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SEVEN FILMMAKERS SELECTED FOR THE 2019 FILM INDEPENDENT PRODUCING LAB

$30,000 ALFRED P. SLOAN PRODUCERS GRANT AWARDED TO MALPELO BY CAMILA ZAVALA

LOS ANGELES (October 15, 2019) — Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Spirit Awards, announced today the producers selected for its 19th annual Producing Lab. This intensive program is designed to help creative, independent producers develop their skills and further their careers by introducing Fellows to film professionals who can advise them on both the craft and business of independent producing. Each Producing Lab Fellow will be paired with an experienced Creative Advisor with whom they’ll work to develop their project over the course of the program.

“At Film Independent we recognize the vital role creative producers play in independent film as well as the enormous challenges they face,” said Jennifer Kushner, Director of Artist Development at Film Independent. “Our Lab provides much needed support, through mentorship, community and education, to help empower the next generation of talented indie producers.”

This year’s mentors and guest speakers include: Rebecca Green (It Follows), Laura Kim (Participant Media), Amanda Marshall (Swiss Army Man), Dani Melia (The Farewell), Sheila Hanahan Taylor (Final Destination) and Tristen Tuckfield (30 West). This year’s Industry Advisors include Lauren Craniotes (Gersh), Greta Fuentes (MACRO), Lauren Mann (Swiss Army Man), Valerie Stadler (Big Swing Productions) and Solome Williams (Bron Studios).
The Sloan Producers Grant, a $30,000 grant to further develop a project that explores science and technology themes or characters in engaging and innovative ways, was awarded to Malpelo, produced by Camila Zavala.

“I am sincerely grateful to have the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation’s support,” said filmmaker and grant recipient Camila Zavala. “Malpelo addresses global issues such as illegal wildlife trade and poaching in an attempt to investigate the rapid decline of hammerhead sharks on Malpelo Island. Thanks to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation we will be able to portray this vital work with precision.”

In addition, Lebanese filmmaker Myriam Sassine is the recipient of a Global Media Makers Fellowship, an exchange program sponsored through a partnership between Film Independent and the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, making her travel and participation in the Producing Lab possible.

Previous projects developed through the Producing Lab include Tayarisha Poe’s Selah and the Spades produced by Lauren McBride which premiered at Sundance Film Festival 2019 and was acquired by Amazon to be developed into an Amazon original series; Chloé Zhao’s Spirit Award nominated Songs My Brothers Taught Me, produced by Angela C. Lee and Mollye Asher; and Joseph Wladyka’s Spirit Award nominated Manos Sucias, produced by Elena Greenlee and Márcia Mayer.

Film Independent Artist Development programs promote unique independent voices by helping filmmakers create and advance new work through Project Involve; Filmmaker Labs (Directing, Documentary, Episodic, Producing and Screenwriting); Fast Track finance market and Fiscal Sponsorship, as well as through Grants and Awards that provide over one million dollars annually to visual storytellers.

For more information on any of the Labs or the projects that have been developed in them, please contact Angela Lee, Senior Manager of Artist Development, at 323 556 9362. Additional information and an application form can be found at filmindependent.org.

The 2019 Producing Lab is supported by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Additional funding is provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

The 2019 Producing Lab filmmakers and projects are:

Title: Bolichicos
Producer: Diego Najera
Logline: In 2006 Venezuela, a privileged 20-year-old recruits the maid’s strait-laced son to carry out a currency exchange scam that exploits the country’s poorest citizens but inadvertently ends up turning brother against brother.
Title: *Costa Brava, Lebanon*
Producer: Myriam Sassine
Logline: The Badri family lives in the Lebanese mountains away from the country's pollution until the government decides to build a landfill right outside their house.

Title: *Farewell Amor*
Producer: Huriyyah Muhammad
Logline: After 17 years apart, Angolan immigrant Walter is joined in the U.S. by his wife and teen daughter. Now absolute strangers sharing a one bedroom Brooklyn apartment, they struggle to overcome the emotional distance between them, relying on the muscle memory of dance to rediscover one another.

Title: *The Inspection*
Producers: Chester Gordon and Valerie Steinberg
Logline: In the age of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," homeless youth Ellis French joins the Marine Corps in a last-ditch attempt to change his life but must conceal his attraction for his drill instructor in order to survive bootcamp.

Title: *I Was a Simple Man*
Producer: Sarah S. Kim
Logline: The ghosts of the past haunt the countryside in this tale of a Hawai‘i family facing the imminent death of their eldest.

Title: *Malpelo*
Producer: Camila Zavala
Logline: Mia, a solitary freediver, is recruited by someone from her past to take the treacherous journey to Malpelo, a remote island in Colombia, in order to investigate the troubling disappearance of hammerhead sharks. To do so, she will have to reconcile with her past and navigate the dangerous waters of the Pacific Ocean, trapped on a boat with an all-male crew. They prove to be just as slippery as the predators she’s studying.

**ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT**
Film Independent is the nonprofit arts organization that champions creative independence in visual storytelling and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision. Film Independent helps filmmakers make their movies, builds an audience for their projects and works to diversify the film industry. Film Independent's Board of Directors, filmmakers, staff and constituents is comprised of an inclusive community of individuals across ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race and sexual orientation. Anyone passionate about film can become a Member, whether you are a filmmaker, industry professional or a film lover.
In addition to producing the Spirit Awards, Film Independent produces Film Independent Presents, a year-round screening series for its members that offers unique cinematic experiences for the Los Angeles creative community and the general public.

Through annual screenings and events, Film Independent provides access to a network of like-minded artists who are driving creativity in the film industry. Film Independent’s Artist Development program offers free labs for selected writers, directors, producers and documentary filmmakers and presents year-round networking opportunities. Project Involve is Film Independent’s signature program dedicated to fostering the careers of talented filmmakers from communities traditionally underrepresented in the film industry.

For more information or to become a Member, visit filmindependent.org.

ABOUT THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION
The New York based Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, founded in 1934, makes grants in science, technology and economic performance. Sloan’s program in Public Understanding of Science and Technology, directed by Doron Weber, supports books, radio, film, television, theater and new media to reach a wide, non-specialized audience.

Sloan’s Film Program encourages filmmakers to create more realistic and compelling stories about science and technology and to challenge existing stereotypes about scientists and engineers in the popular imagination. Over the past two decades, Sloan has partnered with some of the top film schools in the country— including AFI, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, NYU, UCLA and USC plus six new film schools this year—and established annual awards in screenwriting and film production, along with an annual best-of-the-best Student Grand Jury Prize administered by the Tribeca Film Institute. The Foundation also supports screenplay development programs with the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Film Institute, SFFILM, the Black List, the Athena Film Festival, the North Fork Film Festival, and Film Independent’s Producing Lab and Fast Track program and has helped develop over 25 feature films such as Jessica Oreck’s One Man Dies a Million Times, Michael Tyburski’s The Sound of Silence, Shawn Snyder’s To Dust, Ben Lewin’s The Catcher Was a Spy, Melissa Finell’s Sensitivity Training, Logan Kibens and Sharon Greene’s Operator, Mathew Brown’s The Man Who Knew Infinity, Michael Almereyda’s Experimenter, Morten Tyldum’s The Imitation Game, Marni Zelnick’s Druid Peak, Musa Syeed’s Valley of Saints, and Andrew Bujalski’s Computer Chess. The Foundation’s book program includes support for Margot Lee Shetterly’s Hidden Figures, adapted into an Oscar-nominated box office hit in 2017.

For more information about the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, visit sloan.org or follow the Foundation at @SloanPublic on Twitter and Facebook.

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