American Museum of Natural History

MARGARET MEAD

WE ARE THE STORY

May 2-4, 2025

amnh.org/mead







Stories have a way of calling us in.

They make us pay attention, challenge us to care, and remind us that even in our differences, we are deeply connected. At the Margaret Mead Film Festival, our goal is simple yet profound: to present powerful works of art that make you feel. In a moment when so much attention is paid to what divides us, we hope these stories spark curiosity—and that curiosity leads to understanding, empathy, and action.

This year, the Mead takes us to more than a dozen countries, immersing us in stories of resistance, performance, and our ever-evolving relationship with nature. We witness communities preserving culture through art, protagonists standing in their collective power, and the courage it takes to fight for justice. These films take us from the highest highs to the lowest ocean depths, revealing the stakes of protecting the world we share and the choices we make for its future.

Since 1976, the Mead has amplified voices that challenge, inspire, and connect us. While the full Museum comes together to make this festival shine, please know that it is shaped and sustained by all of us-including you. Our hope is that you leave not just moved but empowered, carrying these narratives forward in your own way. Mead is an invitation—to listen, to engage, and to see yourself in the stories on screen. To me, this festival is a reminder that we are all part of something bigger.

We are the story.

See you in the theater,

Jacqueline 'Jackie' Handy

Director, Margaret Mead Film Festival American Museum of Natural History





7 PM | LEFRAK THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Seeds

Georgia farmers Willie Head Jr. and Carlie Williams, stewards of some of America's oldest Black-run farms, fight for their land's future in a shifting agricultural landscape. In 2024, the U.S. Department of Agriculture pledged \$2 billion to 40,000 Black farmers, but funding delays persist. *Seeds*, shot in striking black and white, follows Head and Williams as they confront bureaucracy in Washington, blending the farmers' resilience and expertise into a contemplative portrait of Black agricultural heritage and the struggle for restorative justice.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2025 | 125 min | USA

DIRECTOR Brittany Shyne

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

OUR FRIENDS. THE ANIMALS

10 AM-5:30 PM | MAY 3-4 | MILSTEIN HALL OF OCEAN LIFE

This collection of five imaginative short films explores the deep and often mysterious connections between humans and animals. These stories—told through myth, magic, and quiet moments of discovery—remind us how animals reflect our fears, guide our journeys, and illuminate our place in the natural world.

Spirit of the Forest

A little girl stumbles into a sacred grove near her village in south India. She disturbs the spirit of the forest, which takes her on a journey to reveal the origins of the ancient swampland and to learn of the respect that nature deserves.

2022 | 7 min India **DIRECTORS**

Nandini Rao, Nirupa Rao, Kalp Sanghvi



The Turnip

Based on the Slavic folktale of "The Enormous Turnip", which is about the struggles of a farmer trying to harvest a turnip that remains stubbornly stuck in the ground, this film flips the tale's traditional point of view to tell the story of the underground critters that live alongside the turnip in the depths of the soil.

2022 | 7 min Estonia DIRECTORS

Piret Sigus, Silja Saarepuu



La Légende du colibri

A fire breaks out in the Amazon rainforest, and all the frightened animals leave their habitat to take refuge on the other side of a river. Only one little hummingbird decides to stay, facing the fire to save a sloth and its young trapped in the flames.

2025 | 10 min France DIRECTOR

nce Morgan Devos



Μû

An essential divine water spring has dried up. In this magical realist story about nature, a young child and an otter-like animal set out together on a quest to find a solution to the life-threatening water shortage.

2023 | 6 min DIRECTOR
Germany Malin Neumann



Dragfox

A young boy named Sam is searching for his identity when a mysterious neighborhood fox interrupts him. Together, they venture to the attic on a magical journey to uncover their similarities and their differences, and the value in both.

2023 | 8 min England **DIRECTOR** Lisa Ott







NOON | KAUFMANN THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Favoriten

At a crowded primary school in Favoriten, a working-class Vienna neighborhood, teachers struggle with growing class sizes. Director Ruth Beckermann quietly observes as students—many of them recent immigrants from Syria—grapple with religion and identity in a new country. Using iPhones, they interview each other, posing questions about culture in an unfamiliar context. Despite living through constant upheaval, they learn, adapt, and form identities, while Beckermann captures their journey of resilience and belonging in Austria.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2024 | 118 min | Austria

DIRECTORRuth Beckermann

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

NOON | LINDER THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

The Return of the Projectionist

It's been 20 years since Samid last screened a film for his village. A TV repairman, Samid longs to bring the magic of cinema back to his bucolic town, taking pains to repair a Soviet-era projector. He trawls snowy mountains in search of an internet signal to order a light bulb, humorously demonstrating his tenacity. As he collaborates with 16-year-old cinephile Ayaz, Samid's journey becomes a personal odyssey of healing for the elderly projectionist.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2024 | 87 min | Azerbaijan

DIRECTOR Orkhan Agazade

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE



1 PM | LEFRAK THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Remaining Native

"This land I was raised on...it feels heavy." Nevadan track star Kutoven Stevens runs with the weight of his ancestors on his shoulders. His great-grandfather Franklin ran away from the Stewart Indian School three times, escaping an abusive boarding school that sought to erase Indigenous culture through re-education. As Ku trains for scholarships and accolades, he wrestles with the legacy of colonialism, searching for a response to his family's enduring pain.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2025 | 87 min | USA

DIRECTORPaige Bethmann

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

PROTAGONIST IN ATTENDANCE





2:30 PM | LINDER THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Night of the Coyotes

The rural Mexican town of El Alberto has several tourist attractions—a waterpark, zip-lines, and pristine swimming pools. Foremost among its offerings is the Caminata, a simulated walkthrough of a border crossing. Complete with gang members, border police, and night patrols, many of the actors in the Caminata have firsthand experience with immigration. Through reenactment, the townspeople of El Alberto gain insights into why people leave and the journey that comes after the crossing.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2024 | 79 min | Mexico

DIRECTORClara Trischler

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

3 PM | KAUFMANN THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Mira Nair presents *Our Land, Our Freedom*

The struggle against British imperialism in Kenya came to a head in 1952, when the Land and Freedom Army, known as the Mau Mau, staged an uprising against British settlers. Decades later, the children and family of Mau Mau leader Dedan Kinathi rely on their community to help search for his remains. In commemorating his legacy, Kinathi's family challenges Kenya's unequal land redistribution, connecting with other Freedom Fighter descendants to confront the lasting effects of colonialism.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2023 | 100 min | Kenya

DIRECTORS

Meena Nanji Zippy Kimundu

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

PROTAGONIST IN ATTENDANCE



4 PM | LEFRAK THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

The Shepherd and the Bear

When night descends on the misty French Pyrenees, an age-old beast emerges, and an elderly shepherd must defend his flock. In 1996, the French government began reintroducing near-extinct brown bears into the woodsy region. Now, the uptick in bears is imperiling local livestock. Presented as a uniquely modern conundrum for French farmers amid a shrinking agricultural industry, *The Shepherd and the Bear* examines the ancient relationship between humans and nature.

Co-presented with The Climate Museum.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2024 | 100 min | France, Spain

DIRECTOR Max Keegan

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE





5 PM | LINDER THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Brink of Dreams

The Panorama theatre troupe is looking for a new rehearsal space. As an all-female, mostly teenage company, it's not just a stage that Panorama seeks out—the streets of their remote town provide their most important platform. The girls must also prepare themselves for backlash from their friends and family. Fearlessly tackling taboo subjects like arranged marriages, the Panorama troupe evolves over time, honing their acting and singing skills to challenge gender norms within their community.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2024 | 101 min | Egypt

DIRECTORS Nada Riyadh Ayman El Amir

6 PM | KAUFMANN THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Land with No Rider

Once one of the ranching and mining heartlands of the United States, New Mexico no longer has the workforce nor environmental conditions to support its dwindling number of cattle ranchers. Those who remain recognize ranching's importance, seeking to continue tending the land in the face of encroaching subdevelopment. *Land With No Rider* captures the transcendent New Mexican skies, illustrating with pastoral breadth why these ranchers remain.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2025 | 80 MIN | USA

DIRECTOR
Tamar Lando

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

PLAYS BEFORE LAND WITH NO RIDER

Beneath Which Rivers Flow

In southern Iraq's marshlands, Ibrahim finds solace with his buffalo companion when feeling alienated, but an impending ecological disaster jeopardizes their way of life.

US PREMIERE 2025 | 18 min | Iraq

DIRECTOR Ali Yahya



EMERGING VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGIST SHOWCASE

11 AM | LINDER THEATER

In this special showcase, the Mead Film Festival presents exciting new ethnographic documentaries from emerging visual anthropologists. This screening is co-hosted by Faye Ginsburg, director of the Center for Media, Culture and History and Kriser Professor of Anthropology at New York University, and Pegi Vail, anthropologist, filmmaker, and adjunct professor for the NYU Center for Media, Culture and History.

Breathe What I Hear

Sounds in a city are like an invisible landscape. In this experimental documentary, filmmaker Boyi Xu constructs a sensory journey of the intense soundscape of New York City, visiting various places and spaces to draw a sound sketch of everyday urban lives.

2024 | 15 min | USA

DIRECTOR Boyi Xu

Anfitriões Há Meio Século -Hosts for Half a Century

The film presents the perspective of our Mỹky people on 50 years of contact with the non-Indigenous population. We portray our movements in the territory, and young Typju Mỹky guide us along with the elders, who reflect on the changes experienced by our people in the last half century after we first became "hosts." The stories about the past and archival images help us understand life before the arrival of the Kewa, the non-Indigenous people, and the profound transformations they brought with them. Finally, the time has come to tell our own version of history.

2024 | 40 min | Brazil

DIRECTORS

André Tupxi Lopes Typju Mŷky Community



EMERGING VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGIST SHOWCASE

One More Cup of Coffee for Ambe'

Torajan People of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, are deeply rooted in a culture where death is not seen as an end but as extension of life. This ethnographic film explores the unique approach to death among adherents of Aluk to the Dolo belief system, who have recently converted to Christianity, by contrasting the funerary practices of two families—one middle-class and one upper-class—who are both deeply devoted to honoring their deceased fathers.

2024 | 25 min | Indonesia

DIRECTOR Shinta Retnani

Eating Spring

Zoe Yang started foraging for edible herbs as a way to connect with her Chinese heritage in New York, where her family planted roots. Filmmaker Yuanya Feng accompanies Zoe as she trespasses and forages, tasting what she picks along the way. This observational documentary offers an intimate portrait of Zoe's foraging practice.

2024 | 24 min | USA

DIRECTOR Yuanya Feng





1 PM | KAUFMANN THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Bright Future

In July 1989, the 13th World Festival of Students and Youth commenced with unprecedented fanfare. In a display of anti-imperialist unity, 22,000 people from 177 countries arrived in Pyongyang for the event. That summer, which followed the Tiananmen Square protests and preceded the Romanian Revolution, the world order was on the brink of seismic change. *Bright Future* captures a pivotal moment in the youth struggle for democracy.

US PREMIERE

2024 | 89 min | North Korea

DIRECTOR

Andra MacMasters

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

2 PM PM | LINDER THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Make It Look Real

At Watan Digital Color Photography, subjects enter the photo studio as everyday people and emerge as royalty. Sakhi, the shop's namesake photographer, uses his camera and extensive photo editing tools to transform customers into celebrities and heroes. Here, singletons and soldiers alike bear assault rifles crowned with roses. Despite its artifice, this portraiture style is widely coveted. Director Danial Shah dissects Sakhi's interventions through interviews probing his uncanny techniques and examining its popularity.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2024 | 67 min | Pakistan

DIRECTOR

Danial Shah

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

PLAYS BEFORE MAKE IT LOOK REAL

Tessitura

Three trans opera singers refine their unique vocal talents and contemporize the history of gender-fluid performances in the art form.

2025 | 16 min | USA

DIRECTORS

Brit Freyer Lydia Cornett



2 PM | LEFRAK THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

How Deep is Your Love

The ocean depths are more alien to us than Mars. Teeming with iridescent life and studded with precious minerals, the ocean floor attracts biologists and mining companies alike. As 50 scientists descend 2.9 miles (4,700 m) to study this fragile underworld, they uncover Earth's most primordial forms—and issue a call to defend our planet's most remote corners from exploitation.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2025 | 101 min United Kingdom

DIRECTOR Eleanor Mortimer

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE





3:30 PM | KAUFMANN THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

River of Grass

There is no place in the world quite like the Everglades, which serves a fundamental role in the Florida ecosystem. Betty Osceola, a member of the Miccosukee tribe, has defended the Floridian swamplands for decades against fracking, agribusiness, and water pollution, protesting swamp drainage with multi-day prayer walks along major highways. The film's title evokes a Miccosukee phrase describing the Everglades, emphasizing the region's natural resilience in the face of climate devastation.

Co-presented with the International Center of Photography.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2025 | 83 MIN | USA

DIRECTOR Sasha Wortzel

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

4:30 PM | LINDER THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Partition

Consisting of documentary footage captured during the British occupation of Palestine (1917-1948), *Partition* is a subversive approach to the colonial archive. Director Diana Allan overlays the film with audio from Palestinians, whose stories challenge colonial narratives embedded in the archival imagery.

Diana Ana

DIRECTOR Diana Allan

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2024 | 61 min | Pakistan

PLAYS BEFORE PARTITION

Sunflower Siege Engine

Moments of resistance are collapsed together, from the Indigenous-led occupation of Alcatraz to the reclamation of Cahokia and repatriation of ancestors to one's reflections on their body in the world today. These become meditations on the carceral inception and nature of the reservation system, and where sovereignty and belligerence intersect and diverge.

2022 | 13 min | USA

DIRECTOR Sky Hopinka



4:30 PM | LEFRAK THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Darren Aronofsky presents Viktor

Kharkiv, Ukraine, lies 40 miles south of the Russian border. Since 2022, the city has been under siege by their neighbors, enduring warfare for three years. Local photographer Viktor's love for samurais and reverence for his late father, a veteran, spurs him to join the Ukrainian forces—but his hearing impairment prevents enlistment. As he captures Kharkiv through phases of the invasion, viewers experience the visceral tragedy of war through Viktor's tenacious lens.

Viktor will be screening with open captions, and ASL interpretation will be provided for the post-screening conversation.

NEW YORK PREMIERE 2024 | 91 min | Ukraine

DIRECTOR Olivier Sarbil

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

PROTAGONIST IN ATTENDANCE



SPECIAL EVENT

6 PM | KAUFMANN THEATER

Humans and Nature in the Arctic: Indigenous Perspectives

Join Vera Solovyeva and Maidi Eira Andersson as they share Indigenous perspectives on kinship with nature, rooted in the traditions of the Arctic. The talk will be followed by a screening of *Folktales*.

This event is a collaboration between the Museum Public Programs and the Center for Biodiversity and Conservation's Mack Lipkin Man and Nature Series.

The Mack Lipkin Man and Nature Series was established in honor of Dr. Mack Lipkin, Sr., by his many friends and admirers. Dr. Lipkin was a physician who was a gentle and powerful force in advancing the most humane and caring practices of medicine.

7 PM | LEFRAK THEATER

MEAD FILMMAKER AWARD CONTENDER

Folktales

Each year, teenagers from around the world gather at Pasvik Folk High School to experience Norway in its most raw and natural state. A Nordic tradition, folk schools have offered education to rural Scandinavians since the 19th century. Pasvik now attracts students internationally, offering the opportunity to sharpen wilderness survival skills. Through dog sledding races and icy expeditions, students at Pasvik forge a community through nature, learning to embrace life's great unknowns.

NEW YORK PREMIERE

2025 | 106 min | Norway

DIRECTORS

Heidi Ewing Rachel Grady

DIRECTORS IN ATTENDANCE



The Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award

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 selected by the jury and given to a filmmaker whose feature-length documentary displays artistic excellence and originality in storytelling technique while offering a new perspective on cultures and communities. Filmmakers with works making their New York premieres at the festival are eligible.

Audience Award

The Audience Award, voted on by Margaret Mead Film Festival attendees, celebrates the power of community engagement and the diverse perspectives that enrich the cinematic experience, fostering a vibrant dialogue between filmmakers and their audience. Films making their New York premiere at the festival are eligible.

Awards Contenders

Bright Future

Directed by Andra MacMasters

Brink of Dreams

Directed by Nada Riyadh and Ayman El Amir

Favoriten

Directed by Ruth Beckermann

Directed by Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady

How Deep is Your Love

Directed by Eleanor Mortimer

Land with No Rider

Directed by Tamar Lando

Make it Look Real

Directed by Danial Shah

Night of the Coyotes Directed by Clara Trischler

Our Land, Our Freedom

Directed by Meena Nanji and Zippy Kimundu

Directed by Diana Allan

Remaining Native

Directed by Paige Bethmann

The Return of the Projectionist Directed by Orkhan Agazade

River of Grass

Directed by Sasha Wortzel

Seeds

Directed by Brittany Shyne

The Shepherd and the Bear

Directed by Max Keegan

Directed by Olivier Sarbil



Julian Brave NoiseCat

Julian Brave NoiseCat is a writer, Oscar-nominated filmmaker, and student of Salish art and history. His first documentary, Sugarcane, directed alongside Emily Kassie, follows an investigation into abuse and missing children at the Indian residential school where NoiseCat's family was sent near Williams Lake, British Columbia. Sugarcane premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, where NoiseCat and Kassie won the Directing Award in the U.S. Documentary Competition. The film was recognized with dozens of awards, including Best Documentary from the National Board of Review and the Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award, and was nominated for a 2025 Academy Award. A proud member of the Canim Lake Band Tsg'escen and descendant of the Lil'Wat Nation of Mount Currie, NoiseCat is author of We Survived the Night, which will be published by Alfred A. Knopf on October 21, 2025.

Ryan Krivoshey

Ryan Krivoshey is a veteran of the independent film scene and the founder of Grasshopper Film, a leading distribution company established in 2015. Grasshopper's acclaimed releases include Last Men in Aleppo, Pacifiction, Vitalina Varela, Leviathan, and Days. With a library of more than 500 films, the company champions both emerging and established filmmakers. Previously, Krivoshey served as director of distribution at Cinema Guild, expanding its theatrical slate and presence. He has also worked at Icarus Films and Film Forum, building a career dedicated to supporting independent cinema.

Irene Sosa

Irene Sosa is a Venezuelan-born documentarian and professor in the Department of Television Radio and Emerging Media and the Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies at CUNY Brooklyn College. Sosa has dedicated her career to exploring the intersection of media, culture, and social justice. Her films, including Sexual Exiles, Vertical Slum and Shopping to Belong, explore the culture of marginalization and the evolving dynamics of identity and space. In 2004, she was commissioned by the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea to show her documentaries about the feminist artist Nancy Spero, which have since been featured in the MoMA PS1 and the Rufino Tamayo Museum. As a Fulbright Scholar and artist, she continues to challenge conventional narratives, using her craft to amplify voices often overlooked in mainstream media.



Generous support for the Margaret Mead Film Festival has been provided by The Mead Trust.

A portion of the Margaret Mead Film Festival is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



Indigo Sparks

DESIGNER

WRITER
Joel Danilewitz

Maya Rodgers

The Margaret Mead Film Festival is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

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John A. Bunce	Cat Flores	Shivkumar Desai
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THE OFFICE performing arts + film:	Preeshita Shah	Dushan Tripp
Noah Bashevkin	Jacqueline Wagner	Kristin Wahlberg
Rachel Chanoff	Liz Weber	Amanda Witsaman
Ana Maroto	SPECIAL THANKS	Museum Education Experience Program
	Louiso Adlor	(MEED) D. Material

Louise Adler

Aaron Anleu

Kate Cole

Joan Kelly Bernard

Catherine Brouillette

(MEEP) Participants

2025 Mead Volunteers

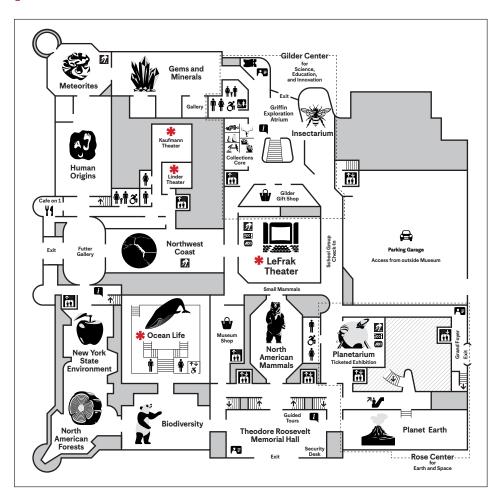
Visual Team

American Museum of Natural History Audio/

American Museum of Natural History Movers

FESTIVALINFORMATION

* Film & Event Locations





ENTRANCE

Entrance for all Margaret Mead Film Festival programs is on 77th Street between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue. Refer to your ticket, confirmation email, or amnh.org/mead for entrance information.

ACCESSIBILITY

Mobility Access: The 77th Street entrance to the Museum is step free. All screenings take place in wheelchair-accessible theaters with nearby accessible restrooms.

Hearing Access: All theaters are equipped with hearing loop systems, and Assistive Listening Devices are available. Please contact us at meadfest@amnh.org or 212-769-5305 to request one in advance.

Viktor will be screened with open captions, and ASL interpretation will be provided for the post-screening conversation. If you would like to request ASL interpretation for another screening, please contact us at meadfest@amnh.org or 212-769-5305.

Sensory Access: Sensory Bags containing noisecancelling headphones, sunglasses, and fidget tools are available to borrow for screenings in the LeFrak Theater. For screenings in the Kaufmann and Linder Theaters, please request a Sensory Bag in advance of your visit.

If you have additional questions about accessibility at the Mead or would like to request an accommodation not listed here, please contact us at meadfest@amnh.org or 212-769-5305.

TICKETING

Opening night film and reception tickets are \$20 (\$15 for Members and students).

All other screenings and programs are \$12 (\$10 for Members and students).

Weekend passes are available for \$75 (\$50 for Members) and include the welcome performance, and all other screenings.

FOOD AND DRINK

Museum cafes are open throughout the festival during regular hours. Cafe on One, located near the Futter Gallery, will be open for extended hours. No food is allowed in the theaters, but drinks in cups with lids are permitted. Theater-compliant reusable Mead cups are available for sale in the Futter Gallery. No outside food or beverages will be allowed in the theaters.

LOOKING FOR MORE?

A space in the Kenneth Griffin Exploration Atrium, opposite the Museum shop on the first floor of the Richard Gilder Center for Education, Science and Innovation, will serve as a dynamic gathering space where festival attendees can extend their film discussions beyond the theater, fostering deeper dialogue and connections. Designed as an informal forum, this gathering space invites guests to exchange insights, reflect on themes, and engage in spontaneous conversations inspired by the festival's screenings.

