



**WOMEN IN FILM ANNOUNCES 31st ANNUAL
FILM FINISHING FUND RECIPIENTS**

UPDATED

LOS ANGELES, CA, December 8, 2016... Women In Film is pleased to announce the recipients of the 31st annual Film Finishing Fund grant program. Over 250 feature-length narrative films, documentaries and shorts were submitted from 22 countries around the world. Past recipients of the Fund have gone on to win Academy, Emmy, Sundance, Berlin Film Festival and Peabody Awards, among other recognitions.

The Film Finishing Fund provides cash grants and in-kind production services to complete films that fit the established criteria of being by, for or about women. The works-in-progress are viewed by a special jury of women in the industry who select the winning films.

“Women In Film is enormously proud that for 31 years we have enabled talented women filmmakers to complete their films and helped to bring their remarkable stories to the attention of the world,” said WIF Executive Director Kirsten Schaffer when making the announcement.

The 2016 Women In Film Finishing Fund winners are:

Narrative Feature Films

Solace

Directed, written and produced by Tchaiko Omawale

Band Aid

Directed, written, and produced by Zoe Lister-Jones

Miracle

Directed and written by Egle Vertelyte

The Darkest Days of Us

Directed and written by Astrid Rondero

Documentary Feature Films

Amor Puro Y Duro

Directed and produced by Catherine Gund and Daresha Kyi

Unrest (Canary in a Coal Mine)

Directed and produced by Jennifer Brea

Farida and Gulnaz

Directed by Clementine Malpas

Mudflow

Directed and produced by Cynthia Wade and Sasha Friedlander

Tribe

Directed and produced by Jordan Bryon

When A Girl Is Born

Directed and produced by Sarita Khurana and Smriti Mundhra

2016 WOMEN IN FILM FINISHING FUND WINNERS DETAIL

Narrative Feature Films

Solace

Directed, written and produced by Tchaiko Omawale

After her father dies a 17 year old girl numbs her emotions to deal with life, but when forced to live with her estranged grandmother she seeks comfort in a forbidden friendship, with the self-destructive neighbor, ultimately pushing her to confront her own pain.

SNAPSHOT BIO: After growing up in seven different countries while her father worked for UNICEF, Tchaiko and her family landed in New York where she graduated from Columbia University with a degree in African American Studies. She has produced several short form projects: *His/Herstory* with Franklin Leonard (The Black List), which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival; *America's Shadows...HIV Risk in Black and Latino Youth*, which received a Ford Foundation grant; and her music videos which were featured on RSA Films' Black Dog. Inspired by her own journey with an eating disorder and self-harm, she made the short film *Solace*. The feature script for *Solace* was a semi-finalist at the 2012 Sundance Writers Lab.

Band Aid

Directed, written, and produced by Zoe Lister-Jones

A couple who can't stop fighting embark on a last-ditch effort to save their marriage: turning their fights into songs and starting a band.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Zoe Lister-Jones is an American actress, singer, playwright, and screenwriter who currently co-stars in the CBS sitcom *Life in Pieces*. In 2009, Lister-Jones co-starred, co-wrote, and co-produced (with Daryl Wein) the independent feature, *Breaking Upwards*. The film premiered at the SXSW Film Festival. *Lola Versus* was her second project co-written with director Wein, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2012. In 2015, Lister-Jones and Wein co-wrote *Consumed*, which premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival.

Miracle

Directed and written by Egle Vertelyte

Close to bankruptcy, Irena, the owner of a struggling pig farm finds a surprising benefactor in a handsome American man who appears to be the answer to all her prayers. But as Irena begins to fall for his charms she realizes that his intentions may not be what he claims.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Since her childhood, Egle was interested in theater, films, acting and story telling. After getting her BA in history, Egle attended European Film College in Denmark. Upon returning to Lithuania after school, she worked with Studio Nominum, run by famous Lithuanian director Arunas Matelis. In 2008, she applied to MFI screenplay workshops in Greece and started to develop her feature length screenplay *Back Home*, which was later developed with Jan Fleischer at National Film and Television School and became the feature script *Miracle*. In 2009, she moved to Mongolia to teach film to visual anthropology students and while there, directed a documentary and began filming her first narrative feature, *Ub Lama*, about a boy who is trying to become a Buddhist monk. She has written for a popular prime parody show *Repeat* on TV3 channel in Lithuania and is developing a third feature length script.

The Darkest Days Of Us

Directed and written by Astrid Rondero

Ana's recollection of the day when her sister Julia died, is a fragmented and foggy image that has haunted

her since childhood. Now, Ana has returned to Tijuana, her hometown, where she has to face the pain and the darkness of her memories.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Astrid studied filmmaking in Mexico City. Her graduation short film, *In Still Waters* (2011), was selected for the Editing Studio of the Berlinale Talents 2010 and obtained a post-production grant from the Mexican Fund for the Arts and Culture. Astrid began to develop *The Darkest Days of Us* in 2012 and is now writing the script for her second feature film, *Brama*.

Documentary Feature Films

Amor Puro Y Duro

Directed and produced by Catherine Gund and Daresha Kyi

Inspired by exclusive, never-before-seen interview and performance footage of Chavela Vargas shot in 1991 and guided by her unique voice, *Amor Puro y Duro* weaves an arresting portrait of a woman who dared to dress, speak, sing, and dream her unique life into being.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Catherine Gund is the founder of Aubin Pictures and an Emmy-nominated producer, director, writer, and activist. Her media work focuses on strategic and sustainable social transformation, arts and culture, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, and the environment. She has three films in production: *A Moving Body*, *Amor Puro Y Duro*, and *American Rhapsody*.

Daresha Kyi is an award-winning filmmaker and television producer with over 25 years in the business. After working in the New York independent film community, she decided to attend film school at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. She also won a full fellowship from TriStar Pictures to attend the Directors Program at the American Film Institute (AFI) based on her multiple award-winning short, *Land Where My Fathers Died*.

Unrest (Canary in a Coal Mine)

Directed and produced by Jennifer Brea

Four families and one bedridden filmmaker fight to live in spite of the most devastating, prevalent, and invisible disease your doctor has never (really) heard of.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Jennifer is a doctoral student in the Department of Government at Harvard University on indefinite medical leave. Prior to that, she was a print journalist in Beijing and East Africa. She earned her AB in politics from Princeton University and is a TED fellow. The story of her illness has been featured on ABC, Al Jazeera, and The Root 100. She gave a TED talk in June 2016 about her experience with ME and the long history of psychologizing women's bodies. *Unrest* was awarded a Special Jury Prize at the Paley Center for Media's DocPitch competition. Jennifer is a Sundance DFP Fellow and will participate in the Sundance Edit & Story Lab.

Farida and Gulnaz

Directed by Clementine Malpas

This intimate story of courage love, loss and compromise follows two Afghan women who embark on an extraordinary journey of justice.

SNAPSHOT BIO: British filmmaker Clementine Malpas has spent much of her career focusing on refugees and women's rights. Her films have been nominated for best TV documentary of the year at the Foreign Press Association, Royal Television Awards and One World. In 2014, she was nominated for an Emmy Award for *Kim vs Kabul, a Dan Rather Reports*. She has helped tell refugees' stories around the world, be it Somalis in Kenya, Syrians in Lebanon, or Burmese in Thailand. She has extensive experience filming in conflict and post-conflict areas, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, South America, and Africa.

Mudflow

Directed and produced by Cynthia Wade and Sasha Friedlander

Mudflow is the story of Indonesian villagers' fight for justice in the wake of a massive exploding mud volcano blamed on gas drilling gone wrong. The film unfolds against the backdrop of Indonesia's historic 2014 presidential election as the world's third largest democracy is put to the test. The election offers hope, but is real change possible?

SNAPSHOT BIO: Cynthia Wade's 2007 Academy Award-winning documentary *Freeheld* won Sundance's Special Jury Prize and 13 additional film awards; Wade was a lead producer on the 2015 Lionsgate feature adaptation of the same name. In 2013, Wade's film *Mondays at Racine* was nominated for an Academy Award. Her 2010 film *Born Sweet* won 15 festival awards, including Honorable Mention at Sundance. Wade has directed the feature documentaries *Shelter Dogs*, *Living the Legacy*, and *Growing Hope Against Hunger*. She has won over 45 film awards. Cynthia holds an MA in Documentary Filmmaking from Stanford University. She lives in the Berkshires, Western Massachusetts with her husband and two daughters.

Sasha Friedlander is an award-winning filmmaker who directed, produced, shot, and edited the feature documentary *Where Heaven Meets Hell*. It was awarded Special Mention at Prague's One World Human Rights Film Festival and aired on PBS in June 2013. Friedlander has lived and worked as a journalist in Indonesia. Sasha holds a BA from UCLA and an MFA in Social Documentary Film from the School of Visual Arts.

Tribe

Directed and produced by Jordan Bryon

The vastly different lives of a Bedouin transgender girl from Jordan, an Iraqi refugee on the run and a filmmaker from Australia collide in Jordan.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Emerging documentary filmmaker and activist Jordan Bryon has worked on human rights films in Australia, Uganda, India, Jordan, and Afghanistan. *Head Miles* saw Jordan enter a medium-security men's prison alone and follow the prisoners on their journey to redemption through creative expression. Jordan embeds in hidden communities and builds deep relationships with people, allowing her camera to capture their rawest moments and present the tenderness, courage, and beauty that exist in struggle.

When A Girl Is Born

Directed and produced by Sarita Khurana and Smriti Mundhra

When A Girl Is Born follows three young women who struggle with the demands of arranged marriage while pursuing opportunities for work, education and even love in a newly globalizing India.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Sarita Khurana is a New York-based filmmaker who works both in the narrative and documentary genres. Her work addresses topics related to South Asia, feminism, ethnic migration, community, memory, and sexuality. Khurana holds an MFA in Film Directing from Columbia University. Khurana is an alum of Film Independent. Her documentary work includes *Bangla East Side* about Muslim youth in a post 9-11 New York.

Smriti Mundhra is a Los Angeles based director and producer who has been working in the film and television industry for over 12 years. She produced *Bomb the System*, a 2004 Independent Spirit Award nominee for Best First Feature and the award-winning feature film *Waterborne*. She also co-produced *Punching at the Sun* (2006 Sundance Film Festival), as well as over a dozen award-winning short films.

HISTORY OF THE FILM FINISHING FUND

The Women In Film Finishing Fund (FFF) has been identifying and awarding funds to deserving filmmakers for 31 years. The juries have consistently singled out films for finishing that went on to earn

critical acclaim and major international awards, including:

Godless: 2016 Golden Leopard Award, Locarno Film Festival; director: Ralitza Petrova

American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs: 2014 Peabody Award, American Documentary; director: Grace Lee

Regarding Susan Sontag: 2014 Best Documentary Feature, Tribeca Film Festival; director: Nancy Kates

Grace Paley: Collected Shorts: 2010 Palm Springs International Film Festival finalist - Best in Festival; director: Lilly Rivlin

Circumstance: 2010 Sundance US Dramatic Competition Winner, Audience Award; director: Maryam Keshavarz

Freeheld: 2008 Academy Award®, Best Documentary; director: Cynthia Wade

A Walk Into The Sea: Danny Williams And The Warhol Factory: 2007 Berlinale Teddy® Award, Best Documentary; director: Esther Robinson

American Blackout: 2006 Sundance Special Jury Prize, Best Documentary; producer: Anastasia King

Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision: 1994 Academy Award®, Best Documentary; director: Freida Lee Mock

About Women In Film

Women in Film is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting equal opportunities for women, encouraging creative projects by women, and expanding and enhancing portrayals of women in all forms of global media. Given that women comprise fifty percent of the population, WIF's ultimate goal is to see the same gender parity reflected on and off screen. Founded in 1973, WIF focuses on advocacy and education, provides scholarships, grants and film finishing funds and works to preserve the legacies of all women working in the entertainment community. For more information visit www.wif.org

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