

Press Release



NATIVE: Female Directors and Protagonists From the Pacific Region Feature Prominently in 2019 Programme

In 2019, *NATIVE - A Journey into Indigenous Cinema* is screening 16 short and feature-length fiction and documentary films from the Pacific region. Characteristic of the programme is the presence of women on both sides of the camera: the special series' opening film *Vai* alone features the collaborative efforts of a group of eight female filmmakers.

"The range of stories and the different visual languages that the Berlinale presents every year, especially within the *NATIVE* programme, are indispensable for the global film community. We want to see Indigenous filmmakers' own stories, films made *by* them and not *about* them," comments Festival Director Dieter Kosslick.

"Vai is thinking of us all - of her own daughter, of yours too, and of those to come," says a supporting character in *Vai* regarding the film's eponymous protagonist. In eight episodes set on seven different islands, the directorial collective composed of eight Indigenous female filmmakers depicts various stages of Vai's life. Intimately followed by the camera, the character Vai makes the smooth transition between temporal, geographical and socio-cultural contexts. Individual experience becomes universal, the everyday unfolds in a single location and yet everywhere at once.

Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen and ***She Who Must Be Loved*** portray two exceptional Indigenous women with a common goal: to indigenise the media. Merata Mita was an iconic female Maori filmmaker and a radical political activist. Her son, Hepi Mita, researches the life and work of his late mother for answers to unresolved questions. And in Erica Glynn's ***She Who Must Be Loved***, Freda Glynn makes her feelings clear to her daughter right from the start: "I just normally do my thing. You can't follow me around all day." It is immediately unmistakable that Freda is not only the woman who in the early 1980s founded CAAMA, Australia's influential Aboriginal media organisation, but that she is also a wonderfully headstrong matriarch.

NATIVE Co-Curators Maryanne Redpath and Anna Kalbhenn confirm that strong-willed women form the common thread that runs through the special series' programme: "The films also reflect upon a distinct sense of disorientation, which is frequently played out in front of deceptively paradisiacal island backdrops. This is often due to more recent, less discussed colonialist practices, work-related migration and adaptations in living conditions made necessary by environmental changes. The films' male protagonists in particular are frequently severely conflicted."

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For instance, in *For My Father's Kingdom* (directed by Vea Mafile'o and Jeremiah Tauamiti): Family head Saia left Tonga as a hero long ago. After decades spent in the New Zealand diaspora, he continues to donate all of his money to the church back home, putting himself and his family into debt in the process. *Out of State* also takes up the question of what we call home. In her documentary film, director Ciara Lacy follows Hawaiian criminal offenders who first develop a closer relationship to their culture while locked up in an Arizona prison.

NATIVE Advisor Kanakan-Balintagos, otherwise known as Aureus Solito, traces his Indigenous roots in *Busong (Palawan Fate)*, utilising an intense aesthetic. In the film's non-chronological narrative, he blurs the boundaries between legend and reality, jumping adeptly between past, present and future.

With several additional talk formats and special events, *NATIVE* 2019 will also be continuing its successful collaboration with the Embassy of Canada to Germany and the Climate Initiative Regional Climate Change (REKLIM) at the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research. The *NATIVE* booth at the *European Film Market (EFM)* remains an important market presence for Indigenous cinema and Indigenous filmmakers from around the world.

Film programme:

Feature-length Films at *NATIVE*:

Busong (Palawan Fate)

by Kanakan-Balintagos, Philippines 2011

An imaginative filmic reinterpretation of Indigenous legends in Palawan. "Busong" refers to fate, which no individual can control.

For My Father's Kingdom

by Vea Mafile'o, Jeremiah Tauamiti, New Zealand 2019

Documentary form

World premiere

The church of Tonga demands donations, especially from those who have left the country. This personal documentary follows the family of Saia Mafile'o who, decades after moving to New Zealand, still dedicates his life and money entirely to his homeland.



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Mababangong bangungot (The Perfumed Nightmare)

by Kidlat Tahimik, Germany / Philippines 1977

In Kidlat Tahimik's 1977 debut, he uses imaginative montage to interweave a heroic journey and picaresque tale, the bid for progress and postcolonial criticism, and existence as a migrant worker in Paris and the way of life in Balian on the Philippines.

Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen

by Hepi Mita, New Zealand 2018

Documentary form

European premiere

Merata Mita's life bears testimony to how the personal is political. Blending archive, interviews and her children's and colleagues' memories, this intimate documentary traces the life, work and legacy of this radical first female Maori filmmaker.

One Thousand Ropes

by Tusi Tamasese, New Zealand 2017

The spirit Seipua is haunting Maea, who lives alone after his aggressive past has estranged him from his family. When his daughter returns, Maea seeks to mend broken relationships. A story about tackling violence, set in Wellington's rainy grey suburbs.

Out of State

by Ciara Lacy, USA 2017

Documentary form

Doing time in prison might give you access to your traditions and roots, but how can you take that home after your release? This documentary describes two working-class Kanaka Maoli men who make the emotional journey back home to their families in Hawaii.

She Who Must Be Loved

by Erica Glynn, Australia 2018

Documentary form

International premiere

Erica Glynn explores the life and work of her mother Freda, a pioneer of the Indigenous media landscape in Australia. Family and art, history and stories all merge in this intimate portrait of a strong-willed woman.

Tanna

by Martin Butler, Bentley Dean, Australia 2014

Given the conflict between the Yakel and Imedin, Wawa and Dain's relationship seems impossible from the start. Featuring a cast of amateurs, this award-winning film explores the laws of nature and society that govern life on the island of Tanna.



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Vai

by Becs Arahanga, Amberley Jo Aumua, Matasila Freshwater, Dianna Fuemana, Mīria George, 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Marina Alofagia McCartney, Nicole Whippy, New Zealand 2019

World premiere

Coming of age as an Indigenous woman on the South Pacific Islands is a process full of change. Every island may be different but they are connected by a shared history. Everywhere she goes, Vai is someone else, and yet she remains connected to her roots.

Short Films at *NATIVE*:

Blackbird

by Amie Batalibasi, Australia 2015 - 13'

Solomon Islander siblings Kiko and Rosa struggle to survive whilst labouring on a Queensland sugar plantation. This period drama addresses the history of Australia's "sugar slaves" and the forced displacement of Pacific Islanders from their homelands.

Liliu

by Jeremiah Tauamiti, New Zealand 2018 - 17'

World premiere

Solo, a Samoan court interpreter, works for the New Zealand colonial government. When a Samoan woman on trial refuses to accept the court's judgement and challenges New Zealand's jurisdiction and claim to legitimate rule, Solo remembers his true allegiance.

Memoria

by Kamila Andini, Indonesia 2016 - 35'

Flora senses that her mother is a survivor of sexual abuse. The spectre of the past continues to loom over their lives, putting a strain on their relationship. But when Flora decides to get married, Maria is obliged to open up to her daughter.

Snow in Paradise

by Justine Simei-Barton, Nikki Si'ulepa, New Zealand 2011 - 9'

The heavenly peace and relaxed island life on Aitutaki (Cook Islands) comes to an abrupt end when French nuclear tests shake the South Pacific.

Stones

by Ty Sanga, USA 2009 - 20'



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Nihipali and Na'iwi are the only Mū spirits left in their Hawaiian forest. When Nihipali encounters a human child, the veil between the spirit and human worlds is lifted.

Toa'ipuapuagā Strength in Suffering

by Vea Mafile'o, New Zealand 2018 - 10'

International premiere

Toa, a young Samoan woman, displays cuts on her body and begins to bleed prior to having a near-death experience on Easter Sunday. For many Christians in Samoa, her experience has been perceived as an expression of God's dismay.

Va Tapuia (Sacred Spaces)

by Tusi Tamasese, New Zealand 2009 - 15'

Taro planter Lui labours every day to buy decorative lights for his wife's grave and so commemorate her life and her sense of beauty. When he meets Malia, who recently lost her husband, Lui reaches out to her so they can share their sense of loss.

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