Visual Arts Program of the Lewis Center for the Arts presents the Black Maria Film Festival

Renowned internationally touring festival brings nine short films to Princeton for screening

Photo caption: A still from Belgian filmmaker Soetkin Verstegen’s animated short Mr. Sand, one of nine films to be screened at the Black Maria Film Festival at Princeton. Photo credit: Soetkin Verstegen

What: The Black Maria Film Festival, the renowned nationally touring film festival screens a diverse collection of nine short works touring in the Festival’s 36th season

Who: Introduced by Festival Director Jane Steuerwald, presented by the Visual Arts Program of the Lewis Center for the Arts

When: February 23 at 7:30 p.m.

Where: James M. Stewart ’32 Theater at 185 Nassau Street in Princeton

Free and open to the public

(Princeton, NJ) The renowned internationally touring Black Maria Film Festival will screen nine short works at Princeton University’s Lewis Center for the Art on Thursday,
February 23 at 7:30 p.m. Introduced by Festival Director Jane Steuerwald and coordinated by Professor of Visual Arts and filmmaker Su Friedrich, the screening will take place in the James M. Stewart ’32 Theater at 185 Nassau Street in Princeton. The event is free and open to the public.

For 36 years the Black Maria Film Festival has been celebrating creativity and innovation in the moving-image arts. An annual juried competition of short works in all genres, the Festival is a project of the Thomas Edison Media Arts Consortium, which also showcases the New Jersey Young Filmmakers Festival and the Global Insights Collection, an archive of films focusing on the environment, people with disabilities, international issues, and films with themes of social justice. Following the Festival's annual premiere in February, it travels over the next 12 months across the U.S. and abroad.

The films that become the centerpiece of the Black Maria Film Festival honor the vision of Thomas Edison, New Jersey inventor and creator of the motion picture, whose studio, the “Black Maria,” was the world’s first. The Festival focuses on short films – narrative, experimental, animation, and documentary - including those that address issues and struggles within contemporary society such as the environment, public health, race and class, family, and sustainability. These juried works range from animation, comedy, and drama to the exploration of pure form in film and video and are the heart and soul of the festival.

The films being screened at Princeton include Mr. Sand, a dreamy animated short exploring a dangerous new medium to tell a bedtime story; TYSON!, which follows an abandoned boy at the village medical clinic and the nurse that fights the local bureaucracy for his sake; Microspectrum, a surreal short journeying through the abstract strangeness of nature; Altimir, which documents the extreme population decline in Bulgaria by following Altimir, one of Bulgaria’s disappearing villages; A, a unique narrative delving into the history of the first letter in the alphabet; Decision, an animated short exploring one woman’s experience with anxiety and how she handles a perceived false choice; More Dangerous Than a Thousand Rioters, which uses experimental
animation techniques to tell the story of revolutionary Lucy Parsons, the historically overlooked woman of color married to Haymarket anarchist Albert Parsons; *Prison Fight*, a documentary peeking into the lives of two men from opposite sides of the globe who face each other in a Thailand prison fight; and *How Do You Raise a Black Child?*, which adapts Cortney Lamar Charleston’s poem to paint a portrait of everyday life for a young black man growing up in America.

Among the other institutions hosting the Black Maria Festival Tour include the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.; the Roxie Theater in San Francisco; Savannah College of Art and Design; University of the Arts in Philadelphia; University of Delaware; University of Gloucestershire in the U.K.; and the Paramount Theater in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Festival is based at New Jersey City University in New Jersey, not far from the site of Thomas Edison’s original film studio the “Black Maria” in West Orange. The studio received its name from Edison’s employees who thought the studio’s boxy shape and black tar paper covering resembled the so-called “black maria” police paddy wagons.

The Festival jurors for the 2017 tour include Henry Baker, who works in video, television, film, sound, print and interactive media, and is founder of BXB, a video company based in New York City whose clients include HBO, Cinemax, SONY, and Panasonic; and Margaret Parsons, curator of film and media programs at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. who has also worked with the Corcoran Gallery of Art, American University, the National Archives, the Smithsonian Museum of American History, the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, CINE, The Moving Image, and the Getty Trust’s experimental Art on Film in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Thomas Edison Media Arts Consortium is supported by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Hudson County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs and Tourism, The Charles Edison Foundation, New Jersey City University, and private and corporate donors.
To learn more about this event, the Program in Visual Arts, and the more than 100 other performances, exhibitions, readings, screenings and lecture presented each year at the Lewis Center visit arts.princeton.edu.

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