

# 17th Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival



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10—30 September 2021

Berwick-upon-Tweed  
online





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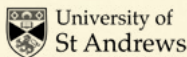
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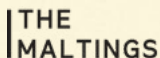
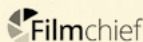
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## **Welcome to the 17th Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival**

I am hoping that some of you might be reading this having already watched a film or two in our Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed home base. Sitting alone tonight in our basement office, that's still quite an overwhelming thought. The Festival will mark my first return to the Maltings' main house and cinema since March 2020. I was there with my son to see *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* [he thinks I organised it]. The Maltings has been closed since.

We have all lost friends and relatives in the time in between. Some of us have been seriously ill or experienced tremendous struggles in our day to day. Certainly nothing could have prepared any of us for the last year and a half. I want to particularly thank two colleagues whom would ordinarily be sharing this Berwick basement office with me: Festival Manager Claire Hills and Programme Coordinator Hamish Young. Your extraordinary kindness and friendship over these long uncertain months has been a life saver.

Time and attention are precious, especially when you have the feeling you do not have any to spare. Whether in the cinema, listening to a podcast, reading an essay, experiencing an online exhibition—thanks to artists Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley and Seema Mattu—or attending one of BFMAF 2021's 12 live events online, I am very grateful that you have chosen to spend time with Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival.

The Festival was created by artists in 2005 and solidarity with filmmakers is central to our work. Questioning what that solidarity might mean in 2021, while adapting the Festival to current circumstances has meant making tough decisions. Our Festival programme is smaller than 2015-19 and in person exhibitions will not take place in Berwick this year. Instead we have committed budgets towards paying artists and filmmakers more fairly.

With fairness in mind, the Berwick New Cinema Competition becomes the non-competitive Berwick New Cinema Awards—with a prize supported by Berwick Town Council and shared equally by filmmakers: Ane Hjort Guttu, Salad Hilowle, Adam Lewis Jacob, Tim Leyendekker, Jordan Lord, Sophia Al-Maria, Fox Maxy, Cat McClay, Éiméar McClay, Abdessamad El Montassir, Carlos Maria Romero, Suneil Sanzgiri, Fern Silva, Camara Taylor, Amalia Ulman and Rehana Zaman

Jemma Desai who joins us as Head of Programming for the 2021 Festival has the ability to articulate and connect social justice work and practices through to festival exhibition like no one else I know. It is inspirational. I am very grateful to Jemma and our exceptional programming team of Christina Demetriou, Alice Miller, Myriam Mouflih and Herb Shellenberger for all their nuanced experience which has shaped the 17th Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival's programmes.

The experience of cumulatively watching over a 1000 films together in research for the Festival changes us. We have been learning many lessons. I am very grateful that you have joined us to push our conversations further along and to bring the Festival alive.

And thank you for buying a ticket! Even in a good year, ticket sales at Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival add up to less than 10% of the budget it needs to take place. Thank you Arts Council England, the BFI, Community Foundation, Northumberland County Council, Berwick Town Council, Simpsons Malt, Joicey Trust, Sir James Knott Trust, Newcastle University and Berwick Chamber of Commerce for contributing to the Festival's core costs. It would be impossible without you.

Likewise if you trusted us with your film or applied for a job at BFMAF, myself and my colleagues have been humbled by your interest and support throughout the most difficult of times. Thank you!!

Peter Taylor, Festival Director

# **Berwick New Cinema Awards**

The *Berwick New Cinema Competition* becomes the *Berwick New Cinema Awards*—a non competitive prize that is shared between the filmmakers. The strand encompasses a selection of work that has most spoken to our group of programmers this year and includes what we feel is some of the most distinctive works of new cinema and artists' moving image being made around the world today.



# a body is a body is a body

Éiméar McClay & Cat McClay

This is a new video work by artist duo Cat and Éiméar McClay. It entwines Catholic prayers with queer experience. Narrated by a written text, language folds and falls in on itself. Animated tableaux of Catholic paraphernalia and strikes of elemental weather accompany the words. Together, they enact the historically fraught relationship between queerness and the Catholic church.

How is a body—particularly a queer body—narrated? *a body is a body is a body* deals with coexisting forces: lived experience and the external forces that shape it. The subtitle text is unspoken yet uncannily close. It is also corporeal in its depictions: it haunts the video like a spirit. It slips from the body of a twin to the body of a lover, from pleasure to violence, from pious to unrepressed. Imbued with a power of their own, these words create and suppress, get close and push away. There is an amalgamation of experimental literature, prayers and queer erotics. In this way, the text curls in on itself. Repeating, re-telling and undoing.

**Cat and Éiméar McClay** are Irish-born collaborative artists currently based in Edinburgh. They both graduated in Intermedia Art from Edinburgh College of Art in June 2020. Their collaborative practice considers ideas of queerness, abjection and patriarchal systems of power and oppression through an interdisciplinary body of work comprising video, 3D models, installation and digital collage. It draws on and seeks to examine the historical narration of the queer body within heteronormative society. Recent exhibitions and awards include Trading Zone 2019 at Talbot Rice gallery (Edinburgh), Futuarelab, West Bund Centre (Shanghai), Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2020 Selected Artists, Friends of the University of Edinburgh Visual Art Award 2020, RSA New Contemporaries 2021 and CCA digital residency participants 2021.

**United Kingdom | 2021 | 13 mins**  
**World Premiere**

#### **Filmography**

I Guess I Need You Baby (2021), a body is a body is a body (2021), MAGIC ISN'T WORKING (2020), Queer Use (2020), You Couldn't Tell the Difference Between a Snowflake and a Star (2019)

Digitally imaged scenes, which begin as religious still lifes, are taken over by a different kind of supernatural power. Closer to witchcraft and magic, Catholic icons and ornaments hover and float. Rain, fire and flood—both biblical and spell-like—disrupt and break through the images.

Like these objects, the bodies also float in a disembodied nowhere. They are invisible but evoked in the video's silent narration. The bodies are between desire and language, tradition and awakening. They are slippery and wet in their anguished specificity. *a body is a body is a body* weaves between the abject, spiritual, violent and tender. It is a surreal, unsettling look at the legacies of Catholicism and witchcraft. It also unearths the capacity of queer desire to undo and retell what a body can be.

—Christina Demetriou

# Alternative Economies

Rehana Zaman

*Alternative Economies* was made in conversation with herbalist Rasheeq Ahmad and financial services regulator Rachel Bardiger. The film discusses the imperialist exploits of the Disney character Scrooge McDuck, and the apparently radical yet deeply compromised promises of cryptocurrency. Between these two strands, possibilities for an alternative network of exchange and subsistence are sought.

Conversation and cooperative methods sit at the heart of artist and filmmaker Rehana Zaman's practice. This latest work was commissioned for the Boras Art Biennial, which convened around the theme 'deep listening'. The film feels like the clearest distillation of a longterm and ongoing interest: the ways socio-political concerns not only provide content, but actively structure the assembly of an artwork. In the film, disembodied voices speak about Bitcoin as a speculative

alternative to existing banking systems. Later a crypto economics researcher waxes lyrical about peer-peer connections. While one of the speakers describes it as a “pyramid scheme”, another responds, “if you want to learn about it, you’ve got to own it.”

These ideas of faux promises of collectivity and capitalist knowledge exchange meet with a sudden flash of green. Through a series of conversations with Zaman, all bathed in sage tones, Ahamad shares their knowledge of herbal medicine. This gestures to the ongoingness of “peer to peer” technologies of sharing. As the artist and the herbalist share time and strain herbs, they produce a tincture. Later, they distribute them for free. They do this via community-led spaces and grassroots actions in solidarity with asylum seekers at Napier Barracks.

In ayurvedic medicine, green is the colour to calm anxiety and stress. But, in the hyper-capitalist world of Scrooge McDuck's 'Tralla La', it is the breakdown inducing the colour of money. The excerpts of the comic duck provide an absurdist visualisation of the possibility of utopian banking. But, they also provide an unarticulated personal connection. Tralla La was conceived by writer Carl Bank after he read an article on the Hunza River Valley in Pakistan, in the October 1953 issue of National Geographic. This is a subject in Zaman's last work, "Your Ecstatic Self", which speaks to the possibilities and entitlements of knowledge replication and translation.

More colours enter the frame, through a series of direct animations. These were produced through a Cameraless Filmmaking Correspondence workshop via London based Black + POC led artist workers' cooperative Not.Nowhere. On top of these animations, the gentle dissent of a financial services regulator is offered via voice note. As these connections emerge, Alice Coltrane's harp begins to play. Zaman's hand painted film dances on the screen. Its forms merge and separate, unencumbered, free and constantly in relation.

—Jemma Desai

**Rehana Zaman** (1982, Heckmondwike, UK) lives and work in London. Working predominantly with the moving image, she is concerned with how individuals and groups relate and the effects of multiple social dynamics. Her narrative-based pieces, often deadpan and neurotic, are frequently generated through conversation and collaboration with others. Zaman was a LUX Associate Artist in 2012–13. Solo exhibitions include Kochi-Muziris Biennale; Serpentine Projects (London); Liverpool Biennial; CCA (Glasgow), and Material Art Fair IV (Mexico City). Her films and installations have been shown at Sheffield Doc Fest; ICA Miami; SAVAC (Canada); Oberhausen Film Festival; the ICA, and Whitechapel (London) and Bétonsalon (Paris). In 2019 she edited *Tongues*; a collection of writing emerging from her solo exhibition at CCA Glasgow and curated *The Range*; a group exhibition at Eastside Projects (Birmingham).

Zaman's film *How Does an Invisible Boy Disappear* was screened in collaboration with Liverpool Black Women Filmmakers at BFMAF 2018, and her short film *5* was screened at BFMAF 2015.

### **Filmography**

*Alternative Economies* (2021), *Your Estatic Self* (2019), *How Does an Invisible Boy Disappear* (2018), *Lourdes* (2018), *Tell me the story Of all these things* (2017), *Sharla Shabana Sojourner Selena* (2016), *5* (2014), *Some Women Other Women* and *all the Bittermen* (2014), *I, I, I, I and I* (2013), *Netball* (2013), *What an artist dies in me/Exit the Emperor Nero* (2013), *Iron Maiden (Ambridge)* (2011), *Like an Iron Maiden Trapped Between a Rock and a Hard Place* (2010)

# El Planeta

Amalia Ulman

Amalia Ulman's debut feature is a dark comedy. It explores contemporary poverty, deception, class, and escapism through a tender mother-daughter relationship, played by Ulman and her real-life mother.

After her father's death, Leo returns from London to a seaside town in the north of Spain to move back in with her mother. Broke and with increasing debts, they slip further into poverty. It is just a matter of time until they will be evicted. But they also narrate their own stories and identities; imitating, grifting and keeping up appearances while the facade slips around them. Leo is ambitious but limited by her lack of resources. She weighs up the options of badly paid sex work or badly paid fashion jobs. Meanwhile she navigates her mother's more eccentric alternate reality of rich boyfriends, cat memorabilia and expensive dresses.

The film and its characters are composites of real people and experiences. This includes Ulman's own life growing up in Gijón when the family immigrated from Argentina. The coastal setting—once reliant on the coal industry, transitioning to tourism with its steady decline, and hit hard post-financial crisis—is both in the background and foreground of the film. It is a character itself, its out-of-season monotone weather reflected, albeit lovingly, in the film's black and white cinematography. The high unemployment and lack of options is felt and seen. In the empty shop fronts,



**Amalia Ulman** (1989, Argentina/Spain) is an artist based in New York City. In 2011 she graduated from Central Saint Martins, London. Her works, which are primarily voiced in the first person, blur the distinction between the artist and the object of study, often creating humorous, gentle deceptions while exploring class imitation and the relationship between consumerism and identity. In 2012 Ulman presented *Profit I Decay* at the gallery Arcadia Missa in London. The following year she screened her first video essay *Buyer, Walker, Rover* as a Skype lecture at the Regional State Archives in Gothenburg. In 2014 Ulman began the four-month performance “Excellences & Perfections” on her Instagram account, which told the story of three fictional characters. In 2016 the performance was selected to be included in the exhibition “Performing for the Camera” at Tate Modern, London.

Spain | 2020 | 28 mins  
UK Premiere

#### Filmography

*El Planeta* (2021), *Shanghai Fire* (2019),  
*Buyer Walker Rover Aka. Then There*  
*(Yiwu)* (2019), *The Future Ahead* (2016)

deserted promenades and window displays, stuck in time. Here too, reality slips between the constructed image and lived experience.

Instead of a melodramatic look at its subject, the film is a sum of small parts. It draws out its story from small details, dialogues, emotive, kitschy objects and deadpan humour. The result is a portrait of transaction and debt in the everyday economy of appearances, just as much as it is about image and keeping face as inseparable material conditions. Just as it is about image and keeping face as the inseparable material conditions. *El Planeta* is a film about holding things together, daydreaming and performance as a means of survival.

—Christina Demetriou

# Feast

Tim Leyendekker

In Tim Leyendekker's debut feature film, victims, perpetrators and their observers offer entangled viewpoints on the 2007 Groningen HIV case in the Netherlands. In this case, three men hosting sex parties drugged others and injected them with their own HIV-infected blood. *Feast* explores the uneasy complexities, motivations, assumptions and projections of those involved and those watching: the media, the diagnosing professionals, and us, the viewers.

Rather than referring to the work as a fictionalised documentary, Leyendekker calls it "a set of proposals". Working with seven different cinematographers on the seven vignettes, the film unfolds in different formal registers. We see stylised tableaux to documentary-like reportage and sensorial sequences of close-up, music and voice. The film explores the questions of this harrowing case beyond clear designations of "good" and "bad", looking at what might be missed in such reductions.

In its hybrid approach, *Feast* investigates how truth is constructed and how it resonates within fictions. It questions the viewer's expectations, oscillating between what is real and what is acted in how this story is told. Rather than looking for answers or conclusions, in fact refusing to do so, *Feast* explores the impossibility of a single truth. Inspired by Plato's

**Tim Leyendekker** (1973, Netherlands) is an artist based between Rotterdam and Strasbourg. He received an MFA from the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. He graduated with a master's degree in Fine Arts from the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam and studied at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam. His films contain a palpable trace of its creation process, engaging the viewer to critically relate to the construction of the work itself. His work has been shown in galleries and festivals including International Film Festival Rotterdam, Cinéma du Réel, Power Plant (Toronto), DOKUFEST, Taipei Film Festival and Loop (Barcelona).

**The Netherlands | 2021 | 85 mins  
UK Premiere**

Leyendekker's short film *Blinder* screened at BFMAF 2015. *Feast* was included in BFMAF's 2020 *Previews* strand. *Previews* has been renamed as *Work in Progress* for BFMAF 2021.

#### **Filmography**

*Feast* (2021), *Blinder* (2015), *The Healers* (2010), *Opening Night* (2009), *Still* (2006), *How the West Was Won* and *Where It Got Us* (2003), *Survival (prayer #1 prayer #2)* (2002), *(hectaren)* (2001)

story *The Symposium*, the film unfurls as a philosophical investigation into concepts of beauty, love, truth and evil. In one scene, a plant biologist speaks, almost from the virus's point of view, about the sharing of viruses between plants as an act of collaboration, connection and bonding. But Leyendekker refuses to make any judgements, juxtaposing ideas of beauty and love with the horrifying and ugly, and wonders what happens in the space in between.

—Christina Demetriou

# Galb'Echaouf

Abdessamad El Montassir

*Galb'Echaouf* delves into the idea of amnesia as the result of an extreme and destructive political context which generated shame and guilt. Conflicts put an end to freedom of movement, and most importantly, to the transmission of types of knowledge passed down over centuries. It is fuelled by the statements and silences of the inhabitants of the region, but also by non-human knowledge present in plants and landscapes.

How does one tell a story of displacement? The people present in *Galb'Echaouf* seem unable to talk about the trauma of the past. Perhaps, because there is nothing left that could possibly be said. Instead, Abdessamad El Montassir looks to the landscape for testimony, a landscape which has borne witness. The natural environment becomes a witness to warfare, holding knowledge that is too painful to be remembered by the land's human inhabitants. A woman who grew up in the desert tells El Montassir, "we cannot speak of all we have lived through there. Go and ask the ruins, the desert, its thorny plants, they saw and lived through everything and remained there."

*Galb'Echaouf* unfolds in the Western Sahara, a 266.000 km square territory yet to obtain legal status. From 1975 to 1991, the Western Sahara was the theatre of a long war between Morocco and the Polisario front which inflicted deep and lasting wounds on the Sahrawi civil society. Nomadic popu-

**Abdessamad El Montassir** (1989, Morocco) lives and works between Boujdour and Marseille. His research-based practice is anchored in a trilogy of concepts: the right to forget, visceral narratives, and the trauma of anticipation. In his body of work, El Montassir sets reflexive processes that invite us to rethink history through collective or fictional narratives and immaterial archives. He has participated in several national and international exhibitions, including *Invisible* curated by Alya Sebti for the 13th Biennale of Contemporary African Art of Dakar and for ifa-Galerie in Berlin, *De liens et d'exils* at La Villa Empain – Fondation Boghossian in Brussels, *Al Amakine* in the context of 11ème Rencontres de Bamako, *Saout Africa(s)* in the context of the documenta 14 at SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin, among others. El Montassir also participated in various artist residencies such as the Art, Science and Society program at IMÉRA in Marseille, La Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, the summer's lab at Le Cube – independent art room in Rabat and the Résidence Méditerranée at La Friche La Belle de Mai in Marseille.

**Morocco, Western Sahara | 2021**  
**18 mins | UK Premiere**

**Filmography**  
Galb'Echaouf (2019)

lations had to settle in urban areas to escape the conflicts taking place in the Sahara. To see the Western Sahara from the perspective of someone who was born there is rare. El Montassir's narration is poetry, detailing the loss of inter-generational knowledge in conflict. In this way, it also examines the complexity of amnesia, as the result of an extreme and destructive political context.

—Myriam Mouflih

# Golden Jubilee

Suneil Sanzgiri

Suneil Sanzgiri's recent video trilogy is shown here, in full, for the first time. The series is bookended by his attempts to recreate the landscapes of his father's birth place in Curchorem, Goa. All three films utilise an aesthetics of distance and proximity to gesture to tensions, possibilities and replications when we search for ourselves in the remnants of colonial histories.

In *Golden Jubilee*, the final part of the trilogy, Sanzgiri reconsiders ideas of freedom, loss and recovery in the wake of colonial and neo-colonial theft. The film asks us to consider "what is liberation when so much has been lost?" Reflecting on the contradictions in the pursuit of 'preservation', the filmmaker creates a 3d virtual rendering of his father's home in Goa using the same technologies of surveillance that mining companies use to extract iron ore in the region.

The title "Golden Jubilee" refers to both a forgiveness of debt and the 50th anniversary of liberation. This final chapter of the trilogy moves with a sense of palpable urgency. It underlines both the losses in our personal quests for repair in the shadow of imperial legacies and compels us to look further than the ancestral in our shared pursuit of collective liberation.

—Jemma Desai

**Suneil Sanzgiri** is an artist, researcher, and filmmaker working to understand how systems of oppression are informed and reinforced by trauma, history, and memory. His work spans experimental video, animations, essays, and installations, and contend with questions of identity, heritage, culture and diaspora in relationship to structural violence. He graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) with a Masters of Science in Art, Culture and Technology in 2017 and was a 2016 resident of the SOMA program in Mexico City. His work has been screened at festivals and galleries nationally and internationally. Sanzgiri was also selected as a co-programmer of the Flaherty Seminar NYC 2020.

**United States, India | 2021**  
**19 mins | World Premiere**

#### **Filmography**

Golden Jubilee (2021), Letter From Your Far-Off Country (2020), At Home But Not At Home (2019)



# At Home but Not at Home

Suneil Sanzgiri

Sanzgiri's first part of the trilogy unfolds to consider what one does with regret and to ask: what is the correct distance from which to examine its insights? In this film, emails, texts and skype recordings provide attempts at a remote connection with the landscape of his father's village in Goa, which he has never visited.

At home but not at home begins with an excerpt from a conversation between Hall and sociologist Les Back. Hall describes the diaspora as a space of regret, "a void", representing an unrealised moment of history. Technologies of surveillance and extraction, like drone footage, google street view and 3d renderings are interspersed with scenes from classics of parallel cinema. As his father discusses the gaps felt in his experiences of "liberation" from Portuguese rule, and of cinema as a young person, ideas of physical, emotional and cultural distances are layered and complicated.

—Jemma Desai



# Letter From Your Far-Off Country

Suneil Sanzgiri

In *Letter from your far off country*, Sanzgiri draws lines of solidarity that emerge from lineages of political commitment in his family. The film finds its purpose in a “found” connection and epistolary exchange: a letter addressed to a “distant” relative Communist Party leader Prabhakar Sanzgiri, and a poem *Dear Shahid* by Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali.

The film’s aesthetic foregrounds intimacy through hand-processed 16mm film, direct animation techniques as well as digital renderings of Kashmir’s mountains. Combining intuited proximity with intentional assembly, Sanzgiri experiments with formal strategies to enact political engagement when producing images and reconsidering archives.

Images and sounds from the Muslim women-led anti CAA protests in Shaheen Bagh are filmed on 16mm film stock that expired in 2002 (the same year as the state-sponsored anti-Muslim genocide in Gujarat). A key piece of archival footage shows

actor Shabana Azmi protesting the murder of playwright Safdar Hashmi to an audience at the International Film Festival of India in 1989. The footage, labelled by the filmmaker as a “rare moment of solidarity”, feels utterly unimaginable in the context of the suppression of dissent by a Hindu nationalist government today.

—Jemma Desai

# Idrish (ইদ্রিসি)

Adam Lewis Jacob

*Idrish* acts as an urgent and potent piece of anti-deportation activism. With reports of deportation flights regularly in the news, the film is rich with resonance to our current moment. In one striking sequence, footage of a protest march gives way to staccato editing and propulsive sound design by Claude Nouk, who re-uses and manipulates archival sounds to transform the film into a powerful rallying cry. Radically reanimating the documentary form, Jacob enlivens the archive to tell a vital history.

In this latest film by Jacob, the focus is on Birmingham activist Muhammad Idrish. The film builds on his research into the archives of the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre and work on histories of activism. In *Idrish*, Jacob crafts an impassioned portrait of an inspiring anti-deportation campaigner and a timely celebration of the British anti-racist movement.

The film begins with the revolutionary poem *Bidrohi (The Rebel)*, a stirring proclamation of rebellion against oppression that establishes the fighting spirit of the film. Central to the film is Idrish's fight to remain in the UK in the 1980s and the trade union campaign that supported him. Idrish came to England from Bangladesh in 1976 to train at Bristol Polytechnic. He went on to marry and apply to stay in the UK, but following the dissolution of his marriage, he was faced with deportation.

Jacob renders this history with a wealth of archival footage and materials, using a mix of film formats and techniques. VHS recordings of anti-de-

**Adam Lewis Jacob** (1985, UK) is an artist and filmmaker based in Glasgow and Poole. His work is about the structures that govern our lives and the countercultural figures that question them. He uses the camera to create a space where ideas and people can be brought together and unexpected relationships can occur, using improvisation, performance and sound to reinterpret research and reactivate histories. He is one of the founding members of Céline, an independent artist-run exhibition space in Glasgow. His work has been screened and exhibited at Ann Arbor Film Festival, Alchemy Film festival, Kochi-Muriz Biennale (India), Studio 55 (South Korea), LUX (London) among others. In 2019 he was awarded the Cove Park Experimental Film and Moving Image residency and in 2022 he will participate in the ESW/TOKAS residency program in Japan.

**United Kingdom, Bangladesh  
2021 | 31 mins | World Premiere**

#### **Filmography**

Idrish (2021), People Meeting in a  
\$Easy Answers (2018), Can't See  
The Trees For The Wood (2015)

portation films made by Idrish's trade union are punctuated with playful animations and rapid montages of printed ephemera, as an archive of activism is brought to life. Print materials, photographs and newspaper clippings are interspersed with animals drawn from Idrish's family tapestry, and the repeated motif of a campaign sticker declaring "Muhammad Idrish Must Stay" marches across the screen. This innovative reanimation of archive material acts to mobilise it once more, whilst enmeshing Idrish's identity and heritage with a history of protest.

Jacob augments the archive further with contemporary film of Idrish visiting Bangladesh and locations significant to him are overlaid with his powerful testimony. The film also documents Idrish's continued anti-deportation campaigning, anti-racist work through which Idrish found a supportive and kindred community of British activists.

—Alice Miller

# La Nave

Carlos Maria Romero

In *La Nave*, Colombian artist and first-time filmmaker Carlos Maria Romero (aka Atabey Mamasita) translates the meaning and spirit of Carnival de Barranquilla during a year in which gatherings were forbidden. Through clandestinely filmed performances with members of many different communities—indigenous, trans, queer, rural, Afro-Colombian and radical outsiders among them—Maria Romero recreates northern Colombia's largest cultural event as an essayistic performance film, demonstrating how Carnival is a lifeblood to its many diverse participants.

Maria Romero's extensive artistic practice incorporates many different forms, stretching across performance, pedagogy and community-building. Combining these elements with embedded knowledge and networks as a native of Barranquilla, the filmmaker transmits a feeling to the viewer of being led through a series of private encounters with the featured performers, musicians and citizens (a perspective which would otherwise be closed to us). In effect, this series of encounters establishes a filmic form that mirrors a parade or procession—one of the central components of Carnival—through our short interactions with participants/performers, who are then displaced by the next subsequent person to step in front of the camera.

But *La Nave* is not just a formal mirror to the Carnival de Barranquilla; the film beautifully captures the sensorial phenomena imparted by its participants. It is



**Carlos Maria Romero** aka Atabey Mamasita (1979, Colombia) is based between Colombia, United Kingdom and Germany. Maria Romero is a multidisciplinary artist with a background in dance and live art, working in the fields of performing and visual arts, heritage and architectural activism, pedagogy and curating. Maria Romero's performances, art works, contributions and co-creations have been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Contemporary Art (Bogotá); La Poderosa (Hiroshima), Espai Erre (Barcelona); Opera House Tokyo; Uferstudios Berlin; Il faut brûler pour briller (Paris), and in London at Vogue Fabrics, Sadler's Wells, The Tanks/TATE, The Serpentine Gallery, among others. Most recent projects include the performance series *Muy Serio* presented since 2018 in Bogotá, Barcelona, Margate and most recently at Stretch Festival in Berlin, Royal Academy of Arts and Selfridges State Of the Arts Programme in London, and Kettle's Yard in Cambridge.

Colombia, United Kingdom | 2021  
52 mins | World Festival Premiere

**Filmography**  
La Nave (2021)

alive with pleasure, sensuality, spirituality, humour, spontaneity; it simultaneously upholds the weight and gravity of tradition whilst leaving space for the expansiveness of new perspectives to supplant what came before.

In Spanish, “la nave” means vessel, such as a ship. In contemporary Colombian slang, the term takes on a futuristic meaning, such as referring to technological devices and their ability to “shift space”. Within the imaginations of Barranquillero, the Carnival can simultaneously expand forward and backward in time, imagining new futures and reinventing suppressed pasts. As Maria Romero puts it: “The film’s vessel is one full of lucid and fearless people making an upside down world, in which all (historically oppressed) worlds can and have a right to exist. Aboard La Nave, directioning is a collective, decentralizing, eternal dance ever expanding its reach and partakers.”

—Herb Shellenberger

# Maat means Land

Fox Maxy

In *Maat means Land*, Fox Maxy (Ipai Kumeyaay and Payómkawichum) has created an intoxicating and urgent film collage that gives invigorating expression to contemporary Indigenous identity, culture and experience. Exploring the question, “what does it mean to come from somewhere?”, Maxy pays homage to the land and his surroundings, whilst challenging us to think about the painful and multi-layered histories that exist within territories scarred by settler colonialism.

Eschewing dominant forms of representation, Maxy constructs a playful and rebellious film language from a self-archive of films, phone videos, found footage and computer game screen recordings. They are all threaded together with a near-continuous soundtrack of emotive music and sounds. The result is the creation of a filmic space both intensely personal and defiantly radical. A diaristic stream of consciousness, the film evokes the experience of a world mediated through digital interfaces and social media feeds.

The political underpinning of the film quickly emerges, first through the voiceover of Hawaiian activist and scholar Haunani-Kay Trask. It then appears later through footage that conveys violence and resistance in the landscape, such as news reports on the Cali-

**Fox Maxy** (Ipai Kumeyaay and Payómkawichum) is a filmmaker and artist based in San Diego, CA. He has a film company called Civic Films that produces experimental films, artist profiles and music videos. He made 2 short films during quarantine in 2020. His work has screened at International Film Festival Rotterdam, Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) Doc Fortnight, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), AFI Docs (Washington), ImagineNative Film Festival (Toronto) and Camden International Film Festival (CIFF) among others.

United States | 2021 | 30 mins  
UK Premiere

#### Filmography

Gush (2021), Maat means Land (2020), San Diego (2020), Petroleum Jelly (2020), One Big Selfie (2020), Lil Nas X (2019), California Girls (2018), Muzzles Off (2018), Cheyenne Ziegler (2018)

fornia wildfires, film of a border checkpoint and clips of protest marches. *Maat means Land* shifts between temporalities and travels across urban, natural and digital terrains. Filmed across many locations of Indigenous territory, Maxy juxtaposes instances of sociality, play, dance and activism.

Through the use of superimposition to layer real and virtual spaces and the insertion of found footage into computer game worlds, Maxy questions our sense of reality and our relationship to space. The concept of layered space is echoed in a clip of Native activist L. Frank Manriquez (Tongva and Ajachmem) who gives a powerful oral history on Tongva land, saying that “it’s all one space in time.”

—Alice Miller

# Manifesto

Ane Hjort Guttu

*Manifesto* establishes a multifaceted portrait of an arts academy which has been recently subsumed into a large national university. Through frank and revealing discussions with students, teachers, administrators and other staff, Ane Hjort Guttu establishes links between seemingly disparate topics—from architecture and surveillance to neoliberalism and dysfunctionality—embedded within the framework of contemporary academia.

The main engine propelling the film is the art academy's new building, promised to students as purpose-built but clearly designed without functionality truly in mind. When faced with obstacles (doors won't stay open without huge bricks), annoyances (their new building is constructed without communal kitchen space) or things even more nefarious (their movements can be tracked through their electronic key cards), the community of students and staff decide to self-organise by creating their own policies, courses and ways of existing within the hostile architectural environment. And so, in secret, they build a mobile kitchen unit hidden within movable exhibition walls, invite the public to participate in low-key workshops, and vote the building's cleaner as the art school's rector.

*Manifesto* brilliantly details the systemic dysfunction that accompanies work or study within educational environments in which administrative policies outrank educational imperatives. An inevitable pang of recognition will arise in any viewer who has

**Ane Hjort Guttu** (1971, Norway) is an artist, writer and curator based in Oslo. In 2013, she obtained a PhD in Artistic Research from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, where she has worked as a professor since 2016. Through video works, picture collections, sculpture and photography her recent work has focused on the issues of power and freedom in the Scandinavian post-welfare state. Hjort Guttu also writes analytical as well as poetical texts, and several of her projects discuss art and architectural history.

Daisuke Kosugi and Ane Hjort Guttu's film *The Lost Dreams of Naoki Hayakawa* screened at BFAF 2017.

Norway | 2020 | 27 mins |  
UK Premiere

### Filmography

*Manifesto* (2020), *Pratiquer le Poésie* (2019), *Furniture isn't Just Furniture* (*Møbler er ikke bare møbler*, 2017), *The Lost Dreams of Naoki Hayakawa* (2016), *Time Passes* (*Tiden går*, 2015), *This Place is Every Place* (*Dette er alle steder*, 2014), *(The City at Night)*, (*Uten tittel* (*Byen om natta*)), 2013), *Four Studies of Oslo and New York* (*Fire studier av Oslo og New York*, 2012), *Freedom Requires Free People* (*Frihet forutsettes at noen er fri*, 2011), *The Paper is the Line's World* (*Arket er strekens verden*, 2009), *How To Become A Non-Artist* (2007)

studied at, taught in, worked for or otherwise interacted with any higher education institution over the last two decades. One interviewee concludes, “the only possible relationship to academia today is a criminal one.”

Beyond elucidating the often intangible failures and dissatisfaction in contemporary university arts education, Guttu's most remarkable contribution with *Manifesto* is yet another deft construction that comments on reality through character design, scripted dialogue and worldbuilding. Even shrewd viewers could be excused for mistaking the film as a documentary, as its factual content is so persuasive and compelling. The film arises yet again from Guttu's research-based practice which includes field studies, workshops and casting actors in roles that mirror their actual professions and sensibilities.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Passion of Remembrance

Salad Hilowle

In *Passion of Remembrance*, Salad Hilowle creates a personal and evocative meditation on Black Swedish identity. Collage-like, Hilowle interlaces archive footage taken from 90s Swedish television with contemporary scenes filmed in rural and urban settings. The result is a dynamic and multi-layered work that interrogates, re-frames and reclaims blackness in Swedish culture.

The film begins with footage of a 19th-century “blackmoor” sculpture in the gardens of the Ulriksdal Palace in Solna, Sweden. This work of imagined blackness leads us to later representations (and misrepresentations) of people of colour from televised media. Through clips from teen dramas, news reports, music videos and interviews, Hilowle confronts us with the limitations and violence of cultural representation. Abrupt edits evoke channel-hopping, giving us rapid and fragmented snapshots. Hilowle also deploys split-screen, carving the screen into four repeated sections, a strategy that invokes the overwhelming presence of media images.

These archival clips are interwoven with present-day scenes filmed using 16mm and 35mm film stock. As a counterpose to the media of his childhood, Hilowle creates his own representations of contem-

**Salad Hilowle** is a filmmaker and artist based in Stockholm. His artistic practice revolves around identity, memories and place. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Vanus Labor* at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm (2021); *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Part II* at Österångens Konsthall; *Buurha u Dheer (Passion of Remembrance)* at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (2020); *Home Is Where the Heart Is* at Konstfack Gallery, Stockholm (2018); *Brev till Sverige* at Tierp Konsthall, Tierp (2017); *Erinra* at Dalarnas Museum, Falun (2015).

Sweden | 2020 | 26 mins  
World Festival Premiere

#### Filmography

*Passion of Remembrance* (2021), *Brev till Sverige* (2017), *Erinra* (2015)

porary blackness. With fluid camera and sumptuous colour, Hilowle gives us tender and sensory moments, connecting the body with the landscape. Scenes filmed in nature bring reflection, tranquillity and respite, and the pace is noticeably slowed down. Hilowle also incorporates moving portraiture, filming a group of young men and women who steadfastly return the gaze of the camera. These sections function as a powerful reclaiming of representation, of Swedishness and of space.

In name, *Passion of Remembrance* references the Sankofa film of the same title made by Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien, another potent piece of cinema dealing with Black experience, identity and personal history. Here, Hilowle gives us a rich and vital work that addresses the complexity and diversity of Black Swedish identity.

—Alice Miller

# Rock Bottom Riser

Fern Silva

*Rock Bottom Riser* is an immersive, exploratory and deeply inquisitive study of an island world at sea. The film fashions a layered and heterogeneous portrait of Hawaii through its cosmogony, its uncertain future and the scattered lens of the present. Through a combination of research, observation of the islands' landscape and conversation with many different people who call it home, artist-filmmaker Fern Silva highlights the complexity and contradictions of a place which can be understood as beautiful and serene but also under constant existential threat.

Building on a foundation of short-form work that stretches back to 2007, Fern Silva has regularly trained his inquisitive artistic vision towards portraits of place that emphasise their unseen, sublimated qualities through external phenomena. *Notes From a Bastard Child* (2007) gives external shape to Silva's patrilineal connection to Portugal, while *Wayward Fronds* (2014) brilliantly expresses the seductively creeping beauty of the Florida Everglades.

*Rock Bottom Riser*, Silva's feature debut, allowed him to draw on the many filmic techniques he honed over past works in addressing a topic larger than he previously could. Interviews and meetings with people across the islands are presented, usually without introduction, building a tapestry of voices to express a



**Fern Silva** (1982) is an artist and filmmaker who works primarily in 16mm. He studied film at the Massachusetts College of Art and Bard College and is a fellow at the Film Study Center at Harvard University. His early films centered on his relationship to Portugal and have since expanded, underlining the influence of industry on culture and the environment. For over a decade, his 16mm films have been screened widely in festivals, museums, and cinematheques including the Media City, Toronto, Berlin, Locarno, Rotterdam, New York, London, Melbourne, and Hong Kong International Film Festivals, MOMA PS1, Anthology Film Archive, and the Harvard Film Archive. He's taught filmmaking at various institutions including the University of Illinois at Chicago, Bard College, and Bennington College. Silva's short film *The Watchmen* was presented at BFA 2017 and his film *Rock Bottom Riser*, as a work in progress debut feature, was part of BFA's 2020 inaugural Previews programme, newly renamed for BFA 2021 as our Work in Progress strand.

United States | 2021 | 70 mins  
Joint UK Premiere

#### Filmography

*Rock Bottom Riser* (2021), *The Watchmen* (2017), *Ride Light Lightning*, *Crash Like Thunder* (2017), *Scales in the Spectrum of Space* (2015), *Wayward Fronds* (2014), *Tender Feet* (2013), *Concrete Parlay* (2012), *Passage Upon the Plume* (2011), *Peril of the Antilles* (2011), *In the Absence of Light*, *Darkness Prevails* (2010), *Servants of Mercy* (2010), *Sahara Mosaic* (2009), *After Marks* (2008), *Spinners* (2008), *Notes from a Bastard Child* (2007)

plural and heterogeneous viewpoint. Alternating with these sections are observations of the landscape: the ocean and waves, trees and greenery, mountains and valleys, the ominous presence of solid lava or the awe of yellow-orange-red molten flows.

Resisting a singular narrative, through-line or perspective, *Rock Bottom Riser* lets these scenes and encounters build upon each other. In the process, the film touches on the deep impacts that colonialism, religion, capitalism, activism, technology and environmentalism have had on the Hawaiian land, state and people. While these important topics are approached thoughtfully, Silva also works diligently to accentuate the film's formal qualities, mixing the topical with stunning visuals and a rich sonic palette. As a result, *Rock Bottom Riser* offers an exciting proposition both to those looking to think through the complexity and contradictions of Hawaii's past, present and future, as well as those looking for a surprising and immersive cinematic experience.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Shared Resources

Jordan Lord

Made over five years, *Shared Resources* depicts the filmmaker's family after they declare bankruptcy due to debt accrued from the loss of their home in Hurricane Katrina. Use of captioning and visual description act both as points of access and autonomy for his subjects: Jordan Lord asks their family, their filmmaking community and us, the film's audiences—what does it mean to owe each other everything?

Albert Lord, the filmmaker's father, was once a debt collector. He conducted his duties in line with the principles of bankruptcy as a social safety net. He viewed his work as not just a collection from those who had lost their material identity, but as a guardian of their dignity and self-respect. Yet the year he is forced into bankruptcy, he finds himself on the receiving end of draconian changes in law. These are laws made by a governor who feels that "debtors have lost their sense of shame." He believes in the right of the state to take his debt in the form they see fit. This means that accepting his disability compensation from Agent Orange during his service in Vietnam is "fair" game for the creditors.

*Shared Resources* is a film about debt, disability, and documentary. But it is also a film about how all these things are governed by language. In a pivotal scene, Albert Lord—the filmmaker's father—reads a contract

**Jordan Lord** is a filmmaker, writer, and artist, working primarily in video, text, and performance. Their work addresses the relationships between historical and emotional debts, framing and support, access and documentary. Their video and performance work has been shown internationally at venues including MoMA Documentary Fortnight, Camden Arts Centre, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (New York), and Performance Space NY. Their solo exhibition of video work *After...After...* was presented at Piper Keys (London) in 2019, and a new exhibition of their video work is currently in process at Artists Space (New York). They teach at Hunter College, CUNY (New York).

United States | 2021 | 98 mins  
International Premiere

#### Filmography

Shared Resources (2021), Shared Resources (Partial View) (2019), *After...After...* (Access) (2018), *I Can Hear My Mother's Voice* (2018)

prepared by his son. The “Catch Agreement” is Jordan Lord’s inversion of a standard filmmaker’s “release”. Instead of discharging the risk of telling a story that is not your own, Lord proposes a rearticulation. Lord centres an ethics of care that tethers people and subjectivities together, rather than “pragmatically” (and transactionally) pulling them apart. Their father refuses to sign, “Why would you give up your right to tell the truth?”, he asks his son. But what is the truth that his son would give up? And who decides how much of it is truly owed to him?

As the family struggles to make meaning through language together, we the viewers also enter a space of self reflexive struggle. Yellow captions indicate off camera commentary and description which is sometimes delivered by the subjects depicted. This has the effect of drawing attention to our wrongheaded assumptions. Or, the ways we render images in the frame so neutral that they become invisible. These multiple registers become an essential part of Lord’s exploration of interrelatedness and precarity. They gently, but undeniably, reveal that the injustices born out of our understandings of what we owe to one another and what we expect from each other are as much relational as they are structural. —Jemma Desai

# suspiration!

Camara Taylor

In *suspiration!*, Taylor brings false promises made by the United Kingdom to the surface with pieces of news footage and a spoken testimony describing racism in the UK. Amongst this bleakness, moments of beauty shine through, indicating the possibility for reassurance and hope.

Suspiration, [noun]—a long deep breath or a sigh. The film is a collage of images, bodily gestures and sounds. The structure and the score of the film are comprised of the body's audible release of liquid and air; enmeshed utterances and ir/regular vibrations. Although we do not hear the narrator's voice, their presence is made evident through these reverberations: breath; urine against a toilet bowl; vibrations; the knock of fingernails against teeth; queefs. These noises, combined with electronic beeps, drums and the repetition of a match striking—over and over—create an anxiety inducing score.

**Camara Taylor** is an artist and programmer who lives and works in Glasgow. Camara's practice flows from photography into text, sound works, workshops, events, publications and a zine library. Recent works include *holus-bolus* commissioned by Edinburgh Art Festival as part of *What happens to desire...* (2021); *suspitation!*, a film organised around queefs and other utterances for The Newbridge Project, Gateshead (2021) and *sorry I missed you*, an epub of collages for The Second Life, Edwin Morgan Trust & Saltire Society (2020/21). Taylor has undertaken residencies at Market Gallery, Glasgow (2020), The National Theatre of Scotland, Glasgow (2019) and Fresh Milk, St George (2015). Currently they are participating in the Satellites programme at Collective Gallery, Edinburgh and will be part of an upcoming Experimental Film and Moving Image Residency at Cove Park.

United Kingdom | 2020 | 23 mins  
World Festival Premiere

#### Filmography

*suspitation!* (2021), *mind how you go* (2020), *screaming by citation, lol ur so drama* (2019), *Untitled (HYSTERIA!)* (2019), *all we can given the climate* (2018)

Utilising different forms like printed text outlines and the artist's handwriting feel like ways of distinguishing a reference point, a cinematic weaving of different paths of thought. Taylor's practice is one of meticulous research and *suspitation!* is a continuation of lines of inquiry that they have been pursuing over the last few years, woven together and processed through the body. Excerpts from work by Frantz Fanon, Christina Sharpe Fred Moten and Stefano Harney populate the screening, gesturing towards a lineage of black radical thought.

—Myriam Mouflih

# Tender Point Ruin

Sophia Al-Maria

Through Arabic poetry, collective history and what artist Sophia Al-Maria calls “an assemblage of exquisite cadaver moments”, *Tender Point Ruin* traverses the gifts, the vulnerabilities and the detritus of art-making.

How do we make and remake ourselves?

The body of *Tender Point Ruin* unravels through a series of aural and textual encounters. Beginning with the rogue test (a behavioural experiment using mirrors and make up from the 70s, which mapped how self recognition develops in young children) and ending with a conversation with her frequent collaborator drag performance artist Sin Wai Kin.

In many ways, the film is a companion piece to her recent video work *Beast Type Song*, in which she began to explore her profound loss of faith in the written form. In *Tender Point Ruin*, Al-Maria returns to many of the same references and texts. An essay written to reject speechlessness by Jamaican-American writer Michelle Cliff entitled *Caliban's Daughter* is this time recited by American artist Kelsey Lu. Etel Adnan, whose epic 1989 poem *The Arab Apocalypse*, so foundational to *Beast Type Song*, is here cast in the role of the poet. Her gravelly voice accompanies images of the moon as she tells us of the recurring images of desolate lovers

**Sophia Al-Maria** (1983) studied comparative literature at the American University in Cairo, and aural and visual cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her work spans many disciplines including drawing, film and screenwriting for TV. Her cinematic videos explore postcolonial identity, imperialism, and counter-histories weaving together music, literature, oral history, film and dance. Her fractured, nonlinear works are often cast against a science fiction backdrop and explore the revision of history, the isolation of individuals through technology, and the corrosive elements of consumerism and industry. Recent solo exhibitions include *Julia Stoschek Collection*, (Düsseldorf, 2020), *Tate Britain*, (London, 2019–20) and *Whitney Museum of American Art*, (New York, 2016). In 2018, she was the *Writer-In-Residence* at *Whitechapel Gallery*, London and she has a forthcoming *Garage Museum of Contemporary Art*, (Moscow, 2021).

Al-Maria was BFAF's 2018 Artist in Profile and included the world premiere of her film *The Magical State* as well as a wide-ranging selection of her moving image work.

**United Kingdom | 2021 | 26 mins**  
**World Festival Premiere**

### Filmography

*Tender Point Ruin* (2021), *Astral Bodies Electric*, *Makeup!* (2019), *Beast Type Song* (2019), *Not Really in Reality Reality TV* (2018), *Mirror Cookie* (2018), *Major Motions* (2018), *The Magical State* (2017), *Wayuu Creation Myth* (2017), *Spiral* (Fatima Al Qadiri music video, 2017), *Mothership* (2017), *Black Friday* (2016), *The Limerant Object* (2016), *The Future Was Desert Parts I-II* (2016), *The Litany* (2016), *Little Sister* (2015), *Sisters* (2015), *A Whale is a Whale is a Whale* (2014), *The Watchers 1–5* (2014), *Class A* (2014), *Your Sister* (2014), *Evil Eye* (2014), *Choque* (2014), *Slaughter* (2013), *Schrodinger's Girl* (2013), *Scout* (2012)

in Arabic poetry, their yearning telling us of the “tender point of a ruin.” In between, we see Umm Kulthum, the iconic Egyptian singer’s only 1970 performance in Paris, performing *Al-Atlal*. Describing heartbreak, the song was originally a poem by Ibrahim Nagi and its title translates as ‘the ruins’.

In a text exchange in *Tender Point Ruin*, Al Maria asks “wtf is the point of art?”—gesturing to the inevitability of ruination when in love with something that cannot love you back. But like the poetry that finally shores up her faith in language, the artist’s CGI renderings of future landscapes turn technologies of hyper-vigilance into spiritual openings. Cameras and pineal eyes become composite and night vision cameras give way to another world that invites us to enter into the spaces between the ruins, to wander and discover, and to reach for the moon.

—Jemma Desai and Myriam Mouflih

# Filmmakers in Focus: Anti Archive

Since its founding in 2014, the Cambodian film production company Anti-Archive has emerged as a formidable platform through which the new generation of filmmakers in Cambodia can develop their artistic visions, realise ambitious productions and collaborate with others internationally. Across 16 productions and growing—both fiction and documentary films, either short or feature-length—they have demonstrated a refreshing diversity of form and an enviable level of quality.

Anti-Archive was founded by Davy Chou, Steve Chen and Kavich Neang, three young filmmakers who had previously collaborated on each other's projects. The collaborative spirit runs through all the company's work: one filmmaker might take on an acting role in a production, or work as camera operator or producer instead. Another form of collaboration can be seen in the several co-productions that Anti-Archive has engaged in, either through their own films being co-financed and co-produced by international companies or in collaboration with international, inde-



pendent filmmakers who are shooting in Cambodia and Southeast Asia.

The past seven years have brought many new developments to Anti-Archive. Their films have been shown extensively across international film festivals, earning awards at International Film Festival Rotterdam, Jeonju IFF, Singapore IFF and Cannes' Semaine de la Critique. In more recent years, the core group of Chou, Chen and Neang have been joined by new partners, producers Sungho Park and Daniel Mattes. And the project "Echoes from Tomorrow" was developed, creating a support structure for Anti-Archive's behind-the-scenes (or in front of the camera) female collaborators Danech San, Sreylin Meas and Kanitha Tith to realise their first films.

BFMAF is proud to present the first-ever Focus programme bringing together a number of films produced by Anti-Archive, a reflection on their working methods and chance for new audiences to see their expertly crafted productions. This series includes several titles by filmmakers produced prior to the founding of Anti-Archive, to give a fuller sense of their trajectory, as well as productions as recent as 2020. In a special online event, we will speak with several Anti-Archive filmmakers together to learn about their history, production methods and what the future holds for the company.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Anti Archive shorts

This collection of short form work by the Cambodian filmmakers associated with the production company Anti-Archive shows the breadth and quality of their filmmaking.

The programme begins with two films produced prior to Anti-Archive's forming. Kavich Neang's first short documentary *A Scale Boy* (2010) is an urgent work produced by his mentor, Rithy Panh, one of Cambodia's most important filmmakers. Davy Chou's debut fiction short *Cambodia 2099* (2014) premiered in Cannes Directors' Fortnight and set in Phnom Penh's Diamond Island, where two friends tell each other about their dreams.

Kanita Tith's *Boding* (2015) is an independently produced artist film set in Phnom Penh's White Building. An actor and art director in several Anti-Archive films, her short documentary *The Crab* is currently in production. It forms one third of the

“Echoes from Tomorrow” project of female filmmakers, of which Sreylin Meas’ *California Dreaming* (2019) is another production. The short fiction film shows an unexpected encounter between two women who meet at an oceanside resort. Finally, Danech San’s second short film *Sunrise in My Mind* (2020) stages a late-night romance between a hairdresser and a delivery man who cross Phnom Penh on his motorbike.

—Herb Shellenberger

# A Scale Boy

មេងជញ្ជីង

Kavich Neang

Kavich Neang's first film is a short documentary following Sory Chan, a 14-year-old boy who is living in Phnom Penh apart from his family. A student of Cambodian classical music, Sory lives with his mother's friend after his mother fled a debt she couldn't afford to pay back. Each evening after class, he carries a scale outside in a popular part of the city and asks people to weigh themselves for a small amount of money. In this urgent film, we witness Sory's day in class, his nightly routine and a particularly difficult conversation with his mother who he meets on the street.

*A Scale Boy* was produced by Rithy Panh, one of the most acclaimed Cambodian directors whose films have won awards internationally at BAFICI, Berlinale, Cannes and Yamagata IDFF, to

**Kavich Neang** (1987, Phnom Penh, Cambodia) graduated from the Asian Film Academy in 2013 after originally studying Music and Dance. In 2014, he co-founded the Cambodian production company Anti-Archive. Kavich has been part of Talents Tokyo, Visions du Reel's Docs-in-Progress and Cannes Cinéfondation Residency. Since 2010, he has directed five short films.

**Cambodia | 2010 | 17 mins**  
**UK Premiere**

#### **Filmography**

White Building (2021), Last Night I Saw You Smiling (2019), New Land Broken Road (2018), Goodbye Phnom Penh (2015), Three Wheels (2015), Where I Go (2013), A Scale Boy (2011)

name a few. The legacy of Panh's socio-political documentary filmmaking can be found in Neang's debut, which follows its protagonist closely, filming him directly and without intervention.

The film shows Sory's daily scenes without narration and without patronising; though he is a young teen, the viewer understands he has had to take care of himself for some time. We also are confronted with the fact that his story is not unique but symptomatic of a country where urban poverty is at a high level. The film ends with its subject walking off into the distance, without direction, a charged image that we hope will lead to better conditions in the future.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Boding

Kanitha Tith

Kanitha Tith's 2014 artist film *Boding* is an evocative portrait of Phnom Penh's White Building, Cambodia's first public housing project built for moderate-income residents during the early 1960s. Originally consisting of 468 apartments, the White Building (like the whole city that surrounds it) was abandoned during the Khmer Rouge regime rule in the 1970s. After their fall in 1979, the building fell into disrepair but was still a home for its original residents, artists, community educators and others who built a vibrant community there. Tith's film is a patient walkthrough of the "boding" (as it is popularly called by locals) that allows the viewer an unhurried look at its corridors, surfaces and the manifestations of life inside and around it.

The artist explains: "I think that, sometimes, the omnipresence of the context of something, or its too powerful background story—in other words the construction of an "official image"—tends to prevent us from really seeing that thing, or from feeling its sensitive reality. Walking through the numerous, typically long and dark corridors of the White Building recently, I suddenly felt an unfamiliar sentiment of losing the consciousness of time, as if the space was offering me a unique journey in the vertigo of time. It is this very specific and personal connection I felt within the space and time, losing myself into those corridors, which I have tried to explore in this video."

**Kanitha Tith** (1987, Cambodia) is a cross-disciplinary artist working between the visual arts in sculpture, performance, installation and in Cambodia's independent film industry as an artistic director. She is also working as a forthcoming director with Phnom Penh based Anti-Archive film production project "Echoes of Tomorrow". In 2010, she was awarded an honorable mention at the inaugural You Khin Memorial Women's Art Prize. Tith's works have been exhibited widely, most recently including the group exhibitions *Le paysages apres coup*, Centre d'art contemporain Faux Mouvement, Metz, France (2018) and *SUNSHOWER: Southeast Asian Art From 1980s to Today*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2017). Her 2014 video work *Boding* was created as part of the 2014 group exhibition, "Rates of Exchange, Un-Compared: Contemporary Art in Bangkok and Phnom Penh" at H Gallery in Bangkok and Sa Sa Bassac in Phnom Penh. It has since screened at Tentacles Gallery in Bangkok, M+ Museum in Hong Kong, and National Gallery of Singapore. Tith is currently an artist in residence at Rijksakademie, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

**Cambodia | 2014 | 10 mins**  
**UK Festival Premiere**

**Filmography**  
*Boding* (2014)

*Boding* isn't specifically an Anti-Archive production, rather an independently made artist film from Kanitha Tith, a visual artist whose work ranges across sculpture, performance, installation and film work. But Tith has worked with Anti-Archive extensively, both in front of the camera (as actress in Douglas Seok's *Turn Left, Turn Right* and Steve Chen's *Dream Land*) and behind, as an art director for Anti-Archive films. One film which Tith provided art direction for is Kavich Neang's *White Building*, a narrative feature set in the eponymous building, which was also the subject of Neang's previous documentary feature, *Last Night I Saw You Smiling*, chronicling the last days prior to the White Building's destruction in 2015. Tith is currently in production with Anti-Archive as director of *The Crab*, a short documentary which will complete the "Echoes from Tomorrow" project.

—Herb Shellenberger

# California Dreaming

Sreylin Meas

Sreylin Meas' first film follows a simple scenario in creating a stunning work of loneliness and connection shot at an oceanfront resort. Sarita travels to the seaside to take a break from her hectic life and family obligations. While exploring the surrounding wilderness, she meets another woman, Sak, who works at the hotel where she is staying. Also in need of respite from her busy job, Sak invites Sarita to meet in a secret place where the two discover an unforeseen connection that allows them to temporarily escape from reality.

*California Dreaming* achieves a sensitive pitch as a film both languorously paced yet also filled with presence and intensity. From the opening shot of Sarita (Sarita Reth) walking in a daze along the ocean waves while sounds of the wind and water swell, for most of the film's duration it feels as if it is running in slow(er) motion, an evocative effect given the narrative. Its muted and flat colour palette evokes an echo of the present, as if a dream or a memory is being lived out in real time. That coincides with the film's vignette-like runtime and sparse construction: though references to the outside sometimes intrude, we only see the two actors crucial to the story who seem to exist in their own world.



**Sreylin Meas** (1989, Cambodia) has worked in many production roles in both film and television, for both the local industry and international productions in Cambodia. She has worked with Anti-Archive as first assistant director for *Dream Land* (2015), *Turn Left Turn Right* (2016), and *White Building* (2021), and as second assistant director and acting coach for *Diamond Island* (2016). *California Dreaming* (2019) is her first short film.

**Cambodia | 2019 | 16 mins**  
**UK Premiere**

#### **Filmography**

*California Dreaming* (2019)

After working across a number of production roles for both international productions and Anti-Archive films—such as art director for *Sunrise in My Mind* and assistant director on films like *Cambodia 2099* and *Diamond Island*—Sreylin Meas built up the confidence to develop this personal story from her own scenario. Produced as part of Anti-Archive’s “Echoes from Tomorrow” project, *California Dreaming* proves Meas’ talent as a writer and director, and one hopes that her second film won’t be far behind.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Cambodia 2099

Davy Chou

*Cambodia 2099* is a fictional short by Davy Chou which, on the face of it, consists of three characters whose interactions drive the film's action. Sotha (artist Sotha Kun) and Kavich (Anti-Archive filmmaker Kavich Neang) meet on a sunny day in Phnom Penh's Diamond Island to discuss their dreams from the night before. Kavich's girlfriend Vanary (first-time actress Sothea Vann) comes to meet him and they spend the evening together in which a difficult conversation needs to be had. The film's climax comes as Sotha re-enacts his dream, transporting to the future out of thin air in front of a crowd assembled on motorbikes.

The film brilliantly mines the uncertainty and discontent of the present era towards the promise of a future where everything is perfect, easy and worked out. In this way, Chou speaks beyond the specific context of the film towards universal feelings, where the present can feel like a state of becoming towards some future resolution. It's a mistake that young people can make, to not realise that life is forever unfolding, changing and is charged with a lack of permanence. Kavich's hesitance in breaking the news to his girlfriend that he will go to live with his mother in California expresses this lack of

**Davy Chou** is a filmmaker and producer based in Paris, France and Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In 2011, he directed the documentary *Golden Slumbers* (Berlinale Forum, Busan), about the birth of Cambodian cinema in the 60's and its destruction by the Khmer Rouge. In 2016, his first fictional feature, *Diamond Island*, won SACD award at Cannes Critics' Week. He is one of the founders of Cambodian production company Anti-Archive, which has produced several films by emerging independent Cambodian directors, including documentary *Last Night I Saw You Smiling* by Kavich Neang, which won the Netpac Award at Rotterdam in 2019. In 2021, he produced Kavich Neang's first fictional feature, *White Building*.

**Cambodia, France | 2014**  
**21 mins | UK Festival Premiere**

#### **Filmography**

*Diamond Island* (2016), Cambodia 2099 (2014), *Golden Slumbers*, (2011), *Expired* (2008), *Davy Chou's First Film* (2007)

permanence, as does the ominous shot of a neon sign towards the end of the film which reads “The future of Phnom Penh”.

Coming after Davy Chou's brilliant look at Cambodia's past—*Golden Slumbers* (2011) looks back to the Golden Age of Cambodian cinema in the 1960s and its subsequent destruction by the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s—*Cambodia 2099* elegantly shoots forwards to a completely different register. The film acts as a sort of proof of concept for Chou's subsequent feature film *Diamond Island* (2016), which again explores the challenges and opportunities faced by new generations, the tension between rural and urban life, as well as Cambodia's uncertain future.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Golden Slumbers

Davy Chou

*Golden Slumbers* is a feature documentary on the legacy and contemporary traces of the “golden age” of Cambodian cinema which emerged from the 1960s and into the 1970s. During this period, several hundred feature films were produced and exhibited in cinemas across the country, and even in some cases internationally. But the Khmer Rouge’s reign of terror from 1975 to 1979—which resulted in the deaths of over 3 million Cambodians—also put a halt to this flourishing national cinema. Director Davy Chou reckons with this loss of life and culture through finding remnants of this cinematic past among rogue photos, still-existing soundtrack music, traces of film studios in the land and most of all in the memories of the few who survived, among them actors, directors and cinema-lovers.

Directed by Anti-Archive co-founder Davy Chen several years before the founding of the production company, *Golden Slumbers* gives a clue to the lines of inquiry, artistic sensibility and working methods that Anti-Archive would pursue in the years following. Future collaborators are among the crew, including Anti-Archive co-founder Steve Chen (camera operator) and composer Jérôme Harré, whose compositions are

also found in Danech San's *Sunrise in My Mind* (2020) and *Sea Within a Sea* (2021).

Beyond that, the film even more acutely invokes the spirit of Anti-Archive through the sentiment behind the production company's name, described by its co-founders: "the name Anti-Archive invites one to rethink the relationship of films and filmmakers with the past and history." In Cambodia, where memory and history is so sharply divided by the brutal Khmer Rouge genocide during the 1970s, an investigation into certain subjects can be not only traumatic but also impossible due to their eradication by the regime.

This is precisely what makes *Golden Slumbers* an elegant and moving work, not only of cinema, but of cultural history-making: Chou re-creates Cambodia's cinematic past through the material artefacts which remain, but also through the testimony of directors Ly Bun Yim, Ly You Sreang, and Yvon Hem, as well as actor Dy Saveth and two gentlemen whose passion for cinema-going has remained so vivid they can recall details decades later.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Last Night I Saw You Smiling

Kavich Neang

*Last Night I Saw You Smiling* finds filmmaker Kavich Neang documenting the final days of the White Building, an architectural landmark in Phnom Penh built in the 1960s and earmarked for destruction in 2017. Originally built as social housing for moderate income tenants, the White Building stood as witness to the history of the past 50 years in Cambodia. After the building (and city) became empty due to the Khmer Rouge's brutal regime in the 1970s, tenants relocated to a building that came into increasing disrepair while simultaneously nurturing a community of artists, educators and neighbours. Neang films residents packing up their lives in the final week before moving out, conversing about their own personal histories and how they intertwine with the White Building and Cambodia at large.

The footage which comprises *Last Night I Saw You Smiling* was recorded quickly with a borrowed camera in May 2017, immediately following the announcement that a Japanese company had purchased the site

and would demolish it imminently. This was in the midst of writing for Neang's first feature *White Building*, a fiction feature which went into pre-production in 2016 (and will have its world premiere September 2021 in competition at the Venice Film Festival). After taking some time and distance to reflect on the best way to utilise the footage, Neang worked with French editor Félix Rehm on shaping the dozens of hours into the finished documentary.

Building upon his previous non-fiction work—*A Scale Boy* (2010) and *Where I Go* (2014), both also urgent in construction and addressing difficult, intimate topics—Kavich Neang here reckons with a history that is both overwhelmingly personal but also has weight and resonance across his culture. Born and raised in the White Building himself, Neang spends time with family members, friends and neighbours leaving this distinctive environment, many after decades spent there.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Sunrise in My Mind

Danech San

Through an expertly pitched blend of realistic fiction, *Sunrise in My Mind* shows a view of a beauty salon in Phnom Penh at night which sparkles like a jewel box. The patterned aquamarine wallpaper plays off of the many pink objects inside, including the shirt of the film's protagonist Pich, a beautician whose mind is clearly elsewhere. Against the strains of a soul song from the early 1970s by Pan Ron, the co-workers' conversation moves toward the guy who has a crush on Pich, to which she acts demure and with indifference (but also with a private smile to herself). But Lay, a deliveryman who rides a motorbike through the city at night, reliably shows up to the salon. After asking Pich to wash his hair, we witness a moment of intimacy, though it's unclear whether this is real or imagined.

Danech San's second short film instantly creates an evocative atmosphere through the meticulously detailed setting of the beauty salon. The questioning of the line between fiction and reality—or between “life” and “movies”—comes from the dialogue of a film (*Jivit Dara Pheapyun*, 1990) which a salon customer is watching on a cracked smartphone screen in an early scene of the short film. While we could understand it simply as pertaining to realistic scenar-



**Danech San** (1991, Cambodia) is a director and has worked in different production roles on a variety of TV shows and films. After originally studying interior design, San turned to film-making, working with Anti-Archive on *Three Wheels* (Kavich Neang, 2015) as production manager, and *Diamond Island* (Davy Chou, 2016) as casting assistant and assistant production manager. Her debut film, *A Million Years*, world premiered at the 2018 Busan International Film Festival. It subsequently was named Best Southeast Asian Short Film at the 2018 Singapore International Film Festival and won the Arte Short Film Award at the 2019 Internationales Kurz film Festival Hamburg.

**Cambodia | 2020 | 14 mins**  
**UK Premiere**

#### **Filmography**

*Sea within a Sea* (2021), *Sunrise in My Mind* (2020), *A Million Years* (2018)

ios and dialogue, its use calls into question the film's climax, where the CinemaScope aspect ratio shifts to an otherworldly sequence within a smaller and more intimate frame.

*Sunrise in My Mind* follows Danech San's 2018 short *A Million Years*, Anti-Archives first film from the Echoes of Tomorrow project and another exploration of the shaky ground between fiction and reality which won awards at Hamburg International Short Film Festival and Singapore IFF. While the filmmaker is still active in production roles across television and film, she has increasingly been productive as a director, including the documentary short *Sea Within a Sea*, a commission from New Zealand's Doc Edge Film Festival which looks at the growing concerns between nature and the increasing populations of the Cambodian island Koh Sdach.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Turn Left, Turn Right

បត់ឆ្វេងបត់ស្តាំ

Douglas Seok

*Turn Left, Turn Right* is a narrative feature following Kanitha (played by artist/filmmaker Kanitha Tith), a free-spirited young woman in Phnom Penh who doesn't conform to society's (and her mother's) expectations. Easily prone to daydreams, Kanitha floats by working at a rock club and at a hotel, riding her motorbike across the city and generally being restless, unsettled and at times self-sabotaging. But this lifestyle is increasingly out of step not only with her mother's demands, but also with her father's deteriorating health. When she needs to step in and care for him, engaging with dreams might provide a potential solution to his suffering.

Structured as an album, *Turn Left, Turn Right* introduces different scenes as "tracks": with corresponding music setting the tone and atmosphere for what's to come. The short feature is varied in emotion and texture, at times joyous and filled with

**Douglas Seok** (Chicago, 1983) is a filmmaker and cinematographer based in Seoul, South Korea. He has a master's in digital cinema from Chicago's DePaul University. He worked as Lee Isaac Chung's assistant director for *Lucky Life* (2010) and *Abigail Harm* (2012). In 2015, he was the director of photography for Steve Chen's *Dream Land*. All three films were presented in the Onde section of the Torino Film Festival. *Turn Left Turn Right* is his first feature. Recently, Seok worked as the assistant director for Lee Isaac Chung's acclaimed *Minari* (2020) and as the cinematographer for Kavich Neang's *White Building* (2021).

**Cambodia, United States, South Korea | 2016 | 68 mins**  
**UK Premiere**

#### **Filmography**

*Sand in Her Hands* (2021), *Turn Left Turn Right* (2016)

revelry while in other moments minor-key and challenging. Douglas Seok presents Kanitha as a character capable of great depth and transformation, but also as someone whose innate qualities—some of which might read as negative—provide redemption in the end. The exquisite cinematography by Steve Chen (Anti-Archive co-founder and director of *Dream Land*, 2015) is shaped by Seok's vision, as he himself has worked as a cinematographer on Anti-Archive films such as *California Dreaming* and *White Building*. *Turn Left, Turn Right* marries its formal/conceptual sensibility with a strong narrative and complex emotional palette, resulting in a work of nuance, invention and beauty.

—Herb Shellenberger

# Filmmaker in Focus: Nguyễn Trinh Thi

Nguyễn Trinh Thi is one of Vietnam's leading contemporary artists. Her moving image work engages with the ways in which memory, history and representation are part of broader structures of power, the legacies of colonialism and war, and the erasure of indigenous Vietnamese cultures.

Using montage, Nguyễn's work draws on found footage and still images from postcards, photography, newsreels, Hollywood films and ethnographic footage alongside her own audio and visual recordings. Composed of different image media, her work is characterised by multiplicity; exploring both the ways in which we look at and create images, and what is *not* shown, said, or heard.

Presented in this artist focus are four moving image works from the Landscape series; *Landscape series no. 1* (2013), *Letters from Panduranga* (2015), *Fifth Cinema* (2018) and *How to Improve the World* (2021).



Nguyễn writes of her work: “I am interested in landscapes as quiet witnesses to history.” The films of the Landscape series explore affective ecologies; the ways in which cultural identity, narratives and historical legacies are inscribed onto land and affect environmental justice. Landscapes, for Nguyễn, are sites of entangled temporalities of the past, present and future. Ruins appear in different forms, speaking to these temporalities; traces of the destruction of war and colonialism on land, ruined temples of the past with indigenous cultures declared “extinct” although very much living, and the envisioning of a future nuclear disaster. In *Letters to Panduranga* one of the narrative voices states: “every landscape contains a power structure.”

A central thread across these works is the act of listening as a way of perceiving history through absences, invisible structures, and the limitations of representation. Listening, sound and music is explored most overtly in her latest work *How to Improve the World*, which questions and resists the westernised privileging of visual over aural practices, modes and traditions. In *Letters from Panduranga*, Nguyễn describes the Cham tradition in which the dead are buried on the chest of their deceased mothers, the spot marked only with a stone. Through oral histories, passed down by Cham women, a trace is kept of which stones mark the graves of whom. They are only named by voice and through mutuality, listening is crucial. In Nguyễn’s work, listening is also a methodology; a process of letting others speak, exploring the uncertain over the fixed, and an openness to encounter the not-yet-known.

—Christina Demetriou

# Fifth Cinema

## Điện ảnh Thứ Năm

Nguyễn Trinh Thi

*Fifth Cinema* begins with a quiet statement “I am a filmmaker, as you know.” That text and what follows, by Maori filmmaker Barry Barclay, who coined the term ‘Fourth Cinema’ to distinguish Indigenous cinema from the established ‘First, Second, and Third Cinema’ framework, provides structure to Nguyễn’s hybrid essay film that moves on multiple cinematic and topical terrains. Eschewing voice in favour of the written word and juxtaposing moving images of the filmmaker’s own daughter with archival images of Vietnamese women seen through the lens of the “ship’s officers”, the film slowly leads the viewer through a narrative of colonialism, indigeneity and cinematic limitations in representation.

—Nguyễn Trinh Thi

Montage for Nguyễn becomes an artistic strategy; exploring multiplicities of identity and storytelling, and the different forms of mediated images that make up a personal and collective imaginary. National cultural narratives and external depictions of Vietnam sit alongside the artist’s own subjective position, and that of her daughter.

*Fifth Cinema* offers space and pause for reflection, to see or feel the affective gaps and what is left out between these different narratives of history. The subtitle text shows only a few words on the screen

**Nguyễn Trinh Thi** (1973, Vietnam) is a Hanoi-based independent filmmaker and video/media artist. Nguyễn studied journalism, photography, international relations and ethnographic film in the United States. Her diverse practice has consistently investigated the role of memory in the necessary unveiling of hidden, displaced or misinterpreted histories; and examined the position of artists in the Vietnamese society. Nguyễn is founder and director of Hanoi DOCLAB, an independent centre for documentary film and the moving image art in Hanoi since 2009. Her films and video art works have been shown at festivals and art exhibitions including Jeu de Paume (Paris); CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux; the Lyon Biennale 2015; Asian Art Biennial 2015 (Taiwan); Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial 2014; Singapore Biennale 2013; Jakarta Biennale 2013; Oberhausen International Film Festival; Bangkok Experimental Film Festival; Artist Films International; DEN FRIE Centre of Contemporary Art (Copenhagen); and Kuandu Biennale (Taipei).

**Vietnam | 2018 | 56 mins**  
**UK Premiere**

Nguyễn Trinh Thi's film *Eleven Men* (*Mười một người đàn ông*) screened at BFAF 2016.

### **Filmography**

How to Improve the World (2021), Fifth Cinema (2018), Everyday's the Seventies (2018), Eleven Men (2016), Vietnam The Movie (2016), Letters from Panduranga (2015), Landscape Series #1 (2013) SOLO for a Choir (2013) Que Faire (2012), Jo Ha Kyu, (2012) I Died for Beauty (2012), Song to the Front (2011), Unsubtitled (2011), Chronicle of a Tape Recorded Over (2011), Terminal (2009), Spring Comes Winter After (2009), 93 Years, 1383 Days (2008), Love Man Love Woman (2007), A Chungking Road Opening (2005)

at one time. It is poetry-like and requires a closer reading: the written words diverge from the images or spoken voice of the film. Between these different registers, the artist's voice-as-text acts as a commentary and poetic counter-narrative to dominant media images on Vietnam, both from official accounts inside the country and international media from the outside. The result is an intimate film based on subjectivity, exploring the intersection of personal and collective memory. As the subtitles of the film at one point state, "you can make a personal story out of parts of anything."

*Fifth Cinema* explores the legacies carried and constructed by images, questioning who holds the camera, and what it means to be inside or outside of images.

—Christina Demetriou

# How to Improve the World

**Điện ảnh Thứ Năm**

Nguyễn Trinh Thi

Resisting the westernised reliance on images for creating narratives, telling stories and experiencing the world, *How to Improve the World* turns to music and sound as a way of perceiving through listening. Originally a 3-channel installation, this aurally centred work reflects on the past, present and future of indigenous cultures of the people in Vietnam's Central Highlands.

"Do you trust sounds or images better?"

Nguyễn, off screen, asks her daughter, who confidently replies "images, mum". In another scene, a man tells the filmmaker how his memory doesn't attach to images, or looking, but rather to listening. He describes shamanic ear blowing rituals, and how singing and storytelling has declined in his village since Catholicism has increased, lost alongside bird and field sounds as land has been taken and extracted. The two conversations represent and speak to different specificities, cultural legacies, and sensory perceptions of the world.



Set in the Central Highlands of Vietnam and drawing on the aural culture and gong music of the indigenous Jarai people living there, the film foregrounds voice, music and sound as traditions considered secondary to (and often replaced by) the cultural dominance of looking and the image. Listening, for Nguyễn, goes beyond the senses, as the film looks at issues of assimilation, alienation, and the loss of indigenous land in Vietnam. The work itself is an act of listening, open to song as story, to silence and to the in-between of translation.

—Christina Demetriou

“As our globalized and westernized cultures have come to be dominated by visual media, I feel the need and responsibility as a filmmaker to resist this narrative power of the visual imagery, and look for a more balanced and sensitive approach in perceiving the world by paying more attention to aural landscapes, in line with my interests in the unknown, the invisible, the inaccessible, and in potentialities.”

—Nguyễn Trinh Thi

# Landscape Series #1

## Phong cảnh #1

Nguyễn Trinh Thi

As the journey starts, wide empty landscapes make one wonder what one is looking for. A mysterious object? A crime scene? Something horrifying? The scenes are getting more and more specific, but they do not lead to any concrete solution—only an injury in place of a metaphor.

—Nguyễn Trinh Thi

An outstretched arm, a hand, a finger, pointing; the body's way of saying "look". Yet we see and know nothing about what is being pointed at. It remains unseen and unspoken, only sensed through the repeated gesture (a tradition practiced by local photojournalists) in the found images of *Landscape series #1*. The only sound, the click of the projector as each image slides into the next, makes a quiet absence beyond the visual felt.

What is being looked at is gone, hidden or missing. What is left is the embodied act of looking; the relational movement of pointing which connects the subjects of the images to the natural landscapes, the buildings, roads and wounded

skin. Cultural and affect theorists have argued that gestures are movements through which structures of power are embodied, produced, reinstated and, also, potentially interrupted.

What connects the wound to the natural landscape? The repeated sameness in the images creates a sense of uneasy presence. As May Adadol Ingawanij notes, this repetition allows these previously intimate moments from the “private domain” of the individual photographs—the subjects and creators of which we find out nothing—to become something bigger and shared, perhaps passed along. There is a sense of history both personal and collective, starting from the subjects and photographers of these images, but continuing through their surroundings, out of the frame of one image and into the next.

Nguyễn writes “I am interested in the idea of landscapes as quiet witnesses to history.” The film listens to this quietness, to the phantom traces of the past, and in the gesture of pointing to the unseen there is an invitation to the uncertain, the not-yet-defined, the potential of something new.

—Christina Demetriou

# Letters from Panduranga

## Những lá thư Panduranga

Nguyễn Trinh Thi

An essay film in the form of a letter exchange, Nguyễn's personal and poetic film explores the complex legacy of cultural and historical occupation, its ongoing presence in the indigenous Cham community, and her role as an artist.

*Letters from Panduranga* was developed in response to the Vietnamese government's plan to build the country's first nuclear power plants in Ninh Thuận. This is a province once known as Panduranga and a spiritual centre for the ancient matriarchal Cham culture, now an ethnic minority in the country. The Cham indigenous culture originated almost two thousand years ago, and Panduranga was the last of the Champa territories to be annexed in 1832 by the kingdom of Dai Việt, present-day Vietnam.

Nguyễn's film thinks through the marginalisation and erasure of indigenous history and experience, alongside media censorship of ecological destruction and injustice. Responding to this censorship in the form of letters, she situates the film between the macro of these power structures and the micro ecologies of specific places, details and personal stories.

Questioning her position as an artist and outsider to the Cham community, the film investigates distance and proximity. Through the letters, a man and a woman, both representative of Nguyễn, the film addresses the crossing of distances; of lands, time, the camera lens, and the space between this community and themselves. The two voices hesitate at their own roles as narrators. The film asks what is carried across such distance by people and memory, quietly exploring how history lives in the present.

The audience's attention is guided between the background and the foreground, as Nguyễn states in one interview: "The only way for me to tell the story is to talk about two stories at once: the intimate story of the Cham and the wider story of colonialism, war, contemporary politics and the position of the artist." Looking at the relational dynamic between the subject and the lens, an ongoing question in her work, the voice in the film says: "Nothing feels right."

Addressing the unease of fiction and documentary filmmaking, and the politics of representation in art, *Letters from Panduranga* asks the perhaps unanswerable question of how to tell a story.

—Christina Demetriou

# Filmmaker in Focus: Rajee Samarasinghe

Rajee Samarasinghe's body of work tackles contemporary sociopolitical conditions in Sri Lanka through the scope of his own identity and the deconstruction of ethnographic practices. BFMAF 2021 presents a series of Samarasinghe's 12 short films shot over a decade—an archive of images navigating the terrain of migration, memory, and impermanence.

Rajee Samarasinghe has developed a strikingly original and kaleidoscopic film practice, encompassing myriad film formats, techniques and aesthetics to render recurring subjects of interest, including the Sri Lankan Civil War, family, memory and film form itself.

Samarasinghe grew up amidst the violent and turbulent period of the Sri Lankan Civil War, emigrating with his family to the US when he was 10. In his films, Samarasinghe often returns



to his mother's village in Southern Sri Lanka as a setting. In *If I Were Any Further Away I'd Be Closer to Home*, Samarasinghe revisits his mother's place of birth to create a sensuous and perceptive study of noodle makers and a portrait of labour. Connecting with his family's past and present, in *The Eyes of Summer*, Samarasinghe films an improvisation with family members to evoke his mother's childhood communications with the incorporeal world.

Samarasinghe draws on a vast collection of footage that he's filmed for over a decade, and familiar motifs, places and people reoccur across his work, each time entering into new conversations. In this way, Samarasinghe enters into a generative dialogue with himself and his work, excavating his own archive of images to create evocative explorations of memory, identity and Sri Lanka in the post-war era.

Samarasinghe's work displays an accomplished and studied handling of cinematic language, and at the same time pushes that language into new and unexpected configurations. Actively interrogating the forms he uses, Samarasinghe utilises and subverts conventions of documentary, narrative and experimental cinema. Working in close proximity to non-fiction, Samarasinghe's films are rich with observational moments but resist delivering easy truths. Samarasinghe employs disruptions and ruptures, deconstructing the documentary form and drawing our attention to the construction and materiality of the image. In *The Spectre Watches Over Her*, a filmed restaging of his mother's childhood exorcism, Samarasinghe

inghe uses high contrast hand-processed 16mm film to abstract the representational elements of the footage, creating a textural film imbued with an elusive history. In *The Exile*, superimposition is used to disrupt instances of observation, collapsing the film's sense of space and temporality with flashes of light.

Often employing a collage-like approach, Samarasinghe creates arresting compositions that can be described as lyrical assemblages or cinematic poems. A stunning example of this is *Show Me Other Places*, a dizzying cavalcade of images that transport the viewer across multiple terrains. Weaving together documentary footage with expressive painterly visuals, and using an abundance of techniques and manipulations, the work conjures forth a stream of associations that are endlessly surprising and stimulating.

In several works, Samarasinghe destabilises and challenges audience perception by playing with cinematic temporality, decelerating and then accelerating time. In *everyday star*, the film begins with slow motion portraiture followed by a sequence of time-lapse footage. The slowness envelopes the viewer into a filmic dream-space, while the increase in speed subverts the experience of space.

One of the most notable qualities of Samarasinghe's imagery is its multi-sensory and tactile nature. Samarasinghe's work belongs to the realm of haptic cinema, creating luminous and textural images that engage the senses and encourage embodied viewing. In the past, Samarasinghe



employs shallow depth of field and extreme close-ups to draw our attention to small facial details, an eyelash, a teardrop, a cheek, whilst throwing the background into an impressionistic blur of colour and light. This film echoes an earlier work, the richly atmospheric *black widow summer set*, another sublime choreography of light and dark. In this instance, minimal light and close framing are used to create a sense of intimate looking, as bodies are cast as shadowy landscapes.

—Alice Miller

# black widow summer set

Rajee Samarasinghe

Informed by principles of psychogeography and human ecology, this non-verbal film suggests a mournful narrative involving humans and the nocturnal and crepuscular landscapes they inhabit.

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**Sri Lanka, United States | 2015**  
**8 mins | International Premiere**

## Filmography

Show Me Other Places (2021), Misery Next Time (2021), the past (2021), Gimhanaye Netra (The Eyes of Summer, 2020) Jeevithaye Mayawa (Imitation of Life, 2020), Untitled (2019), everyday star (2018), Piṭuvahalayā (The Exile, 2018), YI XIANG JU SUO (Foreign Quarters, 2017), The Spectre Watches Over Her (2016), If I Were Any Further Away I'd Be Closer to Home (2016), An Appearance of Fortitude (2015), black widow summer set (2015), The Queen of Material (2014), Untitled (Horse) (2014), 01.39411.999 (2012)

Rajee Samarasinghe's film *everyday star* screened at BFAF 2019.

**Rajee Samarasinghe** (1988, Sri Lanka) is a filmmaker based in the United States. His work tackles contemporary sociopolitical conditions in Sri Lanka through the scope of his own identity and the deconstruction of ethnographic practices. His debut feature, *Your Touch Makes Others Invisible*, is inspired by his childhood experiences during the Sri Lankan civil war. It received a Sundance Documentary Fund grant in 2019, was invited to Berlinale Talents' Doc Station, as well as True/False Film Festival's inaugural PRISM program in 2020. He was named one of Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Independent Film in 2020. Rajee's work has been exhibited at venues internationally including the Tiger Short Competition at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, New Directors/New Films presented by Film Society of Lincoln Center & MoMA, BFI London Film Festival, FIDMarseille, Festival du nouveau cinéma, Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, among others.

# everyday star

Rajee Samarasinghe

Everyday states of being and decay are observed through the infinite scope of the cosmos and the restorative light which emanates from it, driving cinematic and photographic impulses.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2018  
9 mins

# FOREIGN QUARTERS

异乡居所 / YI XIANG JU SUO

Rajee Samarasinghe

The condition of distance, genetic to the ethnographic image, traces the elusive qualities of Samarasinghe's mother's past and persona as a woman of partial Chinese heritage.

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Sri Lanka, China, United States  
2017 | 15 mins

# If I Were Any Further Away I'd Be Closer to Home

Rajee Samarasinghe

A silent poem reflecting on the place of the filmmaker's mother's birth and her first traces on earth. A generational portrait of South Asian "makers" becomes a perceptual voyage into memory, experience, and touch.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2016  
15 mins | UK Premiere

# Misery Next Time

Rajee Samarasinghe

This associative stream of visuals, culled from the past, reflect on the roles of art, labor and journalism in contemporary Sri Lanka, facing a dubious future ahead. Memory and ethnographic deconstruction cascade in an obliterated form, forging a dire and prescient assemblage.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2021  
5 mins | International Premiere

# Show Me Other Places

Rajee Samarasinghe

At the centre of this film is a Sri Lankan woman accessing other places in digital form, while situated in her own physical reality. Navigating through a multitude of spaces from the natural world to man-made environments as well as virtual planes, traditional relationships between the creator, the tool, and the subject are questioned, shattered and reconstructed.

Reflecting on his own practice as a filmmaker working in non-fiction, in this film Samarasinghe takes a collage-like approach to examining issues around representation, verisimilitude, the ethnographic image, and the limitations of the form itself. Shot on seven different cameras (and a video synthesiser) on both film and video over the course of a decade in Sri Lanka, China, and the United States, Samarasinghe delves into some of his fundamental curiosities as a filmmaker.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2021  
11 mins | World Festival Premiere

# The Exile

Piṭuvahalayā

Rajee Samarasinghe

Shot improvisationally in 2010, shortly after the end of the Sri Lankan civil war, this film takes a lyrical approach to examining recent history and the process of reconstruction in the post-war era. The visions of an exile are carried through an immoral silence, to an end both dubious and bittersweet.

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Sri Lanka | 2018 | 8 mins



# The Eyes of Summer

**Gimhanaye Netra**

Rajee Samarasinghe

In a small and remote hamlet, a young girl develops a curious friendship with a spirit who lives in an abandoned house. *The Eyes of Summer* was shot in Samarasinghe's mother's village in Southern Sri Lanka—shortly after the civil war in 2010.

Collaboratively developed with members of the filmmaker's family, a narrative was improvised around an investigation into his mother's interactions with spirits in the community during her childhood. Landing somewhere between horror fiction and "spectral" ethnography, the film describes a population reeling from devastations of the past, where distinctions between the living and the dead are thinning.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2020  
15 mins | UK Premiere

# the past

Rajee Samarasinghe

Two people mourn an unsaid tragedy in this silent and improvised play in cinematic narrativity and melodrama, telling an elegiac tale in portraiture. In looking at narrative cinematic storytelling, this piece also examines the devices of power and control embedded into that form and tradition.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2021  
5 mins | World Festival Premiere

# The Queen of Material

Rajee Samarasinghe

A paeon to Kenneth Anger, this film depicts a short procession of colourful material and a mysterious woman lit by the sun.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2014  
2 mins | International Premiere

# The Spectre Watches Over Her

Rajee Samarasinghe

A reaction to the groundbreaking text by Swiss anthropologist Paul Wirz entitled “Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon,” this silent and hand processed film considers a history of colonialism and ethnographic practices in South Asia. At his mother’s village, Samarasinghe restaged an exorcism once performed on her in the early 1960s when she was a little girl. Possessed by the lecherous entity known as the Kalu Kumara, the Sanni Yakuma healing ritual was performed over a 12-hour period.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2016  
14 mins

# Untitled

Rajee Samarasinghe

A performance film consisting of a string of five slow motion portraits of a young woman—recalling the stillness of photographs. Each portrait varies in length and gesture as her myriad expressions invite our gaze.

With each action performed in dead silence, stretched to the limits of voyeuristic levels of comfort, the simple act of looking is made fragile. A curious exchange is established between spectator, creator, and subject through a careful appropriation and reframing of social media conventions and advertising iconography transposed into a cinematic space—pointing to a cycle of regressive media consumption.

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Sri Lanka, United States | 2019  
4 mins | UK Premiere

# Filmmaker in Focus: SPS Community Media



BFMAF is pleased to present two recent films by SPS Community Media which provide a clarifying backdrop to urgent news stories such as the ongoing Farmer's Protests in India, rooted in the experiences of individuals and families living in Madhya Pradesh, one of the most populous states in India.

In this first UK presentation of the organisation's work, we show *Hailstorm* and *Entrance Exam*, two documentaries grounded in observation, deep listening and trust. Both films are built in community that make the interrelatedness between educational inequality and political indifference with the growing climate crisis and the violence of global capitalism impossible to ignore.

SPS Community Media was founded 20 years ago by Pinky Brahma Choudhury and Shobhit Jain, graduates of the Film and Television Institute of India. To date, they have produced nearly 200 films, working with, and for, the rural communities in which they are located. Their project moves from the belief in the power of cinema to provide platforms of unity in rural communities divided on the lines of caste, community, religion, and language.

The media initiative is part of the wider Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS), one of India's largest grass-roots initiatives for water and livelihood

security. The initiative works with partners on 1 million acres of land across 72 of the most deprived districts, mainly in the central Indian Adivasi belt. SPS is based in a drought-prone, tribal area in the Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh, which typifies the most difficult social and environmental problems facing the country.

SPS Community media output ranges from social documentaries to community videos and training films on subjects as wide ranging as watershed managements, sustainable agriculture, women's rights and the environment. These are films made for and with the people most impacted by these issues, with local youth training in filmmaking fostering self-representation and determination in articulating the concerns of their communities.

Using handset pocket projectors, SPS Community Media conducts around 200 screenings every month across 365 villages, engaging households in discussions about soil fertility, government entitlements, climate uncertainties, commodity marketing, loans and bank linkages and much more. Once the monsoon recedes and the grounds are dry enough to sit, SPS's People's Mobile Cinema travels from village to village, screening films in open-air venues on a big screen, bringing the experience of cinema alive in remote locations. More than 25,000 people become a part of these screenings every year.

Understanding the power of the film festival circuit to both draw attention to the issues they explore and to contribute to the wider organisation's resources, the team have shown films at



various international film festivals including Dharamshala International Film Festival and Mumbai International Film Festival. Sometimes working with government funds, these films are neither partisan nor independent. But their situated methodology, dissemination and impact raise urgent and pertinent questions on our understanding of ideas of radicality in filmmaking. Equally also on aesthetics, representation, and agency, as well as questions of authorship, when global festival audiences meet with documentary stories from the global south.

—Jemma Desai

# Entrance Exam

एंट्रेंस इग्जाम

Aditya Verma

In a village in central India, dedicated school teachers put their heart and soul into preparing a group of children for an entrance exam for a Government-run “School of Excellence.” *Entrance Exam* explores the stakes of the opportunities afforded by this continued, subsidised education for underprivileged children, as well as the many layers of struggle in this intense and surprising journey.

—Jemma Desai

India | 2020 | 60 mins  
UK Premiere

#### Filmography

*Entrance Exam* (2020), *Katchyuk my Love* (2020)

**Aditya Verma** is a recent graduate from School of Design, Doon University, Dehradun. He graduated with a degree in Graphic Design and has always taken a keen interest in visual storytelling, photography and documentary filmmaking. *Entrance Exam* is his second documentary film. He also enjoys working in the medium of animation, and his animation music video *Katchyuk my Love* was recently published in The Hindu and won the Best Music Award in Dada Saheb Phalke Film festival 2021.

# Hailstorm

Gaar

Shobhit Jain

*Hailstorm* is based in the Narmada valley in central India, an area with extremely low levels of groundwater. Farmers here battle for survival, pitched against the vagaries of climate change. Following the events of a freak hailstorm over four seasons, the film unfolds the vulnerability and precarity of those that are at the sharpest end of global capitalism's rapacious greed and the furthest from its benefits.

—Jemma Desai

**Shobhit Jain** is a filmmaker based in India. He holds a post graduate Diploma in Cinema from Film & Television Institute of India (1992). He is the founder & Director of SPS Community Media, a grass-roots initiative for water and livelihood security, based out of a remote tribal village in Madhya Pradesh since 1990. It is a full-time in-house production unit that came up in 2008, articulating all SPS endeavours, translating ideas, practices and knowledge into films and other media contents in a dynamic, interactive process, in partnership with the local community. Its core team comprises local people of the area who have been trained to make films in local languages reflecting local milieu. The media content etch stories towards change, which are shared within the community through People's Mobile Cinema—over 100 interactive sessions take place every month. More than 200 films—social documentaries, community videos and training films—have been produced so far. These films have also been screened in many national and international film festivals and received multiple awards.

India | 2021 | 61 mins  
World Premiere

## Filmography

Hailstorm (Gaar, 2021), Nari Sangh (2015), The Road Back Home (2013) Rozgaar Gaarantee: Nayi Aazaadi Ki Or? (NREGA Reforms: Building Rural India) (2011), Hamari Apni Dudh Dairy 'Our Own Milk Dairy' (2010), Watershed Development (Series of 6 films, 2008) Bhaona (2021), Forgotten Shadows (2001), Duphang-ni Solo - An Autumn Fable (1999), The Ritual (1998), Kherai - The Performing Art (1998)

# Propositions



***Propositions*** is the Festival's hybrid of discussion and online screenings, interactive games and performances. The artists in this strand share discoveries encountered through their research, experience and practice. With no physical exhibitions in Berwick this year, *Propositions* artists expansively demonstrate the possibilities of online presentation.



# Back Inside Ourselves

Three recent works by Rhiana Bonterre, Tako Taal and Ufuoma Essi are brought into dialogue with S. Pearl Sharpe's *Back Inside Herself* (newly digitised by Cinenova and playing in BFMAF 2021's *Essential Cinema* strand).

The programme takes the poem on which *Back Inside Herself* is based as a point of departure. Just as how in her poem S Pearl Sharp calls for African-American women to reject images placed on them, this presentation will examine ways of using archival exploration to contrast the relentless fixation on the “new”, as well as ideas of “competition” and “exceptionalism”, so often present in public presentation, especially of Black female identifying artists. Drawing on themes around language and articulation, as well as movement and the body, which all arise from the works, the in-person workshop and online presentation will attempt to provide a space of regrouping, exhaling, reflecting and articulating.

Back Inside Ourselves is accompanied by a response by London-based poet Sarah Lasoye commissioned by Cinenova. A reflective text from Jamila Prowse will follow.

—Jemma Desai and Myriam Mouflih

# Bodies In Dissent

Ufuoma Essi

*Bodies In Dissent* by Ufuoma Essi is an exploration of the body as a central site of remembrance and resistance. The film explores ideas of “bodily insurgency” and using the body as an archive, as a point of return, a position of refusal, a broker between transgenerational life and histories, past, present and future.

Archival clips trace a line that connects movement from the past with that of the present, finding freedom through bodily forms. The work uses the body as an archive, or perhaps, the archive(s) are processed through the body. Moments of stillness feel pronounced, in contrast with the dancer’s movements, providing “a pause before we start the cycle again.”

—Myriam Mouflih

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United Kingdom | 2021 | 5 mins

## Filmography

From Where We Land (2021), *Bodies In Dissent* (2021), *All That You Can't Leave Behind* (2019), *ALTEA* (2018)

**Ufuoma Essi** (1995, London) is a video artist and filmmaker. She works predominantly with film and moving image as well as photography and sound. Her work revolves around Black feminist epistemology and the configuration of displaced histories. The archive forms an essential medium for her as an artist and it's

through explorations with the archive that she aims to interrogate and disrupt the silences and gaps of political and historical narratives. Previous exhibitions and screenings include Barbican Centre (London); Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles); Croydon Art Store (London); Black Star Film Festival (Philadelphia); South London Gallery; and Chisenhale Studios, (London). Essi has been selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2020, and Syllabus VI (2020–21) a collaboratively produced alternative learning programme that supports ten artists across ten months. Forthcoming presentations include the culmination of a short digital residency with the Black Cultural Archives, curated by Languid Hands (Rabz Lansiquot and Imani Robinson).



# DUMP\_ outthrough- themouth

Tako Taal

Formatted for viewing on a smartphone, *DUMP\_outthroughthemouth* borrows its form from image dumps and slideshows. Using a bank of images taken on a camera phone over the past five years, Taal's work speaks to feelings of being at capacity, fatigue and frustration.

"Dump" is a word that imitates a sound, as well as a form of back-up after a system failure, something that Taal identifies through her work as a "catalogue of what could be lost."

—Myriam Mouflih

**Tako Taal** is an artist-filmmaker and programmer living in Glasgow. At stake in her artistic practice are the psychic structures of colonial relations and the question of how vivid they remain in the present. Taal was a 2019 RAW Academy fellow at RAW Material Company (Dakar) and Artist in Residence at Talbot Rice Gallery (Edinburgh), 2018–20. In 2020 her work was presented at Glasgow Short Film Festival, Tramway (Glasgow), Glasgow Women's Library. Her work was part of the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival (BFMAF, Berwick-upon-Tweed), 2018. Other exhibitions include: Glasgow Women's Library, 2019; Grand Union (Birmingham), 2018; CCA Glasgow, 2017; Galerie de l'UQAM (Montreal), 2017; Castlefield Gallery (Manchester), 2019; New Contemporaries, Royal Scottish Academy, 2016; Gallery of Modern Art (Glasgow), 2014. Taal was shortlisted for the 2021 Margaret Tait Award.

United Kingdom | 2020 | 2 mins  
World Festival Premiere

Originally created for Tramway  
Glasgow's, Tramway TV

## Filmography

*departures*, (2021), *DUMP\_outthroughthemouth* (2020), *Halo Nevus* (2018), *You Know it but it Don't Know You* (2017), *We Must Travel Through Something* (2014)

# Rhythms of my Silence

Rhiana Bonterre

Are softness and strength unable to co-exist? *Rhythms of my Silence* is an exploration and expression of music, colour, dance and poetry. It is reminiscent of memories from Trinidad, through the gaze of Delila, as she navigates through her internal world and the emotions these memories prompt.

Through a spoken monologue that flits between a hushed whisper and an echo, she confronts the differing notions of longing and resentment, intimacy and separateness that seem to define the relations between herself and her mother. Emotionally charged dancing ebbs and flows and a kind of resolution is found.

—Myriam Mouflih

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United Kingdom | 2021 | 12 mins  
World Festival Premiere

## Filmography

Rhythms of my Silence (2021), To Shake and Disturb and Bring Us Back to Ourselves (2021), Silent Truths (2019)

**Rhiana Bonterre** is a filmmaker based in the UK. Her work draws inspiration from Caribbean life and culture, and the ways its complex and traumatic past affects and shapes thought, identity and perception in the pres-

ent, both at home and amongst the Diaspora. Through the vessel of moving image, Bonterre engages intimately with the subjects of her work, playing with movement, the mixing of mediums, voice, archive footage and interview material in fluid ways. Having grown up in Trinidad, the rich art forms of the region are intentionally intertwined and integrated within many of her works. In her most recent projects, Bonterre experiments with the many emotional expressions of dance, and how movement in this form can translate feelings of restriction, resentment and freedom in ways that feel spiritual and often dreamlike. Her short film *Silent Truths* (2019) was screened at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival.

# Danielle Brathwaite- Shirley

*When Amongst Our Own* is an online work and exhibition designed by Danielle Braithwaite Shirley produced and commissioned by Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, Circuit NZ, New Zealand and Spike Island, Bristol. It includes a sound work by Shenece Oretha, a publication by Ebun Sodipo and a film by Day Eve.

When we are amongst our own our labels disappear. We become more than we usually are. We can finally get closer to ourselves, shedding a layer of unwanted eyes. This moment of real home amongst family is presented in a virtual tour around the 3D rendered city “FAM”. The city fam has been made as a tribute to the work of 3 artists: Shenece Oretha, Ebun Sodipo and Day Eve.

Like this space their works have held more than can be spoken, and have given rise for spaces like this to be conceived. Tread respectfully.

—Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley

# **When Amongst Our Own: ACITY OF Shenece Oretha, Ebun Sodipo and Day Eve**

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley

## **Dearly Beloved (a four-part harmony for deeply loved flesh)**

Shenece Oretha

United Kingdom | 2019  
UK Premiere

Dearly Beloved is a sculptural sound work dedicated to the late Toni Morrison negotiating the question of what it is to be moved by what you hear. Starting with a passage from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: "Long notes held until the four-part harmony was perfect enough for their deeply loved flesh." Within this work Oretha explores the physicality and effect of sound with the help of speakers conceived both as body and instrument.

## **Em.Press.Me**

Day Eve Komet

Austria | 2020 | 6 mins  
World Premiere

Em.Press.Me is a psycho- surreal film about finding yourself in time and space. It tells the story of the unknown, a being who finds themselves in temporal time and must find understanding and refuge in the light.

## **This Body of Fragments**

Ebun Sodipo

Zine | 2019

*This Body of Fragments* performs a study of Black digital archives, particularly the archives of social media platforms such as Tumblr, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube. Forming tenuous links between multiple fragments of black artefacts with collage and poetry, I try to tell a story of blackness, embodiment and memory.

**Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley** is an artist based in London. Brathwaite-Shirley graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art (London) in 2019. They work predominantly in animation, sound, performance and video games to communicate the experiences of being a Black Trans person. Their practice focuses on recording the lives of Black Trans people and intertwining lived experience with fiction to imaginatively retell Trans stories. Spurred on by a desire to record the "History of Trans people both living and past," their work can often be seen as a Trans archive where Black Trans people are stored for the future. In 2020, Brathwaite-Shirley produced a solo performance work at Tate Modern,

United Kingdom | 2021  
World Premiere

London. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at Focal Point Gallery, London (2020); Science Gallery, London (2020); and MU Hybrid Art House, London (2020). Group exhibitions include Re\$\$urrection Lands, Les Urbaines, Lausanne, Switzerland (2019); BBZ GRADUATE SHOW, Copeland Gallery, London (2019); and Transpose: The Future, Barbican, London (2018).

# Seema Mattu

*BERWICKWORLD*—an online commission in collaboration with New Art City featuring the world premiere of *NO BLASPHEMIES*.

*SEEMAWORLD* is an immersive, multi-channel realm and streaming facility. It's comprised of the mimicry of multiple amenities and services—which act as portals to a specific aspect of *SEEMAWORLD*. An interactive installation, it shows born-digital artefacts alongside digitised works of traditional media.

*Click!* And the stories within *Youterus* emerge: expansive, generative and multi-channel.

As a colony of *SEEMAWORLD*, *BERWICKWORLD* transports viewers firmly into the cinematics of the cinema and magnifies Fan Labour as behaviour, thought and form.

Performed through the artist's own cosplay, the world premiere of *NO BLASPHEMIES* sits inside the virtual theatre of *BERWICKWORLD*.

Within *SEEMAWORLD*, *NO BLASPHEMIES* looks to Vidding as a framework and falls under Seema's interpretation and fascination with Fan Labour (reclaimed within *SEEMAWORLD* as: *Fan Labia*).

# BERWICK- WORLD

Using portals to travel between *SEEMAWORLD* and *BERWICKWORLD*, these virtualities open gateways into the future of viewership through gameified performance, world-built environments and floating space.

As part of *BERWICKWORLD*, viewers are also treated to the fan-fictional stylings of writer and critic Zarina Muhammad—whose own contribution of Fan Labour is upheld by the characters, landscapes and customs existent inside the narratives of *Youterus*.

— Seema Mattu

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**Seema Mattu** (1993, Birmingham) is a moving-image artist based between Birmingham and London. She graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2016. Mattu's practice is framed as a theme park known as *SEEMAWORLD*. Through the welding of both 2D and 3D mixed-media, *SEEMAWORLD* centres around LGBTQ+, non-specific and othered culture. Mattu aims to build an interactive online community space for people marginalised because of race, sexuality, caste and gender—employing care through access, visibility and representation. Her works have been shown in collaboration with a number of organisations, including: Eastside Projects (Birmingham, UK), CCA (Glasgow, UK) Fotomuseum (Zürich, Switzerland), as well as screenings in New York and Rhode Island (USA).

## Filmography

NO BLASPHEMIES (2021), LOW ENERGY (2020), don't post pictures on the fucking tv (2019), RAINFOR-EST DYKE (2019), TIT TV (2019), RUBBER MERKIN (2019), SEX CURRY (2019), gay superhero (2017), seema weds seema (2016), electric toothbrush (2016)

## Must be Muzhabi

United Kingdom | 2021 | 3 mins  
World Festival Premiere

Considering the real-life rigidities of caste, *Must be Muzhabi* explores the ways in which these limitations are challenged by intercasteness, conversion and the interlocking of nature and nurture.

## Do not dream...

United Kingdom | 2021 | 4 mins  
World Festival Premiere

Through chant and trance, *Do not dream...* teases the unfolding of future mysteries. As fate and faith would have it, the work echoes the thoughts and feelings of this character—setting a virtual stage for their current intentions and later behaviours, whether coalesced or not...

## The Desperate and the Degraded

United Kingdom | 2021 | 4 mins  
World Festival Premiere

Highlighting the very real situation of caste within South Asia, *The Desperate and the Degraded* examines the way in which caste groups are defined by occupation, and the severity of the occupations themselves.

## Pump Organ

United Kingdom | 2021 | 5 mins  
World Festival Premiere

Channelling the direct experience of this character, *Pump Organ* presents a journey of caste through music as: ritual, rite of passage and relief. Through the playing of instruments and alluding of tunes, this work gives insight into what it means to be 'of service'.

## Hijra = Higher

United Kingdom | 2021 | 4 mins  
World Festival Premiere

Through use of archival, personal and community footage, *Hijra = Higher* (2021) caresses the wonders of South Asia's Hijra community—and offers allusions to a character whose identity reflects a similar sparkle and sorcery as the narrative unfolds.

## NO BLASPHEMIES

United Kingdom | 2021 | 8 mins  
World Festival Premiere

This is a satirical music video, which foreshadows and alludes to Youterus—an unfolding high-fantasy, mixed-media narrative, which is framed against the system of caste.



# Sharlene Bamboat

Made between three locations, artist and filmmaker Sharlene Bamboat's latest work is assembled through a call and response exchange of sound, text and image. Interested in the framework of voice, vibration, time, sound and language that quantum physics explores, Bamboat's new film emerges from an exchange of theoretical entanglements but is practiced and rendered through bodily ones.

In Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, Ponni writes *Rekhti*, a form of 19th century Urdu queer poetry, while Sarala acts as the camera person. On receiving the captured images, Bamboat (based in Montreal, Canada) passes back directorial instruction along with fragments of quantum theory which Sarala reads, this time filmed by Ponni. As the digital images repeatedly transcend geographic location to reach Bamboat, she lays her commentary on Sarala and Ponni's images, overlapping her voice on theirs. Travelling further to the Isle of Skye in Scotland, the recordings reach Sharlene's frequent collaborator, sound designer and musician Richy Carey, who enters a third space of deep listening, co-creating a sonic landscape that allows a further exchange of polyvocality through sound and image.

Into this assemblage, Bamboat weaves references to the interconnected impacts of British colonialism and Indian nationalism on contemporary

poetry, dance and music in South Asia. This nods to her ongoing interest in both the many ways that popular culture can be politicised, as well as the sensuous possibilities of its reclamation.

For this presentation Bamboat has created a specially captioned version in collaboration with Collective Text in Glasgow and the film plays alongside a specially commissioned video performance by Toronto-based musician Nick Dourado and writer-programmer Aaditya Agarawal, to trace the cultural lineages of music in the film spanning geographies, language and social movements.

The UK premiere of *If from Every Tongue it Drips* is co-presented with Open City Documentary Film Festival who will screen the film in London on and the film will be available online simultaneously for BFMAF audiences until 30 September.

—Jemma Desai

# If From Every Tongue it Drips

Sharlene Bamboat

**Sharlene Bamboat** (1984, Pakistan) is a video and installation artist based in Montreal. Her work calls into question narratives of mobility, citizenship and nation building. Through a re-examination of history, Bamboat elicits tongue-in-cheek performative videos and installations to question our contemporary moment marked by colonialism and neoliberalism. She has screened and exhibited internationally, including: International Film Festival Rotterdam (Netherlands), Art of the Real (NYC), Addis Video Art Festival (Ethiopia), the Sharjah Film Platform (U.A.E.), Berlinale: Forum Expanded (Germany), Mercer Union Gallery (Toronto) and Henry Art Gallery (Seattle). Sharlene frequently works in collaboration with Bambitchell. The duo were long list recipients of the 2020 Sobey Art Award. Bamboat contributes regularly to the arts-sector in Canada, as programmer, jury member for festivals, board member for arts organizations, and has been a member of numerous film/video collectives.

**Canada, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka | 2021 | 68 mins**  
**World Premiere**

## **Filmography**

Bugs & Beasts Before the Law (Collaboration with Bambitchell, 2019), The Stammering Alphabet (Collaboration with Terra Jean Long, 2019), Video Home System (2018), Special Works School (Collaboration with Bambitchell, 2018), The Wind Sleeps Standing Up (2017) Empire Symbol, Or a Man and His Mule (Collaboration with Bambitchell, 2015), In Queer Corners (2015), Oxidize (2015)

# Sung Hwan Kim

*“The question always has been whether these stories of Hawai’i have any worth to anyone in Gwangju, or vice versa. Furthermore, should the worth be the end of all stories? Why should one care, and how does one really care about the trouble beyond a national border, let alone the border of one’s skin? Here, does film educate about this method to care; or is it regenerating and readjusting the area of one’s skin?”*

—Sung Hwan Kim

New York-based artist Sung Hwan Kim presents *Hair is a Piece of Head*, the first part of a multi-part research work, *A Record of Drifting Across the Sea* (2017–ongoing). The project comprises short films, books, and installations grounded in the artist’s ongoing exploration of the histories of Korean immigration to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. In this presentation, we show the film and the accompanying publication, which both explore the key sources of imagery which provide motifs for the first iteration of this ongoing research.

The film references the May 18 Democratization Movement in Gwangju, South Korea (also known as the Gwangju Uprising, 18–27 May, 1980) in which it is estimated that around 600 people were killed. During this period, Gwangju citizens took up arms after local Chonnam University students—who were demonstrating against the martial law government—were brutalised by government troops. Through the oral histories

of Korean picture brides in Hawai'i from the early 1900s, Kim connects this history to Hawai'i. As the artist notes, "for centuries, Hawai'i has served as the integral point of passage for most, if not all, immigrants first crossing the Pacific, including Koreans, and the first patch of "U.S. soil" that many migrants encountered historically. This historicising is often oblivious to the dwindling fate of another nation, that of kānaka maoli, Native Hawaiians."

The practice of Japanese, Okinawan, and Korean immigrant workers in Hawai'i selecting brides using photographs represents the collision of fantasy and material reality. This echoes how, in the film, Hawai'i is both a location and a concept. Continuing his ongoing interest in the ways that language can be a space of insight as well as struggle, Kim's film is spoken in English, Korean, Mandarin, and Hawaiian, in order to weave together the different subjectivities embedded in different languages.

Edited using the iPhone's "Live Photos" feature, the artist evokes what he has called a "psychological hesitancy" to the seemingly definitive act of photography: bracketing a moment rather than capturing an image. Kim observes that "the vanity embedded in Instagram culture is visible in the postures, expressions, outfits, and circumstances of these bygone beings and their many personal photographs." His striking, lyrical evocation of this imagery through performance, fragments of research and haunting sound design (composed by long-time collaborator David Michael DiGregorio aka dogr) creates space of connection between what he describes as "the moment of catastrophe, such as a national trauma, and the moment in which aesthetics slips into the form of reason, education, tradition, pride, justice, love, and glory."

—Jemma Desai

# Hair is a piece of head

머리는 머리의 부분

Sung Hwan Kim

United States, South Korea | 2021  
25 mins | World Festival Premiere

## Filmography

Hair is a piece of head (2021), Love Before Bond (2017), Temper Clay (2012) Apologize at UNIS (2016), Temper Clay (2012), Washing Brain and Corn (2010), Manahatas Dance (2009), Drawing Video (2008), Summer Days in Keijo—written in 1937 (2007), From the commanding heights... (2007), This is a scene (2006), Dog Video (2006), Three Videos by SUNG HWAN KIM and a lady from the sea (2004-2005), Green Lotte (2005), 12 minutes (2005), Flat White Rough Cut (2004), Her (2003), A-DA-DA (2002), J story (1998)

**Sung Hwan Kim** (1975, South Korea) lives and works in New York. He studied architecture at Seoul National University, followed by a BA Mathematics and Art at Williams College, Williamstown (2000), followed by a Master of Science in Visual Studies at MIT and a residency at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam (2004–5). Over the past two decades, Kim has been producing lyrical multimedia installations, films, and performances that merge the mythological and the everyday. Kim participated in the 57th Venice Biennale and had solo exhibitions at MoMA (2021); DAAD Galerie (Berlin, 2018); Artsonje Center (Seoul, 2014); the Tanks at Tate Modern (London, 2012); Kunsthalle Basel (2011); Queens Museum (New York, 2011); Haus der Kunst (Munich, 2010).

Kim's short film *Love Before Bond* was screened at BFM&F 2017.

# Zia Anger & Monica Mirabile

Filmmaker Zia Anger and movement artist Monica Mirabile present a performative conversation, working through their collaborative practice and a hypothetical future work.

The conversation will both be about and be the work itself, where process and collaboration are as important as the finished outcome. Inspirations, experiences and plans are shared, deconstructed and worked out in real time. Starting with performance and movement, Zia and Monica draw on the performances of family, ritual and lived experience, to inspirations in opera, mimic gestures, accidental macro dosing and the internet.

Their ongoing conversation thinks through a more physical experience of moving-images, screens, audience, and the negotiations in between. Embracing the not-yet-figured-out-ness of a future project, their practice goes against the outcome centred ideals of the film industry and the individual storyteller.

Both artists, via different mediums, have been working with storytelling through the body. Zia Anger's unique screening-performance *My First Film* rearranged the formal expectations of documentary and first-person narratives. Questioning the idea of where a film begins and ends (and the distance between the situated filmmaker and their "body of work"), *My First Film* redefined narrative as an unfixed entity; shifting in relation to the world around it, lived experience, and relationship between the screen, filmmaker and audience. In this work, failure, possibility and movement were in constant conversation—questioned and redefined with each "screening".

Mirabile's work also engages with what happens at the edges, in the unplanned and the collaborative, expanding expectations of dance as a form in the making rather than predefined. Through *FlucT*, Mirabile's collaborative dance-performance-duo with Sigrid Lauren, movement and gesture are explored as both manifestations of social power dynamics, as well as the means of forming relationships which can undo or remake into something new.

This live virtual event is a playful iteration of these artists' relationship and process-based practice, where the behind-the-scenes is as much a part of the story as what is in the frame. What also comes to the foreground is the value of friendship; of collaboration and the togetherness of thinking through work, significant in ways beyond what is valued as "productive". The togetherness of sharing, humour, care and provocation; the relationships that sustain and build a practice, beyond fixed finished works.



A live audience is required to ask questions in real time. Whether we are getting closer to the actual or deeper into the hypothetical will be revealed. EG: “where will I sit?”, “who is this about?”, “what are your references?”

—Christina Demetriou

**Zia Anger** works in moving images. Her short films have screened at festivals such as New York Film Festival, Festival del Film Locarno, New Directors/New Films, AFI Fest, Maryland Film Festival, Ann Arbor Film Festival, and Vienna Independent Shorts. She has made music videos for various independent artists including: Angel Olsen, Mitski, Julianna Barwick, Beach House, Maggie Rogers, and Jenny Hval; the latter of whom she also toured with as a performer and stage director. In 2018 she began touring a new solo performance that traces the last ten years of her lost and abandoned work, titled *My First Film* (2015).

**Monica Mirabile** is a New York based artist whose work explores the physical vocabulary of authority existing at the intersection of choreography, visual art and group dynamics. She is one half of the performance duo FlucT, a collaboration with Sigrid Lauren exploring the psychology of capital obedience in American consumerism through sound and choreography. For 8 years Mirabile has operated a performance studio in Brooklyn called Otion Front Studio, a rehearsal space and performance residency organised with a fluctuating community of artists working through movement.

2021

**Filmography: Zia Anger**

*My First Film* (2015), *I Remember Nothing* (2015), *Lover Boy* (2008), *Thanks For Calling, Baby* (2005)

# Essential Cinema

***Essential Cinema*** is our pluralist retrospective series that provides a revisionist view of what might be considered canonical works of cinema. The 2021 Selection brings new restorations and digitisations that evoke connections between political and spiritual awakenings, taking in projects from India, Cuba, USA and Palestine.

# Amma Ariyan (Report to Mother)

John Abraham

A young cultural activist Purushan (Joy Mathew) is on his way to Delhi when he sees the dead body of Hari, a tabla player and Naxalite. Purushan begins a long journey to inform Hari's mother of her son's death, collecting comrades and perspectives on the struggle along his journey.

John Abraham was a founding member of Odessa Collective, a group of filmmakers who challenged mainstream production and distribution. *Amma Ariyan* was funded through the 16mm films that Odessa distributed directly to audiences. It screened across Kerala through travelling shows rather than being formally released. Made in 1986, the film rests on the febrile legacy of an earlier period. A time punctuated by intense periods of agitation by workers and students, 70s politically radical Kerala.

The film repeatedly depicts the image of the ever growing crowd of comrades who join Purushan on his journey. This centralises the theme of material solidarity and the idea of a constantly forming and reforming struggle. Within this loose narrative, the film draws on manifold iterations of political turbulence on social, cultural and intellectual life in Kerala. Scenes of police brutality that suppressed naxalite activism mingle with references to scandals, such as Vypeen alcohol poisonings.

As it restages real strikes by medical workers and labourers with the participation of those who originally agitated in the movements, it also refers to the influence of such activity on artistic production in the region. In one scene, we see a rehearsal for a play demanding the release of Nelson Mandela. In others, a character quote from Pablo Neruda or read

Che Guevara's diaries as the camera pans past posters of Che, Karl Marx and Mao Zedong on the wall. The effect is one of collapsing recent local and global political history into one ongoing moment.

The asymmetry to these different registers (and their gendered associations) is gestured to in a scene towards the end of the film. As a man waits to deliver his report of Hari's death, he picks up a copy of Time magazine. He thumbs through a photo essay containing images of global atrocities. In a parallel space, two women discuss ritual and astrology. This provides a foil for the violence of the uber-scientific, modern world. But it also raises questions about the separation between militant political identities and our more reflective internal searches for meaning.

The film is an important artefact of Parallel Cinema. It's recent restoration and visibility presents us with a series of dichotomies—between the quotidian and exceptional, the radical and the intellectual, the worker and the artist. The relevance of all these ideas continue to preoccupy, politically and culturally, engaged cinema audiences globally.

—Jemma Desai

**John Abraham** (1937 – 1987, Kuttanad) was a Malayali Indian filmmaker, short story writer and screenwriter ranked among the greatest Indian film directors. After originally graduating with a degree in History and Politics and working as a teacher, Abraham went on to study at the Film and Television Institute of India. He is well remembered for his efforts in starting a people's cinema movement, an absolute form of independent filmmaking called Odessa Collective. Abraham is known for his nomadic style of living, he rebelled against all the established ways of life as well as filmmaking. He was also a great writer of short stories. In one of his surrealist tales, *How Many Mathais in Kottayam*, a man named Mathai sets out to discover how many other Mathais are there in his town.

### **Filmography**

Amma Ariyan (Report to Mother, 1986), Cheriyaachante Kroora Krithyangal (Cruelties of Cheriyaachan, 1979), Donkey in a Brahmin Village (1977), Trisandhya (1972), Vidhyarthigale Ithile Ithile (1971), Hides and Strings (1969), Priya (1969), Koyna Nagar (1967)

# Back Inside Herself

S. Pearl Sharp

Described by S Pearl Sharp as “a visual poem on identity”, *Back Inside Herself* shows a Black woman finding her own sense of self and rejecting hegemonic societal expectations of who she should be and how she should behave.

Through simple acts like taking off her wig and kicking off her shoes, the protagonist embodies a sense of freedom. Inspired by the filmmaker’s poem of the same name, a single line is repeated again and again to create a rhythmic mantra and voices become a unified chorus that soundtracks the work.

Barbara O is perhaps most widely known for her performance in Julie Dash’s film *Daughters of the Dust* (1991). Here she plays the titular ‘herself’ with a magnetism that undeniably evokes the spirit of the LA Rebellion. A wave of creativity and collaboration by Black filmmakers across the USA in the late 70s and early 80s, the LA Rebellion found new ways to reimagine and reframe Black life by putting subjectivity at the centre of their work.

—Myriam Mouflih



**S. Pearl Sharp** (1942, Ohio) is an award-winning filmmaker, writer, activist and actress based in Los Angeles. In the 60s she studied acting in New York and attended John O. Killens' Writers Workshop at Columbia University. During her studies, she completed two volumes of poetry and her first play, *The Sistuhs*, in addition to forming the literary performance troupe Poets & Performers. Sharp then studied film production at Los Angeles City College. In her work, she uses the medium of film to address community issues. She is one of the co-founders of the Black Anti-Defamation Coalition, which directly challenged the entertainment industry on the Black image in the media, and edited the group's newsletter, Media Matters. Her published written works include *The Evening News - Essays And Commentaries From NPR And Other Clouds*, *Black Women For Beginners* (non-fiction) and two poetry w/jazz CDs.

**United States | 1984 | 4 mins**  
**New Film Restoration**

**Film copy courtesy of Cinenova**

### **Filmography**

Fertile Ground: Stories from the Watts Towers Arts Center (2005), The Healing Passage/ Voices From The Water (2004), Central Avenue Live! (1996), It's OK to Peek (1996), Picking Tribes (1988), Life Is A Saxophone (1985), Back Inside Herself (1984)

# One Way or Another

**De Cierta Manera**

Sara Gómez

Made by pioneering Cuban filmmaker Sara Gómez, *One Way or Another* is a bold work of revolutionary feminism. It is also a compelling and complex picture of Cuban life under socialism. The film is radical in its honest and unflinching assessment of the difficulties of living in a newly formed socialist society. It astutely shows the struggles of marginalised communities adapting to revolutionary ideals, whilst casting a critical lens on the machismo, class and race discrimination that was still present in Castro's post-revolutionary Cuba.

Hybrid in form, *One Way or Another* blends ethnographic documentary techniques with narrative fiction, and the film shifts fluidly between these modes. Gómez achieved a unifying low-key aesthetic by using 16mm film throughout. This is further emphasised by how she embeds her main characters in non-fiction settings with non-professional actors who drew on real-life experiences.

Set in the Miraflores housing development, an area on the outskirts of Havana built to replace slum housing, the fictional story centres on a romance between factory worker Mario and

**Sara Gómez** (1942 – 1974, Cuba) was a pioneering Cuban filmmaker. Born in Havana, Gómez studied literature, piano and Afro-Cuban ethnography and worked as a journalist before turning to filmmaking. In 1961 Gómez became the first woman to join the newly-formed Instituto de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC). At the ICAIC she worked as an assistant director to filmmakers Jorge Fraga, Tomas Gutiérrez Alea and Agnès Varda. She made several short documentaries before directing her first feature film *De Cierta Manera* (*One Way or Another*) in 1974. Gómez's work used documentary and fiction to represent the Afro-Cuban community and highlight the class, race and gender inequalities in revolutionary Cuba.

**Cuba | 1977 | 73 mins**  
**UK Premiere**

**New Film Restoration**

### **Filmography**

*De cierta manera* (1975), *Sobre horas extras y trabajo voluntario* (1973), *Atencion prenatal; Año uno; Mi aporte* (1972), *Un documental a proposito del transito; De Bateyes* (1971), *Isla del tesoro; Poder local, poder popular* (1970), *Una isla para Miguel; En la otra isla* (1968), *Y tenemos sabor* (1967), *Guanabacoa: Crónica de mi familia* (1966), *Excursion a Vueltabajo* (1965), *Ire a Santiago* (1964), *Solar habanero* (1962), *Plaza Vieja; Fábrica de tabacos; El solar; Historia de la piratería; Solar habanero* (1962)

middle-class schoolteacher Yolanda. Over the course of the film and their fractious relationship, the pair are forced to confront their values, prejudices and contradictions. Mario's old macho ways are put to the test, while Yolanda's prejudices surface when teaching underprivileged children.

In *One Way or Another*, Gómez challenges Cuba to live up to its utopian revolutionary values and strives for a society free of class discrimination, racial inequality and outdated patriarchal traditions. The first feature film to be directed by a Cuban woman was to sadly be Gómez's last work. Gómez died during post-production and the film was completed by her colleagues Tomas Gutierrez Alea and Julio Garcia Espinosa. A timely and much-anticipated restoration by Arsenal is presented here.

—Alice Miller

# The Void Project

The Void Project looks at the effect of the absence of Palestinian visual archives on the construction of a Palestinian visual narrative. The project was founded by Palestinian documentary filmmaker, cinematographer, producer and writer Azza El-Hassan, whose documentary films mostly reflect her experience living in exile and her experience living in Palestine. In this programme, El-Hassan brings together a selection of films produced by the Palestine Film Institute in Jordan and Lebanon. during the revolutionary years of Palestinian Cinema These films are a testimony to both the history of international solidarity with Palestine, as well as the ongoing struggle for a self determined Palestinian narrative.

— Jemma Desai

The filmmakers of the Palestine Film Institute, PFI, which are the creators of these films, perceived their cinema to be different in its form and content to that which was being made in the West. Through the institute, they wanted to create films that changed the world and challenge Western concepts. Many filmmakers and artists from around the world joined the PFI, to participate in the creation of an alternative narrative, among them was Jean-Luc Godard, Jean Genet and many others. As a filmmaker myself, I find this fascinating, and I want to share its beauty with you. I chose *The Fifth War* (1978), because it embodies the effort and work of artists from around the world to retell the Palestinian narrative. It is a film that was codirected by Samir Nimer, an Iraqi filmmaker, and Monica Maurer, a German filmmaker. The film also stars British actress Vanessa Redgrave.

All the films that I have chosen have been made with the Western audience in mind, where the filmmakers engages with the role of introducing the audience to what has happened to Palestine and the Palestinians, and tell them what the Palestinian movement is doing to challenge the injustice that has been inflicted on it's people.

Two of the films, *The Urgent Call for Palestine* (1973) and *Glows of Memories* (1975), are by the prominent Palestinian painter Ismael Shamout. These films are his only attempt to use a different medium to work through his art concepts. His art work, which usually focused on depicting Palestinian life prior to expulsion and the aftermath of the expulsion, is presented in *Glows of Memories* as intercuts to the actual real life events which led to the creation of the

art pieces; making the viewer constantly aware of the connection between art and human real life events. Driven by strong political convictions, Shammout makes a call in *The Urgent Call of Palestine*, to fellow Jews urging them to not be led by colonial intervention in the region.

The last film in the collection, *The Road to Palestine* (1985) by Layali Bader, stands out from the rest, as it is a children's animation film. I chose this beautiful short film, not only because it is probably the Institute's first attempt to make an animation film, but because it is probably one of the last films that were made by the PFI. Bader was sent to the GDR to learn and make an animation film, while she was in Germany, the Israeli army invaded Lebanon and looted the PFI archives. That was in 1982, and it wasn't until 1985 that Bader on her own managed to finish the film and release it.

—Azza El Hassan

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**Azza El Hassan** is a Palestinian filmmaker and the winner of various International film awards, such as the the Aleph Award, Luchino Visconti Award and Grierson Award. She is the founder of *The Void Project*, which looks at the effect of the absence of Palestinian visual archives on the construction of a Palestinian visual narrative.

# The Fifth War

Al Harb Al Kamisah

Monica Maurer, Samir Nimr

Fronted by Vanessa Redgrave and narrated entirely in English, *The Fifth War* gives a visceral account of the 1978 'Litani Operation', in which Israeli forces invaded south Lebanon aiming to eradicate the PLO.

A war documentary that stands as an example of both the possibilities of international solidarity and also its dangers. Co-directed by an Iraqi and German filmmaker and starring a British actress, its proximity to the violence of the Litani Operation resulted in the loss of two of its members during filming.

—Jemma Desai

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**Palestine, German Democratic Republic | 1980 | 66 mins**

## Filmography

Palestine in Flames (1988/89), Listen! (1985), War Lab (1984), Why? (1982), ASHBAL-Pulse of Life (1981), YOM AL ARD (1981), Born out of Death (1981), The Fifth War (1980), Children of Palestine (1979), Palestine Red Crescent (1978)

**Monica Maurer** (Germany) is an independent filmmaker. Maurer originally studied Sociology and Communication Sciences in Munich and Berlin University. She later worked as a journalist for several newspapers in Germany and for the US-based radical magazine "Ramparts". Maurer has been making films since the 60s and between 1977 and 1982 she made films in cooperation with the Palestinian Cinema Institution and the Information Department of the PRCS. Currently she is working on digitising her film archive and on a film project-in-progress entitled *SHOOTING REVOLUTION*. She is also a member of the Board of Archive of the Working Class Movement (AAMOD).



# Road to Palestine

**Zikriat wa Nar**

Layaly Badr

Seven-year-old Layla lives in a refugee camp outside Palestine. Her father was killed and she was badly injured from an air raid. We share the life of Layla and her friends, who tell us how they imagine Palestine despite them having never seen it.

—Jemma Desai

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**Layaly Badr** wrote children's stories before she turned to filmmaking. She studied film-making in Germany and screenwriting at the New York Film Academy. Badr has been awarded several awards for her films and television work and published two books, *Lobana Wal Qamar* and *Nahr Wa Shajara*. Her films are distinguished musicals, combining live action with animation. Badr was the head of ART Children's Channel before moving into the cinema industry as a producer and distributor. She worked as a managing director in the two biggest networks in the Middle East: ART and Rotana. She has also worked as a consultant for two of Egyptian networks: Al Nahar and ON TV.

**Palestine, German Democratic Republic | 1985 | 7 mins**

## Filmography

Road to Palestine (1985)

# Glows of Memories

Nida Filinstin

Ismail Shammout

Ismail Shammout, a Palestinian painter, also served as director of the Cultural Arts Section of the PLO and worked with the organization's Film Unit in the 1970s. In this one of his few film works he unravels the memories within his painting *Memories and Fire*.

Using a non verbal style utilised by early Soviet filmmakers, comprising archival photographs and Shammout's own paintings, a story of Palestinian experience and resistance is communicated across language boundaries.

—Jemma Desai

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**Palestine | 1975 | 11 mins**

## Filmography

Glows of Memories (1975), The Urgent Call of Palestine (1973)

**Ismail Shammout** (1930 - 2006, Palestine) was a painter, art historian and filmmaker. He is known as a pioneer of modern Palestinian art. Living through the 1948 Palestinian exodus (Nakba) and facing exile from Palestine, Shammout depicted the many struggles he faced throughout his artistic career. Shammout and his family marched from his hometown, Lydda, to the Khan Younis camp in Gaza when the artist

was eighteen. This experience shaped the life of the artist as he became actively involved in regional politics. He graduated from the College of Fine Arts in Cairo (1950) and later from the Academia De Bella Arti in Rome (1954). Shammout was part of the Palestine Exhibition of 1954 in Cairo, inaugurated by president Gamal Abdel Nasser. Shammout became the Director of Arts and National Culture for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1965. The PLO awarded him the Revolutionary Shield for Arts and Literature, the Jerusalem Medal for Culture, Arts and Literature, and The Palestine Prize for the Arts. The Arab Thought Forum awarded him The Creative Prize for Arab Painting. An annual prize in his name is awarded for excellent Palestinian painting. His works have been acquired by several Arab and international museums.

# The Urgent Call of Palestine

Ismail Shammout

In this short film, Shammout records a solidarity song by the Palestinian Egyptian singer Zeinab Shaath announcing the urgent call of Palestine. The song is punctuated by the words of poet Kamal Nasser, which continue to hold striking relevance today.

—Jemma Desai

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Palestine | 1973 | 5 mins

# Rising Up at Night: Work in Progress

Returning for a second edition, *Work in Progress* is a Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival programme strand highlighting forthcoming feature-length films.

For 2021's *Work in Progress*, we will focus on Congolese director and visual artist Nelson Makengo's *Rising Up at Night* (2022) his feature film debut currently in production. *Rising Up at Night* is a co-production between Democratic Republic of the Congo, Belgium, Germany and Burkina Faso. We will discuss the work in progress while also sharing a previous short directed by Makengo as part of the Festival's online programme.

# Rising Up at Night

Nelson Makengo

After an election that has shaken its already precarious political and economic stability, DR Congo is trying to revive its project to build Africa's largest power plant on the Congo River. Kinshasa, the capital, remains in darkness while its population struggles for access to light. *Rising Up at Night* subtly portrays a population that is reinventing itself in spite of everything, in an environment plagued by the violence and beauty of Kinshasa's nights and the uncertainty of the next day.

Flying back to Kinshasa, on the plane after my first stay in Europe, I was struck by the darkness that reigns over Africa and particularly in the Congo where I live. Even when flying over this overpopulated metropolis of 15 million inhabitants, you are in almost total darkness.

In Europe, I had been connected with the *Nuit debout* movement, a spontaneous protest movement that had emerged in Paris in 2016. I had discovered a space where the voice of the voiceless was freed, opening up a fascinating dialogue on political, social and economic issues. I myself was filled with questions about the deprivation that millions of Kinshasa residents face on a daily basis and the untimely power cuts that plunge entire neighbourhoods or even parts of the city into darkness at night. I had of course experienced this before



**Nelson Makengo** (1990, Kinshasa, DR Congo) is a photographer, filmmaker and producer. He is a graduate from The Academy of Fine Arts in Kinshasa and La Fémis in Paris. He has directed six short films which have been screened at the Sao Paulo International Film Festival, Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival (France) and de Saint-Louis Documentary Film Festival (Senegal), among others. He was one of the 10 Congolese artists selected to participate in the 2017 Atelier Picha (Lubumbashi). In 2018, Makengo presented his film *E'ville* at the Lubumbashi Biennial and was artist-in-residence at Wiels Contemporary art centre (Belgium). Makengo's film *Up at Night* had its UK Premiere at BFMF 2020.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Belgium | 2020**

#### **Filmography**

*Up at Night* (2019), *E'ville* (2018),  
*Théâtre Urbain* (2017), *Tabu* (2017),  
*Souvenir d'un été* (2017)

from the “inside” but seeing it from the window of the plane was particularly striking.

Once in Kinshasa, the more I tried to think about it, the more I felt caught up in the contradictions inherent in Kinshasa's life as a result of years of colonisation, plundering of resources, abandonment by the state.

It was in this particular context and at this important moment in the country's history that I decided to film this dark night in Kinshasa, in darkness but far from being asleep. Indeed, Kinshasa does not fall asleep, it is in perpetual resilience, trying to provide the necessities for the providence of a few night owls who are not afraid to brave the darkness in search of something to survive in this feverish hegemony of the night.

To make this film, I left my comfort zone, as a young Kinshasa native from the industrial district of Limete, near the city centre, and entered the depths of Kinshasa's working-class neighbourhoods, the absurdity of the rubble of endless nights, where young people of my age have stopped dreaming, because they have to survive day by day. What about beauty in all this? It's a question of self-illumination. Whatever the price.

—Nelson Makengo

# **Berwick Young Filmmakers**





# Intended Ten: The Fate of The Middle Place

A collaborative film made by Berwick Young Filmmakers (a group of local 12–14 year olds). The film was produced over five days of workshops led by artist Kimberley O'Neill, which introduced the group to digital filmmaking and documentary techniques. The film that the Berwick Young Filmmakers have produced together, explores the theme 'Reworld'—speculating on what life in the year 2031 could be like and imagining how people, technology and nature may change in the near future.

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**Kimberley O'Neill** is an artist and filmmaker based in Glasgow. O'Neill was shortlisted for the Margaret Tait Award 2019/20. Recent activities include; *Enigma Body Tech*, solo exhibition, Satellites Programme, Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, 2019; *Ways to Speculate*, Screening, Site Gallery, Sheffield, 2019 and she was co-Programmer of AMIF 2019 with Ima-Abasi Okon & Emmie McCluskey at Tramway, Glasgow.

**United Kingdom | 2021**

# Festival Programmers

## **Jemma Desai** Head of Programming

Jemma Desai is based in London. Her practice engages with film programming through research, writing, performance, as well as informally organised settings for deep study. She is about to undertake a practice based PhD on the histories of liberatory performance and moving image and the possibilities opened up through ideas of abolitionist praxis at Central School of Speech and Drama.

## **Christina Demetriou** Associate Programmer

Originally from the UK, Christina currently lives in Berlin. She has programmed film, performance and video art events in different contexts, as well as working in the arthouse film industry on sales, audience development and festival strategy. Across these settings she is interested in developing a deeper engagement with film, understanding the potentials and limits of the industry, and finding new forms of working. She recently started an initiative called Oyster Films, developing tailor-made festival and distribution strategies for moving-image work between cinema and visual art.

## **Alice Miller** Associate Programmer

Alice Miller is a PhD researcher and film programmer based in Leeds. She is currently writing her thesis on the history of local independent film exhibition, in the Centre for World Cinemas and Digital Cultures at the University of Leeds. In 2018, she joined Leeds International Film Festival as a programmer and for the 2019 edition of the festival, she programmed Mother Cutter: Women Who Shaped Film, a retrospective season cele-

brating the work of women editors. She organises pop-up film screenings in various spaces across Leeds and is a local organiser for the DIY celebration of cinema that is Scalarama.

### **Myriam Mouflih** Associate Programmer

Myriam Mouflih is a film programmer and sometimes writer from Glasgow, UK. Her research has focused predominantly on Artists Moving Image from the African continent and the diaspora. Since 2017, Myriam has programmed for Africa in Motion Film Festival and served on the committee of Transmission Gallery from 2018-2020. She is also a member of the LUX Scotland Advisory group and was on the jury for the Margaret Tait Award 2020/21.

### **Herb Shellenberger** Associate Programmer

Herb Shellenberger is a film programmer, curator and writer originally from Pennsylvania and based in London. He has curated screenings, exhibitions and film series at film festivals, cinemathèques and art institutions internationally, including retrospectives of filmmakers such as Ali Khamraev (BFMAF 2017), Sophia Al-Maria (BFMAF 2018), Tiffany Sia, Payal Kapadia (BFMAF 2020), Sid Landovka & Anya Tsyrlina, George Kuchar, Jonas Mekas, Sergei Parajanov, Johan van der Keuken and Al Wong. In 2020, he was a union rep and co-organiser of the 42-day strike of workers at Tate Modern and Tate Britain, and he is co-editor of the revised edition of Amos Vogel's 1974 book *Film as a Subversive Art* (Film Desk Books, 2021).

### **Peter Taylor** Festival Director

Born in Belfast (1974), Peter Taylor has been Director of Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival since 2015. Prior to this he was a programmer at International Film Festival Rotterdam and WORM. Together with Myrid Carten he curated *BARBED WIRE LOVE: Artists and their North of Ireland troubles* for the 2021 Glasgow Short Film Festival.

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# **PUNTO DE VISTA**

PAMPLONA - IRUÑA · 14 — 19 MARZO 2022

FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE CINE DOCUMENTAL DE NAVARRA  
NAVARROAKO ZINEMA DOCUMENTALEKO NAZIOARTETIKO JAIALDIA  
INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL OF NAVARRA

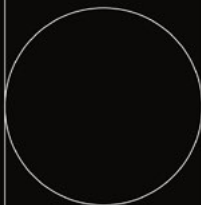
Gobierno de Navarra  
Gobierno de España

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08.09.21-14.09.21 in London  
13.09.21-23.09.21 Online

# Open City Documentary Festival

The Art of  
Non-Fiction



More info & tickets:  
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# Schedule

## Friday 10 September

Invisible Touch	12:30-14.40 Maltings Henry Travers
Feast	15:00-17:05 Maltings Main House
How to Improve the World & Landscape Series #1	17:15-18:30 Maltings Henry Travers
Opening Film: Idrish (ইদ্রিশ)	19:30-20:55 Maltings Main House



## Saturday 11 September

Passion of Remembrance & Golden Jubilee Trilogy	10:30-12:05 Maltings Main House
Manifesto, Tender Point Ruin, suspuration!	12:45-15:05 Maltings Main House
Hailstorm	13:30-14:50 Maltings Henry Travers
Amma Ariyan (Report to Mother)	15:45-18:05 Maltings Main House
Back Inside Ourselves	16:15-18:30 The Gymnasium
Shared Resources	19:00-21.00 Maltings Main House
Anti-Archive Shorts	19:30-21:10 Maltings Henry Travers
Rock Bottom Riser	21:30-23:00 Maltings Main House

## Sunday 12 September

La Nave	11.00-12:30 Maltings Main House
Entrance Exam	11:30-12:50 Maltings Henry Travers
A Body is a Body is a Body, Alternative Economies, Galb'Echaouf, Maat Means Land	13:15-15:20 Maltings Main House
The Void Project	13:45-15:35 Maltings Henry Travers
One Way or Another & Back Inside Herself	16:15-17:50 Maltings Main House
Closing Film: El Planeta	19:00-20:45 Maltings Main House



# Thanks

**Aaditya Agarawal**

**Omar Ahmed**

Alchemy Film & Arts: **Rachael Disbury, Michael Pattison**

Anti-Archive: **Daniel Mattes**

Arsenal - Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V.:

**Carsten Zimmer, Gesa Knolle**

Arts Council England:

**Nicholas Baumfield, Laura Cresser, Lara Devitt,**

**Sam Peace, Jane Tarr**

Auguste Orts: **Marie Logie**

Berwick Chamber of Trade: **John C. Gardiner, Stephen Scott**

**Anna Chapman, Martin Parker**

**Ben Corthoys, Jessie Greengrass**

Berwick Film Society: **Genni Poole, John Spiers, Maurice Ward**

Berwick Food & Beer Festival

Berwick Literary Festival: **Michael Gallico**

Berwick-upon-Tweed Community Development Trust:

**Becci Murray, Ann Turner**

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European Media Arts Festival: **Katrin Mundt**

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Filmchief: **Dennis Pasveer**

Film Heritage Foundation of India: **Shivendra Singh Dungarpur**

Glasgow Short Film Festival: **Sanne Jehoul, Matt Lloyd**

Goethe-Institut: **Maren Hobein, Katrin Sohns**

**Cíntia Gil**

**Emily Grieve**

Havana Glasgow Film Festival: **Eirene Houston**

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**Amal Khalaf**

**Sarah Lasoye**

International Short Film Festival Oberhausen: **Hilke Doering**

**The Joicey Trust**

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LNER: **Lorna Stemp, Adam Reid**

Open City Documentary Film Festival:

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**Inge de Leeuw**

**Hilary Lowe**

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**Jimmy Manningham, Charlotte Payn, Wendy Payn,**  
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**Rhubaba**

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Youth Hostel Association: **Berwick-upon-Tweed**

# Accessible Cinema

Access measures at BFMAF 2021 include:

To make the Festival more accessible for Deaf and hard of hearing audiences, either **SDH** or **Captions** are available for selected programmes and screenings.

**Subtitles** are available for the majority of the rest of the programme. Please see individual titles for your guidance.

All of our films contain **content notes** to help indicate any potential distressing subject matter for audiences.

**Transcripts** are available for all podcasts - these can be found on the podcast pages.



All live discussions are recorded and available with subtitles on our website shortly after the event.

A **large print version** of our catalogue is available on our website.

A **text only version** of our catalogue is available on our website.

**Ticket prices** for the Festival have been flattened to ensure as many people as possible can enjoy the programme.

If you have any queries regarding accessibility please do not hesitate to contact **[info@bfmaf.org](mailto:info@bfmaf.org)**

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