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FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES 2026 SCREENWRITING LAB PARTICIPANTS

The Climate Entertainment Development Grant, in partnership with Plot Shift Media, to award a \$25,000 grant for a climate-focused project

LOS ANGELES (March XX, 2026) — Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Film Independent Spirit Awards, announced the seven screenwriters selected for its twenty-eighth annual Screenwriting Lab launching April 6. Andrés Pérez-Duarte, Emma He, Maddie McCann, Sam Osborn, Rammy Park, Alissa Torvinen and Alejandra Vasquez were chosen for this intensive program, which is designed to provide individualized story and career development for screenwriters working on fiction feature screenplays.

“We’re so excited to support this outstanding cohort of writers who approach their work with nuance and creativity,” said Dea Vazquez, Associate Director of Fiction Programs. “We’re thrilled to be able to further develop both their scripts and careers in the program.”

Over the course of the program, Fellows will develop their projects through intensive workshops guided by creative advisors Linda Yvette Chávez, Phil Hay, Javier Fuentes-León, Matt Manfredi, and Robin Swicord. Additional guest speakers and advisors include Ruth Atkinson, Marco Alvarez, Clint Bentley, Tyler Boehm, Mike Downing, Jordan Hart, HIKARI, Greg Kwedar, Marvin Lemus, Justin Lothrop, Amanda Marshall, Ellen Shanman, Lauren Shelton and Kendrick Tan. Notably, HIKARI previously workshoped her first feature in this same lab—just as Chloé Zhao and Andrew Ahn did—making her participation a powerful and exciting full-circle moment.

In addition, the second-annual Climate Entertainment Development Grant, in partnership with Plot Shift Media, has been awarded to Alissa Torvinen, who will receive a \$25,000 grant for their

climate-focused fiction feature *Extinction of the Badger Duck*. At Plot Shift Media, storytelling and narrative change are tools for climate justice. The organization designs and develops transmedia projects that have the potential to reach broad audiences with entertaining and inspiring stories about the pathways to a just and equitable climate future. It also collaborates with artists developing entertainment or impact-driven climate stories and advocacy organizations working towards just climate solutions for all.

Past Screenwriting Lab projects include Adam Meeks' *Union County*, which premiered at this year's Sundance Film Festival; Jing Ai Ng's *Forge*, which had its world premiere at the 2025 SXSW Film Festival and will be released this spring by Utopia; Billy Luther's *Frybread Face and Me*, winner of the Best Narrative Feature at the 2023 Urbanworld Film Festival and nominated for a GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Film; Academy Award-winner Chloé Zhao's feature debut *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*; Andrew Ahn's Film Independent Spirit Award-winning debut *Spa Night*; *37 Seconds* by HIKARI, which won the Panorama Audience Award and CICAÉ Art Cinema Jury Prize at the 2019 Berlinale Film Festival and is now on Netflix; Ani Simon-Kennedy's *The Short History of the Long Road*, which premiered at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival and received a Special Jury Mention for Best Screenplay; and Kate Marks' *The Cow of Queens*, which was a 2020 recipient of the prestigious Nichols Fellowship.

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, Fiction Producing and Screenwriting), Fast Track Film Finance Market, Fiscal Sponsorship, Amplifier Fellowship and the Imaginar Producers Residency, as well as through Grants and Awards that provide over one million dollars annually to visual storytellers.

The Film Independent Screenwriting Lab is supported by Plot Shift Media.

If you are interested in supporting or applying to Film Independent's [Artist Development](#) programs or learning more about the projects that have been developed in them, please contact artistdevelopment@filmindependent.org or visit filmindependent.org for more details.

The 2026 Screenwriting Lab participants and their projects are:

***Extinction of the Badger Duck* – The Climate Entertainment Development Grant Awardee**

Writer/Director: Alissa Torvinen

Logline: *Extinction of the Badger Duck* follows the rediscovery of a mythic bird and the viral mania it inspires.

Seasonal

Writer/Director: Rammy Park

Logline: Untethered by the loss of her mother after a long period of caretaking, Nara Lee seeks refuge on a remote Danish island. There, the seasons guide her through a cycle of loss and love, bringing her back to the one home she will always have: herself.

Superbloom

Writers: Maddie McCann, Emma He

Logline: In Scottsdale, Arizona's not-so-wild West, wallflower Callie must transform from outcast to outlaw to afford the nose job of her dreams.

Teen Age Riot

Writer/Directors: Sam Osborn, Alejandra Vasquez

Logline: When teenager Emilio Monreal is dragged to Mexico City after his mother's divorce, he finds a home among the city's emo scene. Little does he know that he'll play a pivotal role in the stranger-than-fiction punk vs. emo riots of 2008, battling in the streets for his right to exist.

The Last Supper

Writer/Director: Andrés Pérez-Duarte

Logline: In a close-knit and religious Mexican-American community, a closeted baker prays away her homosexuality to secure her place within a prominent local family. But when her prayer for change backfires, a bizarre twist of fate reverses everyone's sexual orientation overnight, plunging the entire town into bewildering chaos.

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 foster a culture of inclusion, in support of 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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