



Programme preview

The Dardenne brothers, Sergei Loznitsa, Bi Gan, Lav Díaz and Gabriel Mascaro will compete for the Golden Spike at the 70th edition of SEMINCI

- *The Official Section will also feature films by three promising new filmmakers: Shih-Ching Tsou, Eva Victor and Mascha Schilinski*
- *Meeting Point brings together young filmmakers who portray the dilemmas of adolescence in their debut films*

Valladolid, 24 July 2025. Renowned filmmakers such as **Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Sergei Loznitsa, Bi Gan, Lav Díaz and Gabriel Mascaro**, together with representatives of a new generation of filmmakers, will participate in the Official Section of the 70th edition of the Valladolid International Film Festival (SEMINCI).

These filmmakers, along with others to be announced shortly, will compete for the Golden Spike at the 2025 edition, which will take place from 24 October to 1 November. The festival programme preview also includes six debut films by new filmmakers in the thriving Meeting Point competition section, most of which focus on the adolescent perspective.

The official selection brings together titles that are not only triumphing at the world's most important film festivals, but also engage in dialogue with each other, exploring universal themes such as family, overcoming trauma and social transformation through diverse cinematic languages.

Authors with their own voice and style

The brothers **Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne** (Palme d'Or for *Rosetta* in 1999 and *The Child* in 2005) aspire to repeat in 2025 the Golden Spike they obtained at SEMINCI in 1996 with *The Promise*. In *Young Mothers*, the Belgian directors offer an optimistic look at the lives of five teenage mothers in a shelter and the family and social tensions they face. This film won the award for best screenplay and the Ecumenical Jury Prize at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival.

Another filmmaker who has won awards at international festivals, particularly for his documentary review of Eastern European history, and who shares the Dardennes' strong political and social commitment, is **Sergei Loznitsa** (*State Funeral, Donbass*). In *Two Prosecutors*, the Belarusian-born, Ukrainian-adopted director offers a contemporary political interpretation of Stalinism based on a work by the little-known Soviet writer, physicist and engineer **Georgy Demidov**, a victim of the Soviet regime of terror. A master of using archival material to make documentaries, Loznitsa turns his gaze in his third fiction film to the trials instigated by Stalin, which he already documented in *The Trial* (2018).

The list of renowned international authors competing for the Golden Spike in 2025 also includes Filipino filmmaker **Lav Diaz** (Golden Lion in 2016 for *The Woman Who Left*). The most renowned independent filmmaker in his country, and the most awarded at international festivals, he goes back to the 16th century in *Magellan*, a co-production in which Albert Serra participates through his production company Andergraun Films. Starring **Gael García Bernal**, Díaz constructs a visually epic tale about colonial maritime expeditions and the moral degradation of the protagonist.

Chinese director **Bi Gan** (*Long Day's Journey Into Night*) has established himself as one of the most unique and visionary voices in contemporary cinema, especially within the Asian arthouse film scene, thanks to his ability to create dreamlike and surreal atmospheres. The film with which he will compete at SEMINCI, *Resurrection* (Special Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival), is a cinematic fable about a dystopian world where humanity has lost the ability to dream, filmed in six episodes that combine the dreamlike with the historical.

Gabriel Mascaro (*Neon Bull, Divine Love*) is not far behind as one of the most original filmmakers in contemporary Brazilian cinema. In the futuristic dystopia *The Blue Trail*, Grand Jury Prize winner at the 2025 Berlinale, he takes us on a journey through the Amazon starring a 77-year-old woman (**Denise Weinberg**) who confronts the authorities when they decide to isolate people her age in remote colonies.

A new generation of independent filmmakers

Alongside these masters, the advanced titles in the Official Section of the 70th edition of SEMINCI also include three emerging filmmakers representing a new generation with a marked personal stamp, both in terms of themes and visual tone, who address human issues from a gender and emotional perspective.

Shih-Ching Tsou, producer of titles by *Anora* director **Sean Baker**, such as *Tangerine* and *The Florida Project*, makes her solo debut with *Left-Handed Girl*, after co-directing *Take Out* with Baker in 2004. The film, co-written, produced and edited by Sean Baker, explores themes such as adapting to life in present-day Taipei and the tension between tradition and modernity within a family marked by secrets and traditions.

Also a first-time director, but with experience as an actress (*Billions*), **Eva Victor** won the award for best screenplay at Sundance for the tragicomedy *Sorry, Baby*, backed by **Barry Jenkins** (*Moonlight*) as producer. Victor writes, directs and stars in this film with sensitivity and humour, which tells the story from a fresh and personal perspective of how a university professor deals with trauma and healing after experiencing sexual abuse in the workplace.

Completing the trio is German filmmaker **Mascha Schilinski**, who will present *Sound of Falling* in competition at SEMINCI, preceded by the Jury Prize, ex aequo with *Sirat*, at the Cannes Film Festival. In her second film after the also award-winning *Dark Blue Girl*, Schilinski weaves together the stories of four young people over almost a hundred years in a temporal framework in which the traumas and violence experienced in other eras reverberate in the present. Although the plot is strongly rooted in a German farm, it

reflects universal themes such as memory, loss, the female condition, and the fragility of childhood.

Meeting Point, the youngest section

Dedicated to fiction writers seeking to reinvent the way stories are told and expand the language of cinema, Meeting Point will feature six debut films that reveal the new trends in contemporary independent cinema. They all offer a personal perspective on intimate stories of transformation and growth of teenage or young adult characters facing crucial moments of change, filmed in a realistic style with an intimate and social focus.

Rebuilding, by **Max Walker-Silverman** (*A Love Song*), comes from this year's crop of American independent films premiered at Sundance. The feature film, winner of the Ecumenical Jury Prize at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival, explores themes such as loss, community and emotional reconstruction in the context of a camp for people who have lost their homes in a forest fire. **Josh O'Connor** (*Challengers*, *La Chimera*) plays a cowboy who is given the opportunity by the fire to reconnect with his ex-wife and daughter.

Another notable premiere this year was that of Slovenian director **Urška Djukić** with *Little Trouble Girls*, winner of the Fipresci Prize in the Perspectives section of the Berlin Film Festival. A story of sexual discovery set in the context of a Catholic school girls' choir. With her previous work as a short filmmaker (*Granny's Sexual Life*), Djukić had already won awards such as the European Film Academy's Best Short Film Award in 2022 and the César Award for Best Animated Short Film in 2023.

Meanwhile, *Wild Foxes*, the debut film by Belgian director **Valéry Carnoy**, won the Europa Cinemas Label award for best European film at Cannes 2025. The film focuses on a promising young boxer (**Samuel Kircher**, son of actress **Irène Jacob**) who, after surviving a fatal accident, develops an inexplicable pain that threatens his sporting career. Carnoy goes beyond the clichés of sports dramas to focus on mental health and male friendships.

Also premiering at Cannes, *Nino*, by **Pauline Loqués**, and *Kika*, by **Alexe Poukine**, portray two people facing crucial moments in their lives. In the case of *Nino*, it is a young man who is disoriented by a medical diagnosis that affects his future and the possibility of becoming a father. The film has been compared to an updated version of Agnès Varda's *Cléo from 5 to 7*, with a masculine, nocturnal and youthful tone. The main character is played by **Théodore Pellerin**, who won the award for best new actor at Cannes 2025 for this work and best actor at SEMINCI 2018 for *Genesis*. Loqués had previously directed the medium-length film *La Vie de jeune fille*.

Kika addresses single motherhood and the sudden death of her partner with sensitivity and humour, as faced by a woman (**Manon Clavel**) who goes from being a social worker to a sex worker in search of financial stability. Its director, Alexe Poukine, also participated in SEMINCI in 2024 with her documentary on the mental health of healthcare workers, *Who Cares?* She achieved international recognition with *That Which Does Not Kill* (2019), about sexual violence in environments of trust.

Finally, *Mad Bills to Pay (or Destiny, dile que no soy malo)*, by Dominican-born American **Joel Alfonso Vargas**, was one of the big surprises at Sundance 2025, winning the NEXT

Special Jury Prize for Best Cast. Vargas began as a self-taught filmmaker influenced by hip-hop culture and collaborating with marginalised communities to tell nuanced stories about issues of identity in the diaspora and social justice. After shooting short films such as *May it Go Beautifully for You*, Rico winner of the Pardi di Domani Award for Best Director at the Locarno Film Festival, his first feature film has earned the support of producer Christine Vachon, the godmother of independent cinema and producer of Todd Haynes.

PREVIEW OF THE OFFICIAL COMPETITION SECTION OF THE 70TH EDITION OF SEMINCI

The Blue Trail (O Último Azul). Gabriel Mascaro (Brazil, Mexico, Netherlands, Chile, 2025)

Sorry, Baby. Eva Victor (United States, 2025)

Young Mothers. Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne (Belgium, France, 2025)

Left-Handed Girl. Shih-Ching Tsou (Taiwan, United States, United Kingdom, France, 2025)

Sound of Falling (In die Sonne schauen). Mascha Schilinski (Germany, 2025)

Two Prosecutors. Sergei Loznitsa (Ukraine, 2025)

Resurrection. Bi Gan (China, 2025)

Magellan. Lav Diaz (Portugal, Spain, France, Philippines, Taiwan)

PREVIEW MEETING POINT 70TH EDITION SEMINCI

Mad Bills to Pay (or Destiny, dile que no soy malo). Joel Alfonso Vargas (United States, 2025)

Wild Foxes. Valery Carnoy (France, Belgium, 2025)

Little Trouble Girls. Urška Djukić (Slovenia, Italy, Croatia, Serbia, 2025)

Rebuilding. Max Walker-Silverman (United States, 2025)

Nino. Pauline Loqués (France, 2025)

Kika. Alexe Poukine (Belgium, France, 2025)

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