Northwest Film Center announces Identifying Features as winner of its Future/future competition

The debut feature from director Fernanda Valadez takes top honors in boundary-pushing new cinema from emerging filmmakers at the Portland International Film Festival

(PORTLAND, OR) – The Northwest Film Center is excited to announce the winner of the 44th Portland International Film Festival’s Future/future competition: Identifying Features, directed by Fernanda Valadez. The film, an intriguing and confident first feature following a mother’s journey to find out what happened to her son along the Mexican border, was awarded the honor as well as a $1,000 prize.

The Future/future competition highlights boundary-pushing new cinema from emerging filmmakers and represents some of the most exciting new voices in global cinema. The selected films come from around the world and exemplify the theme of “cinema unbound” in the 44th Portland International Film Festival.
(PIFF), presented by the Portland Art Museum’s Northwest Film Center, which ran March 5-14 and featured over 80 films, programs, events, and drive-in experiences with work from over 34 countries. For more about PIFF, visit cinemaunbound.org.

“What the world needs now is not more of the same,” says Amy Dotson, Director of the Northwest Film Center and Curator of Film & New Media at the Portland Art Museum. “We are honored to shine a light on cinematic storytelling that pushes the boundaries, breaks rules, and invites new ways of seeing. In Future/future, these artistic and unique films are pushing audiences forward into this new era where great stories—regardless of their budgets, formats, countries of origin—are finally being recognized for their important contributions as storytellers, artists, and non-conformists.”

The 2021 Future/future competition winner was selected by an international jury that included Ali Khechen, the Workshops & Labs Manager at the prestigious Doha Film Institute in Qatar; Natalie Difford, Head of Artist Development at film foundation and funder Cinereach in New York City; and David Cress, an Oregon-based media producer (Portlandia, Shrill, Documentary Now!).

“Fernanda Valadez’s film, Identifying Features, is an assured thriller,” said Cress. “The film has important things to say about immigration and the state of America’s southern neighbors, but it manages at the same time to be compelling, edge-of-your-seat cinema.”

Finalists in the 2021 PIFF Future/future Competition

“Once more the Portland International Film Festival's Future/future competition brought forth an array of unique and engaging films by emerging voices,” said Ben Popp, the Northwest Film Center’s Filmmaker Services Manager. “We cannot wait to see what they do next, and we’re all excited to see what the entries will be for next year’s competition!”

American Thief
Dir. Miguel Silveira / United States / 2020 / 90 mins.
A teen hacker seeking revenge for his father’s murder becomes a pawn in a plot to derail the 2016 presidential elections.

Everything in the End
Dir. Mylissa Fitzsimmons / United States / 2021 / 96 mins.
Stranded in a small Icelandic village during Earth’s final days, a man seeks solace in the brief human connections he encounters.

Identifying Features
Dir. Fernanda Valadez / Mexico / 2020 / 96 mins.
A mother travels across Mexico in search of her son who authorities say died while trying to cross the border into the United States.
A Kaddish for Bernie Madoff
Dir. Alicia J. Rose / United States / 2021 / 74 mins.
A Kaddish for Bernie Madoff explores the system that allowed Madoff to function for decades through the eyes of musician/poet Alicia Jo Rabins, who watches the financial crash from an abandoned office building on Wall Street.

A Machine to Live In
Dir. Meredith Zielke, Yoni Goldstein / United States / 2020 / 89 mins.
A Machine to Live In is a hybrid documentary linking the cosmic power structures of the state to the mystical architecture of cults and utopian cities in the remote hinterlands of Brazil.

A Rifle and A Bag
Dir. Cristina Hanes, Isabella Rinaldi, Arya Rothe / India, Romania, Italy, Qatar / 2020 / 90 mins.
Somi and her husband fell in love fighting alongside a communist guerrilla group. Since the couple deserted the movement, they have been striving to forge a new identity, educate their two children, and reconcile their hostile past.

A Son
A couple’s world collapses when their son is shot, and the father discovers he’s not the boy’s biological parent.

Sugar Daddy
Dir. Wendy Morgan / Canada / 2020 / 101 mins.
Darren is a wickedly talented and unconventional young musician who dreams of making music like nobody has ever heard before. Desperate for cash, she signs up to a sugar daddy paid-dating website and throws herself down a dark rabbit hole that forces her to grow up fast, shaping her music, and how she sees the world.

Learn more about the PIFF Future/future competition at cinemaunbound.org/programming/future-future-competition.

ABOUT THE NORTHWEST FILM CENTER
Established in 1971, the Portland Art Museum's Northwest Film Center is a Portland, Oregon-based year-round organization and space where artists and audiences explore our region and the world through cinema and cinematic storytelling in all its forms.

Our mission is to expand the reach of cinema as an art form and challenge for whom, by whom, and how stories can be told. Through our screenings, events, guest speaker programs, classes, and workshops, audiences and artists form vital connections that bind our community and encourage a more vibrant, accessible, and diverse media-arts ecosystem.
The Northwest Film Center acts as an advocate for pioneering filmmakers and artists, giving a platform to voices that might not otherwise be heard and serves as a catalyst for cultural appreciation, conversation, collaboration, and community-building around new ways of seeing locally and globally. For more information, visit www.nwfilm.org.

###