

# LAPILLI

a soft film about hard matter



Karlovy Vary  
International Film Festival  
Proxima Competition

written and directed by *Paula Ďurinová*  
producer *Matej Sotník*  
creative producer *Viera Čákanyová*  
co-producer *Paula Ďurinová*  
director of photography *Paula Ďurinová*  
original music *Petra Hermanová*  
sound design *Agnese Menguzzato, Paula Ďurinová*  
dramaturgist *Dane Komljen*  
script editor *Tamara Antonijević*  
editors *Paula Ďurinová Deniz Şimşek*  
grading *Dominik Jursa*

producer

guča  
films

with financial support

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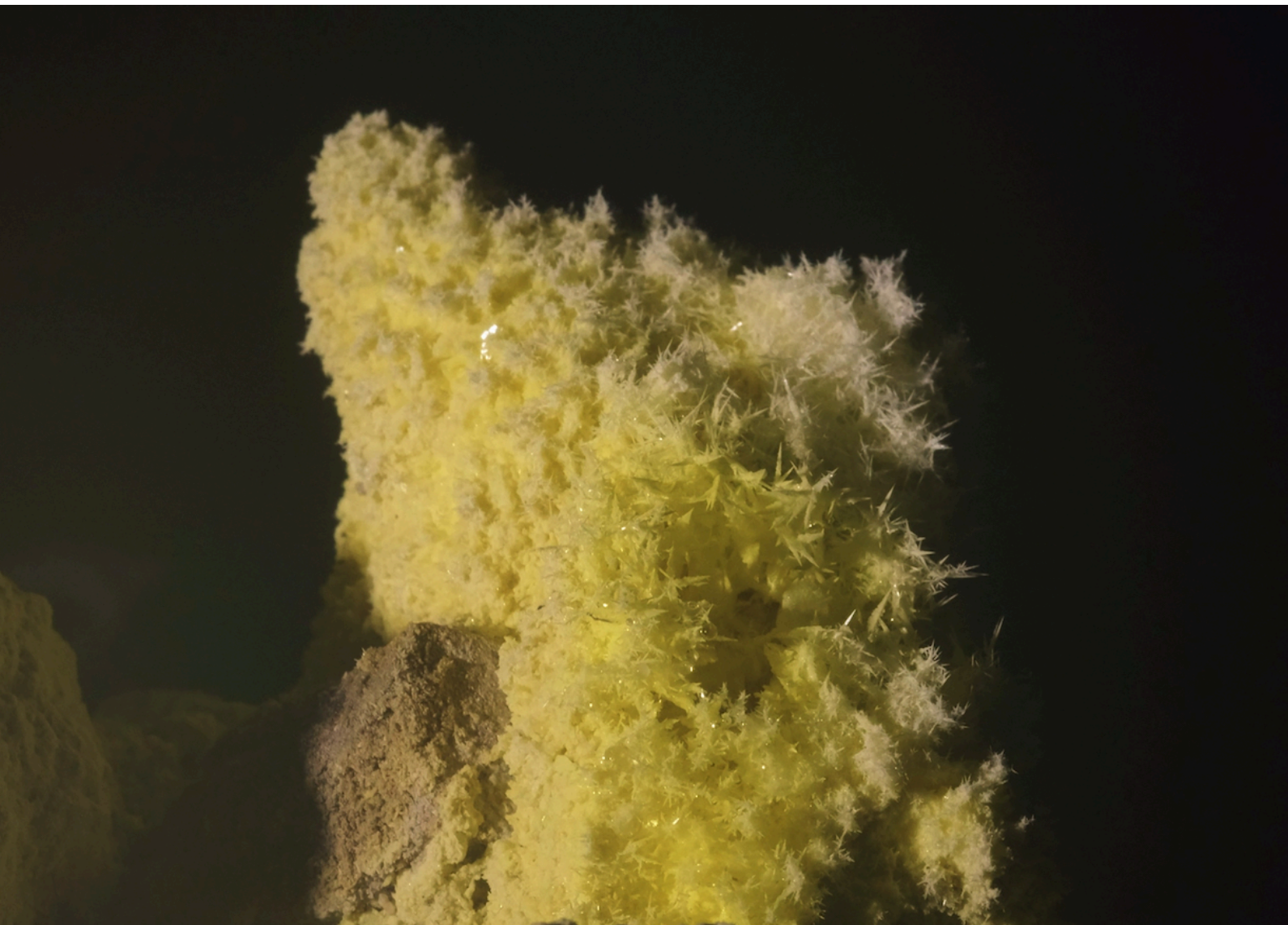
written and directed by Paula Ďurinová  
*Slovakia / Germany, 2024, 65 min.*

## **TAGLINE**

A soft film about hard matter.

## **SYNOPSIS**

From the sea, through dark caverns, to volcanic deserts, LAPILLI is a personal reckoning that dives deep into hard matter. Traversing through rocky landscapes, director Paula Ďurinová deals with the sudden loss of her grandparents. An unexpected disappearance uncovers a new horizon. Strings of old autoharps now resonate in the gorge. Phases of grief unfold in this emerging ecosystem, offering a perspective full of empathy for minerals and life that is no more.



## **INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR PAULA ĐURINOVÁ**

**LAPILLI is your debut feature-length film. It is very personal and was inspired by coping with the loss of your grandparents. What gave you the idea to embark on a journey through rocks?**

When my grandparents passed away unexpectedly during the pandemic, I was faced with a new reality. My rational self researched the stages and progression of grief to know what to expect, all of which was soon lost in oblivion. Shortly after their passing, I became obsessed with the story of the once-fourth-largest lake in the world, the Aral Sea, which almost disappeared in our lifetime. Images of rocks, stones and rocky valleys began to appear in my mind. I could not consciously say why, but I decided to follow my intuition and visit some rocky places. Perhaps subconsciously I knew that this had something to do with my grief. The hard matter gave me a sense of pause, of frozen time, but also a projection of something in its final stage. Observing its size, hardness, and position. The time it might have taken to create and conserve them. As I immersed myself in the rock material, I realised that this was the time and space I was spending with my grandparents.

Making the film became an outlet for me to be with my grandparents and try to come to terms with what their loss meant to me. The grieving process and the filmmaking process merged. At some point, the intuitive search for places and meanings turned into observing the meaning of these places and my relationship with them while thinking about my grandparents' legacy. My grandfather was an experimental physicist, a scientist at heart, my grandmother was a very spiritual person and a teacher by profession.

**The film is guided by your voiceover, which is made up of different layers. Fragments of memories of your grandparents as well as narrative of your emotional transformation and your relationship to the minerals. How did you choose to work with these layers?**

Writing the voiceover was the most challenging part. I knew I wanted to work with text and my voice. I took notes while spending time with the stones, raw, unprocessed notes that surfaced and connected to the places and their significance in the mourning. I also felt that the voiceover was an outlet to report back to my grandparents, to tell them what I discovered, as I did when they were alive. As you mentioned, the voiceover has several layers of narration, and I like the interplay and that it's not entirely clear to whom it's speaking: to me, to the rock, to my grandparents, or the viewer. The essayistic way of writing is very close to my heart. I was very happy to have the support of Lapilli's dramaturgist Dane Komljen, co-editor Deniz Şimşek and writer Tamara Antonijević in this process of writing and editing.

**The metaphor of rocks, where life once existed in the form of water, takes us deeper into geological time. Your film contains several references to various theories or philosophy. What inspired you in the making of it?**

As I mentioned before, the film grew out of following my intuition and not asking too many questions about why I needed to be with the rocks. As I progressed, I became curious about philosophies, and interpretations of the landscape - deserts, volcanoes, caves, etc. It was also a moment when these places combined different interpretations - let's say geological and mystical. There I rediscovered my grandparents' story and everything made more sense.

In the process, I became intensely drawn to cave environments, but couldn't understand why I needed to spend time there. It was only after some research and discussions with a friend from my hometown, Peter Laučík, an anthropologist who researches the anthropology of the underground, that I understood it to be a place of deep immersion in loss and trauma, but also a safe space to 'meet' my grandparents again and prepare for life after. I was also inspired by the writings exploring deep ecology and geological time, of writers and researchers such as Vaclav Cílek and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen.

**The singer and musician Petra Hermanova composed the music for the film. Her autoharp compositions penetrate deep inside the listener. How did the collaboration with Petra evolve?**

I knew from the beginning that I wanted to work with Petra on the music for the film. Petra was going through the loss of her father at the same time as I was with my grandparents. She spent 2 years working on her album *In Death's Eyes*. While I was immersed in the caves and rocky environments, she was immersed in composing and recording with organs and autoharps. We shared the joy of this process, even though it was a difficult one. I felt that we had both found our way of mourning, Petra with music, I with film.



Her music composition became an integral part of the film. When I wasn't able or ready to say something with my voice, Petra expressed it with music. She has a collection of old broken autoharps that do not function the way this instrument should. We worked specifically with them. The material element, the touch of the string, and the resonance are what we enjoyed working with. I have the feeling that Petra understood the meaning of the landscapes and images, and when I listened to her compositions, I often had a shiver in my heart because they correspond to what I was feeling at those moments of the filming. I must also mention a close collaboration with the musician Agnese Menguzzato on the sound design of the film. The soundscape of the film is pretty much composed from scratch. We spent a long time composing sounds that represent, for example, the memory of the body, the landscape or the material.

**Where was the film shot and according to what key did you choose these locations?**

I had quite a storyline that was driving me, but I wasn't too rigid about it. However, I was quite obsessive about researching locations, which is also a kind of work I like to do in general. For example, I learned about the inflammatory processes in the body in the early stages of grief, and I looked for a representation of these processes in the landscape. I used a similar approach when researching most of the locations, but the most important thing was intuition, the need to spend time there.

I knew I wanted to make the film as a journey. From the disappearing lake, the retreat of the water, after which we emerge into rocky landscapes. Although the matter is no longer shaped by water, other processes become visible. There is no mention of specific places in the film because I wanted to connect them in an imaginary environment. I filmed in my home country, Slovakia, especially the mountains and caves there are very important to me. I filmed a lot in Greece and Georgia, countries with which I have developed a strong connection, and it was important for me to immerse myself in their landscapes while grieving.

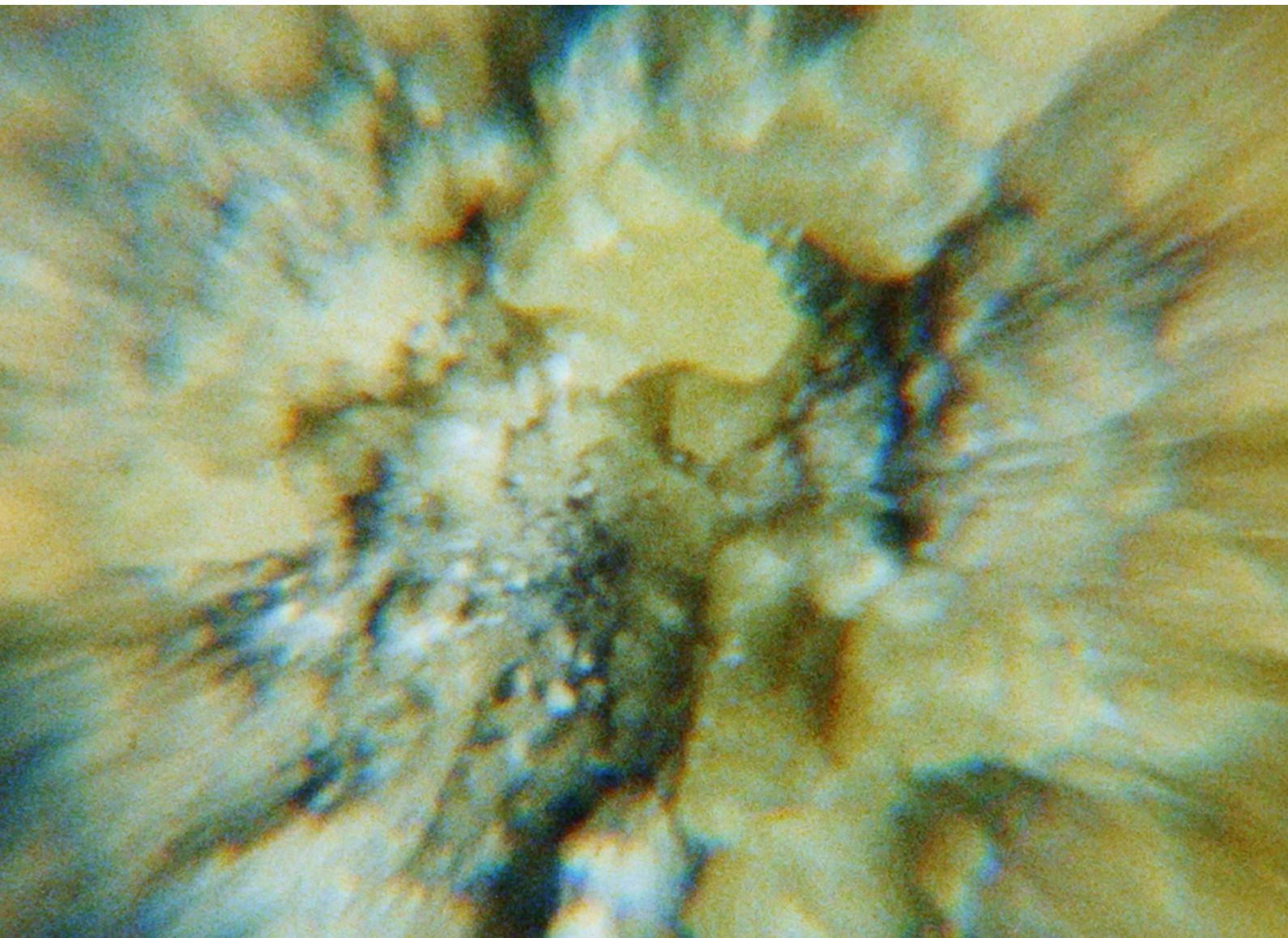
**You are the cinematographer of your short films as well as LAPILLI. In your style there is a feel of sensitive observation and admiration for the landscape. How do you think about visuality? What is at the center of your focus when you are behind the camera?**

For LAPILLI it was important for me to spend time in these places and to be alone in the environment. I decided to shoot the film myself (some scenes were shot in collaboration with close friends Deniz Kozerawski and David Stichling). During the filming, I was curious, and fascinated, but also very impatient and nervous. I hiked a lot, I was restless, and the images offered a rest for my thoughts and sighs. I wanted to combine seeing, feeling and simply being in this space, not trying to change it or influence its existence with my presence. Many places I first researched while looking at photographs and this photographic approach was somehow very close to me while working with a camera.

I decided to work with a digital camera, but I needed something that had been around longer than digital technology. I decided to work with old photographic Carl Zeiss lenses and they brought me another layer of materiality that I was engaging with. But I also needed an analogue aspect, something that was more imprinted. A super 8mm sequence of images became a repository of lived grief, inscribed in the material - or transcribed from the material and inscribed in me.

*Paula and I have gone through a tectonic experience in parallel. First we lost together, then we grieved together, until underneath that weight a work was formed. I remember that Paula was filming in the caves on the same days that I was in a cathedral recording a pipe organ for my album. We were both going through a really joyful, transformative moment. By the time I started composing for Lapilli, I had been working with the theme of death for almost two years. So this was an opportunity to extend and inhabit the same space with similar means, but with a very different set of constraints. In my practice, the usual starting point is silence. This time it was an already emotionally saturated image, so I had to construct different poetic principles. The core of the music is mainly me trying to coax a swan song out of the most broken autoharps in my collection, and accompanying these dying instruments with the steady breath of an organ.*

Petra Hermanova, music composer



## ABOUT DIRECTOR



### Paula Ďurinová

Paula Ďurinová (1987) is a filmmaker, visual artist, and writer based in Berlin. She is interested in creating (utopian) landscapes and exploring forms of resistance. In recent years, she worked on film and art projects in Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia and Germany. Her short films were presented at Sarajevo IFF, Ji.hlava IDFF, One World Prague or CinéDOC Tbilisi. She studied narrative and experimental film at the Universität der Künste Berlin and worked as artistic director and curator of ACUD Galerie in Berlin. Her feature debut "Lapilli" will make its world premiere at the 58th Karlovy Vary IFF in the Proxima Competition. Paula Ďurinová is currently working on her second feature film about collective anxiety with the working title "It's Not Your Fault".

### Filmography

2024	<i>Lapilli</i>
2023	<i>Constant - an Homage to the Apartment</i> – short
2018	<i>Passing</i> – short
2016	<i>Interviews</i> – short

## CREDITS

<b>Written and directed by</b>	Paula Ďurinová
<b>Producer</b>	Matej Sotník
<b>Creative producer</b>	Viera Čákanyová
<b>Co-producer</b>	Paula Ďurinová
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Paula Ďurinová
<b>Original music</b>	Petra Hermanova
<b>Sound design</b>	Agnese Menguzzato Paula Ďurinová
<b>Dramaturgist</b>	Dane Komljen
<b>Script editor</b>	Tamara Antonijević
<b>Editors</b>	Paula Ďurinová Deniz Şimşek
<b>Grading</b>	Dominik Jursa
<b>Additional cinematography</b>	Denis Kozerawski David Stichling
<b>Sound Mix</b>	Jochen Jezussek
<b>Financially supported by</b>	Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Slovak Arts Council, Literary Fund of Slovakia
<b>Supported by</b>	Universität der Künste Berlin





## ABOUT THE COMPANY

guča films is an independent film production company based in Bratislava. Established in 2013 by Viera Čákanyová, Alexandra Gojdičová, Dorota Zacharová and later joined by Matej Sotník.

Our films have been presented or awarded at international film festivals such as Berlinale, Karlovy Vary IFF, Sheffield Doc/Fest, RIDM Montreal and many others.

At the crossroads of various genres, media and themes that resonate today, we develop our projects in international co-productions. Our philosophy is to support creative freedom without compromises.

[www.gucafilms.com](http://www.gucafilms.com)



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### High-resolution stills:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UPtmtYdx5YLR0Vs\\_hHmorddVvNKc6jY](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UPtmtYdx5YLR0Vs_hHmorddVvNKc6jY)

### Trailer:

[https://youtu.be/Z\\_3h8i9TJmA?si=BL3UkwM\\_EvO5xuIP](https://youtu.be/Z_3h8i9TJmA?si=BL3UkwM_EvO5xuIP)

### Director's photo:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MO8ShWw4d3Gwli53PN98SsT9r0107DU4?usp=share link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MO8ShWw4d3Gwli53PN98SsT9r0107DU4?usp=share_link)