existed nowhere else in the world."

She says rakia in the morning, on an empty stomach, cures ulcers, heart disease, high blood pressure, and will also keep you from getting nervous. Now that does sound like a beautiful medicine! Rakia comes from grapes, plums and apples, so it has to be good for you, she reasons. Who can argue with that?!

She lives in the village of Kanatlar, Macedonia, known as the home of the Bektashi, followers of the Shah Haji Bektash Veli, who was born 800 years ago. Bektash built a tekke (lodge) there, and the men who joined are called dervishes. The film shows them singing and dancing, as dervishes, they are famous for this. The song says "those who get drunk will receive the Lord."

After the meal, the Iman leads the village in a prayer: "May Allah protect us from misfortune and sorrow, known and unknown. May our prayers be accepted by the Great Allah and Dikmen Baba in the month of Muharrem. I drink in the name of Allah! And in the name of Muhammed! And in the name of the Holy Trinity, Imam Ali!" She loves the Bektashi faith immensely she says, "I don't think there is a cleaner path in this world."

She sings a song as young girls dance a traditional dance. The song describes God: Sometimes I ascend to the sky, to observe the world from above...sometimes I descend to the soil, allowing the world to observe me. Soil and Wings.

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She leads the singing to another song "I've been boiled on this old soil for years. Honey, you're still underdone, they said" This sentence, this lyric boils it all down quickly, to the essence. As long as she lives, it will be a hardscrabble life, but in the end she will be pure. It is a hard life, but if someone calls you honey, a husband, a son, a mother, it helps you make it to the end.

This film does well in painting Ayten, a Bektashi Muslim matriarch who is a light for her family and community, dispensing wisdom and wit, headstrong and opinionated, queen of her domain.

Written by Scott Hoy



# DOKUNIGHTS

# On Love In All Its Forms

I'm unable to talk about my experience of Ibadet Ramadani's stirring performance last night without contextualising it with what came before. I had the pleasure of watching Redon Kika's directorial feature debut, *I Have Never Been on an Airplane*, at Kino Lumi a couple of hours prior. The film follows three best friends over the course of several years as they attempt to leave Kosovo briefly and take to the air, limited by strict visa restrictions. Kika's film has political bite, but its guiding motif is an immense, overwhelming sense of love in its purest form. Romantic love; platonic love; love as a guiding force, with the ability to shift people from disparate strangers to intimate friends to inseparable family. The film radiated this profound passion and, talking to the cast and crew both before and after, it was clear to see the deep adoration that they had for each other, and how Kika's film captured it in all its essence. To love is to learn from each other, to grow with each other, to bask in each other's presence.

This sense of love that radiated out carried all the way through the night, as Ibadet Ramadani and her band—virtuoso guitarists Martin Gallop and Tom Vastiphout—graced us with full-hearted songs of yearning, celebrating, loving. Bereft of the spectacle that defined Shkodra Elektronike two nights ago, this was a more intimate setting, the vast expanse of Kalaja condensed into a fireside chat. Here was Ramadani, back in Kosovo where she spent her childhood, talking to the crowd like they're an old friend. First, she gave the stage to Gallop and Vastiphout, their twanging guitars setting the scene. Then, the homecoming: enter Ramadani, beaming smile, a gorgeous, soothing voice striking deep into the soul.

Much like the love Kika and his friends shared, there was a familiar, potent warmth between Ramadani and her bandmates, the three having met in Berlin some years prior—the start of a beautiful friendship. Together, they performed Ramdani's self-titled album, each song once again telling a tale of aching, fully-fledged love in all its forms. Acoustic and uncomplicated, their gentle, Americana-adjacent compositions and sincere songwriting cast their spell, the crowd taking in the love that beamed out. This love extended to the familial, too, Ramadani's niece, Fiona, coming up to the stage and proving that divine vocals run in the family.

Towards the end of the performance, Gallop took center stage to perform his beautiful 'Strange Place Called Home', a yearning, eloquent story of searching for a sense of belonging, and the loved ones that make it possible—a theme that also emerged in Kika's film. A home is a place to be loved. A home is a place to be found. I hope that, for a brief moment, under the stars, above Prizren, playing out to an adoring crowd, Ramadani and her bandmates felt that sense of home too.

Tonight, the acoustic gives way to the digital, as Cinna Peyghamy, YAAND and urbau enter Kalaja for a night of border-spanning and risk-taking compositions all about breaking boundaries, forming dialogues between the traditional and contemporary, natural and electronic, melodic and discordant. Three immense talents, three bold, uncompromising visions: we'll see you there.

Written by Gus Edgar-Chan



PHOTO: SUER CELINA



