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## **Sundance Institute's 2020 Directors & Screenwriters Lab Fellows**

### **Newly Expanded Advisor Roster Spans Filmmaking Disciplines**

Los Angeles, CA -- 11 independent filmmakers developing 10 projects have been selected for the **2020 Sundance Institute Directors and Screenwriters Labs**, reimagined and expressed digitally this year on [Sundance Co//ab](https://sundanceco.org/lab). These Labs are at the heart of the nonprofit Institute's long-standing support for artists, and will connect curated selections of Fellows with Creative Advisors and Industry mentors across multiple disciplines.

At the **Directors Lab** (June 1-19th), filmmakers will participate in a rigorous schedule of advisor presentations, scene analysis sessions, directing exercises, one-on-one meetings, and -- new this year -- collaborative conversations across a wide range of industry disciplines, including casting, production design, film scoring, and producing. Immediately following, the **Screenwriters Lab** (June 22-25th) provides the opportunity to process the insight gained from the Directors Lab through one-on-one story sessions with screenwriter advisors, and find inspiration and guidance for continued development of their screenplays.

Under the leadership of Feature Film Program Founding Director **Michelle Satter** and Deputy Director **Ilyse McKimmie**, the Labs are part of a year-round continuum of customized support for Fellows, which can include creative mentorship, granting at critical stages, and tactical advice from program staff and industry professionals.

The group of creative advisors is made up of directors, cinematographers, editors, actors, and screenwriters including **Miguel Arteta, Joan Darling, Rick Famuyiwa, Naomi Foner, John Gatins, Gyula Gazdag** (Artistic Director, Directors Lab), **Lesli Linka Glatter, Stephen Goldblatt, Keith Gordon, Susannah Grant, Randa Haines, Ed Harris, Karyn Kusama, Kasi Lemmons, Malia Scotch Marmo, Walter Mosley, Robert Redford, Nancy Richardson, Howard Rodman** (Artistic Director, Screenwriters Lab), **Elena Soarez, Joan Tewkesbury, Dylan Tichenor, Lynette Wallworth, Zoë White, Tyger Williams, Erin Cressida Wilson, Doug Wright and Benh Zeitlin**.

For the first time, the 2020 Directors Lab will include advisors across other areas of creative collaboration, including casting directors **Jodi Angstreich, Eyde Belasco, Maribeth Fox and Richard Hicks**, production designers **Akin McKenzie, Beth Mickle and Inbal Weinberg**, composers **Peter Golub, Heather McIntosh and Mervyn Warren**, and producers **Mollye Asher, Mary Jane Skalski and Nina Yang Bongiovi**.

The Sundance Institute Feature Film Program is supported by explore.org, a direct charitable activity of the Annenberg Foundation; Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; Will & Jada Smith Family Foundation; Maja Kristin; Universal Filmed Entertainment Group; Amazon Studios; Hollywood Foreign Press Association; Karen Lauder; RT Features; Sandra and Malcolm Berman Charitable Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund; NHK/NHK Enterprises, Inc.; Comedy Central; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Kimberly Steward—K Period Media; SAGindie; Philip Fung—A3 Foundation; Directors Guild of America; Writers Guild of America West; Rosalie Swedlin and Robert Cort; and the Deborah Reinisch and Michael Theodore Fund.

**Fellows and projects selected for the 2020 Directors Lab are:**

**Aftersun** (United Kingdom/U.S.A.)  
**Charlotte Wells**, writer/director

A woman reflects on shared joy and private melancholy in the final days she spent with her father, filling in the gaps of banal home-video footage captured on holiday at a Turkish seaside resort twenty years earlier.



**Charlotte Wells** is a Scottish filmmaker based in Brooklyn. She is a graduate of the MBA/MFA program at NYU, where she was supported by BAFTA New York and Los Angeles. Wells was featured in *Filmmaker Magazine*'s "25 Faces of Independent Film" in 2018 and was a fellow at the 2020 Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab.

***Birth/Rebirth*** (U.S.A.)

**Laura Moss**, co-writer/director

**Brendan O'Brien**, co-writer

In this all-female adaptation of the Frankenstein story, a grieving maternity nurse and an obsessive morgue technician are unexpectedly bound together in a quest to re-animate a deceased child.



**Laura Moss** is a filmmaker from New York City whose work has screened at MoMA, Tribeca, Rotterdam and SXSW. She was named one of *Filmmaker Magazine*'s "25 New Faces of Independent Film" in 2017 and her short film, *Fry Day*, which is currently available on the Criterion Channel, premiered at SXSW in 2017. Her latest project, the pilot of the sci-fi/comedy series *neurotica*, starring Karen Gillan and Jon Bass, premiered at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival and won Best Director for a Comedy Pilot at Seriesfest. Moss is a 2020 Women at Sundance Adobe Fellow.



**Brendan O'Brien** is a writer and producer whose films have screened at SXSW, Rotterdam, Tribeca, and Clermont-Ferrand. His work has been included in the London Review of Books and the Zombie Movie Encyclopedia.

***Chalino*** (U.S.A.)

**Jesus Celaya**, writer/director

The true story of Chalino Sanchez, the originator of the narcocorrido, who immigrated from Sinaloa to Los Angeles in the early 1990s and started a musical revolution with his songs about the lives of Mexican outlaws.



**Jesus Celaya** is a Mexican American genre writer and director raised between the mountains of Washington State and the deserts of Sonora, Mexico. He finally settled in Los Angeles for film school, where he now resides. Celaya's work has placed in several prominent screenwriting contests and he was a fellow at the 2020 Sundance Screenwriters Lab. He is currently developing several projects that marry his love of history and folklore with his passion for cinema. Celaya is the recipient of the 2020 Sundance Institute Latinx Fellowship.

**Chinks** (U.S.A.)

**Bing Liu**, writer/director

A Chinese American teenager discovers his voice by making skate videos in his rustbelt hometown while navigating a complex family relationship between his mother, stepfather, and half-brother.



**Bing Liu** is a Chicago-based filmmaker best known for the Academy Award- and Emmy-nominated documentary *Minding the Gap*, which premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and went on to win a Peabody Award. He directed three storylines on *America To Me*, a 10-hour series from Steve James that examines racial inequities in the U.S. education system. Liu is a 2017 Film Independent Fellow and Garrett Scott Development Grant recipient and graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is in post-production on his second feature documentary, following two young men and their mentors transforming lives in two of Chicago's neighborhoods most affected by gun violence. Liu is the recipient of the 2020 Sundance Institute Asian American Fellowship, made possible in part by the A3 Foundation.

**Frybread Face and Me** (U.S.A.)

**Billy Luther**, writer/director

Two adolescent Navajo cousins from different worlds bond during a summer herding sheep on their grandmother's ranch in Arizona while learning more about their family's past and themselves.



**Billy Luther** (Navajo, Hopi and Laguna Pueblo) is the director/producer of the award-winning documentary, *Miss Navajo*, which premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and aired nationally on PBS' Independent Lens that same year. His second documentary feature *Grab* premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and aired nationally on Public Television that same year. His latest short documentary film *Red Lake* had its world premiere at the 2016 Los Angeles Film Festival and was nominated for Best Documentary Short at the 2016 International Documentary Association Awards. In 2018, he launched his web-series *alter-NATIVE* for PBS' IndieLens StoryCast.

**Nanny** (U.S.A.)

**Nikyatu**, writer/director

Aisha is an undocumented nanny caring for a privileged child. As she prepares for the arrival of her own child she left behind in her native country, a violent supernatural presence invades her reality, jeopardizing the American Dream she's carefully pieced together.



Sierra Leonean American filmmaker **Nikyatu**'s films have screened at top tier film festivals nationally and internationally. Her short film *Suicide By Sunlight*, a project funded by THROUGH HER LENS and sponsored by the Tribeca Film Institute and Chanel, made its debut at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. *Nanny*, her feature screenplay, was selected for the 2019 Sundance Institute Creative Producing Labs & Summit, the 2020 Screenwriters Lab and the 2019 IFFP Project Forum. Most recently, *Nanny* was one of 35 projects selected for the 2020 Creative Capital Awards. Nikyatu made her television directing debut with an episode of the original scripted horror anthology *Two Sentence Horror Stories*, which premiered on CW in September 2019. She is a tenure track Assistant Professor in the Film & Video department at George Mason University, where she teaches screenwriting and directing.

***The Spirit Guest* (South Africa)**  
**Fanyana Hlabangane**, writer/director

Brothers Tito and Kgabane, two men who merely tolerate each other, lead mundane lives on the fringes of Johannesburg. During a mercilessly dry winter, their turbulent childhood pain simmers when their dead mother arrives in the flesh, sending the brothers' relationship into a tailspin.



South African filmmaker and photographer **Fanyana Hlabangane** was raised in Alexandra Township, a place that drove him to interrogate what it means to be a black man today. He has written episodic content for Mnet, Africa's premium pay television broadcaster, and his shorts have also screened at international film festivals. Hlabangane's photographic work was recently exhibited at the 12th Recontres de Bamako, Africa's most significant photo biennale. His debut feature script *The Spirit Guest* was selected for the Realness Residency in 2019, and Realness is now attached to the project as co-producers. In 2020, co-producer Mmabatho Kau was selected to take *The Spirit Guest* to IFFR Pro's Rotterdam Lab, while Hlabangane developed the script further at the 2020 Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab. Hlabangane is currently a writer on Netflix's first African original series, *Queen Sono*, and is in pre-production on his next short film, *Home for the Weekend*.

***Tiger Girl* (U.S.A.)**  
**Andrew Thomas Huang**, writer/director

Set in 1967 Los Angeles, *Tiger Girl* is a coming of age fantasy about a repressed Chinese American teenage girl haunted by a tiger lurking in her attic. When pressured by her immigrant mother's rigid social expectations, the girl must learn that the beast upstairs is the tiger within that will set her free.



With a passion for combining queer Asian immigrant stories with folklore and mythology, LA-based filmmaker **Andrew Thomas Huang** uses his background in visual effects, puppetry, and animation to craft hybrid fantasy worlds. He has directed Grammy-nominated music videos for Bjork, Radiohead's Thom Yorke, and FKA Twigs, among others. Serving as creative director for Bjork's VR exhibition Bjork Digital, Huang created multiple immersive experiences for the pioneering traveling installation. His films have been commissioned by and exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art, NYC, The Sydney Opera House, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Huang continues his foray into narrative film with *Tiger Girl*, which has received support from Sundance Institute, Film Independent, Cinereach,

IFP, and K Period Media. His most recent narrative short *Kiss of the Rabbit God* premiered at Tribeca Film Festival 2019.

**These artists will be joined at the Screenwriters Lab by the following fellows:**

***Sisyphus*** (China)

**Xixi Wang**, writer/director

Based on true events, a single mother fights to uncover the truth after her son dies in a subway station in China. Over the course of the investigation, she confronts an impenetrable bureaucracy but also rediscovers herself.



**Xixi Wang**, a Chinese writer and director, graduated from Beijing Film Academy with a B.A. in Screenwriting and received an MFA in Directing from Columbia University. She is currently teaching in the Department of Screenwriting and Film Studies at Beijing Film Academy. Her films have screened at major Chinese and international festivals. Her MFA thesis film, *Greenhouse*, won Best Director, Audience Award, and Jury Selects at Columbia University Film Festival.

***Yurt*** (Turkey)

**Nehir Tuna**, writer/director

Forced to leave the comfort of his middle class lifestyle at his father's behest, eleven-year-old Ahmet is sent to an all-boys religious dormitory where he must navigate familial expectations, his religious obligations, and the childhood to which he so desperately clings.



**Nehir Tuna** is a Turkish screenwriter and director. Tuna is a 2019 Sundance Institute Feature Film Program Fellow and 2018 Nipkow Fellow. He has written and directed various short films, including *The Shoes*, a prequel to his forthcoming feature. Tuna is currently in the MFA Graduate Film Program at Columbia University and holds an MFA in directing from Rochester Institute of Technology.

### **Sundance Institute**

Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, and media to create and thrive. The Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. [Sundance Collab](#), a digital community platform, brings artists together to learn from each other and Sundance Advisors and connect in a creative space, developing and sharing works in progress. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences and artists to ignite new ideas, discover original voices, and build a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as *The Farewell*, *Late Night*, *The Souvenir*, *The Infiltrators*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Eighth Grade*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, *Hereditary*, *RBG*, *Call Me By Your Name*, *Get Out*, *The Big Sick*, *Top of the Lake*, *Winter's Bone*, *Dear White People*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *State of the Union*, *Indecent*, *Spring Awakening*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Fun Home*. Join [Sundance Institute](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).