

SAVE THE DATE!
DOCLANDS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL
A Celebration of Documentary Filmmaking
Thursday, May 2 – Sunday, May 5, 2024
AT THE CHRISTOPHER B. SMITH RAFAEL FILM CENTER

*FESTIVAL TO PRESENT WORLD PREMIERES OF FROM HERE/FROM THERE (De Aquí/De Allá),
I HOPE THIS HELPS!, MAKE A CIRCLE, AND NOT JUST A GOOF
PLUS, THE NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF LIVING WITH WOLVES AND
US PREMIERES OF 500 DAYS IN THE WILD AND HUNT FOR THE OLDEST DNA*

OPENING NIGHT: SKYWALKERS: A LOVE STORY | CLOSING NIGHT: 500 DAYS IN THE WILD



We are thrilled to announce the return of the DocLands Documentary Film Festival to the Smith Rafael Film Center from Thursday, May 2 – Sunday, May 5, 2024. This year, we invite audiences to immerse themselves in a carefully curated program of inspiring, thought-provoking, and entertaining stories that celebrate the art of documentary filmmaking.

Join us for DocLands 2024, where we will proudly present the world premieres of "**From Here/From There (De Aquí/De Allá)**," "**I Hope This Helps!**," "**Make a Circle**," and "**Not Just a Goof**." These films offer unique perspectives and compelling narratives that will leave a lasting impression. Additionally, we are delighted to showcase the North American Premiere of "**Living with Wolves**," and US premieres of "**500 Days in the Wild**" and "**Hunt for the Oldest DNA**," adding to the excitement of this year's festival.

"We are so excited to present 25 exceptional feature films from filmmakers worldwide at the 2024 DocLands Documentary Film Festival. Documentary filmmaking is more relevant than ever, covering a spectrum of topics from joy to the most pressing issues of our time," said Mark Fishkin, Founder/Executive Director at The California Film Institute (CAFILM). "The DocLands lineup is set to entertain, inspire, and leave a lasting impact. Join us for an unforgettable experience."

In addition to the premieres mentioned above, DocLands 2024 will kick off with "**Skywalkers: A Love Story**," and conclude with the 2020 DocPitch Audience Award winner "**500 Days in the Wild**." Additionally, DocLands will feature engaging Q&A sessions with filmmakers, an enlightening DocTalk panel discussion, and special events, providing attendees with the opportunity to interact with industry professionals and fellow film enthusiasts.

Save the date for DocLands 2024 and join us at the Smith Rafael Film Center for four days of cinematic excellence, inspiration, and community. Tickets and additional details will be available soon at www.doclands.com.

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About the Films

Opening Night

Thursday, May 2, 2024

SKYWALKERS: A LOVE STORY

Expected Guests: Directors Jeff Zimbalist, Maria Bukhonina

Angela was raised poor outside Moscow, her parents working for the circus. A talented gymnast, she excels at the sport of rooftopping, or climbing the world's highest buildings without safety harnesses, but Angela isn't accepted by her male climbing peers. As she begins to one-up the boys with her bravery and creativity, she gets the attention of Russia's top rooftopper Vanya. The two form an elite team and expand the phenomena to a new genre they call "skywalking," creating artistic photography of acrobatic stunts on the edges of skyscrapers. Their art goes viral, they get sponsored to travel with their new brand, eventually fall in love, and social media explodes. But when Covid halts travel, and Russia invades Ukraine, Angela and Vanya lose their sponsors and followers, stirring trust issues in their partnership. In the hopes of saving their careers and their relationship, they risk never seeing their families again and leave Russia to conquer their greatest quest yet, the second-highest building in the world.

Filmed over the course of six years across six countries, SKYWALKERS uses extreme climbing as a metaphor for trust in romantic relationships, ultimately compelling us to choose love on the most epic scale.

Closing Night

Saturday, May 4, 2024

500 DAYS IN THE WILD – US Premiere

Expected Guests: Director Dianne Whelan, Subjects, Louisa Robinson, Jenica Vanelli

The 24,000 km Trans Canada Trail stretches across the continent of North America, connecting the Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific oceans. It is the longest trail in the world. For six years filmmaker Dianne Whelan traveled the entirety of the land and water trails, the only person to ever accomplish this journey. From pushing 150 pounds of bike and a heavy backpack over rocks to hiking through flooded bogs, paddling one of the largest lakes in the world, snowshoeing through dense forest, skiing and biking along pristine trails in all seasons, 500 DAYS IN THE WILD weaves Dianne's adventures with her cross-cultural visits with those who live close to the land.

This feature doc culled from 800 hours of footage is an intricate weave of adventure film, personal reflection and stunning captures of wildlife and landscapes. The people Dianne encounters include the Indigenous elders she pays her respects to along the way, friends who occasionally join her on the trail and locals in the communities she passes through.

Using humor, adventure, beautiful cinematography and a great soundtrack, 500 Days in the Wild will entertain audiences and inspire hope for the future.

She started out alone, disillusioned with state of the world, to look for different ways of caring for the land and for each other. She ended the journey a bit wiser, more hopeful, in love and with a passion to share this story. Just as Dianne was profoundly changed by her experience, the film will give audiences of all ages and walks of life a window into their own possibilities in life, and entertain them while doing so.

World Premiere

FROM HERE/FROM THERE (De Aquí/De Allá)

Expected Guests: Director Marlene “Mo” Morris, Producers Jed Riffe, Nicole Solis-Sison Subject: Luis Cortes Romero

Local Connections:

Director, Mo Morris is a Bay Area Resident | The film was partially shot in the Bay Area; locations include South Bay and San Francisco. The subject, Luis Cortes Romero grew up in Redwood City

When the Trump administration abruptly threatens to deport 700,000 fellow Dreamers, charismatic attorney Luis Cortes Romero fights back, co-piloting an A-Team of lawyers who take their case all the way to the Supreme Court, making the tattooed homeboy, raised in Redwood City, CA, the first undocumented immigrant to argue before the nation’s highest court. Accompanied by vibrant animation and an original score reflecting Luis’s code-switching identity, FROM HERE/FROM THERE (DE AQUÍ DE ALLÁ) interweaves the journey of the case with the remarkable story of Cortes Romero and his close-knit family. Their ties nearly snap under the stains of personal tragedies, but they survive to rejoice together when Luis triumphs at the Supreme Court. Set for release amidst this volatile election year and ongoing DACA threats, this timely documentary is more urgent than ever, serving as a poignant reminder of the pressing need for immigration reform. Luis's narrative, marked by family resilience and unwavering determination, promises to inspire audiences to stand up for justice in the face of adversity.

World Premiere

I HOPE THIS HELPS!

Expected Guests: Director Daniel Freed, DP Brendan Hubbard, Editor Josh Bowen

Daniel Freed is a man who is convinced that artificial intelligence is going to destroy humanity. He attempts to finance, recruit, and train an army to defeat AI in the coming human-machine war. Ironically, he uses AI to help him do all this.

World Premiere

MAKE A CIRCLE

Expected Guests: Directors Jen Bradwell, Todd Boekelheide, Producer Rebekah Fergusson

Local Connection:

Bay Area Filmmaker + Bay Area Content—The film was filmed in three childcare centers: All People's School, led by Susan Stevenson and Anne Bauer in Berkeley (West Berkeley), Rose's Daycare, led by Charlotte Guinn in downtown Oakland, and Creative Learning Center, led by Patricia Moran in San Jose.

MAKE A CIRCLE is a character-driven documentary that follows the directors and teachers at three childcare centers in California over several years. Emerging from the pandemic, this ensemble of educators is determined to change how society values the education of its youngest citizens. MAKE A CIRCLE captures the unfolding stories of Patricia, a leader of the California child care workers union, as she fights on behalf of a mostly immigrant workforce; Charlotte, another union member who tirelessly lifts up the low-income families in her care; and Anne, the director of a large preschool, who finds novel ways to value and support her teachers when jobs at Starbucks are offering higher pay. The film culminates as thousands of childcare union members march on the California state capitol demanding better working conditions, resulting in an unlikely, inspiring victory for the providers on the day their contract is set to expire. Weaving together the magic they create in the classroom, the struggles they endure at home, and their drive to change the system for the better, MAKE A CIRCLE is a moving portrait of life as an early childhood educator and a rallying cry for a childcare system in crisis.

World Premiere

NOT JUST A GOOF

Expected Guests: Director(s) Christopher Ninness, Eric Kimelton, Subject Kevin Lima, Producer Scott Seibold, Writer Mason Trueblood, Composer Cameron Chambers

Local Connection:

Subject Kevin Lima (animator)

NOT JUST A GOOF is a captivating documentary that delves deep into the untold story behind the making of the cult-classic Disney film, A Goofy Movie. It paints a vivid picture of an underdog team of young creatives tackling their very first Disney feature project, only to face disappointment upon its initial release, followed by a surprising resurgence in popularity two decades later. It offers a glimpse into the obstacles, clashes, and victories that shaped the film. Through interviews with key figures involved in A Goofy Movie's creation, coupled with rare, previously unreleased archival footage, concept art, it unveils the studio's inner workings and provides an unfiltered perspective. Not only is this documentary a window into the creative rollercoaster that Disney Animation experienced during this era, it also showcases why "A Goofy Movie" means so much to the generation who watched it on repeat in the 90's, from their perspective. "Not Just A Goof" offers a captivating and informative retrospective. It illuminates the enchanting behind-the-scenes magic that contributed to making "A Goofy Movie" a cherished gem in Disney's storied animation history, making it a must-watch for both Disney enthusiasts and an entire generation of millennials.

North American Premiere

LIVING WITH WOLVES

Expected Guests: N/A

After disappearing for almost 80 years, wolves are gradually repopulating Europe. Man will have to learn to live and cohabit with these mysterious yet dangerous animals.

After living alongside a community of wolves, Jean-Michel Bertrand embarks on a fascinating cinematic quest through European forests, during which he'll make some surprising encounters.

A sensitive and naturalistic reflection that leads us to perceive differently both the nature that surrounds us and the cohabitation between humans and the wild animals that inhabit it, which has become a worldwide concern.

US Premiere

HUNT FOR THE OLDEST DNA

Expected Guests: Executive Producer John Rubin

HUNT FOR THE OLDEST DNA tells the story of a maverick gene hunter, whose single-minded pursuit of an improbable scientific vision would tease and torment him before ending with a stunning triumph: a lost world recovered from a spoonful of dirt.

Two decades ago, Eske Willerslev had a radical idea: Could DNA, the fragile chemical code of life, survive intact in frozen sediment for millennia? Fellow scientists called him crazy. But the Danish biologist set out to prove everybody wrong, and his perseverance paid off with a landmark breakthrough—with massive implications for how we understand the deep past.

After many years of failure, Willerslev recovered the genetic traces of a lush forest ecosystem from before the Ice Age, more than two million years ago. The species identified from their DNA lived during the last hot epoch on Earth. Signaling a new era in DNA research, scientists can now use DNA to travel back millions of years and piece together vanished ecosystems. Today, they are poised to harvest the genetic secrets of these ancient worlds to help us adapt to our own climate future.

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For Calendar Editors:

DocLands Documentary Film Festival

In-person at the **Smith Rafael Film Center** in San Rafael, 1118 Fourth Street, San Rafael, CA 94901

May 2 – 5, 2024

Tickets:

On-sale to CAFILM members Wednesday, April 3 at 7:00 PM (PT)

On-Sale to General Public Saturday, April 6 at 10:00 AM (PT)

\$16.50 general | \$14.00 CAFILM member | \$15.00 senior (65+)

\$8.00 Students (with ID) | \$8.00 Youth (12 & under)

Social Media

#DocLands2024

Facebook: @doclandsfestival @californiafilminstitute

Instagram: @doclands @cafilm

Twitter: @doc_lands @cafilminstitute

About DocLands

DocLands Documentary Film Festival, presented by the California Film Institute, is a vibrant celebration of nonfiction storytelling held annually in Marin County, California. Expanding upon the exchange of ideas and inspiration through captivating screenings, networking, and engaging conversations, DocLands strives to foster dialogue, inspire connections, and build an inclusive community around the art of documentary filmmaking. DocLands aims to illuminate filmmakers' diverse perspectives and ignite a passion for exploring real-world issues by showcasing compelling stories and the thought-provoking insights behind them. Join us as we embark on a journey to discover, connect, and celebrate the power of documentary cinema.

About DocLands Sections

- **Art of Impact:** Experience stories that illuminate the diverse cultures, politics, and personal narratives shaping our global community.
- **The Great Outdoors:** Journey outside to explore and appreciate the beauty of our environment, compelling us to protect and conserve our planet's natural wonders.
- **WonderLands:** Discover stories of joy, wonder, and possibility that uplift and inspire audiences.

About the California Film Institute

The California Film Institute (CAFILM) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing film and media arts through acclaimed programs like the Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival. With CAFILM Education, we provide students of all ages with opportunities to learn about the world through the art of film and filmmaking. Our premier independent theater, the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, engages over 275,000 guests annually with compelling cinema and storytelling on pressing social, environmental, and cultural issues. Additionally, CAFILM now owns and operates the Sequoia Cinema, reinforcing our commitment to preserving cinematic heritage and access to fine films locally. The organization relies on the generosity of its community; the invaluable support from our sponsors, foundations, donors, and members ensures our ability to continue expanding and sustaining our vital programs. Join us in celebrating, exploring, and championing the art of film. For more information, visit cafilm.org.

Supporters | DocLands

CAFILM is proud to acknowledge the Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, Jennifer Coslett MacCready, Vickie Soulier, Resonance Philanthropies, Bellam Self Storage and Boxes, Jackson Square Partners, Jim Boyce Trust and Kris Otis, Downtown San Rafael Arts District, and the Academy of Integrated Humanities and New Media for their generous support of DOCLANDS. We are also fortunate to have the contributions of the following DocPitch supporters: Nancy P. & Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation and Resonance Philanthropies.