

The 2021 CineYouth Programs and Film Selection

The Cinemas of Chicago (Opening Night)

Our city has proven once again to be fertile ground for filmmakers to find sources of creative self-expression, and these shorts are a mere sample of what the future holds for Chicago cinema.

RAICES

Andres Aurelio | Chicago/Mexico | Age 21

Reflecting on his passion for gardening, a man finds the source of this infatuation in Mexico. Now living in the United States, he seeks to plant his pride from the Mexico family garden into his new one.

Love Stories

Elizabeth Myles | Chicago | Age 21

Unique love stories are touchingly explored from multiple perspectives through experimental animation of archival personal photographs, investigating what it means to love in this world.

Miniature Vacation

Samantha Ocampo | Chicago | Age 16

In this visual adaptation of her own poem, filmmaker Samantha Ocampo reveals the little local things she appreciates in her life that help her escape the day-to-day banality.

The Wolf Comes at Night

Nathan Marquez | Chicago | Age 22

An ominous presence comes from out of the darkness, terrorizing a cattle farm where a frightened grandfather and his grandchildren are trying to protect themselves and the farm.

Face Me

Ty Yamamoto | Chicago | Age 21

This provocative look into Hollywood's history examines the use of yellowface and its continued impact on the Asian-American community by projecting media onto the faces of the younger generation.



De Sol a Sol

Shira Baron | Chicago | Age 21

On warm summer days you can find Abraham and Ricardo selling ice cream along the Chicago lakefront, but a new perspective offers a glimpse into the often harrowing experiences of ice cream men.

Stuck in the System

Ameerah Connor, Kala Dismuke, Matthew Echols, Rajuan Barnes | Chicago | Age 14-17 Students from Free Spirit Media explore the topic of racialized mass incarceration and the U.S, prison system, asking why petty crimes have caused minorities to make up the majority of inmates.

Fear

Marjorie Matamoros | Chicago | Age 19

Visiting desolate and lonely spaces around Chicago, a young woman recites a poem exploring her fears and their relationship to her own grieving process.

71 Seconds

Jazmin Bryant | Chicago | Age 20

Mirroring the final moments in the life of Treyvon Martin and imagining the 71 seconds unaccounted for in the official report of his murder, an ordinary day takes a tragic turn in an all too common way, reminding everyone that Black Lives Matter.

As We Are Planted

Anna Lee Ackermann | Chicago | Age 21

To combat the effects of food deserts in the South Side of Chicago, Just Roots Chicago and Saint James Catholic Church unite to bring fresh produce and smiles to the local community.

Phenomenally Me

Sahrmaria Wright, Jakia Walker, Amanee Muhammad, and Iyanna Jordon | Chicago | Age 16-17 This empowering portrait of four African American teen girls from Chicago explores the way hair shapes their individuality, expresses their creativity, and builds their confidence.

Fear Frenzy



Nikki Houston | Chicago | Age 21

After starting the fear-based competition game show Fear Frenzy to patch up his marriage, Tony must come to terms with how the game caters to a complacent audience only interested in watching him suffer.

Children Play With Fire

Samuel Johnson/Jakari Thompson | Chicago | Age 19-20

There's a party going on in Chicago's South Side neighborhood Bronzeville, and Kari asks his brother to pick something up from the store. What follows is a devastating journey through time and memory.

Dois Estágios

Lua Borges | Chicago/Brazil | Age 21

Exploring the beginning and end of a bloodline, this film delves into the personal history of the filmmaker's family and illustrates her longing memory of Brazil.

Playtime: Animation

Bats, birds, dogs, rams, monsters, and even mushrooms get their stories told in this wide array of animated delights from around the world.

honeyheart

Alice Langlois | Rhode Island | Age 21

Nestled in her cozy tree trunk home, a bird goes about her day until the arrival of a wild honeybee sets her on a strange and tumultuous journey of anxiety, fear, and finally self-acceptance.

Comfortable Position

DRF Children Animation Studio | Uzbekistan | Ages 8 to 12

When a person falls asleep, they are immersed in another reality where anything can happen. Through a series of animated vignettes, the beautiful and sometimes menacing world of sleep comes to life.

Monster Land

Students of Toon Club | India | Ages 8 to 13



A free form series of hand-drawn scenes that showcase the precarious routines of several silly monsters as they squash, fight, transmogrify, and bend the rules of their own universe.

Kinoko

Erika Gomi | California | Age 22

Two jovial mushrooms embark on a whimsical adventure in the woods. Curiosity may get the better of them when they stumble upon a seemingly cozy woodland residence.

Baofahu (The Evicted Millionaires)

Yufei Xiao | China | Age 17

A resident of an urban village set for demolition ignites his fireworks in view of the police. It's an apparent act of professional self-destruction, yet a frequent patron of his shop sees it differently.

Yayoi Kusama's Magical Circles

Students of Eleni Pehlivani's Art Workshop | Greece | Age 5

Setting off on a globe-trotting hot air balloon journey, Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama visits various lands and collects their magical circles. How will she use their power to rebuild?

Password to the * * * * *

Adél Szegedi | Hungary | Age 22

Haunting pen and paper illustrations bring a poem to life, evoking the way childhood memories and diary notes take on new meanings in adulthood.

Followers

Sofiia Oleksiienko | Ukraine | Ages 12 to 16

Through vibrantly colored claymation, we witness a herd of curious rams as they're led to a suspicious manor hosting a grand feast. But what's the main course?

Gekou

Ajisa | Japan | Age 22

On her commute home, a young student is inspired to take a new route. The mundane reality of her daily life suddenly shifts as she discovers a different world isn't so far after all.

Best Seat in the House



Lily Gibbons | New York | Age 11

As the age-old sibling argument over who gets to sit where begins to escalate, is there anything that will make them give up their seat before mom intervenes?

Meeting at Half Past Five

Daria Litvichenko | Estonia | Age 17

Combining an unusual perspective with a variety of cutout animation styles, this amusing short features the somber Philip as he comes to terms with how cruel and corrupt the world can be.

Night-Riders

Jules Chin Greene | New York | Age 22

Losing their natural habitat due to climate change and colonial forces, an endling bat reflects on displacement and extinction in this haunting, beautiful gothic animation.

Lights, Camera, Lock Down

COVID-19 may have locked everything down, but it couldn't stop the creative energy and journalistic drive of these filmmakers who provide a fresh look at our tumultuous now.

Fragments of Gage

Emilio Nieto | Chicago | Age 21

A woman balances her bakery business with her medical work at a hospital threatened with closure in this pandemic portrait of Chicago's Gage Park neighborhood.

"Only Love" by Gem Tree

Bridget Johnson | Chicago | Age 21

Two queer female skateboarders meet at their favorite spot: the skate park. They crush on each other and document their memories on a VHS, celebrating their love in this vibrant music video.

Korridor

Walter Duncan | Germany | Age 7

A mother and son transform their home corridor into a ghostly and experimental place marked by gamelan sounds and transfixing light imagery in this playful lockdown collaboration.

Under the Same Sky. Trinitat From Within



Students of "Cinema en curs" (Catalunya) | Spain | Age 12-13

While preparing a documentary about their neighborhood's diversity, a group of students are sent home as schools close. They decide to explore their neighborhood from their windows.

this is a completely normal home movie

Tessa Hill | Canada | Age 19

Capturing mundane life through her laptop screen and layering sounds of the natural world, the filmmaker reflects on beauty, family, and creativity in the midst of lockdown.

Exposure

Claire Imler | California | Age 21

A year into the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, this intimate portrait of ICU nurse Deanna Okajima illustrates how this health crisis has impacted her professional and personal life.

A Personal Climate Crisis

The climate crisis takes a personal toll in these films which investigate humanity's relationship to nature through dystopian (but not so distant) futures, the damaging effects of commerce, and stresses on individual growth.

Unshopping

Rheannah Wynter | Florida | Age 21

Hoping to stay climate conscious, a sometimes-paranoid filmmaker ditches an alarming heap of fast fashion clothes. In the process, she encounters obstacles, misdirection, propaganda, rabbit holes, and a one-sided obsession with H&M CEO Karl-Johan Persson.

The Pleasure of Killing Bugs

Leonardo Martinelli | Brazil | Age 21

As the climate crisis reaches the point of no return, a nun and a priest grapple with their faith as they lament the disappearance of insects in this surreal and tense vision.

Those Who Move Mountains

Lauren Loesberg | Evanston, IL | Age 22



In a near-futuristic society that has left humans reliant on urban infrastructure and turned nature into a prison, a falsely convicted woman finds a new community in the wilderness.

Metamorphism

Kate Saltel | Texas | Age 17

Metamorphism is the change in a rock due to heat or pressure. This clever short expresses how humans undergo similar transformations under great pressure from family, school, and wealth.

Earth had issues Loading...

Leonardo Pirondi | California | Age 20

Lushly photographed on 16mm, this meditation on the relationship between humans, nature, and technology confronts the menacing effect machines and industry have on the planet's well being.

Pathfinders

When it feels like the world has failed to provide us with an adequate instruction manual for life, we need to forge our own path to understand our place in the universe.

She Who Wasn't Tamed

Saleh Kashefi | Iran | Age 19

Over the course of a day-long, school-wide poetry recital competition, a rebellious high schooler reaches out to an anxious classmate whose determination to be the best has pushed them to a breaking point.

Life in the Between

Siara-Lauren | Florida | Age 22

A tense first day of school causes young Surrah to find herself stuck in biracial limbo. She looks to her family for help in understanding how she fits into the world.

Grounding

Oisín-Tomás Ó Raghallaigh | Ireland | Age 19

Shy, 16-year-old Sarah finds the courage to open up while attending an appointment at a children's mental health facility,



Ida

Mirjam Thorkelsdottir | Norway | Age 20

Faced with crippling loneliness, Ida tries reaching out to old friends to keep herself from slipping away in this sensitively directed look at the value of companionship.

Beautiful Days

Klaudia Pashjari | Greece | Age 19

A lifelong friendship receives a meditative portrait as we accompany two women during their daily activities, from morning drinks to evening shoreline sunsets.

The Quiet

Radheya Jegatheva | Australia | Age 20

In this cosmically impressionistic animation, an astronaut ponders the quietude of space and comes upon a startling self-realization. The truth is written in the stars, but what will he uncover?

Speak, Memory: Documentary

Memory and history inform the future in these six documentaries that consider the legacy of language, the power of collective identity, and the ripple effects of incarceration and climate change.

Inuit Languages in the 21st Century

Ulivia Uviluk | Canada | Age 22

Scouring the internet for information about Inuktitut, Ulivia considers the future of this complex, multi-dialectical language that evolves with new generations.

\$360.00

Matt Swing | Chicago | Age 22

A few weeks after finishing parole, Antonio Brison returns to the spot that changed his life forever. Now an actor and performer, he utilizes the skills that he uses on stage to tell his story.

The Factory of Light

Cinema en curs students from Castellet High School | Spain | Age 16



A uniquely reflective glimpse into a factory that manufactured graphite rods for cinema projectors. This enigmatic journey explores not only the factory itself but also the people who used to work there.

The Impossible Way

Grady Roderweiss-O'Brien | Chicago | Age 10

An impassioned and informative explanation from a young environmentalist on how humans contribute to climate change and the effects on our animals and planet, offering solutions in the process!

Uma Fruta Estranha (A Strange Fruit)

Natalie Harris | New York | Age 21

Utilizing stock footage and confrontational narration, this visual poem unearths what binds Afro-Brazilians and African-Americans across continents and shared cultural connections of their resilient ancestors.

Creciendo (Growing Up)

Nancy Nguyen | California | Age 21

On the grounds of a unique Paraguayan high school where students leave home to study farming and entrepreneurship, a portrait emerges of teenagehood and the challenges facing educators in the 21st century.

It's All Relative: Siblings

Bonds are tested and renewed in these heartfelt stories of sibling rivalry and solidarity, revealing the ways brothers and sisters shape each other's character.

My Brother's Keeper

Mariah Barrera | New York | Age 18

Combining family photos and dramatic footage, the filmmaker crafts a lyrical look at her father's experiences with brotherhood, incarceration, and the relationship between the two.

Escape

Laura Hadsund Baarstrøm | Denmark | Age 18



Fearing her neglectful parents will split them apart, teenaged Freja takes her younger brother into the woods. Insecurity over their escape settles in as she reflects on being a responsible older sister.

Stranger

Chloe Caufield | Arizona | Age 20

Filmmaker Chloe Caufield creates a tender portrait of her brother, who shares his journey with autism and how it has shaped his perception and expression of self.

Delta

Jules St-Jean | Canada | Age 22

Three sisters journey to fulfill the dying wish of their father: scattering his ashes at Prince Edward Island. Together they recollect their complicated family history, a life filled with both darkness and light.

Bru'dhars

Sriram Papolu | Michigan | Age 20

Through his own tumultuous relationship and often violent power dynamic with his little brother, a young man confronts his own trauma from a generational cycle of abuse.

Up Past Bedtime: Horror

True crime, creature features, and descents into the darkest depths of the mind are the jumping off points for these exciting and bold genre exercises.

Taming Kara

Naishe Nyamubaya | South Africa | Age 21

Poaching rare animals for the black market, a pair of hunters find themselves in over their heads after capturing the exotic Tokoloshe, a mythic creature whose touch leaves one with a menacing curse.

Wendigo

Max Hendrickson | Ireland | Age 15

Deliriously deadpan, this hybrid animation follows a young man who decides to visit an abandoned house in the mountains, only to be haunted by its baneful, pagan past.



Pogo

Ella McKeon | California | Age 12

This free associative dive into the mind of America's most infamous clown paints a portrait of "Pogo" as the culmination of failed artistic impulses and dark desires.

Blue Zenith

Jacques Manjarrez, Nathan Kim | Chicago | Age 22 & 21

Sitting around a campfire, we are told the curious tale of Gregory, a young man who takes his maniacal obsession with eels to a gruesome extreme in this dark comedy horror.

Hollow

Max Buttrill | Florida | Age 15

Soaked in inky dread and featuring a Lynchian sonic preoccupation with electricity, this formally bold journey into darkness follows a young investigator as she experiences strange phenomena in a recently abandoned house.

Swipe Right for Murder

Raine Bracken | Canada | Age 21

An aspiring crime writer finds her perfect match through online dating. Unfortunately, their interests are a little too closely aligned: it's not "fictional" crime he likes to dabble in...

Hi, Mom!

These six shorts celebrate the impact that mothers have on our lives, tugging at your heartstrings with dramatic stories of family, grief, and most of all: love.

The Memory Palace

Luke Alexander Harris | California | Age 21

Returning to her childhood home for the last time, Diamond finds her repressed memories triggered by artifacts that force her to re-live a painful history with her mom.

Neuma

Nikki Milan Houston | California | Age 21



As the last rays of a dying California summer shine through, young Neuma tries to mourn the death of her mother after the accidental killing of an animal.

Roti

Ariella Khan | Evanston, IL | Age 20

Sarah has the perfect dress in mind for Homecoming, but her mother insists it's too short. With the help of some fresh roti and a comically well-meaning classmate, Sarah finds beauty in the different aspects of her life.

Mama

Simon Maria Kubiena | Austria | Age 19

After his mother has a stroke, Karner drives to bring her some essentials. With his daughter in tow, Karner finds more than he expects in his encounter with his childhood home.

Through the Looking Glass

Carolyn Carpenter | Minnesota | Age 22

Exploring her identity through technology, surveillance, water, and archival audio, Carolyn's self portrait reveals the powerful influence of her mother over her body and mind.

No Crying at the Dinner Table

Carol Nguyen | Canada | Age 21

Using vulnerable recollections in the form of confession, filmmaker Carol Nguyen interviews her family to craft a portrait of love, grief and intergenerational trauma caused by cultural oppression.

Jam Session: Music

Band mates and artists find their music and personal lives blend together in these visually arresting films, featuring energetic music videos to reflective dramas and absurdist comedies.

Mod Mod Teenage World

Adelaide Wilson | Chicago | Age 18

Mod teenager Julie becomes smitten with local cutie Winston and, determined to win him over, carefully follows magazine advice on "How to Get the Guy" in this lushly textured love letter to 1960's Swinging London.



kwənáŋət né?

Marius Fernandes, Anthony Fernandes | Canada | Age 14 & 16

An Indigenous youth artist transcends feelings of social isolation in the COVID-19 pandemic by connecting to community online, empowering his listeners to bond in a time of disconnection.

The Banshee

Eva Ulreich | Virginia | Age 12

Inspired by American composer Henry Cowell's "The Banshee" from 1925, this short animated fairytale depicts the travel of The Banshee as she retrieves the soul of a dying young woman.

Spit Head

Theo Taplitz | California | Age 16

After the messy breakup of their band, John and Ophie try to make sense of their changed relationship as they reopen old wounds and revisit the underlying pain in the music they made together.

How Sad, How Lovely, How Brief

Olivia Lindsley | Chicago | Age 19

Inspired by the life of singer/songwriter Connie Converse, this experimental projection piece explores the isolation and desperation that can exist even in the most stimulating of environments.

The Artist, The Old Man and The Waiter

Gustav Bondeson | Sweden | Age 21

In the midst of a creative roadblock, a young blasé artist is enlightened in the search for her upcoming musical single when she encounters an old man and a surprisingly talented waiter.

Everything Bagel

Brendan Lee Hickey | Washington | Age 18

Following the devastating breakup and subsequent musical stagnation, a record store employee searches for a path forward as her band prepares for a show. An uproariously funny and absurd Seattle odyssey.



A New Outlook: LGBTQ+

Self love triumphs in these six short films as the filmmakers come of age and come to understand their own identities.

Baby Steps

Kira Findling | Ohio | Age 21

Through middle school texts, webcam videos, and secret moments, a young woman comes of age online. As she grows, she grapples with gender identity and sexuality, finding a new language for herself.

Out of the Box

Casey Gurtler | Colorado | Age 17

Unwilling to conform to social norms, filmmaker Casey Gurtler turns the cameras on her own mother-daughter relationship, crafting an authentic portrait of what it means to live an unshackled life out of the box.

Affection

Connor Williams | California | Age 20

Following an encounter with a homophobic stranger, two young gay men must confront their own attitudes toward their identities, revealing the complexities that often lie within interracial queer relationships.

This is a Teenage Love Letter

Tessa Hill | Canada | Age 18

Elliptical narrative rhythms and a preoccupation with physical media create a fresh perspective on this teenage romance in which a young woman writes a letter to her past, to love, and to what the future might hold.

Tender Hearts

Lauren Jevnikar | New York | Age 22

Remembering a warm summer afternoon, a woman unearths true feelings about intimate moments spent with her partner in this emotionally vulnerable and beautiful film.

Pitoc e Icinakosian

Jos-Onimskiw Ottawa-Dubé, Gerry Ottawa | Canada | Age 18 & 15



Gerry, an indigenous trans woman, and her brother paint a gentle and honest portrait of her identity and experience through the eyes of her family.

You Havin' a Laugh?: Comedy

Come have a hearty chuckle with these goofy shorts where heroes are pushed to their limits in the fight to keep parrots missing and claim the last piece of pie.

No Fan of Andy

Kai Tomizawa | Oregon | Age 16

After her childhood friend becomes completely obsessed with recovering her missing bird named Andy, Rain must decide whether to help her find him or make sure he stays out of their lives.

Backwater

Mone Frogg Christiansen | Norway | Age 22

The weather is perfect. The river is serene. And Even has just proposed to his girlfriend Ida. But do either of them think getting married is a good idea?

Interdimensional Pizza Pushers

Lije Morgan | New York | Age 22

Travelling through time and space delivering pizzas, Fishlips and Honeybear encounter all manner of oddballs as they try to make all the orders before their shift ends.

Pie

Miro Alleyne-McCarthy | UK | Age 15

The lone witness of a grisly brawl recounts the downward spiral that led six strange individuals to fight to the death over the greatest prize of all - a perfect slice of pie.

STAY AT HOME movie

Sasha Lebedeva | California | Age 21

A playful narrator tries to convince herself that she is not bored during the COVID-19 isolation and that everything is okay in this comedy about the destructive nature of self-persuasion.

Happy Little Fly



Justin Fargiano | New York | Age 19

Staring down the business end of a flyswatter, a fly spirals into an existential crisis as its life flashes before its eyes in this tragicomic claymation.

A Bootless Grief

Nick Milczarczyk | Canada | Age 16

Four friends decide the best way to get revenge on an old man who stiffed them on their summer jobs: steal his fortune. But can they even trust each other?

Give Me Strength

Provocative and emotional, these shorts exhibit the power and resilience of survivors as they reflect on and recover from personal traumas.

The Lord's Day

Simon Weizineau | Canada | Age 18

To get over his Sunday boredom, a young Atikamekw wanders around killing time with friends, reminiscing about troubles at school and his dogs.

Moira

Mckenna Ryan | Canada | Age 20

Slipping out of the present and into the liminal unconscious landscape of her anxious mind, a woman struggles through an existential crisis in this ghostly 2D animation.

The Words We Don't Say

Jess O'Brien | UK | Age 18

As alcohol flows at a house party packed with teenagers, a nervous Ellie finds herself trapped in a dilemma that could compromise her sense of self and her relationship with a coercive partygoer.

The Year That Passed

Grace Simmons | Pennsylvania | Age 22

Minimalist, monochromatic animation accompanies this thoughtful look at addiction and grief, in which a young woman reflects on how the opiate epidemic has directly affected her life and her understanding of the world.



Witness

Kira Findling | California | Age 22

In a world where women go missing every day, the terror of going outside becomes personified in colorful paintings, Google Maps images, and the news.

An Alternative Method

Hannah Schierbeek | Chicago | Age 22

After a ballerina teacher is followed on her way home from work, her fears start manifesting in dreams and reality. To cope, she confides in her neighbor.

Project a World: Experimental

Experience the radically inventive approaches to imagemaking from these young visionaries, who create a cinematic language all their own.

I Am He Who Created Himself

Emma Penaz Eisner | California | Age 17

Joining with his shadow, the first god creates himself as the progenitor of humanity. This surrealistic mix of stop motion, time lapse photography, and live action sequences re-imagine the Heliopolitan creation story.

Wonderland

Ella Fields | California | Age 15

Waking up on the beach, a young girl battles peer pressure to find her own happy place in an absurd, dreamlike world full of animal masks and eyeball munching loonies.

Home(sick)ness

Daria Litvichenko | Estonia | Age 18

Observational photography finds poetry in the everyday as Estonians living abroad share their memories of home, reflecting on their old routines and the wonderful quiet.

Life's a Blur

Shaun Louis Calleja | Malta | Age 21



A visual, abstract expressionist piece that finds vivid street lights meshing and colliding together to create a transcendent experience out of ordinary objects.

The Rose of Manila

Alex Westfall | Rhode Island/The Philippines | Age 22

Archival footage and reenactments evoke a formative moment in the life of young Imelda Marcos, the infamous wife of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, to investigate the nature of beauty and love.

CELEBRITISM

Mia Neumann | Chicago | Age 22

Hundreds of celebrity faces align in this kaleidoscopic collage, where endlessly generated media images create icons whose reality degenerates when fed to us at incredible speeds.

Same Everything

Rachel Bowman | Chicago | Age 18

Chaotic text, music, and multiple exposed images represent the inner state of two teenage girls discussing feelings of fear, apathy, and uncertainty about growing up as they get ready for a New Year's Eve rave.

Wash Day

Kourtney Jackson | Canada | Age 22

As they prepare for the day ahead, three young Black women discuss the public perception of their Blackness in relation to their cultivation of a strong sense of self.

I look back and it's gone

Teona Galgoțiu | Romania | Age 21

Hoping to find a way to keep important memories from disappearing, three subjects interact with an experimental device designed to reconstruct memory fragments.