

Media Inquiries: Ellen Evaristo, Department of Communications
212-769-5973, eevaristo@amnh.org
www.amnh.org

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**THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CELEBRATES THE 35TH ANNUAL MARGARET MEAD FILM FESTIVAL
NOVEMBER 10 THROUGH 13**

OVER 35 FILMS EXPLORE ADVENTURES IN SPACE, CLASSIC AND GROUNDBREAKING ETHNOGRAPHIC WORKS, CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN EXPERIENCES, THE STRUGGLE TO BALANCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPERATIVES, AND EXTRAORDINARY KINETIC SCULPTURES

The **American Museum of Natural History** celebrates 35 years as founder of the [Margaret Mead Film Festival](#) – the preeminent showcase for contemporary cultural storytelling – **November 10 through November 13, 2011**. The festival will screen over 35 outstanding films, including 7 U.S. premieres, culled from more than 1,000 international and domestic submissions, and feature live musical performances and a space-themed Radiolab listening party in the Hayden Planetarium dome. Seven filmmakers are in the running for the coveted **Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award** to be conferred by a jury chaired by Darren Aronofsky, director of Academy Award-winning film *Black Swan*, and awarded on closing night.

In the spirit of the legendary anthropologist Margaret Mead, this year's films shed light on diverse and, sometimes, vanishing cultures through the work of filmmakers from more than 30 countries, including the Czech Republic, Egypt, Mozambique, and Portugal. Twenty one of the filmmakers will be in attendance, as will two MacArthur Fellows, including WNYC Radiolab's Jad Abumrad and anthropologist and Mead Festival advisor Faye Ginsburg. The festival's post-screening discussions allow audiences to participate in rich, engaging, and intimate conversations with filmmakers and film subjects.

"The Mead Festival illustrates the profound richness and variety of human experience today," says Ellen V. Futter, President of the American Museum of Natural History. "By training a lens on the people and experiences of our own time, it builds on and extends the legacy of the great Margaret Mead and the American Museum of Natural History's commitment to studying and presenting culture."

Festival highlights also include **Dreams of Outer Space**, a film series about space exploration and science-fiction cinema; the **35th Anniversary Retrospective**, a celebration of the festival's most influential features over the past three decades; and a live performance by Mohawk musicians.

"Every year the Mead Festival introduces audiences to cultures and communities that might otherwise be inaccessible," adds Ariella Ben-Dov, Margaret Mead Film Festival creative director. "With filmmakers present at the screenings, the films spotlight the struggle to preserve traditions and cultures against great odds."

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Full film descriptions and trailers can be found online at amnh.org/mead. The public can purchase tickets and create a personalized film schedule at mead2011.sched.org. For festival highlights or daily updates, information can be found on Facebook at facebook.com/MeadFilmFestival or Twitter using #MeadFilmFest.

The Margaret Mead Filmmaker Awards

The [Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award](#) recognizes documentary filmmakers whose work displays artistic excellence and originality of technique while offering a new perspective on a culture or community remote from the majority of the festival audiences' experience. The seven contenders for this year's Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award, presenting U.S. premieres at the festival, are:

- Vit Klusák for *All for the Good of the World and Nošovice*
- Bettina Büttner for *Kids*
- Robert Nugent for *Memoirs of a Plague*
- Floris-Jan van Luyn for *Rainmakers*
- Caroline Leitner, Daniel Mazza, and Guiseppa Tedeschi for *Small Kingdom of Lo*
- Marian Kiss for *Space Sailors*, and
- Yuanchen Liu for *To the Light*

The Mead Award jury is led by Academy Award-nominated director **Darren Aronofsky** (*Black Swan*, *The Wrestler*), who will be joined by **Karen Cooper**, director of New York City's Film Forum; **Liz Garbus**, Academy Award-nominated director (*Bobby Fischer Against the World*, *The Farm: Angola, USA*) and 2002 MacArthur Fellow **Stanley Nelson**, director of the Emmy-winning documentary *The Murder of Emmett Till*. The Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award winner will be announced on closing night.

Festival Opening and Closing Nights

The **opening night** film on Thursday, November 10, is the New York premiere of *Grande Hotel*, directed by Lotte Stoops. The Grande Hotel in the West African seaside town of Beira, Mozambique, was once the most opulent resort on the continent. Now, it is home to an estimated 3,000 squatters. Living in this outsize shell of former luxury, those on the margins of society create a self-enclosed community as the place they call home crumbles around them. As one voice in the film observes, the history of the hotel is the history of the country.

Closing night will feature the New York festival premiere of *Flames of God*, directed by Meshakai Wolf, on **Sunday, November 13**. The film follows Romani songwriter and poet Muzafer Bislim on his journey from Macedonia to France for the International Biennial of Poets in Paris. While seeking to publish his opus, a handwritten, 25,000-word dictionary containing what he believes to be some of the oldest and most obscure words in the Romani language, Bislim reunites with long-lost friends and family.

Mead Festival Special Series and Panels

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The **35th Anniversary Retrospective Series** presents a program of short films and several feature documentaries from the festival's past: *N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman* by John Marshall, Adrienne Miesmer, and Sue Cabezas; *A Wife among Wives* from David and Judith MacDougall's Turkana Conversations Trilogy; and Alanis Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. Featured films also include *Trance and Dance in Bali* by Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Les Maitres Fous* by Jean Rouch, and *Jero on Jero: A Balinese Trance Séance Observed* by Linda Connor and Patsy and Timothy Asch.

In anticipation of the Museum's upcoming exhibition [*Beyond Planet Earth: The Future of Space Exploration*](#), opening November 19, the Mead Festival presents **Dreams of Outer Space**, a film series about the human quest to conquer space. Marian Kiss's *Space Sailors* is a look back at the Soviet Union's Intercosmos Program, which sent 13 cosmonauts from socialist countries on highly publicized missions. Christian Frei's *Space Tourists* contemplates the privatization of space travel and the implications for the earthbound. Museum astrophysicist Michael Shara, who is the curator of *Beyond Planet Earth*, will lead audiences on an armchair tour of the last 100 years of science-fiction cinema – from Georges Méliès's whimsical *Le voyage dans la lune* (1902) through Duncan Jones's existentialist *Moon* (2009) – to see what these filmmakers got right about the future of space travel and what they got wrong. In addition, **Radiolab's** Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich will host a listening party in the Hayden Planetarium's dome featuring previously aired interviews with Ann Druyan, Carl Sagan's widow; Brian Greene, host of NOVA's *The Elegant Universe*; and Hayden Planetarium Director Neil deGrasse Tyson. Abumrad and Krulwich will share behind-the-scenes anecdotes and field questions from the audience.

The Mead Festival's **Inventing Home** series presents films that depict individuals carving out space for themselves and for their families, even forming wider communities in unlikely or inhospitable locations. In *Kinder*, a troubled boy returns to his family determined to find his place among them. A ramshackle scrap yard on the edge of Israel is the setting for *Hula and Natan*, a tragicomedy about two brothers who spend most of their time locked in battle over matters both the fundamental and trivial. The ordinary Chinese citizens profiled in *Rainmakers* are transformed into political activists to protect their homes, which are threatened by a series of environmental disasters. *All for the Good of the World and Nošovice* tells the dramatic behind-the-scenes story of the giant car company that tore the heart out of a bucolic tight-knit village in the Czech Republic. Finally, *Blue Meridian* meanders down the Mississippi, measuring myth against the reality of the communities that have thrived and foundered along America's fabled waterway.

The special panel discussion **How Do We Look** will focus on the history of documentary and its 40-year trajectory from the academic realm of visual anthropology to the living room as primetime entertainment. Technological changes continue to play a crucial role in the how documentaries are made, as increasingly portable and affordable tools influence form and multiple channels opening up the potential to reach wider audiences.

Live Performances

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Following the screening of *Skydancer* on Sunday, November 13, is a performance and discussion of traditional Mohawk songs by **Bear Fox** and **Katsitsionni Fox**, who appear in the documentary, and **Robby Baier**, who composed the film's score.

Past Mead Festivals and the Traveling Festival

Tackling diverse and challenging cultural and social issues, the Mead Festival has introduced New York audiences to such acclaimed films as the Oscar-winning documentary *The Blood of Yingzhou District* (2006), Oscar-winning animated short *The Moon and the Son: An Imagined Conversation* (2005), *The Future of Food* (2004), *Power Trip* (2003), and *Spellbound* (2002). The Mead Festival has a distinguished history of "firsts," including being the first venue to screen the now-classic documentary *Paris Is Burning* (1990) about the urban transgender community. It was also one of the first U.S. festivals to feature "indigenous media production." A touring version of the Mead Festival begins in January, with visits to universities and film centers around the country.

Festival Information and Tickets

All screenings take place at the American Museum of Natural History. Opening and closing night tickets are \$15. All other screenings are \$12. Members/students/senior citizens should call or check online for discounted rates. Shorter films may be grouped together in single programs. The Friend of the Festival Pass (opening night film and reception for two, plus six other programs) is \$99 (a \$150 value). Please note the Mead Festival has eliminated the ticket service charge. Attendees can now save money when ordering tickets in advance by phone or online. Tickets can be purchased by phone at 212-769-5200, online at amnh.org/mead, or at any of the Museum's admission desks. For more information, the public should call 212-769-5305 or visit amnh.org/mead.

Support

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

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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.

The 2011 Festival is proudly sponsored by Documentary Channel, Movado, Czech Center, Finland Fits You, the Goethe Institut, and the Consulate General of Switzerland.

Beyond Planet Earth: The Future of Space Exploration is organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York, (www.amnh.org) in collaboration with the Israel National Museum of Science, Haifa.

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[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 45 permanent exhibition halls and galleries for temporary exhibitions, the Rose Center for Earth and Space with the Hayden Planetarium, state-of-the-art research laboratories and five active research divisions that support more than 200 scientists in addition to one of the largest natural history libraries in the Western Hemisphere and a permanent collection of more than 32 million specimens and cultural artifacts. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, it is the first American museum to grant the Ph.D. degree. In 2012, the Museum will begin 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 growing collection of apps for mobile devices extend its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more beyond its walls. Visit amnh.org for upcoming exhibitions.

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