

Gloria_mixdown

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SPEAKERS

Paige Smith, Speaker 2, Speaker 1

Paige Smith 00:11

Hello everyone, I'm Paige Smith with after school a podcast project from Simon Fraser University's faculty of communication, art and technology after school showcases FCAT alumni in traditional and unconventional career paths across communications, interactive art and technology, contemporary arts, publishing and digital media. We would like to respectfully acknowledge the xÉ·mÉ™Ĵ, kÉ·É™yĴ" É™m (Musqueam), Sá, μwxĴ± wĀ°7mesh Āšxwumixw (Squamish), sÉ™ĴĴ" ilwĴ" É™m taÉ·É™ (Tsleil-Waututh), qĴ" Ācl" É™yĴ" (Katzie), kÉ·ikÉ·É™ÆĴĴ" É™m (Kwkwetlem), Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen peoples on whose unceded traditional territories our three campuses reside. In today's episode of after school, our student hosts Ethan Ukrainetz of SFU's School of contemporary arts talks with filmmaker Gloria Mercer, they chat about her creative process and the transition from film student at SFU to producing small budget films professionally in the Lower Mainland. As an emerging filmmaker himself, Ethan asked pressing questions every early career artists has, such as how to maintain your artistic vision while making a living or whbū m ě T

So my short film academia was supported by the Canada Council for the Arts and the National Film Board of Canada. And recently was nominated for two Leo Award nominations, and also is streaming on CBC gem. And I just made the short film smoke eater, which was one of only three films to be selected for the 2021 Harold Greenberg shorts to features grant. That's very exciting. I also, for me,

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that so many people have come together and made this thing. And so the nice thing about it is that moment often happens like repeatedly throughout the process, seeing everything come together. But as soon as prep is done, I guess it's like

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Speaker 1 04:17

yeah, it's all about like, you start to see the whole collection that you guys are working together.

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Speaker 2 04:22

Yeah.

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Speaker 1 04:23

Like as a machine novelist. Yeah, I get that.

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Speaker 2 04:26

There's so many people involved. And there's so many little pieces and they're all important and the details are really what I love. The little details of stories very rewarding.

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Speaker 1 04:36

Do you ever feel overwhelmed having so many hats to wear?

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Speaker 2 04:40

Yeah, well, I guess more about that the last couple shorts. So academia, I wrote it and I directed it, and I produced it, and then I also edited it. That was hard. And then in more recent projects with my partner Aidan West, he tends to write them and then we co produce and I direct and I also usually end up editing them. So the question is it overwhelming? Yes. cause I think the thing that becomes more overwhelming to is when you're making no budget projects, and you end up doing things like, if you want to find really good locations, for example, like you're going to be the one probably doing that research and doing the scouting, you don't have the luxury of like, a big team, pulling those things together for you and present those options. I mean, locations is a great example. Because I think they're often neglected. And like, it's so fun to get great locations. And, frankly, with low budget projects, yeah, you don't have the resources to just rent them. You have to put in the work and write those letters and say, like, Could we please film here? Like, what would it take? And then if that doesn't work, keep doing it. So it can be really overwhelming to do all that stuff. But luckily, I've got some really, really good collaborators. They take, take the pressure off. Yeah,

made it happen before which is in 2018. And that was on 16 millimeter. And that was a very fun experiment with dop, Zahn freezing. All this to say I approach filmmaking from character and tone, in a broader sense. And then the the most fun thing lately has been talking with my regular collaborator, Devin Scott, and he's sort of the wizard behind like, we have these discussions about the story. And he's really great at asking me questions about like, trying to choose that style. And it has been a luxury, sort of just being a bit of a chameleon from project to project. So academia was like, very like static and like very isolated frames. And then a safe distance was a very weird, roving camera that moves slowly through the woods. And that smoke eater was all about like, throwing the camera on a dolly and like emulating 1970s Kind of, I mean, it's a very broad statement, but kind of trying to look at directors like a little bit of Robert Altman, and a little bit of like, I mean, his cinematographer Gordon Willis, who obviously is very popular. It's a big, big reference and so so I guess all that to say like my own style, is generally I tend to go for films that are character based and also are more specifically like focusing on women, representations of women that are flawed and trying to ask more questions and answer and deal and kind of get a little bit messy with character and then style I don't know seems to follow story so far, but I haven't. Yeah, I should. I should have a better analysis of my work and maybe be like, you know, I love two shots?

if ae I know character k ct t

there are lots of good films out there, but making films that feel prescriptive and kind of feel like they're telling you how to feel like I just I prefer it, it's a little messy, and you can kind of draw your own conclusions. An court's a-sAe ofc to fy there, and kind

Speaker 2 15:03

Oh, gosh, okay, well, so I finished the SFU film program in 2016, finished at SFU, slightly later in 2017. And I have so many memories. I really enjoyed my time at SFU. I met so many of the collaborators and just friends I have now, which is great. And I think it's one of the best things about that program is you just form these really close relationships with the people you work with, for example, like my partner and frequent collaborator, Aidan West at he and I met at SFU. And he has written the last two shorts that I've directed me produce them together. Devon Scott is also of SFU. And he shot the last three films I made. There's more I mean, Andy Huang was a producer on academia. He's wonderful. You should have him on the podcast. He's really great. He I'm sure he actually has his own podcast, but you could do

Speaker 1 15:56

really?

Speaker 2 15:57

a dual podcast, his podcast is called bipoc credit. So you interview like bipoc members of the Vancouver filmmaking community more so like it's kind of industry focused. He's

Speaker 1 16:08

oh interesting I'll check it out.

Speaker 2 16:10

Yeah. Yeah, you should. And like, Carly, Southern also was the production designer on Smoke eater which, and she, she and I are great friends. And on that level, like, there's so many people I met there who we worked on one another's films when we were in school. I did many days like a grip, or like a camera assistant stuff. And I was in film school, and now we still work together in some capacity, or just hanging out. You know, that's our industry. You wh heu

make each other's films, right. And that's like a very small film crew. And of course, the other year has helped you. So it's like, you have the film set, you know, maybe half your year plus, like a handful of second years, third years. And it's just like, I have memories of like night shoots, or like being in the rain, getting home at like, four in the morning and stuff like that. And I don't know, it's just very fun. It's a very fun way to go to school feels like an adventure. So

Speaker 1

How did you get from like graduating SFU to where you're at now professionally?

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Speaker 2 19:43

Well, so like many artists I have, sort of split my time between directing when I can and also having a day job but when I finished school, I ended up kind of gravitating towards post production. I did like day leaves for a while, which is not a fun job, you work at night and you're doing like the kind of the grunt work of post production. So I could tell you, I didn't do it for that long, but it's like using sound and you like transcode footage, and then it's all and then you send it to the editorial department and they work on in the morning. I know, it's very glamorous, and then I got into assistant editing. And that's a lot of what I do now. Still, the industry side is great. I think that there is definitely a divide between indie films and industry films. And I think like there's, there's a divide and the approaches to how you make them and lots of different things like I mean, like budget level, obviously. But I think like being in the industry for a few years, has really helped me pick up practices that work. Yeah, it's been really informative. And so since finishing school, you know, we got a grant for academia, from the Canada Council for the Arts. And we also got the National Film Board of Canada has the filmmakers Assistance Program. And then Aidan and I got the Harold Greenberg Fund grant. And then we also got a Canada Council grant for a film we haven't made yet that is now partially funded. But I'm not trying to just repeat myself about getting grants, I'm just trying to say, like, doing industry work, I think is good, because it gave me it gave me a really realistic sense of scope of project. So it gives you a better sense of, yeah, I guess how bigger projects get off the ground. And, and you quickly, I think the way I made films in film school, was not very sustainable, because you need to like, do things like track how much money you've spent. And just because filmmaking is really expensive. And so I think like, there's a lot of grants out there. And I think it's like, I was very intimidated by them for a long time and would do things like do half of a grant application, then like the deadline would approach and I would just not submit it, I'd be like, it's too scary. I don't know why. But getting over that hump. And like, you know, starting to work with other people who were making funded shorts was like, somewhere along the way it happened and I don't know, well, it's to get paid for your work. Not go into debt making movies, right?

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Speaker 1 22:13

I guess I didn't realize at first that you were doing both industry work and your own, like Indie work at the same time?

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Speaker 2 22:21

Yeah. Well, to be realistic, you know, a lot of that, sorry, my cat what I was gonna say, to be realistically, you know, you have to find that work life balance, because like, even if you were to make only grant funded films, like so much of that is doing the grant writing, which is a job unto itself. So for me, it's been a balance of trying to take time off from working in the industry to make my own projects, and then kind of go back to it. But I've really enjoyed working in the industry, because like I said, it's, it's taught me a lot. It's made me more realistic about the

process.

Speaker 1 24:55

where do we get that money from

Speaker 2 24:56

Yeah, the government. What I've been told and possibly private corporations sometimes.

Speaker 1 25:04

You ever thought about your relationship between your art and its com merbrate

Speaker 1 26:18

many movies before on like my fifth one. I was like, Okay, this one is like I actually feel like I could be a drag this is really cheesy, but jump out of your comfort zone and try whether it's like their departments or like try movies you you wouldn't have made like, I just thought that was

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Speaker 1 28:40

like I guess SFU is a good space for that.

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Speaker 2 28:42

Yeah, I thought so. You got to be on other people's sets. I mean, I don't know how it works the pandemic these days, but like it was really valuable for me like assisting on other people's shoots and being not even in key roles. I was a grant grant. I was like an AC I was I'm really bad at BU mopping because I have no upper body strength. So my arms get really tired.

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Speaker 1 29:02

I don't think anybody would say that they're 100% Great at BU mopping

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Speaker 2 29:07

Like especially for really long in the suits are secret as I'm lazy them because I like the position where you can like rest your arms. I felt like those were the most valuable times when I could get out and help other people because it really did. That's making me sound like I'm like I helped so many people but we all did right like it kind of your shell and getting to know other people before you went and did it. But it was very rewarding when it started happening.

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Speaker 1 29:34

Yeah, I've definitely seen that in my year too where there's just an atmosphere of like, Yeah, I'll help you. You help me I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine.

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Speaker 2 29:42

Well, yeah,

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Speaker 1 29:44

and everybody's the better for it.

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Speaker 2 29:45

Speaker 2 31:04

I will be sharing a trailer in the next month or so and the poster and that kind of stuff as as we get closer to sharing it with the world eventually, even though with all things film, everything is a very protracted process. It takes a lot of time. So if you if you follow us [us](#) [in](#) [n](#) [m](#) [o](#) [f](#) [f](#) [e](#) [o](#)