

Northwest Film Forum Announces and Opens Applications for the Second Installment of the Lynn Shelton “Of A Certain Age” Grant

Awards \$25,000 To One Woman, Non-Binary, or Transgender Filmmake, Age 39 Or Older, Working on Their First Narrative Feature

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SEATTLE, WA (AUGUST 10, 2021) — In 2020, Seattle’s Northwest Film Forum (NWFF), alongside Duplass Brothers Productions, launched their inaugural Lynn Shelton “Of a Certain Age” Grant to honor the legacy of beloved late filmmaker Lynn Shelton. Shelton often spoke of seeing filmmaker Claire Denis at NWFF and feeling inspired that Denis did not make her first feature until age 40. At age 39, Shelton then went on to make her own first feature film (*We Go Way Back*); she followed it with a prolific canon of feature and television work which made an indelible mark on the landscape of American cinema.

Now in its second year, the Lynn Shelton “Of a Certain Age” grant awards \$25,000 to a US-based woman, non-binary, or transgender filmmaker, age 39 or older, who has yet to direct a narrative feature. The recipient of the 2020 installment was [Keisha Rae Witherspoon](#), a Caribbean-American filmmaker based in Miami.

"After nearly two decades of self-discovery, coursing—most often as a voyeur, through exclusive and often intimidating creative communities—and finally piecing together my career and creative identity from limited optics and examples, I’ve arrived at this new existence as a ‘40-year-old emerging filmmaker,'" explains Keisha Rae Witherspoon in her 2020 letter to the Award Selection Committee. "I’ve often been my own source of strength to push through these spaces, because I had to—because my unheard voice was my community’s, and it deserves more."

Megan Griffiths, a NWFF board member and Shelton’s longtime friend and collaborator, helped establish the grant last summer. She explains, "As last year's process revealed, this grant fills a void in our industry. The large number of talented individuals whose materials were viewed by last year's award selection committee was truly inspiring, and showcased just how overlooked this population of filmmakers has been. Lynn demonstrated through her life and work that great filmmakers can emerge at any age, and this grant seeks to reinforce that idea and put real institutional weight behind helping them do it."

The [2021 installment](#) includes developments which aim to increase access, including a national open call—rather than 2020’s nomination-based process—and eligibility is open to all transgender filmmakers.

"We have thought long and hard about how to make a more equitable grantmaking process for the second year of this affirming opportunity, and that includes an open application process to lower barriers for those who have been traditionally underserved," explains Vivian Hua, Executive Director of NWFF.

"This grant has already shed light on a plethora of unique voices that, for various reasons, have yet to direct their first feature," remarks Mel Eslyn, president of Duplass Brothers Productions. "I

was blown away by the inaugural years' applicants—so many talented filmmakers that I can't wait to see more from. Hopefully I get to collaborate with a few of them as well!"

Reflecting on the inaugural year, Eslyn adds, "The reality is there is just not enough representation of women over a 'certain age' in media—in front of, but even moreso, behind the camera. We hope that this grant can be a meaningful step towards helping to change that."

Shelton emerged from her hometown of Seattle to become a major force in American independent cinema and a prolific television director. She was a vibrant, kind, creative human being. Her work drew acclaim for its compassion, humor, unique voice and wonderful performances. Shelton directed eight features including *Humpday* (2009), *Your Sister's Sister* (2011), *Outside In* (2018), and *Sword of Trust* (2019). Shelton also worked in television, directing memorable episodes of acclaimed series, including "Mad Men," "GLOW," "The Mindy Project," and "Little Fires Everywhere."

For those looking to give in her honor, donations to the [Shelton/Seal Family Fund](#) for the Northwest School for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children, or Seattle's [Northwest Film Forum](#) are encouraged.

The Lynn Shelton "Of a Certain Age" Grant was spearheaded by Duplass Brothers Productions, which includes Mark Duplass, Jay Duplass and Mel Eslyn, and 2021's installment is funded by many others, including Washington-based production company COLOR, Tracy Rector, Eliza Flug, Marc Maron, Joshua Leonard & Alison Pill, Michaela Watkins & Fred Kramer, CB Shamah, and Jennessa & Robert West.

ABOUT NORTHWEST FILM FORUM

Northwest Film Forum incites public dialogue and creative action through collective cinematic experiences. A nonprofit film and arts center located in Seattle, Northwest Film Forum presents hundreds of films, festivals, community events, multidisciplinary performances, and public discussions each year. A comprehensive visual media organization, the Forum offers educational workshops and artist services for film and media makers at all stages of their development. Artist services include access to space, gear, fiscal sponsorship, and an edit lab. Northwest Film Forum is a member-based organization. nwfilmforum.org

ABOUT DUPLASS BROTHERS PRODUCTIONS

Under their banner Duplass Brothers Productions (DBP), award-winning filmmakers Mark and Jay Duplass and Mel Eslyn create original projects for film, television, and digital media.

In television, DBP was previously in an overall deal with HBO which yielded the hit series ROOM 104 (currently in its fourth season) and TOGETHERNESS, both of which Mark and Jay created, directed, and executive produced. HBO licensed DBP's animated series ANIMALS, which ran for three seasons.

DBP is also active in the docuseries television space, best known for producing Netflix's WILD WILD COUNTRY, winner of the Emmy Award for Outstanding Documentary or Nonfiction Series in 2018. DBP also produced EVIL GENIUS for Netflix and ON TOUR WITH ASPERGER'S ARE US for HBO, and they will release a new docuseries on HBO and Hulu in 2020.

DBP's recent feature film productions include THE ONE I LOVE, TANGERINE, the CREEP franchise, PADDLETON and HORSE GIRL. Both brothers have also been prolific in front of the camera. Mark is a series regular on the Golden Globe-nominated Apple series THE MORNING SHOW, and Jay starred in all four seasons of Amazon's award-winning series TRANSPARENT, as well as the series finale movie.