

BERGAMO FILM MEETING

International Film Festival

44th edition, March 7 - 15, 2026

Bergamo Film Meeting pays tribute to Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami and French actor Louis de Funès.

Spanning two distinct eras in film history, the 44th edition of Bergamo Film Meeting - taking place from March 7 to 15 - offers a journey celebrating two key figures of the 20th century. A comprehensive tribute marks the tenth anniversary of Abbas Kiarostami's death: a master of contemporary cinema and driving force behind the revival of Iranian filmmaking between the 1980s and 2000s, the Persian director redefined the relationship between reality, fiction, and perception. The program also honours Louis de Funès, the iconic face of postwar French comedy, who became the embodiment of popular, irresistible physical humour in the 1960s and 1970s, establishing himself as a European cultural phenomenon.

Two eras, two approaches to filmmaking, two opposing visions of cinema—yet both filmmakers shared an extraordinary talent for capturing the spirit of their times while maintaining a dialogue with the here and now.

*The visual identity of BFM 44, created by Studio Suq, is inspired by the films *Le grand restaurant* (The Restaurant, 1966) by Jacques Besnard and *L'aile ou la cuisse* (The Wing or the Thigh?, 1976) by Claude Zidi, starring Louis de Funès.*

Abbas Kiarostami (Tehran, 1940 - Paris, 2016) was one of the most important directors, screenwriters and visual artists of contemporary cinema, a central figure of Iran's second "nouvelle vague" and a leading author of international auteur cinema. After studying at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Tehran, he began working as an advertising graphic designer and an illustrator for children's stories and fairy tales. His exposure to children's literature reveals a shared language between the director and children, which will permeate his entire filmography. Before devoting himself entirely to cinema, he worked on commercials, experimenting with an original filming style based on improvisation and devoid of the typical gimmicks of advertising. From the outset, his films stood out for their essential, austere style, blending fiction and documentary and prompting viewers to question the relationship between reality, truth and representation.

His career as a filmmaker began in 1970 with the short film *Nan va Koutcheh* (The Bread and Alley [tl]), but, after a long series of shorts, the work that brought him international recognition was *Khane-ye doust kodjast?* (Where Is the Friend's House?, 1987), a touching story about a child who tries to return a notebook to a classmate without knowing his home address.

It is the first chapter of the so-called "Koker trilogy" — which also includes *Zendegi va digar hich* (And Life Goes On, 1992) and *Zire darakhshan zeyton* (Through the Olive Trees, 1994) — in which Kiarostami depicts rural Iran and reflects on cinema itself. *And Life Goes On* follows a filmmaker who, after the 1990 earthquake, travels through the affected areas looking for the young actors from the previous film; in *Through the Olive Trees* — awarded with the golden Rosa Camuna at the 1995 edition of Bergamo Film Meeting — a man and a woman play a couple in love, but while the actor is really in love, the actress rejects him.

Prominent among his seminal works is *Nema-ye nazdik* (*Close Up*, 1990). This film-essay reconstructs a famous Iranian news case: a man posing as filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf to infiltrate the life of a middle-class family. By having the real protagonists interpret the story, Kiarostami blurs the boundaries between documentary and fiction, crafting one of the most influential films in the history of modern cinema.

International recognition finally came with *Ta'm e guilass* (*Taste of Cherry*, 1997), winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, the story of a man who wanders around Tehran in his car looking for someone willing to help him die. The film perfectly embodies Kiarostami's cinema: open, philosophical, capable of raising questions without providing definitive answers.

Another milestone is *Bad ma ra khahad bord* (*The Wind Will Carry Us*, 1999), set in a Kurdish village where a film crew waits for an elderly woman to die so they can document her funeral rites. A haunting and contemplative film, it reflects on time, waiting, and the intangible, and was awarded the Grand Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival.

In the early 2000s, Kiarostami furthered his search for new forms with a series of more radical films. *Dah* (*Ten*, 2002) is built around ten conversations filmed almost entirely inside a car, with a woman driving and talking to various passengers. Using minimal staging, the film tackles issues such as the status of women in Iran, divorce and individual freedom. This experience is linked to *10 on Ten* (2004), an educational and introspective film in which Kiarostami reflects on his own work, explains the artistic and theoretical choices behind *Ten*, and offers a first-hand insight into filmmaking.

In *With Five Dedicated to Ozu* (2003), a tribute to Japanese master Yasujiro Ozu, Kiarostami creates five long, static shots filmed by the sea, in which human presence is minimal or absent. Devoid of dialogue and consisting solely of images and natural sounds, the film represents one of the purest expressions of his contemplative cinema.

In the following years, Kiarostami worked increasingly more often outside Iran. In Europe, he directed *Copie conforme* (*Certified Copy*, 2010), filmed in Tuscany and starring Juliette Binoche and William Shimell, an encounter between a woman and a writer that turns into an ambiguous game of roles and identities. The film earned Binoche the award for Best Actress at the Cannes Film Festival. With *Like Someone in Love* (2012), set in Tokyo, Kiarostami explores loneliness and alienation through the unexpected relationship between a young female student and an elderly teacher.

His last work, *24 Frames* (2017), completed shortly before his death, is a sort of an artist's testament: twenty-four paintings inspired by photographs and paintings, in which movement and sound transform static images into meditations on time, nature and the act of looking.

Throughout his career, Abbas Kiarostami directed many documentaries that constitute a significant part of his artistic research. These films examine reality from a raw, open perspective, constantly questioning the boundary between what is performed and what is real. Films such as *Mashgh-e Shab* (*Homework*, 1989), in which Kiarostami engages in dialogue with children and families about the Iranian education system, or *ABC Africa* (2001), in which he follows a group of children in Uganda to investigate life and its challenges in Africa, showcase Kiarostami's attention to childhood, ethics, and the inner workings of society.

Kiarostami was also a poet, photographer and visual artist, with his work exhibited in major international museums such as the MoMA in New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the National Museum of Cinema in Turin and, posthumously, the Centre Pompidou in Paris. However, he will be remembered above all as a seminal figure in international cinema, a master at transforming simplicity into profundity and turning film into a space for poetic, ethical and universal meditation.

Under the patronage of the Kiarostami Foundation

THE FILMS

Khane-ye doust kodjast? (*Where Is the Friend's House?*, 1987)

Nema-ye nazdik (*Close Up*, 1990)

Zendegi va digar hich (*And Life Goes On*, 1992)

Zire darakhshan zeyton (*Through the Olive Trees*, 1994)

Ta'm e guilass (*Taste of Cherry*, 1997)

Bad ma ra khahad bord (*The Wind Will Carry Us*, 1999)

Dah (*Ten*, 2002)

Five Dedicated to Ozu (2003)

10 on Ten (2004)
Copie conforme (*Certified Copy*, 2010)
Like Someone in Love (*Like Someone in Love*, 2012)
24 Frames (2017)

Louis de Funès (Courbevoie 1914 - Nantes 1983, France)

«I'm despicable, and that's what's funny».

(Interview by Alain Rémond with Louis de Funès, *Télérama*, March 1978)

Louis Germain de Funès de Galarza, known simply as Louis de Funès, was one of the greatest comedians in European cinema, the undisputed champion of the French box office from the 1960s to the early 1980s, as well as one of the best-known and most beloved French actors far beyond national borders, even though some critics looked down on his admittedly popular cinema.

The son of Spanish immigrants, de Funès initially trained in theater and music: a jazz enthusiast, he worked extensively as a pianist in Parisian bars during the war years. His musical education profoundly influenced his comedic style, built on rhythm, acceleration, and continuous variation.

Before achieving success, he went through a long apprenticeship: over a hundred minor, marginal roles in post-war cinema, where his extraordinary mimicry and explosive energy were already noticeable.

He was soon noticed by Sacha Guitry, who recognised his comedic power and cast him in several of his films. Still, his first truly central role came with *Ni vu, ni connu* (*Neither Seen nor Recognised*, 1957) by Yves Robert, where he plays a cunning and mischievous poacher, creating an irresistible character full of shrewdness, sharp looks, witty remarks and an exuberant physicality, which immediately became his trademark.

The 1960s marked his ultimate breakthrough. De Funès established himself as the author of his own characters, becoming the undisputed star and symbol of French comedy, from the familiar adventures of the clumsy gendarme of Saint-Tropez to the more daring and parodic exploits of Commissaire Juve in the *Fantômas* trilogy; from the large-scale choral films directed by Gérard Oury (*Le Corniaud*, 1965, *La Grande Vadrouille*, 1966) to comedies built on perfect comic devices such as *Le grand restaurant* (*The Restaurant*, 1966) by Jacques Besnard and *Oscar* (1967) by Édouard Molinaro.

His persona soon became instantly recognisable: hot-tempered patriarchs, conceited aristocrats, greedy swindlers often invested with a bit of power that they exercise clumsily, awkward anti-heroes, petty, timid and incompetent, capable of eliciting laughter and contempt, but also sympathy and compassion. Characters who are more clumsy than mean, more inept than devilish. The comedy of these portraits is based on physicality rather than words: grimaces, snappy gaits, hands and face always in motion, bursts of anger and sudden changes of mood. The body, frequently emphasised by unlikely disguises, becomes the real driving force behind the action, complementing the witty and sharp dialogue. It is no coincidence that de Funès has often been compared to the giants of silent cinema, from Chaplin to Laurel and Hardy. His presence on the scene accelerates time, bringing it to the edge of syncopation, pulling the viewer into a continuous vertigo, often accentuated by frantic chase sequences and sudden twists.

In the 1970s, his partnership with Gérard Oury marked the artistic peak of his career. Films such as *La Folie des grandeurs* (*Delusions of Grandeur*, 1971) – in which he stars alongside Yves Montand – and *Les aventures de Rabbi Jacob* (*The Mad Adventures of Rabbi Jacob*, 1973) – among the most popular French comedies of all time – combine popular comedy with social satire, making de Funès an iconic figure. In *Delusions*, he is a greedy finance minister in 17th-century Spain, ruthlessly expelled from court and seeking revenge. In *Rabbi Jacob*, he is a wealthy Parisian industry magnate, nationalistic and racist, who unwittingly becomes involved in the kidnapping of an Arab revolutionary. His characters became even more of a warped reflection of society's collective vices, offering a chance to laugh at power, middle-class hypocrisy, and a rigidly hierarchical society riddled with stale rituals, polished uniforms, and ceremonious pomp.

In 1975, after suffering a heart attack, de Funès was forced to abandon his theatre commitments and put his film career on hold. No insurer wanted to take the risk of hiring him on a film set, until Claude Zidi, the director of *L'aile ou la cuisse* (*The Wing or the Thigh?*, 1976), managed to secure insurance for two weeks of filming. It was de Funès' last major success, a hilarious comedy about French gastronomic culture, consumerism, modernity, the industrial society and the power of the media.

Critical recognition came with time. François Truffaut was among the first to recognise De Funés' genuine and compelling comedic talent, rooted in his gestures, rhythm, and physical energy. After dominating the box office for two decades, official recognition finally arrived in 1980: Jerry Lewis personally presented him with the César Award for Lifetime Achievement, confirming the universal value of an actor who turned comedy into a universal art form.

In collaboration with FEMA Festival La Rochelle Cinéma

THE FILMS

Ni vu, ni connu (Neither Seen nor Recognised, 1957) by Yves Robert

Fantômas se déchaîne (Fantômas Unleashed, 1965) by André Hunebelle

Le grand restaurant (The Restaurant, 1966) by Jacques Besnard

Oscar (1967) by Edouard Molinaro

La Folie des grandeurs (Delusions of Grandeur, 1971) by Gérard Oury

Les aventures de Rabbi Jacob (The Mad Adventures of Rabbi Jacob, 1973) by Gérard Oury

L'aile ou la cuisse (The Wing or the Thigh?, 1976) by Claude Zidi

Bergamo Film Meeting Onlus Press Office

Ada Tullo +39 349 2674900 press@bergamofilmmeeting.it adatullo33@gmail.com

Michele Boselli +39 339 6890796 michele@bergamofilmmeeting.it