



5900 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 800, Los Angeles, CA 90036
1825 Three Kings Dr., Park City, UT 84060
180 Varick Street, Suite 1330, New York, New York 10014

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Media Contact:
Chalena Cadenas
310.360.1981

chalena_cadenas@sundance.org

Sundance Institute Announces 14 Projects Selected for 2015 June Directors and Screenwriters Labs at Sundance Resort in Utah, May 25-June 25

14 Projects from Six Countries Bring Experience in Documentary, Theatre, Animation, New Media, Visual Art and Music to Narrative Films

Creative Advisors include Robert Redford, Miguel Arteta, Ed Harris, Kasi Lemmons and Lynn Shelton

Los Angeles, CA — Sundance Institute today announced the 14 projects selected for its annual June Directors and Screenwriters Labs, taking place at the Sundance Resort in Utah from May 25 through June 25. The Labs are the centerpiece of the Institute's year-round work with narrative feature filmmakers and are part of 24 residential labs the Institute hosts each year to discover and foster the talent of emerging independent artists in film, theatre, new media and episodic content.

Projects and participants selected for the 2015 June Directors and Screenwriters Labs are from the United States, Brazil, China, France, Georgia and the United Kingdom, and the Fellows bring experience from an unprecedented diversity of creative backgrounds, including documentary, theatre, music, new media, visual art and animation.

Michelle Satter, Founding Director of the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program (FFP), said, "The projects selected for this year's Labs represent a diverse group of artists who are experimenting with different forms and mediums, demonstrating how, more than ever before, the boundaries between creative disciplines are blurring."

Ilyse McKimmie, Labs Director for the Sundance Institute FFP, said, "The Lab experience will begin a year-round continuum of support focused on providing each Fellow with the tools and experiences to realize their unique voices and visions as they delve deeper into creative expression through narrative filmmaking."

At the Directors Lab and under the leadership of Satter and the artistic direction of Gyula Gazdag, the Fellows, all first-time feature filmmakers, will work with an accomplished group of Creative Advisors, professional actors and production crews to shoot and edit key scenes from their screenplays. Through this concentrated, hands-on process, the Fellows workshop their scripts, collaborate with actors and find a visual storytelling language for their films. Directors Lab Fellows join five additional projects for the week-long Screenwriters Lab, where they participate in individualized story sessions under the guidance of established screenwriters.

Creative Advisors include Robert Redford, Karim Ainouz, Miguel Arteta, Joan Darling, DV DeVincentis, Caleb Deschanel, Stephen Goldblatt, Deena Goldstone, Affonso Goncalves, Randa Haines, Catherine Hardwicke, Ed Harris, Elizabeth Kling, Christine Lahti, Kasi Lemmons, Tobias Lindholm, James Mangold, Joshua Marston, Doug McGrath, Walter Mosley, Lee Percy, Howard Rodman, Jennifer Salt, Lynn Shelton, Peter Sollett, Oliver Stapleton, Dana Stevens, Wesley Strick, Robin Swicord, Joan Tewkesbury, Dylan Tichenor, Tyger Williams, Doug Wright and Rupert Wyatt.



Projects supported through the Directors and Screenwriters Labs receive continued, customized, year-round support from the Feature Film Program, which can include the following: creative and tactical advice, ongoing mentoring, significant production and postproduction resources, the Screenplay Reading Series, the Work in Progress Screening Initiative and direct financial support through project-specific grants and artist fellowships.

Three films supported by the FFP are among those screening at the 2015 Cannes International Film Festival: *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*, written and directed by Chloe Zhao, *Mediterranea*, written and directed by Jonas Carpignano, and *Masaan (Fly Away Solo)*, co-written by Neeraj Ghaywan and Varun Grover and directed by Neeraj Ghaywan. FFP-supported films selected for the 2015 Sundance Film Festival include awards winners *The Witch*, written and directed by Robert Eggers, and *Diary of a Teenage Girl*, written and directed by Marielle Heller. Since 1981, the FFP has supported an extensive list of leading-edge independent films, including recent notable films such as Damien Chazelle's *Whiplash*, Malik Vitthal and Ismet Prsic's *Imperial Dreams*, Ryan Coogler's *Fruitvale Station*, Ritesh Batra's *The Lunchbox*, Haifaa Al Mansour's *Wadjda*, Lucy Alibar and Benh Zeitlin's *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and Dee Rees' *Pariah*.

Artists and projects selected for the 2015 Directors Lab (May 25 – June 18) are:

Bart Layton (writer/director) / ***American Animals*** (UK): Combining elements of documentary and drama, this existential heist movie is the improbable but entirely true story of a group of well-read university students who plot an escape from middle America by planning the perfect robbery. Along the way reality and fiction become blurred as they attempt to live deeper and deeper inside a movie version of their lives.

Bart Layton is a multi award-winning British director, producer and executive producer. He is the co-principal and creative director of leading British production company, RAW. His first feature documentary film, *The Imposter*, received great critical acclaim since its debut at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. The film became one of the most successful documentaries of all time and picked up numerous prestigious awards including the Grand Jury Prize at Miami Film Festival, the Golden Eye in Zurich and the Filmmakers' Award at Hotdocs, before winning two British Independent Film Awards, the BAFTA for best debut director and being shortlisted for the 2013 Academy Awards.

Yung Chang (writer/director) / ***Eggplant*** (China/Canada): A neo-noir love story set in China, *Eggplant* follows a mysterious woman who cons countryside bachelors for their money and a wedding photographer escaping a troubled life in Taiwan. When they meet in a collision of fate, the past quickly confronts the present in an explosion of events as these two Chinese millennials struggle to find a meaningful existence in a society fixated on money, materialism and duty.

Yung Chang (张侨勇), based between China and Canada, is known for his feature documentaries *Up the Yangtze* (2008), *China Heavyweight* (2012) and *The Fruit Hunters* (2013). Both *Up the Yangtze* and *China Heavyweight* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and went on to garner numerous awards, including two Taipei Golden Horse Awards. *Up the Yangtze* had a robust theatrical release in 2008 and *China Heavyweight* had a theatrical release in over 200 mainland China cinemas — a first for a social issue documentary.

Olivia Newman (writer/director) / ***First Match*** (U.S.A.): Hardened by years in foster care, a teenage girl from Brooklyn's Brownsville neighborhood decides that joining the all-boys high school wrestling team is the only way back to her estranged father.

Olivia Newman received her MFA in film from Columbia University and has written, directed and produced award-winning short films in the U.S.A., France and Serbia. Her films have screened at dozens of festivals internationally including the New York Film Festival, Aspen Shortsfest and Palm Springs International Shortsfest, and aired



nationally on PBS and internationally on ShortsHD. Newman was one of 10 filmmakers selected for the 2012 IFP/Film Society of Lincoln Center Emerging Visions program and the 2014 Cine Qua Non Screenwriting Lab.

Christopher Makoto Yogi (writer/director) / *I Was a Simple Man* (U.S.A.): Like marionettes on a stage, the ghosts of an elderly man's past haunt the countryside in this tale of a Hawai'i family dealing with the death of their patriarch.

Christopher Makoto Yogi was born in Honolulu, Hawai'i and raised on the ocean. His most recent short film, *Makoto: or, Honesty* is a documentary about the death of his father. His previous film, *Obake (Ghosts)*, screened worldwide including at the Palm Springs International ShortsFest, Raindance Film Festival and the Hawai'i International Film Festival. Yogi also has extensive experience editing documentaries for film and television. He is a graduate of the USC School of Cinematic Arts MFA program and participated in the Visual Communications' Armed with a Camera fellowship. In addition, Yogi was a fellow in the Kyoto Filmmakers Lab, sponsored by Toei and Shochiku Studios and the Museum of Kyoto.

Nia DaCosta (writer/director) / *Little Woods* (U.S.A.): For years, Ollie has illicitly helped the struggling fellow residents of her North Dakota oil boomtown access Canadian health care and meds. When the authorities catch on, she plans to abandon her crusade, only to be dragged in even deeper by her foster sister's desperate plea for help.

Nia DaCosta is a writer/director based in New York City. She has written and directed projects for stage, film and new media platforms including the playlet *Kingdom Come* at the Leicester Square Theatre in London, the game show *Sagmeister v Walsh* for Adobe (Behance), and the documentary *Shark Loves the Amazon*.

Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre (writer/director) / *Mustang* (France): Roman Coleman is halfway through an 11-year sentence for attempted murder when he is offered the chance to participate in a rehabilitation program that trains inmates to break captured wild mustangs. Based on a real-life program, *Mustang* is a portrait of one man's unique connection to these wild animals and his complex struggle to control his own ferocity.

Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre is a French actress, producer and director living in Paris. She has worked as an actress with directors including Raoul Ruiz, Luc Besson, Julian Schnabel, Pascal Thomas, Jean Michel Ribes, Danielle Thompson and Rani Massalha. Her first short film as a writer/director, *Atlantic Avenue*, won prizes at the Nantucket Film Festival, Milwaukee Film Festival, and the Tenerife International Film Festival, and also screened at the Tribeca Film Festival, Clermont Ferrand and the Palm Springs International Film Festival, among others. Her second short film, *Rabbit*, which was bought by Canal Plus and produced by Charles Gillibert of CG CINEMA in coproduction with the company MACT PRODUCTION, premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. Laure has been named a Sundance Institute/RT Features Fellow.

Mark Kindred (writer/director) / *Rogue* (U.S.A.): An ex-cop gone rogue wages unconventional warfare on the institutional forces that wronged him. Inspired by true events.

Mark F. Kindred grew up as an immigrant in the projects of Boston. He earned his bachelor degree in philosophy at Harvard University and has lived and traveled all over the world. He is currently a graduate thesis student at the NYU Tisch School of the Arts, where he is the recipient of the Williard T.C. Johnson Fellowship and the 2014 Faculty Commendation Award. His short film *America* premiered at the SXSW Film Festival.

Brent Green (co-writer/director), **Michael McGinley** (co-writer) and **Thyra Heder** (co-writer) / *Over the Eaves* (U.S.A.): In this stop-motion animated film, a young boy begins inventing strange, hand-made machines to ease his mother's hard labor and bring joy to her monotonous life, but his ambitions quickly grow. When his most daring



invention backfires and changes life on Earth forever, his neighbors struggle to understand whether he has done them harm or shown them what they have been missing.

Working in the hills of rural Pennsylvania, Brent Green is a self-taught filmmaker, storyteller and visual artist whose films have screened, often with live musical accompaniment, at the Rotterdam Film Festival, the Sundance Film Festival, the San Francisco Film Society, MoMA, The J. Paul Getty Museum, The Walker Art Center, The Hammer Museum, as well as at warehouses, galleries and rooftops across the globe. He serves on the board of Rooftop Films, is a 2005 Creative Capital grantee, and is the recipient of 2014 MAPfund grant. Green's work is in permanent collections including the Progressive Collection, the Hammer Museum and MoMA. He is currently in the midst of a year-long residency at the Park Avenue Armory.

Thyra Heder is an author, illustrator and artist who got her start studying film. She graduated from Brown University with a BA in Art Semiotics and put it to surprising good use storyboarding for television, feature films and advertising campaigns. Over the last decade her clients have expanded to include major restaurant groups, design companies and hotels, and her work has been regularly featured in *Vogue*. Her debut picture book, *Fraidy Zoo*, garnered numerous starred reviews and was one of the ALSC Notable Children's Books of 2014. Her second book, *The Bear Report*, will be released this fall.

Michael McGinley is a musician and painter from Chicago. He has performed with members of Fugazi, Dirty Three and Califone. His work has been featured in the *Chicago Reader*, *Doris* and *Dead or Dying*.

Artists and projects joining the Directors Lab Fellows for the 2015 June Screenwriters Lab (June 20-25), which will be dedicated to the memory of longtime Creative Advisor and award-winning screenwriter Stewart Stern, are:

Frances Bodomo (writer/director) / ***Afronauts*** (Zambia/U.S.A.): Just after Zambian Independence in 1964, an ingenious group of villagers builds a homemade rocket in a wild bid to join the Space Race. As the launch date approaches, their astronaut—17-year-old Matha Mwambwa—must decide if getting into their precarious rocket vindicates her traumatic past or just makes her a glorified human sacrifice. Inspired by true events.

Frances Bodomo grew up in Ghana, Norway, and Hong Kong before moving to New York City to study film at Columbia University (BA) and NYU's Tisch School of the Arts (MFA). Her two short films, *Boneshaker* (2013) and *Afronauts* (2014), both premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and went on to play at film festivals including the Berlinale, Telluride, and SXSW. *Afronauts* received the Grand Jury Prize for Short Film at Dallas International Film Festival, IFFBoston, BlackStar Film Festival, and New Orleans Film Festival. Bodomo has been named a Sundance Institute/Alfred P. Sloan Fellow.

Mariam Bakacho Khatchvani (co-writer/director), **Vladimer Katcharava** (co-writer/producer) and **Irakli Solomanashvili** (co-writer) / ***Dede*** (Georgia): As Georgia fights for its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a young woman struggles to make a life in the remote, isolated villages high in the Caucasus Mountains, where ancient patriarchal laws threaten to separate her from her daughter.

Born in Ushguli, Georgia, Mariam Bakacho Khatchvani directed the short film *Dinola*, which was nominated for a European Film Award and screened at several international film festivals including Clermont-Ferrand and Hong Kong. *Dede* will be her feature debut.

Vladimer Katcharava was born in Tbilisi, Georgia. He recently was a producer on the feature *President*, directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2014 and went on to screen at a myriad of international film festivals.



Irakli Solomanashvili is a Georgian writer known for the films *Bolo Gaseirneba*, *The Conflict Zone*, and *Gaseirneba Karabaghshi*.

Rashaad Ernesto Green (writer/director) / *For Tomorrow We Die* (U.S.A.): *For Tomorrow We Die* follows the rise and fall of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense as its members struggle for liberation amidst political infighting and FBI counterattacks.

A graduate of Dartmouth College and NYU Graduate Film School, recipient of the Princess Grace Foundation Award and Spike Lee Fellowship, Rashaad Ernesto Green has been included on the Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Independent Film list and indieWIRE's Ten Exciting New Voices in Black Cinema. His short films have screened on HBO, BET, at Sundance and won accolades at festivals internationally. Green's first feature *Gun Hill Road* premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and opened theatrically in 26 cities nationwide. Most recently, he has been writing and directing television.

Fernando Coimbra (writer/director) / *The Hanged* (Brazil): A family dispute upsets the ruling order in Rio de Janeiro's underworld, triggering a bloody escalation of betrayals and double crosses. Set in the unique world of traditional Brazilian gambling syndicates, *The Hanged* is a dark comedic tale of greed and trust which illuminates the moment at which even the closest relationships can't survive.

Fernando Coimbra majored in Cinema at the University of São Paulo (ECA-USP). He has written and directed nine short films, including *Tropic of Goats* (2007) and *Magnificent Desolation* (2010). His first feature, *A Wolf at the Door*, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2013. The film won the Horizons Award at the San Sebastian International Film Festival and won awards at many other international film festivals including Havana, Miami, Guadalajara, Marseille and Rio de Janeiro.

Dan Krauss (writer/director) / *The Kill Team* (U.S.A.): Based on the true story of an American soldier forced to choose between his conscience and his survival when members of his platoon carry out a scheme to murder Afghan civilians.

Dan Krauss is an Academy Award-nominated documentary director. His most recent feature documentary, *The Kill Team*, won the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival, the Truer than Fiction Independent Spirit Award, and a nomination from the Director's Guild of America. Krauss earned his Master's Degree from UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism, where he is presently a lecturer in documentary film and television production.

Boots Riley (writer/director) / *Sorry to Bother You* (U.S.A.): A black telemarketer with self-esteem issues discovers a magical key to business success, propelling him to the upper echelons of the hierarchy just as his activist comrades are rising up against unjust labor practices. When he uncovers the macabre secret of his corporate overlords, he must decide whether to stand up or sell out.

Boots Riley studied film at San Francisco State University before ending his studies in favor of a major label recording deal for his band, The Coup. He directed a music video for The Coup's "Me And Jesus The Pimp In A '79 Granada Last Night," upon which the novel *Too Beautiful For Words* was based. He has never won an award for artistic achievement, but has decided that being the only musical artist whose surveillance was uncovered via Wikileaks is just as good as an Oscar or a Grammy.



The Sundance Institute Feature Film Program is supported by The Annenberg Foundation; Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; RT Features; Red Crown Productions; Time Warner Foundation; HP; AJ+; Jeanne Donovan Fisher; Hollywood Foreign Press Association; National Endowment for the Arts; NHK Enterprises, Inc.; Manish Mundra; 3311 Productions; The Ammon Foundation; Firestone / von Winterfeldt Family Fund; A3 Foundation; the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; SAGIndie; Grazka Taylor; The Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund; Naja Pham Lockwood and David Lockwood; and The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Sundance Institute

Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, and new media to create and thrive. The Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences to artists in igniting new ideas, discovering original voices, and building a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *Sin Nombre*, *The Invisible War*, *The Square*, *Dirty Wars*, *Spring Awakening*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Fun Home*. Join [Sundance Institute](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

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