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ARTE France - LA LUCARNE

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF  
The French Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée  
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Jewish Story Partners & New York State Council on the Arts



*Turbulence*  
a film by anne aghion

Color. 71' - Bilingual English & French, English subtitles.  
[www.turbulencethefilm.com](http://www.turbulencethefilm.com) - [www.anneaghionfilms.com](http://www.anneaghionfilms.com)

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*How do we overcome the heartbreaks, sorrows  
and traumas we endure or witness,  
and come out at peace  
with ourselves and the world?*

**SHORT SYNOPSIS**

In her award-winning film career, Anne Aghion has traveled the world and borne witness to the lives of people who have survived the most extreme circumstances. In *TURBULENCE*, she grapples with the shadows cast over her own life—losing her mother when she was a child, and her father’s memories of life during the Holocaust. Through a series of tender, honest and visually stunning cinematic letters to her mother, she recounts her sometimes shocking odyssey in search of resolution and peace.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

It started with a tumble, a broken foot, and a renewed obsession with hiking despite the pain. From this evolved *TURBULENCE*, a moving, intimate memoir by award-winning filmmaker Anne Aghion (*MY NEIGHBOR MY KILLER*, *ICE PEOPLE*).

In *TURBULENCE*, Anne Aghion grapples with the long ignored, but life-long effects of losing her mother at age ten, and of growing up with her father's memories of life during the Holocaust.

Still a little girl, Anne Aghion coped with her mother's death by drawing a curtain on all memories of her life until then. Whatever she felt was brushed aside by a teenage rebellion that landed her in trouble with the law. As an adult, she was drawn to making movies about survival in the most extreme circumstances, finding people who were discarded by their countries through poverty or genocide—which brought her new traumas—or who willingly put themselves in the coldest, most desolate place on earth in the name of science.

Acclaimed by critics and audiences alike for her work, Anne Aghion insisted for decades that she was fine, until, inevitably, she was not. Ignoring the pain in her foot brought home, literally, that this was a habit that dated to her childhood. A reckoning was due.

In *TURBULENCE*, Anne Aghion brings us on her decades-long global odyssey, which she recounts in a series of tender and honest letters to the mother she barely remembers, but uncannily resembles. She tells the story of her life with a visually stunning and sometimes striking collage of home movies, clips of her films, original animated artwork, and new footage shot in India, France, and New York.

With *TURBULENCE*, a dozen years in the making, Anne Aghion has created both a personal work, and a deeply moving, universal story of overcoming loss to find resolution and peace.

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

A Film written, produced & directed by.....Anne Aghion  
Editor.....Nadia Ben Rachid  
Director of Photography.....Saumyananda Sahi  
Line Producer.....Adrien Roche  
Original Score.....Justin Messina  
Sound Recordist.....Adrien Roche  
Visual Effects.....Ève Ramboz  
Restoration & Color Grading.....Éric Salleron  
Sound Editor & Re-Recording Mixer.....Mélicca Petitjean  
With the Artistic Participation of.....Wilfrid Rouff  
Producer.....Cynthia Kane  
Consulting Producers.....Anita Kirpalani  
Anne Massiot  
Mathilde Trichet  
Writing Consultant.....Octavia de Larroche  
Voice Over Consultant.....Cécile Vargaftig  
Artistic Consultant French Voice.....Bruno Carpentier  
Artistic Consultant American Voice.....David Coburn  
Aerial View Pilots .....Jean-Luc Koch  
Wilfrid Rouff  
Stan Zeltner  
Additional Camera.....Anne Aghion  
Adrien Roche  
Wilfrid Rouff  
Additional Sound Recording.....Gautier Isern  
Wilfrid Rouff  
Fred Salles  
Foley Artist.....Romain Anklewicz  
Poster Design & Graphics.....Dorothee Perkins  
Trailer.....Vincent Bourre  
Production Assistants India.....Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman  
Jibi Pulu  
Provence.....Karine de Barbarin  
Pyrénées.....Txomin & Jeany Etchemendy  
Legal Services.....Christophe Pascal  
Production Accounting.....Pascal Henriquet

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ARTE France - LA LUCARNE  
Unité Société & Culture  
Fabrice Puchault

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Administratrice	Marie-Louise Lafon
Chargée d'administration	Linda Rekouane
Chargée de post production	Isabelle Zaborowski

**WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF**  
Centre national du Cinéma & de l'Image animée  
Mélanie Bensoussan  
Nina Descotes  
Lola Primault  
Linda Zitouni

Procirep & Angoa  
Elvira Kaurin  
Séverine Thuet

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Roberta Grossman  
Caroline Libresco

New York State Council on the Arts

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Rockefeller Foundation - The Bellagio Center  
The Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship  
The Camargo Foundation  
The Bogliasco Foundation

## ARCHIVES

Aghion Family Films 8mm & Super 8mm:	Image Philippe Aghion
Night Antarctic Sky:	Anthony 'Antz' Powell
Se le Moviò el Piso - A Portrait of Managua:	Directed by Anne Aghion Image & Sound Anne Aghion, Masashi Ohtsu, Stephen Torton Editing Martine Zévort © 1995 Anne Aghion
Ice People:	Directed by Anne Aghion Image Sylvestre Guidi Sound Richard Fleming Editing Nadia Ben Rachid © 2007 Dry Valleys Productions
Moon Landing Footage & Audio:	NASA
Atlantic Crossing:	Anne Aghion
Paris in the 1940's:	Ina - Institut National de l'Audiovisuel Actualités Filmées - 1 <sup>er</sup> mai 1947 & 1 <sup>er</sup> janvier 1948
My Neighbor My Killer:	Directed by Anne Aghion Image Claire Bailly du Bois, Linette Frewin, Mathieu Hagnery, James Kakwerere Sound Pierre Camus, Richard Fleming Editing Nadia Ben Rachid © 2009 Gacaca Productions
Battle of Imphal:	Imperial War Museums
Watercolors:	Anne Aghion
Photographs:	Aghion Family, Richard Fleming, Mathieu Hagnery, Adrien Roche, Wilfrid Rouff, Saumyananda Sahi

Cambodia Genocide Painting:  
Photographed by:

Peter Fletcher  
Alain Gelberger

## **TECHNICAL FACILITIES**

Equipment Rental:

Locaimages  
La Prod du Sud

8mm & Super 8mm transfer:

Family Movie

Image Post:

Avidia

Sound Post:

Studio Orlando  
Transperfect Media

Special Effects:

La Maison  
Makadam Prod

Subtitles:

Telos Adaptation

## **MUSIC**

Original Recording:

Cello – Alex Greenbaum

Piano – Justin Messina

Guitar – Kyle Sanna

Additional Music Clearance:

Pigalle Productions

Pierre-Marie Dru, Raphaëlle

Dannus, Laureen Arnou-Sanchez

“Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child”

Music and Lyrics by Robert Alexander Blackwell

Interpreted by The Gospel Pearls Starring Bessie Griffin

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“Bakobwa mwirira”

“Urukundo”

By Florida Uwera

Courtesy of Florida Uwera

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“Need Your Love So Bad”

Music and Lyrics by John Jr. Mertis

Interpreted by Little Willie John

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Courtesy of BMG Rights Management (France) and Warner Chappell Music France

Courtesy of Gusto Records, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee



*“You know, Mom, I’ve often wanted to make a film about you,  
about me—well... about our story—but I never got around to it.*

*And then, one day, I fell.*

*I walked on my foot for months, not knowing it was broken,  
disconnected from the pain.*

*It took several years for me to realize that I had carried  
this fracture in me since your death.*

*I finally decided to make this film in order to walk,  
and to tell you what your death, what death,  
and everything else had shaped me into.”*

*--Anne Aghion, in an excerpt from TURBULENCE*

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

### INTRODUCTION

A child's mother dies. The child becomes a woman. She carries with her only the presence of absence: the nearly total loss of memories of the mother are replaced by a whirlpool of undefined grief that seems to predetermine one life choice after another, constraining freedom. That is TURBULENCE, the new film by award-winning filmmaker, Anne Aghion: a film that navigates the treacherous cross-currents of sorrow.

While it’s convenient to call this new work a *documentary* or a *memoir*, those terms don’t quite capture the film: TURBULENCE, a series of letters from the filmmaker to her mother, moves at the intersection of both, and represents a shift in focus and a new form of creativity for Aghion that incorporates home movies, outtakes from her previous films, new footage, animation and other techniques. In this way, TURBULENCE tells a multi-layered tale of how the presence of absence can become a place to be filled by love.

### THE STORY UNFOLDS

Under hypnosis as the film opens, Aghion has returned to her mother Nancy's womb as depicted in Aghion's own animated watercolors. Nancy's image then emerges in a painting Aghion discovers in a sub-basement. Mother and child appear together again, this time at the Brittany seashore as preserved on luminous 8mm footage. It is here that Aghion's first letter to the mother who died when she was ten begins. She starts telling her in bits and pieces, in words and images, a story of a life they were unable to live together.

Following the blow of Nancy’s death, young Anne erased most memories of her childhood and bluntly rejected the pain. An adolescence and young adulthood of confusion and self-destruction followed. Eventually, though, the invisible force of her grief found expression in filmmaking, in making documentaries first in the unreconstructed rubble of central Managua, years after the destructive 1972 earthquake, and then for more than a decade, on the remote hillsides of rural Rwanda in the years after the 1994 Tutsi genocide against the Tutsi. Aghion’s quiet patience and respect gave the subjects of her films—people whose experiences had been swept aside by larger forces—the possibility to talk about and reflect on their own cataclysms.

But the years she spent filming the aftershock of dehumanizing cruelty and unfathomable violence took an emotional toll on her. In Managua, an old woman’s funeral propelled her back to her own mother’s death. And, with each film she made in Rwanda, as she fought the resulting nightmares and depression, she found that it all harked back to her father’s survival of the Nazi occupation of France of which he barely spoke.

She recounts how, in the middle of filming in Rwanda, already feeling the bite of the melancholy, and at the age her mother died, she fled to Antarctica to film scientists working in the coldest, driest place on earth, in search of life millions of years ago. A fascinating story, to be sure. But what is revealed in *TURBULENCE* is that what ultimately mattered to her was that Antarctica was a place without any dead bodies buried underfoot.

Her next pursuit was in a place not quite as remote or stunning as the white continent, but almost equally magnetic. In Northeast India, one of the wettest places on earth, which Aghion calls “the conceptual antipodes of Antarctica,” she went in search of the drama of the monsoon rains, which were becoming more erratic in a changing climate.

Around the time she found herself there, a former lover resurfaced after seventeen years apart. And her ageing father, who had started retelling his past, inched closer to a decision to end his life on his own terms. Northeast India became the improbable anchor of the film, the place where her personal narrative shifted and, thus, the place from which she would recount her story to her mother. After the emotional turmoil of Rwanda and the physical desert of Antarctica, she found herself filming in a place teeming with life, allowing her to reconnect with the absences and the absent, and to bring the film to its end on a light, aerial note.

## A FILMMAKER’S JOURNEY TO TURBULENCE

In the late 1990s, in the wake of the 1994 genocide that wiped out over 800,000 ethnic Tutsi, the Rwandan government undertook an experiment in restorative justice called the Gacaca (pr. Ga-CHA-cha) Tribunals. Accused killers were given the opportunity to confess publicly and seek

survivors' forgiveness before being released from prisons and reintegrated into their communities. Aghion filmed these state-sponsored attempts at reconciliation and interviewed many survivors and alleged perpetrators for more than ten years.

Throughout the process, she traveled deep into the countryside, far from the seat of power, the reach of the media, or even a paved road, to hear how survivors and perpetrators alike were coping with this mandate. Two award-winning films (out of a total of four that would comprise the series in the end) emerged that won an EMMY, a UNESCO Fellini Prize and a Courage in Filmmaking Award from the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, among others. The second in the series—IN RWANDA WE SAY... THE FAMILY THAT DOES NOT SPEAK DIES—was screened to some 40,000 prisoners before being released to give them a sense of what to expect when they got home. In these films, Aghion principally focused on the emotional content of her subjects' narratives rather than attempt to construct a cinematic fact-finding tribunal, thereby allowing them the chance to reflect on their own losses.

Those years spent plumbing the bereavements of others took an emotional toll but also imperceptibly moved Aghion to peer at the great loss she had suppressed for so long.

In the middle of filming in Rwanda, she reached the age Nancy never did. Overwhelmed by what she thought was a desire to look away from death and sorrow, Aghion embarked on a project to film paleo-geologists' search for ancient life in the Dry Valleys of Antarctica. The result was ICE PEOPLE.

Aghion and her crew of two spent months in remote field camps with a research group of four scientists. Her goal was to explore what drove them to endure such hardships: weeks living together in tents in sub-zero temperatures, surrounded by nothing but rocks and ice, silence or howling winds.

American film critic, Bilge Ebiri, wrote that ICE PEOPLE “might be the most immersive documentary I’ve ever seen.” NASA scientist Tom Wagner—at the time, the Program Director for Antarctic Earth Sciences at the U.S. National Science Foundation Office of Polar Program—remarked then that: “I have seen hundreds of science films, and ICE PEOPLE is unique in the way it portrays what it’s really like to do field science. Also, this is some of the best cinematography I’ve ever seen of the Dry Valleys—it’s the first time anyone has captured in motion picture the ‘Lawrence of Arabia’ feel of Antarctica.”

After returning from Antarctica and completing ICE PEOPLE, Aghion re-engaged with the Rwanda films, directing the last two films of the four-part series. The feature-length MY NEIGHBOR MY KILLER screened in Official Selection at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival and went on to win multiple awards as Aghion shepherded the film to screenings around the world.

## TURBULENCE EMERGES

During a screening in Brussels, Aghion fell. Given a misdiagnosis of a sprained ankle, she continued her travels, disconnected from the pain of what turned out to be a serious broken foot, improperly set. She began to see the fracture as a metaphor for her own brokenness after her years working in Rwanda, and walking as a metaphor for the healing process that she felt she must undergo. When that was revealed, the idea for a new film, simply entitled WALKING, was revealed as well.

At the same time, the embryo of another film was growing. India was the “it” destination when Aghion was a teen and a young woman, so as a traveler, India was a place she had long wanted to visit. As a filmmaker, she saw a way in: another film about life in a harsh environment but this time in a place teeming with life and, therefore, death too. MONSOON would be a film about Northeast India, one of the Earth’s wettest places.

In 2011, to develop WALKING, Aghion was a resident at the prestigious MacDowell Colony and the following year she obtained a residency at the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center in Italy.

In her proposal to MacDowell—the first time she’d put any ideas about WALKING in writing—she explained that it would be “a film about the inner journey of an artist to understand her place in our world.” The fictional protagonist based on Aghion’s life would “delve into the personal and collective traumas that had shaped her life and work—the death of her mother at a young age, the Holocaust that her father survived and her work filming unfathomable horrors.” She would confront all this suffering and death in an attempt to “project herself into a more connected emotional life.”

The principal hovering spirit of TURBULENCE is Nancy but, at MacDowell, it became clear that Aghion's father (who was still alive then) must also emerge in an examination of her life. Who, after all, had taken those 8mm and Super 8mm shots at the seashore in Brittany? Another Aghion behind the camera: Philippe, the filmmaker’s father. To the presence of Nancy's absence, Philippe brought more absence. He rarely spoke of Nancy after she died, and likewise, rarely, if ever, spoke of what it had been like to suffer as a Jew in the France of the Second World War.

Deeply affected by Aghion's films about the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda, Philippe started to open up. But as the filmmaker tells her mother in the film, “his words were the same over and over again, like a disembodied narrative.” Until, months before his death, she decided to record him, and one story in particular changed: In an effort to escape persecution and join

de Gaulle's Free French Forces in London, he had attempted to cross the Pyrenees into Spain but was unable, because of a physical handicap, to walk fast enough to keep up with the rest of the group. He was left behind with sore legs that wouldn't carry him. As Philippe told the tale, those unreliable legs proved to be a saving grace. The others were captured; he was not.

At the end of his life, Aghion's father was unwilling to let fate decide once again whether he would live or die. He chose assisted suicide instead. At Philippe's side on the day he had chosen to die, the filmmaker spontaneously and with his consent recorded his passing with a camera she happened to have in her pocket. That day appears in *TURBULENCE*: yet another moment in which presence becomes absence and sorrow must be confronted.

### THE FILMMAKER'S ARTISTIC EVOLUTION

MacDowell was an important turning point in Aghion's artistic evolution. When she applied to be a fellow there, the filmmaker was asked what kind of space she needed. Besides a writing desk and a printer, she asked for space to paint. Aghion is not a painter. But at MacDowell, she began experimenting with watercolors, conveying what she had experienced under hypnosis, scenes from her childhood, including the Mont Ventoux, and other notable landscapes she had visited during her travels.

These exercises allowed her to start thinking of herself, not just as a documentarian, but as an artist and to broaden her toolkit: she gradually was able to free herself from the constraints of the straightforward documentary form she had worked with so far. A prime example in *TURBULENCE* of this aesthetic evolution is the animated representation of recurring nightmares Aghion had following her work in Rwanda. For the first time, she decided to work with visual effects and commissioned artist Eve Ramboz to manipulate the original footage from Rwanda. The result was striking. She decided to continue working with her to animate her watercolors.

It was also at MacDowell that Aghion met Justin Messina, who wrote the original score for *TURBULENCE*. Having had no training in music, she had always had a hard time communicating her intentions to composers. She was immediately drawn to Justin Messina's work, which he himself qualifies as "non-music music." Working with him made her realize she was very attuned to music and sound, just not equipped with the vocabulary to share what she experienced or expected.

The insights and innovations that first emerged for Aghion at MacDowell developed further at the Bellagio Center and subsequent residencies at the Camargo Foundation in France and at the Bogliasco Foundation in Italy.

## FILMING BEGINS – WATER EVERYWHERE

In 2014, Aghion took off for India on a Fulbright-Nehru fellowship in search of MONSOON. After a couple of trips to the Northeast, where she and her newly-hired line producer Adrien Roche took long scouting hikes, it suddenly became apparent that WALKING and MONSOON were the same film.

In the words of the filmmaker, “I thought India’s humongous, stunningly beautiful, superlative Northeastern region, surrounded by the towering Himalayas and traversed by one of the world’s mightiest river systems, the Brahmaputra and its tributaries might be the perfect canvas on which to paint a cinematic picture of the way in which even a broken life goes on.”

Aghion began filming. With Adrien Roche recording sound, and Saumyananda ‘Somo’ Sahi behind the camera, she began to put herself in the frame in fragmented ways, for instance filming her feet walking. And while at the time she still thought she was looking for other characters, unbeknownst to her then, some of these sequences would become central to the film.

Over the next five years, Aghion wrote, filmed and edited, mostly in France, all the while looking for funding. Gradually, ideas for sequences were taking shape, focused, by this point, exclusively on episodes of Aghion’s life and history. She decided to build a segment about learning to walk as a toddler, using 8mm footage filmed by her father (Other 8mm and Super 8mm clips eventually found their way into TURBULENCE). The images are of her and Nancy, mostly on the beach in Brittany. The tenderness of their relationship combined with the radiant blue water was so captivating that this sequence ended up including clips of her first swimming strokes under her mother’s guidance.

Like walking, water would become a recurring motif in the film—from the opening return to the womb, to the childhood beach strolls, to the aridity of the Dry Valleys, to the overpowering humidity of the Northeast—and ultimately birth the film’s title itself. Looking back at early writing she did for the film, Aghion was surprised to find that the title TURBULENCE existed as early as February 2014, less than a month after she’d arrived in India for her Fulbright fellowship.

But there was a big hurdle. Building on those initial steps that put her in the frame did not come easily. At the time, and for some years to follow, she tried one approach after another to turn the lens away from herself: she would play a fictional character drawn from her own experience; she would create several characters to tell her own story and those she’d heard from others who’d worked in post-conflict areas, in essence attempting to drown her own story; or maybe hire an actress to narrate the film or even to play her outright.

Looking back at it now, Aghion reflects, “I think I was trying to delude the audience, or maybe even myself, into thinking this wasn’t my story.”

### THE FILMMAKER BECOMES THE FILM’S MAIN CHARACTER

This first editing session lasted two weeks, and took place a few weeks after Philippe’s death. When Aghion mentioned to her longtime editor that she wanted to edit the sequence of her father’s death, Nadia Ben Rachid’s initial reaction was that “it had no place in the film.” Aghion couldn’t really explain why she absolutely wanted it in, but she insisted. This was their very first day in the editing room. And the filmmaker’s father’s death was the very first sequence they edited. It barely changed in the eight years that elapsed until the finished film.

By the end, four sequences had taken shape. Three of them would end up in the final film. Over the years, between 2015 and picture lock of the film in fall of 2023, there were a total of 19 weeks of editing spread over eight sessions. Each time Aghion and her crew filmed new footage, and then she and Nadia Ben Rachid would reconvene for a week or two, which, in turn, led to new writing and more filming.

After a couple of years, the idea of a voice-over approach started to take hold. Gradually, this voice-over evolved into letters that would be based on the main character’s story. First, they were addressed to several people: the filmmaker’s mother, father, the little girl from the nightmare sequence in Rwanda, and the lover with whom she had just reconnected. In the end, they became letters to Nancy only.

“This was an important breakthrough” says the filmmaker: “At that point, there was no turning back. The film was my story and my story only. No more other people’s stories to drown my own. I was the main character of this film. Now, I needed to make sure the story was emblematic to allow viewers to embrace the film.”

In *TURBULENCE*, Aghion applied the same process as with the protagonists of her other documentaries: creating a space for questions to emerge, without eliciting firm answers or absolute truths. By showing these emotional and intellectual processes on issues that affect us all—loss, grief, absence—she allows viewers to make this story their own.

### ENGLISH OR FRENCH?

Several key questions remained: even though she had decided to embrace her presence on screen, Aghion continued to question whether to call on an actress to read the letters to her mother. Eventually, Aghion chose her own voice to speak her own words. But what language

should the letters be in? Aghion is fully bicultural and bi-lingual. Every editing session, she would write and record drafts of the letters in both French and English. Different thoughts came easier in one language or the other. At some point, she even thought about mixing languages in the same sentences.

Working with two different voice coaches, she recorded all the letters in both languages and envisioned making two versions of the film. But, Aghion explains: “This would have meant two different films. And the English sounded considerably more natural and organic than the French. Even though I feel like French is my first language, and I had to learn English later, what I discovered while making this film is that English is literally my mother—my mother's—tongue. Nancy, after all, was born and raised in New York.”

## CONCLUSION

Twelve years after she first conceived of WALKING, Aghion completed TURBULENCE. “The twelve years it took,” says the filmmaker, “gives the film its density and its depth. Had I gone faster, the film would have felt very different. For one, it’s likely it would have had a more somber ending. Because it took time, not only for the shadows of loss to dissipate from my life, but for me to be able to translate this process emotionally into the film. The happy ending of Wilfrid – the love of my life – and me soaring above the Mont Ventoux is not something I ever expected for myself, or for the film. And that’s just the point, isn’t it? Sometimes, life is awfully painful and merciless, but sometimes, if we persist, we might just live past the heartbreaks, the sorrows and the traumas that we endure or witness, and come out as peace with ourselves and the world.”



## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

### **ASSEMBLING THE PRODUCTION TEAM**

Over the years, Aghion assembled an extraordinary international team for *TURBULENCE*. It began as early as her first artist residency at the MacDowell Colony where she and composer Justin Messina met. Before even starting to formulate what role music would play in the film, she told him she'd like him to score it, confident that, although he'd never composed for cinema, he would find the right tone and place.

Before setting off for her Fulbright to India, Aghion traveled to Bangladesh, Myanmar and Kolkata in West Bengal to do some preliminary research. Cynthia Kane, who created *DocDay* in 2002 on Sundance Channel, and was a commissioning editor with ITVS International and Al Jazeera America, and who had programmed and commissioned Aghion's work since her first Rwanda film, put her in touch with the director of *DocEdgeKolkata*, the Asian Forum for Documentary Film. In a matter of days, Aghion was recruited to be a mentor at *DocEdge*. That year, Saumyananda Sahi, fresh out of school, was a mentee. Adrien Roche, who had already been living and working in India for a decade, was an observer. The two did not know each other, but Adrien Roche, who was fascinated by Northeast India but had never been there, seized upon Aghion's offer to travel there with her during her upcoming fellowship. And when the two of them needed a camera person, Saumyananda Sahi was their top choice.

A couple of years later, in France, Aghion tried working with another camera person but the result was disappointing. She found that Saumyananda Sahi had captured her intentions with such poetry and soul that she decided to invite him to film in France and in New York. Adrien Roche who had started out as Line Producer and Sound Recordist in India, traveled to France regularly to visit his family. Aghion and he worked on the film during each one of his visits. He became an indispensable aide, almost taking on the role of Assistant Director. Longtime collaborator Nadia Ben Rachid came on board. Cynthia Kane became fully involved as a producer. The main crew was assembled. Filming and editing took place according to availability of funding and to everyone's schedule.

### **ANNE AGHION – WRITER, DIRECTOR & PRODUCER**

Anne Aghion has been praised as a filmmaker of poetic vision and a unique documentarian whose films, in the words of one critic, “pull us deep into the social fabric” of the places she covers.

She gained international renown for THE GACACA SERIES (pr. ga-CHA-cha), four films on post-genocide justice and social reconstruction in Rwanda. There, Aghion charted the emotional impact of a controversial system of justice that returned killers to their homes to live side-by-side with the survivors of unimaginable violence. The final film in the series, MY NEIGHBOR MY KILLER, premiered in Official Selection at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival; was nominated for Best Documentary at the Gotham Awards; and earned Aghion the Nestor Almendros Award for courage in filmmaking at the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. Additionally, other films in the series received an Emmy Award and the UNESCO Fellini Prize.

The 2007 feature ICE PEOPLE was described by Variety as “staggeringly beautiful,” and New York Magazine’s noted critic Bilge Ebiri wrote that “it might be the most immersive documentary I’ve ever seen.” The film, which explores the physical, emotional and spiritual adventure of living and conducting science in Antarctica, was produced with ARTE France and ITVS International in association with Sundance Channel. Her award-winning 1996 directorial debut SE LE MOVIÓ EL PISO : A PORTRAIT OF MANAGUA (The Earth Moved Under Him), examines how Nicaraguan slum dwellers had survived the double ravages of political and natural disasters.

Aghion has earned a host of grants from such organizations as the United States Institute of Peace, the National Science Foundation, the French Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée, and the Soros and Sundance Institute Documentary Funds. She has had residencies at the MacDowell Colony in the United States, the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center, the Bogliasco Foundation in Italy, and at the Camargo Foundation in France. Additionally she was selected for a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship to India.

She has served as a juror for La Scam’s L’Oeil d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival, International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), the El Gouna Film Festival and the International Documentary Association (IDA), among others. She is an international speaker at universities and has conducted documentary workshops and master classes at film programs in countries including Haiti, India, Morocco, Lebanon, France and the United States. She serves on the board of Camargo Foundation’s French association.

Aghion holds a degree in Arab Language and Literature from Barnard College at Columbia University in New York. She spends her time between New York and France.

### **NADIA BEN RACHID – EDITOR**

TURBULENCE is the sixth collaboration between award-winning editor Nadia Ben Rachid and filmmaker Anne Aghion.

Their work together has included the four films of the acclaimed Gacaca Series, which culminates in the feature MY NEIGHBOR MY KILLER and ICE PEOPLE.

Likewise, Ben Rachid has had long working relationships with a roster of ground-breaking directors, among them Yamina Benguigui, Michka Saal and Jero Yun. She has edited seven films for the iconic Abderrahmane Sissako, including the multiple-award winner BAMAKO (2006) and the Academy-Award-nominee TIMBUKTU (2014) for which Ben Rachid won the César for Best Editing. She has just completed Sissako's latest film, BLACK TEA which premiered at the 2024 Berlinale.

She began honing her craft as an assistant editor on Roman Polanski's films, PIRATES, BITTER MOON, and FRANTIC. By the late 1990s Ben Rachid was in the editor's chair, and since then has cut some seventy films, both narrative and documentary, and is in high demand as a consulting editor. Additionally, Ben Rachid works in television, with recent credits including the 14 episodes of the series KINGDOMS OF FIRE directed by Peter Webber (GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING).

A frequent juror on the international festival circuit, she was recently on panels for the Excellence Awards of the European Film Academy, the International Festival of Clermont-Ferrand, the Carthage Film Festival, The Atlas Workshops of the Marrakech International Film Festival, and was on the 2023 jury of the Montpellier Mediterranean Film Festival's Cinemed section.

In 2015, Ben Rachid became a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

### **SAUMYANANDA 'SOMO' SAHI – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

Director Anne Aghion recruited cinematographer Saumyananda 'Somo' Sahi at the 2013 DocEdgeKolkata. At this forum for Asian documentary, Anne Aghion was a mentor and Saumyananda Sahi a mentee, there to workshop his first documentary SMALL THINGS, BIG THINGS, having just shot his first feature HAVE YOU SEEN THE ARANA? and just recently graduated from the world-renowned Film and Television Institute of India.

Over the years of production on TURBULENCE, Saumyananda Sahi not only shot all of the film's contemporary footage on locations in France, the United States and Northeastern India, he also became a much-in-demand, multiple award-winning cinematographer, working in non-fiction and narrative alike.

Over the last decade, he has lensed eight narrative features, thirteen non-fiction features and a seven-episode mini-series. In 2022, he was selected for the BAFTA Breakthrough India program, and the publication Film Companion named him one of India's "Disruptors," explaining that "his career of a little over a decade is one breakout moment after another."

Saumyananda Sahi was one of three DPs on the 2022 documentary ALL THAT BREATHES, which won some 16 majors awards, including the Sundance Film Festival’s Grand Jury Prize; the Cannes Film Festival’s top documentary award, the Golden Eye; the American Society of Cinematographers’ Best Documentary prize; Cinema Eye Honors for Outstanding Filmmaking and Outstanding Cinematography; and the DOC NYC Cinematography Award. The film also received dozens of nominations, including from BAFTA and the Academy Awards.

Saumyananda Sahi worked with acclaimed director Prashant Nair on the award-winning mini-series, TRIAL BY FIRE released globally by Netflix in January, 2023 to wide critical acclaim. It scored 100% on Rotten Tomatoes, made it onto IMDB’s Top 100 list after its debut, and just won a Filmfare Award for Best Series in Critics Category.

Director Anamika Haksar’s GHODE KO JALEBI KHILANE LE JA RIYA HOON (TAKING THE HORSE TO EAT JALEBIS), which mixes gritty verité with dreamscapes and magical realism was called a “masterpiece of contemporary Indian cinema” by Kinoscope and “thrilling” by The Hollywood Reporter. The film brought Saumyananda Sahi the 2023 Indian Critics’ Choice Award for Best Cinematography, and played at numerous festivals including the New Frontier section of the Sundance Film Festival.

Additionally, Saumyananda Sahi’s work has screened at major film festivals such as Berlin, Rotterdam, Locarno, Busan, Toronto, Hot Docs (Canada) and IDFA (Holland), Mumbai, Filmfare, and the joint Tribeca-YouTube pandemic event, the We Are One global film fest.

Saumyananda Sahi has directed two documentaries, is at work on a new seven-episode series, three of which he is directing, and is presently completing his own first narrative feature. As a teacher, he has conducted workshops at the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute of India, BITS Pilani (Goa) and NYU Abu Dhabi.

### **ADRIEN ROCHE** – LINE PRODUCER & SOUND RECORDIST

Adrien Roche has worked in international filmmaking and media for over twenty years, with a resumé that includes 40 films, and credits including producer, first assistant director, cameraman and sound recordist.

He met director Anne Aghion at the Asian documentary forum, DocEdgeKolkata, in 2013. Intrigued by her plans to film in northeastern India, he offered himself as the researcher/line producer and sound recordist for that shoot. As TURBULENCE evolved over the next decade, he continued in that role, traveling to multiple locations in France and the United States.

Adrien Roche began his career in his native France working with Pulitzer Prize-winner Raymond Depardon, a towering figure in the worlds of documentary and photojournalism. Adrien Roche

was assistant producer on the narrative feature, UN HOMME SANS L'OCCIDENT and the documentary features, 10<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT COURT and PROFILS PAYSANS, LE QUOTIDIEN. These films were selected for the 2003 Venice Film Festival, the 2004 Cannes Film Festival, and the 2005 Berlinale, respectively.

He then served as Assistant Director on two high-profile France Televisions programs directed by the preeminent French documentarian, Patrick Rotman: THE SURVIVORS aired in 2004 and the two-part CHIRAC was broadcast in 2005.

Moving to India in 2006 after having filmed a feature-documentary about the Kolkata Bookfair, he established himself as a resource for Indian and international independent filmmakers, and for feature documentaries commissioned by France Televisions, ARTE, German channel ZDF and Finnish channel YLE.

Adrien Roche line-produced two groundbreaking global projects by Yann-Arthus Bertrand—the 2003 multinational video exhibition 7 BILLION OTHERS (originally titled 6 BILLION OTHERS), and the 2009 HOME, a film composed almost entirely of aerial footage shot on every continent.

He line-produced and assistant directed two feature films by French director Siegfried: KIDS STORIES in 2011, which premiered at the Moscow Film Festival, and BENGALI VARIATIONS which premiered at the International Rotterdam Film Festival in 2021.

His own films have included WILBUR GOES POOR three short episodes for the Pulitzer-Prize-winning documentary series, WHY POVERTY?, premiered at IDFA 2012.

His short film, LAKESIDE, was selected in the Visions Du Réel Film Festival market 2018.

Adrien Roche has a Master's Degree in History from Sorbonne University and speaks five languages. He teaches Indian history, and his book, the photo essay Left Behind about political graffiti in Kolkata, is distributed in France and India.

### **JUSTIN MESSINA – COMPOSER**

Justin Messina is a composer who works with both acoustic and electronic elements to create works that explore the expressive nature of sound. These works range from expansive orchestral compositions to electronically created sound installations.

He and Anne Aghion met at the MacDowell Colony where they were both fellows in residence at a time when Anne Aghion was just starting work on TURBULENCE. Their collaboration marks the first time Justin Messina has ventured into scoring for film.

Justin Messina's compositions have found a home in renowned concert halls across the United States and Europe, including prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Cité de la Musique, Concertgebouw, and Wiener Musikverein.

Recently, Justin Messina contributed to violinist Johnny Gandelsman's epic-scale commissioning project, "This is America".

He has also been an artist in residence at a number of other institutions including Ucross, Art 342, The Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Sitka Center for Art and Ecology and the Camargo Foundation.

Through installations like "Island", recorded at Channel Islands National Park, Justin Messina explores the relationship between music and sound by recording acoustic instruments in unusual acoustic spaces like sea caves and forests. "Island" is on display at the Chrisman California Island Center.

His album Shortwave Artifacts investigates the mysterious nature of radio. Made entirely of radio sounds and music for string ensemble, the album emerged naturally following a decade of interest in electronic music and techno during which time he worked with Francesco Tristano, Carl Craig, and Moritz von Oswald.

Beyond his own compositions, Justin Messina has made significant contributions as an arranger, copyist, and electronic musician. He has collaborated with Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, Ken Burns, Bela Fleck, Oswaldo Golijov, Adam Schoenberg, Brooklyn Rider, and Francesco Tristano.

Justin Messina was honored with the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2006 and was the winner of the Juilliard Orchestral Competition in 2004. During his time as an undergraduate at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, he received accolades such as the Peter D. Faith Prize, Gretchaninoff Memorial Prize, and the Juan Orrego-Salas Scholarship Award. In 2001, he clinched the first prize for the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies Peer-to-Peer Commissioning Project and was recognized with the Alvin and Charlotte Bronstein Award at the Ojai Music Festival.

Justin Messina earned a Master's in Music Composition and a Doctorate of Musical Arts from The Juilliard School in New York City. He lives in California.

### **MÉLISSA PETITJEAN** – SOUND EDITOR & RE-RECORDING MIXER

Mélissa Petitjean has amassed hundreds of credits in sound design, editing and mixing, with work in live-action and animation for film, television and other platforms. In 2018, she was made a Knight of the French National Order of Merit, nominated by the head of France's

National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image (CNC) for her commitment and her remarkable contribution to French cinema through sound.

Drawn to sound engineering by her training as a classical violinist and her love of science, in 2002, Méliissa Petitjean graduated from France's globally ranked film school, La Fémis. Her first job as lead sound mixer on a feature came soon after, with Éléonore Faucher's BRODEUSES (A COMMON THREAD), winner of the 2004 Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival's Critics' Week. Since then, she has worked with an expansive roster of film directors and for television programming on networks ARTE, Disney+ and France 5, among others.

Méliissa Petitjean won the 2014 César for Best Sound for MICHAEL KOHLHAAS, the first of four collaborations with filmmaker Arnaud des Pallières, including the upcoming CAPTIVES, which premiered in 2024. Her 2023 projects included Nathan Ambrosioni's award-winning feature TONI, EN FAMILLE; Raoul Peck's Amazon Original documentary, SILVER DOLLAR ROAD; LE PARADIS (THE LOST BOYS), which debuted at the Berlin Film Festival. She also collaborated with Nobel Prize Winner Annie Ernaux for LES ANNEES SUPER 8, the film she made with her son David.

Additionally, Méliissa Petitjean regularly mixes the French versions of major film and television titles from the United States, Europe, Korea, Japan and elsewhere, with a list comprising every genre. Examples range from Bong Joon Ho's PARASITE, winner of four Oscars including Best Picture and the Palme d'or at Cannes, to the American animated satire SOUTH PARK, multiple anime series and numerous shows for Netflix and HBO.

Méliissa Petitjean has been teaching the art and science of sound, at her alma mater La Fémis since 2007, at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Louis Lumière, at La Cinéfabrique, and at Morocco's renowned Ecole Supérieure des Arts Visuels since 2008.

In 2023, Méliissa Petitjean became a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

### **EVE RAMBOZ – VISUAL EFFECTS**

For over thirty years, Eve Ramboz has created visual effects for film, television, concerts, music videos and art installations, collecting numerous awards along the way.

She has worked on dozens of international films that include PERSONAL SHOPPER (Olivier Assayas, 2016), MISSION IMPOSSIBLE (Brian De Palma, 1992), THE TIME THAT REMAINS (Elia Suleiman, 2009), VATEL (Roland Joffé, 2000), BEHIND THE SUN (Walter Salles, 2001) and the acclaimed 3D dance documentary CUNNINGHAM (Alla Kovgan, 2019).

In 2019, the Paris Image Digital Summit presented Eve Ramboz with a Génie d'honneur for her contribution to the film and animated image industry through creativity, innovation and vision. Early in her career, she was a BAFTA nominee for Best Special Visual Effects for PROSPERO'S BOOKS (1992), her third feature with Peter Greenaway, entirely crafting the effects at the then state-of-the-art facilities of NHK in Japan. For her work on the miniseries DREAMKEEPER (dir. Steve Baron), she won the 2004 Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Miniseries, Movie or a Special.

She is currently at work once more with Peter Greenaway on his latest project, LUCCA MORTIS, starring Dustin Hoffman.

Eve Ramboz is also an award-winning director. Notably, she has directed and co-directed seven short films on artists ranging from Hieronymus Bosch to Mark Rothko.

### **WILFRID ROUFF** – ARTISTIC PARTICIPATION

Wilfrid Rouff is a photographer and conceptual artist.

His most recent solo show in 2019 was at Galerie Ici in Paris. He participates regularly in group shows, most recently Rouge à Lèvres at Résidence Secondaire in the Loire Valley in France, with such artists as Jean Dupuy, Jacques Halbert, Joël Hubaut, Fabrice Hyber, Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux, Yoko Ono, ORLAN, Ben Vautier, etc.

Since the beginning, his photographic language has revolved around surrendering to the chance of outside elements, notably relying on sound to release the shutter, or letting movement create his images. He often chooses to use the simplest possible cameras—toy cameras, compact cameras, the first generation of cell phones and now smartphones. He also works with video.

Not only does Wilfrid Rouff appear in TURBULENCE, as director Anne Aghion's life partner, but he was also involved artistically, on occasion recording sound, filming and contributing in numerous ways. Some of his photographs appear in the film.

In the 70s, Wilfrid Rouff was an assistant to master Art Director Oliviero Toscani (United Colors of Benetton); for a few years, he was an active member of Groupe Untel—described by artist Ben Vautier as “very close to my street actions of the 1960s and to Fluxus.” Some of the most avant-garde galleries of the 80s showed his work: J&J Donguy, La Boutique Sentimentale, and Galerie Satellite in Paris, C Space and White Columns in New York City. At the invitation of Jean Dupuy, his work was shown at the Centre Pompidou in Paris as part of the show Anti-Pub. Canadian critic Yan Rucar called his work “irreverently humorous.”



Also in the 80s, Carrie Donovan, chief fashion editor for The New York Times Magazine, commissioned him to photograph backstage for the Couture and Ready-to-Wear Collections in Paris and New York. For close to a decade, he was one of a handful to focus his singular lens on the models and the clothes of this golden era of fashion.

During the 90s, Wilfrid Rouff became a member of the pedagogical team at L'Ecole des Arts & Métiers de l'Image MI21 in Montreuil-sous-Bois, just outside Paris. Also known as l'Ecole Autrement, this alternative art school thrived for a decade.

In the 2000s, his work was shown in the networks of the French Institutes. In particular, he was invited to Lagos in 2002 where he conducted workshops on animated GIFs, and in 2007 to the Jakarta International Photo Summit where his workshops focused on 'second-long photographs.' He also showed and performed at La Savonnerie in Brussels in 2009 and at the French Institute of Valencia in 2010.

For half a century, he has contributed regularly to the Revue Doc(k)s, an alternative art magazine created by poet Julien Blaine, and published in the South of France. He is also a regular contributor to online publication, Spectaculum Magazine.

### **CYNTHIA KANE – PRODUCER**

Throughout her extensive career as a writer and producer, Cynthia Kane has been dedicated to creating impactful documentaries that resonate globally.

Co-creator of Sundance Channel's DOCday, Cynthia Kane played a pivotal role in bringing acclaimed documentary daylong series ("Mondays: 24 hours of Documentaries") to U.S. television, notably Jean-Xavier de Lestrade and Denis Poncet's award-winning masterpiece, THE STAIRCASE (2006 Peabody, Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Awards). While there, she also brought Anne Aghion's first two films in the Gacaca Series to Sundance Channel, one of which earned one of Sundance Channel's first Emmys.

During her tenure at ITVS, Cynthia Kane shepherded 135+ international and U.S. co-productions for public media, including Anne Aghion's ICE PEOPLE, contributing to the enrichment of the documentary landscape. At Al Jazeera America, her impact extended further as she commissioned noteworthy documentaries and series, including the late Albert Maysles' final work, IN TRANSIT, the duPont Award-winning series, Kartemquin Films' HARD EARNED, and many more. Kane was critical in launching the channel and served as Senior Commissioning Producer in the Documentary Unit until its closure in 2016.

Cynthia Kane's recent filmography showcases her commitment to thought-provoking storytelling. Notable productions include CALL ME DANCER (2023, ZDF ARTE/yes docu), directed

by Leslie Shampaine and Pip Gilmour, executive produced by Jay Sean and Jitin Hingorani; Sabine Krayenbühl and Zeva Oelbaum's *OBSESSED WITH LIGHT* (2023); and Raj Patel and Zak Piper's *THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER* (2021). Cynthia Kane's diverse portfolio also includes Carl Gierstorfer and Antje Boehmert's *THE RIVER BETWEEN US* (2021), NC Heikin's *LIFE & LIFE* (2021), Maria Finitzo's *THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE* (2020, Showtime), Kim A Snyder, Maria Cuomo Cole, and Lori Cheatle's *US KIDS* (2020), *LESSONS FROM A SCHOOL SHOOTING: NOTES FROM DUNBLANE* (2018, Netflix Original Documentary), Sabine Krayenbühl and Zeva Oelbaum's *LETTERS FROM BAGHDAD* (2016, PBS/BBC), and Hiwot Admasu Getaneh's *NEW EYES* (2015, Venice, TIFF, Rotterdam).

Cynthia Kane currently freelances and serves as a creative consultant for Women Make Movies' Production Assistance Program. Her international collaborations, including work with Anne Aghion | Dry Valleys Productions (France), Stina Gardell | Mantaray Films (Sweden), Hemal Trivedi | Manjusha Films and Zero Point Gravity (India, US), and Laurence Uebersfeld | LuFilms (France) further underscore her dedication to elevating voices and stories across borders.

### **ANITA KIRPALANI** – CONSULTING PRODUCER

A multi-hat professional working at the crossroads of social innovation, culture and media, Anita Kirpalani worked with Anne Aghion in New York as an Associate Producer for several years at the very onset of what would become *TURBULENCE*. Over the years, she remained involved, recently re-engaging more formally to help shepherd the film's foray into the world.

She started her career as the United Nations representative for the International Federation for Human Rights. Based out of New York, she also worked as a reporter/researcher for *Newsweek International* and as a correspondent for *Youphil*, the first French web publication dedicated to social innovation.

After five years in New York and Rio de Janeiro, she moved back to France to manage a large-scale European multi-disciplinary cultural and political event spearheaded by the French Mission du Centenaire, which took place in Sarajevo in 2014 to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWI. She then became Director of Development and Partnerships for leading French non-profit Article 1, which focuses on creating equal opportunity in the fields of education and professional development.

More recently, Anita Kirpalani was at Epic, a global foundation which seeks to empower and protect children, youth and our planet. There, she was rapidly promoted from Director France to Managing Director Europe and lastly Chief Operating Officer.

In addition to her work with Anne Aghion, she does operational strategy consulting in the non-profit sector in Europe, and creative consulting with Kaimera Productions, a live performance organization, and others.

Half-Indian, half-French, Anita Kirpalani lives in Paris. She holds a Master of International Affairs from Columbia University and a Master of Public Affairs from Sciences Po Paris.