“Documania” — that’s how the New York Times recently referred to the stunning proliferation of documentary film made possible by the signature technologies of our time. In short, it has never been easier to make a documentary. But producing a film that stands out is another story, another challenge altogether. In our first years as an MFA program at the School of Visual Arts, the faculty and staff of the Social Documentary Film Department have been proud to support our students as they attempt to do what can sometimes seem impossible: create films that engage, illuminate and inspire.

No matter the subject matter or style—be it personal, political, comic, revolutionary—these films aim to increase our awareness of ourselves and the world we inhabit. These films bring us from the Amazon jungle, the streets of Karachi, Pakistan and Abuja, Nigeria, to Kazakhstan’s receding Aral Sea shore; they show us what it is like to campaign for the office of mayor of Savannah, Georgia and to compete for the championship of the Chicago’s Windy City Rollers. They shift our consciousness and change the way we see our world. By taking us places we’ve never been, they open windows into who we are.

For such a young program, it’s hard to believe the reception these films and filmmakers have had already. From the Princess Grace Award, to the SVA Alumni Scholarships, to consideration for the Student Academy Awards, our students and their films have been recognized throughout the student filmmaking community. What’s more, these young filmmakers have also found interest and financial backing in the larger documentary world. Their short films have screened in festivals internationally, they have raised over $200,000 in private funds via Kickstarter and other platforms, and some have received grants and support from organizations like the Sundance Institute, the Jerome Foundation, and the IFP Spotlight on Documentaries to expand their thesis films into features.

None of this could have been possible without the generosity and genius of all of our faculty, the unfappiness of our staff, and the institutional support and guidance from the SVA community, especially David Rhodes, Anthony Rhodes and Steven Heller.

—Marto Chermayeff, Department Chair and Founder
| **ANAM KHAN**  
Fulbright Scholar  
2012 Alumni Scholarship Award  
Roadside Darlings  
(30 min) 6:30pm–7:00pm  
Down a grimy alleyway in Karachi, a striking figure tweaks her makeup and squirts a dash of perfume under her arms. She is Saima. All day long in scorching heat she begs at traffic signals. Roadside Darlings is a thought-provoking tale of transgender minority in Karachi, Pakistan. This film is an insight into the life of “two Chellas and a Guru” and their recounting tales of poverty, extortion, sexual violence and predatory police harassments. | **CATHERINE MARK**  
Sundance London and Worldview Award  
Street Girls (preview screening)  
(30 min) 7:30pm–8:00pm  
Street Girls is a film about prostitutes given a chance to turn their lives around. The film follows three girls picked up from the crime-ridden streets of Abuja and taken to Nigeria’s first center to rehabilitate prostitutes. The girls embark on a course which they must complete or face jail. **Q&A and BREAK  1:30pm–1:45pm** | **SAMUEL CARROLL**  
Darla Wynne  
(80 min) 7:45pm–9:05pm  
When Darla Wynne, a Wiccan prison minister, joined forces with the ACLU and won a landmark Supreme Court case against the town of Great Falls, SC for religious discrimination, she immediately became a victim of the town’s wrath. When she came home to find her beloved African Grey parrot beheaded and a note saying “You’re next,” her spirit was broken. She severed all ties to the outside world and began work as a phone sex operator. Now Darla wants her life back. We watch her journey from shut-in to politician as she faces her tormentors and runs for a seat in the Great Falls Town Council. **Q&A** 10:30pm–10:45pm | **JUSTIN ERVIN**  
Elephant in the Room  
(70 min) 9:20pm–10:30pm  
Deonne Canady, former world champion boxer, opens up a youth boxing gym. She and her trainer, Tabbi Rosario encounter two girls —best friends— whom they attempt to mentor through boxing. One girl, Zaneta, seems to be taking a negative turn in her life and her best friend, Emily, isn’t giving the coaches any information as to why. The coaches try to teach the girls boxing and instill life skills as Zaneta tries to navigate her final year of high school. Through truancy and failing grades, Emily attempts to lend support to Zaneta as a secret looms large in the background. **Q&A** 9:55pm–10:10pm |
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22nd
FILM SCHEDULE

LUCAS GROTH
To Build a Family
(40 min) 12:00pm–12:40pm
This film follows the filmmaker as he looks to his family as well as to his closest friends to understand how, why and when we form and maintain relationships with our families. By examining his past and present, he strives to make a plan for his future while learning what makes a family.

ADAM BANICKI
Brooklyn Public
(35 min) 12:40pm–1:15pm
Brooklyn Public follows a group of kids in an underprivileged Brooklyn neighborhood high school as they look at their community and how it has affected their lives.
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

SCHEDULE

JENNIFER CRYSTAL CHIEN

Waiting for Bekir  (preview screening)
(50 min) 1:15pm–2:05pm

A documentary filmmaker follows the life of a Turkish immigrant, an information technology professional who dreams of making Hollywood action movies. The film reflects upon the nature of dreams, ambition and procrastination while blending the aesthetics of experimental art, amateur video and cinema verité.

Q&A and BREAK  2:05pm–2:20pm

SABRINA FRANZ

Camp Cranium  (preview screening)
(45 min) 2:20pm–3:05pm

For one week in June, Millville, Pennsylvania’s Camp Victory welcomes Camp Cranium—a camp for children and young adults with brain injuries. Camp Cranium is a non-profit, one-week event that is tailored to meet the large variety of needs (from medical to mobility) of brain-injured children. Here a wheelchair-bound child can experience the thrill of zip-lining, or the pride of reaching the top of a rock-climbing wall. Camp Cranium is the only site in the United States dedicated to children with brain injuries. The purpose and goal is to provide those that attend with a week of fun they would not normally be able to experience. Here, they commune with other individuals who have gone through the same trials and struggles where they can feel accepted.

MEGAN BLACKBURN

Savannah Rose  (preview screening)
(45 min) 3:05pm–3:50pm

Civil rights activist Edna Jackson campaigns to be the first African-American female mayor of the alluring southern city of Savannah, Georgia. This sassy, southern lady in fire-engine-red lipstick is not your average politician. More than an election story, the film is a manifesto on the power of positive thinking, consensus building and working as a collective to accomplish change.

Q&A and BREAK  3:50pm–4:05pm

LINDSAY LINDBERG

Scattered
(45 min) 4:05pm–4:50pm

Scattered unravels the mystery of the filmmaker’s late father, who abandoned her as a child and left behind pieces to the puzzle of his tortured soul. With over 100 hours of home movies and the words of family and friends, the filmmaker tries to put the scattered pieces of her father’s life in order, so as to come to a fuller understanding of the man he was.

Q&A and BREAK  4:50pm–5:00pm
BRANDON GREENBAUM

Invisible Walls (preview screening)  
(60 min) 5:00pm–6:00pm
After Brandon’s mother reveals the truth that led to his parent’s divorce, the filmmaker turns the camera on himself and his family. Blame becomes elusive as he delves into his family’s troubled past, uncovering a cycle of abuse where there is no absolute victim. Invisible Walls is an uneasy journey into the nature of family history and its discontents.

SARA KHAKI

Face the Mirror  
(40 min) 6:00pm–6:40pm
Dr. Kaveh Alizadeh, an Iranian born American plastic surgeon, has dedicated his life to offering hope and healing to those whose lives and bodies have been ravaged by war. Through the stories of a four-year-old boy and a middle-aged man, both disfigured in the recent war in Iraq, this film puts a human face on war’s collateral damage and presents a lyrical journey of a doctor whose “past” enables him to relate to the “present” of his patients.

Q&A and BREAK 6:40pm–6:55pm

RECEPTION 7:00PM–8:30PM

ADA EZE ELECHI

The Keepsake  
(40 min) 8:30pm–9:10pm
After living eight years with relatives in Lagos City, 14-year-old Amarachi returns to the village pregnant as a result of abuse. Forced to accept that justice will not be served in this life, Amarachi and her mother Ikechi begin to work through the trauma of the lost years by themselves. The Keepsake is a portrait of a mother and daughter on their journey to heal old and new wounds.

Q&A 10:22pm–10:35pm

KATYA USTINOVA

George 2012  
(72 min) 9:10pm–10:22pm
George 2012 is a globe-hopping existential tragicomedy about one man’s self-imposed quest to save humankind from an extinction event expected by the end of 2012. Behind the facade of a wise and ascetic spiritualist chosen to make the renewed world a better place, a disillusioned aging surfer burns bridges in pursuit of fulfilled life and proper love. The film follows the survivalist quest of the 54-year-old surfer George, who only gives his first name because of the secrecy around his preparations for the impending end of the world.

Q&A 10:22pm–10:35pm
The Bright Shadows
(30 min) 12:00pm–12:30pm
A documentary following four adorable third grade children as they try to make a new home for themselves in the international melting pot that is Brooklyn. All while their class, led by a charismatic teacher, rehearses and stages shadow puppet plays.
There is Salomshoh from Uzbekistan who doesn’t yet speak a word of English, happy but baffled by all that happens around him. There’s Wiktoria from Poland and Rabab from Yemen who form the most unlikely of friendships. And Max, from Michigan, who finds Brooklyn a strange and exotic place where it’s hard to fit in.

SOLO
(30 min) 12:30pm–1:00pm
Using an extraordinary talent for storytelling, acting coach Matt Hoverman helps his students turn their lives into art. SOLO follows actress Cindy Cheung as she develops an autobiographical solo show. Cheung struggles to reconcile the show she set out to create—about her experiences as an Asian American actress—and the story “that wanted to be told.” This is a film about the power of storytelling to heal the teller.
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

MATTHEW CRANE
Tour
(30 min) 1:00pm–1:30pm
A humbling portrait of life on the road for the relatively unknown rock band Estrogen Highs.

Q&A and BREAK 1:30pm–2:00pm

STEVEN LORING
The Age of Love
(84 min) 2:00pm–3:24pm
A cutting-edge Speed Dating event for 70- to 90-year-olds opens a window into the desires of the human heart at the farthest stage of life. We intimately follow thirty seniors—recently widowed, long-divorced, never-married—as they prepare for the big day, endure a rush of encounters, then emotionally learn their results. What has changed over decades of love and loss? What emotions still lurk behind wrinkled skin and thinning hair? Who will get a date, and how will they handle the bittersweet realities of age and love?

Q&A and BREAK 3:24pm–3:35pm

LUCAS P. SMITH
Ghosts of the Aral Sea
(37 min) 3:35pm–4:13pm
Two young brothers, Islambek and Nurbek, live and fish on the Aral Sea in Kazakhstan. Once the fourth-largest inland sea in the world, the Aral has all but disappeared in the last 40 years. Together, Islambek and Nurbek face everyday challenges beneath the specter of one of history’s greatest ecological nightmares.

LATOYA FLOWERS
Derby Girls
(30 min) 4:15pm–4:45pm
Roller derby is currently the number one growing female sport with amateur leagues forming across the country. The sport is made up of everyday women who have faced challenges in their lives head-on. Derby Girls is a portrait of Jailya Roberts, Janicide Joplin, and Sixteen Scandals who play roller derby for the Windy City Rollers. The film explores their passion for the sport; the challenges they face with strenuous practices, injuries and family approval; the camaraderie they have with their teammates; and how the sport helps them feel empowered.

Q&A and BREAK 4:45pm–5:05pm
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23rd

HEATHER FISCH

Little Sister
(45 min) 5:05pm–5:50pm

Haunted by the unexpected discovery 17 years earlier that she was not an “only child,” the filmmaker embarks on a quest to find her missing siblings and stitch the story of her fragmented family back together.

Q&A and BREAK 5:50pm–6:05pm

RAUL PAZ PASTRANA

Princess Grace Foundation Award
Hispanic Scholarship Fund Award
2011 MFA Social Documentary Award

OME
(70 min) 6:05pm–7:15pm

Filmed in the heart of the Amazon jungle, OME follows tribal warriors from one of Ecuador’s most isolated indigenous groups, the Huaorani, as they trade in their spears for modern tracking devices on a journey to patrol their ancestral homeland, preserve the past and ensure their future atop 800,000,000 barrels of crude. As the Huaorani travel from their home in the pristine Yasuni Rainforest Reserve to Via Texaco, a polluted oil excavation route along former Huaorani territory, OME paints a picture of what is truly at stake in the Huaorani’s effort to preserve their remaining territory from further oil exploitation and government interests.

Q&A and BREAK 7:15pm–7:30pm