SUNCINE33 Awards Ceremony and screening of *The Lake*

Snow Leopard Sisters wins SUNCINE's Sol de Oro with a story of nature, resistance and freedom

At the Festival's closing ceremony, the President of the Parliament of Catalonia, Josep Rull, announced SUNCINE's designation as a "Film Festival of Strategic Interest."

Calafell, 14 November 2026.

The SUNCINE jury has awarded the **Sol de Oro of its 33rd edition** to *Snow Leopard Sisters*, a film co-directed by Ben Ayers, Sonam Choekyi Lama and Andrew Lynch. It explores community-based conservation, resistance and the bond between two Indigenous women seeking to make their voices heard in a hostile environment. This year's awards also include the Sol de Oro Ñ for *Ladrones de Fuego*; the Miradas Award for *Oxygen*; and the Monarca Documentary Award for *Gypaetus: The Last Bone Breaker*. *Trade Secret* received a Special Mention for International Documentary.

SUNCINE's 33rd edition screened 47 films in person in Barcelona and Calafell. Its online programme will remain available through CaixaForum+ until 22 November. This edition once again brought together different cinematic perspectives on some of the major environmental challenges of our time: biodiversity loss, ecosystem conservation, the climate crisis, pollution and social conflicts linked to the defence of local territories.

***Snow Leopard Sisters* has been awarded the Sol de Oro** for a story that connects the conservation of one of the Himalayas' most emblematic and endangered species with women's emancipation and the defence of their rights. The film follows Tshiring Lhamu Lama, a local conservationist, and Tenzin Bhuti Gurung, a young woman who joins her and finds an opportunity to escape an arranged marriage. Together, they travel through the Himalayan landscape in search of the elusive snow leopard. A story of friendship, resistance and transformation that highlights the close relationship between protecting nature and enabling communities to shape their own future.

In the Ñ section, dedicated to Spanish productions, the Sol de Oro went to *Ladrones de Fuego*, directed by Francisco José Vaquero Robustillo. The documentary examines the consequences of fire management detached from local communities and gives a voice to those calling for a return to traditional knowledge and the use of fire as a tool for managing and caring for the landscape. It offers a critical perspective on rural memory, the abandonment of the land and the need to understand fire as more than a threat.

The **Miradas Award went to *Oxygen***, by Roxane Perrot and Ugo Isoard. Over the course of a week, the French documentary follows a group of volunteer freedivers as they dive into the Mediterranean to remove plastic, nets and other waste from the seabed. Through their efforts and commitment, the film addresses marine pollution and the determination of those who continue to act to protect the ocean, even in the face of the scale of the problem.

The **Monarca Documentary Award went to *Gypaetus: The Last Bone Breaker***, by Juan de la Cueva Aldea. This 18-minute documentary explores the Pyrenees and the struggle for survival of the bearded vulture, one of the most emblematic birds of Iberian wildlife. Through intimate and

visually striking images, it reveals the feeding relationships and hierarchies between vultures and other scavenger species, while portraying the resilience of a species essential to the balance of mountain ecosystems.

The **Monarca Animation Award went to *Like Friend, Like Deer***, by Iranian director Malek Eghbali. This 13-minute short begins with a tense confrontation between a forest ranger and a poacher to explore the invisible bonds between humans, animals and the land. The film invites reflection on violence, the protection of nature and our responsibility in relation to the animal world.

Meanwhile, ***Trade Secret***, directed by Abraham Joffe, received a **Special Mention for International Documentary**. Filmed over six years and across thirteen countries, it follows three people investigating the international trade in polar bear parts and skins. The documentary questions the boundaries between conservation and commercial exploitation, focusing on the interests that can shape efforts to protect endangered species.

The ceremony concluded with a **screening of *The Lake***, directed by Abby Ellis and produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, in its Spanish premiere. The documentary explores the severe ecological crisis threatening Utah's Great Salt Lake through the stories of scientists and others working to find solutions and avert the collapse of one of the most important ecosystems in the United States.

During the awards ceremony, the President of the Parliament of Catalonia, **Josep Rull**, announced the recent approval of the declaration designating SUNCINE a **"Film Festival of Strategic Interest in Catalonia."** This recognition opens a path towards the protection of our cultural heritage.

For **Jaume Gil**, the Festival's director, "The unprecedented response from audiences reaffirms the need for SUNCINE, both for the general public and for the film and audiovisual industries. The strong presence of filmmakers from all over the world confirms that SUNCINE is a leading festival in the sector."

Claudio Lauria, SUNCINE's founder and president, added: "The fact that the Parliament of Catalonia has recently declared SUNCINE a festival of strategic interest shows the need for a legal framework that enables the Government of Catalonia to take a further step towards protecting long-standing events with national and international prestige across the different artistic disciplines that form part of our cultural heritage. This recognition is an honour for us and an opportunity to open a path that still lies ahead."

Today, SUNCINE is much more than a festival. It is a platform for communication, awareness and action; a meeting point for art, science and society that shows how audiovisual storytelling can inspire change and build hope. Under the motto **"SUNCINE33. Cinema that leaves a mark,"** this edition has once again championed the power of stories to transform the way we see and relate to our planet.

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