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FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES 2020 SCREENWRITING LAB PARTICIPANTS

LOS ANGELES (February 18, 2020) — Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Film Independent Spirit Awards, announced the seven screenwriters selected for its 22nd annual Screenwriting Lab. This intensive program is designed to provide individualized story and career development for emerging screenwriters with fiction feature screenplays. Eighty six percent of this year’s participants are from communities underrepresented in film and over half the participants are women.

“Being part of Film Independent’s Screenwriting Lab, I’ve learned not only how to structure and write a script, but also to trust my instincts, make mistakes and not to be afraid to think outside of the box,” said former Screenwriting Lab Participant HIKARI. “Through this process of collaboration and sharing with my fellow screenwriters and the Film Independent staff, we became like family. Film Independent is a place you can go experiment, try, fail and then try again– a place of encouragement that I will always be grateful for and [will] be close to my heart.” 37 Seconds by HIKARI made its world-premiere at the 2019 Berlin International Film Festival and won the Audience Award out of 30 feature films and the CICAE Art Cinema Award (International Confederation of Art House Cinemas). The film is available to stream on Netflix.

Film Independent is also excited to present the Loyola Marymount University School of Film and Television Screenwriting Fellowship. This year’s Fellowship is being awarded to Ben Gross, who will receive a $10,000 grant to support the development of his script, Mijo/Son, through the Screenwriting Lab. Gross is the eighth recipient of this fellowship from Film Independent and LMU SFTV.
Over the course of the Lab, Fellows will workshop their projects under the guidance of Creative Advisors Javier Fuentes-León (Undertow), Pamela Ribon (Moana, Wreck it Ralph 2) and Jeff Stockwell (Bridge to Terabithia). Additional guest speakers and advisors include script consultant Ruth Atkinson, literary manager Angela Cheng Caplan, writer and director HIKARI (37 Seconds), screenwriter Ellen Shanman (The Hidden Girl, Gallagher Girls) and producer Sheila Hanahan Taylor.

“The power of cinema comes from its ability to reflect our wonderfully diverse communities while entertaining and challenging audiences with universal yet also very specific stories,” said Angela C. Lee, Senior Manager of Artist Development at Film Independent. “We’re so thrilled to support the seven writers selected for this year’s Screenwriting Lab, each of whom embody these qualities with their bold voices and dynamic vision as storytellers.”

Past Screenwriting Lab projects include 37 Seconds by HIKARI which won the Panorama Audience Award and CICAE Art Cinema Jury Prize at the 2019 Berlinale Film Festival, Ani Simon Kennedy’s A Short History of the Long Road which premiered at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival and received a Special Jury Mention for Best Screenplay, Andrew Ahn’s Spirit Award-winning debut Spa Night and Chloé Zhao’s Spirit Award-nominated debut Songs My Brothers Taught Me.

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, Fiscal Sponsorship, as well as through Grants and Awards, that provide over one million dollars annually to visual storytellers.

The Film Independent Screenwriting Lab is supported by Loyola Marymount University School of Film and Television, Writers Guild of America West, Final Draft and Coverfly.

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 2020 Screenwriting Lab participants and their projects are:

**Title: Containment**
Writer: Mitali Jahagirdar
Logline: In an ultra-secure biotechnology research laboratory, a highly virulent strain of SARS — secretly designed at the lab — contaminates the entire building, forcing a doctor to try and save its inhabitants before everyone is infected.

**Title: The Cow of Queens**
Writer/Director: Kate Marks
Logline: Sonya and her dying dad go on one last adventure to save an escaped slaughterhouse cow loose on the streets of Queens.
Title: *Mabel*
Writer: Joy Goodwin
Writer/Director: Nicholas Ma
Logline: No one at her new school gets Callie, an awkward kid whose one friend, Mabel, is a potted plant—except Ms. Garrett, the charismatic science teacher who introduces her to the controversial world of “plant intelligence.” Desperate to impress her teacher, Callie starts building a secret greenhouse laboratory in her backyard, but Callie’s obsession threatens her first real friendship with another kid.

Title: *Malpelo*
Writer/Director: Victoria Rivera
Logline: At the height of Colombia’s civil war, a young and headstrong female freediver makes the perilous voyage out to Malpelo Island, an inhospitable and remote rock in the middle of the pacific, in order to investigate the troubling disappearance of hammerhead sharks, trapped on a boat with an all-male crew who turn out to be just as dangerous as the predators she’s after.

Title: *Mijo/Son*
Writer: Ben Gross
Logline: In a historic United States court case, an undocumented immigrant battles for custody of her son with an American family who adopted him after her arrest by ICE Agents.

Title: *Wonderland*
Writer/Director: Tiffanie Hsu
Logline: When her mother disappears with the family bankroll during a Christmas vacation in Las Vegas, eleven-year-old Adeline Tang hires a devious street magician to bring her mother home before her father finds out.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT
For over 38 years, Film Independent has helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit’s mission is to champion creative independence in visual storytelling and support a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision.

In addition to producing the Film Independent Spirit Awards, the organization supports creative professionals with Artist Development programs, grants and labs, and signature mentorship program Project Involve fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Weekly Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. International programs include Global Media Makers, a cultural exchange program that provides career-building opportunities for international film professionals. Film Independent Presents is a year-round program offering screenings, conversations and other unique cinematic experiences to Members in Los Angeles and beyond.

While working to make the entertainment industry more inclusive, Film Independent provides access to a network of like-minded artists. Film lovers, industry professionals and anyone passionate about visual storytelling can become a Member at filmindependent.org and connect with @FilmIndependent across social platforms.

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