

ROBBY MÜLLER AWARD 2023

Once asked to describe her style, H el ene Louvart said she does not have one, as her only goal is to follow a filmmaker and a story. She also mentions that it is important for her to be invisible on set, in order to give more space to actors and create an atmosphere of intimacy, trust, and truth. Those are the words that Robby M uller could have said too.

Indeed, Louvart sort of hides herself behind the camera and keeps away from being a typical virtuoso, de-emphasising the initial technical aspect of her work. In that sense, the images she makes are transparent and weightless yet they have a strong physical, visceral presence.

Throughout her career, she has collaborated with many film directors on different continents, as well as filmed in different languages, being particularly keen on working with new, emerging talents. Despite her modest attitude, her diverse, extensive oeuvre is certainly characterised by a crystal-clear approach of her own. Moreover, it's hard to find another contemporary cinematographer whose signature would be as recognisable as Louvart's.

It's easy to conclude that she is mostly interested in narratives with a documentary background. Louvart is famous for capturing the skin of things that she films closely with the use of natural light and a soft colour palette. However, calling her style realistic or naturalistic would not be enough, as there is more to it – a profound, existential dimension that is bigger than any socially acute portraiture.

There is a classic notion of the camera as an extension of the eye, but in the case of Louvart the camera is also an extension of the body, or rather it is a vulnerable, sensitive body itself. And as such, it is not just observing the other bodies, but exists in the constant dialogue with them, mirroring them and exchanging movements with them.

No surprise that Louvart happened to make two documentaries about two outstanding female choreographers: Mathilde Monnier (*Vers Mathilde* by Claire Denis, 2005) and Pina Bausch (*Pina* by Wim Wenders, 2011), respectively. Both films draw parallels between movements in contemporary dance and ones in film, praising the unpolished, raw authenticity of bodies as opposed to the classic canons of beauty. The aesthetic of Louvart has a similar corporeal, sensual as well as sensorial nature. And it's no coincidence either that she has filmed so many poignant, extremely genuine stories about the essence of youth, intimacy, and sexuality, focusing on characters who are discovering their bodies, or struggling with them (for instance in her collaborations with Alice Rohrwacher and Eliza Hittman).

Just like dance, Louvart's gaze is fluid and unfolds as a constant becoming – a physical, intuitive process of evolving and dissolving. It's like a wave that goes back and forth and exists in accordance with the pace of the tide. Her visuals are effortlessly synchronised with the rhythm of natural breathing, as if they are shot from within and cross the very line between screen and viewer.

We are delighted to present the fourth Robby M uller Award to H el ene Louvart and praise the unique qualities of her work, which are so much in tune with the artistic legacy of Robby M uller.

Rotterdam, 29 January 2023

The jury members:

Evgeny Gusyatskiy, IFFR

Mercedes Mart inez-Abarca, IFFR

Andrea M uller-Schirmer

Jay Rabinowitz, ACE

Josje van Erkel, NSC

Richard van Oosterhout, NSC