

MFA DOCUMENTARY FILM AND VIDEO 2025
THESIS FILM CATALOG

Zach Ben-Amots
Sofia Stærmose Hardt
Alem Kent
Elisa Leiva Anderson
Pamela Martinez Barrera
Ma'ayan Porat
Yuxuan Ethan Wu
Yue Wu

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THANKS TO

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Zach Ben-Amots





PAULINA CHOH

To narrate the transition from the adventure of childhood to adult disillusionment, Zach Ben-Amots' film evokes something of the fairytale. Filming at his childhood home in Colorado Springs, the camera lingers on a picturesque wooden house blanketed in snow, its lilac eaves peeking out under caps of white. The accompanying score composed by the filmmaker's father Ofer saturates the film with ironic trills and elegiac pauses, while interviews of his family members take place against backgrounds painted by his mother Laura with clouds that Bob Ross would approve of. The effect is at once comforting, recalling the cloth backdrops of annual yearbook portraits, and theatrical, a mix perhaps appropriate for a family of artists.

But this is a modern fairytale, and the pivotal memory is of having to sneak the bags of trash piling up at their house into the neighbors' bins at night when behind on trash collection bills. Having lost their own bin, Ben-Amots and his brother Barak vividly recall the ritual of awakening under the cover of night to dispose of the family's trash, driving to a dumpster at a church, or tossing it in those of the neighbors across the street making methamphetamine, always carefully raising and lowering the metal lids. These scenes of fantasy and shame are recreated using a hand-built puppet theater. Like the rolling landscape of this moving panorama, Ben-Amots' documentary features vignette after vignette exploring the relationship between memory and money, the one ineffable and the other taboo. At one point, Laura rediscovers the painted leprechaun of an old erotic poem of hers; she begins to read aloud, stopping suddenly when she realizes where the lines are leading her. With a light touch and in slightly desaturated frames, Ben-Amots skims over the monstrous and the beautiful in daily domestic details. Ben-Amots conjures the everyday poignancy of the stories we inherit and pass down, like the magic accumulation of bags of trash which reappear the next day no matter how many times they are snuck out.



"Staring into the viewfinder as one stares into the abyss, Ben-Amots uses his lens to glare beyond reflection, tearing at the edges of the visible to peek beneath its otherwise unbroken surface."

TYRIK LACRUISE

Where does the mind go when it sets out to find its self?
Where does the mind go when it sets out to find itself?

Perhaps without realizing it, Zach Ben-Amots' film takes up that question, diving into its director's past in a piece as concerned with its putative subjects—familial inheritance, in every sense of the term—as with the subjects it cannot yet bring into view. The result is a work as much invitation as incantation, drawing the viewer toward spaces in their psyche they dare not reach.

To encounter Ben-Amots' work is to encounter the self—its origins as much as its residues. This encounter often takes shape as a refraction of those other-selves whose looming absence paradigmatically structures each of our attempts at coming into being. Members of our family, taken for granted as they might often be, are taken for something else in this work—for subjects, yes, but also as figures ripe for excavation, in pursuit of the other as much as in pursuit of the self.

Staring into the viewfinder as one stares into the abyss, Ben-Amots uses his lens to glare beyond reflection, tearing at the edges of the visible to peek beneath its otherwise unbroken surface. What does money mean, and from where does one find feelings of lack? Beyond that, what happens to the unseen in the moment that you try to catch a glimpse, particularly when the objects in view are the reflections of oneself?

Ben-Amots asks as much of himself in this work, lovingly committing as much through the tactile work of making, in a film that consciously bears the mark of its maker, in the process daring his viewers to do the same.

May we all set out to shape the world as makers.

The self is just the start.





Sofia Stærmose Hardt





DINEO MAINE & PRASHANT PARVATANENI

California's wildfires have become an annual scourge, burning millions of acres and displacing thousands of people. Behind the headlines, however, a hidden workforce toils on the frontlines: prison laborers. Sofia Stærmose Hardt shines a light on a five woman crew in the Fire House at the Central California's Women's Facility (CCWF), who risk life and limb to contain the infernos. These incarcerated firefighters are paid next to nothing, and this "service" is cajoled out of them in lieu of marginal privileges and in hopes of a reduced sentence.

As the filmmaker trains her camera on lives lived under the double duress of incarceration and the labour of firefighting, several knotted questions come to the surface in the very process of filming, even before the images take their final place on the screen. What does it take to make a film under the shadow of incarceration? How close can one get to the truth of lives that unfold behind barriers of bureaucratic permissions, legal restrictions, imposing supervisions, and the cold hard obstruction of the prison walls? How does the camera of the documentary filmmaker stand apart from the many surveillance cameras that populate the panopticon of the prison? (In Hardt's bts notes, a small inscription reads: "a passive camera is a surveillance camera"). Can the act of filmmaking steal and smuggle moments of freedom and glimpses of agency from under the nose of crushing authority?

The sensitive nature around documenting the individuals at the heart of this film, alongside issues of privacy and access exacerbated by the tight controls of the California Department of

Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), offers new possibilities for sensory exploration. Hardt had the permission to film “interviews and b-roll” under the supervision of the prison staff inside the Fire House at the facility. While the interviews were tightly monitored — owing to the common association of speech to testimony and hence evidence — the camera’s roving observation of small actions, practices, gestures and other minutiae, were guarded more loosely, or not at all. What if this seemingly less important archive of peripheral acts took centre stage? What if the quality of the camera’s attention to minor details could tease out a wordless testimony that remains un-redactable? Using “b-roll” as the primary footage, and not just a site of visual context, Hardt captures fragments of the textures, sounds, and rhythms of daily life. Affect and proximity are foundational through what is delicately shown on camera in the form of close ups and lingering takes, and yet, what is not captured in a heavily surveilled system establishes an equally crucial presence throughout.

Hardt aims to “speak nearby,” a concept coined by Trinh Minh-ha to describe a mode of documentary practice that resists speaking for or about its subjects. Instead, the filmmaker seeks to speak alongside, to listen, and to bear witness to the prisoners’ stories. Such intimacy in a place of confinement and control confronts the intersections of labor, incarceration, and environmental degradation. This film is not just a window into a hidden world of prison labor, but an invitation to reexamine how the state coerces the labor we all rely on.

It is the very act of showing rather than telling that allows for the sense of precarity and weight of the prisoner’s labor to be felt. It is through this prioritizing of the experiential over the explanatory that Hardt creates a space for reflection on the lived experience of incarcerated firefighters, critique of the exploitation they endure, and solidarity with these unsung heroes. The film takes us close to an interstice — a space inhabited by the imprisoned firefighters — between the “free” outdoors increasingly precarious to the irruptions of climate, and the indentured unfreedoms of the prison system. This site, which is the film’s dwelling, is the site where the climate and carcerality meet under the shadow of capitalism and its exploitation of resources and labour.

And yet, the film offers no easy declamations, for it is all too aware of the limits of expression, let alone transparency, under the controlled choreography of prison-scripts. Close-ups of people, gestures and actions are routinely interrupted by long and wide detached perspectives and dispassionate declarations by prison authorities. The screen often fades to black in the middle of an unfolding sequence, as if to remind the viewer of that which is still not being seen, that which remains unfilmable. This failure to tell an uninterrupted tale, this slipping into the dark opacity of the screen, returns the viewer, time and again to the carceral system’s shaping of the public consciousness.





"What does it take to make a film
under the shadow of incarceration?"



Alem Kent





PAULINE MORNET, ED. MARIANA HEBLING

Among the shattered windshields and boarded buildings, Alem Kent accompanies young performers to sing the traditional Ukrainian ritual Vertep through liberated Eastern Ukraine. They rehearse in bunkers, surrounded by paintings and pillows, amid sounds of laughter and sometimes of tears. They harmonize to sirens, under derelict monuments with ribbons floating in the wind. Through costume, gesture and song, they transform into mischievous goats and carriers of stars, devils and angels, and the fearsome shepherdess who faces evil. The children in the playground encounter the character of the goat and they wonder if she is real. The goat chases them through the snow, what they envision as a spectre seems so tangible that it moves them. The bells jingle and they watch her with eyes of adoration. These are the zones of freedom that emerge at the end of the world. The grandmothers and soldiers, hardened by the war, open to temporarily suspend their disbelief, if only for a second. They clap, they sing along. They are fed chocolate.

What does it mean to perform when the world has collapsed? To turn warzones, bullet-ridden walls into spaces of song and dance, of folklore and wonder?

I ask Alem about their encounter with the collective LesyaKvarteryanka in December 2024, at the time of filming. They tell me about the recently recuperated freedom to travel through Eastern Ukraine, which differs from its occupied past. Over the last two years, soldiers have fought and sacrificed their lives to liberate these territories, attempting to undo the war crimes systematically

"Public spaces become temporary theatres: exceptional situations turn space into places of play. Alem sees the joy and resistance in folklore and childlike songs. Through sparse costumes, incantations, pagan archetypal characters, the play unfolds and stretches a bleak reality into a moment of collective imagination."

committed under Russian occupation. The suspended possibility of movement has emerged and the collective may travel through former homes, familiar spaces. In the instability, they savor the freedom of migration — at least for now. Public spaces become temporary theatres; exceptional situations turn space into places of play. Alem sees the joy and resistance in folklore and childlike songs. Through sparse costumes, incantations, pagan archetypal characters, the play unfolds and stretches a bleak reality into a moment of collective imagination. Through the camera, this playfulness and collaboration is also evoked in their careful framings and thought-provoking prompts. There is permission to laugh, to be silly, to smile, to be together.

I ask them about the origins of these rituals, and why it is that children and soldiers alike carry the embodied knowledge of the lyrics of the *koliady* [carol]. The Vertep has been with the Ukrainian people for centuries and stores a revolutionary past. The tradition was banned in occupied territories, the singing of songs punished. The composer Mykola Leontovych, famous for Carol of the Bells, was executed 100 years ago by the Soviet secret police for his music. Carol of the Bells now reverberates throughout the world. But the future of the Vertep is once again uncertain, with Alem's film capturing these temporarily demilitarized spaces. As the shepherdess slays evil, she says "But evil will never win. The day will come when you meet your end," to which the angels reply: "If you have hope, you will live. But remember today's lesson. You can't hope with idle hands."



The Vertep group has been fundraising to collect funds for medical equipment. We invite you to donate to the collective through Kent: e.alem.kent@gmail.com



Elisa Leiva Anderson





KYÉRA STERLING

A plume of smoke billows from a cigarette forming a profile around a storied human rights attorney: here is Fabiola Letelier waiting for the Chilean Supreme Court to rule against two military generals responsible for the 1976 assassination of her brother, Orlando Letelier. The case is monumental. It becomes symbolic of all those disappeared and murdered by Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship, as well as a litmus test of Chile's willingness to reckon with its buried histories. It is also the first publicly televised court proceeding in Chile, turning bars, cafes, storefronts – any space equipped with screens in 1995 – into one collective waiting room. This suspension which describes Chilean civic life in the 1990s bears an uncanny resemblance to the state of eighteen hours of dormant archival footage that Letelier's granddaughter excavated thirty-two years later. Elisa Leiva Anderson inherits a lineage of mythic proportion: an emblem of Chilean counter-resistance and the first state-sanctioned terrorist attack on US soil, a mythos which crashes against the ambiguous shorelines of family history and intimate memory.

As Leiva works to reconcile a monumental political externality with a grief-tinged familial interiority (Letelier passed in 2021), she re-enlivens petrified histories in a surgical act of cybernetic rehabilitation: a transformation that jolts analog past with digital futures that mediate junctures of impasse. Cybernetics, an interdisciplinary postwar science of communications and data, bridges the political (infrastructure) with the technological, resulting in idealistic computational modernities. Such technical futurism is integral to a pre-Pinochet Chile that saw nationalist promise in the whizzing machines that could engineer a new, economically

independent nation to better serve its people. Leiva's film surges with this socialist cybernetic futurism, one that her great uncle was indirectly a part of; as a Cabinet Minister under Salvador Allende, Letelier worked to nationalize the country's copper reserves which would be a fulcrum for building out infrastructures of Chilean technological modernization.

"The case is monumental.

It becomes symbolic of all those disappeared and murdered by Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship, as well as a litmus test of Chile's willingness to reckon with its buried histories."

Speculative hope for political/social/economic change pinned to the probability modeling of machines and their feedback loops: a sequence strikingly familiar to current-day-Leiva in her editing suite rendering speculative material sequences of Fabiola smoking, reapplying lipstick, drinking in dive bars, litigating Orlando Letelier's international terrorism case in front of the Chilean Supreme Court, speaking with demure poise at grassroots rallies.. Leiva's editing suite toggles between 1976 – 2025 – 1995 and the geopolitical monumentality of the footage ripples with an intimate, knowing restraint. The delicate weave of personal and collective lances with the didactic conventions of documentary and an MFA's expectations for "subjectivity". In response, Leiva confronts both with a stereophonic opacity—a kind of haptic tactility produced through the blur of image grain and stretches of quiet punctuated by the sounds of camera-handling. The stereophonic, a sonic multi-directionality, renders multiple "channels" in a single frame: a useful allegory for the history within history within a film within a film, or the nesting doll of footage from an unfinished film being remade into Leiva's thesis of constellating, polyphonic histories.

Leiva, who has lived in Chile for the last 15 years, flew home twice to sort through fragments, digitize footage, and reconcile a family lineage that paradoxically belongs to an entire nation. Her encounters sometimes rewrote her own memories, bringing her back to her 4-year-old self in a different reconciliation of time and space. These spatial-temporal knots are elemental to Leiva's film, as she guards against the creation of artificial space or continuity in her editing, prioritizing instead "the grief of the cut" that holds stark reliefs: a lionized human rights figure preparing a grocery shopping list, a political crusade forged in the morbid dehiscence of death. Looped sequences of Letelier applying lipstick or uncles watching news coverage carve a protective interiority within a larger externality. These tactilities recontextualize, or go against the grain of, dominant histories. Leiva, who sees filmmaking as "writing with images", amplifies the static of the banal to bring nearly-mythic Chilean history to the lucid reality of a matriarch and her family warring with political ideals and the internal, quiet fractures such crusading costs. There is communion between the political optimism of Allende's Chile, those who believed in it, and the granddaughter who revisits both in the start and stop of a film editing suite.





Pamela Martinez Barrera



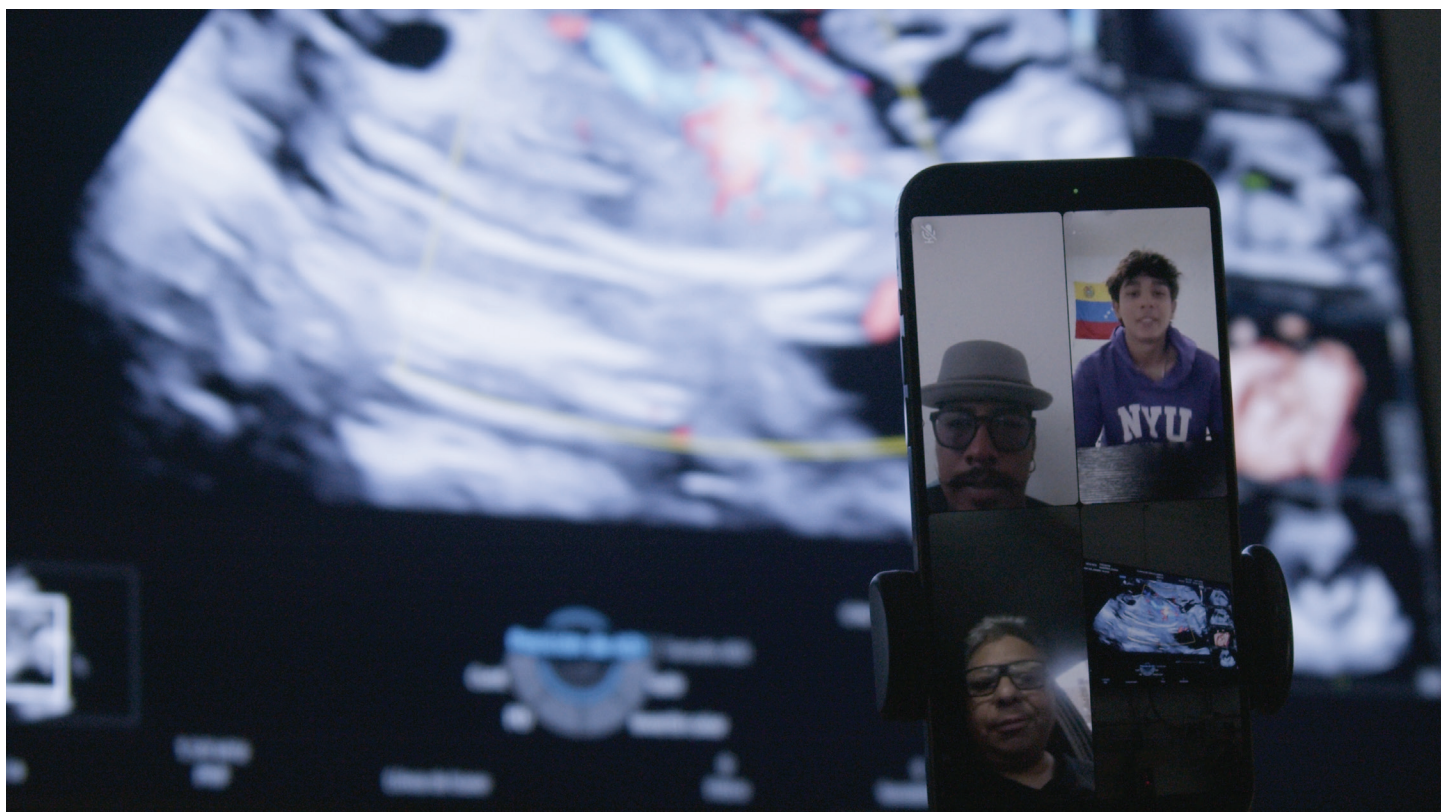


AATIKA SINGH

Pamela Martinez is a filmmaker and scholar with Venezuelan roots transformed by her constantly transitory experience in the diaspora. Her perspective throughout her work makes visible interconnected systems of oppression. *Estado Fallido* (2020) explores polarized perceptions regarding the Chavismo regime within the Pemon Kamarakoto indigenous community in Canaima, one of the most touristic places in Venezuela. *Illegal Alien* (2023), a sociological research-based art exhibition explores the act of *deep listening* as she archives collective gendered migratory processes of Venezuelan women migrants into the US.

Her pursuit in making visible systems of care as acts of survival and rebirth is at the heart of her cinematic vision. *As I Witness* (2024), questions the audience's visual desensitization to violence the contemporary amputation of the body, physically and psychologically. The act of writing on the body constitutes an act of refusing to forget the names of those ignored by history. Similarly, *Universitas and Undercommons* (2025) dialectically questions relationships of power and surveillance within educational systems as places of ideological contestation. In *La Siesta/Naptime* (2025), silence and breath absorb a new meaning as one patiently observes the labor of care of putting children to sleep. Martinez's voice searches for care and critique as necessary ways of thinking about the world through cinema, the portal to manifest a more humane reality.





"...a heartbeat caught on film..."

BRYN EVANS

La vida es lo que es — the exhalation of breath against an ultrasound's hum, transonic gel coating skin as sound waves sharpen the fetal image produced by a ripple of echoes. *Así es la vida* — a heartbeat caught on film, the depiction of life from the inside. In *Presente en Los Grandes Eventos* / *Present in the Big Events*, Pamela Martinez Barrera carefully stitches excerpts from family home videos with the quotidian drumming of her sister Paola's life as she navigates pregnancy and the existential realities of motherhood as a Venezuelan immigrant living in Panama.

The title comes from a quote by the filmmaker's father who recorded most of the archival footage in *Presente*. It is a reminder to live wholeheartedly with one's beloved, a gesture reflected in Martinez Barrera's decision to join her sister in Panama and document the early months of her pregnancy. In this way, the filmmaking process surfaces as a series of embodied rituals. Director becomes doula, offering an intimate portrait of intergenerational visions for one's children. The work itself activates a liberatory poesis—the bringing into being, into existence, a radical ethos of care that does not prioritize linear chronology over sacred moments of transition. This is to say that *Presente* does not reproduce the documentary form as a means to an end. Rather, the film reckons with birth's overlapping frequencies—as it relates to nation of origin, individual and collective labor, artistic process, internal family systems, and trauma.

Martinez Barrera deftly weaves poetry through *Presente's* visual sequencing — a sonogram's ethereal wedge transitions to the dark, archival tunnel of a children's playground slide, a shot that breaks into swirling, blue waters, then a scene of Paola sleeping late into the morning before the director comes in to wake her. The sweet, defiant dream for a safer life, a safer world for those to come, brushing up against the edges of what one once never even dared to imagine.



Ma'ayan Porat





KATHERINE BOOSKA

Maayan is from Jerusalem.

C is from Jerusalem.

Maayan and C were mutual friends, now, real friends.

They met for the first time at a coffee shop and went to an international student orientation together to learn about their health insurance, housing policies, financial matters, and other things they would need to begin their life as graduate students in the United States. Maayan and C are the same age. They grew up during the second Intifada. Their parents were both activists. When others ask, they have both said they are from Jerusalem. Now C says she is from Palestine. Maayan is a citizen of Israel and of the United States. C has no citizenship, anywhere.

Maayan and C met in California. They would not have met or become friends in Jerusalem. On the West Coast, Maayan and C are both far from home. Their conversations are peppered with choices: What language to speak? With whom? When C speaks Arabic. They have to translate for Maayan. When they speak Hebrew together, C is speaking a language that is not their own. When to have which conversations? Should C reveal their identity? Can they reveal their identity? And yet there is comfort for them both in speaking with one another. During and after October 2023 there was no one else near who could understand without speaking what they were witnessing, the notifications that filled their WhatsApp inboxes, the relitigation of all the

conversational choices they had just made. Every day they experienced impersonal violence so intimately it screamed. They knew what was happening, what happened, was too big not to be their responsibility. They hope less than their parents did, for their future and for the future of their children.

Jerusalem Stones, much like Maayan Porat's other films, explores the connections which arise when people find themselves out of place but in community with one another. Her work lingers in being away, in non-places, using silence to speak to the strangeness of this position. In this film, Porat explores the frayed tensile strength of a friendship that is also an artistic collaboration. Fragmented images, static frames, and aimless motion convey the rupture of longing. The film is not an answer. It shatters the fetish of contact, mars illusions of dialogue and reconciliation, by documenting the reality of sustained, violent imbalance.

Watch, perhaps, alongside Chantal Akerman's *News From Home* (1976) and Basel Adra and Yuval Abraham's *No Other Land* (2025). To read: Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail* (2017).

C

I remember the walk with Maayan when she suggested we co-direct a movie together about Jerusalem. The idea both excited and terrified me. We discussed how important it would be to maintain my anonymity. I was eager to capture my voice, but had to carefully consider every decision we made. Growing up in Jerusalem under the Israeli Occupation, self-censorship has become second nature for me. I hold no citizenship to either Israel or Palestine – or any other country. Maayan and I both claim the identity of "Jerusalemite," each for her own reasons. I carried my absurd statelessness because for many years I couldn't claim another. Saying I'm Palestinian was often met with disapproving silences and orientalist stereotypes. The US initially allowed me to claim my Palestinian identity more freely, but the shackles of censorship still bind me wherever I go.

Our work on the film coincided with months of genocide in Gaza. While our film focuses on growing up in Jerusalem and being abroad in disastrous times, co-directing it has highlighted years of enduring injustice, humiliation, and muffled anger. We talk about the precarious future in our film. It's easy to postulate a better future from our ivory towers in the US, but I fear this nightmare will persist at home, before any peace is reached.

It often feels disgustingly privileged to create art during genocide. Art has always been my refuge, but our film represents an inescapable duty for me. It's not a beacon of hope, but an attempt to stomach an abnormal reality. It's how I confront grief, despair, and the inability to contribute anything to Palestine from where I stand as an expatriate. It's my hope to create a multiplicity of Palestinian voices. I'm doing so anonymously now, waiting patiently for when I can speak without a mask.





"Fragmented images, static frames, and aimless motion convey the rupture of longing."



Yuxuan Ethan Wu





LUCAS BAISCH

A mother bandages her adult son's injury. A head tilts backwards. A hot compression is applied to the eye.

A son sprints out over a bus's seats. Guangzhou (广州市) arrives as his companion. A city and passenger rehearse their union in transit.

A series of windows invite a world of material study. Glass reflection, muted chatter, and municipal noise mark the space between interior and exterior, between the fleeting and forthcoming.

A mother shuffles paperwork. She assembles documents, gathering a son's needs, comforts, behavioral histories. The white of the sky beckons behind her, framed by the fog's approaching abyss.

A son harbors a damaged body as record. A black eye is later bloodshot. Bruising and abrasions dress his brow and temple. A son's mortality syncs with those around him.

An architectural grammar draws the camera toward the corners of domestic space, empty classrooms, medical facilities. Wind bellows a curtain. A chair, askew from the kitchen table. Someone's gone to retrieve dinner.

A mother converses with another parent. They share laughter. She looks beyond us, down and left, as if our gaze might be blocking a view of the horizon.

A son eats. The sky stirs. A city's nightscape is marked in globs of light. A bowl is slowly emptied.

A mother develops a procedural way of life.

A son attunes, intent and unblinking.

Their future careens before us.

Yuxuan Ethan Wu's *Separation of Responsibilities* (2025) breathes life into a culture of neurodivergence in China. While the nation estimates that there are roughly 14.5 million citizens living on the autism spectrum disorder, a widespread social awareness is still developing. In this work, Wu accompanies a *dai rong* (戴榕), the parent of an autistic adult, as she navigates the question: "What will happen when I'm gone?" The slip between ability and need displays itself in bureaucratic settings — visits with specialists, collecting legal paperwork, care setup.

Wu is a master of texture. His scenes arrive as a feedback loop, oscillating between the still-forming composition, swaying in its focus, followed by cuts to the crisp frame made confident with attention to surfaces. A reflective pane, a cloud of scratches on the flooring of a municipal vehicle, a dressing of leaves upon afternoon tile. Mundanity is usurped as Wu's images accumulate into a voracious quiet, presenting the audience with the slight irregularities of natural phenomena. For instance, a greenish bend of sun striping the family's home lends itself to a prismatic contemplation of light. These interventions bloom the idiosyncratic, showcasing the twisting nature of the organic and what may or may not be misperceived as "normal."

"What will happen when I'm gone?"

"Who am I as a filmmaker without a camera?" In conversation, Wu offers this dilemma as an insight into his creative practice. His background working in Chinese news media grows an approach rooted in inquiry and restraint, where documentation lives as a social process extending beyond the film's frame. This is, in part, the ethnographer's task: to witness, to interpret, to complexify. His compassion for 戴榕 arrives in the film's attention to the parental sensate — where worry and love imbricate. Wu hopes his film will urge parents of autistic adults to initiate a plan of action. And yet, Wu's call asks us to remain with life's uncertainty, envisioning absence as both spectral and inevitable. From here: a mother drives home, Guangzhou recedes into a shroud of foliage, and the city's infrastructure dissolves into a tunnel's echo.





Yue Wu





IVY VUONG

Filmmaker Yue Wu gives a stunning view into the shared life and landscape of a grandmother and granddaughter in their small hometown of Dubuque, Iowa. Every year, the city is blanketed in glittering snow—a beautiful sight that can be both welcoming and devastating for its local farmers like Grandma Joyce. As climate change renders the snowfall's timing and magnitude more unpredictable each year, and as developers slowly morph Joyze's once deeply familiar hometown, she witnesses her livelihood and her old memories—carefully sown over her lifetime into the rolling fields—put in increasingly precarious conditions.

The inevitability of time is impressed in scenes of Joyze's trembling weathered hands, omnipresent labored breath, and visits to the cemetery. Yet, they are starkly juxtaposed by her inimitable spirit central to the meaning of and making behind the film. With her bejeweled spectacles on, Joyze meticulously paints rocks for her neighbors and friends with colorful animations of their prized pets and possessions; hosts community paint-and-sips taught by her granddaughter Emerald; and acts as various characters in Emerald's Instagram sketches. Through a combination of wide panoramic views and close-up vignettes, viewers are granted an intimate look into the grandmaternal pair's physical and mental landscapes. Separated by a generation, the two bridge their lives and exchange old and new memories in a diner booth; during home hair trimmings; and even in an outdoor red-beret'd photoshoot. Against the snow-padded backdrop of the crisp and quiet monochromatic landscape, their reciprocal love is radiant.



"Against the snow-padded backdrop of the
crisp and quiet monochromatic landscape,
their reciprocal love
is radiant."

PEDRO MARNOTO

the ridge of Her elder hand folds into youth or the bone-white dawn, says WISH YOU WERE
HERE with a pulse thick as tree rings, rocks lifted from silence brushed with ochre, says IT'S
ALL A GAMBLE, when a glance trades places (a word unsaid is still a word) and shadows slip
below the husk of Spring's thawed mouth ON A ROAD WIDE AS FORGETTING, fields stripped,
ice-womb emptied, horizon unfolding upward, rivers choking on their own reflections melting
into mud, says SOMETIMES YOU LOSE HOPEFULLY, while wrinkles erode into dust-song
over a Midwestern plain unweaving under fossil winds, says YOU GET BY before the city's
gilded teeth and the country's outspread tongue swallow each other whole under the shade
of a hollow silo when the GREEN FACED VISITOR's finger pressing into soil slips through loam
and unearths the gasping below and rainbow fire lights up the eyelid's slope, asks DID YOUR
HOUSE BURN DOWN? She leans forward and Her body spills and THE SKY POOLS IN THE
EYE OF A STONE through a window where the land should go, seam lines dissolve, stillness
made blue, cooled in memory's flame, Her fingers root, veins to bramble, leaves hush among
Her ribs, lungs bloom with moss beneath the field's tongue of green pressing through, the soil
no longer barren when Her name is whispered, for HER BODY SOAKS THE EARTH AND IT
DRINKS HER and something somewhere grows









2025

COHORT



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