Gender & Short Films: Emerging Female Filmmakers and the Barriers Surrounding their Careers



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Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative





Dear Friends,

The volume is being turned up on the conversations around gender inequality and the lack of diversity among Hollywood filmmakers. This conversation is nothing new to LUNA®. Beyond the bar, LUNA has been championing women for over 15 years with programs that inspire and support equality and a voice for women. It's in our DNA, what drives us, and is at the very core of what we do.

In fact, we created LUNAFEST®, a film festival by, for, and about women, 15 years ago to address gender disparity in filmmaking. And it is why for 15 years, LUNAFEST has supported female filmmakers and given these talented directors a platform to share their unique perspectives and stories. To date, LUNAFEST has received over 10,000 submissions, worked with 115 female directors, and had female directed films viewed by more than 300,000 people across the United States.

To celebrate our 15th anniversary, we knew we wanted to do something special – something that would make an impact – that would push the cultural conversation further.

LUNAFEST has partnered with Dr. Stacy L. Smith and her team at the Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative at USC's Annenberg School in the development of the following groundbreaking study. This trailblazing research examines the valuable population of female filmmakers whose work has been featured at LUNAFEST over the past 15 years. It is through this powerful data that we are able to better understand why, despite their talents and hard work, the challenges for women directors still remain.

But there is hope. We think you will find the results compelling and motivating.

The findings not only reveal how programs like LUNAFEST can continue to be a strong ally to female filmmakers, but also what the industry and like-minded people and organizations can do to elevate the incredible work these women are producing.

LUNAFEST remains committed to enhancing the representation of women in the film industry. Working together, we can pave the way for the next generation of female filmmakers.

Suzy Starke German

LUNAFEST Program Manager

Gender & Short Films:

Emerging Female Filmmakers and the Barriers Surrounding their Careers

The purpose of this investigation was threefold. First, the gender of short and mid-length film directors across 10 top film festivals worldwide was assessed. Second, the occupational paths and career impediments faced by LUNAFEST female directors were examined. Third, the content of LUNAFEST films over the last 15 years was evaluated. Across these three areas of inquiry, a picture of the career pipeline for female directors emerged.

KEY FINDINGS

FEMALE DIRECTORS OF SHORT FILMS

Females fill almost a third of the directing pipeline. Of the 3,933 short film directors at 10 top worldwide festivals, a full 68 percent were males and 32 percent were females. This calculates into a gender ratio of 2.13 male directors to every 1 female director.

Females were more likely to be directors of documentary shorts than narrative or animated shorts. 37 percent of documentary directors were women versus 31 percent of animated directors and 28 percent of narrative directors.

Female documentary directors fare better in some countries than others. Female helmers of documentaries were more likely to have films based outside the U.S. (40%) than from the U.S. (30%). The analysis for narrative and animated short/mid-length films was not related to country of origin.

There has been no change in the percentage of female short film directors over time. Females' participation as directors of narratives, documentaries, and animated films was examined across the five years of short film festival programming. No overtime analysis was statistically significant. As such, the percentage of female short film directors has not increased or decreased over the last five years.

BARRIERS FACING FEMALE DIRECTORS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

Work/family balance (64%). Participants stated that the tasks associated with their careers are made more difficult by familial responsibilities. Responses in this category included personal challenges faced, general statements of difficulty, and considering the timing of parenthood or career moves.

Finance (61%). Interviewees mentioned that project financing was difficult, and a few personal financial barriers were described. Of females who had never made a feature film, 58 percent reported financial obstacles to creating longer-form content.

Subject matter, cast, or crew of films (29%). Women described difficulty generating finance or interest in films about females or individuals from underrepresented groups, in stereotypically feminine genres, or for female-oriented films.

Three additional barriers were mentioned by female participants. The first was that the **entertainment industry favors males** (25%). Women also stated that non-gender specific **closed networks** (14%) in the industry make it difficult to gain access to opportunities for work or funding. Finally, individuals cited **stereotyping** (14%) or obstacles that arose from being challenged, dismissed, pigeonholed into certain types of content, or limiting norms or beliefs about gender.

Networking and mentorship (71%) and **encouragement or examples/role models** (43%) were mentioned by interviewees as ways to support women. Participants also indicated that increasing **funding** (46%) and helping directors **improve skills** (32%) were useful for female filmmakers. Several individuals mentioned ways that **film schools** (25%) could help women. Finally, creating **awareness of the problem** (18%), **showcasing work** (18%), and **hiring women** (11%) were indicated as opportunities for change.

LUNAFEST CONTENT

LUNAFEST shorts feature girls and women on screen. Across 115 short films, a total of 63 percent of the 744 speaking or named characters evaluated were female and only 37 percent were male. A full 81 percent depicted a female lead/co lead driving the plot. These findings are in stark contrast to the 100 top films of 2014, where 28.1 percent of speaking or named characters were female and only 21 percent of leads or co leads featured a girl or woman.

LUNAFEST shorts showcase diversity of character race/ethnicity. Of the 715 characters that could be evaluated, 38 percent were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. A full 37 percent of the short films' leads or co leads were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. This deviates from mainstream content, as 26.9 percent of characters and 17 percent of leads or co leads in the 100 top films of 2014 were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

LUNAFEST shorts showcase diversity of age. Across the 179 characters coded 40-64 years of age, 54 percent were female and 46 percent were male. This is a marked deviation from the 100 top movies of 2014 where only 19.9 percent of all 40-64 year old characters on screen were female.

LUNAFEST shorts sexualize girls and women on screen. Females were far more likely to be depicted in sexualized or tight attire (23% vs. 6%) and with some nudity (22% vs. 10%) than were males. These trends are similar to those found in the 100 top-grossing movies of 2014.

In sum, this research deepens our understanding of employment obstacles and offers potential avenues for intervention and support. Shedding light on the pitfalls and prospects for female filmmakers provides insight on how industry processes and females' choices dictate their career paths. Broadening our knowledge of the ecology of women's film careers informs how to create equity and opportunity for female filmmakers at all levels—now and in the future.

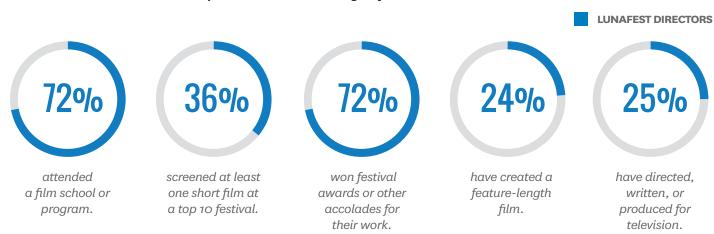
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LUNAFEST, a year-long traveling film festival dedicated to films by, for, and about women, has hosted over 100 female filmmakers in its 15-year history. As a showcase for female-directed short film content, LUNAFEST represents one step in the pipeline to later filmmaking careers for its distinguished alumnae. The majority of female LUNAFEST directors (72%) attended a film school or program. Their short films have received acclaim, with 36 percent of female LUNAFEST directors screening at least one short film at a top festival and 72 percent winning festival awards or other accolades for their work. The pedigree of LUNAFEST directors suggests that after their short films, these women are poised to move into the entertainment industry.

Yet, recent studies have revealed the persistent underrepresentation of female directors of both independent and top-grossing films. Across 13 years at the Sundance Film Festival, a mere 18 percent of all narrative directors were female.³ This percentage plummets when the 100 top-grossing movies of each year are examined. Of the 1,300 top movies from 2002 to 2014, just 4.1 percent of directors were female.⁴ What accounts for this scarcity of female feature film directors?

One explanation for the lack of women helming features comes from prior research on barriers in entertainment that impede women's career progress. These include perceptions that cast women filmmakers and the content they create in a less lucrative light than male filmmakers and their stories. Another possibility is that women may elect not to pursue feature directing for personal reasons. Thus, the women of LUNAFEST represent a class of filmmakers potentially faced with both career choices and constraints. The purpose of this study is to investigate the pipeline for female filmmakers from short to feature films, with LUNAFEST directors and content at the center.

Alumnae Accomplishments: Percentage of Female LUNAFEST Directors who...



The pipeline was examined in three specific ways. First, the gender of short and mid-length (under 60 minutes) film directors at the 10 top festivals was evaluated. This provides a benchmark of women's participation at one filmmaking level and reveals whether females' films are programmed at the same rate as their male peers. Second, the occupational trajectories and barriers of female LUNAFEST directors were qualitatively explored. Interviews with LUNAFEST alumnae assessed the impediments women face in their work and opportunities for

support. Finally, the content of LUNAFEST films was examined. Given industry perceptions about female content, LUNAFEST shorts were compared to trends observed in more mainstream filmmaking. Below, the methodology and major findings are highlighted. Only statistically (p<.05) and meaningfully significant results (5% or greater difference between categories) are reported below.

SHORT FILM DIRECTOR GENDER AT 10 TOP FILM FESTIVALS

Females' participation as directors of short or mid-length films was assessed across the 10 top festivals world-wide as reported by Indiewire. The 10 top film festivals include: Festival de Cannes (Cannes), Sundance Film Festival (SFF), Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), South By Southwest (SXSW), International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), Venice Film Festival (VFF), Berlin International Film Festival (BIFF), International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR), New York Film Festival (NYFF), and Telluride Film Festival (TFF).

The gender of all short and mid-length film directors was assessed per festival from 2010 to 2014. All films less than 60 minutes in length were included in analyses, due to the variability in defining a short across the 10 festivals. Sections within festivals devoted to experimental or avant-garde shorts were excluded as were those devoted to cross-platform/transmedia work, music videos, TV episodes, or high school programs. In total, 3,481 short or mid-length films were evaluated for director gender across 5 years of the 10 top festivals. Using industry databases and festival programs, a full 40 percent were classified as narratives, 26 percent documentaries, and 11 percent were animated. Twenty-two percent of the short and mid-length films could not be classified for genre using available sources.

FEMALES FILL ALMOST A THIRD OF THE DIRECTING PIPELINE

Of the 3,933 directors across the 10 festivals, a full 68 percent (n=2,676) were men and 32 percent (n=1,257) were women. This calculates into a gender ratio of 2.13 male directors to every 1 female director. Given the variability in run time across the sample, we categorized films into one of three time frames: 1 to 20 minutes, 21 to 40 minutes, or 41 to 59 minutes. Run time was associated with director gender. Females were more likely to create content 41 to 59 minutes (40%) in length than stories 1 to 20 minutes long (31%) or 21 to 40 minutes in duration (34%).

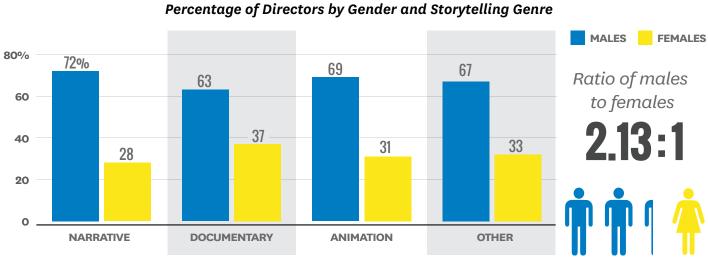


Table 1
Percentage of Directors by Gender and Storytelling Genre

Note: Other refers to short and mid-length films that could not be classified for genre using available sources.

Females were more likely to be directors of documentaries than directors of animation or narratives (see Table 1). Females were less likely to direct narrative films than films with genres that could not be classified. Because over 75 percent of directors with "other" films were only from one festival, these movies were excluded from all of the following analyses.

FEMALE DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS FARE BETTER IN SOME COUNTRIES THAN OTHERS

Each film's country of origin was collapsed into two categories: U.S. vs. not U.S.¹² Then, we looked at the association between director gender and country of origin separately across narrative, documentary, and animated short and mid-length films. The relationship between country of origin and director gender was significant for documentary¹³ but not the other two genres.¹⁴ Female helmers of documentaries were more likely to have films based outside the U.S. (40%) than from the U.S. (30%).

Table 2
Percentage of Female Directors by Storytelling Genre and Country



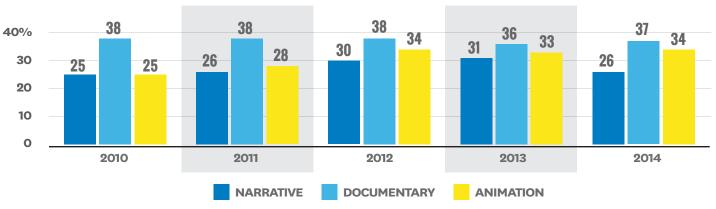
COUNTRY	NARRATIVE	DOCUMENTARY	ANIMATION
U.S.	25%	30%	28%
Not U.S.	29%	40%	32%

Note: Columns do not add to 100%. Each cell represents the percentage of females with films originating within country (U.S. vs. Not U.S.) and storytelling genre (narrative, documentary, animation). The percentage of males can be obtained by subtracting per cell the percentage of females from 100%.

THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE DIRECTORS OVER TIME

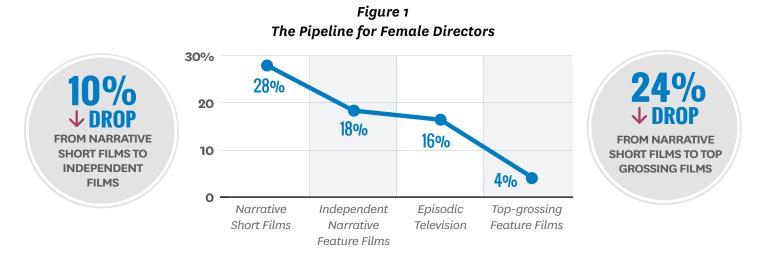
Females' participation as directors of narrative, documentary, and animated films was examined across the five years of festival programming. None of the overtime analyses were statistically significant. As shown in Table 3, the percentage of female directors in narrative and documentary films did not differ between 2010 and 2014. In animation, the incidence of female directors increased 9 percent across the 5 years. Because none of these trends were statistically significant, it is safe to conclude that the percentage of female directors has not reliably increased or decreased over the last five years.

Table 3
Female Directors by Storytelling Genre and Year



Note: Columns do not add to 100%. Each cell represents the percentage of females within storytelling platform. The percentage of males can be obtained by subtracting per cell the percentage of females from 100%.

Overall, the findings reveal that female directors do not occupy half of the short or mid-length film space across 10 prestigious festivals worldwide. Women were more likely to screen documentary than narrative or animated shorts at top festivals, which is somewhat consistent with our research on female directors of features at Sundance Film Festival. Differences by country emerged for documentary helmers, with females less likely to direct U.S.-based short films than international shorts. Finally, very little change has occurred over time in the prevalence of female short film directors across the 10 top festivals.



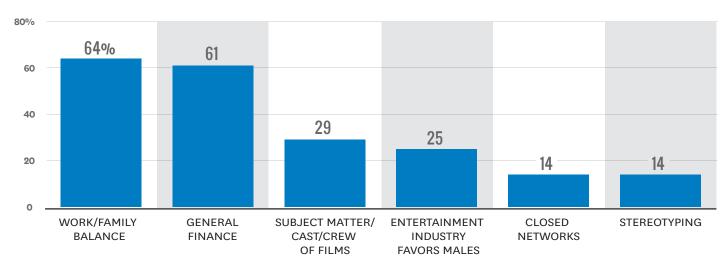
The percentage of female short film directors is important in the broader context of women's film employment. These findings demonstrate that female directors start out on unequal footing with their male peers. This gap persists and even widens at the feature level. For example, while 28 percent of narrative short film directors were female across the 10 festivals, this figure drops to 18 percent for narrative features at Sundance Film Festival, 16 percent for directors of television episodes in the 2014-15 season, and 4.1 percent for female directors of 1,300 top-grossing films across 13 years. ¹⁷ Clearly, a fiscal cliff exists for female directors.

In documentaries, females represent 37 percent of short film directors, 34.5 percent of documentary feature directors at Sundance Film Festival from 2002 to 2012, and 22 percent of the 100 top-grossing documentary directors over 12 years. The pipeline for documentaries holds fewer cracks and leaks for female directors compared to narrative films. Given this, it was important to understand the barriers facing female directors. The next section explores the career trajectories of female LUNAFEST filmmakers as well as obstacles and opportunities identified by a subset of LUNAFEST directors.

OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE FILMMAKERS

The career paths of LUNAFEST directors reveal that women may pursue directing, or they may look to other employment opportunities. We qualitatively examined the occupational outcomes of 115 female LUNAFEST directors. One-quarter (25%) were pursuing work in film and television, both in front of and behind the camera. Women also worked as entrepreneurs, opening their own businesses (27%) including freelance film companies. Others were employees (20%), using their skills at entertainment industry firms and in a variety of other fields. A few women became educators (11%). Finally, for a small group (16%) of women, career pursuits were not apparent from biographical sources or for other reasons.

Table 4
Response Categories for Spontaneously Identified Barriers



Note: Individuals may have made comments in multiple categories. Cells reflect the percentage of respondents mentioning the barrier. As such, the column does not add to 100%.

Given these varied career outcomes as well as prior research on the lack of female directors of feature films, it is not surprising that only a portion of LUNAFEST directors go on to create longer-form content. Of the 115 female LUNAFEST directors over the past 15 years, 24 percent have completed a feature-length narrative or documentary film. Similarly, 25 percent of LUNAFEST alumnae have directed, written, or produced for television. On the lack of female directors who go on to create feature content? This section explores the barriers facing female directors and the opportunities they see for support.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 28 LUNAFEST alumnae on their career experiences.²¹ The women interviewed had an average age of 40, worked across narrative, documentary, and animated filmmaking, and were at different points in their careers. Thirty-six percent were from underrepresented racial and/or ethnic groups. Participants answered one question regarding general barriers and two additional prompts on obstacles related to finance and work/family balance. Across all items, responses were coded for reoccurring themes. A full 82 percent of participants stated that they had personally faced barriers working as a filmmaker.

WORK/FAMILY AND FINANCIAL CONCERNS WEAKEN THE PIPELINE FOR FEMALE FILMMAKERS

The first major barrier related to balancing the demands of work and family life. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of participants stated that maintaining career or work and family responsibilities is difficult. Responses in this category included personal challenges faced, general statements of difficulty, considering the timing of parenthood or career moves, and one statement regarding cultural beliefs that resulted in a lack of understanding from family members.

The complexity of balancing work and family life is not unique to LUNAFEST directors. Previous studies have demonstrated that balancing work and family life is a challenge for women in both the U.S. and U.K. film and television industries.²² However, the emphasis on work/family balance in this group is unique. The women in this study, unlike in prior investigations of U.S. directors, had not all created feature films. Perhaps the array of expe-

riences held by the women in this interview sample made balancing work and family stresses a more salient obstacle.

Over half (61%) of women cited the second barrier, general finance. This included project financing and a few personal financial barriers. We also asked females who had never made a feature film about barriers moving from short to feature content. ²³ Fifty-eight percent reported financial obstacles to creating longer-form content. Again, prior research has identified financing as an obstacle to both female filmmakers ²⁴ and to directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. ²⁵ Clearly, careers in filmmaking involve overcoming fiscal impediments.



PIPELINE PROBLEMS ARISE WHEN MALES AND MALE PERSPECTIVES ARE PREFERRED

Female directors reported that the subject matter, cast, or crew of their films created a barrier (29%) as they were deemed less commercial or of less interest to industry members. Women described difficulty getting films made or generating finance or interest in films about females or individuals from underrepresented groups, in stereotypically feminine genres, or for female-oriented films. Previous research reveals pervasive industry perceptions that female-driven content takes up a smaller slice of the market and that female directors make small, independent films. ²⁶ These stereotypical notions about content by, for, or about women may affect the circumstances under which female directors are attached to or given financial support to create feature content.

The fourth barrier was that the entertainment industry favors males (25%). Previous studies of female directors in the U.S., ²⁷ alongside evidence from the U.K., ²⁸ demonstrates that females face difficulty gaining entrance to a "boy's club" that persists in the entertainment industry. Further, 14 percent of those interviewed indicated that non-gender specific closed networks in the industry make it difficult to gain access to opportunities for work or funding.

In addition to these barriers, 14 percent of individuals reported impediments related to stereotyping. These obstacles arose from being challenged, dismissed, pigeonholed into certain types of content, or limiting norms or beliefs about gender. Additionally, several responses fit into an other category. These included disparate responses about industry processes (14%), internal or psychological impediments faced by self or others (11%), or situational constraints for filmmakers (7%).

FEMALE FILMMAKERS ADVOCATE MULTIPLE APPROACHES FOR SUPPORT

We asked participants a series of questions regarding how programs, organizations, and institutions (including film schools) can aid female filmmakers. An additional question probed whether women might recommend LUNAFEST to other female directors and if so, why.²⁹

Female filmmakers stated that both personal and practical support were important for directors. Networking and mentorship (71%) and encouragement or examples/role models (43%) were mentioned as ways to bolster women's careers. Women also indicated that increasing funding or resources (46%) and helping directors im-

prove skills (32%), were useful methods of aiding female filmmakers. Several individuals (25%) also mentioned different ways in which film schools could support women, including, but not limited to, the admissions process. Finally, creating awareness of problems or difficulties facing female directors (18%), showcasing work (18%), and hiring women (11%) were suggested as opportunities for change. Female filmmakers also indicated that LUNAF-EST does serve some of the supportive functions desired from industry groups and organizations.

80% 71% 60 46 43 40 32 25 18 18 20 0 **NETWORKING FUNDING ENCOURAGEMENT IMPROVE** FILM SCHOOL **AWARENESS OF** SHOWCASING & MENTORSHIP OR EXAMPLES SKILLS **EFFORTS** THE PROBLEM WORK

Table 5
Response Categories for Spontaneously Identified Opportunities

Note: Individuals may have made comments in multiple categories. Cells reflect the percentage of respondents mentioning the category. As such, the column does not add to 100%.

One way that LUNAFEST supports women is through a broad array of film screenings. This may be especially important for generating interest and excitement in content created by women, whose voices and vision as directors are largely absent from popular cinema. It becomes important to understand what LUNAFEST delivers to audiences and how it is similar to and different from mainstream films. The next section explores the content of LUNAFEST films.

LUNAFEST SHORTS

The findings above and other investigations reveal that female directors face barriers related to industry perceptions about the stories women tell. The aim of this section was to examine, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the nature of characters in 115 short films selected and screened at LUNAFEST from 2002 to 2015. Across the shorts, every speaking or named character was evaluated. A speaking character was defined as a living being that independently and discernibly uttered one or more words on screen. Characters were evaluated across a series of demographic characteristics and hypersexualization indicators. Below, we highlight the content patterns of the LUNAFEST films and on certain measures, compare to trends observed across the 100 top films of 2014.

LUNAFEST SHORTS FEATURE GIRLS AND WOMEN ON SCREEN IN ABUNDANCE

A total of 63 percent of the 744 speaking or named characters evaluated were female and only 37 percent were male.³³ This translates into a gender ratio of 1.7 females to every one male, which is the reverse of what we typically see in top-grossing films. Across the most popular 100 movies of 2014, only 28.1 percent of speaking characters were female and 71.9 percent were male.

The prevalence of female leads or co leads was also assessed. Of the 115 short films, a full 81 percent depicted a female lead/co lead driving the plot. The gender of narrators was also evaluated. Seventy-nine percent of the narrators were female. Together, these findings suggest that the nature of content can look completely different than what we see in mainstream storytelling (see Table 6).

Table 6
Female Characters, Narrators & Leads in LUNAFEST Shorts & Top-Grossing Films

LUNAFEST SHORTS SHOWCASE DIVERSITY OF CHARACTER RACE/ETHNICITY AND AGE

Of the 715 characters that could be evaluated for race/ethnicity, 62 percent were White, 11 percent were Black, 10 percent were Hispanic/Latino, 9 percent were Asian, 6 percent were Middle Eastern, and 3 percent were from other races/ethnicities. In total, 38 percent of the characters in LUNAFEST films were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This is a deviation from top-grossing films of 2014, where underrepresented characters are 26.9 percent of all on-screen characters.

Turning to lead roles, a full 37 percent of the short films' leads or co leads were from an underrepresented racial/ ethnic group. This point statistic is on par with the percentage of individuals from underrepresented groups in the U.S. $(37\%)^{34}$ and is 20 percent higher than the percentage of films with an underrepresented lead/co lead across the 100 top films of 2014 (17%).

Gender was also related to character age across the LUNAFEST shorts.³⁵ Females were more likely than males to be 0-12 years of age (12% vs. 6%) whereas males were more likely to be shown in middle age (31% vs. 22%). This latter pattern is consistent with what we see in top-grossing films. No other differences emerged in the breakdown of age within gender.

Given that females typically only comprise a fraction of the roles for 40-64 year olds in popular movies, we decided to see if that was the case with LUNAFEST films as well. Across the 179 characters coded 40-64 years of age, 54 percent were female and 46 percent were male. This is a marked deviation from the 100 top movies of 2014, where only 19.9 percent of all 40-64 year old characters on screen were female.

LUNAFEST SHORTS SEXUALIZE GIRLS AND WOMEN ON SCREEN

Females were far more likely to be depicted in sexualized or tight attire (23% vs. 6%) and with some nudity (22%

vs. 10%) than were males (see Figure 2).³⁶ Little differences emerged by gender on the attractiveness measure. These trends are remarkably consistent with what we have found across top-grossing films. As such, a culture of objectification seems to be normative for both male and female directors. Such portrayals may be costly, however. Studies show and theory supports that exposure to sexualizing content may contribute to deleterious effects among some female viewers.³⁷

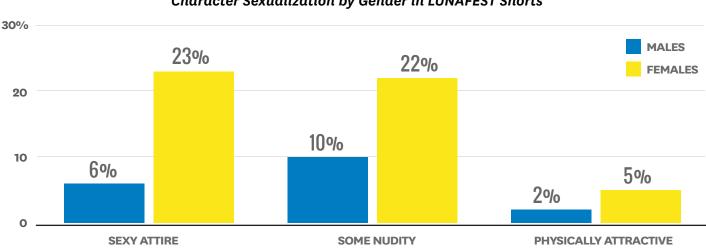


Figure 2
Character Sexualization by Gender in LUNAFEST Shorts

Overall, the content of LUNAFEST shorts is demographically different from top-grossing cinematic fare. LUNAFEST shorts included more girls and women, as well as characters from underrepresented racial and/or ethnic groups. As women indicated in interviews, these may be the very characteristics that the industry views as less appealing or financially viable in feature content. While LUNAFEST shorts are progressive in their casting, they are strikingly similar to top-grossing films in the sexualization of female characters. This latter trend is problematic and suggests that the unintended consequence of increasing the number of female characters is the increase in the depiction of sexualized girls and women on screen.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this investigation was threefold. The gender of short and mid-length film directors across 10 top film festivals worldwide was assessed. Then, the occupational paths and career impediments and opportunities faced by LUNAFEST female directors were examined. Finally, the content of LUNAFEST films over the last 15 years was evaluated. Across these three areas of inquiry, a picture of the career pipeline for female directors emerged.

First, women are outstripped at the starting gate. At major worldwide festivals, female directors showcase short films in smaller percentages than male directors. Second, career barriers derail and divert female filmmakers. Through mapping women's occupational achievements and interviews with LUNAFEST alumnae, it is clear that female filmmakers face impediments related to achieving work/family balance and financing projects. However, women see opportunities to support female directors through networking, funding, providing encouragement, and improving skills. Third, LUNAFEST content counters commercial trends. The gender profile of LUNAFEST films runs opposite to what we see in top-grossing films from 2014. The focus of these stories deviates considerably from decision-makers' perceptions of what sells.

The study does have notable limitations. We examined the gender of directors at 10 top international festivals. While we intentionally selected influential festivals, there are many other outlets, including prestigious short film festivals that may program female-directed fare at a higher or lower rate. Also, the career paths and career impediments faced by LUNAFEST directors are unique to this sample and may not generalize to all female directors of short films. In particular, interviews were conducted with only 28 filmmakers. Participants were also prompted with questions about work/family balance and financial obstacles which may have increased reporting in these categories. Although the barriers are highly similar to other studies of feature filmmakers, readers should not extrapolate from the data given the sample size.

In sum, by examining early pipeline points, this research deepens our understanding of employment obstacles and offers potential avenues for intervention and support. Shedding light on the pitfalls and prospects for female filmmakers provides insight on how industry processes and females' choices dictate their career paths. Broadening our knowledge of the ecology of women's film careers informs how to create equity and opportunity for female filmmakers at all levels—now and in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOOTNOTES

- 1. Information on LUNAFEST directors was obtained from several sources:
 1) IMDbPro and StudioSystem/inBaseline; 2) LinkedIn; 3) LUNAFEST website; and 4) Directors Guild of America. Following this, a web search was conducted for further information on directors' backgrounds. Several key search terms were used for each director. Information regarding directors' careers was garnered from biographies, interviews, and other online statements. Film school attendance (but not completion) was defined as undergraduate or graduate study at a program specifically for film or animation. When information was unclear, further material regarding the curriculum was sought to determine if the course of study included production or filmmaking content. Film programs also included extracurricular directing programs from non- or for-profit institutions (i.e., American Film Institute Directing Workshop for Women, New York Film Academy) that train filmmakers.
- 2. Directors were considered to have attended a top 10 festival if any of a director's short films (made at any point in their career) had screened at Cannes Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, South by Southwest Film Festival, International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, Berlin Film Festival, Venice Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, New York Film Festival, or Telluride Film Festival. Information on festival screenings and awards came from information contained in industry databases (e.g., IMDbPro), information on the LUNAFEST film page or other biographical information on directors (i.e., personal website, resume). If individuals mentioned screening their film at an independently organized section affiliated with one of the top 10 festivals (i.e., Kodak Emerging Filmmaker's Showcase at Cannes), this was not considered as having screened at a top 10 festival. Awards were any designation that the filmmaker had won for a short film, including individual awards (i.e., Best Director, Best Performance) as well as awards for a film itself. The level of prestige for awards was not taken into account.
- 3. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2015). Exploring the Careers of Female Directors: Phase III. Report prepared for Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles Female Filmmakers Initiative. Los Angeles, CA
- 4. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2015).
- 5. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2015).
- 6. Brooks, B. (May, 2010). 10 Best Fests: A Directory. Indiewire. Retrieved online: http://www.indiewire.com/article/50_films_and_a_top_ten_for_indiewires_new_festival_directory
- 7. All films 59 minutes or shorter that appeared across the 10 festivals were included in the analysis. There were sample exclusions, however. First, all sections devoted primarily to experimental or avant-garde films, cross-platform or transmedia work, music videos, TV episodes, or high school directors' narratives were excluded. Second, to be included in the analysis, the festival had to stipulate the title of the short or mid-length film, the director's name(s), and the run time of the story. Further, the shorts had to be a self-contained story that was not part of a larger movie or compilation. Given this second stipulation, anthologies presented as a single film or without information about each short were excluded. Third, the short or mid-length film had to be made within 5 years of the festival screening. Using these stipulations, each festival program residing online or in print was scoured for all of the qualifying short or mid-length films.

When clarification was needed on a particular section, we contacted the festivals directly for information on their programming practices.

Each festival's definition of a short film was utilized for sample inclusion. Information on short film run times came from festival websites, including submission guidelines and regulations for feature and short program sections. Clarification was sought from one festival (IDFA) regarding short film length when information from the festival website was not sufficient. There was variation in the definition of a "short film" across the festivals in the sample. Short films had run times up to, but not including, the designated run time for a feature per festival. Some festivals included mid-length films that exceeded their short film time but did not qualify as a full-length feature. Some of the run times of the mid-length films varied and could be considered features at one festival, but mid-length or short films at another. Further, at least one festival had different regulations regarding run time for shorts and features across sections. Multiple festivals defined a feature as 60 minutes in length or longer. As such, we stipulated that no films with a running time of 60 minutes or longer could be included in the sample.

The range of running times in minutes for short and mid-length films per festival is as follows: Cannes (min=5, max=58), Sundance (min=2, max=48), Toronto (min=1, max=37), SXSW (min=1, max=40), IDFA (min=1, max=59), Venice (min=1, max=59), Berlin (min=2, max=59), IFFR (min=1, max=59), New York (min=3, max=32), Telluride (min=1, max=59).

^{8.} Directors were included in the analysis if they were listed as the director or co-director by the festival in their program materials. In very rare cases, a producer was listed in place of the director. In these instances, the director's name was found from other sources (e.g., IMDbPro; another festival) and was included instead of the producer.

We were unable to determine the gender of 18 directors across all short films in the sample. Of these 18 directors, 17 were categorized as male or female based on their given name, using websites such as www.baby-namewizard.com, www.babynamescube.com, www.babycenter.com, and www.first-names-meanings.com. The remaining director was coded as Can't Tell for director gender and excluded from analyses. Fifteen films credited organizations or anonymous collectives whose members could not be ascertained. These were coded as Not Applicable for gender and excluded from all analyses.

- 9. Film genre was coded as narrative, documentary, animation, or other. First, terms from IMDbPro were considered. Second, information on genre from StudioSystem/inBaseline and Variety Insight was used. Third, the category of festival programming was used to determine genre. In other words, films in a documentary category or at a documentary festival were coded as such. Fourth, for films with ambiguous designations (i.e., "short"), the cast and summary were scrutinized for the presence of actors/actresses and a clear description of the storyline. Documentaries typically had cast lists featuring descriptors such as "himself/herself." In the absence of clear information across these sources, films were categorized as "other." One film defied these categorization steps as it was labeled a narrative by IMDbPro but played at a documentary festival. The film was re-classified as a documentary by the authors.
- $^{10\cdot}$ A significant chi square between *director gender* (male, female) and *run time* (1-20, 21-40, 41-59) was observed, X^2 (2, 3,933)=12.82, p<.01, $V^*=.06$.
- 11. A significant chi square emerged between director gender (male,

female) and storytelling platform (narrative, documentary, animation, other), X^2 (3, 3,933)=26.99, p<.01, $V^*=.08$.

- 12. A film's country of origin came from the festival program listing. Films could originate in multiple countries, but if the U.S. was included in the designation, the film was coded as being from the U.S. Sometimes, films were listed as having additional countries of origin across different festivals. The additional countries were included, but the U.S. rule applied. In a few cases, films did not have a country of origin from the festival program. In those instances, IMDbPro was consulted to determine country of origin. Two films were coded as Can't Tell for country of origin.
- $^{13\cdot}$ Among documentaries, a chi-square analysis was significant for *country of origin* (U.S. vs. non U.S.) and *director gender* (male, female), X^2 (1, 1,068)=7.42, p<.01, phi= .08.
- ^{14.} The chi-square analysis was not significant for director gender and country of origin within narrative (p=.16) and animated films (p=.33).
- ^{15.} Director gender (male, female) was not associated with festival years (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014) in narratives (p=.35), documentaries (p=.98), or animated (p=.58) films. A marginally significant (p=.08) increase (12.8%) was observed within "other" genres between 2010 and 2014. Given that the directors within the "other" category are primarily from one festival, the results do not generalize sample wide.
- ^{16.} Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2013). *Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers: Phase I.* Report prepared for Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles Women Filmmakers Initiative. Los Angeles, CA.
- 17. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2015). Directors Guild of America (August, 2015). DGA TV Diversity Report: Employer Hiring of Women Directors Shows Modest Improvement; Women and Minorities Continue to be Excluded In First-Time Hiring. Retrieved online. http://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2015/150825-Episodic-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx
- 18. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2013). Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2014). Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers: Phase II. Report prepared for Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles Women Filmmakers Initiative. Los Angeles, CA.
- 19. Using information obtained from public sources (see Footnote 1) or from interviews, a judgment was rendered regarding each filmmaker's occupational trajectory. To be included in the "filmmaker" category required the individual to have some combination of the following: credits on IMDbPro in recent years (i.e., 2013 forward), an agent and/or manager, or biographical information that demonstrated current film projects were in development. Inclusion in the "business owner" category necessitated information listing the individual as a partner, founder, or owner of a business. Within entertainment, company ownership included taking on contract work solely or in addition to developing the individual's own projects. Those in the "employee" category were people who listed a workplace or company in biographical information as their employer but did not indicate any ownership over the business. Educators were full or part-time instructors at post-secondary institutions within the previous four years. Individuals whose biographical information was not available or who had no recent credits or lacked concrete information on career paths were listed as "unknown." Information on agents and managers was retrieved from IMDbPro and StudioSystem/inBaseline listings only.

- ^{20.} Feature-length films were considered to be 60 minutes or more in run time (based on IMDbPro, Rotten Tomatoes, or Amazon designations) and screened at film festivals or received theatrical distribution. TV credits were obtained from IMDbPro and StudioSystem/inBaseline. Directing credits included director or co-director. Writing credits included: written by, screenplay/teleplay, story, screen story/television story, characters, creator/created by, writer, staff writer, story editor, and/or story co-ordinator. Producing credits included: producer, executive producer, co-producer, associate producer, field producer, supervising producer, and/or consulting producer. Information regarding whether directors had created feature content or directed, written, or produced television was derived from information on IMDbPro and StudioSystem only. Thus, these findings may underestimate how many directors created feature or television content if women were not included or had incomplete information in these databases.
- ^{21.} Interviews were conducted by phone with 28 female directors between July and September 2015. All had screened a film at LUNAFEST in the previous 15 years. One individual did not provide her age. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. After transcription, all responses were checked twice for accuracy. Coding categories were developed based on previous investigations and responses of female directors. Transcripts for each question were coded by at least two of the study authors and verified by another author for conceptual fit. Across all questions, the unit of analysis is the entire response, including answers to prompted questions. Individual responses could be coded into multiple categories, but the same portion of the response could not be included in more than one coding category. Several types of comments were included: general statements, personal experience, stories and anecdotes, and others' experiences. To determine barriers, interviewees were asked: Have you faced any barriers as a director? What were those obstacles? Interviewees then answered two additional prompts: Have you faced any barriers related to financing your films or projects? Have you faced any barriers related to balancing your work and family life? Excluding responses to prompted questions decreases the percentage of interviewees reporting most barriers.
- ^{22.} Randle, K., Wing-Fai, L., & Kurian, J. (2007). Creating difference: Overcoming barriers to diversity in UK film and television employment. *Creative Industries Research and Consultancy Unit, The Business School*, University of Hertfordshire. Sinclair, A., Pollard, E., & Wolfe, H. (2006). Scoping Study into the Lack of Women Screenwriters in the UK: A Report Presented to the UK Film Council. Institute for Employment Studies, University of Sussex. Ensher, E.A., Murphy, S.E., & Sullivan, S.E. (2002). Reel women: Lessons from female TV executives on managing work and real life. *Academy of Management Executive*, *16*(2), 106-120. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2013).
- ^{23.} To address barriers faced in pursuing a feature film, those LUNAFEST alumnae who had not directed a feature film were asked the following: Directing a short film is often one step toward directing feature content. At any point in your career, did you consider or attempt to direct a feature film? If women answered in the affirmative, they were prompted with: How difficult was it to move from directing a short to directing a feature? Were there specific barriers that you faced? If women indicated they had not considered or attempted, or were not presently interested in directing a feature, they were asked the following prompt: Were there specific reasons that you did not want to direct a feature film?
- ²⁴· Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2013).

- ^{25.} Pieper, K.M., Choueiti, M., & Smith, S.L. (2014). Race & Ethnicity in Independent Films: Underrepresented Directors and the Barriers They Face. Report prepared for Sundance Institute, Los Angeles, CA.
- ^{26.} Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2015).
- ^{27.} Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2013).
- ^{28.} Randle, K., Wing-Fai, L., & Kurian, J. (2007).
- ^{29.} To investigate general support for female directors, the full sample of women received the following questions: *In your opinion*, are there programs, services or other forms of support that might be helpful for early or mid-career female filmmakers who want to advance in their directing careers? Is there anything that film schools could do to support female filmmakers? Are there other ways female filmmakers might need to be supported? Interviewees were also asked about their feelings regarding LUNAFEST: Would you recommend LUNAFEST to other filmmakers? Why/ why not?
- 30. The two units of analysis were the speaking character and the film. Only independent speaking characters (no groups) appeared across the 115 short movies evaluated. Measures were applied at both levels to accurately capture the nature of characters across the unfolding narrative.
- 31. Each character was evaluated across a series of demographic characteristics: age (child/o-5 yrs, elementary school aged child/6-12 yrs, teen/13-20 yrs, young adult/21-39 yrs, middle age/40-64 yrs, or elderly/65 yrs or older); sex (male, female); role (primary, secondary, tertiary character), apparent race/ethnicity (White, Hispanic/Latino, Black, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Asian, Middle Eastern, Other); parental status (not a parent, single parent, co parent, parent-relational status unknown); and relational standing (single, married, committed relationship, committed relationship-marital status unknown, divorced, widowed). Characters were also coded for apparent sexuality (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual), as well as whether the character was Transgender (no, yes).

Sexualization indicators (derived from Downs & Smith, 2010, p. 725) captured sexually revealing attire or tight/alluring apparel (no, yes). Nudity captured how much skin exposure a character portrayed. Nudity had three levels (none, partial, full). Partial captured exposed skin in breast, midriff, or high upper thigh region (an exposed buttocks was coded as partial). Full referred to showing skin in genital area for males and nipple or genital exposure for females. Covering body parts with hands was considered full nudity if characters were shown without any clothes. Both sexually revealing clothing and nudity were only measured on characters with human or human-like bodies. Attractiveness captured the frequency that other characters in the plot referenced a character as being physically desirous. The levels were: none, 1 verbal or nonverbal reference, 2 or more verbal or nonverbal references.

At the film level, the shorts were evaluated across a few measures. *Narrator* (present, absent) was a voice over articulating the story or providing extra information across the plot. Each narrator was assessed for sex (male, female). This process was repeated for as many different narrators that appeared in the short film. Finally, the *lead/co lead sex* (male, female) of the film was determined at the end of the narrative as well as the *lead/co lead race/ethnicity* of the character(s) driving the action (underrepresented race/ethnicity).

In addition to the levels reported above, two codes were available: not applicable and can't tell. Further, some of the variables were collapsed

prior to analysis. When this occurred, we report the collapsed values in the footnote with the statistical analysis.

Prior to evaluating the short films, a large group of research assistants at USC was trained to unitize speaking characters and apply the variables in the study. Training lasted roughly 6 weeks and involved being taught in a classroom type environment the code book and a series of lab diagnostics to test consistency in coding judgments. After training, the research assistants evaluated the LUNAFEST films during the Spring of 2015. Each short film was evaluated independently by at least three research assistants. Reliability for unitizing and variable coding was calculated per film. MDSC Project Manager (Marc Choueiti) also watched all 115 shorts and resolved any unitizing or variable coding disagreements among the research assistants.

Two issues did emerge during the coding process. First, short films are unique in that they often feature narration but little (or no) dialogue on screen. Coders had to draw inferences about whether a narrator was an actual (and sometimes only) character in the film. This created unitizing difficulties as our code book was not designed to fully capture characters in these types of storytelling formats. When low unitizing occurred due to this issue (n=15), the short film was reassigned to another set of coders.

Second, a majority of short films featured just a few characters. This created issues for reliability, as disagreement on one or a few characters among the coders could actually yield a very low and unacceptable reliability score. Here, we list the number of times across 115 short films that a zero was observed per applicable measure: age (3 or 2.6% of films), parental status (2 or 1.7% of films), relational standing (5 or 4.3% of films), sexually revealing clothing (1 or <1% of films), nudity (2 or 1.7% of films), first narrator (1 or <1% of films), first narrator sex (1 or <1% of films). Given these two issues and the method of resolving disagreements, the findings should be considered both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

Unitizing reliability was calculated per film and measures the number of characters agreed upon by 2 of the 3 coders. We report unitizing agreement by quartiles, illuminating the percentage of agreement for each quarter (roughly 25% of the shorts) of the sample: Q1 100% (films 1-28); Q2 100% (films 29-56); Q3 100%-88.9% (films 57-84); Q4 87.5%-60% (films 85-112). Three shorts had reliability below 60% (57.1%, 50%, 0%). In terms of the latter, the coders disagreed on whether the only character in the short film should have been unitized. Overall, few films (n=10) in the sample had below 70% unitizing agreement (8.7%) and this is roughly consistent with what we find evaluating feature film content.

Variable reliability was assessed using the Potter & Levine-Donnerstein (1999) formula for multiple coders. Here, the median reliability coefficient, average, and range across all films is reported per variable: age 1.0 (average=.89, range 0-1.0); sex 1.0 (average=.99, range .80-1.0); role 1.0 (average=.91, range 0-1.0); race/ethnicity 1.0 (average=.97, range .66-1.0); parental status 1.0 (average=.90, range 0-1.0); relational standing 1.0 (average=.86, range 0-1.0); sexually revealing clothing 1.0 (average=.96, range 0-1.0); attractiveness 1.0 (average=.99, range .5-1.0); apparent sexuality 1.0 (average=1.0, range 1.0); first narrator 1.0 (average=.89, range 0-1.0); first narrator sex 1.0 (average=.92, range 0-1.0); second narrator 1.0 (average=.96, range .47-1.0); second narrator sex 1.0 (average=.97, range .61-1.0); Transgender 1.0 (average=1.0, range .74-1.0).

 $32\cdot$ The same coding scheme applied to LUNAFEST short films has been used to evaluate the 700 top-grossing movies from 2007 to 2014 (exclud-

ing 2011). In the report, we compare the 100 most popular fictional films of 2014 based on U.S. domestic box office.

- 33. Only 1 character could not be evaluated for biological sex.
- 34. Motion Picture Association of America (2015). *Theatrical market statistics 2014*. Retrieved online: http://www.mpaa.org/wp-content/up-loads/2015/03/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2014.pdf
- 35. Prior to running the analysis, the age variable was collapsed into five levels: child (0-12), teen (13-20), young adult (21-39), middle age (40-64), and elderly (65 or older). Chi square analyses revealed a significant association between *character age* and *sex* (male, female), X^2 (4, 705)=12.28, p < .05, $V^* = .13$.
- 36. Sexually revealing clothing (no, yes) was associated with character sex (male, female), X^2 (1, 726)=35.98, p <.01, phi=.22. Before running a chisquare, nudity was dichotomized into two levels: none vs. some (some, full). Again, the analysis was related to character sex, X^2 (1, 726)=17.60, p <.01, phi=.16. There were only 10 instances of full nudity sample wide, all involving female characters. Attractiveness was also collapsed into two levels before analysis: not attractive, attractive (1 or more references). The chi-square analysis was significant but the difference between genders failed to reach 5%, X^2 (1, 744)=3.86, p <.05, phi=.07.
- 37· Fredrickson, B.L., & Roberts, T.A. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21*,173-206. Roberts, T.A., & Gettman, J.Y. (2004). Mere exposure: Gender differences in the negative effects of priming a state of self-objectification. *Sex Roles, 51*(1/2), 17-27. Aubrey, J.S. (2006). Effects of sexually objectifying media on self-objectification and body surveillance in undergraduates: Results of a 2-year panel study. *Journal of Communication, 56*(2), 366-386.

LIST OF LUNAFEST FILMS INCLUDED IN SAMPLE

Grappling Girls Pockets 34 x 25 x 36 A Good Match Grrlyshow Psalm 51

A Good Uplift Red Wednesday **Happiness** A Reluctant Bride How To Be Alone Remembrance A Summer Rain I am a Girl! Roadside Assistance A Vida Politica In Public Space Roz (and Joshua)

Agricultural Report **Running Dry** Irene Janey Van Winkle Anjali Sarah in the Dark

Backseat Bingo Judy's Time Self-Portrait with Cows Going Home

Barrier Device Kaden and Other Works

Kissed by Angels Shui Hen Big Girl Kuna Ni Nanang (My Mother Said) Sidewalk Blank Canvas

Blessing Kylie Goldstein-All American Slip of the Tongue Boobie Girl La Milpa/The Cornfield Sound Shadows

Breached Lady Parts Tahara

Breaking Boundaries: The Sondra Lady Razorbacks The Bathhouse Laying Down Arms The Guarantee

Breaking the Glass: The American Life Model The Kinda Sutra

Basketball League Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Hap-The Ladies Chalk piness The Last Gunshot

Chicas Day Little Black Boot The McCombie Way City Paradise Love on the Line The Translator

Colorforms Lunch Date The Wind is Blowing on My Street

Daikon Ashi Mabel's Saga/Le Voyage de Mabelle Thembi's Diary

Date with Fate Make A Wish This is for Betsy Hall Tightly Knit Dear Judge Mann Ke Manjeer Tiny Miny Magic Dear Talula Maria of Many

DIY: Emancipation 101 Miracle Lady Tits

Miss Todd Top of the Circle Dona Ana/Mrs. Ana

Dysenchanted **Missed Connections** Top Spin **Every Mother Counts** Monday Before Thanksgiving Touch

Fim-de-Semana (Weekend) Mother of Many **Tryouts** First Match My First Crush **Twilight** Flawed My Other Mother **Velvet Tigress**

Flor de Toloache Omelette Viva

Flying Anne One Weekend a Month Wet Dreams and False Images Perfection Georgena Terry Whakatiki- A Spirit Rising

Personal Touch Getting a Grip When I Grow Up

Godir Gestir/Family Reunion Plastic Worst Enemy

Plum Flower

Granny's Got Game

Van Ert Story