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**THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY ANNOUNCES
THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2012 MARGARET MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD**



Courtesy of the Film *A Life Without Words (Una Vida Sin Palabras)*

DIRECTOR ADAM ISENBERG FOR *A LIFE WITHOUT WORDS (UNA VIDA SIN PALABRAS)*

**2012 Margaret Mead Film Festival Special Mentions include
Giovanni Giommi For *Bad Weather* and
Miyarrka Media For *Manapanmirr, In Christmas Spirit***

Director **Adam Isenberg** received the **Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award** at the 2012 Margaret Mead Film Festival on Sunday, December 2, for his film *A Life Without Words (Una Vida Sin Palabras)*, a story of two deaf siblings in rural Nicaragua living entirely without written, spoken, or signed language. Isenberg was selected from among 10 contenders by a jury that included filmmaker Judith Helfand (*The Uprising of '34*), founder and executive director of the New York African Film Festival Mohan Bonetti, executive director and co-founder of Impact Partners Dan Cogan, and director and anthropologist Patricia Cardoso (*Real Women Have Curves*).

“Adam Isenberg’s film captures the essence of the Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award because it is a beautifully shot, movingly thoughtful, and ultimately transporting cinematic experience,” said Ruth Cohen, AMNH senior director of education strategic initiatives and director of the Center for Lifelong Learning. “Audiences come away with renewed verve and excitement about the power of fine visual media to convey the human experience.”

A Life Without Words is a quiet yet profoundly provocative film with a haunting story of two siblings born deaf in rural Nicaragua. Dulce Maria, who is 28 years old, and her 22-year-old

brother Francisco have never strayed more than a few miles from the farm where they were born. With no written, spoken, or signed language, the siblings were never exposed to the traditional modes of communication and learning that others take for granted. When a deaf aid worker arrives to try to teach them their first words, the unsettling drama that unfolds poses difficult questions about the meaning and nature of language, of aid work, and of documentary film.

For the first time, the jury also selected two **Margaret Mead Film Festival Special Mentions: Giovanni Giommi** for *Bad Weather* and **Miyarrka Media's Paul Gurrumuruwuy, Fiona Yangathu, Jennifer Deger, and David Meckenzie** for *Manapanmirr, in Christmas Spirit*. *Bad Weather* tells the story of a tiny island in the Bay of Bengal, which is notable for two reasons: it is sinking into the sea, and is populated almost entirely by sex workers. *Manapanmirr* explores the joys and sorrows of Christmas in northeast Arnhem Land, one of the most isolated tracts of Aboriginal land in Australia.

"The selection of films we watched were moving—each one so different, each one holding a lesson, a message and the question that has been at the heart of this festival—whose story is it," said juror Judith Helfand. "Two films stood out and deserved special commendations this year. In the first, we got to feel and see a community actively blend the past with the present in *Manapanmirr*. For the second, we got to see a great and enduring love story set amidst an island that was eroding into the sea and a community of smart, funny, and tenacious sex workers in *Bad Weather*."

In addition to Isenberg, Giommi, and Miyarrka Media, and Isenberg, the 2012 nominees for the Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award included Valérie Berteau and Philippe Witjes for *Himself He Cooks*; Ram Devineni and Cano Rojas for *The Human Tower*; Zoé Chantre for *Keep Me Upright (Tiens moi droite)*; Pietra Brett Kelly for *Maori Boy Genius*; Patrick Morell for *Nagaland: The Last of the Headhunters*; Sadia Shepard and Samina Quraeshi for *The Other Half of Tomorrow*; and Stefan Wittekamp and Suzanne Arts for *Wheat and Tares*.

The Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award recognizes documentary filmmakers who embody the spirit, energy, and innovation demonstrated by anthropologist Margaret Mead in her research, fieldwork, films, and writings. The award is given to a filmmaker whose feature documentary offers a new perspective on a culture or community while displaying artistic excellence and originality in storytelling. Eligible filmmakers must present a U.S. premiere at the Margaret Mead Film Festival.

Celebrating 36 years as the preeminent showcase for contemporary cultural storytelling, the 2012 Margaret Mead Film Festival screened 29 outstanding films and hosted special multi-

media events and performances throughout this year's festival including experimental films, unique storytelling formats such as crowd-sourced media, and provocative online games from *Games for Change*. The Mead Film Festival is a rare opportunity to view new films that strive to illuminate the complexity and diversity of peoples and cultures from around the world in a museum environment that provides the setting for a deeper level of conversation and understanding.

Support

The Presenting Sponsor of the Museum's multicultural public programming is **MetLife Foundation**.

The Margaret Mead Film Festival is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

The American Museum of Natural History gratefully acknowledges **HBO, Inc.** for its generous support of the Mead Films and cultural programming for New York City Public High Schools.

Projector solutions provided by projectiondesign.

American Museum of Natural History

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses 46 permanent exhibition halls, including the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. Five active research divisions and three cross-disciplinary centers support 200 scientists, whose work draws on a world-class permanent collection of more than 32 million specimens and artifacts, including specialized collections for frozen tissue and genomic and astrophysical data, as well as one of the largest natural history libraries in the Western Hemisphere. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, it is the only American museum authorized to grant the Ph.D. degree. In 2012, the Museum began offering a pilot Master of Arts in Teaching with a specialization in earth science. Approximately 5 million visitors from around the world came to the Museum last year, and its exhibitions and Space Shows can be seen in venues on five continents. The Museum's website and collection of apps for mobile devices extend its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more beyond its walls. Visit amnh.org for more information.

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