

PRESS RELEASE

JEROME FOUNDATION'S 2021 NEW YORK CITY FILM, VIDEO AND DIGITAL PRODUCTION GRANTS ANNOUNCED

ST. PAUL, MN, November 8, 2021— The Jerome Foundation Board of Directors authorized 13 grants and 9 finalist awards totaling \$435,000 to early career filmmakers in New York City, based on the recommendations of the New York City Film, Video and Digital Production Grant Program Review Panel.

Of the 246 applications submitted for production grants, 13 production grants of \$30,000 each were authorized to:

- » Suha Araj, for the comedy *Khsara (Pickled)*
- » Sarah Friedland, for the narrative film *Familiar Touch*
- » Adrian Garcia Gomez, for the experimental animation *Las Catas*
- » Travis Gutiérrez Senger, for the documentary *ASCO: Without Permission*
- » Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich, for the experimental narrative *Madame Negritude*
- » Nadav Kurtz, for the documentary *Untitled Sam Project*
- » Eunice Lau, for the documentary *Son of the Soil*
- » Dean Colin Marcial, for the narrative film *Green Gorillas*
- » Kristian Mercado Figueroa, for the narrative film *Mataron A Pedro (They Killed Pedro)*
- » Yasmin Mistry, for the animated and live action documentary *Together* (working title)
- » Suneil Sanzgiri, for the experimental documentary *Two Refusals* (working title)
- » Illya Szilak & Cyril Tsiboulski, for the experimental narrative film (shot within virtual reality) *Fly Angel Soul*
- » Jingjing Tian, for the narrative film *Kid C*

Nine finalists were awarded \$5,000 each for their productions:

- » Sisa Bueno, for the lyrical documentary *For Venida, For Kalief*
- » Natalie Gee, for hybrid narrative and experimental film *Buried*
- » Ash Goh Hua, for the experimental documentary *The Feeling of Being Close to You* 能靠近你的感觉
- » Sonia Malfa, for the coming-of-age drama *It's Always Sunny*
- » Kate Marks, for the adventure/comedy *The Cow of Queens*
- » Hedia Maron, for the documentary *Before Us*
- » Rafael Samanez, for the docuseries *My Existence is Resistance*
- » Nova Scott James, for the documentary *Wild Darlings Sing The Blues (And it's a Song of Freedom)*
- » Taryn Ward, for the comedy *Broken Goods*

ABOUT THE GRANTEES



Photo by Kris Rumman.

SUHA ARAJ

Khsara (Pickled)

Grant Award: \$30,000

Suha Araj (she, her, hers) creates films that explore the displacement of immigrant communities. *The Cup Reader*, a comedy shot in Palestine about a fortune teller and her matchmaking abilities, screened at Tribeca Film Festival and was awarded the Next Great Filmmaker Award at the Berkshire International Film Festival and Baghdad International Film Festival. Araj has received support for her work from the Sundance Film Festival, Torino Film Lab, Independent Filmmaker Project, Berlinale Talent Project Market, Center for Asian American Media and Cine Qua Non Lab. She is the 2018 recipient of Tribeca/Chanel Through Her Lens production funding for her film *Rosa*, which tells the story of a woman who begins a business to ship undocumented immigrants to their home countries for burial. The film won the Best Short Narrative Award and the Lionsgate/STARZ Short Film Award at BlackStar Film Festival, and the Best Short Narrative Award at the Woodstock Film Festival. She is a 2021 Creative Capital Grantee for her feature film *Khsara (Pickled)* and a Warner Media 150 Fellow for her feature comedy/thriller, *Bowling Green Massacre*.

Khsara (Pickled) is a feature-length comedy film set in the Palestinian diaspora about women who don't get married "in time." Nearing the ripe age of 30, astrophysicist Nisreen will expire if not wed. She struggles to find her own path between her old-world Palestinian roots and the modern reality in which she lives, while her global family actively interferes, for better or worse. This film shows what happens when a Palestinian-American discovers that love is more important than marriage.



Photo by Matteo Bellomo.

SARAH FRIEDLAND

Familiar Touch

Grant Award: \$30,000

Sarah Friedland (she, her, hers) is a filmmaker and choreographer working at the intersection of moving images and moving bodies. Through hybrid, narrative, and experimental filmmaking, multi-channel video installation, and site-specific live dance performance, she stages and scripts bodies and cameras in concert with one another to elucidate and distill the undetected, embodied patterns of social life and the body politic. Her work has been screened, installed, and performed across film, art, and dance venues including New York Film Festival, New Directors/New Films, Ann Arbor Film Festival, BAMcinémathèque, Performa19 Biennial, Sharjah Art Foundation, the American Dance Festival, and Mubi,

among many others. She is a 2021 NYSCA/NYFA Fellow in Film/Video and a Pina Bausch Fellow for Dance and Choreography.

A coming of (old) age film, ***Familiar Touch*** follows an octogenarian woman's transition to life in an assisted living facility as she contends with her own desires and conflicting self-narratives amidst her cognitive impairment. The protagonist Ruth experiences herself primarily as a twenty-something woman, without losing the selves and experiences of her sixty intervening years. A feature-length narrative film, ***Familiar Touch*** centers the embodiment and physical experiences of the elder facility's residents and staff, reflecting and challenging our socio-cultural mores regarding aging (ageism) and independence, the work of caregivers, and collective living.



ADRIAN GARCIA GOMEZ

Las Catas

Grant Award: \$30,000

Adrian Garcia Gomez (he, him, his) is an interdisciplinary artist working in film/video, photography, and illustration. His artwork, which is largely autobiographical and often performative, explores the intersections of race, immigration, gender, spirituality, and sexuality. His films have screened at festivals around the world and at cultural institutions including Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), LA Filmforum and the Roxie Theater (San Francisco). His videos are distributed by Video Data Bank and Collectif Jeune Cinéma. He studied photography and non-western art history in San Francisco, 16mm filmmaking in Mexico City, and video in New York City. Gomez migrated to California from Mexico with his mother when she was six months pregnant with him. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn.

Las Catas is an experimental animation exploring femininity and the gender binary through a queer Latinx lens. The video, structured around a speculative meeting between the filmmaker and astrologer Walter Mercado, weaves together original and appropriated footage to create short vignettes in order to bring to light our complex relationship with gender and the rich realities and possibilities that have always existed within our culture.



TRAVIS GUTIÉRREZ SENGER

ASCO: Without Permission

Grant Award: \$30,000

Travis Gutiérrez Senger (he, him, his) is a Mexican-American director, writer, and producer. His debut feature, ***Desert Cathedral***, starring Lee Tergesen and Chaske Spencer, was released in 2016. His documentary short, ***White Lines and***

the Fever, about legendary Puerto Rican deejay Junebug, won awards at Tribeca Film Festival and SXSW in 2010. He is currently directing **ASCO: Without Permission**, a feature documentary about the avant-garde art collective ASCO, executive produced by Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna.

ASCO: Without Permission profiles the extraordinary an East Los Angeles based Chicano artist collective, active from 1972 to 1987. ASCO merged art and activism and challenged Latinx representation in the art world, politics, and Hollywood through their incendiary performance art, photography, video, and muralism. **ASCO: Without Permission** examines the importance of their subversive and wildly spirited work and how it serves as a framework for Latinx representation in today’s cultural landscape. Through formal invention and the creation of original works with the next generation of artists, along with ASCO’s incredible archive and interviews, the documentary provides a call to action while celebrating a group that was far ahead of its time.



MADELEINE HUNT-EHRLICH

Madame Negritude

Grant Award: \$30,000

Madeleine Hunt Ehrlich (she, her, hers) is a filmmaker and artist who has presented projects in Kingston, Jamaica, Miami, Florida, and extensively in the five boroughs of New York City. Her work has screened at the Guggenheim

Museum and the Whitney Museum of Art in New York, and at the New Orleans Film Festival, Doclisboa, and Blackstar Film Festivals. She has been featured in *Essence Magazine*, Studio Museum’s *Studio Magazine*, *ARC Magazine*, *BOMBLOG*, *Guernica Magazine*, and *Small Axe* journal, among others. She was named in *Filmmaker Magazine*’s 2020 “25 New Faces of Independent Film” and is the recipient of a 2020 San Francisco Film Society Rainin Grant, a 2019 Rema Hort Mann Award, a 2019 UNDO fellowship, a 2015 TFI ESPN Future Filmmaker Award and a 2014 Princess Grace Award.

Madame Negritude is the true story of Suzanne Roussi Césaire, the rebellious Martiniquan writer and wife of the Caribbean poet and politician Aimé Césaire. The Césaires were formative members of the group of writers, artists, and philosophers involved in the black power Négritude movement. The couple and their contemporaries led the rejection of colonialism and the rise of African and Caribbean independence movements. Négritude made an impact on how the black people viewed themselves. For fifty years, writer and activist Suzanne Césaire’s impact on influential works of art and political movements has been overshadowed by the political stardom of her husband. This film will break the silence about the important contributions of her life and work.



Photo by Nolis Anderson.

NADAV KURTZ

Untitled Sam Project

Grant Award: \$30,000

Nadav Kurtz (he, him, his) is an Israeli/Japanese/American filmmaker and editor born in Israel and raised in Europe and the United States. His work has been shown at the Sundance Film Festival, True/False Film Fest, Sheffield Doc Fest and more, and has been showcased by the Criterion Channel, POV, and the *New York Times*' Op-Docs. His directorial debut, ***Paraíso***, won Best Documentary Short at multiple international festivals and was short-listed for an Academy Award. His direction of 35 short accounts of immigration won him three Gold Pencil awards at The One Show. Kurtz was named in *Filmmaker Magazine*'s 2020 "25 New Faces of Independent Film" and was a Points North Fellow at the 2021 Camden International Film Festival. He is a member of the Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective.

When Omar was six years old, his father Sam produced ***Street Thief***—a fictional feature film about a burglar. Only weeks before the film's premiere, Sam was arrested for an armed robbery and sentenced to 24 years in prison. Now twenty-two, Omar struggles under the weight of his father's long absence, while Sam, still incarcerated, hopes to reach Omar through a creative collaboration on a screenplay. Through Kurtz's intimate relationship with Omar's family—whom he met while editing ***Street Thief***—this hybrid documentary draws on a wealth of personal archival, behind-the-scenes footage, and 16mm dailies from the film Sam produced before his arrest. It follows Omar's coming of age as he seeks freedom from his past, reckoning and reconciling on the way to healing his relationship with his father.



Photo by Wong Maye-E.

EUNICE LAU

Son of the Soil

Grant Award: \$30,000

As a descendant of immigrants displaced by conflict, Eunice Lau (she, her, hers) is drawn to stories about the journey of the immigrant and the profundity of hyphenated identities. It's this inheritance that makes her cognizant of injustice and makes her storytelling personal. Her feature documentary ***Accept the Call***, set in Minnesota's Somali community, explores the impact of injustice and intergenerational trauma. It aired on PBS' *Independent Lens* after screening at acclaimed film festivals. Her work has been supported by the Jerome Foundation, Tribeca Film Institute, Woodstock Film Festival, ITVS, Chicken & Egg Pictures, North Point Institute, and YouTube Impact Lab. A Masters of Fine Arts in film graduate from NYU, Lau was born and raised in Singapore and now lives in Queens on Lenape land.

Son of the Soil is a documentary film about the exigency of our ecocide told through the story of David Buckel, a lawyer-turned-environmentalist who set himself on fire in the name of climate change. Once celebrated for being a public defender of LGBTQ rights and for creating America’s largest hand-powered compost sites, David’s suicide captures the trauma and impact of climate change on our psyche. By documenting David’s journey as he struggled against the political expedient defunding of his cherished compost site, Lau’s documentary reveals how our profit-driven economy compels politicians to pay lip service to the climate movement. The film is also a love story to the world, capturing the zeal of his protégé Domingo Morales as he expands composting across public housing in NYC.



DEAN COLIN MARCIAL

Green Gorillas

Grant Award: \$30,000

Dean Colin Marcial (he, him, his) is an international filmmaker working in New York and Manila. His award-winning films have been screened at Toronto International Film Festival, SXSW, Sitges Film Festival, Fantastic Fest, and

Slamdance. Several of his shorts are Vimeo Staff Picks and Short of the Week selections and featured on VICE, CNN, and *Filmmaker Magazine*. He co-founded Calavera USA in 2010. This Brooklyn-based production company’s credits include ***All That I Am*** (SXSW Special Jury Prize 2013, distributed by Gunpowder & Sky), ***Fishtail*** (Tribeca Film Festival 2014, distributed by Netflix), and ***Yearbook*** (Sundance Film Festival Jury Prize 2014 and 25+ awards, 125+ festivals). In 2017, he was a recipient of the Tribeca All Access Grant and Tribeca All Access Alumni Grant and shortlisted for the Russo Brothers Fellowship.

Green Gorillas chronicles the rise and fall of an impassioned eco-terrorist group over an explosive decade in the Philippines. When they were young, they were reckless—and when they grow up, they face off. Jess, Eddie, and Emilia were best friends, a love triangle, and the leaders of an environmental action group who called themselves the ***Green Gorillas***. They staged protests and demonstrations by day—and by night, they organized tree-spiking, tree-sitting, and sabotage. At the heart of the film are visionaries whose ideals collide. Their emotions and history run deep. Three people, who long to be together, but keep themselves unrequited. In Tagalog this is called “hugot”—a deeply-felt aching inside your bones and body, a wistful longing for something that may never be.



Photo by Matt Carey.

KRISTIAN MERCADO FIGUEROA

Mataron A Pedro (They Killed Pedro)

Grant Award: \$30,000

Kristian Mercado Figueroa (he, him, his) is a Puerto Rican filmmaker from Spanish Harlem. His psychedelic reggaeton short film, ***Nuevo Rico***, won the Animation Jury Award at SXSW 2021, and in 2019 his short film/music video ***Pa'lante*** won a Jury Award at SXSW. In 2020 his screenplay ***Hawkbells*** won Slamdance's Screenwriting Award. He has been the recipient of awards and grants from Cinereach (2020) and others. In 2020, Kris received official selection at SXSW 2020 for the Grammy-nominated ***Colors*** by Black Pumas and "Miami Nights Comedy Special" for Hannibal Buress. His work can be seen on Netflix, Comedy Central, Adult Swim, and more. He's currently working with HBO and A24. Mercado's distinct voice addresses issues of identity, family, and systemic oppression across race and class.

Mataron A Pedro (They Killed Pedro) is a narrative film about a Puerto Rican man attending Harvard and leading labor strikes against a white Chief of Police and white Governor in the early 1930s. The compelling moments in this story range from an epic sugar cane workers strike in the backdrop of a burning plantation field to a husband and father putting his life on the line to defend his people. The film explores the question: "For whom has democracy been crafted in America?" It explores the themes of class struggles, family, colonialism, and the justice system.



YASMIN MISTRY

Together (working title)

Grant Award: \$30,000

Yasmin Mistry (she, her, hers) is an Emmy-nominated animator and filmmaker. Her work has been displayed worldwide, including showings at the United Nations and White House as well as at SXSW, Tribeca Film Festival, DOC NYC, and more. She is the recipient of grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Brooklyn Arts Council, Puffin Foundation, Riverside Sharing Fund, and Harnisch Foundation and was a two-time finalist for funding from the ITVS Diversity Development Fund. Films from her documentary shorts series about foster care have been featured in over 140 film festivals and nominated for more than 80 awards. In 2018, Mistry received the CASA Hero Award for her advocacy work, giving youth in the child welfare system an opportunity to be heard.

Together (working title) is a film about a Vietnamese-American woman's efforts to reconcile her tumultuous childhood by exploring her family history. This journey leads to the discovery of two sisters, a legacy of childhood abuse, and a forced confrontation with the haunting question: "How do you heal when you don't know the truth?" Blending

personal interviews, verité footage, and animation, this feature-length documentary explores family separation and trauma while questioning the destructive notion that seeking help is a sign of weakness instead of a path to empowerment. These sisters' stories weave a dynamic narrative, demanding changes to the ingrained social hierarchies which perpetuate intra-familial violence.



Photo by Arin Sang-urai.

SUNEIL SANZGIRI

Two Refusals (working title)

Grant Award: \$30,000

Suneil Sanzgiri (he, him, his) is an artist, researcher, and filmmaker whose work spans experimental video and film, essays, and installations and contends with questions of identity, heritage, culture, and diaspora related to structural violence. He graduated from MIT with a Masters of Science in Art, Culture and Technology in 2017. Sanzgiri's films have screened extensively around the world, including the New York Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Hong Kong International Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival, Sheffield Doc Fest, IndieLisboa International Film Festival, Punto de Vista International Documentary Film Festival of Navarra, The Viennale International Film Festival Vienna, LA Film Forum, e-Flux, 25 FPS Festival, and won awards at BlackStar Film Festival, Open City Documentary Festival, VideoEx Festival, and Images Festival. Sanzgiri has participated in residencies and fellowships, including SOMA, MacDowell, Pioneer Works, and was named in *Filmmaker Magazine's* 2021 "25 New Faces of Independent Film."

Two Refusals (working title) is a personal journey through ancestry, anti-colonialism, and harbingers of dissent across India and Africa, inspired from the myths of an unlikely source—Portugal's oldest work of epic poetry *Os Lusíadas*, or *The Lusíads*—repositioning key elemental and mythological figures to ask the question, "How can one refuse an empire?" The film weaves together personal reflections of Sanzgiri's family history as freedom fighters against the occupying Portuguese forces in Goa with stories of liberation and resistance across the Goan diaspora. This film focuses on the bonds of solidarity that developed across India and Africa against the Portuguese Empire.



ILLYA SZILAK & CYRIL TSIBOULSKI

Fly Angel Soul

Grant Award: \$30,000

Illya Szilak (she, her, hers) is a writer, artist, director, and creative producer. Shaped by her experiences as a physician, her richly collaborative, multidisciplinary art practice explores mortality, embodiment, identity and belief in an increasingly virtual world. Her longtime artistic partner

is Cyril Tsiboulski (he, him, his). Their first virtual reality piece, **Queerskins: a love story** (2018), received a Peabody Futures of Media Award for transmedia. Their second, **Queerskins: ARK**, which features live dance performance was developed at The Venice Biennale College V.R. Lab. Their most recent work, **In My Own Skin** (2021), premiered at CPH:DOX festival. It combines handmade textiles, photography, wearable avatars, and virtual architecture. Szilak continues to work as a doctor, currently caring for inmates at Rikers Island, NYC.

Fly Angel Soul is a short experimental narrative film shot within virtual reality. It tells the story of Sebastian, a young gay physician estranged from his rural Catholic Missouri family, who, having moved to Mali to heal the sick, is diagnosed with AIDS. Inspired by a quote from Meister Eckhart “(let us) rejoice in the everlasting truth in which the highest angel and the soul and the fly are equal,” **Fly Angel Soul** is shot in real-time, from the unique points of view of three networked virtual cameras adopting the “roles” of the eponymous characters. The “human” p.o.v. will be that of a live cinematographer moving through the virtual set. Thus, in **Fly Angel Soul**, “liveness” resides in the “embodied” cameras even more so than in the actors in the story. Finding commonality with video games and live performance, **Fly Angel Soul** explores the potential for virtual production techniques to expand 2-D cinematic language.



JINGJING TIAN

Kid C

Grant Award: \$30,000

Jingjing Tian (she, her, hers) is a Chinese American filmmaker based in NYC. Born in Northeast China, she immigrated to Texas at the age of nine, where she learned to speak with a twang, wore a belt buckle, and discovered her Asian American identity. Tian explores these identities and the themes of autonomy and oppression in her work and her life. Writing and directing are therapy for her. A Sundance Institute Uprise Grantee, she is working on her first feature film, **Kid C**. Her short films have been screened at Nitehawk Cinema with MoMA, Cleveland International Film Festival, Bentonville Film Festival, Seattle Asian American Film Festival, and Museum of the Chinese in America. Her work has been profiled in *Paper Magazine*, *AM New York*, *BuzzFeed*, *High Country News*, *South China Morning Post*, and more.

A character and emotionally driven film, **Kid C** is a narrative feature that follows Lee during her first year as a Chinese immigrant in a small town in Texas during the late 1990s. Cracking under the pressures of volatile parents, Lee, a rambunctious 10-year-old, attempts to reclaim a sense of childhood with her best friend John, an African American boy. But when she accidentally reveals a secret that he shares, their friendship is threatened and life begins to collapse. Drawing from field research and personal experiences, **Kid C** explores a child’s agency in the face of parental abuse and intergenerational trauma.

ABOUT THE FINALISTS



SISA BUENO

For Venida, For Kalief

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Originally from New York City, Sisa Bueno (she, her, hers; pronoun flexible) is a traveling film and multimedia maker dedicated to making inaccessible stories more accessible to audiences. She studied film production and interactive technologies at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. The NBC Network named Bueno a 2013 Latino Innovator for her upcoming documentary ***To the Mountains*** (in post-production) about decolonization in Bolivia. She has completed a short film for AJ+ related to the same subject. Bueno is a recipient of the ITVS-PBS Diversity Development grant and ITVS Open Call, Hot Docs CrossCurrents grant, Bay Area Video Coalition MediaMaker fellowship, Points North Institute North Star Fellowship, and the IDA Pare Lorentz Documentary Fund for her current work in progress, ***For Venida, For Kalief*** (in production).

A late mother's poetry echoes a movement for criminal justice reform for her son in ***For Venida, For Kalief***. This lyrical film is an intentional departure from current storytelling approaches, focusing on personhood to inspire and reimagine a new kind of legacy for Kalief Browder. The film presents Venida's words as poetic cinema, showcasing the full spectrum of everyday life for people of color in New York City, reveling in lyrical moments of Black and Brown joy and spirituality, as well as constant police surveillance, struggle, and activism. The film explores the concept of legacy and personhood, lyrically weaving together the deeply personal emotions of Venida's poems with the community activism that emerged in the aftermath of Kalief's death.



NATALIE GEE

Buried

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Natalie Gee (she, her, hers) was made in England, assembled in Australia, and directly imported to NYC. She's a filmmaker and festival programmer based in Brooklyn. Her shorts have premiered at Oscar-qualifying festivals in the U.S. and overseas. Most recently, she wrote and directed ***Waves***, a dance narrative starring Lily Baldwin. Her experimental short ***Queendom*** was featured on NoBudge and nominated for Best Experimental film at the Miami Short Film Festival. Gee shadowed Oscar-nominated director Steph Green on HBO's ***The Deuce*** with James Franco and Maggie Gyllenhaal. She's a programmer for Santa Barbara, HollyShorts, and Aesthetica film festivals and has curated feminist film nights at the Brooklyn Museum. She's

previously been on the screening committee for the Telluride Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, and Hamptons International Film Festival.

Buried is a hybrid narrative and experimental film exploring the physical and the surreal experiences surrounding work burnout, grief, and rage. The lyrical story, to be shot on 16mm, follows a winemaker plagued by stress and sickness who is convinced her vineyard is being poisoned until a sinister presence reveals the truth around her chaotic and mysterious illness. With bold scores and physical soundscapes, Gee's intimate approach to stylized terrains explore how difficult it is to channel self-compassion when we push ourselves to exhaustion.



Photo by Kristie Chua.

ASH GOH HUA

The Feeling of Being Close to You

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Ash Goh Hua (any pronouns) is a filmmaker and cultural worker from Singapore, based in New York. They create documentary and experimental-based work informed by the politics of abolition and autonomy. Often utilizing archives and anachronistic formats (Super8, VHS), Hua's films show different imaginings of the possibilities of liberated futures.

They have been supported by programs and fellowships from the Sundance Institute, Jacob Burns Film Center Creative Culture, NeXt Doc, IF/Then, and NYFA. Their films have screened and won awards at film festivals internationally and have been distributed by PBS and Third World Newsreel. Hua is also a Common Notions collective member.

The Feeling of Being Close to You 能靠近你的感觉 documents an attempt at healing the trauma of touch between mother and child. Driven by a pure desire for intimacy, Hua talks openly with his mother for the first time about the intergenerational trauma and abuse within their lives. Using present-day phone conversations juxtaposed with archival VHS footage, this act of filmmaking becomes a vessel to reconnect with past selves and re-write once cyclical destinies, thus generating new possibilities of living and relating.



Photo by Delphine Diallo.

SONIA MALFA

It's Always Sunny

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Sonia Malfa (pronoun flexible) is a filmmaker who incorporates her love of the surreal, culture, and nature with a passion for visual poetry and storytelling. Malfa's short experimental documentary ***Simone: A Survivor's Story*** won a Clio Award, Webby Award (Jury), and was shortlisted at the 1.4 Awards, One Show Awards and Kinsale Shark

Awards. It also screened at the Atlanta Film Festival. Her narrative short, **Close Your Eyes**, premiered at Tribeca Film Festival. Malfa has been awarded the NYSCA Individual Artist grant and was selected for the DGA/AICP Commercial Director's Diversity Program. She holds a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in American Studies (Gender and Race Relations).

Following the death of her father, a young poet seizes the opportunity to escape her controlling mother by embarking on a magical, cross-country journey. **It's Always Sunny** is a queer coming-of-age road trip drama of a young, Black woman's empowering journey of self-discovery. The film creates a distinct cinematic style that blends poetry and narrative drama exploring storytelling beyond genre molds. Co-written by Sonia Malfa and Trae Harris, the film will be Malfa's feature directorial debut with Trae Harris performing the lead character, Sunflower.



KATE MARKS

The Cow of Queens

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Writer/director Kate Marks (she, her, hers) comes from a long line of tricksters. Her tricky films **Pearl Was Here** (65 million YouTube views), **Manic** (New York Television Festival Best Drama), **Miracle Maker** (Queens World Films

Festival Best Short), **7 Day Gig**, and **Homebody** have screened at Tribeca Film Festival, Slamdance, Edinburgh International Film Festival, Austin Film Festival, Nashville Film Festival, Atlanta Film Festival, Cleveland International Film Festival, New Orleans Film Festival, PBS, HBO Go, and more. Past fellowships include the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship, Academy Nicholl Award, Film Independent Screenwriting Lab and Project Involve, and the HBO ACCESS Directing Fellowship. After graduating from Brown University, Marks spent nine years writing and directing plays in NYC. She then went on to get her Master of Fine Arts in film directing at CalArts. Additionally, she is a mom, a teacher, and a stilt-walker. www.katemarks.net

The Cow of Queens is an adventure/comedy/coming-of-age mash-up about a father (played by Rob Morgan) and his daughter who embark on one last adventure to save a cow that has broken loose from a local slaughterhouse: running free on the streets of Queens. Chasing an impossible dream like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, they contend with the Butcher who wants his damn cow back and the dad's cancer, which promises to separate this inseparable duo. Inspired by personal experience (with cancer, not cows), **The Cow of Queens** is a story about love and the ways we rally for each other when shit hits the fan. It's about characters having fun in the midst of terrible pain. It's about finding comedy in the middle of drama. It's about celebrating the best of humanity in the worst of times.



Photo by Lauryn Siegel.

HEDIA MARON

Before Us

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Hedia Maron's (pronoun flexible) films highlight the absurdity of life and give voice to weirdos and outcasts. Maron is interested in uncovering deeper truths through humor, unexpected imagery, and an emotional investigation into subjects, which often include family and friends.

Maron's films have screened at Sundance Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, Documenta, SXSW, Outfest, Tribeca Film Festival, New Museum, Anthology Film Archives, The Jewish Museum, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Tensta konstall, and Queens Museum.

Before Us is a feature-length documentary that reflects on 1960s counterculture, adoption in North America, and changing family structures. The film takes an unconventional approach to the adoption narrative, uncovering the ramifications of Maron's family secrets and placing them within the context of a counterculture that devalues women and children. ***Before Us*** has finished principal photography and Maron is working on contextualizing her family's story within the larger cultural moment through voice-over and archival footage.



Photo by Leilani Clark.

RAFAEL SAMANEZ

My Existence is Resistance

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Rafael Samanez (he, him, his) was born in Brazil to Peruvian parents. He resides in Queens, NY. His previous work as a community organizer inspires his films which delve into the intersections of gender, race, migration, and class. He graduated with a Master of Fine Arts from the City College

of New York in 2019 and received a 2018 Princess Grace Award/Honoraria. Rafael was a John Grist Documentary/BAFTA New York Scholar and a top finalist for the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship in 2020. His film ***Out of the Shadows*** won Best Documentary in the 2019 Cityvisions Film and Video Showcase. It appeared in nine film festivals, including the Urbanworld Film Festival and the New York Latino Film Festival. Alongside filmmaking, Samanez teaches media production at the City College of New York.

My Existence is Resistance is a verité-style docuseries covering the life and work of three influential transgender women of color who break down barriers in New York City. Amidst a global pandemic, they lead their communities in the fight for equal housing, healthcare, jobs, political representation, and lives free of violence. Having learned early how to survive the trials life threw at them with quick wit, creativity, and boundless resiliency, these heroines are poised to carve a new path for trans people. We follow their journeys closely as they make bold moves to lead their lives in their truths, harness internal strength during hard times and overcome setbacks on their paths to greatness.



NOVA SCOTT-JAMES

Wild Darlings Sing The Blues (And it's a Song of Freedom)

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Nova Scott-James (she, her, hers) is a filmmaker, artist, and creative coach from Harlem, NYC. Her childhood experiences of being flooded with the sounds and culture of jazz have impacted her creative aesthetic greatly as her work honors improvisation, altered states of consciousness, ritual, and collaboration. Scott-James is also a reiki practitioner and dedicated intuitive worker—she uses these abilities to serve people as a director and creative coach by guiding them in honoring their creative genius.

Wild Darlings Sing The Blues (And it's a Song of Freedom) is a feature-length documentary following the Wild Darlings, a queer healing arts collective of black women and non-binary activists, as they embark on an epic road trip from New York to a former slave plantation in Virginia. The Darlings are tasked with harnessing their “healer within” to bless the plantation land, honor their ancestors and explore their experiences of racial and gender-based violence. They create a performance art homage to The Blues.



TARYN WARD

Broken Goods

Finalist Award: \$5,000

Taryn Ward (he, him, his) is a filmmaker and writer currently working and living in Brooklyn, NY. His often deadpan-centric narrative-based filmmaking tends to revolve around the quotidian and the idiosyncrasies of the everyday layabout. Ward’s films have been screened in the Fast Forward Film Festival, NewFilmmakers at Anthology Film Archives and Atlanta Film Festival.

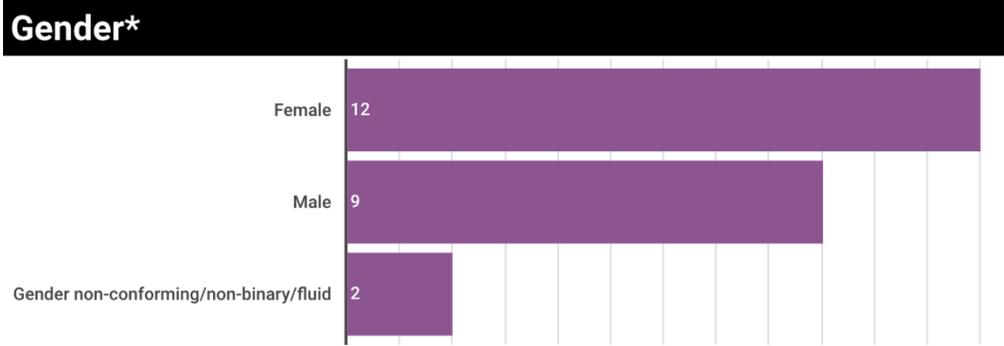
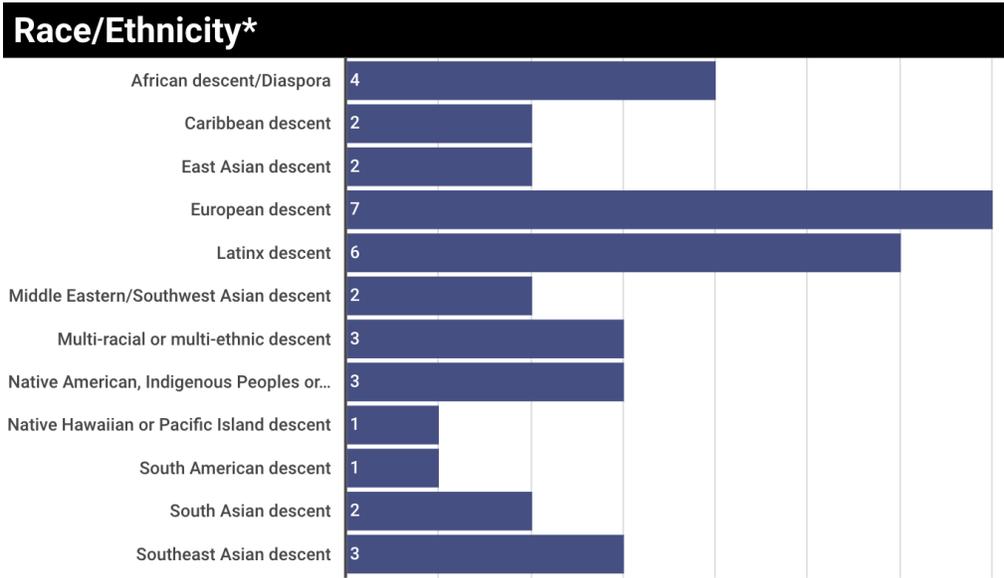
Ward’s upcoming comedic film *Broken Goods* follows the story of an aloof man named Vincent who, in addition to struggling with a sugar addiction, becomes a full-time test subject for clinical drug and product test trials in lieu of working a steady nine to five. Despite the risk, there’s a small fortune to be made when donating one’s body to experimental research—and instead of working more hours at his retail position, Vincent finds this risk worth the reward. Driven mostly by its satirical tone and existential character study, *Broken Goods* also underscores the relationship between mind and self as well as one’s relationship to both state and labor.

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

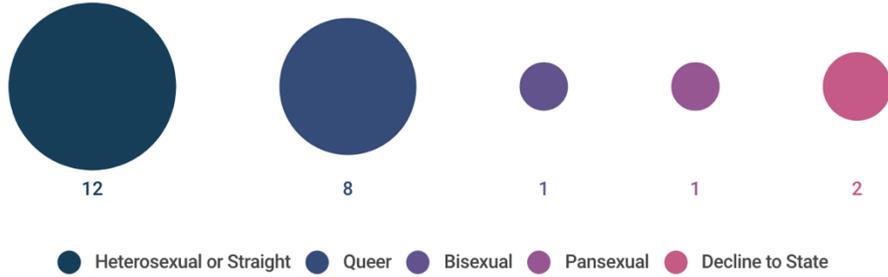
Jerome Foundation examines its grantmaking through an equity, diversity and inclusivity lens to ensure our commitment to EDI is realized in action. The demographics we are attentive to include race, gender, sexuality, generation and physical ability. Information about this round of grantees and finalists, along with panelists, follows and is also available [on our website](#).

2021 New York City Grantees and Finalists by...

* respondents could select more than one identifier



Sexuality*

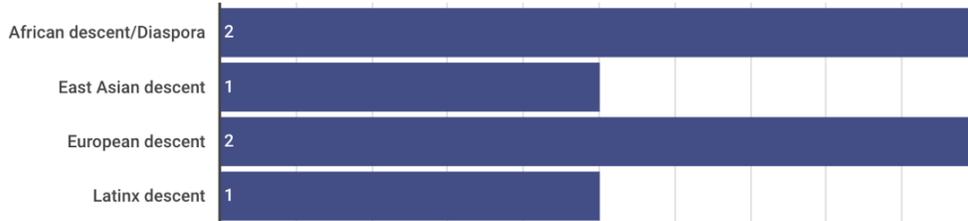


No grantees/finalists identified as transgender.
Two grantees/finalists are part of the disability community.

2021 New York City Panelists by...

* respondents could select more than one identifier

Race/Ethnicity*



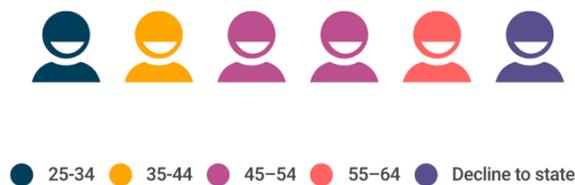
Gender*



Sexuality



Age



Geography



One panelist is transgender.
One panelist is part of the disability community.

PRESS CONTACT: Ben Cameron, President
bcameron@jeromefdn.org
(651) 925-5617

For downloadable images, go to <https://www.jeromefdn.org/logos>. Individual artist images are available upon request.

ABOUT THE JEROME FOUNDATION

The Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship is named for Jerome Hill (1905-72), an Academy Award-winning filmmaker, painter, photographer, composer, and supporter of the arts and artists. Throughout his life, he offered financial assistance to numerous artists and humanists to continue their work and in 1964 created what is today known as the Jerome Foundation.

Today, the Foundation seeks to contribute to a dynamic and evolving culture by supporting the creation, development, and production of new works by early career/emerging artists. It focuses resources on grants to early career artists and those nonprofit arts organizations that serve them in the state of Minnesota and in the five boroughs of New York City.