

Annick Blanc, Maria Garcia Turgeon

Production company(ies)

Midi La Nuit

Short biography of producer(s)

Annick Blanc and Maria Gracia Turgeon's love of innovative storytelling and striking visuals has led them to create Midi La Nuit . Their debut feature films, Hunting Daze and Who Do I Belong To, premiered internationally this year at prestigious festivals: SXSW and Berlinale competition. Next, they are slated to feature at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, continuing their journey across the global festival circuit.

Blanc and Gracia Turgeon got Oscar Nominations for Best Live Action Short Film 2 years in a row in 2020 with Brotherhood (TIFF, Sundance) and in 2019 Fauve (Sundance Special Jury Award, Telluride). They also have won Best Canadian Short Film at TIFF both in 2018 with Brotherhood and in 2017 with PRE-DRINK. They have a dozen films to their credit that have been shown in renowned festivals such as Sundance, Locarno, Tribeca, Telluride and Tiff amongst others.

Filmography of applicant(s) - include title and year and/or a link to your IMDb page

Tout Simplement, 2016: Grand prix Focus-FNC, TIFF, CSA

IMDB

Annick Blanc https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3869291/?ref=fn_al_nm_1

Maria Gracia Turgeon https://www.imdb.com/name/nm5637080/?ref=fn_al_nm_1

Feature films:

Hunting Daze, 2024: SXSW, Sydney, Jeonju, Karlovy Vary, Fantasia, FIFF
Namur, Thessaloniki FF, - Best Screenplay, Audience Award- Jim Thorpe FF

Who Do We Belong To, 2024: Berlinale Competition, Karlovy Vary, Best Director- Hong Kong FF, Grand Prize- Taipei IFF, Istanbul FF, Flying Broom women FF, Taipei IFF, Mediterranean FF, Dubran IFF, Guanajuato IFF, Melbourne IFF, Afrika FF Köln, Helsinki IFF, FIFF Namur, BFI, Mostra de Sao Paulo, Mostra de Valencia, Stockholm IFF, Films from the south,

Short Films:

Brotherhood, 2018: Oscar Nominee, Best Canadian Short-TIFF, Sundance, Audience Award- Winterthur Int. Short Film Festival

Fauve, 2018: Oscar Nominee, TIFF, Special Jury award-Sundance, Telluride, CSA

Tibbits Hill, 2019: Busan, FNC, Best Short film- RVCQ, Bronze Prize- Solveig Anspach

The Color of Your Lips, 2018: CSA, Best fantastic short-Austin Fantastic fest, Fipresci Critic Prize– Regard sur le court, Best Canadian Short – Festival Court d’un soir
le Ver, 2018: Best Short – Festival Vitesse Lumière, FNC, Regard sur le court,
Pre-Drink, 2017: Best Canadian Short-TIFF, CSA, Tampere, Atlantic Film Festival
How Tommy Lemenchick Became A Grade 7th Legend, 2017: Tribeca, Giffoni Int. Film Festival, International Jury Award, Public Award-Reggio IFF
Lost Paradise Lost , 2017: Vancouver IFF, FNC, RVCQ, Best Directing - SPASM

Title of qualifying feature film
Hunting Daze

Expected release date in 2024:
March 8th 2024 (world premiere), August 16th 2024 (theatrical release)

Through which distribution model is your qualifying film expected to be released:
Festival

Name of theatrical distributor, film festival or streaming service releasing or exhibiting qualifying film:
SXSW (film festival), Maison 4:3 (distributor)

Film synopsis

Nina, a young, tempestuous woman, is taken in by a group of hunters in a remote cabin. In the midst of this tough, yet endearing, male micro-society, she feels like she finally belongs. A mysterious stranger’s arrival disrupts her newfound place in their male micro-society. Both raw and dreamlike, Hunting Daze offers up a unique universe where humour, horror, the uncanny, and the sensual combine.

The inspiration: why was this an important film to make?

"Hunting Daze" is an important film for us to make because it plunges the viewer into a psychological thriller where reality and dark humor gradually shift towards nightmare and horror. We have created a genre film that is both sensory, captivating, and mysterious, making it a unique addition to Canadian cinema. Beneath the veil of metaphor, we explore with this piece the theme of toxic masculinity and individual responsibility within a group, offering a thought-provoking narrative that resonates with contemporary social issues.

In the current context, it is crucial for us to create a film about a strong woman who confronts and triumphs over toxic masculinity. By participating in the cinematic conversation started by the #MeToo movement, we aim to tackle this subject in an entertaining yet metaphorical way. Our approach is designed to reach audiences who might be resistant to or fatigued by direct discussions of these issues, thereby broadening the impact of our film's message.

As people increasingly opt for home viewing over cinema outings, we wanted to create a truly cinematic experience that would intrigue and draw audiences back to theaters. "Hunting Daze" aspires to be breathtaking, entertaining, and intelligent—a film that stands out in the landscape of Canadian cinema. We promise a sensory experience that can only be fully appreciated on the big screen, encouraging a return to communal film-watching.

Amidst the ongoing political crises, we also believe it is important to showcase a character who is unafraid to challenge the establishment and dismantle harmful structures. This theme resonates with current societal movements and provides a narrative of empowerment and change that we feel is essential. Moreover, we believe that the possibilities offered by intertwining genres are underexploited in Canadian cinema.

With "Hunting Daze," we leverage the appeal of genre films and the element of surprise that comes from mixing different genres. Our innovative approach not only captivates the audience but also adds a layer of complexity and depth to the storytelling. Given the film's impressive run in prestigious festivals such as SXSW, Jeonju, Sydney, Fantasia, and Karlovy Vary, along with the enthusiastic audience response, we can confidently say it was a successful endeavor. Our unique approach not only captivates the audience but also adds a layer of complexity and depth to the storytelling. This fusion of genres allows us to explore multifaceted characters and themes in a way that single-genre films often cannot, thereby enriching the viewer's experience and providing a fresh perspective in Canadian filmmaking.

"Hunting Daze" is a vital film for us because of its bold exploration of toxic masculinity, its engagement with contemporary social movements, and its commitment to revitalizing the cinematic experience. We stand as a testament to the power of film to entertain, provoke thought, and inspire change.

The making-of: how did this film come together? What were the highlights/challenges of producing this film?

Our filmmaking journey began with challenges long before the cameras started rolling. Securing funding was as usual a lengthy process where we ended up successfully locking a nearly \$2.5 million budget.

The onset of the pandemic necessitated a year-long postponement of our shooting schedule, followed by an unexpected pregnancy of our producer-director, which further delayed production by another year. These challenges left us in a precarious situation, exacerbated by inflation and a shortage of skilled labor, all managed within our pre-pandemic budget. Despite these setbacks, we utilized the extended timeframe to enhance our creative process and maximize productivity. We creatively streamlined the film without compromising the creative vision. We take pride in being the "magic department," achieving so much with so little. Drawing from our experiences producing shorts, we navigated these challenges successfully.

Our debut film was incredibly ambitious. Among the significant challenges we successfully tackle : safely setting an actor on fire, complicated animal scenes such as our actress acting closely with a wolf, a dog acting to die, a complex blood rain rig requiring frequent resets of the actors, a car accident. Every day had a challenge, and all that while shooting in remote locations. We also navigated through unpredictable changes in temperature during Quebecois autumn, necessitating quick adjustments to our plans. Last but not least, we manage an ensemble cast of seven actors involved in daily intense physically and emotionally charged scenes.

Thanks to our reputation and previous shoots, we also managed to secure a talented cast including Nahema Ricci, Bruno Marcil, Alexandre Landry, Marc Beupré. We also had incredible key creative partners who had collaborated with us previously and were eager to join us for our first feature film. Both cast and crew believed in our vision, prioritizing the project despite its modest budget. These collaborations were crucial in achieving the production value we aimed for.

Yet, another hurdle awaited us during distribution. With minimal contacts in the feature film distribution world, we had to work hard to establish our presence. Despite the odds, we secured an international sales agent with a Minimum Guarantee (MG) before a festival selection, a rare feat for a Quebec debut feature. Our film then found its place in renowned festivals such as SXSW, Jeonju, Sydney, and Karlovy Vary, paving the way for distribution deals in the US, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

We are finally eagerly preparing, with our Canadian distributor Maison 4:3, for our first theatrical release set on August 16. We continue to learn and grow from this experience, gaining insights into the marketing tools needed and exploring different ways to reach our audience.

This challenging journey has made us stronger as women, partners and producers and taught us invaluable lessons and reaffirmed our passion for filmmaking.

National pride: describe what uniquely defines you as a Canadian producer.

As Canadian producers, we champion a cinema rooted in artistic merit rather than solely commercial appeal. This ethos allows us to boldly take risks and create unique cinematic experiences that challenge audiences and defy expectations. Our commitment to nurturing a strong artistic and cinematic vision ensures directors can imprint their distinctive signatures on every project.

We pride ourselves on inclusive and multicultural storytelling, both on-screen and behind the scenes. Our films portray diverse Canadian stories in multiple languages—French, English, Spanish, Arabic—and are shot in various countries, celebrating the rich tapestry of global cinema.

At the heart of our cinema is a feminist perspective, amplifying the strength and narratives of women. We push forward stories of resilience, empowerment, and talent, contributing to a cinematic landscape that values equality and representation. Our success is fueled by the exceptional creative and technical talent of Canadian cast and crews, who bring depth and innovation to every production. Many of our cast and crew have been able to gain experiences in both independent and major studio shoots.

The Canadian film industry has established itself as a key player in international co-productions. As Canadian producers, bolstered by institutional support, we were able to acquire experience and explore the co-production landscape to unite Canadian and international talents. These collaborations allow us to create films with a broader impact on both national and international stages.

In essence, as Canadian producers we stand at the forefront of a dynamic industry, shaping narratives that resonate globally while fostering creativity, diversity, and artistic excellence.

How will this film further your career as a producer?

This film marks a significant milestone in advancing our career as producers, enriching our knowledge across all aspects of production, funding, distribution, and crew management. The challenges we navigated have fortified our capabilities, preparing us to tackle even larger and more complex projects with confidence.

The success of our film has solidified the trust and confidence of funding institutions such as Telefilm and SODEC in our abilities. Alongside with our co-production "Who Do I Belong To," which premiered at Berlinale this year, we have now unlocked access to financial structures supporting budgets of 3.5 million and beyond.

Adding two feature films which received acclaim at prestigious festivals, to our two Oscars nominations for live action short, has not only elevated our profile but also expanded our network significantly. These successes have opened doors to new opportunities in production, coproduction and distribution and forged valuable connections crucial for future projects.

Moreover, our efforts in building an audience for our films within the festival circuit and beyond have been fruitful. We have learned to leverage social media and marketing tools effectively, enhancing our film's visibility and engagement across diverse audiences, including the general public, media, and social platforms.

As we continue to navigate the evolving landscape of filmmaking, these experiences and achievements have positioned us to pursue ambitious projects with greater impact and reach, shaping a promising trajectory for our future endeavors in the industry.

What is your next step as a Canadian independent producer?

As a Canadian independent producer, our next steps are poised to elevate the presence and impact of strong, unique and meaningful films in the global film industry while continuing to promote Canadian culture and talents. We currently have a diverse array of projects, spanning Canadian productions and international co-productions at various stages of development and production.

We are thrilled to have secured Telefilm funding for our upcoming majority co-production with Canadian-Colombian director Juan Andrés Arango, scheduled to commence filming in spring 2025 in Colombia. This highly anticipated project has already garnered attention, having won the DALE Award at the prestigious San Sebastian lab and being selected for Cannes' Cinefondation lab. We believe this film, about the resilience of the Emberá indigenous people fighting to return to their land, carries a hopeful and important message, and we are committed to bringing it to the public. Working with our Colombian co-producer to navigate this shoot in the dangerous Bogota slums and the jungle will be an unprecedented challenge from which we will learn a great deal.

Looking ahead, we aim to expand opportunities for strong Canadian talent. Discussions are underway with XYZ and Film Forge to explore the potential of our first interprovincial co-production. We are excited to discover new talents and innovative methods of production while uniting forces with fellow Canadians from other regions. This collaboration will not only strengthen our domestic film industry but also highlight the diverse and rich cultural narratives across Canada.

In addition, our premiere at SXSW has opened doors to potential partnerships in the US, broadening the scope of some projects that we are developing like 'Black Ballerina', which combines commercial appeal with unique storytelling. We are supported in this endeavor by the acclaimed team at Black Bear Pictures known for bringing 'Immaculate', 'I Care a Lot', and 'Mudbound' to the screen. Those connections will help us secure Canadian and American A-list cast members, ensuring strong appeal to both the public and financiers. This strategic direction aims to produce larger-budget films that maintain a bold artistic vision, always with the ultimate goal of bringing our stories to the broadest possible audience.

In parallel, we are committed to nurturing emerging voices and fostering diversity in Canadian cinema. This includes supporting first and second-time directors such as Annick Blanc and Meryam Joobeur, whose distinct perspectives enrich our industry.

Attending new markets and festivals to discover new talents and films, promote Canadian culture, exchange knowledge, and stay up to date with the latest trends and methods in filmmaking and production remains a priority. The success of our initial features has provided access to new funding and co-production opportunities. We have recently been invited to esteemed events like the Bogota Co-Production Market and Fantasia's Frontier, while our films continue to attract invitations from festivals worldwide including Namur, Thessaloniki, BFI London, Sao Paulo, Stockholm, among others.

In pursuit of our vision, we aspire to create larger-budget films that maintain a bold artistic proposition while aiming for ambitious storytelling that resonates globally. These endeavors reflect our dedication to advancing Canadian cinema on both national and international stages, fostering collaboration, innovation, and diversity in storytelling.