

**HAMPTONS
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL**

**HAMPTONS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES
SCREENWRITERS AND MENTORS FOR
18TH ANNUAL SCREENWRITERS LAB**

**LAB TO INCLUDE ALL FEMALE SCREENWRITER PARTICIPANTS
WILL TAKE PLACE APRIL 6-8, 2018 IN EAST HAMPTON, NY**

East Hampton, NY (March 20, 2018) – The Hamptons International Film Festival (HIFF) announced today the screenwriters and mentors for the 18th annual Screenwriters Lab, which will take place April 6-8, 2018, in East Hampton, New York. The Lab pairs rising screenwriters with established and knowledgeable screenwriters, directors, and producers for a weekend of one-on-one mentoring sessions.

The three selected screenplays for 2018 are **Esra Saydam's "The Mesopotamian," Anu Valia's "We Strangers,"** and **Aemilia Scott's "Birthday Suit."** Full bios of all Lab participants are included below. For the first time ever, all of the selected lab participants are women.

"We make it a priority to support new writers in establishing their careers with the guidance of experienced storytellers from the industry," said David Nugent, Artistic Director of the Hamptons International Film Festival. "We are thrilled to once again guide fresh voices and continue to diversify the narratives coming to the screen every year. We are even more proud that for the first time ever we have three female screenwriters who will participate in the Lab."

This year's mentors include **Sabrina Dhawan**, screenwriter of MONSOON WEDDING, for which she received a Golden Globe® nomination and won the 'Leon D'Oro' at the Venice Film Festival; **James V. Hart**, screenwriter of various acclaimed films, including HOOK, BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA, EPIC, CONTACT, AUGUST RUSH, and more; and **Alec Sokolow**, screenwriter of TOY STORY, for which he received an Academy Award® nomination, as well as CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN, GARFIELD, GOODBYE LOVER, I AM JANE DOE, and more.

James V. Hart will also lead this year's screenwriting **Master Class**, which is open to the public. Hart will use his [HartChart](#), a proven story mapping tool for writers working in television, film, novels, plays, and other literary form to take participants through all the stages of the creative process. He will use clips and personal experience to detail all that goes into writing a script for every type of audience. This is a special opportunity to hear from one of the most talented and versatile writers in the industry.

The Master Class will take place at 6:00PM on Saturday, April 7 at the Ross School in East Hampton. Tickets are available for purchase [here](#).

This year's Lab is funded with support from the Melissa Mathison Fund, established in 2016 and named for the late beloved Oscar®-nominated screenwriter, which strives to foster female writers in the industry and their continued development. Three former HIFF Lab alumni projects from female filmmakers—NANCY by Christina Choe, AND BREATHE NORMALLY, by Ísold Uggadóttir, and DEAD PIGS, by Cathy Yan—all made their World Premiere and received

awards in the screenwriting, directing, and acting categories at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival.

“The HIFF Lab continues to serve as a significant launching pad for writers looking to start a promising journey with their narratives, as evidenced by recent alumni,” said Anne Chaisson, Executive Director of the Hamptons International Film Festival. “As always we are extremely grateful to the Melissa Mathison Fund for their support of the Lab’s mission and encouraging new voices in the industry.”

Highlights since the Lab’s inception include Destin Daniel Cretton’s *SHORT TERM 12*, starring Academy Award®-winning actress Brie Larson and John Gallagher Jr., which won the Grand Jury and Audience Award at SXSW in 2013; Justin Schwartz’s *THE DISCOVERERS*, starring Griffin Dunne, which made its world premiere at HIFF 2012; Sara Colangelo’s *LITTLE ACCIDENTS*, which premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, starring Elizabeth Banks and Chloe Sevigny; and Claudia Myers’s *FORT BLISS*, starring Michelle Monaghan and Ron Livingston, which was released in 2014.

For more information on this program, please visit the [HIFF website](#). The 26th annual Hamptons International Film Festival will take place over Columbus Day Weekend: October 4th-8th, 2018.

SCREENPLAYS

“The Mesopotamian” by Esra Saydam

Logline: *The Mesopotamian* follows two EMT partners, Ela and Marco, as they navigate an otherwise unseen New York City that is both intimate and lonely. Together, they begin to 'heal' their seemingly loveless, metropolitan lives, which at times, feel more alienating than their previous war experiences on the other side of the ocean.

Bio: Bridging the oceanic divide between her hometown Istanbul and New York, Esra is a filmmaker with an MFA degree from the Columbia University Graduate Film Program. Her first feature film, *ACROSS THE SEA* (2014), co-directed with Nisan Dag, won multiple awards in her home country as well as at many international festivals, including Slamdance and Milano Int. Film Festival. After its screening at other prestigious festivals like Florida, Raindance, Istanbul and Warsaw, the film had its theatrical distribution in Turkey and later became available on Amazon Prime in USA. Esra’s next projects in development have been recognized and invited by renowned programs like EAVE’s *Ties That Bind*, Istanbul (If) Sundance Screenwriters’ Lab, *Meetings on the Bridge*, IFP Film Week and Cine Qua Non Lab. In 2018, Esra was the participant of Berlinale Talent Program as a US-based filmmaker, and *WHEN I’M DONE DYING*, a feature film she co-wrote, was selected for Berlinale Coproduction Market. Besides feature film projects, she is currently developing a TV mockumentary within her production company, Sand & Snow Films. Esra is the recipient of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association Fellowship, fluent in four languages and a certified EMT in the State of New York.

“We Strangers” by Anu Valia

Logline: *We Strangers* follows Rayelle "Ray" Martin, a commercial cleaner for a company that sends her to clean foreclosed homes and commercial spaces. While on the job, she meets a dentist who invites her to become his personal housekeeper for a substantial amount of money. Ray accepts the job, and she unwittingly enters a whole new world of the rich Northwest Indiana elite.

Bio: Anu Valia is an Indiana-born, New York-schooled filmmaker whose award-winning short films have screened across the country and abroad. Her most recent short film, LUCIA, BEFORE AND AFTER, won the Jury Prize for U.S. Fiction at Sundance Film Festival. It was also an official selection at festivals around the world, including South by Southwest, Hong Kong International Film Festival, Nashville Film Festival, and Seattle International Film Festival. LUCIA was a recipient of Refinery29's Shatterbox Anthology grant. Her previous short film, DRIFTERS, was a Special Jury Mention for Narrative Shorts at New Orleans Festival, and won Best Experimental Short at Aesthetica Short Film Festival. And her NYU thesis film, FIGS, was a Student Academy Award Semifinalist, a National Board of Review Grant Finalist, and an NYU Wasserman Award Finalist. Anu is the Director and Executive Producer of SOFT FOCUS WITH JENA FRIEDMAN, a comedic interview series premiering on Adult Swim in February 2018. She is also part of New York Film Festival's 2017 Artist Academy and was an artist resident of SPACE at Ryder Farm. She's most proud to be an ambassador for the American Film Showcase, a U.S. film diplomacy program promoting arts involvement and education abroad.

“Birthday Suit” by Aemilia Scott

Logline: On the eve of her 55th birthday, Elaine realizes that she is becoming invisible to her husband, her family, and her town. So she decides to take a radical step to be seen: she takes her clothes off, and she does not put them back on.

Bio: It all started with a viewing of L'AVVENTURA in a broom closet in college. Or maybe it began when her brother showed her Stan Douglas' video art at 13. For Aemilia, it hasn't always been about filmmaking, but it has always been about film. She didn't go to film school, but rather studied History and Photography at Columbia University, studying under street photographers Thomas Roma and Dana Hoey. In Chicago she came up as a comedian, training and eventually performing at Second City, iO and Annoyance. After years writing sketch comedy, she began writing longer and sadder things, which turned into her first short films. For Aemilia, filmmaking unites the skills of image-making, writing and performance. Comedy and art are both pursuits of truth, and once she actually made a film of her own, she never looked back. Her first film, BEST IF USED BY, won a number of awards, including a premiere at Clermont Ferrand, a BAFTA award at Aspen Shortsfest, honorable mentions at REGARD Quebec and USA Dallas, and best short of 2013 at Newfilmmakers LA. Her next film, FOR A GOOD TIME, premiered at Aspen Shortsfest. She has two films on the festival world right now: SHOT, which premiered at Chicago International Film Fest and won Best Short at Minimalen Film Festival Norway, and HOW YOU ARE TO ME, which won best drama at Short Sweet Film Fest.

MENTORS

Sabrina Dhawan

Sabrina Dhawan grew up in Delhi. She has received her BA from Delhi University, an M.A. from Leicester University, England, and an MFA in Film from Columbia University. Her student short SAANJH - AS NIGHT FALLS won 'Best of the Festival' at the Palm Springs Film Festival; 'Most Original Film' from New Line Cinema, 'Audience Impact' Award at Angelus Awards, and was nominated for a Student Academy Award. Sabrina's debut feature as screenwriter, MONSOON WEDDING, won the 'Leon D'Oro' at the Venice Film Festival and received a Golden Globe nomination, amongst other awards. She was the bookwriter on the stage musical adaptation of MONSOON WEDDING, which premiered at Berkeley Rep (CA) summer, 2017. It was extended three times because of demand for tickets and went on to become the most lucrative show in the history of Berkeley Rep. Sabrina's other produced screenplay credits include KAMINEY and

RANGOON by Vishal Bharadwaj; ISHQIYA, directed by Abhishek Chaubey; 11.9.01, directed by Nair; *Cosmopolitan* for PBS. She served as co-producer on *Bollywood Hero*, a mini-series for IFC. The studios and production companies Sabrina has been commissioned to write for include UTV, 20th Century Fox, HBO, Disney, Fox-Star, Killer Films, ABC Family, and Fox Searchlight. Sabrina has taught at filmmaking labs and been on film juries around the world, including India, Uganda, Tanzania Singapore, Qatar and across the continental USA. Sabrina is a Professor of Dramatic Writing at the Tisch School of the Arts, NYU.

James V. Hart

****Master Class Mentor****

James V. Hart (J.V.) was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, and grew up in Ft. Worth, Texas, on drive-in movies and Saturday matinees. His writing/producing credits include HOOK, directed by Steven Spielberg based on an idea by Hart's then 6-year-old Son, Jake; BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA, directed by Francis Ford Coppola; MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND, directed by Brian Henson; and CONTACT, directed by Robert Zemeckis. Other writing/producing credits include MARY SHELLY'S FRANKENSTEIN, TUCK EVERLASTING, JACK AND THE BEANSTALK: THE REAL STORY. SAHARA, LARA CROFT: TOMBRAIDER – THE CRADLE OF LIFE, AUGUST RUSH, EPIC, and the TV series, CROSSBONES. Hart has served on the faculty of the Columbia University Graduate Film program. Served as mentor and advisor at the Austin Writer's Ranch, Sundance Film Labs, and the eQuinox-Europe Writing Workshops for over 20 years in 11 countries. Hart has also conducted the Puglia Experience for writers and producers, held in the Puglia region in Italy. Hart is a co-founder of the Peter Pan Children's Fund, a non-profit that fosters youth philanthropy supporting Children's Hospitals, has served on the Meadows School of the Arts board at SMU, is a founding member of the Writer's Guild Initiative board, and founder of Lionfish University, a non-profit dedicated to reef preservation and conservation. His renowned story mapping tool app, The Hart Chart, was launched online at the 2015 Austin Film Festival. "Go with Gravity" is Hart's primary mantra for the writing life.

Alec Sokolow

Alec Sokolow has worn many hats in his career as a professional writer. A career in Hollywood that has taken him from staff writing late night TV comedy to having written some of the most memorable studio films of our time to writing the story for a top video game series. His credited film work has topped one billion dollars in worldwide Box Office receipts, including TOY STORY (1995, Disney Animation, Pixar) for which he received an Academy Award nomination and won an Annie Award for Outstanding Achievement in Writing, CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN (2003, 20th Century Fox), GARFIELD (2004, 20th Century Fox), EVAN ALMIGHTY (2006, Universal), GOODBYE LOVER (1998, Warner Brothers), MONEY TALKS (1996, New Line Cinema), and I AM JANE DOE (2017, Producer).

ABOUT THE HAMPTONS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The Hamptons International Film Festival (HIFF), celebrating 25 years, is a year-round non-profit organization with monthly screenings, filmmaking workshops, a Screenwriters Lab, master classes, a summer documentary screening series, and an annual film festival each October. The Festival is the premiere film event on New York State's east end, and is an intimate showcase of some of the year's best offerings in contemporary cinema from around the world. Selections from all of our programs continue to play an important role during awards season. 2017 marked the 8th time in a row that a film in the Festival has become the eventual Best Picture winner at the Oscars, making HIFF the only Festival on the East Coast with such a distinction. For more information please visit: www.hamptonsfilmfest.org.

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