

FILM & MEDIATION GUIDE • SCHOOL & INSTITUTIONAL SCREENINGS

THE SKIN I'M IN



Elena Vialykh • United Kingdom • 14'32

Session 1 "What We Carry Within Us" • Wednesday 16
September 2026 • 7:30 p.m.

SDG 5 — Gender Equality



Through magical realism, colour and texture, a woman reconnects with a part of herself she had left behind. A film about identity, creativity and the freedom to choose one's own path.

Would you like to imagine a screening or activity with us?

This guide accompanies the discovery of the film and offers mediation ideas. For a school, university or institutional screening, the Festival can draw on its network of filmmakers and its film selection to design a tailor-made programme adapted to your audience and objectives.

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THE FILM

Identity, creativity and the freedom to choose your path



SYNOPSIS

A poetic short film rooted in magical realism that explores how women lose and then reclaim parts of themselves.

DIRECTOR

Elena Vialykh

PRODUCTION

Stellatis Miltiadous

THEMES

identity · creativity · vocation · autonomy · social expectations · magical realism · transmission

READING THROUGH SDG 5

Equality: being free to choose your place, your voice and your future

The film can open a discussion around SDG 5 through autonomy, the freedom to choose one's path and the expectations that may weigh on women. Without reducing the film to a single interpretation, mediation can explore what leads someone to set aside a part of themselves, the models of success they are offered, and the conditions needed for everyone to develop their talents, creativity and ambitions.

"In the film, magic represents creativity, hope and the truest part of Nicole's identity."

BEFORE THE SCREENING

- What can lead someone to set aside an important part of themselves?
- Why can some professional or creative paths feel more "legitimate" than others?
- How can clothes, colours or objects express a character's identity?

AFTER THE SCREENING

- What changes visually between Nicole's everyday life and her creative world?
- At what moments does Nicole seem to reclaim her choices and her identity?
- What conditions help everyone pursue a vocation without being limited by expectations or stereotypes?

MEDIATION WORKSHOP

Picking up the threads of your story



Objective: use the textures, colours and creative gestures in the film to reflect on identity, social expectations and the freedom to build one's own path.

How it works

1. Observe - Each participant chooses one visual detail from the film: a fabric, a colour, the watch, the mirror, the attic or a garment.
2. Two voices - On a sheet of paper, create two spaces: "what is expected of me" and "what matters to me". Add words, shapes or colours.
3. Create a fragment - Design a symbolic piece of clothing: a shape for a strength, a colour for a desire, a drawn texture for an obstacle or a source of support.
4. Connect the fragments - As a group, assemble the creations into a garment, cape or collective silhouette representing the freedom to choose one's path.
5. Share - Identify what helps people develop their talents: confidence, education, role models, equal opportunities, support, time and the right to try.



Formats to co-create with the Festival

Screening + guided discussion • SDG 5 pathway • identity and creativity workshop • discussion on stereotypes and equal opportunities • filmmaker or guest encounter, subject to availability.

FILMMAKER VOICE

Interview with Elena Vialykh

**ELENA VIALYKH**

Writer-director

After training and working in dermatology before moving into fashion and then filmmaking, she reflects on the deeply personal origins of the film, magical realism and creativity as a path back to oneself.

What inspired this film? Where did the original idea come from?

The original idea came directly from my own life. I trained and worked as a dermatologist, although deep inside I always dreamed of becoming a fashion designer and working in a creative profession. Eventually I moved into fashion, and later into filmmaking, initially by creating films and visual content for my own brand. The emotional core of *The Skin I'm In* comes from that experience of living one life while feeling called towards another. I respect medicine, and I was fortunate that I was good at it, but I remember constantly feeling exhausted. Creating clothes, on the other hand, has always felt magical to me. Because this story comes from such a personal place, it was natural for me to understand Nicole's emotional journey as both a writer and a director.

Our festival celebrates the marvellous, the fantastic and the imaginary. What does "le merveilleux" mean to you, and how does it live in your film?

To me, le merveilleux is a way of experiencing emotions through magic, imagination and metaphor. I have always loved books and films that use magical realism because they allow us to express emotions in a very honest, almost childlike way. I think this comes from childhood itself—from the way children understand hope, fear, good and evil through imagination. In my film, magic represents creativity, hope and the truest part of Nicole's identity. Her everyday adult life is intentionally more restrained and grey. The magical world is not an escape from reality, but a way of revealing what she has lost within herself.

Can you tell us about the technique and visual style you chose, and why?

I was inspired by films such as *The Shape of Water*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Alice in Wonderland*—stories that build rich visual worlds around emotional journeys. I wanted Nicole's creative world to feel colourful, textured, warm and full of life. In contrast, her everyday adult life was designed to feel flatter, quieter and less colourful. My hope was that this visual contrast would allow the audience to experience an emotional shift alongside Nicole, rather than simply observing it.

INTERVIEW • CONTINUED

Finding the colour in your own life again



What was the biggest challenge during the making of the film?

As this was my first professional fiction film, one of the biggest challenges was writing the screenplay. The story existed very clearly in my imagination, but transforming those ideas into a screenplay was a completely different creative process. The second challenge was directing a crew whose members were, in many cases, more experienced filmmakers than I was. As a first-time fiction director, I had to learn to trust my own vision, communicate it clearly and collaborate with confidence, despite my own doubts. Looking back, that became one of the most valuable parts of the entire experience.

Is there a detail, a scene or a hidden element in the film that you are particularly proud of?

There is one moment that still feels almost magical to me. In my storyboard, I had drawn two beams of sunlight coming through the skylight windows in the attic. On the day we filmed that scene, the weather was completely overcast, and technically we couldn't recreate that lighting ourselves. We simply continued preparing the scene and trusted the process. Then, just as we were ready to shoot, the sun suddenly appeared and created almost exactly the image I had imagined months before. It felt like one of those rare moments when reality quietly collaborates with cinema. I have always loved those little moments that feel like fate.

What do you hope the audience will feel when leaving the screening?

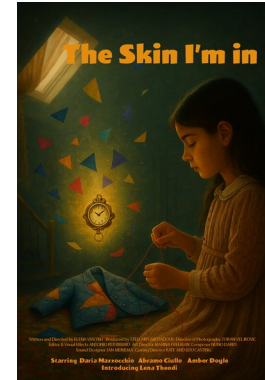
If someone watching the film has not yet found the life they truly want to live—or already knows what their calling is but has not yet found the courage to follow it—I hope the film encourages them to believe that another, more colourful life is possible. And for those who are already following their own path, even when it is difficult, I hope the film reminds them that although choosing your true calling is not always easy, it is often where the greatest sense of wonder and magic can be found.

What are you working on next?

I am currently developing a feature film inspired by this short, although it will move into a slightly different genre, so I would rather not reveal too much just yet. At the same time, I am working on two new short films. Once again, they explore childhood, dreams, magic and mystery—subjects that continue to inspire me and that have become the heart of my storytelling.

IMAGES FROM THE FILM

The Skin I'm In • visual world



The Festival

The Festival du Film Merveilleux & Imaginaire works with schools, universities, cultural institutions and partners wishing to organise screenings around wonder, imagination and the Sustainable Development Goals. Based on your audience, themes and objectives, we can draw on our network of filmmakers and our film selection to create a tailor-made programme.

Imagine a screening with the Festival

A programme may include one or several short films, a mediation session, audience discussion, workshop or encounter with a filmmaker or guest, depending on the project and availability. Each programme is designed as an experience of discovery and dialogue, adapted to the context, participants' age and the host organisation's objectives.

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