

UNIONDOCS ANNOUNCES THE RECIPIENTS OF THE UNDO FELLOWSHIP
Supporting collaborative research for radical practices in documentary filmmaking.



(Brooklyn, New York. October 4, 2022) UnionDocs Center for Documentary Art is honored to announce the selection of four pairs of artists and writers for the UNDO FELLOWSHIP, an initiative to expand radical filmmaking practices and research new languages of documentary cinema. The fellowship recipients include writer **Ashon Crawley** with artist **Crystal Z. Campbell**, author **Sukhdev Sandhu** with filmmaker **Deborah Stratman**, scholar **Lakshmi Padmanabhan** with filmmaker **Miryam Charles**, and writer/editor **Jas Morgan** with artist **Thirza Cuthand**. Each of the fellows will receive \$20,000 for their participation in the yearlong program, which includes a seminar at DocLisboa 2021 followed by a retreat at Casa Do Xisto in Portugal, and a final retreat and public symposium in the Fall of 2022 at EMPAC at Rensselaer in Troy, New York.

For this, the second round of the UNDO FELLOWSHIP, a select group of nominated writers and documentary artists participated in a match-making process guided by UnionDocs. Once matched, they worked together to develop a shared research question to motivate their regular intellectual and creative exchange over the fellowship year. This collaboration was meant to root in the artist's film practice and offer resources for the further development of their projects, aesthetics, and methodologies. The funding for the four artists is unrestricted, while the writers are commissioned to author and organize a reader— a compendium of writing, interviews, excerpts and ephemera— that approaches the proposed research question from multiple angles.

The selection of these pairs gave equal consideration to the excellence of previous work and to the proposed research focus, ambitious questions relevant to contemporary documentary representation (see the list of research threads below). UnionDocs is cultivating feedback structures and a spirit of community to support these sustained explorations, allowing for the cohort to contribute in their strength and diversity. Each pair's proposed focus of research will be workshopped through a series of in-person gatherings and remote discussions over the fellowship year and will ultimately be addressed in a final publication and in a public

session at the culminating symposium, which hopes to make a significant contribution to documentary discourse.

The avenues of support for formally adventurous, artful documentary like the work of the filmmakers and artists recognized by the UNDO FELLOWSHIP are few. UnionDocs Co-Artistic Director Jenny Miller says, “This program offers a rare opportunity for a unique and perhaps unexpected form of collaboration. We’ve been excited to develop it as an experiment in grant-making and to evolve the format in this new iteration, seeking ways to include more voices and angles on the research, and provide the right amount of space and structure for the pair’s ideas to morph and gestate. We can’t wait to see and also share how bringing these folks together grows their practice and research. Next stop, Portugal!”

MOTIVATING QUESTIONS

THE SITE OF WHISPERS

Writer Ashon Crawley and Artist Crystal Z Campbell will examine the various ways that ideas, stories, and narratives are collected and ask what happens when the things collected are ephemeral? They will imagine ways that knowledge about Black geographic translation—in its variance and shade, in its color and texture, in its weight and lightness, in its vibration and sound—moves, how it spreads. The sound of glances and glimpses, the sight of whispers and hushed words, is where their research resides. They ask if the sonic component in film is the augmentation of the relationship between remembering and forgetting, or is the sonic a way to get at the archive and what exceeds its capture? Campbell’s sonic-centered documentary work honors the untranslatable, strategies of opacity, and rumor. They will posit together if fragments and gaps in archives can act as historical conductors, offering new translations or urgent questions, around Black geography, land and body, and the public secrets embedded in landscapes.

FORMS OF ERRANTRY

How can the form of experimental documentary address the legacies of colonization as they are lived today? Scholar Lakshmi Padmanabhan and Filmmaker Miryam Charles will be following the routes opened up by this question, traveling and filming in India and Haiti (places of origin and belonging for them), to hear from women both dead and alive about their histories of survival and aesthetics of errantry. They will seek answers in the fissures between image and sound, personal narrative and political history, and in the juxtapositions between the dream of an anticolonial future, and the nightmare of our globalized present.

TWO-SPIRIT LIFE CYCLES

Writer and critic Jas Morgan and filmmaker / artist Thirza Cuthand propose to advance Two-Spirit Indigiqueer life cycles through forms of mutual recognition, contemporary kinship, and world-building. Reflecting on the ways Indigenous queer, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming peoples have lost knowledge about their social and cultural roles, and of homophobic shame imposed on Indigenous Peoples through punishment and policing of non-normative sexualities, they will expand on the impact of feminist material aesthetics, private documentary style filmmaking, and experimental realms for consciousness raising. Cuthand and Morgan will engage in a “call and response” dialogue working through archival material, photos and journal entries, from Cuthand’s personal archive with autotheoric responses by Morgan reflecting on what they have learned about Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer life cycles.

GEOLOGIC LISTENING

Author Sukhdev Sandhu and filmmaker Deborah Stratman will probe critical debates around the Anthropocene, monumentality, and the politics of audibility through an inquiry that looks to geology as an

experimental pedagogy, an archive from which to ponder the ways in which our society dwells between past and future catastrophes. Drawing on speculative fiction as well as forensic non-fiction, their research will extend Stratman's longstanding engagement with the politics of landscape. Fundamentally, they ask: how can we begin to formulate a progressive politics – or even a vision of the future – that does not pedestalize the human species?

MEET THE FELLOWS

Ashon Crawley is a writer, artist and teacher, exploring the intersection of performance, blackness, queerness and spirituality. He is associate professor of Religious Studies and African-American and African Studies at the University of Virginia. His is author of *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (Fordham University Press) and *The Lonely Letters* (Duke University Press). He is currently at work on a book about the practice of contemporary black life as a spiritual disposition, posture, gesture and relation; and a short story collection and a nonfiction volume, both about the Hammond B3 organ, the Black church and sexuality. A MacDowell interdisciplinary arts fellow, he is at work on an art installation featuring light sculpture and sound that serves as a memorial to blackqueer spiritual life, musicianship and erasures from official narratives.

Crystal Z Campbell is a multidisciplinary artist, experimental filmmaker, and writer of African American, Filipino, and Chinese descents. Campbell finds complexity in public secrets—fragments of information known by many but untold or unspoken. Select honors include the Pollock-Krasner Award, MAP Fund, MacDowell, Skowhegan, Rijksakademie, Whitney ISP, Franklin Furnace, OVAC Art 365, and Flaherty Film Seminar. Exhibitions/screenings include SFMOMA, Drawing Center, ICA-Philadelphia, REDCAT, Artissima, Studio Museum of Harlem, Project Row Houses, and SculptureCenter, amongst others. Founder of archiveacts.com, Campbell was a 2020-2021 Harvard Radcliffe Film Study Center & David and Roberta Logie Fellow and is currently a Distinguished Scholar at the University of Buffalo. A 2021 Guggenheim Fellow in Fine Arts, Campbell lives and works in New York & Oklahoma.

Deborah Stratman makes films and artworks that question power, control and belief, considering how places, ideas, and society are intertwined. She regards sound as the ultimate multi-tool, and time to be supernatural. Recent projects have addressed freedom, surveillance, broadcast, sinkholes, comets, raptors, orthoptera, levitation, exodus, evolution, sisterhood and faith. Stratman has exhibited internationally at venues including MoMA (NY), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Hammer Museum (LA), Austrian Film Museum (Vienna), MCA (Chicago), Whitney Biennial (NY), Flaherty Seminar and festivals including Sundance, Viennale, Berlinale, CPH:DOX, True/False, Locarno and Rotterdam. She is the recipient of Fulbright, Guggenheim and USA Fellowships, an Alpert Award and grants from Creative Capital, Graham Foundation, Harpo Foundation and Wexner Center for the Arts. She lives in Chicago where she teaches at the University of Illinois.

Sukhdev Sandhu is the author of *London Calling: How Black and South Asian Writers Imagined A City* (HarperCollins), *I'll Get My Coat* (Book Works), *Night Haunts* (Verso), *Other Musics* (MoMA). His writings - on documentary and international film, experimental music, migrant aesthetics - have appeared in journals such as *Film Comment*, *Frieze*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *The Wire*, *4 Columns*, *The Guardian*, and *Suddeutsche Zeitung*. He is an Associate Professor at New York University where he also directs the Colloquium for Unpopular Culture.

Lakshmi Padmanabhan is assistant professor in Radio/TV/Film at Northwestern University. She is co-editor of "Performing Refusal/Refusing to Perform," a special issue of *Women & Performance*. Her teaching and research focus on world cinema and experimental film, postcolonial theory, feminist theory and queer theory.

Her current book project addresses the ways in which feminist documentary artists from South Asia experiment with cinematic form in order to imagine a radical postcolonial ethics. Her academic writing has been published in journals including *Camera Obscura*, and *Art History*, and she has contributed reviews and criticism to venues including *Seen*, *Public Books*, and *Post45*. She has programmed film and video at venues including BRIC Arts, AS220, and Magic Lantern Cinema.

Miryam Charles is a director, producer and director of photography living in Montreal. She has produced and photographed several short fiction films as well as feature films . She is also the director of several short films which have been presented in various festivals in Quebec and internationally. She is working on her first feature-length documentary *Cette maison* (Talents en vue, SODEC), on short fiction film *Au crépuscule* (SODEC créateurs émergents), a fantastic series *Jou va, jou vien* (Banff/Netflix Diversity of Voices + Trio Orange) as well as a feature-length fiction film *Le marabout* (La forge Québec cinéma/Netflix + Voyelles Films). She is currently artist-in-residence at Concordia University and on the board of directors of RIDM, Dazibao and La Coop vidéo de Montréal.

Jas Morgan is a Toronto-based SSHRC doctoral scholarship recipient, a McGill University Art History Ph.D. candidate, and an assistant professor in Ryerson University's Department of English. They previously held the position of Editor-at-Large for *Canadian Art*. Morgan's first book *n̄tis̄anak* (Metonymy Press, 2018) won the prestigious 2019 Dayne Ogilvie Prize and a 2019 Quebec Writer's Federation first book prize, and has been nominated for a Lambda Literary Award and an Indigenous Voices Literary Award.

Thirza Jean Cuthand was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada in 1978, and grew up in Saskatoon. Since 1995 she has been making short experimental narrative videos and films about sexuality, madness, Queer identity and love, and Indigeneity, which have screened in festivals internationally, including the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City, Mix Brasil Festival of Sexual Diversity in Sao Paulo, ImagineNATIVE in Toronto, Ann Arbour Film Festival, Images in Toronto, Berlinale in Berlin, and Oberhausen International Short Film Festival. Her work has also exhibited at galleries including the Remai in Saskatoon, The National Gallery in Ottawa, and The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. They completed their Bachelor of Fine Arts majoring in Film and Video at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2005, and her Masters of Arts in Media Production at X University in 2015. She currently resides in Toronto, Canada.

ABOUT UNIONDOCS

UnionDocs is a Center for Documentary Art that presents, produces, publishes, and educates. Since 2005, we've brought together a diverse community on a search for urgent expressions of the human experience, practical perspectives on the world today, and compelling visions for the future. Our programs are run with the belief that documentary art, when paired with thoughtful context and open debate, is an invaluable tool for understanding the complexities of contemporary life and creating a more compassionate, engaged, and integrated society.

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