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ReFrame Launches REFRAME RISE Accelerator for Mid-Career Women Directors and Cinematographers in Partnership with Netflix's Creative Equity Fund

The talent development program from Women In Film Los Angeles (WIF) and Sundance Institute returning for its second cohort; expanding to include both directors and cinematographers in 2022

Also announcing WIF Emerging Directors and Cinematographers Fellowship in 2023; Both programs supported by Netflix's Creative Equity Fund

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Los Angeles, CA - ReFrame™, a collaborative initiative of WIF and the Sundance Institute, announced today the new class of **ReFrame Rise™** which will be supported through a multi-year grant from Netflix's Creative Equity Fund. [ReFrame Rise](#) is a comprehensive and customized 2-year program designed to accelerate high-level, sustainable advancement for mid-career talent.

Building upon the successes of the inaugural class, ReFrame is expanding the program to support Cinematographers as well as Directors. The new class includes 7 mid-career **directors** ([Ally Pankiw](#), [Angel Kristi Williams](#), [Ekwa Msangi](#), [Mounia Akl](#), [Nijla Mu'min](#), [Terrie Samundra](#), and [Yoko Okumura](#)) and 4 **cinematographers** ([Ava Benjamin Shorr](#), [Barbie Leung](#), [Laura Merians Gonsalves](#), and [Mariscela Mendez](#)), who will each be matched with a mentorship team of industry professionals and a career coach.

Each year, ReFrame reviews the top 100 feature films and top 200 TV series as part of its [ReFrame Stamp](#) Program, releasing annual reports on gender equity in hiring. Through this research, it became clear that there was a significant gap in representation of women cinematographers. "The numbers of women cinematographers hired on our industry's largest projects remains stagnant – only 7 films in the Top 100 releases last year were lensed by women," said Andria Wilson Mirza, ReFrame's Director. "Through applying our career acceleration model - which has proven to be successful for directors - to this talented group of DPs as well, we aim to demonstrate our commitment to developing both above and below-the-line talent, and the urgent need for a cross-industry investment in these roles in which women remain underrepresented."

In 2023, Netflix's grant will also support the new WIF Directors and Cinematographers Fellowship Circles providing a year of mentorship, connection to the **Rise™** class, and access to industry experts and special events for 12 directors and 6-8 cinematographers. WIF members and the general public will apply to be considered and selected by a jury this fall. Said WIF Director of Programs, Maikiko James: "This program will build critical relationships between people across different stages of their careers. As we intentionally deepen the community of women and gender non-conforming creatives we see opportunities grow, so we must nurture these connections."

Through this significant support, Netflix will advance opportunities for both mid-career and emerging directors and cinematographers to reach the next level of their careers. By connecting both programs, WIF and Netflix are establishing a cycle of support that extends a ladder up for both groups and sees ReFrame Rise Fellows reaching back to support the next generation of emerging creators as they climb.

NETFLIX QUOTE

The inaugural class of ReFrame Rise, which ran from 2019 to early 2022, supported acclaimed directors **Desiree Akhavan**, **Haifaa al-Mansour**, **Patricia Cardoso**, **Hanelle Culpepper**, **Sydney Freeland**, **Zetna Fuentes**, **Tina Mabry** and **Meera Menon**.

INTRODUCING: The 2022-24 ReFrame Rise Class



Ally Pankiw (Director)

Writer/director Ally Pankiw's accomplishments in TV include directing and executive producing the first season of the Netflix comedy series, *FEEL GOOD* (which stars Mae Martin and Lisa Kudrow), and blocks of episodes on Hulu's *SHRILL* and *THE GREAT*. Ally recently completed her first feature film, a dark dramedy which she wrote and directed, called *I USED TO BE FUNNY*. It stars Rachel Sennott (*SHIVA BABY*, *BODIES BODIES BODIES*) and Jason Jones (*THE DAILY SHOW*, *THE DETOUR*). Previously, Ally served as a writer on *SCHITT'S CREEK*, and she is now developing an original comedy series with its star and creator, Dan Levy, for Hulu and 20th Century Fox Animation. The duo are also co-writing a feature for Universal Pictures. She has directed commercials for brands like Amazon, adidas, Pepsi, Chanel and Nylon, and music videos for artists like Phoebe Bridgers, MUNA, Janelle Monae, and Lil Jon.

Angel Kristi Williams (Director)

Angel Kristi Williams is an award winning filmmaker born and raised in West Baltimore, Maryland. Her feature directorial debut REALLY LOVE, produced by MACRO, won the Special Jury Recognition for Acting for co-stars Kofi Siriboe and Yootha Wong-Loi-Sing at SXSW. The film then played as part of AFI Fest's Special Presentations to much acclaim. Angel is a Sundance Institute Momentum Fellow as well as a Film Independent Project Involve Directing Fellow, where she was the recipient of their Sony Pictures Diversity Fellowship. Angel won an NAACP Image Award for directing COLIN IN BLACK AND WHITE, her first episode of television. She directed an episode of NAOMI for CW and will later helm the season 2 opener of CHERISH THE DAY for OWN.

Ava Benjamin Shorr (Cinematographer)

Ava Benjamin Shorr is a Los Angeles-based director of photography raised in Portland, Oregon. Some of her most lauded work includes DISCLOSURE, which premiered at Sundance in 2020 and was released by Netflix, FRAMING AGNES, which won multiple awards at Sundance in 2022, and EQUAL, a four-part series she shot for HBO Max. Ava was included on a list of "Mind Blowing Women Cinematographers" by actor and director Emmy Rossum and was awarded an ASC Vision Mentorship with Rachel Morrison, cinematographer of BLACK PANTHER and MUDBOUND. She was also the subject, and co-DP of the documentary short AVA & BIANCA, about her special connection to fellow trans cinematographer Bianca Cline.

Barbie Leung (Cinematographer)

Barbie Leung is a New York based cinematographer with a dark lyrical visual style, as showcased in Todd Bogin's feature LEFT WITH ONLY RAIN and Cynthia Lowen's BATTLEGROUND (Tribeca Film Festival 2022). She is a recipient of The American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) Vision Mentorship Program and AFI Conservatory's Cinematography Intensive Workshop. She's an Associate of the Society of Camera Operators (SOC), and a member of the International Cinematographers Guild (ICG Local 600). Other notable features include UNLADYLIKE which world-premiered at AFI Docs 2020, and SH*TSHOW: THE RISE AND FALL OF HQ TRIVIA for CNN Films. Her work has screened at Sundance, SXSW, Fantasia, and Outfest.

Ekwa Msangi (Director)

Ekwa's award-winning and critically acclaimed feature film FAREWELL AMOR premiered in competition at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, garnering 98% on Rotten Tomatoes. The film won the Sundance Amazon Producer's Award, the NYWIFT Directing Award, the 2020 Durban International Film Festival award for Best Screenplay, and Ekwa was awarded the 2021 Indie Spirit "Someone To Watch" award. The film is distributed by IFC Films for North America, MUBI and Netflix for Worldwide. Ekwa has also written & directed drama series for broadcasters in Kenya including THE AGENCY, MNET's first-ever original hour-long Kenyan drama series. She is both a 2020 Sundance Momentum Fellow as well as a 2020 BAFTA Breakthrough. One of Ekwa's key goals as an artist is to transform our society's images and relationships with African cultures, and to empower African filmmakers in telling their stories.

Laura Merians Gonçalves (Cinematographer)

Laura Merians Gonçalves is an award-winning Cinematographer behind the Darren Aronofsky produced drama PACIFIED (aka PACIFICADO), which won the Golden Seashell for Best Film at the San Sebastián International Film Festival as well as the Jury Prize for Best Cinematography, resulting in Merians being the first woman in the history of the festival to ever win this award. PACIFIED then went on to win the Cinematographers' Debut Competition at the prestigious Camerimage Film Festival. Goncalves was a

cinematographer for Beyonce's highly anticipated film, BLACK IS KING. Other credits include the musical JOHN MULANEY & THE SACK LUNCH BUNCH for Netflix and A24, and additional photography on Josephine Decker's Sundance winning film SHIRLEY. She was selected as one of the Rising Stars of 2020 by the ASC.

Mariscela Méndez (Cinematographer)

Mariscela Beatriz Méndez was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. Mariscela has shot numerous forms of media that have aired for Slamdance and Amazon Prime, and Tubi. Mariscela was selected to participate in The American Society of Cinematographers Vision Mentor Program. She is also the recipient of The Peregrine Collective 2022 Cinematographer's Grant for her project MAL DE AMORES. She has a deep connection to her Mexican-American roots and often works on projects involving LatinX identity, female driven films, and magical realism. Mariscela is currently focusing on narrative feature length and episodic projects.

Mounia Akl (Director)

Mounia Akl is a director and writer from Lebanon living between Beirut and New York. She holds a bachelor's degree in Architecture from ALBA and an MFA in Directing from Columbia University and is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Her first feature film, COSTA BRAVA LEBANON (Sundance Labs, Cannes Residency), premiered in 2021 at the Venice Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival (Netpac Award) and BFI London Film Festival (Audience Award) amongst others. It was inspired by her short film SUBMARINE (Official selection at the 69th Cannes Film Festival, TIFF 2016). Mounia is currently developing new projects (TV and Film) between Paris, Beirut and LA where she also was recently a Ted Talk Women speaker.

Nijla Mu'min (Director)

Nijla Mu'min is a writer and filmmaker from the East Bay Area. Her work is informed by poetry, photography, fiction, and dance. Her debut feature film, JINN, premiered at SXSW 2018, where she won the Special Jury Recognition Award for Screenwriting. JINN, a New York Times Critics pick, was released by Orion Classics, and is currently streaming on Amazon. She received the Shadow & Act Rising Award, the MPAC Media Award for Courage and Conscience, and was invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. For television, she has directed on QUEEN SUGAR, HBO's INSECURE and Hulu's WU-TANG: AN AMERICAN SAGA. She wrote for Starz series BLINDSPOTTING, and both wrote and directed an episode of the Apple series, SWAGGER, a rare accomplishment in television. She also wrote and directed a short film for Netflix, entitled BLACK PROM. She is currently developing her second feature film, MOSSWOOD PARK.

Terrie Samundra (Director)

Terrie Samundra is a director and screenwriter whose debut feature, the Netflix Original film KAALI KHUHI, was released internationally in October 2020. Samundra is currently in development of her original series THE BALLAD OF POOJA, an international co-production with US and India studios, and has recently wrapped a writer's room on an undisclosed Netflix series. She is an alumna of the Sundance Institute International Screenwriters Lab, the SFFILM/Kenneth Rainin Screenwriting Fellowship and the Sundance Women in Film Finance Intensive. Samundra is currently a mentor for the Sundance Uprise program for BIPOC artists. A multicultural artist, Samundra grew up between a rural village in India, a small farming town in Missouri, and along the coast of California. She is represented by the Gersh Agency and Circle of Confusion.

Yoko Okumura (Director)

Yoko Okumura is a genre-fluid writer, director, and performer. Born in a Buddhist temple in Japan and raised in the frostbite of Minneapolis, she now lives and works in Los Angeles. Yoko is currently in post for her directorial debut feature for Blumhouse and Epix. The thriller titled UNSEEN stars Jolene Purdy (THE WHITE LOTUS, WANDA VISION) and Midori Francis (DASH & LILY, THE SEX LIVES OF COLLEGE GIRLS). She also sold a story pitch to Sam Raimi's Quibi/Roku horror anthology 50 STATES OF FRIGHT and directed the episode titled "America's Largest Ball of Twine" starring Ming-Na Wen (THE MANDALORIAN) and Karen Allen (RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK). She has also directed episodes of the one hour drama GOOD TROUBLE and a block of two episodes for THE BOLD TYPE.

About ReFrame

Founded and led by Sundance Institute and Women In Film, Los Angeles ([WIF](#)), ReFrame is an initiative that employs a unique strategy: a peer-to-peer approach, in which [ReFrame Ambassadors](#) engage with senior industry decision-makers at over 50 Partner Companies to implement ReFrame systemic change programs. The initiative's goals are to provide research, support, and a practical framework that can be used by Partner companies to mitigate bias during the creative decision-making and hiring process, celebrate successes, and measure progress toward a more gender-representative industry on all levels. The ReFrame Council, which leads the strategic direction of the organization with ReFrame Director Andria Wilson Mirza, includes the initiative's founding members, WIF Executive Director Kirsten Schaffer, former Sundance CEO Keri Putnam, and Oscar-winning producer, WIF President Emerita and founder of Welle Entertainment Cathy Schulman, alongside Channing Dungey (Chairman, Warner Bros. Television Group), Franklin Leonard (Founder, The Black List), Rena Ronson (Head of UTA Independent Film Group), and Michelle Satter (Founding Senior Director, Artist Programs, Sundance Institute).

ReFrame is made possible by support from IMDbPro; Netflix; The David and Lura Lovell Foundation; The Harnisch Foundation; the Women at Sundance Leadership Council; and Delta Air Lines.

About Sundance Institute

As a champion and curator of independent stories, Sundance Institute provides and preserves the space for artists across storytelling media to create and thrive. Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, the Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. [Sundance Collab](#), a digital community platform, brings artists together to learn from each other and Sundance Advisors and connect in a creative space, developing and sharing works in progress. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences and artists to ignite new ideas, discover original voices, and build a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such recent projects as *Clemency*, *I Carry You With Me*, *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*, *Zola*, *On The Record*, *Boys State*, *American Factory*, *The Farewell*, *Honeyland*, *One Child Nation*, *The Souvenir*, *The Infiltrators*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, *Hereditary*, *Call Me By Your Name*, *Get Out*, *The Big Sick*, *Mudbound*, *Fruitvale Station*, *City So Real*, *Top of the Lake*, *Between the World & Me*, *Wild Goose Dreams* and *Fun Home*. Join [Sundance Institute](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

About WIF

Founded in 1973 as Women In Film, Los Angeles, WIF advocates for and advances the careers of women working in the screen industries, to achieve parity and transform culture. We support women and people of marginalized genders in front of and behind the camera and across all levels of experience. We work to change culture through our distinguished pipeline programs; we advocate for gender parity through

research, education, and media campaigns; and we build a community centered around these goals. Membership is open to all screen industry professionals, and more information can be found on our website: wif.org. Follow WIF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#).