



Set just before the dawn of COVID-19 and shot entirely on a single property on the in the Texas Hill Country, *Family Portrait* follows the Wilsons, a sprawling Southern American oil family, on the morning on which they planned to be photographed for their annual Christmas card. Christmas card portraits, a common suburban White American tradition, aim to represent the family as a stable unit. They are an emblem of a prosperous family network, the family tree, whose unity is sustained through the reproduction of both the family's members and its image over time. This year, the photo is set to capture the expansive family just before one of the daughters, Katy, and her boyfriend, Olek, need to leave for the airport. Olek, an artist and photographer who immigrated from Poland as a teenager, has not yet married into the family, and so has been tasked with the obviously overwhelming assignment of capturing the idealized picture of the Wilsons.

The film begins with Olek before dawn, the sun gradually rising over him as he traverses a river and climbs a cliff across from the property. Olek then wakes Katy, and the two walk to the main house, encountering each of Katy's 13 family members. The camera continues to follow Katy, while sometimes inhabiting the subjectivities of those around her, as she engages in vapid conversations with her family members. The only moment of dialogue of particular inciting importance occurs when Barbara and Annabelle are overheard whispering, after which Barbara steps away and Annabelle shares with Katy that their step-cousin stopped breathing during the night due to a mysterious virus. The two are moved and disturbed by this news, yet Katy continues on in order to ensure the family photo is completed prior to her and Olek's departure. Barbara seems to have gone missing and as Katy searches for her, Olek becomes increasingly frustrated and nauseated, as he is suffering from a liver illness and cannot eat what the others are

having for breakfast. Katy, meanwhile, becomes increasingly desperate to find Barbara and embarks on a quest throughout the property during which she begins to feel a deep-seated sense of dread. She returns to the house empty-handed, only to find Barbara amongst the group; nothing of significance seems to have happened to her. In a dramatic shift in atmosphere, Barbara then begins to ride a creative high as she directs all 16 of her family members to meander down to the river to be photographed. As Barbara only allows spouses to join in on the family photo, Olek's inclusion in the portrait alongside his girlfriend is foreclosed. Instead, he is tasked with the labor of photographing the family. While Barbara engages in the final attempts to command her family members, Olek struggles to direct them to properly position themselves within the frame. For one mundane reason or another, the family becomes unable to take the picture—the validation of their image, and its meaning, is crumbling.



Family Portrait's leitmotif is what may be considered spatio-temporal suspension. At its foundation is the convergence of “real-time” and a sense of arrested time. This convergence is subtle but compelling, achieved through fidelity between the film's screen time and its story time. It is also achieved through the sense of immobilization that casts over the family as they attempt to pursue their common and diverging goals. An autonomous camera ellipses in time, guiding the viewer as we follow the film's protagonists and then trail off of them. This brings into focus the idle and at times nonsensical conversations surrounding them, the constant struggle and chaos of the children, the subjectivities of other family members and workers, and the architecture, walls, and objects of the oil family's property. The film unfolds through several dramatic arcs spurred by low-stakes events and issues that are nonetheless rendered momentous by the upper middle class Southern American family. Dialogue spirals into mundane subjects

discussed with a sense of heaviness or urgency. When the only important communication occurs, as the family learns of their step-cousin's death, the news is taken with emotional restraint. Pressure builds as the conversations prolong preparation for the family portrait. Barbara has gone missing, Annabelle can't find her daughter's Blankie, and Olek is nauseated. The ultimate pressure is time, which is running away from the family as the deadline for Olek and Katy's airport rapidly approaches. The final photo op brings with it a subtle sense of a supernatural suspension of reality. The progression of time appears to be halted as the characters are arrested within the frame of the portrait while simultaneously unable to find unity.

Family Portrait has been in development since 2018, when I applied and was selected to participate in a workshop and private studio visit with Lucrecia Martel at CalArts. I showed Martel a short documentary of mine consisting of footage of my sprawling Texas family attempting to pose for a Christmas card. Since then, I have developed the concept and script based on our discussion. The film began as a short, though after meeting with some of my main collaborators, including [REDACTED] (Katy), I realized that the project would be better suited as a feature. The extended time would allow tension to build, nuance in the relationships between the characters, and provide the space for long takes of Olek, Katy, and the family walking around the property. I am now co-writing the project with my partner, [REDACTED], who is originally from Latvia and can speak to the experience of Olek. My primary collaborator and cinematographer, [REDACTED], and I meet virtually every week to watch films together and discuss the intention and mood of the film in depth. The executive producer on the project, [REDACTED], has also been an essential part of the process, overseeing the budget and the production departments. Recently, [REDACTED] brought on a production company, Insufficient Funds, NSF, including Texas native [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Our shoot dates are locked: June 1-15. We have cast the entire production. The location, an in-kind donation, is also locked, as the film is contained to one property. We will be able to house most crew and cast on the property with some in Airbnb's nearby. Most of the crew will come from Texas and about half of the adult cast will be from Texas. We will be paying everyone a daily rate and we will cover food, transportation and accommodation.



The budget for production is \$ [REDACTED], with funding so far coming from private investment (\$ [REDACTED]) and self-funding (\$ [REDACTED]). Most of the funds are allocated towards travel, cast and crew rates, accommodations, food, and the sound, camera, and grip and electric packages. I am applying for a \$ [REDACTED] cash grant from AFS which would cover post-production costs, including sound designer rate, renting a sound mix theater, and professional color grading. Additionally, the DCP Grant will allow me to create a high-quality deliverable for screening. This project has recently been accepted into the highly selective program, FIDLab, which takes place during FIDMarseille from July 7-8. The Lab connects filmmakers to international financiers, sales agents, co-production companies, programmers, and distributors. In addition, I will be applying for the Ikusmira Berriak residency program at San Sebastian International Film Festival (application due September 2022), which provides international distribution and marketing opportunities for feature length films. Because my film, *Crashing Waves*, screened as part of NEST at San Sebastian International Film Festival, I am eligible to apply for the residency program.

Family Portrait marks an important moment in my career, as it will be my debut feature following the production of two substantial short films: the experimental documentary, *Crashing Waves*, and the experimental narrative, *Site of Passage*. *Crashing Waves* screened at the prestigious festivals FIDMarseille and San Sebastian International Film Festival, was exhibited at Galerie Allen Paris, and was supported by the CalArts Film/Video Project Grant and the Austin Film Society Travel Grant and acquired by the museum in Marseille, France, Frac Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur. *Site of Passage* has been selected for its World Premiere at FIDMarseille 2022. With the connections I have built and sustained through FIDMarseille and SSIF, I am confident that *Family Portrait* will find a notable festival for its premiere.

Additionally, [REDACTED] is an acclaimed actor having won awards from the Toronto Film Critics Association. [REDACTED] co-lead, [REDACTED], who is based in Texas, is also an Indie darling and starred in the film *Give Me Liberty* which premiered at Sundance in 2019. [REDACTED] have empowered this project and will increase its visibility. Following *Family Portrait*'s festival circuit, my goal is to sell the film for distribution and open up to a wider audience on streaming platforms. I hope to bring this film to theaters in Texas, as it is also a meditation on issues of class, privilege, and the reproduction of whiteness in the South. *Family Portrait* brings visibility to a part of the U.S., the South, which is often oversimplified or under-analyzed, and interrogates the violence of image-making as it relates to the fragility and fiction of so-called "American excellence." Support from AFS would not only help this vision become a reality, but would also empower the project as I introduce it to the world.

BLANK BUDGET COVER FORM/ BUDGET SUMMARY SHEET

You must provide a total project budget, regardless of the phase you are applying for. Please note that this is a general budget; not all line items									
BUDGET SUMMARY		EXPENSES			RESOURCES				
(Attach additional sheets if necessary.)		Cash	In-Kind	Total	Cash		Actual	Anticipated	Total
	Pre-production				Grants (list)				
	Production	\$	\$	\$164,054.00					
	Post-production	\$	\$	\$80,000.00					
	Distribution	\$		\$10,000.00					
					AFS Grant Cash Request			\$	\$13,000.00
					Investors	\$			\$70,000.00
					Crowdfunding				
					Credit Cards	\$			\$30,000.00
					Fundraising Events				
					AFS MPS Camera and Lighting Award (up to \$10,000 in-kind)				
					DJI AFS Grant (up to \$20,000 in rentals)				
					Kodak Film Stock Grant (up to \$5,000 in-kind)				
					Stuck On On DCP In-Kind Grant (total value: \$2,350 per DCP)			\$	\$2350.00
					Other In-Kind	\$		\$	\$70,000.00
					Others (list) European Coproduction			\$	\$58,704.00
TOTAL EXPENSES must equal		Total Cash "+"	\$		Total Actual	\$			
		Total In-Kind	\$		"+" Total Anticipated	\$			
TOTAL RESOURCES		"=" Total Expenses	\$		"=" Total Resources	\$			