

Good Evening everyone!

My name is Katrine Kiilgaard, I'm the managing director of CPH:DOX

And my name is Niklas Engstrøm, and I'm the Artistic Director of CPH:DOX

NE:

We are very very happy and joyful to bid you welcome to this award ceremony, and we also hope that it makes you happy and joyful to be here. What you have just heard was the MUSICA choir performing Friedrich Schiller's poem ODE AN DIE FREUDE - that is ODE TO JOY - to the music by Ludwig van Beethoven.

Most people know ODE TO JOY as a propaganda song for the European Union, and as such, everyone in the documentary community will naturally be skeptical towards the song. But of course, the European Union didn't exist when Friedrich Schiller wrote his poem in 1785, just four years prior to the French Revolution. And the song is actually not about the EU, but about, yes, as the title suggests: JOY! The joy that comes from friendship, brotherhood, community. The joy that – based on these virtues – can be used as a driving force for a better future.

KK:

Over the past 10 days, this festival has brought together the documentary community in larger numbers than ever before. And **together**, we have experienced more joy than ever before at CPH:DOX. Even if the festival is far from over, we know that we have broken our own audience record with a huge margin. More people than ever before have attended the film screenings, more people than ever before have participated in debates and dialogues about the films, more people than ever before have been touched and gotten the chance to reflect on the world they live in.

We've received feedback again and again over the past week, that these activities have inspired hope in the midst of the very dark times, we live in. So we truly believe that this is really a source of joy for everyone in the documentary community.

NE:

But as Charles Dickens once said: It was the best of times, and it was the worst of times. And just like the festival has never been at the center of more joy than this year, it is also true that we have never been at the center of more frustration than this year.

The frustration is not unfounded. On the contrary, it reflects a view of cultural institutions as political entities that should take clear stances. We understand and respect this view, and we are trying as best we can to enter a dialogue with everyone who is critical towards the festival. Quite a few dialogue meetings are awaiting us after the festival, and we look forward to it, especially as we believe that we are not necessarily so far from each other.

KK:

For example, we do agree that there is no such thing as an entirely neutral and apolitical position in this world. A documentary festival like CPH:DOX is based on values that cannot be taken for granted in the world of today.

We believe in the freedom of thought and the freedom of speech.

We believe in dialogue as a key to exploring different perspectives, challenging ingrained beliefs, and connecting across differences, even if dialogue is difficult, imperfect and never free from power dynamics.

We believe in pluralism, and we aim to make room for a multitude of opinions and ideas, including those that challenge our own perspective as a festival.

NE:

This also means that we will keep inviting voices from Ukraine, AND from Russia, even if the Russian regime has invaded Ukraine, broken basic rules of international law and been responsible for numerous human rights violations.

From Palestine, AND from Israel, even if Israel has been illegally occupying Palestinian lands for decades, and has been responsible for numerous human rights violations since the invasion of Gaza as their reaction to the Hamas attack on October the 7th, 2023.

From Armenia, AND from Azerbaijan, even if Azerbaijan's military offensive in a little over a year ago led to the displacement of almost all of the ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakh, where they lived for thousands of years, in a conflict that NO ONE seems to care about.

And this is not to say that these conflicts are identical. But it is to say that they all need to be documented, discussed and acted upon. Just as is the case with what's going on in Iran, in the US, in Sudan, in China, everywhere in the world where freedom, equality and democracy is threatened.

KK:

None of this is neutral, none of this is apolitical. In many countries, these freedoms do not exist. And all over the world, these beliefs and values are under threat.

CPH:DOX is all about guarding these freedoms and values in order to offer a space for an enhanced public discourse about how to navigate our common world.

Tonight, we honor the films that have contributed to this mission — films that have broadened our understanding, inspired us, and, at

times, unsettled us and the festival audiences with their powerful truths. These films remind us of the importance of questioning, reflecting, and engaging with the world in all its beauty and complexity.

On that note: Please welcome on stage, our Head of Programme, Mads Mikkelsen, to let the show begin!