



MILWAUKEE FILM

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Contact: Bre Graziano
Director of Communications
bre@mkofilm.org

Milwaukee Film Announces Jury-Selected Recipients of 2023 Forward Fund Awards

Milwaukee Film's 2023 Forward Fund awards pool of over \$100,000 in cash and film production resources to 11 total projects headed by local filmmakers



[Download event photographs here.](#) Please credit: Jolee Mallmann

MILWAUKEE – Tuesday, December 12th – On December 6, 2023, Milwaukee Film announced the recipients of the [2023 Forward Fund](#), which consisted of 11 total film projects. Every year, the Forward Fund awards a pool of over \$100,000 in cash as well as sponsor-donated production resources (camera rentals, lighting rentals, post-production audio, and visual services, etc.) to jury-selected recipients in packages that combine cash and services to suit the needs of the project.

“Since our very first Festival in 2009, Milwaukee Film has made it a priority to focus on and highlight our homegrown artists and storytellers by awarding them cash jury prizes for completed work in order to provide support for their future creative endeavors,” shared Brigid Wheeler, who joined Milwaukee Film as the Artist Services Manager in January of 2023. “Back in 2015 this commitment grew to include an annual grant program, which gave us the opportunity to expand the pool of cash and in-kind services that we offer to provide films in production and development with support at the time when they can directly use it. We are proud to continue this program in order to serve Milwaukee Film’s mission of creating a more equitable space for artists to live, work, and thrive.”

This year’s Forward Fund jury, comprised of film professionals Mikayla Nicholson, Grants Manager at Northwest Film Forum and Office Manager at MUBI, Sean Weiner, Film Producer, Artist Community Builder, and Co-Director of Untitled Filmmaker Org (UFO), and Melodie Sisk, Filmmaker/Producer, Co-Owner of Elektrik Skin Productions, spent two days deliberating before announcing the winners during a reception at Radio Milwaukee.

Juror Mikayla Nicholson recounted her thoughts on one of the projects that most captivated her: “I was enchanted by the project, *Read to Me*. This work seamlessly combines experimental film, essay film, and documentary elements. Quiet, poignant, and deeply personal, it evokes the spirit of Agnès Varda and Charlotte Welles in Milwaukee.”

Sean Weiner, another juror, shared his thoughts on the submission *Everything Must Go* by Jesse McLean: “With a singular voice that is curious, quiet, and unconventional, the jury was excited to support this innovative filmmaker’s followup feature which juxtaposes a laboratory that refuses to use plastics, a hoarder who refuses to open recently delivered packages, and the sudden loss of the filmmaker’s loved one to explore the collective experience of grief and loss.”

Juror Melodie Sisk spoke very highly of Paulina Bugembe-Kuwahara’s film *Sherman Park*, noting “This filmmaker, inspired by tragedies in their own life, is harnessing the power of the horror genre to address urgent issues of our time.” Sisk continued, “In a film that evokes the original *Candyman* in its horriification of class inequity, *Sherman Park* explores the nightmares of incarceration, the ramifications of marginalization, and how very violent reintegration into a broken society can be.”

The annual Forward Fund is an initiative of Milwaukee Film’s [Artist Services program](#), which aims to support the local filmmaking community by offering formal and informal events for filmmakers

throughout the year and providing direct support to the best and brightest filmmakers through competitive awards.

The 2023 Forward Fund award recipients are:

- Director/writer/producer Paulina Bugembe-Kuwahara for the film *Sherman Park* - \$10,000 cash, in addition to \$20,000 in lighting rentals from Electric Sun, and \$10,000 in camera equipment rentals from North American Camera
- Director Delaney Doersch for the film *Mother's Motherland* - \$15,000 cash, in addition to \$10,000 post-production services from Independent Studios, and music, audio rights & sound design consultation from Super Natural Sound
- Co-directors Joel Kaswan-Meilijson & Amira Stone for the film *Forest County*- \$10,000 cash, in addition to \$10,000 post-production services from Independent Studios, and music, audio rights & sound design consultation from Super Natural Sound
- Director/producer Justin Goodrum for the film *Christopher* - \$10,000 cash, in addition to \$10,000 in camera equipment rentals from North American Camera
- Director/producer Keith McQuirter for the film *The 3,000 Project* - \$10,000 cash
- Director Jay Beckman for the film *Communicable* - \$10,000 cash
- Director Jesse McLean for the film *Everything Must Go* - \$10,000 cash
- Director/writer/ animator Chloe Corcoran for the film *Warm Blood House* (or *House* or *House Dream*) - \$7,500 cash, in addition to music, audio rights & sound design consultation from Super Natural Sound
- Director/writer/editor Inna Dmitrieva for the film *Read to Me* - \$7,500 cash, in addition to music, audio rights & sound design consultation from Super Natural Sound
- Co-directors Suzanne Jurva & Colin Sytsma for the film *My Teacher in Space* - \$5,000 cash
- Director Louis Morton for the film *MINE!* - \$5,000 cash

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About Milwaukee Film

Milwaukee Film is a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to entertaining, educating, and engaging our community through cinematic experiences, with a vision to make Milwaukee a center for film culture. Milwaukee Film operates the magnificent Oriental Theatre, a historic cinema palace committed to high-quality and accessible film and education programming. The 16th annual Milwaukee Film Festival will be held April 11 - April 25, 2024. For more information or to become a Member, visit mkefilm.org.

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