



## **CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES AWARDS \$550,000 TOTAL TO 2022 (EGG)CELERATOR LAB GRANTEES AND FINALISTS**

**NEW YORK, NY—April 14, 2022**—Chicken & Egg Pictures, a leader in supporting women and gender nonconforming filmmakers, announce the projects selected in their 2022 (Egg)celerator Lab. Ten feature documentary film projects, directed or co-directed by first- or second-time directors, will each receive year-long mentorship and a \$40,000 grant, to be put towards production. Additionally, for the first time ever, ten projects will each receive a \$15,000 (Egg)celerator Lab Finalist Grant. **The \$550,000 in grantmaking marks the largest sum that Chicken & Egg Pictures has ever directed to emerging filmmakers through (Egg)celerator Lab in a single year.**

“We know there are many exceptional films and filmmakers out there that need and deserve production support. So it’s especially meaningful to us that we can extend **our reach to a total of 20 projects in 2022**” said Executive Director Jenni Wolfson. “We also want to recognize the time and effort filmmakers invest in their applications, and bring attention to an additional 10 projects that deservedly advanced to the final stage of the selection process.”

Films that are part of the **2022 (Egg)celerator Lab** center women reclaiming their stories. They uncover intimate intergenerational memories in the context of complex political histories (*Here, the Silence is Heard* and *Joonam*), include filmmakers’ explorations of injustices in their parents’ pasts, which now inform present circumstances (*Matryoshka* and *TATA*), and follow young women achieving groundbreaking goals, whether in sports (*7 Beats Per Minute*) or in promoting laws to protect victims of cyber sexual assault (*Olimpia*).

The international cohort includes directors hailing from the US, Canada, China, Inner Mongolia, Chile, Spain, Costa Rica, Mexico, India, Moldova, Romania, Belarus, and Estonia. The work of some of them has been supported by Field of Vision, Brown Girls Doc Mafia, Center for Asian American Media, Firelight Media, and the Sundance Institute. Their projects have been featured in CNN, IDFA, Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, SXSW, HotDocs, and DOC NYC.

These emerging directors come from a range of backgrounds and experiences in the documentary field and beyond: The director of *The Wife Of*, Volia Chajkouskaya, is the founder of the Northern Lights Nordic-Baltic Film Festival; Lina Vdovič and Radu Ciorniciuc (*TATA*) are award-winning independent reporters based in Romania, whose previous film *Acasa, My Home* won the World Cinema Documentary Special Jury Award for Cinematography at Sundance 2020; *Our Daughters* is director Chithra Jeyaram’s first

film after a long career as a physical therapist; *Life + Life* director Contessa Gayles is an Emmy-nominated producer.

Past participants of the (Egg)celerator Lab include Jessica Kingdon, director of Oscar nominated and Tribeca Film Festival Award-winning ***Ascension***; Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh, directors of Oscar nominated ***Writing With Fire***, which was also the recipient of the Sundance Audience Award in the World Cinema Documentary competition; and Kristine Stolakis, director of ***Pray Away***, nominated for a Critics Choice Award.

## **The 2022 (Egg)celerator Lab projects and filmmakers are:**

### ***7 Beats Per Minute***

Director: Yuqi Kang (CANADA / CHINA / INNER MONGOLIA)

Producers: Ina Fichman, Anita Lee

*7 Beats Per Minute* is an intimate and unyielding journey with female freediving champion, Jessea Lu, as she faces her biggest fear and attempts to dive over 100 meters in one single breath.

### ***Here, the Silence is Heard***

Director: Gabriela Pena (CHILE / SPAIN)

Co-director: Picho García (CHILE)

Producers: Gabriela Pena, Picho García

After arriving in Chile at the old house that my family abandoned in exile, ghosts of an unstoppable family spell begin to appear at night.

### ***Joonam***

Director: Sierra Urich (US)

Producer: Keith Wilson

A filmmaker uncovers her family's lost Iranian past, and with it the complex relationships between mother and daughter, Iran and America, and displacement and identity.

### ***Life + Life***

Director: Contessa Gayles (US)

Producer: Contessa Gayles

An incarcerated musician struggles for healing and peace as he comes of age in this documentary-musical odyssey composed behind bars.

### ***Matryoshka***

Director: Maricarmen Merino Mora (COSTA RICA)

Producers: Karla Bukantz, Paulina Villegas

*Matryoshka* is an intimate portrait of a mother through her daughter's eyes, following the complex journey of a woman finding her own voice.

### ***Olimpia***

Director: Indira Cato (MEXICO)

Producer: Jessica Rito

After being a victim of sexual virtual violence, Olimpia Coral Melo sought the enactment of a groundbreaking law to protect women against cyberviolence, but now she's still looking for a way to heal her internal wounds.

### ***Our Daughters*** (working title)

Director: Chithra Jeyaram (US / INDIA)

Producers: Chithra Jeyaram, Jonna McKone

For the sake of their twin daughters, an Indian adoptive mother and a white birth mother venture into uncharted territory with an open adoption, crossing racial and cultural lines.

### ***TATA***

Co-directors: Lina Vdovii and Radu Ciorniciuc (MOLDOVA / ROMANIA)

Producer: Monica Lazurean Gorgan

A journalist estranged from her violent father discovers that he's become a victim of exploitation at work. When she agrees to help him expose the injustice, it reopens the wounds of their past.

### ***The Wife Of***

Director: Volia Chajkouskaya (BELARUS / ESTONIA)

Producers: Volia Chajkouskaya, Ivo Felt, Christian Popp, and Marius Markevicius

Undisclosed project.

### ***Undisclosed Project***

Details to be announced later this year.

## **2022 (EGG)CELERATOR LAB FINALISTS**

### ***Alis***

Directors: Clare Weiskopf, Nicolas van Hemelryck (COLOMBIA)

Producers: Clare Weiskopf, Nicolas van Hemelryck, Radu Stancu, Alexandra Galvis

Teenage girls, who lived on the streets of Bogota, dream up a fictional classmate. Their soulful narrative reveals their perseverance to break the cycle of violence and embrace a brighter future.

### ***Eat Bitter***

Directors: Pascale Appora-Gnekindy, Ningyi Sun (CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC / CHINA)

Producer: Mathieu Faure

*Eat Bitter* is a character-driven vérité film set in the Central African Republic, one of the poorest countries in the world. During the civil war, a Chinese immigrant construction manager and a local African laborer work on opposite ends of the spectrum to

construct a sparkling new bank. As deadlines loom, they don't hesitate to strip the earth and destroy their family lives for a seat at the table of prosperity.

### ***How to Build a Library***

Co-directors: Maia Lekow, Christopher King (KENYA / AUSTRALIA)

Producers: Maia Lekow, Christopher King

Two tenacious Kenyan women are transforming a dilapidated, junk-filled library in downtown Nairobi into a hub for the city's population and creatives. But first they must wrangle with the local government, raise several million dollars for the reconstruction, and confront the ghosts of a problematic colonial history still trapped within the library walls.

### ***Hummingbirds***

Directors: Silvia Castaños, Estefanía Contreras (US / MEXICO)

Producers: Leslie Benavides, Miguel Drake-McLaughlin, Ana Rodriguez-Falco, Jillian Schlesinger

Co-directors: Miguel Drake-McLaughlin, Diane Ng, Ana Rodriguez-Falco, Jillian Schlesinger

Best friends Silvia and Estefanía emerge at night to escape the cruel heat of summer in their Texas border town, wandering empty streets in search of inspiration, adventure, and a sense of belonging. When forces threaten their shared dreams, they take a stand and hold onto what they can—the moment and each other.

### ***Light of the Setting Sun***

Director: Vicky Du (US)

Producer: Danielle Varga

A Taiwanese-American filmmaker confronts her family's silence around the cycles of violence that have persisted since the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949.

### ***River of Grass***

Director: Sasha Wortzel (US)

Producer: Danielle Varga

Co-producer: Houston Cypress

*River of Grass* unfolds as a voyage through the past, present, and precarious future of the iconic and imperiled Florida Everglades; told through the writings of the late environmentalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas, and those who today call the region home.

### ***There Was, There Was Not***

Director: Emily Mkrtichian (US / ARMENIA)

Producer: Mara Adina

*There Was, There Was Not* tells the collective myth of a homeland nearly lost to war and four women's resistance to that loss.

### ***We Are Volcanoes***

Co-directors: Sharon Yeung, Natalie A. Chao (HONG KONG)

Producer: Sharon Yeung  
Undisclosed project.

***When They Were Here***

Director: Ivy MacDonald (US / BLACKFEET TRIBE)  
Co-director: Ivan MacDonald (US / BLACKFEET TRIBE)  
Producer: Jessica Jane Hart

Told through the memory and lives of those left behind—families, *When They Were Here* examines the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) crisis and its legacy on the Blackfeet Reservation in Northern Montana.

***Untitled Project***

Directors: Shirley Abraham, Amit Madheshiya (INDIA)  
Producers: Shirley Abraham, Amit Madheshiya  
Undisclosed project.

*Note:* The parentheses next to the directors' names indicate the filmmakers' nationalities and/or countries of origin.

The (Egg)celerator Lab is generously supported by our donors who provide us with General Operating Support. Additional support comes from Netflix and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

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**ABOUT CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES**

Chicken & Egg Pictures supports women and gender nonconforming nonfiction filmmakers whose artful and innovative storytelling catalyzes social change. We envision an inclusive media industry in which women filmmakers, representing a range of experiences and backgrounds, are fully supported to realize their artistic goals, and to build sustainable and fulfilling careers.

Chicken & Egg Pictures was founded in 2005 by Julie Parker Benello, Wendy Ettinger, and Judith Helfand. Since inception, the organization has awarded over \$9 million in grants and thousands of hours of creative mentorship to over 400 filmmakers. For additional information please visit: <http://chickeneggpics.org/>.

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