



## QUEENS WORLD #13

Expect the Unexpected!

April 16 - 28, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Queens, New York - (3/4/2024)

### Bringing the World to Queens

Executive Director Katha Cato is enthusiastic about the upcoming event at The Museum of the Moving Image and Kaufman Astoria Studios. As she puts it, the Queens audience is prized by filmmakers worldwide. "A Queens audience is a smart, resourceful, worldly audience and filmmakers from across the globe want to share their stories for that audience, here in the World's Borough." The festival is screening 152 films from 19 nations for 11 days and expects record attendees.

### Screening Stories that Shock, Inspire and Move Us.

Co-founder/Artistic Director Donald Preston Cato says, "As our complicated world grapples with challenging issues, Queens World cherishes fearless artists who take on themes like survival, empowerment, conflict, immigration, empowerment, the environment. This year's schedule represents the diversity, the vibrancy, the innovative spirit of Queens and in turn: The World."

Rather than herding all the narrative shorts together or grouping the documentary films together, Queens World embraces the unexpected by grouping films that celebrate a specific theme resulting in 47 thematic blocs taking on these provocative themes. A bloc might include narrative shorts from Canada and Ukraine, an experimental film from Argentina, and a documentary short film from Astoria, bringing disparate voices together to form a truly unique screening event.

As early as March 16 filmmakers and their teams will be gathering for exciting and accessible pre-festival events and you are welcome at all of them!

- March 16 - [Queens World Annual Pot-Luck-Kick-Off Party](#)
- March 27 - [Presser at The Museum of the Moving Image](#)
- April 6 - [Trailer Party Screenings at The Local](#)
- April 16 - [Welcoming Night Live Broadcast at Sac's](#)
  - On April 16, Queens World will host a live broadcast from Sac's Place featuring the Queens World Board of Directors and a LIVE interactive zoom with filmmakers from all over the world who are unable to join us in person for the festival. Connecting with filmmakers from Italy, Nepal, Spain, Ukraine, Italy and beyond is proof that Queens World truly brings the world to Queens! Sac's Place is making it even more special with a 15% discount to all festival attendees and participants that night and during the festival run.

- April 17 - **[OPENING NIGHT!](#) at the Museum of the Moving Image**

Queens World will open with a thematic curation that is sure to challenge our audience with stories representing varied cultures and experiences with a bloc we are calling:

**TAKE THIS: 6 FILMS THAT REFUSE TO BACK DOWN.** The bloc begins with a short film that highlights the ungodly decisions parents of young children must make when war is right outside their door and ends with a film that contemplates how we present ourselves and reminds us that sometimes, all it takes is a good haircut.

[Unthinkable Conversations](#) by Emma Richardson from the United Kingdom

[New Moon - Episode 1](#) by Ken Forman from the United States

[The Steak](#) by Kiarash Dadgar Mohebi from Iran

[Together Forever](#) by Barbara Medajska from Poland

[Keep It Open](#) by Lucy Teitler from the United States

[Coda](#) by Joshua Elias Palmer from Hungary

[JADE](#) by Robert Manning Jr. from the United States

## Speaking of JADE by Robert Manning Jr!



Writer, Producer and Key Cast Luke Tienne ([Shrinking](#)) on set of JADE

### **YANCE FORD, 2024 SPIRIT OF QUEENS HONOREE:**

“Yance’s eye is unflinching, his relentless dedication to authenticity is humbling and incredibly inspiring. His work is aligned with the ethos of Queens World, and we are especially excited about introducing him to young emerging creatives who often struggle to see themselves in the industry.” *Donald Preston Cato, Queens World Artistic Director*

The ‘Spirit of Queens Award’ is given annually to filmmakers whose work has made an important contribution to American independent cinema and past honorees include Julie Dash, Karen Black, Nancy Kelly, Melvin Van Peebles, Kenji Yokomoto and Jan Oxenberg. Yance is an Oscar-nominated director and producer based in New York City. His feature documentary film, [Strong Island](#) premiered at Sundance in 2017 to critical acclaim, winning a Special Jury Award for storytelling. The film won the Gotham Award for Best Documentary and the Black Film Critics Circle Award for Best Doc. Strong Island was nominated for Best Documentary Feature at the 90<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards, where Ford made history as the first openly transgender director nominated for an Oscar.

Strong Island went on to win the Primetime Emmy for Exceptional Merit in Documentary Film and was nominated for a George Foster Peabody Award. At the 2018 Cinema Eye Honors, Ford became the first nominee ever to win Best Direction, Best Debut, and Best Feature.

His documentary and scripted work can be seen in the FX series *Pride*, the Netflix series *Trial by Media*, the Apple+ series *The Me You Can’t See*, the Showtime comedy *Work In Progress*, and the documentary *The Color of Care* on The Smithsonian Channel. His new feature documentary [POWER](#) premiered in January at the 40th Sundance Film Festival. A look at the 300-year growth and expansion of police power in the United States, *POWER* will launch on Netflix in May 2024.

## **Queens World #13 by the Numbers**

Almost 600 submissions from 38 nations.

28 Filmmaker Queens

19 Filmmakers from Brooklyn

19 Filmmakers from Manhattan

3 Filmmakers from the Bronx

1 Filmmaker from Staten Island

28% of this year’s submissions were by women yet 40% of films to be screened are by women.

# Films and Blocs of Interest

[WHO TO LOVE](#) (30 mins) by Giorgio Testi from California - **Nominated for BEST EXPERIMENTAL FILM**  
[Greta Scarano](#) plays a rising concert star grappling with anxiety, depression, extreme paranoia, and dissociative episodes that blur the lines between past and present. This long-form video is directed by Emmy, Grammy, and BAFTA winner [Giorgio Testi](#), written by and starring **Grammy and Golden Globe-winning artist/producer Dave Stewart** (best known for Eurythmics) will be an International Premier. The film accompanies a soon-to-be-released album by the same title.

Who To Love screens in the Redstone at MoMI Friday April 26 at 4:15 PM in a bloc of films called:  
[Sight and Sound: 4 films that are visual treats](#) featuring  
[Misericorde](#) by Natasa Prosen Stearns from Slovenia  
[Can You Stay a Little While Longer????](#) by Robert Cafarelli from Ossining  
[Infinitum](#) by Alfonso Otero Mireles from Mexico  
[Who to Love](#) by Giorgio Testi from California

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[Freedom Hair](#) (98 mins) by Dianne Houston from Manhattan - **Nominated for BEST FEMALE ACTOR, BEST DIRECTOR and BEST NARRATIVE FEATURE**

Redstone Theatre at MoMI on Friday, April 26 at 6:45 PM screening as a feature film by itself

Based on the inspiring, true story of Melony Armstrong, a mother who works at a shelter for battered women decides to start a natural hair braiding business to achieve financial independence for herself and others. To do so she must overcome unexpected obstacles imposed by a powerful cartel and the state of Mississippi. **The director DIANNE HOUSTON is an Oscar-nominated writer/director with three decades of credits.** In 1996, Houston transformed Arna Bontemps' classic Harlem Renaissance short story, A Summer Tragedy, into her Academy Award nominated Short Film *Tuesday Morning Ride*. This nomination made her the first African American female director to be nominated for an Oscar in that or any other directing category.

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[Unicorns](#) (94 mins) by [Alex Lora](#) from Spain - **Nominated for BEST FEMALE ACTOR and BEST FIRST FEATURE**

Fresh off his Sundance Grand Jury prize for his short [The MasterPiece](#), Alex Lora presents his first feature: [Unicorns](#) which focuses on Isa, a Feminist and polyamorous posh girl living in a world of appearances who becomes the victim of 'likes', 'follows' and moral judgments in this web that social networks have become.

Unicorns is screening in the Bartos Theatre in the Museum of the Moving Image, April 28 at 4:15 PM

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[Love Letters](#) (39 minutes) by Greta L. Schiller from Queens - **Nominated for BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT and BEST DIRECTOR DOCUMENTARY SHORT**

Love Letters is the story of a blazing lesbian love affair, begun in the revolutionary feminist ferment of 1970's NYC and still going strong almost 50 years later highlighting their highly charged custody case with courtroom line-drawing animation and verbatim testimony about social ostracism and personal triumph.

**Love Letters** is screening the Zukor screening room at the Kaufman Astoria Studios on April 18 at 9 PM and April 25 at 5 PM in a bloc of films called:

[LGBTQ+: 7 films for, from and about the community](#) featuring  
[Ambrosia](#) by Amy Northup from United States  
[Unlucky in Love](#) by Catriona Rubenis-Stevens from United States  
[Check Please](#) by Victor Mignatti, Scott T. Hinson from United States  
[Lesbophilia](#) by Michelle West from United States  
[build me through the image](#) by Paula Hung from United States  
[Mahjong butterfly](#) by Yinlin Chen from China  
[Love Letters](#) by Greta L. Schiller from United States

**[NIKI PILIC - The Legend](#) (62 mins) by [Zeljko Mirkovic](#) from Serbia - **Nominated for BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE, BEST DIRECTOR DOCUMENTARY FEATURE and BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY DOCUMENTARY FEATURE****

The story of the man behind modern tennis: Niki Pilic - a man who only wanted to play and was the actor of the major changes in Tennis history over 6 decades. The film celebrates Niki Pilic's achievements as a player (US Open 1970) and his legacy as the trainer of Boris Becker, Michael Stich, Ivan Ljubicic, Goran Ivanisevic including the best player of all times: Novak Djokovic. Niki Pilic is the unique Davis Cup captain who won 5 Davis Cup with 3 different countries, Germany, Croatia and Serbia. Based on the original script by award winning director Zeljko Mirkovic and producer Vladimir Gasic, The Legend reveals the story of a man who dedicated his whole life to tennis, from the day traded his bicycle for a broken racquet until today as he still trains future champions, every single day of the year.

**NIKI PILIC - The Legend** is screening in the Zukor Theatre in Kaufman Astoria Studios on April 27, 2024 at 12:30 PM.

This screening is sponsored by Armondo's Italian Restaurant who is also hosting a prix fixe at 4 PM on April 27, after the screening. \$40 dinner at 4 PM includes appetizer, entre, desert and a glass of wine or beer.

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**[I want to live on Mars](#) (80 mins) by Mariya Somova from Ukraine - **Nominated for BEST FEMALE ACTOR Director Mariya Somova is a Ukrainian political refugee who left home at the age of 16 to pursue a career in filmmaking.**** I want to live on Mars, takes place in rural Pennsylvania, is an homage to what it's like being a teenage girl, living in the middle of nowhere with no real way of expressing yourself. The film was shot In Centralia, a town of 5 residents with an ongoing fire burning beneath the borough, and Yellow Dog Village, an abandoned mining town.

**I want to live on Mars** is screening in the Zukor Theatre in the Kaufman Astoria Studios on Sunday, April 21 at 2:00 PM in a bloc of films called:

[Nearly Forgotten: two films that shed light on overlooked treasures in rural America](#) featuring [AQUÍ SEGUIMOS \(Still Here\)](#) by Álvaro Hernández Blanco from Spain  
[I want to live on Mars](#) by Mariya Somova from Ukraine

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**[Exit Interview](#) (16 mins) by Victorious De Costa from Brooklyn**

Fresh off 90 days of no contact, Makeba and Che's post-breakup dinner brings waves of emotions as they navigate their unresolved feelings. Victorious De Costa, acclaimed producer, documentarian and community activist best known for "Yusuf Hawkins: Storm Over Brooklyn", an HBO documentary film that was spotlighted at the 20th Annual Tribeca Film Festival and nominated for an NAACP image award in 2021 has returned to his great love - Rom Coms -with strong representation from the music industry with him.

[Jenesis Scott](#), Producer, Amaru

[KAMAUU](#), Key Cast, "Greg"

[Jason Velez](#), Cinematographer: When They See Us

[Omar Bradford](#), EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS, Jackie Robinson: Get To The Bag

[Alyxandra Baranow](#), EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS, Digging for Weldon Irvine

[Mike Quigley](#), EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS, Spider Man, Digging for Weldon Irvine

**[Exit Interview](#)** is screening in the Redstone Theatre at MoMI on April 19 at 2:00 PM in a bloc of films called

[Into the Light: Six films about trying to be understood](#) featuring:

[Flechas \(Arrows\)](#) by Imanol Ruiz de Lara from Spain

[Exit Interview](#) by Victorious De Costa from East Flatbush

[Holding in Forever](#) by Chelsea Christer from Colorado

[Venus](#) by Esmeralda Seay-Reynolds from New York City

[Power](#) by Emma Grosklos from Ohio

[A Perfect Day for a Walk](#) by Diane Catsburrow Linnet from Rochester

**[Piñatas of Earthly Delights](#) (13 mins) by Emmy Nominated [Tom Maroney](#) from California - **Nominated for BEST DIRECTOR DOCUMENTARY SHORT****

A self-described “queer, half-breed South Texan artist,” Roberto Benavidez insists on calling his artistic creations piñatas – and not paper sculptures – one sign of devotion to the Mexican craft he loves. Beautiful, funny, and political, they are stunning, unlike any piñata you’ve ever seen, meticulous, colorful works of art. Inspired by Heironymous Bosch and medieval manuscripts, the delicate, fanciful paper mache forms – a giraffe, a hydrus being eaten by a crocodile, a figure on all fours with candy stuffed into his ass – are both Mexican and European, a blending of cultures, like Roberto himself.

**Piñatas of Earthly Delights** is screening in the Zukor screening at Kaufman Astoria Studios on April 20 at 11:30 AM screening in a bloc of films called:

[Art Heals: 2 films that will put you back together](#) featuring:

[Piñatas of Earthly Delights](#) by Tom Maroney

[The Sound of Hope](#) by Emanuele Michetti

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**[A Ramble Towards Rain](#) (98 mins) by Lisa Angell from Astoria - **Nominated for BEST MALE ACTOR FEATURE, BEST FEATURE SCREENPLAY, and BEST FIRST FEATURE****

Starring [Gregory Jbara](#) (Tony Award Winner: Billy Elliot, *Oppenheimer*, *Blue Bloods*). The debut feature of Queens resident Lisa Angell. As cancer spreads throughout his body a terminally ill cable TV star drafts a fantasy novel as a desperate attempt to leave behind a legacy of significance. The story he creates leads him to come to terms with his insecurities and regrets.

**A Ramble Towards Rain** is screening in the Zukor screening room at Kaufman Astoria Studios on April 21 at 4:30 PM in a bloc of films called

[Remembrances: 2 films about taking stock of our journey](#) featuring

[\(re\)collection](#) by James O’Connor

[A Ramble Towards Rain](#) by Lisa Angell from Astoria

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**[Scammers](#) (17 mins) by Carl Klesch - **Nominated for BEST DIRECTOR SHORT****

Single dad Nick trolls the parking lots of New Jersey for the next target of his dent repair scam. But with his fed-up teenage daughter in tow, the day quickly goes off the rails.

Carl Kelsch, Writer (For My Facebook, 2016).

Daniel Stewart Sherman, Key Cast, “Nick” – Film/TV: Redacted (Brian De Palma); Lodge 49; Black Mirror (S6, E1). B’way: Kinky Boots.

Nico Schumacher, Key Cast, “Tasha”

Jervon Monroe, Key Cast, “Oliver”

**Scammers** is screening in the Zukor Theatre in Kaufman Astoria Studios on April 23 at 7:00 PM in a bloc of films called:

[Family Business: Seven films about blood and traditions](#) featuring:

[Blood is Thicker](#) by Melissa Skirboll from Long Island City

[Jamila](#) by Julia Freij from Los Angeles

[Niloo](#) by Mehdi Koushki from Iran

[Party Favor](#) by Yasmine Gomez from Los Angeles

[Scammers](#) by Carl Kelsch from New Jersey

[A Family Business](#) by Richie Harrington from Los Angeles

[Bogotá Story](#) by Esteban Pedraza from Colombia

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Queens World has provided over 400 young people with 90 hours or more of pre-professional training through our mentoring programs, including Passion in Action and the Young Filmmakers Program. Young people from ReelWorks Media Makrs, Ladders for Leaders, SOAR, Hunter College, Queensboro Community College, La Guardia Community College, John Jay College and PACE University have gained work readiness training in production, marketing, outreach and arts management. It is our commitment to create career pathways for emerging creatives from Queens and to work for representation in our industry.

### **Driving Economic Development**

Queens World boasts impressive numbers and is proudly dedicated to bringing people to the borough from across the globe. Our statistics show that 23% of our audiences come from outside the borough and 28% come from outside the country with 65% of our attendees staying in the Borough for an hour or more and spending \$50 or more on food/drink at restaurants surrounding the venues. The festival is good for Queens

### **A History of Resilience**

Queens World has a history of standing up to adversity as the first festival in the world to jump into the virtual space in response to the pandemic on March 19, 2020, with 191 films from 32 nations. In 2021 and 2022 their sprawling hybrids connected us all. In 2021 Queens World was included on the MovieMaker Top 50 Festival list and in 2022, on the top 20 list of festivals for first time filmmakers for all of the professional development provided to exhibiting filmmakers. In 2023 Queens World was included on FilmFreeway's top 100 reviewed festivals out of 13,000 festivals worldwide!

"We share these honors with all of Queens and we thank our Media Sponsors Schneps Media, Queens Chronicle, It's In Queens, City Guide, Mayor's Office of Media & Entertainment for helping to draw this kind of favorable attention to Queens." says Katha Cato, Executive Director of Queens World.

With the global reputation of curating and presenting compelling films and the commitment to showcasing craftsmanship and diverse narratives, QWFF has become a prominent platform for both emerging and established talent. Previous festivals have featured 1,844 films from over 95 nations including 289 films from Queens.

Katha Cato, Queens World Executive Director, emphasizes the importance of storytellers in today's world: "Now is not the time to turn away from the storytellers, nor for them to be silenced. Now is not the time to stop listening to the lived experiences of others. It is time to gather and reaffirm our hope, our resilience and commitment to being whole again. We need our storytellers now, more than ever."

### **Looking Back: A 14 year retrospective**

- 201,657,051+ Annual Average World Wide Media Impressions
- 128,000+ Average Monthly Visitors to Website during festival season (February, March, April, May)
- 21,000+ Average Monthly Visitors to Website from Lead Search Engine Google
- 4,500 Average Annual festival attendees
- 23% of our audience comes from outside of Queens
- 28% of our audience comes from outside the US
- 17,000+ Annual Average Engagement
- 13,500+ Social Media Followers
- 12,000+ Mailing List
- 20,000+ Youtube Views
- Impressive roster of Spirit of Queens Honorees ([More Info](#))
- Engaging Year-Round Community Programs

- Passion in Action ([More Info](#))
- The Listening Tour ([More Info](#))
- Encore Screenings ([More Info](#))
- Young Filmmakers Program ([More Info](#))

For more information, please contact:

Katha Cato - [kathacato@gmail.com](mailto:kathacato@gmail.com) Connect with us on social media:

- Facebook: [<https://www.facebook.com/QueensWorldFilmFestival>]
- Twitter: [@queensworldfilm](#)
- Website: [www.queensworldfilmfestival.com](http://www.queensworldfilmfestival.com)

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