

FILM INDEPENDENT

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FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES 2021 SCREENWRITING LAB PARTICIPANTS

Loyola Marymount University School of Film and Television Screenwriting Fellowship Awarded

LOS ANGELES (May 5, 2021) – Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Film Independent Spirit Awards, announced the five screenwriters selected for its 23rd annual Screenwriting Lab. Iesh Thapar, Jing Ai Ng, Anna Greenfield, Alfonso Johnson and Rochée Jeffrey were chosen for this intensive program, designed to provide individualized story and career development for emerging screenwriters with fiction feature screenplays. 80 percent of this year’s participants are from communities underrepresented in film and half the participants are women.

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 Varun Chopra, who will receive a \$10,000 grant to support the development of his script, *Holy Cowboy*, through the Screenwriting Lab. Chopra is the ninth 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 Andrew Ahn, Derek Cianfrance, Javier Fuentes Leon and Ellen Shanman. Additional guest speakers and advisors include script consultant Ruth Atkinson, literary manager Angela Cheng Caplan, executive Hannah Minghella, producer Sheila Hanahan Taylor and filmmaker Chloé Zhao.

“While most of the world was homebound due to the pandemic, the creativity of artists flourished as showcased by the overwhelming amount of incredibly talented writers that submitted to this year’s program,” said Angela C. Lee, Associate Director of Artist Development. “The six selected filmmakers exemplify Film Independent’s continued commitment to pushing the boundaries of storytelling through authentic characters, diverse settings and wholly original perspectives.”

“The Film Independent Screenwriting Lab was a gamechanger for me,” said Kate Marks, 2020 Screenwriting Lab Fellow. “I received amazing notes from the industry advisors, my mentor, and other screenwriting fellows so when I buckled down for my revision, I had a deeper understanding of my script and also how to pitch it. Revelations from the lab guided my rewrite of *The Cow of Queens*, which won an Academy Nicholl Fellowship.”

Past Screenwriting Lab projects include Academy Award winning Chloé Zhao’s feature debut *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*; Andrew Ahn’s Spirit Award-winning debut *Spa Night*; *37 Seconds* by HIKARI which won the Panorama Audience Award and CICAÉ 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; and Kate Mark’s *The Cow of Queens*, which was a 2020 recipient of the prestigious Nichols Fellowship.

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 the National Endowment for the Arts.

For more information on any of the Labs or the projects that have been developed in them, please contact Angela C. Lee, Associate Director of Artist Development, at alee@filmindependent.org.

Additional information and an application form can be found at filmindependent.org.

The 2021 Screenwriting Lab participants and their projects are:

Alien Kulture

Writer: Iesh Thapar

Logline: In order to pursue his musical dreams and unlikely punk-rock ambitions, a 19-year-old British Indian must learn to stand up to his highly politicized and insular-minded older brother and define his place in racially-divided, Thatcher-era England.

Forge

Writer: Jing Ai Ng

Logline: When a Princeton art student is humiliated at her final review, she recruits her roommate to found a lucrative art forgery operation. The pair’s crimes culminate in a major art theft, plunging them forever into notoriety.

h.g.o.p.

Writer: Anna Greenfield

Logline: A young woman gets obsessed with the world of porn and wants to make her own movies when she finds out her older sister is an actor in the industry.

Holy Cowboy

Writer: Varun Chopra

Logline: A righteous, teenaged cow herder treads down the bizarre world of vigilante 'Cow Protection' group to end consumption of beef and cattle trading in India, only to be caught in a web of politically protected communal extremism.

(The Legend of) Man-Child Kenny

Writer/Director: Alfonso Johnson

Logline: Struggling comedian Kenny Reeds controversial set goes viral, thrusting him into fame, creating a media frenzy that threatens his sobriety.

Not Your Average Queen

Writer: Rochée Jeffrey

Logline: After a controversial ranking app is created for a high school to vote for their prom queen, a gender non-conforming teen decides to run in order to prove a point, but gets sucked into the pressure of traditional beauty standards, becoming the very thing she sought to defeat.

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.

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