

Mike Downey, OBE,

Monday, 25 July 2022, awarded Honorary Doctor of Letters (Hon DLitt)

with oration given by Professor Ian Sansom

Provost:

I am delighted to introduce our honorary graduand, film producer and theatre director, MIKE DOWNEY.

Mike is a Warwick alumnus, who graduated in French with Theatre Studies in 1983, then continued with postgraduate work in Paris, gaining his Master's degree from the University of Paris X Nanterre in 1985. After his university studies, he pursued a successful career in theatre direction, locally (at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre) and internationally in France, Germany and the former Yugoslavia, including, precociously, working with Jean Genet on a translation of a Genet play into English. Today, involved in film, he still retains an interest in theatre, continuing to work with the now renowned Isango Theatre Company from the Khayelitsha Township in Cape Town.

Mike's move into film came in the 1990s, when he co-founded the trade paper *Moving Pictures International*: this, unlike other papers focussed on Hollywood, had a specific interest in European cinema. In 2000, Mike co-founded the production company Film and Music Entertainment (F&ME), located in Dublin, which has grown to become a key British and Irish production company, collaborating with artists and financiers across Europe and beyond. Mike has produced or co-produced more than 100 films, working in particular with directors from central and Eastern Europe, winning awards at major festivals across the world, including Venice and Berlin, and reaching significant international audiences.

Mike also recently cofounded the International Coalition for Filmmakers at Risk. Launched in September 2020 at the Venice Film Festival, the International Coalition for Filmmakers at Risk (ICFR) aims to activate the film community's collective response to filmmakers who face political persecution for their work. He has collaborated on projects with writers such as Colm Toibin, Gunter Grass, Thomas Keneally and James Ellroy, and worked with directors across Europe, including Stephen Daldry, Agnieszka Holland and Pawel Pawlikowski; recent award-winning productions include Agnieszka Holland's *Charlatan*, and Ivan Ostrochovsky's *Servants*.

Mike Downey has a distinguished international profile, both as film director and academic. He was the co-founder of Croatia's Motovun Film Festival and, for three years, was the Artistic Director of the International Antalya Film Festival in Turkey. He has served on over 20 international juries at film festivals. He is a BAFTA Council member and a member of BAFTA'S film Committee. He is Chair of the European Film Academy, an organisation with a large membership of distinguished professionals that promotes and disseminates European film culture and encourages research across Europe: Mike now has arguably the most important post in European cinema, and has been instrumental, as Chair, in setting up the International Coalition for Filmmakers at Risk, supporting filmmakers facing political persecution. He was for many years a tutor on Sheffield University's Creative Writing for Film course, and for ten years was tutor on a specialised Master's programme at the Media Business School in Ronda, Spain. He has been a Visiting Professor at the University of Ohio and a member of the Board of Advisers at the University of Oklahoma's Film School. He has lectured at institutions around the world, including here at Warwick, and has regularly acted as an expert on major funding panels for the EU's Creative Europe

programme. Mike has written several important books, in particular on film finance, and has published widely in major film magazines. His debut novel, *Istria Gold*, written about Croatia where he is now based, will be published this month.

In 2009, Mike was honoured with a retrospective at the Zagreb Film Festival. In 2014, he won the Producer of the Year Award from the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival; the following year saw a tribute to his career as a producer at the Prague Film Festival. In 2021, he won the Prague Lifetime Achievement Award and, in the Queen's Birthday Honours, was awarded the OBE for services to cinema. We are delighted to add our own award today.

PROVOST: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, MIKE DOWNEY.

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