



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Reel Sisters Announces Award-winning Films for 2025**

#### ***Reel Sisters Presents Shallow End with Best Narrative Short Award***

Reel Sisters announces *Shallow End* as our Best Narrative Short Award 2025 and will recommend the film for Oscar consideration. In *Shallow End*, a woman in her 20s struggles to reclaim her life after returning home from a lengthy stay in rehab. *Shallow End* will stream in our virtual showcase from Oct. 26-Nov. 10, 2025 and receive a \$1,000 cash award.

“Our 2025 Award Winners represent an exciting balance between our in-person and virtual showcases,” said Reel Sisters Founder Carolyn A. Butts. “We hope film lovers from around the world will binge watch *Shallow End*, *Barrel Children* and *Grandmother’s Four Color Cards* online. Our virtual showcase is just as strong as our in-person films.”

### **AWARD WINNING FILMS**

Reel Sisters is proud to present 12 films with top awards for cinematic excellence. *Kiss My Grass* and *Barrel Children* will receive honorable mention and acknowledgement from our jurors for creating a praise worthy films.

Our list of award-winning films is below. For schedule visit [www.reelsisters.org](http://www.reelsisters.org).

## **BEST NARRATIVE SHORT AWARD (Recommended for Oscar Consideration)**

### **Shallow End**

**TRAILER:** <https://vimeo.com/1130421826?fl=pl&fe=sh>

### **Shallow End**

**Director:** Maria de la Cruz Rudloff

**Writer:** Maria de la Cruz Rudloff

**Producer:** Maria de la Cruz Rudloff, Janet Valentina Manina, Anne Leigh Cooper

narrative, 15 min.

Twenty-something year old Agatha comes home after a lengthy stay in rehab, a shattered person. In her small town, everything seems to remind her of the life she once had and the people she held dear before it all went wrong.

## **BEST DOCUMENTARY AWARD FEATURE**

### **The People's Way**

**Director:** William Taft Tyner, Ashley Tyner

**Producer:** Michael Tyner

narrative, 90 min.

Grappling with the impact of George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis, three community organizers, Jeanelle Austin, Toshira Garraway, and Robin Wonsley embark on interweaving journeys to care for their communities, find inner healing and build a future towards black liberation.

## **BEST DOCUMENTARY AWARD SHORT**

### **Boil That Cabbage**

**Director:** Candace Mae Williamson **Producers:** Kaylee Hayes, Jemina Garcia

Doc., 24 min.

Candace is a documentary filmmaker and novice banjo player. As she learns her first tune, “Boil That Cabbage Down,” she reaches out to historians, activists, and storytellers to uncover the complex history of the banjo. Through her journey, we are transported to the past, where the painting “The Old Plantation” is reimaged, revealing the instrument’s origins.

## **BEST SCREENPLAY AWARD**

### **By the Lake**

**Director:** Alex Dauphin

**Writer:** Alex Dauphin

**Producer:** Alex Dauphin, Sable Williams, Amer-Marie Woods

narrative, 25:21 min.

Luce is a Black loner from the city whose hard past makes them distrust the future. Reina is a White firecracker from Appalachia who has never heard a “no” she couldn’t sway. While Luce shoots up in an abandoned warehouse, Reina pops pills at home. Both OD. Their paths intertwine as they both struggle to get clean.

## **BEST DIRECTOR AWARD**

## **AND BEST NARRATIVE FEATURE AWARD**

**A Mess of Memories – Oct. 25, 2025 – 7 pm-9 pm**

**Director/Writer:** Ebony Blanding

**Producers:** Mandy McCowan, Hunter Barcroft, Brandon Williams

When their childhood home is threatened by their mother Jovita's hoarding, estranged siblings Deja, Riley, Mylo, and Brooke are forced to reunite. As they sift through years of clutter, buried memories resurface, tensions ignite, and long-held secrets unravel.

## **BEST COMEDY AWARD**

### **The Knife**

**Director/Writer:** Joy Nesbitt

**Producers:** Grace Odumosu

In *The Knife*, Ife, a young Black Irish woman, is anxiously awaiting her 20-week pregnancy scan, hoping for good news about her baby's health. But when the scan reveals unexpected complications, she and her husband, Darragh, are forced to confront a ridiculous reality that will test their trust in the healthcare system.

## **REEL SISTERS SPIRIT AWARD**

### **You Are Not Alone**

**Producer:** Deem Banton

**Director:** Brittney M Russell

doc., 52 min.

In the United States, Black women are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women, a disparity that rises sharply in the Bronx, one of New York State's most impacted communities, where Black mothers face a maternal mortality rate nine times higher than their counterparts. *You Are Not Alone* captures the powerful stories of women in the Bronx navigating pregnancy and advocating for change.

### **Ownership**

**Director:** Yvonne Huff Lee

**Writer:** Peppur Chambers

**Producer:** Yvonne Huff Lee, Peppur Chambers, Matthew Soraci

narrative, 30 min.

When an innocent invitation to an antiques reality show unearths shameful skeletons between two families—one black, one white—three multi-generational women are forced to take painful ownership of their present reality.

## **BEST ANIMATION AWARD**

### **Little Stories, Big Echoes: Beads of Hope**

**Director/Writer:** Dawn Richard

**Producers:** Chris Hartley and Dawn Richard

Animation, 5 min.

*Beads of Hope* is a powerful animated short film set in New Orleans, following Dawn, a young Black girl, as she navigates the chaos of a devastating flood that threatens the life of a beloved family member. The story unfolds in a historically Black neighborhood, on the day of Hurricane Katrina—now marking its 20th anniversary.

## **BEST EXPERIMENTAL AWARD**

### **Grandma's Four Color Cards**

**Director:** Sally Phuong Tran

**Producer:** Ngân Lê, Kiều Vy

experimental, 11 min.

From her tiny house in Saigon's District 4, 101-year-old Ngoai runs an illegal card game, a traditional Vietnamese pastime, to survive in the slums. With her loyal cat and the support of neighbors, she navigates poverty, demonstrating resilience and strength as a beloved figure in her community.

## **BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY AWARD**

### **She Island**

**Director:** Raven Irabor, SIRA Marissa Lewis

**Writers:** Kadia Blagrove, Dylan Braud, Olivia Jade Khoury, Andrea Knowles

**Producers:** Raven Irabor, D'Andre Wilson, Miesha Miller, Ashley Laird

Experimental, 16 min.

*She Island* is an enchanting and experimental film that weaves together folklore, history, and mysticism to tell a powerful story of resilience and cultural reclamation. Set on the fictional Caribbean island of She Island, where women reign supreme and cultural syncretism flourishes, the narrative is inspired by the folkloric character LaDiabla and navigates themes of hybridity, sisterhood, tradition, ritual, preservation, wisdom, and mysticism.

## **HONORABLE MENTION**

### **Kiss My Grass**

**Directors:** Mary Pryor, Mara Whitehead

**Producers:** Justin Benoliel, Luke Anderson, Saki Fenderson

Doc., 15 min.

*Kiss My Grass* exposes the persistent inequities faced by Black women entrepreneurs in the booming cannabis industry. Executive produced by trailblazers Colin Kaepernick, Rosario Dawson, Mary Pryor, Luke Anderson, and Justin Benoliel, the film takes viewers on an emotional journey through the struggles, corruption, and lack of support these women encounter as they fight for their place in a landscape fraught with obstacles.

### **Barrel Children: The Families Windrush Left Behind**

**Director/Writer:** Nadine White

**Producer:** Nadine White, John Johnston, Jordan Walters

documentary, 55:42 min.

A stellar debut film from award-winning journalist Nadine White, *Barrel Children: The Families Windrush Left Behind* peels back the layered tales of Caribbean youngsters who grew up away from their parents before migrating to join them in Britain.

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