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Contact: Seanna Hore, Ginsberg/Libby

Seanna.Hore@ginsberglibby.com

Gladys Santos, Ginsberg/Libby

Gladys.Santos@ginsberglibby.com

THREE FILMMAKERS SELECTED FOR THE SECOND IMAGINAR PRODUCERS RESIDENCY

\$150,000 in Grants Awarded

LOS ANGELES (July 14, 2025) — Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Spirit Awards, is thrilled to announce the three selected Fellows for the second annual Imaginar Producers Residency, made possible by Searchlight Pictures in collaboration with the National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP). The program kicks off the week of July 21, 2025, and the selected Fellows are Jesus Garcia, Diego Nájera and Daniel Tantalean.

Over the course of the program, the Imaginar Fellows will receive creative and strategic support to propel their careers and projects forward. They will also collaborate with Searchlight executives to gain insight on how to package projects for studios, bridging the gap between producing independent and studio features. Each Fellow will receive professional coaching in partnership with Renee Freedman & Co., and financial and business advice and coaching in partnership with The Jill James. Guest speakers include Robby O'Connor from ROC Literary and Anne-Elisa Schaffer from Rightscenter. Each Fellow will also receive a \$50,000 unrestricted grant to provide sustainability and support their creative endeavors.

"Building on the success of our inaugural year, the Imaginar Producers Residency continues to champion independent producers with the tools, mentorship and industry access needed to thrive in the studio ecosystem," said Angela C. Lee, Director of Artist Development at Film Independent. "We are proud to support this new class of visionary producers as they forge sustainable, long-term careers in film."

"We are excited to be working with Jesus, Diego, and Daniel—three exceptional producers who are at the forefront of bold, original, and forward-looking films," said Richard Ruiz, VP of Production at Searchlight Pictures. "Our aim with this residency is to provide the resources and community to further advance their creative work, and we look forward to collaborating with them."

“Our goal is to provide the three Fellows with the necessary tools and resources to take their projects to the next level. We are excited to see the outcomes of this collaboration and the success of our Fellows as a result of our joint effort,” said Diana Luna, NALIP Executive Director.

The Imaginar Producers Residency filmmakers are:

Jesus Garcia

Jesus Garcia is a Mexican-American producer based in Los Angeles. He was previously the creative executive for *Epic Magazine*, an editorial and production company behind *Argo*, *Radical* and *Little America*. He participated in the 2023 Film Independent Project Involve program, and most recently produced an erotic thriller for Cate Blanchett’s Proof of Concept accelerator program supported by Netflix. Prior to *Epic*, he worked on projects for Big Beach Films, Starz and 20th Television. Jesus is excited to help shape the next wave of genre filmmakers.

Diego Nájera

Diego Nájera is a producer with over a decade of experience in story development and financing. He recently served as Director of Narrative Film at the award-winning studio Participant, working on films like *Costa Brava*, *Lebanon*, *White Bird* and the upcoming film *The Wave* from Sebastián Lelio. Previously, he produced the Academy Award-nominated short film *Please Hold*, and his work has been recognized at Berlinale, SXSW and AFI Fest. Nájera was selected as a Creative Producing Fellow by the Sundance Institute, a Producing and Project Involve Fellow by Film Independent and was named one of 2023’s 25 Rising Stars in Entertainment by Business Insider. He began his career at the Guadalajara International Film Festival and holds an MFA from USC’s Peter Stark Producing Program.

Daniel Tantalean

Daniel Tantalean is an award-winning producer based in Brooklyn, New York. He is the founder of Yellow Nest Films and is known for producing *In the Summers*, winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival and nominated for Best First Feature at the 2025 Independent Spirit Awards. Daniel is a 2023 Film Independent Producing Lab Fellow and has been recognized as a 2020 and 2022 NALIP Latino Media Market Fellow. In 2024, he was selected for the Tribeca Creators Market with his feature documentary *Rebel Without a Pause*. His films have been showcased at Sundance, Tribeca, SFFilm and Hot Docs. He produced the award-winning short documentary *Ale Libre*, directed by Maya Cueva, which was distributed by *The New Yorker*. In May 2025, Daniel participated as a Fellow in The Gotham’s 2025 Festival De Cannes Producers Network Program, sharing his experiences at the Cannes Film Festival through a producer diary published by *Filmmaker Magazine*.

Celebrating 32 years in 2025, Film Independent Artist Development programs promote unique independent voices by helping filmmakers create and advance new work through Project Involve, Filmmaker Labs (Episodic Directing, Documentary Story, Documentary Producing, Episodic, Producing and Screenwriting), Fast Track finance market and Fiscal Sponsorship, as well as through grants and awards that provide over one million dollars each year in cash and services to visual storytellers. The organization will once again celebrate Fellows and alums at the 2026 Film Independent Spirit Awards and will continue to honor them and this robust work throughout the year. Alumni of Artist Development programs include 2025 Academy Award-winner Sean Baker (*Anora*), Jon M. Chu (*Wicked*), Justin Simien (*Haunted Mansion*), Marvin Lemus (*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Road Trip*), LaToya Morgan (*Duster*), Lulu Wang (*Expats*) and Harry Yoon (*Thunderbolts*).

For more information on any of the Labs or the projects that have been developed in them, please contact artistdevelopment@filmindependent.org. Additional information can be found at filmindependent.org.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

For over 40 years, Film Independent has helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit organization's core mission is to champion creative independence in visual storytelling in all its forms, and to foster a culture of inclusion. We support a global community of artists and audiences who embody diversity, innovation, curiosity, and uniqueness of vision.

In addition to producing the [Film Independent Spirit Awards](#), the organization supports creative professionals with [Artist Development](#) programs, grants and labs. Signature mentorship program [Project Involve](#) fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Weekly Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. International programs provide cultural exchanges and career-building opportunities for film professionals around the world. And year-round screening series [Film Independent Presents](#) offers a robust program of unique cinematic experiences, including screenings, conversations, Live Reads and Bring the Noise musical events.

For more information or to become a Member, visit filmindependent.org.

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