



jewish film institute
presents



The Second Annual Pitch + Kvell with the 2022 JFI Filmmakers in Residence

December 13, 2022

The Projects

Lost and Found in Guantanamo, Yael Bridge
Red Herring, Kit Vincent
In Berlin, Annie Berman
My Underground Mother, Marisa Fox
Untitled Joyva Film, Josh Freund and Sam Radutzky
Hello Gorgeous: The Isobel Lennart Story, Marguerite Moritz
Untitled Carlebach Project, Simon Mendes

Pitch Trainer, Story Consultant, Moderator: Judith Helfand

The Panelists

Alana Hauser, *The New York Times*
Hilla Medalia, Medalia Production Company
Evan Neff, Sundance Institute

**Join the conversation! Post your photos from today's event to social media with
[#PitchAndKvell](#) and tag us [@sfjewishfilm](#)**



Lost and Found in Guantanamo

Yael Bridge

Production Status: Post-Production

Connecting Jewish Cuban practice across time and generations, *Lost and Found in Guantanamo* follows two octogenarians, Fortuna and Lidia, as they prepare for their Bat Mitzvahs in their tiny Jewish community of Guantanamo, Cuba—population 200,000—53 of whom are Jewish. While Jews started migrating to the island as early as the Spanish expulsion of the 1490s, religious practice was prohibited after the 1959 revolution until the ban was lifted in 1991. As the film unfolds, the elderly women share their feelings of trepidation and awe at the looming ceremony, all within the context of daily life, as horses and buggies drive by, children play street soccer, and their families shop, clean, cook, and light Hanukkah candles.



Yael Bridge is an Emmy-nominated documentary producer and director. Her directorial feature debut, *The Big Scary “S” Word* premiered at Hot Docs 2020 and on Hulu in 2022. Previously, she produced *Left on Purpose*, winner of the Audience Award at DOC NYC as well as the Netflix Original film, *Saving Capitalism*, starring former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, which was nominated for an Emmy Award in Business and Economics. She

served as Head of Production at Inequality Media, making viral videos that tackled complex political issues and gained over 100 million views in 2016 alone. Yael was included in DocNYC’s 40 Under 40 list of 2021 and is a current resident at the Jewish Film Institute. She is the Co-President of the Documentary Producers Alliance and proudly serves as chair of their Labor Committee. She holds an MFA in documentary film and video from Stanford University and an MA in media studies from the New School, New York.

Contact: yael.bridge@gmail.com



Red Herring

Kit Vincent

Production Status: Post-Production

At 24, Kit was diagnosed with an incurable brain tumor. In a small town on the South Coast of England, his dad Lawrence, still struggling to come to terms with his own dramatic family secret, throws himself into a series of obscure diversion tactics. From illegally growing cannabis in his spare room, to relinquishing his lifelong atheism and secretly attending a local synagogue; he begins to transform his identity for good. Kit's mom, a community nurse who spends her time caring for dying patients, can't cope with the idea of living through her son's death and takes solace in eccentric spiritual endeavors of her own. Following Kit's efforts to make the most of the humorous camaraderie he shares with his dad, as he rebuilds his distant relationship with his mom, the film results in a painful, funny and complex journey towards acceptance. It begs the question: what happens when all normality fades and a broken family is forced to create a new identity together?



Kit Vincent is a London based director/producer with an interest in character driven stories that use humor to explore nuanced, real-life drama. In 2019 he attended the Sundance Talent Forum as part of the Documentary Film Program. He began his career working on flagship documentary series for UK broadcasters and has a First Class Honors degree in Anthropology and Visual Practice from Goldsmiths University, London. *Red Herring* is

Kit's debut feature and was featured at the Edinburgh Pitch 2020 and Sheffield Meetmarket 2021 — where he won runner up prize at the The Wicker Awards pitch — and Gotham Week 2021. He has received funding from: BFI Doc Society, the Sundance Institute, The Whickers, and received a 2022 Discretionary Grant from the Jewish Film Institute.

Contact: kitvincenttv@gmail.com | **Website:** www.kitvincentfilm.com



In Berlin

Annie Berman

Production Status: Production

In Berlin, a virtual reality essay film, tells the story of a New York City-based artist on her first and last trip to Berlin. Told she resembles Anne Frank, she floats through the city feeling like her doppelgänger's aged-ghost. The film explores the uncanny effects of wearing a VR headset, to recreate and share the experience of the unreal, of dissociation, of disembodiment that the filmmaker felt when traveling through Berlin for the first time: one foot grounded in the physical, the other, traipsing across history and memory. "In Berlin, the setting is the story," she recounts, "so many stories just below the surface." Her voice invites the viewer into her head as she attempts to untangle this strange, disembodied sensation the city instills in her. Encounters with the major sites, archival materials, locals, an old friend, slowly unearth her unreconciled inherited trauma from the Holocaust and need for historical memory.



Annie Berman is a New York City based media artist. Named one of *Independent Magazine's* 10 Filmmakers to Watch, her work has shown internationally in cinemas, festivals, galleries, universities, and conferences, including the MoMA Documentary Fortnight, Camden International Film Festival, Rooftop Films, Spring/Break Art Fair NYC, Galerie Patrick Ebensperger Berlin, and the Rome Independent Film Festival where she was

awarded the Best Experimental Film Prize. Her films include *The Faithful* (2021), *Utopia 1.0: Post-Neo-Futurist-Capitalism in 3D!* (2015/2017 in VR), *Street Views* (2013). She received her MFA from Hunter College and teaches film at City College.

Contact: annieberman@gmail.com | **Website:** www.annieberman.net



My Underground Mother

Marisa Fox

Production Status: Post-Production

New York journalist Marisa Fox grew up with a mother she knew as Tamar, a fiery redhead who said she fled her native Poland on the eve of WWII, fought the British in Palestine as a member of the underground and was a hero. “I was never a Holocaust victim,” she repeatedly told her only daughter, the film’s director, who sensed her mother had concealed something. Twenty years after her death, Fox alights on a family secret and follows a trail of clues around the world to unravel her mother’s story and reckon with the harsh truths she took to her grave. What begins as a search for hidden identity evolves into a larger historical quest, as Fox finds her mother’s writing in a collective diary penned by teenage inmates of Gabersdorf, a Nazi-run slave labor camp for Jewish women. Shot throughout Europe, the United States, Israel, Australia and Canada, ***My Underground Mother*** tells a story of women and war that is both personal and universal, combining verité with animation, written testimony and new interviews with women, relegated to history’s margins who refuse to remain silenced.



Marisa Fox is an award winning, New York-based journalist, veteran magazine editor, former U.S. correspondent for *Ha’aretz*, contributor to *The Daily Beast*, *CNN*, *Ms.*, *The New York Times*, *Elle*, *Health*, *The Forward*, and a gender and genocide specialist at Gloria Steinem’s Women’s Media Center. Her social impact campaigns for Hearst digital and redesign work for *Billboard* and *The Hollywood Reporter* earned American Society of Magazine Editor awards and nominations. A producer for Channel 13, Vh1,

MTV and FX, Fox graduated from Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism with a BS, MS and a National Journalism Society Award. Her first film, *My Underground Mother*, has received grants by the NEH and the Claims Conference and was a winner and finalist at the Australian International Screen Forum’s Pitch Royale and Paley Doc Pitch.

Contact: marisafox@me.com | **Website:** www.myundergroundmother.com



Untitled Joyva Film

Josh Freund, Sam Radutzky

Production Status: Production

Richard Radutzky and his cousin Sandy are grappling with the blessing and burden of legacy. Their family's 115-year-old candy company, Joyva, operates out of an ancient and crumbling factory in Brooklyn, where orders are still written with pencil and paper, and workers still mix halvah by hand in copper tubs. As charming and artisanal as this is, sales are flat, and if major change doesn't arrive soon, Richard and Sandy will have to shut Joyva's doors. The business has been in their family for four generations, and when Richard's father Milton passed five years ago, the responsibility of running the company fell squarely onto Richard and Sandy's shoulders. 10 million jelly rings eaten during Passover each year illustrates how Joyva has become a fixture at the most meaningful experiences in the lives of Jewish Americans. As Richard and Sandy bring Joyva through changes, they risk destroying the sacred role that Joyva's products play—connecting American Jews with each other and with their ancestors. With each decision they make, they feel pressure to honor what their forebears built, to define their own identities, and to preserve the livelihood of their 50 employees.



Josh Freund and Sam Radutzky are award-winning filmmakers who co-founded ABIS Productions, a video production company dedicated to creating content for bands and musicians. In addition to their documentary work, they have built a successful freelance career as commercial directors and cinematographers for clients

that include Nike, Mattel, Chevrolet, Google, Rolex, The Smithsonian Institute, Vice Media, Live Nation, Pernod Ricard, Jameson Whiskey and the San Francisco Giants. Their first feature documentary, *Do U Want It?* won the Audience Award at New Orleans Film Festival (2017) and SF IndieFest (2018).

Contact: josh@abisproductions.com, sam@abisproductions.com

Website: www.abisproductions.com



Hello Gorgeous: The Isobel Lennart Story

Marguerite Moritz

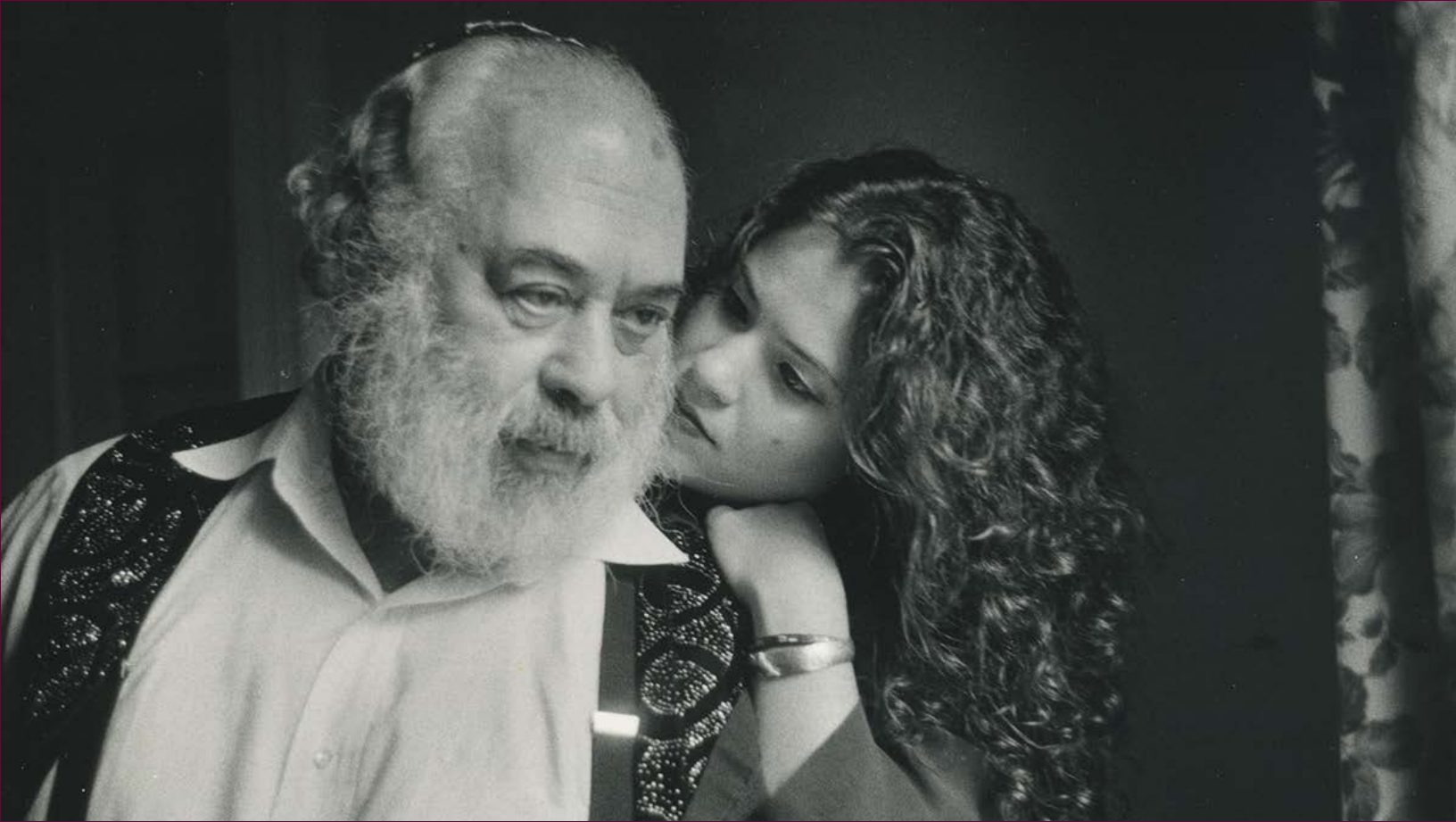
Production Status: Production

Isobel Lennart (1915-1971), a Jew from Brooklyn, NY, was a prolific, critically acclaimed screenwriter during Hollywood's Golden Age, succeeding in an industry whose barriers to women are still formidable. She once said "you write about yourself a lot," drawing on her own troubled marriage to offer insights into gender dynamics in her screenwriting that remain contentious today. A creature of the cinema, her biggest hit came on Broadway with *Funny Girl*, a story in which themes of a woman's success, body image, and the very definition of female beauty, coalesced powerfully on stage and later onscreen. Although *Funny Girl* forever altered the image of Jews and women on the silver screen, and catapulted Barbra Streisand to international fame, Lennart's own life and work remain largely unknown. With a 2022 Broadway revival of Lennart's most iconic work, filmmaker Marguerite Moritz seizes the opportunity to bring her story to light.



Marguerite Moritz is a journalist, writer, and filmmaker based in Boulder, CO. She worked for NBC Radio and TV before becoming a journalism professor at the University of Colorado where her research focused on LGBTQ+ rights as well as media reporting on collective trauma, including school shootings, natural disasters, and terror attacks. She has written and/or directed more than a dozen documentary films, including *Scouts Honor* (writer), *Covering Columbine*, *Taking the Lede*, and *Como Fue: A Cuban Journey* that have been screened on both PBS and at international film festivals. She has served as a Gannett Fellow in Asian Studies, a RIAS Berlin Fellow, a Fulbright Senior Scholar, and a UNESCO chair.

Contact: moritzm@colorado.edu | **Website:** www.opendoorproductions.org



Untitled Carlebach Project

Simon Mendes

Production Status: Production

Shlomo Carlebach, “The Singing Rabbi,” was a charismatic leader who championed women in Orthodox Judaism, revived spirituality for disaffected people, and wrote the soundtrack for 20th-century Jews. He died in 1994, then was publicly accused of sexual abuse. Today, devoted followers, sexual abuse survivors, spiritual leaders, activists, and family members have a vulnerable, first-of-its-kind conversation about Shlomo, his career, and his legacy.



Simon Mendes is a New York-based director, producer, and editor, a member of the PGA (Producers Guild of America), and a Jewish Film Institute Filmmaker in Residence. He was an associate producer of both the Netflix Original documentaries *Becoming*, the story of the former First Lady Michelle Obama, and *Dick Johnson is Dead*, which premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, won the Special Jury Award for

Innovation in Nonfiction Storytelling, and was shortlisted for the 2021 Academy Awards for Best Documentary Feature. Simon was also associate producer of *Charm City*, which premiered at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival and was shortlisted for the 2019 Academy Awards for Best Documentary Feature. Simon’s original film *Dating in Place*, about virtual dating at the outset of Covid, was featured in the *New Yorker*. Most recently, Simon produced *Elegy: My Two Months in Harlem*, which premiered on PBS in the summer of 2022. He is currently co-Producing *Rabbi* (dir. Sandi DuBowski).

Contact: simon.mendes1@gmail.com | **Website:** www.simonmendes.com



Judith Helfand (moderator) is a Peabody Award-winning filmmaker whose films include *A Healthy Baby Girl*, *Blue Vinyl*, *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code* and most recently, *Love & Stuff*. She is the pitch-trainer for JFI's Filmmaker in Residence program, working with Residents throughout the year to develop their works-in-progress. A committed field-builder, Helfand is the co-founder of Working Films and Chicken & Egg Pictures, where she now serves as a Senior Creative Consultant. Helfand is an acclaimed pitch trainer, serving as moderator/trainer for Chicken & Egg Pictures, the Athena Festival Double Exposure Film Festival and the Sheffield Film Festival's pitch forum. She lives and works in New York City.




Alana Hauser (panelist) is a Coordinating Producer of Nonfiction Film and Television for *The New York Times*. Previously, Hauser was the manager of the Sundance Institute's Catalyst program, which connects highly anticipated documentary and fiction films with financiers, and Women at Sundance, which forges gender parity in media. She played a key role in the outreach, selection, and creative support of over 50 films, including *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, *Chasing Coral*, and *Moonlight Sonata: Deafness in Three Movements*. Before Hauser served as Educational Outreach Coordinator at boutique documentary distributor GOOD DOCS and worked for a number of nonprofits including Whole Kids Foundation and Meals on Wheels. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Latin American Studies and Spanish from Washington University in St. Louis.



Hilla Medalia (panelist) is an Israeli director & producer and the founder of the award-winning Medalia Productions company, whose films have been commissioned by HBO, Arte, and BBC and screened at Cannes, Berlinale, and Sundance. Medalia has won a Peabody Award and received four Emmy® nominations. Her projects have garnered critical acclaim and screened internationally, among them: *Transkids*; *Leftover Women*; *The Oslo Diaries*; *Muhi*; *Censored Voices*; *'The Go Go Boys*; *Web Junkie*; *Dancing in Jaffa*; and more. Medalia holds an M.A. in cinema from Southern Illinois University and lives and works in Tel Aviv, Israel.



Evan Neff (panelist) is a Documentary Fund Coordinator at the Sundance Institute and a nonprofit arts professional with a background in documentary production. He works to expand the breadth of stories in independent film to affirm and embrace underrepresented experiences through community-focused artist support. A longtime collaborator of filmmaker Sam Green, Neff produced the Academy Award-nominated filmmaker's *Don't Call Me Gay Zelig* (Whitney Biennial 2019), co-produced *32 Sounds* (Sundance 2022) and associate produced Peabody Award-nominated *Storm Lake* (Full Frame 2021) and *A Thousand Thoughts* (Sundance 2018).



jewish film institute
presents



The Jewish Film Institute (JFI) is a nonprofit organization that champions bold films and filmmakers that expand and evolve the Jewish story for audiences everywhere. JFI does this through the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, year-round exhibitions, its Completion Grants and Filmmakers in Residence programs, and its educational and archival programs. For more information on JFI, please visit www.jfi.org.

JFI Filmmaker Services

JFI's Filmmaker Services initiatives build a community of filmmakers in the Bay Area and around the world whose work challenges stereotypes, conventions, and assumptions in Jewish-themed storytelling. JFI supports projects at all stages of the creative process, from development and production through finishing and exhibition.

The JFI Filmmakers Residence Program, now in its eighth year, is the only dedicated artist development program in the United States that provides creative, marketing, and production support for emerging and established filmmakers whose documentary projects explore and expand thoughtful consideration of Jewish history, life, culture, and identity.

The JFI Completion Grants support independent film and media arts projects that probe nuanced and surprising corners of Jewish life, history, culture, and identity. Grants provide critical resources for filmmakers to accelerate the final stages of their film's production. JFI has distributed \$250,000 in grants to 19 projects since 2020.



Stay in touch with JFI Filmmaker Services! Scan the QR code to subscribe to our mailing list!

For more information, visit www.jfi.org/for-filmmakers.