

The Other Film Festival 2023

RESISTANCE



23 Novemeber 7 December

Welcome to The Other Film Festival 2023 Cinema Program

Resistance is a program of international and Australian films screening from Thursday 23 November – Thursday 7 December 2023.

All Resistance films are made by Deaf and Disabled people either as key creatives, collaborators, and/or performers. All films are available to stream across Australia, free to watch, audio described and captioned.

We are excited to continue our partnership with ACMI and to present our screening program at ACMI Cinema 3. The Other Film Festival (TOFF) is proudly disability-led. As Artistic Director, I am honoured to work with TOFF 2023 curatorial/advisory team including Kath Duncan, CB Mako and Fury.

The films in this program reveal all sorts of resistance. We are thrilled that Resistance includes seven Deaf and Disabled led Australian short films. The recent Seeing Ourselves 2 Report by Screen Australia shows the shockingly low representation of Deaf and Disabled people on our television screens. At TOFF we support and advocate for Deaf and Disabled authored, created, and produced content for screen. Resistance is Deaf and Disabled people having power and agency in telling our own stories to audiences. Deaf and Disabled writers, directors, and producers have great ideas...and need to be supported and employed!

We genuinely thank our Principal Partner – City of Melbourne and Major Government partner – Screen Australia who have been long term supporters of TOFF. An extra special thank-you to TOFF, AAV, ACMI teams for your brilliant work, commitment, and support.

Fiona Tuomy

Artistic Director,
The Other Film Festival

CreditAudiance Memebers at ACMI for the TOFF Red Carpet Resistance event, 2023. Photos by Raphael Recht



Credit: Still from Songbird



About The Other Film Festival

The Other Film Festival (TOFF) is a ground-breaking disability-led program that places Deaf and Disabled people at the centre of the Australian screen industry. Founded in 2004, TOFF is Australia's first international disability film festival and a leader in the global disability screen advocacy movement. We champion and present the breadth of disability-led screen work – film, television, immersive and art. Hosting hybrid programs of virtual and in-person attendances in Melbourne each year. We offer Deaf and Disabled makers and audiences an accessible place for high quality and compelling events including screenings, talks, industry panels, professional development opportunities, commissions, and digital takeovers to capture the now and evoke future possibilities. TOFF Artistic Program has three main streams, and which are underpinned by a global standard model of universal access.

Screening Program

Offers Deaf and Disabled filmmakers and audiences an international platform which centres authentic storytelling and representation.

Industry Program

A call to action on leading sustainable inclusive change. Our Industry Program is a practical and accessible nexus between mainstream Australian screen industry and Deaf and Disabled screen creatives, below the line crew and audiences.

Community Program

As a disability-led program we facilitate genuine opportunities for Deaf and Disabled storytellers and filmmakers from grassroots to emerging, mid-career and established.

As a major artistic project of Arts Access Victoria (AAV), The Other Film Festival reflects the organisation's vision: Cultural equity for Deaf and Disabled people. Established in 1974 AAV is the state's peak body for arts and disability. As an organisation that is disability-led and which centres Deaf and Disabled people in all of its activities, AAV is at the forefront of innovative disability arts practice, access and inclusion. The organisation seeks to lead transformational and systemic change that benefits all Deaf and Disabled people.

Credit: Audience members and staff at ACMI for the TOFF Red Carpet Resistance event, 2023. Photos by Raphael Recht



Credit: Still from When The Sky Was Blue



Accessibility

TOFF is an international leader in offering a global standard of universal access across hybrid delivery – in person and on-line.

Our commitment includes a range of access services and facilities which are available to ensure everyone can have an accessible and enjoyable film festival experience.

On ACMI Cinema 3 platform, ACMI and TOFF are committed to providing more accessible films and instructions. All films will be audio-described, captioned or 100% subtitled.



Open-captioned films display captions that dictate any spoken dialogue, music or sound effect in the film and are shown on the screen for the duration of the film.



Closed captioned films display captions that dictate any spoken dialogue, music or sound effect in the film. Closed captions can be tuned on and off.



Audio description provides commentary to describe body language, expressions, movements, key action and the visual content of the film. Narration occurs during the natural pauses in the audio, and sometimes during dialogue if deemed necessary.

More information available on [ACMI's Cinema3](#)

Credit: staff and speaker at ACMI for the TOFF Red Carpet Resistance event, 2023. Photos by Raphael Recht



Credit: Still from All Silent Dogs



Program Overview

The Other Film Festival 2023 - Resistance screening program includes international documentary feature films

- Is There Anybody Out here? (2023)
- The Tuba Thieves (2023)
- Beyond I Wanna Go! (2022).

Australian short films

- All Silent Dogs (2022)
- Blockhead and Sparkles and the Flood of Tears (2022),
- Deafuturama (2021),
- Mine Mine Mine (2022),
- Songbirds (2022),
- Under My Tongue,
- Under My Hands (2023)
- When The Sky Was Blue (2021).

Tickets

All Resistance films will be free to stream on ACMI Cinema 3.
Available across Australia. To book tickets, go to [ACMI's Cinema3](#)

Credit: Audience members and speaker at ACMI for the TOFF Red Carpet Resistance event, 2023. Photos by Raphael Recht



Credit: Still from Mine Mine Mine





All Silent Dogs

13m • Short, Drama, Science Fiction, Deaf and Disabled • 2022

'I'm not the problem.' (Ylva, All Silent Dogs, 2022, Australia)

Family secrets and her shape-shifting powers are complicating young Ylva's life.

Her mysterious desire to hide gets teasingly unpacked. It's a sci-fi curse and a blessing that she's born with, but her family is not comfortable with any of it. Ylva fights with them over an operation they claim could fix her at the same time as she's welcomed into a group of locals who reveal their kinship with her.

"I want a life that's real, no matter how fractured it is. It's mine."

Any Deaf and Disabled person who's been offered medical interventions to 'fix' them can relate to Ylva's dilemmas about who she is and where she belongs.

All Silent Dogs has echoes of ABC-TV series *Cleverman*, and has similarities to Karul Project's stage show *Weredingo* but here disability and difference, shame and pride are the key elements in Ylva's battles for identity, self-determination and freedom.

This polished short is what can happen when a disabled filmmaker's work is supported, funded and developed. Successful in securing a [NSW Screenability grant](#), *All Silent Dogs* was inspired by writer/director Natalia Stawyskyj's own struggles with sudden disability and the pressures to conform, whatever the costs. Beautifully performed, shot and edited, this Australian short film gets the star treatment. As director [Natalia Stawyskyj](#) [says](#): "Endlessly watching masterclasses will never give the growth that comes from practising our artform."

Will Ylva resist the normalisation procedures her own family, her doctors and society are trying to force on her?

Director

[Natalia Stawyskyj](#)

Writer

[Natalia Stawyskyj](#)

Producer

[Natalia Stawyskyj](#)

Producer

[Katherine Shearer](#)

Language

English

Subtitles

English

Country

Australia

Studio

Two Shoes Films



Beyond... I Wanna Go

34m • Short, Documentary, Deaf and Disabled • 2022

"We are something wonderful, something you can see the future with."

The [Creative Growth Art Center](#) in Oakland, California is the birthplace of the annual Beyond Trend Fashion Shows. Over their ten year history the shows have gained their own momentum, stars and following. In *Beyond... I Wanna Go* we meet a big cast (61 interviewed!) of Deaf and disabled fashion designers, runway strutters, divas and opinionated arts lovers who flaunt their creations with confidence for the ages.

A sensual feast. The fashions! The models! Artists have their own stories and design interests. Fashionistas show off themselves and their arts in gorgeous, colourful and bombastic styles: "Without art, you're a bore, you're asleep."

Filmmaker Cheryl Dunn captures the dynamic tension of the Beyond Trend shows among the artists and unexpected wear. The artists flounce through Oakland streets, airing their views. *Beyond... I Wanna Go* is the Crip/Deaf response to landmark underground ball style extravaganza *Paris is Burning* (1990). The Art Center is pivotal to the artists' lives and community, and you can't help but envy them the connections they have built with each other on display. This is NOT art as therapy; this is [Beauty as a Verb](#), this is Art as Resistance, Art as Big and Beautiful Proud and Loud Crip/Deaf Life.

We don't often see Fashion and Disability prancing together down the runway. Shout out to Melbourne's [Carly Findlay for her inclusive fashion show](#) for 2018's Fashion Week and her ongoing fashion advocacy.

This documentary will move you and challenge every stereotype you've ever had about Deaf and disabled people, design and fashion. Come for the clothes, stay for the heart and passion.

Director

[Cheryl Dunn](#)

Producer

[Cheryl Dunn](#)

Producer

[Pete Shanel](#)

Executive Producer

[Peter Kline](#)

Executive Producer

[Arrow Kruse](#)

Executive Producer

[Michael Karbelnikoff](#)

Language

English with English Subtitles

Country

USA

Studio

Creative Growth



Blockhead and Sparkles and the Flood of Tears

9m • Short, Animation, Deaf and Disabled • 2022

Quirkiest animation ever! Surreal, fast-moving, dreamy and vibrant, this rollercoaster of artist Digby Webster's hand-drawn oil pastels celebrates neurodiversity as it follows two friends with unique gifts.

Great friends Blockhead and Sparkles are mixing their magic to supply their Emporium of Cakes and Treats. But can you have too much magic?

What works here is conflict between these two best buddies. It's not all sunshine and roses in creative Crip Town; alliances can be cut, friends can fall out. It takes courage to repair the damage. And maybe a bigger threat. While each friend veers off to growl and sulk, an Inconsolable Prince is flooding out the entire town with his tears.

The friends are forced to save the town. And each other.

You'll float along with this one, being mesmerised by the colours and lulled by the dense soundtrack featuring just enough voice-over and sound effects, music and outdoor audio tracks. It's a mix of kids' cartoon time and intense mature emotions of jealousy, rivalry, loss and forgiveness.

This is another great outcome of [Screen NSW's Screenability program](#), an initiative which takes scripts and ideas proposed by Deaf and disabled artist/film-makers and turns them into screen reality.

[Read more](#) from filmmakers Digby Webster and Lauren Orrell interview on the making of *Blockhead and Sparkles and the Flood of Tears*.

Director
[Digby Webster](#)

Writer
[Lauren Orrell](#)

Writer
[Rosie Lourde](#)

Subtitles
English Subtitles

Director
[Lauren Orrell](#)

Producer
[Rosie Lourde](#)

Language
English

Country
Australia



Deafuturama

1m • Short, Deaf and Disabled • 2021

Deafuturama is a silent, animated short which explores communications for Deaf people into the future.

'Where there is power, there is resistance.' [Michel Foucault](#).

Communication is power. How are Deaf people taking their power in the fast growing communications world?

Calling texting and camera phones old hat, Deafuturama is what the New Normal may look like and what it may offer. 'Digital spaces are showing us how Deaf people access arts professionally,' Film-maker [Elvin Lam](#) says. 'Social media has connected Deaf artists and Deaf communities regardless of where we are in the world.'

Making inclusive technologies applicable to everyday life is the demand, and active resistance, as in disrupt, defy, develop, and gather in rebellion is the program. Susan Gabel says, 'Resistance functions as a way for disabled people to push against dominance while also attempting to pull society into disabled peoples' way of seeing.'

Three Deafuturama predictions:

Holographic Interpreters (HI) - an AI portable interpreter to be custom designed to match needs and lifestyles; accessed via mobile phone, tablet and/or smart watch. Interface and interact with surroundings, interpreting and translating any conversation in any language. The HI can be programmed to communicate in any language, listening to conversations around it and interpreting back in Auslan, ASL and ISL.

The Menu Board: Tired of not getting the meal you ordered? This feature of the HI is available for all shops and restaurants.

The AI 'Menu Board' will scan the menu and interpret what's available for people who have difficulty reading. All languages available (including Auslan). Once you have made your selection, simply sign it to the 'Menu Board' and your order will be on its way.

Recognised Language: Auslan will become an official language of Australia alongside English. Auslan will be a required subject in school with all students learning Auslan in order to better communicate with Deaf people. This will also provide Deaf people greater opportunities to become teachers and educators.

Welcome to the future.

Director
[Elvin Lam](#)

Writer
[Elvin Lam](#)

Language
English

Country
Australia



Is There Anybody Out There?

1h 30m • Feature, Documentary, Deaf and Disabled • 2023

'I love and respect my body. Being this way is not the problem.'

This film is a must for everybody to see, whether you're disabled or not. Director/writer Ella Glendining sets off on a search for her reflection: a quest to find someone who looks like her, someone who shares her unique configuration, which she's had from birth.

This documentary offers up a very personal and open Ella to camera, her travels, interviews with her parents and others including other disabled friends, and intense archival footage. You get a real sense of the time and place of Ella's life and what has formed her. Particularly engaging is her interview with her disabled friend where Ella asks if she (Ella) has ever hurt her friend's feelings by not understanding her friend's impairments and requirements – a very unusual topic to air in general for first person disability documentaries – where the focus shifts to an intradisability question both sensitive and illuminating.

We follow Ella's excitement in tracking down others like her and finding 'ways to celebrate [her] freakishness.' Another major theme is the medicalisation of people like Ella, and we get to hear about the surgical options offered to Ella and others, which really pushes Ella to debate how she manages herself, how she negotiates the medical minefield she finds herself in, and how she reaches a kind of peace with herself about what she intends to do with her body.

'To fly we have to have resistance.' [Maya Lin](#)

This is an eye-opening story with surprises.

Filmmakers are going to really enjoy Ella's questions on the filmmaking process itself. It's a very engaging 'Everything you ever wanted to know about Disability – but were too afraid to ask' film as we cover Special Ed (complete with horrendous archives), ableism (ditto), wheelchair politics, parental relationships, sex, love and birth, all wrapped in that most universal of human goals – finding a belonging place.

The pacing is superb. There's a lot to get your head around and the archival footage is confronting – the edit balances the intense moments with music and quiet scenes to allow the audience to react and take a breather, to keep focussed but let yourself catch up with being hit in the face with reality checks about how disabled people, and children in particular, are viewed and treated.

You must watch to the very end – the TOFF team assure you that the ending absolutely DEFEATS ableism.

Director

[Ella Bee Glendining](#)

Writer

[Ella Bee Glendining](#)

Executive Producer

[Lisa Marie Russo](#)

Closed Captions [CC]

English

Producer

[Janine Marmot](#)

Executive Producer

[Nikki Parrott](#)

Language

English

Country

UK



Mine Mine Mine

20m • Short, Deaf and Disabled • 2022

This film is a crip adaptation of Peter Pan to a regional Australian town where a boy dreams of being powerful like Peter Pan. What's great about Heath Ramsay's crip Peter Pan however is that he is no saint. Peter isn't the hero. Too often we're portrayed as heroes... or virgins... or do gooders.

Ramsay's lead is just as much attracted to Peter Pan's marauding and fighting nature, as his desire to fly and rescue people. In this filmic telling of Peter's story – beautifully shot and eerily choreographed with performers moving through the landscaped slowed, effected, made eerie, or dream-like – scary mask-wearing kids in an open setting that evokes the photography of [Diane Arbus](#).

We move between fantasies of flying and 'saving people' like Peter Pan to the close-ups and banalities of everyday crip life.

Then a car gets stolen.

Mine Mine Mine breaks conventions around filmmaking (and the stereotypical crip style where it's always deeply personal = earnest) – here reality is rubbery. Time isn't linear. Think about it – how much of Deaf and Disabled filmmaking revolves around True Autobiographical stories? Here *Mine Mine Mine* throws mud at the dominant crip screen career pathway:

the first film about ourselves;

the second about our community

And the 3rd never happens...

It's great to see a new bunch of Australian filmmakers in this Resistance series who are playing with narrative, invention, imagination. This is what funding and production partners (here The Corinthian Food Store and disability arts company Midnight Feast) can achieve. An extra big shout out to – Heath Ramsay who is writer and lead actor. Heath is currently an associate artist with Midnight Feast, the first resident arts company at NIDA. He couldn't be more proud of *Mine Mine Mine*, his short film debut.

Meanwhile in Neverland with voice-over and the sync dialogue being very effected and weird, and the bushland and interior backdrops hyper-realistically spooky, the kids are revolting (as in revolution) and the Wendy character presses Peter to do the right thing, but he resists.

The ending is PERFECT and comes at a moment when you think all hope is lost. And voila, this amazing and powerful and crip-upliftingly beautiful and accurate ending

_– your crip and different buddies save you and share with you the journey – _

Solidarity, resistance, pleasure, sharing, community – the last minutes!

This is a sophisticated and wonderful and confronting and resonant and poetic film – art direction is so key - fantastic and spare – as in detailed and rich but not overdone.

More please.

Cast

[Heath Ramsay](#)

Language

English

Country

Australia

Director

[Duncan Ragg](#)

Subtitles

English Subtitles

Studios

Midnight Feast, The Corinthian Food Store



Songbirds

7m • Short, Deaf and Disabled • 2022

A resonant slice of Europe, but surprisingly shot in Melbourne with local performers.

Director Stefan Bugryn and writer Llewellyn Michael Bates have crafted here a genuinely nail-biting European-style drama of a young teen trying out for a Ukrainian music school.

We start with the unconventionally dressed Sasha (Yiana Pandelis) attempting to get focus outside of her audition, keeping herself separate from the other auditionees, and beset by flashbacks to conflicts with her mother. The audio switches from regular sync sound to the fuzzy, effected sound which it becomes clear Sasha is experiencing.

Sasha is called in to her audition by an impatient man who looks closely at Sasha's long blue hair and does not react kindly to it.

Sasha enters the audition and starts to muff it, her mother's hurtful comments ringing in her ears. It's touch and go as she takes up her violin, fumbles, starts, fumbles again. The pressure is on her and the strain is amplified by the camera moving around her from different perspectives. You can feel Sasha's put-on-the-spot-ness and examination anxiety. The two judges staring and reminding her of her time limit – and the music bursts out.

The ending is ambiguous but intercut with the pouring out of the music, Sasha is on the phone – before? After? During? And her mother tells Sasha she loves her and to forgive her and the music keeps pouring out of her like release, like the letting go after the holding tight, and we hear how the music sounds from outside of Sasha and inside of Sasha like different worlds, yet connected by her dream to play, and be heard, her physicality, blue hair and all.

Sasha defies all of their expectations, in their faces.

Cast

[Yiana Pandelis](#), [Albert Goikhman](#), [Leanne Campbell](#)

Writer

[Llewellyn Michael Bates](#)

Country

Australia

Director

[Stefan Bugryn](#)

Language

Ukranian with English Subtitles



The Tuba Thieves

1h 33m • Documentary, Deaf and Disabled • 2023

This film defies classification. It's an essay-style drama with documentary features that actively experiments with image and sound. The 'essays' as such are enacted in the audio play and the image play that intersect and merge. There is no voice-over.

We follow a couple who meet at Deaf Club and over the course of the film become lovers and fall pregnant. There's a kind of linear time sense, but the story is told via adventures by the couple, and travels through an urban landscape where the audio jumps and cross fades from static and murmurs to full-on loud sync sound, though rarely dialogue.

This disjunction between image and sound is surprising throughout. There's a great scene where the woman lover is in a cupboard touching the texture of a coat and playing with her hands, moving them around, part ASL, part play. It's achingly sensual but on the soundtrack we hear static and distortions. This works to alter the consciousness of the audience – it's like you need to tune in differently, to different rhythms and realities. Life slows down, then suddenly you're on a football pitch with loud cheerleaders, then they're still waving and shouting but all you can hear are clicks and little random whirring loops. Your eyes and ears can't entirely to be trusted to be experiencing the same data, the material you think you're viewing – so you hyper-focus and the process is rewarding – the images dance along, the sound leaps and bounds all over – you surrender to it and the narrative slowly reveals itself.

Cutting into this esoteric sensory action like a bizarre reality tv news show are reports of tubas and other musical instruments being stolen from schools and choirs.

Director Alison O'Daniel describes *The Tuba Thieves* as a 'meditation on access and loss,' and the film as 'a re-frame of cinema from a d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing perspective.'

It's a film about a type of listening that is untethered from the ear; it's types of resistance based in history and place and the people who defied the rules: the stories of Deaf woman Nyke Price and drummer Geovanny Marroquin, the ambient noises of Los Angeles, John Cage's 1952 composition 4'33", a 1979 punk show at San Francisco's famed Deaf Club.

Informed by her own experience as a hard-of-hearing filmmaker, O'Daniel messes with media – documentary, essay film, captions, audio art, character study, video art – that 'probe the processes of interpretation and (mis)communication.' It's ultimately immersive in the Deaf/HOH experience, while tracking a universal narrative of hope and connection.

Prepare to be baffled, then overwhelmed by the different worlds you inhabit in the course of this unusual film. It is truly an original.

Director

[Alison O'Daniel](#)

Writer

[Alison O'Daniel](#)

Language

American Sign Language and English with English Subtitles

Subtitles

English

Country

USA

Studio

Madman



RESISTANCE

Under My Tongue, Under My Hands

5m • Short, Deaf and Disabled • 2021

Performer/choreographer Elvin Lam takes as a launching off point a project directed by Belinda Locke, where anonymous individuals disclose hidden challenges in short written texts. Her title, 'Under my Tongue,' references the unspoken. Elvin Lam, an Auslan user, has added 'Under my Hands; as his interpretation of the texts. Hands can also talk, and yet intimate things, whether spoken or signed, may not be fully heard or understood.

In this 5-minute video, Elvin performs as eight of the anonymous contributors – each responding to the same prompts and identifying different issues – in partial speech, partial sign, partial subtitles, and rich poetic Auslan elaborations that appear as dance-like rhythmical movements.

Elvin invites viewers with open hearts to strive to interpret secrets using non-linguistic cues, joining the dots and finding understanding even when access to a language is incomplete.

Director

[Elvin Lam](#)

Producer

[Belinda Locke](#)

Country

Australia

Writer

[Elvin Lam](#)

Languages

English with English Subtitles, Australian Sign Language



When The Sky Was Blue

14m • Short, Deaf and Disabled • 2021

The film explores themes of anxiety and inter-generational trauma.

On a Sunday between meals and chores with her family, ten-year-old Leah re-lives a series of memories, not all pleasant. There's a disturbing disquiet in this unremarkable on the surface family, while personal tensions simmer and boil beneath the banal preparations and family greetings and sharings. It's a meditative and wistful glance into the intersectional identities of being Chinese-Australian.

When The Sky Was Blue highlights complex cultural and female energy across generations, with the connection between mother and daughter as being revitalising for both, under strained circumstances, in a bilingual Chinese/Australian family. 10 year old daughter Leah is torn between the desire to please her parents and the need to forge her own identity.

Leah secretly wonders what it would be like to have a different nose while an aquarium fish swims in a restricted space. At home Leah finds her own pet fish dead and is nauseated by having to scale the fish the family is having for dinner. Leah's mother Li-Jing faces her husband's indifference regarding dinner plans and searches the expansive blue sky.

It has an archive-y feel, and was shot on 16mm evoking a rich tradition of Australian independent filmmaking. Like memory. Dreamlike even though mega-realistic. Language issues spark drama and conflict around sensitive family flashpoints like identity and belonging. Touch and affection are also complicated across the family; a difficult reserve.

A series of reimagined memories from writer/director Rae Choi's childhood, *When the Sky Was Blue* explores themes of resistance and acceptance within the context of Chinese-Australian identities. The film delves into the nuances of inherited narratives and love languages, depicting the struggle of knowing you are loved but not always feeling it. Ultimately, it reaches for embracing imperfect expressions of love, as both mother and daughter strive to do their best.

Director

[Rae Choi](#)

Writer

[Rae Choi](#)

Producer

[Rae Choi](#)

Producer

[Sheree Ramage](#)

Languages

English, Mandarin

Subtitles

English

Country

Australia

The Other Film Festival is Presented by Arts Access Victoria

The Other Film Festival Principal Partner is



CITY OF MELBOURNE

The Other Film Festival Major Government Partner is Screen Australia



Australian Government



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THE
OTHER
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ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA

Celebrating 50 Years
of Arts and Disability

1974 — 2024



Australian Government

