

3 Afda 2020 graduation films in race for the Oscar

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Afda is proud to announce the selection of three 2020 graduation films to compete for the most prestigious award on the motion picture calendar - The Student Academy Awards (Oscars).

The Student Academy Awards, established in 1972, is an international student film competition that was founded with the intent to provide a platform for emerging global talent.

The Student Academy Awards creates opportunities for student filmmakers to showcase their work within the industry. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences strives to support and inspire emerging filmmakers, through awarding outstanding achievements, and to foster growth and education in the art and science of motion pictures.

Afda is the only film school in Africa to have ever won the most coveted award in cinema. "Elalini", the multiple award-winning AFDA Johannesburg honours film, won Best Foreign Student Film Award at the Student Academy Awards in 2006.

The films selected for the 2021 Student Academy Awards, all of which have female directors and producers, will represent Afda and South Africa in three separate categories. Afda's Johannesburg postgraduate film *Quiet on Set*, produced by Ore Ajewole and co-directed by Natasha Luttjeboer and Jessica Teixeira, represents Afda in the fiction film category. *Quiet on Set* tackles issues concerning abuse of power and sexual harassment as a young female sound designer is forced to choose between her career aspirations and her morals after witnessing the director harassing the female lead. This film elucidates, by use of a behind-the-scenes perspective, how set politics and power dynamics can play out in such a male-dominated field.

Ore Ajewole expressed that, "being chosen to represent Afda at the Student Academy Awards is the highest honour for *Quiet on Set*. As young female filmmakers who have already experienced gender discrimination and sexual harassment, both as individuals and as a group, being able to lend our voices to the conversation on a global level is everything we dreamed and more." Jessica Teixeira shared a similar sentiment; "speaking out isn't easy, it leaves you very vulnerable but I find such strength in that vulnerability, such strength in letting women know that they are not alone."

Another film that addresses topical thematic concerns is that of Afda's Durban postgraduate film *Liminal*, produced and directed by Tiffani Joy, that represents Afda in the documentary category. Conversations around identity unfold in *Liminal* when the concepts of race and racial categorisation in South Africa are explored from the perspectives of mixed raced individuals. The earnest discussion is occasionally complemented by an artistic representation of diverging skin colours to create poetic imagery that coincides with such paramount dialogue.



"I am so proud that Liminal has been selected to represent Afda for the 2021 Student Academy Awards but I know that it would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of my amazing crew," says Joy with acclamation. She then goes on to express her appreciation; "I am grateful that Liminal is getting the recognition that it deserves as it is not just my own story as a bi-racial filmmaker, but it is also the story of each person we had the privilege of interviewing along with so many others within a hyper-racialized society."

AFDA's Johannesburg undergraduate film *Cavity*, produced by Emma Morapedi and directed and animated by Brittany Reis, represents Afda in the animation category. *Cavity* is a dark fantasy animation that follows Brooklyn, the child protagonist, as she is transported to a fanciful land after losing her tooth down the sink drain upon meeting a mystical fairy. *Cavity* is filled with whimsical imagery created by use of hand-painted backdrops and digital animation, making this production a mixed media film.

Brittany Reis elaborated on using such a medium by saying that she felt it, "heightened the themes of imagination and being different... that's what the film is about; it's about accepting your wild imagination despite what others think, and to show how you can use this 'flaw' as a superpower." Emma Morapedi went on to convey her contentment for having *Cavity* represent Afda in the animation category and that, "as a young black woman, this film is an inspiration to all women - animated by a woman, produced by a woman, starring all female characters."

Congratulations to all cast and crew members!

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