“Thank you for joining us for our annual celebration of School of Cinematic Arts filmmakers!

For those of us in the audience, this year’s films are exciting and entertaining. They obscure the fact that filmmaking is frequently difficult and focused on problem solving. However, that means it is also an exercise in finding like-minded collaborators, and creating lasting friendships and working relationships. Despite the hard work it took to create these works, our filmmakers now know they can take on—and succeed!—at challenging endeavors. And that they possess the skills needed to build professional careers.

In addition to a showcase of our filmmakers’ boundless talent and imagination, First Look is also testimony to the dedication of the SCA faculty who have guided these projects to completion. Everyone at SCA is grateful for their commitment to our students.

Thank you also to our Office of Industry Relations; and to our industry partners, Focus Features and Panavision. And thank you to anyone reading this who supported a First Look film or filmmaker.

All these efforts came together in producing this inspiring event!

Congratulations to all of you! Fight On.”

Elizabeth M. Daley
Steven J. Ross/Time Warner Professor
Dean of USC School of Cinematic Arts
“I firmly believe that film has been the major art form of the 20th century, and will continue to have a powerful influence on our culture and society. So please enjoy this exposure to the ‘Learning Exercises’ of some of tomorrow’s important artists. I’m proud to be a participant in this program.”

Marcia Lucas
Founder of The Ohana Foundation,
Sponsor of the First Look program
**Animation**

**Boba Girls**
2:34 | CTAN 594 Animation Master’s Thesis
A trip to get boba milk tea takes two girlfriends on a wild fantasy adventure.

**Camp Kona**
5:34 | CTAN 594 Animation Master’s Thesis
A lonely kid makes an unexpected friend when he’s forced to attend a summer camp with a dark secret.

**Escape Artist**
6:49 | CTAN 401 Animation Senior Project
An alien robot ship invades a colorful creative world to steal their creative energy, but a resistance is born.

**Home Sweet Terrarium**
2:48 | CTAN 401 Animation Senior Project
A chameleon moves into their new apartment in the big city and learns to make this place their home.

**Kilig!**
5:21 | CTAN 594 Animation Master’s Thesis
A mother-daughter story about meeting each other where they are.
Lift Off
4:52 | CTAN 594 Animation Master’s Thesis
A girl goes on a flight trip to her childhood best friend, but is their friendship still the same?

My Number One
4:59 | CTAN 594 Animation Master’s Thesis
Two brothers fight over—and within!—a kiddy racing video game.

The Nectar Instead
4:10 | CTAN 594 Animation Master’s Thesis
A young fly gets trapped in the fly trap in a stop-motion studio only to have the existential realization that it spent its entire life chasing after the wrong thing.

Sports Day
3:05 | CTAN 594 Animation Master’s Thesis
A girl struggles for her mom’s approval in a lively school sports event.

The Star and the Scribe
4:15 | CTAN 401 Animation Senior Project
A rabbit scribe befriends a fallen star.
Tango is Conscious!
6:42 | CTAN 401 Animation Senior Project
A cat randomly gains consciousness one day and, like the rest of us, has to get a job.

true_self.exe
3:57 | CTAN 594 Animation Master’s Thesis
A young woman becomes obsessed with the perfect alter ego living inside of her computer and must embrace her insecurities in order to free herself from the ego’s overbearing pull.
Bea & Kate’s Bucket List
13:24 | CTPR 480 Advanced Production Undergraduate
When Bea's controlling college sweetheart breaks up with her the day before graduation, Bea and her best friend, Kate, decide to complete their freshman year bucket list all in one night---before it's too late.

Clowning Time
13:38 | CTPR 480 Advanced Production Undergraduate
After a rising park clown passes away in a trick-gone-wrong, his clown mentor must confront his past resentment while delivering his eulogy.

Dallas & Delilah
14:46 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Obedient, 70-year-old Delilah’s routine is disrupted when she runs into Dallas, a childhood friend who reminds her what it’s like to live without regrets.

Failure to Launch
22:26 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Multi-Cam Television Comedic Series
The story of an assimilated Indian family in Texas.
Comedy

I’m Todor. I Mean, Bill.
17:30 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A churchgoing widower has his life upturned when he decides to curb his loneliness through a series of sexcapades.

Indulge Me
13:50 | CTPR 546 Advanced Production Graduate
A black comedy about a cynical priest who makes a living running a mobile confessional, until an unlikely sinner forces him to confront his faith.

A Karaoke Space
Odyssey
16:10 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Stella, an undocumented Filipino in pursuit of a green card, goes on a karaoke date with a strange man who turns out to be an alien from outer space.

MIKE
16:00 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A Vietnamese exchange student is determined to make friends at an all-white Christian high school in South Dakota.
Comedy

Start Them Young
14:08 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Two excited yet nervous parents, David and Danielle, take their 4-year-old daughter, Dahlia, to an interview at a prestigious preschool.
**GIRLY**
19:31 | CTPR 547 Advanced Documentary Production Graduate
GIRLY follows nonbinary filmmaker Zoe Black as they retrace their complicated relationship with femininity and how it has changed over time. Zoe explores girlyness alongside three other gender nonconforming people, approaching the topic with heart, humor and sensitivity.

**A Hand to Hold**
22:52 | CTPR 547 Advanced Documentary Production Graduate
In the heart of Los Angeles, two members of an innovative Street Medicine team devote their livelihood to helping their unhoused patients receive care, hope, and connection.

**Held at Gunpoint**
22:36 | CTPR 547 Advanced Documentary Production Graduate
A veteran high school teacher must decide whether to leave her beloved career amidst an epidemic of gun violence in America.
**Mission to Resettle**
24:16 | CTPR 547 Advanced Documentary Production Graduate
After fleeing Afghanistan and coming to the US to seek asylum, many Afghans have had to restart their life. But thanks to an organization of past refugees that have been in those same shoes, their journey may have become a lot less challenging.

**A Proper Education**
19:00 | CTPR 547 Advanced Documentary Production Graduate
Filmmaker MaryLanae Linen explores the impact of poor sex education through not-so-awkward conversations with her peers, parents, and sex educators.

**Yeojeong (Journey)**
23:34 | CTPR 547 Advanced Documentary Production Graduate
Yeojeong (Journey) is an intimate drama that follows Josh, a 19-year-old Korean-American national Judo champion who finds himself at a crossroads in his life.
The Act of Crying
17:43 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A Chinese man who can’t cry asks for the help of an acting coach to prepare for an upcoming ‘project’.

Anywhere the Wind Blows
17:39 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Having recently fled Chinese political persecution, a HongKonger activist is trying to rebuild his life in the United States, but a visit from his ex-boyfriend rekindles unresolved feelings and threatens to derail his plans.

A Better Place
19:08 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A city boy - looking out for the welfare of his family - tries to convince his immigrant parents to sell their cherished family farm.

Donut Boy
17:21 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A Cambodian-American wants to get into the next tier of amateur boxing but family obstacles are keeping him from the ring.
**Eclipse Chasers**
17:04 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A disillusioned father and daughter embark on one last roadtrip to see a solar eclipse before she moves away to repair their strained relationship.

**A Fugue**
16:58 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
After suddenly losing her memory due to a rare illness, an aging concert pianist must find a way to reconnect with her wife.

**I Am Who I Am**
17:28 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Vivian travels to the Mojave High Desert in an attempt to convince her ailing father, Art, to move into assisted living, but when he goes missing in the dead of night, Vivian and her paranormally-inclined husband, Shelby, must follow whatever clues they can scrounge up to find her dad before it’s too late.
It Was Love to Me
15:51 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A complex, intimate relationship brews between a 15-year-old tennis player and the 18-year-old prodigy he looks up to.

The Lights Above
16:51 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a series of unidentified aircraft sightings over Los Angeles lead a determined journalist to reluctantly pair up with a Japanese American photographer to prevent another attack.

The Man From Lubbock
17:54 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
When a twenty-five-year-old motel owner suspects that a strange guest may be a bank robber on the lam, she must uncover his true identity and turn him into the police.

Nuclear
10:56 | CTPR 480 Advanced Production Undergraduate
In 1962 suburban California, at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, a young teenager’s plan to run away from home is complicated by news of an imminent nuclear catastrophe.
Drama

Of Silence and Song
13:18 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A pregnant single mother seeks a way of abortion after her recent divorce.

PLAYGROUND
16:22 | CTPR 582 Narrative Thesis
Six-year-old Jiaja, joyfully reunites with her mother, Lin, after a year apart. However, Jiaja's innocent curiosity leads her to a captivating yet unsettling discovery: Lin performs on the stage of a nightclub.

Truckstop
16:28 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A restless young immigrant, working at an isolated Punjabi truckstop in the California desert, must decide whether she truly wants out.

Sketch
14:37 | CTPR 486 Single Camera Television Dramatic Series
Haunted by his brother's death, a cocky anti-cop street artist reluctantly teams up with the police as their composite sketch artist to solve the case of an elusive serial arsonist.
Drama

**Sultana**
13:57 | CTPR 480 Advanced Production Undergraduate

After a tumultuous rise to power, the first ever female ruler of the Delhi Sultanate fights to guide her kingdom while her closest confidants plot against her.

**WRESTLE-OFF**
19:19 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis

Tenacious high school wrestler Alex battles with the grief of her father’s passing and the hostility of her teammates as she fiercely competes for a varsity spot on an all-male wrestling team.
Amos’ Bride
14:18 | CTPR 480 Advanced Production
Undergraduate
In an isolated cult, a young girl must escape being the prophet’s bride to save herself and the boy she loves.

Danny Boy
15:28 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Upon returning home after a four-year stint in prison for drinking and driving, Danny attends mandatory AA meetings to make amends with an unforgivable act which comes back to haunt him.

Florist
13:23 | CTPR 546 Advanced Production Graduate
A sadistic florist creatively murders undeserving customers. And ever since Tina, that hack, plopped down her poor excuse for a flower shop across the street, there's no shortage of customers who gripe at his prices.

In Nomine Patris
14:25 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A grandmother struggling to save her disturbed grandson enlists the help of a priest with a dark past.
Genre

**Overtime**
16:50 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A transgender runaway in desperate need of cash must convince a blue-collar grump to hire him. The job? Professional monster hunting.

**PRICE**
12:55 | CTPR 546 Advanced Production Graduate
An ambitious actor loses his grip on reality as he pursues the breakout role of his career.

**Scratch & Sniff**
13:05 | CTPR 546 Advanced Production Graduate
A low-level drug dealer sees his perfect day fall apart when his daughter is dropped off in the middle of an exchange.

**Siren Salon**
12:24 | CTPR 480 Advanced Production Undergraduate
In the mysterious 1950s Siren Salon, a young woman in an abusive marriage must decide how many inches—and people—she’s willing to cut off.
**SPLIT**
14:29 | CTPR 546 Advanced Production Graduate
When a hopeless romantic teen discovers a time traveling jukebox at his family's bowling alley that sends him back to the glory days of the 1980s, he must choose between love in the past or healing his relationship with his father in the present.

**THE VISIT**
13:43 | CTPR 546 Advanced Production Graduate
In denial of her impending loss, withdrawn teenager Edith refuses to visit her terminally ill mother in the hospital -- until a hideous visitor lurking in the woods uproots her false reality...
Califoreclosed
15:00 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Brooklyn "Rook" Silas, an architecture student on the verge of graduation, seeks her first job whilst living out of her car — a secret she has kept from everyone in her life.

Echoes of the Sea
8:48 | CTPR 565 Making Media for Social Change
Two students stumble upon an oil-stained bird, a dragon in disguise, by the beach, and it leads them on a journey to uncover the myth hidden beneath the ocean and in their hearts.

Fili
16:03 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
Recent graduate Fili Tanuvasa is torn between following his father's footsteps in playing football and pursuing his hidden passion for acting.

GOLD DOGMA
17:55 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
The president of a Black fraternity faces the antiquated views of LGBTQ representation when their newest member is outed.
In the Gray
13:25 | CMPP 592 Stark Special Individual Project Seminar
When a Christian woman finds herself pregnant with what will be her sixth child, she decides to end the pregnancy, confronting the weight and judgments of her own beliefs.

Launch Fever
23:01 | CTPR 801 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Grant
When a highly anticipated mission for NASA and the Columbia STS-107 Crew takes a sharp turn, Chief Structural Engineer Rodney Rocha uses his intuition and scientific know-how to challenge NASA’s management, risking his credibility in fear of a greater loss.

Obligatory
14:40 | CTPR 480 Advanced Production Undergraduate
A young prison guard’s allegiance to an oppressive regime is tested when he is asked to execute his former college professor.
Social Change

**Renacer**
19:18 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
After a life-changing decision to terminate her pregnancy, Valeria embarks on a journey of self-discovery to confront her past and heal her emotional wounds.

![Image](image1.jpg)

**The Seed of Truth**
16:46 | CTPR 801 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Grant
A Soviet-era scientist is arrested for treason and pressured to sign a confession to save his family. Years later, his daughter shares their intertwined story and her lifelong pursuit of truth.

![Image](image2.jpg)

**Solitude**
17:29 | CTPR 581 Narrative Thesis
A vignette following the journey of identity of a queer black teenager forced to choose between family and self acceptance.

![Image](image3.jpg)
Christopher Chomyn, ASC M.F.A.
Cinematography Presenter
Professor of Practice
Division of Film & Television Production

Leon Crus
Directing Presenter
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Division of Film & Television Production

Jason Rosenfeld
Editing Presenter
Adjunct Associate Professor
Division of Film & Television Production

Brenda Goodman, B.S.
Producing Presenter
Professor of the Practice of Cinematic Art
Division of Film & Television Production

Michael Provart
Production Design Presenter
Associate Professor of the Practice of Cinematic Arts
Division of Film & Television Production

Richard Burton
Sound Presenter
Associate Professor of the Practice of Cinematic Arts; Track Head, Sound
Division of Film & Television Production

Suhail Kafity
Sound Presenter
Associate Professor of the Practice of Cinematic Arts
Division of Film & Television Production

David Weber
Writing Presenter
Associate Professor of the Practice of Cinematic Arts
John Wells Division of Writing for Screen & Television
**Nell Augustin (pronouns: she/they)**  
*Documentary Juror*

Nell Augustin is a queer Haitian-German artist development executive and advocate for artistic independence, risk, and investment. Born and based in NYC, Nell is a proud member of BGDM and the Advisory Council at Define American. In 2020, in partnership with NBC News Studios, Nell launched and leads Original Voices Documentary Films, a US-based fellowship and grant initiative celebrating creative freedom and supporting inclusive, intersectional, formally innovative feature films, shorts, and film criticism for which she is currently director. Nell was named a 2021 DOC NYC Documentary New Leader and selected for the 2022 Rockwood Documentary Leaders Fellowship supported by the Ford Foundation. She has programmed for indie documentary film festivals including True/False, CIFF, and Big Sky, led filmmaker labs and seminars for BlackStar Projects, Firelight Media, and UnionDocs, and served on festival juries and funding panels for BAVC, Brown Girls Doc Mafia, Brooklyn Arts Council, Chicago Media Project, Chicken & Egg Pictures, Creative Capital, Define American, Doc Society, Duke University’s DocX Development Lab, Film Independent, The Gotham, IDA, Indie Memphis, LEF Foundation, Mezcla Media, NEA, New Orleans Film Festival, NYU Production Lab, Open City, Palm Springs ShortFest, SFFILM, and Sundance Institute.

**Mary Lou Belli**  
*Comedy Juror*

Mary Lou Belli, a two-time Emmy award-winner, has been directing television for over 30 years in many genres from sitcoms to procedurals to documentaries. Through her teaching, she supports many of the vibrant diversity programs including the DGA, ABC/Disney, CBS, Sony, AFI's Directing Workshop for Women, and Warner Bros. Directing Workshop mentoring the next generation of directors. She is the co-author of four books: *The NEW Sitcom Career Book, Acting for Young Actors*, PERFORM: Acting for the Screen and Directors Tell the Story which she co-wrote with fellow DA member Bethany Rooney. Mary Lou served two terms as the Co-chair of the Women’s Steering Committee at the DA where she also has served on the Western Director’s Council, presently she is on Leadership Council PAC and as an alternate to the National Board. She is an Honorary Board member of the Alliance of Women Directors and Advisory Board member of Women in Media and a long time member of Women In Film as well as on the Peer Group Executive Committee of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.
Sylvia Carrasco
Drama Juror

Sylvia Carrasco previously worked at Hillman Grad, where she served as Co-Executive Producer on THE CHI and as Co-Producer on Audible’s award-winning scripted podcast KYM. She has a deep passion for all forms of storytelling and is committed to championing diversity on and off the screen. Before her time at Hillman Grad, she worked at Paramount Television, Echo Lake Entertainment, and FactoryMade Ventures.

Tony Ducret
Genre Juror

Tony Ducret graduated from Wesleyan University’s Film Studies department with High Honors. After leaving Wesleyan, Tony primarily worked in non-fiction television producing and writing broadcast programs for a host of networks including VH1, MTV, BET, FUSE, OWN, HLN & NAT GEO. In 2015 Tony longed to make a transition from non-fiction television to scripted entertainment. He suspended his television work in New York and accepted one of 24 positions in USC’s prestigious Peter Stark Producing Program. While studying at USC, he maintained positions with Fox Searchlight Pictures, and with Creative Artists Agency in the Motion Pictures-Literary department. Tony received his MFA in Motion Pictures Producing from USC in 2017. Tony previously worked as the assistant to the Vice President of Production at Steven Spielberg’s Amblin Partners, and currently works as a Director of Development at Universal Pictures - released projects overseen include Ambulance, Nope, Beast, Violent Night, Praise This, Shooting Stars, and Strays.

Fior Fabian
Drama Juror

Fior is a native of Queens, NY. Her path has taken her to the halls of Boston University where she double majored in Psychology and Film/TV. She chose a path in entertainment and headed west to get her MFA at UCLA. She previously was an assistant at CAA in the TV Lit department, and part of the TV team at Bad Robot. Currently, she works at MACRO on the Film and TV teams.
Pilar Flynn

Animation Juror

Pilar Flynn is currently a producer at Warner Brothers Animation on an unannounced theatrical feature. She was named one of “The 75 Most Powerful People in Kids’ Entertainment” by the Hollywood Reporter. Most recently, Flynn won an Emmy® Award for her work as co-executive producer of Disney Branded Television's "Marvel's Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur," based on Marvel's hit comic books. Flynn is a twice Emmy® Award-nominated producer for her work on Disney's "Elena of Avalor," which follows Disney's first princess inspired by diverse Latin cultures and folklore. She began her animation career at DreamWorks Animation Features, where she co-produced the award-winning short "First Flight" and worked on the production of films such as "The Road to El Dorado," "Sinbad," "Spirit," "Madagascar," and "Flushed Away." Flynn went on to serve as line producer of the animated feature films "Mean Margaret" and "Astroboy." She was also co-producer on the groundbreaking R-rated animated feature "Sausage Party," a co-production between Sony Pictures Animation and Annapurna Pictures, starring Seth Rogen. Flynn currently serves on the board of directors for the Latino Film Institute, a nonprofit organization founded by actor Edward James Olmos. She is a native of Chile and Ecuador.

Liliana Granados

Documentary Juror

Liliana Granados, born in Mexico and raised in Los Angeles, grew up in a family-owned beauty salon where she found inspiration to become a storyteller after being exposed to stories from people of all walks of life. As a first-generation college student, she proudly studied Film and TV Production at USC. There she produced TV pilots, short films, web series, and documentaries. She simultaneously interned at NBC Casting, 3 Arts Entertainment, and Sofia Vergara's Latin World Entertainment. Liliana received her start as a mailroom clerk at CAA before entering the world of international film sales and financing at Sierra Affinity. She later worked as a Creative Executive at Viola Davis' JuVee Productions where she executed her passion for developing projects that celebrate culture and diversity. Liliana also participated in the development of TriStar’s WOMAN KING and helped shepherd Amazon and MRC’s upcoming G20 film. Recently, Granados served as the Director of Development at Eugenio Derbez’s 3Pas Studios, where she helped build the film drama department. Liliana’s mission is to build and guide the next generation of diverse storytellers. She aims to stay at the forefront of changes happening in entertainment and produce socially empowering films that inspire audiences globally.
Industry Jury

Lisa Higuchi
Documentary Juror

Lisa Higuchi is an Emmy Award-winning producer from Honolulu, Hawaii where storytelling is a cultural art form. She started her career as a child actor and learned by observing iconic directors and producers in action. Lisa has worked on everything from small intimate documentaries to big blockbuster feature films and feels especially connected to provocative narratives that convey a sense of unity through everyday actions and emotions.

Ashley Victoria Hudson
Drama Juror

Ashley Victoria Hudson grew up in Monticello, MS, and graduated from William Carey University and The University of Mississippi School of Law. Upon graduating from law school, she moved to California to attend Chapman University where she obtained an LL.M in Entertainment Law. Before transitioning to a full-time writer, Ashley worked in the legal department of various companies, such as Lionsgate Entertainment, Creative Artists Agency, and Columbia Pictures (Sony Entertainment). Most recently, Ashley was staffed on the Power spinoff Power Book II: Ghost and aspires to become a Showrunner, but ultimately, Ashley wants to shape the way television is viewed, as both a writer and a generation-defining artist. Ashley's character-driven dramas are authentic portraits of the human experience, set in the world of law, politics, or sports with deep roots in family trauma. While Ashley is not writing, she enjoys binge-watching the many seasons of every Housewives franchise with her wife, Heather.

Nelson Jimenez
Comedy Juror

Nelson Jimenez grew up in El Paso, TX and was first exposed to television storytelling through watching countless Mexican telenovelas with his grandmother. After learning English watching Smallville DVDs and feeling the power of representation through series like Ugly Betty and Glee, he decided to pursue a career in the entertainment industry. His attended The University of Texas at Austin, earning a B.S. in Radio-Television-Film and Corporate Communication. He then moved to Los Angeles and interned at Scott Rudin Productions, Scott Free Productions and America Ferrera’s Take Fountain Productions. After working at Creative Artists Agency in the Multicultural Business Development team, he transitioned to The CW Network. There, he has been a part of the development and current programming team behind series from various genres including Superman & Lois, Kung Fu, All American: Homecoming, Everyone Else Burns, Son of a Critch, and The Winchesters.
Industry Jury

Ben Juwono
Animation Juror

Ben Juwono is co-producer and supervising director of Disney Branded Television's Emmy® Award-winning Marvel's Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur, based on Marvel's hit comic books. An accomplished director and storyboard artist, Juwono has received one Emmy® Award and one Annie Award for his work on Marvel's Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur. Juwono's credits include Big Hero 6 The Series, The Adventures of Puss in Boots, Niko and the Sword of Light, Marvel's Avengers Assemble, Glitch Techs, and Marvel's Ultimate Spider-Man. He earned a master's degree in physics from the University of California, Irvine, and a bachelor's degree in physics from the University of California, San Diego. Juwono was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia, and currently resides in Los Angeles with his wife, Jessie, and dog, Legs. He serves on the board of directors for Reel Start, a non-profit organization that aims to help educate, inspire and empower aspiring filmmakers to tell their stories through film and animation.

Jean Anne Lauer
Genre Juror

Jean Anne Lauer has promoted the development and exhibition of film and media on the festival and independent cinema circuits since 2004, specializing in Latinx, Iberoamerican, and Indigenous titles. Jean began working professionally in the field at the International Pitching Market at the Guanajuato International Film Festival (Gto, Mexico, 2004 through 2013) and as Programmer and then Festival Director at Cine Las Americas (Austin, TX, 2008 to 2022). Jean has been a member of the Fantastic Fest team since 2013 in various capacities, most recently as Director of Short Film Programming. Jean completed her Ph.D. in Radio-Television-Film at UT-Austin, and is a professor in the Dept. of Philosophy, Religion, and Humanities and the Dept. of Radio-Television-Film at Austin Community College.

Cassidy Lee Louwerse
Social Change Juror

Cassidy Lee Louwerse was imported from Korea as a baby to the Midwest cornfields and is now gratefully based in Los Angeles. As a creative executive, she has developed across scripted, unscripted, and documentary formats. Passionate about growing underrepresented stories and filmmakers, she previously worked in Production and International Television at Propagate Content before joining Le Train Train Productions.
Industry Jury

Ashley Mathew
Social Change Juror

Ashley Mathew is a manager at Sri & Company, a production company founded by Sri Rao with a focus on South Asian storytelling. As an executive, she and her team have developed and sold a variety of scripted and unscripted television projects. Prior to Sri & Company, she worked in film and television development at Hillman Grad Productions.

Alex Weiss Morgan
Animation Juror

Alex Weiss Morgan is a production supervisor from Boise, Idaho. Morgan found her way into animation through the pursuit of an MFA from the USC School of Cinematic Arts. She has worked in production management on features at DreamWorks Animation, Netflix Animation, Skydance Animation, and Nickelodeon Animation. Morgan currently works at Dreamworks Animation where her favorite part of the job is setting up productions for success with proper organization, mentorship, and training while maintaining a people-first management mindset. She is a volunteer mentor for Women In Animation where she runs a mentorship circle and is an adjunct professor for a thesis course in animation production management.

DaManuel Richardson
Social Change & Genre Juror

DaManuel is a writer, programmer, and creative producer alongside his award-winning partners at Hello Benjamin Films. His sub-rural upbringing and extensive family tree inspire his love for stories that explore loss, identity, and healing generational trauma. Leaving the cow fields of Georgia behind, DaManuel journeyed to Los Angeles, where he attained his MFA from CalArts. He later programmed shorts for the Sundance Film Festival and recently worked as a showrunner's assistant at WBTV. DaManuel now works with the Oscar-winning team behind Everything Everywhere All At Once, producer Jonathan Wang, and directing duo Daniels. Despite traveling far from his southern roots, DaManuel is happy to report his green thumb is still intact, thanks to years of urban farming in LA.
Scott Weinger
Comedy Juror

Scott Weinger was born in New York City and raised in Hollywood, Florida where he acted in a toy commercial at age eight. Scott eventually made the move to the other Hollywood, starring in several network sitcoms. He most notably became a series regular on ABC’s hit series Full House and voiced the title character in Disney’s animated classic film, Aladdin. After appearing in more than 100 episodes of television, Scott attended Harvard. Upon graduation, he transitioned to a writer and producer roles. He has produced more than 100 episodes of television, including Emmy®-nominated ABC musical Galavant and Emmy®-nominated Black-ish. Scott was also able to reprise his role of Steve Hale in the hit Netflix series Fuller House. Scott kept up his writing, selling pilots to CBS, Fox, and Max, as well as becoming the showrunner for the French-language Netflix romantic comedy series, The Hookup Plan. He recently adapted the YA novel Noggin for Disney+ and is currently a writer and co-executive producer for a new Hulu show that he’s not allowed to talk about yet even though he’s dying to shout about it from the rooftops. Scott and his wife, writer-producer Rina Mimoun, have a fourteen-year-old son.
Stewart Cavanagh
Head of Unscripted and Documentary
Cartel Entertainment

Stewart primarily represents prolific clients in the Alternative and Documentary space. He has spent 4 years as Vice President of Alternative at The Gersh Agency, 6 years as the Vice President of Alternative at Rebel Entertainment Partners and 3 years as an Alternative Agent at Innovative Artists. In the past, Stewart learned unscripted television at The William Morris Agency. He is very proud of his heritage, born in Australia and growing up in Los Angeles to a Scottish father and Filipino mother.

Theo Dumont
Partner
Alta Global Media

Theo Dumont is the co-founder of the Oscar-Qualifying HollyShorts Film Festival, the Hollywood Comedy Festival, and Mammoth Film Festival. He is a co-founder of the production company 88th Street Productions, an affiliate of HollyShorts; and a co-founder and partner at Alta Global Media. Dumont and 88th are currently in development on Stefan Dezil’s THIRST, along with 20th Digital Studio (Disney). The 88th Street banner is also involved in several short film funds including the Seattle Film Summit short film fund, and Hawk Films in the UK short film fund. At Alta Global Media, Dumont is an EP along with Steven Adams on the forthcoming film RISE. Dumont is currently producing filmmaker Jaclyn Bethany's feature film All Five Eyes and upcoming short film Ruby. Dumont was previously an EP on Bethany’s indie drama feature Indigo Valley. Along with several other credits, Dumont is an EP on AGM client Richard Lawson’s upcoming film Black Terror. Dumont studied Communications and received his BA from Florida International University in Miami, FL. He is a BAFTA Member and member of the Television Academy. He is also on the advisory board of several non for profit organizations including Xela Institute of Art and Maribou Storytellers.
Panelists & Pitch Jury

Kelley Kali
Director

Kelley is an LA native, Howard University & USC School of Cinematic Arts Alumna, and has directed, written, and produced award-winning films in Belize, Haiti, China, Brazil and the United States. She wrote, directed, produced, and starred in the original feature film, I'M FINE (THANKS FOR ASKING), an early pick for narrative competition at the 2021 SXSW Film Festival. It won a Special Jury Recognition for Multi-Hyphenate Storyteller (an award created for her). It sold to and is streaming on BET+ and BET Her, Showtime, HBO Europe; had a theatrical release March 2023 in the UK; and currently stands at 90% on Rotten Tomatoes. In 2023, she finished directing two studio feature films, Jagged Mind for 20th / Hulu and Kemba a MPI and BET Original Feature Film, based on true events. Kelley was selected as a recipient of the 2021 Academy Gold Fellowship for Women in directing and more recently she received the 2024 Amplify Award at Sundance Film Festival from the Sundance humanitarian partner, the Windrider Institute, for directing work on Kemba. Kelley's mission is to be a creator who addresses issues within marginalized communities by using the art of filmmaking to create dialogue and action towards positive change.

Cheryl Mulingbayan
CEO and Founder
Little General Consulting

Cheryl Mulingbayan is a seasoned Unscripted Development Executive and Content Consultant for multiple production companies, studios, brands, and platforms. Through her company Little General Productions, she consults for clients such as Cirque du Soleil, Prototipe Media, and Meow Wolf. Most recently, she was Vice President of Unscripted Television for MGM, where she developed global unscripted formats. Before that she was a Development Executive for Ellen DeGeneres’ Ellen Digital Ventures, developing both short form and long form content. Cheryl has worked for multiple production companies as a senior development executive and started her tv career as a producer on Survivor and The Jerry Springer Show. She is a proud alumni of Boston University and studied Television & Film. When she’s not searching for the best slice of pizza in LA and practicing her tennis serve, she loves to relax at home with her rescue pitbull Marley.
Moderators

Sandrine Faucher Cassidy
Senior Director Talent Development, Festivals & Distribution Awards Moderator

Sandrine grew up in Morocco and France where she worked at Unifrance where her insight for Film Festivals and strategy started while promoting French cinema abroad, organizing festivals, programming, working closely with filmmakers, programmers and expanding her international network. Since 1998, Sandrine has served with passion as USC’s Senior Director of Festival, Distribution & Talent Development. She advises students and alumni on strategies for their student films and independent features in the festival circuit. She builds close relationships with filmmakers and advises them on how to reach their career goals. She is responsible for the Licensing of the large catalog of USC shorts. Sandrine is also the Producer of award winning shorts and features. As such she is often invited to participate in juries, panels or to give individual mentoring sessions. She has been on the Tribeca Festival screening committee since 2015 and serves as a mentor for the Film Independent Global Media Makers.

O’Shea” Myles
Film Festival & Industry Events Coordinator
Pitch & Panel Moderator

O’Shea” Myles is the current Senior Career Advisor, Film Festival and Industry Events Coordinator for the USC School of Cinematic Arts. In her current role, O’Shea” focuses on bridging the gap between student and professional by meeting with graduate and undergraduate students to understand the festival circuit and build individual festival strategies for each student film. O’Shea” manages the annual First Look showcase where advanced and thesis films are viewed and judged by industry professionals, creating both industry experience and networking opportunities. Always having found her voice through her creative work, O’Shea” graduated from the USC School of Cinematic Arts with an MFA in Film and Television Production. She has since functioned as a writer, director, producer, and creative assistant on multiple shorts, features, commercials, and music videos; honing her skills and experience at companies such as RSA Films, CAA, Sundance, and Netflix. O’Shea” is also an outspoken advocate for and member of the LGBTQ+ community and volunteers her time supporting community organizations. As a proud graduate of SCA, O’Shea” is dedicated to using her skills, knowledge, and connections to continue creating opportunities for current students and alumni through the Industry Relations office.
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Kellie Brook Malone
Internship Coordinator

O’Sheé” Myles
Career Services & Film Festival Coordinator

Program Design by Kailyn Bondoni