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HOMEGROWN ANIMATION THAT'LL MAKE YOU SHED A TEAR: OIAF ANNOUNCES OFFICIAL SELECTION

Local Filmmakers Take On Heartbreaking, True Stories at This Year's OIAF

OTTAWA (July 23, 2019) - The Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF), North America's leading animation film festival, is pleased to announce the official selection for its 43rd year. This year's collection of competition and showcase films is not only diverse and far-reaching, but also includes two hard-hitting entries from local filmmakers.

"It's not easy to get into the Festival Competition, so it's always a pleasant surprise when some hometown folks make the cut as Chris Dainty (*Shannon Amen*) and Valerie Barnhart (*The Girl in the Hallway*) have done," says Chris Robinson, Artistic Director of the OIAF.

"In fact, this might be the first time the OIAF has had two Ottawans in Competition. It just confirms just how steady the growth of animation has been in Ottawa. It's not just a rise in studios, but we're seeing more independent artists also thriving."

Valerie Barnhart is an Ottawa-based, self-taught animator who was propelled into the craft by the story of a little girl she'd heard in a podcast. Her entry in this year's Festival, *Girl in the Hallway*, illustrates the painful story of a young girl's murder narrated by her real-life neighbour.

"Once I found out Xiana is Indigenous, this located the story in a completely different context. I believe silence and inaction is a major factor in how this particular genocide is ongoing," says Barnhart. "This makes telling this particular story especially important. I was simply not in a position to be silent. Storytelling is medicine. Our communities need these stories."

An Emily Carr printmaking alumni, Barnhart took it upon herself to learn how to animate for *Girl in the Hallway*, her debut film. The film has toured the world at over six film festivals, including the world's largest animation festival in Annecy, and has landed at this year's OIAF for its much-anticipated local premiere.

Also appearing at the Festival this year is Ottawa animation powerhouse Chris Dainty's *Shannon Amen*. The richly textured animated short is an incredibly personal story about loss, artistry, and the suffocating and oppressive force of a rigid religion on a queer person's life and art. The NFB calls *Shannon Amen* "Chris Dainty's Animated Elegy."

"I feel like I've grown with this film, artistically and in all kinds of other ways," says Dainty, on the NFB Blog. "It's brought me closer to Shannon. I'm finally at peace with what happened. Art is therapy, I believe that, and something has lifted from my shoulders. There have been so many highs and lows during this production. It was hard, emotionally draining, and there were days when I didn't want to get out of bed. But that chapter has come to an end."

In addition to these local entries, the 2019 festival will also include a diverse array of Canadian features, competition shorts from across the country, and a wide selection of films for Canadian Panorama and the Canadian Student Competition, which include even more Ottawan talent like Joel Mackenzie.

All Canadian films in Panorama and Competition are eligible for the CFI Best Canadian Animation Award. Winners will be announced on September 29, 2019 at the official OIAF Awards Ceremony.

The Ottawa International Animation Festival runs from September 25 - 29 and screens at various venues in Ottawa. Admission starts at \$14 for the general public, or \$10 for children, seniors, and members of the Canadian Film Institute. Tickets and Festival Passes are available online at animationfestival.ca.

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ABOUT THE OIAF

The Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF) is one of the world's leading animation events providing screenings, exhibits, workshops and entertainment since 1976. OIAF is an annual five-day event bringing art and industry together in a vibrant hub and attracting more than 34,000 artists, producers, students and animation fans from around the world. This year's OIAF runs September 25 - 29, 2019. Visit the OIAF website at: www.animationfestival.ca.

For more information, interviews, press materials, photos, please contact Madeline Lines, Media Coordinator for OIAF, by e-mail (media@animationfestival.ca).