



VOICES
WITH
IMPACT

MENTAL HEALTH FILM FESTIVAL

MMXXVI



Welcome

Coping doesn't look one way. It dances. It lifts a really heavy barbell. It says the hard thing out loud.

This year's ten Voices With Impact films explore Coping, Connection, and Community in ten wildly different flavors. They show us grief that moves like water, joy that looks like protest, recovery that tastes like a pancake, and healing that begins in the breath of a boxer.

Voices With Impact is both a film production grant and short film festival. Each year, we find and fund emerging filmmakers to create five-minute films on a mental health theme drawn from what our communities are actually navigating. The films you are about to see are original works made with care, honesty, and creative courage.

We invite you to join us throughout the month of June to experience these films alongside dozens of other shorts, connect with the artists behind them, and share in the conversations they open. Bring someone you care about.

Thank you for being part of our community.



Cary McQueen

Executive Director
Art Opening Minds



Chris Hyde

Director
Voices With Impact



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The Last Pancake

Ruby Phelan & Ethan McDowell, Drama, London, UK



A magical-realist drama about Amanda, who ventures to The Last Pancake cafe and begins to awaken a long-suppressed appetite.

Ruby Phelan is a writer-director. Ethan McDowell is a producer and founder of AnyOther. Productions. Together, they developed The Last Pancake, a short film exploring recovery and food freedom through a cinematic and deeply personal lens.



Cocotte

Ellie Rose Charette, Drama, Montreal, Canada



Charlotte, a trans girl, hides her hormone injections from her grandmother until they're both forced to figure out what comes next.

Ellie Charette is an emerging filmmaker based in Montréal, Canada. She does fiction and documentary work relating to identity, the body, and political activism, all with a touch of satire. She is also a co-founder of the production house Désolé.



Lost At Sea

Honor Price, Animation, London, UK



Lost in a sea of people, a grieving young woman must learn to hold love and loss together, or risk being swallowed up.

Honor Price is a BAFTA-nominated, London-based animation director known for her distinctive stop motion style, sharp comedic voice, and emotionally resonant storytelling.



1-800-GOLEM

David McShane, Experimental Hybrid Animation, UK



Following a disagreement with her best friend, Jess is delighted when her phone turns into a golem.

David is a director and animator based in London. His award-winning films have played around the world at festivals including Cannes, BFI London Film Festival and SXSW London. He was part of VWI with his previous film, Bonfire.



PIT

Landon Ramirez, Movement Film, Vancouver, Canada



We follow a young punk from the edge of a mosh pit into its chaos, where collision and panic become release and connection.

Landon Ramirez is a Canadian-American filmmaker based in Vancouver. His career spans many facets of the industry, from music video and commercial production, to assistant directing, to creative development, and currently VFX production.



Five Years in 8mm

Cody Stickels, Documentary, Oxford, Mississippi



Shot on Super-8 film, this home-movie-style experimental documentary follows Cody's gender transition within his NYC-based queer community.

Cody Stickels is a filmmaker, photographer, and writer focused on emotionally driven stories that unite audiences. He's a Chicken & Egg (Egg)celerator Lab fellow with A Texas Son and participated in the Film Independent Documentary Story Lab.



All The Worlds I Could Lift

Samantha Lee, Documentary, Manila, The Philippines



A group of queer women use weightlifting to reclaim bodies and spaces that have excluded them as they redefine strength and use female masculinity as an act of resistance.

Sam is a queer Filipino filmmaker who advocates for better representation of women and the LGBTQ+ community in media. She has made three features that have screened and won awards internationally.



Flowers In The Concrete

Kevin Alcántar, Documentary, LA, USA



As developers intensify their push to acquire the neighborhood, Flower Drive residents reflect on how organizing has helped them protect both their homes, their memories, and their well-being.

Kevin Alcántar (he/they) is a writer, director, and producer. His work is shaped by his South Central LA upbringing and explores the interplay between dream, memory, and aims to highlight the rich inner lives of people who live in overlooked places.



Talking, Where I'm From

Lauren Gee & Cameron Martin-Campbell, Documentary, UK



Two women therapists, the filmmakers' mothers, reflect on their journeys into practice through an intimate inter-generational conversation exploring memory, motherhood and becoming.

Lauren and Cameron are a London-based directing and producing duo exploring overlooked perspectives. Lauren's work includes producing *Viva Voce* for Tate Britain and directing Warner Bros commission *Dancing on Road*. Together they centre Black and global majority stories.



The NightMea

Corinna Hunziker, Megan Jones, Stacey Murdoch, Documentary, NZ



When a Māori boxer loses herself in an abusive relationship, it's breath and its cultural significance, that return her to her people and her power.

Director Corinna Hunziker and co-producer Megan Jones are award-winning filmmakers who created the documentary "No Māori Allowed." Both bring lived experience of domestic abuse and mental health advocacy. Co-producer Stacey Murdoch was part of the team behind Sundance award-winning "Prime Minister".



Allison Rose Carter



Allison Rose Carter is a producer and co-founder of Savage Rose Films. Her films have premiered at Cannes, Sundance, Venice, Tribeca, and SXSW. Working with Neon Pictures, in partnership with Jon Read, her work focuses on the human experience and explores characters filled with complexity and contradiction.

Melissa Robyn Glassman



Melissa heads the scripted division at Mariska Hargitay's Mighty Entertainment, where she co-produced *My Mom Jayne*. Previously Director of Development for Ed Pressman, her credits include HBO's *Paterno*, *Dalíland*, and *The Man Who Knew Infinity* with Jeremy Irons and Dev Patel. She began her career at teen magazine YM.

Karyn Smith-Forge



Karyn Smith-Forge is President of This Radicle Act Productions, developing projects for Netflix, Showtime, FX, AMC, Max, and Paramount. A Wharton grad and elite athlete turned TV executive, she's developed hits including *Power*, *White Collar*, and *Superman & Lois* at CBS Television Studios, Fox, and Berlanti Productions.

Amanda Klein



Amanda Klein is EVP, Head of TV, Development & Production at Spyglass Media. Her credits include Guy Ritchie's *The Gentlemen* and *Project Runway*. She's held executive roles at Miramax TV, Crackle, *Pariah*, and Kaplan Entertainment, and teaches at USC.

Edmund Stenson



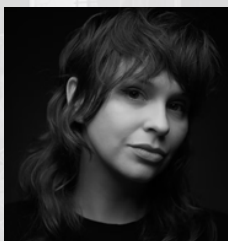
Edmund Stenson's work as director spans both documentary and fiction and focuses on social issues, loners and nomads. He most recently directed BLINK, a National Geographic feature about a family's challenges with retinitis pigmentosa. Before that, he was an associate editor on BAFTA- and Oscar®-winner *Navalny*.

Allegra Newman



Allegra Newman is VP of Development at A Bird and a Bear Entertainment, developing scripted and unscripted series under their first-look deal with CBS Studios. Previously she held development roles at HBO Max and Nickelodeon, and produced primetime series including *Deal or No Deal* and *Kitchen Nightmares*.

Aliza Brugger



Aliza Brugger is a Nebraska-born, Los Angeles-based filmmaker with an MFA from Columbia University. Currently directing *A Little Gay on the Prairie*, a feature documentary following queer folks finding home and happiness in rural USA. Their work explores rural identity, queerness, and working-class survival.

Gavin Seal



Gavin Seal is a Québécois Canadian filmmaker on a mission to dissolve otherness using the universal language of cinema. Writer/director credits include fiction, "Followers" and "Case Claus'd" (CBC Short Film Faceoff), and documentary, "Good Luck Have Fun" (NSI, Just for Laughs).

Searit Huluf



Searit Kahsay Huluf, a UCLA-trained screenwriter, has worked at Pixar on *Incredibles 2* and *Turning Red*, directed award-winning shorts including *Self* on Disney+, earned major festival recognition, and leads international workshops while serving on film festival juries and directing theater.

Jeff Lee Petry



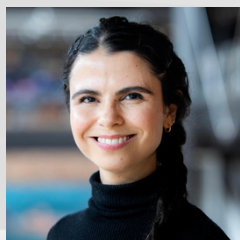
Jeff Lee Petry is a Canadian-born documentary producer, director, and cinematographer. He is co-founder of SALAZAR Film, a Vancouver-based production company that focuses on unique stories of individuals whose lives create change within their communities.

Jessica Heidt



Jessica Heidt is an award winning producer and director, currently working at Pixar Animation Studios, where she most recently managed the art department for the upcoming film, *Hoppers*. She is a TEDx speaker and a fierce advocate for more inclusive onscreen representation.

Paula Assadourian



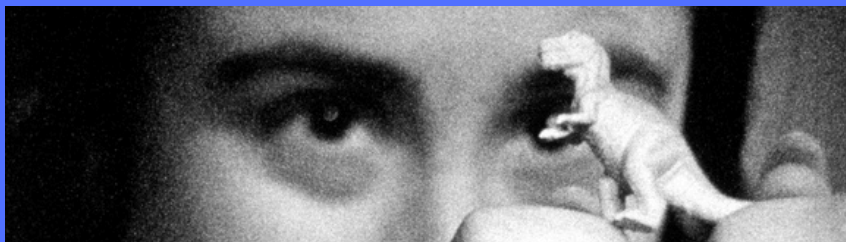
Paula Assadourian is a visual storyteller and director born in the beautiful city of Cuernavaca, Mexico. With over a decade of experience at Pixar, DreamWorks, and Sony Pictures Animation, she has helped shape stories with humor, emotional nuance, and a strong visual sensibility.

Online Festival

From June 4-30 Voices With Impact will share short films exploring mental health, deep dive interviews with the filmmakers and special guest programs. All events are free, on-demand and available anywhere.

June 4: Mental Health Shorts 1

Love & Connection



June 8: Schizophrenia on Screen

With Schizophrenic.NYC



A collection of short films informed by lived experience of Schizophrenia, funded by VWI, followed by a live conversation between Chris Hyde, Director of Voices With Impact, and Michelle Hammer, founder of Schizophrenic.NYC.

June 10: VWI Online Premiere

All 10 short films from the VWI Grant



Voices With Impact's 10 short films from the 2026 cohort. Films exploring community, coping and connection.

Free. On Demand. All of June. From anywhere in the world.

June 11: Industry Panel

Women On Screen, Women Off Screen



Karyn Smith-Forge

An interview with the Director of GEMS, Anaïsa Visser and a discussion panel where women in the film industry discuss the realities of the film industry for women. Panel includes Karyn Smith-Forge (This Radicle Act), Jessica Heidt (Pixar) and Allegra Newman (A Bird & A Bear).

June 13: Mental Health Shorts 2

Family Expectations



June 16: Go Mental! Berlin

A guest program from the archive



Go Mental! are a mental health film festival in Berlin. We've partnered with them to take VWI to Germany. This program shares films exploring mental health from the Go Mental! Archive.

June 17: Narrative Shorts

Best of VWI 2026



June 18: Documentary Shorts

Best of VWI 2026



June 19: Black Women & Mental Health

With the Be Well Sis Podcast



VWI collaborate with Be Well Sis to bring you this program of shorts focused on Black Women's Mental Health. Before the film screening the host of Be Well Sis Cassandra Dunbar will speak to VWI, after the films Cassandra will interview VWI filmmaker Ivanna Samuel.

June 22: Mental Health Shorts 3

Disconnection: Mens Mental Health



June 25: Trans Stories

With Trans Collective NYC



June 26: Mental Heath Shorts 4

Coping through Creativity



June 30: Grant Launch

An information event for the new grant cycle



How to register for VWI Online

Scan the QR code.

Select the event you want to register for, click 'Register for this event', add a donation if you'd like.

Keep an eye on your email for your notification for when the program is available to view. Watch whenever.

Repeat for every event you want to watch.





Community Partners



VWI is made possible by

AMERICAN
PSYCHIATRIC
ASSOCIATION

FOUNDATION



The APA Foundation promotes mental health literacy, connects underserved communities to needed care, and shifts attitudes about mental health.



"Promoting the mental health and well-being of individuals and communities is at the core APA Foundation's mission. Partnering with Voices with Impact allows us to extend that work beyond the clinical, reaching people through story, emotion, and shared human experience. This reflects the kind of impactful work we are committed to supporting."

- Rawle Andrews Jr., Executive Director

Learn more about APAF's work and find resources by scanning the QR code.



Mental Health Resources

We platform films that explore mental health themes, so we encourage you to use the resources below should you need to.

**To access support right now:
Call or text 988**

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

Visit our site:

[artopeningminds.org/art-opening-minds/
mental-health-support](https://artopeningminds.org/art-opening-minds/mental-health-support)





Audience Choice Award

For the first time ever we are asking you, our audience, to select your favourite film. The winner will be our first VWI Audience Choice Award winner. Scan the QR code below to have your say, and whilst you vote you can tell us what you thought of the event tonight. Your opinion matters and helps us support more filmmakers.



Festival On-Demand!

Watch short film packages, guest events and panels. VWI is online, free & on demand June 4-30!

