THIRD ANNUAL THESIS SHOWCASE
September 20 – 22, 2013
“DOCUMANIA” — THAT’S HOW THE NEW YORK TIMES recently referred to the stunning proliferation of documentary film made possible by the signature technologies of our time. In short, it has never been easier to make a documentary. But producing a film that stands out is another story, another challenge altogether. In our first years as an MFA program at the School of Visual Arts, the faculty and staff of the Social Documentary Film Department have been proud to support our students as they attempt to do what can sometimes seem impossible: create films that engage, illuminate and inspire.

No matter the subject matter or style—be it personal, political, comical, revolutionary—these films aim to increase our awareness of ourselves and the world we inhabit. These films bring us from the mountains of the Himalayas to the streets of Detroit; they show us what it is like to compete in a Collegiate Female Soccer Championship and to perform in an improvisational theater troop touring the rural villages of Turkey. They shift our consciousness and change the way we see our world. By taking us places we’ve never been, they open windows into who we are.

For such a young program, it’s hard to believe the reception these films and filmmakers have had already. From the Princess Grace Award, to the SVA Alumni Scholarships, to winning the Student Academy Award, our students and their films have been recognized throughout the student filmmaking community. What’s more, these young filmmakers have also found interest and financial backing in the larger documentary world. Their short films have screened in festivals internationally, they have raised over $400,000 in private funds via Kickstarter and other platforms, and some have received grants and support from organizations like the Sundance Institute, the Jerome Foundation, and the IFP Spotlight on Documentaries to expand their thesis films into features.

None of this could have been possible without the generosity and genius of all of our faculty, the unfappability of our staff, and the institutional support and guidance from the SVA community, especially David Rhodes, Anthony Rhodes, Jeff Nesin and Steven Heller.

-Maro Chermayeff, Department Chair and Founder
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th
SCHEDULE

VICTORIA CAMPBELL
2012 MFA Social Documentary Award
Monsieur le Président
(74 min) 6:00–7:14pm
Filmed over three years in the aftermath of the 2010 Haitian earthquake, Monsieur le Président follows the ascension and confusing downfall of Gaston Jean Edy. The American filmmaker enters Haiti just days after the earthquake with a camera and a small valise of medical supplies. There she meets Gaston, a well-beloved voodoo priest in the Christ-Roi section of Port-au-Prince, who, with nothing but hustle and hope, revives a defunct neighborhood clinic and staffs it with a doctor and nurses. Gaston is a neighborhood hero, and the filmmaker works closely with him, but as their friendship grows, the story takes a sinister turn. No one is a hero. Nothing is what it seems.

Q & A 7:15–7:30pm

LAUREN KRAUS
Search
(40min) 8:30–9:10pm
Head to toe in camouflage and armed with an appetite for adventure, Bruce Barnaclough Jr. is on a quest to show the world that Bigfoot exists. What starts as a hunt for the most mysterious creature on earth, ends in a discovery of the mystery that lives inside us.

Q & A 9:10–9:20 pm

OLGA KLYACHINA
2012 MFA Social Documentary Award
2013 SVA Alumni Scholarship
2013 MFA Social Documentary Award
When People Die They Sing Songs
(50 min) 7:30–8:20pm
When People Die They Sing Songs is a story of mother and daughter who resolve to uncover their wartime past buried half a century ago. After suffering a stroke, 93 year-old Holocaust survivor Regina is getting music therapy. Accompanied by her daughter, Sonia, and a music therapist, Regina sings the Yiddish and French songs of her youth. This revitalizes the mother-daughter relationship. With Regina’s help, Sonia tries to capture their family story. Emboldened to revisit a past that they were both so eager to forget, they are now anxious to remember. But Regina’s memory is rapidly succumbing to dementia.

Q & A 8:20–8:30pm
ENES OZDIL
Village Boy on the Stage
(40 min) 1:00–1:40pm

Eren, a Turkish boy from the village of Kumyaka makes his way to Bursa City to perform with a professional touring theater company. Over the summer the theater company tours through local villages to perform their plays and to share their experiences with the villagers. Eren anticipates returning to his Kumyaka with this company of professional actors.

DOOYOUNG CHO
Unravelling Family
(60 min) 1:40–2:40pm

Director Dooyoung Cho discovers the thinly veiled secret that his father is not his biological father. Upon searching for his real father, he is faced with emotional wounds and scars from his family’s past. The journey to find his real father becomes a journey of self-healing.

Q&A 2:40–3:00pm
ERIK SPINK
Hart Island
(60 min) 3:00–4:00pm
In a place called Hart Island, the unclaimed, unidentified, or indigent of New York City are buried in a potter's field. Approximately one million people have been interred in communal graves dug by the prison labor of inmates from Riker's Island Jail. Family members, activists, artists, and city officials work to improve the dignity of city burials and visitation to the Island.

Q&A 4:00–4:10pm
BREAK TIME 4:10–5:00pm

AMITABH JOSHI
Mustang Rising
(70 min) 5:00pm–6:10pm
Mustang, a remote region in the Himalayas of Nepal known for its mystical setting, is increasingly affected by environmental and social changes. Due to a lack of education and employment opportunities, the majority of the youth are faced with a difficult decision—to stay or to leave. Tashi Bista is a local environmental activist with dreams of harnessing the strong winds of Mustang to bring electricity to all Mustangis. An ambitious young librarian, Dikee Dolker struggles to balance her professional life with the domestic and cultural demands that are traditionally put on the women of Mustang. Tse Long, a nomadic herdsman, faces the bleak employment alternatives in the region and contemplates crossing the border into India for a more promising future.

Mustang Rising delicately interweaves these three extraordinary stories of Mustangis, illustrating the struggles of Nepalese youth.

Q&A/BREAK 6:10–6:30pm

CANDACE BARBOT
Detroit Dog Rescue
(70 min) 6:30pm–7:40pm
With over 70,000 abandoned homes and an unofficial unemployment rate of nearly 50 percent, Detroit is one of the most distressed and violent cities in the nation. Left behind are an estimated 50,000 homeless dogs. Enter Hush. Born and raised in Detroit, he assembles a rag-tag group of eclectic individuals, mostly friends, to tackle the overwhelming problem of abandoned dogs in the failing Motor City. As tough and resilient as the dogs they try to save, this unique, crazy, and irreverent group of optimists brings compassion to a city that continues to spiral downwards. In the process, they rescue not only severely neglected and abused dogs but also the isolated and forgotten people in the decaying neighborhoods of Detroit.
RECEPTION
8:00 – 9:30PM
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22nd
FILM SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22nd
SCHEDULE

ANDRES ARIAS
The Tooth Fairy
(40 min) 2:00–2:40pm
Dr. Tania Rohany is a single 36-year-old dentist who, apart from serving the eclectic New York community of Washington Heights, has altruisti-
cally spearheaded dental health and hygiene missions to the underserved communities of developing nations and has advanced her professional
acumen and experience to a global scope. Will the “transforming power of
love,” however, threaten to derail Dr. Rohany’s chosen career path? Or will it threaten to derail the doctor herself?

SOO HYUNG KIM
Promise Land
(60 min) 2:40pm–3:40pm
Promise Land follows the experiences of Yujin and her friends, defectors who crossed the border from North Korea to South Korea in 2008 in order
to survive.

Q&A/BREAK TIME 3:40–4:00pm
JUSTIN THOMAS
Truth Through a Lens
(60 min) 4:00–5:00pm
Filmmaker and media activist Dennis Flores dedicates his life to defending the oppressed and disenfranchised in his community against the onslaught of economic injustice and police brutality. However, when he falls in love with a fellow activist, he is confronted with the difficult decision of how much time he can devote to his adopted community family and still provide for the new family he longs to create as a husband and father.

Q&A/BREAK TIME 5:00–5:50pm

JOHN PAUL REDMOND
Follow Me To Masdar
(70 min) 5:50–7:00pm
During the Cold War there was a race for the first man to land on the moon, and now the stopwatch is ticking again in the 21st century: the race for the first carbon free city. The filmmaker (a captain in the US Army who served in Afghanistan) has recently returned home and is planning to marry the girl of his dreams. Just before his wedding he learns about a small country in the Middle East that manifests its own power and is well on its way to being the first carbon free city. Follow Me To Masdar is a metaphorical documentary that conjures America’s exigency to harness carbon free energy and a US Army Captain’s life.

Q&A 7:00–7:15pm

DANA KALMEY
The Last 90 Minutes
(70 min) 7:15–8:25pm
What does it mean to be a dedicated, competitive athlete facing the end of your athletic career? How do you say goodbye to the sport that’s been your life-long companion? The Last 90 Minutes is a journey with a women’s college soccer team in their final season as they face the end of their athletic careers. Pushing them to the limit is their headstrong, veteran coach George, in their fight to win the ever-elusive championship.

Q&A 8:25 – 8:35 pm