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ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA

# Artistic Director's Statement

Welcome to The Other Film Festival 2020. We invite you to explore and reflect upon all we have achieved this year – and, importantly, to celebrate!



Living through a pandemic has been incredibly challenging. For those of us in Melbourne, we have endured a long lockdown period; at the start of the pandemic, we could only imagine what life might be like in the coming months. For The Other Film Festival (TOFF), we knew we wanted to develop and deliver a disability-led digital engagement program – to digitally showcase a curated series of interlinking partner events, activations, commissions and access supports for Deaf and Disabled artists and audiences.

Throughout 2020, TOFF offered a 'live' digital program in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, providing valuable and direct community-building opportunities for Deaf and Disabled people.

We deeply value our partnerships with the Emerging Writers' Festival, the Melbourne International Film Festival and The Wheeler Centre, which have allowed us to produce a high-quality series of disability-led, accessible online events.

It has been an honour to work with Adolfo Aranjuez in the newly created role of Specialist Projects Producer, particularly on Two Degrees – a multi-artform series tackling climate change through the work of Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent artists and collectives.

Image: Fiona Tuomy  
Photography: Dan Mahon

A major aim of TOFF is to directly address digital-divide access barriers and to help ensure Deaf and Disabled people can fully participate in digital society. Our Choose Film project – led by disability access consultant Gaelle Mellis alongside Janice Florence, Arts Access Victoria (AAV) Access Development Officer, and Fury, Project Coordinator – has continued to place best-practice access at the centre of our artistic program.

We genuinely thank all of our partners, supporters and the wider AAV team. We are particularly grateful to Caroline Bowditch, AAV's CEO, who creates a boldly passionate, disability-led work environment, and to Nikki Zerella, AAV's Director, Arts Services, who offers enduring guidance and support to all of us at TOFF. We also would like to give a special mention to Hiroki Kobayashi, Special Projects Coordinator at The Wheeler Centre; over the last two years, we have had the great privilege to work with Hiroki to create a unique and impactful series of events.

We look forward to the future, and to TOFF playing a strong, disability-led role in the rebound and recovery-building of a fully accessible post-pandemic world.

**Fiona Tuomy**

Artistic Director, TOFF

# The Other Film Festival

The Other Film Festival (TOFF) is a groundbreaking disability-led program that has positioned Deaf and Disabled people at the centre of the storytelling – not marginalised, imitated or spoken about.

Founded in 2004, TOFF is Australia's first international disability film festival and has advocated against the erasure, misrepresentation and under-employment of Deaf and Disabled people within the mainstream. The festival has encouraged the screen sector to embrace inclusive production structures and processes, including paid employment opportunities and career pathways for Deaf and Disabled screen practitioners and performers.

It is a major artistic project of Arts Access Victoria.



Image: 'Short-sighted' by Abbie Madden, 2020

# Arts Access Victoria

Established in 1974, Arts Access Victoria (AAV) has since become the state's leading arts and disability organisation.

AAV is dedicated to an ambitious agenda of social and artistic transformation for Deaf and Disabled people, the communities in which they live and the arts sector in which they aspire to participate without barriers. It achieves this through:

- Disability-led advocacy
- The delivery of outstanding community arts and cultural development programs for more than 1300 Deaf and Disabled people
- Professional development programs for Deaf and Disabled artists aimed at securing creative and employment outcomes
- Best-practice industry development initiatives that drive the engagement of organisations across the arts, disability and community sectors

Over the past four decades, AAV has established itself as the driving force behind an inclusive and accessible arts and cultural sector in Victoria.

AAV shares unique and untold stories through art-making that interrogates important issues that frame the lives of Deaf and Disabled people. It challenges the placement of Deaf and Disabled artists at the margins, recognising them instead as significant and invaluable contributors to the Australian cultural landscape.



Image: 'WOWalk', 2019. Photography: Raphael Recht

TOFF × EWF

## In the Writers' Room: Writing for Screen

In this event, which kicked off a special collaboration between the Emerging Writers' Festival and TOFF, a panel of screenwriters discussed what happens in a writers' room, what makes good screenwriting and how to develop a guide for a TV or web series. The panellists provided lots of food for thought about writing for the big and small screens.

Featuring Emily Dash, Pavan Dutta and Julie Kalceff

Hosted by Alistair Baldwin

Tuesday 16 June, 2.00–3.00pm AEST

Presented in partnership with the Emerging Writers' Festival

[Watch the panel](#)

Images (clockwise from top left): Emily Dash,  
Alistair Baldwin, Julie Kalceff, Pavan Dutta



TOFF × EWF

## Daily Writing Prompt: Steps to Screen

In this Emerging Writers' Festival project, screenwriter Alistair Baldwin set audiences a daily screenwriting task over seven days. It was intended to offer participating writers a better sense of how to develop their own series for screen, placing them well on their way to devising a handy go-to guide for screen- and story-writing.

Featuring Alistair Baldwin

Wednesday 17 June – Tuesday 23 June

Presented in partnership with the Emerging Writers' Festival

[Read the prompts](#)

Image: Alistair Baldwin

TOFF × MIFF

# ‘Maddy the Model’: Red Carpet Extravaganza!

MIFF 68½, the inaugural online iteration of the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF), was held in August 2020. Among this digital festival’s slate of ‘events’ was ‘Maddy the Model’: Red Carpet Extravaganza! – a virtual dance party held as part of a partnership between TOFF and MIFF.

The event invited attendees to dress up or wear something sparkly in celebration of Madeline Stuart, the subject of the documentary ‘Maddy the Model’, which screened as part of MIFF 68½. The event offered a joyous reprieve during the long Melbourne lockdown in the middle of winter.

Featuring Marc Sorbello, Patrick Francis, Echo Collective, Way Out West, Roslyn Simmons, Deanna Dixon and Adolfo Aranjuez.

Hosted by Caroline Bowditch and Eva Sifis

Saturday 22 August, 2.00–3.00pm AEST

Presented in partnership with the Melbourne International Film Festival



Images (from top): ‘Maddy the Model’; ‘Maddy the Model’: Red Carpet Extravaganza!, 2020

# Future in 'Retrograde': Storytelling and Inclusion on Screen

The six-part ABC TV series 'Retrograde' – about a group of young Australians who regularly meet, drink and commiserate online during the COVID-19 pandemic – was one of 2020's big local TV hits.

The series was shot remotely in June via a series of Zoom calls between the producers, crew and actors, and has been celebrated as an example of ingenuity in screen production during a period of workplace restrictions. But the show was also praised for its authentic representation of disability and chronic illness on screen – a result of the show's lead writer and co-producer, Anna Barnes, having lived experience of chronic illness.

In this panel discussion, presented in partnership with The Wheeler Centre, the creators of 'Retrograde' reflected on what they loved and what they learned while making this groundbreaking show. They also delved into how screen professionals living with disability – who are often more adept at navigating restrictions on social and workplace activity – can lead the way when it comes to innovative production, both during the pandemic and beyond.



Above image: 'Retrograde', ABC TV

Below images (clockwise from top): Anna Barnes, Meg O'Connell, Adolfo Aranjuez



Featuring Meg O'Connell and Anna Barnes

Hosted by Adolfo Aranjuez

Thursday 12 November, 6.15-7.15pm AEDT

Presented in partnership with The Wheeler Centre

[Watch the panel](#)





MAJOR PROJECT

## Two Degrees

Two Degrees is a series that brings together a number of artforms – writing, performance, film, sound, multimedia – and 14 incredible artists and collectives from the disability community, each with their own take on climate change.

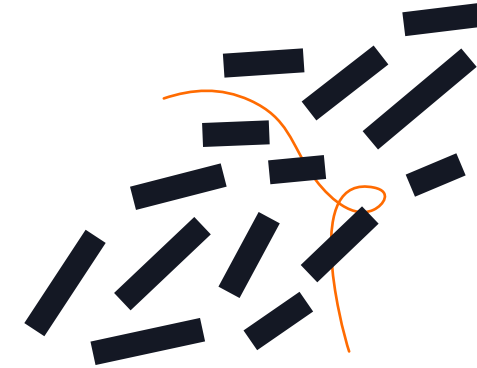
Whether comical or serious, abstract or literal, their pieces are united by the understanding that art and storytelling are powerful tools for education, inspiration and action. Importantly, they also place Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent creatives centre stage in a conversation that has taken on increased urgency, where otherwise they would be left on the sidelines.

Image: 'Short-sighted' by Abbie Madden, 2020

In 2019, TOFF collaborated with The Wheeler Centre to present the panel 'Leading the Charge: Climate Change, Disability and Storytelling'. Several compelling points were raised in that discussion, but they all boiled down to this stark fact: if humanity continues on its current trajectory, the world will be faced with climate collapse – and such a world is just not accessible.

Between that time and now, Australia grappled with two significant events: the summer 2019–2020 bushfires, which devastated both land and living creatures; and the global COVID-19 pandemic, the ramifications of which are felt to this day. As the country headed into another summer, a new year, a new decade, the team at TOFF felt compelled to ask: What would the future be like if Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent individuals led the way? What sorts of conversations would be had? What problems, missed by non-disabled people, would be identified, and what solutions would be posed? And, most importantly, how could TOFF empower the disability community to get these messages across?

Two Degrees is TOFF's contribution, however humble, to this necessary about-face. It hands the proverbial ship's wheel over to the disability community – ensuring that they occupy a central position in both climate-change talk and action.



Featuring Abbie Madden, Ana Maria Gomides, CB Mako, Diimpa, Echo Collective, Erin Kyan, Inkrewsive, Jonathon Goodfellow, Nemeses, Ramas McRae, Sarah Firth, Shakira Hussein, Walter Kadiki and Way Out West

Produced by Adolfo Aranjuez

Launched Tuesday 15 December

[Access the contributions](#)



Images (clockwise from top left): 'Little Fledgling' by Walter Kadiki, 2020; 'Resource Daddies' by Nemeses, 2020; 'The Precious Treasure' by Ramas McRae, 2020

# Choose Film

Choose Film is a research project targeting disengaged audiences for film festivals, including TOFF and MIFF, as well as ACMI's screen-based offerings.

Choose Film focuses on the following cohorts in particular: the low-vision and blind communities, and the deaf, Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. The research findings will be used to develop two main case studies (as integrated marketing campaign solutions) and will also be shared among the wider screen and arts sectors.

Working to a co-design model, Choose Film will collaborate with six members from each of the cohort communities, ensuring representation across a range of ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, and both metropolitan and regional areas. The inclusive methodology of this co-design approach will allow

Choose Film to address not only longstanding barriers to access, but also aesthetic and attitudinal barriers experienced by these communities. Its aim is to foreground how exclusion is not just a social or economic problem, but also a problem of cultural visibility, identity and language.

AAV and TOFF are leading the project, working closely with MIFF and ACMI.

Funded by Creative Victoria's Innovation in Marketing Fund



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