



2022 LUNAFEST FILMMAKER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Andrea Dorfman, director
How to Be at Home

1. In what ways did Covid affect your artistic projects and working environment?
2. Your first film collaboration with Tanya Davis, *How to Be Alone* (2010) went viral on YouTube with 8.4 million views and also played in LUNAFEST. How did that experience affect your approach to *How to Be at Home*? How did you and Tanya collaborate on this new film?
3. Tell us a bit about the titles of the books in the background and their significance to you.
4. Could you talk about the common human experience of loneliness and how you approach it in your work and life?
5. You've worked in various long and short forms. What do you find rewarding about working in the short format?

[Info about and comments by Andrea Dorfman](#)

The film was named to the [Toronto International Film Festival's](#) year-end [Canada's Top Ten](#) list for short films. "I think at the centre of all my work is that freedom that we find in the self, in the aloneness that we occupy as humans," Andrea Dorfman told *The Coast* earlier this year, when discussing her new un-romantic comedy, *Spinster*.

Read more at: <https://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/andrea-dorfman-and-tanya-davis-teach-us-how-to-be-at-home/Content?oid=24871129>

As Andrea embarked on the project, she wondered if the pandemic would be over by the time it was complete. [As she told the CBC's Tom Power:](#)

"There was this feeling that this could go away in a month, so this better be finished soon, so it's still relevant. So as an artist, as a filmmaker, I thought, 'I have to crank this out,' but there's no fast and easy way to do animation. It just takes so long and as I got into it and realized that this was going to be a marathon, not a sprint, the images just kept coming to me and I really just made it up as I went along. I'd go into my studio every day not knowing what lay ahead and I'd think, 'Okay, so, what do we have up next? What's the next line?' And I'd spend maybe a week on a line of the poem, animating it."



It appears to have been an effective approach.

Dorfman's painted images ripple across the fast-turning pages of an old book. The titles change from time to time, and the choices seem deliberate—*The Lone Star Ranger*, *Le Secret du Manoir Hanté*, a chapter in *The Broken Halo*: "Rosemary for Remembrance."

"It's almost as though the way the poem is written there are many chapters in the book. Davis moves from one subject to another so completely," Dorfman told the University of King's College student paper, *The Signal*.

"How to Be at Home" by Tanya Davis

If you are, at first, really fucking anxious, just wait. It'll get worse, and then you'll get the hang of it. Maybe.

Start with the reasonable feelings – discomfort, lack of focus, the sadness of alone you can try to do yoga

you can shut off the radio when it gets to you

you can message your family or your friends or your colleagues, you're not supposed to leave your home anyway, so it's safe for you

There's also the gym

you can't go there but you could pretend to

you could bendy by yourself in your bedroom

And there's public transportation

probably best to avoid it

but there's prayer and meditation, yes always employ it

if you have pains in your chest 'cause your anxiety won't rest

take a moment, take a breath

Start simple

things you can handle based on your interests

your issues and your triggers

and your inner logistics

I miss lunch counters so much I've been eating [pickles and] toasted sandwiches while hanging unabashedly with my phone

When you are tired, again of still being alone

make yourself a dinner

but don't invite anybody over



*put something green in it, or maybe orange
chips are fine sometimes but they won't keep you charged
feed your heart
if people are your nourishment, I get you
feel the feelings that undo you while you have to keep apart*

*Watch a movie, in the dark
and pretend someone is with you
watch all of the credits
because you have time, and not much else to do
or watch all of the credits to remember
how many people come together
just to tell a story
just to make a picture move*

*And then, set yourself up dancing
like it's a club where everyone knows you
and they're all gonna hold you
all night long
they're gonna dance around you and with you and on their own
it's your favourite song
with the hardest bass and the cathartic drums
your heart pumps along/hard, you belong
you put your hands up to feel it*

*With the come down comes the weeping
those downcast eyes and feelings
the truth is you can't go dancing, not right now
not at any club or party in any town
The heartbreak of this astounds you
it joins old aches way down in you
you can visit them, but please don't stay there*

*Go outside if you're able, breathe the air
there are trees for hugging
don't be embarrassed
it's your friend, it's your mother, it's your new crush
lay your cheek against the bark, it's a living thing to touch*



*Sadly, leave all benches empty
appreciate the kindness in the distance of strangers
as you pine for company and wave at your neighbours
savour the depths of your conversations
the layers uncovered
in this strange space and time*

*Society is afraid of change
and no one wants to die
not now, from a tiny virus
not later from the world on fire
But death is a truth we all hate to know
we all get to live, and then we all have to go
In the meantime, we're surrounded, we're alone
each a thread woven in the fabric, unravelling in moments though
each a solo entity spinning on its axis, forgetting that the galaxy includes us all
Herein our fall
from grace from each other from god whatever, doesn't matter
the disaster is that we believe we're separate
we're not
As evidenced by viruses taking down societies
as proven by the loneliness inherent in no gatherings
as palpable as the vacancy in the space of one person hugging*

*If this disruption undoes you
if the absence of people unravels you
if touch was the tether that held you together
and now that it's severed you're fragile too
lean into loneliness and know you're not alone in it
lean into loneliness like it is holding you
like it is a generous representative of a glaring truth
oh, we are connected
we forget this, yet we always knew.*





Akanksha Cruczynski, director
Close Ties to Home Country

1. There are surface similarities between you and the fictionalized version of yourself that you play in this film. You're originally from India, grew up in Saudi Arabia, and moved to the States for college. What else is similar and are there any important differences?
2. Talk a bit about the state of anxiety that immigrants have—what produces it and how you deal.
3. Could you talk about the representation of immigrants in the media and how that might contribute to the “single story” of immigrants, or ideas about who people from specific countries are? Do you want to comment on how immigration might be different for people of color? (I was surprised to learn that a visa application might be over 100 pages, not to mention the cost.)
4. Could you talk a bit about how you use comedy to “build bridges, foster relationships, and bring cultures together” in this film?
5. I read that you came to the US originally in 2008 and got a BA in physics and creative writing from DePauw University (quite a combination!). Then an MFA in cinema directing from Columbia College Chicago. (This film is Akanksha's graduate thesis film, which has been having quite a run.) Can you talk about the journey of this film and what's next for you?

Samantha Knowles, director
Generation Impact: The Coder

1. Was this a difficult film to direct during the pandemic? How did you establish a good working relationship with Jay Jay and her dad remotely?
2. What can you tell us about the percentage of Black women in computing jobs in the US, and how there could be more support for Gen Z young women to access and enter STEM careers?
3. The importance of human connection is very pivotal in this film. It is very specific, and Jay Jay makes the point that kids should not be cut off from their incarcerated parents. There are other



factors that conspire to do this as well. For example, the high costs of phone calls controlled by private companies to and from incarcerated people.

What else can you tell us about this problem, how difficult it is for families to easily connect with incarcerated members—any possible solutions? It makes one think that being able to connect to someone incarcerated should be a right.

4. What's next for you in your journey as a filmmaker? What are your aspirations?

Katherine Fisher, director
Proof of Loss

1. Where did you shoot *Proof of Loss*, and what was your relationship to the communities there? What did you learn from them?
2. There is such a delicate and dramatic dance between the father and daughter dealing with loss, grief, distance, and connection in this film. How did you work with the actors to get this?
3. The power of your film is that you show rather than tell. The characters don't talk a lot, yet we learn to understand them and empathize. How did the script develop?
4. Would you unpack a bit for us the cinematic techniques and relationships you used to give the film such emotional resonance?
5. What are the challenges and rewards for you in working in the short film format?

Sharon Arteaga, director
When You Clean a Stranger's Home

1. Please tell us a little about your background and your interest in the educational potential of film and how it can empower people to tell their own stories.



2. You've made several shorts and now you're developing a feature. What challenges and rewards do you find in each format?

3. Please tell us about your commitment to tell Latinx stories.

Abi Cole, director

Between the Lines: Liz at Large

1. Although you've made little films on your phone, *Between the Lines* is presented as your first film. How have your topics and styles evolved? What was it like to have your film selected for the American Pavilion Emerging Filmmaker Showcase at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival?

2. At George Washington University you studied journalism and mass communications, and you also work as a reporter for *Outdoor Life* and other publications. How does your skill set of producing films fit into your overall career?

3. How did you meet Liz, establish a relationship, and convince her to be in your film?

Emily McAllister, director

Wearable Tracy

1. The origin of this film seems to be expressed in the concept of Design Thinking. Kim met Tracy Brandenburg, an anthropologist lecturing on empathy and creativity, at a Design Considering workshop. And if I'm not mistaken, you met them both in another Design Considering workshop. Could you give us a brief introduction to this concept as part of telling us the origin story?

2. Have you ever worn a Wearable Tracy out in public yourself?

3. Could you talk a bit about your filmmaking career and how you juggle that with day jobs and being a new mom?



Shaleece Haas, director
To the Future, with Love

1. We see from your impressive bio that you've worked as a producer and/or director on a number of significant films, some of which are monumental and groundbreaking (the *Asian Americans* series), incredibly timely and prescient (*Real Boy* and *She Could Be Next*), and of course this wonderful little animation. Could you reflect a bit on how you find your stories and projects (or they find you) and how you got involved with *To the Future, with Love*?

2. Having been one of the founding directors of StoryCorps 15 years ago, how does that experience shape the way you pick projects, conduct interviews, and make films? How did you establish a relationship with Hunter?

Note: StoryCorps mission is to preserve and share humanity's stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world. We do this to remind one another of our shared humanity, to strengthen and build the connections between people, to teach the value of listening, and to weave into the fabric of our culture the understanding that everyone's story matters. At the same time, we are creating an invaluable archive for future generations.

2. At the beginning of the film we see Hunter drawing his self-portrait. How did you work with the animators to find the look and feel of the animation?

3. How do you see the representation of queer and trans people changing—is it evolving fast enough, and what is the role of films such as this one in that evolution? This sweet film's strategy allows us to get to know a teenager, who is an immigrant and a trans person with such an optimistic view of the future and the importance of dreams—and it's a delight!

4. We would love to know more about what you are working on now.