



a Visual Communications production

LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL

No. 39 | May 4 - 13, 2023

festival.vcmedia.org





Our mission is to develop and support the voices of Asian American and Pacific Islander filmmakers and media artists who empower communities and challenge perspectives.

WHAT IS VC?

Visual Communications (VC) is the first non-profit organization in the US dedicated to the honest and accurate portrayals of the Asian Pacific American peoples, communities, and heritage through the media arts.

VC was created with the understanding that media and the arts are important vehicles to organize and empower communities, build connections between peoples and generations through the development of AAPI film, video, and media. The organization has created award-winning productions, nurtured and given voice to our youth and seniors, promoted new artistic talent, presented new cinema, and preserved our visual history.



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Visual Communications presents the

2023 LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL

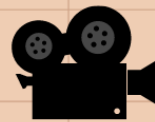
The Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival (LAAPFF), presented annually by Visual Communications (VC), returned for its 39th year from May 4th to 13th in Los Angeles and featured an exciting lineup of in-person programming, along with virtual programming for our audiences at home in Southern California and beyond.

The LAAPFF 2023 Lineup celebrated Native Hawaiian, Pasifika, Indigenous Voices, and Artists across the Asian

American and Asian Diaspora Communities, commemorating the 20th year since the passing of VC's founding Executive Director Linda Mabalot.



5,600+
ATTENDEES



306
ARTISTS
SERVICED



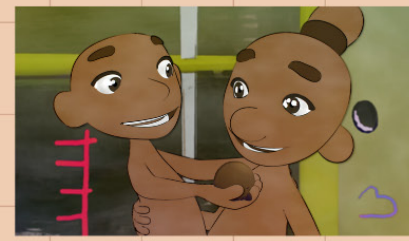
70
IN-PERSON
EVENTS



8
VIRTUAL
EVENTS



37
COMMUNITY
PARTNERS



ANIMATION PROGRAMS

This year's animated short films highlights a community of filmmakers expanding the format. Though animated, these films are reflections of everyone.



CINEMA MUSICA

This year's Cinema Musica program continues to broaden the experience of Cinema and Music; not simply via a pop cultural Music Video form, but dissolves the boundaries to welcome in experimental narrative film and verite documentary filmmaking.



DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMS

Storytelling of lived experience is a powerful way to grow empathy and build solidarity. This year's Documentary program welcomes in a learning experience to better understand each other so that we can navigate life together.



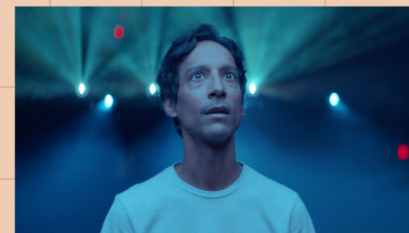
NARRATIVE PROGRAMS

With 16 Narrative Features in the festival, each film brings in a perspective from all over the globe; united in varying degrees of connection and joy.



PACIFIC CINEWAVES

In our fortified commitment to amplify Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, Pacific Cinewaves programming celebrates stories and storytellers emerging from Hawai'i, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Guåhan (Guam), Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Samoa, and throughout the Pacific region.



SHORTS PROGRAMS

Short films tend to be a distilled experience of emotional storytelling, savvy editing and heart. It is often the form where filmmakers dare to dream, and where audiences find new emerging talent.



SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

As one of the first film festivals to center Asian and NHPI storytelling, LAAPFF works with artists and filmmakers to carve out programming that serves campaign needs to enrich outreach to the Asian American and NHPI communities

FESTIVAL PROGRAMS

WHO IS LINDA MABALOT?

Linda Mabalot was the beloved Executive Director of Visual Communications from the mid-'80s until her passing in 2003. She guided VC through a most difficult and challenging time when the organization was focused on survival and still committed to serving and continuing Asian Pacific American media projects. Linda's resilience, political savvy, and commitment to multicultural collaboration served her and VC well. She was creative, spontaneous, and had a generously inclusive nature with an infectious laugh, which helped her staff confront the challenges and survive a difficult time. Today, the staff is still propelled by the vision and foresight brought to the organization by this widely admired, one-of-a-kind leader.

"WHETHER WE ARE PRODUCING MEDIA, OR
WHETHER WE ARE IN AN ADVOCACY ROLE...
OUR WORK IS NOT OVER."

-Linda Mabalot, Visual Communications
Executive Director (1985-2003)



FESTIVAL RENEWAL

In 2020, Visual Communications reached its 50 year milestone because of community support and collective work. However, this anniversary is also a product of decades of sacrifices from staff, volunteers, and artists, surviving through periods of scarcity. We ruminate how/if our programs and presentations create impact by asking difficult questions such as:

- Are we an organization that is an agent of change, or an impediment?
- Are we doing anti-racist work? Or are we just a cog in a system of media and entertainment?
- Are we creating community, or are we inflating individual egos?

Through these reflections come renewed intentions and desired impact. In our continued challenge to improve and create brave spaces, we have to mitigate extractive practices to make our work more impactful.

This year, we dedicated LAAPFF 2023 to Linda's regenerative impact and cultural abundance to VC and our communities. We are called to be in closer community with Artists and Allies in order to build a Festival that fosters wellness and joy.

WEEKEND 1 | LITTLE TOKYO

Visual Communications is an organization founded on Community. When we gather around film presentations and panel discussions, we look to our VC Values to help us connect to audiences in a most meaningful and impactful way. We deepen our practice of programming in venues, like the Japanese American National Museum, that have a legacy of cultivating connections with the communities of Los Angeles. We desire to present programming that compliments that legacy, helps strengthen solidarity and activates storytelling towards impact. When we select venues, we continue our journey of how to make our programs accessible for everyone. As we look for venues for film presentations, we welcome the opportunity to activate non-theatrical venues that are more meaningful to our audiences.



HIGHLIGHTS

- World Premiere of Armed With a Camera Vol, 2023 and Digital Histories 2023
- Instead of C3: Conference, VC hosted R3:NEWAL, a series of restorative activities and gatherings to connect peoples as themselves, instead of our titles as artists and creators
- Free outdoor screenings of HITO HATA: RAISE THE BANNER and THE FALL OF I-HOTEL
- Pacific Islanders in community for a sold out PACIFIC CINEWAVES screening
- The debut of our "HOWZIT: THE LINDA MABALOT EFFECT" Photographic Exhibit as a part of our Linda Visions Series to honor Linda Mabalot



AA & PI IN COMMUNITY

"We're honored to center Native Hawaiian and Pasifika artists in the 2023 edition of AWC as well as our Pacific Cinewaves program. This is a continuation of our intentions from early works like OMAI FA'ATASI: SAMOA MO SAMOA and NA PUA O LAKA, and a renewed commitment to uplift and amplify Indigenous storytellers in spaces where Asian-American artists may historically hold privilege. We have to amplify artists who utilize media to preserve cultural traditions and present diasporic stories if we are being earnest in our efforts to truly build community and collective power."

-Francis Cullado, Visual Communications Executive Director



Featured Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Films and Programs at LAAPFF 2023:

- Armed With a Camera Vol. 2023
- Indigenous Now
- KĀINGA
- Pacific Cinewaves
- Red, White & Brass
- The Weather Inside (Cinema Musica Shorts Program)
- The Wind and The Reckoning
- Trenton: To The Moon & Back (You Are Here Shorts Program)
- WHETŪ MĀRAMA / BRIGHT STAR



PASIFIKA COHORT

KA 'Ā'UME'UME: NAVIGATING HOME*Directed by M. Kaleipumehana Cabral*

Six Kānaka 'Ōiwi weave a story of grief, hope, wisdom, and struggle in navigating diaspora and returning to their homeland.

MORE BOUNCE*Directed by Alexis Si'i*

MORE BOUNCE documents three Samoan men as they reflect on their time as bouncers in Southern California, and the dangers that came with it.

BUTTERFLY/BATAPLAI*Directed by Veialu Aila-Unsworth*

A Papua New Guinean/American woman challenges her evangelist father's strict rules to find her voice as a makeup artist.

To kick off this year's fest, LAAPFF presented an Opening Night lineup of films representative of VC communities and values – setting the stage for a community-forward film festival. Included in the lineup was the World Premiere of ARMED WITH A CAMERA VOL. 2023 (AWC). This year, AWC featured six short films produced by Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander artists, in reflection of VC's renewed commitment to uplifting Native Hawaiian and Pasifika stories.

TALA'S BEDTIME STORY*Directed by Peter Filimaua*

In order to help Tala fall asleep, his mother tells him a tale about his grandfather and Puluotu, the underworld.

SNACK*Directed by Lauren To'omalatai*

After a night out with friends, Jess returns home and shares a late night snack with someone unexpected.

MY BROTHER*Directed by Misa Tupou*

At rugby training, Malu knows time is against him, but his support for his sister Alofa will not be deterred.



At this year's festival, we celebrated 20 years of the Armed With a Camera Fellowship. After the World Premiere of ARMED WITH A CAMERA VOL. 2023, we renewed our connections at Señor Fish with our current fellows, alumni, and mentors.



CELEBRATING
20 YEARS OF AWC

DIGITAL HISTORIES

SPOTLIGHTING OUR FILMMAKER ELDERS

Digital Histories is a mechanism for APA older adults to use their unique voices and perspectives in sharing stories with the generations to come. Since its creation in 2003, Digital Histories has provided a space for seniors to create and share their stories and experiences through film and media.



This program seeks to engage the under- and misrepresented population of APAs in mainstream media in a visible way. Seniors are particularly marginalized, and a major outcome of this project is the development of a unique voice from each program participant. Digital Histories allows for the exhibition of these films to educate viewers about APA history in California and to illuminate how place helps shape identity and community.



DIGITAL HISTORIES

The Festival is proud to present the World Premiere of 13 short documentary films from our Digital Histories class, taught by Weldon Powers Wong.



THEY SERVED
Directed by Don Bannai

WHEN I'M 64
Directed by George Wada

MOCHI, STICKS US TOGETHER
Directed by Teresa Matsushima

CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK
Directed by Barbara Woo

THE TALE OF UNCLE FRANK AND STORIES FOR ANOTHER DAY
Directed by Stony Furutani

A GLIMPSE OF ANTARCTICA
Directed by Hana Tong

THERE IS NO STRAIGHT LINE IN LIFE
Directed by Tracy Quan Nichols

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE
Directed by Fran Ito

SNIP SNIP SNAP IKEBANA SENSEI
Directed by Glen Tao

MISSING PIECES
Directed by Barbara Kagawa Shore

SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS
Directed by Robert M. Shoji

PROFITS ENSLAVE THE WORLD: A SONG ACROSS GENERATIONS
Directed by Emilio J. Virata Jr.

MORE THAN A ROAST CHICKEN
Directed by Patty Fong



R3 REGENERATION RESTORATION RENEWAL

Searching for wellness and joy at the Festival continues with our growing practice of restoration, regeneration, and renewal. For this year's Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, we renew C3:Conference for Creative Content by disrupting it. Instead of C3:Conference, Visual Communications presents R3:NEWAL, a series of restorative activities and gatherings to connect peoples as themselves, instead of our titles as artists and creators.



R3 CONVERSATIONS

At this year's festival, we offered six R3 Conversations centering wellness and joy, and how we find wellness while working in an environment that produces unwell practices of extraction and harm. Our R3 Conversations included:

CALLTIME: WELLNESS

DEEP BREATHS & DEEP CONVERSATIONS
(HOSTED BY NBCU LAUNCH)

KEY FRAME

REFUGE AFTER WAR CONVERSATION

LOVE, HURT, & BASKETBALL

BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER - PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN MEDIA
(HOSTED BY PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS)





LAAPFF AT GARDENA CINEMA

LAAPFF 2023 made its way to the South Bay for the start of Weekend 2! We presented two feature films — No No Girl and Liquor Store Dreams. With over 500 people in attendance at Gardena Cinema, it was a great night filled with connections and community.



WEEKEND 2 | REGAL LA LIVE

The festival continued in-person programming from May 11-13 at Regal LA Live. With over 90 unique films — ranging from shorts, to documentaries, to narratives — and over 3,000 people in attendance, Weekend 2 was filled with an abundance of films, joy, and community.



HIGHLIGHTS

- This year's Cinema Musica program blurred the boundaries to welcome in experimental narrative film and verité documentary filmmaking
- SOLD OUT screenings for #LIFE Shorts Program, Your Son Shorts Program, Battling Demons Shorts Program, The Harvest, KAPWA Texas, Red, White & Brass, and B-Side for Taylor





LAAPFF VIRTUAL CINEMA



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LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL VC ONLINE



Along with our in-person programming, we included virtual programming for our audiences at home in Southern California and beyond. This year's Virtual Cinema included R3 Conversations and selected presentations including BIG FIGHT IN LITTLE CHINATOWN, FLY IN POWER, THE FALL OF THE I-HOTEL, B-SIDE FOR TAYLOR, ZERO WASTE, and YOU ANIMAL! (HAYOP KA!)



LAAPFF 2023 AWARDS



We are thrilled to announce awards and recognitions to these especially moving films from this year's festival:

Emerging Filmmaker Award

Danny Kim of ZERO WASTE and Set Hernandez of UNSEEN



Grand Jury Award – Best Narrative Feature

OLD NARCISSUS (老ナルキソス) by Tsuyoshi Shoji

Special Jury Recognitions

RED ,WHITE & BRASS by Damon Fepulea'i and Halaifonua (Nua) Finau, WHERE IS THE LIE by Quark Henares, Director Rahat Mahajan of THE CLOUD MESSENGER, Director of Photograhly Alfonso Chin of GOLDEN DELICIOUS for cinematography, Taijiro Tamura of OLD NARCISSUS, and Max Eigenmann of RAGING GRACE



Grand Jury Award – Best Documentary Feature

FLY IN POWER by Yin Q. and Yoon Grace Ra

Special Jury Recognitions

WHO IS NEXT? by Nurzhamal Karamoldoeva, Sultan Usuvaliev, IN SEARCH OF BENGALI HARLEM by Alaudin Ullah, Vivek Bald, and UNSEEN by Set Hernandez

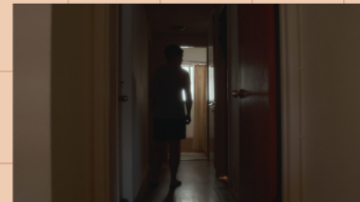
Golden Reel Award – Narrative Short

TAKE ME HOME by Liz Sargent



Golden Reel Award – Documentary Short

TO WRITE FROM MEMORY by Emory Chao Johnson



Linda Mabalot | New Visions Award

THE VOYAGER'S LEGACY by Bailey Poching



Special Jury Recognitions

THE OLD YOUNG CROW (今昔カラス) by Liam LoPinto, KE KAHEA: AN INVITATION INTO SACRED SPACE by Justyn Ah Chong, BIRDSONG by Omi Zola Gupta, Sparsh Ahuja, NĀI NAI & WĀI PÓ (GRANDMA & GRANDMA) by Sean Wang

Audience Award – Documentary Feature

UNSEEN by Set Henandez and LIQUOR STORE DREAMS by So Yun Um

Audience Award – Narrative Feature

MY PARTNER by Keli'i Grace and STARRING JERRY AS HIMSELF by Law Chen

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS IS SUPPORTED BY

FOUNDATIONS



GOVERNMENT



PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER



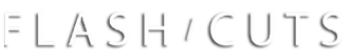
PACIFIC ISLANDERS
IN COMMUNICATIONS >>>



BRONZE



STAR



MEDIA



IN-KIND



IN-KIND

KonMari
BY MARIE KONDO

Lōloyum
crazy good crazy snacks

Mighty
Jaxx



Moshi

omsom

Passion
PLANNER

POKETO

the
PRINT SPOT

Rooted
FARE

CÀ PHÊ SỮA DẺ
SANG
VIETNAMESE
COFFEE

SANZO

Sqwishful



US
TWO

VERVET
CALIFORNIA SPARKLING COCKTAILS

V I O R I

WE ARE
CHIMMI



YOJU

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

LA CHINATOWN
COMMUNITY LAND TRUST
洛杉矶华埠社区土地信托

LAOS
angeles

MONTAGE

OCA
GLA

Okaeri



PIEAM
PACIFIC ISLAND ETHNIC ART MUSEUM

pbp
PROJECT BY PROJECT



SAVE OUR SENIORS NETWORK



STRONG
ASIAN
LEAD



TN
TUESDAY
NIGHT
PROJECT

United
Cambodian
Community
សង្គមកម្ពុជា



VIETNAMESE
BOOM
PEOPLE

VALLA
VIETNAMESE AMERICAN ARTS & LETTERS ASSOCIATION



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

AAM
ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA ALLIANCE

A+DOC
Asian American Documentary Network



A
AFGHAN-AMERICAN FOUNDATION

AFGHANS FOR
A BETTER TOMORROW



ASIAN AMERICANS
ADVANCING
JUSTICE
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



BEATROCK
Music

BGDM

CHINESE
AMERICAN
MUSEUM
華美博物館



CRAZY
WOKE
ASIANS

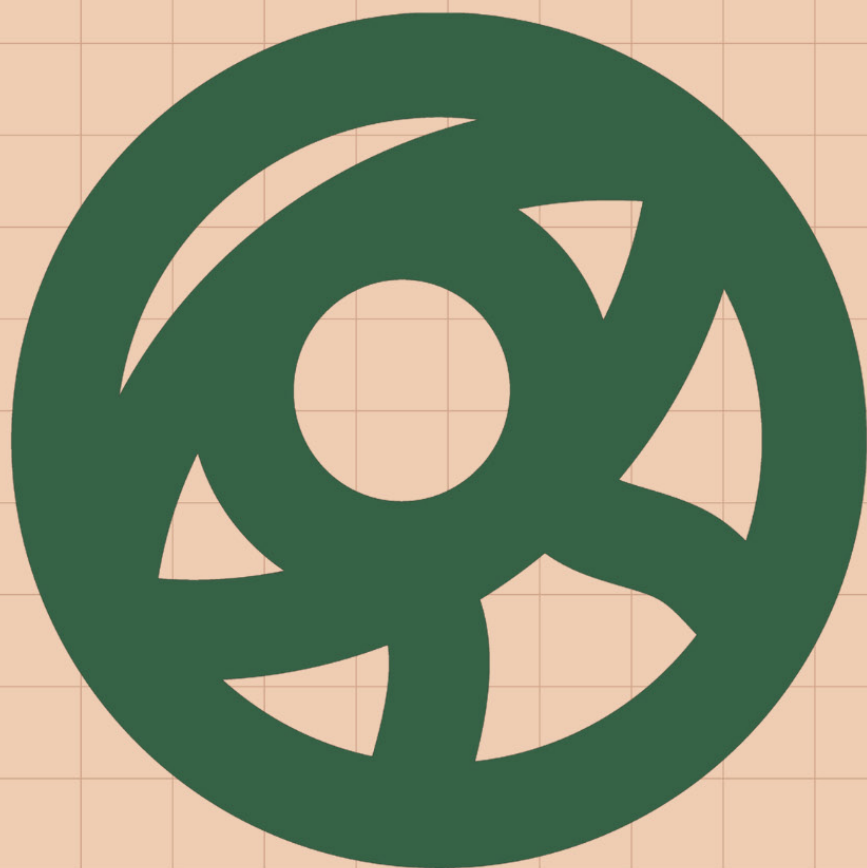


FILM
FATALES



GO

THANK YOU FOR
SUPPORTING VC
AND LAAPFF 2023!



VISUAL

COMMUNICATIONS

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