

Maria-Saroja Ponnambalam

Director-Producer-Interdisciplinary Artist

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Qualifications	Versatility in producing and directing independent film, critical and interdisciplinary thinker, integrates a culturally sensitive and anti-oppressive approach to storytelling, committed to highlighting underrepresented lived experiences, identities and stories
Education	M.A in Human Geography - University of Toronto, Dep. Geography & Planning, 2016 B.F.A in Film Production - York University, Dep. of Cinema & Media Arts, 2008
Awards	John Horner Scholarship (2016), K.M Hunter Award for Excellence in Media Arts, Ontario Arts Council (2015), 2 Digital Emmy Awards for <i>HIGHRISE</i> (2014 & 2015), National Apprenticeship Trainee Award, Academy of Canadian Cinema (2009), York University Fine Arts Award (2008)
Films	<p><i>Fotdella</i>, Dur: 19 min, 2019, (Short Documentary) Director and Producer Funders: Ontario Arts Council, National Film Board Filmmaker's Assistance Program Awards: Best Short Documentary - Regina International Film Festival (2021) Official Selections: Regina International Film Festival (2021), Canada Shorts Film Festival, Award of Commendation (2021), Art Gallery of Hamilton Film Festival (2021), Charlottetown International Film Festival (2021), Kitchener-Waterloo Film Festival (2021), Whakapappa Film Festival (Irsina, Italy) (2020)</p> <p><i>Pandi</i>, Dur: 60 min, 2013, (Short Documentary) Director and Producer Funders: Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, National Film Board Filmmaker's Assistance Program Official Selections: Calgary International Film Festival, Tangled Arts + Disability, International Diaspora Film Festival, Scarborough Film Festival (Audience Award Winner), Rendezvous with Madness, Mumbai Women's International Film Festival, South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC) screening, Brixton Pound (Brixton, UK), and 20 + community-based screenings across the GTA</p> <p><i>Pretty Little Bits</i>, Dur: 12 min, 2010, (Short Documentary) Director and Producer Financial Support: aluCine Toronto Latin Media Festival commission Official Selections: Worldwide Short Film Festival, Calgary International Film Festival, Youngcuts (Nominated for Best Doc), aluCine Toronto Latin Media Festival Press: Listed as One of Toronto's Top Ten Documentaries - BlogTO (2010)</p> <p><i>The Consequence of Rain/ La Consecuencia de la Lluvia</i>, Dur: 17 min, 2008, (Short Documentary) Director and Producer Official Selections: Montreal World Film Festival, France Int'l Environmental Film Festival, Int'l Short Film Festival of India, Human Rights Doc Fest, aluCine Toronto Latin Media Festival</p>
Mixed Media	<p><i>How we cared</i>, Dur: 3 min, January 2020, (Video Installation) Director and Producer Funders: Ontario Arts Council Exhibition Assistance, Toronto Arts Council - Media Arts Exhibitions: Rendezvous with Madness (Nov 2021), <i>Architecture after the Asylum</i>, Trinity Square Video (Jan 17-Feb 29, 2020)</p>

Production Credits *Arrival Archives* (Short Documentary), Dir: Maya Bastian, Dur: 10:52, 2018
 Director of Photography

Video Home System (Short Fiction/Experimental), Dir: Sharlene Bamboat, Dur: 19:10, 2018
 Director of Photography

Highrise (Interactive Documentary), Dir: Katerina Cizek, 2010 - 2015
 Story Researcher and Picture Editor
 Development and researcher for five web-documentaries, *Out My Window*, *1000th Tower*, *1 Millionth Tower*, *The Universe Within*, *Short History of the Highrise*, collaborated with international photojournalists to develop groundbreaking stories about highrise communities across the world

Awards: International Digital Emmy Award for Non-Fiction (2011) for *Out My Window/HIGHRISE* & Emmy Award for News and Documentary (2014) for *Short History of the Highrise*. and several others

Act of God (Feature Documentary), Mercury Films, Dir: Jennifer Baichwal, Dur: 76 min, 2009,
 Production Assistant/Intern

Publications *Fill the Frame with Mist* (2021), (Screenplay). Ponnambalam, Maria-Saroja. (re)Rites of Passage: Asian Canada in Motion – a special anthology published as part of the 2021 Toronto Reel Asian Film International Film Festival.

Work Experience **Filmmaker, Independent, 2004 - Present**
 Director and producer of multiple short experimental documentaries, and one feature documentary. Wrote successful funding proposals for arts council funding, managed creative, administrative and financial aspects of production, negotiated employment contracts and oversaw budgets, hired production crews, worked with post-production companies to finalize deliverables

Community Planner, Social Planning Toronto, January 2018 - August 2022
 Supported grassroots groups, neighbourhood networks and coalitions to build community capacity and civic participation in their communities. Led strategic planning, community organizing and advocacy to advance social equity in housing, racial justice, community infrastructure and civic engagement in Neighborhood Improvement Areas across Toronto

Programming and Tech Coordinator, Regent Park Film Festival, May 2016 - Dec 2017
 Logistics coordination and curation of high-quality film programming, interactive installations, virtual reality projects, photo exhibits, panels and workshops for an annual festival

Community Media Coordinator, HIGHRISE (National Film Board), Dir: Kat Cizek, 2010 - 2015
 Coordinator of photo-voice workshops with low-income tenants in Rexdale, Toronto

Project Assistant, Ontario Media Development Corporation (Ontario Creates), June - Sept 2009
 Supported Film, TV and Media consultant with event and project delivery, organized funding proposals, provided jury documentation, coordinated the TIFF international financing forum

Fellowships Instituto Sacatar Art Residency Fellow, Itaparica, Brazil (2013)
 Hot Docs Accelerator Lab Participant (2013)
 Academy of Canadian Film and Television Apprenticeship (2009) - HIGHRISE (NFB)

Production Coordination Internship - Mercury Films - Jennifer Baichwal & Nick de Pencier (2008)

Teaching	<p>“From Scrapbook to Screen” - Workshop on creating archival video collage at Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) Toronto (2021) Instructor for Toronto School of Arts - Courses: Portfolio Development for Newcomers, Career Development (2018 - 2019) “Instructor for Youth Filmmaking Workshop,” Workman Arts - 2019 “Film Crew I” Instructor, Workman Arts, Toronto, Jan - Mar 2016 “Film Production”, Instructor, Workman Arts, Toronto, Oct - Dec 2015 Founder, Doc Film Workshop for Newcomers, Queens Commons, May 2015 - Aug 2015 Lecturer - <i>Digital Citizenship in the Global Suburbs</i>, Wilfred Laurier University, Sept 2015 Teaching Assistant, University of Toronto, Sept 2014 - Jan 2016 , Courses: Civic Engagement and Urban Politics (3rd year), Urbanization, Contemporary Cities & Urban Life” (3rd year) , “Historical Geographies of Urban Segregation and Exclusion” (2nd year) , “Geography of Canada” (2nd year) - Hot Docs Youth Camp Mentor, Aug 2010 & Aug 2011</p>
Volunteer	<p>Board Member, South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC), 2019 - 2021 Mental Health Advocate - Public Speaker, 2013 - Present Ontario Public Interest Research Group, TRACX Conference Organizer, 2016 & 2017 TOC, End Immigration Detention Network Organizer, Nov 2016 - Present Equity Committee - Geography Grad Student Association Organizer, 2014 - 2016 Community Coalition on Immigrant and Refugee Concerns Organizer, K-W, 2013 - 2016 Network for the Elimination of Police Violence Organizer Toronto, 2015 - 2016 Crossing Borders Youth Group Mentor, Waterloo, 2013 - 2015 Care Collective, Disability Care Worker - Toronto, 2015 - Present</p>
Related Experience	<p>Home Made Visible Jury Member (2017), K.M Hunter Award (Ontario Arts Council) Jury Member (2016), Featured artist on Koffler Gallery’s <i>Koffler Digital - ‘Death/Long Live: The Archive’</i> (2018)</p>
M.A - Research Paper	<p><i>Geographies of Precarious Citizenship: The Policing of Race and Formal Status in Toronto</i> (2016)</p>
Program Proficiency	<p>FCP, Adobe Creative Suite: Premiere Pro CC, Media Encoder, Canva, Microsoft Suite, Google Drive</p>
Languages	<p>Advanced Spanish, conversational Tamil</p>