

This version of the 2024 SFFILM Program Guide is formatted for best compatibility with screen readers. The program listing begins with our two tribute programs, then the titles are arranged in alphabetical order.

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ATTENDING THE FESTIVAL

TICKETS

General Admission.....\$20
Student/Senior/ADA.....\$19
SFFILM Member..... \$16
*Children (14 and under).....\$11

TICKET PACKS

Ticket Packs are the most flexible way to see SFFILM events at a discount, and may be redeemed for any regular, non-rush screening or event priced up to \$25.

6-PACK

SFFILM Members.....\$95
General Public.....\$115

10-PACK

SFFILM Members..... \$145
General Public.....\$175

CINEVISA

The best way to support SFFILM, this all-access pass includes entry to the priority line at all film screenings and access to the Festival Lounge.

Cinevisa.....\$1,800

THE FINE PRINT

Ticket prices may vary for Special Events. Tickets are subject to a \$1.50 service fee. Ticket Packs are subject to a \$5 service fee. Valid ID required to receive discounts. If you require wheelchair seating or other accessibility accommodations,, notify the Festival Box Office when placing an order.

**Children's ticket prices are for select programs only.*

Purchase tickets online at sffilm.org

ACCESSIBILITY

SFFILM is committed to providing accessible experiences at all events whether in-person or online. Event pages will be updated with accessibility information as it becomes available, which may be after tickets go on sale. For more information about accessibility at specific venues or programs, please visit sffilm.org/accessibility or contact ada@sffilm.org.

COVID-19 POLICY

Masks are strongly encouraged when not eating or drinking. Proof of vaccination is not required to attend screenings and/or events.

FILM DESCRIPTIONS

A Tribute to Joan Chen + “Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl”

Sun Apr 28 at 1 pm PT at Premier Theater

Joan Chen (China 1998, 100)

Section: Narratives: International

Joan Chen Tribute

Join us as we pay tribute to actor/director/writer/producer **Joan Chen** with an intimate conversation celebrating her extraordinary career and unique 35 mm screening of her debut feature **Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl**.

Joan Chen Tribute

Joan Chen made her screen debut at 17 with **Youth** (1977), rocketing to stardom in her native China before relocating to the United States where she broke through to American audiences with roles in **The Last Emperor** (1987) and the David Lynch series **Twin Peaks** (1989–1991). She continues to act, most recently appearing in Festival opener **Dìdì (弟弟)** Didi but she has also built careers as a screenwriter, producer, and director. Her debut feature **Xiu Xiu: The Sent-Down Girl** (Festival 1998) received a Film Independent Spirit Award Nomination for Best First Feature—Over \$500,000 and won five Golden Horse Film Festival Awards, including Best Director and Best Feature Film. She went on to direct **Autumn in New York** (2000); **Shanghai Strangers** (2012), a short; **The Iron Hammer** (2020), a documentary; and a segment of **Hero** (2022). In 2014, SFFILM honored her as Essential SF.

Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl

An astonishingly confident directorial debut from San Francisco-based actress Joan Chen, **Xiu Xiu** is a heartbreaking coming-of-age melodrama set during the later stages of the Cultural Revolution. A young girl, Xiu Xiu, is sent to a desolate part of Tibet to learn horse breeding from her trainer, Lao Jin, a serene Tibetan herdsman. Deserted in such a bleak, uncompromising landscape, Xiu Xiu dreams of a better life, but slowly realizes that the authorities have no intention of ever rescuing her. Her dreams shattered, she is coerced into sex by visiting townsmen and their promises of “help.” But no help ever comes, and the silent, love-struck Lao Jin is left as her only hope. Chen’s slow-building moods and self-assured narrative tone recall the emotional power and underlying social critique inherent in mainland China’s Fifth Generation filmmakers as well as the work of their predecessor Xie Jin (whose 1977 film, *Youth*, saw Chen in one of her first starring roles). Austere, uncluttered—no unnecessary dramatic pyrotechnics or visual exotica—*Xiu Xiu* achieves a purity of vision not found in most contemporary cinema. Coaxing gorgeously refined performances out of radiant newcomer Lu Lu and the Tibetan-born Lopsang, Chen weaves a story of love unspoken and love lost, and in so doing introduces an exciting new voice to world cinema. —Jason Sanders, Festival 1998

A Tribute to Chiwetel Ejiofor + Sloan Science on Screen + “Rob Peace”

Sat Apr 27 at 7 PM at Premier Theater

Chiwetel Ejiofor (USA 2024, 146)

Narratives: USA

Chiwetel Ejiofor Tribute

Chiwetel Ejiofor began his acting career as a teenager, appearing in National Youth Theatre productions and going on to study at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). He was 19 when he made his screen debut in **Steven Spielberg’s Amistad** (1997). Among his acting accolades are the 2006 Rising Star BAFTA award, an Academy Award® nomination and BAFTA award for best actor for **12 Years a Slave** (2013), a Film Independent Spirit Award for best supporting actor for **Talk to Me** (2007), and a British Independent Film Award for best actor for **Dirty Pretty Things** (2002), and the organization’s 2015 Richard Harris Award. In 2007, he won a best actor Olivier Award for the Donmar Warehouse’s production of Othello. His turn to screenwriting and directing began with a pair of shorts, **Slapper** (2008) and **Columbite Tantalite** (2013). His first feature, **The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind** (2019) was awarded the Sundance Film Festival’s Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize; an NAACP Image Award for outstanding direction; and the British Independent Film Awards’ Douglas Hickox Award.

Rob Peace

In an acting tour de force, Jay Will plays the talented titular character, a young New Jersey science prodigy headed for the Ivy League, but heavily impacted by his past.

Rob Peace

In an acting tour de force, Jay Will plays the talented titular character, a young New Jersey science prodigy headed for the Ivy League, but heavily impacted by his past. While Rob is still an adolescent, his father (another impeccable turn from writer-director Chiwetel Ejiofor) is convicted of homicide and the boy devotes himself to proving his dad’s innocence. As a budding scientist excelling in biophysics, Rob enters Yale, attempting to negotiate this elite new environment alongside his connection to family and community. Based on Peace’s Yale roommate Jeff Hobbs’ bestselling biography, Ejiofor’s exquisite drama details the collision of a life lived under immense pressure. The film features terrific supporting performances by Mary J. Blige as Rob’s caring mother and Mare Winningham as a Yale professor who grants him special lab access.

Agent of Happiness

Thu Apr 25 at 6 pm PT at Marina 1

Sun Apr 28 at 12 pm PT at BAMPFA

Arun Bhattarai, Dorottya Zurbó (Bhutan 2024, 94)

Section: Documentaries: International

Can happiness be measured by points? In a policy woefully simplified by Western media, Bhutan calculates its development by gross national happiness. Embarking on a census-like enterprise, two government officers ask citizens if they are happy. The answer might be yes, if a farmer's cow gave birth, or no, if a family was denied citizenship. In a journey that is as political as it is personal, people's revelatory answers lay bare their relationship to Bhutan's government, its nation state, and monarchy. With stunning cinematography, **Agent of Happiness** investigates the age-old quest to find the purpose of life—and to derive happiness from fulfilling that purpose.

Alemania

Fri Apr 26 at 8:45 pm PT at Marina 1

Sat Apr 27 at 7:15 pm PT at BAMPFA

María Zanetti (Argentina 2023, 87)

Section: Narratives: International

María Zanetti's vivid debut feature, inspired by her own family's story, tells the story of Lola, a 16-year-old who dreams of escaping her challenging homelife. Lola struggles with school and driving lessons but the mental illness of older sister Julieta presents greater challenges. Julieta consumes their parents' time and money, leaving Lola often ignored, at constant odds with her mother, and dreaming of a different life. **Maite Aguilar** makes an indelible screen debut as a young woman yearning for refuge and security in this complex drama that drifts between a teen's inherent need to embark on her own path and the difficulties her parents face in meeting the disparate needs of their daughters. Striking cinematography further enhances this vibrant coming-of-age tale, which won the Best Director and Best Screenplay prizes at Cine Ceará—Ibero-American Film Festival.

Banel & Adama

Thu Apr 25 at 3:30 pm PT at Marina 1

Sat Apr 27 at 5 pm PT at BAMPFA

Ramata-Toulaye Sy (Senegal 2023, 87)

Section: Narratives: International

The titular Senegalese couple at the center of this visually ravishing romantic drama faces several challenges—Adama is in line to be chief but doesn't want the responsibility while Banel insists they not have children, especially in light of the economic hardships brought about by drought. Tired of being relegated to female-designated roles, Banel would rather relocate outside the village where sandstorms have buried several houses but where she and Adama will be removed from the daily life that hems them in. Though deeply in love and prepared to realize his beloved's wishes, Adama is more pragmatic and concerned about their livelihoods and familial responsibilities. **Ramata-Toulaye Sy's** poetic debut, which competed at Cannes, tells a fable-like story imbued with dreamlike imagery and palpable chemistry between the two young lovers at its heart.

Billy & Molly: An Otter Love Story

Sat Apr 27 at 12:15 pm PT at Marina 1
Charlie Hamilton James (UK 2023, 78)
Section: Documentaries: USA

In a place where land ends and the sea takes over—Scotland’s Shetland Islands—an orphaned otter washes up against Billy and Susan’s isolated jetty. At first utterly dependent on the couple for her survival, the “wee girl” they name Molly quickly captures their hearts, with Billy particularly besotted. This irresistible documentary spins a tale of love and longing in its depiction of the emotional bond between Billy and the playful creature. The melancholic man finds joy, a new connection to the natural world, and purpose in caring for Molly and preparing her for independent life. **Billy & Molly** delves deep into the workings of the human (and otter) heart, becoming a rumination on what it means to give and receive love, and questioning the limits of how far one can or should go in its pursuit. The answer, like the seas that surround the Shetlands, is eternal and fathomless.

Recommended for ages 9 and up.

Black Box Diaries

Fri Apr 26 at 6 pm PT at Marina 1
Sat Apr 27 at 2:15 pm PT at BAMPFA
Shiori Ito (Japan 2024, 104)
Section: Documentaries: International

A 2015 dinner with Noriyuki Yamaguchi evolves into a years-long nightmare for **Shiori Ito** after the veteran journalist drugged and sexually assaulted the Reuters intern. In her quest for justice, Ito faces long odds: Yamaguchi is not only a high-profile newsman but also Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s personal biographer. But she will not be deterred in this powerful, intensely personal documentary that depicts her campaign to hold her assailant accountable. The case makes Ito the face of Japan’s #MeToo movement while launching a national discussion about the country’s outdated sexual assault and consent laws. As she faces threats and the possibility of a coverup, she turns investigator, chasing leads, determined to expose the truth. Splashed across the media as both a hero and villain, Ito becomes a voice for the modern Japanese woman, speaking for those whose own experiences have been too often silenced.

The Cats of Gokogu Shrine

Sat Apr 27 at 2:45 pm PT at Marina 2
Sun Apr 28 at 7 pm PT at BAMPFA
Kazuhiro Soda (Japan 2024, 119)
Documentaries: International

This rich observational documentary opens with a bratty orange tabby grabbing director **Kazuhiro Soda**'s microphone and attempting to eat it. That funny scene serves as a reminder that cats are internet stars because of their playful antics. But while irresistible images abound throughout this film, this is a work of more serious intent as Sôda tenderly observes his seaside hometown Ushimado as the community contends with an aging population, erasure in the face of modernity and shifting industrial investment, and the pandemic. Employing his typical tenets of verité filmmaking, Sôda allows the subjects to guide his camera while he captures day-to-day machinations of daily life and the unusually fraught deliberations over what to do about the feral population residing in Ushimado. A shrine without felines — who have been largely abandoned there — seems unlikely and the film makes a poignant case for their contributions to village life as charming, fluffy providers of purring hospitality.

Cartoon Saloon Workshop: “Puffin Rock and the New Friends”

Sun Apr 28 at 1 pm PT at The Walt Disney Family Museum

Jeremy Purcell (Ireland 2023, 120)

Section: Special Events

Cartoon Saloon, the renowned Irish studio known for their beautifully crafted hand-drawn animation, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Going all the way back to their first feature, **The Secret of Kells** (2009), **SFFILM** has showcased their astonishing 2D masterpieces. Cartoon Saloon's latest work, **Puffin Rock and the New Friends**, builds upon the world created in their award-winning preschool TV series of the same name, and brings back family favorites Oona, Baba, May, and Mossy. With visually stunning designs and vibrant colors, each frame of the film honors the lush natural beauty of the Irish coast while also featuring powerful themes of belonging, friendship, and courage. Director **Jeremy Purcell** will join us to present behind-the-scenes artwork, answer questions, and lead the audience in the drawing of some fan-favorite Cartoon Saloon characters. Additional activities will celebrate the Irish culture the studio brings to life along with raffles for prizes and artwork.

Be sure to bring paper and pencils to draw along. Recommended for ages 4 and up.

Total Program Runtime: 120 minutes

Counted Out

Sun Apr 28 at 5 pm PT at Marina 1

Vicki Abeles (USA 2024, 89)

Section: Documentaries: USA

Math is a gatekeeper in the US. In an increasingly algorithm-and-data-driven 21st century, assumptions made about a child's mathematical ability affect their odds of finding future success. Unsurprisingly these barriers mostly affect those already suffering under systemic racism, patriarchy, and/or the cycle of poverty who are

presumed to have fewer skills. This revealing and urgent documentary weaves together a mosaic of voices and stories across generations and professions to explain the detrimental effects of declining math skills on civic participation, legal rulings, and fulfilling careers. Further, the film challenges the notion that only a select few can be “math people” and illustrates what happens when the myths surrounding math are shattered and mathematics education becomes more inclusive.

Opening Night: Didi (弟弟)

Wed Apr 24 at 8 pm PT at Marina 1

Wed Apr 24 at 7 pm PT at Premier Theater

Sean Wang (USA 2023, 90)

Section: Narratives: USA

Sean Wang's auspicious, semi-autobiographical feature debut centers on a universally recognizable phase of adolescence—that moment we begin the lifelong process of self-determination. Set in 2008 Fremont, this Sundance audience award winner follows 13-year-old Taiwanese American Chris (**Izaak Wang**) in the fleeting months prior to freshman year as he clumsily pursues his first crush, nurtures his passions for filming and skating, and experiments with the dawning intensity of online relationships via AIM chat and MySpace. At home, Chris' college-bound sister Vivian (**Shirley Chen**) and weary mother Chunsing (an illuminating **Joan Chen**) annoy him, while his acerbic grandma Nai Nai (**Chang Li Hua**, the director's real-life grandmother) frets over his diet. All three women draw his ire as Chris stumbles through a series of hilarious coming-of-age situations. Nuanced and tender, Wang's film is a layered exploration of learning to love oneself against the Darwinian backdrop of teenage cliques, cultural conformity, and the maddening frustrations of growing up.

Empty Nets

Fri Apr 26 at 3 pm PT at Marina 2

Sun Apr 28 at 2:30 pm PT at BAMPFA

Behrooz Karamizade (Germany 2023, 101)

Section: Narratives: International

What begins as a pursuit of love becomes a dangerous journey into the seedy underbelly of Iran's fisheries in director **Behrooz Karamizade's** heart-wrenching neorealist debut. Deeply enamored with each other, Amir and Narges want to marry but Narges' upper-class parents disapprove of the union. Amir is determined to prove himself worthy by earning a quick fortune for her dowry—a challenge in Iran's difficult employment market. A talented swimmer, he earns a spot in a fishing operation, where he learns there is big money to be made in the perilous work of poaching and human smuggling. Now living far from his beloved, will Amir's relationship with Narges survive the separation? **Ashkan Ashkani's** dreamy cinematography captures the beauty of the Caspian Sea, a contrast to the ugly secrets the water holds, in this striking portrait of romance struggling against Iran's social realities.

Eternal You

Fri Apr 26 at 3:30 pm PT at Premier Theater
Hans Block, Moritz Rieswieck (Germany 2024, 87)
Section: Documentaries: International

If you could, would you communicate with your dead loved ones? Would you embrace the possibility if your mother or father or spouse could live on virtually after they have left this plane of existence? Can there be life—of a sort—after death? Those queries and more are at the heart of this bold examination of a revolutionary new AI frontier that endeavors to connect the living with the dead and, in a way, conquer death. Ethical questions abound in this fascinating look at “digital afterlife” and a burgeoning industry with no guardrails. A woman who lost her young daughter and another who regrets never answering her first love’s final text message are among the early adopters of these technologies that appear alongside entrepreneurs, research scientists, and critics in **Hans Block** and **Moritz Riesewieck**’s comprehensive and provocative documentary. Where will we go when we die? Heaven? Hell? Purgatory? Or cyberspace?

Eureka

Thu Apr 25 at 2:45 pm PT at Premier Theater
Lisandro Alonso (Argentina 2023, 146)
Section: Narratives: International

A triptych of stories focused on Indigenous culture in the Americas takes the spotlight in the latest feature from one of international cinema’s most exciting auteurs, **Lisandro Alonso**. A striking opening sequence revisits and remixes his last film **Jauja** (Festival 2015), reuniting the director with lead actor **Viggo Mortenson**, who plays a gunslinger looking for his kidnapped daughter. In an abrupt shift of location, filmmaking style, and gaze, the scenario moves to the Pine Ridge reservation in wintry South Dakota where Native American police officer Alaina searches for another missing young woman. And in the final segment, a shape-shifting bird introduces viewers to a forest-dwelling tribe in the Amazon and a community contending with interpersonal rivalries. Employing different cinematic styles and an increasingly dreamlike narrative, **Eureka** (which premiered at Cannes) is elusive and pointed in its willingness to abandon traditional storytelling methods in favor of something stranger and more magical.

Great Absence

Thu Apr 25 at 8:15 pm PT at Marina 2
Kei Chika-ura (Japan 2023, 152)
Section: Narratives: International

An emotional depiction of father/son estrangement, a decades-long love story that takes on multiple shades, and, most centrally, a portrait of dementia, **Kei Chika-ura**’s remarkable drama begins when police raid elderly Yohji’s home before shifting forwards and backwards through time to explain the circumstances that led to the crisis. Though

it starts with a bang, the film is more interested in the quieter shocks that permeate the lives of Yohji, his actor son Takashi, and Naomi, the woman Yohji's lived with since the departure of Takashi's mom. Unraveling the nuances of these relationships is part of the pleasure of watching **Great Absence**, but its essence is Yohji's decline into senility, enveloping everyone around him. **Tatsuya Fuji** is unforgettable as the alternately raging, wounded, and confused patriarch and deservedly won the Best Actor prize at the San Sebastian Film Festival.

The Idea of You

Sat Apr 27 at 8:15 pm PT at Marina 1
Michael Showalter (USA 2024, 115)
Narratives: USA

Unexpectedly stuck chaperoning her daughter's trip to Coachella, the last thing on single mom Solène's (a glowing Anne Hathaway) mind is romance. With everyone frantic over boy band August Moon, Solène escapes the crowds only to have a chance encounter with lead singer Hayes Campbell (Nicholas Galitzine). Their attraction is instant and undeniable, as is their 16-year age difference. Solène attempts to treat their liaison as a momentary affair but she is woefully unprepared for the spotlight that follows Campbell's every move. Against the backdrop of zero privacy, Solène tries to balance the needs of her daughter and demands of her ex-husband (played with relished bite by a reliable Reid Scott), with the growing desires of her heart.

Heartless

Thu Apr 25 at 6 pm PT at Premier Theater
Nara Normande, Tião (Brazil 2023, 90)
Section: Narratives: International

In this drama inspired by co-director **Nara Normande's** own life, teenage Tamara spends the summer of 1996 hanging with her group of friends before leaving them behind to study in Brasilia. While restlessly exploring her village on Brazil's northwest coast, Tamara's relationships begin to shift. She grows apart from her boyfriend Kinzão while developing an attraction for another girl, nicknamed "Heartless" for the surgical scar on her chest. Dazzling images illustrate this magical realist coming-of-age tale that touches on a young woman's blossoming sexuality and anxious anticipation of the future. **Normande** and her co-director **Tião** elegantly weave poetic sentiments with fantastical elements to spin a strikingly poignant story of the connection between nature, sexuality, and growing up.

Janet Planet

Sat Apr 27 at 2:30 pm PT at Marina 1
Sun Apr 28 at 4:45 pm PT at BAMPFA
Annie Baker (USA 2023, 113)
Section: Narratives: USA

In 1991, the summer before middle school, Lacy (**Zoe Ziegler**) brims with questions and gripes. Tightly bonded with her unmarried mom, Janet (**Julianne Nicholson**), she's slowly moving from her parent's orbit into her own, and this remarkable debut from prize-winning playwright **Annie Baker** portrays this shift with careful intimacy and a wonderfully askew visual eye. Living in rural Massachusetts, Lacy's days are languorous but not without incident—she has piano lessons, races around the mall with the daughter of Janet's boyfriend, and attends an odd outdoor theatrical headed up by a semi-guru type named Avi (**Elias Koteas**). The film is remarkably astute in illustrating how adolescent self-awareness builds from small life experiences and careful observation of adult behavior, and Ziegler perfectly captures the churning of Lacy's brain and emotions. As Janet, Nicholson is equally astonishing, ever-so-slightly dissatisfied with her life but always there to be the gently listening ear for her unique child.

Luther: Never Too Much

Thu Apr 25 at 8:30 pm PT at Marina 1

Dawn Porter (USA 2024, 131)

Section: Documentaries: USA

One can never get too much **Luther Vandross**, as **Dawn Porter's** wonderfully comprehensive and jubilant film demonstrates. Known as the "Velvet Voice," Vandross sold over 40 million records, recording 11 platinum albums. The documentary begins as his career starts as an 18-year-old performing with his first group on **Sesame Street**. From there, he segues into gigs as a behind-the-scenes vocalist, singing and arranging with **David Bowie** and several notable R&B acts, and writing and performing numerous lucrative ad jingles. Porter's film also dives into more sensitive territory, including unwanted journalistic focus on his weight and personal life, and his feelings of being relegated to a certain "type" of music. Featuring classic performances of Vandross hits like "Any Love," "A House Is Not a Home," and the titular foot-tapper, the documentary is filled with reminiscences and insights by **Jamie Foxx**, **Mariah Carey**, **Dionne Warwick**, and archival interviews with the man himself.

Mel Novikoff Award: Gary Meyer + "Macario" + "Sour Death Balls"

Sat Apr 27 at 12 pm PT at Premier Theater

Roberto Gavaldón (Mexico 1960, 146)

Section: Narratives: International

Mel Novikoff Award

When **Gary Meyer** was seven, he saw Disney's **Lady and the Tramp**, the experience sealing his fate as someone who would spend his life in communion with movies. At 12, he started a screening series in his family's Napa hayloft. After studying film production at San Francisco State University, he found his calling in exhibition. He started at United Artists, where he worked his way up from drive-in second feature booker to head buyer of the company's Northwestern Division. In 1975, he co-founded Repertory Theatres,

Inc., which would become Landmark Theatres after merging with another company. While at Landmark, he programmed the U.C. Theatre in Berkeley and the Nuart in Los Angeles. After leaving Landmark, he took over the Balboa Theatre in San Francisco in 2001–2012. In 1998, he joined the Telluride Film Festival as Programming/Marketing Consultant, became the Resident Curator from 1999–2006, and co-director from 2006–2015. A longtime journalist, he founded online magazine Eat Drink Film in 2014 along with an adjacent “EatDrinkFilms Festival.” He recently produced a documentary, **The Art of Eating: The Life of M.F.K. Fisher**.

Mel Novikoff Award

For over 30 years, the SFFILM Mel Novikoff Award has been given to an individual or institution whose work has enhanced the film-going public’s appreciation of world cinema. This year’s Mel Novikoff presentation will include **Gary Meyer** in conversation with IndieWire’s Editor-at-Large **Anne Thompson**, followed by a screening of the 1960 Mexican classic **Macario** and **Jessica Yu’s** memorable short **Sour Death Balls**.

Macario

A village’s Day of the Dead celebration foreshadows this bewitching fable of an impoverished woodcutter who gains the power to heal. Screens with **Sour Death Balls**, **Jessica Yu’s** hilarious account of a sour candy taste challenge.

Macario

A village’s Day of the Dead celebration foreshadows a bewitching magical realist fable in director **Roberto Gavaldón’s** dreamy adaptation of a B. Traven (**The Treasure of the Sierra Madre**) short story set in colonial Mexico. Impoverished woodcutter Macario (**Ignacio López Tarso**) has never gone a day without hunger, more acute now that he has five children to feed. His wife produces a rare turkey for him and him alone to eat but when he elects to share it with a mysterious stranger, he gains the power to heal, a gift that enriches the family but also puts Macario in the murderous crosshairs of the Spanish Inquisition. Mexico’s first foreign-language film Oscar® nominee, its star Tarso won the Golden Gate Award for Best Actor when Macario screened at the 1960 Festival. **Gabriel Figueroa’s** (**Luis Buñuel’s The Exterminating Angel**) luminous black-and-white cinematography sparkles anew and astonishes in a 4K restoration.

Screens with: **Sour Death Balls** (**Jessica Yu**, Festival 1992, 5 min) Kids and grownups accept the sour candy taste challenge. **Jessica Yu** records the hilarious results.

Members Screening: Mother Couch

Sun Apr 28 at 10 am PT at Marina 1
Niclas Larsson (USA 2023, 96)

Mother (**Ellen Burstyn**) refuses to leave a couch, which might not be a problem for her youngest child David (**Ewan McGregor**), except the sofa sits in a defunct furniture store and the owners want her to vacate. That is the set up for writer-director **Niclas Larsson’s**

absurd first feature that explores the ways our families can work our every last nerve. With Mother refusing to budge, David enlists his brother Gruffudd (**Rhys Ifans**) and sister Linda (**Lara Flynn Boyle**) to join him in coaxing her home. The three actors' wildly incongruous accents hint at children raised apart from one another and help explain the overall sense of estrangement—though not how Mother wandered into the store in the first place. 91-year-old Burstyn is marvelous in this film full of droll laughs as the recalcitrant matriarch, receiving excellent support from a cast that also includes **Lake Bell, Taylor Russell, and F. Murray Abraham.**

Mountain Queen: The Summits of Lhakpa Sherpa

Fri Apr 26 at 6 pm PT at Premier Theater

Lucy Walker (USA 2023, 98)

Section: Documentaries: International

A heroine hides in plain sight as a dishwasher in a Connecticut Whole Foods in **Lucy Walker's** astonishing documentary. The film tells the inspiring story of **Lhakpa Sherpa**, the first Nepali woman to conquer Mount Everest and survive. Walker captures this elite athlete's life as she prepares for a tenth summit — a new record for women mountaineers. The world knows her from her top-of-the-world exploits but Walker's portrait reveals a range of seemingly insurmountable challenges that Lhakpa manages to transcend. At this "low altitude," the mother of three endures hardscrabble challenges as an immigrant and single parent. Through it all, she perseveres, finding purpose in both daily and historic accomplishments. **Mountain Queen** shines a deserving spotlight on Lhakpa's unyielding determination and spirit as it brings her incredible saga to triumphant heights.

Persistence of Vision Award: Johan Grimonprez + "Soundtrack for a Coup d'Etat"

Thu Apr 25 at 6:30 pm PT at BAMPFA

Johan Grimonprez (Belgium 2024, 200)

Section: Documentaries: International

Persistence of Vision Award

Who owns our imagination in a world of existential vertigo where truth has become a shipwrecked refugee? Is it the storyteller who can contain contradictions, who can slip between the languages we have been given to become a time-traveler of the imagination? **Johan Grimonprez's** critically acclaimed work dances on the borders of theory and practice, between art and cinema, going beyond the dualisms of documentary and fiction, other and self, mind and brain to weave new pathways in how we perceive our realities. Our histories and memories are not only a means to reimagine our contested past, but also tools to negotiate our shared present. In Wonderland, the Queen rephrases it to Alice: "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards."

Persistence of Vision Award

Established in 1997, the **Persistence of Vision Award** honors the achievement of a filmmaker whose main body of work falls outside the realm of narrative feature filmmaking each year. This year, the award goes to Belgian filmmaker and multimedia artist **Johan Grimoprez**.

Soundtrack for a Coup d'Etat

What is the first step a country might take when engineering its first post-colonial African coup? Weaponize music and appoint a jazz ambassador. The stylings of Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, and more form a backbeat in **Johan Grimoprez's (dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y, 1997 New Visions GGA; Shadow World, Festival 2016)** rich essay that interweaves interviews, archival footage, and more to tell the story of Western nations conspiring against the nascent Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to protect capitalist interests. Featuring a Who's Who of midcentury international players, the documentary depicts how the US, Belgium, and other Western interests plotted first a coup and then the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, Congo's first prime minister. The film allows the viewer to connect the dots and make connections, holding a mirror to our own era as it harks back to a violent historical chapter written to serve colonizers and capitalists—all of it set to the soundtrack of cool jazz.

Soundtrack for a Coup d'Etat

Jazz becomes a successful smokescreen for the US and its allies' efforts as well-meaning musicians' diplomatic missions offer cover for a conspiracy to stage a coup against the Democratic Republic of the Congo Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba.

Porcelain War

Fri Apr 26 at 8:45 pm PT at Premier Theater
Brendan Bellomo, Slava Leontyev (Ukraine 2024, 90)
Section: Documentaries: International

When the Russians invade Ukraine, husband-and-wife artists Slava and Anya, their faithful dog Frodo, and dear friend Andrey, seize their destiny as they choose to stay and fight. Setting aside their civilian life and past selves, Slava and Andrey join a special ops unit on the frontlines, while Anya makes delicate porcelain art amid constant bombardment. Made in partnership with US-based co-director **Brendan Bellomo**, these first-time film collaborators steel themselves against the atrocities of war by cherishing spring blossoms, lifelong friendships, and long walks through their beautiful, ravaged country. It is rare for a documentary to capture a war unfolding in real time with such lucidity, while also transcending the immediacy of violence to celebrate the indomitable power of the human spirit. Buoyed by a passion for living and charming animated sequences, this Sundance Documentary Grand Jury prize-winner vividly depicts the human need to create and compulsion to survive.

The Practice

Sat Apr 27 at 8:45 pm PT at Marina 2
Martín Rejtman (Argentina 2023, 95)
Narratives: International

Argentina's master of deadpan humor **Martín Rejtman** (**Silvia Prieto**, Festival 1999; **Two Shots Fired**, Festival 2014) returns with a droll satire of relationships and wellness culture in a tale centered on an Argentinian yoga instructor living in Chile. Gustavo (**Esteban Bigliardi**) is recently divorced and struggling with the end of his marriage, problems at his yoga studio, and an injury he is trying to treat with exercise instead of the recommended surgery. An ex-wife he is still in love with, a nagging mother who wants him to return to Chile, a student recovering from a brain injury, another student who may be a thief, and a comely pharmacist are among the characters whose lives and problems intersect in Rejtman's surreal, absurd, and complex comedy.

Ru

Sat Apr 27 at 5:45 pm PT at Marina 2
Charles-Olivier Michaud (Canada 2023, 116)
Section: Narratives: International

Ten-year-old Tinh's family flees Vietnam after the 1975 fall of Saigon, undertaking an arduous journey to Quebec in **Charles Oliver-Michaud's** gripping adaptation of **Kim Thúy's** Award-winning novel. As Tinh works to overcome the trauma and memories of war and forge an identity in Canada, her educated, formerly wealthy family struggles to adapt to their new circumstances as refugees. **Chloé Djandji** is riveting as Tinh in a drama that combines a harrowing recreation of the family's flight from Vietnam, striking cinematography, vivid flashbacks, and a compelling narrative to create a hauntingly beautiful portrayal of healing told from the powerful perspective of a young girl coming to terms with her past.

Seeking Mavis Beacon

Fri Apr 26 at 7 pm PT at BAMPFA
Sat Apr 27 at 4 pm PT at Premier Theater
Jazmin Jones (USA 2024, 103)
Section: Documentaries: USA

What ever happened to Mavis Beacon? That guiding question propels two intrepid electronic sleuths, Jazmin and Olivia, who dive into the cosmos as they hunt for the woman of Haitian descent who became the face of the 1980s-era popular educational software Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing. Through dynamic "desktop cinema," observational footage, and interviews with artists, writers, and software designers, the investigation lifts the veil on how Mavis' persona came to be. While highlighting ethical questions regarding representation, the film slowly becomes a celebration of glitch art's legacy as a means for underrepresented people to deconstruct and reclaim notions of

Queerness and Racialization. A spellbinding cyberspace adventure, **Jazmin Renée Jones'** inquisitive directorial debut expands ideas around feminism and digital selfdom, while also portraying the importance of tender, healing friendship in a complex world.

Shorts 1: I'm Just a Girl

Sun Apr 28 at 4:15 pm PT at Marina 2

Section: Short Films

Girls, girls, girls. They've had it with life's complications; these girls just want to have fun. Formidable filmmakers deliver stories of culture shock, ethics in a digital world, confronting death, grief, and the reality that nothing stays the same. Obstacles stand in the way of our fated protagonists but also offer each the opportunity for a transformative journey. These diverse stories from five countries across the globe prove girls will be girls, if only life would let them be.

Rizoo

Azadeh Navai (Iran 2023, 16)

Short Films, Shorts

New to Tehran, Rizoo feels out of place but as she adjusts to life in a new country, she finds comfort in different moments around town.

Can We Pretend

Samantha Toy Ozeas (USA 2023, 12)

Short Films, Shorts

Two friends meet for a birthday celebration, gossing and gabbing about their limitless futures – until one reveals how far she's already gone in the name of success.

VOID

Yusuke Iwasaki (Japan 2023, 24)

Short Films, Shorts

Where do feelings travel when they have nowhere to go? Asagi slowly finds out when strange things creep into her life after a friend dies under peculiar circumstances.

Muna

Warda Mohamed (UK 2023, 19)

Short Films, Shorts

Teenage Muna balances the fear of missing out on adventures with friends with learning how to care for her family as they grieve a lost loved one long-distance.

Little Queen

Julien Guetta (France 2023, 25)

Short Films, Shorts

A teenage girl, tired of her overbearing mom's constant intrusions into her life, finally expresses her rage during a drive to a concert.

Shorts 2: Of Body and Mind

Sat Apr 27 at 12 pm PT at Marina 2

Section: *Short Films*

A kaleidoscope of stories examines the sacred, visceral, and deeply personal experience that is our relationship with our bodies. Whether it is uplifting the gender expansive, depicting sexual awakenings or needs, challenging taboos around bodies that menstruate, or addressing inner struggles and resilience, these films navigate what it means to inhabit a body, learn from our limitations, and encourage us to embrace and love the darkest parts of ourselves. Keeping mind and body in sync is an ongoing process and existing in our bodies and honoring our most authentic sense of self in a world not made for the vulnerable is an act of courage.

Thirstygirl

Alexandra Qin (USA 2023, 10)

Short Films, Shorts

A sex-addicted young woman sneaks away periodically to cope with her desire while on an important road trip with her sister.

Playground

Raul Villalba (Spain 2023, 16)

Short Films, Shorts

Amidst a pulsing crowd at a Barcelona rave, Uri tries to find a rhythm and pieces of themselves in others.

La Perra

Carla Melo Gampert (Colombia 2023, 14)

Short Films, Shorts

Ink and watercolor surrealist illustrations explore what it's like to inhabit an oversexualized body and how to make sense of our desires in a society that shames them.

I Did Not Wake Up Dead Today

Erin Macpherson (Belgium 2023, 18)

Short Films, Shorts

Using a teddy bear as a stand-in for themselves, a director expounds candidly about their depressive episodes.

Don't Look Down

Ilanna Barkusky (USA 2023, 8)

Short Films, Shorts

A serious brain injury dashed **Kiana Davis's** dream of competing in the Olympics. Who is an athlete when they can no longer perform? Confronted with that question, Davis finds a new dream and sense of purpose.

Choices

Kameishia Wooten (USA 2022, 12)

Short Films, Shorts

Under the bleachers of a Los Angeles high school, three friends reflect on their decisions surrounding pregnancy and motherhood, and the freedom to choose their path.

Punta Salinas

Maria del Mar Rosario (Puerto Rico 2023, 16)

Short Films, Shorts

A 16-year-old awaits her period after having sex for the first time, learning to own her power as she becomes more familiar with her body.

Shorts 3: Lineages of Love

Sun Apr 28 at 1:30 pm PT at Marina 2

Section: Short Films

A force rippling across time and the world weaves the connective tissue of these eight stories. The distinct works in this collection examine the ways love brings us together even when a multitude of forces work to keep us apart. Love takes many forms: it bursts from the pages of a scrapbook preserving precious moments; it stays behind to comfort those grieving loss and brings us closer to those soon to be gone; it inhabits artifacts that carry meaning throughout our lives. In this group of electrifying, eclectic, and utterly ineffable films, love conquers all.

Salone Love

Tajana Tokyo (USA 2023, 5)

Short Films, Shorts

This genre-bending short colors in between the lines of family, love, and marriage.

a film is a goodbye that never ends

María Luisa Santos (Costa Rica 2024, 13)

Short Films, Shorts

A woman awaiting her US visa befriends a dog named Turbo. When it's time to part, she says goodbye the only way she knows how—she makes a movie.

I Was Here

Noëlle Gentile (USA 2023, 17)

Short Films, Shorts

A couple navigates loss and heartbreak as they visit a grief counselor to help them come to terms with their son's life-threatening diagnosis.

Layover

Taylor Sanghyun Lee (USA 2024, 12)

Short Films, Shorts

Long estranged from the religious community his mother embraces, Solomon must wear a tie one last time on the day of his brief return.

The Medallion

Ruth Hunduma (UK 2023, 19)

Short Films, Shorts

Ruth inherits her mother's medallion, an emblem of survival from Ethiopia's Derg Genocide that also represents the living tissue of collective memory and resistance sewn across generations.

Compton's 22

Drew de Pinto (USA 2023, 17)

Short Films, Shorts

Conversation spans generations as trans artists of today tell their stories and react to the memories of those who laid the robust foundation for future queer communities when they took part in the pre-Stonewall Compton's Cafeteria riot.

Weekend Visits

Pete Quandt (USA 2024, 9)

Short Films, Shorts

Mother and son spend a candid weekend together in a family lodging center attached to a women's prison.

Battery Mommy

Seungbae Jeon (South Korea 2023, 8)

Short Films, Shorts

Mommy charges in to save the day in this so-cute-I-could-die follow-up to **Jeon Seung-bae's** electrifyingly entertaining **Battery Daddy**, the 2023 Festival's Shorts: Family Film Golden Gate Award winner.

Shorts 4: Migration Flows

Thu Apr 25 at 5:30 pm PT at Marina 2

Section: Short Films

Inspired by the flow of people and stories of migration, this shorts program is dedicated to the itinerant. Each film in this block captures different stages in migration, starting with the circumstances that inspire people to leave their native land, the process of traveling to a new country, questions of returning home, and the potential of never seeing home again. This collection of shorts will take you around the world and back, literally and figuratively.

Bogotá Story

Esteban Pedraza (Colombia 2023, 16)

Short Films, Shorts

In this sharp, compelling drama, the rise of militarism and organized crime in early 1990s Colombia impacts the lives of a young married couple—and the entire country.

Boat People

Thao Lam (Canada 2023, 10)

Short Films, Shorts

A second-generation daughter conceptualizes her parents' journey from Vietnam through the movement of ants.

Primero, Sueño

Andrés Lira (USA 2023, 17)

Short Films, Shorts

Deep in the Central Valley, undocumented farmworkers share their stories and describe dreams transformed into harsh reality.

Confused Blood

James Cutler (South Korea 2023, 17)

A mixed Korean man wanders Seoul trying to make sense of his place in the world in a film that considers cultural identities and navigates an in-between space of documentary and narrative.

Until He's Back

Jacqueline Baylon (Morocco 2023, 40)

Short Films, Shorts

In this heart-wrenching drama, after a man drowns in the Mediterranean Sea, bureaucracy prevents his family from bringing his body home to Morocco.

Shorts 5: Family Films

Sat Apr 27 at 10 am PT at Marina 1

Section: Short Films

Wondrous and whimsical shorts from near and far corners of the world grace our festival screen for the enjoyment of the entire family. The latest from **Tonko House**, **Pixar**, and independent filmmakers share central themes of innovation and curiosity. A wooden puppet embarks on a journey of self-discovery as she questions whether or not she fits in, while a mother-daughter rodeo duo connects to their roots and legacy. Explore where ideas and inspiration come from in thought-provoking found footage and experience the charming, and maybe a little gross, feelings of a first kiss. These enchanting stories — true, not-so-true, and animated — are sure to inspire laughter, curiosity, tears, and awe in both the youngest and most seasoned filmgoers.

Recommended for ages 5 and up.

A Little Beetle Returns

Elene Sebiskveradze (Georgia 2023, 4)

Short Films, Shorts

Through elaborate and colorful designs, a beetle goes on a wondrous journey to get to the outdoors.

Self

Searit Kahsay Huluf (USA 2023, 7)

Short Films, Shorts

A wooden woman desperate to fit into the shiny world embarks on a journey of self-love in this latest **Pixar** short.

Where Do Ideas Come From?

Joysi Olijhoek (Netherlands 2023, 5)

Short Films, Shorts

Let your ideas run wild as this exploration of found footage and spoken word helps us to make creative connections and playful discoveries.

Yuck!

Loïc Espuche (France 2024, 13)

Short Films, Shorts

Yuck! Ew! Kissing on the mouth is gross but during a summer camping trip, little Léo secretly wants to try.

Dynasty and Destiny

Travis Lee Ratcliff (USA 2024, 7)

Short Films, Shorts

Their shared passion for rodeo and the weight of their family's legacy in the sport bind together mother-daughter duo Kanasha and Kortnee.

Bottle George

Daisuke 'Dice' Tsutsumi (Japan 2024, 13)

Short Films, Shorts

A mischievous cat and a young girl facing family troubles meet an unusual creature in this latest short from the award-winning studio **Tonko House**.

Coach Pancake

Gabriel Olson (USA 2024, 6)

Short Films, Shorts

Former soccer star Andres, lovingly named "Coach Pancake" by his students, finds his calling training six-year-olds to find their superpowers on and off the field.

Battery Mommy

Seungbae Jeon (South Korea 2023, 8)

Short Films, Shorts

Mommy charges in to save the day in this so-cute-I-could-die follow-up to **Jeon Seung-bae's** electrifyingly entertaining **Battery Daddy**, the 2023 Festival's Shorts: Family Film Golden Gate Award winner.

Little Fan

Sveta Yuferova (Germany 2023, 5)

Short Films, Shorts

In this charming animation, a small and curious fan has an unexpected encounter that grows into a meaningful friendship.

Shorts 6: Youth Works

Sun Apr 28 at 11 am PT at Marina 2

Section: Short Films

Youth Works celebrates and spotlights young filmmakers from within the Bay Area and as far across the globe as Ukraine and rural China. With works encompassing out-of-this-world visual effects, innovative hand-drawn animation, and intimate interviews, these young filmmakers do not shy away from pushing boundaries and displaying their talent. Through their unique viewpoints, we peek into their communities, adolescence, and the growth and transformation that happens in early adulthood. From tales of fantastic journeys, radical self-acceptance, and feminine power, to understanding one's culture and identity, these films introduce us to an up-and-coming group of cinematic voices carrying us one short at a time into the next generation of filmmaking.

Recommended for ages 12 and up.

Make Art, Reese!

Mika Lim (USA 2023, 8)

Short Films, Shorts

Hoping to make a masterpiece, a young artist explores the meaning of art and rediscovers why he creates in the first place.

Weathered

Patrick Jang (USA 2023, 9)

Short Films, Shorts

Three teenagers openly share their personal stories of struggle and transformation that allowed them to embrace self-acceptance.

Comma

Sonia Leliukh (Ukraine 2023, 4)

Short Films, Shorts

Enter into a striking animated portal of Ukrainian people living their everyday lives despite the tragedies of war.

like a stone or flower

Kaiya Jordan (USA 2023, 10)

Short Films, Shorts

Three Bay Area Asian American artists across generations reflect on the ability of art to transcend rationality and logic.

FATALE

Kayen Manovil (USA 2024, 4)

Short Films, Shorts

Through music, enchanting nature, and movement, explore a vibrant meditation on the power and joy of teenage femininity.

Sil-tteu-gi

Yezy Suh (USA 2023, 5)

Short Films, Shorts

Growing up 6,000 miles away from her grandparents, a young Korean American reflects on lost family stories and the culture uprooted from her life.

Majid, the Muslim Rapper

Kea Morshed (USA 2023, 10)

Short Films, Shorts

In Oakland, an up-and-coming Muslim rapper struggles to balance his faith with the provocative nature of his song lyrics.

Substratum

Harvey Abrahams (Australia 2023, 7)

Short Films, Shorts

Isolated and surrounded by power, a young boy attempts to change the path of his dictator father. Will peace prevail or will he succumb to his family's history?

Puppet Back Up

Maxwell Downer (UK 2023, 9)

Short Films, Shorts

In the streets of Southampton, England, two artists create interactive giant puppet theater shows to create understanding and community dialogue surrounding climate issues.

Maps

Esmé Nix (USA 2023, 8)

Short Films, Shorts

Two best friends navigate high school as explorers, discovering new lands. When they find no island where they fit, they learn to change course.

Gentle Breeze

Wenwei Hu (China 2023, 4)

Short Films, Shorts

An old man, a young boy, and a bunch of balloons take a fantastic journey through rural China.

Sidonie in Japan

Fri Apr 26 at 3:30 pm PT at Marina 1

Élise Girard (Japan 2023, 95)

Section: Narratives: International

Isabelle Huppert, one of the best actors working today, crafts a uniquely soft and vulnerable character in **Élise Girard's** low-key charmer. The eponymous Sidonie is a writer, predominantly known for an early novel that charted her grief after the deaths of family members in a car crash. Now grieving another loss, she agrees to a brief tour in Japan to celebrate a new translation of this book, accompanied by soft-spoken interpreter Kenzo (**Tsuyoshi Ihara**). What unfolds is a moving and gentle portrait of a woman slowly emerging from her protective carapace through probing conversations with Kenzo, a side trip to the famous art island of Naoshima, and the ghostly return of her deceased husband. Eschewing broad strokes of closure, Girard instead grabs at the heart with a beautifully nuanced look at a woman who finds a new lease on life.

Sing Sing

Thu Apr 25 at 8:30 pm PT at Premier Theater

Greg Kwedar (USA 2023, 107)

Section: Narratives: USA

Colman Domingo dazzles as Divine G, an incarcerated man who finds purpose as an actor in **Greg Kwedar's** entrancing drama. Inspired by Sing Sing Correctional Facility's Rehabilitation Through the Arts Program and shot at a decommissioned prison, the story takes place as the group prepares a new production and Divine G girds himself for a clemency bid. A talented performer and a leader among the troupe, he is used to deciding what plays to mount only to find his authority challenged when tough new member Divine Eye (real-life RTA alumnus **Clarence Maclin** in an indelible debut) suggests they put on a comedy. Domingo delivers a soul-baring performance as a man putting in the work to redeem himself in a film that reveals the humanity of the incarcerated while celebrating the joy of performance. **Magic Theatre Artistic Director Sean San José, Paul Raci, and RTA alumni** costar.

Sloan Science on Screen Award: Invention of Species

Sat Apr 27 at 7:30 pm PT at Vogue Theatre

Tania Hermida (Ecuador 2024, 91)

Section: Narratives: International

Sloan Science on Screen Award

Presented through a partnership between SFFILM and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Sloan Science on Screen Award is a recognition that celebrates the compelling depiction of science in a narrative feature film.

Invention of Species

When Carla's dad drags her to the Galapagos Islands for a convention on conservation and species evolution, she is less than thrilled. On the cusp of womanhood and grappling with the loss of her brother, Carla finds herself adrift on the historic archipelago that led to Charles Darwin's breakthrough studies on adaptation. Befriending two young boys who become her emotional foils, Carla pretends to be a different version of herself in order to surmount this emotional and physical journey. In this stunningly lensed lyrical debut, Tania Hermida deftly toys with parables while exploring the evolving relationship between man and nature. With Terrence Malick stylings, hints of Agnès Varda observational irony, and a dash of Alice Rohrwacher magical-realism, this tender film is a celebration of the shared sentient experience—biological and emotional.

Invention of Species

On the cusp of womanhood and grappling with the loss of her brother, Carla finds herself adrift on the historic archipelago that led to Charles Darwin's breakthrough studies on adaptation.

Sloan Science on Screen: Mabel

Sat Apr 27 at 5 pm PT at Vogue Theatre

Nicholas Ma (USA 2023, 84)

Narratives: USA

Biracial Callie (**Lexi Perkel**) loves trees and plants and little else in **Nicholas Ma's** warm debut feature. Surly with her parents and intolerant of people who don't share her interest, she's also unhappy about changing schools after her family relocates. But as luck would have it, substitute teacher Ms. G (**Judy Greer**) is starting a botany unit in science class, and Callie wangles her way in. Held rapt by Ms. G's lectures and online speeches, Callie develops an experiment raising chrysanthemums in darkness and manages to lure Agnes, her ebullient younger neighbor, into working on the project with her. Precocious, determined, and wryly funny, Callie is a unique protagonist who leverages her love of botany to propel herself into adolescence.

Recommended for ages 8 and up.

Sugarcane

Sun Apr 28 at 4:15 pm PT at Premier Theater

Julian Brave NoiseCat, Emily Kassie (Canada 2024, 107)
Documentaries: International

Offering searing insights into generational trauma inflicted on Indigenous children, co-director **Julian Brave NoiseCat**'s documentary feature debut delivers an intimate investigation into the abuse elders in his family and community suffered while attending St. Joseph's Mission Residential school near Canada's Sugarcane Reserve. As NoiseCat and co-director **Emily Kassie** search for answers, the Canadian government continues a revelatory probe into the cases of the institution's missing and murdered children. The film fearlessly confronts the survivors' experiences through powerful testimony and difficult conversations as it highlights a community seeking accountability from the government and the Catholic Church and questions whether it is possible to journey out of shame and silence to find forgiveness and healing. NoiseCat and Kassie won the U.S. Documentary directing award at the Sundance Film Festival for their stunning work.

The Teacher

Fri Apr 26 at 4 pm PT at BAMPFA
Sat Apr 27 at 5:15 pm PT at Marina 1
Farah Nabulsi (UK 2023, 118)
Narratives: International

The destruction of a Palestinian home by Israeli edict and the murder of a youth at the hands of an Israeli settler set the stage for even more shocks to come in writer/director **Farah Nabulsi**'s assured feature debut. Saleh Bakri is Basem, an amiable educator who tries to steer the deceased boy's younger brother Adam (**Muhammad Abed Elrahman**) from seeking revenge. At the same time, Basem ignores his own advice, maintaining ties with the resistance and involving himself in a hostage situation. He tries to keep his activities secret from Adam and his British girlfriend Lisa (**Imogen Poots**) but it becomes harder to maintain his silence when Israeli troops show up at his door. Inspired by a real incident and set in 2014, **The Teacher** is a shattering work that feels as current as today's headlines, and a drama made more devastating by Bakri's soulful performance.

Closing Night: Thelma

Sun Apr 28 at 7:15 pm PT at Premier Theater
Sun Apr 28 at 8 pm PT at Marina 1
Josh Margolin (USA 2024 , 97)
Narratives: USA

A steely and hysterical **June Squibb** sinks her teeth into her first leading role as a 93-year-old widow proudly living alone who falls prey to a cash-grabbing hoax. Vowing to bring the perpetrators to justice, Thelma sets out on an odyssey across an evocatively lensed Los Angeles landscape, accompanied by her old friend Ben (a scene-stealing **Richard Roundtree** in his final performance). Together, the determined

duo wield their charm, social invisibility, and elder-age devices to overcome numerous obstacles. Director **James Margolin** overtly and subtly draws on action-hero genre cliches, playing with traditional set-ups to illustrate Thelma's agency while also placing Tom Cruise and **Mission: Impossible** directly into the plot. Margolin is firmly at the helm of this hilarious romp but the film belongs to Squibb, as the Oscar®-nominated performer imbues Thelma with a hunger to be seen and understood by those who love her most, something we never grow out of.

Uncropped

Thu Apr 25 at 2:30 pm PT at Marina 2

D.W. Young (USA 2023, 111)

Documentaries: USA

James Hamilton, one of America's foremost portrait photographers, gets his own portrait in D.W. Young's charming documentary. In a career that spans decades, Hamilton's pictures chronicle the cultural zeitgeist via celebrities, political icons, historic moments, and the ever shifting landscape of New York City. Richard Goldstein, Alexandra Jacobs, Thurston Moore, and Wes Anderson are among the former subjects that speak to his artistry and craft, their conversations peppered throughout with hundreds of his images. Patti Smith, Liza Minnelli, Lou Reed, Noah Baumbach, and Alfred Hitchcock are among the legends whose portraits become part of the documentary's fabric. Hamilton's friendship with Anderson makes up a large chapter of Hamilton's career as the two become lifelong friends and collaborators after a fateful portrait session. **Uncropped** offers voyeuristic insight into a life of rare access and enviable vantage point. Hamilton's work reminds us of the power of imagery and the value of print journalism.

Wakhri

Sun Apr 28 at 2 pm PT at Marina 1

Iram Parveen Bilal (Pakistan 2023, 99)

Narratives: International

Filmmaker **Iram Parveen Bilal** takes inspiration from the story of **Qandeel Baloch** in crafting this compelling drama. Baloch was Pakistan's first social media celebrity, who often used her platform to speak out against the patriarchy, until her brother murdered her in an act of "honor" killing. Her life planted the seeds from which spring this film's widowed schoolteacher Noor and her queer best friend Guchhi. To live out their dreams and aspirations, the pair leads double lives. In bright makeup and flashy wigs, Noor and Guchhi adopt brash, fearless social media personas, representing a freedom so enticing that people can't look away. Too often the cinemascape has portrayed Muslim women and queer people from the Global South as victimized objects of pity. **Wakhri** has a different tale to tell, one that celebrates the resilience with which its protagonists demand equality within a flawed society.

Woodland

Fri Apr 26 at 8:15 pm PT at Marina 2
Elisabeth Scharang (Austria 2023, 100)
Narratives: International

In **Elisabeth Scharang's** evocative drama, a journalist from Vienna retreats to her childhood village and her late grandparents' barely habitable home as she copes with the trauma of witnessing a terrible crime. Marian (**Brigitte Hobmeier**) finds peace in the surrounding woods but it is not a comfortable homecoming – the townspeople resent her for critical articles she's written and her best friends Gerti (**Gerti Drassi**) and Franz (**Johannes Krisch**) still feel the sting of being left behind. Marian has more to heal than just her wounded psyche as she recalls the tight bonds of her youth and attempts to mend broken relationships. Hobmeier delivers a nuanced performance as a woman shut down by the violence she experienced who gradually learns to embrace life again – not through the isolation she originally sought but by reaching for human connection.

Zinzindurrunkarratz

Fri Apr 26 at 5:45 pm PT at Marina 2
Sat Apr 27 at 11:30 am PT at BAMPFA
Oskar Alegría (Spain 2023, 89)
Documentaries: International

"This is a film about a path," says director **Oskar Alegría (Zumiriki, Festival 2020 and 21)** near the opening of this playful and poetic documentary about disappearing practices, among other wide-ranging concerns. The journey begins with his father's ancient Super 8 camera that, surprisingly, still works though it no longer records sound. Needing to make every moment count—a reel is only a little over three minutes long—Alegría brings this camera on a scenic shepherding route traversed by his grandfather, accompanied by an elegant and unforgettable donkey named Paolo. Armed with this antique machine and alongside this equable equine, the filmmaker pays glorious attention to the natural beauty of rural Spain with a discerning and often wryly amusing eye. And, as each celluloid reel fades to black, his equally lyrical voiceover muses on light, history, old traditions, and capturing voices from the past.

Section Descriptions

Documentaries: International

From points all around the globe, this collection of documentaries introduces viewers to issues and viewpoints beyond our own borders.

Documentaries: USA

The mystery behind an iconic software character, the inequity ingrained in math education, and the life of singer **Luther Vandross** are among the fascinating subjects of the Festival's US documentaries.

Narratives: International

From Argentina to Pakistan to Senegal and beyond, this lineup of films takes the pulse of our global village.

Narratives: USA

A selection of emerging American talents spin resonant and culturally diverse tales of life in the US.

Short Films

The Festival's short films, made by filmmakers both veteran and new, pack each moment with storytelling power.

Awards + Special Events

Join The Festival for glittering presentations, among them Fremont-shot opening night film **Didi** (弟弟) and tributes to actors and filmmakers Joan Chen and Chiwetel Ejiofor.

Talks + Workshops

Filmmakers describe their art and craft in The Festival talks, while The Festival's workshop goes behind the scenes of an animated feature.

Spotlight Descriptions

Bay Area Voices

The many qualities of the Bay come into focus with these films set in the Bay or made by local filmmakers.

Family Friendly

A man befriends an orphaned otter, a sixth grader learns more than botany as she experiments with chrysanthemums, and shorts for—and sometimes made by—youth offer captivating fare for parents and kids alike.

Global Documentaries

SFFILM's documentary showcase celebrates the finest in nonfiction filmmaking from around the world, near and far.

Global Visions

Travel the world without ever leaving the Bay with this program of narrative filmmaking with a global perspective.

SFFILM-Supported

Since 2009, SFFILM Makers programs have granted more than \$9 million to independent filmmakers worldwide. Join us as we celebrate these talented independent storytellers and bring their stories to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Shorts

From animation to documentary, experimental to family-oriented, the Festival's short film programs offer terrific work under 30 minutes.

Big Nights

Crowd-pleasing big nights, award presentations, and our Tribute programs make up the 2024 Festival Special Events.

VENUES

SAN FRANCISCO

Premier Theater at One Letterman
1 Letterman Dr #B, San Francisco, 94129
(At the Yoda Fountain)

Marina Theatre
2149 Chestnut St, San Francisco, CA 94123

SFFILM Festival Lounge at One Letterman
1 Letterman Dr #B, San Francisco, 94129
(Under the Skybridge)

Walt Disney Family Museum
104 Montgomery St, San Francisco, CA 94129

Fort Mason Center Gallery 308
Landmark Building A
2 Marina Blvd, San Francisco, 94123

EAST BAY

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA)
2155 Center St, Berkeley, CA 94720

TRANSIT

The Marina District and Presidio neighborhood are served by Muni bus lines 28, 30, 43, and PresidiGO Shuttle. Walking times from transit stops to theaters vary between 1–15 minutes.

BAMPFA is served by BART, Downtown Berkeley Station. Walking time from BART to the theater is 3 minutes.

PARKING

At the Marina Theatre, metered parking is available for \$3/hour at these nearby lots:

- Lombard Street Garage (2055 Lombard St) *Entrance at Moulton Alley*
- Pierce Street Garage (3252 Pierce St) *Entrance at Pierce Street*

In the Presidio, street parking is available in nearby neighborhoods. The Presidio manages multiple paid parking lots. Parking is available at One Letterman for \$6/hour.