

PICTURE TALK

SAN FRANCISCO FILM SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 2008 V18 N6

SF INTL ANIMATION FESTIVAL

NEW ITALIAN CINEMA

QUEBEC FILM WEEK

PROJECTING FILM INTO THE FUTURE

Léa Pool's acclaimed film *Mommy Is at the Hairdresser's* is among the superb offerings at Quebec Film Week, December 10-14.

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For information about copresentations visit www.sffs.org/events

- December 10-14 Quebec Film Week
- December 8: Film Arts Forum, Mezzanine
- December 5: SF360 Film+Club: Mike Reim, Mezzanine
- November 16-23: New Italian Cinema
- November 13-16: San Francisco International Animation Festival
- November 12: **Taking Root**, Landmarks' Embarcadero Center Cinema
- November 10: Film Arts Forum, Mezzanine
- November 7-13: **All for Free and The Fish Fall in Love**, SFFS Screen

Upcoming Events

SAN FRANCISCO FILM SOCIETY™

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Ari Folman's animated **Waltz with Bashir** is a direct and uncompromising look at the effects of war, and one of the most inventive and powerful films of the year. See it at the [San Francisco International Animation Festival](#).

A Banner Year's Grand Finale

By any measure, 2008 has been a landmark year for the San Francisco Film Society. With the genesis of the thriving Filmmaker Services programs, SFFS is now able to serve filmmakers as they work to get their projects off the ground with comprehensive fiscal sponsorship and educational opportunities. Following the triumphant SFIFF51, the Film Society has raised the bar with the introduction of daily year-round programming at the SFFS Screen and the successful launch of two vibrant new festivals—French Cinema Now and Quebec Film Week—in addition to the San Francisco International Animation Festival and New Italian Cinema.

As the year sprints toward its finish, the Film Society gives 2008 a long goodbye party with an uncommonly far-reaching and diverse slate of screenings and events to satisfy even the most eclectic film lover. For tickets and more information about the following events, visit [sffs.org](#).

SFFS Screen: The Redemptive Power of Dinner

SFFS Screen completes its first year of programming November 7–13 at Sundance Kabuki Cinemas with an intriguing split run of films from

Croatia and Iran. Antonio Nuic's **All for Free** offers a touching snapshot of postwar Bosnia with its story of an intrepid mobile café owner who finds tentative meaning for his existence and hope for the future in a region blighted by strife and sorrow. In Ali Raffi's **The Fish Fall in Love**—a mouth-watering, touching film about food, family and friendship—a man returning after two decades in prison finds his longtime love operating a thriving restaurant in his home. SFFS Screen will be dark November 14–January 29, returning on

January 30 with the hit Uruguayan comedy **The Pope's Toilet**.

Special Screening: Taking Root

A moving testimony to the power of grassroots political change, Alan Dater and Lisa Merton's documentary **Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai** presents the story of Dr. Wangari Maathai, Nobel Prize winner and founder of an organization in Kenya that spreads environmentalism by encouraging women across the country to plant trees. Unlike many similarly themed documentaries,

Dater and Merton do not focus on environmentalism to the exclusion of other social issues, and Matthai connects the destruction of forests in Kenya to issues of human rights, public health and women's rights.

Taking Root will screen November 12 at Landmark's Embarcadero Center Cinema.

SF Intl Animation Festival: Your Annual Animation Fix

Currently one of the most fertile, creative and productive forms in cinema and television, animation occupies a pressure point between artistic, experimental, commercial and industrial media. The four-day San Francisco International Animation Festival (November 13–16) celebrates San Francisco's preeminence as a hub for one of the most creative forms in cinema today. Held at Landmark's Embarcadero Center Cinema, this year's SFIAF features acclaimed animator Nina Paley in person with her joyous animated musical **Sita Sings the Blues**, a tribute to maverick animator Gene Deitch, the latest from indie animation king Bill Plympton and Ari Folman's politically charged feature **Waltz with Bashir**.

New Italian Cinema Returns for Another Banner Year

Each year New Italian Cinema (November 16–23) celebrates the rich cinematic tradition of Italy and brings the country's newest directors and films to audiences in San Francisco. The 2008 edition, at Landmark's Embarcadero Center Cinema, features seven films by up-and-coming filmmakers, all vying for the audience-chosen City of Florence Award. Also featured are a trio of titles from Tuscan director Paolo Virzì including the Opening Night selection **Napoleon (and Me)** and a duo of intriguing offerings for Closing Night: Matteo Garrone's Cannes Grand Prize

winner **Gomorrah** and Paolo Benvenuti's **Puccini and the Girl**. Join us—and the many filmmakers who will be present—for this eight-day feast of cinematic delicacies.

SF360 Film+Club: Cinephiles Boogie Down

The final SF360 Film+Club for the year is sure to be a frenetic night of visual and musical bliss at Mezzanine (444 Jessie Street) Friday, December 5. The hugely popular San Francisco-based Mike Relm will present another of his acclaimed live performances featuring a series of audio mash-ups with video images. Relm is a pioneering mash-up DJ who is equally inventive with the live, real-time mixing of video imagery. Relm's live appearances are known for their innovation and fun, making this performance a can't miss night. Opening for Relm is Club Bootie resident DJ Party Ben. Doors open at 9:00 pm.

Celebrating a Singular Cinema at Quebec Film Week

With its own awards ceremony (the Jutras) and a vital history of regionally specific films portraying universal concerns, the cinema of Quebec offers moviegoers a plethora of riches. With the inaugural Quebec Film Week (December 10–14) at Landmark's Opera Plaza Cinema, the Film Society pays tribute to this history with a retrospective screening of Claude Jutra's **Mon Oncle Antoine** (1971) and films by brilliant filmmakers such as Denys Arcand (**The Age of Ignorance**), Sophie Deraspe (**Missing Victor Pellerin**) and Léa Pool (**Mommy Is at the Hairdresser's**) alongside particularly strong debut works and provocative documentaries. This exciting program highlights the best of contemporary Quebec cinema and provides Bay Area audiences with unique opportunities to engage with bold filmmakers whose voices and visions will reward the adventurous.

New Italian Cinema: **Don't Waste Your Time, Johnny!**



Quebec Film Week: **Missing Victor Pellerin**



SF360 Film+Club: **Mike Relm**





PAMELA GENTILE

Following a screening of his film *My Kid Could Paint That*, filmmaker Amir Bar-Lev leads a spirited dialogue about documentary filmmaking with students at Berkeley High School. Youth Education is just one of the Film Society's many vital programs.

Projecting Film into the Future

The Annual Fund Campaign provides a unique opportunity for donors, patrons and members to support a beloved Bay Area cultural institution, underwrite year-round programs and events and be an integral part of the Film Society as it continues to grow and innovate.

The Film Society kicked off its 2008/2009 Annual Fund Campaign September 24. Last year's annual fund campaign brought more revenue than ever before, and this year and next we have even higher goals. Why do we need more money for 2008/2009? Because in order to meet the ver-growing demand for high quality programs, the Film Society is dramatically expanding. With the daily SFFS Screen, French Cinema Now, the San Francisco International Animation Festival, New Italian Cinema, year-round youth and filmmaker education and all the other new filmmaker services—not to mention the SF International Film Festival—we are now programming more than 365 days per year!

All readers of Picture Talk should have received the Annual Fund Campaign mailing, which went out to the entire SFFS community. As was stated in that letter, we rely upon gifts from individuals to meet our annual budget. Membership, tickets, sponsorships and grant revenues cover only a portion of the cost of presenting year-round programming. The Annual Fund ensures that SFFS continues to be

known for top-notch films and guest filmmakers from around the world, its robust Youth and Filmmaker Education programs, and now the slate of Filmmaker Services. If you are reading this, you are passionate about film and understand the power of the moving image to enrich, educate and inspire. Let us know you're there by sending a gift of \$100 or more to help the

Film Society continue to grow and innovate. Join us—and film lovers everywhere—as we embrace a sense of discovery, compassionate humanity and world citizenship.

Make SFFS one of your top giving priorities this year and be a part of San Francisco's open-minded, inventive film culture. Donate online now at sffs.org.

San Francisco Film Society: Annual Operating Revenue

15%	Earned income (tickets)
11%	Foundation grants
4%	Membership
20%	Individual donations
11%	Film Society Awards Night
18%	Corporate sponsorship
21%	In-kind goods & services

Individual donations raised through the Annual Fund Campaign and other efforts constitute 20 percent of the Film Society's annual revenue. These funds are therefore absolutely crucial to our operation, enabling the Film Society to sustain all four core program areas.

SFFS Film Arts Forum: Hobnob with Fellow Filmmakers

Join the local filmmaking community for an evening of camaraderie, networking and support. The inaugural SFFS Film Arts Forum, a monthly evening for local filmmakers and cineastes featuring dynamic presentations, screenings, networking, trade secrets and cocktails from a cash bar—an entire conference in the span of a few hours—will be **Monday, November 10** at Mezzanine. A keystone of the Film Society's newly launched filmmaker services programs, this first Forum will include screenings by Jonathan Silvio, Amanda Micheli and Michael Jacobs, presentations from local filmmaker-centric vendors and presentations by SFFS staff discussing their roles working with filmmakers and details about the \$25,000 Herbert Filmmaking Grants. The next Forum, Sundance Confidential, will be December 8.

FilmHouse Residencies Announced

The San Francisco Film Society is proud to announce the first ten filmmakers to be awarded SFFS FilmHouse Residencies. This new program, developed with the San Francisco Film Commission, supports local independent filmmaking by making office space available free of charge to filmmakers actively engaged in various stages of film production. The initial recipients include writers and directors working on narrative features and documentaries, from the earliest stages of development to postproduction. FilmHouse, opening November 1, will function as a vibrant workshop and community builder for local filmmakers of all stripes. Join us in congratulating the following filmmakers:

Dina Ciraulo Six-month residency, postproduction, narrative feature, *Opal*

Arwen Lee Curry Six-month residency, preproduction, documentary feature, *Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin*

Sara MacPherson Six-month residency, postproduction, documentary feature, *Also Ran*

David Munro Three-month residency, writing, graphic novel adaptation, *The Inferiors*

Tamara Perkins Six-month residency, postproduction, social documentary, *The Trust*

Yoav Potash One-month residency, writing, documentary feature, *Crime After Crime*

Kate Schermerhorn Three-month residency, postproduction, documentary feature, *To Have and to Hold*

Tiffany Shlain Six-month residency, production, documentary feature, *Connected: A Declaration of Interdependence: A New Conversation About the Birds and the Bees*

Greg Sirota Three-month residency, writing, narrative feature, *New Eyes*

Lise Swenson Six-month residency, preproduction, narrative feature, *Saltwater*

Applications for the second term of FilmHouse Residencies (February 1–July 31) are due 5:00 pm, December 1, 2008. For more information, visit sffs.org.

SFIFF 52

Call for Entries

The San Francisco International Film Festival (SFIFF), the longest running festival in the Americas, announces its call for entries. Next spring's 52nd SFIFF runs April 23–May 7, and cash prizes will total nearly \$100,000. The final deadline for entries is **December 5, 2008**. San Francisco Film Society members at the Filmmaker Pro level are eligible for a discount on SFIFF entry fees. Submit your film at sffs.org. Email gga@sffs.org with submissions questions.



JONATHAN DANA

Dayna Goldfine, Dan Geller and crew film their new documentary on location in the Galapagos Islands.

In Production

Geller and Goldfine in Galapagos

By Michael Fox

About ten years ago, Dayna Goldfine and Dan Geller were hired to shoot a piece aimed at middle-school kids on evolution and natural selection in the Galapagos Islands.

Goldfine, a true-crime aficionado, chanced to pluck a book off a shelf while they were on location and read about a pair of mysterious disappearances decades earlier. Five trips to the Galapagos later, with more to come, the husband-and-wife documentary filmmakers are up to their waists in **Satan Came to Eden**.

Let's be frank: Unsolved murders are premium-grade catnip for doc filmmakers and audiences alike. But as Geller and Goldfine delved into the history and befriended descendants of the key figures and residents of the Galapagos, the alleged crimes moved to the periphery and a deeper question gripped them: What makes people want to give it all up and go to the end of the earth, and live on what they hope will be a deserted island?

"There are no indigenous people" in the Galapagos, Goldfine explains. "The only people who lived there or chose to live there were pioneers on these volcanic islands. Not just from Ecuador, which owns the Galapagos, but from Europe and America, who've colonized the islands."

Living off the grid and amid picturesque nature may sound

romantic to us urbanites, but in such conditions survival can't be taken for granted. You've got to be fit, per one Charles Darwin, who's forever linked with the Galapagos. "When you bring up paradise, some of them get really angry," Goldfine confides. Gil De Roy, a 50-year-old who was born on the island, rhapsodized to the filmmakers about how wonderful it was for a child. His elderly mother erupted. "Paradise for you, but you didn't have to make a house out of lava rock and kill and clean food."

Fulfilling basic needs was one thing; getting along with one's own species was another. The iconoclastic emigres in the middle of the long-ago dispute were a rustic German family happily roughin' it and an Austrian baroness with a gaggle of young men. If they crossed swords as well as paths, well, isn't that human nature? "Even though people left their homeland as individuals or family units, they had to negotiate a social existence," Geller notes. "You could put [just] ten people on an island and have a conflict."

The filmmakers, who mined rare and astonishing archival footage for their theatrical hit doc **Ballets**

Russes, discovered a trove of 16mm film and manuscripts in the University of Southern California archives. The celluloid was shot by Captain Allan Hancock, a Southern California industrialist and sailor who made eight trips in the '30s to the Galapagos with scientists, a photographer, a filmmaker and (on occasion) a chamber orchestra. (Hancock Park in L.A. is named after this high roller.)

Goldfine and Geller unexpectedly located other archives, even as they continued to meet colorful people on the islands who they wanted to work into the film. The more great stuff the better, you say. Sure, but all that material complicates and elongates the editing process, and boosts the budget. The filmmakers, surprisingly, don't mind.

"We're going to take as much time as it takes to weave all those characters together," Geller says. "The true freedom of working independently, for all the costs, is we don't have to be done by any particular time and we don't have to answer to someone else's conception of what the movie should be like."

Goldfine's in no hurry either—especially if they can work in a few more escapes to the islands.

"The Galapagos, for me, are about a bunch of people who have left all the material things that we take for granted, and they function fine without them. What I find happens [when we return] is I kind of hibernate for a couple days. Things feel really jarring. So I can be emotionally in touch with the material, I want to keep going back every six months."

This article originally appeared on SF360.org.

New Initiative Honors Investigative Documentary Film

*The Film Society's new two-part initiative designed to showcase feature-length investigative documentary films got off to a strong start in late October with a weeklong theatrical run of Robb Moss and Peter Galison's **Secrecy**, a chilling and rigorous indictment of government cover-ups. The opening weekend saw Moss participating in a suite of adjunct programs designed to bring additional depth to the film's deliberative critique of government secrecy.*

On Friday, October 24 Moss met with juniors and seniors in Gateway High School's Future Leaders class and then was part of a lively evening salon at the home of Bay Area documentarians Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine (**Ballets Russes**). On Saturday morning, he led a Meet the Maker craft-based seminar, which was open to the public and attended by a number of students from filmmaker Kris Samuelson's class at Stanford. In the afternoon he was part of a stimulating panel discussion following the film's matinee, titled Need to Know: Uncovering Government Secrets.

Moss was joined on the panel by Robert Rosenthal, executive director of the Center for Investigative Reporting, Berkeley, and Ben Wizner, staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union in New York City, who was also featured in the film. Phil Bronstein, executive vice president and editor-at-large of the San Francisco Chronicle, moderated, steering the tough-minded discussion through a range of topical issues: the U.S. Government's history of covert ops and blatant mendacity, the media's alternating roles as acquiescent milquetoast and truth-seeking watchdog and the Bush administration's abuse of the courts and ongoing litigation against excessive executive power. Bronstein fielded questions from thoroughly engaged audience members who welcomed the opportunity to speak directly with all the panelists, whose collective intelligence and wry humor made for an edifying afternoon of trenchant analysis, chilling revelations and unredacted exchange.

This theatrical run and its adjunct programming set the stage for the second part of the Film Society's new investigative documentary initiative: the launch this coming spring, at the 52nd San Francisco International Film Festival, of the \$25,000 Golden Gate Award for Best Investigative Documentary. One of the biggest film prizes in the country, and one of the few for this type of work, this award is meant to embolden courageous filmmakers working in this crucial form.

Since its beginnings in 1957, a significant element of the San Francisco International Film Festival has been the programming of a broad selection of the most searching documentaries from across the globe. This, coupled with the Festival's annual Golden Gate Awards for documentary films, has established the International as one of the country's finest showcases for nonfiction filmmaking. With the announcement of the Golden Gate Award for Best Investigative Documentary Feature, the Film Society is proud to disburse a major cash award to a deserving filmmaker who has made a vital contribution to the canon at a time when investigative documentary filmmaking is entering a new golden era, which also happens to be a time when society seems to need it most. The call for entries for documentary features is now open. Investigative documentaries that have been completed after January 1, 2008 may be submitted. The final deadline is Friday, December 5, 2008. The entry form is available on sffs.org.

"This two-part initiative, made possible by the generosity of two enlightened patrons, help further consolidate the Film Society's place as a leader in the exhibition of meaningful nonfiction films and enable us to bring the finest work on crucial issues from all over the world to Bay Area audiences," said Executive Director Graham Leggat. "It is designed to raise the visibility of courageous and committed documentary filmmakers and to provide tangible encouragement to filmmakers considering launching investigative nonfiction film projects."