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CINEMA/CHICAGO'S CINEYOUTH FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES AWARD WINNERS FOR EXPANDED 16TH EDITION

In the festival's first-ever virtual edition, audiences from across the globe can view 102 short films by creators aged 22 years and younger

CHICAGO — **CineYouth Festival**, presented by **Cinema/Chicago**, announced award winners for its expanded 2021 edition, comprising films accepted for the pandemic-preempted 2020 edition plus a new slate of films submitted for the 2021 festival. These include Best Drama winners *She Who Wasn't Tamed* (2020) by 19-year-old **Saleh Kashefi** of Iran and *The Pleasure of Killing Bugs* (2021) by 21-year-old **Leonardo Martinelli** from Brazil. Best Animation went to *The Quiet* by 20-year-old **Radheya Jegatheva** of Australia. Best International was awarded to *No Crying at the Dinner Table* by 21-year-old **Carol Nguyen** of Montréal, Canada. Best Documentary went to *Creciendo (Growing Up)* by 21-year-old **Nancy Nguyen** from Los Angeles, CA.

The Chicago Award for 2020 was won by *Children Play With Fire*, co-directed by DePaul students **Sam Aidan Johnson** (aged 19) and **JaKari Thompson** (age 20). The Chicago Award for 2021 went to *As We Are Planted* by 21-year-old **Anna Lee Ackermann**, a Columbia College Chicago graduate. Award-winning films can still be viewed for the duration of the CineYouth 2021, streaming free, worldwide, through Thursday, May 13.

"I'm so grateful, and it means so much, especially considering the fact that I had a high school film in the festival over five or six years ago," said *No Crying at the Dinner Table* director **Carol Nguyen**, accepting the Best International Film award from Montréal. "It really feels like I'm circling back to the same community that's supported me since the beginning."

"At other traditional festivals we don't have as much space, so we're very thankful to have this special space to highlight films from young people," said **Leonardo Martinelli**, director of *The Pleasure of Killing Bugs*, accepting his Best Drama award from Brazil. "Thank you for awarding our film that brings those issues that are universal, while at the same time, Brazil is in this profoundly difficult time both because of the pandemic, and in this total chaos of the political

crisis as well. It is extremely important that we bring these issues to the rest of the world as a discussion and in the language of filmmaking.”

“Thank you to the CineYouth team for making this such a welcoming film festival experience in these virtual times,” said **Anna Lee Ackermann**, whose documentary *As We Are Planted* won the 2021 Chicago Award. “I may be biased, but I think documentaries are the future. They’re evidence that everyone has a story worth telling and that your story matters.”

“For me, film is all about erasing boundaries both in space and time,” said 17-year-old director **Daria Litvichenko**, whose film *Meeting at Half Past Five* won the Rising Star Award for filmmakers 18 or younger, from her home in Estonia. “One can easily get a lot of inspiration from a piece of art which was created in a completely different country. I think that’s the goal. I thank CineYouth for bringing this group of filmmakers from different countries together and giving us an opportunity to exchange ideas. I look forward to the remaining days of the festival.”

CineYouth celebrated Opening Night on Thursday, May 6 with a timed screening of “The Cinemas of Chicago” program, comprising 14 live-action, documentary, and animated shorts created by Chicago filmmakers, culminating in a real-time filmmakers Q&A with **Andres Aurelio, Elizabeth Myles, Nathan Marquez, Ty Yamamoto, Shira Baron, Marjorie Matamoros, Jazmin Bryant, Anna Lee Ackermann, Samuel Johnson, and Lua Borges.**

In total, CineYouth 2021 showcased 102 films from 25 countries by filmmakers 5-22 years old over eight days. The Festival’s 14 programs of short films are available to stream for free through Thursday, May 13 via Cinema/Chicago’s viewing platforms. Award-winning films will be screened together at the 57th Chicago International Film Festival, October 13–24, 2021. Photos from CineYouth Festival are available [here](#).

Led by major sponsors Adobe, DePaul University, and Hamilton Watch, and partner NFFTY, CineYouth is supported in part by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency and a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events.

The full roster of 2020 / 2021 CineYouth award winners is as follows:

Chicago Award 2020

Presented By DePaul University

Children Play With Fire

Sam Aidan Johnson/JaKari Thompson | Chicago | Age 19-20

Children Play With Fire carried with it the marriage of all the cinematic language elements with its story, character, poignant theme, sound, and performances.

Chicago Award 2021

Presented By DePaul University

As We Are Planted

Anna Lee Ackermann | Chicago | Age 21

As We Are Planted is an eye-opening exposé on modern food desserts, which is both fascinating to watch but also alarming and essential. Documentaries work well when they illuminate and make you think on important subjects, while not losing sight of the heart and soul of the piece. This film does that and more.

Best Animation

The Quiet

Radheya Jegatheva | Australia | Age 20

For its poignant observation in light of the past year of the duality of personal reflection and neurosis when spending too much time alone; coupled with its technical know-how, breadth and captivating storytelling.

Best Comedy

No Fan of Andy

Kai Tomizawa | Oregon | Age 16

An hilarious exploration of the uncertainty of friendship combined with dynamic storytelling made deeper by complex characters.

Best Documentary

Creciendo (Growing Up)

Nancy Nguyen | California | Age 21

For its wonderful unique energy and voice that took us to a place we've never been and introduced us to people that we otherwise would not have a chance to meet.

Best Drama 2020

She Who Wasn't Tamed

Saleh Kashefi | Iran | Age 19

For its beautiful example of cinematic excellence with its look at the nature of friendship, of identity formation and self-actualization.

Best Drama 2021

The Pleasure of Killing Bugs

Leonardo Martinelli | Brazil | Age 21

As terrifying as it is beautiful, *The Pleasure of Killing Bugs* shows us what the world might look like if we fail to change our ways.

Best Experimental 2020

Presented by Hamilton Watch

Wash Day

Kourtney Jackson | Canada | Age 22

The experimental jury loved the juxtaposition of *Wash Days*' visuals of basic but complicated everyday rituals with the discussion of cultural conversations around hair, including ownership of one's body, expressions of gender, and expressions of self-love and growth.

Best Experimental 2021

Presented by Hamilton Watch

this is a completely normal home movie

Tessa Hill | Canada | Age 19

For its inventive assemblage of visual materials to create an expansive visual world; a timely indication of anxiety during these unprecedented times.

Best Horror

Hollow

Max Buttrill | Florida | Age 15

The jury found *Hollow* to be ambitious, sophisticated and engrossing with dread arising from the film's use of editing, sound, and cinematography. In this eerie, self-contained world the boundaries of ordinary objects become portals to an extraordinary landscape.

Best International

No Crying at the Dinner Table

Carol Nguyen | Canada | Age 21

For a highly emotional and honest family "real life" drama, constructed and edited masterfully. This film has touched us deeply and is a brilliant example of its genre.

Best LGBTQ+

Presented by NFFTY

Pitoc E Icinakosian

Jos-Onimskiw Ottawa-Dubé, Gerry Ottawa | Canada | Age 18 & 15

Pitoc E Icinakosian exemplifies what stories are necessary to move our culture forward.

Shedding light on things unseen through the lens of intimate documentation teaches us the importance of empathy and shared experience. Stories of queer indigenous people are so rarely represented yet a vital part to the LGBTQ experience.

Rising Star Award

Presented by Adobe

Meeting at Half Past Five

Daria Litvichenko | Estonia | Age 17

We were all drawn to the unique stop-motion animation, and we all can't wait to see what Daria creates next.

Pandemic Cinema Award

Exposure

Claire Imler | California | Age 21

The jury was touched by *Exposure*'s intimate portrayal of an ICU nurse during this time. The film's storytelling and style of the film are truly captivating.

The CineYouth juries comprise film scholars and educators, filmmakers, screenwriters, editors, film festival programmers, and industry leaders. The complete list of jury members can be found [here](#).

For more information on the CineYouth Festival and to claim free tickets to watch films, visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com/cineyouth.

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CineYouth Sponsors and Partners

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About CineYouth Festival

CineYouth Festival, founded in 2005 and presented by Cinema/Chicago, is a free international film festival for filmmakers 22-years-old and younger. Held annually in the spring, the festival showcases films created by youth, providing a public platform to highlight the next generation of filmmakers. In addition to short film screenings, CineYouth presents free panels, discussions, and other development opportunities to inspire creativity in youth. CineYouth will celebrate its 16th edition virtually from May 6-13, 2021 with films streaming globally. For more information, visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com/cineyouth or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

About Cinema/Chicago

Cinema/Chicago, the presenting organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, is a year-round nonprofit arts and education organization dedicated to fostering better

communication between people of diverse cultures through the art of film and the moving image. Cinema/Chicago's programs include the Chicago International Film Festival, Summer Screenings Program, CineYouth Festival, and year-round Education Program. Celebrating its 57th edition October 13-24, 2021, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival. For more information, please visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#).