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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Mill Valley Film Festival**  
Showcasing the Best in Independent and World Cinema  
Thursday, October 5-15, 2023

## MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS LOCAL FILMS & FILMMAKERS



*The 9 Lives of Barbara Dane*, ©Chris Strachwitz



*Adrift*



*Farming While Black*



*Water for Life* ©Will Parrinello



*Skin of Glass* ©ZDFILM

**SAN RAFAEL, CA, (September 1, 2023)** – The Mill Valley Film Festival (MVFF), presented by the California Film Institute (CAFILM), is delighted to reveal the initial lineup of local films set to debut at this year's Festival, returning to Marin County October 5-15, 2023. Among the impressive selection of titles, MVFF is proud to introduce the latest works from acclaimed Bay Area filmmakers as well as films that highlight the natural beauty of the Bay Area, and tell local stories, underscoring the Festival's commitment to spotlighting both established and up-and-coming talents within the region.

The California Film Institute is thrilled to announce the following local films that have been officially confirmed to screen at the 46th Mill Valley Film Festival. The complete schedule will be announced and available online at [www.mvff.com](http://www.mvff.com) on Friday, September 8, 2023.

### Features

***The 9 Lives of Barbara Dane*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Maureen Gosling) Celebrates the life of singer Barbara Dane, a woman whose stellar voice supported justice movements in the Bay Area and beyond for decades, garnering an impressive FBI file along the way. Deeply respected by fellow luminaries in folk, blues, and jazz, Dane built a far reaching legacy with music, activism, and love. *In English & Spanish with English subtitles – World Premiere*

- Director Maureen Gosling lives in Berkeley
- Barbara Dane lives in Oakland

***A Double Life*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Catherine Masud) Catherine Masud's documentary unravels the mystery of Stephen Bingham's past as a civil rights activist/lawyer and political fugitive, including his alleged involvement in a 1971 prison rebellion that left six people dead. In the aftermath of this incident, he spent 13 years living underground with an assumed identity, finally returning in 1984 to stand trial.

- Film Subject Stephen Bingham lives in Marin
- Black Panther leader George Jackson died during the San Quentin Prison rebellion
- Producer Abby Ginzberg lives in Oakland

***Adrift*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Rory Kennedy) Veteran filmmaker Rory Kennedy launches a welcome intervention into the ongoing global refugee crisis. Adopting personal and historical perspectives as well as testimonies from experts and relevant stakeholders, *Adrift* is a passionate and evidence-driven appeal for compassion and respect for the rights of refugees. *In English, Rohingya, Russian, & Spanish with English subtitles* – **World Premiere**

- Film subject Khaled Hosseini lives in the Bay Area
- Film subject Yami now lives in Half Moon Bay with her family

***Avenue of the Giants*** (US, narrative feature, dir. Finn Taylor) Bay Area writer-director Finn Taylor (*Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait*, MVFF41) movingly dramatizes the true story of Auschwitz survivor Herbert Heller (Stephen Lang), who kept his past a secret for more than 50 years — until the unexpected friendship of a troubled teenager (Elsie Fisher) made hope and healing possible. – **West Coast Premiere**

- Film was shot in Marin
- Film Subject Herbert Curt Heller was the proprietor of Heller's for Children store, a fixture in San Rafael for more than 50 years
- Director Finn Taylor lives in Richmond
- Producer George Rush lives in San Francisco
- Producer Jennifer Goshay lives in Berkeley
- Producer Jeanine Thomas lives in Marin

***Carol Doda Topless at the Condor*** (US, documentary feature, dirs. Jonathan Parker, Marlo McKenzie) San Francisco's first topless dancer, the legendary Carol Doda, reshaped the city's nightlife and transformed America's relationship to female nudity in the 1960s. Using the male gaze to her advantage, Doda found power, letting it rip to great effect. Based partly on the book *Three Nights at the Condor* by Benita Mattioli, this fascinating documentary explores the legacy of a game-changing icon. – **West Coast Premiere**

- Director Jonathan Parker lives in San Rafael
- Director Marlo McKenzie lives in San Rafael
- The Condor Club is in San Francisco's North Beach

***Cyborgian Rhapsody Series*** (US, narrative feature, dir. Lynn Hershman-Leeson) In 1960, two scientists from N.A.S.A., Manfred Clynes and Nathan S. Kline, coined the term "cyborg" to describe the technological apparatus a human would require to record information at supersonic speeds. Both the revolutionary potential of this technology and how it can be abused are examined in this screening of the complete *Cyborgian Rhapsody* series, consisting of four captivating short films: *Seduction of a Cyborg* (1994), *Shadow Stalker* (2018), *Logic Paralyzes the Heart* (2022), and the premiere of the final installment, *CYBORGIAN RHAPSODY – IMMORTALITY* (2023), written and performed by a Cyborg – GPAT-3 Chatbot.

- Director Lynn Hershman Leeson lives in Nob Hill

***The Disappearance of Shere Hite*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Nicole Newnham) Shere Hite's 1976 bestselling book, *The Hite Report*, liberated the female orgasm by revealing the most private experiences of thousands of anonymous survey respondents. Her findings rocked the American establishment and presaged current conversations about gender, sexuality, and bodily autonomy. So how did Shere Hite disappear?

- Director Nicole Newnham lives in Oakland

***Farming While Black*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Mark Decena) In 1910, Black farmers owned 14 percent of all American farmland. Over the intervening decades, that number fell to two percent, the result of racism, discrimination, and dispossession. Director Mark Decena adapts Leah Penniman's

2018 book into a visually eloquent documentary that chronicles Penniman and two other Black farmers' efforts to reclaim their agricultural heritage. – **World Premiere**

- Director Mark Decena lives in Noe Valley
- Production Company Kontent Films is based in San Francisco

***I Am Hope*** (US, documentary feature, dir. ShakaJamal) Through fly-on-the-wall footage and insightful interviews, director ShakaJamal chronicles the effort to create a first-of-its-kind yoga and mindfulness program for Oakland Unified School District middle schools. Through a challenging school year, students are engaged in a range of mindfulness activities that transform them from mindful learners to mindful leaders. – **Bay Area Premiere**

- Director ShakaJamal is from Oakland
- The film features Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) middle schools
- Many of the film subjects live in Oakland

***Música!*** (US, documentary feature, dirs. Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman) Since 2011, US musicians and artisans have traveled to Cuba as volunteers to gift badly needed supplies and help repair instruments in that isolated nation. Bay Area documentarians Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's latest celebrates not just this collaborative effort, but the rich sonic traditions and budding young performers it helps sustain.

- Telling Pictures is a San Francisco based company
- Rob Epstein lives in the Castro
- Jeffrey Friedman lives in Noe Valley

***Mustache*** (US, narrative feature, dir. Imran J. Khan) Writer-director Imran J. Khan's confident debut offers a humorous look at the Pakistani-American immigrant experience in 1990s Silicon Valley, through the eyes of 13-year-old Ilyas (newcomer Atharva Verma) as he navigates the social hierarchy of his new school with a mustache his parents won't let him shave.

- Director Imran J. Khan is from the San Francisco Bay Area and attended UC Davis
- Producer Jessica Sittig lives in San Francisco
- Film takes place in Silicon Valley

***Skin of Glass*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Denise Zmekhol) A journey to reckon with Brazil's harsh inequality begins when Berkley-based filmmaker Denise Zmekhol discovers her father's architectural masterpiece is occupied by hundreds of homeless people. *In English, French, & Portuguese with English subtitles* – **US Premiere**

- Director Denise Zmekhol lives in Berkeley

***The Pigeon Tunnel*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Errol Morris) Academy Award-winning documentarian Errol Morris pulls back the curtain on the storied life and career of former British spy David Cornwell — better known as John le Carré, author of such classic espionage novels as *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and *The Constant Gardener*. Set against the turbulent backdrop of the Cold War leading into present day, the film spans six decades as le Carré delivers his final and most candid interview, punctuated with rare archival footage and dramatized vignettes. *The Pigeon Tunnel* is a deeply human and engaging exploration of le Carré's extraordinary journey and the paper-thin membrane between fact and fiction.

- Director Errol Morris attended UC Berkeley and lived in the Bay Area

***The Right to Read*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Jenny Mackenzie) Executive produced by LeVar Burton, Emmy winner Jenny Mackenzie's inspiring documentary introduces us to two families, a Bay Area activist, and an Oakland teacher, all taking action to reverse the disturbing trend of plummeting literacy — and give our children a brighter future full of appreciation for the written word. – **Bay Area Premiere**

- Producer and Lead Subject Kareem Weaver is an Oakland-based NAACP activist and award-winning educator
- Film subject Sabrina Causey is a first grade teacher in Oakland

***Water for Life*** (US, documentary feature, dir. Will Parrinello) Bay Area documentarian Will Parrinello (*The New Environmentalists - From Accra to Eleuthera Island*, MVFF 2022) captures the efforts of three environmental defenders in Chile, El Salvador, and Honduras, all fighting for clean water. Facing down powerful global corporations and their government backers, the trio persists, despite the danger, the costs nearly always exacted in blood. *In English & Spanish with English subtitles – World Premiere*

- Director Will Parrinello lives in Greenbrae
- Writer and Co-producer Sarah Kass lives in Mill Valley
- Producer Rick Tejada-Flores lives in Emeryville
- Editor and Producer María José 'Majo' Calderón lives in Oakland
- Director of Photography Vicente Franco lives Pacifica
- Composer / Sound Designer Christopher Hedge lives in Moss Beach
- Senior Producer Stephen Talbot lives in San Francisco
- Consulting Editor Quinn Costello lives in Oakland
- Post-Production Supervisor/Colorist Ibon Olaskoaga lives in Novato
- Assistant Editor Kylee Acevedo lives in Richmond
- Subjects Alberto Curamil, Francisco Pineda, and Berta Cáceres, are all past recipients of the Goldman Environmental Prize for South & Central America, awarded by the Goldman Environmental Foundation in San Francisco.

## Shorts

***binary.*** (Milan Mackenzie Wood & Maddie Barbiee, US 2023, 14 min) In this intimate look into the life of a young transgender person inspired by androgynous rock stars, a teen struggle to understand who they really are while facing conflict with those around them. *Youth Work*

- Directors Milan Wood and Maddie Barbee live in the Bay Area
- The film is shot in San Anselmo and Fairfax
- The school scenes take place at Archie Williams High School, located in San Anselmo

***Chasin' Butterflies*** (Joshua Harding, Adam Hobbs & Matt Klug, US 2022, 19 min) Butch Anthony is a lot like his art: eccentric, playful, authentic, charming, provocative, embellished, and layered. But, as a self-taught artist from a one-horse town in rural Alabama, he can't be easily categorized any more than his art can. In this layered portrait, we meet the man behind the drive-thru museum, trophy-covered Cadillac, and pontoon pirate ship known as "Llatikcuf" (read it backwards).

- Director Joshua Harding lives in Healdsburg
- Director Matt Klug lives in Sonoma
- Editor Blake Bogosian lives in San Francisco
- Colorist Chris Martin lives in Oakland
- Sound Designer Joel Rabe lives in Santa Rosa
- Music Composer Derek Papa lives in South Bay

***Circle of Donuts*** (Toshikazu Hosoki, US 2023, 11 min) Aya Ahn is a Japanese immigrant to the United States and a successful businesswoman in San Francisco. Aya is the owner of Bob's Donuts, a small 60-year-old donut shop that has become one of the city's frequented tourist attractions. The shop is open 24 hours per day and has become a community center for residents in San Francisco's Nob Hill district.

- Aya Ahn lives in Mill Valley
- Bob's Donuts shops in Mill Valley, and Nob Hill

- Producer Goran Zaneti was born and lives in San Francisco
- Composer Angela Hsieh lives in Oakland

**Companion** (Latajh A. Weaver, US 2023, 5 min) A woman faces the reality that maybe her roommate needs different things in their relationship.

- Director Latajh A. Weaver lives in Oakland

**A Conversation in Passing** (Matthew Segal, Canada 2023, 12 min) Two strangers find themselves in a surreal chat.

- Film Composer Bun Sudduth grew up in Santa Rosa and is a graduate of UC Berkeley

**Dance With Me** (Gabriel Diamond, US 2020, 5 min) Imagine putting on a blindfold on a busy street corner and inviting strangers to dance with you. That's what Gabriel Diamond did in Berkeley in 2018. Two years later he finally got the courage to revisit the footage and create this touching short documentary about the potential of strangers to meet in unique ways using the power of dance and trust.

- Filmed in Berkeley
- Gabriel Diamond lives in Oakland

**From the Shadow of a Mountain** (Alex Massey, US 2022, 6 min) Markelle Taylor runs the Dipsea, America's oldest trail race.

- The Dipsea Race is a scenic 7.4 mile course from Mill Valley to Stinson Beach
- Markelle Taylor grew up on Divisadero and Hayes in San Francisco and was an inmate at San Quentin Prison for 18 years
- Director Alex Massey lives in Marin

**Goose Town** (Gaspard Choquet, US 2023, 9 min) An urban teenager finds solace from his chaotic home life in a fictional cowboy outlaw persona, but risks taking the cosplay one step too far. *Youth Work*

- Director Gaspard Choquet is from Berkeley
- Editor / Cinematographer Alex Luce is from Oakland
- Writer Maximillian Colombano lives in the Mission
- Actor Heni Munson lives in Berkeley
- Actor Jackson Oakley lives in Berkeley
- Actor Anand Aji is from West Portal
- Actor Henry Marshall lives in Noe Valley

**Gone Before Your Eyes** (Cara Yeates, US 2023, 13 min) Trapped in a surreal loop, an artist with Alzheimer's struggles to paint.

- Director Cara Yeates is from Sacramento
- Colorist Benjamin McIntyre grew up in Mill Valley

**How To Live 100 Years (Or More)** (Gary Weimberg, US 2023, 4 min) A contemplation of longevity. A cinematic collaboration between documentary filmmaker Gary Weimberg and sound designer Gary Rydstrom. *nonverbal*

- Shot in the Redwoods in Northern California
- Director Gary Weimberg lives in Berkeley

**The Innocent Bystander** (Sally Eckhoff, US 2023, 6 min) An affectionate tribute to the late San Francisco musician Dan Hicks.

- Singer, songwriter, and bandleader Dan Hicks lived in Mill Valley for more than 40 years

**Light Beams for Helena** (Kirk Horton, US 2023, 10 min) Helena Bourdillon has pushed her limits in the freediving world, using a single breath to dive to depths that would kill most human beings. But her path

to discovering her diving potential started 20 years ago, when she was on the verge of suicide. *Light Beams For Helena* explores her journey with depression, her ongoing mental health efforts, and what diving into the darkness of deep water has taught her about life and light.

- Kirk Horton grew up in San Francisco and attended Marin County Day School

***No More Longing*** (Connor Lee O'Keefe, US 2023, 16 min) From Brazil to California and four years after starting testosterone, Jaime Jobim searches for his new voice.

- Subject Jamie Jobim lives in Oakland

***Place Setting*** (Amanda Rowan, US 2022, 7 min) An immersion into the exquisite tactility of housekeeping finds expression and rebellion.

- Director Amanda Rowan is from Mill Valley
- She grew up singing at the Sweetwater and acting in the Bay Area theater scene

***Starling*** (Mitra Shahidi, US 2023, 9 min) A mischievous star spirit travels home to Istanbul to celebrate her birthday with her family one last time. After being blown off course, she must maneuver through the city before time runs out.

- The following are all Bay Area based and employees at Pixar Animation Studios.
  - Director and Writer Mitra Shahidi lives in Millbrae
  - Producer Jessica Heidt lives in San Francisco
  - Editor Ayse Arkali lives in Oakland
  - Cinematographer and Composer Andrew Jimenez lives in Oakland
  - Animation Supervisor Holger Leihe lives in Berkeley

***Strawberry Picker*** (Eugenia Renteria, US 2023, 20 min) From a little boy growing up in labor camps to a world-class artist, a look at generations of struggle and resilience in the Chicano Art Community through the experiences of San Francisco printmaker and social activist Juan R. Fuentes.

- Juan R. Fuentes lives in San Francisco
- Director Eugenia Renteria is based in Watsonville
- Production company Inspira Studios is based in Watsonville

***Swimming The Rock*** (Nicolas Collins & Alex Zajicek, US 2023, 7 min) Joshua Kerns is determined to overcome his grief and to fulfill his grandmother's last wish by taking the plunge and swimming to shore from Alcatraz.

- Filmed in San Anselmo, Oakland, El Sobrante, Richmond, Albany, Hercules
- Alcatraz is featured in the film as well as the San Francisco waterfront

***Tracing History*** (Jalena Keane-Lee, US 2022, 13 min) A Chinese-American filmmaker and her mother contemplate loss and legacy while visiting sites where their Chinese ancestors labored.

- Director Jalena Keane-Lee is from Berkeley
- Film features the Chinese cemetery in Daly City

***The Lake Merritt Monster*** (Benjamin Mulholland, US 2022, 16 min) An Oakland teenager named Ollie and his friends must hunt down a monster lurking in Lake Merritt that is responsible for his mother's disappearance.

- Director Benjamin Mulholland lives in Oakland
- The monster lives in Oakland's Lake Merritt

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**About Mill Valley Film Festival**

Presented by the California Film Institute (CAFILM), the 46th Mill Valley Film Festival runs October 5-15, 2023. MVFF is a significant cultural cinema event in the San Francisco Bay Area. It has gained international recognition for its commitment to showcasing exceptional films, supporting emerging talent, and fostering creative dialogue. Over the years, it has hosted renowned filmmakers, actors, and industry professionals, further establishing its reputation as the West Coast launch pad for many Academy Award®-winning films and a hub for cinematic excellence.

**About California Film Institute**

The California Film Institute (CAFILM) is a non-profit organization that celebrates and promotes film and media arts through its renowned programs, which include the Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival. CAFILM fosters the next generation of filmmakers and film lovers through CAFILM Education, offering a wide range of activities, including screenings, Q&A sessions, seminars, and a rich program of classes and hands-on workshops led by international & local filmmakers and industry professionals. The Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, one of the leading non-profit independent theaters in the country, serves as a year-round hub for cinema-centric programming. CAFILM utilizes the power of storytelling through film to entertain and address social, environmental, and cultural issues, reaching 275,000 guests annually. Additionally, CAFILM is the majority owner of the Sequoia Theater in downtown Mill Valley. The organization relies on the generosity of its community; the invaluable support from our sponsors, foundations, individual donors, and members ensures our ability to sustain these vital programs. For more information, visit [cafilm.org](#).

The California Film Institute and Mill Valley Film Festival are in Marin County, California, on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary homelands of the Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples. This includes the Southern Pomo and Graton Rancheria Tribes. These tribes were removed or displaced from their lands. We recognize this history and the harm to present-day Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples and to their ancestors. The California Film Institute commits to moving forward from a place of authenticity and working with present-day tribes to elevate their stories, history, and present-day legacy through film.

**Supporters**

The California Film Institute is once again proud to acknowledge the leadership support of the Christopher B. Smith Family, Jennifer Coslett MacCready, Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, and Vickie Soulier, and the continued major support of Marin Community Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, and The Gruber Family Foundation. We are also fortunate to have the contributions of the following Signature and Major Sponsors of the Mill Valley Film Festival: Jackson Square Partners, Lucasfilm, Ltd., Wareham Development, and Bellam Self Storage and Boxes.

**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS**

**46<sup>th</sup> Mill Valley Film Festival**

Celebrating the best of independent and world cinema alongside high-profile and prestigious award contenders.

**Thursday, October 5 to Sunday, October 15, 2023**

**Ticket On-Sale Dates**

Advance Ticket Packages and Passes on sale Monday, August 7, 2023

General Public Single Tickets on sale Tuesday, September 12, 2023

CFI members can purchase single tickets in advance of the public beginning Friday, September 8, 2023

**MVFF46 Bay Area Screening Venues:**

San Rafael: Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center – October 5 – 15, 2023

Mill Valley: CinéArts Sequoia – October 5 – 15, 2023

Larkspur: Lark Theater – October 13 -15, 2023

Berkeley: Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive – October 7 & 8 and October 12 - 15, 2023

San Francisco: The Roxie Theater – October 9 & 10, 2023