

CINEQUEST™

create, innovate, empower

99 Women Directors Featured at Cinequest Film & VR Festival

According to the 20th annual Celluloid Ceiling report released by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, in 2017, women comprised only 18 percent of directors, writers, producers, editors and cinematographers working on the year's top 250 domestic grossing films. As conversation surrounding this imbalance has taken center stage in 2018, the 28th annual Cinequest Film & VR Festival 2018 (CQ2018) is proud to celebrate the work of 99 female directors and technologists from around the world featured in this year's program.

"Nearly 80% of the films screened at Cinequest are sourced from submissions, and chosen based on merit," stated Kathleen Powell, co-founder of Cinequest. "Through this 'blind' selection process, we've built a program that organically and prominently features female directors and storytellers, speaking to the strength of these artists. Cinequest in 2018 continues to contribute to the reversal of fortunes for women in entertainment and tech, at a time when technology is 'leveling the playing field' for artists, enabling more access, creative mediums and distribution platforms than ever before."

Renowned for the exceptional quality and diversity of its program, CQ2018 will screen 258 feature, short and VR works, including World and U.S. Premieres, from 45 countries, and invite attendees to immerse themselves in a new storytelling medium at its curated VR Cinema and VR Experience Lounge. Over the 13-day program, Silicon Valley becomes the epicenter of tech and entertainment as global filmmakers, futurists, writers, technologists, actors and converge to celebrate their work in the world's leading innovation community and one of the most diverse metros in the world.

To learn more about the full festival lineup, and to purchase festival passes, tickets to screenings and special events, visit www.cinequest.org.

2018 Maverick Spirit Award Honorees | Andie MacDowell, Tatiana Maslany

Two outstanding artists will join past honorees including Jane Lynch (*Glee*, *Best in Show*) Rosario Dawson (*Rent*, *Seven Pounds*) and Jennifer Jason Leigh (*The Hateful 8*, *The Machinist*), as the recipients of this year's prestigious Maverick Spirit Award.

Andie MacDowell | March 10 at 7:00PM, California Theatre

Andie MacDowell's enduring grace, beauty and talent has been witnessed in classic comedies like *Groundhogs Day* and *Four Weddings and Funeral* and provocative indie films like *Sex, Lies & Videotape* and *Short Cuts*. MacDowell will present her latest triumph *Love After Love*, followed by a discussion of the film and her illustrious career.

Tatiana Maslany | March 8 at 7:30PM, California Theatre

Earning legions of fans – and an Emmy – in the titular role in the sci-fi thriller series, *Orphan Black*, and stunning critical acclaim in the emotional film, *Stronger*, Tatiana Maslany effortlessly captivates audiences across drama, sci-fi, and even comedy, proven in her reoccurring

CINEQUEST™

create, innovate, empower

appearances on *Parks & Rec*. Maslany also debut her short film, *Souls of Totality*, to Cinequest audiences followed by a discussion of this bold project, filmed with the great American eclipse of 2017 as the backdrop.

LUNAFEST Short Film Program | March 7th at 7PM, 3 Below Theater

On March 7th, preceding International Women's Day, Cinequest is proud to host LUNAFEST®, a traveling exhibition of short films by female filmmakers. Taking place at the recently renovated 3 Below Theater, this special event will be followed by a panel discussion with attending filmmakers, moderated by Carly Severn, co-host of the KQED podcast, 'The Cooler'.

Courageous Conversations Presented by Bank of America | March 1st at 7:15PM, Hammer Theatre

Bank of America presents **Courageous Conversations**, celebrating the voices of change makers and activists. The world premiere of the documentary *Adios Amor: The Search for Maria Moreno* will headline a program titled **Courageous Conversations**, spotlighting incredible stories of resilience, courage and fortitude. The film investigates the story of Maria Moreno, a mother of 12 that became the voice of activism for the California farm-workers community in the 1950s. Film director Laurie Coyles will join audiences for a discussion of the film, following its world premiere.

Kaiser Permanente Thrive Award Event: *Pick of the Litter* | March 3rd at 4:30PM, California Theatre

Following her previous Cinequest screenings of the heartwarming *Batkid Begins* and harrowing *Witch Hunt*, Bay Area filmmaker Dana Nachman returns with her latest triumph, *Pick of the Litter*. Being a boisterous and playful puppy is easy. But learning to behave and save someone's life is another matter. Follow the journey of Patriot, Potomac, Phil, Primrose and Poppet, a litter of Labradors from birth to working service, where only the best are chosen by Guide Dogs for the Blind for careers in service. The film is the recipient of this year's coveted Kaiser Permanente Thrive Award, for the most life-affirming films.

Highlights of Women in Cinema at CQ2018:

SPOTLIGHT FILMS

What They Had (Director by Elizabeth Chomko, Bay Area premiere)

When Ruth briefly disappears after wandering into a blizzard, her daughter Bridget (Hilary Swank, Academy Award-winner, *Million Dollar Baby*) returns home on her brother Nicky's (Michael Shannon, Academy Award-nominee, *Revolutionary Road*) insistence. While the family deals with Ruth's illness and family patriarch Burt's reluctance to let go of their life together, they must face old tensions and strained. Centered on a crisis stricken home, *What They Had* packs powerful performances from the cast, including Aimee Garcia (*Dexter*), and Taissa Farmiga (*American Horror Story*).

CINEQUEST™

create, innovate, empower

FEATURE FILMS

Arun

Director: Sarah Hanks; Country: United States; Genre: Drama

Living on the outskirts of Bangkok, Thailand three childhood friends are forced to grow up fast when one of them goes missing, sending the other two into the dangers of the big city and its seedy sex industry to get her back.

Birth of a Family

Director: Tasha Hubbard; Country: Canada; Genre: Documentary

Siblings Betty Ann, Rosalie, Ben and Esther were taken from their indigenous mother and deprived of the opportunity to grow up together. Reunited in their 50s, they spend one precious week together.

Facades

Director: Kaat Beels, Nathalie Basteyns; Country: Belgium; Genre: Drama

When Alex pays a surprise visit to her parents, the secret that father and daughter have kept safe for over 30 years now threatens to turn Alex's own marriage upside down.

From Baghdad to the Bay

Director: Erin Palmquist; Country: United States; Genre: Documentary

A translator for the U.S. forces in Iraq, Ghazwan Alshari was accused of being a double agent by the same people he was aiding. With his life and the safety of his family in jeopardy, Ghazwan fled Iraq and settled in San Francisco to begin anew and reveal yet another secret – he is gay.

Hermanos

Director: Laura Plancarte; Country: Mexico, United Kingdom; Genre: Documentary

A former pageant queen, who has lost her house, believes the path to American salvation runs through Donald Trump while two brothers attempt to return to the U.S. after being deported.

It's Hard to be Human

Director: Valeria Buhagiar; Country: Canada; Genre: Drama

Dreamlike, visceral, and at times surreal, *It's Hard to Be Human* elegantly poses the age-old questions of what it means to be human and how to have a connection with the Divine in a fallibly human world.

Little Women

Director: Clare Niederpruem; Country: United States; Genre: Drama

A modern and dynamic retelling of the Louisa May Alcott classic that takes the four March sisters from childhood to adult. Starring Lea Thompson (*Back to the Future*) and Lucas Grabeel (*High School Musical*) as Marmee and Mr. March.

The Poet and the Boy

Director: Kim Yang-Hee; Country: South Korea; Genre: Drama

CINEQUEST™

create, innovate, empower

A troubled teen turns a poet's life upside down. The film's dynamic ride exposes an emotional space that defies labels while exploring marriage, family roots, and social taboos.

Poor Jane

Director: Katie Orr; Country: United States; Genre: Drama

A housewife's comfortable life unravels when she suddenly stops loving her husband.

The Rainbow Experiment (Directed by Christina Kallas)

A chemistry class explosion at a Manhattan high school throws troublemaker Matty Fairchild into a coma. During an out-of-body experience, he sees an investigation that unravels a deeper side to the explosion.

Risking Light

Director: Dawn Mikkelson; Countries: United States, Australia, Cambodia; Genre: Documentary

From the streets of Minneapolis, the aboriginal lands of Australia, and the killing fields of Cambodia come the powerful stories of three people who had the courage to step out of the haunting, tragic darkness of the past, risking everything to reach the light of their own compassion.

Snapshots

Director: Melanie Mayron; Country: United States; Genre: Drama

Can the love of three generations be enough to accept decades of deceit? Starring three-time Academy Award-nominee and acting legend Piper Laurie (*Carrie*, *Twin Peaks*), Brooke Adams (*Gas, Food, Lodging*, *Thirty Something*) and Emily Goss (*The House on Pine Street*, *Castle*).

Speechless

Director: Hilde Van Mieghem; Country: Belgium; Genre: Drama

Jan is a 55-year-old successful novelist at the peak of his career. When his 85-year-old mother, Josée, suffers a massive stroke, he is faced with both her care and a fast approaching deadline for his novel.

Venus

Director: Eisha Marjara; Country: Canada; Genre: Drama

Can a transgender woman have it all? When Ralph skates into Sid's life claiming to be his biological son, life has already thrown a curve ball at Sid, a woman trapped inside a man's body. Starring Debargo Sunyal (*Everybody's Fine*).

Voevoda

Director: Zornitsa Sophia Popgantcheva; Country: Bulgaria, Croatia; Genre: Drama

Based on true events that occurred in 19th century Bulgaria, Roumena has beaten overwhelming odds and made heart-wrenching sacrifices to become the leader of a group of rebels who vow to fight for their people.

CINEQUEST™

create, innovate, empower

VR EXPERIENCES

After Solitary (Directed by Cassandra Herman)

Go inside the Maine State Prison to hear the harrowing story of one man's time in and out of solitary confinement.

Meeting Rembrandt: Master of Reality (Co-Directed by Bridget Erdmann)

What if you had the chance to meet the famous 17th century master painter? Get close up and personal as he changes history forever with his controversial painting, the Night Watch.

My Name is Peter Stillman (Co-directed by Rebecca Collis)

A thrilling private detective experience that combines hand-drawn animation and cutting-edge VR technology to distort the line between reality and fiction, placing you at the center as the strange and haunting story unfolds.

Sneaky Bears (Directed by Mary Ronan)

Can you survive, defeat the evil bear Frank, and save the world from destruction at the hands of the not so innocent cute and cuddly teddy bears?

The Gallery – Episode 2: Heart of the Emberstone (Directed by Jo Dunlop)

After receiving your Gauntlet, you must travel to a long-forgotten world where the past holds many secrets and reveal the true intentions of the dark figure in the Starseed.

Women on the Move (Directed by Shannon Carroll)

A grandmother's life in rural Niger changes when she enters a women's savings group. Will her granddaughter take the next step out of poverty?

More than 105,000 attendees will experience the work of internationally renowned and emerging artists and technologists, representing a spectrum of genres, genders, ethnicities, orientations, and viewpoints. Honoring the careers of icons, legends and risk takers in film, Cinequest will present its coveted Maverick Spirit Award to **Nicolas Cage** (*Leaving Las Vegas, Raising Arizona*), **Andie MacDowell** (*Sex, Lies & Videotape, Four Weddings and a Funeral*), **Tatiana Maslany** (*Orphan Black, Stronger*) and **Tom Cullen** (*Downtown Abbey, Black Mirror*). Director, producer, tech entrepreneur **Travis Cloyd** will be honored with this year's VR Visionary Award, recognizing his work in immersive entertainment. Additionally, this year's Media Legacy Award will be presented to **Ben Mankiewicz**, Primetime Host Turner Classic Movies (TCM) celebrating his incredible life and impact on the industry, as a writer, journalist and co-founder of *The Young Turks*.

This year's program includes 74 World and 55 U.S. premiering films, starring award winning actors including past Maverick Spirit Award winners William H. Macy, Rosario Dawson and Peter Fonda, as well

CINEQUEST™

create, innovate, empower

as Kal Penn, Michelle Pfeiffer, James McAvoy, Hilary Swank and Stanley Tucci. Visit www.cinequest.org for the full Cinequest Film & VR Festival 2018 program.

###

About Cinequest

A vanguard organization set in the Silicon Valley, Cinequest's uniqueness and impact result from being ahead of the curve in the powerful integration of creativity and technology. Cinequest fuses the world of the filmed arts with that of Silicon Valley's innovation to empower youth, artists, and innovators to create and connect – driving transformations and a better tomorrow. Cinequest does this through Cinequest Film & VR Festival, Picture The Possibilities, and its sister company Cinequest Mavericks Studio. (Voted **Best Film Festival** by *USA Today* Readers.)

CONTACT:

Dana Whitney
Cinequest
dana.whitney@cinequest.org
(408) 995-5033