



Press Report

FLYING TIGERS

by Madhusree Dutta



Last updated: March 5th, 2026

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PRESS QUOTES

"It is a jumpy road that the audience embarks on. But it is adventurous as well. It brings interesting historical facts to the table and lets us learn about things we would probably never hear about. Documentary at heart but hybrid in form, "Flying Tiger" combines many elements, from standard documentary to art performance, purely acted scenes, and animation."

- Marina Richter, Asian Movie Pulse

"Dutta recounts all this with a delightful variety of aesthetic devices, from danced children's songs and road movie elements to carefully staged research interviews and artistic inventions on the riverbank."

- Silvia Hallensleben, taz - die tageszeitung

"Flying Tigers is an aesthetically pleasing and content-rich piece of cinema that leaves viewers to spin the threads further."

- Bettina Fraschke, Hessische Niedersächsische Allgemeine

"Blending archival material, staged performance, interviews, animation and musical sequences, Flying Tigers builds meaning through accumulation, where dates recur as markers across decades and vantage points keep shifting."

"Flying Tigers turns form into argument: history is not a fixed narrative but something continually assembled from overlapping memories, cultures and movements. In that sense, Flying Tigers leaves viewers with a changed orientation toward time."

- Poulomi Das, Mint Magazine

"In Dutta's hands, illness becomes an archive, and personal memory opens onto a meditation on war, infrastructure and the landscapes that continue to carry their imprint."

- Poulomi Das, India Today



PRESS OVERVIEW

January 2026	<p>Caligari <i>Online film magazine</i> Mentioned as one of the highlights in the Forum program https://caligari.com.ar/en/the-selection-for-the-berlinale-2026-forum-and-forum-expanded-sections-was-announced/</p>
16 January 2026	<p>Outlook India <i>Online outlet</i> FT mentioned in an overview article about Indian movies at Berlinale https://www.outlookindia.com/art-entertainment/in-which-annie-gives-it-those-ones-restoration-to-premiere-at-berlin-film-festival</p>
23 February 2026	<p>Weltexpresso <i>German Online outlet</i> Positive mention in an overview article about Forum films https://weltexpresso.de/index.php/kino/36602-berlinale-forum-wahlverwandtschaft-gesellschaft-zu-den-32-filmen-im-berlinale-forum</p>
February 2026	<p>Goethe Institut India <i>Website</i> Positive Mention in an overview article about Films from India in the Festival Line-up https://www.goethe.de/ins/in/en/kul/art/b26/iab.html</p>
5 February 2026	<p>Zukunft braucht Erinnerung <i>German Blog for historical topics of our time</i> FT mentioned as one of the highlights in the program https://www.zukunft-braucht-erinnerung.de/berlinale-2026/</p>
6 February 2026	<p>Screen Daily <i>Trade magazine</i> FT announced as one of the highlights in the Forum section https://www.screendaily.com/features/berlin-2026-highlights-from-the-generation-forum-and-panorama-documentary-lineups/5213415.article</p>
12 February 2026	<p>Delhi Times <i>Daily Newspaper - print</i> Announcement of the film premiering at Berlinale</p>
12 February 2026	<p>Business Doc Europe <i>Trade Magazine for documentary film</i> Interview with Madhusree Dutta https://businessdoceurope.com/berlin-forum-flying-tigers-by-madhusree-dutta/</p>



- 13 February 2026 **Variety**
Trade Magazine
Mentioned in an overview article about Indian productions at Berlinale
<https://variety.com/2026/film/markets-festivals/india-berlin-film-festival-1236653518/>
- 14 February 2026 **United News of India**
Indian News Agency
Mentions FT as part of Indian films at Berlinale
<https://www.uniindia.com/~from-not-a-hero-to-restored-classics-india-shines-at-berlin-film-festival/Entertainment/news/3740932.html>
- 16 February 2026 **Screen Daily**
Trade Magazine
Announcing World Sale
<https://www.screendaily.com/news/indian-documentary-flying-tigers-acquire-d-for-sales-ahead-of-berlinale-forum-premiere/5213956.article>
- 16 February 2026 **Asian Movie Pulse**
Online film magazine with Asian focus
Review
<https://asianmoviepulse.com/2026/02/flying-tigers-2026/>
- 18 February 2026 **taz - die tageszeitung**
Berlin weekly newspaper & daily online news
Positive review
<https://taz.de/Dokumentarfilm-Flying-Tigers!/6154745/>
- 18 February 2026 **Hessische Niedersächsische Allgemeine**
German daily newspaper - print
Positive review
- 18 February 2026 **ARD Tagesthemen**
German public broadcaster, daily news journal
Report on extraordinary Berlinale films, with mini interview
<https://www.tagesschau.de/tagesthemen/video-1556736.html>
- 19 February 2026 **Mint**
Indian business and financial daily newspaper + online news
Positive review
<https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge/art-and-culture/flying-tigers-madhusree-dutta-docu-fiction-essay-berlinale-11771487171342.html>
- 20 February 2026 **International Documentary Association**
Online documentary platform
Interview with Ritesh Mehta
<https://documentary.org/online-feature/construction-madhusree-dutta-talks-bridging-history-and-memory-her-berlinale>



- 20 February 2026 **Arte TV**
German-French public TV broadcaster
Interview
<https://www.arte.tv/de/videos/129906-017-A/flying-tigers-interview-mit-madhusree-dutta/>
- 20 February 2026 **India Today**
News channel
Positive review
<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/leisure/story/20260302-memorys-hidden-tigers-madhusree-duttas-flying-tigers-2871648-2026-02-20>
- February 2026 **Goethe Institut (Freiraum magazine)**
Online Magazine
Interview
<https://www.goethe.de/pri/yim/de/mag/das.html>
- 22 February 2026 **Ming Pao**
Hong Kong daily newspaper print & online
Mention of FT in an overview article

Still pending:

- Interview with Poulomi Das for The Swaddle
- Interview with Shubham Sharma for High on Films
- Interview with Meenakshi Shedde for Hindustan Times

ARTICLES

January 2026

Caligari

Online film magazine

Mentioned as one of the highlights in the Forum program

<https://caligari.com.ar/en/the-selection-for-the-berlinale-2026-forum-and-forum-expanded-sections-was-announced/>

The selection for the Berlinale 2026 Forum and Forum Expanded sections was announced



Bosque arriba en la montaña, directed by filmmaker Sofia Bordenave, will have its international premiere in the Berlinale Forum, one of the most significant parallel sections of the Berlin International Film Festival, which will hold its 76th edition from February 12 to 22.

The film will be part of the Forum's main programme, which in its 56th edition will showcase a total of 32 films from different regions of the world. These are complemented by 13 titles in the Forum Special section and a further 33 projects in Forum Expanded. Altogether, the Forum programme will comprise 78 titles, reaffirming its status as one of the most extensive and diverse strands of the German festival.

This year's selection, curated by section director Barbara Wurm, once again underscores the Forum's longstanding commitment to socially incisive and formally adventurous cinema. The chosen films engage with themes of coexistence, individual and collective memory, political conflict, history, and contemporary ecological crises, while also experimenting with hybrid and innovative forms.

Alongside Bordenave's work, the Forum will present new films by internationally acclaimed directors such as Nicolás Pereda, Simón Véléz, Ted Fendt, James Benning, and Rithy Panh, among others. Screenings will take place from February 15 to 25, with the historic Kino Arsenal at Potsdamer Platz serving as the section's main venue.

Among the highlights of this edition is *We Are the Fruits of the Forest* by Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh, which focuses on Indigenous Bunong communities and their confrontation with the pressures of the global economy. Also standing out is *Flying Tigers* by Indian writer and director Madhusree Dutta, a work that combines historical research and archival material to reflect on war and collective memory.

The programme maintains a strong political orientation across both fiction and documentary. Volker Koepp returns to the Forum with *Chronos – Flow of Time*, a portrait of life in Eastern Europe under the shadow of war, while *Black Lions – Roman Wolves* by Haile Gerima revisits a decade of Ethiopian history shaped by colonial legacies. These films are joined by works addressing mourning in Gaza, structural violence, military simulation, and familial addiction, as well as more intimate narratives centered on coming of age, desire, and self-exploration.

According to Barbara Wurm, this edition of the Forum is "probably one of the most political in a long time," emphasizing the wide range of cinematic forms used to address "painful" themes such as enduring colonialism, the repression of Indigenous peoples, gender-based violence, and social injustice, in dialogue with more introspective works.

"Also standing out is *Flying Tigers* by Indian writer and director Madhusree Dutta, a work that combines historical research and archival material to reflect on war and collective memory."

16 January 2026

Outlook India

Online outlet

FT mentioned in an overview article about Indian movies at Berlinale

<https://www.outlookindia.com/art-entertainment/in-which-annie-gives-it-those-ones-restoration-to-premiere-at-berlin-film-festival>

In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones Restoration To Premiere At Berlin Film Festival

Pradip Krishen's 1989 campus comedy was written by Arundhati Roy



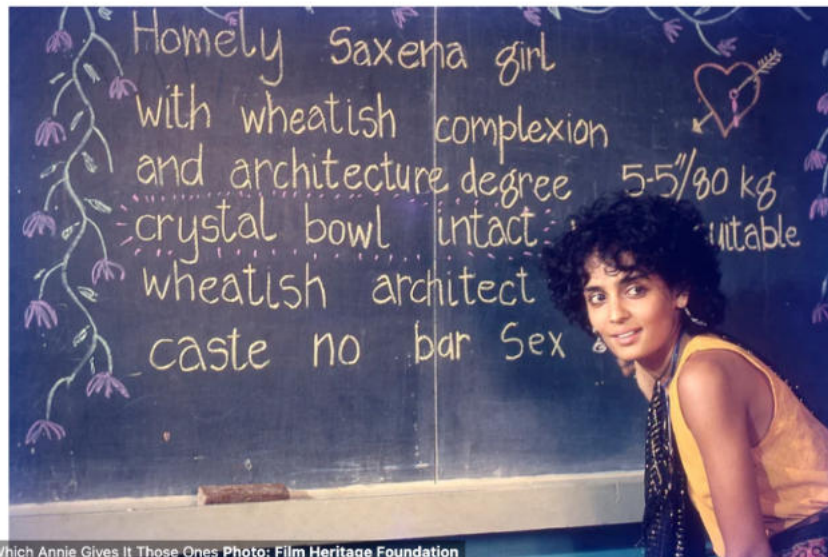
Debanjan Dhar

Updated on: 16 January 2026 2:57 pm

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In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones Photo: Film Heritage Foundation

Summary of this article

- In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones was aired once on Doordarshan.
- Arundhati Roy based the screenplay on her own experiences in architecture school.
- The new restoration was done by Film Heritage Foundation in conjunction with NFDC and NFAI.

The 76th Berlin Film Festival will premiere the new restoration of Pradip Krishen's 1989 film *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* as part of its Classics section. At architecture college in 1974 New Delhi, student Annie fails his final exams four times because the dean has it in for him. Now he is facing his fifth attempt. Over the years, the whimsical, delightfully irreverent campus comedy with a screenplay by **Arundhati Roy** grew as a cult hit. Roy had also written the screenplay for Krishen's 1992 film *Electric Moon*. This was before she became a global phenomenon with her 1997 Booker Prize-winning novel *The God Of Small Things*.

Arundhati Roy will attend the premiere of the restoration. The two other selected Indian films at the festival are both in the Forum section: Madhusree Dutta's documentary *Flying Tigers* and R Gowtham's debut *Members Of The Problematic Family*.



Flying Tigers Photo: Madhusree Dutta

23 February 2026

Weltexpresso

German Online outlet

Positive mention in an overview article about Forum films

<https://weltexpresso.de/index.php/kino/36602-berlinale-forum-wahlverwandtschaft-gesellschaft-zu-den-32-filmen-im-berlinale-forum>

Berlinale Forum Wahlverwandtschaft, Gesellschaft: Zu den 32 Filmen im Berlinale Forum

Kategorie: **Film & Fernsehen**

Veröffentlicht: 23. Januar 2026



Die nächste, die 76. Berlinale vom 12. bis 22. Februar 2026, Teil 17

Klaus Hagert

Berlin (Weltexpresso) - Haile Gerima, Rithy Panh, Volker Koepp, Nurith Aviv, Joko Anwar – die Liste großer Namen des Weltkinos ist lang im Hauptprogramm des 56. *Berlinale Forum*. Gleichzeitig, dem Sektionsprofil treu bleibend, gibt es unter den 32 Filmen



junge Tonlagen zu entdecken (und neun Debüts), starke dokumentarische Formen (und Hybrides), viel Politik (selbst im Fiktionalen), meditative wie knallige Formate – zwischen Antikolonialismus und Empfindsamkeit.

Das *Berlinale Forum* schärft den Blick für Filme von gesellschaftlicher Relevanz und als ästhetische Form der Reflexion. Filme von Menschen, die ihre Wirkung auf unser Zusammenleben, unsere Kämpfe, unser Versöhnen, unsere Geschichte n, die Erfahrbarkeit von Gemeinsamkeit, Schönheit und Solidarität und die Gestaltung unserer sozialen, kulturellen, ökologischen und politischen Gegenwart wie Zukunft ernst nehmen. Mit 32 Filmen im Hauptprogramm und einem *Forum Special*, das auch der Auseinandersetzung mit kritischem Filmemachen im Zeitalter Künstlicher Intelligenz nicht ausweicht, sorgt das 56. *Forum* vielfach für Gelegenheit, den Status quo des Kinos in all seinen Facetten zu erkunden.

„Einen Zugang zur Welt über das Kino zu finden – und zurück zu Filmkorn, Pixel, Foto, Kamerablick, Tonspur, Archivbild und nun immer stärker auch hin zu virtuellen und KI-generierten Bildern“, kommentiert Forumsleiterin Barbara Wurm, „beschäftigt unabhängige Filmemacher*innen genauso wie jene, die stärker im System etabliert sind, im Autor*innen- und Genrekino, im Spiel- und Dokumentarfilm. Das Spannende an diesem Jahrgang – vermutlich der politischste seit langem! – ist, wie unterschiedlich die filmischen Formen sind, mit denen all die konkreten Themen gesetzt werden, die so weh tun: bestehender Kolonialismus und die strukturelle Unterdrückung indigener Bevölkerungen, Gewalt gegen Frauen, Korruptionssysteme, soziale Missstände. Dagegen stehen Selbsterkundungen und, wie schon letztes Jahr, bewusste Wahlverwandtschaften.“

Unter den 15 Spielfilmen im Hauptprogramm sind sechs stilistisch überzeugende Debüts aus Brasilien, Kolumbien, China, Indien und Japan sowie aus Deutschland, von Koxi, die Jelinek-Adaption **Liebhaberinnen**. Frauenpower in großartigen zweiten Filmen gibt es von Ralitz Petrova, **Lust**, und Banu Sivaci, **Hear the Yellow**. Insgesamt bleibt das *Forum* auch im fiktionalen Bereich politisch. Der neueste Streich des indonesischen Genrestars Joko Anwar **Ghost in the Cell** oder Chung Ji-youngs **My Name** zeugen ebenso wie das japanische Debüt **AnyMart** – Supermarkt-Horror samt Sozialkritik.



Haile Gerimas lang erwarteter **Black Lions – Roman Wolves** webt aus Archivmaterial und Zeitzeugnissen eine knapp zehnstündige filmische Abrechnung mit Geschichte und Mythen des italienischen Kolonialismus in Äthiopien, die zugleich Würdigung des Widerstands ist. Gerimas Film wird flankiert von einer ganzen Reihe bedeutsamer Dokumentarfilme. Dazu gehören Madhusree Duttas **Flying Tigers**, Sofia Bordenaves den Rassismus gegen die Mapuche in Patagonien zerlegenden **Forest up in the Mountain**, Rania Rafeis Tripoli-Porträt und Anat Evens eindrücklicher, reflexiver Essayfilm **Effondrement (Collapse)** über die Trauer nach dem 7. Oktober, den Krieg in Gaza und über Fragen von Kausalität und Verantwortung. Erstmals im *Forum* wird Rithy Panh erwartet, mit einer herausragenden Beobachtung der indigenen Bunong in Kambodscha, den Clash lokaler und globaler Ökonomien analysierend.

Zur Reflexion deutscher Befindlichkeit trägt neben **Einar Schleef – Ich habe kein Deutschland gefunden** auch Marie Wilkes **Szenario** über die größte militärische Modellstadt Europas bei, und zeigt die Bundeswehr zwischen Umgang mit der Vergangenheit, Kriegssimulation und ungewisser Zukunft. Volker Koepp begegnet in **Chronos** Menschen aus den Regionen östlich der Weichsel wieder, die er seit 1972 mehrfach für zahlreiche seiner Filme aufgesucht hat. Auf das eigene Werk zurückblickend entsteht eine Langzeitstudie, die die politischen Umstürze kulminierend in Russlands Krieg gegen die Ukraine seismografisch skizziert – ein fundamentaler Europafilm. Transatlantisch steht Koepps epischem Werk James Bennings **Eight Bridges** gegenüber, ausgehend von der lakonischen Beobachtung, es sei „Zeit, Brücken zu betrachten“.

Wie stets bietet das *Forum* auch eine Plattform für hybride und experimentelle Formen, darunter das schwedische Kleinod **Doggerland**, den „Zen Retreat“-Debütfilm der Performerin Nao Yoshigai **Masayume**, Ted Fendts 16mm-Perle **Auslandsreise**, den urkomischen Frauenfilm **Everything Else Is Noise**, die knallige Hommage **Joy Boy** an den Komponisten Julius Eastman oder den neuseeländisch-nigerianischen Film **Crocodile** von Pietra Brettkelly mit dem und über das Künstlerkollektiv The Critics. Kollektiv Filme machen lautet die Devise, hin zur konkreten Gemeinschaft, zur solidarischen Gesellschaft, zu den Wahlverwandten: Kevin Contento etwa mit **The Moths & the Flame** – einem Porträt Schwarzer Jungväter in seiner Nachbarschaft – sowie warm und erhellend: Nurith Aviv **Prénoms (Given Names)**.

Foto:

Flying Tigers by Madhusree Dutta © pong film 2026 | *Joy Boy: A Tribute to Julius Eastman* by Mawena Yehouessi © Paul Shemisi & Anne Reijniers | *The Moths & the Flame* by Kevin Contento © Kevin Contento

February 2026

Goethe Institut India

Website

Positive Mention in an overview article about Films from India in the Festival

Line-up

<https://www.goethe.de/ins/in/en/kul/art/b26/iab.html>

India at Berlinale 2026

JURY MEMBERS, BERLINALE TALENTS AND MORE



Film: Flying Tigers (2026) Director: Madhusree Dutta | Photo: © Berlinale

Berlinale, unarguably the most-momentous film-viewing spectacle in Europe, kickstarts this week. The foremost public film festival in Europe, Berlinale in its 76th edition, promises to be edgy, political, tender and pathbreaking as every year. The vital event in Berlin's culture calendar showcases gritty documentaries to compelling crowd-pleasers and avant garde short films to retrospectives. There is something to savour in every genre and format.

For two weeks in February, Germany's capital city, Berlin becomes the stomping ground for celebrities, industry professionals and movie-goers. Berlinale prides itself upon being a public festival and takes place from 12-22 February 2026. This year there are fewer glitzy Hollywood star vehicles but more European new wave auteurs, arthouse gems, political thrillers and body horrors. Berlinale aims to please film lovers of every shade.

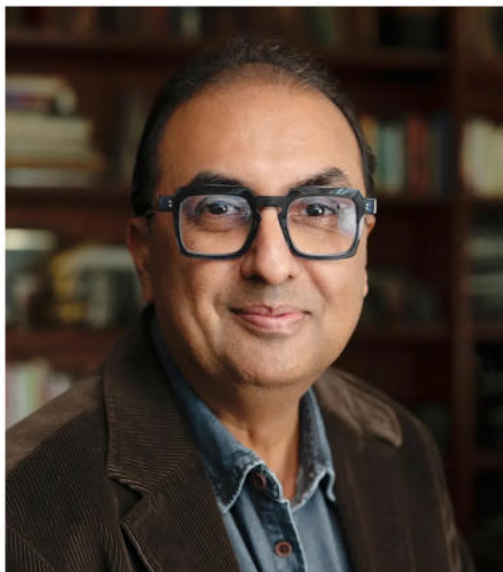
The festival received more than 8,000 submissions from hundreds of countries this year, according to festival director Tricia Tuttle. The programming team distilled the submissions and handpicked a selection of films that confront the pressing political, ecological, social, and personal issues of our time.

Over and above film screenings, the festival also hosts the EFM, European Film Market, that functions as the avenue for international film and media professionals to meet and ink deals. The Berlinale Co-Production Market brings together industry representatives and media professionals involved in international projects. Berlinale's World Cinema Fund, launched in 2024, offers funding for deserving international artists with promising project ideas.



SUBCONTINENTAL REPRESENTATION - FOCUS ON INDIA

The subcontinent is well represented this year with two independent feature films one each in Forum and Generation K Plus sections, one digitally restored film in the Berlinale Classics section, two short films and one documentary. Judging the competition films this year along with the jury president the German director Wim Wenders is Shivendra Singh Dungarpur an Indian director, producer, and archivist as a jury member. Filmmaker Shaunak Sen, whose *All That Breathes* was nominated for Oscars in 2022, is part of the Berlinale Documentary Award Jury. Screenwriter Saagar Gupta (*Evening Shadows*) will be on the jury of Teddy Awards.



Berlinale 2026 International Competition Jury Shivendra Singh Dungarpur | Photo: © Berlinale

India's offerings range from independent filmmaking giants and festival regulars like Rima Das and stalwarts like Madhusree Dutta alongside promising young short filmmakers. Besides, on the sidelines of the festival the Berlinale Talents Program is hosting seven Indian film professionals including Anadi Athaley, Vedant Srinivas, Subarna Dash, Tanushree Das, Thanikachalam SA, Kislay and Devraj Bhaumik.

BREAKDOWN OF INDIAN OFFERINGS AT THE BERLINALE

Feature Films

Rima Das, who has been bringing her feature films since 2019, is no stranger to Berlinale. Das often makes films probing the pains of children while growing up with emphasis on life in rural Assam. Her new film *Not a Hero* is no exception. It follows Mivan, an eleven-year-old boy whose displacement from urban life to village causes disruption in his daily life. *Not a Hero* follows Mivan while he grapples with the sudden change and adjusts to the slower rhythms of life in the countryside.



Das has an exceptionally keen eye for selecting and working with child actors – as she has exemplified in her previous films *Bulbul Can Sing* and *Village Rockstars*. *Not a Hero* is premiering in the Generation Kplus segment where it stands to win the Crystal Bear award.

The Tamil film *Members of the Problematic Family*, directed by R Gowtham a poet turned filmmaker, will be screened in the Forum section. Forum is reserved for films where unconventional narratives and fresh perspectives are explored and from the looks of it, R Gowtham's film fits the bill perfectly.

Members of the Problematic Family is a film about dealing with the sudden death of a family member and how grief shapes memory in mysterious ways.

Short Films

There are two short films from India this year namely, *A Circle as the Center of the Whole* in Forum Expanded and *Abracadabra* in Generation Kplus. Utkarsh's *A Circle as the Center of the Whole* orbits Delhi and its fringes and investigates its sites of archaeological excavation. It is at once a meditation of what it means to live precariously, in a city where threats lurk everywhere around the corner.

Abracadabra is largely set in a school bus and contemplates over what shapes childhood friendships and the prejudices that shape children at an impressionable age.

Documentary

Renowned Indo-German filmmaker and curator Madhusree Dutta returns to documentary making after twenty years with her Forum documentary *Flying Tigers*. Dutta travels to her mother's homeland of Assam in the film to examine her Alzheimer's addled mother's recollection of tigers. The makers are claiming it a genre-defying docu fiction because it mixes, "interviews, archival material, performances, animation and musical numbers," to craft an intimate work.

Berlinale Classics

One of the most exciting offerings from India this year is Arundhati Roy's *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones*. The film from 1990 is restored and being screened in the Classics section of Berlinale. Largely unavailable to watch widely, except for pirated uploads on the internet, the film is now given a fresh lease of life. It is a zeitgeisty time capsule that captured the academia of the late 1970s. Encouragingly, there is reason to believe that the film could find a wider audience in India after this restoration and screening at Berlinale.

Goethe Institut India will bring articles, interviews, reviews and on the ground updates on our social media channels from the festival.

5 February 2026

Zukunft braucht Erinnerung

German Blog for historical topics of our time

FT mentioned as one of the highlights in the program

<https://www.zukunft-braucht-erinnerung.de/berlinale-2026/>

Geschrieben von: Redaktion Zukunft braucht Erinnerung | Erstellt: 5. Februar 2026

Sehenswerte Filme auf der Berlinale 2026

Berlinale 2026 Filmfestival – Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin

Das Programm der **Internationalen Filmfestspiele Berlin** ist auch dieses Jahr voller wichtiger Filme zu unserem Themenkreis. Das wichtigste Filmfestival im deutschsprachigen Raum zeigt jedes Jahr eine Vielzahl von Filmen – meist Welt- oder Europapremieren. Traditionell positioniert sich die Berlinale als politisches Festival, d.h. als Impulsgeber und grenzt sich damit deutlich und positiv von vergleichbaren Festspielen ab.

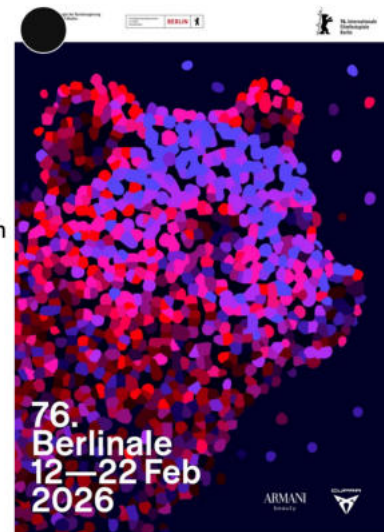
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Unsere wichtigsten Filmempfehlungen

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Flying Tigers – von Madhusree Dutta

Ausgehend von den rätselhaften Tiger-Erzählungen ihrer dementen Mutter reist Madhusree Dutta nach Assam und stößt auf die „Flying Tigers“: US-Transportflüge, die im Zweiten Weltkrieg Güter über den Himalaya nach Kunming brachten. Ihr teilfiktionaler Doku-Essay verbindet persönliche Spurensuche mit der Geschichte gigantischer Logistik und heutigen Warenströmen. In einer hybriden Form aus Interviews, Archiv, Spielszenen, Animation und Musik erkundet der Film Grensräume und Mobilität jenseits politischer Karten. [mehr](#)



6 February 2026

Screen Daily

Trade magazine

FT announced as one of the Highlights in the Forum section

<https://www.screendaily.com/features/berlin-2026-highlights-from-the-generation-forum-and-panorama-documentary-lineups/5213415.article>

Forum Highlights



SOURCE: PLAYTIME

'WE ARE THE FRUITS OF THE FOREST'

Of the 32 features playing in Forum, 31 are world premieres. The outlier, Cambodian director Rithy Panh's latest documentary *We Are The Fruits Of The Forest* (sold by Playtime), debuted at Tokyo last year and depicts a four-year journey through Indigenous communities in Cambodia's northern mountains. Panh was a previous Berlinale documentary winner for 2020's *Irradiated*.

Further highlights from Asia include Indonesian filmmaker Joko Anwar's horror comedy *Ghost In The Cell* (Barunson E&A), as prison inmates unite against a murderous ghost. Anwar's previous genre titles include *The Forbidden Door* and two *Satan's Slaves* films. Indian filmmaker Madhusree Dutta combines historical research and found stories in *Flying Tigers*, a multi-location probe into the US army unit supplying Kunming during the Second World War. A Japanese supermarket is the setting of Yusuke Iwasaki's debut *AnyMart*, a horror film reflecting on the country's societal issues.



12 February 2026

Delhi Times

Daily Newspaper - print

Announcement of the film premiering at Berlinale

India's Flying Tigers to screen at Berlinale

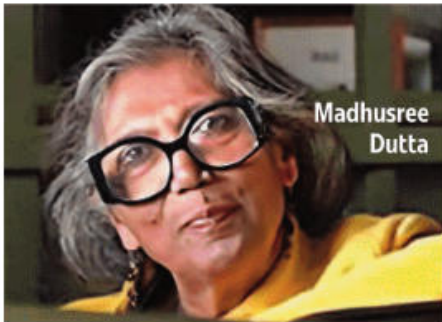




Niharika Lal

Madhusree Dutta's *Flying Tigers* – a film on memory, war and infrastructure – has been selected for the Berlinale Forum (main) section, which the festival describes as a space for reflections on cinema, socio-artistic discourse and distinctive aesthetics. This year, the Forum – which begins today and runs through Feb 22 – will screen 32 international films, 31 of them world premieres. Another Indian film, the Tamil feature *Members of the Problematic Family (Sikalana Kudumbathin Uruppinarhal)*, is also part of the section.

Flying Tigers unfolds through a meandering journey undertaken by Dutta with Chinese media scholar You Mi and Assamese writer Purav Goswami. The film combines historical research with found stories.



Madhusree
Dutta

What started as an intimate conversation with my Alzheimer's-affected mother has grown into a cross-continental journey through sites of wars and infrastructures

'Border lands and military histories never engaged me artistically or even politically'

Dutta shares, "The term 'Flying Tigers' belongs to US military history. It came to me as a backdrop of the time and the land where my mother had spent her childhood – in Assam. It had no connection with my lived-in experiences and work practices. As a filmmaker and curator, I've long been invested in urban cultures, feminist narratives and post-colonial identities. Border lands and military histories never engaged me artistically or politically. But a riddle thrown by my ailing mother, before she died, landed me at the centre of cultural issues around military endeavours. And then the distant past engulfed my present and all my political and artistic preoccupations."



How 'Tigers are coming! Close the windows!' became a riddle

After a historical fragment resurfaced during her mother's Alzheimer's, Dutta decided to explore it. Her mother would repeatedly say, "Tigers are coming! Close the windows!" While others dismissed it as delusion, Dutta's research suggested Alzheimer's patients don't invent new stories; they mix up chronology, perspective and scale. The mystery of the tigers became a way of tracing the life of her mother. The film's synopsis notes, "She follows the trail left by her mother back to WWII. In Assam, 1942, the US Army established the first airbridge across the Himalaya to send military aid to Kunming, China, via the Flying Tiger Air Force unit. The construction disrupted the jungle's ecological balance, and tigers appeared in the tea plantations where the director's mother grew up. During this research, Madhusree and her friend, Chinese media scholar You Mi discover a shared historical moment between two countries with closed borders. They are joined by Assamese writer Purav Goswami."

12 February 2026

Business Doc Europe

Trade Magazine for documentary film

Interview with Madhusree Dutta

<https://businessdoceurope.com/berlin-forum-flying-tigers-by-madhusree-dutta/>

BERLINALE 26 INTERVIEWS

Berlin Forum: Flying Tigers by Madhusree Dutta

By Geoffrey Macnab - 12 February 2026



Flying Tigers by Madhusree Dutta

It all started with Indian filmmaker Madhusree Dutta's mother "talking incoherently about tigers." Dutta was her caregiver. She was intrigued and a bit baffled. "I am not a medical expert. I don't know what Alzheimer's actually means," Dutta observes. Sadly, her mother soon died. That was back in 2015. Dutta, though, realised that Alzheimer's patients never completely make up stories. Everything they mention, regardless of how offbeat it may seem, will have its roots in something they themselves have experienced.

Dutta's realisation that her mother had indeed seen a tiger at one time in her life has indirectly inspired her new feature documentary *Flying Tigers*, produced through Pong Films and receiving its world premiere at the Berlinale Forum.



The filmmaker was a little perplexed that her mother, with whom she had always had a good relationship, had never mentioned seeing a tiger. She was also curious about how and when this could have happened. "It stayed in my head," she remembers.

Her mother had been a child in the 1940s, the period of the Second World War. In 2018, Dutta had gone to Germany where she lived for five years. While she was there, she met Chinese media scholar You Mi. "I was casually telling her about caregiving. It was the pandemic time. Everybody was talking about illnesses and mortality. I told her about my mother."

Through You Mi, Dutta heard all about the US military operation in the Himalayas during the war. The American planes had been called 'Flying Tigers.' They had been bombing Japan and defending China, flying dangerous missions across the Himalayas, or the 'Hump' as it became known, having frequent crashes along the way and leaving an "aluminium trail" in the process.

As Pong Films' producers notes for the film explain, "the building of an enormous infrastructure destroyed the ecological balance of the jungles, and real tigers appeared in the tea plantations of Assam, where the director's mother was growing up."

That's why, all those years later, her mother was talking about tigers. She really had seen them. You Mi's family had experiences from the same period but on the other side of the border.

"We decided to do something together. We weren't very sure whether it would be maybe a film or a book," Dutta says of her collaboration with the Chinese academic.

Both women started researching. It wasn't hard to find details about the Americans' activities in the region during the 1940s. "This road that they built, it is much talked about and so I knew that - but I didn't know the scale of it," Dutta notes. "When you start doing research, you'll be surprised at how easily material is available. There are lots of pilots' memoirs, lots of museums in the United States."

The director, though, wants to issue a disclaimer. She is keen to point out that she isn't really trained as a researcher. "I don't have any methodology. I just make notes here, make notes there. If somebody asked me to share my research, I would not know which texts to send."

Her flair is for making connections. From her mother's tiger, she somehow leaps into an analysis of Chinese infrastructure and tells the story of the "new silk road" between Chongqing in southern China and Duisburg in the heart of industrial Germany.

Flying Tigers has a loose, freewheeling structure. There are scenes of children playing in the forests, musical interludes and reflections on landscape and history.

"I not only used multiple cross disciplines but I also want my audiences to be aware of it," she says. She adds that she wanted the documentary to have some of the academic rigour she learned from working in Germany in the film but, "at the same time, I didn't want to compose the easy, lyrical way of telling stories that is my inheritance."



"I am quite influenced by German film essays but my storytelling, my narrative unfolding rhythms, is very Indian," she continues.

She is happy that so many different languages and storytelling styles are included in her film. "Hybridity" is a phrase she keeps on repeating.

Dutta believes that few, if any, German filmmakers would begin a documentary, as she does in *Flying Tigers*, with scenes of children running amok. "That's a very Indian thing to do."

And, no, she wasn't directing most of the kids. Most had no idea they were appearing in a film. "They were just having fun. But the main girl who comes back at the end of the film with the animated tigers, I shot with her for almost a week...this girl, she's a local person. She was very comfortable in the forest and I was not. I was thinking I would slip and fall - but she was very comfortable. [Watching her] I realised there is a thin line between human settlement and wildlife settlement even today. She goes to school, she lives in the town but there is a comfort level [with the forests]. It is not as difficult to co-exist as we make it out to be. Not only to co-exist between communities but with wildlife and humans."

The director noticed that the people living near the forest had no fear of the tiger. If someone mentioned that one was coming, they'd simply close the doors. "It's more of a nuisance than [a cause] for fear. That, this girl has got. When I walked with her in the forest, I realised this ease she has that I don't have."

This is Dutta's first feature doc in two decades. "My last film was 20 years back," she acknowledges. Her previous credits include *Seven Islands and a Metro* (2006) and *Scribbles on Akka* (2000). She has directed plays and has been involved in curation as well as making documentaries.

Alongside the director and You Mi, there is also a third protagonist, young Assamese writer Purav Goswami, an expert on landscape, topography and soil who is working on maps. "Mapping, making atlases, is no more a drawing board exercise," she says. "It is also [now about] lived-in experiences, tactile experiences."

Dutta currently divides her time between Germany and India. She was in Cologne for five years where she was the artistic director of the Akademie der Künste der Welt (Academy of the Arts of the World - ADKDW). She still has a resident's permit for Germany but India remains her home country and "the main inspiration" for her work. She has known Philip Scheffner and Merle Kröger, the German artists/producers who founded Pong, for many years. Back in 2004, they together made *From Here to Here*, a film about Germans in India and Indians in Germany. Pong was therefore a natural partner for *Flying Tigers*.

The documentary will be distributed in Germany by Arsenal. The filmmakers are in talks with Women Make Movies for US distribution. But, no, Dutta isn't sure yet when it will show in India. First, Dutta will need to secure a censorship certificate.

"What this film has taught me is ease with other cultures. In the process of making this film, I went to China for a month. I was given a visa only for a month...but it was so exciting. It woke something inside me about dealing with other cultures. It is always possible to start a dialogue," she insists.



13 February 2026

Variety

Trade Magazine

Mentioned in an overview article about Indian productions at Berlinale

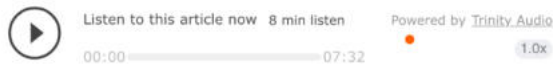
<https://variety.com/2026/film/markets-festivals/india-berlin-film-festival-1236653518/>

India Expands Berlinale Footprint With Six Films, Strategic Market Push

By Naman Ramachandran



Flying River Films



India is mounting its most comprehensive presence at the Berlinale in recent years, with six films screening across the festival's Generation, Forum, Forum Expanded and Classics sections while the National Film Development Corporation of India deploys a strategic market approach aimed at positioning the country as a holistic creative economy hub.

Rima Das' "Not a Hero," R. Gowtham's "Members of the Problematic Family," Madhusree Dutta's "Flying Tigers," Amay Mehrishi's "Abracadabra," Utkarsh's "A Circle as the Center of the Whole" and the 4K restoration of Arundhati Roy and Pradip Krishen's "In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones" represent diverse cinematic approaches from established and emerging voices, underscoring the breadth of India's current independent film landscape.



Das, whose "Village Rockstars" became India's official entry for the 2019 Academy Awards, returns to Berlin's Generation section with "Not a Hero," a coming-of-age story centered on 11-year-old Mivan navigating displacement between urban and rural worlds.

"Children experience the world without filters," Das says. "Through Mivan, I was drawn to a way of seeing where confusion, resistance, and tenderness coexist naturally. He does not analyse his emotions, he lives them."

Das notes a significant shift in her working methodology with child actors compared to her previous work. "The children in 'Not a Hero' were very different from those in 'Village Rockstars,'" she explains. "In 'Village Rockstars,' the children listened to me. In 'Not a Hero,' I listened to them."

The film's title deliberately pushes back against conventional narrative arcs. "I wanted to avoid the idea that growing up is about overcoming or winning," Das says. "Mivan does not arrive as a savior, nor does he conquer his circumstances. His journey is quieter, shaped by listening, failing, waiting, and learning to stay."

"The film does not explain emotions or resolve conflicts neatly," she adds. "It trusts young audiences to sit with ambiguity, discomfort, and tenderness."

"Members of the Problematic Family," screening in Forum, takes a structurally experimental approach to grief and family dynamics. Director R. Gowtham describes the narrative as intentionally fragmented, mirroring his own speech patterns.

"The script itself was written without all those conventional beginnings and ends," Gowtham says. "During the post we found it has some structure to it. In fact my co-producer Mukesh Subramaniam told me the structurelessness is the film's structure."

The filmmaker notes that early test audiences' confusion was actually a desired outcome during the development process. Despite Tamil-specific pop culture references, the film has connected with viewers beyond its immediate cultural context, according to Gowtham, who cites positive responses at Film Bazaar in Goa from Hindi-speaking filmmakers.

In the Forum section, Madhusree Dutta's "Flying Tigers" weaves personal memory with World War II history, tracing a massive U.S. military logistics operation across the Himalayas that connected Assam and Kunming. The project originated from the filmmaker's mother's childhood memories in a tea plantation settlement and her later struggles with Alzheimer's disease.

"My mother's Alzheimer's-induced memory eventually turned into a lens through which I could see and understand the contemporary web of wars and infrastructures," Dutta says. The film marks a departure for the filmmaker, who previously focused on urban cultures and feminist narratives.

"In my earlier works I have never featured myself," Dutta notes. "But in this film I felt compelled to place myself as a protagonist. This film is a gift from my mother to me."

The Berlinale Classics section features the 4K restoration of "In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones," a 1989 campus comedy written by and starring Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy. Directed by Pradip Krishen and originally made for Indian state broadcaster Doordarshan, the film is set in a Delhi architecture school in the mid-1970s and has achieved cult status over the decades. The cast includes early roles for Shah Rukh Khan and Manoj Bajpayee, alongside lead performances from Arjun Raina, Roshan Seth and Roy herself.



14 February 2026

United News of India

Indian News Agency

Mentions FT as part of Indian films at Berlinale

<https://www.uniindia.com/~from-not-a-hero-to-restored-classics-india-shines-at-berlin-film-festival/Entertainment/news/3740932.html>

From 'Not a Hero' to restored classics: India shines at 'Berlin Film Festival'

Los Angeles, Feb 14 (UNI) India is making one of its most comprehensive appearances at the Berlinale in recent years, with six films screening across the festival's- Generation, Forum, Forum Expanded, and Classics sections, Variety reports.

The National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC) is also executing a strategic market approach aimed at positioning the country as a hub for the global creative economy. The Indian slate includes Rima Das' 'Not a Hero', R. Gowtham's 'Members of the Problematic Family', Madhusree Dutta's 'Flying Tigers', Amay Mehrishi's 'Abracadabra', Utkarsh's 'A Circle' as the Center of the Whole, and the 4K restoration of Arundhati Roy and Pradip Krishen's cult classic 'In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones'. These selections highlight the diversity of India's contemporary independent cinema, spanning both established and emerging voices, according to Variety.

Rima Das, whose Village Rockstars was India's official entry for the 2019 Academy Awards, returns to the Generation section with 'Not a Hero'. The coming-of-age story follows 11-year-old Mivan as he navigates life between urban and rural settings.

"Children experience the world without filters," Das explains. "Through Mivan, I was drawn to a way of seeing where confusion, resistance, and tenderness coexist naturally. He does not analyse his emotions, he lives them," as quoted by Variety.

Das notes a significant shift in her working approach with child actors. "The children in Not a Hero were very different from those in Village Rockstars. In Village Rockstars, the children listened to me. In Not a Hero, I listened to them."

She adds that the film intentionally avoids conventional narrative arcs: "Mivan does not arrive as a savior, nor does he conquer his circumstances. His journey is quieter, shaped by listening, failing, waiting, and learning to stay. The film trusts young audiences to sit with ambiguity, discomfort, and tenderness."



In the Forum section, R. Gowtham's *Members of the Problematic Family* takes a structurally experimental approach to grief and familial relationships. Gowtham describes the narrative as deliberately fragmented, reflecting his own speech patterns.

"During post-production, we found it has some structure to it. In fact, my co-producer Mukesh Subramaniam told me the structurelessness is the film's structure," he says. Despite references specific to Tamil pop culture, Gowtham notes the film has resonated with audiences beyond its immediate cultural context.

Madhusree Dutta's *'Flying Tigers'* weaves personal memory with World War II history, tracing the US military's Himalayan logistics operation connecting Assam and Kunming. The story was inspired by her mother's childhood in a tea plantation and her later struggles with Alzheimer's. "My mother's Alzheimer's-induced memory eventually turned into a lens through which I could see and understand the contemporary web of wars and infrastructures," Dutta explains. She also features herself as a protagonist for the first time in her work.

The Classics section features a 4K restoration of *'In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones'*, a 1989 campus comedy written by and starring Arundhati Roy. Directed by Pradip Krishen and originally made for Doordarshan, the film, now restored by the Film Heritage Foundation in collaboration with NFDC and the National Film Archive of India, includes early roles of Shah Rukh Khan and Manoj Bajpayee.

Generation Kplus presents Amay Mehrishi's *Abracadabra*, a U.K.-India co-production that explores identity and belonging through a school bus journey, while Forum Expanded includes Utkarsh's documentary short *'A Circle as the Center of the Whole'*, a U.S.-India co-production using archaeology as a metaphor to examine Delhi's urban landscape.

Beyond screenings, India is represented on festival juries, with Shivendra Singh Dungarpur on the main competition jury and director Shaunak Sen on the documentary award jury.

NFDC's market initiatives at the European Film Market (EFM) include the Bharat Pavilion and WAVES Bazaar, highlighting content, technology, talent, archives, and education.

"India's presence at Berlinale and the European Film Market reflects our larger ambition to engage with the world not only through films, but through a holistic creative economy," says Prakash Magdum, managing director of NFDC to Variety.

The Bharat Pavilion (Feb 12–18) serves as India's official EFM hub, facilitating B2B interactions. WAVES Bazaar includes four Indian gaming and tech startups in WAVES X, four animation companies in EFM Animation Days (Feb 12–14), and eight sponsored filmmakers participating in the international market.

Additional initiatives include Bharat Parv on Feb. 13 for industry networking and co-production dialogue, the National Film Archive of India's participation in the EFM Archives Market (Feb 17), and engagement by leading Indian film education institutions at the Berlinale Film School Summit, reinforcing India's positioning as a global hub for talent development, as per Variety.

16 February 2026

Screen Daily

Trade Magazine

Announcing World Sale

<https://www.screendaily.com/news/indian-documentary-flying-tigers-acquire-d-for-sales-ahead-of-berlinale-forum-premiere/5213956.article>

NEWS

Visionär Films boards Madhusree Dutta's Berlinale Forum title 'Flying Tigers' for sales ahead of premiere

BY BEN DALTON | 16 FEBRUARY 2026



SOURCE: PONG FILM
'FLYING TIGERS'

EXCLUSIVE: Berlin-based Visionär Films has acquired world sales rights to Madhusree Dutta's documentary *Flying Tigers*.

The film will have its world premiere in the Berlinale's Forum strand this afternoon (Monday, February 16).

Flying Tigers is Dutta's first feature in two decades, since 2006's *7 Islands and a Metro*.

The new title sees Alzheimer's disease trigger a memory in the mind of Dutta's mother; sending Dutta down a trail of 20th century history.

The film is produced by Alexandra Gerbaulet and Merle Kroger for Germany's pong film, in co-production with India's TCG Studios and ZDF/Arte.

Backers include the Goethe Institute, Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion, Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln, Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg and German Films.

This unique documentary beautifully blends personal stories with impactful history," said Francesca Vantaggiato, sales, festivals and acquisitions at Visionär Films.



16 February 2026

Asian Movie Pulse

Online film magazine with Asian focus

Review

<https://asianmoviepulse.com/2026/02/flying-tigers-2026/>

BENGALI REVIEWS

BERLINALE

INDIAN REVIEWS

REVIEWS

Flying Tigers (2026) by Madhusree Dutta Film Review

Madhusree Dutta returns to filmmaking after a twenty-year break



Marina D. Richter

February 16, 2026

"Every local agenda is claiming some memory legacies". It is with these words that the Chinese media scholar You Mi responds to Dutta's musings on people's relationship to memory and the past in general in the key scene of her documentary "Flying Tigers", which serves more as an explanation of the story than anything else.

Flying Tigers is scening at **Berlin International Film Festival**

The two women, who struck a friendship in Germany, have embarked on a project to explore a very specific chapter of "a common moment of history between two countries (India and China) with closed borders." With the same goal and fully different approaches to the subject matter, Mi follows a more artistic path, while the director stands firm behind hers, at least when it comes to "Alzheimer as a clue". They exchange experiences to create a mosaic of personal anecdotes, talks, letters, and messages, and finally embark on "a journey between times and territories, between fragile memories of unknown pasts and invisible corners of the present" – to quote the director's words. On that journey, they are joined by the young Assamese writer Purav Goswami, who proves useful for understanding the many layers of a complicated history chapter, "written" in a multi-ethnic, politically complex region.



Inspired by intimate conversations with her Alzheimer's-affected mother, who, stuck in the past, would (for instance) insist on shutting all windows in her Mumbai apartment because "she could smell the tiger", the Indian director has decided to use the illness as a kind of cinematic formula. "Alzheimer's patients refuse to fix the past in any time and space", she explains, noting that all of them would put any memory into any other configuration.

This could be seen as a perfectly good reason for the choppy editing, or as a fantastic excuse for it. We'll leave the second option to the sceptics and stick to our gut feeling that nothing in Madhusree Dutta's film is accidental. The movie, although documentary at its core, is heavily scripted, which is nothing new in the filmmaker's practice. Words uttered in front of the camera, be it by the two main protagonists/ artistic collaborators or their conversations with other people on their quest to explore two things: the history of "Flying Tigers" or The First American Volunteer Group of the Republic of China Air Force, formed to help oppose the Japanese invasion of China actively operating from 1941 to 1942, and the irreparable damage that the construction of an enormous infrastructure to support the first airbridge across the Himalaya in order to send military aid to Kunming in China, are strictly under control.

This is clearly visible in the stiffness that many people who exchange experiences with Mi or Dutta display on camera. In all its occasional awkwardness, this doesn't really harm the movie. On the contrary, it adds to its authenticity.

Madhusree Dutta returns to filmmaking after a twenty-year break during which she dedicated herself to art. The founder and former director (1998-2016) of Majlis, a centre for interdisciplinary art initiatives in Mumbai, she served as artistic director (2018-2021) of the Academy of the Arts of the World (Akademie der Künste der Welt) in Cologne. Now back in the directorial saddle, she continues with her tradition of unusual storytelling.

It is a jumpy road that the audience embarks on. But it is adventurous as well. It brings interesting historical facts to the table and lets us learn about things we would probably never hear about. Documentary at heart but hybrid in form, "Flying Tiger" combines many elements, from standard documentary to art performance, purely acted scenes, and animation.

The film celebrates its world premiere in the Berlinale Forum festival programme.

18 February 2026

taz - die tageszeitung

Berlin weekly newspaper & daily online news

Positive review

<https://taz.de/Dokumentarfilm-Flying-Tigers/!6154745/>

Komplizinnen in der Recherche

Mit einer Vielfalt ästhetischer Mittel erzählt die indische Filmemacherin Madhusree Dutta in ihrem Dokumentarfilm „Flying Tigers“ von einer Reise.

17.2.2026 16:00 Uhr

↑ teilen



Szene aus „Flying Tigers“
Foto: pong film 2026

Von **Silvia Hallensleben**

Auch Krankheiten haben neben Schmerz und Leid ihre produktiven Seiten. Bei diesem Film von Madhusree Dutta sogar in doppelter Form: Da war einmal die Demenzerkrankung ihrer Mutter, die mit unerwarteten Erinnerungen an die Kindheit im nordostindischen Assam die Regisseurin erst zum Staunen und dann zu Nachforschungen in der Geschichte brachte. Und dann die Corona-Epidemie, deren Umstände Dutta in einem Kölner Kneipengespräch mit einer anderen Forschungsreisenden zusammenbringt: der chinesischen Künstlerin und Medientheoretikerin Mi You, deren familiäre Wurzeln in der südchinesischen Stadt Kunming liegen.



Ein Ort, der mit Assam im Zweiten Weltkrieg vier Jahre lang durch eine US-Luftbrücke verbunden war, die das durch japanische Truppen isolierte Yunnan von Flugplätzen im Brahmaputra-Tal über die Berge mit Munition und Nachschub versorgte – darunter auch 5.000 Maultiere. „The Hump“ war eine logistisch aufwändige und auch wegen heimtückischer Winde gefährliche Operation, die so viele der kleinen Flugzeuge abstürzen ließ, dass die unterhalb der Route lebenden Bauern deren Bauteile in ihre materielle Kultur integrierten.

Und die notwendige Infrastruktur für die „Flying Tigers“ genannten Piloten und ihre Maschinen griff so tief in das ökologische Gleichgewicht der Region ein, dass die echten Tiger ihren Lebensraum im Dschungel verließen und in die auch von Menschen bewohnten Teeplantagen streiften. Kunming wiederum wurde von einer verschlafenen Landstadt zu einem bunten Melting Pot, wo mit den eingeflogenen Gütern auch der Schwarzmarkt blühte.

Schwimmende Inseln

Im Wohnzimmer von Yous Familie landete dabei auch ein britisches Kolonialpiano aus Assam. Und ihre Verbundenheit durch die „The Hump“ genannte erste Luftbrücke der Geschichte machte Dutta und You zu Nachbarinnen über postkoloniale politische Grenzen hinweg und so auch zu Komplizinnen in der Recherche.

Dritter im Bund ist Purav Goswani aus Assam, der das Filmteam zu den Resten der ehemaligen Ledo Road zwischen Indien und Burma führt. Und zu den „Chars“, im Brahmaputra schwimmende Inseln, die von Bauern der Miya bewirtschaftet werden. Deren auch bisher schon durch Diskriminierung betroffene Situation verschärfte sich zuletzt durch Implementierung des National Register of Citizens, das Menschen mit nicht ausreichend dokumentierter assamesischer Nationalität mit Internierung bedroht.



Es sind Fragen von Hybridität und vielfältigen Übergangsschwellen, die „Flying Tigers“ auch sonst antreiben. Dazu gehört am Ende neben deutschen Trümmerfrauen auch die Bahnstrecke, die im Rahmen der „neuen Seidenstraße“ von Chongqing nach Duisburg führt, wo ein Kurde mit einer chinesischen Köchin das Lokal „Gülistan – Chinesische Köstlichkeiten“ betreibt.

Dutta erzählt von all dem mit einer beglückenden Vielfalt ästhetischer Mittel vom getanzten Kinderlied über Road-Movie-Elemente bis zu sorgfältig inszenierten Recherchegesprächen und Kunstinterventionen am Flussufer. Besonders bemerkenswert ist der spielerisch bedächtige Erzählgestus des Films, der ganz ohne große Gesten auf die Entdeckungslust seines Publikums setzt.

Translation ([deepl.com](https://www.deepl.com/)):

Accomplices in research

Using a variety of aesthetic devices, Indian filmmaker Madhusree Dutta tells the story of a journey in her documentary film "Flying Tigers."

By Silvia Hallensleben

Even illnesses have their productive sides, alongside pain and suffering. In this film by Madhusree Dutta, this is true in two ways: first, there was her mother's dementia, which brought back unexpected memories of her childhood in Assam in northeast India, astonishing the director and prompting her to research her family history. And then there is the coronavirus epidemic, the circumstances of which Dutta brings together in a conversation in a Cologne pub with another explorer: the Chinese artist and media theorist Mi You, whose family roots lie in the southern Chinese city of Kunming.

A place that was connected to Assam for four years during World War II by a US airlift that supplied Yunnan, isolated by Japanese troops, with ammunition and supplies from airfields in the Brahmaputra Valley across the mountains – including 5,000 mules. "The Hump" was a logistically complex and dangerous operation due to treacherous winds, which caused so many of the small planes to crash that the farmers living below the route integrated their parts into their material culture.

And the infrastructure required for the pilots, known as the "Flying Tigers," and their aircraft had such a profound impact on the ecological balance of the region that real tigers left their jungle habitat and began roaming the tea plantations, which were also inhabited by humans. Kunming, in turn, transformed from a sleepy rural town into a colorful melting pot, where the black market flourished along with the goods flown in.



Floating islands

A British colonial piano from Assam also ended up in You's family's living room. And their connection through the first airlift in history, known as "The Hump," made Dutta and You neighbors across postcolonial political borders and thus also accomplices in their research.

The third member of the trio is Purav Goswani from Assam, who guides the film crew to the remains of the former Ledo Road between India and Burma. And to the "Chars," floating islands in the Brahmaputra River that are cultivated by Miya farmers. Their situation, already affected by discrimination, has recently been exacerbated by the implementation of the National Register of Citizens, which threatens people with insufficiently documented Assamese nationality with internment.

18 February 2026

Hessische Niedersächsische Allgemeine
German daily newspaper - print
 Positive review

Landschaft als Erinnerungsspeicher

BERLINALE Kasseler documenta-Professorin Mi You ist Teil des indischen Filmsays „Flying Tigers“

Kassel – Als Madhusree Dutta Mutter dement wurde, tauchten in ihren Erzählungen Erinnerungen auf, über die sie zuvor nie gesprochen hatte. Was meint sie mit diesen fliegenden Tigern, vor denen man die Fenster schließen sollte?

Die indische Filmemacherin nahm diese Formulierung ihrer Mutter zum Ausgangspunkt des ästhetisch wie historisch in vielen Strängen verwobenen Filmsays „Flying Tigers“, der seine Weltpremiere am Montag auf der Berlinale hatte. Mit dabei ist auch die Kasseler Professorin für Kunst und Ökonomen Mi You vom documenta-Institut. Das Festival soll Startpunkt einer weltweiten Präsentation der Regiearbeit auf Filmfesten sein. Auch auf Arte soll das Essay ausgestrahlt werden.

„Flying Tigers“ hießen die Flugzeuge einer Militäraktion der US-Streitkräfte im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Vom indischen Assam aus wurden Logistik und Waren mit einer Luftbrücke über ein Gebirgsmassiv im Himalaya zum Stützpunkt im chinesischen Kunming gebracht. Unzählige Menschen in Nord-



Mi You
 Professorin doc-Institut

ostindien und Südchina waren davon betroffen, sei es, weil ihre Teeplantagen umgepflügt wurden, weil sie Aluminiumreste von abgestürzten Maschinen verwerteten, oder am Schwarzmarkt teilhatten, der sich um die Flugbewegungen herum entwickelte.

Wo sind unsere Erinnerungen, memorierte Überreste von Geschehenem gespeichert? Nicht nur tief in unseren Gehirnen, auf die wir im rationalen Denkmodus vielleicht keinen Zugriff haben. Auch in der Sprache, manchmal sogar in einer Landschaft. Auf eine solche Spurensuche begeben sich Filmemacherin Dutta und Wissenschaftlerin Mi You, die auch vor der Kamera zu sehen ist.

„Als internationale Kulturschaffende hätten wir uns in



Flussszene mit Tiger: Szene aus „Flying Tigers“.

FOTOS: BERLINALE/VON BUSSE

unseren Heimatländern Indien und China nie kennengelernt“, sagt You. Begegnet sind sie sich an der Kölner Akademie der Künste der Welt. Durch Zufall, so You, haben die Frauen im Gespräch über Privates festgestellt, dass sie „fast Nachbarn“

sind. Zwischen Assam und Kunming liegt nur das Gebirge, das die Piloten „The Hump“ genannt haben. Die Luftbrücke und die Erinnerungen an diese Zeit auf beiden Seiten verbinden die Künstlerin und die Forscherin.

Weitere Filmpartner begleiten das Projekt, wandern aufuralten Straßen, lesen Poesie fast in Vergessenheit geratener Sprachen. Was ist mit den vielen Kulturen passiert, als Indien sich als unabhängiger Staat neu zusammengefounden und eine

einheitliche Identität hergestellt hat? Wie hat die Ideologie des neuen China ab den 1960er-Jahren die Geschichtsschreibung geprägt? Mi You spricht in einer Pflegeeinrichtung mit einem Kriegsveteranen, der sich an den amerikanischen Stützpunkt und somit an alltagsprägende US-Einflüsse in der Region Yunnan erinnern kann – keine offiziell erwünschte Perspektive auf Chinas Historie. Was ist mit den Jeep Girls, chinesischen Frauen, die den G.I.s nahekommen sind? Wo sind ihre Nachfahren?

Die Erzählstruktur bleibt bewusst offen, ist aber nicht immer stringent nachvollziehbar. Mal werden alte Fotos überkleidet, mal singen als Tiere verkleidete Kinder im Wald, ruhige Flussaufnahmen zeigen Alltagsleben auf der Fähre, dann wieder sehen wir Bilder der neuen Seidenstraße, der große Verbindungsweg der Gegenwart. Was wird darüber außer Gütern noch transportiert?

„Flying Tigers“ ist eine ästhetisches und inhaltsstarkes Stück Kino, das die Betrachter die Fäden weiterspinnen lässt.

BETTINA FRASCHKE

18 February 2026

ARD Tagesthemen

German public broadcaster, daily news journal

Report on extraordinary Berlinale films, with mini interview

<https://www.tagesschau.de/tagesthemen/video-1556736.html>

SENDUNG

tagesthemen 22:15 Uhr, 18.02.2026

Stand: 18.02.2026 • 23:38 Uhr

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tagesthemen, tagesthemen, Das Erste, 18.02.2026 • 22:15 Uhr

19 February 2026

Mint

Indian business and financial daily newspaper + online news

Positive review

<https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge/art-and-culture/flying-tigers-madhusree-dutta-docu-fiction-essay-berlinale-11771487171342.html>

'Flying Tigers': Madhusree Dutta's ambitious docu-fiction plays at the Berlinale

Madhusree Dutta's documentary, playing at Berlinale, blends archival material, staged performance, animation and musical sequences

Poulomi Das

Published • 19 Feb 2026, 03:30 PM IST



'Flying Tigers' moves between Assam and China



Before it becomes a film about empires and infrastructure, Madhusree Dutta's *Flying Tigers* is about whether a confused mind can still tell the truth. In 2015, nearing the end of her life, her Alzheimer's-afflicted mother kept repeating one warning: Close the windows. The tiger is coming! At the time, they were living in Dutta's Mumbai apartment. The geography made the claim impossible, yet the filmmaker treated it as evidence. She had learnt one thing while caregiving for her mother — Alzheimer's patients rarely invent events. Rather, their minds distort the chronology or perspective of an event. The question, then, was not why her mother had imagined tigers but when she had actually seen them.

Tracing the riddle led Dutta back to 1940s Assam, where her mother had grown up. There she found its historical setting: during World War II, American planes ferried supplies from Assam to China across the Himalayas along the 'Flying Tigers' route, whose massive infrastructure unsettled the jungle ecology and pushed tigers toward human settlements and tea estates. The discovery expanded into *Flying Tigers*, an ambitious and personal docu-fiction essay that moves between Assam and China.

INVESTIGATING HISTORIES

Premiering at the 76th Berlinale in the Forum sidebar, *Flying Tigers* marks Dutta's return to filmmaking after 20 years. A conversation in Germany with Chinese media scholar You Mi during the pandemic widened the project beyond biography. You Mi recognised the war time airlift from the opposite end—her family in Kunming had grown up waiting for those same American planes bringing aid. What had appeared in Assam as ecological disruption represented relief to civilians in China. The film develops out of this contradiction, placing two inherited emotional narratives of the same event into conversation. History in *Flying Tigers* does not move for ward; it leaks sideways. Over the course of its adventurous 105-minute runtime, the film unfolds like a search conducted in public.

For the first time in her filmmaking career, Dutta places herself in front of the camera as she road trips across Assam with researcher Purav Goswami in pursuit of reported crash sites. On the way, they meet an archivist documenting the route's local memory. From his perspective, the war survives as sound and debris—a thunderous impact, fire in the hills, metal falling from the sky. The wreckage entered village folklore; one aircraft door even found use as a pig-feeding trough. The film treats such remnants as historical evidence, allowing landscape and objects to carry testimony. In Kunming, those relationships acquire consequence, providing the film's most direct political afterlife. Through on-screen interviews with a war historian and a surviving veteran, *You Mi* reconstructs the arrival of supplies—viewers to inhabit the spatial experience.



As the film moves between Bangla, English and Mandarin, testimony, travel and archival fragments align into patterns that the viewer must recognise

FLUID BORDERS

Stills from Madhusree Dutta's *Flying Tigers* fuel, machinery, clothing and spare parts—that soon circulated into a surplus trade market. The informal economy that followed sustained everyday life while simultaneously weakening the Nationalist government, hastening its defeat. Dutta frames this as a butterfly effect: the air route produces an economy, the economy reshapes power, and its pathways persist in contemporary trade networks. Each solution to a crisis generates another system.



The film's wide historical sweep is matched by a form that eschews conventional documentary grammar. Dutta scripts and stages several moments, continuing the porous boundary between fiction and documentary she explored in her beguiling last feature, *Seven Islands and A Metro* (2006). As a result, much of *Flying Tigers* feels less like watching a film and more like walking through an exhibition.

Long takes of the Brahmaputra give way to sudden close details; art installations interrupt the journey; Miya poetry appears along side conversations about displacement under Assam's Citizenship Amendment Act. Federico Neri's editing shifts easily between observation and performance, while Dutta's voice—some times speaking to her mother—ties the fragments together. Shot by Riju Das (*All That Breathes*), Isabelle Casez and Guligo Jia Yanan, the images carry a dreamlike quality that invites This hybridity is not just ornamental. Dutta treats it as her working method. Blending archival material, staged performance, interviews, animation and musical sequences, *Flying Tigers* builds meaning through accumulation, where dates recur as markers across decades and vantage points keep shifting.

The film constantly foregrounds acts of mapping—in one scene, we see Goswami layering soil, pigment, photo raphs, and text onto charts only to erase them again—as if to demonstrate the instability of borders themselves. No frontier is directly shown; instead, it is performed through language shifts, songs that cross linguistic boundaries, and histories told from different positions along the same route. As the film moves between Bangla, English and Mandarin, testimony, travel and archival fragments gradually align into patterns that the viewer must recognise, mirroring the film maker's own process of discovery. In doing so, *Flying Tigers* turns form into argument: history is not a fixed narrative but something continually assembled from overlapping memories, cultures and movements. In that sense, *Flying Tigers* leaves viewers with a changed orientation toward time.



Watching it begins to feel like participating in a mild detective exercise: the full picture emerges only when clashing perspectives and disparate fragments are pieced together. The tiger that opened the film is no longer a mystery to be solved but a way of looking — a reminder that memory often notices consequences long before history records causes. Dutta suggests that wars do not simply end; they reorganise landscapes, economies and relationships until they become ordinary. What remains are intimate, intergenerational afterlives rather than conclusions. The present is simply where the past continues.

Poulomi Das is a Goa-based writer and critic.

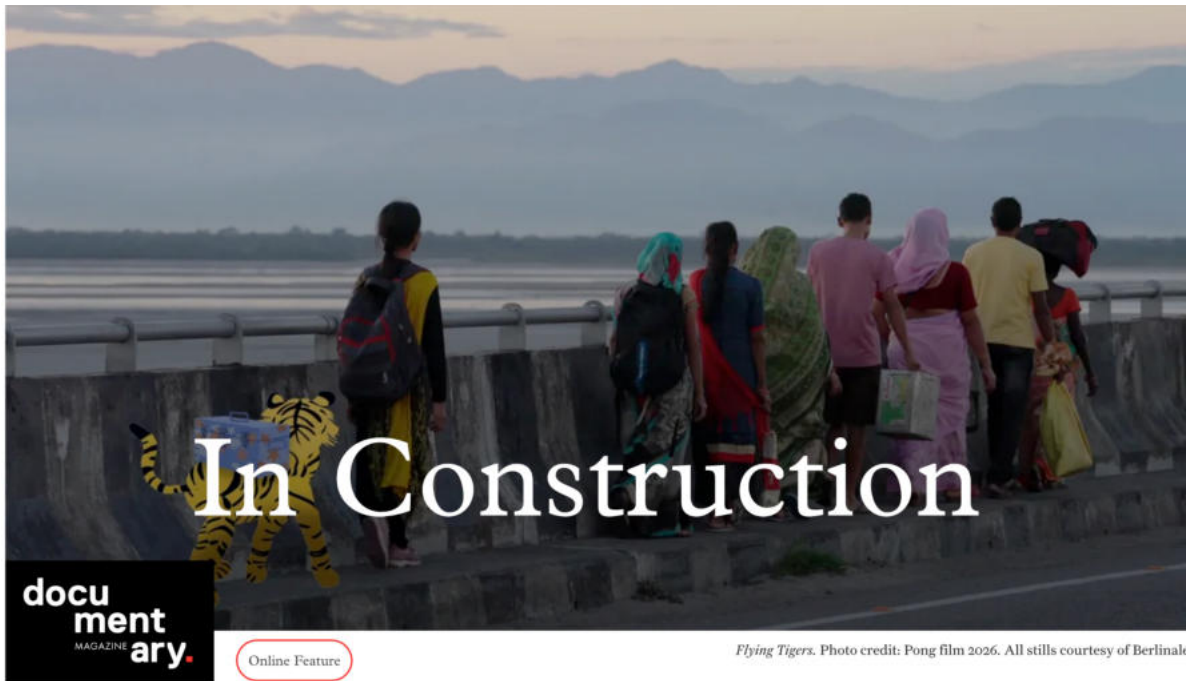
20 February 2026

International Documentary Association

Online documentary platform

Interview with Ritesh Mehta

<https://documentary.org/online-feature/construction-madhusree-dutta-talks-bridging-history-and-memory-her-berlinale>



**Madhusree Dutta discusses *Flying Tigers*,
her decades-spanning Berlinale doc about
memories and histories reclaimed**

“Tiger is coming! Close the windows!” Those were the words Mumbai and Cologne-based Bengali filmmaker-curator Madhusree Dutta remembers her elderly mother uttering while in the throes of Alzheimer’s. Initially she dismissed these ramblings. Years after her mother passed, Dutta fortuitously ran into Chinese-German media scholar You Mi in a cafe in Germany, where they hit upon a personal connection that would eventually birth *Flying Tigers*. This riveting, decades-spanning documentary on memory and wartime infrastructure that premiered in the Forum section of the 2026 Berlinale marks Dutta’s return to the festival after sixteen years.



Dutta places herself at the center of this personal documentary which doubles as a historiographical excavation into a forgotten World War II American military operation in Assam in the Northeastern region of India where her mother was born. Mi, whose family grew up across the Himalayas in Kuming, China, joins Dutta with Assamese writer Purav Goswami, as they research the special air force unit called the Flying Tigers and the aid they flew between both regions, to trace the way this history has affected their lives in entirely different ways.

Structured loosely, the documentary unfolds sometimes like a wondrous travelogue and other times as an epistolary exchange among its collaborators. We watch Dutta and Goswami going on a road trip where they learn about the stirring poems of Assam's once indentured Muslim Miya poets; we follow Mi as she travels to China to speak with a historian who is familiar with the regional devastation caused by the Flying Tigers project. Dutta also cross-cuts between the remnants of a disastrous U.S.-funded wartime railway connecting India, Burma, and China with contemporary footage of the "New Silk Road" railway that transports amusingly diverse goods from China to Europe, connecting past and present, the flinty memory of her mother and the hardened reality around her.

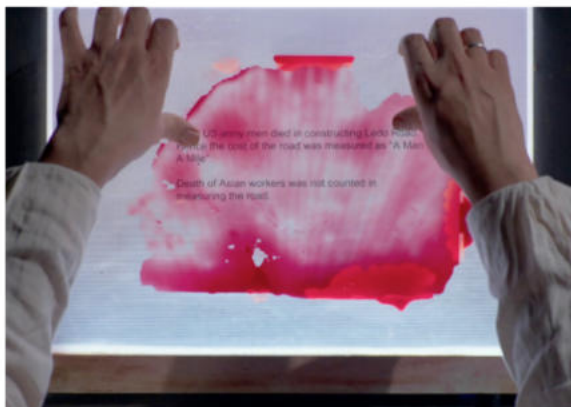
Flying Tigers traverses the lasting aftereffects of these imperialisms, moved along by the whims of diaspora, language, and the subaltern, and finally to the whimsy of personal family history, which Dutta, over a candid Zoom conversation a week before the film's premiere, argues *is* public history. This interview has been edited for clarity.

DOCUMENTARY: This is your first film in two decades, since *Seven Islands and a Metro*, released in 2006. How does that feel?

MADHUSREE DUTTA: I was never away from cinema. I'm interested in multiple things, like archiving and image making. I did a major project in Mumbai called [Project Cinema City](#) [which was premiered at Berlinale 2010]. It was about the cities that produce image at the level of industrial production. Some cities produce cars, some coal. Mumbai produces image. It's an imaginary city, but that city also produces imagination.

That took seven years of my life, during which I produced 11 films. There was no time for me to concentrate on directing. Then I was critically ill for a few years. Then I became interested in curating and writing, so I took a job in Germany as the artistic director of [Akademie der Künste der Welt] in Cologne. That took another four years. Suddenly, I realized, *Oh my God, it's been 20 years!*

I'm happy that I took this [project]. I'm not unnerved by it. But I was petrified of technology, because that changes faster than anything else. I thought, *Do I know what is available to me?* That was a very tense moment. Also at this stage of one's career, one is petrified of being pushed aside. But it's also good. It keeps you on your toes. This amount of insecurity may not be a bad idea for artists.



D: You've said you started this project because of your interest in the fragility of women's memories, and in particular, in your mother's Alzheimer's. In the film, you take us on a decades-spanning tour of so many incredible local histories around wartime infrastructure. As a viewer, I felt the weight of this contrast. I'm still thinking about the thousands of devocalized mules that were transported on the American Flying Tigers aircraft from Assam to China and which ended up in Korea. How did you feel the weight of this contrast between History and these more modest histories?

MD: Your answer is in your question. You brought up the 5000 devocalized mules. In the design of world history, who cares?

But that is what is affecting you, and not the dates of the Second World War—how many people died, how many cities got bombed. That's the filmmaker's job; to open up a far greater concern, and to tweak it so you find a parallel. I want you to be aware of how many small stories are around you every day, which is actually world history. This is my campaign against big History—or not against it, but on how to approach it.

When I was in Cologne, I started a campaign called Be a Public Historian. I invited everyone to bring one thing from their house—a rent receipt, a resident permit, a grocery list from 50 years back. And, in putting it together, we'd see whether we got a history.

This is about how everybody can be a historian. My mother died without knowing that she is part of the history of the Second World War. I am gifting it back. I'm saying, *You thought you lived an insignificant life? World history actually revolved around you.* That can be true of all insignificant people who live discreet lives and their roles in history. And that excites me.

This is a public history. Who will be a public historian? Everybody who has lived a life, I would say.

MD: I was curious why my mother spoke about the tigers while growing up in Assam.

So when the cafe [meeting with You Mi] happened, which is a reenactment in the film, we thought that we should do something together. At the time, we thought maybe a book, maybe we would draw maps or make an atlas of stories or concepts. Maybe an art exhibition or a film. Very vague ideas. But we decided to explore the [Flying Tigers phenomenon] from two angles [of our family history]. She remembers it positively, and I remember it negatively. We had to meet after 80 years in a third country, which happens to be very interestingly Germany, to find this connection.

As I started thinking of the film, we realized that if I am a foreigner in China and if Mi is a foreigner in India, then I'm equally a foreigner in Assam. So a voice from Assam was required. I needed somebody else who is much more settled. That way Purav, Mi, and I would be very mainstream, settled, comfortable people. We are visiting from our zones of comfort, which is also a little bit of a place of power and privilege. The three of us had to be equal in stature vis-à-vis our own spaces.



“ I want to differentiate between fact and truth. Truth is a perception, and perception is very important. Facts say nothing. ”

—Madhusree Dutta

D: Early on in the film, you say, “I love fakes. I think they’re quite original.” That made me laugh. Later, when you’re talking to You Mi on Zoom, she casually says, maybe even sounding a tad dismissive, “You have a penchant for mixing documentary with fiction.” I found myself connecting these lines. Do you find yourself connecting them?

MD: If you see my earlier work, I’m one of the earliest practitioners of hybridity in narrative strategies. [In *Flying Tigers*] Mi is playing her role, I’m playing mine, and we’re friends. That’s part of the film. Before every scene we used to decide what we were going to cover. I knew that she was going to slightly blame me. But that [discussion about Chinese Jeep Girls] is one of the very few places where there’s a little slight discontent between us.

We agreed to do that because I want to differentiate between fact and truth. Truth is a perception, and perception is very important. Facts say nothing. Facts are the official history, like dates or Wikipedia. Many people talking about this film say, “You must have done so much research.” I’m not a researcher by practice or by training. The research that I have done is from sitting in my home in Berlin or Mumbai. I did not go to many archives. I had [some] research assistants, but it wasn’t anything nobody else could find. It’s all slightly obscure, but not buried history.

The thing is to connect, and that connection is fictional. Who knew that my mother had any idea that it was the Second World War that was making her see tigers? I’m making the connection. It’s such a fantastic story. This connection, you can call it fictional, but according to me, it’s a perception. It’s not a fact. I don’t have a recording of my grandmother saying, “Hey, don’t go out, don’t meet any soldier, and don’t meet any tiger.” I don’t have that record.

Fact is very limited. Truth, you will have to extract from facts. I’m not saying fiction means nonfactual, but it is extra factual.



D: Do you then distinguish between fiction and construction, or connection and construction? The whole documentary is a construction of various nonfiction methodologies. Do you see it that way?

MD: Yeah, and in that construction, I also go cross-disciplinary. Sometimes I use only an art installation, like that boat at the riverbank. There are various reasons I cannot go into details [about those boats]. I need to protect my protagonist. They are vulnerable politically. That's true of Germany, China, and India equally. I'm not isolating any particular state. That's why there is not a single person from the Polish city Małaszewicze who appears in the film. [Nor does] a single person from Assam. I'm walking with them; they're standing with me behind the camera, but I'm not putting them in. But I want to put their voice, I want to put their life. So then I think of other strategies, use some other discipline, like art, music, or songs, which I used without shame.

That's construction. You can call it fictional. Or you can call it giving a body to the fact. It helps that I have been a curator, so I have access to these things. That is why I have a problem with insisting on documentary, which is tangible. The intangibility is perception, and that has to be brought in if you are practicing some kind of truth, which goes beyond dry facts.

Tags



Ritesh Mehta

Ritesh Mehta is a Los Angeles-based international story development consultant, curator, journalist, and critic. His work has appeared in IndieWire and *Filmmaker*. Ritesh received his PhD in Communication from the University of Southern California.



20 February 2026

Arte TV

German-French public TV broadcaster

Interview

<https://www.arte.tv/de/videos/129906-017-A/flying-tigers-interview-mit-madhusree-dutta/>



20 February 2026

India Today

News channel

Positive review

<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/leisure/story/20260302-memories-hidden-tigers-madhusree-duttas-flying-tigers-2871648-2026-02-20>

Memory's hidden tigers | Madhusree Dutta's 'Flying Tigers'

In 'Flying Tigers', Madhusree Dutta traces her mother's haunting childhood memory to a forgotten WW-II operation that forever altered lives in Assam.



DEEP STRIPES: Still from 'Flying Tigers'



Poulomi Das

ISSUE DATE: Mar 2, 2026 | UPDATED: Feb 20, 2026 20:05 IST

Close the windows. The tiger is coming.” A mother’s urgent warning sets *Flying Tigers* in motion. When Alzheimer’s dredges up a fragment of her mother’s childhood, National Award-winning filmmaker Madhusree Dutta begins following its trail. The search led her to 1940s Assam, where the United States had established a perilous aerial supply route over the Himalayas to transport military aid to China during World War II. The vast wartime operation reshaped forests and tea plantations, disrupting fragile ecologies. Tigers, forced out of their habitats, started straying into human settlements.



Flying Tigers, which premiered at the 76th Berlinale, marks Dutta’s return to filmmaking after 20 years. It unfolds as a layered, genre-blurring essay that moves between Assam and China alongside Kunming-born media scholar Mi You and Assamese writer Purav Goswami. Together, the trio piece through archival fragments, conversations, letters, uncovering a shared past between two nations now divided by militarised borders.

In her prolific career, Dutta has largely engaged with urban cultures, feminist narratives and postcolonial identities. Her turn toward this subject began in 2015, when her mother, shortly before her death, recalled tigers attacking their home. The image lingered. “As I kept thinking about it,” Dutta says, “I became drawn to memory—personal and cultural—how it survives, shifts contour...unexpectedly resurfaces.”

Shot by Riju Das, Isabelle Casez and Guligo Jia Yanan, the cinematography mirrors the film’s fluid structure, allowing landscape and memory to blur. In Dutta’s hands, illness becomes an archive, and personal memory opens onto a meditation on war, infrastructure and the landscapes that continue to carry their imprint.

February 2026

Goethe Institut (Freiraum magazine)

Online Magazine

Interview

<https://www.goethe.de/prj/yim/de/mag/das.html>

Magazin >

BERLINALE 2026

„Das ist mein Land, aber ich gehöre ihm nicht an.“ - Interview mit Madhusree Dutta



Einer der schönsten, zugleich verblüffendsten und labyrinthischsten Filme der Berlinale 2026 – *Flying Tigers*, uraufgeführt im Forum und unterstützt vom Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan New Delhi und vom Goethe-Institut China – entfaltet sich als kollektive Spurensuche durch die Schmetterlingseffekte der Geschichte: als historische Detektivarbeit, als Collage gefundener Erzählungen und als Archiv individueller Erinnerungen. In seiner hybriden Form ist der Film auf einzigartige Art ebenso persönlich wie intellektuell. Er spannt einen Bogen von der Angst der an Alzheimer erkrankten Mutter der Filmemacherin vor Tigern in Assam bis hin zu einer grenzüberschreitenden Recherche über eine US-Armee-Einheit, die im Zweiten Weltkrieg Kunming versorgte.



Dr. Yun-hua CHEN

Yun-hua Chen (YC): Können wir zu Beginn über die Tiere im Film sprechen? Tiger, Maultiere ...

Madhusree Dutta (MD): Es ist interessant, dass du sie erwähnst. Sie haben sich organisch aus der Geschichte ergeben. Was mich interessiert, und was schließlich zu den Tieren geführt hat, ist das Thema Mobilität: Dinge, die sich bewegen, und Dinge, die sich nicht um Grenzen kümmern. Grenzen sind von Menschen gemacht. Als Mensch benötige ich ein Visum, um jemanden zu besuchen, ein Tiger braucht das nicht. Waren kümmern sich ebenfalls nicht um Grenzen. Was darf mobil sein und was nicht, das ist eine der zentralen Fragestellungen des Films.

In Indien betrachten wir den Zweiten Weltkrieg kaum als Teil unserer eigenen Geschichte. Er wurde uns immer als europäische Geschichte vermittelt, mit der wir uns beschäftigten, weil wir über europäische Geschichte mehr lernen sollten als über unsere eigene Historie. Doch auch wenn die Schlachten nicht auf unserem Territorium stattfanden, waren die Häfen in den formal nicht kämpfenden Regionen massiver Gewalt ausgesetzt, da sie zentrale logistische Knotenpunkte bildeten. Logistische Operationen zerstören natürliche Lebensräume.

YC: Mobilität steht auch im Zusammenhang mit alten und neuen Versorgungsrouten, etwa mit der Ledo Road ...

MD: Ich erinnere mich an ein Gespräch mit einem Mann in Indien, der zu einem Himalaya-Stamm nahe der chinesischen Grenze gehört. Er erzählte mir, dass sie über Dschungelpfade reisen. Jemand sagte daraufhin: Dschungel und Berge sind keine Grenzen; sie sind Brücken.

Grenzen werden auf Straßen, Autobahnen und Fernstraßen gezogen, dort, wo man Kontrollpunkte einrichten kann. Im Dschungel oder im Himalaya lassen sich keine Grenzposten errichten.

YC: Das passt zu einem Satz, den ein Protagonist im Film sagt: „Das ist mein Land, aber ich gehöre ihm nicht an.“

MD: Es ist tatsächlich interessant, dass Mi You meine erste chinesische Freundin ist. Zuvor habe ich zwar Mitglieder der Diaspora kennengelernt, Menschen der dritten oder vierten Generation, aber niemanden, der ethnisch chinesisch ist und die chinesische Staatsbürgerschaft besitzt. Irgendwie erschien uns das nie seltsam, denn auch wir sind so erzogen worden, China als „Fernen Osten“ zu denken. Dahinter steht eindeutig eine eurozentrische Geopolitik.



YC: Du hast gerade die Kinder erwähnt: Kannst du über die Lieder mit ihren unterschiedlichen Sprachen in deinem Film sprechen?

MD: Ich habe bewusst versucht, diesen Film so wenig informativ wie möglich zu machen. Ich hatte das Gefühl, dass es keine Information gibt, die man nicht in einer halben Stunde Google-Recherche finden könnte. Der Film handelt vielmehr davon, Informationen zu verschleiern. Heute findet man alles, was man wissen möchte, in fünf Minuten – und setzt sich dann oft nicht mehr wirklich damit auseinander. Dem widersetzt sich der Film. Ich nehme Informationen und überlagere sie mit Geschichten. Auch Sprache funktioniert im Film auf diese Weise.

Es gibt zwei Lieder, die im Film immer wiederkehren. Das eine ist der Song of Infrastructure, ein europäisches Lied, geschrieben in europäischen Sprachen: Italienisch, ein wenig Französisch, Deutsch und Englisch. Das andere Lied, das indische, ist ebenfalls mehrsprachig: Es ist auf Bengali, Assamesisch und Miya.

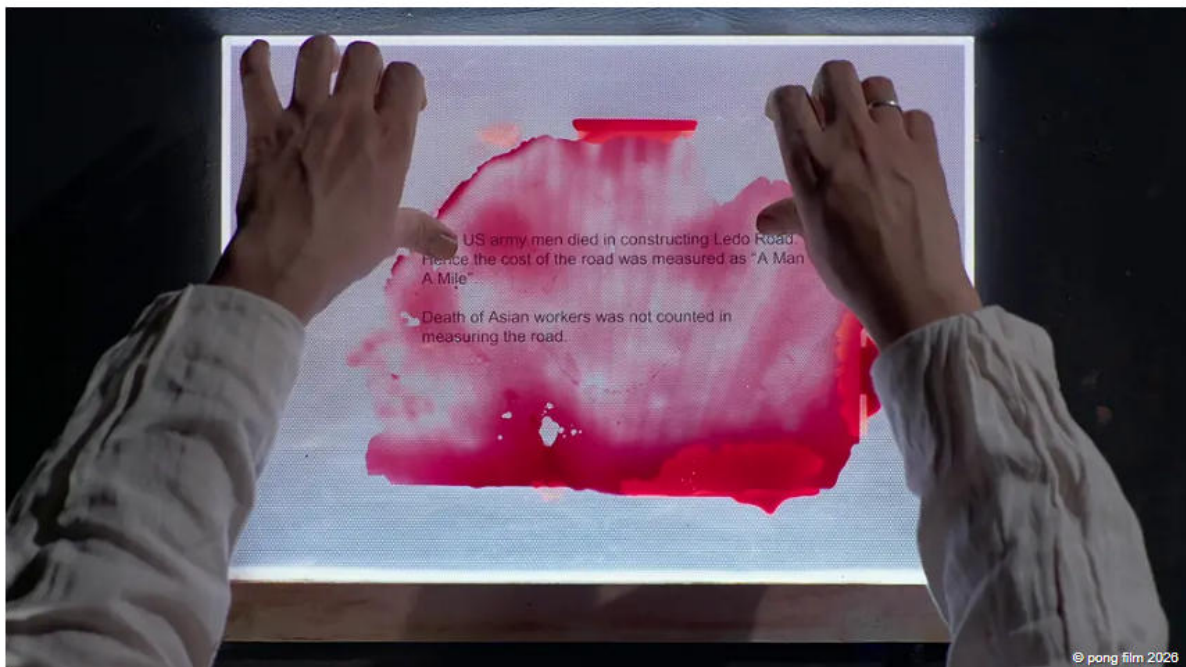
Ein deutscher Zuschauer mag zunächst glauben, alles zu verstehen. Bis ein Satz plötzlich in eine andere Sprache wechselt und dieses Verständnis ins Stocken gerät. Dasselbe gilt für ein indisches Publikum. Dieses sprachliche Unbehagen, diese Verschiebung, ist Teil davon, wie Sprache sich behauptet und überlebt. Sprache bleibt nachvollziehbar, doch sie befindet sich in ständiger Veränderung. Man muss sich anstrengen, ihr zu folgen. Sprache ist historisch. Und genau das wollte ich für das Publikum körperlich erfahrbar machen: etwas zu verstehen und es zugleich nicht ganz zu verstehen.

Das ist keine einfache Erzählung, bei der man den Film sieht und danach „weiß“. Man wird nicht alles wissen. Der Film handelt von meiner Mutter, und er handelt vom Zweiten Weltkrieg, von einer Zeit lange vor meiner Geburt. Zugleich ist er autobiografisch, weil all die Fragen, denen ich in meiner Arbeit als Dokumentarfilmerin immer wieder begegne, darin verhandelt werden: Fragen von Unschärfe und Vertrautheit, davon, wie informativ etwas sein sollte, wie viel Information man gibt und wie viel Information überhaupt verfügbar ist. Heute ist so viel Information zugänglich, dass es vielleicht an der Zeit ist, einen Teil davon zu verbergen. Welche Rolle kommt einem Archiv unter diesen Bedingungen noch zu?

YC: Es geht auch um Erinnerung, um das Archivieren von Erinnerung, und damit um die Frage, was wir erinnern und was wir vergessen: um Erinnerungen, die verblassen, und solche, die erhalten bleiben.

MD: Mein Weg zur Erinnerung – und zum Verständnis ihrer Logik, wie Erinnerung überlebt und wie sie funktioniert – beginnt mit dem Verlust von Erinnerung. Ich versuchte, die Alzheimer-Erkrankung meiner Mutter zu begreifen. Üblicherweise wird die Krankheit als Tragödie verstanden. In meinem Fall jedoch habe ich versucht, sie als einen Prozess der Enthemmung zu sehen. Meine Mutter öffnete sich, ließ Erinnerungen an die Oberfläche treten, die sie sich zuvor verboten hatte.

Vor ihrem Tod sagte sie tatsächlich nur einen einzigen Satz: „Der Tiger ist weg.“ Alles, was ich über Alzheimer gelesen hatte, deutete darauf hin, dass die Krankheit keine Halluzinationen hervorruft. Das erkläre ich auch im Film: Menschen mit Alzheimer erfinden keine neuen Geschichten. Sie geraten lediglich durcheinander, wenn es darum geht, Erinnerungen einzuordnen.





Das bedeutete, dass der Tiger zu einem Zeitpunkt im Leben meiner Mutter tatsächlich präsent gewesen sein musste. Also begann ich darüber nachzudenken. Eine Erkenntnis wurde mir dabei besonders deutlich: Erinnerung muss zugelassen werden. Manchmal wird sie von der Gesellschaft freigegeben, manchmal vom Individuum selbst. Es gibt immer einen äußeren Anlass, der Erinnerungen an die Oberfläche bringt, sie entstehen nicht von allein. Erinnerung kann also auch manipuliert werden, wie es im Film heißt, jeder hat heute eine Erinnerungsagenda.

Doch Erinnerung als Ressource oder als narratives Werkzeug besitzt eine besondere Eigenschaft: Sie existiert nicht einfach. Sie muss geöffnet werden, und sie kann ebenso wieder geschlossen werden. Manchmal geschieht das durch andere, manchmal tun wir es selbst. Die Tiger waren über einen großen Teil des Lebens meiner Mutter verschwunden – und kehrten schließlich zurück, weil Alzheimer ihnen erlaubte, zurückzukehren.

Madhusree Dutta ist eine in Indien und Deutschland lebende Filmemacherin, Autorin und Kulturproduzentin. In ihrer Arbeit setzt sie sich intensiv mit Phänomenen der Hybridität innerhalb öffentlicher und urbaner Kulturen sowie mit dokumentarischen und archivischen Praktiken auseinander. Sie ist Mitbegründerin und ehemalige Leiterin (1998–2016) von Majlis, einem Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Kunstinitiativen in Mumbai, und war von 2018 bis 2021 künstlerische Leiterin der Akademie der Künste der Welt (ADKDW) in Köln. Mit ihrem aktuellen Projekt „Flying Tigers“ kehrt Dutta nach zwanzig Jahren zur filmischen Praxis zurück.

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22 February 2026

Ming Pao

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Mention of FT in an overview article

同場加映

第76屆柏林影展筆記 電影能否改變世界？

第76屆柏林影展一開幕就捲入政治爭議。德國記者Tilo Jung在開幕記者會質問評審團，是否支持主要出資者德國政府站在以色列一方、縱容加沙種族屠殺，又問這是否構成人權雙重標準。評審團主席雲溫德斯在自詡最政治的電影節上，一句「我們必須遠離政治」，顯得懦弱，風波迅速演變成公開危機。不過，記者提問品質日趨低落也是事實，追逐流量、表態、sound bites，電影藝術反在其次，Tilo記者會就拿加沙問題狙擊影人，連Ethan Hawke也不放過。在我看來，沒有哪位影人或哪部電影能表態終結戰爭，電影真正的力量，或許更接近「潤物細無聲」：啟發共情、提出問題、悄悄改變觀念理解世界的方式。

文·陳智廷

前衛影像反思歷史暴力

柏林影展最認真面對政治的，是實驗、前衛、激進的論壇展（Forum Expanded）單元。每場以一小時左右的短片選集，透過檔案、記憶、詩意，反思反殖民主義、帝國、國家暴力。節目以小野洋子1966年無聲黑白實驗電影Film No. 4 (Bottoms)開場，只見行走中的赤裸女性特寫，幽默挑釁。接著放映Claudia von Alemann新修復的紀錄片EXPRMNTL 4 Knocke (1968)，記錄1967、68年之交比利時海濱賭場舉行的第四屆EXPRMNTL實驗電影節。第四屆爭議最大，正值1968年五月風暴前夕，場內有即興行為藝術，也有阻止放映的抗議。參展的美國地下導演雖然反越戰，但示威者不滿「政治電影」只停留在再現，要求真正的政治行動。現場的德國導演Harun Farocki高喊「現實、現實」，比利時皇家電影資料館館長則說「拍電影，別搞政治」(Make films, not politics)，今年柏林開幕的爭議，幾乎是歷史重演。小野洋子躲在自己的行為藝術《袋子》(1964)裏接受訪問時，說「別管我了」(Just forget about me)。

論壇展今年在防火葬場改建的Silent Green開幕演出，一票難求，場內擠得水泄不通。新加坡藝術家雙人組蔡聖恩(Mark Chua)和林俐麗以16mm雙屏投影，擔任DJ兼VJ，把空間化為聲光交錯的地下舞場。他們的《半中誕生》(Born of the Yam)推想虛構的芋頭神話：不斷開芋頭的手勢，像是召喚去脈路化的原住民儀式。這個芋頭神話正發展成林俐麗導演的恐怖長片《異根》(Strange Root)，已入選三月的香港亞洲電影投資會。表演尾聲，蔡聖恩將柔軟白球拋入觀眾席，眾人把球推高，扁平銀幕與球體銀幕對位。最後他鑽進鑽在銀幕前的白球中，彷彿回到芋頭子宮裏的胚胎。

本屆華語片中，最受矚目的是主競賽單元、新加坡



透過混種電影《飛虎》，印度資深導演Madhusree Dutta (左)與學者策展人由宏(右)結伴展開跨境之旅，探索中印邊界與二戰的歷史記憶。(片方提供)



台灣入選短片《你吹Do，我吹Si》講述直笛隊學童在不協調中摸索齊奏和聲的過程。(富邦文教基金會提供)

導演陳哲藝「成長三部曲」集大成的《我們不是陌生人》。影片以兩場婚禮、一場葬禮、一個新生兒，串起21歲青年(許家樂)的務程成長，可說是新加坡的《一一》。相較之下，我最偏愛的華語作品來自全景(Panorama)單元女導演Ag(沈仲曼)的《上海女兒》。這是部揉雜紀錄與虛構的混種電影：導演分身阿若(梁翠珊)從上海出發，前往雲南西雙版納中緬邊疆的東風農場橡膠林，尋找知青父親的蹤跡，試圖重建「嗅覺和顏色」、景觀與空間的多民族、多語言、多物種記憶與連繫。

混種電影探索跨國記憶

與《上海女兒》遙相共鳴的，是論壇單元中印度資深導演、策展人Madhusree Dutta (Madhu)闊別影壇20年後的新作《飛虎》，同樣是部混種電影：紀錄、搬演、歌舞詩、當代藝術、動畫等形式交織，關於二戰記憶、邊境與基礎建設，從中美友誼延伸到中印關係。電影起於導演母親的失智囑語「老虎來了！關窗戶！」母親是印度東北阿薩姆人，原來老虎來自1940年代童年記憶：飛虎隊(美國援華志願航空隊)從阿薩姆飛越最危險的喜馬拉雅山「蛇峰航線」，將抗日軍用物資運往雲南昆明。失智母親口中的老虎，成為打開跨國戰爭史的人口。

失智者支離破碎的記憶，能視為歷史檔案嗎？Madhu認為失智不只是疾病，也可以成為方法。當記憶不再穩固，原本在人為邊界上畫得清清楚楚的國族、敵友與同胞關係就鬆動了，像河一樣流動起來。導演與學者策展人朋友由宏，一位母親在阿薩姆，一位家族在昆明，二人竟是隔著喜馬拉雅山的「鄰居」，於是聯同阿薩姆作家Purav Goswami，展開跨境之旅。

《飛虎》中有一段走訪中印邊境爭議地阿魯納恰爾邦(Arunachal Pradesh)，一位迦龍人(Galo)回憶，1962年中印邊境戰爭前，當地人享自主權，幾乎沒有國家

概念；戰後印度將此地劃為「東北邊境特區」，作為對中國的緩衝，中國則視之為「藏南」。片中提到，中國珞巴族在語言文化上非常接近迦龍人，卻被國界分隔。另一段帶觀眾走入Char Chapori，孟加拉裔穆斯林少數Miya人耕種居住的肥沃浮島。Miya人長期受歧視，自2016年透過抗議詩歌運動重塑身分。

《飛虎》還關注一帶一路的中歐班列，由重慶經新疆到德國杜伊斯堡。由訪問曾在中印戰場服役的老兵楊毓麟，談他1945年去阿薩姆的經歷，這段由女攝影師賈雅楠拍攝，在地製片有郭曉東和米娜。由宏亦與雲南藝術家程新皓踏足滇緬公路/320國道，思考二戰與當下基建。《飛虎》體現電影可以透過混種形式與跨界合作，鬆動疆界，改變世界觀，而非停留在反戰聲明。

華語片中，還有論壇單元新加坡、香港出品的張新陽導演首部長片《傷寒雜病論》，製片為郭曉東、翁志超、單英皓。這是部卷軸山水電影：冬日南京長江沿岸，鏡頭徐徐展開的水墨長卷，開場頗有賈樟柯《三峽好人》的影子。辛棄疾(張獻民)勸止輕生者、以詩歌治病；女主(呂佳禾)和人扭打、與鹿嬉戲；城市漫遊者(陳淵)拖著空瓶在下水道遊走；樂團在廢墟排練。故事幾乎不重要，片長約兩個半小時，也可以想像成一個半、三個半，甚至更長的沉浸式裝置，觀眾被引領進一種百無聊賴的日常虛無之中，反而能更敏銳感到城市與身體的細微律動。

最後，是今年台灣唯一入選柏林的短片《你吹Do，我吹Si》，導演莊榮梓，製片陳厚廷，入選Generation Kplus。這個單元的中小學觀眾大概是柏林最熱情的，總是以掌聲加尖叫回應電影。直笛隊表現不好的女孩窘窘，面臨無法上台的壓力，演奏倍低音直笛的男孩紹瑜，則以氣不夠、容易頭暈為由想退出。女孩請男孩教她吹直笛，兩人透過不斷練習與互相做鬼臉，在不協調中摸索齊奏和聲的方式。