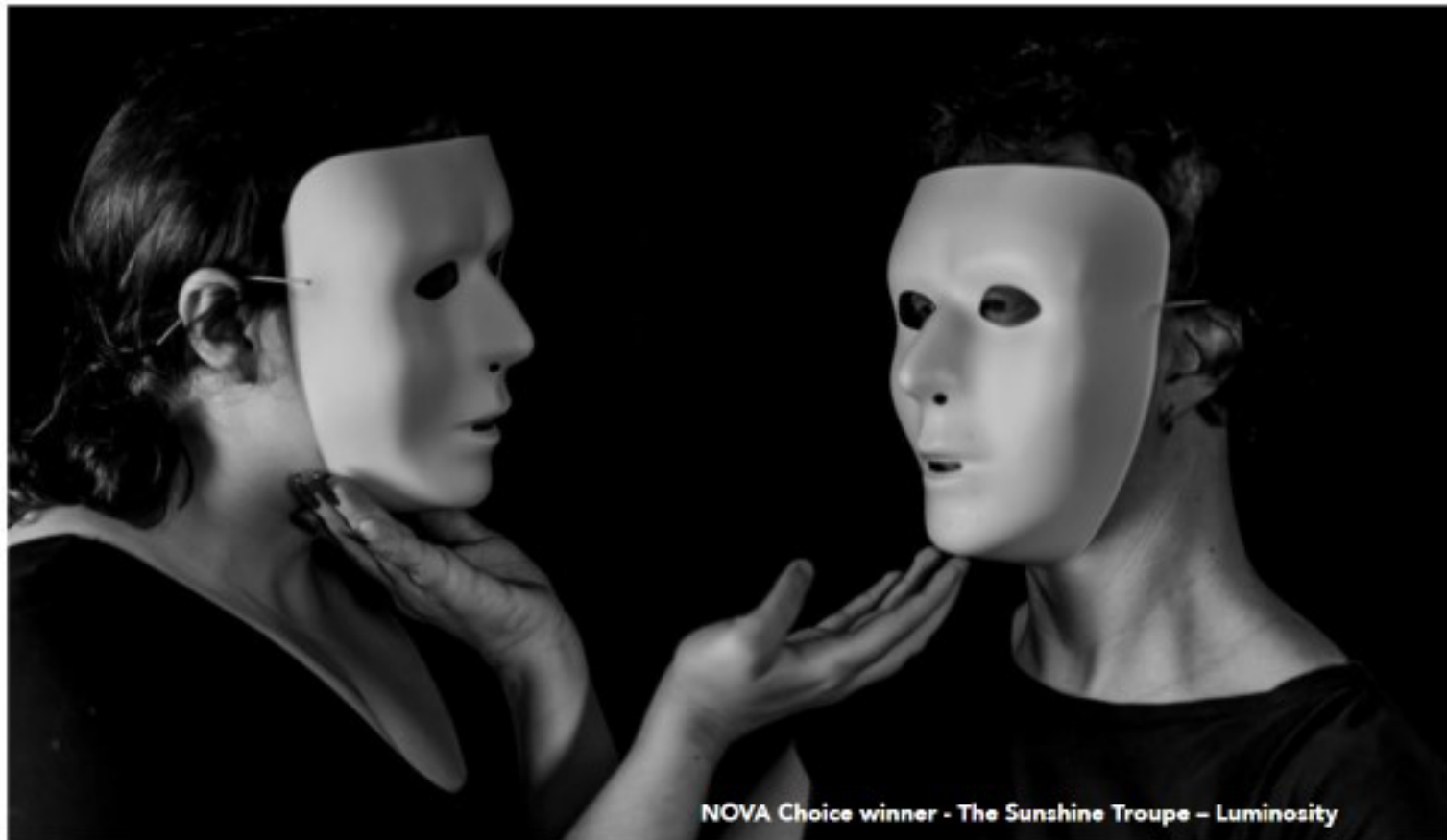


And the winner is....

The Focus on Ability Short Film Festival (FOA) celebrated its 13 annual instalments with an online awards event that was seen globally, showcasing 264 finalists from 22 countries.



NOVA Choice winner - The Sunshine Troupe – Luminosity

This FOA festival asks film makers to Focus on the Ability of people with a disability and tell a story on film for the world to view.

For the International finalists the wins came from Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and Chile each taking home \$5,000. Malindu Kumarasinghe took out the International Most Online Votes prize for his documentary 'Smiling Roses.' "As a Sri Lankan it's an honour to represent my country internationally. Thank you to everyone who support and encourage to get this achievement," he said.

Taking out the 2021 Judges Choice Best Short Film in the Open category was Alex Sideratos for his film 'More to Me.' The film is about an artist's will to express and communicate, to connect with the guests at his art exhibition. "People with special needs must have their stories told in order to change

perspectives," he said. "Everyone deserves an opportunity to show what they are capable of and to live life to their full potential."

As well as awards handed out for Judges Choice and Most Online Votes, the NOVA Employment team select their favourite entry that they feel best represent the Focus on Ability theme, with all Australian submissions eligible. This year's winner was South-East Queensland's The Sunshine Troupe who won a Toyota Corolla courtesy of Toyota, Noble Toyota and NOVA Employment.

Each year the films are showcased on the FOA website and audiences come from around the world to view and vote for their favourites. This year's online voting brought record numbers with over 70,000 registered voters and more than 300,000 viewers.

FOA was started in 2009 by NOVA Employment CEO, Martin Wren who was overwhelmed with the quality of this year's films. "I thought what a privilege I had to be part of such an amazing festival and to view a fabulous collection of films. My concerns we'd be Covid plagued were unfounded and film makers found their way round obstacles to create, yet again, a collection that educates and showcases ability," he said.

"We watched all the films, looking for those we felt captured the intent of the festival. The Sunshine Troupe's 'Luminosity' does just that, removing labels enabling viewers to see each person as an individual - we loved it!"

You can view all of the 2021 winners and finalists via www.focusonability.com.au ●