

NOVEMBER 8-19 2023

27TH EDITION

Toronto
Reel Asian
International
Film Festival



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Reel Asian's offices and main activities are located on the treaty territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat nations. This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, a treaty of collective responsibility for the mutual protection and sharing of land and resources.

For the 27th edition of our festival, we are continuing with in-person screenings as well as hosting industry panels that will stream Canada-wide. As such, we encourage our audiences to learn the specific histories and stories of the lands on which they are settled, and to support the ongoing work of Indigenous leaders and communities.

We honour the longstanding work of organizers, creatives, and communities that continue to give us hope, language, and possibility. We practice critical and reflexive allyship with Indigenous Peoples all over Turtle Island who are exercising their sovereignty and working toward justice and freedom, whose histories, presence, and imagined futures inspire us over and over to envision what our future worlds must look like.

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GOV'T LETTERS



FROM CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

To better understand the human condition, fully experience the world around us and challenge our assumptions, we need art, now more than ever.

More engagement, connection and inspiration are what the arts promise us and what you are bringing to life, collectively, through this unique gathering of the arts and culture in Canada.

The Canada Council for the Arts is a proud supporter of the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival, and I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to all those involved.

Michelle Chawla
Director and CEO
Canada Council for the Arts



FROM TELEFILM CANADA

Showcasing and celebrating the works of Canadian creators is at the heart of what we do at Telefilm. That is why we are proud to partner with the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival to further boost our support for Canadian creatives at home and around the world.

At Telefilm, we are uniquely positioned to finance and support every stage of a film's career, from development and production, all the way to film festivals. In this ever-evolving audiovisual landscape, we are thankful to partner with engaging festivals such as the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival to bring audiences compelling stories made and told by Canadians. The diversity of our storytelling is one that puts Canada in the forefront of a global stage and is what sets us apart. Festivals continue to play an important role in the film industry, growing the talent pool as well as promoting a communal experience for audiences to celebrate and connect with distinctive Canadian films and the talent behind them.

We encourage you to keep supporting Canadian talent in theatres and on digital platforms!



Julie Roy
Executive Director and CEO, Telefilm Canada



FROM THE PREMIER

Warm greetings to everyone taking part in the 27th edition of the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival.

One of the things that makes Ontario great is the wealth of talent in our diverse communities. Our province is proud to be home to many Ontarians with Asian roots. Their skills, talents and rich traditions have contributed much to our cultural and economic strength.

Hats off to the stellar team behind the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival for, once again, bringing us the best of contemporary Asian cinema. Thank you for showcasing the talents of Asian filmmakers, storytellers, and performers.

Events such as this help celebrate Asian culture, entertain and invigorate our communities, and strengthen Ontario's reputation as an international film and cultural centre.

Have a wonderful time at the festival.



Doug Ford
Premier



FROM THE MINISTER OF TOURISM

Welcome to the 27th edition of the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival.

This event showcases world-class contemporary Asian cinema to a wide range of audiences and champions Asian representation in the arts. It also enhances the quality of life of Ontario residents and visitors alike by encouraging an appreciation for the medium of film and contributing to vibrant and dynamic communities.

Our government is proud to support the Toronto Reel Asian Film Festival through the Experience Ontario 2023 program. Events like this highlight our province's dynamic film industry, attract visitors to Ontario from around the world and stimulate cultural and economic growth in communities across the province.

Thank you to the many artists who have put their hearts and souls into these films, and to the hardworking festival organizers and volunteers who make this festival a resounding success each year.

Best regards,



The Honourable Neil Lumsden
Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport



FROM THE MAYOR OF TORONTO

A warm welcome to everyone attending the 27th annual Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival.

Best wishes to everyone taking part in this 12 day film festival showcasing the works of Asian Canadian and global Asian artists. It is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about them and their work through in-theatre and innovative live presentations. Thank you to the organizers for hosting this great event in our city.

Toronto is home to a vibrant Asian community that has made significant contributions to the socioeconomic, and cultural fabric of our city. This event showcases the rich diversity of this community and emphasizes our city's motto: "*Diversity Our Strength*".

On behalf of Toronto City Council, please accept my best wishes for an enjoyable event and continued success.

Olivia Chow
Mayor of Toronto



FROM TORONTO CITY COUNCIL

I'd like to extend my congratulations to Reel Asian on their 27th edition of the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival!

Film shapes our lives - in theatres, on our main streets, and in our communities. It invites us to see new worlds and gives us perspective on the one we live in. Festivals like Reel Asian help put Toronto on the map as a filmmaking and film-loving city—one that reflects, celebrates, and tells the stories of all of the people who make this remarkable city their home.

So it is so exciting to see another year with dozens of new films to explore from across North America, Asia, and all around the world!

To all the filmmakers, workers, and artists who are traveling here - welcome! Thank you for sharing your work with us. And to all of those who call Toronto home - let's work together to make sure that in our city, everyone has what they need to thrive. That includes affordable housing for artists and access to arts and culture programming, funding, and spaces.

And finally, thank you to the organizing team for all your work. I hope it is an unforgettable film festival!

Ausma Malik
Deputy Mayor of Toronto
City Councillor - Ward 10, Spadina-Fort Yorks

Welcome from the Executive Director

It's my honour and pleasure to welcome you to the 27th edition of the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival!

Reflecting upon the past year in the world of Asian American cinema, it seems like the barriers that prevented our stories from being told have been significantly lowered. The year began with an Asian American film sweeping the Oscars, and since then, theatres have been filled with audiences there to see films starring and directed by Asian Americans. Closer to home, we have seen a significant growth in the sheer number of feature films by our community of Canadian filmmakers, making the job of our programming team that much more difficult—a problem we are thrilled to be grappling with.

And what of festivals and the movie-going experience? Watching films in cinemas seemed in danger of fading into memory even before the pandemic forced everyone home. But when we were finally able to come together once again on opening night last year in a packed 630-seat theatre, we deeply felt the tears and laughter coming from our audience—they were a powerful reminder that experiencing our collective stories as a community has always been at the heart of Reel Asian's existence.

It feels like the work that festivals like ours have done over the past 27 years to ensure that our storytellers can create work and thrive in this industry has finally paid off—but it's come at a time when the very nature of creation is changing at such a rapid pace that no one can keep up. And now, when we need our stories more than ever, support for media arts festivals like ours has shrunk, to the point where we have made the difficult choice not to offer our film programme online this year. This decision has profoundly affected our goal of making our festival accessible to as many members of our community as possible. But we hope it won't be a permanent one—with the resilience that has contributed to our longevity, we won't let this situation stop us from bringing you, our audience, another lineup of films that will speak to your own experiences, or introduce you to new ones. Come to the festival so we can talk about it. And thank you to all of you, for being a part of the Reel Asian family.

Deanna Wong
Executive Director

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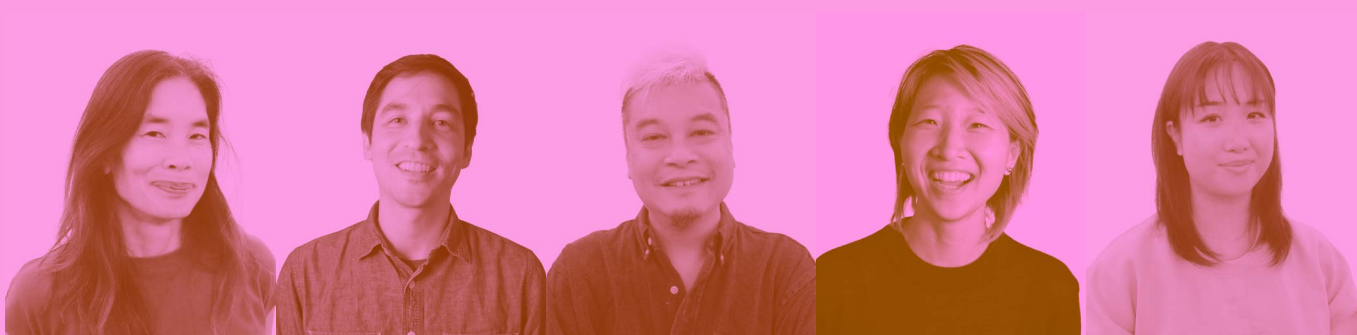
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...and all of our volunteers!

MEMBERSHIP

CALLING ALL FILM ENTHUSIASTS!

Our Reel Asian Membership unlocks a reel of perks just for you! Get access to FREE film screenings year-round, receive exclusive invites to special events, and enjoy discounts at our festival. Experience pan-Asian cinema like never before—get the “Reel” experience today.

REEL MEMBERS ONLY

- Early Access to festival tickets
- Share discounts to friends and family
- Invitations to year-round VIP events
- Special offers in your inbox
- 15% off festival merch
- Discounts with festival partners

**MEMBERSHIP MEANS
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REELASIAN.COM/MEMBERSHIP

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HELP US RAISE \$50,000 BY THE END OF THE YEAR

If you’ve ever found solace, joy, or enlightenment through the films and experiences we’ve brought to Toronto and beyond, if you’ve felt the profound impact of Asian stories on your life, or if you believe in the importance of a platform like Reel Asian, we urgently ask for your support.

**THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND
EVERYONE WHO HAS DONATED
TO OUR \$50,000 FUNDRAISING
CAMPAIGN THUS FAR!**

**JOIN US IN SUSTAINING
REEL ASIAN**



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VENUES+TICKETS

SCAN HERE
For up-to-date in-person showtimes, digital availability, tickets, and accessibility information, visit our online box office



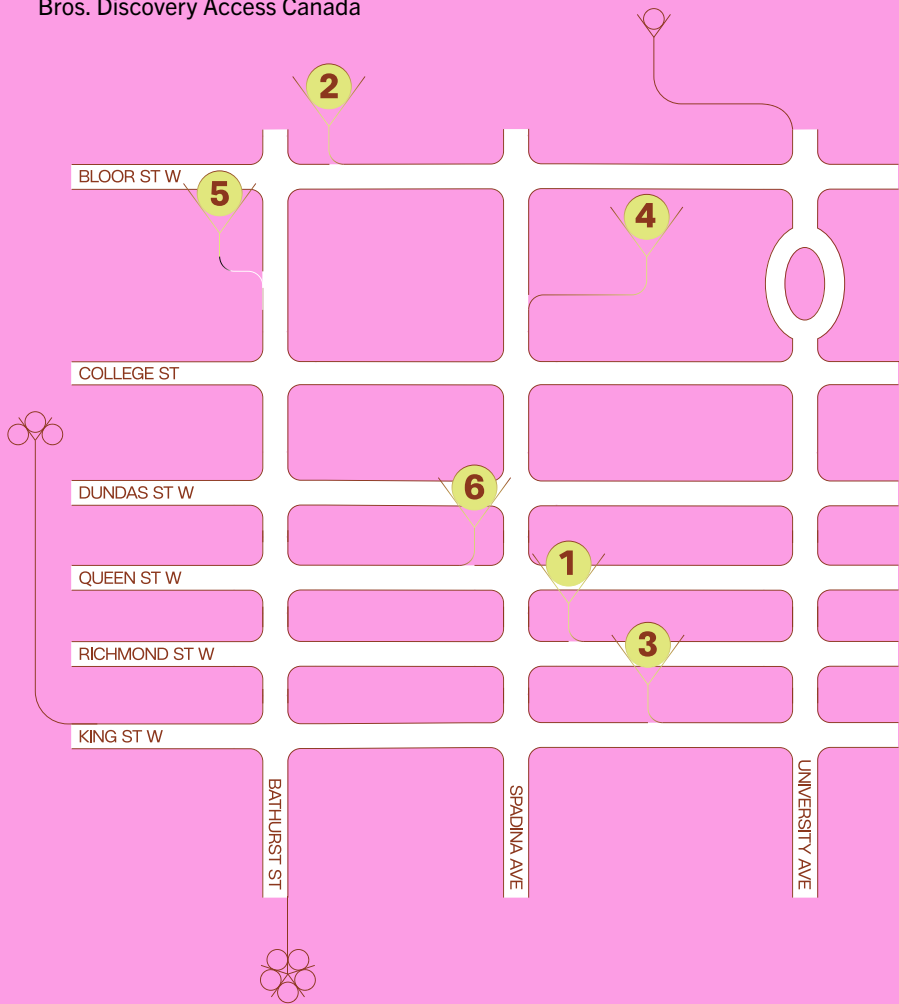
REELASIAN.COM/BOX-OFFICE

Discounted tickets for students, seniors, arts workers, and the un(der)waged are available through our Equity Access Ticketing Programme, supported by Warner Bros. Discovery Access Canada

SCAN HERE
For a grid view of our festival schedule



REELASIAN.COM/SCHEDULE-GRID



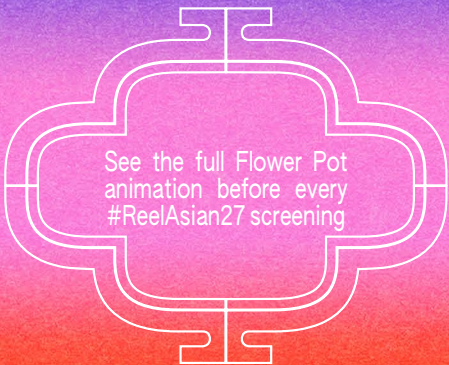
VENUE MAP LEGEND

- 1. Bachir-Yerex Presentation Space/ The Commons (401 Richmond St West, 4th Floor)
- 2. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema (506 Bloor St West)
- 3. TIFF Bell Lightbox (350 King St West)
- 4. Innis Town Hall/Innis College (2 Sussex Ave)
- 5. CSI Annex (720 Bathurst St)
- 6. CSI Spadina (192 Spadina Ave)

FESTIVAL CREATIVE ARTIST



ARTIST BIO
Ben Luu is a graphic designer and artist based out of Tkaronto/Toronto. He is interested in image-making, type design, editorial design, and the intersection of design and dance. His practice encompasses illustration, design, writing, and dance, touching upon topics of wellness, queer identity, technology, and the environment.



ABOUT FLOWER POT

I use flowers in my personal work to symbolize beauty, life, queerness, and celebration. Here, the stylized flowers are a take on the flower motif found in traditional ceramics. In ceramics, stylistic influences, motifs, and natural resources travel between cultures and people, amalgamating human histories—not unlike filmmaking.

There is a lot of uncertainty in a world that is ever automating, attempting to fade artists into obscurity for profit, and I feel that now it is most important to celebrate these practices, like ceramics or filmmaking, where the craft intrinsically captures the human spirit.

AWARDS



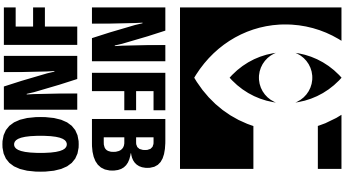
BLUE ANT MEDIA AUDIENCE CHOICE FEATURE FILM AWARD
Winner is selected through a tally of votes from the viewers of the 27th Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival.

\$2,500 cash prize



OSLER BEST FEATURE FILM AWARD
All feature films are eligible for this prize.

\$2,000 cash prize



NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA BEST EMERGING CANADIAN SHORT FILM AWARD
All short works that meet the three criteria—Canadian or permanent resident, emerging filmmaker with no more than 3 completed projects, and not a student—are eligible for post-production services supported by the National Film Board of Canada.

\$5,000 value



FRONTROW INSURANCE AUDIENCE CHOICE SHORT FILM AWARD
The winner of the Reel Asian Audience Award—Short is selected through a tally of votes from the viewers of the 27th Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival.

\$800 cash prize



CINESEND BEST FIRST FEATURE AWARD
All first feature films are eligible for this prize.

\$500 cash prize and CineSend Files Team Annual Plan (Valued at \$4,500)



AIR CANADA SHORT FILM OR VIDEO AWARD
All Canadian short films and videos are eligible for this prize, with an opportunity to broadcast on Air Canada’s in-flight entertainment screens on domestic and international flights.

\$2,000 cash prize



MICHAEL FUKUSHIMA ANIMASIAN AWARD
All animated works are eligible for this award. With support from Seneca College School of Creative Arts and Animation.

\$600 cash prize



DGC ONTARIO AND WIFT TORONTO FILM AWARD
All films made by women or non-binary Ontario-based artists are eligible for this award.

\$1,000 cash prize, \$500 in programming gift certificates, and 2 one-year memberships to WIFT Toronto



OUTSTANDING PERFORMER IN A CANADIAN SHORT FILM
The award recipient will receive full class tuition coverage of a class at Armstrong Acting Studios.

\$2,250 value



REEL ASIAN BEST DOCUMENTARY AWARD
All documentary films are eligible for this \$1,500 cash prize, donated by Karla Bobadilla, Diang lu, Immanuel Lanzaderas, Sonia Sakamoto-Jog and Victoria Shen.

\$1,500 cash prize

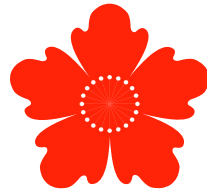


OUTSTANDING PERFORMER IN A CANADIAN FEATURE FILM
The award recipient will receive full class tuition coverage of a class at Armstrong Acting Studios.

\$2,250 value

JURY

FEATURES



Sherien Barsoum directed and produced *Cynara*, *Ride for Promise*, and *Player Zero*, winning the Hot Docs Short Film Pitch and Best Canadian Documentary at NorthWest Fest. She was the producer of *Dreams in Vantablack* and *Babe, I Hate To Go*, which played top festivals internationally and was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award. She is a producer with the National Film Board of Canada and based in Toronto.

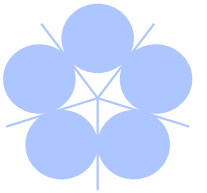


Omar Majeed is an award-winning Pakistani Canadian writer, editor, and filmmaker. His directing credits include the films *Tagwacore: The Birth of Punk Islam*, *The Frog Princes*, *Stitched Glass*, and the upcoming music doc *Disco's Revenge*. As an editor, he's cut many award-winning documentaries including *The Fruit Hunters*, *This Stained Dawn*, and the critically acclaimed HBO/CBC show, *Sort Of*. Majeed currently resides in Toronto with his wife and young child.

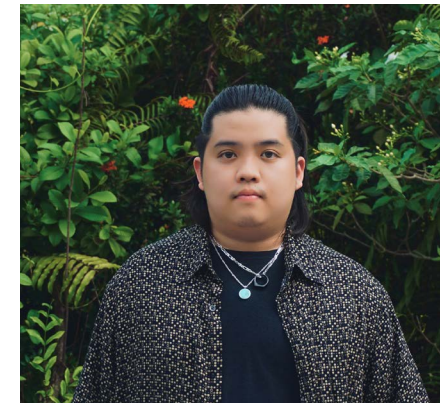


Priscilla Galvez is a Toronto-based filmmaker. She has produced award-winning documentary and narrative shorts and features that have premiered at international film festivals including TIFF, DOC NYC, Fantastic Fest and SXSW. Most recently, Priscilla produced the feature film, *Islands*, directed by Martin Edralin, which was awarded a special jury prize at SXSW '21. Priscilla is the co-founder of the production company Silent Tower and works as a line producer and a director. Her latest short film *A Fermenting Woman* is currently in post-production.

SHORTS



Rabiya Mansoor (she/they) is a Pakistani Calgarian comedian, writer, actor, producer, and recovering lawyer. They like to produce and create work with their friends, including *Get Up Aisha* (CBC Gem) and *Don Valley Girls* (Toronto Fringe Patron's Pick). When not dreading the abyss of existence, they like to read.



Eddy Tan is a film educator, and organizer based in Malaysia. As an educator, he is a faculty member of the Faculty of Cinematic Arts, Multimedia University - MMU Cyberjaya, holding the position of Deputy Dean of Academic and International Relations. As an organizer, Eddy was previously involved in projects such as Johor Bahru Film Grants and Johor Bahru Writers and Film Festival 2017. Now heavily involved in SeaShorts Film Festival, his previous roles include Technical Manager, where he oversees the digital infrastructure of SeaShorts Film Festival 2020 and 2021 online editions, Festival Coordinator for 2022 and Programme Manager for 2023.



Originally from Taiwan, **Ivy Chen** is an animation filmmaker and illustrator living in London. Chen has a strong design sensibility, and uses visual metaphors and a distinct colour palette to tell emotive stories. Inspired by her own experiences, she often explores clashes and similarities in culture throughout her work, which has been screened at festivals worldwide. She has previously worked for clients including Greenpeace, WaterAid, Opéra National de Paris, Facebook, and the Wellcome Trust. Her self-initiated film *is/le of Chair* has been selected by several international festivals and won the AnimAsian Award at Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival 2020.

Features



THE QUEEN OF MY DREAMS



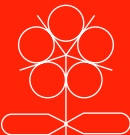
WED, NOV 8 • 7:30 PM • HOT DOCS TED ROGERS CINEMA
AFTERPARTY AT CSI ANNEX • 10:00PM

When Azra, a queer Muslim grad student, hears of her father’s sudden death, she flies back to her ancestral home in Karachi, Pakistan for the funeral, where she is received by her conservative mother, Mariam, perpetually disappointed by Azra’s choices. As a self-assured Azra wrestles with Karachi’s customs and norms, we time travel back to Mariam’s own life in the city 30 years ago, a remarkably different era in Pakistan’s political and cultural history.

Through Azra and Mariam’s shared love for the inimitable Bollywood star, Sharmila Tagore, director **Fawzia Mirza** tells a story that illuminates layers of a deep and complex bond between generations of women who live in starkly different times yet negotiate their freedoms and desires in strikingly similar ways. With outstanding performances by an all-star cast spanning continents, Mirza invites us all to celebrate unlikely bonds and the unifying power of cinema in this energetic, polychromatic, and unforgettable feature debut.

– Mariam Zaidi

Fawzia Mirza is a Canadian writer and director with multiple film and television credits including the feature *Signature Move* (2017), which they co-wrote, produced, and starred in. They directed the short films *The Queen of My Dreams* (2012), *I Know Her* (2019), *Saya* (2019), *Noor & Layla* (2021), *The Syed Family Xmas Eve Game Night* (21), and *Auntie* (2022). *The Queen of My Dreams* (2023) is their directorial feature debut.



CANADA 2023
97 MIN
URDU, ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH
SUBTITLES
PG

DIRECTOR
Fawzia Mirza

CAST
Amrit Kaur Ayana Manji
Nimra Bucha Gul-e-Rana
Hamza Haq

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Toronto International Film Festival, 2023
Atlantic International Film Festival, 2023
St John’s International Women’s Film Festival, 2023
Inside Out Ottawa, 2023

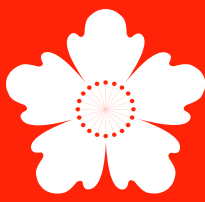
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THE TASTE OF MANGO



THURS, NOV 9 • 5:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4

Chloe Abrahams’ debut feature, is an enveloping, hypnotic, urgently personal meditation on family, memory, identity, violence, and love. At its centre are three extraordinary women: the director’s mother, Rozana; her grandmother, Jean; and the director herself. Their stories, by turns difficult and jubilant, testify to the entangled and ever-changing nature of inheritance and the ways in which we both hurt and protect the ones we love.

What emerges is a delicately layered, personal and collective portrait of coping with physical and sexual violence, the damage of grief and estrangement, and the possibilities of hope, joy, healing, and reconciliation.

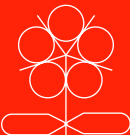
Chloe Abrahams is a Sri Lankan British artist and filmmaker based between New York and London. Using methods drawn from both documentary and fiction practices she investigates the therapeutic potential of the confessional, culminating in visceral work spanning moving image, sound, writing and performance.

UNITED KINGDOM 2023
75 MIN
ENGLISH
AA

DIRECTOR
Chloe Abrahams

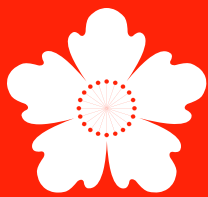
OFFICIAL SELECTION
True/False Film Festival, 2023
BlackStar Film Festival, 2023
BFI London Film Festival, 2023

CONTENT WARNING
Sexual violence, gender violence, trauma, sexist language/situations



OKIKU AND THE WORLD

せかいのおきく



THURS, NOV 9 • 8 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4

JAPAN 2023
90 MIN
JAPANESE WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
PG

You rarely couple poop and romance together, but *Okiku and the World* does it effortlessly in the most genuine and adorable way.

Set near the end of the Edo period, the film presents a fresh take on the time and on samurai culture. Okiku (Haru Kuroki) is the daughter of a fallen samurai. The two of them now live in a tenement far from luxury. One day, she meets Chuji (Kanichiro) and love blooms. The problem is that Chuji is a manure man who collects excrement to sell to farmers. Despite the downfall of samurais, there is still a social gap between them. Will this come between the Edo-period Japanese Romeo and Juliet?

Junji Sakamoto uses a stationary camera and black and white cinematography to create picturesque, painting-like scenes. Audiences may be grateful for this choice, too, as it helps reduce any repulsion for the less glorified scenes of the toilets. Sprinkled with colour and bitter humour, the film gives us a breath of hope within despair. Although life can be sh*tty, spring will surely come.

— June Kim

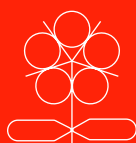
DIRECTOR
Junji Sakamoto
阪本順治

CAST
Haru Kuroki
Kanichiro
Sosuke Ikematsu

OFFICIAL SELECTION
International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2023
Jeonju International Film Festival, 2023
New York Asian Film Festival, 2023

WITH SUPPORT FROM

Junji Sakamoto is an internationally renowned filmmaker of titles that premiered at festivals such as Rotterdam, Karlovy Vary, San Sebastian, and Berlin. He won multiple awards, namely from the Japan Director's Guild and the Japan Academy Film Prize. *Okiku and the World* is his 30th film.



JAPAN FOUNDATION



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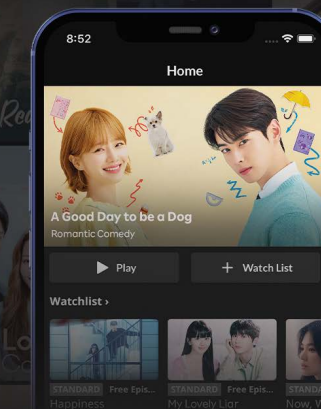
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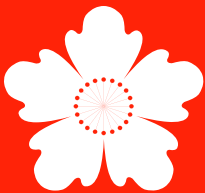
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SMALL FRY



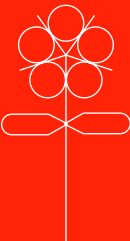
FRI, NOV 10 • 5:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4

Ho-jun, a flailing actor, has found relative success as a social media influencer, hawking fishing hacks. He preps his live stream at his preferred fishing spot, only to be disrupted by an obnoxious stranger whose bad vibes are ruining the morning. The stranger is Director Nam, a hotshot (and hot-headed) independent film director about to shoot his first commercial feature. He's invited rising actress Hee-jin for a quiet pondside chat to convince her that his film will be a star-making breakout role—only Hee-jin isn't sure about Director Nam's film, or his ulterior motives. As the day progresses, links between Ho-jun, Director Nam, and Hee-jin entwine and unravel to reveal each character's ambition, pettiness, and pathos as they try to reel in their respective dreams.

In an impressively lean and resourceful production, *Small Fry* director **Joongha Park** and co-writer Howon Kim (who also stars as Ho-jun) have crafted a funny, biting, and heartfelt meta film commentary about the strains on artistic process and purpose, especially when confronted with the demands of the commercial industry.

— Aram Siu Wai Collier

Born in 1980 and majoring in environmental engineering, **Joongha Park** started making films because he wanted to make stories about the environment and humans. His short film *Sweet Potato Family* (2015) won the Bucheon Choice Audience Award at the BIFAN 2015.



SOUTH KOREA 2023
95 MIN
KOREAN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
PG

DIRECTOR
Joongha Park

CAST
Howon Kim
Seonghwan
Chaeyoung Lee

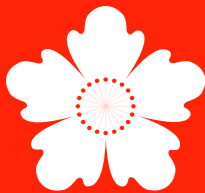
OFFICIAL SELECTION
Jeonju International Film Festival, 2023
Arizona International Film Festival, 2023
San Diego Asian Film Festival, 2023

AWARDS
Best Acting Prize, Jeonju International Film Festival, 2023
Best First Feature, Arizona International Film Festival, 2023

WITH SUPPORT FROM



IN FLAMES



FRI, NOV 10 • 8 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 3

Mariam, a medical student, is dealing with her grandfather's passing, her grieving mother, and preparing for upcoming exams. When an estranged and suspiciously helpful uncle re-enters their lives and promises support with their property and finances, Mariam senses trouble. At school, she meets a charming fellow student who presents a tempting option of marriage and financial security, a supposed avenue of freedom and autonomy. When Mariam begins to feel haunted by the presence of men around her and the spirits of those long gone, escape starts to seem elusive.

In this chilling feature debut by director **Zarrar Kahn**, Mariam's story evokes the sharply suffocating experience of gendered oppression that's situated in but nowhere near unique to Pakistan. A visceral and unsettling yet ultimately triumphant narrative, and the first South Asian horror film to premiere at Cannes, *In Flames* is a remarkably bold and unwavering portrayal of how women navigate and conquer countless forms of violence and control in patriarchal societies.

— Mariam Zaidi

Zarrar Kahn is a Pakistani Canadian writer, director, and producer, and an alumnus of the TIFF Filmmaker Lab. His works have been screened in more than 80 film festivals worldwide, including TIFF, Locarno, and Cannes. *In Flames* (2023) is his feature debut.

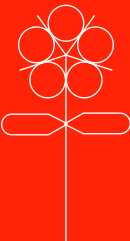
CANADA, PAKISTAN 2023
98 MIN
URDU WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
PG

DIRECTOR
Zarrar Kahn

CAST
Ramesha Nawal
Bakhtawar Mazhar
Omar Javaid

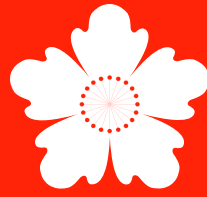
OFFICIAL SELECTION
Cannes Film Festival, 2023
Toronto International Film Festival, 2023
Calgary International Film Festival, 2023

CONTENT WARNING
Themes of abuse; mature themes, frightening scenes, sexual innuendo



RIVER

リバー、流れないでよ



FRI, NOV 10 • 8 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4

JAPAN 2023
82 MIN
JAPANESE WITH ENGLISH
SUBTITLES
PG

DIRECTOR
Junta Yamaguchi

CAST
Riko Fujitani
Yoshimasa Kondo
Shiori Kubo

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Fantasia Film Festival, 2023
Fantastic Fest, 2023
Sitges Film Festival, 2023

WITH SUPPORT FROM

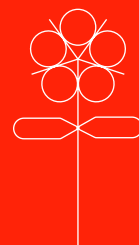


From the team behind *Beyond the Infinite Two Minutes* (Reel Asian Official Selection, 2021) comes **Junta Yamaguchi's** latest time loop comedy, *River*. Set in a quaint inn along the Kibune river near Kyoto—a one-street village wedged between a riverbed on one side and mountains on the other—staff and guests find themselves stuck in a continuous two-minute time loop. Mikoto, a waitress, returns to the river bank after each loop, plunging into a relentless cycle of perplexing scenarios. Her coworkers, the cook, and the mystified guests all grapple with mounting confusion. Despair and disorientation engulf those at the inn, as the uncanny sensation of repeatedly returning to the same moment leads to a frantic quest for answers.

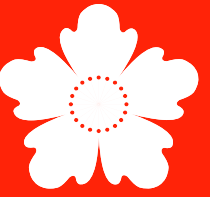
Powered by sweeping takes, pulsating performances from a dynamic ensemble cast, and the distinctively vibrant visual style of creative duo Yamaguchi and Makoto Ueda, *River* offers a punchy yet fascinating window into the human yearning for solace, love, and ritual, mirroring the cyclical nature of everyday existence with the enigmatic loop of time itself.

— Nicolas Uribe

Junta Yamaguchi is a director and cinematographer, known for *Beyond the Infinite Two Minutes* (2020), *River* (2023), and *36,000 Seconds in a Day* (2022).



WE WILL BE BRAVE



SAT, NOV 11 • 12 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 3

CANADA 2023
78 MIN
ENGLISH
PG

The Good Guise is an artist collective in Toronto formed to spark conversations around healthy masculinity. From photography and beat-boxing to poetry and martial arts, these talented artists share their unique lived experiences with inspiring confidence and welcome others to join in their mission of finding radical alternatives to shame and punishment. As each of them grapple with upheavals in their personal lives, their resolve is further tested by a dire lack of resources and the burden of racialized discrimination.

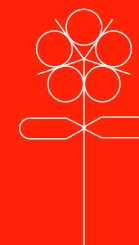
An intimate and deeply compassionate feature debut by director **Chrisann Hessing**, *We Will Be Brave* is an evocative glimpse into a narrative shift around masculinity. Unafraid to express vulnerabilities, the group's affirming work recognizes healing as non-linear and our worth as inherent. A bond held together by an extraordinary commitment to do right by their communities, the collective and the documentation of their work promises to leave an impact in the Toronto arts landscape for years to come.

— Mariam Zaidi

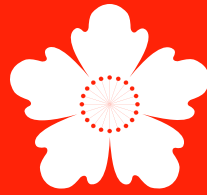
DIRECTOR
Chrisann Hessing

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Calgary International Film Festival, 2023

Chrisann Hessing is a documentary filmmaker and impact producer based in Toronto. Hessing's short film, *Turning Tables*, won Best Short Documentary at the 43rd American Indian Film Festival, and has screened in over 30 film festivals internationally. In 2020, Chrisann was selected as one of Reelworld's Emerging 20 and named Talent to Watch by Telefilm Canada.



STARRING JERRY AS HIMSELF



SAT, NOV 11 • 2:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4

USA 2023
75 MINS
MANDARIN, ENGLISH

Starring Jerry as Himself shakes up notions of traditional storytelling in a genre-bending mystery that centres on Jerry Hsu. Jerry is a loving father of three, a recent divorcé, and has been keeping a secret. The Taiwanese immigrant and Orlando resident has been accused by the Chinese police of being an accomplice in an international money-laundering scheme. In an effort to clear his name, Jerry agrees to help the police with busting the operation. Hiding his role in the investigation from his family, Jerry's world begins to unravel with each step he takes deeper into the conspiracy. Mixing elements of documentary along with psychological thriller, the story raises suspicion about the credibility of the characters while also undermining the confidence of the audience's own perceptions.

— Kevin Lim

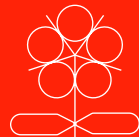
DIRECTOR
Law Chen

CAST
Jerry Hsu Joshua Hsu
Kathy Hsu Jon Hsu
Jesse Hsu

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Slamdance Film Festival, 2023
Asian American International Film Festival, 2023
Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, 2023

AWARDS
Slamdance Film Festival, Grand Jury Prize Winner, 2023
Slamdance Film Festival, Best Actor: Jerry Hsu, 2023

Law Chen is an award-winning director based in Brooklyn. Chen's first feature length film, *Starring Jerry as Himself* is the true story of the principal actors in the film, the Hsu family. In 2023, the film was the Grand Prize Winner at the Slamdance Film Festival.

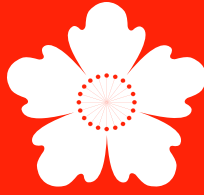


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Canadian you are.
It's who you are
in Canada.



It's a Canada thing.



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ق

SAT, NOV 11 • 5 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 3

USA, LEBANON 2023
93 MIN
ARABIC, ENGLISH
PG

Jude Chehab, a Lebanese American cinematographer and filmmaker, has always known her mother and grandmother to be women devoted to their Muslim faith. During a trip to Lebanon, Chehab is propelled by a curiosity to understand the quest for love, acceptance, and meaning that brought three generations of women in her family to pledge loyalty to a secretive matriarchal religious order operating clandestinely in the country.

Deftly balancing a delicate and determined approach to uncovering and documenting her family's reflections, Chehab illuminates the unspoken ties and long-lasting consequences of loyalty that have not only bonded the women in her family, but left an unshakeable sense of longing and ostracization—for some, years after leaving the religious order. Utilizing incisive imagery and rich aural textures to evoke the sublime, Chehab asks us to question the line between love and devotion in this commanding and precisely crafted debut feature

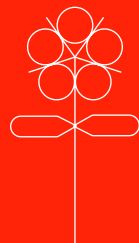
— Mariam Zaidi

DIRECTOR
 Jude Chehab

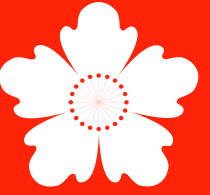
OFFICIAL SELECTION
 Tribeca Film Festival, 2023
 Sheffield DocFest, 2023
 Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival, 2023

AWARDS
 Albert Maysles Award, Best New Documentary Director, Tribeca Film Festival, 2023
 Grand Jury Prize for Best International First Feature, Sheffield DocFest, 2023

Jude Chehab is a Lebanese American filmmaker based in New York and Beirut. Her cinematic interests have drawn her to the exploration of the esoteric, the spiritual, and the unspoken. Chehab's first feature documentary has been supported by IDA, ITVS, TFI, and Sundance. In 2021, *Filmmaker Magazine* named her one of the 25 New Faces of Independent Film.



TIGER STRIPES



SAT, NOV 11 • 7:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 3

MALAYSIA 2023
95 MIN
MALAY WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
14A

Free-spirited 12-year-old Zaffan is the first of her friends to get her period and experience the body-changing horrors that come with puberty and menstruation. Set in a *kampong*, or a Malaysian village, structured around patriarchy and religious expectations, she tries to conceal her pubescent traits out of fear of ostracization. Panic spreads in the village when a monster or demonic spirit is rumored to be roaming the surrounding jungle. Exposed by her peers, Zaffan eventually learns to embrace herself in the face of exclusion and cultural condemnation. A coming-of-age body horror that playfully weaves elements of Southeast Asian folklore, *Tiger Stripes* is a roaring celebration of embracing monstrosity and otherness.

— Sarah Barzak

DIRECTOR
 Amanda Nell Eu

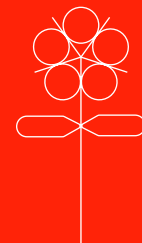
CAST
 Zafreen Zairizal
 Deena Ezral
 Piqa

OFFICIAL SELECTION
 Cannes Film Festival, Critic's Week, 2023
 Sydney Film Festival, 2023
 Fantasia Film Festival, 2023

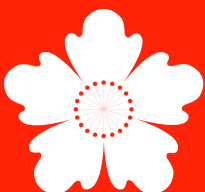
AWARDS
 Cannes Film Festival, Critics' Week Grand Prize, 2023

CONTENT WARNING
 Blood; bullying; physical violence

Amanda Nell Eu is a Malaysian-born director who explores the female body and identity within the sociocultural context of Southeast Asia. She graduated from London Film School and is an alum of the Berlinale Talent Campus and Locarno Filmmakers Academy. *Tiger Stripes* is her debut feature film, and is the first Malaysian film to win an award at Cannes.



TERRESTRIAL VERSES



SUN, NOV 12 • 2:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 3

A job interview, a children’s clothing store, a government registry office. These are just some of the everyday sites for which the characters of *Terrestrial Verses* must navigate cultural, religious, and institutional constraints imposed on them. Featuring dynamic and fine-tuned performances, the 11 vignettes with conversations (and confrontations) between onscreen citizens and offscreen interrogators are striking in their ability to feel absurd and regrettably real at the same time, a place where the mundane and the menace coexist. Through these stories, we see how citizens respond to and resist these restraints until the final vignette’s staggering conclusion.

Alireza Khatami and **Ali Asgari**’s most recent collaboration came together after authorities shut down one of Khatami’s films. The two drew solace from Ghazal poetry, directly citing the poet and filmmaker Forugh Farrokhzad’s poem “Terrestrial Verses.” Deceptively simple and brilliantly composed, Khatami and Asgari’s *Terrestrial Verses* emerged from the Women, Life, Freedom movement in Iran and draws upon empathetic connections to how ordinary people everywhere navigate and struggle in relation to power.

— Aram Sui Wai Collier

Alireza Khatami is an award-winning Iranian American filmmaker based in Canada. Born into the indigenous Khamseh tribe in Iran, he is influenced by his heritage’s rich storytelling traditions. His films poignantly investigate the interconnection of memory, trauma, and power dynamics, often through a philosophical lens and with a dark sense of humor.

Ali Asgari is a prominent figure in Iranian cinema, with more than 200 awards to his name. His films focus on the precarious lives of individuals living on the margins of society in Iran.

IRAN 2023
77 MIN
PERSIAN WITH ENGLISH
SUBTITLES
PG

DIRECTOR
Alireza Khatami & Ali Asgari

CAST
Majid Salehi
Gouhar Kheirandish
Sadaf Asgari

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Cannes Film Festival, Un Certain
Regard, 2023

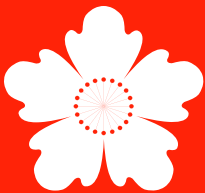
Stories That Unite

We are proud to support Reel Asian in its mission to highlight the rich and creative stories of the Asian Diaspora. Here’s to another edition fueling the growth and appreciation for Asian cinema in Canada.



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SEAGRASS



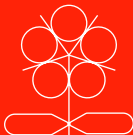
SUN, NOV 12 • 5 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 3

CANADA 2023
115 MIN
ENGLISH
PG

Judith, a Japanese Canadian woman, and her reluctant white husband attend a week-long couple’s retreat on a coastal British Columbia island, their two daughters in tow. With Judith grieving the recent loss of her mother and her connection to her Japanese Canadian identity, the couple’s disconnect grows as she finds herself infatuated with another, seemingly perfect, interracial couple at the retreat. The parents’ rift impresses upon their daughters, as Emmy, the fearful younger sister, becomes increasingly anxious, while the eldest, Stephanie, cautiously navigates the preteen social dynamics of day camp.

Set in the mid-90s and shot on 35mm film, **Meredith Hama-Brown’s** tense, layered family drama is a nuanced look into the legacy of Japanese Canadian internment and how trauma weaves through generations in silences, detachment, and ambiguity. Standout performances by *Shortcomings’* Ally Maki (Judith) and Nyha Breitzkreuz (Stephanie) anchor the film as it explores womanhood, sisterhood, grief, and racial identity in this remarkable debut feature.
— Vidhya Elango

Meredith Hama-Brown’s work as a director has taken part in various international film festivals including Palm Springs Shortfest and Fantasia International Film Festival. In 2018, she won the Telus Sea to Sky Award at the Vancouver International Film Festival for her film *Broken Bunny*. *Seagrass* is her first feature film.



DIRECTOR
Meredith Hama-Brown

CAST
Ally Maki Remy Marthaller
Luke Roberts Chris Pang
Nyha Breitzkreuz Sarah Gadon

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Toronto International Film Festival, 2023
Vancouver International Film Festival, 2023
Atlantic International Film Festival, 2023

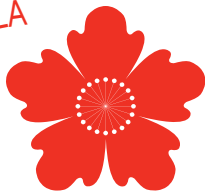
AWARDS
Toronto International Film Festival,
FIPRESCI Prize, 2023

WITH SUPPORT FROM



MUSTACHE

CENTREPIECE GALA



SUN, NOV 12 • 7:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 2
AFTERPARTY AT CSI SPADINA • 10:00PM

USA 2023
83 MIN
ENGLISH, URDU WITH ENGLISH
SUBTITLES
PG

When 13-year-old Ilyas’s parents yank him out of his comfortable Islamic private school and force him to adjust to life in public school, he develops a plan to change their minds. After a staged fondness for non-halal food and explicit music fails to sufficiently scandalize his parents, Ilyas asks his whip-smart former classmate, Yasmeen, to help devise a more foolproof plan. However, underneath those faux concerns, what really preoccupies prepubescent Ilyas is his wispy, dark mustache growing much sooner than that of his peers, prompting a self-loathing born and reinforced by the taunting and teasing of classmates.

Director **Imran J. Khan’s** gently humorous and refreshing take on the Muslim American coming-of-age experience, as well as lead Atharva Verma’s impeccable performance as the charming and determined Ilyas, are the perfect combination in this timeless, hilarious, and heartwarming journey of pre-teen self acceptance.
— Mariam Zaidi

DIRECTOR
Imran J. Khan

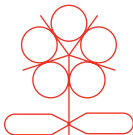
CAST
Atharva Verma Hasan Minhaj
Rizwan Manji Alicia Silverstone
Ayana Manji

OFFICIAL SELECTION
SXSW, 2023

WITH SUPPORT FROM



Pakistani American filmmaker **Imran J. Khan** has written and directed award-winning short films including *Prom* (2016). He was also on the editing teams for *Space Jam: A New Legacy* (2021) and *Minions: The Rise of Gru* (2022). He recently was selected to the Pillars Artist Fellowship, created by Pillars, Riz Ahmed, and Left Handed Films.



Championing diversity and embracing culture

Osler is proud to be an award sponsor for the 2023 Reel Asian Film Festival, supporting representation for Asian Canadians.

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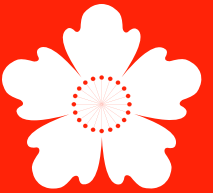
- DIVERSITY
- SCRIPTED
- DOCUMENTARY
- RESIDENCY
- WORK PERMIT
- ROLES
- GENRE
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- PRODUCTION TYPES
- LANGUAGE
- EXPERIENCE
- REPRESENTATION

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RELIQS OF LOVE AND WAR



TUES, NOV 14 • 7 PM • INNIS TOWN HALL

CANADA 2023
40 MIN
ENGLISH
PG

Some family stories are so epic they demand telling. Some moments in history require the intimate and inside knowledge of community storytellers. The venerated Chinese Canadian filmmaker **Keith Lock** narrates the story of how his mother married his father in Australia, who was training with other Chinese Canadian veteran volunteers for the top secret suicide mission, Operation Oblivion. This incredible story is set against the backdrop of the Second World War, a time when Chinese Canadians could not vote, swim in pools, or hire white women for their businesses.

DIRECTOR
Keith Lock

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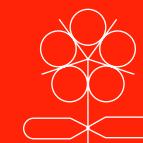
ASIAN INSTITUTE
Dr. David Chu Program
in Asia-Pacific Studies

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Though familiar with his family history, Lock wasn't sure how to tell their story, since many of the participants had long passed. Motivated by the desire to tell it right, Lock's documentary essay uses archival imagery (much of it previously unseen) to bring the history to light. In a previous film, *The Dreaming House* (Reel Asian 2005), Lock ruminated on seeing his father as an old man. This time, Lock celebrates his father, mother, and community of Chinese Canadian veterans as daring and vivacious badasses whose futures were yet to be written, in a tribute and record of this larger moment in Chinese Canadian history.

— Aram Sui Wai Collier

Keith Lock, Canada's first Chinese Canadian filmmaker, works in experimental as well as dramatic and documentary films. **Keith Lock** was the cinematographer for Michael Snow's *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974), voted one of TIFF's 150 Essential Works of Canadian cinema in 2017. His film *Everything Everywhere Again Alive* was selected as one of Jim Shedden's 100 Best Canadian Films of all time and released on Blu-ray by Black Zero in 2021. In 2022, he was the inaugural recipient of Reel Asian's trailblazing Fire Horse Award.



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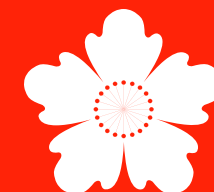
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BABY QUEEN



WED, NOV 15 • 7 PM • INNIS TOWN HALL

SINGAPORE 2022
62 MIN
ENGLISH, MANDARIN, MALAY,
TEOCHEW WITH ENGLISH
SUBTITLES
PG

DIRECTOR
Lei Yuan Bin

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Busan International Film Festival, 2022
Singapore International Film Festival,
2022
Vision du Reel, 2023

WITH SUPPORT FROM

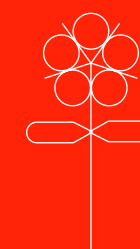
**CINEMA
STUDIES
INSTITUTE**

At the heart of *Baby Queen* is a tender and joyful relationship between Singaporean drag queen Opera Tang and her 90-year-old grandmother, who makes many of her performance costumes. The film follows the rhythm of Opera Tang's day-to-day activities and conversations with chosen family, loved ones, and community, capturing the struggles and joys of being queer through the quiet notation of the personal.

Skillfully woven into the narrative is the context of socially conservative Singapore's mandatory military conscription and rigid gender binary that Opera Tang beautifully interrupts as she discusses dress measurements with her grandmother while dressed in army shorts and drag-queen heels. *Baby Queen's* gentle emotional register offers a sincere reminder that the mundane in queer life is deeply precious because it is so political.

— Jasmine Gui

Lei Yuan Bin is a director, editor and cinematographer. Lei is known for *03-Flats* (2014), which competed in Busan, and *I Dream of Singapore* (2019), which premiered at the Berlinale. His fifth feature, *Baby Queen*, premiered at Busan. He is a founding member of film collective 13 Little Pictures.



Shorts



S-EXPRESS MALAYSIA: MADE BY MALAYSIA

FRI, NOV 10 • 5:30 PM •
TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 3
VARIOUS LANGUAGES WITH
ENGLISH SUBTITLES • PG

CONTENT WARNING

Depictions of violence, guns,
death, suicide



MS. PONTIANAK
Alina Wong JinKei • Malaysia •
2021 • 22 min • English and Bahasa
Melayu with English subtitles

A beloved horror actress questions the triviality of her career starring in Pontianak films, all the while being filmed by a group of documentary filmmakers.

Alina Wong is a Malaysian writer-director who strives to tell stories that incite wonder, conversations and emotions.



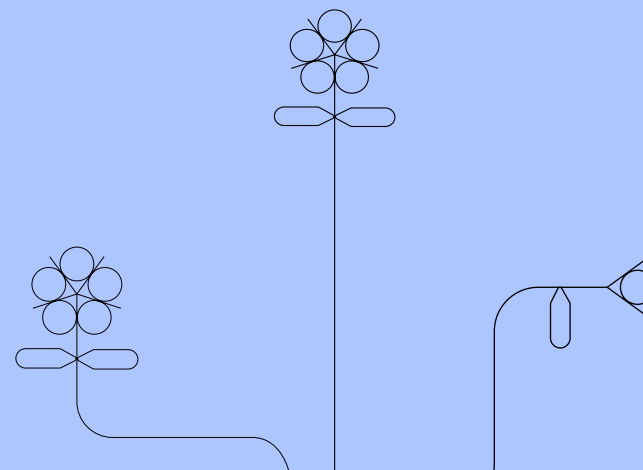
CRUEL (KEJAM)
Aldina Lydia Nabilah binti Azani •
Malaysia • 2022 • 15 min • Malay
with English subtitles

A religious officer and a journalist embark on a close-proximity case in a house that seems to have other plans.

Although she shines with positivity, **Aldina Lydia Nabilah binti Azani**'s head is still full of sadness and darkness.

Initiated in 2002 by Yuni Hadi (Singapore), Amir Muhammad (Malaysia) and Chalida Uabumrungjit (Thailand), S-Express has become an annual showcase of programming from Southeast Asia, spotlighting the abundant filmmaking talent and a nuanced insight into the stories of each participating region.

This year, Reel Asian presents S-Express Malaysia, programmed by Chong Lee Yow of Mini Film Festival, featuring five films depicting one's ability to (un)trap themselves from limitations set upon them, be it bodily, mind, or soul, to achieve relief and victory.



SOEURS (THE SISTERS)
Yazeid Suhaimi • Malaysia • 2021 •
7 min • Malay with English
subtitles

Two sisters seek revenge for the murder of their sister, Isabel.

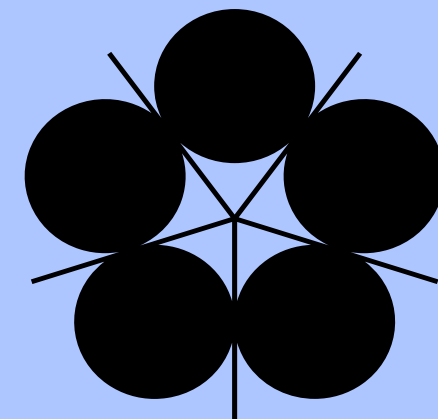
Extremely attentive to visual details and storytelling, **Yazeid Suhaimi** is proficient in directing and cinematography roles especially in short film, commercial, photography, and music video.



A WORM, WHATEVER WILL BE, WILL BE
(住在她身體的蟲)
Mickey Lai Loke Yee • Malaysia •
2022 • 12 min • Cantonese with
English subtitles

Unaware it's her dementia-ridden grandmother's final months, a filmmaker documents her grandmother's physical changes.

Mickey Lai is an emerging filmmaker who is interested in developing stories about diverse cultural values, mortality, and self-identity.



FOR YOU, FOREVER 21 (那年二十一)
Wong Pei Szi • Malaysia • 2022 •
11 min • Mandarin with English
subtitles

On her 21st birthday, A Xin, who studied abroad in Taiwan, meets her brother, who came from Malaysia.

From learning how to shoot to archiving a film, **Wong Pei Szi** is a Malaysian student who studies abroad in Taiwan.

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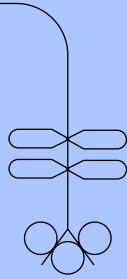
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LET'S BE

These shorts look at the soft to even slightly off-kilter bonds we find in one another, the realms we exist in, and ultimately, ourselves, despite ongoing change—no friendship bracelets required.

SAT, NOV 11 • 12 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4
VARIOUS LANGUAGES WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • PG

WITH SUPPORT FROM



SUGAR GLASS BOTTLE (アメガラス)
Neo Sora • Japan • 2022 • 20 min • Japanese with English subtitles

In the peripheries of near-future Tokyo, high schoolers Kou and Yuta practise a prank that begins as a faux argument and involves a prop glass bottle stolen from their theatre department.

Raised in New York and Tokyo, **Neo Sora** is a filmmaker, artist, and translator living between the two cities. He is in development for his debut feature as a writer-director, *Earthquake*.



THE REPAIR SHOP (L'ATELIER)
Namaï Kham Po • Canada • 2023 • 12 min • French with English subtitles

Kathy Tran and Agnès Gaudreau work as auto mechanics at Bâtiment 7, a collective-run space where they can truly be themselves.

Namaï Kham Po is a self-taught video director and editor based in Montreal and born in Thailand.

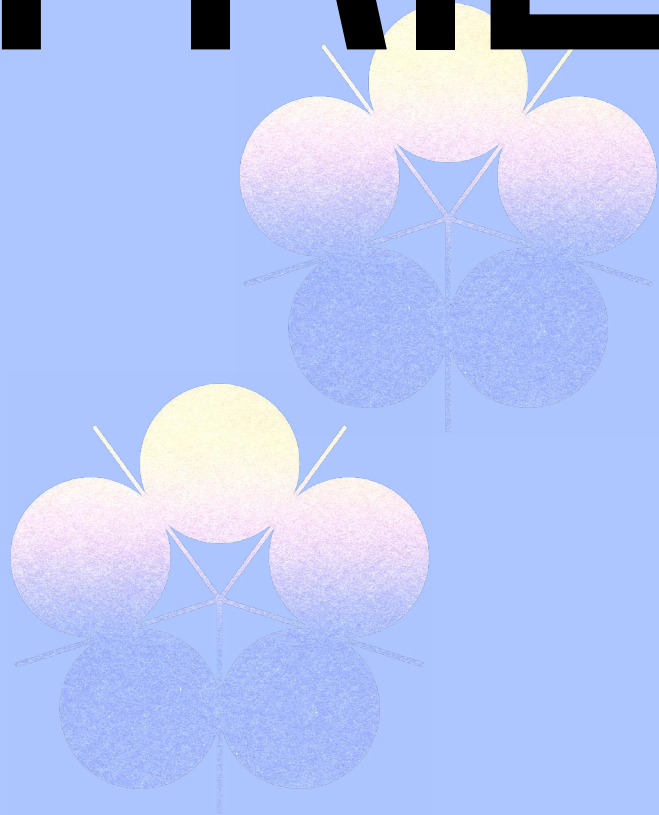


HONOLULU
Maya Tanaka • USA • 2023 • 16 min • English

Flaming lobsters and menstruation woes plague 12-year-old Yuki's doomed Hawai'ian beach vacation.

Maya Tanaka is a Japanese and Lebanese American filmmaker based in Brooklyn. Her work uses writing and film to question historical narratives around cultural legacy, gender, and sexuality.

FRIENDS



EITR (رطع)
Fateema Al-Hamaydeh Miller • Canada • 2022 • 15 min • English and Arabic with English subtitles

Grinding away at the inherited family business, Mohamed works tirelessly making sales of knock-off perfume, while living as a knock-off version of his true self.

Fateema Al-Hamaydeh Miller is a queer mixed-race Palestinian Canadian filmmaker based in Toronto. Her work explores themes of fragmented identity, isolation and connection through grounded “oh no, should I laugh?” comedy.



THE CAVE (저주소년)
Jin-man Kim, Ji-young Chon • South Korea • 2022 • 14 min • Korean with English subtitles

A boy longs for his father's affection, but he is only interested in fishing.

Jin-man Kim and **Ji-young Chon** both work at HUMUHUMU Stopmotion Studio as directors.



WHEN YOU LEFT ME ON THAT BOULEVARD
Kayla Galang • USA • 2022 • 13 min • English and Tagalog with English subtitles

Teenager Ly and her cousins get high before a boisterous family Thanksgiving at their auntie's house in southeast San Diego in 2006.

Born in Olongapo, Philippines, and raised in San Diego and Houston, **Kayla Galang** is an Austin-based filmmaker exploring themes of femininity, home, and belonging.



FUR
Zhen Li • USA • 2022 • 7 min • English

A crush gone mouldy...

Zhen Li is a Chinese American animation artist based in L.A. whose work centres around expressing the in-between, with an affinity with darkness, misalignment, warping realities, and folded feelings.

UNSUNG — VOICES 12

Six fearless emerging filmmakers embarked on a summer-long filmmaking journey online. We're proud to present their world premiere here in the 12th edition of Reel Asian's filmmaking program.

SAT, NOV 11 • 2:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 3
ENGLISH, VARIOUS LANGUAGES WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • PG

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GIRÊ
Ashna Ali • Canada • 2023 • 9 min • English, Kurdish

Two sisters who have chosen different paths are reunited while preparing for a wedding, forcing them to face their differences, whether they are ready or not.

Ashna Ali is a Kurdish Canadian artist, multimedia designer, and activist. She is a co-founder of Anti-Heroine Media, where she foregrounds feminist representation and ethical approaches to storytelling for social change.



DỪA (COCONUT)
Carthy Ngo • Canada • 2023 • 8 min • Vietnamese with English subtitles

A light-hearted short film about a daughter who attempts to chop a coconut for her dying father.

Carthy Ngo is a Vietnamese Chinese Canadian from Southern Ontario who is exploring filmmaking for the first time while working as a speech-language pathologist by day. She is inspired by the stories of love and loss that she has come across through her work and in life, and hopes to comfort with her art.



BENEVOLENCE
Kevin Matthew Wong • Canada • 2023 • 7 min • English

In this charming and meditative documentary, Jackie, Nora and Gayle are three Hakka Chinese women from Victoria, B.C., who unite to save Canada's oldest Chinese temple from crumbling. Along the way, the women explain the challenges of maintaining the temple and its significance as a cultural and community hub.

Kevin Matthew Wong is a Hakka Chinese Canadian theatre creator, producer, performer, projection designer, and emerging filmmaker whose work blends documentary media with personal and conversational storytelling.



CAMERA HEAD
Melvin Daligdig • Canada • 2023 • 8 min • English

After a coven of witches is discovered in the mountains, the government conducts an experiment attempting to mix magic and technology. However, when radio contact is lost, a team of soldiers is sent to investigate the abandoned laboratory—only to find it isn't so abandoned after all.

Melvin Daligdig is a Filipino multidisciplinary artist specializing in film, photography, stunts, and dance in Winnipeg.



CUL-DE-SAC
Satrio Prahasto • Canada • 2023 • 9 min • English

Andrew and Nina reunite when Andrew moves into a new place in the city. As the day passes, they mould the empty apartment into a home, awakening dormant feelings from their past.

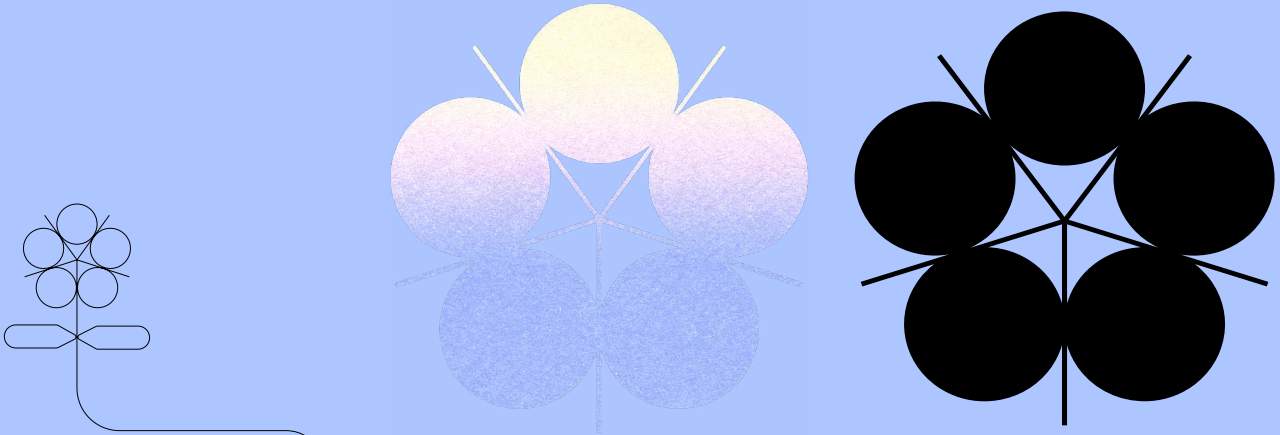
Satrio Prahasto is an emerging filmmaker based in Toronto. Prahasto is interested in how East and Southeast Asian cinema influence can not only inform but also shape how we tell our respective diasporic stories in a North American setting.



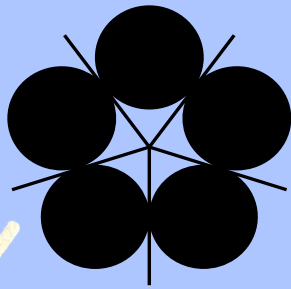
THE OFFICIAL GUIDEBOOK TO LYING
Corinne Langmuir • Canada • 2023 • 9 min • English

A lifetime of abusing his natural talent for making up stories has led an arrogant serial liar to quit his deceiving ways forever. As a final hurrah, this scrappy university student shares an epic 11-minute masterclass on how to execute the perfect lie.

Corinne Langmuir is a Taiwanese Canadian writer, filmmaker, and student. With a strong passion for the arts, Langmuir's interest in media has become a vehicle for her creative expression. She is fascinated by the various forms that storytelling can take—whether through literature, film, or internet culture commentary.



EMERGENGE



There’s no need to be certain about what’s next as this collection of shorts places us in a position to face specific pivotal moments of reckoning. Whether we’re feeling stuck or turbulent in the chaos of transition, can we remain gentle to ourselves?

SAT, NOV 11 • 5 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4
VARIOUS LANGUAGES WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • PG

WITH SUPPORT FROM



ADAGIO
Emma Zuck • Canada • 2023 • 15 min • English

Faye, a 16-year-old ballet dancer, prepares for her final solo.

Emma Zuck is a filmmaker with a focus on directing and screenwriting, whose work is born from growing pains: her soft spot for the sentimental, her childhood of prairie antics, and the contradictory feelings of “home.”



I AM A HORSE (나는 말이다)
Chaerin Im • Denmark, South Korea • 2022 • 8 min • No dialogue

Unable to find the presence of women in the artwork of Lee Jung-seob, *I am a Horse* spins an imaginative tale inspired by *tae-mong* (Korean birth dreams) of women born with half of their bodies, being a horse and a tiger.

Chaerin Im is a filmmaker from South Korea with a focus on experimental animation. With the use of craftsmanship and distinctive materials, she explores gender issues and sexual imagery.



TAKE ME HOME
Liz Sargent • USA • 2022 • 16 min • English

Anna, a cognitively disabled woman, and her estranged sister, Emily, must learn to communicate after their mother’s death in order to move forward.

Liz Sargent is a Korean American adoptee writer and director, whose award-winning work explores themes of adoption, disability, and family.



ABBY
Fanny Lord-Bourcier • Canada • 2023 • 2 min • French with English subtitles

Following an exchange of text messages with her mother about her newly adopted dog Abby, a young woman sees her experience as a transracial adoptee reflected in this adoption.

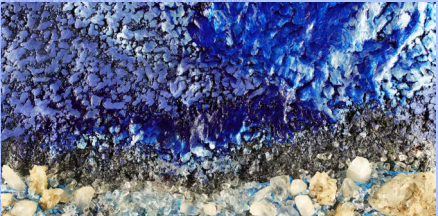
Fanny Lord-Bourcier is a multidisciplinary artist and animator. Curious and keen, she is continuously willing to adopt and be adopted by new places, disciplines, mediums, and people.



默 (TO WRITE FROM MEMORY)
Emory Chao Johnson • USA • 2023 • 18 min • English, Mandarin with English subtitles

Opaque memories seep into a quotidian flow despite efforts to move onward.

Emory Chao Johnson (they/them) is an artist settled on the land of the Tongva whose work centres on the real and abstract forces that charge queer trans lifeworlds.



BAIGAL NUUR - LAKE BAIKAL
Alisi Telengut • Canada, Germany • 2023 • 9 min • Buryat Mongolian with English subtitles

The formation and history of Lake Baikal in Siberia are re-imagined with handmade animation, featuring the voice of a Buryat woman who can still recall some words in her endangered language.

Alisi Telengut is a Canadian artist of Mongolian roots, living between Berlin and Tiohtia:ke/Montréal.



THE SEA ON THE DAY WHEN THE MAGIC RETURNS
Ji-won Han • South Korea • 2022 • 24 min • Korean with English subtitles

Sejin once had the power to have anything she wanted just by thinking about it. But now she has lost her magic.

Ji-won Han is an animation film director, illustrator, and comic book writer who often approaches themes focused on subjective moments and emotions of the younger generation living in the pressure cooker of South Korean society.

UNDER — THE INFLUENCE

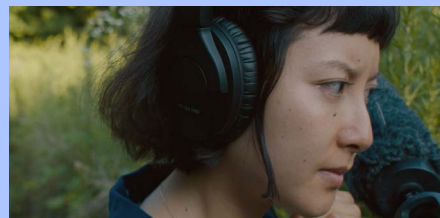
More to the situation than what it seems, these shorts choose to examine, tease, and redefine the forces that pull us to make a decision.

SAT, NOV 11 • 7:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4
VARIOUS LANGUAGES WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • PG

CONTENT WARNING

Depictions of dead marine life

WITH SUPPORT FROM



INVASIVE SPECIES

Annie Ning • USA • 2023 • 13 min • English

Maggie, a young Asian American sound artist, grapples with her imposter syndrome as it takes on new extremes at her first artist's residency.

Annie Ning is a filmmaker from Suzhou, China, currently based in NYC, where she is pursuing her MFA in screenwriting/directing at Columbia University.



PIXELS OF THE ORIENT

Warren Chan • Canada • 2022 • 9 min • English

Pixels of the Orient appropriates Western media depictions of East Asia for a psychedelic and comedic exploration of ahistorical East Asian aesthetics and identity.

Warren Chan is a video artist and curator with a focus on experimental works that analyze digital and new media technologies.



ANU

Pulkit Arora • New Zealand • 2023 • 13 min • English, Hindi, Māori with English subtitles

When Anu, a recent widow, moves to New Zealand from India, she's forced to confront her grief by completing an ordinary ritual in an extraordinary circumstance: quarantine.

Pulkit Arora is a writer-director based in India and New Zealand. His directorial work focuses on identity, faith and belonging.



UNIBROW

Nedda Sarshar • Canada • 2023 • 14 min • English and Farsi with English subtitles

An Iranian Canadian girl reluctantly makes a new friend when the new student from Iran offers to help fix her ruined unibrow — for her, a symbol of the Iranian heritage she tries desperately to hide from the world.

Nedda Sarshar is an emerging filmmaker and writer who loves to tell stories that centre queer women of colour and their immigrant families. Sarshar was the winner of Reel Asian's 2020 Pitch competition for *Unibrow*.



HOT BUNS

Calleen Koh • Singapore • 2022 • 11 min • English

In the strange, polarized world of Hands and Butts, a single act of violence toward an oppressed Butt sets the mediaverse ablaze.

Calleen Koh finds joy in turning serious societal issues into wacky stories using her crazy sexy characters, like anthropomorphic sushis, phallic Crayola-coloured children or walking butts in her manic animated films.



BLUE POETRY (PUI SI BIRRU)

Muhammad Heri Fadli • Indonesia • 2023 • 18 min • Indonesian with English subtitles

Working as a fisherman to support his small family, Ucup is used to consuming his catch from the sea until one day something strange happens that makes him realize something about his daily meal.

Muhammad Heri Fadli is from Central Lombok, Indonesia, and just finished his master's degree at the University Technology Mara in visual communication and new media.



OTHER LIFE (타인의 삶)

Do-hyeon Roh • South Korea • 2022 • 24 min • Korean with English subtitles

Kyu-ho, an ordinary office worker, receives an interview request from a famous writer and agrees to talk to her.

Do-hyeon Roh has held various jobs in the field, such as a lighting technician for a commercial film and a web novelist after signing a contract with a publisher.

HERE — WE

With societal, political, and magical forces at play beyond our control, this programme brings together a variety of filmmaking approaches to reflect on what can remain in troubling times, and along with it, agency to construct the narrative.

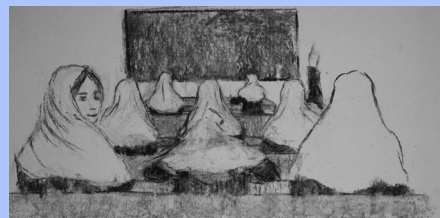
SUN, NOV 12 • 2:30 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4
VARIOUS LANGUAGES WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • PG



SAWO MATANG
Andrea Nirmala Widjajanto • Canada, Indonesia • 2023 • 21 min • Indonesian, Mandarin, and Dutch with English subtitles

In a post-New Order Jakarta, native Indonesians (Pribumi) are legalized to perform the black magic ritual *babi ngepet* to balance their economy against Chinese Indonesians.

Andrea Nirmala Widjajanto is an Indonesian writer and director currently residing in Toronto. Her works explore genre films as a medium to depict current political, social, and cultural issues.



NO. 28 (۲۸ کالپ)
Zahra Salarnia • New Zealand, Iran • 2022 • 4 min • Farsi with English subtitles

Back-and-forth movement blends discrete pictures into each other, contrasting the memory of innocent childhood life in a remote, peaceful environment against the surrounding political affairs of post-revolutionary Iran.

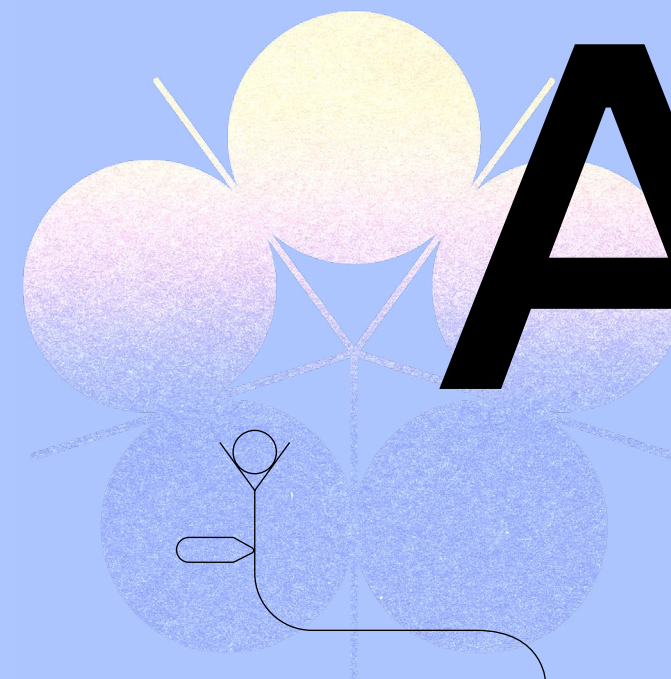
Zahra Salarnia is an Iranian artist based in New Zealand. She seeks to explore alternative and unconventional methods for making and presenting animation.



JUNGLEFOWL
Kalainithan Kalaichelvan • Canada, India, Sri Lanka • 2023 • 18 min • Tamil with English subtitles

In a small village in northern Sri Lanka, a young girl is forced to confront the consequences of a deadly civil war as a wounded freedom fighter is brought into their home.

Kalainithan Kalaichelvan is a Tamil Canadian writer, director, and producer whose films have screened at festivals such as the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, Rhode Island International Film Festival, and Reel Asian.



EVENING CLOUDS
Aung Phyoe • Myanmar • 2022 • 18 min • Burmese with English subtitles

Out of work and forced to marry a man she dislikes, young San Kyi plans to run away with her best friend, but complications unfold.

Aung Phyoe is a writer, director, and film editor. He's currently working on his first feature length film, *Fruit Gathering*.



IN THE GARDEN OF TULIPS
Julia Elihu • USA • 2023 • 14 min • Farsi with English subtitles

At the height of the Iran–Iraq war, Caroline takes a final car ride with her father through the Iranian countryside.

Julia Elihu is an Iranian American writer, director, and producer.



HITO
Stephen Lopez • Philippines • 2023 • 22 min • English, Cebuano, and Tagalog with English subtitles

Between nuclear reactors and military curfews, 14-year-old Jani lives in a dystopian world oppressively devoid of empathy. Together, she and her slippery new friend Kiefer the talking catfish gear up to strike a surreal blow for freedom.

Stephen Lopez graduated from the University of Santo Tomas in 2012 with a degree in nursing. But due to the glut of underpaid health-care professionals in his country, he decided to be broke on his own terms and become a filmmaker instead.

THE STRANGE, THE

SUN, NOV 12 • 5 PM • TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 4
VARIOUS LANGUAGES WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • PG

CONTENT WARNING

Flashing lights; depictions of suggested violence

WITH SUPPORT FROM

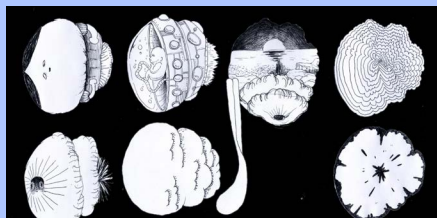


PRIMETIME MOTHER

Sonny Calvento • Philippines,
Singapore • 2023 • 15 min • Tagalog
with English subtitles

The audition process for an exploitative game show becomes the latest test of a long-suffering mother's fortitude and tenacity.

Sonny Calvento is a director, writer, and producer based in Manila. At the age of 19, he worked as a drama writer for ABS-CBN, the largest broadcasting network in the Philippines.



TIME TRIP TIME

Shunny Kim, Taewan Kim • UK • 2022 •
3 min • English

A mad clock takes the viewer on a time trip to a random planet where the concept of time is experienced differently from the one we know...

Shunny Kim and **Taewan Kim** are animators based in London. Co-directing their BA graduation film, their interests aligned through experimental animation, character design and collaboration.



APOY

Nushi Sharma • Canada • 2023 •
15 min • English and Tagalog with
English subtitles

In this complex family thriller, Gian has been plotting revenge since the day Janine, his mother, was sent away.

Nushi Sharma is a Filipino Indian undergraduate student at the University of British Columbia.

Hmm ... this doesn't seem right?! This programme asks us to sit with the discomforting feelings that arise when we begin to confront the unknown in what we believe to know.

AND THE FAMILIAR



I'M HERE (그리고 집)

Eun-uk Jeong • South Korea • 2022 •
27 min • Korean with English
subtitles

Sujin, who was recently fired and is planning to go to Canada on a working holiday, lives with her family after her parents' return.

Eun-uk Jeong is studying film at Myongji University.

DEATH MASK

Njo Kong Kie, John Greyson •
Canada • 2023 • 10 min • English

Filmmakers **Njo Kong Kie** and **John Greyson** (using their highlighter compositional method) have created an original short opera about the last day on Earth for Li Shiu Tong, the lover of Berlin sexologist and legendary gay-rights pioneer Magnus Hirschfeld.

Njo Kong Kie is an award-winning Toronto composer who has been a long-serving music director of La La La Human Steps in Montreal.

John Greyson is a Toronto filmmaker who is a pioneer of the new queer cinema. His films have won four Berlin Teddies, five Canadian Screen Awards, and over 50 Best Film prizes at festivals internationally.



CHOMP IT!

Mark Chua, Li Shuen Lam • Malaysia
• 2023 • 12 min • English

Two crocodilian men go to a swimming pool to cool off. One of them is seemingly of a different and special kind; the other is unable to control his desire.

Mark Chua and **Li Shuen Lam** are a filmmaker and artist duo. Their films often employ absurdist imagery, thinking on place, histories and the peculiarity of human desire.



ACID GREEN

EXYL • USA, Singapore • 2023 •
8 min • No dialogue

One night, a person brushes the teeth of a dog and turns into a bus.

EXYL is a filmmaker and animator born and raised in Singapore. They were trained in painting and drawing, but moved slowly but surely into time-based mediums like live action and animation.



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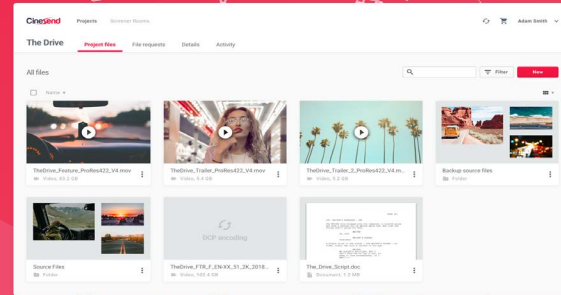
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Submissions open to ACTRA Toronto members from pan-Asian communities who self-identify as Asian.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: January 12, 2024

www.actratoronto.com/showcase/

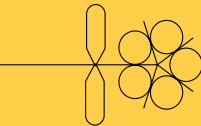
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RAIX

Storytelling beyond
the screen



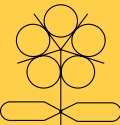
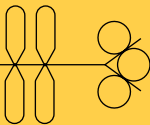
MULTIMEDIA EXHIBITION AND PROGRAM



PIGEONHOLE



FEATURED ARTIST
Emmie Tsumura is a multidisciplinary artist and designer. Her work is positioned where politics meet the everyday, and advocates for more accessible, inclusive, and joyful communities through justice-oriented design strategies. She holds a master's in design from York University, and her current area of research focuses on chaos, absurdity, and the occult.



**BACHIR/YEREX PRESENTATION
SPACE
NOVEMBER 8-19**

**REGULAR HOURS
WEEKDAYS - 12:00PM - 6:00PM
WEEKENDS - 11:00PM - 11:00AM**

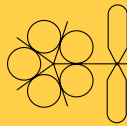
**SPECIAL HOURS
NOV 8TH AND NOV 19TH - 11:00AM
- 4:00PM**

Visit the Pigeonhole, nest and rest from the festival chaos, listen to collaborative pigeon music, watch raw footage, compose your own ditties, and collage a flock of desired futures together with other attendees. Check the festival website or rarara.ca for a full program schedule including artist talks and facilitated collage sessions.

This immersive multimedia installation is inspired by artist Emmie Tsumura's evolving relationship with a motley crew of pigeons who visit her kitchen windowsill to eat snacks and hang out on toy keyboards.

Pigeonhole debuts the creative collaboration between Tsumura and her pigeons-in-crime, and engages communal postures of learning and creation through multispecies forms of intimacy, trust, and being. The installation expands from the human-pigeon partnership to also reflect on the frustrating limitations of diasporic identity labels that "pigeonhole" us. Instead of straining to be legible and recognizable through pre-established structures (born of violent colonial legacies), Pigeonhole considers what zany freedoms are possible in choosing nonsensical play and unfamiliar relations with other beings. What if we turned away from legibility, toward other forms of expression? What might happen if we got out of the weeds to spend some time with the birds?

INTERACTIVE WALK AND TALK



EIGHTY THOUSAND STEPS



FEATURED ARTIST
Crystal 倩瑜 Chan is a Hong Kong-born, Montreal-based artist, producer, and former film critic dedicated to telling stories in new ways. She teaches media writing at the University of British Columbia and works for RavenSpace, a pioneering multimedia platform for Indigenous and collaborative creation.

**THE COMMONS AT 401 RICHMOND
ST, 4TH FLOOR
NOVEMBER 16
TIME: VISIT REELASIAN.COM FOR
DETAILS**

As a child, Crystal loved when her "Pawpaw" ("grandmother" in Chinese) shared life lessons through fables as the two took walks together. Now Crystal realizes Pawpaw was sharing her journey as a child refugee, hiding tragedy behind adventure. Listeners gradually learn about the heartbreaking contrast between real violence and a child's interpretation of it. As the listener walks to the store or through a park, they're forced to examine their steps and stories next to a refugee's.

Artist Talk: Crystal Chan breaks down how the project came together. What were her artistic goals and how did they balance with the technical challenges? How did Chan work with developer Stitch Media to create an elegant user experience?

Steps Together: Join Crystal Chan on a walkabout and experience a step-powered story. Regroup and discuss in a talk-back session with the artist.

**DOWNLOAD 80K STEPS, AVAILABLE
FOR FREE NOW ON THE APP STORE
AND GOOGLE PLAY**

You can still enjoy the story without walking by enabling Accessibility Mode in the Settings menu.



MINI SYMPOSIUM AND EXHIBITION

THE SARI-SARI XCHANGE



**THE COMMONS AT 401 RICHMOND
ST, 4TH FLOOR
NOVEMBER 17
PUBLIC EXHIBITION 1:30 PM–4:30
PM**

The Sari-Sari Xchange is a project that seeks to amplify Asian representation in the creative emerging media industries in Canada, particularly through a community-building residency program that engages artists with digital and extended reality (XR) technologies such as virtual and augmented reality, 360 cinema, game-engine animation, and 3D scanning. The artists-in-residence, mentors, and creative research team will present a mini symposium in the morning around issues and accessibility of XR technology, and a public exhibition of works-in-progress will follow in the afternoon.

ARTISTS
Roda Medhat
Amanda Ann-Min Wong
Chris Perez
Lux Gow-Habrich
Zebv Diez
Dev Ramsawakh

PROJECT LEADS
Carmela Alfaro-Laganse McMaster University
Taien Ng-Chan York University

PARTNERS & PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS
Aram Siu Wai Collier Artistic Director, Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival

Sean Lee Director of Programming, Tangled Arts + Disability

Lesley Loksi Chan Artistic Director, Centre[3] for Artistic + Social Practice



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WEE

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SAT, NOV 18 • 10:30 AM – 3 PM • INNIS TOWN HALL
VARIOUS LANGUAGES WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES • G (SUGGESTED RATING)



MON AMI
Michelle Chen • Canada • 2023 • 2 min • No dialogue

A lonely traveller plans to explore a small town, when a stranger suddenly joins him.

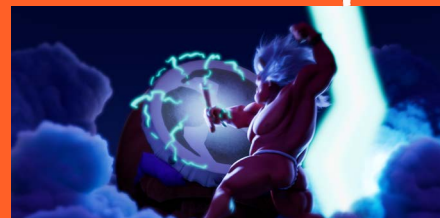
Michelle Chen is an artist based in Burlington, Ont. A colour enthusiast with a passion for background painting, she can often be found cooking (and eating), or cuddling with her cat, Goober.



EID MUBARAK
Mahnoor Euceph • Pakistan, USA • 2022 • 16 min • English, Urdu with English subtitles

Iman, a privileged six-year-old Pakistani girl, embarks on a mission to save her beloved pet goat from being eaten on the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha.

Mahnoor Euceph is a Pakistani American writer and director. She immigrated from Pakistan to Los Angeles at age eight and quickly learned that nobody else cares about cricket.



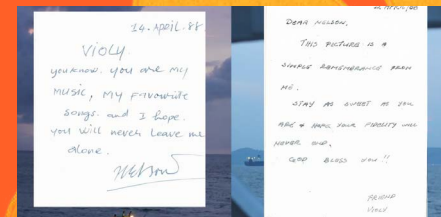
GORO GORO
Ryotaro Sawada & Agatha Tiara Christa • USA • 2023 • 3 min • English

Daigoro, a baby thunder god, dreams of being as powerful as his father.

Growing up, **Ryotaro Sawada** turned to his daydreams to be entertained, only to find out that there were people called animators who could bring those daydreams to life. He hasn't looked back since.

Agatha Tiara Christa, also known as Rara, is a 3D animator and layout artist from Indonesia. She believes that these small things create stories and always includes them in her work.

ASIAN



HI ADING
Dinaly Joyce Tran • Canada • 2023 • 2 min • English, Ilocano, Vietnamese with English subtitles

A poetic glimpse into a love story.

Dinaly Joyce Tran is a queer, trans, nonbinary Filipino Vietnamese community organizer and artist. They are always hoping to make things that feel homey—in their art, their organizing, and on their Animal Crossing island.



EVERYWHERE
Step C. & Kai Chung Ng • Hong Kong • 2022 • 9 min • Cantonese

Things that we thought were gone may not truly leave us—perhaps they are still with us somehow.

Step C. is an animation director, illustrator, educator, and art director based in Hong Kong.

Kai Chung Ng is an animation artist and the founder of Point Five Creations.



SPIRIT OF THE FOREST
Nandini Rao, Nirupa Rao, & Kalp Sanghvi • India • 2022 • 7 min • English, Kannada with English subtitles

A little girl stumbles into a sacred grove near her village in south India.

Nandini Rao was the winner of the 2021 Cannes residency program and is based in Paris.

Nirupa Rao is a botanical artist based in Bangalore whose work is inspired by field visits and close collaboration with natural scientists.

Kalp Sanghvi is an animation filmmaker who graduated from the Indian National Institute of Design and is based in Sydney.



THE OLD YOUNG CROW (今昔カラス)
Liam LoPinto • Japan, USA • 2022 • 12 min • Japanese, Farsi with English subtitles

Mehrdad, an Iranian boy, befriends an old Japanese woman in a graveyard in Tokyo.

Liam LoPinto is a filmmaker and animator based out of New York City who is an assistant manager at the Moviehouse in Millerton.



HAIR UNIVERSE (머리카락 우주)
Jinuk Choi • South Korea • 2023 • 11 min • Korean with English subtitles

A grieving boy finds his late mother's hair caught in the shower drainage hole and gets swept into the "Hair Universe," an unknown world underneath the bathtub.

Jinuk Choi is a Korean filmmaker based in New York.



DANCE ON! NONOKO!
Wanci Hua • USA, Taiwan • 2023 • 5 min • English

Nonoko the cat and Haro the rabbit dance to share a bittersweet goodbye on their graduation day.

Wanci Hua is a Taiwanese animator, currently studying at California Institute of the Arts. She loves telling whimsical and tender stories through the art of animation.



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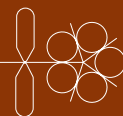
FIRST FILMS—CANADIAN ARTISTS SPOTLIGHT

Film culture loves a genius. Auteurs anointed by the cinematic gods with a touch of movie magic make for good film lore. And there may be a few geniuses among us—however, most filmmakers languish from one film to the next, carrying hard-earned lessons forward in the hopes of another big swing.

In our inaugural First Films event, award-winning Asian Canadian filmmakers show the first films they've ever made. They will reveal their origin stories—that time they caught the movie bug; the place their creative voices first started cracking. Here, we salute the earnest creation, irrational confidence, and the miracle of early- (or pre-)career filmmaking.

What filmmakers call their “first film” is often arbitrary. They usually cite the first film that “did well”—as in played film festivals, sold to distributors, or won awards. But we've convinced three successful filmmakers to show their actual first short films. In some cases, these films have never been seen publicly until now. Join us as these brave filmmakers celebrate, commiserate, and cringe through their first films.

– Aram Siu Wai Collier



SCREENING AND ARTIST ROUNDTABLE
SAT, NOV 18 • 7 PM • CSI ANNEX



HERE I AM • 10 min • 2010
Sami Khan

CONTENT WARNING
Drug use; needles



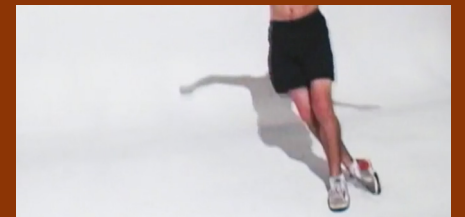
Sami Khan is a Canadian filmmaker who directed *St. Louis Superman* (2019), a short documentary that was shortlisted for the 2020 Academy Awards and was acquired by MTV Documentary Films. *Khoya*, his first fiction feature as writer-director, was selected for the Tribeca Film Institute's All Access grant. Khan is also the director of *Angel Dose* and the PBS series *Spice Road*.



SUNDAY AFTERNOON • 5 min • 1999
Renuka Jeyapalan



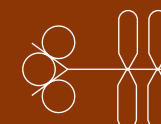
Renuka Jeyapalan is a Toronto-based writer and director. Her shorts have screened at TIFF, Tribeca, and the Berlinale. She has directed episodes of *Kim's Convenience*, *Workin' Moms*, *Sort Of*, *Children Ruin Everything*, *Son of a Critch*, and the Netflix original series *Ginny & Georgia*. Her first feature, *Stay The Night*, premiered at South by Southwest and played at Reel Asian in 2022.



HACKING 'TIL MY LEGS FALL OFF • 8min • 2004
Joyce Wong



Joyce Wong is an award-winning director and writer. Her debut narrative feature, *Wexford Plaza*, is a dark comedy that screened in competition at Slamdance in 2017, and was nominated for the Toronto Film Critics Association's Best Canadian Film Award. She has directed for shows such as *Sort Of*, *The Sticky*, *Baroness Von Sketch Show*, *Fakes*, *Workin' Moms*, *Spencer Sisters*, and *Run The Burbs*.





Reel Ideas






REEL IDEAS CONFERENCE: FROM THE GROUND UP

This year, **Reel Ideas** presents **From the Ground Up**, inviting you to join us in learning from our origins, creative journeys, and the path to forging our unique trajectories. The journey of building a career, honing a practice, and finding your voice all starts with a simple desire to create. Reel Ideas unites industry professionals, including screenwriters, producers, filmmakers, and performers, to engage in candid discussions about the challenges and successes of starting from scratch, all while drawing inspiration from our roots. Together, we'll work to pave new pathways for today's storytellers and advocates, celebrating their contributions and giving them their well-deserved recognition.

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HOW AS THE ART FINDING



A



**SCREENING + PANEL AT HOT DOCS TED ROGERS CINEMA
THURS NOV 16 • 7 PM**

Discover the comedically honest and heartwarming story of the CBC Gem original short-form series *How to Fail as a Popstar* in our panel discussion “The Clumsy Art of Finding Yourself.” Join us as we unravel the creative evolution of the series, which was adapted from Vivek Shraya’s hit play and subsequent book, tracing its journey from page to stage to screen. Immerse yourself in Shraya’s story: a young queer brown boy from Edmonton trying (and failing) to achieve pop stardom, a protagonist that is so sincere and overly optimistic, you can’t help but laugh as Vivek stumbles. At the same time, you’re also rooting for them to win.

As we watch Vivek age and come into her own as a now-40-something trans feminine multidisciplinary artist, her childlike wonder and gumption never dwindle. Vivek’s will to get back up and try again is not only hilarious and honest, but hopeful. It’s hard not to feel inspired as an audience to reflect on our own childhood dreams we once cast aside. Don’t miss this insightful conversation about adapting for film, the realities of the music industry, and the power of one’s intersecting identities.

How to Fail as a Popstar stars Shraya, Adrian Pavone (*Star Trek: Discovery*, 2017), and Chris D’Silva (*The Handmaid’s Tale*, 2017). It was written by Shraya and directed by Vanessa Matsui (*Son of a Critch*, 2022), with Shraya co-directing one episode. The series was produced by Sphere Media with the financial participation of the TELUS Fund, the Bell Fund, and the Shaw Rocket Fund.

All episodes of *How to Fail as a Popstar* are available to stream for free in Canada exclusively on CBC Gem.

TO POPSTAR: CLUMSY OF YOURSELF



PANELISTS

Vivek Shraya	Artist, Creator
Vanessa Matsui	Director
Ayesha Mansur Gonsalves	Actor

PRESENTING PARTNER



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JOURNEY BACK: EXPLORING ORIGIN IN FILMMAKING AND CREATING CHARACTER OUT OF "HOME"

**IN-PERSON DISCUSSION AT THE
FESTIVAL LOUNGE (401 RICHMOND
ST W SUITE 440) •
THURS NOV 9, 2:30 PM**

Delve into the profound connections filmmakers forge when revisiting their roots through a cinematic lens. This in-depth conversation explores how filmmakers turn place into its own dynamic character, and unpacks the emotive pull of returning, despite its tensions and contradictions. Join us as they showcase how "home" can transcend geographical boundaries, ignite stories with new interpretations of place, and animate narratives with the rich tapestry of personal heritage.

MODERATOR
Shehrezade Mian Film Producer

PANELISTS
Fawzia Mirza Director/Writer
Zarrar Kahn Director,
Screenwriter

Photos courtesy of Zarrar Kahn



Photos courtesy of Fawzia Mirza



BUILDING FORCES: THE DIRECTOR PRODUCER RELATIONSHIP

**IN-PERSON PANEL AT THE REEL
ASIAN OFFICE • TUES NOV 14, 4 PM**

Last fall, the DOC Institute invited creative producers to reimagine a documentary ecosystem that recognizes the needs of BIPOC producers with critically acclaimed projects, and published their thoughts in the "**Creative Producer Think Tank Report.**" A key point highlighted was producer/director relationships—a partnership constantly in flux. What is required for these roles to work harmoniously? Listen as panelists explore the vital but tumultuous collaboration behind any successful film.

WITH SUPPORT FROM

DOC institute ▶

TO THE WRITERS' ROOM: CANADIAN TV WRITERS ON CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION AND RESISTING TOKENISM

**ONLINE YOUTUBE LIVE ROUNDTABLE
• WED NOV 15, 4:30 PM**

Step into the thrilling world of TV writing with a range of talented writers as they share their insights into crafting a successful TV series, advancing careers in the writers' room, and promoting diversity in showrunning. Explore their creative processes, approach to pitching episodes, and how they navigate tokenism and stereotypes while fostering collaborative writers' rooms. Leave with valuable insights into the future of the screenwriting industry!

MODERATOR
Samir Ballou Industry and Education
Programmer, Reel Asian

PANELISTS
Rob Michaels Writer, Director, Comedian
Léa Geronimo Writer-Director
Panelist TBA

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SO YOU THINK YOU CAN PITCH?

SUN, NOV 19 • 5 PM • CSI ANNEX

Come celebrate the live So You Think You Can Pitch competition at the 27th Reel Asian Film Festival. A fun and exciting way to support filmmakers, watch as the five finalists pitch their projects to our esteemed jurors for a chance to win an amazing prize package toward kickstarting or finishing their film. Cheer on a new generation of filmmakers, and let the future of Asian Canadian cinema inspire you!

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PITCH WINNER PRIZE PACKAGE

- ✱ \$5,000 cash prize
- ✱ One hour 1-on-1 consultant with Blue Ant Media
- ✱ One hour 1-on-1 consultation with a Wattpad development executive
- ✱ Two-hour business affairs and legal consultation with Behind the Scenes Services Inc. and Lewis Birnberg Hanet Bobadilla LLP
- ✱ Acting support (if applicable) including consultation, coaching, and more with ACTRA Toronto

- ✱ Two hours of fully covered studio rental at Armstrong Acting Studios for casting
- ✱ A production workflow consultation with Charles Street Video which includes:
 - » A production workflow consultation with Charles Street Video which includes
 - » \$3,000 in edit-suite access and/or production-equipment rentals
 - » One-year membership; must activate membership by March 2024, with the option to renew the following year if necessary

- ✱ \$500 cash award/artist fee for third-party equipment rental
- ✱ Opportunity to premiere work at the 2024 Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival (subject to review), with full festival accreditation

PITCH FINALIST PACKAGE

- ✱ \$500 cash for participation (the pitch winner will not receive this \$500 cash prize)
- ✱ All-access pass to the 27th Reel Asian Film Festival
- ✱ \$350 equipment rental credit plus one-year membership to Charles Street Video

PITCH FINALE LIVE JURORS

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Jay Carolyn Wu | Writer/director,
Development Exec |
| Maya Bastian | Filmmaker |
| Aram Siu Wai Collier | Artistic Director,
Reel Asian |

PITCH MENTORS

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| Nedda Sarshar | Filmmaker |
| Kristina Wong | Producer |

PITCH SHORTLISTING JURORS

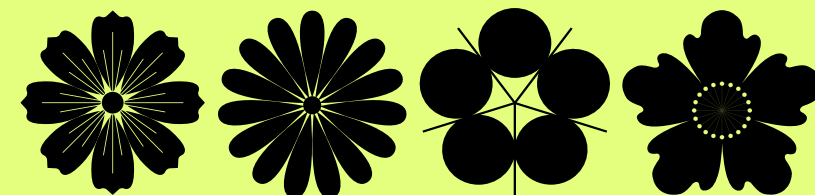
- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Michael Fukushima | Producer |
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| Samir Ballou | Industry and
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Programmer |

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