

SPOTLIGHT ON SCREENWRITERS AND WRITER-DIRECTORS FOR TIFF STUDIO 2017

TORONTO — Twelve Canadian screen creatives will have the unique opportunity to participate in candid sessions with distinguished local and international industry experts as part of TIFF Studio 2017. For the first time, the internationally recognised program will shift its focus to storytelling, with the aim of strengthening and broadening the participants' screenwriting ability through a series of inspiring and dynamic workshop sessions.

The participants are: **Adam Garnet Jones, Ashley McKenzie, Eisha Marjara, Igor Drljaca, Joyce Wong, Kevan Funk, Linsey Stewart, Mark Slutsky, Maxwell McCabe-Lokos, Molly McGlynn, Simon Ennis and Tracey Deer.**

"We're delighted to welcome this exceptionally talented group, as they elevate their screenwriting projects to the next level," said Kathleen Drumm, TIFF Industry Director. "Since it launched in 2012, TIFF Studio has proved successful in preparing Canada's best and brightest talent for the global film industry. This year we recognise that every great story begins with a great script."

The programme will run on a monthly basis from June 16 through January 2018 at TIFF Bell Lightbox. The mentoring sessions will focus on script development, pitching, and creating memorable characters. Participants will receive an Industry Pass for the Toronto International Film Festival in September, and the Canada's Top Ten Film Festival in January. TIFF Studio is managed by Hayet Benkara, TIFF's Talent Development Programmer, and is generously supported by the Harold Greenberg Fund, the Directors Guild of Canada and Ivan Reitman.

TIFF Studio 2017 Biographies:

Adam Garnet Jones (Cree, Métis, and Danish) has written and directed a series of award-winning films that have toured the international film circuit. Jones released his first feature, *Fire Song*, at TIFF 2015 (it is now screening on Netflix in the US), and his second feature, *Great Great Great*, picked up awards for Best Film, Best Screenplay, and Best Performance at the 2017 Canadian Film Festival. He is currently developing a feature film titled *Kill All Fathers*, and a dramatic TV series, *Unfit*.

Ashley McKenzie lives on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Her debut feature, *Werewolf*, screened at TIFF 2016 and the Berlinale, won the Grand Prix Focus QC/Canada at Festival du nouveau cinema, and was selected for the 2017 Canada's Top Ten Film Festival. McKenzie is the latest recipient of the Jay Scott Prize, which recognizes an emerging talent who is positively affecting the direction of Canadian cinema. Her short-film work includes *Rhonda's Party* (10), *When You Sleep* (12), *Stray* (13), and *4 Quarters* (15).

Eisha Marjara drew attention from the industry with her NFB feature docudrama *Desperately Seeking Helen*, which was described as "one of the most auspicious film debuts on the Canadian scene." It received the Critic's Choice Award at the Locarno Film Festival and the Jury Prize at the München Dokumentarfilm Festival. Her transgender short drama *House for Sale* received multiple festival awards. She recently completed her first fiction feature, *Venus*. Marjara's film *Calorie* was selected for the 2016 Goa Film Bazaar co-production market and the Praxis Screenwriters Lab, mentored by screenwriter Guinevere Turner (*American Psycho*).

TIFF is a charitable organization with a mission to transform the way people see the world, through film.



Igor Drljaca was born in Sarajevo and moved to Canada in 1993. He is the recipient of the 2014 Ontario Art Council's K.M. Hunter Artist Award in Media Arts and is a two-time Canadian Screen Award nominee. His award-winning short films *Woman in Purple* (10) and *The Fuse: Or How I Burned Simon Bolivar* (11) have screened at hundreds of festivals. His critically acclaimed feature *Krivina* (12) screened at TIFF and Rotterdam, and his second feature, *The Waiting Room* (15), played at festivals around the world, including Locarno, TIFF, Torino, and Rotterdam. Drljaca's Bosnian-set screenplay, *Tabija*, won Cinemart's Eurimages prize and was part of the prestigious Cannes l'Atelier program. Drljaca currently runs the production company TimeLapse Pictures with his producing partner Albert Shin (*In Her Place*).

Joyce Wong is a writer and director based in Toronto. Her films have played at festivals worldwide, and her work often features an idiosyncratic tone and tongue-in-cheek comedy. She is an alumna of the 2008 Berlinale Talent Campus and the 2016 TIFF Talent Lab, and has been supported by the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Most recently, she completed her first feature, *Wexford Plaza*, which premiered at the Torino Film Festival, screened in competition at the Slamdance Film Festival, and won the 2017 Best Narrative Feature Award at the Center for Asian American Media.

Kevan Funk is an award-winning filmmaker whose work has screened and won awards at various prestigious festivals worldwide. His feature film debut, *Hello Destroyer*, premiered at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival, and went on to win a number of awards, including the BC Emerging Filmmaker Award at VIFF. His short film *A Fine Young Man* (10) premiered at TIFF and won the Grand Jury Prix at the Melbourne International Film Festival. His shorts *Yellowhead* (11) and *Bison* (14) both premiered at TIFF and were named to Canada's Top Ten in their respective years. Funk's short *Destroyer* (12), developed through TIFF Talent Lab, was runner-up for the RBC Emerging Filmmaker Award. His music video for BRAIDS' *Miniskirt* was shortlisted for the 2016 Prism Prize.

Linsey Stewart is a Writers Guild of America Award-winning filmmaker whose first feature, *I Put a Hit On You*, premiered at Slamdance in 2014. Together with her directing, writing, and life partner Dane Clark, she has directed several shorts, including the Vimeo Staff Pick *Long Branch*, which made the *Viewfinder* list of "Top 10 Shorts" voted on by Hollywood executives. Stewart and Clark were named "People to Watch" by the *Toronto Star* and are developing their next feature, *Merv*, with Matt Baer Films in the US. Stewart has also written for the CBC television shows *Being Erica* and *Mr. D*.

Mark Slutsky is an award-winning writer and director based in Montreal. His shorts *Never Happened* (15) and *Sorry, Rabbi* (2011) both premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, with the former making its international premiere at Tribeca. He co-directed and produced the animated short *I'm One, Too!* (13) for the 44th season of *Sesame Street*. Slutsky's feature work includes co-writing and co-producing the comedy *Peepers* (10) and writing the documentary *The Fruit Hunters* (12) with director Yung Chang. He is currently developing a feature version of *The Decelerators*, and the feature *You Can Live Forever* with Montreal's Prospector Films. Slutsky is the creator of the acclaimed web project *Sad YouTube*, which featured in *Newsweek*, *Slate*, and NPR's *On the Media*.

Maxwell McCabe-Lokos is an actor, writer, and director from Toronto. He starred in and wrote Bruce McDonald's *The Husband* (13), which premiered at TIFF. His directorial debut, *Ape Sodom* (16), also premiered at TIFF and has played over 20 festivals worldwide, winning Jury Prizes at both Slamdance and CUFF. His next short film, *Midnight Confession*, is currently in post-production. He continues to work as an actor and has two feature films (both written by himself and Rob Benvie) in development with Scythia Films and MEMORY.

Molly McGlynn is an award-winning writer and director based in Toronto. Her short films *I Am Not a Weird Person*, *Shoes, Given Your History*, and *3-Way (Not Calling)*, which debuted at TIFF in 2016, have received festival and online acclaim. She is the recipient of the Corus Fearless Female Director's Award and is an alumna of Queen's University, Humber College, and the Writers' Lab at the Canadian Film Centre. Her first feature film, *Mary Goes Round*, is currently in post-production.

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Simon Ennis is the award-winning writer and director of the comic documentary *Lunarcy!* and the dark comedy feature *You Might as Well Live*, as well as several short films. His work has screened at TIFF, SXSW, IDFA, Slamdance, Fantasia, Telluride Mountainfilm, and VIFF, among others, and has been reviewed in the *New York Times*, *Variety*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Montreal Gazette*, and *IndieWire*.

Tracey Deer is an award-winning Mohawk filmmaker with multiple credits to her name as an executive producer, writer, and director in documentary and fiction film. Her work has been honoured with two Gemini Awards and has earned acclaim from multiple film festivals, including Hot Docs and DOXA. In 2016, she was a recipient of the Birks Diamond Tribute Award at TIFF. She is currently in pre-production on the fifth and final season of *Mohawk Girls* with her showrunning partner Cynthia Knight and is also developing a project with screenwriter Meredith Vuchnich. She has been nominated for Best Director of a Comedy Series for two years running at the Canadian Screen Awards.

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About TIFF

TIFF is a charitable cultural organization whose mission is to transform the way people see the world through film. An international leader in film culture, TIFF projects include the annual Toronto International Film Festival in September; TIFF Bell Lightbox, which features five cinemas, major exhibitions, and learning and entertainment facilities; and innovative national distribution program Film Circuit. The organization generates an annual economic impact of \$189 million CAD. TIFF Bell Lightbox is generously supported by contributors including Founding Sponsor Bell, the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, the City of Toronto, the Reitman family (Ivan Reitman, Agi Mandel and Susan Michaels), The Daniels Corporation and RBC. For more information, visit tiff.net.

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