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CINEFESTIVAL ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF THE LATINO SCREENWRITERS PROJECT

What: The 2013 Latino Screenwriting Project is a new program sponsored by the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio, Texas with consulting support from the Sundance Institute.

When: The inaugural workshop will take place from February 27th through March 2nd, 2013, during the 35th Annual CineFestival.

Where: The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio, TX

Why: For 35 years CineFestival has been committed to showcasing Latino films and nurturing Latino filmmaking. The 2013 festival will include a screenwriting conference that aims to elevate the representation and quality of stories narrating the U.S. Latino experience.

(San Antonio, Texas) The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center created The Latino Screenwriters Project from collaborative conversations between CineFestival curator Jim Mendiola and filmmaker Cruz Angeles. “Latinos are yearning for more access and representation in American cinema,” Cruz says. “We wanted American-based Latino screenplays to be more competitive in the industry.”

Because Mendiola and Angeles attended the Sundance Screenwriters and Directors Lab, they experienced the importance of nurturing and mentorship in their own careers. “Cruz and I recognized the benefit of the Sundance Labs in terms of a career and in improving one’s craft,” Mendiola says, “we wanted to champion Latino stories, bringing a learning experience like the labs to CineFestival seemed like the perfect fit.”

Mendiola and Angeles then turned to the Sundance Institute for support. Ilyse McKimmie, Labs Director of the Sundance Institute’s Feature Film Program states, “It has always been a core component of Sundance Institute’s mission to discover and foster bold, independent new voices in film. We’re thrilled to be providing consulting support to CineFestival’s Latino Screenwriters Project, the goals of which so closely align with our own,” said “It’s part of our ongoing commitment to encourage and celebrate a diverse group of storytellers and helping them bring their visions to the screen.”

After a national search and review, four fellows were chosen for the 2013 workshop: Zoe Salicrup Junco (New York, NY), Miguel Alvarez (Austin, TX), Mauro Flores Jr. (Los Angeles, CA) and Jose R. Casado (New York, NY). During the 3-day workshop, fellows will be given a support in a hands-on environment where they can receive quality feedback, mentoring and inspiration to hone their craft, polish their screenplays and take their stories to the next level.

The Latino Screenwriters Project will bring award-winning, professional screenwriters to San Antonio to serve as advisors. Mendiola says, “These are some of the most talented working pros in the country. We couldn’t have gotten them without the help of Sundance.” **Advisors this year include filmmaker producer/director Nancy Savoca, screenwriter Mauricio Zacharias, writer/director David Riker, and producer/director Hannah Weyer.**

“Over our long history,” McKimmie says, “personal mentorship has been a hallmark of the work we do at Sundance, and we’ve seen the incredible impact it can have. We’re excited that the culture of generosity, exemplified by experienced artists giving back to emerging ones, will be replicated in this new program.”

The high number of quality scripts submitted to this first workshop, and the difficulty in choosing only four, suggests a wealth of talent out in the field. “The screenplays that were submitted this year were an impressive batch. The competition was fierce and the selection process was rigorous. Ultimately, we are pleased to have four promising screenplays from up-and-coming talents that all bring a unique point-of-view, tone and originality,” Angeles says.

As for the future, Cruz continues, “we look forward to making the Latino Screenwriters Project a yearly tradition at CineFestival, and are excited to someday see these stories in theaters.”

The 2013 Projects

The scripts chosen to participate in the 2013 workshop represent the wide-diversity of Latino talent and stories in terms of regional representation, genre, and experience.

- *Gabi* by Zoe Salicrup Junco

After the unexpected death of her mother, a modern, emancipated Puerto Rican woman in her late 30s forces herself to explore the possibilities of becoming a mother for the first time.

- *La Perdida* by Miguel Alvarez

In the mid-21st century, a memory-wiped psychiatric patient illegally travels back in time to stop a tragedy she can’t remember from happening all over again. But along the way, she can’t help but get swallowed up in a Moebius strip of time, memory, and loss.

- *Rachel's Quinceanera* by Mauro Flores Jr. (Los Angeles, CA)

A coming-of-age story set in South Texas. A shy nerd has a crush on the head cheerleader, but due to his social status Rachel doesn't know he exists. But a family obligation forces Rachel to include the nerd in the Court of Honor for her upcoming Quinceañera.

- *The Andes Project* by Jose R. Casado (New York, NY)

When Sofia, an opportunistic American Latina journalist, attempts to revive her career by investigating mysterious disappearances in Paraguay, she teams up with an idealistic young local reporter doing the same and together they uncover a complex water conspiracy instead.

ABOUT CINEFESTIVAL: Now in its 35th year, CineFestival is the nation's original and longest-running film festival dedicated to the showcase of Latino films and video. This year's festival runs February 23-March 2 and will include World and Regional premiers as well as panels and community screenings. The list of films and filmmakers who have attended the festival in its three decade history include a Who's Who of Latino cinema. Just some of the participants over the years are Luis Valdez, Lourdes Portillo, Miguel Arteta, Greg Nava, Guillermo de Toro, Patricia Cardoso, and many others. CineFestival is hosted by the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, an internationally renowned multi-disciplinary arts organization in the heart of San Antonio's Mexican-American West Side.

ABOUT SUNDANCE INSTITUTE: Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a global, nonprofit cultural organization dedicated to nurturing artistic expression in film and theater, and to supporting intercultural dialogue between artists and audiences. The Institute promotes independent storytelling to unite, inform and inspire, regardless of geo-political, social, religious or cultural differences. Internationally recognized for its annual Sundance Film Festival and its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as *Born into Brothels*, *Trouble the Water*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Amreeka*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Spring Awakening*, *Light in the Piazza* and *Angels in America*.

ABOUT THE GUADALUPE: The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center is a 501c(3) non-profit organization founded in 1980 to preserve, promote and develop the arts and culture of the Chicano/Latino Native American peoples for all ages and backgrounds through public and educational programming in six disciplines: dance, literature, media arts, theater arts, visual arts and music.

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