



ESTUARIES

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After the death of his partner, Eli turns to the recently deceased's artist friends for a hand with his immigration, but some of them have ulterior motives.

100 minutes. 4K DCP

SYNOPSIS

A scripted drama/comedy inspired by Shamriz's own experiences immigrating to the U.S during the Trump administration, ESTUARIES is set in 2017, months after a car crashed through the front window of a Los Angeles art space, killing Bdalak, a rising nonbinary performance artist. Bdalak's partner Eli (Lior Shamriz), a queer Mizrahi musician with a past as an activist in Israel, planned to marry them for a green card and now spends his time adrift, communing with others over his grief and struggling with his visa. He soon meets Myrna, an artist making work about immigration, whom he feels can help solve his situation.

www.estuariesthemovie.com



Directed by **Lior Shamriz**
Screenplay by **Lior Shamriz** and **Matt Polzin**

Produced by **Cary Cronenwett, Alina Rojas Sotres, Sammy Loren, Matt Polzin,**
and **Lior Shamriz.** Produced by **spektakulativ pictures** and **Postcode Productions**

CAST

Lior Shamriz as Eli
Chelsea Rector as Myrna
Emily Lucid as Fiona
Rebecka Jackson as Rachel
Peter Kalisch as Binnie
Tal Meiri as Ronit
Jordan Green as Picard
Atsuko as Christiana
Helene Udy as Morit Paltel
Oscar Alvarez as Mark
Steve Tyler as Robert
Mikki Yamashiro as Sveti
Jason Black as Merrill
Asaadhye Pal as Bdalak's brother
Irit Gidron, Myriam Ali-Ahmad, Maksim Al-Names, Setaleki Manu, Rashvir Singh,
Pooja-Accamma Somaiah, Elliott Tucker, Ryan Harper Gray, René Schoeneberger,
Alessio Bonaccorsi, Marval Rex, Alina Rojas Sotres, Tyler Matthew Oyer, Dez'Mon
Omega Fair, Moti Brecher, Cezar Alberto Lomeli, Damian Dragon, Laura Stinger,
Mamie Green, Hvrmony Adams, Samantha Kayombo, Lil Davis, Ashley Kayombo,
Shelley Skandrani, Mali Nadav, Peter Hernandez, Mark Golamco and Cesar
Dorantes Guevara

Art Consultancy and Bdalak's Art

Neha Choksi, Oscar Alvarez, Lydia Hicks,
Marcus Kuiland Nazario, Kristof Trakal, Maia Assaq

Choreography by **Dorothy Dubrulle, Anna Luisa Petrisko** Drawing by **Stevie Choi**

Cinematography: **Chapin Hall**

Assistant Camera: **Annie Shifflette**

Edited by **Lena Jordanin** Costumes: **M. Caye Castagnetto** Headpieces and Masks by
Page Greene Music by **Asaf Yuria, Teodora Stepančić, Anna Luisa Petrisko, Lior**
Shamriz, and **Manual de Falla** Sound design: **Assaf Gidron**



*There is lamentation in the haunted city.
Reeds of mourning grow there.*

- The Lament for Sumer and Urim

PRODUCTION

This independent production was created as a collaboration between the director and their communities in Los Angeles and elsewhere. Many of the art spaces in the films are queer and BIPOC art spaces on the east side of Los Angeles. For example, O_Space in Lincoln Heights is the façade of “Byzantium,” while LAST Project on Avenue 26 is “Lagash,” the gallery Eli goes to look at the drawing of the crash at Estuaries.

The first phase of production took place in autumn 2020, from mid-October until mid-December, during the intense time surrounding the 2020 elections. The production had to adjust to the pre-vaccine era of careful social gatherings. Completion filming took place in the summer of 2021 in L.A., as well as outside the U.S.

Many of the performers in the film are artists who are also part of the performance and visual arts scene portrayed in the film. These include Peter Kalisch, Chelsea Rector, Emily Lucid, Tyler Matthew Oyer, Rebecka Jackson, Dez’mon Omega Fair, Mikki Yamashiro, Marval Rex, Laura Stinger, Dorothy Dubrulle, Anna Luisa Petrisko, Mamie Green, Jason Black as well as others.

DIRECTOR BIO

Lior Shamriz creates films, installations, and music. Their works often encapsulate a tense narrative, tying campy spectacle and introspective textuality. Born in Ashkelon on the East Mediterranean, they dropped out of the army at nineteen and began making hi8 films and experimenting with computer-generated music and collective art publications. After living a decade in Berlin, they are now based in California. From 2016 to 2018, they curated programs at PAM performance space in Highland Park, Los Angeles, and from 2018 to 2021 for Project Space Festival Juárez and taught workshops on film and performance. They were currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Film and Digital Media at UC Santa Cruz.



Their films were presented at festivals and venues such as the Berlinale, Locarno IFF, Sarajevo IFF, MoMA's ND/NF, BAFICI, Frameline, MixNYC, Torino IFF, Walker Art Center, and the Lincoln Center in New York City, and won awards at Oberhausen Kurzfilmtage.

DIRECTOR FILMOGRAPHY

Port Saïd - Santa Cruz - Sarmad Kashani / 2022 / 14 minutes / Experimental
Fetish Puppies Break Free! / 2019 / 14 minutes / Experimental
Spring in the Park / 2018 / 35 minutes / Experimental
The Cage / 2017 / 65 minutes / Experimental Fiction
Fallen Blossoms / 2016 / 65 minutes / Experimental
The Night / 2015 / 7 minutes / Experimental
Tornado - The Cultural Attaché / 2015 / 4 minutes / Experimental Music Video
Cancelled Faces / 2015 / 80 minutes / Experimental Fiction
L'amour Sauvage / 2014 / 26 minutes / Experimental Fiction
The Present of Cinema / 2013 / 7 minutes / Experimental
The Runaway Troupe of the Cartesian Theater / 2013 / 18 minutes / Experimental Fiction
Beyond Love and Companionship / 2012 / 18 minutes / Fiction
A Low Life Mythology / 2012 / 80 minutes / Fiction
Return Return / 2010 / 26 minutes / Experimental
Saturn Return / 2009 / 93 minutes / Experimental Fiction
The Magic Desk / 2008 / 10 minutes / Experimental
The Whitman Project / with Heinz Emigholz / 2007 / 55 minutes / Experimental
Japan Japan / 2007 / 65 minutes / Experimental Fiction
Ho! Terrible Exteriors / 2006 / 27 minutes / Experimental Fiction
Return to the Savanna / 2005 / 15 minutes / Experimental Fiction

www.liorshamriz.com

SOME OF THE TEAM

MATT POLZIN (co-writer)

Matt writes fiction, autobiography, and criticism. Originally from Michigan, he moved to Los Angeles and completed his MFA at CalArts. His writing can be found in Bathhouse Journal, Poetry Project Newsletter, Modern Painting, and Recorded Reading Archive of DittoDitto Books, amongst other places. He is currently a Ph.D. student in Literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. mattpolzin.info



CARY CRONENWETT (producer)

Cary is a director, editor, writer, and producer. He holds an MFA from The California Institute of the Arts Program in Film and Video and a BA from Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Originally from Oklahoma, he is currently based in Los Angeles.

His narrative and documentary work has been screened at numerous festivals, including Miami International, Outfest Los Angeles, Frameline, NewFest New York, Queer Lisboa/ Lisbon, Identities Vienna, Montreal Image + Nation, London Flare, and Toronto Inside Out. carycronenwett.com



ALINA ROJAS SOTRES (producer)

Alina is a director, writer, and producer based in Mexico City. alinarojassotres.com



SAMMY LOREN (producer)

Sammy is a writer and producer based in Los Angeles. sammyloren.com



CHAPIN HALL (cinematographer)

Chapin was raised in Hawai'i and has since lived and worked worldwide. He is a lifelong and passionate visual art practitioner, having formally studied sculpture and art history at the famed School of the Art Institute of Chicago before following in his mother's footsteps in photography. When the opportunity arose to assist legendary documentary cinematographer Bob Richman, Chapin jumped at the chance. As a Director of Photography, Chapin has gone on to shoot music videos, fashion films, commercials, narrative feature films, TV, and many documentaries. chapinhall.com



ANNA LUISA PETRISKO (Choreographer - Morit Paltel's orientalist "Yemenite Dreams")

Anna is an artist and a choreographer based in Los Angeles.

annaluisapetrisko.com



DOROTHY DUBRULE (Myrna's "Dance of the Immigrants" choreography)

Dorothy is a choreographer and performer living in Los Angeles, California, where she is the director of Pieter Performance Space. dorothydubrule.com



M.CAY CASTAGNETTO (Stylist)

Caye is a musician currently living in Los Angeles, CA. They have exhibited and performed in venues such as the Oberhausen International Filmtage, Kunstverein Munchen (DE), The Whitney Museum (US), Vivienne Westwood's The Art of Elysium. caycastagnetto.wordpress.com



M. PAGE GREENE (Dance Masks and Head-pieces)

Page is an artist and a designer based in Los Angeles. IG @page__person



SOME OF THE CAST

CHELSEA RECTOR ("MYRNA")

Chelsea Rector is a poet and performer based in Owensboro, KY.



EMILY LUCID ("FIONA")

Emily Lucid is a San Francisco-born and Hawaii-raised Jewish trans woman. She is a visual artist and actress currently residing in Los Angeles. Emily's work deals with her interest in gender and beauty. Emily has performed in galleries, films, and venues in L.A., N.Y.C., and Portland, Oregon and is studying for her BFA at Calarts.



TAL MEIRI ("RONIT")

Tal Meiri is an actor, DJ, curator, and film festival producer. A Yisidh, English and French enthusiast, avid reader of paperback books, she's studying Bass guitar and practicing Buddhism.



ATSUKO OKATSUKA ("CHRISTIANA")

Atsuko Okatsuka is a stand-up comedian, actress, and podcast host in Los Angeles, CA.



PETER KALISCH ("BINNIE")

Peter Kalisch is a performance artist and noise musician based in Los Angeles. Kalisch has performed for Queer Biennial, the Broad Museum, the Getty Museum, Re: art show, and a variety of underground warehouse and nightlife venues.

JORDAN MICHAEL GREEN ("PICARD")

VCU alum, screen and TV actor Jordan Michael Green can be found on YouTube @GetExtraJordan.



REBECKA JACKSON ("RACHEL")

Rebecka Jackson is an interdisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles, California. She holds an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), where she studied film production and theater. Her current work is focused on multimedia performance art that integrates current events, political and social movements, and violence.



HELENE UDY ("MORIT")

Born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Helene Udy is best known for playing edgy, rough hewn and often sympathetic portrayals of misunderstood characters the most well known of which is the series regular prostitute "Myra" on the popular CBS TV Western Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman.



OSCAR ALVAREZ ("ALEX")

Oscar Alvarez is a performance artist with a studio practice in sculpture and installation, working with totemic hierarchies, clown rituals, metaphysical grids, sacred geometry, and object embodiments of male psyches.



MIKKI YAMASHIRO (“SVETI”)

Mikki Yamashiro is a self-taught artist, performer and professional wrestler based in LA. Performing under the stage name “Candy Pain”, she is a Libra, and thus contrary by nature. Her work is influenced by pop culture and craft.



STEVE TYLER (“ROBERT”)

Steve Tyler has been cast as the quintessential straight man by the Farrelly Brothers in more of their films than any other actor in Hollywood. He can be seen in King Pin, Something About Mary, Me, Myself & Irene, Shallow Hal, Stuck on You and The Three Stooges.



DIRECTOR STATEMENT

This film was inspired by my own life journey, immigrating multiple times in my adult life. It is also inspired by similar journeys I saw people around me go through as they crossed borders, looking to find a place to call home while figuring out the paperwork and the feeling of alienation from the societies around them. Unsatisfied with life in one place and often feeling marginalized there, either for gender, sexuality, ethnicity, life choices, or political views, many ended up migrating more than once, scattering their social lives around the globe.

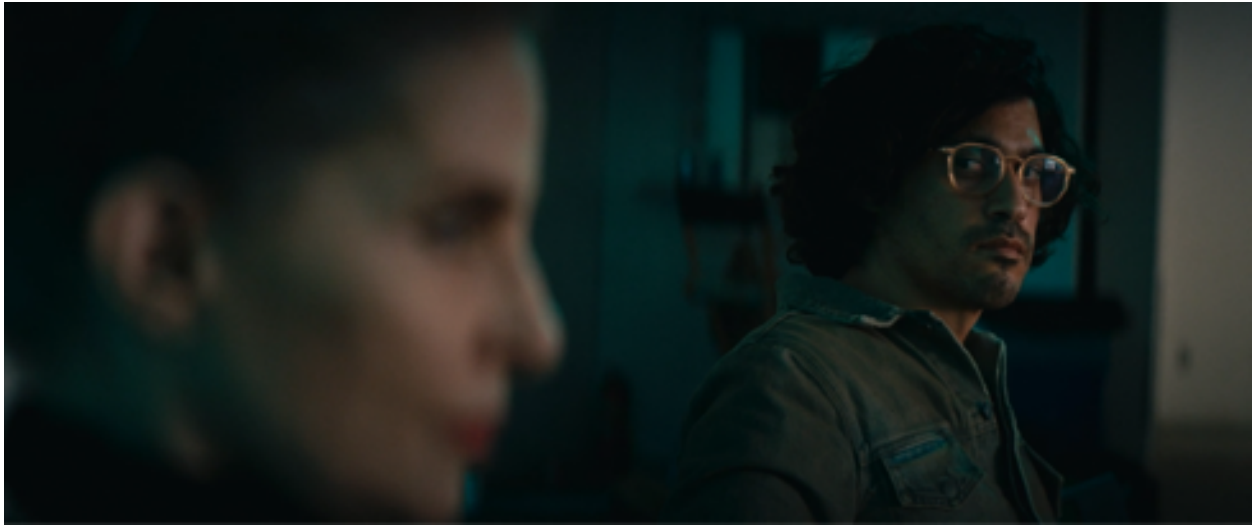
ESTUARIES taps into my personal Queer/PIBOC milieu in Eastside LA and my own familial histories. The film's art landscape was nurtured by previous art installations and research projects I engaged with in previous years, such as the Sumerian-poetry-inspired "City Laments" performance (2020) I made for Project Space Festival Juárez, Mirrors for Prices (2009) which juxtaposed the Instructions of Šurruṣag with contemporary queer performance and MENA-EU migration narratives, and the Corduene Meditation Site (2017) that I first built at the Seoul Museum of Art's artist residency to meditate on how the coercion of borders and surveillance and the way the historical is narrated.

The film offers a cynical take on the idea that art can bring people from different places and backgrounds together, examining who benefits. Through moments of satire, this work asks the question, Who gets to have a platform to talk about social change? Myrna is a U.S. artist who practices "klepto-poetics," stealing material from others to make shallow work about "immigrants." Still, Eli, the immigrant protagonist, is too busy figuring out his visa situation to make work about what is happening to him.

At the same time, it is also a meditation on loss - the loss of a partner but also of cultural heritage and community. Eli feels the loss of his connection to his dead grandmother and her Judeo-Arabic language and Iraqi culture, and it's the loss of Estuaries, the non-profit art space where Eli found community in Los Angeles. Those lost heritages then become almost no more than a curiosity or a gimmick within a globalized profit-oriented cultural world.

Eli mourns his partner, just as the community mourns the art space Estuaries. Bdalak is an "absent hero" whose image is never seen and whose gender remains obscure. No actor portrays Bdalak, who remains unseen throughout the film. Others tell their myth. To create Bdalak's oeuvre, we invited six artist friends to contribute ideas and works to create a multifaceted character, not simply defined.

The camera in Estuaries documents a Los Angeles queer performance scene that has been shaken by the 2016 election and later by Covid. In this regard, the film is modeled after the ancient verse form of the Sumerian city lament, which tells of cities that have been devastated, sometimes by storms. For Eli, Estuaries is a symbol, both of catastrophe as well as what was lost. "Reeds of mourning grow there," as is written in the lament for Sumer.



CONTACT

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