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### **Milwaukee Film Announces New Executive Leadership**

**MILWAUKEE – Monday, January 13th** – Milwaukee Film Inc., the nonprofit organization which produces the nationally recognized Milwaukee Film Festival and operates the historic Oriental and Downer Theatres, today announced the appointment of Susan Santha Kerns, Ph.D., as its new Executive Director, effective February 3. Dr. Kerns, a familiar face at Milwaukee Film and a respected leader in film communities on both a regional and national level, will succeed Anne Reed, who will retire from the role after a transitional overlap.

Since serving as Milwaukee Film’s Education Director from 2010 to 2013, Dr. Kerns has held faculty and leadership positions at Columbia College Chicago, achieving promotion to tenured Associate Professor of Film and Television, and serving as both associate department chair and associate provost for faculty research and development, all roles including extensive work in film festival and cinema studies, production, and promotion.

“Dr. Kerns’ extensive experience was an important factor in her selection,” said Lacey Sadoff, board chair of Milwaukee Film. “Given her rich background in all aspects of our work, we are confident that Susan’s leadership will continue to grow Milwaukee Film’s local and national significance as a film organization.”

Kerns co-founded the Chicago Feminist Film Festival and speaks around the country on topics relating to the film festival landscape. Her most recent film scholarship includes editing and writing for the collection *ReFocus: The Films of Susan Seideman*, which interviews and studies the acclaimed director of *Desperately Seeking Susan*, and providing an essay to the *Tank Girl* Limited Edition box set, distributed by Eureka! Classics. As a filmmaker she writes, produces, and fundraises for independent films; she is currently producing *Uncoiled*, which won A&E’s Pitch Contest at RealScreen. A proud Milwaukee resident, Kerns has been a strong proponent of the local arts scene, notably serving on the steering committee of Action! Wisconsin, a statewide coalition that supports film & TV production tax incentives.

This appointment follows Anne Reed’s successful interim term in 2024, during which Milwaukee Film undertook critical financial restructuring after several recent challenges. Reed will continue to be available to Dr. Kerns to assure a smooth transition. “I am so pleased to return to retirement

knowing that Milwaukee Film is in such strong and experienced hands," Reed said. "I can't wait to see the growth and evolution of Milwaukee Film in the years to come."

With Dr. Kerns at the helm, Milwaukee Film is poised to continue its legacy as a central cultural institution in Milwaukee, expanding its reach and impact within the community and beyond. The organization remains committed to bringing diverse, quality cinematic experiences to its audience, further enriching Milwaukee's vibrant cultural landscape. "I feel honored, delighted, and incredibly excited to step into the Executive Director role at Milwaukee Film. Milwaukee Film is a key part of why I love this city so much, and I'm eager to continue bringing audiences the absolute best film screening experiences in our gorgeous theatres," Dr. Kerns said. "I also take seriously my commitment to local filmmakers. I am eager to highlight their work and help grow the prestige of our terrific filmmaking community."

Kerns' hire concludes the national search previously announced conducted by Milwaukee Film's Board of Directors with the support of Leading Transitions LLC which commenced last fall.

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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 is committed to high-quality and accessible film programming through their operation of the magnificent Oriental Theatre, a historic cinema palace, and the iconic Downer Theatre, Milwaukee's oldest running cinema. The inaugural [Dialogues Documentary Festival](#) ran September 26-29, 2024. The 17th annual [Milwaukee Film Festival](#) will be held April 24 - May 8, 2025. For more information or to become a Member, visit [mkefilm.org](http://mkefilm.org).

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