

 AFI CONSERVATORY

CLASS OF 2024

**DIRECTING
SHOWCASE**



It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the AFI Conservatory Fall 2024 Directing Showcase, where we spotlight the talent of a diverse group of 23 Directing Fellows. In their two years while at AFI, they have worked with exceptional faculty mentors to complete their thesis films and develop their next projects to share with you today. Thank you for being part of our Transition to Industry Program, which introduces Fellows into the business, as we celebrate their stories. The American Film Institute believes in the power of diverse voices to drive culture forward. We are pleased to introduce you to the next generation of storytellers.

SUSAN RUSKIN

Dean, AFI Conservatory and Executive
Vice President, American Film Institute



During an intensive two years at the AFI Conservatory, Directing Fellows hone their directing craft and cultivate their unique points of view. They also develop exciting long-form projects that will become first features, TV pitches, and all manner of new work. Fellows are trained under the guidance of the incredible working professionals who comprise the Directing Faculty. Now, the next generation of filmmakers present to you what comes next with new and original projects, diverse in format and subject matter. I invite you to meet the Directing Fellows of Fall 2024.

ADAM SALKY

Directing Discipline Head



AIMEE HOFFMAN

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Aimee Hoffman is a Saskatchewan-born, Canadian writer-director based in Los Angeles. Using a darkly comedic and surreal lens, her work explores the dynamics of power, privilege and human vulnerability within the desperate pursuit of the “American Dream”. She is a commercial, music video and narrative director, having recently screened her short film I GUESS at Outfest 2023. Able to work in both the U.S. and Canada, she has directed commercials for brands such as Nike, ESPN, 7-11 and more.

LIKE MOTHER *FEATURE SCRIPT – SURREAL THRILLER*

After a failed engagement, a young woman returns to her small Canadian hometown to reconnect with her estranged mother. Things take a wild turn when she's mistaken for her mother, and gets ensnared in a mind-bending drug cult. In an Alice in Wonderland meets Zola adventure, she tries to clear the mix-up but ends up getting in deeper.

EMPRESS OF ZERO *FEATURE SCRIPT – SATIRE*

Riley, a queer environmentally conscious CEO of beauty brand, InOrdinary, prepares for the upcoming launch of her groundbreaking zero waste product. When a petty feud with a salesclerk derails her focus amidst a complex launch campaign, the cracks begin to expose the dark hypocrisy of her ethical image.

DADDA *AFI THESIS – SATIRE*

Amidst his wife's flourishing career, a once hotshot director turned stay-at-home dad, becomes convinced his hands are inexplicably shrinking. In a desperate search to re-enlarge his hands, he puts his family and sanity at risk, as things grow out of control.
[CONTACT FOR LINK](#)



ALI ROSENTHAL

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Ali Rosenthal is a director/writer originally from New York City. She has directed six narrative shorts, as well as branded content for companies like BarkBox and Meet Cute. She has an English degree from Stanford that sits gathering dust. When she was three, Rosenthal put a napkin on her head at the Odeon restaurant in TriBeCa, and everyone smiled and laughed and put their napkins on their heads, too. She's been chasing that feeling ever since...

VIRGIN CHILD OF THE UNIVERSE *FEATURE SCRIPT – COMING-OF-AGE SEX COMEDY*

Virginal college senior Piper thinks she's going to Cabo for Senior Spring Break, but her roomies are actually taking her to a women's sex therapy retreat to face her biggest fear... her own vagina.

TEEN MARY *AFI THESIS – COMEDY, BIBLICAL SATIRE*

When Mary, a horny teenager living in Nazareth in the year Zero, gets knocked up by a hot, married shepherd and might get STONED to death for adultery, she and her gay best friend Joseph hatch a plan to save their lives: they'll convince everybody that GOD made Mary pregnant. With the new Messiah.

CONTACT FOR LINK



ALYSSA CODY GARCIA

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Alyssa Cody Garcia, a native Los Angeleno, began her directing career unconventionally as an art historian and archaeologist of ancient Rome. An alumna of Columbia University and PhD candidate at UPenn, she decided to pursue her own art instead, joining a Meisner studio and directing a few shorts, which led her to the AFI Conservatory. Garcia's affection for pitch-black humor, the psychoanalytical and all things macabre compels her toward stories that explore the idiosyncrasies of human behavior—in all of their deliciously explicit glory—through the eyes of those we least expect.

MACHISMA *FEATURE SCRIPT – WESTERN, REVISIONIST HISTORY*

A *mestizo* girl living in 1900's El Paso crusades against the corrupt *federales* who murdered her grandfather, until a family secret forces her to choose between her grandfather's ideals and her hunger for revenge as she changes the course of the war, and history, in her favor.

THE LAST DOG *NON-AFI SHORT – DARK COMEDY*

After numerous suicide attempts, a crotchety widower living in post-nuclear war LA takes in a radioactive dog as his last chance at death, only to rediscover the joys of life as the clock winds down for both of them.

[CONTACT FOR LINK](#)

MARASCHINO *AFI THESIS – SATIRICAL EROTIC NEO-NOIR*

When a centerfold with abandonment issues suffers an hallucinatory breakdown on her avoidant partner's birthday, she must get past her twisted smart home on a blood-soaked path. Will she embrace her own brutality and get him to stay on her terms, or will she lose him—and her sanity—forever?

[CONTACT FOR LINK](#)



ANABELLE LEMIEUX

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Anabelle LeMieux is a Canadian/American writer, director and actor. Her short film GOOD LUCK IN THE LAND OF MAÑANA premiered at Roxy Underground Film Fest in NYC. Her most recent acting work was the lead role in A FOLDED OCEAN which premiered at Sundance in 2023 and is a Vimeo Staff Pick. She grew up on a marijuana farm in Mendocino county and is the only one in her family who hasn't been to jail. LeMieux is inspired by the natural world and the struggle to survive.

WOMEN'S TRIP *FEATURE SCRIPT – DRAMA, COMEDY*

After losing everything, a young woman joins a women's wilderness retreat in search of self-discovery, but as she becomes increasingly entangled with the women around her, the lines between friendship, love, and obsession begin to blur—leaving her more lost than ever.

FOWL PLAY *AFI THESIS – DRAMA, COMEDY*

A determined single mother must go to extreme lengths in order to provide Thanksgiving dinner for her children including a face-off with a mud woman and a wild turkey chase...

<https://vimeo.com/960620930>

PW: [fowl/playthesis](https://www.pw.com/fowlplaythesis)



BRYNN MITCHELL

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Brynn Mitchell is a narrative and commercial director interested in big worlds and complex characters. She is driven to tell stories about morally ambiguous women navigating ethical dilemmas, and has directed award-winning short films, music videos and commercials. She is especially drawn to genre pieces, like her AFI thesis, a historical drama which was shot on 35mm film. She also has a background in directing social justice theater around the country, and is a certified Intimacy Coordinator for film and TV.

ETTA & NATION *FEATURE SCRIPT – HISTORICAL DRAMA*

When discontented schoolteacher, Etta Price, finds herself chasing Nation Monroe, an ex-Buffalo soldier turned drug runner, through the Wild West, the two stumble upon a heist that's sure to change both of their journeys.

BEHIND GLASS *NON-AFI SHORT – SCI-FI*

When Elle, an ambitious female astronaut, returns from a traumatic mission to space, her recovery turns into the most horrific part of the journey.

<https://vimeo.com/708911979>

THE WITCH PRICKER AND THE HARE

AFI THESIS – HISTORICAL DRAMA

During Scotland's witch trials in the 17th century, an infamous witch hunter struggles to execute a particularly clever witch, which will risk exposing their own identity.

<https://vimeo.com/1015276711?share=copy>

PW:TheWPFilm_2024



COLBY BARRIOS

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Colby Barrios is a Venezuelan-American writer and director based in Los Angeles. Having begun his career in comedy and produced over a hundred standup comedy specials for Dry Bar Comedy, he finds interest in the comedic, but also the questions that scare us the most. Barrios is currently developing a handful of feature films that explore deep-seated fears, horrifying comedy, and strange character relationships. He lives with his wife and his cuter-than-life dog, Lula.

ST. PAULI *FEATURE SCRIPT – BLACK COMEDY*

Pauli Wolff, a horny German fragrance influencer clinging to fame by a thread, ropes in a reluctant Daniel Radcliffe type as his brand ambassador. But when Daniel mysteriously vanishes, Pauli dives headfirst into the seedy underbelly of Los Angeles, on a wild quest to save his career and the unlikely friendship he never knew he needed.

SHOCK, SOBER *AFI SHORT – DRAMA*

Two middle-aged entertainment wrestlers must grapple with their masculinity when a tragic injury upends one's career.

<https://vimeo.com/772318090/2bc19fb005?share=copy>

A LIGHT THAT DOESN'T DIM *AFI THESIS – DRAMATIC HORROR*

Sister Jones is coming to a life-changing decision: to go home and disappoint her family or continue as a Mormon missionary in Mexico, and disappoint herself amidst various familial and cultural pressures.

<https://vimeo.com/962428219/a3392857c5?ts=0&share=copy>



DIDI BECK

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Didi Beck is a Jamaican film director. Her work centers women who encounter the unseen occult world and the power we glean through it. Her most recent film, *IN FOREIGN*, follows a pregnant Jamaican psychic as she's committed to a psychiatric ward. Previously, Beck's work as a writer, photographer and artist has been featured in the Los Angeles Times, The Face, Fader, Al Jazeera and the BBC. She worked at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art as a content creator and spent many years utilizing her most valuable family inheritance – her intuition – offering readings as a professional psychic.

SUGAR VALE *FEATURE SCRIPT – GOTHIC HORROR, DRAMEDY*

In uptown Kingston, Jamaica, a disillusioned 30-something artist inherits the coveted family heirloom: an 18th century plantation house – and all the ghosts that haunt it.

IN FOREIGN *AFI THESIS – SURREAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA*

In 1962 California on the eve of her homegoing, a pregnant Jamaican psychic realizes she's being forcibly admitted to a psychiatric ward by her husband. Seeing the future cannot help her in this foreign world...but perhaps looking to the past might.

<https://vimeo.com/1014387781/f46473d765?share=copy>



FIONA OBERTINCA

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Fiona Obertinca is a Swedish/Albanian writer/director of 14 narrative and documentary short films, which have premiered at festivals in Sweden, the UK and the U.S. Her short film, SHPËTIMI, depicts her family's escape from the war in Kosovo, and won the Bronze prize at the Pixel Short Film Festival in Sweden. She has worked in development on shows such as MAX's MADE FOR LOVE and BBC's RIDLEY ROAD. She is drawn to stories for and about complicated, resilient women who must overcome the odds to find empowerment and self-actualization.

BLUE HOUR *FEATURE SCRIPT – ROMANCE, DRAMA*

Disillusioned with marriage and desperate for space, a young woman returns to her hometown after 15 years only to come face-to-face with her 'right person, wrong time' high school sweetheart. What will she discover when she goes down a path she's traveled before?

GREAT MAN *AFI SHORT – COMEDY, DRAMA*

An overworked nurse's day is turned upside down when her estranged (and now braindead) father arrives at her hospital and she's forced to corral her chaotic half-siblings and Giggles, her father's favorite stripper, into pulling the plug on her terrible dad.

<https://vimeo.com/1007812783/564664bfee>

DANDELION *AFI THESIS – COMING-OF-AGE DRAMEDY*

In 1970s Seattle, a rebellious, queer foster teen gets thrown out of yet another foster placement and finds herself in the care of an enigmatic social worker who's tasked with finding her a home before the break of dawn; it turns out to be somewhere she never could have imagined possible.

<https://vimeo.com/1007134827/92958d1f01>



GRANT SWANSON

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Grant Swanson is an LA-based director/writer. His mostly LGBTQ-centered stories focus on fear-filled characters who believe that they're incapable of facing the world. He hopes that audiences who've felt the anxiety and isolation that his characters embody will see themselves on screen and know that they're not alone. Swanson's feature script *IRON LAKE* placed in the Academy Nicholl Fellowship, and his shorts have screened at Fantasia and numerous other festivals. He comes to directing from a career as a television editor, where his work for NBC received an Emmy® nomination.

QUIET BOY *FEATURE SCRIPT – DARK COMING-OF-AGE THRILLER*

Jason, a lonely and ostracized 14-year-old with an abusive single mother, begins a secret romance with a man who's 20 years older. When the man becomes violent and possessive, however, Jason desperately needs to turn to someone for help—but who?

DYSMORPHIC *NON-AFI SHORT – HORROR*

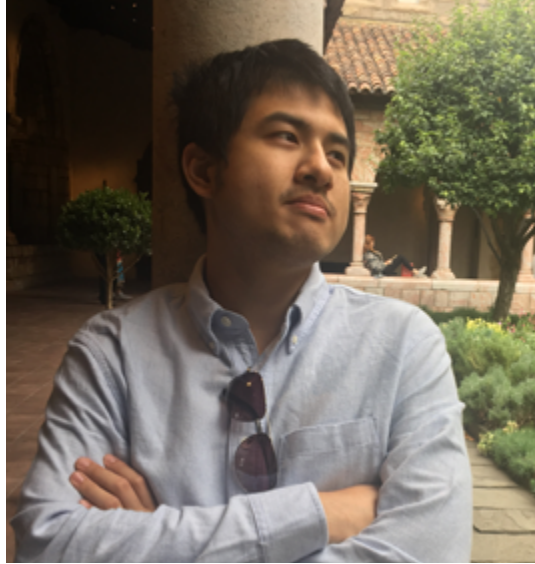
A lonely young man with body dysmorphia believes that he's too ugly to date. One day, he receives a disturbing supernatural vision about a way that he can get with the girl of his dreams. Headlined at Fantasia 2024.

<https://vimeo.com/850798652/c9a54a7d0f>

IRON LAKE *AFI THESIS – COMING-OF-AGE, SUSPENSE*

On a 1990s scouting trip, Scott, a volatile teenager, harbors secret feelings for another boy. When they're paired up for a scavenger hunt, he confesses all, and when rejected, has to decide if he'll risk his secret getting out to the troop, or if he'll go to dark lengths to keep it hidden.

CONTACT FOR LINK



HAORAN MA

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Haoran Ma is a director from Wuhan, China. Following a degree in computer science from NYU, he was a software engineer for Amazon and a prolific independent filmmaker in New York, Shanghai and LA. Recipient of a Sloan Fellowship in 2022, he is drawn to a bold visual language in order to tell stories he hopes will resonate with audiences on both intellectual and emotional levels. His sci-fi short, PLUTO, launches on the festival circuit this Fall.

BIRD AND BIRD IN BETWEEN *FEATURE SCRIPT – DRAMA, ROMANCE*

When intellectual and artsy indie filmmaker Y gets pulled into working on an indie short at the U.S. border, she finds the director actually needs a therapist instead of a producer. As she plunges into dating various men including the director, she quickly unravels until she sees a miracle green light in an Eric Rohmer movie and without giving up ideals of love and freedom, her fate starts to change.

PLUTO *NON-AFI SHORT – SCI-FI, ROMANCE*

When he gets involved with a human client, Pluto, an AI psychiatrist is on the path to having his own emotions, and his destiny changes forever.

<https://vimeo.com/1007597076>

Password: pluto-final

SODA SECRETS *AFI SHORT – COMEDY, ACTION, ROMANCE*

A middle-aged man, a nobody, who divorces with his wife because of his absurd obsession with Coca-Cola, survives an unexpected assassin from the Coca-Cola company and rediscovers the meaning of life.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ebnn_phRytXxZ9HX0yQQsEW9STkvQy65/view?usp=sharing



KANANI KOSTER

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Kanani Koster is a Kanaka Maoli writer and director drawn to unveiling the raw realities of so-called “ordinary” life for women of color, crafting stories that are as authentic as they are comedic. Her short film NO SPECTATORS ALLOWED, won the Best of the PNW Short Film at the 2022 Bend Film Festival and was included in the The Smithsonian National Museum of American Indian’s Fall 2023 showcase. In 2024, Koster was a finalist for Tribeca AT&T’s Untold Story grant for her first feature “Shoots.”

SHOOTS *FEATURE SCRIPT- COMING-OF-AGE COMEDY*

When a floundering high school senior, Jasmine, gets her hands on a bag of stolen marijuana before graduation, she ropes in her level-headed best friend, Nainoa, on a late-night odyssey across Maui to make some quick cash for a dream apartment. Dodging drug dealers, overbearing aunts and past lovers, the two grapple with the oncoming changes to their lives and the island they call home.

LYDIA AND LULU *AFI SHORT - COMEDY*

Lydia has an unorthodox approach to sex, one she shares with LuLu, the human personification of her vagina. Their system is thrown into question when Lydia—much to LuLu’s dismay—decides she’s ready for real intimacy again and a possible relationship with her work crush.

<https://vimeo.com/946886169?share=copy>

PW: *buttery*

FCBK *AFI THESIS - DRAMEDY*

A jaded medical assistant struggles to train a naively optimistic new employee as emotions fly high and threats are made against the abortion clinic where they work.

<https://vimeo.com/945002789?share=copy>

PW: *slurp*



KATE McCARTHY

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Kate McCarthy is a comedian turned writer-director based in Los Angeles. Her 2022 debut short LOOK, MIRA was described by Vulture as “a stylishly bittersweet coming-of-age comedy in the Todd Solondz–Wes Anderson mold that’s bursting with color and idiosyncrasy.” The film played at the Oscar-qualifying LA Shorts Fest and the National Film Festival for Talented Youth, and is now streaming on Directors Notes and NoBudge, where it’s ranked as one of their “Top 12 Most Viewed of All Time.” Back in her comedy days, McCarthy interned at SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, CONAN, FULL FRONTAL WITH SAMANTHA BEE and The Second City.

GIRLS & YOUNG WOMEN *FEATURE SCRIPT – COMING-OF-AGE DRAMEDY*

Over the course of one summer at a rigorous California arts camp, two young women experience painful, parallel struggles with self-acceptance – though one is a teenage camper, and the other her stuck 26-year-old counselor.

JOHN H. *AFI SHORT – DARK DRAMEDY*

Forty years after his infamous attempt, failed presidential assassin John Hinckley Jr. tries to start over in life, love – and folk music. Based on a true story.

<https://vimeo.com/988221191/ac804e9d0e>

THE HICKS HAPPY HOUR *AFI THESIS – SHOWBIZ DRAMEDY*

In 1972, the ever-smiling mother of a family band struggles to keep the family’s TV variety show and wholesome image going when her estranged husband doesn’t turn up to the taping.

<https://vimeo.com/video/943060715>

PW: 2410



KENZ BENMOSBAH

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Kenz Benmosbah is a Tunisian-French film director whose mixed cultural background sparked a passion for stories about misfits. Her debut short film, *I'M LEAVING TONIGHT*, is currently streaming on NoBudge. Passionate about languages, she served as the French translator for the Academy Award®-nominated Tunisian film *FOUR DAUGHTERS* and has directed films in five languages. Benmosbah earned her BA in filmmaking in Bordeaux, France, during which time she worked as a production assistant at Lilies Films, producer of *PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE*.

I THINK SHE HATES ME *FEATURE SCRIPT – COMING-OF-AGE, DRAMEDY*

Lina, a queer 20-something college dropout with bad social anxiety, is thrown into turmoil when her roommates throw a party and force her to come out of her bedroom to talk to her crush.

DEAD GIRL *AFI THESIS – ROMANCE, FANTASY*

After her untimely death, Dani comes back from the dead on Halloween night and goes on a quest to win her fiancée back.

<https://vimeo.com/990712895>

PW: de4dgirl

I'M LEAVING TONIGHT *NON-AFI SHORT – COMING-OF-AGE, DRAMA*

Desperate to escape home after school, 16-year-old Maya stirs tension among her friends when she tries to convince them to run away and party at their secret spot, HQ.

<https://www.nobudge.com/videos/im-leaving-tonight>



KIM CAICEDO

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Colombian-American director Kim Caicedo brings over a decade of experience in New York advertising and production to her films. Caicedo's work has been recognized by the ARC Awards, Creativity International, The Webby Awards and Fast Company's Innovation By Design Awards. Her clients include BlackRock, Jack Daniels, Meta, Adidas, Under Armour and Pepsi among others. Her films have been showcased at 30 festivals worldwide, including the New York Latino Film Festival, LA Shorts International Film Festival and the Bogotá International Film Festival.

NIGHT AT THE OASIS NON-AFI FEATURE FILM - COMING-OF-AGE

At a Florida highway rest stop, a sheltered pre-teen is accidentally abandoned while accompanying her truck driver father on a work trip.

THE PINES FEATURE FILM - HORROR

Best Florida Feature at the Freakshow Horror Film Festival; nominated Best Feature by New Filmmakers LA.

After being stranded during a desolate canoe trip, two best friends must escape a mysterious pine-covered island that seems to have a life of its own.

SANCOCHO NON-AFI NARRATIVE SHORT (16MM) - DRAMA

A widow processes her grief through the Colombian tradition of making sancocho.

<https://app.frame.io/reviews/2a4a8226-e8ac-4f0b-a993-5e0f1a6bf5a6/4edf8bb9-7758-4410-936b-a8f1bb987ff2>

FRANCIS AFI THESIS - FAMILY DRAMA

In the aftermath of their father's death, the youngest of three siblings fights to prevent her older siblings from selling the family's legacy—a once-thriving but now-failing movie theater.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaWtT8541KA>



KIRA POWELL

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Kira Powell is an Afro-Latina director, writer and actor based in Los Angeles. Her recent horror short, *THE GOOD MOTHER*, premiered at the renowned 2023 Screamfest Horror Film Festival. Powell has over a decade of experience in the entertainment industry as a SAG-AFTRA actor in film and television. She developed a lucrative career in commercials, booking dozens of national campaigns. Her one woman show, *CAUGHT IN THE MIX*, won awards at prestigious festivals. Her filmmaking work focuses on themes of multiracial identity, the immigrant experience and mental health in the BIPOC community.

BEST EYES *FEATURE SCRIPT – DRAMA, COMING-OF-AGE*

When an Afro-Latina girl with fake blue eyes develops an important friendship despite her mother's objections, she finds herself on a journey of self-discovery as she grapples with her identity.

THE GOOD MOTHER *NON-AFI SHORT – HORROR*

In the grip of the Covid pandemic and her own unraveling mind, a mother descends into nightmarish desperation to protect and keep her children safe.

<https://vimeo.com/861007475/523fcc6dfb>

BEST EYES *AFI THESIS – DRAMA*

When a bi-racial teen develops an important friendship despite her mother's objections, she finds herself torn between choosing herself or the path her mother has laid out for her.

<https://vimeo.com/1007130494/cf4967d832>



LILLY LION

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Lilly Lion is a writer/director based in Los Angeles, by way of Portland, Oregon. Her short films have screened at festivals around the world, including Tallgrass Film Festival, HollyShorts and Hell's Half Mile Film & Music Festival. Her first short, IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD (2022), won best PNW Short Film at the Tacoma Film Festival. Lion holds a double BA in French and Cinema Studies from the University of Oregon. Her unique upbringing has drawn her to stories about characters living on the fringes of society and family found in odd places. She's compelled by stories that question the beliefs imposed on female sexuality.

TELL ME I'M BEAUTIFUL *FEATURE SCRIPT – COMING-OF-AGE DRAMEDY*

After gaining the courage to do her worm impersonation at a high school party, a reserved 12-year-old gains newfound social praise and must navigate a new boyfriend, competition from her best friend and the expectations of her upcoming bat mitzvah.

DEFERMENT *NON-AFI SHORT – COMEDY, THRILLER*

After responding to a cryptic Craigslist ad, a recent college graduate caters to a man with a cow fetish in an attempt to pay her student loans.

<https://vimeo.com/661044712/1b77e0bc9f>

YOU & ME (& CHAZ & RODNEY) *AFI THESIS – COMING-OF-AGE DRAMA*

After making a plan to give blowjobs for the first time, two curious teens are quickly confronted with their own shifting friendship.

<https://vimeo.com/1015929669?share=copy>

PW: Y&M&C&R



OANH-NHI NGUYEN

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Oanh-Nhi Nguyen is a filmmaker and activist with a decade of experience in gender and racial justice. Her films center on Asian women and girls, exploring themes of diaspora, immigrant experiences and intergenerational relationships. She participated in Tribeca's 2024 Creators Market, pitching her projects to industry professionals and her comedy pilot "UNACCEPTABLE" was accepted into the 2022 Athena's Writers Lab. Her directorial docuseries debut, TAKING ROOT, was officially selected for the 2023 Tribeca Festival.

THERE ARE NO SAINTS *FEATURE SCRIPT – DRAMEDY*

Thao Le, a successful therapist, spent years healing from her anger and anxiety. When she unexpectedly has to care for her elderly, difficult mother, the source of much of her emotional pain, she must confront their strained relationship...and parts of herself she's suppressed.

TAKING ROOT *NON-AFI DOCUMENTARY – EPISODIC SERIES*

Nearly five decades after the wars in Southeast Asia, refugees living in Philadelphia navigate the lasting effects of war and displacement, revealing the profound intergenerational impact of structural violence while showcasing their strength in rebuilding in America.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA0qFtcJlztB4rEvnmoocKpQ9rZGnZ2Xv>

LITTLE BIRD *AFI THESIS – DRAMA*

When Linh Tran, a disillusioned Vietnamese woman working as an eviction officer, is ordered to evict Vietnamese refugees, she faces a moral dilemma. Torn between her duty and her empathy for those who remind her of home, she must choose whether to carry out the eviction or stand in solidarity with the refugees.

<https://vimeo.com/1017294105/06c43cbe3c?share=copy>



RHYS RAISKIN

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Rhys Raiskin is a writer/director based in Los Angeles and Paris, France. He served as creative executive for Hippos In Tanks, an international record label, before becoming a film executive with Muse Productions where he initiated development on art-house megahit Spring Breakers. After a decade in development and independent film producing, Raiskin began spearheading his own projects – writing and directing shorts in the U.S. and France. His thesis film, SHANGRI-LA, premiered at the LA Shorts International Film Festival and has been invited to screen at numerous festivals.

MOTHERLY LOVE *FEATURE SCRIPT – DRAMA, EROTIC THRILLER*

An impish young man with an unhealthy attachment to his mother meets her much younger boyfriend on vacation. Determined to sabotage their relationship, this mama's boy will do whatever it takes, even if it means stealing the young man's heart.

THE RUBICON *AFI SHORT – DRAMA, ROMANCE*

Nat and Jess are girlfriend besties who have very different perspectives on romance, but they always agree on their love for each other, until one night they cross the line and their bond is challenged.

<https://vimeo.com/1013338920?share=copy>

Password: C2G3A

SHANGRI-LA *AFI THESIS – DRAMEDY, ROMANCE*

When Joe discovers his high school crush, Daphne, has moved into his nursing home, he asks his best friend Alma to be his wingman, but little does he know, she has a little crush of her own.

<https://vimeo.com/973411250/3d944dc910>

CONTACT FOR LINK



ROHIT RELAN

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Rohit Relan is a director from Mumbai, India, who is interested in exploring identity, culture and characters through the lens of self-discovery. His stories often center on hopeless individuals finding a glimmer of hope to carry on, and this thematic focus has garnered awards at many film festivals worldwide. He has also worked as an assistant director for mainstream Hindi films and Netflix shows. Relan is dedicated to amplifying South Asian and other original stories on the global stage in order to provoke conversation and change.

THE OBSESSIVE MOTH AND THE FIREBALL

FEATURE SCRIPT – DRAMA, FANTASY

According to local folklore in the Parvati Valley in the Himalayas, a mythical fireball appears in a village during the Holi festival, and no outsiders are allowed to see it. After being spurned by the girl he loves, Ravi, a heartbroken tourist, becomes obsessed with capturing the elusive fireball, making it his life's purpose.

THE OTHER ACTRESS *AFI SHORT – BIOPIC, TRAGEDY*

Academy Award-winner Mercedes McCambridge risks everything, including her sanity and sobriety, to voice Pazuzu for Linda Blair in THE EXORCIST, as director William Friedkin pushes her to confront her inner demons and reclaim her lost fame.

<https://youtu.be/55FgC7iLof8>

PATAKHA/FIRECRACKER *AFI THESIS – DRAMA, COMING-OF-AGE*

In rural India, 11-year-old Radha is pulled out of school to help her family and must confront the realities of working in a firecracker factory, coming to terms with the loss of her cherished backpack and her childhood.

<https://youtu.be/02n-atXf-XQ>



RYAN BEENE

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Ryan Beene is a queer writer/director from small town Texas. Seeing depictions of queer people represented as those to be made fun of or killed, he was determined to change that narrative. Following an MFA in Screenwriting from Chapman University, he worked as writer's assistant to prolific screenwriter Bettina Gilos on several projects, then completed his MFA in Directing from the AFI Conservatory. Today, he is telling personal stories that highlight his commitment and passion to making the viewer feel empowered and less alone.

MY LIFE IN MEN *FEATURE SCRIPT – DRAMA, COMING-OF-AGE*

Over the course of 20 years, Nathan is forced to come of age over and over again as he navigates his search for approval from men and how he's been taught to achieve it.

CANNIBAL *AFI SHORT – DRAMA*

In the aftermath of being sexually assaulted, a young man tries to move on and pretend it never happened, but he soon realizes how difficult that really is.

<https://vimeo.com/video/771332876>

pw: Cycle_2022 (starts at 1:35)

DO US PART *AFI THESIS – PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA*

When a new patient, Patrick, enters the rehab facility, Tyler, a young man in treatment for an eating disorder, spirals further into the depths of his anorexia in a desperate attempt for approval.

<https://vimeo.com/video/998866389>

Password: douspart2024



SANTOS ARRÚE

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Santos Arrué is a writer/director born and raised in Los Angeles. She is interested in exploring stories surrounding foreignness, connection and community. Her short documentary EN CASAS AJENAS (IN A STRANGER'S HOME), follows her mother's experiences as a domestic worker in Los Angeles. It earned her a diversity grant from CalArts and screened at the Cine+Mas San Francisco Latino Film Festival. Arrué was a Sundance Ignite Fellow finalist with her short film SEE IF SHE CAN OPEN HER WINGS.

AZUL *FEATURE SCRIPT – COMING-OF-AGE DRAMA*

Looking to escape her deteriorating family, an aimless teenage girl is captivated by an all-lady lowrider car club in Los Angeles. Determined to join the club, she finds community, young love and how to master the art of being a lady.

TRACKING LUNA *AFI SHORT – DRAMA, COMEDY*

After learning about her college bound daughter's new change in major, Hai-Lin, a traditional Chinese mom, tracks her down to a seedy club determined to persuade her otherwise and bring her home.

<https://vimeo.com/927816529>

AZUL *AFI THESIS – COMING-OF-AGE DRAMA*

In the wake of her sister's passing, aimless 17-year-old Azul catches sight of the LA Lady Lowriders and finds an opportunity for belonging.

CONTACT FOR LINK



STEPHEN STEELMAN

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Stephen Steelman is a Los Angeles-based director. Most recently he completed his AFI thesis film, *WHAT IF WE COULD STAY*, starring Jillian Bell (*WORKAHOLICS*). His horror short *JUICED*, featuring Ian Gary (*TOP GUN: MAVERICK*), premiered at SCREAMFEST 2021, earning him a spot in SHOOT! Magazine's NEW DIRECTOR SHOWCASE. Since 2011, he's crafted music videos and tour visuals for top-tier artists like Kacey Musgraves, System of a Down, The Misfits, Galantis and more. Always experimenting with new technology, his VR short *RACING FOR PINKS* premiered at Hollyshorts 2018. As a creative technologist at XR Studios, he directed LED volume performances for artists like Leon Bridges and Julia Michaels.

GOLDEN NUGGET *FEATURE SCRIPT – THRILLER, DRAMA*

Deep in debt due to his gambling, a lonely Vegas motel manager at the end of his rope meets the 12-year-old daughter he never knew, as she evades her murderous stepfather. He soon discovers why; her guitar case is full of enough money to get him out of trouble... but is he willing to betray her?

JUICED *NON-AFI SHORT FILM – HORROR, COMEDY*

An overworked computer programmer grapples with a deadline and his blender-obsessed roommate in this retelling of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart."
<https://vimeo.com/434102472>

WHAT IF WE COULD STAY *AFI THESIS – DRAMA, SCI-FI*

A loveless entity, forced to body-hop between people experiencing alcoholic blackouts, meets a fellow wanderer who embraces the chaos. As the night fades and sobriety threatens to separate them forever, will our protagonist learn to accept their own existence?

<https://vimeo.com/stephensteelman/whatifwecouldstay>

Password: brig



YANG ZIMIK

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Yang Zimik is a writer/director from India now based in Los Angeles. Zimik has worked extensively in Bollywood and his short films, *FILM*, *CITY* and *WHY DO WE CALL THEM SUNCATCHERS?* streamed on Disney+ Hotstar. He pioneered India's first curriculum for "Writing and Directing in Virtual Reality" and led narrative development for India's first mythological video game, *KURUKSHETRA*. Passionate about exploring themes of disenfranchisement and isolation through the structure of the "underdog story," he aims to create art that moves the needle away from apathy.

KIDS ON THE RUN *FEATURE SCRIPT – CRIME, COMING-OF-AGE*

When three rough street children save a young boy from traffickers, they must navigate the harsh realities of raising a child in the shadows of Mumbai's abandoned railway tracks. The odds are stacked against them as they seek love, security, hope, and a McDonald's Happy Meal.

BUTTON PUSHERS *LIMITED SERIES SCRIPT – ESPORTS, DRAMA*

When Peter 'XPRESSO' Peng is offered a spot on a professional League of Legends team, he leaps at the chance. As they assemble a ragtag team and battle to qualify for the World Championship, he grapples with his brother's addiction, team issues and the cost of unchecked ambition.

THE APPLE PICKER'S SON *AFI THESIS – FANTASY, COMING-OF-AGE*

A 10-year-old Kashmiri boy, still learning to use his supernatural powers of telekinesis learns his migrant worker father is leaving to work the apple harvest in war-torn Kashmir. Fearing for his father's life, he must now use his powers to keep his family together.

[CONTACT FOR LINK](#)



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