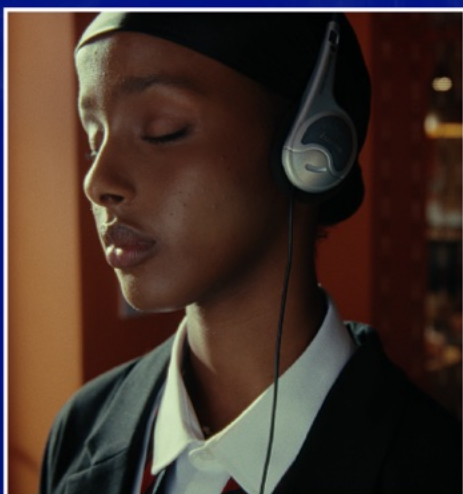


# Black Europe Film Festival

A photograph of two Black women in a checkered sweater, one leaning over the other, against a background of blurred city lights at night.

2025 Exhibition Catalogue





**The Black Europe Film Festival of Minneapolis/St. Paul** is a groundbreaking celebration of Afrodescendant cinema in Europe, debuting in the Twin Cities from January 30 to February 2, 2025. Screenings will take place at prestigious venues, including the Main Cinema, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Capri Theater, and the Cedar Cultural Center. Rooted in community collaboration and anti-racist organizing, BEFF MSP showcases a dynamic lineup of documentaries, fiction films, and shorts by Europe's most innovative Black filmmakers. This festival serves as a platform for artists to present their work and foster connections across the global African diaspora and the international film community.

At its core, BEFF MSP acknowledges the intertwined legacies of racism, colonialism, and displacement while celebrating the vibrancy, creativity, and resilience of global Black filmmakers. The festival experience is enriched with masterclasses, virtual and in-person conversations with filmmakers, workshops, and artist residencies, offering diverse opportunities for learning, connection, and Black joy.

Join us in celebrating the transformative power of storytelling and the boundless creativity of Black diaspora cinema in Europe!

**The Black Europe Film Festival** is made possible by a generous grant from the University of Minnesota Imagine Fund and a residency at the Liberal Arts Engagement Hub.



## FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE

- ★ 3 workshops
- ★ 4 receptions
- ★ 10 visiting filmmakers
- ★ 9 films
- ★ 22 short films
- ★ 24 countries represented

Date	Time	Venue	Event
1/18	1 PM	Minnesota History Center	<b>MONUMENTS AND MEMORIES AFTER GEORGE FLOYD:</b> Free Film Screening + Community Discussion
1/23	7 PM	The Main Cinema	<b>ASMARINA</b> (Italy, 2015) + Virtual Q&A with director Medhin Paolos
1/30	4:30 PM	The Main Cinema	<b>FREE SHORT FILM PROGRAM</b> on the Afro-Caribbean + Q&A with directors Julien Bérakis and Daniela Yohannes
	6:30 PM	The Main Cinema	Opening Reception
	7:30 PM	The Main Cinema	<b>EDELWEISS</b> (Austria, 2023) + Q&A with director Anna Gaberscik
1/31	2 PM	The Main Cinema	<b>FREE SHORT FILM PROGRAM</b> on Black Diasporic Living + Virtual Q&A with directors
	5 PM	The Main Cinema	<b>AFTER THE LONG RAINS</b> (Switzerland/Kenya, 2024) + Q&A with director Damien Hauser

	6:30 PM	The Main Cinema	Community Happy Hour
	7:30 PM	The Main Cinema	<b>THE GRAVITY</b> (France, 2022) + Q&A with director Cedric Ido
2/1	11 AM	The Main Cinema	<b>FREE SHORT FILM PROGRAM</b> on Global Queer Blackness + Virtual Q&A with directors Lamin Leroy Gibba, Jordan Anderson, and Simi Akande
	2 PM	The Capri Theater	<b>GIRL</b> (U.K., 2023) + Virtual Q&A with director Adura Onashile
	4:30 PM	The Capri Theater	<b>FREE SHORT FILM PROGRAM</b> on Black Youth + Virtual Q&A
	6:30 PM		Reception
	7:30 PM	The Capri Theater	<b>THE BLACK SEA</b> (USA/Bulgaria, 2024) + Q&A with co-director and lead actor Derrick B. Harden
2/2	11 AM	The Cedar Cultural Center	<b>SHORT FILM PROGRAM</b> on Somali Diasporic Cinema + Q&A with directors Abdulkadir Ahmed Said, Warda Mohamed, and Salad Hilowle
	2 PM	The Minneapolis Institute of Art	<b>The Art of Remembering: Free Film Screening should be Free Film Program on Black Lives in Painting</b>
	6 PM	The Main Cinema	Closing Round-Table and Wrap Celebration
	7:30 PM	The Main Cinema	<b>DARK SKIN</b> (USSR, 1931) with original live music accompaniment by Dameun Strange



## WORKSHOPS

- ★ **1/25–26:** “Low-Budget High-Impact Documentary” with Fred Kuwornu (reserved for students and people under 21)
- ★ **1/29 7 PM:** “Visualizing Memory” with Salad Hilowle
- ★ **1/31 2 PM:** “Framing Belonging” with Anna Gaberscik

## WHY MINNESOTA?

**Minnesota**, with its vibrant Afrodescendant scene, is the ideal host for the African Europe Film Festival. The Twin Cities’ deep connections to African communities across Europe—particularly East African communities—and their prominence as hub for the global African diaspora make this location uniquely compelling. The killing of George Floyd across Minneapolis and the protests that followed not only heightened African consciousness across Europe but also ignited a moment of global reckoning and solidarity. By hosting our festival here, we aim to amplify the ongoing dialogue between Minnesota’s African communities and the global African diaspora, creating an event that is deeply rooted in the state’s rich African histories while resonating far beyond its borders.

## WHO ARE WE?

**Fred Kudjo Kuwornu** (Founding Director) is a Ghanaian Italian filmmaker, producer, civil rights activist, and educator. The founder of the independent production company DoTheRightFilms, Fred is best known for award-winning documentaries *Inside Buffalo* (2010), *18 IUS SOLI* (2011), *Blaxploitalian: 100 Years of Blackness in Italian Cinema* (2016), and *We Were Here: The Untold History of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (2024).

**Lorenzo Fabbri** (Founding Director & Curator) is a professor, film curator, and producer based in Minneapolis. Lorenzo teaches film media at the University of Minnesota. An active member of the Twin Cities film community, Lorenzo curated the Italian Film Festival of Minneapolis/Saint Paul for many years.

**Kirsten Smith** (Associate Curator)

is a doctoral candidate in the Department of French and Italian at the University of Minnesota, specializing in Québécois cinema. Kirsten is invested in exploring and programming films that represent diverse communities from around the world and transnational and multinational narratives.

**Iman Mohamoud** (Outreach Director)

is a Somali American English teacher at Eden Prairie High School, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota studying Education Policy & Leadership, and a passionate advocate for art and literature. Iman is dedicated to representing African youth in a joyful and empowering way, highlighting their talents and contributions to society.

**Sara Osman** (Director of Programming)

is a documentary filmmaker from Minneapolis. Her passion lies in storytelling around memory, place, and identity, specifically focusing on the unique and evolving Somali identity within the Minnesota landscape. Sara is deep believer art as a tool for social change and for fostering meaningful connections within the community.



Saturday, January 18 • 1:00pm-3:30pm • FREE  
Minnesota History Center • 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. St. Paul

## MONUMENTS AND MEMORIES IN THE WAKE OF GEORGE FLOYD: STONEBREAKERS SCREENING AND COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

*Stonebreakers*. Documentary Feature; 2022; 70 min; USA, Italy; English; directed by Valerio Ciriaci. Print Source: Awen Films.

*A powerful screening and discussion of Stonebreakers, exploring the toppling of monuments after George Floyd's murder, the politics of memory, and the urgent global struggle to reimagine history amid rising authoritarianism and racial reckoning.*

In the wake of George Floyd's homicide in 2020, statues of Columbus, Confederates, and Founding Fathers toppled, intensifying calls for a reparation of memory—a reckoning with history that facilitates a more just future instead of perpetuating past injustices. Now, on the eve of Donald Trump's second inauguration and amidst a global resurgence of right-wing extremism, where do efforts to transform how we remember history stand?

Join us for a thought-provoking afternoon featuring a screening of *Stonebreakers* by Valerio Ciriaci. This compelling documentary examines the aftermath of the George Floyd protests and the 2020 presidential election, exploring the contested memories tied to monuments and ancestral lands in the U.S. *Stonebreakers* reveals the profound connections between history, political action, and the reshaping of America's collective imagination as the nation grapples with its past.

Following the screening, an engaging discussion will address the progress and challenges of reparative memory struggles at local, national, and global levels. Experts and community members will share insights into the strategies and obstacles involved in transforming how the past is memorialized.

### The discussion will feature:

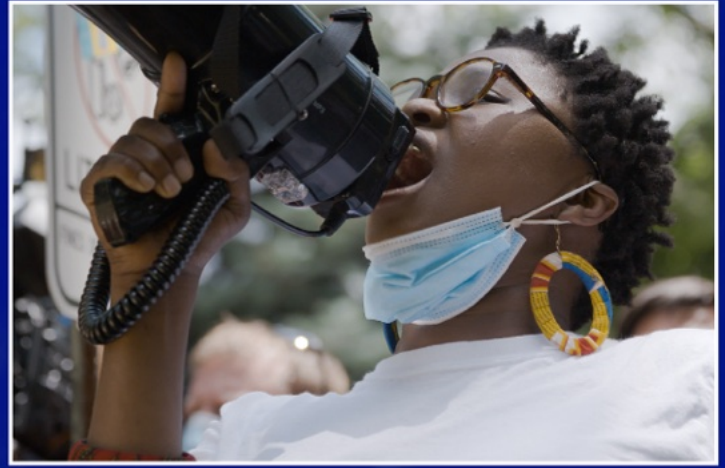
Curtis Caesar John, producer of *Stonebreakers* and a New York-based curator and organizer.

Angelica Pesarini, Assistant Professor of Race and Cultural Studies at the University of Toronto and a scholar-activist in Italy's anti-racist movement.

Katrina Phillips, a proud citizen of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe and Associate Professor of History at Macalester College, specializing in Native American history.

Leesa Kelly, local activist, writer, public speaker, and executive director of Memorialize the Movement, a living archive preserving and activating the plywood protest murals created during and after the 2020 Minneapolis Uprising.





#### About the film:

*Stonebreakers* is an eye-opening documentary delving into the conflicts surrounding monuments in the United States during the George Floyd protests and the 2020 presidential election. The film examines how the removal of statues of figures like Columbus, Confederates, and Founding Fathers challenges the nation's triumphalist myths. By exploring the shifting landscapes of American monumentality, *Stonebreakers* interrogates the link between history and political action in a nation that must confront its past more urgently than ever.

#### About the director:

Valerio Ciriaci is an Italian documentary filmmaker based in New York City. A graduate of La Sapienza University and the New York Film Academy, he co-founded Awen Films, a production company dedicated to independent documentaries. His work explores themes of historical memory, identity, and social justice. Ciriaci's debut feature, *If Only I Were That Warrior* (2015), examines Italy's colonial past and won multiple awards. *Mister Wonderland* (2019) tells the story of theater mogul Sylvester Z. Poli. His most recent film, *Stonebreakers* (2022), investigates the contested legacy of U.S. monuments in the wake of the George Floyd protests and 2020 election.

***This event is presented in collaboration with the Minnesota Historical Society.***



Thursday, January 23 • Social hour at 6:30pm • Screening at 7:15pm  
Main Cinema • 115 SE Main St • Minneapolis

## **ASMARINA:** RECEPTION + FILM SCREENING + VIRTUAL Q&A WITH DIRECTOR MEDHIN PAOLOS

*Asmarina*; Documentary Feature; 2015; 68 min; Italy; Italian; directed by Medhin Paolol and Alan Maglio. Print source: Medhin Paolos.

*Join us for a 10th-anniversary screening of Asmarina, a moving documentary on the Eritrean and Ethiopian diaspora in Italy, followed by a virtual Q&A with co-director Medin Paolos and pre-screening reception.*

The MSP Film Society, Black Europe Film Festival, Archives on Screen, and the Italian Film Festival of Minneapolis / St. Paul are proud to present a special 10th-anniversary screening of *Asmarina*, a powerful and deeply personal documentary exploring the lives of Eritrean and Ethiopian communities in Milan. Directed by Medhin Paolos and Alan Maglio, the film bridges contemporary experiences with the legacy of Western colonialism in the Horn of Africa, shedding light on a vital yet underexplored chapter of postcolonial history.

After the screening, director Medhin Paolos will join us virtually for an insightful conversation exploring the past, present, and future of East African diasporas.

Before the screening, join us for a social hour to connect with fellow attendees and learn more about three upcoming festivals: the Black Europe Film Festival of Minneapolis-Saint Paul (January 30-February 2), the third edition of Il Cinema Ritrovato on Tour (February 14-16) brought to you by Archives on Screen, Twin Cities (February 14-16), and the 16th Italian Film Festival of Minneapolis / St. Paul (February 27-March 2).







#### About the film:

*Asmarina* is a collective project that intertwines oral histories with archival audiovisual materials, offering a more complete narrative of East African diasporas in Italy. Created through over 18 months of meticulous research, the film highlights the everyday lives of Habesha men and women—longstanding residents, Italian-born members of the diaspora, and newly arrived refugees—presenting a rich tapestry of memories, identities, and aspirations.

What makes *Asmarina* truly unique is its approach: crafted by filmmakers who are not outsiders but engaged members of the community, amplifying voices from within. The result is a nuanced and intimate portrayal of overlooked yet vital diasporas in Black Europe.

#### About the director:

Medhin Paolos is filmmaker, photographer, musician and social justice activist. Her work focuses on diaspora, citizenship rights, migration and queerness. For ten years Paolos was part of the folk-electronic band Fiamma Fumana bringing forward the female folk tradition of the Mondine of Northern Italy and performed internationally at venues like Melkweg, Womex and the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. Paolos is the co-founder of the Milan chapter of Rete G2-Secondo Generazioni, a national organization that promotes the human and civic rights of descendants of immigrants in Italy.

***This event is presented in collaboration with the Eritrean Student Association at the University of Minnesota.***



Thursday, January 30 • 4:30pm • FREE  
Main Cinema • 115 SE Main St • Minneapolis

## ISLANDS OF MEMORY: FREE SHORT FILMS FROM THE AFRO-CARIBBEAN + Q&A WITH DIRECTORS

*Here Ends the World We've Known/Ici s'achève le monde connu.* Experimental short; 2022; 24 min; France, Guadeloupe; Sranan Tongo, Aluku Tongo, French; directed by Anne-Sophie Nanki. Source: Sudu Connection

*Atopias: The Homeless Wanderer.* Experimental short; 2023; 27 min; France, Guadeloupe; English, Italian, Tigrinya; directed by Daniela Yohannes and Julien Beramis. Source: Sudu Connection.

*Two haunting short films from the Caribbean bring to life a complex history of Indigenous culture, Blackness, and resistance, while capturing a present shaped by fleeting diasporic identities and the enduring impact of slavery.*

Guadeloupe, an archipelago in the Caribbean, has a rich and complex history shaped by Indigenous cultures, Blackness, and resistance. Originally inhabited by the Arawak and Carib peoples, it was called “Karukera” (Island of Beautiful Waters) by the latter. Its past reflects broader struggles for identity, independence, and the acknowledgment of injustices tied to both colonialism and slavery. Today, Guadeloupe is a French overseas region that blends African, European, and Caribbean cultural influences, serving as a vibrant hub for Creole culture, music, and literature. The two haunting short films in this program bring to life the island's multifaceted heritage and memories, while also reflecting a present shaped by fleeting diasporic identities and the enduring legacies of slavery.

Post-Screening Q&A: After the screening, *Atopias* directors Daniela Yohannes and Julien Béramis will host a Q&A session on Guadeloupe, cinema, and Blackness in the Caribbean. This discussion will provide an opportunity to explore the film's stunning visuals in greater depth, offering insights into the directors' creative processes and the cultural contexts that shape their work.







### About the films:

*Atopias: The Homeless Wanderer.* A Black woman played by co-director Daniela Yohannes embarks on a meditative journey through the wild landscapes of the Caribbean, confronting dreamlike memories as she searches for a transformational portal.

*Here Ends the World We've Known.* 1645, Guadeloupe, French West Indies. Ibátali, a Native Kalinago, is married to a French settler. She takes Olaudah, a maroon African, on a journey during which he could lose his freedom and his life.

### About the directors:

Daniela Yohannes is a multimedia artist of Ethiopian-Eritrean heritage living and working in Guadeloupe in the French Caribbean. Her work reflects upon the racialised movement and conditional belonging of the African diaspora. Through abstract portraiture and storytelling across multiple media, Yohannes explores the overlap of individual and collective subconscious imagination, and the destruction caused by displacement. Her work dwells on alternative Black realities, considering the bonds between herself, her family and other communities through magical symbolism.

Julien Bérakis stands as a diverse artist, with acting and directing being his most cherished forms of expression. Originating and residing in Guadeloupe, Julien is drawn to uncover the shared memories that connect its inhabitants to this fiery landscape, a place echoing with intricate, deep-seated, and unvarnished tales. His work is profoundly influenced by the voices, narratives, mythologies, and pressing themes of the Caribbean.

Anne-Sophie Nanki is an Afro-Caribbean director and screenwriter born in Guadeloupe. At the age of 18 she began studying film and theater, and later graduated from the Sorbonne Nouvelle University. She sharpened her screenwriting skills by contributing to short films, series (*Exterminate all the Brutes*, by Raoul Peck, HBO 2021) and feature films (*Sextape*, by Antoine Desrosières, official selection Un Certain Regard, Cannes International Film Festival 2018). She is currently developing *Here the New World Begins*, a feature film stemming from world of her short *Here Ends the World We've Known*.

***This event is presented in collaboration with the Images of Africa Film Series.***



Thursday, January 30 • 7pm

Main Cinema • 115 SE Main St • Minneapolis

## OPENING NIGHT FILM. EDELWEISS + Q&A WITH DIRECTOR

*Edelweiss*. Experimental feature documentary; 2023; 90 min; Austria; German, English; directed by Anna Gaberscik. Source: Through Our Eyes and Triangle Studio

*What does it mean for Black bodies to occupy the iconic landscapes of The Sound of Music? Edelweiss answer this question delving into Black life in Austria.*

U.S. Premiere. *Edelweiss* is a performative documentary by American-Austrian director Anna Gaberscik about the harrowing realities of Black people living in Europe, Austria specifically. It takes its title from the theme song of *The Sound of Music* and explores what it means for Black bodies to occupy the spaces celebrated in the film. The movie is a frank depiction of the perspectives of many Black and People of Color who have varying connections to Austria—some who call it home, some who have made it their home, and others who would never call it home. *Edelweiss* was made to make people of color in Austria and beyond feel seen, empowered, and validated in the complexities of their experiences, especially in predominantly white societies. To white audiences, *Edelweiss* should be a wake-up call—a call to action. It is an active challenge and demand.

This special opening night screening is followed by a Q&A with the director of the film, Anna Gaberscik, moderated by Dr. Jamele Watkins, Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota.





### About the Director:

Anna Gaberscik, born in Brooklyn, and residing in Austria, is an anti-racism trainer and activist, performer, writer and director. Anna is the founder of "Through Our Eyes," an interdisciplinary project that explores anti-racism, intersectionality and empowerment in various creative forms. In her creative work and workshops, Anna emphasizes the revolutionary potential of preserving and amplifying BIPOC voices, especially when it comes to social justice and socio-political issues. Her social justice agenda is influenced and inspired by various BIPOC cultural phenomena, drawing much inspiration from African-American diaspora culture.

### About the Moderator:

Dr. Jamele Watkins is Assistant Professor in German Studies at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. She engages in intersections of race and gender in Germany in the 20th and 21st Century. Her current book project, "Roses for Angela," examines East German transnational solidarity with Angela Davis. She completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship at Stanford University in German Studies and the Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity.

***This special event is made possible by the generous support of the Austrian Studies Center at the University of Minnesota.***





Friday January 31 • 2pm • FREE  
Main Cinema • 115 SE Main St • Minneapolis

## BLACK DIASPORA IN SHORT FORM: FREE SHORT FILM PROGRAM + VIRTUAL Q&A WITH DIRECTORS

Five powerful short films delve into the complexity and richness of the global Black diaspora. From evocative personal journeys through memory to stark confrontations with historical and societal forces, these Minnesota premieres explore what it means to be Black in Europe, focusing on the profound longing for home that defines the Black European experience.

*I Am Afro-Greek. Documentary short; 2022; 20 min; Greece; Greek; directed by Adéolá Naomi Adérémi. Source: Adéolá Naomi Adérémi.*

*Burnt Milk. Experimental short fiction; 2023; 9 min; Jamaica, United States, United Kingdom; Patois and English; directed by Joseph Douglas Elmhirst. Source: Joseph Douglas Elmhirst.*

*Nha Mila. Narrative short fiction; 2020; 19 min; Switzerland, Portugal; Crioulo and Portuguese; directed by Denise Fernandes. Source: Courtas Metragens*

*A Mother's Body/En Mammas Kropp. Narrative short; 2021; 9 min; Sweden; Swedish; directed by Jonelle Twuw. Source: Hawa Sanneh.*

*Dogfriend/Hundefreund. Narrative short; 2022; 18 min; Germany; German; directed by Maissa Lihedheb. Source: Interfilm Berlin*

The Black experience in Europe is often marked by a longing for belonging—a longing that becomes painful when community feels unattainable. The realities of Black life leave their imprint on gestures and faces, and the labor of being a foreigner in one's own home country is vividly expressed in bodies and movements (*A Mother's Body*). At times, the only relief comes through memory and fantasy, sparked by the scent of familiar foods (*Burnt Milk*) or unexpected encounters (*Nha Mila*). Yet, this connection to the past is never a withdrawal from the present. Young people, especially, are unwavering in their pursuit of futures defined by home, creativity, and community (*Dogfriend* and *I Am Afro-Greek*).



### About the films:

*Afro-Greek* is a powerful documentary shedding light onto the lives of Afro-Greeks, a community often marginalized and perceived as outsiders within Greek society. Through intimate interviews and evocative storytelling, the film explores critical themes of racism, identity, and cultural memory while celebrating Afrodescendant resilience, strength, and creativity.

*Burnt Milk* is an experimental short set in 1985 suburban London. Una, a nurse in a maternity ward, recalls her past life in Jamaica through a spiritual journey sparked by cooking a traditional dessert, "burnt milk."

*Nha Mila* features Salomé who, after 14 years away from Cape Verde, Salomé returns to visit her dying brother. During a layover in Portugal, she reconnects with Águeda, a childhood friend, leading her on a spiritual journey.

*A Mother's Body* is an intimate portrayal of two women hotel cleaners from a daughter's perspective. The daughter reflects on how labor affects their bodies and relationship to time.

In *Dogfriend*, a passionate date in Germany spirals into a frenetic conversation about homosexuality, Nazis, bigotry, and racism.



### About the directors:

Adéolá Naomi Adérémí is a multilingual, multilocal, AfroGreek, and multi-format artist, scholar, curator, filmmaker, and healer. She received her Master of Science in Public Health at Birmingham City University. She is the founder and editor-in-chief of Distinguished Diva. She utilizes the integration of holistic healing practices in policy spaces and culture, as well as uses modalities of care available on issues around Black women's liberation, gender justice, women's health, and equal representation for voices of women of African descent in global media.

Joseph Douglas Elmhirst is a British-Jamaican filmmaker born in Notting Hill, London, and based in Brooklyn, New York. He gained prominence with his debut short film *MADA* (2020), which received critical acclaim. His 2023 short film *Burnt Milk*, inspired by a novel written by his mother, was featured at the British Pavilion during the Venice Architecture Biennale—the first time a film was included in the pavilion's history. Elmhirst also curated *Dead Lef: Visions of Contemporary Jamaica*, a film program highlighting works by Jamaican diaspora filmmakers.



Denise Fernandes is a Swiss-Cape Verdean filmmaker born in Lisbon in 1990 and raised in southern Switzerland. She studied at the International Conservatory of Audiovisual Sciences in Lugano and later at Cuba's International School of Film and TV. Her short films, including *Pan sin mermelada* (2012) and *Idyllium* (2013), have been featured in various international festivals. Her 2020 short film *Nha Mila* was showcased at the Locarno Film Festival and nominated for the European Film Awards. In 2024, her debut feature film *Hanami*, set in Cape Verde, premiered at the Locarno Film Festival, earning her the Best Emerging Director Award.

Jonelle Twum, born in 1992, is a Ghanaian-Swedish filmmaker, educator, and cultural producer based in Malmö, Sweden. Her work delves into themes of visibility, memory, and historical narratives from a Black feminist perspective. Twum is the founder of Black Archives Sweden, an initiative centered on Afro-Swedish experiences. Her 2021 short film *A Mother's Body* received international recognition, and she is currently developing the final installment of a trilogy exploring motherhood, labor, and dreams.

Maissa Lihedheb is a German-Tunisian filmmaker, producer, and writer born in 1993. After facing rejections from several German film schools, she was accepted into the directing programs at both the American Film Institute Conservatory and NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Her short film *Dogfriend* garnered acclaim at festivals like BFI Flare and Tribeca, winning Best Film at Interfilm and earning a nomination for the German Short Film Award.

***This special free short film program is made possible by the generous support of the Center for German and European Studies at the University of Minnesota.***





Friday January 31 • 5pm

Main Cinema • 115 SE Main St • Minneapolis

## **A KENYAN DREAM:** AFTER THE LONG RAINS + Q&A WITH DIRECTOR

*After the Long Rains/Baada ya masika.* Narrative feature; 2023; 91 min; Kenya, Switzerland; Swahili; directed by Damien Hauser. Source: Rushlake Media

*Aisha, a young girl growing up in Kenya, dreams of becoming an actress in Europe. To achieve this, she convinces a local fisherman to teach her to sail, setting her on a path of self-discovery and adventure.*

Minnesota Premiere. In Watamu, a coastal town in Kenya, children are expected to follow in their parents' footsteps, but Aisha dreams of something different. She wants to go to Europe and become an actress. How to do it? Her plan is to find a job on a fishing boat so that she can sail all the way to Europe, but her mother thinks that fishing should be left to men. Aisha doesn't agree – and when she meets Hassan, a drunken fisherman who promises to teach her how to sail and fish, she seizes her opportunity. Damien Hauser's debut gained critical success and was awarded the prize for Best Fiction Film at the 2024 Black Star Film Festival. This special screening is followed by a Q&A with the director, producer, and writer of the film, Damien Hauser.

### **About the director:**

Damien Hauser is a filmmaker based in Switzerland. Born in Zurich in 2001, he began producing short films by the age of seven. He later studied film at SAE and worked for a commercial production company. His greatest passion has always been fictional storytelling. *After the Long Rains* is his third feature film, showcasing his multifaceted talent as director, producer, editor, and sound designer.





Friday January 31 • 7pm

Main Cinema • 115 SE Main St • Minneapolis

## PARIS IN SCIENCE FICTION: THE GRAVITY + Q&A WITH DIRECTOR

*The Gravity/La Gravit  .* Narrative feature; 2022; 85 min; France; French; directed by C  dric Ido. Source: Dark Star Pictures.

*When a planetary alignment disrupts Earth's gravity, Paris spirals into chaos. Two brothers from the housing projects must confront a violent youth gang in their quest for freedom.*

Minnesota Premiere. As planets align in a configuration that impacts Earth's gravity, Christophe, a drug dealer, returns home to the housing projects after serving time in prison. He finds the neighborhood unrecognizable, ruled by a ruthless youth gang. To escape, Christophe must confront this new generation and secure freedom for himself and his brother. Shooting in his hometown of Seine-Saint-Denis, French-Burkinabe actor and writer-director C  dric Ido puts a sci-fi twist on this gritty, up-to-the-minute crime saga as the planetary configuration wreaks unexpected mental havoc on the towers' residents. Equally evoking Walter Hill's *The Warriors*, Mathias Kassovitz's *La Haine*, and Ladj Ly's *Les Mis  rables*, Ido adroitly uses genre to comment on race, class, and the struggles of the recently incarcerated to reintegrate into society. *The Gravity* was awarded the Special Jury Prize at the 2022 Namur International Festival

After the screening, director C  dric Ido will lead a discussion on the political potential of genre fiction.

### About the director:

C  dric Ido is a French-Burkinabe filmmaker, actor, and writer whose work spans film, television, and theater. Born in Seine-Saint-Denis, Ido is acclaimed for blending genres to address social issues, such as systemic racism and police violence. His credits include films like *Chateau* and *The Gravity* and the critically acclaimed mini-series *Oussekin  *.





Saturday February 1 • 11AM • FREE  
Main Cinema • 115 SE Main St • Minneapolis

## GLOBAL QUEER BLACKNESS: FREE SHORT FILM PROGRAM + VIRTUAL Q&A WITH DIRECTORS

What does it mean to be queer and Black in Europe and Brazil? How does the intersection of Blackness and queerness complicate the ability to breathe, love, find community, and achieve self-realization? This thought-provoking free short film program, followed by a virtual Q&A with directors, explores these questions.

*Black Fruit/Schwarze Früchte (Episode 1). Television series; 2024; 36 min; Germany; German; created by Lamin Leroy Gibba. Source: Studiozentral.*

*How to Breathe out of Water/Como Respirar Fora d'Água. Short fiction; 2021; 17 min; Brazil; Portuguese; directed by Victoria Negreiros and Júlia Fávero. Source: Origine Films.*

*The Archive: Queer Nigerians. Documentary short; 2023; 25 min; United Kingdom; English; directed by Simisolaoluwa Akande. Source: Maxine Gordon.*

*The Queer Black Italian Experience. Video project; 2021; 27 min; Italy; Italian; directed by Jordan Anderson. Source: Jordan Anderson.*

The intersection of Blackness and queerness has long been underexplored in film and media, leaving vital stories untold and perspectives unheard. While works such as *Moonlight* and *Pose* in the United States have recently begun to address this gap, more films and series across the globe are forging new narratives that amplify the voices of underrepresented communities. These groundbreaking works are challenging stereotypes, reclaiming histories, and celebrating the complexities of identity.

The short films featured in this program extend the conversation on intersectionality from the U.S. to South America and Europe, offering a global perspective on the lived experiences of Black queer individuals. From intimate personal struggles to collective stories of resilience, these works contribute to the creation of an invaluable archive that resists marginalization and exclusion. Through diverse storytelling, this program highlights the joys, challenges, and nuances of navigating a world where both race and queerness intersect with societal barriers. The films not only invite audiences to witness these stories but also serve as a call to action to recognize and embrace the richness of intersectional identities.

This program is a celebration of creativity, resistance, and self-expression, culminating in a virtual Q&A with Lamin Leroy Gibba (showrunner and lead actor, *Black Fruit*), Simisolaoluwa Akande (director, *The Archive: Queer Nigerians*), and Jordan Anderson (director, *The Black Queer Italian Experience*), who will share their insights and the significance of their work in creating spaces for these stories to flourish.





#### About the films:

*Black Fruit (Episode 1)*. When Lalo is thrown off course by the sudden death of his father, he suppresses his loss with impulsive actions that disrupt his life. While he and his best friend Karla, both in their mid-twenties, queer and Black in Germany, try to shape who they want to become, they are forced to grapple with the limits of their adaptability. This television series is taking Germany by storm.

*How to Breathe Out of Water*. On her way back from swim practice, Janaina is violently confronted by the police. Back home, Janaina heals in her girlfriend's tender embrace while struggling to navigate the relationship with her own father, who is a policeman.

*The Archive: Queer Nigerians*. This visually stunning documentary follows five queer Nigerians living in the UK as they document their lives through audio diaries. From childhood to the present, participants share stories that explore how universal ideas of family, love, and finding oneself are obfuscated within the intersection of Blackness, Africanness, and queerness. With Nigerian queer history erased from the national narrative of Nigeria, queer Nigerians in the U.K. gather to tell their stories, documenting their experiences so they can never be erased again.

*The Queer Black Italian Experience*. This video project offers an in-depth exploration of Italian society, examining what it means to grow up and live as members of the Black and Queer community within a strongly Eurocentric and heteronormative reality. Through interviews and conversations with seven Italian Black Queer individuals, the project creates a safe space to share their stories. It aims to both celebrate the beauty and resilience of the Black Queer Italian experience and shed light on the racism, queerphobia, homophobia, and transphobia that often overshadow it.



### About the directors:

Lamin Leroy Gibba, born in 1994, is a German actor, writer, and producer. He began his theater journey with the youth ensemble at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg and later pursued acting and film studies at The New School in New York City. Gibba has showcased his talents in various theater productions, including performances at the Classical Theatre of Harlem and Theater Oberhausen. His short film *Dogfriend* (2022), which he co-produced, wrote, and starred in, received critical acclaim and was screened at international festivals such as the Tribeca Film Festival. In 2023, he was recognized on Forbes' 30 Under 30 Europe list in the Entertainment category. His TV series *Black Fruit* is airing on the German channel ARD.

Simisolaoluwa Akande is a multi-award-winning filmmaker whose fascination with the art of storytelling has crossed continents, from Nigeria to England, before finding its ultimate expression through film. Celebrated for her deeply collaborative and intimate approach to storytelling, Simisola creates spaces where Black narratives can be told, retold, and cherished. Her work reflects a profound commitment to authenticity and a nuanced understanding of the cultural forces that shape identity and experience. Rooted in her journey from Lagos to London, Simisola's cinematic vision marries the traditions of her Nigerian heritage with the diverse influences of her life in England.

Jordan Anderson is a Milan-based creative director and fashion journalist originally from Jamaica. His work delves into and magnifies political themes such as race, gender, identity, and cultural ethics, using fashion and storytelling as mediums for meaningful discourse. Anderson is the founder of My Queer Blackness, My Black Queerness (MQBMBQ), an innovative online platform that celebrates and explores Black queer identity through creative expression. Anderson serves as editor-at-large for nss magazine and contributes to renowned publications, including Document Journal, A Magazine Curated By, and Vogue Italia. His contributions consistently push boundaries, reflecting his commitment to amplifying diverse perspectives and reimagining the intersections of fashion, identity, and activism.

Victoria Negreiros is a director and screenwriter from Salvador, Brazil, currently based in São Paulo. She holds a degree in Audiovisual from the University of São Paulo and studied at Université Paris 8 in France. Her work focuses on the intersections of queer identities and cinematic genres. Victoria has collaborated on projects for major platforms like Netflix, Disney, HBO, and Paramount, working with Brazilian production companies such as Boutique Filmes, Cinefilm, and Chatrone Latin America. She currently serves as Development Coordinator at Maria Farinha Films, a leading Latin American production company specializing in impact entertainment. Júlia Fávero is a videomaker and photographer based in São Paulo. She graduated in cinema from the University of São Paulo, focusing on screenplay, direction, and editing. Her first short film, *My Rivers Flow Beneath the Asphalt* (2017), was screened at the Kinofórum – International Short Film Festival of São Paulo in 2018. *How to Breathe Out of Water* is her second short film, which she co-wrote and co-directed.

***This special free short film program is made possible by the generous support of the Center for German and European Studies at the University of Minnesota and the Images of Africa Film Series.***





Saturday February 1 • 2pm

Capri Theater • 2027 W Broadway • Minneapolis

## BLACK IN LONDON: GIRL + Q&A WITH DIRECTOR

Eleven-year-old Ama and her mother, Grace, find comfort in the world they've meticulously built together in Scotland. But when Ama's curiosity and desire for growth challenge the boundaries of their secluded Glasgow life, Grace is forced to confront her past.

*Girl*. 2023; 87 min; United Kingdom; English; directed by Adura Onashile. Source: Dark Star Pictures.

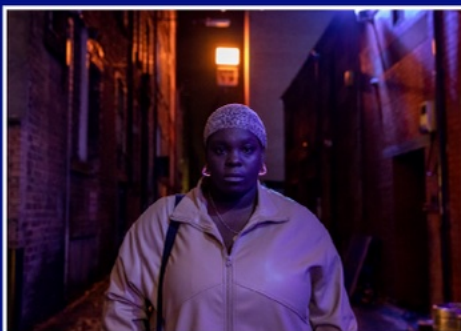
Minnesota Premiere. In this intimate coming-of-age drama, 11-year-old Ama and her mother, Grace, have constructed a secluded world within their Glasgow apartment, finding comfort in their exclusive bond. Grace, a young immigrant mother, is determined to shield Ama from the traumas of her past by enforcing strict boundaries. However, as Ama's natural curiosity and desire for independence grow, she begins to challenge the confines of their insular life. This evolution forces both mother and daughter to navigate the complexities of their relationship and the external world, leading Grace to confront memories she has long suppressed. In 2023, *Girl* won the Jury Award for Best Narrative Film at the Black Star film festival, and was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize in the World Cinema at Sundance.

Following the screening, *Girl's* director, Adura Onashile, will join us virtually from the UK for an engaging conversation about her moving film and her creative journey.

### About the director:

Adura Onashile is a British-Nigerian actor, playwright, and director celebrated for her powerful explorations of identity, race, and resilience. Born in London and having spent part of her childhood in Nigeria, her work is deeply rooted in themes of migration, belonging, and cultural intersections. Onashile's award-winning play *Expensive Shit* showcases her ability to intertwine personal narratives with broader societal critiques. A sharp examination of gender and power dynamics, the play was later adapted into a short film that earned widespread acclaim.

Her innovative storytelling extends into immersive theatre with *Ghosts*, an augmented reality experience that unveiled Glasgow's historical ties to slavery. Committed to uncovering hidden histories and amplifying underrepresented voices, Onashile's work continues to engage and inspire audiences. Adura's debut feature film, *Girl* (2023), is a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story that established her as a bold and significant voice in global cinema.





Saturday February 1 • 4:30 pm • FREE  
Capri Theater • 2027 W Broadway • Minneapolis

## BLACK YOUTH IN MOTION: FREE SHORT FILM PROGRAM + VIRTUAL Q&A WITH DIRECTORS

Black youth in Europe are going places—moving at their own pace (*Run Like We*), finding love and joy where others see only stereotypes (*Essex Girls*), uncovering roots in family archives or on the streets of Dublin (*Villa Madjo* and *Pediment*), harnessing their superpowers to stand up to bullies (*Blackwool*), and riding through the mysteries of a Finnish night (*The Night Stop*).

*Villa Madjo*. Multimedia/animated short documentary; 2023; 13 min; Belgium; French; directed by Elen Sylla Grollimund. Source: Atelier Graphoui.

*Pediment*. Narrative short fiction; 2023; 14 min; Ireland; English and Yoruba; directed by Derek Ugochukwu. Source: Harp Media.

*Essex Girls*. Narrative short fiction; 15 min; United Kingdom; English; directed by Yoro Timi-Biu. Source: T A P E Collective.

*The Night Stop*. Narrative short fiction; 15 min; Finland; Finnish and Finnish Sign Language; directed by Khadar Ayderus Ahmed. Source: Kenno Filmi.

*Run Like We*. Narrative short fiction; 13 min; United Kingdom; English; directed by Rhys Aaron Lewis. Source: Rhys Aaron Lewis.

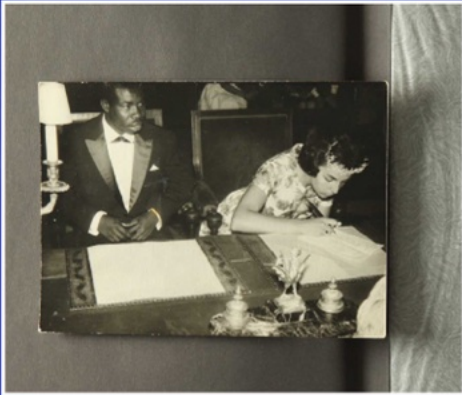
*Blackwool*. Narrative short fiction; 15 min; United Kingdom; English; directed by Eubha Akilade. Source: Sophie Chater.

Black youth in Europe are often mischaracterized as being stuck—caught between cultures, traditions, and societal expectations, unable to define their own paths. These reductive narratives fail to capture the vibrant and multifaceted experiences of Afrodescendant teens, who are actively shaping their futures despite significant obstacles.

This free short program featuring all Minnesota premieres challenge stereotypes, celebrating the agency, resilience, and creativity of Black youth across Europe. Through stories of identity, friendship, defiance, and self-discovery, they illuminate a generation navigating cultural crossroads and going places. Together, these films affirm that global Black youth are not constrained by the expectations placed upon them—they are innovators, dreamers, and changemakers confidently shaping the future.

Following the screenings, a virtual Q&A session with the filmmakers will provide additional insights into their storytelling journeys and the themes addressed in their work.





### About the films:

*Villa Madjo* is a compelling documentary by Elen Sylla Grollimund, combining animation and archival footage to uncover the layered history of her family. Beginning with the striking contrast that her white father was born in Africa and her Black mother in Europe, the film explores their lives amidst the shadows of colonialism and the societal challenges faced by interracial couples in 1950s and 1970s Europe. With its innovative visual storytelling, *Villa Madjo* provides an intimate yet universally relatable exploration of bi-racial identity and belonging.

*Pediment* tells the story of a precocious mixed-race boy who embarks on a day's journey through Dublin to reconnect with an estranged relative, unaware of a longstanding dispute between both sides of his family.

*Essex Girls* follows British-Nigerian teen Bisola as she struggles to navigate adolescence. Despite trying to fit in, even her best friends Charlie and Saffron seem increasingly distant. But when a high school incident brings her closer to Ashlee — the bold, magnetic only other Black girl in her year — Bisola begins a journey of self-discovery.

In *The Night Stop* Asad is a 16-year-old Black boy whose first language is Finnish Sign Language. One rainy night, his bike breaks down on a deserted highway, leading to a strange encounter with a mysterious woman."Best Nordic Short Film – Nordisk Panorama Film Festival

Set during the 2012 London Olympics, *Run Like We* follows 14-year-old Alvin, an awkward teen who hates sports and struggles to meet the expectations of his Jamaican father, Lester, a former sprinter. When Alvin is picked to represent his class on sports day, he sees a chance to finally make his dad proud

In *Blackwool*, a London teen relocates to rural Scotland and clashes with her narrow-minded new classmates. Targeted by bullies obsessed with her Afro hair, she's pushed to unleash her inner superpowers.



### About the Directors:

Elen Sylla Grollimund is a photographer, video maker, and animator based in Brussels. She studied photography at LABA in Brescia, Italy, and later worked in Paris with various music artists. In 2019, she joined Atelier Graphoui in Brussels, where she leads experimental and animation workshops and directs collective films.

Derek Ugochukwu is a Nigerian-born, Ireland-based writer and director. He graduated with a master's degree in Screenwriting for Film & Television from the National Film School, IADT in 2019. He was named one of the 2023 Screen International Rising Stars of Ireland

Yero Timi-Biu is a British-Nigerian writer-director for TV and film. She has worked with the BBC, Channel 4, BFI, Sky, and Netflix. She directed the tv drama *Three Little Birds* (2023) and was second unit director on BBC/Amazon thriller *Chloe*. *Essex Girls* is Yero's debut short film.

Khadar Ayderus Ahmed is a Finnish-Somali director and writer. Born in Mogadishu, Somalia, he moved to Finland as a refugee at the age of 16. He has directed several successful short films, including *The Night Thief* (2017). His feature directorial debut, *The Gravedigger's Wife*, premiered in competition at the Critics' Week at Cannes Film Festival in 2021.

Rhys Aaron Lewis is a filmmaker and visual anthropologist from London. He began his career as a visual anthropologist, graduating with an MA from the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology. His work spans documentary, fiction, music, and commercial videos. In 2023, he was one of six directors selected for the Prime Video Directors Workshop, facilitated by Amazon Prime and the National Film and Television School.

Eubha Akilade is a Scottish actress, dancer, and filmmaker, born in 1998 in Glasgow. She is known for her roles as Lily Watson on the CBBC series *Eve* and as Ines in *Find Me in Paris*. *Blackwool* is her first short film.





Saturday February 1 • 7 pm  
Capri Theater • 2027 W Broadway • Minneapolis

## FROM BROOKLYN TO BULGARIA: THE BLACK SEA + Q&A WITH DIRECTOR AND LEAD ACTOR

The film of the year! Khalid, a charismatic big dreamer from Brooklyn, gets stuck in a small town in Bulgaria. Being the only Black guy in the town, he quickly becomes the center of the village's attention. His New York City street bop is all he has to survive.

*The Black Sea. Narrative feature; 96 min; USA, Bulgaria; English and Bulgaria; directed by Crystal Moselle, Derrick B. Harden. Source: Metrograph Pictures.*

Minnesota Premiere. In search of money and an adventure, Khalid leaves New York City for Europe. However, he soon finds himself in Bulgaria strapped for cash, without his passport, and is the only Black man in a small, coastal town. Unable to convince his family and friends to give him money to return to the US, Khalid begins to befriend the locals in an attempt to make enough money to return to Brooklyn. Through a series of misadventures, Khalid makes unexpected connections which transcend borders and cultures.

After the screening, please join us for a Q&A with *The Black Sea's* co-director and lead actor Derrick B. Harden.

### About the director and lead actor:

Derrick B. Harden is a true renaissance man motivated by his will to help spread artistic expression in the community. As a rapper, art curator, actor, and filmmaker, he has worked with Wutang, Hole Gallery, HBO's Betty, and the Harold Hunter Foundation, to name a few. Just this year, SUPER THOT, his self-released album, has hit number one on college radio for underground hip hop. Derrick continues to lead with his creative eye, integrating his network and love for hip-hop and the urban community. Derrick just opened up for Kool Keith.





Sunday, February 2 • 11 AM

Cedar Cultural Center • 416 Cedar Ave • Minneapolis

## **ECHOES FROM THE HORN: SOMALI LIVES IN CINEMA. SHORT FILM PROGRAM + Q&A WITH DIRECTORS**

A powerful collection of shorts that explore home, grief, and belonging, capturing the resilience and creativity of the Somali diaspora. From tales of migration and memory to narratives of hope, these films weave intimate portraits of Somali lives across generations and geographies.

*Seashell/Aleel. Experimental short fiction; 1992; 23 min; Somalia, Italy; Somali; directed by Abdulkadir Ahmed Said. Source: Abdulkadir Ahmed Said.*

*Erinra. Documentary short; 2015; 8 min; Sweden; Swedish; directed by Salad Hilowle. Source: Filmform – The Art Film & Video Archive.*

*Life on the Horn. Narrative short; 2020; 25 min; Somalia, Austria, Germany; Somali; directed by Mo Harawe. Source: SixPackFilms.*

*Muna. Narrative short; 2023; 19 min; United Kingdom; English; directed by Warda Mohamed. Source: T A P E Collective.*

*Somalinimo. Narrative short; 2020; 18 min; United Kingdom; English; directed by Awa Farah. Source: Awa Farah.*

*I'll Wait for You by the Sea. Experimental short documentary; 2023; 7 min; Egypt; Somali; directed by Rasia Yusuf. Source: Rasia Yusuf.*

*The Night Thief/ Yövaras. Narrative short; 2017; 16 min; Finland; Finnish and Somali; directed by Khadar Ayderus Ahmed. Source: Sons of Lumière.*



**If people come together, they can even mend a crack in the sky.**

- Somali Proverb



Taking place in the heart of the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, this special Somali diaspora program showcases a powerful collection of films that explore themes of home, grief, and belonging, capturing the resilience and creativity of the Somali diaspora. From tales of migration and memory to narratives of hope, heritage, and the search for self, these films weave together intimate portraits of Somali lives across generations and geographies. Through the lens of talented filmmakers, we witness stories that reflect the beauty of cultural connection, the weight of displacement, the horrors of environmental degradation, and the enduring spirit of a people rooted in history yet constantly in motion.

Echoes from the Horn invites you to experience the journeys, dreams, and voices of Somali storytellers to honor the depth of our collective past and the possibilities of our future.

We will be joined in person by Abdulkadir Ahmed Said, Warda Mohamed, and Salad Hilowle. Additional workshops and community activities will be hosted by The Qalanjo Project with these incredible artists during and after the festival.



### About the Films:

*Seashell* follows a beautiful young artist walks along a deserted seashore to paint the ruins of a village on the edge of a cliff. She finds a seashell on the shore and playfully holds it to her ear to hear the sound of the sea. Instead, she hears the voice of a young girl saying, "You are my friend," and learns the story of the village.

*Erinra* is a collage of moving images where a man reflects on being born in one country but having roots in another.

*Life on the Horn* recounts how toxic waste was illegally dumped along the Somali coast for decades. The 2004 tsunami damaged some of the containers, releasing harmful substances and spreading disease. While some locals abandoned their villages, others stayed and lived with the aftermath.

*Muna* is a film about teenage dreams, dislocated grief, and unexpected connections, following a British-Somali teenager as she navigates the confusing mourning of a family member she never met.

*Somalinimo* features four British-Somali students reflect on navigating one of Britain's most elite institutions: Cambridge University. Their identity is rooted in Somalinimo ("the essence of being Somali") and in this love letter to Somali culture, Blackness, and Islam, they examine belonging and marginalization.

In *I'll Wait for You by the Sea*, a 25-year-old woman writes a letter to her half-sister, recounting father-daughter memories and illustrating life in Cairo.

*The Night Thief* follows a Somali man whose car mysteriously disappears each night. When he sets out to catch the culprit, he uncovers a surprising truth that changes everything.



### About the Directors:

Abdulkadir Ahmed Said is a celebrated Somali filmmaker known for his impactful work in directing, producing, and screenwriting. Beginning his career with the Somali Film Agency in the 1970s, he later served as the Director of Programming for Somali television. His acclaimed short films, including *Geedka Noloshka* (*The Tree of Life*) and *La Conchiglia* (*The Conch*), explore themes of resilience and cultural identity, earning international recognition.

Warda Mohamed is a British-Somali filmmaker whose work examines themes of identity, grief, and diaspora. Her storytelling often captures the nuanced experiences of Somali communities navigating displacement and connection. Her film *Muna* sensitively portrays the struggles of a British-Somali teenager reconciling grief for a family member she never met, highlighting the complexities of heritage and belonging.

Salad Hilowle was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, and moved to Gävle, Sweden, at the age of seven. Now based in Stockholm, he is an acclaimed multimedia artist exploring historical narratives and the African diaspora's influence on history and contemporary culture. Hilowle's first major solo exhibition outside of Sweden opens at the American Swedish Institute in June 2025.

Mo Harawe is a Somali-Austrian filmmaker born in Mogadishu in 1992. After studying art in Somalia, he moved to Austria in 2009 and pursued visual communication and film at the Kunsthochschule Kassel. Harawe has directed several acclaimed short films, including *Life on the Horn* (2020) and *Will My Parents Come to See Me* (2022). His debut feature film, *The Village Next to Paradise* (2024), was selected for the Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes Film Festival, marking a significant milestone in Somali cinema.

Awa Farah is a British-Somali filmmaker and researcher based in London. She is pursuing a PhD at the University of Cambridge, focusing on the migration and mobility of Black Muslim diaspora groups in the UK. Farah is also the founder and executive director of the Siman Foundation, an NGO dedicated to democratizing access to education. Her notable works include the documentary *Somalinimo* (2020), which explores themes of identity and belonging within the Somali diaspora.

Rasia Yusuf is a 26-year-old filmmaker based in Cairo, Egypt, who has a passion for photography and filmmaking. She is known for her short film *I'll Wait for You by the Sea*, which explores themes of family, memory, and the concept of home. She made this film after participating in a workshop organized by the Between Women Filmmakers Caravan in 2021. She is currently working on a documentary feature film.

Khadar Ayderus Ahmed is a Finnish-Somali director and screenwriter born in Mogadishu in 1981. He moved to Finland at the age of 16 and began his filmmaking career in 2008. Ahmed has directed several short films, including *The Night Thief* (2017). His debut feature film, *The Gravedigger's Wife* (2021), premiered at the Cannes Film Festival's Critics' Week and was Somalia's first submission for the Best International Feature Film category at the Academy Awards.

***This special short film program is presented by The Qalanjo Project, a Somali cultural organization and creative arts studio located in Minneapolis.***



Sunday, February 2 • 2 PM • FREE

Minneapolis Institute of Art • 2400 Third Avenue South • Minneapolis

## THE ART OF REMEMBERING: BLACK LIVES IN PAINTING. FREE FILM SCREENING + Q&A WITH DIRECTORS

What does it mean—and what did it once mean—to be Black in Europe? Can Renaissance paintings be reinterpreted to recover and reactivate the Black experience in premodern Europe? Through images of Black figures in European art, *Vanus Labor* by Salad Hilowle and *We Were Here* by Fred Kuwornu illuminate a deeper, often overlooked history of Black presence across the continent.

*Vanus Labor*. Experimental short; 2023; 13 min; Sweden; Swedish; directed by Salad Hilowle. Source: Film Form – The Art Film & Video Archive.

*We Were Here: The Untold History of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*. Feature documentary; 2024; 60 min; Italy; Italian, English, Spanish, and Portuguese; directed by Fred Kuwornu. Source: DoTheRightFilms.

**Minnesota Premieres.** This special program of the Black Europe Film Festival pairs two films that explore the representation of Black individuals in European art and culture. Looking at paintings and arts featuring Black characters, *Vanus Labor* and *We Were Here* urge us to take notice of a longer history of Black presence in Europe. Through these works, this program addresses the multifaceted relationship between historical memory, artistic representation, and cultural reclamation. *Vanus Labor* examines the overlooked presence of Black identity within Swedish art history, centering on evocative imagery and themes of visibility. *We Were Here* expands this exploration, uncovering the untold narratives of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe, reframing how their contributions and presence have been systematically (and intentionally) erased. Together, these films provoke a critical conversation about the power of art—whether painting or film—to challenge dominant historical narratives, assert agency, and foster collective memory.

The accompanying panel discussion will weave together questions of historical erasure, the ethics of curation, and the intersections of personal and collective memory. By bringing together filmmakers, curators, and cultural programmers, the conversation will illuminate the shared responsibility of artists and institutions in preserving and amplifying these vital histories. Through this dialogue, we aim to inspire new ways of seeing and understanding the legacy of Black lives in European art and beyond.



### About the Films:

In *Vanus Labor*, Salad Hilowle weaves an evocative and meditative portrait of labor, memory, and belonging through the story of Coschi, a slave boy trafficked to Sweden in the 18th century. Coschi, whose existence was immortalized through the diaries he kept and portraits painted by renowned artists of the time, becomes a conduit for exploring the intersections of Black history, identity, and resilience. Drawing inspiration from the Latin phrase *vanus labor*, meaning “empty labor” the film bridges past and present as Hilowle reads fragments of Coschi's diaries, intertwining them with reflections on the struggles of Sweden's immigrant and Afrodescendant communities.

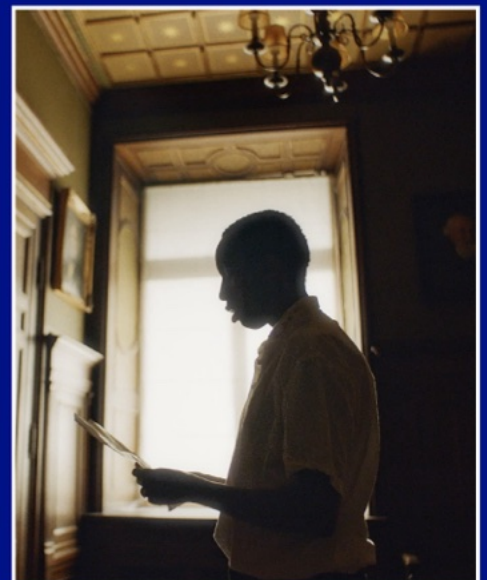
*We Were Here* unveils the hidden history of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe through the lens of iconic painting and artworks. This multilingual documentary, filmed across Europe, challenges the traditional narrative that all Black individuals in Europe in this era were slaves or servants. Instead, it highlights a richly diverse presence that included princes, ambassadors, merchants, and religious figures. Narrated from an Afro-European perspective, the film delves into stories absent from conventional history books, documenting how Europe has always been far less white than it is often assumed to be. By interweaving art history with powerful social narratives, *We Were Here* reframes the European Renaissance, shedding light on the complex and often overlooked tapestry of Black presence in shaping this pivotal era.

### About the Directors:

*Salad Hilowle* was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, and moved to Gävle, Sweden, at the age of seven. Now based in Stockholm, he is an acclaimed multimedia artist exploring historical narratives and the African diaspora's influence on history and contemporary culture. Hilowle's first major solo exhibition outside of Sweden opens at the American Swedish Institute in June 2025.

*Fred Kudjo Kuwornu* is an Afro-Italian filmmaker, artist, and scholar based in New York. Known for his socially engaged work, Kuwornu examines identity and race by remixing historical and archival materials. His films have been showcased at the 60th Venice Art Biennale (2024), the Museum of the Moving Image (NY), the Library of Congress, and international film festivals.

***This special program is presented in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Center of Minneapolis-Saint Paul and the Swedish American Institute.***





Sunday February • 7pm

Main Cinema • 115 SE Main St • Minneapolis

## **BLACK IN UKRAIN:** BLACK SKIN. SILENT FILM + LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

During the Great Depression, an African American man from Detroit, laid off by Ford, is recruited by the USSR to work in a car factory in Ukraine. Inspired by a true story. Featuring live musical accompaniment by Dameun Strange.

*Black Skin/Chyornaya Kozha. Narrative feature; 1930; 67 min; USSR; silent; directed by Pavel Kolomoitsev.*

Tom, an African American worker from Detroit, is laid off by Ford during the Great Depression and relocates to the Soviet Union to work in a Ukrainian car factory. There, he experiences the racial solidarity of Soviet life but also the racism of white Americans. The film's plot is inspired by the true story of Robert Robinson, a Jamaican American skilled toolmaker who left the Ford factory in the U.S. in 1930 to work at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory in the USSR. Robinson's decision was motivated by the economic hardships of the Depression and the pervasive racism in the United States.

Tom is portrayed by Kador Ben-Salim, a Senegal-born acrobat and boxer who settled in the USSR after arriving with a touring Moroccan circus troupe. In 1916, he joined the Red Army to fight for the Russian Revolution.

This silent film features live musical accompaniment by Dameun Strange.

### **About the Musician:**

Dameun Strange is a Minnesota-based sound artist, multi-instrumentalist, and award-winning composer of conceptual electronic and improvised electro-acoustic works focusing on the African diaspora's stories and themes, often exploring surrealist and afro-futurist ideas with unique impressionism.





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