

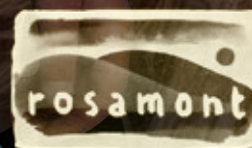
directed by CRISTINA GROȘAN

ORDINARY FAILURES



XOVA
FILM

LAO
KOOON
FILMGROUP



Česká televize



“

You can't help but take notice when Grosan has made something so undeniable.

THE MOVEABLE FEST

A promotional image for a film featuring two women in yellow, high-collared dresses with floral patterns. They are standing side-by-side, looking at each other. The background is a wall with a large, light-colored floral pattern. The lighting is soft and warm, highlighting the women's faces and the texture of their dresses.

“

A grimly bittersweet
portrait

ION CINEMA

“

The women don't have to say
anything—the audience
can see and feel it

DEADLINE

“

A visually captivating
drama

CINEUROPA

**BEST DIRECTOR
UNDER 40**
Premio Autrici Under 40 *Valentina Pedicini*
VENEZIA A NAPOLI. IL CINEMA ESTESO
VENICE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL


16. QUEER LION NOMINATION
VENICE INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL


**GIORNATE
degli AUTORI**


Festival Internacional
de Cine de Gijón


IFFO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
OF OTTAWA

OFFSCREEN


CIFF CLEVELAND
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL

F+ **FEBIOFEST**
Bratislava
29. medzinárodný filmový festival


**GENEVA
INTERNATIONAL
FILM
FESTIVAL**


**International Film
Festival of India**

**AFI
EUROPEAN
UNION FILM
SHOWCASE**  **SILVER**

goEast >
official selection

**CROSSING
EUROPE**
film festival linz
official selection

FESTIVAL SELECTION (ONGOING)

Venice International Film Festival , Giornate degli Autori **in competition*

Venezia a Napoli. Il cinema esteso

Geneva International Film Festival **in competition*

Gijón International Film Festival **in competition*

International Film Festival of India, Goa

AFI Silver Screen European Showcase

International Film Festival of Ottawa **in competition*

Cleveland International Film Festival **in competition*

3Kino International Film Festival **in competition*

Offscreen Film Festival

Finále Plzeň International Film Festival

Febiofest International Film Festival

Cinefest Miskolc

SELECTION CONFIRMED, NOT YET ANNOUNCED:

goEast International Film Festival **in competition*

Crossing Europe International Film Festival **in competition*

Ceau Cinema!

THEATRICAL RELEASE

Czech Republic

October 13

Bontonfilm

Hungary

October 27

Vertigo Media

Italy

TBC - Rosamont

Slovakia

TBC - Superfilm

VOD RELEASE

Netflix: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary

Cinego: Hungary



SYNOPSIS

A misfit teenager, an anxious mother, and a recent widow see their day interrupted by a mysterious natural phenomenon. As their world descends into chaos, the three women struggle to find their place in life.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Barely managing: this seems to describe our daily life, while we try to handle whatever is thrown at us. To avoid breaking down completely, a widow hasn't allowed herself to grieve. A queer teenager is struggling to be someone she's not, just to please her parents. An unemployed mother is ashamed to ask for help. Caught up in their personal failures, they are unable to see the bigger picture. Something is happening outside.

In the midst of a world collapsing, they need to find each other, slow down, and listen. Their struggle has a point. It is the ache of a new world being born.



INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

The catastrophic events depicted in your film may be fictional, but the resulting feelings of incertitude and fragility are strongly echoing with the current zeitgeist. To what extent were you impacted by current events when developing this story and these three women?

I started developing this story back in 2018, with writer Klára Vlasáková, who had already written a first draft. In the beginning, we thought we were doing something with a strong touch of sci-fi, but during the three years we worked on the script, the world around us radically changed. When the pandemic hit, we were locked up in a small Czech village to work on the screenplay. *The misinformation and confusion coming from the authorities in our script were strangely similar to how the governments of our countries were handling the first waves of the pandemic.* Come 2022, and we have a war raging at our doorstep. The chaos, smoke and eerie skyline I see now in the news, draw a strong parallel with our setup and visual choices in the film. Our story has become more real than we could have ever imagined, or wanted, for that matter. But these things don't come to existence all of a sudden. There were many elements, building up over the years.

In what ways did you use fictional and supernatural events to heighten the personal dramas of your characters?

A recent widow, Hana, is too afraid to allow herself to grieve. Teenager Tereza's search for identity is hindered by a strict mother who is trying to mold her daughter in her own image. Silva, an unemployed woman in her early 30ies has doubts about how fit she is as a mother, or as a human being at all. *Each character is focused on preserving a painful status quo that is preventing them from growing.* Neither of them reach out, sinking into disconnection and loneliness.

But something is happening outside, in the grander scheme of things. A strange natural event is quietly growing in the background. It is putting more and more pressure on the characters, eventually derailing their one specific day. They cross paths, helping each other on the way. This chaos forces the characters to reconsider their position in life, prioritize and seek others, and pursue a true connection. If I've learned anything from the past two years' states of necessity, it is that we're in this together. We're much stronger as a whole, than each in our isolated bubbles. *I believe in the reparatory power of the many.*

How did you find the main actresses, and how did you create a link between the three of them?

I spent one and a half year meeting Czech actors during the casting process, and for the role of teenager Tereza I auditioned more than 700 girls.

There are three universes that connect, so I needed more actors than usual to bring these stories to life. Casting director Maja Hamplová understood that I was not just looking for interesting faces, but for a spark between the actors. My Czech isn't perfect, some actors felt more confident in other languages, so I found myself doing casting not just in English, but also in my beginner Spanish or the French I last used in highschool!

I have a method which I started using on my previous film (*Things Worth Weeping For*), and that proved to be even more helpful here, because of the intertwining storylines. In the rehearsals, using improvisation, we tried to build the characters' past. We tried to see where Tereza's ongoing conflicts come from, where Silva's sense of failing comes from, and what life Hana previously had with her husband. It wasn't about text, but about creating a common reality, even visual memories of previous events, so when we come to set, we all have access to this universe. It was a precious asset to have, as the 32 days filming spread over 2 months, shooting in a non-chronological order. The actors needed to know where the characters were coming from, and where they were going.

These three characters come from three social backgrounds, which gives us a chance to see unhappiness in many different colors: the well-off woman in her mid 60ies is as lonely as the young mother who is raising her son in a modest one room apartment. Then there's the wannabe middle class family who tries to look richer, instead of focusing on creating actual connections.

How did you work with your director of photography and your crew to create this cinematic atmosphere of the film?

I was looking for a sense of looming danger, the feeling of a world that is ending, but have it be charming enough that you want to be part of this

extinction. Signs of a strange phenomenon are appearing every now and then, but they're always in the background. With cinematographer Márk Győri we share a child-like fascination for the mysterious, so *we were looking for ways to keep this mystery intact in each frame*. The goal was not to produce beautiful images for the sake of beauty. I needed images that tease, that have a dramaturgy, and contrast. In a warm pink light, Hana starts her day, but there's black water coming out of her tap. In a blissful sunlit garden Tereza's mother is making party arrangements when a paper decoration suddenly catches fire. The camera walks us around, letting the viewer put together the hidden meanings.

Production designer Antonín Šilar and art director Lucie Sedlaková joined that train of thought by animating this world with the character's personalities. Geeky Tereza doesn't have posters on her wall, instead she has a bubbly light projection above her bed. Silva and her partner let their son draw directly on the wall of their one room apartment. Hana's fancy condo opens a world to her own inner state: dead plants, unwashed dishes and clothes lying around, untouched for weeks, maybe months.

Could you tell us about your influences, especially for the supernatural scenes in the film?

I drew inspiration from existing but rare natural phenomena, like St. Elmo's fire, where a luminous plasma creates a very strange discharge in the air, or the more common aurora borealis. We were also looking at man-made catastrophes, like the destructive 1991 Kuwaiti oil fires or the 2021 Turkey wildfires whose smoke plumes spreading over the Mediterranean were visible even in satellite images. We're depicting a phenomenon of energetic disturbance that manifests itself with visible light, electricity and tidal forces boiling up from inside the Earth. During the shooting of our film, a rare tornado swept through South

Moravia and storms knocked down trees in Prague. Going to set one morning I passed by such a tree, which we included later in the film, with the children walking over its huge roots. During location scouting, a large warehouse caught fire in the outskirts of Prague. I shot that with my phone as a reference for VFX, but we ended up including it in the film, along with the smoke from our own explosion tests.

Concerning the visual aspect of our locations, I was interested in creating a universe of concrete, showing a Prague that's I haven't seen often in films, full of brutalist and neo-functional buildings, monumental and geometrical. For me, *the contrast between this concrete jungle and the humans that inhabit it, shows how small and vulnerable we really are.*

With today's context, we see more and more films set in an apocalyptic setting. But ORDINARY FAILURES has an additional layer of a new beginning, a "rising dawn". Do you think that we are, as these women, at a non-return point? And what can we do?

This layer of hope— not guaranteed salvation, but the prospect for some resurrection— is very important in this film. *If there's any chance for progress or even survival, it's in the faith that things are not final,* we can still do something, there is room for improvement. Teenager Tereza takes things into her own hands and ends up being more adult than the grownup themselves. Hana can't go on anymore in her old ways, she must let herself grieve. And Silva's needs to crawl out of the victim's position, and ask for help: she's lucky, she's got someone to give it to her.

I think humanity has often felt it was at a point of no return, but we're here now, in this broken world, and we need to keep on living in it.

It's not the time to avoid trouble, to wait for things to fall back into place. They won't. It's time to bend, adjust, grow, "stay with the trouble", as one American writer, Donna J. Haraway puts it. This resilience and elasticity allows us to grow into stronger individuals, a very much needed trait in these times. To find our lost ways to each other- this is what I strive for.



Click to download the interview as text.

CREW

INCLUDING
NATIONALITY

Director: Cristina Groșan ^{HU/RO} *second feature

Screenplay: Klára Vlasáková ^{CZ}

Cinematography: Márk Győri ^{HU}

Editor: Anna Meller ^{HU}

Set designer: Antonín Šilar ^{CZ}

Casting: Maja Hamplová ^{CZ}

Sound: Filippo Barracco ^{IT}, Ivan Caso ^{IT}, Pavel Jan ^{CZ}

Music: Jonatán Pastirčák ^{SK}

Costume Designer: Petra Krčmářová ^{CZ}

Make-up artist: Eva Ungrová-Malíková ^{CZ}

VFX supervisor: Zoltán Benyo ^{HU}

Colorist: Sebastiano Greco ^{IT}

Producer: Marek Novák ^{CZ}

Co-producers: Judit Stalter ^{HU},

Marica Stocchi ^{IT}, Monika Lošťáková ^{SK}

Zuzana Jankovičová ^{SK}, Simona Hrušovská ^{SK}

Veronika Kocourková ^{SK}

Supported by: Czech Film Fund

Eurimages, National Film Institute Hungary

Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Cultural Activities and Tourism (MiBACT)

Czech Television, ARTE G.E.I.E.

Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Prague Film Fund

Friuli Venezia Giulia Audiovisual Fund

Pilsen Region, Regione Lazio, Filmová NADACE



CAST

HANA: Tatjana Medvecká ^{CZ}

TEREZA: Nora Klimešová ^{CZ}

SILVA: Beáta Kaňoková ^{CZ}

EDITA, TEREZA'S MOM: Vica Kerekes ^{HU}

STANISLAV, TEREZA'S DAD: Rostislav Novák jr. ^{CZ}

KAROLÍNA, SILVA'S PARTNER: Jana Stryková ^{CZ}

DAVID, SILVA'S SON: Adam Berka ^{CZ}

VÁCLAV, IN THERAPY WITH HANA: Luboš Veselý ^{CZ}

TECHNICAL SPECS.

Original title: Běžná selhání

Int' title: Ordinary Failures

World premiere: Venice / Giornate degli Autori 2022

Length: 84 minutes

Year: 2022

Original language: Czech

Category: Fiction

Genre: drama/dystopia

Picture and ratio: Color / 2,39:1

Sound: 5.1

Format: DCP

Produced by: Xova Film ^{CZ}

Co-produced by Laokoon Cinema ^{HU}, Rosamont ^{IT},

Czech Television ^{CZ}, Super film ^{SK}





CRISTINA GROSAN DIRECTOR'S BIO

Cristina Groșan is a Hungarian-Romanian filmmaker and visual artist. Her film *“Ordinary Failures”* premiered at the 79th Venice International Film Festival in the Giornate degli Autori sidebar section in 2022, where she received the *Best Director Under 40* independent award. The film is currently on its international festival circuit, while also being acquired by Netflix for several European territories. Her debut film *“Things Worth Weeping For”* (2021) premiered at the Sarajevo International Film Festival and went on to screen at various festivals worldwide, while also being distributed in Hungarian and Romanian cinemas. In addition to her feature film work, Cristina believes in the short film as an art form in itself. Since graduating from university in 2012, she has directed six short films. Her most recent film *“Along Came a Prince”* (2020) is an exploration of consent from two points of view, reversing the usual gender roles and stereotypes we associate with them.

Selected filmography:

THINGS WORTH WEEPING FOR - 84 min - 2021

ALONG CAME A PRINCE – 22 min – 2020

NIGHT PAINTING - 17 min - 2016

HOLIDAY AT THE SEASIDE - 16 min - 2013

SPUTNIK - 11 min - 2011

MAREK NOVÁK

XOVA FILM led by Marek Novák is a Prague-based production company with auteur-driven, eclectic profile, aiming to produce audiovisual works with authentic creative vision.

The company was established in 2014, starting with one-off TV documentaries (**FAR FROM MAIDAN** by Michal Varga), experimental/hybrid films (**VIENNA CALLING** by Petr Šprincl) and feature documentaries (**CIRCUS RWANDA** by Michal Varga), gradually turning to fiction features as well (**ERHART** by Jan Březina, **ORDINARY FAILURES** by Cristian Grosan). The company is now solely operated by producer Marek Novák and focuses on projects of upcoming talents, fiction and documentary, both as a majority and a minority producer.

Marek graduated Prague's FAMU, is a graduate of **EAVE Producers Workshop** 2019, Berlinale Talents, Emerging Producers 2020 and is 2021's **Producer on the Move**. Marek is a member of the European Film Academy, the Czech Audiovisual Producers Association and its Ethical Committee.





JUDIT STALTER

Laokoon Filmgroup, one of the most active production companies in Hungary, recently opened a US branch in New York. Laokoon Filmgroup is owned and lead by producers Judit Stalter, Gábor Sipos and Gábor Rajna. The company is mostly known for their **ground-breaking, critically acclaimed Holocaust drama “*Son of Saul*”**, awarded at the most prestigious festivals and film events worldwide, recipient of prizes such as the **Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival**, the **Golden Globe** and the **Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film**.

The company’s producers focus on developing and producing high-quality auteur feature films, creative documentaries and short films. The company is active in various genres, from art-house features to commercials, TV series (HBO), and documentaries. One of their goals is to discover new voices and support their projects. Since 2002 Laokoon Filmgroup, as a production company, has completed more than **25 feature films as a main or minority production partner, more than 30 short fiction films and 10 short- and full-length documentaries**.

Judit Stalter and Cristina Groşan have worked together creatively since 2018, from script development up until the distribution of “*Things Worth Weeping For*”, her debut feature film, in spite of difficulties brought by the pandemic. Judit continued to work with Cristina also on “*Ordinary Failures*”, which she joined in 2020, while still in development, managing to be the first minority partner to secure funding for the film, and the only minority producer to secure national release of the film in local cinemas.



*In a way, it's really lovely. The old times are ending
and the unknown is coming.*

ordinaryfailures.com

XOVA
FILM

LAO
KOOON
FILMGROUP

rosamont

Česká televize

SUPERFILM

TOTEM
FILMS