



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Poetry Foundation and Chicago International Children's Film Festival Award  
\$10,000 Poetry Film Prize**

CHICAGO — The Poetry Foundation and Facets Multi-Media are proud to announce that *Fear of Snakes*, by filmmaker Andreas Mendritzki, is the winner of the second annual Poetry Film Prize. The prize awards \$10,000 to a filmmaker whose use of verse in film opens new artistic vistas and inspires children to appreciate poetry.

Mendritzki's film is based on the poem of the same name by Canadian poet Lorna Crozier. Unique to the field of poetry as well as to the film industry, the Poetry Film Prize celebrates the best film based on a poem or poet while also recognizing excellence in language and cinematography. Jury-selected from among more than 90 entrants, the award was presented on Sunday, November 1, at the closing night ceremony of the 26th Annual Chicago International Children's Film Festival (CICFF).

The Poetry Film Prize was created as part of *Reel Poetry*, a larger initiative between the Poetry Foundation and CICFF that highlights the possibilities of poetry in films, especially those directed to younger audiences. Based on a young girl's memories of a summer day when she overcame her fear of snakes, Andreas Mendritzki's winning film *Fear of Snakes* (Canada, 2009, 6 minutes) artfully depicts a reflective and intimate poem.

As the filmmaker describes it, "For me, the film—and Crozier's poem—remind me of what 'adults' often forget: Children are much more aware of their surroundings than we give them credit for. They are every bit as attuned to the gravity of events as their older kin—in fact, probably more so."

Nicole Dreiske, founder and artistic director of Facets, underscores the significance of such a prize as it relates to children's learning: "Creating films based on poems gives children a special opportunity to connect to poetry in ways that are richly layered and deeply meaningful. The music, the images, the cinematography, and the poetry reading itself open new sensory and emotive paths in children's minds, and create a unique tapestry of experiences from each poem. By encouraging excellence in this highly specialized area of filmmaking, the Poetry Foundation has created a visionary bridge for children in our digital age to enjoy and appreciate poetry."

"Overwhelmingly, the jury felt that *Fear of Snakes* demonstrates perfectly the way in which a poem can serve as the narrative base of a film," said Anne Halsey, media director for the Poetry Foundation. "Mendritzki is a talented young filmmaker, and we hope that this prize will inspire and enable him to continue bringing poetry to young audiences via film."

Mendritzki's success lies in using a poem as inspiration for creating a narrative that children and adults can relate to. As he points out, "Our lives are marked by specific events—seemingly small events—that for one reason or another lodge themselves into our absorbent young minds. This film speaks about issues that children can undoubtedly comprehend, and about an event similar to ones they might have experienced themselves. It provides them with a short sensorial adventure, an empathetic view of their own fears or those of their friends, brothers, sisters, or cousins. For adults, it is a guided tour back into one of these life-marking moments, and a reminder of our own childhoods and the events that shaped them."

Since graduating from the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema in 2008, Andreas Mendritzki has been actively writing, directing, producing, mixing, and watching movies. He has a particular interest in and love for film sound, and in 2008 he was the winner of the Atlantic Film Festival's Best Sound Design award. Mendritzki is a founding member of the Montreal-based production company GreenGround Productions.

Initiated in 2007, *Reel Poetry* is a multi-program partnership between the Poetry Foundation and the Chicago International Children's Film Festival designed to engage children as audiences, aesthetes, and appreciators of both poetry and film. To date, the program has reached more than 4,360 Chicago-area middle school students. The collaboration celebrates poetry, making the art form's complex beauty and craft relatable to a young audience. Supported by special curriculums for teachers and discussions facilitated by trained media educators, the *Reel Poetry* program is designed for upper-level elementary and middle school students and has garnered the attention of public school teachers and arts educators across the country.

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### **About Facets Multi-Media and the Chicago International Children's Film Festival**

Founded in 1975, Facets Multi-Media is the nation's leading conservator of great film and one of America's foremost cinematheques, screening 300 films a year and hosting tributes, retrospectives, and premieres of films created by artists across the globe. Called "a temple of great cinema" by critic Roger Ebert, Facets' mission is to present and preserve high-quality, multicultural cinema for diverse audiences and to offer seminars, classes, and a broad spectrum of educational and cultural programs for adults and children. The most important of these programs is the Chicago International Children's Film Festival, the largest festival of films for children in North America and the first juried, competitive festival of children's film in the United States. The CICFF is the only children's film event to be recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as an "Academy-qualifying" festival. For more information, please visit [www.cicff.org](http://www.cicff.org).

### **About the Poetry Foundation**

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine and one of the largest literary organizations in the world, exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org).

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