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**For Immediate Release**

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**The Thomas Edison Media Arts Consortium – Black Maria Film Festival Announces New Partnership with the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University for the Festival’s 2019 Season**

***Festival premiere screening scheduled for February 9 at Princeton University***



Photo caption: A still from *The Elephant’s Song*, an animated short film by Lynn Tomlinson, winner of the Black Maria Film Festival’s Global Insights Stellar Award, and one of the films that will be screened at the Festival’s 2019 season premiere screening at Princeton University. The film tells the true and tragic tale of Old Bet, the first circus elephant in America, as recounted in song by her friend, an old farm dog. Their story is portrayed in colorful, handcrafted animation, created frame by frame with clay-on-glass animation, where oil-based modeling clay is spread thinly on a glass sheet and moved frame-by-frame like a moving finger painting.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the filmmaker.

(Princeton, N.J.) The Thomas Edison Media Arts Consortium has announced a new partnership with the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University for the Black Maria Film Festival’s 38th annual Festival tour in 2019. This new partnership will include the premiere screening at Princeton University, support for the tour of the festival, and multiple opportunities for students to engage with the festival and its filmmakers.

Black Maria Film Festival attracts and nationally showcases the work of independent film and video makers. The festival is a project of the Thomas Edison Media Arts Consortium, an independent non-profit organization. The festival was founded in 1981 as a tribute to Thomas Edison’s development of the motion picture at his laboratory, dubbed the “Black Maria” film studio, the first in the world, in West Orange, New Jersey.

Princeton’s Lewis Center for the Arts is the academic home of the University’s Programs in Creative Writing, Dance, Theater, Music Theater, Visual Arts and the Princeton Atelier. The Program in Visual Arts includes a track in film production and the study of film as an artform.

“Princeton’s support of the arts, engaged student body, and commitment to excellence and diversity makes it an ideal partner for the Black Maria Film Festival,” said Jane Steuerwald, Executive Director of the Thomas Edison Media Arts Consortium. “Princeton’s international reputation mirrors the Black Maria Film Festival’s international mission and draw for filmmakers and film lovers. Today, the works touring with Black Maria represent a mosaic of distinct forms including documentary, experimental/alternative, animation, fiction, dance, and hybrids. Black Maria films shine a light on the environment, human rights, LGBTQ issues, and themes of social justice.”

“I’m delighted that we have been able to arrange for this sponsorship and collaboration between the Lewis Center and the Black Maria Film Festival,” added Professor Su Friedrich, a member of the Lewis Center faculty and an award-winning filmmaker. “Many times in the past, we have invited the festival to screen a program at the James Stewart Film Theater so that our students could see some of the best new short films being made. It’s a festival dedicated to showcasing excellent work that represents a wide range of interests and aesthetics, and I’m happy that we will now be working more closely with them.”

The Black Maria Film Festival annually conducts an international juried competition. Following the extensive pre-screening and jurying process by experts in the field of film curation, media studies and production, the festival launches its year-long tour traveling to museums, colleges and universities, libraries, cinemas, and arts venues.

Black Maria received over 400 submissions for the 2019 festival tour from every continent around the globe, save Antarctica. The highly regarded festival jurors, Margaret Parsons, Head Curator of Film at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC and Henry Baker, Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and former director of Synapse Video Center, chose 55 films for the 2019 collection and awarded the top prizes.

The Lewis Center’s focus on student engagement is at the center of the partnership. The Consortium’s New Jersey Young Filmmakers’ Festival (NJYFF), one of the organization’s other major projects, was founded 44 years ago with the mission to provide young film and video makers who either reside in or attend school in New Jersey, the opportunity to exhibit their works and have them evaluated by prominent experts in the field of media arts, including film scholars, producers, directors, animators and screenwriters. Princeton students will have the opportunity to work directly with NJYFF to showcase their work and present screenings and special events on the Princeton campus.

The national tour of the 38th annual Black Maria Film Festival will premiere at Princeton’s James Stewart Film Theater on Saturday evening February 9, 2019. The Festival will subsequently travel to more than 50 museums, cultural centers, colleges, and universities throughout the United States and abroad. Venues interested in scheduling a screening should contact Festival Director Jane Steuerwald at [jane@blackmariafilmfestival.org](mailto:jane@blackmariafilmfestival.org). The Festival offers programming options ranging from a custom-curated program presented by the host site, to an in-person film presentation by the festival director, including a Q & A and dialog with the audience.

In addition to the support provided for the 2019 tour by the Lewis Center, the Black Maria Film Festival receives generous support from New Jersey State Council on the Arts; the Hudson County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs and Tourism; Warren County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs; The Edison Foundations; The Hoboken Historical Museum; WithumSmith+Brown; Lowenstein Sandler, LLP; Adobe Systems, Inc. and Microsoft through TechSoup.org.

To learn more about the Black Maria Film Festival and Thomas Edison Media Arts Consortium, visit [blackmariafilmfestival.org](https://blackmariafilmfestival.org/page.php?content=content-ourcollection). To learn more about the Lewis Center for the Arts and the more than 100 public performances, exhibitions, readings, screenings, concerts and lectures presented each year, most of them free, visit [arts.princeton.edu](about:blank).

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