

# First Look 2022

By [David Hudson](#)  
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Sergei Loznitsa's *Babi Yar. Context* (2021)

Having offered a [Second Look](#) at a few highlights of the past ten editions last week, this year's [First Look](#), the Museum of the Moving Image's festival of new and innovative international cinema, will open tonight with Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović's *Murina*. Set on a sunny Croatian island and focusing on a young woman determined to break free from her domineering father, *Murina* won the Camera d'Or, the award for best first feature, at Cannes last summer.

"Kusijanović and Frank Graziano's sharply observant script, brought to scintillating life by DP Héléne Louvart's gorgeously stopped-down, moody cinematography, is especially attuned to the torpor and frustrations of living everyday life in a place a passing tourist might mistake for paradise," writes [Jessica Kiang](#) in *Variety*. *Murina* will be preceded by Tsai Ming-liang's *The Night*, a nineteen-minute portrait of Hong Kong that [ScreenAnarchy's Dustin Chang](#) calls "an amalgam of all Tsai's films in a small package: urban loneliness."

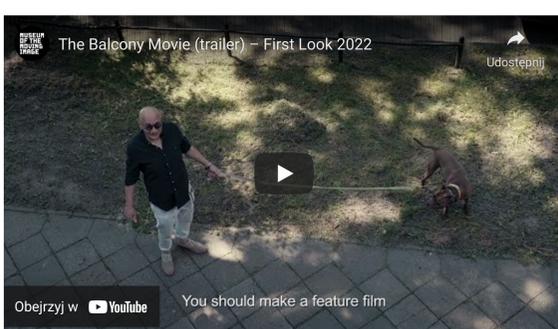
As MoMI curators [Eric Hynes](#) and [Edo Choi](#) mention in their conversation with Projection Booth podcast host Mike White, the dark shadow of Putin's war hangs over much of the First Look 2022 program. *Reflection*, written, directed, shot, and edited by Ukrainian filmmaker Valentyn Vasyanovych, is set at the beginning of the conflict in 2014. Kyiv-based surgeon Serhiy (Roman Lutskiy) heads to the front in Donbas, where he is promptly captured and tortured. "This is a singularly brutal film, not just in content but in its demands on the viewer," writes [Jonathan Romney](#) in *Screen*. "But there's no doubt that Vasyanovych is a filmmaker of uncompromising boldness and brilliance."

Sergei Loznitsa's *Mr. Landsbergis*, the winner of the top award at last fall's International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, is anchored by an interview with Vytautas Landsbergis, a founding member of Sąjūdis, the political movement behind Lithuania's drive for independence from the Soviet Union. That hard-won battle was fought from 1988 to 1991, and in *Variety*, [Guy Lodge](#) suggests that viewers may be surprised that "a four-hour record of dense political negotiations and standoffs, braided with one extended talking-head interview, should go by as quickly as it does." *Mr. Landsbergis* "stands as a major achievement in a career not given to slightness of subject or form."

In *Babi Yar. Context*, Loznitsa investigates the massacre of 33,771 Jews carried out by the Nazis in September 1941 in a ravine in Kyiv. "Editing film and stills from state and public archives in Russia, Germany, and Ukraine, some of it never seen before, Loznitsa creates a fascinating and quietly devastating chronicle of invasion, occupation, and slaughter," writes [Demetrios Matheou](#) in *Screen*. "As ever, the Ukrainian director doesn't labor his film with voiceover or overt authorial steers. Yet this is close to home, and it's impossible not to feel that he's holding his country to account; for while this was a Nazi extermination, it came with a degree of collusion."

Kirill Serebrennikov, who was the artistic director of the Gogol Center in Moscow until he was [fired](#) last month following a trumped-up embezzlement charge, has spoken out against Russia's annexation of Crimea and in support of the country's LGBTQ community. Introducing his interview with Serebrennikov for *Film Comment* last summer, [Jordan Cronk](#) called *Petrov's Flu* "a horrifying portrait of modern Russia from an artist who knows a thing or two about the government's deleterious hold on his country's collective psyche. Based on a novel by Alexey Salnikov, *Petrov's Flu*—Serebrennikov's eighth feature—follows the title character, a mechanic and moonlighting comic book artist played by Semyon Serzin, on a nocturnal journey through the dark heart of Moscow in which memories from his past and visions of his future collide in a slipstream of present-day anxieties."

For *Filmmaker*, [Lauren Wissot](#) talks with Iliana Sosa about *What We Leave Behind*, which has just premiered at SXSW. A portrait of her eighty-nine-year-old grandfather who has returned from the U.S. to his home in rural Mexico, the film is "an astonishingly intimate labor of love," writes [Wissot](#). MoMI will also present Egyptian director Omar El Zohairy's *Feathers*, the winner of the top prize at Critics' Week in Cannes, and two top award winners in [Locarno](#), Indonesian director Edwin's *Vengeance is Mine, All Others Pay Cash* and Chinese filmmaker Qiu Jiongjiong's *A New Old Play*.



First Look wraps on Sunday with *The Balcony Movie*, a film that delivers on its title—Pawel Lozinski shot it entirely from his balcony in Warsaw. "Through smart structuring, Lozinski is able to build and break momentum, create humor and pathos and, ultimately, craft a work that approaches a nondefinitive state of Poland today," writes [Jeff Reichert](#) at *Reverse Shot*. "He does so much with so little—essentially one camera angle (with slight variations), a few microphones and a curiosity about the human condition—that it makes the heaving lengths many contemporary nonfiction films go through to convince of their value almost laughable."

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