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VTIFF Announces December Split Screen titles

Burlington, VT (Feb 1, 2021)

For Immediate Release: VTIFF selects films by African American women directors for its Split/Screen Series – Feb 19 – Feb 28.

The series will include recorded conversations with the directors Natasha Ngaiza and Ashley O'Shay

The series will be available for 10 days on VTIFF's online portal <http://watch.vtiff.org>.

More information, Tickets and Passes now available on <https://vtiff.org/vtiff-now/split-screen/>

The 6 films are:

1. LOSING GROUND by Kathleen Collins | 1982 | Fiction

One of the first American features directed by a Black woman, Kathleen Collins's 1982 film wasn't released until 2015. In 2020, the film was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".

Two years after the film's narrow debut, Collins spoke to a class of Howard University students about [representation of the Black experience](#). She says, "If you've been the notion of sin incarnate and you're now trying to correct that balance, what do you do? You make Black people into saints." Of this extreme binary, she says, "Neither one is reality. Both are tracks to dehumanize you." *Losing Ground* is a complete departure from the saints vs. sinners trope that Collins warns of. Instead, it focuses on that aforementioned emotional need and offers a study of complex individuals in the midst of respective existential crises.

2. FAREWELL AMOR by Ekwa Msangi | 2020 | Fiction

After 17 years apart, Angolan immigrant Walter is joined in the U.S. by his wife and teen daughter. Now absolute strangers sharing a one bedroom Brooklyn apartment, they struggle to overcome the emotional distance between them. Walter is trying to let go of a previous relationship while his wife Esther struggles with a new country, culture and a husband who seems distant. Their daughter Sylvia is a dancer just like her father, and while she also finds her new life difficult, she bravely starts to explore the city and show herself through dance. The film is both a universal immigrant story and the unique perspective of three characters bound together by history and hope. It is an intimate and deeply personal look at an inter-generational tale that has defined America since its inception.

3. ILLUSIONS | BLACKOUT | A MOTHER – 3 short films

ILLUSIONS by Julie Dash | 1982 |

“Now I am an illusion, just like the films. They see me but they can’t recognize me.” So states the protagonist of *Illusions*. The time is 1942, a year after Pearl Harbor; the place is National Studios, a fictitious Hollywood motion picture studio. Mignon Duprée, a Black woman studio executive who appears to be white and Ester Jeeter, an African American woman who is the singing voice for a white Hollywood star are forced to come to grips with a society that perpetuates false images as status quo.

BLACKOUT by Natasha Ngaiza | 2013 |

A sudden power outage leads to an impromptu shadow performance that inspires an African immigrant to revisit the past and confront her marriage. Blackout explores the intricacies of transnational African identity, motherhood and memory.

A MOTHER by Natasha Ngaiza | 2020 |

As a town copes with the disappearance of a little girl, a mother of two must come to terms with her own decision to abort an unexpected pregnancy. “*A Mother* was written in the wake of the first wave of the Black Lives Matter movement. It was written after learning that mothers are more likely to get abortion than non-mothers. It was written after the ProPublica report

headlined, “Nothing Protects Black Women from Dying in Pregnancy and Childbirth” while pregnant with my third child. It was written to honor Black motherhood in the U.S., the beauty, the heartache, the mess, the loss and the hope.

4. UNAPOLOGETIC by Ashley O’Shay | 2020 | Documentary

Produced by Chicago-based Kartemquin Films (*Hoop Dreams*), *Unapologetic* captures tensions between a police board led by Lori Lightfoot (now Chicago Mayor) and abolitionist organizers at Chicago Police Department Headquarters in a polarizing moment in Chicago’s fight against racial injustice after the slaying by police of two Black Chicagoans – Rekia Boyd and Laquan McDonald. The film is told through the eyes of two fierce millennial activists, Janaé Bonsu and Bella Bahhs, as they work to take back their community in the face of a complicit city administration. feminist movement that lies at the helm of fighting for all Black rights.

“High Resolution stills to be found at <https://vtiff.org/press>

More information <https://vtiff.org/vtiff-now/split-screen/>

Split/Screen is an 8-month partnership between the Vermont International Film Festival and Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival, with each organization alternating curating months.

The Vermont International Film Foundation (VTIFF) is a cultural non-profit organization whose mission is to enrich the community and bring the world to Vermont through film. VTIFF operates year-round with monthly screenings on the last Thursday of each month, a Global Roots Film Festival in the spring as well as supporting Vermont filmmakers. VTIFF celebrates its 35th anniversary in 2020. The largest program of VTIFF is the annual Vermont International Film Festival, best known for featuring groundbreaking and independent films from around the world and Vermont.

The Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival is a Vermont-based 501[c][3] non-profit organization with E.I.N. 47-1462141. The Festival was formed to support, promote and exhibit the dynamic and imaginative efforts of first and second time filmmakers and to give new filmmakers a chance to be discovered in a setting that is all about their work, from start to finish. The Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival recently concluded a successful presentation of its 6th Annual event, MNFF6: ONLINE, showcasing 26 feature films and 33 shorts, thanks in part to a CARES Act grant from the Vermont Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities. MNFF7 is currently scheduled to take place in Middlebury August 26-29, 2021. More information at middfilmfest.org

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