



ReFrame

Rise

2022–2024



**Elevating Directors
and Cinematographers**

ReFrame Rise

Presented in partnership
with **NETFLIX** Creative Equity Fund

ReFrame Rise™ is a comprehensive and customized two-year program designed by ReFrame, a Women in Film and Sundance Institute collaboration, to accelerate high-level, sustainable advancement for mid-career talent.

Building upon the successes of the first ReFrame Rise™ class, launched in 2019, ReFrame is expanding

the program to support cinematographers as well as directors. Through applying Rise's sponsorship-driven career acceleration model - which has proven to be successful for directors - to the inaugural group of DPs, ReFrame aims to demonstrate a 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.



We are very excited to support this supremely talented cohort of Directors and Cinematographers as a partnership between Women in Film and the Sundance Institute's Women at Sundance Program. We have learned firsthand the value of the sponsorship opportunity for women artists and look forward to supporting this next group as they level up and find sustainability in their careers.

Michelle Satter

Sundance Institute | Founding Senior Director, Artist Program
ReFrame Leadership Council

If you are interested in supporting or connecting with our fellows, please contact:

Andria Wilson Mirza Director, ReFrame | awmirza@wif.org

 [@reframe_project](https://www.instagram.com/reframe_project)  [@reframeproject](https://twitter.com/reframeproject)

Ally Pankiw

Director



Ally Pankiw is a writer/director who works in TV, film, and branded. Ally's accomplishments in TV include directing and executive producing the first season of the Netflix comedy series, *Feel Good*, starring 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*). Her short films have played international film festivals and in 2018 she was selected for Film Independent's Directing Lab with her feature, *The Hiding House*.

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. Ally has previously directed two digital series for the CBC, called *An Awkward Girl Dates* and *Terrific Women*. And 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.

Representation

Agents

Andrew Mathes WME, TV
Chelsea Radler WME, TV
Sarah Self WME, Film

Manager

Li-Wei Chu Partizan

Social Media

 @allypankiw

 @allypankiw

www.allypankiw.com

Angel Kristi Williams

Director



Angel Kristi Williams is an award winning filmmaker born and raised in West Baltimore, Maryland. She was 8 years old when her late father gave her a VHS camcorder which sparked her love for the medium. After studying visual art, photography and experimental film, Angel developed a voice that embraces silence and the power of the image to tell a story.

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.

She splits her time between Baltimore and Los Angeles and holds an MFA in Directing from Columbia College Chicago.

Representation

Agents

Amanda Hymson UTA, Film

Emerson Davis UTA, Film

Alyssa Lanz UTA, TV

Social Media

 [@angelkristiwilliams](#)

 [@angelkristiwms](#)

Ekwa Msangi

Director



Ekwa Msangi's acclaimed feature *Farewell Amor* won the 2020 Sundance Amazon Producer's Award, the NYWIFT Directing Award and Best Screenplay at the Durban International Film Festival, and earned the director herself the Independent Spirit Award for Someone to Watch in 2021. *Farewell Amor* was bought for distribution by IFC Films for North America, MUBI and Netflix for Worldwide. Having written and directed for multiple drama series in Kenya, including

The Agency, MNET's first-ever original hour-long Kenyan drama series, Ekwa was also a 2020 Sundance Momentum Fellow and 2020 BAFTA Breakthrough artist recipient. Ekwa has taught Screenwriting at The New School and Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema, and at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. 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.

Representation

Agent

Craig Kestel WME

Manager

Ken Lee Brillstein Entertainment Partners

Social Media

 @ekwapics

 @ekwapics

www.ekwapics.com

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).

Apart from directing, Mounia has also taught a lab in Directing at Columbia University, New York, and directing at the NHSI film summer institute at Northwestern University, Chicago.

Mounia is currently developing new projects (TV and Film) between Paris, Beirut and LA where she also was recently a TED Talk Women speaker.

Representation

Agents

Alex Rusher

Independent Talent, London

Olivia Gray

Independent Talent, London

Manager

Faisal Kanaan

Grandview Management

Gabrielle Lewis

Grandview Management

Social Media

 @mounia.akl

www.mouniaakl.com

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. Named one of 25 New Faces of Independent Film by Filmmaker Magazine in 2017, she tells stories about Black girls and women who find themselves between worlds and identities.

Her debut feature film, *Jinn*, starring Zoe Renee, Kelvin Harrison Jr., and Simone Missick, premiered at the 2018 SXSW Film Festival, where she won the Special Jury Recognition Award for Screenwriting. A New York Times Critics pick, *Jinn* was released in November 2018 by Orion Classics, and is currently streaming on Amazon. She has directed episodes of television programs like Ava DuVernay's critically-acclaimed series *Queen Sugar*, HBO's *Insecure*, and Hulu's *Wu Tang: An American Saga*. She's also written for the upcoming Apple series, *Swagger*, and the Starz show *Blindspotting*. She is currently developing her second feature film, *Mosswood Park*. In 2019, she received the Shadow & Act Rising Award, the MPAC Media Award for Courage and Conscience, and joined the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. She is a 2013 graduate of CalArts MFA Film Directing and Creative Writing Programs, and a 2007 graduate of UC Berkeley, where studied in June Jordan's Poetry for the People Program.



Representation

Agents

Brandon Lawrence CAA
Austin Denesuk CAA

Manager

Bash Naran Writ Large
Greg Shephard Writ Large

Social Media

 @Nijla1

 @Nijla1

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Terrie Samundra

Director

Terrie Samundra is a Writer/Director who grew up between a rural village in India, a small farming town in Missouri, and along the coast of California, informing her work as a multicultural artist. Her debut feature, *Kaali Khuhi*, is a Netflix Original Film that premiered in 2020. In its first week on the platform, it was the #3 most watched film on Netflix in India and #4 in Pakistan. Currently, Samundra is in development of her original series *The Ballad of Pooja* with Westbrook Studios, and is working as a staff writer on the second season of a Netflix India Original Series which is soon to be announced.

Samundra's short films *Kunjo*, *Ice Cream Wallah*, and *A Short Tale of Xuan* have screened in film festivals internationally, garnering numerous accolades including a National Geographic All Roads Seed Grant and Best Short Film at the Academy Nominating Athens International Film Festival. She has also directed music videos and a national commercial campaign for Planned Parenthood.

She is the creator of the original limited series *Raakshas* and has written extensively with her creative partner David Walter Lech on their original screenplays *Woman On The Hill*, *Betamax*, *Western Interior Seaway*, and the episodic series *The Blood Below*. She is an alumna of the Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab, the SFFILM/Kenneth Rainin Screenwriting Fellowship and the Sundance Women in Film Finance Intensive. She is represented by the Gersh Agency and Circle of Confusion.



Representation

Agents

Lauren Craniotes Gersh, Film
Sandra Luchessi Gersh, Film
David Rubin Gersh, TV

Manager

Ken Freimann
Circle of Confusion

Social Media

 @terriesamundra

 @terriesamundra

www.terriesamundra.com

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. She is obsessed with telling rebellious stories through underrepresented perspectives and thrives in the intersection of grit and glamor.

Yoko is currently in post for her directorial debut feature for Blumhouse and Epix. The thriller titled *Unseen* stars Jolene Purdy (*The White Lotus*, *Wandavision*) 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*.

Representation

Agents

Jordan Berg CAA
Stevee Jo Eads CAA
Jiah Shin CAA

Manager

Randy Kiyan
Luber Roklin Entertainment

Social Media

 @fouryoko

 @yokinator

www.yokookumura.com

Ava Benjamin Shorr

Cinematographer



Ava Benjamin Shorr is a Los Angeles-based director of photography. Raised in Portland, Oregon, her early curiosity about film emerged from the rough-hewn style of skateboarding videos of the mid-nineties coupled with a fascination with art-house cinema.

By drawing upon experimental photographic techniques and her own memories, Ava uses an innate sense of light to shape emotion, enrich stories, and create new kinds of moving images. But her work is guided most of all by a deep appreciation for the poetics of the human face and a drive to showcase authentic perspectives.

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. *Ava & Bianca* premiered on Nowness and is currently screening on the festival circuit.

Representation

Agents

Bill Dispoto

Dattner Dispoto & Associates

Dan Burnside

Dattner Dispoto & Associates

Social Media

 [@ava.benjamins](https://www.instagram.com/ava.benjamins)

www.avabenjamin.com

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).

Leung is a recipient of The American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) Vision Mentorship Program 2021, and AFI Conservatory's Cinematography Intensive Workshop 2019. 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 also screened at Sundance, SXSW, Fantasia, and Outfest.

Social Media

 @BarbieLeungDP

www.barbieleung.com

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.

Gonçalves was a cinematographer for Beyoncé'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.

Representation

Agents

Ann Murphy ICM Partners

Lily Fettis Green ICM Partners

Social Media

 @lauramelodygoncalves

www.lauramerians.com

Mariscela Mendez

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 has been recognized by her contemporaries and in 2019 she 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*. Mariscela was also selected as one of 4 DPs to participate in the 2022 Reframe Rise Fellowship partnered with Women in Film and Sundance. Miss Méndez 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. Miss Méndez is based in Los Angeles, but works worldwide.



Social Media

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www.mariscela.com



ReFrame

**Founded by the
Sundance Institute and WIF**

Reframeproject.org